

*Chorus, conflict, and closure in Aeschylus' Persians**Marianne Govers Hopman*

In the past fifteen years or so, several studies attentive to the performative context of Athenian drama have highlighted a number of elements thought to support the authority of dramatic choruses. It has been pointed out, for instance, that the social importance of melic choruses likely influenced the perception of their dramatic counterparts (Bacon 1994/5; Gruber 2008: 28–43); that dramatic choruses were central to the organization of the dramatic contests (Wilson 2000); that as ritual performers dancing for Dionysos, the *choreutai* mirrored the experience of the audience celebrating the god's festival; and that the chorus' function as an internal audience further replicated the spectators' position. Even though tragic choruses often took the identity of marginal groups like slaves, women, or foreigners, their special status outside the fiction could foster some form of identification with the audience.<sup>1</sup>

What happened, however, when the chorus impersonated characters who did not belong to the realm of myth but to the historical reality of Athens, and more precisely to the most dangerous people that the Athenians ever had to face – i.e. Persians? In spite of the unexpected and spectacular victory over Persia at Salamis and Plataea, Persia was not a dead issue even after 480 BCE (Pelling 1997: 12); in fact the very foundation of the Delian league assumed that the Greek states still needed to join forces to repel the enemy. In that tense context, Aeschylus' display of an Athenian chorus dressed as Persian males right at the opening of his 472 BCE play was a daring and, as far as we know, unparalleled gesture. The chorus of Phrynichus' 476 BCE *Phoenician Women*, on which *Persians* was partly based, was probably made of Phoenician widows or slaves at the Persian

<sup>1</sup> For a thorough discussion of the parameters that can affect the relation between chorus and audience, see Mastrorarde 1998 and 1999, which build on the work of Gould 2001 [1996] and Goldhill 1996. For a subtle discussion of the concept of identification in Athenian drama and its possible application to the satyr play, see Griffith 2002. I use "chorus" when referring to the medium in general, and "Chorus" when referring to the specific ensemble in *Persians* and other dramatic works.

court. In addition, Phrynichus' play did not start with the Chorus wondering about the outcome of the war, but with a eunuch reporting Xerxes' defeat.

Thematically, *Persians* belonged in a context of active commemoration of the Persian defeat through celebratory offerings, inscriptions, funerary epigrams, and elegiac battle poems. Unlike these monodic discourses, however, the play evokes the war in the fundamentally choral medium of Athenian tragedy.<sup>2</sup> As a counterpoint to earlier studies that highlighted the polarization between Greeks and Persians in Aeschylus' tragedy, this chapter focuses on aspects of the Persian chorus that arguably challenge the ethnic contrast.<sup>3</sup> I first analyze the Chorus as a narrator of the war against Greece and show that it offers a perspective unlike the actors' in its wide range of objects, viewpoints, and ideologies. That breadth of perspective, I further argue, is fostered by a plot that progressively constructs the Chorus as Xerxes' antagonist and thus partly aligns its interests with those of the Athenian audience. Consequently, I suggest that the final reconciliation between king and Chorus may have spread to the audience and encouraged the spectators to emotionally, if not effectively, join in the Persian lament. Besides shedding light on the much-debated pragmatics of *Persians*' 472 BCE production, I hope to make two larger points about dramatic choruses: that the narratological concept of perspective can help us grasp the complex referentiality of some choruses, and that our understanding of tragic choruses can gain from a comparison with comic choruses.<sup>4</sup>

### Choral perspectives

In the last few years, several analytic tools have been put forward to analyze the multi-layered performance of the chorus (see Introduction to this

<sup>2</sup> For useful surveys of the different modes of commemoration of the victory in the 470s, see Barron 1988 and Raaflaub 2004: 60–6.

<sup>3</sup> The idea that Aeschylus' play contributed to an Orientalizing construction of Persia as an ultimate form of otherness was most forcefully argued by Hall 1989 and 1996. See also Harrison 2000. Although I emphasize features of *Persians* that challenge some of Hall's argument, the fact that her work has so forcefully shaped the debate about Aeschylus' play testifies to the power of her analysis. However, neither she nor Harrison takes into account the specificity of the choral medium in their discussion of the pragmatics of *Persians*.

<sup>4</sup> Current scholarship on the play's 472 BCE production falls into two groups. Some – most recently Edith Hall 1996 and Thomas Harrison 2000 – read the play as an Athenian auto-celebration suffused with chauvinist overtones and Orientalizing clichés, while others – notably Desmond Conacher 1996 and Nicole Loraux 1993a – view it as a surprising vehicle for identification with the enemy whereby cultural and military polarities are overcome by a shared experience of loss and death. For a recent summary of the debate, see Garvie 2009: xx–xxii.

volume). The chorus' double role within and outside of the fiction – simultaneously a group of slaves, soldiers or captive women, and a ritual and civic collective performing in the festival of Dionysos – has been described in terms of a double *identity* (Henrichs 1994/5; see also Bierl and Swift in this volume). Furthermore, the notion of *voice* has helped to highlight the complexity of the chorus' enunciative position between poet and spectators, while the semantic diversity of the odes has been described through the concept of *registers* (Calame 1999: 128–9 and this volume). The validity of these concepts is a function of the insights that they yield and may vary from play to play, just as each chorus represents a unique experiment with the medium. In what follows, I propose that some specificities of the Persian chorus may be grasped by analyzing it as a narrator of the war against Greece and by putting the narratological idea of *perspective* to bear upon its utterances.<sup>5</sup>

A fundamental notion of narratology, the concept of perspective (or focalization) was first introduced by Gérard Genette in 1972 to describe “the second mode of regulating information, arising from the choice (or not) of a restrictive ‘point of view’” (Genette 1972: 203). The notion is fraught with difficulty and still fiercely debated.<sup>6</sup> As Genette's sentence implies, “perspective” is perhaps best defined negatively as that which restricts the information offered by a narrator. Positive definitions are more difficult to offer. As post-Genettian critics have made clear, the concepts of “point of view” and “perspective” go beyond the strictly visual significance originally envisaged by Genette to embrace a wide array of non-sensory filters, including but not restricted to cognitive, emotive, and ideological orientation (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 71). Drawing on the work of Seymour Chatman and other critics, I therefore propose to analyze the perspective of the Persian chorus under the four categories of Object (what is of paramount importance to the narrator?); Zooming (how closely

