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HUNZIKER ON THE FIGURE HYPERBOLE IN VIRGIL.

RUDOLF HUNZIKER, *Die Figur der Hyperbel in den Gedichten Vergils*. Berlin, Mayer und Müller, 1896. M. 3.60.

THAT Latin is a rhetorical language, and that Virgil is an extremely rhetorical poet, may be assumed to be pretty well known, but it has perhaps never been so convincingly brought home to us than by Mr. Hunziker in the book the title of which has been printed at the top of this article. His method is lucid and simple. Beginning with the definition of a hyperbole, he divides hyperboles into those of distance, multitude, sound, mass, etc., and then gathers the places of Virgil where they occur, whilst the passage in Homer which gave rise to the hyperbole, is mentioned, and several other writers, ancient and modern, are quoted. Regarding the latter, it would appear that quoting a modern author in editing classics, is considered somewhat of a sin in Germany, as is borne out by the curious note on p. 72, where the author with respect to a commentary of Ludwig-Schaper on *Aen.* ix. 422, containing a quotation from Ossian's *Fingal*, makes the following remark: 'Warum dies aber weder in der Ursprache noch mit genauer Angabe der betreffenden Stelle geschieht, ist mir unerklärlich und zeigt, wie es—grundlos genug—vielfach noch für eine Sünde angesehen wird, den heiligen Apparat der classischen Parallelen in Schulausgaben mit moderner Zutat zu "verunreinigen!"' Let us hope this is an 'überwundener Standpunkt' in other countries!

The author gives evidence of wide and varied reading, which may be proved by the fact that he quotes not only from the classics, ancient and modern, in a narrower sense, but also from authors like Claudianus, Columella, Manilius, Silius, Valerius, Apollonius Rhodius, Musaeus, Ronsard, Ariosto, Tasso, Camoëns, Geibel, Grillparzer, Hebbel, Kleist, Leuthold, Tegnér, Byron, and Ossian.

A few striking instances of Virgil's love of exaggeration are e.g. *Aen.* i. 498 sqq. compared with § 105 sq.; *Georg.* iii. 541 sqq. containing no less than three hyperboles; *Aen.* xii. 899 sq. compared with E 302 sqq. and M 445 sqq. (in Homer the ancient heroes fling stones which no two men of latter times, οἱ οὐκ ἔτι βροτοὶ εἰσι, would suffice to carry; in Apollonius Rhodius four of

these would be required; in Virgil no less than twelve!); and *Aen.* iii. 567, with which majestic hyperbole the opening lines of Shakespeare's *Othello* ii. 1 are compared. Furthermore in the book about the bees, *Georg.* iv., all sorts of high-flown and high-sounding expressions are often used, without their being in harmony with the subject of the poem. One should, however, not judge too rashly, it being sometimes doubtful whether exaggeration exists or not, as is proved by notes 82 and 87, respectively on pp. 60 and 62.

As has been observed, the author begins with a short treatise on the hyperbole. The object and matter by which a hyperbole is called forth, must possess 'an sich' something grand, powerful and extraordinary, and the poet or orator must prepare it, so to say. The various definitions of the Greek and Roman rhetors and grammarians, Gregorius Corinthius, Georgios ὁ χοιροβοσκός (probably a kind of lettered Eumaios), Kokondrios, Diomedes, Pompeius, Beda, Cicero, Julius Rufinianus et hoc genus omne, are weighed and found too light. They are all more or less at sea concerning the question of hyperboles.

The explanations given by Quintilianus, G. Hermann and G. Gerber are *melioris notae*. The chief characteristic of an hyperbole consists in exceeding the limits of truth, not with the purpose to tell falsehoods, but for the sake of making impression, of inciting the imagination. A felicitous and tastefully chosen hyperbole enhances the reader's pleasure. The conclusion, drawn by the author for the (allowed) hyperbole, is given as follows: 'Die Hyperbel ist eine an die Phantasie des Hörers (oder Lesers) appellirende, für ihn aber als solche erkennbare Uebertreibung (Steigerung) der Wahrheit, die vom Sprechenden (oder Autor) mit der bestimmten Absicht, der Ausdrucksweise Schmuck oder Kraft zu verleihen, angewendet wird, und die sowohl in ihrer Qualität als auch in der Quantität ihrer Anwendung den Gesetzen der Aesthetik unterliegt.'

Concerning the question whether the hyperbole belongs to the tropes or the figures, the author decides in general in favour of the latter. When employing a trope, we enter a new sphere of thought; the hyperbole remains in the same sphere, but this is raised to a higher level. If with the trope the proportion of the ideas is $a : b$,

it is with the hyperbole $a : a^n$. Now and then, however, when the hyperbole occurs as metaphor or as comparison, the proportion may be, like this, $a : b^n$.

