

The Dance of the Muses: Choral Theory and Ancient Greek Poetics. A. P. David. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. viii + 284. ISBN 978-0-19-929240-0. \$85

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A. P. David argues that the verse form of Archaic Greek epic can be deduced from a dance step. Along the way, he argues that Ancient Greek had a type of stress accent along with the well-known pitch accent, and that the stress pattern is also a feature of Greek versification. The book is generally well argued, in the sense that if one accepts David's premises, his conclusions usually follow; the difficulty comes in accepting those premises. The theory of stress as well as pitch is intriguing and may well be correct. The new theory of Greek versification, on the other hand, and the new account of the development of epic and lyric verse are considerably less convincing. David discards most of the last hundred years' scholarship on Greek meter, poetics, and epic, admitting that he is "led to make claims that cannot but be thought to seem grandiose and revolutionary" (p. 3), but promises "a new level of objective insight into the poetics of ancient poetry" (p. 18). Unfortunately, his argument rests on far too many unexamined assumptions.

The currently accepted theory of Greek meter goes back to Wilamowitz and Meillet in the early years of the twentieth century. The standard handbooks are those of West, Snell, Dale, Korzeniewski, and Sicking. This theory holds that the building blocks of metrical form are the cola, units of roughly eight to twelve syllables that are combined to make up the longer lines of stichic forms or the unique periods of choral lyric. The "feet" identified by Alexandrian and late antique theorists (units of two to four syllables similar to the feet used in analyzing English meters) have no independent existence in Greek verse. Moreover, the Greek cola are derived from Indo-European forms which can also be seen in Sanskrit; in both cases, the beginning of the metrical unit may be relatively free, but the end has a specified cadential rhythm. Gasparov's exposition of this relationship is particularly clear, and Arnold is still a standard reference for early Sanskrit verse. Although the details of the evolution within Greek itself are obscure, Nagy and West provide possible lines of development. All of this is well known and uncontroversial.

It is also generally held that the forms of cola in Indo-European meter are derived from the formulae of oral poetics; this observation goes back to Parry and has been developed both within Greek and by comparative observation of other traditions (Lord, Foley, Schmitt). The recurring phrases of

Greek epic have particular metrical forms, and the words and the rhythms grew up together.

David rejects both the connection of Greek with Sanskrit meter and the division of periods into cola. He argues instead that all Greek meter derives from dance forms, based on small units of two or three steps, which turn out to be precisely the ancient scholars' "feet." He takes epic to be the original form, from which lyric forms evolved, and suggests that the recurring formulaic phrases are "choral signifiers" (p. 143; chapter 5 *passim*). In other words, he argues for almost exactly the inverse of the currently accepted concept of the development of Greek poetry.

Of course "currently accepted" does not mean "incontrovertibly correct." It is entirely appropriate to re-examine the standard theory of Greek meter. Although I find that theory persuasive, I realize that it is a series of deductions from the observed facts, not a divine revelation. I believe the twentieth-century theory explains Greek meter better than the model it replaced (that used by, for example, Gildersleeve, White, or Jebb), but it is quite conceivable that another, still better model may arise. We have limited evidence: not only has a great deal of Greek verse been lost, but so has the vast majority of the music and all of the choreography. It is therefore impossible to know everything about Greek meter, and we must proceed by a series of successive approximations, one new theory at a time.

When I received this book, then, I was delighted to see its claim to be a careful re-examination of the evolution and constitution of Greek poetic forms. David begins by insisting that Greek poetry exists only in performance, observing that "only from new performance can genuinely new insight into performance-based texts . . . come to light" (p. 1): a commendable and promising start. Yet the particular variety of performance David chooses to work with seems inappropriate, and his analysis ignores some potentially important evidence. As a result, what we have here is not, after all, a viable new theory of Greek meter.

In what follows, I shall summarize and discuss David's argument and methods. It should be stated at the outset that David's new account of Greek accentuation is the most valuable part of the book; it is presented as a supporting argument, what in mathematics would be called a lemma, but it is in fact an original contribution that makes sense of some complicated old terminology. I will return to this point later. The main idea of the book, however, is the derivation of Greek verse from dance, and I will focus on this argument. David has put audio and video recordings of passages from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, recited and, in one case, danced in accordance with his theory on the web site <http://danceofthemuses.org>.

