

CHAPTER 7. REWRITING THE CLASSICS.
DIONYSIUS AND THE METHOD OF METATHESIS

I cannot rewrite what is perfect.
(W.A. Mozart in *Amadeus*, Peter Shaffer / Milos Forman)

7.1. Introduction

In the fourth chapter of his work *On Composition*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus compares the subject of this treatise (σύνθεσις) to the Homeric goddess Athena.¹ Just as Athena makes the same Odysseus appear now in one form, now in another, so composition, taking the same words, makes the ideas (τὰ νοήματα) appear at one time ‘unlovely, mean and beggarly’, and at another time ‘sublime, rich and beautiful’.² This elegant comparison, which illustrates the power of composition, also offers an instructive background to one of the most interesting aspects of Dionysius’ rhetorical works, namely his method of *metathesis* (μετάθεσις).³ The re-arrangement of texts, which changes their character just as Athena can change the form of Odysseus, is one of the three methods of literary criticism of which Dionysius makes use, besides the analysis of longer text fragments and the comparison (σύγκρισις) of two or more authors.⁴ The method of metathesis can be considered a language experiment intended to demonstrate the merits and defects, or more generally the particularities of a text.⁵

¹ This chapter has been published in a slightly different form as De Jonge (2005b).

² *Comp.* 4.19,18-20,10.

³ On the various applications of the term ‘metathesis’ in ancient grammar and rhetoric, see Schindel (1993) 113. In this chapter, the word ‘metathesis’ refers to the technique of rewriting a given text, whether in prose or poetry, in order to make a comparison between the first and second version, thereby pointing to certain virtues, faults or particularities in the style of the original. Dionysius of Halicarnassus usually refers to this technique with the verb μετατίθημι (‘to change’, ‘to transpose’, ‘to place differently’), but he also uses other verbs, such as ἀλλάττω (‘to change’, ‘to alter’) and other compound verbs with μετα-, including μετακινέω (‘to change’, ‘to change places’), μεταπίπτω (‘to undergo a change’) and μεταρρυθμίζω (‘to change the form’).

⁴ The standard work on Dionysius’ critical methods is that of Bonner (1939), who has shown that Dionysius’ use of these methods became increasingly sophisticated in the course of his career. Although Bonner points to some interesting cases of the rewriting method, he does not give a systematic analysis of Dionysius’ use of metathesis. A detailed study is lacking, although many scholars have observed the importance of the metathesis procedure in Dionysius’ rhetorical works. See Rhys Roberts (1901) 11-12, Rhys Roberts (1910) 30-31, Grube (1965) 196 and 224, Damon (1991) 50-52, Classen (1994) 338-347, Bottai (1999b) 141-146, Spina (1999), 125-127, and Pernot (2000) 182. On metathesis in the rhetorical tradition, see Spina (2004) and Grimaldi (2004), who quotes a number of examples from ‘Demetrius’, Dionysius and Hermogenes.

⁵ A modern example of the method of metathesis can be found in Denniston (1952) 7, who intends to prove the power of the first sentence of Herodotus’ *Histories* by changing the order of the first five words: ‘Put the first five words in any other order, and the thing is ruined.’ The formulation of this analysis, which clearly echoes the story about the opening words of Plato’s *Republic* (see below), resembles the conclusions that Dionysius derives from rewriting Homer or Herodotus in order to prove

In the preceding chapters of this study, I have examined Dionysius' ideas on language and the integration of theories from different language disciplines that is characteristic of his rhetorical works. In this chapter, I will not deal with explicit theories on language; but the method of metathesis is a linguistic method, which is closely related to Dionysius' theories on style, syntax and composition. We have already encountered one example of metathesis in the discussion of Dionysius' views on natural style (see section 5.2). We will now more closely examine the rewriting method, which forms an integral part of Dionysius' linguistic knowledge.

Dionysius' use of metathesis seems to belong to a tradition of ancient 'language experiments'. Early examples of the rewriting of texts can be found in Plato and Aristotle. An interesting case is Socrates' criticism of the 'Midas epigram' in Plato's *Phaedrus*.⁶ In that passage, Socrates states that a rearrangement of the verses of Midas' poem would not affect its quality, which proves that it is a bad poem. Although Plato does not use the word *metathesis*, it is clear that Socrates is thinking of rearrangement as a test of the quality of a text. The idea is that it would be impossible to change the order of the elements of a good poem or a good speech.⁷ Another early example of the rewriting of texts is Socrates' metathesis of the opening of the *Iliad* into prose, which shows how Homer would have spoken himself, if he had not impersonated Chryses.⁸ Dionysius himself refers to the famous story about the writing-tablet on which Plato wrote down various arrangements of the opening words of the *Republic*.⁹ In Aristotle, we find the first instances of *metathesis* as a didactic method, employed to point out the difference between deliberative and epideictic rhetoric, and the difference between loan words and standard terms.¹⁰ Like Dionysius, 'Demetrius' and, less frequently, 'Longinus' and Cicero employ *metathesis* to illustrate the virtues or faults of a text.¹¹ There is also an interesting connection between the critical method of metathesis and the preliminary rewriting exercises that were part of the educational system (see section 7.3.2).

the quality of their texts: compare, e.g., *Comp.* 4.17,6-14 (section 7.2). Dover (1997) also applies the method of metathesis in his analyses of prose style.

⁶ Plato, *Phdr.* 264d.

⁷ On this passage and the Platonic notion of 'organic composition', see Sicking (1963) 225-242, Heath (1989) 12-27, Armstrong (1995) 222 n. 32, and Ford (2002) 240-244.

⁸ Plato, *Rep.* 392ff. On this passage, see Ferrari (1989), 92-148 and Spina (1994) 173-179.

⁹ *Comp.* 25.133,7-13. On this story, see Spina (1999) 111-115.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Rh.* 1367b-1368a; *Po.* 1458b15-1459a4.

¹¹ Janko (2000) 227 n. 2 lists all the instances of metathesis in 'Demetrius', *On Style*. See also Damon (1991) 52 n. 100. 'Longinus' employs metathesis e.g. in *Subl.* 39.4 and 40.2-3 (where the procedure is left to the reader). Cicero uses the same method in *Orator* 81, 214-215 and 232-233. Similar to the rhetoricians' method of metathesis is the technique of *μετάληψις* (paraphrasing) that is employed by the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus: see Sluiter (1990) 111-117.

Special attention should be paid to the so-called *kritikoi* who appear in Philodemus' *On Poems* (see section 1.5). The possibility or impossibility of *metathesis* played an important role in the exciting debate between Philodemus and his opponents (the *kritikoi*) on the criteria for good poetry.¹² The *kritikoi* used *metathesis* to prove that the quality of poetry does not depend on content or words, but only on word order and the sound that 'supervenes' upon it.¹³ The reasoning of these critics seems to have been that if the composition of a verse is changed, τὸ ἴδιον (the distinguishing feature) of poetry, that is the euphony that supervenes on the composition, will be lost, although the meaning and the words have not changed.¹⁴ Philodemus, however, objected that if the composition is altered, the meaning of a verse will change as well.¹⁵

In this chapter, I will focus on the use of metathesis by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. I will argue that, in the rhetorical works of this author, metathesis is a very useful and versatile method, which he applies in order to point out the virtues, faults or particularities of certain original texts. Metathesis enables Dionysius *and* his readers to compare such an original text with a new formulation of the same thought. Therefore, it is an important didactic instrument for Dionysius, whose aim it is to teach his audience to write in a clear and pleasing style.

7.2. Metathesis in Philodemus' *On Poems* and in Dionysius' *On Composition*

While modern scholars have paid due attention to the views of Philodemus and his opponents on metathesis, they seem to underestimate the usefulness of Dionysius' language experiments. Although Bonner has already shown how important Dionysius' rewritings are with regard to his critical method, these language experiments have been the target of criticism in more recent publications.¹⁶ When discussing Dionysius'

¹² On the discussion between Philodemus and his opponents about the possibility or impossibility of metathesis, see Armstrong (1995) and Oberhelman & Armstrong (1995).

¹³ Cf. Janko (2000) 226-227.