<sup>5</sup> Formal (as opposed to structural) narratology was originally elaborated to study novels or epics, i.e., genres involving a narrator who turns a story into a narrative through the categories of time (what is the relation between time told and time telling?), voice (who is speaking?), and mood (what is the narrator's perspective?). While drama involves the transformation of a story into a narrative, it does not have a narrator, and thus the relevance of narratology to the analysis of entire plays is still a debated topic (Jahn 2001; Nünning and Sommer 2002). By contrast, the application of narratology to dramatic sections with strong information content is relatively uncontroversial, as demonstrated by Irene de Jong and James Barrett's analyses of messenger-speeches (de Jong 1991; Barrett 2002). Along similar lines, I propose to apply narratological tools to the narrative content of the Chorus' utterances. For a comparable application of narratological concepts, viz. the distinction between performance time and narrated time, to the odes of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, see Grethlein in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> For a sample of works on the question, see Chatman 1986; Jahn 1999; Peir and Chatman 2001; Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005 s.v. Focalization (M. Jahn), with further bibliography.

does the narrator consider those objects?); Filter (from or through whose consciousness are the events perceived?); and Slant (what is the ideological attitude of the narrator or the character filter(s)?).<sup>7</sup> With these tools, I hope to emphasize the highly visual quality of the Chorus' utterances and the remarkable diversity of the images conjured by the *choreutai*.

(a) *Objects of focalization*

Throughout the play, the Chorus highlights a remarkably wide array of peoples and lands, using catalogues of both anthroponyms and toponyms to tread vast expanses through Asia and Greece. In the *parodos*, the *choreutai* recall the spectacular departure of the Persian, Egyptian, Lydian, and Babylonian contingents from Susa to Greece (16–58), glimpse at the Hellespont (65–71) and imagine the men proceeding into Greece in Xerxes' wake (74–85), but also stress the anguish of the wives and parents left behind (61–4). In response to the messenger's report, they vividly imagine the Persian casualties dying in the waters surrounding Salamis (576–7; 595–6) as well as Xerxes and the survivors rushing through the Thracian plains (565–7). The third stasimon nostalgically evokes the prosperous days of Darius' rule and surveys states that were formerly ruled by Persia, including Thrace, north-western Asia Minor and the Hellespont region, Aegean islands, Cyprus and the Greek cities in Asia (864–900). Lastly, in the Xerxes scene, the choral catalogue of Persian casualties embraces the disaster in its manifold human consequences (955–86).

(b) *Zooming*

The Chorus' geographical and temporal breadth of interests combines with various ways of zooming in on peoples and scenes. As a result, we get striking and often poignant close-ups of individuals, most of whom engaged in scenes that the *choreutai* did not see in their counselors' *persona* but rather imagined in their "prophetic heart" (10–11) or in the wake of the messenger's report. Such images include Xerxes on his Syrian chariot leading the army and casting a snake-like glance (74–85); parents and wives counting the days, shuddering as time goes by and soaking their beds with

<sup>7</sup> This typology does not propose to make a theoretical contribution to narratological studies, but only to offer a convenient and relevant grid to grasp the specificity of the Chorus' voice in comparison to the individual actors. The first two categories of Object and Zooming involve *what* is seen rather than *who* sees and therefore fall out of the scope of most narratological studies. For the notions of Filter and Slant, see Chatman 1986.

tears (63–4; 134–7; 579–83); or Persian corpses mangled by fish (576–9). In addition, speaking as Elders left in charge of the royal palace, the *choreutai* sometimes offer “teichoscopic” views projecting outwardly from the walls of the Persian capital.<sup>8</sup> They notionally use city walls as their outlook point as they describe Xerxes’ contingents “forsaking Sousa and Agbatana and the ancient ramparts of Kissia” (16–58) or reminisce of Darius taking cities without leaving his hearth (866) and of men returning home from wars. *E contrario*, the city walls figure negatively in the final scene when they *do not* see the return of the men who left from Agbatana (961). Occasionally this teichoscopic perspective expands, shifts axis, and morphs into a bird’s-eye view whereby the *choreutai* survey places and events from above, thus offering cartographical images of the tribes converging toward Xerxes from all over Asia (16–58), of the Asian land grieving and yearning (61) or of Darius’ empire expanding around the Aegean (865–900).<sup>9</sup> Finally, the Chorus also offers a few images shot *sub specie aeternitatis* in gnomic utterances that are not shaped by a specific outpost but embrace human experience in its universal, timeless and spaceless dimension: thus, *Atē* deceives man by first fawning at him and then trapping him into her nets (92–100).

The Chorus’ variety of objects and zooming modes strikingly contrasts with the perspective of the all-Persian cast of actors. The messenger certainly is expected (246; 294) and does in fact attempt to give a full account of the Persian defeat in Greece (πᾶν ἀναπτύξαι πάθος, 254; cf. 294): his catalogues of dying Persian leaders (302–28) and places crossed by the retreating army (481–95) offer a wide range of objects of interest, while his insistence on the unspeakable quality of the events further opens up his account (329–30; 513–4). Like the Chorus, the messenger combines broad strokes creating an “overpowering vision of vast landscapes and events” (Herington 1986: 69) with vivid and poignant vignettes of Matallos’ beard changing color as he fell into the sea (314–16), Xerxes tearing his robes when he saw the disaster (465–70) or the ice of the Strymon river melting under the first rays of the sun (495–504). In addition, the messenger seldom

<sup>8</sup> Although relatively foreign to us, teichoscopic views must have played an important role in the lives of walled-city dwellers. See for instance Helen and Priam’s discussion of the Greek and Trojan contingents fighting in the plain of Scamander in *Iliad* 3 (161–244), and the fearful glances that the Chorus of the *Seven Against Thebes* cast from the walls down to the Theban plain as they sight the seven chieftains marching against the city (78–180).

<sup>9</sup> On poeticized cartography as an important Aeschylean technique, see Hall 1996: 144 ad 480–514, with bibliography. It may not be coincidental that Hecataeus, whose *Periegesis* has often been offered as a possible source for Aeschylus’ information about Asia, was also the author of a map, probably a response to and a refinement of Anaximander’s map. On Hecataeus’ *Periegesis* and map, see Pearson 1939: 27–96; Branscome 2010: 6–7.

mentions his own post during the battle and refers to the Persians in the third person, which further contributes to his construction as an omniscient narrator looking at the events from multiple vantage points at once (Barrett 1995: 546–50). Yet his interests are more temporally and spatially limited than the Chorus', solely focusing on the time span between the Battle of Salamis and the Persian retreat, and limiting himself to the events in Greece, saying virtually nothing of the Asiatic section of the journey (508–11; cf. Hall 1996: 144 on *Pers.* 480–514). No gnomic statement attempts to derive universal conclusions from the Persian defeat.

