CHAPTER 4

Narrative Drama: Features and Functioning

4.1 The Presence of Narrative

4.1.1 *Synoptic Tables*

The last and longest chapter of the book identifies *in re*, that is in the texts of *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus*, the salient features of narrative drama.[1] It comes up with four features that are considered in separate sections: namely, the above-average quantity of embedded narratives (Chapter 4.1), their capacity to elicit responses and reactions from the internal narratees (Chapter 4.2), impact on the plot (Chapter 4.3), and dramaturgic import (Chapter 4.4). Together, these qualities describe what is distinctive of narrative drama in implicit and (occasionally) explicit comparison with more action-based forms. While none of these features will count in itself as necessary or sufficient to qualify a drama as narrative, they do produce family resemblances as clusters of diffuse but consistent similarities.[2]

Preliminarily, four synoptic tables visualize the structure of *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* and especially two sets of data: the analysis of the plays in preponderantly narrative, responsive, or enactive sections as carried out in Chapter Three, and the relationships between these sections, which are a main issue through Chapter Four.

1 On the necessity of assessing genre-distinguishing features *in re*, see Jauß 1977: 331; Voßkamp 1977: 27; Horn 1998: 16–18; Neumann / Nünning 2007: 4; and cf. Chapter 1.1.1.

2 Since genres are non-discrete categories, logics of mutual exclusion are inadequate to categorizing them: see Rotstein 2010: 6 f.

Legenda

(*speaker*) main speaker(s) of the section

..... mix of different types of utterances within a section

(sections which repeat or complete each other (see Chapter 4.1.3)

└→ sections which elicit responses or reactions (see Chapter 4.2.3)

* narrative sections that make the narrator's illocutionary point explicit

Persians

Lines	Narrative	Response	Action
1–139	(chorus) Persian expedition		
140–214	(Atossa) dream and omen*		
215–248	└→	(chorus, Atossa) interpretation of dream and omen	
249–514	(messenger) Persian defeat: · 256–289 *kommos*: (messenger) Persian defeat ..... · 290–514 *rhēsis angelikē*: (messenger) Persian defeat	(chorus) lament	
515–597	└→	(chorus) lament	
598–680	└→		(chorus) necromantic ritual
681–702			(Darius' ghost) epiphany
703–738	(Atossa) Persian defeat*		
739–764	↓ └→	(Darius) analysis of the defeat	
765–842	(Darius) past and future of Persia ↓		
843–906	(chorus) past greatness of Persia ↓		
907–1037	*kommos*: (Xerxes) ..... Persian defeat*	(chorus) lament	
1038–1077	└→	(Xerxes, chorus) lament	

Seven against Thebes

Lines	Narrative	Response	Action
1–38		(Eteocles) paraenesis	
39–68	(scout) military arrangements of the Argives*		
69–77	→	(Eteocles) invocation to the gods	
78–181	(chorus) attack of the Argives	(chorus) prayer	
182–286		→	(Eteocles) attempt to silence the chorus
287–374		(chorus) prayer	
375–396	(scout) manoeuvres of the Argives; Tydeus *ante portam**	(chorus)	(Eteocles)
397–416	→	→	appointment of Melanippus
417–421	→	comment ←	←
422–436	Capaneus *ante portam**		
437–451	→	→	appointment of Polyphontes
452–456	→	comment ←	←
457–471	Eteoclus *ante portam**		
472–480	→	→	appointment of Megareus
481–485	→	comment ←	←
486–500	Hippomedon *ante portam**		
501–520	→	→	appointment of Hyperbius
521–525	→	comment ←	←
526–549	Parthenopaeus *ante portam*		
550–562	→	→	appointment of Actor
563–567	→	comment ←	←
568–596	Amphiaraus *ante portam**		
597–625	→	→	appointment of Lasthenes
626–630	→	comment ←	←
631–652	Polyneices *ante portam**		
653–676	→	→	self-appointment
677–719			↓ (chorus) attempt to dissuade Eteocles
720–791		lament ←	←
792–819	(scout) outcome of the duels*		
822–1004	→	(chorus) lament	

Suppliant Women

Lines	Narrative	Response	Action
1–22	(chorus) flight from arranged marriage		
23–39	→	(chorus) prayer	
40–77	(chorus) excurses on Io, Epaphus*		
78–175	→	(chorus) prayer	
176–185	(Danaus) approach of armed men		
186–233	→		(Danaus, chorus) preparation for the supplication
234–290	←		(Pelasgus, chorus) acquaintance of Pelasgus with the chorus
291–324	(Pelasgus, chorus) story of Io*		
325–467	→		(chorus) supplication, persuasion, suicidal threat
468–523			(Pelasgus) accepts the suppliants, summons the assembly
524–599	(chorus) story of Io		
600–624	(Danaus) report about the assembly		
625–709	→	(chorus) prayer	
710–733	(Danaus) approach of the Egyptians		
734–824	→	(chorus) lament	
825–907/910			(Egyptians, chorus) attempt to abduct the chorus
911–965			(Pelasgus, Argives) rescue of the chorus
966–979		(chorus) prayer and thanks ←	
980–1033			(Danaus, chorus) plan and oath of chastity
1034–1073			(Argives) attempt to persuade the chorus

Prometheus Bound

Lines	Narrative	Response	Action
1–87			(Power, Hephaestus) fettering of Prometheus
88–127		(Prometheus) lament	
128–159		(chorus) expression of sympathy, (Prometheus) self-pity	
160–283	(chorus, Prometheus) Zeus' future need for help, his seizure of power, Prometheus' help to mankind		
284–339			(Oceanus) vain attempt to persuade Prometheus
340–376	(Prometheus) exempla of Atlas and Typhon*		
377–396			(Oceanus, Prometheus) Oceanus abandons his plans
397–435		(chorus) expression of sympathy	
436–525	(Prometheus) improvement of the human condition		
526–560		(chorus) expression of sympathy	
561–608			(Io) encounter with Prometheus
609–686	(Io) autobiography		
687–699		(chorus) comment	
700–876	(Prometheus) prophecy about Io		
877–907		(Io, chorus) lament	
908–943	(Prometheus) prophecy about Zeus		
944–1079			(Hermes, Prometheus) vain attempt to know Prometheus' secret
1080–1093			(Prometheus) punishment

4.1.2 *Quantifying Narrative*

Data. Assessing how much narrative there is in *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* is an awkward task. For one thing, one inevitably comes up with different figures depending on how one defines narrative itself and deals with sections which mix narrative and non-narrative utterances. The data on the following pages refer to the definitions of narrative, action, and response of Chapter Three and the corresponding text analyses; although estimative, they are nevertheless indicative of the strong presence of narrative in Aeschylean drama. At any rate, the point of quantifying narrative is not to delimit any threshold above which a drama could or should qualify as narrative, but to somehow substantiate the widespread perception that the amount of narrative in these plays is striking and above the average of later dramatic standards.[3]

With these limitations in mind, it is fair to say that *Persians* features a baffling amount of narrative. On a total amount of 1077 lines, narrative totals 624 lines (57.9 %), response 183 lines (16.9 %), and action 105 lines (9.7 %). In addition, there are two *kommoi* which intermingle narrative and responsive utterances (ll. 256–289 and 907–1037) and which together sum up 165 lines (14.7 %) of the play's total—narrative, thus, is so pervasive in *Persians* that it is even present in laments which elsewhere tend to be narrative-free and more distinctively responsive. All in all, nearly two thirds of *Persians* narrates events which are closely related to the Battle of Salamis, and choral responses reverberate with such narratives while action is scant. Also, the average length of the narrative sections is significant, and the messenger scene around which the entire drama revolves is of unparalleled length—nearly 300 lines. Narrative is without doubt the preferred way of representing events in *Persians*: it renders the departure of the army and fleet (narrated by the chorus, ll. 12–139), the dream and the presage which forecast the Persian doom (Atossa, ll. 159–214), the defeat at Salamis (messenger ll. 249–514, Atossa ll. 703–738, Xerxes ll. 907–1037), the glorious past of the kingdom (Darius, ll. 765–842; chorus, ll. 843–906) and its fast-approaching decline (Darius, ll. 765–842). Action is only used to represent the necromantic ritual which summons the ghost of Darius (performed by the chorus, ll. 598–680) and his epiphany (ll. 681–702).

Of the four plays considered, *Seven* is the one with the most balanced ratio between narrative, response, and action. Since it is almost unanimously accepted that ll. 1005–1078 are spurious, the substance of the original play

3 Cf. Dickin 2009: 155–169 for the amount of speeches by reporting figures in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

encompasses ll. 1–1004.[4] Of these lines, 200 qualify as narrative (19.9%), 384 as responsive (38.2%), and 316 as enactive (31.4%) according to our analysis; in addition, 104 lines cover text sections in which narrative and response are mixed (10.3%). The average length of the narratives is significantly shorter than in *Persians*. This is especially manifest in the scene known as *Redepaare*, which fragments the traditional form of the continuous messenger speech into micro-reports counting fourteen to at most twenty-eight lines. As for the type of events that narrative represents in *Seven*, these are the military preparations of the Argives outside the city walls (narrated by the scout, ll. 39–68), the assault on the city walls (chorus, ll. 78–181), the assignment and allocation of seven Argive fighters to the seven gates of Thebes (i.e. Tydeus, ll. 375–396, Capaneus, ll. 422–436, Eteoclus, ll. 457–471, Hippomedon, ll. 486–500, Parthenopaeus, ll. 526–549, Amphiaraus, ll. 568–596, and Polyneices, ll. 631–652, whereby the narrator is the scout throughout the *Redepaare*), and the outcome of the seven duels (ll. 792–819, again by the scout). On the other hand, King Eteocles' organization of the Theban defence is represented by means of action, which includes the appointment of the fighters who will hold the gates (i.e. Melanippus, ll. 397–416, Polyphontes, ll. 437–451, Megareus, ll. 473–480, Hyperbius, ll. 501–520, Actor, ll. 550–562, Lasthenes, ll. 597–625, and finally Eteocles himself, ll. 653–676). Moreover, action represents two vain attempts to modify the current situation—or conations[5]—namely Eteocles' fruitless effort to censure the chorus (ll. 182–286) and, conversely, the chorus' attempt to dissuade Eteocles from fighting against his own brother (ll. 677–719).

In *Suppliant Women*, there is less narrative than in *Persians, Seven*, and *Prometheus*. The play consists of 1073 lines, 229 of which are narrative (21.3%), 305 responsive (28.4%), and 539 enactive (50.2%). Narratives tend to be quite short, a number of them lasting nine to thirty-seven lines (ll. 1–18, 40–77, 176–185, 291–324, 600–624, 710–733); on a related note, the play does not feature any typical messenger report but two brief reports by Danaus instead. The last third of the play (ll. 734–1073) features no narrative at all, little response, and plenty of action, which makes this part of the play read rather like the more action-based dramatic forms which surviving evidence indicates to have set in starting from the 450s BCE. As far as the representation of events is concerned, *Suppliant Women* renders through narratives the past vicissitudes of the Danaids (narrated by the chorus, ll. 1–18), the approach of armed men

4 See Chapter 3.2.2 on ll. 822–1004.

5 See Chapter 3.1.1/*Conation*.

(Danaus, ll. 176–185), the events involving Io and Epaphus (chorus, ll. 40–56 and 291–324), Io's wanderings and offspring (chorus, ll. 524–599), the development and outcomes of the Argive assembly (Danaus, ll. 600–624), and the arrival of the Egyptian ship (Danaus, ll. 710–733). Many events are represented through action, namely the planning, refining, or rehearsing of a line of conduct for the Danaids (Danaus and chorus, ll. 186–233), their encounter with the King of Argos (Pelasgus and chorus, ll. 234–290), the supplication itself, followed by Pelasgus' decision to consult the citizens (chorus, Pelasgus, and Danaus, ll. 325–523), the Egyptians' attempt to kidnap the Danaids (Egyptians, ll. 825–907/910), the rescue by the Argives (Pelasgus, Argives, ll. 911–965), the Danaids' resolution to remain chaste (Danaus and chorus, ll. 980–1033), and the vain attempt of the Argives to change the Danaids' mind on this subject (Argives, ll. 1034–1073). All in all, the amount of action increases at the expense of narrative—and, incidentally, the amount of stichomythic dialogue at the expense of continuous speech.[6] The significance of action is particularly evident in the scene in which the Egyptians seek to abduct the Danaids and the Argives stand up to them. These events might have been easily narrated by locating the combat offstage as usual (for example, by sending the Argives to the bay where the Egyptian fleet has landed) and by reporting on it with a messenger speech after the battle or with a present-time narrative by the choral eyewitnesses at a safe distance (as in the *parodos* of *Seven*).

Prometheus is, after *Persians*, the play which most resorts to narrative. It essentially centres on "narratives which recall and predict."[7] Narratives make up almost half of the play: out of a total of 1093 lines, 542 are narrative (49.5%), 190 responsive (17.3%), and 361 enactive (33%). The average length of the narratives is also considerable, comparable to that of *Persians*. The following events are all narrated by Prometheus but for one case in which the narrator is Io: the future moves of Zeus, his conquest of absolute power, and Prometheus' theft of the fire (ll. 168–276), the mythical *exempla* regarding Atlas and Typhon (ll. 340–376), the ways in which Prometheus improved the human condition (ll.

6 Cf. Bowen 2013: 207: "For stichomythia this play ranks with *Oresteia* (in *Persae* and *Seven* […] there are only two passages in each play, *Pe.* 230–245 and 715–738 and *Se.* 245–263 and 712–719): here there are nearly as many passages as in *Agamemnon* and *Choephori*, and more lines of stichomythia than in *Agamemnon*, a much longer play […]." See Chapter 3.1.2/*Entanglements of drama, action and dialogue*.

7 Schadewaldt 1968: 37. Cf. Hutchinson 1984: 1: "The author deliberately opposes the narrative mode to the dramatic. The beginning and end of this play are occupied with violent events; the rest is commanded by a situation, embodied in the unmoving figure of Prometheus. All the narrative in what follows contrasts in some way with the situation which we witness […], and the static, eventless plot reinforces the extraordinary plight of the hero."

436–525), Io's past sufferings (Io, ll. 622–686), her fate (ll. 700–876), and the difficulties which await Zeus (ll. 908–943). On the other hand, actions represent the events of how Prometheus is fastened (utterances by Kratos and Hephaestus while Prometheus remains silent, ll. 1–87), Oceanus' vain attempt to soothe Prometheus (Oceanus and Prometheus, ll. 284–396, with the narrative about Atlas and Typhon in between), Io's present suffering and her making acquaintance with Prometheus (Prometheus and Io, ll. 561–608, also including narrative elements), Prometheus' defiance in the face of Hermes' threats (Hermes and Prometheus, ll. 944–1079), and finally the additional punishment inflicted on the protagonist (Hermes and Prometheus, ll. 1080–1093). This means that the central body of the play essentially consists of a series of narratives delivered by the protagonist while most of the action is squeezed in at the beginning and at the end of the play. The scarcity of response reflects the circumstance that choral song, which is the most typical (though not the only) responsive form in Attic tragedy, is notoriously scant in this play.[8]

Reading the data. These data attest to a wealth of narrative which is above the average of later drama and often at the expense of action; in other words, the data suggest that narrative more than action was crucial to Aeschylean drama. Not only the sheer quantity of narrative utterances but also the type of events which are narrated corroborate the idea that narratives were very much at home in this kind of tragedy instead of being makeshifts to which the playwright only resorted when action was not an option—for example, to represent taboo crimes or to overcome the shortcomings of the stage technology. To begin with, the events represented in Attic tragedy are for the most part language-based.[9] Far from being mute agencies, they prominently include the characters' speech acts, such as orders, implorations, accusations, threats, revelations, etc., and the ways in which the characters verbalize their own outer and inner life, for example by articulating thoughts and memories. This means that religious taboos or shortages of stage technology offer poor explanations for the scarcity of action in Aeschylus, since in many cases a good voice is all which is materially required to represent events in action—as well as in narrative.

Moreover, Aeschylus offers instructive examples of how he does have the means to represent events in either way, meaning that his opting for action or narrative is not (always) dictated by sheer necessity. Let us consider, for

8 Cf. Chapter 1.1.3/*The literary-historical value of Prometheus*.

9 See Chapter 3.1.1/*Representation in and beyond the text*.

instance, how Aeschylus represents war episodes and the deliberations of assemblies in different plays. While *Persians* projects the Battle of Salamis into a different spatiotemporality and represents it through a number of narratives, *Suppliant Women* opts for action to represent the struggle between the Egyptians and the Argives as taking place in the dramatic here and now, which demonstrates that Aeschylus was familiar with non-narrative ways to represent mass scenes and fights in the open field. Along the same lines, while in *Suppliant Women* he makes Danaus report on the course of the Argive assembly, in *Eumenides* he makes two of the actors and the chorus enact the deliberations of the Areopagus. These cases suggest that Aeschylus' preference for narrative over action was not so much a necessity as a matter of artistic preferences, probably reflecting the tragic practices of his time and context.[10] Aeschylus' victories at tragic contests leave little doubt that his conspicuous use of narrative conformed with coeval tastes regarding the tragic genre (just as much as it challenges ours), and that his drama in turn contributed towards elevating extant aesthetics. Thus, at a macroscopic level the data about the presence of narrative in Aeschylus indicate that staged narratives were valuable components of tragedy and playwrights could prefer them over action even when they had both options available. Possibly, the data could be also read at more granular levels, for example to observe that circumstances such as whether or not a play was part of a connected trilogy or tetralogy and the play's position within these did not ostensibly affect the incidence of narrative, as also indicated by comparisons with the *Oresteia*.[11]

Narrative in fragmentary plays. The evidence is too thin for us to say much about narrative in fragmentary plays. Even so, surviving fragments give the impression that narrative was important to the tragedies produced in the

10 For similar arguments concerning the narrativity of Shakespeare, see Nünning / Sommer 2011 and 2006: 217. However, these possibilities have been seldom considered with regard to Attic tragedy: see, e.g., Markantonatos 2002: 77 ff. on "Narration and the Battle."

11 In the *Oresteia*, the most narrative play came first: the first half of *Agamemnon* in particular shows plenty of narrative but only rare moments of action. The structure of *Persians* is very similar to that of the first half of *Agamemnon* (see Schadewaldt 1974: 137 ff.; Taplin 1977: 125), yet *Persians* did not belong to a connected trilogy. *Seven* did, being the third play of a connected tetralogy concerning Thebes, and *Suppliant Women* too, which came either first or second in a connected trilogy on the story of the Danaids, and both plays are significantly less narrative than *Persians* and *Prometheus*. *Prometheus*, on the other hand, was the first or second play in the Prometheus trilogy and is broadly narrative.

470s–460s BCE by Aeschylus as well as by others, thus further corroborating the notion that *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* are representative of coeval tragedy in this regard. We know, for instance, that Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women*, probably staged in 476 BCE, opened powerfully and *in medias res* with a narrative about the Persian defeat,[12] and that the *Triptolemos* with which Sophocles first won at the City Dionysia in 468 BCE prominently featured the prophecies of Demeter.[13]

A survey of the narratives which are documented for the lost plays of Aeschylus can confirm this picture. To begin with the plays produced along with *Persians* in 472 BCE, it is reasonable to assume that *Phineus* featured the prophecies by Phineus that helped the Argonauts to pursue the Golden Fleece, and F258 and 258a appear to be part of a narrative by the title character about the evils which the Harpies inflicted on him. In the same year, *Glaucus Potnieus* contained a messenger speech "which informed on the death of Glaucus (frr. 38 and 39; probably also frr. 36 b.2.11 and 36 b. 3), apparently addressing the hero's wife and the chorus,"[14] and probably a dream report as well (F36).[15]

In the so-called *Achilleid* trilogy there had to be at least one narrative which was essential to each tragedy. In *Myrmidons*, a messenger (maybe Antilochus?[16]) broke the news of Patroclus' death to Achilles, thus eliciting Achilles' response which included mourning and gnomic pieces of wisdom.[17] As for *Nereids*, if the plot resembled books 18–23 of the *Iliad* a messenger needed to recount the killing of Hector.[18] And in *Phrygians*, whose plot presumably covered book 24 of the *Iliad*, a messenger had to inform Priam that Achilles had resolved to return Hector's body.

Philoctetes included at least two prominent narratives, if the information we find in Dio Chrysostomus is accurate: one in which Odysseus lied to Philoctetes about the calamities that hit the Achaeans, the death of Agamemnon, and the

12 TrGF 1.3 F8 (Phrynichus, *Phoenician Women*); cf. also TrGF 1.3 F10a.

13 See Sommerstein / Talboy 2012: 232 ff. and their commentary to the fragments of the sections D–Q. On the myth of Triptolemos see also Kowalzig 2008: 145 ff.

14 Sommerstein 2010 a: 7 and 2008 (*Aeschylus III, Fragments*): 34 f. On TrGF 3 F36b.2.1 (*Glaucus Potnieus*); cf. Radt reporting a comment by Lobel in apparatus: "The mention of φάσματα …, taken up by ἔδοξε (fr. 1.1), suggests that a dream or vision is being recounted."

15 Sommerstein 2008 (vol. 3, *Fragments*): 34.

16 Cf. Hom. *Il.* 17.651–701, 18.1–34; TrGF 3 F138 (*Myrmidons*).

17 TrGF 3 F135–139 (*Myrmidons*).

18 For the narratives of *Myrmidons* and *Nereids*, cf. the content reconstructions of Schadewaldt 1974: 128 and Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 242–249. Most scholars assume that the plays' order was *Myrmidons, Nereids, Phrygians*; *contra* West 2000, 341–343 who argues for *Myrmidons, Phrygians, Nereids*.

terrible charge against Odysseus, the other in which Philoctetes told the chorus of the Lemnians how the Achaeans abandoned him—that would be F250, 252, and 253.[19] Many other fragments appear to come from narratives. In *Prometheus Unbound*, for instance, the protagonist recounted in a monologue the pains which Zeus had inflicted on him (F193) and predicted to Heracles that he would eventually journey to the Hesperides (F195–199). *Niobe*, which like *Persians* dealt more with responses to the *katastrophē* than with the *katastrophē* itself, had to include at least one narrative about the events which precede the point of attack of the play, that is the *hybris* of Niobe and Apollo's and Artemis' killing of her children;[20] and if the play somehow covered Niobe's metamorphosis into a rock (as I think is likely), the metamorphosis too was probably represented and/or accompanied by a narrative.[21] In *Palamedes*, the protagonist recalled his own ingenious inventions (F181a, 182). In *Thracian Women*, a messenger reported on the suicide of Ajax, as a scholion says.[22] In *Bone-Gatherers*, Odysseus narrated how the suitors misbehaved and outraged him while he lived at his own palace as a beggar (F179, 180). In *Carians* or *Europa*, Europa recapitulated in a monologue how Zeus kidnapped her and which descendance resulted from their union (F99). In *Phorcides*, F261 seems to come from a report about how Perseus entered the cave of the Gorgons. The guessing is even more speculative for the *incertae fabulae*, yet words such as, for example, F387a appear to come from a narrative (i.e., a narrative about Laius' death, which in turn suggests *Laius* or *Oedipus* as possible contexts for the fragment).

4.1.3 *Narrative-Based Structure*

The backbone of drama. Another distinctive trait of narrative drama is narrative-based structure, which can be discussed here among the quantitative aspects because this too is an issue of dramatic economy. A closer look at the structure of *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* reveals that each of these plays is built on an overarching narrative which consists of a number of mutually related narrative sections and stretches throughout the best part of the play. In the synoptic tables, the arches on the left side visualize how

19 Dio Chrys. *Or*. 52.9–10, on which see Gianvittorio 2015. Müller 2000: 51 proposes that TrGF 3 F250, 252, and 253 (*Philoctetes*) come from the narrative by Philoctetes.

20 See Schadewaldt 1974: 128; Alfani 1997: 265. Sommerstein 2008 (vol. 3, *Fragments*): 169 note 1 to fr. 159 hypothesizes a narrative by Tantalus about his own *hybris* and the divine punishment which followed it.

21 See Green 1996: 24; Gianvittorio-Ungar 2024 b.

22 Schol. *ad Soph. Aj. 815*: φθάνει Αἰσχύλος ἐν Θρῄσσαις τὴν ἀναίρεσιν Αἴαντος δι' ἀγγέλου ἀπαγγείλας.

narrative sections often relate to other narrative sections and form a backbone sustaining the body of the four plays.

What follows outlines a "structural description"[23] of the plays under examination with a special focus on narrative-to-narrative relationships.[24] In spite of the inevitable grey areas, one can recognize two types of such relationships, namely repetition and completion. Repetition means that the narrative sections of a play reformulate the same contents (cf. Genette's "repetitive frequency")—not in identical ways, but with variations regarding the narrators, focalization, pace or "rhythm,"[25] inner logic, performance, and other aspects. Despite their variations, repetitive narratives usually hamper the development of the plot and slow down its pace because they continue to spiral around the same events instead of introducing new ones.[26] The other narrative-to-narrative relationship is completion, which is when the narrative sections of a play complement each other in that they cover different segments or facets of the same story:[27] for example, when a narrative sets forth the narration from the point at which the previous one has stopped (though anachronisms are also possible, as in *Prometheus*).[28] Mutually completing narratives are more conducive to plot development than repetitive ones.

