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BEHAGHEL'S CLUB

Recent decades have witnessed a growing interest in *jeux de mots* in Greek poetry. It was especially the discovery of the ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic in Aratus' *Phaenomena* by J.-M. Jacques in 1960[1] that stimulated the desire for joining the elite club of those capable of detecting such encrypted messages. This period of intensive *Rätselforschung* recently found its culmination in the publication of C. Luz's monograph on linguistic games in Greek poetry,[2] in which an impressive variety of these is discussed: acrostics, palindromes, anagrams, isopsephic poems, *carmina figurata*, and so forth. Yet even Luz's list is incomplete, and the present discussion aims to offer a brief supplement to her admirable book.[3] I will discuss a playful device used by Greek poets which may not be as spectacular as acrostics but beats them in one hardly negligible respect – that a plausible new discovery may be easier to make in this field.

Unlike acrostics, which may be viewed as rather marginal demonstrations of poetic virtuosity, the sort of wordplay I am concerned with here stems from the more fundamental characteristics of Greek (and, more generally, Indo-European) poetry. According to a principle very familiar to Indo-European scholars since the beginning of the twentieth century, known as Behaghel's Law of Increasing Members,[4] a sentence in Indo-European poetry and prose tends to become heavier as it develops, so that an element of more weight is often placed at its end. This principle is so universal that it is observable even in virtually meaningless sound sequences. L.P. Wilkinson quotes the carol refrain:[5]

Ding dong ding,
Ding-a-dong-a ding,
Ding dong ding dong ding-a-dong ding.

To adduce a more terrifying example, I turn to Greek magical papyri, where we find the following incantation:

α εε ηηη ιιιι ooooo υυυυυυ ωωωωωωω.[6]

This sequence, in which each unit is one vowel (syllable?) longer than the last, deserves our special attention – we will see more examples of this pattern below.

[1] J.-M. Jacques, 'Sur un acrostiche d'Aratos (Phén. 783–787)', *REA* 62 (1960), 48–61.

[2] C. Luz, *Technopaignia: Formspiele in der griechischen Dichtung* (Leiden, 2010). Luz's book will now replace K. Ohlert's *Rätsel und Rätselspiele der alten Griechen* (Berlin, 1912). See now also J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain, and M. Szymański (edd.), *The Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry* (Berlin, 2013).

[3] But see Luz (n. 2), 251 n. 26.

[4] O. Behaghel, 'Beziehungen zwischen Umfang und Reihenfolge von Satzgliedern', *IF* 25 (1909), 110–42.

[5] L.P. Wilkinson, *Golden Latin Artistry* (Cambridge, 1963), 176.

[6] E.g. *PGM* 13.207–8. See also W.B. Stanford, *The Sound of Greek: Studies in the Greek Theory and Practice of Euphony* (Berkeley, CA, 1967), 81–2.

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In its perhaps most frequent realization in both Greek and Roman literature, Behaghel's Law is embodied in the so-called 'tricolon crescendo' (other terms are also in use). This is a set of three words or phrases, each longer than the preceding. Triads of this sort are found in poetry as well as in rhetorical prose.[7] They may have a poetic effect when they appear in the latter, and on the other hand their widespread use in prose implies that later poets and their audiences were accustomed to this device. The fact that immense religious and magical significance was attached to the number three in Graeco-Roman antiquity may be adduced to account for the popularity of such triads.[8]

G. Kirk recognized a special case of the ascending tricolon in the sort of verse which he calls 'a rising threefolder'. This verse is 'composed of three progressively-lengthening cola, through absence or weakness of a third-foot caesura and the presence of a strong fourth-foot one'. One of numerous such lines pointed out by Kirk in the *Iliad* is 2.173:[9]

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ.[10]

Yet another type of Greek verse that embodies Behaghel's Law and may at the same time serve as an example of the tricolon crescendo is what M. West calls 'the augmented triad': 'It consists of the construction of a verse from three names (or occasionally other substantives), of which the third is furnished with an epithet or other qualification'.[11] One of West's examples from Homer is *Il.* 1.145:

ἢ Αἴας ἢ Ἰδομενεὺς ἢ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.[12]

Even later Greek poets were still fond of this pattern: see, for example, the opening line of Theoc. *Id.* 26:

Ἰνὼ καὐτονόα χἀ μαλοπάραυος Ἀγαύα.[13]

The distinct character of such verses was noticed before West. L.J.D. Richardson mentioned them in passing in one of his articles, in which he labels them as 'rhopaloid lines'.[14] This term, Richardson's coinage, derives from that already used in Antiquity

[7] For a succinct discussion, see J.T. Katz, 'Inherited poetics', in E.J. Bakker (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language* (Malden, MA, 2010), 357–69, at 366–7. Katz's example comes from Cicero (*Fam.* 5.2.10): *si acerbe, si crudeliter, si sine causa sum a tuis oppugnatus*.

