

*Narratives
at Play in
Aeschylus*

PERSPECTIVES ON
GENRE AND POETICS

LAURA GIANVITTORIO-UNGAR

MEMOSYNE SUPPLEMENTS MONOGRAPHS ON GREEK AND LATIN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

BRILL

Narratives at Play in Aeschylus

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Perspectives on Genre and Poetics

By

Laura Gianvittorio-Ungar



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In my late teens I purchased an inexpensive collection of Aeschylus' plays and their Italian translations. I was thrilled when launching into it, but adolescent enthusiasm evaporated quickly when mid-way through *I Persiani* I felt engulfed in dirges and recapitulations beyond any reasonable scale. This study builds on a heterogeneous range of personal and scholarly responses to Aeschylus, including the discomfort and fascination.

Since responses are influenced by the reader's contexts, acknowledging the material and intellectual environments in which my work has developed is a task as necessary as it is delightful. At the University of Vienna, the *Institut für Klassische Philologie, Mittel- und Neulatein* has been my home for six years; this time was blessed by the collaborative spirit of Georg Danek, Andreas Heil, Danuta Shanzer, and especially Herbert Bannert, who supported me since day one. Joining the *Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut* at the *öAW* gave me the extraordinary privilege of collaborating with Stefan Hagel, a.k.a. Lox or Λοξίας. The *Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique* allowed me to live and work with colleagues from three continents for a delightful while. Crucially, the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) has sponsored my postdoctoral activities throughout, with two substantial fellowships named after Hertha Firnberg and Elise Richter and with the unflagging support of Barbara Zimmermann.

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Note on Texts and Abbreviations

The edition of reference for the seven fully preserved plays of (Ps.-)Aeschylus is Alan H. Sommerstein, 2008. *Aeschylus, Volumes 1 and 2*. Cambridge, MA / London: Harvard University Press. Tragic fragments are referred to according to the standard edition of TrGF. Translations from ancient and modern languages are by the author except where otherwise specified.

The most frequently used abbreviations are the following:

- KA Kassel, R., Austin, C. (eds.), 1983–. *Poetae Comici Graeci*, 8 vols. Berlin / New York: De Gruyter.
- LSJ Liddell, H.G., Scott, R., ⁹1996 [1843]. *A Greek–English Lexicon. Revised and Argumented Throughout by Sir H.S. Jones, with the Assistance of R. McKenzie and with the Cooperation of Many Scholars*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- TrGF Snell, B., Radt, S., Kannicht, R. (eds.), 1971–2004. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 5 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

PART 1

Frameworks



A Novel Take on Tragic Narrativity

1.1 Aeschylus' Narrative Drama

1.1.1 *Why Narrative Drama?*

Elusive plays. Reading the earliest surviving tragedies is an experience rich in every regard, including ambivalences. We approach *Persians*, *Seven against Thebes*, *Suppliant Women*, and even *Prometheus Bound* (which is of doubtful authenticity)¹ as archetypes of drama, and yet these plays conflict with quite essential rules of the genre of which they are foundational. They are archetypical inasmuch as in the absence of earlier documents they represent for us the birth of drama and because, from the fifth century BCE until today, they have continued to be included in the selective corpus which defines tragedy as such.² On the other hand, these texts also defamiliarize us from drama as we are accustomed to conceive of it due to models and discourses which became almost normative shortly after Aeschylus and remained such indefinitely.³ In many ways, they differ from the models which were set by Sophocles and Euripides, enforced by the authority of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and which continued to be re-cast, stereotyped, or challenged through the history of drama and criticism. According to such models, drama would enact rather than narrate the events, characters, and feelings it represents (*praxeis*, *ēthē*, and *pathē*), and would do so in dynamic fashions. In these regards, the father of tragedy appears to desert his very child.

The aim of this study is to construct (Part 1) and apply (Part 2) *ad hoc* frameworks which help us reappraise some of the most striking features of the earli-

1 See Chapter 1.1.3/*The literary-historical value of Prometheus*.

2 In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, probably first staged in 405 BCE, Aeschylus wins the prize as best tragedian, and in the fourth century BCE Heraclides Ponticus included him alongside Sophocles and Euripides in his treatise *On the three tragedians* (Περὶ τῶν τριῶν τραγωιδιστοῦν).

3 Cf. Duff 2000: xi s.v. *Defamiliarization*: "The process by which literary works challenge and refresh our habitual perceptions of the world." Alternatively, we could say that *Persians*, *Seven*, *Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* do not feel "classical" if we "use the word *classical* in its regular ahistorical sense to mean a way of doing things that, while not mandatory, is sufficiently paradigmatic for it to be either consciously accepted or deliberately rejected; a way, moreover, enshrined in certain canonical exemplars at the source and centre of the genre or tradition; and which, while perhaps obsolete in practice, is still perceived as a main-stream, orthodox, accepted way to proceed" (Lowe 2000: 61).

est surviving tragedies and of one plausible imitation of their style. The focus is on Aeschylean narrativity seen as an ensemble of features which correlate with the presence and use of narrative in drama. As for the theoretical frameworks, Chapter One discusses why well-established notions of drama may be counter-productive when it comes to understanding Aeschylus, and looks for solutions with the help of extant and new approaches to genres. On the other hand, Chapter Two historicizes the notions of narrative, drama, and their middle ground by considering the different ways in which ancients and moderns have discussed them. Coming to the applications, Chapter Three analyses the four plays under investigation in their narrative, enactive, and responsive components. Finally, building on these findings, Chapter Four tackles conspicuous features of the plays, such as the enhanced capacity of the tragic narratives to elicit responses and reactions from the internal narratees, the creative ways in which they are dramatized, and the freedom they encourage in the construction of dramatic plots.

What motivates a fresh take on these features is not so much that they have escaped the attention of scholars until now as that they have not yet been recognized as interdependent manifestations of narrativity and accounted for accordingly. The reason for this blind spot is that said features elude the interpretative frameworks which have been tailored to a quite different kind of drama. For example, it is widely acknowledged that embedded narratives make up a surprisingly large part of Aeschylus' tragedies (and of some later tragedies as well), that in inverse proportion there is little action, and that the plots develop along awkwardly disjointed or paratactical lines. The tendency, however, is to explain such phenomena as symptoms of some immaturity of the tragic genre at such an early stage—and to overlook how disjointed plots and other Aeschylean hallmarks also depend on narratives which are scarcely related to the dramatic action.⁴ This reasoning is anachronistic because it does not center on features which, while losing part of their importance to drama after Aeschylus, were essential to him, but implicitly or explicitly assumes later tragic models as benchmarks for a different period in the life of the genre. Accordingly, our goal is to find more suitable lines of interpretation for those conspicuous features of Aeschylean drama which cause frictions with inherited expectations. We acknowledge that narrativity was not a by-product but the essence of the tragic genre in the 470s–460s BCE, and that the related phenomena deserve to be investigated on this premise.

4 See Chapter 2.2.3.

What narrative drama is and how it helps. Public opinion experts know that

for the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see [...]. We pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.⁵

Categories and their definitions are more than inert taxonomical grids: they are culturally shaped, inherited constructs which form and colour our understanding of reality. This applies to literary studies too, where genres' labels and discourses influence the interpretation of texts. In the present study, the label "narrative drama" is not meant to indicate that the plays under investigation are expressions of an extra-diegetic voice or instance—like most kinds of drama, Aeschylus' tragedy entirely consists of character speech (*Figurenrede*).⁶ Instead, this artificial category helps us de-contextualize Aeschylus' tragedy from later notions of genres and re-think it in the hybrid terms of a narrative-based kind of drama. This can fine-tune our perspective on some ostensibly "undramatic" characteristics shared by *Persians*, *Seven*, *Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus*, such as the fact that a large part of these works consists of embedded narratives and responses to the narratives, that they opt for representing storyworlds through narrative even when action might be another viable option, and that they tend to inform relationships between play characters (including the chorus) as relationships between internal narrators and narratees.

Yet what exactly is distinctive of narrative drama in comparison to cognate categories or sub-genres? H.-R. Jauß (1977) has demonstrated that distinguishing traits of literary genres should be identified neither with normative (*ante rem*) nor with classificatory (*post rem*) procedures, but by observing the texts themselves and comparing them with one another (*in re*). This is what Chapter Four will attempt to do by analyzing and mutually comparing *Persians*, *Seven*, *Suppliant Women*, *Prometheus*, and to a lesser degree other works as well. More specifically, said chapter will look for features that are, at the same time, shared by the four case studies *and* quite specific to them, meaning not or only partially shared by other tragedies or poems. It will observe, for instance, how

5 Lippmann 1998 [1922]: 81.

6 On narrative as expression of an extra-diegetic voice see, e.g., Pfister 2001 [1977]: 20–22. Barrett 2002 argues that the messengers of Attic tragedy have a dual status, working at the same time as play characters and external narrators, which is fascinating but not thoroughly convincing.

narrative dramas display an unusually large number of embedded narratives, how these narratives elicit responses and reactions from the internal narratees more than in other plays, how they have a greater impact on the construction of the plot and on the dramaturgic economy, and how they are dramatized in peculiarly creative ways.

Scholarship on genres understands the traits which distinguish genres from each other as pointing towards tendencies and typicalities, meaning that these traits can manifest themselves in less or more pronounced ways in different samples of the same genre. Along these lines, the narrative qualities of the plays will be assessed in a scalar rather than binary fashion: for example, we will observe that although the amount of tragic narrative is remarkable in all of the four plays under investigation, it still varies significantly from play to play. In this as in other regards, Aeschylus' *Persians* will strike us as more narrative than *Suppliant Women* and as even more narrative than Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*—just as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is more fantasy than G.R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, even though both these works somehow partake of the genre of fantasy novel. Also, embedded narratives are important to narrative drama, but it is not their bare presence which makes a drama narrative, just as dragons do not make a novel fantasy: the point is rather what narratives or dragons do, what effects they produce, and how they interplay with other elements of the genre. The scalar understanding of drama's narrativity aligns with the notion that genres are not discrete but porous categories, meaning that

participation in a category is often a matter of degree, and [...] categories frequently have a radial structure with central good examples, secondary poorer examples and peripheral examples.⁷

Thus, the distinguishing traits of genres are best understood as that which L. Wittgenstein called “family resemblances” (*Familienähnlichkeiten*).⁸ As such, they do not single out genre-distinguishing features by abstracting them from others, but as clusters of structural relationships (e.g., reciprocal, complementary, contrastive). As a matter of fact, structuralism-inspired approaches have proven helpful for scholarship on classical literatures and particularly on the

⁷ Rotstein 2010: 9f.

⁸ Wittgenstein 2001 [1953]. Rotstein 2010 explains how the psychology of categorization works with prototype theories (a branch of cognitive science), which resort to the notion of family resemblances and whose findings have also been helpful for genre theorists.

poetic genres of archaic and classical Greece.⁹ Accordingly, there is no such thing as one single trait which is in itself sufficient or necessary to ascribe any poem to a genre; it is rather consistent families of traits which work as criteria. And while four plays hardly make for a genre or sub-genre in their own right, together they serve well as documents of a more narrative-based type of tragedy which, to judge from Aeschylus' prizes and reputation, was successful in the second quarter of the fifth century BCE. Of course, embedded narratives such as messenger speeches continued to be important to Attic tragedy even thereafter. Euripides, for instance, staged messenger speeches of a considerable length and represented pivotal events of the plots by means of narrative: in *Bacchantes*—posthumously staged sixty-seven years after *Persians* (405 BCE)—it was a herdsman and a messenger who reported on turning points in the plot. Even so, *Persians*, *Seven*, *Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* strike us as being differently and all in all more narrative than later tragedies.

Heuristic purposes: de-Aristotelizing Aeschylus. How can an alternative genre notion like that of narrative drama have an impact on our understanding of Aeschylus? The answer to this question ultimately has to do with the possibility of using categories as heuristic means. As considered above, categories impinge upon and interact with the objects they organize. Literary genres are a case in point: for authors, they work as “models of writing”¹⁰ while for readers, they suggest interpretative frameworks because “reading [...] is always reading *as*.”¹¹ We thus turn again to scholarship on genres, and more specifically to the processes which shape the readers' “conscience of genre”¹² and their “horizon of expectation” (*Erwartungshorizont*):

As there is no act of communication which does not relate to some general, social or situational norm or convention, in the same way it is inconceivable that a literary work is set in an informational vacuum and does

9 See Conte 1991: 145–173; Käppel 1992: 12 f.; Rutherford 2001: 83; Rotstein 2010: 6–8; Swift 2010: 11 ff.

10 E.g., Todorov 2000 [1978]: 199 f.

11 Rabinowitz, quoted after Neumann / Nünning 2007: 11. Cf. Baroni / Macé 2007: p. 9: “la généricité définit davantage une médiation, un ‘lire comme’, que l’identité d’un texte. Dans une perspective communicationnelle, l’horizon générique est devenu aussi essentiel que la ‘compétence linguistique’, on le conçoit désormais comme cet horizon partagé entre auteur et lecteur à partir duquel une compréhension herméneutique est envisageable. Le sens du genre est devenu pragmatique: le genre est dès lors qu’il sert à quelque chose, pour quelqu’un, et ce ‘lire comme’ est également un ‘lire pour.’”

12 Tynyanov 2000 [1929]: 32.

not depend on a specific interpretative situation. This is why every literary work belongs to a “genre,” which means nothing more and nothing less than that for every work there must be a pre-constructed horizon of expectation [...].¹³

In this sense, genres are cultural categories which produce “expectations of continuity”¹⁴ and help the readers in making sense of texts:

As elements of the collective memory which are culturally informed and which in turn inform culture, generic models should be understood as specific ways of structuring knowledge which pre-organize the process of making sense of texts and which can therefore also contribute towards the homogenization or disambiguation of literary and aesthetic polyvalences.¹⁵

These positions illuminate how an inherited knowledge of literary genres affects our perception of texts and influences the premises on which we formulate judgements about them—including the ways in which we assess aesthetic qualities and relate texts to each other when constructing literary histories. For example, Plato’s writings strike us as foundational masterpieces in the genre of philosophical dialogues and in the sub-genre of the Socratic dialogues, but they have not worked as well in their capacity as dramas even though they have undeniable dramatic qualities, lend themselves to being read *as* dramas, and have in fact been staged as such in ancient and modern times.¹⁶

13 Jauß 1977: 330: “Wie es keinen Akt sprachlicher Kommunikation gibt, der nicht auf eine allgemeine, sozial oder situationshaft bedingte Norm oder Konvention zurückbeziehbar wäre, so ist auch kein literarisches Werk vorstellbar, das geradezu in ein informatorisches Vakuum hineingestellt und nicht auf eine spezifische Situation des Verstehens angewiesen wäre. Insofern gehört jedes literarische Werk einer ‘Gattung’ an, womit nicht mehr und nicht weniger behauptet wird, als daß für jedes Werk ein vorkonstituierter Erwartungshorizont vorhanden sein muß [...].”

14 Voßkamp 1997: 655 (*Kontinuitätserwartungen*).

15 Neumann / Nünning 2007: 13: “Als kulturell geprägter und prägender Bestand des kollektiven Gedächtnisses sind Gattungsmuster als spezifische Wissensstrukturen zu verstehen, die die sinnstiftende Ausdeutung von Texten präformieren und damit auch im Sinne einer Homogenisierung bzw. Vereindeutigung der literarisch-ästhetischen Polyvalenz wirken können.” Cf. Pfister 2001 [1977]: 68–70; Conte 1991: 155; Silk 2013: 34–37. Of course, genres contribute towards shaping expectations even in fields other than literature: see, e.g., Scheinpflug 2014: 3 about film genres.

16 See Athen. 9.381f–382a.

Moreover, Jauß's notion of dynamics of genre (*Gattungsdynamik*) describes genres as "historical families"¹⁷ which, since resulting from traditions and processes of selection, tend to exhibit different traits in different periods and cultures.¹⁸ The production of new literary works, the (re)interpretation of extant ones, and generic interactions (e.g., hybridization, super-genres, *Kreuzung der Gattungen*)¹⁹ constantly re-design the nature of genres. In addition, the very criteria which identify genres—that is, the qualities which the readers prioritize when relating different texts to one genre rather than another—can change over time.²⁰ In these ways,

the genre becomes unrecognizable [...]. [A] *static* definition of a genre, one which would cover all its manifestations, is impossible: the genre dislocates itself; we see before us the broken line, not a straight line, of its evolution—and this evolution takes place precisely at the expense of the "fundamental" features of the genre [...].²¹

By emphasizing the transformational nature of genres, discourses about dynamics help enhance the readers' awareness about the historically and culturally specific angles from which they look at texts. In classics, these discourses

17 Jauß 1977: 330: "den [...] literarischen 'Gattungen' [ist] keine andere Allgemeinheit zuzuschreiben als die, die sich im Wandel ihrer historischen Erscheinung manifestiert. [...] Demzufolge sind die literarischen Gattungen nicht als *genera* (Klassen) im logischen Sinn, sondern als *Gruppen* oder *historische Familien* zu verstehen." Cf. also p. 339: "das Verhältnis vom einzelnen Text zur gattungsbildenden Textreihe [stellt sich] als ein Prozeß fortgesetzter Horizontstiftung und Horizontveränderung dar. Der neue Text evoziert für den Leser (Hörer) den aus früheren Texten vertrauten Horizont von Erwartungen und Spielregeln, die alsdann variiert, erweitert, korrigiert, aber auch umgebildet, durchkreuzt oder nur reproduziert werden können. Variation, Erweiterung und Korrektur bestimmen den Spielraum, Bruch mit der Konvention einerseits und bloße Reproduktion andererseits die Grenzen einer Gattungsstruktur. [...] Die Geschichtlichkeit einer literarischen Gattung zeichnet sich in einem Prozeß der Prägung einer Struktur, ihrer Variation, Erweiterung und Korrektur ab, der bis zur Erstarrung oder auch mit der Verdrängung durch eine neue Gattung enden kann."

18 See, e.g., Baroni / Macé 2007; Fowler 2000; Krieger 2004: 69 f.

19 Fowler 1979: 100. For epic as a super-genre, see Martin 2005.

20 See e.g., Jauß 1977: 331; Voßkamp 1977: 27; Horn 1998: 16–18; Zymner 2007. Cf. Neumann / Nünning 2007: 4: "Gattungen sind stets im Fluss und somit nur durch eine konsequente Verortung in ihrem Entstehungskontext adäquat zu erfassen." Nagy 2020 can be read as an application of these concepts to archaic and classical genres of poetry inasmuch as it considers how these genres have responded to changes in the occasions of poetic performances.

21 Tynyanov 2000 [1929]: 31f. Ahistorical approaches to genres can be helpful too, but for other purposes; cf. Zipfel 2010, 338: "epochenspezifisch differenzierte Bestimmungen des

have supported valuable attempts to reconsider poetic genres from likely emic perspectives (see Chapter 2.2.2).²² With regard to Aeschylus, it has been pointed out that a “study of [Aeschylean] tragedy is [...] inevitably a study of genre as well,” because “it is through genre that literary tradition impinges on the individual work”²³ (although the impinging tradition was actually one of performance more than literature).

On these premises, re-thinking Aeschylean tragedy in the hybrid terms of narrative drama is not for the sake of alternative genre taxonomies, but to encourage readers to try and disentangle Aeschylus’ work from their own notions of drama. The category—which is purpose-made, and hence less burdened with expectations—facilitates a shift in the perspective from which we look at Aeschylus’ texts and locates them at a crossroads between dramatic and narrative forms. Recontextualizing these plays into a different region within our own map of literary genres brings to the fore a hiatus between Aeschylean tragedy and later developments in the genre. This is ideally conducive to a more generous understanding of those aspects which strike us as “non-dramatic,” such as extensive narratives and choral responses to them, scarcity of action, and a dramaturgy which is not uncompromisingly plot-driven.

The present study can count as an (other) attempt to de-Aristotelize our view of Aeschylus, whereby we will observe that the problems lie more in Aristotelizing traditions than in Aristotle’s *Poetics* itself.²⁴ In particular, Chapter Two will discuss how post-classical to modern practices and discourses regarding genres have educated readers to see fundamental differences between drama and narrative, and how the dynamics of tragedy have impinged upon our understanding of a few earlier plays which history and handwritten tradition have left quite unexamined. Reading Aeschylus’ plays as narrative dramas is no antidote to this conditioning, but does more justice to the circumstance that rigid oppositions between narrative and drama became established after Aeschylus’ day, while musicopoetic practices dating to his period inhabited more fluid generic domains.²⁵ For all the shortcomings which etic and artificial notions

Tragischen [...] können [...] in ihrer Begrenztheit den Blick für epochenübergreifende Zusammenhänge verstellen.”

22 A good example is Käppel 1992, who also inspired further studies on the paean (Schröder 1999; Rutherford 2001: 3–136; Swift 2010: 61ff.). See also Most 2000; Barchiesi 2001: 156; Schmitz 2002: 52–54.

23 Michelini 1982: 8.

24 On “Aristotelizing” interpretations of ancient literature see, e.g., Seeck 1985 and Silk 2000: 256–300.

25 See Chapters 2.1.3 and 4.4.1/*Bacchylides’ fourth dithyramb*.

may have, interpreting his tragedy as narrative drama can be an exercise in decontextualizing it from later narratives of the genre (no pun intended) and in repositioning narrativity at the core of tragedy, which is where Aeschylus had it, instead of relegating it to its peripheries.

There is no doubt from an emic perspective—that is, in the eyes of Aeschylus and his original audience—that *Persians*, *Seven*, *Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* qualified as pure dramas and that they qualified as such because they were performed in dramatic ways and on dramatic occasions. At least until the end of the classical period, poetic “forms” (*eidē*) were forms of performance, and were distinguished from each other on the basis of criteria such as the occasion of the performance, the styles and aesthetic qualities of the music and dance, the gender, age, and number of the performers involved, and so on.²⁶ The present work is therefore greatly influenced by past and current debates about the performance genres of ancient Greek poetry in their original contexts.²⁷ At the same time, it combines these (quasi) emic perspectives with unapologetically etic ones in an attempt to cope with the generic expectations which readers inevitably bring into play when interpreting texts. The synthesis is between two diversely unsatisfactory perspectives, namely emic tragedy as a performance genre which is as such largely unknown to us and etic tragedy as a literary genre with which we especially familiarize on the basis of post-Aeschylean dynamics. It is true that “to compare early Greek [poetry] to later literature is to steer a difficult course between the Scylla of a misleading kind of anachronism (to ignore the difference between performance and reading) and the Charybdis of romanticism,” but F. Budelmann and T. Phillips have shown that there is a range of “interpretative acts” which can apply to the textual remains of the original performances on literary premises.²⁸ To borrow two terms from today’s performance studies, in which approaches to performances of the past are a major issue of investigation, our take on early tragedy can be described as reenacting as opposed to reconstructionist inasmuch as it activates different historically specific (e.g., emic, fourth-century BCE, and modern) perspectives on genres in the process of interpretation instead of privileging

26 See Chapter 2.2.2/*Glimpses of emic perspectives*.

27 Recent scholarship on generic issues in Greek drama (and comedy in particular) includes Depew / Obbink 2000; Silk 2000; Foley 2008; Swift 2010; Bakola / Prauscello / Telò 2013; Nelson 2016; Farmer 2017; Foster / Kurke / Weiss 2020; Jendza 2020. In many regards, these studies try and look at ancient genres from emic perspectives. For approaches to performance and chorality which enrich our understanding of ancient genres, see Chapters 1.2.1 and 3.1.4 respectively.

28 Budelmann / Phillips 2018 b: 15.

the supposedly original perspective over later ones.²⁹ While the advantages of the emic approach are apparent, the etic approach opens up a more neutral space within our own system of literary genres to embed the textual remains of Aeschylus' performances. Such a move is legitimate and has hermeneutic potential. As Michael Silk has observed,

it is our "right", and even duty, to make, or consider, proposals on a textual basis. *We* can propose that in textual terms it makes more sense to think of (say) certain Euripidean τραγωδίαι as examples of "romantic melodrama" than as examples of "tragedy"—or vice versa. These plays are still τραγωδίαι: that is a contextual given; but from this contextual given no specifiable textual consequences follow.³⁰

Thus, a generic re-orientation can counterbalance the interpretative bias produced by the readers' horizons of expectations. As the next section will consider, we expect drama to be largely narrative-free and regard embedded narratives as some kind of minor evil to which playwrights resort when lacking more dramatic means. This notion applies well to a significant part of Western drama but conflicts with the plays which heavily rely on narratives to complement and even replace dramatic action. The tendency to project back onto Aeschylus notions of genre according to which narratives were ancillary in drama affects the way in which the sheer amount, dramaturgical uses, and musicopoetic variety of Aeschylean narratives are usually accounted for. Frictions between Aeschylus' drama and the readers' expectations are chances to reconsider the tragedy of his time as a hybrid genre of telling-and-enacting stories—a genre very much concerned with staging narratives and the responses which narratives elicited from the internal narratees.

1.1.2 *Past and Current Approaches to Tragic Narratives*

Narratives as epiphenomena: a historical sketch. Messenger speeches, prologues, teichoscopies, and other forms of narrative in drama have long been attracting scholarly attention, which is not surprising considering their sheer number and length. Traditionally, scholars in the fields of Classical, Literature and Drama Studies have considered narratives as foreign bodies which drama borrows from narrative genres—especially epic—for cogent reasons. Accord-

29 See Chapter 2.2.2/*Reconstructing an emic perspective*. For the differences between reconstructionist and reenacting approaches in the performance studies, see, e.g., Franko 2018; for applications in classics see, e.g., Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 a.

30 Silk 2013: 27 (original italics).

ingly, the point of narratives in drama would be to inform internal and/or external audiences about events which cannot be staged on technical, ritual, or other grounds. Narratives thus count as some sort of makeshift to which playwrights have to resort when more dramatic options are not available: for example, to keep killings offstage, to time-lapse long strings of events, or to render mass scenes and natural catastrophes.³¹ Technical literature reflects these tenets; for example, textbooks on drama and drama theory refer to embedded narrative as a lesser sort of action, such as “disguised action” as opposed to “manifest action” (*verdeckte vs. offene Handlung*), and specialized dictionaries explain messenger speeches as expedients which sheer necessity imposes on the playwright.³² These explanations, however, are not satisfying when it comes to plays in which narratives constitute dramatic elements in their own right which playwrights dwell on and audiences manifestly relished.

One reason why reductionist takes on tragic narratives are well ingrained is that they go back to influential ancient sources. Actually, Aristotle did not mention narratives when considering the practical (and financial) challenges involved in the staging of difficult scenes,³³ but Horace, for instance, understood them as elegant alternatives to shocking or repulsive scenes such as blood crimes:

*Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur.
Segnius iritant animos demissa per aurem
quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae
ipse sibi tradit spectator; non tamen intus*

31 E.g., Di Gregorio 1967: 25–32; Bremer 1976; de Jong 1991: 117 and 2014: 199; Sommerstein 2004; Zeppezauer 2011; Rutherford 2012: 200.

32 *Verdeckte Handlung* is action out of sight of the spectators on which they receive information, and embedded narrative is a key means of conveying it: see, e.g., Klotz 1969: 30–34; Pütz 1970: 212–218; Pfister 2001 [1977]: 276–280. The definition of messenger scene in *Der Neue Pauly* is a case in point: “Längere Rhesis im Drama, in der den anderen Personen oder dem Chor hinter- oder außerszenische, vor oder während der dramatischen Handlung geschehene Ereignisse, die nach den Möglichkeiten oder Konventionen des att. Theaters nicht darstellbar sind, mitgeteilt werden” (Zimmermann 2006). In a monograph devoted to messenger scenes in Attic tragedy, Zeppezauer 2011 considers them as a means to represent *das Schreckliche*, especially killings.

33 Arist. *Poet.* 1453b1–8: ἔστιν μὲν οὖν τὸ φοβερόν καὶ ἔλεινόν ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως γίνεσθαι, ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅπερ ἐστὶ πρότερον καὶ ποιητοῦ ἀμείνονος [...] τὸ δὲ διὰ τῆς ὄψεως τοῦτο παρασκευάζειν ἀτεχνότερον καὶ χορηγίας δεόμενόν ἐστιν, “what is fearful and pitiable can result from spectacle, but also from the actual structure of the events, which is the higher priority and the aim of a superior poet [...]. To create this effect through spectacle has little to do with the poet’s art, and requires material resources” (tr. Halliwell).

*digna geri promes in scaenam multaque tolles
ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens.
Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,
aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,
aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.*

An event is either enacted or reported on stage.
The things that enter through the ear stir the soul more faintly
than that which is put under the faithful eyes and which
the spectator presents to himself. Yet even so, do not
bring upon the stage what is fit to be acted behind the scenes, and spare
the eyes
from many things which eloquence may soon narrate in the presence.
Let not Medea slay her sons in plain sight,
nor shall the execrable Atreus prepare human entrails in public,
nor shall Procne be turned into a bird, nor Cadmus into a serpent:
Whatever you show me in such way, I distrust and detest. (Hor. *Ars P.*
179–188)³⁴

Being greatly indebted to the classical authors, early modern poetologists regarded embedded narratives as epic elements in the body of tragedy.³⁵ A much more recent tenet is that the actor's *Ur-rolle* was that of a bard-like messenger (ἄγγελος/*angelos*), herald (κῆρυξ/*kēryx*) or scout (κατάσκοπος/*kata-skopos*), that messenger speech was therefore the original and epic-like nucleus of tragedy, and that epic is in turn the genre to which tragedy's messenger speech comes closest.³⁶ W. Schadewaldt, for instance, held that

34 Cf. Schol. *ad Soph. Aj.* 815 Papageorgiou (ἔστι δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς σπάνια· εἰώθησι γὰρ τὰ πεπραγμένα δι' ἀγγέλλων ἀπαγγέλλειν· τί οὖν αἴτιον; φθάνει Αἰσχύλος ἐν Θρήισσαις τὴν ἀνάειρσιν Αἴαντος δι' ἀγγέλου ἀπαγγεῖλαις); Schol. *ad Hom. Il.* 6.58–59b Erbse (ὅθεν καὶ ταῖς τραγωιδίαις κρύπτουσι τοὺς δρώντας τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐν ταῖς σκηναῖς); Philostr. *Vita Apollonii* 6.11.113 (on Aeschylus: τὸ ὑπὸ σκηνῆς ἀποθνήσκειν ἐπενόησεν, ὡς μὴ ἐν φανερώι σφάττοι).

35 E.g., Castelvetro 1968 [1570]: 297 a–b: “Ma perche quando s'introduce messo o propheta si passa nel campo dell'epopea, & nel modo narrativo forse percio Aristotele non ha fatta menzione di cio,” cf. Hornung 1869. *Contra* Fischl 1910: 38–46.

36 E.g., Di Gregorio 1967: 33–54 held that tragedy developed out of the alternation of messenger speeches and choral songs (hence the epirrhematic forms; *contra* Taplin 1977: 85), with reference to comparable positions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Further examples are Barrett 2002 (e.g., pp. 23–55 about the relationship of messenger speeches to the epic tradition); Schadewaldt 1974; and Dickin 2009: 45f.

“die älteste Tragödie ist zunächst noch auf der Bühne dargestelltes und vergegenwärtigtes Epos.”³⁷

As a matter of fact, Aeschylus often dramatized narrative materials from the Trojan and Theban epic cycles, and he did so by means of thematically cohesive trilogies and tetralogies which allowed longer stories to unfold—as for example in the *Oresteia*, in the Achilles trilogy, based on several books of the *Iliad*, and in the presumed trilogy *Psichagogoi*, *Ostologoi*, and *Penelope* (followed by the satyr play *Circe*), inspired by the last part of the *Odyssey*.³⁸ As Oliver Taplin has pointed out, “[t]he fact that Aeschylus composed an Achilles trilogy that closely followed the structure of the *Iliad* is not given the recognition it should have in the history of tragedy.”³⁹ While these circumstances set the premises for reconsidering narrative as intrinsic to tragedy, this change has not yet materialized. There is still a tendency, as Chapter 2.2.3 will exemplify,

to view message narrative as though it were an evolutionary weakness in what “should” be a fully dramatic form, producing a narrow discussion in terms of functional necessity.⁴⁰

If one were to summarize the most influential approaches to the narratives of Attic tragedy over the past three centuries, the following pattern might roughly emerge. Erudite approaches dating to the nineteenth and early twentieth century took a special interest in Euripides’ messenger speeches and technically discussed similarities with the style and language of epic, for example with comparisons of vocabularies, epithets, and verbal augments.⁴¹ The second half of the twentieth century, under the influence of Formalism, paid special attention to the structure and morphology of messenger speeches and reasoned on the relevance of messenger scenes within the overall architecture of surviving tragedies as well as lost tragic prototypes.⁴² Since the last decade of the twentieth century, ushered in by the study of Irene J.F. de Jong (1991), narrato-

37 Schadewaldt 1974: 119.

38 Cf. Sommerstein 2008 (vol. 3, *Fragments*): 178–181.

39 Taplin 2007: 83.

40 Goward 1999: 18.

41 E.g., Hornung 1869 (e.g., pp. 9–13); Rassow 1883; Bossi 1899: 50–89; Fischl 1910 (e.g., pp. 38–46); Henning 1910; von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1926: 15; Lesky 1972 [1956]: 204 (“Botenberichte als epische Meisterleistungen”); Bergson 1959. On these approaches, cf. Di Gregorio 1967: 11–16; Barrett 2002: 46–48; Perris 2011: 8f.

42 Keller 1959; Erdmann 1964; Di Gregorio 1967; Mannsperger 1971; Schadewaldt, 1974; Longo 1978; Michelini 1982; Seeck 1984. Cf. Swearingen 1990: 185 ff.; de Jong 1991: vii note 3; Dickin 2009: 1–11 (with an overview of the definitions of messenger speech during past decades).

logy has become a factor in readings of Greek tragedy and classical literature more generally.⁴³ This seminal study, like others inspired by Genettian narratology, privileged close-readings of narrative passages within tragedies, analyzing them in straightforward narratological parameters.

Currently, an eclectic range of narratological approaches co-exist alongside more orthodox ones also in the field of classics. Building on multidisciplinary and transgeneric premises, such approaches apply narratological concepts to genres that have been traditionally regarded as non-narrative, including drama.⁴⁴ Thus, scholarship on Attic tragedy has produced a number of narratology-oriented studies on individual scenes and plays, thereby favouring the angles of focalization and anachronism,⁴⁵ but also with forays into less predictable areas such as the narrator's (un)reliability in the context of messenger scenes.⁴⁶ The idea of drama being "narrative" in itself has also been proposed,⁴⁷ even though in this context there is some concern that the applicability of narratological categories to a dramatic text might pass for evidence of larger issues.⁴⁸ Yet in spite of these openings, narratological takes on Attic tragedy continue to focus on minute analyses of narrative techniques and close readings of selected passages. Basic issues of dramatic narrativity remain out of this focus—so much so that the more relevant studies are actually pre- or non-narratological.⁴⁹

43 Among the earliest works which apply narratological frameworks to classical literature are Fusillo 1985; Winkler 1985; de Jong 1991 and 2001. De Jong 2014: 9 summarizes how classicists have assimilated these frameworks.

44 E.g., Lowe 2000; Grethlein / Rengakos 2009; Grethlein / Huitink / Tagliabue 2020; Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b.

45 E.g., Markantonatos 2002; de Jong 2014: 197–223.

46 E.g., Barrett 2002. Needless to say, there are also studies on tragic narratives which are not (profoundly) influenced by narratology: such as Green 1996 and 1999; Dickin 2009; Perris 2011; Zeppezauer 2011: 111–158.

47 Goward 1999: 12 f.; Lowe 2000; Das 1995; Markantonatos 2002: 1–7; and apparently Gould 2003. For overviews of the relevant positions, see Schmitz 2002: 14–20; Strasen 2002; de Jong 2014: 6–11.

48 Cf. Radke 2003: 318: "Es genügt nicht, allein deshalb, weil man feststellt, daß sich auch in der griechischen Tragödie Elemente finden, die modernen Dichtungskonzepten [...] verwandt zu sein scheinen, sich gerechtfertigt oder—aus einem Modernitäts- oder Innovationszwang gegenwärtiger Diskurse—genötigt zu sehen, mit denselben Kategorien wie bei der Interpretation moderner Texten zu arbeiten. Und es genügt auch nicht, diese modernen Ansätze auf gut Glück einfach auszuprobieren, ob wohl etwas bei der Interpretation 'herauskommt' [...], was vielleicht [...] uns hilft, die alten [...] Texte [...] in einem ganz anderen Licht zu sehen. Denn dieses neue Licht kann auch trügerisch sein [...]." Schmitz 2014 argues for a quite opposite view.

49 E.g., studies on tragic reuses of mythical and epic materials (e.g., Kannicht 2004; Michel 2014; cf. Csapo 2000: 118; and West 2013: 46 for comedy of mythical subject) and the

Narrative in vs. of drama. One fundamental difference between more orthodox narratological approaches to drama and transgeneric ones is in the way they understand narrative itself. In a narrower sense of the term, there is no narrative without a primary narrator or “frame of storytelling” of the sort which is usual in, say, epics and novels.⁵⁰ This position has authoritative endorsers in, among others, G. Genette and I. de Jong.⁵¹ On the other hand, narrative is understood more broadly as any kind of representation of storyworlds, independently of the presence of a primary narrator and regardless of the codes, media, and genres through which the representation is realized. Scholars aligned with this broader definition feel free to consider film, comics, and—relevantly to the ancient world—also drama, music, and dance.⁵² According to these different positions, one can speak of narratology *in* drama, which focuses on discrete narrative elements within the non-narrative body of drama, or, alternatively, narratology *of* drama, which understands drama as being essentially narrative inasmuch as it is committed to representing storyworlds. As M. Fludernik sums up, “one will tend to include drama among the narrative genres on account of its plot, but exclude it from narrative because of the missing narrator/narration function.”⁵³ For the purposes of the present book, schematic oppositions of narrative *in* vs. of drama would be limiting: while transgeneric narratology equips us to read tragedies as narratives on a broader scale, we will also delimit narrative passages from less or non-narrative ones in order to investigate their mutual interactions.

Today, the number of the supporters of a narratology *of* drama is increasing⁵⁴ along with the awareness that, while modern narratology emerged from analyses of novels, it assimilated ancient theories of *mimēsis* which promin-

aforementioned studies of the morphology of tragedy as informed by narrative (e.g., Di Gregorio 1967; Schadewaldt 1974; Michelini 1982).

50 See, e.g., Fludernik 1996: 341 (frame of storytelling); Stanzel 1979: 15–38 (*Mittelbarkeit*); Rajewsky 2007: 40–42; Sommer 2008; Nünning / Sommer 2011: 204–206; Hühn / Sommer 2014; Andronikashvili 2009: 17.

51 E.g., Genette 1994 [1972–1983]: 201; Das 1995; de Jong 1991, 2004: 1–10, 2013, 2014: 17 and 197 f.

52 For dance’s narrativity see, e.g., Foster 1996 and, with regard to Greek and Roman antiquity, Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 a, with references.

53 Fludernik 2008: 358.

54 E.g., Segre 1981: 15; Ong 2012 [1982]: 136–152; Richardson 1987, 1988, 2000, 2001, and 2007; Hardy 1997; Lowe 2000; Jahn 2001; Nünning / Sommer 2002 and 2011; Gould 2003; Korthals 2003; Rajewsky 2007 (rather critically); Fludernik 2008; Nünning / Sommer 2008; Sommer 2008: 122 f.; Andronikashvili 2009: 36–46; Dunn 2009: 342; Bowie 2010 (who also adapts conversation analysis to the study of dramatic texts); Tönnies / Flotmann 2011; Claycomb 2013; Bierl 2019; Schwanecke 2022.

ently dealt with drama.⁵⁵ What produced this change was the recognition of a disproportion between the relevance of drama's narrative phenomena on the one hand, and the inadequacy of subject-related investigations on the other. In this context, Shakespeare has been a favoured field of observation:⁵⁶

Strangely enough [...] the ubiquity and importance of narration in Shakespeare's plays stands in stark asymmetry to the attention it has received in literary criticism. Even narratology has largely neglected the analysis of narrative elements in drama. Contrary to the generally accepted view that drama does not tell a story but shows or scenically represents one, the narrative rendition of stories takes on an extraordinarily important role in Shakespeare as well as in a host of modern and postmodern plays.⁵⁷

As a consequence,

narrative transmission in drama may not be reduced to [...] a surrogate function: Trying to by-pass stage restrictions by telling what cannot be shown can hardly be considered the sole motivation for the use of narrative techniques in drama. In fact, the tendency to employ narration in drama and the establishment of complex structures of epic communication are so pronounced [...] that they by far exceed what is considered necessary for reasons of dramatic economy. The diversity of different narrative strategies [...] cannot merely be regarded as compensation for the well-known restrictions of the Shakespearian stage [...]. Rather, this diversity needs to be considered as evidence of the [...] dynamic interaction of telling and showing [...].⁵⁸

What has been observed regarding Shakespeare and other modern playwrights is even more true for the ancient Greek ones, because explaining the

55 Richardson 2007: 142; Fludernik 2008: 355; Kukkonen 2017 (chapter 1). See also Todorov 1969, who with the neologism *narratologie* indicated a "science du récit" in the widest sense of the word including film, theatre, etc.; and the narratological film analyses by Chatman 1980 and 1990. Cf. Ryan 2008: 288 on Bremond's and Barthes' positions on the matter.

56 For similar views cf. Fludernik 1996: 347–358; Hardy 1997: 24–30; Schwanecke 2022. Cf. Richardson 2007: 151: "For many years, it was widely assumed that fiction was narrated, while drama was merely enacted [...]. The twentieth century, however, is filled with compelling examples of narration in drama, both on and offstage." Drama was defined as a "story without a story-teller" as early as Scholes / Kellog 1966: 4.

57 Nünning / Sommer 2011: 201 f.

58 Nünning / Sommer 2011: 216 f.

earliest and most striking instances of dramatic narrativity in the terms of “surrogate functions” impairs our understanding of drama history altogether. In the field of classics, Nick Lowe’s study of what he calls “the classical plot” across a variety of genres in Greek literature may count as a contribution to trans-generic narratology. A special merit of said study is that it contextualizes Attic tragedy within the narrative culture of its time and recognizes that the genre was informed by culturally specific narrative agendas and aesthetics:

Tragedy’s historical position [...] is due [...] to a conjunction of four factors: tragedy’s unusual status as an invented medium; the remarkable hegemony of myth in early Greek narrative culture; the close relationship the new narrative form seems to have sought with Homeric epic; and its unprecedented and institutionalised productivity. [...] Many of what we think of as the defining characteristics of fifth-century tragedy are the product less of ritual, ideological, or sociohistorical factors than of primarily *narratological* pressures arising from these four circumstances—specifically, from the attempt to adapt what the fifth century admitted in Homeric narrative to the alien medium of theatre, and from the resulting intensive exploration of the technical differences between epic and drama as carriers of narrative.⁵⁹

In this sense, Lowe’s approach to Attic tragedy prefigures the entanglements between “transgeneric narratology, genre theory, the study of narrative as the study of culture, and drama history” for which the aforementioned fringes of English Studies have recently advocated.⁶⁰ On the other hand, his focus is on plot-driven *mimēsis* and, apparently, on one (Aristotelizingly) idealized kind of plot of which a large part of ancient Greek literature—Aeschylus included—is scarcely representative.⁶¹ If compared to Lowe’s, the scope of the present study is, at the same time, narrower and broader: it focuses on a tiny fraction of Greek literature, yet it examines types of plot which Lowe and others have cast aside, as well as dimensions of *mimēsis* other than plot itself.⁶²

59 Lowe 2000: 157 (original italics).

60 Schwanecke 2022: 8.

61 It is intriguing how two books published in the same year and country, Lowe 2000 and Silk 2000, tackle the issue of Aristotelizing vs. non-Aristotelizing plots from quite complementary angles.

62 See, e.g., Chapters 3.1.4/*Feeling the events: mimēsis intensified* and 4.3.2/*Narrative and plot enrichment*.

1.1.3 *This Book's Approach*

In a nutshell. This book seeks to better understand why and how narratives were important to Attic tragedy in the 470s and 460s BCE. The focus is on four plays which make manifest the narrative qualities of this time's tragedy, namely Aeschylus' *Persians*, *Seven against Thebes*, *Suppliant Women*, and the allegedly spurious *Prometheus Bound* (on which see below), that will be compared to each other and occasionally set against other plays to stress relevant differences. This will not produce a narratological analysis but illustrate how several traits that are distinctive of Aeschylus' drama correlate with narrativity. Unlike other studies on tragic narratives,⁶³ the present one does not privilege messenger speeches over prophecies, teichoscopies and teichoscopy-like reports, reports by named characters who are neither messengers nor scouts, mythical digressions sung and danced by choruses, and so on.⁶⁴ Sensitive questions to be addressed include: through which lens do we look at the relationship between drama and narrative today, and how did post-Aeschylean developments in tragedy and in the related discourses shape this lens? What kinds of interaction can be recognized between narrative and non-narrative parts of the four plays under investigation, and between play characters who work, respectively, as internal narrators and narratees? Above all, what exactly do narratives contribute to Aeschylean dramaturgy?

We will observe how notions of drama inherited from Aristotle and Aristotelizing traditions engendered expectations regarding, for example, the prevalence of action over narrative and the development of plot rather than atmospheres, and portrayed these traits as almost ahistorical (transcultural) hallmarks of drama. In classical scholarship, tragedies and comedies that allow us to question these tenets usually count as exceptions to the accepted rule. These views have impinged on interpretations of Aeschylus' tragedies, which rely heavily on embedded narratives and occasionally even opt to narrate events which actors and choruses might be able to enact, and which often linger on narratively evoked atmospheres instead of driving the plot further.⁶⁵ Scholars have especially criticized the plays preceding the *Oresteia* for being actionless, slow, disjointed, or altogether undramatic. At some fundamental level,

63 E.g., Di Gregorio 1967; de Jong 1991; Barrett 2002; Dickin 2009.

64 Cf. Easterling 2014: 226: "there is no need [...] to single out messenger speeches as having a specifically privileged status" in analyses of tragic narratives, and Bowles 2010: 171–193 on play characters as narrators.

65 For example, Chapter 4.1.2/*Reading the data* will consider how it is possible for Aeschylus to stage and enact battles and assembly deliberations but, on occasion, he opts to have these events narrated instead.

such interpretations are *ex negativo* since they focus on that which readers perceive as missing in Aeschylean tragedy more than on that which is quite conspicuously there, and anachronistic inasmuch as they resort to post-Aeschylean models of the genre as implicit—or very explicit—terms of reference.

A process of devising alternative lines of interpretation begins by reassessing narrativity not as a by-product but as a cluster of family resemblances which correlate with the presence and use of narrative and which, collectively, were distinctive of the tragic genre as Aeschylus and his audience experienced it. On the one hand, the book takes an etic viewpoint to look at Aeschylean tragedy as a hybrid genre that easily qualifies as narrative rather than dramatic according to the modern sensibility about these categories, because this shift of perspective adjusts our horizon of expectations—which is significantly shaped by our own notions of genre—based on the Aeschylean evidence. On the other hand, classical sources and research approaches which shed light on the emic understanding of tragedy will help us better historicize tragedy's proximity and interaction with musicopoetic genres that had eminently narrative agendas.⁶⁶ Since Herington (1985), it is widely acknowledged that tragedy arose as a creative synthesis of diverse poetic traditions, yet this is true also with specific regard to coeval arts of storytelling. The history of Attic tragedy reads like an experimental process of reworking and further developing narrative/mythical repertoires for and on the stage, whereby 'repertoires' indicate not so much text corpora such as mythographies as growing bodies alive with multimodal realizations—performed, impersonated, danced, musical, visual, and oral.⁶⁷ The plays under investigation stand out as compelling documents of how by the 470s–460s BCE tragedy was contributing to these repertoires as a sophisticated art of telling stories and enacting responses to the narration. They encourage us to reconceptualize Aeschylean drama accordingly.

Devising responses. The frontispiece illustration lends itself to symbolizing the kind of (assuming there can be such a thing) programmatically ingenuous take on Aeschylus which is here proposed. Painted by John George Brown in 1886,

66 E.g., heroic epic, hymns, (historical) elegy, dithyramb, and other forms of choral poetry. The ties of Attic tragedy to choral genres have been investigated in many specialized studies, though narrative angles are rarer: e.g., Nagy 1994–1995; Calame 1995; Perusino / Colantonio 2007; Swift 2010; Rodighiero 2012; Bagordo 2015; Andújar / Coward / Hadjimi-chael 2018. To mention a few examples regarding the ties of tragedy to other genres, see for epic Di Gregorio 1967; Goward 1999; Barrett 2002; Seck 2000; for historiography and (historical) elegy Grethlein 2007 a and 2010: 47–104; for elegy Mattison 2020.

67 Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b.

A Tough Story captures a moment of narrative *practice*—embodied, communal, and thus quintessentially theatrical. This is quite different from the view of narrative as text suggested by the covers of important volumes on ancient narrative cultures: by depicting the readers of books and scrolls, these covers also illustrate a strong propensity to equate ancient narratives with works of literature.⁶⁸ Instead, Brown's young narrator delivers his story in words no less than expressive gestures, gazes, and poises. He narrates the tough story with his entire self, from the pensively tilted head to the self-confidently outstretched legs; and he does so for an equally physical audience of chorus-like peers. The body language of the children attests not only to the engaging qualities of the narrator, but also to the varying responses with which different narratees meet the same narrative. This diversification brings to our eyes how the task of making sense of narratives inevitably falls on the narratees, who reactively or proactively take parts, make decisions, and exert hermeneutic agency. In an allegorical reading of the painting, the narrator may stand for Aeschylus as a theatre-maker in love with narratives, while the young narratees represent different scholarly approaches to him. The child on the right, whom the name carved into the blacking box identifies as Pat (one of Brown's favourite models),⁶⁹ displays a critical attitude. Pat scrutinizes the narrator with an interrogative look: by clasping his own knee, he refuses to make contact with the peer group and makes his sitting position uncomfortable. In his unease, and in the irritation with which he responds to the narrative, this particular narratee can be likened to readers of Aeschylus who question the purpose of exceeding narrativity. On the other hand, the two little boys sitting in the middle, who admittedly look more naïve than Pat, bond with each other and with the narrator—as emphasized by their mutual physical contact. The narrative does not appear to conflict with their expectations, and thus, they are in a better position to enjoy it. The two boys can represent this study's attempt to distance us from inherited expectations of drama and to start on the premise that narrating profusely was a basic rule in the art in which Aeschylus excelled.⁷⁰ Ideally, the mediation between Aeschylus' and Pat's understandings of drama puts us in a better position to understand them both despite their frictions.

68 E.g., the cover of de Jong 2014 depicts Isaac Israel's *Woman Reading on a Couch*; von Conzen / Tilg 2019 shows *A Reading from Homer* by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, in which a youth reads Homer from a scroll (while a magnificent cithara remains unused); and the cover of Grethlein / Huitink / Tagliabue 2020 shows Hans Joachim Staude's *Germain, Vasco and Felice* as they share a book.

