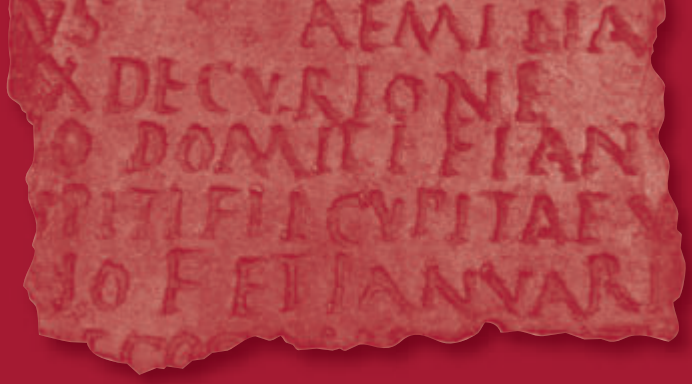

Herausgegeben von:

Thomas Corsten
Peter Kruschwitz
Fritz Mitthof
Bernhard Palme

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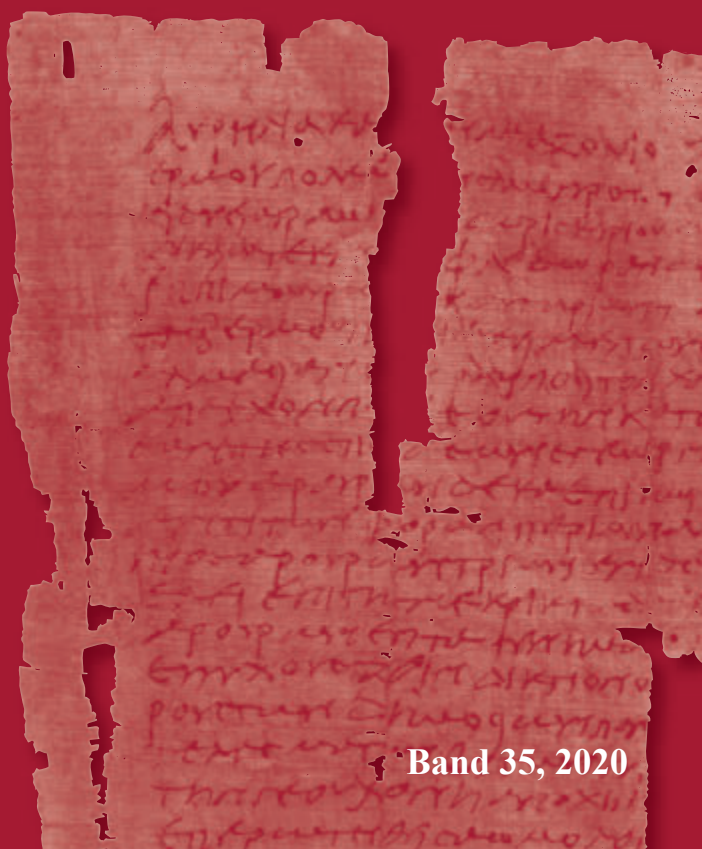

HOLZHAUSEN
Der Verlag

Band 35, 2020

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Five Feet Under*

Exhuming the Uses of the Pentameter in Roman Folk Poetry

1. Nardus' Epitaph

An inscription kept in Nola, of uncertain origin and date, though presumed to date to the first century B. C., appears to commemorate an otherwise unknown poet named Nardus. Its text reads as follows:[1]

Narduș
poeta
pudens
hoc
5 *tegitur*
tumulo.

Nardus, the poet, bashful, is covered by this tomb.

(*CIL* X 1284 = *CLE* 962 = *ILS* 7785)

At first glance, Nardus' epitaph would not appear to be much of a poem at all: six meagre words, spread out over just as many lines. Yet, befitting the subject, this text is a poem — a poem of a single line, and it is made up of a line that does not normally feature on its own in Latin literary poetry, *viz.* a sole pentameter.[2] What is more, the text contains only little imagery (except, of course, for the notion of a tomb 'covering' the deceased like clothing or a blanket), and there is little play with sound (but note the double use of alliterations in *poeta pudens* and *tegitur tumulo*). This low level of artistic decoration, so to speak, is thus as reductionist as everything else about this stone and its monostich.

* I wish to express my profound gratitude for the support I received through the 'VI Plan Propio de Investigación – Universidad de Sevilla' (VIPPI – US) and to the anonymous reviewers of the paper whose reports have been most generous with useful advice. Any remaining mistakes and infelicities are entirely my own. – This project has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 832874, MAPPOLA).

[1] For the reading of the text, as well as photographic documentation, see the relevant entry in the Epigraphic Database Roma (prepared by G. Camodeca): EDR106122.

[2] Aspects of this poem are discussed at https://thepetrifiedmuse.blog/2014/10/02/less-is-more/ (last accessed: March 2021).

The almost infuriating brevity of this poem — for a poet[3] — has long inspired scholars to fill in the obvious blanks:[4] who was this Nardus? Should one interpret *pudens* ('bashful, shame-faced, modest') as another part of the poet's name, and could he then be a Pudens that is already known from other sources? Might one even go as far as to think of a compound noun *nardu-poeta*, supposedly meaning 'soap maker', based on *nardus* ~ 'nard'?[5] Then again, *pudens* in Latin epitaphs is very commonly a quality that praises restraint, moderation, and temperance in moral terms. In a number of cases one finds it accompanied by additional references to the role of temperance, humility, and simplicity in life. It might thus just be the case, then, that Nardus, the *poeta pudens*, (or his relatives, of course) gave a poetic example by which he wanted to be remembered, illustrating his being *pudens* in the single-most reductionist way possible — linguistically, poetically, and metrically, using a line that is most commonly associated with its most common use: the curtailed, often witty afterthought that follows a heroic line.

This tentative explanation and appreciation of the poem for Nardus rests, of course, on a number of assumptions about the use of the pentameter by the poet of Nardus' inscription. Are these assumptions justified? How is the pentameter employed in the Latin verse inscriptions beyond its common use as the second line in an elegiac distich? How much evidence is there for its deliberate employment to emphasise aspects related to the poems' content? And how does all this relate to its use in Latin poetry more widely? The remainder of this paper will address and explore these questions in greater detail. In doing so, it will seek strictly to avoid any notion of vertical qualitative ordering, but work forward from a notion of a varied practice that existed across the Roman empire to a degree that is not reflected in surviving Latin literary poetry.[6]

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[3] Cf. P. Cugusi, *Aspetti letterari dei Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, Bologna [2]1996, 220–221.

[4] For more detail and full documentation of previous scholarship on this piece see C. Ricci, *Il poeta Nardus e il suo epitaffio in versi*, in: C. Ebanista (ed.), *Cumignano e Gallo. Alle origini del comune di Comiziano*, Cimitile 2012, 73–74 (with fig. 21). The individual and his name have been registered in *LGPN* III.A s. v., alongside a handful of further instances from Southern Italy and Campania. H. Solin, *Die griechischen Personnamen in Rom*, Berlin 2003, II 1183 s. v. lists a small number of individuals of that name for the city of Rome, with a roughly equal distribution among *servi* and *incerti*.

[5] This suggestion, of little plausibility to begin with, cannot stand given G. Camodeca's new reading of the text; cf. above, nt. 2. On *nardus*, its identification(s), and its medical uses see F. Mitthof, *Rezept für Augensalbe "Malabathrinon"*, in: I. Andorlini (ed.), *Greek Medical Papyri II*, Florence 2009, 123–141, esp. 133.

[6] This is a fundamental paradigmatic shift from the judgemental and dismissive approach taken by K. F. Smith, *Some Irregular Forms of the Elegiac Distich*, AJPh 22 (1901) 164–194, who in his extensive study, incorporating diverse and partly disparate material from Greek and Roman sources, consistently dismisses the poets of the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* as inferior minds, rather than to accept that there must have been a much broader folkloristic practice from which literary poets could choose, or refuse, to draw in their avant garde compositions. — For the literary side, investigations of connections between rhythmical design and meaning have recently been revisited more fundamentally by L. Morgan, *Musa Pedestris. Metre and Meaning in Roman Verse*, Oxford 2010.

2. The Pentameter in Unfamiliar Contexts:[7] An Overview

Ovid famously reflects on his use of the elegiac distich in *Amores* 1.1.[8] His poem begins with a playful altercation:

Arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam
edere materia conueniente modis.
par erat inferior uersus—risisse Cupido
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.

I was getting ready to relate arms and violent wars in a solemn rhythm, wherein my subject was befitting the rhythm. The even line was identical … then Cupido is told to have laughed and to have snatched a foot away.

(Ov. *am.* 1.1.1–4)

Ovid voices his disagreement with Cupid's theft, but to no avail. Cupid sends his arrow, piercing Ovid's heart — and this settles the matter, once and for all:

Sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat:
ferrea cum uestris bella ualete modis!
cingere litorea flauentia tempora myrto,
Musa, per undenos emodulanda pedes!

Let my work rise in six metres, let it reside in five: farewell, iron-clad wars with your rhythms! Place the sea-shore's myrtle around your golden temples, Muse, as you must be measured in eleven feet.

(Ov. *am.* 1.1.27–30)

Ovid's playful description has little to do with the genesis and the historical development of the pentameter and its uses in Graeco-Roman poetry overall.[9] It merely provides an amusing narrative around the metrical design of Latin love poetry vis-à-vis that of Roman epic, pretending that epic was the genre Ovid was originally hoping to produce. What is interesting about this passage, however, is the implication that the pentameter is an *inferior uersus*, 'the even line', or, more literally still, 'the line below' (Ov. *am.* 1.1.3) — something that allows the work to settle down or to reside: *in quinque residat* (Ov. *am.* 1.1.27).

The notion of *residat*, a downward movement, has inspired poets of other time periods and cultures — in German, for example, there is a famous distich by Friedrich

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[7] Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 186 speaks of 'aberrant types'. I propose a more neutral turn of phrase here.

