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## The Christianisation of Latin Metre : A Study of Bede's De arte metrica

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Seppo Heikkinen

The Christianisation of Latin Metre

A Study of Bede's *De arte metrica*

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## Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. General observations	1
1.2. Grammar and metre in Anglo-Saxon England	2
1.3. The dating of Bede's <i>De arte metrica</i>	5
1.4. The role of metrics in Bede's curriculum	9
1.5. The structure and aims of <i>De arte metrica</i>	11
1.6. Bede's Christian agenda and its implementation in his discussion of metrics	13
2. Hexameter verse and general prosody	17
2.1. The dactylic hexameter in Anglo-Saxon England	17
2.2. Classical and post-classical prosody: common syllables	24
2.2.1. Plosives with liquids	26
2.2.2. S groups	29
2.2.3. <i>Productio ob caesuram</i> and consonantal h	34
2.2.4. Hiatus and correption	40
2.2.5. <i>Hic</i> and <i>hoc</i>	44
2.2.6. Summary	47
2.3. Other observations on prosody	49
2.4. The structure of the dactylic metres	58
2.4.1. The dactylic hexameter	58
2.4.2. The elegiac couplet	72
2.5. The aesthetics of verse	75
2.5.1. Enjambment	77
2.5.2. Bede on word order	81
2.5.2.1. The golden line	81
2.5.2.2. Other observations on word order	92
2.6. Word division and caesurae	97
2.7. Elision and hiatus	108
2.8. Bede on prosodic licences	118
2.9. The differences between pre-Christian and Christian poets	126
2.10. Conclusion	134
3. The lyric metres	137
3.1. The phalaecean hendecasyllable	141
3.2. The sapphic stanza	147
3.3. The terentianean metre	152
3.4. The anacreontic metre	158
3.5. The iambic trimeter	164
3.6. The iambic dimeter	168
3.7. The trochaic septenarius	175
3.8. Conclusion	185
4. Rhythmic verse	187
4.1. Introduction	187
4.2. The evolution of prosodic terminology in late antiquity	187

4.2.1. From mechanical to vocal ictus	187
4.2.2. The redefinition of rhythm	190
4.3. The origins of rhythmic poetry	192
4.4. Bede's definition of rhythm	195
4.5. Conclusion	204
5. Summary	207
Bibliography	211

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Helsinki, 24 February 2012

Seppo Heikkinen

## 1. Introduction

### 1. 1. General observations

Bede's *De arte metrica* is, in many respects, a revolutionary work: it is one of the first metrical treatises composed for an audience who were not native speakers of Latin. At the same time it is the first practical presentation of metrics intended for the purposes of the medieval monastic curriculum. Its role in the transmission of the classical poetic tradition cannot be underestimated; however, its departures from what we consider the classical norm of quantitative metrics also exerted a strong influence on medieval poetry. Despite the background of the work, it turned out to be surprisingly long-lived, and its popularity can be said to have outlasted the curriculum for which it was composed. *De arte metrica* remained in use throughout the Middle Ages and, although its influence began to wane somewhat after the cultural revolution of the twelfth century, it was not really abandoned: it is telling that its first printed edition appeared shortly after the invention of the printing press, and the work was circulated, even in vernacular translations, as late as the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The modern age, however, has been less kind to Bede's writings on grammar. Without doubt, this is largely due to Bede's prominent role as exegete and historian, which has often eclipsed his "minor" grammatical works, but also to their hitherto inaccurate dating. Until quite recently, scholars viewed Bede's works on orthography (*De orthographia*), metre (*De arte metrica*) and "schemes and tropes" (*De schematibus et tropis*) as early works; the idea seems to have been that Bede honed his skills in what is considered a preliminary field of scholarship before moving on to such grander things as biblical exegesis. Ostensibly, the early dating of Bede's grammatical writings corroborated their place as a kind of *juvenilia* within his oeuvre. Yet another factor which has contributed to the underrated status of Bede's grammatical writings has been the role of grammar itself, as it was perceived in antiquity: grammar, which formed a part of the trivium, was literally a "trivial" subject; that Bede, representing an entirely different educational system with a curriculum of its own, did not share this view has not always been recognised or appreciated, although it has a direct bearing on the role and prominence of these works within his literary production. The scrutiny to which these works have been subjected has, inevitably, suffered from the disdainful view which scholars sometimes take of Roman grammarians. Admittedly, Late

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<sup>1</sup> Avalle 1992, 400-401.

Latin grammarians were not always the most original of thinkers: in their work we often encounter much that is recycled from earlier sources with little criticism or imagination. A reader acquainted with the works of Bede's predecessors would be perfectly justified in failing to be impressed by his first glance at Bede's *De arte metrica*, as it, superficially, seems to fit into this mould: much in it is derived from earlier sources, and even verbatim quotations from other grammarians are conspicuously frequent. It is only when one looks closer that one sees the true individuality of Bede's views on metre. Bede rarely goes so far as to refute openly anything in his sources, but through subtle manipulation of wording, as well as careful elimination and introduction of material, he has often managed to alter the traditional presentations of metrical rules in ways that often amount to virtual redefinitions. In addition to the individual revisions of his material, Bede can, with some justice, be regarded as the creator of a literary genre: his *De arte metrica* presents syllable prosody and the poetic metres as a unified system rather than as separate subjects, and his presentation served as the primary model for the subsequent *artes metricae* of the Carolingian era and the high middle ages.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. 2. Grammar and metre in Anglo-Saxon England

The relationship between Christianity and grammatical scholarship had been an uncomfortable one in late antiquity, as the study of grammar was seen as inextricably linked to the study of pagan literature. Vivien Law (1997, 74) cites several historical anecdotes which illustrate this sad state of things, the best-known of which is undoubtedly Jerome's vision where he was accused of being "Ciceronianus, non Christianus".<sup>3</sup> As Christianity gained the upper hand, it nevertheless required an ever-growing number of educated young men for its offices. The school system of the Late Empire, however, was still largely based on the old, pagan, tradition of the *artes liberales*, to which the church had to adjust, and as the socio-economic structure of the empire collapsed, the Christians ultimately had to take over education. In 529, the Council of Vaison instructed parish priests to care for the education of youths in schools that were founded as adjuncts of the diocesan system. Although nominally Christianised, the episcopal and diocesan schools of late antiquity did not differ markedly

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<sup>2</sup> Leonhardt 1989, 75. However, Leonhardt, as Manitius (1911, 74) before him, underestimates the actual content of Bede's treatise (p. 75: "Dabei bringt Bede, wie bereits Manitius zu Recht bemerkt hat, nichts, das nicht auch bei den antiken Grammatikern zu finden wäre.").

<sup>3</sup> Hier. epist. 22, 30.



from their predecessors. The education they provided was still loosely modelled on that of the traditional schools, albeit cosmetically adapted to the needs of a Christian society.<sup>4</sup>

Another approach to the question of education and Christianity was taken in the convents of late antiquity. The monastic schools were dedicated to askesis, or *conversatio*, the Christian life, and their teaching was fully geared to its implementation. They renounced many, if not most aspects of the traditional school system, being, in C. W. Jones's words, "apprenticed, vocational and democratic";<sup>5</sup> even the concept of "liberal education" was rejected, implying, as it did, a society of masters and servants. The curriculum was revised to contain only that which advanced the vocational needs of the monks. The study of Scripture was an integral element of the spiritual life, and the teaching of letters was moulded in its service. This is the tradition that ultimately became the model for the insular monastic schools, which, in turn served as the foundation for the Carolingian system of education.

Nevertheless, the relationship between letters and Christianity was somewhat different on the British Isles, where the Latin language was introduced together with Christianity; subsequently, grammar was, from its arrival, "permeated with the Christian religion".<sup>6</sup> As Latin was the language of the church, instruction in basic grammar was of the essence. This was, in itself, a subject of no little difficulty, as the existing grammatical literature had been composed for native speakers of the Latin language. Trying to learn Latin from the writings of Donatus or Priscian would have been an impossible task, as they provide no paradigms or any other such features as we associate with books of elementary grammar.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, although many of the Late Roman grammarians had been Christian, this was hardly reflected in their works, as they had been composed in the spirit of the earlier grammatical tradition. Christian authors had made some effort to Christianise the subject of grammar, mainly through the occasional introduction of Judaeo-Christian material as substitutes for the usual classical quotations, but this was still largely superficial. These features of the continental tradition necessitated the alteration of grammatical teaching in such a way that it would better serve a) the educational needs of a non-native user of Latin and b) the vocational needs of the monastic system. The latter meant a genuine need for a thorough Christianisation of the subject, to which the insular grammarians generally reacted with prefaces excerpted from the Early Fathers, word-lists revised to contain more ecclesiastical vocabulary, and biblical quotations inserted in place of quotations from the

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<sup>4</sup> Jones 1975, v.

<sup>5</sup> Jones 1975, vi.

<sup>6</sup> Law 1984, 82.

<sup>7</sup> Law 1997, 75.

classics;<sup>8</sup> all of these are features which we can encounter in Bede's grammatical works and which his contemporaries would have taken as a matter of course.

Although the present thesis deals not with a work of elementary grammar but with a treatise on metre, the peculiar linguistic conditions of Anglo-Saxon England nevertheless played a role which cannot be ignored. The rules of quantitative syllable prosody were a cause of considerable bewilderment for the Anglo-Saxons, as the phenomenon had disappeared from the spoken Latin of their day and could only laboriously be garnered from books. Admittedly, this is a problem they had partly inherited from their predecessors: we may call to mind Augustine's confession that he knew nothing of syllable quantity,<sup>9</sup> as well as the number of grammatical works devoted to the final syllables of words, where the discrepancy between the spoken Latin of late antiquity and previous poetic practice was the most blatant. The main drawback of the late antique sources on prosody and the poetic metres was that they discussed them as separate subjects. The Anglo-Saxon poet-scholars Aldhelm and Bede transformed the genre of metrical treatises by incorporating syllable prosody into their discussion of verse technique. Even the title of Bede's treatise on metre, *De arte metrica*, is the first of its kind, and sets it apart from its predecessors (generally with titles along the lines of *De metris*):<sup>10</sup> it sets out to portray the art of verse composition as a whole, ranging from its smallest components, sounds and syllables, to the broader issues of poetic style. Bede's examples of the basic elements of quantitative verse are almost invariably drawn from hexameter poetry, preferably that of the Christian poets, and this, conversely, means that the Christian authors who set the norm for good poetic style also became authorities on questions of general prosody. Hence, we can see that in Bede's treatise, the traditional presentations of the grammarians often come second to the author's own observations on Christian verse.

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<sup>8</sup> Law 1984, 82.

<sup>9</sup> Aug. mus. 3, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Leonhardt 1989, 77 n. 26.

### 1. 3. The dating of Bede's *De arte metrica*

The traditional consensus has, until recently, been that Bede's *De arte metrica* and its companion work *De schematibus et tropis* are early works.<sup>11</sup> This misconception has been founded not only on the idea that they somehow show less maturity and sophistication than his "major" works, but also on an ambiguous turn of phrase which appears in the epilogue of *De arte metrica*: Bede addresses the work to one Cuthbert, whom, as he has previously been interpreted, he calls his "beloved son and fellow deacon". The passage forms a preface to the following *De schematibus et tropis*, functioning as a bridge between the two libelli. Bede writes as follows:

Haec tibi, dulcissime fili et conlevita Cuthberte, diligenter ex antiquorum opusculis scriptorum excerpere curavi, et quae sparsim reperta ipse diuturno labore collegeram tibi collecta obtuli, ut quemadmodum in divinis litteris statutisque ecclesiasticis imbuere studui, ita et in metrica arte, quae divinis non est incognita libris, te solerter instruerem. Cui etiam de figuris vel modis locutionum, quae a Graecis schemata vel tropi dicuntur, parvum subicere libellum non incongruum duxi, tuamque dilectionem sedulus exoro ut lectioni operam inpendas illarum maxime litterarum, in quibus nos vitam habere credimus sempiternam.<sup>12</sup>

[I have taken pains to make these extracts from the handbooks of the ancient scholars for your benefit, beloved son and fellow deacon, Cuthbert, and I have offered to you this collection of poetic excerpts, which, as I came upon them here and there, I laboriously gathered over a long period of time in order that I might instruct you intelligently in the art of metrics, which is not unknown in the Bible, just as I endeavoured to give you your first training in divine letters and ecclesiastical law. To complement it I have also drawn up a little work on the figures and mannerisms of speech which the Greeks call schemes and tropes, and I earnestly beg you to devote your efforts especially to the informed reading of that Book in which we believe that we have eternal life.]<sup>13</sup>

The passage is interesting and illuminating in many respects: firstly, Bede explains the extent to which the works are based on his own research, and the statement that they have been compiled "over a long period of time" would make a very early date improbable.

Furthermore, the closing sentence clearly demonstrates the extent to which Bede regarded the

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<sup>11</sup> Laistner 1957, 95: "Bede's earliest treatises – *De arte metrica*, *De schematibus et tropis*, *De orthographia* – were intended for school use. They prove that he was brought up on, and, when he became himself a teacher, adapted and excerpted such writers as Donatus, Charisius, Audax, Caper, and other grammarians of the later Roman imperial age." Also Palmer (1959, 573), who categorically refutes the "immaturity" of *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*, nevertheless refers to them as "Bede's earliest works". Also Blair 1970, 5; 249-250; Brunhölzl 1975, 201; Leonhardt 1989, 75.

<sup>12</sup> Bede, *De arte metrica*, ed. Kendall 1975 (hereafter DAM) 25, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Kendall 1991, 167.

study of grammar as inseparable from the study of scripture: by his own admission, Bede did not view it as a subject that was merely ancillary to more serious scholarly pursuits.

However, what particularly intrigues us is the term *conlevita* (which Kendall has, in accord with previous tradition, translated as “fellow deacon”). The origins of the term, apparently of Bede’s coinage, are in the practice, widespread in the churches of the East and the West alike, of equating the Christian ecclesiastical hierarchy of deacon, presbyter and bishop with the Jewish one of Levite, priest and high priest.<sup>14</sup> Thus, *levita* was commonly used as a synonym for *diaconus*. Whether Bede here means that both he and his addressee were deacons at the time of the work’s composition is, however, another matter.

The Cuthbert whom Bede addresses is generally held to be his long-time pupil, who later, in 735, became the abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow and to whom the famous description of Bede’s death (*De obitu Bedae*) is also attributed. The double expression “beloved son and fellow deacon” is problematic, as the former term seems to imply that the recipient was considerably Bede’s junior, whereas the latter one would mean that they were both roughly of the same age. On the assumption that Bede was a deacon at the time of the work’s completion, C. Plummer placed the date of the work’s composition between 691 or 692, the time of Bede’s ordination as deacon, and 701 or 702, his ordination as priest.<sup>15</sup> To render the expression “beloved son” explicable, M. L. W. Laistner further refined this dating by estimating that it was composed immediately before Bede’s priesthood.<sup>16</sup> This dating was still accepted at face value by C. B. Kendall in his 1975 editions of *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*: in his introduction he simply states: “DAM and DST were among the earliest of Bede’s numerous works. He was still a deacon (*levita*) when he composed them, very probably in 701 or 702.”<sup>17</sup>

The problem with these dates is that they focus solely on the supposition that Bede was a deacon at the time of the work’s completion while ignoring the probable age of the recipient who certainly was one.<sup>18</sup> Curiously enough, the first person to challenge this dating was Charles W. Jones in his preface to the volume of Bede’s didactic works which contained Kendall’s edition – in other words, in the same volume we encounter two opposite

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<sup>14</sup> Dassmann 1970, 198-214.

<sup>15</sup> Plummer 1896, I, cxlv.

<sup>16</sup> Laistner & King 1943, 131-132.

<sup>17</sup> Kendall 1975, 74.

<sup>18</sup> C. V. Franklin has expressed this problem amusingly: “If, as it is thought, the Cuthbert of the dedication is the future abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow who died in 777, a dating at the beginning of the century would make him a very precocious student indeed.” – Franklin 2000, 200.

views on the date of the work.<sup>19</sup> Thereafter, the new dating for Bede's *De arte metrica* won an increasing number of followers, the most prominent contributors being Martin Irvine<sup>20</sup> and George H. Brown.<sup>21</sup> In his 1991 edition of *De arte metrica*, even Kendall admitted that the final version of the book may have been completed at a later date, and attributes the term *conlevita* to Bede's use of his "old lecture notes".<sup>22</sup> Arthur Holder, however, has pointed out in his 1999 article that Bede's use of *conlevita* should in no way be taken to imply that he was himself a deacon at the time of the work's composition, referring to the use of the similarly prefixed words *condiaconus*, *conpresbyter* and *conepiscopus* in Augustine.<sup>23</sup> *Conlevita* would, in his opinion, simply mean "deacon who is my colleague in the ministry of Christ".<sup>24</sup>

New light on the probable dating of *De arte metrica* has been shed in C. V. Franklin's 2000 article which points out an exegetical interpretation which occurs in *De schematibus et tropis*. Based on what we know about the dating of Bede's exegetical works, this interpretation would, indeed, seem to give Bede's twin work a late date. The passage is in Bede's exposition of *sylllepsis in sensu*, a device where a plural is used for a singular, or vice versa. Bede interprets the expression *reges et principes* ("kings and princes") in Psalm 2:2 as an allusion to Herod and Pilate:

Item pro uno multi, ut: "adstiterunt reges terrae, et principes convenerunt in unum." Reges enim pro Herode, principes pro Pilato positos apostoli intellexerunt.<sup>25</sup>  
[Likewise, many things take the place of one in: "The kings of the earth stood up and the princes met together." For the apostles understood "kings" to refer to Herod and "princes" to refer to Pontius Pilate.]<sup>26</sup>

This interpretation does not yet appear in Bede's first commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (*Expositio Actuum apostolorum*), which we know was certainly not written before 709, although in his revised discussion of the subject (*Retractatio in Actus apostolorum*),

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<sup>19</sup> Jones 1975, x-xi.

<sup>20</sup> Irvine 1986, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Brown 1987, 35-36.

<sup>22</sup> Kendall 1991, 28-29.

<sup>23</sup> All of these terms appear in Augustine's letter 149, with which Bede was thoroughly acquainted. We may safely assume similar knowledge in his recipient.

<sup>24</sup> Holder 1999, 395. It must be added that already the Carolingians found *conlevita* confusing: Remigius of Auxerre seems to have shared Plummer's and Laistner's mistake in his 9<sup>th</sup>-century gloss to *De arte metrica*. – Kendall 1975, 141: "CONLEVITA id est simul levita quia et beatus Beda tunc erat diaconus." ("Conlevita, that is, Levite at the same time, as the blessed Bede was also a deacon at that time.")

<sup>25</sup> Bede, *De schematibus et tropis*, ed. Kendall 1975, 1, 61-63.

<sup>26</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 173.

written “not before 716 and possibly as late as 725-732”, it does.<sup>27</sup> As Franklin states, it is not clear whether *De schematibus et tropis* or *Retractatio* is the earlier work, but suggests that Bede’s treatise on schemes and tropes may have been composed between the two treatises on the Acts. Even this, however, would not rule out even a considerably later date for Bede’s twin work on grammar.<sup>28</sup> It is worthy of note that Bede’s even briefer treatise on orthography, *De orthographia*, was likewise re-dated as early as 1982 on similar grounds,<sup>29</sup> and it is apparent that it, too, was composed no earlier than 709. In other words, none of Bede’s grammatical works seem to belong to the early part of his career, and despite their perhaps deceptive conciseness must be regarded as works of considerable maturity.

The re-dating of Bede’s grammatical works has several implications: firstly, it is impossible to regard them as immature or derivative, as they obviously represent the result of years of research. Secondly, when it comes to *De arte metrica*, it is apparent that Bede was already an accomplished poet at the time of its composition. This means that the concept of Bede’s poetry as a scholar’s half-hearted attempt at the practical application of metrics must be refuted (such views have led to Bede’s verse being, if possible, even more underrated than his works on grammar).<sup>30</sup> Rather, this provides us with another way of looking at Bede’s views on metre: *De arte metrica* is more than an exposition of metrical rules in the abstract, and it is fair to assume that it strongly reflects Bede’s own verse technique.

This, indeed, is the starting point of Neil Wright’s 2005 article, where he discusses several prosodic and stylistic features of Bede’s metrical *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, finding several correspondences with his rulings in his *De arte metrica*. Judging by an early draft of the work (the so-called B redaction), possibly composed around 705,<sup>31</sup> Bede appears to have undergone some changes of mind regarding prosodic issues: the final version of the hagiography was reworked in some crucial respects, and corresponds more closely with Bede’s later rulings on prosody.<sup>32</sup> It is also apparent that Bede, far from regarding metre and grammar as merely preliminary subjects, found them an indispensable companion to all scholarly activity, and retained an active interest in them throughout his career. Nothing speaks more strongly for this than the very fact that the dating of Bede’s grammatical writings is based on the evolution of his views on biblical exegesis.

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<sup>27</sup> Franklin 2000, 202; see also Laistner 1939, xii-xvii.

<sup>28</sup> Franklin 2000, 203.

<sup>29</sup> Dionisotti 1982, 125.

<sup>30</sup> e.g. Turner 1836, 376.

<sup>31</sup> Lapidge 1995, 346-347.

<sup>32</sup> Wright 2005, 150-170.

#### 1. 4. The role of metrics in Bede's curriculum

If indeed, as Bede himself put it, the study of grammar was necessary for “the informed reading of that Book in which we have eternal life”, we cannot afford to take lightly either the tone or content of Bede's writings on grammar. The starting point of Bede's treatise on metre was the belief that metrics were an inalienable part of Judaeo-Christian heritage. This belief was based on the writings of such Christian apologists as Cassiodorus, Jerome and Isidore,<sup>33</sup> who taught that considerable portions of the Old Testament had been composed in verse, and, even more astonishingly, in hexameters and pentameters.

Such claims, which to us may seem outlandish, mainly served to refute the claims that Christians were barbarians or cultural upstarts: Moses was recast as the “Christian Homer”, and the origins of poetry were transplanted into a biblical sphere. Of course, Cassiodorus and Jerome found hexameters and pentameters in the Bible because they wanted to, but their assertions went unquestioned by subsequent generations of Christian scholars. With their negligible knowledge of Hebrew, they were forced to trust Cassiodorus and Jerome implicitly.<sup>34</sup>

Late antiquity, starting with Juvencus's third-century *Evangeliorum libri*, had seen the birth of Christian Latin literature in classical metres, and the works of Christian epic in hexameter verse by Juvencus and his followers Arator, Prudentius and Sedulius formed an important model for the hexameter poets of Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, the influence of Vergil persisted both in the classroom and in didactic literature on prosody and metre. Although such authors as Julian of Toledo and Aldhelm had already introduced more Christian material into their treatises, they still, to a high degree, relied on examples drawn from the classics. The cited material in Bede's *De arte metrica*, on the other hand, has been thoroughly overhauled: Bede's presentations of prosody in general and the dactylic hexameter in particular are dominated by the example of the Christian epic poets, most of all Sedulius. When Bede cites from Vergil, it is often as a last resort for want of an appropriate Christian example, and strikingly often Vergil is used as a specific example of what not to do: Bede emphasises, and frequently exaggerates, the prosodic differences between Vergil and later (Christian) poets. He seems to have believed that there, indeed, existed two distinctly

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<sup>33</sup> Cassiod. in psalm. 118, 23-26; Hier. praef. Vulg. Job; Arator ad Vigil. 80-81; Isid. orig. 1, 39, 11.

<sup>34</sup> The concept that “barbarians” were in possession of a cultural heritage more ancient than that of the Hellenes was, admittedly, not a novelty; such thoughts had been expressed by the Greeks themselves already in pre-Christian times. Understandably, however, the Christians were more than willing to make full use of them. –See e.g. Ridings 1995, 24- 27.

different poetic practices, pagan and Christian. This tendency has been duly noted by scholars, but the connection between Bede's treatment of his sources and the then-prevalent view of the Hebraic origins of verse has not received the attention it deserves: Bede did not merely think that the hexameter was a pagan invention which had been adopted – and possibly improved – by Christian poets. Rather, believing in the biblical origins of all verse, he saw that Christian poets were reclaiming from the pagans what was rightly theirs and restoring it to its former glory. Bede's sincere efforts to help this project are apparent throughout his twin works *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*. The tone of these works is already set by the opening chapter *De littera*, where Bede discusses the Latin alphabet in a surprisingly extended form: he has added the Greek letters  $\eta$ ,  $\chi$ , and  $\rho$  to the alphabet because of the common abbreviations for Iesus (IHS) and Christus (XPS), and  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$  because of their being mentioned in the Apocalypse (21:8).

Qui etiam post perceptionem Dominicae fidei *H* et *X* et *P* et *A* Graecas litteras, etsi non in alphabeti ordinem recipiunt, divinis tamen paginis inditas continent, *H* videlicet...intromittentes propter auctoritatem nominis Ihu, *X* et *P* propter nomen Xpi,  $\Omega$  propter auctoritatem Dominici sermonis, "Ego sum *A* et  $\Omega$ ."<sup>35</sup>  
 [Since their conversion to Christianity, they have also taken over the Greek letters which are found in the Bible, eta, chi, rho, and omega and alpha, although they have not admitted them into the order of the alphabet. To be specific, they have introduced eta...on the strength of the name of Jesus, chi and rho on the authority of the name of Christ, and omega on the authority of the Lord's words, "I am the Alpha and the Omega".]<sup>36</sup>

As we can see, Bede has here attempted to lend a particularly Christian tone to even the smallest elements of verse. Not all aspects of metre, of course, allowed for a similar treatment, but if we observe the quotations Bede has employed by way of illustration, the very same tendency comes to the fore. Besides substituting, wherever possible, Christian quotations for classical ones, Bede also, as I see it, tries to manipulate the content of the examples he employs. The Christian citations are, for the most part, appropriately uplifting even when fragmentary, and even in his classical quotations Bede seems to avoid actual pagan content. It is telling that chapter eleven of his treatise, which deals with the aesthetics of verse (*Quae sit optima carminis forma*), contains a longish quotation from the opening of Lucan's *Pharsalia*.<sup>37</sup> This may seem like a surprising choice in a chapter where all the other

<sup>35</sup> DAM 1, 11-18.

<sup>36</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 37. Bede's chapter on the alphabet has been discussed thoroughly in Robert B. Palmer's 1959 article "Bede as a Textbook Writer: A Study of his *De Arte metrica*", 573-584.

<sup>37</sup> DAM 11, 64-69.



examples of “good” verse are Christian, but the motivation behind this may be the fact of Lucan’s secularity: as a work of pre-Christian epic, the *Pharsalia* has the advantage of being almost free of any mention of the pagan gods whose presence pervades the *Aeneid* in a way that must have seemed repellent to Bede’s sensibilities.

### 1. 5. The structure and aims of *De arte metrica*

Bede’s presentation of the elements of verse generally follows the structure of Donatus’s *Ars maior*. He first describes letters (chapter 1), then syllables and their lengths (chapters 2-9), then metrical feet (chapter 9), devoting the rest of his treatise (chapters 10-24) to actual metrics. The role of the dactylic metres (the hexameter and the elegiac couplet) in his treatise is pre-eminent: not only does Bede devote the most space to the discussion of these metres, but his examples of syllable prosody are mostly derived from hexameter lines. Didactically speaking, one of Bede’s main accomplishments is the integration of syllable prosody with the structures of metrical verse: this is an approach obviously necessary in an age where the classical system of syllable quantity had died out. Bede was right in observing that metre could only be taught by simultaneously keeping an eye on the issues of elementary prosody.<sup>38</sup> Only towards the end of his treatise does Bede present what amounts to a slim compendium of lyric metres (chapters 17-23). This section mainly contains such metres as were employed in ecclesiastical music, the most notable being the iambic dimeter and the trochaic septenarius. Other lyric metres have made it to Bede’s selection because they have been used by Christian authors: the anacreontic metre (used in the proemium of Prosper’s *Poema coniugis ad uxorem*), the phalaecean hendecasyllable (used in the introduction of Cyprianus Gallus’s *Exodus*) and the sapphic strophe (used by Paulinus of Nola). Conspicuously, all examples of lyric verse are Christian, and the wealth of verse-forms in Horace, the primary model for lyric verse in earlier grammars, is absent. This is probably due not only to Bede’s lack of direct contact with Horace’s verse but also Horace’s secularity. Bede himself goes so far as to say that many other metres can be found in earlier literature, but he has not deemed them worthy of discussion, as they are “pagan”, or, from his point of view, irrelevant.<sup>39</sup> As Bede’s treatises were intended for the purposes of the monastic curriculum, learning for its own sake could not be encouraged: rather, grammar was to be taught in such a form that it

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<sup>38</sup> Leonhardt 1989, 75-76.

<sup>39</sup> DAM 24, 8-9.

complemented the study of scripture and the vocational life of the cloisters. Inevitably, this, too, is reflected in Bede's presentation of metre: poetic forms worthy of study, alongside Christian epic, were those forms of poetry which were of immediate importance in liturgy. This explains the scarcity of lyric metres in Bede's *De arte metrica* and the way in which they are primarily limited to those employed in hymnody. This also explains why Bede's *De arte metrica* is the first metrical treatise to give a satisfactory presentation of non-quantitative, or rhythmic, poetry. Bede's chapter *De rithmo* (chapter 24) is generally acknowledged to constitute the most revolutionary portion of *De arte metrica*. Discussions of rhythmic verse in earlier grammar are few; their emphasis is generally on its lack of syllable quantity, and, as in the case of Julian of Toledo, they are limited to the admonition to avoid it. Bede, on the other hand, recognised that the traditional terminology of prosody and metre was not sufficient for the description of all liturgical texts. Remarkably, he also appears to have realised that the rhythmic verse of early medieval hymns was based on quantitative iambo-trochaic models and suggested that metre could find an equivalent in a system without syllable quantity.

The final chapter of Bede's treatise (*Quod tria sint genera poematos*, DAM 25) contains a very brief description of the principal types of narrative, drawn from Diomedes, but supplemented by the writings of the Church Fathers and illustrated with references to Scripture. The chapter serves both as an epilogue to *De arte metrica* and as a bridge to its companion *De schematibus et tropis*, which describes different figures of speech. Although this subject is usually seen to belong in the realm of rhetoric, something unsuitable for the vocational studies of Christians, it had effectively been incorporated into grammar in the monastic schools, largely through the influence of Donatus's discussion of schemes and tropes in his *Ars maior*.<sup>40</sup> The Christian tone of *De schematibus et tropis* is even stronger than that of its companion, where Bede was limited to verse in his choice of examples; in *De schematibus et tropis*, on the other hand, he was able to draw freely on the Bible, and, indeed, nearly all rhetorical figures are illustrated with biblical quotations, together with a handful of citations from the Early Fathers.

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<sup>40</sup> For his 1991 edition, commentary and translation of the two works, Kendall has used the title *The Art of Grammar and Rhetoric*, something which Bede would certainly have considered inappropriate. – see Brown 2009, 23.

## 1. 6. Bede's Christian agenda and its implementation in his discussion of metrics

The purpose of the present thesis is to explore the ways in which Bede, in the composition of his *De arte metrica*, had utilised his sources, grammarians and poets alike: what he chose to leave out, what he paraphrased and what he boldly redefined; we can find abundant examples of all this in his *De arte metrica*. Bede's primary sources on prosody and metre were the Latin grammarians of late antiquity whose works have all been edited in Heinrich Keil's *Grammatici Latini*: they include, alongside Donatus, his commentators Sergius and Pompeius, Audax, Marius Victorinus, Maximus Victorinus, Mallius Theodorus, Diomedes and Charisius.<sup>41</sup> This, conversely, means that Bede probably did not have access to the works of such classics as Cicero, Quintilian, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* or Varro, let alone Greek sources. When it comes to poets, the situation is fairly similar: Bede's examples of verse are primarily taken from the Christian poets of late antiquity and Vergil, with, as we have already stated, a strong preference for the former, although Bede also cites the opening of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, as well as one line from Lucretius and another from Horace; it is likely, though, that he did not know the latter two authors at first hand. Although *De arte metrica* contains many verbatim and almost-verbatim quotations from the grammarians, Bede has surprisingly often altered their phrasing in ways which, taken at a glance, may seem insignificant but which result in a fundamental change of meaning. Take, for example the description of the dactylic hexameter as presented by Mallius Theodorus:

Constat autem metrum dactylicum hexametrum heroicum ex dactylo et spondio vel trochaeo, ita ut recipiat spondium locis omnibus, dactylum locis omnibus praeter ultimum, trochaicum vero loco tantum ultimo.<sup>42</sup>

[The heroic dactylic hexameter consists of the dactyl, the spondee and the trochee in such a way that it takes the spondee in every foot, the dactyl in every foot except the last one, and the trochee only in the final foot.]

Bede follows this definition almost to the letter, but not quite:

Constat autem ex dactylo et spondeo vel trocheo, ita ut recipiat spondeum locis omnibus praeter quintum, dactylum praeter ultimum, trocheum vero loco tantum ultimo.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Keil in *gramm.* VI, 220-221; Irvine 1986, 32. On Bede's library, see Laistner 1957, 117-149; Lapidge 2006, 34-17; 191-228. The Roman grammarians have been given a clear and concise presentation in Law 1982, 11-29.

<sup>42</sup> *gramm.* VI, 589, 230-233.

<sup>43</sup> DAM 10, 2-13; my italics.

[It is formed from the dactyl, the spondee, and the trochee in such a way that it takes the spondee in every foot except the fifth, the dactyl in every foot except the last, and the trochee only in the final foot.]<sup>44</sup>

As we can see, Bede has added the words *praeter quintum* to Mallius's definition, thereby effectively ruling out spondaic lines (towards which, as we shall observe, Bede harboured a vehement dislike). A similar addition appears in Bede's description of rhythmic poetry, this time as a vindication of a new, Christian literary genre. Maximus Victorinus gives the following portrayal of the similarities between rhythm and metre:

*Plerumque tamen casu quodam invenies rationem metricam in rhythmō, non artificii observatione servata, sed sono et ipsa modulatione ducente.*<sup>45</sup>

[However, you can often by chance find measured quantities even in rhythm, not because the regular artistic arrangement has been preserved, but from the influence of the sound and the beat itself.]

Bede, although otherwise in agreement with Victorinus, takes a stand for the literary merits of rhythmic verse by the simple addition of one clause:

*Plerumque tamen casu quodam invenies rationem metricam in rhythmō, non artificii observatione servata, sed sono et ipsa modulatione ducente, quem vulgares poetae necesse est rustice, docti faciant docte.*<sup>46</sup>

[However, you can often by chance find measured quantities even in rhythm, not because the regular artistic arrangement has been preserved, but from the influence of the sound and the beat itself. The common poets inevitably do this awkwardly, and the learned poets skilfully.]<sup>47</sup>

Similar minor alterations appear throughout the work. It must be noted that Bede rarely goes so far as to contradict his predecessors openly.

Alongside with its Christianising element, an important feature of Bede's *De arte metrica* is its practical approach to verse technique. Bede often simplifies the presentations of his predecessors, especially where they are cluttered with unhelpful jargon. We encounter this characteristic in Bede's discussion of "metaplasms", or metrical licences, where he has pared the dozen or so types mentioned by earlier grammarians down to merely four ones which play an actual role in verse composition, focusing particularly on the

<sup>44</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 97; my italics.

<sup>45</sup> gramm. VI, 206, 7 – 207, 3.

<sup>46</sup> DAM 24, 16-19; my italics.

<sup>47</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 201; my italics.

technique of elision, a source of some bewilderment for his contemporaries. Especially in Bede's treatment of the lyric metres, his definitions are simplified to such a degree that they mainly seem to be descriptions of the poems which Bede uses as their illustration. As Bede's examples of the lyric metres are drawn mainly from Late Latin hymnody, where syllable resolution is scarce, he barely touches on the phenomenon at all: Bede presents the trochaic septenarius and the iambic trimeter as isosyllabic metres (with a fixed number of syllables), and syllable resolution in the iambic dimeter is only mentioned as an afterthought.

As Bede's views on prosody and hexameter technique are based heavily on what the Christian poets of late antiquity, above all Sedulius, did or did not do, they strongly reflect the prosodic features of Late Latin, as well as exhibiting some more contrived techniques that had become popular in post-classical verse. Bede presents the prosody of final vowels in an essentially post-classical form: above all, the final o's of first-person verb forms and third-declension nouns are, by his definition, short, and he condones the strange post-classical practice of treating the letter h as a consonant, a common feature in the verse of the Christian epic poets. On the other hand, he condemns outright several other poetic licences (apparently because they were not used by Sedulius), labelling them as essentially pagan practices. These include, above all, spondaic lines (Bede appears virtually incredulous of their existence) and hiatus.

Bede's notion that these features are pagan practices is not wholly justified, as they do appear also in Christian poetry while not being particularly common even in classical verse, but it gives him the possibility of using Vergilian lines with these features as a caveat, thereby underlining his view of Christian verse technique being an improvement on pagan practices in every respect. Possibly disingenuously, he also devotes one whole chapter to explaining away Christian lapses from the prosodic norm which he elsewhere seeks to delineate.

Bede's observations on poetic style, although not numerous, are considerably original and equally telling in their commendation of techniques which Bede had noted in Sedulius and other Christian authors. Bede is apparently the first author to describe the kind of double hyperbaton which in modern scholarship is known as the golden line. The widespread use of the term is probably the indirect result of Bede's observations, and although usually applied to classical hexameter verse, the feature is really a characteristic of Sedulius's verse style. Similarly, Bede commends a kind of line that consists of an asyndetic list of words, a common feature of much later medieval poetry.

This thesis explores the variety of ways in which Bede sought to create a compendium of rules for what he viewed as an ideal way of composing Christian verse. I will look at the historical backgrounds of the phenomena which he struggled to cast in a clear-cut and unambiguous way, drawing on his sometimes conflicting sources and his own observations as a scholar and poet. I will also venture to shed light on the ways in which Bede's reforms of the nomenclature of metre and prosody, as well as his personal likes and dislikes, foreshadowed the practices of medieval poetry. Many of the features which I discuss have been noted in previous articles, but hitherto they have not been observed as an entity, which they deserve to be. I have decided to forego a closer examination of Bede's chapters 1 (*De littera*) and 25 (*Quod sint tria genera poematos*), which, although in their own way illuminating, have no actual bearing on questions of prosody or the scansion and composition of verse. The former has been studied in detail by Palmer (1959, pp. 573-584); a discussion of the latter would more properly belong together with a study of Bede's *De schematibus et tropis*.

Although Bede's discussion of grammar and metre seems highly pragmatic on the surface, his belief in the importance of these subjects was in essence idealistic, based as it was on the concept that metre was ultimately created by God. In this thesis, I will venture to study, and, as far as possible, explain, this subtle interplay of the practical and the idealistic, as it is manifested in Bede's writings on metre and grammar.

## 2. Hexameter verse and general prosody

### 2.1. The dactylic hexameter in Anglo-Saxon England

The Anglo-Saxons are generally acknowledged as the first non-Romance nation to create quantitative Latin poetry of any consequence, and therefore they enjoy a unique position in the cultural history of the Middle Ages. The native language of the last representatives of Roman hexameter poets was still Latin: Arator (fl. 550) was a Latin-speaking Ligurian, Corippus (fl. 550) was a North African speaker of Latin, and even Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 540-600), although he made his career in Merovingian Gaul, was originally from the Latin-speaking north of Italy.<sup>1</sup>

The first attempts at hexameter verse and other forms of quantitative poetry in post-Roman Europe were prosodically shaky, few in number and meagre in scope. This is obvious in the poetic creations of Visigothic Spain: King Sisebuth (d. 620) composed a poem of about fifty lines on eclipses of the sun and the moon, whereas Bishop Eugene of Toledo (d. 647), possibly a Visigoth himself, wrote a handful of occasional poems, none of which exceed the length of twenty lines.<sup>2</sup> The early verse composed by the learned clerics of sixth- and seventh-century Ireland, on the other hand, seems to have been exclusively non-quantitative,<sup>3</sup> and it is highly questionable whether the early Irish scholars had any grasp of quantitative prosody or the poetry based on it.<sup>4</sup> The earliest Irish hexameter poetry was composed no earlier than the eighth century, and is demonstrably based either on Anglo-Latin or Carolingian models.<sup>5</sup> Even in sixth-to-eighth-century Lombardy, closer to the heartland of the Latin sphere, the general decline in classical learning had an inevitable effect on poetry as well: this is demonstrated by numerous poems composed in what must be a form of the dactylic hexameter, albeit without any sense of syllable quantity.<sup>6</sup>

St. Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury and bishop of Sherborne, is without doubt the first Latin hexameter poet of any consequence to emerge after Venantius Fortunatus.

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<sup>1</sup> Lapidge 1979, 210.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> The sole exception may be a handful of poems in quantitative adonic verse, which have been attributed, probably spuriously, to St. Columban (540-615). – Bolton 1967, 42-43.

<sup>4</sup> Roger 1905, 267-268.

<sup>5</sup> Lapidge 1999, 373.

<sup>6</sup> Meyer 1905, 230-234; Norberg 1958, 101-104. Both Meyer and Norberg have questioned whether these verses have any intention of passing for metrical poetry; rather, they simply seem to imitate the word accents of classical verse without taking syllable quantity into account, being in essence “rhythmic” hexameters.

Although, in time, the interval between the composition of Venantius's hexameter hagiography of St. Martin and Aldhelm's main poetic work, *Carmen de virginitate*, is not huge - the former was written around 600 and the latter at the end of the seventh century - their cultural background was fundamentally different: Venantius's native language was still Latin and his schooling classical.<sup>7</sup> Although the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus can be seen as medieval "in spirit" and his verse, at times, reflects the collapse of classical syllable quantity, he is still a representative of an unbroken classical tradition. Aldhelm, on the other hand, was an Anglo-Saxon, his native language Old English and his training and education monastic. The quantitative prosody of classical Latin was, for him, not only alien but also difficult to grasp: it no longer played a role in the spoken Latin of his day, and there was no equivalent feature in his native language. This meant that Aldhelm had to resort to a number of techniques and solutions that were radically different from those of his late Roman predecessors. These methods were passed on to his followers and can be said to have influenced Latin hexameter poetry for centuries to come.

Aldhelm presumably became acquainted with the rudiments of quantitative versification at the monastic school of Canterbury, where he had the opportunity of studying under two pre-eminent southern scholars, Theodore of Tarsus and the North African Hadrian. It is probable that Aldhelm's verse technique is based on the teachings of these two men.<sup>8</sup> Aldhelm's approach to versification is well illustrated by his didactic/poetic *Epistola ad Acircium*, an epistle to the learned king Aldfrith of Northumbria. The work, known also by its full name *De metris et enigmatibus ac pedum regulis*, consists of four parts: a rambling preface on the symbolic value of the number seven is followed by two treatises on different aspects of verse, known respectively as *De metris* and *De pedum regulis*. Sandwiched between them is a collection of hexameter "riddles", mainly modelled after the *Origins* of Isidore, the ostensible purpose of which is to illustrate the metrical rules discussed in the rest of the book. *De metris*, which mainly relies on Audax's *Excerpta*,<sup>9</sup> discusses the structure of the hexameter in detail, outlining the use of dactylic and spondaic feet, the principal types of caesurae and the use of elision, which was apparently an issue of considerable difficulty for Anglo-Saxon poets. Aldhelm follows the example of the Late Latin grammarians in citing

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<sup>7</sup> Manitius 1911, 170.

<sup>8</sup> According to Bede, the subjects taught by Theodore and Hadrian included astronomy, computus and metrics: "ita ut etiam metricae artis, astronomiae et arithmeticae ecclesiasticae disciplinam inter sacrorum apicum volumina suis auditoribus contraderent." ("So that they passed to their pupils, among the study of sacred books, also the disciplines of metre, astronomy and ecclesiastical arithmetic.") - Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 4.2.

<sup>9</sup> Although Aldhelm is supposed to have been acquainted with Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*, the work does not reflect Priscian's theories in any perceptible way. - Ruff 2005, 150.



several classical and late antique poets to illustrate the metrical rules he discusses, but he also, on occasion, uses verses of his own, especially when he wants to demonstrate the possible ways of combining dactyls and spondees. Throughout his work Aldhelm displays a tendency to view metre as an exercise in arithmetic: for him, poetry consists simply in finding a way of combining units with the right syllable lengths to produce larger prosodic entities. This propensity of Aldhelm's is reflected both in his discussion of metrical rules and in his own verse technique, as demonstrated by his poetic works. Aldhelm's adoption of Audax's nomenclature of different types, or schemata, of hexameter lines, in itself of dubious use to students of poetry, betrays the author's obsession with patterns: he first classifies hexameters by the number of dactyls and spondees in their first five feet, and then further categorises these line-types according to the number of permutations they allow. Hence, for instance, he refers to lines with one dactyl and lines with four dactyls collectively as pentaschemi, as they both allow five permutations (dssss, sdsss, ssdss, sssds, ssssd and dddds, dddsd, ddsdd, dsddd, sdddd, respectively). Aldhelm demonstrates each of these schemata in wearisome detail with hexameter lines on the theme "Christ on the cross saved the world". The lines are virtually identical both in content and wording, and illustrate Aldhelm's technique of substitution and permutation admirably. As examples of schemata with four dactyls Aldhelm presents the following lines:

Iam veneranda Dei soboles cruce mundum salvat;	(dddds)
iam veneranda patris soboles salvat cruce mundum;	(dddsd)
en veneranda Dei proles cruce saecla coruscat;	(ddsdd)
iam pietas immensa Dei cruce cuncta beavit;	(dsddd)
mundum iam veneranda Dei soboles cruce salvat. <sup>10</sup>	(sdddd)

As we can see, most of the words in the lines allow liberal permutation. Furthermore, Aldhelm has at his disposal a number of synonyms or near-synonyms, which he uses to create some additional variation. Such words can be prosodically similar (like the iambic Dei and patris) or dissimilar (like the spondaic proles and the dactylic soboles); in the former case, they can be employed to avoid tautology,<sup>11</sup> in the latter, they can be used as substitutes for each other in metrically different positions. In addition, Aldhelm often resorts to short and semantically predictable words (like cruce) to fill in gaps in his lines. The fourth part of

<sup>10</sup> Ehwald 1919, 88.

<sup>11</sup> Admittedly, Aldhelm's use of synonyms is often gratuitous and pleonastic; for instance, both *escarum saginis* and *alimenta ciborum* for 'food' occur in successive lines (10 and 11) of his riddle on the date palm (*Enigmata XCI*, Ehwald 1919, 139).

Aldhelm's *Epistola, De pedum regulis*, is little more than a list of prosodically different words (pyrrhic, iambic, trochaic, spondaic, dactylic, anapaestic etc.), which he apparently considers useful mainly as providing a wide selection of such metrical gap-fillers. Aldhelm's view of the hexameter line is straightforward: a poet must first learn the metrical "framework" of the hexameter line and then absorb a sufficient number of prosodically familiar words and phrases to fill it.<sup>12</sup> This approach is practically the diametrical opposite of the method employed by Donatus and other earlier grammarians, who first discuss the smallest elements of language (letters, then syllables and words) and only then combine them into longer units such as metrical feet.<sup>13</sup> It is well worth asking whether a fledgling poet could actually have learnt to compose verse with the aid of Aldhelm's treatise; in reality, he would have had to rely more on the example of previous poets and his own ear.<sup>14</sup> It is also worthy of note that the mathematically minded Aldhelm presents metrics as something entirely divorced from style and meaning:<sup>15</sup> for him verse composition, both in theory and practice, appears to be equivalent to the completion of a crossword puzzle.

Aldhelm's own poetic technique shows notable parallels with this mechanistic approach to the structure of the hexameter. His hexameter verse is, to quote Andy Orchard, "almost wholly cobbled together from a combination of repeated phrases, both borrowed and newly coined."<sup>16</sup> Most of his lines are formed from three distinct building blocks: the first two and a half feet, followed by a strong penthemimeral caesura, form one. This, in turn, is usually followed by a molossus of three long syllables and a final cadence formed by a dactyl and a spondee (or trochee).<sup>17</sup> Aldhelm achieves variety mainly by altering his "repeated phrases": for instance, in his *Carmen de virginitate*, the final cadences *regna polorum*, *claustra polorum*, *sceptra polorum* and *astra polorum* all signify "heavenly realms".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lapidge 1976, 213.

<sup>13</sup> One possible reason for Aldhelm's ostensibly impractical approach may be that *De metris* was not really intended to be a propaedeutic work and that, according to Aldhelm's assumption, the reader was already acquainted with Donatus. See Ruff 2005, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Wright 1985, 188.

<sup>15</sup> Ruff 2005, 153.

<sup>16</sup> Orchard 1994, 111.

<sup>17</sup> The following passage from his *Carmen de virginitate* (lines 44-48, Ehwald 1919, 354-355) may serve as an example:

Omnia regnando / dispensat / saecula simplex  
 en promissa novo / scribantur / carmina versu  
 garrula virgineas / depromat / pagina laudes,  
 colaque cum pedibus / pergant et / commata ternis.

[God guides in rule all generations as one. Behold, let these promised songs be composed in new verse! Let the fluent page issue praise of virgins, and let the clauses and caesuras of the verse proceed with three types of foot.]

- Trans. Rosier 1985, 104.

<sup>18</sup> Lapidge 1975, 226.

Otherwise, his hexameter poetry is exceedingly monotonous and foursquare: the ends of clauses almost invariably coincide with line-endings, and variation in the placement of dactyls and spondees, for all of Aldhelm's talk about schemata, is minimal. This type of verse structure had its undoubted advantages: a line that consisted of three prosodically predictable and transferable blocks was fairly easy to grasp even for inexperienced poets and could be used in a cut-and-paste manner to produce new verse. This is probably one of the chief reasons for Aldhelm's otherwise perhaps surprising persistence as a model for Anglo-Saxon hexameter poets.

Bede's approach to the problems of the dactylic hexameter differed from Aldhelm's both in theory and practice, and the differences between these two poet-grammarians reflect their respective artistic temperaments. The most apparent difference between Aldhelm and Bede is the latter's emphasis on variety that is only equalled by the former's complete disregard for it. Bede also differs from Aldhelm in seeing the interconnectedness of metre, syntax and rhetoric (which, of course, was incorporated into grammar): whereas Aldhelm appended hexameter riddles and a numerological treatise to his *De metris* and *De pedum regulis*, Bede's *De arte metrica* is accompanied by *De schematibus et tropis*, a handbook on figures of speech, and, throughout his treatise, it is evident that Bede keeps a keen eye not only on metrical structures but also on syntax and literary expression. It has been suggested that Bede's treatise as well as his own hexameter technique are, at least partly, a reaction against Aldhelm, and even that when Bede warns against excessive repetition, Aldhelm is his main target.<sup>19</sup>

Bede's own poetry testifies to his ability to look beyond the inner metric of the hexameter line. Unlike Aldhelm, whose lines are invariably end-stopped, Bede frequently practices enjambment; his lines are less heavily spondaic than Aldhelm's, and there is considerably less repetition of "favourite" schemata. Bede is also noticeably more sophisticated in his use of elision, the stumbling-block of many Anglo-Saxon poets. Bede's verse hagiography of St. Cuthbert is valuable evidence for Bede's views on metre, as it frequently shows striking parallels with his own teaching in *De arte metrica*: Bede made full use of the various metrical devices at his disposal, rather than merely discussing them as problems that needed to be solved.

Both of these quite different approaches to hexameter verse found their followers, and it has been argued that Anglo-Saxon learning brought forth two different

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<sup>19</sup> Wright 2005, 166.

schools of hexameter verse. The more rigid “Aldhelmian” hexameter was emulated by poets of what Andy Orchard has termed the Southumbrian school of hexameter poets, whereas Bede’s lighter and more varied hexameter style won the following of the Northumbrian school.<sup>20</sup> Possibly the most prominent representative of the latter was Alcuin, through whom the influence of Bede’s views and the poetic diction that reflected them spread to the Carolingian mainland.

Anglo-Latin hexameter poetry exhibits several common prosodic and lexical features that, at least in some cases, betray its formulaic nature. When it comes to prosody, it must be remembered that Anglo-Latin poets relied on the example, and often meticulous study, of both the classics and the Christian poets of late antiquity. In this context, their more striking prosodic liberties cannot really be seen to constitute “metrical flaws”. Some of the typically late-antique prosodic features adopted by Anglo-Latin poets are the following:

1) The shortening of long final vowels also in words not subject to the brevis brevians law, a feature attested in much of post-classical Latin poetry (although, in Silver-Age poets, never in dative or ablative forms),<sup>21</sup> was commonly applied to the final o of first-person verb forms, the nominative forms of third-declension nouns and even the dative and ablative of second-declension words; similar abbreviation also took place in the final e of adverbs, the final vowels of imperative forms and even the final a of first-declension ablatives.<sup>22</sup>

2) The consonantal use of h: word- initial h can either create a position after a closed syllable or cause a hiatus (as in *Sedul. carm. pasch. 3, 296*, “*vīr humilis maesto deiectus lumine terram*”, also cited by Bede).<sup>23</sup>

3) The so-called s impurum, or a word-initial s group (sc, sp or st) that creates a position (as in *Ven. Fort. Mart. 3, 1*. “*hactenus in bibulis fixā stetit anchora terris*”). An opposite case of word-internal s groups that do not create a position is a possibly hypercorrect feature typical of Aldhelm (e.g. *gęstat* and *ręstat*).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Orchard 1994, 239-283.

<sup>21</sup> Raven 1965, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Campbell 1953 passim; Norberg 1958, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Norberg 1958, 6-7: this practice is apparently based on Vergil’s line “*terga fatigamūs hasta*” (*Aen. 9, 610*), probably a case of *productio ob caesuram*, which had become a standard textbook example.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*; Ehwald 1919, 755; Orchard 1994, 75-76.

4) A number of other more or less established “wrong” quantities typical of late antique poets: *iūge*, *trīduum*, *ecclēsia*, *pāter*, *stātim*, *quōque*, *āc*, *forīs*. In more arcane vocabulary and Greek words, in particular, false quantities are extremely common.<sup>25</sup>

It is typical that even the more learned poets sometimes deviated from the quantities prescribed by the grammarians. Clearly the reason is that, as writers of Christian poetry, they were overly dependent on the example of their Late Latin predecessors. In some cases, however, it appears to have been a matter of conscious choice: Bede’s own poetry shows some metrical liberties of peculiarly Late Latin nature that do not correspond with his own description in his *De arte metrica*;<sup>26</sup> at least in some cases they can probably be attributed to his admiration of Sedulius.

The lexical and stylistic features typical of Anglo-Latin verse are sometimes caused by gratuitous ostentation, especially when it comes to the obscure vocabulary favoured by the so-called “hermeneutic school” of Anglo-Latin writing whose founding father was Aldhelm itself.<sup>27</sup> The hermeneutic school was fond of archaisms, neologisms and foreign words mainly extracted from glosses. The roots of this “school” can be seen in the Late Latin prose of such authors as Apuleius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Martianus Capella, Ennodius and Sidonius Apollinaris, and the tradition was carried on by such insular figures as Gildas, Columban, Virgilius Maro, the composers of *Hisperica famina* and Aldhelm. In verse, the hermeneutic aesthetic often manifested itself in the form of some rather contrived-sounding metrical devices, which, on the other hand, also served as quick fixes to the prosodic problems frequently encountered by Anglo-Latin authors. Some typical lexical features of Anglo-Latin verse (abundant in, but by no means confined to, the works of the hermeneutic school) are the following, as presented by Michael Lapidge:

1) The use of distributive numerals and numeral adverbs and the tendency to express numbers in the form of multiplication. This was, of course, necessitated by the prosodic impracticability of many cardinal numbers (e.g. *undecim*, *duodecim*), but sometimes became a mannerism.

2) The use of *ast* for *at*.

3) The frequent use of compounds with *-dicus*, *-loquus* and *-loquax*.

4) The use of neuters with *-amen* in the ablative singular (*-amine*) or in the plural (*-amina*), especially to fill in the fifth foot of the hexameter line.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell 1953, 14: “Greek words not regularly found in earlier verse are scanned wrong as often as not, and so are rare Latin words.”

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Lapidge 1972, 86; Lapidge 1975, 67-90.

5) The use of archaic passive infinitives with *-ier* to fill in the fifth foot before a word with an initial vowel.

6) The ablative of the gerund (with a short *o*) used as a substitute for the present participle, especially to fill in the beginning of the fifth foot (as in *meditandō rediscens*).

7) The free use of pentasyllabic words to fill in the fifth and sixth feet of the hexameter line.<sup>28</sup>

Some of these features, such as passive infinitives with *-ier* and pentasyllabic words in line-endings,<sup>29</sup> are typical of archaic Latin verse, some are post-classical, but most of them were necessitated by the Anglo-Saxon authors' need for dactyls in the appropriate parts of the line, and nowhere more so than in the fifth foot, which in Anglo-Latin poetry is invariably a dactyl, spondaic fifth feet having been effectively proscribed both by Aldhelm and Bede. This is a feature which we shall discuss later in detail.

To recapitulate: the Anglo-Latin hexameter poets were compelled to make do with what had been handed down to them from previous generations of poets. They resorted to techniques from various ages of Roman letters, archaic, classical and post-classical alike, and often they did so indiscriminately: their choices were more often than not dictated by the necessity of keeping the basic fabric of the hexameter line together, and actual stylistic issues did not always enter the picture. Bede, both as a poet and as a grammarian, stood apart from many of his contemporaries in exhibiting an unusually keen and analytical sense of style. This is evident in his verse as well as his guidelines for other poets in *De arte metrica*, where he exhibits not only an interest in stylistic questions in general, but also an ability to distinguish between different poetic styles and their metrical manifestations. Bede's typology of "old", or pagan, and "new", or Christian, hexameter styles is a case in point, and, above all, remarkable in the way it pervades his whole presentation of the dactylic hexameter.

## **2.2. Classical and post-classical prosody: common syllables**

Bede's discussion of prosody follows the model of previous grammarians (e.g. Donatus) in starting out from the simplest elements of language: firstly, the letter, and secondly, the syllable. In this respect, Bede's approach must be considered at the same time more practical than Aldhelm's, as well as more successful in its incorporation of prosody into the metrical

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<sup>28</sup> Lapidge 1999, 372.

<sup>29</sup> Raven 1965, 32; Wilkinson 1963, 90-91.

ars. The second chapter of Bede's treatise, titled *De syllaba*, presents the elementary rules of syllable quantity and the differences between long and short syllables. The chapter is markedly traditional, if not hidebound, in its adherence to the terminology of classical grammarians, exemplified by its application of the terms "acute" and "circumflex" to the Latin word-accent. Of greater interest for a study of Bede's views on prosody is the third chapter, *De communibus syllabis*, which deals with common syllables, or cases where a syllable may be interpreted as either short or long. From a stylistic point of view, the questions pertaining to common syllables are important above all because, as Bede himself attests,<sup>30</sup> they often belong to the realm of "poetic licence", where the strict rules of prosody can be bent to suit the requirements of an individual poetic style, but also because classical and post-classical poets dealt with these questions differently. In all their ambiguity, common syllables must have been especially difficult for Anglo-Saxon students of Latin prosody, and Bede correspondingly discusses this problematic subject in detail, drawing on nearly all of his major sources: Diomedes, Donatus, Mallius Theodorus, Maximus Victorinus, Marius Victorinus, Pompeius, Sergius and Servius.

Bede's typology of common syllables is mainly taken from Sergius<sup>31</sup> and Maximus Victorinus<sup>32</sup>, who recognise nine different types of common syllable. Bede's presentation of these nine types cannot be said to be particularly systematic, as he explains the cases in roughly the same order as his predecessors without any attempt at further classification. The types of common syllable, as listed by Bede, are the following:

- 1) Syllables where a short vowel is followed by a combination called *muta cum liquida*, i.e. a plosive (or, in some cases, an *f*) and a liquid.
- 2) Final syllables followed by a word-initial *h*.
- 3) Final syllables ending in a short vowel that are followed by an "s group", i.e. the combination of initial *s* and another consonant; Bede also discusses initial *ps* in this context.
- 4) Final short syllables that are lengthened before a caesura (*productio ob caesuram*).
- 5) Cases of hiatus where an unelided final diphthong can be shortened before the initial vowel of the following word.

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<sup>30</sup> DAM 3, 1-3: "Communes autem syllabae modis fiunt novem, quibus aut naturaliter longae poetica licentia in breves aut naturaliter breves transferuntur in longas." ("There are nine ways in which common syllables are formed. In these ways syllables which are naturally long may be changed by poetic licence into short syllables or syllables which are naturally short may be changed into long syllables.") - Trans. Kendall 1991, 47.

<sup>31</sup> gramm. IV, 478, 29 – 480, 3.

<sup>32</sup> gramm. IV, 230, 7-24.

6) Cases of hiatus where an unelided long vowel can be shortened before the initial vowel of the following word.

7) The pronouns *hic* and *hoc*, which can be interpreted as long, even before an initial vowel.

8) Short vowels followed by *z*.

9) The final syllables of lines.

Almost as an afterthought, at the end of his presentation Bede also discusses *x* and word-initial *gn*. As we can see, the order in which Bede presents the different types of common syllable is remarkably haphazard. In a more analytical presentation, the different types of consonant groups (*mutae cum liquidis* and *s* groups) should more properly be discussed in the same context. It is also notable that, although the “double consonants” *z* and *x* could be classified as *s* groups (as, indeed, Bede has done with *ps*), Bede discusses them separately. The consonantal use of *h*, a Late Latin oddity, is more properly a special case of *productio ob caesuram*, but Bede has chosen to discuss these types of common syllables separately, even going to the length of warning his reader not to confuse them. To facilitate my presentation of Bede’s view’s on prosody, I have chosen to discuss the various consonant groups together, and to analyse Bede’s views on consonantal use *h* in conjunction with *productio ob caesuram*, as these types are historically connected, although Bede has either failed or been unwilling to see their connection.

### 2.2.1. Plosives with liquids

Bede starts his presentation of common syllables with the most common case, where a short-vowelled syllable remains short by position before a consonant group known as *muta cum liquida*, or “mute with liquid”. Consonant groups that behave in this way are *bl*, *br*, *cl*, *chl*, *cr*, *chr*, *dr*, *fl*, *fr*, *gl*, *gr*, *pl*, *phl*, *pr*, *phr*, *tr*, and *thr*, or, in other words, all combinations of either a plosive or an *f* followed by a liquid (*l* or *r*). In early comedy, such syllables are almost always interpreted as short,<sup>33</sup> as, indeed, they appear to have been in the prosody of spoken classical Latin. In dactylic verse, however, they were variable already in the works of Ennius,<sup>34</sup> and in late antiquity they exhibit a growing tendency to be treated as long; to some degree, this

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<sup>33</sup> Raven 1965, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Allen 1965, 90.



phenomenon may reflect the evolution of spoken Latin.<sup>35</sup> Bede's presentation of this type of common syllable is somewhat simplified, as he does not specify the type of consonant that can be followed by a liquid, as Donatus,<sup>36</sup> or Diomedes,<sup>37</sup> for instance, have done:

Brevis quippe transfertur in longam, cum correpta vocalis in eodem verbo a duabus explicitur consonantibus, quarum posterior est liquida. Est enim natura brevis in hoc, "mens tenebris obscura suis" (Sedul. carm. pasch. 2, 209). Est positione longa in hoc, "mortisque tenebras" (Iuenc. 1, 128). In quo Sergius modo iniusto utitur exemplo, "neve flagella" (Verg. georg. 2, 299). 'Flagellum' enim in capite verbi habet liquidam litteram consonanti subiectam, quae positio numquam brevem natura syllabam verbi praecedentis potest facere longam.<sup>38</sup>

[A short syllable may be lengthened when a short vowel is followed in the same word by two consonants, the second of which is a liquid. It is short by nature in this example: "mens tenēbris obscura suis" ("the mind is clouded by darkness"). But it is long by position in this one: "mortisque tenēbras" ("and the shadows of death"). Sergius illustrates this type with the inappropriate example, "nevě flagella" ("nor the topmost shoots of the vine"). For in flagellum, the liquid is next to a consonant at the beginning of the word, which is a combination that can never make the final syllable of a preceding word long when it is short by nature.]<sup>39</sup>

Even in this very brief presentation both Bede's originality and independence come to light, possibly together with his pro-Christian bias. He cites the Christian poets Sedulius and Juvenius as his examples but renounces the Vergilian example ("neve flagella") quoted by Sergius as irrelevant. Bede's critical assessment of Sergius's Vergilian citation shows remarkable perspicacity: word-initial "mutes with liquids" hardly ever lengthen the final syllable of the previous word in Latin poetry. The few exceptions to this rule in the classics are probably due to the emulation of Greek models,<sup>40</sup> and it is interesting to note that this is one of the examples of pre-Christian prosodic "negligence" that came under Bede's attack in his chapter on the prosodic differences between pagan and Christian poets.<sup>41</sup>

Especially in Greek metre, the nasals m and n are usually classified together with the liquids proper, because after plosives they have similar prosodic features: the

<sup>35</sup> e.g. classical Latin *íntegrum* but Italian *intéro* (from late Latin *intégum*). – Norberg 1958, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Holtz 1981, 606, 7-9.

<sup>37</sup> gramm. I, 428, 30 – 429, 8.

<sup>38</sup> DAM 3, 3-12.

<sup>39</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 47, except where Kendall's 1991 edition gives the reading "neve flagello" for Verg. georg. 2, 299.