¹⁴ Cf. Porter (1995a) 88. In an ironical context, Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.53-62 turns things around by employing metathesis to prove the *irrelevance*, instead of the power, of composition: see Freudenburg (1993) 146-147 and Oberhelman & Armstrong (1995) 242-244. For τὸ ἴδιον, see e.g. Philodemus, *On Poems* 1 fr. 31 Janko.

¹⁵ See Sbordone (1983) 36 and Janko (2000) 217 n. 7 and 227 n. 2.

¹⁶ Bonner (1939), 92-93: 'It has already been observed that the method of recasting an author's remark in order to bring home a criticism is among the most satisfactory methods of critical exposition, and one which calls for most exertion on the part of the critic.' Apart from Greenberg (1958), who thinks that the *kritikoi* in Philodemus were more successful in their application of metathesis than Dionysius, other scholars have criticized Dionysius' method as well. Gabba (1991) 66 remarks that Dionysius' 'stylistic criticism of Thucydides brings him to the point of *daring* [my italicisation, CCdJ] to rewrite the text of Thucydides in a fuller and more normal style'. With regard to Dionysius' recasting of Thucydides 3.81ff., Usher (1974) 458 remarks that '[s]ome modern students might prefer Dionysius's

method of metathesis, modern scholars usually refer to an article by Greenberg (1958), who treated ‘metathesis as an instrument in the criticism of poetry’. Greenberg holds the view that the *kritikoi* who are cited by Philodemus were much more successful in their application of metathesis than Dionysius. He draws this conclusion after having discussed only one instance of this method from Dionysius’ works, namely the rewriting of some verses from the *Iliad* in *Comp.* 4:¹⁷

Homer, *Iliad* 12.433-435:

ἀλλ’ ἔχεν ὥστε τάλαντα γυνὴ χερνῆτις
ἀληθής,
ἢ τε σταθμὸν ἔχουσα καὶ εἴριον ἀμφὶς
ἀνέλκει
ἰσάζουσ’, ἵνα παισὶν ἀεικέα μισθὸν
ἄροιτο.

‘Firmly they stayed like the scales in the
hands of a labouring woman
Carefully holding the balancing arm and
weighing the wool
Poising it level, to earn for her children a
beggarly pittance.’

Homer, *Iliad* 13.392-393:

ὡς ὁ πρόσθ’ ἵππων καὶ δίφρου κεῖτο
τανυσθεῖς,
βεβρυχῶς, κόνιος δεδραγμένος
αἵματοέσσης.

‘So there outstretched was he lying, his
steeds and his chariot before,
Groaning, convulsively clutching the dust
that was red with his gore.’

Dionysius’ metathesis:

ἀλλ’ ἔχεν ὥστε γυνὴ χερνῆτις τάλαντ’
ἀληθής,
ἢ τις εἴριον ἀμφὶ καὶ σταθμὸν ἔχουσ’
ἀνέλκει
ἰσάζουσ’, ἵν’ ἀεικέα παισὶν ἄροιτο μισθόν.

‘They stayed firmly like the scales in the
labouring woman’s hands
As she carefully held the balancing arm aloft
and weighed the wool,
Level-poised, that her children might a
beggarly pittance receive.’

Dionysius’ metathesis:

ὡς ὁ πρόσθ’ ἵππων καὶ δίφρου κεῖτο
τανυσθεῖς,
αἵματοέσσης κόνιος δεδραγμένος,
βεβρυχῶς.

‘So there outstretched was he lying, his steeds
and his chariot before,
At the dust that was red with his gore
clutching convulsively, groaning.’

In order to prove the power of composition, Dionysius changes not only the word order, but also the metre of the Homeric verses. He changes the dactylic hexameters from *Iliad* 12 into so-called ‘prosodiacs’, which Dionysius compares to the ‘Priapean’ or ‘ithyphallic’ lines of Euphorion. The hexameters from *Iliad* 13 he rewrites in ‘Ionic tetrameters’, which he compares to the effeminate lines of the Hellenistic poet Sotades. In linking specific metres with a specific ethos, Dionysius is in line with

version, but if they were to do so they would be seen to share his incomplete understanding of Thucydides’s view of history.’

¹⁷ *Comp.* 4.15,3-16,6; *Comp.* 4.16,7-18,3. On this metathesis, see also Bottai (1999b) 143-145.

other ancient critics.¹⁸ He concludes that ‘when the choice of words remains unchanged and only the arrangement is altered, the rhythm and the metre is changed, and with it the structure, the complexion, the character, the feeling and the general effectiveness of the lines.’¹⁹ Greenberg opposes this technique of rewriting to the metathesis practiced by the critics who appear in Philodemus’ *On Poems*. He points to a fragment of this work that Janko (2000) has attributed to the critic Heracleodorus. In this fragment, the importance of word order (and the supervening sound) is proven by a rearrangement (*metathesis*) of *Iliad* 16.112-114, which preserves the dactylic hexameter of the original:²⁰

Homer, *Iliad* 16.112-114:

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’
ἔχουσαι,
ὅπως δὴ πρῶτον πῦρ ἔμπεσε νηυσὶν
Ἀχαιῶν.
Ἔκτωρ Αἴαντος δόρυ μείλινον ἄγχι
παραστάς
πληῆξ’ ...

Heracleodorus’ metathesis:²¹

ἔσπετε Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματα νῦν μοι
ἔχουσαι
ὅπως πρῶτον δὴ νηυσὶν πῦρ ἔμπεσ’
Ἀχαιῶν
Αἴαντος δόρυ μείλινον Ἔκτωρ <ἄγχι
παραστάς>

¹⁸ Cf. the ‘effeminate’ rhythm that, according to ‘Demetrius’, *Eloc.* 189 characterises the Sotadean metathesis of a Homeric verse.

¹⁹ *Comp.* 4.17,6-14: ἐδυνάμην δ’ ἂν ἔτι πολλὰς ιδέας μέτρων καὶ διαφόρους εἰς τὸν ἠρωϊκὸν ἐμπιπτούσας στίχον ἐπιδεικνύναι, τὸ δ’ αὐτὸ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὀλίγου δεῖν πᾶσι συμβεβηκὸς μέτροις τε καὶ ῥυθμοῖς ἀποφαίνειν, ὥστε τῆς μὲν ἐκλογῆς τῶν ὀνομάτων τῆς αὐτῆς μενούσης, τῆς δὲ συνθέσεως μόνης μεταπεσοῦσης τὰ τε μέτρα μεταρρυθμίζεσθαι καὶ συµμεταπίπτειν αὐτοῖς τὰ σχήματα, τὰ χρώματα, τὰ ἦθη, τὰ πάθη, τὴν ὅλην τῶν ποιημάτων ἀξίωσιν. ‘I could illustrate many further different types of metre, all falling under the category of the heroic line, and showing that the same thing is true of almost all the other metres and rhythms — that when the choice of words remains unchanged and only the arrangement is altered, the rhythm and the metre is changed, and with it the structure, the complexion, the character, the feeling and the general effectiveness of the lines.’ Isocrates, *Evagoras* 11 already refers to the possibility of metathesis as an instrument to prove the power of metre: ἦν γὰρ τις τῶν ποιημάτων τῶν εὐδοκιμούντων τὰ μὲν ὀνόματα καὶ τὰς διανοίας καταλίπη, τὸ δὲ μέτρον διαλύσῃ, φανήσεται πολὺ κατὰδεέστερα τῆς δόξης ἧς νῦν ἔχομεν περὶ αὐτῶν. ‘... if you destroy the metre of the most popular poetry, leaving words and ideas as they are, the poems will appear much inferior to their present renown.’ (Translation Grube [1965] 43.)

²⁰ Philodemus, *On Poems* 1 fr. 39 Janko (Heracleodorus fr. 39 Janko). The translations are mine, but inspired by Murray (1957) and Janko (2000). Cf. Greenberg (1958) 264-265 and Janko (2000) 226-227. In his review of Janko’s edition of Philodemus’ *On Poems* 1, Sider (2002) wrongly attributes the metathesis of *Il.* 16.112-114 (*On Poems* 1 fr. 39 Janko) to Philodemus himself. Philodemus, however, objected that metathesis is impossible, because any change in the composition of a verse will also alter its meaning.

