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Democracy's Double Vision: Feminizing the Tragic Eye

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Aeschylus' Persians in light of Herodotus' Histories. Read in this light, the Persians manifests a "double vision" made possible by isegoria, the equality of speech that defines democratic Athens. "Double vision," the ability to look on the foreign and see the self, is explored primarily through Aeschylus' choice to speak through a woman character. The first Persian monarch encountered in the drama is Atossa, the Queen mother. Moreover, Aeschylus not only gives voice to Atossa but also gives her a unique voice. Addressing recent scholarship on democracy in classical Athens and the role of women in Greek tragedy, my argument charts a middle course in this debate within the current scholarship on Persians. Like scholars who argue that Persians seeks to separate Greeks from "barbarians," I acknowledge that isegoria distinguishes Athens from her Persian foe. However, I argue that it is this very distinction that prompts openness to the other in Aeschylus' tragedy. Thus, I agree with scholars who argue that Aeschylus does not wish to assert opposition but rather to establish a connection between Athens and Persia. I conclude that although Aeschylus looks at the other and sees the self, he does not reject the necessity of war.

KEYWORDS

isegoria, democracy, Aeschylus, Herodotus, Persia, Atossa, Darius

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This article explores Aeschylus' Persians in light of Herodotus' account in the Histories of the refounding of Athenian democracy in the 5th century BCE and the Persian invasion of Greece. I argue that read in this light, the Persians manifests what I call the "double vision" made possible by isegoria, or the equality of speech that defines the democratic regime of Athens. Seeing the self in the other, this "double vision" in the oldest of extant tragedies is suggested in three ways. First, Aeschylus, as scholars have emphasized, speaks entirely through his Persian characters, taking the perspective of his "enemy" and showing their anguish throughout the drama. Second, Persian wives mourning for their absent husbands are portrayed as Greek wives, thereby making it easier for Aeschylus' Greek audience to sympathize with them. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the first Persian monarch encountered in the drama is not a king but a queen; Atossa, the Queen mother, comes onstage in dread for her son Xerxes, who has gone off to the land of Greece. Thus, not only does Aeschylus, as a Greek, choose to speak through Persian characters, but also, as a man, he chooses to speak through a prominent female character. Moreover, Aeschylus not only gives voice to Atossa but also gives her a different voice; her judgment of Xerxes' campaign against Greece and the cause of its ultimate failure at Salamis will differ from that of her husband Darius. However, in the account of the battle of Salamis, Aeschylus brings the blood and gore of war to the surface in a way that Herodotus does not, and presents the intrigues and deceptions of Athenian general Themistocles just prior to the battle in a much more positive light than Herodotus. Therefore, I conclude that although democracy fosters openness to the other, it causes neither the regime nor one of its most famous poets to reject the harshness of war.

In arguing that "double vision" or openness to the other is made possible by the *isegoria* of Athenian democracy, I seek to address an important debate in the current scholarship on *Persians*. On one side of this debate are scholars who argue that in the *Persians* Aeschylus seeks to distinguish Athens from Persia such that Athens and its Greek allies appear unquestionably superior to their barbarian foe.[1] On the other side of this debate are scholars who understand the *Persians* not as the invention

[1] For instance, see Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 1-2, 60, 70-73, 79, 80, 83; Snyder, *Prospects of Power*, 24, 32-36; Kantzios, "The Politics of Fear," 4-12, 14, 16-18; and Machinist, "Achaemenid Persia as Spectacle," 110-111, 115.

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of a polarized opposition between Greeks and "barbarians" based on their differences, but rather as Aeschylus' attempt to have his Greek audience identify with his Persian characters based on their similarities.[2]

This article aims to chart the middle course of this scholarly debate. Like those scholars who argue that *Persians*, portraying Athens as egalitarian and democratic, seeks to separate Greeks from "barbarians," I acknowledge that democracy distinguishes Athens from its Persian foe (and other Greek cities as well). As we see when we look at Herodotus' *Histories*, Athenian democracy is grounded in equality and committed to political freedom, especially the freedom (and equality) of speech (*isegoria*). This distinguishes democracy in Athens from the Persian monarchy, which, as we see in both the *Histories* and the *Persians*, values hierarchy and suppresses individual freedom in its aspiration for virtue. However, I argue that it is this very distinction, *isegoria*, that gives rise to the "double vision" in Aeschylus' tragedy. *Isegoria* inclines the Athenian mind toward the universal, such that it can look at the foreign and see itself. *Isegoria*, therefore, simultaneously distinguishes Athenians from and brings them together with the other. Thus, I also agree with scholars who argue that Aeschylus does not seek to separate Athens from Persia, but rather to establish a connection. Like Marlene Sokolon, who argues that tragedy invites its audience to "step outside themselves" to experience the perspective of another, I argue that *Persians* is an example of how *isegoria* allows us to look on the other and see the self, on what is different and see the same.[3]

Focusing on *isegoria* as a core Athenian institution, my study builds on recent scholarship on democracy in classical Athens. For instance, Lindsay Mahon Rathnam argues that, for Herodotus, the goodness of *isegoria* lies in its effects on behavior: free speech energizes the Athenians to resist tyranny at home and domination from abroad.[4] For Rathnam, therefore, Herodotus does not defend *isegoria* on epistemic grounds; free speech does not make Athenians wise or ensure that the truth will come to light.[5] Rather, it creates a "political culture" of "confidence" that leads to Athenian superiority in war.[6] Other scholars such as Matthew Landauer help clarify that *isegoria* creates a culture of confidence not simply by allowing for popular "participation" in political decision-making, but also, and more importantly, by facilitating popular "control" of the political process.[7] *Isegoria*, Landauer argues, gave the Athenian *demos* in the citizen assembly control over the selection of issues that would be collectively decided and hence was primarily "an institutional check on the ability of elites to dominate the democratic agenda."[8] In line with Rathnam and Landauer's arguments that *isegoria* energizes democratic citizens such that they have confidence to take control of the political agenda, Josiah Ober maintains that democratic institutions such as existed in classical Athens fostered "civic dignity" understood as the "equal high standing" of socially diverse citizens, all of whom are respected as moral equals and recognized as "choice-making adults."[9] Yet, although appreciating its contribution to dignity, Ober tends not to look to *isegoria* as defining democracy in Athens, but rather to the representativeness of the Council, the legislative authority of the citizen assembly, and the 'deme-tribe-*polis*' federal system.[10] To the extent that he focuses on *isegoria*, its value for Ober, unlike its value for Rathnam, is epistemic; it allowed for the identification of experts who could make good public policy.[11]

