

No scholar would dispute that Vergil is a master at manipulating sound to match sense, and the range of effects seems relatively easy to quantify: a succession of dactyls suggest rapid movement (as of horses, *Aen.* 8.596); spondaic lines with multiple elisions are deliberately ugly (cf. 3.658 to describe the Cyclops), hypermetric lines may indicate a superabundance of emotion (cf. 4.629, concluding Dido's speech); monosyllabic line-end may be onomatopoeic (cf. 5.481, where the final *bos* seems to mimic the bull's thud to the ground); coincidence of ictus and accent can produce a lulling effect (4.486, of the sleep-inducing poppy). Alliteration, assonance, run-on lines, etc., etc., all are obviously used to produce memorable effects, and there seems little doubt that much soundplay is intentional, pervasive, and easily perceptible (see, e.g., A. Ashcroft, 'Vergil's Hexameter Line', *G&R* v. 20 (1951), 97ff.).

Similar claims have been made for Homer from Dionysius of Halicarnassus to William Gladstone and beyond, but the evidence for such sound effects is much more subjective. Of course there is obvious wordplay (*outis/metis* in *Od.* 9, *figura etymologica* of Odysseus' name at *Od.* 1.62, etc.; see further B. Loudon, *TAPA* 125 [1995], 27ff.), but on the larger scale of the verse as a whole, only rarely can we point to an example as clear as the famous rock of Sisyphus that rolls down dactylicly at *Od.* 11.598. Dionysius attempts to quantify euphony by ranking pleasant and unpleasant sounds (*Peri Synth.* 14), and offers several examples of 'mimetic' sound effects in Homer (*id.* 16). But D. Packard has compiled data that question Dionysius' assertions about letter quality (*TAPA* 104 [1974], 239ff.), and the mimetic examples seem equally arbitrary. Shewan's detailed study of alliteration and assonance likewise finds the degree of intentionality hard to define (*CP* 20 [1925], 193ff.). As for the hexameter itself, more attention has been paid to the demarcation of metrical units than to deliberate sound effects; as with alliteration, so with dactylic or spondaic runs, randomness is often a more likely explanation than conscious intent.

Ultimately I believe that Greek literature is inherently less interested in such sound effects than Latin, but the issue is further clouded by a lack of consensus on what ancient Greek sounded like, even with the sound linguistic basis of the Restored Pronunciation. Latin's stress accent patterns are very close to English, and relate to the structure of the hexameter in clearly recognizable ways. The Greek accent, whether pronounced as pitch or stress (both present problems), has no such relation to the verse, and is counterintuitive to the English ear. Thus the Vergilian hexameter, ictus and all, is taken as the norm, and the Homeric version is somehow expected to conform to that shape (cf. M. Edwards' notation of dactyl/spondee in Homer as DUM de de DUM DUM [*Sound, etc.* 2002, p. 2]). Unless we deliberately 'lighten up' our pronunciation of Greek (perhaps by listening to the cadence of Modern Greek for an imitable model to adapt) our assertions about intentional soundplay will rarely carry conviction.