

The extensive narrative stichomythic passages in Euripidean tragedy have long been criticized for being unnatural and uneconomic, though Schwinge 1968 defended them on the basis of their appropriateness and dramatic function within their wider contexts. This paper is not so much concerned with the justification of narrative stichomythia as with its characteristics as an unconventional type of narrative presentation. Euripides appears to be experimenting with the stichomythic form as an alternative to the traditional presentation of narrative in a speech. For example, in *Supp.* 750-771 stichomythia is used instead of a messenger speech and in *Hec.* 1252-1287 instead of a *deus ex machina* speech. By studying narrative stichomythia as a form of narrative presentation, I hope to shed new light on its function and purpose.

Whereas many narrative parts of Euripidean tragedy have been the subject of narratological study (compare, for example, De Jong 1991 and Barrett 2002 on the messenger speech, and Goward 1999, Markantonatos 2002 and De Jong, Nünlist & Bowie 2004 on various parts), the field of narrative stichomythia has remained relatively unexplored by narratologists, probably because of its problematic dialogic nature. In this paper I will demonstrate how a narratological analysis of narrative stichomythia in Euripidean tragedy may work, by discussing the relationship between narrator (storyteller) and narratee (listener).

In practice, the traditional narratological terms of narrator and narratee prove unsuitable for the analysis of narrative stichomythic dialogue. Therefore I will propose the more flexible term 'distribution of narrative activity'. In order to locate this narrative activity, I will offer a model of different types of information-seeking questions and answers (based on Stenström 1984). Subsequently, I will illustrate the various narrative patterns in which the distribution of narrative activity may result with some examples: *Andr.* 900-20 shows the accumulation of narrative activity, *Ion* 539-54 the stagnation of narrative activity, and *Hec.* 239-48 unilateral narrative activity. Finally, I will show that the narrative patterns displayed in these examples are closely connected with the communicative situation, characterization of the interlocutors, and dramatic irony.

Thus I hope to show that the narratological analysis of Euripidean tragedy does not need to remain on the level of structural classification, but may serve to provide a concrete basis for broader dramatic interpretation.

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