Like Ober, I focus on the epistemic implications of *isegoria*, arguing that Herodotus shows us in his account of the Battle of Marathon that *isegoria* gave to the Athenians what I call "double vision": they could look on the Persians and see the other and the self, the foreign and the familiar, at the same time. Thus, I go beyond Rathnam to argue that Athenian superiority in war has intellectual and cultural roots. My argument here is similar to that of Arlene Saxonhouse. According to Saxonhouse, the Athenians associated *parrhesia*, or the frankness of speech, made possible by *isegoria*, closely with their democratic regimes.[12] Yet, Saxonhouse characterizes *parrhesia* as "the democratic practice of shamelessness," as it sought to uncover or unveil the truth without deference to hierarchical social or political structures or concern for how one appeared before others.[13] According to Saxonhouse, therefore, the *parrhesia* arising from free speech was "an activity of truth seeking within the democratic regime."[14] My argument is similar to that of Euben. Although recognizing, like Rathnam, that it was its democratic political culture that led Athens to be victorious in war, Euben argues that such victory, particularly at the Battle of Salamis, caused the Athenians to emerge collectively as theoretical thinkers.[15] According to Euben, Athenians had a "daring" of mind that saw politics

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[2] For instance, see Kennedy, "A Tale of Two Kings," 65, 67-70, 79-81; Sampson, "Aeschylus," 38, 40; Schmidt, '"*Oioi*,"' 3, 6; Kuhns, *Tragedy*, 11-12, 21; and Favorini, "History, Collective Memory, and Aeschylus' *The Persians*," 107.

[3] Sokolon, *Seeing With Free Eyes*, 9.

[4] Rathnam, "The Marketplace of Ideas,"141, 145.

[5] Ibid., 141, 144.

[6] Ibid., 141-142, 145. But for the argument that there is no connection between democracy understood as *isegoria* and Athenian superiority in war, see Pelling, *Herodotus*, 195.

[7] Landauer, "*Demos* (*a*)*kurios*?" 376.

[8] Ibid., 377-378, 387-388.

[9] Ober, "Democracy's Dignity," 828-829, 840-841.

[10] Ober, *The Rise and Fall of Classical Greece*, 166-167, 170-171, 175.

[11] Ibid., 172-173.

[12] Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy,* 86, 94.

[13] Ibid., 88-89.

[14] Ibid., 92.

[15] Euben, "The Battle of Salamis," 359-361, 376.

as "susceptible to human design" and inspired the emergence of political philosophy.[16] However, whereas Euben locates the emergence of such intellectual daring in the victory at Salamis, I argue that such daring emerged prior to Salamis at the Battle of Marathon and was grounded in the democratic institution of *isegoria* itself.

In arguing that in *Persians* Aeschylus encourages us to look on the other and see ourselves, I contribute to a growing body of scholarship that suggests that classical thinkers were not as hostile to cultural otherness as once thought. For instance, Rebecca LeMoine argues that Plato's dialogues, far from revealing hostility toward foreigners, demonstrate that foreigners play a role similar to that of the Socratic gadfly.[17] According to LeMoine, the dialogues show that engagement with foreigners can reveal contradictions in the authoritative opinions that ground one's political community, and thus "encourage a more self-reflective citizenship."[18] In arguing that the most important other through which we can see the tragedy of *Persians* unfold is Atossa, the Queen mother, I also build on important scholarship on the role of female characters in Greek tragedy. In her seminal study of the ancient Greek fear of the diversity of nature, Saxonhouse argues that the Greek city sought to ground itself in myths of autochthony that denied the role of the human female in reproduction, and pursued politics that, in its desire for order, unity, and rational control, sought to exclude the female from the public square.[19] In response to this denial of difference, the Greek tragedians, according to Saxonhouse, beginning with Aeschylus, introduced powerful female characters onto the stage as a "reminder of the diversity out of which the world was made" and a warning that the natural whole was not "subject to simple answers and rational control."[20] Similarly, Agatha Slupek has recently argued that in the *Eumenides* Aeschylus utilizes the voice of the Furies to demonstrate that injustices against women, such as matricide, are not simply private wrongs but political acts that have implications for the city as a whole.[21] Moreover, according to Slupek, the Furies' challenge to Orestes illustrates the "possible seeds of democratic resistance" to the patriarchal attempt to conceal the "contingent, contestable, grounds of legal justice."[22] There has also been much recent scholarly investigation into the role of female characters in fragmentary Greek tragedy. For instance, Anna Uhlig argues that in *Nereids*, as I argue in *Persians*, Aeschylus gives a prominent voice to a mother mourning for the fate of her son in battle: Thetis and her sisters lament the death of Achilles (or his friend Patroclus) at Troy.[23] Moreover, Uhlig argues that *Nereids* is an example of Aeschylus' utilization of female choruses to destabilize the *oikos/polis* binary, or the classical separation between private woman and public man.[24] Niall W. Slater, exploring Aeschylus' *Europa*, suggests, as I do, that Aeschylus wants his Athenian audience to see themselves in female characters on stage. Europa, in dread for her son Sarpedon at Troy, reminds the Athenians during the war years of the suffering of their own mothers.[25] Aeschylus' tragedy shows that isegoria not only allows the Athenians to see themselves in the Persians but also allows men to establish a connection with women. Yet, since it is in Herodotus' account of the new founding of Athenian democracy just prior to the Persian invasion of Greece that we learn of the centrality and power of isegoria to that regime, it is to the Histories that we shall turn first.

"Isegoria" in the "Histories"

In Book 5 of *Histories*, there is a new founding of Athenian democracy.[26] According to Herodotus, during the reign of Darius in Persia, Athens was freed from the Pisistratid tyrants by the Alcmaeonidae, the latter having been exiled by the former (V.62).[27] Under the leadership of Cleisthenes, the Alcmaeonidae bribed the Pythian priestess to order the Spartans who came to Delphi to free Athens (V.63, 66). The Spartans, in obedience to Pythia, raised an army under King Cleomenes to drive Hippias—Pisistratus' son who now held the tyranny—out of Athens (V.63). Cleomenes, "accompanied by such Athenians as stood on the side of freedom," entered the city of Athens and besieged Hippias and his family, who had barricaded themselves in the Acropolis (V.64). Yet, upon the capture of their children who were secretly conveyed out of the country, the Pisistratids agreed to leave Athens (V.65). They retreated to Sigeum on the Scamander River and Athens was freed from her tyrants (V.63).

After the Pisistratids under Hippias were expelled from Athens, factious war broke out between "two men who held the power," Cleisthenes of the Alcmaeonidae and Isagoras, also of notable family but for whom, Herodotus says, he "cannot declare what their antecedents were" (V.66). When losing to Isagoras in the struggle for supreme power, Cleisthenes, according to

[16] Ibid., 376, 380-381.

[17] LeMoine, *Plato's Caves*, 4, 25-27.

[18] Ibid., 5.

[19] Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity*, x, 52-53, 55, 57.

[20] Ibid., 53, 59.

[21] Slupek, "Oaths that (un)Bind," 121-123, 129, 136.

[22] Ibid., 122, 134.

[23] Uhlig, "Dancing on the Plain of the Sea," 107, 116.

[24] Ibid., 123.

[25] Slater, "*Europa* Revisited," 133, 137.

[26] For this discussion of the new founding of the Athenian democracy, see Ward, *Herodotus and the Philosophy of Empire,*119-128.

[27] Herodotus, *The History*, David Grene trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1987. All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition.

