PART FOUR

DRAMA

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AESCHYLUS

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Tragedy, it has been said, is ‘designed to resolve temporal tensions’.¹ This is perhaps true nowhere as much as in the case of Greek tragedy, which enacts complex temporal schemes predicated in the first instance upon the demanding ‘coincidence’ of a (nearly always) ‘ancient’ myth and the ‘now’ of performance: distant ‘thens’ are made present as the (fifth-century) present is retrojected into the world of myth.² Of a piece with this key premise are the rich temporal structures of the drama’s narrative sections. This particular aspect of narrative practice, then, does work that is in some ways comparable to that of the plays more broadly.³ Although a consideration of these wider implications in any systematic sense is beyond the scope of this study, it is helpful to keep in mind that narrative manipulation of time offers one path to understanding any given narrative’s function within the drama that contains it.⁴

Although narrative appears in all of Aeschylus’ plays, its distribution is uneven. *Seven Against Thebes*, *Suppliants*, *Choephoroi*, and *Eumenides* contain comparatively small amounts, while there is something of an abundance in *Persians*, *Agamemnon*, and *Prometheus Bound*.⁵ The following discussion reflects this unevenness. This situation presents a dilemma with respect to *Prometheus Bound*: do we keep this play at arm’s length because of its uncertain authorship, or do we grant it its due as an

¹ Burke 1966: 137, cited by Rosenmeyer 1982: 330.

² Cf. Markantonatos 2002: 13–14, and the comments of Käppel 1998 with respect to the chorus in this regard, esp. 66–67. This temporal complexity finds an analogue in tragedy’s spatial practices: cf. Rehm 2002: 20–25. Cf. Duchemin 1970, esp. 85–86.

³ Cf. Goward 1999: 21–37, and 60–62 on Aeschylus in particular.

⁴ For examples of how this might work in *Agamemnon* see Duchemin 1974: 123, and 135, where she speaks of this play’s ‘caractère intemporel’; Anderson 1997: 111–113.

⁵ *Seven Against Thebes* is rich in description (of the attacking warriors and their shields), but for present purposes I bracket this apart from narrative. On the distinction between descriptive pause and description see Genette [1972] 1980: 93–94 with n. 12.

important witness to narrative practice in Athenian tragedy? Because, it may be said, narrative is at the center of this drama, I here ‘err’ on the side of paying ‘too much’ attention to this play. In the end, the danger in this approach is limited: only when generalizing about Aeschylean practice must we be careful when taking this play into account.

As a matter of convenience I group the narratives below into four broad groups: retrospective, prospective, mixed, and repeating.⁶ Within the first category I distinguish a subset of catalogue narratives, while the third category is comprised of narratives that, for various reasons, do not fit easily into any of the others.

Retrospective narratives

Retrospective narratives take the form of subsequent narration: they recount afterwards something that has happened earlier. A relatively straightforward example, without anachrony, is Atossa’s account of her dream and the omen of the hawk and the eagle (*Pers.* 176–211).⁷ Unproblematic in terms of order, this narrative uses rhythm and frequency to help shape the unfolding and meaning of events in the drama. The Queen begins with the announcement that she has been ‘incessantly visited at night by numerous dreams’ (*pollois men aiei nukterois oneirasi*, 176). What seems initially to be an account of frequently repeated

⁶ Since in *SAGN* the position is taken that drama is not narrative (*SAGN* 1:6–7), the terms ‘retrospective’ and ‘prospective’ narratives are used instead of ‘analepsis’ and ‘prolepsis’. It would be possible to identify a group of simultaneous narratives as well, yet this group is small. Here we would find, for example, the chorus’ song about their own status and the state of affairs in Argos (*A.* 69–103). Although Clytemnestra’s account of events at Troy (*A.* 320–337) is imaginary (Spring 1917: 191; Anderson 1997: 115), her narrative imagines these events as ongoing; and although the chorus’ description of the assault on Thebes and the city’s (imagined) fall (*Th.* 287–368) may well be understood as iterative (i.e., these are the kinds of things that happen when a city is attacked; see below), this narrative is also an account of the chorus’ present fear. On simultaneous presentation see Goward 1999: 32–35.

⁷ This group also includes the messenger’s report of the slaughter on Psytaleia (*Pers.* 447–471); the herald’s account of the shipwrecks of those leaving Troy (*A.* 650–670); Clytemnestra’s account of Agamemnon’s death (*A.* 1379–1398); Aegisthus’ ‘family history’ (*A.* 1583–1602); Orestes’ report of Apollo’s command (*Ch.* 269–296); as well as the dialogic narrative at *Choephoroi* 522–539; and those discussed below as catalogues. Some in this category have minor anachrony, such as the analepsis at *Persians* 466–467, where the messenger reports Xerxes’ position ‘atop a high hill near the sea’ (464)—from where he watched the battle—only after announcing that all in the Persian force at Salamis had died.

experience becomes a report of ‘last night’s dream ... the most vivid I have yet beheld’ (179–180).⁸ In other words, the narration is strictly speaking singulative, yet works as iterative: in recounting this particular (and particularly meaningful) dream, the Queen (also) puts on display the kind of dreams she has been having since Xerxes led the army to Greece. Her narrative thus renders this particular dream even more portentous than it might otherwise be, standing, so to speak, as the culmination of a lengthy history of such dreams. And the specific content of the dream—the symbolic yoking of the Hellespont and the Greek resistance—take on emphasis as the most ‘vivid’ (*enarges*, 179) expression of the (soon-to-be-realized) danger she fears.

