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The Latin Sapphic

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the American Philological Association contain much literature on the subject. One of the most interesting contributions—that of C. D. Morris¹—has received less attention

¹ Vol vi. (1875), p. 44 ff.

than it deserves. Whatever we may think of the detail, its method is certainly sane and suggestive.

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THE LATIN SAPPHIC.

WE may represent what was presumably the rhythm of the Greek sapphic thus:

π ο ι - κ ι - λ ο θ ρ ο ν' ἀ - θ α ν α τ' Ἀ φ - ρ ο - δ ι - τ α

where the time taken by each bar is equal, though the third bar is divided between a long and two shorts, and the fifth bar between two longs.

Again, we may represent the modern English rhythm of the sapphic thus:

which is approximately the rhythm of Fleming's music to *Integer vitae*, and of 'Needy knife-grinder.'

The differences between these two rhythms are three:

(1) There is a change from what is in the main triple time to 'common' or duple time. I say 'in the main,' for the effect of triple time is broken by bars 3 and 5.

(2) There is a change from 5-bar rhythm to 4-bar rhythm.

(3) The stress in the English rhythm comes on the fourth and sixth syllables instead of on the fifth and seventh.

These differences deserve separate attention; and when we have determined the causes of each, we may be able to see to what extent they were produced or furthered by Horace himself, and so finally to form some idea of the Latin sapphic as conceived by Horace, between its Greek parent on the one hand and its English (degenerate) offspring on the other.

(1) The first change was due in the main to the genius of the Latin language itself, which did not easily accommodate itself to triple-time rhythms. The Roman sense of time in speech was not so delicate as the Greek, and perhaps the triple time was felt too tripping for the dignity of Roman speech. Horace however clearly aided the change by consistently putting a long syllable in the fourth place. Before him Catullus

has shown a distinct preference for a long syllable in that place, as in his two sapphic poems he has only three lines beginning

- - - - -
 (2) The second change was due to the desire for an easier and more symmetrical rhythm, and naturally came about when lyrics were read rather than sung. In the case of the sapphic it was helped on by the change of accent (to be next discussed); but in this respect a similar effect has overtaken two other nearly allied Greek lyric metres.

(a) The Alcaic line, originally

θ ε λ ω τ ι φ ε ι - π η ν ἀ λ λ α μ ε κ ω λ υ - ε ι

has become

O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies;

(β) the 'hendecasyllable,' originally

(with some variations, not now to the point,)

O ye chorus of indolent re-viewers.

(3) The third change was due undoubtedly to the influence of the caesura after the fifth syllable—the 'Horatian caesura,' as it is called, though Catullus in his sapphics has only two lines in which there is a different caesura. As the cause of this we must assign a desire to get an effect of conflict between metrical ictus and word-stress, followed by a reconciliation. This effect was no doubt strengthened by the lengthening of the fourth syllable; for though conflict between ictus and accent might be produced by making syllables 4 and 5 consist of an iambic word, yet the effect of syncope is much stronger when the fourth

syllable is long. But whereas the lengthening of the fourth syllable is *universal* in Horace, the caesura after the fifth syllable is only *usual*.

Taking the two extremes, the Greek rhythm at one end, the English rhythm at the other, to which did the effect intended by Horace more nearly approximate? The differences between the two rhythms are so important that I find it impossible to believe, with Prof. Sonnenschein (*C.R.* p. 255), that Horace intended to pass within one poem from one rhythm to the other. The change would be impossible in singing, as he allows; even in reading Latin the effect seems to me very doubtful; nor am I encouraged by the stanza of Tennyson quoted on p. 253. Moreover, Horace has a certain number of lines that *must* preserve the Greek rhythm, so far as concerns the two important points, 5-bar rhythm and stress on the fifth syllable. He has *no* line in which that reading is impossible.

It so happened that the ode *Integer vitae*, which Flemming selected to set to music, contains no example of any other caesura than the 'Horatian.' How he would have dealt with such a line as

Phoebe, silvarumque potens Diana,

I do not know.

Nor can I believe, with Dr. Verrall (*C.R.* p. 342), that Horace, knowing that there was little chance of getting his sapphics read in the way he himself preferred, was willing to give his readers licence, and even some encouragement, to read them otherwise. I believe that Horace definitely intended his sapphics to be read or sung like their Greek originals in respect to two of the three points mentioned above. The other point, the change from (a predominant) triple time to duple time is less important. After all, it comes to little more than this, that in the Greek rhythm most of the bars were divided unevenly, in the Latin most were divided evenly.

Horace's notion of the normal Latin sapphic was

♩ . ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ . ♩ | ♩ ♩

where bars 1 and 4 are unequally divided, but no prejudice is intended to the question of the exact proportion between the long and short syllables.

Horace in his sapphics was aiming at an effect of 'syncopation' similar to that which gives its charm to the Latin hexameter. Another instance of the same effect

(as Dr. Verrall has no doubt noticed) is found in the 3rd line of the Alcaic stanza, where instead of

♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩
αἰ - δ' ὥς κε σ' οὐ κατ - εἰχ - εν ὀππατ'

we get

♩ | ♩ . ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ . ♩ | ♩ ♩
et cuncta terra - rum sub - acta.

