7 The golden line: ancient and medieval lists of special hexameters and modern scholarship

Kenneth Mayer

The golden line is a type of hexameter frequently mentioned in Anglo-American Latin classrooms and in contemporary scholarship written in English. The golden line is variously defined, but most uses of the term conform to the following definition from the seventeenth century:

[Int]f the Verse doe consist of two Adjectives, two Substantives and a Verb onely, the first Adjective agreeing with the first Substantive, the second with the second, and the Verb placed in the midst, it is called a Golden Verse: as,

Lurida terribiles miscent aconita novercae.
Pendula flaventem pingebat bractea crinem.

With a few recent exceptions, scholars outside the English-speaking world do not discuss the golden line, and when they do they generally make clear that it is an English phenomenon. It is not found in any current handbooks on Latin grammar or metrics. The definition quoted above is the earliest known use of the term, in an obscure Latin textbook published in England in 1652, which never sold well and of which only four copies are extant today. The golden line would therefore seem to have nothing to do with medieval practice and still less with ancient grammatical theory. However, the curious fortunes of this form provide a window into a world of ancient poetic theory and its medieval continuation that has evaded systematic study. I refer to the lists of good and bad hexameter types compiled by ancient grammarians such as Servius, Diomedes, and Sacerdos, and by Greek metricists as well. These lists inspired later poetic criticism from Bede to Julius Caesar Scaliger, and seem also to have influenced poets themselves writing in the same period.

I will begin by discussing the lists of hexameters in antiquity and afterwards. Then in the second part I offer a text, translation, and commentary of the most complete list, that of Diomedes Grammaticus. In the third and final part, I discuss how ancient and medieval poets and pedagogues used one of these forms, “the golden line.” In the course of these three parts we will travel some bizarre and deservedly untrodden byways of metrical theory, but in light of the continuing popularity of the golden line among scholars and pedagogues today (see note 1 below), a journey to the origins of the form seems both relevant and worthwhile.
1. Lists of special hexameters

As is evident from our own handbooks of Latin grammar, the study of metrics has usually been treated as the poor foster child of the study of grammar. And no wonder: The overwhelming majority of metrical treatises written from antiquity onward consist mainly of dry lists of Latin words and their syllable lengths. These lists were of course necessary, if one was to read, enjoy, teach, and compose in a verse form no longer based upon contemporary pronunciation and accentuation and if one did not have the benefit of modern dictionaries. Some ancient and medieval treatises, however, address the same concerns as modern metrical handbooks and appendices, in that they briefly describe the standard verse forms and provide students with examples of each. Examples of such treatises would be Servius’s De centum metris (GL 4.456–467), which is usually dated to around 410 C.E., or a section of the Ars of Attilius Fortunatus (GL 6.283–301).

In general these treatises have the vocabulary and concerns of metrics as conventionally understood today, but Servius’s work contains something more. After treating 75 different meters, grouped and discussed by type (iambic, trochaic, dactylic, anapestic, etc.), he adds a final section entitled De dispersis (GL 4.465–467). Most of the meters in this section are what we would now classify as lyric meters, but the final four meters in the treatise are curious variations of meters treated earlier in the work: the echo verse, whose last word (usually a monosyllable) repeats the previous syllable(s); two types of reciprocal verses, which scan in different meters if the word order is reversed; and the rhopalic verse, a hexameter whose every word has one more syllable than the preceding word. The hallmarks of these verse types are similar to those of the golden line: Word order and arrangement are more important than quantitative prosody. These artificial games of word order—again, like the golden line—are no longer considered crowning points of metrics, but they were a concern of ancient grammarians, and they have not yet been systematically studied.

Perhaps the earliest evidence of both the use of these verses and their systematic study in antiquity is a poem by Martial, in which he disavows such silly versifying:

>Although I don’t boast a verse supine
>Nor read Sotades’ backward behind,
>Although Echo never sings back like a Greek
>Nor cute Attis offer me a galliamb soft and weak,
>All the same, Classicus, I’m not such a bad poet.
>What? Would you force a sprinter to squeeze
>Into the delicate mesh of a circus trapeze?
>Complicated hobbies are a crass way to go,
>And putting effort into ephemera is stupid and slow.
>Let Palemon write poems in popular circles,
>I’d rather please the ears of those in the know.  

>Quod nec carmine glorior supino
>Nec retro lego Sotaden cinaedum,
>Nusquam Graecula quod recantat echo
>Nec dictat mihi luculentus Attis
>Mollem debilitate galliambon:
>Non sum, Classice, tam malus poeta.
Quid si per gracilis vias petauri
Invitum iubeas subire Ladan?
Turpe est difficiles habere nugas
Et stultus labor est ineptiarum.
Scribat carmina circulis Palaemon,
Me raris iuvat auribus placere.] (2.86)

Martial here refers to a hexameter that becomes a Sotadian when read backwards (a type of reciprocal verse), an echo verse, and the galliambics of the sort used in Catullus 63. At the end of the poem, Martial mentions the grammarian Quintus Remmius Palaemon as a popular practitioner of such verses. Suetonius, too, notes that Palaemon was known for his extemporaneous verses, eloquence, and for his poems in varied and unusual meters. Martial's contemporary Quintilian also refers to verses that can be read backwards as Sotadians (9.4.90).

A passage from the second-century littérature Aulus Gellius is the earliest attestation of the rhopalic verse that shows up later in Servius's catalogue. In the Noctes Atticae, Gellius complains about a boring book that includes a lot of useless pedantic information, including "the name for the verse that grows in each word by a single syllable" [et quis adeo versus sit, qui per singula vocabula singulis syllabis increscat] (14.6.4). This reference shows us that these special verse forms were discussed by grammarians, that there was no consensus on the name for the rhopalic verse in antiquity, and that Gellius, like Martial before him, considered the study of such verses beneath his dignity.

But several Greek and Roman grammarians, including Servius, did bother with this nonsense. The surviving Greek lists of special hexameter verse types enter the verses under various rubrics such as παράθεσις "conditions", διαφορά "types", or τιμωρία "forms of heroic meter". None of these lists dates from the "classical" period, although some of the terms used in them can be traced back to antiquity. For the most part the Greek verse types are metrical anomalies -- such as hexameters with extra or missing syllables -- rather than unusual word arrangements such as the rhopalicus or reciprocal verses. The two exceptions are the ἐπιφάνεια, which has a word-division at every foot division, and the τεσσάρων, which contains all eight parts of speech (according to the definitions of Greek grammarians). First among the Roman lists that have been preserved is that of Marius Plotius Sacerdos, a third-century grammarian (Kaster 352–353), who gives a short list of the virtues of the metri heroici (GL 6.505–506). Then perhaps come those of Victorinus, a fourth-century grammarian (Kaster 437), who in three separate sections of his Ars grammatica discusses the flaws of verses (GL 6.67), superior verses (GL 6.71), and reciprocal verses (GL 6.113). The specific verse types included in all of these lists will be detailed in part II, a commentary on a list from Diomedes Grammaticus, a grammarian approximately contemporary with Victorinus.

Diomedes provides us with the most complete list of these types of Latin hexameters that has come down to us from antiquity. His date cannot be determined with precision. He certainly wrote his Ars grammatica before 500 C.E., and it has been plausibly suggested that he wrote after 350 C.E. His Ars apparently benefited from earlier grammars such as Palaemon's and possibly Charisius's. Diomedes' work, edited in GL 1.299–529, is divided into three books, the third of which is devoted to poetry and meter. After defining poetry, feet, and syllables, and discussing the various genres (473–494), Diomedes devotes a long section to the dactylic hexameter (494–500). This section on hexameters is slightly out of place, since it precedes fundamental definitions
of meters, feet, and other terms (500–502). This division may have been pedagogically dictated, since pupils would be expected to compose and work with hexameters first, and then – perhaps – proceed to the other meters. A long catalogue of all the verses except dactylic hexameter concludes the book and with it Diomedes’ *Ars* (502–529). The dactylic hexameter section is capped by a chapter entitled “De pedibus metricis sive significationum industria” (498–500). Here Diomedes lists the ten best (optimi) verses, including (under the name of fistularis) Servius’s rhopalic verse, and five types of flawed verses. This list remained the longest and most complete list of such forms until the Renaissance. In fact, a few of the verse types named by Diomedes are never mentioned again until the advent of printing.

A measure of the popularity and utility of lists such as Diomedes’ in late antiquity would be the use of several of the verse forms therein by the fourth-century poets Optatian Porfyrius and, to a lesser extent, Ausonius. In the ensuing centuries, lists of special hexameters continue to appear in handbooks of grammar and metrics, but contain few of the forms from the classical lists. It is probably a credit to the poetic sensibilities of Aldhelm and Bede that they do not include the ancient forms in their *Artes poeticae*, despite their demonstrated familiarity with Diomedes and with other ancient grammarians who assembled such lists. Aldhelm does, however, discuss the flaws of the heroic verse, some of which are found in Victorinus’s list of flaws (GL 6.67) and some in Diomedes’. Curiously, some of the flaws and Aldhelm’s rubric for them (passiones as derived from pathos, i.e., παθή) seem ultimately to derive from the Greek lists. Bede’s section *Quae sit optima carminis forma* (Kendall 111–115) praises several characteristics in hexameters but does not name them and repeatedly warns against using them to excess. First he praises an interlocked form of double hyperbaton that links the beginning with the end of the verse. Then he praises verses that consist of only nouns, only proper nouns, or only verbs. Finally he again emphasizes the importance of hyperbaton, especially in placing the adjectives before the nouns. As we shall see in part III, Bede’s precepts were to have considerable influence.

Most medieval metrical handbooks and *artes poeticae* lack these lists, and instead one finds full discussions of the rhetorical figures. Presumably the special verses listed in Servius’s *De centum metris*, known and copied throughout the medieval period, were known, but these verses do not seem to have had much influence on later *artes versificandi* or *artes metricae*. However, four medieval texts have lists of special hexameters that include several popular postclassical types in addition to earlier verse forms. Two of these treatises are unusual because they both use Servius’s *De centum metris* and build upon it by adding a few forms, such as the leonine verse. Leonine hexameters are verses in which the caesura and the verse-end rhyme:

\[
\text{Pestis avaritiae | durumque nefas simoniae} \\
\text{Regnat in Ecclesia | liberiore via.} \\
\text{Permutant mores | homines, cum dantur honores:} \\
\text{Corde stat inflato | pauper honore dato.}
\]

Occasional leonine verses can be found in classical poetry, but some medieval poets write poems only in the form. Two other tracts focus almost exclusively on the new verse forms, most of which feature rhyme: the *Laborintus* of Everardus Alemannus and an unedited anonymous tract about hexameter verse types in a fourteenth-century manuscript. Everardus, writing in the thirteenth century, lists 27 types of hexameters or pentameters, only one of which (his *retrogradi*, equivalent to Servius’s *reciprocī*) is
known from the ancient treatises. The anonymous tract seems to have a much smaller list of similar hexameters.

Thus, while several medieval metrical handbooks incorporate a doctrine of special hexameters, they do not report the particular forms praised or censured by the ancient grammarians. Their absence cannot entirely be ascribed to the basically practical nature of medieval prosodies and metrical treatises: Other ancient catalogues of useless metrical information, like the 32 species of the hexameter, abound in all periods. The new names and new forms seem to indicate that there was a tradition of naming verse types, that this tradition could reflect new trends in poetry, and that this tradition was remarkably independent of the lists of antiquity. In fact, the medieval lists better reflect contemporary poetic practices than the ancient lists.

In the Renaissance, several writers on metrics sought out the lists of ancient metrical commentators, Greek and Roman, and combined them and the medieval material into omnibus lists. An early attempt was by Jodocus (Josse) Badius Ascensius (1462–1535), who included a list of special hexameters in his De metrorum ratione et generibus. His list consists of ten verses that are direct translations of one Greek list, followed by the metrum gravidum (apparently the same as the λαγαρός), and concludes with seven verses translated from another Greek list. While some of Badius's terminology appears to be original to him, other terms and their corresponding verse examples are taken directly from the lists in Sacerdos and Victorinus. Roughly contemporary with Badius is a list contained in Johannes Sulpitius Verulanus's De versuum scansione, which lists fourteen flawed verses followed by fourteen "named" verses. As with Badius's verse types, many of these types ultimately derive from the ancient lists, but there are several forms that are medieval or are here attested for the first time: inane, hemistichium, intercalare, tibicen, leoninum, serpentinum, and centones (such as those of Ausonius).

The pinnacle of Renaissance list-mongering is provided by Johannes Murmellius (1480–1517), whose Tabulae in artis componendorum versuum rudimenta contains a list of 47 types of hexameter verse. This list is an uncritical compilation from every possible source. Verse types 8 through 14 on this list are taken directly from Diomedes' list, with little change and, apparently, little understanding. Murmellius does not seem to notice, for example, that his verse type 8, the inlibatus versus (from Diomedes), is a doublet of his verse type 15, the politicus, which derives ultimately from the Greek lists. Murmellius includes some arcane forms from both Latin and Greek sources, such as these examples:

24. Correlativus, qui correlationes habet: ut,
   Pastor, arator, eques, pavi, colui, superavi,
   Capras, rus, hostes, fronde, ligone, manu.  
25. affectatus, qui ex meris aut verbis, aut nominibus constat: ut
   Instruct, inducit, docet, admonet, arguit, urget.
   Classica, tela, faces, tormenta, tonitra, classes.  
26. μακρόρωπος, qui ex longis dictionibus constat, ut
   Insatiabilibus Constantinopolitan
   Oppressaverunt sollicitudinibus.