69 Coffey 2015.

70 Cf. Heath 1987: 79: "If we [...] continue to apply the unhistorical assumption that all literat-

The literary-historical value of *Prometheus*. The debate about the authorship and date of *Prometheus* has been lively and at times a bit rough over the past decades; today, it is in the process of exploring known facets of the problem with new tools.⁷¹ The issue commands attention even in a study which is not concerned with the question of who created the play, but rather with why the author created it the way he did. To recapitulate the essentials, the ancients never doubted that Aeschylus was the author of *Prometheus*, not even when the “judgment of poems” (κρίσις ποιημάτων/*krisis poiēmatōn*) dealt with issues of authenticity as an autonomous sub-field of the *ars grammatica* (for Dionysius Thrax, the most beautiful).⁷² Doubts started to arise in modern times and became more serious starting from the 1970s with the arguments produced by Mark Griffith, Oliver Taplin, and Martin L. West.⁷³ Since then, the tendency has become to deny the Aeschylean authorship, although the minority who argue for authenticity is not one that can be overlooked.⁷⁴ All in all, if a playwright created this tragedy with the deliberate intent to make it pass for a work by Aeschylus, he was successful: *Prometheus* displays qualities which even fifth-century BCE spectators and readers felt resonated well with Aeschylus’. This is why the play can add precious elements to our picture of Aeschylean drama and the emic understanding thereof.

The case of Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*, which has reasonably been presumed to be the earliest surviving tragedy until a papyrus fragment proved otherwise, illustrates how a learned sensibility about the historical development of tragedy is not enough to make strong cases about the periodization

ure must really be like ours, then our interpretations will inevitably be distorted, and our literary applications of texts—which means also: the range of our aesthetic experience and enjoyment—will be arbitrarily limited.”

71 E.g., Manousakis 2020.

72 On κρίσις ποιημάτων (*iudicium*) see, e.g., Gelzer 1982–1984: 138f.; Nicolai 1992: 275–296; Diederich 1999: 241–306; Lulli 2011: 7; Schironi 2018: 413–433.

73 See Maehler 2000 for an overview of relevant positions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and Griffith 1977 and 1983: 31–35; Taplin 1977: 240–275 and 460–469; West 1979, 1990 (*Aeschylus*, with the eloquent subtitle *cum incerti poetae Prometheus*), 1990 (*Studies*): 51–72; 2007. Eventually, also Bees 1993; Marzullo 1993 and 1995; and others doubted the authenticity of *Prometheus*. For more cautious approaches see, e.g., Page 1972: 288 (*de auctore Aeschylō dubitatur*); Conacher 1980: 141–174; Podlecki 2005: 195–200; Bol-lack 2006; Ruffell 2011: 16.

74 E.g., Herington 1970 and 1986: 157–179; Pattoni 1987; Latacz 1993: 147–158; and the reactions to Griffith 1977 recalled in West 1990 (*Studies*): 51–53. Conacher 1980: 167ff. recognizes that the hypotheses of Griffith 1977: 242ff. about possible mistakes by the Alexandrine grammarians in attributing *Prometheus* could theoretically apply to any classical play. For bibliographic surveys on the topic see, e.g., Pattoni 1987: 15–32; Bees 1993: 4–14; Andrisano 2019.

of a play.⁷⁵ As far as *Prometheus* is concerned, the strongest arguments against Aeschylean authorship have been metrical and theological.⁷⁶ The theological arguments concern the bad image of Zeus and have been very much scaled back by more recent scholarship. Griffith himself has emphasized how Zeus should be seen as “a participant in the dramatic action, not an object of abstract theological discussion”⁷⁷ and how Zeus’ characterization is dictated by the play’s inner logic more than by the religious feelings of the author (incidentally, *Prometheus Unbound* probably rehabilitated Zeus’ image). As for the metrical arguments, which are more cogent, the most important are the presence of dactylo-epitrites and the relative scarcity of choral songs by Aeschylean standards.⁷⁸ The question is, thus, whether the figures measuring metrical phenomena can tell an uncontroversial story. The problem with Aeschylean standards is that less than one tenth of Aeschylus’ production survives and that this evidence demonstrates his openness to experiments; both factors make concepts of norm and deviance somewhat slippery.⁷⁹ Comparing metrical phenomena in quantitative terms is notoriously not the most reliable criterion for dating plays. To stick to the previous example, *Suppliant Women* features significantly more choral song than *Persians* (61% and 49% respectively, according to Griffith), yet was staged a decade or so thereafter; and the trochaic tetrameter, which according to Aristotle was the original metre of tragedy, is well-attested in *Persians* and rare in Sophocles but has a comeback in Euripides’ later plays.⁸⁰ In the face of these and similar circumstances, the unexpected qualities of *Prometheus* can serve as stimuli to ask questions not only about the play but also about established notions of Aeschylean typicalities, tragic periodizations, and about how dissonant elements might harmonize in a more nuanced picture.

If spurious, *Prometheus* is a most extensive, invaluable document reflecting an emic understanding of Aeschylus’ art and living memories of Aeschylean performance or early reperformance. Unlike Aristophanes in *Frogs*, the author of *Prometheus* was committed to imitating Aeschylus in a very plausible fashion, and indeed convinced theatre judges and audiences who had first-hand knowledge of Aeschylus’ work. What is especially important for the present

75 Cf. Chapter 1.2.2/*Evolutionary readings of genre history*.

76 Regarding the fragility of the lexical arguments, see, e.g., Conacher 1980: 155 ff.; Pattoni 1987: 167–219 and 241–251; and Bees 1993: 28–72.

77 Griffith 1977: 250. Cf. Herington 1965: 398 ff.; Conacher 1980: 120–137; Podlecki 2005: 34–37.

78 Griffith 1977: 123, with West 1990 (*Studies*): 54 accepting these measurements. However, Conacher 1980, 149 ff. believes that Griffith’s interpretation of the metrical data is not thoroughly impartial, and Pattoni 1987: 33–152 is even more critical in this regard.

79 Even detractors of the authenticity point this out, such as Bees 1993: 73–119.

80 Arist. *Poet.* 1449 a 21, cf. *Rhet.* 1404 a 30; see Broadhead 1960: 297.

purposes is that *Prometheus* shares characteristics with the other plays under investigation which are only found in Aeschylus, such as the taste for representing storyworlds through narrative rather than action and the construction of character relationships as relationships between internal narrators and narratees. If *Prometheus* was created by an imitator of Aeschylus, it demonstrates that both playwrights and theatre-goers at some point in the fifth century BCE perceived these and other qualities involved with narrativity as typical of Aeschylean tragedy. Clearly, doubts about the authenticity of *Prometheus* affect the literary-historical value of the play, but they do not diminish this value—and they compel scholars to find out how to work with it.⁸¹

1.2 What Narrative Drama Can and Cannot Help With

1.2.1 *Approaches to Narrative Performance*

Performance, reperformance, and materiality. This study starts from the premises that ancient tragedy was a genre of musicopoetic performance more than literature, that the ways in which narratives and responses to them were staged greatly contributed to tragedy's meaning, and that modern notions of literary genres can be productively combined with ancient notions which regarded chiefly (not exclusively) genres of performance. For these reasons, our theoretical frameworks for the reappraisal of Aeschylus build on the performance-related venues of research on Attic tragedy and other musicopoetic genres.

The performance turn is longeval and still prolific. It originated in the 1960s and 1970s with artistic practices which, while revolutionizing the concept of art itself, explored the interactions between performers and audiences instead of presenting works of art as self-contained objects to be enjoyed by consumers.⁸² Collaboratively or following suit, scholarship in the broader field of the Arts and Humanities (e.g., semiotic, ritual, and reception studies) developed discourses which helped to make better sense of performance quite generally; in particular, the newborn field of theatre studies shifted the focus of atten-

81 E.g., I have discussed elsewhere how the issue of authenticity may be relevant to the performance of the Io scene, because this is one of the play's best chances to display the choreographic skills for which Aeschylus was renowned (Gianvittorio-Ungar 2021: 132–134). If Aeschylus composed *Prometheus* himself, a dance by Io would do justice to this reputation, while if another tragedian wanted to imitate Aeschylus convincingly, he probably had to bring at least (this) one impactful dance on the stage.

82 Fischer-Lichte 2004.

tion from drama and text towards theatre and performance. Greek studies absorbed these trends quickly, followed by Latin studies; in the same years but largely independently of these trends, they also produced new approaches to choral poetry-and-performance which will be discussed separately.⁸³ Although the Greek scholar Benedetto Marzullo had already institutionalized a full university degree programme on music, spectacle, and the arts by 1971,⁸⁴ it has become customary to see the pioneering book of Taplin (1977), which deals with the actors' entries and exits in Aeschylus' theatre, as the starting point of the performance turn in the field of classics. Since then, the number of studies about performance-related aspects of ancient poetry has been steadily increasing until booming over the last two decades or so.⁸⁵

Today's studies in reperformance and materiality can be seen as shock waves of the performance turn. As manifestos of these trends in classics, we might think of two remarkable volumes, one dealing with reperformance in/of ancient lyric and drama (Hunter / Uhlig 2017), the other investigating material aspects of Attic tragedy (Telò / Mueller 2018). The interest in reperformance, remake, and reenactment—ushered in by research on cultural memory and the related practices—is very much alive in various sub-fields of performance studies.⁸⁶ As for the material turns, they navigate the liminal waters between objects, bodies, and spaces on the one hand and their cognitive and cultural meanings on the other.⁸⁷ One may wonder how the research on performance, reperformance, and materiality could establish itself so well in classics, for which (notwithstanding the significance of archaeological evidence) texts are key sources and virtually every approach risks becoming a “textual tactic.”⁸⁸ In truth, a major interest in performance and reperformance has kept its momentum in the discipline ever since Milman Parry reinvented the study of Homer and the rhapsodic tradition in the comparatist light of oral practices

83 See Chapter 3.1.4/*Response and the chorus*.

84 Andrisano / Tammaro 2019.

85 E.g., Walton 1980; Easterling / Hall 2002; Ley 2007; Marshall 2007; McDonald / Walton 2007; Wiles 2007; Revermann / Wilson 2008; Csapo 2010; Wyles 2011; Hughes 2012; Harrison / Liapis 2013. For a survey of the history of performance-oriented scholarship about ancient theatre, see Liapis / Panayotakis / Harrison 2013.

86 See, e.g., Schneider 2011; Franko 2018. As for the studies on cultural memory which somehow anticipated these trends, see Connerton 1989; Assmann 2011 [1992].

87 With regard to ancient Greek theatre, material aspects include, for example, costumes (Wyles 2011), masks (Meineck 2011), space (Meineck 2012; Weiss 2020 [*Opening*]), objects (Coppola / Barone / Salvadori 2016; Mueller 2016), and bodily movement (Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 a). Canevaro 2019 discusses a number of recent volumes on materiality in classical studies.

88 Perris 2010, 182.

and repertoires. Recently, this interest has grown stronger even with regard to choral, hymnic, and symposial poems, post-classical theatre, and imperial pantomime, for which all reinterpretations of earlier works were crucial.⁸⁹

Navigating the turns. If ancient cultures deserve to be studied as performance cultures, their narrativity should be investigated not only in its literary manifestations, but also in its practices and performance-related aspects. A way towards this goal is to exploit the synergies between scholarly foci which, while having been individually productive in the field of classics, still resist mutual influences: on the one hand the performative/reperformative/material turns sketched above, on the other the narrative turn, and particularly the intermedial and multimodal fringes thereof.⁹⁰ In recent years, these different turns had good opportunities to aid a better understanding of the ancient performance arts whose agendas can be called narrative, mimetic, or representational (e.g., theatre, pantomime, choral and hymnic forms); yet wide-ranging investigations of narrative performance and its place in ancient cultures are rare. Attic tragedy is an excellent field of observation: although several studies have tackled it from narratologically inspired perspectives,⁹¹ they have usually neglected the performance-related aspects of staged, sung, and danced narratives,⁹² their ties with coeval practices and arts of storytelling,⁹³ and their impact on the mythical repertoire in its multimodal manifestations.⁹⁴ While

89 For choral, hymnic, and symposial poems, apart from the papers collected in Hunter / Uhlig 2017 one may recall the studies on the so-called newest Sappho which investigate the reuse of Sapphic songs on occasions such as festivals and symposia (e.g., Nagy 2020: 36 f., with references); for re- and pre-performances of tragedy in Attic demes, see Csapo / Wilson 2020: 17 f. On theatre remakes in the fourth century BCE, see, e.g., Nervegna 2007; Taplin 2007; Csapo / Goette / Green / Wilson. 2014; Steward 2017; Liapis / Petrides 2019. On imperial pantomime, which to a significant extent reinterpreted the tragic repertoire, see, e.g., Lada-Richards 2007; Hall / Wyles 2008; Webb 2008; Schlapbach 2018.

90 See Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b.

91 E.g., de Jong 1991; Goward 1999; Barrett 2002; Markantonatos 2002; de Jong / Nünlist / Bowie 2004; Grethlein / Rengakos 2009; Perris 2011; Zeppezauer 2011. See Chapter 1.1.2/ *Narrative in vs. of drama*.

92 Noticeable exceptions are non-narratological: see, e.g., Green 1996 and 1999; Rutherford 2007; Dickin 2009.

93 In classical Greece (as in other societies which anthropologists used to call traditional) narrative practices and traditions shaped cultural memory and cemented cultural identities, working as technologies for codifying, passing on, and transforming knowledge. Havelock 1963 and Assmann 2011 [1992] were among the first to broach such issues in classics.

94 See Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b for how mythical repertoires consisted of musicopoetic, embodied, visual, and multimodal reinterpretations of myths.

in these regards the idea that Greek theatre was an art of telling-and-enacting stories promised potential, the relevant issues turned out to be disproportionate for the limits of a book section because of their complexity, diversity, and sheer number. I have therefore focused on performance-related aspects of Aeschylean narrativity in separate publications which virtually complement this study.⁹⁵

1.2.2 *Evolutionary Models of Tragedy*

Evolutionary readings of genre history. Poets are candid about how “art never improves,”⁹⁶ but scholars of poetry seem to disagree. Beliefs about the qualitative development of literary forms over time have traditionally abounded in classical scholarship. Also fuelled by Aristotelizing ideas about the development of living organisms, they have teleologically orientated histories and periodizations of ancient literature, encouraging discourses about primitivism and immaturity not only in Aeschylean criticism. According to models in literature’s historiography which may be dubbed as evolutionary, early samples of a genre would be prone to imperfections which make them less congenial to the “true nature” of the very genre they are supposed to initiate or stand for (it is hard to escape circularity here), whereas later authors appear to be in a better position to achieve the genre’s maturity. A related problem is that such evolution is often imagined to follow linear patterns of progression—a picture which, as Taylor 2003 demonstrates, is far too neat to represent the transformative entanglements of any repertoire.⁹⁷

Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* is a case in point, illustrating how evolutionary models can be particularly insidious when it comes to works which challenge the accepted notions of genre dynamics. If *Suppliant Women* has long been regarded as the earliest surviving tragedy, this is not so much because it stars the singing chorus as its main character as because it seemed logical that the importance of the chorus would decrease by degrees, following an imaginary parabola which originated from the “total chorality” of tragedy’s beginnings (as suggested by Aristotle) and ended with the presumed decline of the chorus in post-classical drama.⁹⁸ To summarize the circularity of the argument,

95 Gianvittorio 2012 b, 2016, 2017 a, 2017 b, 2017 c, 2018, 2020, 2022 and forthcoming (*Theatricality*); Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 a.

96 Eliot 1921.

97 A key contribution to the performance studies, Taylor 2003 reads the streamlining attempted by historiographies of performance traditions through the lens of the (power) relationships between archive and repertoire.

98 See the lucid analysis of Jackson 2020.

we know that *Supplices* must be an early play because it contains so many archaic stylistic and structural features; we know that these features are archaic because we find them in *Supplices*, which is known to be an early play.⁹⁹

Given the scarcity of evidence, imaginative efforts are naturally helpful in writing histories of genres as hypothetical architectures. Yet in order to stand to reason, new hypotheses tend to conform with accepted notions instead of problematizing them. With some luck, when hypotheses turn out to be wrong they can trigger re-discussions of the architectures: the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 2256 compelled the experts not just to post-date *Suppliant Women* but also to nuance their assumptions about the chorus' transformation through the history of tragedy.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, "the example of *Suppliant Women* should be a sufficient warning against the arbitrary picking out of features assumed to be primitive";¹⁰¹ while at the same time, the prolonged reticence to rewrite tragic history according to the evidence attests to the profound influence of mainstream narratives about genres.¹⁰²

Evolutionary models are still in the process of being challenged or dismantled. Two studies published in 2000 have warned against the bias of such approaches with regard to Greek comedy. The first is a monograph by Michael Silk which criticizes "the neo-Aristotelizing of Aristophanes," that is, attempts to adjust Aristophanes' comedies to expectations about drama inspired by the reception of Aristotle.¹⁰³ In a comparable spirit, Eric Csapo has argued that features which possibly continued to surface throughout ancient comedy have been selected as distinctive of specific phases only, whereas

[t]o reconstruct the evolution of comedy from the selected plays is merely to rehearse the logic of the selection. It is a circular argument.¹⁰⁴

99 Garvie 2013: 162. On the presumed archaic features of *Suppliant Women*, see, e.g., the positions recalled in Garvie 2006 [1969]: 29–87.

100 On the papyrus, see Garvie 2006: 1–28 and 2013. Michelini 1982: 3f. and Lehmann 1991: 51 sketch the scholarly landscape regarding *Suppliant Women* before and after the post-dating of the play. Cf. West 1989; Scullion 2002.

101 Michelini 1982: 6.

102 Cf. Johansen, Whittle 1980: 25ff. Papers supporting earlier datations or pondering the arguments for and against them continued to be published and re-published well into the 1980s (e.g., Lloyd-Jones, 1983 [1964]).

103 Silk 2000: 256–300, here p. 261.

104 Csapo 2000: 116.

For example, when a scholiast considered Plato Comicus (roughly contemporary of Aristophanes) to be a representative of Middle Comedy because his plays lacked invectives against individuals, the scholiast followed and re-enforced a version of comic history, according to which such invectives were peculiar of Old Comedy as opposed to Middle and New Comedy.¹⁰⁵ In recent years, the study of fragmentary comedy systematically undertaken by Bernhard Zimmermann and the research group led by him has confirmed that traditional periodizations of Greek comedy are inclined toward a similar bias.¹⁰⁶ Evolutionary models have been applied even more widely to Greek tragedy, which is a most favoured object of observation through an Aristotelizing lens, even though today these models are at a lower ebb. Lucy C. Jackson, for instance, has recently questioned the common view that the quantity and quality of choral performance declined in theatre of the fourth century BCE, dissecting the evidence and presumptions which underlie this view.¹⁰⁷

The present study aligns with ongoing efforts to (re-)write multiversal histories of Greek tragedy. It considers anew traits which have traditionally counted as peripheral, if not detrimental, to (good) drama, and accounts for their significance in a historically and culturally specific manifestation of tragedy—that of 470s–460s BCE Athens. The focus is on tragic features which, while being documented by Aeschylus and possibly by an archaizing imitator of him, did not meet the desiderata of later trends in the genre and were, metaphorically speaking, relegated to the footnotes of subsequent aesthetics and histories regarding drama. Periodizing phrases such as “early tragedy” may be used as shorthand but should not obfuscate the circumstance that by the time Aeschylus’ tragic career began (reportedly around 500 BCE), he could look back on previous generations of tragedians, and by the 470s–460s BCE he himself had already gained decades of stage experience and success.¹⁰⁸

105 Csapo 2000: 120 f.

106 E.g., Zimmermann 2015: 14 argues for “die Koexistenz verschiedener komischer Spielformen schon im 5. Jahrhundert, die man nach der *communis opinio* erst später ansetzte, sowie das Vorhandensein von Charakteristika, die man als auf eine frühere Phase beschränkt ansah, in späteren Phasen der Gattungsgeschichte.” Other contributions collected in Chronopoulos / Orth 2015 (from which Zimmermann’s quotation comes) are in this mindset too.

107 Jackson 2020. For a recent example of “developmental” claims about Greek dramatic genres, see Nelson 2016.

108 Aeschylus produced all of his surviving tragedies in the last third or so of his long career, which according to Suda π 2230 Adler (= TrGF III T52) started ca. 500–496 BCE and ended in all likelihood with Aeschylus’ death in 456 BCE. If Aeschylus’ career lasted for ca. forty-four years, it follows that the earliest surviving play, *Persians* (472 BCE) premiered ca. twenty-eight years after Aeschylus’ debut but only sixteen years before the end of his career.

Such relativity of course applies to other careers and periodizations as well. Sophocles, for instance, had been collecting first prizes at the City Dionysia since 468 BCE when he brought *Ajax* onto the stage, which has prompted a thought-provoking observation: “Imagine Mozart had lived into old age: we’d be referring to *The Marriage of Figaro*, the *Requiem*, and the *Jupiter Symphony* as early Mozart.”¹⁰⁹

Narrativity and periodizations. Far from being exempt from evolutionary interpretations, narratives embedded in Attic tragedy have played a considerable role in the ways in which the genre’s history was periodized and in the thorny debate about the so-called birth of tragedy. As mentioned above, one accredited view holds that when the chorus leader (or a chorus member) detached himself from the chorus and began playing the actor, his original role was that of a messenger (ἄγγελος/*angelos*), herald (κῆρυξ/*kēryx*) or scout (κατάσκοπος/*kataskopos*) who delivered news to the chorus and “answered” their questions—the Greek word for “actor,” ὑποκριτής/*hypokritēs*, comes from ὑποκρίνομαι/*hypokrinomai*, “to answer.”¹¹⁰ This situation bears apparent resemblances to a dithyramb by Bacchylides (*Dith.* 4 = *Ode* 18) and to the final *kommos* in *Persians*, to mention just two examples. Aligned with this is the view that tragedy developed out of epic, and that epic in turn offered fundamental models for messenger speeches.

Due to this background, the notion of narrative drama might be perceived as suggesting that, through the history of Attic tragedy, the decrease of embedded narrative followed the pattern of a steady decrease from the peak at the time when the actor’s *Ur-rolle* was the messenger, until around the 450s BCE when tragedy reoriented itself towards the less narrative (and more enacting) directions indicated by the *Oresteia* and by Sophocles, with the narrative drama of the 470s–460s BCE conveniently placed in between. This picture, however, would be unverifiable/unfalsifiable to a large extent and inaccurate for the rest. As far as we can see, narrativity does not univocally correlate with the initial or with any other self-contained period in tragic history, and several studies have shown that narratives continue to be very important to Sophocles and Euripides as well.¹¹¹ Indeed, messenger speeches in Euripides reach a consid-

109 Finglass 2019: 1.

110 Schadewaldt 1974. On the history and interpretation of *hypokritēs*, see in particular late antique and twentieth-century scholarship: e.g., *Lex. Graec.* 9.4.123 (Pollux, *Onomasticon*); Hsch. 667 Latte, Apoll. Soph. *Lex. Hom.* 160 Bekker; Phot. *Lex.* 3.217 Theodoridis, and on the modern side Kranz, 1933; Lesky 1955; Else 1959; Zucchelli 1963; Ley 1983.

111 To mention just some examples, see Goward 1999; Barrett 2002; and Zeppezauer 2011 on

erable length and—to mention one case to which Chapter 4.4.3 will return—Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (first staged ca. 429 BCE) is a superb dramatization of narratives which develop through each other. Even the four plays under investigation will confirm that a later date does not automatically translate into less narrative and/or more action. All in all, narrativity does not lend itself to corroborating theories about linear developments in tragedy, segmentation of the genre's history into self-contained phases, and chronological arrangements of undated plays.¹¹²

On the other hand, a cluster of traits which, as we will observe, correlate with narrativity is especially prominent in the three tragedies which survive from the 470s and 460s as well as in the one play which, if composed later, imitated more old-fashioned ones, while the same traits become less or differently conspicuous in tragedies composed in subsequent decades. This circumstance indicates that a certain type of narrativity was *and* was perceived as being typical of the tragedy of the earlier period—so much so that a fifth-century imitation of this kind of tragedy, in order to be plausible, would feature qualities which had become quite obsolete by its own day. The 450s and 440s BCE first present us with plays which point to less narrative-centred trends in tragedy. This shift is attested by different and in fact competing authors, Aeschylus and Sophocles, who draw inspiration from each other with regard to substantial issues including the use of *skēnai*, additional actors, and arguably embedded narratives, and whose artistic exchanges confirm that the dynamics of genre are social practices (e.g., imitative, reworking, collaborative, antagonizing). It would be nearsighted to try and put the finger on specific plays as though they worked as game-changers or watersheds. A complex transformation, the transition from more narrative towards more enacting drama should be imagined as an experimental process. The very notion of family resemblances, which has been helpful in describing the cluster of traits which are distinctive of narrative drama,¹¹³ implies that these traits are not either present or absent (*aut ... aut*) in a play or self-contained period in the history of tragedy, and that plays and periods can be more or less narrative, and narrative in different manners

all three tragedians; de Jong 1999 on Euripides and de Jong 2014: 197–223 specifically on *Bacchantes*; Markantonatos 2002 on Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.

112 If M. Griffith and M.L. West are correct that *Prometheus Bound* should be dated to around the 430s–420s BCE, then this play would be another example because, as Chapter Four will detail, it features more narratives than *Seven* (first staged 467 BCE) and *Suppliant Women* (staged a few years before the *Oresteia*) and on the other hand less dramatic action than, say, *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides* (458 BCE).

113 See Chapter 1.1.1/*What narrative drama is and how it helps*.

depending on which choice and mix of traits they realize. Thus, while narrativity never disappeared from tragedy, it changed along non-linear patterns through the dynamics of the genre. The tragic corpus shows quantitative and qualitative variations in narrativity concerning, for instance, the varying capacity of narratives to elicit responses from the internal narratees and to promote interactions between the play characters, the different means by which narratives enriched the plot and dramaturgic texture, and the performance features of narrations in themselves. If more tragedies had survived, they would probably present us with an even more complex picture of experimentation rather than with more dots connecting along straight lines. Accordingly, the purpose of focusing on Aeschylus' narrativity is not to downplay the role of narrative in later tragedy and in cognate genres but to delimit a more homogeneous field of observation which, though being stretchable in its chronological and generic boundaries, presents us with a set of narrative phenomena which existing evidence indicates to be typical of this period's tragedy.

With these limitations in mind, the relationship between narrativity and the periodization of Attic tragedy can be envisioned as follows. In the course of the fifth century BCE, tragedy developed rapidly in many respects, including the use of narrative. In this particular regard, the innovations documented by Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and by the younger Sophocles suggest that in the 450s and 440s BCE Athenian playwrights were perceiving more narrative-centred tragedies à la *Persians*, *Seven*, and *Suppliant Women* as being no longer ahead of the new trends in their art. The span of time which separates these earlier plays from the *Oresteia*, first staged in 458 BCE, is remarkably short: only fourteen years for *Persians* (472 BCE), nine years for *Seven against Thebes* (467 BCE), and five years or so for *Suppliant Women* (ca. 463 BCE). Yet it appears that by this time Aeschylus was reconsidering dramatic features which had been distinctive of his previous—and successful—productions, such as long narratives which are loosely connected with the stage action and slow-paced, paratactical plots, enhancing the amount of action and concocting more dynamic as well as cohesive plots instead.¹¹⁴ The modified tragic recipe was palatable to coeval theatre judges, audiences, and playwrights: the *Oresteia* won first prize at the City Dionysia and continued to be regarded as Aeschylus' masterpiece during (and well after) the classical period. Indeed, fourth-century BCE re-performances of *Eumenides* were more frequent than those of other Aes-

114 Significant differences between the *Oresteia* and other Aeschylean tragedies have also been observed with regard to other aspects, including stage techniques: see, e.g., Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 17 ff.

chylean plays,¹¹⁵ arguably because *Eumenides* met post-Aeschylean expectations about tragedy better than others by the same author—though not as well as plays by Sophocles and especially Euripides. We do not know whether or to what extent the *Oresteia* ushered in these changes, but *Ajax*, which appears to be the earliest surviving play by Sophocles (possibly first staged ca. 455–450 BCE) seems to confirm that by this decade the trend had also kicked in for tragedians who competed with Aeschylus—or was it rather the other way round? At any rate, through the second half of the century Sophocles and Euripides further established a tragic style which focused more on dramatic action and unitary plot than on unbridled narrative and the internal narratees' response to it. Their masterpieces were quick to acquire status and in fact almost normative power in practices and theoretical discourses regarding tragedy. They contributed towards redirecting the dynamics of the genre towards less narrative directions with lasting consequences.

Effects of the third actor. It is easy to imagine a causal relationship between the introduction of additional actors on the one hand and the increase of action and the complication of the plot on the other hand. It is true that more actors allow the playwright to multiply the number of dramatic characters, and that more characters in turn can be helpful in creating more complex plots.¹¹⁶ In particular, two to three actors instead of a single one can be used to represent the characters' mutual interaction—typically, by engaging the actors in dialogues with each other—while for staging narratives one actor suffices. One might therefore presume that drama involving more actors would emancipate itself from narrative habits and boast dramatic action and plot complexity instead. But quite the contrary is the case in Attic tragedy, where the point of introducing more actors is not to make them dialogue with each other but narrate to each other.¹¹⁷

The availability of new resources does not automatically translate into the exploitation of their potential. Traditions are powerful forces in (ancient) artistic practice, and by the time the second and third actor entered the stage,

115 Nervegna 2014: 191–193 and 2018; Gianvittorio-Ungar 2022.

116 Sifakis 1995 and Marshall 2003 offer dynamic takes on the so-called rule of the three actors and on likely ways in which similar rules were dealt with in the practice of tragedy. Also, things were probably different in Attic and in Sicilian comedy (see, e.g., Gianvittorio 2013: 440).

117 Lehmann 1991: 45: “[der Deuteragonist] dient nämlich keineswegs der Ermöglichung des Dialogs, sondern dem *Bericht*. Der zweite Schauspieler war der Bote, der das Spiel stofflich erweitern konnte.” Knox 1972 has argued that Aeschylus used the third actor not for the interweaving of dialogue but for climactic pronouncements after long silences.

tragedy had a long tradition of relying on dual interactions between chorus and actor. Up to some indeterminable point, Aeschylus followed and reinforced this way of making tragedy. Although Aristotle and others credit Aeschylus with the introduction of the second actor, he made limited use of this resource and continued to prefer interaction between actor and chorus over interaction between two actors.¹¹⁸ In fact, we know from Aristophanes that Aeschylus was famous for *not* involving one of the actors (*Frogs* 911–929): in a way, the notoriously long silences of Aeschylean actors elevated the very absence of actor-to-actor interaction to a spectacle. While Aeschylus later experimented with the third actor as well, the agency of Pylades in *Libation Bearers* (to which we will presently return) illustrates how peripheral the third actor could still be to the dramaturgic economy by 458 BCE. In this regard, the incidence of dialogic actor-to-actor interactions such as *stichomythia*, *distichomythia*, and *antilabē* through Attic tragedy is noteworthy: *Persians* displays the lowest number of stichomythic lines, the *Oresteia* fares better, and Euripides' plays have the highest number.¹¹⁹

Even so, the scarcity of actor-to-actor interaction and stichomythic lines in Aeschylus does not mean that in his day playwrights could not yet handle the novelties of the second or third actor and the related possibilities, but simply reflects the importance of chorus-to-actor interaction in Attic tragedy as it functioned at the time. The fragments of the most successful comedian of Aeschylus' day demonstrate that he resorted quite often to *stichomythia* and *antilabē*,¹²⁰ and in all likelihood, Aeschylus knew these quick actor-to-actor dialogues of Epicharmus just as Epicharmus was familiar with Aeschylus' work—as one may expect from two theatre-makers who worked on the Syracusan stage in about the same years.¹²¹ The difference between Aeschylus' and Epicharmus' handling of actor-to-actor exchange illustrates how approximative it can be to see a causal relationship between stage dialogue, actors' interaction, and

118 Arist. *Poet.* 1449a15–17. On Aeschylus' limited use of the second actor, see, e.g., Michelini 1982: 27–40; with regard to *Persians*, Broadhead 1960: xli–xliii, van Emde Boas 2017: 318 (with references); with regard to *Suppliant Women*, Lloyd-Jones 1983 [1964]: 47 f.; Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 108–111; Rutherford 2012: 41. Cf. Michelini 1982: 22: “The original form of tragedy, the interweaving of actor and chorus, became functionally obsolescent as soon as the second actor appeared; but in fact forms derived from this original arrangement remained a powerful [...] stylistic influence throughout the fifth century.”

119 Seidensticker 1971.

120 See Gianvittorio 2013: 439 for a comparison between the dialogues of Epicharmus and Aeschylus.

121 Schol. M *ad* Aesch. *Eum.* 626 Smith says that Epicharmus remarked on Aeschylus' unusual verb *τιμαλφέω*, occurring at *Eum.* 15, 626, and 807 (see Berk 1964: 26; Gianvittorio 2013: 438 f.; Csapo / Wilson 2020: 363 f.).

eventful plot on the one hand and the number of the actors who are available at a given moment of theatre history on the other hand. It also confirms that theories about the art's immaturity do not account for concrete artworks and individual artists.

Aeschylus' limited use of the third actor in the *Oresteia* corroborates these arguments, since actors here engage in dialogues with the chorus more than with each other, and two-cornered dialogues are preferred over three-cornered dialogues even when three actors happen to be on the stage at the same time. According to Alan H. Sommerstein, in *Agamemnon* only 327 out of a total of 1673 lines require more than one actor on the stage, which makes *Agamemnon* surprisingly "Thespian" and "one-actor-like."¹²² Only sixty-four lines (*Ag.* 914–957 and 1654–1673) show two actors dialoguing with each other, and even when the three actors playing Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, and Cassandra are on the stage (783–974), Cassandra remains disturbingly silent. In *Libation Bearers*, upon arriving at the palace Orestes talks first to the doorkeeper, then to Clytemnestra, and finally to the nurse in a sequence of two-cornered dialogues—meanwhile, the third actor playing Pylades is present (cf. *Ch.* 713). Strictly speaking, the third actor would not be necessary but for the few words delivered by Pylades at ll. 900–902.¹²³ By this point, Orestes is ready and about to kill his mother, but stops to ask his friend what to do (τί δράσω; *Ch.* 899): in this sense, Aeschylus uses the third actor to delay an imminent action instead of speeding it up. In *Eumenides*, the scene of the trial (ll. 566–777) involves three actors, yet again it features two-cornered dialogues and an actor dialoguing with the chorus.

Another example is *Prometheus*, which begins with three actors on the stage, yet only Kratos and Ephestus are involved in the dialogue while Prometheus remains silent,¹²⁴ which again depending on different positions about the play's authenticity could point to an Aeschylean or pseudo-Aeschylean way of dealing with actors' dialogue and silence. A quick glance at Sophocles, whom reliable sources credit with having introduced the third actor,¹²⁵ reveals

122 Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 2 and 111.

123 At other moments when three actors are on the stage, Pylades is silent and could be played by a "mute character" (*kōphon prosōpon*): see, e.g., Finglass 2011: 8.

124 Since Pickard-Cambridge 1968 [1953]: 139, the idea that a mannequin represents Prometheus at the play's opening has become minority view. Bees 1993: 30–33 recapitulates the arguments against it.

125 Arist. *Poet.* 1449a18–19; Themist. *Or.* 26.316 d (with reference to Aristotle); Diog. Laert. 3.56. However, two anonymous sources—TrGF III T1.15–16 (*Life of Aeschylus*) and TrGF III T108—hold that it was Aeschylus who introduced the third actor (a view which some modern scholars have credited). For a discussion of these sources see, e.g., Pickard-Cambridge 1968 [1953]: 130–132; Knox 1979: 39–55.

that most of his dialogues continue to be between two actors only, despite the fact that even the—presumably—earliest surviving tragedies by him appear to contain at least one scene involving three actors, as in *Ajax* (e.g., ll. 91 ff.),¹²⁶ *Antigone* (ll. 526 ff.), and *Women of Trachis* (ll. 974 ff.). As Patrick Finglass points out, “the absence of three-cornered dialogue here is [...] a reflex of the default mode of composition for such scenes at this period.”¹²⁷ In short, the handling of the third actor in the 450s and 440s BCE illustrates how this could be a resource, a hindrance, and everything in between.

1.2.3 A plaidoyer for *mimēsis*

Dramatic theatre. In concluding this chapter, it is sensible to spell out the differences between narrative drama and outwardly similar concepts regarding generic hybridity and, more particularly, the combination of dramatic and non-dramatic elements in theatre. To begin with generic hybridity, this technique is usually functional to literary or metaliterary agendas, while narrative drama refers to the mixture of musicopoetic practices along the lines traced by other scholars of Greek tragedy and further developed in Chapter Two.¹²⁸ Along similar lines, our notion does not nod to any stylistically motivated *Kreuzung der Gattungen* of the kind which Hellenistic poetry refined, to the “generic enrichments” with which erudite authors of the imperial period operated, nor to other “transgressions of genre” with eminently literary aspirations.¹²⁹

The second point regards more recent discourses about the non-obvious relationship between theatre and drama, which are by no means obvious. In this context, “theatre” usually indicates the domain of stage events, performed agencies, and sensory experiences, while “drama” refers to the works’ mimetic agenda and plot-driven qualities. Building on this distinction, Hans-Thies Lehmann (1999; 2014) has conceptualized post-dramatic theatre as an art which programmatically disturbs or disrupts the traditional equation of theatre with drama. Lehmann questions the tacit assumption that theatre and drama need each other in the way representation and the represented do, which naturally produces tectonic shifts in theatre’s phenomenology and aesthetics.¹³⁰ To exemplify this kind of theatre with works by two Nobel laur-

126 This scene features Ajax, Athena, and Odysseus, whom the goddess orders to remain silent but present (*Aj.* 87 ff.)

127 Finglass 2011: 9 with reference to *Soph. Aj.* 1316 ff.

128 See, e.g., Herington 1985; Swift 2010; Rodighiero 2012; Weiss 2020.

129 E.g., on Hellenistic *Kreuzung der Gattungen*, see Kroll 1924: 202–224; on generic enrichments in Vergil and Horace Harrison 2007; on generic transgressions Todorov 2000 [1978]: 196.

130 Lehmann 1999: 20: “Theater wird stillschweigend als Theater des Dramas gedacht. Zu

eates, one might think of Samuel Beckett's *Breath*, which consists entirely of sound and light effects and does not bring on the stage any living agents (let alone characters and plots in any usual sense of the terms); and Peter Handke's manifesto-like *Publikumsbeschimpfung*. The latter proclaims:

We do not narrate anything to you. We do not do anything. We do not stage any action for you. We do not represent anything.¹³¹

Yet relevantly for the present purposes, Lehmann came to theorize post-dramatic theatre after reconsidering Greek tragedy as being *pre-dramatic* and largely non-mimetic.¹³² In classics, Lehmann's notions have been combined with elements of ritual studies to understand Greek tragedies and comedies outside the mimetic frameworks of Aristotle.¹³³ This approach has applied the pre-dramatic apparatus to the ritual and mostly chorally operated dimensions of Greek theatre to offer a long-due reevaluation of agencies such as dirges, prayers, and invocations. In this process, though, stage rituals have been regarded as though they were a breed apart from the genuinely "dramatic" sections of the plays—that is sections in which ostensible things happen and one can put the finger on which plot pieces are being represented.

In actuality, the singing and dancing through which rituals were staged made crucial contributions to the *mimēsis*, in many regards. To begin with, music and movement gave physical shapes to intangible but vital dimensions of the story-worlds, as for example when soundscapes and gestures contributed to expressing the inner life of the characters (see Chapter 3.1.4/*Feeling the events: mimēsis intensified*). Thus, scenes resounding with different melodies would strike the spectators as being familiar or uncanny, gloomy or busy, Greek or exotic, holy or desecrated, and so on, and varying movement qualities could nuance an

seinen bewußt theoretisierenden Momenten gehören die Kategorien 'Nachahmung' und 'Handlung' sowie die gleichsam automatische Zusammengehörigkeit beider."

131 Handke 1967: 17: "Wir erzählen Ihnen nichts. Wir handeln nicht. Wir spielen Ihnen keine Handlung vor. Wir stellen nichts dar." Similar ideas recur throughout *Publikumsbeschimpfung*.

132 Lehmann 1991 and 2013: 21f.; cf. Chapter 2.2.3/*Examples from today's criticism* and Cole 2020, who discusses the role which antiquity and the field of classics play in post-dramatic practices and ideas. Of course, building bridges between ancient and modern drama has a longer history in and outside classical scholarship; see, e.g., Brecht 1967: 1009 f. (and Seeck 1976 on Brecht's use of Aristotelian concepts); Jens 1961; Seeck 1984: 2 and 1985; Flashar 1997: 62.

133 See, e.g., Bierl 2009 and 2010. The research project *Intermediale Ästhetik. Spiel – Ritual – Performanz* (University of Basel) has explored ritual dimensions of Greek theatre and re-assessed from this perspective the centrality of the chorus as collective reenactor of rituals.

infinity of emotional subtexts.¹³⁴ For these reasons, ritual singing and dancing were particularly apt to represent different characters and their varying states of being: the dirges by, say, Heracles and Hecuba were expressions of pain that could look and sound as different from each other as a mighty hero and an enslaved queen. The sheer expressivity of physical vocabularies and the protean manifestations of voice, movement, and body were huge assets for ethopoetic and pathopoetic purposes, as I have considered with specific regard to Aeschylus' stagecraft.¹³⁵ This is particularly true for Aeschylean choruses, who never put aside their acting characters when performing rituals, but represented the characters' psychophysical affections through the ritual songs, dances, and agencies which were essential to the impersonation of, say, frightened suppliants or defiant unmarried women, feral Erinyes or pious Eumenides. As a result, the dirges by the old dignitaries and their battered king at the court of Susa, on the one hand, and by the Theban girls who lost their king but feel safe again inside the city walls, on the other hand, sounded and looked different from each other; and a play like *Eumenides* relied on how the chorus impersonated their demonic, divine, and metamorphic selves by means of suitable performances of curses, spells, blessings, and processions.¹³⁶ In short, choral rituals were mimetic inasmuch as they represented particular characters as these were intent on changing their own and others' lives by performing particular agencies in particular fashions.

False friends. The best-known match of drama and narrative is probably the so-called epic theatre, with which, however, narrative drama has very little in common. Epic theatre emerged in the intellectual climate of 1920s Berlin with the experimentation of theatre makers-and-theorists such as Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht. According to the latter, epic theatre discarded the idea of absorbing the audience into the play's world, since this would make the spectators passively accept a *status quo* (e.g., power relationships and socio-political settings in which the characters are situated) as a given or a necessity. Instead, this type of theatre encouraged the spectators to critically observe the represented world from a distance, in order to disentangle their judgement

134 It makes a big mimetic difference if, e.g., a suppliant reaches for someone's kin with urgency or slowly, and with a slowness expressing hesitance, deliberateness, or gravity. Similarly, a mourner who beats his or her chest in a private outburst of despair is very different from one who performs the same movement by sharing rhythms and sorrows with their choral peers.

135 E.g., Gianvittorio 2012 b, 2021 b, and 2024 b.

136 See Gianvittorio-Ungar 2022 and forthcoming (*Theatricality*) on these and other examples.

from habit and external conditioning. To promote the emancipation of the spectators into critical observers, Brecht resorted to reports, descriptions, commenting choruses, visual captions, non-realistic acting styles, *parabasis*-like addresses to the audience, and other “estrangement effects” (*V-Effekte*, shorthand for *Verfremdungseffekte*).¹³⁷ This unpretentious résumé may suffice to clarify that epic theatre and narrative drama share nothing but, possibly, the one point that the *V-Effekte* prominently included narrative forms—so much so that Brecht’s work has been dubbed “diegetic theater.”¹³⁸ There is a crucial difference, though: while Brecht used narratives, comments, and choruses to disrupt the *mimēsis*, Aeschylus used them to construct it.¹³⁹ All in all, compared to pre-dramatic and epic takes on theatre the notion of narrative *drama* wants to reclaim the mimetic agenda of Greek theatre. The point of Attic tragedy was not so much to reshuffle mythical plotlines as to create tragic experiences of storyworlds which were at the same time mediated and immersive, multi-sensory and putative, inherited and reenacted, and in all these complex ways mimetic.¹⁴⁰

137 See especially Brecht 1973 [1948], sections 42 ff.

138 Puchner 2002, e.g., p. 120: “The main feature of these stagings is that they transpose the closet drama’s textual diegesis to various forms of diegetic speech, spoken by narrators, raconteurs, poets, and choruses. This transposition also lies at the heart of what I call the diegetic theater, which systematically uses diegetic figures to control, confront, and interrupt theatrical representation. For this reason, diegetic theater is a theater marked by the closet drama’s distrust of the stage and continues the closet drama’s techniques of dissociating gestures from their actors, of isolating stage props and spaces—in short, of utterly fragmenting the theater by means of diegetic language. Diegetic theater thus comes into being when the antitheatrical techniques of the closet drama are brought into the theater. The most fundamental reforms of the theater, from Yeats through Brecht to Beckett, are derived, in different ways, from the return of anti-theatricality to the stage.”

139 See Chapter 3.1.4/*Feeling the events: mimēsis intensified* and, more generally, the analysis of Aeschylus’ plays in Chapter Four.

140 See Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b: 22.

Notions of Genre, Ancient and Modern

2.1 Narrative, Drama, and Their Middle Ground

2.1.1 *Plato: Who Gives Voice and Body to the Poem?*

Representing storyworlds in poetry. This and the next chapter will consider classical authors' views about different ways of representing storyworlds through poetry. In talking about representation, it is helpful to disambiguate the way in which this study deals with the notoriously controversial notion of *mimēsis* in the context of classical poetological discourses (as opposed to a general discussion of *mimēsis*). While scholars specializing in ancient poetics and aesthetics, but also in modern theories of literature, have interpreted *mimēsis* as “representation,” “imitation,” “replication,” or “ritual reenactment,”¹ what follows understands *mimēsis* as representation of storyworlds by means of language and other media—as Bruno Gentili says, “imitating in the sense of reactualizing through the voice, music, dance, and gesture.”²

One reason for this interpretation is the primary objects that, according to Plato and Aristotle, pertain to poetic *mimēsis*, namely *diēgēsis/mythos*. Following the two authors, mimetic arts—including poetry—are or should be about rendering, by means of their own specific media and codes, the aggregated lot which may be tentatively translated as “plot”—though the more inclusive notion of storyworld does better justice to *mythos*.³ Poetry, for instance, is said

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- 1 Interpretations of the classical concept of *mimēsis* in and outside the arts vary considerably. The most usual translations are “representation” and “imitation,” though many alternatives have been proposed, such as “fiction” and “simulation” (Genette 1988 [1983]: 15; cf. Zipfel 1998) or, more recently, “reenactment” (Nagy 1994–1995 and 2020). Not only are the philosophical implications of *mimēsis* much debated, but even the analysis of the semantic field has led to disparate results: see, e.g., Koller 1954; Else 1958; Sörbom 1966; Lucas 1968: 258–272; Haslam 1972; Belfiore 1984; Gentili 1984 (Chapter 4); Zimbrich 1984; Lanza 1987: 56 ff.; Halliwell 1990, 1992 and 2002; Kardaun 1993; Nagy 1994 and 2020; Murray 1996: 3–6; Zoran 1998; Büttner 2001 and 2004; Eusterschulte 2001; Tsitsiridis 2005; Palumbo 2008 and 2013 (“luogo di compenetrazione tra immaginazione e vita vissuta”); Schmitt 2008: 208–213; Malm 2012.
 - 2 Gentili 1984: 70: “imitare nel senso di riattualizzare, attraverso la voce, la musica, la danza e il gesto.” More generally on ancient Greek literary theory, see the references in Schwindt 2000: 48 note 164, to which one may add, e.g., Lanata 1963; Russell / Winterbottom 1973; Fuhrmann 1992 [1973]; Laird 2006; Heath 2012.
 - 3 See Chapter 4.3.1/*Aristotle on plot*.

to resort to language-and-music to realize the *mimēsis* of this complex object: Plato lists *lexis*, *harmonia*, and *melos* as poetry's media, Aristotle *rhythmos*, *logos*, and *harmonia*.⁴ The concept of storyworld or, more reductively, plot is therefore fundamental to understand what poetic *mimēsis* is about in the eyes of Plato and Aristotle. While this concept will be discussed in greater detail later on,⁵ it can be paraphrased for the time being as the ensemble of dynamic elements (including events, interactions, experiences, and the characters who go through them) as the artist/poet arranges them in his or her mimetic work. Both Plato and Aristotle hold that works which deal with a storyworld or plot qualify as mimetic, regardless of their formal properties and the genres of which they partake.⁶ Quite radically, Aristotle goes on to say that works which do not deal with any storyworld or plot should not be called poems at all, even when they happen to be in metres, as for example Empedocles' hexameters:

Of course, people attach the verbal idea of "poetry" [*poiein*] to the name of the metre, and call some "elegiac poets," others "epic poets." But this is not to classify them because of the *mimēsis*, but because of the metre they share: hence, if writers express something medical or scientific in metre, people still usually apply these terms. But Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common *except* their metre; so one should call the former a poet, the other a natural scientist. (Arist. *Poet.* 1447 b13ff., transl. Halliwell)⁷

Thus, medical or scientific views, explanations, and arguments exemplify what *mythos* is not in Aristotle's eyes, while tragic and Homeric contents exemplify what *mythos* is. Clearly, the poet can hardly "imitate" or "replicate" tragic and Homeric contents by means of language-and-music in the same handcrafting

4 It can be problematic to isolate language from the other media which, in Plato's and Aristotle's view, are involved in poetry, since at least until the end of the classical period terms such as *mousikē*, *molpē*, and *choreia* usually designate the interplay of poetry, music, and dance. Chapter 3.1.1 will discuss this study's particular reasons to deal with language-based representation.

5 See Chapters 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

6 E.g., Plat. *Resp.* 392 d, 603 c; Arist. *Poet.* 1447b30–1448 a5.

7 For this passage cf. Phld. *On Poems* 4.108 Janko. On the other hand, Gorgias, DK 82 B11.9, Plat. *Gorg.* 502 d, *Resp.* 393 d, 601 b, 607 d, and even Aristotle himself in *Rhet.* 1408 b30 relate poetry to metric criteria. It has been argued that following Aristotle's *Poetics*, modern lyrics would not belong to the domain of poetry due to their introspective focus on the subject's inner life (e.g., Schlegel 1966 [1809]: 34; Pfister 2001 [1977]: 265 [on *Reflexionslyrik*]; Korthals 2003: 31 f.; Hempfer 2008: 38), yet feelings, thoughts, and moods can be part and parcel of storyworlds and thus suitable for poetic *mimēsis*.

sense as, say, a carpenter can imitate or replicate a table. In other words, it is the very objects of poetic *mimēsis* that point to “representation” as a suitable translation of *mimēsis* in the present context: the tragic poem is mimetic inasmuch as it represents a storyworld.

Speech criterion. Plato and Aristotle recognize two quite opposite ways of representing storyworlds through language and other media, and later scholarship elaborated on their so-called speech criterion by using it as a set of distinctions to work out taxonomies of poetic “forms” (*eidē*) and literary genres. The terminology varies considerably, ranging from *diēgēsis* vs. *mimēsis* in Plato’s *Republic*, *apangelia* vs. *praxis* in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, to telling vs. showing in H. James, P. Lubbock, W.C. Booth, and others,⁸ but it is usually assumed that these and other term pairs describe, by and large, the same distinction. In the case of narrative (*diēgēsis*, *apangelia*, telling) and narrative genres, the objects of the *mimēsis* are recounted or reported on, while in the case of action (*mimēsis*, *praxis*, showing) and dramatic genres they are directly shown or enacted.⁹ We will observe in Chapter 2.2.1 and the *Appendix* that, from the post-classical until the modern period, discourses about literary genres have often associated these two representation techniques with different forms of text and literature (for example, narrative genres with indirect speech, dramatic genres with direct speech), and that, in doing so, they have heavily relied on Plato’s and Aristotle’s speech criterion.

