

For a long time the occurrence of extensive narrative stichomythic passages in Euripidean tragedy has been considered problematic, the main objection against them being that they seem unnatural. More recently narrative stichomythia has been re-evaluated. Schwinge (1968) has tried to show the dramatic function of *Erzählstichomythie* within its wider context and the appropriateness of its stichomythic form. This paper is not so much concerned with the justification of narrative stichomythia - this topic has been sufficiently dealt with by Schwinge - as with its characteristics as a type of narrative presentation. By way of illustration, three narrative devices found in narrative stichomythia will be briefly discussed.

Euripidean tragedy contains several narrative parts, including the prologue, the messenger speech and the exodos, most of which have been the subject of narratological study (De Jong 1991; Goward 1999). So far nobody has analyzed story-presentation in narrative stichomythia. Nevertheless, Euripides seems to be experimenting with this narrative form as an alternative to the more traditional *rhexis*. For example, in *Supp.* 750-771 the latter part of the messenger speech is replaced by narrative stichomythic dialogue and in *Hec.* 1252-1287 narrative stichomythia replaces the more common *deus ex machina* speech.

As an example of how the narratological study of narrative stichomythia might work, I will discuss a few narrative devices that this dialogic form of narrative presentation features:

1. Variants of the 'there is a place / person X' – motif, which is frequently found in Homer (De Jong 2001: 83), are used by narrators of narrative stichomythia to sketch the local/spatial (*Ion* 294), temporal (*Ph.* 415), or thematical (*Med.* 683) background against which their story is going to take place, in order to focus the attention of the narratees and to involve them in their narrative.
2. The οἴσθα-question is more specifically characteristic of the dialogic nature of narrative stichomythia. It is used by narrators to encourage their narratees to participate actively in (a subsection of) the story they are about to begin (*Ion* 936-7). Thus the οἴσθα-question creates the impression of a lively interaction between them.
3. Whereas in the Euripidean messenger speech the *historical present* is used by narrators to establish an experiencing focalization (De Jong 1991: 45), in narrative stichomythia a number of instances of the historical present are used by the narratee (*Ion* 271, 297). He seems to get so caught up in the narrative, that he is mentally going back to the time when the narrated events took place. This use of the historical present may thus be considered not so much a narrative technique of the narrator, as an indication of the success of his engaging narrative.

