NOTES • KORT BYDRAES

METRE AND MEANING IN CIL I² 3109a

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Publii progenies Appi cognomine Pulchri  
occubuit letum

Publius, the scion of Appius, surnamed Pulcher  
has succumbed to death

There is little consensus about any aspect of this graffito scratched onto a theatre wall at Tarracina. Its syntax, subject and tone have all been interpreted in radically divergent ways. The initial *Publi* has been taken as an abbreviated form of *Publius* with apocope of the final *s*, and hence the subject of *occubuit*, or as a vocative, entailing though it does a harsh anacoluthon from second-person address to third-person description.¹ Though Solin’s initial interpretation of the graffito as polemically satirical has gained general acceptance,² Tatum has made a strong case that it ‘is not a trace of some ironic anti-Clodian poem, but is instead an extract – no doubt the opening – from a sincerely phrased elogium to Clodius’, which he further hypothesizes may have been composed by Clodius’ ally and native of Tarracina, Sex. Cloelius.³ Even Solin’s argument that the poem is about P. Clodius Pulcher (tr. 58), which has gained even more general

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¹ ‘Professor [Brent] Vine suggests to me that *Publii* should be so understood’, Courtney 1995:242. Solin 2007:203 objects that this would be unmetrical, but I assume Vine is proposing apocope of the final *s*. Vocative: Solin 1981:357. A genitive is also possible, though the stress on all of the father’s *tria nomina* to the exclusion of any of the son’s would be odd. It may be worth emphasizing that the precise syntax of the graffito, though important in itself, does not impact on the issue of its metrical form.


³ Tatum 1990, quoting from 301.
acceptance, has recently been challenged by Dohnicht.\(^4\) However, one aspect that has been generally agreed upon – or in many cases taken for granted – is that the unusual metrical form, a hexameter followed by a hemiepes, is accidental, the result of haste of composition or transcription. Solin comments comparatively neutrally that ‘the second hexameter has been interrupted after the penthemimeral caesura.’\(^5\) Tatum, as we have seen, considers it ‘an extract … no doubt the opening.’ Massaro similarly suggests that, unlike the irredeemable metrical anomaly of \textit{CIL} I\(^1\) 2274, ‘here the beginning is normal, and one has the impression only that the person who started to compose (or transcribe) did not continue as he should have.’\(^6\) However, Massaro also (‘dall’altro lato’) notes that ‘a graffito … has by its very nature a certain quality of improvisation’, as he had earlier suggested that, in this instance, ‘the improvisational nature of the (dactylic) composition manifests itself in the incompleteness of the second line.’\(^7\) There is at least a suggestion in these latter comments by Massaro that, for all the imperfections which its extemporaneous composition may have entailed, the second verse is only ‘incomplete’ from a metrical point of view and may constitute the entirety of what the graffitist intended to scratch on the wall. I would like to take up this suggestion and carry it further to argue that the peculiar metrical form is also complete, and that its very peculiarity reinforces the thought expressed.

The combination of a dactylic hexameter and a hemiepes is in fact a complete metrical form, albeit one which exploits a certain latent sense of its own incompleteness. By modern scholars, it is sometimes called a ‘First Archilochean’, sometimes a ‘Second Archilochean’ (I shall use the latter term, which is slightly more common), and while it is attested as having been used by its Parian eponym, the only extant literary example earlier than the 4th century CE is Horace \textit{Carm.} 4.7.\(^8\) Llewelyn Morgan’s recent

\(^4\) Dohnicht 2007.
\(^5\) ‘Der zweite Hexameter ist nach dem Penthemimeres unterbrochen worden’, Solin 1981:358. He goes on to note that the second line may be the beginning of a pentameter, a point to which I shall return.
\(^6\) ‘qui è normale l’avvio, e si ha solo l’impressione che chi ha cominciato a comporre (o a trascrivere) non è andato avanti come avrebbe dovuto’, Massaro 2007:156 note 152.
study of the expressive force conveyed by Latin poets’ choice of metre takes this poem as its programmatic example. The case he makes for the particular effect produced by pairing a hexameter and a hemiepes is best illustrated by his analysis of lines 13-16. I shall prefix Morgan’s discussion with the lines themselves:

\[
damna tamen celeres reparant caelestia lunae: \\
nos ubi decidimus \\
quo pius Aeneas, quo diues Tullus et Ancus, \\
puluis et umbra sumus.
\]

Celestial losses, however, swift moons soon restore: we when we descend whither did dutiful Aeneas, whither wealthy Tullus and Ancus, we’re dust and shadow.

