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ON TMESIS, WORD ORDER, AND NOUN INCORPORATION IN HOMERIC GREEK

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Abstract: Negatives, adverbs, and preverbial particles (P-words) can be located in two positions in the AG clause: either at the beginning of the clause, or immediately before the verb, in which case it forms with the verb itself a verbal complex. These positions of the P-word correspond to two kinds of tmeses, external and internal. Structural and typological arguments are adduced to show that a NP can be incorporated into the verbal complex in internal tmesis: semantically, many of these constructions are used to express institutionalized activities; besides, internal tmesis is often a strategy to background a participant and mark it as part of the presupposition.

My aim is to explore here a number of questions about the so-called *tmesis* in Homeric Greek (HG), i.e. the non-agglutination of the verbal particle to the verb, and to suggest what kinds of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors may trigger it. I will make two major claims: first, that there are in fact two kinds of tmeses, with different positions for the verbal particle; second, that this phenomenon is best understood in terms of the element being inserted between the verbal particle and the verb; hence the use of the word "incorporation" in the title. First of all, in order to avoid any preconception about the status of those words like ἀπό ἀνά κατά ἐπί etc. that can be used, in HG, as adverbial particles, prepositions or preverbs, I shall call them P-words, the 'P' standing for 'particle', 'preposition' and 'preverb' at the same time, or 'place-word' in Boley's terminology.[1]

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[1] Here is a list of the preverbs occurring in my sample : ἀμφί (8×), ἀνά (31×), ἀπό (30×), διά (9×), διάπρο (1×), ἐν (57×), ἐξ (93×), ἐπί (68×), ἐς (4×), κατά (78×), μετά (10×), παρά (22×), περί (23×), πρό (6×), πρός (15×), σύν (15×), ὑπέξ (3×), ὑπό (27×).

Before I proceed, it may be useful to define clearly when a given P-word+Verb construction can be properly called a tmesis. One can identify at least seven criteria (the first condition is a necessary one, but not a sufficient one; the others are sufficient, but not necessary). 1. Observable separation: the P-word and the V have to be separated by a word (even a clitic may do for that matter).[2] 2. Case structure: when the interrupting material is a NP, it must not be construed as governed by the P-word, which would then be a preposition. 3. Synthetic meaning: when the meaning of the P-word+verb complex is different from the sum of its parts, we are dealing with a case of tmesis, as in (5) below. 4. Availability of compound form: if a compound form of the same P-word with the same verb is attested elsewhere in the epics, with the same construction, it is again a case of tmesis. 5. The preverb must not be likely to be analyzed as a preposition in anastrophe.[3] 6. Absence of argument for the preposition: if there is a constituent in the clause that can be constructed with the P-word, which could then be a preposition, it is not a tmesis[4]. 7. I ruled out P-word with adverbial force such as περί meaning περισσῶς or ἀμφί meaning 'around', 'on both sides' etc. Needless to say, this last criterium is the most subjective, because many P-words can be construed as local adverbs.

I used these criteria to identify the first 250 tmeses in each epic, browsing about half of the Homeric corpus;[5] I came up with 500 tmeses, covering 18 different P-words[6] which combine with 127 different verbs. Of these 500 tmeses, 134 (26.80 %) consist of the P-word being separated from the Verb by a postpositive word only (or several postpositives). So we are left with 366

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2 This may seem a truism, but recall that word division is an artifice of later editions of Homer, and that nothing prevents us from considering that, synchronically, the preverbal use of the P-word is a matter of syntax rather than lexical composition. After all, the sandhi rules (elision and apocope) are the same in καθέξει (O 186) as in καθ' ἕδρας (B 99), and wherever the recessive accent does not land on the preverb, we could as well write the compound verbs in two words. The P-word could be, then, simply juxtaposed to the verb, not agglutinated to it (de Angelis 2004).

3 Traditionally prepositions in anastrophe are distinguished by barytonesis, but I decided prudently not to trust the judgment of modern editors on that difficult matter.

4 Sometimes there *is* such a constituent, but after the verb; when it is possible to construe it as an argument of the compound verb, I counted the phrase as an occurrence of tmesis. Furthermore, some consider that even if there is no possible argument expressed in the clause, it is a case of zero-anaphora, and that the P-word is still a preposition even when the argument is covert (e.g. Horrocks 1981). But then we should consider that in composition the preverb is also in many cases a preposition with covert or even, sometimes, overt argument. However I do not see what we would gain in adopting this view (Pompeo 2002). In any case, I will stick to the view that the P-word without overt argument has an adverbial-preverbal function, not a prepositional one.