While narrative-to-narrative relationships can be important to the structure of non-Aeschylean drama too, there are significant differences. For example, the comparison with Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* will exemplify that while narrative is very important to this play's structure, the same is true for action as well, and that even when the play heavily relies on narratives, these complete

23 Pavel 1985: 4 f.

24 For narrative-to-response and narrative-to-action relationships, see Chapter 4.2.3.

25 Narratologists sometimes refer to the different length and detail of same-subject narratives as different rhythms: e.g., de Jong 2001: xvii and 2007: 10–12.

26 Cf. Chapter 4.3.3 on repetitive frequency and Chapter 4.4.3 on re-focalizations. These notions can be compared to that which with regard to drama has been called retelling: see Bowles 2010: 55–58; cf. Barrett 2007 a: 271 f. By contrast, enactive sections are never repetitive inasmuch as the representation of events that occur here and now is unique. More generally speaking, repetition (on which see Hartmann 1979; Till 2009) is an important structural feature of archaic and classical poetry including tragedy, as exemplified by the repetitive structure of strophe and antistrophe and by scenes such as *Redepaare* of *Seven*. Early studies on the subject considered, e.g., "typical scenes" (Arendt 1933) and ring composition, which, incidentally, is also relevant to *Persians* (Holtsmark 1970).

27 Here, "story" indicates the *res gestae* (cf. the notions of *fabula* and Aristotle's *praxis*) as opposed to the *compositio rerum gestarum* (cf. plot and Aristotle's *mythos*). Cf. Chapter 4.3.1.

28 Completion can concern narrative as well as enactive sections, since these too can represent different segments or facets of the same story. In our plays, mutually completing narratives are more frequent than mutually completing actions (see the synoptic tables).

rather than repeating each other in ways which promote (further) actions and plot developments (see Chapter 4.4.3/*Comparison: Oedipus the King*).

Structure of the plays. *Persians* is quite obviously narrative-based, as is widely recognized.[29] The synoptic table of the play shows no less than six arches linking narratives to each other. Together, these sections create the overarching narrative which centres on the defeat at Salamis and on which the entire play builds. Most of the narrative sections are repetitive in the sense discussed above, retelling the Battle of Salamis in various fashions and capacities. Different narrators recount the same events over and over again (messenger, ll. 249–514, Atossa, ll. 703–738, Xerxes, ll. 907–1037, and, symbolically, also Atossa, ll. 140–214), which results in fascinatingly different narratives since each narrator focalizes on the events in his or her own unique way.[30] The events which preceded and in a way caused the Battle of Salamis are also narrated (the departure of the Persian fleet and army, ll. 1–139) as well as the consequences (retreat of the surviving Persians and the forthcoming Battle of Plataea, ll. 800–822), whereas narratives on causes and consequences complete instead of repeating those about the battle itself. Altogether, the overarching narrative covers (albeit with interruptions) the entire play: that is, from line 1, at which the choral narrative about the Persian expedition begins, to line 1077, at which the *kommos* mixing narrative and lament about Salamis ends.

Seven too features an overarching narrative regarding offstage military events which runs through the best part of the play—more precisely, from line 39, when the first scout report begins, to line 819, when the last scout report ends. All the narrative sections in between these terms complement each other. Together, they cover all the phases of the Argive attack which takes place outside the Theban walls, from the military preparations until the final outcome of the duels. Once the narratives contributing to this story are over, the only elements which are left are the choral response to the final report by the scout (ll. 822–1004) and a scene which is in all likelihood spurious (ll. 1005–1078). What is striking about the structure of *Seven* is that narrat-

29 E.g., Hopman 2009: 362: "*Persians* presents the war story through embedded narratives. In other words, it confines the distinctively dramatic mode of storytelling—showing rather than telling—to actions and events that lie outside of the war story"; Michelini 1982: 72: "The three-part series of messages—in dream, eyewitness, and prophecy—provides a structure that exemplifies the best resources of paratactic style. The defeat is replicated in the speeches of the Queen, Messenger, and Ghost, each time from a different viewpoint and with differing insight [...]. Yet all three episodes are in a limited and formal sense equivalent."

30 See Chapter 4.4.3/*Case study: Persians*.

ive and enactive sections interact with each other throughout the long scene of the *Redepaare*. This results in a dramatic structure which balances narrative and action, as the play's unusually symmetrical synoptic table visualizes. Together, narrative and enactive sections represent the siege of Thebes in that each new section builds on the previous one and adds another piece of the story, according to the logical-chronological course of the events. The narratives represent the following offstage events: the military preparations of the Argive forces (ll. 39–68), the attack on the city walls (ll. 78–181), the first to the seventh duel (ll. 375–396, 422–436, 457–471, 486–500, 526–549, 568–596, and 631–652), the rescue of the city and the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices (ll. 792–819). The mutually related enactive sections include the seven short passages by Eteocles in the *Redepaare* (ll. 397–416, 437–451, 473–480, 501–520, 550–562, 597–625, 653–676) and the action in which the chorus attempt to dissuade Eteocles from fighting against Polyneices (ll. 677–719, a conation).

Unlike *Persians* and *Seven*, *Suppliant Women* and *Prometheus* do not deal with one single but with two stories that are thematically (as opposed to causally) related to each other.[31] This is relevant when considering the relationships between the narratives in these plays, since narratives that repeat or complete each other contribute to the same story. The main story of *Suppliant Women* is about how the Egyptians pose a threat to the safety of the Danaids and how the Danaids supplicate Pelasgus King of Argos to grant them asylum, while the secondary or less developed story concerns the vicissitudes and progeny of Io, the Argive ancestor of the Danaids. In *Prometheus*, the main story is about the conflict between Prometheus and Zeus and the present-day struggles of Prometheus which result from it, while the secondary story—again—deals with Io and her progeny. In both these plays, the secondary story entirely consists of offstage events represented by means of narratives.

Prometheus represents the main story by means of narratives which complete each other (ll. 160–283, 436–525, 908–943) and frames these narratives between the enactive sections which are at the very beginning and at the very end of the play (ll. 1–87, 944–1079, 1080–1093), as is visualized by the arches on both sides of the synoptic table. As for *Suppliant Women*, the two sets of arches on the narrative side show that this play's narratives pertain to two different stories. The secondary story is represented through choral narratives which repeat each other to a significant extent (ll. 40–56, 291–324, and 524–

31 See Chapter 4.3.2/*Four loosely united plots*.

599). By contrast, the main story is represented through narrative as well as action. The narratives complete each other and deal with offstage events relating to the supplication, namely the opening narrative by the chorus about what motivates the supplication (ll. 1–22) and the three narratives by Danaus about events that take place in the dramatic now, but offstage (ll. 176–185, 600–624, and 710–733). The enactive sections also complete each other and represent the events which immediately precede, accompany, and follow the supplication: its preparation (ll. 186–233), the encounter between Pelasgus and the chorus (ll. 234–290), the supplication itself, including the Danaids' threat to commit suicide if they are refused (ll. 325–467), Pelasgus' reluctant resolution to grant them protection and to summon the city assembly (468–523), the arrival of the Egyptians (ll. 825–907/910), the fight between Egyptians and Argives and the rescue of the chorus (ll. 911–965), the planning of the future conduct of the Danaids (ll. 980–1033), and finally the attempt of the Argives to persuade the Danaids to accept marriage (ll. 1034–1073).[32]

The provisory conclusion which can be drawn at this point is that *Suppliant Women* is less narrative than *Persians*, *Seven*, and *Prometheus* in quantitative as well as structural terms (the two aspects correlate). This means that the narratives are not only fewer and shorter, as observed in the previous chapter, but also that the play's structure balances narrative and action. In these regards, *Suppliant Women* works on quite different premises than the other plays under consideration, and the chapters to follow will confirm the overall impression of more nuanced narrativity. The play therefore illustrates how the traits that are distinctive of narrative drama are not discrete markers but family resemblances that allow for a range of manifestations, which is what makes us say, for example, that *Suppliant Women* is less narrative than *Persians* but more narrative than Euripides' *Children of Heracles* (see below). In scalar though not necessarily chronological terms, *Suppliant Women* can be seen as intermediate between the most and the least narrative dramas of Aeschylus, and while the historical transition from the former to the latter should not be presumed to be linear, *Suppliant Women*'s enhancement of enactive and plot-driven qualities at the expense of narrative ones resonates well with the notion that the play was produced a few years before the *Oresteia*.[33]

32 This last action might well qualify as conative, since forty-nine out of fifty Danaids will not adapt to their new role as wives and will kill their husbands instead.

33 E.g., Garvie 2006 [1969]: 88–140 and Sommerstein 1997: 74–79 point to a later date. On the difficulties of dating *Suppliant Women*, see also Bowen 2013: 10–21.

Comparison: *Children of Heracles*. Comparisons between Aeschylean and later tragedy can shed light on this transition, and they are particularly compelling when the same theme is dramatized. The supplication motif (*hikesia*), often in combination with a resulting conflict between the aggressors and the defenders of the suppliants, was key to a great number of Attic tragedies including (in likely chronological order) Aeschylus' *Telephus*,[34] *Suppliant Women*, and *Eumenides*, Euripides' *Telephus*, *Children of Heracles*, *Andromache*, *Suppliant Women*, and *Heracles*, and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.[35] The success of the supplication on the Athenian stage had certainly to do with its pervasiveness through the mythical repertoire in performed, visual, literary, and multimodal manifestations. In addition, Aeschylus appears to have contributed to this success by dramatizing supplication—unlike so many other subjects—with the help of action more than of narrative, as *Suppliant Women* and *Eumenides* illustrate. These renderings launched or consolidated tragic models of supplication which could gain traction not only on their own merits but also because they conformed with the more action-friendly developments in the genre. As a matter of fact, later supplications in Attic tragedy continued to be quite consistent with the patterns we detect in Aeschylus, for example by sticking to the triangulation of characters (suppliants, villains, rescuers) and moments (flight, supplication, fight). Differences such as the shift of focus from the act of supplication in itself towards the conflict between aggressors and defenders further promoted action at the expense of narrative.[36]

A comparison of *Suppliant Women* with Euripides' *Children of Heracles*, which is traditionally dated to the 430s BCE and possibly earlier, reveals important structural correspondences, for example.[37] In both plays, the ritual of the supplication—that is the ways in which a group of suppliants try to persuade the local ruler to grant them asylum in spite of the quarrels and violence this is likely to cause—is mainly represented through action and similar events

34 According to *Schol. ad* Aristoph. *Ach*. 332a Wilson, both Aeschylus' and Euripides' *Telephus* featured scenes of *hikesia*; on the reliability of this scholion, see Csapo 1990: 42 f. For Euripides' *Telephus*, the *hikesia* has been envisioned as staged action or, alternatively, as reported in a messenger scene: see Gould 1973: 101–103.

35 In addition, Eur. *Med*. 324 ff.; *Hipp*. 288 ff. feature the motif of the supplication in a less developed form. On *hikesia* in Attic tragedy, see Kopperschmidt 1971 and Gödde 2000; on its historical and political meanings Grethlein 2003 and Pattoni 2015; on its stage aspects Rehm 1988; studies on the iconography of the ritual are in Neumann 1965: 67–72 and Canciani / Pellizer / Faedo 2005.

36 Kopperschmidt 1971 remarks on the triangulation of suppliants, villains, and rescuers and on the shift of focus from supplication towards conflict in *Andromache* and *Heracles*.

37 On the date of *Children of Heracles*, see most recently Yoon 2020: 87–96.

unfold following a similar pattern. More relevantly to the present purposes, the two plays display neat correspondences between the use of narrative, action, and response on the one hand and the different moments of the supplication on the other. First comes a narrative with the function of a prologue about the antefacts of the supplication (*Suppl.* 1–22, *Heraclid.* 1–54), then a series of mutually completing enactive sections through which the supplication takes place (*Suppl.* 186–523, *Heraclid.* 55–287), which is followed by a response with expressions of gratitude (*Suppl.* 625–709, *Heraclid.* 288–328), by a teichoscopy-like narrative in which a representative of the suppliants informs that the enemies are now approaching (Danaus in *Suppl.* 710–733, Iolaus in *Heraclid.* 381–424), and by another response with expressions of dismay (*Suppl.* 734–824, *Heraclid.* 425–473).[38]

The differences, however, are just as striking as the similarities. Aeschylus gives much more space to the aforementioned events and interrupts the flow of the action with narratives about Io which digress from the events occurring in the dramatic here and now (*Suppl.* 291–324, 524–599), with the result that the plot of *Suppliant Women* develops much more slowly. Euripides, on the other hand, immediately launches into the action and presses on with it for nearly 300 lines without any significant interruptions (ll. 55–352), with the result that "[t]he initial scenes of the *Heraclidae* are extremely fast paced. In 350 lines, Euripides disposes of an action analogous to that of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*."[39] The centre-piece of this long enactive section is the *agōn* between the children's defender Iolaus and the herald, who speaks for the assailing forces and reclaims the suppliants for them, with King Demophon acting as a mediator between the two; here, events unfold at such speed that *Children of Heracles* has been likened to an action movie.[40] In Aeschylus, on the other hand, a moment which might lend itself to be represented as an *agōn* is rendered by Danaus' short narrative about the assembly's positions for and against the suppliants (*Suppl.* 600–624). As a consequence, upon the successful

38 After this point, the two plays take different courses. Both plays feature the conflict between villains and rescuers, but *Suppliant Women* represents this by means of action, while *Children of Heracles* opts for messenger report.

39 Burian 1977: 4, with a structural comparison of the two plays (cf. also Albini 1993: 106). Euripides' enactive sections include the threats of the herald to the children (Eur. *Heracl.* 79–235), and, in stichomythia, the king's resolution to take care of the suppliants versus the herald's complaints, which, however, do not modify the situation (253–287). After the response of the chorus and Iolaus (ll. 288–328), the action continues with the military preparations (ll. 329–352).

40 Yoon 2020: 1.

conclusion of the supplication the Danaids rejoice over a narrative while the children of Heracles rejoice over an action.

Thus, while *Suppliant Women* is less narrative than the other (Ps.-)Aeschylean plays considered here, it is more narrative than thematically and structurally comparable plays which were produced later on in the fifth century BCE. It is entirely possible that Aeschylus' untypically action-centred representation of the supplication was influential for later tragic renderings of the same theme. The first half of *Children of Heracles* is a case in point, illustrating how by Euripides' time the focus had further shifted from narrative towards action and fast-paced plot, but also revealing Aeschylean legacies in the correspondences of narrative, action, and response with different moments of the supplication as well as in other regards. Tellingly, *Children of Heracles* has often been faulted as one of the most disjointed and archaic-looking tragedies of Euripides with arguments and feelings of discomfort which bear resemblance with those exemplified in Chapter 2.2.3 with regard to Aeschylus. While it is not entirely surprising that *Children of Heracles* survived by chance instead of manuscript tradition, criticism concerning this "puzzling and neglected play" illustrates how it defies "an unstated canon of tragic propriety."[41] In fact,

> [t]he central problem in interpreting the *Heraclidae* is one of dramatic form. The apparent rupture in the play's fabric, the harsh disjunction of the ending from the main body of the action, must be accounted for as a crucial component of its form.[42]

What Aeschylean drama and *Children of Heracles* have in common is that they elude tragic models which, while not being unrivalled in the fifth century BCE, had considerable traction and ultimately oriented the dynamics of the genre. They realize tragic alternatives which feel like imperfections.

4.2 Narrative's Performativity

4.2.1 *How to Do Things with Narratives*

In language. When the narratives embedded in drama elicit responses and reactions from the internal narratees, they make a dent in the characters' world,

41 Burian 1977: 1 and 2, respectively. For surveys of the negative criticism regarding this play, see also Heldmann 2006: 135 ff.; Mills 2014: 366–369.

42 Burian 1977: 4.

and in this process the gap between telling and showing shrinks. This happens constantly in Aeschylus. For this reason, some grasp of how narrative encroaches on action, and of the ancients' awareness of this phenomenon, helps us better understand how Aeschylean drama operates.

The purpose and impact of narratives were the issue of ancient (practice-based) theories long before being rediscovered in the terms of performativity (see Chapter 3.1.4/*The performativity of character utterances*). Sources from the classical period onwards document a keen interest in the intentions that motivate narrators and in the effects which narratives have on the narratees—in ordinary language and in literature alike.[43] Ancient oratory and rhetoric, for instance, counted on narrative's contribution to persuasion: *diēgēsis*/*narratio* was a mandatory part of the orator's training, as we can see in a plethora of "preliminary exercises," *progymnasmata/praeexercitamina*, and rhetorical treatises inevitably included it among the parts of the speech. In this context, it was a given that narratives are instrumental in pursuing all sorts of goals because they elicit powerful responses and reactions from the narratees: Aristotle, for instance, highlights how narratives help the orators in portraying the characters (ἠθοποιία/*ēthopoiia*) and the audience in feeling connected with these.[44]

In modern times, the pragmatically oriented fringes of three fields of study have taken a special interest in narrative performativity—all of them inexplicably neglecting ancient inputs on the subject: philosophy of language, linguistics, and narratology. The *Ur*-father of pragmatic philosophy, L. Wittgenstein, regarded fictional narratives such as fairy tales and jokes as examples of *Sprachspiele*, and in this sense he left a door open for pragmatic takes on literary narratives. Austin and Searle shut this door to focus on the utterances of ordinary language, including "real-life" reports and narratives (i.e., as real-life as possible without discourse transcription and analysis).[45] At first glance, narrative utterances appeared to be purely constative, but Austin soon clarified that all types of utterances are motivated by the speakers' intentions and can interfere with their environment.[46] Along these lines, pragmatic-oriented linguistics has also been focusing on narratives in ordinary language since the 1980s.[47]

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43 See Gianvittorio 2012 a.

44 Arist. *Rhet*. 1417a36–b11. Other rhetorical uses of narrative include the exaggeration (αὔξησις/*auxēsis* or *amplificatio*: Anon. Seguerianus 53–55; Fortunatianus *Ars rhet*. 2.19 Montefusco), the allegation and suggestion of the untruth (διαβολή/*diabolē* and *suggestio falsi*: Anon. Seguerianus 53–55), etc.

45 Austin 1962; Searle 1971 (chapter 3), 1968, and 1979. Cf. Miller 2001: 18; Gianvittorio 2012 a: 75 f.

46 See Miller 2001: 15 ff.

47 E.g., Quasthoff 1980 and 2001; Ehlich 1980 and 2007: 377–383; Franke 1983; Erzgräber / Goetsch 1987.

In literature. The reappraisal of narrative elements in literature had to wait until the recent emergence of pragmatic narratology,[48] even though with specific regard to drama there have been studies on the motivations of the play characters to narrate and on the effects which their narratives produce in the plays' fictional worlds. For example, it has been observed with reference to R. Jakobson's "functions of language" that tragic messenger speeches exhibit both "referential" and "conative" functions,[49] and conversation analysis has been instrumental not only in identifying a number of "local interactional functions" in dramatic narratives (such as explaining, justifying, etc.), but also in tackling the interactions between dramatic narrators and narratees.[50] This means that passing on information is only one of the possible functions of narratives: in drama as elsewhere, narrators may want to persuade, warn, teach, scare, or comfort the narratees, to mention just a few examples.

In general, speakers do not need to explicitly declare what the real or pretended motivations of their utterances are, but in Attic tragedy they do so often and deliberately.[51] In particular, tragic narrators are keen to point out for the internal narratees the purposes for which they are telling what they tell. Making explicit the narrative's motivations contributes towards organizing the responses and reactions to the narrative itself, and possibly directing them according to the wishes of the narrator. It is, in other words, an instrument the narrator uses to try and make the speech act felicitous, as philosophers of language say. What follows will refer to explicit statements by Aeschylean narrators about the illocutionary points of the narratives as 'illocutionary markers.' In the synoptic tables, asterisks (*) tag the narratives that feature illocutionary markers.

4.2.2 *Parameters of Performativity*

Degrees of performativity. Pragmatically oriented studies of literature conceive of performativity in scalar rather than binary ways: the point is not so much to determine whether character utterances are performative (*aut … aut*)

48 On the goals of pragmatic narratology, see Strasen 2002; Nünning / Sommer 2011: 216–222; Segal 2011.

49 See Pfister 2001 [1977]: 151–156 on "polyfunctionality" (*Polyfunktionalität*).

50 Bowles 2010: 53 f. Cf. also Gülich / Hausendorf 2000 and Quasthoff 2001 on how conversation analysis helps approaching narrative.

51 In this regard, Attic tragedy differs from modern drama, where "[n]arrators sometimes refer the overall purpose of their stories during the telling, but more often the purpose is ascribed personally by the analyst" (Bowles 2010: 61). When looking for an ancient Greek equivalent of "illocution" or "illocutionary point," *prohairesis* comes to mind.

as to assess how performative they are, and why.[52] In Aeschylus, all kinds of utterances can elicit responses and reactions, but narrative utterances do so more often and more intensely than responsive and enactive ones—as Chapter 4.2.3 will observe in detail. Responsive utterances, which express emotional and cognitive takes on enactive and narrative ones, show a minimum degree of performativity: they tend to be elicited rather than eliciting anything. Enactive utterances, which make events happen while and because they are uttered, are particularly performative in later drama, in which speech acts such as threats, lies, promises, and oaths tend to generate further speech acts and have a strong impact on the progress of the plot; for this reason, they have been the favoured object of investigation in pragmatic criticism of drama.[53] However, in the four plays under investigation enactive utterances contribute much less to the development of the plot: it is true that they modify the situation in which the characters find themselves, but these changes tend to stagnate instead of triggering further changes. Instead, it is narrative utterances that show the most performative effects, because they routinely elicit responses and reactions from the internal narratees. In this way, narrative works as a propulsive force and significantly contributes to shaping the plot, structure, and overall economy of Aeschylean drama.

Again in accordance with scalar notions of performativity, tragic narratives can be observed to be more or less performative depending on both quantitative and qualitative factors, such as how much character-speech they elicit (for example, an interjection, a two-line remark, or a longer choral lament) and which kind of character speech they elicit. In the latter regard, Aeschylus presents us with three possibilities:

– Narrative elicits narrative.[54] In drama and particularly in Aeschylus' drama, "it frequently happens that someone will tell a story and other participants will respond with one of their own."[55] For example, in *Persians* the narrative in which the ghost of Darius recalls the past splendour of the Persian kingdom (*Pers.* 765–842) triggers another narrative in which the chorus recapitulate the territorial losses (ll. 843–906).
– Narrative elicits response. The most frequent case in Aeschylus is that narratives are conducive to the internal narratees expressing their own feelings and thoughts about that which has just been narrated. For example, in *Suppliant Women* the narrative by Danaus which relates the approach of Egyp-

52 Cf. Pfister 2001 (*Skalierung*); Häsner / Hufnagel / Maassen / Traninger 2011: 74 ff.
53 E.g., Bowles 2010.
54 For structural relationships between narratives, see Chapter 4.1.3.
55 Bowles 2010: 58.

tian ship (*Suppl.* 710–733) triggers the response of the chorus, who sing their despair (ll. 734–824).

– Narrative elicits action. Narrative can also trigger action, though this is infrequent in Aeschylus. For example, in the *Redepaare* of *Seven* each one of the short narratives by the scout is (represented as being) directly accountable for one of King Eteocles' strategic decisions and military orders, that is for events which materialize in the dramatic here and now.

One may argue that the narratees' responses and reactions refer to the narrated events rather than to the narrative itself: for example, that in *Persians* the chorus of the counsellors sing their lament because the army and fleet have been destroyed as opposed to because the messenger has reported on the catastrophe.[56] However, this view would dissociate semantics (the content of narrative) from pragmatics (the use of narrative) and overlook that the functions of narrative in drama can only be investigated by relying on the representational logic of the play. According to the latter, the choral lament does not respond to a battle which occurred elsewhere some time ago, but to the report which the messenger has just given to the counsellors in Susa. In other words, our focus is not so much on "what happened" in Salamis as on how *Persians* represents the events and uses narrative to make the drama unfold.