[8] Further on this see e. g. J.-U. Beck, *Ovid als Dieb und Bogenschütze: zu zwei Details in am. 1, 1*, WJb 28 (2004) 71–83, esp. 74–83 (with a digest of earlier scholarship as well as the underpinning ancient metrical theory).

[9] For a (somewhat dated) discussion of the ancient sources on the pentameter cf. e. g. G. Schultz, *Beiträge zur Theorie der antiken Metrik*, Hermes 35 (1900) 308–325, esp. 310–314.

Schiller, in which he likens the distich to a geyser, wherein the hexameter constitutes the original blast of water, whereas it melodically resides in the pentameter:[10]

> "Im Hexameter steigt des *Springquells* silberne Säule,
> Im Pentameter drauf fällt sie melodisch *herab.*"

Matthias Claudius, in turn, made a comparison to the way in which bagpipes are played — the hexameter is the drone produced while taking in the air, whereas the pentameter accompanies its deflation:[11]

> "Im Hexameter zieht der ästhetische Dudelsack Wind ein;
> Im Pentameter drauf läßt er ihn wieder heraus."

More could be added, but the point is clear: there is a sense of movement that poets, since the ancient world, have associated with the pentameter — a downward, settling movement, combined with a sense of closure. At the same time, from Ovid to Matthias Claudius, the 'even line', sometimes just called *uersus alter*, 'that other line',[12] has also — almost — inextricably been linked to its 'odd' accompaniment, the dactylic hexameter, with which, in this particular sequence, it forms the so-called elegiac distich.[13]

There may be a problem, however, with the dogmatic view, rigorously held since ancient times,[14] that the only acceptable, default use of the pentameter in Roman poetry is one in which the pentameter appears as the even line in an elegiac distich, always following the dactylic hexameter as the odd line opening. Nardus' epitaph, with its use of the pentameter as a monostich, clearly upsets this seemingly so neatly regulated

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[10] F. Schiller, *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1797*, Tübingen 1797, 67.

[11] M. Claudius, *Urians Nachricht von der neuen Aufklärung nebst einigen andern Kleinigkeiten*, Hamburg 1797, 16.

[12] Cf. Ov. *her.* 15.182.

[13] The close interlinkedness of these two lines, according to the Roman tradition, can also be seen in its iconic visual representation — the indentation of the second line: this, most likely, is, in fact, an ἔκθεσις of the first line, to mark the beginning of a new, coherent paragraph (as common, e. g., in legal texts); further on this see A. M. Morelli, *L'epigramma latino prima di Catullo*, Cassino 2000, 89–100. For a more recent discussion of the phenomenon (though not fully informed by earlier scholarship) see J. Lougovaya, *Indented Pentameters in Papyri and Inscriptions*, in: P. Schubert (ed.), *Actes du 26e Congrès international de papyrologie, Genève, 16–21 août 2010*, Geneva 2012, 437–441; cf. also M. Massaro, *L'impaginazione delle iscrizioni latine metriche o affettive*, RPAA s. III 85 (2012–2013) 365–413 and M. Limón Belén, *La compaginación de las inscripciones latinas en verso. Roma e Hispania*, Rome 2014.

[14] A passage regularly adduced in such contexts is Fortunat. *gramm.* VI 291.18–19 Keil: *hic et elegus uocatur, quando per uices heroo subiungitur nec seorsum ac solitarium carmen facere potest*. It may well be possible to argue, however, that what Atilius Fortunatianus actually claims is that only in such instances in which the pentameter is used in conjunction with a hexameter, it is permissible to call it *elegus* (implying that there are other uses also): *quando … subiungitur* appears to refer to a specific condition that required singling out. — For a recent discussion of the pentameter in Greek epigram see G. Hutchinson, *'Pentameter'*, in: E. Sistakou, A. Rengakos (eds.), *Dialect, Diction, and Style in Greek Literary and Inscribed Epigram*, Berlin 2016, 119–138.

system, raising an important, hitherto largely neglected, and much broader question: how was the pentameter used in Roman folk poetry — i. e. in the artistic substrate, with all its regional and ethnic variations across the Roman empire, that not only served as the hotbed for Rome's greatest verbal artists, but also as an essential indicator of cultural practice (as opposed to its stylisations in avant garde literary poetry). Moreover, are variations to the model found in literary poetry really irregularities[15] or norm violations, as is often implied, or are they meaningful more often than not?

In order to get the fuller picture, it seems reasonable to begin with an overview of the various patterns that can be found in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* beyond the (allegedly) standard use within the elegiac distich. Considering a number of ultimately unsurmountable issues with the constitution of an appropriately designed, exhaustive corpus of texts, the following overview — based on F. Bücheler's and E. Lommatzsch's *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* — is meant to capture tendencies and to describe the overall situation without much distortion; it cannot serve, however, as a form of reliable statistics.[16]

Remarkably, there are in excess of 150 poems in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* as edited by Bücheler and Lommatzsch that show uses of the pentameter that are at odds with the default pattern of Roman literary poetry. Considering that this corpus of texts comprises a total of some 2,200+ inscriptions, many of which are either not dactylic in nature, or as *commatica* not judged by the same metrical standards as the others, or, in fact, too fragmentary to tell, this number certainly seems significant. Without applying excessive interpretative force, as will be demonstrated in section 3, below, these instances can be described and categorised as follows (dubious cases are noted with a question mark):[17]

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[15] Thus E. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria. A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions*, Atlanta 1995, 27.

[16] As stated, I have based my considerations entirely on the corpus of those 2,000+ texts included in F. Bücheler's and E. Lommatzsch's edition of the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* as part of the *Anthologia Latina* of the Bibliotheca Teubneriana. While this results in a substantial sample size, one might object that the number of known texts has almost doubled since the publication of Bücheler's and Lommatzsch's work. Spot checks that I carried out in collections of relevant material not included in Bücheler's and Lommatzsch's edition did not result in any contradictions, or fundamental additions, to the trends observed and outlined here. It may well be worth revisiting the issue, however, once a more complete, fundamentally reliable publication of the material, e. g. as part of the long awaited *CIL* XVIII project, has been produced. At any rate, any edition of the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* will only ever be able to present a fraction of the actual evidence that once existed. In that regard, the focus on an established, substantial body of evidence seems methodologically defensible, as the sample size is significant, and no absolute and definitive statistical conclusions are drawn from the material. Completeness is sought, but human error, as well as interpretative disagreement with the edition in Bücheler, Lommatzsch may occur.

[17] Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 168 proposes three categories (the use of the pentameter with verses other than the hexameter; the use of the pentameter as a monostich; the use of the pentameter κατὰ στίχον); this, however, is not the most suitable division for the material available in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*. — Unspecified numerals in the following subsections, (i)–(vi), refer to the relevant entry in *CLE*. — Several phenomena discussed

(i) Pentameters employed as monostichs

The poet of the Nardus epitaph (962) was by no means the only one who chose to use a single pentameter as the metrical form for their verse inscription. Clear parallels for this practice include 886, 921, 933, 952, 985, 1124 (?), 1291, 1464,[18] 1465, 1491, 1492, 1493, 1501, 1502,[19] 1503, 2050, 2065, 2067 (with adn.), 2077, 2140. One may also consider adducing instances that include the common hemistich *sit tibi terra leuis* in some form or other, where they are clearly designed to form a fully fledged pentameter: 1452–1455, 1460–1462.

With over two dozen instances,[20] from the first century B. C. (if the date for the Nardus inscription is correct) to late antiquity, including evidence for pentameters used in isolation at Pompeii,[21] it seems fair to say that this is not an altogether uncommon type: the number may be low in comparison to iambic and other dactylic forms; it compares reasonably favourably, however, when compared to some of the other meters that have been identified in the Latin verse inscriptions, such as hendecasyllabics and other lyrical rhythms.

While monostichic use of the pentameter in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* is not at all uncommon, the same thing cannot be said for the stichic use of the pentameter: compositions that show this rhythm used κατὰ στίχον to a greater extent do not appear to have survived, or even existed, in the Latin verse inscriptions.[22] There is, however, evidence for short stichic runs of the pentameter, such as e. g. in the middle of 560B, 1988, and at the end of 1331 (two lines each)[23] as well as in the middle of 965 and at the end of 1216 (three consecutive lines each).[24]

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subsequently already emerge in earlier and contemporary Greek compositions — an aspect that has been discussed more extensively by E. Bowie, *Epigram as Narration*, in: M. Baumbach, A. Petrovic, I. Petrovic (eds.), *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram*, Cambridge 2010; 313–384 and R. Hunter, *Death of a Child: Grief beyond the Literary?*, in: M. Kanellou, I. Petrovic, C. Carey (eds.), *Greek Epigram from the Hellenistic to the Early Byzantine Era*, Oxford 2019, 140 nt. 7. For an extensive overview of related composition types in Greek epigraphical poetry see P. Ceccarelli, *La struttura dell'epigramma del Pilastro Iscritto di Xanthos (TAM I, 44 = CEG 177)*, in: A. Dell'Era, A. Russi (eds.), *Vir bonus docendi peritus. Omaggio dell'Università dell'Aquila a G. Garuti*, Foggia 1996, 47–69, esp. 59–61.

[18] Discussed in greater detail below, section 3 (i).

[19] This is, incidentally, a line that, similar to the Nardus epitaph, also contains *pudens* as term of praise: *casta pudica pudens coiuge cara suo.* Another similarity to the Nardus epitaph is the marked use of alliterations in each hemiepes (with a parallel also in e. g. 1464.16–17) (discussed below, section 3 (i)).

[20] Already Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 176 called their number 'considerable'.

[21] Cf. *CLE* 933, 952, 1491.

[22] For such literary experiments see below, section 4.

[23] Discussed below, in the context of category (v); cf. also 1327 (mentioned below, category (vi)).

[24] Cf. below, category (iii), and see section 3 (ii).