Herodotus, took the common people (*demou*), previously "deprived of all rights," into partnership (V.66, 69). The rights Herodotus refers to here are most likely those of citizenship that would include *isegoria*, or the equal right of speech, which Herodotus says characterizes the Athenian regime after the expulsion of the tyrants (V.78). This added power allowed Cleisthenes to defeat Isagoras, which resulted in the emergence of a democratic regime.[28]

To win the people to his side and perhaps to make his victory over Isagoras permanent, Herodotus tells us that Cleisthenes did two things. First, he redivided the tribes of Athens into ten (from four) and renamed all the tribes except one after native heroes, expelling the old Ionian tribal names of Gelon, Aegicores, Argades, and Hoples (V.66). Second, Cleisthenes established the demes, assigning ten demes to each of the ten tribes (V.69).

In establishing the demes, Cleisthenes effected a shift in the basis of citizenship from membership in a family or kinship group to residence in a given locality. Consequently, individuals of low origin and foreign extraction were admitted to citizenship.[29] Therefore, the redivision and renaming of the tribes after native heroes along with the establishment of the demes, forms a paradoxical combination of patriotism and openness to others. For the Athenians, after the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes, what was theirs was the other. One of the things that attaches them to the regime and makes them patriotic is the regime's acceptance of difference.

With Cleisthenes' renaming of the tribes, Herodotus shows a movement from support for the regime because it is believed to be divine in Book 1 to support for the regime because it is believed to be Athenian in Book 5. It is a movement from divine support to patriotic support, and from a divine foundation to the human foundation of the regime. In showing a movement from divine to patriotic support for the democracy, Herodotus reveals that the Athenians support the democracy because they believe the regime is "theirs." Athenians believe it is theirs, Herodotus indicates, in two ways. First, the regime is Athenian or native. Second, characterized by *isegoria* or equality of speech, all share equally in deliberation and thus all, it is thought, participate equally in its decisions (V.78).[30] The Athenians are the regime. Moreover, that patriotism replaces divine support for the regime means that what people say of the regime—that "it is ours"—and what it is—a product of human agency—come closer together. The ability to capture what the regime is in speech allows Athenians to internalize their regime. They believe that it is something within themselves and not a product of something outside of themselves. This internalization leads to their willingness in both the battle of Marathon in Book 6 and the battle of Salamis in Book 8 to forsake their city walls and Athens' physical location. Athenians become characterized by motion and the turn to the sea, but they do have a city. It is in themselves or their mind—Athens becomes an "idea." The Athenians have external motion but internal rest; they have an "idea" of the city within themselves.

After being defeated by Cleisthenes and marginalized by the democratic regime, Isagoras sought the aid of Spartan king Cleomenes to expel his rival, overturn the democracy, and place the government of Athens in his own hands and those of his party (V.70). Cleomenes responded positively and, under the instruction of Isagoras, sent a herald to Athens demanding that Cleisthenes be expelled because the Alcmaeonidae family was "under a curse" (V.70). Upon learning of the herald sent by Cleomenes and his demand for the expulsion of the "Accursed," Cleisthenes voluntarily removed himself from Athens (V.72). Cleomenes then entered Athens "with no great military power," according to Herodotus, and proceeded to banish 700 Athenian families identified by Isagoras (V.72). Next, Cleomenes "tried to do away with the Council and entrusted the government to three hundred partisans of Isagoras," thereby dissolving the democracy (V.72). However, according to Herodotus, the Council "resisted and refused to obey," forcing Cleomenes and Isagoras with his faction to retreat to the Acropolis, as the Pisistratids had done before (V.72). Showing a remarkable singularity of thought and purpose, the rest of the Athenians, agreeing with the Council against the attempted usurpation of Isagoras, surrounded and besieged the Acropolis for two days (V.72). On the third day, Isagoras and the Spartans under Cleomenes made terms with the Athenians and marched out of the city (V.72). However, the Athenians took the faction of Isagoras into custody and executed them. Having done so, they recalled Cleisthenes and the 700 families expelled by Cleomenes (V.72-73, 74).

According to Herodotus, Cleomenes "recognized that he had been extremely insulted both in word and deed by the Athenians," and in response raised a great army of Spartans and their allies to avenge himself on the "popular party" in Athens and establish Isagoras as tyrant (V.74). Cleomenes then invaded Eleusis along with his army, and the Boeotians and Chalcidians invaded and plundered other parts of Attica (V.74). Herodotus says that the Athenians, "caught between two fires," delayed fighting the Boeotians and Chalcidians to confront the Spartans immediately (V.74). However, having been abandoned by his Corinthian allies and Demaratus, the other Spartan king, Cleomenes abruptly withdrew and returned home (V.75). The Athenians, however, desiring revenge, attacked the Boeotians at Euripus and won a great victory, killing many Boeotians and taking seven hundred more prisoners (V.77). The Athenians then crossed to Euboea and attacked the Chalcidians. The Athenians also defeated them, taking many prisoners and leaving four thousand settlers on land formerly belonging to the Chalcidians (V.77).

Herodotus, reflecting on Cleomenes' attempt to dissolve the democracy refounded by

[28] This is deeply ironic, as the name Isagoras means "equality of speech."

[29] See Ostwald, *Nomos*, 151. Also see discussion in Hart, *Herodotus*, 11. Also see Aristotle *Politics*, 1257b36-37.

[30] For a similar argument, see Rathnam, "The Marketplace of Ideas," 144. For the argument that Cleisthenes appealed to the slogan *isonomia*—"equality before the law"—not *isegoria*, to gain the people's support, see Ostwald, *Nomos*, 147, 153-57, 159-60.

Cleisthenes, the Athenians' single-mindedness in resisting this attempt, Cleomenes' attempt to punish them for this resistance, and the resulting victory of Athens over the Boeotians and Chalcidians, remarks:

So Athens had increased in greatness. It is not only in respect
of one thing but of everything that equality and free speech (isegorie)
are clearly good (spoudaion); take the case of Athens, which, under
the rule of [tyrants] proved no better in war than any of her neighbors.
However, once rid of those [tyrants] was far the first. What this makes
clear is that when held in subjection they would not do their best, for
they were working for a task-master, but when freed (eleutherothenton)
they sought to win because each was trying to achieve for his very self (V.78).

In this passage, Herodotus indicates that the internal freedom reflected by *isegoria*, or equality of speech, allowed individuals to develop a sense of self denied to them under tyranny.[31] This sense of self supported Athenian superiority in war. According to Herodotus, this was because the expulsion of the tyrants meant that now in war, each person, when fighting for the city, fought for himself or his own individual good rather than the good of the tyrant. Each felt a sense of ownership of the regime and believed that the city reflected their identity and served their interests. Herodotus indicates that the community of speech, shared by all, allowed each person to pursue his own advantage and was used by each for that purpose.[32] This identification of the city with the self drastically improved the fighting spirit and hence the military effectiveness of the Athenians.[33]

Democracy in Athens is grounded not only in the sense of self but also, as mentioned above, in the openness to others, to the difference and plurality within the political community.