These forms seem extremely artificial and removed from the concerns of Latin poetry as we understand them today, but the last two examples – at least – are comparable to forms found in late antiquity. Murmellius's affectatus versus is similar to a verse form found in Optatian Porfyrius's work and discussed in his scholia. The μακρόρωπος is
but a larger set (or extreme variant) of the four-word hexameter praised by Sacerdos and Victorinus.42

One last Renaissance metrical treatise should be mentioned before I discuss Diomedes in detail: the Poetice of Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484–1558). Although Scaliger clearly relies on Murmellius’s work for his own discussion of good and bad hexameters, his work is more valuable to us because he does not merely copy what lies before him but rather evaluates the verse types based on his own judgment and system.43 He often misunderstands the ancient verse types, disagrees with their definition, or finds them irrelevant, and thereby he gives us a sense of what at least one Renaissance humanist and pedagogue really understood of these forms. Scaliger’s text is also of importance for the present study as one of the few “commentaries” to the list in Diomedes.44

II. Diomedes’ List of Good and Bad Hexameters
(De pedibus metricis sive significationum industria. GL 1.498–500)
A text, translation, and commentary

Because this commentary is intended to serve as a reference for all ancient lists of hexameter types, the headings for each section also include names used by other grammarians for verse-types either identical or similar to Diomedes’ verse-types.

1. Introduction: The Good Verses (498.23–28)

De pedibus metricis sive significationum industria
Optimi versus dena proprietate spectantur, principio ut sint inlibati iniuges aequiformes quinquipartes partipedes fistulares aequidici teretes sonores vocales. itaque et Graeci suos nuncupant ἀπλεγεῖς ἀζυγεῖς ἀπρόσχημοι πενταμερεῖς ποδομερεῖς συρόποδες ἰσόλεκτοι κυκλοτερεῖς ἰχνητικοὶ φωναστικοί.

[Concerning metrical feet, or feats of prosody] Verses are considered the best owing to ten characteristics, depending on whether they are intact, detached, equal-shaped, five-part, foot-divided, pipe-like, even-worded, rounded, resounding, or vocalic. Likewise the Greeks name their verses apleges, azugeis, aproschemoi, pentameres, podomeres, syropodes, isolektoi, kyklotereis, echetikoi, phonastikoi.]46

Aside from the curious title, perhaps the word in this passage that is most difficult for our modern ears is optimi. When moderns discuss the verse forms in Diomedes, they are usually called wordplay or amusements, rather than ranked among the aesthetically superior.47 It should give us pause to realize that this word optimi represents the considered opinion of an arbiter of Latin style scant centuries removed from the classical poetic tradition. Servius merely includes a few of these forms without expressing a value judgment. Sacerdos lists the three virtutes of the heroic verse, which are presumably good verse types (GL 6.505).48 Victorinus refers to five types of insignes versus, but these verses can certainly be “notable” before being “best” (GL 6.71).49 Of the medieval list compilers, only Bede expresses a similar unqualified approval, but he does not exactly provide a prescriptive list of verse types.50

The Greek names in this list seem to be direct translations of the Latin terms rather than terms in use by Greek grammarians. The ten Greek names in this list are never used by Greek grammarians, even though at least five of the verse types are found in
the Greek lists. Two paragraphs later the term *azureis* is not used and instead we find the standard Greek term *asyndeton*. Curiously, the first six verse types are in rough alphabetical order by their Greek names, and a similar alphabetic order prevails in the list of faults that follows. The list exhibits no other logical order.

2. Introduction: The Bad Verses (498.28–30)

Sic vero hac in appellatione inprobantur ut quinque speciebus designantur: mutuli exiles ecaudes fragosi fluxi; et hos Graeci ἀκεφάλους λαγαρους μειούρους τραχιες κολοβοὺς appellant.

[But verses are condemned by name if they fall into five types: truncated, scanty, tailless, rough, flabby. And the Greeks call these verses *akephalois*, *lagarois*, *meiouroi*, *tracheis*, *kolobois*.]

The first four of these terms for bad verses are used in Greek metrical treatises, and usually in the same order (Consbruch 325, 327, 341, 347, 348, 349; Koster, *Tractatus* 70). The *kolobos* or “clipped” verse does not seem to be a term of Greek prosody. Similar lists are in the Fragmentum Berolinense (GL 6.636–637), which lists the *acephalus*, *lagarus*, *hypermetrum*, *spondiazon*, *colurus sive colobus*; Victorinus (GL 6.67) lists the *ἀκεφάλος*, *λαγαρός*, *μειούρος*. Aldhelm in *De metris* (Ehwald 94) lists *acefalos*, *procefalos*, *lagaros*, *procilios*, *dolichuros*, *miuros vel spicodis*, and again in a letter he mentions the *acephalos*, *lagaros*, *procilios* (Ehwald 476). Each of these verse types will be discussed in detail below in the order in which Diomedes discusses them.

3. Inlibati, or Intact Verses (πολιτικὸν or λογοειδὲς) (498.30–499.2)

Igitur inlibati sunt qui non aucta vel inminuta aut amputata syllaba vel littera vitiantur, sed integra et plenissima dictione firmantur, ut

*depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro.* [Georgic 1.45]

est enim versus integer et nullo vitio contaminatus.

[Intact verses are those that are not marred by a lengthened, reduced, or cut-off syllable or letter, but are reinforced by complete and full phrase, as in:

*depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro.*

For the verse is complete and contaminated by no fault.]

Diomedes cannot mean that the verse has no elisions, since there is one between the first two words. Nor does the verse form a complete sentence. The *inlibatus versus* would seem to be any verse that has no metrical fault, but there are several problems here. Del Castillo (131) is correct in saying that the *inlibatus* is different from the other *optimi versus*, which are defined chiefly on the basis of word order and diction, not metrical qualities. The *inlibatus versus* is instead defined as a verse without the characteristics of the bad verses.

Diomedes' Greek term ἀπλιγείς is a *hapax legomenon*, but his definition seems to correspond with a verse type found in Greek lists under the names πολιτικὸν “public” or λογοειδὲς “prosaic” (the two names are explicitly linked in Consbruch 294 and 351). This verse type is almost always the last element in each list, and is defined in two ways, although the sample verse is always the same:

(1) πολιτικὸν δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ ἄνευ πάθους ἢ τρόπου πέποιημένου, οἶνον ἔπιπος δὲ ἐξυλικάς ἐκατόν καὶ πεντήκοντα. [Iliad 11.680]
The definition for πολιτικάν describes a verse without poetic or rhetorical flourish: a prosaic verse that lacks tropes (ἐνέυτροπος), while Diomedes emphasizes the fact that the verse lacks faults (perhaps an interpretation of ἐνέυπάθους). At Consbruch 351, line 29, the type is specifically called the “popular” line (τὸ δημοῦδες κατὰ φιλόν), which could indicate that it is the default category for verses that do not fit into the other Greek verse types. In all likelihood, however, it indicates that the verse is prosaic and pedestrian. Diomedes seems to be criticizing the prosaic banality of the λογοειδῆς in his fluxi versus, which conclude his list of bad hexameters (see below).

Scaliger (70–71) refers to Diomedes' definition of the inlibati and equates such verses with the politikoi of Greek grammarians, but takes issue with the ancient definition, considering it trivial. To confuse matters further, Murmellius (table 12 verse 2) lists the ornatus versus, defined as a verse that is disqualified to be one of the other types of special verses. It does not have any correspondence between word divisions and foot divisions. It is not a spondaic or completely dactylic verse, such as those praised in Victorinus's list of insignes versus. Finally, it has a normal caesura. It again seems to be some sort of default verse:

The adorned heroic verse is one that links without any conjunction all the other words with corresponding connections so that when scanned, no foot except only the last one contains a complete word, and in its six positions it maintains the spondee and dactyl in such a way that the dactyl never cedes the fifth position to the spondee, while the spondee always at the end never admits a dactyl. In the third position a spondee divides the penthemimer, as,

Oceanum in tera surgens aurora reliquit.

[Ornatus heroicus, qui sine uilla coniunctione quascunque alias orationis partes, ita mutuis inter se connexionibus colligat, ut in scansione propria, pes nullus nisi novissimus tantum integram partem orationis includat, atque ita sex regionibus suis spondeum dactylumque custodiat, ut nunquam Dactylus quintam regionem suam spondeo concedat, spondeus vero semper postremus dactylum nunquam admittat. In tertia quoque regione spondeus pentemimerin dividat: ut,

Oceanum in tera surgens aurora reliquit.]

4. Iniuges, or Detached Verses (ἀσυνδετος, ἀπηρτισμένος) (499.2–6)

Iniuges sunt qui nulla coniunctionis syllaba copulantur, quos Graeci ἀσυνδετος nuncupant, sicut

tectum augustum, ingens, centum sublime columnis [Aeneid 7.170]
sine nexu. nullus enim coniunctionis nexus occursat.

[Detached verses are those that are joined by no syllable of conjunction, which the Greeks call asyndetoi, as in:

tectum augustum, ingens, centum sublime columnis
without a link. For no link of conjunction occurs.]
The figure of asyndeton should be both familiar to the reader and clear from the example Diomedes provides. What is unclear is why this rhetorical figure, among the countless others, should be considered a particular type of verse. Greek lists do not mention this form (but see below). Sacerdos (GL 6.505) groups it among the virtutes heroici versus, using the terms ἀσύνδετος and sine coniunctione and the examples of Iliad 1.1 and Eclogue 3.5. Victorinus (GL 6.72) groups it among the insignes in metris, using the terms ἀσύνδετος and διὰ πέντε (?) and the example of Eclogue 2.1. The examples Iliad 1.1 and Eclogue 2.1 are curious since they are the opening lines of poems, need no connection to previous lines, and have no asyndeton as we understand the term today. The example Eclogue 3.5 has an asyndeton similar to that in the line Diomedes quotes. The examples without asyndeton (Iliad 1.1 and Eclogue 2.1) indicate that our grammarians are confused or that they are defining asyndeton differently than we would today. It is possible that the Latin grammarians have misunderstood the Greek ἀπηρτυφμένος phrase, which is any verse that makes sense in isolation and is therefore not inextricably connected with the surrounding verses:

ἀπηρτυφμένος δὲ, δὴ τὴν διάνοιαν πάσαν ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ, οἶν,

ὅς εἰτῶν πυλέων ἐξέσπυτο φαῦλος Ἡδυρ.[Iliad 7.1]²⁸

5. Aequiformes, or Equal-Shaped Verses (499.6–9)

Aequiformes sunt qui non composita sed simplici figura ostentantur, ut

urbe fuil media, Laurentis regia Pici, [Aeneid 7.171]

nusquam hic enim duae partes orationis nectuntur.
[Equal-shaped verses are those that are presented with a simple figure, not a composite one, as in:

urbe fuil media, Laurentis regia Pici,

for here two parts of the discourse are nowhere joined.]

Del Castillo (132–133) notes that Diomedes' final comment on this form, nusquam hic enim duae partes orationis nectuntur, makes no sense for this verse form and is better suited to the iniuges above. Note also that Diomedes' example line from Vergil is merely the next line after the previous example (Aeneid 7.170) and could arguably be considered a continuation of the asyndeton discussed there. How can we reconcile the example line with the name and definition of the verse type? Del Castillo (133) believes the key is in the simplex figura, which Diomedes had just defined as being a verse with only one caesura (GL 1.498.16). The aequiformis versus is therefore any verse with a sole caesura at the penthemimer. Such verses are the most common (del Castillo 133), and this verse would therefore be, like the inlibatus versus (as she understands it), a base guideline of good composition and not an unusual line.

It is tempting, however, to try to find some rationale for the aequiformis versus based upon word order, which would make it similar to the next four verse types. The line easily breaks into two units at the caesura, which divides the line into two groups of three words each. The two sides do not have an equal number of syllables or morae, or parity in regard to type of feet. Each group has a hyperbaton-based structure, so that nusquam hic enim duae partes orationis nectuntur. In addition to the hyperbaton, the adjectives and nouns in the two phrases are arranged in a chiastic (ab-ba) structure. Vergil often has a penthemimer caesura divide the line into two parts with the same number of words. It is possible that the aequiformis versus would be any verse with a penthemimer caesura and a hyperbaton structure in both parts. At all events it seems
clear from the *simpex figura* that Diomedes' Greek name for the form (in the introduction, section 1 above) should be restored as ἀπλοσχήμοιοi instead of ἀποφοσχήμοι. This emendation has some support from Scaliger (71), who oddly enough uses the term *aequiformes* to refer to lines that are all dactyls or all spondees. However, he does use Diomedes' example line of Vergil as an example of a type he calls ἀπλοσχήμοιοι rather than ἀποφοσχήμοιοι:


6. Quinquipartes, or Five-Part Verses (*tetracolos, πεντημερεῖς, τέλειοι*)

(499.9–11)

Quinquipartes sunt qui quinque partes orationis liberas possident, ut
ora citatorum cursu detorsit equorum. [Aeneid 12.373]

[Five-part verses are those that have five free words, as in:
ora citatorum cursu detorsit equorum.]

From the example Diomedes gives we must understand *partes orationis* to mean “words” rather than in the grammatical sense of “parts of speech.”