This narrative’s rhythm, too, emphasizes the looming disaster. Using language appropriate to the context of a dream, the Queen speaks of the ‘appearance’ of the two women (*edoxatēn*, 181) and describes what she ‘saw’. But the language of description gives way to a curious form of summary at 186–187: ‘One of them lived in her fatherland, Greece, which she had obtained by lot, the other in the land of the barbarians’. Without insisting on realism, one can easily see that this sentence contains a longer story: just what would the action of obtaining by lot look like in a dream? Up to the point in the dream when the conflict occurs (188), then, no action is recounted except in summary form. Here, though, the narrative shows its interest in this conflict, and in the ‘Greek’ resistance, by giving substantial space to its telling: one of the two women ‘struggled, tore the harness from the chariot with her hands, dragged it violently along ...’ (194–195). Summary gives way to scene as the narrative turns from background to the portended danger.

The Queen’s account, finally, opens a window on two important qualities of narrative in Aeschylean texts: first, that a narrative of even relatively simple temporal structure can prove to be quite complex, and, second, that this structure may articulate with the drama’s broader engagement with time. The Queen’s dream—like dreams already in Homer—is a portent: this relatively simple retrospective narrative, that is, proves to be more complex in that it also *functions* as a ‘prospective’ narrative, insofar as the dream figures the future.⁹ That the Queen herself recognizes this—at least as a danger—is evident from her

⁸ For *Persians* I use the translation of Hall 1996.

⁹ The same may be said of her account of the hawk and the eagle, which follows that of her dream.

anxiety.¹⁰ Furthermore, this ‘coincidence’—or approximation—of past and future points to two key concerns of the play as a whole. First, the play’s theological teaching insists that present action is comprehensible only with reference to the past—or put differently, the past is never entirely past in that it persists as (part of) the present; and second, the presentation of Persian anxiety and suffering takes place, in the words of Duchemin (1974: 137), in a ‘temps-hors-du-temps’, where past, present, and future are not always distinct.¹¹ This retrospective, singulative narrative that also functions as a ‘prospective’ narrative and works as an ‘iterative’ narrative displays well both what complexity may lurk behind seemingly simple façades and how the temporal manipulations of narrative perform work that is analogous to—and part of—the (temporal) work of the play as a whole.¹²

Retrospective narratives more frequently do contain anachronies, as does Prometheus’ account of the Titanomachy and its aftermath (*Pr.* 197–241). The anachrony of this retrospective narrative displays some complexity: prolepsis within analepsis. The manipulation of rhythm and frequency here also deserves notice. Prometheus’ narrative opens by marking what at first appears to be a sharp beginning of the fabula, referring to the onset of anger and conflict in the divine realm (*epei takhista*, 199–200). This apparent coincidence of story and fabula disappears, however, when Prometheus reports that his mother had foretold to him more than once that victory would come through trickery, not force. In the lines immediately prior to these, Prometheus says that when strife broke out he offered the best advice to the Titans without success: they dismissed his wily stratagems, thinking that they would be victorious through sheer violence alone (204–208). The source of his stratagems, however, is explained in an analepsis (209–213): they were formed on the basis of his mother’s prophecies. Here we discover that the fabula begins earlier than the story at first makes clear. This analepsis, however, does more than recuperate a missing, earlier element of

¹⁰ The chorus as well acknowledge the danger at 215–219. It must be said, however, that this scene produces dramatic irony that turns on this temporal ambiguity: the spectators as primary narratees would recognize that this retrospective narrative also functions as a prospective narrative since they would have been familiar, of course, with recent history. Cf. Aelion 1981: 140–141.

¹¹ On the play’s theology see e.g. Paduano 1978: 34–35 with nn. 7–8; Winnington-Ingram 1983: 1–15.

¹² As Aelion 1981: 141 notes, this ‘prospective’ narrative proves to be retrospective in a different sense when the messenger enters: the disaster portended by the dream and omen has already occurred, and this ‘future’ event proves to be, in fact, past.

the fabula: it also constitutes a prolepsis, for here we learn that the Titans will be defeated. Soon thereafter Prometheus' narrative moves from his alliance with Zeus to the present moment: it is due to his advice to Zeus that the Titans today are confined to Tartarus (219–221). The prolepsis revealing that the Titans will be defeated, however, is of a special type, in that the victory prophesied by Gaia/Themis is never recounted. Rather, although Prometheus' narrative alludes to the victory, and even to how it was achieved, the battle itself—and the wily stratagem in particular—find themselves displaced by an ellipsis. And this ellipsis deserves notice.

It is, of course, a commonplace in Greek literature for traditional narratives to be presented via summary and ellipsis. In part, Prometheus' ellipsis conforms to this model: Hesiod's account was presumably familiar to many spectators and Aeschylus has relied upon this familiarity. But this explanation is only partially satisfactory, since Aeschylus here innovates: in identifying trickery as the decisive element in the Titanomachy, he departs from the (traditional) version in Hesiod.¹³ The ellipsis, then, refers to the familiar as it leaves unanswered the question: What was the trickery? The silence of this narrative about the Titanomachy as a whole has yet another consequence. Although the spectators as primary narratees may well be able to fill in much of what is passed over, the same cannot be said of the secondary narratee, the chorus. They, after all, have no idea about cosmic history, as is evidenced by their dialogue with Prometheus preceding this narrative. We must, then, recognize that although we may be left wondering what the trickery was, the chorus remain ignorant of the Titanomachy *in toto*, aside from its outcome, of course. (It must be said that Prometheus is most of all interested in establishing his role in the outcome of the battle, and an account of how it all happened is only peripheral to this task.) In any case, the text here contains something of a tension between the differing abilities of the narratees (primary and secondary) with respect to making sense of the ellipsis.¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Solmsen 1949: 129 n. 22 with M. Griffith 1983: ad 193–283, 216–218, and 219–221. Just how many among the spectators may have been familiar with Hesiod's version is, of course, an unanswerable question. Given the status of Hesiod in this period, however, it seems likely that many would have been. In the end, my comments concerning innovation here will apply only to those spectators familiar with Hesiod.

