

4.5.4 Possible morphological-phonetic word associations

Character cluster 1 (21-58): The terrifying escort under the king (58)

Character cluster 1a (21-22) (Those disdained)

Ἀμίστρης (Amistres) (21, also 320: Ἀμίστρις)

ἀμῖς, ἶδος and τρεῖς, τρία.

ἀμῖς, ἶδος: a chamber pot.

τρεῖς, τρία: the number three.

Modern Greek does not distinguish between the vocalisation of the η and the ι. Both are sounded i, as in “little”. In the classic texts, distinction is made between the long η, ê sound and the short ι, “i” sound. The two variant spellings could be attributed to both rhyme and meter manipulation, or to an error in the scribing process of the play. In this exercise, they are considered referring to the same person.

When the adverb of τρεῖς, τρίς, is used in combinations it often loses its stress. There is no explicit verb that is being modified, and thus the verb “to be” is implied: to be three times - ... In this construction it seems that a chamber pot (toilet) is implied, and idiomatically could have a contemporary equivalent of “smelly”. Thus: “Thrice Smelly”.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Thrice Smelly*.

Ἄρταφρένης (Artaphrenes) (21, 776, 778)

ἄρτι and ἄρτιος and ἄφρων, ον.

ἄρτι: present/exactly.

ἄρτιος: perfect(ly).

ἄφρων, ον: foolish.

In the compound of the two words, the ι would be lost in the assimilation of the newly created ια diphthong, and under influence of the stressed syllable φρέν that follows. Also, then, possibly antonym to ἀρτίφρων, ον (sound of mind, sensible), giving the sense of Idiot. The oxymoron qualification of perfectly foolish is strengthened by the adverbial particle ἄρτι, giving the sense of totality in the indicated sense.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Perfectly Foolish*.

Μεγαβάτης (Megabates) (22, 982)

μέγας, μέγα and βατίς, ἶδος, or βάτος, or βαίνω (βάτης).

μέγα: big.

βατίς, ἶδος: the prickly roach.

βάτος: bramble bush.

βαίνω: step, mount, cover: βάτης: control.

Although it is tempting to restrict the possible associations to the first association’, “Huge Spikey Fish (Roach)”, the allure of βάτης is very strong. It

has the sense possibility of “he that was mounted”,⁷⁹ or idiomatically “the abused one”, or poofter. If this could be considered a possibility, the combination with the adjective μέγα would convey the idea “the greatly abused one”, or “big poofter”. This being a military parade, the juxtaposition and ill-fitting characters within its ranks would most certainly give the elders reason to be concerned (8-10).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Big Poofter*.

Ἄσταςπης (Astaspes) (22)

ἀστός, ἦ or ἄστυ and ἀσπίς, ἶδος, ἦ.

ἀστός, ἦ: a citizen.

ἄστυ: city.

ἀσπίς, ἶδος: a round shield, or a kind of snake. Referring also to a body of men at arms.

Both the possibilities of ἀστός, a male citizen and ἄστυ: city could work in combination with ἀσπίς, ἶδος. Within the context of the πόλις (Greek city-state), the mention of Agbatana, Susa, and Cissia (16-17), makes the association with ἄστυ (city) stronger than ἀστή (citizen). Thus, ἄστυ is considered an adjective, qualifying ἀσπίς (snake or shield). Both the possibilities, snake and shield, could work in the context of a military procession, and should be considered; possibly intended simultaneously. The snake was a venomous pest to the Greeks, whereas it was a sign of life to especially the Egyptians. In this sense, the dual irony of “city snake” (not disregarding associations with evil), would have inter-played between the ideas of life and death. The “city shield” was leaving the city to do battle in a far off country. A choice is difficult to make, but because of its military association, “City Shield”, is considered. The resulting association promotes a sense of vulnerability.

Possible association and reconstruction: *City Shield*.

Character cluster 1b (29-32) (Land and sea)

Ἄρτεμβάρης (Artembares) (29, 302, 972)

ἀρτεμής, ἔς, ἀρτάω, ἀρτέμων, ὠνος, ἀρέτημα, ἄροτρον and τέμενος, εὖς and βάρος.

ἀρτεμής, ἔς or ἀρτεμία: safe, sound or safety and soundness.

ἀρτάω: fasten, fit, prepare.

ἀρτέμων, ὠνος: foresail, topsail.

ἀρέτημα: a hanging ornament.

ἄροτρον: plough.

τέμενος, εὖς: a piece of land.

βάρος: weight, burden, pressure: hence grief, misery: also a quantity, excess.

In considering ἄροτρον, the “ο” sound would be dropped in the compounded word. The stress moves to the second last syllable, leaving the previously stressed “α” unstressed, and encouraging the “ο” sound between the rolling “r” and dental “t” sounds to be dropped. τέμενος is associated especially with sacred ground.

⁷⁹ There is also an explicit sexual connotation, where ἵπποι βαινόμενοι (Hdt 1.192) indicates the mounting of mares, and οἶα βατεύονται (Theocritus 1.87) indicates intercourse with a she-goat.

τέμενος also strengthens ἄροτρον, since the derived verb τέμνω (Dor. Ep. τάμνω) has the senses of cut and hew in battle, to slaughter, sacrifice, as well as to plough. This possibility was considered, but in view of the powerful oxymoron “foresail” and “weight”, further associations with land and safety merely acts to strengthen the misappropriation of this character travelling by sea. He is from the land, through and through, and yet, the overlaying Ἄρτέμ[ων], top sail is an intrinsic contradiction, implying “airiness” against the heavy βάρος, or the sought for theme of sea. Ironically, in 302, he is slammed against the cruel coasts of Sileniae, and in 972, he is remembered as one of those left behind.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Wind Ton*.

Μασίστρης (Masistres) (30, 971) (Note different declension in 971)

μασί or μασι and τιτρώ.
μασι: intensifying prefix: much, greatly.
μασί: Dor. for μησί, dat. pl. of μήν: month.
τρήσω: τρη- stem of τιτρώ: bore, pierce.

There is no motivation to considering μασί (month). It would appear that the fate of this character is predicted in his name (971).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Greatly pierced*.

Ἴμαίος (Imaeus) 31

ἱμ or ἱμάς, ἄντος (ἱμαῖος, α, ου) and ἠίων.
ἱμ: variant for ἐμ = ἐν: in, on.
ἱμάς, ἄντος: strap, girdle, latch (ἱμαῖος, α, ου: rope for drawing water).
ἠίων (Attic - ἠών, Doric - αἰών, ὄνος - Dative = ἀόσι): beach, shore.

ἱμάς, ἄντος (strap, girdle, latch) is a feasible consideration, even though the breathing ‘(h) is not used but ’ (soundless). Rather, the prefix ἱμ is considered in combination with the exotic sounding αἰών, familiarised to αἶος Beach.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Beach Top*.

Φαρανδάκης (Pharandakes) (31, 958)

φαράω or φάραγξ, αγγος and δάκος, εος or δάκνω.
φαράω: infinitive φαρᾶν: to plough.
φάραγξ, αγγος: cleft, chasm, metaphor of the anus.
δάκος, εος: a dangerous animal.
δάκνω: bite.

Later, in 958, the name has a sad ring to it; here however, it releases a wry smile. The picture is rather vivid. Though homosexuality was well esteemed, to play the role of the female was not. This character was therefore quite despicable.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Anus Bitten*.