<sup>40</sup> Raven 1965, 25; e.g. "lappaequē tribolique" (Verg. georg. 1, 153); "per impotentiā freta" (Catull. 4, 18).

<sup>41</sup> DAM 16; Orchard 1994, 75-76. Curiously, Aldhelm, with characteristic individuality, made extensive use of this liberty in his poetry. This feature may have been caused by his imitation of Venantius Fortunatus. Aldhelm's use of plosives and liquids is idiosyncratic also in other ways: he frequently shortens a notionally long final vowel before an initial plosive and liquid. This is particularly striking in ablative forms, as in Carmen de Virginitate 526: "Quem Deus aethrali ditavit gratiā gratis", where *gratia* is an ablative that should have a long final *a*. This feature is apparently without parallel in any other poets. – Orchard 1994, 77-78.

combination of plosive and nasal either may or may not create a position after a short vowel. In Greek verse, the rules, as in the case of proper liquids, are considerably more flexible than in Latin, but usually a word-initial combination of plosive and nasal (as in *tnesis*, *pneuma* etc.) does not create a position after a short vowel.<sup>42</sup> In Latin verse, the rules governing Greek loans with plosives with nasals are essentially the same as those governing plosives with liquids. The only “native” consonant-nasal compound of any relevance in this context is *gn*, which creates a position word-internally but never word-initially; in reality, the *g* may have, already in classical Latin, been pronounced as a velar nasal (as in English *hangnail*), except at the beginning of a word, where it was possibly silent.<sup>43</sup>

Bede discusses both word-internal and word-initial *gn* at the end of his chapter on common syllables. He mentions the compound in conjunction with the letter *x*, their common feature being the fact that they only create a position word-internally but not word-initially. Bede accepts the classification of *n* as a liquid,<sup>44</sup> because initial *gn* is analogous to initial plosive and liquid, but emphasises that, unlike plosives with “other” liquids, it does not make a true common syllable. Bede implies that this observation is his own, and demonstrates this with an appropriately uplifting quotation from Prosper:

N quoque littera pari ratione, ni fallor, cum in medio verbo consonanti alteri fuerit subiecta, praecedentem syllabam sive natura seu positione semper longam habet, ut ‘regna’, ‘calumnia’. Cum vero in primordio verbi fuerit alii subiecta consonanti, ut ‘Gneus’, ‘gnarus’, profecto ultimam syllabam verbi prioris, si in brevem desierit vocalem, brevem hanc, ut fuerat, remanere permittit, neque ullam producendi habet potestatem, Prospero teste, qui ait:

Nec tamen hos toto depellit foedere gnarus,  
naturam errantum dividere a vitiis (Prosp. epigr. 67, 3-4).<sup>45</sup>

[The letter *n* also, if I am not mistaken, in like fashion always makes a preceding syllable long either by nature or by position when it is placed after another consonant in the middle of a word, as *regna*, *calumnia*. But when it is placed after another consonant at the beginning of a word, as *Gneus*, *gnarus*, there is no question but that it permits the final syllable of the previous word, if the latter ends in a short vowel, to

<sup>42</sup> Raven 1968<sup>2</sup>, 23.

<sup>43</sup> Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 23-25; the evidence given by the grammarians is inconclusive: for the proper name *Gnaeus* (abbreviated *Cn.*), Terentianus Maurus suggests the pronunciation *Gnaeus* with an ordinary *g* (Ter. Maur. 894); Varro, according to Julius Paris’s *De praenominibus epitome* (10, 5), on the other hand, has noted the spelling *Naeus*: “Quod unum praenomen varia scriptura notatur: alii enim *Naeum*, alii *Gnaeum* alii *Cnaeum* scribunt.” (“One first name is written with a variety of spellings: some, namely, write *Naeus*, others *Gnaeus* and yet others *Cnaeus*.”) It is also worthy of note that the well-documented Greek transcription is for *Gnaeus* is *Ναίος*. – See also Zirin 1970, 27-29.

<sup>44</sup> In accordance with traditional terminology, Bede classifies nasals as liquids already in his chapter on the letter (*De littera*), see DAM 1, 56-60.

<sup>45</sup> DAM 3, 127-136.

remain short as it was before. Nor does it have any power of making length, as Prosper can witness, who says:

Nec tamen hos toto depellit foederē gnarus,  
naturam errantum dividere a vitiis

(However, he does not drive away these from the whole law, being skillful in separating the nature of the sinners from their vices.)]<sup>46</sup>

### 2.2.2. S groups

The third type of common syllable exposed by Bede involves what can be termed “s groups”, or, in traditional nomenclature, *s impura*, namely, initial consonant groups beginning with *s*, primarily the combinations of *s* and plosive (*sp*, *st* and *sc*). The behaviour of *s* groups is in some ways analogous to that of mutes with liquids, as they on occasion result in similar variability of quantity after short vowels, and in Late Latin poetry and grammar this tendency seems to have been even more pronounced.

In Latin poetry, unlike Greek verse, initial *s* groups normally do not lengthen the previous syllable, should it end in a short vowel. In pre-classical and classical poetry, deviations from this are occasionally found (e.g. Catull. 64, 186 “*nullā spes*”), especially in what D. S. Raven terms “studied imitation of Greek lines” (e.g. Verg. Aen. 8, 425 “*Brontesquē Steropesque*”).<sup>47</sup> After the Augustan period, this device seemed to lose popularity, and most poets avoid short final vowels in such positions altogether. There are, however, notable exceptions among the Late Latin poets, and Dag Norberg notes that certain authors, above all Sedulius, uniformly lengthen short-vowelled final syllables in these positions.<sup>48</sup> Later Christian authors who shared Sedulius’s taste for this licence include Venantius Fortunatus, Aldhelm and Alcuin.<sup>49</sup> Bede’s description of this metrical liberty is terse and based entirely on Christian examples (Venantius Fortunatus and Sedulius). Bede passes no judgement on this prosodic liberty, but implies that it is a normal part of metrical practice, once again showing his indebtedness to the example of Sedulius:

Tertius modus est communis syllabae, cum verbum aliquod in vocalem desinens correptam excipitur a duabus consonantibus, quarum prior sit *s*. Est enim natura brevis in hoc Fortunati:

Ordinibus variis alba smaragdus inest (Ven. Fort. carm. 8, 3, 264).

<sup>46</sup>Trans. Kendall 1991, 59-61.

<sup>47</sup>Raven 1965, 24-25.

<sup>48</sup>Norberg 1958, 77.

<sup>49</sup>Orchard 1994, 77.

Est positione longa in hoc Sedulii:

Adveniat regnum iam iamque scilicet illud (Sedul. carm. pasch. 2, 249).<sup>50</sup>

[The third kind of common syllable occurs when a word ending in a short vowel is followed by a word beginning with two consonants, the first of which is s. The final syllable of *alba* is short by nature in this example from Fortunatus:

Ordinibus variis albā smaragdus inest

(A bright emerald with varying patterns is on the diadem).

The final syllable of *iamque* is long by position in this example from Sedulius:

Adveniat regnum iam iamquē scilicet illud

(May that kingdom, to be sure, come even now).]<sup>51</sup>

Bede's exposition of s groups shows curious parallels with a prosodic feature peculiar to the verse of his predecessor Aldhelm. Aldhelm shows an idiosyncratic tendency to treat word-internal s groups like individual consonants: in Aldhelm's opinion, the rules of common syllables apparently work both ways, and, consequently, we find in Aldhelm numerous cases where, contrary to normal metrical practice, a word-internal s group does not create a position after a short vowel (e.g. *rě-stat*, *gě-stat*, *crĩ-stalli*):<sup>52</sup> Bede appears to reflect this specious logic in his uniquely faulty analysis of a Vergilian line:

Hanc Virgilius et in medio verbo alteri consonanti praepositam, ubi commodum duxit, liquentium more transiluit, ut est:

Hortatur Mnestheus, nunc nunc insurgite remis (Verg. Aen. 5, 189);

nisi forte versum ita scandendum putamus ut sit horta spondees, turmne spondees, stheusnunc spondeus, coniunctis scilicet vocalibus, quod diptongon vocant.<sup>53</sup>

[Even in the middle of the word, when it suited his convenience, Vergil passed over an s standing before another consonant, as though it were a liquid, as is the case in:

Hortatur Mnestheus, nunc nunc insurgite remis

(Mnestheus exhorts them, "Now, now, pull on the oars");

unless indeed we were to argue that this verse should be scanned taking *horta* as a spondee, *turmne* as a spondee, and *stheusnunc* as a spondee: that is, with the vowels e and u joined in the combination which is called a diphthong.]<sup>54</sup>

Bede, in other words, supposes that *Mnestheus* is to be scanned short-short-long (*Mně-sthě-us*), which would prosodically not be dissimilar to such Aldhelmian quantities as *tě-stan-tur* and *gě-stat*. Only as a second alternative does Bede present the true scansion of the word (*Mnēs-theus*, with two long syllables). Bede's muddled analysis of the line reflects the difficulties inherent in the syllable quantities of Greek words and names and his dependence

<sup>50</sup> DAM 3, 28-34.

<sup>51</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 49.

<sup>52</sup> Norberg 1958, 6-7; Ehwald 1919, 755; Orchard 1994, 75-76.

<sup>53</sup> DAM 3, 42-48.

<sup>54</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 51.

on Vergil and other auctoritates in unscrambling them. Simultaneously, it demonstrates the fundamental logic behind Bede's analysis of common syllables: in his (as, apparently, in Aldhelm's) eyes, s groups are prosodically analogous to the combination of plosive and liquid. Bede's and Aldhelm's idea that an s group may not necessarily create a position within a word is probably a back-formation from the rules governing the word-internal use of plosives and liquids.

In conjunction with the more usual types of s group Bede also touches on word-initial ps, which he apparently classifies as a kind of inverted s group. Initial ps and x only appear in Greek loans: in Christian Latin verse, the former had attained unprecedented popularity, mainly owing to such quintessentially Christian words as psallo and psalmus. As Bede's intention was to write a guidebook for Christian poets, he could not overlook the prosody of these words (where the initial ps does not create a position). The examples are from Sedulius and Venantius Fortunatus; Bede also uses the opportunity gently to reprimand Pompeius, who had neglected this issue:<sup>55</sup>

Cum vero s in capite verbi alii fuerit consonanti subiecta, nequaquam potest ultimam verbi prioris syllabam producere, quae in brevem desierat vocalem, ut Sedulius:

Stare choro et placidis caelestia psallere verbis (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 25);  
et Fortunatus:

Vocibus alternis divina poemata psallunt (Ven. Fort. carm. 8, 3, 7).

Falsoque definivit Pompeius s non posse liquescere, nisi ipsa antecedit, ut "ponite spes sibi quisque" (Verg. Aen. 11, 309).<sup>56</sup>

[But an s placed after another consonant at the beginning of a word can never lengthen the final syllable of a preceding word which ends in a short vowel. For example, from Sedulius:

Stare choro et placidis caelestia psallere verbis

(To stand in a choir and chant the divine psalms in agreeable words);

and, from Fortunatus:

Vocibus alternis divina poemata psallunt

(They chant the divine hymns with reciprocal voices).

Pompeius therefore incorrectly claims that s cannot blend with another consonant unless it comes first, as in "ponite spes sibi quisque" ("put aside that hope, each man has his own hope").<sup>57</sup>

Bede does not discuss initial x or z in this context, sharing as he does his predecessors' literal-minded approach to orthography and prosody: Bede deals with letters rather than sounds, and the letters x and z, are, in his nomenclature, not analogous to other s compounds that are

<sup>55</sup> gramm. V, 109, 9-10

<sup>56</sup> DAM 1, 35-42.

<sup>57</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 51.

actually spelt with an s (although, adhering to traditional terminology, he calls x and z by the terms *duplex littera*, “double letter”, and *consonans duplex*, “double consonant”). He does, however, cover both letters at the end of his chapter on common syllables (DAM 3, 109-114; 119-126), immediately before word-initial gn, which he considers analogous to x. In this he follows the example of Sergius, who also discusses z at the end of his presentation of common syllables (gramm. IV, 479, 25).

The case of the letter z is problematic, as it is a Greek loan in the Latin alphabet, and its prosodic nature in verse was the result of not only its actual sound value but also its historical background. Although the original sound value of Greek ζ was originally either [dz] or [zd], by the time late republican Romans adopted it, it had presumably evolved into a voiced s sound [z], which was geminated word-internally [zz].<sup>58</sup> Word-initial z would, therefore, not need to make a position after a final short vowel, but probably from adherence to its earlier sound-value, Roman poets generally avoided placing an initial z after a short vowel altogether (except such cases as *Zacynthos* in Verg. *Aen.* 3, 270).<sup>59</sup> Although the late antique grammarians, as well as Bede, persistently referred to z as a “double letter” or a “double consonant”, several Christian poets (including Juvenius and Fortunatus) frequently treated it as a single consonant even word-internally. Not surprisingly, Bede condones this post-classical practice:

Octavus modus est, cum correptam vocalem in eadem parte orationis sequitur z  
consonans Graeca duplex. Est enim longa in hoc Iuveni:

Difficile est terris adfixos divite gaza (Iuvenic. 3, 522).

Est brevis in hoc eiusdem.

Et gaza distabat, rerum possessio fulgens (Iuvenic, 3, 499).<sup>60</sup>

[The eighth kind of common syllable occurs when the Greek double consonant z follows a short vowel in the same word. For example, the first syllable of gaza is long in this verse of Juvenius:

Difficile est terris adfixos divite gāza

(It is difficult for those attached to the earth to be separated from their rich treasure).

It is short in this verse of the same poet:

Et gāza distabat, rerum possessio fulgens

(And treasure, the glittering possession of things, was at a distance)].<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 45-46.

<sup>59</sup> In early Greek hexameter verse (e.g. Homer), ζ is still clearly a double consonant and makes a position, even word-initially. Exceptions to this rule are words with an initial short syllable followed by a long one (Ζάκυνθος, Ζέλειω), which in hexameter verse would be prosodically impossible after a long syllable. Vergil's *nemorosa Zacynthos* (*Aen.* 3, 270), an often-quoted example, reflects this practice. *Zacynthos* with a preceding short syllable occurs also in Ovid (*her.* 1, 87). Post-classical examples of initial z not creating a position are prosodically more varied; e.g. *zelotypus* in Juvenal (5, 45 and 6, 278) and *zonae* in Manilius (3, 319).

<sup>60</sup> DAM 3, 108-114.

Word-initial *z*, however, must in Bede's opinion never make a position, and he is very explicit on this point on several occasions elsewhere in his treatise. In his second chapter, where he presents his classification of short, long and common syllables, he states unequivocally:

Cum vero parte aliqua orationis in brevem vocalem terminata sequens sermo a littera *z* incipit, nullam producendi habet potestatem, unde est nemorosa Zacinctos (Verg. Aen. 3, 270).<sup>62</sup>

[...but when a word ending in a short vowel is followed by a word which begins with the letter *z*, the *z* cannot lengthen the short vowel, which accounts for the phrase nemorosa Zacinctos.]<sup>63</sup>

Although Bede here relies on the example of Vergil, Vergil is the very poet whom he later rebukes for neglecting this rule. In his chapter on the differences of pagan and Christian poets, Bede cites Vergil's "Euriquē Zephyrique" (Verg. Georg. 1, 352) as an example of outdated prosody.<sup>64</sup> On the question of the prosodic value of *z*, Bede, in other words, departs once again from classical practice: whereas in classical prosody, *z* is almost invariably treated as a double consonant (with certain words like Zacynthos a notable exception), Bede, relying on the example of Vergil's Zacynthos and Iuvenus's gaza, views it essentially as a single consonant that can make a position word-internally but never word-initially. This is a further restriction that does not occur in the presentation of Sergius who treats a short vowel before *z* as an ordinary case of common syllable.<sup>65</sup>

Initial *x*, which Bede discusses at the end of his presentation of common syllables, only appears in Greek names (mainly Xerxes) and is of less interest for Christian poetry than *ps* and *z*, and, correspondingly, Bede's discussion of the feature is less original than that of other *s* groups and more indebted to previous grammarians. Notably, the hexameter line Bede uses as his illustration is from Ennius (ann. 13, 4), also cited by Terentianus Maurus<sup>66</sup> (neither of whom he presumably knew at first hand), probably by way of Sergius.<sup>67</sup> Bede concurs with normal prosodic practice in declaring that an initial *x* cannot lengthen a final syllable ending with a short vowel, although word-internally, it is always a

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<sup>61</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 57-59.

<sup>62</sup> DAM 3, 37-39.

<sup>63</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 45.

<sup>64</sup> DAM 16, 28-29.

<sup>65</sup> gramm. 4, 479, 23-24.

<sup>66</sup> Ter. Maur. 1160.

<sup>67</sup> gramm. IV, 479, 29.

double consonant (unlike Sergius, who treats both z and x as cases where the syllable can be common, not discussing their position in the word at all)<sup>68</sup>:

Cum vero in primordio fuerit verbi, non potest producere finem prioris verbi quod in brevem desierat vocalem, ut:

Pontibus instratis conduxit litora Xerxes.<sup>69</sup>

[But when it is at the beginning of the word, it cannot lengthen the final syllable of a previous word which ends in a short syllable, as in:

Pontibus instratis conduxit litora Xerxes

(Xerxes connected the shores with a series of bridges).]<sup>70</sup>

### 2.2.3. Productio ob caesuram and consonantal h

The fourth type of common syllable in Bede's list is *productio ob caesuram*, or *productio in arsi*, a prosodic feature which the author also touches on in his presentation of the consonantal h, which, as Dag Norberg notes, is ultimately its derivative.<sup>71</sup> *Productio ob caesuram* involves the lengthening of a short final syllable in the arsis of the foot, or before a word-break in the middle of a foot. Generally this takes place before the strong central caesura of a hexameter line. In Vergil's verse, there are fifty-four cases of *productio ob caesuram*,<sup>72</sup> the most famous of which is "omnia vincit amor / et nos cedamus amori" (ecl. 10, 69), which became a textbook commonplace.<sup>73</sup> Surprisingly, many post-classical poets eschewed this licence altogether, being in this matter firmer than Vergil and Ovid, even when composing in an age where the prosodies of final syllables were becoming increasingly shaky.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, Bede, as Mallius Theodorus before him, associates this technique strongly with Vergil, although his example is taken from Sedulius:

Est enim modus quartus syllabae communis, cum post pedem quemlibet una syllaba brevis remanserit de verbo, quae vel in vocalem desinens excipitur a consonante

<sup>68</sup> gramm. IV, 479, 25-26: "Sciendum est etiam quod et x communem syllabam facit, sicut et z Graecum."

<sup>69</sup> DAM 3, 123-126.

<sup>70</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 59.

<sup>71</sup> Norberg 1958, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Allen 1973, 117.

<sup>73</sup> The case of *amor* may be a simple archaism, as third-declension nouns in -or (gen. -oris) generally have a long final syllable in the nominative in Plautus and Ennius; similarly, in Vergil, we also encounter *dolōr* (Aen. 12, 422), *domitōr* (Aen. 12, 550), *labōr* (georg. 3, 118), *meliōr* (georg. 4, 92) and *Numitōr* (Aen. 5, 768). Archaic vowel lengths may also have been intended in such verb forms as *erāt* (Aen. 7, 174) and *dabāt* (Aen. 10, 383), but deliberate archaisms by no means account for all cases of lengthened final syllables in Vergil. – see Johnston 1897, 19-24.

<sup>74</sup> Klopsch 1973, 73-74; the situation is different in high medieval poetry, especially rhyming hexameters, where the feature is ubiquitous.



verbi sequentis vel in consonantem desinens excipiatur a littera vocali. Est enim natura brevis in hoc:

Cuius onus leve est, cuius iuga ferre suave est (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 290).

Est longa permissu poetico in hoc:

Frondea ficus erat, cuius in robore nullum (Sedul. carm. pasch. 4, 46).<sup>75</sup>

[The fourth kind of common syllable occurs when, after any metrical foot, one short syllable of the word remains and is followed by a consonant in the next word or ends in a consonant and is followed by a vowel. For example, the final syllable of cuius is short in this verse:

Cuiūs onus leve est, cuius iuga ferre suave est.

(Whose burden is light, whose yoke is pleasant to bear).

It is long by poetic licence in this:

Frondea ficus erat, cuiūs in robore nullum.

(Leafy was the fig tree, in whose strength there was nothing).]<sup>76</sup>

Bede does not bring the term *caesura* into the discussion, and his formulation of this metrical rule, drawn from several equally tangled sources,<sup>77</sup> is undeniably complicated. It is also slightly misleading: *productio ob caesuram*, at least in Vergil, almost invariably occurs in final syllables that end with a consonant, and the latter case (words with a final short vowel followed by an initial consonant) is unusual in classical verse,<sup>78</sup> although an opposite case can be made, as I believe Bede has done: it has been noted that Vergil generally placed words that, in the spoken Latin of the day, would have been subject to the *brevis brevians* law before the central caesura, where the vacillating length of the final vowel would have made no difference, hence “*Arma virumque cano / Troiae qui primus ab oris*”. Although we scan *canō* with a long *o*, Bede would most certainly have regarded *canō* as the regular scansion, as his chapter on the final syllables of verbs attests.<sup>79</sup> In Bede’s own hexameter verse, where many word-final vowels (mainly *o* in third-declension nouns and first-person verb forms) are generally short, they can still be long in the arsis.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>75</sup> DAM 3, 53-59.

<sup>76</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 53.

<sup>77</sup> Maximus Victorinus (gramm. VI, 220, 1); Marius Victorinus (gramm. VI, 27, 12-13).

<sup>78</sup> The most important exceptions in Vergil’s verse are “*liminaquē laurusque*” (Aen. 3,91) and “*Chloreaquē sybarimque*” (Aen. 12, 363), both of which represent a formula where the first *-que* is routinely lengthened (as in “*Brontesquē Steropesque*, “*lappaequē tribolique*” etc.). Possibly spurious cases in Vergil include “*Dona dehinc auro graviā sectoque elephanto*” (Aen. 3, 464), for which, however, the alternative reading *gravi(a) ac* (with elision) has been suggested. The line appears in several grammarians (e.g. Servius, gramm. IV, 424, 27; Sergius, gramm. IV, 479, 14) and has probably influenced Bede’s presentation, although he does not mention it. – See Johnston 1897, 19-24; Housman 1927, 10-12.

<sup>79</sup> DAM 7, 5-6.

<sup>80</sup> Jaeger 1935, 17-18. For example, line 657 of Bede’s *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti* (Jaeger 1935, 108), “*Emisit, credō flammis ut mundior illis*”, has *credo* with *o* in the arsis. The classical scansion would be *credō*, but, in reality, *credō* with *productio ob caesuram* may have been what Bede intended.

It is not surprising that Bede has, after his wont, “Christianised” the licence of *productio ob caesuram* by substituting quotations from Sedulius for the usual Vergilian lines, but then he unexpectedly goes on to condemn this practice, quoting Mallius Theodorus:<sup>81</sup>

Quod genus syllabae inter longas vel omnino refugiendum vel parcissime usurpandum est. Unde et in recentioribus poetis non facile eius invenies exemplum, quamvis et apud Virgilium non rarissimum, apud Homerum vero frequentissimum reperiatur.<sup>82</sup>

[This licence should either be avoided entirely or it should be used very sparingly. Hence you will not easily find an example of it among the more modern poets, although it is found not infrequently in Vergil and very frequently indeed in Homer.]<sup>83</sup>

Bede has expanded Mallius’s mild criticism of this metrical licence with his own dichotomy of pagan and Christian techniques: although his first example is taken from Sedulius, whose prosody Bede elsewhere seems to consider exemplary, he considers *productio ob caesuram* generally typical of Vergil and even more characteristic of Homer (whom he certainly did not know at first hand), and appears to argue that one of the metrical advances made in Christian poetry was the avoidance of such constructions. We must remember that Bede may have overestimated Vergil’s use of the device because, as we noted, Bede regarded several word-final vowels as short, although they are long in classical verse. This might have led him to see *productio ob caesuram* where none existed. All the same, Bede’s views on this metrical feature appear unusually inconclusive.

Recent studies of Bede’s own verse indicate that Bede may, indeed, have been of two minds regarding *productio ob caesuram*. In a manuscript of Bede’s *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti* known as the B redaction, which apparently is an early draft of the poem,<sup>84</sup> the licence is conspicuously common, appearing no less than thirteen times, which is a quite impressive figure in a poem of about 1,000 lines. In the final, or “vulgate” version, all but one of these have been suppressed.<sup>85</sup> This change may be attributed to Mallius’s admonition that

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<sup>81</sup> gramm. VI, 587, 15-17.

<sup>82</sup> DAM 3, 60-64.

<sup>83</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 53.

<sup>84</sup> See Lapidge 1995, 346-347. Lapidge conjectures that the B redaction was composed around 705 and the vulgate version in the second decade of the eighth century.

<sup>85</sup> Wright 2005, 154. Wright does not take into account that final vowels that in Bede’s prosody – although not in classical prosody – are normally short can appear as long syllables in the arsis. Jaeger 1935, at pp. 19-20 concludes that the true frequency of *productio ob caesuram* in Bede’s verse is difficult to establish: “Wieweit die Stellung in der Arsis Längung bewirkt, ist nicht deutlich ersichtlich, da in den fraglichen Fällen die Quantität der Silben schwankt.” The only clearcut case of *productio ob caesuram* occurs in line 892 (Jaeger 1935, 127): “Quo sacer astra petens corpūs / exsanguē reliquit” (“Where, reaching for the stars, the holy man left his

this licence “should either be avoided entirely or used very sparingly”. Apparently, in the B redaction, Bede chose the latter course, but in the vulgate of the *Vita Cuthberti* the former. Possibly this change was brought about by Bede’s closer study of Christian poets and his growing conviction that *productio ob caesuram* was one of the “pagan” licences he could well do without.

As the second type of common syllable, Bede discusses one of the most peculiar features of late antique prosody, the consonantal use of *h*, which probably came about through a misunderstanding. As Dag Norberg sees it, this practice is based on the model of Vergil’s line “*terga fatigamūs hasta, nec tarda senectus*” (Verg. Aen. 9, 618), where the final syllable of *fatigamus* is scanned as long.<sup>86</sup> Generally this scansion is supposed to be a case of *productio ob caesuram*, but several late antique grammarians attributed this to the initial *h* of *hasta*, which correspondingly came to be treated as an ordinary consonant. The line became a standard textbook example, and the consonantal use of *h*, ostensibly sanctioned by its authority, spread to the technique of several Late Latin poets. It is remarkable that in Late Latin usage, most markedly in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus, a consonantal *h* not only appears after a caesura, but also in the beginning of a foot (e.g. Ven. Fort. Mart. 3, 43: “*angit in ancipiti, quōd hoc aenigma beati*”). In some cases, it may even prevent elision (e.g. Ven. Fort. Mart. 1, 86: “*servantur simul, ille fide, hic corpore vivens*”). Bede’s examples of consonantal *h*, however, taken from Sedulius, belong to the conservative type that is not too different from *productio ob caesuram*: in both cases, the lengthened syllable is in the arsis of the foot, and in the second, the *h* coincides with the trithemimeral caesura. Curiously, though, both times the *h* creates a position after a monosyllable.<sup>87</sup>

Item natura brevis syllaba ad votum poetarum transferri potest in longam, cum correpta vocalis in consonantem desinit et excipitur ab *h* littera. Est enim natura brevis in hoc:

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bloodless body behind”). The line is an allusion to Verg. Aen. 2, 542, which, in the usual reading, has “*corpusque exsanguē*” (with elision and without *productio ob caesuram*).

<sup>86</sup> Norberg 1958, 7: “Partant d’un exemple comme *Terga fatigamus hasta, nec tarda senectus*, on avait formulé la règle qu’une consonne suivie de *h* pouvait former une syllabe longue, règle que les auteurs de la grammaire apprenaient aussi bien à la fin de l’Antiquité qu’au Moyen Age, et que beaucoup de poètes appliquaient...” - Misguided as the grammarians were, there may have been a grain of truth in their mistake. Of the fifty-four cases of *productio ob caesuram* in Vergil’s poetry, fourteen occur before a word-initial *h*, although initial *h* in Latin is about ten times less frequent than initial vowels. Arguably, the articulation of initial *h* may have played some role in Vergil’s prosody, albeit a marginal one. In all classical verse, hiatus is more common before an initial *h* than before initial vowels, and vowels placed before *hic* and its derivatives are generally avoided by all poets. - See Allen 1973, 148.

<sup>87</sup> Ceccarelli 2006 (p. 206) has plausibly suggested that the monosyllable has probably contributed to Bede’s analysis: “Per quanto riguarda gli allungamenti, Bede (o la sua fonte) riconosce dunque l’azione dell’*h* iniziale solo nei casi non giustificabili in base alla pratica virgiliana.”

Porcinum tenere gregem, niger, hispidus, horrens (Sedul. carm. pasch. 3, 84).  
Est voluntate poetarum longa in hoc:

Vir humilis maesto deiectus lumine terram (Sedul. carm. pasch. 3, 296);  
et item:

Mors fera per hominem miserum sibi subdidit orbem (Sedul. hymn. 1,69).<sup>88</sup>  
[Similarly, poets can choose to change a syllable which is short by nature into a long syllable, when a short vowel ending in a consonant is followed by the letter h. It is short by nature in this example:

Porcinum tenere gregem, nigĕr, hispidus, horrens.

(They possessed a porcine herd, dark, shaggy, bristly).

But in this one the poet has chosen to make it long:

Vĭr humilis maesto deiectus lumine terram

(The humble man, with his sorrowful eyes cast on the ground):

And likewise:

Mors fera pĕr hominem miserum sibi subdidit orbem

(Savage death subjects the world to itself through wretched man).]<sup>89</sup>

It is, in this context, unclear whether Bede sanctioned the consonantal use of h in all positions, but it must be noted that in his first example, where the word-initial h does not create a position, it is at the beginning of the fifth foot of the line, whereas the two other examples, where such lengthening occurs, have an h in the middle of the foot. What is surprising, however, is Bede's renunciation of the Vergilian example which, at least in Norberg's view, was the indirect cause of the consonantal h in the first place:

Ubi item quidam grammaticorum dubium ponunt exemplum, "terga fatigamus hasta" (Verg. Aen. 9, 618). Nam etsi h non sequeretur, mus tamen esse posset longa poetica licentia, quia plenis pedibus superfuit, sicut hoc quod item ponunt:

Omnia vincit amor, et nos cedamus amori, (Verg. ecl. 10, 69)

ubi mor ideo potuit produci, quia post emensos pedes integros partem terminat orationis, tametsi vocalis sequatur.<sup>90</sup>

[Some grammarians put "terga fatigamūs hasta" ("we worry the backs of the oxen with the reversed spear") here. This is a dubious example because, even if h did not follow it, the syllable mus could be long by poetic licence, since it is a final syllable and follows two full metrical feet, just as in another example, which they also give:

Omnia vincit amōr, et nos cedamus amori

(Love conquers all, let us also yield to love),

the syllable mor was able to be lengthened even though a vowel follows it, because it comes at the end of a word and follows two full metrical feet.]<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> DAM 3, 13-20.

<sup>89</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 47.

<sup>90</sup> DAM 3, 21-27.

<sup>91</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 47.

Although Bede's terminology is here more than usually convoluted (*quia plenis pedibus superfruit*, literally "because it is left over after complete feet"), it is clear that he is referring to (Vergilian) *productio ob caesuram*, where a word-final short syllable is interpreted as long before a caesura and that he sees this as distinct from the (Christian) use of consonantal *h*, which by his time had become an established metrical feature of Christian poetry. This demonstrates both his analytical mind but also his unwillingness, also perceptible elsewhere, to use Vergil as an illustration when he had Christian examples at his disposal.

Bede also broaches the consonantal use of *h* in his extensive chapter on elision (*De synalipha*),<sup>92</sup> a technique that apparently was very hard to grasp for Anglo-Saxons. Discussing word-final *m*, a particularly thorny issue, he suggests that initial *h* may prevent elision after it, although this is up to the discretion of the poet. Characteristically, this seems to be the only case where Bede actually approves of hiatus, which he otherwise deems an outdated device, and this, too, is due to the authority of the Christian poets Juvenius and Sedulius, whom he also quotes on the subject:

Quaecumque ergo verba in *m* terminantur, nisi adpositione consonantis alicuius defendantur, *synalipha* inrumpente syllabam ultimam aut perdunt semper aut minuunt, excepto cum ab *h* littera sequens sermo inchoaverit. Tunc et enim in arbitrio poetarum est, utrum haec instar fortium consonantium *synalipham* arceat, an pro modo suae fragilitatis nihil valeat. Valuit namque in hoc, quia voluit poeta:

Nomine Iohannem hunc tu vocitare memento (Iuenc. 1, 26);

et:

Progenitum fulsisse ducem, hoc caelitus astra (Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 2, 77).

Item nihil iuvit ad propellendam *synalipham*, quia poeta neglexit:

Qui pereuntem hominem vetiti dulcedine pomi (Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 1, 70).<sup>93</sup>

[Every word which ends in *m* will always either lose its final syllable or have it reduced by the action of elision, unless elision is blocked, which happens when the immediately following word begins with any consonant except *h*. In that case, it is up to the judgement of the poets as to whether the *h* should prevent elision after the fashion of the stronger consonants, or should have no force on account of its weakness. It has the force of a consonant, since the poet willed it, in this example:

Nomine Iohannem / hunc tu vocitare memento

(Remember to call his name John);

and in

Progenitum fulsisse ducem, / hoc caelitus astra

(The Son and king has appeared, the star from Heaven witnesses it).

But it has no power to block elision, because the poet disregarded it, in this example:

Qui pereuntem hominem vetiti dulcedine pomi

(You who restore mankind, damned by the sweetness of the forbidden fruit).]<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> DAM 13.

<sup>93</sup> DAM 13, 31-43.

<sup>94</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 117.

In Bede's metrical *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, h generally does not create a position. As Werner Jaeger has noted, most of the cases where a short syllable preceding an h is treated as a long one, the short syllable coincides with the arsis of the foot, and lengthening can be attributed to the following caesura.<sup>95</sup> Given Bede's ambiguous views on *productio ob caesuram*, we cannot really say what he had in mind. There are, however, two cases of consonantal h which cannot be attributed to *productio ob caesuram*: in both of them, the h is at the beginning of the foot. Conspicuously, in both of the cases h is preceded by a monosyllable (*sed*), as in the Sedulian examples he cites in his treatise:

Servatur sēd haec puero victoria lecto<sup>96</sup>  
 [But this victory is saved for the chosen youth].  
 Acta rotant! nullo noceor sēd hostis ab ictu<sup>97</sup>  
 [However often they roll moving rocks at me, I am unharmed by any blow of the enemy].

Characteristically, Bede has made full use of the "poetic licence" which he endorses in his presentation of the letter h: his *Life of Cuthbert* also has "sed hostis" without lengthening of *sed*:

Propinasque tuis praetristia musta, sēd hostis<sup>98</sup>  
 [You serve the sorrowful wine to your people, but the enemy...].

#### 2.2.4. Hiatus and correption

Hiatus in metrics can best be defined as absence of elision. One of Bede's most extensive chapters (DAM 13, *De synalipha*) deals with the intricacies of elision and when to do it; hiatus, on the other hand, is also touched on in his chapters on common syllables<sup>99</sup> and the differences between "old" (pagan) and "new" (Christian) poets.<sup>100</sup>

Hiatus in Latin poetry is not a very common feature. In the classics it is generally considered a stylistic Graecism, and it often appears in conjunction with Greek

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<sup>95</sup> Jaeger 1935, 19.

<sup>96</sup> Jaeger 1935, 66, line 107.

<sup>97</sup> Jaeger 1935, 93, line 473.

<sup>98</sup> Jaeger 1935, 119, line 792.

<sup>99</sup> DAM 3, 65-96.

<sup>100</sup> DAM 16.

names or other quasi-Greek metrical devices, such as unusual caesurae or spondaic lines (e.g. Verg. georg. 1, 437: “Glauco / et Panopae / et Inoo melicertae”). Licences of this nature usually echo the verse of Homer (where hiatuses are sometimes residues of word-initial digamma) or the Alexandrians, and, in some cases, can be their direct paraphrases.<sup>101</sup> In Vergil, unelided final long vowels or diphthongs are sometimes shortened by the process known as correption, which is a further Graecism (e.g. Verg. Aen. 3, 211: “insulae Ionio in magno”, where the ae of insulae is scanned as short).

Considering that hiatus by itself is an unusual feature and correption arguably a mere curiosity, Bede’s thorough exposition of these features may seem unexpected. Bede, however, had reasons for his interest in these phenomena: firstly, as hiatus is the opposite of elision, which apparently was one of the most difficult verse techniques for the Anglo-Saxons, Bede had to make plain how final vowels should not be handled. Secondly, hiatus is one of those metrical licences which (together with spondaic verses) Bede associates most strongly with pre-Christian literature, and Bede has expanded his presentation of hiatus and correption with a very partisan discussion of the differences between old poets (*veteres*), essentially Vergil, and “our poets” (*nostrates*), the Christians. Apart from his excursus on pre-Christian and Christian practices, Bede’s presentation is primarily drawn from Servius<sup>102</sup> and Sergius,<sup>103</sup> but supplemented with Donatus.<sup>104</sup>

The fifth and sixth types of common syllable in Bede’s treatise are cases where correption either does or does not occur in a final syllable before hiatus, the fifth type being final diphthongs and the sixth, long vowels, a distinction which grammarians, Bede included, tended to give undue prominence. Bede makes it clear from the start that hiatus, with or without correption, is an outdated technique best avoided. Bede shows some originality in extending the rule of correption to word-internal cases: having denounced both hiatus and correption of final vowels as obsolete, he goes on to purport that “modern” (i.e. Christian) poets only use correption inside a word. This claim may seem surprising, as, in Latin, vowels followed by another vowel are almost invariably short, word-internal correption having taken place already in archaic Latin. Apparently, this is an attempt to rationalise the variable length of some word-internal vowels: in his chapter on elision, Bede uses what he perceives as word-internal correption as the explanation for such prosodic doublets as *un̄us/un̄us* and

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<sup>101</sup> Raven 1965, 24.

<sup>102</sup> gramm. IV, 424, 29-34.

<sup>103</sup> gramm. IV, 479, 15-17.

<sup>104</sup> Klotz 606, 12-13.

fidēi/fīdēi.<sup>105</sup> Here Bede uses the example of Maria, always an important name for Christian poets, although he also discusses the e of Eous (‘of the dawn’, ‘eastern’, or, as a masculine noun, ‘morning star’), again using Sedulius as an example. Even in classical verse, the length of e in Eous fluctuates, being generally short in the end of the line but long elsewhere,<sup>106</sup> and Sedulius has followed suit:

Item modus est quintus, cum pars orationis desinit in diptongon sequente statim altera vocali. Est enim per naturam longa in hoc, “Musae Aonides” (Cornelius Severus?). Est per licentiam brevis in hoc, “insulae Ionio in magno” (Verg. Aen. 3, 211), quod posteriores poetae magis in una parte orationis fieri voluerunt. Unde nec huius exemplum facile in nostratibus poematibus invenies. At cum diptongus a vocali alterius verbi excipitur, tum hanc per synalipham transiliendam esse dicebant, ut Prosper in praefatione epigrammatum:

Nec nostrae hoc opis est, sed ab illo sumitur hic ros,  
qui siccam rupem fundere iussit aquas (Prosp. epigr. praef. 7-8).

Sextus modus est, ut Donatus ait, cum producta vocalis est vocali altera consequente. Est enim longa in hoc:

O utinam in thalamos invisi Caesaris issem (Lucan. 8, 88).

Brevis in hoc:

Te Coridon, o Alexi, trahit sua quemque voluptas (Verg. ecl. 2, 65).

Quod moderni versificatores in eadem potius parte orationis facere consuerunt, ut “Eoi uenere magi” (Sedul. carm. pasch. 2, 74) et:

Splendidus auctoris de vertice fulget Eous (Sedul. carm. pasch. 5, 191).

Et rursus longa est per naturam ita:

Angelus intactae cecinit properata Mariae (Sedul. carm. pasch. 2, 36).

Brevis per licentiam ita:

Exultat, Mariae cum prima adfamina sensit (Iuven. 1, 91).

At cum longa vocalis vel etiam brevis, quae partem terminat orationis, excipitur a vocali alterius uerbi, priorem per synalipham absumunt, ut Prosper:

Nam si te virtute tua ad caelestia credas  
scandere, de superis pulsus in ima cadis (Prosp. epigr. 31, 3-4).

Quamvis et Arator imitatus veteres dixerit:

O utinam nostris voluisses fida iuventus  
consiliis parere prius, ne litora Cretae  
linqueres insani rabiem passura profundi (Arator 2, 1107-1109).<sup>107</sup>

[Similarly, the fifth kind of common syllable occurs when a word ends in a diphthong and is immediately followed by a word beginning with another vowel. For example, the final syllable of Musae is long by nature in “Musae Aeonides” (“the Heliconian Muses”). But the final syllable of insulae is short by poetic licence in “insulae Ionio in magno” (“islands in the great Ionian sea”). Later poets have preferred to transfer this licence to the interior syllables of a word, so that you will not easily find an example of this in Christian Latin poetry. Indeed, the grammarians have generally

<sup>105</sup> DAM 13, 45-57.

<sup>106</sup> cf. “dies primo surgebat Ęous” (Verg. Aen. 1, 288); “terras irrorat Ęous” (Verg. georg. 1, 288), but “Ęoas acies et nigri Memnonis arma” (Verg. Aen. 1, 489).

<sup>107</sup> DAM 3, 65-96.



stated that a diphthong followed by another word beginning with a vowel should be elided, as Prosper does in the Preface to his Epigrams:

Nec nostr(ae) hoc opis est, sed ab illo sumitur hic ros,  
qui siccam rupem fundere iussit aquas  
(This is not of our power, but this dew is consumed by him,  
who commanded the dry rock to issue forth the waters).

The sixth kind of common vowel occurs, as Donatus says, when a long vowel is followed by another vowel. For instance, the interjection *o* is long in this verse:

Ō utinam thalamos inuisi Caesaris issem  
(Oh, would that I had married hateful Caesar);

and short in this:

Te Coridon, ō Alexi, trahit sua quemque voluptas  
(Coridon pursues you, oh Alexis, his own pleasure leads each one on).

Modern poets prefer to exercise this licence within the same word. So the first syllable of *Eous* is long by nature in “*Ēoi venere magi*” (“the Magi came from the east”) and short by poetic licence in

Splendidus auctoris de vertice fulget Ĕous  
(The brilliant morning star shines from the head of the Maker).

And again the penultimate syllable of *Maria* is long by nature in this case:

Angelus intactae cecinit properata Marīae  
(The Angel prophesied to the Virgin Mary about things to come),

and short by poetic licence in this one:

Exultat, Marīae cum prima adfamina sensit  
(The offspring of Elizabeth leaped in her womb after he heard the first salutation of Mary).

When either a long or short vowel which comes at the end of a word and followed by a vowel at the beginning of the next word, poets elide the former, as Prosper does in

Nam si te virtute tu(a) ad caelestia credas  
scandere, de superis pulsus in ima cadis  
(For if you think you are climbing to heaven by your own power, driven from above you fall into Hell).

However, Arator, imitating the ancients, said:

O utinam nostris voluisses fida iuventus  
consiliis parere prius, ne litora Cretae  
linqueres insani rabiem passura profundi  
(Oh, would that you, faithful youth, would obey our counsel rather than leave the shores of Crete to suffer the rage of the stormy deep).]<sup>108</sup>

The end of the passage is striking: Bede presents a quotation from Arator, where the poet (quite in keeping with standard metrical practice) has a hiatus following the interjection *o*. Leaving aside the question of how exactly Bede expects *o* to be elided, his interpretation shows his firm belief in the existence of two distinct poetic techniques: pagan and Christian. In Bede’s opinion, Arator’s hiatus is simply attributable to his imitation of pre-Christian poets and, as such, does not truly correspond with the requirements of up-to-date Christian verse,

<sup>108</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 53-57. Kendall’s translation has “Christian Latin poetry” where Bede simply has in *nostratibus poematibus*, but Christianity, of course, is implied.

where all final vowels are elided and correption only takes place within the confines of a single word. In other words, Bede recognises the possibility of using archaising devices in poetry, but only in a Christian context as an allusion to pre-Christian poetry. That hiatus was, even in classical verse, an archaising or Graecistic device never seems to have entered Bede's mind, no doubt owing to his negligible knowledge of Greek literature. Bede's bias against pre-Christian verse technique remains, to all appearances, remarkably unfair: Christian poets like Arator seem to have remained in his good graces, whatever they did, whereas there was no excuse for abnormal prosody in pagan verse.

### 2.2.5. Hic and hoc

As the seventh type of common syllable, Bede discusses the quantitatively problematic demonstrative pronoun *hic* (nominative singular) and its neuter form *hoc*, both of which are generally scanned with a geminated final *c* ('hicc', 'hocc') before vowels, making them, in classical prosody, almost always long by position. This classical practice is the result of analogy: *hic* and *hoc* evolved from the combinations of the pronouns \**ho* (masculine) and \**hod* (neuter) and the deictic particle *-ce*, through the intermediate forms *hice* (with a weakened vowel) and *hocce* (with assimilation of *d* with *c*), both of which have been attested in Plautus and Terence.<sup>109</sup> By analogy, in the syncopated forms *hic* and *hocc*, the geminated *c* of the neuter form also spread to the masculine form *hic*, and classical prosody treats both forms as heavy syllables ending in a double consonant. Historically, the pronouns *hic* and *hoc* have proved puzzling to many generations of scholars. As W. Sidney Allen has noted, their scansion as long has occasionally led to confusion as to their vowel quantity, and older dictionaries have often given them the historically incorrect pronunciations *hīc* and *hōc*.<sup>110</sup> Apparently, *hic* and *hoc* were considered difficult already in late antiquity: Marius Victorinus emphasises that they are truly long syllables and warns his readers not to confuse this with *productio ob caesuram*:

Ergo illae non ideo longae fiunt quod pars orationis finitur, ut putant plurimi (nam idem et in hac effici posset), sed, ut dixi, in pronomibus *c* littera sonum efficit

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<sup>109</sup> Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 76-77.

<sup>110</sup> Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 75-76.

crassiorem et naturam i litterae inter vocales positae ac per hoc sonum geminantis imitatur.<sup>111</sup>

[Therefore, they are not long because they terminate a part of speech, as most believe (for this could also be possible), but, as I said, in pronouns the letter c is pronounced more fully and resembles the quality of the geminate i which occurs between vowels.]

Occasional departures from this norm in classical poetry are rare and usually deliberate archaisms that reflect pre-classical pronunciation (e.g. Verg. Aen. 4, 22: “solus hīc inflexit sensus animumque labantem”). Textbook examples of this kind inevitably led later-day grammarians astray, including Bede, who, quoting Sergius and Servius,<sup>112</sup> classifies “pronouns ending with the letter c” as true common syllables:

Septimus modus est, cum pronomen c littera terminatum vocalis statim sequitur. Est enim longa in hoc:

Non quia summus Pater est, et Filius hic est,  
sed quia quod summus Pater est, et Filius hoc est. (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 319-320)

Brevis in hoc:

Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis. (Verg. Aen. 6, 791)<sup>113</sup>

[The seventh kind of common syllable occurs when a word beginning with a vowel immediately follows a pronoun ending in the letter c. For example, the pronoun hic is long in this verse.

Non quia summus Pater est, et Filius hic est,  
sed quia quod summus Pater est, et Filius hoc est.  
(Not that the one who is the supreme Father is also the Son, but that that which is the supreme Father is also the Son).

It is short in this one:

Hic vir, hīc est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis  
(This, this is the man whom you have heard promised so often).]<sup>114</sup>

It is not surprising that Bede has, once again, Christianised his material by choosing a quotation from Sedulius, his favourite, to illustrate the usual case of hic as a long syllable, although, in demonstrating the less usual case of hic as a short syllable, he has been compelled to rely on Vergil’s example. In this case, Bede has, perhaps surprisingly, not recognised the latter for what it really is, an archaism, and, for this reason, this peculiarly old-fashioned feature has escaped his condemnation: for Bede, as for Servius, hic and hoc are truly common (rather than long) syllables. The implication is that, at least in theory, also hoc

<sup>111</sup> Mariotti 1967, 95, 23-27.

<sup>112</sup> Sergius, gramm. IV, 479, 20-22; Servius, gramm. IV, 424, 34-36.

<sup>113</sup> DAM 3, 95-102.

<sup>114</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 57.

could be scanned as a short syllable, although Bede, understandably, has provided no example of such a case.<sup>115</sup>

Bede follows up his slightly flawed exposition of *hic* and *hoc* with another analogy, which is based on a possibly faulty reading of Paulinus: Bede contends that also adverbs ending in a *c* can also have a common final syllable:

Sed et adverbium *c* littera terminatum communem syllabam facit. Est enim longa in hoc Paulini:

Donec adspirante Deo conatibus aegris (Paulin. 15, 299).

Brevis in hoc Prosperi:

Ut morbo obsessis praestanda est cura medendi,  
donec in aegroto corpore vita manet (Prosp. epigr. 112, 1-2).<sup>116</sup>

[But an adverb ending in the letter *c* also makes a common syllable. The final syllable of *donec* is long, for example, in this verse of Paulinus:

Donēc adspirante Deo conatibus aegris  
(Until with the help of God for the struggling sick),

It is short in this verse of Prosper:

Ut morbo obsessis praestanda est cura medendi,  
donċ in aegroto corpora vita manet  
(So those afflicted with this disease should be cared for as long as life remains  
in their sick body).]<sup>117</sup>

On the strength of his reading of Paulinus 15, 299, Bede has assumed that the final *c* of adverbs and conjunctions such as *donec* has qualities similar to those of *hic* and *hoc*.

Although the usual reading of Paulinus's line is "Donec et adspirante", rather than "Donec adspirante", Bede is here touching on an existing phenomenon that played a genuine role in the prosody of Late Latin verse; *donēc* (with long final syllable) has been documented at least in Venantius Fortunatus (carm. 9, 2, 65 "donēc adventum"). This, however, is not attributable to any special qualities of the final *c*, but, rather, to the fact that *donec*, together with some other particles and adverbs, may have been pronounced with a oxytone, or word-final, accent (*donéc*), which, in turn, led to the lengthening of the final syllable.<sup>118</sup> These, however, are

<sup>115</sup> Not all scholars shared Bede's over-generalisation. Marius Victorinus notes dismissively: "Pro brevi autem 'hic vir, hic est.' Sed pro brevi bis fere tantum." ("It is short in 'hic vir, hic est', but it is short in hardly more than two cases.") – Mariotti 1967, 95, 13-14.

<sup>116</sup> DAM 3, 103-108.

<sup>117</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 57.

<sup>118</sup> Townend 1950, 33. Priscian (gramm. III, 74, 11-16) asserts a penultimate accent for *donec* but not for other adverbs ending in *c*:

In *c* primitiva inveniuntur *sċc*, *donċc* (quod etiam donicum antiqui dicebant...) et derivativa pronominum *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*, *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*, *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*, *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*, *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*.

[Original adverbs with *c* include *sċc* and *donċc* (which the ancients also called *donicum*), and the pronominal derivatives *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*, *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*, *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*, *illċc*, *istċc*, *hċc*.]

highly contested issues of which Bede was not aware, and it seemed logical to him to attribute the quantity *donēc* to the fact that it, like *hic* and *hoc*, ended with a *c*. The role of such forms as *hīc* and *illīc*, where the vowel is long, may also have affected Bede's ruling by analogy.

### 2.2.6. Summary

As we have witnessed, Bede regarded the Christian writers of late antiquity with a very thinly-veiled favouritism. Bede has demonstrated nearly all of the rules pertaining to common syllables with quotations from Christian authors, with Sedulius a clear favourite; one could almost surmise that, as the poet to be emulated, Sedulius had, for Bede, become something like a "Christian Vergil". Bede has not eliminated Vergilian examples altogether, but it is clear that he often resorts to them for want of a better, or, that is to say, a Christian example, as in the cases of word-initial *z* and *x*. There are some phenomena which he presents with exclusively pre-Christian material, but often he portrays them as outdated, "pagan" techniques, the employment of hiatus and correption being a case in point.

Bede's Christian bias is also reflected in the manner in which he evaluates the various ways in which poets have treated common syllables and the respective prosodic liberties they have taken. Although he does not express this explicitly, there appear to be two different prosodic practices for him: pagan and Christian. Prosodic liberties that occur in the classics but were later given up are, in his eyes, examples of archaic unruliness and, at least implicitly, he appears to attribute the subsequent improvements in poetic technique to the onset of Christianity. Conversely, he regards many of the unusual or unclassical prosodies of the late antique Christian poets, above all Sedulius, most favourably. Bede's list of common syllables is more than merely an expanded and "Christianised" version of Sergius and Pompeius: it can be read as a veiled attempt to codify the prosodic practices of Christian poets. This tendency, which is only implicitly expressed in Bede's chapter on common syllables, is later formulated unequivocally in his chapter on the differences of pagan and Christian poets.<sup>119</sup>

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The pronunciation *donēc* is apparently based on analogy: the oxytone accent of such words as *illīc* and *istīc* evolved from the penultimate accent of the unabbreviated forms *illīce* and *istīce*, whereas *donec* (probably from *dōnicum*) is prosodically different. See also Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 87.

<sup>119</sup> DAM 16.

A summary of common syllables and their proper Christian usage, as understood by Bede, can be presented as follows:

1) The combination of plosive and liquid (or f and liquid) can create a position word-internally but never in an initial position. This corresponds with both classical and Christian practice, although some deviations from the latter rule appear in Vergil, a feature which Bede condemns as outdated elsewhere in his treatise. Bede ignores evidence of the same usage in the Christian poets Venantius Fortunatus and Aldhelm.

2) The combination of initial s and another consonant can create a position word-initially, a patently post-classical feature that occurs in Sedulius. Conversely, Bede suggests that similar s groups may not necessarily make a position word-internally, a feature that is virtually non-existent in all Latin poetry (apart from Aldhelm, who makes copious use of it). Bede's assumption, which must be considered erroneous, is based on the faulty analysis of one single line in Vergil, although it is not impossible that his analysis has been influenced by Aldhelm's prosody.

3) Bede regards z fundamentally as a single consonant (although, out of adherence to traditional terminology, he calls it a "double letter"). It can, however, create a position word-internally, if the poet so chooses. Bede's presentation is almost the opposite of classical practice, where z always makes a position word-internally and is only treated as a single consonant initially in prosodically difficult words.

4) Bede's views on *productio ob caesuram*, where a short final syllable can be interpreted as long before a caesura are ambiguous and inconclusive: the phenomenon appears in Sedulius, so Bede cannot wholly discredit it. On the other hand, Bede seems to regard it as more typical of Vergil and therefore potentially old-fashioned and not altogether to be recommended.

5) Bede condones the consonantal use of initial h, which, if the poet so chooses, can create a position after a short final syllable. As he states elsewhere in his treatise, an initial h can also prevent elision from taking place, although apparently only after a final m. This ruling reflects a Christian practice that probably evolved through the grammarians' faulty analysis of Vergil's "*terga fatigamūs hasta*" (more properly a case of *productio ob caesuram*).

6) All other forms of hiatus are archaic and best avoided. Hiatus, if encountered in Christian poetry, must be understood as an allusion to pre-Christian verse.

7) *Hic* and *hoc* are, in Bede's nomenclature, common syllables, although in classical verse they are almost always long. This generalisation, which Bede shares with most

of his predecessors, is based on Vergil's archaising use of short hic (Aen. 6, 791), which had become a textbook commonplace. Relying on what appears to be false analogy, Bede also makes the suggestion that the final syllable of *donec* (and, by implication, other adverbs ending with a *c*) can be common.

As we can infer from this presentation, Bede had studied both Vergil and the Christian poets known to him very thoroughly indeed, obviously in the belief that there existed an ideal kind of "Christian" prosody distinct from pagan practice. Bede's prime model for contemporary verse appears to be Sedulius, whose example he generally follows even in its idiosyncrasies. Sometimes his willingness to generalise and synthesise has led him astray, and he seems to give undue prominence to the example of individual lines (some of his Vergilian examples are genuine rarities even in Vergil's verse). But, arguably, even this fault may have served to make his delineation of Christian verse technique all the more persuasive.

The final type of common syllable, the final syllable of a line, is something which Bede discusses only cursorily, as this was hardly an issue that was expected to confuse readers, or where stylistic issues played a role.

### **2.3. Other observations on prosody**

Bede's chapters on syllables and their respective lengths are lengthy and detailed, and very demonstrative of the techniques that were employed in the teaching of classical prosody in the Middle Ages. They are, however, also highly derivative in their dependence on previous authors, and generally concur with classical prosodic practice, and, as they mainly consist of catalogues of words or their endings, they make wearisome reading. There are, nonetheless, some instances where Bede departs from classical norm and recommends scansion that are more in keeping with the prosody of the Late Latin Christian authors, mainly Sedulius, and it is these cases that we must discuss briefly.

Apart from the common syllables, Bede's departures from classical syllable quantity are generally restricted to the final syllables of words, usually final vowels that are long in the classics but often shortened in post-classical verse. Such variation also often occurs in words with a final *s*. Most typically, the final *o*'s of third-declension nouns and first-person verb forms are shortened, a feature that occurs already in the Silver Age poets,

even in words that do not adhere to the *brevis brevians* law.<sup>120</sup> Bede is content to mention such prosodic features in passing; apparently, by his time they had become established to such an extent that Bede took them for granted, and did not deem them worthy of further analysis.

Bede discusses the final syllables of words in his sixth, seventh and eighth chapters, titled *De ultimis syllabis nominum, pronominum, participiorum* (“On the final syllables of nouns, pronouns and participles”), *De ultimis syllabis verborum et adverbiorum* (“On the final syllables of verbs and adverbs”) and *De regulis syllabarum coniunctionum, prepositionum, interiectionum* (“On the rules governing the syllables of conjunctions, prepositions and interjections”), respectively. These chapters are based mainly on Servius’s *De finalibus* and Maximus Victorinus’s *De finalibus metrorum*, and Bede largely quotes them verbatim. Needless to say, they are also fairly consistent with classical prosody. Bede’s unusual lack of independence in these chapters is demonstrated by his inclusion of a Horatian quotation (from *Ars poetica* 65); elsewhere in his treatise, Horace, even more than Vergil, has been thoroughly supplanted by Christian lines.<sup>121</sup>

At the very beginning of his sixth chapter Bede expresses his approval for a number of short final vowels that are typical of post-classical poetry, starting with the Silver Age poets. The chapter starts with a long catalogue of syllables, taken almost word for word from Servius, where Bede states that the final *o* of third-declension nouns and the final *u* of fourth-declension neuters are short: “*Nominativus singularis has habet breves... o, ut ordo, virgo; u, ut cornu...*”<sup>122</sup> Bede, as Servius, seems to consider the short forms *virgō* and *cornŭ* to be the normal ones (Servius only gives *virgo* and *cornu*,<sup>123</sup> and *ordo* appears to be Bede’s own addition). Remarkably, none of these words are subject to the *brevis brevians* law, and therefore represent demonstrably post-classical prosody. Bede does not even mention the possibility of a long scansion for the final syllables of these word-types.

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<sup>120</sup> Raven 1965, 23.

<sup>121</sup> DAM 6, 35-38:

US, cum in genetivo crescente longa permanserit, producitur, ut “*virtus virtutis*”, “*tellus telluris*”, excepto uno “*palus*”, quod in genetivo dis terminatur, “*palus paludis*”, unde est haec: “*sterilisque diu palus aptaque remis.*”

[Final *us* is long in imparisyllabic nouns when the vowel remains long in the genitive, as, *virtus virtutis* and *tellus telluris*, with the one exception of *palus*, which takes the ending *dis* in the genitive: as for example, “*sterilisque diu palŭs aptaque remis*” (“and the sterile marsh once fit only for boats”)] – Trans. Kendall 1991, 77. The quotation from Horace is one of only four in Bede’s entire output identified in Michael Lapidge’s *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (2006), 212.

<sup>122</sup> DAM 6, 1-5.

<sup>123</sup> gramm. IV, 451, 28.



In his chapter on the final syllables of verbs and adverbs, *De ultimis syllabis verborum et adverbiorum*, Bede presents some prosodic rules that deviate similarly from what we consider to be the classical standard. Most noticeably, Bede presents the final *o* of first-person verb forms as short, although the rule is presented somewhat more ambiguously than the rule governing the final *o*'s of nouns: "In omnibus *o* corripitur, ut 'amo', 'sedeo', 'cerno', 'nutrio', tametsi auctoritas variet."<sup>124</sup> ("In all conjugations final *o* is short, as *amo*, *sedeo*, *nutrio*, *cerno*, although learned opinion differs on this point.")<sup>125</sup> The ruling, together with this minor reservation, is based on Maximus Victorinus's *De finalibus metrorum*,<sup>126</sup> and shows that something that had been a prosodic liberty in Silver Latin had, by Bede's time, become the norm. Bede's own metrical practice is generally consistent with his unclassical, or postclassical, rulings on final vowels. In his *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*, short final *o* seems to be the rule for both third-declension nouns and first-person verb forms as in:

Regia virgō venit, regis quae sponsa perennis<sup>127</sup>  
 [The royal maiden arrived, who had long been betrothed to the king].  
 Tu, rogō, summe, iuva, donorum spiritus auctor<sup>128</sup>  
 [I beseech Thee, o highest, help me, the creating spirit of gifts].

Deviation from this practice only occurs in the arsis of the foot (before a strong caesura) and could equally well be attributed to *productio ob caesuram*, as in:

Audet adhuc supplex virgō / pulsare propheten<sup>129</sup>  
 [Still the kneeling virgin dared to touch the prophet].  
 Dic ergo, adiurō / summi per regna tonantis<sup>130</sup>  
 [Say, therefore, I vow by the realms of the highest God].

Such variation is by no means unusual in post-classical poetry, and these examples may seem highly trivial. There is, however, one aspect that we must take into consideration: Bede employs this variation very logically, and the logic is fully understandable if we bear in mind his own teachings on metre: if, indeed, *virgō*, *ordō*, *cernō*, *cornī* etc. were what Bede, by his own admission, considered the normal pronunciation, nearly all cases to the contrary, with a final long vowel in the arsis of the foot, may constitute cases of *productio ob caesuram*. It is,

<sup>124</sup> DAM 7, 5-6.

<sup>125</sup> Trans. Kendall 83.

<sup>126</sup> gramm. VI, 231, 20-21.

<sup>127</sup> Jaager 1935, 95, line 495.

<sup>128</sup> Jaager 1935, 61, line 35.

<sup>129</sup> Jaager 1935, line 518.

<sup>130</sup> Jaager 1935, line 504.

therefore, apparent that Bede's definition of *productio ob caesuram*, along with his exhortation to use it "sparingly", needs to be re-examined with this feature of his prosody in mind. As Jaeger has suggested, we may already see traces of high medieval caesural practice in Bede's verse and its treatment of word-final syllables.<sup>131</sup> As we know, in some later medieval grammars *penthemimeres*, the term for the strong caesura of the third foot of a hexameter line, often came to be understood as synonymous with *productio ob caesuram*,<sup>132</sup> and, especially in Leonine hexameter verse with penthemimeral rhyme, the rhyming syllable that precedes the caesura is commonly indifferent.<sup>133</sup> Although Bede's unclassical but systematic treatment of word-final syllables is still more classical than that of the high medieval poets (Bede does not shorten the long final vowels of datives or ablatives, nor are the final vowels of first-declension nouns scanned as long in his verse), his definitions, together with contemporary verse, probably contributed to the evolution of medieval prosodic practice.

It must be noted that, in Bede's *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*, similarly consistent variation in the final syllables (long in the arsis, short elsewhere) occurs also in other words, some of which normally have a short final vowel even in classical verse: the most important of these are the pronouns *ego*, *mihi*, *tibi*, *sibi*, *cui*.<sup>134</sup> In his *De arte metrica*, Bede does not mention *ego* but implies, albeit very obliquely, that it is analogous to nouns ending with *o*; the final *i*'s of *mihi*, *tibi* and *sibi* are by Bede's own admission variable:

*Dativus vero, sicut in nomine, semper longus est, excepto 'mihi', 'tibi', 'sibi', quae indifferentem poni possunt. Sic reliqui quoque casus regulam sumunt ex nomine.*<sup>135</sup>  
[The final syllable of the dative, just as in the noun, is always long, with the exception of *mihi*, *tibi* and *sibi*, which can be treated as common. And in the same way the remaining cases take their rule from the noun.]<sup>136</sup>

Bede's presentation is taken verbatim from Servius (*gramm.* IV, 453, 25 – 454, 2). As we see, Bede does not discuss *ego*, but the suggestion that the "remaining cases" of pronouns take their quantities from noun cases would suggest an analogy with nouns with final *o*. Bede seems to rely frequently on such analogy, especially where it seems corroborated by verse technique.

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<sup>131</sup> Jaeger 1935, 20.

<sup>132</sup> Klopsch 1972, 75.

<sup>133</sup> e.g. *Carmina Burana* 5.8: "*Ordo, pudicitia, / pietas, doctrina, sophia*" ("Order, modesty, piety, learning and wisdom"). Also note the short *o* in *ordo*, as well as the Italianate prosody in *sophia*.

<sup>134</sup> Jaeger 1937, 17.