This and the next chapter will argue for a different interpretation of the classical speech criterion. According to this interpretation, Plato and Aristotle would tell apart poetic genres from each other based on performance rather than literature. This means that what in Plato’s and Aristotle’s eyes makes a difference between dramatic, narrative, and other genres is the way in which the performers use their own voice, agency, and body to relate to the objects of the *mimēsis*—as, for example, when the rhapsode presents Helen to the audience by speaking of her, and on the other hand, the actor physically impersonates Helen. Text forms can occasionally capture aspects of the performance—for example, when the rhapsode refers to Helen in the third person or the actor speaks as Helen herself in the first person—but according to my interpretation, it is performance rather than text-immanent reflections thereof which defines poetic genres in Plato and Aristotle.

8 See, e.g., Herman 2007: 15 on these and similar terms.

9 E.g., de Jong 2008: 19 f.: “Both in Plato and in Aristotle the distinction between ‘narrating while remaining oneself’ vs. ‘speaking while becoming someone else’ is used not only to distinguish the parts within a narrative [...], but also to define genres: epic combines diegetic and mimetic parts, drama is purely mimetic, and dithyrambs are purely diegetic.”

Re-thinking the speech criterion in these terms means to see embodied musicopoetic practices as the fundament of the theoretical reflection about poetry in the classical period. It also means that literary and text-based notions of narrative and dramatic genres, though often ascribed to or inspired by Plato and Aristotle, do not really apply to the classical period. After focusing on the speech criterion of Plato and Aristotle, the rest of Chapter Two will discuss how, while classical sources drew porous boundaries between dramatic and narrative forms, the reception of these sources crystallized into a more radical opposition of dramatic *vs.* narrative genres and, no less importantly, interpreted discourses which were originally about genres of performance as though they were about genres of literature.

Plato's tripartition. In the third book of *Republic*, when considering the role and risks of poetry in the ideal state, Plato ascribes “all things said by storytellers and poets” to the general category of narrative (*diēgēsis*) regardless of differences in form and performance.¹⁰ Other passages confirm that, with *diēgēsis*, Plato broadly indicates the representational purport that different poetic forms have in common. In poetological discourses, the term continued to be used in this sense throughout antiquity (in the fifth century CE, Nicolaus the Sophist still qualified genres as different kinds of *diēgēsis*).¹¹ However, later on in the third book Plato also uses *diēgēsis* in a narrower sense.¹² This occurs when Socrates explains that poetic “narrative” (*diēgēsis* in the broader sense) can be realized in different ways: namely, with simple or pure *diēgēsis* (ἀπλή διηγήσει/*haplēi diēgēsei*), which is regarded as typical of dithyrambs, with a *diēgēsis* that is realized through *mimēsis* (διὰ μιμήσεως γιγνομένη/*dia mimēseōs gignomenēi*) and is considered typical of drama, or with a mixed *diēgēsis* that combines the pure and the mimetic type (δι’ ἀμφοτέρων/*di’ amphoterōn*) and is regarded as typical of Homeric epics as well as of other, unspecified genres.¹³ In other words, Socrates recognizes two basic ways of representing storyworlds in poetry as well as a third way which is a middle ground between the two.

10 Plat. *Resp.* 392 d: ἄρ’ οὐ πάντα ὅσα ὑπὸ μυθολόγων ἢ ποιητῶν λέγεται διήγησις οὐσα τυγχάνει ἢ γεγονότων ἢ ὄντων ἢ μελλόντων; “Is not everything that is said by fabulists or poets a narration of past, present, or future things?” (transl. Shorey 1969).

11 Nicolaus *Prog.* 2, p. 455 Spengel, *Rhet.* 3.

12 On the narrower sense of *diēgēsis*, see, e.g., Halliwell 1990: 489 and 1992: 59 f.; Büttner 2001: 51 (note 40) and 2004: 40.

13 *Resp.* 392 d ff. This is a much-studied passage in scholarship on genres, in classics and beyond. For a few examples on both sides over the past hundred years or so, see Gallavotti 1928; Kirby 1991: 114–116, Korthals 2003: 27–52.

In an attempt to make things easier to understand, Socrates then makes an experiment of conversion from the mixed into the pure type of *diēgēsis*, thereby transforming and paraphrasing a passage from Homer in which Chryses appeals to Agamemnon for his own daughter (*Iliad* 1. 17–42). Homer used the mixed *diēgēsis* in that he partially impersonated the characters involved: on many occasions during the epic performance, the singer would lend his own voice (and thus, to a letter extent, his physical self) to the characters, in a type of representation which naturally requires that the characters address each other in direct speech and that the rhapsode often speaks in the first person. In *Resp.* 393 d ff., Socrates' experiment consists in representing the same events, interactions, and characters of the Homeric passage by resorting to pure instead of mixed *diēgēsis*. In this delivery, Socrates does not pretend “to be”—e.g., to speak and act in the capacity of—Chryses, Agamemnon, or any other character; he sticks to his own role of external narrator without any attempt to slip into the characters' voice, agency, and skin. As a consequence, he makes the characters speak with each other by means of indirect speech and refers to them in the third person, saying for example: “when Chryses had thus spoken [...] Agamemnon was angry and bade him depart” (*Resp.* 393 e).

Paradoxically enough, and in spite of Socrates'/Plato's best intentions, this example of conversion from mixed into pure *diēgēsis* seems to have confused (later) readers instead of helping them to understand better. This is because readers have focused their attention on the text-immanent changes produced by the experiment, such as the reformulation of the dialogues between the characters (Chryses and Agamemnon) into the monologue by the external narrator (Socrates) and the corresponding replacement of direct with indirect speech.¹⁴ By focusing on text, however, we end up overlooking some quite fundamental differences in performance: in pure *diēgēsis*, the performer of the poem remains true to the real-life setting instead of merging with the storyworld—he does not signal to the audience that they should imagine he were one of the characters, but makes his own mediation of the storyworld a manifest part of the representation itself. By contrast, in the mixed *diēgēsis* the performer embodies a different setting by occasionally taking on the different

14 Liveley 2019: 11–23 may count as an exception to this trend in that she focuses on poetry's reception instead of text (see, e.g., p. 19 “Plato's Socrates is not concerned with how or why a single narrative might present multiple [...] points of view, but simply with the ways in which this multiplicity is received and emotionally processed by an audience”). While this shift of focus marks an improvement in my view, it is not the same as recognizing that the tremendous psychagogic power which, following Plato, poetry has on the audience has very much to do with the ways in which poems were performed, embodied, and experienced.

voices, agencies, and identities of the characters—however putatively. While these different ways of performing the storyworld also have textual manifestations, for example in terms of direct/indirect speech and dialogue/monologue, the key of Plato's speech criterion (and of the related distinction between poetic genres) is the way in which the performer of the poem uses his or her own voice, agency, and body to represent the storyworld. In this regard, "genre is important to Plato, but not as a literary concept."¹⁵

Following this performance-based understanding of the speech criterion, if the performer speaks and acts as though he or she were the very agent(s) of the represented events, then the *diēgēsis* is mimetic, as for example in the case of actors and choruses who impersonate the characters of a play onstage. If, on the other hand, during the delivery the performer remains him- or herself and detached from the characters that he or she represents, then the *diēgēsis* is simple, as in dithyrambic poems (the dithyrads which Plato has in mind are presumably of a type in which the chorus narrated myths in song and dance without enacting them).¹⁶ Finally, if the performer pretends "to be someone else" (ἄλλος ὢν, *Resp.* 393 c)—namely, one or more characters of the storyworld—and does so not during the entire delivery, as a stage actor would do, but by lending his or her own voice, agency, and body to the characters at certain times while remaining him- or herself at other times, then the *diēgēsis* is mixed. The *diēgēsis* of *Iliad* 1.17–42 qualifies as mixed because the epic singer impersonates Chryses or Agamemnon at some times, but himself—or more precisely, the socially stylized role of an epic singer—at other times, which makes the boundaries between the storyworld and the real-life setting of the poetic performance particularly fluid.

Lexis. Reconsidering the notion of λέξις/*lexis*, which is pivotal to the argumentative framework of the third book of *Republic*, can corroborate this performance-based understanding of the speech criterion. Plato's discussion about

15 Ford 2002: 260.

16 Plato's words suggest that narrative dithyrads could be perceived as stereotypical of the genre by his day, even though this choral genre had undergone at least two significant turns in the run of the fifth and fourth century BCE. After Peisistratus' inclusion of dithyrambic performances in the contests of the City Dionysia, dithyrads probably assimilated the more tragic traits which are reflected by Bacchylides' *Dith.* 4 (= *Ode* 18, on which see Chapter 4.4.1). A few decades later, dithyrads became a major playground for the innovations of the so-called New Music under the influence of poets such as Kinesias and Melanippides (cf. Pherecrates F155 KA). See Fantuzzi 1993, 37 note 21 with references. The history and development of dithyrambic poetry has received considerable attention over the past decades: see, e.g., Privitera 1991; Zimmermann 1992 and 1993; D'Angour 1997; Ieranò 1997; Kowalzig / Wilson 2013.

poetic *mimēsis* is intertwined with and sometimes hardly distinguishable from discourses about the performance of music and dance—especially in *Republic* and *Laws*.¹⁷ The constant use of *verba sentiendi* and *videndi* to speak about the experience of poetic *mimēsis* confirms the fundamental overlapping of poetry and performance not only in Plato's philosophy but also in the culture in which he lived.¹⁸ This performance culture makes it likely that, in the context of Plato's poetological reflection, *lexis* indicates language-based aspects of the poetic delivery, such as acoustic qualities of voice and enunciation, diction, and other aspects that the audience can experience with their senses.¹⁹

This conclusion is supported by a number of elements in Plato as well as by contextual evidence such as the meaning of *lexis* in Aristotle's *Poetics*.²⁰ Before lingering on the speech criterion, Plato (similarly to Aristotle: see the next chapter) draws an important distinction between the contents of poetry, i.e. the objects of poetic *mimēsis* (ἃ λεκτέον, "the things which are to be said"), and the media and ways in which they are represented (ὡς λεκτέον, "how they are to be said").²¹ It is with regard to the "how" of poetry that Plato reviews the *lexis* (*Resp.* 392c–398b) along with aspects that pertain to musicopoetic performance, such as harmonies and rhythms (398 c ff.). This context indicates that *lexis* has to do with the ways in which poetry is performed and the media used to realize the *mimēsis*. For example, when performers assimilate their own diction (e.g., voice qualities and idiolect) to the characters', they operate with the *lexis*:

Ἄλλ' ὅταν γέ τινα λέγῃ ρῆσιν ὡς τις ἄλλος ὦν, ἄρ' οὐ τότε ὁμοιοῦν αὐτὸν φήσομεν
ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν αὐτοῦ λέξιν ἐκάστῳ ὃν ἂν προείπῃ ὡς ἐροῦντα;

17 See, e.g., Peponi 2013.

18 E.g., *Resp.* 601 a–b, 602 b, 604 e.

19 It is easy to forget about the voice and its mimetic potential when reading dramatic texts, but several studies have reappraised the issue: e.g., Lehmann 1991: 33–44; Vetta 1993; De Martino / Sommerstein 1995; Rodighiero 2017.

20 In Aristotle's *Poetics*, *lexis* indicates aspects related to the audible domain of poetic language: e.g., *Poet.* 1449 b33 ff., λέγω δὲ λέξιν μὲν αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν μέτρων σύνθεσιν. In other passages, however, Aristotle seems to understand *lexis* in more comprehensive terms as delivery by linguistic means which can, of course, also encompass aspects of the diction. For example, he says that in the pre- or protohistory of tragedy, the *lexis geloia* was naturally in trochaic tetrameters, while when the *lexis* became more dignified and conversational (cf. ἀπεσεμνύθη, λεκτικόν), the metre changed into iambic trimeters (*Poet.* 1449a18–27). Kotarcic 2020 entirely deals with Aristotle's *lexis* and dedicates one chapter to the related performance aspects (ch. 5).

21 Plat. *Resp.* 392 c, 394 c, 398 b.

But when he delivers a speech as if he were someone else, shall we not say that he then assimilates thereby his own diction (λέξις) as far as possible to that of the person whom he announces as about to speak? (*Resp.* 393 c, transl. Shorey 1969)²²

The fact that Plato thinks of *lexis* as of something which the performer accomplishes with his or her own voice and by physical means is especially clear in this passage:

The balanced man, when he comes in the course of his narrative (ἐν τῇ διηγήσει) to some speech or deed of a good man, will be willing to refer it as if being himself the other, and will not be ashamed of this sort of *mimēsis* [...] but when he comes to a character which is unworthy of him, he will not wish to liken himself in earnest to one who is inferior [...] but will be embarrassed [...] also because he shrinks in distaste from moulding and fitting himself into the types of baser things [...]. Then he will resort to the narrative (*diēgēsis*) of the kind that we just now illustrated by the verses of Homer, and his delivery (*lexis*) will partake of both, of imitation and of simple narration, yet with a small portion of imitation in a long discourse [...]. The other kind (of performer), the more debased he is, the more he will deliver the story (*diēgēsetai*) in everything, to the point that he will attempt to imitate [...] thunders and the noise of winds, hail, axles and pulleys, and the tune of trumpets, flutes, pan-pipes, and whatever instruments, and again the cries of dogs, sheep, and birds; and his *delivery will entirely rely on the mimēsis of voices and bearings* (λέξις ἅπασα διὰ μιμήσεως φωναίς τε καὶ σχήμασιν). (*Resp.* 396c–397b)

The speaker Socrates, thus, sees a connection between *lexis* and the histrionic skills of the rhapsode, who imitates characters and other elements of the story-world with his own voice and body language (cf. *σχήματα/schēmata*).²³ The connection between *lexis* and the performer's physical means of *mimēsis* is extensively discussed in *Ion*, as Chapter 2.1.3 will consider, and emerges in vari-

22 Cf. Plat. *Ion* 540 b, where Ion says that the rhapsode knows “which kind of things [...] it befits a man to say and which ones a woman, which ones a slave and which ones a free-man, which ones a subject and which ones a ruler.”

23 For *σχήματα/schēma* as referring to the performing body and its mimetic qualities, see, e.g., Catoni 2005; Peponi 2017; Rocconi 2017; Bocksberger 2021. On performance-related aspects of *Resp.* 396c–397b, see also Rocconi 2014. Cf. Hom. *Hym. Ap.* 162–164.

ous passages of *Republic*.²⁴ It is on one of these occasions that Socrates remarks on how the prolonged practice of poetic *mimēsis* influences the performers' voice and body (*Resp.* 395 d). And again, when he recapitulates his examination of the *lexis*, he says that what he has just illustrated was about both the contents and the "how" of poetry (398 b). Shortly after that, Socrates starts his examination of song and melodies with the premise that song consists of three interplaying components (398 d, τὸ μέλος ἐκ τριῶν ἐστὶν συγκαίμενον), one of which he has just dealt with, namely speech (λόγος/*logos*). These passages confirm that, in the multimodal art of *mousikē*, language phenomena can count as an essential part of performance. This and other evidence points to the conclusion that *lexis* refers to physical aspects involved in the delivery of poetry, such as the ways in which performers give voice to the characters and thereby physically adjust to them.

Speaking of poetry, with performance in mind. To conclude this discussion of Plato's speech criterion as concerning poetic performance, let us take a step back and consider some contextual evidence. The ways in which authors coeval with Plato spoke about genres confirm that specialized as well as casual discourses about poetry were indebted to the experience of musicopoetic performance. On the specialized side, Chapter 2.1.2 will discuss the important case of Aristotle's speech criterion, yet even casual remarks confirm how generic distinctions were naturally based on differences in (the experience of) poetic performance. For example, Isocrates, who was a decade or so older than Plato, remarks that while both epic and tragedy represent objects such as wars and quarrels, the difference is that Homer deals with them by "speaking about myths" (ἐμυθολόγησεν/*emythologēsen*)—that is, with verbal storytelling—while tragedians showcase the same objects in theatre contests and performances (εἰς ἀγῶνας καὶ πράξεις κατέστησαν/*eis agōnas kai praxeis katēstēsan*) and by addressing both the ears and the eyes of the audience.²⁵

Throughout the classical period, poems were first and foremost performances. This made it almost inevitable that theoretical and other discourses about poetic *eidē* were inspired by and especially dealt with genres of per-

24 E.g., *Resp.* 393 c, ἢ κατὰ φωνὴν ἢ κατὰ σχῆμα μιμῆσθαι.

25 Isoc. 2.49 (*ad Nic.*): ὁ μὲν γὰρ τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ τοὺς πολέμους τοὺς τῶν ἡμιθέων ἐμυθολόγησεν, οἱ δὲ τοὺς μύθους εἰς ἀγῶνας καὶ πράξεις κατέστησαν, ὥστε μὴ μόνον ἀκουστοὺς ἡμῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ θεατοὺς γενέσθαι, "he [*sc.* Homer] has dressed the contests and battles of the demigods in myths, while they [*sc.* the tragic poets] have rendered the myths in the form of contests and action, so that they are presented, not to our ears alone, but to our eyes as well" (transl. Norlin 1928).

formance, meaning that we should rather read them as such. For example, reflection on the genre of epic were rooted in the experience of how this art or skill, τέχνη/*technē*, was practised by professional singers, and by the fourth century BCE aspects such as the impersonating qualities described in Plato's *Ion* were certainly part of this picture. Stephen Halliwell (2002) has convincingly demonstrated how theories of *mimēsis* applied to musicopoetic arts and how these arts in turn informed the theories. In a way, the very word *mimēsis* can be seen as reflecting the performed and practice-like nature of poetic representation, since the suffix *-sis* does not highlight the finishedness of the product (*nomen rei actae*) but rather the activity of producing or developing the representation (*nomen actionis*). The uses of *mimēsis* in the two authors of the speech criterion confirm this active quality. Plato uses *mimēsis* in two different though related senses (as observed above for *diēgēsis*). In a broader sense, *mimēsis* indicates virtually all possible kinds of technical-artistic representation—as in the case of a carpenter who produces a table, a painter who produces a picture or a poet who produces a poem—while in a narrower sense it indicates a specific type of representation in poetry, namely the one which is typical of drama. In the first and broader sense, the meaning of *mimēsis* as *nomen actionis* involved in the material production of the representation is apparent, because the mimetic artists are producers and apply their technical-artistic skills in order to realize artworks (tables, pictures, poems). Yet, even the narrower meaning of *mimēsis* as theatrical representation implies aspects of physical production, since theatre-making very much involves crafts, training, and physical agency—as stage performers of all times know well. Similarly, Aristotle holds that mimetic arts differ from each other because of the media they resort to in order to realize the *mimēsis*, and lists rhythm, language, and melody as the media used (in various combinations) in poetry. The makers of poetry, thus, materialize *mimēsis* through the performance and experiential domains of rhythm, language, and melody.²⁶ These and other elements corroborate the idea that genre discourses of the classical period do not primarily deal with literary products but with musicopoetic practices and experiences.

2.1.2 Aristotle on Genre and Performance

Aristotle on genres. It is a widespread opinion that Aristotle regarded performance as irrelevant to poetry and to any critical understanding of it, though this view has been challenged in significant ways.²⁷ This tenet is hard to reconcile with the fact that in Aristotle's culture—notwithstanding the exceptional

26 Arist. *Poet.* 1447a13–21. See Chapter 2.1.2.

27 See, e.g., Scott 1999; Griffith 2019: 212; Sifakis 2013; Condello 2013; Bonanno 2016 (for a

(and silent) reading habits of Aristotle himself—poetry was also a domain of musical and embodied performance. It therefore makes sense to assume that the experience of poetry in its multimodal manifestations contributed towards shaping Aristotle's reflection on poetological matters including genres and *opsis*. In particular, the present chapter will argue that Aristotle's speech criterion—much like Plato's—referred to different ways of realizing poetic *mimēsis* in performance.

Aristotle classified poetic “forms” (*eidē*) according to a speech criterion which is comparable to Plato's,²⁸ and which was eventually echoed by Aristotelizing discourses about genres such as, for example, the *Tractatus Coislinianus*.²⁹ The beginning of *Poetics* says that the manifold forms of musicopoetic *mimēsis* can be distinguished from each other in virtue of three aspects, namely

- the media in which the *mimēsis* takes form, including *rhythmos*, *logos*, and *harmonia*—used in various combinations (ἐν ἑτέροις/*en heterois*);
- the very objects of the *mimēsis* (ἕτερα/*hetera*);
- the ways in which the objects of the *mimēsis* are represented (ἐτέρωσ/*heterōs*).³⁰

While these three aspects can be recognized in all forms of musicopoetic *mimēsis*, their different realizations mark differences between the genres. The six qualitative components which Aristotle later recognizes in tragedy can be seen as the tragic manifestations of these aspects. In particular, storyworld or plot (*mythos*), characters (*ēthē*), and insights (*dianoia*) are the objects of the tragic *mimēsis*, thus pertaining to the aspect of ἕτερα/*hetera*. On the other hand, the composition of music (*melopoīia*, combining *rhythmos*, *logos*, and *harmo-*

recent reappraisal of experience in *Poetics*, see Fossheim 2020). *Contra*, e.g., Perceau 2013: 127 f.

28 It is widely accepted and indeed plausible that Aristotle drew inspiration from Plato on this matter (*contra*, e.g., Gudeman 1934, 21 ff., 104). The close correspondence of Plato's and Aristotle's classification of genres is taken for granted outside the field of classics: see, e.g., Genette 1992 [1979]: 11 and 21–23; Hempfer 1973: 157 and 2008: 41.

29 Kaibel 1999 [1899]: 50–53. The *Tractatus Coislinianus* is a treatise of unknown date and author which is closely related to Aristotle's *Poetics*. After distinguishing between non-mimetic (ἀμίμητος/*amimētos*) and mimetic poetry (μιμητή/*mimētē*), the anonymous author breaks mimetic poetry down into narrative (τὸ μὲν ἀπαγγελτικόν/*to men apangelitikon*), dramatic (τὸ δὲ δραματικόν/*to de dramatikon*) and a third kind relating to *praxis* (πρακτικόν/*praktikon*): see Janko 1984: 133. Gallavotti 1928: 362 ff. interpreted this passage in a different way: he understood the narrative genre (τὸ μὲν ἀπαγγελτικόν) as belonging to non-mimetic poetry (ἀμίμητος) because Plato uses “mimetic” and “dramatic” almost as synonyms.

30 *Poet.* 1447a16–17.

nia) and diction (*lexis*, encompassing *logos* and *rhythmos*) define tragedy's intermedialities, thus pertaining to the aspect of ἐν ἑτέροις/*en heterois*. This leaves *opsis*, to which we will return in a while, to describe the “how” of tragic *mimēsis*, ἑτέρως/*heterōs*.³¹ According to Aristotle, it is this last aspect which marks the difference between narrative and dramatic poetry, while the first and second aspects are helpful for further sub-classifications—for example, Aristotle says that in order to tell tragedy apart from comedy we should observe whether they represent noble or humble objects (i.e. ἕτερα/*hetera*). Let us therefore consider the different ways in which narrative and drama represent the objects of the *mimēsis*.

Aristotle's taxonomy of genres is comparable to Plato's inasmuch as it includes two basic ways of poetic *mimēsis* and a third resulting from their mixture. Aristotle calls the two fundamental ways *praxis*, which can be translated as “enactment” as is regarded as characteristic of tragedy, and *apangelia* or “report,” which is typical of epic.³² Within *apangelia*, Aristotle further distinguishes between representation realized “by assuming a character other than yourself, as Homer does” and representation realized “by remaining yourself without any such change.”³³ Representation “by becoming someone else” corresponds to that which Plato calls mixed *diēgēsis* and, like Plato, Aristotle regards this as a middle ground which is typical of Homeric epic. What is special about Homeric epic in comparison to other non-dramatic forms of poetry is that the singer frequently represents character speech (which is a key form of agency) by virtually lending his own voice and body to the characters (ἕτερόν τι γιγνόμενον ὡς περ “Ὀμηρος ποιεῖ, 1448a20–21). I would like to propose that Aristotle, much like Plato, distinguishes dramatic and narrative genres from each other on the basis of their performance more than textual reflections thereof, and particularly on the basis of the different relationship which the performers create with the objects of their *mimēsis* (e.g., storywords and characters) by using their own voices and bodies.

31 *Poet.* 1450a7–12: ἀνάγκη οὖν πάσης τῆς τραγωδίας μέρη εἶναι ἕξ, καθ' ὃ ποιά τις ἐστὶν τραγωδία· ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ μῦθος καὶ ἦθος καὶ λέξις καὶ διάνοια καὶ ὄψις καὶ μελοποιία. οἷς μὲν γὰρ μιμοῦνται, δύο μέρη ἐστίν, ὡς δὲ μιμοῦνται, ἓν, ἃ δὲ μιμοῦνται, τρία, καὶ παρὰ ταῦτα οὐδέν, “Tragedy as a whole, therefore, must have six components, which give it its quality—namely, plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and lyric poetry. The media of the mimesis are two components, its mode one, and its objects three; there are no others” (transl. Halliwell 1995).

32 E.g., *Poet.* 1449b8–11.

33 *Poet.* 1448a18–23. Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not specify which poetic forms are purely narrative, but in *Probl.* 918b–919 he says that dithyramb was narrative at the beginning (cf. Plat. *Resp.* 394 c) and eventually became more dramatic. See Barrett 2002: 69 ff.; Primavesi 2008: 21.

The ways of representing character speech in tragedy and in Homeric epic provide a telling example of the difference in representational uses of voice and body. Theatrical performance implies that a number of actors speak in the capacity of the characters, while Homeric performance only features the singer's own voice, even when the singer "makes" the characters speak. In text and in the eyes of the readers, the dramatic and Homeric kinds of character speech can look similar inasmuch as they both display markers of direct speech such as the use of the first person instead of the third. Indeed, post-classical discourses about the differences between narrative and dramatic genres have invested direct/indirect speech, seen as text-immanent manifestations of character speech, with capital importance, because they deal with literary rather than performance genres and hence are more sensitive to text-immanent criteria of distinction. However, in Aristotle's eyes "text dialogues" could hardly obfuscate the circumstance that, in reality, the Homeric performance relied on the singer's voice only. "Homeric epic" could easily refer to this performance setting for people who had concrete experience of Homeric recitals of, say, specialized Homeridai and other professional rhapsodes, tipsy symposiasts and children doing their homework.

Interpreting *praxis* and *apangelia* as representational practices is beneficial in several ways. For example, it helps explain why Aristotle classifies Homeric poems as (a special kind of) *apangelia* instead of (a special kind of) *praxis* in spite of the fact that they consist for the most part of direct speech—67% of the *Iliad* and 66% of the *Odyssey* have been measured to consist of direct speech³⁴—and why, on the other hand, he includes narrative elements of tragedy such as messenger speeches and prologues in the treatment of tragic *praxis*. At the same time, Plato and Aristotle regarded Homer as the champion of the genre which best mixed narrative and dramatic ways of representation, and even called him the father of tragedy. As Chapter 2.1.3 will observe, they acknowledged the remarkable histrionic skills which the Homeric singer displays in impersonating different characters and other objects of the *mimēsis*.

Praxis, drama. Lexical evidence can corroborate the performance-based understanding of Aristotle's speech criterion. This section briefly considers how, in *Poetics* and elsewhere, *apangellō/apangelia* on the one hand and *draō/drama* as well as *prattō/praxis* on the other indicate two different kinds of poetic performance.

34 For the figure of the *Iliad*, see Latacz 1975: 395; for that of the *Odyssey*, see de Jong 2001: viii (cf. Beck 2012). There is no way to ascertain whether the rest of the epic tradition featured direct speeches to such a great extent as Homer: see Cantilena 2002: 24 ff. Among the Homeric Hymns, *Hymn. ad Aphrod.* and *Hymn. ad Herm.* resort more frequently to direct speech.

In the Aristotelian corpus, *prattō* often indicates the physical agencies and movements of living organisms or parts thereof. To mention a telling set of examples, in the second book of *Parts of Animals*, *prattō/praxis* and related words show significant semantic overlapping with *kinēsis* (“movement”).³⁵ This meaning of *praxis/prattō* in biological contexts is consistent with the way in which the words are used in coeval discourses about performing arts which have a representational/mimetic purport. Xenophon, for instance, refers with *prattō* to the movements and gestures which two dancers perform in embodying the love story between Ariadne and Dionysus.³⁶ In *Poetics* too, several passages demonstrate that Aristotle uses *prattō* to indicate aspects of the bodily enactment of the stage performers.³⁷ For example, he says that visual spectacle, music, and diction are necessary for tragedy because it is the *πράττοντες/prattontes*, i.e. the stage performers, who realize the tragic *mimēsis*:

Since it is the performers (*πράττοντες*) who realize the *mimēsis* (*ποιούνται τὴν μίμησιν*), some part of tragedy will, in the first place, necessarily be the arrangement of spectacle (*ὄψεως κόσμος*); to which can be added music-making (*μελοποιία*) and diction (*λέξις*), for these are the media in which they render the *mimēsis*. (*Poet.* 1449 b30 ff., transl. Halliwell 1995, slightly modified)³⁸

Another example occurs when the discussion finally moves on from tragedy to epic. To mark this transition, Aristotle uses “tragedy” and “*mimēsis* by means of stage enactment (*prattein*)” as nearly interchangeable synonyms as opposed to the “*mimēsis* in verse” of epic:

Let that, then, count as sufficient discussion of tragedy and enactive *mimēsis* (*τῆς ἐν τῷ πράττειν μιμήσεως*). As regards narrative *mimēsis* in verse [...] (*Poet.* 1459 a14 ff., transl. Halliwell 1995)

While *praxis* has a more specialized meaning in *Poetics*, “action” in the sense of “story” or *res gestae* still pertains to the semantic field of *prattō* because it refers to actual events and developments as they manifest themselves in

35 E.g., Arist. *PA* 647a29–30.

36 Xenophon, *Symp.* 9.6.

37 See Cessi 1985: 49–52, who understands *prattein* as “movimento drammatico sulla scena” and *praxis* as “azione simulata” by the actors.

38 *Contra Phld. On Poems* 4.107–109 Janko. For *opsis*, see below.

the (historical or mythical) world as opposed to their representation, organization, and fictionalization in the plot or *compositio rerum gestarum* of the storyworld.³⁹

Coming to *draō/drama*, it is the very semantics and semantic history of these words which suggest their intrinsic affinity with the idea of physical enactment. The verb *δράω/draō* means “accomplish” in quite practical senses, including “realize with the hands and the body.”⁴⁰ Accordingly, the noun *δράμα/drama* often means in non-specialized contexts an “act” or “deed” with a special emphasis on agency, such as in the good deeds and wrongdoings which one accomplishes and bestows on others (as opposed to the ones which one suffers and endures), as this passage exemplifies well:

Neither Paris, nor the city that has paid its due together with him, can boast that what they did (τὸ δράμα) was greater than they have suffered (τοῦ πάθους). Having been found guilty of abduction and theft, he has both lost his booty and caused his father’s house to be mown down to the very ground in utter destruction: the family of Priam have paid double for their crime. (Aesch. *Ag.* 532–537, transl. Sommerstein 2008)

Here, *δράμα/drama* refers to the wrongdoings which Paris has committed (“abduction and theft”) and is opposed to that which he has endured (loss of the booty and destruction of his father’s house). Yet interestingly, the non-specialized meaning of *draō/drama* has potential for indicating someone’s acting in capacities which differ from his or her own true nature—that is, “acting” which occurs in real life instead of onstage—which illustrates how the semantic shortcut from non-theatrical to theatrical “acting” might have taken place. For example, in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, when Creon argues that he would naturally prefer that Oedipus had the crown but he himself had the power, he draws a subtle but powerful distinction between being someone (*εἶναι/einai*) and acting in someone’s capacity (*δράω/draō*):

I myself was not born with the yearning for being a ruler (τύραννος εἶναι), but for acting as a ruler (τύραννα δρᾶν). (Soph. *OT* 587 f.)

The more specialized meaning of *δράμα/drama* as “stage performance” or “theatrical play” is attested for the first time by Herodotus.⁴¹ After him, this meaning

39 See Chapter 4.3.1/*Aristotle on plot*.

40 For *δράω* as referring to “Verrichtung der Hände und des Körpers” see, e.g., Schreckenber 1960; Kannicht 1976: 330 f.

41 Hdt. 6.21.2.

does not surface again until the very end of the fifth and the fourth century BCE, and then especially in poetological discourses.⁴² The specialized meaning of stage performance or theatrical play is consistent with the general one as outlined above, inasmuch as actors and theatre choruses physically enact the objects of the *mimēsis* through their physical agency on the stage. For example, when representing a supplication (*hikesia*), they also perform gestures which are typical of (or for the audience identifiable as) gestures of supplication—such as embracing the knees of the prospective protectors, touching their chin, showing olive branches wrapped with strips of wool, and so forth.⁴³ As Aristotle says,

δράματα καλεῖσθαι τινες αὐτά φασιν ὅτι μιμοῦνται δρώντας

some say that δράματα are called this way because they represent people as they act (*Poet.* 1448a28–30)

It follows that translators and interpreters of *Poetics* who render δράμα/*drama* along the lines of “staging,” “stage acting,” *Bühnenhandlung*, *azione scenica* etc. strike the right chord.⁴⁴ Summing up, the very words *praxis* and *drama* point to the conclusion that what Aristotle considers to be distinctive of dramatic genres has to do with the way actors and choruses enact the storyworlds.

Opsis. It may be unconventional to regard performance as central to Aristotle’s understanding of poetic genres, since the prevailing view is that he dispenses with *opsis* as the least important component of tragedy—though Aristotle literally says “the most non-technical” (ἀτεχνότατον/*atechnotaton*), to which we will return below.⁴⁵ But what exactly is *opsis*? Undoubtedly an umbrella term, *opsis* subsumes visual and semiotic aspects of stagecraft and theatre-making,

42 E.g., Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (ll. 920 and 923), Aristotle’s *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, etc. In Plato, occurrences of δράμα/*drama* can be almost equally divided into two groups, one having the meaning of “deed,” the other the meaning of “drama” (cf. Ast 1835 s.v.). Derivatives of the root *δρα (e.g., δραματικός, δραματοποιός, δραματοποιεῖν, δραματοργεῖν, etc.) are only attested starting from a later phase of the classical period (e.g., Arist. *Poet.* 1448b35–37). Graverini 2006: 6 discusses late uses of δράμα.

43 Cf. Chapter 3.3.1/*Representation in and beyond the text*.

44 See, e.g., Fuhrmann 1982; Andronikashvili 2009: 68 f.; Zeppezauer 2011: 111 f.

45 See Wiles 2007 and Perceau 2013 to mention just a few examples which are not outdated. The idea that performance is of little or no importance in Aristotle’s *Poetics* is widespread also outside classical scholarship: e.g., Korthals 2003: 53. For different positions, see below.

and can be roughly translated as “visual spectacle.”⁴⁶ It designates one of the six qualitative components of tragedy,⁴⁷ but is the only one which according to Aristotle belongs to tragic *mimēsis* “out of necessity” (ἐξ ἀνάγκης/*ex anankēs*).⁴⁸ *Opsis* seems to work as a non-verbal counterpart of two other domains of tragic performance, namely *melopoiia* (referring to *mousikē*, and hence to music including song) and *lexis* (referring to voice-related and other aspects of poetic language).⁴⁹ Yet unlike them, *opsis* does not pertain to the media (*en heterois*) but to the “how” (*heterōs*) of the tragic *mimēsis*, and is therefore key to the distinction between narrative and dramatic genres. It follows that *opsis* deserves a place in discussions about the speech criterion.

However elliptic, Aristotle’s treatment of *opsis* can be seen as corroborating the interpretation of the speech criterion proposed above, according to which a main difference between narrative and drama lies in the putative *vs.* embodied relationship which the performers create with the objects of the *mimēsis*. This is because *opsis* is involved with the physical agency of the actors and other visible tokens of the storyworld. A much-quoted passage of *Poetics* exemplifies what *opsis* is with artefacts such as scenographies, masks, and costumes, and says that *opsis* has the power to lead the soul of the audience wherever it wants (cf. ψυχραγωγικόν/*psychagōgikon*).⁵⁰ What scenographies, masks, and costumes do is to work on the stage as physical tokens of the storyworld and to materially hold it up to the eyes of the spectators—and performers. In so doing, these artefacts powerfully promote the lifelike, immersive experience of the storyworld itself—they help transport the spectators’ soul into different spatiotemporalities, so to speak, which is a remarkable psychagogic achievement indeed.⁵¹ To grasp how *opsis* involves the performers’ agency and how it promotes the spectators’ immersion into the storyworld in almost forcible ways, one may consider the use and semiotic value of masks and costumes in theatre. For the actors and choruses of Greek theatre, masks and costumes worked as mimetic extensions of their own body and as ethopoetic instruments in impersonating the characters—for example, the horrific way in which the Erynies’ black costumes came to life in the *parodos* dance was key to creating the Erinyes in the eyes of

46 There is a puzzling trend to regard *opsis* as also including music and song performance: e.g., Taplin 1977: 39, 478f.; Liapis / Panayotakis / Harrison 2013: 1.

47 *Poet.* 1450a7–12.

48 *Poet.* 1449b31–35.

49 See above.

50 *Poet.* 1450b15–20, cf. also 1453b7–8.

51 In discussing how the Homeric singer impersonates the storyworld, Plato’s *Ion* constantly refers to ψυχή/*psychē* to describe the “make-believe effects” of the *mimēsis*: see Chapter 2.1.3.

the spectators.⁵² (By contrast, the narrators of purely narrative genres continued to look like their own undisguised selves throughout the performance.) Accordingly, in the same passage Aristotle distances *opsis* from the sphere of competence of the poet to locate it within that of the actors and the painters of scenographies instead.⁵³ By Aristotle's time, tragic poets no longer acted on the stage themselves, nor were they theatre artisans, which explains why actors and painters of scenographies were more in charge than poets when it came to physical and hence, according to our interpretation of the speech criterion, dramatic ways of realizing the *mimēsis*.

With this, we are back to the starting point, which was why Aristotle qualifies *opsis* as “the most non-technical” (ἀτεχνότατον/*atechnotaton*) component of tragedy. The adjective expressly raises the issue of pertinency within or in relation to one specific *technē*: tellingly, *Rhetoric* recognizes that *hypokrisis* is a major factor in oratory (and poetry), but regards it as rather non-pertinent in relation to the *rhētorikē technē* (ἀτεχνότερον/*atechnoteron*),⁵⁴ and *Parts of the Animals* says that anatomical objects will be dealt with according to their shared functions instead of manifestations because, as the art and discourse about statuary are not about marble, in a similar way “*technē* is the discourse about the function without the matter” (ἡ δὲ τέχνη λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ὁ ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης ἐστίν).⁵⁵ Along the same lines, *Poetics* focuses on poetry's “functions” and virtually disentangles it from that which, in the fourth century BCE, was still the multiform living “matter” (ὕλη) of poetry, namely performance

It is in this sense and in the capacity of a particular manifestation that *opsis* is non-technical in relation to a general *poiētikē technē*. While *Poetics* has been often read as though it were a treatise *On tragedy*, its scope is much more inclusive, as declared by the treatise's title. Discussing poetry naturally entails more detailed analyses of particular manifestations, and tragedy and epic stand out as the most representative ones. However, for Aristotle tragedy works as an exemplary field of observation for more general phenomena, and this is why it is the most discussed genre of poetry in a treatise devoted to poetry of all genres. Broaching an issue as multi-faceted as poetry requires that the main

52 This suggests that Aristotle also subsumes under *opsis* visible aspects of the embodiment such as gestures, body movement, and dance—at any rate, his treatment of the actors' and choruses' scenic movements (κίνησις/*kinēsis*) aligns with the treatment of *opsis*: see *Poet.* 1462a11–13.

53 *Poet.* 1450b15–20.

54 *Rhet.* 1403b–1404a, cf. Chapter 2.1.3/*Classical views*.

55 *PA* 640a32–33. On the benefits of reading *Poetics* by integrating them with other works of Aristotle, see recently Destrée / Heath / Munteanu 2020.

focus of attention lie on traits which tragedy, epic, and other genres have in common more than on their exclusive specificities. In fact, once the extensive treatment of tragedy is over and Aristotle finally comes to epic (not before chapter 23), he can afford to laconically refer to what he has already said about tragedy for the simple reason that this applies, by and large, to epic as well:

Moreover, epic should encompass the same types (of plot) as tragedy, namely simple, complex, character-based, rich in suffering; it has the same components, except for lyric poetry and spectacle, for it requires reversals, recognitions, and scenes of suffering, as well as effective thought and diction. All of which Homer was the first to employ, and employed proficiently. (*Poet.* 1459b7–13, transl. Halliwell 1995)

This corroborates the notion that Aristotle's treatment of tragedy selects or emphasizes aspects which he regards as key to epic and other poetry too, which makes it clear why stage performance cannot very well be part of his tragic picture. Instead, Aristotle pays special attention to *mythos* and the construction thereof, which are most relevant to the *poiētikē technē* since all genres of mimetic poetry necessarily represent storyworlds. In other words, *Poetics* selects and develops its arguments, including the arguments regarding tragedy, also according to criteria of functionality that prevent the discourse about poetry from dispersing into a (taxonomically unmanageable) variety of particular manifestations—which aligns with Aristotle's taxonomic principles in fields other than poetics. While under such premises *opsis* qualifies as ἀτεχνότατον/*atechnotaton*, Aristotle acknowledges that it is necessary to tragedy and that it (along with *melopoia*) distinguishes tragedy from epic. Being specific to the dramatic genres only, *opsis* needs to be confined to the periphery of a treatise which centers on poetry in general.

2.1.3 *Cross-Overs of Narrative and Drama: Ancient Views*

Classical views. Literature, like everyday communication, rarely produces pure forms of genres, and pure narrative *vs.* pure drama in particular, as it has been acknowledged in ancient and modern times.⁵⁶ In the last decades, not only the-

56 E.g., in comparing epic to drama J.W. von Goethe observed that the “three natural forms of poetry” usually manifest themselves as intermingled with one another (Goethe 1961 [1819]: 178f.: “In dem kleinsten Gedicht findet man sie oft beisammen, und sie bringen eben durch diese Vereinigung im engsten Raume das herrlichste Gebild hervor”), and B. Croce (1990 [1902]) rejected the very notion of genre as shallow, and held that literary masterpieces unavoidably break, re-shape or supersede the boundaries of the genres to which they

ories of genre but also other fields of study have emphasized the interplay of narrative and action. To mention some examples, scholars of theatre studies,⁵⁷ transgeneric narratology,⁵⁸ reader-response studies,⁵⁹ and discourse analysis or philosophy of ordinary language⁶⁰ have addressed issues relating to the subject, also on literary premises. Yet while these disciplinary angles are new, the practices and discourses regarding the hybridization of narrative and drama are not. In the *Hymn to Apollo*, the description of a narrative *and* histrionic performance by the chorus offers an early and intriguing example:

κούραι Δηλιάδες Ἐκατηβελέταιο θεράπναι
αἶ τ' ἔπει ἄρ' πρῶτον μὲν Ἀπόλλων ὑμνήσωσιν,
αὐτίς δ' αὖ Λητώ τε καὶ Ἄρτεμιν ἰοχέαιραν,
μηνσάμεναι ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ παλαιῶν ἠδὲ γυναικῶν
ὕμνον ἀείδουσιν, θέλγουσι δὲ φύλ' ἀνθρώπων.
πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ βαμβυλιαστῶν
μιμείσθ' ἴσασιν· φαίη δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος
φθέγγεσθ'· οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή.

The Maidens of Delos, the servants of the Far-shooter, who, after first hymning Apollo, and then in turn Leto and Artemis profuse of arrows, turn their thoughts to the men and women of old and sing a song that charms the people. They know how to mimic all people's voices and their

belong. These and similar notions have been reformulated many times: e.g., Lämmert 1968 [1955]: 9 ff.; Steiger 1968 [1946]: 10 (“jede echte Dichtung [ist] an allen Gattungsideen [...] beteiligt”); Lockemann 1973; Genette 1992 [1979]: 22 (“... pure narrative [telling without showing, in the language of American criticism] is pure possibility, with almost no attempt made to actualize it at the level of a whole work and, a fortiori, at the level of a genre ...”); Pankau 1994: 1434 (“Es muss bedacht werden, dass diese Gattungsbestimmungen idealtypischen Charakter haben. Real treten dramatische, epische und lyrische Elemente fast stets in Mischform auf”); de Jong 1991: 173 f.; Goward 1999: 11 f.; Markantonatos 2002: 3 f.

57 E.g., Hempfer 1973: 225 comments on the *Überlagerungen* in epic theatre of what he calls “narrative” and “performative” situations; Korthals thinks that dramatic forms such as documentary drama and monodrama should count as narrative genres (Korthals 2003: 81 f. and 135: “Allein über die Figurenrede könnte sich [...], bei entsprechenden quantitativen Verhältnissen der narrativen und vielleicht auch teichoskopischen zu den geschehenskonstituierenden Passagen, ein Drama dem Bereich der Erzählung annähern”).

58 E.g., Nünning / Sommer 2002, 2006, and 2008 (cf. Nünning / Nünning 2002 a: 1–22 on the scope of this sub-field of narratology); Schwanecke 2022.

59 E.g., Eco 1979: 105–107 considers how narrative elements are embedded in non-narrative texts.

60 See below.

babble; anyone might think it was he himself speaking, so well is their singing constructed. (*H. Ap.* 157–164, transl. West 2003)

Here, the Maidens of Delos sing songs about gods and “the men and women of old,” that is songs of mythical and heroic content, and do so by mimicking (cf. μιμῆσθ’) the voices (φωνάς) and language typicalities (βαμβαλιστῶν) of the characters—whereas if, as A.E. Peponi has argued, the *lectio κρεμβαλιστῶν* is preferable the chorus would also appear to embody the narrative “with rhythmic patterns,”⁶¹ along the lines of Simonides’ definition of the hyporchema as “speaking dance.”⁶²

The boundaries between genres continued to be drawn in remarkably flexible ways at least through the classical period; in particular, the “song and dance culture” in which Aeschylus participated saw no insuperable gap between narrative and drama. In a study which despite more updated efforts still commands attention, John Herington has shown how Attic tragedy never really developed *out* of the different poetic traditions from which it arose, but continued to be shaped by cross-generic interactions throughout.⁶³ The ninth appendix to his book is particularly relevant to the present purposes, because it collects “passages illustrating ancient views on the relationship between tragedy and nontragic poetry,” especially from Plato and Aristotle.⁶⁴ Interestingly, the earliest metapoetical view regarding the cross-overs of narrative and drama come from the mouth of “Aeschylus” himself: in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, first staged ca. 405 BCE, Aeschylus declares that the main goal of his tragedy has been to make citizens good at fighting wars (mentioning *Seven against Thebes* and *Persians* as examples), and goes on to say that he has drawn inspiration for his best fighting characters from Homer (*Frogs* 1013–1042). Aristophanes thus draws a parodying or paratragic picture according to which Aeschylus chose Homer as the model for exactly those aspects of his own tragic art which he regarded as most crucial and distinctive. This testimony is intriguing: it alleges that Aeschylus’ debt to Homer regarded the very matters that differentiated his tragedy from that of others, and it portrays Aeschylus himself as being aware and, in fact, proud of this Homeric debt. Though of questionable historicity, the

61 Peponi 2009.

62 Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 748a.

63 Herington 1985. For more recent studies of a kindred spirit see, e.g., Rutherford 1994–1995; Swift 2010; Weiss 2020.

64 Herington 1985: 213–216. For ancient theories of drama, see Bagordo 1998, who presents fragments from ancient treatises about tragedy, comedy, and satyr play from the fifth century BCE until the end of the late antique period.

theme of Aeschylus' admission of his debt to Homer survived as a biographical element throughout antiquity—be it because of the words which Aristophanes puts in Aeschylus' mouth, because Aeschylean tragedy indeed offers reasons to argue that Aeschylus sought inspiration in Homer, or both. In the early third century CE, Athenaeus still recalled an anecdote (again, of questionable historicity) according to which Aeschylus described his tragedies as “fillets from the great banquets of Homer” (Αἰσχύλου, ὃς τὰς αὐτοῦ τραγωδίας τεμάχῃ εἶναι ἔλεγεν τῶν Ὀμήρου μεγάλων δείπνων).⁶⁵ Whatever purpose the anecdote served in its own context, Oliver Taplin is right that the claim reads like

a direct assertion of rivalry [...]. His tragedies may have been [...] τεμάχῃ τῶν Ὀμήρου μεγάλων δείπνων [...], but Aeschylus proceeded to take the slices away and set up a rival restaurant of his own.⁶⁶

On the other hand, Plato and Aristotle claimed on many occasions that Homer was the first, best or father of all tragedians (and occasionally comedians too).⁶⁷ This position speaks volumes about how poetological discourses of the fourth century BCE perceived or constructed overlappings between epic and tragedy with regard to crucial aspects such as representational strategies, functions, and aesthetics. As discussed in Chapter 2.1.2, *Poetics* regards tragedy and epic as similar in the objects that are suited to their *mimēsis* (including in both cases “serious-and-excellent things,” *σπουδαῖα/spoudaia*, and noble characters)⁶⁸ and in most of the issues concerning plot construction; for these reasons, Aristotle has no doubt that knowledge about tragedy can easily transfer to epic.⁶⁹ In fact, Aristotle praises Homer for speaking in the capacity of the characters and for “bringing (them) onto stage”:

65 Athen. 8.347 e (= TrGF III T112 a); cf. Eust. *ad Il.* 1298.56 (= TrGF III T112 b). On this testimony and on the relationship between Homeric and Aeschylean poetry, see Gordesiani 1981; Herington 1985: 135–139; Kannicht 2004; Zimmermann 2004; West 2013: 45; Michel 2014.

66 Taplin 2006: 1.

67 Plat. *Resp.* 595 b–c, 598 d–e, 605 d, 607 a (cf. also 602 b on tragedy in heroic verses), *Theaet.* 152 e; Isocr. 2.48–49 (*ad Nic.*); Arist. *Poet.* 1448b33–1149 a6, 1451a16–35, 1459a30–b2, 1459b13–16. Cf. Murray 1996: 188 (with reference to Plato): “This is not just a reference to the fact that tragic plots tend to be taken from epic, but rather that Plato sees Homer as the originator of the dramatic method.”

68 *Poet.* 1448a11–18 and 26 f., 1448b35–1449 a1.

69 *Poet.* 1449b17–18 (see Chapter 2.1.2).

