

CHAPTER V

THE PARTICIPIAL CONSTRUCTIONS - A REVIEW

182

Traditional studies on this aspect of the language, especially on the past participle, have thrown considerable light on the syntactic behaviour and the semantic function of such constructions. A summary of the results is given below for reference.

Position

ERBEN (54) points out that the clause opens the sentence if it is a prerequisite for the following statement.

Seines Talentes versichert schrieb er

(assured of his talent he wrote ...)

BRINKMANN (26) notes that the minor clause used attributively usually follows the noun to which it belongs :

Die weite Diele, mit grossen Steinfliesen
gepflastert, widerhallte

(The wide hall, paved with large tiles, echoed ...)

BRINKMANN (ibid) shows further that if the adverbials have close connection to the verb, i.e. if they are complements to the predicate, then the participle stands at the end :

¹⁸² In the following pages participle refers always to past participle (Partizip II).

Ein Bein ueber das andere gelegt, blaettern er
 (One leg placed over the other, he turned the
 leaves ...)

Waehrend die Beinkleider, sorgfaeltig in Falten
gelegt, ...

(while the trousers, carefully folded at the
 at the crease)

Where the adverbials are not bound the participle can also
 open the minor clause :

Buddenbrook spaekte, gestuetzt auf die
 Loeschetange ...

(Buddenbrook peered, propped on the candle
 extinguisher ...)

As JUNG (95) has remarked, the participles in any case mostly
 take the initial or final positions within the clause.

Semantic functions

Generalizations have been made about the semantics of
 participial constructions also. GRIMM (67) has observed
 that in general the participle has passive sense though
 transitive verbs can be active :

ein eingebildeter Mensch (a conceited person)

BEHAGEL (775) writes : Verbs which require genitive,
 dative or prepositional complements form - seldom - passive
 participles. Only "gefolgt von" occurs frequently.

BRINKMANN (ibid) has cited an example where an action-verb (Handlungsverb) has active sense :

ein alter Mann, angebissen den Arm von wuetendem Hunger

(an old man, the arm bitten through furious hunger)

PAUL (137) names transitive verbs as productive of passively used participles as against which intransitives produce active participles :

der geschriebene Brief (the written letter)

der abgefahrene Zug (the departed train)

Transitive verbs can be attributes only to the object :

den Acker pfluegen - der gepfluegte Acker

(to plough the field - the ploughed field)

+ der gelesene Student (the read student)

The participle II describes the completion of a process and the resultant quality of the subject or object (SCHMIDT (157)). Perfective intransitives participate freely in such constructions (ERBEN (54)) :

Der schnurrgerade gewachsene Baum

(The tree grown dead straight)

Imperfective intransitives can occasionally be used similarly if modified by an adverbial (JUNG (95)) :

+ das gelaufene Kind (the run child)

das auf die Strasse gelaufene Kind

(the child run out on the street)

JUNG (95) cites the following types of clauses as possible for the sentential participials :

temporal : und dann gestorben, kam ich hier ins Schattenbereich

(and then dead, I came here into the region of shadows)

modal : sie sah mit blickarmen Augen, vor sich hin, von heissen unruhigen Gedanken erfuehlt.

(She looked with expressionless eyes in front of her, filled with hot uneasy thoughts)

concessive : obgleich gewarnt, ging Luther nach Worms.

(Although warned, Luther went to Worms.)

causal : Allzu straff gespannt, zerspringt der Bogen.

(stretched too taut, the bow snaps.)

attributive : Sie brachte Blumen mit und Fruechte, gereift auf einer anderen Flur

(She brought flowers along and fruits ripened on another field)

The participle occupies a middle position between the noun and the verb. (GRIMM) Owing to its nominal character it can function as an attribute to the noun. Used as an adverbial it shows the disposition or circumstance of the Agens. (ERBEN, ibid) :

Er ging von widerwillen geschuettelt.

(He went shaken by aversion.)

BRINKMANN (ibid) makes the same observation and adds that the content of such attributive appositions can be formulated by a "have"-sentence.

Er hatte ein Bein ueber das andere geschlagen.

(He had thrown one leg over the other.)

In such formulations the verb hold must take the place of have if a state is being expressed.:

Er hielt ihre Hand in der seinen

(He held her hand in his)

Where haben can be employed, the participle II shows the enduring effect of a completion.

The verbal character enables the participle to occur in absolute constructions. :

der Konsul stand, die Haende in den Taschen vergraben

(the consul stood, the hands buried in the pockets).

The relevant noun in the participial construction however belongs to the realm of the subject of the sentence, being either parts of the body or clothing and tools, which can be carried in the hand. The noun of the participial is always in the accusative case. (BRINKMANN, ibid)

The normative views on the use of participles

The normative rules concern mainly two aspects of the participle : active-passive sense and reference to time (past-present). ENGEL (52) takes up issue with ANDRESEN for calling ein gern gelesener Schriftsteller (a gladly read writer) questionable. Engel cites classic examples where the rule : 'participle II only for the past, participle I only for the present' has been broken.¹⁸³ WUSTMANN (187) has pointed out that the restriction :

only real passives of transitive verbs and in active only such intransitives which take the auxiliary "to be" for forming the perfect tenses can form the Partiziple II

is a later historical development. In the eighteenth and the beginning of nineteenth century the participle I (present participle) has been used also in the passive sense :

zu einer vorhabenden Reise (to an intending journey).

Especially officialese has been subjected to severe criticism for violating the norms of usage. SCHILL (156) cites as illustration of faulty usage of the passive participle in the active sense : "Die am 10. dieses Monats stattgefundene (richtig: vorgenommene) Ausschusswahl hat folgendes Ergebnis

¹⁸³ Ich ritt ungewaschen und ungefuchstueckt nach Sedan
(I rode unwashed and unbreakfasted to Sedan)
(Bismarck cited in ENGEL (ibid))

gehabt". (The elections to the committee taken place on the 10th instant has had the following result.) The participle is here not only wrong, it is quite superfluous! WUSTMANN (ibid) also condemns "die stattgefundenne Versammlung." (The taken-place meting)