CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF DRAMA (STAGECRAFT, PRODUCTION AND CULT SETTING)

McCormick (1990:1) commences his chapter on interpretation and history with an expression on the relation between interpretation and history, theory and practice in the arts:

> One virtue among the several vices in recent philosophy of art, whether in Anglo-American or Continental terms, however various, is careful work on the interactions between interpretation and history, theory and practice. Thus, philosophers as diverse as Arthur Danto, Nelson Goodman, Francis Sparshott, and Richard Wollheim on the one hand and Hans-Georg Gadamer, Gilles Deleuze, François Lyotard, and Paul Ricoeur on the other continue to elaborate their sustained reflections on art in the context of repeated and closely detailed case studies within such individual arts as literature, painting, dance and cinema.

In this chapter an overview of ancient and modern drama theory will be given, in order to ascertain the best approach to appreciating *The Persians*, a tragedy, as a stage production.

3.1 Introduction

Drama analysis, especially regarding the study of Greek tragedy, is invariably restricted to the text of the script, and does not necessarily take the broader extent of the production into consideration.[49] Under the broader extent of the production is understood: the performance itself; the character portrayal and interpretation; the dance and choreography; the music and sound; lighting (special effects); the cast-audience interaction, the theatre itself; the setting of the competition and the role of the judges; and the relation of the specific production (in terms also of the tetralogy)[50] to the cult festival.

---

[49] E.g. Campbell (1904). 19th century philologists were often more concerned with establishing a correct text than with interpreting the text within its immediate context. Thus also the heavy attack against Nietzsche by Wilamowitz-Möllendorf (See Reedy 2000).

[50] Murray (1939:73) considers The *Persians* as the second play in a tetralogy: *Pineus, Persae, Glaucus Potnieus* and *Prometheus the fire-kindler.* These are named by Campbell (1906: xxi): The three tragedies *Phineus, Persae,* and *Glaucus of Potniae*, and the satyric drama *Prometheus with the fire.*

These aspects are difficult to research, especially in terms of a historic and theoretic construct, since not much information is available. A further complicating factor is that drama fashions and trends change and develop (as Greek tragedy itself is a development). It is thus that theories of drama also change and develop in conjunction to the development of the arts, and as such, it is not always desirable to formulate a universal theory of tragedy, or to regard a specific theory (esp. that of Aristotle) as being universally applicable.

The different schools of thought are presented in this study to emphasise the importance of consulting contemporary-to-production orientated drama theory. In the same breath, the presentation of theories is beneficial to the appreciation of the development of criticism of the art form.

The problem of understanding a play the way it was intended and understood by the writer, the director, the cast, and the audience - both initially and from later periods - is integral to drama theory and analysis. This refers to the history of interpretation. Later readings of a play are often influenced by a reconstruction of the play's interpretations through time. The interpretations are often the result of various approaches to reading the text. At certain stages, certain readings, as a result of specific strong interpretations, become dominant. This is dangerous, because traditions of interpretation evolve that become rigid and dogmatic in their nature. Readings then result that are orientated more towards the tradition of interpretation than in the text or production of the play.

3.2 Drama theories

In his pursuit to answer the question: "What is Art", McCormick (1990:4) mentions: "Danto thinks of a theory in art as an 'interpretation'..." Tilghman (McCormick 1990:4) points out: "all Danto's examples of theories as interpretations are 'examples of what we would ordinarily call artistically relevant descriptions and not theories at all'...." For the purposes of this study it is important not to fall into the trap of merely describing tragedy as a specific art form. Rather, its nature and the ways in which it was and is interpreted are discussed, to serve as a theoretical framework to how Aeschylus' *Persians* is read.

There is necessarily a difference between drama theory for the producers of plays (including directors, cast, performers and artists) and the audience (including critics,

judges, media, analysts and students). The first is directed towards the second, and the latter receives from the former. The following distinguished questions serve as illustration: the producer asks: "How will this dialogue/action affect my audience?"; "Does the emotion I am looking for in this character communicate the character's mood?"; whereas a member of the audience would ask: "Why/How did that dialogue/action affect me/not affect me?"; "Why did that character portray that specific emotion?" This study, being of the second category, will attempt to enhance its argument by referring to aspects of drama production.

3.2.1 Aesthetics and drama theories

Though the term 'aesthetics' is based on a Greek word (αἰσθάνομαι), and though Aesthetics derives much from Greek philosophical contemplation, it is rather a modern (including post-modern) branch of Philosophy. Lee (1938:6) gives a workable "definition of aesthetics":

> … aesthetics is a branch of philosophy, as it is the attempt to understand one particular portion of experience and the nature of the value apprehended in that experience. The artist, the critic, and the psychologist can contribute valuable data concerning certain aspects of this experience and the processes to be understood. But the philosophical task lies in electing the general principles inherent in all the particular data and in systematically organising them into a coherent theory.

Gadamer (McCormick 1990:16) considers three periods of Aesthetic reflection, being represented by Plato, Kant and Hegel. It is important to remember that Gadamer orientates himself to earlier "aesthetics" through his own situation: McCormick (1990:16) notes that Gadamer focuses on the nature of the apparent revolt of the modernist artists against the tradition. McCormick (1990:17) comments that Gadamer "urges especially that we rethink such traditional concepts as imitation, expression, beauty, play, festival, gesture, sign and symbol".

Further distinctions in aesthetics could be established between the different schools, whether it be analytic aesthetics, of which Arthur Danto is an exponent, or hermeneutic aesthetics, in which Gadamer found himself involved (McCormick 1990:2).

3.2.1.1 Medieval Aesthetics

A particular characteristic of medieval aesthetics' attitude to ancient texts, which particularly influenced the way Greek plays were treated (as a literary genre more than

as stage genre), was the emphasis placed on grammatical structures. Eco (1986:102) indicates that "Poetics had long been confused with Grammar and Metrics". The study of Tragedy fell under the study of Poetry, where, like poetry, the tragedies were rather read and interpreted for linguistic eloquence than as a stage production and a performance. Eco (1986:102) indicates:

> The idea of an art of poetry reappeared in Domenico Gundisalvi's *De Divisione Philosophiae*, but on the whole the place of Poetics was taken by the rules of oratory (*artes dictamini*), to which prose and poetry alike were subject. As Curtis[51] notes, there were no words for the writing of poetry; the concepts of metrical composition, verse, or writing in metre, were expressed by Adhelm of Malmesbury and Odo Cluny as 'metrical eloquence' (*metrica facundia*) or 'written texts designed for poetic dicta' (*textus per dicta poetica scriptus*), and other expressions of the same type.

Eco (1986:4) indicates that most of the aesthetic issues that were discussed during the Middle Ages were inherited from Classical Antiquity. He reasons that medieval thinking might be said "to involve no more than the manipulation of an inherited terminology, one sanctified by tradition and by a love of system but devoid of any real significance".[52] Eco emphasises the tradition when he says (1986:4):

> ... where aesthetics and artistic production are concerned, the classical world turned its gaze on nature, but the medievals turned their gaze on the classical world; that medieval culture was based, not on a phenomenology of reality, but on a phenomenology of a cultural tradition.

The use of names in *The Persians* is a continuation of a Homeric tradition (*The Odyssey*). The deeper meanings associated with names also had cultural significance. The names used in *The Persians* can be understood on various levels, signifying a person, containing an adjectival quality of the character indicated,[53] implicating grandeur while sounding at once foreign and distant, familiar and ordinary. The philosophic approach to the meanings of words distinguished between various levels of understanding (Plato: *Timaeus*). This philosophic tradition in which word meanings were analysed was also practised by medieval scholars, like Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* (Eco 1986:58-64). Eco quotes Aquinas (Eco 1986:58-64):

> ... Words can signify something properly and something figuratively; the literal sense is not the figure of speech itself, but the object which is figured.[54]

---

[51] Cf Curtis, ER. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, ch. 8, in Eco (1986:102 n.40).
[52] Hobson (1998:1) indicates: "The putting together of arguments, even in a scientific tradition, is affected by the particular language, national and cultural it is occurring in."
[53] The Persian nation is being implied by the various names in the play.
[54] Quoted from Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae* I 1,10 ad 3.