After this the division of hyperboles is treated, and the opinions of Trypho, Cornificius, Quintilianus, Demetrius, Weisse, G. Hermann,¹ Gotschall, Beyer, and others are mustered, whilst the *ἐμφασις, αὐξησις, ὑπολώσις*, and *μείωσις* are commented upon, as well as the conscious and unconscious hyperboles, the naïve (Homer) and artificial ones (Virgil). As contributions to the study of hyperboles the author mentions J. Egli, *Die Hyperbel in den Komödien des Plautus und in Cicero's Briefen an Atticus*; J. Franke, *De Siliî Italici Punicorum tropis*; Spangeberg, *De Lucretii Cari tropis*; F. Dressler, *De troporum qui dicuntur apud Catullum usu*; M. Hansen, *De tropis et figuris apud Tibullum*; and H. Gebbing, *De Valerii Flacci tropis et figuris*, whilst the monographs of W. Barchfeld (Silius), L. Genther (Juvenalis), C. H. Müller (old elegiac poets), W. Peca' *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Tropik der Poesie, Teil I. Aeschylus, Sophocles und Euripides*, and H. Schmaus' *Tacitus ein Nachahmer Vergils* have been of use to him and have furnished him parallels. Likewise, he is indebted to two works by Oscar Brosin, *Parallelstellen aus modernen Dichtern zu Vergils Aeneis* and *Anklänge an Vergil bei Schiller* and to P. Lange's *Ueber Ronsard Franciade und ihr Verhältnis zu Vergils Aeneis*.

It is, of course, impossible to deal separately with all the places quoted by the author; I shall only mention where I do not agree with him, and where I think I am able to supply him with another instance or comparison. For the sake of gaining space, I shall not quote all passages *totidem verbis*, but only point out where they may be found. If needed, I intend to be more circumstantial.

The explanation of χ 304 given on p. 44, 'sich zu Wolken, d. h. dichtgedrängten Schwärmen duckend,' is in my opinion very hazardous—ingeniosius quam verius. When treating of this place in my dissertation *Studia Tragico-Homerica*, s.v. ἄγρη p. 52 sq., I have quoted the commendable conjecture of Prof. Van Leeuwen:

τῶν μὲν τ' ἐν πεδίῳ νέφεα πῶσσαντα φέονται.

As an instance of the use of *horrescere* and *horrescere* of arms like a *seges*, the verse of Ennius 'sparsis hastis longis campus splendet et horret' might have been mentioned, as well as *Georg.* i. 314, whilst besides N 339

¹ In his *Dissertatio de Hyperbola*.

some space might have been given to Δ 281 sq. and ψ 599.

To the blood-hyperboles on pp. 49 and 50 may be added Shakesp. *Macb.* ii. 2, 60 sqq., *Jul. Caes.* iii. 1, 105 sqq., and *Rich.* II. iii. 3, 43; to the tear-hyperboles Eur. *Alc.* 183 sq., Shakesp. *Lear* iv. 6, 199 sqq., *Tit. Andr.* iii. 2, 17 sqq., *King John* iii. 1, 22 sq., *Rich.* II. iii. 3, 162, *Rom. and Jul.* i. 1, 139, and *Lov. Compl.* 7. Where an ocean or a sea of troubles, injuries, calamities is spoken of, the following instances may be compared: Shakesp. *Hamlet* iii. 1, 59, *Pericles* v. 1, 194, and *Henry VIII.* iii. 2, 360; whilst in *Oth.* i. 3, 159 there occurs 'a world of sighs' and in *Cymb.* iv. 2, 391 'a century of prayers... twice o'er.' In W. Morris' *Earthly Paradise*, 'The Story of Cupid and Psyche' we read:

Thou hast been tried, and cast away all blame

Into the sea of woes that thou dost bear.

On p. 55 a parallel to *Aen.* vi. 305 sqq. may be found in Milton, *P.L.* i. 298 sqq., where the hosts of hell are compared to the autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallombrosa, whilst in the verses immediately following they are compared to 'scattered sedge | Afloat when with fierce wind Orion armed | Hath vexed the Red Sea coast.'

The author declares 51 non-hyperbolical, which I venture to doubt.

In the same way I should like to put a sign of interrogation after most of his instances on p. 57. Does the author really think that these are all hyperboles consciously and purposely employed? To quote an instance from p. 58, *Buc.* i. 11 sq. There *totis* is considered a hyperbole; but I dare say that by *totis agris* we should understand all the fields in Meliboeus' surroundings, all the fields *he* knows of. The same remark is applicable to more instances on this page.