Even more striking is the contrast between the Chorus' and the royal family members' perspectives. The Queen obsessively focuses on her son and considers the war through his interests, thus offering close-ups primarily centered on Xerxes. Unlike the wide choral views of the *parodos*, her version of the expedition in the first episode consists of a symbolic and highly pared-down dream report featuring only four characters – Xerxes, Darius, and two women personifying Asia and Greece – and stressing the son's shame in front of his father (197–9; cf. 753–8). Similarly, she responds to the defeat by worrying about the survival and psychological well-being of the King. Upon hearing the news, she breaks her long silence only to inquire about the survival of the leaders (290–8); the information that Xerxes is still alive seems to entirely relieve her of her worries (301); upon exiting to fetch libations, she recommends that the Chorus console and escort Xerxes to the palace (529–31).

Darius' perspective is spatially and temporally broader than the Queen's: he contextualizes the defeat within the history of Persian monarchy, announces the pending defeat at Plataea (803–20) and gnominically casts the events as an illustration of divine retribution for excessive *hybris* (821–2). Yet his vision is still centered on Xerxes as leader and king: he inquires which of his sons led the campaign (717), interprets the disaster as a consequence of Xerxes' foolish attempt to enslave Poseidon (743–52), worries that his economical legacy may be wiped out (751–2) and highlights the discontinuity that Xerxes has introduced among seven generations of Persian rulers (759–86). Darius' emphasis on rulers (ἄπαντες ἡμεῖς, οἱ κρᾶτη τὰδ' ἔσχομεν, 785) contrasts with the Chorus' concern for the Persian people (Περσικὸς λαὸς, 789). The Queen views the war as an Oedipal plot<sup>10</sup> and the King envisages it as a cosmic dual, whereas the Chorus sees it as the adventure of a whole people.

<sup>10</sup> For a psychoanalytic reading that emphasizes family tensions in *Persians*, see Kuhns 1991.

(c) *Filters*

As the *choreutai* focus on a wide range of objects apprehended through various levels of proximity and distance, they activate and embrace the perspective of different characters.<sup>11</sup> Some of these constituencies can be described in terms of concentric circles expanding from the *choreutai* outwards. The *choreutai* (often through the *koryphaios*) speak in their royal counselors *persona* as they announce their intention to “engage in careful thought” (142) or reminisce about Darius’ successes (852–906). By contrast, the teichoscopic views listed above describe experiences that the Elders notionally shared with Susa’s other inhabitants. Expanding still further, the Chorus sometimes conveys the perspective of the whole Persian people, for instance when they describe Salamis as an “utter catastrophe for the Persians” (πάντα Πέρσας παγκόκως, 282) or when they ask Darius for advice about how the Persians can fare best (787–9).<sup>12</sup> Finally, like many tragic choruses, the Persian *choreutai* have a special connection to the land.<sup>13</sup> Xerxes left them in charge of his palace and land (χώρος, 7) and that rootedness translates into a special understanding of the grief of the “Asian land” (πᾶσα χθών Ἀσιῆτις, 61).<sup>14</sup> In other words, the Chorus’ range of interests and insights activates the whole spectrum of their various identities as royal counselors, inhabitants of Susa, Persians, and Asians.

More strikingly still, the Chorus occasionally embraces the perspective of Persian constituencies to which the Elders do not belong. The odes go beyond what the *choreutai* can technically know in their fictional identity and embrace others’ perspective on the Persian expedition as they mention the shuddering of parents and wives (63) and the loneliness of Persian widows (289). The Chorus’ empathic ability to transcend its fictional identity is perhaps most obvious in two passages when the Elders impersonate the voice of Persian women.<sup>15</sup> In the anapestic introduction to the first stasimon, the choric dirge and its accompanying gestures are projected upon women who are imagined tearing their veils, weeping, and grieving

<sup>11</sup> My use of the term “filter” here overlaps with the concept of “identity” that some scholars use to describe shifts in the choral voice. I find the term “filter” more suitable to describe rapid changes in the Chorus’ perspective within a short interval of performance time.

<sup>12</sup> On the use of compounds on the *pan-* root to express the magnitude of the disaster, see Saïd 1988.

<sup>13</sup> On the rootedness of tragic choruses, see Gould 2001 [1996].

<sup>14</sup> Although some commentators understand the term χώρος as a reference to the royal domain, the context of the play makes it more likely to refer to the Persian land as a whole (cf. 67, 271, 493, 857, χώρος ἄνθος 925).

<sup>15</sup> On the idea of choral empathy, see Peponi 2009. On the chorus’ ability to perform a mimesis of other choruses, see Nagy in this volume.

(537–47).<sup>16</sup> More strikingly still, the *parodos* includes a vivid impersonation, in direct speech, of the laments that the Chorus fears will be voiced by the women (115–25):

ταῦτά μοι μελαγχίτων φρήν ἀμύσσειται φόβῳ  
ὄᾶ Περσικοῦ στρατεύματος τοῦδε μὴ πόλις πύθη-  
ται, κένανδρον μέγ' ἄστυ Σουσίδης·

καὶ τὸ Κισσίων πόλισμ' ἀντίδουπον ᾄσεται,  
ὄᾶ, τοῦτ' ἔπος γυναικοπληθῆς ὄμιλος ἀπύων,  
βυσσίνοις δ' ἐν πέπλοις πέσση λακίς.

This is why the black robes of my heart are rent with terror –  
“*oa!* – the Persian army!” – lest the city, the great citadel  
of Sousa, become emptied of men and hear this cry.

And the Kissian city will sing in response,  
“*oa!*” – this is what the massive horde of women will call out,  
tearing their linen gowns.<sup>17</sup>

The demonstratives τοῦδε and τοῦτο simultaneously mark anaphoric deixis and deixis *am Phantasma* and merge the voice of the Elders with that of the imagined women.<sup>18</sup> For a brief moment, therefore, the chorus of Elders ventriloquizes two antiphonal female choruses. The passage is remarkable in at least two ways. Intertextually, the stanza may allude to and competitively engage with the female chorus of the *Phoenician Women* composed by Aeschylus' predecessor Phrynichus. Generically, moreover, the passage enacts the polyphony of the dramatic chorus in a particularly vivid manner that crosses over time, age, and gender. The odes do not reflect the perspective and ideas of a single entity, albeit a collective one. Rather, they combine a plurality of perspectives and voices, weaving the Elders' with others' views into plural, polyphonic and multi-focalized songs.