What is epic? The Greek name for the form comes from ἔπος, “word” or “utterance” (cognate with Latin *vox* and English “voice”). That is, to the Greeks, epic is a form made of words. The term in this sense is used by Pindar (N. 2.2), Herodotus (2.117), and Thucydides (1.3); it can also mean poetry in general (Pindar O. 3.8), or a line of verse (Aristoph. *Frogs* 862, Hdt. 4.29). Lyric poetry is called μέλος, and there are more specific names for particular genres, such as ἵαμβος. This is the position in classical Greek. Earlier, in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, poetry is called ἀοιδή, and the word ἔπος refers to words in general; it is, for example, the word used in the familiar phrase “spoke winged words,” ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα. The Homeric poems make no distinction among different genres of poetry, or types of poetry with different performance practices; all the songs referred to in the two epics are called by the same name.

As far as we know, epic is a narrative form, performed by a single singer, accompanying himself on a stringed instrument of the lyre family. It is distinct from the choral forms, such as dithyrambs or epinicians, which were performed by a group of singers who also danced, accompanied by one or more instrumentalists. Epic is also distinct from lyric monody, performed by a single singer, but the difference here is in the verse form rather than the performance practice. It must be emphasized that all the evidence we have shows us two separate kinds of performance, solo and choral. In solo song, the singer sings and plays a stringed instrument, but does not dance. In choral song, the singers sing and dance while one or more other people play stringed or wind instruments; it is also possible that the chorus only danced, while one of the musicians sang. Epic, as far as we can tell, was a solo performance form, with no dancers.

David, however, argues that epic must have been a choral dance form. Dancing is certainly depicted within the *Odyssey*, and, in less detail, on the Shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*. As a result, the society shown within the poems, and therefore, plausibly, the society in which the bards lived, must have known choral dancing; fair enough. But *we* know of no *lyric* verse contemporary with the Homeric epics. Moreover, as noted above, the Homeric epics do not use different names for “epic” and “lyric” verse. Therefore, suggests David (p. 67, p. 95, etc.), lyric is a later development, and the dances shown within the poems must have gone along with epic verse, because epic is the only verse that existed. He suggests “there may have been a significant change in compositional and performance practice between the lost age of epic and the historical period in which the earliest lyric poets began to assert their craft” (p. 216), clearly implying that, for him, Greek lyric verse begins after epic is already an established form; see also p. 221, where he refers to “the development of lyric out of epic.”

The idea that lyric post-dates epic in Greece is both implausible and contrary to the available evidence. It is true, of course, that the earliest lyrics that survive date from the eighth century at the earliest. Folk-songs, such as the well-known Rhodian Swallow Song, must have existed earlier, since every culture seems to have folk-songs, but for Greece such songs are known to us only from later sources, such as Athenaeus, who quotes the Swallow Song at 8.360. We do not know what the precursors of Sappho, Archilochus, and Stesichorus were doing, nor do we know what music filled the halls of Mycenae. What we do know, however, is that the lyric verse forms used by the archaic poets are strikingly similar to the verses of the *Rig Veda*. David denies this (p. 240), quoting M. L. West almost as if he believes West was first to make the comparison, though Meillet's *Origines indo-européennes des mètres grecs* does appear in his bibliography. Yet to most observers the salient fact about the glyconic is not that "it contains (must contain) a dactyl" (p. 240, emphasis David's) but that it always contains eight syllables, and allows variation only at the opening of the line, exactly like the Sanskrit line used in the *gāyatrī* and *anuṣṭubh* stanzas. The normal metrical scheme for the glyconic is $\times\times-\cup\cup-\cup-$, while that of the Sanskrit 8-syllable line is $\times\times\times\cup-\cup-$. In the Sanskrit line the second and fourth syllables are usually long. In Greek, although the glyconic usually only responds with other cola of the same form, it can also respond with cola shaped $\times\times\times-\cup\cup-$, $-\cup\cup-\cup-\cup-$, or $\times\times\times\cup-\cup-$. Contraction (substituting a long syllable for two short ones, as occurs in dactylic hexameter) and resolution (substituting two short syllables for a long one, as in iambic trimeter) never occur in archaic Greek lyric in meters of this family; the occasional resolution in the opening portion of the glyconic is a later development, in fifth-century drama. Sanskrit never develops contraction or resolution. Most scholars conclude, with Meillet and others, that the Greek and Sanskrit forms had a common ancestor, a line of eight syllables with a variable opening and a fixed cadence. There was apparently also a longer form, represented in Sanskrit by the twelve-syllable *jagatī*, which is the direct ancestor of the Greek iambic trimeter and possibly of the dactylic hexameter as well. The development is well described by Gasparov, p. 49-58.