5 The sample covers the *Iliad* up to Λ 764 (7034 lines) and the *Odyssey* up to μ 200 (5959), i.e. 12993 lines.

6 The P-words involved are: ἀμφί (8×), ἀνά (33×), ἀπό (32×), διά (6×), διάπρο (1×), ἐν (55×), ἐξ (91×), ἐπί (69×), ἐς (5×), κατά (80×), μετά (10×), παρά (21×), περί (24×), πρό (6×), πρός (14×), σύν (14×), ὑπέξ (3×), ὑπό (28×).

occurrences of tmeses with at least one lexical word interrupting the P-word+V sequence; this construction I shall call *lexical tmesis*, the former being of course *non-lexical tmesis*.[7]

1. THE POSITION OF P-WORDS IN HG WORD ORDER

1.1. Ancient Greek word order (the Dik -Matić template)

Let us first briefly sketch the principles of HG word order, following mostly Dik (1995) and Matić (2003). The basic principle, in Ancient Greek (AG), including HG, is that word order encodes information structure rather than syntactic structure. It is a linearization of constituents according to their informational function. One can design a functional pattern to capture this fact, representing the maximal projection of linearization rules, in which a number of structural slots are filled in with different constituents depending on their informational (or pragmatic) function in the clause (fig. 1).

a. Narrow focus construction:

Non-ratified Topic(s)	**Focus**	Verb	Ratified Topic(s)	Presupposed material
└— TOPIC FIELD —┘	└ FOCUS ┘	└———— PRESUPPOSITION FIELD ————┘		

b. Broad focus construction:

Non-ratified Topic(s)	**Verb**	Ratified Topic(s)	**Focal material**
└— TOPIC FIELD —┘	└———— FOCUS DOMAIN ————┘		

Fig. 1. The two focus constructions in AG.

As we can see, two main focus constructions are to be identified in AG. In the *narrow focus construction*, there is only one constituent in the focus: this focus expression, as a rule, is placed immediately before the verb, as in (1), where the focus of the clause is each time on the expression identifying the price taken by each candidate, preceded by the non-ratified topic expressions Μηριόνης and Τεῦκρος (notice the postverbal position of the ratified topic expression κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας);

(1) Ψ 882-883 Ἂν δ' ἄρα Μηριόνης **πελέκεας δ ἑκα πάντας** ἄειρε,
Τεῦκρος δ' **ἡμιπ ἔλεκκα** φέρεν κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας.

In the *broad focus construction*, the verb and optionally other elements make up a focus domain: the verb marks the left border of this focus domain, and the remaining focal material follows. Consider e.g. (2), where both the verb and its object are in the focus.

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[7] It has been doubted that one should consider non-lexical tmesis as tmesis at all (Rosén 1999); nevertheless, I collected the occurrences of this construction for comparison purposes.

(2) E 1-2 Ἔνθ' αὖ Τυδεΐδῃ Διομήδεϊ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
δῶκε μένος καὶ θάρσος .

Topic elements can be of two different kinds, depending of the activation status of their referents. *Non-ratified topic expressions*, i.e. expressions whose referents are presented, in relation to the proposition expressed by the clause, as new Topics or renewed Topics, are located at the beginning of the clause, preceding any focus element (e.g. Τυδεΐδῃ Διομήδεϊ and Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη in (2) above). *Ratified topic expressions*, i.e. expressions whose referents are presented as being already under discussion, have a dedicated slot immediately after the verb, in any focus construction. (They may thus interrupt a Focus domain.) Besides, they have alternative positions: they behave as a kind of phonologically reduced expression that cannot stand by themselves at the beginning of the clause, but may cliticize, so to speak, to the right of any strong element in the clause (mainly the verb, but also non-ratified topic expressions or focus expressions, both pre- and postverbal).

To sum up: as can be seen in fig. 1, AG clause pattern consists of an initial topic field, mainly for non-ratified topic expressions, followed by either a broad focus domain consisting of the verb plus optionally one or more focus elements (potentially interrupted by ratified topic expressions located immediately after the verb), or a narrow focus expression, followed by a presupposition field consisting in the (presupposed) verb plus by ratified topic expressions and other non-topical presupposed expressions, if any.

What is important for our present purposes is that in both constructions the verb marks the left border of a domain: the presupposition field in the narrow focus construction and the focus domain in the broad focus construction. As I tried to show elsewhere (Bertrand 2009), this feature of AG word order has a number of consequences, most importantly that, as a rule, postpositives (like anaphoric αὐτόν, clitic anaphoric pronouns and the particle ἄν) cannot be located further left than immediately after the verb (Marshall 1987), i.e. the same position as the preferred one for ratified topic expressions, which could be called pseudo-postpositives. This is because the postverbal position is in fact a second position in the domain beginning with the verb, a position attracting precisely this very kind of weak elements by virtue of Wackernagel's (1892) well-documented law about second position clitics. To use Fraenkel's (1964) words, the verb then can be said to mark the left border of a *colon* or intonation unit[8].

