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Further Advanced Latin: Vergil

A metre-based reading

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Reading Vergil

“Vergil’s management of the hexameter is as essential a component of his style as his choice of words; indeed, Vergil’s mastery of verse form is commonly thought to be one of his greatest achievements as a poet.” (R. Tarrant 2012: 37)

Bascis of Latin verse

- Rhythm in Latin metre is different from normal word stress
- It is based instead on the difference between heavy and light syllables (long and short)
- Each word (form of word) has its own set quantities in this regard: we have already seen this influence pronounciation:
 - *habére* versus *dícere*: a heavy (long) antepenultimt syllable pulls the word accent towards the end of the word
- This is what determines how any word can be fitted into a metrical pattern

Hexameter

- The hexameter line consists of six verse feet (hence the name)
- The first five feet consist of either
 - One heavy + two light syllables, i.e. a dactyl: usually printed as – [˘][˘]
 - One heavy + one heavy, i.e. a spondee: usually printed as – –
- The sixth foot consists of either two heavy syllables, or one heavy and one light syllable:
 - – – or – [˘]

The hexameter line & pauses

- The hexameter rhythm is broken up by word breaks (*caesurae*) that 'split' verse feet to help avoid coincidence between word stress and metrical emphasis
- The most clearly felt typical *caesurae* in Vergil are:
 - 3rd foot after the first long
 - 2nd foot after the first long + 4th foot after the first long
- Caesurae help structure the line, supporting the syntax and bringing out content emphasis
- ...and at Vergil's time, the fifth foot is always dactylic!

The opening of *Aen.* 4

<u>at regina graui iamdudum saucia cura</u>	SDSS
<u>uulnus alit uenis et caeco carpitur igni.</u>	DSSS
multa uiri uirtus animo multusque recursat	DSDS
gentis honos; haerent infixi pectore uultus	DDSS
uerbaque nec placidam membris dat cura quietem.	DDSS
iactatus fatis! quae bella exhausta canebat!	SSSS

Propertius Book 1 & Vergil

sed sic intentis haerebam fixus ocellis,

Argus ut ignotis cornibus Inachidos. Prop. 1.3.19-20

The lover's gaze on his *puella*

no adeo leuiter nostris puer haesit ocellis,

ut meus oblito puluis amore uacet. Prop. 1.19.5-6

Cupid's influence on the lover causing memory after death

reginam petit. haec oculis, haec pectore toto

haeret et interdum gremio fouet inscia Dido

insidat quantus miserae deus. Aen. 1.716-719