The idea that the dactylic hexameter is the fundamental verse form of Greek, then, is ahistorical. David is overly influenced by the theories of Plato and Aristotle, even though he realizes they are not contemporary with the poetic tradition he is trying to re-construct (p. 26). A curious passage in the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* (991b) seems to be the root of David's argument. The passage is discussing doubling (powers of two) and ratios, and observes that the arithmetic and harmonic means between six and twelve constitute "a gift from the blessed choir of the Muses" (trans. A. E. Taylor),

or perhaps *to* the blessed choir; the interpretation of this dative is debated, and David sensibly does not take a position as it is not really relevant to his argument (Tarán ad loc., p. 340; Thomas p. 405; Lacey p. 83). The means are 9 (the arithmetic mean) and 8 (the harmonic), which make the hemiola ratio 3:2 (9:6 :: 3:2, 12:8 :: 3:2) and the epitrite ratio 4:3 (12:9 :: 4:3, 8:6 :: 4:3) with their extremes. David comments “Nine and eight happen to add up to seventeen, the number of steps in a dactylic hexameter catalectic. Nine and eight are seen to link the all-encompassing ration of doubleness with the Muses’ dance” (p. 96), and goes on to say “we have explicit evidence that the seventeen elements of the dactylic hexameter, nine plus eight, *were* in fact elements of a dance. (Without any further qualification, the phrase ‘dance of the Muses’ was apparently sufficient to refer to the epic hexameter.)” (p. 96).

But David’s conclusion has nothing to do with what the *Epinomis* passage is saying. First of all, the form of the paragraph between pages 95 and 96 makes it quite unclear how much is David’s summary of the dialogue and where his own conclusions begin. An inattentive reader might think that the sum, $9 + 8 = 17$, and the connection with epic are in the text; they are not. It is therefore highly suspect to call this “explicit evidence” for a connection between a group of seventeen syllables and anything at all, and commentators on the passage do not do so. Instead of dance, the passage is generally taken to refer to divisions of the octave into smaller intervals (Lacey p. 96, Thomas p. 404-5 fn. b, Tarán p. 336, 340). Moreover, the Greek word that Taylor translates as “choir” and David as “dance” is χορεία, a broader word than merely “dance” and certainly not specifically referring to any one dance form. Finally, the idea that the phrase “dance of the Muses” must refer specifically to the epic hexameter, as opposed to any other form of song, poetry, or dance, is speculation, not to say fantasy. One may as well assume that the phrase is “apparently sufficient to refer to” (David’s words, quoted above) the iambic trimeter – after all, the iambic trimeter has twelve positions, and the whole passage in the *Epinomis* is about the number twelve. But David needs to find epic in this passage; he goes on from here to argue that the dactylic hexameter line is in fact divided into nine syllables plus eight syllables, despite the fact that there is never a natural break (“principal caesura” in modern terms) after the ninth syllable (after the third dactylic metron); more on this below.

David quotes Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (1093a29-b1) in support of this unlikely reading of the *Epinomis* passage. Here the Greek text does say that “epos is seventeen,” and that this is the sum of the means eight and nine. The Greek also says that “it is stepped on the right with nine syllables, and on the left with eight” (p. 97, David’s translation).

ὅμοιοι δὴ καὶ οὗτοι τοῖς ἀρχαίοις Ὀμηρικοῖς, οἱ μικρὰς ὁμοιότητας ὀρῶσι μεγάλας δὲ παρορῶσιν. λέγουσι δὲ τινες ὅτι πολλὰ τοιαῦτα, οἷον ἄ τε μέσαι ἢ μὲν ἑννέα ἢ δὲ ὀκτώ, καὶ τὸ ἔπος δεκαεπτὰ, ἰσάριθμον τούτοις, βαίνεται δ' ἐν μὲν τῷ δεξιῷ ἑννέα συλλαβῶν, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀριστερῷ ὀκτώ.

These people are like the Homeric scholars of old, who see small resemblances and overlook important ones. Some people go on to describe many such cases. For example, the middle notes are 9 and 8; the epic hexameter has 17 syllables, which is equal to their sum, and scans with 9 syllables in the right-hand part, and 8 in the left-hand part. (trans. Annas)