1.2 The position of adverbs and negatives

As we have seen, the verb has a pivotal function in the overall structure of AG clause. Now, I would like to show that this position is not a simple one, but may contain other elements that, together with the verb itself, constitute a phrase,

[8] On intonation units in HG see Bakker (1997).

which has, of course, the same positional properties as a simple verb. As we will see, it is useful to allow more than one element to occupy the verb slot in the word order pattern.

1.2.1 Negatives

The pivotal role of the verb in the AG sentence has already been illustrated by Moorhouse (1959) in his work on negatives. As a matter of fact, negatives have two typical positions: they can be either *initial* in the clause or *colon* or *immediately preverbal* (and quite frequently they combine both positions, being initial with the verb immediately following). In HG, the initial position is by far the most frequent position (the non-initial preverbal position tends to become more and more frequent only in later Greek[9]). Moreover, negatives never occur after the verb in Homer unless accompanied by an indefinite clitic such as ποτε, τις, τι or πῃ, and only, as far as I can see, in very special pragmatic contexts[10].

Furthermore, the distribution of preverbal/non-preverbal positions depends on the place of the negative: initial or not. The rate of negatives separated from the verb is much higher when the negative is initial than when it is not (especially in Homer, where there are up to two thirds of initial negatives that are *not* immediately followed by the verb). Reversely, when the negative is not in first position, there are very few exceptions to what Moorhouse calls "attraction to the verb". So the two positions (initial and non-initial) are not even in terms of contiguity to the verb. We could formulate this as a rule stating that when the negative is not initial, it has to be immediately preverbal. This difference between an initial non verb-contiguous position and a non-initial verb-contiguous position will be of importance in what follows.

Now, from a syntactic point of view, this also means that we could consider, in both cases, that the negative is initial in its domain: the clause itself or the verbal domain. Since negatives are prepositive words, they form a prosodic unit with the following word, and I think it would be rather unproblematic to expand the 'Verb' position in the AG word order pattern to 'Verb preceded by an

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9 This evolution parallels the diminishing strength of Wackernagel's law throughout the history of Greek.

10 In the four occurrences of this construction in Homer (E 516, β 256, ε 140, σ 409), the postponement of the negative is probably due to a combination of pragmatic factors, one of them being the informational status of the verb itself, which is strongly topical in every occurrence. The important thing is here that the Verb is *not* in its dedicated slot, but occupies an initial non ratified contrastive topic slot. Notice also that, in the three Odyssean examples, a character is speaking, not the main narrator; and in the *Iliad* there seems to be a playful note by the narrator anticipating the potential reaction of the Trojans when Aeneas comes back uninjured after having been miraculously rescued by Aphrodite and Apollo.

optional negative', schematically {(Negative) Verb}. The resulting composite constituent can aptly be called a **Verbal Complex**.

1.2.2 Adverbs

My next move will be to show that every position opened to negatives is also accessible to adverbs. Adverbs (as well as other kinds of adverbial expressions) are floating constituents, which may occupy virtually any position in the word order pattern. Depending on their informational status, adverbs can be located either in the initial topic field, or in the focus domain. When they only set the frame for the interpretation of the sentence, they are typically in the topic area (notice that non-ratified topic expressions have also typically a frame-setting effect); but, like any other element, they can be part of the Focus, in which case they obviously land in the Focus area, be it the preverbal narrow focus slot, or the postverbal broad focus domain.

Having said that, I believe it is nevertheless possible to identify two basic positions for the adverb: either at the very beginning of the sentence, or immediately before the verb, independently of the semantic function of the adverb. In a large sample of nearly 3 000 Homeric lines[11], I found 1129 adverbs (not counting P-words), 473 of which (41,90 %) were initial in their clause and 406 (35,96 %) immediately preverbal. It means that in the great majority of cases, an adverb is either initial, or immediately preverbal but not in narrow focus, as in (3), or both.

(3) ι 399-400 Αὐτὰρ ὁ Κύκλωπας **μεγάλ'** ἤπυεν, οἳ ῥά μιν ἀμφὶς
ὤκεον ἐν σπήεσσι δι' ἄκριας ἠνεμοέσσας.

Due to the very mobile nature of adverbs in general, it may appear difficult to conclude anything just on the basis of statistical data. However, a structural argument must be adduced here. Adverbs are one of the rare constituent types that can be placed between a narrow focus expression and the verb, which normally are contiguous (Matić (2003) calls those expressions "Focus intruders"), as exemplified by (4).

(4) Σ 251-252 Ἕκτορι δ' ἦεν ἑταῖρος, ἰῇ δ' ἐν νυκτὶ γένοντο,
ἀλλ' ὃ μὲν ἄρ μύθοισιν, ὃ δ' ἔγχεϊ **πολλὸν** ἐνίκα.

