

# WORKING WITH POPE

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## THE DUNCIAD

### BOOK I—VERSES 59, 81, 87, 91 & 121

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### Verse 59

59 How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie,  
60 How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry,

A first reading indicates a change of rhythm with *embryo*.

59 Hōw hīnts | like spāwn | scārce quīck | īn ēm | brȳō līe

and the verse clearly shows the presence of the anapest in the last foot. This format is commonly seen with the anapest taking the last two syllables of a three-syllable, sometimes four-syllable word. Its presence is obviously noted, but it does not violate the rhythm of the verse.

We should also note that punctuation, although grammatically required, does little to control the overall rhythm of the verse. In other words, the iambic rhythm is controlling the reading of the verse. Punctuation in some verses becomes irrelevant and is only used for grammatical correctness.

The companion line skips along with the expected iambicity:

60 Hōw nēw | bōrn nōn | sēnse fīrst | īs tāught | tō crȳ

### Verse 81

81 She, tinsel'd o'er in robes of varying hues,  
82 With self-applause her wild creation views;

We note the three-syllable varying as the point of variation.

81 Shē tīn | sēl'd o'er | īn rōbes | ōf vār | ȳīng hūes

The expected substitution of the anapest applies to the last two syllables of varying. It would be unusual to have these forms of words appear as a single metrical foot, especially toward the end of a verse. Verse 82 follows as expected:

82 With sēlf | äplāuse | hēr wild | crēa | tiōn vīews

## Verse 87

**87 (Pomps without guilt, of bloodless swords and maces,  
88 Glad chains, warm furs, broad banners, and broad faces)**

Here we have both verses with the same variation in their construction, being what we often call a *feminine ending*. In these cases, we find the verse to end with the *amphibrach* foot (or hypermetrical syllable).

Verse 87 may begin with an iamb or trochee. Naturally we find that the trochee is capable of increasing dramatic effect due to the initial emphasis.

87 Pōmps wīth | ōūt guīlt | ōf blōod | lēss swōrds | ānd mēcēs  
87 Pōmps wīth | &c.

88 Glād chāins | wārm fūrs | brōād bān | nērs ānd | brōād fācēs

The emphasis, as in speech stress, on and in the fourth foot of verse 88 is very appropriate in that it connects *broad faces* with chains, furs and banners.

Using the feminine ending gives a very pleasant change to the rhythm of the couplet. However, one would not use this variation too closely to the same as the novelty soon wears off with what appears to come across as a hanging or hypermetric syllable. It can also confuse the expected rhythm of iambic couplets.

Generally, we see that both verses in a couplet will be feminine and not only one as the reader's sense of rhythm would be disrupted or at the least, confused.

## Verse 91

**91 Now May'rs and Shrieves all hush'd and satiate lay,  
92 Yet eat, in dreams, the custard of the day;**

The presence of the three-syllable *satiatē* followed by a single syllable (word) leads to the presence of an anapest in the last foot.

91 Nōw Māy'rs | ānd Shrīēves | āll hūsh'd | ānd sā | tīātē lāy

The result is as expected with the companion verse following in strict iambic pentameter:

92 Yēt ēāt | īn drēams | thē cūs | tārd ōf | thē dāy

Although we tend to avoid the metrical accent on words such as of (fourth foot), here both metrical accent and speech stress are appropriate by leading to more meaning of *the day*.

## Verse 121

121 Round him much Embryo, much Abortion lay,  
122 Much future Ode, and abdicated Play;

Attempting any form of iambic splits in the first half of verse 121 is doomed. *Embryo* sets itself apart and the *comma* is metrically times resulting in the iambic finish of the verse.

121 Rōund hīm mūch | Ĕmbrÿö | ° mūch | Ābōr | tīōn lāy

This is an unusual construct for Pope but the variation of the two dactyls as the substitution of two iambs carries well. Unless you are aware, the reading of this line may not be as smooth as it should be. A casual reading would not effectively demonstrate the variation, especially sight reading (as opposed to reading aloud).

The companion line playfully finishes as a series of iambs which is common when any variation occurs in *one* verse of the couplet:

122 Mūch fū | tūre Ōde | ānd āb | dīcāt | ěd plāy