²¹ Because Heracleodorus merely changes the word order of Homer’s lines, there is no uncertainty about the exact words that are to be read in the papyrus text. For this reason, I leave out the critical signs of the papyrus edition, for which I refer to Janko (2000) 226.

<p>‘Tell me now, Muses, who have dwellings on Olympus, how first fire was flung upon the ships of the Achaean. Hector came near to Ajax and smote his ashen spear (...).’</p>	<p>‘Tell, Muses, who have dwellings on Olympus, me how first upon the ships of the Achaeans fire was flung. Near to Ajax came Hector and smote his ashen spear (...).’</p>
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We should observe, though, that Heracleodorus’ hexameters contain serious errors. The normal caesura (the *penthemimeral* caesura after the fifth verse-element or the *trochaic caesura* after the first short of the sixth verse-element) is lacking in lines one and three.²² Of Homer’s hexameters without caesura, most have word-end after the fourth marked element, which Heracleodorus’ verses do not have either.²³ Besides, the distribution of information is very strange. After he has compared the use of metathesis by Dionysius, who changes the metre of the original, and the *kritikoi*, who preserve dactylic hexameters (deficient as they may be), Greenberg draws the following conclusion:²⁴ ‘Comparison of relevant passages from Philodemus’ treatise shows that the device of metathesis has not been employed with full rigor by Dionysius, that metathesis was employed more often by ancient critics than might be supposed from Dionysius’ account, and that these critics derived conclusions from the device which were more sweeping than those of Dionysius.’²⁵

We could wonder, however, whether such a conclusion, based on one instance of Dionysian metathesis, is justified. First, Greenberg pays no attention to Dionysius’ many metatheses of prose, which fall outside the scope of his article.²⁶ Second, he seems to ignore that Dionysius’ language experiments have a much wider application than those of the *kritikoi* who are discussed by Philodemus. I do not agree with Greenberg that the conclusions that the *kritikoi* derived from the method of metathesis were in general more ‘sweeping’ than those of Dionysius.²⁷ For, as I intend to point

²² Cf. Van Raalte (1986) 70-83 and Sicking (1993) 75-78.

²³ Cf. Van Raalte (1986) 81-82.

²⁴ Greenberg (1958) 262.

²⁵ In fact, Dionysius nowhere says that other critics did *not* employ the method of metathesis. Besides, when Greenberg (1958) 265-6 states that ‘Dionysius is demonstrating in effect the efficacy of the meter rather than the primacy of *synthesis*’, he seems to forget that for Dionysius σύνθεσις is far more than word order alone, and that rhythm is in fact one of the many aspects that comprise the Dionysian concept of σύνθεσις (see section 1.6). Dionysius does not say that he is discussing the importance of word order, but of composition in general. Therefore, it seems to me that his metathesis of the verses from *Iliad* 12 and 13 is not as unsatisfactory as Greenberg thinks.

²⁶ Greenberg (1958) 265 n. 11 correctly states that ‘[u]nlike poetic metathesis, not all prosaic metatheses are bad.’ In other words, whereas the metathesis of a line of poetry is always presented as inferior to the original, the rewriting of a prose text can be presented as surpassing the original in quality. See section 7. 3.1.

²⁷ Greenberg (1958) 262.

out, Dionysius' rearrangements have many more purposes than just to establish the general importance of composition. His method of metathesis is a versatile instrument, which he uses to point to specific merits, defects or particularities of classical texts, in order to teach his readers how to write convincingly.

7.3. The versatility of Dionysius' method of metathesis

When discussing Dionysius' language experiments, it seems useful to distinguish between three categories of metatheses.²⁸ First, the rewritings that claim to surpass the quality of the original text, by the correction of certain alleged faults (section 7.3.1). Second, the rewritings that are inferior to the original, thus proving the virtues of that original text (section 7.3.2). Third, the rewritings that are of equal value to the original text, illustrating alternative compositions that are neither better nor worse than the original (section 7.3.3). I will discuss a few examples of each category.

7.3.1. Metatheses correcting alleged faults of the original

The majority of Dionysius' rearrangements belong to the first group: they bring out stylistic defects in the original. In his early works, Dionysius uses this first type of metathesis exclusively, and it remains the most common technique in his later works, such as the *Second Letter to Ammaeus*, in which Dionysius illustrates his criticism of the style of Thucydides. In most cases, the rewritings of this type prove the artificiality and 'unnaturalness' of a certain passage: the original texts are criticised because they contain hyperbaton, anacolutha, obscure words, complex constructions, long-windedness, redundancy, periphrases, grammatical irregularities, unclear figures, or 'theatrical' parallelisms. Dionysius removes these defects and rewrites the passage in everyday language, or, as we have already seen, in the style of 'those who construct the expression in conformity with common usage' (see sections 4.4.2 and 5.2).²⁹

In *On Demosthenes* 18-19, Dionysius intends to show that the style of Isocrates is not perfect, and contains serious deficiencies, in particular long-windedness by the use of

²⁸ Damon (1991) 51-2, who focuses on the evaluative aspect of the method, seems to make a distinction between only two groups: 'The majority (33) of the rewritten sentences point out stylistic faults in the original by providing simple, unambiguous and otherwise unobjectionable renderings of the same idea. (...) Ten of the metatheses, however, are intended to show that by changing the word arrangement in a passage of good writing one can either produce a different style of equal acceptability, or destroy its effectiveness altogether.' It seems useful, however, to distinguish between the rewritings that are inferior to the original version on the one hand, and the rewritings that are of equal value on the other hand. Hidber (1996) 66 ignores the metatheses that provide alternatives of equal quality.

²⁹ *Amm.* II 11.430,18-20: for the Greek text, see section 4.4.2. Cf. Damon (1991) 52.

repetitions, lack of compactness and the inappropriate use of soft-sounding words.³⁰ The way in which Dionysius introduces his metathesis of a passage from Isocrates' *On the Peace* is characteristic of his application of the rewriting method, in that he explicitly involves the reader in his analysis:³¹

εἰ δὲ ὀρθῶς ἐπιλογίζομαι ταῦτ' ἐγὼ καὶ ἔστιν ἐν ταύταις ταῖς ἀρεταῖς ἐνδεέστερος ὁ ἀνὴρ, πάρεστι τῷ βουλομένῳ σκοπεῖν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρτίως παρατεθείσης λέξεως ποιουμένῳ τὴν ἐξέτασιν.

'Whether my argument is sound and Isocrates is inferior in these qualities, any reader can judge for himself by examining the passage which I have just quoted.'

Dionysius then rewrites a sentence of Isocrates' *On the Peace*, 'making one period out of two': he simplifies the original, in order to make it 'more compact' (συντομωτέραν) and 'more elegant' (χαριεστέραν):³²

Isocrates, *On the Peace* 41:

Τίς γὰρ ἂν ἄλλοθεν ἐπελθὼν καὶ μὴ συνδιεφθαρμένος ἡμῖν ἄλλ' ἐξαίφνης ἐπιστὰς τοῖς γιγνομένοις οὐκ ἂν μαίνεσθαι καὶ παραφρονεῖν ἡμᾶς νομίσειεν; οἱ φιλοτιμούμεθα μὲν ἐπὶ τοῖς τῶν προγόνων ἔργοις καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐκ τῶν τότε πραχθέντων ἐγκωμιάζειν ἀξιούμεν, οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν ἐκείνοις πράττομεν ἀλλὰ πᾶν τὸναντίον.

'What stranger, coming from abroad and suddenly finding himself embroiled in our affairs before having the time to become corrupted by our depravity, would not think us insane and beside ourselves, when we glory in the deeds of our ancestors, and think it right to sing the city's praises by recounting the achievements of their day, and yet act in no way like them but do exactly the opposite?'

Dionysius' metathesis:

τίς γὰρ ἂν ἄλλοθεν ἐπελθὼν οὐκ ἂν μαίνεσθαι νομίσειεν ἡμᾶς, οἱ φιλοτιμούμεθα μὲν ἐπὶ τοῖς τῶν προγόνων ἔργοις, οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν ἐκείνοις πράττομεν;

'What stranger from abroad would not think us insane, when we glory in the deeds of our ancestors, but act in no way like them?'