The four-word line was listed as one of the *virtutes metri heroici* by Sacerdos (*GL* 6.505), who uses the term *tetracolos*, defining it as “quattuor verbis vel quibuslibet partibus orationis fuerit divisus, cuius virtutis exemplum latinum melius lectum est quam greccum.” He gives as examples *Eclogue* 5.73 and a slight misquotation of *Iliad* 11.46. Sacerdos feels that the Latin example is superior to the Greek example because the Homeric verse contains a compound word (πολυγρόβοοι), so that the line is really a *pentacolon*. Victorinus (*GL* 6.71) also considers the four-word line to be a superior type of verse, giving the example of *Aeneid* 3.549. The four-word verse in Homer and later Greek poets has been studied by Bassett, who counts 431 verses of four words or fewer in Homer, as opposed to only four such verses in the *Aeneid*. He notes:

Verses that contain but four words are by no means so rare in the Homeric poems as Plotius [Sacerdos] seems to imply, for the natural inference from *exemplum latinum melius lectum est quam greccum* is that the Greek tetracolos is found at least no more frequently than its Latin equivalent, which is called noteworthy (*insignis*) by Victorinus and classed as a curiosity. Such a verse which occurs on the average nearly four times in every 350 verses or about once every two pages cannot be called a curiosity, but should be regarded as a type. (217)

The *quinquipartes* may again be – like the *inlibati* and the *aequiformes* – verses that offer an admirable norm, rather than a rare and unusual type. Unlike the four-word hexameter, the five-word hexameter seems to be quite common in Latin: There are eleven examples in the first hundred lines of the *Aeneid* and five examples in the first *Eclogue*. The form does not appear in the Greek lists, although five-word verses are comparatively common in Homer. If Sacerdos’s *tetracolos* does in fact derive from Greek metrical criticism, then perhaps the *quinquipartes versus* reflect a rare attempt
to adapt a Greek form to the conditions of Latin poetry. By this I mean that the form may have been changed to reflect the fact that a five-word Latin hexameter is roughly as common as a Greek four-word hexameter. Scaliger calls this type of verse πεντάμετρος and sees no point in it:

For why did they proclaim some verses five-parts (πεντάμετρος)? For no verse can take five feet, except for a pentameter. But perhaps it would be the verse that fills up its feet with five words, six in a heroic verse, in other verses other numbers. Here for your enjoyment are set examples of a few types:

Iupiter omnipotens votis flectendus avaris?
Parebit eius nutibus Fatum piis
mentem aegram spes falsa serenat.

[Quare etiam πεντάμετρος quosdam prodidere? neque enim potest alquis versus capere pedes quinos, nisi quinarius. Sed fortasse fuerit is qui vocibus quinis pedes suos explet: sex in Heroico, in alius alium numerum. Plurium exempla hic animi gratia posita sunt:] (71)

Perhaps related to the quinquipartes is the τέλειον μέτρον, a verse found in the Greek lists that contains all the parts of speech: δύναμις, δήμος, μετοχή, ἀρχή, ἀντιπρόταση, πρόθεσις, επίθεσις, συνέδεσμος. The example always given is:

πρός δ’ ἑμεῖς τὸν δύστυχον ἔτι φρονέοντ’ ἐλέασε. [Iliad 22.59]

The Latin forms of this verse substitute the exclamation for the article, as Murmellius (table 12 verse 17) demonstrates:

τέλειος, id est, absolutus, qui omnes orationis partes complexus est: ut
Ah me si flentem super aethera mox rapuisset.
Vae tibi si nantem sub flumina nunc posuissent.
Heu si tunc flentem hunc rapuisset in aethera Mavors.

7. Partipedes, or Foot-Divided Verses (districtus, ὀποίοθετημένον) (499.12–14)

Partipedes sunt qui in singulis pedibus singulas orationis partes adsignant, ut
miscent fida flumina candida sanguine sparso.
[Foot-divided verses are those that mark off individual words in individual feet, as in:
miscent fida flumina candida sanguine sparso.]

The source of this line is unknown, and this fact has a bearing on the supposed virtues of this form. All six feet in the line consist of one word each, and the word breaks correspond exactly to the breaks between feet. This form was not popular in classical Latin, and its unpopularity is underscored by Diomedes' failure to find an example in Vergil. Victorinus (GL 6.71) is explicit in listing this form, not as an optimus versus, but as one of the worst:

However, it is not pleasing, as has been said, to finish words on individual feet, but to mix up the syllables, for whoever ends words on individual feet, will be crude, just as

Pythie, Detie, te colo, prospice votaque firma.
non amat, autem, ut dictum est, per singulos pedes verba finire, sed immiscere syllabas, nam qui per singulos pedes verba terminarit, erit indecens, sicut . . .

The *Ars Palaemonis*, a work of late antiquity not to be connected with Quintus Remmius Palaemon, calls this type of verse *districtus*, and offers a verse that was probably composed for the occasion:

What is the *districtus* (stretched-out) verse? One that has meaning or words separated out in the scansion, as, say

Tell me, Clio, who was the first to fashion verses?

[Qui districtus? Qui in scandendo sensum seu partes orationis separatas in se habet, ut puta veluti

dic mihi, Clio, quisnam primus fingere versus?] (GL 6.214)

The *districtus* versus is contrasted with the *coniunctus* verse, which has no word breaks at foot breaks and is therefore very praiseworthy.

In the Greek handbooks the *partipes* or *districtus* versus was known as the right-measured verse (*ὑπόρρυθμον*):

A right-measured verse is one divided into a word at each foot, as

υβίως εἶνα χόρδε, σὺ δ’ ἱσχεο, πείθεο δ’ ἵμιν. [Iliad 1.214]

[*ὑπόρρυθμον δὲ ἔστι τὸ καθ’ ἐκαστὸν πόδα ἀπαρτίζον εἷς μέρος λόγον, οἷον ...*

This form seems to be more applicable to Homeric criticism than to Latin poetry, since none of the Latin grammarians can find canonical examples.

8. Fistulares, or Pipelike Verses (*rhopalius*, *συφόποδες*, *κλιμακωτόν*, also *tibicines*) (499.15–17)

Fistulares sunt qui paulatim ad crescente partis orationis numero ab unica syllaba plures adusque ducuntur, ut Homericus ille declarat,

οὐ μάκαρ Ἀτρείδη, μορφηγένες, ὅμδιδαμον. [Iliad 3.182]

[Pipelike verses are those that expand as the number of the word increases, from one syllable up to more syllables, as great Homer declares:

οὐ μάκαρ Ἀτρείδη, μορφηγένες, ὅμδιδαμον.]

The *fistularis* verse form is unambiguously clear. The form had several names in antiquity, as I mentioned earlier (see p. 141) in discussing the first attested mention of the form by Aulus Gellius at *Noctes Atticae* 14.6.4. Servius (*GL* 4.467) calls the form *ropalicus*: "ropalicus versus est, cum verba, prout secuntur, per syllabas crescent, ut est hoc, rem tibi confeci, doctissime, dulcisonoram." Sacerdos (*GL* 6.505–506) calls it *rhopalius* and quotes the same line of Homer as Diomedes. He says its name is derived from Heracles's club, which similarly expands from a short end to a thick one. Sacerdos notes that he cannot find a Latin example, but that he can adjust a verse of Vergil without changing the meaning to get this example: *quae quarum facie pulcherrima Deiopea*. Ausonius composed his *Oratio* entirely in rhopalic verse, and Optatian Porfyrius displays his knowledge of the form in line 5 of his poem 15: *quem divus genuit Constantius induperator*. Müller (580) collects examples from other Latin poets of late antiquity.

The form is found in only one Greek list:
Badius (88 verso) translated κλιμακωτών as ascendens, and offered a freer rewriting of Aeneid 1.72 as the example:

Ascendens quod cum ab una syllaba incipiat in singulis dictionibus una auget syllaba ut

\[\text{O nymphe facies dulcissima Deiopea.}\]

Et

\[\text{rem tibi confeci doctissime Sardanaphale.}\]

Scaliger (71) rewrites Vergil's verse yet again, gives still more names for the form, and describes its reverse, the tibicen:

\[\text{Ex quibus insignis pulcherrima Deiopeia.}\]

They call these verses κλιμακάω, that is ladderlike, because they climb by steps. Others call them συριγγοειδές, that is pipelike, from the shepherd's musical instrument, which was discussed at length above. For it progresses from the smallest reed all the way to the largest. There are even people who give the verse the name Euryalic. By the same token, if the lengths run backwards, so that from five syllables it ends in one, they call them Tibicines:

\[\text{Vectigalibus armamenta referre iubet Rex.}\]

[ Hosce κλιμακάω, quasi scalares appellarunt: quod per gradus ascenderent. Alii συριγγοειδές, hoc est fistulares, a pastorali musico instrumento: de quo satis supra. Ita enim a minima canna ad maximam usque subibat. Non desunt qui Euryalicum ei nomen fecerint.

Eiusdem rationis erit, si recurrent quantitates: ut quinque syllabis desinat in unam. quos Tibicines nominarunt.]

What Gellius noted at the beginning of our era is still true in the modern era: pedants continue to quibble about the name of this verse form.

9. Aequidici, or Even-Worded Verses (499.18–21)

Aequidici sunt qui singulis propositionibus antithetas apparant dictiones, ut

\[\text{alba ligustra cadunt, vaccinia nigra leguntur. [Eclogue 2.18]}\]

albis enim nigra opposuit, ligustris autem vaccinia tribuit et cadentibus legenda adsignavit.

[Even-worded verses are those that present words that are antithetical to their premises, such as

\[\text{alba ligustra cadunt, vaccinia nigra leguntur.}\]

For it opposes “black” to the white, sets up “vaccinia” to the “ligustra” and assigns picking-up to falling.]

There are no equivalents to this verse in the Greek lists. Only two other authors mention this form, Murmellius and the sixteenth-century author Jacobus Pontanus. Murmellius's entry (table 12 verse 11) is curious, because although it is in a section in which he copies Diomedes almost verbatim, he has displaced aequidicus, perhaps in order to place it next to aequiformis, and added this note: “alba enim nigra opposuit, ligustris autem vaccinia attribuit, & cadentibus legenda assignavit.” Pontanus (95) says
that some call these verses *contrarius* and that others use the term *aequidicus* to refer to verses in which all the words begin with the same letter.75

Probably the *aequidicus* *versus* consists of nothing more than a line full of antonyms. However, the example has the exact same pattern as the *aequiformis* above. The metrical patterns are identical (DDSDS). Both have a caesura dividing the line into two groups of three words each. Both verses have adjectives and nouns arranged in a chiastic structure (adjective, noun, noun, adjective). Instead of a hyperbaton structure in each half, this verse is arranged in a series of oppositions. Is the symmetric order of these oppositions a defining characteristic of the *aequidicus* *versus*, or is it only the antithesis of the words themselves?

10. Teretes, or Rounded Verses (499.21–23)

Teretes sunt qui volubilem et cohaerentem continuant dictionem, ut

*Torea Mimalloneis inflatur tibia bombis.*76

[Rounded verses are those that conjoin a fluent and contiguous phrase, such as

*Torea Mimalloneis inflatur tibia bombis.*]

It is difficult to understand what "volubilem et cohaerentem continuant dictionem" means and how it applies to this line of verse. The phrase is similar to one used by Fortunatus in his *Ars rhetorica* to describe a type of periodic style,77 and postponing the nouns to the end does give the example line a periodic style.78 None of the other ancient metricalians use the term *teres versus* or *κυκλοτερεῖον*.79

The *teres versus* has been identified by del Castillo as the golden line (133): "... the verses called *teretes*, ... on account of their name, the definition, and the example offered, suggest that ancient metrics had the concept of the golden line, although the definition does not narrow down its verbal composition as concretely as the current definitions" [... los versos llamados *teretes*, ... por su nombre, por la definición y por el ejemplo propuesto, suponen una consideración por parte de la métrica antigua del verso áureo, aunque la definición no precise su composición verbal de forma tan concreta como las definiciones actuales]. As del Castillo suggests, if Diomedes had been trying to define the golden line, one might expect him to refer to elements of the modern definition (two adjectives, two nouns, verb in the middle).

However, there are signs that at least one later commentator understood the *teres versus* to mean the golden line. The next known reference to the *teres versus* is in Murmellius (table 12 verse 12), who merely quotes Diomedes verbatim. Scaliger (71–72) comments at length on the form, but seems not to understand it. He too uses Diomedes' example (also misquoting Persius) and mentions that Quintilian and others propose another example, a misquotation of *Eclogue* 2.50. The passage is muddled and difficult and requires a lengthy quotation and translation, if only to document how bizarre and confused Scaliger can be. The Latin text of this passage is printed below in an appendix. Scaliger begins by discussing the *πολυποικοί* verses (see the commentary on *inlibati*, section 3 above), which he understands to mean "polished."

Clearly it will be polished and simple. But that simplicity, which we arrived at in the first discussion, will in no way require polishing. For it is natural and does not need a grindstone (for that is what *polire* means, from *πολέων*). Therefore Horace calls the mouth of the Greeks rounded [*rotundum*, *Ars poetica* 323] and says

*Male tornatos incudi reddere versus.* [Ars poetica 441]
[Return poorly ground verses to the lathe.]

Hence I should think that the type of verse that they call κυκλοτερίς is rather the same as the polished (πολυτικοί). You would find infinite examples from the father of poetry. Read the whole treatment of the plague in the third Georgic. But the grammarians err still more, because they define incorrectly. They say politi are those verses that conjoin a fluent and contiguous phrase [using Diomedes’ exact definition of the teres versus]. For this definition applies to all verses that are the opposite of asyndetonous verses. A fluent verse could therefore be unpolished; how could the same verse be polished? An example of a fluent or unbroken verse, which is nevertheless unpolished:

_Praetextam in cista mures rosere Camilli._

He who shall call this type of verse κυκλοτερίς or teres will not be choosing the worst term. For indeed they are the opposite of unequal verses, of the sort that abound in Lucilianus and Lucretius, not a few of which are unpolished. Ennius’s verses are the same. Nor is Horace better in his hexameters. I call these verses _familiares_ (usual). They result when one just speaks good and pure Latin, but one does not watch out for the rhythm. The diction is pure, the trails are rocky:

_Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo quam sibi sortem._ [Horace, _Satire_ 1.1.1]

No better are those who think that _teres_ verses are the opposite of harsh and broken verses. For soft verses, which the Greeks call μαλακοειδεῖς, oppose harsh ones. An example is offered by Quintilian and others:

_Mollia luteola pingens vacciniae calta_ and our own:

_Luteola in viola caltula pallidula._

For at this point they offer that bad example:

_Torva Mimalloneis inflatur tibia bombis._

For this is not _teres_ (rounded), but flawed and classed among the bloated verses, just like that verse of Horace:

_Nec circumtonuit gaudens Bellona cruentis._ [Satire 2.3.223]

Besides, that verse, which they offer, does not correspond to the definition. For the phrases (words) conjoin in no way at all, but rather the third word ends with the fourth foot, the fifth foot with the fourth word.

