

MODIFICATIONS IN THE METRIC PATTERN OF THE HEXAMETER IN NONNUS' EPIC POEMS

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The article deals with the metric changes of the hexameter system in the Nonnus of Panopolis' works "Dionysiaca" and "Metabole", their distinguishing features. The research mentions the preconditions of the change in the metric pattern on the linguistic level.

Key words: epic, paraphrase, changes in the hexameter's structure, late Hellenistic Greek, dactyl, protorhyme, metrical stress.

The **topicality** of our research is determined by the fact that the problem of the metric pattern's modification in the III-IV centuries was insufficiently researched in the previous Ancient Literature studies by such investigators as S. S. Averincev, A. M. Yehunova, I. M. Tronskyj, A. A. Taho-Godi, A. I. Biletskyj, N. I. Pashchenko, G. N. Pidlisna, M. L. Gasparov.

Our **contribution** to the previous research lies in the examination of the distinguishing features of Nonnus' hexameter pattern which had influenced the works of late Hellenistic authors, including the representatives of the Nonnus' poetic school in Egypt. The **main objective** of the research is to identify the features of this modification. The **object** is Nonnus of Panopolis' use of language. The **subject** of the paper is the particularities of hexameter metric pattern in the IV century, its prerequisites and consequences. The **study materials** are "Dionysiaca" and "Metabole" ("Paraphrase of the Gospel of John") by Nonnus of Panopolis.

In S. S. Averincev's analysis of the hexametrical epic's evolution as the evolution of the ancient culture's paradigm, he determined four evolutionary dialectic phases: thesis, antithesis, synthesis and reset. Homer is the representative of the thesis, the antithesis is represented by Apollonius of Rhodes' writings, the synthesis is represented by Virgil, and Nonna of Akhmim (Panopolis) represents the final phase. [Аверинцев 1981, 142]. Laura Cover's (a researcher of the Egyptian epic of the II – VI centuries) statement confirms this hypothesis: "Nonnus was a link (an important one) in the evolution of epic poetry since Homer, not a new starting point" [Cavero 2008, 373].

Nonnus of Panopolis (Akhmim) (Χεμμίς according to Herodotus [Herodotus 2.91.1–5], Πανὸς πόλις according to "Geography" by Strabo [Strabo 17.41]) is considered the chief representative and founder of the Egyptian poetic school (IV–VIII centuries), which produced a number of epic poets, such as Musaeus, Cyrus of Panopos, Pamprepis, Christodorus of Coptus, Colluthus of Lycopolis [Cavero 2008, 373]. Nonnus' principal works are "Dionysiaca" and "Metabole".

"Dionysiaca" is a paraphrastic heroic mythological epic, although some researchers consider it a romance, which relates the wanderings of Dionysus-Bacchus in India (an allusion both to Odysseus and to Alexander III of Macedon and his Indian campaign).

Paraphrase (παράφρασις) is a retelling of a text using other words, which sometimes involves abridging or expanding the original and frequently involves rendering the prose

into poetry [Ткаченко 2003, 293]. In the introduction to the Russian translation of "Metabole" D. A. Pospelov states that it is a *sui generis* (unique) kind of a Christian epic [Поспелов 2002, 293]. It is a debatable assertion if we take in consideration such a work of literature as "Homeric centos" by Eudocia, etc.

Semantic conventionality of metric patterns and rhythms was standardized in the Antiquity: each poetic genre always corresponded to a precise metric pattern [Фрейденберг 1948, 290–320]. Hexameter has a "semantically divine" reputation: it was the metric pattern of the Homeric hymns, of the Delphic Oracles' predictions, and of Greek poetic philosophical works, particularly by Xenophanes and Parmenides, Empedocles and Cleanthes. The fact that Ancient Greek was taught and learnt through reading and commenting poems by Homer for centuries (for half a millennium before Nonnus' birth) is of great importance. This is strongly supported by the assertion of a researcher of Homer's language, Clyde Pharr, that one should start studying Ancient Greek from Homer to be able to read fluently the New Testament, Attic and Hellenistic writers and even study Modern Greek afterwards. [Pharr 1920, XXV–XXVI].