[8] On the importance of the number three in Greek and Roman culture, see D. Lowe, 'Triple tipple: Ausonius' *Griphus ternarii numeri*', in Kwapisz, Petrain, and Szymański (n. 2), 335–52, at 341–2, with further literature in n. 21. It is no wonder that Ausonius' *Griphus*, an explicit tribute to the number three, provides a good example of the tricolon crescendo at line 84: *Gorgones Harpyiaeque et Erinyes agmine terno*.

[9] G. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1985), 1.20. The quotation is from xxiii.

[10] 'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus'. Translated by R. Lattimore, *The Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer* (Chicago, IL, 1990^2), 16.

[11] M. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007), 117. For a fuller discussion, see M. West, 'An Indo-European stylistic feature in Homer', in A. Bierl, A. Schmitt, and A. Willi (edd.), *Antike Literatur in neuer Deutung: Festschrift für Joachim Latacz anlässlich seines 70. Geburtstags* (Munich, 2004), 33–49.

[12] '[E]ither Aias or Idomeneus or brilliant Odysseus'. Translated by Lattimore (n. 10), 3.

[13] 'Ino, Autonoa, and Agava of the white cheeks'. Translated by A.S.F. Gow, *Theocritus* (Cambridge, 1952^2), 1.215.

[14] L.J.D. Richardson, 'Further observations on Homer and the Mycenaean tablets', *Hermathena* 86 (1955), 50–65, at 57. Richardson planned to devote a larger study to this sort of verse, which, as far as I am aware, he never accomplished.

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for the peculiar sort of verse which may be viewed as the perfect realization of Behaghel's Law – *versus ropalicus* – which is, in turn, named after its resemblance to the shape of a club, ῥόπαλον. In such a verse, each word is one syllable longer than the preceding one. Late Latin poets were particularly fond of this *jeu de mots*: for instance, Ausonius is credited with a prayer composed of 42 rhopalic hexameters (which begins and ends with the line *Spes, deus, aeternae stationis conciliator*).[15]

Here I choose to focus on rhopalic lines, or rhopalic devices, in Greek poetry. The earliest and most widely known example is found in the *Iliad*, in the passage in which Priam famously addresses Agamemnon from the walls of Troy (3.182):

ὦ μάκαρ Ἀτρείδη μοιρηγενὲς ὀλβιόδαιμον.[16]

Ἀτρείδη is now usually taken to be quatro-syllabic, but it *may* be treated as tri-syllabic, so that this becomes a perfect rhopalic line. As N.J. Richardson sensibly notes, this line, ending with two hapaxes, is 'unique and impressive … whether or not the poet was aware of the special structure which he was producing'.[17] At any rate, the peculiar structure was noticed by the Homeric commentators. The bT scholiast remarks that 'the expression of praise is built up in a climactic way, each word being a syllable longer than the last'.[18] The same line serves as an illustration of *versus rhopalius* (sic) in Plotius Sacerdos' *Ars grammatica*.[19]

Even if the poet of the *Iliad* was not concerned with counting precise syllables, it is not unlikely that this particularly successful application of the common pattern as defined by Behaghel's Law was, after all, to some extent deliberate in this otherwise artful verse.[20] There can be little doubt about the deliberateness of a rhopalic effect in my next example, Eur. *Hipp.* 621, which W.B. Stanford adduced as an illustration of Behaghel's Law.[21] Hippolytus suggests that no one would need women if children could be bought directly from Zeus, for a price corresponding to the buyer's means (line 621):

ἢ χαλκὸν ἢ σίδηρον ἢ χρυσοῦ βάρος.[22]

[15] 'O God, our hope, provider of our eternal home'. Translated by N.J. Richardson, 'Literary criticism in the exegetical scholia to the *Iliad*: a sketch', in A. Laird (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Ancient Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 2006), 176–210, at 210. For further examples of Latin rhopalic verses, see L. Müller, *De re metrica poetarum Latinorum* (Leipzig, 1894^2), 579–80.

