

History

Messenger's Spatial Perspective: for the Narration of the Battle of Salamis in the Persians by Aeschylus

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ABSTRACT. The present paper deals with the notion of narratorial spatial perspective and its importance in the process of textual modeling of the central scene of *The Persians* by Aeschylus, the naval battle of Salamis. The messenger is a narrator of the event. In the framework of his narrative he creates a highly artistic picture of the actual battle, which primarily means a high quality of narrative visualization. We assume that this effect is achieved through the skilful use of the narratorial spatial standpoint. The latter is the term coined by the contemporary narratology. It is defined as a narratorial means received based on the unity of the narrator's optical perception and of its localization in a particular space and angle of view. Thus, there are three types of spatial perspectives: panoramic, scenic and close up (zoom in). Messenger's traditional characteristics inherited from the epics, being the eyewitness of the event he is going to narrate, enables Aeschylus to make the optical spatial perspective of the messenger as a basic feature when narrating the naval battle. At the same time, the playwright relieves the narrator from certain spatial limitations, which are connected to the narration in the first person and turns him into a Homeric type, omniscient narrator that implies the realization of all three types of spatial perspectives during the flow of the narration. This dramatic technique selected for the verbal representation of the battle allows Aeschylus to create a comprehensive spatial (visual) image of the event; by juxtaposing the participants of the scene: people, locations, views and voices he creates simultaneity effect of the action, which is a special artistic-aesthetic value of the Aeschylean drama text. © 2018 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: narrator, narrative, perspective, battle scene, Aeschylus

Narratorial spatial perspective is one of the fundamental concepts in contemporary narratology which has been a subject of heated debates up to nowadays. The term was primarily used by G. Genette who defined it as: "the second mode of regulating information, arising from the choice (or not) of a restrictive point of view" [1]. Consequently, the researcher made distinctions

between the "one who talks" (narrative voice/narrator) and the "one who perceives" (perspective) in a discourse. Certain limitations of presenting information in a narrative, conditioned by focusing on the optical aspect of the concept were ignored by the next generation of narratologists. The concept has become broader and implied non-sensory – emotional, cognitive

and ideological filters of the narrator. Concept definition of this type resulted in its placement within the framework of focalization. In the framework of the present paper, we share standpoints belonging to the narratologists who make distinctions between visual and cognitive aspects of the term and consider visual component as decisive when it comes to perspective [2]. Respectively researchers define focalization as mentally and ideologically filtered perception of the event presented in the narrative by the narrator, which does not necessarily involve the presence of visibility (in its direct meaning), and spatial orientation, though it is not excluded either. In addition, as for the perspective, on contrary it is defined as a narratorial means received based on the unity of the narrator's optical perception and of its localization in a particular space and angle of view [3].

Thus, scholars distinguish between three basic types of narratorial spatial standpoint: a) Panoramic spatial perspective, which implies the narrator's positioning at a considerable distance and overseeing the totality of the events. b) Scenic spatial perspective, which implies the narrator's positioning within the scene and directing the narrative from this perspective; c) Close-up, which is also referred to as the term: zoom in.

In the framework of the present paper we aim at analyzing the central scene of *The Persians* by Aeschylus, the naval battle of Salamis, according to the narrator's spatial perspective and its variety, which we consider as the main textual strategy for narrating the central event of the tragedy and for presenting it as spatially and simultaneously completed verbal unity.

The messenger starts the narration of the central naval battle scene in the third person, by presenting events ordered in chronological sequence: misleading message from the Greek Messenger, about orders made by Xerxes based on this and the military preparations of the Persian Army (353-373). The scene is narrated in a scenic, fixed,

actorial perspective. However, the messenger's participation in the action, as of the character is expressed by only his witnessing the scene, without saying a word. The narrator's attention is focused on the central characters of the scene; initially on the Greek messenger, and then already on Xerxes. The messenger does not say anything about where and in what conditions this meeting took place.

