

Abstract

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In his *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791), the English orthoepist John Walker observed that English borrowings from Latin, either directly or via French, tend to preserve the Latin stress pattern when the syllable count remains unchanged (e.g., *o'pin̩io* → *o'pin̩ion*). This paper revisits Walker's claim within a diachronic framework, testing it on a corpus of approximately 35,000 Latinate words traced from Classical Latin (CL) through Vulgar Latin (VL), Gallo-Roman (GR), Old French (OF), and Middle English (MidE) to Present-Day English (PDE).

Our results not only confirm Walker's principle but also extend it: even when syllable count changes, be it via syncope, vowel reduction, or affixal restructuring, stress often still mirrors that of Latin, albeit not in its immediate source form (e.g. *compārabilis*, *sensibilis*), but in an earlier, shorter etymon (e.g. *'compārō*, *'sentiō*; see also Bejta 2003). Thus, PDE *'comparable*, *'collocate*, *'temperament*, and *'sensible* (antepenultimate stress in RP) mirror the Latin stress of *'compārō*, *'collōcō*, *'tempērō*, and *'sentiō*, rather than that of the longer derivatives *compā'rabilis*, *collō'cātus*, *tempērā'mentus*, and *sen'sibilis*. The following table contains further examples:

CL - PDE	Latin etymon - CL - PDE
orat̩io - o'ration	audiō - audībilis - 'audible'
asperīt̩as - a'sperity	volvō - vōlūbilis - 'voluble'
argillācēus - 'argil'laceous	dēpīlō - dēpīlātus - 'depilate'
anxiūs - 'anxious	infātūō - infātūātus - in'fatuate
ardūus - 'arduous	argūō - argūmentum - 'argument'
barbārus - 'barbarous	ostendō - ostensīvus - o'stensive
stūpendus - stupendous	argūmentōr - argūmentatīvus - argu'mentative
āmentīa - a'mentia	fātum - fātālis - 'fatal'
fōliūm - 'folium	nātūs - nātālis - 'natal'
radius - 'radius	hospēs - hospītālis - 'hospital'
consōnans - 'consonant	partīcūla - partīcūlāris - par'ticular
ăbundans - a'bundant	mēmōrīa - mēmōrīālis - me'morial
corpūlens - 'corpulent	arbōrēa - arbōrēālis - ar'boreal
appārens - ap'parent	mānūs - mānūālis - 'manual'
ădōlescens - ado'lescent	clērīcūs - clērīcālis - 'clerical'
thesīs - 'thesis	tertīa - tertīānus - 'tertian'
nēcrōsis - ne'rosis	ēlōquens - ēlōquentīa - 'eloquence'
incūbus - 'incubus	jūdīcīum - jūdīcīārius - ju'diciary'

Building on these findings, we explore historical explanations for certain morphophonological rules of PDE pronunciation as formulated by Duchet in his book *Code de l'anglais oral* (1994). In particular, we address the long-standing puzzle of why stressed /i/ remains short in words containing any of the stress-imposing <i + vowel> suffixes, such as -ious, -ient, -ia, -ion, etc., as in *opinion*, *religious*, *ambitious* despite long vowels in analogous contexts, such as in *prostration*, *commotion*, *ablution*. We argue that developments in Vulgar Latin during the Gallo-Roman period (c. 58 BCE - 476 CE) provide a plausible account of this anomaly.

In sum, in our paper, and in our proposed talk, we intend to show and exemplify how Walker's observation, when extended through evidence from syllable structure, morphophonological processes, and contact history, reveals a deeper and more pervasive phonological inheritance from both Classical and Vulgar Latin than has hitherto been recognized.