¹⁴ As both Solmsen 1949: 129 n. 22 and M. Griffith 1983: ad 219–221 note, this version credits Prometheus with much, emphasizing the value of his intelligence. The

With respect to this narrative, finally, I note the occurrence of iterative narration at 209, where Prometheus says that his mother gave her prophecy not one time alone (*oukh hapax*). Although it might be thought that the report of multiple acts of prophecy serves to condemn the Titans for the obstinacy that Prometheus mentions (207), he informs us that Gaia/Themis spoke the prophecy to him (*emoi*, 209). Prometheus' iterative presentation, then, serves principally to authorize, and to explain, his own intervention. His advice to Zeus proved to be valuable in fact, in that Zeus did defeat the Titans, but it proves now to be inspired by more than Prometheus' cleverness: his cleverness, he tells us, is supported by the prophetic powers of his mother.

Various forms of prolepsis occur in the messenger's account of the battle of Salamis (*Pers.* 353–432). At the outset, the narrative offers a brief suggestion of a snare in the form of an actorial 'prolepsis': a Greek tells Xerxes that the Greeks will attempt to flee once darkness falls (355–360). We, along with the Queen, are briefly invited to take this actorial 'prolepsis' as a guide to what will follow, just as Xerxes so fatefully does. This 'prolepsis', however, is immediately withdrawn, when the messenger explains that the Greek was lying (361–362). (Indeed, both the Queen and the spectators, when listening to this narrative, know *that*—but not *how*—the Persians have suffered a disaster.)¹⁵ Thereupon, however, follows a 'real' prolepsis, that of Xerxes' orders to his men concerning what they are to do at nightfall (364–371). Having indicated what would happen at dark, the narrative proceeds to track the sailors' actions leading up to these prefigured events: preparations for the evening, and for the battle, were under way (374–376). When darkness arrives and the sailors do as they were ordered, the messenger's narrative repeats, in summary fashion, the substance of the prolepsis (380–381).¹⁶

The choral narrative of the events leading up to Iphigeneia's sacrifice at Aulis in the *parodos* of *Agamemnon* (104–257) contains a complex and subtle manipulation of temporal elements, including matters of order, rhythm, and frequency: we find both analepsis and prolepsis, as well as

ellipsis here allows that intelligence to remain somewhat enigmatic and, consequently, perhaps unlimited (in the eyes of the narratees).

¹⁵ Those in the audience who had been at the battle, needless to say, would be invulnerable to such a 'snare'.

¹⁶ Although I now find the arguments unpersuasive, some take the subject in line 374 to be the Greeks rather than the Persians. In this case, there would be no prolepsis. For Greeks see Hall 1996: ad 374–383; for Persians see Bakewell 1998.

repetition, summary, and ellipsis. Altogether this magisterial display of narrative possibilities expresses in short order some of the play's most pressing concerns.

This narrative of events at Aulis begins with the omen of the eagles and the hare, which is followed by the seer Calchas' interpretation (126–145) and a prayer to Apollo (146–155), asking that he intervene to protect the Greeks from Artemis' wrath. The so-called 'Hymn to Zeus' then follows (160–183), before the chorus resume the narrative proper and recount the debilitating delay in port, Agamemnon's quandary, and the preparations for the sacrifice itself (184–257).

In reporting Calchas' interpretation of the omen, the choral narrative presents a revealing prolepsis. This actorial prolepsis announces the fall of Troy. When spoken at Aulis, of course, these prophetic remarks need not have been less believable than after Troy did in fact fall, but it is worth noting that for the chorus now, in Argos, recounting what happened some ten years earlier at Aulis, the fall of Troy is still—as far as they know—unrealised. This is, of course, relevant only because, in fact, Troy at this moment has fallen: what remains a 'future' event for the chorus—not only in terms of narrative order but also in terms of actual experience—is for the primary narratees, the spectators, an event of the past. This much, after all, the watchman announces at the play's outset.¹⁷

A second, internal prolepsis in Calchas' remarks comes via his prayer that Apollo somehow avert the delay in port with its debilitating consequences, one of which he identifies as 'another sacrifice' (150–151), clearly that of Iphigeneia.¹⁸ In calling this prolepsis 'internal' I include in the narrative of events at Aulis the death of Iphigeneia which itself is present only by way of highly marked and explicit ellipsis ('What fol-

¹⁷ My comments above on the Queen's dream and the omen in *Persians* apply in large part, *mutatis mutandis*, to the omen of the eagles and hare at *Agamemnon* 111–120. Cf. Aelion 1981: 140–142; cf. also Anderson 1997: 111–113, who speaks of the omen and its interpretation as 'a temporally looped chain of causality' (113). An incisive analysis of riddles and metaphors in *Agamemnon*, with much to say about the passages I discuss here, is Ferrari 1997; cf. in particular her careful consideration of the omen and Calchas' interpretation of it at 26–35. Her elucidation shows well the temporal complexity of this passage. Cf. Stanford [1936] 1972: 144–149. Cf. also Peradotto 1969: 246–247; M. Edwards 1977: 23–24; Goldhill 1984: 19–20.

