

A.F. GARVIE, *Aeschylus' Supplices. Play and Trilogy*. Corrected edition, Bristol: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006², xxiii + 279 pp., ISBN 1-904675-36-0.

A.F. Garvie's *Aeschylus' Supplices. Play and Trilogy* (first issued in 1969 by Cambridge University Press) is, without doubt, one of the most fundamental books ever published on the subject of this problem-plagued, difficult, and enigmatic tragedy by Aeschylus. It would be no exaggeration to state that Aeschylean scholars may disagree with some of G.'s views, but all who choose to ignore or neglect them would do so at their peril. It is thus unfortunate that this book should have remained out of print for as long as it did, with used hardback copies exchanging hands for truly exorbitant prices in the second-hand market. Fortunately, Bristol Phoenix Press has now decided to put forth an affordable paperback edition of *Aeschylus' Supplices. Play and Trilogy* as part of their IGNIBUS Paperbacks series. Bristol Phoenix Press should be commended for making this essential and epoch-making book on Aeschylus available again for young scholars, libraries, and institutions.

The reissue of *Aeschylus' Supplices. Play and Trilogy* is all the more timely in that some of the problems discussed by G. have reared their heads again and become hotly debated points of contention among Aeschylean scholars. G.'s new Preface to Second Edition addresses important controversies and reassesses the evidence in twelve substantial and information-filled pages (ix-xx). The Preface to Second Edition offers fair and objective summaries of opposing views and criticisms that had appeared after the publication of *Supplices. Play and Trilogy* in 1969, and adds G.'s own responses to issues raised in connection with the material analysed in each of the four chapters of the book.

The new Preface tackles first the thorny and re-opened question of a possible early date for *Supplices* (ix-xii). G. still prefers 464/3 as the date of the play's first production (ix). G. gives a fair and

sympathetic hearing to the arguments offered in support of dating the Danaid tetralogy back from ca. 463 BC to ca. 470 BC, but advances nonetheless a few new considerations of his own in favour of the later date that ought not to be lightly discarded:

(1) The evidence from *POxy 2256* fr. 3 and from style (chapters I-II). G. continues to favour Lobel's restoration ἐπὶ Ἀρ]χεδημίδου (archon in 464/3 BC) for ἐπὶ ἄρ] in *POxy 2256* fr. 3 (= *TrGF 1* DID C 6 = *TrGF 3* T 70 R.), on the grounds that the irregular alignment of the lines and the difficulty to estimate the letters to be supplied make comparisons with, and extrapolations from, *POxy 2256* fr. 2 (= *TrGF 3* T 58b) quite problematic (ix). Indeed, considering that preferring ἐπὶ ἄρ]χοντος over ἐπὶ Ἀρ]χεδημίδου is a matter of choosing one plausible attempt at restoration (that of Snell for *POxy 2256* fr. 2) over another, equally plausible one (that of Lobel's)¹, caution seems to indicate that in view of the present lack of hard evidence it is best not to base an early date for *Supplikes* on such slippery grounds. G. mentions also that the surviving manuscript hypotheses to the plays seem to favour restoring ἐπὶ Ἀρ]χεδημίδου, although he acknowledges that this is just 'a statistical probability' (ix)². G. concludes that, although he is still inclined to date *Supplikes* in the 460s, he does not regard 470 as a date inconsistent with the evidence (xi, xv). Another point of contention about the evidence supplied by *POxy 2256* fr. 3 involves the actual year of Sophocles' first production in the City Dionysia (x). G. acknowledges that the ancient sources do not agree on the date of Sophocles' debut in the tragic agon: it is only the testimony of Plu. *Cim.* 8, whose historical veracity is highly suspect, that informs us that 468 BC was the year of Sophocles' first production (= *TrGF 4* T 36 R.). If, on the other hand, we turn to the evidence supplied by Eusebius/Hieronymus (*TrGF 4* T 32a R.), it follows that Sophocles joined the tragic contest in 470 for the first time, thus eliminating 468 as a *terminus post quem* for *Supplikes* (x). However, I would like to point out that the fact that Plutarch's source for *Cim.* 8 concocted such a clearly fictitious story to explain the reasons why an unknown, young

¹ See *TrGF 3* ad A. T. 58b, *TrGF 1*, DID C4a.