Σοσθάνης (Sosthanes) (32)

σῶς or σόω and θνήσκω or θάνατος.

σῶς: safe.

σόω: Ep. for σώζω: escape, save, keep alive.

θάνον, Ep. aor. 2 of θνήσκω: kill, die.

θάνατος: death.

Another oxymoron is detectable. The greater preference is given to the combination which implicates the combination of σώζω and θάνατος. Thus, the only person in this sub-cluster, it would seem, whose name is not related to any of the features of land or sea is Σοσθάνης (Sosthanes), whose name recalls another bilateral theme in the play: life and death. The oxymoron contained in the name exhibits this theme in a profound manner. The inclusion of Sosthanes (Living Dead) in the land and sea sub-cluster indicates the affinity of the bilateral themes: life and death; light and darkness; day and night; land and sea; Greece and Persia; the battle lost and won.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Living Dead*.

Character cluster 1c (34-38): Dignity amongst the doomed
Σουσισκάνης (Sousiskanes) (34)

σούσιος or σοῦσον and ἴσκω or σκανά.

σούσιος: person from Susa, as in σουσιγενής (644): person born in Susa.

σοῦσον: lily (flower).

ἴσκω: to think like, to make like.

σκανά. Dor. for σκηνή: a tent, a stage, a banquet.

The flower imagery in the play has not yet been developed. The construction in the form of a name would be the type of device that would draw the audience's attention to this imagery. Here though, a flower, a lily at that, has little place in a "magnificent" display of military power.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Lily Like*.

Πηγασταγών (Pegastagon) (35)

πηγάς or πηγή and τᾶγέω or σταγών, ωνος.

πηγάς: anything congealed or hardened.

πηγή: spring, fountain, source.

ταγός:⁸⁰ commander.

σταγών, ωνος: drop.

Depending on the word break, either side of the "σ", different combinations are possible, with ironic implications. If πηγή is considered in combination with σταγών, ωνος, the idea is created of Spring Drop, which would be the source of the stream that would eventually gush into the sea. This in itself is a nourishing imagery. If πηγάς were considered in combination with ταγός, a contrasting picture is created. This commander is tough. The first association that jumps to

⁸⁰ This term is used of Θάρυβις, commander of 5 X 50 ships (323).

mind is Spring Drop, though the possibility of the alternative is not excluded, indicating the richness of the character imagery/portrayal.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Spring Drop*.

Ἄρσάμης (Arsames) (37, 308)

ἄρῳ (αἶρω) or ἀραρίσκω and ἄμης, ἠτος or σῆμα, ατος.

ἄρῳ (αἶρω): lift.

ἀραρίσκω: ἄρσαι, ἄρσον, ἀρσάντες, ἀρσάμενος: all aorist 1 active and middle of ἀραρίσκω: to be joined closely together; to be fitted closely, to fit well; to be fixed, to be fitting, meet or suitable.

ἄμης, ἠτος: a kind of milk cake.

σῆμα, ατος: Dor. = σᾶμα: battle sign/seal.

Depending, once more, on where the break is made, Ἄραρίσκω seems to be indicated in the first syllable (ἄρσ-) of the compound. Then, in combination with the most likely possibility (ἄμης) with the remainder of the compound (-άμης), it is difficult to determine what sense would be implied with the compound: well baked, or to be compact. Within the immediate context, Ἄρσάμης could be accentuating the juxtaposition of the “domestic” orientated “flower like” (Σουσισκάνης) (34) in the army, in that a “Dense Milkart” is also present - and then in the company of a “Spring Drop” (Πηγασταγών) (35).

However, it seems more plausible to consider the first syllable as ἄρ and the second as σάμης. Thus considered, the idea is portrayed of dignity, where the person has a proud bearing.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Battle Emblem*.

Ἄριόμαρδος (Ariomardos) (38, 321, 968)

Ἄρης or ἄρι or ἄριος and μάρτυς (note the alliteration of the “α” and “ο” sounds in conjunction to the liquid “ρ”, the nasal “μ”, dental “δ” and sibilant “ς”).

Ἄρης: Genitive = Ἄρεος: Ares, the god of war (also Ἄριος-).

ἄρι prefix like ἐρι - strengthens the notion conveyed by its compound.

ἄριος: old word for Μηδικός, Median.

μάρτυς: witness.

Rather than opting for “Median Witness”, preference is given to the allusion to Ares, the god of war. This would also be befitting the context. “T” (t) and “δ” (d) are both dental sounds, and with the stress being placed on the inserted “ο” sound after Ἄρι, the name sounds both foreign and familiar. Though Ἄριος is an old allusion to Media, the Ares association is stronger. However, the previous possible reference to a place, Susa (34), in this sub-cluster could be motivation for Media. It seems that “Ares’ Witness”, who plays an important role in the off-stage action of the play - called noble (brave - ἐσθλός) in 321, and was witness to Xerxes deserting his men in 968 - takes in the sobering position in this sub-cluster with “Spring Drop” (35) and “Battle Emblem” (37).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Ares’ Witness*.

Character cluster 1d (43-44): This and That
Μητρογαθής (Metrogathes) (43)

μήτηρ (μητρο-) and ἀγαθός, ἦ, ὄν or γαθέω.

μήτηρ: mother. (μητρο in compounds).

ἀγαθός, ἦ, ὄν: good.

γαθέω, Dor. for γηθέω: rejoice, to be delighted.

Between the two options, “Good mother” and “Mother’s delight”, “Mother’s delight” is considered most feasible. It could have the sense that a mother would be proud of her distinguished son, or that the boy was a wimp. Possibly, both senses are considered.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Mother’s Delight*.

Ἄρκτης (Arkteus) (44, 312)

ἄρκτος.

ἄρκτος: bear.

Ἄρκτος, Bear, has a reference to strength, size and valour. Thus, not all of Persia is pathetic - but these people are ill-placed, Arkteus especially, since he was aboard a ship, and neither his strength nor his size was of any advantage to either himself or the boat (312).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Bear*.

Character cluster 1e (51): Odd couple
Μάρδων (Mardon) (51, 993)

cf.: Ἄριό-μαρδος (38, 321, 968).

μάρτυς (note closeness of dental sound “τ” and “δ” following the liquid “ρ” and nasal “μ”).

μάρτυς: witness.

This person was a witness not a fighter!

Possible association and reconstruction: *Witness*.

Θάρυβις (Tharybis) (51, 323, 971)

Θάρρος and ὕβος.

Θάρρος (Attic for θάρσος): courage.

ὕβος: hump-backed.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Brave Hump-back*.

In the first cluster it is apparent that the elders had reason to be concerned. Even though there is disorganisation, they are still described as Persia's military procession. A gentle reminder, in some of the honourable names, is also left that the outcome of the battle could have been different. There is little tension between the audience and the events on-stage, or the military procession of the enemy that was described.