‘The limitless time enjoyed by the processes of the natural world is perfectly served by the full hexameter length of 13, as is the evocation of human grandeur in the roll call of great Romans at 15. But the inevitable truncation of human felicity and hope – lyric’s response to the fantasies of immortality – is just as felicitously situated in the abbreviated dactylic line that follows, an epic length that seems to give up the ghost halfway through.’ The parallels with CIL I² 3109a are clear. The language of the graffito, whether one takes it as parodically ‘old-fashioned and solemn’ (’altertümlich-feierlich’) or the ‘archaic diction … appropriate to the genre of elogium’¹¹ unquestionably reinforces the ‘evocation of human grandeur’ produced by the epic hexameter, and in turn is reinforced by the ethos of that rhythm. In its echo of Annales fr. 389 Sk. (occumbunt multi letum), it even shares an Ennian intertext with Carm. 4.7.15, which recalls fr. 137 Sk., mediated through Lucretius 3.1025.¹² The graffitist’s hemiepes, if anything, even more forcefully evokes ‘the inevitable truncation of human aspirations’¹³ than do Horace’s, as occubuit letum abruptly tolls a death knell for the scion of Appius, for the grand aspirations evoked by the hexameter, and even for the hexametric form itself. Even if the

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¹⁰ Morgan 2010:13-14 (original italics).
¹² That the graffito’s Ennian echo is in the hemiepes rather than the hexameter is not a problem, since the effect is of the Ennian hexameter’s itself being truncated. It was already noted by Solin 1981:358, using the Vahlen² fragment number 398.
¹³ Morgan 2004:17.
graffito’s metrical form is indeed the result of its excerption from a longer poem or the extemporaneous nature of its composition, it is hard to imagine one which could more effectively convey the sudden end to its subject’s great hopes.

Four issues remain to be briefly addressed. Morgan’s interpretation of the Second Archilochean is based partly on understanding, or perhaps better ‘feeling’, the hemiepes as a truncated hexameter. Yet, as Solin and Courtney note, the indentation of hemiepes in the graffito might tend to make it appear to be the beginning, not of a hexameter, but of a pentameter to complete an elegiac couplet. It is, of course, possible that the epodic form of the Second Archilochean would in itself be most naturally indicated by indenting the second line, without any additional implication that a pentameter was to be expected. However, if the graffito is evoking the form of either a funerary epigram or an elegium, then generic expectations would also encourage the reader to expect a pentameter. How much of the sense of ‘the inevitable truncation of human aspirations’ would be lost if it were not the grand epic hexameter which was mimetically truncated, but the far humbler pentameter? At the very least, a less specific sense of truncation, of the brutal interruption simultaneously of a life and of a line, would certainly remain even if that line did not carry the generic associations of the versus herous. The pentameter itself is often treated as representing a diminished hexameter, most famously in Ovid’s conceit of Cupid’s stealing a foot from his epic measure, and its ethos – especially in its (almost) invariable juxtaposition with the hexameter within the elegiac couplet – is often one of unepic humility. If the pentameter is already a diminished hexameter, the further truncation of that already truncated measure could even increase the sense of potential cut short. Indeed, it is worth noting that ancient metrical treatises analyse the second line of the Second Archilochean, not as a hemiepes, but as penthemimeres elegiacon, and in this they have been followed by modern scholars other than Morgan, such as Michael Putnam and Richard Thomas. If ancient (and some modern) readers of Carm. 4.7

16 [Mar. Victorin.] (Aphthonius) GLK 6.182.6. Cf., more elaborately, Fortun. GLK 6.303.8: secunda pars penthemimeres habet, quod iteratum integrum pentametrum faciet sic, ‘arborebusque comae arborebusque comae’. ‘It consists of a line in dactylic hexameter followed by a hemiepes, half a hexameter. But this last might be more imaginatively, as well as more honestly, characterized as the first of the two segments that form a pentameter’, Putnam 2007:361; The metre has a truncated
could read *puluis et umbra sumus* as half of a pentameter, but still feel the sense of contrast with the preceding hexameter, there is no reason to believe that theatre-goers in Tarracina could not do likewise.