[16] 'O son of Atreus, blessed, child of fortune and favour'. Translated by Lattimore (n. 10), 33.

[17] Richardson (n. 15), 210.

[18] Translated by Richardson (n. 15), 209.

[19] Keil, *Gramm. Lat.* 6.505.27–506.6. Plotius says that he has been unable to find an example in Latin poetry, but adapts Verg. *Aen.* 1.72 so as to produce *quae quarum facie pulcherrima Deiopea*. Another Roman grammarian who mentions *versus ropalicus* is Servius: he illustrates its definition with the line which ingeniously comments on itself and aptly appears at the end of his *De centum metris* (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.* 4.467.15–17): *Rem tibi confeci, doctissime, dulcisonoram*.

[20] Another Homeric verse that deserves to be noted in the present discussion is *Il.* 18.576: πὰρ ποταμὸν κελάδοντα, παρὰ ῥοδανὸν δονακῆα ('by the river murmuring ever, by the slender, waving reeds'), Homer's most beautiful verse according to S.E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley, CA, 1938), 156–7 (whence the translation), who observes, *inter alia*, that the first half-verse is almost perfectly rhopalic, whereas the second half-verse is 'a perfect ῥόπαλον'.

[21] Stanford (n. 6), 82.

[22] '[E]ither bronze or iron or a mass of gold'. Translated by D. Kovacs, *Euripides: Children of Heracles, Hippolytus, Andromache, Hecuba* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), 185.

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This line is not, strictly speaking, of a club-like shape, yet there is a rhopalic pattern that is recognizable within it. The structure consists of three units, in which the number of syllables increases from two to four. That this effect is deliberate can be inferred from the fact that the verse grows in weight along with the increasing value of listed metals. It is intriguing that this line is, as W.S. Barrett observes,[23] a reworking of the Homeric formula χαλκός τε χρυσός τε πολύκμητός τε σίδηρος,[24] which we recognize as yet another example of the 'augmented triad'. It is as if Euripides' intention was to show us the difference between a deliberate and a non-deliberate application of Behaghel's Law.[25]

My two further examples come from the Hellenistic poets. Wilamowitz observed that a rhopalic line climactically ends *Anth. Pal.* 12.46 (Asclepiades 15 Sens):[26]

> Οὐκ εἴμ' οὐδ' ἐτέων δύο κεἴκοσι καὶ κοπιῶ ζῶν.
> ὦρωτες, τί κακὸν τοῦτο; τί με φλέγετε;
> ἢν γὰρ ἐγώ τι πάθω, τί ποιήσετε; δῆλον, Ἔρωτες,
> ὡς τὸ πάρος παίξεσθ' ἄφρονες ἀστραγάλοις.
>
> I'm not even 22 years old and I'm tired of living.
> Erotes, why this trouble? Why do you burn me?
> For if something happens to me, what will you do? Clearly, Erotes,
> you'll play heedlessly with knucklebones just as before.[27]

K.J. McKay attractively suggested that the rhopalic structure of the last line (1:1:2:2:3:4) may almost graphically represent the game of knucklebones, during which the number of knucklebones was likely to be increasing with the game's progress.[28] A. Sens added as an alternative that the allusion may be to 'the often contentious series of calculations involved in scoring'.[29] At any rate, Asclepiades cleverly employs the playful device to illustrate what the rhopalic line says, in a similar manner to Euripides.

There is a variation on the rhopalic verse to be found among the scanty remnants of the early Hellenistic poet Simias of Rhodes.[30] Fr. 11 Fränkel (= 15 Powell), apparently the opening of a hymn to Dionysus, is preserved by Hephaestion because of its unusual metre. This is a variation on the cretic tetrameter (for which see frr. 9–10 Fränkel = 13–14 Powell), in which the first three cretics are completely resolved and the fourth is resolved into a fourth paeon:

> Σέ ποτε Διὸς ἀνὰ πύματα νεαρὲ κόρε νεβροχίτων ...[31]
> ⏖ ⏑ ⏖ | ⏖ ⏑ ⏖ | ⏖ ⏑ ⏖ | ⏖ ⏑ –

[23] W.S. Barrett (ed.), *Euripides: Hippolytos* (Oxford, 1964), 276–7, ad loc.

[24] 'Bronze, and gold, and difficultly wrought iron'. Translation slightly adapted from Lattimore (n. 10), 68.