But, as to the sapphic, Horace in the first three Books rather overdid it. 'So fantastical' was 'the dainty metre,' that it barely bore the strain he put upon it. He longed to preserve the original rhythm, but to get as much of the effect of syncopation as possible. In the more robust hexameter there was not the same danger. But even the hexameter was exposed to the same perversion, though here the result was merely the sprouting of an off-shoot. As soon as the word-stress on the last half of the second foot was reinforced by rime, it triumphed, and we get the 'leonine'

ut rosa flos *florum* sic est domus illa
domorum.

This is the fate to which rhythmists who play with syncopation are exposed. When he introduced the fascinating element of conflict, Horace hardly sufficiently realized that the balance might sway in the wrong direction. People *would* read the Latin sapphic accentually and were sliding into the 'Needy knife-grinder.' But Horace never encouraged them to do so this. He did much to prevent them. In three odes of Book I (as Dr. Verrall has pointed out), namely 10, 12, and 30, he starts them on the right lines by opening with a trochaic caesura.

♩ . ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ . ♩ | ♩ ♩

We now come to the sapphic odes later than the Three Books. And here it is convenient to consider the question whether Horace's lyrics were mainly intended for singing or for reading. In the first three Books the only Sapphic ode that distinctly suggests singing is I. 10,

Mercuri, facunde nepos Atlantis,
which is a hymn. It happens that this is also the ode which has the most frequent exceptions to the 'Horatian caesura'; that is to say, it has three instances of the trochaic caesura, whereas no other ode in

the Three Books has more than one, and the majority have none at all. Perhaps the coincidence is accidental; but it is also possible that in a sung ode Horace wished to preserve more fully the flavour of the Greek original. Neither of the sapphic odes of Catullus strongly suggests singing. But for the study of metre it is important to consider the odes as intended to be *read*: it is for right *reading* that precautions must be taken; when an ode is sung, 'the music,' as Prof. Sonnenschein says (p. 255), 'takes care of its own rhythm.' But the question between reading and singing is not really important in the present connexion; for Horace certainly intended those of his odes that were primarily meant for singing to be also effective when read.

There are four sapphic odes later than the Three Books, namely Book IV., odes 2, 6, and 11, and the Carmen Saeculare. Of these the last-named was of course intended in the first instance for singing. With this we must place IV. 6, of the same date and of similar character. On the other hand IV. 2 does not much suggest singing, and IV. 11 hardly at all. But all four odes agree in having a much larger number of

trochaic caesuras than the odes of the first Three Books. The explanation is that Horace was conscious that the precautions he had hitherto taken to ensure the right reading of his sapphics were not sufficient. The metre must be fortified, the syncope more frequently sacrificed, the original rhythm more frequently recalled. And—let it be repeated—no person, 'however feloniously disposed,' could read *Phoebe, silvarumque potens Diana*, in the rhythm of the 'Needy knife-grinder.'

That the writing—and the reading—of the Latin sapphic was no easy matter is evident. But I doubt if mere difficulty of form is enough to account for the fact that it did not take permanent root. If it decayed after the death of Horace, it may be asked what Latin *poetry* (setting aside satire and epigram) did not decay after that date? For the matter of that, how long did the golden age of Greek lyric poetry itself last? Fair Latin sapphics have been written by Englishmen, and probably Romans could have written them too if they had had anything to say in them. But they had not.

E. SEYMER THOMPSON.

THE QUESTION OF THE COINCIDENCE OF WORD-ACCENT AND VERSE-ICTUS IN THE LATIN HEXAMETER.

THIS subject was treated by Prof. M. W. Humphreys in a paper 'On Accent in Latin Dactylic Hexameters,' published in the Transactions of the American Philological Association for 1878. His statistics showed that from the time of Ennius, who made no attempt to avoid conflict between word-accent and verse-ictus, and 25 per cent of whose extant hexameters show conflict, there is a steady decrease of such non-coincidence in Lucilius and Lucretius till we get to Virgil, who has only 4 per cent. Other facts not stated by Prof. Humphreys are that there are only five (5) cases of conflict in Cicero, in Catullus twenty-four (24) apparent cases, of which, however, all but two can be explained away. Hence Virgil as compared with Cicero and Catullus, was even slightly reactionary.

There is, indeed, one important exception to this development. Horace shows a very large percentage of non-coincidence. But Prof. Humphreys' figures show 28 per cent

of conflict in Satires I, but only 17 per cent in the Epistles. This merely bears out a well-known fact that Horace, though he allowed himself great licences in all of his hexameter-poems, was much more careful in the Epistles than in the Satires. The difference between 28 and 17 per cent cannot have been due to accident.

Prof. Humphreys' statistics are supplemented and substantiated by Schulze in the *Zeitschrift für das Gymnasialwesen*, xxix, pp. 590 ff., who after examining the works of the poets of the strictly classical school, finds that in Tibullus, Lygdamus, Propertius, Ovid, and Statius, the cases of conflict are so very few as to be negligible.

Here, then, appears to be a very strong case for the theory that this agreement of accent and ictus was by design. But this theory has been vigorously attacked by Wilhelm Meyer in the *Sitzungsberichte der Königl. bayer. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München* 1884, pp. 979–1087. His views are adopted by Plessis, in the *Traité*