¹⁸ But cf. Lebeck 1971: 34–35; M. Edwards 1977: 24 with nn. 31 and 32; and Ferrari 1997: 26–28, who argue that there are multiple referents here, including the death of Agamemnon. Insofar as 'another sacrifice' refers to that of Agamemnon, this remains a prolepsis.

lowed I neither saw nor tell', 247). The presence of her death, however, is so strongly felt and so important to the narrative that, I think, we have no choice but to acknowledge that even if the chorus choose not to tell it, it is the center of gravity around which the rest of the narrative turns. One indication, then, of how this narrative exploits the possibilities of its temporal code appears in this early proleptic announcement of the narrative's climactic moment: a moment which both marks the goal and conclusion of the narrative, on the one hand, and, on the other, finds itself displaced by the chorus' refusal to tell it.¹⁹

Following the 'Hymn to Zeus' (160–183), the chorus continue their narrative of events at Aulis with the temporally ambiguous phrase 'and then' (*kai tote*, 184). As Fraenkel points out,²⁰ the temporal adverb here signals continuity between the earlier narrative section concerning the omen and what the chorus now undertake to tell, but only vaguely. Indeed, as the syntax of this long opening sentence (184–204) suggests, the temporal code of this narrative is complex and somewhat difficult to grasp.²¹ Part of this difficulty is produced by an anacoluthon which arises when the initial subject (Agamemnon) never acquires a main verb and finds itself displaced by a different construction beginning with another temporal adverb ('when') at 188: 'And then the senior commander of the Achaean fleet, blaming no prophet, giving in to the blows of fortune, when delays in port ...' (184–188). What begins as an account of Agamemnon's response to the delay in the harbour and its attendant ills—including a new prophecy by Calchas, briefly alluded to in 'blaming no prophet'—turns within a few lines to these events which, in fact, precede the 'then' of line 184. Only in 201–204 do we hear more about the new prophecy. But if we are to understand just what Calchas says, we must reconstruct it from Agamemnon's response to it, which follows at 205–217. These dizzying anachronies are accompanied by two other temporal devices that deserve notice: repetition and extreme summary that verges on ellipsis.

Some of the proleptic elements of Calchas' prayer to Apollo (146–155)—the delay in harbour and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia—are repeated in the chorus' narrative. The sacrifice reappears, in much

¹⁹ Cf. Goldhill 1984: 31 and Goward 1999: 48 on this refusal.

²⁰ Fraenkel 1950: ad 205.

²¹ Fraenkel 1950: I 120 n. 1, however, expresses puzzlement that the 'clear evidence' has not been perceived by all. On the difficulties here see Goldhill 1984: 28–29; Goward 1999: 48.

greater detail, at 207–247. After appearing initially at 149 without elaboration, the delay is identified at 188 as causing hunger, while its consequences become more varied at 192–198. This third and most elaborated reference to the delay provides an example of how summary may be so extreme that it verges on ellipsis. The winds that cause the delay in port are described by three adjectives meaning ‘wearing out with idleness, causing famine, and making for bad moorings’ (194). It is these adjectives that summarize the events leading up to Calchas’ prophecy and to Agamemnon’s decision, but the summary is so condensed that the narrative here contains a series of virtual ellipses. This allusive quality continues in the following lines, which may, or may not, compensate for the ‘ellipses’ here. The ‘wanderings of men’ (195), after all, may allude to the necessity of wandering in search of food, a necessity that famine would likely impose.²² Even so, such ‘compensation’ is barely more informative than the summary it augments.

The repetition and maze-like structure of this narrative’s temporal code reproduce an important thread of meaning in the choral narrative. The opening words of line 184 (‘and then’) mark the coincidence of temporal ambiguity at the narrative level and at the experiential level of the Greeks at Aulis. And this coincidence continues in several ways. As Bollack notes,²³ the term the chorus use to describe the temporal effect of the delay (*palimmēkē*, 196) indicates ‘un retour en arrière, un retour sur soi en sens inverse’. Just as the narrative itself returns to familiar ground, that is, so do the Greeks experience ‘un retour en arrière’. Evidence of such ‘turning back’ appears even at the textual level: *hegemōn ho presbus* (184–185) reappears as *anax d’ ho presbus* (205); *antipnoous ... aploias* (147–148) is echoed in *sumpneon ... aploiai* (187–188); *Kalkhas ... apeklagxen* (156) returns as *mantis eklagxen* (201). Manipulation of the temporal code, then, is but one aspect of the narrative’s attention to temporal displacement and uncertainty: meaning and narrative structure coincide in this regard.²⁴

²² Cf. Fraenkel 1950: ad 194.

²³ Bollack 1981: 271.

²⁴ Bollack 1981: 272 comments: ‘Le temps n’est alors plus orienté ... les guerriers sont dépossédés de la possibilité de se fixer un but’.

Retrospective narratives: catalogues

Unlike the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, those of Aeschylus contain a noteworthy subset of (typically) retrospective narratives that may be called ‘catalogues’.²⁵ This group is something of a special case in that these narratives generally recount only minimal action, while offering a virtual inventory of names (of people, places, etc.).²⁶ This paucity of action makes order comparatively unimportant, though occasionally suggestive. In fact, the more such narratives approximate (mere) lists, the less chronology plays a role. Prometheus’ account of his many benefactions to humans (*Pr.* 436–506) and Clytemnestra’s ‘beacon speech’ (*A.* 281–311) are two instructive examples. The relative simplicity of these narratives is indicated in part by a paratactic style. Like Aeschylean catalogues generally, these two show little or no anachrony.²⁷

Clytemnestra’s ‘beacon speech’ (*A.* 281–311) recounts the ordered advance of fire signals from Troy to Argos. At once a story of action and a catalogue of beacon sites, this narrative is characterized by parataxis: an accumulation of narrative elements joined by various terms without temporal significance (*de, te, kai*). Here, however, the various elements are clearly ordered in a temporal sequence, and this narrative order corresponds to the sequence of events in the fabula. Indeed, Clytemnestra speaks of ‘laws’ (*nomoi*, 312) that govern the transmission of the signal from one beacon to the next: her narrative of this reg-

²⁵ Not all such narratives in Aeschylus are retrospective, however. Prometheus’ accounts of Io’s future wanderings (*Pr.* 707–735, 790–815) comprise geographical lists. Cf. Rosenmeyer 1982: 112–114 on geographical inventories in Aeschylus. Korzeniewski 1967: 33 finds in these lists a ‘Stilprinzip der frühgriechischen Dichtung’ and speaks of a ‘systematischer Aufbau’ (35). Cf. Korzeniewski 1966: 557–558. Paduano 1978: 41 calls the catalogue in the *parodos* of *Persae* a ‘mezzo di amplificazione’ producing a ‘messaggio dell’elefantiasi’. Cf. Said 1988: 332.