Character cluster 2 (299-330): A few disasters selected from many (330)

The second character cluster (299-330) is significant for its dramatic tension between the narration and the audience, between victory and loss. The name cluster falls within the midst of the off-stage action (which, chronologically - dramatically - took place before the on-stage action). The intensifying sequences (though not yet as intense as in the fourth character cluster 961-1003), with their inherent characterisation, further helps to accentuate the horror of the reported battle at Salamis. Some of the audience would have relived some of that horror during the performance of *The Persians*. In this cluster the names are chosen and placed selectively and strategically to give a personal touch to the national disaster. There is a strong sense of misplacement, which was hinted at during the opening sequence (1-64). The names help communicate the misplacement of manpower and national loss, symbolised in the powerful imagery of the Flower of Persia, signifying the innocent youth that had perished on the ill-timed battle field. The dramatic, situational irony is not to be disregarded: it is the audience's enemy loss (Persian) that is being emphasised, but not over-played; the delicate mockery has a sting and balances out the potential over-sympathising with the enemy (Persian) losses.

Character cluster 2a (survivor)

Ξέρξης (Xerxes) (299)

As a historic person, no deeper significance is sought in the singular name structure. The name appears constantly throughout the play, like Darius, but here it has a strategic function, in relation to the "constructed names", since it emphasises the Persian anguish in signifying the Persian survivors (see also character cluster 5) over against the torment of the recalled dead.

Character cluster 2b (dead)

Ἄρτεμβάρης (Artembares) (302, 29, 972)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Wind Ton*.

Δαδάκης (Dadakes) (304)

δᾶ for γᾶ and δάκος, εος or δάκνω or δάϊος, α, ον or δάω or δάκνω.

δᾶ: Earth.

δάκνω: δάκε: Ep for ἔδακε, aorist 3 sing: Bite.

δάκος, εος: a dangerous animal.

δάϊος, α, ον: hostile, destructive - also unhappy, wretched.

δάω: to learn, to teach.

δάκνω: bite.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Dust Bitten*.

Τενάγων (Tenagon) (306)

τέναγος, εος or τένων, οντος and ἀγών.

τέναγος, εος: shallow, a shoal.

τένων, οντος: a sinew, tendon.

ἀγών: battle, fight, contest.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Shoal Battle*.

Character cluster 2c (dead)

Λιλαιός (Lilaios) (308, 970)

λιλαίομαι or λαός or λαιός, ά, όν.

λιλαίομαι: to long.

λαός: people.

λαιός, ά, όν: left! (not right).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Yearner*.

Ἄρσάμης (Arsames) (308, 37)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Battle Emblem*.

Ἄργηστος (Argestes) (308)

ἀργής, ἦτος and γή and ἴστημι.

ἀργής, ἦτος: white, bright, vivid.

γή: land.

ἴστημι: στή - Ionic for ἔστη, aorist 3 sing of ἴστημι: stand, place, fix, raise.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Bright Land*.

The high frequency, in different combinations, of the affix Ἄρ- must surely carry more significance than that it was a common affix in Persian names. Within the context of the play, and especially the battle report sequence, the allusion to Ἄρά (Ara), (a prayer/curse; ruin, mischief, evil; and the name of the goddess of ruin!) is rather appealing. References and allusions to Ἄρτέμις (Artemis - the goddess of death) and

Ἄρης (Ares - god of war) are also a probability, considering especially the emphasis - stress - on the first syllable of Ares and Artemis.

Ἄρκτηύς **Arkteus** (312, 44)

The great bear meets his fate, too cumbersome perhaps for the vessel.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Bear*.

Ἄδεύης **Adeues** (312)

ἄδεής and υἱός or ὕς.

ἄδεής: fearless, shameless, secure, confident.

υἱός: son.

ὕς: ὕός genitive of ὕς: boar hog.

Some may hear son, others could hear hog.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Fearless Son*.

Φαρνοῦχος (**Pharnouchos**) (313, 967)

φάρος, ὄ, or φάρος, εὐς or φάρω or φαράω and νύξ, νυκτός.

φάρος, ὄ: a lighthouse (light).

φάρος, εὐς: cloth, sail.

φάρω: separate.

φαράω: plough.

νύξ, νυκτός: night.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Night Light*.

Character cluster 2d (dead)

Χρυσεύς (**Chryseus**) (314)

Χρύσεος.

Χρύσεος: gold.

Similar to Ἄρκτηύς (Arkteus) - Bear.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Gold*.

Μάταλλος (**Matallos**) (314)

μάτη or μετά or μέταλλα or μέταλλάω and ἄλλος.

μάτη: folly, fault, vain, idle, senseless, false.

μετά: Preposition - not with nominative: with.

μέταλλα: gold mine.

μεταλλάω: explore.

ἄλλος: another, other.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Gold Miner*.

Μάγος (Magos) (318)

μάγος.

μάγος: a magician (Persian).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Magician*.

Ἄραβος (Arabos) (318)

ἄραβος and βοή or βοῆ also ἄβιος, ον.

ἄραβος: gnashing of teeth, grinding.

βοή: cry.

βοῆ: shield.

ἄβιος, ον: not survived!

Possible association and reconstruction: *Gnashing Teeth*.

Ἄρτάβης (Artabes) (318)

ἄρτάω or ἄρτάβη and βαίνω or ἄβιος, ον.

ἄρτάω: fasten, hang.

Ἄρτάβη: Persian measure equal to 1 medimnus (μέδιμνος) - about 12 gallons, and 2 choenices (χοῖνιξ, ικος) - dry measure, about a quart.

βαίνω: βῆ poetic for ἔβη aorist 3 sing of βαίνω: walk, step, go.

ἄβιος, ον: not survived!

Possible association and reconstruction: *Fill Tank*.

Ἄμιστρος (Amistris) (320, 21)

Compared to the humorous and awkward mention of this name in the opening sequence (21), in which a possible association was identified as “Thrice Smelly” - “Very Smelly”, probably due to lack of personal hygiene, its placement here calls for a more startling rendition. Here, the idea of a chamber pot reminds of a coffin, being mentioned in the context of death and decay. This is an example of the context dictating the meaning associations made. The idiomatic association of the name “Very Smelly” now communicates as “Very dead”, emphasised by the adverbial enforcement “thrice”, indicating the totality of the state.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Thrice Smelly*.

Ἄμφιστρεύς (Amphistreus) (320)

ἀμφίς and τρέω (τρέος).

ἀμφίς: round.

τρέω: tremble, quake, flee, be afraid (τρέσας: coward).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Total Fear*.

Ἀριόμαρδος (Ariomardos) (321, 38, 968)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Ares' Witness*.

Σεισάμης (Seisames) (322) (compare Σησάμης 982)

Σείω and ἄμης, ἠτος.

Σείω: shake, pass to be shaken, shake, to harass.

ἄμης, ἠτος: milk cake! See also 37 and 308.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Shaken Milk-tart*.

Θάρυβις (Tharybis) (323, 51, 971)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Brave Hump-back*.

Συέννεσις (Suennesis) (326)

σύν or σύειος, α, ον and ἐν and νέω or νεοσίς or ἐννεσία or ἐνίημι.

συν: in compositions: with, along with, together, at the same time.

σύειος, α, ον: of swine.

ἐν: in compositions: in, with, by.

νέω: swim.

νεοσίς: chicken.

ἐννεσία: suggestion, counsel.

ἐνίημι: to throw in, send, inspire, implant, incite.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Among Chickens*.

Character cluster 3: Persian Kings in Darius' message

This third name cluster, incorporated into Darius' speech, is the most historically inclined. The authority with which the names are recalled - or omitted - by Darius is indisputable. It is therefore those missed or dead. The appearance of the name in the Persian kings cluster therefore calls for a closer scrutiny of possible, though admittedly more subtle, associations.