[25] Note also Soph. *Ant.* 891: ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφής. This line is discussed as a tricolon crescendo by R.B. Rutherford, *Greek Tragic Style: Form, Language and Interpretation* (Cambridge, 2012), 79.

[26] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* (Berlin, 1924), 1.112.

[27] Translated by A. Sens, *Asclepiades of Samos: Epigrams and Fragments* (Oxford, 2011), 96.

[28] K.J. McKay, 'A Hellenistic medley', *Mnemosyne* 21 (1968), 171–5, at 173.

[29] Sens (n. 27), 101, ad loc.

[30] On Simias, see now esp. L. Di Gregorio, 'Sui frammenti di Simia di Rhodi, poeta alessandrino', *Aevum* 82 (2008), 51–117; J. Kwapisz, *The Greek Figure Poems* (Leuven, 2013).

[31] J.U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* (Oxford, 1925), 114, unnecessarily attempts to emend this line, whose correct interpretation was provided by H. Fränkel, *De Simia Rhodio* (Göttingen, 1915), 48: σέ ποτε, ὦ νεαρὲ παῖ Διὸς νεβροχίτων, ἀνὰ πύματα [γῆς πέρατα πορευθῆναί φασιν] ('O youthful

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H. Fränkel noted a peculiar feature of this line: the first word in the first *metron* is monosyllabic, in the second *metron* the first word is dissyllabic, and so on (σέ:ἀνά:νεαρέ: νεβροχίτων).[32] Again, we recognize a rhopalic pattern. It would be helpful if we could see whether this pattern was repeated elsewhere in the hymn, which would be clear proof that the line was deliberately structured in this way, but even without such an indication I am inclined to think that the rising structure within this invocation was not created by accident. The rhopalic line beginning a poem which bears the title *Laus Martis* in the MSS of Claudian has similar force, as it likewise addresses a deity:

> Mars, pater armorum, fortissime belligerator.[33]

The incantation from magical papyri which I quoted above may be viewed as another example of the rhopalic invocation.

It is important to remember that Simias was not only a poet but also a grammarian. His grammatical work entitled Γλῶσσαι (see frr. 29–32 Fränkel), alongside Ἄτακτοι γλῶσσαι by his more famous contemporary Philitas of Cos,[34] marks the beginning of exegetical interest in the Homeric text, which found its peak in the work of the Alexandrian scholars, such as Zenodotus, Aristophanes of Byzantium, and Aristarchus of Samothrace, whose exegetical pursuits are, in turn, reflected in the extant Homeric scholia. As a grammarian versed in the peculiarities of the Homeric text, Simias may have been aware of the unusual syllabic characteristics of *Il.* 3.182. If he was, then the rhopalic pattern in his hymn to Dionysus might have been conceived as a reminiscence of the rising praise of Agamemnon in the *Iliad*. There is a possible parallel for this sort of echo of a Homeric *jeu de mots*: it is often assumed that Aratus' ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic at lines 783–7 of his *Phaenomena* was modelled on the (accidental) ΛΕΥΚΗ acrostic that can be found at the beginning of the last book of the *Iliad*.[35]

Simias' predilection for wordplay is well known. He is famous for his pattern poems, whose visible form reproduces the shape of the object being described: the *Axe*, the *Wings of Eros*, and the *Egg*. These are a part of the collection of six such *technopaegnia* preserved in the bucolic manuscripts of Theocritus and in the manuscript of the *Palatine Anthology*.[36] There is a connection between these and my last rhopalic finding which comes from the latest poem in this collection of the *technopaegnia* – the *Altar*. It was probably composed in the time of Hadrian, who is believed to have been its

son of Zeus, dressed in a fawnskin, they say that once upon a time you went to the farthest ends of the earth'). Cf. Di Gregorio (n. 30), 108–9.

[32] Fränkel (n. 31), 48. See also J. Kwapisz, 'Were there Hellenistic riddle books?', in Kwapisz, Petrain, and Szymański (n. 2), 148–67, at 160–1; Kwapisz (n. 30), 37.

[33] 'O Mars, father of arms, the stoutest of warriors'. My translation.

[34] On Philitas' activity as a grammarian, see P. Bing, *The Scroll and the Marble: Studies in Reading and Reception in Hellenistic Poetry* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2009), 11–32.

[35] See e.g. S. Stewart, '"Apollo of the shore": Apollonius of Rhodes and the acrostic phenomenon', *CQ* 60 (2010), 401–5.

