H's *Persians* contains a new text, a substantial introduction, a literal translation, a commentary, and a metrical appendix. The text fulfills a genuine need, since Sedgwick's school text and the brief commentary in French under the direction of J. de Romilly exhaust the possibilities for students. More experienced scholars will also benefit from H's work: the commentary supplements in places the more detailed commentaries of Broadhead and Groeneboom. Persian history and the place of the Persians in the Hellenic imagination have been the subject of intense scrutiny in the last two decades, and H employs the bibliography impressively in her introduction and commentary. Indeed, the concision and synoptic perspective of H's introduction to the play are in themselves a major achievement. The introduction should be required reading for students of theater and of culture to get their bearings on the play and the traditions of staging, studying, and interpreting it. The translation is serviceable: it should prove helpful to those with some Greek, who might use it to

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1 H's text is essentially a hybrid of Page and West with a slight preference for the latter. While acknowledging that she follows West on 99, 256, 981-82, 1008, 1076, she prints no concordance. H prints the same text as West prints at 162, 275, 277, 329, 334, 483-84, 532, 538, 555, 558-59, 761, 778, 815, 829, 845, 859, 865, 876, 900, 975, 989, 992, 997, 1006; her text is identical to Page's at 9, 93-100, 145-46, 245, 280-283, 288, 450, 571, 656, 666, 675-76, 850, 935, 940, 994; she prints a text different from both West and Page but the same as Broadhead at 312-18, 859-60, 944-45, 967, 1052; at 218 she reads τέκνω̒ with Heimsoeth, at 924 she prints Brunck's Αγβατάνων. It is impossible for me to comment on all of H's textual choices here. Suffice it to say she has selected a text that is as close to MSS as possible without presuming to conjecture what Aeschylus would have originally written. By the same token, she eschews some emendations Page accepted which seem to me to make a more readable text (e.g., Broadhead's τ' πέδον at 761; Schütz' deletion of 778; Keiper's πολίσματα at 859; Schütz' πόλεις at 900).
decipher the original. To judge it according to any other standard is probably unfair.

At the conclusion of her Introduction, H defines the aims of her commentary against those of her predecessors:

...the central purpose of my commentary is rather different from that of previous editions: military history is emphatically not a concern, and discussion of purely text-historical, philological, and metrical controversies is largely excluded. Instead the focus is on the visual and performative dimensions of the play, its emotional impact, its metaphors, symbols, imagery, and psychological registers; central concerns are the poetic vocabulary used to delineate the ethnically other, and especially the tension between the tragedy's 'translation' of authentic Persian practices and blatant misrepresentations emanating from its ethnocentric perspective. (28).

Assessed according to these criteria, the commentary is a success. H's notes distinguish the real from the imaginary in the Persians' depiction of Persia and its culture. In addition, H's comments on staging the drama and the impact of its song and spectacle are original (particularly her appreciation of the necromancy) and derived from a genuine understanding of the ancient theater. Scholars have investigated the imagery of Persians in minute detail; yet H still manages to convey fresh insights. Throughout she displays a refined sense for the interaction between language and spectacle. Although H does not list the epic subtext of the Persians among her central concerns, her commentary offers consistently helpful notes on the epic roots of the play's diction.

Few would deny H's central premise—that the Athenian imagination constructs the Persians as 'other,' and irrespective of historical truth, Persians figure the antithesis of the Athenian
identity. The difficult question is whether the Persians faithfully replicates a monolithic ideology, or whether it encodes a conflict of ideologies and employs the 'other' to represent the tensions and conflicts polis ideology and praxis elide or suppress. It is curious that H views the construction of the Persians as a psycho-social process (the imagined 'other' fulfills the needs of the self and society), yet neglects how this 'other' encodes the 'self' except in its most obvious function of preserving self-supremacy.