(ii) Predominantly hexametrical compositions interspersed with single pentameter lines

A second category that emerges organically from an analysis of the texts compiled by Bücheler and Lommatzsch is that of predominantly hexametrical compositions in which occasional pentameter lines appear, but without sufficient regularity to constitute elegiac distichs.[25] These can be arranged as (a) instances in which pentameters feature in the middle of the composition and (b) instances in which pentameters conclude an otherwise hexametrical composition. In a small number of cases, (c), both elements occur.

(a) Pentameters in the middle of otherwise hexametrical compositions: 250, 467, 497 (?), 502, 543, 560B, 656 ('quasi pentameter'), 688, 779, 922, 947, 986, 1009, 1095, 1145, 1186,[26] 1190, 1208, 1215, 1219, 1227 (?), 1253, 1294, 1319, 1384, 1427, 1433, 1544.

(b) Pentameters at the end of otherwise hexametrical compositions: 489 ('quasi pentameter'), 495, 914, 1037,[27] 1088, 1105, 1188, 1224, 1240, 1256, 1260, 1265, 1268, 1292, 1324, 1328, 1329, 1341, 1494, 1987, 1996.

(c) Pentameters both in the middle and at the end of otherwise hexametrical compositions: 383, 493 (also with a Vergilian-style half line), 500, 1007, 1058, 1171, 1184, 1206, 1216,[28] 1223, 1318, 1542, 1545, 1559, 1988, 2115.

In virtually all cases under this rubric, some three dozen instances in total, it is apparent that the pentameter(s) has (have) been inserted specifically to mark the end of a section, either internally or for the entire poem.[29]

(iii) Predominantly elegiac compositions with an apparent disparity between hexameter and pentameter lines

A third category, on the face of it somewhat similar in nature to the previous one, is that of compositions that appear to be predominantly elegiac in nature, with variations to the otherwise monotonous repetition to alternating hexameter and pentameter lines.[30] Such variations may occur due to additionally employed hexameters, (a), or additionally employed pentameters, (b).[31] Similar to what could be seen above, in category (ii), these

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[25] Bücheler and Lommatzsch list some examples under their entries for hexameters, others under their collection of elegiac distichs or even among the polymetra, without any apparent rationale.

[26] The final line of this piece is an iambic senarius, so structurally this item is, in fact, closer to type (c) than to type (a).

[27] This composition consists of two parts, one in dactylic hexameters with a concluding pentameter, and one in elegiacs.

[28] Discussed in greater detail below, section 3 (ii).

[29] This practice is not altogether unknown from Greek compositions, cf. e. g. *AP* 13.15 and 16 (= *CEG* 820).

[30] Complex polymetric compositions with an apparent change of rhythm between its various constituent parts, such as e. g. the famous poem of the Claudii at Kasserine (1552), are excluded from this category. This includes, e. g., 971 (with a change in rhythm from hexameters to elegiacs to mark the transition from a first-person discourse to a dialogue), 1561, and 2100. A special case is 1549 where the rhythm changes from elegiac distichs to dactylic hexameters, while the layout, using indentation for even lines, remains unchanged.

[31] It is possible, of course, to employ a different model, i. e. one that surmises defectiveness rather than excess, suggesting that the other verse type is lacking in numbers, or that verses of one type were replaced with another due to lack of due diligence. On closer inspection of the

additional lines could feature at the beginning (1), middle (2), or end (3) of the respective poem, or any combination of these.[32] The spread of instances across those potential rubrics is anything but even, however:

(a) additionally employed hexameters: **(1)** 924, 970 (?),1097 (?), 1125, 1179, 1187. — **(2)** 950, 1053 (initial hexameter only a Vergilian-style half-line), 1158, 1168, 1173, 1237, 2102. — **(3)** 1119, 1160, 1541.[33]

(b) additionally employed pentameters: **(1)** One may mention 1271, 1308, and 1327 in this context.[34] — **(2)** 965.[35] — **(3)** [unattested].

With slightly just over a dozen and a half instances, this type is less well attested than the previous one, especially when it comes to additionally employed pentameters, for which evidence is scarce. Unlike for the previous category, (ii), above, there does not appear to be any comprehensive explanation for such occurrences, especially for subtype (a). In several cases, no apparent relevance to the poem's content or structure can be detected; there are, however, cases, in which an effect is obvious. As for subtype (b), the apparent question is whether this operates on the same level as subtype (a), or whether this is, in fact, evidence for a stichic use of the pentameter, albeit over no more than three consecutive lines (965).

(iv) Sandwiched pentameters in three- and five-line compositions

It seems reasonable to assume that Latin song and poetry resorted to a wide range of forms and composition techniques that are not all reflected in literary poetry: ambitious literary poets, certainly of the imperial age, were not best known for their metrical and formal experiments, unless these experiments involved the revival of — in a Roman context — somewhat laboured forms of either the archaic or the Hellenistic period of Greek literature.[36] In fact, it would not be entirely unjustified to say that the lack of desire to create something new and innovative is somewhat perplexing. If one is justified to derive a level of certainty from numbers, however, it is possible to argue that in the context of the Latin verse inscriptions, though still within the framework of the traditional stock of forms, a couple of new types of compositions have come about.

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relevant poems, their content, and the way in which structural features have been used to draw attention to content, this does not seem to be an appropriate approach, however.

[32] For the sake of clarity, in this case only the most significant aspect will be used for categorisation, while any other features will be noted in parenthesis. — A text that seems to pertain to this category, but to an extent defies the classification, is 1332, in which a number of lines seem to resemble pentameter endings.

[33] 2112 may belong into this final group, but the text is too fragmentary and too problematic in its documentation for it to be included with any level of certainty.

[34] Structurally, I prefer to think of these instances as inversions, however, as the employment of pentameters at an initial position shapes the metrical expectations of the reader; see below, section (vi) and section 3 (vi).

[35] See below, section 3 (iii).

[36] For reflections of that in the context of the Latin verse inscriptions see P. Cugusi, *Carmina latina epigraphica e novellismo: cultura di centro e cultura di provincia, contenuti e metodologia di ricerca*, Md 53 (2004) 125–174.

The first one of these innovative patterns can be described as a form of sandwiched pentameters in short compositions of three or five lines' length:

(a) Three-line compositions: 894, 1010, 1049, 1089, 1090, 1092 (?), 1272, 1288, 1489, 2047, 2082.

(b) Five-line compositions: 949, 1302 (?), 1346, 2098.[37]

To these one might consider adding 1107 as well, a seven-line composition that follows the same principles.

While one might at first be inclined to see these compositions as manifestations of type (iii) (a) (3), above, they do not only exceed the remaining evidence for this pattern in numbers with over a dozen instances: they also consistently form structurally and intellectually coherently formed, planned compositions.[38]

(v) Hexameter and double pentameter as concluding lines

The second innovative pattern that is attested in significant numbers is a sequence of one hexameter followed by two pentameters. This pattern occurs both in a 'stand-alone' version, i. e. in three-line compositions and as a concluding element to longer poems:

(a) Three-line compositions: 880,[39] 1020, 1039, 1082, 1091 (second pentameter incomplete), 1193, 1220, 1221 (?), 1267 (?), 1303 (only first hemistich of the second pentameter given), 1326,[40] 1451,[41] 1482, 1497, 2076, 2092 (second pentameter hypermetrical due to insertion of personal name), 2221.

(b) Use as clausula: 1085, 1121, 1123, 1134, 1149,[42] 1278, 1314 (cf. below, section (vi)).

Multiple cases include variants of the *sit tibi terra leuis* formula into the second pentameter, but this is by no means the only use of the second pentameter.

Finally, a particularly interesting composition is that of 1331, that at first glance would seem to combine an instance of type (iv) with one of type (v):[43]

D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum). |
nomen non dico nec | *quod (!) uixerit annis* |
ne dolor im (!) mentem (!) | *cum legimus maneat (!).* |
infans dulcis eres (!) sed | *tempore paruo* |
mors uitam uicit ne li|*bertatem teneres.*
heh[e]u (?) non dolor es ut | *quem amas pereat.*
nunc mors perpetua liber|*tatem dedit.*

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[37] 1222 and 1246 may belong here, but the texts are too fragmentary to be certain. — 1012 does not belong here, as the final line is not part of the original composition.

[38] Further on this see below, section 3 (iii).

[39] Note the comment by Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 184: 'the third line betrays the amateur': a view that is untenable in the light of the accumulated evidence.

[40] Discussed in greater detail below, section 3 (iv).

[41] Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 177 speaks of a composition that 'is merely due to the aggregation of a distich with the favourite line of the bereaved', which is, of course, a judgement based on classically trained taste rather than the statistical evidence for the spread of composition types.

[42] Discussed in greater detail below, section 3 (iv).

[43] An image of this inscription is available at http://cil.bbaw.de/test06/bilder/datenbank/PH0010992.jpg (last accessed: November 2018). — The second hexameter (*infans dulcis* eqs.) is one foot short, rendering this line an actual pentameter (as opposed to a composition of two hemiepeis).

Sacred to the Spirits of the Departed.

I do not state the name nor how many years s/he lived, lest pain gets to settle in our mind as we read this. As a baby you were sweet, but within a short time death overcame life, lest you obtain freedom. Woe is me, there is no pain equal to that when one loses whom one loves. Now death bestowed eternal freedom.

Looking at the interactions of the syntactical and metrical structures more deeply, however, it becomes clear that this piece is a composition consisting of an elegiac distich, two hexameters, and two pentameters, the latter of which provide a mourning epode to the life of the anonymous deceased. In that regard, it belongs in category (i), above.

(vi) Inversions

The final category may be described as instances of 'inversion', i. e. cases in which, in the context of larger compositions, the (in literary contexts) customary sequence of hexameters and pentameters within the elegiac distich appears to have been inverted.[44]

In some cases it is difficult to determine, from a methodological point of view, whether or not inversion is, in fact, what the poet had in mind. An example of this is the following piece from Tadinum (Gualdo Tadino (Perugia)), dated to the second half of the first century,[45] that produces a short stichic use of the pentameter (1314):

Dis Man(ibus) s(acrum). |
hic Seuera sita est Virusi nepotula cara |
quae iam uix uitae tres inpleuerat annos |
quos inmaturos abstulit hora grauis |
rapta patri et matri raptaque dulcis | *auiae.*
hic circum me positi soror | *et frater quorum fleuere parentes.* |
f(aciendum) c(urauit) Vir(usius) Ver(us).