Homer deserves praise for many other qualities, but especially for not ignoring, alone among epic poets, what he ought to do himself. The poet should speak as seldom as possible in his own capacity, for by these means he is not a maker of *mimēsis*. The other poets remain themselves throughout the poetic contest and engage in *mimēsis* briefly and sporadically; yet Homer, after a brief introduction, immediately brings onto stage (εἰσάγει) a man, woman or another character, and none of them is unlike himself but with his own characteristics. (*Poet.* 1460a5–11)

Rhetoric sheds further light on this phenomenon, addressing the issue of the “very great power” of *hypokrisis* or actor-like impersonation in epic as well as drama. In this context, *hypokrisis* regards

the ways in which the voice should be used for (representing) each particular emotion (*pathos*)—that is, when it should be loud, when low, when intermediate—and the use of the tones—that is, shrill, deep, and intermediate—and of the rhythms for (representing) particular emotions. For they are concerned with three qualities, which are volume, harmony, and rhythm. Those who master them usually carry off the prizes in dramatic contests, and as nowadays actors are more important than poets, it is the same in political contests [...] (*Rhet.* 1403 b)

In particular, Aristotle acknowledges the representational quality of “our (physical) parts” and especially voice:

The first ones who gave an impulse to *lexis* were the poets, which is natural: for words are representations (*mimēmata*), and the voice, which of all our parts is the most representational (*mimētikōtaton*), was ready to hand. As a consequence, the poetic arts were fashioned—rhapsody, the art of the actors, and so on. (*Rhet.* 1404 a)

Plato’s short dialogue *Ion* is an even more compelling document of these views, and of how under the influence of new stage trends and the increasing professionalization of the actors, impersonation had become particularly important to rhapsodic performances of Homeric poems by the fourth century BCE. As a consequence, similarities and liminalities between dramatic and narrative genres were even more apparent. In *Ion*, Socrates addresses the professional Homeric rhapsode Ion as a “rhapsode and actor” (ῥαψωδὸς καὶ ὑποκριτής/*rhapsōidos kai hypokritēs*) and describes how, during the performance, Ion embodies the manifold objects of the *mimēsis* as if he were “outside himself” (ἔξω

σαυτοῦ/*exō sautou*), since the rhapsode's soul in a way believes (οἶεται [...] ἡ ψυχὴ/*oietai [...] hē psychē*) that it is inhabiting the characters, events, and spatiotemporalities that are represented.⁷⁰ In this process, the soul of the rhapsode moves through the different objects of the *mimēsis* without manifest effort—it dances in and out of them (ὀρχεῖται σου ἡ ψυχὴ/*orcheitai sou hē psychē*). Speaking from experience, Ion confirms the complementarity or liminality between narrative and drama by explaining how the very act of reporting entails embodiment: when he reports on (ὄταν [...] λέγω/*hotan [...] legō*) pitiful things, his eyes fill with tears, and when he reports on dreadful ones it makes his hair stand on end and his heart leap.⁷¹

Towards a polarization. The Hellenistic period accelerated the transition from a musicopoetic culture that conspicuously relied on performance towards more literary understandings of poetry. This environment favoured text-immanent over performance-immanent interpretations of the speech criterion of Plato and Aristotle, with important repercussions on genre theories (see the *Appendix*). Nevertheless, in some regards even post-classical discourses about genres continued to see or stylize dramatic and narrative poetry as intertwined, also under the influence of Plato's and Aristotle's positions on the matter. For example, if Polemon of Athens (head of the Academy from 313 until 270 BCE) could call Homer “the epic Sophocles” and Sophocles “the tragic Homer,” it was possible or usual at the Academy to portray the similarities between epic and tragedy as more important than their differences.⁷² Affinities in the way in which epic and tragedy dealt with noble characters attracted particular attention; for example, Ps.-Longinus and Dio Chrysostom praised the “heroic,” and hence epic-like quality, of Aeschylus' characters.⁷³ Comparable views continued to surface throughout antiquity, and late antique scholarship still echoed Plato and Aristotle with regard to the striking mix of narrative and drama

70 Cf. what Halliwell 2002: 75 says with regard to *Republic*: “the narrower sense of mimesis in part of book 3 is designed [...] to allow a sharp focus on the particularly heightened state of “self-likening” [...], or psychological assimilation, which is ascribed first to the author [...] and then to the reciter or actor [...] of poetry in the dramatic mode, whether epic, drama proper, or other kinds.”

71 Plat. *Ion* 535b–536b.

72 See, e.g., the testimonia in TrGF 4 TIIb (*Sophocles Ὀμηρικός*) and Phld. *On Poems* 4.112 Janko.

73 Ps.-Longin. *De subl.* 15.5 (= TrGF 3 T132) τοῦ δ' Αἰσχύλου φαντασίαις ἐπιτολμῶντος ἠρωικωτάταις, ὥσπερ καὶ <οἱ> Ἐπὶ ἄ ἐπὶ Θήβας παρ' αὐτῷ [...]; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 52.4 (= TrGF 3 T135) ἢ τε γὰρ τοῦ Αἰσχύλου μεγαλοφροσύνη καὶ τὸ ἀρχαῖον [...] πρέποντα ἐφαίνετο τραγωδίᾳ καὶ τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἦθεσι τῶν ἠρώων [...].

which marks Homer's epic. Euanthius, for instance, restated that Homer was the model of tragedy and comedy in the fourth century CE.⁷⁴ A short passage *From the History of Music* which has been attached to the end of the *Life of Aeschylus* was still reminiscent of the Platonic tripartition of poetic genres into diegetic, dramatic, and mixed, and compared the poetry of Homer and Aeschylus precisely because both of them exhibited a well-balanced mix of narrative and dramatic action; in fact, following the reasoning of this source, if it had not been for the fact that the work titles also specified the author's name—e.g., “the *Niobe* of Aeschylus,” “the *Iliad* of Homer”—it would have been difficult to say whether these works were actually epic or dramatic.⁷⁵

These and similar examples illustrate that the borders between (tragic) drama and (Homeric) narrative continued to be porous throughout the classical period—and under different premises, afterwards as well—because these categories had to do with comparable practices of impersonating storyworlds, characters, and other objects of the *mimēsis* more than with different reflections of these practices on papyrus scrolls. On the other hand, the next chapter and the *Appendix* will discuss how cultures with a more literary understanding of poetry have tended to polarize the differences between narrative and drama by focusing on text-immanent features such as direct vs. indirect speech and the presence vs. absence of a narrative instance. In other words, literary cultures have naturally highlighted differences in the literary means of representation at the expense of physical ones, despite the fact that primary representational practices such as conversational storytelling, oral epics, and drama are eminently embodied.⁷⁶ For example, studies on conversational storytelling have investigated how speakers often act and speak *as if* they were the characters to make the narrative more vivid, as when someone who tells a joke or reports some gossip delivers the characters' utterances by mimicking their physical attitudes and language peculiarities;⁷⁷ however, a transcript of the same joke translates this multi-layered representational practice with a simple switch from indirect to direct speech.

74 Euanthius *De fab.* 1.5 Cupaiuolo: [Homerus] *Iliadem ad instar tragoediae, Odysiam ad imaginem comoediae fecisse monstratur.*

75 *Life of Aeschylus* (Ἐκ τῆς μουσικῆς ἱστορίας) 2.14 Page: τῶν ποιημάτων ἃ μὲν ἐστὶ διεξοδικὰ καὶ διηγηματικά καὶ ἀπαγγελτικά, ἃ δὲ δραματικά καὶ μιμητικά, ἃ δὲ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, ἃ δὲ μόνον δραματικά: αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐνεργεῖ καὶ λέγει ἅμα τὰ πρόσωπα καὶ αὐτὰ τὸ κύρος ἔχει. διὰ τοῦτο αἱ τῶν δραμάτων ἐπιγραφαὶ προγράφονται τοῦ ποιητοῦ, Νιόβη Αἰσχύλου, Ὀμήρου δὲ Ἰλιάς: μικταὶ γάρ εἰσιν αἱ ποιήσεις αὐτῶν. See Podlecki 1969, 136 f. on this passage.

76 Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b: 14.

77 See, e.g., Stempel 1980: 398 (who calls this phenomenon *fingierende Redeerwähnung*); Bergmann 1987: 149–166; Quasthoff, 2001: 1294; Ehlich 2007: 395 ff.

Classical thoughts about the cross-overs of narrative and drama can help us bridge this cultural distance. The circumstance that Plato and Aristotle regarded Homer as the most dramatic of the epic poets—combined with the hermeneutic strategy of *reading as* (see Chapter 1.1.1/*Heuristic purposes*)—encourages us to see Aeschylus as the most narrative of the dramatists. We can thus put Aeschylean drama in a hybridizing perspective on genres which, while not being that of Aeschylus' day, is nevertheless more productive than emphatically literary notions about narrative, drama, and their mutual opposition.

2.2 Generic Projections

2.2.1 *Text Transfers*

Drama and narrative as text. Roughly speaking, from the time when poetic performance lost its centrality to Greek culture until the performance turn of the 1970s, discourses about genres have dealt with literary more than performance categories.⁷⁸ This chapter and the *Appendix* consider how, after Plato and Aristotle but with frequent reference to their speech criterion, narrative and drama have been associated with text-immanent manifestations of the presence *vs.* absence of a narrative instance. My purpose is not to sketch a succinct history of genre theories (in which the speech criterion has been but one of many factors),⁷⁹ but to observe how text-centric interpretations of the classical speech criterion have backed up the distinction between narrative and dramatic genres, often polarizing these with scarce interest in nuances and mutual cross-overs. In this process, we will detect the paths along which quite specific expectations about drama came into being—including the expectations which Aeschylus does not satisfy. In particular, the present chapter will focus on the decades between the performance turn and today—a period in which the emergence and cross-disciplinary expansion of performance studies and, at the same time, the classicists' rediscovery of ancient Greece as a performance culture could have inspired more performance-friendly readings of classical discourses about genre (see the *Appendix* for previous periods). Due to their foci, the specialized sub-fields of drama studies and narratology will lend themselves to exemplifying the phenomenon.

78 See, e.g., Fantuzzi 1993: 41 f.; Backe 2010: 105.

79 Different criteria for the classification of genres are discussed, e.g., by Komfort-Hein 1996; Korthals 2003: 37–52; Zymner 2010: 29–46; Dannenberg 2004: 53. On the other hand, some scholars feel that modern genre theories have added comparatively little to the foundation of Aristotle: see Pappalardo 2009: 23 with examples.

Under reference to Plato and Aristotle, drama has often been equated with the dialogue between characters or more precisely with textual realizations thereof, that is text dialogue as opposed to stage dialogue.⁸⁰ Even after the 1970s, many studies in literature and drama continued to regard stage dialogues as interpretations or reflections of text dialogues rather than the other way around, and reiterated that dialogic text features are the essence of drama—an idea which is still alive and well in handbooks.⁸¹ The “absolutization of the dialogue”⁸² looms so large in drama theory that dialogues occurring in narrative genres and, on the other hand, monologues occurring in drama are often read as cross-generic interferences, borrowings, or exceptions. For example, in the context of epic and novels, sections in which the characters engage in dialogue are described as “dramatizing” elements, while monologues in drama qualify as “epic,” as Chapter 1.1.2/*Narratives as epiphenomena* has observed with regard to the messenger speeches of Attic tragedy.

Being traditionally strong in genre theory, German studies can be an illustrative field of observation for the (post-performance turn) equation between drama and dialogic text forms, and for how this equation is assumed to apply transhistorically viz. transculturally—“the past is a foreign country,” as novelist Leslie Hartley put it. In a vintage but still much-quoted study by P. Szondi, “the monocacy of the dialogue” (*Alleinherrschaft des Dialogs*) counts as the essence of drama, even though the price of this tenet is that historical manifestations as noticeable as Greek tragedy and medieval *Mysterienspiele* have to be left out of consideration because dialogue, as Szondi admits, is not at all central to them.⁸³ This exclusion reveals that “dialogue,” in this as in other studies about drama, does not just indicate utterances by the stage characters (*Bühnenrede*), since even Greek tragedy and *Mysterienspiele* consist of *Bühnenrede*. Rather, dialogue is synonymous with text forms which display character-to-character interaction—such as stichomythic and lyric-epirrhematic exchanges in Attic tragedy.⁸⁴ Other examples confirm that dialogic text is assumed to be an all-time hallmark of drama and to strongly correlate with the characters’ inter-

80 See, e.g., Hamburger 1957: 158 f.; Scholes / Kellog 1966: 4; Berghahn 1970: 8 ff.; Hempfer 1973: 159 ff.; Schmid 1976; Elam 1984: 15; Kiel 1992: 9 ff.; Horn 1998; Pfister 2001 [1977]: 19 ff. and 105; Pappalardo 2009: 23; Scherer 2010: 8, 12, 15 f.; Schößler 2012: 1; Hofmann 2013: 16 f.

81 E.g., Scherer 2010: 8; Marx 2012: 4 f.

82 Pfister 2001 [1977]: 196.

83 Szondi 1968 [1956]: 13–15. Another example is a book chapter on genre theory dating 1925 but still quoted in the German studies which defined epic as “monologic report of an action” (*monologischer Bericht einer Handlung*) and drama as “dialogic representation of an action” (*dialogische Darstellung einer Handlung*): Petersen 1925: 100–102.

84 See Chapter 3.1.2/*Entanglements of drama, action, and dialogue*.

action; in fact, drama in itself has been dubbed as an “art of dialogue” (*Dialogkunst*) for the reason that dialogue and the interaction it entices would remain the features that define the genre as such through its history.⁸⁵ Even more recent studies explain Plato’s and Aristotle’s speech criterion as referring to representational modes of literature, thereby associating the dramatic mode with dialogue and embedding them both in the horizon of text.⁸⁶ The assumption is thus that dialogic text and the interaction which it represents are “naturally” essential to drama—and that Plato and Aristotle regarded them as such.

These assumptions work well for large parts of Western drama, but entail a misinterpretation of the classical speech criterion and a bias in the understanding of historical manifestations of drama which do not really centre on the kind of dialogic interaction described above. In theory, the risks of projecting modern notions about drama as “dialogized myth” back to Greek tragedy were recognized long ago.⁸⁷ However, scholarship on Aeschylus offers plenty of examples of how these notions do influence the readers’ perception of Aeschylean drama as not-quite-dramatic (see Chapter 2.2.3). As far as Greek poetry is concerned, the equation between drama and dialogue is doubly inaccurate. On the one hand, dialogue was scarcely distinctive of the dramatic genres, as exemplified by non-dramatic poems composed for or at any rate featuring

85 Berghahn 1970: 3. Further examples from the same book are at p. 1: “Drama ist Handlung durch Sprache im Dialog [...] . Der Dialog ist des Dramatikers ‘einziges Mittel’ [...] . Die dialogische Darbietung erweist sich als eine gattungseigentümliche Konstante der dramatischen Kunst im Wandel der Zeiten”; p. 5: “Der Dialog ist im Drama die wesentliche Darbietungsform, ohne die sich die Handlung nicht entfalten [...] kann. [...] Während der Dialog im Drama die gattungsnotwendige Form der Darstellung bildet, bleibt er in der Erzählkunst [...] eine Darstellungsmöglichkeit unter anderen”; p. 13: “Handeln ist im Drama immer sprachliches Handeln, bleibt auf die dialogische Darbietungsform angewiesen.” See also Roumois-Hasler 1982: 23; Horn 1998: 151 ff. (“weil alles Dramatische dialogisiert ist”); Pfister 2001 [1977]: 23 f., where dialogic character speech is said to be the “basic form of dramatic texts”; Krieger 2004: 71.

86 E.g., Asmuth 2009 [1980]: 9. Korthals 2003: 80 (though pp. 53–74 distinguish between the spheres of text and performance). *Contra* Andronikashvili 2009: 38f., who remarks on Korthals’ approach: “Diegesis und Mimesis [...] sind [...] Präsentationsmodi im Rahmen des einen oder anderen Mediums [...]. Die Hervorhebung des Literarischen [...] ignoriert die Konstruktion des dramatischen Texts in Hinblick auf die Aufführung.”

87 E.g., Peretti 1939: 90: “[...] si suole vedere la tragedia antica con un concetto moderno dell’essenza di drammaticità [...] che del racconto fa un’azione [...], si concentra tutta l’attenzione sul mito dialogizzato e sceneggiato [...]”; Lehmann 1991: 44: “Ein verbreitetes Vorurteil setzt nun die Bühnenrede mit dem Dialog gleich [...]. So naheliegend diese Version ist, so sehr muß betont werden, daß es in der Tragödie vorab um *Aus-Sprache* der Figuren geht, nicht in erster Linie um das ‘Miteinander’ des Sprechens.”

at least two voices;⁸⁸ and on the other hand, actor-to-actor interaction and stichomythic forms can be surprisingly under-represented as well as scarcely conducive to action in Greek tragedies which favour narrative monologues and actor-to-chorus interaction instead.⁸⁹

In the field of narratology, discourses about “telling” and “showing” present themselves as being the heirs of Plato’s and Aristotle’s speech criterion,⁹⁰ yet crucially they refer to different modes of presenting the storyworld in text or, as one of the fathers of narratology puts it, “modes of (re)production of the speech and thought of characters in written literary narrative.”⁹¹ While G. Genette recognized that Plato and Aristotle were not concerned with taxonomies of literary genres but with different situations of poetic delivery,⁹² he also built on their speech criterion to analyse the levels of indirectness of narrative with the category of “mode” and to distinguish between “author” and “narrator.” In this process, he associated Plato’s *diégēsis* and *mimēsis* with the absence or presence of dialogic text:

Diégēsis [...] sends us back to the Platonic theory of the modes of representation, where it is contrasted by mimēsis. Diégēsis is pure narrative (*without dialogue*), in contrast to the mimesis of dramatic representation and to *everything that creeps into narrative along with dialogue*, thereby making narrative impure—that is, mixed.⁹³

Today, in spite of the recent proliferation of multimodally and intermedially inspired narratological studies, there is still a significant tendency to understand narrative as synonymous with literary narrative and to rely on narrative texts rather than practices when it comes to defining what narrative is, how it works, and what it can achieve.⁹⁴ Although classicists have been studying Greek narrative practices and their cultural history at least since Milman Parry’s and Albert Lord’s work on oral epic, they too are inclined to see Plato’s and

88 E.g., Bacchylides *Dith.* 4 (= *Ode* 18, to which Chapter 4.4.1 will return); Hipponax F35 Degani (= *IEG* 25); Sapph. F114, 137, and 140 Voigt; *PMG* 24 (*Carmina Popularia*). See Herington 1985: 211 f.; Gianvittorio 2013: 437 f.

89 Seidensticker 1971. See Chapter 1.2.2/*Effects of the third actor* on the scarcity of actor-to-actor dialogue in Aeschylus.

90 See, e.g., Klauk / Köppe 2014; Korthals 2003: 101: “Die Opposition Mittelbarkeit-Unmittelbarkeit wird allgemein als aktuelle Version des antiken Redekriteriums verstanden.”

91 Genette 1988 [1983]: 50.

92 Genette, 1992 [1979]: 12 and 61.

93 Genette 1988 [1983]: 18 (the italics are mine).

94 Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b: 12–22; cf. Chapter 2.1.3/*Towards a polarization*.

Aristotle's speech criterion as the starting point for genre discourses which deal with *mimēsis* in text rather than in performance. *Narratology and Classics* (2014) is an outstanding example, not least because I. de Jong is one of the few classicists whose authority is widely acknowledged by narratologists. The book's introduction opens by explaining Plato's difference between *diēgēsis* and *mimēsis* as the difference between narrator-*text* and character-*text*, which sets the tone for the subsequent argumentation.⁹⁵ Of course, this explanation makes perfect sense from the perspective of later literary theory, which looks at the presence viz. absence of a narrative instance within a text and at the "inner-textual (textually encoded) highest-level speech position from which the current narrative discourse as a whole originates."⁹⁶ Yet in this way, scholars of classical and modern literatures align in transferring Plato's and Aristotle's speech criterion from the level of event experience to that of reading experience.

Performance-based vs. text-based speech criterion. The positions considered above and those which will be discussed in the *Appendix* illustrate that the "how" of the poetic *mimēsis* (*diēgēsis/apangelia*, *mimēsis/praxis*) has shifted from the physical dimension of the performer's agency, where Plato and Aristotle had it, to the textual manifestations thereof. An imaginary experiment can show the difference between the two levels and the implications of their confusion. Following the text-based speech criterion, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* qualifies a drama regardless of whether and how it is performed—even when, for instance, one single person instead of more declaims him- or herself all the lines attached to the different characters. However, according to the performance-based speech criterion the person interpreting *Oedipus the King* alone would deliver a narrative (*diēgēsis/apangelia*) of the mixed or Homeric sort instead of a drama, because he or she would to some extent impersonate the different characters with his or her own voice. Historical examples confirm how text-based readings of the classical speech criterion can produce generic assignments of ancient poems which conflict with emic views. Medieval philologists such as Johannes de Garlandia ascribed tragedies and comedies of classical antiquity to the *genus narrativum* because they (relying on Livius) thought that these works originally consisted of solo recitals during which silent pantomimes danced the plot in the background—though in Plato's and Aristotle's view this would be a case of *genus mixtum* at the most, yet more probably a

95 de Jong 2014: 3.

96 Margolin 2014: 351. See also, e.g., Richardson 1988: 193 (with references); Pfister 2001 [1977]: 20–22.

drama due the supposed presence of dancers embodying the characters.⁹⁷ Even more curiously, it has been argued that Plato's works qualify as dramas according to his genre taxonomy in the third book of *Republic*—because the *texts* are entirely dialogic.⁹⁸

By way of alternative, a performance-centred understanding of genres offers considerable advantages when it comes to devising generic notions in which narrative and drama coalesce, as in Aeschylus' narrative drama. Indeed, while scholars who think in terms of literary genres (such as Genette and de Jong) emphasize the mutual differences between narrative and drama and often reject the notion of drama as a narrative form in itself,⁹⁹ scholars who think in terms of performance genres are more comfortable in connecting the two domains. The second group crucially includes authors of the classical period, as Chapter 2.1.3 has observed. The dialogue which Plato dedicates to the art of the "rhapsode and actor" *Ion* (*Ion* 536a 1) illustrates the point perfectly, because it captures the hybridity of narrative and dramatic *practices* by considering the physical agency of a skilled performer. The young narrator of *A Tough Story* on this book's frontispiece is another narrator-and-actor at work, as perhaps anyone who has ever animated a bedtime story with some quite necessary changes in voice and bodily expressivity. Living in the poetic-performance culture of their time, Plato and Aristotle could easily conceive of generic boundaries between narrative and drama in flexible terms, since they had rich experience of how performance encourages hybridity. Moreover, experience showed them that poems could partake of different genres depending on how they were performed or reperformed, since the ancient practice of reusing poetic materials enhanced their exportability across genres—such as when suitable bits of tragedy morphed into symposial, satyr, and even pantomimic pieces, as apparently in the case of *Alcestis*.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, the poetological discourses of Plato and Aristotle theorized their own passive and active experiences of poetry.

Enriched with new meanings and functions, the classical speech criterion proved to be very fruitful in modern literary theories. This may count as yet another case of productively misleading receptions of ancient sources with far-ranging implications in the fields of genre and drama theory. To mention

97 Komfort-Hein 1996: 535–537. On Livius 7.2.8–10 see, e.g., Hall 2002: 25.

98 E.g., Liveley 2019: 22. Plato's dialogues feature traits which may be called dramatic (e.g., lively characterization of the speakers) and they were occasionally staged in later periods, but were not dramas in Plato's eyes because they were not created for impersonation.

99 Cf. Chapter 1.1.2/*Narrative in vs. of drama*.

100 Hunter / Uhlig 2017. The only surviving poem which scholars interpret as a pantomimic libretto is the *Alcestis Barcinonensis* (fourth century CE): see Hall 2008; Viccei 2019.

further flamboyant examples, the division of poetry into three “archigenres” including lyric (besides epic and drama) has been traditionally but inaccurately ascribed to Plato or, alternatively, Aristotle,¹⁰¹ and the so-called Aristotelian unities of action, time, and space in tragedy, which worked as normative principles for modern drama, were actually established by the sixteenth-century commentator Lodovico Castelvetro.¹⁰²

2.2.2 *Defining Genres through their History*

Genres as historically defined objects. A range of genre-defining criteria emerged during the Hellenistic period, when eidography established itself as a sub-discipline of the *ars grammatica* with specialized scholars such as Apollonius, nicknamed Eidographer. In this context, the classification of lyric poems became especially challenging because the distinctive traits of lyric genres were rooted in performance practices of the past and largely eluded Hellenistic grammarians. For example, at the Library of Alexandria three leading scholars adopted different criteria: Callimachus (ca. 310–235 BCE) classified the victory songs of Pindar according to the competition in which the winner had prevailed; Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 257–180 BCE), like other Greek and Latin grammarians after him, chiefly resorted to metrical criteria, and the Eidographer (who became head of the Library after Aristophanes) distinguished between lyric genres on the basis of the available information about their musical harmonies.¹⁰³ In the face of such variety, it is not surprising that ancient scholars would disagree over matters of genre classification and occasionally ascribe the same poem to different categories. A well-known case is Bacchylides’ *Cassandra*: while Callimachus regarded it as a paeon because of the peculiar interjection *ῥή/ιῆ*, Aristarchus held that it was a dithyramb due to the narrative content.¹⁰⁴

101 On the misrepresentation of lyric poetry, see Genette 1992 [1979]: 1–8 and 28 ff.; Hempfer 1973: 158 (note 165) and 2008; Schwinge 1981: 145; Primavesi 2008.

102 Castelvetro 1968 [1570]: 96 a, 296a–297a. Cf. Kirby 1991 on uses and abuses of classical sources in modern literary theory.

103 On these and similar examples, see Rossi 1971: 71; Brink 1971: 163–173; Schwinge 1981: 142; Gelzer 1982–1984; Fantuzzi 1993; Rutherford 2001: 152–158; Löwe 2007. For the genres of ancient prose, see Sluiter 2000; Ford 2002: 252 ff.

104 Bacchylides F23 Snell-Maehler. On the classification problems posed by this fragment, see Gelzer 1982–1984: 137; Käppel 1992: 39; Fantuzzi 1993: 45 f.; Ierandò 1997: 322–324; Hordern 2002: 18; in more detail Schröder 1999: 110 ff.; D’Alessio 2000 and 2013: 119 ff. For comparable cases, see Käppel 1992: 41 f.; D’Alessio 1997; Rutherford 2001: 90–108; Swift 2010: 62 note 1.

Ancient struggles regarding generic taxonomies contain a lesson. What ultimately motivated them is that although new lyric poems continued to be produced and labelled as, say, paeans and dithyrambs throughout the Hellenistic period, there was no longer living memory of the different performance styles which had defined the lyric genres in the centuries before.¹⁰⁵ This illustrates how a generic label (*signifiant*) such as “dithyramb” can easily come to indicate something different (*signifié*) for Arion, Bacchylides, Plato, and the Hellenistic poets, audiences, and scholars—a phenomenon which the concept of dynamics of genre helps to describe.¹⁰⁶ Our understanding of Aeschylus’ tragedy is affected by similar processes, namely the shift in the meaning of the generic label and the insufficient knowledge of the features which once identified tragedy as such. Thus, while the textual remains of Aeschylus still qualify as tragedy, the genre came to subsume different desiderata and typicalities.¹⁰⁷ What is particularly relevant to the present purposes is that features such as the prevalence of action over narrative became more desirable, typical, or “institutionalized” under the influence of masterpieces by Sophocles and Euripides which continued to work as “normative prototypes” well after their time.¹⁰⁸ These developments shape the readers’ perception and interpretation of Aeschylean drama in tangible ways, as Chapter 2.2.3 will consider.

Reconstructing an emic perspective. The paramount factor to consider in historicizing our generic expectations is that in Aeschylus’ day tragedy primarily was a type of theatrical performance. Through the archaic and classical periods, texts were not the key to defining genres but depended on the performances and occasions which motivated them. Libretti-like scripts probably circulated among theatre artists and highly educated people well before Aristophanes in *Frogs* portrayed Dionysus as an avid reader of Euripides, but tragedies and the traits which distinguished them from other musicopoetic works really existed

105 See Harvey 1955; Gelzer 1982–1984: 134 ff.; Rutherford 2001: 91–108; *contra* D’Alessio 1997: 39 and 2013: 119.

106 See Chapter 1.1.1/*Heuristic purposes*. For the dynamics of the dithyramb, see Zimmermann 1992; D’Angour 1997; Ieranò 1997; Kowalzig / Wilson 2013.

107 For transhistorical perspectives on Attic tragedy see, e.g., Dalfen 1972; Most 2000; de La Combe 2008: 265 ff.; Bohrer 2008; Valakas 2009; Büttner 2017.

108 See Voßkamp 1977: 30 ff. on the “processes of institutionalization and de-institutionalization” regarding the typical traits, on normative prototypes, and on their influence on the dynamics of genre. Cf. also Tynyanov 2000 [1929]: 33 (with special reference to the “canonization of the younger genres”); and Gymnich / Neumann 2007. There is indeed remarkable consensus about the works which count as masterpieces of different genres, both in and outside literature: see, e.g., Scheinpflug 2014: 4.

in the voices of the actors, the feet of the chorus members, the senses of the audience, as well as the communities and festivals which produced the tragedies themselves. In other words, genres existed in embodied and ephemeral dimensions to which readers have scarce access, especially if they cannot flesh out the text with knowledge or imagination about these dimensions.

Discourses about genres are documented since Homer. What motivated them and made them meaningful was the musicopoetic competence of audiences, nonprofessional practitioners, and professional ones (the three groups were by no means mutually exclusive). The circumstance that norms and rules regulating genres were unwritten and established by living traditions made them, if anything, all the more compelling. “Like most forms of tacit knowledge, genre functions implicitly better than explicitly, by practical performance rather than by theoretical precept,” in ancient Greece as well as in other cultures.¹⁰⁹ Bacchylides emphasized how the *sophoi*—a broad category which also included poets and other performance artists—constantly renewed inherited traditions and passed them down to the next generations:

ἕτερος ἐξ ἑτέρου σοφός
 τό τε πάλαι τό τε νῦν.
 Οὐδὲ γὰρ ῥᾶστον
 ἀρρήτων ἐπέων πύλας
 ἐξευρεῖν.

Poet is heir to poet,
 now as of yore.
 For it is no light task
 to find the gates of virgin
 songs (Bacch. *Pae.* 5.1–5, transl. Jebb 1905, modified)

Bacchylides seems to refer to a kind of knowledge which was quite literally inherited, since poetry used to be a family business and Bacchylides himself was the nephew of Simonides.¹¹⁰ Traditions made it sensible to group together

109 Most 2000: 18. For similar arguments, see Rossi 1971: 72; Calame 1974: 126; Fantuzzi 1993: 44; and cf. Rüpke 2000 on the relationship between literacy and genres in Latin literature. As for a cross-cultural comparison, Garuba 2008 observes that the Yorùbá in south-western Nigeria conceptualize practice-based knowledge of different poetic genres into a subtle terminology and strictly follow generic rules. On the competence of ancient theatre audiences in particular see, e.g., Revermann 2006.

110 For a discussion of this fragment, see Lanata 1963: 102 f.

musicopoetic works which were felt to be cognate in crucial aspects of their performance aesthetics and appropriate to their respective social, civic, religious, and artistic environments.¹¹¹ On these premises, Homer could speak of paeon, hymenaeus, and song of Linus as of different musicopoetic forms, Pindar of skolion, ialemus, and again song of Linus, to mention just a few early examples¹¹²—whereas the song of Linus might well indicate quite different types of song for Homer and Pindar.¹¹³ If in our eyes these and other generic labels do not always appear to be used in a consistent fashion, this not only because of our exclusion from the embodied and ephemeral dimensions mentioned above, but also because functionality to specific purposes rather than general consistency was of the essence. In fact, “differentiation in ancient perceptions of genres is only as detailed as specific contexts and purposes require: different systems of genres exist, for different purposes,” such as the purposes of professional musicians, chorus teachers, and scholars.¹¹⁴ Even so, the terms themselves demonstrate that different poetic “forms,” *eidē*, were widely perceived to be distinctive enough to be told apart from each other, and hence, that the *eidē* coexisted as mutually related domains in a web of meaningful relationships (i.e., the similarities and oppositions which defined individual genres in relation to others). For example, Pindar and Plato refer to generic relationships when telling *eidē* apart from each other.¹¹⁵

It is therefore very helpful that starting from the 1970s classicists have been studying the poetic genres of ancient Greece on structuralist premises¹¹⁶ and by prioritizing performance style and *Sitz im Leben* as fundamental criteria.¹¹⁷

111 Cf. Griffith 2013: 80–114 and Ford 2002: 13–22, who examines archaic and classical sources on matters of appropriateness in poetry.

112 Hom. *Il.* 1.473, 18.493 and 570, 22.391; Pind. F122 and 128 c Maehler.

113 Ford 2020. Further examples are the dynamics of *hymnos*, for which the specialized meaning of song dedicated to a god or goddess is not attested before Plato (Ford 2002: 259; Carey 2009: 26), and *skolion* (Harvey 1955: 162 f.).

114 Rotstein 2010: 13.

115 See, e.g., Pind. F128 c Maehler (on which see Cannatà Fera 1990: 136–156; Käppel 1992: 34 f.; Carey 2009: 25 f.) and Plato’s *Laws* 700 a–b, where τούτω δὴ τὸ ἐναντίον contrasts hymns with dirges (see below on this passage).

116 E.g., Calame 1974: 123 (“cette étude structurale d’un corpus donné de poèmes ne peut être que contrastive”); Conte 1991: 148 (“ciò che caratterizza un genere non è un “ripieno” di contenuti assunti come esclusivi, ma un insieme di relazioni reciproche, strutturate”); Käppel 1992: 82–86 and 2000; Ford 2002: 250 ff.; Rotstein 2010: 3–16; Swift 2010: 8; Foster / Kurke / Weiss 2020: 14.

117 E.g., Calame 1974; Conte / Most 1996; Cingano 2003; Rüpke 2000 (on Latin poetry). More recently, Nagy 2020 has considered how archaic and classical genres re-actualized themselves once the occasions which had previously motivated them became obsolete. Cf. Chapter 3.1.4 for studies of choruses of a kindred spirit.

These approaches have tackled poetic genres from arguably emic perspectives, that is by trying to embed them in their original contexts as far as these can be reconstructed. They have therefore looked at genres from a variety of cultural angles, reconsidering them as “literary and social institutions,” “repositories of cultural memory,” and “embodied cultural knowledge.”¹¹⁸ It thus emerged that what differentiated poetic genres from each other were aspects from two related spheres, both of which elude us to a significant extent. On the one hand, there were the genres’ occasions and purposes, for example the different civic and cultic rites in which poetic events were enacted or reenacted—this is what Marco Fantuzzi calls poetry’s “sociological venues” (*luoghi sociologici*)¹¹⁹—whereas “placing a given poem at exactly the right point on the real-to-fictional scale for its first performance is often impossible.”¹²⁰ On the other hand, there were distinctive performance features, for example the ways in which the poems were set to song, instrumental music, and dance. In Greek, generic labels often reflect these two sets of criteria, referring to real or putative occasions (e.g., *thrēnoi*, *epinikia*, *epithalamia*) and to performance features of the poems (e.g., *epē*, *hyporchēmata*).¹²¹ While the *Sitz im Leben* has been sometimes prioritized over performance as the key criterion for emic definitions of genre,¹²² one can disentangle pragmatics and aesthetics from each other in theory better than in practice, where these spheres coalesce. For example, what defined *thrēnoi* was that they were used for mourning, yet what enabled them to fulfil this task was the aesthetics of mourning which the *thrēnoi* themselves created.¹²³

118 For these phrases, which are used by classicists or are at any rate apt to describe their approaches, see, respectively, Voßkamp 1977: 32; Neumann / Nünning 2007: 11–15; and Olsen 2020 (who refers to Greek lyric genres).

119 Fantuzzi 1993: 41. Cf. Nagy 1994 and 2020; Depew / Obbink 2000; Rutherford 2001: 4 (“shared function or shared performance scenario”); Silk 2013: 19–30; Rotstein 2010: 3–7 and 2012; Carey 2009: 24 (with note 17); Sells 2020: 143; and the essays collected in part one of Budelmann / Phillips 2018 a.

120 Budelmann / Phillips 2018 b: 7.

121 Ford 2002: 18 specifies that “no archaic name for song is metrically based. [...] the archaic poetry of ‘abuse’, *iambos*, generated the name ‘iambic’ for its characteristic meter; similarly, the ‘elegiac’ couplet seems to have been named because it was by that time prominent in the traditional family of songs long known as *elegoi*, ‘laments’”.

122 E.g., Käppel 1992: 17–21, 44–65, and 299 f.; Cingano 2003 (“le mode d’exécution reste à l’extérieur de la définition de genre, et ne peut pas être considérée une caractéristique immanente, ‘intrinsèque’ d’un *eidōs* lyrique”).

123 Cf. Nagy 2020: 34: “I define *occasion* as the context of performing something that is composed or precomposed. And I define *genre* as a set of rules that generate such a performance” (original italics).

When it comes to historicizing ancient genres, these emic approximations have considerable advantages over more erudite ones such as, for example, ἰή/ιῆ as a textual marker of the paean (see above)—even though our knowledge of ancient performance is too vague to pinpoint the distinctive similarities and differences. On the other hand, the etic perspectives which Chapter 1.1.1 has brought into play are better suited to re-positioning genres within the horizon of expectations which *we*—as readers with inherited notions of (literary) drama but inadequate knowledge of the original contexts and performances—entertain towards ancient texts. Thus, emic and etic perspectives serve different purposes and can complement each other.

Glimpses of emic perspectives. Performance-related traits which were distinctive of Attic tragedy can be only summarily identified. The impersonation and reenactment of mythical storyworlds was not exclusive to tragedy, since coeval performance genres such as satyr play, Sicilian comedy, dithyramb, and even non-verbal arts such as pure dance routinely embodied myths.¹²⁴ What was specific to tragedy were rather the civic and ritual settings of the impersonation and its acting, musical, and orchestric styles. Both aspects have been investigated with renewed interest in recent years; in particular, commented editions of literary and epigraphic sources have greatly enriched our knowledge of the historical, social, and organizational contexts of ancient theatre,¹²⁵ and stagecraft has never ceased to be a major focus of investigation since the performance turn.¹²⁶

Information about tragic performance comes from literary and archaeological evidence, neither of which can be taken at face value to envision (let alone reconstruct) what stage renderings looked like with historical fidelity.¹²⁷ To set off tragedy against coeval genres impersonating myths, one can say, for instance, that the tragic performers were two to three actors and twelve to fifteen choreuts (as opposed to, e.g., the fifty of dithyramb),¹²⁸ all male (as

124 Xenoph. *Symp.* 9.2–7 is a striking example of how dance could embody mythical stories without the help of poetry in the classical period: see Andrisano 2003; Wohl 2004; Schlapbach 2018, chapter 4; Bocksberger 2021: 75–78.

125 E.g., Csapo / Slater 1994; Csapo / Wilson 2020.

126 See Chapter 1.2.1/*Performance, reperformance, and materiality*.

127 On the chimera of the archaeologically-based reconstruction of ancient stage performance see, e.g., Giuliani 1996: 71–75 and Liapis / Panayotakis / Harrison 2013: 11–13. Cf. also Naerebout 1997: 209–253 for essential insights into the different but pertinent issue of ancient dance reconstructionism.

128 Aesch. *Ag.* 1348–1371 suggests that Aeschylus still resorted to twelve choreuts by the end of his career.

opposed to the male and female performers of mythical dances),¹²⁹ that they wore masks (unlike, again, dithyrambic performers), and so on. They spoke, chanted, sang, acted, and danced in ways which were recognizable as tragic. For example, tragic dances pertained to the dancing style or broader aesthetic domain which classical sources called ἐμμελία/*emmeleia* and portrayed above all as solemn. Aeschylus himself (in the satyr play *Theōroi* or *Isthmiastai*) contrasted the adjective ἐμμελής/*emmelēs* with the wild-looking, riotous *choreia* of the satyrs¹³⁰—which is yet another example of how mutual relationships defined individual genres and informed the related discourses. The sung parts of tragedy were usually, though not exclusively, accompanied by the *aulos* player. With regard to tragedy, fifth-century BCE and later sources describe the sound of the *aulos* as piercing, engrossing, and entrancing;¹³¹ indeed, interpretations of *aulos* music based on music archaeology show the vast potential of this instrument for stirring effects.¹³²

These and other sparse pieces of evidence may appear to shed more light on the elusiveness of tragic performance than on tragic performance itself. On the bright side, we have some clues about the range of affects-and-subjects¹³³ which tragedy was supposed to deal with in Aeschylus' day, how binding these preferences were, and how transgressions were met. Herodotus (6.21.2) offers an enlightening testimony: at the time of the Ionian revolt, the audience reacted so badly to Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus* that the play was banned from the stage and Phrynichus was fined a thousand drachmas because "he had reminded [the audience] of domestic sorrows" (ὡς ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκίη κακὰ).¹³⁴ This indicates that, in Aeschylus' time, tragic audiences felt entitled to see affects-and-subjects represented on the stage which, while being "worth serious attention" (*spoudaios*, in Aristotle's words), were not emotionally overwhelming but detached from real-life sorrows or possibly sublimating them.

129 Cf. again Xenoph. *Symp.* 9.2–7.

130 TrGF 3 F78c.58. Examples of fourth-century BCE sources on *emmeleia* are Plat. *Leg.* 814 e ff. and Aristoxen. F104 Wehrli; for later periods Athen. 1.20 a and Anon. *Peri tragōidias* p. 11 Perusino.

131 E.g., TrGF 3 F57 (*Edonoi*) and *Prom.* 574 f., to stick to (Ps.-)Aeschylus.

132 See, e.g., Stefan Hagel's performance with a reconstructed Hellenistic *aulos* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCHWv16mpg>, last accessed 7.5.2021) and Hagel 2021 on *auloi* of Aeschylus' time.

133 Regarding the close ties between tragedy's affects and subjects, Aristotle says that "tragedy's most potent means of emotional affect [cf. ψυχαγωγεῖν] are components of the plot, namely reversals and recognitions" (*Poet.* 1450a32–34, transl. Halliwell 1995).

134 For recent discussions of Herodotus' passage see, e.g., Csapo 2010: 103; Hunter / Uhlig 2017: 6.

The spectators' perception of what was suitable *vs.* unsuitable for tragedy and the corresponding expectations were so distinct that they could simply refuse to be confronted with out-of-place tragedies.

The anecdote recalled by Herodotus demonstrates that by the early decades of the fifth century BCE tragedy existed as a culturally constructed category whose do's and don'ts were regulated by traditions, shared expectations, and public institutions. The circumstance that too daring departures were chastised not only with criticism but also with fines and censorship confirms that musicopoetic genres had been handled as political issues long before Plato conceptualized them as such.¹³⁵ Plato himself recalled or idealized the period immediately before the Persian wars (when Phrynichus and Aeschylus were active) as a time in which public institutions enforced rules to ensure the proper practice of musicopoetic genres and punish generic infractions.¹³⁶ Although the point of these remarks is not so much historical accuracy as the criticism against today's poets, who according to the speaker of *Laws* mix up genres which do not belong nor fit together, Plato's testimony about the punishment of generic infractions resonates very well with that of Herodotus.

These references to the early fifth century BCE illustrate how, even at a time when the plays' texts did not widely circulate among readers who were not involved in theatre productions, communal and political agencies contributed towards constructing tragedy as a "literary and social institution," a "repository of cultural memory," and "embodied cultural knowledge," as considered above. Regulative forces gained power from and at the same time strengthened shared idea(l)s about the identity, orthodoxy, and function of tragedy—and oriented subsequent dynamics of genre accordingly. To stick to Phrynichus' example, it appears that the difficulty of handling historical matters in properly tragic fashions and the stigma attached to *Sack of Miletus* played a role in the subsequent selection of suitable tragic subjects. In this process of trial and error, the immediate reaction was to focus on the despair of the Persians instead of the Greeks

135 See Gianvittorio-Ungar 2024 a.

136 Plat. *Leg.* 700 a–b: "Among us, at that time, music was divided into various genres and bodily realizations (κατὰ εἶδη τε ἑαυτῆς ἄττα καὶ σχήματα): one genre of song was that of prayers to the gods, which were given the name of 'hymns'; contrasting with this was another genre, called for the most part 'dirges'; 'paeans' were another; and yet another was the 'dithyramb'—named, I think, after Dionysus [...]. Thus, these and other genres being classified and fixed, it was forbidden to apply one genre of song to a different one [...]." On this passage see, e.g., Harvey 1955: 165–175; Fantuzzi 1980: 436 ff. and 1993: 36 ff.; Musti 2000; Foster / Kurke / Weiss 2020; Ford 2020.

when dramatizing the Persian Wars, as Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women* and Aeschylus' *Persians* demonstrate. Yet, surviving plays and titles prove that historical subjects were soon discarded altogether while mythical ones, which facilitated more detached, estranging or sublimating takes on reality, established themselves as standard. Aristotle confirms that the initially broad range of tragic subjects was streamlined in the history of the genre along a selective pattern.¹³⁷

2.2.3 “Nothing Happens, Really, It Is Just Talk, Talk, Talk”

Examples from ancient criticism. The previous chapters have discussed how on the one hand the readers' conscience of genre shapes perceptions and expectations about texts and how, on the other hand, genres as well as the criteria which define them change over time. This chapter exemplifies the interpretative effects of these phenomena with regard to Aeschylus' plays—especially the tragedies preceding the *Oresteia*—though similar problems are also relevant to other texts which are difficult to locate on the readers' mental map of genres.¹³⁸ Although this choice of positions does not always do justice to the broader arguments which support them, it is nevertheless indicative of how expectations tailored to post-Aeschylean tragedy have influenced the perception of Aeschylus. For example, we will observe how (not only general readers but also) classical scholars feel the absence of action and unitary plots; apparently, thus, our erudite awareness that there is no evidence indicating that by the 470s–460s BCE these traits worked as “discursive properties”¹³⁹ of the genre does not erase inherited expectations. This kind of criticism illustrates why *ad hoc* frameworks of interpretation help us better discern Aeschylean phenomena from superimposed norms.

Unfavourable assessments of Aeschylus' art are documented since the classical period in contexts which explicitly contrasted his kind of tragedy with later ones. The earliest document is particularly difficult to assess: in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Aeschylus prevails over Euripides in the contest for the best

137 *Poet.* 1453a17–22: “originally, the poets recounted any and every story (μύθους/*mythous*), but nowadays the finest tragedies are composed about only a few families, such as Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and as many others as have suffered and perpetrated terrible things.” (transl. Halliwell 1995).

138 E.g., Old Comedy has been criticized for its loose structure and other peculiarities in the plot's construction, as *Acharnians* (Silk 2000: 258), *Ecclesiazusae*, and *Plutus* (Csapo 2000: 122 ff.) can exemplify. Something similar may be true for Lycophron's *Alexandra*, which is difficult to ascribe to an easily recognizable genre (West 2000). See Conte 1991: 145–173 on how similar problems present themselves for classical literatures more generally.

139 Todorov 2000 [1978]: 198 f.

tragedian, but in the comedy's context "best" means most edifying for the Athenian citizens, and it seems likely that Aeschylus' victory is due more to the educational and civic value of his tragedies than to artistic merits. Aeschylus is criticized for the actors' silences and the excessive length of choral performances, which are both parodied as monotonous and tiresome.¹⁴⁰ These traits make the point that Aeschylean drama is in slow-motion: nothing happens during the long moments—or pauses, according to a more plot-driven understanding of drama—during which the actors are inactive and/or the chorus perform. Similarly, later Aeschylean scholarship has often seen a link between scarcity of action and disproportionate chorality.¹⁴¹

In the fourth century BCE, a trend clearly emerged to regard Sophocles and even more so Euripides as the best tragic poet. Not only coeval scholarship, but also theatre practice demonstrates that Aeschylus' work received less favour, to judge from the ratio between the pictorial records of Aeschylean, Sophoclean, and Euripidean re-performances.¹⁴² In *Poetics*, Aristotle mentions Sophocles, Euripides, and other tragedians but is hardly concerned with Aeschylus at all—a silence which cannot be a token of appreciation.¹⁴³ He feels that the early stages of the genre left considerable room for improvement, judging that "almost all the early tragedians" (οἱ πρῶτοι ποιηταὶ σχεδὸν ἅπαντες) were bad at arranging *mythoi*.¹⁴⁴ This is a serious point for Aristotle, who regards *mythos* as essential to tragedy and its composition as a most crucial task of the poet, and while it is uncertain whether Aeschylus counts as an early tragedian here, it is true that Aeschylean plays elude Aristotle's picture of the unitary plot in

140 On the silences of Aeschylean actors, see p. 115, note 83 (on *Pers.* 249–514), with references.

141 E.g., A.W. Schlegel 1966 [1809]: 73 said about Aeschylus: "Seine Pläne sind äußerst einfach: er verstand es noch nicht, eine Handlung reich und mannigfaltig zu gliedern und ihre Entwicklung und Auflösung in abgemessene Fortschritte einzuteilen. Daher entsteht oft ein Stillstand, den er durch allzu gedehnte Chorgesänge noch fühlbarer macht."

142 On re-performances of Aeschylus in Greek and Roman antiquity, see, e.g., Taplin 2007: 48–87 and 2012; Lanari 2014; Futo Kennedy 2018; and Gianvittorio-Ungar 2022.

143 Montanari 2009; LaCourse Munteanu 2018.

144 *Poet.* 1450a36–37, on which Gudemann 1934: 184 f. remarked: "Daß die ältesten, dem A[ristoteles] als Beobachtungsmaterial noch vorliegenden Tragödien an einer in seinem Sinne bearbeiteten σύστασις τῶν πραγμάτων noch viel zu wünschen übrig ließen, wäre in der Anfangsstadien einer neuen Kunstgattung nur zu begreiflich. Um so auffälliger ist es, daß er selbst unter den Archegeten der Tragödie einige Ausnahmen (σχεδόν), die wir gern erfahren hätten, gelten läßt, zumal wir auch nicht einmal genau feststellen können, welche Tragiker A. hier unter οἱ πρῶτοι oder gleich darauf unter οἱ ἀρχαῖοι (1450 b7) oder οἱ παλαιοί (1453 b27) gezählt haben mag, sind doch derartige Zeitangaben stets elastischer Natur." Cf. Lucas 1968: 105.

important regards (see Chapter 4.3.2).¹⁴⁵ On a related note, Aristotle remarks that the amount of actor speech compared to choral song has increased during the history of tragedy (*Poet.* 1449 a15 ff.), whereas as *Frogs* points out the abundance of choral song and the scarcity of actor speech correlate with less action-based and plot-driven kinds of drama.

Scholars of the Hellenistic, Roman, and later periods generally ranked Aeschylus second to both Sophocles and Euripides, especially on account of the simple and actionless quality of Aeschylean plots.¹⁴⁶ The anonymous author of the *Life of Aeschylus* makes this point very clear and confirms that later tragedy was the benchmark against which Aeschylus was being measured:

αἱ τε διαθέσεις τῶν δραμάτων οὐ πολλὰς αὐτῷ περιπετείας καὶ πλοκάς ἔχουσιν
ὥς παρὰ τοῖς νεωτέροις [...]

the arrangements of his plays do not have as many reversals and complications as those of later playwrights [...] (TrGF 3 T1.5)

And again,

τὸ δὲ ἀπλοῦν τῆς δραματοποιίας εἰ μὲν τις πρὸς τοὺς μετ' αὐτὸν λογίζοιτο, φαῦ-
λον ἂν ἐκλαμβάνοι καὶ ἀπραγμάτευτον [...]

with regard to the simplicity of his dramatic composition, if one were to judge him in relation to the playwrights who succeeded him, one would find him unsophisticated and lacking elaboration [...] (TrGF 3 T1.16 [*Life of Aeschylus*], transl. Burges Watson 2014)

Furthermore, building on the point of criticism validated by Aristophanes and possibly the peripatetic circles, the *Life of Aeschylus* also reiterates the connection between the long silences of the actors and the uneventful quality of Aeschylean drama (TrGF 3 T1.6).

