CHAPTER 3

Distribution of Narrative Activity

3.1 Introduction

Narratological theory distinguishes the functions of narrator and narratee. As narrative stichomythia is a narrative embedded within a play, it is important to clarify in advance all levels of communicative interaction and their agents.

The narrator is defined as ‘that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the [narrative] text’.¹ The narrators of narrative stichomythia are characters in the play. The function of narrator must be distinguished from that of (implied) author/playwright. The author/playwright is the historical person who physically produced the text/play, whereas the implied author/playwright is the abstract reconstruction of the author/playwright as inferable from the text/play.² In practice the same person may fulfill all of these roles simultaneously, for example in an autobiography, but this is not always the case and it is therefore important to make these theoretical distinctions. In the case of Euripidean tragedy the role of author/playwright is fulfilled by the historical person of Euripides, while the selection and presentation of certain scenes point to the creative role of the implied author/playwright.

At the receiving end of the narrative we find the narratee, who can be defined as that participant which receives the linguistic signs that constitute the narrative text. The narratees of narrative stichomythia are characters in the play. The function of narratee too should be distinguished from that of the (implied) reader/audience.³ The reader/audience is the person who physically reads the text or watches and listens to the play, whereas the implied reader/audience is the abstract reconstruction of the reader/audience that can be inferred from the text/play.⁴ Although in practice the same person may fulfill these roles, from a theoretical perspective these functions should nevertheless be distinguished. In the case of Euripidean tragedy the role of reader/audience may be fulfilled by a member of the audience of the play in fifth-century Athens or by an individual reading the play today. Instances of dramatic irony or pathos are aimed

¹ Bal (1985) 120.
at and indicate the presence of the implied reader/audience. This communicative situation can be schematically represented as follows:

| Author / Playwright | Implied Author / Playwright | Narrator — Narratee | Implied Reader / Audience | Reader / Audience |

Narrators and narratees can be subdivided according to their diegetic status or the degree to which they participate in the story. A narrator/narratee may be **heterodiegetic** when he does not play a part in the narrated events, **homodiegetic** when he plays a part in the narrated events, and **autodiegetic** when he plays the main part in them. In Euripidean stichomythia virtually all narrators are homo- or autodiegetic, and virtually all narratees are heterodiegetic. However, in what follows we will see that there is an occasional exception to this standard situation.

### 3.2 Methodology

Application of the functions of narrator and narratee to narrative stichomythia is complicated by the dialogic nature of this type of narrative. The division of roles between narrator and narratee may change in the course of the conversation. Although we might perhaps expect the narrator to converge with the answerer and the narratee with the questioner, in practice this is not always the case. The questioner may function as a narrator by posing leading questions and the answerer as a narratee by merely answering in the affirmative or negative. Alternatively, the questioner and answerer may contribute so actively to the narrative that they both seem to be fulfilling the role of narrator. Because the division of roles between narrator and narratee is not as clear-cut as in other, non-dialogic narrative texts, I will for the most part replace the traditional terms of narrator and narratee with the more flexible *distribution of narrative activity between interlocutors*. However, in contexts where the narrator converges with the answerer and the narratee with the questioner I will revert to the traditional narratological terms.

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7 E.g. *Ion* 308, 330, *Or.* 763.
8 E.g. *Hec.* 239–248.
9 E.g. *Andr.* 900–920.