²⁶ Aeschylean catalogues appear outside of narrative as well (cf. Rosenmeyer 1982: 109–117). I take up only those that are also narratives.

²⁷ Other catalogues include: the chorus’ account of those gone to Greece (*Pers.* 1–64); the messenger’s list of those who have died (*Pers.* 302–330); the messenger’s list of places traversed by the Persian army in flight (*Pers.* 480–497); Darius’ ghost’s brief ‘history’ of Persian kings (*Pers.* 759–786); the chorus’ list of territories ruled by Darius (*Pers.* 867–896); the Pythia’s account of Delphic ‘history’ (*Eu.* 1–19). On this last passage see Rosenmeyer 1982: 111–112, in particular his keen observation that by means of this list ‘the liberating dimension of history enters and promises to unclog the old inflamed congestions’ (112). I understand the temporal patterns of the *parodos* of *Agamemnon* (discussed above) and of Cassandra’s narratives (discussed below) as key parts of these ‘congestions’. Here again, then, the temporal structure of this narrative carries out important work of the play—and of the trilogy—as a whole.

ulated sequence reproduces the order which her narrative implicitly attributes to the events themselves.²⁸ Coincidence of temporal orders here serves to demonstrate and, to some extent, to put on display the effectiveness of the ‘laws’ of the beacons. The narrative thus ‘explains’ how the beacons function, as it demonstrates the skillful forethought and conspicuous talents of Agamemnon’s capable wife. Here, then, the organization characteristic of catalogues helps sustain the order of both fabula and story.²⁹

Prometheus’ account of his many benefactions (*Pr.* 436–506) displays a similar paratactic style, signaled again by use of *kai*, *te*, and *de*. But if this narrative consists largely of a catalogue, the catalogue itself consists of actions. Prometheus here uses at least twelve different verbs to describe his ‘gifts’: ‘I gave’, ‘I showed’, ‘I discovered’, ‘I yoked’, ‘I devised’, ‘I systematized’, ‘I made visible’, etc. This catalogue, it seems, is really a series of highly summarized stories. What is lacking, however, is a temporal dimension connecting this collection of condensed stories. The many gifts of Prometheus, that is, appear to have been given all at once—or at least we are unable to say which may have been earlier, and which later. The particulars of the catalogue narrative, then, matter not as temporally distinct elements of a series of events, but rather as their sum total. The summary that is characteristic of the narrative, therefore, is significant in a double, even contradictory, fashion: on the one hand, this summary invites the narratee to imagine the content behind, for example, Prometheus’ allusive report that he ‘systematized’ the mantic art (484), while, on the other hand, the rapid sequence of highly condensed reports of this type serves in the end to emphasize the absence of any account of what lies behind such summaries. Although the narratee may be unable to learn anything about how Prometheus accomplished these feats, the catalogue narrative makes clear that the actions of Prometheus himself are at issue here, not merely the ‘gifts’ that humans received. And it is the summary, in large part, that accomplishes this.

²⁸ Anderson 1997: 128 puts it this way: ‘her speech guides the beacons to their finish-line in Argos’.

²⁹ With Fraenkel 1950: ad 313 I understand Clytemnestra to be the source of the *nomoi* that govern the beacons. Not only does she display a masterful understanding of these *nomoi*, but she says with confidence ‘Such are the rules of the torch-bearers’ (312). On the strength of the pronoun *moi* in this line, Collard 2002 translates with ‘my arrangements’. This matters because the coincidence of temporal orders proves to highlight her control, and organizational skills, in both domains.

Prospective narratives

Few narratives prove to be prospective in their entirety. The most significant among these are Prometheus' accounts of Io's future wanderings and what they will lead to (*Pr.* 707–735, 790–815, 844–876).³⁰ These narratives are principally prophetic, although the prophetic statements are often interlaced with admonitions. Prometheus accordingly employs many imperatives alongside the future indicatives. That these imperatives indicate not only what Prometheus advises, but also what Io will do, is evident from the fact that the events related in the clearly prophetic account of Epaphus and his descendants (846–873)—an account marked by the prophetic present at 848 (*tithēsīn*) and by future indicatives elsewhere—will occur only as a consequence of Io's obedience to Prometheus' commands. In introducing his prospective narrative, furthermore, Prometheus speaks of what Io must do (703–706), and in so doing he makes it clear that what he is about to describe is part of a single journey that concludes in Egypt.

The vocabulary of the journey, in fact, points to the most prominent temporal element of Prometheus' narratives. With two exceptions, these narratives show no anachrony. Rather, they track Io's journey closely: their progress coincides with hers. Indeed, Prometheus speaks of the track of his narrative (*ikhnos*, 845), a term that calls to mind the journey or path that Io will follow (*hodos*, 706) as it suggests the coincidence of the fabula's temporal order with that of his story.³¹ This coincidence reappears in the most substantial ellipsis of his narrative. Once his account of Io's wanderings brings her to Egypt and names her child by Zeus, it turns immediately (852) to a much later time, that of the fifth generation, the Danaids. What happens in the meantime is, apparently, of no more concern to Io than it is to Prometheus: as the track of his narrative follows the path of her wanderings, it comes to a 'conclusion' of sorts when her journey ends. And it is here that his story jumps forward, abandoning its earlier strict adherence to the fabula.

