

# The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## Hilberg on the Ovidian Pentameter *Hilberg's Gesetze der Wortstellung im Pentameter des Ovid*. Teubner. 1894. M. 28.

Robinson Ellis

The Classical Review / Volume 9 / Issue 03 / April 1895, pp 157 - 162  
DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00201558, Published online: 27 October 2009

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0009840X00201558](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00201558)

### How to cite this article:

Robinson Ellis (1895). The Classical Review, 9, pp 157-162 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00201558

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

## HILBERG ON THE OVIDIAN PENTAMETER.

*Hilberg's Gesetze der Wortstellung im Pentameter des Ovid.* Teubner. 1894. M. 28.

THIS book is a natural, if in some ways a perverted, outcome of the many-sided study of Ovid which has marked the last forty years. Since the appearance of Merkel's *Tristia* and *Ibis* in 1837 hardly a corner of the vast Ovidian domain has remained unexplored. Both the *Tristia* and *Ibis* have been set on a new footing by the editions of S. G. Owen (1889), and my own (1881), each of them not only read but carefully and minutely studied by Hilberg: the *Pontic Epistles* were published by Korn with a full *app. crit.* of MSS. in 1869; the *Metamm.* with a complete collation of the Marcius also by Korn in 1880; subsequently Zingerle, Riese, who has given a complete collation of the Neapolitanus, and Magnus, have again edited them; Magnus indeed by various programmes, and a continuous series of thorough-going diatribes in Fleckeisen's *Jahrbücher*, has perhaps done more than any other critic to adjust the respective claims of the MSS., a task of no little difficulty in the case of the *Metamorphoses*. Even the *Halientica* fragment has obtained an admirable editor in Birt, whose monograph will remain unsurpassed in the history of Ovidian criticism, though on a scale not comparable with the same editor's recently published Claudian (1892); Palmer and Sedlmayer, Palmer especially, by his often jealously ignored but indisputably admirable emendations, have revolutionized the criticism of the *Heroides*: Ehwald in his 1888 reprint of Merkel's *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*, and *Medicamina Faciei* gave a conspectus of the most important readings of the earliest MSS. of those works, of which<sup>1</sup> however we still require a minuter collation, the more that they are indubitably the finest flower of the poet's genius: on the *Fasti* Peter, Polle, and others have exhausted an erudition which too often fails to clear up the problems in dispute, as indeed most questions of Roman topography still remain debatable, or at least not determinately settled.

Of all these works, so far as they touch the pentameter, Hilberg has availed himself, and his readers will find in him—for the work contains little short of 900 pages—

<sup>1</sup> Except the *Med. Fac.* exhaustively edited by Kunz in 1881.

very detailed discussions of a large number of lines in which the reading is doubtful, and into which conflicting considerations enter. This indeed is not the primary purpose of the book, but it is perhaps the most interesting, and at any rate has the advantage of calling the reader's attention to some of the most crucial questions, so far as these occur in pentameters.

The primary object of Hilberg's work is to elicit the laws which guided the poet in arranging the words in his pentameters. Any one at all versed in the Elegiac poems of Ovid, and *a fortiori* such as have practised the composition of Latin elegiacs (in these days mainly Englishmen), arrive, after a very short study, at the conviction that the rules by which the Ovidian pentameter is regulated are of the strictest, most rigid kind. That elision is of the utmost rarity—that the first half of the line begins preferably with a dactyl—that if it begins with a spondee, the spondee is not one complete word, but part of a word which is continued into the second foot—that the last syllable of the first half is preferably a naturally long syllable—and this syllable rhyming with the last syllable of the second half—so much becomes, to a really careful student, clear after studying the poems, as exhibited in most of the post-Heinsian editions. He sees that those Greek licences, *e.g.* allowing a word of three four or five syllables to end the line, and admitting the last syllable to be indifferently long or short, which Catullus Tibullus and even Propertius still permitted themselves, are studiously avoided by Ovid, indeed are almost entirely relegated from his most finished poems. When he takes up the *Pontic Epistles*, the relaxation of these rules accompanies an obvious decline in the poet's powers and genius. I should suppose that most very close students of Latin metric—especially if they have studied Lucian Müller's *de re metrica*, the newly appeared second edition of which book I herewith commend to my readers' notice—will have formulated for themselves the above, or most of the above, rules as distinguishing Ovid's pentameters from those of his predecessors. The question is whether it is possible to go farther; whether we can formulate these and perhaps other rules with sufficient precision to be able to pronounce by an appeal to them which of several pos-

sibilities presented by the MSS. *must* be right. This is the point raised by Hilberg, and no one who has not examined his book ought to pronounce in a hurry on the question.