In lines, 374-376 the messenger narrates a sequence of two actions, which occupy the same time interval, i.e. he presents the narration of simultaneous events. From line 374 to the first punctuation of line 375, the narrator depicts the army having a dinner in a panoramic spatial perspective. After the first punctuation of the 375th line, all of a sudden, he changes his perspective and introduces particular boatman in action, he ties a rope on the boat, by means of a close up shot effect; This method of presentation or cutting a narrative by introducing other shot in it is defined in narratology as intercutting and is used in unilinear medium (including movies), for the purpose of attainment of action simultaneity effect. Consequently, we have the so-called "latitudinal" sequence of actions in the narrative which implies: "isochronous strands of events run in parallel, i.e. in a point-by-point co-presentation of isochronous fact-sequences occurring in different places or with the different agents, resulting in a "spatial" distribution"[4]. In the messenger's narrative dinner of the army and tying of a rope by the sailorman are not related to one another sequentially. Both of them involve the same temporal interval. Relation of the latter to the former is conditioned by the very probability or necessity, as a boatman is a comprising detail of a single global action (military preparation of the army) and becomes perceived after presenting it with this action in a synchronous and not in a sequential mode. Intercutting method in the messenger's narrative is applied when narrating about massive settings (scenes prior to battle and the battle scenes). Such realization of the

narratorial perspective is directed to activate the mental perception of the internal and the external naratees. It is also strengthened by the use of the verbs and name type formatives of certain semantics. In lines 374-375, totality effect of the army on the verbal level is achieved by the use of adjective "whole" and the verbal formative, denoting dining in the third person of imperfect and in plural form. The latter is followed by the noun a boatman in singular and consequently by the verb form "to prepare" in imperfect and singular form likewise, followed by the first temporal marker of the narrative. In Homeric narrative panoramic spatial perspective is used not only for making narrative vivid to certain extent, but it also has a particular structural function in the same narrative. As a rule, it follows or precedes markers of the text having a temporal character such as sunrise, sunset, midday etc, which on their own way carry function of transition lines when shifting from one setting to another. We assume that in the messenger's battle narrative the lines 377-378, which inform about coming of night should be understood as a temporal marker with transitive function, which on the one hand denotes temporal starting point and represents a part of a narrative strategy on the other. A temporal marker it is the case with Homer is accompanied by presenting large-scale settings and consequently, actualization of the narrator's panoramic perspective. In lines 378-383, before the use of the next temporal marker, the narrator depicts a visual image of the Persian fleet spread across the vast area of the sea. Effect of extensiveness and totality of the setting is achieved by the use of pronoun "everybody" in lines 378, 379 and 383, as well as by the use of verbs in imperfect denoting actions and the use of formative denoting swimming in historical present. The latter is particularly for the verbal visualization of the action. Salamis Battle virtually from the beginning to the end is narrated in imperfect. There are also several cases of using historical present, including the 381st line. The use of historical present and

imperfect in a retrospective narrative of the messenger create the so-called concurrent narration effect that implies simultaneousness of the narration action and the action to be described. As Margolini mentions: "narration here is a record of what is seen and happening at the moment and is the anthithesis of the historian narrative statements which, retrospectively, invest acts and actions with meaning" [5].

This technique of narration makes imitation of the action immediacy. Overcoming temporal spatial distance enables the receiver of the information to position himself in the place and time in which the action takes place, it enables the receiver of information to see the action in continuity, and place himself in a position of a witness and a perceiver of the action together with the narrator and the characters. This form of cognitive teleportation is achieved by very shifting of temporal deictic markers and by means of narration of the story in imperfect and historical present. Together with the intercutting method, this enables the concurrent narration possibility for the spatial distribution of the narrated event. Thus, we get impression that everything goes on simultaneously, in the same temporal interval. The next temporal marker in lines 386-387 points to the beginning of a new action sub-block. Here the narrator's view that was focused on the Persian fleet is changed and shifted to the side of Greeks. It is essential to underline the use of verb denoting view, within the framework of temporal marker in line 387, which is preceded by what has become the subject of seeing, the whole land. The narrator not only in lines describing actions, but through temporal markers too manages projecting of the battle action space image, by using formatives describing light and vision [6]. This verbal-perceptual presentation of the space serves the stimulation of the mental imagination at all levels of communication. On the background of sunrise in lines 388-391, we have to "see" high isle cliffs and "hear" the echo of the noise similar to the Greek

fleet song. In this passage of the narration, there is no sight of the Greek fleet yet. Its introduction as a character is of acoustic nature from line 388 to line 397. Sounds coming from the Greek fleet are of different types. The messenger makes their explanation and articulation in an orderly manner. We may distinguish between three types of sounds. The first one is realized in the very first lines 388-391, when the Persians hear Greeks' military hymn. In line 395 the second type of noise is presented, which do Persians hear: the sound of trumpet summons the Greek fleet. In lines 396-7, there is the third type of voice presentation. Sound, which arises from the rhythmic touching of oars on the surface of the sea. The narrator's spatial perspective, which up to this page was in a passive condition as the action had an acoustic nature, becomes active again from the 396th line (when hearing is literally replaced by imagery) up to the first punctuation of the 402nd line (before the start of the direct speech). The narrator by non-actorial panoramic perspective shows the battle setting dislocated on the horizontal line, orderly movement of the Greek fleet in the sea, movement of the right branch, which is followed by the group of the rest ships. At the structural-semantic level, the mentioned passage reflects relation to lines 378-38. The narrator constructs two identical scenes – opposing fleets' pre-battle intensive movements and their dislocation in the sea by using the method of identical spatial perspective and concurrent narration; Such duplication of the narrative strategy, besides the fact that it was expectable to have been used for construing typologically similar settings, at the same time levels the narration and gives to it the effect of visual symmetry.