Herodotus' account of the battle of Marathon (490 BCE), in which Aeschylus and his brother participated, shows that equality, especially the equality of speech that defines democracy, also opens the Athenian mind to the difference and plurality within the human community. According to Herodotus, Persian king Darius, ostensibly to punish those Greeks who took part in the Ionian revolt and the burning of Sardis (V.102, 105), sent a Persian expedition under the command of Datis and his nephew Artaphrenes against Greece, "with instructions to enslave Athens and Eretria and to bring the slaves before him" (VI.94). However, Herodotus says that the real reason for the expedition was Darius' desire to conquer those Greeks who had refused to give him earth and water (VI.48-49), thereby subjugating all of Greece (VI.44, 94). Datis and Artaphrenes headed with their host to Cilicia, where they boarded their horses and men on ships, setting sail from the coast of Asia Minor (VI.95). From the island of Samos, they first subdued the Greek island of Naxos and then took Delos and Carystus (VI.96, 97, 99). Setting off from Carystus, the Persians put in Euboea in the area of Eretria. They unloaded their horses and men and prepared to attack the city (VI.101).

According to Herodotus, "The Eretrians had no intention of sallying out and fighting, for what they chiefly cared for was to preserve the walls of the city if they could, inasmuch as they had resolved not to quit their city" (VI.101). Unable to distinguish their city from its physical location and visible manifestations, the Eretrians were besieged by the Persians for six days. On the seventh day, Euphorbus and Philagrus, two notable Eretrians "who looked to the private gains they would make from the Persians," opened the gates of their city to the Persians who then entered, plundered and burned the temples, and enslaved all the inhabitants (VI. I01). After conquering and enslaving the Eretrians, the Persians crossed over from Euboea to Attica, accompanied by the recently expelled Pisistratid tyrant Hippias, and encamped at Marathon. According to Herodotus, on receiving this news, "the Athenians too marched out to Marathon" under the leadership of their "ten generals," the most important of whom was Miltiades (VI.103).[34] The Athenians, unlike the Eretrians, do indeed "quit their city" and sally out to face the Persians. Unlike the Eretrians, the Athenians conceive of their city as something within themselves rather than as something outside of themselves. They can distinguish between the city and its physical location and outward manifestations. Having requested assistance from the Spartans, who said they could not leave their territory during the Carnea festival, the Athenians were joined at Marathon by the Plataeans "in full force as a people" (VI. I05-6, 108). When it was Miltiades' day to command the troops, battle lines were drawn up, and the Athenians and Plataeans charged and routed the Persians under Datis and Artaphrenes (VI.111–12).

Herodotus maintains that one of the chief reasons the Athenians won a great victory over the Persians at Marathon was that, of the Greeks, they were, "the first to face the sight of the Median dress and the men who wore it. Until then, the Greeks were terrified even to hear the names of the Medes" (VI.I 12). The Athenians, Herodotus suggests, face the Persians (Medes) in Persian (Median) dress, or the Persians in their particularity or otherness, without fear, because they are able to look on and face the men underneath Persian dress without fear as well. They were able to look on the Persians not only as Persians but also as human beings like

[31] Also see Hart, *Herodotus,* 67; Forsdyke, "Athenian Democratic Ideology," 348; Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom*, 59-61, 86; and Euben, "The Battle of Salamis," 368-69. But see Fornara, *Herodotus*, 48-49.

[32] See Benardete, *Herodotean Inquiries*, 146. Also see Thompson, *Herodotus*, 37-40.

[33] For the argument that isegoria made the Athenians not wise but energetic, see Rathnam, "The Marketplace of Ideas," 141, 144. Also see Schlosser, *Herodotus in the Anthropocene*, 62, 77-79.

[34] For a discussion of the Philaidae family, from whom Miltiades sprang, as chief rivals of the Almaeonidae, and Miltiades' supposed contempt for democracy, see Hart, *Herodotus*, 17-22.

themselves. Hence, the Athenians at Marathon had "double vision," as it were: they could look on the foreign and see the other and the self at the same time; they could look on the particular and see the universal, on the different and see that which was the same.

At Marathon, however, the Athenians, looking at the universal or on men as men, are still defending their own and asserting their particularity as Athenians against the totalizing attempts of the Persians. They combine a universal perspective with an understanding of the importance of a particular. As Herodotus indicates, the Athenians believe that their ability to see men "naked"—or the universality of human nature that lies concealed beneath convention or "clothing"—distinguishes them from the rest of the world.

"Persians": Feminizing the Male Eye

First staged in 472 BCE, a brief eight years after the battle of Salamis itself (480 BCE), Aeschylus' *Persians* is an example of the "double vision" that Herodotus shows arises out of *isegoria* and which is first displayed by Athenian soldiers at Marathon. This is manifested in the drama in three ways. The first and most obvious way is that Aeschylus, a combatant himself at Salamis as he was at Marathon, relates the events of the battle from the Persian perspective, that of the vanquished, not that of the Greeks, the victors, and no Greek commander or soldier is identified in the play by name.[35] Aeschylus, therefore, takes the perspective of his enemy; he looks through the eyes of his enemy and imagines their sorrow at such a devastating defeat, and thus puts himself in their place, as it were, thinking what they think, feeling what they feel. Beginning with a chorus of Persian elders in the Persian capital of Sousa and remaining with Persian characters throughout, Aeschylus also invites his Greek audience into the mind and emotions of their formidable Persian foes. Aeschylus seeks, in other words, to give the Greek audience of his tragedy that "double vision" possessed by Greek soldiers on the field at Marathon. Aeschylus invites his audience to look at his Persian characters and see and experience the other and the self simultaneously.

Aeschylus' treatment of Persian wives longing in dread for their absent husbands is the second way in which the drama seeks to establish connection rather than separation between Persians and Greeks. According to the Chorus in Sousa, "Beds with longing fill with tears/Persian wives in softness weep/Each her armed furious lord/Dismissed with gentle love and grief,/Left all alone in the yoke" (130-140).[36] Interestingly, these Persian wives seem to be in monogamous marriages bound together by romantic love, at least on the part of the wife for her husband. However, if we look at the *Histories*, Herodotus tells us that each Persian nobleman marries many legal wives and has even more concubines (135). How do women in Persia respond to this situation? Herodotus tells us that after the death of the Persian king Cambyses, a Persian nobleman named Otanes suspected that a usurper sat on the Persian throne and had taken all of Cambyses' wives for himself, including Otanes' daughter Phaedyme. To confirm his suspicions, Otanes sent to his daughter and inquired with whom she slept, "Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, or someone else" (III.68). Phaedyme answered that "*she did not know*, since she had never seen Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, *nor did she know* with whom she slept" (III.68) (emphasis mine). Herodotus indicates that Persian noble marriages, which are polygamous and often made for political reasons, do not seem to generate much romantic love in the wife for her husband. Aeschylus, therefore, portraying them as in love with and in anguished longing for their absent husbands, seemingly portrayed Persian wives like Greek wives, or at least the ideal of the latter. In doing so, he has perhaps portrayed them in a way that Greeks could understand and identify with, and therefore sympathize with their suffering.