The surviving poems by Nonnus of Panopolis were written in the traditional Greek epic metre – the dactylic hexameter. It consists of six dactylic feet -UU (hereinafter – d), and a typical line of the poem has 17 syllables. The last foot is catalectic, sometimes it may be a trochee -U (hereinafter – t) or spondee -- (hereinafter – s). In the first four feet dactyls can be replaced by spondees, but spondees in succession can be used only in the second and third feet. A line where a spondee is the fifth foot is called a spondaic hexameter [Звонська 2007, 635].

The Antique prosody is quantitative; it is based on the alternation of short and long vowels. However, in the second century A.D. and onwards the quantitative metre gradually became an accentual-syllabic metre [Звонська 2011, 210].

Nonnus' metrics is traditional and innovative at the same time. This thesis can be easily explained by the linguistic processes and tendencies influenced by the elimination of phonological differences between long and short vowels which began in the third century BC and was completed in the first century A.D. Meanwhile Alexandrian grammarians of the second and third centuries A.D. revived musical prosody [Звонська 2011, 210].

Considering these facts, we can conclude that Nonnus updated the hexameter to fit not only the new linguistic laws, the modern versification, but also Homer's language and prosody, which had been a standard in the language and in metrics. Nonnus used archaisms in "Dionysiaca" to increase the resemblance to Homer's works and revived the hexameter which had become a "dead metre" by that time, according to Averintsev S. S. [Аверинцев 1981, 142].

The metric system reformed by Nonnus is rather peculiar and had been a model for the next several centuries. He excluded certain metrical patterns of the hexameter, which complicated the perception of the metre by his contemporaries; took into consideration the *accentus* as well as *ictus*; unified the caesura; introduced the protorhyme.

Poems by Nonnus are euphonious, but uniform due to the reduction of the number of spondees in hexameters: *εἰπέ, θεά, Κρονίδαο διάκτορον αἶθοπος ἀνγῆς, | νυμφιδίῳ σπινθῆρι μογοστόκον ἄσθμα κεραυνοῦ* [Dion.1.1–2] – which is demonstrated by the metric pattern: -UU |-UU | – U || U |-UU |-UU | -- ||-UU | -- |-U ||U |-UU |-UU | --.

Nonnus limited the usage of the spondees, avoiding two in succession within a line. The pattern *dddddd*, *sddddd*, *dsddddd* was commonly used throughout the history of hexameter, but Homer used 32 variations of the hexameter, Callimachus used 20, and Nonnus used only 9, among which the five most common verses were: *dddddd*, *dsddddd*, *dddssd*, *dsdsd*, *sddddd*. The first seven lines of "Iliad" have the following metric pattern: *ddddddt dssdddt ssdddt ssdddt sddddd ssdddt ddssds*, whereas in "Dionysiaca" we see a different pattern: *dddddds dsddds dddddd sddddd dddssds dddssds dddssds*, as well as in "Metabole": *dddddds dddddd dddddd dddddd dddddd dsddds dsddds*. This clearly indicates that Nonnus refrains from using spondaic hexameters, spondees in succession in the third and fifth feet, and trochees at the end of the verse. Thus the foot becomes uniform and usually consists of sixteen or seventeen syllables (in the "Iliad", the line 221 of XXIII book consists of 12 syllables).

Nonnus' caesurae are fixed. The predominant type of caesura used is the so-called *κατὰ τρίτον τροχαῖον*. On the whole, the percentage of *κατὰ τρίτον τροχαῖον* in "Dionysiaca" is 81,1 %, and of *τριθημιμερής* is 18,9%. In the "Metabole" the percentage is 89,3 % and 10,7 % respectively, notwithstanding the fact that the two poems are obvious imitations of Homer.