The climax builds up to the reference Darius makes to himself, a historically indisputable persona, though constructed character (as a messenger and as a ghost of the dead king), without mentioning his own name. In the last breath of the long wake, Xerxes is also mentioned - almost as a curse - as in a death procession. This is dramatic in itself, since Xerxes, though totally defeated, is still alive.

A further interesting feature is the absence of particular names: the sons of kings are referred to but are not given names (766, 773). Divergent reasons could be given for this, including: names not fitting into the immediate metre and rhythm; the persons being of little or no consequence; the contrast between the named soldiers under Xerxes' doomed expedition to the leaders (some great names) gone before - accentuating the severity of Xerxes' actions; and the names containing no possible,

wanted or strong Greek association possibilities. The last argument is possibly the weakest.

Character cluster 4: The other multitude of friends lost (956-1001)

If ever there were an intensity of compounded loss, then this would be contained in the fourth name sequence in *The Persians*. The poet is relentless in the tides of names washing over his Greek audience. Nevertheless, the Greek audience would not have had the feeling that they were responsible for the calamities. Thus the audience would not have experienced the tides of names and the descriptions as either a victory celebration or as an admonishment. Rather, the names communicate what could be best described as pathos. It is neither pity, awe nor sympathy; neither joy nor humour. Instead the audience would experience irony and tension; innocence and guilt (Persian); the humour of the gods; and the deference (to act according to one's nature) that should be afforded to the gods.

Character cluster 4a: From Agabatana (961)

Φαρανδάκης (Pharandakes) (958, 31)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Anus Bitten*.

Σούσας (Sousas) (959)

σοῦσον.

σοῦσον: lily (Persian word).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Lily*.

Πελάγων (Pelagon) (959)

πελάγος.

πελάγος: sea.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Sea*.

Δοτάμας (Dotamas) (959)

δίδωμι.

δίδωμι: to be given.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Offering*.

Ψάμμης (Psammis) (959)

ψάμμη.

ψάμμη: sand.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Sand*.

Σουσισκάνης (Sousiskanes) (960)

σοῦσις, ἰδος and κάνη, ἦ (κάννα).
σοῦσις, ἰδος: a woman of Susa.
κάνη: reed.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Reed of Susa*.

Ἄγαβάτας (Agabatas) (960)

See also: Μεγαβάτης (Megabates) (22, 982).
ἄγω and βατίς, ἰδος, or βάτος, or βαίνω (βάτης).
ἄγω: to lead.
βατίς, ἰδος: the prickly roach.
βάτος: bramble bush.
βαίνω: step, mount, cover: βάτης: control.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Inside Poofter*.

Character cluster 4b (967-970): Emphasis of those lost (973) who saw Athens (976)

Φαρνοῦχος (Pharnouchos) (967, 313)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Night Lighthouse*.

Ἄριόμαρδος (Ariomardos) (968, 38, 321)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Ares' Witness*.

Σευάλκης (Sevalkes) (969)

σεύω and ἀλκή.
σεύω: put into quick motion, drive, hunt, chase.
ἀλκή: bodily strength, force, prowess, courage, defence, battle.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Chasing Defence*.

Λίλαιος (Lilaios) (970, 308)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Yearner*.

Μέμφις (Memphis) (971)

μέμφις, εως or also μέμφομαι.
μέμφις, εως: a complaint.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Complainer*.

Θάρυβις (Tharybis) (971, 51, 323)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Brave Hump-back*.

Μασίστρας (Masistras) (971, 30: note alternative declension)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Greatly Pierced*.

Ἄρτεμβάρης (**Artembares**) (972, 29)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Wind Ton*.

Ἵσταίχμας (**Hustaichmas**) (972)

ἴς and [τ] αἰχμή.

ἴς: a tame pig.

αἰχμή: point of a spear, a spear, a staff, war, battle, warlike spirit.

Possible association and reconstruction: *War Boar*.

Character cluster 4c (978-985): The Flower of the Persians (978) left behind (985)

Ἄλπιστος (**Alpistos**) (981)

ἀλύπητος.

ἀλύπητος: not pained or grieving.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Without Grief*.

Βατανώχος (**Batanochos**) (981)

βατία and νύχιος.

βατία: a thorn bush.

νύχιος: doing a thing by night, as if asleep, dark as night, murky.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Night Thornbush*.

Σησάμης (**Sesames**) (982) (compare Σεισάμης 322)

σησάμη.

σησάμη: a sesame tree.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Sesamé Tree*.

Μεγαβάτης (**Megabates**) (982, 22)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Big Poofter*.

Πάρθος (**Parthos**) (984)

παραθέω.

παραθέω: to run to one side of, to run beside, to run beyond.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Alternative Path*.

Οιβάρης (**Oibares**) (984)

See also Ἄρτεμβάρης (*Artembares*) (29, 302, 972).

οἶος and βαρύς or βάρος.

οἶος: alone, by oneself, alone.

βαρύς, εἶα: grievous, oppressive, troublesome, impressive.

βάρος: weight, burden, pressure: hence grief, misery: also a quantity, excess.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Lonely Grief*.

Character cluster 4d (992-1001): Others that are missed (992)

Note must be taken that numerous names in this cluster are in the accusative case (ην, ον, αν, ιν), and not in the nominative case (ης, ος, εα). This cluster can be singled out as the cluster with the most names being in the accusative case, drawing particular attention to the names. The grammatical shift accompanies the dramatic shift in mood.

Μάρδων (Mardon) (993, 51)

Possible association and reconstruction: *Witness*.

Ξάνθη (Xanthes) (994)

ξανθός.

ξανθός: yellow of various shades, golden or pale yellow, a horse of Achilles.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Goldman*.

Ἄγχάρην (Anchares) (994)

ἄγχω ανδ ἀρά.

ἄγχω: to press tight, to strangle, hang.

ἀρά: a prayer, cursed (goddess Ἄρα: goddess of destruction).

Possible association and reconstruction: *Strangled Curse*.

Δίαξιον (Diaixis) (995)

δία and ἰκνέομαι (ἴκω).

δία: godlike one.

ἰκνέομαι: to come, arrive, reach, becoming, proper, befitting.

Possible association and reconstruction: *God Befitting*.

Ἄρσάκην (Arsakes) (995)

ἄροσις, εως (ἄρω) and ἀκή.

ἄροσις, εως: arable, ploughing, tillage (fruitful).

ἀκή: a point, edge, silence, healing.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Silent Soil*.

Ἄγδαδάτης (Agdadates) (997)

ἄγδην and ἀδάητος.

ἄγδην: adverb (ἄγω) by carrying.

ἀδάητος: unknown.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Unknown Company*.

Λυθίμναν (Luthimnas) (997)

λύω and Θεός and μνα.

λύω: loosen, unyoke, unharness, set free.

θεός: god.

μνα: 100 drachmae.

Instead of only considering θεός, the optative passive of λύω could also be taken into account. Here, λυθείην would give the sense of a desire to be loosened, set free. Other uses of the optative mood could also be involved, such as, the optative after verbs of fear and caution. The sentence is built around the verb ποθοῦμεν (...whom we miss). There is thus a definite presence of fear under the chorus in the list of names they mention. Under the influence of the monetary value, feelings of ransom are procured. This association works well in South African currency, where Rand-som generates the idea also of monetary involvement.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Deo Ransom*.