#### (d) *Slant*

The Chorus' ability to transcend boundaries culminates in its references to Athenian civic practices that are foreign to the individual Persian characters. The Chorus' stichomythic exchange with the Queen in the first episode demonstrates a precise knowledge, further underscored by her ignorance, of the Athenian resources in silver (238), hoplite technique (240), and

<sup>16</sup> For the concept of “choral projection”, see Henrichs 1994/5: 75.

<sup>17</sup> Here and throughout, I quote *Persians* in the text and translation of Hall 1996.

<sup>18</sup> On the distinction between three types of deixis (deixis *ad oculos*, anaphoric or textual deixis, and deixis *am Phantasma*), see Bühler 1934.



democratic government (242). In the first stasimon, the Chorus' highly emotional response to the messenger's news (548–83) is soon followed by a cold-hearted analysis of the political consequences of the defeat that is phrased in distinctively Athenian concepts and includes the end of tribute, abolition of proskynesis, and re-establishment of frank speech (584–94). Even more remarkably, the abrupt questioning to which the Chorus submits Xerxes in the final scene is reminiscent of the practice of frank speech (*parrhēsia*) that defines Athenian democracy.<sup>19</sup> The Elders angrily list the names of fallen Persians and ask Xerxes where they are (967–73):

οἰοιοῖ <βόρα>, ποῦ σοι Φαρνοῦχος  
 Ἀριόμαρδος τ' ἀγαθός;  
 ποῦ δὲ Σευάλκης ἄναξ  
 ἢ Λίλαιος εὐπάτωρ,  
 Μέμφις Θάρυβις καὶ Μασίστρας,  
 Ἄρτεμβάρης τ' ἠδ' Ὑσταίχμας;  
 τάδε σ' ἐπανερόμαν.

Oioioi – cry it out; where are your Pharnouchos  
 And noble Ariomardos?  
 Where lord Seualkes  
 Or Lilaios of noble birth?  
 Memphis, Tharybis and Masistras,  
 Artembares and Hystaichmas?  
 I put the question to you again.

The catalogue is reminiscent of earlier lists of departing or fallen Persians (21–58 and 302–30, respectively) but is now embedded in direct interrogative clauses introduced by the interrogative adverb “where” (ποῦ, 967 and 969; cf. 956 and 957) that give it an angry significance. Earlier utterances in the drama construct frank speech as a practice that does *not* belong in the Persian Empire. In the first episode, the Queen emphasizes that Xerxes is not accountable to his subjects (οὐχ ὑπεύθυνος πόλει, 213). The limitation of free speech in Persia is forcefully enacted in the Darius scene. After singing the kletic hymn that constitutes the second stasimon, the Elders find themselves unable to speak to Darius face to face “on account of [their] old fear of [him]” (694–6). As a result, most of the conversation with Darius is performed by the Queen who informs him of the recent

<sup>19</sup> On the distinctively Athenian overtones of the Chorus' criticism of Xerxes, see Kranz 1933: 550, who viewed it as the poet's voice, and Broadhead 1960 xxiv–xxvi, who finds it “out of character”; Broadhead's phrase perfectly captures the fact that the Chorus cannot be adequately described as a character only.

disaster and Xerxes' expedition (703–58). The Chorus' abrupt questioning of Xerxes in the final scene therefore represents a strong departure from the Persian practices described and performed earlier in the play.<sup>20</sup> They speak as Athenian citizens questioning a magistrate rather than as Persian subjects enthralled by their king. The Chorus' views of the economic, military and political implications of the war differentiate it from the royal family and carry distinctively Athenian resonances.<sup>21</sup>

In melic poetry, the first-person pronoun is a polysemic signifier whose shifting meaning depends on whether the chorus speaks to or on behalf of the community.<sup>22</sup> The dramatic chorus of *Persians* draws on and redefines that fluidity in the narrative context of Athenian drama.<sup>23</sup> In comparison to the more restricted perspective of the actors, the odes focus on a wide variety of objects, considering them from various degrees of proximity or distance, and activating the viewpoint or ideology of different character groups to whom the *choreutai* may or may not belong. As a result, seemingly incompatible ways of thinking, perceiving or reacting, are unified under the voice of a single performative entity. The *parodos* juxtaposes prophetic utterances that correctly sense and already lament the impending Persian defeat (92–100; 115–25) with some triumphant statements of confidence and hope in the success of the army (86–91), and sheer ignorance about the status of the expedition (140–9). The first stasimon combines highly emotional and graphic close-ups of Persian corpses lacerated by fish (576–8), images of parents lamenting the death of their offspring (579–83) and pragmatic considerations involving key concepts in Athenian politics (584–96). Through the seamless blending of various perspectives into a powerful song-and-dance performance, the multi-referential chorus complicates and challenges polar divisions between old and young, male and female, and Greek and Persian.

### A choral plot

The plurality of perspectives described above is not unusual of tragic choruses, but it is further enhanced by the plot structure of *Persians*. Besides the

<sup>20</sup> For the suggestion that the Chorus' examination replaces the εὔθυνα to which Atossa said that Xerxes was not subject, see Griffith 1998: 125.

<sup>21</sup> On the interweaving of Greek and Persian ideas and customs in Aeschylus' play, see Broadhead 1960: xxx–xxxii and Calame in this volume. Hall 1989: 69–100 by contrast views the Greek/Persian pair as an unbridgeable polarity.

<sup>22</sup> Calame 1977 i: 436–9; D'Alessio 1994, with further bibliography.