In the last sentence, Scaliger seems to understand Diomedes’ definition of the _teres versus_ as ultimately being the opposite of the _partipes_, that is, it has no word division corresponding to a foot division. It is clear that his criticism here is directed towards Diomedes’ example from Persius (Torva Mimalloneis . . .), since none of the other examples in this section has the fourth foot ending with the third word. It is hard, however, to see why Scaliger connects it with Horace’s “Nec circumtonuit . . .”, which has no word division corresponding to a foot division. Scaliger argues that the “Praetextam in cista . . .” verse (which has no correspondence between word and foot divisions) corresponds to the definition of the _teres_ verse, but is nonetheless an unpolished verse. Horace, _Satire_ 1.1.1 (“Qui fit, Maecenas . . .”) is an almost perfect _partipes_, and Scaliger offers it as an example of the opposite of the _teres_ verse, which he calls an unequal or familiar verse (_inaequalis_ or _familiaris_).

Scaliger’s confused comments on the _teres versus_ themselves are of little value, but we can learn two things from them. First, his confusion makes it clear that the pedagogues of his day had no idea what a _teres versus_ was. In fact, all three forms that appear only in Diomedes’ list until their rediscovery in the Renaissance (aequiformes,
aequidici, teretes) confuse Scaliger, who attempts to redefine them all. Second, from Scaliger's remarks we learn of another, as yet unidentified commentator who offered another verse as an example of the teres versus, a misquotation of Vergil Eclogue 2.50:

Mollia luteola pingens vaccinia calta.

Scaliger argues that neither this verse nor Diomedes' example verse is truly teres, but both verses are what moderns would call golden lines. In fact, the second verse is the first "pure" golden line in the Vergilian corpus, by which I mean that it conforms exactly to Burles's definition quoted above, and it has no extraneous words beyond the five mentioned in the definition. A few modern scholars use this verse as the standard example of the golden line. Its use by some unknown commentator prior to Scaliger as an example of the teres versus may not help elucidate Diomedes' meaning, but it probably indicates that at least one other Renaissance humanist equated this form with the golden line. However, this putative definition was not unanimously - or even generally - accepted.

If Diomedes understood the teres versus on the same terms as the modern golden line, then the absence of any analogous form in the Greek lists is understandable. There are no golden lines in Homer, which is the sole source for examples on the Greek lists. The golden line never had the equivalent popularity in Greek as it did in Latin (see part III below).

11. Sonores, or Resounding Verses (499.24–29)

Sonores sunt qui crepitant pronuntiatione fragosa et exultantem informant dictionem ut

\[\text{at tuba terribilem sonitum procul aere canoro} \] \[\text{[Aeneid 9.503]} \]
\[\text{increpuit} \]

et

\[\text{quadripedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.} \] \[\text{[Aeneid 8.596]} \]

[Resounding verses are those that clang with a jerky pronunciation and shape a galloping phrase, such as]

\[\text{at tuba terribilem sonitum procul aere canoro} \]
\[\text{increpuit} \]

and

\[\text{quadripedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.} \]

No other grammarian prior to the Renaissance discusses the sonoris versus, and one must be cautious before deducing the meaning of the sonoris line from Diomedes' examples. The first line is one of the most frequently used example lines in ancient metrical works, and grammarians often alter the line to suit the need for an example. Twice it is offered as an example in combination with Diomedes' second example (Aeneid 8.596). Diomedes' examples, aside from the dubious quality of containing words that are cognates of sonoris, may have been chosen due to their familiarity rather than their applicability to the form that Diomedes is discussing. But the verses apparently do connect their sounds to their meanings. The first verse begins with noticeable alliteration, and may perhaps imitate the sound of a trumpet. The second verse has a flurry of plosive consonants that mimic a horse's hooves and could easily be the "galloping phrase" of Diomedes. Scaliger (72) defines sonores verses as being lofty due to a sound that, while not flowing, is none the less consistent with the
meaning: “Maiestas in carmine comparatur extra sententiam sono quodam non fluido, sed sibi ipsi constante.” He argues that the distinction between the *sonoris* and *fragosus versus* is one of *maiestas*, not of sound.

The *versus sonoris* may be identical to the *τραχύς στίχος* in the Greek lists:

> The rough verse is one combining the rhythm of sounds, such as τριχύδα τε καὶ τιτραχύθα διατρυθήν κάππεσα χειρός.\(^{80}\)

[τραχύς δὲ ἐστὶ ὁ τὸν δόθημον τῶν φθόγγων συνιστάς, ὡς . . .]

There is one problem with equating the *sonoris* with the *τραχύς* verse, namely that Diomedes understands *τραχύς* as the name of a flawed verse, which he calls *fragosus* in Latin. Many of the Greek lists of hexameter types appear descriptive, rather than prescriptive, and they do not separate (as Diomedes, Victorinus, Sacerdos, and Scaliger do) good and bad types of verses into distinct lists. See notes to section 16, the *fragosus* or *τραχύς* verse.

12. **Vocales, or Vocalic Verses (κακόφωνος)** (499.30–500.4)


Vocales sunt qui alte producta elocutione sonantibus litteris universam dictionem inlustrant ut est illud Paconianum, *Eoo Oceano Hyperion fulgurat Euro*  
_Arctoo planastro Boreas bacchatur aheno,  
Hesperio Zephyro Orion volvitur * [austro],  
fulva Paraetonio vaga Cynthia proruit Austro._

[Vocalic verses are those that grace the whole phrase with diction that is highly elevated by sonant letters, such as that bit of Paconianus:  
_Eoo Oceano Hyperion fulgurat Euro  
Arctoo planastro Boreas bacchatur aheno,  
Hesperio Zephyro Orion volvitur * [austro],  
fulva Paraetonio vaga Cynthia proruit Austro.\(^{90}\)]

For Diomedes, the *vocales versus* may have an imitative force similar to the consonants in *sonores* verses, since the example verses have a breathy quality like the winds they describe. No other source has *vocales versus*, but they may be identical to the *κακόφωνος* of Greek lists, which are also verses with a large number of vowels:

> Κακόφωνος δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ πολλὰ φωνήντα ἔχων, ὅπως  
φῇ ἄθηρηθοιμὸν ἔχειν ἀνά φαινών όμοιον.\(^{91}\) [Odyssey 11.128]

Although the Greeks do not distinguish lists of good and bad verse types, *κακόφωνος* is clearly a pejorative name, while for Diomedes they are among the best verses. The Renaissance commentators on the *vocalis versus* offer different examples, but do not shed much light on Diomedes.\(^{92}\)

This concludes Diomedes’ list of *optimi versus*. Notably, Servius’s *reciprocus* and *echoicus versus* (see text above before note 9) are not mentioned in the list, but Diomedes is not ignorant of the *reciprocus* verse. He discusses it a few pages later, in the catalogue of all other types of verses (*De versuum generibus*, GL 1.516–517), the fullest discussion of the different *reciprocus* forms in antiquity.\(^{93}\)

Del Castillo (133) sees a progression in the list of best verses from simple to more complex types.\(^{94}\) The last four types are concerned with content rather than merely
with form, if we accept the teres versus as being a verse with a periodic structure and
the somoris and vocalis as being imitative of the content (onomatopoeic). However,
this distinction is not very compelling, and I fail to see any pattern in the verses except
for the rough alphabetical order of the Greek names of the first six verse types.

13. Mutili vel trunci, Truncated or Clipped Verses (ἀκέφαλος) (500.5–10)

De improbatis vero versibus varia traduntur. mutili vel trunci sunt qui in
principio amputantur et litteram vel syllabam amittunt vel tempore deficiunt:
Graece dicuntur ἀκέφαλοι, quale est

fluviorum rex Eridanus; [Vergil, Georgic 1.482]

item Homericus ille,

ἐπεὶ δὴ νήδς τε καὶ Ἑλλησσων τό ἱκοντο· [Iliad 23.2]

[Various things are reported about bad verses as well. Truncated or clipped verses
are those that are cut in the beginning and are missing either a letter or syllable
or are deficient in meter. In Greek they are called akephaloi. Of this sort is

fluviorum rex Eridanus;

and that Homeric verse

ἐπεὶ δὴ νήδς τε καὶ Ἑλλησσων τό ἱκοντο.]

Diomedes’ section concerning the flaws in hexameters closely corresponds to lists in
Greek handbooks. The first four types of verse – the ones that actually appear in Greek
texts – (ἀκέφαλοι, λαγαροί, μειώφοι, τραχεῖς) are in Greek alphabetical order, pre-
cisely as they appear in some Greek texts (Consbruch 325–326, 327, 341; Koster,
Tractatus 70–71; Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 468–469), although the other
types in these lists do not adhere to any alphabetical order. Diomedes’ list also
 corresponds to lists in other ancient Latin grammars and to lists in modern handbooks
of Latin prosody. What accounts for the unanimous and unabating familiarity with the
forms in this section as opposed to the virtual disappearance of the partipedes,
fistulares, and teres versus? The flaws are mainly flaws of syllable length and scansion,
which remain to this day the proper field of metrics, rather than word-order games and
palindromes. Thus the ἀκέφαλος, λαγαρός, and μειώφος verses have been well
documented from the dawn of scholarship to the present day (and therefore require
less commentary here). Most commentators have noted that these forms, although
appropriate for Homeric scholarship, are forced upon Latin. Vergil does not, in fact,
have lines corresponding to these flaws, as Homer does. The grammarians often feel
therefore compelled to invent them.95

Other than the half line of Vergil quoted as an acephalus versus, Diomedes fails to
give any Latin examples of bad verses – an omission probably owed not to his poetic
acumen, but rather to his indolence in finding or inventing examples. His presentation
of the flaws is so cursory that for the two last types he fails to give any examples at all,
and he ignores other, similar forms of flawed verses, such as the προκέφαλος and the
δολιχούφος.96

14. Exiles, or Scanty Verses (λαγαροί) (500.11–13)

Versus in media parte exiles vel hiulci Graece vocantur λαγαροί, qualis est item
Homericus

βὴν δ’ εἶς Αἴόλου κλατά δώματα:97
[Verses that are scanty in the middle or gaping are called *lagaroi* in Greek, of this sort is the Homeric verse
βὴν δ' εἷς Αιόλου κλυτὰ δόματα.]

This verse is used in only a few of the Greek lists, which show an unusual variety in their examples. So, too, the Roman grammarians apparently did not have a standard example for the *lagaros*. Victorinus (GL 6.67) cites a portion of *Aeneid* 3.179 as an example of the *lagaros* verse; the Fragmentum Berolinense (GL 6.637) offers *Aeneid* 12.13.

15. Ecaudes, or Tailless Verses (μεióουοι vel σκάζοντες) (500.14–16)

Ecaudes sunt qui in ultima conclusione oratiuncula vel syllaba fraudantur vel tempore deficiunt; Graece μείουοι vel σκάζοντες vocantur, ut est
Τρόας ἐρρίζομαι, διὸς ἵδιον αἰόλον δήμων. [*Iliad* 12.208]

[Tailless verses are those that are short a little word or syllable in the final conclusion or deficient in meter. They are called *meiouoi* or *skazontes* in Greek, such as,
Τρόας ἐρρίζομαι, διὸς ἵδιον αἰόλον δήμων.]

This Homeric example is used in all the Greek lists.99 Victorinus (GL 6.67) quotes the same example together with line 1930 of Terentianus Maurus, which is a translation of the Homeric line into a Latin *miurum versum*.100 The *miurum metrum* was also featured in Servius's *De centum metris*, in the same final section (De dispersis) as the *ropalius* and *reciprocii* verses quoted at the beginning of this article.101 The terms *miurus versum* and *acephalos* were used for other meters besides hexameters; see Sacerdos, GL 6.524 and 533.

16. Fragosi, or Rough Verses (τραχὺς) (500.17)

Fragosi sunt qui inlevigato et incondito sono variantur.

[Rough verses are those that stand out for their harsh and ill-arranged sound.]

The *fragosi* verses are apparently failed *sonores*, in which the harsh sounds are overdone or serve no useful purpose. References to the Greek τραχύς verse that Diomedes equates with the *fragosus* can be found under *sonores versus* above. *Fragosus* is a term for prose style, often translated “jerky,” “disjointed”; see, for example, Quintilian 9.4.7 and 9.4.116. Pontanus (94) gives the following account:

The roughed-up verse (as in Quintilian) or the rough verse (in Diomedes) is a verse made up of syllables that join together in a harsh manner, called by the Greeks harsh or rough.

*Belli ferratos postes Saturnia fregit
Fraternas strages, perstrictaque flecta cruore.*102

[Confragosus Fabio, Fragosus Diomedi, qui syllabis aspere coeuntibus catenatus est, χαλεπός, τραχύς.]

17. Fluxi, or Flabby Verses (λογοειδῆς) (500.17–18)

Fluxi sunt qui soluto modo et uberi metro vacillanter quatiuntur.