Sacred to the Spirits of the Departed.

Here lies Severa, the dear little granddaughter of Virusius who had just barely completed three years of her life, which, still immature, were snatched away by a grave hour: she was stolen from her father and mother, stolen, sweet, from her grandmother.

Here around me lie my sister and my brother, whom the parents mourned.

Virusius Verus took care (*sc.* of this monument).

It is certainly possible to argue that the second hexameter and the first pentameter appear in an inverted order. But is this really the case? Looking at the text in greater detail, it would appear that, similar to 1331, discussed just before, the two pentameter lines in the present case provide a mourning epode to the piece's hexametrical opening. The composition is then concluded by a line with dactylic elements but without formal adherence to the principles of the hexameter. With a view to the poem's first four lines'

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[44] These necessarily produce sequences of the type subsumed under (v); the difference is, however, that these do not feature at the end of compositions, but occur in the middle, combined with a double hexameter line in the immediate vicinity.

[45] Cf. E. Zuddas's entry in the Epigraphic Database Roma: EDR161777.

content specifically, it seems most reasonable to see the first line of the poem as an introductory hexameter, followed by a three-line poem of the type described as (v) (b). This is then concluded by one rhythmical, but not strictly metrical, line that adds a reference to additional individuals that were buried in the same grave.

A more credible example of a simple inversion is 1320 and, as an even more complex case, 974.[46] Other noteworthy instances include 1271, 1308, and 1327 (the latter with two pentameters used κατὰ στίχον at the beginning, and a single pentameter, expanded by the insertion of a name, at the end).[47]

3. Case Studies

Anything that differs from a (perceived, if ultimately entirely arbitrary) norm is immediately suspected of being of inferior quality by those who think in normative terms. Already the small number of specific cases discussed in somewhat greater detail so far, however, has shown conclusively that in the case of the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* it is often possible to trace the poets' thinking behind the way in which they designed their texts, metrically, linguistically, and otherwise.[48] In a vast majority of instances there has been a clear rationale behind the composition of these texts; the main roles of the pentameter in these compositions are either to highlight structural boundaries and transitions or to provide emotionally charged, sometimes extended closure, an epode so to speak, to a longer text. It would be both impossible and tedious to demonstrate this here in exhaustive detail for each and every case. Instead, an indicative sample, chosen from the various categories introduced in section 2, above, shall suffice to explain the approach and highlight the key observations.

(i) Pentameters employed as monostichs

Several instances of single pentameters appear in isolation as individual lines, detached from any other written context. There are cases, however, in which a pentameter appears as a concluding line to a text otherwise written in prose. An example of this is the following piece, dated to the first half of the second century A. D., from Libarna in Liguria (1464):[49]

C(aio) Catio L(uci) f(ilio) Maec(ia)
Martiali scribae:
uixit ann(os) XVIII.
L(ucio) Catio C(ai) f(ilio) Seuero
patri,
C(aio) Virio C(ai) f(ilio) Fido
auo,

[46] See below, section 3 (vi) for a broader discussion of this piece.

[47] It is possible that 1845 belongs here as well, but the fragmentary state of the inscription does not allow for any definitive judgement.

[48] The only area in which there is a greater than usual number of exceptions from this rule appears to be category (iii), as already stated above.

[49] For a full recent documentation, as well an image of this piece, see the relevant entry in the Epigraphic Database Roma by S. Valentini: EDR010397.

Muciae P(ubli) f(iliae) Quartae
auiae,
C(aius) Lucretius Genialis
amicus ||
f(aciendum) ||
sibi et
Valeriae uxori ||
c(urauit). ||
tu qui legisti nomina
nostra uale.

For Gaius Catius Martialis, son of Lucius, of the Maecian tribe, the scribe: he lived 18 years. For Lucius Catius Severus, son of Gaius, his father. For Gaius Virius Fidus, son of Gaius, his grandfather. For Mucia Quarta, daughter of Publius, his grandmother: Gaius Lucretius Genialis, a friend, took care of the execution of this for himself and his wife Valeria.

You who read our names: farewell!

Here the pentameter, clearly separated from the main (prose) text by the employment of the *f(aciendum) c(urauit)* abbreviation as a striking visual marker for the end of the main text,[50] interacts with the content of the main text (*nomina* | *nostra*), providing a summary and closure to the composition as a whole, just as the pentameter often does in elegiac distichs: 'you who read our names, farewell.'

(ii) Predominantly hexametrical compositions interspersed with single pentameter lines

As shown above, there is a substantial number of verse inscriptions that use otherwise isolated pentameter lines as structural devices in the context of otherwise largely hexametrical compositions, either in the poem's middle, or at the end.[51] Some instances, of greater length, show multiple pentameters employed to this end. A particularly impressive example is the poem of Allia Potestas (1988), in which pentameters feature in structurally irregular intervals alongside hexameters and heptameters.[52] This aspect has thus far not been included as a deliberate feature of structural design in the discussion of this poem.[53] As explained above, in many cases, pentameters feature as structural devices to aid the reader's comprehension of the logical development of a composition, marking conclusions and transitions: in these cases, the end of the pentameter typically coincides with clause and sentence endings. In that, this use of the pentameter is similar to what has been seen above, section 3 (i) in the case of an otherwise prosaic inscription.

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[50] The letters F and C, for *faciendum curauit* are inscribed in bigger size and enclose, as a bracket, so to speak, two lines that are engraved in the area that thus exists in the middle (l. 13–14). This results in the somewhat awkward diacritical presentation and syntactical structure above.

[51] A technique that appears to have been employed in a Greek poem ascribed to the Roman dictator Lucius Sulla as well; cf. App. *BC* 1.97 (mentioned by Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* [above, nt. 6] 190).

[52] Cf. l. 5, 7, 19, 37, 38, 43, 45, 50, cf. also l. 49.

[53] See in particular N. Horsfall, *CIL VI 37965 = CLE 1988 (Epitaph of Allia Potestas): A Commentary*, ZPE 61 (1985) 251–272.

There are more sophisticated uses, however, and for the purpose of this short case study the following piece from the city of Rome, now lost, seems to be particularly instructive. Here one does not only encounter internal pentameters, but also a coda, so to speak, in a short, rare stichic composition in pentameters (1216):[54]

D(is) M(anibus)
Fabiae Pyrallidi optimae
et sanctae patron(ae)
de se bene merit(ae)
Artemisius libertus.
cunctorum haec suboli sedem | post morte(m) reliquit,
ante | tamen nato coniuge (!) et ante suo. |
nondum secura dum flet maes|[10]*tissima mente,*
occidit et | tristes decepit maesta fouendo. |
set nos soliciti memoresque | parentis amore
matrem | cum nato coniuge cumque suo |[15]
securos colimus memores de | nomine nostro,
et faciet | suboles multos memorata per annos |
sacra deis patribusque suis | memoresq(ue) priorum
et memo|[20]*res nostri nostrorumq(ue) alta | propago*
aeterno seruent | semper memorabile nomen. |
quisquis est (!) aut olim nostra de | stirpe futurus:
sis memor |[25] *antiqui nominis et tituli,*
in | quorum titulo hic datur esse | locus,
et domus aeternae | tu tueare focos.

To the Spirits of the Departed.

For Fabia Pyrallis, the best and most saintly patroness, who has deserved well of herself: Artemisius, the freedman.

She left this place as residence for everyone's offspring after their death, but before that already as residence for her offspring, before that already as residence for her husband.

Not yet serene again, as she cries, in a most woeful state of mind, she dies and, already nourishing woeful thoughts, she trapped us in sadness. But we, distressed and in memory of our patroness, have taken loving care of them in serenity, of a mother with her offspring and with her husband, remembering our common name, and the offspring, (to be) remembered for many years, held sacred ceremonies in honor of the gods and their ancestors, in memory of both their elders and ourselves, and our illustrious offspring may serve forever that name that is worthy to remember.

Whoever is or will one day be of our descent: may you remember the ancient name and this memorial, for whose memorial this place is granted, and may you look after the fires of your eternal home.

The text is divided into two parts, a five-line prose passage (l. 1–5), and a largely hexametrical poem (l. 6–28 = v. 1–15). In the poetic part, there are two isolated pentameters, v. 2 and 6, and the pentametrical coda of v. 13–15. The poem's opening with a hexameter and pentameter sequence may initially be considered as establishing

[54] Cf. also above, section 2 (i). Cf. also below, section 3 (iii).

an elegiac, only for that rhythm to be disrupted from the v. 3 onwards. This, however, is a slight misconception.

To understand what has happened here it is essential to look at the content of the two pentameters as well as their context. The first two lines of the poem may, of course, be taken as an elegiac distich — praising the patroness's caring for her household (v. 1) and her family (v. 2). But v. 2, *ante | tamen nato coniuge (!) et ante suo* ('but before that already as residence for her offspring, before that already as residence for her husband'), is a key phrase looking ahead rather than concluding this first movement: Fabia Pyrallis meant to take care of everyone, but before everything came to fruition, death of her husband and her son had left Fabia Pyrallis without her family and 'just' her household (or so the text implies). Her suffering and her death, shortly after she lost her family, is imagined to have affected everyone around her: they almost became a substitute (and the household is certainly keen to emphasise that point repeatedly, linking the generations, past, present, and future).

At the core of the memorial, however, remains the commemoration of *matrem | cum nato coniuge cumque suo* (v. 6: 'a mother with her offspring and with her husband') — a line that invokes and reaffirms the key terms of the second line, a line that establishes the nucleus of the family and its future. In that regard, it seems altogether intentional to link these two lines through the same meter — a meter that in the context of hexameters appears to be curtailed just as the life of Fabia's family.