He lays down *eleven* laws :—

A. The position of the word must not violate the prosodial and metrical laws of Ovid.

B. The more or less emphasized words should, if possible, be represented by their position in the pentameter.

C. The natural order of the words is observed so far as A and B permit. It is only within the most rigidly defined limits that this order is broken through in favour of law H (that the pentameter should begin with a dactyl).

D. An adjective stands *before* the substantive or pronoun with which it agrees, so far as this is consistent with A B C H J.

E. Short vowels at the end of the pentameter are avoided.

F. Appended *st* (*est*) is preferably found at the end of the pentameter.

G. The first half of the pentameter ends preferably with a syllable long *by nature*, not by position.

H. The first foot is, if possible, a dactyl.

J. If the first foot is a spondee, it should not form a complete word.

K. Adjective and substantive agreeing with it are, if possible, in different halves of the pentameter.

L. The verb is placed as early in the pentameter as is consistent with the other laws.

The first criticism which I would offer on this, is—that it is scarcely a right use of the word ‘law’ (*Gesetz*). The exceptions to most of the rules above drawn out are very numerous indeed, and it is just in this that Hilberg fails to carry conviction. Take F. He first obtains from a large number of examples proof of the tendency of Ovid to place *st* (*est*) at the end of pentameters,<sup>1</sup> especially after a short *ā* or *ē*: then proceeds to insert it in places where it has no support from the MSS. e.g. *Fast.* ii. 719, 720

Ille iacens pronus matri dedit oscula terrae.  
Creditor offenso procubuisse pede.

<sup>1</sup> And of hexameters. Thus *A. A.* i. 655, 6  
Iustus uterque fuit: neque enim lex aequior ullast  
Quam necis artificis arte perire sua: where Hilberg  
remarks ‘hier ist es Merkel, welcher das längst eingearkte  
*’st* zu neuem Leben erweckt,’ and adds that, however, such appended *’st* is rare at the end  
of hexameters, the syllable being *in thesi*, as  
opposed to the pentameter, the last syllable of which  
is *in arsi*.

Merkel in his later editions altered this with the best MSS. to *Creditus*. Hilberg goes a step farther and adds *’st* after *pede*. I do not think this is right. There are other instances of the participle *creditus* used in this somewhat rare manner, *i.e.* as = *in quo creditus est* ‘and was believed in doing so to have stumbled and fallen.’ Nor can I believe that in *Ibis* 458 Victor ut est celeri uictaque uersa pede the poet really wrote Victor uti celeri uictaque uersa pedest, by which entirely unsupported alteration the verse is brought into harmony not only with F, but also with C and E.

In the well-known passage of the *Remed. Amoris* 476, where Agamemnon describes Briseis as only differing from Chryseis by a syllable—

‘Est,’ ait Atrides, ‘illius proxima forma,  
Et si prima sinat syllaba, nomen idem’—

two MSS. give *idem est*. Can any one say that *idem* is right, *idem est* wrong? or reversely? Surely nothing is gained by Hilberg’s ‘laws’ for determining such a question. All we can safely do, is to observe Ovid’s general use, primarily in the *A. A.* and *Rem.*, then in the *Amores* and *Heroides*: subordinately, and with a great deal of reservation, in his later and much inferior works. For I must come to what most lovers of the poet will, I think, agree with me in enforcing, and there is hardly any point which I would so earnestly press upon the attention of the ingenious writer I am reviewing as this—that the works of Ovid’s prime ought to be judged by a *different* standard from those of his decline—especially from the *Tristia* and *Pontic Epistles*.<sup>2</sup> Licences or irregularities which we have reason to think were absolutely unknown in the finer works of his adolescence and early manhood were very likely to find admittance in the comparatively uninspired elegies of his later years when the misery of his sudden and unexplained banishment combined with the dismal surroundings of Tomi to depress his spirit and freeze the genial current of his Muse. But Hilberg not only equalizes all the Elegiac poems as teaching us the ‘laws’ of Ovid’s pentameter, but admits works of very doubtful

