

what questions this approach may help us answer is less clear. One that Walton raises is the reason for the 'three actor rule' in tragedy. It might have to do with economic constraints, I suppose, but if we remember that the festival was also a competition, it seems more likely to be one of the rules designed to ensure fairness. The playwrights themselves, if we can trust our sources, got the number expanded from one to two to three; they apparently felt that they could do what they wanted within that limit.

Marianne McDonald's concluding chapter moves off in a different direction: she surveys some transmutations of Oedipus in modern opera, on radio and television, and in film. The approach is familiar to those who know McDonald's earlier publications on the subject, and it stands to some extent outside the book's remit, but one is glad to have it here as a reminder that the tradition of performance of ancient drama did not end with the end of the ancient Greek and Roman theatre.

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THE TRAGIC TRIMETER

BAECHLE (N.) *Metrical Constraint and the Interpretation of Style in the Tragic Trimeter*. Pp. xvi + 343. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto and Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007. Paper, £23.99, €37.78, US\$36.95 (Cased, £69, €108.68, US\$105). ISBN: 978-0-7391-2143-6 (978-0-7391-0950-2 hbk).

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There is no poetic form more analysed than the Greek tragic trimeter. Its manifold intricacies of prosody and stylistics have been studied so extensively, particularly by Devine and Stephens in the late twentieth century, that most future developments in the field are contingent upon further refinement of the three tragedians' texts. One would suspect therefore that B., with a title as broad as that of the publication of his doctoral thesis ('Metrical Constraint and Poetic Style in the Greek Tragic Trimeter', Yale, 1993), has largely provided a synthesis of previous knowledge on the subject. This suspicion is mostly confirmed, since the book, for all its statistics and length, contains little that is new and interesting. The primary findings are buried within various technical discussions, the three main conclusions of which (as far I can unearth them) do not startle: (i) metrical constraint was pervasive for the tragedians; (ii) Euripides was typically the most prone to employing metrical expedients (resolution, synizesis, lengthening of short final vowels, etc.); (iii) hyperbaton was typically used *metri causa* rather than for stylistic reasons, since, being an artificial variation of natural word order, it had to be used with reservation within the register of tragic dialogue. The last conclusion should be understood in light of B.'s almost complete dismissal of pragmatic motivations in favour of metrical convenience. Notwithstanding the book's title, B. offers limited interpretation of tragic style as opposed to its description.

Following a lengthy introduction which outlines the scope of the survey and imports a certain amount of modern stylistic theory, Part I concerns the tragedians' employment of numerous devices to modify the prosody of various word shapes, and Part II treats the use of hyperbaton, focussing upon the preferred compositional

patterns of phrases and semantic categories of modifiers involved. B. then provides an impressive array of statistics concerning the distribution of word shapes and an appendix outlining what and whose texts have been used (*PV* and *Rhesus* are excluded throughout, and a selection of eight plays often represents Euripides); a relatively thorough bibliography and an *index rerum* (but not *locorum*) close the volume.

Since the book lacks both an overall conclusion and obvious logical development, it may prove uninviting to the casual reader. Its primary value is as a dense repertory of statistics that illustrate the preferences and differences amongst the compositional styles of the three tragedians and, to a lesser extent, Aristophanes, whose employment of paratragic elements B. often adduces as an instructive *comparandum*. Yet since the statistical evidence of Descroix, Schein, Philippides and Cropp and Fick (*inter alios*) is already well known to scholars, the value of B.'s statistics is limited. None the less, his models for analysing the trimeter (particularly in distinguishing between final consonants and vowels of word shapes) are the most sophisticated yet published, and a large number of tables present analyses not previously carried out. Whether the fact that B.'s myriad statistics have been collected – and scanned – almost entirely by a computer programme increases or decreases their reliability, it is difficult to say. Yet when one learns that the texts of the tragic poets used as his basis are those available on *TLG*, i.e. Murray's Aeschylus (1955), Dain and Mazon's Sophocles (1955–60) and Murray's Euripides (1902–13), it is clear that their value is significantly limited. To produce a detailed study of tragic metrics without taking into account the signal improvements in the text of the poets in the last fifty years by Page, Diggle, Dawe and West, among others, is a remarkable decision. B.'s one-line defence does not pass muster (p. 325): 'It has been assumed that corrupt lines, textual variants, and differences in the text resulting from diverse emendations will not have a significant effect statistically'. For large-scale statistics that may be so, but B.'s figures are very often low, frequently no more than one or two. In such cases the editor's decision is paramount: has a metrical rarity been rightly preserved here but needlessly emended away elsewhere? Conversely, how many instances of unique anomalies has an editor removed from his text owing to their very singularity? That B. typically does not provide references for any statistics in his tables compounds the problem: although the book can tell us, for instance, that only once is the second syllable (when common) of a third paean treated as long or that only once does a pyrrhic non-demonstrative adjective undergo lengthening of its final syllable, we are only told that both occur in Euripides.