<sup>135</sup> DAM 6, 67-69.

<sup>136</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 79.

There are two phenomena which we must finally discuss, possibly of lesser consequence than Bede's rulings on final o's but nevertheless illustrative of his stubborn and sometimes misguided attempts at regularisation: firstly, in his chapter on the final syllables of nouns, adjectives and pronouns, Bede presents an idiosyncratic analysis of fifth-declension nouns. Bede states that their genitive and dative endings should have both a long e and a long i:

Ubi notandum est quod nomina quintae declinationis, quae in ei litteras genetivo et dative casu terminantur, et has divisas et utramque longam habent, ut 'faciei', diei', 'fidei'.<sup>137</sup>

[It should be noted here that in nouns of the fifth declension, which end in the letters ei in the genitive and dative case, the e and i should be pronounced separately and both are long, as faciei, diei and fidei.]<sup>138</sup>

Bede's ruling on this matter does not correspond with usual classical prosody, where fifth-declension nouns only have a long e in the genitive and dative forms when the preceding letter is an i: strictly speaking, *faciēī* and *diēī* are the normal classical forms, but *fidēī*, where e is preceded by a consonant, is not. This confusion is probably attributable to the shaky prosody of fifth-declension nouns in Late Latin. The form *fidēī* (with long e) is archaic, and it appears in the poetry of Ennius, Plautus and Lucretius, but it also reappeared in Late Latin and was common in the early Middle Ages, as several hymns testify.<sup>139</sup> There apparently was a deep-set tendency for the two types of genitive (*diēī* and *fidei*) to affect each other by analogy, as in Late Latin we also encounter the opposite case *diēi*. Bede's presentation of fifth-declension nouns as always having a long e in the genitive is a hypercorrect generalisation, certainly affected by Late Latin verse but possibly also a reaction against such forms as *diēi*. Remarkably, Bede does not observe his rule in his own verse, where *fidēi* is the norm (e.g. line nine of *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*: "ut cunctum nova lux fidēi face fusa sub axem").<sup>140</sup> Bede does, however, give a thorough explanation for this variation in his chapter on elision (*De synalipha*): he states explicitly that although, as he sees it, *fidēī* is the normal form, *fidēi* is also possible by way of word-internal correption of the type he has previously described in his chapter on common syllables.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>137</sup> DAM 6, 46-48.

<sup>138</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 77.

<sup>139</sup> Norberg 1958, 12. The prosodies are easily identifiable even in rhythmic verse, as they are accentuated differently: *fidei* and *fidēi*.

<sup>140</sup> Jaeger 1935, 58.

<sup>141</sup> DAM 13, 44-57

At the very end of his chapter on the final syllables of verbs and adverbs, Bede discusses the numeral adverbs and departs from classical norm in ruling that the e in the suffix -ies is short: “es in numeris corripitur, ut ‘toties’, ‘quoties’, ‘septies’, ‘decies’.”<sup>142</sup> Although such shortened final syllables are by no means uncommon in Late Latin verse, the ruling is curious, as we know not only that the e is long in classical prosody,<sup>143</sup> but that numeral adverbs also have the older alternative spelling -iens (totiens, quotiens, septiens, deciens etc.), where the final syllable is long even by position. This was by no means unknown to Bede, who contests the alternative spelling in his normative guide to orthography, *De orthographia*: “‘Quoties’, ‘toties’, ‘septies’ sine n.”<sup>144</sup> The treatment of such words does not seem to have been entirely consistent even in classical antiquity: in inscriptional evidence, the suffix -ies seems to have coexisted with the older -iens at a fairly early date (this is analogous to such forms as *mesibus/mensibus*, *cosul/consul* etc.), although this seems to have applied mainly to the definitive numerals like *quinquies*, *sexies* and *septies*.<sup>145</sup> On the subject of *quotiens*, *totiens* and other indefinitives, the grammarians generally seem to have been adamant in their defence of -iens.<sup>146</sup> Bede, however, appears to have gone out of his way to rule out all scansion where the final syllable of numeral adverbs is long; furthermore, he does not distinguish between the definitive numerals (*septies*, *decies*) and the indefinitives *quoties* and *toties*.

The question of numeral adverbs and their use in Anglo-Latin verse is somewhat more important than it may seem on the surface: one of the most recognisable mannerisms of Anglo-Latin poetry is the habit of expressing numbers in the form of multiplication, that is to say, with a numeral adverb and a distributive numeral (as in *bis seni*, or ‘two times six’, for ‘twelve’). This is understandable if we remember that some Latin numerals are prosodically unusable in dactylic verse (for instance, *duodecim*, with four short syllables, does not scan, but *bis seni* does), but there are good examples of gratuitous use of multiplication, especially in the verse of Aldhelm and his followers.<sup>147</sup> However, even

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<sup>142</sup> DAM 7, 46.

<sup>143</sup> See Probus at *gramm.* IV, 247, 8-9.

<sup>144</sup> Jones 1975, 45.

<sup>145</sup> Long 1901, 12. In late antiquity, the definitive numeral adverbs often became even further contracted (*sexis*, *septis* etc.).

<sup>146</sup> e.g. Priscian (*Passalacqua* 1987, 10, 23 - 11, 4): “*Reliqua omnia in es productam desinunt...indefinitis tamen numerorum adverbis etiam n interponitur, quotiens, totiens, similiter multotiens.*” (“All the others end in a long es, however, in the indefinite numeral adverbs an n is also placed in the middle: *quotiens*, *totiens*, and, similarly, *multotiens*.”) *Caper concurs* (*gramm.* VII, 95, 8-9); *Marius Victorinus* (*Mariotti* 1967, 88, 20) advocates that all numeral adverbs should be spelt with an n.

<sup>147</sup> e.g. Aldhelm’s riddle on the woman pregnant with twins (*Enigmata XC*):  
Sunt mihi sex oculi, totidem simul auribus exsto;

numeral adverbs have their prosodic limitations: if they are scanned with a long final syllable, several of them are cretic in structure (long-short-long) and therefore useless in dactylic verse (e.g. *quinq̄iēs*, *sexiēs*, *septiēs*, *octiēs*, *centiēs*), whereas their shorter forms (*quinq̄iēs*, *sexiēs*, *octiēs*, *centiēs*) are not. This may certainly have contributed to the proliferation of the shorter forms in Late Latin poetry, and as poetic metre was one of Bede's primary sources on all prosody, he simply codified what he had encountered in verse. The short final syllables of numeral adverbs are a phenomenon that is parallel to the shortened final vowels of nouns and verbs, but in this case, more than in many others, prosody was probably based on necessity. Bede's ruling that the final syllables of numeral adverbs are always short shows a consistency with contemporary metrical practice, and I find it possible that he also ruled out the alternative spelling with *-iens* for the very reason that it did not scan.

It must be added that Bede does not always follow his own prosodic rules consistently. In such cases, his grammatical writings are invariably – and predictably – more conservative than his verse, where departures from the “official” prosodic rules are generally due to the influence of late antique poetry. For one thing, in his *De ultimis syllabis nominum, pronominum, participiorum*, Bede declares the final syllables of genitives and ablatives are long with the exception of the third declension: “Genetivus, dativus et ablativus producuntur. Sed genetivus, cum tertiae fuerit declinationis, cum ablativo suo e tantum littera terminato breviatur, ut ‘a fonte fontis’.” (“The final syllables of the genitive, dative and ablative cases are long. But the genitive of the third declension together with its ablative in *e* are short, as, a fonte, fontis.”)<sup>148</sup> In other respects, Bede follows his own ruling on the matter but, remarkably, treats the final *o* in the ablative of the gerund as short, which, of course, is consistent with much of Late Latin and nearly all of medieval Latin verse, where the ablative of the gerund was regularly used as a substitute for the present participle.<sup>149</sup> It is commonly

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sed digitos decies senos in corpore gesto:  
 ex quibus ecce quater denis de carne revulsis;  
 quinquies at tantum video remanere quaternos.  
 [I have six eyes, and take things in from as many ears;  
 but I have sixty toes and fingers on my body.  
 Look, when forty or these have been torn from my flesh,  
 I see that only twenty will remain.]

– Ehwald 1919, 136; trans. Lapidge 1985, 90. Note the short *e* in *quinq̄iēs* at line four.

<sup>148</sup> DAM 6, 41-43; trans. Kendall 1991, 77.

<sup>149</sup> The first documented uses of the ablative of the gerund with a short final *o* are in Seneca; see J. Fitch 1987, 154.

placed in the end of the line so that the two final syllables take up the beginning of the fifth foot.<sup>150</sup> Bede's use of the gerund conforms to this practice:

“Num nostrum e speculis” dixit “temptandō latenter  
lustrabas itiner?”<sup>151</sup>  
[He said: “Did you observe my journey testing me secretly?”]

Bede also deviates from his prescribed prosody in the genitive singular of the fourth-declension *spiritus*, where the *u* is short on two occasions, e.g. “*Spiritūs extinxit sacri quae praescia virtus*” (“Which the virtue that knew the Holy Spirit defeated”) in line 333 of his metrical *Life of Cuthbert*.<sup>152</sup> This is understandable from a strictly technical point of view: the normal genitive form *sp̄ritū̄s* is cretic and therefore unusable in dactylic verse, whereas the unclassical form *spiritūs* is not. Bede's unusual licence is probably based on the emulation of Sedulius, in whose *Carmen paschale* it appears at least three times.<sup>153</sup> Bede does not discuss this particular licence in detail, but he does touch on the problems inherent with cretic words in the fifteenth chapter of his treatise.<sup>154</sup> Although similar shortening of the final *us* in fourth-declension genitives is by no means unusual in Late Latin and medieval verse, in Bede's poetry it seems restricted to *spiritus*, without doubt a necessary word for a Christian poet, and the phenomenon can almost certainly be attributed both to prosodic necessity and the authority of Sedulius.

A final word must be said about the degree to which Bede has Christianised the examples which he uses in his presentation of final syllables: on the whole, apart from endorsing some post-classical syllable lengths, Bede's chapters on final syllables are fairly conventional, and less dominated by the authority of Sedulius or other Christian poets than the other chapters of his treatise. This is understandable when we bear in mind that Servius's and Victorinus's word-lists hardly gave Bede the scope he would have needed fully to implement his Christian agenda, as the poetic quotations they employed rarely exceed the length of one word. There are, however, some minute but nevertheless telling alterations that Bede has undertaken, and these are apparent in his presentation of Greek nouns. Where

<sup>150</sup> e.g. Ven. Fort. Mart. 3, 153: “*Carnutis hinc etiam dum praetereundō veniret*” (“When [the saint] was passing by the Carnutes”). The ablative of the gerund can have a final long *o* in the arsis, as testified by Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*, line 44 (Ehwald 1919, 354): “*Omnia regnandō dispensat saecula simplex*” (“[God] guides in rule all generations as one”). –Trans. Rosier 1985, 104.

<sup>151</sup> Jaeger 1935, 76, lines 241-242.

<sup>152</sup> Jaeger 1935, 82.

<sup>153</sup> Huemer 1885, 395; Wright 2005, 158. Sedulius also shortens the final *us* in the genitive forms of *vagitus*, *domus* and *sexus*.

<sup>154</sup> DAM 15, 1-11.

Servius gives *Musa* and *Euterpe* as examples of Greek nouns with final *a* and *e*,<sup>155</sup> Bede has eliminated these mythic figures and replaced them with the innocuous and Christian *ecclesia*, *baptisma*, *schole* and *synagoge*:

In Graecis vero nominativus singularis has habet breves: *a*, ut ‘*ecclesia*’, ‘*baptisma*’...longas vero has: *e*, ut ‘*schole*’, *synagoge*’, quae Latina consuetudo in a terminat...<sup>156</sup>

[In Greek words the nominative singular is short in these short final syllables: *a*, as *ecclesia*, *baptisma*...the nominative singular has these long final syllables: *e*, as in *schole*, *synagoge*, which in Latin usage ends in *a*...]<sup>157</sup>

Bede’s presentation is certainly not accurate, as far as Greek prosody is concerned: in Greek, first-declension words usually have a long final *a*, except words with the suffix *-jα* (as in *Μήδεια*, *παίδεια* or *τράπεζα*), and *ecclesia* does not fall into this category; rather, Bede is describing its Latinised pronunciation. It is also apparent that Bede’s choice of examples is not entirely successful: the words *schole* and *synagoge* are, in Latin, generally spelt with a (*schola*, *synagoga*), something which Bede himself readily admits. Bede’s efforts at presenting Greek prosody in a more “Christian” form do not end here: in his lists of Greek vocatives, he predictably uses *Peter* (*Petros*, vocative *Petre*) instead of *Maximus Victorinus*’s *Phoebos*, *Phoebe*.<sup>158</sup> But where Bede really clutches at straws is his list of Greek first-declension vocatives: Bede’s presentation includes the vocatives of *schole*, *synagoge*, *pentecoste* and *parasceve*, all identical with the nominative and all of them arguably things one is unlikely to address in the second person:

Vocativus, cum *a* terminatur, in masculinis tantum longus est, ut ‘*Aenea*’: nam in femininis corripitur, ut ‘*cathedra*’. *E* terminatus producitur, ut ‘*schole*’, ‘*synagoge*’, ‘*pentecoste*’, *parasceve*’, exceptis his quorum nominativus *os* terminatur, ut ‘*Petros Petre*’.<sup>159</sup>

[Final *a* in the vocative is only long in the masculine, as *Aenea*. In feminine words it is short, as *cathedra*. Final *e* is long, as *schole*, *synagoge*, *pentecoste*, *parasceve*, with the exception of those words whose nominative ends in *os*, as *Petros Petre*.]<sup>160</sup>

The passage, in all its superfluity, can only be attributed to Bede’s attempts to make his presentation of Greek prosody as Christian as possible: as in his list of Latin letters, which he

<sup>155</sup> gramm. IV, 452, 2.

<sup>156</sup> DAM 6, 70-74.

<sup>157</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 79.

<sup>158</sup> gramm. VI, 234, 15

<sup>159</sup> DAM 6, 80-84.

<sup>160</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 81.

had elaborated with his own Greek additions, practical considerations seem to have come second to piety.

## **2.4. The structure of the dactylic metres**

### **2.4.1. The dactylic hexameter**

As we have witnessed, Bede's presentation of verse prosody shows certain well-recognisable departures from the practice of classical poets. Generally these differences are small and can almost always be attributed to the verse technique of the Christian hexameter poets of the Late Empire, although, as we have observed, Bede's own generalisations, and, at times, false analogy also played a part. In the main, Bede is very consistent about his "reformed" rules of Christian prosody, especially in those cases where his Christian models have shown similar consistency. In general, though, prosody as presented by Bede is still remarkably close to classical practice: this is shown by the way in which he revised his own poetry, eliminating incorrect vowel lengths where his closer study of earlier poetry proved them wrong.<sup>161</sup> His opposition to some unusual features of classical verse, such as the use of hiatus and *productio ob caesuram*, cannot be regarded as particularly radical; what is a new element in his treatise is their blanket denunciation as "old", or, in other words, potentially un-Christian practices: for Bede, purely prosodic considerations appear to have become inextricably enmeshed with ideological ones. Nevertheless, these "outdated" practices were, by and large, uncommon even in classical verse, and also many pagan authors had avoided them strenuously. Bede's presentation of classical and post-classical prosody tends to exaggerate the differences between classical and Christian poets, and although it illuminates his agenda very well, and ultimately affected the poetic diction of later poets, it still mostly corresponds with classical practice.

From a purely theoretical point, Bede's description of the hexameter line must be considered an even bolder departure from the traditions of Latin verse and verse theory, as it essentially constitutes a redefinition of the dactylic hexameter itself. If we take a typical

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<sup>161</sup> Lapidge 1996, 343; Wright 2005, 153-155.



definition of the dactylic hexameter line, as presented by virtually all grammars and treatises, ancient and modern alike, it is more or less the following:

The hexameter is the metre of epic and much other non-dramatic poetry, and is occasionally found as a 'stichic' length in the drama. As the name implies, it consists of six dactylic metra. Of these, the first five may take the dactylic or the spondaic form, although the spondee is rare in the fifth place; the last metron must be a spondee.<sup>162</sup>

Contrast this with what Bede writes in the introductory part of his chapter *De metro dactylico exámetro vel pentámetro*:

Metrum dactylicum exámetrum, quod et heroicum vocatur, eo quod maxime heroum, hoc est, virorum fortium facta canerentur, ceteris omnibus pulchrius celsiusque est. Unde opusculis tam prolixis quam succinctis, tam vilibus quam nobiles aptum esse consuevit. Constat autem ex dactylo et spondeo vel trocheo, ita ut recipiat spondeum locis omnibus praeter quintum, dactylum praeter ultimum, trocheum vero loco tantum ultimo; vel, ut quidam definiunt, spondeum ultimo loco semper et omnibus praeter quintum, trocheum vero nusquam, quia, etsi ultima brevis est natura, tamen spondeum facit ad votum poetarum, qui, ut praediximus, ultimam versus omnis syllabam indifferenter accipiunt.<sup>163</sup>

[The dactylic hexameter, which is called 'heroic', because the deeds of heroes, i.e. of brave men, used to be sung in it, is more beautiful and loftier than all the rest. Hence it is usually as suited to extended works as short ones, to common works as to dignified ones. It is formed from the dactyl, the spondee, and the trochee in such a way that it takes the spondee in every foot except the fifth, the dactyl in every foot except the last, and the trochee only in the final foot. Or, as some prosodists explain it, it takes the spondee in the last foot and in all feet except the fifth, but it never takes the trochee, because, even if the final syllable is short by nature, the metre makes a spondee at the will of the poets, who, as I have stated above, treat the final syllable of every verse as common.]<sup>164</sup>

Bede's description of the hexameter line is, for the greater part, largely borrowed from Mallius Theodorus, but Bede has elaborated it with additions of his own to make it conform to his severe approach to metrical structures. One may note the rather lengthy excursus on the nature of the final foot of the line (whether it should be a spondee or a trochee), where Bede reminds his reader that the final feet of lines are *syllabae ancipites* and that every final foot can ultimately be interpreted as a spondee. This discussion is possibly designed to serve as a warning to readers still struggling with Latin quantitative prosody: the trochee is not one of

<sup>162</sup> Raven 1965, 44.

<sup>163</sup> DAM 10, 2-13.

<sup>164</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 97.

the building blocks of the hexameter line and must never be used, except as the final foot of the line.

More conspicuously, Bede has reformulated the make-up of the hexameter line itself. According to most definitions, the fifth foot of the hexameter is usually a dactyl, but Bede states explicitly that it is always a dactyl (“spondeum locis omnibus praeter quintum”), and later reminds his reader that the last foot must always be a spondee but the fifth foot, never (“spondeum ultimo loco semper et omnibus praeter quintum”). We can see how subtly radical Bede’s tinkering with the definition of the hexameter is if we contrast it with his source, Mallius:

Constat autem metrum dactylicum hexametrum heroicum ex dactylo et spondio vel trochaeo, ita ut recipiat spondium locis omnibus, dactylum locis omnibus praeter ultimum, trochaicum vero loco tantum ultimo.<sup>165</sup>

[The heroic dactylic hexameter consists of the dactyl, the spondee and the trochee in such a way that it takes the spondee in every foot, the dactyl in every foot except the last one, and the trochee only in the final foot.]

Bede’s exposition of the dactylic hexameter is almost a verbatim quotation from Mallius, but where Mallius has spondium locis omnibus, Bede has wedged in praeter quintum. Bede has effectively ruled out the fifth-foot spondee from his very definition of the hexameter line, or, having recognised that the fifth foot is usually a dactyl, he has ruled that it must never be a spondee.

As in Bede’s revision of classical prosody, this break with grammatical tradition must be viewed in its proper historical context. It is obvious that what Bede perceived as the essential differences between pagan and Christian prosody has once again played a role, as well as his perhaps over-zealous habit of presenting as rules what had previously been mere tendencies. For Bede, spondaic fifth feet in hexameter lines were, together with hiatus, a relic from a bygone age, a claim that can be validated by the study of classical and Late Latin verse, although arguably not to the extent that Bede implies.

The spondaic fifth foot was, already in antiquity, considered an unusual feature, indeed so much so that lines with this feature were given a name of their own: they are called spondaic verses (Greek *σπονδειάζοντες*, Latin *versus spondiaci*). Greek hexameter poets used spondaic verses from time to time, although sparingly; the individual styles of the poets also played a role in the way in which this feature was employed. Hesiod, in particular, was

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<sup>165</sup> gramm. VI, 589, 20-23

apparently fond of this device, as the opening line of his *Works and Days* attests.<sup>166</sup> On the average, spondaic verses appear to constitute approximately five per cent of all Greek hexameter lines, although individual variation seems to be considerable (ranging from one every 6.9 lines in the Hellenistic Aratus to none at all in the late antique Nonnus and Musaeus). The appendix of George E. Duckworth's *Vergil and Classical Hexameter Poetry* gives the following figures:<sup>167</sup>

Spondaic verses, one every x lines

Homer, <i>Iliad</i>	18.3
Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>	20.6
Homer, total	19.4
Hesiod	15.7
Aratus	6.9
Theocritus, I-XIII	63.1
Callimachus, Hymns	63.1
Apollinaris	11.9
Quintus	14.3
Nonnus	-
Musaeus	-

Spondaic verses are a feature that was radically limited already in the earliest Roman attempts at hexameter poetry. One may question the reason for this development, but it is probable that as the Latin hexameter, for several historical reasons, was from the start less dactylic than its Greek counterpart, it was considered necessary for it to have a dactylic cadence to render its metrical structure more recognisable. Already in Ennius, spondaic verses are considerably less common than in most Greek hexameter poetry (one every 51.5 lines according to Duckworth, although any statistics on Ennius's verse are, of course, inconclusive), and, over time, they show a slow but steady decline. Excepting Catullus, who in his *Peleus and Thetis* employed spondaic verses abundantly, apparently in emulation of the Alexandrians, the classical hexameter poets were very cautious in their use of spondaic verses, as we can observe from the following selection of statistics - again courtesy of Duckworth:

Spondaic verses, one every x lines

Cicero	745.0
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<sup>166</sup> “*Μοῦσαι Πιερίηθεν, ἀοιδῆσι κλείουσαι*” (“Pierian Muses, praising with your song”).

<sup>167</sup> Duckworth 1969, table III.

Lucretius	230.2
Catullus, LX	13.6
Vergil, Eclogues	276.0
Vergil, Georgics	437.0
Vergil, Aeneid	409.5
Horace, Satires	-
Horace, Epistles	1,967.0
Horace, Ars poetica	476.0
Ovid, Metamorphoses	323.5

As we can see, in the classics, spondaic verses are not only an unusual verse-type but a downright marginal one. It is also interesting to note that Horace's Satires have no spondaic verses at all, although, in other respects, their quasi-colloquial style is generally viewed as "looser" than that of epic poetry. Apart from Catullus, the highest instance of spondaic verses is in Lucretius, where they are probably attributable to his more archaic style, still influenced by Ennius. In Vergil's Eclogues, which show a higher number of spondaic verses than his other work, they are obviously due to the emulation of Theocritus, as in Catullus. All this would seem to indicate that by the age of the Augustans, spondaic verses had come to be viewed as a somewhat contrived artistic device (this view is corroborated by the admittedly few, and arguably weak, attempts at parody they excited).<sup>168</sup> Usually they were used in direct paraphrases of Greek lines, in conjunction with Greek names, or otherwise in "Greek-related" contexts, where they were often paired with other Graecistic devices such as hiatus or unusual caesurae.<sup>169</sup> Owing to their perceived heaviness, they could also be used to express great size. In some cases, they alluded to archaic Latin poetry (Ennius or Lucretius).<sup>170</sup> The following is a random sampling of spondaic lines as employed by Vergil and Ovid with brief analyses of the probable motives for their use:

- "Cara deum suboles, magnum Iovis incrementum" (Verg. ecl. 4, 49) ("Beloved progeny of the gods, Jupiter's great offspring"). – Spondaic verse suggesting size.
- "Ante tibi Eoae Atlantides abscondantur" (Verg. georg. 1, 221) ("First let Atlas's daughters vanish from your sight at dawn"). – Spondaic verse in conjunction with Greek names; also note the "Greek" hiatus before Atlantides.

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<sup>168</sup> The most famous example of a spondaic verse parodied is Cicero's (Att. 7, 2): "Flavit ab Epiro lenissimus Oncesmites" ("The gentle Onchesmites blew from Epirus"); the line mocks the style of Catullus and the Neoterics, with whom the spondaic verse was a stock Greek affectation. - The only spondaic verse in Horace's *Ars poetica* (line 467) is in his admonition not to save mad poets, should their vanity drive them to self-destructive acts: "Sit ius liceatque perire poetis; invitum qui servat, idem facit occidenti" ("Poets should have the right to kill themselves; who saves them against their will as good as murders them"). The association of spondaic verses with overly pompous poets is evident.

<sup>169</sup> Raven 1965, 101.

<sup>170</sup> Eden 1975, 32.

- “Tune ille Aeneas, quem Dardanio Anchisae / alma Venus Phrygii genuit Simoentis ad undam?” (Verg. *Aen.* 1, 617-618) (“Are you the Aeneas whom kindly Venus bore to the Dardanian Anchises on the shores of the Phrygian Simois?”) – Profusion of Greek names; hiatus before *Anchisae*.

- “Cum patribus populoque, penatibus et magnis dis” (Verg. *Aen.* 8, 675.) (“With the senate and the people, the Penates and the great gods”). – Allusion to Ennius;<sup>171</sup> spondaic verse suggesting size.

- “Penelopaeque socer cum Parrhasio Ancaeo” (Ov. *met.* 8, 315) (“Penelope’s father-in-law with the Parrhasian Ancaeus”). – Greek names with “Greek” hiatus.

The marginalisation of the spondaic verse in classical hexameter poetry appears to be the by-product of the general standardisation the hexameter line, above all its final cadence: in classical hexameter verse, the final two feet of a “normal” hexameter correspond either with the type *cóndere géntem* or *cónde sepúlcro*: in other words, the line ends with a dactyl and a spondee, and the final word has either two or three syllables, thereby ensuring that the accent coincides with the ictus in the final two feet of the line. These two types were overwhelmingly popular already in Ennius (around 80 per cent of the lines), and other types gradually fell into disuse.<sup>172</sup> This standard cadence made the hexameter line more uniform, and, for most Latin speakers, it was probably its most recognisable part. Unusual line-endings were reserved for special effect, and they often have a ring of the “literary” about them, alluding to faraway places or earlier poets, either in homage or parody.<sup>173</sup>

The practice of the classics was generally followed by the poets of the Silver Age and late Antiquity: their use of spondaic verses shows frequencies similar to their Augustan predecessors, although, conspicuously enough, several poets seem to have given up spondaic verses altogether. This applies, above all, to a group of late Christian authors, whom

<sup>171</sup> *ibid*; Lloyd 1956, 38-46. The phrase *cum magnis dis* appears in Pyrrhus’s speech, as portrayed in Ennius’s *Annals* 190: “*Dono – ducite – doque – volentibus cum magnis dis*” (“This I grant you with the favour of the great gods”). Vergil has also used the phrase in *Aen.* 3, 12: “*Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis*” (“With my companions, son, the Penates and the great gods”).

<sup>172</sup> Raven 1965, 100-101. Unorthodox line-endings include all those in which the word-accent clashes with ictus, as in most lines ending in a quadrisyllabic word or word-combination or a (stressed) monosyllable (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 10, 442: “*soli mihi Pallas*”; *Aen.* 5, 481: “*procumbit humi bos*”). Quinquasyllabic words or word-compounds such as *frugiferentis* or *omn(e) animantum*, freely used by Lucretius, also fell into general disuse, although they appear to have made a comeback in late antiquity, and later were a favourite technique of the Anglo-Latin poets. The above restrictions do not, however, apply to the “conversational” hexameter lines of Roman satire.

<sup>173</sup> Nougaret 1948, 46, suggests that already Ennius and Lucretius used spondaic lines as a vehicle of parody. The notorious Ennian line (dubia 9 Skutsch) “*Introducuntur legati Minturnenses*” (“The Minturnese legates are brought in”), which consists entirely of spondees, can be seen to reflect the pomposity of the dignitaries.

Duckworth has dubbed “post-Ovidian”.<sup>174</sup> Of these, such poets as Paulinus of Périgueux, Dracontius, Cyprianus and Arator did not use spondaic lines at all, and Sedulius, Bede’s apparent favourite, only once.<sup>175</sup> Here, again, we may perhaps look to Sedulius as a possible model for Bede’s redefinition of the dactylic hexameter: Bede was aware of Sedulius’s single spondaic line in *Carmen paschale* (5, 196), but he offered it an alternative scansion, as if to exculpate his model of what in his eyes was a grave metrical fault.<sup>176</sup> But we shall discuss this later in detail.

Meanwhile, spondaic verses met with increasing disapprobation in the works of grammarians. According to Gellius’s *Attic Nights*, Seneca notoriously sneered on Vergil’s allusions to Ennian verse as a gratuitous archaism (although, admittedly, he did not specify spondaic verses);<sup>177</sup> Quintilian, on the other hand, labelled spondaic verses, together with similar prose clausulae and hexameter lines ending with five-syllable words as “weak” (*praemolle*).<sup>178</sup> Of the late antique grammarians, the most hostile stand was taken by Audax in his *Excerpta de Scauro et Palladio* (*gramm.* VI, 337, 17-20):

Minusque lenis est versus, qui quinto loco spondeum magis quam dactylum habuerit, et vocabitur spondiazon, veluti est ille: “Aut leves ocreas lento ducunt argento.” (Aen. 7, 634)

[A verse that has a spondee, rather than a dactyl, in the fifth foot is uncouth, and it is called a spondeiazon, as the following one: “Aut leves ocreas lento ducunt argento” (“Or they make smooth greaves of malleable silver”).]

<sup>174</sup> Duckworth 1969, 132-133; table I.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*; Ceccarelli 2008 vol. 2, 88.

<sup>176</sup> DAM 15, 55-60.

<sup>177</sup> Gell. 12, 2, 10:

De Vergilio quoque eodem in loco verba haec ponit: “Vergilius quoque noster non ex alia causa duos quosdam versus et enormes et aliquid supra mensuram trahentis interposuit, quam ut Ennianus populus adgnosceret in novo carmine aliquid antiquitatis.”

[In the same place, he (i.e. Seneca) says these words about Vergil: “Even our Vergil used, from time to time, some harsh, unusual and somewhat overlong lines for no other reason than that friends of Ennius might recognise something of the old in a new poem.”]

<sup>178</sup> Quint. inst. 9, 4, 65:

Est in eo quoque nonnihil, quod hic singulis verbis bini pedes continentur, quod etiam in carminibus est praemolle, nec solum ubi quinae, ut in his, syllabae nectuntur, “fortissima Tyndaridarum” (Hor. sat. 1, 1, 100), sed etiam quaternae, cum versus cluditur “Apennino” et “armamento” et “Orione.” [There is also something in the fact that here two feet are included in one word, something that is excessively weak even in verse, not only when a word of five syllables ends a verse, as fortissima Tyndaridarum, but even when the concluding word consists of but four syllables, as Apennino, armamentis, Orione.]

Quintilian’s objection is probably based on the accentuation of verse-endings of this type: although Latin presumably had a secondary accent, it was not considered strong enough for the beginning of the fifth foot (see Wilkinson 1963, 90-91; Raven 1965, 32; Allen 1973, 190).

Aldhelm, Bede's immediate precursor, seized Audax's condemnation of spondaic verses and more or less formulated it into a rule. In his *De metris*, Aldhelm quotes Audax in his aesthetic objection to spondaic verses: "minus lenis est versus, qui quinto loco spondeum habuerit" ("a line with a spondee in the fifth foot is uncouth").<sup>179</sup> Somewhat later, he reiterates the warning, this time in stricter terms: "nec in fine dactylus poni debet nec spondeus in quinto loco" ("one must never place a dactyl at the end of a line or a spondee in the fifth foot").<sup>180</sup> But Aldhelm does not stop here: in the invocatory prooemium of *Carmen de virginitate*, his most extensive hexameter work, he goes yet one step further and actually calls divine powers to his aid in order to avoid spondaic verses (line 49): "Spondaei quintam contemnat sillaba partem" ("Let the syllable of the spondee shun the fifth foot").<sup>181</sup>

Aldhelm's patent hostility towards spondaic verses is reflected in his own work, which, as Anglo-Latin poetry in general, is uniformly devoid of them. The only exception may be Aldhelm's own spondaic lines in his *De metris*, where he demonstrates his classification of the schemata of dactyls and spondees in hexameter lines.<sup>182</sup> But these spondaic verses are intended as purely theoretical models, and it is plain that when it came to actual poetry, Aldhelm regarded them as inapplicable. Aldhelm's take on spondaic verses largely corresponds with his remarkably formulaic approach to metre and versification: as we stated previously, the final two feet of the hexameter line were for Aldhelm and his followers an immutable block that invariably consists of a dactyl and a spondee. As Carin Ruff has formulated this spurious logic: "That the dactyl is characteristic of the fifth foot explains (in Aldhelm's view) why the spondee is characteristic of the sixth foot."<sup>183</sup> Aldhelm's views were probably influenced by Audax's purely hypothetical example of what a hexameter line that consists of six dactyls would sound like. As an illustration, Audax uses two such lines, one apparently of his own invention and the other a highly eccentric paraphrase of Vergil's *Aen.* 9, 503-504: "At tuba terribilem sonitum procul aere canoro / increpuit" ("But the brazen trumpet let out a terrible sound from afar");

Posset itaque esse etiam versus ex dactylis sex, si modo metrici admitterent, veluti dictus est ille, "interea tenero mihi bucula pascere gramine", item "at tuba terribilem sonitum procul excitat horrida."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ehwald 1919, 83.

<sup>180</sup> Ehwald 1919, 83.

<sup>181</sup> Ehwald 1919, 355.

<sup>182</sup> Ehwald 1919, 84-89.

<sup>183</sup> Ruff 2005, 158.

<sup>184</sup> gramm. VII, 340, 1-5.

[In other words, there could also be a line of six dactyls, if the prosodists only allowed it, as the following one: “Interea tenero mihi bucula pascere gramine” (“Meanwhile, my herd grazes on the soft grass”); similarly “At tuba terribilem sonitum procul excitat horrida” (“But the frightful trumpet raises up its terrible sound from afar”).]

Bede appears to have followed Aldhelm’s reasoning, as to the interconnectedness of the compulsory fifth-foot dactyl and the sixth-foot spondee. However, he also seems to have been led astray by Audax’s purely hypothetical discussion of (non-existent) sixth-foot dactyls: in his chapter on the outdated practices of pagan authors and the subsequent improvements made by the Christians, he suggests that the earlier poets did not always follow the ideal type of verse-ending, but sometimes used spondees in the fifth foot of the line and dactyls in the sixth. This misunderstanding is obviously due to Bede’s attribution of Audax’s hexameter paraphrase of Vergil to Vergil himself:

Nam et in exemplis antiquorum inveniuntur aliquoties duo spondei in fine versus, sicut et duo dactyli nonnumquam, ut sunt illa Maronis:

At tuba terribilem sonitum procul excitat horrida

et:

Aut leves ocreas lento ducunt argento (Aen. 7, 634).<sup>185</sup>

[In the model passages of the ancient poets two spondees are found several times at the end of the line, and similarly two dactyls, as in these verses of Vergil:

At tuba terribilem sonitum procul excitat horrida

(But the frightful trumpet raises up its terrible sound from afar);

and:

Aut leves ocreas lento ducunt argento

(Or they fashion smooth greaves from malleable silver).]<sup>186</sup>

This must be considered a highly atypical oversight on Bede’s part, but as we have witnessed, he was sometimes prone to misquotation, especially when the misquotation appeared to confirm a theory.<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, Bede appears to have accepted implicitly Aldhelm’s view that the fifth and sixth foot of the hexameter line are interconnected, that deviation from the norm mainly occurs in pre-Christian poetry, and that the veteres, who were notoriously prone to metrical irregularities, may have gone beyond the employment of spondaic verses in their transgressions against the norm. Bede’s assumption that pagan authors used lines with a dactyl in the sixth foot also appears in his chapter on syllable fusion and resolution (De

<sup>185</sup> DAM 16, 3-7.

<sup>186</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 141.

<sup>187</sup> It must be noted that Audax’s quasi-Vergilian prevarication is also quoted by Aldhelm (Ehwald 1919, 89-90), who also gives the original line as Vergil wrote it, attributing only the latter to Vergil.



episynalipha vel dieresi), where he discusses the genitives of second-declension nouns with -ius and -ium. He presents a line from Paulinus of Nola (18, 280), where the final -ii is in the last element of the line and presumably to be scanned as one syllable: “Oblectans inopem sensu fructuque peculii.” Bede defends this interpretation of the line but makes an allusion to the “ancients” with their habit of ending a hexameter line with a dactyl:

Quod si quis dixerit hic eum more antiquorum dactylum in fine posuisse versiculi,  
legat quod idem alibi dicit:

Excoluit, biiugis laquearii et marmore fabri (Paulin. 27, 385).<sup>188</sup>

[For if anyone should claim that in this instance Paulinus placed a dactyl at the end of the line in accordance with the practice of the ancients, let him read what the same poet says elsewhere:

Excoluit, biiugis laquearii et marmore fabri

(It was adorned, with the chariots of the panelled-ceiling maker and with the marble of the stonecutter).]<sup>189</sup>

Apparently Bede took it for a fact that pre-Christian poets used not only fifth-foot spondees, but also sixth-foot dactyls. Moreover, he seems to assume that his reader shares this view: otherwise he would not have gone to such lengths as to refute an analysis based on this alleged feature of pagan poetry.

Bede’s opposition to spondaic verses went far beyond their mere condemnation. That the structure must have seemed utterly unpalatable to him is manifest in the way in which he virtually tied himself in knots in order to exonerate his metrical authorities of what he perceived as an unpardonable flaw: in essence, Bede tried to prove that when Christian authors appear to use spondaic lines, they are, in reality, doing nothing of the sort. He contrived to accomplish this by extending the rules of syllable resolution to suggest alternative scansion where the fifth-foot spondee would de facto be scanned as a dactyl. The most problematic case, from Bede’s point of view, was indubitably the solitary spondaic verse in Sedulius, who, in most stylistic and prosodic matters, was Bede’s champion. The line appears in Sedulius’s portrayal of the crucifixion (carm. pasch. 5, 196), and undoubtedly the poet had aimed for an air of unusual “heaviness”, quite compatibly with the classical use of the device: “Scribitur et titulus: Hic est rex Iudaeorum” (“And the inscription is written: This is the king of the Jews”). This, however, was plainly not good enough for Bede, who, in his chapter on prosodic liberties, suggests an alternative scansion, turning the fifth-foot spondee into a dactyl:

<sup>188</sup> DAM 14, 88-90.

<sup>189</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 131,

Quod quomodo scandendum iudicaverit, videat qui potest, utrum ‘Iudaeorum’ duos spondees quinta et sexta regione contra morem, an solutis syllabis, iuxta quod supra monstravimus, dactylum fieri voluerit et spondeum.<sup>190</sup>

[Anyone who can may decide for himself how the poet determined that this line should be scanned: whether he wanted Iudaeorum to make two spondees in the fifth and sixth feet contrary to custom, or to become a dactyl and a spondee with the syllables resolved according to the principles which I have discussed before.]<sup>191</sup>

It is unclear what Bede’s suggested scansion for Iudaeorum would be. He makes a rather oblique reference to his previous chapter on the fusion and resolution of vowels (DAM 14), but does not specify how this should be applied to the line in question. Kendall has suggested the scansion *ī-u-de-ō-rum*,<sup>192</sup> although I find it equally possible that Bede had *Iū-da-e-ō-rum* in mind. In either case, Bede’s suggestion is remarkably far-fetched compared to the normal scansion of the line. A further and even bolder elaboration of the rules of fusion and resolution is a device, apparently Bede’s own invention, which consists in the insertion of a short prosthetic vowel (i or e) between two consonants when one of them is an r. This, as we may deduce from Bede’s own description, is a feature common to medieval ecclesiastical singing, but Bede only discusses the phenomenon in conjunction with the hexameter line with the apparent purpose of giving an alternative scansion to spondaic verses. All the examples Bede presents are by Christian authors (Juvenius, Paulinus of Nola and Prudentius), and their use of spondaic verses must have seemed particularly jarring to Bede’s religious sensibilities, but, rather than sidestepping the issue, Bede has boldly attempted to explain why these lines are only ostensibly spondaic:

Recipit et r littera solutionem quamvis ordine dissimili. Ibi enim discissis sive conglutinatis vocalibus syllaba contra naturam aut adcrevit aut interit; hic autem ea vocali, quae nequaquam adscripta est, in sono vocis adsumpta superadcrevire tantum syllaba consuevit, ut:

Illi continuo statuunt ter dena argenti (Juvenius, 4, 426);  
et Paulinus:

Et spatii coepere et culminis incrementa (Paulinus. 28, 202);  
et rursus:

Sic prope, sic longe sita culmina respergebat (Paulinus. 28, 91);  
et Prudentius in Psychomachia:

Dixerat haec et laeta libidinis interfectae (Prudentius. psychom. 98);  
et idem in eadem:

<sup>190</sup> DAM 15, 57-60.

<sup>191</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 139.

<sup>192</sup> Kendall 1991, 139: “I.e. IUDE, dactyl, with resolution of IU, and the shortening of a long vowel or diphthong before a second long vowel.”

Palpitat atque aditu spiraminis intercepto (Prud. psychom. 594):  
 Neque enim in quinta regione versus heroici spondeum ponere moris erat. Sed ita tamen versus huiusmodi voluisse reor, ut addita in sono vocali, quam non scribebant, dactylus potius quam existeret spondeus, verbi gratia, intericepto, incerementa, interifectae, resperigebat, et per synalipham denarigenti. Quod ideo magis r littera quam ceterae consonantes patitur, quia, quae dure excipitur; atque ideo sonus ei vocalis adponitur, cuius temperamento eius levigetur asperitas. Quod etiam in cantilenis ecclesiasticis saepe in eadem r littera facere consuerunt qui antiphonas vel responsoria vel cetera huiusmodi, quae cum melodia dicuntur, rite dicere norunt.<sup>193</sup>  
 [The letter r can also be resolved, although not in the same way. For in the examples we have been discussing, a syllable contrary to its nature was either split into two or disappeared by means of vowels which were resolved or fused. In this case however the practice was simply to augment the syllable by adding in pronunciation an unwritten vowel, as, for example:

Illi continuo statuunt ter dena argenti

(They immediately agree upon thirty pieces of silver for him);

and Paulinus:

Et spatii coepere et culminis incrementa

(They began to have increases both of width and height);

and again:

Sic prope, sic longe sita culmina resperigebat

(So the storm soaked the buildings located near and far);

and Prudentius in the *Psychomachia*:

Dixerat haec et laeta libidinis interfectae

(She had spoken these things, and rejoicing in the death of lust...);

and the same poet in this line:

Palpitat atque aditu spiraminis intercepto

(She shudders, and with the entrance of the breath cut off...).

Since it was not the custom to place a spondee in the fifth foot of a heroic verse, I believe that these poets intended such verses to be scanned so that, with the audible addition of a vowel, which they did not write, there should be a dactyl rather than a spondee in that foot; for instance, intericepto, incerementa, interifectae, resperigebat, and by elision, denarigenti. This occurs more readily with the letter r than with other consonants because r which is naturally voiced harshly is made harsher when it is followed by other consonants; and therefore a vowel sound is added to it to smooth its harshness by blending of the vowel. Those who have been trained to chant antiphons and responses and other such pieces properly are in the habit of treating the letter r very frequently in this way even in the songs of the Church.]<sup>194</sup>

Bede's attempt seems desperate but I see no reason to doubt its sincerity. Seen as an explanation for the use of spondaic verses in Christian poetry, it is certainly not satisfactory: Juvencus, Paulinus and Prudentius, unlike Sedulius, belong to a group of late Latin poets

<sup>193</sup> DAM 14, 53-79.

<sup>194</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 127-129.

whose use of spondaic verses parallels or even exceeds the classics,<sup>195</sup> and this phenomenon is scarcely explainable by the postulation of an extra vowel in the fifth foot of the line. Bede's reference to antiphons and canticles reveals the background of his argument: the insertion of prosthetic vowels is a practice that is generally postulated for the ecclesiastical music of the early Middle Ages; such interpolated vowels are presumably what early neumatic notation implied with "grace notes" known as liquescent neumes.<sup>196</sup> It seems natural that Bede, himself a teacher of ecclesiastical music, must have been attracted by such a solution to an apparent metrical flaw, although applying it to hexameter verse intended for reading rather than singing seems a desperate measure and betrays both his favouritism when it came to Christian poets and the surprising rigidity of his views on prosody and metre.

Bede's description of the hexameter and its placement of feet shows us the curiously dual aspect of his scholarly temperament: Bede was undoubtedly more original and empirical in his approach to metre than most grammarians. He is seldom content with merely quoting from his predecessors, and everywhere in his treatise we come across observations that are clearly based on his own observation and meticulous study. At the same time, he shows a pigheaded predilection for creating systems and rules, and his observations often appear to have been influenced by a pre-existing theoretical superstructure of his own device, even to the extent of the suppression of evidence and the creation of inapplicable prosodic rules. Bede's presentation of the hexameter, in particular, seems to have been impaired by his visions of an "ideal type of verse", a feature that we must now observe more closely.

We may call to mind how Bede discusses the sixth foot of the hexameter line. Bede is not explicit as to whether it should be interpreted as a trochee or a spondee, but suggests that it would make more sense always to view it as a spondee. Bede argues in favour of this interpretation by reminding the reader that the final syllable of every line is "indifferent", i.e. a syllaba anceps. However, Bede presents a further argument that strikes a post-medieval reader as fanciful, if not downright metaphysical:

*Alioquin legitimum numerum XXIII temporum versus hexameter non habebit, quia tot illum pro sui perfectione habere decebat, quot habet libra plena semiuncias.*<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> See Duckworth 1969, table I: Juvenecus has one spondaic verse per 526.7 lines, a figure comparable with Vergil's Aeneid, but Prudentius has one spondaic verse per 134.3 lines and Paulinus one per 256.5 lines – in the context of Roman hexameter verse, very high frequencies indeed.

<sup>196</sup> Treitler 2003, 391.

<sup>197</sup> DAM 10, 13-16.

[Otherwise the hexameter will not have the correct number of twenty-four morae, since it was considered fitting that it have for its perfected state as many morae as a full pound has half-ounces.]<sup>198</sup>

Bede clearly views the hexameter line as something that has an ideal, “perfect”, form that harmonises with the rest of creation; consequently, he regards the concept of an odd number of morae in a hexameter line as aesthetically objectionable. His exposition of this principle is taken from Audax, who is even more adamant in his opposition to the concept of trochaic sixth feet but presents no arguments in favour of his view except that a hexameter line with twenty-three morae would, by definition, be catalectic (*colobos*).<sup>199</sup> Bede’s parallel with weights and measures is apparently his own addition and probably reflects his general world-view of symmetry and harmony, to which the hexameter, too, is subject.

Bede’s discussion of the hexameter shows, once again, that his aim is to write a guide to the proper composition of Christian poetry. The quotation which he gives as an illustration of the dactylic hexameter is the first line of Venantius Fortunatus’s *Christian De virginitate*, an extensive work in elegiac couplets that became a model for much of the Carolingian poetry in the same metre. To facilitate scansion, Bede has divided the line into feet: “*Culmina. multa po.los radi. anti. lumine. complent*” (“Many mansions fill Heaven with a radiant light”). In other words, Bede’s prime example of a hexameter line is not taken from Vergil but from a Christian work, and one in elegiac couplets (rather than pure hexameters) at that. But there is logic behind this choice: Bede discusses the hexameter and the pentameter under the same heading, and goes to great lengths to demonstrate their connectedness as well as their prosodic parallels, illustrating both line-types with the same couplet. Arguably, the hexameters of Venantius are also easy to scan for beginners: they are almost invariably

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<sup>198</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 97.

<sup>199</sup> gramm. VII, 336, 14-23. Audax’s discussion of this purely theoretical point may seem gratuitous: *Quid est dactylicum metrum? Quod constat dactylo et spondeo. Cur non addis ultimo interdum trochaeo? Quia bono iudicio metrici complures hunc pedem de versu hexametro excludendum censuerunt. Quippe omnis syllaba in ultimo versu adiaforos est, id est indifferenter accipitur, nec interest utrum producta sit an correpta, siquidem positione longa fiat, cum partem orationis in exitu finit. Eo accedit quod vitiosus eius modi versus est, qui trochaeum admittit. Nam cum ita ratio exposcat, ut in pleno versu viginti quattuor tempora sint, admisso utique trochaeo minuitur temporum numerus, et erunt tempora viginti tria, qui est versus colobos.* [Why is it a dactylic metre? Because it consists of the dactyl and the spondee. Why do you not add that it sometimes has a trochee in the last foot? Because several prosodists have, with good judgement, opined that this foot should be excluded from the hexameter line. Namely, every syllable at the end of a line is *adiaforos*, that is indifferent, and it does not matter whether it is long or short, as it becomes long by position when it ends a part of speech at the line-ending. In addition, a line that admits a trochee is faulty. For since the rules require that a full line should have twenty-four morae, the admission of a trochee, so to speak, diminishes the number of morae, and the line would have twenty-four morae, making it a catalectic line.]

heavily dactylic, the caesurae are regular almost to the point of tedium and the clash of accent and ictus is generally avoided, except in the very middle of the line.<sup>200</sup>

#### 2.4.2. The elegiac couplet

In conjunction with the dactylic hexameter, Bede also discusses the elegiac couplet, which consists of a hexameter line followed by a pentameter. In his introduction to the subject, Bede has seen it fit to warn his reader that the pentameter only appears together with the hexameter line,<sup>201</sup> an observation which, as he cautiously implies, he has made on his own. This is something that previous generations presumably took for granted, but Bede, ever wary of overestimating his reader, has stated it explicitly. His definition of the dactylic pentameter line and its structure are taken from Mallius Theodorus, who is also his main source on the lyric metres, probably because his definitions are simpler and more practical than those of many other grammarians, and unencumbered by excessive theoretical speculation. His example of the pentameter line is taken from the second line of the couplet by Venantius Fortunatus which also provided him with the model for the hexameter. Once again, Bede has facilitated the scansion of the line by dividing it into feet that correspond with Mallius's description of the metre:

Huic cognatum est et quasi familiariter adhaerens, ita ut sine ipsius praesidio numquam id positum viderim, metrum dactylicum pentametrum, quod recipit spondeum loco primo et secundo, dactylum locis omnibus, catalecton in medio et in fine. Huius exemplum:

Laetan.turque pi.is. agmina. sancta cho.ris (Ven. Fort. carm. 8, 3, 2).<sup>202</sup>

[The dactylic pentameter is related to the hexameter and, as it were, clings intimately to it, so that I have never seen the pentameter used without the other being in attendance. It takes a spondee in the first and second foot, a dactyl in all feet, and a catalectic foot in the middle and at the end. An example of this meter is:

Laetan.turque pi.is. agmina. sancta cho.ris.  
(And the holy host rejoice in sacred choirs).]<sup>203</sup>

<sup>200</sup> Heikkinen 2004, 27.

<sup>201</sup> This observation is, indeed, true, as far as extant literary works are considered. The best-known exception is the anonymous Pompeian inscriptional poem "Nihil durare potest tempore perpetuo" (CIL IV 9123), famously used by Carl Orff in his *Catulli carmina*. All four lines of the poem are in the dactylic pentameter.

<sup>202</sup> DAM 10, 20-25.

<sup>203</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 98-99.

To avoid confusion, Bede also presents an alternative way of dividing the pentameter line, which, as he is quick to point out, is impractical as it ignores the central caesura of the line, as well as obscuring its dactylic nature. According to this model, the pentameter line is cut up into metrical feet of similar lengths so that the beginning of the line has two dactyls, and the end, two anapaests.<sup>204</sup> Bede does not condemn this theory outright, but cleverly, and with characteristically wry modesty, demonstrates its impracticality with a line of his own, constructed from two identical half-lines.<sup>205</sup> Bede's analysis shows that the hexameter is, for him, the primary metre and the pentameter its derivative:

Huius metri versus quidam ita scandendos astruunt, ut quinque absolutos pedes eis inesse doceant, spondeum sive dactylum loco primo et secundo, spondeum tertio semper, quarto et quinto anapestum, veluti si dicas:

Quaerite regna poli, quaerite regna poli,  
quaerite dactylus, regnapo dactylus, liquae spondeus, ritere anapestus, gnapoli  
anapestus. Quod rationi eiusdem metri, ni fallor, minus videtur esse conveniens, cum  
universi qui huic metro usi sunt versum omnem in medio diviserint, quem duabus  
pentimemeris constare voluerint, quarum prior dactylum sive spondeum licenter in  
utraque regione recipit, posterior solum dactylum in utraque.<sup>206</sup>

[Some prosodists claim that verses of this metre should be scanned this way - they teach that they have five complete feet: a spondee or a dactyl in the first and second foot, always a spondee in the third foot, and an anapaest in the fourth and fifth foot, as though you should pronounce the verse

Quaerite regna poli, quaerite regna poli  
(Seek the kingdom of Heaven, seek the kingdom of Heaven),  
quaerite (dactyl), regnapo (dactyl), liquae (spondee), ritere (anapest), gnapoli  
(anapest). This seems less suitable for the scheme of the metre, if I am not mistaken,  
since all who have used it have divided the whole line in the middle and have  
intended it to consist of two two-and-a-half-foot segments, the first of which takes  
the dactyl or the spondee freely in either full foot, and the second, the dactyl  
exclusively in both full feet.]<sup>207</sup>

Bede shows a firm sense of pedagogics: he has opted for the most lucid means of explaining the structure of the pentameter. As in his later chapters on the structure of the lyric metres, he has jettisoned the excess baggage of idle theoretical speculation and simultaneously demonstrated the simplest building blocks of the metre.

<sup>204</sup> This cumbersome analysis of the dactylic pentameter is given by Marius Victorinus (gramm. VI, 109, 29 – 110, 8).

<sup>205</sup> Bede is, of course, not the first author to resort to this device; it occurs already in Terentianus Maurus ("Desine Maenalios / desine Maenalios" – Ter. Maur. 1730) and is virtually ubiquitous in Late Latin grammarians.

<sup>206</sup> DAM 10, 26-37.

<sup>207</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 99.

Bede also briefly discusses the origins of the hexameter and the elegiac couplet, as well as the etymology of their names. This part of his presentation cannot be considered particularly original, as it is borrowed almost verbatim from Isidore. Bede describes the origin of the hexameter as follows. “Hoc metrum post Homerum heroicum nomen accepit, Pithium antea dictum, eo quod Apollinis oracula illo sint metro edita.”<sup>208</sup> (“This metre received the name of ‘heroic verse’ after Homer’s time, having previously been called ‘Pythian’, because the oracles of Apollo were uttered in it.”)<sup>209</sup> The etymology of the word ‘elegiac’ comes from the same source: “Hoc autem et superius metrum ubi iuncta fuerint, elegiacum carmen vocatur. Elegios namque miseros appellant philosophi, et huius modulatio carminis miserorum querimoniae congruit, ubi prior versus exámetro, sequens est pentámetro.”<sup>210</sup> (“When the pentameter is joined with the hexameter, the verse is called ‘elegiac’. For scholars speak of elegiac poetry as sad, and the modulation of this verse, where the first line is a hexameter and the next a pentameter, is suited to the lamentations of the miserable.”)<sup>211</sup> Bede, however, departs from this traditional material with a brief excursus into what he and his contemporaries considered the biblical use of the hexameter and the elegiac metre:

Quo genere metri ferunt canticum Deuteronomii apud Hebreos, sed et psalmos CXVII et CXLIII esse scriptos. Namque librum beati Iob simplici exámetro scriptum esse asseverant.<sup>212</sup>

[It is said that the song of Moses in Deuteronomy (Deut. 32) and Psalms 118 and 144 were written in this metre in Hebrew, while the book of the blessed Job was written in plain hexameters.]<sup>213</sup>

Bede has drawn this presentation from Cassiodorus’s and Jerome’s commentaries,<sup>214</sup> which constitute the most influential attempts to impute a biblical origin on poetic metres. By Bede’s time, their assertions were no longer really questioned, and it is no wonder that Bede takes the questions of prosody in hexameter verse so seriously. Far from viewing the dactylic metres as pagan metres that had been adopted by Christian writers, he saw them as essentially Judeo-Christian, although for a period of time they had also been in the used by Greek and

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<sup>208</sup> DAM 10, 18-19.

<sup>209</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 97.

<sup>210</sup> DAM 10, 37-41.

<sup>211</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 99.

<sup>212</sup> DAM 10, 41-44.

<sup>213</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 99.

<sup>214</sup> Cassiod. in psalm. 118, 23-26; Hier. praef. Vulg. Iob.



Roman pagans. This, apparently, is the real starting point of all his observations on metre and poetic diction.

## 2.5. The aesthetics of verse

In pronounced contrast to many of his predecessors, and Aldhelm in particular, Bede does not limit his treatise of the poetic metres to their inner metric: he goes beyond mere prosodic issues and the placement of feet in attempting to explain how individual lines could best be combined into larger entities. He discusses these questions already at the end of his presentation of the structures of the hexameter and the pentameter.

The elegiac couplet, in Bede's opinion, seems to have required particular scrutiny. In part this is undoubtedly due to the fact that it was less familiar to his readers than "pure" hexameter verse: for one thing, it was less prominently represented in the works of the authors who belonged to the monastic curriculum. Presumably, the classic elegiac poets Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius were still largely unknown in England during Bede's lifetime (apart from the lines quoted by grammarians). Although we know that, even in his discussion of hexameter poetry, Bede preferred Christian examples to classical ones, in the case of the elegiac couplet he really had little choice: all his quotations are drawn from the Christian poets Sedulius, Prosper and Venantius Fortunatus.<sup>215</sup>

The one aspect of elegiac verse which in Bede's eyes needed to be spelt out explicitly is the fact that the hexameter and the pentameter form a sense-unit. This may not have been self-evident to readers only acquainted with "pure" hexameters: although the lines in Anglo-Latin hexameter verse of the Aldhelmian type are more often than not end-stopped, hexameter verse also permits free enjambment. In elegiac verse, on the other hand, an individual couplet may not be concatenated with the following one. Bede's discussion of the structure of the couplet and the emphasis on the close connection of its two lines is probably intended as a caveat to prospective poets with some grasp of hexameter verse. Drawing on the example of Sedulius and Prosper, he presents two alternative ways of constructing a couplet: that where the individual lines make sense on their own, and that where enjambment takes place between the hexameter and the pentameter:

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<sup>215</sup> Late Latin elegiac verse is, in some respects, looser than its classical predecessors, and above all, the Augustan refinement of always ending the pentameter line with a two-syllable word is not consequently observed. Bede was probably ignorant of such restrictions, and in any case, they would have been meaningless to him, and consequently are not discussed in his treatise.

Observandum est autem in carmine elegiaco nequid umquam de sensu versus pentametri remaneat inexplicatum, quod in sequente versu exámetro reddatur, sed vel uterque sensibus suis terminetur versus, ut Sedulius:

Cantemus, socii, Domino, cantemus honorem,  
dulcis amor Cristi personet ore pio (Sedul. hymn. 1, 1-2);

vel sibi mutuo prior exámeter ac pentámeter subsequens, prout poetae placuerit, conserantur iuxta illud Prosperi:

Solus peccator servit male, qui licet amplo  
utatur regno, sat miser est famulus (Prosp. epigr. 8, 5-6).

Nam sequentes versiculi, etsi his sunt subiuncti, sibimet sunt tamen invicem coniuncti et secundus primo dat supplementum. Sequitur enim:

Cum mens carnali nimium dominante tyranno  
tot servit sceptris dedita quot vitiis (Prosp. epigr. 8, 7-8).<sup>216</sup>

[Furthermore, it should be observed that in elegiac poetry the sense of the pentameter line is never left to be completed by the following hexameter. Either each line makes complete sense separately, as in Sedulius's couplet:

Let us sing, companions, let us sing glory to the Lord,  
let the sweet glory of Christ sound out from our pious mouths,  
or, if the poet prefers, there may be enjambment between the hexameter and the following pentameter, in the manner of this couplet of Prosper:

The sinner serves evil alone; although he may possess  
a great kingdom, he is a wretched enough slave.

The following lines, although they are subjoined to these, are nevertheless linked to each other in their turn, and the second completes the sense of the first. This is the next couplet:

When the tyrant sin excessively dominates the flesh,  
the mind serves as many masters as the number of vices to which it is given.]<sup>217</sup>

Although Bede here discusses something that is a mandatory feature of elegiac verse, he has extrapolated his discussion of outer metric to hexameter verse. Far from limiting himself to the bare necessities of metrical rules, he tries to give guidelines for its architectonics on a larger scope. The eleventh chapter of his treatise, titled *Quae sit optima carminis forma* (On the best kind of verse) constitutes a slim compendium of what Bede apparently regarded as particularly elegant poetic devices. The chapter is too modest to make an actual treatise on poetic style, but it allows us a glimpse at Bede's aesthetic mindset.

For Bede, the key elements of "the best kind of verse" are variety and scope, and their worst enemies are excessive repetition and short-windedness, both flaws that mar the verse of less accomplished poets and are prominent in Aldhelm's poetry. It has been suggested that Bede's aesthetic is in many respects a reaction to Aldhelm's poetic diction and even that when Bede speaks against excessive repetition he is actually taking a "sideswipe at

<sup>216</sup> DAM 10, 44-59.

<sup>217</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 101.

Aldhelm”.<sup>218</sup> The four devices which Bede recommends as hallmarks of sophisticated verse are the following:

- 1) Enjambment of consecutive hexameter lines.
- 2) The employment of what has traditionally been called a “golden line”.
- 3) Asyndetic lists of nouns or verbs.
- 4) The principle that adjectives should preferably be placed before their nouns.

This may seem like a random choice of poetic devices, and Bede’s motives in choosing them may, on the surface, seem hard to fathom, but apparently his main intention has been the promotion of a better and more varied hexameter style. The chapter also displays Bede’s obvious admiration of Sedulius’s poetry, and his discussion of the aesthetics of verse shows that this admiration went far beyond questions of prosody. Bede by no means intended these four techniques to be quick fixes for unimaginative poets; on the contrary, he repeatedly warns his readers not to overuse these techniques, lest they cause “tedium”.

### 2.5.1. Enjambment

Bede starts his discussion with an indirect reference to the structure of the elegiac couplet which he discussed in the previous chapter: Bede says that, in hexameter verse (as opposed to elegiac poetry) the concatenation of several lines often causes a pleasing effect, calling forth the very Christian example of Arator and Sedulius. Bede first cites six enjambed lines from Sedulius’s *Paschale carmen*’s portrayal of Lot’s wife, following it up with a five-line description of the Temple in Arator’s *De actibus apostolorum*.

At vero in exámetro carmine concatenatio versuum plurimorum solet esse gratissima, quod in Aratore et Sedulio frequenter invenies, modo duobus, modo tribus, modo quattuor, aut quinque versibus, nonnumquam sex vel septem vel etiam pluribus ad invicem conexas, quale est illud:

Loth Sodomae fugiente chaos, dum respicit uxor,  
in statuam mutata salis stupefacta remansit,  
ad poenam conversa suam: quia nemo retrorsum,  
noxia contempti vitans discrimina mundi,  
aspiciens salvandus erit, nec debet arator  
dignum opus exercens vultum in sua terga referre (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 121-

126);

et Arator:

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<sup>218</sup> Wright 2005, 167.

Iura ministerii sacris altaribus apti  
 in septem statuere viris, quos undique lectos  
 Levitas vocitare placet. Quam splendida coepit  
 ecclesiae fulgere manus, quae pocula vitae  
 misceat et latices cum sanguine porrigat agni (Arator act. 1, 552-556).<sup>219</sup>

[In hexameter verse, on the other hand, the concatenation of many lines is usually very pleasing. You will frequently find this kind of thing in Arator and Sedulius, where enjambment links two, three, four or five lines, such as this passage: “As Lot was fleeing from the chaos of Sodom, his wife looked back and was rooted to the spot, stunned and changed into a statue of salt, converted into her own punishment: because no one who looks back while trying to avoid the injurious hazards of the despised world will be saved, nor should the ploughman exercising his worthy labour look behind him”;

or these lines of Arator: “They decree that the duties of the office of deacon, which has to do with the sacred altar, should fall upon seven men, whom they chose from among all the disciples and agreed to call deacons. How splendidly did the band of deacons of the church begin to shine, the band which administers the cup of life and serves the water with the blood of the lamb.”]<sup>220</sup>

Bede, however, warns his reader not to overdo it:

Verum huiusmodi conexio si ultra modum procedat, fastigium gignit ac taedium.<sup>221</sup>  
 [But if a sequence of run-on lines goes on too long, it is distasteful and wearisome.]<sup>222</sup>

Curiously, he also warns not to do this in antiphonal hymns:

Hymnos vero, quos choris alternantibus canere oportet, necesse est singulis versibus ad purum esse distinctos, ut sunt omnes Ambrosiani.<sup>223</sup>  
 [And indeed those hymns which are properly sung by antiphonal choirs must be carefully arranged line by line according to sense, as all the hymns of Ambrose are.]<sup>224</sup>

Bede’s emphasis on the importance of enjambment is clearly a reaction to the “Aldhelmian” form of hexameter versification, where the individual lines were composed piecemeal, and the clauses rarely extend beyond line-endings. From the evidence of his own *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti* we know that Bede was a master in the use of enjambment, and in this his

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<sup>219</sup> DAM 11, 2-18.