[Flabby verses are those that shake back and forth in a loose form and a rich meter.]
No other grammarian speaks of the *fluxus versus*. Diomedes' Greek term for this verse, *colobus*, refers to a verse clipped off at the end (the counterpart to *acephalos*). However, this does not correspond with Diomedes' definition. Diomedes is probably thinking of the *logoeidè* from the Greek lists. This term is used for lines that are not poetic, but merely prose set in meter. Diomedes' Greek term, *colobus*, is used to describe such verses in Fragmentum Berolinense GL 6.637: "colurus est sive colobus, cum versus quasi prosa oratione decurrit, ut est hoc, aut spumas miscent argenti vivaque sulphura" (Georgic 3.449).

Here ends Diomedes' list of special hexameters, and with it the section *De pedibus metricis sive significationum industria*. Diomedes' list of flawed verses comprises three well-known types of metrical irregularities, followed by two types based on stylistic criteria of sound and, perhaps, poetic aesthetics. All of these flaws are apparently derived ultimately from Greek authorities, and Diomedes makes little effort to adapt this material to Latin poetry. His dependence on the Greek lists here is in marked distinction to his list of good verses. In that list some forms seem to have been adapted to Latin, some have no counterparts in the Greek lists, some seem to be reinterpretations – or rather misinterpretations – of the Greek forms, and almost all have been provided with Latin examples. The confused variety in the section *De pedibus metricis*, both good and bad verses, gives the impression of an uncritically compiled collection, portions of which may preserve traces of an original Latin writer on metrics; originality and understanding do not however seem to reside with the compiler Diomedes.

III. The golden line in theory and practice

We have seen that the verses in Diomedes' list of special hexameters were not included in later lists until after the Renaissance, when humanists expressed a renewed interest in Diomedes and his Greek predecessors and analogues. One form, the *teres versus*, has been considered to be an ancient name for the modern "golden line." Regardless of whether or not this identification is correct, for over three hundred years "the golden line" has been leading the short list of *optimi versus* as understood in branches of English and American criticism. Thus the golden line phenomenon is analogous to the verse types in Diomedes, particularly those that are determined by word order. In this part I first present statistics about the use of the golden line in ancient and medieval poetry, and then I discuss the tradition of the modern concept of the "golden line."

Before proceeding, I need to say a few things about my methodology. The Muses know how to tell many things which are true and many things which sound true, and we can say the same about statistics. The least of the many problems raised by bringing statistics into the temple of the Muses is the problem of definition: I have collected about ten different definitions of the "golden line." Often scholars do not explicitly offer a definition, but instead present statistics or lists of golden lines, from which one must extrapolate their criteria for deeming a verse golden.

Although Burles's 1652 definition (quoted in the first paragraph of this essay) is explicit about the abVAB structure, many scholars also consider lines with this chiastic pattern to be "golden":

*humanum miseris volvunt erroribus aevum* (Prudentius, *Hamartigenia* 377)

adjective a, adjective b, VERB, noun B, noun A (abVBA)
Perhaps this more inclusive definition is based upon the famous definition offered by Dryden, “that Verse commonly which they call golden, or two Substantives and two Adjectives with a Verb betwixt them to keep the peace.”\textsuperscript{107} Wilkinson offered the humorous definition “silver line” for this variant.\textsuperscript{108} Since that name is convenient and has won some adherents, I will use it here, and count it separately from the golden line.\textsuperscript{109}

In the statistics that follow I also include the less common variants, in which one or both nouns precede the verb, although the gold (aBVAb, AbVaB, ABVab) and silver (aBVbA, AbVBa, ABVba) patterns are still preserved.\textsuperscript{110} I also include lines with extra prepositions, adverbs, exclamations, conjunctions, and relative pronouns. I do not include lines with extra verbs, adjectives, or nouns. I count periphrastic verbal expressions, treating, for example, the following line as a silver line:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Atque futurorum gestura est turma nepotum} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 271)
\end{quote}

A participle can occupy the central position of the verb, as long as it does not agree with one of the enclosing nouns, so that this line would be acceptable:

\begin{quote}
\textit{lucida perpetuae visuros praemia vitae} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 1226)
\end{quote}

But this line would not count as golden:

\begin{quote}
\textit{sed mens virgineis ardescens torrida flammis} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 1986)
\end{quote}

Not included in the statistics are lines where the golden or silver pattern is obvious, but a noun or pronoun in the genitive is used in place of the adjective. Thus these two lines would not be golden:

\begin{quote}
\textit{putrida fibrarum procurans ulcera fotu} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 517)
\textit{cuius quadratum crebrescit fama per orbem} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 1620)
\end{quote}

Even so there are quandaries: How to classify this line, which begins with two proper nouns and ends with their apposite nouns?

\begin{quote}
\textit{Silvester Roma degebat praesul in urbe} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 541)
\end{quote}

And in this line should \textit{pater Ambrosius} be considered a unit, should \textit{haec} and \textit{miracula} be considered to be apposites?

\begin{quote}
\textit{haec pater Ambrosius stupuit miracula cernens} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 665)
\end{quote}

And in this line the silver pattern with the indeclinable adjective \textit{tot} is clear, but with an extra pronoun:

\begin{quote}
\textit{tot nos in supera numerabimus arce coronas!} (Aldhelm, \textit{Carmen de virginitate} 2317)
\end{quote}

In my statistics all three lines were counted as golden or silver, but it should be clear that inevitably questions of interpretation and nuance will arise. I intend to make my data available in an accessible electronic form within a few years.

This detailed discussion of criteria for counting golden lines may seem silly, particularly to those readers who, like myself, find the form and name somewhat silly.
in and of itself, but its necessity is made clear when we examine statistics offered by other scholars, such as Orchard.

Orchard (97) does not offer a definition of the golden line, but instead refers readers to the discussion of the form in Winbolt. He does, however, list the golden lines in the first 368 verses of Aldhelm’s *Carmen de virginitate*, and his criteria can be extracted by examining the lines he does and does not include in his list. In these lines Orchard counts 24 golden lines and 22 “near-misses.” As in my criteria, he allows relative pronouns (2, 4, 112, 221, 288), prepositions (278, 289), conjunctions like *ut* and *dum* (95, 149, 164, 260), exclamations (45), and adverbs (14). However, he also allows extra adjectives, as in “Haec suprema” in Orchard’s example on p. 15. He includes silver lines (4, 123, 260). He disqualifies inverted or mixed order, where nouns come first (101, 133, 206, 236, 275, 298). He allows participles as the verb in the middle (71, 182), but he does not include the periphrastic verbal form in 271: *Atque futurorum gestura est turma nepotum*. By my count, in the same 368 verses there are 26 golden lines and 6 silver lines, for a total of 32 combined.

Before proceeding I should note the curiously different use of the term *áureo verso* by Enríquez. Enríquez refers to the definitions of several English scholars in his article (*Estudios*), but he himself includes any line with a verb in the center, surrounded by two substantives and two adjectives. He therefore includes (331) the following examples of the *áureo verso*:

florentem cytisum sequitur lasciva capella (Vergil, *Eclogue* 2.64)
Temporis angusti mansit concordia discors. (Lucan, *BC* 1.98)

The *áureo verso* here defined would therefore appear to encompass not only the gold and silver lines as defined above (of which Enríquez cites a large number of examples), but also lines without any chiastic structure at all.

I have compiled a database of golden lines in classical and medieval hexameter poetry using the criteria described above and presented some of my results in three tables. Table 7.1 gives the totals for the gold and silver lines in classical poetry, listed in approximate chronological order from Catullus to Statius. Table 7.2 gives similar figures for a few poets in late antiquity, while Table 7.3 gives figures for a selection of early medieval poems from the fifth to tenth centuries of this era. In all three tables, the first column is the total number of verses in the work in question, followed by the number of “golden lines” and “silver lines” in the work. More important for the purposes of comparison are the last three columns, which give the percentage of golden and silver lines in respect to the total number of verses. Aside from a few exceptions, I have only included poems with more than 200 lines, since in shorter poems the percentage figures are arbitrary and can be quite high. See, for example, the combined percentage of 14.29 in the *Apocolocyntosis*. Similarly, other short poems that are not included on the tables, such as the *Copa*, *Moretum*, *Lydia*, and *Einsiedeln Eclogues*, have rather high combined percentages between 3.45 and 5.26.

From Table 7.1 we see that golden and silver lines occur in varying frequencies throughout the classical period, even within the corpus of a single author. There are no Latin golden or silver lines before Catullus, who uses them in poem 64 to an extent almost unparalleled in classical literature. Lucretius has a few examples of the form. Horace has about one in every 300 lines, as does Vergil’s *Aeneid*. Vergil’s earlier works have a much higher percentage. Ovid and Lucan use the golden line about once in every 100 lines. The high percentage of golden lines found in the *Laus Pisonis* and other works of the Neronian period has led some scholars to claim that the form...
Table 1: Golden lines in selected classical texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>%G</th>
<th>%S</th>
<th>%G+S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catullus 64</td>
<td>408</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>4.41</td>
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<td>6.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horace, Satires &amp; Epistles</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vergil, Eclogues</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgic 2</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgic 4</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aeneid</td>
<td>9896</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culex</td>
<td>414</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciris</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovid, Metamorphoses</td>
<td>11989</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucan</td>
<td>8060</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laus Pisonis</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>7.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persius</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ilias Latina</td>
<td>1070</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>2.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apocolocyntosis Divi Claudii</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>14.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statius, Thebais 1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>0.42</td>
<td>1.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statius, Thebais 2</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statius, Thebais 3</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.42</td>
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Table 2: Golden lines in selected late antique poetry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>%G</th>
<th>%S</th>
<th>%G+S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prudentius, Apotheosis</td>
<td>1084</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.74</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudentius, Hamartigenia</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudentius, Psychomachia</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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<td>Aegeiritudo Penticae</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
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<td>Dracontius, De laudibus Dei 1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claudian, Panegyricus 1</td>
<td>279</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>4.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claudian, In Eutropium 1</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claudian, Honor. 3rd</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>5.69</td>
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<td>Claudian, Honor. 4th</td>
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<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<td>Ausonium, Mosella</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

is a mark of Neronian aesthetics. While several scholars have claimed that the golden line is mainly and artfully used to close periods and descriptions, the texts I have investigated do not seem to bear this out.

Unfortunately, no amount of statistics can prove that the golden line was a recognized form of classical poetics. Winbolt, the most thorough commentator on the golden line, described the form as a natural combination of obvious tendencies in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>%G</th>
<th>%S</th>
<th>%G+S</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caelius Sedulius, <em>Paschale</em> 1</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>7.95</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Paschale</em> 2</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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<td><em>Paschale</em> 3</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>4.80</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Paschale</em> 4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>3.90</td>
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<td><em>Paschale</em> 5</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Paschale</em>, Total</td>
<td>1731</td>
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<td>0.23</td>
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<td>Corippus, <em>Iohannis</em> 1</td>
<td>581</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Iohannis</em> 2</td>
<td>488</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>0.41</td>
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<td><em>Iohannis</em> 3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<td>3.42</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Iohannis</em> 6</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>1.68</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Iohannis</em> 7</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Iohannis</em> 8</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<td>0.77</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Iohannis</em>, Total</td>
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<td>116</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corippus, <em>In laudem</em> preface</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>6.06</td>
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<td><em>In laudem</em> 1</td>
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<td><em>In laudem</em> 2</td>
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<td>2.33</td>
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<td><em>In laudem</em> 3</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In laudem</em> 4</td>
<td>377</td>
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<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.45</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>In laudem</em>, Total</td>
<td>1680</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.57</td>
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<td>Aldhelm, <em>Carmen de virginitate</em></td>
<td>2904</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>7.26</td>
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<td>Ennodius, <em>Itinerarium</em></td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>2.35</td>
<td>4.71</td>
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Latin hexameter, such as the preference for putting adjectives towards the beginning of the line and nouns at the emphatic end.\textsuperscript{120}

As Table 7.2 shows, in late antiquity the use of golden lines remains within the general range found in classical times. Of particular interest is their use by Claudian. On the average the golden line crops up once in every 50 lines of Claudian, but there are considerable differences between works. In Table 7.2, I give the poem with the lowest percentage (\textit{On Honorius's Fourth Consulship}) and that with the highest (\textit{On Honorius's Third Consulship}).

At this stage I should mention a type of poetry, both antique and later, that does not use the golden line: figurative poetry, such as that of Optatian Porfyrius and, in Carolingian times, that of Hrabanus Maurus. These poets use a variety of hexameters praised by Diomedes and discussed above — rhopalic verses, echo verses, and reciprocal verses.\textsuperscript{121} They do use the golden line, but not often: Once is enough to show that they can do it, and the form is rather elementary compared to their usual pyrotechnic displays.\textsuperscript{122}

Table 7.3 reveals several interesting tendencies in golden line usage in the early medieval period. The fact that Caellius Sedulius, Aldhelm, and the \textit{Hisperica Famina} have a pronounced preference for the form has long been noted.\textsuperscript{123} Corippus in the sixth century also uses the golden line significantly more than classical authors. Note that there is not a comparable increase in the silver line: If anything, these authors have fewer silver lines. This trend may be due to the growing fondness for leonine rhymes, which are facilitated by the golden line structure but not by the silver line. Another tendency, seen in Corippus, Sedulius, Aldhelm, and Walther de Speyer, is an extremely large number of golden lines in the beginning of a work, which is not matched in the rest of the work. Previous scholars have only tallied figures for the golden line at the beginnings of these poems, and therefore can have inflated numbers.\textsuperscript{124} In the first 500 lines of Aldhelm's \textit{Carmen de virginitate}, for example, there are 42 golden lines and seven silver lines, yielding percentages of 8.4 and 1.4 respectively; in the last 500 lines (2405–2904) there are only 20 golden lines and four silver lines, yielding percentages of 4 and 0.8 respectively — a reduction by half. Corippus's \textit{Ioannis} and Sedulius's \textit{Paschale} have even more extreme reductions. These skewed percentages may indicate that the golden line is an ideal that is artfully strived for but which cannot be continuously realized over the course of a long epic.