In this passage, however, Aristotle is quoting the Homerists who “observe small similarities but overlook large ones” (David’s version, p. 96), and saying that it is *they* who divide *epos* into nine and eight and connect that to the means between six and twelve. Aristotle does not endorse this idea – rather the opposite. In context, what Aristotle says is roughly “some Homerists divide the *epos* into nine and eight, but this is trivial or silly.” As Annas puts it, “Aristotle may be just criticizing a few random absurd claims; but it is possible that in this passage he is attacking a systematic parallel derivation of parts of speech and of the musical scale” (p. 219); once again, there may be a connection with musical intervals, but Annas does not suggest one with dance. For David, on the other hand, this is an essential piece of testimony, particularly since Aristotle (or, rather, his Homerists) uses the word “stepped,” βαίνεται. David is entirely correct to note that this is far more likely to refer to physical movement than to scansion: it’s a perfectly concrete verb. But assume for a moment that we should accept this division, as Aristotle does not: what, then, are the nine on the right and the eight on the left? It seems inevitable that we must assume seventeen steps for the seventeen potential syllables in the hexameter, if we are to make the numbers work. Suppose the first step is with the right foot, and steps alternate between right and left thereafter in the usual way. We would then make nine steps with the right foot interspersed with eight made with the left: RLR LRL RLR LRL RLR LR. But there is an alternate interpretation, which David presents as the only possibility. Divide the same series of steps, not by “feet” (dactyls) as I have just done, but into a group of nine followed by a group of eight: RLRLRLRLR LRLRLRLR. Then the first group begins from the right foot and the second from the left. Therefore, David concludes (p. 98), there is an essential division after precisely the ninth syllable of the hexameter. He says, “The testimony is . . . definite and first-hand: the hexameter dance was seen by authoritative native informants

to break into two segments of nine and eight.” (p. 99-100) But this goes beyond the evidence he has cited. The *Epinomis* may or may not be referring to epic, to dance, or even to the number seventeen. Aristotle refers to some Homerists, whom he does not name, as importing such an interpretation, one he clearly considers insignificant. If Aristotle is our “authoritative native informant,” he is repudiating the conclusion David wants to draw. The other available native informants in this discussion are the author of the *Epinomis* and Aristotle’s Homerists, not necessarily figures to whom we may impute a great deal of authority.

Moreover, although the dactylic hexameter virtually always breaks into two parts (look at any modern edition of Homer and count how many lines have a comma or other punctuation mark near the middle), that division is almost never after the first nine syllables. The usual location for this mid-line break, conventionally called the principal caesura, is after the *seventh* or *eighth* syllable. The standard analysis of the hexameter line is $D|\text{ϕ}D-$, that is, a hemiepes, a contractible biceps, another hemiepes, and a final long syllable, with word break normally either before the biceps or between its two short syllables (Haslam p. 38, West 1982 p. 35). The units D , $D-$, $D\text{ϕ}$, and $-D-$ are the cola or building blocks of this line. As West points out, “Many of the repeated phrases of epic are designed to fill one or other colon” (p. 35). This observation goes back to Parry, who referred to “expressions . . . which occupied fixed places in the hexameter line” (p. 9) and listed “expressions which form the complete predicate of a sentence and whose metrical value is $D-$ ending in a short vowel, and . . . other expressions which can stand as subject and whose metrical value is $\text{ϕ}D$ ” (p. 12; I have modified the metrical notation). While it is possible to have word-end after the ninth syllable, the significant structural break is almost always within the third foot, not after it. The line does not divide into nine positions followed by eight, but into seven plus ten or eight plus nine.

David tries to get round this by suggesting that the mid-line cadence may take several forms “with different rhythmic consequences” (p. 101), in which each kind “would leave a syllable or two unused in the arsis, which would then be heard to precede the following thesis rather than trail their own one, and so modulate the rhythm at that point towards ascent” (p. 101) – whatever exactly that means. There should be “some feeling of closure or cadence in the third foot” (p. 100) to mark the end of the nine-syllable unit, which “would naturally have fallen on the strong part, or thesis, of the third foot” (p. 100); in other words, the cadence that marks the nine-plus-eight structure actually comes after seven syllables. But if so, then what distinguishes the ninth position? How would one hear nine-plus-eight, if the usual cadence gives seven-plus-ten? In fact, in Homer (though not in Latin

verse), the usual division is not even in the “strong part” of the third foot, but after the eighth syllable, between the two short syllables of the third foot, a position quite difficult to account for in terms of “downbeats.” David is trying to reconcile two incompatible counts: the nine-plus-eight that he finds (incorrectly, I believe) in the philosophical texts, and the seven-plus-ten or eight-plus-nine that he hears (correctly) in the actual verse. This leads to confusion. David is correct that there is a “closure or cadence in the third foot,” of course, but this means that the first structural component of the verse is not the first three feet (nine syllables) but rather the first two feet and part of the third. The salient audible and grammatical breaks (and even, on David’s view, the breaks in the dance figure) come after seven or eight syllables, not after nine. It might have been better to omit the passages from the *Epinomis* and the *Metaphysics* altogether and focus on interpreting the hexameter line as it actually is.