<sup>220</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 103.

<sup>221</sup> DAM 11, 19-20.

<sup>222</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 103.

<sup>223</sup> DAM 11, 20-22.

<sup>224</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 103.

primary models were, indeed, Sedulius and Arator. As a prime example we may observe the opening of Bede's verse hagiography:

Multa suis Dominus fulgescere lumina saeculis  
 donavit, tetricas humanae noctis ut umbras  
 lustraret divina poli de culmine flamma.  
 Et licet ipse Deo natus de lumine Christus  
 lux sit summa, Deus sanctos quoque iure lucernae  
 ecclesiae rutilare dedit, quibus igne magistro  
 sensibus instet amor, sermonibus aestuet ardor;  
 multifidos varium lichinos qui sparsit in orbem,  
 ut cunctum nova lux fidei face fusa sub axem  
 omnia sidereis virtutibus arva replet.<sup>225</sup>

[The Lord gave many lights to shine in their times, so that the divine light from the summit of heaven would illumine the gloomy shades of human night. Although Christ himself, born from God who is the light, is the greatest light, God also gave saints rightly to redden as lamps of the church, through whom, with fire as their teacher, love might press on our senses, ardour might burn in our speeches. He scattered their manifold lamps over the diverse parts of the world, so that the new light of faith, poured from the torch under the whole heaven, might fill all the land with heavenly powers.]<sup>226</sup>

As we see from Bede's long periods, what he has aimed at is a sort of uninterrupted stream of verse; if anything, even more so than in the examples he has chosen from Sedulius and Arator. The effect is enhanced by Bede's subtle placement of clause-breaks: rather than making them coincide either with the line-ending or the penthemimeral caesura, Bede uses the less usual trithemimeral caesura in line two ("donavit, / tetricas humanae noctis ut umbras"), the even less usual trochaic caesura of the second foot in line five ("lux sit summa, / Deus sanctos quoque iure lucernae") and the hepthemimeral caesura in line six ("ecclesiae rutilare dedit, / quibus igne magistro"). That Arator, also quoted at length by Bede in his presentation of enjambment, was an influence on Bede's verse can be seen not only from the overall structure of the passage but from the direct allusions to Arator's verse which it contains: in line six, "igne magistro" plays on Arator's "Ecclesiae nascentis erat quibus igne magistro" (act. 1, 126); line seven, on the other hand, is an almost direct quotation of his "Mentibus instat amor, sermonibus aestuat ardor" (act. 1, 147), and line ten is a paraphrase of Arator's "Omnia qui fidei virtutibus arva serenant" (act. 2, 1222): Bede has merely substituted qui fidei for sidereis and repletet for serenat.

<sup>225</sup> Jaeger 1935, 58-59, lines 1-10.

<sup>226</sup> Trans. Steen 2007, 24.

If we compare this passage from Bede's *Vita* with the opening lines of, say, Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*, the contrast could not be greater:

Omnipotens genitor, mundum ditioe gubernans,  
 lucida stelligeris qui condis culmina coeli,  
 nec non telluris formas fundamina verbo,  
 pallida purpureo pingis qui flore vireta,  
 sic quoque fluctivagi refrenas caerula ponti,  
 mergere ne valeant terrarum litora lymphis,  
 sed tumidos frangant fluctus obstacula rupis...<sup>227</sup>

[Almighty Progenitor, guiding the world by Your rule, Who are the Creator of the shining heights of the star-filled heaven, (Who) also formed the foundations of the earth by Your Word; You Who paint the pale greensward with purple blossom, and restrain the azure surface of the wave-wandering sea so that the shores of the lands are not submerged by water, but rather that obstacles of rocks may break the swollen waves...]<sup>228</sup>

The image Aldhelm conjures is one of intense breathlessness, but it has been achieved by a string of parallel clauses, none of which extend beyond the line-ending. Even the order of the individual lines could be changed without any fundamental alteration to the content. In other words, the whole aesthetic of the poem is different and reflects Aldhelm's short-spanned approach to versification, where the main focus was on keeping the inner structure of the individual line together, rather than any attempt to craft the lines into a congruous whole. All in all, the respective poetic styles of Bede and Aldhelm betray their personal attitudes towards poetry, one seeing it as adjacent to rhetoric, the other to arithmetic. However, Aldhelm's verse is certainly easier to read than Bede's, and its structural straightforwardness does lend it a kind of vigour and panache, which some critics have preferred over Bede's broader but, at the same time, subtler style.<sup>229</sup>

Characteristically, Bede, in his presentation of enjambment, has bypassed any mention of Vergil or other "ancients" altogether and, through his choice of poetic examples, managed to present the technique of enjambment as something typically Christian; in other words, his exposition of enjambment, once again, exhibits his relentless effort to substitute Sedulius for Vergil. The sudden introduction of antiphonal hymns into the discussion may

<sup>227</sup> Ehwald 1919, 352.

<sup>228</sup> Trans. Rosier 1985, 102.

<sup>229</sup> e.g. Turner 1836, 376: "Our Venerable Bede attempted Latin poetry, but the Muses did not smile on his efforts." On Bede's *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*, Turner is particularly harsh: "It has little other merit than that of an Anglo-Saxon labouring at Latin prosody in the dark period of the seventh century. It has not the vigour or the fancy which occasionally appear in Aldhelm's versification." And further, quoting the opening of the work: "His invocation is much inferior to Aldhelm's." Nowhere does Turner specify what he means by "inferior", nor does he take into account that Bede's "laboured" prosody is actually much superior to Aldhelm's.

strike the modern reader as strange, but we must bear in mind that Bede was himself a teacher of ecclesiastical music<sup>230</sup> and that antiphonal hymns were the poetic form with which his readers were most acquainted. Bede has tried to be as clear as possible about the metrical phenomenon that he is discussing: as in the case of the elegiac line, he expounds that certain features of hexameter verse are not applicable to other forms of poetry. Bede's observations do not amount to an actual discussion of the differences between stichic and strophic poetry, and even those chapters of his treatise which deal with the lyric metres are virtually devoid of any guidance to poetic style: Bede's brief chapter on the iambic dimeter, as used by Ambrose,<sup>231</sup> discusses only its metrical structure, and the outer metric of the line or its stylistic features are not mentioned at all. This underlines the overall impression of enjambment, and hexameter technique in general, as a novelty that was probably largely alien, and certainly difficult, for Bede's readers.

## **2.5.2. Bede on word order**

### **2.5.2.1. The golden line**

Bede is often credited as the first grammarian to recognise the construction that traditionally, in the classrooms and grammars of the English-speaking sphere, is termed the "golden line". The construction can best be defined as a double hyperbaton with the predicate verb placed in the centre, although usage of the term tends to vary considerably. What often adds to the confusion is that this, apparently, was the state of things already for the early modern grammarians, and that the term has, until fairly recently, been virtually unknown outside the English-speaking world.<sup>232</sup> The best-known use of the term is in the preface to Dryden's *Sylvae* (1685), which was famously quoted in L.P. Wilkinson's 1963 *Golden Latin Artistry*: "that verse which they call golden, of two substantives and two adjectives with a verb betwixt them to keep the peace."<sup>233</sup> Wilkinson has reworked this definition by first noting that "conjunctions, prepositions, etc. can be ignored", then by limiting the term in a way that probably corresponds with how it was traditionally taught in the English classroom:

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<sup>230</sup> Hist. eccl. 5, 24.

<sup>231</sup> DAM 21.

<sup>232</sup> Mayer 2002, 139.

<sup>233</sup> Wilkinson 1963, 215.

Let us restrict the term, as is generally done, to lines in which the epithets and nouns appear in the corresponding order, that is, a b C A B: as in  
*grandia per multos tenuantur flumina rivos.*<sup>234</sup>

In other terms, the first word of the line agrees with the penultimate one and the second word with the final one. Wilkinson further refined this definition by creating other, mildly jocular terms for other types of line-spanning hyperbaton which fall short of his definition of "golden":

The chiasitic form a b C B A (shall we call it the 'Silver Line', since it is not quite so absolute?) can also be used in this way, as at the end of *Georgic II* (540):  
*impositos duris crepitare incudibus ensis.*<sup>235</sup>

And further:

Another form of hexameter (shall we call it the 'Bronze Line'?) is that framed by epithet and noun, as in (*Aen. VI*, 137)  
*aureus et foliis et lento vimine ramus.*<sup>236</sup>

Wilkinson's nomenclature of golden, silver and bronze lines was obviously not intended to be taken too seriously, but it was adopted at least in the 1998 Latin grammar of Dirk Panhuis (translated in 2006), which presents golden, silver and bronze lines as a veritable grammatical rule.<sup>237</sup>

An alternative, and much stricter, definition of the golden line, which also has modern-day followers, was presented already in the 1652 Latin grammar of Edward Burles, the first known source to use the term "golden" for lines of this type. Burles's definition of the golden line is essentially the same as Wilkinson's, but with the further restriction that the adjectives should come at the beginning of the line and the nouns at the end:<sup>238</sup>

Epithets are elegantly set before their Substantives, and if the Verse doe consist of two Adjectives, two Substantives and a Verb only, the first Adjective agreeing with

<sup>234</sup> *ibid*; *Ov. rem.* 445 ("Great streams are weakened by many tributaries").

<sup>235</sup> Wilkinson 1963, 216; *Verg. georg.* 2, 540 ("Nor had the people heard swords clattering on hard anvils").

<sup>236</sup> Wilkinson 1963, 217; *Verg. Aen.* 6, 137 ("A bough, golden both in leaves and in flexible twig").

<sup>237</sup> Panhuis 2006, 206. Frustratingly enough, Panhuis's definition of the bronze line differs from Wilkinson's "line framed by epithet and noun", being simply a verse which contains "one or two hyperbata with the scheme abBA." Panhuis also appears to specify that adjectives should precede nouns, being stricter than Wilkinson or Dryden, and more in line with Burles.

<sup>238</sup> Burles 1652, repr. 1973, 357.



the first Substantive, the second with the second, and the Verb placed in the midst, it is called a Golden Verse; as, *Lurida terribiles miscent aconita novercae*.<sup>239</sup>  
*Pendula flaventem pingebat bractea crinem*.<sup>240</sup>

Burles's little-known and amusingly concise grammar gives several tips on how to write proper (classical) hexameter verse. Interestingly, he reiterates the ban on fifth-foot spondees we have witnessed in both Bede and Aldhelm;<sup>241</sup> however, he also warns his pupils not to use rhyme (in allusion to the medieval rhyming hexameters of the Leonine type, by his time totally exploded).<sup>242</sup> Burles's stricter definition of the golden line is apparently the combination of the double hyperbaton, as recommended by Dryden, with the preference for a word-order where adjectives precede their nouns. Burles's definition of the golden line can be represented with the following formula:

adj A – adj B – V – noun A – noun B

If this stricter definition of the golden line is followed, not all of the lines presented by, say, Wilkinson as golden really qualify as such.<sup>243</sup> Apparently, similar inconsistency in the nomenclature of golden lines and similar structures seems to prevail even in modern academia, sometimes resulting in widely differing estimates as to their frequency: to name but one example, Young, in his 1932 article, found thirty-nine golden lines in Vergil's *Eclogues*,<sup>244</sup> but Kenneth Mayer, in 2002, using stricter criteria, only fifteen (together with seven silver lines).<sup>245</sup> The differences in the definitions of the golden line are due to diverging views as to whether chiasmic "silver" lines are included, whether pronouns, adverbs or extra nouns and verbs are allowed, whether participles in periphrastic verb forms qualify as adjectives and so forth. Understandably, the whole feature and its relevance have been questioned: Mayer, himself probably the most industrious compiler of statistics on the

<sup>239</sup> *Ov. met.* 1, 147 ("Terrible stepmothers mix deadly aconites").

<sup>240</sup> "The hanging gold leaf dyed his/her hair yellow." – The origins of the line are unknown, but its earliest known use in a textbook is in John Clarke's 1633 *Manuductio ad artem carmificam seu poeticus* (p. 345). – Mayer 2002, 166.

<sup>241</sup> Burles 1652, repr. 1973, 356: "The fifth foot must be a Dactyle, the sixth a Spondey, the other four Dactyls or Spondeys at our pleasure: and this Verse is also called Hexameter."

<sup>242</sup> Burles 1652, repr. 1973, 357: "In making Verses avoid Rhimes: as,  
*Singula spectando ventos superare volando.*  
*Nutrix dum rotat, canit & cunabula motat.*"

<sup>243</sup> e.g. Horace's portrayal of the town mouse's abode in *sat.* 6, 103: "*tincta super lectos canderet vestis eburnos*" ("the dyed cloth shone on the ivory couches"); the second noun (*lectos*) comes second and its adjective (*eburnos*) only at the end of the line.

<sup>244</sup> Young 1932, 517.

<sup>245</sup> Mayer 2002, 161.

phenomenon, is extremely dismissive of the very concept of the golden line, and views it as a medieval, or even post-medieval invention.<sup>246</sup>

The golden line as such is never discussed in antique sources. What is possibly the first attempt at its description appears in Diomedes's *De pedibus metricis sive significationum industria* and its fanciful – and highly impractical – list of “good” and “bad” verse types.<sup>247</sup> Among these, one type that is specially commended is what Diomedes calls a *teres versus*, or “rounded verse”. Diomedes's list has been thoroughly discussed in Mayer's 2002 article on the golden line.<sup>248</sup> Most of Diomedes's categories are useless for the actual composition and study of poetry; his list is highly unanalytical in confusing purely metrical features with rhetorical figures, and some of the “good” line-types commended by him are patently faulty and virtually nonexistent in Latin poetry.<sup>249</sup> Similar lists abound in Late Latin grammarians, and this tradition was perpetuated by medieval and renaissance scholars. “Special” hexameter lines seem to have been an academic hobby already in the Silver Age: both Martial and Quintilian mention hexameter lines that, when read backwards, are in another metre;<sup>250</sup> Gellius, in his *Noctes Atticae* talks reprovingly of a book on metrical trivia such as the “name for the verse that grows in each word by one syllable”.<sup>251</sup> Impossibly convoluted nomenclatures were imposed on these verse types by the grammarians, who often differ widely in their application and also their judgement on whether the respective line-types are to be recommended or not.

Diomedes's list of good and bad hexameter types is, by and large, unenlightening, but his example of a “rounded verse” is certainly what we would call a golden line. Diomedes does not discuss word order, his actual definition of his “rounded

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<sup>246</sup> Mayer 2002, 166.

<sup>247</sup> gramm. I, 498-500. The good verses include types which Diomedes terms as *inlibati*, *iniuges*, *aequiformes*, *quinqupartes*, *partipedes*, *fistulares*, *aequidici*, *teretes*, *sonores* and *vocales*, or, in Mayer's translation, “intact, detached, equal-shaped, five-part, foot-divided, pipe-like, even-worded, rounded, resounding or vocalic”. The bad verses, in turn, are *mutili*, *exiles*, *ecaudes*, *fragosi* and *fluxi* (“truncated, scanty, tailless, rough and flabby”). – Mayer 2002, 144-145.

<sup>248</sup> Mayer 2002, 144-158.

<sup>249</sup> Diomedes, for instance, recommends a verse-type which he calls *partipes* (“foot-divided”), where the word-breaks coincide with the ends of feet: “*Partipedes sunt qui in singulis pedibus singulas orationis partes adsignant, ut miscent fida flumina candida sanguine sparso.*” (“Foot-divided verses are those that mark off individual words in individual feet, as in: *miscent fida flumina candida sanguine sparso.*”) – gramm. I, 499, 10-12, trans. Mayer 2002, 149. As Mayer notes, Marius Victorinus at gramm. VI, 71,24-27 listed this line “not as an *optimus versus*, but as one of the worst.” Moreover, the line-type is in crass violation of Roman usage of caesurae, and therefore virtually non-existent in Latin poetry, apart from such curiosities as Ennius's infamous “*Sparsis hastis longis campus splendet et horret*” (*Enn. varia* 14V), which, in Wilkinson's words, was “a joke already to Lucilius”. – Wilkinson 1963, 96.

<sup>250</sup> Mayer 2002, 140-141; Mart. 2, 86; Quint. inst. 9, 6, 90.

<sup>251</sup> Mayer 2002; Gell. 14, 6, 4: “*et quis adeo versus sit, qui per singula vocabula singulis syllabis increcat*”.

verse” is well-nigh unintelligible, and it is not altogether impossible that he is in fact discussing some other prosodic or lexical feature:

Teretes sunt, qui volubilem et cohaerentem continuant dictionem, ut  
Torva Mimalloneis inflatur tibia bombis.<sup>252</sup>

[Rounded verses are those that conjoin a fluent and contiguous phrase, such as  
Torva Mimalloneis inflatur tibia bombis.  
(The stern flute swells with Mimallonean blasts.)]<sup>253</sup>

And indeed, it is only in Bede’s *De arte metrica* that we encounter the first reliable and comprehensible description of a verse that has the structure of Dryden’s golden line:

Optima autem versus dactylICI ac pulcherrima positio est, cum primis penultima ac mediis respondent extrema, qua Sedulius frequenter uti consuevit, ut:

Pervia divisi patuerunt caerula ponti” (Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 1, 136);

et

Sicca peregrinas stupuerunt marmora plantas (Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 1, 140);

et:

Edidit humanas animal pecuale loquelas (Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 1, 162);

item in pentametro:

Dignatus nostris accubitare thoris (Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 1, 2);

et:

Rubra quod adpositum testa ministrat holus (Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 1, 16).<sup>254</sup>

[The best and most beautiful arrangement of a dactylic hexameter verse is when the next to the last word agrees with the first word and the final word agrees with a word in the middle, an arrangement which Sedulius was accustomed to use frequently, as in:

The unobstructed waters of the divided sea lay open;

and

The dry marble surface astonished the soles of the strangers’ feet;

and

The asinine animal uttered human speech.

And likewise in the pentameter:

Having deigned to recline on my couch;

and

The herb, which, having been popped in, the red pot serves.]<sup>255</sup>

The reader may note the differences between Diomedes’s and Bede’s approaches: rather than presenting the various types of good verse as an elaborate system, Bede gives a few examples

<sup>252</sup> gramm. I, 499, 20-22.

<sup>253</sup> Trans. Mayer 2002, 152, except that of the verse, which is mine. The line is a paraphrase of Persius’s “torva Mimalloneis inplerunt cornua bombis” (1, 99), itself a golden line.

<sup>254</sup> DAM 11, 24-34.

<sup>255</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 103-105.

of the phenomenon, which, moreover, are taken from his own reading of Sedulius. Bede's presentation of the golden line is therefore probably not influenced by Diomedes (who does not specify what he means by "fluent and contiguous"), but is, rather, Bede's own analysis of a stylistic feature with which he has been thoroughly acquainted through experience. One must note, furthermore, that Bede does not give the verse-type a name: apparently, he was not in the least attracted by the Late Latin practice of composing lists of good and bad verse-types.

Bede's description of the verse-type corresponds with the "Wilkinsonian" refinements of Dryden's golden line, while at the same time being more lax than Burles's 1652 model: what Bede describes is a double hyperbaton of the abCAB type rather than the chiasmic, or silver, model (abCBA). Unlike either Burles or Dryden, Bede does not discuss verbs or their placement at all.<sup>256</sup> Bede also does not, at least in this context, specify whether nouns should or should not be restricted to the latter half of the line, although in the first two cited examples they seem to be. The third example, "edidit humanas animal pecuale loquelas", however, does not follow Bede's own presentation of the poetic device: it simply consists of a noun and its attribute framed by another such word-pair with the verb at the beginning.<sup>257</sup> This may seem like an uncharacteristic slip on Bede's part, but, above all, it shows that he was not dogmatic about his definition. Neither of Bede's examples of "good" pentameter lines are golden lines in the strictest sense: the first line "dignatus nostris accubitare thoris" has only one pair of noun and attribute, whereas in the latter, "rubra quod adpositum testa ministrat holus", the nouns and attributes are in their prescribed order but the verb is not, as it intrudes between the final nouns (abACB).

Bede's ostensible lapses from his own description of a good hexameter line must, first and foremost, be seen as an indication that, unlike some of his predecessors, he was not trying to create a typology of verse.<sup>258</sup> He starts with what he has found a particularly pleasing line-type, giving an analysis of its word-order, and goes on to give examples of similarly pleasing, although structurally not quite identical lines. In essence, Bede could be said to recommend all lines with hyperbatons, preferably (but not necessarily) with double ones.

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<sup>256</sup> Wright 2005, 162-163.

<sup>257</sup> As Neil Wright has noted, this construction is very common in both classical and post-classical verse, being also a favourite structure of Sedulius: "Indeed, so common is it that it will be helpful to term lines with this structure 'initial verb' golden lines." –Wright 2005, 162. In Panhuis's (though not Wilkinson's) terminology this would be a bronze line.

<sup>258</sup> Mayer 2002, 142.

Bede's attribution of the golden line to Sedulius may seem like yet another case of his favouritism: in much of modern scholarship, the golden line is seen as a typically classical feature. L. P. Wilkinson's discussion of the feature relies, inevitably, on exclusively classical examples,<sup>259</sup> whereas Michael Lapidge views Bede's use of the golden line as an example of his mastery of Vergilian techniques.<sup>260</sup> It appears, however, that the role of the golden line in classical poetry has been overestimated and that Sedulius was indeed a more enthusiastic user of the technique than any of his classical predecessors.

According to the statistics which Kenneth Mayer has compiled on the frequency of golden and silver lines in classical and post-classical poetry, the feature is actually comparatively uncommon in most of the classics proper: golden lines rarely exceed two percent of the lines, and the frequencies for silver lines are lower still. The highest figures are in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis Divi Claudii* (six out of forty-nine hexameter lines), *Laus Pisonis* (6.13 per cent), *Catullus 64* (4.41 per cent) and *Ciris* and *Culex* from the *Appendix Vergiliana* (4.35 and 4.99 per cent, respectively). In Vergil's *Aeneid*, the figure is as low as 0.34 per cent, and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1.05 per cent.<sup>261</sup> It would appear that, of the major classical poets, only Catullus went out of his way to employ the golden line and that, for the others, it was simply one of many possible word orders, enjoying no special prominence. Mayer has also questioned the claim, made, among others by Wilkinson, that classical poets used golden lines especially to round off periods.<sup>262</sup>

The situation is completely different in late antique and early medieval poetry. Noticeably high figures occur in Ausonius's *Mosella* (3.73 per cent), and, inevitably, Sedulius (3.93 per cent). At least Mayer's statistics seem to bear out Bede's view that golden word order is typical of Sedulius's verse technique. Sedulius's example was followed by Aldhelm, whose use of golden lines in his *Carmen de virginitate* exceeds even the figures encountered in Sedulius.<sup>263</sup> It appears that, for Aldhelm, the golden line became something of a mannerism, which, together with his disregard for enjambment, often creates a tedious effect. As Neil Wright has noted, Aldhelm sometimes allowed himself "as many as three

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<sup>259</sup> Wilkinson 1963, 215-217.

<sup>260</sup> Lapidge 2005, 747-748.

<sup>261</sup> Mayer 2002, 161.

<sup>262</sup> Wilkinson 1963, 216: "Virgil also used it finely to round off periods. Here are two splendid examples from the great finale to *Georgics*, 1, which also constitute that 'overarching superflux of rhythm' at the end of a period." – Mayer 2002, 161: "While several scholars have claimed that the golden line is mainly and artfully used to close periods and descriptions, the texts I have investigated do not seem to bear this out."

<sup>263</sup> According to Mayer's statistics, Aldhelm has 188 golden and twenty-three silver lines in his 2,904-line *Carmen de virginitate* (6.47 and 0.79 per cent respectively). –Mayer 2002, 162.

consecutive golden lines”, citing the following example (*Carmen de virginitate* 813-815) as an illustration (the first two lines are genuine golden lines and the third a silver one):

Aequora per vitreos bullirent turbida campos  
 Priscaque turgescens non nosset litora Pontus,  
 Caerula fluctivagis sed regnant molibus alta.  
 [(As) the turbid seas raged throughout their glassy fields,  
 and the swelling ocean did not know its old shores  
 but the high seas reigned with their flooding masses.]<sup>264</sup>

Bede apparently saw the risks inherent in the repetitive use of golden lines, and, as before in his discussion of enjambment, he cautions his reader against their overuse, possibly with Aldhelm’s verse in mind: “Nec tamen hoc continuatim agendum, verum post aliquot interpositos versus. Si enim semper uno modo pedes ordinabis et versus, tametsi optimus sit, status statim vilescit.”<sup>265</sup> (“However, this should not be done constantly, but only after intervals of several lines. For if you always arrange your feet and verses in the same way, even if it is the best way, your composition is at once cheapened.”)<sup>266</sup> Possibly Bede’s flexible presentation of golden verse and similar, but not quite identical, constructions was also tailored to preclude the mechanical reiteration of completely identical word patterns.

Several scholars of Bede’s own verse have noted the exceptional care with which he applied Sedulius’s golden line and its near-equivalents in his own verse *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*. Although Michael Lapidge, in his 2005 article, sees Bede’s cultivation of golden symmetry as a result of his meticulous study of Vergil,<sup>267</sup> Bede’s main model was probably Sedulius (it is, of course, probable that through his study of Sedulius Bede had become acutely aware of the structure and certainly recognised it when encountering it in Vergil). Bede’s use of hyperbaton is varied, ranging from the strict golden word-order of line 24

Aurato nitidae lustrat fulgore loquelae  
 [(John Chrysostom) illuminates (Constantinople) with the golden radiance of his  
 speech]

to the looser

Qui facit humanas asinam reboare loquelas

<sup>264</sup> Ehwald 1919, 387-388; trans. Wright 2005, 165-166.

<sup>265</sup> DAM 11, 35-37.

<sup>266</sup> Kendall 1991, 105.

<sup>267</sup> Lapidge 2005, 196-197.

[Who made the ass bray human words]

at line 74. As we can see, the latter line is a reworking of Sedulius's "edidit humanas animal pecuale loquelas", which Bede specially recommended in his treatise.<sup>268</sup> More notably, however, Bede's use of various types of hyperbaton differs markedly from Aldhelm's – and, to a lesser extent, Sedulius's – occasional reiteration of structurally identical golden lines. In this respect, Bede's loose and arguably inconsistent description of the phenomenon, as well as his admonition to avoid excessive repetition of identical structures, seem to correspond with his own metrical practice.<sup>269</sup> The ultimate disadvantage of golden lines in their strictest form is that their structure is syntactically and semantically self-contained and that their continuous use impedes with the enjambment of lines (for which Bede shows a high appreciation) and results in a monotonously end-stopped style. If we examine the first three lines of Bede's *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*, we can see how Bede has solved this problem. I have used different fonts to indicate the respective word-pairs:

Multa **suis** Dominus fulgescere lumina **saeclis**  
 donavit, **tetricas** humanae noctis ut **umbras**  
 lustraret **divina** poli de culmine **flamma**.

As we can see, none of the lines is golden in the strictest sense. The first line comes the closest: it has the a-b-A-B word order which we associate the golden line, but the predicate verb has been transposed to the beginning of the following line. The next line has the chiasmic, or silver, word-order a-b-B-A, but here, again, the predicate verb has undergone the same transposition. The third line has a simple hyperbaton without a central verb. As we can see, enjambment has been achieved through the manipulation of the placement of verbs, which, perhaps wisely, Bede leaves undiscussed in his presentation of golden word order.

An important aspect of Bede's presentation of Sedulius's hyperbaton, golden or otherwise, is its connection with end-rhyme, which is considered a typical feature of Sedulius's verse, and is probably inseparable from his penchant for certain types of word-order.<sup>270</sup> It has been suggested that golden word-order ultimately led to the emergence of

<sup>268</sup> Lapidge 2005, 195. As Lapidge notes, Bede has further elaborated on his model by adding cacemphaton, or ugly-sounding syllable reiteration (*humanas asinam*), to emphasise the braying voice of Balaam's donkey.

<sup>269</sup> Wright 2005, 163-166.

<sup>270</sup> Rhyme is also prominent in Sedulius's abecedary hymn *A solis ortus cardine*, where it is "consistently present though not in a consistent pattern" (Hiley 1993, 284):

A solis ortus cardine  
 ad usque terrae limitem

leonine rhyme in hexameter poetry: if the second word of a hexameter line agrees with the final one, and they both belong to the same declension, the result is inevitably rhyme-like. In classical Latin poetry, it appears that some poets actually went out of their way to eliminate rhymes, usually by tampering with word-order, although long sequences of lines with internal rhyme have also been documented.<sup>271</sup> Kenneth Mayer has suggested that the rising popularity of the golden line in late antique poetry was connected with fondness for end-rhyme: that chiasmic, or “silver”, hyperbatons did not enjoy a similar surge is, in his view, a result of their inability to produce rhyme.<sup>272</sup> Whether rhyme was a by-product of hyperbaton or golden lines resulted from the pursuit of rhyme is, of course, an academic chicken-or-egg question of a rather fruitless kind; at best, we can say that in late antique verse antique word order and rhyme are strongly related. Of the five lines of Sedulius quoted by Bede, four have pure monosyllabic rhyme (*divisi-ponti*; *peregrinas-plantas*; *humanas-loquelas*; *nostris-thoris*) and one a milder form of word-final assonance (*adpositum-holus*). Remarkably, even Bede’s examples of not-quite-golden lines have rhyme, and it seems possible that this feature played a part in Bede’s presentation of the feature, although he does not say it in so many words.

Although in his *De arte metrica* he does not discuss the phenomenon, Sedulius’s use of rhyme certainly did not go unnoticed by Bede: his *De schematibus et tropis*, the companion work of *De arte metrica*, contains a presentation of *homoeoteleuton* (in practice, monosyllabic rhyme), where one of Bede’s examples is a line by Sedulius (*carm. pasch. 1, 136*). Strikingly, it is the very same line with which he illustrates the optimal type of word order, and it is plain that Bede was quite aware of their connection:

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Christum canamus principem  
 natum Maria virgine.  
 Beatus auctor saeculi  
 servile corpus induit,  
 ut carne carnem liberans  
 non perderet quod condidit. (Sedul. hymn. 2, 1-8)  
 [From the rising of the sun in the east  
 to the furthest reaches of the West  
 let us sing the glory of Christ, our Lord  
 born from the Virgin Mary.  
 The blessed creator of the world  
 put on a servant’s body,  
 that, liberating flesh with his flesh,  
 He might not lose what He had founded.]

<sup>271</sup> Marouzeau 1949, 99-100; Wilkinson 1963, 33.

<sup>272</sup> Mayer 2002, 163. If we take Vergil and Sedulius as examples, the phenomenon is most striking: although in Sedulius’s *Carmen paschale* golden lines are over ten times more common than in Vergil’s *Aeneid* (3.93 per cent in Sedulius, 0.34 per cent in Vergil), the frequencies of silver lines are almost equal (0.23 per cent in Sedulius and 0.26 per cent in Vergil). –Mayer 2002, 161-162.



Omoeoteleuton est similis terminatio, quoties media et postrema versus sive sententiae simili syllaba finiuntur, ut Ecclesiastes (Eccl. 6:9): “Melius est videre quod cupias, quam desiderare quod nescias.” Et iterum (Eccl. 7:6): “Melius est a sapiente corrigi, quam stultorum adulatione decipi.” Hac figura poetae et oratores saepe utuntur. Poetae hoc modo:

Pervia divisi patuerunt caerula ponti (carm. pasch. 1, 136).

[Homoeoteleuton or “like ending”, is the name for the figure when the middle and final sections of a verse or clause end in the same syllable, as in Ecclesiastes (6:9): “Better it is to see what you may desire (cupias), than to desire that which you cannot know (nescias)”. Or in (Eccl. 7:6): “It is better to be rebuked (corripi) by a wise man than to be deceived (decipi) by the flattery of fools”. This figure is frequently employed by poets and by writers of polished prose. Poets use it like this.

The unobstructed waters of the divided (divisi) sea (ponti) lay open.]<sup>273</sup>

This passage is notable not only for its endorsement of end-rhyme in poetry: in Bede’s *De schematibus et tropis*, his Christianising tendency is even stronger than in *De arte metrica*: Bede’s examples of rhetorical figures are almost exclusively drawn from the Bible, with some quotations from the Early Fathers being the most prominent exception. That Bede chose to cite Sedulius in his strictly Christian presentation of schemes and tropes shows that he viewed him, at least in this context, as being “as good as” Scripture.

Bede’s chapter on optimal word order also contains a gentle admonition to place adjectives before nouns. Although this is not the typical word order of Latin prose, it is a tendency that seems to prevail even in classical poetry, the idea being that the weightier nouns should preferably come at the end of the line.<sup>274</sup> Bede cites examples of this feature by quoting Sedulius, again a line with roughly golden word-order (abACB) and internal rhyme:

Studendum est praeterea metricis, quantum artis decori non obstitit, ut mobilia nomina fixis nominibus praeponant, sed nec concinentia nomina coniunctim ponant, verum interposita qualibet alia parte orationis, ut:

Mitis in inmitem virga est animata draconem (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 132).<sup>275</sup>

[Poets should also strive, so long as it does not interfere with the grace of their art, to place adjectives before their nouns, but not to put nouns and adjectives that are in agreement with each other side by side, but rather to interpose some other word, as:

The harmless rod was changed to a fierce dragon.]<sup>276</sup>

In other words, Bede not only recommends that adjectives should precede their nouns but reiterates his endorsement of hyperbata – and, by implication, internal rhyme – this time by cautioning against the placement of agreeing nouns and adjectives next to each other. If we

<sup>273</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 177-179.

<sup>274</sup> See e.g. Winbolt 1903, 153; Norden 1916, 400-402; Harrison 1991, 138.

<sup>275</sup> DAM 11, 48-52.

<sup>276</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 105.

observe this “rule” together with Bede’s previous definition of the ideal type of verse, it is easy to see where the early modern concept of the golden line in its strictest sense originated: it is simply a fusion of the double hyperbaton as described by Bede, and the principle, also recognised in *De arte metrica*, that adjectives should precede rather than follow their noun heads. Kenneth Mayer’s studies of renaissance grammar show how Bede’s two rules were, in succeeding grammatical works, collated into one, until we arrive at golden verse as understood by Burles (adj A - adj B – C – noun A – noun B). That this was merely one tendency in medieval and post-medieval grammar is demonstrated by the considerable lack of consensus as to what exactly constitutes a golden line, and the correspondingly varying estimates as to how common it truly was in classical and post-classical poetry.

That the golden line was essentially a Late Latin feature needs to be more widely acknowledged. Although the argument can be made, and, indeed, has been made, that it is a classical technique that came to be overused by post-classical and medieval poets, the very definition of the structure as we know it is ultimately derived from Bede, whose purpose was to define something that he perceived as a typically Christian verse technique. Although Sedulius was certainly not the first user of golden lines, they were, more than in classical poetry, a predominating feature of his poetic style. And it is probably due to Sedulius, Bede and Bede’s latter-day followers that this technique and its varying analyses came to enjoy such widespread popularity even in modern classical scholarship.

### **2.5.2.2. Other observations on word order**

Bede is not entirely dogmatic in his recommendation of preferred word-orders. Having stated that adjectives should ideally precede their main nouns, and that words in agreement with each other should be apart, he gives some examples to the contrary, again drawn from his own reading of Christian verse, in this case Prosper. Bede states quite explicitly that what he has presented as ideal word-order is not a fixed rule but nevertheless contributes to the overall aesthetic of verse: “...non quod haec simper observari necesse sit, sed quia, cum fiunt, decori sint.”<sup>277</sup> He further adds that beautiful verse can be composed even without observing this principle:

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<sup>277</sup> DAM 11, 56-61.

Nam et Prosper mutato hoc ordine fecit versum decentissimum:

Moribus in sanctis pulchra est concordia pacis (Prosp. epigr. 29, 1);

et item:

Lex aeterna Dei stabili regit omnia nutu

nec mutat vario tempore consilium (Prosp. epigr. 41, 1-2).<sup>278</sup>

[For Prosper has composed a very fitting verse, with this order reversed:

The peaceful harmony in holy conduct is very lovely;

and again:

The eternal law of God rules all things with a stable will,

nor does God's plan change with the changing of the times.]<sup>279</sup>

In the first line, the adjective *sanctis* follows the noun *moribus*. In the hexameter line of the second quotation, the adjective *aeterna* follows its noun *lex*, and, in the pentameter, there is no word interposed between *vario* and *tempore*, although the adjective does precede the noun. These are hardly crass transgressions of “good” poetic style, as the lines also contain word orders of the type recommended by Bede (*pulchra – concordia*; *stabili – nutu*). The examples are certainly well chosen, if their aim is to demonstrate the flexibility and variability of word order in verse.

Bede's use of the Christian poets Sedulius and Prosper as examples of elegant word order is hardly surprising, given the overall tone of his treatise, but in the very same chapter Bede gives his presentation a surprise twist by referring to the authority of the classical, and pagan, Lucan, quoting nothing less than the opening of his *Pharsalia* (1, 1-3 and 10-12):

Et Lucanus, poeta veteranus, Caesaris et Pompei proelia descripturus, ita incipit:

Bella per Emathios plus quam civilia campos  
iusque datum sceleri canimus populumque potentem  
in sua victrici conversum viscera dextra.

Cumque superba foret Babilon spolianda trophaeis

Ausoniis umbraque erraret Crassus inulta,  
bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos.<sup>280</sup>

[And when the ancient poet Lucan sets about to describe the battles of Caesar and Pompey, he begins in this way: “Wars more civil upon the Emathian plains, and license conceded to lawlessness, I sing; and a powerful people turning with victorious right-hand against its own vitals...And, while proud Babylon was to be spoiled of the Ausonian trophies, and the shade of Crassus was wandering unavenged, has it pleased you that wars, doomed to produce no triumphs, should be waged?”]<sup>281</sup>

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 107.

<sup>280</sup> DAM 11, 62-69.

<sup>281</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 107.

The passage is supposed to provide yet another example of how a poet may depart from the best kind of word order, as defined previously. The departures, on the whole, are not striking: there are four instances of an adjective (or participle) following its noun head: *ius datum* and *populum potentem* in line two, *umbra inulta* in line four and *bella habitura* in line six.

It is remarkable that Bede, who is usually scrupulous in using only Christian examples to illustrate his prosodic rules and stylistic rulings, has opted for a relatively lengthy quotation from a pagan author. He obviously realises this himself, underlining that Lucan is one of the ancient poets, using the term *veteranus* here in the same sense that he uses *priscus* and *vetus* elsewhere in his book. We may recall that “old”, or “ancient”, in Bede’s vocabulary, simply means pre-Christian, all Christian poets starting with Juvencus being, by his reckoning, “modern”. We have seen Bede’s reluctance to use Vergil as an illustration, so why Lucan? My suggestion is that this is yet another subtle manoeuvre on Bede’s part to dispense with pagan learning: the most prominent feature of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* is that, unlike Vergil’s *Aeneid*, it is a secular epic, or an epic without pagan gods. This feature had certainly been widely recognised already in antiquity, often with no little puzzlement and sometimes with displeasure; Isidore, for one, states that Lucan seemed to have written history rather than poetry.<sup>282</sup> This lack of the supernatural, or fictional, element, which some had viewed as a drawback, was, for Bede, a veritable virtue: although Lucan certainly was one of the “old” poets, not being Christian, he was not blatantly pagan, and his verse, having no references to pagan gods, was more compatible with Christian learning. In essence, although he does not say this explicitly, Bede seems to recommend Lucan over Vergil as the “old” poet to be studied.

Bede’s treatise is remarkable for the way it attempts to sidestep everything that is related to pagan religion. His approach, in this respect, is certainly subtler than that of some of his predecessors. Earlier Christian poets were often very blatant about their denunciation of pagan beliefs, often in such a way that they could simultaneously exhibit both their classical learning and their Christian piety. We can encounter this tendency in Sedulius, who compares benighted pagans to Theseus wandering in the Labyrinth:

Quid labyrintheo, Thesidae, erratis in antro  
caecaque Daedalei lustratis limina tecti?<sup>283</sup>

[Why, children of Theseus, do you wander in the labyrinthine cave

<sup>282</sup> orig. 8, 7, 10: “Unde et Lucanus ideo in numero poetarum non ponitur, quia videtur historias composuisse, non poema.” See also Klopsch 1980, 9-12.

<sup>283</sup> Sedul. *carm. pasch.* 1, 43-44.

And roam about the blind thresholds of that Daedalean hall?]<sup>284</sup>

Aldhelm's renunciation of paganism is considerably more heavy-handed in its combination of the scholarly and the sanctimonious. Consider, for example, the first lines of his "riddle" on the Sun and the Moon (Enigmata LXXIX):

Non nos Saturni genuit spurcissima proles  
Iupiter, immensum fingunt quem carmina vatum,  
nec fuit in Delo mater Latona creatrix;  
Cynthia non dicor nec frater Apollo vocatur,  
sed potius summi genuit regnator Olympi,  
qui nunc in caelis excelsae praesidet arci.<sup>285</sup>

[The foul offspring of Saturn, namely Jupiter –whom the songs of poets picture as mighty –did not produce us, nor was Latona our mother on Delos; I am not called Cynthia and my brother is not Apollo. Rather, the ruler of high Olympus, Who now resides in His heavenly citadel on high, produced us.]<sup>286</sup>

Bede, obviously, saw no need to go so far; rather, as an example of acceptable pre-Christian verse, he simply chose Lucan over Vergil, thus making any allusions to pagan beliefs unnecessary. This is another variant of the technique of omission which Bede also employs elsewhere in his treatise: we may recall how the names of these Greek deities Phoebus and Euterpe were simply omitted from Bede's presentation of final syllables, which otherwise was an almost verbatim reproduction of Servius and Victorinus. Even there, Bede had left in such ancient but non-godly and therefore innocuous figures as Tanaquil and Dido;<sup>287</sup> here, the reference to Crassus's ghost was apparently something that even Bede's Christian sensibilities could manage.

Yet another stylistic device which, in Bede's opinion, is typical of the best kind of verse and which merits closer observation here is the typically medieval feature that Curtius has termed verse-filling asyndeton (*versefüllendes Asyndeton*).<sup>288</sup> This device consists in the use of asyndetic lists of words belonging to the same word class and is a hallmark of the poetic style of Venantius Fortunatus.<sup>289</sup> Bede was certainly aware of this, and, indeed, all his examples of this device are from Venantius:

<sup>284</sup> Trans. P. McBrine, <http://www.pmcbrine.com/translations/> 2010.

<sup>285</sup> Ehwald 1919, 134.

<sup>286</sup> Trans Lapidge 1985, 87.

<sup>287</sup> DAM 6, 8; 6, 85.

<sup>288</sup> Curtius 1948, 289.

<sup>289</sup> Tardi 1927, 261.

Aliquando versum nominibus tantum perficere gratum est, ut Fortunatus:

Lilia, narcissus, violae, rosa, nardus, amomum,  
oblectant animos germina nulla meos (Ven. Fort. carm. 8, 3, 237-238).

Quod idem et in propriis fecit nominibus:

Sarra, Rebecca, Rachel, Hester, Iudith, Anna, Noemi.  
quamvis praecipue culmen ad astra levent (Ven. Fort. carm. 8, 3, 99-100).

Fecit et in verbis:

Blanditur, refovet, veneratur, honorat, obumbrat,  
et locat in thalamo membra pudica suo (Ven. Fort. carm. 8, 3, 127-128).<sup>290</sup>

[Sometimes, it is pleasing to compose a line with nouns alone, as Fortunatus did in:

The lily, the narcissus, violets, the rose, the nard, the spiceplant,  
no such plants please my mind.

The same poet also did this with proper nouns:

Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Esther, Judith, Anna, Naomi,  
although they especially raise their eminence to Heaven.

And he did it with verbs:

He cherishes, restores, respects, honours, protects,  
and places her chaste limbs in his marriage bed.]<sup>291</sup>

This time, Bede does not warn his reader against the overuse of such word-lists, although he well could have, given some of the more outré examples in Venantius's poetry.<sup>292</sup> Although Bede here commends this construction, he himself appears to have made little use of it in his own verse, based as it is on the model of Sedulius, and generally not very exuberant in tone. It seems that Bede's endorsement of Venantius's idiosyncratic use of asyndeta may have been little more than a whim. Nevertheless, Bede's enthusiastic support for the device presentation may certainly have contributed to its popularity in later Anglo-Latin poetry,<sup>293</sup> and medieval verse in general.

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<sup>290</sup> DAM 11, 38-47.

<sup>291</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 104.

<sup>292</sup> e.g. the over-the-top description of a leper in Ven. Fort. Mart. 1, 490-492:

Vir maculis varius, cute nudus, vulnere tectus,  
tabe fluens, gressu aeger, inops visu, asper amictu,  
mente hebes, ore putris, lacerus pede, voce refractus.  
[A man mottled with spots, with naked skin, covered with wounds,  
dripping with pus, with infirm step, failing sight and rough clothing,  
dim mind, putrescent mouth, lacerated feet and broken voice.]

<sup>293</sup> The device seems to have been particularly popular among the representatives of the so-called hermeneutic school of Insular Latin poets. See Lapidge 1975, 107-111.

## 2.6. Word division and caesurae

The twelfth chapter of Bede's *De arte metrica*, titled *De scansionibus vel caesuris heroici versus*, is a highly condensed presentation of the types of word division and caesurae employed in hexameter verse. Bede's analysis follows Audax's presentation of word division (in Audax caesurae, in Bede scansiones) and supplements it with what he considered the principal types of caesurae. Relying as he does on previous grammarians, Bede is far from exhaustive in his presentation, recognising the penthemimeral and hepthemimeral caesura, the trochaic caesura of the third foot and the bucolic diaeresis; unlike some of his predecessors he does not discuss the respective importance of these types of word-break. The simplicity of Bede's presentation is, first and foremost, the result of his reliance on Late Latin grammarians: as Bede's own use of sense-pauses, judiciously placed in widely varying parts of the hexameter line, testifies, his metrical sophistication on a practical level exceeded what he presented in his grammatical writings. The chapter ends with a brief but vague explanation of cola and commata, illustrated with a quotation from Scripture, which demonstrates both Bede's unwillingness to impose too much theory on his reader and his Christianising tendency.

The role of word division is central in Latin hexameter poetry; arguably more so than in Greek verse. The main reason for this is the nature of the Latin system of accentuation. Latin words almost invariably have an accent on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable, and as a result, in hexameter verse, strong caesurae, or word-breaks in the middle of a foot, create a clash between accent and ictus, whereas other types of word-break (diaereses and trochaic, or "weak", caesurae) have the opposite effect. As in classical hexameter verse the general tendency is to make the accent clash with the ictus in the middle of the line and coincide with it towards the end, the preponderance of strong caesurae in Latin hexameter verse is marked.<sup>294</sup> Most Latin hexameter lines have a strong caesura in the third foot of the line, known as the penthemimeral or semiquinarian caesura (e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 1, 1 "Arma virumque cá|no / Tró|iae qui primus ab oris"), which more or less ensures that, at least in the third foot, accent and ictus do not coincide. An alternative solution is to have a strong caesura in the fourth foot of the line (known as hepthemimeral or semiseptinarian); in developed hexameter verse this is always supported by another strong caesura (trithemimeral)

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<sup>294</sup> e.g. Wilkinson 1963, 120-121.

in the second foot (e.g. Aen. 3, 490 “Sic oculos / sic ille manus / sic ora ferebat”).<sup>295</sup>

Diaereses (word-breaks coinciding with the end of a foot) and trochaic caesurae, on the other hand, produce feet where accent and ictus coincide. An extreme example of the former is Ennius’s notorious “Spársis | hástis | lóngis | cámpus | spléndet et horret” (Varia 14V), whereas even in Vergil we occasionally find lines where the strong caesurae are neglected. In Aen. 4, 486 “Spárgens | úmida | mélla / so|pòrife|rúmque pa|páver” (“Sprinkling wet honey and sleep-inducing poppy”), all the word breaks are either trochaic or coincide with the ends of feet, resulting in a perfect coincidence of accent and ictus, and a line that is, literally, *soporifer*. Apparently Roman grammarians of the classical period were already aware of the importance of word division in Latin hexameter verse, and realised that words should preferably not end with feet in the middle of a line, although it does not seem that they were able to present their findings in the form of an actual system, and they appear to have been largely unaware of their prosodic implications. Aulus Gellius testifies that Varro had already pondered these issues and emphasised the role of the penthemimeral caesura:

In longis versibus, qui hexametri vocantur, item in senariis, animadverterunt metrici primos duos pedes, item extremos duo, habere singulos posse integras partes orationis, medios haut umquam posse, sed constare eos semper ex verbis aut divisis aut mixtis atque confusis. M. etiam Varro in libris disciplinarum scripsit observasse sese in versu hexametro, quod omnimodo quintus semipes verbum finiret et quod priores quinque semipedes aequae magnam vim haberent in efficiendo versu atque alii posteriores septem, idque ipsum ratione quadam geometrica fieri disserit.<sup>296</sup>

[In long verses, known as hexameters, and similarly in senarii, prosodists noticed that the first two feet, and similarly the two final ones, could each contain complete words, but the middle ones hardly ever, consisting always of words that are either divided, mixed or blended. Also Marcus Varro, in his books on the disciplines, wrote that he had observed that in hexameter verse the fifth half-foot invariably ended a word and that the first five half-feet had the same importance in making up the verse as the seven following ones, and he asserted that this took place through a geometrical law of some kind.]

Varro’s (or Gellius’s) observation seems to overplay the role of the penthemimeral caesura, undeniably predominant in Latin hexameter verse, while ignoring the hepthemimeral caesura. Subsequent generations of grammarians seem to have done little to refine this presentation, apart from the observation that in hexameter verse words should generally not end with feet. Diomedes, sharing many other grammarians’ penchant for descriptions of “good” and “bad”

<sup>295</sup> Raven 1965, 94-96.

<sup>296</sup> Gell. 18, 15.



hexameters, inevitably took this even further and presented as the best kind of all hexameter lines a type where as many words as possible cut across feet:

Versus heroicus is dignitate primus est et plenae rationis perfectione firmatus ac totius gravitatis honore sublimis, multaque pulchritudinis venustate praeclarus, qui sine ulla coniunctione quascumque alias orationis partes ita mutuis inter se conexionibus colligat, ut in scansione propria nullus pes nisi novissimus tantum [interdum] integram partem orationis includat.<sup>297</sup>

[The kind of hexameter verse that is foremost in dignity, strong in the full perfection of its art, sublime in the honour of all its weight and brilliant in the charm of its plentiful beauty is the one where, without any conjunction, all words are assembled and connected with each other in such a way that in its scansion no foot – except sometimes the last one – encloses an entire part of speech.]

Diomedes's example of such a remarkable hexameter line is Vergil's (Aen. 4, 129)

“Ocea|num intere|a sur|gens Au|rora re|linquit” (“Meanwhile the rising dawn leaves behind the ocean”). This aesthetic judgement was shared by Audax, who in his *Excerpta de Scauro et Palladio* (gramm. VII, 340) attempted to create a typology of hexameter verse based on its word division. Although flawed and arguably impractical, Audax's presentation was adopted in slightly altered form by both Aldhelm and Bede in their respective presentations of hexameter caesurae. Audax's analysis of hexameter word-division is fundamentally sound, as it grasps the importance of whether word-endings coincide with the ends of feet or not; however, it relies heavily on hexameter types that are unusual or virtually non-existent, and must therefore be considered ill-presented and misleading. Audax lists four categories of word division which also appear in other grammarians, sometimes under other names, and sometimes even in the lists of “special” hexameter lines compiled by such authors as Diomedes and Marius Victorinus.<sup>298</sup> Audax refers to these types of word division with the term caesurae, which may strike the modern reader as an unusual practice, but the meaning of the word in antiquity was not quite fixed. Early Greek writers on metrics were, as far as we know, not preoccupied with caesurae and it is uncertain to what extent they had either a terminology or a theoretical framework for them. The Greek *τομή* (for which caesura is a calque) was, to our knowledge, first employed in a cogent manner by the third-century Aristides Quintilianus, and it originally meant a segment of verse rather than an end of a

<sup>297</sup> gramm. I, 495, 27-34.

<sup>298</sup> e.g. Audax's *versus districtus*, where words end with feet, is identical with *versus partipes* (“foot-divided verse”), praised by Diomedes as a *versus optimus* (gramm. I, 499, 10-12) and castigated by Marius Victorinus as a bad one (gramm. VI, 71, 24-27).

segment.<sup>299</sup> Although, already in late antiquity, several grammarians used the term caesura in the modern sense to denote a word-break, Audax appears to use it for a system of word-breaks. Audax's "caesurae" include four types which he calls *coniunctus*, *districtus*, *mixtus* and *divisus*:

De caesuris. Quot sunt species in caesura hexametri versus? Quattuor. Quae sunt? Coniunctus, districtus, mixtus, divisus. Coniunctus qui est? Qui in scandendo ita concatenatus sibi est, ut nusquam finito sensu divisa inter se verba ponantur, quod genus versificationis laudabile habetur, veluti est:

Infandum, regina, iubes renouare dolorem (Verg. Aen. 2, 3).

Qui districtus? Qui in scandendo sensum seu partes orationis separatas habet, ut puta veluti:

Dic mihi, Clio, quisnam primus fingere versus.

Qui mixtus? Qui utrumque in se habet, ut in quibusdam coniunctus, in quibusdam separatus sit, ut puta:

Hic currus fuit, hoc regnum dea gentibus esse (Verg. Aen. 1, 17).

Qui divisus? Qui in priapeo deprehenditur metro. Quale est metrum priapeum? Cum in hexametro versu primi tres pedes concatenati inter se, a reliquis tribus sequentibus divisi separatique sunt, ut in bucolicis:

Aut Ararim Parthus bibet aut Germania Tigrim (Verg. ecl. 1, 62),

Utque viro Phoebi chorus adsurrexerit omnis (Verg. ecl. 6, 66),

Est mihi namque domi pater, est iniusta noverca (Verg. ecl. 3, 33).<sup>300</sup>

[On caesurae. How many ways of dividing a hexameter verse are there? Four. What are they? The conjunctive, the districtive, the mixed and the divided. Which line is the conjunctive? That which, when scanned, is bound together in such a way that parts of speech are never placed divided among themselves when their meaning is completed; this type of line is considered worthy of praise, as in:

Infan|dum, re|gina, iu|bes reno|vare do|lorem

(O queen, you force me to relive an unspeakable pain).

Which line is districtive? That, where the meaning or the parts of speech are separated in scansion, as for example:

Dic mihi, | Clio, | quisnam | primus | fingere | versus

(Tell me, o Clio, who was the first to compose verse).

Which line is mixed? That which has both types so that words are sometimes conjoined, sometimes separated, as in:

Hic cur|rus fuit, | hoc reg|num dea | gentibus | esse

(Here was her chariot, this the goddess wanted to be the ruler of peoples).

Which line is divided? That which is seen to be in the priapeian metre. What is the priapeian metre? When the first three feet of the hexameter are bound together and divided and separated from the three following ones, as in the Bucolics:

Aut Ara|rim Par|thus bibet | aut Ger|mania |Tigrim

(Or the Parthian will drink from the Saône, or Germany from the Tigris),

Utque vi|ro Phoeb|bi chorus | adsur|rexerit | omnis

(And how all of Phoebus's choir rose to the man),

Est mihi | namque do|mi pater, | est in|iusta noverca

<sup>299</sup> Bassett 1917, 86-87; Bassett 1919, 348-349. Aristides is also the first author to differentiate between a caesura and a diaeresis, a distinction not generally made in antiquity.

<sup>300</sup> gramm. VII, 340, 6-23.

(For I have a father at home, and an unjust stepmother).]

We can see the logic behind Audax's presentation, although it is not well commented and potentially misleading: Audax's *versus districtus* is a line where all the word-endings coincide with the foot-division; it has no central caesura, and as such, it is a genuine rarity in Latin verse (it is telling that Audax has not been able to illustrate it with a quotation but has instead used a wholly artificial line, presumably of his own making). Its opposite is the *versus coniunctus*, where none of the words end with the feet, and this type of verse Audax actually ventures to commend. What Audax calls the *mixtus* is a line with both types of word-division. Audax does not make it plain that what really counts is the word division in the middle of the line, or what we call the "main caesura", and therefore his presentation is plainly useless as a means of teaching verse composition. This is underlined by his inclusion of what he terms *divisus*, or a divided line, a verse-type that is arguably little more than a curiosity: it is simply a line where a penthemimeral caesura is followed by a pyrrhic word (in the cited examples *bibet*, *chorus* and *pater*, respectively); the following diaeresis lends it an air of being cut neatly in half, an unusual but by no means abnormal effect. Audax's presentation also leaves much to be desired as far as clarity is concerned: he does not discuss caesurae, and barely mentions metrical feet, and his discourse on "divided" or "separated" words would border on the impenetrable if it were not for his cited examples.

Both Aldhelm and Bede undertook to improve Audax's presentation by incorporating it with a presentation of the principal caesurae of hexameter verse. In developed Latin verse, a hexameter invariably has either a penthemimeral or a hepthemimeral caesura, which both Aldhelm and Bede are quick to point out in their discussion of Audax's *versus districtus*.<sup>301</sup> With typical perversity, Aldhelm has completely reshuffled Audax's terminology: in his presentation *coniunctus* has become *districtus*, *districtus* had become *divisus*, and *divisus* is known simply as *priapeius*.<sup>302</sup> Remarkably, Aldhelm has also undertaken to Christianise Audax's cited material, providing several quotations from widely

<sup>301</sup> Ehwald 1919, 93. Aldhelm implies that lines without caesurae are an archaic feature, bringing up what he sees as major advances in "modern" (Christian?) versification. This comment seems to foreshadow Bede's dichotomy of pre-Christian and Christian techniques: "Sed huiuscemodi versum pentimemere vel eptimemere carentem modernus usus in exametero dactilico non libenter admittit." ("But this kind of line, lacking a penthemimeral or hepthemimeral caesura, is not freely admitted in the dactylic hexameter by modern practice.") – Trans. Wright 1985, 208.

<sup>302</sup> Ehwald (1919, xix) has suggested that Aldhelm's presentation may be based on an alternative, unknown source rather than Audax. However, his wording is largely identical with Audax's, and the change in nomenclature may simply be Aldhelm's attempt to "improve" Audax's presentation. – R. Leotta 1980, 248. – However unaccountable this may seem, it is parallel to Aldhelm's confusing manner of using a dialogue form with the Greek letters Δ and Μ, not for *διδάσκαλος* (teacher) and *μαθητής* (pupil) as one might expect, but the other way around, apparently for *discipulus* and *magister*.

varying Christian sources,<sup>303</sup> although, in the main, Audax's Vergilian examples are still there, as is his artificial example of the *versus districtus*. The wealth of quoted lines is striking; with what appears to be intentional humour on the author's part (or perhaps a dig at previous grammarians) the disciple of Aldhelm's dialogue-form presentation snaps at his teacher: "Melius exemplis quam nuda verbositate informor" ("I would learn better from examples than unsupported eloquence").<sup>304</sup> Aldhelm's improvements on Audax's presentation are, however, limited, and he confuses his exposition further by adding a discussion of different types of *pathe* or *passiones* of hexameter verse, metrical liberties that occur in Homeric verse but are totally irrelevant for the Latin hexameter.<sup>305</sup>

In his presentation of word division in hexameter verse, Bede essentially paraphrases Audax, but his alterations to both word and content are conspicuous:

Scansionum autem in versibus sunt species quattuor, coniuncta, districta, mixta, divisa. Coniuncta, quae ceteris laudabilior habetur, illa est, ubi nusquam pes cum verbo finitur, ut:

Inmortale nihil mundi conpage tenetur (Iuenc. praef. 1).

Districta, ubi verba cum pedibus terminantur, ut:

Haec tua sunt, bona sunt, quia tu bonus omnia condis (In laude Cerei 1,1), quam versificationis speciem rarissime invenies. Nam et si non post duos vel tres pedes syllaba superfuerit, quod pentimemerim et eptimemerim uocant, ratus haberi versus nequit, sicut hic post duos pedes sunt, post tres tu superest.

Mixta est scansio quae utrumque in se habet, ut in quibusdam coniunctus, in quibusdam vero separatus sit versus:

Nobis certa fides aeternae in saecula laudis (Iuenc. praef. 17);

et:

Pacificos Deus in numerum sibi prolis adoptat (Iuenc. 1, 465).

Divisa est, ubi primi tres pedes concatenati inter se a reliquis pedibus separati sunt, ut:

Inde Dei genetrix pia virgo Maria coruscat (Ven. Fort. carm. 8, 3, 25);

et Prosper:

Corde patris genitum creat, et regit omnia Verbum (Prosp. epigr. 104, 5).<sup>306</sup>

[There are four types of scansion in lines of heroic verse; the conjunctive, the districtive, the mixed and the divided. The conjunctive scansion, which is considered more praiseworthy than the others, is that in which the end of a word never coincides with the foot division, as in:

Inmor|tale ni|hil mun|di con|page te|netur

(Nothing is imperishably preserved by the structure of the world).

<sup>303</sup> Aldhelm cites from Arator's *De actibus apostolorum*, Prosper's *Epigrams*, an anonymous Latin translation of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, Symphosius's *Aenigmata* and one line of his own, attributing it, with probably disingenuous modesty, to "a poet". – Wright 1985, 207-209.

<sup>304</sup> Ehwald 1919, 92; trans. Wright 1985, 207.

<sup>305</sup> Wright 1985, 187.

<sup>306</sup> DAM 12, 2-22.

The districtive scansion is that in which the ends of words coincide with the foot endings, as in.

Haec tua | sunt, bona | sunt, quia | tu bonus | omnia | condis

(These things are yours, they are good because You who make all things are good.)

You very rarely find this kind of scansion, because, unless there is a word break after the first syllable in the third or the fourth foot, which is called a penthemimeral or a heptemimeral caesura, the verse cannot be considered acceptable. In this case the word *sunt* follows the second foot and the word *tu* follows the third foot. The mixed scansion is that which combines the two, so that the line is conjunctive in some feet, but districtive in others, as in:

Nobis | certa fi|des ae|ternae in | saecula | laudis

(Firm faith will confer the immortal glory of eternal praise through the ages on me);

and:

Pacifi|cos Deus | in nume|rum sibi | prolis a|doptat

(God adopts the peacemakers into the ranks of his elect).

The divided scansion is that in which the first three feet of the verse are joined by consecutive scansion and separated by diaeresis from the remaining feet, as in:

Inde De|i gene|trix pia | virgo Ma|ria co|ruscat

(Then the holy mother of God, the virgin Mary, trembles);

and in this line of Prosper:

Corde patris geni|tum creat, | et regit | omnia | Verbum

God creates the son in the heart of the Father, and rules all things through the Word).]<sup>307</sup>

As we can see, Bede has retained Audax's typology of word-division, but subjected its presentation to some minute and apparently well thought-out alterations. Firstly, Bede has discarded Audax's broader use of the term *caesura* for *scansio*, obviously because he elsewhere uses the word *caesura* in the modern sense to denote a word-break and has wanted to avoid unnecessary ambiguity. Secondly, the Christianisation of the quoted examples has been carried out more thoroughly than in Aldhelm's *De metris*: Bede has eliminated Audax's Vergilian citations altogether in favour of Juvencus, Venantius Fortunatus and Prosper. Bede's discussion of the *districta scansio* is also a clear improvement on Audax's utterly artificial presentation, having, as it does, an authentic quotation for its model, the anonymous poem known as *De laude cerei* quoted by Augustine in his *City of God*.<sup>308</sup> The cited verse is

<sup>307</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 109-111.

<sup>308</sup> Aug. civ. 15, 22:

Quod in laude quadam cerei breviter versibus dixi:  
Haec tua sunt, bona sunt, quia tu bonus ista creasti.  
Nil nostrum est in eis, nisi quod peccamus amantes  
ordine neglecto pro te, quod conditur abs te.

[Which I shortly said with verses in a certain praise of the paschal candle: "These things are yours, they are good because you who are good created these things. There is nothing of us in them except the sin we commit in ignoring the order of things and loving your creations instead of you."]

metrically not quite as implausible as Audax's example, as the central caesura is not totally neglected, which Bede takes care to point out: in Bede's words, *sunt* follows the second foot and *tu* the third one (i.e. the line has both a penthemimeral and a hephthemimeral caesura). The presentations of "mixed" and "divided" scansion follow Audax more closely than those of the "conjunctive" and "districtive" ones, but Bede's examples of these types are taken from Christian poetry. All in all, Bede's presentation is more lucid than Audax's; one may contrast Bede's clear-cut definition of the *coniuncta scansio* ("ubi nusquam pes cum verbo finitur") with Audax's obscure "ut nusquam finito sensu divisa inter se verba ponantur".

