

Some Basic Rules for Scansion of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

I. *Quantity of Syllables* - i.e. whether the syllable is long (-) or short (˘)

A. Naturally LONG if it contains:

1. a long vowel:     - - ˘ ˘

(line 754)   lanugine     where the "a" and "u" are naturally long

2. a diphthong, i.e. a natural blend of two vowels

                  - -             ˘ - ˘ ˘

(line 750)   Fauno         Symaethide, where "au" and "ae" are diphthongs

B. LONG by position if it contains:

1. a vowel followed by TWO OR MORE CONSONANTS

a. in the same word:     - - ˘

(line 751)         patrisque, where the "pat" is long because of the "tr" following "a" and the "ris" is long because of the "sq" following "i"

b. in successive words:   - - - ˘ ˘ -

(line 754)         signarat teneras, where the "at" is only long because it is followed by two "t's"

2. a DOUBLE CONSONANT ("x" or "z"):   ˘ - -

(line 773)                             Ulixes, where the "lix" is long because of the double "ks" contained in "x"

3. a CONSONANT "I", i.e. one with a "y" sound when pronounced

                  - -

(line 752)         maior, where the "ma" is long because of the consonant quality of "i" in "ior"

C. MOST OTHER SYLLABLES ARE SHORT!

*EXAMPLES and EXCEPTIONS:*

1. If the SECOND CONSONANT following a vowel is "h", then the syllable is SHORT because the Latin "h" rarely had the hard consonantal sound we give it:

                  ˘ - ˘ ˘

(line 760)         ab hospite

                  ˘ ˘ - - -

(line 766)         libet hirsutam

2. Likewise if the TWO CONSONANTS following a vowel are the Greek blends "ph," "ch," or "th" the "h" DOES NOT constitute a second consonant so the syllable NEED NOT BE LONG.

(line 765) Polypheme

3. A syllable with a SHORT VOWEL followed by a mute (p, b, t, d, c, g), in turn, followed by "l" or "r" is called COMMON and may be EITHER SHORT or LONG as the verse requires.

(line 764) cura placendi, where the "ra" is short despite the "pl" following it.

4. "Y" can be a SHORT or a LONG vowel, depending on its natural quantity in the given word and/or its placement.

(line 755) in "Cyclops" the "y" is naturally short, but its syllable is long because of position

(line 750) in "Symaethide" the "y" is short naturally and by position

II. *Meter*- i.e. the rhythm of the poem. In the *Metamorphoses* the only meter is DACTYLIC HEXAMETER

A. Feet - the divisions of a metrical verse

1. In Dactylic Hexameter, there are SIX FEET to a line.
2. Each FOOT is either a DACTYL (- ∪ ∪) or a SPONDEE (- -), where the dactyl's two shorts have been resolved into ONE LONG syllable. (One exception: The last foot of the line may sometimes be a TROCHEE (- ∪)). Since the last syllable of a verse may sometimes be either LONG or SHORT, it is called an ANCEPS and is often marked by an x above it
3. Dactyls and spondees are freely mixed within the ~~foot~~<sup>verse</sup> with two exceptions:
  - a. The FIFTH FOOT of a dactylic hexameter is REGULARLY a DACTYL, but may occasionally be a spondee
  - b. The SIXTH FOOT of a dactylic hexameter is REGULARLY a SPONDEE, but may be a trochee
3. The metrical scheme of a dactylic hexameter line is then:

- ∪ | - ∪ | - ∪ | - ∪ |     | - -  
 or    or    or    or    - ∪   or  
 - - | - - | - - |     | - ∪

### III. Scansion and Other Metrical Matters

A. Scansion is the division of a verse into its component feet according to the values of each syllable within the framework of the pattern listed above. So, if you are asked to SCAN A LINE OF OVID, that means you should note the proper quantity of each syllable AND the division of the verses into their feet above the line of poetry.

#### B. Elision and Ecthlipsis

1. Elision occurs when a vowel or diphthong at the END of a word is DROPPED BEFORE A VOWEL OR "H"

— — — — —  
(line 759) Nempe ille inmitis

(NOTE: the linking marks beneath these are necessary to show that a blending of vowels is occurring)

2. Ecthlipsis occurs when a FINAL "M" with a preceding vowel is DROPPED BEFORE A VOWEL OR "H"

— — — — —  
(line 763) pecorum antroꝛumque

3. NOTE: the consonantal "I" (sounds like "y") DOES NOT count as a vowel in these two processes so it should not be elided

4. Hiatus occurs when ELISION or ECTHLIPSIS has been DISREGARDED to give emphasis to the first word or signal a pause between the two words that should have been elided.

#### C. Caesura and Diaeresis

Caesura is a "cutting" of a foot by having a word end within the foot.

These can occur anywhere in the verse, but there are some preferences. A principal caesura, however, usually stands out in a verse at the point of a pause in the sense of the sentence or idea. This principal caesura, marked by ||, usually occurs in the third foot.

If a major caesura falls in the second foot, it is usually matched by another in the fourth foot and each is marked by :

Diaeresis is when the end of a foot and the end of a word coincide.

SAMPLE SCANSION!!!! PLEASE USE THIS AS A MODEL

— ∪ ∪ | — — | — || — | — — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — —

(lines 764-66) Iamque tibi formae, iamque est tibi cura placendi,

— ∪ ∪ | — : — | — — | — : ∪ ∪ | — ∪ : ∪ | — —

iam rigidos pectis rastris, Polypheme, capillos,

— ∪ ∪ | — — | — || ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — ∪

iam libet hirsutam tibi falce recidere barbam

— — | — ∪ : ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — : — | — ∪ ∪ | — —

et spectare feros in aqua et componere vultus;