In the thought of Aquinas, then, distinction is made between a first level of meaning, which is the historical literal; and a second level, which is used to communicate pathos and humour (Eco 1986:64). The names in the play, though approached from different traditions, whether cultural, linguistic, philosophic or dramaturgic, can be indicated as being of paramount significance for a comprehensive understanding of the play. The medieval scholars neglected the stage and performance dimensions of drama analysis, but their approaches to the language of the plays, while being narrow (grammatically orientated), still have value for a critical understanding of the performance on-stage, because the tones implied by the associated meanings of the names, in the cultural context of the audience, and in the tradition of tragedy, while simultaneously identifying a person, had a particular effect on the play's audience.

3.2.1.2 Modern Aesthetics

In similar fashion to Aristotelian drama theory having its limits (Scruton 1983:3), modern aesthetics also has its limits, in that it considers the subject and object of art from a particular historic orientation, both regarding the subject matter itself, and its varied assessments (critical – appreciative/descriptive) through time. Scruton (1983:3) elaborates on the restrictions of modern aesthetics:

> [Aesthetics'] rise and fall (as we presently perceive them) have been contemporaneous with the rise and fall of Romanticism. Now that art looks back to the upheavals which created the 'modern' consciousness, philosophy stands on its shoulder, discoursing on their common loss of faith. To understand the state of contemporary aesthetics, we must therefore reflect on its romantic origin.

Lee (1938:174-175) uses Aristotle to arrive at a theory of tragedy.[55] He expounds the apparent problem Aristotle had with a theory of tragedy, in relating beauty and ugliness.[56] In his short exposition, Lee reduces Aristotle, and thus his theory of tragedy, to the assumption "that it is necessary to explain how the contemplation of tragic drama can yield pleasure" (Lee 1938:175). Lee elaborates on this problem:

> The whole statement of the problem, as well as its treatment, is bound up with Aristotle's representative theory of art. For him, art is the representation either of actual or universalized situations. Aesthetic pleasure

[55] See also Listowel (1933:254-259), who considers the various categories of Aesthetics, for a survey of early 20th century thinkers on tragedy, who, all in one way or another, relate to Aristotle from a point of own concern.
[56] Lee (1938:174) makes specific references to *Poetics* chapter 4.

> is the pleasure of recognizing a representation, or perhaps of recognizing the universal elements in what is represented. If the actual situation is unpleasant, why is not its representation unpleasant? This, for Aristotle, was the major theory of tragedy.

Two directions in modern aesthetics could be indicated by distinguishing the analytic and hermeneutic aesthetic schools. The respective representatives of these schools could be summarised as follows, according to McCormick (1990). McCormick's summary of the later views of Danto on interpretation and history are relevant to this study:

> 1. What marks the difference between mere things and works of art is interpretation; interpretations define works of art.
> 2. Interpretations are neither classificatory nor explanatory but are constitutive in that, as functions, interpretations 'transform material objects into works of art.'
> 3. Specifically, interpretations are artistic identifications that 'determine which parts and properties of the object in question belong to the work of art into which interpretation transfigures it.'
> 4. The successful results of a surface interpretation's determination of identity become the *interpretanda* of deep interpretations.
> 5. Interpretations change and therefore are essentially historical in character.

McCormick (1990:32) summarises the elements of interpretation and truth in the latter works of Gadamer as follows:

> 1. The essential historical character of interpretative understanding lies in a dialectic of innovation with tradition in a fusion of horizons.
> 2. Interpretation involves rethinking both the cardinal notion of tradition and the traditional character of such central notions as expression, representation, and the cognitive.
> 3. Such a rethinking needs to award a central place to the distinction between language as an utterance and language as dialogue.
> 4. Deploying the dialogue aspect of language in interpretative understanding helps us take account of the further distinction between the truths of language – truth as what we mean – and – 'the truths of things' – what things make manifest.
> 5. Interpretative understanding addresses pre-eminently the truth of things in the sense of trying to respond to the peculiar way things come to abide as a hold on what is near through the suspension that works of art effect in the natural and ineluctable transience of things.

These summaries indicate that modern aesthetic thinking is an important apparatus to understanding the problems of interpreting tragedy and understanding it correctly, but in its abstraction and insistence on emphasising the cognitive, it removes itself from the theatre event and considers the aesthetic value in the study or library. Like philology, aesthetics has its limitations in fully apprehending a tragedy in its varied dimensions.

Further elaboration on modern aesthetics would be incomplete without mention of the contributions made by Kant and Hegel.[57] This would however entail a drawn out discourse, which would be a deviation from the main line of argument. It suffices to mention that Kant gave form and status to aesthetics, and Hegel endowed it with content (Scruton 1983:3), indicating the historical "gap" in using it as a theoretical base to approach Greek Tragedy.

The lines of argument set in the previous chapter will be picked up, where consideration is given to the producers of Greek Tragedy, who applied particular "theories" and rules to maximise on the effectiveness of their works of art, whether their intentions were to win the prize, enhance the cult festivals, venerate the divine, or to be involved in didactic activities (religious, political, or moral).

3.2.2 Pre-Aeschylean drama

Without disregarding the actual historic development of tragedy as an art form, the dramatists preceding and contemporary to Aeschylus (his models and competitors) are investigated to follow the theoretic development of the art form, in order to better understand his craft as expressed in *The Persians*. Thus, the fashions of drama prior to Aeschylus will be related to him.

3.2.2.1 Thespis

Thespis was trained in the art of composing rustic dithyrambs by the masters of Sicyon, whom he also later influenced (Croiset & Croiset 1904:167).[58] Thespis modified the traditional forms of tragic chants and created something new and original. This must at once also be seen as a development, because the old traditional forms could no longer be appreciated to the extent that they were previously esteemed, if new developments were used as the measure. However, this should not detract from the earlier forms being evaluated and appreciated in accordance to the older criteria.

[57] Further elaboration would, for example, consider Kant's threefold division of rationality: in which aesthetic judgement is distinguished from morality (practical reason) and from science (understanding), to be united with them only through a theory of agency. Scruton (1983:3) indicates that Kant was not too clear on the matter of the agency, to which Hegel gave clarity, where the latter would have stated that "it is not possible to discuss aesthetics without advancing a theory of art" (Scruton 1983:3).
[58] See also Aristotle *Poetics* 1448b on the history of Tragedy.

Thespis introduced an actor, a development of the chorus leader (ἔξαρχος), thus signifying a stronger development in the distinction of roles within the chorus. Until then the leader of the chorus narrated in easy rhyme (Croiset & Croiset 1904:167), and was answered by the greater chorus in composed passages. Thespis is also credited with developing costumes and applying makeup to enhance the dramatic illusion, aspects which Aeschylus developed to a far greater extent (Croiset & Croiset 1904:168). It is also indicated that Thespis could have been the first person to win a drama contest between 536-534BC (Croiset & Croiset 1904:168), thus indicating a development also in the cult setting.

3.2.2.2 Choerilus

Little is known of Choerilus, apart from the fact that he was active during the time between Thespis and Aeschylus, competing against the latter, and being responsible for costume and mask developments. It is important to remember that stagecraft developments were as important to the development of Greek Tragedy, as were matters pertaining to the text of the script (dialogue, plot, structure, motifs and themes).

3.2.2.3 Phrynichus

Phrynichus is known to have won the 67th Olympiad (Croiset & Croiset 1904:170), thus between the years 512-509BC. Apart from introducing feminine characters (acted by boys/men), he developed a variety of sentiments, emotions as well as introducing material equipment.

