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**Interpreting Songs, Interpreting Meters: the *Antigone* Parados**

The chorus of the *Antigone* enter addressing the sun with a single sentence whose phrasing corresponds to the three metrical periods of the first strophe. Close examination shows four problems of form and content; they can be described as problems of metrical analysis, but since it is the literary critic who must ultimately decide them—for they are implicated in our understanding of how the chorus of this play present themselves—they also illustrate a fifth problem: how we do metrical analyses and use them as a guide to the poetry in the play.

In most commentaries the first period is three glyconeans, with the first overlapping. The second is a so-called “choriambic dimeter” followed by a “dragged” glyconeon overlapping a hipponactean. The third is a series of choriambic dimeters with a concluding pherecatean.

- 1) Some scholars call this a homogeneous structure, others say a change of meter takes place in the second period. Is the similarity of a glyconeon and a choriambic dimeter or the difference between them more important?
- 2) Some scholars reject the possibility of an overlapping dragged glyconeon and posit other cola for the second period. Why are such disagreements possible?
- 3) A potential alternate analysis, simpler but previously unnoticed, renders the first two questions moot. It eliminates the overlaps, the glyconic series, and the hipponactean in favor of choriambic dimeters with clausal suffixes (iambus and baccheus) at period end—an undoubtedly homogeneous structure that is varied only by the repetition of a shorter colon (acephalous choriambic dimeter) in matching vocatives, *Aktis aeliou...hameras blepharon*. Unfortunately, the antistrophe has a totally different, two-part rhetorical structure, lacks such matching phrases, and includes a passage where the abnormality of an overlapping dragged glyconic would fit the sense. It is difficult to choose one analysis for both, if we wish to take rhetorical phrasing into account.
- 4) A separate analysis for each strophe provides the best fit, but would violate the common axiom that the colon is the fundamental structure. It assumes a rhythmic basis which the colometric analysis articulates. Several recent theories, although mutually incompatible, point toward just such a possibility.
- 5) The two-analysis solution can be justified here; however, the choice to accept or reject this or any analysis cannot be made in purely metrical terms. Different metrical analyses originate in different assumptions. Traditionally, meter is treated as a formal system to be explicated before a literary appreciation; but if metrical analyses regularly gave an account of the possible choices and their consequences, commentators could offer judgements using both literary and metrical criteria, and, over time, such coordinated discussions would inform our understanding of which assumptions are most probable.