³⁰ *Dem.* 18.166,5-8.

³¹ *Dem.* 19.167,14-17.

³² *Dem.* 19.167,14-168,12. On this passage, see also Bonner (1939) 69-70.

In this case, Dionysius has merely shortened the original passage, leaving out all repetitions and ornaments. He objects to the presence of *παραπληρώματα* ('filler words') in Isocrates' text, 'which are unnecessary and make the expression more inflated and the period more ornate'.³³ All amplifications in Isocrates' sentence, three of which start with *καί* (namely *καί μὴ ... γιγνομένοις, καὶ παραφρονεῖν* and *καὶ τὴν πόλιν ... ἀξιοῦμεν*), one with *ἀλλά* (namely *ἀλλὰ πᾶν τούναντίον*), have been removed. He has, however, also changed the word order of *ἡμᾶς νομίσειεν* into *νομίσειεν ἡμᾶς*, probably in order to avoid the ugly hiatus of *μαίνεσθαι ἡμᾶς*. In the subsequent passage, Dionysius goes on rewriting Isocrates, not only shortening the original, but also changing certain words and simplifying periphrastic formulas. Thus, in *On the Peace* 42 (below) he rewrites *τὰς πόλεις τὰς Ἑλληνίδας* ('the Greek cities') as *τὴν Ἑλλάδα* ('Greece') and in *On the Peace* 43 he changes *τῶν κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον γενομένων* ('the men who lived in that time') into *τῶν προγόνων* ('our ancestors'):³⁴

Isocrates, *On the Peace* 42:

κάκεῖνοι μὲν ἐλευθεροῦντες τὰς πόλεις
τὰς Ἑλληνίδας καὶ βοηθοῦντες αὐταῖς
τῆς ἡγεμονίας ἠξιώθησαν, ἡμεῖς δὲ [καὶ]
καταδουλούμενοι καὶ τάναντία τοῖς τότε
πρόττοντες ἀγανακτοῦμεν, εἰ μὴ τὴν
αὐτὴν τιμὴν ἐκείνοις ἔξομεν.

'They liberated the cities of Greece and came to their aid, and so earned the right to be their leaders, while we try to enslave them, doing the opposite of what they did at that time, and then feel aggrieved when we are not honoured to be as they were.'

Isocrates, *On the Peace* 43:

οἱ τοσοῦτον ἀπολελείμεθα καὶ ταῖς
διανοίαις καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν κατ' ἐκεῖνον
τὸν χρόνον γενομένων, ὅσον οἱ μὲν ὑπὲρ
τῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐλευθερίας τὴν τε
πατρίδα τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἐκλιπεῖν ἐτόλμησαν
καὶ μαχόμενοι καὶ ναυμαχοῦντες τοὺς
βαρβάρους ἐνίκησαν, ...

Dionysius' metathesis:

κάκεῖνοι μὲν ἐλευθεροῦντες τὴν Ἑλλάδα
καὶ σῶζοντες ἐπὶ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν προῆλθον,
ἡμεῖς δὲ καταδουλούμενοι καὶ διολλύντες
ἀγανακτοῦμεν, εἰ μὴ τῶν ἴσων τευξόμεθα.

'They attained to the leadership of Greece by freeing her and saving her, while we, who are trying to enslave and destroy her, are aggrieved that we are not to be accorded equal honour.'

Dionysius' metathesis:

οἱ τοσοῦτῳ χείρους ἐσμὲν τῶν προγόνων,
ὅσον οἱ μὲν ὑπὲρ τοῦ σῶσαι τοὺς Ἑλληνας
τὴν τε πατρίδα τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἐξέλιπον καὶ
μαχόμενοι πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους ἐνίκησαν,
...

³³ *Dem.* 19.168,8-12: *παραπληρώματα* ... οὐκ ἀναγκαίαν ἔχοντα χώραν, ἃ ποιεῖ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν ἀμετροτέραν, τὴν δὲ περίοδον κομψοτέραν. On the concept of *παραπληρώματα*, see section 4.3.2.

³⁴ *Dem.* 19.168,12-169,11.

‘We who fall so far short of the men of those times in both our deeds and our aspirations that, whereas they had the courage to leave their country in order to save Greece, and fighting on both land and sea conquered the barbarians, (...)’

‘We who are so much worse than our ancestors that, whereas they, in order to save the Greeks, abandoned their country, and fighting the barbarians conquered them, (...)’

Dionysius seems to object in particular to rhetorical pleonasm; so he interprets the expression τάναντία τοῖς τότε πράττοντες (‘doing the opposite of what they did at that time’) as διολλύντες (‘destroying’), thus clarifying the antithesis with βοηθοῦντες (or σφάζοντες, which he uses instead of βοηθοῦντες, possibly in order to avoid assonance of βοηθοῦντες with ἐλευθεροῦντες). He also changes μαχόμενοι καὶ ναυμαχοῦντες (‘fighting on both land and sea’) into the simple μαχόμενοι (‘fighting’). Besides, Dionysius rewrites some of Isocrates’ synthetic expressions in an analytical way, which seems to be characteristic of later Greek. So he resolves the verb ἤξιώθησαν into a preposition and a verb, namely ἐπὶ ... προῆλθον, and he changes the perfect ἀπολελείμεθα into χεῖρους ἐσμέν, leaving out the pleonastic καὶ ταῖς διανοίαις καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις (‘in both our deeds and our aspirations’).³⁵ Dionysius also changes the arrangement of clauses: in his version, πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους belongs to μαχόμενοι, whereas Isocrates’ τοὺς βαρβάρους is the object of ἐνίκησαν. This change is probably suggested by the disappearance of καὶ ναυμαχοῦντες. In many cases we may disagree with Dionysius, for some of his changes do not preserve the exact meaning of the original. ‘The cities of Greece’, for example, are not identical with ‘Greece’, and Isocrates’ addition of ναυμαχοῦντες (‘even on the sea’) is surely not a useless one.

A constant theme in Dionysius’ discussions of the passages that he tries to correct is the idea that one should avoid obscurity. Lucidity (σαφήνεια) and the use of standard, ordinary words (κύρια ὀνόματα) are qualities that Dionysius holds in constant regard, from his early essays (especially *On Lysias*) onwards.³⁶ The view that poetic language and periphrasis should be avoided seems to be central to the metatheses of the first type. Apart from Isocrates, Thucydides is an important target for Dionysius’ criticism of obscure language. In his treatise *On Thucydides*, he constantly criticises the style of Thucydides, some of whose passages ‘cannot be understood without a linguistic explanation’ (see section 4.4.1).³⁷ Dionysius illustrates his remarks by offering a clearer version of Thuc. 3.82, removing strange words, periphrases and figures of

³⁵ See Sicking & Stork (1996) 121 on the disappearance of the synthetic perfect in later Greek.

³⁶ See *Lys.* 2-4.

³⁷ *Thuc.* 51.410,15-17.

speech, ‘which have the appearance of solecisms’ (see also section 5.2).³⁸ We have seen that Dionysius puts forwards similar objections to Thucydides’ style in the *Second Letter to Ammaeus*, where he focuses on grammatical irregularities in the use of the parts of speech (section 4.4.2).³⁹ Again, the rewriting of several passages from Thucydides serves to illustrate the ways in which one could avoid obscurity and artificiality.

7.3.2. Metatheses bringing out virtues of the original

The second type of metathesis, which is intended to bring out the virtues of an original text, is only found in *On Composition*.⁴⁰ We have already observed that the purpose of Dionysius’ rewriting of the lines from *Iliad* 12 and 13 in *Comp.* 4 (section 7.2) was to prove that composition in general is more important and powerful than the selection of words. Apart from establishing the primacy of σύνθεσις in general, however, the second type of metathesis can also point to *particular* virtues of certain texts. The virtues that Dionysius analyses in this way are (1) the euphonious effects of certain letters or combinations of letters, (2) the effects of certain rhythms, and (3) the proper arrangement and length of certain clauses. I will give one example of each of these subtypes.