This earlier strictness, however, is not absolute. Twice Prometheus' account includes an external prolepsis. At 724–727 he speaks of the

³⁰ Substantial prospective narrative sections occur in *Eumenides* (681–915), where Athena tells, piecemeal and in part through dialogue, the future of the Areopagus and of the Eumenides themselves. Amid these prophetic remarks, Orestes announces an oath (762–774) that in retrospect must be acknowledged to be prophetic at least in part.

³¹ Cf. Kaimio 1970: 84. On path as metaphor see Becker 1937; Nünlist 1998a: 228–283.

future of the Amazons, and at 732–734 he informs Io that her crossing of the Bosphorus will engender a ‘great story’ including the naming of the spot after her. That this narrative does (a bit) more than track Io’s journey is evident as well from the digression at 709–711; here Prometheus reports on the (odd) practices of the Scythians.

Mixed narratives

A number of Aeschylean narratives fit comfortably into neither of the categories above because they contain various combinations of retrospective, present, and prospective elements. The most substantial and complex examples of this type are the last of the three narratives spoken by Darius’ ghost (*Pers.* 800–820) and Cassandra’s accounts of past, present, and future ills in Argos (*A.* 1072–1172, 1178–1197, 1215–1245). Both of these narrators, of course, rely upon prophetic knowledge, a factor which partly explains the temporal richness of their narratives. Cassandra is inspired by Apollo, while Darius’ ghost recalls oracles (739) given at some earlier point. This privileged knowledge applies in both cases to past as well as future events, and serves to explain to some degree the mixture of temporal frames in their narratives: past, present, and future are less distinct—or at least inseparable—when viewed from this privileged vantage point.

The ghost of Darius’ account of the Persian army’s suffering contains some anachrony that expresses in short order this narrative’s temporal reach. A brief passage at the outset of his account encompasses all three temporal domains, moving from present to future to past. He begins by saying that Xerxes and his army are presently camped near the Asopus (805), before turning in the next line to the future misery that awaits them. This misery is explained as a consequence of what the army did in Greece, the subject of the lines that complete this passage (809–812). The reach of his narrative—from the (past) sacrilege in Athens to the (future) slaughter at Plataia—is made possible by Darius’ knowledge of the divine decrees which he identifies in the lines introducing his account (800–802). There is, to be sure, no temporal confusion. Rather, the past events necessarily imply those to come, as the divine guarantees make clear: the temporal manipulations of this narrative announce that any account of Xerxes’ present encampment near the Asopus is only part of a much larger story that reaches (at least) from the earlier sacrilege to the disaster that awaits. As often

noted, the ghost's intervention in the events of the drama serves in large part to explain and justify on theological grounds the Persian suffering, and the temporal code of this narrative certainly furthers that purpose.³²

Cassandra's dialogue with the chorus (A. 1072–1172) contains in piecemeal form a narrative that reaches from the distant past to an imminent future.³³ But this temporal expanse is not measured; there is no clear distinction between past and future.³⁴ Both, for Cassandra at any rate, are thoroughly present. The gruesome deaths and eating of Thyestes' children are vividly at hand (1095–1097; note in particular the deictic *toisde*), as is the coming death of Agamemnon ('she reaches out her hand', 1110). Although we can distinguish between past and future, there is more than Cassandra's use of the 'prophetic present' tense to conjoin the multiple killings in the house. At 1090–1092 her ambiguous language describing the house refers with equal force to murders both past and future. She speaks of a house 'that knows many sad tales of kindred murder ... a slaughter-place for men'.³⁵

Much the same can be said of her narrative at 1215–1245. Indeed, this repeating narrative resumes not only the slaughter of Thyestes' children and that of Agamemnon, but also something of the temporal structure of the earlier, dialogical account. Both versions of these events begin with a vividly present past and then turn to an imminent future (*tod' estai*, 1110; *teuxetai*, 1230), before representing the looming death of Agamemnon as a present reality. In this case, Cassandra speaks of the (now long-dead) children sitting near the house, hands full of their own flesh (1217–1222); speaks then of the plans afoot and the coming death of Agamemnon (1223–1231); and finally announces that 'the female is the killer of the male' (1231–1232). There is little suggestion that Cassandra

³² Cf. Broadhead 1960: xxix; Hall 1996: 156–157, with references. Saïd 1981: 38, however, speaks of a 'rupture brutale avec le passé' in this play.

³³ This is a peculiar form of dialogue, with Cassandra showing sporadic awareness of the chorus' presence and the chorus speaking of her in the third person (1083, 1093–1094). Cf. Fraenkel 1950: ad 1095. This somewhat disjointed quality helps to convey Cassandra's mantic status, which is further evidenced by her narrative's temporal code.

³⁴ Goward 1999: 75 speaks of an 'unnatural timelessness' in Cassandra's narrative. Aelion 1981: 142 finds that this narrative 'détruit la notion même du temps'. Goethe speaks of the spectator as a 'seer' as a result of this narrative's remarkable temporal code (Rehm 2002: 80; cf. P.G. Mason 1959: 86).

³⁵ The text here is problematic. I give the translation of Lloyd-Jones 1979. Cf. Fraenkel 1950: ad 1091 ff.

herself cannot distinguish between past and future, but her language makes it clear that this distinction is of little significance.

