

Workshop: “The Grammar of Latin Verse: Word Order between Syntax, Pragmatics, and Prosody”

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Organisers: Brian Cluyse (Trinity College Dublin), Łukasz Berger (Adam Mickiewicz University), Boris Kayachev (Trinity College Dublin)

In case of questions about this workshop, please contact: cluyseb@tcd.ie

In recent years, poetry has been reconceptualised as a prosodically stylised form of language, shaped by metrical constraints while also permitting syntactic and pragmatic phenomena not typically available in non-metrical contexts (Fortson 2008; Devine & Stephens 2024; see also Gunkel & Hackstein 2017). This perspective has found support in a growing body of studies on the word order of Latin poetry, which have identified several core features of poetic syntax (Mayer & Adams 1999; Fortson 2008; Ferri 2011; Dainotti, Hasegawa & Harrison 2024; Devine & Stephens 2024).

While certain aspects of poetic word order, such as discontinuous phrases (Pearce 1966a,b; Conrad 1990), have been studied extensively for decades, many others remain only superficially described, and their syntactic and interpretative properties are still poorly understood. In particular, the role of pragmatics and prosody in shaping poetic word order has only recently begun to receive sustained attention from a linguistic perspective (see Kayachev & Chahoud 2025). Ongoing research has examined the effects of metrical and syntactic positions (Dainotti 2015; Smith 2021; Hasegawa 2024), the influence of rhythm on constituent placement (Zimmermann 2009; see also Blankenborg 2015), the pragmatic/semantic motivations for word order variation (de Melo 2010; Spevak 2010; Bortolussi 2016; Halla-aho 2018; Devine & Stephens 2024; Verano *forthc.*), and the interaction between word order and the prosodic organisation of the verse (Bertrand 2023; Allan 2025a, b).

These developments raise a number of broader questions concerning the nature of word order in Latin poetry. How can the study of individual word order phenomena contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the syntax, pragmatics, and prosody of Latin verse? To what extent does poetic word order reflect syntactic, pragmatic, and prosodic principles that diverge from those operating in non-metrical texts? Finally, can similarities and differences between word order configurations in metrical versus non-metrical texts be accounted for within a unified explanatory framework?

Building on these questions, this workshop is devoted to the study of word order in Latin metrical texts, with particular attention to its interaction with semantics, pragmatics, prosody, and metrical structure. We welcome contributions that address word order from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, including synchronic and diachronic approaches, and that focus on individual authors and genres as well as on comparative corpora. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Word order phenomena that are characteristic of or particularly frequent in poetry (e.g., enjambment, poetic formulae, golden verse, repetition)

- The relationship between metrical structure (colometry, versification) and word order
- Positional effects within the verse (e.g., verse-initial, verse-final, post-caesural placement) and the structures associated with such positions
- Variation in word order across authors, genres, or metrical forms
- The role of pragmatics, prosody and (oral) performance in motivating poetic word order
- Comparative case-studies of word order configurations in metrical and non-metrical texts
- Recurrent word order configurations as stylistic or genre-specific features
- Word order as evidence for syntactic constituency, information structure, or prosodic phrasing in poetry

Suggested reading

- Allan, Rutger. 2025a. Caesurae, cola, and Discourse Acts: A Functional Discourse Grammar approach to Homeric colometry. In Jesús de la Villa, Araceli Striano & Rodrigo Verano (eds.), *Advances in Ancient Greek Linguistics*, 609–625. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Allan, Rutger. 2025b. Hyperbaton and Homeric colometry: A first exploration. In Klaas Bentein & Metin Bağrıaçık (eds.), *From Greece to Cappadocia: Ancient and Modern Greek Language Studies in Honour of Mark Janse*, 15–39. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Bertrand, Nicolas. 2023. When phonology outranks syntax: Postponed relative pronouns in Pindar. *Glossa* 8(1). 1–41.
- Blankenborg, Ronald J.J. 2015. *Audible Punctuation. Performative Pause in Homeric Prosody*. Radboud University PhD Dissertation.
- Bortolussi, Bernard. 2016. L'ordre des constituants en poésie: verbe initial chez Ovide. In Paolo Poccetti (ed.), *Latinitatis Rationes: Descriptive and Historical Accounts for the Latin Language*, 603–620. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Conrad, Carl. 1990. *From Epic to Lyric: A Study in the History of Traditional Word-Order in Greek and Latin Poetry*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Dainotti, Paolo. 2015. *Word Order and Expressiveness in the Aeneid*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Dainotti, Paolo, Alexandre P. Hasegawa & Stephen Harrison (eds.). 2024. *Style in Latin Poetry*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Devine, Andrew M. & Laurence D. Stephens. 2024. *Latin Elegiac Verse: A Theory of Very Free Word Order*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ferri, Rolando. 2011. The language of Latin epic and lyric poetry. In James Clackson (ed.), *A Companion to the Latin Language*, 344–366. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fortson, Benjamin W. 2008. *Language and Rhythm in Plautus: Synchronic and Diachronic Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Gunkel, Dieter & Olav Hackstein. 2017. *Language and Meter*. Leiden: Brill.
- Halla-aho, Hilla. 2018. *Left Dislocation in Latin Topics and Syntax in Republican Latin*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hasegawa, Alexandre P. 2024. Iconic word order in Horace's Odes. In Paolo Dainotti, Alexandre P. Hasegawa & Stephen Harrison (eds.), *Style in Latin Poetry*, 149–168. Berlin: De Gruyter.

- Kayachev, Boris & Anna Chahoud. 2025. Poetry, Prosody and Pragmatics: Linguistic Insights from/on Verse in Indo-European Traditions [Workshop]. 19–20 June 2025. Dublin, Ireland.
- Mayer, Roland & James Noel Adams (eds.). 1999. *Aspects of the Language of Latin Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Melo, Wolfgang David Cirilo de. 2010. Possessive pronouns in Plautus. In Eleanor Dickey & Anna Chahoud (eds.), *Colloquial and Literary Latin*, 71–99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pearce, T. E. V. 1966a. The enclosing word order in the Latin hexameter I. *The Classical Quarterly* 16(1). 140–171.
- Pearce, T. E. V. 1966b. The enclosing word order in the Latin hexameter II. *The Classical Quarterly* 16(2). 298–320.
- Smith, Joseph Andrew. 2021. Modular Clause Composition in Plautus: Evidence of Poet and Actors at Work on the Play. *Mnemosyne* 75(5). 811–852.
- Spevak, Olga. 2010. *Constituent Order in Classical Latin Prose*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Verano, Rodrigo. fthc. Special syntax and the language of Homer: Patterns of non-progression in discourse. In Raymond F. Jr. Person (ed.), *The Special Grammar of Traditional Literature: Studies Building upon Albert Lord's Special Grammar*. Boston/Leiden: Brill.
- Zimmermann, Philippe. 2009. *Rythme métrique et rythme rhétorique dans la poésie lyrique d'Horace. Recherches sur une poétique du sense*. Université Rennes 2 (Université européenne de Bretagne) Thèse de Doctorat.