In his discussion of μετασκευή, the third ἔργον of composition (see section 4.3.1), Dionysius shows that the addition of one letter can make a composition more charming (or, rather, that the omission of one letter can make it less euphonious). Here, as in other cases (see below) Dionysius presents his own metathesis as the standard version, from which the original text deviates. At the beginning of his *On the Crown*, Demosthenes has written τουτονὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα instead of τοῦτον τὸν ἀγῶνα, which would be the standard expression.⁴¹

Demosthenes, *On the Crown* 1:
εἰς τουτονὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα
‘to the trial here’

Dionysius’ metathesis:
εἰς τοῦτον τὸν ἀγῶνα
‘to this trial’

³⁸ *Thuc.* 28-33. See esp. *Thuc.* 29.373,23: τὰς τῶν σχηματισμῶν πλοκάς σολοικοφανεῖς, ‘combinations of constructions that make the impression of solecism’. *Thuc.* 33.381,6-7: σχήματα, ὧν ἔνια σολοικισμῶν παρέχεται δόξαν, ‘figures, some of which provide the appearance of solecisms’.

³⁹ *Amm.* II 8-15.

⁴⁰ Bonner (1939) 76-7 remarks that in *Comp.* ‘the method of recasting is used in a novel and most convincing manner.’

⁴¹ *Comp.* 6.29,19-30,1. Dionysius classifies τοῦτον as a pronoun: see sections 3.6.3 and 5.3.6.

Although Dionysius does not explain why Demosthenes' version is more harmonious than his metathesis, we can easily supply his argument from other chapters of *On Composition*: according to Dionysius, the combination of the semivowel (ἡμίφωνον) ν and the voiceless (ἄφωνον) τ produces a dissonant effect.⁴² Therefore, the addition of the ι, between the ν and the τ, has made the composition more euphonious.⁴³ When applying the three activities (ἔργα) of composition to the level of clauses, Dionysius shows that, in a chapter of his speech *Against Leptines*, Demosthenes has made his composition charming, by paying more attention to the rhythmical quality (εὐρυθμία) than to the explicitness (ἀκριβεία) of his clauses:⁴⁴

Demosthenes, *Against Leptines* 2:

ἐγὼ δ' ὅτι μὲν τινῶν κατηγοροῦντα πάντας
ἀφαιρεῖσθαι τὴν ἀτέλειαν τῶν ἀδίκων
ἔστί, ἐάσω.

'As for me, the fact that it is a case of
injustice that, when someone is accusing
certain individuals, he tries to deprive all of
exemption, I shall pass over.'

Dionysius' metathesis:

ἐγὼ δ' ὅτι μὲν τινῶν κατηγοροῦντα ὡς οὐκ
ἐπιτηδείων ἔχειν τὴν ἀτέλειαν πάντας
ἀφαιρεῖσθαι καὶ τοὺς δικαίως αὐτῆς
τυχόντας τῶν ἀδίκων ἔστί, ἐάσω.

'As for me, the fact that it is a case of
injustice that, when someone is accusing
certain individuals of being unfit for
exemption, he tries to deprive all of
exemption, even those who receive it by
right, I shall pass over.'

Although Dionysius tells us that the rhythm makes the original text preferable to the rewritten version, he is not explicit about the precise character of that rhythm. It is interesting, however, that he describes his own metathesis as the αὐτοτελή (complete, self-sufficient) version: here we have his recurring idea of a basic, natural form of language, in which each sentence is complete in itself (see section 5.2).⁴⁵ Authors can deviate from this basic form by shortening or expanding their clauses. The term αὐτοτελής (having its own τέλος, *ending*) points to the idea that a clause embraces a

⁴² Cf. *Comp.* 22.104,14-105,13 where Dionysius discusses the dissonance of the combinations -ν θ- and -ν τ- in Pindar's ὀμφάλον θυόεντα and πανδαίδαλόν τ' εὐκλέ' ἀγοράν: with regard to the latter case, Dionysius actually says that the removal of the τ (which would also involve a change of metre) would make the composition more euphonious. See Vaahtera (1997) 593, where all the combinations of a ἡμίφωνον and an ἄφωνον in the texts discussed by Dionysius are counted. According to Vaahtera, the texts of Isocrates that are quoted by Dionysius contain 41 combinations of words ending on -ν and words beginning with τ-, which is far more than the passages by other authors. Isocrates, however, belongs to the smooth composition type, so in fact he should have fewest of these combinations. This fact seems to support Vaahtera's conclusion that Dionysius' theory is not fully consistent with the reality of the texts that he used.

⁴³ Dionysius may also object to the stamping repetition 'TON TON'.

⁴⁴ *Comp.* 9.35,7-16.

⁴⁵ On Dionysius' views on natural configuration of language, see also Schenkeveld (1983) 90-92.

complete thought and is, therefore, independent.⁴⁶ Thus, Dionysius assumes that we can isolate a basic, grammatically complete sense-structure, on which supplements can be added or from which items can be removed. The remarkable consequence of this view is that Dionysius describes Demosthenes' original sentence as the *adaptation* of his own version: according to Dionysius, the two first clauses have been 'shortened' (μεμείωται) by Demosthenes. This kind of what we would regard as turning things around appears in many of his discussions of metathesis; Dionysius often presents his own rearrangement as the natural or standard version, from which the original text deviates (see also section 5.2).

Earlier in the discussion of clause composition (*Comp.* 7-9), Dionysius' metathesis of a sentence from Thucydides proves the importance of the proper arrangement of κῶλα (clauses):⁴⁷

Thucydides 3.57.4:

ὕμεις τε ὧ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἡ μόνη ἐλπὶς,
δέδιμεν, μὴ οὐ βέβαιοι ᾗτε.

'And we fear, men of Sparta, lest you, our
only hope, may fail in resolution.'

Dionysius' metathesis:

ὕμεις τε, ὧ Λακεδαιμόνιοι, δέδιμεν μὴ οὐ
βέβαιοι ᾗτε, ἡ μόνη ἐλπὶς.

'And we fear, men of Sparta, lest you may fail
in resolution, that are our only hope.'

In the metathesis of this paragraph from the speech of the Plataeans, the shift of the words ἡ μόνη ἐλπὶς removes the charm (χάρις) and feeling (πάθος) of the original.⁴⁸ We could add that Dionysius' change does not make the sentence more understandable.⁴⁹

As has been pointed out by Damon, Dionysius is less explicit about the precise nature of the virtues that his metatheses prove than about the defects that he corrects.⁵⁰ I think that there are at least two explanations for this habit: on the one hand, we may

⁴⁶ On the idea that a colon indicates the conclusion of a thought, see 'Demetrius', *Eloc.* 2, with the remarks by Schenkeveld (1964) 23-25 and Innes (1994) 36-53. The word ἀντοτελής was also important for the Stoic philosophers, who introduced the notion of ἀντοτελής διάνοια, 'a complete, independent thought', which is the closest definition of a sentence in ancient linguistics: see Schenkeveld (1999) 184.

⁴⁷ *Comp.* 7.31,5-17. On this case of metathesis, see also Bonner (1939) 76 and Bottai (1999b) 145.

⁴⁸ The original is 'a very felicitously' (χαριέντως) composed sentence, 'full of feeling' (μεστὴ πάθος).

⁴⁹ Dionysius may be thinking that 'you who are our only hope' is logically last as providing the cause for the fear: 'Longinus', *Subl.* 22.2 discusses a hyperbaton in Herodotus 6.11, where the historian is said to have inverted the natural order of words by putting the reason (αἰτία) on the first place.

⁵⁰ Damon (1991) 52: '(...) all Dionysius does is label the various stylistic characters, never putting his finger on that wherein the character lies. (...) Metathesis, then, though an eminently satisfactory means of locating a passage's faults, is not used by Dionysius to explain its virtues in any but the most general terms.'

point to the didactic nature of Dionysius' literary analysis; on the other hand, we should take into account Dionysius' views on the so-called ἄλογος αἴσθησις, the instinctive feeling that enables any person to appreciate and judge a work of art.