Another possible explanation for the diminished use of golden lines within an author's work (observed already in Vergil; see Table 7.1) is that, with time, poets may gradually free themselves from the constraints of the form. The golden line may have been taught in the schools as a quick way to elegance, which poets would use with increasing moderation as their experience grew. Two poems that appear to be juvenilia point to this conclusion. The \textit{Hisperica Famina} is a bizarre text which is apparently from seventh-century Britain.\textsuperscript{125} It seems to be a collection of school compositions on set themes that have been run together. Of its 612 lines, 144 — 23.53 percent — have the golden line structure. Most of the lines that are not "golden" are merely too short to have more than three words; or, occasionally, they are too long. These extremely short or long lines are due to the fact that the poem is not written in hexameter. It may be written in some rough stress-based meter, but even that cannot be stated with certainty. But the ideal model that the composers took for their verses appears to have been the golden line.\textsuperscript{126} Walther de Speyer composed his poem on the life of St. Christopher in 984 when he was seventeen. The percentage of golden lines is high, but the number of
near-misses is enormous. When you read Walther you get the impression that he was programmed in school to write golden lines.

The large number of golden lines in poetry from the sixth through ninth centuries could reflect the combination of several trends, such as the preference for hyperbaton and the growing popularity of leonine rhymes. The statistics do not (and cannot) prove that the form was ever taught and practiced as a discrete form. Even if the golden line was not a conscious poetic conceit in the classical or medieval period, it might have some utility today as a term of analysis in discussing such poetry. However, the form now appears in canonical English commentaries to authors from Callimachus to Aldhelm and most scholars who refer to the golden line today treat it as an important poetic form of indisputable antiquity.

As far as I can tell, the form can be directly traced to Bede's remarks in the *De arte metrica*, which were repeated and made more prescriptive and strict by Renaissance commentators, ultimately leading to Burles's description of the golden line. As I mentioned in part I (p. 142), Bede advocated a double hyperbaton, and also the placing of adjectives before nouns. In the examples from each criterion (double hyperbaton and adjectives before nouns) Bede includes at least one golden line, but from his other examples it is clear that he did not limit these injunctions to the golden line:127

But the best and most beautiful arrangement [optima . . . ac pulcherrima positio] of the dactylic verse is when the penultimate parts respond to the first ones and the last parts respond to the middle ones [primis penultima, ac mediis respondent extrema]. Sedulius was in the habit of using this arrangement often, as in

*Pervia divisi patuerunt caerula ponti* [Sedulius, Paschal. 1.136]

and

*Sicca peregrinas stupuerunt marmora plantas* [Sedulius, Paschal. 1.140]

and

*Edidit humanas animal pecuane loquelas* [Sedulius, Paschal. 1.162]

Likewise in the pentameter . . . [Bede gives two verses that are not golden, Paschal. 1.2 and Paschal. 1.16]. But this cannot be done continuously, but after a few intervening verses. Because if you always arrange your feet and verses in one way, even if it is the best way, it immediately cheapens their worth. . . . In addition, versifiers should strive -- as long as it does not interfere with the beauty of their art -- to place adjectives before nouns, and they should avoid putting words in agreement together, but some other word should intervene, for example:

*Mitis in inmitem virga est animata draconem* [Sedulius, Paschal. 1.132]

He placed 'mitis' before 'virga', 'inmitem' before 'draconem' (but this is also separated, that is, the phrase 'est animata' was placed in between). He did this not because it was necessary to always follow these rules, but because, when it is done, it makes it a thing of beauty. Prosper, too, by changing this order, made a very appealing verse:

*Moribus in sanctis pulchra est concordia pacis* [Prosper 29.1]128

Bede's two criteria were collapsed into one rule in several Renaissance guides to versification. The earliest is the 1484 *De arte metrificandi* of Jacob Wimpfeling:

It will be a mark of extraordinary beauty and no mean glory will accrue when you have distanced an adjective from its substantive by means of intervening words, as if you were to say "pulcher prevalidis pugnabat tiro lacertis."
And two years later the *Ars Versificandi* of Conradus Celtis followed Wimpfeling:

Fifth precept: The most charming form of poem will be to have distanced an epithet from its substantive by means of intervening words, as if you were to say

\[
\text{maiores cadunt altis de montibus umbre}
\]
\[
\text{pulcer prevalidis pugnabit tiro lacertis.}
\]

[Quintum preceptum: venustissimaque erit carminis figura epitheton per interiectas orationis partes a substantio removisse: ut si dicatur]

In 1512 Jean Despauterius quoted Celtis’s remarks verbatim in his *Ars versificatoria* in the section *De componendis carminibus praecepta generalia* and then more narrowly defined excellence in hexameters in the section *De carmine elegiaco*:

Elegiac poetry rejoices in two epithets, this is to say adjectives (not swollen, or puffed-up, or affected adjectives). This is almost always done so that the two adjectives are placed in front of two substantives, so that the first responds to the first. Nonetheless, you will frequently find different types, for we are not imparting laws, but good style. Propertius, Book 2:

*Sic me nec solae poterunt avertere sylvae*

*Nec vaga muscosis flumina fusa iugis.*

Nor is this inelegant in other genres of poetry, for example

*Sylvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.*

Care must be taken that the two words are not in the same case and number, because that leads to ambiguity. That is not the case when Vergil says

*Mollia lutheola pingit vaccinia calta.*

Moreover, there should not be two epithets [for one noun], because that is faulty according to Servius. An example would be:

*dulcis frigida aqua.*

Therefore *decorum* is an adjective, but *insigne* a substantive in this verse from the second book of the Aeneid:

*Androgeo galeam, clypique insigne decorum induitur.*

[Carmen elegiacum gaudet binis epithetis, id est adiectivis, non turgidis, vel inflatis, vel affectatis, quod fere ita fit, ut duo adjectiva duobus substantivis preponantur, ubi prius priori respondet, frequentem tamen aliter invenies, neque enim legem sed elegantiam tradimus. Propertius lib. 2

*Sic me nec solae poterunt avertere sylvae*

*Nec vaga muscosis flumina fusa iugis.*

Neque dedecet istud alius generibus carminum ut,

*Sylvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.*

Cavendum est, ne sint eiusdem casus, numerique, quia ambiguitatem parerent. Id non est quum Virgilius dicit,

*Mollia lutheola pingit vaccinia calta.*

ne sint autem epitheta duo, quia vitiosum est, teste Servio, quale est,

*dulcis frigida aqua.*

Ideo decorum adiectum est, insigne vero substantivum apud Virg. 2 Aenei. *Androgeo galeam, clypique insigne decorum induitur.*]
Despauterius here combines Bede’s two rules into one general precept of elegance: Two adjectives should be placed before two substantives, the first agreeing with the first. It is not quite the golden line, for there is no provision for a verb in the middle. However, Despauterius quotes the famous example of the golden line, Eclogue 2.50, as a good example of the type.

The same general remarks about epithets are found in John Clarke’s 1633 Manu-
ductio ad Artem Carmificam seu Dux Poeticus. He declares (345) that “Epithets are placed most charmingly before their substantives”:

Epitheta, ante sua substantiva venustissime collocantur, ut:

\[ \text{Pendula flaventem pingebat bractea crinem} \]
\[ \text{Aurea purpuream subnexit fibula vestem, [Aeneid 4.139]} \]
\[ \text{Vecta est fraenato caeruleae piscis Thetis.} \]

The source of Clarke’s first example line is unknown, but the same line is also one of Burles’s examples of the golden line. Burles’s discussion of the golden line is clearly based upon this tradition concerning the position of epithets. The sentence that immediately precedes his definition of the golden line reads, “Epithets are elegantly set before their substantives.” Burles’s golden line can therefore be seen as a more narrow application of the principles outlined by Bede almost a millennium earlier.

We like to believe that our critical approaches to classical poetry are direct and immediate, and that we aim to understand classical literature in its own context or, depending on one’s critical stance, from the perspective of our own context(s). However, the use of “the golden line” as a critical term in modern scholarship demonstrates the power of the intervening critical tradition. The golden line may originally have been the \textit{teres versus} of Diomedes, but this fact does not legitimate its use as a critical term today. No commentators today count up \textit{versus inlibati}, \textit{iuniges}, \textit{quinquipartes}, or any of the other bizarre forms assembled by that fourth-century grammarian. In all likelihood the golden line is a term gradually developed by medieval and Renaissance grammarians, from Bede to Burles, but this indeterminate (and apparently unknown) pedigree does not explain its curious hold on Anglo-American scholarship. Far more interesting than the appearance of the golden line in ancient and medieval poetry is the use of the term by these modern critics. Today major works and commentaries on canonical poets in Latin and Greek discuss them in light of the golden line, and occasionally even the silver line: Neil Hopkinson’s Callimachus, William Anderson’s \textit{Metamorphoses}, Richard Thomas’s \textit{Georgics}, Alan Cameron’s Claudian, Andy Orchard’s Aldhelm. Most of these critics assume or imply that golden lines were deliberate figures, practiced since Hellenistic times and artfully contrived and composed by the poets in question. This process of scouring the canonical texts for such special verse forms is entirely in the spirit of the ancient lists of Servius, Victorinus, and Diomedes. Thus, in a curious way, the arcane wordplay that fascinated ancient grammarians has – in the English-speaking world, at least – come again to play a role in interpreting and explicating the central works of the classical canon.
APPENDIX

Julius Caesar Scaliger on the teres versus or κυκλοτελής: Scaliger 71–72.

sane et politus fuerit, et erit simplex. at enimvero simplicitas illa quae prima quaque investigatione sese offert nobis, nullo pacto polienda erit. nativa enim est, neque torno indiget: hoc enim est Polire, quod πολείν. Itaque Horatius Graecorum os rotundum dixit:

Et, Male tornatos incudi reddere versus. (Ars Poetica 441)


Praetextam in cista mures rosere Camilli.

Hosce κυκλοτελεῖς, teretes qui vocabit, non pessime faciet. Sunt autem contrarii inaequalibus: cuiusmodi sunt permulti Luciliani, & apud Lucretium non pauci impoliti. de Ennianis tantundem. neque Horatius in Senariis dactylicis felicior. Hos ego voco familiares modo enim Latinè & purè dicat, parum prospicit quid numeris futurum sit. Oratio pura, tractus scrupei,

Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo quam sibi sortem. [Horace, Satire 1.1.1]

Neque melius multo qui streperis teretes, atque confragosis contrarios arbitrati sunt. adversanter enim streperis molles, quos μαλακοείδες Graeci. Exemplum ponitur a Quintiliano et alius:

Molla luteola pingens vaccinia calta [misquotation of Eclogue 2.50]

Et nostrum:

Luteola in viola caltula pallidula.

Quo loco etiam male adducunt exemplum illud,

Torva Mimalloneis inflatur tibia bombis. [misquotation of Persius 1.99]

Neque enim teres est, sed vitiosus: atque relatus ad censum tumidorum, sicut & illud Horatii,

Nec circumtonuit gaudens Bellona cruentis. [Horace, Satire 2.3.223]

Praeterea versus ille, quem adducunt, non respondet definitioni. Neutiquam enim cohaerent dictiones: sed simul cum quarto pede finitur tertia vox: simul cum voce quarta pes quintus.

Notes

A very early version of this paper was presented in November 1996 at the Texas Classical Association Conference in Austin. This chapter would have been vastly different and often completely wrong were it not for Carol Lanham's erudite insights and careful attention. I am also grateful to Marina del Castillo Herrera of the Universidad de Granada for her patient help in tracking down Spanish references to the aureo verso.

2. Burles 357. The first example line is Ovid, *Met.* 1.147. The source of the second is unknown.

3. I know of only five non-English-speaking scholars who have referred to the golden line in print, and they usually pointedly use the English term to refer to it: Thraede 51: “die Spielarten der ‘golden line.’” Baños 762: “el denominado *versus aureus* o *golden line.*” Hellegouarc’h 277: “l’origine du ‘versus aureus’ ou ‘golden line.’” Del Castillo 133 mentions the *dureo verso* but does not discuss. Enriquez’s *dareo verso* (discussed in the text after note 113) seems to differ markedly from those used by English scholars. Baños, Enriquez, and Hellegouarc’h all refer exclusively to Wilkinson 215–217 and other English scholars for discussions of the term. I have heard, per litteras, that the golden line is currently being taught in Spain and that it was taught in Gymnasium in Germany in the 1970s, but most Germans seem to be unfamiliar with the term. Typical would be the French article of Kerlouégan, which never mentions the term, but which is entirely devoted to the form.

4. Burles, introductory note to 1971 reprint (no page number and no indication of author): “Although Burles’ work is one of the most interesting and thorough school texts produced in the first half of the seventeenth century, it never apparently won popularity and was never reprinted.”


6. Documented exhaustively in Leonhardt, *Dimensio*. Cf. Leonhardt, “Classical” 311: “The teaching of syllabic quantity was the central point of medieval metrical theory.” For a common example of this type of treatise, I refer readers to the *Doctrinale* of Alexander de Villa Dei and its commentators or, among the earlier writers, [Maximus Victorinus], *De finalibus*, *GL* 6.229–242.


9. Servius gives an example of a rhopalicus from an unknown author: *rem tibi confeci, doctissime, dulcisonoram, doctissime, dulcisonoram*. This type of hexameter is discussed in the commentary to section 8, Diomedes’s *fistularis versus*, pp. 150–151.

