

Pragmatic Disruption: Functional Grammar and Formulae in the *Iliad*

Functional Grammar is a form of linguistic analysis that considers “the instrumentality of language with respect to what people do and achieve with it in social interaction.” (Dik & Hengeveld 1997: 3). Classicists such as Helma Dik (1995, 2007) and S. R. Slings (1992) have used Functional Grammar to study word order in Greek prose and tragedy, and to detect oral elements in written Greek, among other pursuits. Mark Edwards (2004) briefly applies Functional Grammar to the *Iliad*, but by the demands of a more popular audience does not provide a nuanced account of how the theory fits into Homer. But word order in the *Iliad* routinely frustrates the paradigms offered by Functional-Grammarians classicists. In this paper, I will summarize the Functional Grammarians' work on Greek word order, demonstrate the problems of applying these word-order paradigms to Homer, and then resolve these problems by an appeal to Homeric formulae.

Helma Dik (1995: 12) proposes the following as standard Greek word order: Topic, Focus, Predicate, Remainder. We can identify the Topic as that which the clause is about. In the sentence, "The library is quiet," the sentence is about the library, and so "the library" is the Topic. The Focus is the constituent that is the most salient or new information in the clause. In the sentence, "The library is quiet," the most salient information is the quietness of the library, and so "quiet" is the Focus. The Predicate is the constituent that concerns the relations and properties of the other constituents. It is usually the verb, and in the sentence, "The library is quiet", the Predicate is "is". The Remainder constituent, or Tail, is a word or group of words at the end of a clause that provides little salient information. In the sentence, "The library is quiet, isn't it?" the words "isn't it" are the Remainder constituent.

Homeric verses do not always follow the paradigm H. Dik provides. As an example, here are two lines that Edwards (2004: 2-12) discusses:

αὐτὰρ ὃ βοῦν ἱέρευσε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
πίονα πενταέτηρον ὑπερμενεί Κρονίῳνι, (Il. 2.402-403)
But Agamemnon, lord of men, sacrificed a bull,
A fat one, five years old, to the mighty son of Kronos

In the passage in which these lines occur, the Achaeans are sacrificing to many different gods to escape death (2.400-401). The most salient feature of lines 2.402-404, then, is that Agamemnon is sacrificing to *Zeus*, and so ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων (Agamemnon lord of men) is the Topical constituent, ὑπερμενεί Κρονίῳνι (mighty son of Kronos) is the Focal constituent, and βοῦν ἱέρευσε (sacrificed a bull) is the Predicative constituent. πίονα πενταέτηρον (fat five years old) is the Remainder. It would appear that the word order does not match the predictions of Functional Grammar, which would expect the clause to be ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων (Topic) ὑπερμενεί Κρονίῳνι (Focus) βοῦν ἱέρευσε (Predicate) πίονα πενταέτηρον (Remainder).

But if we look intratextually, we see that some formulaic expressions in these lines are constrained to be in certain positions. The formula ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων occurs 35 times in the *Iliad*, and is always line final. Working within the standard framework of formulaic composition, we can safely say that ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων represented a metrically convenient way for the Homeric composer to end a line when the subject was Agamemnon. Hence, regardless of whether Agamemnon is Topic, Focus, or a Remainder, when this formula fits his name will be line final. ὑπερμενεί Κρονίῳνι is likewise a formula that always occurs line finally in the *Iliad*, with four instances. Both these epithets also occur after the trochaic caesura, and so are metrical equivalents in Homeric composition. Thus, if both ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων

and ὑπερμενέϊ Κρονίῳνι must occur line finally, they can hardly follow the word order prescribed by Functional Grammarians.

This paper examines word order in the *Iliad* just as in the example above, taking as a sample corpus the lamentations of the *Iliad*. I will show that, in distinction from the discovery of H. Dik (2007) that the poetic genre of tragedy consistently follows the expectations of Functional Grammar, the *Iliad* frequently violates these expectations, but that in every such instance the reason is a formula embedded in the clause.

Bibliography

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