[36] On the *technopaegnia*, see S. Strodel, *Zur Überlieferung und zum Verständnis den hellenistischen Technopaignien* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002); L.A. Guichard, 'Simias' pattern poems: the margins of the canon', in M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit, and G.C. Wakker (edd.), *Beyond the Canon* (Leuven, 2006), 83–103; Kwapisz (n. 30).

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addressee, by Lucius Iulius Vestinus, an important official at the emperor's court.[37] Here is the text of the poem:[38]

Ὀλὸς οὔ με λιβρὸς ἱρῶν
Λιβάδεσσιν οἷα κάλχης
Ὑποφοινίῃσι τέγγει,
Μαύλιες δ' ὕπερθε πέτρῃ Ναξίῃ θοούμεναι
Παμάτων φείδοντο Πανός, οὐ στροβίλῳ λιγνύος 5
Ἰξὸς εὐώδης μελαίνει τρεχνέων με Νυσίων·
Ἐς γὰρ βωμὸν ὁρῇς με μήτε γλουροῦ
Πλίνθοις μήτ' Ἀλύβης παγέντα βώλοις,
Οὐδ' ὃν Κυνθογενὴς ἔτευξε φύτλη
Λαβόντε μηκάδων κέρα, 10
Λισσαῖσιν ἀμφὶ δειράσιν
Ὅσαι νέμονται Κυνθίαις,
Ἰσόρροπος πέλοιτό μοι·
Σὺν Οὐρανοῦ γὰρ ἐκγόνοις
Εἰνάς μ' ἔτευξε γηγενής, 15
Τάων δ' ἀείζῳον τέχνην
Ἔνευσε πάλμυς ἀφθίτων.
Σὺ δ', ὦ πιὼν κρήνηθεν, ἣν
Ἶνις κόλαψε Γοργόνος,
Θύοις τ' ἐπισπένδοις τ' ἐμοὶ 20
Ὑμηττιάδων πολὺ λαροτέρην
Σπονδὴν ἅδην. ἴθι δὴ θαρσέων
Ἐς ἐμὴν τεῦξιν, καθαρὸς γὰρ ἐγὼ
Ἰὸν ἱέντων τεράων, οἷα κέκευθ' ἐκεῖνος,
Ἀμφὶ Νέαις Θρηικίαις ὃν σχεδόθεν Μυρίνης 25
Σοί, Τριπάτωρ, πορφυρέου φὼρ ἀνέθηκε κριοῦ.

The black ink of victims does not dye me with its reddening stream, like that of purple, and the knives sharpened on the Naxian stone spare the flocks of Pan; the sweet-scented gum of the Nysian saplings does not blacken me with its curling smoke. You see in me an altar not composed of golden bricks or the clods of Alybe, nor let that altar match me which the two gods born in Cynthus built, taking the horns of the goats that feed about the smooth ridges of Cynthus. For together with the children of Heaven did the Earth-born Nine rear me, to whose art the king of the gods granted immortality. And may you, who drink of the spring that the Gorgon's son opened with a blow of his hoof, sacrifice and pour on me libations in abundance sweeter than the honey of Hymettus' bees. Come to meet me with a confident heart, for I am pure of the venomous monsters which lay hid on that altar in Neae of Thrace that the thief of the purple ram dedicated to you, three-fathered one, not far from Myrina.

The first letters of each line spell out an acrostic, which probably addresses Hadrian: 'Olympian, may you sacrifice [sc. on this altar] for many years'.[39] A feature of the

[37] On Vestinus as the author of the *Altar*, see C. Haeberlin, 'Epilegomena ad Figurata Carmina Graeca', *Philologus* 49 (1890), 271–84, at 283–4; and esp. E. Bowie, 'Hadrian and Greek poetry', in E.N. Ostenfeld (ed.), *Greek Romans and Roman Greeks: Studies in Cultural Interaction* (Aarhus, 2002), 172–97, at 185–9.

[38] The text is from Kwapisz (n. 30), 71, translation adapted from W.R. Paton, *The Greek Anthology* (London, 1918), 5.131. In what follows, I draw on my discussion of Vestinus' *Altar* in Kwapisz (n. 30), esp. 180.

[39] According to Bowie's (n. 37) highly attractive hypothesis, Vestinus used the title 'Olympian', which Hadrian adopted after his dedication of the Olympieion in Athens in 131/2, because the poem was composed on this occasion. In return for Hadrian's gift to Athens, numerous altars started to appear in the eastern empire. Vestinus' *Altar* would be another such *charisterion*.