First, we should consider the pedagogical character of Dionysius' work *On Composition*, to which the instances of the second type of metathesis are confined (see section 1.3). It is true that in all his treatises, literary criticism is subservient to the actual production of texts: in that sense, all his critical works have an educational purpose. However, the treatise *On Composition* is in particular characterised by a didactic approach. In this work, Dionysius intends to instruct his pupil Rufus Metilius and other young boys who are beginning to take up the study of civil oratory.⁵¹ The person of the addressee and the intended audience in general clearly involve a specific presentation of Dionysius' ideas. This might explain why he uses the second type of metathesis (bringing out virtues of the original text) only in *On Composition*, and not in the works dedicated to his friends and colleagues.⁵² It may be significant that the methodological treatise of 'Demetrius' *On Style*, which clearly has a didactic character, applies the technique of illustrating the quality (rather than the faults) of a text very frequently: this type of metathesis is apparently more appropriate to a practical handbook for students than to literary treatises dedicated to competent 'scholars'.⁵³ The intended audience of *On Composition* might also explain the fact that Dionysius is not always explicit on the virtues that his metatheses bring out: instead of analysing the exact causes of the supreme quality of the original text that he rewrites, Dionysius often invites his readers (or pupils) to draw their own conclusions on the basis of his metathesis. He asks, for example: 'Would the sentence have been composed with the same elegance as in the form in which it was actually written?' (*Comp.* 8.32,21-22). Such repeated didactic questions are absent from the treatises that are addressed to Ammaeus, Pompeius Geminus, and Quintus Aelius Tubero, where Dionysius seems to have in mind an audience of scholars rather than pupils (see section 1.3). The didactic aspect of the rewriting technique in *On Composition* is also indicated by the cases in which Dionysius does not carry out the metathesis, but leaves it to the reader. In *Comp.* 3, for example, Dionysius invites the reader to put the method of metathesis into practice, if he wants to see that the quality of Herodotus' story about 'Gyges and Candaules' is not due to the selection of words, but to the composition:⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Comp.* 1.4,3-5. See section 1.3.

⁵² On the addressees of Dionysius' rhetorical works, see section 1.4. On the intended audience of his works, see section 1.3.

⁵³ On the didactic nature of 'Demetrius', *On Style*, see Schenkeveld (1964) 22. For the use of metathesis in that work, see Damon (1991) 52 n. 100.

⁵⁴ *Comp.* 3.14,16-18.

ὅτι δὲ οὐδὲν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐστὶ σεμνὸν οὐδὲ περιττόν, ὁ βουλόμενος εἴσεται μεταθεῖς οὐδὲν ὅτι μὴ τὴν ἁρμονίαν.

‘That there is no grand or striking word in the present passage, anyone who wishes will discover by changing nothing but the arrangement.’

Evidently, Dionysius supposes that his readers are used to the technique of rewriting texts, and he is even confident that they can employ the method of metathesis themselves.⁵⁵ We can explain this by pointing to the importance of the *paraphrases* in the ‘preliminary training exercises’ (*progymnasmata*) that were part of the educational system of Dionysius’ time.⁵⁶ In his treatise on *progymnasmata*, Theon defines paraphrase as ‘changing the form of expression while keeping the thoughts’.⁵⁷ He distinguishes four types of *paraphrasis*, namely variation in syntax, by addition, by subtraction and by substitution: these are the four categories of change that we also encountered in Dionysius’ discussion of μετασκευή and in Caecilius’ theory of figures (section 4.3.1). Dionysius’ readers were certainly used to the rewriting of texts because of their daily exercises at school. Therefore, he could assume that his audience was familiar with his technique of metathesis.⁵⁸

However, the didactic character of his works does not offer the complete explanation for the fact that Dionysius is almost never explicit about the virtues of the texts that his metatheses prove. The second aspect that has to be taken into account here is the irrational, instinctive criterion (τὸ ἄλογον τῆς διανοίας κριτήριον), which is, besides the rational criterion (τὸ λογικὸν κριτήριον), one of the two faculties by which literature is judged.⁵⁹ According to Dionysius, everyone has an instinctive feeling (ἄλογος αἴσθησις), on which one can rely to judge literature. It seems that Dionysius therefore supposes that the virtues that his metatheses prove are self-evident and do not need a lengthy explanation. In many cases, the rearrangement is directly followed by a rhetorical question, in which Dionysius makes it clear that he expects everyone to agree with him that the original text is better than his own version: ‘When the clauses

⁵⁵ A similar procedure can be found in ‘Longinus’, *Subl.* 40.2-3: a metathesis of Euripides, *HF* 1245 (a verse consisting of simple words), would prove that ‘Euripides is a poet of word arrangement more than of ideas’.

⁵⁶ The *progymnasmata* fell under the teaching of the *rhetor*, but some elementary exercises were already taught by the *grammaticus*. On these preliminary exercises, and the *paraphrasis* in particular, see Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* 1.9.2 and Theon 2.62.10ff. Cf. H.-I. Marrou (1965⁶) 259-264 and 410-411, Bonner (1977) 250-276, Morgan (1998) 198-226, Kennedy (2000), and Murphy (2000) 484-492.

⁵⁷ See Kennedy (2000) 51-52.

⁵⁸ Similarly, the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus supposes that his audience is familiar with his method of μετάληψις (paraphrasing): see Sluiter (1990) 111-117.

⁵⁹ See *Thuc.* 27.371,5-10. Cf. Schenkeveld (1975) 93-107, Goudriaan (1989) 142-54 and Damon (1991) 44-45.

are arranged in this way, does the same charm still remain, or the same feeling? No one would say so.⁶⁰

7.3.3. Metatheses illustrating alternative compositions or particularities

The third type of metathesis produces a text that is neither preferable nor inferior to the original, but offers an alternative that can exist beside the original. This type is only found in Dionysius' later writings. This may be explained by the fact that in *On Composition* and *On Demosthenes* Dionysius develops a theory of different valid composition types (χαρακτῆρες τῆς συνθέσεως or ἁρμονίαι: see section 4.3.2), whereas in his earlier works he uses the theory of antithetical good and bad qualities (ἀρετὰ ἰδέξεως), which sharply distinguish good and bad versions of a text (see section 6.5).⁶¹ The metathesis illustrating alternative compositions seems to be a more original approach than the other two types of rewriting, which I have dealt with before. The use of this metathesis also corresponds to the more aesthetic approach and the generally more detailed analysis that set Dionysius' later works apart from his earlier writings. Within the third type of metathesis, we can distinguish between three subtypes: (1) conversions of the Ionic dialect, (2) metatheses pointing out differences between various styles of composition and (3) metatheses illustrating the poetical character of clauses in a prose text.

First, we can place in this category those cases where Dionysius changes the Ionic of Herodotus into the Attic dialect. According to Usher, Dionysius was forced to do this, because in the Ionic dialect, Herodotus could never be a satisfactory model.⁶² However, there seems to be a second reason why Dionysius converts the dialect of Herodotus. In *Comp.* 3, Dionysius quotes the famous story of 'Gyges and Candaules' in the Attic dialect.⁶³ As he explains himself, Dionysius changes the Ionic into Attic 'in order that no one may imagine that the passage owes its attractiveness to the dialect'.⁶⁴ In other words, Dionysius wants us to believe that the charm of the story is due to the composition, and not to the Ionic dialect. Therefore, he has to show that the

⁶⁰ *Comp.* 7.31,16-17: ἄρ' ἔτι μένει τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἡρμοσμένων τῶν κώλων ἢ αὐτὴ χάρις ἢ τὸ αὐτὸ πάθος; οὐδεὶς ἂν εἴποι.

⁶¹ On the evolution of Dionysius' doctrine, see Bonner (1939) and Lebel (1973).

⁶² Usher (1974) 398-9 n. 1 (on the rewriting of Herodotus 7.8 in *Dem.* 41.220,23-223,4): 'Herodotus was something of an embarrassment to Dionysius (...).' Dionysius did not have the same problem with Homer, because Homer was considered the model of all dialects, including Attic: see Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Homero* 8-13. Cf. Hillgruber (1994) 114ff. For writing prose, Attic was the model, but for poetry the dialect depended on genre requirements. Therefore, Dionysius quotes not only Homer, but also Sappho and Pindar in their own dialect.