The poem's ending is equally carefully planned. Corresponding with the opening, there appears to be an elegiac distich (v. 12–13), addressing the intended audience (v. 12) and asking them to pay their respect to the memorial (v. 13), repeating a recurring key phrase of the poem: *memor*.[55] This distich is extended by an additional two pentameters, establishing that this memorial is available to future generations (v. 14), and admonishing its readers to look after it (v. 15). The lines are interlinked in terms of their internal logic, but at the same time, due to the coincidence of verse and syntactical structures, give an impression of disjointedness and coming to an eventual standstill, thus allowing for composure and closure. The same effect, it would appear, was sought in other cases of stichic pentameters, as the example in section 3 (iii), below, demonstrates.

(iii) Predominantly elegiac compositions with an apparent disparity between hexameter and pentameter lines

As the figures for this category reveal, elegiac compositions with a disparity between hexameter and pentameter lines are typically due to an excess number of hexameters rather than pentameters. Many of them do not seem to follow any specific pattern, and this may reveal more about attitudes towards the elegiac distich than about the pentameter. One regular pattern that does occur in significant numbers can be singled out, however, as it appears to be a poetic form that was embraced more widely

[55] Cf. G. Sanders, *Sauver le nom de l'oubli: le témoignage des CLE d'Afrique et aliunde*, in: A. Mastino (ed.), *L'Africa romana. Atti del VI convegno di studio. Sassari, 16–18 dicembre 1988*, Sassari 1989, I 43–79, esp. 58 (with nt. 68) and 65 (with nt. 89).

in the context of Roman folk poetry: see below, section (iv) on 'sandwiched' pentameters in three- and five-line compositions. Excess pentameters, used κατὰ στίχον, are significantly less common,[56] apart from forms of the type that is described below, section (v).[57] An example of this in the context of a predominantly hexametrical composition, 1216, has just been discussed above, section (iii). A rather striking example from the context of predominantly elegiac compositions, datable to A. D. 10 on the basis of the mention of the suffect consuls of that year, is the following piece from the city of Rome, which survives through a manuscript tradition only (965):[58]

Rusticelia M(arci) l(iberta) Cytheris
debitum reddidit X K(alendas) Sept(embres) Maluginense et Blaeso co(n)s(ulibus).
quandocumque leuis tellus mea conteget ossa
incisum et duro nomʳenˡ erit lapide,
quod si forte tibi fuerit fatorum cura meorum,
ne graue sit tumulum uisere saepe meum.
et quicumque tuis umor labetur ocellis,
protinus inde meos defluet in cineres.
(uac.)
quid lacrumis opus est Rusticeli carissime |[10] *coniunx*
(cont.) *extinctos cineres sollicitare meos?*
una domus cunctis nec fugienda uiris.[59]
ut quae uolui tempore tempus habet.
nondum {bis}uicenos annos compleuerat annus,
supremum Parcae sorte dedere mihi.

Rusticelia Cytheris, freedwoman of Marcus, returned what she owed on the 23rd of August under the consulship of Maluginensis and Blaesus.

As soon as light soil will cover my bones and my name will be cut into the hard rock, if you happened to care at all, by any chance, for my fate, may it not be a bother to you to visit my tomb often. And whatever fluid will drop from your eyes, it will flow further down from there into my ashes.

What need is there for tears to disturb my cold ashes, Rusticelius, my dearest husband? There is one home that no man may escape. Time gave me in (*or:* over) time whatever I wanted.

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[56] Cf. also E. Galletier, *Étude sur la poésie funéraire romaine d'après les inscriptions*, Paris 1922, 287–288.

[57] Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 180 is mistaken, however, to claim that '[t]he Latin inscriptions yield no examples of the pentameter κατὰ στίχον.'

[58] The first word inscribed in l. 10 belongs to the verse that is written in l. 9, hence the diacritically somewhat peculiar presentation of the text. — Further on this inscription and its relation to contemporary literary elegiac poetry see A. Keith, *Naming the Elegiac Mistress: Elegiac Onomastics in Roman Inscriptions*, in: A. Keith, J. Edmondson (eds.), *Roman Literary Cultures: Domestic Politics, Revolutionary Poetics, Civic Spectacle*, Toronto 2016, 59–88, esp. 66–67.

[59] According to the presentation in *CIL* VI 25617, this line was not indented, but presented as a hexameter. The presentation here, above, therefore reflects metrical design, not the transmitted presentation of the text.

This year had not yet completed twice twenty years, when the Fates assigned me my final one.

This inscription consists of three distinctive parts: a prose prescript (l. 1–2), a first poem of six lines (3–8), written in elegiacs, in which the deceased is presented as speaking in the first person, and a second poem of equally six lines (l. 9–14), apparently originally separated from the first through a little gap, in which first the deceased addresses her husband (l. 9–12) and then states her age at the time of death (l. 13–14).

Remarkably, it is precisely in the context of the representation of Rusticelia's addressing her grieving husband that the metre — otherwise with non-standard features, but essentially adhering to common principles — suddenly shifts from elegiacs to a composition of one hexameter (l. 9–10) and three pentameters (l. 10–12).[60] The three pentameter lines all aim at the same thing: comforting and calming the grieving husband, for him to compose himself and to find closure: he is thus asked to allow for the ashes to rest (l. 10), to consider that death is inevitable (l. 11), and to bear in mind that the deceased had all the time in this world that she desired (l. 12). Through this metrically extraordinary composition, the pace of the poem, otherwise bouncing back and forth between hexameters and pentameter decelerates, the calm of stichic regularity replaces the hitherto lively, excited rhythmical change, and three quintessential 'bottom lines' are designed to reduce the agitation of the husband's grief.

(iv) Sandwiched pentameters in three- and five-line compositions

A well-established pattern in popular compositions,[61] three- and five-line poems of the type 'hexameter — pentameter — hexameter (– pentameter — hexameter)' are a regular fixture in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*. An instructive, yet almost randomly selected, example for their workings is the following piece from Cirta in Numidia (Constantine, Algeria), dated to the late second or early third century. The relevant part of the element of the monument, which displays three separate blocks of (independent, but content-wise related) texts, reads as follows (1288):

[60] Another reason to be confident that this design is deliberate, and not merely an accidental replacement of a hexameter with a pentameter, is the observation that l. 11 does not, in fact, introduce any new overarching thought — l. 10–12 all resemble conclusions and downward movements with regard to their semantic value.

[61] This type of composition was even acknowledged by an otherwise sceptical Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 184 ff., presumably on the basis of the observation that there is precedence in Greek literary sources that were deemed respectable enough: 'the form rose to literature, but only in the inscriptional sphere'. Even in this context, however, Smith continues to maintain the view that '[s]ome are the result of mere collocation or inexperience.' The idea that literature's main function is not to endorse the validity of popular compositions, does not appear to have crossed his mind.

1 *D(is) M(anibus)*
Sittiae Spen[is].
3 *quisquis a|mat coniunx* |[5] *hoc exsemplo con|iungat amore(m).* |
est autem uitae dulce | *solaciolum:*
hac | *abit ad superos cum* |[10] *filio Episuco karissi|mo nostro.*
uixit | *a(nnos) LVII. h(ic) s(ita).*

To the Spirits of the Departed of Sittia Spenis.[62]

May any loving husband join a loving consort of the model that she gave. But there is a sweet, little consolation in life: she departed to the gods, with our most beloved son Episucus.

She lived 57 years. She is buried here.

The structure of the text is straightforward: after two lines of prose containing the customary dedication to the Manes and the name of the deceased, there is a poem that consists of three metrical lines (spread out over l. 3–10 of the actual inscription), followed by another short passage in prose with information about the deceased's age and the affirmation that she was buried there. The poetic part, consisting of a pentameter 'sandwiched' into two (hypermetrical) hexameter lines, was treated with unsurprising 19th century charm by the editors of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*:[63] 'Qui scripsit carmen fecisse sibi visus est', 'the writer imagined to have written a poem', followed by additional comments about flawed prosody ('a versifice esse correptam', 'corrupted by the poetaster') and the oddity of the diminutive *solaciolum*.

Prosodical issues and their significance in folk poetry to one side, it is worth considering the dynamics of the poem, however. Commonly, in the context of elegiac distichs, pentameters tend to provide closure and downward movement rather than to introduce new thoughts and impulses. Here, however, the pentameter turns against the narrative set in motion by the initial line to such an extent that it then attracts another hexameter to provide closure: Sittia is presented as an exemplary wife — the kind that any loving husband should be hoping to find. Now, however, she is dead: but (*autem*) — there is a bit of consolation, as Sittia, together with her son, will find her place *ad superos*. The pentameter that at first might be mistaken for a less significant constituent of the composition, thus turns out to be the crucial turning point of the poem — the introduction of a moment of *solaciolum* in between the loss of the beloved wife and her departure into the realms of the gods, the moment that makes everything bearable.

While three-line compositions are well attested, five-line compositions of this type are not only less common, but also often provide some additional difficulties in terms of textual coherence and interpretation — meaning that one can be less certain about

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[62] The name has also been explained as Sittia, daughter of Spenus; cf. J.-M. Lassère, *Recherches sur la chronologie des épitaphes païennes de l'Africa*, AntAfr 7, (1973) 7–151, esp. 113 nt. 1. There is, however, sufficient evidence for a female name *Spenis*: cf. e. g. *CIL* VI 10984, 12539, 133854, VIII 7525, to mention just a few examples.

[63] *CIL* VIII 7427 (cf. p. 1848) ad loc. — For a more useful metrical commentary see L. M. Rae, *A Study of the Versification of the African Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, Diss. University of British Columbia 1991, 112–114.

this pattern. A good example of this is the following — complex — textual cluster from Pompeii (949):[64]

Si potes et non uis, cur gaudia | differs
spemque foues et | cras usque redire iubes?
[er]|go coge mori quem |[5] *sine te uiuere cogis. |*
munus erit certe non | cruciasse boni:
[5] *quod spes | eripuit spes certe redd[i]t amanti.*

If you are capable and not willing — why do you postpone pleasures, both giving me hope and continually urging me to return tomorrow: just force, whom you force to live without you, to die! It will be a good person's duty, for sure, not to have inflicted torment:[65] that s/he took away (my) hopes … s/he for sure bestowed that apprehension on their lover!