Nonnus of Panopolis used only *τομή κατὰ τρίτον τροχαῖον* in the first 7 lines of "Dionysiaca": 1. -UU|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|--|| 2. -UU|--|U||U|-UU|-UU|--|| 3. -UU|-UU|-U||UU|-UU|-UU|--|| 4. --|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|--|| 5. -UU|-UU|-U||U|--|-UU|--|| 6. -UU|-UU|-U||U|-|-UU|-|-|| 7. -UU|-UU|-U||U|--|-UU|--. The poet also used *κατὰ τρίτον τροχαῖον* in the "Metabole": 1. -UU|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|-|-|| 2. -U|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|-|-|| 3. -UU|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|-|-|| 4. -UU|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|-|-|| 5. -UU|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|-|-|| 6. -UU|--|U||U|-UU|-UU|-|-|| 7. -UU|-|-U||-|-UU|-UU|-|-||. Homer, on the contrary, used a range of diverse caesuras in "Iliad": 1. -UU|-UU|-|-|-UU|-UU|-U|| 2. -UU|-|-|-UU|-|-UU|-U|| 3. -|-|-|-UU|-UU|-|-U|| 4. --|-|-||UU|-UU|-UU|-U|| 5. --|-UU|-U||U|-UU|-UU|-|-|| 6. -|-|-|-U||U|--|-UU|-U|| 7. -UU|-UU|-|-|-|-UU|--||.

The peculiarity of the Nonnus' prosody is a frequent coincidence of *ictus* with *acutus*, particularly at the end of the verse. This marks the evolution of the stress system from musical to expiratory and subsequently of the versification from quantitative to accentual-syllabic. Thus, the first 100 lines in the poem "Dionysiaca" contain only 23 cases of discrepancies *ictus cum acuto* and in "Metabole" 17 cases respectively.

With the changes in the versification, rhythmical prose's techniques were transferred to poetry, especially the principle of repetition of sounds at the end of lines which served as protorhyme. According to I. M. Tronskyj, rhyme is the last legacy of the Greek rhythmic system [Тронський 1988, 269]. The repetitions are a widespread phenomenon in Homer's and Nonnus' works, because they facilitated the audience's perception of the epic.

It is easy to single out the repetitions at the end of the line in Nonnus of Panopolis' verses, which could serve as protorhyme and are essentially an epiphora: "...μήτερ ἐμὴ καὶ μαῖα, δολοπλόκε δύσγαμε **κούρη**,|| τίπτέ μοι οὐ σχεδὸν ἦλθες, ὅτ ἐγγύθεν ἦλθον ὀλέθρου;|| νῦν πόθεν οὐ χραίσμησας ἐμοὶ πάλιν, ἄτρομε **κούρη**..." [Dion. 30.150–152]. We can also suggest the presence protorhyme in the middle of the

Nonnus' line: "...Καὶ θεὸς ἡμᾶρ ἐπ' ἡμᾶρ ἔσω πιτυώδεος ὕλης || δειέλος, εἰς μέσον ἡμᾶρ, Ἐώιος, Ἑσπερος ἔρπων..." [Dion. 42.175–176]; "...κερδαλέω θώρηκι καλύπτετο, μαῖα κυδοιμοῦ, || αἶμαλέω θώρηκι, καὶ ἐγρεκύδοιμον ἀπειλὴν..." [Dion. 20. 192–193]. The repetition of syllables in middle of verses finally confirms our assertion about the beginning of the usage of rhyme by this author: "μαρνάσθω μακάρεσσιν, ἀναρρήξειε δὲ πέτρας | | τρηχάλεοις βελέεσσιν διστεύων πόλον ἄστρων" [Dion. 2. 267–268].

Moreover, special attention should be paid the extraordinary and unprecedented sonority due to alliteration, assonance (which is easy to follow in the examples above) and the aforementioned Nonnus' modification of the dactylic hexameter.

Nonnus of Panopolis' hexameter pattern was used by his followers for at least two centuries.

У статті розглядається реформа гекзаметру у творах Нонна Панополітанського "Діонісіака" та "Перифраза Євангелія від Іоанна" у порівнянні з класичним гекзаметром на прикладі епосу Гомера, її особливості. Також в дослідженні розкриваються передумови зміни гекзаметру на мовному рівні.

Ключові слова: епос, парафраза, зміни структури гекзаметру, мова пізнього еллінізму, дактиль, проторима, наголос.

В статье рассматривается реформа гекзаметра в произведениях Нонна Панополитанского "Дионисиака" и "Парафраза Евангелия от Иоанна" в сравнении с классическим гекзаметром на материале эпоса Гомера, ее особенности. Также в исследовании раскрываются предпосылки изменений гекзаметра на уровне языка.

Ключевые слова: эпос, парафраза, изменения структуры гекзаметра, язык позднего эллинизма, дактиль, проторима, ударение.

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