It is not only Aristotle and (pseudo-)Plato who can be over-interpreted, however; modern scholars may also receive the same treatment. Another pillar of David’s argument is the idea that the original Homeric dance still survives in the modern world. For support he quotes the musicologist Thrasybulos Georgiades (p. 102), whose book *Greek Music, Verse, and Dance* has a similar project to David’s: using the extant verse to gain some sense of the music and dance that belonged to it. Georgiades says (his p. 134, quoted by David p. 103) that a rhythm involving an alternation between long elements and shorter ones, with the long ones one and a half times the length of the short, still exists in a popular Greek folk dance, the *syrtós kalamatianós*. But, according to ancient theorists, the long syllable in ancient Greek meter is not quite twice as long as a short (or not always), and may be closer to one and a half times its length. Georgiades also points out that the name *syrtós* is attested for a kind of dance in the first century AD (p. 136, cited by David p. 104). But Georgiades never goes so far as to identify the *syrtós* with an ancient dance; what he says is simply “The two phenomena, the old and the new, the rhythm of Homer and that of the round dance of modern Greece, testify to identical attitudes and have common roots” (p. 139, cited by David p. 105). He then suggests that “tracing the hexameter to the rhythm of the *kalamatianós* poses the question as to what extent the epos was originally related to dance” (p.140, a passage David does not quote) – if the rhythm of the poetry is similar to the rhythm of a dance, could this have been danced poetry? Georgiades does not answer this question, as he is more concerned with analyzing the meter of Pindar’s 12th Pythian, a poem that certainly was sung and danced. For Georgiades the idea that dance may have accompanied epic is a small side issue in a discussion of lyric poetry. David, on the other hand, appears to suggest that

Georgiades supports the notion that epic was a dance form; as far as I can see, this goes beyond what Georgiades actually says.

David's other unusual claim about Greek verse is that stress plays a major part in it. While this may be possible – consider, for example, the work of Knight on stress in Vergil's Latin verse (omitted from David's bibliography) – it is a curious claim to make about ancient Greek, since, as far as we know, the language did not have phonemic stress. All available evidence suggests that each ordinary Greek word, under ordinary circumstances, had one distinguished syllable, the one which, since the third century BC, we have marked with a written accent mark. That syllable was acoustically prominent in some way, and as best we can tell, this prominence took the form of a change in pitch, *not* a change in loudness like the stress in an English word (or a Latin one). Standard references here include Allen (1973, 1987) and Devine and Stephens; see also Daitz for a demonstration. It should be noted that in Modern Greek the accent has changed to a stress accent, though it is normally on the same syllable as the ancient change in pitch, where that syllable has survived through two thousand years of phonetic change.

The ancient Greek language did not have phonemic stress, then, and ancient Greek poetic meter was based on patterns of long and short syllables. This is quite different from Modern English verse, in which the metrical patterns involve stressed and unstressed syllables. Moreover, Modern English uses stress at the level of the sentence to change nuances of meaning, something Ancient Greek does with a variety of small, thrown-in words ("particles"; see Denniston) that have no obvious equivalents in English. For example, the last line of *The Hunting of the Snark* reads: "For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see." Here the word "was" is stressed more than it would normally be, indicating that the narrator expects the listener to be surprised that the Snark should turn out to be a Boojum. If instead we had "For the *Snark* was a Boojum, you see," the point would be that it was not the Snark, but something else that was expected to be a Boojum. In Ancient Greek one might use the particle ἄρα to produce the first meaning and the particle γε to produce the second, perhaps with changes in word order as well. Devine and Stephens (1994 p. 475-497) discuss the various ways of marking topic, focus, or contrast in ancient Greek, none of which necessarily involves stress, though there may be changes to the ordinary pitch contour of words.

David, however, seems to think that stress is necessary for poetry. "In poetry *and* prose, stress is the key to emphasis and style" (p. 18), he writes. Moreover, the "tradition of interpreting Greek metrics that extends two

thousand years . . . is the tradition, uniquely among all metrical analyses of the world's poetries, that has managed to proceed without taking the role of verbal accent into account." (p. 3) But this is simply not true: many languages have poetic forms that have nothing to do with stress. The most familiar example is modern French, whose meters are purely syllabic. The French alexandrine consists of twelve syllables, with obligatory word break after the sixth. There is no question of stress or "verbal accent," because that is not part of the French language. Indeed, in formal poetry, every syllable counts, even those that would not be pronounced in casual speech. For example, consider these lines from Racine's *Phèdre*:

Cet heureux temps n'est plus. Tout a changé de face
 Depuis que sur ces bords les dieux ont envoyé
 La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé.