10. Koster, *Traité* 56–59 briefly lists the more common forms of εἴδη and πάθη (virtutes et vitia) found in the Greek lists, but all, with the exception of the χλαμακωτός and τέκλαιον (57), are features of syllables and meter, not palindromes and word order. Bassett addresses the *tetracolos versus* in Greek epic: three- and four-word hexameters. *Reciprocì versus* are treated in Leviatan, “Dancing” 248, but the assessment in Leviatan, “Field” 94 still holds true today: “As yet there exists no complete history of this essentially painterly attitude toward writing in antiquity.”

11. All translations are my own except as noted.

12. Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 23.3: “sed capiebat homines cum memoria rerum tum facilitate sermonis nec non etiam poemata faciebat ex tempore. Scripsit vero variis nec vulgarius metris.” Palaemon wrote the first Latin grammar and flourished during the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius (Kaster 55–57; Suetonius, ibid.).

13. There is in fact a multitude of ancient names for this verse type: *rhopalicus, ropalicus, fistularis, suriggiow*, χλαμακωτός, χλαμακώς, and apparently (known to me only from Renaissance writers) *syngyntigde* and *Euryalicus versus*.

14. For Greek lists of hexameters see Grossman 29–53; Voltz 28–37; Koster, *Tractatus* 64–77; and Koster, *Traité* 56–59 (lacks references to ancient sources). Most of the lists are printed in Consbruch 282–294, 325–328, 340–342, 347–354; others are in Voltz; Grossmann; Koster,
Tractatus. The most complete and accessible list is available in the Pseudo-Plutarchean De metris, printed in the seventh volume of Bernardakis's Teubner edition of the Moralia.

15. Plutarch, Mor. 397d, Athenaeus 14.632e (reprinted in Consbruch 347–348), both of which have lines called ἄκραπος, λαγάρος, and μέσος. The term λαγάρος is also found in Ar. Eccl. 1167. These types of verse are discussed in the commentary to Diomedes, sections 13–15. Consbruch (xxvii) also believes that these lists probably had classical models: “Quin in commentariis de hexametro scriptis antiqua doctrina tradatur, non dubitabis, si modo metricos latinos peruslustraveris. Etiam Hephaestionem in uniberius libris diligenter de talibus rebus disseruisse pro certo licet affirmare.”

16. Consbruch 293, 331, 351, 353; Koster, Tractatus 68, 107; Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 467.16. The example given is always ὄμος ὄμη ὀηδε, σύ δ' ὁμο, πείθει δ' ἤμιν (Iliad 1.214). The ὄποροπήθημα is identical to the Latin partipedi, which is discussed in section 7, pp. 149–150.

17. Consbruch 293, 341, 351; Koster, Tractatus 68; Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 467.19. The example usually given is πρὸς δε μὲ τὸν δυστηρὸν ἐν φρονοντι' ἐξεῖσε (Iliad 22.50), which has all eight parts of speech: ὄνομα, ὄμη, μετοχή, ὄμηθον, ἀκτονήμα, πρόθεσις, ἐξεῖσε, and σύνθομος.

18. Kaster 270–272 (Grammaticus #47) assembles and briefly discusses the evidence. For a more complete discussion of Diomedes and his work see Herzog and Schmidt 132–136 (#524).

19. Terentianus Maurus (GL 6) has a similar structure, introducing basic terms in lines 1580–1605, addressing the hexameter at length in 1606–1720, related meters in 1721–1820, and the remaining meters in 2181–2981. Bede’s De arte metrica similarly treats the varieties of hexameters and art of their composition at length (chs. 10–16, CCSL 123A pp. 108–131) before briefly turning to the other meters (chs. 17–23, CCSL 123A pp. 131–137). Aldhelm’s De metris et enigmatibus et petum regulis has an even more extreme division, first treating hexameters at length (chs. 8–10, Ehwald 77–96), next illustrating these points with 100 riddle poems (chs. 11–111, Ehwald 97–149), and then treating the basic rules of prosody and other meters (chs. 112–140, Ehwald 150–199). The pedagogical impetus for treating hexameters first is not immediately clear in Diomedes, but it seems clear in Bede and Aldhelm.

20. The phrase significationium industria is difficult to understand. See note 45 below.

21. Diomedes’ ten best verse types are: inibati, iniugae, aequiformes, quinquipartes, partipedi, fistulares, aequidici, teretes, sonores, vocales. The five flawed types of verses are: mutuli, exiles, caudoata, fragosi, fluxi.


23. Aldhelm, De metris 10 (Ehwald 94): “Quot pathos in dactilico exametro inserita adstipularis vel quid sunt pathos? Pathos quidem Latina lingua passiones dicuntur, sunt autem numero sex: acefalos, procefalos, lagaros, proclilos, dolichuros, miuros vel spicidos.” Ehwald’s commentary ad loc. points out that Aldhelm is the only Latin grammarian who lists all six πάθη just as the Greek grammarians Hephaestion does. Aldhelm also mentions several of these flaws in a letter to Leutherius (Epistle 1, Ehwald 476–477), where he refers to them as “pathetica septenae divisionis disciplina hoc est acephalos, lagaros, proclilos.”

24. Bede gives as examples two golden lines, and then three lines of somewhat similar chiastic structure. The entire passage is discussed in part III, p. 164.

25. These verse types are called clausulati nominales and clausulati verbales in Everardus’s Laborintus (see examples from Murmellius’s list below at note 40).

26. The first tract is an unedited anonymous Ars metrica, the Anonymus Vaticanus, perhaps from the twelfth century. Vat. lat. 11441, saec. XV, fols. 279v–306 (Leonhardt, Dimensio 206–209, under the rubric A 4.1). The special verses are on fol. 300v and include leonina, caudata, and reciproca. The text’s discoverer, Leonhardt, notes that it is unique for including a reworked version of Servius’s De centum metris, as well as descriptions of leonine verses and other forms (Dimensio 142). The second treatise is an Ars metrica by
Guido, perhaps written in the thirteenth century and printed in the fifteenth century (see the MSS and publication details in Leonhardt, *Dimensio* 216–218, under the rubric A 4.13). The special verses in Guido’s *Ars metrica* are on fol. 40 of the Rome 1473 edition (Hain-Copinger number 1830 = 14065) and also include *leonina*, *caudata*, and *reciproc*. Leonhardt notes that this list is extremely unusual because it leaves out the ancient lyric verses and instead offers medieval rhymed forms like the *leonine* verses (*Dimensio* 141). Leonhardt mentions that the text also refers to *versus retrogradi*, which possibly refers to *reciproc* verse, as in Everardus’s list (see text at note 3 below).

**Footnotes**


29. MS Vat. Chig. L. IV. 103, saec. XIV. The text includes fol. 108vb, but its extent is not known since the MS has not been systematically examined. Leonhardt, *Dimensio* 235, under the rubric A 8.2, treats number 14.


31. The manuscript has not been examined closely. Leonhardt (*Dimensio* 235) transcribes the following from fol. 108vb: “Metrorum alia sunt leonina, alia ventrina alia repercussina alia caudata alia dupliciter caudata.”


33. For medieval poetic use of the verse types, see Walther.

34. Leonhardt, *Dimensio* 241 (B 23). The treatise seems to have never been independently printed but can be found appended to a few editions of other grammarians. The text I examined was printed at the end of a 1512 London edition of Niccolò Perotti (see bibliography under Perotti).


36. Badius must have used a list almost identical to Anonymous Parisinus, Conbruch 351, which in turn is representative of a type of list such as Conbruch 293–294.

37. *Cognomina versuum*. For Sulpius see Leonhardt, *Dimensio* 279–280 (B 155.1). The first edition seems to have been in Perugia ca. 1476, but there were at least ten editions before 1500.


39. The *applicati versus* of Everardus, *Laborintus* 699–704. For other examples of this form see Weis 95, who calls them “Spaltverse.”

40. The *versus clausulati nominales* and *versus clausulati verbales* of Everardus, *Laborintus* 735–746.


42. The *tetracolos*: *GL* 6.505; *GL* 6.71.

43. The *hexameter* types are discussed in Scaliger, Book 2 chs. 28–32 (pp. 70–76 in the 1561 first edition). See also the critical edition with translation and commentary of Deitz and Vogt-Spira, vol. 1.

44. The only other scholar who discusses Diomedes’ list in any detail is del Castillo (130–135).
The only other person even to mention Diomedes’ list is Hardison (37), who deserves great credit for taking this passage seriously, although he does not seem to have understood it nor to have appreciated how unusual it is.

45. The phrase significationum industria is difficult to understand, as del Castillo notes (130). She gives instead the gloss “virtutes et vitia.” I render the title “Concerning metrical feet, or feats of prosody,” based on context rather than on parallel passages. Significatio may be a calque based on ομητίον, which is used by some Greek grammarians for a measure of time (see Quintilian 9.4.51; also Marius Victorinus, GL 6.43, “ομητίον autem veteres χρόνον, id est tempus, non absurde dixerunt ex eo, quod signa quaedam accentum”). It is probably not used in the usual sense of “meaning” or in the grammarians’ sense of “voice” (cf. Servius, Comment. in Artem Donati, GL 4.413.37; also 4.406.4, 4.416.28, 4.417.22, 4.440.18, and passim in Servius, ad Vergil.). The title of a lost work by M. Valerius Probus, De significationibus sive generibus verborum (fragment 82) is probably unrelated. For industria as “feat” see Gallius 5.3.7, quanam verborum industria.

46. Hardison 37 paraphrases as follows: “Verses can be integral (integrae [sic]), disjunctive (inivules), balanced (aequiformae [sic]), mixed (partipedes), incremental (fistulares, or ‘piping’), antithetical (aequitidici), or sonorous (sonores).”


48. Sacerdos includes the asyndetic verse; the tetracolos or four-word verse; and the rhopalius, the ladder verse, identical to Servius’ rhopalic verse mentioned above. Diomedes’ list has verse-types similar to each of these, and the individual elements of Sacerdos’s list are discussed in the commentary to Diomedes, sections 4, 6, and 8.

49. Victorinus lists the dactylic (all dactyls except for the last foot); the spondaich, which has a sponde in the fifth foot; verses ending with a monosyllable; verses consisting of just four words, and asyndetic verses. The last three verse types are similar to verses named by Diomedes and will be discussed in the appropriate part of this commentary.

50. De arte metrica 10 (Kendall 111), quoted below in part III, p. 164.

51. The Greeks had the lines πολυτεχνων or λογοειδες (corresponding to Diomedes’ aplēgeis); ἔποικηθήμον (corresponding to Diomedes’ podomereis); χλωμαχων (corresponding to Diomedes’ syropodes); χωδόφωνον (corresponding to Diomedes’ phonastikoi).

52. However, del Castillo (133) sees a progression from simple types to more complex types in one part of this list. Her remarks are quoted in note 94 below.

53. Badius (88 verso) defined this form as: “politicum quod omnis passionis ac figurae expres est. ut crudelis Alexi nihil mea carmina curae” [Eclogue 2.6].

54. Badius (88 verso) defined this form as: “soluta [metra sunt]: ut cum prosae quam metro similiora videntur. ut dono ducite doque volentibus cum magnis diis” [Ennius, Annales 6.190]. It seems unlikely that Badius would choose an example from Ennius unless there was already one available from the ancient tradition. The same verse is used by Sulpitius for the soluta versus and by Murmellius for the logoeide (table 12 verse 35).

55. “Atque illi nominare hunc ausi sunt, illibatum. quam tamen ita definiant: Illibatus, qui nulla aucta, aut minuta, aut amputata syllaba formatur. Et vox ipsa Illibati, hoc loco sane trivialis est.” Scaliger also confuses the politikos with the tereides versus, as we shall see in section 10.

56. This is Diomedes’ partipedes, about which see section 7 below. In Murmellius’ list it is verse 34, under the name ἐτοιμασθήμον. Murmellius’ oransus verse would therefore correspond to the coniunctus versus of the Ars Paladonos (see note 64 below).

57. GL 6.71. Murmellius (verse 7) calls verses which consist entirely of spondees or dactyls isochronus.

58. “A perfect verse is one that has the whole sense in it”; cf. LSJ s.v. ἀπλῆγεις. Consbruch 327. Cf. Consbruch 292, 341; Koster, Tractatus 70; Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 468.10. Badius (88 verso) renders this form as: “perfecta [sc. metra sunt] cum sententia uno metro concluditur: ut Dixit et ardentis avido bibit ore favillas” [Martial 1.42.5].
Both words are *hapax legomena* and the word is probably, like the others, a direct calque into Greek of the Latin word. Diomedes' manuscripts confuse lambda with rho in the next line (GL 1.498.27 *cyclotelis*, which Keil rendered *κυκλοτέλης*). Scaliger seems to be reading a text with ἀπλοσχήμονες (quoted in the text, p. 148).

Although the *tetracolos* is not found in the Greek lists, a verse flaw called *διλημμαία* is found in two lists of verse flaws, one in Eustathius and one in *Anecdota Varia* I.214, both of which are printed and discussed in Grossmann 30–31. The anonymous tract cites a three-word verse (*Iliad* 2.706) for an example of *διλημμαία*. Both tracts also discuss the opposite extreme, *πολυλείμα* (adducing *Iliad* 6.253 and its copies). Murmellius, table 12 verse 26 μυκτόμαλος, the ultimate extension of the *quinquipartes* and *tetracolos*, has been quoted in full on p. 143. Pontanus (93) condemns the more familiar example of the μυκτόμαλος: *Innumerabilibus Constantinopolitani / Conturbantur solitudo minibus*. Five- and four-word lines are praised for their "special sonority" by Cooper 45.