Performative narratives are not a prerogative of Aeschylean drama. To mention one example from Attic tragedy, in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* Tiresias predicts that Thebes will only be saved by the sacrifice of young Menoeceus, son of Creon (*Ph.* 911–959): this narrative triggers the resolution of Menoeceus—who is on the stage during the prophecy as one of Tiresias' internal narratees—to kill himself in order to save the city (ll. 991–1012).[57] One example from modern drama is the self-fulfilling prophecy of the three witches at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. By revealing that Macbeth will one day become the King of Scotland, this narrative somehow sets the entire plot in motion: it sows unbridled ambition in Macbeth's mind, encourages him to betray the king and to commit more and more crimes until Macbeth's despotism leads to a civil war which is ultimately co-induced by the prophecy according to the representational logic of the play. Yet however performative these narratives are, in Euripides' and Shakespeare's drama the main trigger and driver of the plot events is action, whereas in Aeschylus narrative is the main and, in some cases, only motor of drama. Another important difference is that in more action-based drama performative narratives tend to elicit action

56 For a similar notion cf. Schirren 2009: 81.

57 Or ll. 991–1018, though most editors consider ll. 1013–1018 to be spurious.

and to give dynamic twists to the plot. For example, in Sophocles' *Antigone* the report by the sentry (*Ant.* 245–277), which relates how Polyneices' body has been partially buried, brings about the action in which Creon orders the culprit to be found (ll. 280–331), and the messenger speech that reports on the death of Haemon (ll. 1192–1243) triggers Eurydice's suicide. Also, in *Oedipus the King* the narrative by the servant (*OT* 1121–1185) elicits a tremendous series of actions which includes Jocasta's suicide and, eventually, Oedipus' self-injury (ll. 1233–1285). In Aeschylus, on the other hand, the most frequent case is that of narratives eliciting responses—or even further narratives—which significantly slow down the pace of the plot. What is peculiar about narrative's performativity in Aeschylus, thus, is not only the circumstance that narrative shows a greater capacity than action to produce effects, but also that narrative and its effects are scarcely conducive to the development of the plot.

Blurring the line between narrative and action. Narrative can be used in drama not just as a trigger for action, but also as action itself. This is the case when the very narration of an offstage event *x* enacts an event *y* in the dramatic here and now, so that the distinction between narrative and action is virtually indiscernible.

To judge from the surviving tragedies, enacting narratives of this type became more frequent after Aeschylus along with a more general increase in the dramatic action and the functionalization of narrative for plot development. Sophocles provides excellent examples. One is in *Philoctetes*, where Neoptolemus' dishonest tale about the misfortunes of the Greek forces enacts here and now Odysseus' scheme for deceiving Philoctetes. In *Oedipus the King*, most of the narratives have a share in making the main events of the plot happen (*OT* 449–460, 710–753, 771–813, 939–963, 1008–1046, 1121–1185), because by disclosing information about the family background of Oedipus, they contribute to Oedipus' realization about his own identity (*anagnōrisis*). In particular, the narratives by Jocasta (ll. 710–753) and the servant (ll. 1121–1185) reveal crucial details about the murder of Laius and recount how the baby was abandoned and taken care of by Polybus of Corinth: it is during and because of these narratives about past events that the *anagnōrisis* of Oedipus sets in here and now, since in this light Oedipus comes to realize that he is the murderer of his own father and the husband of his own mother.

Although Aeschylus' drama abounds with narratives and with manifestations of their performativity, it seldom features enacting narratives, which aligns with Aeschylus' greater freedom to resort to narrative for narrative's sake—also at the expense of action. For the most part, Aeschylean narratives

elicit responses and reactions that come after and are distinct from the narratives themselves, as Chapter 4.2.3 will observe. The most noticeable exception is in *Suppliant Women* 291–324, where the story of Io and her offspring is recounted in the form of a stichomythic dialogue between Pelasgus, who asks the questions, and the chorus leader, whose answers make the story unfold bit by bit. What strikes us as enacting here is that the narrative plays a major role in the enactment of the supplication: the Danaids count on the story of their Argive ancestor Io as their biggest asset for receiving protection from Argos (cf. ll. 49–56 and 323 f.); indeed, this narration is deeply intertwined with the supplication itself (ll. 325–467 and 468–523), working as an effective introduction to it, if not as its actual beginning.

Other Aeschylean narratives are less enacting, if at all. A particularly relevant case is that of narratives disclosing information which significantly changes the narratees' perception of their own status and existence, and which therefore appear to realize, in the dramatic here and now, a passage from ignorance to knowledge (*anagnōrisis*). However, the learning processes produced through narratives usually end in responses and phases of plot stagnation in Aeschylus. The messenger report in *Persians* is an illuminating example. On the one hand, it produces tremendous responses from the narratees, which prove that the narrative does change the characters' perception of the world and of their own place in it: since this *anagnōrisis* occurs here and now (while and because the messenger says what he says), the report enacts the *anagnōrisis* and is virtually indistinguishable from it. On the other hand, the messenger report does not ostensibly accelerate or redirect the course of the plot because it produces very few factual and material (as opposed to cognitive and emotional) consequences. By comparison, Sophocles' enacting narratives typically engender action and accelerate or redirect the course of the plot. For example, in *Oedipus the King* breaking the news translates into the *anagnōrisis* of the protagonist *and* this knowledge works as the turning point of the plot—incidentally, Aristotle seems to imply that *anagnōrisis* naturally ensues from causes and engenders consequences, and that it is distinctive of the composite plot for this reason.[58]

One may conclude that dramaturgically speaking, speech acts such as "telling" and "disclosing information" do not realize plot events in their own right, but only on condition that they ostensibly modify the premises on which the characters *act* in the play (e.g., the premises on which they make choices

58 This section anticipates notions which Chapter 4.3.1/*Aristotle on plot* will discuss in greater detail.

and pursue their goals). Aeschylus' narratives do not quite fulfil this condition even when they disclose key information and have the potential to realize *anagnōrisis* here and now. In *Persians*, for instance, Darius' prophecy (ll. 765–842) provides the queen and chorus with the advice they have asked for, and Darius says clearly that the events he narrates (that is, the present-day suffering of the survivors in Boeotia, the imminent defeat by Plataea, and the consequences thereof) should teach the Persians that they should never again attack Greece. But these envisioned consequences of the narrative lie in the future—"outside the drama" and "outside the plot," as Aristotle would say—and the characters are not represented as acting accordingly in *Persians*. In *Suppliant Women* 600–624, Danaus' report on the assembly's decision to grant protection to the Danaids marks an important change of status for them: thanks to this report the suppliants see themselves as being upgraded to refugees. But according to the play's inner logic, the Danaids would be protected by the Argives even if Danaus had not uttered these lines, as opposed, for example, to Oedipus, who would not (according to the play's logic) have blinded himself if it had not been for the narratives which reveal his identity. Another interesting case concerns *Prometheus* 340–376, where the protagonist uses the narrative about Atlas and Typhon to discourage Oceanus from saving him: in this way, the narrative is not used to make something happen, but to prevent it from happening.

The examples discussed above demonstrate the potential of dramatic narrative to assimilate with action, and confirm that the line between narrative and action can be variously nuanced and negotiated. At the same time, the examples illustrate that Aeschylus and Sophocles realize this potential in different ways, and give us elements to try and figure out the experimental paths along which the differences materialized.

4.2.3 *The Motor of Drama*

Persians. This chapter observes the performative effects of character utterances in the four plays under scrutiny. In particular, it focuses on how tragic narratives elicit, trigger or bring about responses and reactions from the internal narratees and, in so doing, work as the main force which sets and keeps Aeschylean drama in motion. The synoptic tables visualize these relationships of dependence by means of arrows (→) that link performative sections of text with the ones they elicit.

In *Persians*, the most frequent case of performativity is that of narratives eliciting responses that are for the most part sung by the chorus. Atossa's narrative to the chorus is about her dream and the bird omen she witnessed (ll. 159–214). The narrator explicitly says that she narrates in order to receive advice from

the narratees (ll. 159 ff. and 170–172),[59] and the asterisk apposed to this narrative in the synoptic table signals the presence of illocutionary markers. In fact, Atossa only begins to recount once the chorus assure her that they are willing to meet these expectations.[60] Accordingly, the chorus give advice to the queen and help her "interpret" the two portents to the best of their knowledge (l. 225 κρίνομεν, l. 226 κριτής),[61] thereby also trying and explaining the wild card of who the Greeks are (ll. 215–248). In the end, the narratees are pleased to have interpreted the prophetic signs in good faith,[62] and the narrator confirms that her expectations have been fully satisfied.[63] A particularly conspicuous case of narrative eliciting choral response is the messenger speech followed by the lament. At first narrative and response are intermingled in the form of a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue between messenger and chorus (as the dotted line of the synoptic table indicates: ll. 256–289).[64] After this, an extraordinarily long messenger speech (ll. 290–514) elicits responsive utterances, first in the form of iambic trimeters (ll. 515–531), then in choral song (ll. 532–597). Similarly, the narrative in which Atossa summarizes the Persian situation for the benefit of Darius' ghost (ll. 709–738) triggers his political and strategic analysis (ll. 739–764). Here too, as in her previous narrative (ll. 159–214), Atossa makes her illocutionary point explicit: by acknowledging Darius' reputation as an excellent counsellor, the narrator signals that her aim is to receive advice from the narratee.[65] Darius' response keeps up this reputation: as soon as the queen's report is over, he does not hesitate to share his wisdom and counterpoints his own good advice by remarking that Xerxes—unlike Atossa now—has received

59 *Pers.* 159–162, ταῦτα […] ἱκάνω […] ἐς δ' ὑμᾶς ἐρῶ μῦθον (on the causal and final meaning of ταῦτα cf. Garvie 2009: 86; LSJ s.v. οὗτος C VIII, 1); *Pers.* 170–172, πρὸς τάδ', ὡς οὕτως ἐχόντων τῶνδε, σύμβουλοι λόγου τοῦδέ μοι γένεσθε, Πέρσαι, γηραλέα πιστώματα· πάντα γὰρ τὰ κέδν' ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστί μοι βουλεύματα; cf. also *Pers.* 526–528.

60 *Pers.* 173–175, εὖ τόδ' ἴσθι, γῆς ἄνασσα τῆσδε, μή σε δὶς φράσαι μήτ' ἔπος μήτ' ἔργον, ὧν ἂν δύναμις ἡγεῖσθαι θέλῃ· εὐμενεῖς γὰρ ὄντας ἡμᾶς τῶνδε συμβούλους καλεῖς.

61 On κρίνω as "interpret," see Garvie 2009: 131.

62 *Pers.* 224, ταῦτα θυμόμαντις ὧν σοι πρευμενῶς παρῄνεσα.

63 *Pers.* 226–229 ἀλλὰ μὴν εὔνους γ' ὁ πρῶτος τῶνδ' ἐνυπνίων κριτὴς παιδὶ καὶ δόμοις ἐμοῖσι τήνδ' ἐκύρωσας φάτιν […] ταῦτα δ' ὡς ἐφίεσαι πάντ' θήσομεν. At this point, the chorus' advice still satisfies Atossa, though she will judge it differently later on: cf. l. 520, ὑμεῖς δὲ φαύλως αὖτ' ἄγαν ἐκρίνατε.

64 Such mixed sections confirm that narrative, response, and action are not necessarily mutually exclusive domains and cannot always be disentangled from each other. Their distinction serves the heuristic purpose of analyzing peculiar mechanisms that are at work in Aeschylus' drama.

65 *Pers.* 655 f. "the Persians called him 'divine counsellor,' and divine counsellor he was"; cf. 631 f. "for if he knows any further remedy for our troubles, he, alone of mortals, will tell us how to end them."

bad advice (ll. 749 and 753 ff.). Finally, in the *kommos* that concludes the play, Xerxes' own testimony regarding the battle is at first intermingled with responsive utterances by the chorus (ll. 907–1037, cf. the dotted lines which mark both *kommoi* in the synoptic table). This mix of narrative and response is then followed by a purely responsive section with the alternating voices of Xerxes and the chorus (ll. 1038–1077). Once again, illocutionary markers—visualized by an asterisk—make explicit what motivates Xerxes' narrative, namely the wish or need to receive sympathetic support from the narratees: in fact, Xerxes constantly urges the chorus to display their grief (ll. 941 f., 1038, 1040 = 1048 = 1066, 1042, 1046, 1050, 1054, 1056, 1058, 1060, 1062, 1064, 1068, 1070, 1072), a task which they accomplish with the greatest emphasis.

When the narratives of *Persians* do not elicit responses, they evoke further narratives, as the two narrative-to-narrative arrows in the synoptic table indicate. Atossa's summary of the Persian defeat (ll. 703–738) elicits not only, as we have seen, Darius' analysis of the events but also his prophetic narrative about the great past and imminent doom of the kingdom (ll. 765–842). In turn, this prophecy inspires the choral narrative that recalls the good old times when the Persians prospered in safety (ll. 843–906).

Persians features only two actions, that is sections in which events take place in the dramatic here and now while and because the characters say what they say. In a way, they both derive from a narrative: the messenger report (ll. 290–514) leads not only to the choral response but also to Atossa's resolution to summon the ghost of her late husband and to the performance of the necromantic ritual (first action, ll. 598–680), and as a direct consequence, Darius' ghost appears (second action, ll. 681–702). It is noteworthy that Atossa presents the action, that is her decision to summon the ghost, as being a consequence of the messenger narrative and of the impressions which it has created on her mind:

> So for me now, everything is full of fear: before my eyes there appear hostile visions from the gods, and in my ears there resounds a din that is not a song of cheer—such is the stunning effect of these misfortunes (κακῶν ἔκπληξιν) that terrifies my mind. That is why I have retraced my path, coming back from my house without my carriage and without my former luxury, bringing propitiatory drink-offerings for the father of my child [...] (*Pers*. 603–610).

Since κακά/*kaka* often indicates "bad news" in tragic vocabulary, the phrase κακῶν ἔκπληξιν/*kakōn ekplēxin* refers to the "blow of the bad news"—the report which Atossa has just received. Literally struck by the messenger narrative,

Atossa's mind conjures up terrifying visions and soundscapes which motivate the extraordinary resolution of the necromantic ritual—whereas previously the queen had only agreed to more usual drink offerings in honour of Darius' memory (ll. 220–231).

All in all, the role which narratives play in *Persians* is crucial not only, as observed above, in quantitative terms but also with regard to the performative effects. They are the driving force of the play's (however limited) dynamism: but for the exception of Darius' epiphany, the entire drama consists either of narratives or sections that are elicited and motivated by narratives.

Seven against Thebes. The narratives of *Seven* are remarkably performative: here more than in any other of the plays under investigation, narrative displays the capacity to prompt events to happen in the dramatic here and now, working as the propulsive force that drives drama. Basically, the entire play ensues from the mutually related bits of narrative by the scout concerning the Argive attack.

While in *Persians* the most frequent case is that of narratives eliciting responses, *Seven* also features seven cases of narrative eliciting action, as displayed in the synoptic table by the arrows which link the scout's utterances to Eteocles' in the *Redepaare* scene. In fact, but for one exception (ll. 182–286) all actions in *Seven* result from narratives. What motivates the first report by the scout (ll. 39–68) and then again each of his seven micro-reports in the *Redepaare* (ll. 375–396, 422–436, 457–471, 486–500, 526–549, 568–596, and 631–652) is the intention of obtaining from Eteocles, who is the political leader and military mind of the assaulted city, real-time solutions to the problems posed by the Argives. The scout reaffirms this illocutionary point over and over again (cf. the asterisks in the synoptic table): at first by urging Eteocles, in a paraenetic appeal, to react immediately for the sake of Thebes (ll. 57–65),[66] then in the *Redepaare* by closing the bits of his report with anxious questions about Eteocles' military plans (ll. 395 and 435 f.) or with exhortations to the king to act resolutely (ll. 470 f., 499 f., 595 f., and 652). The reactions of the narratee fulfil these expectations: seven times, Eteocles relies on the information provided by the scout to choose and appoint the Theban warrior whom he deems to be most suitable for facing the Argives (ll. 397–416, 437–451, 473–480, 501–520, 550–562, 597–625, and 653–676). Thus, throughout the *Redepaare* Eteocles' mili-

66 *Sept.* 57–65, πρὸς ταῦτ' ἀρίστους ἄνδρας ἐκκρίτους πόλεως πυλῶν ἐπ' ἐξόδοισι τάγευσαι τάχος [...] σὺ δ' ὥστε ναὸς κεδνὸς οἰακοστρόφος φάρξαι πόλισμα, πρὶν καταιγίσαι πνοὰς Ἄρεως [...] καὶ τῶνδε καιρὸν ὅστις ὤκιστος λαβέ.

tary orders are presented as ensuing from the scout's reports; his utterances qualify as enactive because they represent the ruling king in the act of making strategic decisions and giving military orders to save Thebes.

Other narratives elicit responses. The first report of the scout causes a brief response in which Eteocles invokes the gods as protectors of Thebes (ll. 69–77), while the last report, which is about the outcome of the duels, triggers the response of the Theban women (ll. 822–1004). This last narrative also contains an illocutionary marker, since the scout instructs the narratees that they all "have to rejoice and to weep over" the news he breaks (ll. 814 f.)—"with an auspicious and a dropping eye," as another tragedy puts it.[67] The envisioned response is difficult because contradictory: on the one hand, the chorus should express gratitude for the safety of Thebes, on the other hand they are supposed to mourn the death of Eteocles and Polyneices. Accordingly, the choral anapaests try to express both of these ambivalent feelings: "shall I hail with shouts of joy the unharmed salvation of the city, or shall I weep for the wretched, ill-starred, childless warlords?" (ll. 822–831).[68]

There are also cases in which narrative produces performative effects not alone but in synergy with non-narrative utterances. The short choral responses during the first to sixth *Redepaare* (ll. 417–421, 452–456, 481–485, 521–525, 563–567, and 626–630) seem to respond in equal measure to the scout's narratives and to the corresponding actions by Eteocles. Also, ll. 78–181 mix the chorus' teichoscopy-like narrative about the Argive assault and the response to these events in form of a choral prayer, and this mixed section brings about the action in which Eteocles seeks, in vain, to subdue the emotional outbursts of the chorus (conation, ll. 182–286). Yet immediately after Eteocles' interruption, the maidens continue to elaborate on the narrative about the Argive attack (ll. 287–374); in fact, Eteocles' attempt to reprimand the chorus appears to have backfired and re-ignited the choral response, in which case ll. 287–374 would respond to both the mixed narrative of ll. 78–181 and the action of ll. 182–286.

Suppliant Women. This is the least narrative play of the four. Not only are the narratives comparatively few and of diminished relevance to the dramatic

67 Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.2.11.

68 Some editors consider these lines to be spurious, though. In one untypical case, it is action instead of narrative that elicits a response: the choral lament that follows the *Redepaare* (ll. 720–791) ensues from the action in which Eteocles resolves to fight himself against his brother (ll. 653–676) and, arguably, from the (conative) action in which the chorus fails to dissuade Eteocles from doing so (ll. 677–719).

structure (see Chapters 4.1.2 and 4.1.3), but they also exhibit less conspicuous performative effects. The two narratives by the chorus of the Danaids with which the drama opens (ll. 1–22 and 40–77) appear to elicit responses in the form of prayer and lament (ll. 23–39 and 78–175). In both cases, however, it is the choral narrators who respond to their own narratives; in fact, nobody else could possibly respond since nobody is on the stage to listen to these narratives. The circumstance that there are no internal narratees for ll. 1–22 and ll. 40–77 undermines the performativity of these utterances. The Danaids actually state the illocutionary point of the second narrative, which concerns their Argive ancestor Io, by saying that the story will legitimate their request for help in the eyes of the Argives (ll. 49–56; cf. the asterisk in the synoptic table), but no-one is there to receive such information. The same applies to the only extensive narrative in *Suppliant Women* (ll. 524–599), in which the chorus retell (after ll. 40–77) and expand on the story of Io, her wanderings and progeny. Once again, there are no internal narratees on the stage while the Danaids narrate, because Danaus and Pelasgus have both left before the beginning of the choral song;[69] as a consequence, the narrative does not trigger any responses or reactions. Here, the chorus retell Io's story apparently for no other reason than to cover the lapse of time during which the city assembly takes place offstage. Thus, the narratives of ll. 1–22, 40–77, and 524–599 address external narratees only, that is the audience instead of the characters.

Two narratives elicit actions. The brief, teichoscopy-like report by Danaus about the approach of the Argives (ll. 176–185) motivates Danaus and his daughters to devise or, more probably, detail and rehearse the supplication strategy in order to carry out the ritual in the most persuasive fashion (ll. 186–233). Although Danaus/the Danaids had to have supplication plans well before this point—coming all the way from Egypt to Argos to ask for asylum—according to the inner logic of the drama and to how the events are presented, it is Danaus' report that triggers the enactment of the plans. Immediately after the report, Danaus leads into action and starts preparing his daughters for the supplication by giving them plenty of practical, almost choreographic instructions. For example, he instructs the maidens to position themselves close to a certain rock, makes sure that they use the suppliant branches in the proper way, and briefs them about what to say and, no less importantly, how to say it—also specifying the body language, facial, and eye expression the chorus have to display.[70] Danaus' narrative is conducive to action not least because it makes the women even more willing to enact his plans: while the Danaids had shown

69 Taplin 1977: 204–209; Friis Johansen / Whittle 1980 (vol. 2): 392–406.

70 E.g., *Suppl.* 188–199: "[…] it is best from every point of view, girls, to sit at this rock sacred

some relief upon arriving on the coast near Argos, they are now very scared by the news that armed men are approaching, and hence particularly submissive to their father's leadership.

The other narrative which leads to action is yet another choral recapitulation of Io's story (ll. 291–324), which paves the way for the long action of the supplication itself (ll. 325–467 and 468–523). This narrative is virtually inextricable from both of the two actions between which it is placed, because it is elicited by the acquaintance between Pelasgus and the chorus (ll. 234–290) and in turn preludes the supplication (ll. 325–523). After the Danaids and Pelasgus have made acquaintance with each other, the king requests the maidens to tell him more about their Argive origins, which are alleged but at odds with their exotic looks (ll. 289 f.), and the chorus meet this request by telling about Io and her descent (ll. 291–324). In the plays under scrutiny, this is the only case of an action that elicits a narrative—Aeschylus usually has it the other way round. The narrative itself unfolds in the "dramatized" form of a stichomythic dialogue between King Pelasgus, who asks the questions, and (probably) the chorus leader, who in the answers lays out the story of Io. The narrator plainly states the illocutionary point of the narrative in concluding it (ll. 323 f., which align with ll. 49–56): the story of princess Io and of her offspring should persuade King Pelasgus to grant protection to the Danaids.[71] Recognizing a performative relationship between this narrative and the action of the supplication does not mean that the supplication happens because of the narrative, but that the Danaids are well aware that telling Pelasgus the story of Io is their chief asset: the Argive ancestor is the factor which morally if not legally entitles the Danaids to look for protection in Argos, and they use the narrative adroitly to prepare the supplication and to enhance its chances of being successful.[72]

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to the Assembled Gods […] But come as quickly as you can; hold reverently in your left hands your white-wreathed suppliant-branches […] and answer the natives in words that display respect, sorrow and need […] Let your speech […] not be accompanied by arrogance, and let it emerge from your disciplined faces and your calm eyes that you are free of wantonness […]" The entire section offers plenty of elements for the study of choral movement. See Gianvittorio-Ungar, forthcoming (*Theatricality*).

71 *Suppl.* 323 f., εἰδὼς δ' ἀμὸν ἀρχαῖον γένος πράσσοις ἄν, ὡς Ἀργεῖον ἀνστῆσαι στόλον, "now you know my ancient lineage, / you can act so as to accept the supplication of this Argive band." Cf. Friis Johansen / Whittle 1980 (vol. 2): 260: "ἀνστῆσαι has the technical sense of inducing suppliants to leave asylum under the promise […] of protection, immunity or satisfaction."

72 As noted in Chapter 4.2.2/*Blurring the line between narrative and action*, this narrative comes close to making something happen in the dramatic here and now by recounting events which happened in other spatiotemporalities.

While the narratives discussed above trigger or are entangled with actions, there are also two comparatively short narratives in *Suppliant Women* that elicit substantial responses. In both cases, Danaus is the narrator and the Danaids are the narratees. The chorus respond to Danaus' report about the Argive assembly with a prayer of blessing and gratitude (ll. 600–624 and 625–709), and they respond to the narrative about the approach of the Egyptian fleet by expressing their fear and anxiety (ll. 710–733 and 734–824). Finally, in one case it is not, as usual, narrative that elicits response, but action:[73] Pelasgus and his men rescue the Danaids from the Egyptians (ll. 911–965) and this motivates the Danaids to sing of their gratitude and relief (ll. 966–979).