Phrynicus tried twice to deal with contemporary issues, indicating a continual search amongst the dramatists for new and innovative material. According to Else (1965:88), the reason for the presence of only three 'historical' tragedies was "because the single thing absolutely essential to a tragedy was a pathos[59] of heroic quality and scope, and fifth-century history in Greek lands provided just two such: the fall of Ionia and the defeat of Persia". Croiset & Croiset (1904:170) indicate that Thespis enlarged the drama

[59] According to Else (1965:88), pathos has two related senses, which result in dramatic action which affects all the persons of the play, as well as the audience: "For the chorus it remains a generalized fear and anxiety about what may happen; for the hero it takes more and more pointed form, as a moral and emotional crisis attending a *decision to act.* From having one focal point, the pathos itself, the drama begins to have two, the hero's act of choice and pathos; the play is then a sequence of action leading through the one to the other." He also indicates (1967:99): "The old undramatic pathos and the static forms of lamentation that accompanied it have been caught up in the service of a larger unity, an ongoing movement. Pathos has become part of the drama and ultimately gives way to *mathos*, learning."

source from a Dionysus orientated corpus to include the broader Homeric corpus, or the broader history of Greece (in mythological terms).[60] In similar vein, in 495 BC, Phrynichus represented a recent historical incident, the *Capture of Miletus*. The play is said to have made the Athenians weep, though it excited their anger against the poet. In 476(?) BC he produced *Phoenician Women.* The play was concerned with the defeat of Xerxes at Salamis. This play was not too successful, leaving it to Aeschylus to attain victory, using *Phoenician Women* as basis, a few years later.[61]

3.2.2.4 Pratinas

Pratinas is associated with the satyr-drama. He competed against Aeschylus on numerous occasions.

Two schools of drama could be distinguished during the late 6th century BC. The differentiation between Pratinas and Aeschylus serves as a good opportunity to exemplify the development of theory of drama in antiquity. The Attic tragedy, of which Aeschylus was an exponent, was centred strongly around the chorus, which was predominant in the production. In contrast, the Peloponnesian tragedy was structured around the satyrs. Satyr plays were a special form of tragedy. The main difference between the Peloponnesian and Attic forms was that the Attic was more serious in nature, where the Peloponnesian possessed a merrier humour (Croiset & Croiset 1904:170).[62] The two schools were strongly associated by the audiences and later the association was prescribed by law for competition purposes. Thus the development of the tetralogy, consisting of three Attic orientated tragedies, and Satyr drama came to be part of Greek drama legacy.

A central figure in drama's heritage is Aristotle. Drama had a long history before him, and developed significantly after his time. His observations on tragedy and comedy (though comedy is not developed in *Poetics*) have influenced especially Renaissance

---

[60] The mythological is mentioned here while accepting of a continuation between the ancient and the recent, the present and the future, the ancient and the future.

[61] On plot and structure, it is possible to gain insight into how Aeschylus developed his ideas through the testimony of Glaucus of Rhegium, a 4th century writer, who wrote in his *On the plot of Aeschylus*: "the poet had made over", or, "the poet had composed on the model of" *parapepoieisthai* the play of Phrynichus (*The Phoenician Women*). He opened his play with a description of the defeat of Xerxes, given by the eunuch while placing the chairs for the elders. According to Haigh (1938:72) the rest of the drama could only have been monotonous and deficient in interest, and was to be associated strongly with the old choral drama. See also Else (1965:87-88).

[62] Demetrius of Phaleron is reported to have said "it is a gay tragedy" – παίζουσα τραγῳδία.

and thus modern and contemporary drama contemplation and theory. It would, therefore, be important for this study to unravel the Aristotelian thinking to determine an Aeschylean theory, since the two are divergent on many points and the Aristotelian is often used as theory model to represent all ancient drama.

3.2.3 Aristotelian theory

Chaucer gives a representative medieval view on tragedy in his prologue to *The Monk's tale* (Cuddon 1998):

> Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
> As olde bookes maken us memorie,
> Of hym that stood in great prosperitee
> And is yfallen out of height degree
> Into myserie, and endeth wrechedly.

This medieval view was influenced by reading Aristotle, as well as by an own design, where Chaucer gives a basic summary of his story.

As a man of the theatre, Aeschylus was not only a playwright, but was concerned with the totality of the production. His tragedies were intended to be performed before an audience (Taplin 1978:1).

Taplin is practical in his approach to drama in the sense that he seeks the real as being reflected in what we see (1978:1). Where he lays emphasis on the dramatists' visual technique, the devices used to translate intended meaning into theatrical terms (1978:3-4), Taplin is advocating a study of drama, oriented to the stage, and not its written form, as is the case with Aristotle. This is not to demean Aristotle, but to indicate the difference between critical orientation and drama.

Lee (1938:174-175) considers Aristotle's predicament with the theory of tragedy in terms of "difficult beauty", where the subject matter of tragic art may be "strikingly different in kind from that of idyllic or lyric art".

Aristotle's primary intention with the *Poetics* was not for general publication, it generally being included in his ensoteric works, as opposed to his esoteric books (1454b, Maritz 1997:2). Its theoretical base is to be found in the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. The *Poetics'* readers could be identified as philosophy students rather than either playwrights, drama critics or drama students. Aristotle says at the

start: κατὰ φύσιν πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων (as is natural, from first principles) (*Poetics* 1447a), and says: ... ὅτι μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἥδιστον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοινωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ ("... that understanding gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but likewise to others too, though the latter have a smaller share in it" - *Poetics* 1448b).

Aristotle compares the natures of history and tragedy in theoretic dimensions while discussing narration (*Poetics* 1459a):

> Περὶ δὲ τῆς διηγηματικῆς καὶ ἐν μέτρῳ μιμητικῆς, ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς μύθους καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις συνιστάναι δραματικοὺς καὶ περὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν ὅλην καὶ τελείαν ἔχουσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος, ἵν' ὥσπερ ζῷον ἓν ὅλον ποιῇ τὴν οἰκείαν ἡδονήν, δῆλον, καὶ μὴ ὁμοίας ἱστορίαις τὰς συνθέσεις εἶναι, ἐν αἷς ἀνάγκη οὐχὶ μιᾶς πράξεως ποιεῖσθαι δήλωσιν ἀλλ' ἑνὸς χρόνου, ὅσα ἐν τούτῳ συνέβη περὶ ἕνα ἢ πλείους, ὧν ἕκαστον ὡς ἔτυχεν ἔχει πρὸς ἄλληλα. ὥσπερ γὰρ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους ἥ τ' ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ἐγένετο ναυμαχία καὶ ἡ ἐν Σικελίᾳ Καρχηδονίων μάχη οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ συντείνουσαι τέλος, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐφεξῆς χρόνοις ἐνίοτε γίνεται θάτερον μετὰ θάτερον, ἐξ ὧν ἓν οὐδὲν γίνεται τέλος.
>
> As regards narrative mimesis in verse, it is clear that plots, as in tragedy, should be constructed dramatically, that is, around a single, whole and complete action, with beginning, middle, and end, so that epic, like a single and whole animal, may produce the pleasure proper to it. Its structures should not be like histories, which require an exposition not of a single action but of a single period, with all the events (in their contingent relationships) that happened to one person or more during it. For just as there was chronological coincidence between the sea battle at Salamis and the battle against the Carthaginians in Sicily, though they in no way converged on the same goal, so in a continuous stretch of time event sometimes follows event without yielding a single goal.

In this extract it is evident that Aristotle is comparing action to period in comparing the essential criteria for tragedy as compared to history. Where history is unrelated in its events, tragedy needs a strong sense of cohesion. This is communicated through plot. Tragic action, which is superior to character (1450) is displayed in the construction of plots (1452-3), and is based on the consideration that (1452b):

> ... τὴν σύνθεσιν εἶναι τῆς καλλίστης τραγῳδίας μὴ ἁπλῆν ἀλλὰ πεπλεγμένην καὶ ταύτην φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν εἶναι μιμητικήν....
>
> ... the structure of the finest tragedy should be complex not simple, as well as representing fearful and pitiable events....

Furthermore (1450b):

> ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας, δεύτερον δὲ τὰ ἤθη ... τρίτον δὲ ἡ διάνοια ... τέταρτον δὲ τῶν μὲν λόγων ἡ λέξις ... τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν ἡ μελοποιία μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων, ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μέν ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς· ἡ γὰρ τῆς τραγῳδίας δύναμις καὶ ἄνευ ἀγῶνος καὶ ὑποκριτῶν ἔστιν, ἔτι δε κυριωτέρα περὶ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν τῶν ὄψεων ἡ τοῦ σκευοποιοῦ τέχνη τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν ἐστιν.
>
> Plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, soul of tragedy, while character is secondary ... Third in importance is thought ... Fourth is the diction of the spoken sections ... Of the remainder, lyric poetry is the greatest embellishment, while spectacle is emotionally potent but falls quite outside the art and is not integral to poetry: tragedy's capacity is independent of performance and actors, and besides, the mask-maker's art has more scope than the poet's for rendering effects of spectacle.

