

## Latin 401: Meter in Plautus' *Amphitruo*

### Cicero, *de oratore* 3.196

"... in the case of poetry ... the whole audience will hoot at one false quantity. Not that the multitude knows anything of feet, or has any understanding of rhythm; and when displeased they do not realize why or with what they are displeased. And yet nature has implanted in our ears the power of judging long and short sounds as well as high and low pitch words" (cited by Marshall 227).

#### Modes of Delivery

S = spoken senarii, stichic, unaccompanied by the tibicen (the musician playing the tibia)

- Meter of prologues.
- The gods in Plautus' *Amphitruo* speak in this meter nearly all of the time; is this a method to control the audience's reception of the play? (Christenson 56).
- When the music stops, the audience pays attention.

R = recitative, iambic or trochaic meters or anapests, stichic, accompanied by the tibicen

- Appears at the end of the play
- Lively and combative discourse

C = cantica mixtis nodis, songs in mixed measure, accompanied by the tibicen

- *Amphitruo* has five songs (average)
- The analysis of particular songs is fraught with difficulty owing to our almost complete ignorance of musical performance.

- "We cannot posit hard-and-fast rules regarding what kinds of situations and character-types tend to be associated with S, C, R in Plautus, whose musical practice is fluid and flexible" (Christenson 56).
- "Metrical differences (which necessarily correspond to musical differences) are one of the principal resources available to the playwrights for creating emotional effect" (Marshall 225).

#### Patterns for determining long and short syllables in Plautus (Christenson 56-66)

- "A single consonant between two vowels belongs to the latter vowel (fa-ci-lis)."
- "When two consecutive consonants occur between vowels, whether within or between words, the first normally belongs to the preceding vowel and the second to the one following (mit-to)."
  - Mute (c, g, p, b, t, d) + liquid (r, l) are not split in Plautus (pa-trem) and the syllable can be either long or short. Mutes and liquids resulting from compounds are split (ab-ripio).
- "A syllable ending in a consonant is said to be 'closed' and counts as long regardless of the quantity of its vowel; one ending in a vowel by contrast is 'open' and scans long only if that vowel is long by nature or a diphthong."
- x/z = double consonants.
- h, aspiration, not a consonant.
- -at, -et, -it are usually long in Plautus, except -bit, the future perfect, and the present indicative of the third conjugation.
- -ae, -er, -al are always long, although they may be subject to iambic shortening.

#### Elision (Christenson 56-66)

Words ending in a short or long vowel (included diphthongs), or words ending in *m*, were elided when the next word begins with a vowel or with *h*. "Whether or not this final elided syllable was completely lost in pronunciation, it does not count in scansion...Syntactical breaks or changes of speaker do not prevent elision" (Christenson 59).

- *do, dem, spe, spem, sim, sto, qui* (plural) and monosyllabic interjections are never elided (A&G 612).

### Accent (Christenson 56-66)

Monosyllables: accented unless they are prepositions or enclitics.

Disyllabic words: accented on the first syllable.

Three syllables or more: long penult = accent on the penult; short penult = accent on the antepenult.

Four syllables of the UUU×: accented on the fourth to last syllable (stultitia).

Four or more syllables: two accents (*expugnāvisses*)

### Iambic and Trochaic Meters in Plautus' *Amphitruo* (Christenson 56-66)

U = one time-unit    - = two time-units    × = anceps (long or short)

/ = foot end

// = word end

Λ = *brevis in longo*

senarii        6 feet/twelve elements

septenarii    7.5 feet/fifteen elements

octonarii     8 feet/sixteen elements

- Each foot can be either a iamb (U -) or a trochee (- U).
- Each short is treated as an anceps: it can be either short, long, or two shorts. This means that each iambic or trochaic foot can be one of the following:

spondee	--
dactyl	-UU
anapest	UU-
tribrach	UUU
proceleusmatic	UUUU
pyrrhic	UU

"This extreme flexibility leads to a staggering number of possible metrical configurations of lines and seemingly threatens to mask any predictable sense of rhythm" (Christenson 59).

Iambic senarii                    × - / × - / × // - / × - / × - / U Λ  
    × - / × // - / × - / × // - / × - / U Λ

Iambic octonarii<sup>1</sup>                × - / × - / × - / × Λ // × - / × - / × - / U Λ  
    × - / × - / × - / × - / × // - / × - / × - / U Λ

Trochaic septenarii<sup>2</sup>            - × / - × / - × / - × // - × / - × / - U / Λ

<sup>1</sup> Used for comic scenes. "Though a relatively rare rhythm, Plautus uses it for an effect that 'stands out for its frequency, [and] is best described as comic or heroic exaggeration, and occurs when the usually disreputable or pompous character comes on stage extolling his exploits or abilities. The rhythm of *ia*<sup>8</sup> with its balanced caesura means that 'iambic octonarii . . . are farcical, ridiculous, exaggerated' and are particularly suited for boasting slaves" (Marshall 229, citing Tobias 1980: 15-16).

<sup>2</sup> Catalectic version of the trochaic octonarius. Catalectic verse lacks a final syllable. Or it may be viewed as a senarius with a cretic unit at the beginning (- × -o).

### Breakdown of meter in Plautus' Plays (Marshall 225)

- 37.6%, unaccompanied lines of iambic senarii.
- 40.6%, accompanied lines of trochaic septenarii
- 6.1%, accompanied lines of iambic septenarii
- 1.9%, accompanied lines of iambic octonarii
- 13.8%, accompanied other

**Synizesis:** two vowels (not already diphthongs) may blend, creating a single syllable. Here are some common examples:

- possessive pronouns (*mei*)
- genitive singular of relative and demonstrative pronouns (*cuius, huius*)
- oblique forms of *is*
- forms of *deus*

**Prodelision:** a word may meld with *es* or *est* if it ends in *-m, -us, -is*.

**Apocope:** a syllable ending with a short vowel and *-s* following by a word beginning with a consonant can be either short or long (*minus*, 27 where it is short and 986 where it is long). Sometimes the final *e* in words such as *ille, nempe, proinde, deinde, unde, and inde* is dropped even when elision is not possible.

**Iambic Shortening:** disyllabic words of the  $\cup -$  type become  $\cup\cup$ . The final long is shortened due to the accent on the first syllable. Words of the  $\cup - \times$  with an accent on the final syllable undergo a shortening of the long. Disyllabic words like *ille, iste, ipse* were accented on the last syllable, which causes the first to be shortened.

- *ego, bene, modo*
- *magistratum, voluptates*

**Hiatus:** caused when words that would normally be elided are not. This occurs more frequently in Plautus than in any other author.

**Prosodic hiatus:** a long monosyllable followed by a word beginning with a short vowel results in a shortening of the monosyllable without elision. Short monosyllables ending in *-m* are also short.

- *quo agis* (450)
- *qui habito* (1038)
- *quam amat* (473)

**Enclisis:** long monosyllables can be scanned as short when they are combined with *quidem, quis, quid*.

**lines, 1-4, iambic senarii**

Ut vos in vostris voltis mercimoniis

emundis vendundisque me laetum lucris

adficere atque adiuuare in rebus omnibus

et ut res rationesque vostrorum omnium.