While H allows that the drama allows the 'covert exorcism ... [of Athenian] psychological pain,' (19) she focuses exclusively on the drama's negative imagination of the Persians as a positive act of Athenian self-definition. The presumption that Athenian self-definition is a non-controversial act in 472 or at any other time in history is difficult to accept. To be sure, an epitaphios logos might maintain the pretense of a non-controversial Athenian self-identity; but tragedy both asserts and problematizes this identity. The Persians offers evidence for the displacement of specifically Athenian tensions onto the Persians: the emphasis on the gulf separating Dareios and Xerxes, Marathon and Salamis, good civic order and disaster that empties the land (Athens was literally emptied out twice in 480 and 479), and the conflict between traditional land power and innovative, potentially disastrous naval power are as relevant to Athens in 472 as to Persia in 480. H uncritically accepts the stereotypical image of the bow and spear as metonyms for Persia and Hellas in the drama, yet the reality of the play belies the image. Salamis is a contest of hulls, and the bow and arrow are in Athenian hands on the island of Psyttaleia. The only spear in the play is the 'Dorian spear' at Plataia. While H displays little awareness of the historically conditioned vision of naval imperialism at the heart of the Persian disaster, she also omits how Aeschylus' Persians, like the Athenians, use the keywords ἕβη and πόθος in their memorials of the dead.² It might be that this tragedy, like
others, transforms the stereotypes of cultural ideology, displacing elements suppressed in the communal act of self-definition onto its dramatic figures. The drama may encode more specific markers for the audience’s identification with the ‘other’ than merely ‘pain.’

The concentration on a simple binary opposition between Persian and Hellene and the interpretation of the Persians as a mechanism of self-defense lead H to exaggerate the ethnocentric bias of the play. The following might be considered exemplary:\(^3\) the ‘Persian running’ of the messenger’s entrance, may be ‘a jibe...intended at the speed with which the Persians turned tail and fled from Greece.’ (247). ‘The central theme of the return march is the Persians’ inability to deal with hunger, thirst, and sudden changes in temperature.’ (n.480-514, p.144; repeated on n. 495-97). As for the Persian prayers before crossing the ice, ‘The implication may be that the Persians’ stupidly wasted valuable time in praying; if they had crossed the ice more quickly, they might all have escaped before the thaw’ (500). A similar reflex appears in n. 232: H claims that Aeschylus locates Athens ‘where the sun perishes,’ ‘because Athens is associated with light and Persia with darkness.’ The poetic tradition associates this place with Hades, zophos, and death. Athens and Salamis, where Persian corpses litter the sea and crash obscenely against the rocky shore, have this function for the Persians.

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\(^2\) In fairness to H, however, she does see the play in general as a ‘nascent expression of the very tension between Panhellenic ideals and Athenian imperial ideology which was to inform historiography, tragedy, and comedy throughout the fifth century’ (12).

\(^3\) Others include: ‘Aeschylus’ Persians are deficient in all four [cardinal virtues: intelligence, courage, self-control, justice]’ (361-2). 743: Xerxes discovered a \(\pi\eta\gamma \kappa\alpha\kappa\omega\nu\), but the Athenians have a \(\pi\eta\gamma \eta\) of silver that won them the battle; 778: the Persian succession implies, ‘an unstable and bloody barbarian court, susceptible to vicious intrigues and serial coups’; 841: Dareios’ parting injunction implies an ‘oriental preoccupation with sensual self-gratification’; 862-6: Dareios and Aigisthos are comparable as oikouroi.
The perils of this fashion of reading are evident in H’s interpretation of Pe. 378-383: that the messenger narrates the activities of the Hellenic fleet before the battle, chiefly because, ‘the delineation of the sailors in terms of orderly conduct, in conventional democratic language defining willing [emphasis H’s] obedience to authority is far more appropriate to the play’s overall picture of the Greeks.’ H’s stereotypes lure her into Procrustes’ bed factory. To substantiate her intuition of ‘Greekness’ in this passage, H adduces various forms of πειθαρχία as necessary signposts to democratic obedience. But the connection is an illusion. In tragedy, characters who assert their power beyond the democratic norm employ the word πειθαρχία (Eteokles, A. Se. 224; Kreon, S. Ant. 676). In the fourth century, the word implies Spartan military discipline (Xen. Ages. 1.27; Hell. 5.2.6; Isok. 5.111). H claims that, ‘Isocrates, in his patriotic Panathenaicus, cites πειθαρχία as one of the virtues which enabled the Athenian democracy to maintain its imperial hegemony’ (115). The passage explicitly says the opposite: the Athenian forefathers knew that ευταξία, σωφροσύνη, and πειθαρχία are characteristic of land hegemony while naval hegemony destroys the kosmos of the body politic; but they chose sea power because it was expedient for the polis to remain independent of Sparta (115-116). H cites Eccl. 762-64 as further evidence for her claim, but she fails to point out that while one speaker does indeed value πειθαρχία, the other speaker calls him ‘mindless’ to do so. It is much more likely that the sailors’ πείθαρχος φρήν at 374 is the complement to Xerxes’ deluded εὐθυμος φρήν while delivering his orders at 372. The word πειθαρχία provides no basis for the inference of democratic, Hellenic culture.