Aristotle distinguishes between the forms of media, performed and written, and shows greater affiliation with the written art form. Though the elements are indicated to be present in Aristotle's thought, being spectacle and effect, these are not primary. It is thus wrong to ascribe these considerations to Aristotle's pen, though later drama theorists might have placed greater value on these aspects.

In contemporary drama theory, Aristotle is the one name that is mentioned repeatedly in discussing tragedy. This is well illustrated by Wilson in *The Theater Experience* (1980:383):

> One of the most fundamental dramatic forms in the Western tradition, tragedy involves a serious action of universal significance and has important moral and philosophical implications. Following Aristotle, most critics agree that the tragic hero or heroine should be an essentially admirable person whose downfall elicits our sympathy while leaving us with a feeling that there has in some way been a triumph of the moral and cosmic order which transcends the fate of any individual. The disastrous outcome of a tragedy should be seen as the inevitable result of the character and his or her situation, including forces beyond the character's control. Traditionally tragedy was about the lives and fortunes of kings and nobles, and there has been a great deal of debate whether it is possible to have a modern tragedy....

It is especially in this last debate that a person like Nietzsche (2000) would have found himself, where he saw the revival of Greek tragedy, its continuance, in German culture, in the music of Wagner. There are several cues in this quotation from which whole debates could be started. These are: (i) whether Greek drama should be seen, or not be

seen, in a Western, European light;[63] (ii) the adaptation of Aristotelian drama observations as theory, without considering all the consequences; (iii) and more specifically for this study, whether the nature and material used, characters and stories, are primary determinants in qualifying a drama as a tragedy, or whether a time specific genre is being dealt with.

As has been indicated, character is not of primary concern for Aristotle, though he does not disregard its importance. As it is problematic to base theories of modern drama on the thoughts of Aristotle, emphasising differing aspects, so it is problematic to interpret pre-Aristotelian drama using the thoughts of Aristotle as guideline. None the less, it must also be said that Aristotelian thoughts would have much in common with his predecessors and other ancient theories. A point in fact would be the contemplation on character.

A treatment of the tragic hero is not found in the *Poetics*. This treatment is contradictory to his considerations on character where (1452b – 53a):

> ...πρῶτον μὲν δῆλον ὅτι οὔτε τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς ἄνδρας δεῖ μεταβάλλοντας φαίνεσθαι ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν, οὐ γὰρ φοβερὸν οὐδὲ ἐλεεινὸν τοῦτο ἀλλὰ μιαρόν ἐστιν· οὔτε τοὺς μοχθηροὺς ἐξ ἀτυχίας εἰς εὐτυχίαν, ἀτραγῳδότατον γὰρ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ πάντων, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔχει ὧν δεῖ, οὔτε γὰρ φιλάνθρωπον οὔτε ἐλεεινὸν οὔτε φοβερόν ἐστιν· ... ὁ μεταξὺ ἄρα τούτων λοιπός. ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλα δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινα....
>
> ... it is to begin with clear that neither should decent men be shown changing from prosperity to adversity, as this is not pitiable but repugnant, nor the deprived changing from adversity to prosperity, because this is the least tragic of all, possessing none of the necessary qualities, since it rouses neither compassion nor pity nor fear ... This leaves, then, the person in-between these cases. Such a person is someone not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but through some kind of error....

These considerations are akin to general Greek thought, which does not consider character development as an aspect of characterisation, but character manifestation, thinking rather of character stereo types. It is also based on Aristotle's own ethic

[63] The question is whether the Greek genius is Western European or whether it is more Egyptian and Eastern influenced. The Greek genius has been inherited by Western Europe (especially via the Renaissance), and is thus considered, reversibly, in light of the direct continuation of old Greek and modern Western civilisation.

framework of the golden mean, in which the best temperament is neither the one nor the other, either overly bad or overly good.

Gomme (1962: 194-214) discusses problems of interpreting Aristotle and his *Poetics,* "and with the meaning of what he says, not with the problem whether he is right or wrong" (1962:194). Gomme identifies three principal passages in the *Poetics* in which Aristotle expresses an opinion about tragic character: chapters 2; 13; and 15. He continues to elaborate on three "characters in tragedy" which are not covered by Aristotle (1962:196). Unfortunately, Gomme does not consider the characters used by Aeschylus, and rather considers the characters in the plays of Aristophanes, Shakespeare, and Euripides in light of Aristotelian drama theory without considering the essence of Aristotle's concerns.

The most important consideration in the *Poetics,* given to the central unifying function of a hero, is given in Aristotle's discussion of plot where he states (1451a):

> Μῦθος δ' ἐστὶν εἷς οὐχ ὥσπερ τινὲς οἴονται ἐὰν περὶ ἕνα ᾖ·
>
> A plot is not unified, as some think, if built round an individual.

Thus, on this reading of Aristotle, the central function of a tragic hero is not possible. Nor can characterisation contribute to the play's structural unity.

The tragic hero is also foreign to Aeschylus' portrayal of character, and to the context of the play at large – Xerxes' character is worse than it should be in Aristotelian thinking - and as Greeks in the audience saw him. From the onset, Xerxes is presented as a slight figure, always in his father's shadow. His defeat is imminent from the start of the play, where the anxious chorus expects the worst. The time frame of the play also precedes the appearance of the chorus, and the defeat has already taken place. Xerxes was the audience's enemy, and he is presented as enemy of the Persian people too, contrary to Darius, also a defeated enemy, who is portrayed in an honourable light.

It is also determined that character plays a unifying role in *The Persians*, not that of Xerxes, Darius or the Queen on their own, but that of the failed expedition in contrast to the chorus. This characterisation is conveyed through the changing pathos associated with the changing tempo/intensity, name associations, adjectival elaboration and events through the course of the play. The functions of Xerxes, Darius and the Queen in the

play on-stage are akin to that of the messenger, themselves being messengers. The men in the procession we laugh at in the beginning we feel empathy for at the end. It is thus important to determine more accurately the sense communicated by the names mentioned in the play. Distinction is also made between the on-stage action and the off-stage action.

Else (1965:76) considers *The Persians* as "not yet quite a drama, but Aeschylus has given it considerable dramatic life". The criteria determining "drama" for Else is orientated from later considerations on the theme (Aristotle), and even though he rejects the idea of "tragedy development" he seems to be falling prey to his own verdicts, where he indicates "development" within the dramas of Aeschylus. Else analyses *The Persians* under "action". It is interesting that he does not force the tragedy structure into an Aristotelian model, but reflects on it in terms of 4 phases (1965:76):

> In the *Persians* the disaster has already taken place before the play begins; all that remains is to bring its effect and meaning home to us. The action, so far as we can speak of an action, goes through four stages, each having a definite relation to the disaster (the battle of Salamis). These stages are: (1) apprehension (the chorus and the Queen), (2) verification (the Messenger's report of the battle), (3) explanation (by the Ghost of Darius), (4) emotional realization (the frantic lamentations of Xerxes and the chorus).

Else would need to keep in mind that the tragedy was performed by a Greek cast before a Greek audience. Thus, the battle at Salamis would not be considered a disaster but a triumph. Even so, Else indicates the complexity of drama structure, where the main action took place off-stage before the production begins. To a certain extent this is an economic consideration. The economic considerations are also illustrated by: time, for the battle to be displayed and enacted on-stage; cast, extra choreography that must be plotted and choruses and music that must be learnt; and, the story line, which supports the primary focus of the tragedy (do not fight against your nature).