The third and perhaps most important way the openness to the other is manifested in the Persians is that the first Persian monarch to enter the drama is not a king but a queen, Atossa (although never named in the play), wife of former King Darius, and mother of Xerxes. The chorus hails her entrance with "Lo! She comes/A light whose splendor equals the eyes of gods/The mother of our king, I kneel. Now, all must address and salute her. /O most majestic Queen of Persians/In ample folds adorned,/Hail, aged Xerxes' mother/Consort of Darius, hail!" (150-158). Thus, Aeschylus chooses to tell the story of Salamis not simply, as a Greek, through the eyes of a foreign enemy but also, as a man, through the eyes of a woman, a powerful but grieving mother.

One may question why the queen whose eyes Aeschylus and his audience look through is the mother of Xerxes and not one of Xerxes' many wives, such as Amestris.[37] One possibility could be that *Persians* portrays Xerxes as a child, as it were, mourned for and comforted by his mother, and then chided by the ghost of his father Darius later in the play. However, more interesting possibilities arise if we look again at the *Histories* and Herodotus' account of Xerxes' ascension to the Persian throne. According to Herodotus, after the Persian defeat at Marathon, Darius was even more determined to subdue Greece and absorb it into the Persian Empire. However, Persian law required that the king declare his successor before going on campaign (VII.2). To this effect, a dispute arose between two of Darius' sons: Artobazanes, who was the eldest son of Darius' wife before he became king, and Xerxes, the eldest son of Atossa, daughter of Cyrus, who became Darius' wife after he became king (VII.2). Artobazanes' claim asserted that he was the eldest of all Darius' children and that it was a universal custom among mankind for the eldest to inherit his father's rule, whereas Xerxes claimed that he was the son of a daughter of Cyrus, the latter having liberated Persia from the Medes and founded their empire (VII.2). At this time, there was an exiled king of Sparta, Demaratus, in the Persian court. Perhaps wanting to gain his favor, Demaratus approached Xerxes and advised him to make the following claim:

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[35] For scholars who emphasize this aspect of *Persians*, see Kantzios, "The Politics of Fear," 17; Schmidt, "*Oioi*," 3; Favorini, "History, Collective Memory, and Aeschylus' *The Persians*," 104, 107; and Kuhns, *Tragedy*, 11, 21.

[36] Also see 540-545: "Ladies of Persia/Softly are weeping,/Desiring each/Him to behold/Wedded but lately,/Couches forsaking,/Soft as their coverlets/(Youth was voluptuous),/Their sorrows, insatiate woe."

[37] See Herodotus, *The History*, IX.108-113.

Artobazanes was born to Darius when the latter was only a private man, whereas he, Xerxes, was born to Darius after the latter had become king; thus, it was only right and just that he should inherit sovereignty (VII.3). Demaratus implies that whereas a man gives birth to a man, only a king can give birth to a king. According to Herodotus, Xerxes followed Demaratus' advice and Darius, acknowledging his claim, appointed Xerxes his successor.

Herodotus' gloss on these events is as follows: "But I myself believe that, even without the advice [of Demaratus], Xerxes would have become King. *For Atossa had all the power*" (VII.3) (emphasis mine). Xerxes' first claim, therefore, that he is the son of Atossa daughter of Cyrus, is the real claim to which Darius accedes. Atossa has all the power, Herodotus implies, because she is the biological instantiation among the Persians of their hero-founder Cyrus, and they revere her as such, and will revere her son as such after her death.[38] Thus, although *sons* of a king may dispute who should inherit their father's formal power, Herodotus clarifies that the *daughter* of a king can inherit his *real* power. In giving voice to Atossa before Darius in the play, it is possible that Aeschylus, like Herodotus, pays tribute to the power of Atossa, acknowledging her as the real, if not formal, sovereign of Persia.

Aeschylus gives Atossa not only voice but also a unique voice, distinguishing it carefully from the voice of Darius.[39] Atossa's unique voice manifests itself in her relationship with her son Xerxes and her understanding of his motives for invading Greece. The latter first becomes apparent in Atossa's dream, occurring in the evening before the Herald arrives in Sousa with news of the destruction at Salamis. Addressing the chorus of Persian elders, Atossa recounts how she dreamt of two beautiful sisters the previous night, one dressed in Persian robes and having received Asia from her father to dwell in, and one dressed in Doric fashion and having received Greece to dwell in (180-185).[40] Yet, strife arose between them, and Xerxes, in response, according to Atossa, "tries to check/And soothe them; he yokes them to a chariot,/Bridles their necks: and one so arrayed, towers/Proud, her mouth obedient to reins;/But the other stamps; Annoyed, and rends apart/Her trappings in her hands; unbridled, seizes/The car and snaps its yoke in two" (190-197). As this dream indicates, Atossa believes that Xerxes, in his invasion of Greece, has positive intentions. In trying to rule both Asia and Greece, who are at odds, he acts as a peacemaker who can bring an end to their quarrel. Imperialism, which seeks to make Greece and Asia one, looks to the common good of both. Yet, one of the sisters, we think the Greek one, resists the bridle, breaks the chariot, and throws Xerxes. In great shame, according to Atossa, "My son falls, and his father, pitying,/Stands by his side, but at whose sight Xerxes/Tears his robes" (198-199). The dread foretold in the dream is confirmed for her the next morning when, on her way to offer sacrifices at the hearth of Apollo, Atossa sees a falcon representing Greece, swoop on an eagle representing Persia, fleeing to Apollo's sanctuary but having its head ripped by the falcon's talons (200-210).

If we read certain lines given to the Queen in Persians in light of certain sections of the Histories, we see that not only does Aeschylus' Atossa believe in the good intentions of her son but she also takes his perspective (or has he taken hers?) on war as well. Thus, while waiting pensively for the herald to arrive with news of the war, the Queen asks the chorus, "Who commands the [Athenians]? Who is the shepherd of the host?" (241). The chorus responds, "They are slaves to none, nor are they subject" (242). Bewildered that such free men would give battle to her son, the Queen replies, "But how could they withstand a foreign foe" (242). If we turn to the Histories, we see that Xerxes also believes that political freedom is detrimental to military effectiveness. According to Herodotus, after counting his host, land and sea, on the plain of Doriscus, Xerxes summons Demaratus, now travelling with the king on his march against Greece. Xerxes asks Demaratus whether the Greeks, being much inferior in numbers, would withstand such a force as his (VII.101). Demaratus responds that the Greeks would indeed challenge Xerxes to battle, rejecting his proposals bearing slavery to Greece, regardless of their numbers: "For their numbers, ask me not how many they are able to do this. If there are a thousand of them ranging to fight you, they will fight you—or less or more than a thousand" (VII.102). Thinking that Demaratus is certainly speaking in jest, Xerxes responds:

Now, I would like to see this in plain reason: how could
a thousand or ten thousand or even fifty thousand confront
so great an army as mine if they were all alike free and not
subject to one command? We would be more than a thousand
to one if they were five thousand strong. If they were
commanded by one, as our men are, for fear of him and
reaching beyond their courage that is natural to them, they
might go forward, though few against many, under
compulsion of the lash. But being suffered to be free,

[38] Darius came to power in Persia after the death of Cambyses, Cyrus's son, without issue. Cyrus' biological line is continued not through Darius but Cyrus' daughter Atossa. See Herodotus, *The History*, III.66-88.