After demonstrating the battle area and two opposing fleets, each of them as one unity and a general picture in a panoramic spatial perspective, verbal form to “blast” in the 480th line marks the start of the battle. Narration of the active battle scene continues including the 428th line. In this segment of the central block, the messenger

achieves a particular freedom of describing events from the spatial viewpoint, which implies fast and continued interchange of the narrator's perspective from the setting to panoramic perspective, shifting from the latter to the close-up effect and vice versa. The narrator activates narrative strategies of intercutting, as well as concurrent narration, for creating total all-involving spatial imagery of the naval battle. Before the first punctuation of lines 408-409, the messenger depicts a large-scale imagery of the first clash of fleets in a panoramic non-actorial spatial perspective. From the 409th line including the first punctuation of the 411th line, the narration shifts to the scene non-fixed perspective and is focused on the description of one particular military action, which takes place between the military boats of Greeks and Phoenicians. In addition, by the end of the line 411, the narrator returns to the presentation of general battle imagery (spears invaded air), by applying panoramic spatial perspective again. In this segment of narrative, intercutting represents a priority method for the construction of a massive battle scene, as it was the case in construing the previous battle setting in lines 374-376. As Margolini notes it in both cases: „Diverse actions are designed to create a vast network of underlying interconnections, an overall unified mechanism” [7]. In the narration of the battle process, simultaneity effect of the action is strengthened by the use of verbal formative having the semantics of destroying the side of the Phoenicians' ship in historical present form. The latter, similar to the previous cases of using historical present form in the messenger's narrative is directed for the stimulation of the visual imagery of the listener, who has to “see” the fact of destroying the side of ship in action, in parallel with the narrator. The second sub-block of the naval fight begins from the 412nd line and continues until the 424th line. In quite a long passage, the narration continues in a panoramic, non-actorial, non-fixed perspective. The messenger describes driving in of the Persian

ships in a narrow strait and their destroying by the Greek ships, which Greeks had done in the open sea. In a setting construed by a temporal sequence, intercutting is replaced by a partial concurrent narration, which implies presenting majority of verbal forms denoting action in imperfect. The effect of the battle setting totality is achieved by the use of nouns having a collective semantics and the pronoun formatives, which is directly related to the possibility of perceiving and seeing the Persian fleet on distance, as one unity. The climax of the visual reality of the battle is achieved when in the 419th line of the text, within the third block the messenger repeats the phrase already for the third time, which to some extent may be generalized at epic formula level: It was impossible to see the sea. This one more time underlines the importance of the setting imagery and the actualization of the cognitive vision of the listener/reader, who has to "see" the area of the sea covered with parts of the destroyed ships (419-420) and the shores of Salamis covered by the dead bodies (412).

After the perfect demonstration of the visual imagery of the large-scale destroying of the fleet in the strait, by means of the panoramic spatial perspective, the narrator alters the imagery perspective again, in lines 424-426. Based on merging of non-actorial and close-up effects, the narrator describes terrifying images of dying by violence, expressed in a poetical mastery in a very naturalistic way. The narrator is quite close to the scene of action to make a detailed and accurate description by imperfect asyndetic verbal forms of graphic content (426), how Greeks minced and broke backbones of the Persians, whom the messenger compares to Tuna (type of fish). The comparison used by the narrator to visualize the violence imagery relates to the process of hitting a fish by the angler. As Hall notes it, the latter requires reasonably great strength from the fisher. To illustrate this the researcher presents a Sicilian ceramic vase-painting sample of the fourth century, which clearly describes this process (hitting the