Τόλμος (Tolmos) (999)

τόλμα.

τόλμα: brave, courage to venture on a thing, boldness, daring.

The adjectival elaboration, αἰχμας ἀκόρεστον (the war hero), strengthens the idea that this person was a worthy soldier. He is also the last person to be named, and thus the full impact of the name lists concludes in his attributes.

Possible association and reconstruction: *Braveheart*.

“These soldiers have all gone without names” (1003), reminding of the importance of the names. In the fourth cluster the names leave a lump in the throat. There are different reasons for this, ranging from content - what happened to them - to organisational considerations, such as meter, pace and rhyme and density of names.

The audience is thus not only influenced by the names on their own, but also by the formal organisation of the play.

Character cluster 5: Those who have remained from Xerxes’ troops (1017)

In contrast to all the names mentioned of the soldiers who had gone into battle, by land and by sea, an inversion occurs in the 5th cluster. To emphasise the gravity of Xerxes’ disposition, feared during the opening sequence, items of his weaponry are personified. This has the effect of qualifying the name analysis of the various names mentioned in this play:

οἰστοδέγμονα: *A single arrow holder* (1020).

θησαυρὸν βελέεσσιν: *A storehouse for keen arrow heads* (1022).

Of all the Persians gone into battle this is all that remains. As surely as this is no attempt to being historically correct, it is a dramatic technique used to consolidate the Persian loss in tangible items, which are symbolic of nature, visible to the audience, and not too heavy as to require extra energy at the end of a long and intense performance.

4.5.4.1 *New literal translation possibilities of relevant passages*

In this section, translated passages have been selected to illustrate the names of the Persian soldiers in context. Attention is drawn to the various functions of the names: the names sound at once exotic and familiar. In the first extract, some of the names sound cumbersome and out of place in a military procession. The first extract gives more descriptions of the characters, mentioning their origins, ranks, and military specialities. The general impression is that the old men have reason to worry.

4.5.4.1.1 *Lines 1-64*

1. We here are the trustees, called to
stand guard over both the riches and gold-laden
estates of the Persians who have left
for the Grecian land; because of our age
5. lord Xerxes, king,
son of Darius
chose us to oversee the land.

- Our hearts - prophets of doom - are already
extremely worried here deep inside
10. about the royalty's return
and concerning the gold-paid army:
because a whole Asian generation
was led away, and is wailing about a young man,
yet neither a messenger nor any rider
 15. has returned to the city of the Persians;
these men that left Susa, Agbatana
and the ancient walled city of Cissia
set out, some on horseback,
others per ship, and marching on foot,
 20. surging forward as a solid column of war;
men like *Thrice Smelly, Perfectly Foolish,*
Big Poofter and *City Shield* -
Persian marshals,
lords, subjects of the great king,
 25. hastened, supervisors of the great army,
archers and horsemen,
causing fear when seen, deadly in battle,
reputed for their steadfast courage:
Wind Ton, the one who relishes fighting from the chariot;
 30. *Greatly Pierced*; the archer brave

Beach Top; Anus Bitten;
 and the driver of horses *Living Dead*.

- The big and prolific Nile also
 sent some: *Lily Like;*
 35. *Spring Drop*, Egyptian born;
 the lord of holy Memphis,
 great *Battle Emblem*; the regent of
 wealthy Thebes, *Ares' Witness*;
 and marsh-dwellers that row ships,
 40. skilled and uncountable in number.

- They were followed by a crowd
 of delicately living Lydians, who control
 the whole Mainland nation, those leaders that *Mother's Delight*
 and brave *Bear*, aspiring lords,
 45. and wealthy Sardis,
 excited with countless chariots,
 arranged in squadrons two and three abreast,
 a most fearful sight to observe!

- The neighbours of holy Tmolos threaten
 50. to throw the yoke of slavery over Greece:
Witness; Brave Hump-back, those anvils of the spear;
 Mysian javeliners; Babylon - the
 rich in gold - is sending a powerful multitude,
 in a long row, and the commanders of ships;
 55. they all have faith in the tight temper of the bow;
 and the spear-bearing nation from all over
 Asia follows
 in the terrifying escort under the king.

- Such is the blossom of men from the Persian land
 60. who have gone,
 all of the Asian soil that fed them
 mourns for them with a glowing yearning;
 parents and wives tremble as they count
 the stretched out time day by day.

4.5.4.1.2 Lines 290-330

The description of the battle scene is graphic. The events of the battle are structured around the fate of the Persians. Principle attention is given to the leaders, though the chorus mourns for the youth, the flower of Persia. Xerxes, mentioned first, contrasts to the whole of the fleet and army. He is alive, and others have died. The messenger also chooses a few incidents. He need not be exhaustive, and opportunity is given for the chorus to react, and ask Xerxes about particular characters later in the play. This change in voice also contributes to the developing pathos. The graphic nature of the associated

meanings of the names helps to paint a grim picture. The grim picture contrast to the Queen's self conceit, and wordiness.

BASILEIA

290. I was quiet for so long, poor me, I was shattered
by the misfortune; because this state is the best:
that suffering should neither be mentioned nor questions asked about it.

Even so, necessity dictates that people must bare all ills
when the gods send it; unfold the whole woeful
295. tale, take your stand, even if you cry because of the agony;
who did not die, and over which of the leaders
should we mourn, which officer's position
has been left manless, empty because he had died?

MESSENGER

Xerxes himself lives and looks at the light.

BASILEIA

300. You refer to a great light for my house
and a bright morning after the black night.

MESSENGER

Wind Ton the leader of ten thousand horsemen
was slammed against the cruel coasts of *Sileniae*.

The leader of one thousand, *Dust Bitten*, due to a spear attack
305. jumped from his ship with a too light leap;
and *Shoal Battle* most honourably born of the *Baktrians*
fares about around the sea struck island of *Ajax*.

Yearner, *Battle Emblem* and thirdly *Bright Land*
were defeated close to the island
310. and were shed against the tough, deadly land where doves find nurture;
and from the dwellers alongside the fountains of Egypt's Nile
Bear, *Fearless Son* as well as the heavily weaponed
Night Light thirdly, fell from a single ship.

Gold with *Gold Miner*, he that is commander over ten thousand, died,
315. himself commander of thirty thousand dark horses,
his bushy, reddish, dark, full beard
was drenched, while his colour changed in the purple dye.

Also *Magician*, *Gnashing Teeth*, *Fill Tank* the *Baktrian*,
a stranger from a savage land, was slain there.

320. *Thrice Smelly* and *Total Fear*, the skilful manipulator
of the spear, and he that brings forth suffering, noble *Ares' Witness*
from *Sardis*, and *Shaken Milk Tart* the *Mysian*,
and *Brave Hump-back*, lord over five times fifty ships,
a *Lurnaeon* by birth, a handsome man,

325. lies dead, victim of a not too fortunate fate;
and *Between Chickens* foremost amongst the brave,
high commander of the Cilicians, one man who offered
the most resistance against the enemy, died like a hero.

Such then was my report concerning those things.