[39] That Greek tragedy utilizes male characters to amplify the voice and characterization of female protagonists, see Ozbek, "Shattered Mothers (and Relatives)," 53-70.2019: 52, 68. But for the suggestion that Aeschylus' portrayal of Atossa is unflattering and subordinates her to Darius, see Sampson, "Aeschylus," 26-28.

[40] For the argument that Aeschylus uses women to represent the nations of Persia and Greece in this dream, allegorizing women as the real strength of a nation, see Schmidt, "Oioi," 8.

they would do neither of these things [...] the quality
you speak of resides in us and no others, and even with us.
in a few, not many (VII.103).

For Xerxes, military victory requires that men fear the lash of a single ruler, which is closely connected to their belief that strength is in numbers. For Xerxes, most men, if not all, are bodies to be counted, and strength of the soul or rational skill when fighting can be dismissed. When we return to Persians we can see that Atossa shares this view with her son. The herald finally arrives, tells of the utter destruction of the Persian fleet at the hands of the Greeks at Salamis and the utter destruction of the Persian army in its desperate and chaotic withdrawal from Europe back into Asia, although Xerxes has survived. In great anguish, the Queen declares, "Alas! I hear the greatest/of misfortunes, shame of Persians, and shrill/Lament" (331-332). Yet, she then asks the herald, "Bet tell me, returning to your tale,/What was the number of Grecian ships,/That thought themselves a match for Persian/Arms in naval combat?" (333-338). The herald responds, "Had numbers counted,/The barbarian warships surely would have won" (339-340). From this exchange we can see that Atossa, believing that the Persians have been "shamed" by defeat, is proud just as her son is. Moreover, like Xerxes, she thinks that military strength is in numbers, and thus initially believes that Greek ships outnumber Persian ones.

Atossa returns to what she believes are the good intentions of her son when she blames a deceitful god for the loss at Salamis, not Xerxes. Listening to the herald's report of violence and death visited on Persian forces at the hands of the Greeks, Atossa laments, "O hateful deity! How did the Persians/You Deceive! Bitter was the vengeance/which my son at famous Athens found:/She could not sate her appetite with those/Whom Marathon had made the Persians lose. /For these my son, exacting as requital/punishment (or so he thought)/Called on himself so numerous a train of woes" (472-478). A few lines later, the chorus also blames the gods rather than Xerxes or the Greeks for the Persian defeat at Salamis (531-533). However, it is important to note that unlike the chorus, Atossa, now acknowledging the defeat of Darius' forces at Marathon, claims that Xerxes invaded Greece to punish this defeat. Xerxes, in seeking to destroy Athens and subjugate Greece, for Atossa is a doer of justice and the gods are unfair.

The uniqueness of Atossa's voice in Aeschylus' drama comes into view when her understanding of Xerxes' intentions is contrasted with that of Darius, her deceased husband and king, and the father of Xerxes. After the herald exits the drama, Atossa brings offerings to the tomb of Darius and asks the chorus to call on him, or perhaps his ghost, to rise from the dead. The chorus calls on the gods to allow Darius to come up from the place of the dead and into the light (630-670). Then something happens in Aeschylus' drama that does not happen in Herodotus' *Histories*: Darius rises from the dead, appearing at the top of his tomb at center stage.[41] The chorus, in too much shame and fear before Darius, cannot speak to him, so Darius tells his "Noble Queen" to speak to them of their woes (705). Listening to Atossa's account of how "Persia is destroyed," Darius' response makes clear that he does not share Atossa's view of their son's motives. For Darius, Xerxes is not a doer of justice in his attempt to punish the Greeks, but rather the one being punished; just retribution is being delivered on Xerxes by this devastating defeat.[42]

Darius gives approximately three reasons why he believes the destruction at Salamis, and later at Plataea, is Xerxes' just punishment from the gods. First, in bridging the Hellespont and then attempting to have it whipped and branded when, in a storm, it destroyed his first bridge, Darius declares, "Mortal though [Xerxes] was,/By folly thought to conquer all the gods/And Neptune" (749-75). For Darius, in bridging this body of water, understood as divine, to allow his forces to cross from Asia into Europe and then have it whipped and branded, Xerxes is engaged in a hubristic and prideful battle with the gods, not the Greeks. Why did this war occur with the gods? Darius speculates, "Had not my son diseased his sense?" (750). "Furious Xerxes" is mad, like his maternal grandfather Cambyses, and cannot act rationally (753).[43]

The second reason Darius gives for Xerxes' punishment from the gods is his imperial overreach. According to Darius, hegemonic rule of Asia is sanctioned by the gods, "Since Zeus, our Lord, bestowed that honor:/One man to wield his rod's authority/Over all Asia, rich in flocks." But "Xerxes, my son, as young/In age as sense, ignored my wisdom" (761-763; 782). In other words, Xerxes ignored his father's wisdom and tried to rule over both Europe and Asia. Hence, Xerxes is not a peacemaker, as Atossa envisions, because the gods do not wish one man to rule over both continents. Moreover, Darius foretells that the gods will punish Xerxes for this imperial overreach with the slaughter of the Persians at the hands of the Greeks in the battle of Plataea. According to Darius, "Behind, his empty hopes to persuade, chosen/Numbers of his host, who now are stationed/Where Asopus floods the plain, its rich sap/Kind to Boeotia: here await them/The lowest depths of woe to suffer, payment/For his pride and godless arrogance. /They, invading Greece felt no awe" (802-809). Darius thus points to the third reason that he believes Xerxes is being punished by the gods. The Persian forces, under Xerxes, "did not hesitate to plunder images/Of gods, and put temples to the torch;/Altars were

[41] This magical or mystical scene in the Persians, without any parallel in the Histories, perhaps points to important differences between the genres of poetry and history.

[42] Perhaps another manifestation of Aeschylus' respect for diversity, and hence for the Persians, is his attribution of this diversity of political opinion among them despite Persia being a monarchy in form.

[43] Herodotus agrees with Aeschylus' Darius in this, stating that it was an act of "violent arrogance" on Xerxes' part to have the Hellespont whipped and branded (VII.34). However, for the argument that for Aeschylus this incident is only an outward sign of Xerxes' *hubris*, the latter of which is grounded in Xerxes' desire to surpass the achievements of his father, not in a war with the god or an imperial overreach, see Papadimittropoulos, "Xerxes' *hubris*," 453, 457.

no more, and statues, like trees/Were uprooted, torn from their bases/In all confusion. Thus, their wickedness/Shall no less make them suffer" (810-812). Xerxes and his Persian forces, in other words, are being punished for their impiety, displayed not only in the hubristic arrogance of trying to yoke Asia and Europe together but also in their burning of the temples of the gods in Athens and throughout Greece.