These focus intruders are indeed a problem, because the defining feature of the preverbal narrow focus slot is its contiguity to the verb. Now, if we consider that adverbs too can be part of the Verbal Complex, and that the Verbal Complex as a whole counts as one word for positional purposes, the "intrusion" effect disappears, and we are left with a canonical focus-verb construction. That is why I would like to expand again the theoretical Verbal Complex in order to allow

[11] This reference corpus consists of Books E, X, α, ι, and υ, for a total range of 2828 lines, evenly distributed between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* on the one hand and speech and narrative on the other.

adverbs to precede the verb. The Verbal Complex consists of an adverb slot, a negative slot and then a verb slot, schematically {(Adverb) (Negative) Verb}.[12]

1.3 The position of P-words

We are now in a position to examine the location of P-words in the HG sentence. Intuitively, one would like to equate the positional behaviour of P-words with that of negatives and adverbs in general. Here are a number of reasons to do so.

1.3.1 P-words as adverbs

First of all, most scholars agree that originally the P-words were indeed adverbs (e.g. Dunkel 1979, Chantraine 1988, Neuberger-Donath 2004). Synchronically, in HG, this use is residual, but well attested (but for ἀντί, ἀπό, διά and ὑπέρ). They can even be used absolutely, i.e. as a predicate. From this adverbial and general function, P-words specialized into two functions: they became either **prepositions** (associated with a case, they specify the semantic function of a NP) or **preverbs** (agglutinated to a verb root, they specify and qualify the verbal process). The synchronic situation of HG seems to be transitional: the older uses are becoming rarer, whereas the newer ones are not only becoming more frequent, but they are on their way to getting compulsory.

So the answer to the question "where does the P-word stand in the AG word order pattern?" is far from simple, since we have three possible situations (leaving apart the absolute use). The first one will be rapidly dealt with, since it falls outside our theme: in the **prepositional use**, the P-word may be in first or second position with respect to the NP it qualifies (Rosén 1999, de Angelis 2004). Our problem is now to distinguish between **adverbial** and **preverbal** uses of the P-word. A first answer is to consider that the only preverbal use is when the P-word is agglutinated to the verb-root, i.e. in compound verbs; if the P-word is separated from the verb (and is not a preposition), then it is an adverb. The concept of tmesis would then be totally vacuous.

As it happens, I find this solution unsatisfying, for two reasons. First, I do not see how it can account for cases of synthetic meaning, as in (5).

(5) B 317 Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ **κατὰ** τέκνα **φάγε** στρουθοῖο καὶ αὐτήν…

Second, as I hope to show, there are strong constraints as to which elements can be located in the gap between the P-word and the verb, which suggests that a P-word is not just another adverb, and that it has a specific link to the verb.

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[12] Cf. Moorhouse (1959: 114) where an example in Aristophanes where a non-initial negative is not immediately followed by the verb is explained away by saying that the intervening adverb forms a "composite phrase" with the verb.

1.3.2 Positional properties of negatives, adverbs and P-words

Let us have a look to the statistical distribution between preverbal and non-preverbal position of the P-word. In six of the most common verb roots available both in tmesis and in compound form in my sample, I compared the number of occurrences for both cases. Generally speaking, and to various degrees, the compound form is the preferred option, with a prevalence of the compound form ranging from about 60 % to nearly 90 %, with a average rate of 80.79 %. This is not surprising, given that the P-word is on its way to lose completely its adverbial status in Greek. The alleged anachronism of the ancient grammarians, who named the phenomenon a *cut* (τμῆσις), was perhaps not that inappropriate: from a purely statistical point of view, the preverbal position of the P-word is indeed the norm, whereas the tmesis is the exception. But, however exceptional or marked it may be, it is still a frequent strategy, since one cannot easily dismiss 20% of all occurrences.

We can compare this situation to that of negatives: if we combine the figures given by Moorhouse, we get an evenly balanced distribution between immediately preverbal and not immediately preverbal negative οὐ in the *Iliad*. But there is an evolution going on: the rate of non-preverbal negatives is 7.75 % in Herodotus, 18.27 % in Thucydides and 28.62 % in Aristophanes. So in no author after Homer is the rate of non-verb-contiguous negatives as high as it is in HG.[13] Moreover, in later authors, among clauses with initial negative, the negative is nevertheless followed by the verb in the majority of cases (from about 58 % in Thucydides and Aristophanes up to 83 % in Herodotus); but in Homer, the opposite situation obtains: the majority of initial negatives (36 %) are *not* contiguous to the verb. This fits well with the fact that lexical tmesis virtually disappears from the language after Homer. In this case also, the elements have a greater positional independence in HG than in later Greek.