All in all, narrative's performativity is markedly different in *Suppliant Women* than in *Persians*, *Seven*, and, as we will presently consider, *Prometheus*. It is true that several narratives appear to elicit actions and choral responses or are at least followed by them. However, three narratives (ll. 1–22, 40–77, 524–599) are delivered while no internal narratees are on the stage; as a consequence, the longest of these narratives fails to produce any effect at all, and in the remaining two cases it is left to the narrators themselves to utter self-responses (ll. 23–39 and 78–175). At the same time, the ties between narrative and action become particularly close in the narrative about Io at ll. 291–324, which is unusually triggered by an action, performed as a dialogue, and which constitutes—and is presented by the choral narrators as—a functional part of the supplication itself. Together, these phenomena attest to a change in the ways in which narrative is used to shape and develop drama. Although the historical shift from more narrative-based to more action-based drama cannot be realistically imagined as a linear progression, elements such as the quantitative decrease and the reduced performativity of the narratives of *Suppliant Women* as well as the assimilation of narrative in action (which in turn contributes to this play's increase in action) are consistent with each other and resonate with the dramaturgy of the *Oresteia* more than, say, *Persians*.[74]

Prometheus. There is a great deal of narrative in *Prometheus*. The narratives of this play can be described as being less performative than those of *Persians* and *Seven*, though more performative than those of *Suppliant Women*. On a related note, in *Prometheus* and *Suppliant Women* the narrators state their illocutionary points less regularly than in *Persians* and *Seven*; indeed, the narrators in *Prometheus* do not narrate because they intend to achieve anything, but

73 Cf. *Sept.* 653–791.

74 This aligns with the remarks of Chapter 4.1.3/*Structure of the plays*.

because other characters beg them to do so, on account of the pleasure they expect from the narrative or out of sheer curiosity. For example, the Oceanids ask Io to tell her story to give them "a share of pleasure" (l. 631), Prometheus further motivates her to narrate to do them a favour and with the promise that she will receive the narratees' sympathy in return (ll. 635–639), and Prometheus himself prophesies Io's future upon the invitation of the curious Oceanids, thereby anticipating just as much as is needed instead of the full story (ll. 698 f. and 870–876 respectively).[75]

Strikingly, two longer narratives (ll. 160–283 and 436–525) bring about neither responses nor actions: as far as performative effects and further contributions to drama are concerned, these narratives are as inert as *Suppl.* 524–599. Also, it is rare for narratives in *Prometheus* to elicit responses, and when they do so the responses are of relative import: Io's autobiographic narrative (ll. 609–686) is met by the chorus with a short outburst of sympathy (ll. 687–699), and Prometheus' prophecy about the future wanderings and offspring of Io (ll. 700–876) is followed by a lament which is, however, weakly related to the narrative (ll. 877–907). The relationship is weak on the one hand because Io's own short lament (ll. 877–886) seems to be due more to the circumstance that the gadfly has resumed torturing her than to a realization of what awaits her according to Prometheus' prophecy, and on the other hand because the chorus wraps up the prophetic scene with a rather abstract, gnomic reflection about the necessity to marry in one's own station (ll. 887–907), in a choral song that is hardly comparable with others ascribed to Aeschylus in length as in other regards.

This song exemplifies well two oddities of other choral responses in *Prometheus*, namely scarcity and unspecific reference. As for the scarcity, the entire play contains notoriously little choral performance, which is the most common form in which response is delivered. And in addition to ll. 887–907, two other responses by the Oceanids are loosely related to previous sections: these are the first and second choral songs (ll. 397–435 and 526–560), both of which are general expressions of sympathy—and which the synoptic table does not relate to any other text sections. By unspecific reference I mean that these utterances favour gnomic wisdom and broad-brush expressions of compassion over elaborating on specific points and aspects of the preceding sections. In fact, after Oceanus dismisses his plans for helping Prometheus (ll. 377–396), the chorus

75 *Prom.* 631, μοῖραν δ' ἡδονῆς κἀμοὶ πόρε, "Give me, too, a share of pleasure"; 635, χάριν, "favour"; 698 f., λέγ', ἐκδίδασκε· τοῖς νοσοῦσί τοι γλυκὺ τὸ λοιπὸν ἄλγος προὐξεπίστασθαι τορῶς, "Speak, tell us all. For the afflicted, you know, it is pleasant to understand clearly in advance the pain they have still to suffer."

laments Prometheus' fate without any mention of Oceanus, his good intentions or the role he might have played (ll. 397–435): due to the generic character, this lament is virtually exchangeable with that of the *parodos* (ll. 128–167) and of the second choral song (ll. 526–560). And again, after Prometheus narrates how he has improved the human condition (ll. 436–525), the second choral song briefly remarks on his commitment to humankind (ll. 543–551) but then continues in the same vein as before (ll. 526–560). This might make an element against the authenticity of *Prometheus*, because post-Aeschylean tragedy inclines towards the relative independence of choral songs from the plays' specific subjects and plot, and it is possible to imagine how this trend could pave the way for the *embolima* of the so-called New Music, as Aristotle describes them.[76]

Two narratives in *Prometheus* can be seen as triggering actions, if with some reservations. Firstly, Prometheus' excursus about how Zeus punished Atlas and Typhon (ll. 340–376) is intended to advise Oceanus to be prudent and to make him desist from his plan of interceding with Zeus, as the narrator himself points out (illocutionary markers are at ll. 340–346 and 373 f.). Curiously, though, in the enactive section that follows (ll. 377–396) Oceanus says that he is now abandoning his plan after having reconsidered Prometheus' misfortunes (l. 391),[77] as though the sad examples of Atlas and Typhon had never been narrated. Secondly, the actions that conclude the play—that is, Hermes' vain attempt to extort the secret from Prometheus (ll. 944–1079) and the consequent punishment of the protagonist (ll. 1080–1093)—take place after and, according to the inner logic of the drama, because of the narrative in which Prometheus reveals himself to be the only one to know what could save Zeus from losing his power (ll. 908–943); as a matter of fact, upon entering the stage Hermes presents his current mission as being motivated by the prophecy.[78] Hermes' threats and the worsening of Prometheus' pain may not be completely unexpected,[79] but cannot be the desired effects of Prometheus' narrative either. Not only common sense suggests this but also the circumstance that the narrator is not aware that an additional (offstage) narratee is listening too: for Prometheus only spots Hermes on the stage after concluding his prophecy, when he

76 For "exportable" stasima see, e.g., Soph. *Ant.* 332–375; Eur. *Heracl.* 353–380 and *Her.* 637–700. On *embolima*, see Arist. *Poet.* 1456a25–32.

77 *Prom.* 391, ἡ σή, Προμεθεῦ, ξυμφορὰ διδάσκαλος, "Your misfortunes, Prometheus, serve to instruct me."

78 *Prom.* 947 f., πατὴρ ἄνωγέ σ' οὕστινας κομπεῖς γάμους αὐδᾶν, "The father orders you to state what this union is about which you are bragging."

79 The chorus last warned Prometheus against this possibility at l. 934.

says "But I see Zeus' message-boy is here [...]" (ll. 941–943). While other tragedies present narratives producing effects which, though being unintentional (or "infelicitous speech acts"), end up marking turning points of the plot—as Chapter 4.4.3 will observe with regard to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*—the prophecy of *Prom.* 908–943 is the only comparable case in the four plays under scrutiny.

In *Prometheus*, action rather than narrative works as the motor that sets and keeps the drama in motion. Action shows performative effects at the very beginning and at the very end of the play. At the beginning, the action of Hephaestus, Kratos, and (the silent) Bia, who bound Prometheus to a rock (ll. 1–87), triggers the two responses following upon each other in which the protagonist complains about his fate first alone (ll. 88–113) and then with the chorus in the *parodos* (ll. 128–167). Towards the end of the play, the action in which Hermes tries to extort the secret and Prometheus resists him (ll. 944–1079) brings about another action, in which the protagonist is punished even more cruelly than before (ll. 1080–1093). The in-between is marked by a closely intertwined pattern of action-narrative-action: Oceanus tries to persuade Prometheus, who resists him (action, ll. 284–339), this motivates Prometheus to put forward the discouraging examples of Atlas and Typhon (narrative, ll. 340–376), and then again, Oceanus gives up his attempts to save Prometheus (action, ll. 377–396). In Prometheus' intentions, the narrative about Atlas and Typhon is an integral part of his resistance against Oceanus' advice, since he narrates to discourage Oceanus from pursuing the issue further. This functionalizing of narrative for action—i.e., the way Prometheus narrates something in order to make something else happen here and now—resembles the case of the Danaids who used the narrative about their Argive ancestor Io to usher in their supplication towards the city of Argos, and is yet another example of how the line dividing narrative from action is negotiable.[80]

To wrap up the main points of this chapter, one may say that *Persians* and *Seven* on the one hand and *Suppliant Women* and *Prometheus* on the other exemplify different degrees of narrative performativity and ways in which narratives contribute towards shaping (Ps.-)Aeschylean drama. The narratives of *Persians* and *Seven* constantly trigger responses and reactions (or further narratives) from the internal narratees in sections that follow and are distinct from the narratives themselves. The narratives of *Suppliant Women* and *Prometheus* sometimes fail to produce performative effects; at the same time, in

80 See above on *Suppl.* 234–290 (action), 291–324 (narrative), and 325–467 (action) and cf. Chapter 4.2.2/*Blurring the line between narrative and action*.

these two plays the line between narrative and action becomes more indistinct, because narratives about offstage events are effective in making other events take place in the dramatic here and now (see *Suppl.* 291–324; *Prom.* 340–376). These dramaturgically productive uses of narrative indicate a number of ways in which Attic tragedy might have shifted from more narrative-based towards more action-based forms. A play like *Prometheus*, of which according to our measurements around 50 % consists of narratives, can illustrate how this shift did not simply equate to a decrease in narrative viz. increase in action, but was multi-faceted, having much to do with narrative's uses and relationships to other elements.

4.3 Influences of Narrative on the Plot

4.3.1 *Unitary and Disunited Plot*

Closed *vs.* open, classical *vs.* unclassical. Other distinguishing traits of narrative drama regard the plot, and particularly the ways in which the events represented relate to each other.[81] Before turning to consider the plot specificities of *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus*, we need to lay out the plot-related notions and criteria of analysis on which the discussion will build.

Plot is a configuration, and hence a relational notion. It results from the ways in which events and other objects of the representation are arranged, assembled, and related to each other. While the notion can apply to all mimetic arts, it has been chiefly investigated with regard to literature.[82] In this context, scholars have worked out contrastive models of plot based on how events are mutually related or, no less importantly, not related. The drama theorist V. Klotz (1960), for instance, has contrasted the ideal forms which he calls closed and open; W. Ong has considered how literacy encourages linear and climactic plots while episodic ones are more typical of oral contexts;[83] more recently, narratologists have fleshed out fundamental differences between plots which conform to "natural" patterns of organisation (such as causal, physical, and

81 On event as an umbrella term to indicate self-contained elements of the plot, see Chapter 3.1.1/*Event*; this notion also subsumes, e.g., agencies, interactions, and experiences.

82 Most scholars working on/with literature and genre theories agree—often with reference to Plato and Aristotle—that the representation of events is one of the chief traits that dramatic and narrative genres have in common: e.g., Lämmert 1968 [1955]: 258; Hamburger 1957: 158 f.; Schulze 1976: 352; Horn 1998: 178 f.; Pfister 2001 [1977]: 265 (with note 1); Korthals 2003: 75 ff.; Dannenberg 2004: 51.

83 Ong 2012 [1982]: 136–152.

spatiotemporal plausibility) and their manifold "unnatural" counterparts.[84] In spite of being unnecessarily polarizing, Klotz' model can work as a starting point toward a more nuanced understanding of the matter.[85] His "closed form" describes plots which are hierarchically organized and in which ideally all elements are functional inasmuch as they mark a progression toward the dramatic highlight (*klimax*). On the other hand, the "open form" is described contrastively, that is, by subsuming under this label disparate features whose common denominator is that they reverse or elude their closed form counterparts.[86] For example, the open plot is described *ex negativo* as "non-tectonic" and the related drama as lacking unity and completeness.[87] This encourages the perception of otherness as deficiency, and therefore qualitative criticism, so that open plot ends up summarizing a variety of dramatic imperfections.[88] Applying this or comparable notions of plot to Aeschylus can easily lead to ungracious and scarcely productive conclusions, as Chapter 2.2.3 has exemplified.

A more recent take on the subject is the cross-generic study of that which Nick Lowe (2000) calls the "classical plot" and of its manifestations through ancient Greek literature. Lowe draws on much more refined premises and productively integrates theoretical frameworks with each other which range from narratology to game theory. At the same time, the contrast between "classical" and "unclassical" plot resonates with the models which have been above exemplified with Klotz. In accordance with the declared focus of his study, Lowe discusses the classical plot in depth,[89] whereby the unclassical forms are defined

84 See Richardson 2017 on natural and unnatural (e.g., "denarrated," "choose-your-own-story" etc.) narratives.

85 E.g., Pfister 2001 [1977]: 318–326; Boenisch 2012: 138–143; Hofmann 2013: 21–24 argue for the heuristic value of Klotz' model.

86 E.g., Klotz 1960: 101: "[…] so ist damit den Prinzipien des geschlossenen Dramas—Einheit, Ganzheit, Unversetzbarkeit der Teile—eine konträre Struktur entgegengesetzt"; pp. 102 f.: "die *eine* Handlung wird durch Polymythie ersetzt, auch die dabei entstehenden mehreren Einzelhandlungen sind keine geschlossenen Kontinua, sondern punktuelle Begebnisfolgen ohne Szenenbindung […]. Hier gibt es weder die große, begrenzte, einheitliche Handlung, wie im geschlossenen Drama, noch wie bei Shakespeare ein Gefüge mehrerer isolierter Einzelhandlungen […]. Das hierarchische Verhältnis von Haupt- und Nebenhandlung, das Prinzip: Einheit durch Aussparung und Funktionalisierung, Geschlossenheit durch *liaison des scènes*, Unversetzbarkeit der Teile durch zielstrebige Finalität: all dies ist aufgehoben"; p. 231: "Der Einheit von Handlung, Raum und Zeit dort steht hier eine Vielfalt von Handlung, Raum und Zeit gegenüber. Während im geschlossenen Drama ein einheitliches Konstruktionsschema genügt, bedarf es hier vielfältiger Mittel, die auseinanderstrebenden Geschehnispartikel zu steuern."

87 Klotz 1960: 230.

88 Cf. Pfister 2001 [1977]: 322–326.

89 See Lowe 2000: 61–78, and the second part of his book; e.g., pp. 62 f.: "Classical plots are nar-

on the basis of explicit and implicit comparison with the classical ones (as reflected by the very label "un-classical"). Interestingly, instances of the unclassical plot come from genres which have been traditionally regarded as minor or less accomplished, such as cyclic epic, catalogue poetry, and fable.[90] On the other hand, Homeric epic and Attic tragedy—to which higher literary prestige is attached—count as models of classical plot, although they may be fewer in number and statistically less representative and in spite of the fact that several tragic plots (including Aeschylus') meet the requirements sub-optimally at best.

These and comparable treatments of "open" or "unclassical" plot forms might be serviceable in investigations about their supposed reverse—the "closed" or "classical" forms—but are inadequate on other premises.[91] Michael Silk (2000) lucidly addresses this problem. In considering Aristophanes' comedies, he points out a general resistance in classics and other disciplines to problematizing Aristotelian notions of plot even in the face of striking counterexamples:

> If classical scholarship has been unduly deferential to Aristotelian principles of organic unity, to the detriment of Aristophanes and the appreciation of his comedy, a similar charge can be levelled at literary theory. In few other areas of theoretical debate has there been less willingness to confront fundamental questions, and this notwithstanding a mass of narratological enquiries into patterns, strategies, and perspectives. Such investigations tend to assume norms of causally based organization; we need instead a problematizing of them.[92]

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rative systems that *minimise redundancy*, or maximise the ratio of functionality to content in the narrative information presented to the reader. In other words, as much as possible of the contents of a story world should play an essential role in the narrative game [...]. The story's narrative limits in time and space should therefore be as tight as the game structure allows; the cast of players should be defined early, retained throughout, and fully required by the move-structure; and all moves should both conform to established rules and advance the action towards the endgame, which itself should be built entirely from elements already clearly planted in the narrative" (original italics).

90 Lowe 2000: 79–99.

91 See, e.g., Ong 2012 [1982]: 136–152; Richardson 2017; Kukkonen 2019: 267–270.

92 Silk 2000: 259. Silk then explains Aristophanes' plot by resorting to B. Brecht's notion of "montage" of an artefact as opposed to Aristotle's plot as the "growth" of a living body. Cf. Liveley 2019: 8: "Aristotle's decision to take tragedy as his touchstone and to extend its poetics to explain all other kinds of (mimetic) poetry will have produced a very different result than if he had chosen Aristophanes' absurdist comedy or Sappho's lyric poetry instead."

The "neo-Aristotelian preoccupation with the causal continuum," Silk argues, has constricted scholarship in important ways and impinged on the very understanding of what individual plays are about, as reflected by the tendency of plot summaries to skip or misrepresent causality-free segments.[93] Curiously, while many plot features which Silk analyses in Aristophanes apply to Aeschylus as well—for example, paratactic structure, cumulativeness, fallacies in sequential development, spatiotemporal discontinuities, and thematic as opposed to causal relationships—he locates Attic tragedy *en bloc* on the Aristotelian side of plot's metaphorical chart.[94] Chapters 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 will try to nuance this picture and relocate Aeschylean drama in a grey zone between forms of plot which are often regarded as mutually exclusive.

Aristotle on plot. It may come as a surprise, but a most in-depth discussion of forms of plot which may be called open, unclassical or disunited is provided by Aristotle.[95] One possible reason for this being so is that, historically, the disunited plots which Aristotle harshly criticizes formed a considerable part of the mimetic (including poetic and tragic) repertoires with which he was so familiar.[96] Musicopoetic works of different genres, including for example non-Homeric epic and Aeschylean drama, could count as masterpieces while

93 Silk 2000: 265, and p. 267 adds: "[r]eductive summary as a tool of literary analysis was invented—needless to say?—by Aristotle. It has its uses for realistic fiction—for the *Odyssey*, for *Iphigenia in Tauris*, for Henry James; its usefulness for the viewer or critic of Aristophanes is very limited." In this regard, it is interesting that Aristotle in *Poetics* uses *logos* to indicate how a few sentences summarize an entire *mythos*, which aligns with the *Grundbedeutung* of *logos* as action and/or result of "gathering" or unifying elements in speech (Gianvittorio 2010). E.g., the *logos* of the *Odyssey* can be summarized as follows: "a man is away from home many years; he is watched by Poseidon, and isolated; moreover, affairs at home are such that his property is consumed by suitors, and his son conspired against; but he returns after shipwreck, allows some people to recognise him, and launches an attack which brings his own survival and his enemies' destruction. That is the essential core; the rest is episodes" (*Poet*. 1455b17–23, transl. Halliwell).

94 E.g., Silk 2000: 267.

95 Modern views on causality in plot are heavily indebted to Aristotle even when the goal is to dismantle notions of causality and of plot itself, as for example in E. Ionesco and M. Frisch (see, e.g., Pfister 2001 [1977]: 268 with note 9). In particular, modern treatments of loose plot elements often echo Aristotle's discussion of so-called episodes (on which see below): e.g., Tomashevsky 1965 [1925]: 68: "The motifs which cannot be omitted are *bound motifs*; those which may be omitted without disturbing the whole causal-chronological course of events are *free motifs*" (original italics). On "weakly integrated" plots, see Pavel 1985: 118–122.

96 See Heath 1987: 105 f. on *poikilia* as a "centrifugal principle" in ancient discourses regarding the plot.

navigating eclectic ensembles of storyworlds, themes, and atmospheres and displaying plots in various shades of disunitedness. They could evoke, abandon or fragment storylines rather freely, arranging them into flat hierarchies or simply paralleling them, linger profusely on that which one may call digressions, and exploit tangential thematic affinities between different myths. The best-known case is that of Pindar's victory odes, whose variegated fabric has inspired the metaphors of "harsh connection" (*harmonia austēra*)[97] and "Pindaric flight" in ancient and modern scholarship respectively, but comparable phenomena regarded tragedy as well. While Aeschylus experimented with connected trilogies/tetralogies *à la Oresteia*, he also assembled trilogies/tetralogies with far more stretchable ties. For example, the trilogy which he presented in 472 BCE dealt with heterogeneous subjects—not only historical as in *Persians*, but also mythical—which he presumably felt (or made) to relate not so much to the Persian wars as to the broader issues of cultural identity which the Persian wars had raised.[98]

Before approaching Aristotle's theory of plot, his terminology on the subject needs to be introduced with special attention to *Poetics*. However elliptic, the definition of *mythos* is a good starting point:

> ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις, λέγω γὰρ μῦθον τοῦτον τὴν σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων
>
> *mythos* is the representation (*mimēsis*) of the *praxis*—for by *mythos* I mean the arrangement of the events (*pragmata*) (Arist. *Poet.* 1450a2–4)

In Greek, the meaning of *mythos* is comprehensive enough to encompass any "mythical story" along with the "mythical world" in which the stories unfold (e.g., mythical characters, geographies, materialities, sensorialities, etc.). Aristotle seems to poetologically specialize this comprehensive meaning to refer to the "storyworld" as poetry (re)constructs it. In *Poetics*, *mythos* indicates a con-figuration in the double sense that it is "figurative" or representational of something else (the *praxis*) and that it does so by putting elements together: the poet (re)constructs the storyworld with his own "arrangement of the *pragmata*," whereas *pragma* usually indicates a manifestation of reality seen in its particular, self-contained state—both object-wise, as for example in "matter" or "thing," and agency-wise, as in "deed," "act" or "affair."[99]

97 Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 22.
98 Sommerstein 2010 a.
99 See LSJ s.v.

In the sentence quoted above, thus, the notion of *pragma* can be likened to that of "event" outlined in Chapter 3.1.1 inasmuch as they both identify some discrete objects of the *mimēsis*. Aristotle's *mythos* indicates the way(s) in which a mimetic work arranges and organizes the objects of *mimēsis*: for example, the patterns along which they are represented as impinging on, changing and developing into one another, as "moving over" (*metabainein, metabasis*) and becoming entangled or disentangled (*desis*, *lysis*),[100] and so on. On the other hand, the *praxis* which *mythos* is said to represent subsumes the events just as they occur (or are presumed to have occurred) in reality, that is, independently from their representational-artistic arrangement. On this account, *praxis* has often been likened to the concept of "fabula" (*res gestae*) and *mythos* to "plot" (*compositio rerum gestarum*), though different terms have been applied to similar notions.[101] For the present purposes, these equations are acceptable on condition that the contrastive pairs of terms do not obfuscate the interdependency between the "what" and the "how" of the representation,[102] and that we keep in mind that the lexeme which *Poetics* uses in a somehow specialized fashion, *mythos*, actually evokes much more than plot and plot-related functionalities, referring to the totality of the storyworld and including landscapes, materialities, affects, atmospheres, etc.[103]

In dealing with different forms of *mythos*/plot, Aristotle draws two basic distinctions. On the one hand, he distinguishes between the simple plot and the composite plot, and on the other hand between the unitary plot and both the episodic and the double plot.[104] The distinction between simple and composite plot (ἁπλοῦς/*haplous vs.* πεπλεγμένος/*peplegmenos*) relies on the absence *vs.* presence of particular types of events in the plot itself: simple plots do not fea-

100 *Poet.* 1455b25–32.

101 E.g., *fabula* and *sjužet* (Tomashevsky 1965 [1925]: 66–78 and other Russian formalists), *histoire* and *discours* (Todorov, Benveniste), *histoire* and *récit* (Genette), *fabula* and *intreccio* (Segre), *Geschichte* and *Fabel*, *story* and *plot* (Forster), etc. A handy synopsis of these terms is in Martinez/Scheffel 2007 [1999]: 26; cf. also Pfister 2001 [1977]: 266–268; Dannenberg 2004: 60; Lowe 2000: 17 f.

102 On this interdependency see, e.g., Genette 1994 [1972–1983]: 17; Andronikashvili 2009: 18.

103 The equation and translation of *mythos* with the modern concept of plot is frequent: see, e.g., Cessi 1985: 56 with references at note 45, to which one may add Kannicht 1976: 331; Fusillo 1986: 385; Käppel 1998: 25; Lowe 2000: 3–8; de Jong 2008: 20; Shen 2008; Andronikashvili 2009: 16–18; Liveley 2019: 34–41. A minority rejects this translation: e.g., Schmitt 2008: 233 f. and Stenzel 2012: 18. Cf. Frazier 2013 for a survey of the interpretations and translations of Aristotle's *mythos*.

104 The distinction unitary *vs.* episodic/double is actually more relevant to the issue of the disunited (or open or unclassical) plot, but will be discussed after the distinction simple *vs.* composite plot because it builds on notions which regard the latter.

ture reversals and/or recognitions (περιπέτειαι/*peripeteiai*, ἀναγνωρίσεις/*anagnōriseis*), while composite ones do.[105] Why do reversals and recognitions of all possible events make this difference? The reason probably is that reversal and recognition lend themselves to being "intertwined" (which is a more literal translation of πεπλεγμένος), that is, constructed as processes of causes and consequences or chains of events which ensue from each other—at least ideally:

> πασῶν δὲ βελτίστη ἀναγνώρισις ἡ ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων, τῆς ἐκπλήξεως γιγνομένης δι'εἰκότων, οἷον ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Οἰδίποδι καὶ τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ [...] δεύτεραι δὲ αἱ ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ.
>
> Best of all is recognition ensuing from the events themselves, because the *coup de théâtre* comes into being through likely elements, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus* and in the *Iphigenia* [...] the second best are the recognitions ensuing from inference. (*Poet*. 1455 a16 ff.)[106]

As usual, Aristotle does not explain what he thinks is obvious but only provides a few examples: the plot of the *Odyssey* is composite because "there is recognition throughout" (*anagnōrisis gar diolou*), while the plot of the *Iliad* is simple.[107] For us, though, these examples are not self-explanatory. It is easy to see that the plot of *Odyssey* is based on (the process and phases of) recognition, but one may argue that the *Iliad* contains enough reversals to qualify as composite as well. However, Achilles' refusal to fight lasts until book 18 and this inactivity prevents the main reversal of the Trojan war from taking place: regardless of how many battles are fought meanwhile, the plot of the *Iliad* is virtually at a stalemate until the moment Achilles goes back to the battlefield.[108] The plots of *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* appear to qualify as simple rather than composite in Aristotle's terms.[109]

The distinction of unitary (ὅλος/*holos*) *vs*. episodic and double plots is even more clearly about whether the represented events are causally related to each

105 Cf. Garvie 1978. *Metabasis*, on the other hand, occurs in both simple and composite plots: see *Poet*. 1452a14–17. For the distinction between *metabolē* and *peripeteia* see, e.g., Stenzel 2012: 19.