<sup>2</sup> The *Ibis* stands on a different footing. The metre is throughout singularly careful, and if the work is genuine, is quite worthy of the poet’s best days. Few however can doubt that it has been, to say the least, interpolated. I may refer sceptical readers to my article in the *Cambridge Journal of Philology* for 1885, pp. 98—106.

genuineness, such as the *Nux*, the later *Heroides*, and the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, to rank on a par with the genuine. So uncritical a course is the more surprising, as the task of eliciting 'laws' is easier and simpler if these doubtful works are kept aloof. The *Consolatio*, in particular, bears on its face the signs of extraneous authorship, and the numerous discussions which its peculiarities have provoked would better have been spared and must be considered intrusions in Hilberg's volume.

To return to *F*. The following passages seem to me to have drawn from Hilberg a wrong conclusion.

*Her.* xii. 73, 4

Ius tibi et arbitrium nostrae fortuna salutis  
Tradidit, inque tuast uitaeque morsque  
manu.

'In some MSS.' says our critic, 'the *'st* after *tua* is wanting, and it should be unhesitatingly removed, for where *'st* does not obviate hiatus or lengthen a vowel (*pedest* etc.) Ovid only admits it in the inner half of the pentameter in those very rare cases where a misunderstanding would arise without it.' To this I must demur. The *'st* seems to me absolutely required. Let us take another case.

*Am.* i. 7, 20

Ipsa nihil: pavidost lingua retenta metu.

Hilberg would remove *'st* for the above reasons and because it should naturally follow, not precede, *retenta*, as laid down in 'law' *C*. Here we see the arbitrariness of the procedure. Because in a large number of instances *est* (*st*) follows the participle to which it belongs, a 'law' results that it should always do so, except where some palpable reason exists for neglecting it. Then the cases where the 'law' is violated are pronounced to be wrong. But what is the in every way more probable decision? We notice (1) that the verb to *ipsa* is omitted: here is a reason why in the sequent clause it should not be. (2) *est* (*st*) is avoided after *-u*, therefore it is unlikely to have been placed after *metu* at the end of the line. If, then, it was inserted at all, it can only be after *pavido*. So much *a priori*: then, what is the evidence of MSS.? Hilberg states nothing on this point; and I am not sure even that the readings of the two earliest, the Puteaneus and the Sangallensis, are known: for we still desiderate a thorough collation of MSS. in this, the

most exquisite of all Ovid's poems, as also in the *Ars Amatoria*. Strange that the two works which made the poet famous in every province of the Roman Empire should still lack a completely adequate edition: while the *Heroides*, in every way an inferior work, should have been thought worthy of a collation as exhaustive as the works of Horace. I venture to hope that this task may still be undertaken by some one of the increasing band of palaeographers whom Oxford and Cambridge are training.

*Trist.* iii. 10, 9, 10

At cum tristis hiemps squalentia protulit  
ora,  
Terraque marmoreost candida facta gelu.

It might be expected that Hilberg would follow the line of reasoning adopted in *Am.* i. 7, 20 and omit *'st*. Not so: it is required, he says, to prevent a misapprehension. Without *'st*, it might be thought that both *hiemps* and *terra* were subjects to *protulit*. To the conclusion, that *'st* is indispensable, most readers will assent: but the ground alleged is inadequate: nor is it much helped by the wish to avoid *'st* after *gelu*. For Hilberg himself admits that in two cases, *A. A.* i. 552—

Terque fugam petiit: terque retenta metu  
est.

Horruit, ut sterilis agitat quas uentus  
aristae—

and *Pont.* iv. 1, 14 *manu'st*, Ovid has permitted this collocation. One is tempted to ask, are there no others? Yet if there are only two, the law is broken: and, so far as MS. evidence goes, it is quite doubtful whether in *Trist.* iii. 10, 10 the poet adds *'st* after *marmoreo* or after *gelu*. And do not let us forget that the 'laws' depend ultimately on MSS.: and that these vary constantly and cannot be said to give any certain sound, at least on this point of *'st*.