Concerning adverbs, as we have seen, the option to place them between a narrow focus expression and the verb indicates that they too may constitute a Verbal Complex together with the verb. Even if it is not the preferred strategy, it is significant that the possibility exists at all. This provides another point of comparison to account for the placement rules of P-words.

In sum, two positional possibilities are opened to P-words, adverbs, and negatives alike: an **initial position** where the link with the verb is only semantic, and a **preverbal position** with the constitution of a Verbal Complex, which obeys to the same placement rules as any other simple verb form. Put differently, they may be either initial in the clause, or initial in the Verbal Complex.

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[13] I calculated that this evolution was statistically highly significant: there is virtually no probability at all that such a repartition be due to mere chance ($\chi^2 = 154.39$, $P < 0.01$).

2. TMESIS AND NOUN INCORPORATION

Up to this point, I tried to suggest that the positional behavior of P-words is similar to that of negatives and other adverbs, with initial and immediately preverbal positions. But there is a third position open to P-words, which is neither initial nor immediately preverbal: this happens when a non-initial preverb is nevertheless separated from the verb. I will try to show that this position is also to be considered initial in the Verbal Complex, by reviewing the properties of the elements allowed to be placed in the space between the P-word and the verb, which I will call the "tmetic field".

It should be noted that this "tmetic field" seldom hosts more than one lexical word, and never more than two different constituents. In 70.49 % of all the lexical tmeses I collected, the P-word is only one word away from the verb. As for the number of constituents, 90.71 % of all lexical tmeses have no more than one constituent between the P-word and the verb. This means, generally, that the P-word tends to be as close to the verb as possible. If we consider the 34 cases of tmeses involving more than one constituent between the P-word and the verb, we can notice that the P-word is always initial in the clause, but for two tokens.[14] So, as a rule, it is only when the P-word is initial that the separation by more than one constituent is allowed. Inversely, if we consider the 101 non-initial lexical tmeses, 92.08 % of them have only one word in the "tmetic field", and the rest have two words. As for the number of constituents, the tendency to allow no more than one constituent in the "tmetic field" is overwhelming, with the only two aforementioned exceptions.

There is thus a clear difference between initial lexical tmeses and non-initial lexical tmeses, the former being more susceptible to harbour several words and up to two constituents in the "tmetic field". I would claim that this difference, which *is* statistically significant to a very high degree[15], reflects a deeper opposition between the initial position and what I would call a preverbal position, because I assume this position is located at the beginning of the Verbal Complex. I suspect the statistical difference would be even greater if we had a way to discriminate between both positions when the Verbal Complex as a whole happens to be located at the beginning of the clause[16]. I propose, then, that we distinguish between **internal tmesis**, when the P-word stays inside the Verbal Complex, and **external tmesis**, when the P-word is located outside the Verbal Complex, at the beginning of the clause[17]. Recall that for negatives too there is a

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[14] The verses in question are K 535 and μ 177, both surprisingly involving the name of the *ears* (οὔατα).

[15] The χ^2 rate (31.81) indicates a probability of less than 1/100000 for such a difference to arise by chance.

[16] Moorhouse (1959) makes similar observations when dealing with the position of the negative.

[17] The similarity between tmesis and hyperbaton is striking here. Devine & Stephens (2000) distinguished between two kinds of hyperbaton: first, what I would call **internal**

clear difference between an initial position, which allows separation from the verb, and a non-initial position, which, as a rule, involves contiguity to the verb.

Let us state this differently: like negatives and adverbs, P-words may form a phrase with the verb (the Verbal Complex is then a compound form); they may also be separated from the verb, but then the P-word must be initial in the clause (external tmesis). However, we sometimes find some lexical material between the P-word and the Verb without the P-word being in first position in the clause. I will provisionally consider that this material is, in this case, *inserted* in the Verbal Complex (internal tmesis). That is, the P-word is still forming a composite unit with the verb, but another element is added to that unit and lands between the two (this is the normal position for clitics and postpositives, rather than after a compound verb).

I shall now investigate the nature and properties of the interrupting material, in order to see whether there are generalizations to be made.

2.1 Characteristics of the interrupting material

2.1.1 Syntactic properties

If we have a look at the syntactic functions performed by the interrupted constituent, we note generally, the predominance of (direct) objects, as shown in Table 1.