106 See more in general 1454b18–1455 a20, which criticizes recognitions which are not constructed as processes of causes and consequences.

107 *Poet*. 1459 b15.

108 *Contra* Schmitt 2008, 643. Curiously, in resuming a longer lapse of time in a few lines, Hom. *Il*. 12.10 ff. appears to regard the events that take place during Achilles' inactivity as the very subject of the poem.

109 See Garvie 1978.

other. Unitary plots represent a story (*praxis* or *res gestae*) which is "consistent and self-contained" (συνεχοῦς καὶ μιᾶς/*synechous kai mias*, 1452a14–15) and in which different events follow from each other "according to likelihood or necessity" (ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ κατὰ τὸ εἰκός/*ē ex anankēs ē kata to eikos*).[110] This is the case when

> the components (μέρη/*merē*) of the events are arranged in such a way that if a component is transposed or removed, the whole system (τὸ ὅλον/*to holon*) is reconfigured and shifted: indeed, that which makes no manifest difference whether it is there or not is not an integral part of the whole. (*Poet*. 1451a32–35)

Unitary plots, thus, similarly to composite plots (*peplegmenoi*), represent events that take place not just one after the other (μετὰ τάδε/*meta tade*, 1452a19–22) but because of one another (διὰ τάδε/*dia tade*); for this reason, the middle and the end parts of these plots naturally result from that which precedes them (1450 b25ff.). According to Aristotle, polymythic plots (πολύμυθος/*polymythos*) can be somehow unitary too: they deal with two or more storylines instead of a single one, yet even so, if the storylines fit in with each other they can create a fairly unitary whole (1462b7–10). This is what happens in the *Iliad*, which Aristotle regards as an instance of a unitary yet polymythic plot (1456 a13). In practice, the multiple storylines of the polymythic plot tend to require poems longer than one tragedy to unfold and (re)converge, so that this kind of plot is more typical of epic poems such as the *Iliad* itself.[111] It shall remain an open question whether the linked trilogies and tetralogies of Aeschylus, such as the *Oresteia* and *Achilleis* (based on the *Iliad*), sufficed to represent polymythic but unitary plots in Aristotle's eyes.

Aristotle is adamant that the unitary plot is the best and most desirable, in tragedy as in other genres. Of course, Aristotle's very preference for one type of plot and his heartfelt criticism of other types only confirm that alternatives, that is disunited types of plot, existed too—and were common enough to

110 *Poet*. 1451a12–13. Aristotle's views on plot offer many inputs to comparative readings; for example, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* also emphasizes the organic unity of the phases of development (*avasthā-s*) and "connections" thereof (*sandhi-s*) in dramatic plot (see, e.g., Rangacharya 1984: 157–167). On the plot's causal relationships according to Aristotle see, e.g., Käppel 1998: 20–38; Lowe 2000: 11–14. Without primary reference to Aristotle, see Pavel 1985: 17; Korthals 2003: 90ff.; Dannenberg 2004: 53; Andronikashvili 2009: 18–21.

111 *Poet*. 1456a10–19; 1462a18–1462 b3. Possibly, Schmitt 2008: 563f. sees more unity than Aristotle in the polymythic *mythos* of the *Iliad*, which he explains as *Unterhandlungen* which are subordinated to the main *Handlung*.

annoy him.[112] He regards the episodic plot (ἐπεισοδιώδης/*epeisodiōdēs*, 1451b32–33) as the worst kind of simple plot, from which one infers that episodic plots do not feature reversals and/or recognitions—or are bad at constructing them as causal processes. Instead, episodic plots represent loose series of events which are paratactically arranged, not consequent but subsequent. The passage quoted above describes an easy test to check causality in plot: if the general course of the events remains unchanged even though an element is transposed or removed, then the element is independent and hence accessory from a causal viewpoint. This is exactly the case for the so-called episodes. Aristotle does not particularly appreciate the double plot either, in which two stories (instead of one single) run parallel to each other, but acknowledges that each one of the two independent stories can be consistent in itself.

Narrated events as part of the dramatic plot. Aristotle's treatment of plot and of different plot types indicates that he holds causal shortcomings responsible for various imperfections. From this a point follows which will be relevant to our analysis of Aeschylean plots, namely that Aristotle considers events which a tragedy represents as lacking causal ties with the others as integral parts of the tragedy's plot: otherwise, how could he conceive of disunited, episodic, and double plots at all? Another though potentially related point is that, as far as tragic plot is concerned, it does not make any difference for Aristotle whether the events are represented through narrative (e.g., messenger speeches and prologues) or in other ways (e.g., action and stage performance): all events are constitutive of the plot as far as the tragedy represents them. This is indicated by a number of passages in *Poetics*.

The first is when Aristotle, in discussing plot composition, says twice that in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* the recognition of Oedipus that he has killed his own father is within the play, but the killing itself is "outside the tragedy" (ἔξω τῆς τραγῳδίας/*exō tēs tragōdias*, 1454 b7) and "outside the play" (ἔξω τοῦ δράματος/*exō tou dramatos*, 1453 b31).[113] Interestingly, although Aristotle is in the middle of a discussion about plot, he does not say that the killing is outside the plot, but outside the play, by which he means outside the spatiotemporal boundaries of this piece of stagecraft. According to this interpretation, the killing is outside the play but not outside the plot because this event precedes the point of attack of *Oedipus the King* (outside the play) but, though not being

112 E.g., *Poet.* 1451b33–1452 a17 and 1452b30–32.

113 Some editors consider this last sentence spurious. For δρᾶμα as referring to a play in its staged quality, see Chapter 2.1.2/*Praxis, drama*.

enacted/staged, it is inside the plot because it is represented by means of three narratives—one by Creon, one by Iocasta, and the last by Oedipus himself.[114]

Two other passages about the plot's "complication" and "denouement" (δέσις/*desis* and λύσις/*lysis*) shed light on the relationship between events which are external to the play on the one hand and their representation by means of embedded narratives on the other:

> ἔστι δὲ πάσης τραγῳδίας τὸ μὲν δέσις τὸ δὲ λύσις, τὰ μὲν ἔξωθεν καὶ ἔνια τῶν ἔσωθεν πολλάκις ἡ δέσις, τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἡ λύσις· λέγω δὲ δέσιν μὲν εἶναι τὴν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μέχρι τούτου τοῦ μέρους ὃ ἔσχατόν ἐστιν ἐξ οὗ μεταβαίνει εἰς εὐτυχίας ἢ εἰς ἀτυχίαν, λύσιν δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς μεταβάσεως μέχρι τέλους· ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ Λυγκεῖ τῷ Θεοδέκτου δέσις μὲν τά τε προπεπραγμένα καὶ ἡ τοῦ παιδίου λῆψις καὶ πάλιν ἡ αὐτῶν * * * λύσις δ' ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰτιάσεως τοῦ θανάτου μέχρι τοῦ τέλους.
>
> Every tragedy has both a complication and denouement: the complication comprises events from the outside (τὰ μὲν ἔξωθεν/*ta men exōthen*), and often some events from within; the remainder is the denouement. I define the complication as extending from the beginning to the furthest point before the transformation to prosperity or adversity; and the denouement as extending from the beginning of the transformation till the end. Thus, in Theodectes' *Lynceus* the complication covers the preceding events (τὰ προπεπραγμένα/*ta propepragmena*), the seizure of the child, and again their * * *, while the denouement runs from the accusation of murder to the end. (*Poet.* 1455b23–31, transl. Halliwell 1995, slightly modified)

This passage makes sufficiently clear that antefacts, that is events occurring before the point of attack of the play, are an integral part of the plot as far as they are the (con)cause of the events represented in the play. In a tragedy about the conflict between Lynceus and his father-in-law Danaus and the unexpected death of the latter (see 1452a27–28), relevant antefacts might be, as a hypothetical example, the mass marriage between the sons of Aegyptus and the daughters of Danaus and the mass murder which ended it. Yet again, Attic tragedy typically represents relevant antefacts by means of narratives, such as prologues and messenger speeches. This suggests that according to Aristotle, tragic narratives can expand the spatiotemporal boundaries of the plot (as

114 Soph. *OT* 103–127, 710–753, 798–813.

opposed to the boundaries of the play, which are naturally less negotiable).[115] The second passage, which focuses on denouement, is quite explicit on the matter:

> φανερὸν οὖν ὅτι καὶ τὰς λύσεις τῶν μύθων ἐξ αὐτοῦ δεῖ τοῦ μύθου συμβαίνειν, καὶ μὴ ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ Μηδείᾳ ἀπὸ μηχανῆς καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἰλιάδι τὰ περὶ τὸν ἀπόπλουν. ἀλλὰ μηχανῇ χρηστέον ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω τοῦ δράματος, ἢ ὅσα πρὸ τοῦ γέγονεν ἃ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἄνθρωπον εἰδέναι, ἢ ὅσα ὕστερον, ἃ δεῖται προαγορεύσεως καὶ ἀγγελίας· ἅπαντα γὰρ ἀποδίδομεν τοῖς θεοῖς ὁρᾶν.
>
> Clearly the denouements of plots should issue from the plot as such, and not from a *deus ex machina* as in *Medea* and the scene of departure in the *Iliad*. The *deus ex machina* should be employed for events outside the drama—preceding events beyond human knowledge, or subsequent events requiring prediction and announcement (προαγορεύσεως καὶ ἀγγελίας); for we ascribe to the gods the capacity to see all things. (*Poet.* 1454a37–b6, transl. Halliwell 1995)

Here, Aristotle concedes that divine intervention is an acceptable means of denouement on condition that it helps the events develop according to the plot's inner logic and causal trajectory. But this is not what happens in Euripides' *Medea*, where Medea magically escapes in Helios' chariot, and in *Iliad* 2.155–187, where Athena uses her power to reverse the Greeks' decision to abandon the war. In both these cases, divine intervention is an external force which works against necessity or likelihood, a force which twists, bends or departs from the natural course of events. Aristotle's last sentence demonstrates that narrated events (cf. προαγορεύσεως καὶ ἀγγελίας/*proagoreuseōs kai angelias*) can be an integral part of the tragic plot, for example when the gods predict future events or announce past ones (again ἔξω τοῦ δράματος/*exō tou dramatos*, cf. 1453 b31). In other words, events which, while being relevant to the stage events, take place before or after the dramatic now count as part of the plot (in Aristotle's example, as the plot's denouement) when stage narratives report on them.[116]

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115 *Contra*, e.g., Hopman 2009: 362: "the story presented in an Athenian drama usually coincides with the actions performed on and off stage during the time of performance."

116 Cf. Heath 1987: 103: "The *praxis* may include events outside the span of time in which the actions staged in the play fall; and these events must be represented obliquely in the play, just as some events concurrent with the stage-action are made known only by report (for example, in a Messenger-speech […])."

Aristotle mentions one single case of events which, though being narrated in the play, do not form part of the plot. In discussing plot composition, he summarizes Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* with an additional remark:

> τυθείσης τινός κόρης καὶ ἀφανισθείσης ἀδήλως τοῖς θύσασιν, ἱδρυνθείσης δὲ εἰς ἄλλην χώραν, ἐν ᾗ νόμος ἦν τοὺς ξένους θύειν τῇ θεῷ, ταύτην ἔσχε τὴν ἱερωσύνην· χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον τῷ ἀδελφῷ συνέβη ἐλθεῖν τῆς ἱεραίας, τὸ δὲ ὅτι ἀνεῖλεν ὁ θεὸς ἐλθεῖν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐφ' ὅ τι δὲ ἔξω τοῦ μύθου· ἐλθὼν δὲ καὶ ληφθεὶς θύεσθαι μέλλων ἀνεγνώρισεν [...]
>
> A girl was sacrificed, and vanished without trace from her sacrificers; settled in a different country, where it was a custom to sacrifice strangers to the goddess, she became priestess of this rite. Later, the priestess' brother happened to arrive there (that the god's oracle told him to go there, and for what purpose, is outside the plot). Captured after his arrival, and on the point of being sacrificed, he caused his recognition [...] (*Poet.* 1455b2–9, transl. Halliwell 1995)

The exception "that the god's oracle told [Orestes] to go there, and for what purpose, is *outside the mythos* (ἔξω τοῦ μύθου/*exō tou mythou*)" implies that, by contrast, the other events listed—that is, the antefacts and consequences of Iphigenia's sacrifice—are, in fact, *within* the plot. Yet again, in Euripides' play these very events are narrated: in the prologue, Iphigenia recounts why a sacrifice was necessary in Aulis to propitiate the winds, how it came that she herself was doomed to sacrifice, how Artemis rescued her from the knife and brought her to Tauris to serve as a priestess, and so forth (Eur. *IT* 1–41). On the other hand, *Iphigenia in Tauris* also narrates the extra-dramatic events involving Orestes, since Orestes recounts how Apollo made him go to Tauris to escape the vengeance of the Erinyes and to seize the statue of Artemis (Eur. *IT* 79–94)—this is what Aristotle sums up with "that the god's oracle told him to go there, and for what purpose." So why does Aristotle think that the events narrated by Orestes are "outside the *mythos*," while the ones narrated by Iphigenia are inside it?

It seems to me that the most likely reason is that Aristotle here thinks of the plot of *Iphigenia in Tauris* as somewhat poly-mythic (πολύμυθος), that is based on two storylines which up to a certain point run parallel to each other: the main storyline centres on past and present events regarding Iphigenia, the other on Orestes. While the two storylines converge early in the play, the antefacts regarding Orestes are outside the main storyline. In fact, according to necessity or likelihood the situation in which the characters find themselves by

the point of attack of *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the course of events as represented in the play would be the same if Orestes arrived in Tauris not because Apollo wanted him to do so but, say, because of a shipwreck, an adventure with Pylades or another reason: all that matters is that "the priestess' brother happened to arrive there," as Aristotle puts it. By contrast, the antefacts narrated by Iphigenia are non-replaceable for *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Thus, despite Aristotle's brachylogy the comparison with other passages in *Poetics* which include narrated events in the tragic plot sheds light on the reasons for excluding Orestes' antefacts from the *mythos* of Iphigenia. Incidentally, similar phrases occur in contexts other than plot analysis when it comes to defining the mutual pertinence of certain events and to tell these apart from extraneous ones. For example, when the speech writer Lysias minutely reconstructs for the jury how the rivalry between his own client and a man called Simon escalated, he adds that he will resist the temptation to include in the narrative other crimes committed by Simon because they would lead the argument astray: in Lysias' words, these events would be "outside the case" which is to be debated (ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος/*exō tou pragmatos*).[117]

All in all, the examples from *Poetics* make two points sufficiently clear. One is that, for Aristotle, causal relationships or the lack thereof between the represented events determine whether the plot is unitary, disunited, or anything in between, meaning that causally non-related events are very much part of the plot. The second point is that events which take place outside the spatiotemporal limits of the play are constitutive of the plot on condition that the play represents them, which typically happens by means of embedded narratives. These points make Aristotle's theory of plot more helpful than most in the study of Aeschylus' comparatively disunited plots, which is paradoxical given that but for a few exceptions, *Poetics* has been read as the Bible of plot unity, and this reading has influenced drama for centuries.[118] Yet *Poetics* can also set more level premises for studying the specificities of plots which are shaped by narratives and not strictly committed to unity and causality. On these premises, the plot analysis of *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* will include all the events which these plays represent as constitutive of their respective plot, regardless of the causal/non-causal (e.g., thematic, atmospheric, tangential, putative) nature of the relationships between events and independently of the narrative/enacting means of their representation.

117 Lys. 3.46 (*Sim.*).

118 For the exceptions see, e.g., Heath 1987: 98–111.

4.3.2 *Elastic Plots*

Narrative and plot enrichment. The norms which regulate the plot's construction and aesthetics are culturally, historically, and also genre-specific. Written and unwritten rules of genre, which change along with the genre's dynamics, suggest how elements can be conveniently or appropriately arranged together—a phenomenon which Nick Lowe has encapsulated by saying that "[t]here is no such thing as a narrative innocent of genre."[119] Aeschylus operates with plot rules which in important regards differ from the ones prevailing in later Attic tragedy and in a large part of Western drama. These differences, or rather the inadequate efforts to contextualize and understand them on their own premises, have often puzzled Aeschylus' readers (see Chapter 2.2.3). The present chapter identifies a number of plot features which, while being shared by the four plays at hand, create frictions with readers' inherited ideals of plot, and considers the impact which narratives have on these plot features. It considers how more narrative-based plays tend to have more disunited plots while more action-based plays tend to have more unitary plots—the multipurpose aphorism of M. McLuhan that "the medium is the message" may apply to the correlation between means of representation and plot qualities as well.

An important reason for this correlation is that action restricts the range of that which is representable in drama to the play's spatiotemporal boundaries and characters, and in this way works as a powerful bond which keeps the represented objects more closely related to each other. On the other hand, narrative opens up wider and yet potentially dispersive horizons of representability, because it makes it easy to introduce events that take place at different venues and times (see Chapter 4.3.3) and that involve agents other than the play's characters. This indefinite extension of the representational potential encourages plot disunity in that it sets free the represented events and characters from being closely related to each other. Aristotle addresses similar issues towards the end of *Poetics*, when discussing epic:

> ἔχει δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἐπεκτείνεσθαι τὸ μέγεθος πολύ τι ἡ ἐποποιία ἴδιον διὰ τὸ ἐν μὲν τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἅμα πραττόμενα πολλὰ μέρη μιμεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν μέρος μόνον· ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ διὰ τὸ διήγησιν

119 Lowe 2000: 55, who continues by saying: "Most rule-systems [...] work by superimposing narrative restrictions on the causality of the story universe [...] by labelling certain game patterns as narratively impossible [...]. Thus Penelope is not, after all, struck down in the third year of the war; Odysseus does not suffer a fatal mishap with a javelin at the Phaeacian games; the suitors do not come down in a mass with food poisoning on the day of the showdown." Cf. Pavel 1985: 15.

> εἶναι ἔστι πολλὰ μέρη ἅμα ποιεῖν περαινόμενα, ὑφ' ὧν οἰκείων ὄντων αὔξεται ὁ τοῦ ποιήματος ὄγκος. ὥστε τοῦτ' ἔχει τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἰς μεγαλοπρέπειαν καὶ τὸ μεταβάλλειν τὸν ἀκούοντα καὶ ἐπεισοδιοῦν ἀνομοίοις ἐπεισοδίοις· τὸ γὰρ ὅμοιον ταχὺ πληροῦν ἐκπίπτειν ποιεῖ τὰς τραγῳδίας.
>
> But epic has special scope for substantial extension of size, because tragedy does not allow multiple simultaneous storylines to be represented, but only the one on stage involving the actors; whereas in epic, given the narrative mode, it is possible for the poem to include many simultaneous storylines which, if they are kindred, enhance the poem's dignity. So this gives epic an asset for the development of grandeur, variety for the hearer, and diversity of episodes, whereas sameness soon cloys and causes tragedies to founder. (*Poet.* 1459b22–31, transl. Halliwell 1995, slightly modified)

Here, Aristotle points out that epic narrative (διήγησις/*diēgēsis*) allows the representation of many simultaneous storylines (ἅμα πραττόμενα πολλὰ μέρη/*hama prattomena polla merē*) which are not necessarily related to each other or "kindred" (οἰκεῖος/*oikeios*); thus, narrative enhances "diversion" (cf. τὸ μεταβάλλειν/*to metaballein*) by introducing diverse episodes and promotes airier forms of plot. On the other hand, according to Aristotle tragedy cannot represent simultaneous storylines and extra-dramatic episodes because it sticks to the storyworld which is dictated by scene and actors, and this circumstance tends to make the plot more narrow, focused, or narrowly focused.[120] Remarkably, Aristotle appreciates the more inclusive and eclectic plot aesthetics which narrative encourages, praising the "grandeur," "variety," and "diversity" of good epic over the unimaginative "sameness" of bad tragedy. Another passage confirms that his greatest appreciation of less unitary forms of plot is for Homeric epic:

> ἔτι ἧττον μία ἡ μίμησις ἡ τῶν ἐποποιῶν (σημεῖον δέ, ἐκ γὰρ ὁποιασοῦν μιμήσεως πλείους τραγῳδίαι γίνονται), ὥστε ἐὰν μὲν ἕνα μῦθον ποιῶσιν, ἢ βραχέως δεικνύμενον μύουρον φαίνεσθαι, ἢ ἀκολουθοῦντα τῷ τοῦ μέτρου μήκει ὑδαρῆ· λέγω δὲ οἷον ἐὰν ἐκ πλειόνων πράξεων ᾖ συγκειμένη, ὥσπερ ἡ Ἰλιὰς ἔχει πολλὰ τοιαῦτα μέρη καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια ⟨ἃ⟩ καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἔχει μέγεθος· καίτοι ταῦτα τὰ ποιήματα συνέστηκεν ὡς ἐνδέχεται ἄριστα καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα μιᾶς πράξεως μίμησις.

120 Cf. de Jong 1991: 173 f.; Goward 1999: 21–37; Markantonatos 2002: 7–13.

> Also, the *mimēsis* of epic poets is less unified (a sign of this is that any epic yields several tragedies), so that if they compose a single plot, it will seem either truncated (if the exposition is brief) or diluted (if it comports with the length that suits epic metre). By the latter I mean an epic made up of multiple stories, in the way that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have many such storylines of a certain magnitude. Yet those poems are assembled as well as could be, and are close as possible to *mimēsis* of a single story. (*Poet.* 1462b3–11, transl. Halliwell 1995, slightly modified)

These passages illustrate how Aristotle conceives of norms regulating plot construction and aesthetics as genre-specific, since he regards a number of qualities—such as the "diversity of episodes" and "multiple stories"—as suitable for epic plot but undesirable in tragic plot. Moreover, he recognizes that more narrative-based *mimēsis* tends to realize more open forms of plot, and that it does so because it can easily afford them. These notions can apply to Aeschylus as well, since the flexibility of his plots reflects the aesthetics of a specific genre at a specific time and is largely a product of narrative. In this sense, Aristotle encourages us to look at issues of plot (dis)unity within and across generic boundaries, paving the way for considering the interfaces between Aeschylean tragedy and Homeric epic.[121]

Plot experiments across generic boundaries. Aeschylus' debt to Homer is noticeable with regard to plot.[122] Surviving titles and fragments document that Aeschylus drew inspiration from Homer for the subjects of many of his plays. He allegedly described his own tragedies as "fillets from the great banquets of Homer,"[123] and while this anecdote may be of questionable historicity, it speaks volumes about the ancient perception of the Homeric legacy in Aeschylus. Transposing and reworking Homer's plots into drama meant, among other things, portioning such "great banquets" into much smaller "fillets," and finding ways to cook and serve them in a palatable tragic meal. This is a bold exercise in plot de- and reconstruction across different genres, and implies the selection, reorganization, and modification of the objects of the *mimēsis*. For example, in reworking a longer part of the *Iliad* for the *Achilleis* trilogy Aeschylus especially focused on the swaths of the epic which provided major reversals as suitable objects for tragic *mimēsis* (e.g., dealing with Achilles'

121 For broader discussions of the relationships between Greek epics and tragedy see, e.g., Velardi 1989; Kannicht 2004; Bierl 2008; Kraias 2011; Michel 2014; Kircher 2018.