330. I have told a few disasters from many incidents.

4.5.4.1.3 Lines 956-1001

The uttering of the names intensifies as the chorus requests further information from Xerxes. Various character traits of the men gone to battle are discernible. The majority of men were not suited for war. The small kernel of natural soldiers was restricted in its duties by the multitude of characters who should have stayed at home. The names are also uttered rhythmically, almost becoming chant like. The pace of the play is thus intensified. The descriptions of the soldiers are less frequent, and many names are repeated. Thus the chorus requests of Xerxes:

Where are the other multitudes of friends?

Where are they that stood by you,
men like *Anus Bitten*,
Lily, Sea, Offering, Sand,

960. *Reed of Susa* and *Inside Poofter*
who left Agabatania?

ANTISTROFE B

XERXES

I left them behind
where they went to their death
from a Turian warship

965. on the beaches of Salamis,
when they struck the rock hard coast.

CHORUS

Ah please no, where did you leave
Night Light and also good *Ares' Witness*?

970. And where is lord *Chasing Defence*,
or the honourable *Yearner*,
Complainer, Brave Hump-back and *Greatly Pierced*,
Wind Ton and *War Boar*?

I ask you again.

STROFE C

XERXES

- Poor poor me.
975. after they all saw old
and hateful Athens with one stroke,
ah ah, they pitifully breathed out their last breathe on a beach.

CHORUS

- And the Flower of the Persians
your totally trustworthy eye
980. who counted the tens of thousands
Without Grief son of *Night Thornbush*

son of *Sesamé Tree*, son of *Big Poofter*,
and *Alternative Path* also big *Lonely Grief*
985. you have left behind? Oh poor people.

Evil upon evil you tell to the honourable Persians.

ANTISTROFE C

XERXES

- To be sure you keep me drinking
the howling earth of the beloved and those longed for,
990. when you speak of hateful cruelty on cruelty.

My heart screams and screams within my limbs.

CHORUS

- And the others whom we miss,
captain over ten thousand *Witness*,
Goldman, *Strangled Curse* from Arion,
995. *God Befitting* and also *Silent Soil*
the calvary leaders,
and *Unknown Company*, *Deo Ransom*
and *Braveheart* the war hero.
1000. I am amazed, amazed, they are not
in your train, they are not following your wheeled and curtained carriage.

Xerxes returned in luxury. The army and navy did not. This is far from the historical retreat of the Persian fleet. More so, this is happening on a stage, and on the stage Xerxes would stand alone, a arrow holder in one hand, and a storehouse for keen arrowheads in the other. These weapons personify the Persian loss and contrast to the names the chorus has just inquired about.

4.6 Function of place names and character clusters in the play

Broadhead (1960:321) concludes his discussion on the Persian names with the observation:

The poet has made effective use of Persian names to attain his dramatic purpose: what historical truth may underlie the Persian roll of honour is for the historian and the antiquarian to determine.

The interest in the use of the names to determine the historical correctness of the play cannot be considered. The use of the names to achieve the poet's dramatic purpose is of more importance.

When one hears the names of the soldiers in the opening sequence, one almost wants to smile, but on hearing the last name, Tolmos (Braveheart), one has a lump in the throat. It would be difficult to determine the psychological effect the mentioning of the names would have had on the play's first audience. It cannot be denied that the names, in whatever sense they are understood in - dramatically or historically, had a profound effect on the Greek audience.

The on-stage action takes place all in one day: the day Xerxes returns. The on-stage scene does change. The play's movement and parts are controlled by the chorus and messengers. The chorus does not leave the stage, and thus particular emphasis is placed on the messengers, the Queen, the messenger, Darius and Xerxes, and their link to the off-stage action.

The off-stage action covers several generations, in Darius' speech, and covers a large geographical area, with many ports of call. Even the battle scene is best described as a montage sequence of amalgamated scenes.

The names mentioned in the procession that went into battle characterise the Persian army and fleet. This characterisation is contained to a large extent in the disorganisation, cumbersome size, misappropriated personas, lack of leadership, but also in the balanced reference to worthy men. The play's imagery and several of the themes are contained within these names. The names themselves do not develop the imagery or themes, but their placement, like music notes, contributes towards their development.

The imagery the names allude to include: the contrasted land and sea; the symbolism of flowers and youth - as compared to the aged guardians; the strong and the weak; the despicable and the honourable. These characteristics are inherent in the names through the dramatised Hellenised pronunciation thereof, and are not a historic reflection on the actual name carriers.

The travels and journey back to Persia are Homeric in structure and syntax. These are not travels of the hero Odysseus, but the escape routes used by the enemy. The majority of places mentioned are Greek orientated, contrasting Greek unity to the Persian disunity. The Persian disunity is communicated by the references made to the soldiers' origins in the opening sequence. Greece was united under Athens, which is prominent in the play. The non-mention of any Greeks by name should also be considered in this context. No opportunity is given for party formation under the audience, who are thus also united. This political unity has a religious bearing, emphasised by the Homeric stylistic allusions.

Allusion to the Dionysian myth could also be made due to the mention of the places. Thus the Dionysian allusions in the off-stage action could be contrasted to the allusion to Apollo on-stage through the presence of his bust.

4.7 Reading the play

In this section a reading is made of selected sections of the play. These sections have been chosen to represent interpretations of various aspects pertaining to the play. The readings are not comprehensive and are intended to highlight considerations brought to the fore by this study. The readings are based on a dramatological analysis of the text and thus imply that various interpretative exercises have been conducted.

4.7.1 The opening sequence (1-64)

The opening sequence forms the first of three parts of the *πάροδος*. The sequence opens with the entrance of the chorus, who introduce themselves as the elders of the Persian empire, too old to go into battle, but still entrusted to guard the home land. Broadhead (1960:37) indicates that the chorus was singing in anapaestic measure, reflecting on the prevalent anxiety for the safety of Xerxes and his army. The audience knows that the Persian army has been defeated, and thus there is no tension in an anticipated victorious return for Xerxes, but the audience can have empathy for the position the Persian elders find themselves in. The chorus would thus be credible in the eyes of the audience, even though they represent the defeated enemy.

Murray (1939:77) interprets line 14 as: “Royal Post:] An organized postal service throughout the Persian Empire had been established by Darius (*Herodotus* VIII. 98). It is one of the features which illustrate the great superiority of the Persians to the Greeks in material civilisation.” This reading would not be true, even in the context of the ample references to the Persian riches. This wealth is a false wealth (800-842). The presentation of the Persian empire to the audience is in contradiction to the plight the elders find themselves in. Therefore, contradictory to Broadhead (1960:37), who believes that an impressive list of the different commanders and their contingents is provided, I consider the clusters to reflect on the elders’ anxiety, where the futility of their attempted war against Greece is evident. The futility is expressed in the descriptive names provided, and their positioning in the ‘appraisal’. The inherent futility could also be considered a false confidence in the Persian military power. The false confidence is elaborated upon further by the chorus’ gloomy foreboding in the second sequence of the *πάροδος* (65-139). Though the elders are far more positive in the third, short, sequence of the *πάροδος* (140-154), they are still very “anxious” (143-144).

Certain images are introduced in the opening sequence, which are used at first to accentuate the false confidence. Where a state of anxiety is established in the opening sequence, this state undergoes a change during the course of the performance, and the Greek audience leaving the theatre at the close of the play would have a different foreboding about its own position in the eyes of the deity. The chorus is instrumental in leading the audience in its changed perception through the course of the play. The chorus manipulates the change in pathos. Apart from the names, the following images in

the first sequence accentuate a frightful situation in the Persian camp, which is best described as “clumsy”.