In showing that Aeschylus gives Atossa a unique voice, I do not argue that Aeschylus agrees with that voice or with his character's understanding of Xerxes' motives for invading Greece. Rather, I argue that he is dignifying that voice by making it unique. Moreover, to argue that Aeschylus may not agree with Atossa's view of Xerxes and his attempt to subjugate Greece is not to argue that he takes the view of his character Darius either. Scholars such as Rebecca Futo Kennedy argue that, in contrast to Xerxes, who is despotic and engaged in imperial overreach, Aeschylus presents Darius as a wise hegemon whose rule over Asia is welcomed by his subjects and should be imitated by Athens in the Delian League.[44] Alternatively, I believe there is much in *Persians* to suggest that the character of Darius has presented his reign as wiser and more moderate than it truly was, and his audience would surely have known this.[45] For instance, in the play, Darius blames Xerxes for bridging the Hellespont as an insult to the gods and as a manifestation of his despotic desire to yoke Asia and Greece together in one empire under one imperial ruler. Yet, what of Darius' failed campaigns in Scythia (modern-day Ukraine and Russia), to facilitate which he had bridged both the Thracian Bosporus and the Ister River?[46] In this did not Darius war with the gods (according to his own understanding in *Persians*) and seek to yoke Asia and Europe together in one empire under a single Persian king, as he accuses Xerxes of doing? Even after the failure of his Scythian campaign, Darius' forces continued to subdue cities and peoples in the Chersonese and Thrace. This continued westward expansion, as we have seen, eventually culminated in the battle of Marathon just north of Athens in 490 BCE.

Herodotus' account in the Histories of the debate among the Ionian tyrants at the Ister River calls into question the wisdom of Darius' reign. According to Herodotus, when Darius and his forces reached the Ister in their march through the Chersonese, he had the Ionians serving in his navy build a bridge of boats across the river, over which his army passed into Scythia (IV.97). Ultimately, failing to encounter the Scythians and defeat them in battle, Darius decides to retreat and flee back to Asia. The Scythians, seeing their chance to destroy Darius and the Persian army, divide their forces, sending some to harass the Persian host in its long retreat out of Scythia, and others to the Ister to convince the Ionians to destroy the bridge before Darius' forces arrived to cross back into Asia, making themselves "free" men (IV.135). Upon hearing this from the Scythians, while some of the Ionian tyrants were for listening to the Scythians and breaking the bridge, Histiaeus, the tyrant of Miletus, argued against it. According to Histiaeus, all the Ionian tyrants held power over their cities thanks to Darius, and if Darius were destroyed, neither he nor any of the other tyrants would be able to hold their cities in subjection (IV.137). Histiaeus prevails in the debate, the bridge is preserved, and Darius and the Persians who survived the perilous retreat from Scythia were saved (IV.137-138). Artabanus, Darius' brother and Xerxes' uncle, later advising Xerxes against his intended campaign against Greece, says of the preserving of the bridge, "The Scythians did everything in the world to induce the Ionians to destroy Darius' passage home—[…] On that day, if Histiaeus, the prince of Miletus, had followed the judgment of the other princes instead of opposing them, the empire of Persia would have been over. It is a terrible thing, even to hear, that all the power of the King should lie at the disposal of one man" (VII.10). Putting the fate of oneself and one's entire people into the hands of a single person in a single instance hardly seems like the action of a perfectly wise ruler–at least not one who forbids his hubris from overcoming his prudence. Again, Aeschylus would certainly have known of this hubris and the near destruction that resulted from it, events that his character chooses to conceal.

1.1 Themistocles and the Gore of War

Persians, I have argued, is a manifestation of the "double vision" made possible by the isegoria that defines Athenian democracy. Aeschylus, therefore, seeks to give his audience the perspective of the Greek soldiers at Marathon, seeing the Persians as Persians, but also seeing the Persians as human beings like themselves. Thus, Aeschylus seeks to establish a connection between Greeks and Persians, men and women, rather than polarized separation. One may thus suspect that freedom of speech and the openness of democracy to the other would undermine violence or equate it with a commitment to peace and a belief that war is unnecessary. However, does Aeschylus reject the necessity or harshness of war? To begin to answer this question, we can turn to the herald's detailed description of the violence visited on the Persians during the Battle of Salamis itself.

According to the herald, during the battle, "The lifeless rotting corpses glut the shore,/And adjacent fields of Salamis," and again, "The Grecian warships, calculating, dashed/round, and encircled us; ships showed their belly:/No longer could we see the water, charged/With ships' wrecks, and men's blood. Corpses glutted beaches and the rocks" (271, 415-420). As these passages show, Aeschylus, a battle participant, brings the blood and gore of war to the surface in a way that Herodotus, who was not a participant and writing a generation later, does not.[47]

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[44] Kennedy, "A Tale of Two Kings," 65, 67-70, 79-81.

[45] For a similar interpretation, see Sampson, "Aeschylus," 36, 38; and Grethlein, "The Hermeneutics and Poetics of Memory," 384-386.

[46] See Herodotus, *The Histories*, IV.83, 97.

[47] The Herald vouches for the truth of his report by saying, "And since I was witness, deaf to rumor's tales/I can indicate what sorrows came" (267-268). Thus, as Aeschylus was in fact, so the Herald was in poetry a participant in the battle. For the argument that the Herald of the *Persians*, in appealing to his presence or eye-witness status for the authority of his narrative, is a departure

The account of Aristides and his actions on the island of Psyttaleia during the battle highlights Aeschylus' foregrounding of the slaughter of war, in contrast to Herodotus.

Turning to the Histories, Herodotus tells us that Themistocles, commander of the Athenian fleet at Salamis, had been the chief enemy of one Aristide, successfully persuading the democracy to ostracize the latter (VIII.79). Of this Aristides, Herodotus says, "I have information of this man's character and am convinced that he was the best and the justest man in Athens" (VIII.79). Calling into question the wisdom of democracy and the character of Themistocles as being the chief enemy of the best and most just of men, Herodotus tells us that, although expelled from Athens, Aristides served in the Aeginan contingent of the Greek fleet in their present troubles. In this capacity, Herodotus recounts that

> Aristides […] a man of Athens, whom I mentioned a little while ago as being the best of men, in this general rout at Salamis did as follows. He took many of the men-at-arms who were ranged along the coast of Salamis (these were in stock Athenian) and brough them over to the island of Psyttaleia; and it was they who killed all the Persians (stationed there before the battle to kill Greek survivors. swimming to its shore) on that small island (VIII.76, 95).

In this passage, Herodotus indicates that it is within the capacity of just and good men to kill their enemies en masse to defend their fellows and their city, or if their enemies would have done the same. Turning to Aeschylus' account of this incident in Persians, the herald tells the Queen:

> There is an island fronting Salamis,/Small, scarce an anchorage for ships,/Where the dancer Pan rejoices on the shore;/Whither Xerxes sent those men to kill/The shipwrecked enemies who sought the island/As a refuge (easily, he thought,/The Grecian Arms would be subdued);/ He also bid them rescue friends. He conned/The future ill. For when a god gave Greeks/The glory, that very day, Fenced in bronze,/They leaped ashore, and drew the circle tight/At every point: mewed up, we could not turn./Many rattled to the ground, whom stones/Had felled, and arrows, shot by bowstring,/Others killed; and in a final rush,/The end: they hacked, mangled their wretched limbs,/Until the life of all was gone (446-463) (emphasis mine).