The plot of *The Persians* is not complicated, and the story line is straight forward. However, this can neither be called primitive nor a flaw. Jones (1962) is an example of drama analysts who insist on using the Aristotelian "rules" as model for all tragedies,[64]

[64] An interesting inversion between Aristotle and Aeschylus is very apparent, a critical slip, where Jones (1962:115) states: "Aeschylus breaks the Aristotelian rule in order to throw a premonitory light upon the abnormal individual." I have not been able to trace references to Aristotle or his rules in either Aeschylus or in Aeschylus' contemporaries!

imposing structures on tragedies where they are not necessarily relevant. For example, Jones (1962:72) states:

> The Persians is the one play in the entire extant literature – not just in Aeschylus – which is genuinely and fully founded upon hybris, and the story of the failure of the Persian expedition against Greece is at one with the work of art's morality....

Jones sees "art's morality" in a religious context, and the *hybris* he indicates as irreverence towards the native Greek gods (1962:80).

Aristotle was reacting to other theories on tragedy, as is evident in his remark: ὥσπερ τινὲς οἴονται ("as some think" - 1421a). This makes it necessary, also in the light of Aristotle's inadequacies, to consider alternative or other ancient theories of drama.

3.2.4 Other ancient theories of drama

3.2.4.1 Homer

Webster (1942:6) relates Homer's composition craft to the cosmos: "In manner due and orderly you sing". Composition is then "the careful balancing of phrase by phrase and scene by scene so that the whole has a definite shape". Webster (1942:6) wishes to see Homer's compositions constructed in terms of cosmic order (Greek), and thus balance is emphasised. Since the sixth and fifth centuries, dramatists inherited this craft, and I would like to suggest that *The Persians* should be analysed in terms of cosmic harmony and balance. This is well reflected in the philosophy of Aeschylus' contemporary, Heraclitus.

3.2.4.2 Plato

Plato's thoughts on tragedy, like his thoughts on art, are predetermined by his theory of Forms, and should thus be understood in relation to his ethics and politics. Education plays a central role. A condensed indication of Plato's thoughts on tragedy is expressed in the famous Book X of his *Republic*: Plato's concern is that art, tragedy, distorts "truth" (*Republic* 598-599):

> ... μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπισκεπτέον τήν τε τραγῳδίαν καὶ τὸν ἡγεμόνα αὐτῆς Ὅμηρον, ἐπειδή τινων ἀκούομεν, ὅτι οὗτοι πάσας μὲν τέχνας ἐπίστανται, πάντα δὲ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια τὰ πρὸς ἀρετὴν καὶ κακίαν, καὶ τά γε θεῖα· ἀνάγκη γὰρ τὸν ἀγαθὸν ποιητήν, εἰ μέλλει περὶ ὧν ἂν ποιῇ καλῶς ποιήσειν, εἰδότα ἄρα ποιεῖν, ἢ μὴ οἷόν τε εἶναι ποιεῖν. δεῖ δὴ ἐπισκέψασθαι, πότερον μιμηταῖς τούτοις οὗτοι ἐντυχόντες ἐξηπάτηνται καὶ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ὁρῶντες οὐκ αἰσθάνονται τριττὰ ἀπέχοντα τοῦ

> ὄντος καὶ ῥᾴδια ποιεῖν μὴ εἰδότι τὴν ἀλήθειαν· φαντάσματα γάρ, ἀλλ' οὐκ ὄντα ποιοῦσιν....
>
> We must now consider tragedy and its leader, Homer, in the light of this, for we hear it said by some that tragedians know all arts, all human affairs where vice and virtue are involved, and all things divine too: for they say, the good poet must compose with knowledge if he is to compose well on any subject. We must therefore consider whether these people have fallen in with a set of imitators who have deceived them and have failed to realise that their works, which they see, are three removes from the reality and are easy to make even if you don't know the truth. They are images, not realities....

Therefore, Plato's thoughts on tragedy are not considered feasible criteria for understanding the dramatological aspects of *The Persians*, though he does indicate that there are "people" who consider the composition of tragedies as a form of art.

3.2.4.3 Horace

Horace prescribes rules for tragedy in his *Art of Poetry* (24-20 BC). Wilson (1980:314) indicates that the *Art of Poetry* is the only complete piece of dramatic theory from the Roman period. Accordingly, the Roman critic stressed consistency in character and the exclusion of comic relief. He also dictates a five act structure, indicating a development in formal play structure into various acts.

3.2.4.4 Longinus

Longinus criticised Aeschylus for his extravagance of thought and language, indicating one of his primary concerns in his *On the Sublime* 3:1 (Περὶ ὕψους). He is rather direct in his criticism, quoting from *Oreithyia*(?) Fragment 281- Nauck (Apfel 1935):

> ... καὶ καμίνου σχῶσι μάκιστον σέλας.
> εἰ γάρ τιν' ἑστιοῦχον ὄψομαι μόνον,
> μίαν παρείρας πλεκτάνην χειμάρροον,
> στέγην πυρώσω καὶ κατανθρακώσομαι·
> νῦν δ' οὐ κέκραγά πω τὸ γενναῖον μέλος.
>
> ... restrain the oven's mighty glow.
> For if I see but one beside his hearth,
> I'll thrust in just one tentacle of storm,
> and fire his roof and turn it all to cinders.
> I've not yet started my proper song.

On this quotation Longinus expands (3:1):

> οὐ τραγικὰ ἔτι ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ παρατράγῳδα, αἱ πλεκτάναι, καὶ τὸ πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἐξεμεῖν, καὶ τὸ τὸν βορέαν αὐλητὴν ποιεῖν, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐξῆς· τεθόλωται γὰρ τῇ φράσει καὶ τεθορύβηται ταῖς φαντασίαις μᾶλλον ἢ

δεδείνωται, κἂν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν πρὸς αὐγὰς ἀνασκκοπῇς, ἐκ του φορεβοῦ κατ' ολίγον ὑμονοσττει πρὸς τὸ εὐκαταφρόνητον. ὅπου δ' ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ, πράγματι ὀγκηρῷ φύσει καὶ ἐπιδεχομένῳ στόμφον, ὅμως τὸ παρὰ μελός οἰδεῖν ἀσύγγνωστον, σχολῇ γ' ἂν οἶμαι λόγοις ἀληθινοῖς ἁρμόσειεν. ταύτῃ καὶ τὰ τοῦ Λεοντίνου Γοργίου γελᾶται γράφοντος "Ξέρξης ὁ τῶν Περσῶν Ζεύς," καὶ "γῦπες ἔμψυχοι τάφοι," καί τινα τῶν Καλλισθένους ὄντα οὐχ ὑψηλά, ἀλλὰ μετέωρα, καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον τὰ Κλειτάρχου φλοιώδης γὰρ ἀνὴρ καὶ φυσῶν κατὰ τὸν Σοφοκλέα μικροῖς μὲν αὐλίσκοισι, φορβειᾶς δ' ἄτερ.

This is not tragedy; it is a parody of the tragic manner – tentacles, vomiting to heaven, making Boreas a flute player, and so on. The result is not impressiveness but turbid diction and confused imagery. If you examine the details closely, they gradually sink from the terrifying to the contemptible. Now if untimely turgidity is unpardonable in tragedy, a genre which is naturally magniloquent and tolerant of bombast, it will scarcely be appropriate in writing which has to do with real life. Hence the ridicule attaching to Gorgias of Leontini's "Xerxes the Persians' Zeus" and "their living tombs the vultures", or to various things in Callisthenes, where he has not so much risen to heights as been carried off his feet. Clitarchus is an even more striking example; he is an inflated writer, and, as Sophocles has it, blows at his tiny flute, the mouth-band off.

3.2.4.5 Aristophanes

Aristophanes makes special reference to Aeschylus in *The Frogs*. In this comedy a competition is staged between Euripides and Aeschylus, to reveal Euripides as a poor dramatist. Moral content of the play as well as the person of the dramatist is taken into consideration. They must both be exemplary. The office of the dramatist is a lofty and responsible one. His duty is to make the citizens braver, nobler, more generous and more virtuous than he found them; "to inspire them with valiant thoughts and exalted aspirations" (Haigh 1938:66).

3.2.5 The Renaissance

Wilson (1980:314) indicates that the Italian Renaissance critics devised rigid criteria for tragedy that were debated for centuries. Among these critics were Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558) and Luodovico Castelvetro (1505-1571). Wilson (1980:314-315) summarises their theory of tragedy as dealing with individuals of high birth. Further, "mixture of genres was forbidden. The unities of time (twenty-four hours), place and action were inviolable". Wilson (1980:315) also indicates that the tragic playwright, according to the Renaissance critics, should strive for an "illusion of reality (*verisimilitude*)".