B. does not seem to have practised composition of tragic iambs. Such an exercise would have demonstrated how obvious certain compositional patterns were, owing to the restrictions of the tragic trimeter. (A considerably more interesting question is how and why these restrictions came into being.) Familiarity with compositional jargon would have prevented his opening Part I, Chapter 2 ('Metrical Lengthening of Short Final Vowels') with the sentence 'Short final vowels very rarely make position in trimeter'. Nevertheless, the modern composer can learn much here, particularly from the extensive discussion of hyperbaton, although it is unfortunate that instances of the device with either two or more lexical words interceding or enjambment were excluded from the analysis. It is unfortunate, too, that H. Dik's important *Word Order in Greek Tragic Dialogue*, which also appeared in 2007, does not feature.

In sum, B. has provided a considerable repertory of statistics which, save for the smallest figures, will be largely accurate. Yet it is left for the persistent and perceptive reader to draw wider interpretative conclusions and to separate what is truly informative from what is either obvious once the structure of the trimeter is briefly

considered or mostly irrelevant. For instance, in spite of his apparently thorough analysis of the deployment of word shapes, B. only provides a footnote (pp. 224–5, n. 43) on the significant fact that the great majority of ‘medial caesurae’ are mitigated by elision and is silent on Sophocles’ curious occasional employment of synaphea in his trimeters.

The work is austere printed. There are few misprints in Greek and Latin but over two dozen in English (including ‘trimester’ within the rear-cover blurb). It remains unclear why the book appears in the series ‘Greek Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches’.

The main *desideratum* for the study of tragic metre remains a sophisticated and comprehensive analysis of choral lyric.

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WORD ORDER IN TRAGEDY

DIK (H.) *Word Order in Greek Tragic Dialogue*. Pp. xvi + 281, ills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Cased, £55. ISBN: 978-0-19-927929-6.

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After her dissertation *Word Order in Ancient Greek* (1995), which provided important new insights into word order in Herodotus, D. turned to word order in tragic dialogue. In her introductory chapter, D. states that she wants to offer an alternative to studies that have tried to explain word order by means of metrical structure. D.’s general approach to the question is that we can only determine what is poetic about tragic dialogue by trying to analyse it as if it were prose. In the second chapter, D. sets out a theoretical framework serving as a background for her analysis. Crucial pragmatic notions such as Topic, Focus, Theme, Tail and Setting (derived from Simon Dik’s *Functional Grammar*) are defined and illustrated in such a way that those readers not very familiar with linguistic theory and terminology will be able to follow her argument. According to D., the basic word order in a Greek clause can be represented by the following ‘formula’: Setting–Topic–Focus–Verb–Remainder. Within a constituent, adjectives normally follow the noun. The adjective precedes the noun, however, if it is pragmatically more salient than the noun.

In Chapter 3, D. presents a case study involving two verbs of dying, *θνῆσκω* and *ἄλλυμαι*, in tragedy. These two verbs were chosen to provide a random sample of passages which are however – thanks to a shared core of meaning – easy to compare. The question D. tries to answer here is whether pragmatically marked constituents (Topic and Focus) precede the verb, as her model predicts. In a discussion of a large number of examples sometimes involving complicating factors such as theme, setting, or multiple-focus constituents, D. convincingly demonstrates that this is indeed the case. Only her explanation of a number of verb-initial clauses by means of the notion of predicate–Topic (which figures also in her 1995 book) is less attractive from a theoretical point of view. Topics should refer to discourse referents, i.e. referents for which long-term ‘file cards’ are created. I would propose to interpret such clause-initial predicates (including the extended Topics on pp. 148 and 163) more broadly as pragmatically presupposed elements.