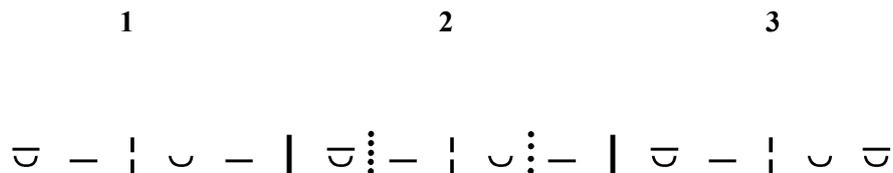


Greek and Latin Metre VII

The Iambic Trimeter II: Latin (pure, tragic and comic metres)

The Greek inheritance 1: (a) pure iambics; (b) tragic iambics; choliambics



(a) Pure Iambics:

- The iambic trimeter was adopted into Latin metre at various stages and does not therefore reflect a single linear continuum of development within the language. A significant figure in its adoption was Catullus, who keenly experimented in several Greek metres.
- In two of his poems (4 and 29) Catullus employed the trimeter in the form of ‘pure’ iambics (i.e. only $\cup -$ throughout), a Grecker-than-Greek practice, since this seemingly basic and original form of the metre is not attested in the parent language (although lines that are, by chance, only iambic do of course crop up, e.g. Eur. *Med.* 8)

phaselus ille, quem uidetis, hospites,
ait fuisse nauium celerrimus,
neque ullius natantis impetum trabis
nequisse praeterire, siue palmulis
opus foret uolare siue linteo.

Cat. 4.1-5

- In Cat. 29 an exception to this rule occurs in the case of the proper noun *Māmurra*, whose inclusion (as the target of the invective) was necessary; the opening of line 20 is corrupt.
- These wholly pure iambics are only attested elsewhere in Latin as part of Horace’s *Epodes* (a.k.a. *Iambi*, publ. 30 B.C.).
- Penthemimeral or hepthemimeral caesurae are regular, and Porson’s Law is observed.

(b) Tragic Iambics:

- Tragedians of the Augustan Age and subsequent periods, whether writing for the stage or adopting the guise of drama, often employed the iambic trimeter, basing their practice on the principles of their Greek tragic ancestors.
- The schema is the same as that discussed in Lecture VI, save for the following few points of discrepancy:

- The fifth foot is rarely iambic and, unlike in pure iambics, a line close of two iambic words is avoided.
- Porson's Law is generally observed but exceptions are commoner than in Greek, e.g.:

Sen. *Phae.* 394 *supplex adoro. uota superis soluite*

- The 'anapaestic' resolved foot occurs more commonly throughout the line (including the fifth foot), and is found with all types of words, not only proper nouns, e.g.:

Sen. *Med.* 155 *leuis est dolor, qui capere consilium potest*

- There exists a marked preference for a long instead of a short in the anceps opening the third metron (fifth foot); in fact, resolved feet are often preferred to an iambic fifth foot, e.g.:

Sen. *Med.* 37 *hoc restat unum, pronubam thalamo feram*

- Occasionally the resolution of both the anceps and the longum of the first foot is found, e.g.:

Sen. *Med.* 670 *pauet animus, horret, magna perniciēs adest*

- **Try scanning the following:**

*opaca linqvens Ditis inferni loca,
adsum profundo Tartar(i) emissus specu,
incertus utras oderim sedes magis:
fugio Thyestes inferos, superos fugo.* Sen. *Ag.* 1-4

(c) Scazons (choliambics):

- The form of this metre, which was treated at the close of Lecture VI, was regularly adopted by Catullus (among other writers of the first century B.C.): see poems 8, 22 and 31.
- The schema is the same as in Greek – the iambic trimeter (with no restriction to pure iambics) but with the compulsory close ∪---, e.g.:

Cat. 8.1 *miser Catulle, desinas ineptire*

The Greek inheritance 2: Roman comic metres (*senarii* and *septenarii*):

(a) The iambic *senarius*:

1	2	3
∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∴ — ∪ ∴ — ∪ — ∪ ∪		
∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∴ ∪ ∪ ∴ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪		