<sup>23</sup> On the transformations of the melic chorus resulting from its transfer to the dramatic stage, see Calame 1994/5; Nagy 1994/5b.

war story often thought to be its main topic, *Persians* thematizes a second set of events located in Susa and largely centered on the Chorus: the Elders wait for the return of Xerxes and the army (*parodos*), hear about the defeat (first episode), conjure up Darius in an attempt to thwart further losses (second episode), learn that further woes await the Persians at Plataea (third episode), confront Xerxes and finally mourn with him (*exodos*). Unlike the war story that took place in a distant space and time, the characters in this choral plot are impersonated by the performers on stage. Its duration – about an hour – coincides with the duration of the performance. Its location, Susa, is the space presented on stage.<sup>24</sup>

The staged events may be less memorable than the Persian defeat, yet they still amount to a causal sequence unified by the Chorus' desire to see the army back.<sup>25</sup> Indeed the Elders' longing for "the homecoming of the King and his gold-bedecked army" (8–9) motivates the entrances and exits of the actors:<sup>26</sup> the Queen's dream narrative amplifies the Chorus' anxiety; the messenger's entrance fulfills their longing for news; the libations poured by the Queen (624) and the kletic hymn performed by the Elders (634–80) are motivated by their wish that Darius find a remedy to prevent further losses (219–25, 521–6, 631–2); and Xerxes' entrance visually enacts the disaster and irrevocably sanctions the end of the Chorus' hopes. While the Elders are no more than spectators in the war story told in the embedded narratives, they actively shape the action happening in Susa and represented on stage.

Aeschylus' extant plays offer at least two other examples of chorus-centered plots.<sup>27</sup> In both *Supplices* and *Eumenides*, the chorus' desire (for virginity or revenge) triggers and organizes the action of the actors. *Supplices* is centered on the Danaids' hope to escape marriage with their cousins. The girls flee with their father from Egypt to Argos, successfully beg the Argive king Pelasgus to give them asylum and resist the herald who attempts to seize them on the Aegyptids' behalf: Danaus speaks for his daughters, Pelasgus helps them, and the herald opposes them.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, *Eumenides*

<sup>24</sup> For a full analysis of the narrative structure of *Persians*, with special attention to its combination of a war story and a *pothos* story, see Hopman 2009. Garvie 2009: xxxii–xxxvii similarly points out that the play is not only concerned with "the tragedy of Persia" (i.e., the war) and that the "tragedy of Xerxes" is equally important.

<sup>25</sup> For desire as a fundamental narrative trigger, see Brooks 1984.

<sup>26</sup> On the *nostos* pattern underlying the staged events, see Taplin 1977: 124–7; Hopman 2009: 362–8.

<sup>27</sup> On the central role of the chorus in the plot of *Supplices* and *Eumenides*, see Rosenmeyer 1982: 146. Murnaghan 2005 sees that prominence as an inheritance from the early origins of tragedy. By contrast, Friis Johansen and Whittle 1980 i: 26 and Sommerstein 1996: 153 view it as an innovation.

<sup>28</sup> For the terminology of desiring subject, helper, opponent, sender, and receiver, see Greimas 1966: 174–85 and 192–212. For the idea that Danaus is hardly differentiated from the Chorus and may play the role of a *chorēgos* to his daughters' chorus, see Murnaghan 2005.

is structured around the Erinyes' wish to avenge Clytemnestra's murder. The Queen's ghost urges the Chorus to avenge her death, Orestes seeks to save his life, Apollo purifies him of the murder and Athena organizes the trial that leads to his acquittal: Clytemnestra is the sender who prompts the Chorus to act while Orestes, Apollo and Athena are its opponents. Thus it is not unusual that the chorus occupy the main plot position in Aeschylean drama.

Although some critics have dismissed the Persian *choreutai* as helpless old men, in fact the comparison with the only other extant Aeschylean chorus of elders in the *Agamemnon* brings their performative prominence to the fore.<sup>29</sup> The plays are similar in many ways (Taplin 1977: 125). Both are *nostos* plays concerned with the departure of the King. Both feature a dialogue between a chorus of old men and the Queen, followed by the arrival of a messenger. Yet while the Argive Elders seem barely tolerated in the palace, the Persian Elders are directly connected to power and knowledge. Their close ties to the royal family are underscored by the recurrence of terms derived from the words πίστις, "trust" (2, 171, 528, 681) and βουλευώ, "take counsel" (142, 172) in relation to their identity and function. While the Argive old men provide no self-introduction in the *parodos* but immediately launch into a lyric narrative of the Trojan War (*Ag.* 40–263), the Persian *choreutai* confidently highlight their position in the opening anapests (*Pers.* 1–7). The Argive Elders associate old age with lack of strength and compare it to a withered leaf faltering forward like a dream (*Ag.* 72–82).<sup>30</sup> By contrast, the Persian Elders tie seniority with authority and invoke their age as the reason why Xerxes entrusted his domain to them (κατὰ πρεσβείαν, *Pers.* 4); they only complain that their long life forces them to hear about the Persian defeat (262–5). The contrasting self-presentation of both choruses finds a striking confirmation in their respective interaction with the Queen. While the conversation between the Argive Elders and Clytemnestra demonstrates the superior control of the latter, whose network of beacons immediately informed her of the fall of Troy, the Persian Elders conversely provide Atossa with information, interpret her dream and tell her about Athens (215–45). The

<sup>29</sup> For the Elders as helpless, see Georges 1994: 89 (who calls them "ultimate slaves"), Hall 1996, and Harrison 2000.

<sup>30</sup> On representations of old age, see Falkner 1995. On the relation (or absence thereof) between the chorus' fictional identity and dramatic role, see Foley 2003. For a critique of the assumption that choruses of elders are normally ineffective, see Dhuga 2005 on the chorus of *Oedipus at Colonus* and Hawthorne 2009, who argues that the elders of *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* constitute a "rhetorical audience" whose approval is sought by the individual characters.

Elders' comparison with the *Agamemnon* Chorus highlights their relative empowerment and potential influence upon the spectators.

The Elders' active role on stage is memorably encapsulated in the ghost-rising song, which the god Dionysos of Aristophanes' *Frogs* highlights as one of the two most enjoyable sections of the play (*Ran.* 1028–9).<sup>31</sup> By conjuring Darius' ghost, the Elders attempt to act upon their wish to see the army back. The scene highlights their agency and success. The Elders take on a strikingly active role by performing the chanting normally expected from the person pouring libations.<sup>32</sup> Their success is stressed by the many internal references to the difficulty of the task (634–9; 688–90) and further comes across in contrast with the *Choephoroi*, where the *kommos* sung by Orestes, Electra, and the Chorus ultimately fails to bring back the dead Agamemnon. The technical language used by the King as he appears over his funeral mound (θρηνεῖτ', 686; ψυχάγαγοῖς ὀρθιάζοντες γόοις, 687) emphasizes the ritual correctness of the choral performance.<sup>33</sup> The necromantic hymn is also striking for its meta-poetic significance. Generically, it amounts to a *mise en abyme* of drama – just as drama gives new life to people from the heroic age through actor impersonation, so does the necromancy reverse time and bring the dead back among the living (Grethlein 2007). The Elders' awe and speechlessness at Darius' sight thus enact past, rather than present, relations of power and authority at the Persian court. The Chorus' ability to conjure Darius' ghost through chanting and beating the ground thus puts it in a position parallel to the poet's, whose words and music give a new life to the old myths.

