

**REVIEWS**

**10.R.1 (2009):** Maria-Kristiina LOTMAN

Baechle, Nicholas (2007) *Metrical constraint and the interpretation of style in the tragic trimeter*. Lanham etc: Lexington Books. XIV, 343 p. ISBN 978-0-7391-0950-2 (cloth), 978-0-7391-2143-6 (hb).

This book offers a keen insight into the relationship between the metrical constraint and style in the iambic trimeter of Greek tragedy. The study is remarkable, on the one hand, for its scope, including the large material of analysed verses, and on the other hand, for the detail of the analysis. It is a major contribution to quantitative stylistics.

The book is divided into two main parts: "Part I. Treatment of word shapes in composition and the use of prosodic variation" and "Part II. The use of hyperbaton in composition and its interpretation". The subthemes of the first part are: metrical lengthening of short final vowels, correptio attica vs metrical lengthening, synizesis, elision and lengthening of words shaped UU<sup>v</sup>. The second part is divided into three subsections: marked forms of word order for prepositional phrases, postposition and *Einschiebung*; metrical and prosodic variations at mid-line; hyperbata of the form modifier-verb-noun or the reverse. The author emphasizes that this is not a linguistic, but a stylistic analysis: the study demonstrates how the stylistic devices create additional restrictions, on the one hand, but also offer means for resolving metrical difficulties, for instance, with the licenses of word orders.

The study provides a look at the previous treatments of the prosody of Greek verse, filling certain lacunae and at the same time establishing a solid basis for the further conclusions. In the core of this aspect of the study lies an observation that in different genres different prosodical licenses are preferred: the results of the given analysis confirm this observation.

Greek authors used standardized word orders and standard rhythmic phrasings and in order to achieve the approved models the most effective patterns were chosen. One of the hypotheses of this study is that the standard solutions of Greek authors proceeded from the style of the given genre, that is, every genre has its own specific style which determines the compositional demands. Nicholas Baechle shows how the tragic authors tended to prefer the normal prose word order (for instance, in the case of prepositional phrases with a noun and dependent modifier the normal word order is about three times as frequent in Aeschylus and Sophocles and twice as frequent in Euripides, see p. 190–191). If different devices were applied to vary rhythmic, prosody and word order, usually serious compositional challenges were faced, which included, first of all, intractable words. Tragedians applied verbal hyperbaton with restraint: Euripides just a little more than Aeschylus and Sophocles. The use of hyperbata is specific: first of all, possessives and demonstratives are chosen. Therefore, by preferring the certain types of hyperbata the tragedians carefully controlled this stylistic licence: its moderate use distinguishes the style of tragedy from the style of, for example, lyrics, but at the same time, hyperbaton is still a feature of poetical style: the closer a genre is to the everyday speech, the more restricted is the use of hyperbata. For instance, in

this respect comedy is the closest to the ordinary speech. The style of Aristophanes is especially interesting: although stylized and shifting between different style registers, it is still colloquial; yet different stylistic strata in his texts allow us to see more distinctly the prosodical features of different genres, as perceived by him.

Baechle demonstrates that there is a clear relation between the metrical constraint and stylistic choices: what is usually treated as a rhythmical or prosodical variation (for instance, medial caesura, pyrrhic resolution, synizesis) proceeds from the same restraints as do stylistic choices. Stylistic devices form additional restraints, on the one hand, but give an additional tool to solve metrical issues, on the other hand. The formal and elaborated style of the tragedians is in accordance with their metrical choices. The difference between styles becomes rather obvious in the case of synizesis which is marked as a non-Attic and poetic feature. In Aeschylus and Sophocles it is uncommon, in Euripides, who sometimes chooses it even in the case of the lesser compositional pressure, it is relatively more frequent, while in Aristophanic trimeter it is almost always restricted to the paratragic passages, where he is clearly parodying Euripidean style.

Nicholas Baechle has provided a technically detailed study, proceeding from the thorough statistical analysis towards the careful treatment of single cases. The methodology of previous works has been perfected (for instance, it contains the most accurate analysis of words shapes, taking into account both the inherent word shape and its prosodical modification). Therefore it is one of the most meticulous studies of the prosodical phenomena until now; especially valuable is the comparative nature of the work. The analysis is fully verifiable: the list of the analysed texts with the exactness of single verse lines is given in the addenda.

The same method could be useful, for instance, as an additional instrument in authorization. But the benefit is not just practical, as it is in the case of authorization, but it also helps us to better understand, for instance, the more subtle nuances of Aristophanes' humour, as Baechle states, for instance, in p. 79: "The importance of Aristophanic parody in understanding the tragedians' preferences is that it gives us external evidence as to the stylistic importance of this prosody. Aristophanes had to avoid such [metrical] lengthenings as inappropriate, to begin with. He could also rely on that inappropriateness: he knew his audience would respond to the humor of using an alien form of prosody."

*Mutatis mutandis*, the method of this study can be fruitful in application to other verse traditions as well. Further studies in this field cannot overlook the achievements of this work.