Bede's description of the actual caesurae is terse and simple. In one respect it can be regarded as simpler than those in his Late Latin predecessors: Bede does not differentiate, as several of his forerunners did, between "primary" and "secondary" caesurae. This dichotomy is probably based on practical observation: a Latin hexameter line invariably has either a penthemimeral or a hephthemimeral caesura, and in most treatises these are accorded the first place; other types of caesura that are mentioned as secondary are the trochaic caesura of the third foot, the even less usual trochaic caesura of the fourth foot<sup>309</sup> and (although in our terminology not caesura but usually discussed as such by the grammarians) the bucolic diaeresis between the fourth and fifth feet.<sup>310</sup>

That the trochaic caesurae are discussed at all reflects the conservative nature of Latin grammar, as does the fact that the trithemimeral caesura (a strong word-break in the second foot), all but compulsory in hexameter lines with a hephthemimeral caesura, never made it to the terminology of the Late Latin grammarians.<sup>311</sup> Bede's presentation of caesurae is taken from Maximus Victorinus (gramm. VI, 240). Obviously Bede did not expect much prosodic sophistication from his prospective readers, as he has added a warning, taken from Diomedes (gramm. I, 497) not to be led astray by the concept of "trochaic" caesurae: Bede, as Diomedes, emphasises that trochees as feet do not occur in the middle of a hexameter line. All cited examples are taken from Sedulius's *Carmen paschale*:

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It is probable that the hexameter poem is not by Augustine himself, who even by his own admission knew nothing of syllable quantity (Aug. mus. 3, 2). Although Bede's quotation does not follow the usual reading in Augustine it is possible that Bede attributed the poem to him.

<sup>309</sup> Most grammarians do not mention this caesura, but Marius Victorinus, Priscian and, curiously, Aldhelm do.  
<sup>310</sup> See Klopsch 1972, 66. The dichotomy of primary and secondary caesurae appears in Marius Victorinus (gramm. VI, 64, 31 – 65), the *Fragmentum Sangallense* (gramm. VI, 638, 5-11), Iulius Severus (gramm. VI, 645) and Priscian (gramm. III, 460). Aldhelm (Ehwald 1919, 97) Bede and Cruindmel (Huemer 1883, 35), who generally follows Bede, do not differentiate between the roles of the caesurae.

<sup>311</sup> Klopsch 1972, 65-66: "Einerseits werden die weiblichen Zäsuren mitgeschleppt, andererseits wird die längst eingebürgerte Trithemimeres nicht in den Katalog aufgenommen."

Nec minus caesurarum intuendus est status, quae et ipsae sunt quattuor, pentimemeris, eptimemeris, cata triton trocheon, bucolice ptomen. Pentimemeris est, ubi post duos pedes invenitur semipes, qui versum dividat et partem terminet orationis, ut “cum sua gentiles”. Eptimemeris, ubi post tres pedes invenitur syllaba, ut “cum sua gentiles studeant” (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 17). Dicta autem pentimemeris et eptimemeris Graece quasi semiquinaria et semiseptinaria, quia cum per spondeos fiunt, haec quinque syllabis, illa constat septem, et in hac quinta syllaba semipedem, in illa tenet septima. Cata triton trocheon, ubi tertio loco invenitur trocheus, non quod in medio versu esse possit trocheus, sed sublata una de dactylo syllaba remanet trocheus, ut “grandisonis pompare modis” (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 18). Bucolice ptomen, ubi post quattuor pedes non aliquid remanet, ut:

Semper principium, sceptrum iuge, gloria consors (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 34);

et:

Cristus erat panis, Cristus petra, Cristus in undis (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 159).

Quae caesura inde nomen habet, quod in bucolicis saepius invenitur.<sup>312</sup>

[Attention should be given as well to the essential features of the caesuras of heroic verse, of which there are also four: the penthemimeral, the hephthemimeral, the trochaic, and the bucolic diaeresis. In the penthemimeral caesura a half-foot which coincides with the end of a word and divides the line is found after the first three feet, as in “cum sua | genti|les ||”. In the hephthemimeral caesura the final syllable of a word is found after the first three feet, as in “cum sua | genti|les stude|ant ||” (“since the pagans study their own fictions”). These are called penthemimeris and hephthemimeris in Greek; and similarly semiquinaria and semiseptinaria in Latin, because when they are fashioned with spondees the former consists of five and the latter of seven syllables and in the former the fifth syllable makes up a half-foot and in the latter the seventh syllable. The trochaic caesura is that in which a trochee is found in the third foot – not that there can be a trochee in the middle of a line, but when you take the last syllable from a dactyl a trochee remains, as in “grandiso|nis pom|pare || mo|dis” (“to make a show with swelling measures”). In the bucolic diaeresis there is a word break after the first three feet, as in:

Semper principium, sceptrum iuge, gloria consors

(Always power, dominion forever, shared glory):

and:

Cristus erat panis, Cristus petra, Cristus in undis

(Ghrist was the bread, Christ was the rock, Christ was in the waters).

This caesura takes its name from the fact that it is quite often found in bucolic verse.]<sup>313</sup>

As we can see, Bede, as his predecessors, overemphasises the role of the trochaic caesura. Although it was popular with Greek poets, it cannot exist on its own in Latin verse: it is normally always supported by trithemimeral and hephthemimeral caesurae, and usually the hephthemimeral caesura constitutes the primary break of such lines. This is certainly the case

<sup>312</sup> DAM 12, 23-39.

<sup>313</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 111-113.

in the line which Bede cites as an example of the trochaic caesura, as we can see if we (unlike Bede) observe the line in its entirety:

Grandisonis pompare modis, / tragicoque boatu.

As a matter of fact, in a hexameter line with trithemimeral and hepthemimeral caesurae there need be no third-foot caesura at all:

Inde to|ro / pater | Aene|as / sic orsus ab alto (Verg. Aen. 2, 2)

The retention of the bucolic diaeresis in the terminology of the grammarians is arguably quite as artificial: in the examples cited by Bede, the penthemimeral caesura is at least equally important (e.g. “Semper principium, / sceptrum iuge, gloria consors”). Bede’s presentation of caesurae might strike one as unusually hidebound, derivative and largely unhelpful from a didactic point of view: it, unhappily, presents Audax’s artificial typology of word-division, which is largely based on non-existent or unusual types of hexameter verse and ignores normal metrical practice. In his presentation of the actual caesurae, Bede follows the example of previous grammarians. He emphasises the role of the penthemimeral and hepthemimeral caesurae, certainly the most important ones, but, probably out of adherence to traditional terminology, also discusses the trochaic caesura of the third foot and the bucolic diaeresis, which in reality are little more than side issues. In this respect Bede is neither better nor worse than his predecessors, although probably the most useful part of his presentation is the almost parenthetical statement that a hexameter line should have either a penthemimeral or a hepthemimeral caesura. Bede acknowledges neither the existence nor the importance of the trithemimeral caesura, but neither did any of his predecessors: apparently even Varro and Gellius limited their observations on hexameter caesurae to the third and fourth feet of the line. – It must be noted that in his metrical *Vita Cuthberti* Bede followed classical practice meticulously in having a trithemimeral caesura in all lines with a hepthemimeral one.

It would, indeed, seem that Bede primarily intended his chapter on caesurae to be a reference work of well-established prosodic terminology rather than a guide to the use of caesurae. This would explain his discussion of largely irrelevant caesura types as well as his neglect of more well-established types of word division. Bede’s own work testifies that he was well aware of the good use to which word-breaks in various parts of the line could be put. Although even in Bede’s verse the penthemimeral caesura dominates, his sense-pauses



often appear in the most unusual places, as we noted in the opening of his *Vita Cuthberti*: in line two (“donavit, / tetricas humanae noctis ut umbras”) the first clause ends with the trithemimeral caesura (for which Bede did not have a name) and in line five with the even less usual trochaic caesura of the second foot (“lux sit summa, / Deus sanctos quoque iure lucernae”). If we observe Bede’s presentation of Audax’s *divisa scansio*, we can also see that he was certainly aware of the role of the diaeresis after the third foot of the line, but, alas, he did not have a name for such a diaeresis and did not venture to coin one. It is also noteworthy that chapter twelve is the only portion of Bede’s treatise where he actually uses the term *caesura*: elsewhere, as in his discussion of common syllables in chapter three, he relies on circumlocutions (e.g. DAM 3, 23-24: “plenis pedibus superfuit”) which may seem tortuous to us but reflect earlier usage.

The end of Bede’s chapter contains a brief discussion of *cola* and *commata*. Here again, the probable purpose is to acquaint the reader with some central terms of grammatical theory. The precise difference of colon and comma is something that does not always come across unambiguously in earlier literature, and Bede has chosen to conclude that in prose the terms are virtually interchangeable. When it comes to verse, however, Bede seems to have adopted Pompeius’s idiosyncratic idea that the difference is one of word-division: a segment of verse ended by a strong caesura is a comma, whereas one terminated by a diaeresis after the second foot is a colon.<sup>314</sup> In practice, Bede’s definition of comma is simply another way of describing the penthemimeral caesura and probably reflects the chapter’s purpose of being a compendium of metrical terminology:

Item ubi post duos pedes superest syllaba, comma dicitur; ubi post duos pedes nihil remanet, colon vocatur. Quae tamen nomina apud oratores indifferenter ponuntur, qui integram sententiam periodon appellant; partes autem eius cola et commata dicuntur.<sup>315</sup>

[A phrase which is two and a half feet long is said to be a “comma”; a phrase which is only two feet long is called a “colon”. But these names are employed without regard to distinctions by professors of rhetoric, who call the whole sentence a “period” and its parts “colons” and “commas”.]<sup>316</sup>

Bede’s definitions of *commata* and *cola* in verse are historically imprecise: the concept of the colon was originally derived from poetry, and originally corresponded with a sense-unit

<sup>314</sup> gramm. V, 133, 23 – 134, 2.

<sup>315</sup> DAM 12, 42-46.

<sup>316</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 113.

roughly equivalent to a hexameter line,<sup>317</sup> whereas a comma is generally described as something shorter. As we can see, the “Pompeian” definition adopted by Bede turns things the other way around, as both terms are applied to segments of hexameter verse, and a colon has actually become the shorter one of the two. Bede ends his chapter with some samples of cola and commata in prose, where, as he contends, the two terms are wholly undifferentiated. The Biblical quotation gives Bede’s simple presentation the required Christian veneer; the passage is remarkably similar to *De arte metrica*’s companion work *De schematibus et tropis* with its discussion of rhetorical figures and their Biblical illustrations:

Ut puta, “sustinetis enim, siquis vos in servitutem redigit” (2 Cor. 11:20), colon est; “si quis devorat”, colon est; “si quis accipit”, colon est; “si quis extollitur”, et cetera usque ad plenam sententiam, cola sunt et commata.<sup>318</sup>

[For example: “For you suffer if a man bring you into bondage” is a colon; “if a man devour you” is a colon; “if a man take from you” is a colon; and “if a man be lifted up”, and so on to the end of the sentence are colons and commas.]<sup>319</sup>

To sum up: Bede’s chapter on word division and caesurae must be primarily viewed as an introduction to the traditional terminology of hexameter caesurae rather than a guide to their actual employment. Although Bede has attempted to elucidate his presentation, especially when it comes to Audax’s typology of caesurae, it is evident that he feels uncomfortable with the terminology which he discusses, and the chapter seems lacking in the practical approach otherwise typical of Bede’s treatise.

## 2.7. Elision and hiatus

The prosodic feature known variously as elision or synaloephe has traditionally been one of the major stumbling-blocks for students trying to learn the proper scansion of Latin verse. In practice, elision means that if a word that ends in a vowel (or an *m*) is followed by a word

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<sup>317</sup> Thus, for instance, in Demetrius (1,1). Cicero has the analogy to hexameter verse in his *Orator* 221-222, where he uses the Latin *membra* for cola: “Constat enim ille ambitus et plena comprehensio e quattuor fere partibus, quae membra dicimus, ut et auris impleat et neque brevior sit quam satis sit neque longior...E quattuor igitur quasi hexametrorum instar versuum quod sit constat fere plena comprehensio.” (“For the full comprehensive period consists of roughly four parts, which we call members, that it may satisfy the ear and be neither shorter nor longer than necessary... Therefore, the full period consists of four parts equivalent to a hexameter line.”).

<sup>318</sup> DAM 12, 46-49.

<sup>319</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 113.

with an initial vowel (or an h), the final vowel (or vowel and m) of the previous word is left unpronounced (e.g. *multum ille* > *mult' ille*) – or this, at least, is the view generally taken by the grammarians, and one that has been considered good enough for the classroom.

Nevertheless, the precise nature of elision (or synaloephe) has, in modern literature, been a matter of some debate: it is unclear whether an elided final vowel was truly dropped, whether it became fused with the following initial vowel, or whether it was glossed over in some other manner;<sup>320</sup> nevertheless, the feature is assumed to have existed, at least to some extent, even in regular speech.

There are several things which further complicate the matter of elision. Firstly, elision is normally not indicated in writing, and it can be broken against, resulting in what is known as hiatus. Generally, the only way to verify whether elision takes place or not, is to see whether the line scans. Secondly, the verb form *est* acts differently from other words with an initial vowel. If *est* follows a word-final vowel (or m), the initial e is eliminated by a process known as prodelision or aphaeresis (e.g. *multum est* > *multum'st*).<sup>321</sup> Unlike “regular” elision, prodelision is often spelt out in manuscripts of archaic drama and inscriptional verse, but usually not in manuscripts of literary classical poetry, and Late Latin grammarians generally seem to have been ignorant of its existence.

Bede's treatise on metre is unusually advanced in its presentation of elision as a form of verse technique, and, in this respect, he follows in the footsteps of Aldhelm.<sup>322</sup> Earlier grammarians (e.g. Donatus) followed the less practical course of presenting elision among what they termed “metaplasms”, or metrical licences. In Donatus's *Ars maior*, for instance, elision, together with other metaplasms, is placed at the end of the treatise, together with schemes and tropes, and presented separately from actual metre. Donatus's list of metaplasms reads as follows; it is worthy of note that he in no way differentiates between structures that are mere prosodic curiosities and those that are an integral part of verse technique:

*Metaplasmus est transformatio quaedam recti solutique sermonis in alteram speciem metri ornatusve causa. Huius species sunt quattuordecim: prosthesis, epenthesis,*

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<sup>320</sup> A particularly intricate system of synaloephe, which combines complete omission of vowels with synizesis (vowel fusion) and final u:s and i:s turned into consonants is offered by Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 78-82, but even he admits: “However, if the English reader chooses to apply elision in all cases of vowel junction, and thereby avoid the uncertainties inherent in other solutions, he will at any rate be no further removed from classical practice than some of the Latin grammarians were; and only very rarely will such reading lead to any ambiguity.”

<sup>321</sup> Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 123. In archaic verse, prodelision also takes place after word-final s.

<sup>322</sup> Wright 1985, 185.

paragoge, aphaeresis, syncope, apocope, ectasis, systole, diaeresis, episynaliphe, synaliphe, ecthlipsis, antithesis, metathesis.<sup>323</sup>

[Metaplasm is a type of transformation of direct and unbound speech into another kind for the sake of metre or embellishment. There are fourteen kinds of metaplasm: prothesis, epenthesis, paragoge, aphaeresis, syncope, apocope, ectasis, systole, diaeresis, episynaliphe (=episynaloephe), synaliphe (=synaloephe), ecthlipsis, antithesis and metathesis.]

An even more extensive presentation of metaplasms is given by Consentius in his *De barbarismis et metaplasms*.<sup>324</sup> Bede, on the other hand, has limited his discussion of metaplasms to those that have a practical effect on the scansion of hexameter verse (i.e. synaloephe, synaeresis, diaeresis and syncope) and ignores the rest. His terminology is also simplified even within the scope of the phenomena which he discusses: unlike many of his predecessors, he uses one term (*synalipha*) for all forms of elision, whereas, e.g., Isidore, Donatus, Consentius and even Aldhelm use two different terms, *synalipha* and *ecthlipsis*, for different (and variously defined) types of elision.<sup>325</sup> Bede also discusses other metaplasms in his chapter on the fusion and resolution of syllables, which, in accordance with older terminology, he calls *episynalipha* and *diaeresis*.<sup>326</sup> The fifteenth chapter of his treatise, which deals with the prosodic licences of poets, is also fundamentally based on earlier presentations of metaplasms, although, here too, Bede's approach to the matter is much more practical, as he has jettisoned the earlier nomenclature with its elaborate names for the lengthening (*ectasis*) and shortening (*systole*) of syllables altogether.<sup>327</sup>

The focus of Bede's presentation of metaplasms is on elision. That such an approach was necessary for the Anglo-Saxon scholars is reflected in the obvious difficulties which the use of elision presented them with. Andy Orchard, among others, has demonstrated the different approaches to the technique of elision taken by the first major Anglo-Latin poets: in Aldhelm, elision is scarce and generally limited to the first two feet of the line,<sup>328</sup> whereas Bede seems to have gone out of his way to introduce elision wherever possible. Although, even in Bede, elision is not nearly as common as in, say, Vergil, his eagerness

<sup>323</sup> Holtz 1981, 660, 8-10.

<sup>324</sup> Niedermann 1937, 22-32.

<sup>325</sup> Lausberg 1998, 230-231; Holtz 1981, 663; Niedermann 1937, 27-28; Isid. orig. 1, 35, 5. The general consensus appears to be that, in some way, *synaloephe* is the "smooth transition" from one vowel to another, whereas *ecthlipsis* is something "harsher". Isidore and Donatus seem to understand *ecthlipsis* to mean the elision of final *m* (*synaloephe* would be the elision of final vowel), and Aldhelm follows their example. Consentius suggests that the difference is that in *synaloephe*, a vowel is "skipped rather than omitted" ("*transilitur, non exclusa est*"). –Niedermann 1937, 28, 16-17.

<sup>326</sup> DAM 14.

<sup>327</sup> e.g. Donatus in Holtz 1981, 661-662.

<sup>328</sup> Wright 1985, 185-186; Orchard 1994, 79-80.

sometimes has unsatisfactory results: from time to time, Bede's use of elision appears either gratuitous or awkward, especially in his elision of monosyllables,<sup>329</sup> in itself not atypical in Anglo-Latin verse.<sup>330</sup> All of this would indicate that Bede viewed elision as one of the hallmarks of sophisticated poetic style, something also reflected in his disdain of its opposite, the hiatus. Indeed, together with spondaic lines, hiatus was apparently one of Bede's main annoyances and one of those features which, in his opinion, most marred the verse of the pre-Christian poets. Bede's severity regarding the matter may be biased, but contemporary evidence shows that Bede's concern was justified: the occasional poetry of less accomplished Anglo-Latin poets exhibits strikingly liberal use of hiatus, usually without any regard for poetic style. Hiatus is particularly conspicuous in Insular Latin Hymns, a feature unique in early medieval rhythmic verse where elision and hiatus were usually equally strenuously avoided.<sup>331</sup>

Bede's presentation of elision (in Bede's terminology, *synalipha*, in accordance with Donatus's nomenclature) starts with a short explanation of the phenomenon, together with a concise etymology of the term, taken from Consentius:<sup>332</sup>

*Synalipharum quoque commemoranda ratio est, quia nonnumquam ultima verbi syllaba vel particula syllabae videtur absumi. Unde synalipha Graece dicitur quasi quodam saltu transmittens. Fit autem duobus modis quia, cum aliqua pars orationis aut in vocalem litteram aut in m consonantem desinit, incipiente a vocali sequente parte orationis, illa quae sequitur pars orationis praecedentem vel litteram vocalem vel syllabam quae in m desierat sua vocali absumit.*<sup>333</sup>

[The principle of elisions should also be discussed, because sometimes the final syllable or part of the final syllable of a word seems to be taken away. Hence in Greek elision is called "synaloepha", a kind of leaping across, as it were. There are two kinds of elision, since, when a word ends in either a vowel or in the consonant m and the following word begins with a vowel, the following word absorbs with its own vowel the preceding vowel or the syllable ending in m.]<sup>334</sup>

Shortly thereafter Bede ventures to give a few examples of this practice, quoting from his favourite Christian authors. Bede shares with some of his Late Latin predecessors a total ignorance of the practice known as *aphaeresis* or *prodelision*, where the initial e of the verb

<sup>329</sup> Jaeger 1935, 20. Jaeger specifically mentions the inelegant elision of the first syllable of the line in verses 457 ("qu(i) oblii"), 685 ("qu(am) imperiti") and 762 ("qu(i) obsequio") of *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*.

<sup>330</sup> Orchard 1994, 80.

<sup>331</sup> Norberg 1958, 32-33; Orchard 1994, 38.

<sup>332</sup> Niedermann 1937, 27, 1-8.

<sup>333</sup> DAM 14, 2-9.

<sup>334</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 115.

form est is elided after a final vowel or m.<sup>335</sup> Bede assumes normal elision to take place in such cases, as his first example makes evident:

Quod dico huiusmodi est:

Arta via est verae quae ducit ad atria vitae (Prosp. epigr. 19,1).

Scanditur enim ita, artavi dactylus, estve spondeus, intercepta a syllaba per synalipham.<sup>336</sup>

[This, in my view, is how elision works:

Arta vi(a) est verae quae ducit ad atria vitae

(The path is narrow which leads to the temple of true life).

The line scans like this: artavi (dactyl), estve (spondee), with the syllable a being absorbed by elision.]<sup>337</sup>

The correct reading would be *arta viast*, rather than *arta viest*. The same misunderstanding occurs several more times in Bede's chapter on elision: he cites the following examples, all from Prosper and all more properly cases of prodelision:

Nullus enim est insons (Prosper epigr. 43, 3);

Magnum praesidium est (Prosper epigr. 72, 1);

Non cognitus ordo est (Prosper epigr. 40, 3).

Bede's suggested scansion is "nullus enest insons" (rather than *enimst*), "magnum praesidiest" (rather than *praesidiumst*), and we may suppose that he implies the scansion "cognitus ordest" (rather than *ordost*) for the last quotation. Of course, we know better, but, ultimately the issue is a fairly irrelevant one, having, as it does, no actual bearing on the metrical structure of any line, and therefore being untraceable unless spelt out.

Bede reiterates the fact, which Anglo-Saxons probably found perplexing, that also word-final *m*'s are elided.<sup>338</sup> This practice reflects the phonetics of classical Latin, where

<sup>335</sup> On aphaeresis or prodelision, see e.g. Raven 1965, 28. Of the grammarians, especially Consentius is in an utter muddle: he recognises the possibility of eliding the first vowel of a word (he refers to this as a form of *ecthlipsis*), but appears to suggest that it is freely interchangeable with ordinary *synaloepe* (where the final vowel is "skipped"):

Ergo sic dubium erit, utrum hoc an illo modo scandas, utrum *synalipham* an *ecthlipsin* facias, "coniugio Anchise" (Verg. Aen. 3, 475). Nam si sic scandas: coniugi Anchi, *synalipham* fecisti, transiluisti enim o syllabam; quae transilitur, non exclusa est. Si sic scandas: coniugi Onchise, *ecthlipsis* erit; exclusa est enim a et quasi expressa. – Niedermann 1937, 28, 13-18.

[Therefore, if there is any doubt whether you should scan in this or that particular way, making either a *synaloepe* or an *ecthlipsis*, (consider) "coniugio Anchise". For, if you scan thus: coniugi Anchi, you have made a *synaloepe*, skipping the syllable o, which is skipped, not omitted. If you scan: coniugi Onchise, it will be an *ecthlipsis*; namely, the a is omitted and, so to speak, squeezed out.]

<sup>336</sup> DAM 14, 9-13.

<sup>337</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 115.

<sup>338</sup> That the issue was taken seriously by Anglo-Saxon scholars is proven by the singular use of elision in the works of both Aldhelm's works: he is presumably the only hexameter poet in whose verse the elision of *m* is

final m's were very weakly articulated and may simply have nasalised and lengthened the previous vowel.<sup>339</sup> Bede has, strangely enough, added that initial h has the power to block elision after an m. This is in line with his exposition of the consonantal value of the letter h in his chapter on common syllables and reflects the metrical practice of the Christian epic poets Juvenius and Sedulius.<sup>340</sup> Bede's formulation of the rule in such a form that hiatus may take place when the previous word ends in an m and the following word begins with an h appears to be his own attempt to codify this practice:

Quaecumque ergo verba in m terminantur, nisi adpositione consonantis alicuius defendantur, synalipha inrumpente syllabam ultimam aut perdunt semper aut minuunt, excepto cum ab h littera sequens sermo inchoaverit. Tunc et enim in arbitrio poetarum est, utrum haec instar fortium consonantium synalipham arceat, an pro modo suae fragilitatis nihil valeat. Valuit namque in hoc, quia voluit poeta:

Nomine Iohannem hunc tu vocitare memento (Iuenc. 1, 26);

et:

Progenitum fulsisse ducem, hoc caelitus astra (Sedul. carm. pasch. 2, 77).

Item nihil iuuit ad propellendam synalipham, quia poeta neglexit:

Qui pereuntem hominem vetiti dulcedine pomi (Sedul. carm. pasch. 1, 70).<sup>341</sup>

[Every word which ends in m will always either lose its final syllable or have it reduced by the action of elision, unless elision is blocked, which happens when the immediately following word begins with any consonant except h. In that case, it is up to the judgement of the poets as to whether the h should prevent elision after the fashion of the stronger consonants, or should have no force on account of its weakness. It has the force of a consonant, since the poet willed it, in this example:

Nomine Iohannem / hunc tu vocitare memento  
(Remember to call his name John);

and in

Progenitum fulsisse ducem, / hoc caelitus astra  
(The Son and king has appeared, the star from Heaven witnesses it).

But it has no power to block elision, because the poet disregarded it, in this example:

Qui pereunt(em) hominem vetiti dulcedine pomi  
(You who restore mankind, damned by the sweetness of the forbidden fruit).]<sup>342</sup>

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actually more common than that of final vowels. This feature of Aldhelm's verse seems inexplicable, but is possibly due to hypercorrection. Even in Bede the elision of final m is conspicuously common: in his *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*: together with elision of final que, it comprises the majority of elisions. Orchard 1994, 81-82; Jaager 1935, 20.

<sup>339</sup> e.g. Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 31.

<sup>340</sup> Curiously enough, Bede does not appear to have made use of this licence in his own verse. In Aldhelm, on the other hand, it is copious enough, although Aldhelm in his *De metris* does not recognise this possibility. Orchard 1994 (p. 84) states: "One might note that of some twenty-four instances in Aldhelm where a word beginning in h- is in a position which may potentially cause elision, only seven in fact do so (= 29.17%)." It seems probable that cases of elision blocked by initial h in Aldhelm are due to the influence of either Venantius Fortunatus or Sedulius.

<sup>341</sup> DAM 13, 31-43.

<sup>342</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 117.

Bede here also touches on a prosodic feature which he had discussed in his chapter on common syllables, where he renounced the use of hiatus as an old-fashioned practice typical of the pagans, together with the correption of a long vowel in hiatus. However, as what appeared to be his own extrapolation of the subject, he alleged that such correption could take place within a word, using the examples of *Marīa*/*Marīa* and *Ēous*/*Ēous*.<sup>343</sup> Here Bede again takes up the subject, this time emphasising that elision never takes place within a word, but that a word-internal vowel may be shortened before another vowel:

Sciendum autem quod numquam in eadem parte orationis media fieri potest synalipha. Verum si in medio verbo duae vocales conveniunt, quarum prior sit longa, potest illa quae sequitur priorem facere brevem de longa, si sic poeta voluerit. Auferendi autem funditus potestatem non habet. Est enim longa naturaliter in illo Paulini:

Ut citharis modulans unius uerbere plectri (Paulin. carm. 27, 72).

Est brevis licenter in illo Sedulii:

Unius ob meritum cuncti periere minores (Sedul. hymn. 1,5).

Item natura longa est in hoc Paulini:

Discutiebat ovans galea scutoque fidei (Paulin. carm. 16, 125);

licentia brevis in hoc Prosperi:

Delicias iam nunc promissi concipe regni

virtute et fidei quod cupis esse tene (Prosp. epigr. 102, 17-18).

Et hoc, ut supra rettulimus, inter communes syllabas computatur.<sup>344</sup>

[It should be understood that elision can never occur in the middle of a word. It is true that if two vowels the first of which is long, come together in the middle of a word, the second vowel can shorten the first, if the poet so wishes; but it does not have the power of eliding it completely. For instance, the *i* in *unius* is long by nature in this line of Paulinus:

Ut citharis modulans unīus uerbere plectri

(As one singing to the accompaniment of the lyre, with the strike of the plectrum alone).

But it is short in this line of Sedulius:

Unīus ob meritum cuncti periere minores

(On account of the fault of one man all his descendants perished).

Similarly, the *e* in *fidei* is long by nature in this line of Paulinus:

Discutiebat ovans galea scutoque fidēi

(Triumphing with the helmet and the shield of faith, he scattered their weapons);

but it is short by poetic licence in this couplet of Prosper:

Delicias iam nunc promissi concipe regni

virtute et fidēi quod cupis esse tene

(Take now the wealth of the promised kingdom, maintain that you desire to be by virtue and faith).

<sup>343</sup> DAM 3, 81-87.

<sup>344</sup> DAM 13, 44-59.



A vowel which may be shortened this way is reckoned among the common syllables, as I have mentioned above.<sup>345</sup>

Bede's idea that a long vowel may be shortened inside a word if another vowel follows it has hit the nail on the head, albeit accidentally: this is precisely what happened at the junctions of vowels in archaic Latin.<sup>346</sup> As a consequence, classical Latin has precious few words where a long vowel is followed by another vowel: the main exceptions to the rule are most forms of *fiō*, the pronominal genitive ending *-ūs*, Greek loans such as *āēr* and a few others.

Therefore, Bede's effort to present this as a poetic technique seems misguided, as classical Latin has few words where a long vowel remains long before another vowel, and the applications of the rule, as presented by Bede, are extremely limited. The examples which Bede here discusses are the pronominal genitive *illius* and the genitive/dative form *fidei*. In classical Latin, the normal form of *illius* has a long *i* in the hiatus, but the short form *illūs* is also common in archaic verse, and coexisted with *illūs* even in Vergil (e.g. *Aen.* 1, 16: "*hic illūs arma*"), and, probably through his influence, in later verse. *Fidēī* (with long *e*) on the other hand, is an archaic pronunciation – the classical form is *fidēī* – which, probably through analogy to *diēī*, had gained a new popularity in Late Latin.<sup>347</sup> As we noted in Bede's chapter on final syllables, he considers the archaic *fidēī* to be the normal form,<sup>348</sup> although he himself uses *fidēī* in his verse. The reasons for this are clarified by Bede's theory of word-internal correption: *illūs* is the normal form and *illūs* the result of correption; similarly, *fidēī*, which Bede erroneously considers the normal form, can be shortened to *fidēī*.

The segment on word-internal correption, and Bede's emphasis on elision never taking place word-internally, is probably a reaction against Maximus Victorinus, who in his *De ratione metrorum* suggested the opposite. Victorinus proposes an utterly nonsensical scansion, with a verbose and scarcely intelligible theoretical explanation, for Verg. *Aen.* 5, 186 "*Nec tota tamen ille prior praeunte carina*" ("Yet not first by a whole ship's length"). Victorinus's suggested scansion is *prae-ente* (with omission of the *u*),<sup>349</sup> which Bede attacks

<sup>345</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 118-119.

<sup>346</sup> See e.g. Baldi 1999, 265-266.

<sup>347</sup> Norberg 1958, 12.

<sup>348</sup> DAM 6, 47-48.

<sup>349</sup> Scanditur enim sic, nec to spondeus, ta tamen dactylus, ille pri dactylus, or prae spondeus, hic vides posse alios dicere dactylum esse ratione coniunctarum syllabarum, quoniam prae syllaba vocali finitur et excipitur a vocali, quae est e. Sed cum synalipha fieri possit faciatque spondeum, cur non eam viam sequamur, quam nobis consuetudo frequentior tritam reliquit? Antenovissimus pes est huius versus ente ca, quem ideo praepono. Cum in synalipha haec sit consuetudo, ut anterior vocalis excludatur, tunc tamen non excludi scias, cum sola syllabam facere potest anterior, quae excludi non potest. Quod dico, huiusce modi est: praeunte per duas e scribitur; est ergo spondeus or prae, sequunturque circa se duae uocales, eunte carina. Sed quoniam e littera eadem et syllaba

vehemently, proposing instead his theory of word-internal correption. In Bede's opinion the *ae* in *praeunte* is shortened so that both *prae* and *e* are short syllables:<sup>350</sup>

Ita scandendum esse ratio probat, ut primo sit necto spondeus, deinde tatamen dactylus, illepri dactylus, orprae dactylus, adbreuiata diptongo propter vocalem quae sequitur, unteca rina dactylus et spondeus, qui terminent. Quis enim audiat Victorinum docentem ut scandamus enteca rina, facientes synalipham in media parte orationis, quod numquam fecere priores?<sup>351</sup>

[Hence metrical theory proves that Vergil's line...should be scanned so that first there is necto, a spondee, then tatamen, a dactyl, illepri, a dactyl, and orprae, a dactyl, with the diphthong *ae* shortened on account of the following vowel. The line ends with unte carina, a dactyl and a spondee. For who will agree with Victorinus, who teaches that we should scan enteca rina, eliding in the middle of the word, which earlier writers never did?]<sup>352</sup>

If, in his use of *priores* for "earlier writers" Bede is referring to the pre-Christian authors, this may be the highest compliment he pays them in his treatise.

Bede's presentation of elision ends with the statement that elision can be used in every foot of the line, even the last one, something which Aldhelm had conspicuously neglected,<sup>353</sup> and this may be yet another effort on Bede's part to encourage a richer and more varied hexameter style. Bede also presents an example of elision in the final syllable of a line, a fairly unusual technique which does not appear in his own verse. Although this is a Vergilian feature, Bede, true to his habits, does not present it as such but uses the example of Paulinus:

Fit autem synalipha in omni parte versus, etiam in extrema, ut Prosper:

Sed rerum auctori nullus non cognitus ordo est (Prosper epigr. 40, 3).

Fit et post versum synalipha, quae ad sequentis uersus caput intendat, ut Paulinus:

Quae decus omne operum perimebant inproba foedaque

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est, u autem, syllaba ut sit, adhibet sibi consonantes n et t, idcirco rectius ente carina quam unte carina per synalipham scandimus. – gramm. VI, 218-219.

[It is namely scanned thus: nec to is a spondee, ta tamen, a dactyl, ille pri, a dactyl, and or prae a spondee. Here you see that some may say that it is a dactyl by way of joined syllables, because the syllable *prae* ends in a vowel and is followed by a vowel, which is *e*. But if elision may take place and make a spondee, why not follow the road which has been made familiar to us by custom? The penultimate foot of this verse is *ente ca*, which I prefer for this reason: although in elision it is customary that the previous vowel is omitted, you should know that it may not be elided when it comprises the entire previous syllable, which may not be excluded. Therefore I say it is as follows: *praeunte* is written with two *e*'s, or *prae* is therefore a spondee, and followed by two vowels. But as the letter *e* is, at the same time, also a syllable but *u*, in order to make a syllable, also has the consonants *n* and *t*, we are more correct in scanning *ente carina* (by way of elision) than *unte carina*.]

Victorinus's theory is probably based on the fact that one-letter words like the interjection *o* are not elided.

<sup>350</sup> More probably, this is a case of vowel fusion that Bede fails to recognise.

<sup>351</sup> DAM 66-72.

<sup>352</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 121.

<sup>353</sup> Orchard 1994, 82.

obice prospectum caecantia (Paulin. carm. 28, 65-66).

Sunt namque ultimi versus illius pedes, inproba dactylus, foeda spondeus, at primi sequentis per synalipham, quobice dactylus, prospec spondeus.<sup>354</sup>

[Elision may occur in every foot of the line, even the last, as in Prosper:

Sed rerum auctori nullus non cognitus ordo est.

(There is no sequence of events which is not already known to the Creator.)

There even occurs elision which links the end of one verse to the beginning of the next, as in Paulinus:

Quae decus omne operum perimebant inproba foedaqu(e )  
obice prospectum caecantia.

(Ungainly and unsightly things which ruined every grace of the building, and ruined the view with a barrier.)

For the last feet of the first line are inproba (dactyl), foeda (spondee), and the first feet of the second line as a result of elision are quobice (dactyl), prospec (spondee).]<sup>355</sup>

Bede's presentation of elision must be considered a vast improvement on both the grammarians of late antiquity and his immediate predecessor Aldhelm: Bede treats elision as an integral part of the scansion and composition of verse, rather than as a side issue. Furthermore, he has practically discarded the traditional terminology of metaplasms, calling all forms of elision by the name of synalipha and disregarding the cumbersome and useless distinction between synalipha and ecthipsis, as employed by Isidore and Aldhelm. Bede also presents the rules of elision in a logical and straightforward manner, erring only in his ignorance of prodelision, which makes several of his suggested scansions historically incorrect. He also refutes the idea of elision taking place in the middle of the word, suggesting instead a technique where correption of long vowels in word-internal hiatus takes place; Bede's suggestion may be dubious and of limited use, but arguably it testifies to the same willingness to standardise, regularise and simplify which we can encounter everywhere in his treatise. Bede's presentation of elisions taking place in all the feet of the verse, on the other hand, is probably intended to promote a more varied kind of hexameter verse. We know that elision was difficult for the early Anglo-Latin poets, and especially in Aldhelm its use was both limited and inconsistent. In view of this, we can read Bede's presentation of elision as a supplement to the stylistic guidelines offered in the earlier part of his treatise.

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<sup>354</sup> DAM 13, 73-82.

<sup>355</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 121.

## 2.8. Bede on prosodic licences

Bede gives us a further glimpse on his respective views on Christian and pre-Christian prosody in two successive chapters of his treatise. These chapters, numbered fifteen and sixteen, are placed towards the end of his presentation of the dactylic hexameter and have the respective titles *Quod et auctoritas saepe et necessitas metricorum decreta violet* and *Ut prisci poetae quaedam aliter quam moderni posuerunt*. Chapter fifteen (in Kendall's translation, "Concerning the fact that the rules of the prosodists are often broken both by authority and from necessity"<sup>356</sup>) discusses the various deviations from strict prosody necessitated either by the structure of the dactylic metres or other stylistic considerations. Although some of Bede's examples of such liberties are taken from Vergil, the chapter deals primarily with the metrical liberties of Christian poets and can also be viewed as an attempt to justify some of their transgressions. The sixteenth chapter (in Kendall, "Prosodic differences between ancient and modern poets"<sup>357</sup>), on the other hand, deals with the metrical practices of pre-Christian poets, most notably Vergil, and condemns a number of their prosodic licences, most notably hiatuses and spondaic lines, which, as we have seen, were Bede's *bête noire*. The ultimate purpose of the chapter seems to be to demonstrate the extent to which pre-Christian poets (whom Bede here, tellingly, calls *prisci poetae*) are outdated, contrasted with the prosodic regularity of the "modern", or Christian, poets.

In chapter fifteen, Bede primarily discusses the alterations of syllable lengths, which, in hexameter poetry, are sometimes necessary to make the words prosodically usable. Such devices are age-old and were well established already in the classical age; usually they involve the lengthening of one or more syllables to make a prosodically cumbersome word fit the metre. This practice, known as "epic lengthening", occurs already in Greek epic poetry, and in Latin it was used primarily to alter the prosodic structure of words with a surfeit of short syllables. To mention but one example, the word *religio*, with three consecutive short syllables would be inapplicable in dactylic verse, but its poetic forms *rēligio* and *relligio* (with a long first syllable) are not. Similarly difficult are words with cretic structures, or short syllables sandwiched between long ones, as in *imperator* (-u-x), for which already Ennius substituted the rather contrived *induperator* (-uu-x). The post-classical evolution of Latin prosody provided poets with other ways of circumventing metrically difficult word-forms: the shortened final vowels of first-person verb forms and third-declension nouns proved

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<sup>356</sup> Kendall 1991, 133.

<sup>357</sup> Kendall 1991, 141.

highly useful in providing poets with additional short syllables, and, as we have already stated, the short final *es* of numeral adverbs such as *quinquies* made previously useless cretic words employable in dactylic verse. For Bede, however, these were the regular forms of the words in question (we have his own word on the subject in his chapters on the final syllables of words), and therefore required no further explanation.

The lengthening and shortening of syllables belong to the features which in the earlier grammarians are, impractically enough, lumped together with other “metaplasms” and discussed together with “schemes and tropes”, or figures of speech. As in the case of elision, Bede has chosen a more practical course: he understands that this prosodic feature has a direct effect on the scansion of verse and discusses it accordingly. Remarkably, he has also abandoned the traditional terms for lengthened, shortened, eliminated or interpolated syllables<sup>358</sup> as being simply confusing for the point he is trying to make.

The examples which Bede gives of such prosodic tinkering generally fall into the *religio/rēligio* category, and cannot be said to represent a radical departure from classical norm, although in some cases the analyses which Bede gives his examples are, yet again, idiosyncratic. Also noteworthy is Bede’s the inclusion of the Christian trinitas as a prosodically difficult cretic word:

At tamen intuendum est nobis quia et auctoritas nonnumquam et necessitas metricae disciplinae regulas licite contemnit. Necessitas quidem in his verbis quae non aliter in versu poni possunt, ut sunt ea quae quattuor syllabas breves habent, ita, ‘basilica’,

<sup>358</sup> e.g. Donatus in his *Ars maior*:

Prosthesis est appositio quaedam ad principium dictionis litterae aut syllabae, ut *gnato* pro *nato* et *tetulit* pro *tulit*. Epenthesis est appositio ad mediam dictionem litterae aut syllabae, ut *relliquias* pro *reliquias*, *induperator* pro *imperator*. Hanc alii epenthesein, alii parenthesesin dicunt. Paragoge est appositio ad finem dictionis litterae aut syllabae, ut *magis* pro *mage* et *potestur* pro *potest*. Hanc alii *prospalalempsin* appellant. Aphaeresis est ablatio de principio dictionis contraria prothesi, ut *mitte* pro *omitte* et *temno* pro *contemno*. Syncope est ablatio de media dictione contraria epenthesi, ut *audacter* pro *audaciter*, *commorat* pro *commoverat*. Apocope est ablatio de fine dictionis paragoge contraria, ut *Achilli* pro *Achillis* et *pote* pro *potest*. Ectasis est extensio syllabae contra naturam verbi, ut “*Italiam fato profugus*”, cum *Italia* correpte dici debeat. Systole est correptio contraria ectasi, ut “*aquosus Orion*” cum *Orion* producte dici debeat. – Holtz 1981, 660, 7 – 662, 2.

[Prosthesis is the placement of a letter or a syllable in the beginning of a word, as in *gnato* for *nato* and *tetulit* for *tulit*. Epenthesis is the placement of a letter or a syllable in the middle of a word, as in *relliquias* for *reliquias* or *induperator* for *imperator*. This is called epenthesis by some and parenthesis by others. Paragoge is the placement of a letter or a syllable in the end of a word, as in *magis* for *mage* and *potestur* for *potest*. Some call this *prospalalempsis*. Aphaeresis is the removal (of a letter or a syllable) from the beginning of a word, contrary to prosthesis, as in *mitte* for *omitte* and *temno* for *contemno*. Syncope is the removal (of a letter or a syllable) from the middle of the word, contrary to epenthesis, as in *audacter* for *audaciter* or *commorat* for *commoverat*. Apocope is the removal (of a letter or a syllable) from the end of the word, contrary to paragoge, as in *Achilli* for *Achillis* and *pote* for *potest*. Ectasis is the extension of a syllable against the nature of the word, as in “*Italiam fato profugus*”, since *Italia* should be pronounced short (i.e. with a short initial *i*). Systole is the correption of a syllable, contrary to ectasis, as in “*aquosus Orion*” (Verg. *Aen.* 4, 52), since *Orion* should be pronounced long (i.e. with a long initial *o*).]

‘Italia’, ‘religio’, vel tres primas syllabas breves, ut reliquiae, vel unam in medio brevem, ut ‘veritas’, ‘trinitas’, quae neque dactylum consuetum neque spondeum facere possunt, quod propriis nominibus maxime solet evenire.<sup>359</sup>

[Nevertheless we should keep in mind that the rules of prosody are sometimes properly disregarded both by those poets whom we consider authoritative and from necessity. They must be disregarded from necessity in those words which otherwise have four short syllables, like Italia, basilica, and religio, or those which have three initial short syllables, like reliquiae, or those which have one short syllable between two long ones, like veritas and trinitas. Words like these can make neither an ordinary dactyl nor a spondee. This problem is especially common with certain specific nouns.]<sup>360</sup>

Bede, for once, cites an example from Vergil (Aen. 5, 629) with the name Italia, where lengthening takes place in the initial i. Strangely enough, he does not take it for granted that this is what the poet intended but suggests an alternative scansion where the first foot of the line is a tribrach (uuu) rather than a dactyl:

Huius exemplum:

Italiam sequimur fugientem et mergimur undis.

I contra naturam pro longa posuit, quia non aliter Italiam, quam saepius erat nominaturus, appellare valebat, nisi aut syllabam quae natura brevis erat produceret aut tribrachum loco dactyli poneret.<sup>361</sup>

[For example:

Italiam sequimur fugientem et mergimur undis

(We seek Italy which keeps receding and we are overwhelmed in the seas).

Here the poet has put the i, contrary to its nature, in the position of a long syllable, because he could not otherwise have referred to Italy, which he was going to have to name rather frequently, unless he were either to lengthen a syllable that was short by nature or put a tribrach in place of a dactyl.]<sup>362</sup>

Bede’s quotation from Vergil is not the usual reading (volvimur rather than mergimur), but this has no bearing on its scansion. Bede’s suggestion that a short syllable could, at least theoretically, be used in the place of a long one is, however, a misconception possibly influenced by earlier grammar, such as Aldhelm’s discussion of the *pathe* or *passiones* (prosodic liberties) of hexameter verse.<sup>363</sup> That Bede thought such tampering with the basic fabric of the hexameter possible is demonstrated by other examples where poets have altered

<sup>359</sup> DAM 15, 2-11.

<sup>360</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 133.

<sup>361</sup> DAM 15, 11-16.

<sup>362</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 133.

<sup>363</sup> Aldhelm, citing Aen. 1, 2 (“Italiam fato profugus”) suggests that Vergil “permitted the barbarism of the substitution of a tribrach for a dactyl” (“Etenim barbarismo tribrachum pro dactylo admisit”) –Ehwald 1919, 94; trans. Wright 1985, 209. It is telling that both Aldhelm and Bede use Italia as an example, even if the actual quotations are different.

syllable lengths but Bede suspects them of substituting other metrical feet for dactyls and spondees. A telling example is another quotation from Vergil (*Georg.* 4, 34), where, apparently baffled by the word *alvearia*, Bede suggests that the poet used an antibacchius (--u) in the place of a spondee:

Sic cum de apibus loquens alvearia nominare uellet, necessitate posuit antibacchium in versu dactylico:

Seu lento fuerint alvearia vimine texta.<sup>364</sup>

[So, when speaking of bees, he wanted to refer to beehives by name, he had to substitute an antibacchius for a dactyl out of necessity:

Seu lento fuerint alvearia vimine texta  
(Or let the beehives be woven of pliant twigs).]<sup>365</sup>

Apparently Bede suggests a reading where the third foot of the line is *rint alve* (--u); in reality, the line is not quite as exotic as all that: more plausibly, *vea-ri-a* could be scanned as a dactyl, with synizesis of *e* and *a*.<sup>366</sup> That this solution had not entered Bede's mind is probably attributable to the same mulishness that we encounter in his chapter on common syllables, where he steadfastly refuses to recognise the *eu* in *Mnestheus* for a diphthong.<sup>367</sup> It is nevertheless surprising that although Bede devotes one extensive chapter (number fourteen) to the subject of synizesis, he has serious difficulties recognising it in his own reading.

The other examples of prosodic licence in Bede's presentation or, rather, their analyses are similarly bizarre. Bede cites the examples *religio* and *basilica* (with lengthened first syllable),<sup>368</sup> quoting from Paulinus and Venantius Fortunatus, and gives them an

<sup>364</sup> DAM 15, 16-19.

<sup>365</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 133-135.

<sup>366</sup> *E* in hiatus may have been pronounced as something resembling a semivowel. See Grandgent 1907, 94; Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 51. The authenticity of *alvearia* in Vergil's *Georgics* has been debated, and most modern editions have the synonymous (and prosodically more plausible) *alvaria*. See Johnston 1897, 15.

<sup>367</sup> DAM 3, 42-51.

<sup>368</sup> DAM 15, 22-28:

Et Paulinus:

Qui simul huc sancta pro religione coistis (Paulin. *carm.* 27, 637);

re contra naturam pro longa posuit, quia non aliter hoc nomen versus hexameter recipere valebat. Tale est et illud eiusdem:

Basilicis haec iuncta tribus patet area cunctis (Paulin. *carm.* 27, 637).

Namque alibi quia potuit pro brevi ponitur eadem syllaba, dicente Fortunato:

Hic Paulina, Agnes, Basilissa, Eugenia regnant (Ven. Fort. *carm.* 8, 3, 35).

[And in:

Qui simul ac sancta pro religione coistis

(You who assemble together for the sake of holy religion),

Paulinus has put *re*, contrary to its nature, in the position of a long syllable, because this noun could not otherwise go into a hexameter verse. Of such nature is also this line of the same poet:

adequate explanation but then goes on to cite further examples of poets introducing, as it seems to him, unusual feet into the hexameter line. The remaining examples fall, in Bede's terms, into the category of liberties sanctioned by the auctoritates without actual prosodic necessity, and Bede's presentation of these licences amounts to little less than a *carte blanche* for Christian poets. The substance of Bede's presentation is simply this: at times, if the content of a verse is of sufficient consequence, prosodic rules can be broken so as to emphasise the superiority of the divine truth over human learning. All the examples which Bede uses are from Sedulius, Bede's champion, and all of them consist in the manipulation of syllable lengths in ways not entirely consistent with usual prosody. Awkward as these lines may seem, the prosodic analyses Bede gives them are stranger still, as he persistently proposes the insertion of unusual feet (trochees and antibacchii) into the metrical framework of the hexameter line. His main motives seem to be the defence of Sedulius's prosody, even in its irregularities, and the unwillingness to accept such metrical features as hiatus or spondaic lines in Christian poetry, which in turn has resulted in some very elaborate alternative interpretations for the lines in question. His first example of Christian content overriding grammatical rules is a line from Sedulius's Hymns (1, 110), where Sedulius has scanned the ablative form *spiritu* with a short first syllable:

Auctoritate autem contemnitur regula grammaticorum, ut Sedulius in clausula carminis, cuius supra memini, cum dixisset:

Gloria magna Patri, semper tibi gloria, Nate (Sedul. hymn. 1, 109),  
subdidit:

Cum sancto Spiritu gloria magna Patri (Sedul. hymn. 1, 110).

Spiritus enim primam syllabam habet longam; unde vera scansio versus istius haec est: *cumsanc spondeus, tospiri antibachus, non dactylus*. Sed poeta, ut gloriam sanctae et individuae trinitatis clara voce decantaret, neglexit regulam grammaticae dispositionis.<sup>369</sup>

[The rules of the grammarians, moreover, are sometimes disregarded by poets whom we consider authoritative. So, for example, at the end of the poem which I mentioned above, Sedulius, after saying:

Gloria magna Patri, semper tibi gloria, Nate

(Great glory be to the Father, glory be always to you, Son),

added:

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Basilicis haec iuncta tribus patet area cunctis

(The courtyard adjoining the three churches is accessible to all).

For elsewhere, because of its natural quantity, *ba* is found in the position of a short syllable, as when Fortunatus says:

Hic Paulina, Agnes, Basilissa, Eugenia regnant

(Here Paulina, Agnes, Basilissa and Eugenia reign).]

-Trans. Kendall 1991, 135.

<sup>369</sup> DAM 15, 35-45.



Cum sancto Spiritu gloria magna Patri  
(Great glory be to the Father with the holy Spirit).

The first syllable of spiritus is long, and therefore the correct scansion of this last line is: cumsanc (spondee), tospiri (antibacchius, instead of dactyl). But the poet, in order to celebrate clearly the glory of the holy and undivided Trinity, has neglected the rule forbidding the placement of an antibacchius in elegiac verse.<sup>370</sup>

The genitive and ablative forms of spiritus (*sp̄ritū̄s* and *sp̄ritū̄*) are prosodically impossible in dactylic verse, being, as they are, cretic in form. What is apparent here is that Sedulius has solved the problem by shortening the first syllable of spiritu. This, however, is not how Bede sees it; rather, he supposes that the poet has used an antibacchius (-u) in the place of a dactyl. The importance of the passage, of course, is obvious, as “cum sancto Spiritu” is a direct quotation from the Latin Gloria, and, as Dag Norberg has demonstrated, direct quotations from the Bible and liturgical texts often have prosodically unorthodox syllable combinations.<sup>371</sup> Bede himself took some licences regarding the prosody of spiritus: in his *Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti*, the genitive singular of spiritus appears twice, both times with an unclassical short u, which, as Neil Wright has suggested, may have been inspired by Sedulius’s usage, although, of course, the unshortened form would inevitably be useless in dactylic poetry.<sup>372</sup>

The next quotation from Sedulius receives a similarly idiosyncratic treatment from Bede. The line (carm. pasch. 1, 321) presumably has a hiatus, something of a rarity in Sedulius’s verse and apparently something that Bede refused to stomach, as in Bede’s nomenclature of “ancient” and “modern” verse techniques hiatus was something that he considered typical of pre-Christian poets. Here the hiatus appears in the phrase “ego in patre”, which is a direct quotation from the Gospel of John (10:38),<sup>373</sup> but instead of allowing Sedulius his hiatus, Bede assumes that the o of ego is elided and the line has a trochee in place of a spondee:

Idem ipse in carmine paschali:

Sic ait ipse docens, ego in patre et pater in me.

Sic enim scanditur, sicait dactylus, ipsedo dactylus, cense trocheus, ginpa spondeus, ablata o per synalipham, aut si candere vis censego et facere dactylum, contra morem

<sup>370</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 135-137.

<sup>371</sup> Norberg 1988, 17-18.

<sup>372</sup> Wright 2005, 158-159.

<sup>373</sup> One alternative scansion, suggested in Heiric of Auxerre’s gloss (Kendall 1975, 129), but not by Bede himself, is to scan the e in ego as long and elide the final o (“ēgin patre”).

ipsius Sedulii, quem per omnia seruauit, agis ut immunis stet vocalis altera  
superveniente vocali de foris.<sup>374</sup>

[Likewise the same poet in the Paschale carmen writes:

Sic ait ipse docens, ego in patre et pater in me.

(Thus he himself teaches when he says: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me”).

The verse is scanned in this way: sicait (dactyl), ipse do (dactyl), cense (trochee), ginpa (spondee, with elision of the o). Or, if you prefer to scan censego, making a dactyl, you block the elision of a vowel, which is followed by another vowel at the beginning of a word, contrary to Sedulius’ own custom, which he always observed.]<sup>375</sup>

Bede’s hostility towards hiatus is evident, and in this case it has probably warped his judgement. This peculiar approach to Sedulius’s prosodic liberties shows that Bede’s starting point in poetry was prosody, and the composition of poetry consisted in uniting appropriate syllable combinations to create larger metrical structures (rather than filling a metrical structure with the appropriate syllables, as Aldhelm seems to have viewed it). Undeniably, Bede’s approach to prosody seems too unyielding: he seems more willing to tamper with the metre itself rather than with syllable lengths or the rules of elision.

Yet another quotation from Sedulius has been given a similar treatment in Bede’s exposition: in this case, Sedulius, quoting from John 12:28, uses the phrase “clarifica nomen tuum” (“illuminate your name”), which presents difficulties similar to the previous examples: unless the final syllable is elided, the phrase would normally end in a cretic construction. Sedulius’s probable intention is to scan tuum as a monosyllable (by way of synizesis), a possibly inelegant but nevertheless plausible course. This time, Bede is not clear about what he assumes the intended scansion to be, but by analogy to the previous examples, we must suppose that, in his opinion, Sedulius has used a long syllable in the place of a short one. Bede’s defence of this licence is, in all but wording, identical with the previous ones:

Idem in eodem opere:

Clarifica, dixit, nomen tuum. Magnaque caelo (Sedul. carm. pasch. 5, 8).

In quo, ut veritatem Dominici sermonis apertius commendaret, postposuit ordinem disclipinae saecularis.<sup>376</sup>

[In the same work, Sedulius says:

Clarifica, dixit, nomen tuum. Magnaque caelo

(Glorify your name, he said. And a great voice resounding from Heaven...).

In this verse, in order to commend more clearly the truth of the Lord’s Word, he set aside the order of worldly learning.]<sup>377</sup>

<sup>374</sup> DAM 15, 45-51.

<sup>375</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 137.

<sup>376</sup> DAM 15, 51-55.

Bede's final example of prosodic licence in Sedulius's verse is an awkward attempt to recast a spondaic verse from his *Paschale carmen* 5, 196 ("Scribitur et titulus: Hic est rex Iudaeorum") as an ordinary hexameter line. We already discussed this in conjunction with Bede's incredulity at, and condemnation of, spondaic verses (p. 68). Here Bede's approach seems the very opposite of the previous examples: rather than admitting that Sedulius could have used a spondee in the fifth foot of a hexameter line, he suggests that the final word *Iudaeorum* be scanned as a dactyl and a spondee (possibly *Iū-da-e-ō-rum*, although Kendall suggests *Ī-u-de-ō-rum*<sup>378</sup>). It is worthy of note that here, too, the reason for Sedulius's licence is that the phrase "hic est rex Iudaeorum" is quoted verbatim from the Bible (Luke 23:28).

The middle of Bede's chapter on prosodic licences further contains a curious allusion to Jerome's preface to the book of Job, where he alludes to the metrical practices of the ancient Jews to lend credibility to his exposition of prosodic licences. Jerome was one of the foremost Christian apologists who sought to portray Scripture as the well-spring of all human learning, and Bede certainly took him at his word when he declared that the book of Job had been written in hexameters. Jerome's preface, in Bede's interpretation, also seems to lend legitimacy to the prosodic liberties of the type he describes, although Jerome and Bede are equally oblique on the subject:

His et aliis huiusmodi necessitatibus credo factum, quod de libro beati Iob loquens Hieronimus, cum dixisset eum maxima ex parte versibus apud Hebreos esse descriptum, addidit: qui dactylo spondeoque currentes propter idioma linguae crebro recipiunt et alios pedes eorundem quidem temporum, sed non earundem syllabarum.<sup>379</sup>

[I believe that this is what was done in these cases and in other cases of this kind involving necessity, because Jerome, speaking of the book of the blessed Job, after saying that the Hebrews had written it for the most part in hexameter verses "which were composed of dactylic and spondaic feet, on account of the idiom of the language frequently incorporated also other feet of the same number of morae but of a different number of syllables."]<sup>380</sup>

Kendall suggests, with what appears to be candid and well-justified bafflement, that Bede is trying to justify "the substituting of feet of the same number of syllables but of a different number of morae" by analogy to the very opposite practice (the substitution of feet of the

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<sup>377</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 137.

<sup>378</sup> DAM 15, 55-60.

<sup>379</sup> DAM 15, 29-34.

<sup>380</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 135.

same number of morae but a different number of syllables) in Hebrew verse.<sup>381</sup> In other words, Bede's quotation from Jerome sheds no light on why spondees or antibacchii should be employed in a metre that consists of dactyls and spondees. It would seem that, although Jerome is describing a quantitative phenomenon, Bede has interpreted it as something completely different, although it is hard to say whether Bede had any actual theory of what Jerome meant by his statement.<sup>382</sup> As an argument in defence of prosodic licences in Christian poetry, Bede's use of Jerome seems a desperate attempt.

Bede's chapter on the prosodic licences of poets shows how meticulous his study of Sedulius's verse had been and how relentless his efforts are to present him as the epitome of good poetic style. The unusual prosodic features of the lines which Bede quotes result from Sedulius citing verbatim either from Scripture, or, on one instance, the Latin mass. Bede was certainly aware of this, and certainly his emphasis on the superiority of divine over secular learning is based on this observation. At the same time, Bede has clearly misunderstood the nature of Sedulius's poetic liberties, and the alternative scansion which he suggests for his lines are unduly fanciful. Bede's stubbornness regarding such features as hiatus and spondaic verses, which he saw as characteristic of pre-Christian poetry, has led him astray, as has his inability fully to grasp the fusion of vowels. Bede's message is nevertheless plain: Christian poets, or, at any rate Sedulius, can do no wrong, as any or all of their metrical liberties can be attributed either to prosodic necessity or the "superiority of divine truth". The latter excuse is obviously something which the pagan authors did not have recourse to, and, as we shall shortly observe, Bede was fairly ruthless in his treatment of their prosodic licences.

## 2.9. The differences between pre-Christian and Christian poets

Bede's final notes on dactylic verses in his sixteenth chapter deal with stylistic and prosodic issues which he has already touched on in the earlier part of his treatise. The chapter may, superficially, appear to be a mere curiosity: here Bede, with exaggerated emphasis, discusses the prosodic irregularities of pre-Christian poets, mainly Vergil, implicitly arguing that the

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<sup>381</sup> Kendall 1991, 135.

<sup>382</sup> Bede may have, in his muddled way, seen Jerome's portrayal of Hebrew prosody as something akin to the rhythmic poetry of the early Middle Ages; it is telling that Bede, as one of the first authors, uses the word *rhythmus* ('rhythm'), also employed by Jerome in his preface to Job, as the designation for poetry without quantitative structure.

hexameter had undergone vast improvements over the subsequent centuries, mainly owing to the diligence of the Christian poets. Nowhere else in his treatise is Bede quite as explicit about his belief that there are two distinct styles of hexameter verse, pagan and Christian. Bede's dichotomy is reflected in his choice of terminology: he refers to pre-Christian poets with the terms *veteres*, *prisci* and *antiqui*, so as to emphasise their obsolescence, whereas the Christian poets, regardless of their true age, are called either *moderni poetae*, 'modern poets', *posteriores poetae*, 'later poets', or *nostrates poetae*, 'our poets'. The term *veteres* already appears in earlier Latin grammars, where it usually alludes to archaic or pre-classical authors; Bede, on the other hand, uses it specifically for the authors whom we regard as classical. Bede's terminology shows us that, as he saw it, history could be divided into two distinct ages, and that their differences were manifest everywhere, even in such minute matters as syllable lengths.

Bede's examples of the prosodic unruliness of earlier poets are mainly based on a handful of well-circulated quotations from the works of Vergil. As examples of Vergil's verse technique they are hardly illuminating, as the very reason they had become so well-studied was their unusual prosody: such exceptional features as *hiatuses*, *productio ob caesuram* and *spondaic verses* were invariably demonstrated with quotations from Vergil, and consequently Vergilian lines which exhibited these features came to be overrepresented in the grammarians. That they were unusual even in Vergil's verse is something which Bede – maybe deliberately – ignored.

Bede's case for the superiority of Christian prosody mainly revolves on Vergil's use of two licences which Bede particularly abhorred: *hiatuses* and *spondaic verses*. We have witnessed the variety of excuses and alternative scansiones Bede made for Christian authors who had used these devices, most notably his hypothesis of prosthetic vowels in *spondaic verses*, which would make the fifth foot dactylic (e.g. *intercepto* > *intericepto*, *dena argenti* > *dena arigenti*).<sup>383</sup> However, *spondaic verses* appear to have been so repellent that Bede could not attribute such a monstrosity even to Vergil. This is demonstrated by the beginning of his sixteenth chapter, where he cites a Vergilian *spondaic verse* (*Aen.* 7, 634) but even here tentatively suggests that the insertion of a parasite vowel might solve the problem (presumably *ducunt argento* > *ducunt arigento*), something we already discussed in conjunction with Bede's exposition of the hexameter (p. 69). We may also recall how Bede quotes a hexameter line with six dactyls from Audax ("at tuba terribilem sonitum procul

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<sup>383</sup> DAM 14, 53-79

excitat horrida”<sup>384</sup>) in the mistaken belief that its author was Vergil. Apparently, in Bede’s eyes, the “ancients”’ cavalier way of dealing with the ending of the hexameter line was their most serious metrical transgression, although his presentation of it is ultimately faulty: relying on a badly-understood passage in Audax, he believes that pagan authors used dactyls in the sixth foot of the hexameter line, but is, at the same time, strangely incredulous of their well-attested use of spondaic verses.

The rest of Bede’s chapter deals primarily with what Bede appears to have considered less serious faults of pagan prosody, but even here the examples are sometimes misquoted and frequently misinterpreted. The larger part of the chapter discusses the rules regarding common syllables, something which Bede himself discussed at length in the third chapter of his treatise, sometimes drawing his own conclusions where his reading of Christian verse seemed to demand it. In the sixteenth chapter of his treatise, he focuses on some minor deviations from standard prosodic practice in the pre-Christian authors; all the examples are arguably both trivial and easily explained, and Bede’s main motive in using them has probably been to demonstrate the irregularity of pagan prosody.

Remarkably, Bede has pounced on Audax’s presentation of *qu* creating a position in Lucretius, a poet whom Bede certainly did not know at first hand and who was definitely irrelevant for his contemporaries. Audax mentions this feature in his list of long syllables:

Aut cum correpta uocalis excipitur a littera q, quam necesse est ut consequatur littera u, quae cum altera uocali iuncta loco consonantis accipitur, ut apud Lucretium:

Quae calidum faciunt aquae tactum atque uaporem (Lucr. 6, 868).<sup>385</sup>

[Or when a short vowel is followed by the letter *q*, which must be followed in turn by the letter *u*, which in conjunction with another vowel is treated as a consonant; as in Lucretius:

Quae calidum faciunt āquae tactum atque vaporem.

(Which give a warm feel and steam to the water).]

