

ΣΥΣΤΑΣΙΣ ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΩΝ:

THE PLAYWRIGHT'S USE OF THE ACTION IN  
ATHENIAN TRAGEDY

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to the understanding of the stagecraft and composition of Athenian tragedy through a re-evaluation of its component elements within the structure. I undertake a re-interpretation of the Aristotelian terms for ‘plot’, which allows for a more nuanced examination of events occurring within a tragedy. As Aristotle notes, the *systasis* of *pragmata* is the structure of events that forms a tragedy. The *muthos* is the way in which these events are presented and includes the actions and words of the *dramatis personae*. *Pragmata* are constituent elements of both the *systasis* and *muthos*. This thesis identifies and evaluates the *pragma*’s effects upon the movement of the *systasis*, its contribution to the enrichment of the *muthos* and its influence on audience engagement with a performance through both enacted and non-enacted forms.

My approach involves a rigorous examination of the elements common to an enacted *pragma*, before identifying the variations therein. While a *pragma* involves all actions which serve the same general function, every instance of a *pragma* is unique. Each chapter in turn focuses on a particular *pragma*, before examining the role of that *pragma* within an entire tragedy. Enactments of each *pragma* in extant tragedy are tabled in appendices. The *pragma* of return home is examined within *Andromache*; recognition in Sophocles’ *Elektra*; supplication in *Hekabe*; and reporting in *Women of Trachis*.

This analysis demonstrates the dynamic role and versatility of different types of *pragma* within a tragedy, and the playwright’s ingenuity as demonstrated by his deployment of this element. No single approach or methodology can by itself fully interpret an Athenian tragedy, but a focus on a particular *pragma* illuminates different themes and emphases and ultimately provides us with a better understanding of a tragedy.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

A. Aeschylus

E. Euripides

*EGF* M. Davies, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (1988) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

*FGrH* F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (1923-62) Berlin & Leiden: Brill.

*LfgrE* *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* (1955) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

*PMGF* M. Davies, *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (1991) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

S. Sophocles

*TrGF* B. Snell, R. Kannicht and S. Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (5 vols, 1971-2004) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.