Secondly, there is the question of the spondee in the hemiepes. In our only Classical exemplar of the Second Archilochean, *Carm. 4.7*, all fourteen hemiepes are purely dactylic. In contrast, that in *CIL I* 3109a consists of a dactyl, a spondee and a (closed) short.

Horatian metrical practice is notoriously strict, and often observes restrictions which are not to be found in Catullus, where the latter writes in metres which permit the comparison. Thus, the fourth syllable of the Sapphic hendecasyllable is invariably long in the *Carm.*, while Catullus follows the Greek practice of allowing it to be short instead (e.g. I 11.6, 51.13), and Horatian glyconics always have a spondaic base, while their Catullan (and Greek) predecessors can also open with a trochee (e.g. I 61.1) or even an iamb (III 34.1). However, unlike these licences with Greek and Catullan precedents, the use of two dactyls in the hemiepes when used in lyric (broadly conceived), be it strophic, epodic, or asynartete (as in the elegiambi of Archil. fr. 196 and Hor. *Epod. 11* or the iamblegi of *Epod. 13*) is the rule in Greek verse as well as in Horace, doubtless to make clear its dactylic character in a metrically diverse context.

The two poems which Ausonius wrote in the Second Archilochean (I 10.26 and 17.2 elegiac feel to it (half a dactylic ‘pentameter’ in the second line), consistent with its content, Thomas 2011:173.

17 The short is probably unexceptionable, since even Horace seems to treat the final syllable of his hemiepes as anæps, with shorts ending six out of fourteen in *Carm. 4.7* (8, 10, 14, 16, 22, 26), though since both the hexameters beginning with a vowel are preceded by naturally long syllables (choros. | immortalia 6-7, pietas; | infernis 24-25), it could be argued that he is observing strict synaphea and all fourteen are long either by nature or by position. The sample is too small to be dogmatic. By contrast, in Auson. 10.26 Green, three of the hemiepes end with a short followed by an initial vowel in the next hexameter, one even featuring interlinear hiatus (Cataphroniam | innuba, 2-3). If the shortness of the second syllable of *letum* is not satisfactorily explained by *brevis in largo* or by the imperfections of the graffitist’s metrical technique (despite his ambition), the case could be made that the syllabification of the end of a poem, with no following syllable for the –*m* to be attached to, renders –*um* closed and hence long in any case.

18 The hemiepes as a colon in dactylo-epitrite does on rare occasions allow contraction (e.g. Pi. N. 8.1, Eur. *Med.* 980), but this always occurs in the first biceps and is in any case of doubtful relevance to the length’s use in epodic combinations. See West 1982:50-52, 71, 134.
Green) also follow this rule, though their usefulness as evidence is limited by the influence of Horace and the general tendency of metrical preferences to harden into rules over time. Indeed the only non-colonic hemiepes other than those in the first half of pentameters which contain spondees are ten of the remarkable run of fifty-seven stichic hemiepes which constitute Auson. 11.10 Green, a special case if ever there was one. It certainly seems overwhelmingly likely in the light of this evidence, especially his use of the hemiepes in surviving fragments, that the hemiepes in Archilochus' Second Archilochceans were purely dactylic. On these strict metrical criteria, therefore, CIL I² 3109a, with its contraction in the second biceps of the hemiepes, cannot be considered a Second Archilochean in the purest sense.

We need not, however, reject its claim to this metrical status altogether. Metrical anomalies (or, to be less legalistic, exceptional licences) in inscriptions are far from rare and we might compare as particularly close parallels those which break a far more firmly established rule by including a pentameter with a spondee in the second hemiepes: a mid-5th century BCE epitaph from Eretria, a graffito from a Pompeian brothel and (in both pentameters) a statue-base from Canusium. Although the very notion that the author of the graffito could comprehend the expressive potential of a Second Archilochean already presupposes a degree of metrical sophistication, that does not necessarily mean that his conceptual acumen was matched by his technical ability or even knowledge. While the Second Archilochean is a rare form, it is made up of the dactylic elements which would be familiar to all educated Romans and certainly to the authors of the countless inscriptions in elegiacs. If a graffitist had the ambition and technical skill even to attempt, say, Alcaics or ionics a minore, it might be harder to accept that he would then demonstrate a failure of technique by making a metrical mistake (though even there it is far from inconceivable). It is far less improbable that someone who perhaps had the general notion that a Second Archilochean was a hexameter and half of either a hexameter or pentameter should hence include a spondee just as one would in the first half of either of those lengths.