The editors of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV (ad no. 1837) were torn whether or not v. 4–5 of the poem were a later addition to the text by a second hand. Whatever one's stance on the matter, it must be firmly noted that, either way, the composition thus always consisted of an odd number of verses, with a number of hexameters (with some metrical irregularities) 'sandwiching' the pentameter(s). If a second hand added v. 4–5, they understood the principle, and added in the same manner. One cannot help but wonder whether the argument that v. 4–5 may have been written by another person is not, implicitly, based on the observation of a change in tone and direction from v. 4 onwards. V. 1–3 seem to form a more or less coherent unit, as conveyed by the layout of the translation, above. The lines are a partly angry, partly resigned outburst of a wannabe lover against someone who has been tantalising them, continually inspiring hope for future adventures and giving them the cold shoulder. Why not just kill it off?

V. 4–5, beginning with the pentameter of v. 4, introduce a departure from these depressing thoughts, but, and this seems vital, v. 4 alone does not by any means on its own provide closure to the theme introduced by v. 1–3.[66] This countermovement,

[64] I exclude subsequent additions to this text that are clearly recognisable as such from the presentation of the text here. Cf. also Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria* (above, nt. 15) 96–97, 305 no. 91.

[65] The interpretation of this line is notoriously difficult. The proposed translation is what appears to me to be most likely in terms of verse structure and the basics of Latin grammar (which in several other translations that are available has been applied rather loosely); for a fuller discussion see e. g. recently L. Graverini, *Ovidian Graffiti: Love, Genre and Gender on a Wall in Pompeii. A New Study of CIL IV 5296 — CLE 950*, Incontri di filologia classica 12 (2012–2013), 1–28, esp. 21–22.

[66] A. Varone, *Erotica Pompeiana. Love Inscriptions on the Wall of Pompeii*, Rome 2002, 103–105, esp. 103 suggests that only the final line, v. 5, was added by another hand, which seems even more unlikely, considering the text layout across the inscribed lines. Varone, like many others, takes *munus* to mean 'price' (or 'reward' or 'gift'). The problem with this is, however, that this view leaves v. 5 entirely meaningless, as no one who has taken this view has yet been able to explain what exactly it is supposed to be that *spes* both steals from, and bestows upon, the spurned lover. — With a view to the metrical design, the anonymous reviewer kindly pointed out to me that l. 1 could be interpreted as hemiepes + penthemimer, and l. 3 as something approaching

spread out over two lines that closely linked by the recurring use of *certe* in v. 4 and v. 5, is about hope, *spes.* The sentiment of v. 5 — hope taking away what hope gives to the lover — has not yet been well understood, not least as interpreters have consistently assumed that *spes* must be a nominative singular, and thus the subject, of the sentence, resulting in translations that sound sufficiently philosophical, but are, in actual fact, meaningless.[67] The *spes* motif at that point is not new: it was already introduced in the first pentameter — *spemque foues*, 'giving me hope', a hope that is continually frustrated. The hexametrical bottom line returns to this with a twist after v. 4 and its reminder that it is a good person's duty not to inflict pain: the dreaded prospect of having been robbed of all hope (*quod spes eripuit*)[68] as a lover is finally dawning on the writer with certainty (*spes certe reddit amanti*). This turn is accompanied by a transition from a direct form of address, aimed at the love interest, in the second person to a third-person statement of resignation and despair. The agent behind *coge* and *cogis* (v. 3) as well as *eripuit* and *reddit* (v. 5) is identical, therefore.

On the basis of this, one must acknowledge that the structure of the entire composition very much hangs on its two pentameters: the first one introduces the crucial *spes* motif, the second one introduces the major intellectual shift — away from expressions of pain and suffering towards more abstract considerations about humane behaviour and, in a wordplay that explores the various facets of the term *spes* (thus linked back to v. 2), an expression of profound despair. In that regard, the five-line Pompeian poem, in its compository technique, operates on a similar basis as the aforementioned three-line poem from Cirta.

(v) Hexameter and double pentameter as concluding lines

Another well-established pattern in popular compositions consists of a sequence of 'hexameter — pentameter — pentameter', both individually and as concluding sequence of a longer composition. Sometimes one of the two pentameters contains a variant of the *sit tibi terra leuis* formula, but this is not at all always the case, and in virtually all cases in which it features it is rather obvious from the context that a deliberate effort was made to align it with the overall flow of the poem.[69]

An example of the popular 'hexameter — pentameter — pentameter', in this case: without the inclusion of any variant of *sit tibi terra leuis*, is the following poem from Ravenna (1326):

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a greater asclepiad, introducing, potentially, a curious lyric reminiscence to a reworking of Ov. *her.* 3.140. Such openness to even more daring metrical designs is very much called for.

67 Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria* (above, nt. 15) 97, 305, for example, argued that 'this presumably means 'at any rate to have refrained from torturing me will be the gift of a kind man', which implies that this was written by a woman', which can hardly be reconciled with the actual wording of the inscription.

68 For the phrase *spes eripere* (with *spes* as an acc. pl.) cf. Sil. 7.404.

69 The claim made by Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6) 184 that these cases are 'all bad, and all the result of collocation' is not based on any serious attempt to study the content and the structure of these pieces.

- - - - - -
[- - -]eli
et Caesiae Pri-
migeniae uxo(ri)
Q(uinto) Pub(licio) Geniali
5 *fratri et*
Peculiari matr(i)
Iuuenali lib(erto)
Modesti.
[1] *qui mortale genus* |[10] *statuit animamque* | *creauit*,
attribuit | *reddi corpora Elys*|*iis*.
hoc simul ut creda[s], | *tu moriture legis*.

(For . . .) [- - -]eli and Caesia Primigenia, his wife, and Quintus Publicius Genialis, his brother and Peculiaris, his mother; for Iuvenalis, freedman of Modestus.

Who required a mortal race and created the soul, made returning of their bodies to the Elysium part of it: so that you, too, believe it, read this, you, who eventually will have to die.

The inscription consists of two separate parts, visually distinguished by different letter sizes: the first part (l. 1–8) is a prose proscript listing the occupants of the burial and their family relationship. The second part (l. 9–14 = v. 1–3), inscribed in smaller letters, is a poem consisting of one hexameter and two pentameters reflecting on the human condition. V. 1–2 of the poem, in terms of their dynamics, may easily be interpreted as a 'regular' elegiac distich: the hexameter introduces a general theme, and the first pentameter provides a convincing bottom line to it. The second pentameter is of a summary nature as well, and in that it performs a similar function as the previous one. There is a slight nuance insofar as the first pentameter specifically answers to the preceding hexameter, whereas the second pentameter is a more generalising statement, asserting the relevance of the entire composition to its audience. Overall, however, the composition with its one hexameter and two pentameters gives the impression of a forceful opening with a double cadence.

A slightly different, yet equally significant use of a double pentameter closure can be seen in a somewhat longer composition in the following piece from Hasta (Asti) in Liguria (1149), tentatively dated to the late first century A. D.:

T(ito) Arrio T(iti) f(ilio) Tro(mentina) Tertio
ann(orum) XXI.
Mucia T(iti) f(ilia) Modesta
mater u(iua) f(ecit)
5 *sibi et T(ito) Arrio M(arci) f(ilio) uiro.*
[1] *inuida florentem rapuerunt* | *fata uiuentem,* |
nec licuit misero me super|*esse uiro.* |[10]
fleuit praesentem pater, | *fleuere sorores,* |
et mater tepido condidit | *ossa rogo,* |
[5] *qu(a)e prius hoc titulo* |[15] *debuit ipsa legi.* |
16 *in agro p(edes) XX in fronte p(edes) XX.*

For Titus Arrius Tertius, son of Titus, of the tribus Tromentina, aged 21. Mucia Modesta, daughter of Titus, his mother, had this made while she was still alive for herself and Titus Arrius, son of Marcus, her husband.

The spiteful Fates took me, flourishing, away in the middle of my life, and I was not allowed to outlive my husband.

My father mourned in my presence, my sisters mourned, and my mother buried my bones on this pyre, still warm: she, who deserved to be read about first in this inscription.

Twenty feet wide, twenty feet deep.

There are some substantial issues with the reported text.[70] Based on what appears to be the best reading of the monument's inscribed text, now lost, however, it would appear that the text once consisted of three parts: a prose prescript (l. 1–5) explaining the arrangements for this burial, a poem consisting of five lines (l. 6–15 = v. 1–5), and a final line (l. 16) defining the dimensions of the burial. The prose opening mentions three individuals in particular: Mucia Modesta, her son Titus Arrius Tertius, who died aged 21, and her husband (*uir*) Titus Arrius.

The opening distich of the poem (l. 6–9 = v. 1–2, contained entirely within these three lines of the actual inscription, with each metrical line laid out over two inscribed lines) mourns the loss of Mucia Modesta, who died in the middle of her life and was not allowed to outlive her husband. The subsequent three-line structure (l. 10–15 = v. 3–5, contained entirely within these six lines of the inscription) introduces the fact that the son, Titus Arrius Tertius also died — to the deep upset of his father and his sisters in the opening hexameter. The enumerative nature of the two hexameter lines (v. 1 and 3) is emphasised further by the recurring use of the participles referring to the respective deceased (*florentem*, *uiuentem* vs. *praesentem*). What follows in the subsequent pentameters, however, takes a different turn: first it is made clear that the son's death was almost immediately followed by that of the mother (the pyre has not yet cooled, and the mother's ashes bury those of the son still on the pyre); subsequently, the inversion of the natural order is mentioned: the son's name deserved to be inscribed after that of the mother — now, quite literally, it comes on top, to highlight the way in which the normal sequence of generations has been upset (l. 1–5).

