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 To: <editoriale@storiaeletteratura.it>

cara dottoressa saraceni (o, meglio, cara valentina)
 È scito questa recensione, su una rivista elettronica di grande diffusione nell'ambito degli studi
 classici. sono molto contento
 un cordiale saluto e a presto
 Luigi b.

Da: bmcr-l-bounces@brynawr.edu per conto di Bryn Mawr Reviews
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A: Bryn Mawr Classical Review
Oggetto: BMCR 2009.03.36, Luigi Battezzato, Linguistica e retorica

Luigi Battezzato, Linguistica e retorica della tragedia greca. Sussidi
 Eruditi 78. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2008. Pp. xvi,
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Reviewed by Martin Cropp, University of Calgary (mcropp@ucalgary.ca)
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 (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/casalini07/08664544.pdf>)

Luigi Battezzato's book contains five studies of some particular
 features of tragic style, three of which were first published between
 2000 and 2003,[[1]] while the first and third are new. What ties them
 together is Battezzato's interest in applying recent linguistic theory,
 especially in the areas of syntax and pragmatics, to the features he
 discusses, and in tracing their development from the language of early
 Greek poetry to the language of tragedy.

A brief essay on 'Oedipus and Homer' starts by noting the association
 in early Greek culture between poetic and oracular language, and the
 uses (and abuses) of both in politics. In Sophocles' play Oedipus'
 misinterpretations of oracular language are in part prompted by
 traditional poetic devices. He treats the oracle's warning that he
 would murder 'the father who begot me' (OT 793) as a mere poetic
 pleonasm, and the point is underlined when he refers to 'Polybus who
 raised and begot me' (OT 827) as if the traditional pleonasm could be
 taken for granted. Battezzato adds that Oedipus' casual remark that he
 has not caused Polybus' death 'unless he wasted away through longing
 for me' (OT 969-70) recalls the wordings in which both Anticlea and
 Penelope describe their longing for Odysseus (Odyssey 11.202, 18.203-4,

19.136), so that epic phrasing is here linked to his ignorance of the identity of his own mother and wife.

The hysteron proteron phrasing of OT 827 is one amongst many examples surveyed in Battezzato's second chapter, which offers both a strict definition and a linguistic explanation of this 'figure'. On Battezzato's definition (p. 21) a hysteron proteron arrangement 'puts on the same level, by means of a coordinating conjunction, two verbs (or two nouns) in an order inverted with respect to the order of the chronological sequence of events (or of the sequence implied in two nouns), leaving the chronological sequence to be understood from the semantic relationship between the inverted verbs (or nouns), without giving signals by means of verb-tenses or temporal adverbs'. Battezzato argues that the 'figure' originated naturally in the tendency of Homeric Greek to use coordination rather than subordination in expressing causes or circumstances, or with concessive effect. Sentences such as 'Allow me to kill the man and to come within spear-cast of him' (Iliad 5.118), where the second infinitive phrase expresses a precondition for the focal action expressed by the first, were therefore not unusual. Only later did such phrasing come to be seen as artificial and to be used as a figure by poets recalling Homeric style. Battezzato discusses some well-known Sophoclean and Virgilian examples from this point of view, and adds appendices illustrating the relevant ancient technical terminology, some contrasting modern explanations, and an array of examples from Homer and the tragedians.

The more substantial of the two new essays (Ch. 3) surveys the tradition of 'rhetorical superlatives' (i.e., attributions of primacy, supremacy, or authority) used in declarations of value or importance. Statements such as 'Water is best' or 'Eros rules over all the gods' were rhetorical exaggerations, often with a gnomic character which is reflected in priamels, ainigmata and the like. Their implications were limited by context and convention, but contradictions could easily arise if they were taken literally or were actually used categorically. In a culture which attributed powers to many gods and tended to deify abstractions as well, these contradictions were likely to generate theological problems, and the results emerge in the questionings of Xenophanes and later thinkers. Battezzato's focus is Euripides' Hecuba 798ff. where (he argues) Hecuba's assertions about *nomos* ('which rules over the gods') and *peitho* ('sole tyrannos for men') are rhetorical superlatives reinforcing her appeal to divine justice (799-805) and her resort to persuasion once that appeal has failed, although her gesture towards the definition of *nomos* as convention (800-1) hints at a tension between this traditional rhetorical mode and the implications of sophistic thought.

A study of interrogative phrasing in Euripides (Ch. 4) considers the text of Andromeda F 125, where Battezzato proposes to read <greek>parqe/nou d'eikw\ ti/na</greek> 'and what image of a maiden . . .' rather than the transmitted <greek>parqe/nou d'eikw/ tina</greek> 'and some image of a maiden . . .' which many editors have accepted (Rutherford and Housman preferred the interrogative, and it has been adopted by several editors of Andromeda since Battezzato's initial publication). Battezzato illustrates the inversion of the pronoun-noun order normally used in interrogative phrases and explains it in pragmatic terms (the promotion of the noun gives prominence to a new topic or, as here, sub-topic). He also shows incidentally that <greek>automo/rfwn</greek> in line 3 may well mean 'true to her very form'.

Lastly, Battezzato's study of interlinear hiatus in tragic trimeters (Ch. 5) makes important advances on the discussion of this topic by T. C. W. Stinton in 1977 (following those of E. Harrison and C. J. Herington). Battezzato provides a modified definition and classification of enjambement, making an important distinction between stronger types (such as those involving prepositives at line-end) and

less strong types (such as those involving separation of subject and verb). He also offers a more accurate quantification of the data and a linguistic explanation. Battezzato broadly confirms his predecessors in finding that enjambement-with-hiatus is generally more frequent in Aeschylus than in Sophocles and Euripides, though the frequencies increase somewhat in the later plays of these two (only Euripides' Helen exceeds Aeschylean rates, and of the rest only his Electra and Iphigenia in Tauris approach them). But it also emerges that in the stronger types of enjambement hiatus is equally rare throughout. Battezzato explains these phenomena as a result of changing 'phonostyles' in tragedy. For Aeschylus a slower and more formal verse-delivery would have made hiatus between enjambed lines less objectionable than in the increasingly fluent phonostyles of his successors. Sophocles, using enjambement very freely, was correspondingly sensitive to hiatus, while Euripides became more tolerant of it to the extent that he moved towards informal diction and the norms of Comedy. To these general findings Battezzato adds comments on some special cases (Prometheus Vinculus, Trachiniai, Cyclops, Rhesus), on short final syllables in lines enjambed without hiatus, and on the accentuation of oxytone words at the end of enjambed lines.

One could (naturally) debate a few marginal points of classification, but these studies are generally persuasive and enlightening, based as they are on a thorough knowledge of the scholarship in this area and of current trends in linguistics. It is good to have them in book form, which should give them a higher profile. The book itself is handsomely produced and reasonably priced. I noticed a dozen minor errors but only one that could be seriously misleading: in Table 5 (p. 136) the figure in the right-hand column for Orestes should be 8%, not 18%. On p. 69, line 14 the words 'Il famoso passo delle Nuvole di Aristofane' should be deleted. On pp. 73-4 much of the paragraph repeats what has been said on pp. 68-9. And on p. 120, in the second paragraph of section 7.1, the references should (I think) be to category E and p. 136, Table 5.

Notes:

1. Ch. 2 in G. Avezzu\ (ed.), *Il dramma sofocleo. Testo, lingua, interpretazione* (Stuttgart-Weimar, 2003), 17-48; Ch. 4 in MD 44 (2000), 141-73; Ch. 5 in *Seminari Romani* 4.1 (2001), 1-38.

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