

The metre in which the *Heroïdes* is composed is the so-called Elegiac couplet, that is, a Hexameter, or ordinary Heroic line (like that of Virgil's *Æneid*), followed by a Dactylic Pentameter, which was hardly ever used but in connection with the Hexameter. The following is a scheme of the present way of scanning the Elegiac couplet :

(1) — — — | — — — | — — — | — — — | — — — | — — —

(2) — — — | — — — | — — — | — — — | — — — | — — —

An older way of scanning the Pentameter was :

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that is, with a Spondee in the middle followed by two Anapæsts.

1. The Hexameter consists of six feet, of which the fifth is a Dactyl, the sixth a Spondee, while the first four may be Dactyls or Spondees. Licenses of any kind are but sparingly admitted in the Hexameter of this couplet.

2. The Dactylic Pentameter, as usually scanned, consists of two members separated by the Penthemimeral pause. The first member has two feet—Dactyls or Spondees—followed by a long syllable ; the second member is made up of two Dactyls followed by a syllable, which, whether long or short, is considered long.

Ovid, who presents the best models of Elegiac verse, usually observes the following, among other rules :

(a) If the sense overflow the limits of the Hexameter, and be completed in the first word of the Pentameter, then the first foot of this latter should be a Dactyl.

(b) Elisions should be sparingly employed.

(c) Each couplet should make sense by itself.