The names in the prose part of the inscription reflect the upset order — an aspect that is even more apparent when one considers that the core of this prose part of the inscription, l. 3–5, points out that the original monument was set up by Mucia Modesta during her own lifetime, prior to her husband's need to modify it due to unforeseeable circumstances. Remarkably, the poem does not do the same. Instead, it introduces the mother first, then introduces the death of the son, explains the rapid sequence of deaths that hit the family, but then concludes with a line that, quite literally and beyond the topical nature of its underlying idea, draws attention to the arrangement of the inscription as a whole. The observation of such conscious design that underlies this text

[70] For a discussion of the discrepancies of the text between its editions in *CLE* and *CIL* cf. also M. F. del Barrio Vega, *La recopilación epigráfica de Juan Calvete de Estrella (1559)*, in: C. Fernández Martínez, M. Limón Belén, J. Gómez Pallarès, J. del Hoyo Calleja (eds.), *Ex officina. Literatura epigráfica en verso*, Seville 2013, 19–38, esp. 28.

suggests that little was left to chance, and that even the choice of metrical design was meaningful, most likely. In that regard, it is worth pointing out that the initial distich refers to the curtailment of life in its middle (*florentem*, *uiuentem*) — as well as to the fact that the surviving husband was deeply hurt by his — double! — loss. To make the composition end with the repetition of a pentameter, may thus have been a deliberate way of expressing the double curtailment that Titus Arrius, the grieving widower and father, experienced in his life due to his losses.

(vi) Inversions

As shown above, there are a number of poems that can be classed as inversions, including cases where the rhythm of the very opening line(s) is pentametrical. There are, however, even more complex cases that warrant further in-depth research and analysis as popular compositions. A particularly interesting one to illustrate the use of what would appear to be a form of inversion and permutation of elegiac structures and the like in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* is a piece from the city of Rome that has been presented as follows by Franz Bücheler (974):[71]

Inuida sors fati rapuisti Vitalem, | sanctam puellam, bis quinos annos, |
nec patris ac matris es miserata preces. |
accepta et cara sueis: mortua hic sita sum. |[5]
cinis sum, cinis terra est, terra dea est, | ergo ego mortuua non sum.

Bücheler, believing in a specific underlying model, commented that 'primi uersus ex hexametro pentametrisque detorti, syllogismus extremus e poemate graeco translatus' ('the first lines are corrupted from a hexameter and a pentameters, the final syllogism has been lifted from a Greek poem').[72] A closer inspection of the inscription itself reveals, however, that there is little that is unplanned in this piece.[73] The inscription has been laid out over six lines, with lines 2 (*sanctam puellam bis quinos annos*) and 5 (*cinis sum cinis terra est terra dea est*) indented:

Inuida sors fati rapuisti Vtilem,
sanctam puellam, bis quinos annos.
nec patris ac matris es miserata preces.
accepta et cara sueis: mortua hic sita sum.
cinis sum, cinis terra est, terra dea est:
ergo ego mortuua non sum.

Spiteful lot of fate, you snatched Utilis away, a saintly girl, twice five years old. You showed no mercy towards the prayers of the father and the mother. She was welcome and loved by her folks. 'Now I rest here! I am ashes, ashes is earth, Earth is a deity: consequently, I am not dead.'

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[71] Bücheler's reading of Vitalem is false: as the editors of *CIL* VI explain, this reading is a subsequent (false) correction of someone who had not recognised Utilis as a personal name.

[72] F. Bücheler in *CLE* ad loc.; a similar view was repeated in *CIL* VI ad n. 29609.

[73] An image is available at http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/bilder.php?bild=PH0005758 (last accessed: November 2018).

It is essential, to bear the layout in mind when interpreting the text.[74] It thus becomes clear that lines that are aligned to the left (and not indented) introduce a new movement. The piece opens with an address directed at fate itself that took Utilis, a girl at the innocent age of ten (l. 1–2). Fate refused to listen to the parents (l. 3). The girl was loved by all, but now she is dead — something that, through her apparent descent into the soil, simultaneously allows her to ascend into the realm of gods in the imagination of her family (l. 4–5). There can only be one conclusion: Utilis is not dead after all (l. 6). The layout thus brings out the meaning that is enshrined in the phrases of this piece, many of which seem to come from popular compositions also manifested elsewhere (including in Greek).

Though clearly not uninformed in literary terms, the piece is not without challenges structurally, as one must observe the transition from an address to Fate by an unspecified narrator (but probably not the deceased, as it talks about her in the third person, l. 1–4, first half) to a first-person intervention by the deceased herself (l. 4, second half, to l. 6). Metrically, the analysis of this piece is even more challenging, and the apparent unevenness and lack of adherence to literary standards has resulted in the assumption that this piece has been merely cobbled together by an altogether inept and unthinking composer. In the light of the previous considerations, this assessment may not be entirely fair, however. There cannot be any reasonable doubt, of course, that the composer of the inscription found it impossible, whether for reasons of ability or intention, to follow a more widely used rhythmical design. At the same time, it is also apparent that l. 1 opens perfectly well as a hexameter (and its curious, almost radical trochaic end may well mirror how the deceased's life was cut short by Fate) and that l. 6 concludes like a hexameter: it is in between these two lines that matters become significantly more difficult, especially in l. 2 and 5 — incidentally those very lines that appear indented. At the inscriptions core, l. 3–4, there is a reasonably well composed pentameter (l. 3) followed by what appears to be a line in the same rhythm with an excess syllable at its beginning (l. 4) — both lines that, like l. 1 and 6, have been aligned to the left as openings of new paragraphs.

Based on these observations, one may have certain reservations regarding the view that the author 'merely' corrupted hexameters for his l. 1–2 and 5–6, and that the poem is nothing but a metrically corrupted structure consisting of two elegiacs, whose least important flaw is the inversion of the (allegedly) customary sequence of hexameter and pentameter in the second distich. At any rate, it would seem obvious that the poet aimed for a hexametrical rhythm for the composition's frame of l. 1 and 6, and put two (almost unproblematic) pentameters in the centre (l. 3–4) — a centre around which the entire composition revolves: the parents' prayers failed to prevent a cruel fate from snatching away their child (l. 3), and, though loved by all, the child now rests here (l. 4). Working outward from this centre, fate may have acted out of envy (l. 1), but in doing so, it has also rendered the child immortal (l. 6). Placing two pentameters — the very lines that

[74] On the layout of the Latin verse inscriptions from the city of Rome in general cf. now Limón Belén, *La compaginación* (above, nt. 13); this item is not discussed specifically in greater detail, however.

Ovid had described as rendered imperfect due to divine interference and snatching away of a foot — at the centre, interrupting and/or upsetting a flow of hexameters that seems to take off well at the beginning, and that is reconciled with its original design at the end, thus may have been rather more thoughtful a composition than scholars thus far have been willing to acknowledge (even though its metrical issues remain apparent).[75]

4. Looking Beyond the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*

With the framework established for the evidence in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* in mind, it is possible to revisit a number of literary instances of non-customary uses of the pentameter in surviving Latin literature.[76] One such aspect could be the (alleged) use of this metre in the form of monostichs in a prose context by the elder Cato.[77] More importantly, however, it is in this context that one must reconsider two well-known passages in Petronius, in which Trimalchio comes up with what one might call tristichs — compositions of three lines.[78] In the first instance, upon throwing the famous silver skeleton as a memento mori, Trimalchio comes up with the following composition:[79]

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[75] The anonymous referee pointed out to me, absolutely correctly, that there is another way of interpreting this composition — more daring still, but highly attractive. In particular, they pointed out that l. 1 is almost — but not quite — another instance of a hemiepes + penthemimer composition (that had been observed on another occasion already, above, on 949). Then, and I quote from the report, '*rapuisti Vtilem* reads almost as a curious dochmiac with its beginning adapted to the preceding dactylic rhythm, which would be absurd — were it not for the fact that line 5 might be analysed as dochmiac + hemiepes. This makes us realise that a hemiepes in the latter part of the verse is a recurring pattern; we see it not only in line 5, but also line 4 (…), but more properly an enoplian (or prosodiac) + hemiepes, whereas line 2 is iambic penthemimer + hemiepes (but it is important to note how the penthemimer continues the trochaic rhythm of the *Vtilem* concluding the preceding verse). Line 6 fits this interpretation as yet another type of 'enoplian.' In sum, all these correspondences suggest an unparalleled, yet deliberately complex structure evocative of elegiacs, but with a lyric tone.'

[76] It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the developments in Greek poetry. It would be an important next step, however, to investigate the way in which these two poetic traditions are linked with a view to the theme of the present paper. A substantial amount of evidence has been collated by Smith, *Some Irregular Forms* (above, nt. 6), albeit in the context of what now comes across as a rather regrettable condescending discourse at the expense of patterns not sanctioned by a canon of literary figures.

[77] Suggested by E. V. Marmorale, *La vendetta della ... poesia ovvero un pentametro di Catone*, GIF 5 (1952) 148–149.

[78] For a comprehensive discussion of these two compositions see, in addition to the items listed below on individual points, e. g. A. Setaioli, *I due 'epigrammi' di Trimalchione (Petr. Sat. 34.10 e 55.3)*, Prometheus 30 (2004) 43–66 and cf. also G. Sampino, *Il Satyricon come 'ipertesto multiplo'. Forme e funzioni dell'intertestualità nel romanzo di Petronio*, Diss. Palermo 2017, 160–163.

[79] The piece is notably absent from E. Courtney's edition of Petronian poems (*The Poems of Petronius*, Atlanta 1991). See further e. g. N. W. Slater, *Reading Petronius*, Baltimore 1990, 161–162 ('a wonderful awful poem'); cf. also U. J. Beil, *Die hybride Gattung: Poesie und Prosa im europäischen Roman von Heliodor bis Goethe*, Würzburg 2010, 94.