122 See Lowe 2000: 157–187 for a general discussion.

123 Athen. 8.347 e (= TrGF 3 T112a), on which see Chapter 2.1.3/*Classical views*.

comeback from prolonged inactivity and with the related consequences in *Nereids* and *Phrygians*, and preparing the comeback in *Myrmidons*), reorganized the plot elements of several Homeric books in three tragedies according to convenience and creativity (e.g., squeezing books 9 to 18 in *Myrmidons* and books 18 to 23 in *Nereids*, but entirely devoting *Phrygians* to book 24, according to reconstructions), and modified the objects of *mimēsis* in significant ways (e.g., emphasizing the role of the Myrmidons, Nereids, and Phrygians with the respective choruses and characterizing Achilles and Patroclus as lovers).[124]

In all likelihood, the choice of epic subjects was an important incentive for Aeschylus to resort to the apparently unusual form of the continuous trilogy or tetralogy—which is one example of how deeply objects of the *mimēsis* and dramaturgical techniques can influence each other. The continuous trilogy or tetralogy allowed Aeschylus to redistribute plots of epic magnitude and complexity over three to four dramas instead of a single one, and to represent a wider range of spatiotemporalities and a greater number of characters, since the play settings could change (at least) with every play and the characters be reassigned to actors and choruses. Yet although the continuous trilogy was better suited to accommodating oversize plots, to dramatize epic Aeschylus also concentrated "on one manageable, self-contained heroic episode, and on one or a few heroic figures."[125] The streamlining and narrowing of the plot's focus are important factors in Aeschylus' reinterpretation of the epic repertoire into tragedy, and pave the way for more unitary forms of plot in later drama:

> The extant plays show that the evolution of a classical type [of plot] was by no means a straightforward, inevitable, unilinear, or unresisted progression. But by 406 BC we can at least see that some lines of experiment had been permanently abandoned, and others increasingly pursued, in a way that clearly agrees with much of Aristotle's prescription [...].[126]

124 TrGF 3 F135–137 (*Myrmidons*) give a glimpse into how the characterization of Achilles and Patroclus as lovers distanced the tragic scene of mourning from its Homeric model; cf. Plat. *Symp.* 180 a. On the Iliadic and Odyssean tetralogies, see Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 242–253.

125 Herington 1985: 140. On the connection between Homeric subjects and Aeschylus' continuous trilogy, see also Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 39–41. More generally on the reinterpretation of ancient narrative repertoires across different performance genres, see Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b.

126 Lowe 2000: 62.

If one were to imagine the works of ancient Greek literature in a (non-chronological) continuum which ranges from minimal to maximal plot unity, works such as catalogic epics (e.g., Ps.-Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* or *Ehoiai*) and Sophoclean tragedies might be assigned to the sides of minimal and maximal plot unity respectively, while the variegate in-between would also include Homeric epic, which as Aristotle observes has remarkably unitary plots by epic standards, and Aeschylean drama, which has remarkably disunited plots by dramatic standards. In this regard, Aeschylus strikes us as being the most epic of the tragedians in a similar way as Homer struck Aristotle as the most tragic of the epic poets.

Four loosely united plots. We now come to observe more closely the plot of *Persians, Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus*. To briefly recall the Aristotelian notions that apply in the following pages, if the represented events pertain to one single story (*praxis*) and are represented as causally—i.e., according to necessity or likelihood—ensuing from each other, they will be seen as forming a unitary plot (*mythos*). If, on the other hand, some of the represented events escape causal relationship to the others, the plot is episodic. Polymythic plots contain multiple stories or storylines as branches of one story, but can still be comparatively unitary on condition that the storylines are represented as being in causal relation to each other. By contrast, plots are double when they put together stories that, again according to necessity or likelihood, are non-related to each other (e.g., when the main thing two stories have in common is that they feature the same character).[127] While Aristotle's plot theory as interpreted above puts us in a better position to account for elements that are conspicuous in Aeschylus' plot such as narratively represented and non-causally related events, it also marginalizes responsive elements which, although being crucial to Aeschylean drama, centre on making sense of events more than representing them, contribute to the representation of moods and atmospheres more than events, and realize dimensions of the storyworld which are less plot-driven (see Chapter 3.1.4).

Persians raises issues that are intriguing from the perspective of plot analysis and also illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of applying Aristotle's plot theory to Aeschylus, since narratively represented events and the responses to them are the alpha and omega of the play; it is therefore worth lingering on this plot a bit longer. *Persians* represents events that range from the remote past (ancient monarchs and glories of the Persian kingdom) to the recent past

127 Arist. *Poet.* 1451a19–31.

(Battle of Salamis), the present (the current suffering of the survivors), and the future (Battle of Plataea and future generations). The one single *praxis*/story underlying the play unmistakably revolves around the Battle of Salamis.[128] The messenger scene, which is the longest narrative of *Persians*, has the lion's share in representing this story, and is therefore pivotal to the plot: for "[…] prosaically speaking, the only difference between the situation at the beginning and at the end [of *Persians*] is that by the end the defeat at Salamis [… is] known about in Susa."[129] Other narratives, too, go back almost obsessively to the events of Salamis with significant contributions to the representation of these and related events.[130] Indeed, when *Persians* represents events at all—as opposed to responding to the event representation—this is mostly by means of narratives, and all of them relate to (e.g., reframe or counterpoint) the events of Salamis. On the other hand, action is scarce, and the perception of this scarcity is further emphasized by the circumstance that *Persians* systematically engenders *and* frustrates expectations about imminent action, as Edith Hall has pointed out.[131] This is because just at the points when action is expected to take place, more narratives come instead. The only events represented by non-narrative means are the arrival of the messenger (ll. 249 ff.), the necromantic ritual and the resulting consultation of Darius' ghost (ll. 598–680 and 681–702), and the return of Xerxes (l. 909); yet even these events ultimately resolve into narratives, since the messenger comes to break terrible news, Darius to deliver a prophecy, and Xerxes to share his testimony.

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128 Of course, different criteria of plot analysis have led to different conclusions; e.g., for Hopman 2009 *Persians* comprises two storylines, one represented through narrative and regarding the offstage military events, the other represented through action and dealing with the longing (*pothos*) of the Persians.

129 Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 109. Cf. Schadewaldt 1974: 117: "[…] das dramatische Geschehen schreitet nicht von anfänglichen Ereignissen zu anderen, neuen Ereignissen fort. Das tragische Geschehen, der Untergang des persischen Heers, ist abgeschlossen. Die Dramatik beruht auf dem Fortschritt von anfänglicher *Unkenntnis* über das Geschehen zur *Kenntnis* und damit zu schwerem *Leid*" (original italics); Goward 1999: 44: "The movement from ignorance to knowledge, from deceit to recognition of the truth, is the major movement of many tragedies."

130 Cf. Chapter 4.4.3.

131 Hall 1996: 18 f.: "The action of the play underlines the Persians' defeat by its consistent frustration of its characters' intentions: until Xerxes' arrival every time a character decides on a course of action another one moves the action around to a different end. The chorus intend to hold a debate but are interrupted by the Queen; the Queen intends to sacrifice but is interrupted by the messenger; Dareios' help is sought so that in the future the situation may be better, but when he appears he says that it will get worse; the Queen finally departs to ensure that Xerxes is not seen in rags, but the play ends with the Queen losing her 'race against time' as he instead meets the chorus and displays his rags in public."

The epiphany of Darius' ghost also brings up issues of causality, and hence of plot unity: is the epiphany a cause and/or consequence of other events according to the inner logic of the play, or should it rather count as a self-contained episode—which would make the plot episodic? It is true that what follows the scene of Darius, and especially the return of Xerxes, is not presented as taking place because of anything said or done by the ghost. On the other hand, however, the epiphany is the direct consequence of the necromantic ritual performed by the chorus, and Darius' advice indeed fulfils the expectations which the queen and chorus had when they resolved to perform the ritual. Also, Darius gives instructions not only about the political course that should be taken in the distant future (these events are *exō tou dramatos* or outside the play, as Aristotle would say), but also about how to receive Xerxes upon his return (which is within the play). Therefore, the Darius scene is presented as having significant causal ties with its context—much more than, for example, the Oceanus scene in *Prometheus*, where Oceanus' arrival is neither a consequence of the preceding events (unlike Darius, Oceanus arrives unasked for) nor a cause for the subsequent ones. As for Darius' prophetic narrative, this presents the Battle of Plataea and the troublesome future of Persia as being direct consequences of the Battle of Salamis, and in virtue of this causal relationship the future events also pertain to the (expanded) story about Salamis. That is to say that although the Battle of Plataea and the future of Persia are outside the spatiotemporal boundaries of the play—*exō tou dramatos*—they are inside the plot inasmuch as they are (narratively) represented in the play. Yet in the same narrative (ll. 765–786), the memories of the glorious past of Persia are not, according to necessity or likelihood, related to the Battle of Salamis: being non-causally—but thematically and contrastively—related to the story, these past events bring an element of disunity into the plot.[132] Even so, common sense suggests that minor departures from the story are not automatically secondary stories and do not always make the plot double. Again, Aristotle's discussion of Homeric plots is helpful because it makes clear that plot unity is not a binary notion anyway, and the plot of *Persians* seems very much at home in the middle-ground between the two ideal types of unity and disunity. Considering that the play focuses strongly on the one single story revolving around Salamis, and that it features only minor elements which are potentially disuniting, it is possible to conclude that the plot is comparatively unitary. On the other hand, the question of whether this plot is simple or composite—which

132 One might compare how Aristotle, in dealing with Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, sees the events regarding Orestes as non-causally related to those regarding Iphigenia (*IT* 79–94): cf. Chapter 4.3.1/*Aristotle on plot*.

here means whether the messenger narrative about the Persian defeat realizes an *anagnōrisis* and/or a *peripeteia*—depends on the issues discussed in Chapter 4.2.2/*Blurring the line between narrative and action*.

The plot of *Seven* and the impact of narratives on it are more straightforward to evaluate. The plot is unitary because it relies exclusively on the story concerning the Theban siege and does not include any episodes, that is events that are not constitutive parts of this story. The military events are represented in nearly equal measure by means of action and of narrative, whereby all the narratives represent events that take place in the play's present and outside the city walls. What is peculiar about this plot is that the scene of the so-called *Redepaare*—which is long, prominently placed in the middle of the play, and in every regard pivotal to it—favours paratactic arrangements over the hypotactic ones of causal relationships, dispensing with more articulated, integrated, and, in our eyes, "dramatic" arrangements of the materials. It is true that each duel is arranged in causal terms and that narratives contribute to these causal configurations, because the scout's narratives about individual Argive champions are presented as leading to the actions in which Eteocles appoints the corresponding Thebans. However, each duel stands out as a self-contained unit without any causal relation to the remaining six. Essentially a catalogue, the *Redepaare* represent a complex operation as a list of duels—one after the other instead of one because of the other, as Aristotle would say.[133] The plot is technically unitary, but its gears work next to more than with each other.

In *Suppliant Women*, the main story deals with the Danaids asking for and obtaining asylum at Argos, and the related events are represented by means of both action and narrative. The secondary story is about Io and all the events regarding it are represented by means of choral narratives. This second story is conspicuous enough: the chorus go back to narrating about Io on three occasions (ll. 40–56, 291–324, and 524–599)—according to the previous measurements, 124 lines out of the total of 1073 of *Suppliant Women* (11.5%) cover this story.[134] The question now is, how are the two stories of *Suppliant Women* presented as being connected to each other, which is to say, is the plot unitary, polymythic or double? Danaus and his daughters make it sufficiently clear that they have resolved to ask Argos for help precisely because they have in princess Io a prominent Argive ancestor. The Danaids wisely use

133 Cf. Chapter 4.4.2/*The Redepaare*.

134 Chapter 4.1.2/*Data*. These figures do not include shorter references to Io in responsive sections. By comparison, in *Persians* the part of Darius' prophecy recalling events which are loosely related to the story of Salamis (but regard the distant past of the kingdom instead: see above) covers twenty-one lines, i.e., 1.9% of the play.

the story of their ancestor as an argument which paves the way for the supplication (cf. Chapter 4.2.3/*Suppliant Women*). This means that a causal relation between the main and the secondary story exists not only at the level of the *res gestae* but also, and more importantly to the present purposes, in the *compositio rerum gestarum*. On the other hand, it is possible but—to put it like Aristotle—neither necessary nor indeed very likely that the Argives grant the Danaids asylum *because they recount* Io's story. In fact, in his report on the city assembly Danaus does not say that the Argive assembly is touched by the story of Io or willing to resolve the case in favour of the Danaids because of the ancestor argument—the only argument which he recalls is that Zeus as the protector of the suppliants should not be disappointed (ll. 600–624). Furthermore, the chorus also recount at length Io's vicissitudes on occasions which are non-influential for the supplication, especially since there are no Argives present on the stage to listen to them (ll. 524–599). All in all, Io's story seems to carry more weight in the eyes of the Danaids than in those of the Argives. It may be concluded that *Suppliant Women* does attempt to create a causal relationship between the supplication story and Io's story, but that the attempt is not thoroughly convincing, and that therefore the plot is loosely united.

Prometheus features two different stories which are even more loosely connected to each other than those of *Suppliant Women*. The main story concerns the increasingly deteriorating relationship and ultimate clash between Zeus and Prometheus. This story encompasses events from the remote past, in the time at which Zeus imposed his supremacy over the Titans and Prometheus stole fire for the benefit of mankind, to the present day, when Prometheus is being punished for his disobedience, and further into the far future, when according to Prometheus' prophecy a cure will come for Zeus' despotism and for his own pain. Some elements which Aristotle might call episodic are attached to this story and enrich it, but are not causally related to it, namely Oceanus' ineffective attempt to mollify Prometheus, represented through a longer enactive section (ll. 277–396), and the vicissitudes of Atlanta and Typhon, exemplary of Zeus' cruel despotism and represented with a narrative by Prometheus (ll. 340–376). The secondary story is about the sufferings and wanderings of Io. From Io's entrance onto the stage until her exit (ll. 561–886), this story makes up nearly one third of the play (346 lines out of the total of 1093), and is therefore substantial. The greatest part of the story of Io is represented by means of two narratives, namely the autobiographic recollections of Io herself (ll. 622–686) and the prophecy of Prometheus regarding her fate (ll. 700–876). Together, these two narratives add up to more than one fifth of the entire play (240 lines out of 1093, i.e., 21.9%), and in addition to this there

are sparse narrative utterances intermingled in ll. 561–608.[135] The link between the main and the secondary story is that Prometheus predicts that after thirteen generations a descendant of Io shall put an end to his own sufferings. While in theory events which are so much outside the play's spatiotemporal boundaries (*exō tou dramatos*) might still be inside the plot, in truth the strongest link between the two stories is that Prometheus and Io are both victims of Zeus' ruthless and abusive conduct, which means that the link relies on themes and affects more than causality.[136] Therefore, the plot of *Prometheus* can qualify as double instead of unitary, and also as episodic, because of the causally non-related Oceanus scene.

Summing up, the conspicuous use of narrative makes it easy for Aeschylus to represent single events or entire stories/storylines that, since they occur in different spatiotemporalities and involve different characters than the play's, are more likely to have weak causal relationships with the events which the play characters enact in the here and now. This freedom encourages episode-like elements and parallel storylines, relaxes the overall cohesion of the plot, and promotes polycentric and paratactical structures instead; as a matter of fact, elements that undermine the unity of the plot are constantly represented by means of narratives in the four plays under examination. Aeschylus' drama eludes rules of plot economy which are established in more action-based drama because it can afford representing elements that are not necessary or highly functional with regard to the (main) story. Narrative is the currency for plot elasticity.

4.3.3 *Anachronisms and Displacements*

Beyond the boundaries of the here and now. Narrative liberates the playwright from the tyranny of the here and now because it indefinitely expands the range of objects which drama can represent (and minimizes the costs for representing them on the stage). This chapter specifically focuses on how narratively represented anachronisms and displacements enhance plot freedom in Aeschylus.

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135 Cf. Gianvittorio-Ungar 2021.

136 Cf. Taplin 1977: 265: "Certainly Io is […] the progenitor of Heracles, the eventual deliverer of Prometheus; and she is, like Prometheus, the victim of Zeus' tyrannical behaviour. But these connections seem tangential rather than central […]"; p. 267: "the [Io] act as a whole is not fitted into the play; it is not led up to and it in no way follows from what precedes. […] The Io act with its highly theatrical beginning and its forward-looking internal coherence makes a kind of play within a play; yet it lacks any significant connection with what goes before and after it." Griffith 1983: 190 speaks of a "curious […] intrusion."

The three categories of time established by G. Genette—duration, frequency, and order—will be helpful in analyzing the impact of narrative on time and, with some adaptations, on space as well.[137] Duration can be defined as the relationship between the timelapse an event takes to happen and the timelapse it takes to represent it. Action has little impact on duration because it represents the events just while they develop—in real time, if one may say so for drama. Narrative, on the other hand, can modify duration significantly, since it allows for summaries, ellipses, omissions, and accelerations: it often takes us more time to do things than to tell others about what we have done, and the contrary is just as representative of narrative's free handling of duration. An instance of narrative summary is the prophecy of Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, which covers events regarding five generations (*Ag*. 1072–1294), and the prophecy of Prometheus in the homonymous play contains a noticeable ellipsis because it jumps ahead to a time in the future which is thirteen generations away from the dramatic present, skipping the in-betweens (*Prom*. 774).

Frequency can be defined as the relationship between the number of occurrences of an event in the story and in the plot. It can influence the plot in significant ways, whereas in drama "cyclic, repetitive or contrastive principles of order" have been observed to disrupt the "linear finality of the plot developments."[138] This is especially true for Aeschylus, in which narratives represent several times (though in different fashions) events that only occur once.[139] In *Persians*, for instance, the events of Salamis are recounted many times by narrators who have different focalizations. In *Suppliant Women*, the Danaids re-narrate the story of Io and her descendants three times and with increasing detail: the first time almost incidentally during the *parodos* (ll. 40–56), the second time when they outline their own family tree to introduce themselves to Pelasgus (ll. 291–324), and finally during the choral song in which they also detail Io's wanderings with a geographic catalogue (ll. 535–589). Again, in *Prometheus* the protagonist predicts twice that Zeus will need his help (ll. 168 ff. and 908 ff.). By favouring chronological circularity over linearity, repetitive frequency undermines the economy, causal cohesion, and unity of the plot.

Order is a particularly illuminating category for observing how narrative compromises not only time linearity but also plot unity. Since Genette, anachronisms are usually defined as discrepancies between the story time and the discourse time as produced by flash-forwards (prolepses) and flashbacks

137 For an overview of different treatments of time in the context of narrative see, e.g., Scheffel / Weixler / Werner 2014.

138 Pfister 2001 [1977]: 324.

139 Cf. Chapters 4.1.3 on repetitive narratives and 4.4.3 on re-focalizations.

(analepses). Genette's notions concerning time order have been functionalized for drama in various ways, and embedded narratives play an important role in all of them. Our analysis will align with the majority view which considers (only) the events occurring between the play's point of attack and its end as being present.[140] Defined in this way, present events can be represented not only by means of enactive utterances and/or stage performance, which are both bound to the play's here and now, but also by means of present-time narratives such as teichoscopies, telesthesias, and other narrative strategies that represent extra-scenic events roughly in the moment they happen. Events that precede the point of attack or follow the end of the drama qualify as anachronisms, and narrative is a chief means to represent them—in drama as elsewhere.

The spatial distinction between scenic *vs*. extra-scenic or onstage *vs*. offstage events operates with a similar logic. We will regard as scenic the events that occur in the drama's here—on the "stage," which here indicates the space which is supposed to be in the visual range of the play characters as opposed to the physical-architectonic space that is reserved for actors and choruses in theatre buildings. This means that scenic events should be generally visible to the characters who are present—not only, say, to the sentry who overlooks the battlefield from a vantage viewpoint or to the seer. On the other hand, extra-scenic or offstage events are (supposed to be) invisible for the play characters or visible only to a minority of them—e.g., the sentry and seer—and can only be experienced indirectly. While the plays under investigation represent extra-scenic events with present-time narratives, later tragedy resorts to both narrative and non-narrative means, as for example when, in *Agamemnon*, the extra-scenic murder is represented with screams from the backstage.

Expanded spatiotemporalities. Aeschylus has "supreme skill in managing flashback"[141]—a skill which is especially remarkable in drama. His tragedy is rich in anachronisms and displacements, which are here shorthand for narratives about events which take place in spatialities and temporalities different from the play's here and now. These expanded spatiotemporalities have the effect of loosening the unity of the plot and hampering its linear progression with digressions and other redirections. In *Persians*, what makes the plot so distinctively non-linear is that many narratives make the pendulum of the discourse time swing from the past to the future and back again, so that very little evolves in the play's here and now. It is narrative flashbacks that represent the

140 For an alternative adaptation of time order to drama, see, e.g., Andronikashvili 2009: 23 f.
141 Ong 2012 [1982]: 141.

departure of the Persian forces (ll. 12–139), the defeat at Salamis as recounted by the messenger, the queen, and Xerxes (ll. 249–514, 703–738, and 907–1037), and the glorious past of the Persian kingdom according to the recollections of Darius first and then the chorus; while in-between a narrative flash-forward gives insights into the impending decline of Persia (ll. 765–842).[142] The same is true for space: the scene is set in Susa, but narratives and responses to them constantly evoke the dystopia of Salamis and the landscapes which the Persians go through on their way to and back from the battle. As for the play's here and now, there is plenty of emotional and cognitive response to the narratives but remarkably little action. In fact, that which happens in the here and now revolves around three acts of narration, since the messenger arrives to break the fatal news, Darius makes his appearance to share his prophecy, and Xerxes re-narrates and mourns about Salamis upon his return.

In *Seven*, every single narrative represents extra-scenic events that happen in the play's present; as a consequence, story time and discourse time overlap in spite of the great number of narratives. This synchronism promotes the integration of narrative with action (especially but not only in the *Redepaare*) and ultimately results in the most unitary plot among the four considered. The present-time narrative by the chorus about the attack of the Argives (ll. 78–181) is not uttered from the top of the city walls, but is nonetheless comparable to a teichoscopy inasmuch as it informs about what is currently going on the battlefield on the basis of evidence that is audible and, apparently, somehow visible to the chorus.[143] The narratives regarding the military preparations of the Argives (ll. 39–68), their champions at the Theban gates (ll. 375–396, 422–436, 457–471, 486–500, 526–549, 568–596, 631–652), and the outcome of the seven duels (ll. 792–819) are almost present-time because they report on extra-scenic events immediately after these have taken place. Specifically, the off-stage manoeuvres of the Argives take place while, on the stage, King Eteocles is addressing his subjects (ll. 1–38), the chosen Argive warriors are positioned outside the Theban gates while Eteocles is rebuking the chorus and the chorus is in turn praying (ll. 182–374), and the duels are fought while the Theban women are singing their lament (ll. 720–791). Thus, the narratives of *Seven* expand the spatial rather than the temporal frame of the play to include events which happen not at exotic locations but at the city walls. The spatiotemporal proximity of the narrated and enacted events is conducive to the plot unity.

142 See Grethlein 2007; cf. also Grethlein 2013.

143 The chorus report in rich visual detail on the military manoeuvres of the Argives, and building on Athenaeus 1.22a I have argued elsewhere that a weapon dance may symbolically stage these events during the *parodos* (Gianvittorio-Ungar 2020).

As for *Suppliant Women*, it has been noted above that this play exhibits fewer and shorter narratives. Yet actually, the narratives that grow shorter are only the ones which represent events within the spatiotemporal boundaries of the play (ll. 176–185, 600–624, 710–733): that is, events related to the Danaids' supplication, which takes place in the play's here and now through action and constitutes the main story underlying the plot. By contrast, the narratives that digress into spatiotemporally dislocated events are of considerable length (cf. ll. 291–324 and 524–599) and deal with the secondary story regarding Io, which has a thin causal relationship with the supplication story. It is therefore the narratives representing the anachronisms and displacements of Io's story that undermine the unity of the plot.

Prometheus, too, displays the two by now familiarly correlating traits: it has a non-linear and disunited plot—a double plot in Aristotle's terms—and it abounds in narratively represented anachronisms and displacements. These are a natural result of the prophetic gift of the play's main narrator, Prometheus, who "reach[es] out inexhaustibly into past and future time," yet even the second narrator, Io, contributes to "open[ing] the trilogy out into time and space."[144] Narrating about the future—that is, about temporal domains beyond the end of the play—Prometheus predicts the circumstances that will one day jeopardize Zeus' absolute power (ll. 168–192) as well as the fate of both Io (ll. 700–876) and Zeus himself (ll. 908–943). On the other hand, his flashbacks shed light on Zeus' conquest of power and on the ways in which Prometheus himself bestowed many gifts on mankind (ll. 193–276) and improved their condition (ll. 436–525). More analepses and exotic landscapes come with the autobiographic narrative of Io (ll. 622–686 and, to a minor extent, 561–608). In *Prometheus*, too, the elements that loosen the plot's unity are chiefly rendered by means of narratives; in particular, narratives by Prometheus and Io represent the best part of the secondary story regarding Io herself.

