Stress—Weight Mapping in the Latin Elegaic Pentameter

This paper adds the elegiac pentameter to the discussion in Latin metrics of independent stress—weight mapping and contends that the word stress incidence of the Latin pentameter is generatable by a minimal constraint violation (cf. Golston & Riad 2000). A century ago, after Meyer (1884), Sturtevant (1924) observed that the Latin elegiac pentameter ends at an overwhelming frequency with an iambic word, which in nearly all cases results in the definitional "stress clash." The tradition was once that an *ictus*, which recent generative theories call a "strong metrical position," must coincide with natural word stresses in the phonological sequence of the poetic line (i.e., be *homodyned*; cf. Knight 1939) or else present a "clash." In observation of the close attention the ancient Roman poets paid in aligning word stresses and strong metrical positions in the final two feet of the epic (and elegiac, cf. Sturtevant 1924) hexameter, Ryan (2017) has formalized a generative—metrical constraint set which defines this final *colon* of the hexameter as indexing both syllable quantity and word stress (a salient feature only in the last two feet). This constraint set "generates" the famous "dum-di-di-dum-da" rhythm and accounts for the occasional exception to the final *colon* rhythm (i.e. certain hypermeters). The pentameter has not yet been considered by generative frameworks.

Certain metrical features of the Latin elegiac pentameter, namely the "mandatory" dactyls in the second *metron,* leave a similar impression as the hexameter that some portion of the line is sensitive to stress and other portions not. Take the schematic below.

— ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — × || — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — ×

The pentameter conists of two *metra,* both catalectic (×) by one metrical position. When considered alongside the extrametricality constraint in Latin prosody—which forbids the final syllable of a polysyllabic word from receiving word stress (Hayes 1995, cf. Allen 1978)—, it is impossible in the catalectic feet of the elegiac pentameter for strong metrical positions (—) to receive word stress, as *metron*-ending polysyllables must be stressed penultimately. However, in a

small sample collected by the author, the first *metron* (whose noncatalectic feet exhibit alternation in weak metrical positions, ∪ ∪) shows stress clash in the first verse foot at a rate of 67%, and the second *metron* (with "mandatory" dactyls) shows clash in the fourth verse foot at a rate of only 18%. The data indicate a looser alignment between stress and weight in the first *metron* than in the second, despite more rigid constraints on syllable quantity in the second *metron*. This is suggestively similar to the "harmony" obtained in the hexameter's final *colon*. Though sophisticated utilities do not yet exist to quantify larger corpora of pentameters, the figures recommend a rejection of the null hypothesis that stress is not indexed to the second *metron*.

Under the alternative, that word stress is mapped to the second *metron* independently of syllable weight, the constraints "FtBin" and "Weak⇒σ_{μ}" generate the invariant dactyls there just as they do in the hexameter. The constraint "Strong⇔Stress," however, which dominates in the hexameter's final *colon*, is consistently violated by the overwhelming tendency for word stress to fall on one of the light syllables of those pentameter dactyls: the same clash observed by Sturtevant in those iambic, *metron*-final words. Following Golston & Riad (2000, 2005), who show that quantitative meters are definable by "distinctive violation of constraints," this paper concludes that the pentameter's stress index is generatable by a minimal violation of "Strong⇔Stress." The goal of such a generative—metrical program is an explanatory grammar of Latin quantitative meter; the implication of independent stress—weight mapping under minimal constraint violation is to explain why the incidence of word stress in elegiac pentameter surfaces as we observe it.

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