intervention of Apollo in *Eum.*—makes a very good specimen case of K.'s method (pp. 243–5). K. uses his argument to this point, the painstaking process by which he has shown how Aeschylus has imbued each 'Handlung' of the drama with a cause that connects it to the 'Plot' (K. employs the mixed-language terminology of M. Pfister, which may at times be confusing to readers whose first language is English), to demonstrate the fundamentally different quality of the action of *Eum.* from that of the *Ag.* and *Cho.* For K., *Eum.* is an exploration of the divine forces that lie at the back of the human causality that the previous two tragedies have brought to the stage.

That human causality is best characterized as the 'Geschlechterfluch' of K.'s title, and the most important contribution of his book—though far from the only one—must be the demonstration that the family curse of the House of Atreus serves rather as the causal backbone of the *Oresteia* than simply as a source of good dramatic material. Among other critical insights, K.'s reading of the eagle-simile and the eagle-portent in the parodos of *Ag.* should win a great many supporters, integrating as it does the meal of Thyestes with the sacrifice of Iphigenia in a way that I can only describe as stunning. K.'s discussion of the parodos as a whole, indeed, which takes up ninety pages of Chapter I, may well prove a touchstone for interpretations to come. The qualities that make those ninety pages so valuable, and which they share with every other page of this volume, are a clear, forceful writing style and something not usually found in association with such a style—a remarkable depth of erudition in text-critical and interpretative scholarship alike.

University of Connecticut ROGER TRAVIS

TRAGIC TALES

B. GOWARD: *Telling Tragedy. Narrative Technique in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.* Pp. vi + 214. London: Duckworth, 1999. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-7156-2795-3.

Scholars often see drama and narrative as utterly distinct, and narrative theory has had relatively little influence on the study of tragedy. To be sure, I. F. de Jong has applied narratological method to the messenger speech, while D. Roberts and F. Dunn have studied closure, but much work on tragedy has emphasized either stagecraft or language and social context, not storytelling.

Tragedy is a form of storytelling, however, and has much in common with narrative in the narrower sense. This book discusses several aspects of the narrative methods of the tragedians, both in the actual narratives of tragedies and in their overall progression. Though well worth reading, it lacks focus: it does not fully discuss the relation between narrative and authorial audience, or the treatment of time, or the manipulation of audience expectations, or the building of narrative progressions, but all of these. The result is dissatisfying, despite the intelligence and literary sensitivity the book generally shows throughout.

One problem is theoretical. The narrative theory most influential on the book is the actantial theory of Greimas; Bremond, Bal, Genette, Prince, and Propp hover in the background. The author, though, is primarily interested in how the tragedians manage audience response and in the meanings of individual narrative sequences. Actantial theory is generally too abstract to explain the detail of particular texts (though Goward's treatment of the recognition-process in *IT* is a partial exception). In general, structuralist narratology has usually concentrated on the novel and has emphasized

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phenomena peculiar to narrative in the strict sense, such as focalization and variable duration. Furthermore, much narrative theory is simply not very interested in interpretation or audience response. There is thus a mismatch between theory and the issues under discussion. Studies of narrative that might have been more helpful do not appear in the bibliography: an article of P. Rabinowitz is there, but not *Before Reading*, and J. Phelan and M. Sternberg do not appear. On Homer, S. Richardson and de Jong are there, but not J. Morrison and S. D. Olson, whose concerns are closer to G.'s. A different and more useful theoretical background might have enabled her to define her questions more sharply.

The overall structure also tends to fragment the book. After a theoretical opening, the book gives a chapter to each tragedian, combining general discussion of narrative strategies with analysis of a few scenes. In each chapter, the discussion emphasizes a particular, characteristic aspect of the tragedian's technique. In the section on Aeschylus, G. concentrates on time: delay, suspense, and the use of prophetic material. For Sophocles, the issue is the 'narrative loop', the deceit that sends the action away from a 'straight' progression but eventually brings the plot back more-or-less to the starting point. The discussion of Euripides centers on his use of narrative at the beginnings and ends of his plays, and on recognition.

Much of this is thought-provoking. G. rightly emphasizes Aeschylus' techniques of delay and deferral, and his creation of suspense and uncertainty. The treatment of the Euripidean divine prologue, which limits audience knowledge as much as it increases it, is very good. (There are excellent comments on prophecy and its complexities in tragedy throughout.) Most interesting is the discussion of 'narrative loops'. These include Lichas' deception in *Trachiniae*, the Merchant Scene in *Philoctetes*, the deception of Electra in *Electra*, and Ajax's *Trugrede*. The episodes have more in common than the category of 'deception' by itself conveys; and a term for these sequences is useful. One might ask, though, why the entire action of *Philoctetes* until the appearance of Herakles is not a loop.

This procedure inevitably places differences among the tragedians in the foreground and slights their similarities, as well as their relationship to other Greek narrative. Is the narrative loop as uniquely Sophoclean as G. claims? One might ask whether *Ion* does not have 'loopy' qualities, or the end of *IT*. *Alcestis*, too, would make an interesting comparison. Nor does G. ask why deception in Sophocles should so often involve such narrative circularity, or why indeed circularity tends to be connected with deception, especially since the audience is typically not deceived.

Theoretically, G. actually obscures these questions, since she follows a brief discussion of different theories of narrative 'deceit' (pp. 39–47) by grouping together various narrative strategies that manipulate audiences and calling them 'dolos'. An affinity between the 'trickiness' of a narrative whose action returns to the starting-point and the deceitfulness of a character is thus taken for granted. Narrators, however, may be tricky in all kinds of ways that need to be distinguished from each other and from the tricks of characters. Sophocles' ambiguous endings, for example, should not be classed with misdirection, let alone with the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* structuralists see as basic to narrative.

This study, then, opens more questions than it satisfactorily answers. This is the rare book that is too short. Still, it invites further thought about many familiar passages, and the very limits of its theoretical basis may inspire further useful explorations of tragedy-as-narrative.

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