This overview has shown how narrative facilitates the indefinite expansion of the spatiotemporal boundaries of the play by including elements from past and future times as well as from near and remote spaces. Narrative thus encourages multiple storyworlds in drama which do not, however, co-exist in a parallel arrangement but rather enrich each other, especially by means of mutual thematic and atmospheric relationships—as for example when a storyworld evokes, reflects, amplifies, or counterpoints another. On the other hand, elements from disparate spatiotemporalities are more likely to have thin causal ties with the ones that are within the play's spatiotemporal boundaries (and

144 Goward 1999: 83.

with each other). In the four plays considered, narratives about events occurring at times and venues external to the play usually translate into reduced linearity and unity of the plot. This trend has nuances and partial exceptions. For example, narratives about events that, while occurring in different spatiotemporalities, become known, meaningful or impactful—one might say reactivated—in the play's here and now (e.g., the messenger report in *Persians*) have less dispersive effects on the plot;[145] and the same can be true for narratives which are nearly present-time and report on moderately extra-scenic events (e.g., the scout's utterances in the *Redepaare* of *Seven* or Danaus' report on the city assembly in *Suppl.* 600–624) as opposed to narratives about very distant spatiotemporalities (e.g., the remote past/future and exotic landscapes of Io's story in both *Suppliant Women* and *Prometheus*), because they are in a better position to interplay with the events enacted in the play's here and now. Even so, what emerges is the trend towards a triangulation between dislocated spatiotemporalities, narrative representation thereof, and the enhancement of plot multi-directionality and disunity. *Prometheus* illustrates this triangulation well, since it features a great number of anachronisms and displacements, a striking number of narratives to represent them, and two storylines whose causal ties are weak at best, meaning a disunited (specifically, double) plot.

On the other hand, action-based drama roots the storyworld more deeply in the play's here and now and inclines towards spatiotemporal economy, whereas the cohesion between the represented elements also promotes the unity and linearity of the plot. This is not to say that post-Aeschylean drama reduces or dispenses with flashback and flash-forward narratives. Rather, it tends to functionalize these narratives to enlighten or complement the (enacted) events which are internal to the play's spatiotemporal boundaries and to build stronger causal relationships between narrated/external and enacted/internal events—which is a good recipe for the plot's unity and linearity. The same applies to the treatment of space as well: while Aeschylus handles extra-scenic spaces with generous narratives, which include for example extensive toponymic catalogues and descriptions of exotic regions (as in *Persians* and *Prometheus*), later tragedies tend to narratively represent extra-scenic events only inasmuch as they help to account for and further develop the scenic ones.

145 Cf. Chapter 4.2.2/*Blurring the line between narrative and action*.

4.4 Dramatizing Narratives: Some Techniques

4.4.1 *Breaking Down Narratives into Dialogues*

Dialogic narratives, participating narratees. Aeschylus dramatizes narratives in creative ways. The present chapter focuses on three techniques which his drama features prominently: the dialogic redistribution of narratives (this chapter), a special case involving catalogues (Chapter 4.4.2), and the interplay of different focalisations (Chapter 4.4.3).[146] These techniques are also interesting because they underwent different treatments in later tragedy: while dialogic narratives continued to appear in Sophocles and Euripides, dialogic catalogues fell into disuse, and the interplay of focalizations was radically transformed. Such outcomes exemplify how the dramatization of narrative increased through an experimental process of trial and error in the dynamics of the genre.

It has been previously observed that Aeschylus favours monologic over dialogic character speech (*rhēsis* over *stichomythia*), while two- and three-cornered dialogues become more frequent with Sophocles and Euripides.[147] In the face of the comparative scarcity of dialogues in Aeschylus, it is all the more conspicuous that he sometimes distributes between two characters engaging in a dialogue contents which might be easily represented by one single narrator. On such occasions, the dialogue involves one narrator who releases the information and one or two participating narratees who by throwing in questions and comments motivate, encourage, and often expressly urge the narrator to continue, detail or retell the narrative.[148] The role which participating narratees play in dialogic narratives confirms the remarkable capacity of Aeschylean narratives to trigger responses and reactions from the internal narratees, and thus to enhance the interaction between the play's characters (see Chapters 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).

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146 Other techniques to dramatize narratives are less distinctive but also observable. For example, Aeschylus prefers that a main character of the play personally narrates events in which he or she has been crucially involved, while later tragedy often introduces a minor character for the main purpose of narrating, regardless how peripherally he (rather than she) was involved in them. (see Pfister 2001 [1977]: 130 f. on *monologische Exposition*).

147 See Chapter 1.2.2/*Effects of the third actor*.

148 On dialogic narratives in drama see, e.g., Pfister 2001 [1977]: 130–135 ("der Übergang von narrativer Exposition und dramatischem Spiel [kann] fließend gestaltet werden"); Korthals 2003: 148, who remarks on narrative in the form of questions and answers ("Geschehensdarstellung muß sich grammatikalisch nicht unbedingt in Form von Aussagesätzen manifestieren," with examples and references at note 232); Bowles 2010: 177, who explains how narrative can be "cooperatively constructed by both participants"; Nünning / Sommer 2011: 203. With regard to Attic tragedy, see Schwinge 1968: 171–330; Swearingen 1990; Barrett 2004; Easterling 2014: 226; Schuren 2014.

All the four plays under scrutiny feature dialogic narratives—in stichomythic or lyric-epirrhematic form. In *Persians* (ll. 715–738), the narrator Atossa recapitulates the events regarding Salamis while the participating narratee Darius solicits her narrative. In *Suppliant Women* (ll. 291–324), the chorus recount the story of Io while Pelasgus asks them questions. In *Prometheus* (ll. 160–192 and 242–258), the dialogic narrative involves Prometheus as the narrator and the curious Oceanids as the participating narratees. The most striking example of this technique is the long scene of the *Redepaare* in *Seven*, which Chapter 4.4.2 will discuss in greater detail. The *Redepaare* entirely consist of the three-cornered dialogue between the scout in the capacity of the narrator, and his narratees King Eteocles and the chorus of the Theban maidens. Contrary to the habit of Attic tragedy, the scout of *Seven* does not deliver the news in a long continuous speech (*rhēsis angelikē*) but in seven short narrative bits, separated by the reactions and responses of the participating narratees. In turn, King Eteocles utters his military orders not in a continuous speech but in seven short enacting pieces, each of them reacting to and integrating the scout's utterances that immediately precede those of Eteocles. Also, the chorus do not voice their worries, hopes, and wishes in a continuous song as usual, but sing each strophe or antistrophe separately from the others, thus commenting on each prospective duel with a distinct piece of the song. By fragmenting narratives, (re)actions, and responses that are usually continuous into shorter sections which alternate and interact with each other, Aeschylus transforms the traditional messenger speech and the performative effects that it elicits into a more dramatic three-voice dialogue between the narrator and the participating narratees.

Bacchylides' fourth dithyramb. From a cross-generic perspective, it is interesting that the *Redepaare* refine techniques for dramatizing narratives with which genres that were akin to tragedy were also experimenting by this time.[149] In roughly the same years and on the same (Athenian and Syracusan) stages as Aeschylus, Bacchylides too was developing strategies to convert continuous mythical narratives into more dramatic-style dialogues, namely in the genre of dithyramb. His *Dithyramb* 4 (= *Ode* 18) is a dialogue between the internal narrator Aegeus, king of Athens, and the chorus of the Athenian citizens as the participating narratees.[150] Since the text is fully preserved, we know that the poem

149 Cf. Battezzato 2013.

150 See Zimmermann 1992: 95 f.: "Es ist bezeichnend, dass Bakchylides dieses formale Experiment, das die Dithyrambiker gegen Ende des 5. Jahrhunderts wiederaufnehmen sollten, in

entirely consisted of this dialogue and did not frame it in a broader narrative context. The narrator relates a herald speech in the second and fourth strophe, thereby passing on the news that a young hero is currently approaching Athens. The choral narratees ask Aegeus questions about the identity, looks, and intentions of the hero in the first and third strophe. In this way, the strophes alternate narrative parts and the related questions. We do not know how this dialogue was performed but can envision three options: did a solo, actor-like singer play Aegeus and take turns with the chorus,[151] were there two semi-choruses,[152] or did the entire chorus sing all the strophes—including the ones ascribed to Aegeus?[153] In theory, all three options are viable because lyric (like dramatic) choruses did not need to match numerically—nor gender-wise—with the characters they impersonated: accordingly, a chorus of fifty members could impersonate Aegeus and refer to themselves in the singular—in a similar way as tragic choruses of men impersonating girls referred to themselves in the feminine.[154]

While aspects relating to performance would be crucial to assess the theatrical qualities of *Dithyramb* 4, its affinity to drama is also attested by the text. Scholars have often remarked on the similarities between this dithyramb and tragedy—and Aeschylean tragedy in particular.[155] For example, *Persians*, *Seven*, and *Agamemnon* all open with a feeling of trepidation for warriors who are expected to arrive presently (Xerxes, the Argive enemies, and Agamemnon respectively), which describes the basic situation of the dithyramb at issue. Another point of contact regards so-called tragic irony: in Bacchylides, the anonymous hero is coming to Athens in peace since he happens to be Theseus, the son of Aegeus, king of the Athenians. Yet while the narrative about the hero's achievements had to make his identity perfectly clear to the Athenian

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Athen wagte, vor einem Publikum also, das schon jahrelang an dramatische Aufführungen gewöhnt war […]. Der Dialog von zwei Halbchören bzw. einem Chor und einem Solisten bietet keine Möglichkeit zur Aktion, es sei denn, man macht, was die Vertreter des jungattischen Dithyrambos versuchten, aus der chorlyrischen Gattung ein Miniaturdrama mit Solisten und Chor […]. Bakchylides unternimmt das formale Experiment sicherlich unter dem Einfluss der gleichzeitigen Tragödie." For an in-depth discussion of this dithyramb, see Maehler 1997: 211–240; more generally on Bacchylides' life and dates see, e.g., Maehler 2004: 9 f.

151 This is the most likely option in my view: see Jebb 1905, 234; Pickard-Cambridge 1962 [1927]: 29; Vox 1982: 131.

152 E.g., Burnett 1985: 117–123; Ieranò 1987: 89 note 7; Zimmermann 1992: 96 note 5.

153 Del Grande 1952: 11–13.

154 Privitera 1991: 188 f. and note 10.

155 E.g., Michelini 1982: 68; Gentili 1984–1985: 25 ff.; Privitera 1991; Calame 2013: 347 ff.

audience who attended this performance, the poem's characters are in the dark—and therefore worried.[156]

Three similarities between Aeschylus' tragedy and Bacchylides' *Dithyramb* 4 are particularly interesting for the present purposes. Two of them are mutually related, and concern the offstage focus of the plot and, as a consequence thereof, the mediating role of the internal narrator. Like much of Aeschylus' drama, the dithyramb narratively represents events occurring in spatiotemporalities that are external to the poem: most of the events lie in the past (Theseus' heroic deeds) and the present ones are extra-scenic anyway (Theseus' approach); as a consequence, Aegeus' narrative is the only way in which the narratees—both internal and external—can experience them.[157] The narrator thus mediates between different spatiotemporalities that impinge on each other, namely those of the embedded narrative, of the poem's here and now, and of the historical settings in which the performance and re-performances of the poem reenacted the mythical past.

Finally but most importantly to this chapter, Bacchylides' *Dithyramb* 4 consists entirely of dialogue: the chorus listen and ask questions, while Aegeus, very much in the spirit of the actor—*hypokritēs*, *hypokrinomai*—gives the answers.[158] It is therefore not surprising that this dithyramb has often been tackled from dramatic angles, though this move has often aimed at pinpointing alleged tragic archaisms.[159] However, Bacchylides—like Aeschylus in the *Redepaare*—considerably dramatizes the narrative by re-distributing it between the internal narrator and narratees, who are in this way transformed in the dialogue's partners: after the chorus asks Aegeus to speak (first strophe), Aegeus' alarming report (second strophe) triggers the chorus' excited questions (third strophe), to which the narrator answers again (fourth strophe). Even the identity and number of the speakers involved in the dialogue allow for comparisons with Aeschylus. As considered above, the *Redepaare* break down the narrative about the duels into a three-cornered dialogue involving the characters

156 On the "tragic irony" of Bacchylides *Dith.* 4 see, e.g., Wind 1972: 512; Zimmermann 1992: 97.

157 Vox 1982.

158 See, e.g., Burnett 1985: 117–123; Calame 2013: 347 f.; Gianvittorio 2013: 438. Maehler 2004: 193 even suggests that "the unusual form of ode 18 was suggested to B[acchylides] by the *parodos* of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," and dates the ode accordingly (August 458 BCE), though this is speculative.

159 E.g., Michelini 1982: 68 regards the dithyramb as an example of the "paratactic style in drama," which she explains at p. 67: "The actor in pre-Aeschylean drama is likely to have been a figure similar in function to the chorus: that is, he was primarily a commentator rather than an "actor" or participant in a dramatic event, a figure who might at times take his view of the myth from a rather remote and isolated point."

of the scout, the king, and the chorus. Bacchylides' *Dithyramb* 4 features a king and a chorus, but no scout. Yet although the designated or professional narrator is not physically there, his agency looms large—in fact, almost tangibly—in the entire poem. Aegeus opens the second strophe (ll. 16–19) by announcing that the herald has just arrived to report the news he himself is about to mediate to the chorus, the chorus in turn asks to know from Aegeus the news reported by the herald (ll. 31 f.), and indeed, in the fourth strophe Aegeus' report consists of infinitive sentences in indirect speech which depends on the verb λέγει/*legei*, "(the herald) says …" (ll. 46 f.).[160]

To sum up, two roughly coeval poets who had plenty of chances to familiarise themselves with each other's work in Athens as well as in Syracuse experimented with similar techniques for dramatizing mythical narratives in two cognate genres, namely tragedy and dithyramb. To turn narratives into dialogues, both poets fragmented narratives which one might expect to be monologic and continuous into smaller narrative and responsive units, accordingly distributed the units between narrators and narratees, and emphasized the performative effects of the narrative units with the narratees' responses to them. In Aeschylus' *Redepaare* as well as in Bacchylides' *Dithyramb* 4, the narrative which is dramatized in this way represents in vivid detail the military threat posed by heroes who are in real time but extra-scenically approaching the city. In both poems, the narratees participate in the narrative by asking questions which encourage the narrator to continue, and by expressing fear for the safety of the city and of themselves. In both poems, the characters involved in the dialogue are the king of the threatened city, the chorus of the city dwellers, and the professional narrator (scout or herald), whereas the agency of the latter is manifest in the *Redepaare* but implicit in the dithyramb.

4.4.2 *Dramatizing Catalogues*

A range of techniques. A catalogue is a longer list of items—especially names of persons or places—arranged in prevalently paratactic fashions.[161] Most typical of epic (both heroic and didactic),[162] catalogues also occur within narrative sections of other genres including, for example, elegiac, choral, and tragic

160 For the likely presence of a messenger in Simonides' lost poem about Theseus, see Maehler 1997: 218.

161 E.g., Reitz 2006. Asper 1998: 915 points out how catalogic items can also include narrative expansions: "Der poetische K[atalog] besteht aus einer ausgedehnten offenen Liste gleichwertiger Begriffe, d.h. einer parataktischen Reihung, wobei die einzelnen Elemente jeweils narrative Erweiterungen zeigen können."

162 See, e.g., Minton 1962; Fowler 1999; Rutherford 2000; Cingano 2005; Arrighetti 2008; Faraone 2013.

poetry.[163] In the process of appropriation and reuse of manifold musicopoetic traditions through which Attic tragedy developed, catalogues, too, found their way onto the tragic stage. The surviving plays suggest that catalogues held a prominent position in tragedy by the 470s–460s BCE but lost much of their appeal afterwards. Finding ways of dramatizing catalogues had to pose challenges to the playwright, and the four plays at hand attest to Aeschylus' experimentalism in this regard.

Persians contains five extensive catalogues.[164] It certainly took quite some time for the actors and the chorus to perform them on the stage. The author of the *Funerary Oration* passed down under Lysias' name saw no point in listing the names of the Persians who marched against Greece one by one (καταλέξαι/*katalexai*),[165] but Aeschylus was clearly of a different mind. To him, long lists of exotic-sounding names were worth the time and effort, and we will see that he required the actors and chorus to perform them richly in word, song, and dance. By producing a fatal sense of accumulation, catalogues give an almost tangible feeling of the formidable strength of Persia in terms of manpower, territories, and sheer size, which inevitably translates into the feeling of how much is now lost or destroyed. The first two we encounter in the play are an expedition catalogue and a casualty catalogue, and they mirror each other in subtle ways. The expedition catalogue is in the *parodos*, where the chorus list in anapaests and at astonishing length the names of the distinguished warriors who left their homes to attack Greece (ll. 21–64).[166] The very first line of the play foreshadows the doom of the Persian men, because the participle "departed" (οἰχομένων/*oichomenōn*) suggests that they are gone never to return, and in the messenger scene the catalogue of the casualties confirms this premonition with the names of prominent Persians who perished in the battle (ll. 302–330). Together, these catalogues give substance and measure to the otherwise indistinct notion of the shattered forces and painfully transform an anonymous mass into a choice of individual portrayals (the fact that the expedition and the casualty catalogues have only six names in common is not detrimental to this

163 See, e.g., Faraone 2005 (on early Greek elegy); Steiner 2020 and 2021: 581–628, who suggests that epic catalogues took their cue from choral performances; and Kirk 2021, with epigraphic materials.

164 For the catalogues of *Persians* as "epic" elements see, e.g., Michelini 1982: 15; Barrett 2002: 41 ff.

165 Lys. 2.27 (*Epit.*).

166 See Broadhead 1960: 318–321 and Bacon 1961: 23 f. on the Persian and Persian-like names recalled by Aeschylus and on the identity of the name-bearers (cf. Hdt. 7.61–67). Dué 2006: 62 ff. interprets the poetic imagery of this catalogue (e.g., the metaphor of youth as a flower at *Pers.* 59) as quintessentially Greek.

effect). The third and the fourth catalogues are also related to each other. The ghost of Darius mentions eight Persian rulers in order of succession (ll. 765–786)—from Medus,[167] the eponymous founder of the Medes, down to Darius himself and his son Xerxes. In turn, this catalogue inspires the next one, in which the chorus go on remembering the past greatness of the Persian kingdom and detail—while singing and dancing—the cities and territories that have been under its influence (ll. 863–900).[168] By contrasting the present crisis with the idealized past, the two catalogues deepen the sense of loss. The play closes with the longest and most spectacularly dramatized catalogue (ll. 955–1001). Unlike the previous four catalogues, this one is not uttered by one single character but by two who engage in dialogue—thus adapting the technique discussed in Chapter 4.4.1 to a catalogue. This produces a catalogic *kommos* (i.e., song-and-dance of mourning performed antiphonally by the chorus and the actor), in which the chorus ask anxious questions about the fate of twenty-eight individual warriors—a veritable hail of questions—while Xerxes cannot but confirm their death every time.[169] Detailing the noble Persians who have perished because of Xerxes' *hybris* and compelling Xerxes to admit each and every death greatly emphasizes the moral responsibility of the king. Again, the span of time required by the stage performance of the catalogue—a span of time which the question-and-answer structure virtually duplicates—contributed to the overwhelming cumulative effect.[170] It only takes one sentence to say that an anonymous mass of warriors has perished, but to recall twenty-eight illustrious men individually and by their patronymics during a choral dirge in song-and-dance is something else entirely, namely a ritual of mass mourning.[171]

All in all, *Persians* features extensive and mutually related catalogues and displays an eclectic range of techniques for dramatizing them. Some of these techniques exploit the potential of stage performance: instead of spoken iambic trimeters, which would appear to be the routine and most epic-like option for catalogues in messenger and other speeches (*rhēseis*), Aeschylus sometimes opts for catalogues in choral song-and-dance, such as the geograph-

167 "Alternatively, Μῆδος may mean 'a Mede', in which case the reference will be to Cyaxares (reigned ca. 625–585), the first Median king to extend his rule to Asia Minor" (Sommerstein 2008 on *Pers.* 765).

168 These territories encompass the Eastern part of Asia Minor (cf. *Pers.* 863, "without crossing the stream of the river Halys"), areas further in the East, and the region around the Ionian peninsula.

169 One name is missing at l. 981, so that we only read twenty-seven names.

170 Saïd 2007.

171 Cf. Gianvittorio 2017b on the performance of this passage.

ical catalogue in the third choral song (*Pers.* 863–900; cf. also the geographic catalogue of *Prom.* 397–435, that covers the first choral song). Since the chorally performed catalogues of tragedy opened up manifold possibilities to echo the catalogues of other choral genres,[172] Aeschylus might be here receptive to different performance traditions. Another technique for dramatizing catalogues resorts to the mechanisms of narrative's performativity observed in previous chapters, such as when Darius' nostalgic review of Persian rulers elicits the chorus' recollections about the past greatness and territories of Persia—in this case, a catalogue elicits another catalogue. Finally, the catalogue of ll. 955–1001 is not only sung and danced by the twelve chorus members and by the actor playing Xerxes, but also takes on the form of a dialogue between narrator and participating narratees. The performance of the catalogue concluding *Persians* suggests that by 472 BCE tragedy was appropriating catalogues from epic and choral genres and adapting them for its own purposes—in this specific case, for a high-impact commatic finale involving everyone on the stage.

Suppliant Women and *Prometheus* confirm that catalogues in dialogic form had then kicked in with Aeschylus' tragedy and/or were reproduced in possible imitations thereof. The one in *Suppliant Women* is embedded in the narrative about the chorus' descendance from the Argive princess Io: during ll. 314–324, the questions asked by Pelasgus solicit and punctuate the catalogue in which the chorus details the progeny of Io. In *Prometheus*, the questions of the Oceanids invite Prometheus to go on listing his gifts to mankind (ll. 242–258). In addition, *Prometheus* exhibits two other strategies for dramatizing catalogues. One strategy refunctionalizes catalogues for non-narrative purposes (cf. above on *Pers.* 955–1001): the geographical catalogue of *Prom.* 397–435 that mentions the peoples and toponyms of the Asian, Colchis, Scythian, and Arabian regions unfolds during the response of the first stasimon, whose opening line says that the song shall express sympathy for Prometheus' terrible fate. In this context, the catalogue makes exotic peoples ideally partake of a lament of universal proportions, as though the Oceanids were speaking on behalf of humankind that has benefitted from Prometheus' services. The other strategy for adapting catalogues to drama consists of splitting catalogues that would be otherwise too extensive or monotone and in placing bits of dialogue in between. This is how the author of *Prometheus* deals with the catalogue in which Prometheus lists in spoken iambic trimeters the regions and perils through which Io will wander. The first part of this long geographic catalogue (ll. 707–735) outlines the route "from here" (ἐνθένδ'/*enthend'*, l. 707)—meaning somewhere in the

172 See Steiner 2020 and 2021: 581–628 on choral catalogues.

Scythian desert—up to the "Strait of the Cow"—i.e., the Bosporus—which will take its name after Io herself. Then comes a dialogue between the narrator Prometheus and the narratee Io (ll. 742–785), after which the second part of the catalogue (ll. 786–818) resumes the impervious route from the Bosporus up to the Egyptian Delta.[173]

The *Redepaare*. *Seven* features only one catalogue, but one that is dramatized with superb artistry. It covers the longer scene of the *Redepaare* (ll. 375–676), a scenic catalogue around which the entire play revolves. The catalogue consists of names, patronymics, and further details about the fourteen champions who fight for Thebes—seven Argives and seven Thebans.[174] It is impossible to observe circumstantially how Aeschylus re-worked epic catalogues and other materials concerning military contingents, since the works that might have offered better terms of comparison are lost, such as the epic poem *Thebais* but also the *Achilleis* trilogy and other tragedies by Aeschylus that were inspired by epics with military subject matter. For all we know, a typical, epic-looking catalogue of the contingents would feature one continuous list of the warriors and some specifics about them.

Aeschylus, on the other hand, dramatizes the catalogue in a way which has no parallel in surviving tragedies and was possibly quite new in 467 BCE. He split a more likely catalogue of fourteen warriors into two semi-catalogues of seven warriors each, entrusted each semi-catalogue to either actor (the Argives to the scout, the Thebans to Eteocles), and intertwined the semi-catalogues with each other by having the two actors engage in a dialogue rather than in two monologic speeches (*rhēseis*). Thanks to the dialogic form, the two semi-catalogues dynamically complement each other: every time the scout informs Eteocles about one of the Argives, the king reacts to the news by appointing one Theban in turn. In addition to the actors, Aeschylus involved the chorus of the Theban maidens as well, having them comment on each duel after the scout's and Eteocles' utterances.

The three-cornered dialogue—that is, dialogue involving all the performers available on the tragic stage by 467 BCE—is a rarity in Aeschylus and effectively dramatizes the routine catalogue in the form of monologic speech (*rhēsis*). It also sheds further light on a number of the issues that have been broached thus far. One of them concerns the performativity of catalogues seen as narrative elements. The scout's pieces of narrative detail items from a catalogue

173 Cf. Collard 2008: xciii on Io's wanderings, with a handy map.

174 Cingano 2002 examines literary and archaeological evidence regarding the names of the seven Argive heroes and discrepancies in different versions of the myth.

and elicit reactions and responses from the participating narratees Eteocles and the chorus. Yet since Eteocles, by sending the Theban men to the gates, contributes half of the catalogue himself, the distinction between narrator and narratee becomes very nuanced in the *Redepaare*.[175] Another point regards the way in which Aeschylus refunctionalizes the catalogue for dramatic purposes. *Prometheus* (ll. 397–435) and *Persians* (ll. 955–1001) have already exemplified how drama can use the typically narrative elements of catalogues for responsive purposes. *Seven* goes a step further in that it systematically turns parts of the catalogue into dramatic action—which is yet another instance of how rarefied the line dividing narrative from action can be. In fact, the semi-catalogue offered by Eteocles constitutes the best part of the action that takes place in *Seven*: it is while and because the king appoints the seven Thebans that something happens in the play's here and now, since assigning each of them to a gate means enacting strategic plans that save the city (see p. 213).