In the third line, one must pronounce both syllables of *fille*, even though in ordinary conversation the second syllable would be silent. There is no accentual pattern here: these alexandrines are neither iambic (like English alexandrines) nor anapestic. Nor is French the only language to have poetic meters without stress; the same is true in Japanese, which, like ancient Greek, has pitch accent rather than stress. It is hard to see how stress can be "the key to . . . style" in languages such as these where it does not exist; in the metrical analyses of the poetics of such languages, naturally "verbal accent" plays no role. David's idea that poetry must involve stress is surprisingly naive, and to make a blanket statement about "all metrical analyses of the world's poetries" is unscholarly.

Once he decides that there must be stress patterns in ancient Greek verse, David must figure out how to assign stress to words. Here, building on the work of W. S. Allen, he makes a real contribution. The basic question is the meaning of the Alexandrian terms for words of various accentual shapes: oxytone, perispomenon, paroxytone, and so on. Each of these indicates what kind of accent mark is written on which syllable: oxytone has an acute (sharp, ὄξύς) accent on the final syllable, paroxytone on the nearly-final syllable (the penult), proparoxytone on the antepenult; perispomenon has a circumflex (bent-around, περισπόμενον) accent on the final syllable, properispomenon on the penult. As David points out (p. 53), the term barytone is different: we might expect it to refer to a word with the grave (heavy, βαρύς) accent, but in fact it denotes any word whose final syllable has no accent. The terminology is asymmetric, in that *oxus* and *perispomenon* refer to accents, but *barus* refers to a particular type of non-accent. A Greek word may be both perispomenon and barytone, say, or both proparoxytone and barytone, but it cannot be perispomenon and oxytone: "barytone" com-

bines with the other terms, but they do not combine with each other. *Barus* might therefore refer to something different from what *oxus* refers to.

Allen compares the Greek accent with that of Sanskrit, which marks a high pitch (the *udātta*) and a down-glide (the *svarita*). For Allen the *svarita* is “a structural variant on the low pitch” (David p. 55); this must be correct, although Whitney (sect. 81, p. 28) suggests it is the same as the Greek circumflex. Moreover, something similar may have existed in Greek. David’s advance is to identify this *svarita* with what the Greeks call *barus* (p. 56). This tidily accounts for the Greek terminology and makes a sensible connection with the Sanskrit evidence. Now it is clear how a word might be both *barus* and *oxus* (or *perispomenon*): it is *barus* if its high pitch is not on its last syllable, so that it has a fall in pitch before the end of the word.

But Allen also suggests that there may have been some audible stress in ancient Greek, and cautiously concludes that there may have been “an element of dynamic reinforcement” (1987, p. 132) going along with the quantitative metrical patterns. He is careful to insist that ancient Greek verse is quantitative, not accentual, but that a relatively weak pattern of stress may have added to the rhythm of the verse (p. 132, 138). David quotes Allen’s formulation about the “prominence” of syllables (Allen 1987, p. 135-136, quoted p. 69), and notes that Allen determines that this “prominence” must be stress, but omits Allen’s qualifications about “the probable relative weakness of any such patterns of stress in classical Greek” (1987, p. 138). Instead, he says that Allen did not go far enough: each word must actually have a stress, *barus* when available, *oxus* otherwise, in addition to its change in pitch. While Allen talks of the *svarita* as a down-glide, David takes the apparently corresponding Greek *barus* as a stress, not merely a pitch change. Then, because there are now two ways for a syllable to be stressed, either as *oxus* or *barus*, it turns out that “we have found, for the first time, a link between accent and metre in Greek” (p. 72) based on the placement of these stressed syllables in the verse, and particularly in the cadence. The idea that the *barus* property, un-marked in the Greek accent system but certainly discussed by ancient theorists, corresponds to the Sanskrit *svarita* is linguistically interesting; the idea that the *barus* syllable is stressed, however, is more speculative, as is the application of this theorized stress to Greek quantitative meter.

