

**THE PHONOLOGICAL RIDDLE WRAPPING AROUND  
THE UNDERAPPLIED OVERAPPLICATION MYSTERY INSIDE  
THE PHILOLOGICAL ENIGMA OF LATIN**

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For centuries before Linguistics even existed as a field of study, scholars of Classical Latin observed through metrical scansion that consonants always contributed to syllable weight. Later scholarly literature in Linguistics has supported that claim, maintaining that all coda consonants in Latin are moraic (cf. McCarthy 1979, Zec 1995). Contrary to that characterization, however, I argue that word-final [s] was *always* extrametrical – as were all consonants after long vowels. That claim accounts for a number of phonological patterns that are poorly understood. Those patterns range from underapplied rhotacism in words like *opus* ‘work’, which resist the analogical shift from [s] to [r] that is found in words like *honor* (< *honōs*) ‘honor. NOM.SG’ to vowel length alternations in words like *sūs* ‘swine. NOM.SG’ and *suīs* ‘swine. GEN.SG’. In addition, extrametricality clarifies the idiosyncratic behavior of word-final [s] in Old Latin verse, in which the final syllable of a word like *minus* ‘less’ – contrary to Classical Latin verse – scans as light more often than it scans as heavy. Extrametrical consonants furthermore exhibit anomalous phonotactic patterns. For example, only word-final [s] can create a coda with rising sonority.

Word-final extrametricality is the result of associating a segment with a prosodic word (cf. Vaux and Wolfe 2009). I argue that the enigmatic observation that all consonants contribute to syllable weight in Classical Latin verse falls out from the absence of prosodic words in period metrical composition. That absence is manifest insofar as all prosodic constituents (i.e. moras, syllables, feet, prosodic words and prosodic phrases) adhere to strict layering *except* for prosodic words, which may dominate partial syllables or be dominated by multiple feet. Without prosodic words, extrametricality is not licensed, resulting in a philological exception to an otherwise robust phonological generalization.

The resulting Optimality Theoretic analysis advances a detailed account of moraicity in Latin phonology and more generally informs our understanding of complex patterns in moraic structure that come about through constraint interaction.

**References:**

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