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A surplus of meaning : the intent of irregularity in Vedic poetry

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Samenvatting

Grammatical as well as poetological studies of the Ṛgveda have almost exclusively concentrated on the regular patterns of Vedic Grammar and Poetry. As was to be expected, irregularity of any kind has always had a very difficult stand with scholars. Against the background of a highly regular prosodic and grammatical system, rare exceptions have been neglected, played down, or simply (dis)qualified as nonce formations, aberrations, abnormities, and even monstrosities.

The further a formal excentricity deviates from the norm, the more likely it appears to me that this deviation is intended. And, not only is it to be accepted as intentional, it may convey a Surplus of Meaning that could not have been communicated in a regular way and by normal means of expression.

All along the partly published (A. B. C. D.), partly unpublished (E. F.) articles that are united in this dissertation, I have enacted the role of a critically devoted advocate of the Vedic poet, taking sides with him or trying to do justice, in his apparent absence, to certain forms of irregularity.

A. In my first publication, “The Nonce Formation: A more-than-momentary look at the *Augenblicksbildung*”, *The Vedas*, Groningen 2004, 261-283 (= 21-43), four different kinds of grammatical anomaly are presented: 1. cross-breeds of tenses and moods (265-272 [= 25-32]), 2. blends of verbal and nominal forms (272-274 [= 32-34]), 3. re-reduplication (274-280 [= 34-40]), and 4. double ending (280-283 [= 40-43]).

B. In my paper “Mind-Reading the Poet”, *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 24, Bremen 2007, 105-139 (= 45-79), various cases of intended metrical irregularity are treated: two extreme examples each of 1. catalexis (110-130 [= 50-70]) and 2. hypermetricality (130-139 [= 70-79]).

C. In a corollary to the mind-reading paper, “Conspicuous Absence”, published in *Indologica*, *Gedenkschrift Elizarenkova*, Moskow 2008, 183-195 (= 81-93), I discuss yet another catalectic line, ṚV 10.129.7b.

D. “Portmanteau Words in the Ṛgveda”, East and West, Bremen 2009, 89-110 (= 95-116), is mainly concerned with three Vedic formations where two base words seem to be blended in the creative way that was designed as a literary device — so many secular centuries later — by Lewis Carroll.

E. After this, there follows an unpublished article (1-21 [= 117-137]) sporting the fancy title S*T*A*R*S. It consists of four digressions and one sub-excursus, all of which are connected, however loosely, with the preceding publication.

F. Finally, yet another unpublished paper deals with “The Mid-Word Cæsura. Degrees of Metrical Irregularity” (1-62 [= 139-200]). Here, a great number of exceptional trimeters are listed in which a cæsura **I. 0.** falls between two elliptical duals (4 [= 142]), **I. 1.** coincides with the seam of a compound (4-10 [= 142-148]), **I. 2.** separates the suffix from the rest of a derivative (10-14 [= 148-152]), **II.** is kept in suspense inside a single indivisible word, either **II. 1.** a noun (14-27 [= 152-165]) or **II. 2.** a verb (27-62 [= 165-200]). The more rarified and exceptional these carefully graded trimetrical lines are, the more deserving of a distinctly individualized treatment they seemed to me.