The quotation from Lucretius in Audax is not our usual reading (the accepted reading has *laticis* instead of *aquae*), but, arguably, the feature genuinely exists in Lucretius’s verse: there are several instances in his *De rerum natura*, where the words *aqua* and *liquidus* appear to be scanned with a long first syllable.<sup>386</sup> It is uncertain whether this is due to some colloquial

<sup>384</sup> gramm. VII, 340, 5.

<sup>385</sup> gramm. VII, 328, 18 – 329, 3.

<sup>386</sup> Lucr. 6, 552; 6, 868; 6, 1072 (for *aqua*); 1, 349; 3, 427; 4, 1259 (for *liquidus*).

pronunciation of qu (cf. *acqua* in modern Italian),<sup>387</sup> but this phenomenon seems largely restricted to Lucretius (with such possible exceptions as *Paulin. carm. 21, 785* “*quo totiens āquae*”),<sup>388</sup> and Bede’s unusual attention to it is probably a reaction against Audax’s inaccurate presentation of long syllables:

Qui et aliis in metrico opere regulis multum libere utebantur, quas moderni poetae distinctius ad certae normam definitionis observare maluerunt. Nam et vocalem brevem, quae q et u et vocali qualibet exciperetur, voluerunt esse communem, ut Lucretius:

Quae calidum faciunt aquae tactum atque vaporem (*Lucr. 6, 868*).<sup>389</sup>

[The ancients also used to take a very casual attitude toward other rules of versification, which modern poets have preferred to observe more carefully with the standards of established principles. Not only did they claim that a short vowel followed by qu and any vowel was common, as Lucretius did in:

Quae calidum faciunt aquae tactum atque vaporem  
(Which give a warm feel and steam to the water)...]<sup>390</sup>

This is followed by other supposed examples of pagan latitude regarding common syllables: Bede cites several lines where Vergil has allowed the short final vowel to be lengthened by an initial plosive-liquid group or the letter z, both practices on which he touches in his chapter on common syllables (Bede only allows such lengthening word-internally):<sup>391</sup>

Et vocalem in fine verbi brevem, quae exciperetur a consonante et liquida, inter communes syllabas deputarunt, ut Virgilius:

Aestusque pluviasque et agentes frigora ventos (*Verg. georg. 1, 352*),

et:

Si tibi lanitium curae, primum aspera silva

lappaeque tribulique absint, fuge pabula laeta (*Verg. georg. 3, 384-385*).

Quod nunc poetae in eadem parte orationis, ut supra docuimus, magis fieri oportere decernunt. Idem vocalem in fine verbi correptam, quae excipitur a littera z, inter communes syllabas deputavit, ut: “*Eurique Zephirique tonat domus.*”<sup>392</sup>

[...but they also classed among the common syllables a short vowel at the end of a word which was followed in the next word by a consonant plus a liquid, as Vergil did in:

Aestusquē pluviasque et agentes frigora uentos

(Summer heat and rains and winds bringing frost),

and:

Si tibi lanitium curae, primum aspera silva

lappaequē tribulique absint, fuge pabula laeta

<sup>387</sup> Allen 1978<sup>2</sup>, 18.

<sup>388</sup> Holford-Stevens 1979, 393.

<sup>389</sup> DAM 16, 15-21.

<sup>390</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 141.

<sup>391</sup> DAM 3, 8-12; 3, 111-114.

<sup>392</sup> DAM 16, 22-32.

(If your concern is wool, first see to it that prickly bushes, burrs and thorns are absent, avoid lush pastures).

Poets have now decided that it is more fitting to do this within the same word, as I have taught above. The same poet classified among the common syllables a short vowel at the end of a word followed in the next word by the letter z, as in “Euriquē Zephyrique tonat domus” (“when the house of Eurus and of Zephyr thunders”).]<sup>393</sup>

Bede ignores the fact that lines of this type are a genuine rarity even in Vergil’s verse, and that they mostly follow the same formula: a pair of nouns, both with the enclitic que, the first of which is lengthened.<sup>394</sup> The phrase, with lengthened que, is almost invariably placed in the beginning of the line, and the particle is generally lengthened before a consonant group which normally does not create a position word-initially: in Vergil, long que can appear before plosives and liquids or, on one occasion, fl:

terrasquē tractusque (ecl. 4, 51; georg. 4, 222)  
 lappaequē tribolique (georg. 1, 153; georg. 3, 385)  
 tribulaquē traheaeque (georg. 1, 164)  
 aestusquē pluviasque (georg. 1, 352)  
 Cretesquē Dryopesque (Aen. 4, 146)  
 spiculaquē clipeique (Aen. 7, 186)  
 Noemonaquē Prytanimque (Aen. 9, 767; end of line)  
 ensemquē clipeumque (Aen. 12, 89)  
 fontisquē fluviosque (Aen. 12, 189)

The same can take place before a word-initial z or x:

Euriquē Zephyrique (georg. 1, 371)  
 Drumoquē Xanthoque (georg. 4, 336)

Lengthened -que can also be followed by a word-initial s group:

Brontesquē Steropesque (Aen. 8, 425)

There are also cases where que is lengthened before a single consonant:

liminaquē laurusque (Aen. 3, 91)

<sup>393</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 143.

<sup>394</sup> Johnston 1897, 19-20. Housman (1927, p. 12) states the rules regarding the formula in the following terms: “All of them are surrounded by severe restrictions: the preceding word must fill a whole foot, the following word must be a spondee or an anapaest, and a second que must be subjoined; and furthermore the lengthening is confined to a few authors.”



## Chloreaquē Sybarimque (Aen. 12, 363)

As we can see, all the cases of such lengthening of -que are highly formulaic; Vergil has, in fact, sometimes used the same phrase twice, or with minute alteration of wording. It is generally assumed that this is a Graecistic device based on the use of the enclitic  $\tau\epsilon$  in Greek epic. The phenomenon, which Bede here condemns is a highly unusual one even in Vergil; on the other hand, instances of a position being created by initial plosive-liquid groups have been attested even in Christian literature, most notably in the verse of Venantius Fortunatus and Aldhelm,<sup>395</sup> and they should more properly be considered a post-Classical feature.<sup>396</sup> Bede does not discuss positions created by word-initial s groups (as in *Brontesquē Steropesque*), because, although highly unusual in the classics, they had become a favourite technique in Sedulius's verse, which Bede regarded as exemplary. As all of these lines have the lengthened que in the arsis of the foot, they could arguably be interpreted as cases of *productio ob caesuram*, a course which Bede has not chosen.

The remaining examples of pre-Christian irregularity are lines where Vergil has used a hiatus. Hiatus in Vergil is often a Graecistic device (these cases are easily recognisable as they occur in conjunction with Greek names or in paraphrases of Greek hexameter lines), and, consequently, its use is more common in the *Eclogues* than in the *Aeneid*. On some occasions, a "sense-pause", or the end of a clause, usually coinciding with a caesura, may account for the phenomenon; in other words, Vergil seems, on rare occasions, to have used hiatus as a form of punctuation, a feature that he probably inherited from the archaic Latin poets.<sup>397</sup> Hiatus is a feature which Bede discusses both in his chapter on common syllables and his chapter on elision; logically enough, as hiatus simply means absence of elision. Although Bede's presentation of hiatus and its variations is very thorough, the substance of it is the exhortation not to use it, as it is, in his view, archaic. The end of the sixteenth chapter is mainly a recapitulation of what Bede has previously said on the subject, and it covers all the different types of elision one is likely to encounter (after m, after vowels and after diphthongs, with or without correction of the final long vowel or diphthong):

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<sup>395</sup> Orchard 1994, 76.

<sup>396</sup> A. E. Housman 1927, 3. Housman exemplifies this by citing several examples from Manilius (whom he himself had edited).

<sup>397</sup> Lindsey 1922, 239-241; Shipley 1924, 142. In Plautus, hiatus often occurs to indicate the change of speaker. Of Bede's examples, *georg.* 1, 4 and *ecl.* 3, 79 would certainly seem to fall into this category. On the other hand, the phrase *quī amant* (with shortened but unelided *i*) in 8, 818 is a frequent enough phrase in archaic verse.

Qui eadem libertate synalipha utebatur, siquidem et m, ubi voluit, in fine uerbi positam a supervenientis vocalis absorptione reservavit, ut “iterum iterumque monebo” (Aen. 3, 436); et longam vocalem longam remanere permisit, ut:

Sit pecori, apibus quanta experientia parcis (georg. 1, 4);

et longam, cum voluit, breviavit, ut:

Et multum formose vale vale, inquit, Iolla (ecl. 3, 79);

et:

Credimus, an qui amant ipsi sibi somnia fingunt (ecl. 8, 108);

et diptongon reservavit, ut:

Ulla moram fecere, neque Aoniae Aganippe (ecl. 10, 12);

et eandem breviavit, ut “insulae Ionio in magno” (Aen. 3, 211).<sup>398</sup>

[He (Vergil) used elision with the same freedom, since, when he wished, he not only kept an m at the end of a word from being absorbed by a following vowel, as in “iterum iterumque monebo” (“I will warn again and again”); but he also permitted a long vowel to remain long, as in:

Sit pecorī, apibus quanta experientia parcis

(What care for the flock, how much experience for the thrifty bees);

he shortened a long vowel, when he wished, as in:

Et multum formose vale, valē, inquit Iolla

(And she kept saying, farewell, farewell, beautiful Iolla);

and in:

Credimus, an quī amant ipsi sibi somnia fingant

(Do we believe? or do lovers invent their own dreams?);

he kept a diphthong, as in:

Ulla moram fecere, neque Aoniae Aganippe

(For the ridges of Aonian Aganippe did not impede you).

and shortened it, as in “insulae Ionio in magno” (“islands in the great Ionian sea”).]<sup>399</sup>

The first example of Vergil’s use of hiatus is either a corrupt reading or a lapse of memory on Bede’s part: the received reading of Aen. 3, 246 has “iterumque iterumque”, without hiatus. This lapse seems to indicate Bede’s eagerness to find hiatuses in Vergil’s verse, possibly to make a stronger case for its lack of discipline in prosody.

Bede’s precise motives for this parade of metrical licences are unclear. That he is hostile to all forms of hiatus (except before the letter h),<sup>400</sup> is abundantly obvious, judging by the other chapters of his treatise. It is possible that he has found it necessary to show all the possible forms in which hiatus may appear in Vergil’s verse so as to facilitate scansion; on the other hand, he seems to have deliberately gone out of his way to show how disorderly pre-Christian prosody was. As we know how common hiatus is in early Anglo-Saxon verse, the idea that hiatus should be presented as a predominantly pagan feature seems grossly

<sup>398</sup> DAM 16, 34-44.

<sup>399</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 143, except the last four lines, which are mine; through some editorial lapse, the translation in Kendall 1991 is incomplete.

<sup>400</sup> DAM 13, 31-43

unfair (it is, of course, possible that Bede aimed to wean his readers from the use of hiatus by casting it as pagan). Bede counters his presentation of undisciplined prosody in pagan literature with a strangely prettied-up image of Christian poetry, most of all in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of his treatise: it is remarkable how Bede elsewhere manages to come up with various pretexts for the occasional deviations from regular prosody which he encountered in the Christian authors, explaining at length that what appear to be hiatuses or spondaic lines are really nothing of the sort, and finally concluding that “secular learning” like prosody can be subjugated to “divine truth”, which would seem to cover all the remaining prosodic licences in Christian poets.

No quarter, on the other hand, is given to Vergil’s “pagan” licences: Bede does not discuss the stylistic or historical reasons for Vergil’s metrical irregularities, and, of course, this would have been beyond the scope of his learning. Once, in his third chapter, Bede makes a reference to Homer in conjunction with Vergil’s use of hiatus,<sup>401</sup> but this is a connection which he certainly only knew at second hand. Bede’s quotations from Vergil are, especially in the sixteenth chapter of his treatise, partly imprecise and misanalysed, and he gives overdue prominence to the evidence of individual lines.

In most of the chapters of Bede’s treatise, citations from Vergil and other classics have been thoroughly substituted with Christian quotations, and, for example, in Bede’s brief chapter on poetic style, the material is almost exclusively Christian.<sup>402</sup> Of the remaining thirty-six Vergilian quotations which I have counted in Bede’s *De arte metrica*, nine are in his sixteenth chapter as specific examples of what not to do.<sup>403</sup> Nothing is more telling than the words with which he concludes his sixteenth chapter, and his whole exposition of dactylic verse: “Quae cuncta posteriores poetas, ut dixi, distinctius observare repperies.”<sup>404</sup> (“You will find, as I have said, that the later poets observe these things more conscientiously.”)

Bede’s views on pre-Christian and Christian verse are understandable if we keep in mind his implicit trust in Jerome’s and Cassiodorus’s claims that the hexameter and pentameter, together with other poetic metres, were already used in the Old Testament; that they, in other words, belonged to the sphere of the very earliest and least corrupt learning that mankind had. Many Christian authors of the late antiquity were largely motivated by a need to create an independent corpus of Christian learning, and, furthermore, a whole Christian

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<sup>401</sup> DAM 3, 62-64.

<sup>402</sup> DAM 11

<sup>403</sup> Heikkinen 2007, 106.

<sup>404</sup> DAM 16, 44-45.

culture that would no longer be dependent on pagan thought: this notion is explicitly formulated in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*.<sup>405</sup> Bede, on the other hand, lived in a world where Christian culture was dominant, and where there was an extensive body of Christian literature in existence. There was no need for him to try to overthrow the classical tradition. However, as he viewed the hexameter, together with other poetic forms, as something which the ancient Hebrews had first, it was natural for him to see the Christian poets of the late antiquity as representatives of an ageless Judaeo-Christian tradition. For Bede, hexameter poetry was not a pagan medium which the Christians had appropriated; rather, it was for him a biblical vehicle of expression that had temporarily been borrowed by the pagans. If the Christian apologists had viewed Moses as "the Jewish Homer", Sedulius was for Bede the Christian Vergil. Sedulius's poetic diction is reflected in Bede's own verse, and Bede's efforts to codify Latin prosody are, to high degree, based on what Sedulius did and what he did not do. Sometimes Bede overgeneralises and lapses into false analogy, and certainly exaggerates the contrast between Christian and pagan poets by overplaying the poetic licences in Vergil and explaining away those in the Christian poets. In reality, there is no noticeable rift between "pagan" and Christian prosody, but Bede's world-view dictated that there must be, and that it must be discovered and thoroughly explained. Bede's presentation of pre-Christian verse and its outdated licences plays a central role in his efforts to delineate Christian poetic technique in its ideal form.

## 2. 10. Conclusion

The larger part of Bede's *De arte metrica* is taken up by its composite presentation of prosody and the structure of the dactylic hexameter. Such a combination may seem odd, but Bede had rightly realised that a discussion of metrical structures that excluded syllable lengths, or vice versa, would have been useless to his readers: the knowledge of syllable lengths was no longer a feature of the spoken Latin of his day, nor had it been for some centuries. The only practical "use" of syllable quantity was its central role in the traditional forms of metrical poetry which the Christians had adopted from the pagan cultural heritage. The hexameter was an obvious vehicle for the presentation of prosodic rules, as it is more complex than the shorter lyric lengths which Bede discusses briefly in the latter part of his

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<sup>405</sup> Bonner 1973, 86-87.

treatise. Bede had also inherited from his predecessors the view that the hexameter was “nobler” than the other poetic metres.<sup>406</sup> Although such views in antiquity were due to its role as the metre of epic poetry, Bede ultimately based his views on the biblical use of the hexameter purported by Cassiodorus and Jerome. Bede was committed to portraying the noblest poetic metre in its noblest possible form, and this task had involved the close study of the Christian epic poets of late antiquity, above all Sedulius, whom Bede appeared to hold on a par with the Church Fathers; remarkably, Sedulius is the only poet whom Bede cites in his even more exclusively Christian *De schematibus et tropis*.

As Bede trusted his own practical observation more than the grammatical auctoritates, and as he largely had to derive the rules of syllable prosody from pre-existing verse, his choice of reading matter ultimately affected his views on prosody, down to the lengths of individual syllables. This comes to the fore, above all, in his chapter on common syllables (DAM 3). Although the chapter is ostensibly derived from the presentations of Sergius and Maximus Victorinus, nearly all of Bede’s poetic samples are taken from Christian hexameter poetry. Consequently, he presents several features of post-classical prosody as the norm: these include the consonantal use of h and the so-called *s impurum*, or a word-initial s group that creates a position. At the same time, he condemns several prosodic features more strongly than his predecessors did, again mainly on the strength of Sedulius’s usage: these features include hiatus and the practice known as *productio ob caesuram*, where a short syllable preceding a caesura is scanned as long (admittedly his views on the latter appear inconclusive). His rather purist take on metre extends to his presentation of the very structure of the hexameter. As the first author on poetic metre, Bede, for all practical purposes, denies the possibility of spondaic verses rather than merely condemning them. Subsequently, he has to explain away the cases of spondaic lines in Christian poets by postulating elaborate forms of syllable resolution and prosthetic vowels; Bede’s suggested alternative scansion seem to have been influenced by contemporary vocal technique, but, applied to hexameter verse, they seem like little more than a ruse.

The final chapter of Bede’s presentation of hexameter poetry is the most illuminating, as it shows his ideological bent more explicitly than do his chapters on purely prosodic issues. There his dichotomy of “ancient”, or pagan, and “modern”, or Christian, poets is presented in a nutshell. Mainly, Bede presents a list of cases where Vergil (or, in one case, Lucretius), had broken against the rules of metre and prosody which Bede had

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<sup>406</sup> DAM 10, 2-4.

meticulously presented in his earlier chapters. Remarkably, there are no examples of bad prosody by a Christian poet in Bede's treatise, and no examples of metrical flaws that are not attributed to the fact that they are from the pen of a pagan author. Bede presents one sole case of a hiatus in a Christian author, but contends that the line has been composed *imitatus veteres*. The overall picture one gets is incredibly one-sided: according to Bede, all Christian verse is good and deviations from standard prosody can be explained away; on the other fact, metrical faults in pagan verse are due to the very fact that they are pagan.

Apart from purely prosodic and metrical considerations, Bede presents some guidelines for good verse. They mainly include the use of enjambment to preclude a foursquare, end-stopped poetic style, and some instructions on word-order, which, again owe a great deal to Sedulius. The most interesting of these is Bede's presentation of the so-called golden line, a type of double hyperbaton (abCAB), which, in modern literature, is presented as a Vergilian technique, although it is really far more common in the verse of Late Latin poets, and conspicuously so in Sedulius. Paradoxically enough, Bede's description of this feature affected later scholarship to such an extent that it became embedded in the terminology of modern philology and, in effect, far outlived the popularity of Sedulius's verse.

The influence of Bede's views on hexameter verse and general prosody was threefold. Bede's presentation which successfully assimilated the presentation of syllable structure into the *metrica ars* served as a model for subsequent generations of authors on verse composition. His codification of prosody, which was based on the practices of Christian hexameter verse, exerted a similar influence on medieval poets. But, apparently, his influence does not end there: indirectly, Bede's views on good poetic style had an impact on the modern study of the self-same pre-Christian classics that he had so zealously tried to substitute with Christian authors.

### 3. The lyric metres

In comparison to Bede's thorough study of the hexameter and the elegiac couplet, their rules and metrical structure, his presentation of other Graeco-Roman metres is surprisingly slender. Of the whole array of non-dactylic metres covered by the previous generations of grammarians, Bede has deemed only the following seven worthy of discussion:

1. The phalaecian hendecasyllable (in Bede's title, *metrum Falleucium*)
2. The sapphic stanza (*metrum Sapphicum*)
3. The "terentianean" metre (*metrum dactylicum tetrametrum catalecticum*)
4. The iambic senarius (*metrum iambicum hexametrum*)
5. The iambic dimeter (*metrum iambicum tetrametrum*)
6. The anacreontic metre (*metrum Anacreontium*)
7. The trochaic septenarius (*metrum trochaicum tetrametrum*)

This selection is conspicuously sparse and ostensibly random especially when it comes to aeolic verse: of the aeolic metres known to Roman poets of the classical era, only the phalaecian hendecasyllable and the sapphic stanza are represented in Bede's treatise, and, with the exception of the sapphic stanza, the whole panoply of lyric metres employed by Horace is ignored. On the other hand, a curious post-classical lyrical length termed, for lack of a better word, the "terentianean" has been discussed in a chapter of its own. Bede's presentation of the iambo-trochaic metres seems more logical even in its scantiness: it is reduced to the iambic trimeter and the trochaic tetrameter, historically the most important of the iambo-trochaic metres, together with the iambic dimeter, which had won the favour of the early Christian hymnodists Sedulius and Ambrose.

This drastically reduced system of Roman metrics can be viewed as the indirect result of the decline of lyric metres in Christian literature of late antiquity and the early middle ages. We may consider it peculiar that the dactylic metres, and the hexameter in particular, retained their popularity throughout the transition from pagan antiquity to medieval Christianity despite the prosodic difficulties they presented to medieval Latin speakers, while many of the simpler quantitative metres fell into obsolescence. This development appears to be the result of several historical coincidences. Although early Christian scholars embraced the dactylic hexameter enthusiastically for their epic works on Biblical themes, no such development took place in lyric poetry. The churches of the Greek East produced a wealth of Christian hymns in classical lyric metres, but despite the efforts of such figures as Hilary to follow suit, the more classical of the lyric metres never fully took

root in western hymnody, which preferred to adopt the form of the simplest of the iambo-trochaic metres, mainly the iambic dimeter, as employed by Caelius Sedulius and Ambrose of Milan, and the trochaic tetrameter or septenarius, as used by Prudentius and Hilary. These metres, together with their later non-quantitative counterparts, came to form the most important models for subsequent Christian hymns. The choice appears to have been relatively simple to make: these metres are, for the most part, largely isosyllabic and show a high degree of ictus-accent coincidence, making them ideal for singing. As, at the same time, the preferred metres of Christian epic and didactic poetry were the hexameter and the elegiac couplet, the simple iambo-trochaic metres of early Christian hymnody, and subsequently their rhythmic variants, pushed the majority of lyric metres into the very margin of literature. Paul Klopsch gives Venantius Fortunatus as an example:<sup>1</sup> the bulk of his poetic output is composed in elegiac couplets, the hexameter hagiography *Vita Sancti Martini* being the most notable exception. The only non-dactylic poems in his oeuvre are the hymn *Pange lingua gloriosi* (carm. 2, 2) in the trochaic septenarius, the Ambrosian hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt* in the iambic dimeter and the abecedary *De Leontio episcopo*, in the same metre. Only once, in his *Carmina* 10, 7, did Venantius venture to employ a classical lyric metre (the sapphic stanza), and then it was at the behest of his friend Gregory of Tours. Even then, Venantius apparently had to model his poem after Terentianus Maurus's tortuous verse presentation rather than the earlier lyric poets.<sup>2</sup>

Bede apparently made his narrow selection of lyric metres by a process of elimination: the seven metres that made it to his final choice have all been used by Christian poets on Christian themes. This seems to have been a very important criterion for Bede: in the beginning of his twenty-fourth chapter (*De rithmo*), he professes knowledge of Servius's exhaustive *De centum metris*, but declares that the metres he does not discuss are "pagan".<sup>3</sup> Bede's verdict has presumably not been directed against the person of Servius, but rather his material. It is notable that the only metre that Bede has illustrated with pre-Christian quotations is the dactylic hexameter, obviously because the subject of Vergil and his example could hardly be left undiscussed; after all, Vergil still belonged to the "set books" of the Anglo-Saxon monastic curriculum. When it comes to the other Graeco-Roman metres, Bede could afford to be much more radical in his endorsement of Christian poetry and excise pagan

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<sup>1</sup> Klopsch 1972, 93.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> DAM 24, 3-9: "Praeterea sunt metra alia perplura, que in libris Centimetrorum simplicibus monstrata exemplis quisque cupit reperiet...Quae, quia pagana erant, tangere non libuit." ("There are, besides, a great many other metres, which anyone who desires will find set forth with plain examples in the Book of a Hundred Metres...I have preferred not to deal with them because of their pagan nature.") – Trans. Kendall 1991, 161.



writers completely from his selection of auctoritates. Another factor that may have contributed to Bede's simplified presentation of the non-dactylic poetic metres has probably been his lack of first-hand acquaintance with such prominent users of lyric metres as Horace, Martianus Capella and Boethius. When it comes to Horace, however, Bede's apparent ignorance may have been at least partly deliberate: if Bede had not decided to leave Horace and his verse undiscussed, the grammarians at his disposal would certainly have provided him with all the quotations necessary for a thorough presentation. As we have witnessed, in his presentation of the hexameter Bede did not shy from quoting Lucretius, a poet whom he most certainly did not know at first hand.

The lyric metres discussed by Bede can be divided into three categories: firstly, Bede gives us three metres which he defines as "dactylic": the phalaecian hendecasyllable (DAM 17), the minor sapphic stanza (DAM 18) and an enigmatic metre found for the first time in Terentianus Maurus and hence termed the "terentianean" (DAM 19). All of these metres, with the possible exception of the terentianean, are in reality aeolic metres, but in the Late Latin grammars they had generally come to be classified as dactylic. The second category consists of three metres that Bede terms "iambic": the iambic trimeter (DAM 20), the iambic dimeter (DAM 21) and the anacreontic metre (DAM 22), a Greek lyric metre which Bede interprets as a catalectic form of the iambic dimeter. The third category consists of the trochaic metres, represented in *De arte metrica* only by the trochaic septenarius (DAM 23). Bede's selection is not only rather eclectic but also somewhat unanalytic: of the three iambic metres which he presents, one is not a true iambic metre at all, and Bede does not clearly differentiate between the "classical" and "archaic", or Plautine, versions of the iambo-trochaic metres. This is evident in his chapter on the iambic trimeter, where the definition is that of the classical iambic trimeter, although Bede insists on calling it *metrum iambicum senarium*,<sup>4</sup> a term more properly used for its archaic form, the *senarius*. This confusion, of course, is something that Bede had inherited from his late antique predecessors, who often exhibit similar inability to distinguish the two types of iambo-trochaic verse. Alongside the classical iambic trimeter and dimeter, Bede presents the trochaic septenarius as the only trochaic metre in his treatise.<sup>5</sup> Bede's only trochaic metre is, unlike the iambic metres, not described in its classical form: the metre is in essence the archaic form of the trochaic tetrameter catalectic, as used by Plautus and Terence (although Bede has managed to impose some additional, and obviously erroneous, rules on its structure). This apparent lack of logic

<sup>4</sup> DAM 20, 2. The title (*De metro iambico exámetro*), however, refers to the metre as the "iambic hexameter".

<sup>5</sup> DAM 21.

is largely due to Bede's narrow selection of poems with which he illustrates his metres: in most cases, the description of a metre appears to be little more than an analysis of the poem he presents as its illustration. One could even argue that, rather than illustrating his presentation of a metre with a poetic citation, Bede derives his very presentation from the poem in question. Bede rarely ventures to discuss poetic metres in the abstract, and he shows little interest in the history of metrics or the evolution of the individual metres (it is also very typical of him that his poetic quotations are often much longer than their metrical analyses). Faithful to this very pragmatic principle, Bede has excluded most of the iambo-trochaic metres from his treatise. The remaining metres are those which his monastic readers were likely to encounter in the course of their studies, and their description corresponds with the structure of those poems which they would read.

Bede was not the sole representative of this trend in early medieval grammar. The insular 9<sup>th</sup>-century Cruindmel, whose treatise on metre was strongly influenced by Bede's *De arte metrica*, presents an even slimmer selection of lyric metres, only discussing the iambic dimeter, as employed by Ambrose, and the so-called terentianean metre. For him, there are plainly but two kinds of poetry: that composed in dactylic hexameters, and Christian hymns, and the latter barely merit discussion in a treatise on metre:

Sed hos hymnos idcirco scandere neglegimus, quia per hexametrum dactylicum heroicum, quo maxime metrici utuntur, non sunt compositi.<sup>6</sup>  
[But we refrain from citing these hymns, because they are not composed in the dactylic hexameter, the metre most employed by metric poets.]

In this respect, Bede can be said to represent an intermediate position between the late antique grammarians and Cruindmel. His exposition of the lyric metres is indubitably narrow, indeed too much so for the later generations of poets who had better access to the works of such polymetrists as Horace, Prudentius, Martianus Capella and Boethius and sought to emulate them. Bearing this in mind, it is all the more significant that several of Bede's definitions still exerted a notable influence on the Carolingian poets, even to the extent of leading them astray.<sup>7</sup> This must be considered as evidence of the immense authority his treatise enjoyed.

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<sup>6</sup> Huemer 1883, 48, 29. Klopsch has pointed out that, for Cruindmel, the only conceivable form of lyric poetry are hymns. –Klopsch 1972, 94.

<sup>7</sup> The most significant example of this is Bede's erroneous assertion that a trochaic septenarius should always have a trochee in its third foot (DAM 23, 4), which was slavishly followed at least by Hrabanus Maurus, Walahfrid Strabo and Hincmar of Reims. – Norberg 1958, 76-77.

### 3.1. The phalaecian hendecasyllable

The first lyric metres discussed by Bede are the phalaecian hendecasyllable and the minor sapphic strophe, which are described in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of his treatise, titled *De metro Falleucio* and *De metro Sapphico*, respectively. Both of these metres belong to the type of verse generally called aeolic, because in Greek antiquity they first appeared in the poetry of the Aeolian poets Sappho and Alcaeus.<sup>8</sup> Originally, the metres termed aeolic did not consist of a sequence of regular metres; rather, the common feature of all aeolic metres is that they are structured around what is termed a “nucleus” formed by a metron known as a choriamb. The choriamb consists of the sequence long-short-short-long (-uu-), and each nucleus can have one or several choriamb. The choriambic nucleus, in turn, is generally expanded in each direction by a sequence of short and long syllables.

In some of the shorter lyric lines, the nucleus consists of a single choriamb. To this group belong many of the most frequently used aeolic verses, including the glyconic:

Collis, | O Heli|conii (Catull. 61, 1)  
-u | -uu- | u-

the phalaecian hendecasyllable:

Passer, | deliciae | meae puellae (Catull. 2, 1)  
-- | -uu- | u-u--

and the sapphic verse:

Integer vi|tae, sceleris|que purus (Hor. carm. 1, 11, 1)  
-u-- | -uu- | u--

In the longer aeolic verses, the nucleus can consist of two choriamb, as in the minor asclepiad:

Maece|nas, atavis | edite re|gibus (Hor. carm. 1, 1, 1)  
-- | -uu- | -uu- | u-

or even three, as in the major asclepiad:

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<sup>8</sup> Raven 1968<sup>2</sup>, 71; Raven 1965, 133.

Quae nunc | oppositis | debilitat | pumicibus | mare (Hor. *carm.* 1, 2, 5)  
 -- | -uu- | -uu- | -uu- | u-

In general, the Greek aeolic metres are much more varied and complex than their Roman equivalents, which, from the start, tended towards greater regularisation. Above all, in the shorter aeolic verses, the beginning of the line, which in Greek poetry tended to be very variable, evolved in a much more regular direction. Similarly, the placement of the caesurae in aeolic verse underwent considerable standardisation during the Augustan period.

The phalaecian hendecasyllable ( $\bar{u}\bar{u}$  | -uu- | u-u-x) is an aeolic verse form that was used only occasionally in early Greek poetry. Although already employed by Sappho, it never attracted a wide following among the Greek poets, appearing only sporadically in tragic choruses and as an ingredient in Attic *scolia* or drinking songs, where it formed stanzas together with other lyric lengths. It was only in the Hellenistic age that poets like Theocritus and Callimachus began to employ the phalaecian hendecasyllable in stichic poetry.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, it became one of the favourite metres of the early Roman lyric poets. One of the metre's features that the Roman poets found attractive may have been its simplicity: the phalaecian line is relatively short and, in its Hellenistic form, suitable for stichic poetry and therefore employable in sustained narrative. To students of classical literature, the phalaecian hendecasyllable is best known through the poetry of Catullus (about two-thirds of his lyric poetry are in this metre), but it was also used by Varro, Petronius, the author(s) of the *Priapea*, and more importantly by Statius and Martial, and, at a later date, Ausonius.<sup>10</sup> It was also embraced fairly early by the Christian poets, including Prudentius and Cyprianus Gallus.<sup>11</sup>

In its original form, the beginning of the line showed considerable variation. The initial pair of syllables could manifest itself as either a spondee (--), a trochee (-u) or an iamb (u-). Although from the start Roman poets showed a strong preference for a line that began with a spondee, the other types still appear in the poetry of Catullus:<sup>12</sup>

-- | -uu- | u-u--      Passer, deliciae meae puellae (Catull. 2, 1)  
 -u | -uu- | u-u--      Arida modo pumice exolitum (Catull. 1, 2)  
 u- | -uu- | u-u--      Et acris solet incitare morsus (Catull. 2, 4)

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Raven 1968<sup>2</sup>Raven 1965, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Nougaret 1948, 103.

<sup>11</sup> Norberg 1958, 77.

<sup>12</sup> Raven 1965, 139.

Even in Catullus, however, the first type was overwhelmingly the most popular, and in the poetry of Statius and Martial, the two other types are already nonexistent. Starting with Catullus, the phalaecian line also had a regular caesura either after the fifth syllable (as in “arida modo / pumice expolitur”) or, more commonly, the sixth one (as in “lugete, o Veneres / cupidinesque”). The writings of the grammarians generally concur with the imperial, standardised version of the metre, although some of them, including the second-century Terentianus Maurus, still acknowledge the possibility of a trochee or an iamb at the beginning of a phalaecian line. Typically, Terentianus’s analysis itself has been composed in phalaecian hendecasyllables:

Verum mobilis hic locus frequenter  
 non solum recipit pedem, ut loquebar,  
 spondeum, sed et aptus est trochaeo,  
 nec peccat pede natus ex iambo.<sup>13</sup>  
 [But this variable position  
 does not only take the spondee, as I said,  
 but the trochee is apt as well,  
 and one that begins with an iamb is not wrong either.]

The aeolic metres were obviously considered difficult by late Latin authors, and the longer line-units seem to have largely fallen into disuse in Christian poetry. The only aeolic metres present in Bede’s *De arte metrica* belong to the relatively simple type with a single choriamb for its nucleus, with the possible exception of the Terentianean metre, if indeed it is an aeolic metre. Another fact that illustrates the problematic nature of the aeolic metres for the scholars of late antiquity is the tendency of grammarians to impose a regular metron-scheme on them. Generally, the aeolic metres came to be viewed as a variety of dactylic poetry. Already the silver-age Caesius Bassus in his *De metris* discusses the variety of ways in which the phalaecian hendecasyllable can be analysed and reaches a total of six, some of them quite fanciful. Bassus mentions the “vulgar” analyses where the beginning of the line is drawn from the hexameter, the most obvious division being one where the two and a half opening feet of the hexameter (– – | – uu | –) are combined with the beginning of an iambic trimeter (u-u- | u):

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<sup>13</sup> Ter. Maur. 2564-2565, 2558-2559.

Sed prima vulgaris quidem illa divisio, quae docet eum partem habere ex heroico, partem ex iambo, cuius exemplum: *castae Pierides meae Camenae*. Ex heroico sic dividitur: “*castae Pierides sonitum dedit aere canoro*”; ex iambico sic: “*meae Camenae caelitem testor genus*.”<sup>14</sup>

[But the first one is that vulgar division, which teaches that the metre has one part from the heroic metre and another from the iambic, as in “*castae Pierides meae Camenae*.” It is divided from the heroic line thus: “*castae Pierides / sonitum dedit aere canoro*”; from the iambic thus: “*meae Camenae / caelitem testor genus*.”]

This method of deriving “difficult” metres from more familiar ones, mainly the dactylic hexameter and iambo-trochaic sequences, appears to have been a popular mnemonic device in the late empire. Bassus’s “vulgar” division which views the phalaecian metre as a combination of the opening of the dactylic hexameter and that of an iambic line was also favoured by Terentianus Maurus<sup>15</sup> and is still presented by Diomedes:

Hendecasyllabum phalaecium a Phalaeco inventum tale est: “*vidi credite per lacus Lucrinos*.” Huius pars prior de hexametro est, quam supplebimus sic, “*vidi credite per liquidos Nereida fluctus*,” posterior autem pars de principio iambici est, quam si suppleamus, integrum iambicum faciemus sic, “*lacus Lucrinos inter alta navium*.”<sup>16</sup> [The phalaecian hendecasyllable, invented by Phalaecus, is as follows: “*vidi credite per lacus Lucrinos*.” The first part of it is from the hexameter, and we can fill it out thus: “*vidi credite per / liquidos Nereida fluctus*,” the latter part, however, is from the beginning of an iambic line, and if we complete it, we shall make it into a whole iambic verse in this way: “*lacus Lucrinos / inter alta navium*.”]

The main advantage of this interpretation of the metre is that, from the point of view of the student, it is relatively simple and easy to grasp, as the division-line between the dactylic sequence (– | –uu | –) and the iambic sequence (u–u–) coincides with the caesura that usually comes after the sixth syllable of the line.

Bassus presents another simple, and apparently popular, way of dividing the Phalaecian hendecasyllable. This consists in viewing it as the two first feet of a hexameter (– / –uu) followed by a trochaic sequence called the ithyphallic (–u–), which is best-known from the archilochean stanzas of Horace’s poetry, where it is combined with dactylic and iambo-trochaic elements.<sup>17</sup> Bassus illustrates this with a line where the caesura comes after the fifth syllable of the line:

<sup>14</sup> Mazzarino 1955, 136, 10-16.

<sup>15</sup> Ter. Maur. 2575-2578.

<sup>16</sup> gramm. I, 509, 10-17.

<sup>17</sup> e.g. Raven 1965, 87-88; 113.

Altera divisio est, cuius feceram mentionem, cum de epodo Callimachi dicerem hoc exemplo: “Siccas ducite machinae carinas.” Nam primi duo pedes reliquis quattuor adsumptis faciunt heroum sic: “Siccas ducite remigio subeunte carinas”; reliqua pars ithyphallicum facit: “machinae carinas”.<sup>18</sup>

[The other division is the one which I had mentioned when discussing the epode of Callimachus with this example: “Siccas ducite machinae carinas.” For the first two feet, when four more are added to them make a hexameter in this way: “Siccas ducite / remigio subeunte carinas”; the remaining part makes an ithyphallic: “machinae carinas”.]

This way of explaining the structure of the phalaecian metre could be further simplified by analysing the final ithyphallic as a sequence of three trochaic feet (-u | -u | -u), and this, indeed is the way in which many of the later grammarians describe it, including Mallius Theodorus, whose presentation of the metre was Bede’s direct model:

Metrum dactylicum Phalaecium hendecasyllabum constat ex sponedio et dactylo et tribus trochaeis. Huius exemplum: fulgens divitiis et ore clarus.<sup>19</sup>

[The dactylic Phalaecian hendecasyllable consists of a spondee, a dactyl, and three trochees. An example of this: shining with wealth and with a resplendent face.]

As we can see, Mallius views the phalaecian metre as an unequivocally dactylic verse form, even going so far as to append the word “dactylic” to its name.

Bede’s description of the phalaecian hendecasyllable mainly relies on that of Mallius, with some alteration of terminology. As Bede’s treatise of the phalaecian hendecasyllable is his first chapter on the lyric metres, he has added a short preface which gives us a rather illuminating picture of the decline of the lyric metres in the early middle ages. In his introduction, Bede makes it clear that the real focal point of his treatise is the dactylic hexameter and that in the remaining chapters he is plainly dealing with leftovers:

Verum quia de metro heroico quae videbantur tractavimus, libet et aliorum genera metrorum, ea dumtaxat quae magis usui haberi reperimus, parumper commemorare. Est igitur metrum dactylicum Phalaecium pentametrum, quod constat ex spondeo et dactylo et tribus trocheis.<sup>20</sup>

[Now that I have dealt with everything that seemed appropriate about heroic verse, I should like to mention briefly the other types of metres, those at least which I consider are considered to be of more use. There is therefore the phalaecian dactylic pentameter, which consists of a spondee, a dactyl and three trochees.]<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Mazzarino 1955, 136, 17-22.

<sup>19</sup> gramm. VI, 590, 21-22.

<sup>20</sup> DAM 17, 2-6.

<sup>21</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 145.

Bede's portrayal of the phalaecian metre is very strict and simple, and it follows the late antique tradition of dissecting the metre into feet and classifying it as dactylic. What is novel about Bede's approach is that he calls the phalaecian line a pentameter. The logic behind this innovation is, in its way, quite irrefutable: if a line can be broken up into distinct metrical feet, it makes perfect sense to call it by the number of the feet, as this, after all, is the standard practice in the nomenclature of the dactylic and iambo-trochaic metres. It is also conspicuous that Bede has given up the term *hendecasyllabus*, still employed by *Mallius Theodorus*. Obviously Bede has had trouble grasping its function, the term being, as it was, a remnant from the times when the Graeco-Roman lyric metres were not yet subjected to a rigid scheme of metrical feet. Bede has apparently sought to bring his analyses of the lyrical metres into line with those of the other poetic metres, and, accordingly, prefers a nomenclature based on the number of feet to one based on the number of syllables. He has implemented a similar alteration of terminology in his chapters on the sapphic strophe and the terentianean metre, calling them, respectively, "the sapphic dactylic pentameter" and the "dactylic tetrameter catalectic",<sup>22</sup> although his direct models *Mallius Theodorus* and *Julian of Toledo* had applied the term *hendecasyllabus* to both of them.<sup>23</sup>

Bede has, in his customary manner, given a very generous sample of this modestly-presented metre by quoting no fewer than fifteen lines from *Cyprianus Gallus's Exodus*, which forms a part of his *Heptateuchos*, an epic paraphrase of the Old Testament. Alongside verse hagiography, poetic paraphrases of biblical texts were one of the favourite genres of late antique and early medieval poetry. Although *Cyprianus Gallus* today is generally considered an obscure figure, his poetry appears to have enjoyed considerable popularity in Anglo-Saxon England, and it has even been surmised that *Cyprianus's Exodus* may have served as an inspiration for the much-celebrated Old English poem of the same name. Bede's lengthy quotation from *Cyprianus* paraphrases the Song of Moses (Ex. 15:1-18).

Bede's short chapter on the phalaecian hendecasyllable illustrates well the three main tendencies of his work: the regularisation, simplification and Christianisation of the Roman metrical heritage. Previously, Bede's predecessors in late antiquity had begun to treat the phalaecian hendecasyllable as a regular sequence of metrical feet and, on the strength of its first half, defined it as a dactylic metre. Following the example of *Mallius Theodorus*, Bede took this tendency one step further by classifying the phalaecian hendecasyllable as a

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<sup>22</sup> DAM 18, 2; 19, 2.

<sup>23</sup> *gramm.* VI, 591, 8-9; 12; *Maestre Yeyes* 1973, 229, 9-10.



pentameter and thus giving it an analysis that was analogous to those metres which even originally had a regular metron-scheme. The age-old term hendecasyllabus, a relic from the days when Greek letters still flourished in the West and the structure of the lyric metres was perhaps better understood, was for him useless ballast that he could well do without.

### 3.2. The sapphic stanza

The sapphic stanza is based on a common aeolic form where the choriambic nucleus (-uu-) is preceded by an opening sequence of four variable syllables and followed by three:  $\bar{u}\bar{u}\bar{u}\bar{u} | -uu-$  | u-x. A more regular form, where the opening sequence is more fixed (-u-x) is generally known as the sapphic line, or the sapphic hendecasyllable, after the poet Sappho. Sappho, together with Alcaeus, employed it in a strophe of originally three lines, where two ordinary sapphic lines are followed by a longer line that has been extended with a sequence of five syllables (-uu-x). In later times, the “extension” of the third line came to be understood as a separate line known as the adonic, and the sapphic stanza was consequently seen as consisting of three sapphic lines and one adonic.<sup>24</sup> The adonic line can be analysed as a simple choriamb followed by one syllable (-uu- | x), but it also resembles the final two feet of the hexameter, and, analogously, it is often interpreted as a combination of a dactyl and a spondee or a trochee (-uu | -x). In modern terminology, the sapphic stanza is sometimes termed the “minor sapphic” to distinguish it from a related metre (correspondingly dubbed the “major” or “greater” sapphic) encountered in Horace’s Ode 1, 8).<sup>25</sup>

The sapphic stanza was adopted by the Roman poets of the late republic, and its most notable early user is Catullus, whose poems in this metre still show the same flexibility of form as their Greek models in having either a long or a short syllable in the fourth position of the line:

Sive in Hyrcanos Arabasve molles	-u--   -uu-   u-x
seu Sagas sagittiferosque Parthos	-u-u   -uu-   u-x
sive quae septemgeminus colorant	-u--   -uu-   u-x
aequora Nilus. <sup>26</sup>	-uu-   x

<sup>24</sup> Nougaret 1948, 106; Raven 1968<sup>2</sup>, 79-80.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Raven 1965, 145.

<sup>26</sup> Catull. 11, 5-8.

The sapphic stanza was employed by Horace in both his Odes and in his *Carmen saeculare*. True to his habits, Horace standardised the metre by making the fourth syllable of the longer line always long and regularising its caesuras. The sapphic lines of Catullus do not always have a caesura at all, and a similar feature appears even in Horace,<sup>27</sup> but in its more evolved classical form, the line usually has a caesura after its fifth syllable (as in Hor. *carm.* 1, 22, 1: “integer vitae / scelerisque purus”), or less commonly, after the sixth one (as in Hor. *carm.* 1, 10, 1: “Mercuri, facunde / nepos Atlantis”).<sup>28</sup> In later Latin poetry, starting with the Silver Age poets, the caesura after the fifth foot became the rule. The original structure of the sapphic stanza as a three-line strophe is still reflected in Catullus and Horace, as well as some later-day poets who followed Horace’s example: although the Romans viewed the adonic line as a unit of its own, the third and fourth lines were often seen to be connected, which frequently led to concatenation of the third line with the following adonic. In Catullus and Horace, there is sometimes no word-division between the third and fourth lines, and there are even some examples of hypermetric elision.<sup>29</sup>

After Horace, the sapphic stanza’s most prominent users include Statius (*Silv.* 4, 7) and Seneca, who used the stanza in a whole tragic chorus of his *Medea* (*Med.* 579-606). Seneca also used the sapphic line in a stichic form without the adonic in his *Phaedra* (*Phaedr.* 274-324). Late antique users of the metre include Prudentius and Ausonius. After the onset of Christianity, the sapphic stanza appears to have retained its popularity rather better than the other lyric metres, and the metre continued to be popular throughout the middle ages.<sup>30</sup> The Late Latin Christian poets who used the sapphic strophe include Paulinus of Nola and Venantius Fortunatus, who, in a rare effort at composing lyric poetry, used the metre once in his *Carmina* (10, 7). The Late Latin and medieval poets who composed verse in the sapphic stanza generally followed the restrictions imposed on it in Silver Age: the fourth syllable is always long, and the caesura generally comes after the fifth foot. Medieval departures from these rules can generally be attributed to imitation of Horace.

The Roman grammarians tried, from the start, to give the sapphic stanza a definition that was analogous to other, “simpler” metres. The Silver-Age Caesius Bassus, ever inclined to derive all metres from other metres, presented an analysis of the longer line

<sup>27</sup> Nougaret 1948, 103; e.g. Hor. *carm.* 1, 2, 30: “quam Iocus circumvolat et Cupido”.

<sup>28</sup> Raven 1965, 144; the latter type of caesura, often called “trochaic” or “weak”, is common in the fourth book of Horace’s Odes and in his *Carmen saeculare*, but was shunned by later generations of poets.

<sup>29</sup> See Nougaret 1948, 107; Raven 1965, 144. Famous examples include Catull. 11.11-12 (“Gallicum Rhenum horribile aequor uli//mosque Britannos”) and Hor. *carm.* 1.2.19-20 (“labitur ripa Iove non probant(e) u//xorius amnis”). On similar features in medieval poetry, see Norberg 1958, 77-78.

<sup>30</sup> Norberg 1958, 77.

as the combination of the beginning of the trochaic tetrameter (-u - - | -) and the iambic trimeter (uu - u - | -) with resolution of the first element. He demonstrates this by drawing Horace's Ode 1, 2, 1 from iambic and trochaic lines of unknown origin, possibly his own invention (the iambo-trochaic sequence *genibus haerebo tuis* also appears in his presentations of other lyric metres, including the alcaic stanza):

Cola huius carminis singula ex duobus commatibus, quorum quod antecedit ex archilochio quadrato nascitur sic: "iam satis terris magisque genibus haerebo tuis"; hoc enim par est huic: "nunc ita est, magis magisque genibus haerebo tuis." Sequens comma trimetri iambici primam habet partem; componitur sic: "nivis atque dirae genibus haerebo tuis", ut sit par huic: "magis magisque genibus haerebo tuis."<sup>31</sup>  
 [The individual cola of this verse consist of two commata, the first of which can be derived from the trochaic tetrameter in this way: "iam satis terris / magisque genibus haerebo tuis"; for this is similar to "nunc ita est, magis magisque genibus haerebo tuis." The following comma has the first part of an iambic trimeter, and it can be composed thus: "nivis atque dirae / genibus haerebo tuis", as it is similar to this: "magis magisque genibus haerebo tuis".]

The adonic line, on the other hand, could easily be taken from the end of the dactylic hexameter. Bassus elucidates this, in turn, by presenting a hybrid of the opening line of Vergil's Aeneid and Horace's Ode 1, 2, 4:

Clausula strophes huius haec est "terrui urbem", quae nascitur ab heroo hexametro sic: "Arma virumque cano Troiae qui terrui urbem." Nam "primus ab oris", pro qua hanc clausulam posui, par est huic non tantum numero, sed etiam pedibus: constat enim ex dactylo et spondeo.<sup>32</sup>  
 [The cadence of this strophe is the following: "terrui urbem", which comes from the hexameter in this way: "Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui / terrui urbem." For "primus ab oris", for which I substituted this cadence, is similar to it not only regarding rhythm, but the feet themselves: it consists of a dactyl and a spondee.]

Although several alternative ways of interpreting the longer line were possible, the adonic, probably for the sake of simplicity, was invariably viewed as a hexameter fragment.

Diomedes gives the sapphic line a similarly iambo-trochaic interpretation, also using Horace's Ode 1, 2 as his illustration:

Hendecasyllabum sapphicum Sappho poetria invenit. Exemplum huius tale est, "iam satis terris nivis atque dirae". Superior pars ex trochaico est. Nam si haec verba "iam satis terris" suppleas, facies integrum trochaicum sic: "Iam satis terris virente secta

<sup>31</sup> Mazzarino 1955, 144, 7-14.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

pinus in Crago.” Inferior autem, verba haec “nivis atque dirae”, de principio iambici sunt. Denique additis quae desunt iambicus poterit inpleri sic: “Nivis atque dirae secta pinus in Crago”.<sup>33</sup>

[The poet Sappho invented the sapphic hendecasyllable. An example of this is “iam satis terris nivis atque dirae”. The first part is from a trochaic line, for from these words “iam satis terris” you can complete a whole trochaic line in this fashion: “Iam satis terris / virente secta pinus in Crago.” The latter part, however, the words “nivis atque dirae”, are from the beginning of an iambic line. Therefore it can be made into a complete iambic line by adding the missing parts in this way: “Nivis atque dirae / secta pinus in Crago.”]

The growing tendency to define all lyric metres as dactylic ultimately affected the sapphic stanza as well. Rather than attempting to derive the longer line from iambic and trochaic sequences, Mallius Theodorus in his *De metris* has given it a decidedly dactylic presentation, possibly to make it harmonise with his analysis of the phalaecian hendecasyllable. The phalaecian metre had already earlier come to be viewed as a dactylic metre, an analysis to which it lends itself more readily than the sapphic line, as its beginning is similar to the first feet of the dactylic hexameter. The process of the sapphic metre’s “dactylisation” involved breaking the line up into feet of two or three syllables: -u | -- | -uu | -u | -x. This meant that the first and fourth “feet” of the line would be trochees, arguably a highly atypical feature in a dactylic metre:

Metrum dactylicum sapphicum hendecasyllabum constat ex trochaeo et spondio et dactylo et duobus trochaeis sive trochaeo et spondio, ut est apud Horatium: “iam satis terris nivis atque dirae”. Huic autem metro post tres versus additur finis heroici versus, ut est apud eundem Horatium: “terruit urbem”.<sup>34</sup>

[The dactylic sapphic hendecasyllable consists of a trochee, a spondee, a dactyl and two trochees or a trochee and a spondee, as in Horace’s “iam satis terris nivis atque dirae”. After three verses, to this metre is added the end of a heroic verse, as in Horace’s “terruit urbem”.]

Bede based his definition of the Sapphic metre on that of Mallius, apparently wanting to make his descriptions of the lyric metres as simple and uniform as possible. Bede’s subtle alterations of wording are similar to those in his chapter on the phalaecian hendecasyllable:

Metrum dactylicum sapphicum pentametrum constat ex trocheo, spondeo, dactylo, duobus trocheis, cui metro post tres versus additur semis heroici versus.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> gramm. I, 508, 21-29.

<sup>34</sup> gramm. VI, 591, 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> DAM 18, 2-4.

[The dactylic sapphic pentameter consists of a trochee, a spondee, a dactyl and two trochees, to which, after three verses, is added one half of a heroic verse.]<sup>36</sup>

Parts of Bede's definition are taken verbatim from Mallius Theodorus. Mainly, Bede has retained Mallius's definition of the sapphic metre as "dactylic" and retained his foot-division. Curiously, from Mallius's "duobus trochaeis sive trochaeo et spondio" (two trochees or a trochee and a spondee) Bede has left out the words "sive trochaeo et spondio" (or a trochee and a spondee), apparently finding the mention of this possibility uninformative and redundant; as we may recall, Bede had discussed word-final syllables as one of the types of common syllable in his third chapter.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, we may note that in analogy to his chapter on the phalaecian hendecasyllable, Bede has substituted the term pentametrum for the word hendecasyllabum, wishing to draw his reader's attention to the foot-division presented in the analysis of the metre rather than its number of syllables.<sup>38</sup> What may strike us as odd is the description of the adonic as semis heroici versus, one half of a heroic verse, which seems unusually imprecise for Bede: after all, the two feet of the adonic only make up one third of a hexameter line. The word semis appears in all the manuscripts of *De arte metrica*,<sup>39</sup> and it seems logical to suppose that it is originally a misreading or corruption of the word finis in Mallius.

As in his presentations of the other lyric metres, Bede has not only followed a policy of simplification but also one of Christianisation. Remaining true to his principles, he has eliminated every reference to Horace and, instead, presents two quotations of no less than four strophes altogether from Paulinus of Nola's *Carmen* 17 (lines 1-4 and 45-56). This is all the more remarkable as Horace's Ode 1, 2 appears to have remained the grammarians' staple illustration of the sapphic stanza over a period of many centuries. It is obvious that Bede's knowledge of Horace's poem probably did not extend beyond what he had found quoted by the grammarians, and the substance of Horace's description of Jupiter's vengeance on impious Romans would certainly have struck him as highly unsuitable for an essentially Christian guide to metre. Nevertheless, it is just possible for us to hear the same sentiment echoed, in a subtly Christianised form, in his quotation from Paulinus's description of the plagues of Egypt:

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<sup>36</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 147.

<sup>37</sup> DAM 3, 115-118.

<sup>38</sup> Coronati 1981-82, 57: "L'uno e l'altro verso sono però definiti pentametrum, a differenza di Mallio Teodoro che invece parla di hendecasyllabum, e forse anche in questo caso la scelta bedeica è dovuta alla consueta esigenza di non creare confusioni, inserendo una definizione terminologicamente incoerente con il resto di manuale."

<sup>39</sup> Kendall 1975, 132.

Sicut Egypto pereunte quondam  
 noctis et densae tenebris operata  
 qua Dei vivi sacra gens agebat,  
 Lux erat orbi.<sup>40</sup>

[Just as once when Egypt was perishing,  
 covered with the shades of thick night,  
 where the holy people of the living God were living,  
 He was a light to the world.]<sup>41</sup>

### 3.3. The terentianean metre

One of the most enigmatic and, for most classical scholars, least familiar metres covered in Bede's *De arte metrica* is discussed in the nineteenth chapter of his treatise, titled *De metro tetrametro catalectico*. The metre, which Bede terms the "dactylic tetrameter catalectic", is a stichic verse-form of obscure origins that made its first documented appearance in Terentianus Maurus's second-century didactic poem *De litteris, de syllabis, de metris*.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the metre is in our time commonly called the terentianean metre, or *versus terentianeus*, a term first employed as *térentianéen* by Dag Norberg in his *Introduction à l'étude de la versification latine médiévale*.<sup>43</sup>

Even in late antiquity, the metre was never a common one, appearing mainly in the refrains of Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* and Ausonius, but most notably as a 27-line poem in Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* (1, 4, 2).<sup>44</sup> Apart from being unusual, the metre has been considered difficult to classify. Terentianus himself presents the metre as a sub-species of dactylic poetry, where the beginning of a hexameter line (right up to the penthemimeral caesura at 2.5 feet) is combined with its final two feet:

Si penthemimeris talis praemissa tome sit  
 quae primo spondeon habet, mox dactylon addit  
 tum post semipedem veniant duo fine revulsi  
 incolumi sermone pedes sine parte priorum  
 "postquam res Asiae" veluti, tunc "primus ab oris".<sup>45</sup>  
 [If a line is cut off at the penthemimeral caesura, having first a spondee, then a dactyl, then after the half of a foot come two feet which have been seized, intact,

<sup>40</sup> Paulin. 17, 45-48 (cit. DAM 18, 12-14).

<sup>41</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 147.

<sup>42</sup> Ter. Maur. 1939-1956.

<sup>43</sup> Norberg 1958, 79-80.

<sup>44</sup> Norberg 1998, 255.

<sup>45</sup> Ter. Maur. 140-144.

from the end of the line without the preceding ones, as in “postquam res Asiae”, followed by “primus ab oris”.]

Terentianus further demonstrates his analysis with four lines, which have mainly been cobbled together from bits and pieces of Vergil and which essentially read like a radically condensed version of the Aeneid:

Postquam res Asiae primus ab oris  
at regina gravi saucia cura  
sic fatur lacrimans, mittit habenas  
et tandem Euboicis labitur oris.<sup>46</sup>

The metrical scheme of each of the lines is ---uu- | -uu-x. In other words, the metre resembles the first two and a half feet of a hexameter line followed by an adonic (or the two final feet of the hexameter), the beginning and the end of the line being invariably separated by a strong caesura. In Terentianus’s presentation, the dactylic character of the verse is enhanced by his Vergilian loans, which beyond doubt lend the metre an air of a hexameter line with the middle cut out.

Terentianus’s own analysis of the metre has often been accepted at face value, although it is in some respects problematic. For one thing, the beginning of the line differs from that of a typical Roman hexameter in one crucial respect: the terentianean line begins invariably with a spondee, whereas the opening foot of a Roman hexameter is in most cases a dactyl.<sup>47</sup> His analysis, however, corresponds with the tendency of the Late Latin grammarians to view all the lyrical metres as ultimately dactylic, as we noted in the case of the phalaecian hendecasyllable. Other ways of classifying the terentianean metre have at various times been propounded by scholars of Late Roman poetry, and Dag Norberg has provided us with a fairly exhaustive list of these in his 1995 article *Le vers Térentien*.<sup>48</sup>

Firstly, there are some parallels between the terentianean metre and the phalaecian hendecasyllable, which has prompted some authors to view the former as an “anaclastic” variant of the latter: the opening sequence of the syllables (-- | -uu-) is identical in both metres, as is the number of syllables (eleven), to which some grammarians were prone to attach great importance. Julian of Toledo was a supporter of this analysis of the

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<sup>46</sup> Ter. Maur. 1949-1952.

<sup>47</sup> See Duckworth 1969, *passim*.

<sup>48</sup> Norberg 1998, 257.

metre,<sup>49</sup> although Terentianus Maurus himself had been very explicit in distinguishing the two metres.<sup>50</sup>

There have been several attempts to derive the terentianean metre from other aeolic metres, which makes sense if the line is analysed as having a double choriamb for its nucleus: -- | -uu- | -uu- | x. In other words, the line could be read as a catalectic form of the minor asclepiad (-- | -uu- | -uu- | ux), which is the analysis W. Meyer propounds in his *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*.<sup>51</sup> Parallels with other forms of lyric poetry have also been proposed over the centuries, although some of these seem barely intelligible: Huguccio of Pisa, in his 13<sup>th</sup>-century treatise on pronunciation *De dubio accentu* called it “semisaphonicum tetrametrum, constans in prima parte ex pentametro saphonico, in postrema adonico” (“a semisapphic tetrameter, consisting in its first part of the sapphic pentameter, in its second of the adonic”).<sup>52</sup> A. Lentini and F. Avagliano, in their 1974 edition of the poems of Alfanus I, speak of “gliconei catalectici in syllabam+adoni”;<sup>53</sup> several medieval authors, on the other hand, view the metre as a fusion of the minor asclepiad and the adonic, speaking often of *metrum Asclepiadeum Adonicum*, or asclepiadic adonic metre, although in some cases the analysis appears to have become confused with the strictly dactylic interpretation of the line.<sup>54</sup> Norberg himself echoes this interpretation in his Introduction: “...il se compose d’un demi asclépiade + un adonique”.

Somewhat more bizarrely, it has also been put forward that the terentianean metre is, in fact, a form of ionic poetry. This would, in effect, make it a trimeter composed of minor ionics (uu--), with a mandatory fusion of the two short elements in the first metron: --- | uu-- | uu--. This theory was proposed in 1907 by K. Wagner, and supported by Paul Klopsch in his *Einführung in die mittellateinische Verslehre*.<sup>55</sup> Structurally speaking, this analysis is not impossible, but it seems unnatural for several reasons. Firstly, the regular fusion of the two short elements in the first metron seems highly atypical; secondly, the placement of the

<sup>49</sup> Maestre Yeyes 1973, 229, 11-13.

<sup>50</sup> Ter. Maur. 1945-1947: “Fiet hendecasyllabos, sed alter, / namque hic de genere est phalaeciorum, / cuius mox tibi regulam loquemur.” (“It will become a hendecasyllable, but another one, for this one belongs to the phalaecian type, the rules of which I will shortly expound.”)

<sup>51</sup> Meyer 1905, 225: “Das quantifizierende Vorbild ist nicht die phalaecische Zeile, sondern die kleine Asklepiadeer: *Saevus bella serit barbarus horrens*”.

<sup>52</sup> Limone 1984, 382.

<sup>53</sup> Lentini & Avagliano 1974, 143.

<sup>54</sup> e.g. John of Garland in his 13th-century *De Parisiana poetria*: “*Metrum Asclepiadeum Adonicum...constat ex medietate versus hexametri et fine suo.*” (“The asclepiad adonic metre...consists of the half of a hexameter verse and its ending.”) – Lawler 1974, 198. Although John’s description of the metre, with its reference to both the asclepiad and the hexameter, seems exceedingly confusing, we must bear in mind that the aeolic metres, too, were in the middle ages generally understood to be a form of dactylic poetry.

<sup>55</sup> Wagner 1907, 28; Paul Klopsch appears to consider Wagner’s analysis more or less conclusive: “Dass der Vers als Trimeter aus Ionici a minore zu deuten ist, hat Wagner wahrscheinlich gemacht.” – Klopsch 1972, 98.



caesurae in the line does not correspond with the conventional use of the minor ionic in Latin poetry. The minor ionic, admittedly, was never widely used by the Roman poets, the most important example being Horace's Ode 3, 12 (1-3):

Miserarum est neque amori dare ludum neque dulci  
mala vino lavere, aut exanimari metuentis  
patruae verbera linguae...

It is worthy of note that in Horace's ode, word-division invariably falls between the metrons: miserarum (e)st | nequ(e) amori | dare ludum | neque dulci, etc. In the terentianean metre, if it indeed were a form of Ionic verse, this would not be the case, because the central caesura of the line would always intrude before the final element of the second metron: Postquam res | Asiae / pri|mus ab oris. The overall aural impression created by Horatian minor ionics is sufficiently different from that of the Terentianean metre to make the connection imperceptible and Wagner's hypothesis, at the very best, dubious.

The problem of the terentianean metre's structural nature is complicated by the fact that several poets have deviated from the previously presented formula of the terentianean metre. Above all, Boethius and his medieval emulators, apparently viewing the metre as a curtailed hexameter line, treated the beginning of the line as they would the opening feet of a hexameter, with the corresponding variations. In principle, the first half of a hexameter line (the part preceding a penthemimeral caesura) permits the following combinations of feet:

- a) two dactyls (-uu | -uu | -), as in arma virumque cano,
- b) a dactyl and a spondee (-uu | -- | -), as in Italiam fato,
- c) a spondee and a dactyl (-- | -uu | -), as in inferretque deos,
- d) two spondees (-- | -- | -), as in quam Iuno fertur.