According to the herald, this violent and gruesome death on the island of Psyttaleia means that many Persians, "excellent in soul, and nobly bred to grandeur," died, "in infamy, dishonor, and in ugliness" (441-445).

Aeschylus' account in *Persians* of the incident on Psyttaleiaa is much bloodier than Herodotus' account and clarifies, in stark detail, what it takes to kill other human beings with one's own hands in a way that Herodotus does not. Does Aeschylus think such killing is necessary or within the capacity of just and good men, as Herodotus does? Some scholars think not, arguing that the herald's descriptions of death in battle are the earliest record of extant antiwar literature.[48] However, does Aeschylus' attention to the violence and horror of killing unambiguously demonstrate his categorical opposition to it? This is not suggested by the lines I emphasize in the passage cited above. In these lines, Aeschylus does not fail to mention that the Persians on Psyttalei had been stationed there by Xerxes to kill Greek survivors of the battle who had sought its shores for refuge and Aeschylus is likely Herodotus' source on this point. Including this important detail makes the killings seem like returning harm for harm–an ancient and pervasive understanding of justice.[49] Thus, although Aeschylus indicates that the violence of war is horrible and the antithesis of his own activity of writing, he thinks that it is sometimes necessary or even just.

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from epic poetry's mode of authorization of messenger speeches and makes him like Aeschylus himself: both present at the events they narrate and standing outside the narrative, free from the limitations on those within in the telling of the story, see Barrett, "Narrative and the Messenger," 546, 550, 553.

[48] Schmidt, "*Oioi*,"10.

[49] For retributive justice as the exchange of harm for harm, "a hidden desire at the heart of justice," as that which motivates Medea in Euripides' tragedy of the same name, see Sokolon, *Seeing With Free Eyes*, 36-37.

That Aeschylus believes that the violence of war may be necessary, and even just, is pointed to in his treatment of Themistocles. Again, the comparison with Herodotus is fruitful. According to Herodotus, after the Spartan defeat at Thermopylae and the retreat of the Greek fleet to Salamis, three debates took place between the Greek commanders, the overall commander being the Spartan Eurybiades, on where they should oppose the king at sea. For the sake of brevity, I will not discuss in detail what happens in each of the three debates. Rather, I will note that the commanders from the Peloponnese, upon learning that Xerxes had entered the city of Athens entirely empty of its population (VIII.51) and plundered its temples and put the Acropolis to the torch (VIII.53), "were in […] turmoil of mind" and "dreadfully afraid […] for the safety of the Peloponnese" (VIII.56, 74). As a result of such psychic turmoil and fear, the Peloponnesian commanders favored withdrawing from Salamis to the Isthmus across the width of which Cleombrotus, brother of Spartan King Leonidas who died at Thermopylae, had the Peloponnesians, in fear of "losing their all," build a wall (VIII. 71,74). The Athenians, under the command of Themistocles, favored fighting the Persians at sea at Salamis. In the third debate among the commanders, Themistocles, according to Herodotus, wishing to force the Peloponnesians to resist the Persians at Salamis, secretly left the meeting and had his slave, Sicinus, take a message to Xerxes and his generals encamped with their fleet at Phalerum. When Sicinus arrived at the camp, he spoke:

The general of the Greeks has sent me, unknown to the other
Greeks; for he is indeed an adherent of the king and wants his side
to win rather than the Greeks. I am to tell you that the Greeks
are plotting to run away, in their extreme fear, and now you have
the chance of achieving the very finest of your actions—unless
you stand by and let them run away and escape (VIII.75).

Themistocles, having himself falsely portrayed as the "general of the Greeks," secretly takes on the identity of Eurybiades and raises the specter of becoming Persian. Nonetheless, the Persians, "believing in his message," decide to put to sea and encircle the Greeks (VIII.76). Beginning at midnight, so they would not be seen by the Greek forces at Salamis, the Persians extended the western wing of their fleet toward the island of Salamis and the eastern wing into the channel of Munychia (VIII.76). At dawn the next day, the Greeks, according to Herodotus, realized that they had been encircled, and finally made preparations to fight the Persians at Salamis (VIII.83). In Herodotus' account of the encirclement at Salamis, Themistocles, thwarting the results of democratic deliberation, deceives both the Greeks and the Persians, but such deception is useful as it forces the Greek fleet to remain at Salamis and fight there, not at the Isthmus.

When we turn to Aeschylus' rendering of these events in Persians, we see in the herald's speeches the same message from Themistocles (although not named) via Sicinus to Xerxes, advising the latter to encircle the Greeks who plot to flee, and Xerxes believing in such messages and ordering his fleet to take action accordingly (382-405). However, when we consider the herald's account of the Greek response at dawn the next day to being encircled, significant differences emerge from Herodotus' account. According to the herald:

All night the [Persian] captains kept the fleet awake;/
And night ran on. No Grecian army set/Secret sail: but
when the steeds of day,/White and luminous, began to/
cross/The sky, a song-like, happy tumult sounded/From
the Greeks, and island rocks returned/The high-pitched
echo. Fear fell among us,/Deceived in hope; for they (and
not as if to flee)/A solemn paean chanted, and to battle/
Rushed with fervent boldness: trumpets flared,/Putting
Every Greek aflame […]/ Next advanced the whole armada (382-395).

In this passage, the herald reports a loud, joyful, and triumphant singing or "paean" coming from the Greek side at dawn, a detail that is absent in Herodotus. This loud and triumphal singing puts the Persians, now tired from a sleepless night, in dread and suggests that far from being in "turmoil of mind" and "dreadfully afraid," the Greeks are confident and happy that they are surrounded. The latter is supported by the herald's suggestion that the Greeks never intended to retreat to the Isthmus and that Xerxes had been deceived by Themistocles in this.

What do these details suggest about Aeschylus' account of the encirclement at Salamis? I would argue that they point to Aeschylus' attempt to convey the impression that although Themistocles did indeed deceive the Persians, he did not deceive the Greeks. The Greeks were happy and confident at dawn because they knew of and were persuaded by Themistocles' plan to trick Xerxes into thinking they were about to run away and so encircle them the night before (he did not thwart the results of democratic deliberation), the latter proving a strategic advantage for the Greeks at Salamis while simultaneously draining the Persian forces of alertness and strength. If this is correct, I believe that Aeschylus portrays Themistocles and the Greek forces at Salamis in a much more positive and purely virtuous light than Herodotus (although Herodotus does not necessarily portray them in a negative light). Therefore, in Persians, although trying to see the war through the eyes of his enemy and acknowledging its horrors, Aeschylus does not reject war if necessary to defend democracy and the isegoria that defines it.

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