David brings in an unexpected bit of supporting evidence here: Latin (p. 75-79). The rules for stress accent in Latin are well known: in words of two syllables, the first (or penult) is stressed; if there are more than two syllables, stress the penult if it is a long syllable, otherwise the antepenult. But when Roman names are transliterated into Greek, as happens frequently when Greek authors write about Roman topics, the Greek ac-

cent mark often does not go on the syllable that would be stressed in Latin. David observes that in fact the Greek accent mark is placed so that the Latin stressed syllable becomes the Greek *barus*. For example, the name *Augustus* is accented on its penult in Latin, because that is a long syllable. In Greek, however, the name becomes Αὐγουστος, with acute on the antepenult – and, therefore, stress on the penult (p. 76). This is a lovely observation and an excellent use of comparative linguistic evidence. Of course, sometimes the accent of a loan word into Greek does appear on the Latin stressed syllable, or in a different place altogether, as for example Servius Tullius becomes Σερούιος Τύλλιος. Here “Tullius” has an acute on the antepenult, exactly where the Latin stress is. It would not be possible to put an acute before this syllable, to make it *barus*, because it is the first syllable of the word. As for “Servius,” it becomes four syllables long in Greek, so cannot have an accent on its first syllable. More work is needed here to determine exactly when a Latin stress turns into a *barus* in Greek; David’s observation may only be true for names of three or more syllables with long penult.

There follow some twenty-odd pages of “prosodic charts” with discussion (p. 115-137), in which David writes out the longs and shorts for a passage of Homer, then marks his oxus and barus accents on the syllables where they fall. Here is an example, from the opening of the *Iliad* (p. 117):

˘υ υ˘υ υ˘ ˘˘˘˘ υ˘˘˘
 μῆνιν ἄειδε θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
 ˘˘˘˘ ˘ ˘υ υ˘˘ ˘υ υ˘˘
 οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ ἄχαιοῖς ἄλγε’ ἔθηκε

He observes “the clear evidence of a tendency towards rhythmic-prosodic ‘agreement’ not just at the end of the line, where one should expect it in any case, but also in the third foot, where its presence confirms the descriptions of the epic dance in the *Epinomis* and the *Metaphysics*.” (p. 118) By “rhythmic-prosodic agreement” (the scare quotes are David’s), he means an *oxus* or *barus* accent on the first syllable of a foot; it is true that in *Iliad* 1.1-10, seven lines have this accent on the first syllable of the third foot and three have it on the second syllable (one has both, while line 4 has neither); six of the ten lines have an accent on the first syllable of the sixth foot and three more on the final syllable. His other analyses show similar results. The mid-line caesura, he concludes, “must be seen as an automatic consequence of the desire to accent the thesis of the third foot” (p. 119). “Caesura results from the prosodic shapes that produce a sense of agreement in ancient Greek, a concrete musical motivation; not from a need to pour words into metrical moulds inherited from some unknown tradition” (p. 119), he

goes on, ignoring the idea that the tradition, the words, and the “metrical molds” grew up together.

Consider, moreover, the reference to the *Epinomis* and the *Metaphysics* in the sentence quoted at the start of the previous paragraph. As we have seen, David reads those passages as allusions to the counting of syllables in epic verse. Even on his rather tendentious reading, it is a stretch to call those passages “descriptions of the epic dance.” Unfortunately, this is not an isolated slip, but a deliberate rhetorical mannerism. A more striking example occurs on p. 75, where David writes “perhaps, as I suggested earlier, his descriptive principle was borrowed from Sanskrit theoreticians,” referring to how Aristophanes of Byzantium devised the system, still in use today, for marking the pitch accent in ancient Greek texts. But David has never actually made the incredible suggestion that Aristophanes of Byzantium had been in contact with Sanskrit grammarians. Instead, he uses a perfectly reasonable, evocative simile: “As if under the influence of Panini, Aristophanes marked up his words by analogy with the *udatta*.” (p. 66) Since Pāṇini lived about a century and a half before Aristophanes, I suppose it is conceivable that the Greek scholar *could* have read his work, but it is unlikely, and it is certainly not what was “suggested earlier.” Instead, in the space of ten pages analogy has turned into argument, and the reader is left wondering where the supporting evidence might be.