Coming to another line discussed on p. 413, *Trist.* i. 6, 6—

Si quid adhuc ego sum, muneris omne tui est

(which line is part of the page facsimiled from the best MS. of the *Tristia*, the Laurentianus (*L*), in S. G. Owen's edition), it appears to me very questionable whether *st* (*est*) should be omitted on the showing of the facsimile. It is true that *est* is not in the line as written at first: but *omne tui* ÷ is unmistakably written over, and Hilberg

speaks unadvisedly when he says that there is a doubt as to the meaning of  $\div$ . It can mean nothing but *est*, as Owen, of course rightly, explains.

An interesting rule which is formulated on p. 414 deserves close consideration. It is in reference to final  $\ddot{i}$  (in cases where the quantity is indifferently long or short, *mihi tibi sibi*). Hilberg lays down this rule: Ovid omits *'st (est)* where final *i* rhymes with *i* in the first half of the pentameter, e.g.

*Rem. Am.* 228

Aeger, et oranti mensa negata mihi

*Trist.* ii. 104

Cur imprudenti cognita culpa mihi?

*Trist.* ii. 208

Alterius facti culpa silenda mihi

but *Rem. Am.* 582

Est opus: auxilio turba futura tibist

*Fasti* i. 480

Siste precor lacrimas! ista ferenda tibist

*Fasti* iv. 456

Nec mora 'me miseram! filia,' dixit, 'ubist?'

*Pont.* ii. 9, 72

Et tamen his gravior noxa fatenda mihist

*Pont.* ii. 10, 10

Vel mea quod coniunx non aliena tibist.

A similar rule is enunciated for final  $\bar{a}$  on p. 416: that is to say, where such  $\bar{a}$  rhymes, *st(est)* is omitted. But here the case seems more doubtful: at any rate the MSS. exhibit very great fluctuation. Meanwhile I need not say how greatly such questions affect palaeographical research. When a MS. of first-rate importance, like the Trinity College (Cambridge) codex (*G*) of the *Ibis*, or Owen's *L* of the *Tristia*, comes to light—and of the immense weight of both codices Hilberg's pages afford the most abundant evidence—its readings not only do not stand on a parallel with ordinary MSS., but rank among the ultimate standards by which such points as Hilberg raises have to be judged. Conversely, one of the subordinate yet real gains from so thorough a book as his is lies in the clearness with which it exhibits the intimate connexion of palaeography with almost every point of philological research—orthography, metric, grammar, mythology, archaeology.

It is time to turn to another section of our critic's book. We may take law *C*, which enforces that the natural order of the words in the pentameter is kept so far as is consistent with other laws, notably *H* (that the pentameter begins with a dactyl). Here again it seems to me that the works of the poet do not all stand on the same level.

In the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* the order of the words in the pentameter is, speaking generally, as nearly the natural order as metrical considerations permit. In the *Heroides* this is not so: the pentameters are more complex in construction, and the arrangement of the words less direct and simple. This is, as might be expected, equally, perhaps more, true of the *Tristia* and *Pontic Epistles*. On the other hand the *Fasti* show a return to the plainer and more direct order of the *Amores*. I shall attempt to prove this by examples.

The following are taken from the *Amores*:

Damnabitque oculos et sibi uerba dabit

Non caret effectu quod ualuere duo

Centum sunt causae cur ego semper amem

Sive rudis, placita es simplicitate tua

Haec melior specie corporis, illa sapit

Me miserum! quare tam bona causa meast?

Maesta erat in uultu: maesta decenter erat

Tu tamen ante alios, turtur amice, dole

Apta quidem dominae, sed magis apta mihi

Aerati postes, ferrea turris erat

Liber et Alcides et modo Caesar habent

Egressum tectis, pulcher Iule, tuis

Perdere: non ego sum stultus, ut ante fui.

