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FELIPE G. HERNÁNDEZ MUÑOZ / MÁXIMO A. GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ

Notes on the Position of the Pronoun 'Εγώ in the Iambic Trimeter of Greek Theatre (II): Comedy

ABSTRACT: The study of the position of ἐγώ in the iambic trimeter of Greek Theatre has been added to with the data from comedy (Aristophanes and Menander) and conclusions have been drawn, comparing them with those from tragedy: Aeschylus and Sophocles, on the one hand, and Aristophanes and Menander, on the other, seem to be opposed in their tendencies.

Keywords: positions, ἐγώ, iambic trimeter, Greek Theatre, Comedy.

In 2019, in this same journal¹, F. G. Hernández Muñoz published a study on the position of the nominative pronoun ἐγώ² within the iambic trimeter of the three main Greek tragedians (excluding the fragments) and showed the intention³ of extending the work to the main authors of comedy. Thanks to the collaboration of M. A. García González, we are finally able to present our study which, although brief, has been very laborious to develop due to the amount of data involved. We believe that the 1,477 examples we have analysed (909 in tragedy and 568 in comedy) can offer a fairly complete picture of Greek theatre as a whole⁴.

We begin from the division of the iambic trimeter into the traditional 6 “feet” or “sedes”:

| I | II | III | IV | V | VI |
|----|----|-----|----|----|----|
| x- | v- | x- | v- | x- | v- |

We found 416 examples of ἐγώ in Aristophanes and 152 in Menander, which have been distributed, according to their positions, as follows (in absolute data and %):

- 1 “Notes on the position of the pronoun ἐγώ in the iambic trimeter of Greek Theatre”, *Hermes* 147, 1, 2019, 103–105. We refer to this work for the methodological basis and bibliography for our study.
- 2 It is worth noting that it is particularly fitting that its “short” “long” (v-) metrical sequence appears in this verse and that, despite its inclusion not entirely necessary for the understanding of the verb, it is often used for emphasis and contrast. We have limited ourselves to the simple form ἐγώ, and have foregone other less frequently used forms such as κἀγώ, ἐγωγε, ἐγῶδα, ἐγῶμαι which, for different phonetic reasons, change the original sequence v-.
- 3 p. 105, n. 3
- 4 Within the research project from the Complutense University of Madrid – University of Salamanca PID2019–105733 GB-I00, Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.



| | I | II | III | IV | V | VI |
|-------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| | x- | v- | x- | v- | x- | v- |
| ARIS. | 154(37%) | 58(13.9%) | 14(3.4%) | 50(12%) | 22(5.3%) | 118(28.4%) |
| MEN. | 42(27.6%) | 20(13.2%) | 6(3.9%) | 12(7.9%) | 10(6.6%) | 62(40.8%) |
| Total | 196(34.5%) | 78(13.8%) | 20(3.5%) | 62(10.9%) | 32(5.6%) | 180(31.7%) |

In each half:

| | First half (I, II, III) | second half (IV, V, VI) | |
|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| ARIS. | 226(54.3%) | 190(45.7%) | Total: 416 |
| MEN. | 68(44.7%) | 84(55.3%) | Total: 152 |
| Total | 294(51.8%) | 274(48.2%) | Total: 568 |

In each meter:

| | meter 1 (I, II) | meter 2 (III, IV) | meter 3 (V, VI) | |
|-------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| ARIS. | 212(51%) | 64(15.4%) | 140(33.6%) | Total: 416 |
| MEN. | 62(40.8%) | 18(11.8%) | 72(47.4%) | Total: 152 |
| | 274(48.2%) | 82(14.5%) | 212(37.3%) | Total: 568 |

In light of the above data, it can be concluded that in Greek comedy, as in tragedy, ἐγώ is often found in the first and last positions (I and VI), which are the most emphatic positions in the trimeter. However, there are differences between the authors. In Aristophanes, position I (37%) is the most dominant in the first half (54.3%) and in meter 1 (51%), while in Menander, position VI (40.8%) is the most dominant in the second half (55.3%) and in meter 3 (47.4%). In both authors, the central position, III, is the least frequent (approx. 3–4%), within meter 1 (11–15%).