Type c is identical with the first half of the terentianean metre as presented by Terentianus, and even in Boethius it is the most common one, appearing 17 times in the 27-line poem of *De consolatione philosophiae* 1, 4, 2.<sup>56</sup> The other types, however, are present in Boethius as well: there are four instances of type a,<sup>57</sup> five instances of type b,<sup>58</sup> and one sole instance of type d.<sup>59</sup> This would indicate that, whatever the origins of the terentianean line, it was in Boethius's eyes simply another dactylic metre, permitting the same variations as the

<sup>56</sup> e.g. line 1: "heu quam praecipiti"

<sup>57</sup> e.g. line 2: "mens hebet et propria"

<sup>58</sup> e.g. line 3: "tendit in externas"

<sup>59</sup> line 6: "hic quondam caelo"

hexameter, albeit, in contrast to the hexameter, with a preference for a spondee in the opening foot. Boethius was not without followers, and several Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon poets allowed these very same variations in the first half of the terentianean line, as well as some of their own invention.<sup>60</sup>

The perhaps surprising popularity of the terentianean metre in the early Middle Ages is, however, not mainly attributable to the example of Boethius, let alone Ausonius or Martianus Cappella, none of whom were known to the earliest Anglo-Saxon authors, but rather to its early adaptation by Christian hymnodists. The best-known examples of Christian verse in this metre are the two hymns cited by Bede in his *De arte metrica*: *Squalent arva soli* and *Obduxere polum*. Typically, Bede's analysis of the terentianean metre paraphrases Julian of Toledo, who also has given the first line of *Squalent arva soli* as an example, but Bede's quotations are much lengthier, and his treatise of the metre can be essentially be read as an analysis of his cited examples. Bede's definition of the terentianean metre as a "dactylic tetrameter catalectic" is apparently his own, and as a classification it is considerably more practical than Julian's interpretation of the metre as a variety of the Phalaecian hendecasyllable. Julian writes:

Dactylicum phalaecium hendecasyllabum. Quales pedes recipit? Spondeum, dactylum et tres trochaeos. Da eius exemplum. "Fulgens divitiis, et ore clarus". Fit alio modo? Per spondeum, dactylum, catalecton et dactylum, ita ut in fine trochaicum aut spondeum habeat. Da eius exemplum: "Squalent arva soli pulvere multo."<sup>61</sup>  
 [The dactylic phalaecian hendecasyllable. Which feet does it take? A spondee, a dactyl and three trochees. Give an example of it. "Resplendent with riches and radiant of face". Can it be constructed otherwise? With a spondee, a dactyl, a catalecton and a dactyl, so that in the end it has spondee or a trochee. Give an example. "The fields lie deep in dust."]

Bede, on the other hand, has an entirely different interpretation:

Metrum dactylicum tetrametrum catalecticum constat ex spondeo, dactylo, catalecto, dactylo, spondeo. Quo usus est sanctus Ambrosius in precatone pluviae, cuius exordium hoc est:

Squalent arva soli pulvere multo,  
 pallet siccus ager, terra fatescit,  
 nullus roris honos, nulla venustas,  
 quando nulla viret gratia florum.  
 Tellus dura sitit nescia roris,  
 fons iam nescit aquas, flumina cursus.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> see Norberg 1998, 258-60.

<sup>61</sup> Maestre Yeyes 1973, 229, 8-13.

<sup>62</sup> DAM 19, 2-11.

[The dactylic tetrameter catalectic consists of a spondee, a dactyl, a catalecton, a dactyl and a spondee. Saint Ambrose used this metre in a prayer for rain, of which this is the beginning:

The fields lie deep in dust,  
the dry land yellows, cracks appear in the earth,  
no grace of blossoms shows green.  
The hard earth thirsts, deprived of water,  
the springs now are dried up, the rivers lack currents.]<sup>63</sup>

Bede's interpretation of the terentianean metre as a "dactylic tetrameter catalectic" is much simpler and more understandable than Julian's presentation of the metre as a variant of the phalaecian hendecasyllable. Always striving for the least cluttered ways of analysing things and never reluctant to jettison unhelpful terminology, he makes no reference to the phalaecian metre and none to hendecasyllables; we have noted that elsewhere, too, Bede shows a strong reluctance to classify verse types according to the number of their syllables. Bede's choice of the term "tetrameter" to describe the terentianean metre does seem somewhat more difficult to explain, but it is possible that he perceived the metre as a dactylic pentameter lacking the two final syllables.<sup>64</sup>

Commentators have found it puzzling that Bede attributes *Squalent arva soli* and *Obduxere polum* to Ambrose of Milan. That they have certainly not been composed by Ambrose has been fairly well established on stylistic grounds; furthermore, none of Ambrose's authentic poems are in the terentianean metre. Efforts have, however, been made to trace the origins of these hymns. They have both been published by Bulst in *Analecta hymnica* XXVII because, together with several other texts in the same metre,<sup>65</sup> they have formed a part of Visigothic hymnody. Wilhelm Meyer, in his *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, indicated that the hymns 203, 204 and 206 have probably been composed by the same poet,<sup>66</sup> and F. J. E. Raby placed their author in 5<sup>th</sup>-century Southern Italy.<sup>67</sup> More importantly, however, the hymns in question had been used in the monastery of Monte Cassino, where they were presumably referred to with the generic phrase *Ambrosiani*. It is known that the hymns were, at least on one occasion, transmitted in the manuscript that also contained the Benedictine rule, and it is presumably through the Benedictine usage of *Ambrosianus* as a nonspecific expression that Bede came under the impression that the hymns were actually

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<sup>63</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 149.

<sup>64</sup> Kendall 1991, 149.

<sup>65</sup> i.e. AH XXVII 200 *Rex aeterne deus*, 201 *Iram quam merito*, 202 *Huius supplicium* and 205 *Tristes nunc populi*.

<sup>66</sup> Meyer 1905, 295.

<sup>67</sup> Raby 1947, 1-3.

composed by Ambrose.<sup>68</sup> It is obvious that Bede's mistaken belief that the hymns were by Ambrose must have invested the metre with exceptional authority and impelled Bede to include it in his very sparse corpus of lyrical metres.

It is worth mentioning that the hymns quoted in Bede's chapter on the so-called Terentianean metre all conform to the strict verse structure ---uu- | -uu-x, as presented by both Terentianus Maurus and Julian of Toledo: they are conspicuously devoid of the variations introduced by Boethius. Arguably, Bede's codification of the Terentianean metre may have contributed to its popularity among medieval poets and hymnodists; however, we also know that their efforts were often modelled on the looser, "Boethian" form than the strict verse type represented by Bede's pseudo-Ambrosian models. But this may ultimately be due not only to the example of Boethius but also to Bede's unambiguously dactylic interpretation of the metre's structure.

### 3.4. The anacreontic metre

The presence of the anacreontic metre among Bede's planed-down selection of lyric metres may seem surprising to many readers, given the historical background of the metre: not only is the anacreontic metre often associated with imagery of a somewhat profane nature, but the Roman poets appear to have made hardly any use of it. As we shall shortly observe, Bede's decision to include the metre in his treatise appears, once more, to have been made on the strength of a single poem by a single, possibly falsely attributed poet; a decision that ultimately had far-reaching repercussions on later Christian poetry.

The anacreontic metre (uu-u | -u--) has received its name from the Greek lyric poet Anacreon, who employed the metre in his poetry on love and wine. It is generally classified together with the "ionic" metres, which normally consist of a sequence of two short syllables alternating with two long ones, the so-called minor ionic metron (uu--) having two short syllables followed by two long ones, and the so-called major ionic, the other way around (--uu). The traditional analysis of the anacreontic metre is that it is an "anaclastic" form of the minor ionic dimeter (uu-- | uu--): in other words, that it is a minor ionic dimeter where the final syllable of the first metron has changed places with the initial syllable of the

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<sup>68</sup> Norberg 1998, 256-57; Schaller 1984, 73-90.

second one.<sup>69</sup> This analysis of the anacreontic metre has been contested by C. M. J. Sicking,<sup>70</sup> among others, but the fact remains that in Greek poetry the anacreontic line frequently alternates with the normal (non-anaclastic) minor ionic dimeter, as testified by the poetry of Anacreon himself.

The anacreontic metre is surprisingly rare in Latin poetry: in the poetic works of classical Roman antiquity it makes only a few isolated appearances and even then often in conjunction with other metres. We know from a quotation by Terentianus Maurus that Petronius used it,<sup>71</sup> and in late antiquity, it makes up the first part of the strophes in Claudian's *Fescennina* 2. Perhaps more importantly for scholars of Latin literature, it forms a part of the Hellenistic verse-type known as the galliambic, which is best known for its use in Catullus's so-called *Attis* poem (Catull. 63). The galliambic can best be analysed as a combination of two anacreontic lines, the latter of which is catalectic (docked of its last element): uu-u | -u-u | uu-u | -u-. The galliambic metre also allows frequent fusion of the short elements into long ones and the resolution of long elements into double-shorts. The fusion of short elements mainly takes place at the beginning of each anacreontic:

sectam meam exsecutae duce me mihi comites.<sup>72</sup>      --u | -u-- | uu-u | uuu-

The anacreontic and its derivative, the galliambic, were traditionally associated either with light-hearted subjects or images of orgiastic revelry, which is still reflected by the modern usage of the word anacreontic simply to mean a drinking song. In the Greek east, the anacreontic metre was employed by later-day emulators of Anacreon in classicising texts collected in a corpus called *Carmina anacreontea*, which greatly contributed to this trend. But in the Greek-speaking world, the metre also survived the transition to Christianity surprisingly well, as did many other lyric metres: it was adopted by several early Christian poets, including the pre-eminent Gregory of Nazianzus, who used the metre in two of his poems, as well as such figures as John of Nyssa and bishop Synesius of Cyrene. Christian poetry in anacreontics appears to have been cultivated, in particular, in the schools of Palestine and Syria.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Raven 1968<sup>2</sup>, 69; Raven 1965, 129: "To some extent the outside syllables of the metron seem to be variable, uu-- being replaced by uu-u and -u--; and these two alternatives are joined in the form known as 'anacreontic' uu-u -u--, which in Greek verse often occurs as a variant of the "normal" ionic dimeter."

<sup>70</sup> Sicking 1993, 124.

<sup>71</sup> Ter. Maur. 2852; 2862-2865; Petr. fr. 20.

<sup>72</sup> Catull. 63,15.

<sup>73</sup> Petit 1924, 1856-72; Lapidge 1996, 231.

In Late Latin grammar and poetry, on the other hand, the prosodic nature of the anacreontic metre became obscured, and it frequently came to be treated as an iambic metre. It was often viewed by the grammarians as a variant of the iambic dimeter catalectic (x-u- | x-x) with a mandatory resolution of the first element. This analysis of the anacreontic is understandable, as a fusion of the two short elements at the beginning of the line would result in what is in essence a iambic line. This trend can also be interpreted as another instance of the Late Latin tendency to view all lyric metres as forms of either dactylic or iambo-trochaic verse. The iambic dimeter catalectic itself was never very popular among the Romans, one of the best examples being another fragment of Petronius (fr. 19), and it does not appear to have gained much popularity in late antiquity. Its most notable appearance in Christian Latin is the hymn *Hymnus ante somnum* in Prudentius's *Cathemerinon* 6. The poem consists of thirty-eight strophes of seven lines each, and, according to my observation, in 33 cases the opening foot of the line is an anapest, resulting in a verse that is identical with the anacreontic.<sup>74</sup> This is all the more notable as resolution of a long element or syllaba anceps into a double-short does not occur anywhere else in the poem and is, indeed something of a rarity in the iambic poetry of late antiquity.<sup>75</sup> This feature of the hymn was also recognised by Dag Norberg, who discusses the iambic dimeter catalectic in conjunction with the anacreontic metre,<sup>76</sup> and it is analogous to a similar resolution in the (acatalectic) iambic dimeter of the Ambrosian hymns.<sup>77</sup> In the grammarians, the analysis of the anacreontic line as a form of iambic verse can be encountered, most notably, in *De metris* by Mallius Theodorus, which apparently served as the primary model for Bede's own analysis of the anacreontic metre:

Metrum iambicum tetrametrum colobon, quod anacreonticum dicitur, recipit supra dictos pedes omnes et pro quarto pede una tantum syllaba ponitur; quod maxime fit sonorum, si primus pes anapaestus ponatur, post duo iambs, deinde syllaba. Huius exemplum: "Triviae rotetur ignis, / volucrique Phoebus axi / rutilum pererret orbem."<sup>78</sup>

[The iambic tetrameter catalectic, which is called the anacreontic, takes all the aforementioned feet, but, in place of the fourth foot, only one syllable; this becomes most sonorous if the first foot is an anapest, followed by two iambs and one syllable. An example of this: "(You see how) Trivia's fire turns and Phoebus, on his flying chariot, travels the golden orb."]

<sup>74</sup> e.g. line 10 "redit et quietis hora".

<sup>75</sup> Norberg 1958, 72-73.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Norberg 1988, 17-18.

<sup>78</sup> *gramm.* VI, 593, 24-27; *Petr.* fr. 20.

Mallius's presentation is curious in many ways. His terminology is typical of the Late Latin grammarians in having totally abandoned the classical concept of the iambic metron: for Mallius, the iambo-trochaic metres consist of autonomous feet, which also results in his applying the term tetrameter to what more properly is a dimeter. His definition of the iambic dimeter catalectic, with the phrase "the aforementioned feet", refers to his earlier definition of the iambic trimeter, which is entirely classical.<sup>79</sup>

Mallius appears to regard the anacreontic as merely another name for the iambic dimeter catalectic. He does also present an analysis of the "proper" anacreontic metre, although simply as a superior variant of the metre, which he illustrates with a three-line quotation from a fragment of Petronius previously cited by Terentianus Maurus. Although no more than four lines of the original poem have been preserved to us, it is apparent that it was originally composed in anacreontics in the strictest sense of the word;<sup>80</sup> furthermore, we also know Petronius to have employed the iambic dimeter catalectic as a metre in its own right.<sup>81</sup>

Mallius's presentation of the "proper" anacreontic does not differ from the ordinary iambic dimeter catalectic only in having an initial pair of short syllables: Mallius specifically states that in the preferred form of the metre, the third foot is an iamb (not a spondee), and he rules out all syllable resolution in the latter part of the line. The prosodic structure of the "most sonorous" form of the anacreontic line is strictly determined and without the prosodic variation that is typical of the genuine iambic metres.

Bede's chapter on the anacreontic, drawn from Mallius, also presents the anacreontic metre under the name of the iambic dimeter catalectic, but, in stark contrast to Mallius, Bede only presents the anacreontic metre in the strictest sense, not discussing other possible types of the iambic dimeter catalectic:

Metrum iambicum tetrametrum colophon<sup>82</sup>, quod Anacreontium dicitur, recipit anapestum, duos iampos et semipedem.<sup>83</sup>

[The iambic tetrameter catalectic, which is called the anacreontic, takes an anapest, two iambs and a half-foot.]<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> "Recipit vero metrum iambicum hexametrum pedes hos: iambum locis omnibus, tribrachyn locis omnibus praeter novissimum, spondium, dactylum et anapaestum locis tantum imparibus, pyrrichium loco tantum ultimo." ("The iambic hexameter (=trimeter) takes the following feet: the iamb in every foot, the tribrach in every foot but the last one, the spondee, the dactyl and the anapest only in the odd feet, and the pyrrhic only in the last foot.") – gramm. VI, 593, 6-9.

<sup>80</sup> The first line, "triplici vides, ut ortu", not cited by Mallius, is also an anacreontic line in the strict sense.

<sup>81</sup> e.g. Petr. fr. 19: "Horatium videmus / versus tenoris huius."

<sup>82</sup> Colophon is a corrupt form of colobon (Gr. κολοβόν) given by manuscripts of *De arte metrica*. Keil, in his *Grammatici Latini*, has emended it to colobon.

<sup>83</sup> DAM 22, 2-3.

<sup>84</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 157.

Bede, like Mallius Theodorus, apparently considers the anacreontic to be simply another name for the iambic dimeter catalectic. What is curious is that Bede has not derived his explanation of the metre's composition from that of the other iambic metres: he only presents the structure of the "proper" anacreontic, not discussing the true iambic dimeter catalectic at all. All that is left of Mallius's presentation of the anacreontic as an iambic verse-form, apart from the wording of the metrical analysis, is that Bede discusses the anacreontic immediately after the iambic dimeter. Bede illustrates his analysis with a quotation from a poem known as *Poema coniugis ad uxorem* or *Ad coniugem suam*, generally attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine.<sup>85</sup>

Quo usus est Prosper Tiro in principio exhortationis ad coniugem, ita dicens:

Age, iam precor mearum  
comes inremota rerum,  
trepidam brevemque vitam  
Domino Deo dicemus.  
Celeri vides rotatu  
rapidos dies meare  
fragilisque membra mundi  
minui perire labi.  
Fugit omne quod tenemus,  
neque fluxa habent recursum,  
cupidasque vana mentes  
specie trahunt inani.  
Ubi nunc imago rerum est?  
Ubi sunt opes potentum,  
quibus occupare captas  
animas fuit voluptas?<sup>86</sup>

[Tiro Prosper uses this metre at the beginning of his exhortation to his wife. He says:

Come now, I pray,  
inseparable companion of my affairs,  
let us dedicate an anxious, brief life  
to the Lord God.  
You see our days rapidly  
whirling away  
and the inhabitants of a fragile world  
declining, stumbling, perishing.  
Everything which we possess is fugitive,  
nor do fleeting things ever return,  
and vain things attract the avaricious heart  
with insubstantial appearance.  
Where now is the shadow of reality?

<sup>85</sup> In manuscript tradition, the poem is variously attributed either to Prosper or Paulinus of Nola, although the most recent opinion seems to be that it is by Prosper. – Santelia 2009, 10-13.

<sup>86</sup> DAM 22, 4-21.



Where is the wealth of the powerful,  
with which pleasure was able to ensnare  
captive minds.]<sup>87</sup>

The bulk of *Poema coniugis* is composed in elegiac couplets; only the introduction is in the anacreontic metre, in keeping with the Roman custom of combining the anacreontic metre with other types of verse. It has, indeed, been suggested that the immediate model of the poem is Claudian's *Fescennina 2*, and that Prosper has sought to create a spiritual equivalent of Claudian's epithalamion:<sup>88</sup> the poem is an exhortation to a fundamental life change and the adoption of a pious and chaste life-style in times of turbulence. It may be telling that both poems begin with the exhortation *age*.<sup>89</sup>

Bede cites the introduction in its entirety. Two things are evident from Bede's treatise of the anacreontic metre: firstly, Bede, in presenting the metrical scheme uu-u | -u-- as the only type of the Anacreontic metre, has followed his usual practice of trimming his definitions down to the bare essentials. Secondly, it is obvious that this simplified analysis is based on his quoted example, the introduction to *Poema coniugis*. In his presentation of the anacreontic metre, Bede has been faithful to the method he applies throughout *De arte metrica*: although the phrasing of his definitions may be borrowed from previous treatises, their content is not, being more or less a description of his cited material. The wording may resemble that of Mallius Theodorus, but the substance is based on the evidence of a single poem.

The importance of *Poema coniugis* for Bede is surely attributable to his belief that the poem was the work of Prosper of Aquitaine. Undoubtedly, the subject and ethos of the poem must also have appealed to Bede greatly, impelling him to quote its introduction in its entirety. The introduction of *Poema coniugis* served as a model for later generations of Latin poets: we know that at least Walafrid Strabo and Godescalc of Orbais have imitated it in their works.<sup>90</sup> In limiting his definition of the anacreontic metre to the form presented in *Poema coniugis*, Bede also inadvertently restored the metre, bringing it closer to its classical models as a metre manifestly different from the iambic verse forms with which it was often confused in late antiquity.

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<sup>87</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 157.

<sup>88</sup> Chippaniniello 2007, 115-138.

<sup>89</sup> Claudian. *fesc. 2*: "Age, cuncta nuptiali / redimita vere tellus / celebra toros eriles" ("Come now, all earth, garlanded by the nuptial spring, celebrate the wedding of your master.")

<sup>90</sup> Norberg 1958, 72-73; see PAC II, 412; III, 733; IV, 246.

### 3.5. The iambic trimeter

The iambic trimeter is the metre of dramatic dialogue par excellence of classical Greek drama. In its classical form, the iambic trimeter consists of three iambic metra (x-u-), or, in other words, metra of two iambs (u-) where the first element is a syllaba anceps and can manifest itself as either long or short: x-u- | x-u- | x-ux. The metre can allow frequent syllable resolution: both the long elements and the syllabae ancipites at the beginning of the metron can be resolved into two short syllables. To put it in the terms of the Latin grammarians, this means that the iambic feet can be substituted with tribrachs (uuu) in every foot (but the final one), but in the odd feet, where the initial syllable can be either long or short, also with spondees (--), dactyls (-uu) and anapests (uu-). If resolution occurs both in the syllaba anceps and the following long element, even proceleusmatics (uuuu) are possible, although highly unusual.<sup>91</sup> Several variants of the iambic trimeter were used in Roman antiquity. Catullus, in his fourth poem, experimented with a form that allowed no syllabae ancipites and where every foot is an iamb, and a similar type of verse alternates with dactylic hexameters in Horace's sixteenth Epode. Generally, though, such extreme regularity was seldom practised by the Roman poets, although the iambic trimeter, as other metres, underwent some regularisation over the course of its history in Latin literature.

Already in the Golden Age, the more outré cases of syllable resolution were going out of vogue in iambic verse. Resolution of the long element and the metron-initial anceps are comparatively rare in the Epodes of Horace: such lines as *alitibus atque canibus homicidam Hectorem*<sup>92</sup> (- uu u - | u uu u uu | - - u -) are genuine exceptions from this general tendency. Some of the Silver Age poets swung rather in the opposite direction (mainly Seneca in his tragedies),<sup>93</sup> but the Late Latin users of the iambic trimeter generally shunned any form of syllable resolution; this general tendency seems to apply to iambo-trochaic verse in general.<sup>94</sup>

Dag Norberg has discussed the late antique evolution of the iambo-trochaic metres extensively in his 1988 *Les vers latins iambiques et trochaïques au Moyen Age et*

<sup>91</sup> e.g. Sen. Med. 670: "Pavet animus, horret, magna perniciēs adest" (uu uu u - | - - u - | uu - u -).

<sup>92</sup> Hor. epod. 17, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Raven 1965, 51-52.

<sup>94</sup> Norberg 71-72. The most notable exceptions are the syllable resolution that usually occurs in the beginning of the Ambrosian iambic dimeter (as in Ambros. hymn. 6, 19 "Geminae gigas substantiae", also quoted by Bede in DAM 21, 22) and a similar resolution in the iambic dimeter catalectic of Prud. cath. 6, which may result from analogy to the anacreontic metre.

leurs répliques rythmiques, where his starting hypothesis is that the simplification and regularisation which these metres underwent in late antiquity ultimately led to the birth of the rhythmic verse of the middle ages. This simplification and regularisation took the form of several developments that guided the iambo-trochaic metres in a more pronouncedly isosyllabic and accentually regular direction. The most important phenomena are the gradual disappearance of elisions and syllable resolution and an increasing tendency to make the word-accent coincide with the ictus, mainly towards the end of the line.<sup>95</sup>

The “classical” iambic trimeter, as presented above, had its equivalent also in the popular forms of iambo-trochaic verse employed in the comedies of Plautus and Terence. This form, known as the iambic senarius, differed from the classical variety of the iambic trimeter mainly in the respect that the syllaba anceps was not restricted to the odd feet of the line but could appear anywhere but in the final foot. The resulting metre consists of a regular sequence of feet (rather than the two-foot metra of the classical variety): x - x - | x - x - | x - u - . In the dialogue of Plautus and Terence, syllable resolution is also very common, and, given the higher frequency of syllabae ancipites, can make the metre at times almost unrecognisable.<sup>96</sup> As a vehicle of popular literature, the iambic senarius retained its popularity throughout classical antiquity, and was employed as an “archaising” metre by several late antique authors as well, including Ausonius and, in Christian poetry, Hilary of Poitiers.<sup>97</sup> Oddly enough, despite Hilary’s example, the metre seems to have fallen into near-complete disuse in the middle ages.<sup>98</sup> In late antiquity, the archaic iambic senarius seems to have been subject to changes similar to those its classical equivalent, the iambic trimeter: it, too, became increasingly isosyllabic, and syllable resolution, which in the plays of Plautus and Terence was very profuse, all but disappeared.<sup>99</sup>

In the earlier grammarians, the classical iambic trimeter was still clearly distinguished from its popular form, the iambic senarius. Terentianus Maurus in his *De*

<sup>95</sup> Norberg 1988, 66. As examples of the gradual disappearance of elisions and syllable resolution, Norberg mentions verses 155-271 of Paulinus of Nola’s *Carmen 21*, which contain 40 elisions and 50 cases of syllable resolution, contrasting them with Prudentius’s hymn *O Nazarene, lux Bethlem, verbum Patris* (*Prud. cath. 7*), the 220 lines of which only contain 27 elisions and 11 cases of syllable resolution. Still later, in seventh-century Visigothic Spain, the poetry of Braulio of Zaragoza and Eugene of Toledo appears even more simplified: in a 80-line hymn of Braulio, there are only 6 cases of elision and no occurrences of syllable resolution, and in the 64 iambic trimeters of Eugene, both phenomena are completely absent.

<sup>96</sup> e.g. Ter. *heaut.* “neque ut animum decuit aegrotum adulescentuli” (uu uu – uu | u - - uu | - - u -).

<sup>97</sup> e.g. Ausonius’s *Ludus septem sapientium* and Hilary’s hymn *Fefellit saevam*, which has been thoroughly analysed in Meyer 1905, 164.

<sup>98</sup> Norberg 1988, 69.

<sup>99</sup> Norberg 1958, 72: “A ce propos, nous voulons faire remarquer qu’il est relativement rare qu’une syllabe longue se décompose en deux breves... après saint Ambrose et Prudence il est rare que l’on rencontre des cas de ce genre, ceci valant aussi bien pour le vers iambique classique que pour le vers iambique archaïsant.”

littera, de syllaba, de pedibus emphasises that those poets who use the latter do so not through ignorance but deliberately (“in metra peccant arte, non inscitia”).<sup>100</sup> He is also notable for still using the terms trimeter and senarius in distinctly different meanings (“sic fit trimetrus qui fuit senarius”).<sup>101</sup> In later grammarians, the terminology became much more confused, which was certainly compounded by the increasing tendency to view iambic metres as consisting of individual feet rather than metra of two feet. In several Late Latin grammarians we see the iambic trimeter referred to as the iambic senarius, but also as the iambic hexameter, in this context an outrageously unclassical term. Even when the clear distinction between the two types of line had become blurred, some grammarians retained some idea of their differences. The fourth-century Maurus Servius, in his *De centum metris*, writes in the following manner:

Metra iambica locis imparibus quinque recipere possunt pedes, iambum, tribrachum, spondeum, dactylum, anapaestum, locis autem paribus tantum iambum vel tribrachum, et apud comicos frequenter anapaestum, ita tamen ut multarum brevium iunctura vitetur.<sup>102</sup>

[The iambic metres can take five feet in the odd positions: the iamb, the tribrach, the spondee, the dactyl, and the anapest, but in the even positions only the iamb or the tribrach, and in the comic writers, often the anapest, but in such a way that a juncture of many short syllables is avoided.]

Marius’s description of the “comic” versions of iambic metre is undeniably imprecise: of all the feet made possible by syllabae ancipites in the even feet, he only recognises the anapest; however, he still shows some grasp of the prosodic differences between these two verse types. There is nothing left of this in Mallius Theodorus’s *De metris*, which served as Bede’s model for his short chapter on the iambic trimeter:

Recipit vero metrum iambicum hexametrum pedes hos: iambum locis omnibus, tribrachyn locis omnibus praeter novissimum, spondium, dactylum et anapaestum locis tantum imparibus, pyrrichium loco tantum ultimo.<sup>103</sup>

[The iambic hexameter (=trimeter) takes the following feet: the iamb in every foot, the tribrach in every foot but the last one, the spondee, the dactyl and the anapest only in the odd feet, and the pyrrhic only in the last foot.]

Bede has retained Mallius’s wording to a high degree:

<sup>100</sup> Ter. Maur. 2239.

<sup>101</sup> Ter. Maur. 2265.

<sup>102</sup> Soraci 1988, 26, 24 – 27, 2.

<sup>103</sup> gramm. VI, 593, 6-9.

Metrum iambicum senarium recipit iambum locis omnibus, tribrachin locis omnibus praeter novissimum, spondeum, dactylum, et anapestum locis tantum imparibus, pyrrhichium loco tantum ultimo.<sup>104</sup>

[The iambic senarius takes the iamb in every foot, the tribrach in every foot except the last, the spondee, the dactyl, and the anapest in the odd feet only, and the pyrrhic only in the final foot.]

As we can see, Bede has once more tinkered with Mallius's presentation: he has substituted the word *senarium* for Mallius's *hexametrum*. Otherwise, the presentations are identical and certainly portray the classical iambic trimeter, not the *senarius*. Mallius's choice of the word *hexametrum* may reflect his effort to portray an analogy between the dactylic hexameter and the iambic trimeter:

Metro autem dactylico heroico metri iambici hexametri proxima definitio visa est. Altero enim producuntur acies, ubi proelia conseruntur, altero clarorum hominum vita atque fortuna scenam personat; atque idcirco utriusque conexio in earum rerum, quae sunt maximae, expressione ac declaratione versatur.<sup>105</sup>

[Next to the heroic dactylic metre, it seems most fitting to define the iambic hexameter. For the one is used to portray armies and battles, with the other the lives and fates of famous men are resounded on-stage; therefore each of the two is used in expressing and declaring those things which are of the greatest importance.]

To quote this would not have fitted well with Bede's Christian ethos. Instead of alluding to war and the stage, Bede has presented the iambic trimeter with a quotation from Prudentius's *Psychomachia*. Bede's introduction to the citation can be read as a Christian paraphrase of Mallius's presentation. It can even be understood to imply the connection of the iambic trimeter and the dactylic hexameter as portrayers of great things, albeit in a Christian context:

Quo nobilissimus Hispaniarum scholasticus, Aurelius Prudens Clemens, scripsit proemium *Psychomachiae*, id est, libri quem de virtutum vitiorumque pugna heroico carmine composuit. Ita enim inchoat:

Senex fidelis, prima credendi via  
Abram, beati seminis serus pater,  
adiecta cuius nomen auxit syllaba,

Abram parenti dictus, Abraham Deo (Prud. *psychomach.* praef. 1-4).<sup>106</sup>

[Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, the celebrated scholar of Spain, wrote in this metre the prologue of the *Psychomachia*, i.e., the book which he composed in heroic verse on the battle of the virtues and vices. It begins this way:<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> DAM 20, 2-5.

<sup>105</sup> gramm. VI, 593, 2-5.

<sup>106</sup> DAM 20, 5-12.

The faithful patriarch who first showed the way of believing,  
 Abram, late in life the father of a blessed progeny,  
 whose name was lengthened by a syllable,  
 for he was called Abram by his father, but Abraham by God.]<sup>108</sup>

In the light of Mallius's and Bede's thorough exposition of all the possible feet which can appear in the iambic trimeter, the introduction to *Psychomachia* is very subdued in the matter of syllable resolution: there are only four instances in its seventy lines, and all of them belong to the common type where the initial syllaba anceps is a double-short. If we compare Bede's exposition of the iambic trimeter with those of the other iambo-trochaic metres, the contrast is quite remarkable: in his examination of the iambic dimeter, Bede only discusses syllable resolution as an afterthought, and in his chapter on the trochaic septenarius it is not mentioned at all; this would mainly be the result of his basing the portrayals of the metres in question on his analyses of the individual poems he uses as their illustration. In view of this, Bede's description of the iambic trimeter would certainly appear to be more thorough than his material warrants, and, in this instance, Bede himself comes across as unusually derivative, and rather less than usually empirical, in his reliance on previous authors.

### 3.6. The iambic dimeter

The prominence of the iambic dimeter in Late Latin poetry can be wholly attributed to Christianity and Christian hymnody. Although this metre appears in Greek drama (and even there mainly as a component of larger metrical units),<sup>109</sup> its use in classical Latin poetry was infrequent, and even then it mainly appeared in conjunction with other types of usually iambic verse.

The structure of the classical iambic dimeter is quite analogous to that of the iambic trimeter: it consists of two iambic metrons (x - u-) of two iambs each. The first foot of the metron is, as in the iambic trimeter, a syllaba anceps. Both the long syllables and the syllabae ancipites can be substituted with a double-short, and therefore the metre, at least in theory, allows the same panoply of possible metrical "feet" as the iambic trimeter: tribrachs (uuu) in every foot but the last, spondees (--), dactyls (-uu), anapests (uu-) and proceleusmatics (uuuu) in the odd feet.

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<sup>107</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 153.

<sup>108</sup> Trans. Thomson 1949, 275.

<sup>109</sup> Raven 1968<sup>2</sup>, 33.

The iambic dimeter very rarely appeared on its own in classical Latin verse (the tragedies of Seneca being the most prominent example), and they are mainly known to students of the Roman classics from the Epodes of Horace, where they appear in alternation with other lengths.<sup>110</sup> Horace's emulators in their use include Martial and Ausonius. Analyses of Horace's Epodes show that the iambic dimeter was from the very start treated as a more isosyllabic verse form than the more common trimeter: there are only two instances of syllable resolution in his dimeters.<sup>111</sup> Horace's Silver-Age emulators were freer in their use of syllable resolution, but this was to become increasingly rare towards the end of antiquity, although resolution still occurs sporadically in Bede's main authorities on the iambic dimeter, Sedulius and Ambrose.

It is unclear why the iambic dimeter, for all its previous obscurity, became the metre of choice of the early Latin hymnodists. Apparently its short length made it suitable for the singing of hymns; Wilhelm Meyer, in his *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, has, on the strength of some statements by St Augustine, even ventured to derive the origin of Latin hymns in the iambic dimeter from oriental models.<sup>112</sup> In Christian hymns in the iambic dimeter, four lines normally form a stanza, and as the hymns were commonly sung antiphonally, the number of the stanzas is usually even. The best-known representatives of Christian hymns in the iambic dimeter are the hymns by Ambrose of Milan and Caelius Sedulius, but other contributors to this genre include Ennodius of Pavia, Paulinus of Nola and Venantius Fortunatus. Although this would not be strictly necessary in verse that is primarily intended for singing, the early Latin hymns in the iambic dimeter by Sedulius, Ambrose and their near-contemporaries have been composed in a strictly classical form of iambic metre: only the first syllable of each metron (or the first syllables of odd feet) is a *syllaba anceps*, and syllable resolution is generally restricted to the beginning of the metron, a feature common with the Late Latin iambic trimeter.<sup>113</sup> Ambrose of Milan composed altogether 14 hymns in the iambic dimeter. These hymns comprise 448 lines and show only 18 cases of syllable resolution; of these

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<sup>110</sup> Horace's first ten epodes have the iambic dimeter alternating with the iambic trimeter (e.g. epod. 1.1-2: "Ibis Liburnis inter alta navium / amice, propugnacula"). In his epodes 11-13 and 14-15, the iambic dimeter is used in conjunction with dactylic elements in what are termed "archilochian" stanzas: the so-called iambelegus, which consists of an iambic dimeter and a hemiepes (x-u- x-u- | -uu -uu -) forms the second archilochian stanza together with the dactylic hexameter, and the so-called elegiambus, where the same components are in an inverted order (-uu -uu - | x-u- x-u-) forms the third archilochian stanza together with the iambic trimeter. –See Raven 1965, 112-13.

<sup>111</sup> Raven 1965, 60.

<sup>112</sup> Meyer 1905, 119; Augustine describes the nightly services of Milan in his *Confessions*, 9, 7: "Tunc hymni et psalmi ut canerentur secundum morem orientalium partium, ne populus maeroris taedio contabesceret..." ("Then it was first instituted that after the manner of the Eastern Churches, Hymns and Psalms should be sung, lest the people should wax faint through the tediousness of sorrow...")

<sup>113</sup> Norberg 1958, 71-72.

fourteen occur in the first syllable of the metron.<sup>114</sup> Although also Prudentius applied syllable resolution in his hymns, Sedulius refrained from it altogether in his hymn *A solis ortus cardine*, and Ennodius only used it in proper names.<sup>115</sup> At the same time also elisions became increasingly uncommon, and there was a pronounced tendency to eliminate the clash of accent and ictus from the end of the line, thereby giving it a regular proparoxytone (antepenultimate) accent. All of these developments served to make the iambic dimeter easier to grasp for audiences without training in classical verse and in time also paved the way for the emergence of rhythmic poetry.

Prior to Bede's *De arte metrica*, the growing importance of the iambic dimeter was in no way noted by the grammarians who generally lump it together with the other iambic metres, if they bother to discuss it at all. Diomedes does not mention the iambic dimeter, and in Mallius Theodorus's *De metris*, the metre, which Mallius calls an iambic tetrameter, is sandwiched between the iambic trimeter and the iambic dimeter catalectic. The description of the metre itself is very sparse:

Metrum iambicum tetrametrum recipit supra dictos pedes omnes. Huius exemplum:  
 "Merulae quod os vetustius."<sup>116</sup>  
 [The iambic tetrameter takes all the aforementioned feet. An example of this:  
 "Merulae quod os vetustius."]

With his expression *supra dictos pedes*, Mallius refers to his definition of the iambic trimeter, as described above (p. 166), which is in essence perfectly classical (iamb and tribrach in every foot but the last, spondees, dactyls and anapaests in the odd feet). Although Bede usually follows Mallius's wording fairly closely in his descriptions of the lyric metres, the description of the iambic dimeter in *De arte metrica* reads as a redefinition that is no longer based on the general classical rules of iambic verse, but portrays metre as it had been adopted by the Christian hymnodists. As a consequence, the definition is very much streamlined: Bede has left out most of the metrical options which the classical form of the metre, at least in theory, allows. Bede acknowledges the option of syllable resolution only grudgingly and then mainly

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<sup>114</sup> Norberg 1988, 17-18; the first foot is an anapest seven times (e.g. "geminae gigas substantiae") and a dactyl three times ("martyribus inventis cano"); the second foot is once a tribrach ("carnis vitia mundans caro"), and the third foot is an anapest seven times ("mortis sacrae meritum probat"). Norberg also mentions that in a hymn in honour of John the Evangelist that is attributed to Ambrose there are some unusual cases where, contrary to classical practice, the second foot is an anapest (followed by a hiatus). These lines, however, are direct quotations from the Gospel of John: "in principio erat verbum", and "in principio apud deum", from John 1:1.

<sup>115</sup> Norberg 1988, 18. Some of Ennodius's syllable resolutions run counter to the classical rules of iambic metre (e.g. "vatis Cypriani et martyris" with an anapaest in the second foot) and almost seem closer to the archaic type of Latin iambs.

<sup>116</sup> gramm. VI, 593, 21-23.



in the position to which it was usually confined in Late Latin metre: the initial element of the metron. Even this liberty is absent from the beginning of the chapter where Bede lays down the rules of the metre. All that remains from Mallius Theodorus's presentation is the definition of the iambic dimeter as a tetrameter. Bede has illustrated his redefinition of the iambic dimeter with the opening lines of Sedulius's hymn *A solis ortus cardine*, Sedulius's best-known contribution to the genre of Christian hymnody:

Metrum iambicum tetrametrum recipit iambum locis omnibus, spondeum locis tantum imparibus. Quo scriptus est hymnus Sedulii:

A solis ortus cardine  
adusque terrae limitem.<sup>117</sup>

[The iambic tetrameter takes the iamb in every foot, and the spondee only in the odd feet. A hymn of Sedulius is written in this metre:

From the rising of the sun in the east  
to the ends of the earth in the west...]<sup>118</sup>

Bede's initial definition of the iambic dimeter is, in other words, entirely isosyllabic: for Bede, the metre consists essentially only of iambs, with the option of spondees in the odd feet. As Norberg's analysis of *A solis ortus cardine* shows, this definition corresponds with the structure of Sedulius's hymn, which is structurally even simpler than the hymns of Ambrose and does not contain a single case of syllable resolution. As Bede understandably did not want to exclude Ambrosian verse from his treatise, he has found it necessary to elucidate his discussion of the iambic dimeter with quotations of Ambrosian hymns, and thereby also bring up the question of syllable resolution. Bede's first quotation from Ambrose consists of a sampling of the opening lines of some of his best-known hymns (5, 4, 3, and 2, respectively):

Sed et Ambrosiani eo maxime currunt:

Deus creator omnium;  
Iam surgit hora tertia;  
Splendor paternae gloriae;  
Aeterne rerum conditor;

et ceteri perplures.<sup>119</sup>

[But above all the hymns of Ambrose are composed in this metre; for example:

God the Creator of all things;  
Now the third hour rises;  
The splendour of the Father's glory;

<sup>117</sup> DAM 21, 2-6.

<sup>118</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 155.

<sup>119</sup> DAM 21, 7-11.

Eternal creator of things;  
and a great many others.]<sup>120</sup>

Somewhat surprisingly, Bede takes an aesthetic stand for a more “regularised” form of iambic verse, where the odd feet of the line are regularly spondees, creating a repeated spondee-iamb sequence (--u- | --u-). For his illustration of this type of iambic dimeter he has chosen the opening lines of Ambrose’s fifteenth hymn, *Aeterna Christi munera*:

In quibus pulcherrimo est decore conpositus hymnus beatorum martyrum, cuius loca cuncta inparia spondeum, iambum tenent paria, cuius principium est:

Aeterna Christi munera  
et martyrum victorias,  
laudes ferentes debitas,  
laetis canamus mentibus.<sup>121</sup>

[One of them is a hymn of great beauty and dignity on the blessed martyrs, of which all the odd feet are spondaic and the even feet, iambic. This hymn begins:

Let us sing with joyful hearts  
the eternal gifts of Christ  
and the victories of the martyrs,  
which bring about merited praises.]<sup>122</sup>

Only at the very end of his exposition does Bede discuss the question of syllable resolution, resorting once more to Mallius Theodorus’s general description of the iambic metres. He furnishes his discussion with a sole example drawn from Ambrosius’s sixth hymn:

Recipit hoc metrum aliquoties, ut scribit Mallius Theodorus, etiam tribrachin locis omnibus praeter novissimum, dactylum et anapestum locis tantum inparibus. Unde est:

Geminae gigas substantiae  
alacris ut currat viam. (Ambr. hymn. 6, 19-20)

Ceterorum rara habes exempla.<sup>123</sup>

[As Mallius Theodorus points out, this metre occasionally also takes the tribrachs in every foot except the last, and the dactyl and the anapest in the odd feet only. This explains:

Like a giant of two-fold nature,  
he swiftly runs his course.

You will find few examples of the others.]<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 155.

<sup>121</sup> DAM 21, 12-18

<sup>122</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 155.

<sup>123</sup> DAM 21, 19-24

<sup>124</sup> With the exception of the last sentence, the translation is from Kendall 1991, 155.

The resolution presented by Bede for the benefit of his readers represents the type most commonly encountered in the iambic verse of late Latin poetry. The line “*geminae gigas substantiae*” (uu-u- | --u-) has syllable resolution of the initial syllaba anceps, or to put it in the terms of the grammarians, has an anapest for its first foot. As Norberg’s study shows, the overwhelming majority of syllable resolutions in Ambrose’s hymns take place in the first element of the metron, i.e. they have an anapest in an odd foot. Other types of syllable resolution, of which there are but four instances in all of Ambrose’s hymns, are so rare that Bede has apparently not bothered to illustrate them. We can see that here, again, Bede’s definition of a poetic metre is closely based on his exclusively Christian reading matter, which also functions as its illustration. In Christian usage, the iambic dimeter was on its way to becoming a totally isosyllabic metre: syllable resolution occurred seldom, and then mainly in very restricted places. In Bede’s eyes, this phenomenon did not merit discussion in the actual definition of the metre, being for all intents and purposes a curiosity of marginal interest. Yet Bede’s pervasive tendency to simplify and regularise goes even further than this: he specifically commends a type of iambic dimeter verse where even the use of spondees is preordained, and all the odd feet are spondees. Bede’s ideal form of the iambic dimeter can be presented as an invariable chain of spondaic and iambic feet: -- u- | -- u-.

Bede’s own hymns in the iambic dimeter corroborate his partiality for this “improved” iambic dimeter. The iambic dimeter was Bede’s metre of choice in his *Liber hymnorum*, which has regrettably not survived to us in its entirety. According to Bede’s own account, he had composed hymns not only in the iambic dimeter but other metres as well, and may even have composed rhythmic (non-quantitative) verse.<sup>125</sup> Although the authenticity of some of the hymns that have circulated in Bede’s name has been debated, it would seem that the extant hymns that can with any certainty be attributed to him are all in the iambic dimeter. As Bede’s hymns were all intended for regular ecclesiastical use, it is sensible to presume that their most important model was the so-called Canterbury “Old Hymnal” which had been brought to Wearmouth-Jarrow in the late seventh century.<sup>126</sup> Although no extant manuscript of the hymnal remains, its contents are known from secondary sources.<sup>127</sup> The Canterbury Hymnal consisted of sixteen hymns altogether, all composed either in the iambic dimeter or its rhythmic (non-quantitative) equivalent. Of the eleven metrical hymns, nine are almost certainly by Ambrose, and it makes sense to see Ambrose, rather than Sedulius, as the

<sup>125</sup> Bede mentions in his *Historia ecclesiastica* that he had composed a “book of hymns in diverse metres and rhythms” (*librum hymnorum diverso metro sive rythmo*). – *Hist. eccl.* 5, 24.

<sup>126</sup> Lapidge 1996, 322. On the Old Hymnal itself, see Gneuss 1968, 10-40.

<sup>127</sup> Lapidge 1996, 322; Gneuss 1968, 16-17 and 24-25.

primary model of Bede's own hymns in the iambic dimeter. One must bear in mind that Bede's *Liber hymnorum* was, first and foremost, intended to be a supplement to the Old Hymnal: Bede composed his hymns for those occasions which were not covered by the pre-existing hymns at his disposal, and it obviously made sense to strive for a style that was, as far as possible, uniform, consistent, and compatible with that of the older hymns.

The popular but arguably unfair view on Bede's hymns often appears to be have been that they are somewhat bland and uninspired, which no doubt is based on the traditional conception that good scholars make poor poets. They are, however, elegantly composed, and, needless to say, metrically faultless. They are also quite in line with Bede's treatise of the iambic dimeter in *De arte metrica*. The metre in Bede's hymns is, as one might expect, all but isosyllabic: Dag Norberg has detected one sole case of syllable resolution, in *Analecta hymnica* 82, 22, 2: *dominus potens et fortis est* (uu-u- | --u-), where the first foot is an anapest,<sup>128</sup> making it prosodically similar to Ambrose's *geminae gigas substantiae*, cited above. It would also appear that Bede's admiration for the type of iambic verse where spondees and iambs follow each other in strict alternation was not of a passive kind. As an example we may cite the first four stanzas of Bede's perhaps most famous hymn, composed for the day of the Holy Innocents:

Hymnum canentes martyrum	--u-   --u-	
dicamus innocentium,	--u-   u-u-	
quos terra flendo perdidit,	--u-   --u-	
gaudens sed aethra suscipit.	--u-   u-u-	
Vultum patris per saecula	--u-   --u-	
quorum tuentur angeli		--u-   u-u-
eiusque laudant gratiam,	--u-   --u-	
hymnum canentes martyrum.	--u-   --u-	
Quos rex peremit impius,	--u-   u-u-	
pious sed auctor colligit	u-u-   --u-	
secum beatos collocans	--u-   --u-	
in luce regni perpetis.		--u-   --u-
Qui mansiones singulis	--u-   --u-	
largitus in domo Patris,	--u-   u-u-	
donat supernis sedibus,	--u-   --u-	
quos rex peremit impius. <sup>129</sup>	--u-   u-u-	

<sup>128</sup> Norberg 1988, 18.

<sup>129</sup> Ed. Fraipoint 1955, 412.

[Chanting a hymn of joyous praise  
we sing martyrs who are innocent  
whom the earth relinquished in tears  
whom the heavens receive rejoicing.

They whose face the angels of the Lord  
gaze on in peace forever,  
and praise His mercy  
chanting a hymn of joyous praise.

Those whom the wicked king destroyed,  
the merciful Creator now receives,  
drawing to Himself the blessed ones,  
in the light of the perpetual realm,

He Who grants mansions to all  
inside His Father's house,  
now grants eternal dwelling-place  
to those whom the wicked king destroyed.]<sup>130</sup>

We can see that out of the sixteen lines, nine (in italics) consist of spondees and iambs in strict alternation (--u- | --u-). Moreover, only one line out of sixteen begins with an iamb. Bede's predilection for an iambic dimeter with as many spondees as possible, or at least a spondaic opening, is made very apparent by this example. The hymn shows the strong influence of Ambrose, and both its form and content have noticeable parallels with Ambrose's *Aeterna Christi munera*, quoted in *De arte metrica*, that go beyond the purely metrical.

It is curious that apart from the dactylic hexameter, the only type of metrical verse on which Bede makes an actual aesthetic judgement is the iambic dimeter. The obvious reason is that these are the two metres which he himself mainly had employed as a poet. In this instance, Bede's treatise on metrics is not only a description of existing verse and its structures: it is a normative guide to what Bede perceived as the best possible form of verse, as reflected by his own tastes and his own poetic technique.

### 3.7. The trochaic septenarius

The only trochaic metre even briefly discussed in Bede's *De arte metrica* is the trochaic tetrameter catalectic, or, more properly, its archaising variety, the trochaic septenarius. That

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<sup>130</sup> Trans. Lapidge 1996, 329.

the iambic metres (the iambic dimeter and trimeter) are presented by Bede in their classical form, whereas the work's sole example of trochaic metre is given in its archaising variety, is the direct result of certain metrical practices which were applied to the iambo-trochaic metres in late antiquity, as well as Bede's choice of reading material: as we have stated previously, Bede's slim corpus of lyric and iambo-trochaic metres is based on those metres that he had encountered in the works of the foremost Christian poets of late antiquity. That a metre had previously been discussed by the grammarians was for Bede not a strong enough criterion to merit its presentation in his essentially Christian treatise on metre. Correspondingly, Bede modelled his presentations of poetic metres as much on the form which they took in the poems at his disposal as on how the metrical structures had been analysed by previous grammarians. Bede's analysis of the trochaic septenarius is, in essence, based on the structure of one single hymn, *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum*, a poem composed in archaising and highly isosyllabic trochaic verse, and Bede's analysis, as usual, owes more to his own observation than to the authority of any previous grammarian. Curiously, the analysis is also faulty: in this case, Bede's do-it-yourself approach has resulted in an erroneous interpretation of the metre's prosodic structure. Bede has presented as rules features that are more properly mere tendencies in the hymn at hand and ended up with a presentation that does not properly correspond with any known form of Latin trochaic verse; archaic, classical, or archaising.

In Latin poetry, the trochaic metres were subject to variation similar to that which had affected the iambic metres. In essence, both iambic and trochaic metres consist of alternating short and long elements, but whereas in an iamb the short element precedes the long one (u-), in a trochee the long element comes first (-u). The classical trochaic metron consists of two trochaic feet, but, in certain positions, the short element can be a syllaba anceps and thereby replaced with a long one. In this respect, the trochaic metron is the reverse of the iambic one: in the trochaic metron, the last element is a syllaba anceps (-u-x), in the iambic metron, the first one (x-u-). Syllable resolution, too, can take place in the long elements as well as the syllabae ancipites, which can be substituted with a double-short (uu). In effect, any trochaic foot can manifest itself as a tribrach (uuu), and the even ones, where the latter syllable is an anceps, as spondees (--), dactyls (-uu),<sup>131</sup> and, at least in theory, proceleusmatics (uuuu).<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Raven 1965, 76.

<sup>132</sup> Raven 1965, 43, 45 and 79: For prosodic reasons, proceleusmatics are much less common in trochaic metres than in iambic ones: in iambo-trochaic poetry, a "resolved anceps readily precedes but very seldom follows resolved long", making trochaic feet (-x) with resolution of both elements considerably less common than iambs (x-) with the same feature.

Quite like the iambic metres, the trochaic metres also have popular, or archaic, variants, where the latter element of each foot can be a syllaba anceps, resulting in a regular sequence of long syllables and syllabae ancipites: - x - x | - x - x ... Syllable resolution, especially in the early comedy writers, can be profuse, although usually less extreme than in iambic metres. This characteristic, compounded by the greater number of syllabae ancipites makes a wide variety of different feet possible, often rendering archaic trochaic lines challenging to read, as demonstrated by this line from Plautus (*rud.* 620):<sup>133</sup>

Facit(e) hic lege potius liceat quam vi victo vivere.  
uu - - u | uu - uu - | - - - - | - u x

The differences in the nomenclature of the classical and archaic varieties are parallel to those of the iambic metres: the names of the classical types are derived from the number of metra in the line ('dimeter', 'tetrameter' etc.), whereas those of the archaic or popular type have names based on the number of feet in each line, although the terminology is in some cases misleading. This applies, above all, to the trochaic tetrameter catalectic, the popular form of which is known as the trochaic septenarius.

The trochaic tetrameter catalectic is the most common of the trochaic metres. It is used in the dialogue of Greek drama, where it usually lends the lines a more agitated air than does the more common iambic trimeter. It is assumed that the trochaic tetrameter catalectic was the original metre of tragic dialogue and that it was only later supplanted by the iambic dimeter. The trochaic tetrameter catalectic consists of three trochaic metra, the last of which is catalectic, i.e. docked of its last syllable: - u - x | - u - x | - u - x | - u - . There is commonly a diaeresis after the second metron. Apart from drama, the trochaic tetrameter catalectic also appears in the Greek lyric poets.<sup>134</sup> In classical Latin poetry, this form of the metre appears, above all, in the classicising tragedies of Seneca. The popular counterpart of the trochaic tetrameter catalectic is known, rather perversely, as the trochaic septenarius. The name of the metre is drawn from the number of complete feet in the line, as the trochaic septenarius can be seen to consist of seven complete trochees and one extra syllable: - x | - x | - x | - x | - x | - x | - u | - . It is worthy of note that even in the archaic septenarius, where most of the short elements can manifest themselves as syllabae ancipites, the penultimate element is always short, a feature that, as we shall see, may have contributed to Bede's erroneous

<sup>133</sup> Raven 1965, 43.

<sup>134</sup> Raven 1961, 34.

definition of the metre. The trochaic septenarius is a common metre in the dialogue of early comedy. However, the use of the trochaic septenarius was not restricted to early drama, but the metre appears to have coexisted with the classical trochaic tetrameter even in later poetry, being particularly common in popular verse of all kinds. Recorded examples of its popular usage include such lines as “urbani servate uxores, moechum calvum adducimus”<sup>135</sup>, which the Roman soldiers chanted to Caesar in his triumphal procession, and children’s verse such as “habeat scabiem quisquis ad me venerit novissimus” and “rex erit qui recte faciet, qui non faciet non erit”.<sup>136</sup> We have adequate evidence to suggest that the trochaic septenarius, unlike most archaic forms of iambo-trochaic verse, never completely fell into disuse but continued its survival on the margins of poetry, having established itself as the Roman doggerel-writer’s metre of choice.<sup>137</sup>

Even the earliest examples of the trochaic septenarius commonly have a diaeresis after the fourth foot, a feature that proved decisive for the later evolution of the metre and its treatment by the grammarians.<sup>138</sup> Often the lines also have a secondary diaeresis after the second foot.<sup>139</sup> The evident fact that trochaic septenarii tend to have word-breaks coinciding with the endings of the feet serves to emphasise the line’s prosodic regularity: in the trochaic septenarius, the overwhelming tendency is for the accent to coincide with the ictus, a feature that made it an obvious choice for marching songs.<sup>140</sup> That the trochaic septenarius had a background of being used on parades also made it adaptable to Christian processional hymns. Medieval texts in this genre often show a structural similarity to the vernacular pagan examples cited above in having systematic accent-ictus coincidence, a diaeresis after the fourth foot and often after the second foot as well.<sup>141</sup> It is curious to note that in Late Latin poetry, including early Christian verse, the classical form of the trochaic tetrameter catalectic (- u - x | - u - x | - u - x | - u -) appears to have coexisted with the archaising trochaic septenarius (- x - x | - x - x | - x - x | - u -). Important examples of the

<sup>135</sup> Suet. Iul. 51. On the other hand, Suetonius also cites some chants where the technique appears to be quite classical: the odd feet are all trochees in e.g. “Gallias Caesar subegit, Nicomedes Caesarem / ecce Caesar nunc triumphat, qui subegit Galliam, / Nicomedes non triumphat, qui subegit Caesarem.” – Suet. Iul. 49.

<sup>136</sup> Norberg 1988, 84.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Raven 1965, 79.

<sup>139</sup> Norberg 1958, 74; e.g. “ecce Caesar || nunc triumphat || qui subegit Galliam, / Nicomedes || non triumphat || qui subegit Caesarem.” – Suet. Iul. 49.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*; “Il faut remarquer que, dans tous ces vers qui étaient destinés à être chantés en marche ou en chœur, les accents coïncident avec les ictus.” Whether the more literary poets took pains to avoid the clash of accent and ictus appears to have been largely a matter of personal preference. That this was so is best demonstrated by the anonymous *Pervigilium veneris* and the classicising Prudentius (e.g. *Cath.* 6), where there appears to be no attempt to regularise the accentual rhythm. On the other hand, in Venantius Fortunatus’s trochaic hymn *Pange lingua gloriosi*, the accentual rhythm is regular in 90 per cent of the lines.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*; cf. Walafrid Strabo in *PAC* II, 405: “Imperator || magne vivas || semper et feliciter.”



former include the anonymous *Pervigilium Veneris* and the sixth hymn of Prudentius's *Cathemerinon*, the latter was employed by Hilary of Poitiers in his hymn *Adae carnis gloriosae*, and the anonymous composer of *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum*, previously also attributed to Hilary and cited by Bede in his *De arte metrica*.

The descriptions of the trochaic tetrameter by the grammarians in general correspond with the structure of the classical form of the metre. The huge popularity of the trochaic tetrameter/septenarius and the relative obscurity of other trochaic metres is reflected in the *Ars* of Diomedes, where the author does not specify that he is discussing the trochaic tetrameter: for him the trochaic tetrameter is simply the trochaic metre:

Trochaicum metrum recipit pedes quinque: dactylum, spondeum, anapaestum tribrachyn trochaicum, a quo nominatur. In triplicem autem feritur dipodian, et uni cuique sine dubio pedes tam praeponuntur hi, trochaicus, dactylus, tribrachys, quam subiungitur qui libet de supra memoratis quinque pedibus. Catalexin facit aut in amphimacro aut in epitrito quarto.<sup>142</sup>

[The trochaic metre takes the following five feet: the dactyl, the spondee, the anapest, the tribrach, and the trochee, from which it receives its name. It is divided into three dipodies (=metra), and at the beginning of each one are, without doubt, placed these feet: the trochee, the dactyl, and the tribrach. This is followed by any one of the aforementioned five feet. It makes a catalexis either in the amphimacer or the fourth epitrite.]

Diomedes gives a general outline of the metre's structure, which, however, is curiously flawed. Diomedes is well aware that the odd feet of a trochaic line are unlike the even ones, but he commits the error of allowing a dactyl in the odd feet of the metre, which is plainly impossible, if we are discussing the metre in its classical form and do not permit a syllaba anceps in an odd foot. It would appear that even to the grammarians, the distinction between the classical trochaic tetrameter and the looser septenarius was not always perfectly clear-cut. This is probably largely due to their excessive reliance on Greek authorities and the absence of a theoretic framework for the archaic forms of the iambo-trochaic metres. Despite its shortcomings, the analysis illustrates that even some of the late grammarians still perceived the trochaic tetrameter as a line that consisted of two-foot metra, or dipodies, rather than individual feet. This take on the trochaic metres was, however, on its way out, as Mallius Theodorus's *De metris*, Bede's prime source on lyric and iambo-trochaic metres demonstrates:

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<sup>142</sup> gramm. I, 504.

Iambico autem metro trochaicum metrum, quamvis et spondium et anapaestum et dactylum recipiat, ut iambicum, eo tamen est contrarium, quod in iambico supra dicti pedes locis tantum imparibus, in trochaico autem non nisi paribus conlocari licet. Trochaeus vero in hoc metro, quod ex eo nomen accepit, locis omnibus, tribrachys locis omnibus praeter septimum ponitur.<sup>143</sup>

[The trochaic metre is converse to the iambic metre, although it, like the iambic, takes the spondee, the anapest and the dactyl, because in the iambic metre, the aforementioned feet may only be placed in the odd feet; in the trochaic metre, on the other hand, only in the even ones. In this metre, the trochee, from which it receives its name, is placed in all the feet, the tribrach in every foot but the seventh one.]

Mallius has abandoned the use of dipodies from his terminology. Although this is never mentioned explicitly, the trochaic metre which he discusses is obviously the trochaic tetrameter catalectic, judging by his mention of the seventh foot where the tribrach is not allowed. Mallius spends some time discussing the ways in which the trochaic tetrameter catalectic can be constructed, contrasting a type of line consisting entirely of trochees with one where all the even feet are spondees, also pondering the advantages and drawbacks of syllable resolution. Nowhere, however, does he give a description of the popular trochaic septenarius.

Bede's description of the trochaic septenarius is, seen from this light, his most radical redefinition of a Latin poetic metre and represents a complete break with previous tradition. Although the wording of his treatise contains, as usual, some verbatim quotations from Mallius, the content is all his own:

Metrum trochaicum tetrametrum, quod a poetis Graecis et Latinis frequentissime ponitur, recipit locis omnibus trocheum, spondeum omnibus praeter tertium. Currit autem alternis versiculis, ita ut prior habeat pedes quattuor, posterior pedes tres et syllabam.<sup>144</sup>

[The trochaic tetrameter... which the Greek and Latin poets very frequently used, takes the trochee in every foot, and the spondee in every foot but the third. It is formed with alternating lines in such a way that the first has four feet and the second three feet and an extra syllable.]<sup>145</sup>

Bede's main deviations from previous tradition are the following:

1) The trochaic tetrameter is described as a couplet, where the first line consists of four feet and the second one of three feet and one syllable. In other words, the central diaeresis which almost invariably comes after the fourth foot has been recast as a line ending.

<sup>143</sup> gramm. VI, 594, 28 – 595, 3.

<sup>144</sup> DAM 23, 2-6.

<sup>145</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 159.

That Bede calls it a ‘tetrameter’ in spite of this alteration is due to Late Latin practice, where the nomenclature of iambo-trochaic metres is based on the number of feet rather than metra. In this context, the word tetrameter must be viewed as analogous to Bede’s use of the word in conjunction with the iambic dimeter: for Bede, the metre has two alternating lines of four feet each, the first being acatalectic and the second catalectic (docked of its last syllable).

2) Bede’s description of the trochaic tetrameter corresponds more closely with the structure of the septenarius than with that of the classical trochaic tetrameter: Bede allows spondees in the odd feet as well as the even ones. The exception, in Bede’s presentation, is the third foot of each line. This means that, quite in keeping with standard metrical practice, the penultimate syllable is always short. That Bede thinks that this applies to the third foot of the first half of the line as well is an obvious error that requires closer observation.

3) Bede precludes all types of syllable resolution from his analysis of the metre. For him, the trochaic metre only consists of trochees and spondees and is perfectly isosyllabic, having an invariable number of fifteen syllables.

The form of the trochaic septenarius, as Bede sees it, can be summed up as follows: - x - x | - u - x || - x - x | - u -. As we can see, the structure matches neither that of the classical trochaic tetrameter nor that of the septenarius. How did Bede arrive at such a construction? As usual, we probably have to attribute the occurrence to the poem Bede uses as an example in his treatise:

Huius exemplum totus est hymnus ille pulcherrimus:

Hymnum dicat turba fratrum,  
hymnum cantus personet,  
Christo regi concinentes  
laudes demus debitas.<sup>146</sup>

[An example of this is the whole of that very beautiful hymn:

Let the congregation sing a hymn,  
let the music swell the hymn,  
singing in chorus to Christ the King,  
let us offer his merited praises.]<sup>147</sup>

The hymn *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum* has been preserved in several early insular hymnals, including the Irish Antiphonary of Bangor. In the earliest manuscripts, including those of the Antiphonary, it has generally been attributed to St. Hilary of Poitiers, whom we know to have

<sup>146</sup> DAM 24, 6-11.

<sup>147</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 159.

been one of the pioneering figures of early Latin hymnody.<sup>148</sup> The hymn is exceptional in the Antiphonary of Bangor because it is quite evidently of continental origin; furthermore, it is the sole representative of quantitative verse in the Antiphonary. It has been suggested by some critics that the hymn is, in fact, rhythmic, and several authors have noted the obvious metrical flaws that appear in the hymn. These, however, generally belong to a type that is not uncommon in Late Latin poetry: the prosodically faulty words, in most cases, have a stressed syllable where the vowel has been lengthened contrary to classical practice, or where a final syllable has been lengthened.<sup>149</sup> In Late Latin verse, licences of this kind are less unusual than one might believe, and Bede, as we may recall, dedicated a whole chapter of his treatise to the defence of such prosodic liberties, in particular in Christian hexameter poets. Similar features also occur in the hymn *Adae carnis gloriosae* that we with certainty know to be by Hilary.<sup>150</sup> The prosodic similarities between *Hymnum dicat* and *Adae carnis*, as Dag Norberg suggests in his *Les vers latins iambiques et trochaïques*, are probably due to the history of the hymn's dissemination: it was probably brought to Ireland in a continental hymnal, possibly from Poitiers, where its anonymous composer may have been influenced by the verse of St Hilary.