The following from the *Ars Amatoria*:

A pereant, per quos munera crimen habent

Vir mala dissimulat, tectius illa cupit

Quamuis sit mendax, Creta negare potest

At puto non poteris ipsa referre uicem

Ut fragilis glacies interit ira mora

Perprime temptatam nec nisi uictor abi

Oscula deinde dabit, deinde rogabit emas

Et modo festines et modo lentus eas

Et si quis male uir quaerit habere uirum

Fac tantum cupias: sponte disertus eris

Depexaeque iubae plausaque colla iuuant

Ei mihi! rusticitas, non pudor ille fuit

Casus inest illis, hoc erit artis opus

Sit tua cura sequi, me duce tutus eris

Altius egit iter deseruitque patrem

Nil opus est illi qui dabit arte mea

Perfer et obdura! postmodo mitis erit

Dummodo sit diues, barbarus ipse placet.

In all these the words follow an order almost identical with the order of prose. I suppose that it will be a surprise to many who have never looked into the matter to find that Wordsworth's theory, that the natural order of words in poetry is the right one, is confirmed by the two most highly finished poems of Ovid. It is difficult to see why this should not be equally true of the *Heroides*, where the subject is the same, love. But the difference, which makes itself felt on the shortest comparison, is marked and unmistakable. The reason, I imagine, lies in the different way in which the same passion is presented. The Greek heroines who speak in the *Heroides* plead their cause (generally, not to be forsaken by their lovers) with all the arguments which feminine rhetoric can urge. It is no wonder that their language should at times become artificial like their reasoning, or that rhetoric should employ its usual methods of antithesis, inversion, and the other arts by which the diverse phases of passion find their habitual expression. Whereas in the *Amores* we have short idyllic scenes or phases of a lover's life. It is the poet-lover showing us his own feelings as directly and plainly as he can: a male and highly sensuous nature expressing his not too refined or ideal emotions in words which convey their meaning without reservation or ambiguity. In the *A. A.* this is even more decidedly true. In this Manual of Love for the use of Men and Women, Ovid never beats about the bush; his precepts are straightforward and delivered in the most straightforward words: take away the single element of obscurity, the mythological allusions, which strike a modern reader so grotesquely, and the work is intelligible to the least cultivated understanding. When we come to the *Tristia* the case is very much altered. Here alone such involutions of clause, as

Si quis, qui, quid agam, forte requiret,  
erit,

such poor antitheta as

Inque suis amat hunc Caesar, in hoste  
probat,

or such inversions as

Quam tribuit terris, pacis an ista notast?

become, if not frequent, at least not uncommon.

NO. LXXVII. VOL. IX.

This difference of style in different works is not recognized by Hilberg, and, so far as it goes, seems to diminish the weight of his conclusions. But the reader of his *Gesetze* must judge for himself, and will, at any rate, be certain to learn much from the long array of examples by which each 'law' is illustrated, even if the exceptions seem to him too numerous to allow of such a term at all.

The value of a book like this is not to be gauged by the amount of conviction which it produces. It is much to be able to show (for instance) that spondees at the beginning of pentameters are not nearly as common as dactyls; that an isolated spondee contained in one complete word with a pause in the sense after it is very rare indeed. It is quite another thing to be told that these inductions from a number of instances constitute a 'law': at best they can only be considered guiding rules.

I will now touch on some points in which I feel myself to be in direct antagonism with the views of Hilberg. Some of these relate to the *Ibis*. There are two pentameters in which MSS. agree to place *quamuis* after the verb to which it refers.

45 Non soleant quamuis hoc pede bella  
geri.

58 Non soleant quamuis hoc genus ipse  
sequi.

In the second of these, G (the Galeanus) gives *Quamuis non soleam*, against metre. Hilberg, full of his 'law' C, that the natural order is to be looked for, seizes on this fact, and transfers G's *quamuis non soleam* to 45, writing then *Quamuis non soleant*. With every wish to give G its full weight as a unique testimony, I confess this seems to me unjustified and improbable.

239, 240

Flebat ut est infans fumis contactus amaris  
De tribus est cum sic una locuta soror.