Examples from modern criticism. In modern times, too, Aristotle's *Poetics* and its reception were influential in shaping the notion that drama should rely on

145 Cf. Garvie 1978; Genette 1992 [1979]: 19 f.

146 For the reception of Aeschylus in Hellenistic period, see Montanari 2009 and Nervegna 2018; for the Roman period, see Harrison 2018 and Gianvittorio-Ungar 2022; for the Byzantine period Simelidis 2018.

eventful, unitary plot and on action instead of narrative.¹⁴⁷ This has been conducive to ascribing Aeschylean tragedy to an immature stage in the history of the genre. What the critical positions presented below (all of them dating from the past hundred years or so) have in common is a dissatisfaction, voiced in frustrated to apologetic tones, with the scarcity of action, plot minimalism, abundance of narrative, and archaic halo of Aeschylus' drama. Reginald P. Winnington-Ingram, for instance, accounted for the most striking qualities of *Persians* with more than a hint of embarrassment:

Persae is not the greatest of the surviving plays of Aeschylus: it may well be the least great. [...] I suggest that, in point of construction and dramatic craftsmanship, it is a finer piece of work than it is sometimes credited with being.¹⁴⁸

The comparison with later realizations and notions of drama may be more or less explicit, but it is apparent that the models of Sophocles and Euripides loom large in Aeschylean criticism and amplify the perception of deficit. Humphrey D.F. Kitto, for instance, put considerable emphasis on the "primitivity" of Aeschylean drama,¹⁴⁹ but also admitted that "[w]hat we here have is pure drama; not indeed the form we are accustomed to, but one which we can readily understand once we lay aside prepossessions derived from later forms."¹⁵⁰ Even more recent studies have addressed the hermeneutic implications of overt and covert references to later standards and to Aristotle's understanding of tragedy cursorily at best.¹⁵¹

The lion's share in the criticism of Aeschylus' immaturity regards phenomena of narrativity and chorality, on the one hand, and the shortcomings of the action and plot, on the other. It is important to recognize that these issues are

147 See, e.g., Kannicht 1976; Schmid 1976.

148 Winnington-Ingram 1983: 15.

149 E.g., Kitto 1961 [1939]: 31 speaks of *Persians*, *Seven*, and *Prometheus* as "historically or biologically [...] primitive."

150 Kitto 1961 [1939]: 40.

151 E.g., Goldhill 1986: 3: "although Aristotle described tragic drama as the imitation of an action [...], to the modern reader these plays have often seemed less than action-packed"; Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 109: "Aeschylean plots are frequently simple by the standards of later tragedy; even less [than in *Suppliant Women*], after all, happens in *The Persians*, where, prosaically speaking, the only difference between the situation at the beginning and at the end is that by the end the defeat at Salamis (and the coming defeat at Plataea) are known about in Susa: and what would we think of *Agamemnon* if it had ended at or about line 1073?" Similar judgements also regard Aeschylus' fragmentary plays: see, e.g., Alfani 1997: 264–269 on *Niobe*.

correlated. The issue of narrativity is sometimes addressed in different (more casual or pejorative) terms, for example as excessive “speech,” “talk,” and “wordiness” or as epic flavour; yet this variety does not obfuscate that the target of criticism is the abundance of narratives. The lapidary remark of Jan M. Bremer that “nothing happens, really, it is just talk, talk, talk”¹⁵² in *Persians* lends itself well to epitomizing the correlation between scarce action (“nothing happens”), overabundant narrative (“it is just talk, talk, talk”), and the readers’ dissatisfaction with these attributes, but this is by no means an isolated case. To continue with Kitto, he explains the epic flavour of *Persians* by saying that “much of the action must be presented through narrative” and that (in this play as well as in *Prometheus*) “the action is partly past action, partly inner action [...]; in either case, necessarily conveyed in a series of speeches”¹⁵³—of course, “speeches” about past action are messenger reports and other embedded narratives. A subtler example is a time-honored assessment of *Prometheus* on which there is still broad consensus

It is episodic and disjointed, it lacks forward dramatic momentum, and it is on the whole sluggish and wordy [...]. The two scenes that we would call dramatic come at the beginning and the end [...]: everything in between is stagnation.¹⁵⁴

The only two moments which are here considered to be “dramatic”—i.e., the beginning, when the protagonist is bound to a rock, and the end, when he is plunged into the abyss—are the only ones which feature action in *Prometheus*, while the long narratives by the protagonist take up the central and largest part of the play: this means that the sluggishness, wordiness, and stagnation have a lot to do with these narratives.

Aeschylean narrativity promotes peculiarities in the plot and a supposedly archaic halo—which in turn have often been related to each other and to insufficiency of action. Reservations regarding plots described as actionless, static, inconsistent, and even non-existent surface throughout the history of Aeschylean scholarship,¹⁵⁵ and they significantly contribute towards the per-

¹⁵² Bremer 1976: 29.

¹⁵³ Kitto 1961 [1939]: 33 and 40.

¹⁵⁴ Taplin 1977: 467, who here quotes from Nestle.

¹⁵⁵ E.g., Spring 1917: 189 (on *Prometheus*): “the entire play is nothing but an unfolding of conditions already existent. A more static drama is almost unimaginable”; Lavagnini 1927: 296 (on *Persians*): “Per la natura stessa del soggetto, la tragedia non consentiva azione, svolgimento organico da una situazione iniziale a una situazione finale attraverso un intreccio, esterno o interno,” p. 298: “Azione drammatica [...] in tutto questo, non c’è [...],” p. 300: “L’argomento non si prestava ad una drammatizzazione effettiva dell’azione, che non v’era,

ception of Aeschylus as immature or “primitive.” Some examples regarding *Persians* can illustrate this link: U. von Wilamowitz held that the play’s “connection is not only loose but poor” and wondered how “by 472 BCE Aeschylus could still compose a tragedy devoid of any unity and action”;¹⁵⁶ B. Lavagnini thought that the subject did not allow for an organic development of the plot and concluded that this was “a more ancient form of Greek tragedy, a form which was not yet dramaturgically well-developed”;¹⁵⁷ B. Snell felt that “*Suppliants* and *Persians* strike us as archaic especially because they do not construct consistent plots, but let a series of great pictures pass by. There is no structure to the action in which any element, however small, can be integrated”;¹⁵⁸ A. Lesky judged that “the play’s architectonics appears to be still archaic compared to plays from the later classical period”;¹⁵⁹ and H. Broadhead explained the loose and actionless quality of the plot as “archaisms” which “give promise of what is to come, but still retain something of the stiffness and austerity of earlier work.”¹⁶⁰

Examples from today’s criticism. In *Postdramatisches Theater* (1999), theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann laid the foundations for a novel understand-

ma ammetteva una espressione essenzialmente lirica della passione”; Albini 1972 a: 23: “[...] nei *Persiani* è assente l’intreccio, non ci sono mutamenti di situazione, né precipitare di eventi”; Albini 1972 b: 51: “Ma non potrebbero essere indizi di una drammaticità elementare, nelle *Supplici*, la povertà d’azione [...]? Indubbiamente poco succede [...] e in ogni caso niente di esplosivo”; Rosenmeyer 1982: 31 ff., with regard to *Prometheus* and *Seven* speaks of “an action with a minimum forward movement” and adds that “*Prometheus* has no plot whatever”; Griffith 1983: 12 f. (on *Prometheus*): “it lacks the organic unity characteristic of most Attic tragedies.”

- 156 von Wilamowitz 1914: 42: “die Verknüpfung ist nicht nur lose, sondern unzureichend” and p. 48: “Es ist sehr beherzigenswert, dass Aischylos noch 472 eine Tragödie ohne jede Einheit und Handlung bauen konnte.”
- 157 Lavagnini 1927: 301. “forma più antica, e non ancora drammaticamente evoluta, della tragedia greca.”
- 158 Snell 1928: 68: “*Hiketiden* und *Perser* wirken archaisch vor allem deswegen, weil sie nicht eine folgerichtige Handlung aufbauen, sondern eine Reihe großer Bilder an uns vorüberziehen lassen. Ein Plan der Handlung, dem sich auch das Geringste eingliedert, existiert nicht.” Similarly, Bees 1993, 36 describes *Prometheus* as “kein homogenes Drama, sondern eine Aneinanderreihung loser Szenen.”
- 159 Lesky 1972 [1956]: 84: “Gewiß erscheint die Architektonik des Stücks im Vergleich zu Dramen der Hochklassik noch archaisch.”
- 160 Cf. also Broadhead 1960: xxxii: “The construction is faulty: the three main scenes have little organic connection and might rather have formed a trilogy [...]. There is a lack of a clear focal point in the action [...], and there is no plot, as this term is commonly understood”; p. xxxv: “*Persae* is virtually devoid of the ‘action’ characteristic of a gradually developing ‘plot’ [...]”; p. xl: “The three main acts are connected in parallel rather than in series.”

ing of non-mimetic theatre forms which, unlike “Aristotelian” drama, centre on stage presence and agency rather than representation and plot.¹⁶¹ What is remarkable in our context is that Lehmann came to theorize modern and modernist non-dramatic theatre after an investigation of Greek tragedy which might be seen as preparatory, *Theater und Mythos* (1991). Classicists in the German-speaking area received these ideas particularly well, combined them with elements from ritual studies, and applied them in various ways to the study of ancient Greek theatre. Accordingly, Greek theatre was interpreted as “pre-dramatic” instead of representational or plot-driven and as especially concerned with (choral) reenactments of rituals such as *sparagmos*, *hikesia*, and *goos*. Plays like Aeschylus’ *Persians* and Euripides’ *Bacchantes* lend themselves well to such readings.¹⁶²

Pre-dramatic approaches tackle the cultural functions and distinctive aesthetics of Greek tragedy and comedy in thought-provoking ways. On the other hand, they somehow reiterate critical paradigms which interpret ostensible characteristics of Greek drama (such as the openness of the plots and the prevalence of narrative and choral response over action) as the absence of their opposites—in other words, they focus on what the plays are perceived to be missing instead of what they exhibit. A related problem is that the notion and the very label of pre-dramatic encourage contrastive, evolutionary or teleological readings of the history of drama, as other periodizing categories based on pres and posts do in other contexts (e.g., *Vorsokratiker*, *Vorplatoniker*).¹⁶³ Chapter Four will argue that Aeschylean drama is significantly concerned with *mimēsis* and the representation of storyworlds; *Persians*, for instance, represents nothing less than the greatest battle ever fought by the Greeks up to the fifth century BCE and the incipient collapse of the mighty Persian kingdom. However, what strikes us as un- (or pre-)dramatic is that Aeschylus, unlike later playwrights, tends to represent these events by means of narrative rather than action, and that such narrativity promotes features which later drama ideally avoided.

Alternatives. While the samples of Aeschylean criticism discussed above are representative of a majority view, there also is the minority view that our perspective of Aeschylus should be fine-tuned in ways which owe less to later practices and Aristotelizing discourses regarding drama. Guido Paduano, for example, was dispirited that

161 See Chapter 1.2.3/*Pre-dramatic theatre*.

162 E.g., Bierl 2009.

163 Cf. Gianvittorio 2010: xvi f. on these categories and their limits.

even quite brilliant readings [...] have often pointed out the lack of action and seen in *Persians* some kind of monochord and static lamentation,

and suggested that alternative notions of tragedy should be envisioned to deal with such plays:

We must recognize in this a deliberate dramaturgical choice which, while refusing notions of the tragic as *καταστροφή* and *ἀπροσδόκητον*, opts for a different pattern of composition which realizes the tragic as cumulative production of knowledge. The “lack of action” boils down to this.¹⁶⁴

About two decades later and once again with regard to *Persians*, Edith Hall still needed to point out that

[d]iscussions about its ontological status as a tragedy proceed from wholly anachronistic definitions of “the tragic” which cannot be identified before Aristotle’s *Poetics* at least a century later.¹⁶⁵

Although no book-length treatment of Aeschylean poetics ensued, there were remarkable openings. The study of Michelini (1982), for instance, had the potential to re-assess peculiarities of *Persians* such as the paratactic structure of the play and the meagre use of the second actor with *ad hoc* frames and a more refined genre-historical perspective. However, her overarching discussion of “archaisms” (*sic*) and the reading of *Persians* as a document of an unripe phase in the evolution of tragedy undermined this potential.¹⁶⁶ Smethurst (1989) dared to look for cross-cultural terms of comparison which enlighten and legitimize more slow-motion forms of drama; while this move can effectively decontextualize Aeschylus from Aristotelizing horizons, the comparative agenda encouraged parallelisms and the analysis of particular aspects of Aeschylus and Japanese Nō drama more than broader poetological reflection.

164 The two quotations are from Paduano 1978: 12, note 1: “anche letture più acute [...] hanno spesso insistito sulla mancanza d’azione per cui i *Persiani* sarebbero una sorta di lamentazione monocorde e statica,” and p. 32: “Dobbiamo riconoscere in ciò una scelta drammaturgica precisa, che rifiuta la *καταστροφή* e la concezione del tragico come *ἀπροσδόκητον* a beneficio di un altro schema costruttivo, che prevede il tragico come elaborazione crescente del conoscere. Ecco dunque la ‘mancanza di azione.’”

165 Hall 1996: 16.

166 See, e.g., Michelini 1982: 69: “This kind of mimesis, which stops at a point intermediate between the full impersonation of a mythical protagonist and a flat narration of myth, is a plausible beginning for drama, or for proto-drama.”

Actually, one of the most radical attempts to adjust the readers' perspective was made long ago, when an impossibly young professor of Greek argued that ancient drama was not concerned with action at all:

It was a real calamity for aesthetics that the word “drama” has been always translated as “action.” Not only Wagner is mistaken in this point but the entire world and even the philologists, who should know better. Ancient drama envisioned great *displays of pathos*—and in fact dispensed with action (it allotted action to *before* the play's beginning or *beyond* the scene).¹⁶⁷

However, Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas and *enthousiasmos* sparked more animosity than inspiration in the community of nineteenth-century *Altertumswissenschaftler*, who were by this time reclaiming classical antiquity for professional scholarship as opposed to Hellenomania, and the ostracizing climate further obfuscated Nietzsche's difficult message.

167 Nietzsche 1980 [1888]: 32: “Es ist ein wahres Unglück für die Aesthetik gewesen, dass man das Wort Drama immer mit ‘Handlung’ übersetzt hat. Nicht Wagner allein irrt hierin; alle Welt ist noch im Irrthum; die Philologen sogar, die es besser wissen sollten. Das antike Drama hatte grosse *Pathosszenen* im Auge—es schloss gerade die Handlung aus (verlegte sie *vor* den Anfang oder *hinter* die Scene)” (original italics). The passage continues as follows: “Das Wort Drama ist dorischer Herkunft: und nach dorischem Sprachgebrauch bedeutet es ‘Ereigniss’, ‘Geschichte’, beide Worte in hieratischem Sinne. Das älteste Drama stellte die Ortslegende dar, die ‘heilige Geschichte’, auf der die Gründung des Cultus ruhte (– also kein Thun, sondern ein Geschehen: δρᾶν heisst im Dorischen gar nicht ‘thun’).”

PART 2

Applications



A Functional Analysis

3.1 Criteria and Categories

3.1.1 *Criteria*

Segmenting the texts. Chapter Three analyses the text of *Persians*, *Seven, Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus* in ways that should be functional to the investigation of Aeschylus' dramaturgy as conducted in Chapter Four. In particular, the task of Chapters 3.1.1. to 3.1.4 is to discuss the criteria and categories that are relevant to the text analysis. This paves the way for Chapters 3.2.1 to 3.2.4, which will mutually delimit manageable text sections and classify them according to the categories of action, narrative, and response—as a consequence, these chapters will be neither résumés of the plays nor thematic commentaries, but will account for the reasons which motivate the classification of each text section. Eventually, the synoptic tables of Chapter 4.1.1 will visualize the outcomes of the analysis.

Analyzing longer texts implies parcelling them into minor units. Almost invariably, the criteria for delimiting text sections from each other vary with the premises and purposes of the analysis, and hence delimiting text sections is in itself an act of interpretation. This is true for our analysis too, which is not supposed to be above alternatives and counterarguments, not least because it is based on controversial or negotiable notions (e.g., action and narrative); even so, the analysis will facilitate, in Chapter Four, the identification of dramaturgic traits that are distinctive of Aeschylus. Diverse examples can illustrate how analyses of the tragic text in manageable sections depend on goals and interpretations. Thematic and plot-related concerns, for instance, have dictated a number of criteria for dividing tragic texts into parts: Aristotle—followed by many—identified the two fundamental moments of complication (*δέσις/desis*) and denouement (*λύσις/lysis*), whereas others have recognized three, four, or more such supposedly essential moments.¹ Formal and formalism-inspired concerns about the morphology of drama rekindled the interest in tragic components

1 *Poet.* 1455 b24 (see West 1990 [*Studies*]: 3–25). For alternative segmentations see, e.g., Schade-waldt 1974 (*agnoia, gnōsis, and pathos*); Seeck 1984 (*Spannungssituation, Krisis, and Reaktion*); Jens 1974 [1955]: 102 (*Erwartung, nähere Einkreisung des Problems, Entscheidung, and Lage nach der Katastrophe*). De Jong 2001: viii comments on the difficulties of isolating text sections for the purpose of thematic analyses.

originally identified by Aristotle such as *parodos*, episodes, *exodos*, and other not entirely clear-cut constituents.² And again, Taplin (1977), being committed to enlightening stagecraft, has apportioned Aeschylean plays according to (text-encoded markers of) the actors' stage entries and exits. Our analysis will segment Aeschylus' plays according to the categories of action, narrative, and response.

The text sections will be delimited and classified according to the ways in which the character utterances deal with the storyworld and its events (cf. below on *Event*). While the relevant categories will be more minutely discussed in the dedicated chapters below, they can be succinctly described as follows:

- action is when the character utterances chiefly represent events that take place in the play's here and now,
- narrative is when the character utterances chiefly represent events that take place in spatiotemporalities different from the play's here and now, and
- response is when the character utterances chiefly express feelings and thoughts relating to previously represented events.

Three examples may suffice to explain these categories. When the chorus of *Persians* summon Darius' ghost (ll. 623–680), the necromantic ritual takes place in the play's here and now, while and because the chorus say what they say; accordingly, this text section will qualify as an action. On the other hand, when Prometheus predicts the fate of Io (*Prom.* 700–876), his utterances represent events occurring in the future and in exotic regions instead of the play's here and now; therefore, the prophecy will count as a narrative. Finally, when the Danaids in *Suppliant Women* sing their gratitude to the city of Argos after they have been granted asylum (ll. 625–709), their utterances do not so much represent any new events as process events that have been previously represented (the concession of asylum); accordingly, this section will qualify as a response.

Since text sections of a manageable size usually mix utterances of different types instead of being purely enactive, narrative, or responsive, the analysis also avails itself of two auxiliary criteria that can be called quantitative and functional. For example, a section may consist for the most part of narrative utterances but also include response-like elements that may or may not contribute to the narrative itself, such as the narrator's own views and feelings regarding the events that are being narrated, pieces of gnomic wisdom that are supposed to explain them, and so on.³ Yet as long as the responsive elements

2 *Poet.* 1452b14–24. Although going back to the authority of Aristotle, this type of segmentation was unusual in ancient scholarship (see Wilamowitz 1914: 1 ff.); in the twentieth century it was important to studies such as Kranz 1933 and Jens 1971, to mention just two important cases.

3 Chatman 1990: 1–21, Pfister 2001 [1977]: 281 (*Grenzfälle narrativer Vermittlung*), and others

remain incidental (quantitative criterion) and/or they appear to be used to enrich the narrative (functional criterion), they will be included in the narrative section. Such approximations are necessary to avoid text segmentation giving way to fragmentation, since dealing with very small portions of the text would interfere with the investigation of how narrative and other components interact with each other. However, the boundaries drawn to disentangle narrative, response, and action from each other are not as clear-cut as they may appear, and the corresponding domains will often be observed to overlap. Ultimately, text sections can only qualify as narrative, responsive, or enactive depending on which category strikes us as quantitatively and/or functionally prevalent. In this sense, the analysis offers a simplified but serviceable image of the text, whereas “the image must not by any means reproduce all the qualities of that which it imitates, if it is to be an image.”⁴

On the other hand, formal and performance (e.g., metrical) criteria are scarcely influential for our analysis. It is true that some forms correlate with each category more often than others, as for example the *rhēsis* often correlates with narrative and choral song with response. However, action, narrative, and response manifest themselves in a variety of forms: as considered above, the choral song of *Persians* enacts the necromantic ritual in the play’s here and now, and we will encounter a good number of narratives in the form of dialogues or songs as well as responses in spoken lines.⁵

Event. The categories of action, narrative, and response essentially depend on the concept of event, which therefore needs to be elucidated. According to Aristotle, there is no *mimēsis* without storyworld or plot (*mythos*) and no *mythos* without *pragmata*, which I will tentatively translate as events.⁶ Events are thus essential to poetry and other mimetic arts. But what is an event? The question has been given many answers, which significantly vary according to the disciplines which formulated them.⁷ In this study, “event” is an umbrella term to

have considered how diverse text types can be used for narrative purposes. Cf. Chapter 3.1.3/ *Narrative and description*.

4 Plat. *Crat.* 432 b.

5 An example of dialogic narrative is *Suppl.* 291–324; see Chapter 4.4.1 for other examples and references. An example of narrative in song is *Suppl.* 40–77; cf. Pattoni 1988; Rutherford 2007; Nicolai 2011; Gianvittorio 2012 b. An example of response in spoken lines is *Pers.* 739–764.

6 Chapters 2.1.1/ *Representing storyworlds in poetry* and 4.3.1/ *Aristotle on plot* also deal with these issues.

7 For examples from literary studies, see Dannenberg 2004: 52f.; Andronikashvili 2009: 33 note 94; for philosophical angles Sinn 1972; Käppel 1998: 9–38; Casati / Varzi 2010; for narra-

indicate a self-contained element in the plot which is represented by means of character speech, and hence text-encoded. More precisely, I understand events as actual or attempted modifications of the *status quo* as they manifest themselves in the characters' utterances: for example, the physical and mental agencies, interactions, and experiences to which the characters verbally refer, inasmuch as these phenomena modify the situation in which the characters are (or presume to be) and the premises on which they act—e.g., assess their environment, set their goals, and make decisions. Accordingly, events can regard the inner as well as the outer life of the characters—however customary, this distinction can be tricky.⁸ Being about transformation, events naturally tend to have causes and consequences, meaning that they easily develop from and into other events. We can often identify events by the consequences they produce: what happens in a situation A causes, necessarily or in all likelihood as Aristotle says, a situation B which is (perceived as) different from the previous one. In *Poetics*, *metabasis/metaballō* express both the qualitative and the diachronic dimension of the transformation.⁹

Since modifications can only be assessed by comparison, it is hard to say beforehand which kind of agencies, experiences, and interactions constitute events and which do not; in fact, similar agencies can be transformative in one play but not in another. The context makes the difference, as theories of plot and games have often pointed out.¹⁰ One may consider the case of war survivors returning home: Odysseus' return to Ithaca and Agamemnon's return to Argos after the Trojan War constitute events in the plot of Homer's *Odyssey* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* respectively, because these returns ostensibly modify the situation in which the characters (the returning warriors, their spouses, subjects, etc.) find themselves and redirect the course of the events. But it is more open to interpretation whether Xerxes' return to Susa after the Battle of Salamis modifies in itself the factual or perceived situation of the characters in *Persians*.

tological angles van Dijk 1974: 277–281; Korthals 2003: 86–98; Herman 2008. On the related concept of situation see, e.g., Werling 1989: 92–150, 159f.; Andronikashvili 2009: 186–218.

8 The distinction is between the characters' psychological and cognitive developments on the one hand and the manifestations thereof on the other has become quite standard starting from Lessing: see, e.g., Werling 1989: 40f.; Asmuth 2009 [1980]: 6f. on *innere* vs. *äußere Handlung*. On the potential arbitrariness of the distinction, see Chapter 3.1.2/*Event-constituting speech*.

9 See, e.g., Flashar 1976.

10 E.g., Pavel 1985: 17 and Lowe 2000: 51, in defining the rules of their “plot-grammars,” refer to game theory and the notion of move, which bears resemblances to what is here called event and is contextually defined; and Schmid 2017, who further develops the structuralist understanding of event (established by Lotman).

Modifications of the *status quo* can be more or less proactive and intentional, meaning that the characters can produce or endure them;¹¹ also, the modifications can satisfy the intentions and motivations of the characters, be utterly undesired, or everything in between.¹² For example, Hermes' attempt to change Prometheus' mind (*Prom.* 944–1079) ends up modifying the situation in a way the speaker does not intend: since Prometheus' reaction to the threats is defiance instead of compliance, his punishment becomes harsher instead of milder. Xerxes, who went to war to defeat the Greeks, ends up being defeated, and Oedipus, who wanted to kill a passer-by (if anyone at all)¹³ and marry a queen, finds out that he has killed his own father and married his own mother. In these as in many other cases, the tragic characters proactively try to modify the situation to their own advantage with results which are beyond their control or go against their intentions, as epitomized by Aristotle's notion of "error" (*hamartia*).¹⁴

Conation. Vain attempts by the characters to modify the situation will count as events as well. In this case, the characters make efforts to achieve some goals but do not accomplish anything—that is, neither the desired results nor (as in the case of the *hamartia*) undesired ones. In Attic tragedy, vain attempts of this sort often consist of rhetorical flops in which a character fails to persuade or dissuade another. For example, in *Prometheus* the situation looks very much the

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- 11 Arist. *Poet.* 1452b8–10, 1459b11–12 considers what the characters endure (*pathē, pathēmata*) as components of the plot (*mythou merē*) just as much as what they accomplish, while later sources such as Anon. *Peri tragōidias* p. 26 Perusino draw a line of distinction between *praxis* and *pathos*.
- 12 Building on Aristotle's correlation between *praxis* and *prohairesis* (e.g., Elm 2005), on philosophical theories of action (e.g., Leist 2007; Wilson / Shpall 2012), and on cognate discourses in drama theory (e.g., Stierle 1976), some scholars see the characters' *intentional* agencies as key to drama and/or plot: e.g., Hübler 1973: 10; Pavel 1985: 17; Pfister 2001 [1977]: 269–271 (who distinguishes between *Handlung* and *Geschehen* on the basis of intentionality); Werling 1989: 35 f., 45, 66, 73, 157 f. For comparable positions regarding Greek drama, see, e.g., Snell 1928: 7–43, who builds on the meaning of *δρᾶν* and *δρᾶμα* as acting with specific purposes; Schmitt 2008: 195; Stenzel 2012: 15 f. *Contra*, e.g., Asmuth 2009 [1980]: 7. At any rate, non-anthropomorphic modifiers such as natural disasters play a minor role in Greek literature—meaning that it is not so much bolts and storms that kill random people as Zeus' bolts and Poseidon's storms that punish their enemies.
- 13 Oedipus' murder may be unintentional and the circumstance that he uses a club instead of a more purpose-made weapon has been seen as corroborating this view. For two quite opposite readings of this murder in legal terms, see Harris 2010 and Sommerstein 2011.
- 14 See *Poet.* 1453a12–16, on which much "scholarly blood [has been] shed" (Dyer 1965: 658) and none will be added here.

same before and after Oceanus' attempt to mollify Prometheus.¹⁵ Such events will be referred to as conative or conations to emphasize how they do not have an ostensible impact on subsequent events; in other words, they do not redirect the course of the tragic events along a different trajectory from the one which—according to necessity or likelihood—they would have followed anyway. Even so, conative events can be presumed to affect the way in which the characters perceive the situation they live in. Prometheus, for instance, learns at the very least that Oceanus would be happy to help him, and this may even affect his relationship to the Oceanids.

Conative events illustrate how *mimēsis* is much more than plot, and play an important role in Aeschylean drama.¹⁶ While they fail to add new elements to the plot development, they greatly contribute towards shaping the characters (*ēthopoia*), creating or prolonging retarding effects, and intensifying moods and atmospheres, to mention just a few examples. Like a football match in which a lot happens but which ends 0:0, a play which only featured conative events—for example, a play in which the power and spheres of influence of antagonizing characters are well-balanced and their agencies invalidate or counteract each other—may be very eventful, dynamic, and packed with action even when the plot resembles a zero-sum game.

Representation in and beyond the text. Chapter Two has argued that, in the classical period, narrative and action were embodied practices of representing the storyworld more than ways of modelling it in text. On the other hand, our analysis will deal with these modi of representation as they manifest themselves to the reader in character speech—or rather a text reflection thereof devoid of expressive qualities of the voice. The motivations for doing so are extrinsic and practical, since performance-based forms of representation are either to some degree encoded *viz* implicitly reflected in the text or are otherwise non-detectable for readers. In truth, the very distinction between text-

15 Cf. Tomashevsky 1965 [1925]: 70, who distinguishes between dynamic elements “which change the situation” and static ones which do not. *Contra* Schmid 2017: 234: “change of state that constitutes an event is not inchoative (begun), conative (attempted), or durative (confined to an ongoing process) but rather is resultative in that it reaches completion in the narrative world.”

16 Even fragmentary plays appear to confirm the importance of conation in Aeschylean drama. E.g., *Niobe* and *Myrmidons* had to prominently feature the attempt of Tantalus to comfort his daughter (TrGF 3 F154 a.10 f. and 160) and the paraenesis of the chorus of Myrmidons to Achilles (TrGF 3 F131 and 132). These failed attempts to modify the situation were important to Aeschylus' dramatization of the two myths, for Aeschylus' Niobe did not allow Tantalus to console her and therefore ultimately died of grief, and Achilles only started to be more cooperative thanks to the persuasive skills of Phoenix (TrGF 3 F132 b).

based and performance-based representation is an abstraction when it comes to ancient Greek theatre, in which language, bodily, visual, music, and dance codes complemented each other in a mimetic continuum. Even so, the distinction makes sense in studies that need to resort to representational notions that are largely independent of the great unknown of the stage performance. Also, text-based notions of action and narrative are better suited to the purpose of re-locating Aeschylus' texts in a different area of our own map of literary genres (see Chapter 1.1.1).

In text, the objects of the tragic *mimēsis* coincide with utterances and speech acts by the characters—in iambic trimeters, recitative, or song—such as threats, pleas, prayers, accusations, and so on. Like other types of agencies, the characters' utterances and speech acts will also count as “events” on condition that they (attempt to) modify the situation in which the characters find themselves or perceive themselves to be. Accordingly, not all that which philosophers of language regard as speech acts—e.g., thanking, greeting, wishing, etc.—will count as events in the context of drama.¹⁷ For example, when the Danaids give thanks for being admitted to Argos (*Suppl.* 625–709), they do not modify nor intend to modify the situation in which they find themselves. Instead, their supplication offers a perfect example of speech acts which do constitute an event in the play's context (*Suppl.* 348–437). These utterances—the only remains of a multimodally staged ritual—are motivated by the speakers' intention to modify the situation: the Danaids say what they say to receive protection from the Argives, and their speech acts are key to transforming the suppliants into refugees, with all that follows for each and every character of the play. In fact, even an unsuccessful supplication (i.e., an infelicitous speech act) would, according to necessity or likelihood, redirect the course of the events—even if it is in an undesirable direction: if King Pelasgus had turned down the Danaids, they would probably have committed suicide (as they threaten to do), and such a terrible act would have jeopardized the safety of Argos (a risk which the Argives recognize).

The example of the Danaids also confirms how utterances were nearly inseparable from the corresponding stage agencies, because in rites as well as in theatre renderings thereof it was the coalescence of language and physical agencies—that is, the way words were embodied and acts verbalized—which carried meaning. For example, rites of supplication featured not only appropriate prayers and appeals but also the holding up of olive branches wound with

17 Chapter 4.2.1 will return to speech acts.

stripes of wool and embracing the knees or touching the chin of the supplicated ones, and ceremonies for the dead feature specific invocations along with the pouring of libations, the beating of the head and/or chest.

It is possible, of course, that some objects of the tragic *mimēsis* challenge representability in language and elude the textual dimension. However, the (comforting) premise on which the performance turn in classics has been working since its beginning is that, while we know painfully little about the staging of individual plays, essential information is in any case encoded or reflected in the plays' text. This perception might be influenced by the philologists' emphasis on text, but on the other hand even theatre-makers have frequently highlighted the affinity of Greek theatre to *logos*.¹⁸ In Attic tragedy, the character speech often comments on performance aspects that would otherwise remain off the readers' radar. In the minority of cases in which the words and gestures gain relative independence from each other, words seem to be better off without gestures than gestures without words:¹⁹ for example, the murder of Agamemnon in Aeschylus' homonymous play is represented by means of character speech (Agamemnon's screams from the backstage) while the killer and the victim are offstage. Our analysis will observe how in *Persians*, *Seven*, *Suppliant Women*, and *Prometheus*, the character speech that comments on actual or imagined performance aspects such as stage movements, entries, and exits is indeed frequent—and brief, which makes it possible to include it in the active, narrative, or responsive sections in which it is embedded according to the quantitative criterion.

Along these lines, Taplin (1977) and others have rationalized the widespread view that Aeschylus lavishly resorted to visual effects (*opsis*) and to theatre machines—especially *mēchanē* and *ekkyklēma*—by arguing that scenes of great theatrical impact would rely more on the power of language and onstage agency than on special effects, since “[s]pectators whose imaginations have not been spoiled by realistic stage management will ‘see’ what the dramatist tells them they are seeing.”²⁰ In fact, later testimonies about Aeschylus' propensity for spectacular effects might easily have drawn inspiration from his texts, which have a striking capacity to conjure up powerful scenic visions in the mind's eye.²¹ Nevertheless, ideas and phantasies about the extravagance of Aeschylus'

18 E.g., Pier Paolo Pasolini liked to compare his own *Teatro di parola* to ancient Greek tragedy on the basis that both rely more on words than onstage action (see Pasolini 1968).

19 E.g., Taplin 1977 and 1978; cf. Mastronarde 1979: 2.

20 Taplin 1977: 32. On Aeschylus' spectacular theatre, see, e.g., Murray 1940: 37 ff.; more recently, Podlecki 2013 has reconsidered the issue.

21 See, e.g., TrGF 3 T1.2 and 14.

stagecraft continue to surface, for example when it comes to the hypertrophic choruses of *Suppliant Women*, the entry of the “winged” chorus of the Oceanids in *Prometheus*, and the disappearance of Prometheus in the same play. But it is questionable whether *chorēgoi* felt compelled to pay for fifty chorus members by the circumstance that, according to myth, Danaus had fifty daughters, or whether more than a dozen of Athenians trusted some unheard-of device to float above the stage because the poet liked the novelty. Describing the chorus as coming on wings can be an effective means to instruct the audience about how they should envision things which are not being shown. Interestingly, media studies have observed how mimetic arts tend to refine conventional as opposed to realistic means to represent objects which somehow elude language, and how audiences learn to interpret correctly such means when given enough exposure to the media.²² While conventional means of representation usually serve functional purposes, they also tend to acquire an aesthetic value on their own terms and engender representational traditions. This is to say that even in the eventuality that, in the fifth century BCE, an affordable theatre machine—say, a car suspended by a crane—had existed which could have allowed the entire chorus to safely enter the stage, this would not have needed to translate into a revolution of the traditional *parodos* seen as a set of practices and inherited aesthetics. Thus, arguing that Aeschylean theatre relied on language more than technology does not circumfuse it with an aura of primitivism, but acknowledges the power of living traditions—and the circumstance that representational uses of voice, song, or song-and-dance can be extremely sophisticated.²³

3.1.2 Action

Event-constituting speech. Meaning is the product of the ways in which lexemes are used, and the uses of “action” vary greatly depending on the contexts and specialized vocabularies in which they occur. This makes action a protean word which needs to be clarified. In discourses about literature, action usually indicates one or more of the following concepts:²⁴

22 E.g., Greenfield 1984 refers to empirical studies on how the audiences of films become familiar with conventional means of representing mental activities such as thoughts and dreams. Usually, audiences correctly interpret mind-reading signals such as blurring effects in image and sound to indicate the characters' dreams or daydreams, or the camera's close up of the actor's face combined with the sound of the actor's voice without visible movements of the lips as an expression of the character's thoughts.

23 Arist. *Rhet.* 1404 a.

24 Cf. Pfister 2001 [1977]: 265–273; Asmuth 2000. Of course, the following levels of action can interact with each other: cf. Rosenmeyer 1982: 311 f.

- plot, that is the ways in which storyworlds and events are arranged in a mimetic work; for example, the way in which Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* organizes and relates to each other elements such as the return, betrayal, and murder of Agamemnon;²⁵
- performance, that is the arts, skills, and media through which a mimetic work is materially interpreted (e.g., staged, sung, and danced); for example, the way in which the actor playing Agamemnon steps on an ominously red cloth and self-confidently walks into the palace;²⁶
- event-constituting speech, that is the way in which the characters of a mimetic work make something happen precisely during and because of their utterances; for example, when Agamemnon says “Alas! I am struck deep with a mortal blow!” (*Ag.* 1343) and the reader or spectator knows that Agamemnon is being murdered.²⁷

In this study, “action” and the adjective “enactive” will exclusively indicate the last of the aforementioned concepts, that is a type of character speech which is in itself constitutive of the events. Events represented by means of action take place in the dramatic here and now while and because the characters say what they say—they are immanent to the characters' speech.²⁸ As a consequence, action always features speaking characters who are personally involved in the events—whereas narrative can also feature speaking characters who are non-involved or peripherally involved such as eyewitnesses (see below). For example, in the scene of mutual recognition or *anagnōrisis* between Orestes and Electra in *Libation Bearers* (*Ch.* 212–245), the recognition takes place in the dramatic here and now through Orestes' and Electra's utterances, which present and assess the evidence about the identity of the newcomer. These utterances enact the recognition inasmuch as they are made by the very char-

25 Chapter 4.3.1 will return to the notion of plot.

26 For different understandings of performance in theatre studies, see, e.g., von Brincken / Englhart 2008: 25. With reference to the Greek culture, notions of impersonation (*hypokrisis*) and embodiment apply not only to theatre but also, for instance, to choral poetry, epic, oratory, and dance: see, e.g., Nagy 2002.

27 This last case, which is about a murder represented by means of words rather than stage acts, illustrates that while speech and embodiment often go hand in hand, they can also occur separately from each other. Cf. Chapter 3.1.1/*Representation in and beyond the text*.

28 See Korthals 2003: 129 ff. on *geschehenskonstituierende Rede* vs. *geschehensdarstellende Rede*. According to Korthals, the utterances by characters who are involved in the events always constitute the events themselves to some degree (they are somewhat *geschehenskonstituierend*), but he understands event constitution (*Geschehenskonstituierung*) in a scalar fashion and *geschehenskonstituierende Rede* as its fullest realization. Cf. Hempfer 1973: 161: “Aussage und Akt konstituieren sich [...] gleichzeitig, womit die allgemeinste Bestimmung des Performativen erfüllt ist.”

acters who here and now make the recognition happen. On the one hand, there would be no action in the dramatic here and now if, say, Orestes and/or Electra reported on the recognition in its aftermath. On the other hand, if Pylades instead of Orestes revealed to Electra that her brother is still alive, his utterances would still enact an event in the dramatic here and now, though this would be another event entirely—a revelation in which the speaker Pylades is personally involved. In accordance with the broader notion of event outlined in Chapter 3.1.1, action can represent modifications and phenomena regarding the outer and inner life of the characters—two domains which often overlap anyway: the recognition between Orestes and Electra exemplifies how a shift which is cognitive and emotive can transform the external situation.

Entanglements of drama, action, and dialogue. Passages such as the *anagnōrisis* in *Libation Bearers* illustrate how action can easily take the form of a dialogue between the characters involved, since it is in a stichomythia that Orestes reveals his own identity and Electra comes to believe him. Beyond recognition, one might think of many classes of events which imply character-to-character interaction and lend themselves well to dialogic rendering, such as assemblies in which arguments and counter-arguments bounce from one speaker to another and deliberations are collectively constructed, trials in which prosecutors ask the questions and defendants give or refuse answers, supplications in which the powerless asks for protection and the powerful grants or refuses it, and so on.

These examples should make it sufficiently clear that in our context, dialogue does not indicate the utterances delivered by the characters as opposed to those by a narrative instance (in this sense, virtually all drama reads as dialogue), but a particularly interactive type of character speech in which the characters frequently take turns while speaking to and with each other.²⁹ In Greek drama, this happens in a variety of stichomythic, lyric-epirrhematic, and lyric forms of exchange. Along the same lines, monologue indicates the situation in which one character speaks at some length without interruption, that is without expecting or allowing other characters to intervene in-between with questions, objections or remarks—this is what drama scholars sometimes call “fiction-inherent monologue.”³⁰

Dialogues easily correlate with action because, by promoting character-to-character interaction, they encourage shifts in the situations and mutual relationships in which the characters find themselves, and because they represent

29 Cf. Chapter 2.2.1/*Narrative and drama as text*.

30 Pfister 2001 [1977]: 131.

these changes precisely at the moment they happen through the utterances of the characters who produce the changes. This may appear to corroborate the widespread view that drama, action, and dialogue are quite naturally and transhistorically entangled with each other (see Chapter 2.2.1). Yet on the one hand, action and dialogue are by no means exclusive to drama, but are also frequent in other genres and especially in Homeric epic (see Chapter 2.1.3), and on the other hand Aeschylean drama itself presents us with alternative renderings of similar events. For example, the proceedings of an assembly are represented by means of dialogic action in *Eumenides* (*Eum.* 711–753), but by means of monologic narrative in *Suppliant Women* (*Suppl.* 600–624). In this respect, genres were not binding: Homer and Aeschylus had wide latitude in deciding whether to represent events through narrative, action, or different combinations of the two.

3.1.3 *Narrative*

Event-portraying speech. Much of that which has been said above regarding action helps in defining narrative as well. Like action, narrative indicates in what follows a way of representing events by means of character speech. While in action the events are represented as taking place in the dramatic here and now (during and because of the characters' utterances) narrative represents the events as taking place at different times and/or venues;³¹ for example, teichoscopic narratives represent the events as taking place now but elsewhere. While in action the represented events are speech-immanent and the speakers coincide with the agents, this is not the case in narrative, where the events (usually) take place independently of the narrators' identity and of their being narrated. In *Persians*, for instance, the Battle of Salamis does not take place while and because the messenger reports on it, and the narrator—an eyewitness—apparently did not fight in the battle. By contrast, the action of the necromantic ritual which summons Darius' ghost takes place while and because the chorus perform the ritual by saying what they say. It is true that narrators are identical with the agents of the narrated events in autodiegetic narratives, such as when in *Prometheus* the protagonist recalls how he has improved the human condition, or when Io narrates her own life story, yet even in these cases the events are not speech-immanent: they have occurred independently of what Prometheus and Io say now and in different spatiotemporalities.³²

31 See again Korthals 2003 on *geschehensdarstellende Rede*. For another *ad hoc* definition, see Bowles 2010: 13–30, who resorts to conversation analysis to adapt the concept of narrative to the narratives embedded in drama.

32 Autodiegetic narratives can add another element to the discussion of the speech criterion

Semantic and pragmatic dimensions. In the past decades, the concept of narrative has been embedded in increasingly multidisciplinary contexts.³³ While definitions are many and emphasize different dimensions of narrative, for the present purposes the semantic and pragmatic dimensions are particularly important.³⁴ The semantic dimension of narrative regards the “what,” that is the objects of the representation (e.g., the *res gestae*).³⁵ In what follows, narratives qualify as such on condition that they represent events in the broad meaning of the term outlined in Chapter 3.1.1—which boils down to a perceived transformation of the situation in which the characters live and function—and as taking place in spatiotemporalities different from the dramatic here and now. Due to the transformational nature of the events, the semantic dimension of narrative also has implications which may be called syntactic. These regard the ways in which the relationships between different events such as their causal, chronological, and motivational connections are constructed and represented (*historia rerum gestarum*).³⁶

More recently, pragmatic criteria have come to play a role in the understanding of what narratives are and how they work, especially in narratological approaches which question intrinsic and formal distinctions between narrative and other representational formats (such as description: see below). Acknowledging the pragmatic dimension means that even when criteria such as semantic and syntactic ones are met, there is narrative only on condition that we can detect an intention to narrate.³⁷ This helps explain why, for instance, the instructions for assembling a toy may represent logical-

(see Chapter Two), showing that narrative speech does not always manifest itself in the third person.

- 33 See, e.g., Nünning / Nünning 2002 a and 2002 b; Ryan 2004; in the field of classics, see Grethlein / Huitink / Tagliabue 2020; Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 a.
- 34 To pick out a few definitions of narrative from reference works only: for literary studies, see Schmeling / Walstra 2000; for linguistics Ruffinatto 2004; for rhetorics Pankau 199. On the elusiveness of such definitions, cf. Ehlich 2007: 371 ff.; Sommer 2008: 120; Andronikashvili 2009: 16f. This study does not draw conceptual distinctions between types and sub-types of narrative (e.g., reports, accounts, etc., on which cf. Rehbein 1984).
- 35 E.g., van Dijk 1974; Ryan 2007. Typically but not unproblematically, semantic criteria are used to tell apart narrative from “text forms” such as descripton and argument: e.g., Adam 1992; Jahn 2001: 669 ff.; Dunker 2010: 14. See below, *Narrative and description*.
- 36 Cf. Ryan 2007: 23 on different kinds of relationships (e.g., temporal, logical, and causal) between states of things; Ehlich 2007: 427–480 on the relation between structures of the *res gestae* and narrative structures. Chapter 4.3.1 will return to these aspects.
- 37 E.g., Fludernik 1996: 313: “narrative texts are [...], first and foremost, texts that are *read* narratively, whatever the formal make-up” (original italics). Cf. also Dijk 1974: 275; Rudrum 2005.

chronological sequences of moves and transformations but feel scarcely narrative: the reader *knows* that instructions are not supposed to tell a story—not even a story about how toys are assembled. More radically, narratological approaches inspired by cognitive studies emphasize the active role of narratees and narratees' contexts in making sense of narratives, whereas these ideas are also finding application in the field of classics.³⁸ Pragmatic criteria thus reaffirm the role of the narratees as interpreters, and in spite of their somehow circular logics they can effectively integrate others.

On these premises, the analysis of the plays will recognize narrative sections and delimit them from others on the basis of semantic and, on occasion, pragmatic criteria, while formal features—such as monologic *vs.* dialogic shape, identity of the narrators, etc.—will be practically irrelevant.³⁹ In fact, we will observe a great variety of narrative forms. The *rhēsis* of prologues and messenger speeches⁴⁰ may be the most typical form, but choral songs, stichomythic dialogues, and other text sections can be narrative as well.⁴¹ Moreover, not only characters who are specifically designated to report on offstage events—messengers, heralds, and scouts—act as narrators, but virtually all the play characters including the chorus. In *Suppliant Women*, for instance, Danaus repeatedly works as a scout or messenger (*Suppl.* 176–185, 600–624, 710–733) and even likens himself to an *angelos* (l. 774), while the chorus engage in a long narrative in song-and-dance which recalls the vicissitudes of Io (ll. 524–599).

Narrative and description. The distinction between narrative and description is often porous and defined by functionalities more than qualities, as the ana-

38 See, e.g., Lowe 2000: 17–36; Grethlein / Huitink / Tagliabue 2020; Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021 b.

39 On the other hand, de Jong 1991, Dickin 2009, and others also rely on formal criteria such as the frequency of third-person past-tense verbs to identify messenger narratives. Cf. Barrett 2004; Perris 2011; Easterling 2014: 226.

40 Reference works tend to define the prologue as a monologic exposition of the antefacts which is placed at the beginning of a play, though for Arist. *Poet.* 1452b18–19, *prologos* is that which precedes the chorus' entry or *parodos* and there are other exceptions as well (e.g., Schmidt 1971: 1–3). Messenger speeches are usually understood as monologues uttered by a messenger-like character who announces the catastrophe on which the tragedy centres (Perris 2011 surveys different definitions). This in turn raises the question of which characters qualify as messenger-like, whereby anonymity stands out as one of the most discussed qualities, in spite of a number of exceptions (on which see de Jong 1991: 65 note 7). Yoon 2012 excludes messengers from her study about anonymous characters in tragedy, but see Yoon 2012: 1 notes 1 and 6, pp. 22–25, and pp. 46–51 on heralds.

41 On narratives in the form of choral song see, e.g., Schol. *ad* Aristoph. *Ach.* 443 Wilson about Euripides: οὗτος γὰρ εἰσάγει τοὺς χοροὺς [...] ἱστορίας τινὰς ἀπαγγέλλοντας; Kranz 1933: 251 ff.; Panagl 1971; Pattoni 1988; Rutherford 2007; Nicolai 2011; for solo song Gianvittorio 2012 b. On dialogic narratives, see Chapters 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 with references.

lysis of our plays will exemplify. It is true that narratives deal with transformations or dynamic processes while descriptions focus on states of things or static objects (e.g., artefacts, landscapes, and characters in their physical and psychological traits), yet this only confirms description as a quite natural component of narrative inasmuch as states of things and objects are part of any transformation.⁴²

Grey areas between narrative and description have long been the object of investigation.⁴³ For modern discussions of the subject, one might think of the essay published by G. Lukács in 1936 in *Internationale Literatur* (but translated into English only in 1970), which considered the strategic use of descriptions to contribute to an overarching narrative rather than to interrupt it, and S. Chatman's arguments about how "narration can just as easily function at the service of description as vice versa."⁴⁴ In a way, the emphasis on the narrative uses of description anticipates today's pragmatic trends in narratology. In this context, the difference between semantic-based and pragmatic-based understandings of narrative and the shortcomings of equating them with text types have been summarized as follows:

Narrative and description are arguably defined by the content of text—a changing world for narrative, a static one for description—but categories such as persuasion, instruction, and argumentation are things we do with language rather than what language is about [...]. As long as the text-type approach remains unable to make a choice between semantic apples and pragmatic oranges, it will not lead to a satisfactory definition of narrative.⁴⁵

Aeschylus offers excellent examples of how descriptions can be used for narrative purposes. *Persians*, for instance, illustrates how similar descriptions can serve different purposes or how—in Ryan's words—the "semantic apples" can be similar even when the "pragmatic oranges" are not. The chorus describe in ll. 133–139 the sense of loss of the Persian women who find themselves separated

42 Even a "minimal narrative" (Genette 1988 [1983]: 18f.) such as "the cat walked away" expresses different states of things ("previously, the cat was there" and "now, the cat has walked away") as well as their mutual and chronological relationship. On the elementary conditions of narrative cf. Stierle 1975: 20f.; Eco 1979: 107–110 (with reference to Aristotle).

43 E.g., van Dijk 1974; Chatman 1990: 1–37 with references (also to Genette's position); de Jong 2014: 112–122; Harrison 2001, who considers how in ancient Greek and Latin literature description, *ekphrasis*, can anticipate and introduce narrative themes.