- Early Roman drama took its origins in the late 3rd cent. B.C. and followed Greek practice in adopting for its spoken dialogue the iambic trimeter, albeit in an even freer form than that found in extant Greek New Comedy (from which many plays were translated and lightly adapted for production).
- Of all early (Republican) comedy and tragedy, the works of only two playwrights survive complete: twenty plays (of 52) by T. Maccius Plautus (c.254 – 184 B.C), staged from 212 until his death, and six written by P. Terentius Afer (c.195 – 159 B.C.), staged between 166 and 160.
- The vagaries of Latin comic metre were little understood even by Romans one hundred years after the age of Plautus and Terence. Horace's famous criticism of the metre is reflective of this lack of expertise:

*at uestri proaui Plautinos et numeros et
laudauere sales, nimium patienter utrumque,
ne dicam stulte, mirati, si modo ego et uos
scimus inurbanum lepido seponere dicto
legitimumque sonum digitis callemus et aure.* *Ars Poetica 270-4*

Iambs vs spondees:

- The most significant difference between the comic trimeter and the adoption of the iambic trimeter by Catullus and subsequent poets is that *a short is not required as the third element* of the first and second metra; the final foot of the line must, however, remain an iamb.
- However, the trimetric origins of the line remain vestigial, since a short syllable is more commonly found as the third element than as the first element.
- The name *senarius*, originating from a podic (i.e. foot-based) of the line, is therefore somewhat unhelpful, since it obscures the Greco-Roman *trimetric* conception of the verse form.
- The basic rhythm of the line is often heavily obscured by the great frequency of resolutions in the line, e.g.:

Plaut. *Rud.* 462 *satin nequam s(um), ut pote q(ui) hodi(e) amar(e) inceperim*

- For the ins-and-outs of longs and shorts in the line, see below.

Caesurae, pauses and antilabe:

- As in other iambic verses, the caesura typically falls after the first element of the second metron, i.e. after the fifth element. This is the familiar penthemimeral caesura, e.g.:

Plaut. *Men.* 1-2 *salutem primum ÷ iam a principio propitiam
mihi atque uobis, ÷ spectatores, nuntio.*

- If this caesura is not in evidence, a caesura typically falls after the third element of the second metron, i.e. after the seventh element. This is the hepthemimeral caesura, e.g.:

Plaut. *Men.* 11 *atque adeo hoc argumentum ÷ graecissat, tamen*

- Analogous to the quasi-caesura (*caesura media*) – typically seen with elision at the mid-point of Greek iambic trimeters – the Latin comic trimeter considers elision after the fourth or sixth element (i.e. before the onset of the third or fourth feet) as counting as a penthemimeral or heptemimeral caesurae respectively. E.g.:

Ter. *HT* 66 *attente tut(e) † illor(um) † officia fungere*

- Pauses can occur anywhere in the line but are rare in the first and last feet.
- The rhythmical tendencies of Porson's Law are not observed.
- As in the Latin tragic trimeter, it is extremely rare for a line to close with two iambic words.
- Changes of speaker within the line (antilabe) are very common and attested in every position of the line, save for the first and last feet. Multiple changes within a line are common, e.g.:

Plaut. *Stich.* 247 G: *quo nunc is?* C: *ad te.* G: *quid uenis?* C: *Panegyris*

- As in Greek, elision can occur at such changes of speaker, e.g.:

Ter. *Phorm.* 52 GE: *at ego obuiam conabar tibi, Daue.* DA: *accipe, em:*

Elision & Hiatus:

- Latin comic playwrights are far more free in their use of elision than any other Latin (or Greek) metre: elision not only of short vowels but also of long vowels and diphthongs is regular in all parts of the line. Monosyllables also regularly suffer elision, e.g.:

Plaut. *Aul.* 89 *ab(i) intr(o), occlude ianuam. i(am) eg(o) hic ero.*

- Hiatus typically occurs at caesurae but is sometimes attested at other pauses in the line. E.g.:

Plaut. *As.* 109 D: *atque audisne etiam?* | L: *ecce.* D: *si quid te uolam.*

Plaut. *Merc.* 745 *uidere, amplecti, | ausculari, | alloqui*

less probably *uidere, | amplecti, ausculari, | alloqui*

Syllabic resolution and substitution:

- The schema on the previous page looks *prima facie* alarming: in the place of any natural short of long of the iamb (with the exception of the last foot), one can find instead a long (in place of a short) or two shorts (in place of a short or long). Such resolutions and substitutions can occur at any point in the line, and most senarii contain significantly more than twelve syllables. Compare a line such as:

Ter. *HT* 9 *existumarem scire uostrum, id dicerem*

with

Ter. *HT* 100 *neque ut animum decuit aegrotum adolescentuli*

- All of the long (i.e. even-numbered) syllables marked in the schema – with the exception of the last – could be replaced by two shorts, on the notion (seen in reverse in the dactylic hexameter) that ∪∪ and – were metrically equivalent.
- As a result, it is possible for each of the first five feet to have any of the following rhythms:

∪ – – – ∪ ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪

- Resolved syllables are not typically divided between words.
- It is also rare for a resolved syllable to occur at word end (which began in an earlier element).

Meyer's Law:

- If a word (excluding proclitics and enclitics) ends at the end of a metron, it should typically be preceded by a short. This tendency arises from a desire to avoid word accent on a long or resolved *anceps* (the third element of a metron).
- Thus *reges amant* (---∪) is an acceptable metron, but *amant reges* (∪---) rare / illicit.
- This law is more strongly observed as the line progresses: in the third metron it is essential.

Luch's Law:

- If a word (excluding proclitics and enclitics) ends at the second element of a metron, it should be preceded by a long.
- This law is most strongly observed in the final metron.
- Thus *reges* (--) would be an acceptable start of a metron, but not *amant* (or, e.g., *conscii*, where *cons* stands in the preceding metron), which provides a beginning ∪-.
- The law was touched upon by Bentley, and is often referred to as the Bentley-Luch's Law.

Prosodic irregularities:

- The greatest difficulty of scanning comic metres is presented by the wide range of prosodic licences available to early Roman poets, several of which are alien to the principles of classical prosody (for which see Lectures I-II).
- Synizesis can occur freely in cases where *i*, *u* and *e* precede vowels: e.g. *huius*, *eius*, *eo* and *tuom* can be pronounced as (long) monosyllables, *deosque* and *easdem* as disyllables; *nihil* and *mihi* are regularly monosyllabic (as if *nil* and *mi*).
- As well as hiatus at caesurae, prosodic hiatus (the shortening of a final vowel or diphthong) is common at all places in the line. It should be noted that prosodic hiatus can also occur in the cases of words closing with *-Vm* (where *V* is any vowel). Such prosodic hiatus typically occurs before another short, e.g.:

Plaut. *Men.* 93 *facile adseruabis, dŭm ẽo uin clo uincies*

However, occasionally the licence is extended to instances before a long syllable, e.g.:

Plaut. *Men.* 227 *maior meo animo quam quõm ex alto procul*

- The phenomenon of iambic correption is regular, but is also extended to the first two syllables of several longer words, especially with words/phrases of the form ∪-´... being scanned instead as ∪∪´... . For instance, *uoluptatis* and *enimvero* and, collocations such as *apud matrem*, often scan as ∪∪-.
- The original inherited scansion of several nouns and verbs is found, e.g. *amāt*, *habēt*, *audīt*, *sorõr*.
- Often final *-s* is disregarded in preconsonantal position (sigmatic ecthipsis).

Why not scan the following?

*curate ut splendor meo sit cluqueo clarior
quam solis radii esse olim quom sudumst solent* Plaut. *Miles Gloriosus* prol. 1-2

ST: *si hoc non credis, ego credidero* CA: *quid?* ST: *me nihili pendere.*

CA: *quam dudum istuc aut ubi actumst?* ST: *ilico hic ante ostium* Plaut. *Trin.* 607-8 (tr.tetr.)

summum ad gradum cum claritatis ueneris Decimus Laberius *fr.* 128

per pol quam paucos reperias meretricibus

fidelis evenire amatores, Syra. Ter. *Hec.* 58-9