⁶³ On the many different rewritings of the story of 'Gyges and Candaules' in the rhetorical tradition, see Spina (1999).

⁶⁴ *Comp.* 3.12,18-13,2: ἵνα δὲ μή τις ὑπολάβῃ τὴν διάλεκτον εἶναι τῆς ἡδονῆς αἰτίαν τῇ λέξει.

passage preserves its pleasing form when rewritten in the Attic dialect. It remains remarkable, however, that it does not seem to bother Dionysius that, together with the dialect, he also changes the sounds of the original text, in spite of the fact that euphony is such an important aspect of σύνθεσις.

In a few cases, Dionysius rewrites a passage in order to show the differences between various composition styles.⁶⁵ The most interesting example of this subtype is his dual metathesis of Herodotus 1.6 in *Comp.* 4. The first rearrangement is in the style of Thucydides, the second is that of Hegesias, the archetype of Asiatic perversity:⁶⁶

<p>Herodotus 1.6:</p> <p>Κροῖσος ἦν Λυδὸς μὲν γένος, παῖς δ' Ἀλυάττου, τύραννος δ' ἔθνῶν τῶν ἐντὸς Ἄλυος ποταμοῦ· ὃς ῥέων ἀπὸ μεσημβρίας μεταξὺ Σύρων τε καὶ Παφλαγόνων ἐξίησι πρὸς βορέαν ἄνεμον εἰς τὸν Εὔξεινον καλούμενον πόντον.</p>	<p>Dionysius' metathesis, the style of Thucydides:</p> <p>Κροῖσος ἦν υἱὸς μὲν Ἀλυάττου, γένος δὲ Λυδός, τύραννος δὲ τῶν ἐντὸς Ἄλυος ποταμοῦ ἔθνῶν· ὃς ἀπὸ μεσημβρίας ῥέων μεταξὺ Σύρων καὶ Παφλαγόνων εἰς τὸν Εὔξεινον καλούμενον πόντον ἐκδίδωσι πρὸς βορέαν ἄνεμον.</p>	<p>Dionysius' metathesis, the style of Hegesias:</p> <p>Ἀλυάττου μὲν υἱὸς ἦν Κροῖσος, γένος δὲ Λυδός, τῶν δ' ἐντὸς Ἄλυος ποταμοῦ τύραννος ἔθνῶν· ὃς ἀπὸ μεσημβρίας ῥέων Σύρων τε καὶ Παφλαγόνων μεταξὺ πρὸς βορέαν ἐξίησιν ἄνεμον ἐς τὸν καλούμενον πόντον Εὔξεινον.</p>
<p>'Croesus was a Lydian by birth and the son of Alyattes. He was king of the nations on this side of the river Halys, which flows from the south between Syria and Paphlagonia and discharges itself into the sea to the north, which is called the Euxine.'</p>	<p>'Croesus was the son of Alyattes, and by birth a Lydian. He was king, on this side of the Halys, over nations; which river from the south flowing between Syria and Paphlagonia runs into the sea which is called the Euxine and issues towards the north.'</p>	<p>'Alyattes' son was Croesus, by birth a Lydian. King over all nations was he, on this side of the river Halys; which river from the south flowing between Syria and Paphlagonia discharges itself to the north, into the Euxine- called sea.'</p>

Dionysius describes the original version as 'leisurely' (ὕπαγωγικόν) and 'history-like' (ιστορικόν), the second as 'straightforward' or 'systematic' (ὀρθόν) and 'forensic' (ἐναγώνιον). The third version, in the style of Hegesias, is 'precious' (μικρόκομψον),

⁶⁵ Apart from the metathesis of Herodotus 1.6 in *Comp.* 4 (below), there is the rewriting of a verse by Pindar in *Comp.* 22.105,2-13, which illustrates the difference between the austere and the smooth composition type by removing the dissonant combination -ν τ-. 'Demetrius', *Eloc.* 296-298 uses this type of metathesis to illustrate the differences between styles that are specific to individual authors, such as Aristippus, Xenophon, Aeschines and Plato.

⁶⁶ *Comp.* 4.18,4-19,18. On this metathesis, see also Bottai (1999b) 145-146.

‘degenerate’ (ἀγεννές) and ‘effeminate’ (μαλθακόν). There is much to say on these rewritings, but I can here only briefly comment on some aspects. The reason why the Thucydidean version is described as ὀρθόν is probably that it has a more systematic way of distributing its information than the original. In ‘outward expansion’, ‘Thucydides’ first deals with Croesus’ family, then his Lydian birth and finally his kingship; likewise, the relative clause flows together with the river Halys, beginning in the south (ἀπὸ μεσημβρίας) and ending in the north (πρὸς βορέαν ἄνεμον). Dionysius has also altered some words.⁶⁷ For example, he has observed that παῖς is more common in Herodotus, whereas Thucydides and Hegesias would rather use υἱός.⁶⁸ In the composition of this version, I think that we can observe some characteristics of the austere σύνθεσις, the composition type to which Thucydides belongs, according to Dionysius (see section 4.3.2).⁶⁹ The displacement of Λυδός breaks the parallelism between Λυδός, παῖς (υἱός) and τύραννος, and creates *anastrophe*. In the Thucydidean version, there are also more clashes of consonants and semivowels at word boundaries, such as μεσημβρίας ῥέων and ῥέων μεταξὺ. Next, the postponement of ἔθνῶν creates a hiatus between ποταμοῦ and ἔθνῶν. Hiatus and clashes of consonants or semivowels are typical of the austere composition as Dionysius conceives it.⁷⁰ Further, instead of eight, there are now twelve words between the relative pronoun ὃς and the verb ἐκδίδωσι (ἐξίησι), a hyperbaton which also appears to suit the σύνθεσις ἀύστηρά.⁷¹

Finally, the removal of the word τε from τε καί might be explained by the fact that the austere composition contains fewer σύνδεσμοι than the smooth composition.⁷² As I have pointed out before (section 4.3.2), Dionysius’ austere composition, which is characterised as ὀλιγοσύνδεσμος (‘containing few connectives’), might be related to Aristotle’s λέξις ἀγωνιστική (the style of oral speech), which employs asyndeton. Although the removal of τε from τε καί in the first metathesis of Herodotus 1.6 does of course not produce asyndeton, Dionysius may have been guided by the idea that his

⁶⁷ In fact, Dionysius had said that he would not change the words, but only the composition: μενόντων μὲν τῶν ὀνομάτων, ἀλλαττομένης δὲ τῆς συνθέσεως (*Comp.* 4.18,5-6).

⁶⁸ See LSJ s.v. υἱός. The change of παῖς into υἱός may also be explained by the fact that the latter word is more familiar in later Greek: ‘Demetrius’, *Eloc.* 11 (on period-theory) makes the same change in his metathesis of Demosthenes, *Lept.* 1.

⁶⁹ See *Comp.* 22.98,11 and *Comp.* 22.106,15-111,17. On the three composition types (σύνθεσις ἀύστηρά, γλαφυρά and εὐκράτος or κοινή), which should not be confused with the three ‘styles’, see further Pohl (1968) and Donadi (1986) 42-63.

⁷⁰ See *Dem.* 38.210,14ff. and *Comp.* 22.96,13-14: ἀπέχειν τε ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων τὰ μόρια διαστάσεις ἀξιολόγους αἰσθητοῖς χρόνοις διειργόμενα. ‘The parts shall be at considerable distances from one another, separated by perceptible intervals.’

⁷¹ The austere composition type is in many cases ὑπεροπτική τῆς ἀκολουθίας (‘neglecting grammatical sequence’): *Comp.* 22.98,2-3. See section 5.2.