3.2.6 Modern theories

The modern authors are grouped together, though their influences and schools of thought are often divergent. The groupings are more for convenience's sake than to distinguish finer nuances. The treatment attempts to accommodate a fuller understanding of the authors' concerns in context, while also safeguarding against indiscriminate eclectic "patchwork" references to authors, who themselves were dependent on other sources.

According to Wilson (1980:315):

> During the eighteenth century, there was a movement away from strict adherence to the Italian ideals. Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765) is a defence of Shakespeare's tragic style. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767-69), suggested that the neoclassical critics had misinterpreted Aristotle. He also called for critical acceptance of domestic tragedy, which dealt with the lower social classes. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the German Romantics, among whom were Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, began writing tragedies that emulated Shakespeare rather than the Greeks.

Wilson closes his discussion of the theories of tragedy from the eighteenth and nineteenth century with a short mention of Friedrich Nietzsche. According to Wilson (1980:315) *The birth of Tragedy* "was probably the most important theoretical essay of the century". Wilson summarises Nietzsche's theory: "...tragedy was born out of the fusion of the Dionysiac and the Apollonian, the primitive and the rational."

3.2.6.1 Russian Formalists

The Russian Formalists are used as illustration of modern theories. The Formalists are important for seeing literary devices as interrelated elements or functions within a total textual system. They[65] have a particular bearing for this thesis on the names in *The Persians,* like medieval Aesthetics, because, though the Formalists concentrated on particular aspects of texts, consideration of their insights helps to assess the relation between the names and the greater play.

[65] Russian formalists emerged before the 1917 Bolshevick revolution, and were active during the 1920s They included: Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, Ospin Brik, Yury Tynyanov, Boris Eichenbaum; and Boris Tomashevsky (Cf. Eagleton 1988:2-6).

The formalists emphasised the literary form over the literary content, being essentially concerned with the structures of language rather than with what is said. Partially in reaction to Formalist Theory, and partially basing arguments on insights derived from the Formalist School, the close relation can be indicated between linguistics, structure, meaning and significance (the effect of how something is said on what is said and how it affects an understanding of the language structure). Where the Formalists saw art as having no relation to the social reality, this thesis illustrates that there is a definite relation. *The Persians* indicates the close relation between the art (the performance), the playwright, the audience (including judges) and historic and social setting. The judges as first "formal critics" also signify the relation between the art and its formal critical valuation and judgement, at once in context, as illustration of later critics' relations to their own social contexts and to that of the world of Aeschylus. Eagleton (1988:3) uses the examples of *Don Quixote* and *Animal Farm* to indicate the relation between socio-political context, names and the significance of names within the various socio-political contexts, form and meaning:

> *Don Quixote* is not 'about' the character of that name: the character is just a device for holding together different kinds of narrative technique. *Animal Farm* for the Formalists would not be an allegory of Stalinism; on the contrary, Stalinism would simply provide a useful opportunity for the construction of an allegory.

In this extract, indicating at once Eagleton's pre-concern for ideological stance and treatment of the different literary schools, Eagleton illustrates the Formalists' priority of form over content. This priority cannot be seen as a total exclusion of meaning. In contrast, *The Persians* contains names that indicate characters and convey characterisation, that are as important to the play's structure as they are to its content (historic and literary) in relation to context (historic and literary)[66] and to its effect (reception).

[66] Content and Context are here distinguished by literary and historic considerations which do not preclude each other. The historic is conveyed through the literary, and the literary has a historic orientation.

3.2.6.2 Reception theories

Reception theories are based in part on Hermeneutics, such as on the thoughts of Gadamer, Ricoeur and Schillebeeckx (Vos 1996), as well as on communication dynamics as considered by de Saussure (1959). Reception theories place emphasis on the audience, and the audience's participation in the theatre event. The question the dramatist would ask is: How would my audience receive this? And in relation to this: If I wished to evoke a particular reaction, how would I have to orchestrate my presentation? It is with this consideration that the limits of only using textual versions of the play are most evident; we do not know what the audience's reactions were. This must be assumed.

Even though the emphasis on audiences and how they receive and experience the performance is a relatively new science, its essence is by no means new. Aeschylus presented his plays before judges at a competition, and the audience's reaction was one criterion that determined its success. He was therefore very aware of its reception, and surely also composed and performed it in such manner as to invoke the audience's favourable response.

3.2.7 Understanding drama

The performed play should be approached as a production which incorporates back stage, stage, and audience. The play in its written form should be approached as the script,[67] which dictates back stage activities, is interpreted on-stage, and assumes reaction from the audience. To reach a correct understanding of a play, it would be necessary to know the different cues where the audience laughed, cried, fell silent or became angry. Unfortunately, such cues are not explicit and must be induced from a close reading of the text.

3.3 The script – intention

Taplin (1978:2) indicates that:

> All students of the theatre … must be aware that the written quotation of any spoken sentence is a very incomplete transcript of what was conveyed by the utterance itself. On the one level we miss the tone of voice, nuance,

[67] See also Easterling (1997:157) for a discussion on considering the extant text a script. Although, it must also be mentioned that the extant text was only prepared after the first performance and not prior to it.

> pace, stress; and we miss facial expression, gesture and the physical posture and positioning of the speaker and addressee. Even more profoundly the transcript does not convey the roles and social or personal relationships of the real people involved ... It lacks context ... For the medium of the playwright is the bodies and the voices of his actors, and by these means he has, in a very limited space of time, to build up a complex of relationships and communications of sufficient depth and interest to capture his audience. So the meaning of the play, what it is about, is heard and seen ... When we read a play, what we are doing - or what we should be doing - is hearing and seeing the play in the theatre of the mind....

Through the text a reader can only partially appreciate the tragedy. It needs to be reconstructed. The reader thus becomes an internal drama constructor, based on knowledge and feeling.

The dramatic action (on-stage and off-stage) is contained within the language. The language of Tragedy is therefore dramatic language. The acting, walking and facial expressions are therefore not as important as the speech, and the tone, volume, pitch is more important than the stage décor. Aeschylus' creativity and ingenuity is detectable in 1026-1027 - "without foresight I looked at a tragedy". Xerxes is made a spectator of the off-stage action, and is thus made part of the audience. The audience experiences the off-stage action through Xerxes. This same scene also has implications for the competition, where his view is firstly described in 1028 as the route of the fleet of warships, and secondly the tragedy is confirmed in 1030 as a disaster but also as a prize for our enemy (1034). The theme of battle won and lost is also contained herein.

3.3.1 The language of the script

I would like to suggest that the pathos of *The Persians* is established in the play's language, and not in the character of the hero.[68] Aristotle himself considers character secondary to plot.

Goldhill (1997b:127) asks how the language of tragedy is to be characterised. He indicates that "tragedy is - and was perceived to be – made up of a particular register of language: there is a style and vocabulary proper to the genre". Even though Goldhill tries to cover the corpus of 5th century tragedy, he does this through criteria elaborated upon during the later quarter of the 5th century and course of the 4th century BC. This

[68] Contrary e.g. Else (1967:87).

pertains specifically to the association between the tragedians and the school of sophists in their approaches to language and rhetoric (Goldhill 1997b:127-150). Still, the criteria were prevalent, though applied differently by Aeschylus, during the earlier part of the 5th century BC. Even so, this treatment of the language of Greek tragedy is more detailed than that of Wilson (1980:309), who indicates: "The language of traditional tragedy is verse."

Using Goldhill's criteria, the following characteristics of the language of Greek Tragedy could be indicated:

3.3.1.1 Application and alternation of different genres

Goldhill (1997b:127) indicates: "One basic articulation of tragedy is the difference between scenes and choral odes." Different genres are also incorporated within the scenes and the choral odes, where the scenes are subdivided into *rhēseis* and *stichomythia*. The speeches and alternating speech in the play mostly make use of an Attic dialect. The Doric dialect is applied in much of the choral odes, which are subdivided into a πάροδος, a μεσῳδή, an ἐπῳδός, and προῳδός, and where the standard *stasima* could be divided into στροφή and ἀντιστροφή. The principle, as has been determined in *The Persians,* is that each type of verse has its own specific mood and pitch, which would have been amplified by the accompanying dance and sound. They fulfil various functions within the play, apart from regulating the pace and allowing for breathing space and accentuating the spectacle. They lead the audience in its participation in the play, since the chorus could also be described as the participating audience on-stage.