A closer examination of the hymn *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum* sheds some light on Bede's ostensibly eccentric description of the metre. Firstly, the poem is completely isosyllabic, showing hardly any signs of syllable resolution despite its sometimes eccentric prosody; only line 30 ("duodecim viros probavit, per quos vita discitur") can be interpreted as having a double-short in its first element (uu u - u | - u - - | - - - u | - u -), but the initial duodecim can equally well be read with fusion of the u and o, making the first element a long syllable. In the light of what appears to be a complete absence of syllable resolution in the poem, it must have seemed sensible to Bede to leave this prosodic option undiscussed: we must recall that elsewhere, too, Bede limits his discussion of metrical rules to those features that appear in the poem at hand.

As for Bede's seemingly absurd rule that the third foot of the trochaic septenarius is always a trochee, this feature does, to some extent, seem to correspond with the structure of *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum* as well, although by no means to the degree one might suppose from Bede's presentation of the metre. A quick analysis of the poem's

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<sup>148</sup> Walpole 1922, 1-3.

<sup>149</sup> Kabell 1960, 64; Norberg 1988, 87.

<sup>150</sup> Norberg 1988, 87: "Il est étonnant qu'Hilaire ait commis plusieurs erreurs prosodiques: *nīhil* 6,3, 9,2, *īn* 4,2 et en outre *mēus* 8,2 et *mīhi* 8,3 dans une citation de la Bible. De même l'auteur de *Hymnum dicat* : *vīa* (citation de la Bible) et prolongement de la finale de *discutit* 18,1, de *scandere* 20,1, de *nuntiat* 28,2."

seventy-four lines (or, if we follow Bede's restructuring of the metre, seventy-four couplets) shows that in the overwhelming majority of the lines the third foot is indeed a trochee. Only thirteen lines in the whole text would appear to have a spondaic third foot, although the exact metrical structure of some of the lines is open to interpretation, owing to the poet's at times idiosyncratic prosody. Bede acknowledges this feature and even gives two examples of third-foot spondees from the poem but implies that they are exceptional. Following his recasting of the trochaic septenarius as a couplet, he persistently refers to them as occurring "in the third foot of the first line":

In quo aliquando et tertio loco prioris versiculi spondeum reperies, ut:

Factor caeli, terrae factor;

et:

Verbis purgat leprae morbos.<sup>151</sup>

[In it you will find here and there a spondee even in the third foot of the first line, as in:

Maker of heaven, Maker of earth;

and:

He cures the disease of leprosy with a word.]<sup>152</sup>

It remains unclear why Bede decided to formulate this tendency of the poem into a fixed metrical rule. Admittedly, Bede had ventured similarly bold redefinitions of metrical structures elsewhere in his treatise. It could simply be that, for obscure reasons of his own, Bede had taken an aesthetic dislike to third-foot spondees in trochaic verse; if this is the case, we can view it as analogous to his vehement opposition to fifth-foot spondees in hexameter poetry.

There may also be yet another factor that contributed to Bede's presentation of this previously nonexistent metrical rule, and this is his redefinition of the trochaic septenarius as a couplet. Even in the archaic form of the trochaic septenarius, the penultimate element is always short; in other words, the seventh foot of each line is invariably a trochee regardless of any variation in the earlier portion of the line. In Bede's analysis of the trochaic septenarius as a couplet, the seventh foot of the line has become the third foot of the second line. Then, by analogy, Bede has extended the rule that had previously only applied to the end of the line to the first half of the line as well. This might very well have brought about Bede's idiosyncratic view that the third foot of each line is generally a trochee, although the third

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<sup>151</sup> DAM 23, 12-16.

<sup>152</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 159.

foot of the first line of each couplet (i.e. the true third foot) may also be a spondee. This observation was no doubt corroborated by Bede's own study of *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum*.

Bede's new definition of the trochaic septenarius seems to have exerted a surprisingly strong influence on poets of the later generations, particularly the Carolingians. According to Dag Norberg, several poets followed Bede's eccentric metrical rulings to the letter. No lesser figures than Hrabanus Maurus, Walahfrid Strabo and Hincmar of Reims composed poems in a metre that structurally resembles the archaic trochaic septenarius with the exception that the third foot of the line is always a trochee.<sup>153</sup>

It is also probable that Bede's reformed interpretation of the trochaic septenarius played a role in the evolution of some forms of medieval rhythmic verse, and in this respect it may have had even more durable results than in its erroneous ban on spondaic third feet: Bede's perception of what had previously been a line as a couplet of alternating line-types may ultimately have contributed to the increasing popularity of new strophes where the halves of the original line were combined in new and creative ways. One of the best-known examples of this is the *versus tripartitus caudatus* of the *Stabat mater* sequence, which is based on the rhythmic, or non-quantitative, variant of the trochaic septenarius, where the first half of the line is reduplicated (e.g. "*Stabat mater dolorosa / iuxta crucem lacrimosa / dum pendebat filius*"). Similarly, there is a wealth of medieval poetry where only one half of the trochaic couplet is employed, again in its non-quantitative form, as in the *Dies irae* sequence where the first half of the verse (8p) is reiterated ("*Dies irae, dies illa / solvet saeculum in favilla / teste David cum Sibylla*"). On the other hand, the latter half of the trochaic septenarius, basically identical with the latter half of the iambic trimeter (7pp), was, at times, used on its own, as in the following lines by Godescalc d'Orbais:

Inest quibus caritas,  
 ipsis placet veritas.<sup>154</sup>  
 [Those, in whom there is charity,  
 love the truth.]

Verse of this type became ever more popular during the Carolingian era. One must also bear in mind that Bede's definition of the trochaic septenarius as an unambiguously isosyllabic verse form made it more adaptable to rhythmic poetry.

<sup>153</sup> Norberg 1958, 77; Meyer 1905 II, 348.

<sup>154</sup> PAC VI, 106. See Norberg 1958, 117-118.

Bede's description of the trochaic septenarius represents one of the more radical reinterpretations of metrical forms in *De arte metrica*. The line has become a couplet; syllable resolution is banished from its metrical structure, and to crown it all, new restrictions have been imposed on its construction. Although the last of these features had apparently come about through the overzealous author's error, it too, had repercussions on later poetry. The two first ones, on the other hand, paved the way for new poetic forms by codifying some of the stylistic and prosodic changes to which the metre had been subjected in late antiquity.

### 3. 8. Conclusion

Bede's presentation of lyric metres is more modest in scope than his discussion of the dactylic metres, which is largely due to the prosodic features of the respective metres as well as their differing roles in the monastic curriculum. The hexameter is prosodically more complex than the shorter lyric lengths which Bede had chosen to present; furthermore, the influence of the pre-Christian classics was still prominent in dactylic verse, as Vergil and Lucan belonged to the curriculum authors and could not be entirely bypassed. The lyric metres which Bede had chosen to discuss, on the other hand, are metres which had been employed by Christian authors and many of them played a central role in hymnody. As pre-Christian lyric verse was largely unknown and definitely irrelevant to Bede and his contemporaries, there was no need to discuss the respective features of the pagan and Christian usage, when it came to lyric metres. Correspondingly, Bede presents these metres in the form in which they occur in Christian poetry, relying more on his own observations than those of the grammarians who largely drew on the example of Horace and other pre-Christian authors.

This means that the lyric metres, as Bede presents them, are considerably simpler than their pre-Christian forms. In the phalaecian metre and the sapphic strophe, the variable syllable lengths of the opening of the line had disappeared. Therefore, Bede could confidently present the former as beginning with "a spondee and a dactyl", and the latter, with "a trochee and a spondee". In Christian iambo-trochaic verse, on the other hand, the resolution of the long element had grown increasingly rare, and Bede only treats it as a side issue in his presentations of the iambic metres but not at all in his discussion of the trochaic septenarius. At the same time, Bede tries to impose additional restrictions on some of the metres: in his chapter on the iambic dimeter, he specifically commends a type of verse where

all the odd feet are spondees, whereas in his chapter on the trochaic septenarius he presents the erroneous rule that the third foot of the line must never be a spondee. This misunderstanding is probably due to the limitations of Bede's sources, which only discuss "classical" trochaic verse, ignoring the "popular" septenarius; in his presentation of the metre, Bede was left to his own devices.

Bede's simplification of his metrical analyses extends to his choice of terminology. He follows the growing trend of the grammarians to view all metres as either dactylic or iambo-trochaic. Bede breaks all metres into metrical "feet" of two or three syllables, which basically enables him to present all metres as sequences of dactyls, spondees, trochees and iambs. The classical aeolic metres (the phalaecean metre and the sapphic verse) have, in Bede's terminology, become "dactylic pentameters", and, following the example of Mallius Theodorus, he presents the iambic trimeter as a "hexameter" and the iambic dimeter as a "tetrameter", treating the foot, rather than the classical two-foot metron, as their basic unit. The trochaic septenarius, on the other hand, remains a "tetrameter" but only because Bede treats it as a couplet of two lines with four or three-and-a half feet each. Remarkably, Bede gives hardly any guidance on style in his chapters on lyric metres. Obviously, he did not regard them as likely to cause any real difficulty to his reader; furthermore, when it comes to lyric verse, the pre-Christian classics did not enter the discussion, whereas Bede clearly viewed them as problematic in his discussion of the hexameter. We must also bear in mind Bede's background as a teacher of church music and Cuthbert's as his pupil: the hymns were, for both of them, the most familiar kind of verse, requiring far less instruction than the hexameter, the mastery of which formed the pinnacle of poetic scholarship.

Bede's straightforward presentation of the lyric metres is, in many respects, even more thoroughly Christianised than his discussion of the dactylic hexameter and the elegiac couplet, and it is the first consistent effort to present the metres of Christian hymnody in a practical form. Bede's efforts to standardise the metres he discusses played a role in the verse of subsequent generations of poets: as Norberg has noted, Bede's misguided rulings on the structure of the trochaic septenarius were followed by several Carolingian poets. Also, his portrayal of most of these metres as isosyllabic, with variation of syllable lengths and syllable resolution cut to the minimum, reflects the transition from quantitative metres to their rhythmic counterparts, something to which Bede devoted unprecedented attention in the twenty-fourth chapter of his treatise.



## 4. Rhythmic verse

### 4.1. Introduction

By almost universal consensus, *De rithmo*, the twenty-fourth chapter of Bede's *De arte metrica*, is considered to be its most radical and historically significant portion. In his brief chapter on rhythm, Bede, for the first time in grammatical literature, introduces rhythmic poetry to his readers as a literary genre in its own right. The chapter is also noteworthy as it constitutes the first arguably correct and unambiguous analysis of rhythmic poetry: in his treatise on rhythm, Bede states explicitly that he is dealing with a form of poetry based not on the length but the number of syllables. If Bede's work as a whole is taken to codify many of the central features of early medieval metric poetry, in its chapter on rhythm we can see the origins of those forms of medieval Latin poetry which are usually considered to be the most characteristic of the Middle Ages, and on which most West European poetry in the modern languages is also based. The importance of Bede's chapter on rhythm was fully grasped by the work's medieval readers, which is corroborated by its distribution in vernacular languages as late as the sixteenth century, when one would have expected it to be superseded by more advanced presentations.<sup>1</sup>

### 4.2. The evolution of prosodic terminology in late antiquity

#### 4.2.1. From mechanical to vocal ictus

In order fully to understand the context of Bede's presentation of rhythmic poetry, we must first take a look at how the central terminology of prosody and metrics evolved during late

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<sup>1</sup> D' Arco Silvio Avalle cites as an example a sixteenth-century French translation by Claude Fauchet: "Il y a apparence que les Rhythmes tiennent du Metre: pour ce que c'est une harmonieuse composition de paroles, non par mesure et certain ordre tel que celui qui se garde en la composition des Metres au vers, ains par nombres de syllables, selon qu'il plaist auz areilles. Et tells sont les Cantiques des Poetes vulgaires. De vray le Rhythme peut ester faict par soy (parfois?) sans Metre: mais le Metre ne peut ester sans le Rhythme ou mesure. Ce que l'on peut dire plus clairement, Metre est un chant contraint par certaine raison; Rhythme est un chant libre et non subject à aucune loy. Vray est que bien souvent vous trouverez de la raison ou mesure certaine au Rhythme, non pour ce que le compositeur s'y soit assubjecti, mais pour ce que le son (ou ton, selon Victorinus) et harmonie l'a par adventure conduit et mené iusques à caste raison. Laquelle il est de nécessité que les Poetes vulgaires suivent lourdement, et les sçavants sciemment. Comme l'Hymne qui s'ensuit, lequel est tresbien en façon de vers iambiques: [Rex aeterne domine] et autres en assez bon nombre de saint Ambroise. Encore s'en chante il en façon de Trochaïques, comme cestuy-ci du iour du iugement, compose par alphabet: [Apparebit repentina]." – Avalle 1992, 400-401.

antiquity. As the classical syllable lengths of spoken Latin began to disappear, the prosodic nature of Latin poetry became increasingly blurred as well. This led to the gradual and possibly inadvertent redefinition of such terms as *arsis*, *thesis*, *ictus*, and the very concept of rhythm itself.

The term *ictus* has been a subject of some controversy among scholars, mainly because, in its classical sense, it is an abstract and, according to some critics, inaudible feature.<sup>2</sup> Quintilian describes the term unequivocally as the beating of time with the foot and finger of the performer of a poem:

Tempora etiam animo metiuntur et pedum et digitorum ictu.<sup>3</sup>  
[People measure time even in their minds with a stroke of the feet and the fingers.]

Similarly, in his Odes Horace instructs his choir in the following manner:

Lesbium servate pedem meique pollicis ictum.<sup>4</sup>  
[Observe the Lesbian metre and the stroke of my thumb.]

In other words, classical “*ictus*” appears to be a phenomenon unrelated to dynamic stress, and no classical author mentions the practice of stressing the metrical *ictus* by raising the pitch or volume of the voice.<sup>5</sup> All this was to change with the decline of the quantitative prosody of Latin. When the first syllables of such words as *cano* and *eget*, for example, were pronounced long, as became customary in late antiquity, the metrical structure of dactylic or lyrical metres was no longer perceptible. As the average reader could no longer hear the metrical beat behind the metre, the role of word accent became increasingly important. Subsequently, such metres as the dactylic hexameter could only be taught by the practice known as “*scansion*” where the first syllables of all feet are stressed and *ictus* and accent became inseparable. The term *scandere* versus itself seems to have its origins in the schools of the late empire, and several authors from the third century onwards describe this practice. One of the earliest and most explicit descriptions of this practice is by the late third-century Sacerdos:

<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson 1963, 92-94. Wilkinson himself prefers to speak of “metrical pulse”.

<sup>3</sup> Quint. 9, 4, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Hor. *carm.* 4, 6, 36. Wilkinson (1963, 92) curiously considers it “unlikely that there was a conductor in antiquity who beat time for a choir. Horace’s thumb was picking at the strings of an imaginary lyre.”

<sup>5</sup> Norberg 1988, 13; Avallé 1992, 394-395.

Hoc tamen scire debemus, quod versus percutientes, id est scandentes, interdum accentus alios pronuntiamus quam per singula verba ponentes: ‘toro’ et ‘pater’ acutum accentum in to et pa, scandendo vero ‘inde toro pater Aeneas’ in ro et ter.<sup>6</sup> [However, we must know this: when we are scanning verse, at times we pronounce the accents differently than in individual words: ‘toro’ and ‘pater’ take the acute accent on to and pa, but when scanning “inde toro pater Aeneas”, on ro and ter.]

It is clear that Sacerdos’s presentation is either faulty or corrupt, as the accent can in no way fall on the syllable ter in pater (ter is the final syllable of a dactylic foot and does not coincide with the ictus). Nevertheless, the quotation gives us a general idea of the practice of scanning verse. Scansion involved the segmentation of a line into units of one foot each, which in turn were provided with an individual accent. The fourth-century Maximus Victorinus, one of Bede’s main sources, gives a description of this practice in his *De ratione metrorum*, where Vergil’s “omnia vincit amor et nos cedamus amori” is segmented to omnia (dactyl), vincita (dactyl), moret (spondee), and so forth.<sup>7</sup> This became a standard practice in later grammatical literature and was used by Bede himself.<sup>8</sup> This practice appears to have been applied primarily to the dactylic metres (the hexameter and the elegiac couplet) for the obvious reason that in Roman poetry they have an extremely high rate of clash between accent and ictus, and, indeed, some of the Roman innovations to the structure of the dactylic metres are specifically intended to enhance this very feature.<sup>9</sup> Iambic and trochaic metres, with their higher ratio of accent-ictus coincidence, could easily be recited without resorting to this practice, as we shall soon observe.

As ictus became identified with accent, the terms *arsis* and *thesis*, originally terms for the “upbeat” and “downbeat” of a metrical foot, became identified with stressed and unstressed syllables.<sup>10</sup> We can find numerous examples of this change in the grammatical literature of late antiquity. In the fourth century, Marius Victorinus writes:

Arsis igitur et thesis, quas Graeci dicunt, id est sublatio et positio, significat pedis motum. Est enim arsis sublatio pedis sine sono, thesis positio pedis cum sono. Item arsis elatio temporis, soni vocis, thesis depositio et quaedam contractio syllabarum.<sup>11</sup> [Therefore, the *arsis* and the *thesis*, as the Greeks call them, i. e. raising and lowering, signify the movement of feet. Therefore *arsis* is the raising of the foot without sound,

<sup>6</sup> gramm. VI, 448, 20-22.

<sup>7</sup> gramm. VI, 219, 13-14.

<sup>8</sup> DAM 10, 17.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. Wilkinson 1963, 120-21; Raven 1965, 98-99.

<sup>10</sup> Avalle 1992, 394.

<sup>11</sup> gramm. VI, 40, 13-16; cf. Wilkinson 1963, 90: “I shall avoid the terms ‘thesis’ and ‘arsis’, because they actually exchanged meanings in antiquity, and are only confusing.”

thesis the lowering of the foot with sound. Similarly, arsis is the raising of the syllable and the voice, the thesis a kind of lowering and contraction of the syllables.]

Marius Victorinus's rather tortuous definition of arsis and thesis is a curious melange of old and new, and serious confusion between the concepts of rhythm, stress and quantity seems to prevail. All this can be attributed to his reliance on earlier authors on prosody, and the prosodic changes that Latin was undergoing at his time. All the same, we can see that such terms as arsis, thesis and ictus, which were initially employed to describe phenomena of a quantitative nature, had been given a radically new definition to suit the didactic purposes of the Late Latin grammarians, although the clarity of the new terminology sometimes tends to be undermined through contamination by older definitions.

#### 4.2.2. The redefinition of rhythm

In antiquity, the word *rhythmus* had a double usage: it could have the more general meaning of musical "pulse"; on the other hand, it was used as a more specific metrical term to describe the technique and structure of lyric poetry.<sup>12</sup> This definition of rhythm can still be encountered in some grammarians of late antiquity. Mallius Theodorus, as one of the last, warns his readers:

*Siqua autem apud poetas lyricos aut tragicos quispiam reppererit, in quibus certa pedum conlocatione neglecta sola temporum ratio consideranda sit, meminerit ea, sicut apud doctissimos quosque scriptum invenimus, non metra, sed rhythmos appellari oportere.*<sup>13</sup>

[Should someone find something in the lyric or tragic poets, where the regular placement of feet is neglected and only the order of the tempora is to be observed, let him remember that, as we can find even in the writings of the most learned authors, these are to be called rhythms, not metres.]

In this quotation, the terms *metrum* and *rhythmus* are contrasted in a way that may appear misleading if we think in the modern terms of metric (i.e. quantitative) and rhythmic (qualitative or non-quantitative) poetry. The author, however, makes it abundantly clear that *rhythmus* is by his definition a decidedly quantitative phenomenon: *sola temporum ratio consideranda sit*. In other words, the word *rhythmus* basically describes such quantitative

<sup>12</sup> Meyer 1905, 140; Avalle 1992, 396.

<sup>13</sup> gramm. VI, 585-586.

phenomena that cannot be analysed as consisting of regular metrical feet. This would mainly apply to Greek lyric metres.

The contrast of *metrum* and *rhythmus* is a common enough subject in the works of Late Latin grammarians. Marius Victorinus states:

Inter pedem autem et rhythmum hoc interest, quod pes sine rhythmum esse non potest, rhythmus autem sine pede decurrit.<sup>14</sup>

[Between a foot and a rhythm there is this difference: a foot cannot exist without rhythm, but rhythm can flow even without feet.]

as does Augustine in his *De musica*:

Quocirca omne metrum rhythmus, non omnis rhythmus etiam metrum est.<sup>15</sup>

[Therefore all metre is rhythm, but not all rhythm is metre.]

These late definitions of rhythm are, however, increasingly more ambiguous as to the precise prosodic nature of the phenomenon. This, too, would appear to reflect the disappearance of syllable quantity in spoken Latin. Like *ictus*, *arsis* and *thesis*, the concept of rhythm was gradually given a new definition: it came to be used to denote the fluctuation of stressed and unstressed syllables within lines that did not conform to the requirements of strict metrical quantity. In his *De musica*, Augustine implicitly recognises the existence of non-quantitative prosody by pleading ignorance of syllable quantity:

Iudicium aurium ad temporum momenta moderanda me posse habere non nego, quae vero syllaba producenda vel corripienda sit, quod in auctoritate situm est, omnino nescio.<sup>16</sup>

[I do not deny that my ears have the power to judge the measurement of time, but I do not in the least know which syllable is to be lengthened or shortened, which is determined by the authors.]

We find the same contrast of *metrica ratio* with *iudicium aurium* in the *Ars Palaemonis de metrica institutione* by Maximus Victorinus, one of Bede's sources:

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<sup>14</sup> gramm. VI, 44.

<sup>15</sup> Aug. mus. 3, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Aug. mus. 3, 5. Cicero uses the term *iudicium aurium* and its equivalents in conjunction with quantitative prosody, cf. Cic. or. 173, "*iudicium ipsa natura in auribus nostris conlocavit*" [Nature herself has placed the power of judgment in our ears] and 177, "*aures enim vel animus aurium nuntio naturalem in se continet vocum omnium mensionem.*" ("For the ears, or the mind through the medium of the ears, contain in themselves the natural ability to measure all sounds.")

Metro quid videtur esse consimile? Rhythmus. Rhythmus quid est? Verborum modulata compositio non metrica ratione, sed numerosa scansione ad iudicium aurium examinata, ut puta veluti sunt cantica poetarum vulgarium.<sup>17</sup>  
 [What is there that seems to resemble metre? Rhythm. What is rhythm? The harmonious composition of words, not by the means of a metrical system, but by a rhythmic scansion, judged in accordance with the way they sound to the ear, as are, say, the songs of common poets.]

This definition of rhythm is already remarkably close to Bede's own. We shall presently observe the subtle alterations that Bede made to this description in adapting it to his own purposes.

### 4.3. The origins of rhythmic poetry

There have been three theories about the origin of medieval rhythmic poetry:<sup>18</sup>

- 1) The romantic view that rhythmic poetry was of either of Celtic, Germanic or Romance origin, propounded among others by K. Vossler in *Die Dichtungsformen der Romanen* (Stuttgart 1951, 30) and P. Verrier in *Le vers français* (Paris 1931, vol. 1, 19).
- 2) The view that rhythmic poetry is a phenomenon of primarily Hebraic origin, as expressed by W. Meyer in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur mittellateinischen Rythmik* (Berlin 1905-1936).
- 3) The modern view that medieval rhythmic poetry is a descendant of classical metres adapted to a different prosodic system.<sup>19</sup>

Although the prevailing opinion is that rhythmic poetry has evolved from classical metric poetry, there is some evidence of Semitic influence in certain rhythmic poems of late antiquity: the verse pamphlets *Psalmus contra partem Donati* by Augustine and *Psalmus contra Vandalos Arrianos* by his follower Fulgentius. These are non-quantitative, isosyllabic and roughly trochaic poems with a primitive rhyme and are presumably based on Semitic models.<sup>20</sup> Norberg, however, does not consider them to have had any influence on subsequent Latin poetry.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> gramm. VI, 206.

<sup>18</sup> Avalle 1992, 391.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Norberg 1958, *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> Norberg 1988, 131.

<sup>21</sup> Norberg 1988, 132: "Pour l' évolution du vers latin rythmique ces psaumes ne doivent avoir eu aucune influence."

The current opinion is that most of the rhythmic poetry of the middle ages is based on non-quantitative forms of classical iambic and trochaic metres. Neither the dactylic nor the lyric metres were ever extensively used as models for rhythmic verse. There are a number of reasons that precluded the extensive use of, say, the hexameter in rhythmic form. First of all, the hexameter was considered too dignified for such use, and although Commodian had composed a number of non-quantitative hexameters in the fourth century, he had found no followers. As there was an existing corpus of strictly quantitative Christian hexameter poetry based on classical models (e.g. the works of Juvenecus, Arator, Sedulius, Prudentius and others), Christian poets were not inclined to break away from this tradition.

The structure of the hexameter is also ill suited to a rhythmic reinterpretation. Compared with the iambo-trochaic metres, the hexameter has a very low rate of ictus-accent coincidence and the resolution of long elements plays an important role in the metre. The iambic and trochaic metres, on the other hand, can be composed in a practically isosyllabic form with no resolution of the long elements and, the trochaic tetrameter in particular, with a very high rate of accent-ictus coincidence.

As Norberg states in his *Les vers iambiques et trochaïques au Moyen Age et leurs répliques rythmiques*, the rhythmic variants of iambo-trochaic verse did not evolve simply by substituting word-accent for ictus. Rather, the priests and monks who had not received a classical training tried to imitate the rhythms they heard in verse when it was read with the regular prose accents.<sup>22</sup> The process of transforming metric to rhythmic, or quantitative to qualitative, was facilitated by the increasing prosodic regularisation of iambic and trochaic verse in late antiquity. If we take as an example the iambic dimeter which was one of the favourite metres of early hymnody, we can observe four possible accent patterns when the lines are read with prose accents. Norberg demonstrated these four patterns with the example of the following lines:

1. aetérne rérum cónditor
2. spléndor patérnae glóriæ
3. sólvit pólum calígine
4. si réspicis lápsus cáduunt

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<sup>22</sup> Norberg 1988, 2 and 13-16. The author claims that this proves that, even in late antiquity, the reading technique known as scansion was not as prevalent as is generally supposed. On the other hand, it could simply mean that scansion was primarily applied to dactylic verse and that iambo-trochaic verse was commonly read with the usual prose accents.

The fourth pattern where the penultimate syllable is accented was well on its way out already in antiquity, as it does not harmonise well with the others.<sup>23</sup> The elimination of the fourth pattern led to an easily identifiable verse with a regular number of syllables and a regular rising, or proparoxytone, cadence, with some accentual variation in the first half of the verse. The iambic trimeter and the trochaic tetrameter catalectic underwent a similar evolution, and as a result we have a system of verse that is identifiable by the number of syllables per line and a regular cadence, the types of cadence being rising, or proparoxytone, and falling, or paroxytone.<sup>24</sup> The accent patterns of such lines were subsequently copied by (initially uneducated) writers without adherence to syllable length.

This type of non-quantitative poetry won particularly great popularity in the British Isles and was presumably the only form of Latin verse created by the earliest Irish scholars, who are generally presumed to have had no knowledge of syllable quantity,<sup>25</sup> and even Aldhelm, the first major insular author of quantitative poetry, contributed to this genre with his *Carmen rhythmicum*.<sup>26</sup> Aldhelm's *Carmen* has been composed in a verse form commonly termed the continuous octosyllable, a highly alliterative verse form with a regular proparoxytone ending and primitive end-rhyme. This verse form, also cultivated by the eighth-century Boniface, is presumably based on seventh-century Hiberno-Latin models but is probably ultimately derived from the rhythmic forms of Classical metres, mainly a non-strophic form of the iambic dimeter.<sup>27</sup>

Some insular poets went so far as even to jettison the regularly accented verse ending. This resulted in a form of verse that was solely based on the number of syllables per line, a solution that may be practical, or understandable, in texts that are intended for singing. The hymns attributed to the sixth-century Columba, although based on hymns in the iambic dimeter by Ambrose and Sedulius, only resemble their models in the number of syllables, as do most of the hymns in the late seventh-century Antiphonary of Bangor.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Norberg 1988, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Roger 1905, 267-268; Meyer III 1936, 303-346; Norberg 1988, 42-43; Lapidge 1979, 210. The earliest Irish hexameters are presumably based on Anglo-Latin or Carolingian models; cf. Lapidge 1999, 273.

<sup>26</sup> Orchard 1994, 19-72.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*; Orchard 1999, 339.

<sup>28</sup> Norberg 1988, 43-45.



#### 4.4. Bede's definition of rhythm

Bede's main sources in his short chapter on rhythmic poetry are *De Scauri et Palladii libris excerpta per interrogationem et responsionem* by Audax and *Ars Palaemonis de metrica institutione* by Marius Victorinus, whose descriptions of rhythm are virtually identical.<sup>29</sup> At first glance, this would seem to apply to Bede as well, whose description of rhythm is taken almost verbatim from the *Ars Palaemonis*. Marius Victorinus writes:

Metro quid videtur esse consimile? Rhythmus. Rhythmus quid est? Verborum modulata compositio non metrica ratione, sed numerosa scansione ad iudicium aurium examinata, ut puta veluti sunt cantica poetarum vulgarium. Rhythmus ergo in metro non est? Potest esse. Quid ergo distat a metro? Quod rhythmus per se sine metro esse potest, metrum sine rhythmo non esse potest. Quod liquidius ita definitur, metrum est ratio cum modulatione, rhythmus sine ratione metrica modulatio. Plerumque tamen casu quodam invenies rationem metricam in rhythmo, non artificii observatione servata, sed sono et ipsa modulatione ducente.<sup>30</sup>

[What is there that seems to resemble metre? Rhythm. What is rhythm? The harmonious composition of words, not by the means of a metrical system, but by a rhythmic scansion, judged in accordance with the way they sound to the ear, as are, say, the songs of common poets. Is there then no rhythm in metre? There can be. How, then, does it differ from metre? The difference is that rhythm can exist on its own without metre but metre cannot exist without rhythm. This can be defined more clearly as follows: metrical verse is a (quantitative) system with a regular beat, whereas rhythm is a regular beat without a metrical system. However, you can often, by chance, find measured quantities even in rhythm, not because the regular artistic arrangement has been preserved, but from the influence of the sound and the beat itself.]<sup>31</sup>

Bede paraphrases:

Videtur autem rithmus metris esse consimilis, quae est verborum modulata compositio, non metrica ratione, sed numero syllabarum ad iudicium aurium examinata, ut sunt carmina vulgarium poetarum. Et quidem rithmus per se sine metro esse potest, metrum vero sine rithmo esse non potest. Quod liquidius ita definitur: metrum est ratio cum modulatione, rithmus modulatio sine ratione. Plerumque tamen casu quodam invenies etiam rationem in rithmo, non artificii moderatione servata,

<sup>29</sup> Palmer 1959, 574: "It is virtually impossible to know whether Bede used Audax exclusively or turned at times to the combination to be found in the *Ars Victorini grammatici - Ars Palaemonis*. Victorinus-Palaemon and Audax are so similar in wording that it is obvious both rest on the same source... Since the sections which radically distinguish the two are not used by Bede, the problem will probably never be solved." Kendall in CC 123A, p.138, attributes the quotation in Bede's definition of rhythm to both sources.

<sup>30</sup> *gramm.* VI, 206-207.

<sup>31</sup> My translation paraphrases Kendall's translation of Bede's *De arte metrica*, 1991, 161.

sed sono et ipsa modulatione ducente, quem vulgares poetae necesse est rustice, docti faciant docte.<sup>32</sup>

[Rhythmic verse appears similar to metrical verse. Rhythmic verse is the harmonious composition of words, not by the means of a metrical system, but by a rhythmic scansion, judged in accordance with the way they sound to the ear, as are, say, the verses of common poets. Rhythm can certainly exist by itself without metre, but metre cannot exist without rhythm. This can be defined more clearly as follows: metrical verse is a quantitative system with a rhythmical beat, while rhythmic verse has a rhythmical beat without a quantitative system. However, you can often by chance find measured quantities even in rhythm, not because the regular artistic arrangement has been preserved, but from the influence of the sound and the beat itself. The common poets inevitably do this awkwardly, and the learned poets skilfully.]<sup>33</sup>

Superficially, the most noticeable difference is that Bede has dispensed with his predecessor's stilted dialogue form. Most of Victorinus's turns of phrase are still there: *modulata compositio*, *iudicium aurium* and the reference to "common poets". Where Bede departs from Marius Victorinus's description is in supplanting his ambiguous *numerosa scansio*<sup>34</sup> ("rhythmic scansion" or "regular beat") with *numerus syllabarum*. In other words, Bede unequivocally states the isosyllabic nature of rhythmic verse: it is a form of poetry based on the number of syllables rather than merely poetry composed without regard to syllable quantity. Apparently, Bede has taken advantage of the double meaning of *numerus* as either "rhythmical beat" or "number" and, by substituting the latter for the former transformed the older, vaguer, definition of rhythmical poetry into a newer and less ambiguous one.<sup>35</sup> The observation of the number of syllables being a deciding factor in rhythmic verse already occurs in the *Ars grammatica* of Diomedes:

*Rhythmus est versus imago modulata servans numerum syllabarum.*<sup>36</sup>  
[Rhythm is a rhythmic image of a verse, which preserves its number of syllables.]

<sup>32</sup> DAM 24, 10-19.

<sup>33</sup> My translation paraphrases Kendall's translation of Bede's *De arte metrica*, 1991, 161.

<sup>34</sup> The term *numerosus* occurs in classical Latin as a prosodic term but, like *rhythmus*, without any contrast to quantitative metrical ratio; cf. Cic. *Brut.* 8, 43 on prose clausulae: "Ipsa enim natura circumscriptione quadam verborum comprehendit concluditque sententiam, quae, cum aptis constricta verbis est, cadit etiam plerumque numero." ("Nature herself limits the number of words that can be employed in a sentence; when these words are aptly chosen and well organised, the sentence usually falls rhythmically.")

<sup>35</sup> Julian of Toledo employs an expression that is ostensibly very similar: "*verborum modulata compositio non metrica ratione sed numero ad iudicium aurium examinata.*" That Julian simply has *numero*, rather than *numero syllabarum*, would imply that he is using the term *numerus* in the same sense as Victorinus's *numerosa scansio*: to denote a regular beat. Amusingly enough, Maestre Yenes's 1973 edition of Julian's *Ars* has *numero syllabarum* with the explanation "addidi ex Beda". - Maestre Yenes 1973, 222-223.

<sup>36</sup> *gramm.* I, 474.

Bede's skillfully eclectic use of his sources is demonstrated by the way in which he has managed to transplant this observation into Marius's description of rhythm, which, in content, is considerably different. Bede's insight may also owe something to the fact that, as an Anglo-Saxon, he was exceptionally observant in some matters of prosody. As Cuthbert testifies in his *De obitu Bedae*,<sup>37</sup> Bede appears to have been well versed in Anglo-Saxon poetry, which, as we all know, has a practice of versification entirely different from Latin rhythmic poetry. This, in turn, may have made him more aware that the principle of having a fixed number of syllables per line constitutes a rule or restriction in much the same way as the principle of having a fixed order of long and short syllables. All this is something that may not have occurred to his predecessors who had a more exclusively Latin background and a narrower frame of reference.

This, however, is not the only way in which Bede departs from his most immediate source. What is striking is Bede's vindication of this poetic form in his phrase "quem vulgares poetae necesse est rustice, docti faciant docte". Bede, in other words, implies that rhythmic poetry is a perfectly legitimate literary form capable of a high degree of sophistication; that it is not simply a vehicle for "vulgar" or popular expression but can be composed by educated people in an educated manner. We may comfortably say that Bede is revolutionary not only in giving the first correct analysis of the structure of rhythmic verse but also in recognising its legitimacy as a literary genre. This is particularly remarkable, as some of his Christian predecessors, like Julian of Toledo, were openly hostile to all forms of non-quantitative verse.<sup>38</sup>

Bede's other sources include *De metris* by the fourth-century Mallius Theodorus, whose definition of rhythm was quoted in chapter 4.2.2. Although Mallius is one of Bede's favourite authors and Bede is heavily indebted to him for his chapters on the lyric and iambo-trochaic metres, the two authors take a completely different stance on the question of rhythm. We may recall that Mallius still adheres closely to the classical definition of

<sup>37</sup> Published in the edition of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* by Colgrave and Mynors (Oxford 1969), 579-587.

<sup>38</sup> In a letter to his friend bishop Modoenus, Julian of Toledo warns him against the use of this type of verse: "Tua aetas gravis...aut fortes prosa exequatur sententias aut metricis dictis pandat iure camenas et rithmis uti, quod plebegis est solitum, ex toto refugiat." ("Being a man of venerable age, you should express your bold thoughts in prose or compose poems in metrical form, as is right and proper, but totally shun the use of rhythms, which is typical of commoners.") – Bischoff 1966, 288-298. Norberg believes this corroborates the existence of a living tradition of rhythmic versification: "Mais Julien n'aurait pas eu raison d'avertir son collègue contre la versification rythmique si celle-ci n'avait pas existé." – Norberg 1988, 100. In his *Ars grammatica*, Julian gives an example of rhythmic poetry by quoting the unattributed line "lupus dum ambularet viam, incontravit asinum" (Maestre Yenes 1973, 222-223). It is open to discussion whether the line is a prosodically faulty trochaic septenarius (lûpus, vîam, âsinum) or its rhythmic equivalent. In other respects, Julian's description of rhythm is virtually identical with that of Audax and Maximus Victorinus, and, whatever the case may be, Bede's attitude towards rhythmic poetry is the diametric opposite of Julian's.

rhythm as a quantitative element of prosody. It seems surprising that, in his chapter on rhythm, Bede should have casually ignored this source and redefined rhythm in a way that is no way reconcilable with Mallius' description. It is all the more surprising if we bear in mind that Mallius is one of Bede's main sources and that Bede's definitions of the iambo-trochaic and lyric metres rely heavily on his. The answer to this apparent riddle can be found in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of *De arte metrica*.

Rhythm, in its classical meaning, was frequently used to describe the structure of those lyric metres that could not be analysed as consisting of regular metra or metrical feet (note the words "certa pedum conlocatione neglecta sola temporum ratio consideranda sit"). The description of such lyric metres in Bede's *De arte metrica* has been pruned down to the bare minimum: he only discusses the phalaecian hendecasyllable and the minor sapphic stanza. Furthermore, he analyses both the phalaecian and sapphic metres as consisting of metrical feet: the phalaecian metre consists of a spondee, a dactyl and three trochees whereas the sapphic stanza consists of a trochee, a spondee, a dactyl and two trochees, to which is added "a half of a hexameter line". For Bede, these metres are simply another form of dactylic poetry, analogous to the hexameter and the elegiac couplet, and they can be analysed accordingly by being segmented into feet. By his definition, all quantitative poetry consists of metrical feet. Hence, the classical definition of rhythm as quoted by Mallius Theodorus ("certa pedum conlocatione neglecta") had, for Bede, become redundant and devoid of meaning. Accordingly, the term *rhythmus* could be used to describe a phenomenon of greater importance for Bede and his contemporaries.

Who, then, are the *vulgares poetae*, to whom both Victorinus and Bede allude? It would be tempting to suppose that Victorinus was thinking of the verse pamphlets of Augustine and Fulgentius, but as we have stated previously, these works are an isolated phenomenon that inspired no followers. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Bede knew either of these poems; Augustine's anti-Donatist writings in general appear to have been largely unknown in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>39</sup> In his 1991 commentary to *De arte metrica*, C. B. Kendall ignores the fact that the term *vulgares poetae* already appears in Victorinus and has been merely borrowed by Bede as he states: "Tempting as it is to assume that Bede is here referring to poets writing in their native Anglo-Saxon tongue, it is more likely that he has in mind composers of crudely isosyllabic, non-quantitative Latin poems like many of

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<sup>39</sup> Laistner 1957, 143.

those in the Antiphony of Bangor and the Irish Liber Hymnorum.”<sup>40</sup> Of course, Victorinus’s term may have reminded Bede of these very works.

We can interpret the term *vulgaris* in this context as something that refers to the audience of the poems rather than their composers. If this is the case, we can take *vulgaris* to mean popular, populist or accessible to the people, as in the *vulgaris sermo*, or common language, for the use of which Jerome felt inclined to apologise. Of course, in a country inhabited by speakers of a Germanic language, rhythmic poetry written in Latin was no longer a form of “people’s poetry” any more than other forms of Latin literature were, and, in this respect, we can regard Bede’s use of Victorinus’ term *vulgaris* as rather outdated. Latin rhythmic poetry was “common” in Bede’s age only in the sense that it did not, as a rule, belong to the official curriculum, or “set books” of the monastic schools and that it did not require the long and tedious apprenticeship necessary to, say, an aspiring hexameter poet. Bede illustrates his description of rhythmic verse with two poems:

Quomodo ad instar iambici metri pulcherrime factus est hymnus ille praeclarus:

Rex aeterne domine,  
rerum creator omnium,  
qui eras ante saecula  
semper cum Patre Filius;

et alii Ambrosiani non pauci. Item ad formam metri trochaici canunt hymnum de die iudicii per alphabetum:

Apparebit repentina  
Dies magna Domini,  
Fur obscura velut nocte  
Improvisos occupans.<sup>41</sup>

[In this way was very beautifully composed in the likeness of iambic metre that celebrated hymn:

Eternal Lord King,  
creator of all things,  
you who were before the worlds  
eternally the son with the father;

and quite a few other hymns by Ambrose. Similarly, they sing a hymn on Judgement day – an abecedary – in the form or trochaic metre:

The great day of the Lord  
will suddenly appear,  
like a thief in the dark of night  
seizing those not expecting it.]<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Kendall 1991, 161.

<sup>41</sup> DAM 24, 19-31.

<sup>42</sup> Trans. Kendall 1991, 163.

The anonymous poems quoted by Bede had been well known in Anglo-Saxon England, and they have been published in Walpole's *Early Latin Hymns*.<sup>43</sup> Bede has observed, quite correctly, that iambic or trochaic verse need not be quantitative in order to be recognisable. This idea may well have been inspired by Diomedes's statement that rhythmic poetry is versus imago modulata, a phenomenon that echoes metrical poetry without being quite the same thing.<sup>44</sup> And indeed, the poems quoted by Bede have been written in the rhythmic equivalents of two quantitative metres presented elsewhere in his *De arte metrica*: the iambic dimeter and the trochaic septenarius.

Bede's first poem, *Rex aeterne Domine*, has been documented as early as the sixth century. It is a hymn of indubitably continental origin and appears for the first time in the *Regula virginum* of Caesarius and Aurelianus of Arles, where it is prescribed to be sung at the first nocturns of Sunday ("die dominica ad primos nocturnos") in lieu of the more common *Mediae noctis tempus est*, which was used on the other nights of the week.<sup>45</sup> The hymn originally consisted of sixteen stanzas of four lines each, quite like a quantitative Ambrosian hymn. Originally the hymn, in its entirety, was a portrayal of the whole redeeming work of Christ, but "from the Xth century onwards the first seven stanzas...were taken by themselves to form an Easter hymn, for which purpose they are not especially suited."<sup>46</sup> The hymn was brought to England as part of the "Old Hymnal" which contained hymns for different occasions of the ecclesiastical year.<sup>47</sup> Some of its hymns have been composed in the quantitative iambic dimeter, but some are in their rhythmical counterpart. The hymn *Rex aeterne domine* is the most notable representative of the latter group.

The prosodic structure of *Rex aeterne Domine* emulates the iambic dimeter, which had become the favourite metre of Christian hymnody, mainly through the influence of Ambrose and Sedulius. The metre, in its quantitative form, is described in the twenty-first chapter of *De arte metrica*. We may recall that the description of the metre is simple and sparse, but it is evident that we are here dealing with a strictly quantitative form of poetry. Quoting Mallius Theodorus, Bede also acknowledged the possibility of resolution of the long element into a double-short, which is regarded as one of the central features of metric poetry.<sup>48</sup> Bede illustrated this phenomenon with a quotation from Ambrose (hymn. 6, 19:

<sup>43</sup> Walpole 1922, 211-217; 381-384. The first hymn (*Rex aeterne Domine*) also appears in W. Bulst 1956, VI 2, 92; the second one (*Apparebit repentina*) in MGH, *Poet. Lat.* IV, pp. 507-510.

<sup>44</sup> *gramm.* I, 474.

<sup>45</sup> Walpole 1922, 212.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Gneuss 1968, 24.

<sup>48</sup> DAM 21, 19-24:

“geminae gigans substantiae”). This line has quite obviously not been written *numero syllabarum*, as the very concept of syllable resolution means that the number of syllables in each line is variable.

As Bede has defined a fixed number of syllables as a central feature of rhythmic verse, the distinction between the metrical form of the iambic dimeter (with possible syllable resolution) and its rhythmic equivalent is obvious. At the same time he is obviously aware of the origin of the rhythmic poem he quotes: it is composed *ad instar iambici metri*, in the likeness of iambic metre. We must also note his words “*ut sunt Ambrosiani non pauci*”. Although it is quite possible that Bede is here falsely attributing the poem to Ambrose, as we know that he has done with other poems (most notably the anonymous hymns *Squalent arva soli* and *Obduxere polum* in the “terentianean” metre at DAM 19), it is plain that Bede has understood the similarity of the metre to that of the Ambrosian iambic dimeter correctly, while at the same time remaining aware of their prosodic differences. In other words, he appears to have analysed the metrical “pedigree” of the verse correctly.

If we undertake a closer prosodic analysis of the hymn as quoted by Bede, we shall be able to observe the differences between the rhythmic and metric forms of the iambic dimeter. Superficially, the most striking feature of the hymn is that the first line, “*Rex aeterne Domine*”, only has seven syllables. Some critics have analysed the line as corrupt and have tried to emend it by changing it to “*O Rex aeterne Domine*”.<sup>49</sup> Norberg, however, points out that this may not be necessary. His analyses of early rhythmical variants of the iambic dimeter show several similarly “faulty” lines that appear to be one syllable short. These lines are invariably the odd lines of the hymns. Norberg considers this a sign that the rhythmic form of the iambic dimeter may have consisted of units of two lines and that the first syllable of the first line of the “couplet” could be omitted at will. This makes perfect sense if we remember that these hymns have been sung: the “weak” first syllable constituted a sort of “upbeat” to the first accentuated note of the melody.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, especially Irish poets were in the habit of adding such an upbeat to the rhythmic variant of the trochaic tetrameter catalectic, thereby creating a “hypercatalectic” line.<sup>51</sup> These liberties were common in early

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<sup>49</sup> e.g. Avalle 1992, 418: “Il primo è ipometro (manca di una sillaba) e gli editori in genere suppliscono una O prima di Rex.”

<sup>50</sup> Norberg 1988, 39: “Le rythme accentuel étant régulier dans environ 50% de cas...on pouvait omettre la première syllabe du vers aussi bien que la première note de la mélodie comme une sorte de mesure d’attaque.” It is noteworthy that some sources give the third line of the poem “*qui eras ante saecula*” in the form “*qui es ante saecula*”, where a similar omission seems to have taken place. Cf. Bulst 1956, VI 92.

<sup>51</sup> Norberg 1988, 98.

medieval hymnody and form a rare exception to the rule of having a fixed number of syllables in each line of rhythmic verse.

Let us ignore the first foot of the first line for a while and analyse the remaining fifteen feet of the example. Bede maintains that in the metrical form of the iambic dimeter, all feet can take an iamb and only the odd feet can take a spondee. A quick analysis of the four lines quoted from *Rex aeterne Domine* shows us that five of the remaining fifteen feet are flawed if seen in the context of metrical poetry: in the first line, “*Rex aeterne domine*”, the second and third foot are unmetrical, the second being a spondee and the third a pyrrhic. In the third line, “*qui eras ante saecula*”, the first foot is a trochee and the second one a spondee,<sup>52</sup> and in the fourth line, “*semper cum patre filius*”, the second foot is a spondee. These metrical flaws are, of course, compounded by the omission of the first syllable in the first line, a practice alien to the iambic dimeter in its quantitative form. At the same time, the use of hiatus is conspicuous: the cited portion of the poem has “*qui eras*”, but the rest of the hymn at times virtually abounds in them (the second strophe, for example, has “*mundi in primordio*”, “*plasmasti hominem*” and “*tuae imaginis*” in consecutive lines).

The other example of rhythmic poetry quoted by Bede, *Apparebit repentina*, is an abecedary hymn on Judgement day. It consists of strophes of four lines which begin with the consecutive letters of the alphabet. Each strophe is followed by the refrain “*in tremendo die iudicii*”, which does not appear in Walpole’s edition. Bede’s citation of the hymn’s first strophe in his *De arte metrica* is the first documented appearance of the hymn, which, according to Walpole, is “certainly as old as the VIIth cent., possibly much older.”<sup>53</sup> The author of the hymn is unknown: it has, at times, been ascribed to Hilary, but it may well be of insular origin. Lapidge has tentatively put forward that it may have been composed by Bede himself, as the poem shares many features with Bede’s own (metrical) poem on Judgement day,<sup>54</sup> as well as the vernacular “Bede’s death song” which he is alleged to have sung in his native tongue on his deathbed and which is quoted in Cuthbert’s *Epistula de obitu Bedae*.<sup>55</sup> We must also consider the way in which Bede presents the poem: although he characterises *Rex aeterne domine* as *pulcherrime factus*, he refrains from any such praise in his presentation of *Apparebit repentina*: if the poem were, indeed, his own, this would be understandable modesty.

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<sup>52</sup> If we, however, choose the reading “*qui es ante saecula*”, where the first syllable has been left out in the same way as in the first line of the poem, all the remaining feet are iambs.

<sup>53</sup> Walpole 1922, 380.

<sup>54</sup> Ed. Fraipoint 1955, 439-44.

<sup>55</sup> Lapidge 1996, 328; Bede’s death song in Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 580.



Structurally, *Apparebit repentina* has been composed in what is basically the rhythmic equivalent of the trochaic tetrameter or septenarius, where the central diaeresis of the classical original has evolved into a break between two lines of alternating lengths.<sup>56</sup> The quantitative version of the metre is described in Bede's twenty-fourth chapter (*De metro trochaico tetrametro*), and we may recall that, even in its quantitative form, the metre is rendered in a form that is considerably less classical than those of the other quantitative metres. The most crucial departure from classical tradition is the splitting of the original line into a couplet, but we also noted the apparently confused, or faulty, definition of the metre's prosodic structure (Bede precludes spondees in the third foot of the line, although he shortly thereafter recants and admits them as an afterthought, probably after studying the hymn he uses as his illustration). As we noted, Bede's description of the trochaic septenarius also differs from his portrayal of the iambic metres in one crucial respect: the possibility of syllable resolution in the long element is not mentioned at all in his definition. Bede portrays the septenarius, even in its metrical form, as an essentially isosyllabic verse form that is remarkably close to its rhythmic variant. This, however, is not to say that Bede views them as identical.

If we perform a metrical analysis of *Apparebit repentina* based on Bede's interpretation of the trochaic septenarius as a distich of two trochaic lines (one acatalectic and one catalectic: -x -x -x -x / -x -x -u x) where all but the third foot of the second line can be either trochees or spondees (for the present, we may forego Bede's additional rule that the third foot of each line must be a trochee), we can conclude that from the viewpoint of quantitative metre, the quoted four lines contain four metrically faulty feet. In the first line, "*apparebit repentina*", the third foot is an iamb. In the second line, "*dies magna Domini*", the first foot is an iamb and the third foot a pyrrhic. In the third line, "*fur obscura velut nocte*", the third foot is an iamb, although, admittedly, *velut* does occasionally appear with a long *e* even in Late Latin metrical poetry.

Such metrical lapses are common enough even in the quantitative poetry of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, but out of respect for his anonymous authors, Bede has preferred to present the poems as examples of good rhythmic poetry rather than bad metric poetry. He does not claim that the first poem, *Rex aeternae Domine*, has been composed in an iambic metre but rather *ad instar iambici metri*, in the likeness of iambic metre. Similarly, his other example, *Apparebit repentina*, has been written *ad formam trochaici metri*, in the form

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<sup>56</sup> Coronati 1981-1982, 53-62.

of trochaic metre. Bede has quite correctly observed that the alternation of long and short in metrical verse can find its equivalent in the alternation of stressed and unstressed in rhythmic verse, making it possible to transform quantitative structures into rhythmic ones.

Bede's distinction between quantitative verse and its non-quantitative counterpart appears, at least at times, to have gone unheeded. Under Urban VIII, the hymn *Rex aeternae domine* underwent fundamental revision in the hands of humanist correctors who changed a fundamentally non-quantitative hymn into a quasi-classical one in quantitative iambic dimeters. The resulting hymn, known by its opening line *Rex sempiternae caelorum*, became the Roman Breviary hymn for Matins of Sundays and weekdays during Paschal Time.<sup>57</sup> This revision has come under heavy attack from later-day hymnologists who have viewed the revision as needless and misguided, but, undoubtedly, the close affinity of the hymn with its earlier quantitative counterparts must have appeared particularly inviting to prosodic purists of the renaissance and the modern era. Walpole himself, in his *Early Latin Hymns*, quotes Bede's description of the hymn in *De arte metrica* but appears completely oblivious of what Bede has meant: "The first thing that strikes us in this ancient hymn is the number of lines defective in metre. In view of them Bede's words – *quomodo ad instar iambici metri pulcherrime factus est hymnus ille praeclarus rex Aeternae Domine* – seem somewhat strange."<sup>58</sup> Walpole also undertakes several desperate attempts to emend individual lines to make them conform to the quantitative model of the iambic dimeter, having failed to grasp Bede's meaning. Although Bede elsewhere in his treatise sometimes comes across as pigheadedly dogmatic (we may recall his inflexible views on spondaic hexameter lines), on the question of rhythmic poetry he appears to have been both more insightful and more radical than many of his later-day colleagues.

#### 4.5. Conclusion

Although superficially Bede seems indebted to previous authors in his description of rhythmic poetry, he is in many respects revolutionary. First of all, he has, for the first time, correctly analysed rhythmic poetry as a verse form based on a fixed number of syllables. Secondly, he states that rhythmic poetry can be written *docte* and *pulcherrime*, in an educated and aesthetically pleasing way; that it, in fact, is a legitimate form of poetic expression rather

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<sup>57</sup> Henry 1912.

<sup>58</sup> Walpole 1922, 210-211.

than merely a vulgar version of “real poetry”. Thirdly, he has observed that quantitative metrical structures can find their equivalents in non-quantitative verse. This is a realisation that can be considered essential to the transmission of the Graeco-Roman poetic heritage to the European poets of the middle ages and beyond.

How is Bede’s apparently unprecedented interest in rhythmic poetry to be explained? The most obvious reason, of course, is the extreme vitality of this literary idiom and its widespread use among the scholars of Anglo-Saxon England. Rhythmic poetry was also an exclusively Christian form of poetry, whereas hexameters and elegiac couplets had been composed by such pagan personalities as Vergil and Lucan, and for all the efforts of the Christian poets and Bede himself, the pre-Christian classics still largely constituted the standard for dactylic verse.

The authority of the Early Fathers would also have played a role in Bede’s opinion on rhythmic poetry. As we noted previously, Augustine, in his *De musica*, had implicitly sanctioned the idea of prosody without quantity in opposing *iudicium aurium* with *metrica ratio* and the *auctoritas* of poets and grammarians. We must also consider the ambiguous evidence of the phrase “*et alii Ambrosiani non pauci*”, which Bede uses in conjunction with the poem *Rex aeternae Domine*. If Bede did not use the term *Ambrosiani* in a generic sense but genuinely believed the hymn to have been composed by Ambrose, this would definitely have increased his respect for rhythmic poetry.

Bede may also have been inspired by Jerome’s preface to the book of Job. The preface itself is one of the most famous examples of the Early Fathers’ efforts to present the Bible as the fountainhead of all learning, metrics and rhetoric included.<sup>59</sup> In his preface, Jerome claims that the book of Job has mainly been composed in hexameters but that it also contains other prosodic structures, including a mysterious entity called *rithmus ipse*.<sup>60</sup>

*Hexametri versus sunt, dactilo spondeoque currentes et propter linguae idioma crebro recipientes et alios pedes non earundem syllabarum, sed eorundem temporum. Interdum quoque rithmus ipse dulcis et tinnulus fertur numeris lege solutis, quod metrici magis quam simplex lector intellegunt.*

[There are hexameter verses running in dactyls and spondees, and, owing to the idiom of the language, often other feet as well, not with the same syllables, but the same quantities. Sometimes, also, the rhythm itself is carried, sweetly and melodiously, by numbers untied to metre, which is more understandable to scholars of prosody than to the ordinary reader.]

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<sup>59</sup> Jones 1975, ix.

<sup>60</sup> Hier. praef. Vulg. Iob.

Jerome is presumably using the word *rithmus* in its older, classical sense, so as to denote quantities that are not arranged into a scheme of metrical feet. Jerome's expression *numerus lege solutis* is, in fact, a direct loan from Horace's ode in praise of Pindar (*carm.* 4, 2, 9-12):

Laurea donandus Apollinari,  
 seu per audacis nova dithyrambos  
 verba devolvit numerisque fertur  
 lege solutis.  
 [He merits the award of Apollo's laurels,  
 whether he rolls new words through his bold dithyrambs,  
 or is carried by rhythms unbound by rules.]<sup>61</sup>

Jerome's classical allusion was probably lost on Bede, deprived as he was of first-hand access to Horace. However, it is not impossible to think that Bede may have construed Jerome's ambiguous passage as a description of something similar to the rhythmic poetry that he knew, lending it a previously unthought-of legitimacy and a lineage that went far beyond the bounds of classical antiquity.

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<sup>61</sup> What Jerome precisely meant by his description of the prosodic structure of the Book of Job is unclear and beyond the scope of this presentation, but the subject has been discussed by Baroway 1950, esp. at 119-120. – Confusingly, grammarians frequently used the expression *lege solutus* as a way of describing prose, cf. *Isid. orig.* 1, 38, 1: “*Prosa est producta oratio et a lege metri soluta.*” (“Prose is a long utterance free from metrical rules.”) It may also be noted that Horace's use of the same phrase was eagerly snatched by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century champions of *vers libre* such as Goethe and Hölderlin as a vindication of their art form.

## 5. Summary

Bede's *De arte metrica* continues the trend of Christianisation of grammatical literature that began in late antiquity. On the surface, the Christian features of the treatise closely resemble earlier attempts in this direction: we can witness Bede's eagerness to supplement classical quotations with Christian ones and to introduce ecclesiastical vocabulary into word-lists; something which is already present, although to a relatively modest degree, in the works of such figures as Priscian, Isidore and Julian of Toledo. There are, however, some fundamental differences between *De arte metrica* and its predecessors, and this can be largely attributed to Bede's hands-on approach to questions of prosody. Bede generally relies more on his own extensive reading of classical and Christian verse than he does on the often abstruse definitions and typologies suggested by previous generations of grammarians; as a consequence, although the work is intended to be a prescriptive guide to verse, it largely reflects the poetic practices of Bede's favourite authors, above all Sedulius, who appears almost as a replacement for Vergil throughout Bede's treatise. This is also the partial result of Bede's integration of syllable prosody into his presentation of dactylic verse. Rather than presenting the rules of prosody in their age-old and well-circulated guise with Christian quotations thrown in, Bede largely derived his rules from his poetic examples. This, in turn, has resulted in an unprecedented overhaul of prosodic rules, which, in Bede's treatise, largely reads as a codification of a "Christian" metrical standard. The departures from classical practice are minute but consistent, reflecting several post-classical features of the Christian epic poets, mainly in their use of common syllables such as word-initial *s* groups and *h*'s creating position, but condemning others, such as the use of hiatus and spondaic verses, often casting them as "pagan" practices. It is evident throughout Bede's treatise that his main model for good Christian verse is Sedulius, as he ignores the evidence of such "pagan" practices in Venantius Fortunatus and several other Christian poets.

Bede's crude dichotomy of pagan and Christian verse techniques is surely subjective, and at times the logic behind it is hard to follow. It is difficult to say whether Bede condemns some metrical practices because he truly regards them as pagan, or whether he simply justifies his subjective aesthetic objections to them by labelling them as pagan. Evidently, there is a deeply ingrained streak of aesthetic purism behind Bede's generally practical approach to verse: in his chapter on the structure of the hexameter, for example, he argues that a hexameter line must have twenty-four *morae*, exactly like there are twenty-four half-ounces in a Roman pound. It is probably on account of such purism that Bede rejects the

spondaic verse more vehemently than any of his predecessors, not merely condemning it but excluding it from his very definition of the hexameter line. The hexameter is, for Bede, a part of creation, a view borne out by the statements of the Church Fathers who found, or claimed they had found, hexameters in the Bible. Consequently, Bede goes to great lengths to give plausible alternative analyses to lines in Christian epic which fail to fit his idealised mould of the perfect hexameter line. On the other hand, Bede generally attributes similar deviations from what he sees as the norm in pre-Christian verse to the simple fact of their pagan nature.

When it comes to lyric verse, Bede's treatise exhibits no such dichotomy, because its presentation in *De arte metrica* has been Christianised to the point of total exclusion of pagan material. Bede mainly discusses such metres as had been used by the early Christian hymnodists (in addition to the phalaecean and sapphic metres employed by Cyprianus and Paulinus). The presentation of these metres is streamlined and, in places, profoundly simplified, mainly when it comes to Bede's analysis of their structure: Bede dissects all metres into "feet" of two to three syllables. He follows Mallius Theodorus in his rejection of the classical two-foot metron in iambo-trochaic verse, and, like several of his predecessors, presents the phalaecean and sapphic metres (together with the post-classical aeolic length known as "terentianean") as forms of dactylic verse. On the other hand, his discussion of the iambic dimeter used in the hymns of Ambrose is, if anything, more extensive than anything that can be found in Bede's secondary sources, which yet again indicates that, apart from hexameter and elegiac verse, the most important form of poetry for him was the Christian hymn. Similarly, his presentation of the trochaic septenarius is unlike anything we encounter in the works of previous grammarians: Bede presents the line as a couplet of two lines and imposes further metrical restrictions on its structure. Bede's idiosyncrasies must at least partly be attributed to the fact that the two lyric lengths he discusses in the greatest detail are, for him, above all metres of Christian hymnody, and both of them had generally been either ignored or, in the case of the septenarius, misrepresented in the grammars of late antiquity.

For Bede, the central role of these two metres also necessitated a closer and more analytical discussion of the non-quantitative hymns which had evolved in late antiquity. As studies have shown, these hymns were based on the accent-patterns of the iambo-trochaic metres but without regard for syllable quantity, something which Bede certainly had perceived. As the difference between, say, the metrical form of the iambic dimeter and its rhythmic variant would have been largely imperceptible when sung, it was necessary for Bede to emphasise the differences between these two poetic forms: that the reader should not

look for syllable quantity where none existed; that both metrical and rhythmic verse were legitimate forms of poetic expression; and that they were mutually exclusive. Bede's implicit views on the infallibility of the Christian auctoritates dictated that a well-established form of ecclesiastical poetry could not be "faulty": therefore, he had to emphasise that also verse without a quantitative structure could be tastefully composed. This is all the more significant if we bear in mind how meticulous Bede was in his approach to questions of prosody in quantitative verse, where he showed little tolerance for vacillating syllable lengths, often showing himself to be stricter than poetic practice necessitated. In Bede's view, the rules of prosody should be observed to the letter or not at all, and, as a consequence, it was necessary for him to recognise rhythmic verse as a literary form in its own right, a delineation that was historically significant for many generations of medieval poets.

The few but characteristically Late Latin instructions on good poetic style which Bede gives in his presentation of hexameter technique also foreshadow the practices of medieval verse, metrical and rhythmic alike. Although Bede, at least in his *De arte metrica*, does not discuss rhyme, a prominent feature of medieval poetry, he was certainly aware of its existence, and, in recommending a line-type with the kind of word order we term "golden", may indirectly have contributed to its proliferation, as internal rhyme is a common feature of golden lines, and, indeed, of all hyperbata where the noun head and its attribute belong to the same declension. Both golden lines and internal rhyme are, yet again, typical of the poetic style of Sedulius, and appear frequently together in later rhyming hexameters of the Leonine type. In other words, of the most immediately recognisable features of medieval verse, Bede effectively defines non-quantitative prosody and at the very least hints at rhyme, although not in the same context. Although the bulk of *De arte metrica* discusses the dactylic hexameter and rarely wanders far from classical practice, it anticipates, on a more modest scale, several poetic practices that only reached their full fruition in the high Middle Ages. The importance of *De arte metrica* is manifest on several levels: firstly, as a didactic work, it constitutes one of the first treatises on metre that was aimed specifically at a monastic audience. At the same time, in incorporating the presentation of syllable prosody into its presentation of quantitative metres, it presents a major advance over the various treatises on metre composed by the Late Latin grammarians; this, of course was necessitated by the fact that it was not aimed at an audience of native Latin-speakers. Consequently, it formed the prime model for the *artes metricae* composed in the following centuries. As for its content, *De arte metrica* effectively codifies several metrical practices of late antiquity, and seeks to create a standard for good hexameter verse that is ultimately modelled on the example of one

man: Caelius Sedulius. This partisanship, taken together with Bede's purist approach to verse, resulted in sometimes insightful, sometimes impractical definitions which nevertheless had an impact on poets of later generations. Apart from hexameter and elegiac verse, Bede's main preoccupation was with Christian hymnody, where, by his time, rhythmic verse already coexisted with the older quantitative metres. In recognising these two as separate forms, he laid the ground for the various verse forms that appeared in the Middle Ages, and, ultimately, even the vernacular verse of our own times may owe more to Bede's observations than is generally realised.



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