However, we would risk doing the graffitist an injustice if we were to attribute his anomalous spondee entirely to metrical incompetence. While he may not have been aware of the niceties about the inadmissibility of contraction in the hemiepes, he may well have had an arguably more

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19 ‘The hemiepes [in Archilochus’ and Hipponax’ strophic metres] does not admit contraction or hiatus; ’West 1982:44.
important sense of the length's character as a truncated hexameter or pentameter. As such, it could admit spondees just as the first two feet of any hexameter or pentameter could. Fortunatius' comment (quoted in note 16) that the hemiepes would make a pentameter if repeated does, by strict logic, entail that it must be dactylic, in order to produce an acceptable second half of the hypothetical pentameter. However, it also reflects some feeling that the hemiepes represents the first rather than the second half of a pentameter. Read in this way, however partially and tendentiously, metrical theory as well as ethos could be taken as justifying a spondee in the hemiepes. Strictly speaking the spondee —it let— means that CIL I 2 3109a is not a metrically correct Second Archilochean. However, as a hexameter followed by a truncated pentameter, it unquestionably captures the spirit, if not the letter, of the metre.

The third issue is that of date and influence. The graffito is generally dated to between 80 and 30 BCE, and even a substantial extension of the later limit would be unlikely to produce a date after the publication of Carm. 4 in 13 BCE. Despite the well-attested influence of literary texts on epigraphic verse, it is therefore highly unlikely that the unusual form of CIL I 2 3109a was inspired by a metrically sensitive reading of Carm. 4.7. Three possibilities remain. No earlier example of the Second Archilochean survives, and even the ancient authorities who mention Archilochus' invention of the metre tend to make it clear that they have this knowledge at second hand rather than from personal experience of reading such an epode (hoc doctum Archilochum tradunt genuisse magistri, 'The profs hand it down that learned Archilochus fathered this [metre].' Ter. Maur. de metris 1807). Yet it remains possible that a particularly learned graffitist was aware of the existence of this particular combination of hexameter and hemiepes, as well as the connotations it carried (or could be made to carry), and scratched his own couplet on a theatre wall. If the graffito were a transcription of a literary poem, the likelihood of its author's being familiar with the Second Archilochean might increase. Alternatively, someone familiar with the use of the hemiepes in the pentameter, and perhaps even in other epodic and lyric combinations, independently produced a couplet which so effectively conveyed the truncation of its subject's grand hopes. This scenario would, of course, remove any remaining objections about the spondee in the hemiepes. The final possibility is that the truncation is indeed the felicitous result of extemporaneous composition. Yet even in this scenario, it would be tempting to think that the graffitist might have stopped, not because he

21 See, most conveniently, Cugusi 2007, with extensive further bibliography.
could not think what else to write or was interrupted, but because he
recognized that what he had already written, like a half-line of Virgil,
perfectly expressed his meaning in word and form.

Finally, there is the issue which has been the main point of debate
about this graffito, whether it is a polemically parodic attack on its subject
(whether he be Clodius or not), or a seriously eulogistic tribute. The
analysis of the couplet as a Second Archilochean is suited to either
interpretation. The parallel with Carm. 4.7 would tend towards a serious
interpretation, plangently lamenting the curtailment of the scion of
Appius' glorious career. It might still not be quite the sort of laudatory
poem which one would expect Cloelius to compose, but it would
certainly have the same positive attitude to its subject as Tatum proposes.
Yet the truncation of the hexameter and its grandiose ethos could equally
be taken as a deformation and deflation of its pomposity: for all his
pretensions to grandeur, death cut him, them, and the hexameter which
embodies them, short. While it might be considered disappointing that an
insight into the implications of CIL I² 3109a's metrical form does not
definitively establish its tone, it may be appropriate that the connotations
of the Second Archilochean are as ambivalent as those of the graffito itself.

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