

**The name clusters and use of names in *The Persians*: their contribution to  
appreciating the play's historical and dramatological aspects**

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Handwritten notes at the bottom right of the page, including the date "10-2-01" and the name "SWART".

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appreciating the play's historical and dramatological aspects**

“No wonder the Greeks decided to record tragedies for the benefit of later generations”

**Petrus J Maritz**

**Pretoria 2001**

## SUMMARY

For a brother  
who never ceased to motivate, as in his own style,  
and who, for a rather prolonged period of time,  
could turn any conversation on any topic  
to bear on the completion of this study.

Thank you Steven

I would also like to thank the following people who contributed in various ways towards the completion of this task:

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## SUMMARIES

### English summary

*The Persians* by Aeschylus is traditionally considered a history play. A close study, based on phonetics, morphological and structural analyses, indicates that the names in the play have an intentionally descriptive function. The historic validity of the names referring to actual people is not disputed. The names reveal the character of the Persians and are instrumental in developing the play's pathos. The names relate to the imagery and themes developed in the play. The history reflected in the play is constructed history according to contemporary understanding, but functions within the 5th century BC Homeric world view.

An analysis of the function of character, place and deity names is done. No names of Greeks are mentioned. The names of characters are contained in 5 clusters. The mentioned places illustrate the Persians' disunity and the Greeks' unity. The play is a tribute to the battle at Salamis, but is not a song of triumph. The theme "the battle lost and won" is used by this study to illustrate the Greek balance in the play.

The three traditionally distinguished characters, the Queen, Darius and Xerxes are considered messengers and not principal cast. The play does not have a tragic hero. The play has three stages. The chorus and the Queen represent the on-stage performance. The messenger and Xerxes relay the off-stage action. The ghost of Darius represents the third stage (universal).

The use of interpretations of Aristotle's *Poetics* to develop a theory on tragedy is thus questioned in light of *The Persians*. This study indicates that the *Poetics* is also a construct that has its own concerns. Modern Aesthetics is considered as well as other ancient theories. It is illustrated that Renaissance drama contemplation, which influenced all later drama theories, was most strongly influenced by readings of Aristotle. The *Poetics* must be read against the background of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*.

The principal problem in approaching *The Persians* is that the study of drama is restricted to the text. This reading indicates that the audience response can also be determined in part by the nature of the names.

### Key terms

Aeschylus

Aristotle

Characterisation

Drama theory

Dramatology

Greek history

Names

Persians

Salamis

Tragedy

## Afrikaanse opsomming

Aeschylus se *Die Persae* word tradisioneel as 'n historiese verhoogstuk beskou. 'n Nadere studie van die teks, morfologies, foneties, en struktuuranalities, dui aan dat die name 'n doelbewuste beskrywende funksie het. Die historiese grondslag van die name word nie ontken nie. Die name stel die karakter van die Persiese nasie bloot waar dié taamlik divers voorkom. Die name is instrumenteel in die ontwikkeling van die tragedie se *pathos*. Die name staan ook in verband met die beeldspraak en temas in die verhoogstuk. Die geskiedenis in die tragedie is gekonstrueer in terme van huidige denke, maar funksioneer wel binne die 5de eeu voor-Christelike Homeriese wêreldbeeld.

'n Analise van die funksies van karakter, plek en goddelike name word gemaak. Geen name van Grieke word genoem nie. Die karakters se name kom voor in 5 groeperings. Die plekke wat genoem word dui op die Perse se diversiteit teenoor die Grieke se eenheid. Die verhoogstuk is 'n huldiging van die veldslag by Salamis, maar is nie 'n triomflied nie. Die tema "oorlog gewen en verloor" word gebruik om die Grieke se balans in die tragedie aan te dui.

Die drie tradisioneel onderskeie karakters, die Koningin, Darius en Xerxes, word as boodskappers beskou en nie as hoof karakters met eie persoonlikhede wat karakterontwikkeling ondergaan nie. Die verhoogstuk het geen tragiese held nie. Die verhoogstuk het drie verhoë. Die koor en die Koningin verteenwoordig die sigbare verhoogaksie, terwyl die boodskapper en Xerxes die agterverhoog aksie vertel. Darius se spook verteenwoordig die derde verhoog (universeel), wat beide die voorverhoog en agterverhoog aksie betrek.

Die gebruikmaking van interpretasies van Aristoteles se *Poetica* om 'n teorie van tragedie te ontwikkel word dus bevraagteken in die lig van *Die Persae*. Hierdie studie dui aan dat die *Poetica* self 'n konstruksie is met eie oogmerke. Moderne estetika word oorweeg sowel as ander antieke teorieë. Dit word aangedui dat die Renaissance drama denke, wat latere drama teorie beïnvloed het, ten sterkste deur Aristotles beïnvloed was. Die *Poetica* moet gelees word teen die agtergrond van Aristoteles se *Metafisika* en *Etië*.

Die prinsipiële probleem in die toenadering tot *Die Persae* is dat dramastudies beperk word tot die teks. Hierdie studie dui aan dat die gehoor se reaksie ook ten dele afgelei kan word deur die aard van die name. In dié lig is *Die Persae* nie 'n triomflied van die Grieke se oorwinning by Salamis nie. Eerder is dit 'n herinnering om getrou te bly aan die goddelik bepaalde lewensplasing.

### **Kern terminologie**

Aeschylus

Aristoteles

Dramateorie

Dramatologie

Griekse geskiedenis

Karakterisering

Name

Perse

Salamis

Tragedie

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**But what mortal man can escape  
the crafty-minded deception of God?**

**Whose foot is so light  
that he can leap aside easily?**

*(The Persians: 107-110)*

**“What is best and most desirable for humans?”**

**“Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and toil, why do you  
force me to tell you what would be best for you not to hear? The very  
best of all things is completely beyond your reach: not to be born, not to  
be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is – to meet an early  
death.”**

*(the wisdom of Silenus in: The birth of Tragedy: 3)*