Syntactic functions	Initial tmeses	Non-initial tmeses	All lexical tmesis
Subject	68 (29.18 %)	15 (15.15 %)	83 (25.00 %)
Object	137 (58.80 %)	73 (73.74 %)	210 (63.25 %)
Other	28 (12.02 %)	11 (11.11 %)	43 (11.75 %)
Total	233 (100.00 %)	99 (100.00 %)	332 (100.00 %)

$\chi^2 = 7.97$ $P = 0.02$

Table 1. Syntactic functions of elements occurring within the "tmetic field"

When there is only one constituent inserted in the tmetic field, it is the direct object in 2/3 of lexical tmeses, the subject in 1/4, the other categories (indirect object, adverb, predicative adjective, instrumental etc.) occurring each below 6 % of the cases. But this repartition is not homogenous. If we distinguish again between initial and non-initial tmeses, we notice that there are comparatively more subjects and fewer objects in the tmetic field in initial tmeses than in non-initial tmeses. Again, I account for this difference by assuming that

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hyperbaton, where the first part of the discontinuous constituent stays inside the verb phrase, in a phrase-initial weak focus slot, as they say; this kind is only attested in poetry, especially in Homer; and second what I would call **external hyperbaton**, where the first part of the discontinuous constituent is located in the preverbal focus slot; this is the only hyperbaton type allowed in classical prose.

the non-initial tmesis is typically of the internal kind, whereas initial tmesis is more often of the external type, and that there are strong constraints for the insertion of material into the Verbal Complex that do not exist in external tmeses, because they arise from a different process. But it is not only a matter of numbers. Del Treppo (2008) noticed that there is a syntactic hierarchy of constituents with respect to their accessibility to inclusion in the tmetic field: Object > Subject > Other. In her data, if the object is expressed at all, it has priority over all other constituents for inclusion in the "tmetic field", so that generally we do not find subjects inserted when there is also a lexical object in the same clause. However, it is not an absolute rule. Among 83 tokens in my sample where the subject is the only element inserted, the object was also expressed in 12 cases (14.46 %). This is too few to be useful for any general statement about the function of these expressions, and I leave this point to further inquiry.

2.1.2 Informational properties

The analysis of pragmatic functions gives also very interesting results, and again points toward a difference between external and internal tmesis. The data are shown in table 2.

Pragmatic functions	Initial tmeses	Non-initial tmeses	Total
Non-ratified topic	45 (19.31 %)	2 (2.02 %)	47 (14.16 %)
Ratified topic	64 (27.47 %)	57 (57.58 %)	121 (36.45 %)
Narrow focus	110 (47.21 %)	36 (36.36 %)	146 (43.98 %)
Circumstantial	6 (2.58 %)	3 (3.03 %)	9 (2.71 %)
Part of internal hyperbaton	8 (3.43 %)	1 (1.01 %)	9 (2.71 %)
Total	233 (100.00 %)	99 (100.00 %)	332 (100.00 %)

$\chi^2 = 35.38 \quad P < 0.01$

Table 2. Pragmatic function of elements occurring within the "tmetic field"

The revealing fact here is the high rate of ratified topic expressions in non-initial tmesis: the most frequently inserted constituents are indeed ratified topic expressions; this means that they land just before the verb. Recall that the normal position for ratified topic expressions is immediately after the verb.[18] So the large number of these expressions inside the "tmetic field" is intriguing.

There are at least two possible ways to explain this situation. First, as I have already said, the pragmatic function of ratified topic expressions is cross-linguistically marked by deaccentuation and reduced phonological weight (Lambrecht 1994, Matić 2003). In AG, these expressions are pseudo-postpositive,

[18] "Normal" here means, for example, that in my reference corpus, I identified 1388 ratified topic expressions, 860 of which (61.96 %) were immediately postverbal; for the second commonest position, after a Narrow Focus expression, the rate falls to 10.95 % (152 cases).

i.e. they behave in a manner similar to other postpositives. So if we consider that the Verbal Complex is initial in its prosodic and syntactic domain (i.e focus domain or presuppositional field), it is only natural that a pseudo-postpositive be located in second position with respect to this domain. Like second-position clitics and postpositives in non-lexical tmesis, the phrase is placed between the preverb and the verb.

The other explanation would go along the following lines: the ratified topic function results from the speaker's desire to demote a participant in a certain state-of-affairs and to pragmatically background it. One possible strategy would be noun incorporation: the backgrounded element is incorporated into the Verbal Complex, between the preverb and the verb. Such a view takes tmesis to be not so much the separation of normally agglutinated elements than the insertion of another constituent into the space framed by those elements, resulting in a larger composite element. In the last section of this paper, I shall try to substantiate this view by comparing some cross-linguistic characteristics of incorporated nouns with properties of tmesis-framed elements.