⁷² *Comp.* 22.98,1-2; cf. *Dem.* 29.213,6ff. See section 4.3.2. For the term σύνδεσμος, see section 3.6.4.

austere composition, just like Aristotle's λέξις ἀγωνιστική, avoids the use of many connectives. And we may notice that Aristotle's views on the use of asyndeton in the 'agonistic' style fit well into Dionysius' description of the Thucydidean version as 'forensic' (ἐναγώνιον). An alternative explanation of the removal of τε is that the Thucydidean composition favours a clash between -ν κ- (Σύρων καὶ) to the combination -ν τ- (Σύρων τε). However, both clashes (-ν τ- and -ν κ-) are described as 'rough and dissonant':⁷³ the interrupted continuity of speech between these letters produces a harsh effect, which is at home in the austere composition type. It may be interesting to add that Usher attributes to Dionysius a 'great partiality' for the particle τε, which might be explained as an aspect of his archaising tendency.⁷⁴

Dionysius' second metathesis of Herodotus 1.6 is a clear example of a defective style, which pays no attention to the systematic distribution of information.⁷⁵ The opening with the genitive Ἀλυάττου is strange, the position of μέν after Ἀλυάττου puts the reader on the wrong track, the word τύραννος is concealed at an unnatural place, and the congruent pair βορέαν and ἄνεμον have been separated. This metathesis is associated with the 'Asiatic' style, to which the Atticist Dionysius strongly objects.⁷⁶

There remains one subtype of metathesis to be discussed, namely the rewriting of passages from prose texts in order to illustrate their poetical character. We find these rewritings in the *Comp.* 25, which deals with the question how prose can be made to resemble a beautiful poem (see chapter 6). By adding one or two words to a certain

⁷³ Cf. Vaahtera (1997) 589. For the dissonant effect of the clash -ν τ-, see *Comp.* 22.105,27 (on Pindar's πανδαίδαλόν τ' εὐκλέ' ἀγοράν) and *Comp.* 22.106,7-10 (on Pindar's στεφάνων τᾶν τ' ἐαριδρόπων). For the clash -ν κ-, see *Comp.* 22.108,18-109,13 (on Thucydides' Πελοποννησιῶν καί).

⁷⁴ Usher (1982) 829-830.

⁷⁵ One could argue that this second metathesis, being inferior to the original, should be treated under the second category (metatheses bringing out virtues of the original). The Thucydidean metathesis, however, is not presented as inferior to the original. Dionysius' purpose in this passage is to show the various ways in which one idea can be expressed, rather than to prove the quality of Herodotus' version. I have therefore chosen to deal with both the Thucydidean and the Asiatic metathesis in the third category (metatheses illustrating alternative compositions).

⁷⁶ On Hegesias and his alleged corrupt style, see Swain (1996) 22. See also section 1.2. A third *metathesis* of Herodotus 1.6 can be found in Hermogenes, *On Types of Style* 1.3 (p. 230 Rabe). According to Hermogenes, Herodotus' original sentence is a model of purity (καθαρότης), which would be lost if the sentence started with a genitive absolute subordinate construction: Κροίσου ὄντος Λυδοῦ μὲν γένος, παιδὸς δὲ Ἀλυάττεω, τυράννου δὲ ἔθνῶν τῶν ἐντὸς Ἄλυσος ποταμοῦ ...: 'Since Croesus was a Lydian by birth, and since he was the son of Alyattes, and since he ruled those nations on this side of the Halys River (...)' (Translation Wooten [1987]). In Caecilius of Caleacte fr. 76a Ofenloch (Epitome Alexandri III p. 39,12 Spengel), Herodotus 1.6 is rewritten in order to make it clear that the part on the river Halys is a παρεμβολή (parenthesis): ἐδύνατο γὰρ οὕτως ἔχειν ὁ λόγος "τύραννος δὲ ἔθνῶν τῶν ἐντὸς Ἄλυσος ποταμοῦ, ὁ τὸς ᾧν ὁ Κροῖσος. 'For the sentence could also be like this: "As king of the nations on this side of the Halys river, this Croesus (...)"'. 'Demetrius', *Eloc.* 45-46 rewrites a comparable sentence from Thucydides 2.102, in which the course of the river Achelous is described.

clause of Demosthenes, Dionysius shows that this clause almost corresponds to a trimeter, tetrameter or pentameter. In the following instances of metathesis, Dionysius completes two iambic trimeters by adding *τινα* to the first, and *ἐν μέρει* to the second clause:⁷⁷

Demosthenes, *Against Aristocrates* 1:
 προάγειν ἑμαυτὸν εἰς ἀπέχθειαν
 ‘expose myself to his hostility’

Dionysius’ metathesis:
 προάγειν ἑμαυτὸν εἰς ἀπέχθειάν τινα
 ‘expose myself to some hostility of his’

Demosthenes, *Against Aristocrates* 1:
 ἀποστερηθῆναι πάλιν αὐτῆς
 ‘and once again be taken from you’

Dionysius’ metathesis:
 ἀποστερηθῆναι πάλιν αὐτῆς ἐν μέρει
 ‘and once again be taken from you in return’

We should not assume, of course, that Dionysius really suggests changing the original texts in these cases. Rather, he is proving that, in many cases, Demosthenes’ prose texts resemble poetry. His writings are not actually ‘in rhythm’ (ἔρρυθμον) or ‘in metre’ (ἔμμετρον), but they *appear* rhythmical (εὔρυθμον) and metrical (εὔμετρον), which is to be preferred:⁷⁸ they are poetical though not actually a poem (see section 6.1).⁷⁹ By completing the latent metres in Demosthenes’ text, Dionysius simply intends to prove that the poetical ways of expression are there.

7.4. Conclusion

Having shown the many different ways in which Dionysius applies his method of metathesis, I hope to have made clear that this technique is more useful and successful than is supposed by Greenberg (1958), whose article on this subject is the standard work of reference for modern scholars who discuss *metathesis*.

Although Dionysius’ rewritings resemble that of Heracleodorus and the *kritikoi* in some instances, they serve other purposes besides that of establishing the importance of composition. Analysing prose as well as poetry, Dionysius employs metathesis not only to show that composition (σύνθεσις) in general is more important than choice of words (ἐκλογή), but also (1) to correct the artificiality of certain passages, thus showing ways to avoid ‘unnatural’ composition, (2) to trace specific effects of sound, rhythm and clause arrangement, and (3) to illustrate the differences between various styles of composition, or to point to the poetical character of prose texts. The method

⁷⁷ *Comp.* 25.128,14-18; *Comp.* 25.129,16-20.

⁷⁸ *Comp.* 25.124,10-125,7.

⁷⁹ *Comp.* 25.125,6-7.

of metathesis thus offers a versatile instrument enabling Dionysius to isolate and highlight characteristics of a given text under one aspect, while leaving other aspects unaffected. Dionysius' method of rewriting is closely related to the theories on language, linguistics and literature that we have examined in the previous chapters. In the analysis of style, Dionysius' grammatical theories on syntax and his method of metathesis closely cooperate, as we have seen in sections 4.4.2 and 5.2. By adopting a grammatical framework on the one hand and the method of rewriting on the other, Dionysius is able to trace specific characteristics of stylistic composition. Further, we have seen that Dionysius' use of metathesis departs from the idea that there is a natural form of expression that underlies all utterances, and to which deviating constructions and figures can be reduced. This idea corresponds to the views on natural syntax and word order that I have discussed in chapter 5.

Dionysius' language experiments are in no way theoretical exercises. They have a very practical aim, namely to teach the reader how to write in a correct and convincing style. In accordance with the principles of Atticism and classicism, classical literature is taken as the model for new writing; the method of metathesis shows the merits, defects and particularities of the classical examples.⁸⁰ Metathesis offers Dionysius and his audience the opportunity to compare two formulations of the same thought, and, as Dionysius himself has observed, 'the best method of assessment is the comparative.'⁸¹

⁸⁰ For the relation between *μίμησις* and *μετάθεσις*, see the contribution of M. Hurst to the discussion of Flashar (1979) 109.

⁸¹ *Pomp.* 1.224,9-10: κράτιστος ἐλέγχου τρόπος ὁ κατὰ σύγκρισιν γιγνόμενος. See also section 1.4. Dionysius here refers to the method of comparing two or more authors, not to the method of metathesis. The essence of metathesis, however, is also that it enables Dionysius and his readers to *compare* the original text with a new phrasing of the same idea. In that sense, *μετάθεσις* is also a form of *σύγκρισις*.