Why not *cum sic de tribus est*? Probably because *de tribus* counts as a single word. Hilberg allows this: yet, obedient to his law of natural order, cannot believe that the poet wrote anything so inverted as *De tribus est cum sic* and substitutes *tum*. To me this spoils the verse, and if it were so written in the MSS. I should have felt its unusualness and un-Ovidian character, and should have been inclined to alter it into *cum*. And will not most of my readers agree with me if I find in the position of

*De tribus* at the beginning of the first half of the line a designed antithesis to *una* at the beginning of the second?

96 Qui scit se factis has meruisse preces.

Hilberg denies that *se scit*, which is found in several of the best MSS. including the Turonensis (T), can be right. Why? Because there is no emphasis on *se* and because *scit se* is the natural order. I cannot feel this to be at all convincing: and I notice that Mr. Housman,<sup>1</sup> the most recent editor of the poem, prints *se scit*.

Two cases, where I have been the first to make a conjecture subsequently made by others, must not be passed over in silence. One is in *A. A.* ii. 307, 8:—

Ipsos concubitus, ipsum uenerere licebit  
Quod iuuat et quaedam gaudia noctis  
habe.

On p. 393 of the *American Journal of Philology* for 1892 I emended this: *et quae clam gaudia noctis habet* (or *habes*), constructing *Quod iuuat* with *ipsum*. 'licebit uenerere ipsos concubitus ipsamque uoluptatem coitus et gaudia ueneris quae tacet (taces).' Hilberg has made this identical emendation, p. 653 of his *Gesetze* (published in 1894), punctuating however with a comma after *licebit* and writing the pentameter

<sup>1</sup> In fasc. 2 of Postgate's *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum*.

Quod iuvat et quae clam g. n. habes.

which I do not quite understand.

The other is in *Pont.* ii. 7, 23, 4 which the Bavarian codex gives thus:—

Crede mihi, si sum ueri tibi cognitus oris,  
Nec planus nostris casibus esse potes.

In a review of Korn's edition of the *Pontic Epistles* which I published in the *Academy* of Jan. 8, 1870 I emended this:—

Nec planus (an impostor) e nostris casibus  
esse puter.

This conj. I subsequently sent to Merkel, who admitted it into his text of 1884. In Gütthling's edition of the *Pontic Epistles* a nearly identical conj. *Nec planus in nostris casibus esse putor* is admitted, of which *planus in* is ascribed to A. Rothmaler, *putor* to Korn. On purchasing Rothmaler's pamphlet I found that he read the line *Nec planus in nostris casibus esse potest*: but that his work was not published till after the battle of Sedan, Sept. 1, 1870.

These facts are completely misstated by Hilberg and he even seems to believe that I meant *puter* to be an adjective. Of course I meant it to be the pres. subj. of *putor*: but it is perhaps improbable that Ovid should have combined *sum* with *puter*: then, with S. G. Owen in the new volume of Postgate's *Corpus P. L.*, I should read *putor*.

ROBINSON ELLIS.

#### EDITIONS OF CLAUDIAN BY BIRT AND KOCH.

*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctorum antiquissimorum tomus X. Claudii Claudiani carmina* recensuit THEODORUS BIRT. Accedit appendix uel spuria uel suspecta continens. Berolini apud Weidmannos. 1892. Pp. ccxxx. 611. 30 Mk.

*Claudii Claudiani carmina* recensuit JULIUS KOCH. Lipsiae in aedibus B. G. Teubner. Pp. lxi. 346. 3 Mk. 60.

AN adequate critical edition of the last of the Latin poets has long been desired; and it is a tribute which he well deserves. For although his graces are often of the engine-turned order and his lustre metallic, yet in power and range and deftness of poetical expression he recalls the best ages of Rome while the purity of his Latinity and his mastery of metre, wonderful in any case in

a foreigner, are almost miraculous in a successor of Ausonius. It is however to his historical importance, not to his poetical merits, that we owe the editions now to be passed under review.

The first of these editions is in scope and method a truly 'monumental' work, indispensable to every student of Claudian. Of its mere contents even it is not easy to give an adequate account within the limits of a review. The two hundred and thirty pages of prolegomena each containing forty-seven square inches of print as against forty-two in this article, to say nothing of the difference in type, deal with every topic in which any reader of the poet may be supposed to take an interest. Its divisions are as follows. I. *On the life and writings of Claudian and contemporary history* ('tem-