44 Chatman 1990: 2.

45 Ryan 2007: 27.

from their men; this description is embedded in the narrative about the departure of the Persians forces and represents one otherwise invisible aspect of the events. Again, ll. 537–545 describe the sense of loss of the Persian women, but this time the description is in the context and for the purpose of a lament for the dead. Another example regards the *Redepaare* of *Seven*, where the scout's descriptions of the Argive warriors and their shields significantly contribute to his overarching narrative about the attack which takes place at the city gates: these descriptions encourage the (internal and external) narratees to vividly imagine the offstage events by *illustrating* the danger which the enemy brings upon Thebes. In the vocabulary of cognitive narratology, the scout's descriptions greatly enhance the experiential and immersive qualities of the report.⁴⁶ In the face of these circumstances, Chapters 3.2.1 to 3.2.4 will include descriptions in narrative or (more seldom) non-narrative sections depending on the purposes which the descriptions serve and the contexts in which they are embedded.

3.1.4 *Response*

The performativity of character utterances. In literary studies, response usually indicates the way readers think and feel about a literary work.⁴⁷ In what follows, however, response is used in the non-specialistic sense of responding to a stimulus, and denotes a section of text in which the characters elaborate on events that have already been represented. Unlike narratives and actions, responses are not so much about the straightforward representation of events as about expressing emotive and cognitive takes on them—although they do contribute to representation by evoking more diffuse and intangible dimensions of the storyworld rather than, say, discrete segments of plot (see below). Manifestations of response are, for example, lament, praise, analysis, gnomic reflection, and in general expressions of attitudes and feelings motivated by the events or, more precisely, by the ways in which the narratives and actions have represented the events.⁴⁸ In Aeschylus, responses are most typically (though

46 Cf., e.g., Fludernik 1996 and 2003; Caracciolo 2014 a and 2014 b.

47 Beckerman 1979 [1970]: 129–167.

48 Narrative and action on the one hand and response on the other can be likened to “exposition” and “analysis” as the two sides of *Informationsvergabe* (Pfister 2001 [1977]: 126). Since lamenting, praying, giving thanks, etc. are standard examples of speech acts (of the type which Austin calls “behabitive”), one might argue that such utterances qualify as actions rather than responses, inasmuch as they represent the acts of lamenting, praying, etc. as taking place in the here and now. However, what defines action is not the representation of any acts but of events that change the *status quo*, and while speech acts may well produce such changes, not every speech act does so: see, e.g., the case of the chorus of *Suppliant*

not exclusively) choral pieces that elaborate on the narratives of the actors, as Chapters 4.2.1 and 4.2.3 will observe in detail. An emblematic example may suffice here: in *Persians*, when the messenger's report on the battle triggers the choral lament, this response takes up the grief immanent in the narrative and amplifies it into the main theme of the play.

The dynamics and mutual enrichment of narrative and response can be considered from a number of angles; musically, for example, they resemble the call and response exchanges that are common in other song traditions (e.g., gospel and jazz). For the present purposes, however, it is speech act theories and their applications to literature that help us to explain how utterances can elicit responses—be performative.⁴⁹ In drama more than in other forms of literature, utterances show the striking power to inform reality, as playwrights know from experience.⁵⁰ The investigation of the phenomenon began under the influence of the first generation of pragmatic philosophers⁵¹ (despite their scant interest in the utterances of literature),⁵² and it continues to the present day with greater diversity. For Greek and Latin literature, the foci of analysis range from time-honoured speech acts to politeness theory.⁵³ Pragmatic approaches

Women, whose expressions of gratitude for Argos do not visibly change the *status quo* (Chapter 3.1.1/*Representation in and beyond the text*).

- 49 The pragmatic wings of philosophy of language call “performativity” the phenomenon of how utterances are motivated by the speakers’ intentions and can produce effects. This is clearly different from “performance,” that is the actual ways (embodied, medial) in which a work is presented to an audience. For theoretical overviews on performativity *vs.* performance, see Fischer-Lichte / Wulf 2001; Wirth 2002; Hempfer 2011. The terminological distinction can be found, e.g., in Loxley 2007; Bohle / König 2001 (e.g., 23 f.); Hempfer 2011; König 2011 (for different uses of the terms see, e.g., Fischer-Lichte / Roselt 2001; Berns 2014).
- 50 E.g., Luigi Pirandello encapsulated this power in the oxymoron of *azione parlata*, “spoken action” (Pirandello 1899), and August W. Schlegel, who was a translator of Shakespeare among other things, found that “words can also be acts; not seldom, the greatest deeds were realized just through words” (“Worte können auch Taten sein; die größten Dinge wurden nicht selten bloß durch Worte verrichtet,” see Berghahn 1970: 9).
- 51 Stierle 1975 (e.g., pp. 8 ff., p. 14 note 1) radically proposed that the whole of literary studies be regarded as *Handlungswissenschaften*. For applications of pragmatics to literary texts see, e.g., Pratt 1977; Miller 2001; Häsner / Hufnagel / Maassen / Traninger 2011; for applications to drama in particular, Porter 1986; Elam 1984; Kiel 1992; Krieger 2004: 71 f. Explicit references to Austin, Searle, and others can be found, e.g., in Stierle 1976: 324; Schmachtenberg 1982; Franke 1983; Elam 1984: 199–212; Porter 1986; Petrey 1990; Horn 1998: 178; Miller 2001; Loxley 2007: 143 ff.
- 52 Austin considered utterances in literature and theatre “hollow or void” and “parasitic upon [the] normal use” (see Loxley 2007: 13–15). Along similar lines, Searle 1975: 325 remarked: “the author of a work of fiction pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts, normally of the representative type” (see Reboul 1990; Loxley 2007: 63–68).
- 53 E.g., Conacher 1980: 25; Petersmann 1983; Prins 1991; Nagy 1994 and 2020; Burian 1997:

to literature assume that the utterances of characters, like the utterances of speakers in ordinary language, can be analysed in terms of locution (i.e., phonatory act), illocution (intentions that motivate the locution), and perlocution (possible effects of the locution). Some adjustments may be necessary; for example, while pragmatics usually resorts to short sentences to illustrate what speech acts are, literary studies may regard much longer pieces of text as speech acts.⁵⁴ Crucially, the text is the only reference for determining whether and how a character's utterance functions as a speech act: we look at the illocutionary points of the speaking character—as opposed to the author—and at the perlocutionary effects of the utterances on other characters—as opposed to the audience. Thus,

[a] character gives an order, reveals a secret, makes a threat, makes a promise, expresses agreement and so on—in all these and similar speech acts, the character performs an action by means of which the situation and thus the mutual relations between the characters are modified on a purpose. This kind of acting by speaking, or effectual speaking, is very common in dramatic texts; the identity of speech and action becomes apparent in it [...]. Dramatic utterances are always performative utterances in the sense of speech act theory, utterances that are a form of acting.⁵⁵

200 f.; Bierl 2001: 37–64; Lloyd 2006 and 2017; Fuhrer / Nelis 2010; Minchin 2011; Barrios-Lech 2016; Berger 2016; Bonifazi 2001 and 2012; Bonifazi / Drummen / de Kreij 2016; Iurescia 2016; Unceta-Gómez 2016; Fedriani 2017; Heuner 2017; Lentini 2018; Martin / Iurescia / Hof / Sorrentino 2021.

- 54 Stierle 1975: 8f.: “[...] die philosophische Sprachhandlungstheorie seit Austin, die immer noch am einzelnen Satz orientiert ist, [kommt] da erst zu ihrer wirklichen Entfaltung, wo sie in eine systematische Literaturwissenschaft überführt wird, die [...] von den elementaren Formen der Sprachverwendung bis zu den komplexen Formen literarisch-fiktionaler Sprachhandlungen reicht.” Cf. Porter 1986: 250 (with references); Hempfer 2011: 25 f.
- 55 Pfister 2001 [1977]: 169: “Eine Figur erteilt einen Befehl, verrät ein Geheimnis, stößt eine Drohung aus, gibt ein Versprechen, stimmt eine andere Figur um usw.—in jedem dieser und ähnlicher Sprechakte vollzieht sie sprechend eine Handlung, durch die die Situation und damit die Relation der Figuren untereinander intentional verändert wird. Solch sprechendes Handeln, solch aktionales Sprechen, findet sich in dramatischen Texten sehr häufig und in ihm wird jene Identität von Rede und Handlung deutlich [...]. Dramatisches Sprechen ist zwar immer im Sinn der Sprechakt-Theorie ein performatives Sprechen, ein Sprechen als Form des Handelns.” For Greek drama, see de Jong 2014, 34: “the messengers, chorus, or characters telling a story are best seen as secondary narrators although there is no primary narrator. The reason for this is that they tell their story to other characters, who are secondary narratees, since they are to be distinguished from the spectators in the theatre.” Cf. Hempfer 1977: 18: “die performative Sprechsituation [... bezieht] sich nur auf

Response and the chorus. To speak about response is to speak about the chorus, for response was an eminently choral activity in ancient Greek literature and culture as well. In Homer, choral response is typical of practices of mourning that resemble in structure and performance logic the *thrēnos* and *goos* of tragedy. At the end of the *Iliad*, the dirge for Hector is described in detail as a performance in which a chorus of singers lead the *thrēnoi* and a chorus of women respond to them with sighs,⁵⁶ and in which individual mourners (Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen) perform solo—with significant narrative elements about the life and loss of the Trojan prince—while the chorus respond with expressions of grief.⁵⁷ Similarly, the last book of the *Odyssey* describes the lament of the Muses for Achilles in terms of choral response and with the verb ἀμειβομαι/*ameibomai*;⁵⁸ and the same verb refers to the choral performance of the Muses in the *Hymn to Apollo* (189). In tragedy, response is typically, though not exclusively, a choral agency that materializes in the multifirmity of *choreia*—the fusion of choral singing and dance.

There are many ways to write a history of modern approaches to the tragic chorus, for the chorus itself has been seen as many different things, ranging from a passive character incapable of autonomous agency to the essence of theatre and Greekness. The aim here is not to summarize this complexity.⁵⁹ Rather, it is to build on approaches that challenge the tendency (derived from Aristotle) to contrast the more plot-driven elements of drama, which are usually the responsibility of the actors, with the more elusive dimensions of choral competence—and to prioritize plot-driven elements over others. Although approaches reassessing the centrality of the performing chorus are heterogeneous, their common roots can be traced to Friedrich Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1872), which celebrated the singing and dancing chorus as the lifeblood of Attic tragedy. This was a bold departure from accepted doctrine and academic prose; and the timing was bad too, because the *Altertumswissenschaften* were by then rationalizing themselves as

die Kommunikationssituation der *dramatis personae* untereinander, nicht jedoch auf den Zuschauerbezug"; Miller 2001: 1: "Speech acts in literature' can mean speech acts that are uttered within literary works [...]"; and Bowles 2010, who pays attention to the interactions between internal narrators and narratees in drama.

56 Hom. *Il.* 24.720–722, παρὰ δ' εἶσαν ἀοιδοὺς θρήνων ἐξάρχους, οἳ τε στονόεσσαν ἀοιδὴν οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον, ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες.

57 Hom. *Il.* 24.746, ὡς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες; 761, ὡς ἔφατο κλαίουσα, γόον δ' ἀλίαστον ὄρινεν; 776, ὡς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἐπὶ δ' ἔστεινε δῆμος ἀπείρων.

58 Hom. *Od.* 24.60 f. Μοῦσαι δ' ἑννέα πάσαι ἀμειβόμεναι ὅπτι καλῆ θρήνεον.

59 For overviews regarding chorus theories see, e.g., Thiel 1993: 1–9; Bierl 2001: 37–64; Gruber 2009: 1–14.

newborn disciplines and no-frills university departments. The wave of indignation that hit Nietzsche's booklet (quite violently, with the giant personality of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff) helps to explain why it took a century or so for strong reappraisals of the performing chorus to surface again. And so, under the influence of cultural studies and again at a time when classical studies were re-defining themselves in scope and purpose, such a shift materialized on several fronts. Scholars such as Eric Havelock, Bruno Gentili, and John Herington found ways to look beyond the poetic texts and consider the cultural contexts that required the texts to be, and to be the way they were, in the archaic and classical periods; in the same years, Claude Calame (formerly a student of Gentili) drew on ritual studies and anthropology to understand how choral practices constructed and transformed social identities.⁶⁰ The shockwaves of these approaches have not yet subsided. Poems originally composed for performance are still being rediscovered as manifestations of the "song and dance culture" (as Herington called it); functional ties between dramatic and other choral forms continue to be explored in and beyond the circle of Gentili's pupils;⁶¹ and Calame's work underpins neo-ritualist approaches to choral (reenactments of) supplications, curses, and oaths, for example.⁶²

Feeling the events: *mimēsis* intensified. The above approaches shed light on how the chorus catalysed tragedy, not only in phylogenetic and protohistoric respects (which have been widely debated since Aristotle's mention of the choral-dithyrambic legacy in the genre), but also in terms of dramaturgy and stagecraft. Nevertheless, the contribution of the chorus to *mimēsis* is still greatly underestimated. The next chapters will observe in detail how Aeschylus interweaves the dramaturgical, plot-relevant fabric of his plays with choral words, voices, and physicalities, especially by embedding the choral agencies in the speech-act-like dynamics that produce them. Here, by contrast, the point is more fundamentally how choruses and choral responses contribute to *mimēsis* in the fullest sense of the word—as *nomen actionis et rei actae*.

In Aeschylus' dramaturgy, the *mimēsis* of complex storyworlds accrues along recursive, ramified, and multidirectional processes (sometimes described as

60 Havelock 1963; Gentili 1984; Herington 1985; and Calame 1977 can count as manifesto-like studies.

61 E.g., Perusino / Colantonio 2007; Lonsdale 1994–1995; Nagy 1994–1995; Rutherford 1994–1995; Calame 1995; Zimmermann 2003; Graham 2007: 114–199; Swift 2010; Rodighiero 2012; Rutherford 2012: 45–57.

62 As examples of this cluster of subjects, one may think of Easterling 1993 [1988]; Lloyd-Jones 1998; Calame 1999 and 2013; Bierl 2001: 11–104 and 2013; Zimmermann 2002; Sommerstein / Torrance 2014; Brook 2018.

dispersive *and* circular, which is curious). One important reason for this is that narratives allow for multiple representations of the same events that resonate with each other,⁶³ and another reason, on which we now focus, is that Aeschylus functionalizes responses for a number of representational purposes. Responses are the places in tragedy where (usually choral) characters most prominently assess the forces affecting their lives and worlds, and process the related changes accordingly.⁶⁴ These places are not halls of mirrors displaying reflections of the events for stunning effect. Rather, responses are semantic laboratories in which the represented and the representation are dissected or pieced together, imbued with meaning—*made* tragic, also in a concrete sense. Being the primary producer of response, the chorus is also the primary producer of the meaning of that which is represented, and in this crucial capacity choruses act upon the process of representation itself.

In practice, Aeschylus constructs narratives and actions—the most straightforwardly representational and plot-driven sections of his plays—as if they inherently lacked self-evidence and, in this sense, autonomy. This is not to say that the narratives and actions are in fact uninformative or unintelligible, but that the dramatist cloaks them in a pretence of opacity and conjures up the need for further elaboration. In this way, narratives and actions are not so much followed as completed by elaborate responses that (putatively) reveal their full meaning and implications, and this is usually the task of the chorus. In this dramaturgical design, each piece of plot calls for a (choral) response that can fulfil, concretize, and re-represent it, and so a much fuller *mimēsis* ensues.

Other essential contributions to the *mimēsis* depend on the extraordinary capacity of music-and-dance—the *choreia* in which choral responses are typically set—to represent integral but elusive dimensions of the storyworld. Music-and-dance can express the characters' states of mind in all their rapture and volatility (e.g., dismantled beliefs, second thoughts, sudden realizations), enrich the staged spatiotemporalities with different yet overlapping ones (e.g., exotic touches, ancestral fears, fresh hopes for the future), and create resonances or disturbances with the represented events by evoking moods and atmospheres.⁶⁵ Although the medium of text is not ideally suited to conveying the

63 Instead, for tragic re-narrations that undermine or supersede each other, see Chapter 4.4.3/*Comparison: Oedipus the King*.

64 One might think of response in terms of reaction to the represented events, but re-action suggests a discrete and ideally game-changing type of agency that is nonessential to tragic responses.

65 See Gianvittorio-Ungar / Schlapbach 2021a. On the “mimetic evanescence” of *mousikē*, see Peponi 2018: 164: “the sonic environment of poetry may operate as a dissolving medium,

physical expressivity of *choreia*, choral utterances treat the reader with feats of sensomotoric impressions, kinetic vocabulary, animal comparisons, and other teeming physicalities that suggest vivid impressions of performance to the imagination.⁶⁶ Taken together, these factors illustrate that choral agencies are not one step behind or beyond tragic *mimēsis*, but very deep in it.⁶⁷

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 Persians

1–139 [narrative]: The *hypothesis* to *Persians* says that the *skēnē* was set by the tomb of Darius—whatever a *skēnē* looked like by 472 BCE and whatever the author of the *hypothesis* thought it looked like.⁶⁸ It also says that *Persians* re-worked (παραπεποιήσθαι) Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women* and, more specifically, that the first line of *Persians* echoed the beginning (τὴν ἀρχὴν) of Phrynichus' play.⁶⁹ This is interesting for the present purposes, because *Phoenician Women* broke the news of the Persian defeat towards the beginning of the play, while *Persians* opens with a narrative about the antefacts: the *parodos* works like a prologue inasmuch as it narrates events preceding the point of attack of the play. The narrator of this section is a collective person, namely the chorus of elderly men. With their very first words they introduce themselves (τάδε, l. 1)⁷⁰ as the body of trusted counsellors of the royal palace, and hence as reliable narrators. The narrative consists of two parts, which differ from each other in story time (that is, the time of the *res gestae*) and in performance, as the different metres indicate. The first part (ll. 1–64), in chanted

somehow disintegrating the semantic concreteness of words while at the same time emitting a certain atmosphere or mood that envelopes the listener.”

66 Gianvittorio-Ungar, forthcoming (*Theatricality*).

67 See Chapter 1.2.3/*Dramatic theatre after all*.

68 On the scenography of *Persians* or absence thereof see, e.g., Broadhead 1960: xliii–xlvi; Taplin 1977: 117; Garvie 2009: xlvi–liii. It is possible that proper *skēnai* began to be used only once Sophocles had made his reputation as a tragedian (his first victory at the City Dionysia was in 468 BCE). *Persians* sets Darius' tomb in Susa, and while the tomb was actually in Persepolis, there is no reason to presume that Aeschylus and his audience should know or care about the exact location. On the historicity of *Persians* see, e.g., Pelling 1997; Harrison 2000; Grethlein 2007 a and 2010: 74–104.

69 TrGF 1.3 T5 (Phrynichus): Γλαύκος ἐν τοῖς περὶ Αἰσχύλου μύθων ἐκ τῶν Φοινισσῶν φησὶ τοὺς Πέρσας παραπεποιήσθαι. ἐκτίθησι καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ δράματος ταύτην, τάδ' ἐστὶ Περσῶν τῶν πάλαι βεβηγῶτων. Cf. Herington 1985: 142; Sommerstein 2010 b: 45.

70 In drama, τάδε can indicate the characters of the play; see Broadhead 1960 ad loc. for examples.

marching anapaests, is a flashback about the departure of the Persian forces and consists for the most part of a catalogue of Persian fighters—this gives us an early taste of *Persians*' penchant for catalogues.⁷¹ The second part of the narrative (ll. 65–139) is a choral song of five pairs of strophes and antistrophes⁷² and deals, mostly though not exclusively, with present-day events occurring at venues other than the royal palace of Susa, namely across the Hellespont and in private houses scattered through the vast Persian territories. The choral narrator envisions in nearly telesthesia-like fashion how the journey of the Persian forces—both by road and by sea—has by now come to its end, and how things have been in Persia since the men left their homes and wives. While in-between shorter flashbacks (analepses) and flash-forwards (prolepses) represent the causes and possible consequences of the events mentioned above,⁷³ the narrative has the shape of a ring composition that opens and closes by dealing with the present day. Descriptions play a major role in this narrative, since the narrator portrays in vivid detail both the military and family situations that ensue from the departure of the men.⁷⁴

140–214 [narrative]: After the choral song, some choral utterances enlighten aspects of the stage performance (ll. 140–158): the chorus leader invites his peers to sit down by the ancient house (ll. 140–141), thus making an explicit reference to the position and arrangement of the chorus on the stage, and introduces the entry of the actor impersonating the queen, who is the narrator of this section.⁷⁵ She, incidentally, is addressed and referred to in many ways—for example, “light,” “mother of the King,” “my queen,” and “wife of Darius”—but never called by her name: the word Atossa occurs nowhere in *Persians*.⁷⁶ The

71 See Chapter 4.4.2.

72 West 1990 (*Studies*): 10 f. discusses whether this choral song should be regarded as part of the *parodos* (along with the anapaests) or as a stasimon. Cf. also Garvie 2009: 257.

73 A flashback at ll. 109–113 explains how Persia shifted its military focus from land to sea; a flash-forward at ll. 119–125 expresses (in future tenses: ἔσεται, πέσῃ) fears that will materialize in the course of the play. Regarding these last lines, it has been noticed that unlike Herodotus, Aeschylus refers by Kissia to the citadel instead of the region of Susa: see Garvie 2009: 55 and Seaford 2012: 207 ff. on the administrative geography of the Persian kingdom.

74 A brief piece of gnomic reflection about the power of Ate (ll. 93–100, on whose transposition, see Garvie 2009: 46–49) is included into this section in virtue of the quantitative criterion.

75 On the arrangement of the chorus, see West 1990 (*Studies*): 11; possibly, the royal palace is imagined having a council room: see Taplin 1977 ad loc. Since Atossa says that she comes back without a carriage (ὄχηματα, l. 607), it is usually assumed that her first stage entry has featured one.

76 Cf. Yoon 2012: 121–129, though I do not think that Atossa's anonymity is due to the circum-

narrative begins with Atossa's speech at l. 159. Her long monologue, which is sporadically interrupted by the chorus leader, features two parts differing from each other both in performance, as the metres indicate, and in content. The first part (ll. 159–172), in trochaic tetrameters, expresses the motivation and purpose of the narrative: Atossa is concerned for the safety and wellbeing of the royal house, and wishes to receive the counsel of the trusted men.⁷⁷ After the chorus leader's reassurance that she can count on them (ll. 173–175), Atossa goes on to narrate, in iambic trimeters now, the disturbing dream she had last night and the bird omen she witnessed upon waking up (ll. 176–214). The events of the dream are about two haunting and rival sisters, one in Persian, the other in Dorian attire, whom Xerxes tries to yoke until the Dorian-looking woman in disenthraling herself ends up breaking the yoke and hurling Xerxes to the ground.⁷⁸ Disquieted by the dream, Atossa wants to make a propitiatory sacrifice when she spots an eagle—a symbol of regality in Persia as well as in Greece—flying to Phoebus' altar only to be savaged there by a falcon.

215–248 [response]: In the response that follows Atossa's narrative, the chorus analyse and interpret (l. 225 κρίνομεν, l. 226 κριτής) the narrated events and, fully meeting Atossa's expectations, give her their advice about what is the wisest thing to do. They agree that the queen should pray to the gods and the soul of her late husband, Darius, and offer libations (ll. 215–225). The trochaic tetrameters (ll. 215–248) express the solicitude of both the chorus and Atossa. The queen elaborates on the chorus' advice and says that she is eager to carry off the ritual procedure (ll. 228–230), but this intention does not translate into action. The stichomythic dialogue between Atossa, who asks questions, and the chorus, who answer them, also produces a description of the Greeks, the region they

stance that “she is dramatically dependent on her son Xerxes, and Aeschylus gives her no word, action, or motive that does not direct the audience's attention to him” (Yoon 2012: 124); see below, p. 227. In an informal exchange with A. Sommerstein (from which I quote with his kind permission), he pointed out to me that “we don't know that Aeschylus even knew what her name was; it is striking that the chorus call her wife and mother of a god, but not daughter of a god (her father was in fact Cyrus). I suspect that he couldn't have cared less whether or not Xerxes' actual mother was even alive in 480, any more than Shakespeare did when in *Richard II* he invented a wife for King Richard to whom he gave no name for the very good reason that Richard, at the relevant time, was in fact a widower.”

77 These lines prepare for and motivate Atossa's narrative and are therefore attached to this section because of the functional criterion (cf. Chapter 3.1.1).

78 On Atossa's dream, see, e.g., Barrett 2007 a: 256–258; on dreams in Aeschylus Rousseau 1963; Aéliou 1984; on dream-telling in drama, see Bowles 2010: 106–114. Reports on dreams will continue to be a specialty of female tragic characters after Aeschylus (e.g., Eur. *IT* 42–60).

inhabit, their economy, and particularly their democracy (ll. 230–245).⁷⁹ This dialogue is included in the response because it helps the characters make better sense of Atossa's narrative about the dream and omen. The response closes on the chorus' announcement that a messenger is arriving (ll. 246–248).

249–514 [narrative]: Thus, the longest surviving messenger scene of Attic tragedy begins. It narrates events that occurred well before the point of attack of *Persians*, namely the events revolving around the Battle of Salamis—a point of no return in the history of the Persian hegemony in the Mediterranean area. This astonishingly long narrative consists of two main parts, which as usual (cf. ll. 1–139 and 140–214) correspond to different metric configurations and performance fashions. After a few introductory lines in spoken metres (ll. 249–255), the first part is a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue alternating the voices of the messenger, who speaks in couplets of iambic trimeters, and the chorus, who sing a total of three pairs of strophes and antistrophes (ll. 256–289). Aeschylean scholarship often calls these lines a *kommos*,⁸⁰ that is a mourning song performed by the actor and the chorus, though typical *kommoi* are sung continuously instead of mixing sung and spoken parts. At any rate, this *kommos* intermingles narrative utterances about Salamis and responsive utterances that lament upon it. Usually, the messenger narrates while the chorus respond, but there are crossovers, for the messenger too expresses sorrow (ll. 284 f.) and the chorus occasionally contribute to the narrative by envisioning battle scenes in macabre detail (ll. 268–271 and 274–277).⁸¹

The second part of the messenger scene is a long speech in iambic trimeters (ll. 290–514), sporadically interrupted—actually, solicited—by Atossa.⁸² The queen admits that the terrible news has left her speechless (ll. 290–292), yet in re-emerging from a prolonged silence, she produces many pressing questions.⁸³ The catalogue of ll. 302–330 is not, like that of the *parodos* (ll. 21–64),

79 See Harrison 2000: 58–60.

80 This habit lasts, e.g., from Diehl 1921 to Garvie 2009: 143. Arist. *Poet.* 1452 b24 defines *kommos* as θρήνος κοινός χοροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ σαγήνης.

81 While the chorus is particularly sensitive to some of the messenger's statements (ll. 285–289) and key words (l. 260 ἀέλπτως, l. 265 ἄεπτον), the choral utterances are not always closely related to the messenger's (see Garvie 2009: 148), which motivates editors to transpose some of the lines (e.g., Sommerstein 2008 ad loc., and cf. there note 47).

82 See Pelling 1997 on the historicity of this report.

83 Both the prolonged silence of Atossa and her return to spoken iambic trimeters after the lyric-epirrhematic dialogue between the messenger and the chorus are expressions of dignity. The silence of Atossa is different from that of Cassandra (*Ag.* 810–1071), Prometheus (*Pr.* 1–87), and other Aeschylean characters parodied by Aristophanes (*Ra.* 911–929): in

a list of the departed, but of the deceased. In a way, the messenger's catalogue undoes the choral one which has impressively accumulated the Persian forces⁸⁴ (the circumstance that the two catalogues only share six warrior names has bothered scholars more than Aeschylus and his audience). It has been argued that at lines 374–379 the messenger might be dealing with the military manoeuvres of the Greeks instead of the Persians,⁸⁵ which would make the report particularly intriguing—also from a narratological perspective. For in this case, the messenger would narrate in a dual capacity: as an eyewitness of the battle, he reports on the events by relying on his own particular view and experience of them, and as an omniscient, Homer-like bard, he also knows about what happens in the background among the enemy troops. Quite typically, the messenger often re-affirms that he is restraining himself from sharing more—and more upsetting—details than necessary (ll. 329f., 429f., 513f.).⁸⁶ As a matter of fact, many bad-news-narratives of Attic tragedy feature one of the two following settings: either the narrator wishes to narrate but the narratees (at first) refuse to listen, or vice versa the narratees want to know more but the narrator (at first) refuses to share the information.

515–597 [response]: A response lamenting the Persian catastrophe meets the messenger narrative. The response begins with spoken iambic trimeters by the chorus and the queen (ll. 515–531), who re-states her intention to set in practice the chorus' pious suggestions (ll. 521–526, cf. ll. 228–230)—though again no action follows. The response then upgrades to choral anapaests (ll. 532–547) and culminates in a choral song of three pairs of strophes and antistrophes (ll. 548–597). The main issue of this responsive section is the mourning about the Persian casualties and defeat. In addition to this, the chorus try to make sense of the events at Salamis by recapitulating the key points of the messenger's news and with cursory glances at the recent history of Persia (ll. 550–578). The

these cases, a visibly suffering character is silent from his or her very entry onto the stage, thus intensifying the spectators' curiosity about him or her, while Atossa has already made herself known to the audience with ll. 159–214. On these and other Aeschylean silences, see, e.g., Taplin 1972; Michelini 1982: 30; Catoni 2005: 175–177; Gianvittorio-Ungar 2024b; on silences in Attic tragedy, see Griffith 1983: 100f.; on cultural aspects of silence in ancient Greece, see Longo 1985 and Montiglio 2000 (including a chapter on theatre).

84 Saïd 2007 considers the cumulative effect of the catalogues of *Persians*, which illustrate the immensity of the Persians' strength just as well as that of their losses. See Chapter 4.4.2 on Aeschylus' catalogues.

85 Hall 1996 ad loc., followed by Barrett 2002: 38f.; *contra*, e.g., Sommerstein 1998.

86 On these aspects, see Barrett 2002: 23–55.

lament also contains short descriptions of the current misery of the Persian women (ll. 537–545)⁸⁷ and of the kingdom in general (ll. 548 f.; 579–597). These descriptions contribute to the lament (and are included in it here) inasmuch as they seek to bring to the mind's eye the desperate state into which the defeat has thrown Persia—once again, pragmatic aspects such as the speakers' intentions are key to our text analysis.⁸⁸

598–680 [action]: Back to the stage, which this time she enters demurely and on foot,⁸⁹ Atossa enacts a necromantic ritual to summon the ghost of her late husband with the assistance of the chorus.⁹⁰ For the second time (cf. ll. 290 ff.) it is Atossa who, after a highly pathetic song, de-escalates with less emotional iambic trimeters and a more rationalizing attitude. The queen concisely reflects in gnomic style on the human reaction to good and bad luck (ll. 598–602). This offers a motivation not only for her present state of mind and composure, but also for her resolution to offer libations to Darius' ghost. Finally, thus, a thought that has been long entertained (ll. 228–230; 521–526) comes to be translated into action. The libation and the necromantic ritual take place in the dramatic here and now—not only with the stage movements of Atossa (that are not encoded in the dramatic text), but also during and because of the prayers or “hymns” of the chorus (ll. 623–680, cf. 625 ὕμνοις)—and this is why the section qualifies as an action. This again exemplifies how similar text types—in this case, a choral prayer—can serve different purposes: while in the previous section (as usual in Attic tragedy) the choral song responded to previously represented events, the choral song in this section represents in itself the summoning of the ghost and makes it happen, therefore constituting an action.

681–702 [action]: As a consequence of the ritual, the ghost of Darius now materializes—and speaks. Crucially for the readers and for the present purposes, the epiphany is represented not only by means of impressive *opsis*—including a head-to-toe orientalizing costume (ll. 660 f.)—but also by means

87 This description of the women's condition reminds us of ll. 133–139 (which, however, were embedded in a narrative); Dué 2006: 74 ff. considers how the choral laments of *Persians* centre on women's themes.

88 See Chapter 3.1.3/*Narrative and description*.

89 Cf. *Pers.* 150–158.

90 Another Aeschylean necromancy survives in TrGF 3 F273a from *Psychagogoi*, a tragedy which staged the *nekylia* of *Odyssey*, book 11. Like in *Persians*, in *Psychagogoi* it was the chorus who summoned the dead, but the libations were with blood. For necromantic rituals on the Attic stage, see e.g., Jouan 1981: 411 ff.; Gianvittorio 2017 b: 103–107.

of character speech.⁹¹ Darius addresses the trusted counsellors, acknowledges the presence of his wife, and also comments on stage aspects such as the disposition of the actor playing Atossa and of the chorus members (ll. 684–687).⁹² In fact, it seems that the point of Darius' repeated questions to the chorus and of the chorus' reticent non-replies also is to anchor in the dramatic text a powerful piece of stagecraft of which there would be otherwise no memory and trace in the long term. In this sense, the character speech can be seen as fulfilling the task of stage directions and notations.

703–738 [narrative]: Unlike the chorus, Atossa answers Darius' questions about the Persian disaster without reticence (cf. l. 713). This narrative takes on the more dynamic form of a stichomythic dialogue between wife and husband (ll. 715–738):⁹³ the narrator, Atossa, recapitulates for Darius the key points of the messenger speech, while the narratee, Darius, solicits her narration with circumstantial questions—just as Atossa herself did with the messenger when she was the narratee. This section marks the first but not the last time that the Battle of Salamis is re-narrated in *Persians*. Chapter 4.4.3 will discuss how each re-narration represents the battle with a different focalization and provides new elements to try and make sense of an event that, however, remains unfathomable for the characters.

739–764 [response]: Darius reflects on Atossa's update and especially lingers on the part about Xerxes' crossing at the Bosphorus. The conclusions he draws can be summarized as follows. In bringing ruin upon his house and kingdom, Xerxes has helped make some dark prophecies come true; his greatest foolishness was to profane the holy waters at the strait between Asia and Europe; and his accomplishments will remain unforgettable indeed (for the wrong reasons). In that which seems to be an attempt to justify her son, Atossa points out that Xerxes has been ill-advised and misled by others throughout the enterprise (ll. 753–758).

91 On the “metaphorical orientalism” of stage costumes, see Wyles 2011: 26 and 80–87. On the theatrical impact of Darius' epiphany see, e.g., Taplin 1977: 105 and 114; Michelini 1982: 132 ff.; Garvie 2009: xlix ff. and 249 f. The audacity of the staging makes Boshier 2012: 101 ff. suppose that (contrary to the testimony of *Life of Aeschylus*) *Persians* might have been first staged before 472 BCE in Syracuse, where theatre was particularly experimental. Cf. Gazzano 2017 on speeches by Persians kings in Greek literature, including those by Darius and Xerxes in *Persians*.

92 Darius' words suggest that the altar (*thymelē*) also doubled as tomb.

93 As pointed out in Chapter 3.1.3/*Semantic and pragmatic dimensions*, narrative can occur in a variety of forms, including stichomythic, lyric, and lyric-epirrhematic dialogues.

765–842 [narrative]: While Darius' long narrative in iambic trimeters has been likened to a messenger's,⁹⁴ his more-than-human knowledge allows him to relate past, present but distant, and future events. His narrative is therefore rich in anachronisms, ranging from the more remote history of the Persian kingdom (analepsis), to present-day events taking place in inhospitable regions (teles-thesia), to that which awaits Persia in the future (prolepsis). The analeptic part of the narrative (ll. 765–786) evokes the past greatness of the kingdom and consists for the most part of a catalogue of the Persians rulers from Medos until Xerxes. The telesthetic part (ll. 800–812) narrates the present-day suffering of the Persian survivors scattered through the inhospitable regions of Boeotia and unable to make it home—this sadly confirms what the messenger said (ll. 484–491). The prolepsis (ll. 813–822) encompasses events that will take place one year to three generations from the dramatic now, namely the Persian defeat by Plataea (in 479 BCE, cf. l. 817) and the bitter lesson which, supposedly, heaps of bodies or bones will still teach to future generations. From a pragmatic viewpoint, it is interesting that Darius narrates events occurring in different spatiotemporalities in order to give to Atossa and the chorus the advice they have been asking for.⁹⁵ As Darius explains, the events he narrates should teach the Persians to never again attempt to attack Greek territories (ll. 823–828) and Xerxes to be more prudent and pious (ll. 829–831).⁹⁶ To this second piece of advice, Darius also adds that Atossa should provide Xerxes, whom Darius says is currently in rags, with magnificent robes immediately upon his return. The plan will not work, though, and by the final scene of *Persians* Xerxes will enter the stage in rags.

843–906 [narrative]: After Atossa once again states her intention to do something that is not going to happen, namely handing out the royal robes to Xerxes (ll. 846–851), the choral narrative recalls the good old times under Darius. Narrative elements make up the bulk of this choral song, and especially the catalogue of lost territories in the second and third pair of strophe and antistrophe, including many Greek-speaking islands and the wealthy cities of Ionia as tributaries of powerful Persia. A nostalgic and catalogic flash-back about a

94 E.g., Schadewaldt 1974: 118: "Auch Dareios ist [...] eine Art Bote, Bote aus einer anderen Welt."

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

96 This is at odds with the historical circumstance that King Darius himself had moved against Greece and lost the Battle of Marathon, but "[...] we should remember the way in which Aeschylus elaborates the contrast between the prudent leadership of Darius and the rashness of Xerxes; too much resemblance of Darius' own failed Greek adventure would blur that contrast" (Pelling 1997: 10).

glorious past, this narrative virtually continues the equally nostalgic and catalogic flash-back of Darius (ll. 765–786) and complements it with geographical detail: as Darius' list of kings covered the time extension of the kingdom, the chorus' catalogue covers the space extension. Choral expressions of a sense of loss and regret in the first pair of strophe and antistrophe add responsive elements, though it is hard to say whether they respond to Darius', to the messenger's, or in fact to any specific narrative at all.

907–1037 [**narrative/response**]: Between lines 906 and 907, Xerxes finally enters the stage. Unlike the entry of the chorus, Atossa, and the messenger, the entry of Xerxes can be seen as marking an event in *Persians*, because the play's characters have been long expecting and hoping for the king's return (unlike the messenger's) as though this might somehow alleviate the dire situation in which they find themselves. One may compare how, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the entry onstage of Agamemnon—another king returning from a distant war and long expected—is an event, while Clytemnestra's is not.⁹⁷ The event of Xerxes' return is not only represented by visual and non-verbal means (*opsis*), namely with the actor's entering in rags and in a spectacularly wretched fashion,⁹⁸ but also encoded in the character speech, namely Xerxes' initial anapaests and then the lament song joined by the chorus. Like the lyric-epirrhematic dialogue between the messenger and chorus (cf. ll. 256–289), the *kommos* of Xerxes and the chorus also entangles narrative and responsive utterances with each other.⁹⁹ Either speaker is prevalently though not exclusively in charge of the narrative viz. the response. On the one hand, Xerxes works as the main narrator: he offers yet another testimony about the Salamis defeat (see especially ll. 950–954, 963–965, 974–977, 1002), this time from the perspective of its protagonist and in a highly fragmentary and emotional fashion, while at the same time also mourning over his own fate and the kingdom's (ll. 931–933). On the other hand, the chorus express for the most part their grief and despair at what Xerxes says, but also solicit the narrative by asking Xerxes a number of questions, in a process of dialogization and dynamization of the narrative

97 See Chapter 3.1.1/*Event* on the importance of the context to determine if what happens in a literary work is an event.

98 The entry of Xerxes made for an impressive spectacle: see, e.g., Taplin 1977: 121–127 and Seaford 2012: 214–220, with cultural and symbolical readings of the royal robes as reduced to rags. According to an accredited view, Aeschylus himself played Xerxes and Atossa; *contra* Dickinson 2009: 107 (with references), who holds that Aeschylus played the messenger and Darius.

99 Hopman 2013: 72 ff. detects in the course of the *kommos* a gradual reconciliation between Xerxes and the chorus.

which has been already observed (cf. ll. 715–738). In fact, the narratees contribute to the narrative itself, because the choral questions about the fate of single Persian fighters produce the catalogue of ll. 955–1001.¹⁰⁰

1038–1077 [**response**]: Starting with the sixth strophe (l. 1038), the *kommos* becomes a pure lament, for Xerxes ceases to narrate anything and instead instructs the chorus on how to mourn the dead in word as well as by participating in the dirge himself. In the remaining part of the song (and play), both Xerxes and the chorus depart from logically and syntactically well-organized forms and, in a way, from articulated speech altogether, since tragic interjections become so frequent that they hinder the formation of full sentences.¹⁰¹

3.2.2 Seven against Thebes

1–38 [**action**]: The play opens *in medias res* with a character attempting, in the dramatic here and now, to achieve a certain goal: King Eteocles exhorts the Theban men to fight fiercely for their city in danger (paraenesis). Eteocles' words may directly address a group of background actors (*kōpha prosōpa*) as some scholars think;¹⁰² alternatively, they may be supposed to reach directly or by report the Theban men, as they are offstage. The narrative utterances of ll. 24–29, in which Eteocles relates Tiresias' prophecy that the Argives will soon attack Thebes, can be included in the active section because of the quantitative and functional criteria, since the news serves the purpose of motivating the men to fight bravely.

39–68 [**narrative**]: The scout reports to Eteocles on the ritual and military preparations of the Argives, who are ready and about to launch an attack on the city walls. For the ritual preparations, the scout recounts that the Argives have

100 For dialogic narratives, see Chapter 4.4.1, for dialogic catalogues Chapter 4.4.2, for re-narrations of the Battle of Salamis Chapter 4.4.3.

101 The finale of *Persians* lends itself as a laboratory for readings for and against the notion that the play would construct a barbaric identity as morally and culturally inferior: see, e.g., Hall 1989; Loraux 2002: 45; Dué 2006: 58 ff.; Grethlein 2007 b; Hopman 2013; and Zarifi-Sistovari 2009 (who adds to the picture the insights of a professional stage director who has reinterpreted *Persians*).

102 E.g., Taplin 1977: 129 ff.; Sommerstein 2008: 153 and 2010: 68. Eur. *Her.* 462–489, featuring three children of Megara, is an instance of a group of silent actors as opposed to individual ones. Yet, not all the arguments which have been produced for the presence of silent actors are convincing: e.g., Taplin thinks that since *Seven* has much to do with Eteocles' role as a leader, the fighting Thebans should rather be visible on the stage, but the scene of the *Redepaare* illustrates how this play entices the audience into imagining fighters who are not on the stage. This may be true for the *parodos* as well: see below, p. 123 note 107.

sacrificed a bull, sworn a solemn oath, and stored the personal effects which will be sent back to the homes and families of those who will die on the battlefield.¹⁰³ For the military preparations, the scout reports that he has seen the Argives draw lots to decide which champions will lead their troops at which gates. The narrator emphasizes that this is the latest news from the field and urges King Eteocles to react without delay (ll. 54–65).

69–77 [response]: Eteocles responds to the scout's narrative by invoking not only Zeus, Earth, and the city gods but also demons like the Erinyes in defence of Thebes.

78–181 [narrative/response]: As in the two *kommoi* of *Persians*, in the *parodos* of *Seven* narrative and responsive utterances are also intermingled with each other. Here, however, it is not two different speakers but the chorus alone who sing both types of utterances. These alternate by following quite neatly the structure of the song: the narrative utterances cluster together at ll. 78–91 especially, and then in the first strophe (ll. 108–127) and in the second pair of strophe and antistrophe (ll. 150–165), while in-between there are more responsive utterances which express despair and invoke the gods at ll. 92–107 in the first antistrophe, and in the third pair of strophe and antistrophe.¹⁰⁴ The narrative utterances by the chorus continue and expand on the report of the scout (ll. 39–68), who has related the military preparations of the Argives up to the point of their assignment to the gates. Now, the chorus goes on to narrate, teichoscopy-like and in the present tense, the real-time results of these preparations: the Argives are said to be by now in the middle of an assault on the other side of the city walls. The imminent danger radically changes the focalization of the offstage events. The scout's report on the preparatory manoeuvres had been in a matter-of-fact fashion, even though the final address to Eteocles betrayed concern; by contrast, the chorus of the Theban maidens narrate very emotionally, as is frequent in tragic narratives in song-and-dance.¹⁰⁵ The choral narrators are panic-stricken and overwhelmed by the sensory stimuli reflecting the siege which is supposed to be going on in the meantime; echoes and visible signs of the siege make their narrative extraordinarily vivid, synaesthetic, and life-like. The chorus also pick up and enrich with sensorimotor detail some of the motifs of the scout's report, such as that of the dust which rises as the Argive

103 See Guidorizzi 2002 on ll. 42–56.

104 There are no elements indicating that two semichoruses were in charge of the more narrative viz. responsive parts of the song.

105 See Gianvittorio 2012 b and 2021: 134–136.

army approaches (ll. 81f., cf. l. 60) and the soundscape of war.¹⁰⁶ The eyewitness quality and the visual details of the choral narrative, concerning for example the looks of the Argives and the colour of their weapons, corroborate the hypothesis that the attack on the city walls was visibly referred to on the stage.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, the chorus voice their fears in responsive utterances and raise a prayer to the Olympian gods for the sake of the city (unlike Eteocles, they do not invoke any chthonic divinities).

182–286 [action]: This large text section includes heterogeneous parts, namely the monologic speech by Eteocles (ll. 182–202), the lyric-epirrhematic dialogue between Eteocles and the chorus (ll. 203–244), their stichomythic dialogue (ll. 245–263), and finally another monologic speech by the king (ll. 264–286).¹⁰⁸ However, the section is fairly homogeneous as far as the purposes of this analysis are concerned, since it represents the not really successful attempt of King Eteocles to quieten down the chorus with speech acts such as threats and intimidation (conative utterances). He admonishes the women not to spread panic among the men, even threatening them with the death penalty for infractions, but the chorus and chorus leader nevertheless continue to express their anxiety as in the *parodos*—without being punished.¹⁰⁹ There is nearly unanimous consensus that Eteocles was not present on the stage during the *parodos*, but he now acts as though he had listened to or heard of it in that he seeks to censure the emotional outbursts of the women.¹¹⁰ Finally, Eteocles states his plan

106 E.g., galloping horses (ll. 80–84, 122 f., cf. l. 61), the metaphor of the enemy as a crushing wave (ll. 85 f., 114, cf. ll. 62–64), and other war sounds (ll. 84, 89, cf. l. 64). Cf. Edmunds 2002.

107 I have argued in Gianvittorio-Ungar 2020 that the dance performance of *Seven* recalled in Athen. 1.22 a (= TrGF 3 T81) might have been a war dance enacting the Argive attack (either in 467 BCE or in later reperformances); such a performance would better account for the terrorized reaction, life-like description, and visual details provided by the chorus as well as for fifth-century BCE testimonies that this play left spectators with a craving for fighting (DK 82 B24 [Gorgias], Aristoph. *Frogs* 1021).

108 Liapis 2017 discusses the textual problems of ll. 203–207, 211–213, 219–222, 223–225, 271–280, and 282–284 in this section.

109 Eteocles' speech abounds in misogynist and somewhat gnomic pieces of wisdom (ll. 187–190, 195, 200 f., 208–210, 217 f., 224 f., 244; cf. also the chorus at ll. 226–232) which reaffirm his power over female subjects in particular. For political readings see, e.g., Longo 1978: 87 ff.; Foley 1993: 129 ff.

110 Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1444, where Clytemnestra refers to the “swan song” of Cassandra even though she was offstage during the song, and Eur. *Or.* 1510 and 1529, where Orestes, on coming back onstage after the monody of the Phrygian slave, speaks as though he listened to it.

to assign six warriors to the Theban gates and to fight at the seventh himself (ll. 282–286).¹¹¹

287–374 [response]: The section is mainly responsive and covers the choral song. It articulates the emotive and cognitive takes of the chorus on the military events as these have been previously represented. The maidens thus resume their response of ll. 78–181 after Eteocles' interruption (rather than repression). They beg the gods to avert the Argive danger and consider the terrible consequences which the fall of Thebes would imply; this also includes a description of the social scenarios which are likely to present themselves in the conquered city, with special attention to the women's own condition (ll. 321–368). Only the final lines are not responsive but introduce the scout and Eteocles back on the stage (ll. 369–374).¹¹²

375–396 [narrative]: The scout/messenger¹¹³ had opened his first report (ll. 39–68) by saying that he had just come back from a scouting session (ll. 39–41), meaning that in said report, the events up to the point when the Argives get ready to appoint their leaders (l. 56) must have been quite recent. At the end of the same report, the scout had promised to resume informing on the manoeuvres of the Argives as soon as there was any news (ll. 67 f.). Now he keeps this promise: by line 375, the enemies have already advanced to the city gates. The so-called *Redepaare* begin. In a structure that recurs identical to itself seven times, the narrative utterances of the scout are met by the enactive ones by Eteocles, which are in turn followed by a brief response of the chorus. Throughout the scene of the *Redepaare*, the short pieces of report announce which Argive fighter is at which gate and include brief descriptions of the looks, weapons, and emblem-like shields of the Argives;¹¹⁴ also, each narrat-

111 It is doubtful whether “with myself as the seventh” (l. 282) marks a decision which Eteocles is making here and now: Eteocles might be stating something decided in advance, which would also explain why the chorus do not react to the news at this point (though they will try and dissuade Eteocles immediately before he enters the battle)—besides, it is not really surprising that the military chief of Thebes plans on partaking of the fight.

112 Murray 1937 and Page 1972 think that the two characters are introduced by two semichoruses, Sommerstein 2008 suggests that it is two chorus members speaking, Werner 1969 [1959] refers to the chorus leader only. Cf. Taplin 1977: 146 ff., who observes how “as a symmetrical pair of entrance announcements this is unique.”

113 *Kataskopos* and *angelos* are listed as different play characters, though no elements indicate that the two narratives are delivered by different narrators. In fact, the narrative of ll. 375–396 continues that of ll. 39–68 and seems to keep the promise made there that “through my clear reports you will know what is happening.”

114 The shield descriptions of *Seven* have been the object of archaeological and semiological

ive section closes with a heartfelt appeal to King Eteocles to find solutions to the problems posed by the Argives. In the first narrative of the *Redepaare*, the scout announces that Tydeus is standing at the Proitides Gates.¹¹⁵ As in the remaining six narratives of the scene, the scout's account of the Argive warrior is multi-sensory, and his description of the shield particularly contributes towards illustrating the danger which Tydeus brings upon Thebes (ll. 387–390). The narrator concludes by inviting Eteocles to appoint a suitable adversary (ll. 395f.). Formally, the scout's utterances during the *Redepaare* may strike one as more descriptive than narrative, because they represent what the situation is like at the gates and depict it as being static for the time being, though it is apparent that things will presently degenerate. But these utterances should be included in the narrative sections for a number of reasons. Firstly, the scout is here deliberately resuming the report which he began at l. 39, meaning that he represents this particular static situation as a moment within the broader development of the military events (see Chapter 3.1.4 on description as a natural component of narrative). Secondly, from a pragmatic point of view, the goal which the speaker is pursuing by describing the Argives is to round off the report, for the eyewitness information helps him give to the narratees the full measure of the danger which lingers over the city. Thirdly, narrative is obviously the designed (though not necessarily the exclusive) task of tragic characters such as scouts and messengers, and indeed the scout in *Seven* constantly refers to his own speech with *legein* and *logos*. Finally, it is noteworthy that the descriptions of the shields themselves often have narrative qualities, because the motifs depicted on the shields show (mythical) characters in the act of attempting or achieving something, such as a warrior scaling the city walls (ll. 465–468), Typhon blowing fire (491–494), the Sphinx killing a Theban man (ll. 539–544), and Dike leading Polyneices (642–648). On occasion, the inscriptions on the shields, dutifully quoted by the scout, clarify which stories such images are supposed to evoke.