H likewise builds her case upon an implausibly radical change of register within the narrative. The messenger’s description of the sailors embarking as ‘lord of the oar...master of his gear’ (378-79) indicates that ‘The Persians’ socio-political hierarchies...are metaphorically transformed by the Athenian democratic imagination into descriptions of each citizen’s
relationship with the tool with which he will defend his own liberty.’ (n.378-9). A more cogent explication of the passage is precisely the opposite: the Persian messenger imposes the categories of his culture upon the fleet. And this fleet—even though the Persians are ‘other’—is capable of discipline and good order. The entire passage describes that brief and illusory moment of order, confidence, and discipline prior to the horror of the Greek attack at sunrise.

There are other grounds for rejecting 378-83 as a narrative of the Hellenic fleet: there is no explicit change of subject or narrative focus in the text; the messenger could neither have perceived these events nor could the Hellenic commanders order an all night διαπλοος; rather, they waited and let the Persian fleet deploy in the narrows, while their crews slept; the Persian side went into the battle on no sleep (Hdt. 8.76). The dramatic peripeteia of the passage is ruined if the messenger introduces the Hellenes at their meal: the narrative’s power resides in Persian shock at daybreak—after their nocturnal confidence and mastery—when they hear the echoing paian and see the spectacle of an unexpectedly belligerent Hellenic fleet.

H is ‘emphatically’ not concerned with ‘military history’ and apart from Pe. 382, where she would have us believe the Hellenes conducted an all night διαπλοος, this emphasis causes few problems. Occasionally an historical perspective would have added point to the commentary. For instance, H resorts to dubious psychologizing when she suggests in her n. to Pe. 102-107 that the images in the passage are ‘perhaps prompted by the Greeks’ astonishment at the Persians’ monumental architecture.’ This passage describes the ancestral warfare of Persians: sieges of walled fortifications and cavalry skirmishes, which contrast with Xerxes’ potentially disastrous turn to naval imperialism. The Persians were the preeminent siege power in the Aegean, and the Athenians proudly occupied the void they left (e.g. Eion Epigram; Thuc. 5.111.1). In her note on 586, H writes, ‘Under the democracy at Athens taxes were payable to the state, not to any
individual....’ This is misleading. Wealthy Athenians paid taxes in the form of liturgies; when eisphorai (in 428) and other occasional levies were introduced, they almost certainly were paid to an individual who bought the franchise from the polis. The point of the passage, however, is not about tax but about tribute, money payable to another state (or king), which signified the dependence or subjection of the payer. And in this regard, the antithesis between Athenian and Persian is not entirely clear-cut. Likewise, that Lemnos was ‘required by 472 to pay tribute to the Delian League’ (n. 890-6) implies that we know something about the status of Lemnos prior to 451, when it is assessed 9 talents. Most scholars assume that the island was assessed for tribute as part of the first assessment in 478/77.

H’s commentary offers excellent guidance on the theatrical and poetic issues of the Persians. Its concentration on the Persians as a diametrically opposed ‘other’ offers insight into an important aspect of the drama, but leads to several exaggerations and a few misreadings. It may also neglect the less obvious ways in which the drama transforms this construct to suggest elements of the ‘self.’

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4 H’s translation of Pe. 821-22 may also be classed here. Most translators render ἐκάρπωσεν as a gnomic aorist, and translate the lines as a general law, applicable to Hellene and Barbarian alike. H’s translation, ‘for hubris flowered and produced a crop of calamity, and from it reaped a harvest of lamentation,’ implicitly denies this. The Persians and their voice are incarcerated within the critic’s construct of the ‘other.’