Consbruch 293, 341, 351; Koster, *Tractatus* 68. Defined by Badius (88 verso): "Absolutum quod omnies partes orationis habet. ut heu tunc si flentem rapuisset in ethera me mors."

The source of this quotation is unknown.

This example verse is also used by Servius and Sacerdos, and in one Greek list.

The source for this verse is unknown. In the copy of Badius (88 verso) that I viewed it read somewhat differently: *rem tibi confeci doctissime Sardanaphale*.

Aequidicos nonnulli vocant versus, quorum dictiones omnes ab una incipiant lettera. Aequidicus aliis dicitur, qui singulis propositionibus antithetas subdit dictiones. At hic orationes, non dimensionis est auctus.

alba liguStra cadunt, vaccinia nigra leguntur. [Eclogue 2.18]

Hic ab aliis contrarius appellatur, quod in eo nominum & verborum oppositio sit.”
The golden line

77. The passage is worth quoting in full. “Quid est compositio? quam structuram vocamus. Quae sunt principales eius species? nomenque id est caesum, id est membrum, id est circuitus. Structurae qualitatis est tripartita: aut enim rotunda est, id est volubilis, aut plana, id est procurrens, aut gravis, id est stabillis ac resistens. His vitiosa quae opponuntur? resistenti aspera et confragosa, procurrenti fluxa, volubili contorta et nimirum rotata” (Fortunatianus, Ars rhetorica 3.10, RLM 127.7-13).

78. Note that the Greek lists use the term περιόδος as to refer to a verse that consists of alternating dactyls and spondees: Consbruch 263, 340, 351; Pontanus 91; Murmellius table 12 verse 4.

79. The only name similar to κυκλοτετράς is anacyd, a term apparently used for a versus reciprocus in a scholiun to Optatian Porfyrian. See Levitan, “Dancing” 248.

80. The verse is from an unknown poet, quoted and criticized in Quintilian 8.3.19, apparently because he takes camilli to be an inappropriate adjective.

81. This is a misquotation of Vergil, Eclogue 2.50. Scaliger is wrong in attributing this example to Quintilian, or at least the line is not found in Quintilian’s text as we have it. Scaliger may have confused this line with the earlier example of praetextam in cista mures rosere Camilli, which was taken from Quintilian.

82. Scaliger’s exact quotation of Diomedes’ misquoted line of Persius shows that Diomedes was the ultimate source for this example.

83. For the “pure golden line” see Claussen’s commentary on this line (80). Most scholars allow additional words, such as prepositions, exclamations, conjunctions, adverbs, or even an additional noun in the “golden line.” E.g., Winbolt (220-221) prints 16 examples of the form, of which two have a preposition (ab and in). But in making a point about its use in practice, he quotes Aeneid 5.66, which has an extra noun (Teucer). In general, scholars tend to omit reference to these extra words in their definitions of the golden line and avoid them in their example verses, yet admit these extra words when counting up examples of the form. I discuss the problem of defining the golden line at the beginning of part III, pp. 158ff.

84. Winbolt 219, Young 515, Jackson Knight 184-185, Wright 74. The slavish and mechanical repetition of an example line from earlier sources is usually considered a hallmark of ancient grammarians. The reuse of this line is especially odd, since it is such a poor example owing to the similarity of nominative and ablative endings, a fact already noted by Despauterius in his section De carmine elegiaco (discussed in part III, p. 165).

85. Pontanus, like Scaliger, seems to understand teres as the opposite of the partipes: “Teres [versus est], volubili et cohaerente dictione continuus. κυκλοτετράς, κυκλοτετράς, exempla infinita apud Virgilium invenias, Semper honos, nomenque tuum, laudesque manebunt” (94). Note that Pontanus’s example verse has no correspondence between word and foot division.

86. Most Renaissance commentators correct Diomedes’ third-declension sonoritis to the more classical sonoris.

87. Victorinus adjusts it to make an anapest (GL 6.75.6), a sotadian (GL 6.116.1), a phalaecian (GL 6.117.15) a catalectic anapest (GL 6.122.32), a catalectic anapestic tetrameter (GL 6.125.23), and a strophic hexameter (GL 6.213.8). Other grammarians use the same line to create a hendecasyllabic phalaecian (Cassius Bassus, GL 6.258.22), a typical hexameter (Atilius Fortunatus, GL 6.283.25), the longest hexameter (Atilius Fortunatus, GL 6.284.19, Frag. Sangallensis, GL 6.638.3), an anapest line (Terentianus Maurus, GL 6, lines 1855, 1858), a normal hexameter (Sacerdos, GL 6.501.12; note that Diomedes’ other example verse, Aeneid 8.596, is quoted here too), a mainly dactylic line (Sacerdos, GL 6.502.26), an example of a type of pentameter, again with the other example line (Sacerdos, GL 6.511.5), a catalectic anapestic pentameter (Sacerdos, GL 6.533.20), and a catalectic anapestic hexameter (Mallius Theodorus, GL 6.506.20).

88. Both are offered as examples of normal hexameters (Sacerdos, GL 6.501) and, after some adjustments, as examples of a type of pentameter (Sacerdos, GL 6.511).
90. This passage of Diomedes is the sole source for the poetry of Paconianus. A Renaissance edition of Diomedes by Johannes Caesarius offers Aeneid 3.570 instead (Kell, GL ad loc.).

91. Consbruch 292 (cf. 328, 342, 351); Koster, Tractatus 73; Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 469.7.


93. On reciprocal verses, see also Quintilian 9.4.90–91; Martial 2.86.2 (quoted in full above, in text following note 10); Servius, De centum metris, GL 4.466; Servius, ad Aeneidem 7.634; Victorinus, GL 6.113–114; Sidonius Apollinaris, Epistle 8.11.5 and 9.14.4–6; Nicolodemus of Heraclea, Anth. Pal. 6.314–320; scholia to Optatianus Porfyrius, poem 15 lines 9–15; Flores and Polaris 118; Levitan, "Dancing" 248.

94. "... y así lo demuestra la progresión de los tipos de hexámetro expuestos desde los más simples a los más complejos: de sucesión de fonemas reproducen o ilustran el contenido (sonores o vocales), pasando por los aequiformes, como se ha dicho, divididos en dos partes iguales por la penthemímeras, los que hacen coincidir palabra y pie (partipedes), los formados por palabras cuyo número de sílabas aumenta progresivamente (fistulares), los que divididos en dos partes oponen el sentido de cada una de ellas (aequidici) o, como hemos dicho, los teretes."

95. Sacerdos, GL 6.452 gives as examples of acephali Aeneid 1.30 and 2.715. Fragmentum Berolinense, GL 6.637 offers Aeneid 5.3 as acephalus, Aeneid 12.13 as lagaros or laxus. Victorinus, GL 6.67 offers Georgics 1.483 and Aeneid 11.354 as acephali, Aeneid 3.179 as lagaros. Aldhelm considers Aeneid 1.2 to be acephalos (Ehwald 94).

96. The former has an extra syllable or quantity in the first foot (Consbruch 325, 328; Koster, Traité 59; Pontanus 93). The latter (sometimes called μοῖχοσκελῆς) has an extra syllable in the last foot (Consbruch 326, 328, 350; Pontanus 94).

97. The full line is Βίβη εἰς Ἀἰλόου κλίτα μείζονα ἄρεις ἐχαίρανον (Odyssey 10.60).

98. Consbruch 289, 349; Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 472, where such lines are called μοῖχοσκελεσι. Different verses are used in Consbruch 322 (Iliad 2.544), 326 (Iliad 3.172), 327 (Iliad 4.11), 347 (Iliad 2.731); Koster, Tractatus 71 (Iliad 14.1); Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 468 (Iliad 14.1).

99. Consbruch 290, 323, 326, 327, 341, 348, 349, 350; Koster, Tractatus 71; Pseudo-Plutarch, De metris, Bernardakis 468 and 472.

100. attoniti Troes viso serpente pavitant. Terentianus discusses the form in lines 1927–1930 (GL 6.383). The form is grouped among Victorinus’s vitia versuum.

101. "miurum constat ita ut heroicum, sed pyrrhichio clauditur, ut est hoc, mortem contemnunt laudato vulnere Getae" (GL 4.465). The source of the example is unknown.

102. The first example line is a mixture of Vergil, Aeneid 7.622 and Ennius, Annales 7.226 (cf. Macrobius, Sat. 4.17 and Horace, Satire 1.4.61). The source for the second line is unknown.

103. "Fabio" refers to Quintilian. The reference is to Quintilian 1.1.37, where he discusses tongue-twisters, calling them rough (confregosos) or χαλανοι. As Carol Lanham points out, Pontanus apparently is using a text of Quintilian with the lectio facilior χαλανος.

104. The term can be applied to any meter that lacks a syllable. Sacerdos, GL 6.524; Victorinus, GL 6.61, 135, and 209; Maltius Theodorus, GL 6.593.11, 18, and 24, 596.28, 597.20, 598.9; Aldhelm, De metris 10 (Ehwald 82).
105. Discussed under the *inlibati* above. Note particularly the correspondence between Diomede's definition and that of Badius (88 verso, quoted in note 54 above), who calls these verses *soluta*. The Fragmentum Berolinense seems to be the basis for Sulpitius Verulanus's comment in *De versuum scansione*, C iii, "Colossum seu colobum seu solutum quod prosa oratione incedit."

106. This line is also used by Victorinus as an example of a verse with a dactyl ending (*GL* 6.212).


108. "The chiastic form a b C B A (shall we call it the 'Silver Line', since it is not quite so absolute?) can also be used in this way, as at the end of *Georgic* 2: *impositos duris crepitare incudibus ensis*" (216).

109. Scholars who include silver lines (explicitly or implicitly) in their golden line definition: Winbolt 219, Sedgewick 49, Jackson Knight 184–185 (apparently), Cameron 290, Cooper 44–45, Thomas 86–87, Wright 74–76, Gruzelier xxviii, Claussen 80, Orchard 96–97, Baños 762, Enriquez, *Estudios* 335. Some scholars, such as Anderson 28–29 and Hopkinson 87–88, say that it is not golden, but that it can be so called in a less strict sense. Among scholars who make a rigid distinction between the two forms: Wilkinson 215–216, Conrad 208, and Whitby 105. Conrad offers the far superior terms *interlocked lines* and *concentric lines*, but the weight of tradition is marshalled against him.

110. The relative infrequency of the verses with the substantive in the first half of the verse can be gleaned from the statistics in Enriquez, *Estudios*.

111. Orchard's golden lines are lines 2, 4, 14, 18, 45, 46, 71, 95, 97, 112, 123, 149, 164, 173, 177, 182, 188, 221, 260, 278, 288, 289, 303, and 356. His near misses are lines 5, 20, 32, 49, 73, 131, 133, 138, 203, 206, 207, 214, 220, 236, 268, 271, 275, 283, 287, 298, 310, 366.


114. See Conrad 208–211. Greek golden lines appear as early as the Hellenistic period and are perhaps most popular in Nonnos. They are never used in the frequencies one sees in the Latin poets. See Hopkinson 87–88, Wifstrand 139, Kost 52–53, and especially Whitby 105.


116. A fact already noted by Young 516 and Jackson Knight 185: "Vergil gradually repressed the golden line, making its structure looser and looser according to a detectable devolution."

117. Boatwright 13, Caspari 92–94 (although he is discussing the abAB pattern, not golden lines *per se*).

118. Wilkinson 216: "Vergil also used it finely to round off periods. Here are two splendid examples from the great finale to *Georgics*, 1, which also constitute that 'overarching superflux of rhythm' at the end of a period." Jackson Knight 185: "In Vergil's later style, if a golden line, or a line like one, occurs, it is usually at the end of a verse-group, asserting unity by rhythmic punctuation." Roberts 37: "A passage often ends with a *sententia* or golden line, both of which bring a note of finality to the conclusion of a development (Avitus)," and his note 56 on the same page: "Because of their self-sufficient metrical and syntactical structure, golden lines too, though they may occur elsewhere in a passage, are especially suited to bringing a development to an end." Enriquez, *Estudios* 331: "La 'ubicación' especial del verso áureo en la estructura de la obra literaria aparece con mucha frecuencia al principio o al final del período o del poema."

119. *Pace* Enriquez, Estudios 337: "Creo que se han expuesto unos datos más que significativos en cuanto a la existencia de este verso, al que muy acertadamente llamamos 'áureo.'"

120. Baños 772–774 also argues that golden lines result from the combination of several tendencies in Latin hexameters, and he documents these tendencies with statistics. He finds, for example, that the verb tends to be in the center of a line, that adjectives come
before nouns, that they are separated from their substantives, and that there is symmetrical positioning of adjectives and nouns.

121. See Levitan, “Dancing,” and Flores and Polara for examples and discussion.

122. An example would be Optatian Porfyrius 5.8 et tua descriptis pingit vicennia metris or 5.21 Castiostis tota respondet voce triumphos.

123. Wright 74–76, Orchard 96–97.


125. For the date and provenance, both of which are controversial, see Herren 32–44.

126. Wright, Orchard 96–97.

127. Despite the claims of Orchard (96–97) and Wright (74–75), who sees Bede as the first to describe the golden line: “No earlier grammarian or meterian, to my knowledge, advises the use of the golden line.”


129. Wimpfeling (fol. 14v–[15]). See Worstbrock 470, 484–485. Worstbrock considers Bede to be one of Wimpfeling’s primary sources.

130. Fol. 17 recto of the first edition (see Worstbrock 470), fol. 244 of the edition in the microfilm series Italian Books before 1601.

131. The 1533 edition from which I quote has no pagination; this section is at the beginning of printer’s signature E iii.

132. Note that Scaliger keeps the MSS readings of Diomedes, which have been since emended, no doubt correctly, to κυκλοτετερίς.

Works cited


Badius. See Perotti.