In the case of Cassandra, it is important to note that the familiarity of the traditional myth makes it possible for us to identify Thyestes' children as well as Agamemnon, as it enables us to distinguish the 'real' temporal location of the various events she reports. Her narratives are marked not only by this mixing of temporal frames, but also by an allusive style and much ellipsis. Our own ability to make sense of this (otherwise confusing) narrative terrain is made clear by contrast with the chorus' explicit commentary on their own failure to do the same (e.g. 1112–1113, 1130–1133). For them, after all, the events of which Cassandra speaks are not part of a familiar traditional myth. In this sense, then, the peculiarities of her narratives serve not only to depict the temporal fluidity of human experience seen from a prophetic point of view, but also to distinguish between primary and secondary narratees.

In the category of mixed narratives I include iterative narration (even if some examples may be identified as retrospective or prospective—or even simultaneous), because such narratives generally recount typical events, representative examples of the kind of thing that did or does happen. Io's account of her transformation and wandering in *Prometheus Bound* (645–682), for example, is retrospective without anachrony, but it is also an example of iterative narration. This narrative opens with an emphatic assertion that the dreams that set her suffering in motion were even more than frequent: 'Nighttime visions would always (*aiei*) enter my bedroom and speak soft words' (645–647), she says by way of introducing what these visions actually said to her. She says further that she was possessed by such dreams every night until she worked up the courage to tell her father (655–657). The specificity of the dreams' quoted speech—more than seven lines long—might seem to conform imperfectly with the repeated appearances of the nighttime visions, and this might then appear to be an example of what Genette ([1972] 1980: 121) calls 'pseudo-iterative' narration: 'scenes presented, particularly by their wording in the imperfect, as iterative, whereas their richness and precision of detail ensure that no reader can seriously believe they occur and reoccur [*sic*] in that manner, several times, without any variation'. Io does employ the imperfect here both introducing (646) and concluding (656) the reported speech. We may, then, follow Genette and understand the quoted speech here to represent the kind of speech produced by these recurring visions, rather than a single,

identical speech that Io heard on many occasions. On the other hand, we are clearly in the realm of divine agency and realistic concerns may well be out of place.³⁶

Although the chorus' account of Thebes' (imagined) fall in *Seven Against Thebes* (287–368) may be treated as an instance of simultaneous narration, it is best understood as an iterative account of a (typical) event.³⁷ This passage contains lament and expression of fear, as well as prayer. In sum, however, the chorus present a vivid picture of (what is to be considered typical of) what happens when a (mythic) city is sacked. Although this narrative is not explicitly marked as iterative (by use of the imperfect, for example), one can hardly avoid reading it as such, in part because the chorus speak now in the present tense, now in the future, as their fear of what will happen proves to be inseparable from the account of what does happen. Some statements in the present tense confirm the status of the narrative as iterative, inasmuch as they constitute general claims: 'One man takes and kills another, sets a fire. Smoke pollutes the entire city, and raging, conquering Ares breathes on it, blotting out piety' (340–344).³⁸ The typicality invoked by the iterative character of this narrative finds corroboration and extension in the 'conspicuous use of Homeric phrasing'.³⁹ In short, the fall of Thebes is presented as a vivid example of a (familiar) event, a variant of the paradigmatic case, the fall of Troy.⁴⁰ This typicality need not render the narrative less powerful or haunting. In fact, it more likely augments these qualities in providing a template of sorts for understanding the

³⁶ Another retrospective iterative narrative is Clytemnestra's account of her suffering during Agamemnon's absence (*A.* 855–894).

³⁷ This type of iterative narrative might also be termed 'omnitemporal' inasmuch as the reference may be to the future as well as to the (present and) past. Other examples include the following choral narratives: the account of the impious type exemplified by Paris (*A.* 366–399); the description of the sorrows of war (*A.* 427–455); the narrative of the many terrifying things (*deina*, 586) on earth (*Ch.* 585–636); and narrative sections of the 'binding song' (*Eu.* 299–396), in which the chorus recount their privileges, powers, and characteristic acts (cf. 550–565).

³⁸ Hutchinson 1985: ad 342 identifies smoke 'like the other things described in 340–342 ... as a basic element in the sack of a city'. Cf. *A.* 818.

³⁹ Hutchinson 1985: ad 287–368. This will be true, of course, only for those spectators as primary narratees familiar with such Homeric language. But it is hardly adventurous to assume that many would recognize the allusion in line 322 (*Aidai proiapsai*) to the opening of the *Iliad* (*Aidi proiapsen*, 1.3). Hutchinson 1985: ad 287–368 comments: 'no allusion could be more ostentatious'.

⁴⁰ Hutchinson 1985: ad 328–329 identifies lines 326–329 as offering another typical element: women being dragged by the hair—as at Troy and by a centaur on the Olympia pediment.

horrors the chorus imagine: ‘Think of Troy’, we may understand them to say, ‘and you will be thinking of Thebes’.⁴¹

Repeating narration

There are several examples of repeating narration which deserve notice:⁴² the Persian disaster in Greece is reported several times in *Persians*;⁴³ the Danaids’ coming to Argos is recounted more than once in *Suppliants*, as is the story of Io;⁴⁴ the death of Agamemnon is recounted or described in all three plays of the *Oresteia*;⁴⁵ and the fall of Troy is rehearsed repeatedly in *Agamemnon*. This last case displays something of what such repetition can accomplish through variation in narrative modality, focalization, and temporal framework. At the play’s outset the watchman announces that he sees the beacon indicating that Troy has (just) fallen. This highly condensed summary tells little, other than that much remains to be told (36–39): it presents the fall as unelaborated event. The chorus then present the fall (104–159) as a story dimly visible (to a seer) in the otherwise meaningless devouring of the hare by two eagles. No longer only a literal event, the fall is now encoded in the obscure language of the gods. Clytemnestra’s account (320–347)

⁴¹ The chorus cannot, of course, be aware of Troy’s fall—which follows in mythic time. Rather, they say more than they can know. Cf. Hutchinson 1985: ad 287–368: ‘The situation is mythical itself, but tragedy uses the resonance of famous myths to heighten the impact of the myth which is being presented to us’.