φύλακες (4). The old and the wise men of Persia would not have given offence to the Greek audience. Aeschylus would therefore have been able to use their prominence to communicate vital and orientating information. They would have been reliable and would have been able also to articulate mood and control the play’s pace. Ironically, they would have been too old to be effective guards over both the riches and the gold laden estates of the Persian Empire, and to oversee the land (1-7).

θύμος (11). The hearts of the trustees, personified to imply the elders. The prophets of doom who are worried about the campaign’s return set the pitch for the play. There is no hope, it would seem, for their victorious return. There is thus a dramatic tension, because the audience knows that the campaign will not be returning. Thus, the audience is also participating in the drama, in the off-stage action. The clause (8-11) also serves as a heading for the πάροδος.

νέον ἄνδρα (13) in contrast to ἀναξ Ξέρξης βασιλεύς (5), and in contrast to πρεσβείαν (4), and Δαρειογενής (6). The portrayal of Xerxes as a young leader is emphasised, and his inability to maintain an own status is established by the continuous close proximity of references to Xerxes to those of Darius’ status. The ‘supernatural’ status of Darius indicates that his persona in the play is a creation (not to be taken seriously), and thus also the persona of Xerxes is portrayed as weaker than the historic person. The archetypes of the created persona are significant, not the historic persons. This character image should also be related to the images of youth and flowers (59).

A final image to be mentioned: ἄθος Περσίδος (59) contrasted to the πρεσβείαν (4). The youth of Persia, depicted as the blossom of the Persian land makes the youthfulness of Xerxes sour. The contrast between the youth and the elders is also carried through the references: τοιούδ’ (59) and τᾶδε (1). The former refers to the action off-stage, and the second implies the events on-stage. There is a relation between the two “stages”, which will be bridged by the messengers.

Murray (1939:77) makes an important observation: “Like Herodotus, he (Aeschylus) is impressed by the great variety of nations under Xerxes’ rule, from the highly armed

Persians and Medes to Ethiopians with painted bodies and stone-headed arrows and Libyans with spears headless but hardened in the fire” (Herodotus VIII,61-80). On reading the opening sequence an inherent defeat is detectable in the construction of the army, which Murray (1939:77) applauds. The solid column of war (20) was not so solid, as is indicated by the flaws communicated by the names and by the variety in the groupings.

The poor military strategy is made explicit through the mention of the multiple angle attack: horseback (18); per ship (19); and others on foot (20). The divided attack by land and sea was one of the primary factors that led to their defeat, where their leadership resources were divided. In the messenger’s description of Xerxes’ involvement, the idea is created that he is neither here, nor there (465-471). To suggest such military strategy in a procession of “triumph” is contradictory. Xerxes was fighting on two fronts.

Furthermore, the divided nature can be seen in the ambivalent description of the Egyptians, who are described as merchants (37-38) and as labourers (40) – though, sarcastically it may be implied that labourers and not sailors are an asset to any navy. The uncountable in number (40) reads at once as of significant proportions, and as chaos. Within the context the second reading is preferred. This reading is substantiated by the reference to the crowd of delicately living Lydians (41-42). The concept “crowd” gives the idea that the non-military Lydians were rather disorganised. The divisions are given further accentuation in the description of the various weapons, and in their inappropriate trust (49-58). Such a military expedition was doomed to fail. Their trust should have been with the gods, not with riches (53) with bows (55) while being spear fighters (51; 56) or with land fighters – implied (55) while being a naval battle. Historically, on a military technical point: Greece fought with spears and Persia with bows and arrows. Greek unity is thus implied by the reference to Persian diversification.

An idea is also created that the whole column was not unified in focus. Lines (41-43) 44-48 illustrates one of the reasons why the column that left for Greece made the old war veterans concerned:

[ἀβροδιαίτων δ’ ἔπεται Λυδῶν
 ὄχλος, οἷτ’ ἐπίπαν ἠπειρογῆς
 κατέχουσιν ἔθνος, τοὺς Μητρογαθῆς]
 βασιλῆς δίοποι,

χαί πολύχρυσοι Σάρδεις ἐπόχους
πολλοῖς ἄρμασιν ἐξορμῶσιν,
δίρρυμά τε καὶ τρίρρυμα τέλη,
φοβερὰν ὄψιν προσιδέσθαι.

[They were followed by a crowd
of delicately living Lydians, who control
the whole Mainland nation, those leaders that Mitrogothes
and brave Arkteus,] aspiring lords,
and wealthy Sardis,
excited with countless chariots,
arranged in squadrons two and three abreast,
a most fearful sight to observe!

The adjectives to note are: δίοποιοι (those who are aspiring), describing βασιλῆς (lords - gentry in no way warriors!); and πολύχρυσοι (those who are wealthy) and thus used to luxury, fine cloths and good food and not rations, marching and hardship; The verb ἐξορμάω indicates that the discipline was not controlled. Ἐξορμάω is similar to ἐξορμίζω, which corresponds to a further sense of ἐξορμάω: to bring out of harbour. In this wordplay the dual front of the Persians is suggested: chariots - land; and ships - sea. This column was not fearful to the enemy, but to the old men:

This section of the column, starting with the delicately living Lydians (42) was more like a festival procession. Here, Aeschylus could be reflecting on the drama festival processions which precede the actual performances. It could be that he is describing these, but evidence to support this hypothesis is lacking. However, the idea of “entertainment” features strongly, where the courage of non-militants to enter battle comes from external stimulus and not from military ability or training. The description of Xerxes’ column is thus impressive to behold, but holds little threat. In light of the chorus’ concern, expressed at the onset, this last observation surely refers to the elders concern for the expedition’s well being.

And a last point: the elders concern is only for the blossom of men from Persia and not for the whole column (59-64). On the one hand this would have provoked the Greek audience’s sense of discretion, and on the other a reminder that it was not only Athens that went into battle, to defend the offensive against Greece.

4.7.2 The Queen's enquiries about Athens (230-245)

Broadhead (1960:88) asks whether "Aeschylus [has] been guilty of introducing the dialogue merely in order to gratify national pride".

The Queen has related her dreams (176-214) and the chorus has responded (215-225). In 228-230 the Queen thanks the chorus, but then asks the unexpected question:

ποῦ τὰς Ἀθήνας φασὶν ἰδρῦσθαι χθονός

Where in the world do the people say Athens is situated?

Though an initial response, like that of Broadhead (1960:88) could be justified, this question provides Aeschylus with an opportunity to conduct certain necessary exercises in drama: 1. Break the immediate tension, with a humorous, naïve question (who does not know where Athens is? everybody does!); 2. Bring Athens (physical) and the play (physical and super-physical) into the sphere of the deity (Helios) (super-physical). 3. Provide an opportunity to bring hail to Athena and the *chorēgos*⁸¹ (benefactor) of the play (232-244); 4. Compare the Athenian and Persian military and political situations;⁸² 5. Relate the battle of Salamis to the battle of Marathon (244).

Mention of the battle of Marathon (indirect through the reference to Darius) is followed by the introduction of the second actor: the first messenger. The stachismata between the chorus and the Queen prepares the scene for the entrance of the messenger and his relation of the events off-stage.