Viewed as a choral drama centered on the Chorus' desire to see the army back, *Persians* culminates in the Chorus' final confrontation with Xerxes.<sup>34</sup> As the action progresses and makes it clear that the army will not come back, the Chorus increasingly comes to view Xerxes as the cause of its frustration and losses. In that respect, the first and second halves of the play

<sup>31</sup> On the textual problem raised by the crux ἤκουσα περὶ at *Fr.* 1028, see Dover 1993 ad loc. On the excitement generated by the necromancy, see Hall 1996: 151 on 623–80. On the problem of staging the ghost rising, see Broadhead 1960: 309.

<sup>32</sup> Broadhead 1960: 306.

<sup>33</sup> As Lawson 1934 emphasizes, it is not necessary to believe with Headlam 1902 that the Chorus has special magic powers. The necromancy is not a foreign ritual, as Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* and the archaeological evidence assembled in Dakaris 1963 demonstrate. The Chorus' mention of barbarian language can be explained by the need that the invocation be performed in Darius' native tongue. See Broadhead 1960 on 633–9. On ritual in Aeschylus, see Else 1977.

<sup>34</sup> For similar emphasis on the *kommos* as the dramatic climax of the play and its confrontational mood, see Garvie 2009: xxxv and on 908–1077. By contrast, scholars who primarily view the play as a retelling of the Persian expedition treat the encounter between Xerxes and the Elders as an afterthought (Adams 1952).

offer a striking contrast. Up to and including the messenger speech, the Elders, the messenger, and the Queen explicitly attribute the (intuited or witnessed) Persian defeat to the responsibility of a jealous *daimōn* (92; 354; 472) and implicitly allude to the valor of the Greeks (237–48; 384–407). By contrast, the second half of the play increasingly highlights Xerxes' responsibility. In the first stasimon, the Elders tie their grief to Xerxes' actions and emphasize his responsibility by hammering his name as the subject of destructive verbs (546–54). In the second episode, Darius further criticizes Xerxes, attributes the defeat to his son's mental sickness, and offers a model of hybris and retribution that emphasizes individual responsibility (800–31). In the third stasimon, the Elders' nostalgic evocation of the good old days of Darius' rule amounts to an implicit but nevertheless strong criticism of their current ruler.

Thus the Athenian-like frank speech performed by the Chorus at the beginning of the final scene belongs with a plot whereby the Elders progressively identify Xerxes as the cause of their woes. The confrontational dynamics of the first half of the final scene may have been emphasized in the staging, with Xerxes standing at one end of the orchestra facing the Chorus at the other.<sup>35</sup> The tense verbal exchange further contrasts the wide perspective of the Chorus to the narrower approach of the actor. The Chorus cares for the army as a whole (στρατιῶς, 918; ὄχλος, 956); it approaches the defeat from the political perspective of Persia, now deprived of its prestige (919), and from the even broader ecological perspective of the land devoid of its offspring (922–30). By contrast, Xerxes' initial concerns are emphatically self-centered. First-person pronouns or verbal forms pile up as the King laments the unexpectedness of his fate, worries about his future, and wishes for death (909; 912; 931; 974). Xerxes requests that the Elders lament the reversal of his fate (δαίμων γὰρ ὄδ' αὖ / μετάτροπος ἐπ' ἐμοί μετάτροπος ἐπ' ἐμοί, 942–3), while the Elders reply that they will sing in honor of the people's suffering (λασπαθῆ, 945). The visual and performative contrasts between individual actor and collective chorus are mirrored in their respective concerns.

The beginning of the Xerxes scene thus marks a remarkable reversal in the Elders' position in and out of the fiction. The King's close counselors have become his violent critics, in which the old men emphatically dressed in eastern garbs echo the Athenian practice of public examination of the conduct of officials (*euthuna*). More strikingly still, the chorus' confrontation with the Xerxes actor may have mirrored the anger that the Athenians

<sup>35</sup> Rehm 2002: 249; Garvie 2009 on 908–1077.

felt at the real-life king for their own human and material losses. Like the Elders, Aeschylus' spectators could have used catalogues of names – albeit Greek rather than Persian names – to blame Xerxes for their own past and future dead. Through its choral plot, *Persians* challenges simple ethnic polarities and partly aligns the Chorus' position vis-à-vis Xerxes with that of the Athenian spectators. In this play, the ability of tragic choruses to speak alternately as poet, fictional characters or spectators becomes a crucial element of the plot.

### Choral closure

The Elders' collective perspective sustains the conflict with Xerxes but also brings that confrontation to an end. A turning point in the choral plot occurs in the third antistrophe of the *kommos* as Xerxes expresses longing for his fallen comrades (987–91):

ἴνυγά μοι δῆτ'  
ἀγαθῶν ἐτάρων ἀνακινεῖς,  
<ἄλαστ' > ἄλαστα στυγνὰ πρόκακα λέγων.  
βοῶ βοῶ <μοι> μελέων ἔνδοθεν ἦτορ.

You stir up in me longing  
for my noble comrades,  
telling of unforgettable – unforgettable – and loathsome evils  
beyond evils.

My heart cries out – cries out – from within my limbs.

By expressing concern for the fallen army, Xerxes moves away from a primarily self-centered lament to an embrace of the collective perspective of the Chorus. From a plot perspective, he thus leaves the position of the Chorus' opponent to become its helper, share its grief and mourn its losses. Consequently, the Elders' response immediately changes. The meter switches from lyric anapests to lyric iambics (1002–78); the antiphonic division of strophes between King and Chorus gives way to a sung exchange of individual lines; the second-person verbs that the Chorus used to question the King are replaced by verbal forms in the first person plural; the Chorus stops incriminating Xerxes and mentions unnamed *daimones* as the cause for the disaster (1005–7). Subsequently, they renew their allegiance, call him “master” (δέσποτα, 1049) and escort him to the palace (1078).