fish)[8]. Illustration of the total and united force, which Greeks directed against the Persians, is described in a completely realistic way, within the framework of this brilliant visual metaphor. From the 426th line on, the action acquires acoustic features again. The specifics and extensiveness of sounds in lines 426-427 is realized by means of formatives having acoustic effect across the open sea area. We assume that the 427th line shows certain semantic parallelism with the 419th line, in which the focus is made on impossibility of seeing the sea area likewise, as it is covered by bodies of the dead people. In both cases, as well as in the whole battle scene, the messenger continuously repeats about the idea of not seeing but also of filling and covering certain spatial openness. However, this fullness by its essence is negative. It goes through death. Visual-acoustic simultaneity of the battle scene in an open sea area in the 428th line ends by temporal marker, which ends the scene not only in temporal aspect but from the visual point of view too, as it was done in cases of previous time markers. Night covers and keeps away from sight the whole severity of the setting, which accompanied the battle. This poetic symbolism of light and darkness has a dramatic function in the messenger's narrative that is reflected in the event, the visual and acoustic features of which become visible and audible, together with light, and the latter covers the space, similar to dead bodies covering the sea surface. Along with light fading away in the area, the same event with its spatial aspect ends in the total darkness and silence.

Conclusion: Thus, messenger's spatial perspective in the Salamis battle scene narrative is characterized by constant and fast changes, completely free action (non-fixed viewpoint), panoramic perception and the change of distance between the narrator and the action to be described in any passage of the narrative. Using the spatial perspective and all the narratological devices in that way enables narrator to present precisely the spatial distribution of the event. The result is, as Michelin

remarks: “the pure narrative which creates a theatrical (visual) effect that only partially depends upon dramatic illusion” [9].

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ისტორია

მაცნის სივრცული პერსპექტივა: სალამინის საზღვაო ბრძოლის ნარატივისათვის ესქილეს *სპარსელებში*

ა. ცანავა

ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი; კლასიკური ფილოლოგიის, ბიზანტიისტიკისა და ნეოგრეციისტიკის ინსტიტუტი

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის რ. გორდეზიანის მიერ)

წინამდებარე სტატიაში განხილულია მთხრობელის სივრცული პერსპექტივის ცნება და მისი მნიშვნელობა ესქილეს *სპარსელების* ცენტრალური სცენის, სალამინის საზღვაო ბრძოლის, მხატვრული მოდელირების პროცესში. ტრაგედიაში მთხრობელის როლში გვევლინება მაცნე, რომელიც ქმნის რეალურად მომხდარი ბრძოლის (ძვ.წ. 480 წ.) მაღალმხატვრულ სურათს, რაც უპირველესად გულისხმობს ნარატივის ვიზუალიზაციის მაღალ ხარისხს. ჩვენ მიგვაჩნია, რომ აღნიშნული ეფექტი მიიღწევა მთხრობელის სივრცული პერსპექტივის ოსტატური გამოყენებით. ეს უკანასკნელი თანამედროვე ნარატოლოგიის მიერ შემუშავებული ცნებაა. იგი გულისხმობს მოცემულ კონკრეტულ სივრცეში მთხრობელის ადგილმდებარეობისა და მისი ხედვის რაკურსის საფუძველზე მოვლენის თხრობას. შესაბამისად, დიფერენცირდება სამი ტიპის სივრცული პერსპექტივა: პანორამული, სასცენო და ახლო კადრი. მაცნის ტრადიციული, ეპოსიდან მემკვიდრეობით მიღებული მახასიათებელი, იყოს იმ მოვლენის თვითმხილველი, რომლის თხრობასაც ახდენს, ესქილეს საშუალებას აძლევს საზღვაო ბრძოლის რეპრეზენტაციის მაკორდინირებელ შტრიხად მაცნის ოპტიკური სივრცული პერსპექტივა აქციოს. ამავდროულად, დრამატურგი მთხრობელს ათავისუფლებს სივრცული შეზღუდულობებისგან, რაც პირველ პირში თხრობას ახლავს თან და სპარსელ მაცნეს აქცევს ჰომეროსის ტიპის ყოვლისმხედველ მთხრობელად. ეს უკანასკნელი გულისხმობს ბატალური სცენის მოდელირებისას სამივე ტიპის სივრცული პერსპექტივის აქტუალიზაციას. ბრძოლის ვერბალური რეპრეზენტაციისთვის შერჩეული ეს დრამატული ტექნიკა ავტორს შესაძლებლობას აძლევს, შექმნას გარკვეული დროის ინტერვალში, ფართო სამოქმედო არეალში მოქცეული მოქმედების ყოვლისმომცველი სივრცული ხატი; სცენებში მონაწილე ადამიანების, ლოკაციების, ხედვებისა თუ ხმების შეპირისპირებით შექმნას მოქმედების ერთდროულობის ეფექტი, რაც *სპარსელებისა* და, კონკრეტულად, სალამინის ბრძოლის სცენის განსაკუთრებულ მხატვრულ ღირებულებას წარმოადგენს..

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