Greek Scansion

- A line of **Greek iambic trimeter** verse is made up of **three** metrical units or metra.
- Each iambic metron consists of two **iambs** (**short long u —**).
- A syllable is **long** if it is long in time. This is the case if the syllable has a long vowel or diphthong, or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants. Otherwise a syllable is **short**.
- For example:
  - ουδ αν κτανειν
  - ου – in ουδ is a diphthong = **long** syllable
  - α – in αν is a short vowel + two consonants = **long** syllable
  - **– α –** in κτανειν is a short vowel + only one consonant = **short** syllable
  - **– ει –** in κτανειν is a diphthong = **long** syllable
  - So we get: **long long short long — — u —**
- It sometimes happens that a short syllable is replaced by a long syllable. This is known as **substitution**.
- It also sometimes happens that a long syllable is 'broken down' into two short syllables. This is known as **resolution**.
- **Scanning** a line means working out the pattern of long and short syllables.
- Start by marking **long** syllables, using the rules given above. Then work out the complete pattern of longs and shorts, using vertical lines to divide the line into metra.

Example: αυτη προς αυτην πατερ αποιμωξη φιλον

- Mark long syllables:
  | — — ? — — ? ? ? — — — ? — |

- So we must have:
  | — — u — | — u u u — | — — u — |

- In the first metron **u —** has been replaced with **— —** to give **— — u —**

- In the second metron **u —** has been replaced with **— —** which has been resolved into **— u u** to give **— u u u —**

- The **caesura** is a break between words that occurs after the **fifth** or **seventh** syllable of the line. Mark it with a double vertical line. So in the example above:

  - The caesura falls after the fifth syllable i.e. between αυτην and πατερ.

  - **| — — u — | — || u u u — | — — u — |**