To the mountain-hyperboles the author might have added Shakesp. *Com. of Err.* iv. 4, extr., where 'a mountain of mad flesh' is spoken of, and *Henry IV.* ii. 4, 269, where Falstaff is called 'this huge hill of flesh.' Those who wish to read some amusing scolding-hyperboles, may find them in the second act of *Troilus and Cressida*. As to the passage where Polyphemus is compared to a wooded mountain-top and passages of the same nature, we may call attention to Milton's *P.L.* i. 589 sqq., where Satan stands 'proudly eminent' above the others, like

a tower. With *Aen.* vii. 528 *sqq.* compare Shakesp. *Henry IV.*^b iii. 1, 21 *sqq.* and *Oth.* ii. 1, 92, and with *Aen.* x. 318, Hom. H 141. Why does not the author, in dealing with the peculiar use of *πέρραι*, compare Soph. *Ai.* 693 and *Ant.* 1307? Where the hyperbole 'swifter than the wind' is spoken of, we may mention Shakesp. *Ven. and Ad.* 678 *sqq.* (cp. Shelley's short song from the Arabic, commencing: 'My faint spirit was sitting in the light') and where the ether and the clouds are treated of (p. 90), the opening lines of Shelley's *Skylark* might have been compared, as well as 'The Ettrick Shepherd's' lines on the same bird: 'Wild is thy lay and loud | Far in the downy cloud'...and 'Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.' Similar apostrophes to the skylark are as follows: 'Ethereal Minstrel! Pilgrim of the sky!' (Wordsworth); 'Songster of sky and cloud' (Barton); and 'Ere yet the shadows fly, he mounted sings | Amid the dawning clouds...' (Thomson, *Spring*).¹ To the hyperboles of sound may be added 'All the earth and air | With thy voice is loud' (Shelley, *Skylark*, str. 5), and to the hyperboles of thunder: Burns' *Jolly Beggars*: 'To rattle the thundering drum was his trade,' Dryden's *Power of Music*: 'the thundering drum,' and Shakesp. *King John* v. 2, 173, where the sound of the drum will 'mock the deep-mouth'd thunder,' with which passage compare *Coriol.* i. 4, 59.

Georg. ii. 324 and 364 are not so very hyperbolic in my opinion, whilst 336—339 impress one as a fantasy, in which the hyperbole does no harm to the passage, on the contrary, it enhances its power and significance.

To *Aen.* v. 695 *sq.* might have been added *Ov. Met.* xi. 517, and to *Aen.* iii. 564 *sq.* *Ov. Met.* xi. 502 *sqq.* The quotations from Silius on p. 111 may be augmented with xv. 681.

A double hyperbole of whiteness and smoothness (p. 114) occurs in Shakesp. *Oth.* v. 2, 3 *sqq.*

To the hyperboles of affection may be added Horace's 'O et praesidium et dulce decus meum,' and with the Latin *lux* in the sense of *bliss*, *salvation*, may be compared Hom. π 23 and ρ 41, besides Soph. *El.* 1224.

In mentioning ἀποθνήσκειν (p. 124) in a figurative sense, the author might have called attention to the Latin expressions *deperire alqm* and *taedio alqm enecare*,

whilst on p. 125 in dealing with *Buc.* i. 38 *sq.* and Theocr. iv. 12, Moschos' *Epitaphium Bionis*, as well as Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's *Adonais* might have supplied the author with parallels.

Perhaps the author had better left untouched one of the most difficult lines in the *Aeneid*, viz. iv. 436, that real *crux interpretum*. The explanation quoted from Koch's *Lexicon*, p. 115, is in my opinion as unsatisfying as all the others I know of. Amongst the hyperboles of scoffing and jesting on p. 132, I think Hom. σ 106 may be named, where in the jeering and scornful *κοίπavos* a note of comic exaggeration is sounded; and to *Aen.* ix. 414 similar scenes from Ovid (e.g. the fight between Perseus and Phineus, and between the Lapithae and Centaurs) might have been added.

In dealing with *occidere* (*Aen.* xi. 413) the use of *perii* might have been commented upon, and Soph. *Ai.* 896 have been adduced as a parallel.

According to the author (p. 140) *Georg.* ii. 172 contains a greater compliment to the Indians than to the Romans, but may we not assume *imbellem* to be used here proleptically?

In order not to overtax the reader's patience, I shall abstain from further particulars, and only add that at the end of his book the author gives an aesthetic appreciation of Virgil's epic, in which he states as his opinion that its merits have been often overvalued, and that it stands far beneath Homer's *Iliad*. I dare say Mr. Hunziker is in the main right, when he judges Virgil as follows on p. 143: 'In dem richtigen, aber vielleicht unbewussten Gefühle, dass ihm wirkliche epische Begabung fehle, hat Vergil eine ganz besondere Sorgfalt auf die Sprache verwendet; er wollte seine Schwächen durch das ausgefeilte Pathos verdecken, und so schwelgt er in einer pathetisch gehobenen Diction, um möglichst episch zu erscheinen, tut aber dabei meiner Ansicht nach des Guten viel zu viel, so dass man seine Redeweise oft mit Recht schwülstig, unklar, übertrieben und daher langweilig nennen kann; wir sehnen uns bei der Lectüre der Aeneis zurück zu dem einfachen Heldengesang Homers, der von echt künstlerischer—und nicht künstlicher Schönheit durchtränkt ist, und der nie durch eine grossrednerische Sprache das Fehlen eines bedeutenden Inhalts bemänteln muss.'

¹ Cp. Shakesp. Song in *Cymbeline*: 'Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings' and Sonnet XXIX.

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