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acrostic which deserves our special attention here is its peculiar metrical structure (I assume that its final syllable is to be treated as long):

Ὀλύμπιε, πολλοῖς ἔτεσι θύσειας.
⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ – – –

This produces a sequence of units intriguingly regular in their rise – short : long : double-short : double-long : triple-short : triple-long. With the exception of the longer initial word, word breaks coincide with these units, which may suggest that the pattern was not created by accident. I do not think I am able to point out an exact parallel to this device, but certainly the rhopalic verse is closest to this: Vestinus' acrostic grows in weight metrically; it is rhopalic ἐν μέτρῳ.

In his *Altar*, Vestinus was careful to acknowledge his debt to Simias as the inventor of the genre of pattern poetry. This is evident above all from the poem's ending: like Simias' *Axe*, the *Altar* ends with the apostrophe to Athena. The last three-line segment of the polymetric structure of the poem – which itself may more distantly evoke the intricate polymetric pattern of the *Egg* – is composed of the choriambic verse with the bacchiac clausula, clearly a borrowing from Simias, who innovatively employed this verse in his *Axe* and *Wings* (cf. Heph. p. 30.21–31.13 Consbruch). In view of Vestinus' familiarity with Simias' poetry, the possibility that Vestinus' acrostic was meant to allude to the rhopaloid pattern detectable in the fragment of Simias' hymn to Dionysus deserves serious consideration. The rhopalic structure of Vestinus' address to Hadrian places it in the same tradition as the rhopalic invocations to which the address to Priam in the *Iliad* as well as Simias' fragment belong. Yet it is the hymn to Dionysus that is a more appropriate model for Vestinus, since, by using the title 'Olympian' in the acrostic, Vestinus suggests that its addressee, too, is a divine figure. If this is correct, then the rhopalic apostrophe, with the intertextual baggage it carries, becomes an instrument of subtle praise.

What can we learn from all this? The rhopalic line in the *Iliad* shows how its poet – perhaps with half-conscious intuition? – refines the poetic diction inherited from the Indo-European oral tradition and takes control over its mechanisms for his own purposes. Such a device does not carry an explicit message in the way that acrostics do, but, nevertheless, it has something to tell us: the sound effect gives additional emphasis to the refined language of praise. The Hellenistic poets used this device more consciously. We may suspect that its appearances in Hellenistic poetry were preceded by, and grounded in, a theoretical reflection on the rhopalic line in Homer, of the sort we see in the later Homeric scholia. In the opening of Simias' hymn to Dionysus, there seems to be an intricate interplay between the metrically innovative verse and the rising structure within it – a display of the poet's technical skill. In Asclepiades' epigram, the rhopalic line is used for more than just emphasis: it illustrates the poem's contents. Such a calculated elaboration and the influence of philological thinking are, of course, hallmarks of Hellenistic poetry, yet it is noteworthy that the rhopalic pattern is used with no less deliberateness by Euripides. This reminds us that his art in some respects foreshadows important trends in Hellenistic poetry, and also that the Hellenistic poets, as careful readers of earlier poetry, were always ready to appropriate its less common motifs and techniques, which we now view as distinctly Alexandrian.[40]

[40] On the 'Hellenisticness' of pre-Hellenistic poetry, including Euripides, see B. Acosta-Hughes, 'The prefigured Muse: rethinking a few assumptions on Hellenistic poetics', in J.J. Clauss and M. Cuypers (edd.), *A Companion to Hellenistic Literature* (Malden, MA, 2010), 81–91.

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Finally, a reminiscence of the rhopalic verse is found in a poem composed during the revival of Greekness under the rule of Hadrian. In this spectacular display of the poet's familiarity with Alexandrian *Formspiele*, the reader is expected to discover a word game nested in another word game, just as in a Russian matryoshka doll: Vestinus embedded a rhopalic pattern within an acrostic within a figure poem. By having done so, he made a notable effort to show that both he and Hadrian, his poem's first reader, were capable of matching in wit and perceptiveness the notoriously sophisticated poets and audiences of the courtly circles of Ptolemaic Alexandria.

From Homer to Vestinus – this is a long period in the history of Greek poetry. Rhopalic and quasi-rhopalic devices may be relatively rare, and I am ready to admit that they are on the whole a minor phenomenon, but the story which their variously interconnected appearances tell us is remarkable in how it reflects at once the changing character and continuum of Greek culture.

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