It is important that the audience be drawn into comparing Persia with Greece. This would be in order to accentuate the universality of the events, within the pathetic question by the Queen and the mention of Athenian strengths, a relation to history, and an unwritten warning that things could change. But first a question: Who of the Athenians knew where Agbatania, Susa was? The news delivered by the messenger would be good and bad; good for Greece, bad for Persia. The first words of the messenger let the chorus know that Persia's luck has changed (249-252).

⁸¹ According to Cartledge (1997:25) Pericles, who was barely adult, served as the play's *chorēgos*.

⁸² "They have no master" relates to the difference in government between Persia (autocracy) and Athens (democracy). However, Greece had the law as their master, but Aeschylus does not explore this dimension. It is though, explored by Herodotus (VIII, 104): "They are free, but not free in everything. There is a Master over them called Law, whom they fear more than thy slaves fear thee": answer of Demaratus, the exiled Spartan king to Xerxes.

This passage illustrates how Aeschylus controls his audience's reactions to the play, and thus also to his themes. It is also instrumental in the pathos development through the course of the play, hinging on the ignorance of the Queen (let the audience not be ignorant). The chorus tells the Queen, the audience, the facts the way Aeschylus wants them to think about and understand them. This is one of the obstacles facing historians: Aeschylus is working in a frame of reference that is drama orientated and not a frame of reference that is historically true. Thus, rather than questioning validity and actuality, functionality should be queried. Aeschylus appears to be exploring extremes of the boundaries of information: For example, Darius the defeated enemy is presented as a god in the play, a messenger from the underworld.

4.7.3 The prophecy of Darius (800-842)

Darius appears in the play as the second messenger. He looks back into the past and forward into the future. Within the tradition of Greek "fairness" he does not seek the outcome of the battle within the ranks of the Persians (inherent as expressed in the πάροδος) nor in the superiority of the Greeks (as implied by the outcome of the battle), but in the transgression of divine law, a theology which is wholly Greek, with no Persian traces.

The sacrilegious actions, such as the wrecking of the altars, are paradoxical. Historically, the Persians did not believe in anthropomorphic gods as the Greeks did (Herodotus I,131). However, in the religious construct of the play these acts of the Persians create the illusion that they were exercising sacrilege, where they were plundering their own shrines. Thus the theme of impiety is emphasised: Greek impiety.

It could therefore be determined that it is not Darius (historical person) speaking, but a Greek messenger God. The extent of this message's significance is made evident in that a former enemy relates it to a Greek enemy. The validity of the message is thus accentuated.

The reference made to the Spartan victory in the Battle of Plataea (800) helps to neutralise the notion that the play is an Athenian song of triumph. Apart from such references there are a few themes, many referred to in the opening sequence, that receive particular emphasis in Darius' prophecy.

4.7.4 The Queen's concern for Xerxes' robes (845-851)

The Queen's concern for Xerxes' robes is confusing. Everything she has heard about the Persians losses seems to have fallen on deaf ears. The losses seem to have been relativised in relation to the immediate predicament. The Queen is worried about her son's lack of appropriate clothing, where his clothes are shredded – not befitting a monarch – and to dress him in new clothes would help him to regain his lost dignity. An aspect of the importance of clothes is made clear in 914 and in 1036, where his vulnerability in the face of total defeat is expressed.

In 849-850 play directions are given by Aeschylus. The audience is prepared for Xerxes' appearance.

Line 851 gives a key to the play: we will not betray our beloved ones in these trying times. Not only her son is implicated, the appeal is universal – Greeks too, therefore Greek empathy is generated. This is followed by political commentary by the chorus (852-857). This is important for the Athenians because the democratic concepts civil law and order are being ascribed to a monarch. Also, the ambivalence between democratic and religious society. Religion is autocratic, civil society is democratic.

4.7.5 The final sequence (907-1076)

The final sequence involves the third messenger, Xerxes, who now appears to validate the first and second messengers.

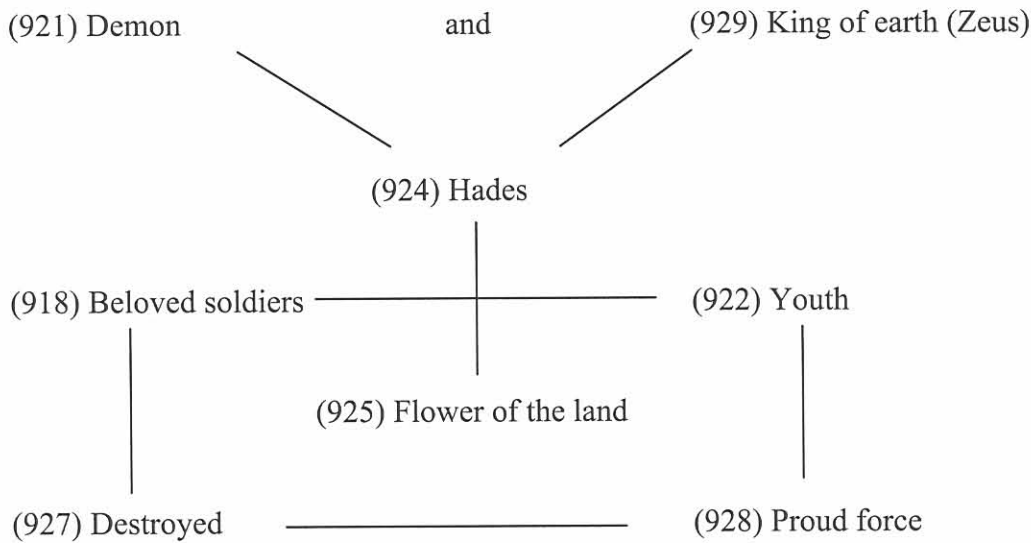
In 914 the clothes metaphor is made clearer. The robes become metaphor for ruin, as implied by the single sheath carrier, probably indicating an assistant of sorts, like a weapon carrier. The war is thus reduced in importance, fighting for a worthy cause, futility of war.

Line 939 contains a lamentation. Murray (1939:91) considers this “an exotic performance in the style of some Asiatic people” also present in 1054 as “a Mysian song”. Correctly he states (1939:92):

This lamentation is not only written with great technical skill, but seems to combine an expression of utter defeat and desolation with a certain nobleness and dignity. The conquered oppressor is not mocked.

A construction can be drawn which communicates this balance between honour and destitution:

Figure 1: The balance between honour and destitution



It is important to note that the chorus is not crying for Xerxes but for those who died (944-946). This lament for those have died is accentuated in line 1003: “They have gone, oh without names!” The importance of the use of names in *The Persians* for dramatological purposes is thus beyond dispute.

4.8 Conclusion

Chapter 4 presents numerous dramatological and historic insights on *The Persians*, based on the analysis of the names. The names of the people are considered in light of a characterisation technique which characterises the Persian nation more than it does individuals. In this light, no characters in *The Persians* could be considered as central. They are all functional. The consideration of the Queen, Darius and Xerxes as messengers, alongside the messenger of war also has an impact on the way the play is interpreted. These messengers present the audience different perspectives on the relation between gain and loss in the context of Fate.

The mentioning of the place names are more akin to the nature of tragedy as an art form, regarding play structure and classic allusion, than giving historic reflection on the Persian retreat. It must therefore be concluded, that the whole of *The Persians* is a dramatic construction, utilising recent events (the battle of Salamis) in an imposed situation (the return of Xerxes), reminding the Greek audience of the ever present power of Fate.