4.4.3 *Playing with Focalization*

Using narratives to create suspense. Narratives contribute to dramaturgic effects in many ways: for example, they can build climaxes and anti-climaxes, portray characters, raise expectations, suspicions or hopes, create effects of redundancy, retard crucial events that appear to be imminent, and much more. As for Attic tragedy, I. de Jong has demonstrated—in a study to which all narratological analyses of (Greek) drama are directly or indirectly indebted—how the messenger speeches of Euripides have preparatory, concluding, transitional, and other functions.[176] The present chapter considers how Aeschylus uses narratives that enrich each other to create or enhance suspense, also comparing *Persians* and *Oedipus the King* to enlighten their differences in this respect.

The notions of suspense and focalization will be useful in this task, and need to be succinctly introduced. In the vocabulary of drama theory, suspense indicates the relationship between the partial or incomplete information that is made available to the characters (as opposed to the readers) and the expectations that this information engenders in them—whereas expectations can include hopes, fears, suspicions, anticipations, worries, hypotheses, forebodings, sense of opportunity, and attitudes more generally.[177] In narratology, on

175 Cf. Chapter 4.2.2/*Blurring the line between narrative and action*.

176 de Jong 1991: 120–131.

177 Pfister 2001 [1977]: 141–148. Pfister also distinguishes between the suspense about what will happen next (*Was-Spannung*), and the suspense about how it will come to happen (*Wie-Spannung*), whereas Attic tragedy (unlike comedy) relies more on the latter.

the other hand, partial or incomplete information defines the concept of focalization as the relationship between the narrator's and the characters' knowledge of the storyworld. Focalization is thus a relational notion, and since Genette it has been customary to distinguish between the degrees of zero, internal, and external focalization. In a nutshell, zero focalization is when the narrator says more about the storyworld than the character could say, internal focalization is when the narrator says as much as the character could say, and external focalization is when the narrator says less than the character could say.[178] Although Genette's notion of focalization refers to the ratio between different amounts of (withheld or released) information, a more widespread understanding of focalization to which also the following sections resort encompasses not only the narrator's information but also his or her own perception and interpretation of that which is narrated and his or her attitudes and emotions toward it.[179]

Re-focalization in Aeschylus. That Shakespeare "[…] tells the same story from different points of view, at different times, in different moods"[180] is a better-studied phenomenon than the Aeschylean equivalent. In Aeschylus, narrative is key to dramatic suspense because it is the chief and often only means to make information available to the characters. More specifically, suspense often

178 See, e.g., Niederhoff 2014, with references. In applying such notions to drama, it is not superfluous to point out that *internal* narrators—that is, narrating characters of the play, such as messengers—do not necessarily have *internal* focalization: in drama-embedded narratives, focalization expresses the relationship between the information/experience/attitude of the play character who narrates (e.g., the messenger) on the one hand, and of the characters of the embedded narrative (who are not necessarily characters of the play) on the other. For example, the prophetic narratives by Prometheus and by the ghost of Darius have zero focalization because these two narrators, thanks to their prophetic gift, can say more about the storyworld than the characters about whom they narrate.

179 Different positions about focalization contrast the more inclusive model of the "point of view" adopted here and the information-based or quantitative model (Narrator > Character, Narrator = Character, Narrator < Character). On their difference, see Niederhoff 2014: 116: "If a novel begins by telling us who a character is, to whom she is married, and for how long she has been living in a certain town, it will reveal no more than the character knows herself, but no one would describe such a beginning as an example of 'vision with' or character point of view. To tell a story from a character's point of view means to present the events as they are perceived, felt, interpreted and evaluated by her at a particular moment." For example, the narrator's "attitude" may include "[a]n open-ended list of qualifiers [such as] neutral *vs*. judgmental, sympathetic *vs*. detached, involved *vs*. distanced, cynical, sentimental, emotionally charged, curious, amused, bewildered, and so on" (Margolin 2014: 361).

180 Hardy 1997: 22.

results from re-narrating the same events with different focalizations which continue to modify the characters' expectations.[181] There is hardly a single narrative that in itself presents the narratees with the full picture of the offstage events, since each narrator presents the events according to his or her own experience, direct or indirect knowledge, and sensibility. The expectations of the play's characters—that is, the dramatic suspense as defined above—sprout in the interstices that open up between different narrative angles and change with them.

A few examples can illustrate how re-focalization works in Aeschylus. In *Agamemnon*, the fall and sacking of Troy are narrated by Clytemnestra first and then by the herald (*Ag*. 320–350 and 503–586). Yet while their narratives confirm each other with regard to what happened at Troy, they offer two quite complementary perspectives on these events—namely the perspective of the political mind and of the war survivor. Queen Clytemnestra can "presume" (οἶμαι/*oimai*, l. 321) what has befallen a distant city in which she herself has never set foot. She figures out horrors such as the improvised funerals, the food shortages, and the overwhelming sense of chaos, and being the clever ruler that she is, Clytemnestra imagines these events with a fair amount of realism. The herald, however, is a soldier and reports on deprivations and toils which he has been experiencing firsthand over ten interminable years. His report is born of experience and can therefore enrich Clytemnestra's notions with vivid sensory details. For example, while Queen Clytemnestra was right in assuming that the Greeks had been sleeping in bivouacs until the fall of Troy, it is the herald who brings this notion to life: in his version of the story, sleeping outdoors means that one gets soaked by rain from above and by dew from below, and that the damp clothes fill with vermin (ll. 560–562). The experiences which Aeschylus himself had made at Marathon and Salamis certainly put him in a position to flesh out war reports with real-life details—and to identify with the reporters.

Similarly, the different narrators of *Persians* recount the defeat at Salamis in different capacities and colour their narratives with various physical, mental, or oneiric experiences of the battle and degrees of personal involvement in it. Atossa, as queen and mother of Xerxes, is involved at public as well as personal levels, and has experienced dreams and bird signs obscurely related to the battle. The messenger, by contrast, recalls the facts in vivid detail in the double capacity of eyewitness and loyal subject. The omniscient ghost of Darius can add information about extra-scenic and future consequences. Finally, Xerxes once again retells the story as its very protagonist and as the great defeated

181 Cf. Chapter 4.1.3 on Aeschylus' repetitive narratives.

party of the battle. The re-narrations of the Salamis disaster build up to a crescendo in suspense and pathos as each narrative reveals new dismaying facets or implications of the events. If the initial forebodings of Atossa could be still neutralized by the optimistic interpretation of the chorus, the opening lines of the messenger report immediately shatter all hopes, and by the end of the play Xerxes' testimony cannot but mix narrative fragments with overwhelming lament. The different way in which each narrator focalizes the battle engenders suspense in that it feeds and modifies the expectations of the internal narratees: for example, the hope that Atossa's premonitions are unwarranted, the fear of realizing the full measure of the Persian disaster, and the expectations about the return of Xerxes.

While different focalizations are usually produced by different narrators, it is also possible for one single narrator to shift through different focalizations. *Seven* illustrates this point well: throughout the play (i.e., ll. 39–68 to 792–819, with the micro-narratives of the *Redepaare* in between), every new segment of the scout's report reflects how the scout's knowledge about the manoeuvres of the Argives continues to develop with every scouting session, and adds new pieces of information and insights to the previous ones. The circumstance that the information release is rationed and that the knowledge of the extra-scenic events can only improve step by step is crucial to building the suspense in *Seven*, because it keeps the expectations of the characters fluid. Their fears and hopes for the safety of Thebes intensify or abate with every new narrative.

Case study: *Persians*. *Persians* is enlightening of how re-focalizations of the same events create distinctive effects of suspense. All the internal narrators (the chorus, Atossa, the messenger, Darius' ghost, and Xerxes) deliver narratives that variously deal with the Battle of Salamis, yet crucially, each narrator relies on his or her own experiences and (narratively constructed) memories thereof, firsthand or mediated knowledge, and subjective affects and moods regarding the battle. The ways in which narratives are performed are crucial to realizing their different focalizations, because stage narrators use their voices and bodies to give form and power to their own perceptions, attitudes, and feelings regarding the storyworld—which are vital components of focalization itself.

The following pages focus on how each narrative of *Persians* influences the characters' expectations and thus contributes towards creating suspense. This begins with the very first line of the play, since the choral narrative of the *parodos* (ll. 1–139) opens with a hint at the Persians' doom with the participle οἰχομένων/*oichomenōn*, "departed."[182] In a good example of how, in Aeschylus,

182 The verb οἴχομαι/*oichomai* "to depart" is a euphemism for "to die" (LSJ s.v. II), and also

"le pressentiment oriente les pensées,"[183] the rest of the choral narrative echoes this initial ambiguity by recalling in implicit and explicit ways the perils to which the Persian forces have been exposed: implicitly, such as when the chorus make the deeds of "bold" Xerxes sound unnecessarily temerarious (ll. 74–113, cf. l. 74 θούριος/*thourios*); and explicitly, such as when they continue to voice their worries for the well-being of the Persians (ll. 8–15, 59–64, 93–125, 133–139)—so much so that there are passages in this *parodos* that might be suitable for a mourning song. This indicates that since the beginning of *Persians* the characters feel uncomfortable with their admittedly partial knowledge of the events, and throughout the play narratives regarding Salamis contain information gaps that never fail to upset them. Paradoxically, thus, narratives are the only source of information but at the same time enhance the characters' perception that the information is incomplete.

The next narrative—Atossa's report about the dream and omen (ll. 159–214)—is exquisitely allusive and can therefore affect suspense in subtle ways. It makes it possible for the chorus to fabricate false expectations, since signs are open to interpretation and the interpretation of the chorus is unreasonably optimistic; yet on the other hand, it deepens the dark forebodings of the *parodos*—although ultimately retarding the moment of their confirmation by the messenger. Atossa gives shape to the abstract concerns expressed in the *parodos* with two plastic and lively described images, namely a woman in Doric attire who smashes Xerxes' yoke and a hawk that tears at the eagle's head. In this way, the vague feelings implied by the choral narrative materialize as almost palpable threats in Atossa's narrative. Together, the two narratives point allusively but consistently (through roughly one fifth of the play) to the worst-case scenario. They create a shared sense of anticipation of the inevitable, and so the messenger arrives.

The narrative by the messenger exceeds more than fulfilling the expectations. While the narrative of Atossa allowed the chorus to delude themselves *and* the queen, the messenger's report is as unequivocal and informative as it can be. The narrator is an eyewitness who understands military matters and has himself taken part in the battle, and compels the internal narratees to face the full extent of the Persian disaster immediately upon rushing onto the stage (ll. 249–255, cf. l. 247 δράμημα [...] Περσικόν/*dramēma* [...] *Persikon*). His report

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occurs with the same ambiguity at *Pers*. 13 and 60. Cf. Garvie 2009: 50: "line 1 is a translation into anapaestic metre of the opening line of Phrynichus' play, τάδ' ἐστὶ Περσῶν τῶν πάλαι βεβηκότων. Metre no doubt necessitated the change of βεβηκότων to οἰχομένων, but the latter also provides the sinister ambiguity."

183 Vicaire 1963: 338.

annihilates hopes and ignites panic. We do not know if building up suspense until the messenger report and using it as a climax was a novelty in tragedy by 472 BCE, but we know that it was a new way to dramatize the Battle of Salamis, because Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women*—staged in 476 BCE—broke the news of the Persian defeat toward the beginning of the play.[184]

The messenger scene consists first of a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue with the chorus and then of a much longer monologue. The two parts of the narrative focalize the battle in quite different ways, and the shift in focalization contributes to portraying the messenger as a dynamic character who processes the horrible experiences of Salamis while he narrates them. At first, the messenger is still overwhelmed by war memories which are too fresh to rationalize and recalls the events rather confusedly, but as he manages to get a grip on his emotions, he can deliver the report professionally. Technically, the few lines that break the news of the defeat toward the beginning of the messenger scene fulfil its purpose (ll. 249–255), yet the scene goes on for about three-hundred lines, during which narrator and participating narratees try to absorb and make sense of the overwhelming news together. The lyric-epirrhematic dialogue (ll. 256–289) serves this purpose: the chorus seek to assimilate the news bit by bit by asking questions, and in turn their expressions of sympathy encourage the narrator to talk the war experiences through (a process that bears resemblance with a psychotherapy session). Here, the focalization of the messenger is highly subjective: he places himself and his first-hand experience at the centre of the narrative, emphasizing how his knowledge of the battle is embodied—as exemplified by statements such as "I myself never expected to see the day of my return" (l. 261) and "I was there myself, I did not merely hear the reports of others" (ll. 266 f.). He also points out that the process of remembering and narrating the battle is painful because it makes him re-experience the traumatic events—e.g., "Ah me, it is terrible to be the first to announce terrible news, but I have no choice …" (ll. 253 f.), "How utterly loathsome is the name of Salamis to my ears! Ah, how I groan when I remember Athens!" (ll. 284 f.). It is this kind of focalization that produces the first climax of *Persians*.

This climax calls for an anti-climax, which *Persians* realizes with the shift from more subjective toward more objective focalization in narrative when the queen requires the messenger to restrain his emotions and to tell the story clearly: "Still, we mortals have no choice but to endure the sorrows the gods send us; so compose yourself and speak, revealing all that has happened, even

184 TrGF 1.3 F8; cf. Herington 1985: 142.

if you are groaning under the weight of the disaster" (ll. 293–295). Orders make subjects, and so the man launches into the second and more extensive part of his narrative, in which he no longer speaks as a traumatized survivor but as a well-informed eyewitness and professional messenger (ll. 299–514). The switch in focalization corresponds to a change in performance, since the messenger re-frames the contents confusedly outlined during the lyric-epirrhematic dialogue into a monologue (iambic trimeters) which pinpoints the events with numbers and specifics, minutely reconstructing the facts in their logical-chronological order. This is consistent with a general trend in Attic tragedy that spoken narratives are more informative and better understandable for the internal narratees than narratives in song and dance.[185] Unlike the purely emotional remarks of the chorus, those by Atossa—here a participating narratee—help the narrator stay on track and consider the events matter-of-factly: "But go back to the beginning and tell me this: how great were the actual numbers of the Greek ships […]" (ll. 333–336), "Then the city of Athens is still unsacked?" (l. 348), "But tell me how the naval battle began. Who started the fight?" (ll. 350–352), "Tell us what you say is this further disaster that has come upon the army […]" (ll. 439 f.), "By what kind of death do you say they have perished?" (l. 446), "But tell me—those of the ships that escaped destruction—where did you leave them? Do you know enough to give us clear information?" (ll. 478 f.). Thus, Atossa illustrates how narratees can influence the way in which events are focalized and narratives impact on drama. Scholars have seldom been generous with her character,[186] but this woman displays a thirst for factual knowledge and a practical grasp of war politics.[187] She acts like the most self-possessed character amid the (all-male) political and military minds who should, supposedly, be in control of the situation—namely the elderly counsellors, the battlefield-tested messenger, and King Xerxes himself. Without her agency, *Persians* would be more dirge than drama.

185 See Gianvittorio 2012 b and 2021 and cf. below for the cases of Atossa's and the ghost's narratives.

186 See, e.g., Yoon 2012: 124; Rosenbloom 2013, with a selection of relevant positions. Centanni 2020 is a recent reappraisal of Atossa.

187 Atossa's thirst for facts and rational mindset are confirmed by the questions she asks the counsellors to enquire about Athens' exact location, power, war skills, wealth, political organization, and self-defence (*Pers.* 230 f., 233, 235, 237, 239, 241, and 243), by her conspicuous silence while the chorus and the messenger abandon themselves to lamentation (it would be natural for her to join the lament after the messenger's news and at the epiphany of her husband's ghost, but she never sings at all), and by her resolution to summon omniscient Darius to know what shall be done.

While the necromantic ritual involves colourful stage elements such as the song-and-dance by the chorus (ll. 633–680) and the spectacular epiphany of the ghost, the two re-narrations of the events of Salamis which follow it establish a more somber atmosphere with the help of monologic renderings. Consistently with her character, Atossa is the one who dares to speak with the ghost of Darius, and summarizes for him the essentials of the extensive messenger report in a much shorter narrative (ll. 709–738, trochaic tetrameters). The narratee, that is the ghost, requires clarity and brevity (ll. 705 f.), and Atossa knows how to fulfil the request: she cuts down the almost 300 lines of the messenger scene to twenty-nine lines without a significant loss of information.[188] Since the ghost soon demonstrates that he has prophetic knowledge of the military and political situation, Atossa's résumé appears to retard the prophecies of Darius—in a comparable way to how Atossa's narrative about the dream and omen (ll. 159–214) had retarded the messenger scene. Yet according to the inner logic of the play, the prophecy of the ghost ensues from the woman's summary (ll. 765–842). This spectral narrator knows more than any mortal who has had dreams or even experience of the battle, and makes prophesies about events preceding the battle, its future consequences, and the current condition of the soldiers who are dying far away from Susa (zero focalization). He makes it clear that the ones who happened to survive the battle will not return home and that time will not improve the situation of Persia, thus depriving the characters not so much of hope as of reasons to hope and exacerbating their despair. The performance of Darius' narrative significantly contributes to the lucid focalization of the events: this is a level monologue in iambic trimeters, whereby alternative renderings such as a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue with the queen would have been possible as well.[189]

Finally, Xerxes re-narrates the disaster of Salamis one last time with the focalization of a protagonist and of the one who is responsible for it. In this capacity, he also confirms the death of many illustrious men, though the news can barely change the characters' expectations by this point. Xerxes' focalization is so steeped in feelings of failure and guilt that his narrative often makes way for pure lament; in fact, while the general division of roles in the *kommos* is that Xerxes narrates and the chorus responds to the narrative with lament, Xerxes appears unable to speak in an articulated fashion and voices his grief instead on several occasions. The narratees play a hand in the narrator's feel-

188 Cf. l. 713, ἀκούσῃ μῦθον ἐν βραχεῖ χρόνῳ.

189 A monody, on the other hand, would hardly be an option: the only two monodies in the Aeschylean corpus are *Prom.* 88–127 and 561–608, and hence of questionable authenticity (see Barner 1971: 279 f.).

ings about the events he recounts, since they obsessively ask him about the fate of men who cannot possibly be alive; this confirms that narratees can influence narrators, that is narratives and their impact on the play (see above). In turn, the narrator influences the way in which the narratees respond to the narrative, since Xerxes—almost doubling as the chorus leader—gives stage instructions for increasingly spectacular expressions of grief.[190] Once again, the focalization and performance of narrative determine each other.

Collectively, the re-focalizations of the events of Salamis give suspense to *Persians* inasmuch as they transform and to some extent dynamize the expectations of the characters.[191] At the same time, the narratively-constructed suspense of this play develops along peculiarly redundant patterns instead of the more linear arcs of suspense favoured by action-based drama, in which there is—by trend or ideally—progression until the climax and possibly regression after it (anti-climax), as the next section will exemplify. In *Persians*, on the other hand, starting from the messenger's entry expectations and suspense continue to spiralize around increasing despair viz. decreasing hope instead of developing more or less linearly from initial hope towards final despair.

Comparison: *Oedipus the King*. Even more action-based drama can use narrative and re-focalization to increase suspense, as Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* brilliantly illustrates. The narratives embedded in this play pursue dramaturgic ends in ways that are very effective and puzzling at the same time. As Alan H. Sommerstein has pointed out in an informal exchange,

> the role of narrative in this play is distinctly paradoxical. We start off on the assumption that what needs to be investigated is the murder of Laius, and for a long time we will be expecting a narrative of the murder by the sole survivor to be crucial (such a narrative figured in Aeschylus' *Laius* or *Oedipus*, we do not know which: Aesch. fr. 387a). But this narrative never comes. The murder is actually narrated by Oedipus himself, and the slave gives information only about a much earlier event—and he gives it not in a *rhesis*, but by piecemeal and reluctant answers to an interrogation. The crucial narrative in *OT*, arguably, is the short one by Iocasta speaking of the oracle given to Laius and of his death at a road junction; from that

190 Gianvittorio 2017 b.

191 Cf. Herington 1985: 142 on *Persians*: "the suspense and the *katastrophe* are due to no action that takes place in the *here and now*, all is done by words, and much lies in the *there and then*" (original italics).

> moment on Oedipus is aware that it is at least possible (and he seems to think it is probable) that he was the killer.[192]

Comparing how Aeschylus and Sophocles use narrative for dramaturgical purposes is quite enlightening with regard to both similarities and differences. To begin with the similarities, *Oedipus the King* also features narratives that are both numerous and dramaturgically essential, because they represent events that are outside the spatiotemporal boundaries of the play but key to the plot, namely the events related to the abandonment of the baby and to the murder of Laius.[193] Together, the different reports and recollections regarding these circumstances form an overarching narrative that develops through the play (*OT* ll. 449–460, 710–753, 771–813, 939–963, 1008–1046, 1121–1185, 1234–1296).[194] Each internal narrator contributes different bits of the same story (*praxis*), namely the story that began with the prophecy that Laius' son would one day kill his own father and now unfolds through the recognition (*anagnōrisis*) of Oedipus that he himself has fulfilled this prophecy.[195] As in *Persians*, in *Oedipus the King* each narrator focalizes the events in a highly subjective manner, that is by relying on his or her own partial knowledge, personal experiences, involvement, and emotional attitudes. Each narrator can therefore contribute facets and details which cast different lights—and shadows—on the story. Each narrative influences the expectations of the characters accordingly, for example by engendering or enhancing their doubts, suspicions, and fears. In this way, narratives and focalizations realize suspense.

On the other hand, there are striking differences, for example in the ways in which the narratives relate to and interact with each other. In *Oedipus the King*, the arc of suspense progresses in a quite linear crescendo that culminates when the servant's narrative transforms gnawing doubts into inescapable certainty (Soph. *OT* 1123–1185). This progression is possible because the narratives do not retell the same over and over again; instead, each narrative provides

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192 The email (to which I refer with the sender's knowledge) continues: "[…] I am wondering whether Sophocles, almost throughout his career, gives narrative a more dynamic, plot-shaping role than Euripides does, even in latish plays like *Electra* and *Philoctetes* (in both of which, by a remarkable twist, the plot-shaping narratives—by the Paidagogos and the pseudo-Merchant—are wholly or largely false)."

193 See Chapter 4.3.1/*Narrated events as part of the dramatic plot*.

194 See Chapter 4.1.3/*The backbone of drama*.

195 At first, the two storylines that underlie *Oedipus the King* appear to be largely independent of each other (polymythic/double plot)—one revolving around the murder of Laius, the other around the abandonment of baby Oedipus—but eventually it becomes apparent that they are causally related to each other and parts of the same story (unitary plot).

new and, as it turns out, crucial bits of information, which the characters put together only to see the situation in which they find themselves change before their eyes—in the play's here and now. In *Persians*, on the other hand (and to a lesser degree, in *Suppliant Women* and *Prometheus*: see Chapter 4.1.3), narratives create redundancies and repetitions because they tend to variously reformulate the same contents, and while they can provide new details on occasion, these do not really transform the situation. One could also say that Aeschylus' re-focalizations are more about variance in moods and attitudes (focalization *sensu lato*) while those of Sophocles are more about variance in information (focalization *sensu stricto*). This correlates with the circumstance that Aeschylean narratives are performed in more conspicuous and various fashions than Sophoclean ones, since music and dance are powerful means of expressing the narrators' emotions. Again with regard to narrative-to-narrative relationships, the narratives of *Oedipus the King* (unlike those of *Seven*) do not continue each other chronologically, that is by resuming the narration of the story from the point at which each previous narrative has stopped. Instead, narratives concerning a baby abandoned decades ago, the more recent murder of Laius, and the connection between these two clusters of events intersect with each other. This means that narratives about more recent events re-write the meaning of previous events (and of the related narratives) or re-assess their import, compelling the characters to make shockingly new senses of them. Thus, while the narratives of *Persians* tend to confirm the characters' expectations, those of *Oedipus the King* revolutionize them.

Not less importantly, there are differences in the relationships between narrative and non-narrative sections of the plays. While the narratives of Aeschylus tend to elicit emotional and cognitive responses (see Chapters 4.2.2 and 4.2.3), the narratives of Sophocles trigger significant reactions—that is, events that occur in the play's here and now and are presented as ensuing from the narratives themselves. In *Oedipus the King*, the very event that marks the turning point of the plot (in Aristotle's terms, the *metabolē*)—namely Oedipus' recognition that he has murdered his own father and married his own mother—takes place in the play's here and now precisely while and because Jocasta and the servant narrate what they narrate.[196]

196 See Chapter 4.2.2/*Blurring the line between narrative and action*.