⁴² Spring 1917: 188–191 notes that Aeschylus’ use of the ‘distributive method of exposition’, together with the repetition it entails, resembles that of Sophocles (→). Although not limited to narrative sections, her careful and very useful study of gradual exposition in Aeschylus (and Sophocles) illuminates the work these repetitions do in demarcating various focalizations.

⁴³ In the Queen’s dream and the omen (176–211); the messenger’s narratives (249–514); and the dialogic narrative between the Queen and Darius’ ghost (709–738).

⁴⁴ Danaids: in the *parodos* at 1–39 and in the dialogic narrative between the chorus and Pelasgus (274–347); Io: 291–315 (part of the dialogic narrative) and in the choral stasimon at 531–589. On repeated references to Io in this play see R.D. Murray 1958.

⁴⁵ In *Agamemnon*: at 1107–1128 Cassandra foretells his death; at 1223–1238 she describes it as happening; at 1343–1345 Agamemnon is heard to say he is being struck; at 1372–1398 Clytemnestra recounts the deed in some detail. In *Choephoroi*: at 429–445 Agamemnon is said to have been mutilated and unlamented; at 491–496 Orestes and Electra ‘remind’ Agamemnon’s ghost of the deadly bath and ‘net’ in which he was killed; at 980–1005 Orestes describes—and puts on display—the robe. In *Eumenides*: at 455–461 Orestes again describes the ‘hunting nets’; at 625–639 Apollo describes Agamemnon’s death in the bath.

further expands the repertoire of narrative modalities in offering an imagined fall as real.⁴⁶ These three tellings are followed by two eyewitness accounts, that of the Herald (503–582) and that of Agamemnon (810–828). Troy's fall, then, appears as unelaborated event signaled by a beacon; as the meaning of an omen; as imaginary event; and as an event seen through the eyes of two participants. This variety displays not only the varying focalizations of the different narrators, but also a range of possibilities for viewing the fall and its significance.

Just as important are the temporal schemes. In the choral narrative the fall is portended by an omen; for the watchman, the fall itself portends a murky future (34–39). Thus do these narratives underscore the 'temporally looped chain of causality' in the play;⁴⁷ as the trilogy makes clear, the fall of Troy is a key link in an unbroken chain of events that includes the sacrifice of Iphigeneia at Aulis (where the omen is read by Calchas), and the death of Agamemnon, which is part of the vague future hinted at by the Watchman. Clytemnestra's account completes this sequence by conjuring a virtually timeless picture. Her narrative also opens the theme of Greek impiety at Troy (338–347), a theme picked up by the Herald (524–537). As Spring points out,⁴⁸ the Herald's boast of the Greek destruction of Trojan altars (527) produces dramatic irony in 'repeating' Clytemnestra's warning at 341–342: this repetition serves to emphasize the destruction of the altars as both danger and success, although the irony here suggests that the success is illusory. Agamemnon also picks up the theological strand of earlier accounts and characterizes the fall as divinely sanctioned (810–828). In sum, then, this scheme of repetition in the play offers the fall as a prism through which we may view the characters via their differing focalizations, as it presents a range of modalities for thinking about the fall and its significance. It also illustrates economically the play's attention to theological matters and their relevance to the unfolding chain of events that surround Troy's fall. The fall, in short, is a kind of touchstone in the play, and the repeating narratives elaborate the richness of the fall in this capacity.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The chorus' skepticism (272–280; cf. 351–354) engages this pretense, of course.

⁴⁷ Anderson 1997: 113.

⁴⁸ Spring 1917: 190–191.

⁴⁹ Anderson 1997: 122 sees the fall as 'a source of thematic and emotional reversal' in the play. The first stasimon (355–487) contains some elements that contribute to the play's distributive exposition of Troy's fall. Athena briefly mentions the fall of Troy at *Eumenides* 397–402; cf. Anderson 1997: 130–132.

Conclusion

Aeschylean tragic narratives display both a broad range of temporal schemes and a perhaps surprisingly sophisticated use of them. These narratives are sometimes simple in their temporal aspect, sometimes complex. And in some cases, apparently simple structures can prove to contain various layers of temporal reference. Even adjectives can contribute to a narrative's engagement with time, as the chorus' account of events at Aulis in *Agamemnon* shows. The uses of these temporal schemes, furthermore, demonstrate the kinds of work these formal elements can do. For example, these narratives can mimic in their temporal aspect something of the experience of the characters they describe, thereby assimilating the narratee to these characters in some ways—as we see in the *parodos* of *Agamemnon*. In addition, a narrative's temporal code may serve to differentiate between primary and secondary narratees, as we find in *Agamemnon* and in *Prometheus Bound*. Perhaps the most powerful use of temporal structure lies in the overlapping of form and meaning. A good example of this appears in *Persians*, where the narrative of the Queen (176–211) at once puts on display the possibilities inherent in such overlapping and shows what a complex temporal structure can look like. This account is retrospective and singulative but functions as 'prospective' and 'iterative', all while this temporal complexity dovetails elegantly with the play's theological concerns. It is this latter aspect—these narratives' abilities to harness what might appear to be mere formal elements and to exploit them in the service of larger concerns—that especially deserves notice. From *Persians* to *Prometheus Bound*, tragic narratives show a tendency to employ rich temporal structures that participate in the broader work of the plays that contain them. Indeed, the complexity of these temporal structures, and the uses they are put to, extend our understanding of the degree to which the genre as a whole is predicated on a densely textured engagement with time: if tragic performances occurred in a time (and place) marked off from ordinary experience, and if these performances relied upon a coincidence of distant pasts and the present moment, their narratives prove to have been an important avenue for exploring the significance of this key premise.