If we were to also consider the data on the three tragedians, we would have a rather complete panorama of Greek theatre as a whole. In total, there are 1,477 examples, of which 93 correspond to Aeschylus, 306 to Sophocles, 510 to Euripides, 416 to Aristophanes, and 152 to Menander, which have been distributed as follows:

For each position:

| | I | II | III | IV | V | VI |
|-------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | x- | v- | x- | v- | x- | v- |
| AES. | 38(40.9%) | 7(7.5%) | 0 | 15(16.1%) | 7(7.5%) | 26(28%) |
| SOPH. | 65(21.2%) | 43(14.1%) | 2(0.6%) | 49(16%) | 43(14.1%) | 104(34%) |
| EUR. | 153(30%) | 64(12.5%) | 1(0.2%) | 81(15.9%) | 61(12%) | 150(29.4%) |
| ARIS. | 154(37%) | 58(13.9%) | 14(3.4%) | 50(12%) | 22(5.3%) | 118(28.4%) |
| MEN. | 42(27.6%) | 20(13.2%) | 6(3.9%) | 12(8%) | 10(6.6%) | 62(40.8%) |
| Total | 452(30.6%) | 192(13%) | 23(1.6%) | 207(14%) | 143(9.7%) | 460(31.1%) |



For each half:

| | First half (I, II, III) | second half (IV, V, VI) | |
|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| AES. | 45 (48.4 %) | 48 (51.6 %) | Total: 93 |
| SOPH. | 110 (35.9 %) | 196 (64.1 %) | Total: 306 |
| EUR. | 218 (42.7 %) | 292 (57.3 %) | Total: 510 |
| ARIS. | 226 (54.3 %) | 190 (45.7 %) | Total: 416 |
| MEN. | 68 (44.7 %) | 84 (55.3 %) | Total: 152 |
| Total | 667 (45.2 %) | 810 (54.8 %) | Total: 1477 |

For each meter:

| | Meter 1 (I, II) | meter 2 (III, IV) | meter 3 (V, VI) | |
|-------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| AES. | 45 (48.4 %) | 15 (16.1 %) | 33 (35.5 %) | Total: 93 |
| SOPH. | 108 (35.3 %) | 51 (16.6 %) | 147 (48.1 %) | Total: 306 |
| EUR. | 217 (42.5 %) | 82 (16.1 %) | 211 (41.4 %) | Total: 510 |
| ARIS. | 212 (51 %) | 64 (15.4 %) | 140 (33.6 %) | Total: 416 |
| MEN. | 62 (40.7 %) | 18 (12 %) | 72 (47.3 %) | Total: 152 |
| | 644 (43.6 %) | 230 (15.6 %) | 603 (40.8 %) | Total: 1477 |

We previously mentioned that Aeschylus and Sophocles seem to present completely opposite trends in terms of the main positions (Aeschylus: **I** vs. Sophocles: **VI**) and, above all, in the trimeter meters: Aeschylus: meter 1 (48.4 %) – meter 3 (35.5 %) vs. Sophocles: meter 1 (35.3 %) – meter 3 (48.1 %)⁵ Although not in an exact way, something similar occurs in comedy, both in the positions (Aristophanes: **I** vs. Menander: **VI**) and meters: Aristophanes: meter 1 (51 %) – meter 3 (33.6 %) vs. Menander: meter 1 (40.7 %) – meter 3 (47.3 %). From this point of view, Aristophanes would appear to be closer to Aeschylus, and Menander closer to Sophocles, while Euripides would be considered the most balanced author. Meter 2 is shown as the meter with the lowest and most stable percentage in all of the authors, although this percentage decreases somewhat in comedy, especially in Menander (12 %).

Moreover, in the central position, III, the pronoun is the least used by all of the authors, although the percentage increases somewhat from tragedy to comedy (Aeschylus: 0 vs. Menander: 3.9 %). In a similar way, position IV⁶ decreases from tragedy to comedy (Aeschylus: 16.1 % vs. Menander: 8 %). Overall, position V also decreases in comedy.

5 In positions II and V, the percentage in Sophocles (14.1 % in both) almost doubles that of Aeschylus (7.5 % in both).

6 When ἐγώ is in position III or IV, we may be presented with cases of the debated “caesura media”. This seems to be the case in some, very rare, examples of Aeschylus (*Pr.* 252, *Cho.* 444), Sophocles (*Ant.* 997, *Ant.* 555, *Aj.* 343, *OT.* 581, *OT.* 968, *Ph.* 1021, *OC.* 270), Euripides (*Hipp.* 686, *Hel.* 503, *Ph.* 1317, *Ba.* 841, *IA.* 973), Aristophanes (*Nub.* 17, *Nub.* 141, *Vesp.* 941, *Av.* 77, *Av.* 649, *Av.* 815, *Thes.* 72, *Thes.* 1208–1209, *Lys.* 1229, *Fr.* 101a.2, Edmonds) and Menander (*Dysc.* 658, *Epitrep.* 328, *Peric.* 475, *Fr.* 745.3, Sandbach).



Finally, Aristophanes is the only author who includes ἐγώ more in the first half of the verse (54.3 % vs. 45.7 %). On the opposite side of the scale would be Menander (44.7 % vs. 55.3 %) and the tragedians, especially Sophocles (35.9 % vs. 64.1), who, of all the authors, is the one who prefers to include the pronoun in the second half.

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