Regarding the informational properties of constituents inserted in the "tmetic field", the second noticeable feature is the low rate of narrow focus expressions, even if it is the second most common element found between preverb and verb (in a chance repartition, one would expect more than 50 narrow focus expressions, instead of 35 in my sample, and such a difference is statistically significant). Now, if internal tmesis is a kind of noun incorporation, one does not expect the inserted NP to receive any focus function of its own. So the low rate is not surprising; what *is* surprising, however, is that it is still so high. I think it can be explained with my own methodological bias when I tagged my data for informational function. As I did not want to anticipate on my conclusions, I systematically considered certain sequences as narrow focus + verb structures, instead of attributing to the NP no pragmatic function at all, because they felt pretty much like unitary expressions. For instance, in κατὰ δάκρυ χέω (10×), the meaning is clearly unitary: 'to weep' would be a sufficient translation.[19] In such cases I chose to attribute the main semantic load to the NP rather than to the verb, and consequently I considered them as focused. In fact it is the whole Verbal Complex which is focused, not an element within it.

[19] The unitary meaning of this Verbal Complex is indicated in many manuscripts by writing the phrase as one word: although *δακρυχέω is not a possible compound form according to the rules of word formation in AG (West 1998: 1, xxviii), this may be a precious indication of the feeling an AG speaker could have when coming across this kind of tmesis.

2.2 Cross-linguistic characteristics of incorporated nouns

I shall now briefly review different features of noun incorporation across languages, and indicate whether they can shed an interesting light on the processes involved in tmesis. Let us first consider one example of noun incorporation in Samoan (Austronesian; from Mithun 1984: 850), where precisely the incorporation is visible only because of the position of the verbal particle *ai*.

(6) a. Po ‘o āfea e tausi ai e ia tama?
Q PRED when TNS care PRO ERG he child
‘when does he take care of the child?’

b. Po ‘o āfea e tausi-tama ai ‘oia?
Q PRED when tns care-child PRO ABS.he
‘when does he baby-sit?’

Normally *ai* cliticizes to the right of the verb, as in (6a); in (6b), however, the position of the particle after the Verbal Complex *tausi-tama* is the only clue that indicates the incorporated status of the noun *tama* ‘child’. This comes as no surprise to Hellenists: we are accustomed to the postponement of second-position postpositives after fixed idioms (e.g. πρὸς τούτοις δέ vs. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις). What I would like to suggest, then, is that the preverb in tmesis has the same effect: it indicates clearly the incorporated status of the material within the “tmetic field”. Besides, this example shows that the incorporated noun does not necessarily undergo morphological changes, as is very frequently the case across languages (for example bare nouns in Turkish or Hungarian): in certain languages, as here, incorporation is indicated only by positional clues.

Let us now see what kind of semantic, syntactic and informational properties are generally associated with incorporation.

2.2.1 Semantic properties

It has become well known since Mithun’s (1984) paper that a structure with noun incorporation expresses stronger cognitive bonds between constituents than its analytical counterpart. Consequently, it is very often used to express name-worthy and institutional activities. Obviously, name-worthiness is culture-dependant: ‘deer-hunting’ or ‘coconut-grinding’ may be name-worthy in one culture, and ‘car-washing’ in another. For an extinct language like HG, name-worthiness is sometimes hard to assess, especially since it is so closely tied to evanescent cultural matters. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that we find a great number of tmeses in type-scenes: descriptions of sacrifices and meals (7a), embarking and disembarking (7b), etc. as well as natural events such as sunrise, sunset (7c), etc.

(7) a. γ 40-41 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ **κατὰ** μῆρ' **ἐκάη** καὶ σπλάγχν' ἐπάσαντο.
b. ι 178 …**ἀνά** τε πρυμνήσια **λῦσαι** .
c. A 475 ἦμος δ' ἠέλιος κατέδυ καὶ **ἐπὶ** κνέφας **ἦλθε**

Semantically, generic verbs are more often involved in the incorporation process than specific verbs. This may be a mere consequence of the higher rate of generic verbs in natural languages, but notice that the most frequent verbs occurring with tmesis in my sample are also among the most generic of the Greek language[20]. Another frequent claim is that incorporation involves a loss of referentiality and specificity, which manifests itself through the dropping of number, and case affixes. But this is not always the case, and of course, it does not happen in AG. Incorporated nouns are here marked in gender, number and case as usual; their incorporated status is indicated only by their position. However, the semantic function of the incorporated noun is often just to specify the type of activity, not to denote any specific referent. One very clear instance is (8) where the meaning of the Verbal Complex means nothing more than the simplex verb *to spear* in English.

(8) E 40 Πρώτῳ γὰρ στρεφθέντι μεταφρένῳ **ἐν** δόρυ **πῆξεν** .

A similar process is involved in the very common formula ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο (e.g. δ 68), in which it is virtually impossible to analyze the meaning of the unitary phrase 'to-be-satiated-with-something'.