397–416 [action]: Throughout the *Redepaare*, King Eteocles' utterances qualify as actions because they effectively promote, in the dramatic here and now, a change in the situation in which the characters find themselves. In these enactive sections, the ruler of a city under siege ponders over the military news related by the scout and quickly takes (or, according to a different reading, con-

studies, such as Zeitlin 1982; Vidal-Naquet 1988 [1972]; Guidorizzi 2002; Catenacci 2004; Berman 2007: 33–86.

115 On the location of the gates, see Mastronarde 1994: 647–650 (with a map).

firms)¹¹⁶ strategic decisions which make a difference for the lives of everyone in Thebes, including the maidens, the scout, and Eteocles himself. The military orders he gives are supposed to be immediately carried out offstage; in this sense, “Eteocles’ words [...] are *as good as action*, and [...] for the audience they are supposed to be translated into action off-stage.”¹¹⁷ It is an open question whether the warriors appointed are present on the stage and take the orders personally (*kōpha prosōpa*), though this would not be necessary for them to execute the orders without delay (cf. above on ll. 1–38). In this particular section Eteocles, after quickly assessing the danger posed by Tydeus and the meaning of his painted shield, appoints Melanippus to defend the Proitides Gates.

417–421 [response]: From *Redepaare* one to six, the chorus sing their response to the utterances by the scout and by Eteocles in six short pieces of song—three alternating pairs of strophes and antistrophes. In the lines at hand, the chorus wish good luck to the newly appointed Melanippus and express concern for the outcome of the duel.

422–436 [narrative]: The scout informs Eteocles that the huge and arrogant Capaneus has been assigned by lot to the Elektrai Gates. He also relates the sacrilegious threats which Capaneus has shouted against Thebes, including the promise that he will destroy the city regardless of the god’s will and some very hazardous irony about the power of Zeus. The brief description of the shield (ll. 432–434) is about a naked man holding a torch, a picture which is explained with the golden inscription “I will burn the city”—while the scout describes other shields with inscriptions, only this and one other speak in the first person, as if in a comic strip (cf. ll. 647 f.). The narrative closes with worried questions to Eteocles (ll. 435 f.).

437–451 [action]: Eteocles interprets the manifestations of Capaneus’ arrogance and particularly the mockery of Zeus as good signs for Thebes, reasoning that the man will be inevitably destroyed by his own arrogance and by Zeus. Eteocles chastises Capaneus’ speaking out of turn by choosing Polyphontes to fight against him, a man of few words and great bravery.

116 As soon as at ll. 282–284 Eteocles has announced that he is going to deploy (τάξω) six men and himself as the seventh at the seven gates of Thebes; thus, in the *Redepaare* he might be making public and enforcing previous decisions as opposed to selecting the six men. At l. 508, Eteocles himself says that Hermes appointed Hyperbius to fight against Hippomedon, which might indicate that the six Theban warriors have been appointed by lot: see Centanni 2003: 812.

117 Taplin 1977: 155 f. (original italics).

452–456 [response]: The maidens express their hope that Capaneus will die before he can set foot in their chambers.

457–471 [narrative]: The scout reports that Eteoclus is ready to fight alongside his men and horses at the third gate. Eteoclus' shield, which is described at ll. 465–469, depicts a full-armored man climbing up the enemy's walls. On this shield too (cf. l. 434) an inscription further clarifies the meaning of the image; the inscription, which the scout relates in indirect speech, says that not even Ares can pull this man down. The scout concludes this bit of report by urging Eteocles to find a suitable opponent (ll. 470 f.).

472–480 [action]: Eteocles' decision is particularly quick this time: he appoints Megareus, who will punish both Eteoclus and the warrior depicted on the shield.¹¹⁸

481–485 [response]: The chorus wish good fortune to the defenders and destruction to the assailants.

486–500 [narrative]: The scout continues his report: at the gates of Athena Onca the fourth Argive leader is waiting, Hippomedon. His round shield, embellished by an excellent artist, displays Typhon as fighting and breathing fire and black smoke, with two intertwined serpents (Typhon's legs?) framing the terrible figure (ll. 491–496).¹¹⁹ The scout likens Hippomedon's looks to that of a possessed Bacchant and to the personification of Terror himself (*Phobos*).

501–520 [action]: Eteocles reasons that Athena Onca, who certainly hates the arrogance of Hippomedon, will easily stop him, and that the Theban Hyperbius will be the end of him. Most aptly, Hyperbius will counter Hippomedon's shield with his own, which depicts Zeus and his lethal thunderbolt (this is the only Theban shield described in the *Redepaare*). Thus, the images of Typhon and Zeus on the two shields speak an unmistakable language (cf. l. 518) and reveal who will be on the winners' side and who on the losers'.

521–525 [response]: The chorus agree on Eteocles' iconographic reading of the duel.

118 Since Harberton, most editors (e.g., Page 1972; West 1990 [*Aeschylus*]; Sommerstein 2008) have considered line 472 spurious, in which case this section should probably begin with line 473.

119 Cf. Berman 2007: 61–63 for the iconography of Typhon.

526–549 [narrative]: For the Northern Gates, the scout announces a warrior so young that his beard has only recently spread over the cheeks, but who has a frightening gaze and the speaking name of Parthenopaeus (Maiden's Face). His shield displays the monster which the Thebans hate and fear most, the Sphinx, as she holds a Theban man under her paw (ll. 539–544). Instead of the usual appeal to Eteocles, the scout just wishes that Parthenopaeus' threats will not become true.

550–562 [action]: Eteocles decrees that the fearless Actor, the brother of Hyperbius, will stand against Parthenopaeus to turn the threats of the Sphinx against the assailants.

563–567 [response]: The chorus comment that the above speech (*logos*) pierces their heart and makes their hair stand on end, though it is not completely clear whether they mean the scout's speech, Eteocles', or both.

568–596 [narrative]: The scout reports on the sixth assailant, who is positioned by the Homoloidian Gates: this is an exceptional warrior, Amphiarus the Seer (*mantis*).¹²⁰ The scout relates in the form of a free résumé as well as in direct speech Amphiarus' criticism of Tydeus, Polyneices, and the unjust expedition of the Argives, for whom the seer predicts failure. Amphiarus' shield is just as extraordinary as its owner. It bears no signs, but in this case the absence of signs is meaningful in itself and, according to the interpretation of the scout, indicates that Amphiarus is determined to excel as opposed to giving the impression of excellence (ll. 591 f.). By the end of the narrative, the scout invites Eteocles to send opponents who are both wise and good to face Amphiarus.

597–625 [action]: Eteocles is especially careful in dealing with Amphiarus. He clearly dislikes the idea of fighting a man who is dear to the gods, regrets that the seer joined the unjust enterprise of the Argives, and still hopes that in the end he will resolve not to charge the Theban gates. Finally, Eteocles appoints Lastenes to hold the Homoloidian Gates, knowing that he is as wise as he is strong.

626–630 [response]: In the third antistrophe, the chorus pray that the gods destroy their enemies and save Thebes.

120 The cult of Amphiarus as chthonian divinity attests to the exceptional status of this enemy: see Hutchinson 1985: 132 with references.

631–652 [narrative]: Prepared by the first to the sixth *Redepaar*, the conflict finally culminates in the competition between the two brothers. The scout reports that Polyneices is awaiting Eteocles at the seventh gate, cursing the Thebans and singing the paean. He relates in indirect speech Polyneices' words that he will kill his usurper brother and will die with him if need be. Polyneices' shield has been forged for the occasion: it shows a golden warrior and Dike herself, who proclaims in an inscription (which is longer than the inscriptions on the shields of Capaneus and Eteocles) that she will lead Polyneices to take back Thebes and his father's house (ll. 642–648). The narrative closes on an urgent appeal to Eteocles to know (*gnōthi*, l. 652) who will oppose Polyneices.

653–676 [action]: Like all of Eteocles' utterances during the *Redepaare*, this section also begins with reasoning about the overt meaning and covert implications of the scout's news, by which Eteocles makes strategic decisions and enforces them in the dramatic here and now. The king opens this particular section by remembering the curse of his father Oedipus and by pointing out how Polyneices' name is well-suited to his conflictual nature: according to Eteocles, the life of his own brother reads like a history of estrangement from Dike, whom the man now sports on his shield without merit. Relying on the argument of Polyneices' unfamiliarity with Dike, Eteocles becomes more and more confident that the goodness of justice will not stand by Polyneices today and proclaims that he himself will meet his brother on the battlefield. Eteocles had already announced his intention to personally defend the seventh gate at ll. 282 f.; thus, the decision-making does not (or not exclusively) happen at the end of the *Redepaare*. But it is now that this decision is enforced: by the last lines of this section, Eteocles puts on his arms and leaves for the battlefield (ll. 675 f.).

677–719 [action]: In a similar way to how Eteocles previously failed to hush and calm down the chorus (ll. 182–286), now the chorus seek in vain to dissuade him from fighting against his own brother. There is an address to Eteocles in spoken iambic trimeters, probably by the chorus leader (ll. 677–682), after which the king confirms that he has taken the possibility of death into account (ll. 683–685). The section then develops into a more pathetic lyric-epirrhematic dialogue through which Eteocles speaks in iambic trimeters and remains adamant in his position while the chorus sing their counter-arguments in two pairs of strophes and antistrophes (ll. 686–711). After the song, when the chorus or chorus leader once again addresses the king in iambic trimeters (ll. 712–719), the feeling is that by now there is actually no hope of changing Eteocles' mind.

720–791 [response]: The Theban maidens respond to Eteocles' decision by singing a lament of five pairs of strophes and antistrophes. In the course of the lament, the focus of the choral reflection broadens from a more particular to a more general subject: namely from the curse which Oedipus has cast on his sons (ll. 720–741, i.e. first strophe, first antistrophe, and second strophe) to the fate of the Labdacids (ll. 743–757, i.e. second antistrophe and third strophe; ll. 772–791, i.e. fourth antistrophe, fifth strophe, and fifth antistrophe), and of the entire city, compared to a ship in a rough sea of misfortunes (ll. 758–771, i.e. third antistrophe and fourth strophe). The part concerning the Labdacids includes a recapitulation of the story of Laius (ll. 743–757) and Oedipus (ll. 772–791). These two narrative moments can be included in the responsive section because of the quantitative and the functional criteria, since the point of recalling the family's misfortunes is to fuel the lament and to find reasons for the inescapable fate which awaits Eteocles and Polyneices.

792–819 [narrative]: The messenger scene breaks good as well as bad news: Thebes is safe, but Eteocles and Polyneices have perished at each other's hand. The chorus struggle to cope with the latter piece of news, which is why the scout's reports briefly switches from a monologue into a stichomythic dialogue in which the chorus leader asks for clarifications (ll. 803–810). Then the scout resumes his monologue to relate in greater detail how the two brothers died.

822–1004 [response]: The chorus respond to the news with a funerary song for the death of Eteocles and Polyneices, which they call a *goos* (l. 854).¹²¹ During the song, the two bodies are carried onto the stage to be mourned over (l. 848). Significant parts of this lament have been considered spurious, namely the introductory anapaests (ll. 822–831), the lines at which Antigone and Ismene are introduced on the stage (ll. 861–874), and possibly also ll. 996 f.¹²² From Wilamowitz onwards, many editors have held that these passages are interpolations adjusting the play to ll. 1005–1078, with which the surviving text ends but which are almost unanimously regarded as spurious.¹²³

121 As in the final *kommos* of *Persians* (1038–1077), the dirge on which *Seven* closes is also rich in references to the music and dance performance: see Gianvittorio 2017b.

122 See, e.g., Murray 1937, Hutchinson 1985, West 1990 (*Aeschylus*), Sommerstein 2008 and 2010 b: 64.

123 For a rare exception see Tsantsanoglou 2010. Taplin 1977, 169–191 outlines scholarly positions on the authenticity of ll. 1005–1078 starting with von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who argued that the lines were spurious, and Lloyd-Jones, who argued that they were genuine. For further references see, e.g., Conacher 1996: 71–74; Hutchinson 1985: 209; Barrett 2007 b; Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 90–95.

3.2.3 Suppliant Women

1–22 [narrative]: Like *Persians* and probably a number of lost tragedies by Aeschylus (e.g., *Myrmidons*), *Suppliant Women* opens with a *parodos* in marching anapaests (ll. 1–39). The chorus of the Danaids introduce themselves by narrating the vicissitudes which have led them to the present-day situation.¹²⁴ They recapitulate the more recent events, namely the flight from Egypt to Argos under the leadership of their father Danaus to escape the marriage with their cousins (ll. 1–15),¹²⁵ and briefly recall how their ancestor Io was originally from Argos (ll. 15–18). The *parodos* thus has the function of a prologue and informs the audience about events preceding the point of attack of the play.¹²⁶

23–39 [response]: The second half of the anapaestic *parodos* is a prayer.¹²⁷ The chorus address the gods of Argos and Zeus in particular to ask for protection and for the ruin of the Egyptians. The prayer is highly emotional. It immediately follows the narrative and responds to it inasmuch as it elaborates on the dangers described there. It is unusual but not unique that the same speaker utters a narrative as well as a response which deals with it (cf. for example *Sept.* 78–181).

40–77 [narrative]: Like *Persians*, *Suppliant Women* features a long choral song after the *parodos* (ll. 40–175). It opens with a narrative section—two mythical excursuses which shed more light on the background, identity, and state

124 For other treatments of the myth of the Danaids in ancient Greek literature, see Garvie 2006 [1969]: 163–183; Friis Johansen / Whittle 1980 (vol. 1): 44–55; Angeli Bernardini 2007.

125 The reason why the Danaids are so fiercely against marriage is not obvious. Some think the problem is the endogamic marriage with their own cousins: e.g., Friis Johansen / Whittle (vol. 1) 1980: 30–35; Seaford 2012: 149–157 (who understands *ἀυτόγενῆ* at l. 8 as “within the kinship-group”); Grethlein 2003: 70–72; Bernardini 2007: 108–110. Others, e.g., Garvie 2006 [1969]: 221, think that the problem is marriage in general; this view might be corroborated by Sicherl 1986, who on the basis of a scholion *ad* Aesch. *Suppl.* 37 (Smith) hypothesizes that an oracle had predicted Danaus’ death at the hand of his son-in-law, and that for this reason Danaus and his daughters refused marriage. On this hypothesis, see Rösler 1993: 7 and Sommerstein 2010 b: 92 ff.

126 This narrative section might make a suitable opening for the trilogy, because it addresses issues such as the forced marriage and the husbands’ impiety, which were probably relevant to all of the three plays. Also, Bowen 2013: 151 argues on the basis of the comparison with *Agamemnon* that *Suppliant Women*’s longer *parodos* (*Suppl.* 1–39) is an argument for this play’s coming first in the trilogy. However, the traditional view that the plays’ order was *Suppliant Women*, *Egyptians*, *Danaids* (followed by the satyr play *Amymone*) has been challenged with sound arguments; in particular, Rösler 1993 and Sommerstein 2008: 284–296 argue for the order *Egyptians*, *Suppliant Women*, *Danaids*.

127 Actually, line 23 does not survive; West 1990 conjectures *ἀλλ’ ὦ πάτριοι δαίμονες Ἄργους*.

of mind of the choral narrators. The first excursus, corresponding to the first pair of strophe and antistrophe (ll. 40–56), is the story of Epaphus and of her Argive mother, Io, who is an ancestor of the Danaids themselves (cf. ll. 15–18). The Danaids say that they are recounting this story to demonstrate (l. 52, ἐπιδειξω/*epideixō*) that they are entitled to look for protection in Argos. The second mythical excursus corresponds to the second pair of strophe and antistrophe (ll. 57–76). It recalls the story of Nightingale (Aëdon, Procne),¹²⁸ in which the themes of the rape of women by family members and their subsequent murder frame the state of mind of the chorus. At the same time, the Nightingale myth is one of the references which the choral song makes to the musical performance of the lament or *goos* (ll. 57–76, 113–121, and 131–132).¹²⁹

78–175 [response]: From the third antistrophe onwards, the choral song continues with a prayer to the ancestral gods and in particular to Zeus and Artemis. The prayer can be seen as responding to the events which the Danaids have previously narrated, because it expresses their fear and self-pity in the face of the violence they find themselves exposed to, but also their hope for divine intervention and salvation. Also, references to the previous narrative about Io punctuate this section and make once again the point that the Danaids, as descendants of Zeus and Io, feel entitled to Zeus' protection. The response also includes some gnomic-theological remarks about Zeus, who is asked to stop the *hybris* (l. 104) of the Egyptians and whose mind is impenetrable to the mortals, and about Artemis, the chaste hunting goddess to whom the Danaids, being virgins and hence (according to the imaginary of ancient Greek poetry) untamed, naturally entrust themselves.

176–185 [narrative]: Although isolating such a short section is rather exceptional for the present analysis, the brief narrative of Danaus represents crucial events and triggers important reactions (see below). Danaus informs his daughters about what is unfolding under his vigilant eyes: a rising cloud of dust and the sound of wheels announce that armed men are approaching before they come into plain sight; clearly, the Argives have received news that a group of strangers have arrived. Danaus' report is teichoscopy-like inasmuch as it represents offstage events which take place in the dramatic now (cf. also ll. 710–733),

128 See Rutherford 2007: 5f. Starting with Sophocles, Aëdon is better known as Procne.

129 This strophe actually ends at line 76 (instead of 77) and the following antistrophe begins with line 79 (instead of 78). However, here as in a few other passages (e.g., *Prom.* 877–907 and 908–943) I opt for a continuous numeration for practical reasons such as the quantification of narrative in Chapter 4.1.2.

although *Suppliant Women* is set in the open space of the coast near Argos and Danaus does not speak from the top of a wall.¹³⁰

186–233 [action]: Together, father and daughters arrange and/or agree on the specifics of a plan for how the maidens will meet the Argives and make a good first impression. Danaus finetunes every detail of the ritual supplication (*hikesia*) and his daughters absorb the lesson eagerly.¹³¹ There can be little doubt that the general plan of asking the Argives for asylum was in the minds of Danaus and the Danaids well before the point of attack of the play. Even so, it is the character speech of this section which determines, specifies, and rehearses in the dramatic here and now strategic aspects of how the girls should persuade the Argives and perform the ritual: for example, where they should sit (by the sacred rock of the altar), how exactly they should act and behave, what kind of language and body language they should use, and so on. The chorus is anxious to follow Danaus' instructions carefully, for example by positioning themselves by the altar as required (l. 223 f.), by putting on a pious and properly suppliant-like way of speaking, and apparently by showing the docile body language recommended by Danaus. The prayer to Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, and Hermes (which at one point takes on the unusual form of a stichomythic dialogue between father and daughters) exemplifies well how in this section events unfold during and because of the characters' utterances. While supervising their prayer, Danaus teaches his daughters in the here and now how to exhibit manners which are appropriate for suppliants, and repeatedly addresses them with verbs in the imperative to instruct them on what to do next: for example, "Now also call on this bird of Zeus" (l. 212), "Now honour this common altar [...] and sit in this holy place" (ll. 222–224). The chorus, on the other hand, not only absorb Danaus' instructions but put them into practice. The preparation for the supplication ends with Danaus' wish that the enterprise will be successful (πρᾶγος εἶ νικᾷ, l. 233).

234–290 [action]: This enactive section represents how the suppliants meet and make acquaintance with Pelasgus, the king of Argos. Pelasgus arrives with his men and demands to know who are the newcomers who sport exotic garb and suppliant-branches.¹³² The chorus' costumes and props make for a puzz-

130 Poe 1989: 118f. suggests that the actor playing Danaus makes the announcement from an elevated position as typical for teichoscopies, namely by standing on the stage altar.

131 For exchanges between *chorodidaskalos*-like actors and rehearsal-like choruses in Aeschylus, see Gianvittorio-Ungar, forthcoming (*Theatricality*).

132 On the outfits of the Danaids, see Wyles 2011: 48–50 and 82.

ling but eloquent mix: the costumes betray their non-Greek origins, while the props show that the strangers nevertheless follow Greek customs—although the circumstance that a group of foreign women come to Argos without heralds, native sponsors, or guides is in Pelasgus' eyes “astonishing” (l. 240).¹³³ Instead of answering the king's questions, the chorus ask who he is. Introductions are made.¹³⁴

291–324 [narrative]: The choral narrative is about Io, the ancestor of the Danaids, her entanglement in the marriage of Zeus and Hera, and her descent from Epaphus until Danaus and Aegyptus. This narrative naturally develops out of the chorus' self-introduction to Pelasgus. Dialogic narratives are not uncommon in Aeschylus (e.g., *Pers.* 715–738), in which case the narratees usually ask questions and the narrators unfold the story by providing the answers. This is what happens here between the narratee, Pelasgus, and the narrator, the chorus or chorus leader.

325–467 [action]: The dialogue between the chorus and Pelasgus continues, yet in this section the utterances no longer represent past events (Io's story), but events which occur in the dramatic here and now: namely the supplication (*hikesia*) of the Danaids and Pelasgus' decision to summon the city assembly to settle the case. What the Danaids carry out in the supplication scene is a complex ritual towards which a very composite mix of speech acts—along with physical acts which are less clearly encoded in the text—contribute. In a stichomythic dialogue (ll. 325–347), the chorus explain to Pelasgus that they are escaping from an unjust marriage with the sons of Aegyptus and formulate their request for protection. In the subsequent lyric-epirrhematic dialogue (ll. 348–437), the chorus switch to a more solemn register to perform the ritual of the supplication, re-formulating their request more ceremoniously and somehow navigating the liminal waters between calling the king to his duties and cajoling him into saying yes. Pelasgus, who replies in spoken lines, displays a quite rational take on the issue; he explains that the decision would have far-ranging consequences for the entire city and that it is therefore not for him alone to make. The notion of a king who shares his power with the citizens

133 On the native sponsor (*proxenos*), see Bowen 2013: 237f. Grethlein 2003: 55ff. reflects on what the encounter of the Argives with this semi-barbaric group meant in terms of Greek collective identity.

134 The brief aetiological narrative about Apis (ll. 260–270), which Pelasgus includes in his self-presentation, is included in the enactive section because of both the quantitative and the functional criterion (the narrative is functional to Pelasgus' self-introduction).

seems to puzzle the chorus, be it because of the supposed political customs of their home country, their own experiences under the leadership of Danaus, or because they would like Pelasgus to resolve the matter without delay. Finally, in the second stichomythic dialogue (ll. 438–467) the prevalent kind of speech act is the threatening one: the Danaids warn Pelasgus that they will hang themselves from the statues of the gods if he refuses to take them under his protection, which means that they would pollute a sacred place and bring ruin upon Argos.¹³⁵ With this scene, Aeschylus (re-)works the motif of the supplication in ways which bring a considerable amount of action into the drama. In this respect it is noteworthy that as far as surviving evidence indicates, the *hikesia* played a less prominent role in other ancient treatments of the myth of the Danaids.¹³⁶

468–523 [action]: Pelasgus gives voice to his own doubts and thoughts concerning the best course of action in a text section that nicely exemplifies the grey zones between *innere* and *äußere Handlung*. He is well aware that he can only choose the lesser of two evils. If he refuses the Danaids, they will pollute Argos with their suicide and hence call the wrath of Zeus the protector of suppliants upon the city. If, on the other hand, he grants them asylum, he will predictably incur the anger of the sons of Aegyptus, though Pelasgus realizes that this would be by far preferable to the wrath of Zeus. By carefully considering the advantages and disadvantages of these scenarios in a monologue, Pelasgus comes to three wise decisions. One decision is to take the Danaids under his protection, another is to make sure that their status as suppliants is clear to everyone (ll. 480–489), and the last is to summon the city assembly to debate the case collectively—and to somehow share the responsibility.¹³⁷ There are several reasons why this section qualifies as action, because several events take place during and through Pelasgus' speech. Firstly, his utterances represent the complex process of the decision-making as it unfolds. Secondly, Pelasgus' announcement of his decisions marks the success of the supplication of the Danaids in the dramatic here and now. Moreover, Pelasgus immediately enforces his decisions as he speaks: he orders that Danaus be escorted into the city as the representative of the suppliants (ll. 500–503); he personally instructs

135 The characterization of the Danaids is notoriously ambivalent, since they supplicate as well as threaten and are moved by survival instinct as well as longing for their enemy's destruction: see, e.g., Friis Johansen / Whittle (vol. 1) 1980: 37–40.

136 See, e.g., Friis Johansen / Whittle (vol. 1) 1980: 40–55; Grethlein 2003: 45–48.

137 Cf. Sommerstein 1997: 74–79 on the historical and political implications of the Argive assembly and Grethlein 2003: 90 ff. on the juridical status of the asylum-seekers.

the Danaids on how they should produce lasting proof of the supplication they have just performed for present and possibly future eyewitnesses—namely by leaving the branches by the altar “as a symbol of distress” (ll. 504–507)—and presently summons the assembly of the Argives (ll. 516–523).

524–599 [narrative]: The choral song is a prayer to Zeus. For the most part, it re-narrates in greater detail the story of Io, who, like the Danaids, is a victim of sexual desire (ll. 535–589): this further expands on the motifs which previous choral narratives have introduced (ll. 15–18 and 291–324). What is exceptional for Aeschylean standards is that this narrative addresses no internal narratee: indeed, there is no character beyond the choral narrators themselves on the stage between line 523, when Pelasgus leaves to attend the city assembly, and line 600, when Danaus returns.¹³⁸ Apparently, the purpose of this particular choral narrative is to bridge the timelapse during which the Argive assembly takes place offstage.

600–624 [narrative]: In one of the briefest episodes of Attic tragedy,¹³⁹ Danaus relates to the chorus the news from the assembly of the Argives. The chorus greet him as a messenger (l. 602) and Danaus will equate himself with a messenger later on (l. 774). In this capacity, he reports that the assembly has unanimously resolved to grant asylum to the Danaids, even at the cost of a likely war with the Egyptians. Danaus also reports that Pelasgus has played a decisive role at the assembly, persuading the Argives with the argument of the tremendous grief which Zeus the protector of the suppliants might inflict on the city if the Danaids are turned away.

625–709 [response]: The chorus rejoice at the news and respond to it with the second stasimon. This is a liberating song of four pairs of strophes and anti-strophes. It is a prayer, first of all to Zeus, but also to his divine children Ares, Artemis, and Apollo. It expresses gratitude and blesses the Argives for their sense of justice.

710–733 [narrative]: Like the first episode (cf. ll. 176–185), the third opens with a teichoscopy-like report by Danaus.¹⁴⁰ Again he fulfils the function of a mes-

138 Taplin 1977: 209. The scene thus lacks the “audience on stage” (Goldhill 2009). For an analysis of this choral narrative, see Rutherford 2007: 22–25.

139 See Bowen 2013: 272 for comparisons. Earlier scholarship did not even consider this as an episode on its own right: cf. Di Gregorio 1967: 46, with references.

140 See Taplin 1977: 210 f. on so-called mirror scenes.

senger, announcing to the chorus that armed men are approaching—this time from the sea. The ship of the Egyptians cuts the waves at great speed. From a distance, Danaus has a clear view of the sail, the side-screens, the prow which is painted as usual with big apotropaic eyes, and the dark skin of the men on board contrasting with their white garments. He then tries to reassure the maidens by anticipating that he will soon come back with “helpers and defenders” (ll. 724–733).

734–824 [response]: The chorus respond to Danaus’ news by raising a song of sheer terror. This section basically consists of two moments. The first is the lyric-epirrhematic exchange between the Danaids, who are out of their mind at the idea that they might fall prey to their fearsome cousins, and their father, who in spoken iambic trimeters tries to soothe them by reminding them that the Argives have promised help and by pointing out that the arrogance of the assailants might turn out to be their ruin (ll. 734–763). In a short monologue, Danaus reassures his daughters that the Egyptians will still need some time before they disembark and that meanwhile he will go and alert the city to find help (ll. 764–775). After this, the second moment of the responsive section is a choral song of three pairs of strophes and antistrophes in which the Danaids, now left alone, give unrestrained expression to their fear (ll. 776–824).

825–907/910 [action]: The beginning of this section is badly damaged, given that several lines are incomplete or entirely missing.¹⁴¹ But it is clear enough that at this point Egyptian men¹⁴² rush onto the stage and begin to intimidate the Danaids with ferocious cries and threats, and that the Danaids display their revulsion for them. It appears that the Egyptians would form a second chorus, though the issue is still debated and the debate is ultimately influenced by how scholars envision and define the chorus of Attic tragedy.¹⁴³ The Egyptians urge the Danaids to hurry up and board the ship if they want to be spared some “very bloody” injuries (l. 840). The concitation of the voices and in all likelihood the body language of the Egyptians is to some degree reflected by the text, for example by means of word repetition and shaky syntax (ll. 836–841). The exchange between the Egyptians and the Danaids continues over four pairs of strophes and antistrophes, first in the form of an *amoibaion* or dialogic song, and then starting from line 882 in the form of a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue

141 Several editors invert the order of ll. 872–875 and 882–885. Cf. Lomiento 2015 for different metrical analyses of these lines.

142 Cf. West 1990 (*Aeschylus*): 170: *irrupunt homunculi Aegyptii (non Aegypti filii)*.

143 The idea of a second chorus is endorsed, e.g., by West 1990 (*Studies*): 152f., while Taplin

with the Egyptian herald.¹⁴⁴ Throughout this exchange, the vocabulary of the Egyptians and their herald is outrageously violent and physical, to which the Danaids respond with anger and disgust, repeatedly wishing for the death of the assailants. Although the attempt of the Egyptians to seize the Danaids fails, these events unmistakably change the situation in which the characters find themselves: the Danaids no longer fear what may come but are in actual danger, and the Argives can no longer ponder the risks but have a moral obligation to intervene immediately. The stage performance of this scene must have made a strong impression on the audience, and the text, although damaged, offers a number of footholds to try and figure it out.¹⁴⁵

911–965 [action]: King Pelasgus finally arrives at the head of his men (yet another chorus?) and confronts the Egyptians in a dialogue with their herald. In the first place he criticizes their improper behaviour towards the men of Argos, their customs, and their gods, without even mentioning the Danaids. Pelasgus' reaction seems to deliberately disregard the issue of the Danaids, which politically is the clever thing to do because it shifts the premises of the conflict from a complicated family impasse to the aggression against Argos. This enables Pelasgus to oppose the Egyptians not primarily as the self-proclaimed protector of the Danaids but as the king of the city which the Egyptians have assailed. But he also makes it clear that the Egyptians may take the Danaids with them only with the maidens' consent, after which he dismisses the herald and invites the Danaids to enter his city. Whether or not any physical violence was shown at the level of the *opsis*,¹⁴⁶ the scenic realization of the last-minute rescue probably made a stronger impression on the original audience than one may be inclined to think, because "the last-minute entry of the rescuing hero has become a classic of theatre and film [... but] when Aeschylus wrote this scene [...], such things had not been staged so frequently."¹⁴⁷

966–979 [response]: The chorus express their gratitude to Pelasgus, ask that their father is sent back to them, and prepare themselves to enter the city.

1977: 202 f. is more cautious. Lloyd-Jones 1983 [1964] surveys earlier positions about the (indefinable) number of choreuts involved in *Suppliant Women*.

144 The actor playing Danaus could here double as the herald, which would allow to stage the play with two actors only: see, e.g., Dickinson 2009: 177; *contra* Bowen 2013: 319.

145 On the staging of this scene see, e.g., Taplin 1977: 213–222; Papadopoulou 2011: 90 f.; Bowen 2013: 312, whereas not only *opsis* but also language is a powerful means to portray barbarian characters (cf. Bacon 1961: 15–24).

146 Taplin 1977: 203 and 216 plausibly argues against physical violence.

147 Bowen 2013: 324.

980–1033 [action]: This enactive section represents how the Danaids prepare their entrance to the city of Argos. It consists of two moments. The first is a monologue by Danaus (ll. 980–1013, fifth episode), who now comes back on the stage from the city escorted by spearmen. Once again, Danaus gives his daughters precise instructions about how to behave properly once admitted to Argos, demanding their full attention and that they take mental note of what he says (ll. 991f.). The gist of this lesson, which Danaus underpins with gnomic pieces of wisdom, is that the young women shall remain chaste and avoid any chance of arousing men's desire, as epitomized by the last words which Danaus says in the play: "value your chastity more than life itself" (l. 1013). This seems to confirm that the goal of Danaus is not only to prevent his daughters from marrying their cousins, but anyone at all.¹⁴⁸ The second moment of this section encompasses the first pair of strophe and antistrophe of the choral song (ll. 1018–1033). After promising, in spoken lines, that they will stick to their father's orders (ll. 1014–1017), the Danaids begin to sing the *exodos*, which represents their entry into the city. As they move on, the chorus praise chaste Artemis and pray that they shall never be forced to consummate marriage. We do not know how things developed in Aeschylus' trilogy, but according to myth the fifty Danaids were eventually married against their will and forty-nine of them killed their husbands on their first night under wedlock. In the face of this, one may read various degrees of success into the action with which Danaus drills his daughters in a life of chastity: Danaus is unsuccessful inasmuch as his daughters will get married, but on the other hand quite successful in that forty-nine of them will put an early end to their marriages—be it to prevent that the marriage is consummated, or as revenge for having been violated by their husbands.¹⁴⁹

1034–1073 [action]: It appears that starting from l. 1034, the choral song develops into a two-voice exchange between the chorus of the Danaids and another chorus, maybe of Argive soldiers.¹⁵⁰ The second chorus seek to persuade the

148 According to Rösler 1993, Danaus' monologue confirms that *Suppliant Women* was the second (instead of the first) play of the trilogy and that *Egyptians* (which would thus be the first play) mentioned the oracle response that Danaus would die at the hand of his own nephew (cf. Garvie 2006 [1969]: 165). Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 100–108, Bowen 2013, and others agree on this structure of the trilogy.

149 According to some versions of the myth, the only Danaid who spared the life of her husband (Hypermnestra, married to Lynceus) did so because she could preserve her virginity: see Garvie 2006 [1969]: 165 on the sources.

150 It has been argued that the parts of the song which favour Aphrodite were sung by a chorus different from the suppliants (e.g., Sommerstein 2010 [1996]: 108; Swift 2010: 280–282). The

Danaids that they should revere not only chaste Artemis, but also powerful Aphrodite, and invite them to reconsider the issue of marriage itself from a more conciliatory perspective. The Danaids cannot be mollified, however, and while we can only speculate about what happened next in the course of the trilogy,¹⁵¹ we know that this, like any other possible attempt to make them accept the idea of a fair marriage, will turn out to be in vain. For this reason, the attempt to change the Danaids' minds qualifies as a conation.¹⁵²

3.2.4 Prometheus

1–87 [action]: *Prometheus* opens on an enactive section. The character utterances represent Power, Hephaestus, and Violence (who, however, remains silent) in the act of carrying out Zeus' orders and binding Prometheus to a rock somewhere in a desolate area in Scythia. The dialogic opening of the play, which informs the audience indirectly about the antefacts, resembles the openings of Sophocles more than the monologic prologues which we are familiar with from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides* (as well as from Euripides' tragedies) and has been used as an argument against the authenticity of the play.¹⁵³ From the point of view of theatrical performance there are two particularly insidious issues: first, how or how realistically the punishment was shown on the stage (this is a question which actually applies to many scenes of *Prometheus*),¹⁵⁴ and second, how many actors were required. Four characters enter the stage together at line 1, but since Violence remains silent it could be played by a κωφὸν πρόσωπον instead of an actor. Also, it has been hypothesized that a puppet might stand for Prometheus, who remains

identity of this hypothetical chorus is debated, but they might be Argive soldiers: see, e.g., Rösler 1993: 14 note 30 with references; Sommerstein 2008; Bowen 2013. Swift 2010: 279–296 interprets the song as a hymenaeus.

- 151 That is, in *Egyptians* if *Suppliant Women* were the first play or, alternatively, *Danaids* if *Suppliant Women* came second. What is certain is that *Danaids* came third (TrGF 3 T 70.3, cf. also TrGF 3 TRI B1 [pp. 111 f.]). On the likely content of this play, see Sommerstein 2008: 281 f., 2008 (*Fragments*): 38–41, and 2010 [1996]: 105 f.
- 152 However, Garvie 2006 [1969]: 226 f. thinks that the trilogy might have closed on a second marriage of the Danaids, since one version of the myth speaks of a second marriage which did not end with a bloodbath: see Garvie 2006 [1969]: 179 f. and Angeli Bernardini 2007: 111–113 on Pind. *P.* 9.111–116.
- 153 E.g., Griffith 1983: 80; West 1990 (*Studies*): 54; Bees 1993: 34 f. However, TrGF 3 T1.6 (*Life of Aeschylus*) describes the opening of a lost tragedy by Aeschylus (*The Ransom of Hector*) as “little exchanges in song” (ὀλίγα ἀμοιβαία) between Achilles and Hermes: see Taplin 1972: 63 f.; Pattoni 1987: 173.
- 154 Griffith 1977: 143 argues for a symbolic staging of the binding—incidentally, it seems that Euripides' *Andromeda* also opened with the protagonist bound to a rock.

silent throughout the section, though the hypothesis is not particularly convincing,¹⁵⁵ and according to Aristophanes it was typical of Aeschylus to make an actor enter the stage only to remain silent for a long while.¹⁵⁶ In all likelihood, *Prometheus* is the only one of the four plays considered here which makes use of three instead of two actors; yet this resource does not translate into an increase of actor-to-actor interaction nor in a more eventful plot.¹⁵⁷

88–127 [response]: Prometheus is finally able to speak, lamenting his condition in spoken and sung lines. Not surprisingly, he invokes none of the Olympian gods, but does call on the primordial powers of nature—sky, earth, sweet and salt waters. At the end of the responsive section (ll. 114–127), Prometheus comments like an internal spectator on visual and sound aspects of the entrance of the chorus. Although these words and the first strophe of the *parodos* (see below), which speak of a winged chorus, have caused much controversy, an entry on foot—possibly supported by visual and choreographic elements suggesting the idea of wings—might do an excellent job of evoking a “winged car” (l. 135) which is not actually on the stage.¹⁵⁸

128–159 [response]: The chorus are water nymphs, daughters of Oceanus. Their *parodos* has the form of a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue with Prometheus and, for the purposes of the present analysis, can be split into this section, which is mostly responsive, and the next one, which is mostly narrative. In this section, the chorus say they have come after hearing “the sound of stroke on steel” (l. 133) produced by the torturers of Prometheus, and express both sympathy for Prometheus and reproach for Zeus and his “newly made rules” (l. 150). In turn, Prometheus pities himself, invites the chorus to be an eyewitness to what he

155 See, e.g., Taplin 1977: 243–245; Conacher 1980: 182; Griffith 1983: 31 note 95; further references in Podlecki 2005: 199 note 12. Virtually every single aspect of the staging of *Prometheus Bound* is much debated (see, e.g., Davidson 1994).

156 See above on *Pers.* 249–514. Not surprisingly, scholars who think that *Prometheus* is spurious regard Prometheus’ silence as not quite like the Aeschylean ones, while scholars who think that the play is genuine think differently. E.g., Taplin 1972: 78f.: “[o]ne who believes that *Prom.* is not by Aeschylus [...] would do well to maintain that this silence is a derivative attempt at an Aeschylean silence. The imitator knew that his character should be silent at the beginning of the play; but he did not know how to use the silence effectively” (note 66); *contra* Pattoni 1987: 174 ff. On Prometheus’ dilemma about whether he should speak or keep silent, see Conacher 1980: 35 note 6.

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

158 For the problems regarding the chorus’ (and Oceanus’) entry and the possible use of the *mēchanē* in *Prometheus* see, e.g., Griffith 1977: 143 f.; Conacher 1980: 182 ff. Ruffell 2011: 88 ff.; Lazani 2018: 166; and cf. Chapter 3.1.1/*Objects which challenge mimēsis.*

is enduring, and wishes that Zeus had plunged him into the realm of the dead instead of leaving him languishing fixed to a rock. Most of these expressions of sorrow can be seen as responding to the punishment inflicted on Prometheus as represented at the play's beginning.

160–283 [narrative]: This rather long section encompasses the remaining part of the *parodos* (ll. 160–192) and a subsequent exchange between Prometheus and the chorus, mostly in spoken lines (ll. 193–283). In spite of the formal differences, what these two moments have in common is that they both recall the events relating to the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus, and also, that in both Prometheus' narrative develops out of the questions of the chorus. In ll. 160–192, what encourages Prometheus to tell his story is not only the chorus' questions ("What god is so hard-hearted as to take delight in this?" ll. 160f.) but also their discontent with the tyranny of Zeus. This motivates Prometheus to reveal, in a rather cryptic flash-forward narrative, that Zeus will one day need Prometheus' help to maintain his power; when the chorus ask what the end of Prometheus' sufferings will be (ll. 178–185), the focus of the prophecy shifts accordingly. Now the chorus switch to spoken lines and ask Prometheus to tell everything clearly, and thus Prometheus' narrative in spoken lines begins (ll. 193–283). This structure reminds us of another prophetic scene, that of Cassandra in *Agamemnon* (ll. 1072ff.): both prophecies are delivered in song at first and then in spoken lines, whereby the song part only gives obscure hints and the spoken part delivers the prophecy in easily understandable language. In *Prometheus*, as in *Agamemnon*, it is the chorus who, after an obscure prophetic song, ask the prophet to "unveil" the speech ("Tell us everything and unveil the speech [ἐκκαλύψον [...] λόγον], l. 193").¹⁵⁹ To retell the story in a more understandable and (chrono-)logical fashion, this time Prometheus begins with past instead of future events. The flash-back narrative covers at first the way in which Zeus prevailed over the Titans and gained absolute power with the help of Prometheus himself, after the Titans refused his good advice out of pride and he switched to Zeus' cause instead (ll. 197–225). However, the alliance between Zeus and Prometheus soon deteriorated (ll. 226–262)—this part of the story answers the chorus' question about why Zeus is now punishing Prometheus (l. 226 "But as to the question you ask ...," cf. ll. 193–196). Prometheus' narrative goes over how Zeus, then newly enthroned, resolved to destroy mankind and how Prome-

159 The debate on the authorship of *Prometheus* neglects these kinds of similarity with *Agamemnon*: cf. Gianvittorio-Ungar 2021: 135f. In the main text, the translation of *Prom.* 193 slightly modifies Sommerstein's.

thus helped men, thus bringing upon himself the wrath of Zeus. Formally, the narrative begins as a monologue (ll. 226–241) and continues as a stichomythic dialogue in which the questions asked by the choral narratees encourage the narrator to add further items to the catalogue of the gifts which Prometheus bestowed on men (ll. 242–258). Finally, the chorus invite Prometheus to interrupt the narration or “leave the matter” (ll. 261 f., ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν μεθώμεν); the narrator agrees but asks the chorus to pay attention to the next bit of narrative (ll. 271–276), which will come at ll. 436–525. As so often at the end of a section, the final lines of this one comment on aspects of the *opsis* (ll. 277–283): the chorus say that they want to listen to Prometheus carefully and that to do so they will now leave their winged carriage and set foot on earth, where the narrator awaits them.

284–339 [action]: Despite the plans of both narrator and narratees, the rest of the narrative is postponed because of an unexpected arrival, and thus, the curious episode of Oceanus begins. After commenting on his own stage entrance,¹⁶⁰ Oceanus pays his respects to Prometheus, offers him pieces of advice, and promises that he will help him in any way. Above all, he tries to dissuade Prometheus from resisting Zeus, which will be in vain (see ll. 377–396). He professes his intention to change the situation in which Prometheus finds himself in two ways, that is by interceding with Zeus and by mollifying Prometheus himself (see ll. 295–297, 307 f., 325 f., 338 f.). Words such as *prothymia* and *prothymeō* (ll. 341 and 381) confirm that Oceanus is acting with a purpose here, yet he fails to modify the situation in the way he hopes, or in any other factual way for that matter.

340–376 [narrative]: Prometheus is grateful but adamant. He recalls the mythical examples of Atlas and Typhon, both enemies of Zeus who received harsh punishments from him, to remind Oceanus of how cruel Zeus can be.¹⁶¹ Towards the end of the section there is confirmation of what is apparent anyway, namely that the purpose of Prometheus’ narrative is to remind Oceanus of Zeus’ relentless nature and the risks to which he would expose himself by mediating between the two parties (l. 373 “You are not without experience, and you

160 Lines 284–287, “steered this swift-winged bird by mental power,” cf. ll. 393–396 on Oceanus’ exit. Cf. Taplin 1977, 260 f.; Griffith 1977: 144 ff. and 1983: 140.

161 The mention of the volcanic eruption (also recalled by Pind. *P.* 1.20 ff.) has offered an element for hypotheses about the date of *Prometheus*: e.g., Bees 1993: 17–19. The eruption should be dated to 479/478 BCE according to *IG XII,5 444 52.68–69a* but 475 BCE according to Thucydides (3.116).

don't need me to teach you"). Indeed, the one who wanted to persuade ends up being persuaded.

377–396 [action]: In the form of a dialogue, Prometheus refuses the help which is being offered and Oceanus in turn abandons his plan to persuade him and intercede with Zeus (ll. 387 and 391). The section therefore represents how Oceanus' attempt to improve the situation of Prometheus fails in the dramatic here and now and therefore qualifies as enactive-conative. While the entire episode of Oceanus has often been criticized as "dramatically weak"¹⁶² or superfluous on the basis that it does not contribute towards the development of the plot, it certainly contributes to other aspects of the drama, such as the characterization of the protagonist and the taste for retarding the inevitable.¹⁶³ Hence the episode is a good example of how dramatic elements tend to be regarded as weak under the tacit assumption that drama should be eminently plot-driven while the qualities which episodes can strengthen are less important to drama.

397–435 [response]: The first stasimon is a choral response. The Oceanids shed tears (ll. 397–401) about Prometheus' fate, essentially lamenting once again the same misfortunes as in the responsive *parodos* (see ll. 128–159),¹⁶⁴ though the new lament seems to be triggered by the latest developments and by Oceanus' failure. They list in a catalogue barbaric people who are imagined mourning Prometheus' unjust sufferings. The catalogue thus expands the lament to a universal scale: the chorus ideally speak for men from every corner of the Earth, and voice the sorrow which mankind is supposed to feel for its saviour, Prometheus.¹⁶⁵

436–525 [narrative]: The second episode consists entirely of a narrative.¹⁶⁶ Prometheus proudly recalls (maybe after a short silence?¹⁶⁷) the many ways in

162 The "non-dramatic" quality of scenes like this one has been remarked upon as soon as Schlegel 1966 [1809]: 28; see, e.g., Griffith 1977: 144 (cf. pp. 115 f. with references) and 1983: 139; Conacher 1980: 45, who describes the Oceanus scene as an "abortive intervention"; and Bees 1993: 43 f., who recalls further negative judgements.

163 E.g., Conacher 1980: 150 f.

164 Cf. Griffith 1983: 156: "The ode introduces no new material or ideas, nor does it attempt to analyse or explain the preceding events [...]; instead, it provides a lyric response to P[rometheus'] account of his suffering in the previous scene."

165 Conacher 1980: 47 f. explores the reasons for the focus on barbaric people only. Lines 425–430 on Atlas may be interpolated.

166 This episode is anomalous because it is the only one in Attic tragedy without the stage entry and/or exit of actors: see Taplin 1977: 262–265 on this "static structural technique."

167 On the possible silence which followed l. 437 see, e.g., Wilamowitz 1914: 122 (who thinks of

which he has improved the human condition,¹⁶⁸ thereby also describing how human life had previously been wild and nearly feral (ll. 447–457, 478–480).¹⁶⁹ The narrative breaks off when Prometheus refuses to reveal his secret to the chorus.

526–560 [response]: Throughout the second stasimon, the chorus sing of their hope never to incur the wrath of Zeus and emphatically consider the position of Prometheus.

561–608 [action]: The scene of Io can probably be ascribed to the category of action according to the quantitative criterion, but this is an approximation, since enactive and narrative utterances are intermingled with each other.¹⁷⁰ Io comes on the stage without knowing where she is and introduces herself with a few anapaests (ll. 561–565). Her cries of pain encode in the text the torture which the gadfly is currently inflicting on her body (action),¹⁷¹ yet Io also recounts the misfortunes which have befallen her (narrative), namely the torment of the gadfly and her long wandering, including a cryptic reference to Zeus' responsibility for this suffering (ll. 568–588). The rest of the section is a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue which represents the encounter and the exchange of information between Io and Prometheus as these events occur in the dramatic here and now (ll. 589–608).¹⁷²

609–686 [narrative]: The chronological order of this long narrative section is multi-layered, ranging from the future (prolepsis) to the past (analepsis).

a strategy to focus the audience attention); Taplin 1972: 64f. and 83f. (who does not consider this as a typical Aeschylean silence of the kind parodied by Aristoph. *Ra.* 911–929); Griffith 1977: 116–118.

168 The same topic is addressed in TrGF 3 F181a, 182 (*Palamedes*), and 189a (from an unidentified *Prometheus*). Conacher 1980: 82ff.; Podlecki 2005: 16–27; and Ruffell 2011: 57–79 comment on the notion of technological and social progress in this text passage and in ancient Greek culture.

169 On description as being functional to narrative, see Chapter 2.1.4/*Narrative and description*.

170 See Gianvittorio-Ungar 2021.

171 Interpretations of the Io scene by modern artists confirm that expressions of physical pain and other enactive elements are often perceived as crucial components of it. E.g., in Luigi Nono's *Prometeo—Tragedia dell'ascolto* (1984), which transposes passages from Aeschylus, Hölderlin, and Benjamin into music (cf. Jeschke 1997), piercing cries dominate the scene.

172 Taplin 1977, 266 points out that this is the only place in the corpus which is traditionally regarded as Aeschylean at which the song parts of a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue are not by the chorus but by the actor.

At first Prometheus, moved by Io, makes a somehow reticent reference to his present condition (ll. 609–621) and appears to be about to reveal to Io future events regarding herself (ll. 622–630). Yet at this point, the chorus interrupt to ask that the prophecy be postponed and that Io should tell them about her past first (ll. 631–634)—once again, this play builds suspense by delaying something which appears to be just about to happen. Starting from l. 640, Io satisfies the curiosity of the chorus by narrating a long monologue on how Zeus began stalking her with upsetting dreams, how she shared the dreams with her father Inachus, how he painfully resolved to cast his daughter away, how Io was transformed into a cow and undertook her long wanderings, and how her guardian Argus perished (ll. 640–686).

687–699 [response]: The chorus briefly comment on the hardship of the events narrated by Io (ll. 687–695); then Prometheus prepares the narratees for the prophecy which was previously promised (cf. l. 630).

700–876 [narrative]: This is an extensive prolepsis regarding the fate of Io. The narrative section is articulated in two moments. In the first (ll. 700–741), Prometheus prophesies Io's journey through exotic regions and peoples until she reaches the Bosphorus.¹⁷³ This is followed by a passage (ll. 742–785) which is different in content—it is about the future of Zeus rather than Io—as well as in form—it is a dialogic exchange with Io and with choral interventions. In this passage, Prometheus hints at the end of Zeus' absolute power and at how Io's fate and his own are intertwined, since a descendant of Io, Heracles, will one day put an end to Prometheus' suffering. While being relevant to the trilogy of which *Prometheus Bound* was presumably part,¹⁷⁴ these events take place in a distant future. In the second moment of the narrative section (ll. 786–876), Prometheus sets forth his prophecy about the wandering of Io, who will reach the Nile and give birth to Epaphus; even the murders of the Danaids and the birth of Heracles are anticipated, which is the link between this and the next narrative section (ll. 908–943).