That political reconciliation of Elders and King coincides with a generic shift. The second half of the *kommos* departs from the differentiation between chorus and actor characteristic of drama and comes closer to

the integrated relation of chorus and *chorēgos* that defines melic poetry (cf. μέλος, 1042).<sup>36</sup> Xerxes virtually takes on the role of a melic chorus-leader as he leads the Elders' song and dance. He offers musical directions emphasizing the high pitch (1050; 1058) and the antiphonal nature of the dirge (1040), as well as physical directions instructing the Elders to walk toward the palace (1036), wave their hands in a rhythmic oar-stroke (ἔρροσ', 1046), tear their beards (1056) and tread softly (ἄβροβάται, 1073). Although the choreography of the *kommos* is irretrievably lost for us, Xerxes' intimation that the Chorus "proceed towards the palace" (πρὸς δόμους δ' ἴθι, 1038) probably suggests, as Edith Hall points out, that the Chorus begins to arrange itself around or behind him.<sup>37</sup> The wail *otototoi* at line 1042 is probably delivered simultaneously by Xerxes and the Chorus (cf. ὄμοῦ τιθεῖς, 1042). Hence the funeral procession of the *thrēnos* mirrors the procession of the departing army described in the *parodos* (προπομπῶν, 1036) and brings closure to the performance. Xerxes is reintegrated into the community, albeit as chief mourner rather than military leader.<sup>38</sup> The conflict between Chorus and King ends in a *thrēnos* jointly sung and led by the protagonist.

Athenian drama offers several parallels for that sequence of antagonism and reconciliation between chorus and actor. In Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, the Erinyes, furious to have been superseded by younger gods, ventilate their rage and curse the land until Athena integrates them into the polis. As in *Persians*, that sequence of conflict and conciliation is performed musically. In the first epirrhematic exchange between Athena and the Chorus, the Chorus curses Athens in strophes and antistrophes, while Athena reasons in iambic trimeters (*Eum.* 778–891). By contrast, after a transitional stichomythia between Athena and the *koryphaios* (*Eum.* 892–915), the Erinyes accept Athena's offer and bless the land in a second epirrhema whose strophes and antistrophes include both some choral lyrics and some anapests uttered by Athena (*Eum.* 916–1031). In that exchange, Athena refers anaphorically to the lyrics of the Chorus (948 τᾶδ'; cf. 927

<sup>36</sup> It has long been recognized that the final part of the *exodos* is a formal *thrēnos*. Xerxes' choregic role was already emphasized by Kaimio 1970: 25–6 and 219; see also Swift 2010: 328. However, neither of these scholars discusses the implications of that generic shift for the dramatic plot.

<sup>37</sup> Hall 1996: 175 ad loc. For a survey of contemporary attempts to reconstruct tragic dancing, see Ley 2003.

<sup>38</sup> It is difficult to assess whether Xerxes' integration among the Chorus also involves a renewal of his royal authority. The question largely depends on non-textual signifiers like Xerxes' costume, which the play repeatedly associates with his kingly status (Thalman 1980). Since the script does not allude to the Queen's re-entrance with a new robe for Xerxes, I find it more likely that the drama ends with Xerxes in rags (Taplin 1977: 121–2) and thus highlights his new identity as chief mourner rather than king. For a different view, see Avery 1964.



and 968) as if she were acting as their *chorēgos*. In other words, Chorus and actor now complement rather than compete against one another (Scott 1984: 132). Subsequently, the play and the trilogy end in a grandiose finale arranged by Athena (1021–47) whereby the Erinyes are integrated into a larger chorus including the Areopagites, Athena, sacrificial victims, and female attendants.<sup>39</sup> The seemingly unending sequence of murder and revenge in the house of Atreus finds closure in the integrative quality of a choral song.<sup>40</sup>

That capacity of dramatic choruses to challenge and subsequently reintegrate the protagonist is further illustrated in Aristophanic comedy.<sup>41</sup> In both *Wasps* (422 BCE) and *Lysistrata* (411 BCE), a chorus initially hostile to the hero is won over after the *agōn*; both plays end in a revelry whereby one or more actors become the chorus leader. In *Wasps*, the chorus of jurors initially opposes Bdelycleon's attempt to reform his father from his addiction to law courts, but switches side after the *agōn*. The comedy ends in a revelry (*kōmos*) featuring the Chorus, Philocleon, and the dancer Carcinus and his sons; at the Chorus' request, Carcinus becomes *chorēgos* and leads the *choreutai* out of the orchestra. Similarly in *Lysistrata*, the half-chorus of old men is initially hostile to the women's attempt to end the war but eventually reconciles itself with its female counterpart to form a single chorus (*Lys.* 1043–71) – the final scene features Athenian and Spartan delegates singing hymns in turn and leading the choral dance.

An even closer parallel for the dynamics of the Xerxes scene comes from the 425 BCE *Acharnians*. Dicaeopolis' private treaty with Sparta leads him into a conflict with the chorus of belligerent Acharnians but their antagonism disappears after the *agōn* (*Ach.* 204–625). As in the Xerxes scene, the conflict and dramatic division between actor and chorus dissolves in the final choral song led by the protagonist. Dicaeopolis introduces the refrain “hail the champion!” (τήνελλα καλλίνικος, 1227 and 1231), which is then taken up by the *koryphaios* (1228, 1230) and the entire chorus (1233). Like Xerxes, Dicaeopolis now leads the dance and organizes the procession (ἔπεισθε, *Ach.* 1231), while the Chorus follows him (ἔψόμεσθα, 1232). Structurally, therefore, the *thrēnos* that closes off *Persians* works as a tragic equivalent for the comic *kōmoi*. The *kōmoi* use joyful exuberance

<sup>39</sup> For the reconstruction of the final procession, see Sommerstein 1989: 275–8 on 1021–47, who calculates that 35 performers were on stage at that point.

<sup>40</sup> On the semantic relevance of the final procession to the progression of the *Oresteia*, see Taplin 1977: 415.

<sup>41</sup> On the sequence of choral rivalry and revelry in Aristophanic comedy, see *RE* s.v. Aristophanes (Gelzer).

and the *thrēnos* sorrow to close off the previous conflict between chorus and protagonist.