The integration of at once foreign sounding foreign names into the already loaded diction of the choral verses would heighten the effect of at once distance and time, but also of familiarity, since the audience, identifying with the chorus, would make certain associations with the foreign names. The differentiated language contained within the alternating genres in the tragedy help to accentuate its dramatic effect.

3.3.1.2 Colloquial language

Not all the language in tragedy is 'elevated', and requires effort to grasp. If this were the case the dramatist would lose three quarters of his audience. A fine balance would be

required, with an overall effect of being of an elevated nature, even though much use is made of colloquial language, or as Goldhill (1997b:128) formulates: "the language of tragedy also incorporates many elements of the language of the city."

An example in Afrikaans Anglicisation serves to illustrate the use of "language of the city" in a lofty sense, while also indicating the phonetic morphological possibilities foreignness and grandiosity could give rise to. The English "Breakfast" when transcribed to Afrikaans could be rendered as "Brekvis" (Breck - fish). An Afrikaans mother asks her daughter what she wishes to eat. They are in a grand hotel. "Vis" (Fish), the daughter replies. "Brekvis". The daughter is trying to speak in 'elevated' language, and in the confused phonetics/meanings/words, the resultant communication is rather amusing. The dramatist who can manipulate these inter-language devices has command over a very useful dramatic tool.

The Persians has definite lighter moments. The humour is carried for example in the wordiness of the Queen, as well as in her impromptu, audience amusing, essential questions, such as when she suddenly queries where Athens is (230-231):

> ... κεῖνα δ' ἐκμαθεῖν θέλω,
> ὦ φίλοι, ποῦ τὰς Ἀθήνας φασὶν ἱδρῦσθαι χθονός·
>
> But first I wish to know this, friends,
> where in the world do the people say Athens is situated?

These expressions by the Queen give the chorus opportunity to expound on the political and military strength of Greece, as well as to relieve the more intense moments in the play. The Queen's language could be described as common in an air of pomp.

3.3.1.3 Elevated language

The feeling of grandiosity is carried by both diction and inverted syntax. Aeschylus makes much use of compound adjectives.[69] One of the principal problems Aeschylus faces is elevating recent history to the status of Homeric history. If successful, Homeric history would, in a sense, become more real. Goldhill (1997b:129) says: "the archaic grandeur of Homeric language resounds throughout Greek tragedy."

[69] See Kelly (1975:1-30) for a detailed analysis of the compound adjectives in *The Persians*.

This study isolates pronunciation of diction and use of names, at once exotic and familiar to attain a sense of grandiosity.

3.3.1.3.1 Pronunciation

The correct pronunciation of the Persian names would be established through a study of the Persian language. One of the problems in *The Persians* is that not all the names are Persian, but also represent the "nations" that went into battle with them. Questions that could be asked on the pronunciation of the names by the Greek actors, would query differences between Persian and Greek pronunciation, the difference in stressed and unstressed syllables, tone and pitch. It will be established that the names were intended to be Hellenised, and thus an analysis into the Persian language and pronunciation, though interesting, will not be necessary for this study.

A further consideration, in accordance to Rutherford (1968:3) is that the language of tragedy is the Attic of the time when tragedy "sprang into life". Rutherford (ibid) considers the irregularities in Greek dialects when considering the use of Attic dialect in tragedies:

> It is strange that Tragedy which, rightly considered, sheds more light than aught else on the history of the Attic dialect, should have been the occasion of concealing its purity. Among other causes which have prevented Attic from being thoroughly understood, none can equal the mistake of regarding the Tragic diction as only an elevated modification of ordinary Attic. This conviction is of the same kind as that arising from the concomitant study of several Hellenic dialects, namely that Greek as a whole is markedly irregular. As a matter of fact nothing is further from the truth.

In agreement with Rutherford (1968), I consider Greek, within its different dialects, to have become regulated by the time that Aeschylus produced *The Persians*. The different dialects were used in the tragedies for dramatic effect, as much as convention also contributed to and was used to create a particular environment. No general rule can be established regarding the Attic dialect, or diction in the various tragedies, since each dramatist considered and used these differently in the presentation of their plays.

3.3.1.3.2 Letters and sounds

A comparison between the phonetics of ancient Greek and modern Greek alphabet serves as an illustration to emphasise the complexity of using the written letters as guide to establish the pronunciation of letters from foreign words. Smyth indicates in his *Greek Grammar for Colleges* (1920:12) that "the pronunciation of Ancient Greek varied

much according to time and place, and differed in many important respects from that of the modern language". For the purposes of *The Persians* it will be necessary to focus on Attic Received Pronunciation, since this was the dialect spoken by the majority of the Athenian audience. To this extent, even the Doric used in the play should, from a reception point of view, be considered from an Attic perspective.

Smyth (1920:12) further expounds the problem of reconstructing correct pronunciation of Ancient Greek when he states:

> While in general Greek of the classical period was a phonetic language, i.e. its letters represented the sounds, and no heard sound was unexpressed in writing …, in course of time many words were retained in their old form though their pronunciation had changed. The tendency of the language was thus to become more and more unphonetic. Our current pronunciation of Ancient Greek is only in part even approximately correct for the period from the death of Pericles (429 BC) to that of Demosthenes (322 BC); and in the case of several sounds, e.g. ζ, φ, χ, θ, it is certainly erroneous for that period. But ignorance of the exact pronunciation, as well as long-established usage, must render any reform pedantical, if not impossible.

The matter would be further complicated when the foreign words used in Ancient Greek are considered: to what extent was the pronunciation of the "original" language retained? A further consideration is that the predominant current pronunciation of all ancient texts, from Homer to Simonides to the texts of the New Testament and late Byzantium, is relatively similar.

Distinction between pronunciation of words in songs, narratives, speeches and poetry is also not taken into consideration, emphasising the difference between written and spoken word; nor how the varied sound interpretations, pending familiarity, would have influenced meanings associated with the sounds heard and deciphered in the codes of the reception language. Further, the elaboration on the complexities involved in syllable renditions and unravelling diphthongs would only be justified in a treatise on its own, and thus will only be mentioned here, though their complexities will be taken into consideration in the phonetic and morphological name analysis.

The sound equivalents of the ancient and modern Greek alphabets are given as example to illustrate the problem of "changed pronunciation" and symbolic representation of

sounds. It must be remembered that an English (South African) phonetic/sound system is being used for both alphabets:[70]

Table 1 Greek and English alphabets

Letters			
Greek		English (Classic)	
A	α	A	A
B	β	B	B
Γ	γ	G	G
Δ	δ	D	D
E	ϵ	E	E
Z	ζ	Z	Z
H	η	Ē	Ē
Θ	θ	TH	Th
I	ι	I	I
K	κ	K	c, k
Λ	λ	L	L
M	μ	M	M

Letters			
Greek		English (Classic)	
N	ν	N	N
Ξ	ξ	X	X
O	ο	O	O
Π	π	P	P
P	ρ	R	R
Z	σ,ς	S	S
T	τ	T	T
Υ	υ	U	u, y
Φ	ϕ	PH	Ph
X	χ	X	X
Ψ	ψ	PS	Ps
Ω	ω	Ō	Ō

[70] Further elaboration would then distinguish between American English, Queen's English (Received Pronunciation), Scottish and Irish dialects, South African (Cape/ Boland, Gauteng, Natal, Bloemfontein) dialects, as to how certain sounds are pronounced, e.g. the "r" sound is soft, hard, rolled, or absent.