877–907 [response]: After Io's anapaests, at which the torment of the gadfly resumes (ll. 877–886), the chorus respond with a short song on Prometheus'

¹⁷³ On Io's journey see, e.g., Collard 2008: xciii, with a map and further references.

¹⁷⁴ The form and contents of the Prometheus trilogy are open questions, though the solutions proposed by West 2007 are persuasive. Podlecki 2005: 27–34 outlines the major lines of the debate. For the involvement of Heracles in the trilogy, see TrGF 3 F 195–200.

prophecy (ll. 887–907), thereby formulating gnomic pieces of wisdom about the risks which mortal women incur when consorting with the gods.

908–943 [narrative]: Prometheus fulfils the request which the chorus has previously formulated (cf. ll. 782–785) in that he predicts the fate of Zeus. However, he does not reveal the secret which might compromise Zeus' power (he knows from Gaia, his mother, that if Thetis had a son from Zeus or Poseidon it would be the most powerful of the immortals).

944–1079 [action]: This and the next section represent by means of action events which are causally related to each other: first, the failure of Hermes, who, speaking on behalf of Zeus, tries in vain to extract the secret from Prometheus, and eventually the punishment inflicted on Prometheus himself. The dialogue between the two characters represents the degeneration of an irremediable conflict; Hermes' threat in the form of a brief narrative about how Prometheus will be punished if he continues to defy Zeus (ll. 1016–1029) is part of the enactive section.

1080–1093 [action]: The final part of the play represents in word and *opsis* the consequence of the previous action and enacts the threats of Hermes (l. 1080 ἔργῳ κοῦκέτι μύθῳ, cf. ll. 1016–1029). Amidst a thunderstorm sent by Zeus, the earth shakes and opens up under the rock to which Prometheus is bound, thus making him plunge into Tartarus.¹⁷⁵

175 Probably, the stage rendering of Prometheus' plunging into Tartarus was as realistic as his binding to the rock (cf. above on ll. 1–87): see, e.g., Monaco 1982: 16 f.

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: 6f.

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 (Atossa) dream and omen*	(chorus, Atossa) interpretation of dream and omen	
140–214			
215–248			
249–514	(messenger) Persian defeat: · 256–289 <i>kommos</i> : (messenger) Persian defeat (chorus) lament · 290–514 <i>rhēsis</i> <i>angelikē</i> : (messenger) Persian defeat	(chorus) lament	
515–597			
598–680			(chorus) necro- mantic ritual
681–702			
703–738	(Atossa) Persian defeat*	(Darius) analysis of the defeat	
739–764			
765–842	(Darius) past and future of Persia		
843–906			
907–1037	(chorus) past greatness of Per- sia ↓ <i>kommos</i> : (Xerxes) (chorus) lament 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	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>(Eteocles) invocation to the gods</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>	(Eteocles) invocation to the gods	
78–181		(chorus) attack of the Argives	(chorus) prayer
182–286	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>(Eteocles) attempt to silence the chorus</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		(Eteocles) attempt to silence the chorus
287–374		(chorus) prayer	
375–396	(scout) manoeuvres of the Argives; Tydeus <i>ante portam</i> *	(chorus)	(Eteocles)
397–416	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>appointment of Melanippus</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		appointment of Melanippus
417–421			comment ←
422–436	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Capaneus <i>ante portam</i>*</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		appointment of Polyphontes
437–451			comment ←
452–456	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>appointment of Megareus</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		appointment of Megareus
457–471		Eteocles <i>ante portam</i> *	comment ←
472–480	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>appointment of Hyperbius</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		appointment of Hyperbius
481–485		Hippomedon <i>ante portam</i> *	comment ←
486–500	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>appointment of Actor</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		appointment of Actor
501–520		Parthenopaeus <i>ante portam</i>	comment ←
521–525	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>appointment of Lasthenes</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		appointment of Lasthenes
526–549		Amphiaraus <i>ante portam</i> *	comment ←
550–562	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>self-appointment</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		self-appointment
563–567		Polyneices <i>ante portam</i> *	
568–596	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 150px; border-right: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>lament</p> </div> </div> </div> </div>		lament ←
597–625		(scout) outcome of the duels*	
626–630			
631–652			
653–676			
677–719			
720–791			
792–819			
822–1004			(chorus) lament

Suppliant Women

Lines	Narrative	Response	Action
1-22	(chorus) flight from arranged marriage		
23-39		(chorus) prayer	
40-77	(chorus) excursus on Io, Epaphus*		
78-175		(chorus) prayer	
176-185	(Danaus) approach of armed men		
186-233			(Danaus, chorus) preparation for the supplication
234-290			(Pelagus, chorus) acquaintance of Pelagus with the chorus
291-324	(Pelagus, chorus) story of Io*		
325-467			(chorus) supplication, persuasion, suicidal threat
468-523			(Pelagus) 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			(Pelagus, 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 *kommōi* 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 conations⁵—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 (Pelagus and chorus, ll. 234–290), the supplication itself, followed by Pelagus' decision to consult the citizens (chorus, Pelagus, and Danaus, ll. 325–523), the Egyptians' attempt to kidnap the Danaids (Egyptians, ll. 825–907/910), the rescue by the Argives (Pelagus, 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 *Choephoroi*, 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 (fr. 38 and 39; probably also fr. 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 / Talbot 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*): 34f. 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 Schade-waldt 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 Θρήσσαις τὴν ἀναίρεσιν Αἴαντος δι' ἀγγέλου ἀπαγγελίας.

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: 4f.

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: 271f. 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* (Holtmark 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: 42f. 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 Albin 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 (ἡθοποιία/*ēthopoïia*) 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

43 See Gianvittorio 2012 a.

44 Arist. *Rhet.* 1417a36–b11. Other rhetorical uses of narrative include the exaggeration (αὐξήσις/*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: 75f.

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 Egypt

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 (*anagnōrīsis*). 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 *anagnōrīsis* occurs here and now (while and because the messenger says what he says), the report enacts the *anagnōrīsis* 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 *anagnōrīsis* of the protagonist *and* this knowledge works as the turning point of the plot—incidentally, Aristotle seems to imply that *anagnōrīsis* 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 [...] ἰκάνω [...] 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 τὰδ’, ὡς οὕτως ἐχόντων τῶνδε, σύμβουλοι λόγου τοῦδέ μοι γένεσθε, Πέρσαι, γηραλέα πιστώματα· πάντα γὰρ τὰ κέδ’ ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστὶ μοι βουλευόμενα; cf. also *Pers.* 526–528.

60 *Pers.* 173–175, εὖ τόδ’ ἴσθι, γῆς ἄνασσα τῆσδε, μή σε δις φράσαι μῆτ’ ἔπος μῆτ’ ἔργον, ὦν ἂν δύναμις ἡγείσθαι θέλῃ· εὐμενεῖς γὰρ ὄντας ἡμᾶς τῶνδε συμβούλους καλεῖς.

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

62 *Pers.* 224, ταῦτα θυμόμαντις ὣν σοι πρευμενῶς παρήνεσα.

63 *Pers.* 226–229 ἀλλὰ μὴν εὐνοῦς γ’ ὁ πρῶτος τῶνδ’ ἐνυπνίων κριτὴς παιδί 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 αὐτ’ 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 435f.) or with exhortations to the king to act resolutely (ll. 470f., 499f., 595f., 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 ἀνδρας ἐκκρίτους πόλεως πυλῶν ἐπ' ἐξόδοισι τάγευσαι τάχος [...] σὺ δ' ὥστε ναὸς κενὸς οἰακοστρόφος φάρξαι πόλισμα, πρὶν καταγιῆσαι πνοᾶς 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. 814f.)—“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 Pelagus 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 precludes 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

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' ἁμὸν ἀρχαῖον γένος πράσσοις ἄν, ὡς Ἀργεῖον ἀνστήσαι 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: “ἀνστήσαι 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’ ἠδονῆς κάμοι πόρε, “Give me, too, a share of pleasure”; 635, χάριν, “favour”; 698 f., λέγ’, ἐκδίδασκει τοῖς νοσοῦσί τοι γλυκὺ τὸ λοιπὸν ἄλγος προὔξῃς ἐπίστασθαι 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 373f.). 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, Προμηθεύ, ξυμφορὰ διδάσκαλος, "Your misfortunes, Prometheus, serve to instruct me."

78 *Prom.* 947 f., πατήρ ἄνωγέ σ' οὔστινας κομπεῖς γάμουσ ἀύδᾶν, "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 counter-examples:

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

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, cumulateness, 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 ἢ 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 (*ἄπλοῦς/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*, *ἀναγνώρισεις/agnōriseis*), 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 ἢ ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων, τῆς ἐκπλήξεως γιγνομένης δι’ εἰκότων, οἷον ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Οἰδίποδι καὶ τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ [...] δεύτεραι δὲ αἰ 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” (*anagnōrīsis 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 τὰδε/*meta tade*, 1452a19–22) but because of one another (διὰ τὰδε/*dia tade*); for this reason, the middle and the end parts of these plots naturally result from that which precedes them (1450 b25 ff.). 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: 90 ff.; Dannenberg 2004: 53; Andronikashvili 2009: 18–21.

111 *Poet.* 1456a10–19; 1462a18–1462 b3. Possibly, Schmitt 2008: 563 f. 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/*episodiōdēs*, 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 τραγωδίας/*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 δράμα 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 τραγωδίας τὸ μὲν δέσις τὸ δὲ λύσις, τὰ μὲν ἔξωθεν καὶ ἔνια τῶν ἔσωθεν πολλάκις ἢ δέσις, τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἢ 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 τὰ τε προπεπραγμένα καὶ ἡ τοῦ παιδίου λήψις καὶ πάλιν ἢ 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.* 145b23–31, 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 ἔξ αὐτοῦ δεῖ τοῦ μύθου συμβαίνειν, καὶ μὴ ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ Μηδείᾳ ἀπὸ μηχανῆς καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἰλιάδι τὰ περὶ τὸν ἀπόπλου. ἀλλὰ μηχανῆ χρηστέον ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω τοῦ δράματος, ἢ ὅσα πρὸ τοῦ γέγονεν ἃ οὐχ οἶόν τε ἀνθρωπῶν 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

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, ἰδρυνθείσης δὲ εἰς ἄλλην χώραν, ἐν ἣ ἰ νόμος ἦν τοὺς ξένους θύειν τῇ θεῷ, ταύτην ἔσχε τὴν ἱερωσύνην· χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον τῷ ἀδελφῷ συνέβη ἔλθειν τῆς ἱεραίας, τὸ δὲ ὅτι ἀνεῖλεν ὁ θεὸς ἔλθειν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐφ' ὅ τι δὲ ἔξω τοῦ μύθου· ἐλθῶν 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 (ἐξω 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 ἐπεκτείνεισθαι τὸ μέγεθος πολὺ τι ἡ ἐποποιία ἴδιον διὰ τὸ ἐν μὲν τῇ τραγωδίᾳ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἅμα πραττόμενα πολλὰ μέρη μιμῆσθαι 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 πολλά μέρη ἅμα ποιεῖν περαινόμενα, ὅφ' ὧν οἰκείων ὄντων αὖξεται 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 τραγωδίας.

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 cloyes 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 πολλά μέρη/*hama prattomena polla merē*) which are not necessarily related to each other or “kindred” (οἰκείος/*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 ἦττον μία ἢ μίμησις ἢ τῶν ἐποποιῶν (σημεῖον δέ, ἐκ γὰρ ὁποιασοῦν μίμησεως πλείους τραγωδίαι γίνονται), ὥστε ἐὰν μὲν ἓνα μῦθον ποιῶσιν, ἢ βραχέως δεικνύμενον μούρουρον φαίνεσθαι, ἢ ἀκολουθοῦντα τῷ τοῦ μέτρου μήκει ὑδαρῆ· λέγω δὲ οἶον ἐὰν ἐκ πλείονων πράξεων ἢ συγκειμένη, ὥσπερ ἡ Ἰλιάς ἔχει πολλά τοιαῦτα μέρη καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια <ᾶ> καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἔχει μέγεθος· καίτοι ταῦτα τὰ ποιήματα συνέστηκεν ὡς ἐνδέχεται ἄριστα καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα μίας 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.

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 *anagnōrīsis* 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.

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: 23f.

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 re-activated—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).

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

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 der jungatistischen 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: 9f.

- 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: 188f. and note 10.
- 155 E.g., Michellini 1982: 68; Gentili 1984–1985: 25ff.; Privitera 1991; Calame 2013: 347ff.

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., Micheline 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 musicopoeic 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 (καταλέξει/*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: 41ff.

165 Lys. 2.27 (*Epit.*).

166 See Broadhead 1960: 318–321 and Bacon 1961: 23f. 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: 62ff. 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” (ἐνθ’ ἐνδ’/*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 Bosphorus—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 Bosphorus 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 οἰχομαι/*oichomai* “to depart” is a euphemism for “to die” (LSJ s.v. 11), 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

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, τὰδ’ 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. 266f.). 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. 253f.), “How utterly loathsome is the name of Salamis to my ears! Ah, how I groan when I remember Athens!” (ll. 284f.). 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. 439f.), “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. 478f.). 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.* 230f., 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 prophecies 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 *kommós* 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, ἀκούση μῦθον ἐν βραχέϊ 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 dramatic 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 *rhexis*, 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

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 Iatish 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*.

From Tragic Narratives towards New Narratives of Tragedy

Criticism by negatives. In ancient as well as modern times, Aeschylus' tragedies—especially the ones preceding the *Oresteia*—have often been described as uneventful, actionless, plotless, and in many ways nondramatic. These descriptions exemplify the habit of appraising Aeschylean drama based on what it is or does *not* (not yet, not quite, or not enough). The focus lies on perceived shortcomings of the plays more than on their intrinsic and distinctive traits. However widespread, this line of criticism raises considerable problems. Implicit and explicit comparisons with Sophocles and Euripides pave the way for evaluating Aeschylus by dramatic standards or desiderata which crystallized as such after him. This is a retroactive, somewhat circular procedure that is prone to accordingly biased results. For example, the plots of Aeschylus will strike us as being awkwardly constructed as long as we assess them based on their otherness—e.g., their distance from the plots concocted by Euripides, the ones praised by Aristotle, or other “model plots” whose existence in the theatre culture of Aeschylus cannot be presumed. Similar arguments can apply to other important aspects of the plays such as action, pace, and consistency. Approaches of this circular sort have produced pictures of Aeschylus which, notwithstanding their respective merits, still approximate or marginalize those traits that are flamboyant in Aeschylus and less pronounced in later drama.

To counteract this tendency, the present study reconsiders a set of features that are, at the same time, conspicuous in Aeschylus, puzzling for his readers, and still awaiting examination on their own premises. First and foremost among these features is the prominence of embedded narratives about off-stage events, on the one hand, and the rich responses (e.g., laments, comments) which such narratives elicit from the internal narratees, on the other hand; by comparison, later tragedies tend to be more focused on stage events and on how these elicit further events. No less peculiarly, Aeschylean dramaturgy relies on multiple re-narrations of the same events, meaning that different internal narrators retell, say, the same battle or piece of myth from their own unique perspectives and in their individual fashions. In these cases, it is the interplay of same-but-different narratives—the ways in which they complement, detail, counterpoint, or rewrite each other—which creates key dramaturgic ingredients such as momentum, dramatic arches, and suspense (*Wie-Spannung*). Fur-

thermore, Aeschylus typically constructs the interactions between his characters as exchanges between internal narrators and internal narratees, thereby keeping both these parties highly committed to interacting with each other. On the one hand, the narrators show a remarkable capacity to stun, destabilize, and move the narratees into their complex responses; on the other hand, the proactive narratees compel the narrators to narrate better, further, or more fully by means of questions, encouragements, threats, or, more subtly but no less effectively, by professing incomprehension and disbelief. These and similar phenomena illustrate that what is most conspicuous about the dramaturgy of Aeschylus is a distinctive kind of narrativity—his way of dramatizing the narratives.

Tragedy's different narrativities. Compared to the tragic narratives of the second half of the fifth century BCE, the Aeschylean ones stand out for their sheer quantity, variety in form and performance, and dramaturgic relevance, to mention three aspects only. Line-wise, narratives such as messenger speeches, prophecies, dream telling, and telesthetic or teichoscopy-like reports together make up the bulk of Aeschylus' plays. As for variety, the narratives materialize in monologues and recitatives no less than in the sounds and shapes of choral performances, dialogues between the chorus and an actor as well as combinations of these two types (as in kommatic and lyric-epirrhematic narratives). Regarding the third aspect, narratives work as the motor that sets—and keeps—Aeschylus' drama in motion in that they constantly elicit responses and reactions from the internal narratees. Narrativity, thus, emerges as a cluster of narrative-related features which were constitutive of the tragedy of Aeschylus and probably (under his influence or because of mutual inspirations) other Attic playwrights in the 470s and 460s BCE. To judge from the surviving plays, this kind of narrativity started being transformed around the 450s BCE by tragedians including Sophocles and, by the end of his long career, even Aeschylus himself: in the *Oresteia* trilogy (458 BCE), narratives are less central than they used to be and less prominently in charge of the dramaturgy. On the other hand, if *Prometheus* was an imitation of Aeschylus fabricated at some point in the second half of the century (perhaps the 440s or 430s, as it has been argued), then this play would be a most eloquent document of what theatre-makers and audiences who had first-hand experience of Aeschylean performances and early reperformances regarded as typical of his tragedy, namely narratives over narratives. Designed to make dramatic action almost impossible, *Prometheus* puts narratives on display and gives them dramatic rights of their own. It stars a talkative protagonist suitably gifted with prophecy, forces him with fetters into immobility throughout the play, and leaves him there apparently for the

sole purpose of telling his extraordinary stories on the eager narratees' demand. In the scenario of a spurious *Prometheus*, thus, the spectators sensed the vintage touch of this marked narrativity because the tragic trends of their day had meanwhile outdated it; and a skilled imitator wagered his credibility not on the choral songs which modern scholars expect from Aeschylus and acutely miss in this play, but on extensive, compelling narratives about the past and the future.

At a bird's eye view, the surviving plays of Sophocles indicate that soon after Aeschylus the scope of narrative in drama was narrowing down considerably, while most of Euripides and, in a different but important way, Aristotle's *Poetics* confirm that this trend was very successful. Tragedy's trajectory of development steered from conspicuous narrativity towards greater reliance on action, from reports on offstage unavoids towards stage dynamics in the here and now, from delving in the narrators' perspectives towards being more plot-driven, and from the spirals of atmospheric re-narrations towards more linear, progressional, causal logics. The side-effects of these successful stage trends were post-classical notions of genre that, unlike the earlier ones, hypostatized narrative and drama as virtual opposites, and generic taxonomies that charted these two poles much more accurately than the prolific area in-between. Unpardonably roughly speaking, from the 450s BCE until the 1970s most readers of Aeschylus have found themselves at an awkward juncture, namely at the receiving end of a growing tradition that idealized features with which Aeschylus was fairly unconcerned as the almost universal desiderata of drama. Therefore, it is in discourses about genres that correctives can be found.

Adapting the lenses to the eye. Our understanding of ancient poetic genres has been steadily improving since the work of Bruno Gentili, Claude Calame, Oliver Taplin, and other pioneers of the cultural-and-performative turn in classical studies. A game changer was the realisation that, in the archaic and classical periods, what defined individual genres in themselves (or, to put it differently, what distinguished them from each other) were not so much literary forms as the contexts and modalities of the performance: that is, the occasions, venues, and communities in which the appropriate musicopoetic works were sung, embodied, and played in appropriate manners.¹ Clearly, thus, the investigation of performance-related dimensions is key to understanding poetic genres as living traditions which organized the expanse of *mousikē* into semiotic, aesthetic,

1 If anything, it was rather such performance factors that produced literary consequences, as for example in the case of formularity, which was the creature of rhapsodic performance and eventually developed into a simulacrum of epic literature.

and affective domains—as for example when distinctive soundscapes and kinetic repertoires expressed the sorrows, hopes, or commitments of a community. At the same time, however, readers also need literary lenses to consider the textual remains of these musicopoetic performances, because the latter are lost and too scarcely documented for most scholarly (rather than artistic) purposes.

There are cogent reasons for complementing literary and performance angles with each other, such as the historical circumstances that performance informed its own literary manifestations *and* re-performance transformed them, as in the case of the actors' interpolations, for instance.² More extrinsically but no less relevantly, what the readers see in the texts—including what they connect with, relish, and *study*—is also the product of their situatedness, since we inevitably approach the texts through inherited literary frameworks (even departures from the frameworks need and navigate the frameworks themselves, as the present study may exemplify). Yet while the readers cannot escape their situatedness, they can counteract the biased perspectives and perceptions with lenses which are specifically designed to observe specific texts from specific standpoints.

Such adjustments are helpful in dealing with genres which underwent radical transformations during their long histories. Unlike, say, paeans and dithyrambs, tragedies never ceased to be written and read; and although this tradition was deeply transformative, its continuity inspires a false sense of familiarity. The set of expectations with which the readers approach tragedies of the past may be tailored on models that are different in virtually every regard except the genre's label. This hermeneutic fallacy essentially affects tragedies (and other poems) of the classical period in general, which originally qualified as such in virtue of their tragic sounds, visuals, and contexts but which the readers can only access through literary parameters. An additional quirk of the reception concerns the tragedy of Aeschylus in particular, because towards the end of his career tragedy started favouring a choice of structural and plot-related features which are clearly detectable in the medium of text—that is, more clearly than the performance-related innovations—and which soon came to define tragedy, both as such and as a literary genre.

Reading as. These literary-historical circumstances were determinant for the criticism by negatives which has been considered above. They situated macroscopic features of Aeschylean tragedy outside or at the periphery of the readers' horizon of expectations concerning drama and influenced the reception

2 See, e.g., the studies collected in Budelmann / Phillips 2018 a.

accordingly. Yet, if genres and the related expectations have power over interpretation, can they also be used to make better sense of texts that elude us? And more specifically, what can be gained and lost from reading Aeschylus' works *as though* they were narrative pieces? However ahistorical and etic, this reading helps us focus less on the difformities of Aeschylean works from post-Aeschylean standards and more on the characteristics with which these tragedies were awarded first prizes at the City Dionysia, invitations to the artistic hotspot of Syracuse, and the exceptional piece of legislation which in 455 BCE encouraged remakes with public money, for instance. In this sense, the ahistorical reading appears to pursue historical agendas in its own way, inasmuch as it puts us in a better position to understand why Aeschylus' works epitomized tragic excellence in their own context. Ultimately, if the goal were an emic understanding of Aeschylus' works, then the major problem would not be reading them differently but reading them in the first instance—without any genuine understanding of the *Gesamtkunstwerke* for which the texts were written. In the absence of extensive first-or-so-hand information about the original performances, the best readers can hope for is an etic understanding that improves the balance between historicity and hermeneutics.

In this spirit, my book attempts a radical reappraisal of narrative as a vital force in drama, followed by a close observation of how this force works in Aeschylus. On the one hand, it rethinks the Aeschylean poems as the literary remains of a performance art (tentatively labelled “narrative drama”) that hybridized rich musicopoetic traditions of storytelling with each other *and* with theatrical impersonation. On the other hand, the book takes into account the readers' inherited understanding of drama as a genre that is quite the opposite of narrative and ideally narrative-free, and resolves to bring the mountain to Mohammed by repositioning Aeschylus on the genre map of his readers. These intertwined lines of investigation produce a composite set of questions: Which instruments are suitable for the literary analysis of tragic texts that can be neither dissected with the poetological toolkit of Aristotle nor conformed to the templates of drama erected by the Aristotelizing tradition? And in turn, what differences does such an analysis reveal between the use of tragic narratives in the 470s–460s BCE and in subsequent decades—which also means, how exactly does Aeschylus integrate storytelling and dramaturgy?

These issues roughly correspond to the two parts in which the volume is organized. Part One develops theoretical frameworks that promote the identification and analysis of manifold entanglements between narrative and drama. This begins with a new emphasis on the narrative-related features of Aeschylus' tragedies and with what motivates an enrichment of the genre perspectives on these texts (Chapter One). In turn, a transhistorical choice of

insights, ranging from the Homeric Hymns to transgeneric narratology but more narrowly focused on the classical period, shows how the initially fluid boundaries between narrative and drama stiffened as these evolved into literary forms more than embodied practices, with far-ranging consequences for drama theory (Chapter Two). Part Two relies on these frameworks to consider how narrativity shapes the earliest surviving tragedies and, possibly, one convincing imitation of their style. Since analyses need data, the texts are segmented according to the three main categories of narrative, response, and action in order to make diffuse phenomena better discernible through the plays (Chapter Three). This paves the way for a number of close readings that look into what and how, actually, narratives contribute to the structure, plot, characterization, and overall dramaturgy of individual plays (Chapter Four).

The rationale of this work is to produce an unapologetic re-evaluation of narrative as the protean matter of Aeschylus' drama. The incidence, sophistication, and dramaturgical import of narrative phenomena indicate that these are not by-products but the artfully constructed trademarks of Aeschylus' dramaturgy. The reticence to examine this type of dramaturgy in depth costs classicists an opportunity to reconsider the premises on which their own approaches to Greek tragedy rely, as well as an opportunity to make theoretical and historical contributions to studies on theatre, genres, and narratology, for example. In the absence of a time machine which lets us experience Aeschylean performance or reverts our situatedness within the *literary* tradition of tragedy, we can experiment with heuristic means to bring our own and Aeschylus' notions of drama somewhat closer to each other. On the one hand, the ancient wisdom regarding the intersections of narrative and drama helps us historicize their hybridity, and on the other hand, reimagining Aeschylean theatre as an art of telling-and-enacting stories enhances our understanding of the narrative and choral phenomena that were constitutive of it. If these measures equipped us to address the narrative elephant in Aeschylus' room, we might recognize in it a stunning offspring of arts that still love each other.

The Reception of the Classical Speech Criterion

Post-classical antiquity. This appendix adds historical depth to Chapter 2.2.1. It sketches a brief history of the text-centric reception of Plato's and Aristotle's speech criterion through a choice of sources that range from the post-classical until the modern period. The point is to observe how the classical speech criterion has been traditionally interpreted as referring to the presence *vs.* absence of a text-immanent narrative instance, and how the text forms which typically correlate with this presence or absence, such as indirect *vs.* direct speech and monologue *vs.* dialogue, have counted as the distinctive traits of narrative and dramatic genres respectively.

The Hellenistic, Roman, and late antique periods produced further classifications of literary texts into genres (κρίσις ποιημάτων/*krisis poiēmatōn*). While discourses on the subject were dominated by technical judgements on aspects such as lexicography and metrics, they also referred to simplified versions of Plato's and Aristotle's speech criterion, which was still used to distinguish genres from each other. A good example is the lost *Chrestomathy* attributed to Proclus, of which Photius summarized the two initial chapters containing one of the most minutely detailed discussions about genres surviving from antiquity.¹ Although it appears that Proclus was more concerned with particular manifestations of genres (e.g., individual poems, poets, and styles) than with a general theory, he opened the treatise by contrasting the two fundamental forms of poetry, namely the narrative (διηγηματικόν/*diēgēmatikon*), which is said to include epic, iambic, elegiac, and choral poetry, and the dramatic (μιμητικόν/*mimētikon*), consisting of tragedy, satyr play, and comedy. What is particularly relevant to the present purposes is that ancient scholars already understood the classical speech criterion as fairly detached from performance. Philodemus of Gadara, for instance, in arguing against Aristotle's view that tragedy is superior to epic because of its enactive kind of *mimēsis*, used Aristotelian terms with a different meaning:

[...] ἐπειδ[ὴ] πράττεται κἀν τοῖς ἔπε[σι] τὰ κἀν ταῖς τραγωδίαις. ὥστε οὐ 'τῆς μὲν τραγωδ[ί]ας τὸ τε ἀπαγγέλλειν ἐν τοῖς ἀγγέλοις, καὶ τὸ πρακτικὸν ἐν τοῖς

¹ Photius, *Bibl.* 239 Henry. Proclus may have been a second-century CE grammarian or a fifth-century CE Neo-Platonic philosopher.

ἄλλοις, ἐν δ[ὲ] τοῖς ἔπει[σ]ι τὸ μόν[ο]ν [ἀ]παγγέλλειν, ἀλλ' ὅμοιον ἢ] φῶ και δαψιλέστερον; τὸ ἀπαγγέλλειν.

[...] the (actions enacted) in tragedy are also enacted in epic. Consequently, (it is) not (true) that “narrative belongs to tragedy in its messenger speeches and the dramatic (belongs to tragedy) in its other (parts), but in epic (there is) only narrative”; rather, the narrative (is) similar in epic,— or should I say that (it is) even more ample? (*On Poems* 4.113, transl. Janko 2010: 291)

As R. Janko explains, “Philodemus refers πράττειν to the content of tragic and epic plot rather than, as Aristotle intended, to the mode of mimesis”;² as a consequence, πράττειν no longer indicates the impersonation and stage performance which are distinctive of tragedy according to Aristotle.

The Byzantine period and the Western Middle Ages. This trend was consolidated in subsequent periods when the classical speech criterion was seen as pointing to different types of literary communication rather than musicopoetic performance. By this time, that which distinguished narrative from dramatic genres was whether or not the poet’s “person” (πρόσωπον, *persona*) manifests itself *in the text*. This person and its presence no longer indicated the actual performer of the poem but a text-immanent, disembodied entity which may be likened to what is called narrative instance today.³ For example, in the fifth century CE Nicolaus the Sophist distinguished three types of narratives (διηγῆματα/*diēgēmata*) in terms that while paraphrasing Plato on a literal level also reveal significant differences:

τὰ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἀφηγηματικά, τὰ δὲ δραματικά, τὰ δὲ μικτά· ἀφηγηματικά μὲν, ὅσα ἀπὸ μόνου τοῦ ἀπαγγέλλοντος προσώπου εἰσιν, οἷα τὰ παρὰ Πινδάρῳ· δραματικά δὲ, ὅσα ἀπ’ αὐτῶν τῶν ὑποκειμένων προσώπων ἐστὶ μόνον, μὴ παρεμφαινομένου τοῦ συντιθέντος προσώπου, εἶτα τὰ κωμικά πάντα και τραχικά· μικτά δὲ τὰ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν τοῦ τε συντιθέντος και τῶν ὑποκειμένων συγκείμενα προσώπων, οἷα τὰ Ἡροδότου και Ὀμήρου· ταῦτα γὰρ πῆ μὲν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀπαγγέλλοντος ἐκφέρεται, πῆ δὲ ἐξ ἑτέρου προσώπου.

2 Janko 2010: 291. On this passage from Philodemus, see also Barrett 2002: 70 f.

3 Korthals 2003: 103 ff. discusses how during the history of literary criticism the classical speech criterion passed from indicating the author (I would rather say, the performer: see Chapters 2.1.1 and 2.1.2) to indicating the narrative voice.

Some are related by others, some are dramatic, some are mixed. Those related by others (ἀφηγηματικά) are from a single reporting person, such as in Pindar. The dramatic ones (δραματικά) are exclusively from the persons involved, whereas the person who makes it up does not show himself, such as in comedy and tragedy. The mixed ones (μικτά) are from both sides, the one who makes it up and the characters involved, such as in Herodotus and Homer, for these are at some places from the one who reports, at others from a different character. (Nicolaus, *Prog.* 2, p. 455 Spengel, *Rhet.* 3)

Below the Platonizing surface, the example of Herodotean prose as illustrative of the mixed genre reveals that what Nicolaus has in mind are text forms—such as the mix of direct and indirect speech, for which Herodotus can indeed be a good example—rather than embodied performances (unless one assumes that Nicolaus envisioned Herodotus as declaiming his *Histories* like an actor). Nicolaus also exemplifies how the speech criterion of Plato and the related terminology were still fashionable in his time,⁴ and if, as some scholars think, Nicolaus is relying here on a source which is roughly contemporary with Hermagoras, then one might conclude that Plato's speech criterion had found its way into rhetoric tradition by the second century BCE if not earlier.⁵ Be that as it may, from the late antique period onwards references to Plato's speech criterion as embedded in the dimension of text are documented in the context of rhetorics and literary exegesis.⁶

Another example is the *Anecdoton Estense*, a commentary of the Byzantine period which offers, among other things, a standard explanation of the dramatic, narrative, and mixed genres. While the *Anecdoton* groups together dramatic genres on the basis that they were once staged,⁷ it also says that

ἔστι δὲ δραματικὸν μὲν τὸ μηδαμῆ γε ἐμφαίνον τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ ποιητοῦ, διηγηματικὸν δὲ τὸ διόλου ἐμφαίνον, μικτὸν δὲ τὸ πῆ μὲν ἐμφαίνον, πῆ δὲ οὔ.

4 Another example is Servius, an early fifth-century commentator of Vergil who remarks on Vergil's third *Eclogue*: Serv. *ad Ecl.* 3.1: "novimus autem tres characteres hos esse dicendi [...]"

5 See Barwick 1928; Matthes 1958: 200; Amato / Ventrella 2009: 14; Gianvittorio 2012 a: 66.

6 For the influence of Plato's speech criterion in the literary exegesis of scholiasts and ancient commentators see, e.g., Kayser, 1906: 52 f. Cf. also Gallavotti 1928: 363; Garzya: 1998; Lulli 2011: 11.

7 *An. Est.* 11.4 Kayser: 59: πάντες οὗτοι [...] πάντα μιμητικῶς ἔπραττον πρὸς τὴν θυμέλην.

The dramatic genre is that in which the poet's person is never manifest, the narrative that in which it is always manifest, the mixed that in which it is manifest at some times but not at others. (*An. Est.* III.6 Kayser, 63)

This confirms that for the Byzantine scholar, poetry is text rather than event and the “poet's person” designates a text-immanent instance which may or may not manifest itself, or manifest itself intermittently (how could the performer disappear from the performance, always as in drama or at times as in the mixed poetry of Theocritus?).⁸

In the area of Latin influence, discourses about genres long remained indebted to the mediation of Diomedes, a grammar scholar of the fourth century CE, rather than to the original Greek sources.⁹ The grammar scholars of the Middle Ages were usually not proficient in Greek and scarcely interested in constructing new, comprehensive theories of genre.¹⁰ They continued to use Platonizing and Aristotelizing notions and labels, although inconsistently. In this context, Diomedes' threefold division of genres, which simplified the corresponding Greek discourses in Latin, turned out to be quite handy. Diomedes' *Artis grammaticae libri III, Caput de poematibus* opens with a dutiful recapitulation of the speech criterion of Plato and Aristotle:

Poematos genera sunt tria: aut enim activum est vel imitativum, quod Graeci δραματικόν vel μιμητικόν, aut enarrativum vel enuntiativum, quod Graeci ἐξηγητικόν vel ἀπαγγελτικόν dicunt, aut commune vel mixtum, quod Graeci κοινόν vel μικτόν appellant. δραματικόν est vel activum in quo

8 In spite of constant references to Aristotle's *Poetics*, the anonymous treatise *On tragedy* of the eleventh or twelfth century (passed down among works by Michael Psellus) does not linger on the speech criterion (Büttner 2017: 32; more generally on this treatise, see Perusino 1992 and 1993).

9 Diomedes' influence reached well beyond the Middle Ages; e.g., Bartolomeo della Fonte (1446–1513) still paraphrased him: “[...] tria poematum genera esse constat. Commune, in quo poeta et personae eloquentes introducuntur. Narrativum, in quo solus poeta loquitur. Activum, in quo solae personae inductae agunt” (*De poetice ad Laurentium Medicem libri III* [1491], quoted after Trinkaus 1966, 114).

10 They made, nevertheless, many remarks on the subject. A prominent case is Dante's letter to Can Grande della Scala which explains the title *Divina Commedia* with the poem's contents and happy end (Dante, *Epistula* 13.29–30: “Differt ergo a tragedia, in materia per hoc, quod tragedia in principio est admirabilis et quieta, in fine seu exitu est fetida et horribilis. [...] Similiter differunt in modo loquendi: elate et sublime tragedia; comedia vero remisse et humiliter.”). See also Jauß 1977: 328 and Komfort-Hein 1996: 533 with references.

personae agunt solae sine ullius poetae interlocutione, ut se habent tragicae et comicae fabulae [...]; ἐξηγητικόν est vel narrativum in quo poeta ipse loquitur sine ullius personae interlocutione, ut se habent tres georgici et prima pars quarti [...]; κοινόν est vel commune in quo poeta ipse loquitur et personae loquentes introducuntur, ut est scripta *Ilias* et *Odyssea* tota Homeri [...]

In poetry there are three genres: either active or imitating, which the Greeks call δραματικόν or μιμητικόν, narrative or reporting, which the Greeks call ἐξηγητικόν or ἀπαγγελτικόν, or shared and mixed, which the Greeks call κοινόν or μικτόν. δραματικόν or active is the genre in which the characters act alone without the poet speaking in-between (*sine ullius poetae interlocutione*), as in tragic and comic subjects [...]. ἐξηγητικόν or narrative is the genre in which the poet speaks himself without any character speaking in-between (*sine ullius personae interlocutione*), as in books one to three of *Georgics* and in the first part of book four [...]. κοινόν or shared is the genre in which the poet speaks himself and speaking characters are introduced as well, which is how the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer are written [...] (Kaibel 1999 [1899]: p. 53)

While late antique Greek sources such as Nicolaus overtly stick to traditional discourses about the poet's person (πρόσωπον/*prosōpon*) and use words such as "to manifest oneself" (ἐμφαίνομαι/*emphainomai*) to indicate the poet's presence in poetry, Diomedes abandons these notions altogether and understands this presence as "speech in-between" (*interlocutio*). To him, the point is not poetic performance but the ways in which texts are shaped, namely as dialogues and direct speeches on the one hand and as reports and indirect speeches on the other, as confirmed by the final remark about how Homer's poems are *written* (*scripta*). Other medieval scholars echo Diomedes' division in *genus dramaticum*, *narrativum*, and *mixtum* when addressing issues of genre. To mention just one example from the beginning of the Middle Ages and one from the end, Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636) quoted Diomedes almost literally when distinguishing the three *characteres dicendi* from each other,¹¹ and John of Garland

11 Isid. *Etym.* 8.7.11: "Apud poetas autem tres characteres esse dicendi: unum, in quo tantum poeta loquitur, ut est in libris Vergilii Georgicorum; alium dramaticum, in quo nusquam poeta loquitur, ut est in comoediis et tragoediis: tertium mixtum, ut est in Aeneide. Nam poeta illic et introductae personae loquuntur." On matching points between Diomedes and Isidore, see Kayser 1906: 45 ff.

(ca. 1180–1252) used Diomedes' division as one of four criteria for classifying genres in his *Poetria magistri Johannis anglicide arte prosayca metrica et rithmica*.¹²

Renaissance Humanism. By the early modern period, the classical speech criterion had long completed its transition from the domain of performance to that of text. The rediscovery of Greek sources and of Aristotle's *Poetics* in particular kindled a lively interest in poetological matters,¹³ but could not turn back the clock in this regard. Instead, the humanist translations and commentaries of *Poetics* into Italian and other modern languages make the shift even more evident.

With the re-discovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* and the extensive poetological reflection of the Secondo Cinquecento, Renaissance scholarship laid the foundations of modern literary criticism and genre theories.¹⁴ Translations and commentaries of *Poetics* such as those by Giulio Cesare Scaligero (1484–1558), Pietro Vettori (1499–1585), and Lodovico Castelvetro (ca. 1505–1571) were decisive in this process and divulged models of genre classification which were supposed to adhere to the source.¹⁵ However, they saw distinctions between dramatic and narrative genres in textual features such as dialogic vs. monologic forms and direct vs. indirect speech. For example, Scaligero's *Poetices libri septem* (posthumously published in 1561) began with a terse reference to Aristotle's speech criterion,¹⁶ but understood Aristotle's *praxis* as *dialogi* and contrasted these with "diegematic" representation,¹⁷ and Vettori's commentary on the first book of *Poetics* (published in 1560) explained the Aristotelian

12 See Jauß 1977: 346; Komfort-Hein 1996: 537.

13 For the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* on humanist scholars, see Stillers 1992.

14 Cf. Hempfer 1973: 156 ff.; Vos 1991; Fricke 2010: 11 f.; Nünning / Sommer 2011: 204 f.

15 Trappen 2001; Kapp1 2006.

16 Scaligero 1561, 1.2.90: "Differunt autem poemata modis tribus. Hi sunt: quae imitamur, quibus imitamur et quomodo imitamur. Imitatur Medeam eandem Ovidius in Metamorphosi quam Seneca in tragoedia. Res igitur eadem, at versus quibus imitantur diversi, modus quo imitantur diversus, quippe aliter in scaena per personas dramata, aliter in epico mixtum genus videtur. Iidem versus in Aeneide et Tityro; res et modus alii. Idem modus in Tytiro et in comoediis; res et versus non iidem." Scaligero then speaks of *narratio simplex*, *dialogi* and *genus mixtum*. See Bachmann 2012: 55.

17 Scaligero 1561, 1.3 (for references see Komfort-Hein 1996: 540, note 19). Cf. Castelvetro 1968 [1570], who in 26 a–b cap. 1.VIII speaks of "narrativo mutato," "narrativo non mutato," and "attivo" and explains them as follows: "sono tre specie del modo di rassomigliare o per racconto mutandosi il raccontatore in altra cosa come fa Homero, o per racconto non mutandosi il raccontatore, o per rappresentatione essendo occupati i rassomigliatori in facende [...]."

distinction in terms of “form of the speech” (*forma dicendi*).¹⁸ Many works by Italian humanists also dealt with the taxonomy of genres, such as Antonio Sebastiano Minturno’s *De poeta* (1559) and *L’arte poetica* (1564),¹⁹ Gian Giorgio Trissino’s *Poetica* (1562, posthumous),²⁰ Bernardo Tasso’s *Ragionamento della Poesia* (1562),²¹ Orazio Toscanella’s *Precetti della Poetica* (1562),²² and Battista Guarini’s *Compendio della poesia tragicomica* (1601).²³ While all these treatises rely heavily on Aristotle for their discussions of literary genres, they basically equate the difference between narrative and dramatic genres to that of speech in the poet’s own person vs. speech in other persons. Scholars from other countries shared this text-based understanding of the classical speech criterion.²⁴

18 Vettori 1560, 5 and 25 f.

19 *L’arte poetica* 6 (Minturno 1725 [1564]) first defined poetry in Aristotelian terms and then specified: “Perciocché tre sono i modi della poetica imitazione: l’uno de’ quali si fa semplicemente narrando: l’altro propriamente imitando: il terzo dell’uno e dell’altro è il composto.” Hempfer 2008: 47 compares this passage with a similar one in Minturno’s *De poeta* (1559).

20 For Trissino, see Weinberg 1970: 13: “La terza cosa poi che avemo detto di esaminare è il modo col quale devemo esse azioni e costumi imitare. E questo è di tre maniere: l’una, che ’l poeta parla sempre in sua persona e non induce mai altre persone che parlino, come sono quasi tutte le elegie, le ode, le canzoni [...]; l’altra è che ’l poeta mai non parla in sua persona, ma solamente induce persone che parlano, come sono le comedie, tragedie [...]; la terza è che ’l poeta parte parla e enunzia e parte introduce persone che parlano, come sono li eroici di Omero e di Vergilio [...].”

21 For Tasso, see Weinberg 1970: 571: “Il ditirambico con una continua orazione esprime il suo concetto. Il tragico et il comico con una diligente imitazione [...]. L’epico, ora narrando ora imitando [...].”

22 For Toscanella, see Weinberg 1970: 561: “Le specie della poetica sono tre, cioè: attiva o vero imitativa, che i Greci chiamano ‘dramatica’, et è quella in cui solamente parlano persone e mai parla l’autore, come le tragedie, comedie; enarrativa o vero enonciativa, che i Greci chiamano ‘essegematica’, in cui il poeta parla solo e mai altre persone parlano, come nei versi di Lucrezio; commune o vero mista, che i Greci chiamano ‘mictè’, nella quale parlano il poeta et altre persone [...] come nell’Eneide di Virgilio [...].”

23 Guarini 1601 (after Casella 1866: 364–367) explained the “tre famose spezie di Poesia” as follows “Perciocchè altre sono che rappresentano senza che la persona del poeta mai v’intervenga, sì come la Tragedia, Commedia, e l’altre che son dette Drammatiche dalla voce greca che significa operare [...]. Altre non rappresentano, ma con la persona del poeta narran le cose fatte [...], sì come la Poesia Ditirambica e Lirica [...]. Nasce da queste due [...] la terza spezie, nella quale alcuna volta parla il Poeta, e alcuna parlano le persone ch’egli introduce: e questa è l’epica poesia [...].”

24 E.g., López Pinciano 1596, *Epistula IV*: “Poetas imitan, hablando siempre ellos mismos, como esta visto en la Dithirambica, [...] otras vezes nunca ellos razonan por sus personas, sino por agenas y interlocutoras como en los dialogos, tragedias y comedias, otras vezes los Poetas razonan por personas proprias suyas a vezes y a vezes pos agenas como en las Epicas [...].”

Romantic period. Another major turning point in the modern history of genre theory is German Romanticism, to which important generic concepts are still indebted today.²⁵ The importance of Greek (and, to a lesser extent, Latin) sources for genre discourses of the Romantic period is well-illustrated by the poet and scholar F. Schlegel (1772–1829), who broached the issue in several writings.²⁶ A full discussion of Romantic genre theories is beyond the scope of these pages, but it suffices here to illustrate how Romantic scholars-and-literates promoted a polarizing understanding of narrative and drama, and how they associated drama with dialogic text forms.²⁷ Personalities such as August W. Schlegel and Georg W.F. Hegel authoritatively confirm this equation:

What is dramatic? [...] that in which different persons are introduced as speaking, while the poet does not speak himself as a person of his own. This is only the most basic and exterior form; it is dialogic.²⁸

Also on the basis of such textual features, German Romanticists distinguished dramatic and narrative genres quite sharply from each other. This is remarkable in the face of their manifest interest in Greek classical sources, which, as observed in Chapter 2.1.3, draw porous boundaries between narrative and dramatic forms, and acknowledging the influence of this Romantic opposition is relevant to our attempt to theorize and historicize a narrative-and-dramatic hybridity instead. Plato had exemplified the purely narrative genres with the dithyramb, which prompted humanists to replace the virtually unknown dithyramb with other forms of lyric poetry as models for pure narrative in order to keep Homer as *the* example for the mixed genre—Minturno, for instance, proposed the sonnets of Petrarca.²⁹ Such solutions attest to the humanists' will to stick, at least formally, to the genre taxonomy of the ancient Greeks.

25 E.g., “tragic” as an aesthetic category can be regarded as an invention of German Romanticism.

26 See F. Schlegel's *Von den Schulen der griechischen Poesie* (1794), *Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie* (1797) and *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und der Römer* (1798).

27 A.W. Schlegel 1966 [1809]: 30, for instance, defined drama as “presentation of an action through direct speeches and without narrative” (“Vorstellung einer Handlung durch Gespräche ohne alle Erzählung”).

28 A.W. Schlegel 1966 [1809]: 28: “Was ist dramatisch? [...] wo verschiedene Personen redend eingeführt werden, der Dichter aber in eigener Person gar nicht spricht. Dies ist indessen nur die erste äußere Grundlage der Form; sie ist dialogisch” (cf. Marx 2012: 4). On Hegel's position, see Kiel 1992: 10 f.

29 Minturno 1725 [1564]: 6.

In contrast with this tradition, yet still with open reference to the classical speech criterion, Romantic men of letters interpreted epic and drama as opposites. Although J.W. von Goethe (1749–1832), in his influential reflection about the “three true natural forms of poetry” (*drey ächte Naturformen der Poesie*), pointed out the propensity of genres to interact with each other, he iconically contrasted epic “which narrates clearly” with drama “which acts through the characters” (lyric poetry “of enthusiastic excitement” somehow went missing from this schema).³⁰ His close friend F. Schiller (1759–1805) emphasized the contrast between narrative and dramatic forms on different occasions,³¹ in the letters that Goethe and Schiller exchanged on this and other poetological issues (*Über epische und dramatische Dichtung*. 1827). F. Schlegel went even further, criticizing Aristotle for arguing that there is a fundamental similarity between tragedy and epic; ultimately, he made the Stagirite responsible for being,

over millennia, the source of all the basic misunderstandings which come from confusing the epic with the tragic genre.³²

On these premises, F. Schlegel variously reformulated the Platonic tripartition of genres by calling lyric poetry “subjective,” drama “objective,” and epic “subjective-objective.”³³ As G. Genette has observed,

30 Goethe 1961 [1819]: 178 f. (quoted in Chapter 2.1.3). Goethe’s tripartition identifies not so much literary genres (which would be *Dichtarten* such as ballad, elegy, etc.) as fundamental types of poetry and relies not only on formal aspects but also on contents (cf. Hempfer 2008: 42). On the reception and influence of his model see, e.g., Hempfer 1973: 66 f.; Korthals 2003: 33 f.

31 E.g., F. Schiller, *Über die tragische Kunst* (1792): “Der Begriff der Nachahmung unterscheidet [die Tragödie] von den übrigen Gattungen der Dichtkunst, welche bloß erzählen oder beschreiben. In Tragödien werden die einzelnen Begebenheiten im Augenblick ihres Geschehens [...] gestellt [...]. Die Epopäe, der Roman, die einfache Erzählung rücken die Handlung [...] in die Ferne, weil sie zwischen den Leser und die handelnden Personen den Erzähler einschieben” (see Stenzel 1950: 387). Similarly, in *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung*, Schiller says: “Der Epiker und der Dramatiker sind beide den allgemeinen poetischen Gesetzen unterworfen [...]; ihr großer wesentlicher Unterschied beruht aber darin, dass der Epiker die Begebenheit als vollkommen vergangen vorträgt, und der Dramatiker sie als vollkommen gegenwärtig darstellt.” (Stenzel 1950: 512).

32 “[...] auf Jahrtausende der Quell aller grundstürzenden Mißverständnisse geworden, welche aus der Verwechslung der epischen und tragischen Dichtart entstehen” (quoted after Schwinge 1981: 135).

33 This was actually an inversion of Schlegel’s previous tripartition, which called epic “objective” and drama “subjective-objective”: cf. Schwinge 1981: 138–140.

[t]hese are indeed the terms of the Platonic division (enunciation by the poet, by his characters, by both poet and characters), but the choice of adjectives obviously displaces the criterion from the plane of the enunciating situation [...] toward a somewhat psychological or existential plane.³⁴

34 Genette 1992 [1979]: 38.

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So little happens in the earliest surviving plays that their dramatic status almost eludes the reader. This kind of reading experience encourages a revision of inherited views and historiographies of dramatic literature. It also raises broader questions about how action came to define drama and how these genre developments influenced the reception of more open forms.

Narratives at Play in Aeschylus reassesses tragic narratives and the power they exert over (internal) narratees as the essence of tragedy in the 470s–460s BCE. The book understands Aeschylean and Aeschylus-like theatre as a practice that combined elements of storytelling with enacted responses to them. Crucially, it develops and tests strategies for reading the literary remains of this practice. Drawing on archaic to contemporary discourses on genre, we seek to adapt the reader's perspective on earlier dramatic texts, rather than vice versa.

Narratives at Play in Aeschylus was awarded the Gustav Figdor Prize for Linguistics and Literary Studies.

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