Eheu nos miseros, quam totus homuncio nil est!
sic erimus cuncti, postquam nos auferet Orcus.
ergo uiuamus, dum licet esse bene.

Alas, for us poor mortals, all that poor man is is nothing. So we shall all be, after the world below takes us away. Let us live then while it can go well with us.

(Petr. 34.10, transl. M. Heseltine, W. H. D. Rouse)

Later, talking about the uncertainty of the human condition, Trimalchio decides that the moment should be captured in another little epigram:

Ita, inquit Trimalchio, non oportet hunc casum sine inscriptione transire; statimque codicillos poposcit et non diu cogitatione distorta haec recitauit:

"Quod non expectes, ex transuerso fit . . .
. . . et supra nos Fortuna negotia curat:
quare da nobis uina Falerna puer."

ab hoc epigrammate coepit poetarum esse mentio diuque summa carminis penes Mopsum Thracem memorata est donec Trimalchio (…) *inquit* (…).

"Ah," said Trimalchio, "then we should not let this occasion slip without a record." And he called at once for paper, and after no long reflection declaimed these crooked verses:

"What men do not look for turns about and comes to pass … And high over us Fortune directs our affairs. Wherefore, slave, hand us Falernian wine."

A discussion about poets arose out of this epigram, and for a long time it was maintained that Mopsus of Thrace held the crown of song in his hand, until Trimalchio said (…).

(Petr. 55.3, transl. M. Heseltine, W. H. D. Rouse, corrected)

The transmitted text of this passage, fascinating to anyone who ever wondered how individuals in the Roman world would go about drafting their poetry even for their somewhat more spontaneous outbursts, appears to be corrupt in a number of ways.[80] A crucial point is that the scansion of the first two lines does not result in any standard metre. At the same time one ought to be loath to correcting it, as the text itself specifically says that Trimalchio's lines were *distorta*.[81] The overall dactylic nature of the first couple of lines, however, would seem to suggest that Trimalchio was aiming for a composition akin to his earlier one, above.

Unsurprisingly, scholars have almost universally adopted Petronius' purposefully condescending perspective on Trimalchio's poetic abilities and, without much reflection

[80] See e. g. G. Jensson, *The Recollections of Encolpius: The Satyrica of Petronius as Milesian Fiction*, Groningen 2004, 10–11.

[81] Heseltine and Rouse in the Loeb translation were not the only ones who took *distorta* to go with *cogitatione* rather than *haec*. This seems perverse, however, both syntactically and from a content point of view.

or contextualisation, dismissed his poetry as doggerel or worse[82] — a lack of active reflection that is at odds, in fact, with Trimalchio's own desire, as displayed in the second passage, not only to compose, but to talk about poetry and literature more widely, including some (at least nowadays) obscure points of reference such as Mopsus of Thrace. The point is: Petronius chose to represent Trimalchio in a specific way, as a representative of a certain class and a certain type — a type that is rich, lacking in taste and understanding in a way that consistently, and with a grating effect, misses the mark from an aristocratic point of view (and to the entertainment of a snobbish elite readership), but is in fact not at all altogether uninformed or downright cretinous. To this end, Petronius makes him produce a specific brand of poetry, applying certain aesthetic standards that, for this to work out on a humorous level, must resonate with common perception, as well as some basic knowledge, of the workings of Roman folk poetry. Trimalchio's poetry is not by default worse than any other kind of poetry due to its application of different aesthetic parameters: it is just different, and it is different in a marked way, exaggerated for comic purposes. What one can say, though, is that Petronius in these two instances of Trimalchian tristichs, so to speak, appears to have captured quite accurately a type of composition that was, in fact, in popular use. This is not only true for the form, but also for the use of the pentameter in these compositions as a summarising 'bottom line'.

A less well known, yet similarly instructive passage can be found in the *Historia Augusta*. In the description of the life of Rome's short-lived co-emperor Diadumenian (A.D. 217–218), son of the Mauretanian Roman emperor Macrinus, the following somewhat convoluted passage is related:

Exstat epistula Opilii Macrini, patris Diadumeni, qua gloriatur non tam se ad imperium peruenisse, qui esset secundus imperii, quam quod Antoniniani nominis esset pater factus, quo clarius illis temporibus non fuerat uel deorum. quam epistulam priusquam intexam, libet uersus inserere in Commodum dictos, qui se Herculem appellauerat, ut intellegant omnes tam clarum fuisse Antoninorum nomen, ut illi ne deorum nomen commode uideretur adiungi. uersus in Commodum Antoninum dicti:

Commodus Herculeum nomen habere cupit,
Antoninorum non putat esse bonum,
expers humani iuris et imperii,
sperans quin etiam clarius esse deum,
quam si sit princeps nominis egregii.
non erit iste deus nec tamen ullus homo.

hi uersus a Graeco nescio quo compositi a malo poeta in Latinum translati sunt, quos ego idcirco inserendos putaui, ut scirent omnes (…).

There is still in existence a letter written by Opellius Macrinus, father of Diadumenianus, in which he boasts, not so much that he attained to the imperial power, having previously held

[82] In addition to what has been mentioned above, nt. 78–79, cf. e. g. J. Bodel, *Trimalchio's Underworld*, in: J. Tatum, *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, Baltimore, London 1994, 237–259, esp. 237 with nt. 1 (p. 253).

second place in the Empire, as that he had become the father of one bearing the name Antoninus, than which no name was then more illustrious — no, not even that of the gods. But before I insert this letter, I wish to include some verses directed at Commodus, who had taken the name of Hercules, in order that I may show to all that the name of the Antonines was so illustrious that it was not deemed suitable to add to it even the name of a god. The verses directed against Commodus Antoninus are as follows:

> Commodus wished to possess Hercules' name as his own;
> That of the great Antonines did not seem noble enough.
> Nothing of common law, nothing of ruling he knew,
> Hoping indeed as a god greater renown to acquire
> Than by remaining a prince called by an excellent name.
> Neither a god will he be, nor for that matter a man.

These verses, written by an unknown Greek, some unskilful poet has rendered into Latin, and I have thought it right to insert them here for the purpose of showing to all that (…).

(SHA *Diadum.* 7.1–3, transl. D. Magie)

Framed in a trebly dismissive narrative (an invective, composed by an unknown Greek, rendered into Latin by an incompetent poet),[83] this piece is a rare instance for a use of the pentameter κατὰ στίχον, an oddity even within the context of an already odd *Historia Augusta* and its several remarkable poems.[84] As was shown above, in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica,* passages that exhibit a sequence of pentameters are rare and short. The anonymous poem against Commodus, branded for its allegedly poor quality, clearly enters a next level — exaggerating popular uses (a connection that the author was quick to point out in his reference to the *malus poeta*): and yet, clearly the poem was not bad enough so as not to include it. It is not only the stichic use of the pentameter, however, that makes this poem resonate with a practice whose beginnings in Rome can be seen in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*.[85] Looking at the content of the poem, as well as its formal design with an absolute match of metrical and syntactical boundaries at the end of each verse, one might regard this composition as an extended

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[83] On the piece's context in the general ridicule aimed at Commodus cf. O. Hekster, *Commodus: An Emperor at the Crossroads*, Amsterdam 2002, 208.

[84] The poems of the *Historia Augusta* are still a relatively understudied field. See, however, most importantly I. Cazzaniga, *Gli epigrammi contra Diadumeniano e Macrino (H.A.) e la tradizione epigrammatica*, PP 27 (1972) 137–155, B. Baldwin, *Verses in the* Historia Augusta, BICS 25 (1978) 50–58, and J. Velaza, X. Espluga, Hos versus nescio qui…: *la technique de fiction des* carmina Latina epigraphica *dans* l'Histoire Auguste, in: G. Bonamente, H. Brandt (eds.), *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Bambergense* (Atti dei Convegni sulla Historia Augusta 10), 2007, 175–182.

[85] This is an important addition to the more common narrative that literary composition rules existed as an abstract, absolute ideal that gets violated in the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*; further on this see M. Rodríguez-Pantoja, *La aceptación de las normas de la poesía latina culta en los « Carmina Latina Epigraphica »*, in: J. Luque Moreno, P. R. Díaz y Díaz (eds.), *Estudios de métrica latina*, Granada 1999, II 851–876.

collection of punch lines directed against the butt of its humour: the disjointed nature of the composition adds to the impression of a veritable barrage of put-downs.

This compository technique, capitalising on the sensation of the pentameter as the archetypical punchline, remains in place when the pentameter first appears to become somewhat more of an acceptable avant garde art form that no longer requires an apologetic introduction. This is true for both its stichic use, as the spurious Ausonian poem on Anacharsis and eventually Martianus Capella's poem on peace in the natural world[86] reveal, just as much as it applies to its use in epodic forms such as the *carmina* of Boethius' *Consolations* 3.3 (combined with iambic trimeters) and 4.4 (in conjunction with hendecasyllabi).

5. An Afterthought

There has been, and, to an extent, there continues to be, a tradition in classical scholarship to dismiss variations from, and violations of, an (alleged) metrical norm as intellectual or artistic inadequacies of lesser minds. Vertically hierarchical and prescriptive approaches to linguistic phenomena have long been dismissed as unhelpful, though rooted in the principles, and the educational aims (*ne dicam* snobbery), of the ancient grammarians. Metrical prescriptions need to follow their linguistic counterparts: they belong on the scrap heap of outdated philological methodology.

As far as the pentameter is concerned, it is safe to say that it was much more than 'just' a *uersus alter*, 'that other line', in Roman folk poetry, a line that both structurally and content-wise served as a marker of defining moments and, unsurprisingly, as the bottom line for complex thought in popular compositions. Whoever thought that it would be the best rhythm to employ in the desire to celebrate the life and death of Nardus, the bashful poet, knew exactly what they were doing.

Department of Ancient History,
Papyrology and Epigraphy,
University of Vienna
Universitätsring 1
1010 Vienna, Austria
peter.kruschwitz@univie.ac.at

Peter Kruschwitz

[86] Mart. Cap. 9.907–908.