David goes on to consider the well-known repeated phrases of Homeric verse, which, since Parry, we have referred to as “formulae” and understood as “metrical ‘building blocks’ of the hexameter line” (p. 139). David, however, argues that the noun-epithet formulae are in fact artifacts of the dancing nature of the verse – that “danced verse intends to conjure a presence” (p. 138) and that “the combination of catalogue and round dance provide a complete account of the genesis and the ontology of metrical name-and-epithet phrases in Greek epic” (p. 141). In other words, the repetition of “fleet-footed Achilles” or “Diomedes of the great war cry” is a patterned recurrence exactly analogous to the recurring dance steps, which are already reflected in the recurring rhythm of the lines (p. 142). According to David, these formulae are “choral signifiers,” the true and evocative names of the heroes they refer to. David does not discuss other formulae, such as those that introduce speech. He also rejects the idea that some formulae are inherited from Indo-European:

“Zeal for the comparative reconstructive method, rather than facts, led to the positing of ‘cognate formulae,’ and to a number of versions of ‘comparative metrics.’ Gregory Nagy, for example, following Kuhn, described the Greek poetic collocation *kleos*

aphthiton as ‘cognate’ with Vedic *sravas aksitam*. Unfortunately, however, the collocation *sravas aksitam* never actually occurs as such. . . . The question of what in fact constitutes an isolable unit in such reconstructive studies, whether metrical or formulaic, remains highly dubious.” (p. 13)

In fact, the phrase occurs four times in the *Rig Veda* (1.40.4, 8.103.5, 9.66.7, 1.9.7), though it is true that each time the words in Sanskrit are in the reverse of their order in Greek. While this was the first cognate formula to be identified, it is hardly the only one, however, and comparative Indo-European poetics is by now a rather well established subfield (Schmitt, Watkins). David’s discussion of the relationship between formulae and metrics (p. 163-167) is simply confused.

Finally, David attempts to consider the implications of his new theory for lyric verse, hoping “to persuade the reader that the corpus of Greek lyric is a treasure as yet unearthed” (p. 215) – which sounds, oddly, as if the reader is assumed to be unfamiliar with Greek lyric. Because classical Greek lyric is vastly more complicated than epic, David’s discussion is necessarily tentative. He suggests that the choreography must have been based on a principle of “one syllable, one step” (p. 227-236). This is probably a necessary simplifying assumption if he is to make any progress at all, though it is a sadly reductionist idea of what experienced dancers are capable of. On the other hand, he also assumes that “an ode should begin and end on the right foot” (p. 233), just as the seventeen-syllable hexameter line would, and observes that therefore a lyric poem must have an odd number of syllables. “This runs directly counter to the traditional theory of strophic respension, which entails that the total number be even” (p. 233), at least in antistrophic verse; David notes, correctly, that in triadic forms, an odd number of triads can have an odd number of syllables. As a result, some emendations, made to restore metrical respension, may be wrong: “perhaps the ‘missing’ syllable was in reality Pindar’s contrivance for having the dancers’ movement both begin and end on the right foot” (p. 233). This is far-fetched. It may also contradict the well-established idea that the strophes and antistrophes were sung to the same melody, which David dismisses: “Late musical settings apparently suggest an identity of melody in both strophe and antistrophe, without particular regard for verbal prosody. Perhaps, however, this approach to lyric melody belongs to the New Music.” (p. 225-226)

Given that David derives epic from dance, and lyric from epic, it is perhaps not surprising that he claims that dance is not as important to lyric *choreia* as it was to epic. “In lyric the dance is fundamentally subordinate to the word,” he says (p. 218-219), because it is the patterns of words

that produce the metrical pattern and, therefore, the dance steps. He goes so far as to try to revive the dreadful old term “logaoedic,” “word-song,” a term used by later Greek grammarians apparently to refer to meters that seemed closer to prose than to proper verse (Dionysus Laertius, Aristides Quintilianus; references are in LSJ). David refers to “Aeolic metres, which used more usefully to be called logaoedic” (p. 239), because in these meters “we reach the furthest limit . . . of the control of the word over the dance.” Indeed, for David, “Aeolic rhythms can seem almost free-form” (p. 239) in their flexible use of iambs, trochees, dactyls, epitrites, cretics, and the other “feet.” Paradoxically, then, he argues that choral lyric, a form we know to have been danced, is dominated by its words, while epic, a form that as far as we know never involved dance, is fundamentally a dance form.

Aside from one short poem of Sappho, David focuses on fifth-century lyric, primarily Pindar. Conspicuously absent from the text or the *index locorum* is Stesichorus, the master of large-scale narrative lyric, whose work survives only in fragments. His poems are in the same metrical and structural forms as those of Pindar, or the lyrics of tragedy, so were presumably also performed by dancing choruses; see Haslam on the metrical form and the possible performance practice. These poems, I suggest, are much more like the performance of the “Lay of Ares and Aphrodite” in the Phaeacian court in *Odyssey* 8 than Homer’s own poems are. David’s thesis – that epic is the original Greek verse, that it is a dance form, that Greek meter derives not from an ancient verbal tradition but from dancing – is ultimately unconvincing.

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