Table 2: ancient and modern Greek letter sounds

Sounds: ancient Greek (Smyth 1920:7)			Sounds: modern Greek (Ελληνικά Τώρα 1992:14)		
Greek	**English**	**English**	**Greek**	**English**	**English**[71]
ἄλφα	alpha	a: *a*ha; ā: *fa*ther	άλφα	Alpha	Art
βῆτα	bēta	*B*eg	βήτα	Vita	Voice
γάμμα	gamma	*G*o	γάμα	Yama	Yes, woman
δέλτα	delta	*D*ig	δέλτα	Velta	That
εἶ,ἒ (ἒ ψῑλόν)	epsīlon	M*e*t	έψιλον	Epsilon	Egg
ζῆτα	zēta	Da*z*e	ζήτα	Zita	Zoo
ἦτα	ēta	Fr. F*ê*te	ήτα	Ita	Think
θῆτα	thēta	*Th*in	θήτα	Thita	Think
ἰῶτα	iōta	e: mete*o*r; ī: pol*i*ce	γιώτα	Yiota	Think
κάππα	kappa	*k*in, [*c*ould]	κάπα	Kapa	Key
λάμβδα	lambda	*L*et	λάμδα	Lamva	Lamp
μῦ	mu	*M*et	μι	Mi	Man
νῦ	nu	*N*et	νι	Ni	No
ξεῖ (ξῖ)	xi	La*x*	ξι	Xi	Taxi
οὖ, ὄ (ὂ μῑκρόν)	omīcron	*O*bey	όμικρον	Omikron	Port
πεῖ (πῖ)	pi	*P*et	πι	Pi	Port
ῥῶ	rho	*R*un	ρω	Ro	Room
σίγμα	*s*igma	*S*uch	σίγμα	Sigma	Sea
ταῦ	tau	*T*ar	ταυ	Tau	Tea
ὖ (ὗ ψῑλόν)	ὖpsīlon	u: Fr. t*u*; ū: Fr. Sûr	ύψιλον	Ipsilon	Think
φεῖ (φῖ)	phi	Gra*ph*ic	φι	Fi	Fun
χεῖ (χῖ)	chi	Germ. Ma*ch*en	χι	Hi	He
ψεῖ (ψῖ)	psi	Gy*ps*um	ψι	Psi	Maps
ὦ (ὦ μέγα)	ōmĕga	N*o*te	ωμέγα	Omega	Port

[71] Further illustration: the complication of English pronunciation – received, South African, Australian, English, Irish, American, all different, also take note of the great vowel shift.

The reference in the introduction to the problem of dealing with a written and read play, and not a spoken (sung) and heard play is thus accentuated. A further complicating factor would be the influence of tunes, melodies, music and pitch. These are aspects of performance, and reconstruction of these could probably support the thesis on the names here explored, but would require, under the circumstances, more speculation than would be permissible. Any proposal would then have to be considered without its plausibility being subject to critical applause or denunciation.

Examples of different types of language are: religious and ritual language, seen in the Queen's dreams, the references to the deity (names) and hero worship (Darius - various functions), and the rituals and libations; the political and legal language, where democracy is compared to monarchy (232-244).

3.4 Other aspects of Greek Tragedy

3.4.1 The world (context)

The festival of Dionysus was the immediate context of Greek tragedy. Goldhill (1997a:55-56) mentions that the boundary between the audience and the participants must have become increasingly less distinct during the processions leading up to the performances. The audience participation would then also have been strengthened by the ceremonies and the audience's involvement in these ceremonies.

The larger context was the *polis*. The nature of Greek tragedy reflected the nature of the *polis*. This can be described in terms of the competition, the prevalence of the judges – elected to represent the various tribes, the oratory nature of the speeches – already compared to the orations in the Assembly and law courts, and the educational dimension of Greek tragedy. Cartledge (1997:15) considers the role of tragedians as civic teachers, where they "were expected to contribute to popular understanding of the ways in which the gods sought to impose or foster justice among men".

3.4.2 The stage – presentation

Formal and performance orientated stagecraft is distinguishable. Formal considerations concern aspects of stagecraft such as exits and entrances (Taplin 1978:61-128), whereas performance orientated aspects deal with décor, dance and music.

The role and presence of the chorus is most important for this study, more so than stage dress – of which we have little knowledge, and stage construction – which was standard. In *The Persians* the chorus introduces itself,[72] thus establishing an immediate rapport with the audience concerning the various aspects of the play. One of the important functions of the chorus was to help, prompt, the audience to become involved in the process of responding to the play (Easterling 1997:164). Easterling (1997:163) notes on the role of the chorus that "as choruses express their hope or fear, joy or sorrow for the characters, they offer possible models for the onlookers' emotional responses". However, this cannot be considered as a general rule as she mentions that the emotional range the chorus covers is immense, and that the guidance offered by a chorus may be quite elusive. In *The Persians*, though, the role of the chorus is instrumental in guiding the audience from the ridicule of the Persian situation (πάροδος) to empathy with the losers (ἔξοδος).

3.4.3 The audience – reception – effect

Where Will (1976:27) sees the single mood of the tragedy indicating a single preoccupation, being the fate of the Persian forces, the mood of the audience must also be taken into consideration. This is especially the case in the enactment of their victory over the Persian enemy. The audience's mood would then be elevated, being lofty with national pride. The sombre mood of the enacted tragedy would thus be in direct tension with the mood of the audience. This tension is carried by the contrasts between the inwardly portrayed characters on-stage and the response provoked from the audience. The genius of this tension is that the human is seen in relation to the heavenly, to the will of the gods. The historic figures on-stage are given mythological proportions, and thus the audience, too, stand in mythological relation to the world of the gods. The cult setting of the tragedy would further enhance this aspect. Thus, regardless of being champion or enemy, hero or anti-hero, the characters become examples of "meddlers of fate", and "disrupters of harmony".

[72] Τάδε μὲν Περσῶν τῶν οἰχομένων Ἑλλάδ' ἐς αἶαν πιστὰ καλεῖται.... (1ff).

3.4.4 The competition

In line 738 Aeschylus refers to the strength of his play in terms of the competition, when he lets the Queen say:

> ... λόγος κρατεῖ σαφηνὴς τοῦτό γ'· οὐκ ἔνι στάσις.
>
> ... this tale wins the day, without any competition.

The competition is immediate and it is obvious that Aeschylus is very aware of it. Furthermore, the drama competition is reflective of 5th century BC Athenian life. The essence of the legal and political systems is made imminent in the debates and jurisdiction by way of votes.

3.5 Understanding Aeschylus

Haigh (1938:65) states:

> The most obvious characteristic of the poetry of Aeschylus ... is its grandeur, and loftiness, and massive strength. His dramas are colossal creations, planned and executed with a largeness of design and a depth of purpose to which it would be difficult to find any parallel ... There is no point in which this elevation of treatment manifests itself more conspicuously than in the profound and intense earnestness of the moral tone[73] ... The justice of Providence, the unrelenting power of fate, and the dire effects of crime and wickedness, are the ideas which form the key-note of every scene ... The purpose of Aeschylus is not, like that of other dramatists, to analyse the complex machinery of the human mind, but to reveal the relation in which men stand to the universal order of things, and to teach them how to read the mysterious decrees of destiny, and to adjust their actions to the will of Providence.

More attention should be given to Aeschylus' stagecraft. The text of the tragedy is part of this stagecraft, being the script of what was said. It appears from a reading of the text, expressed in the next chapter, that the stage arrangements of Aeschylus are far more complex than a central stage and a central action. The various mechanics of past and present, divine and profane, dramatic intent and audience reaction become evident when a performance is envisaged.

---

[73] Note especially the speech by Darius (800-842).

3.6 Conclusion

> In defeat, the men and women of tragedy triumph. They lose, but in losing they win. This paradox gives traditional tragedy much of its resonance and meaning, and explains why we are both devastated and exhilarated by it (Wilson 1980:309).

The dramatic techniques Aeschylus employed that can be discerned from the text are contained primarily in the language. In this chapter the different approaches to tragedy were considered, as an art form and as a stage production. It was determined that *The Persians* should be interpreted uniquely from the various theories, which pose a danger of distorting its dramatological sense. The central action on-stage is contained within the dialogue. Manipulation of the language in the dialogue is therefore the most important dramatic technique employed by Aeschylus.

In the next chapter a close analysis of the names used in *The Persians* will be made as outflow of the theoretical considerations made in this chapter to illustrate how Aeschylus used the known (history, actual and constructed names) to achieve his dramatic intentions.