2.2.2 Syntactic properties: manipulating the case structure of the sentence

Noun incorporation may also be a means to manipulate the case structure of the sentence. By demoting one of the participants, it may for instance leave the object position open to another participant, as in Yucatec Mayan (9) (from Mithun 1984: 858)

(9) a. k-in-**č'ak**-Ø-k **če'** ičil in-kool
*INCOMP-I-**chop**-it-IMPF* ***tree*** *in* *my-cornfield*
'I chopped a tree in my cornfield'
b. k-in-**č'ak-če'**-t-ik in-kool
*INCOMP-I-**chop-tree**-TR-IMPF* *my-cornfield*
'I wood-chopped my cornfield'

Nothing like that really happens in HG; the case structure is not modified through incorporation to such a degree. However, the very common speech-formula in (10) may attest a similar phenomenon, with incorporation of μῦθον and the Verbal Complex as a whole becoming transitive, as witnessed by the accusative pronoun μιν. Semantically, the meaning is unitary anyway.

(10) H 46 στῆ δὲ παρ' Ἕκτορ' ἰὼν καί μιν **πρὸς** μῦθον **ἔειπεν**

[20] The verbs occurring more than 15 times in my sample are: αἱρέω βαίνω βάλλω εἰμι εἶπον ἔρχομαι ἵημι τίθημι χέω.

Note that certain languages allow stranding with incorporation (modification of the incorporated noun by an external headless NP) or doubling (specification of IncN by external NP), as in (11) (Southern Tiwa: Kiowa-Tanoan, from Smit 2005):

(11) wisi bi-**seuan**-mũ-ban
two *I-man-see-PAST*
'I saw two men'

In HG, this situation is quite common too with tmesis: witness the formula θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντα (e.g. δ 556).

2.2.3 Informational properties: backgrounding vs. foregrounding

Last but not least, noun incorporation is frequently used across languages as a backgrounding strategy. Referential and specific expressions can be incorporated precisely to mark them as part of the presupposition. This means that the pragmatic context is important to determine the acceptability of noun incorporation in any language. In HG, I assume that this is the most important trigger for internal tmesis. This would explain why we have so many ratified topic expressions in the tmetic field, and almost no non-ratified topic expression, at least in internal tmesis. Consider the Koryak (Paleo-Siberian) example (12) (from Mithun 1984: 862):

(12) wűtčŭ iñínñin **yúñi** qulaívun. mal-**yúñi**. ga-**yuñy**-upényil.enau.
this.time.only such *whale* *it.comes* *good-whale* *they-whale-attacked*
'This is the first time that such a whale has come near us. It is a good one (whale). They attacked it (the whale)'

At the first mention of the *whale*, the word stands by itself; then it is incorporated, because it is still activated information. The same obtains in AG tmesis, as in (13).

(13) a. β 113-114 Μητέρα σὴν **ἀπόπεμψον**, ἄνωχθι δέ μιν γαμέεσθαι
τῷ ὅτεῳ τε πατὴρ κέλεται καὶ ἀνδάνει αὐτῇ.
b. β 132-133 Κακὸν δέ με πόλλ' ἀποτίνειν
Ἰκαρίῳ, αἴ κ' αὐτὸς ἑκὼν **ἀπὸ** μητέρα **πέμψω**.

Compare the position of μητέρα (σήν) with respect to the verb ἀποπέμπειν. In the first instance (13a), μητέρα σήν is a non-ratified topic expression ('your mother, send her away'); in Telemachus' answer (13b), the whole 'sending-away-my-mother' activity is presented as presupposed, and the Focus of the sentence consists of the preverbal (that is, preverbal with respect to the Verbal Complex) αὐτὸς ἑκών. One could translate: 'if it was from my own will that I would send my mother away'. Notice again that without an analysis in terms of Verbal Complex, the last clause would be at odds with the word order pattern, because the Narrow Focus expression would be separated from the verb. But if we consider the whole phrase ἀπὸ μητέρα πέμψω as one Verbal Complex, the word order turns out to be canonical.

Conclusion

Let us sum up what I tried to achieve in this paper. First, I hope to have shown that tmesis exists: synchronically P-words must be considered preverbs in many cases even if they are *not* agglutinated to the verb. Second, tmesis is not a unitary phenomenon. The two positions of the detached preverb correspond to two types of tmesis, an external one where the link between preverb and verb is only semantic (as is the case with initial negatives), and an internal one which involves the constitution of a Verbal Complex (negatives and other adverbs may also be placed before the verb to the same effect). I hinted several times to the usefulness of the Verbal Complex for resolving some word order problems. Third, I used noun incorporation in a somewhat metaphorical fashion to account for the insertion of nominal material into this Verbal Complex. Even if one may disagree as to the validity of this concept as applied to Greek data, I hope that it helped to understand the processes triggering tmesis: expressing name-worthy activities, manipulating case structure and information structure. Lastly, I think it could be of great interest to further explore the similarities between tmesis and hyperbaton (both terms were sometimes used indifferently in Antiquity), especially the specifically poetic internal kind.

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