Strikingly, three of the examples of choral reconciliation discussed above also encourage the audience to join the final song, as if the inclusive capacity of the choral medium extended from the *choreutai* through the actor(s) to the spectators. The chorus of *Wasps* explicitly invites the audience to take part in the revelry and “cry ooh” (*Vesp.* 1526–7). The final song of *Acharnians*, which is not transmitted in the manuscript tradition, is likely to have been an Olympic victory-hymn attributed to Archilochus (fr. 119 Bergk = fr. spur. West) and thus familiar to the audience (Sommerstein 1983: 215). Most strikingly, the ending of *Eumenides* fuses the fiction with the present of the performance (see also Grethlein, this volume). As the Erinyes don red robes similar to the outfit worn by metics at the Great Panathenaia and the procession as a whole is modeled on the Panathenaiaic procession (Headlam 1906), the Chorus becomes part of a community extending beyond the stage to the audience (Rehm 2002: 97). Consequently, it is likely that, as Alan Sommerstein suggests, the audience was invited to join into the song:<sup>42</sup> πανδαμεί (1039) is too broad to refer only to the Areopagites, and the second utterance of the refrain ὀλολύξατε νῦν ἐπὶ μολπαῖς (1047), which is also the final line of the trilogy, makes it possible for the entire audience to join in. In all three plays, deictic allusions to the extra-fictional world dissolve the boundary between performers and spectators. The fiction spills over the world of spectators and gives way to a ritual in which the spectators are invited to take part.

The inclusiveness of those choral songs can be explained through the findings of comparative anthropology. Generically, an actor-led choral song signals the recession of the narrative or descriptive function of drama and the foregrounding of its ritual aspects. The performers are still wearing masks, but the fiction spills over the here-and-now of the audience to produce a sort of hybrid between the fiction of drama and the ritual of melic poetry. Such a combination is therefore conducive to generating among actor, chorus and audience the kind of “solidarity without consensus” that anthropologists have highlighted as a distinctive feature of ritual.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Sommerstein 1989: 286 on 1047: “the *Oresteia* ends with a united cry of triumphant joy from over ten thousand mouths as all Athens hails the birth of a new era.”

<sup>43</sup> See the classic statement in Fernandez 1965: 912: “ritual can achieve integration on the social level of interaction, between participants who on the cultural level – the ideological level of beliefs, rationales, interpretation of symbols – in fact, lack consensus.” For an application of the notion of solidarity without consensus to Athenian drama, see Griffith 2002.

There were of course important differences between tragic and comic choruses. Comic choruses were larger and tended to step out of their fictional role more often than their tragic counterparts, most famously in the *parabasis*. Since comedies were performed at the Great Dionysia since 486 BCE, however, it seems likely that the dynamics of one genre influenced the audience's experience of the other. Most importantly, the choral closures discussed above depend on features – the contrast between the collective chorus and the individual actors, and the chorus' intermediate position between actors and spectators – that generally defined Athenian drama throughout the fifth century.<sup>44</sup> As far as choral closures are concerned, therefore, Aristophanic comedy may shed light on Aeschylean tragedy.

The endings of *Eumenides*, *Wasps*, and *Acharnians* are thus important witnesses of what dramatic choruses could do for their audiences, and what may be at work in *Persians*. Among other things, they show that final songs that marked the end of a conflict between chorus and actor were especially conducive to audience participation, and that audience participation could be further encouraged through deictic pointers and memorable refrains. Against that horizon of expectations, a possible effect of the Xerxes scene was to invite the audience to notionally if not literally join the final *thrēnos*. Onomatopoeic repetitions make the lament easy to join in and memorable enough for Dionysos to echo the choral exclamation ἰωά (*Pers.* 1071 and 1072) in the 405 BCE *Frogs* (Ἰαυοῖ, *Ra.* 1029). Moreover, like the *exodoi* in *Acharnians* and *Eumenides*, the ending of *Persians* tends to break down the dramatic illusion. As the *choreutai* depart and tramp the ground of the orchestra, they complain that 'the Persian earth is hard to tread' (Περσὶς αἴα δύσβατος, 1070 and 1074). In other words, the Elders mention the Persian land while physically pointing at the ground of the theater of Dionysos. The deixis thus merges the dramatic space set in Susa with the scenic space of the theater, itself grounded in the reflexive space of the Athenian landscape (Rehm 2002: 20–5 and 250). As the actor becomes the chorus leader and as the boundaries between fiction and reality dissolve, the narrative function of drama recedes and its ritual dimension comes to the fore to encourage "solidarity without consensus" among the Persian characters and the Athenian audience. While some features of the *thrēnos* may have sounded unusual or foreign to the Athenian audience, as Edith Hall has argued, its position in the choral plot had the potential to encourage at least some degree of identification between performers

<sup>44</sup> For an important discussion of the function and effects of the satyr plays in the Athenian experience at the Great Dionysia, see Griffith 2002.

and spectators.<sup>45</sup> Through the complex handling of the chorus, *Persians* exposed its audience to a wide range of contradictory stimuli.

The tragic chorus of Athenian drama is a complex and powerful medium. As a collective, polymorphic, polyphonic, and multi-focalizing performer, it can interweave a variety of perspectives crossing over the barriers of ethnicity, age, and gender. Unlike the viewpoint of the protagonists, the chorus' perspective is not limited by its fictional identity but can embrace the views of other communities or even the anonymous and boundless truth of gnomic utterances. Furthermore, its generic continuity with melic choruses allows it to entertain various relations with the protagonist, ranging from opposition to inclusion. Just as a ballet soloist can dance with or independently from the *corps de ballet*, so can the protagonists of Greek drama oppose, concur with, or lead the dramatic chorus.

*Persians* takes full advantage of those possibilities to complicate and challenge the binary opposition between Greeks and Persians both within and outside of the fiction. The Elders are ostentatiously dressed in eastern garbs and emphatically introduce themselves in relation to their ethnic identity, yet they also offer a range of perspectives on the war that goes beyond their identity as royal counselors to embrace the more marginal voices of women in the Persian empire and even echo some Athenian political concepts. That pluralized view of Persians as an ethnic group is epitomized in the initial tension of the final scene, which exposes the divergence of the Chorus' and the King's respective concerns.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the evidence provided by later Athenian plays suggests that such sequences of conflict and reconciliation between chorus and actor(s) often encouraged the audience to join in the final song. By constructing its polyphonic chorus as a temporary opponent to Xerxes, *Persians* opened to the Athenians the possibility to mourn with the Persian characters.

<sup>45</sup> For the lament as an un-Athenian, effeminizing song that constitutes the climax in the play's Orientalizing strategy, see Hall 1996 on 908–1078. Hall's argument rests on the idea that Athenian mourning practices had been effectively restricted by Solon's legislation and that laments were normally sung by women in fifth-century Athens.

<sup>46</sup> By contrast, on the role of simplifying stereotypes in Orientalism, see Said 2000.