² See also H. Friis Johansen-E.W. Whittle, *Aeschylus. The Suppliants*, Copenhagen 1980, I, 22.

newcomer such as Sophocles was able to beat the old master at his own game, seems to indicate that ancient commentarists saw in Sophocles' successful debut a real πρόβλημα that needed all their ingenuity to solve³: the very absurdity of the *reasons* given for Sophocles' victory may in actual fact vouch for the historical veracity of Aeschylus' defeat by a newcomer's first production⁴. In any event, there is no good reason to prefer Eusebius/Hieronymus' dating for Sophocles' first production over that of Plutarch on the grounds of believability alone, considering that Eusebius had made the egregious (and self-contradictory) mistake of listing 468 as the year of Euripides' theatrical debut (*TrGF* 4 T 34a-e, 35 R.). There is no guarantee that he did not enter Sophocles' date as incorrectly as he did that of Euripides. G. notes as well that some of the later arguments from style and structure advanced in favour of an early date for *Supplices* are mostly 'similar to, or a development of, those which, before the publication of the papyrus, were used to prove a really early date for the play' (xi). G.'s own authoritative examination of such problems (29-140) had proven (successfully and conclusively, as I think) that, although internal evidence did not permit a secure dating of the play, some details of style and structure were compatible with a date in the 460s. G. goes on to clarify his own position regarding 'the study of a tragedian in terms of his development' (xi), which had come under some heat: although he cautions against the dangers of assuming that stylistic development always happens in a straight line, and acknowledges the restrictions imposed on successfully tracing stylistic developments by the fact that so

³ See M. Librán, "Teóride de Sición y la ΔΙΚΗ ΠΑΡΑΝΟΙΑΣ contra Sófocles", *Habis* 37, 2006, 98.

⁴ We have no way to know whether Sophocles was truly an unknown at the time of his first production. Some ancient sources could be interpreted along the lines that in a few cases young playwrights could collaborate with older, more established ones in order to gain exposure and experience before joining the contest in their own name (M. Librán, *Lonjas del banquete de Homero. Convenciones dramáticas en la tragedia temprana de Esquilo*, Huelva 2005, 38-9). If that were the case with Sophocles and Aeschylus (pupil and teacher according to some anecdotes), it is not impossible that the Athenian public should be acquainted with Sophocles before he entered the contest for the first time.

few Aeschylean plays are preserved, he concludes that it is 'not unreasonable to guess that if [*Supplikes*] had been a really early play, it would have differed from the other plays more than in fact it does' (xi). This seems to be a very sensible, cautious, and yet fruitful approach.

(2) Structure (chapter III). The next part in the Preface to Second Edition addresses questions raised about the structure of the play (xii-xv). G. argues that the high proportion of choral lyric cannot be taken as proof of an early date for *Supplikes*: while it is true that *Eumenides*, in which the chorus has a central role as well, has 'the lowest proportion of lyric to dialogue' in Aeschylus (xii), it is no less true that the chorus is *one* of the central characters in *Eumenides*, while it is *the* central character in *Supplikes* (xii), thus making very problematic any comparison between the relative extension of choral lyric interventions in both plays. G. defends his claim that the large choral part in *Supplikes* is best explained as the result of a dramatic experiment previous to the introduction of the third actor, rather than as a consequence of the play's early character, in that there is insufficient evidence to support the claim that the chorus had a dramatical central role in one-actor tragedy (xiii)⁵. Furthermore, the ancient evidence proves conclusively enough that a tragedy starting with a parodos need not be earlier or more primitive than another one starting with a prologue (xiv-xv)⁶. G. concludes this section on the evidence from style and structure for a revised dating of *Supplikes* by stating that, while a date in the 470s is possible, 463 is still the more probable candidate (xv). I would also wish to suggest that a date in the 470s would be difficult to reconcile to the evidence from vase-painting, which seems to indicate that a version of the tale consistent with the Aeschylean treatment of the Danaid matter was known to vase-painters in 460-450⁷.

⁵ I have argued that the experimental nature of *Supplikes*, and not its early date, explains many of the alleged problems in its supposedly deficient dramatic structure (*Lonjas del banquete de Homero*, 274-301, 351).

⁶ For an attempt to conciliate Themistius' and Aristotle's conflicting evidence regarding the introduction of the prologue and the third actor, see J. Vara, *Origen de la tragedia*, Cáceres 1996, 27, 29.

⁷ A. Kossatz-Deissmann, *Dramen des Aischylos auf westgriechischen Vasen*, Mainz am Rhein 1978, 55.

(3) Background (chapter IV). G. devotes p. xv-xvi to canvassing recent opinions on the political and ideological background of *Supplices*, and concludes, sensibly enough, that the reasons for Argos' anachronistic democratic constitution are fundamentally dramatic and artistic in nature, i.e. not political or propagandistic (xvi).

(4) Reconstructing the trilogy (chapter V). Lastly, G. offers some new considerations on the evidence for the lost plays of the trilogy (xvi-xx). He now believes that the correct reading for l. 8 is ἀπογενῆ φυξανορίαν and accepts that there was a supplementary chorus at the end of *Supplices*, probably composed of members of the Argive bodyguard. However, the evidence for the Argive bodyguard is not as strong as it is indicated here, and a case can still be made for a subsidiary chorus formed by the Danaids' own handmaidens⁸. Regarding the motivation for the Danaids' flight, G. re-examines the old question: are the girls opposed to marriage in general, and not just marriage to their cousins (xvii, cf. 221-3)? Doubtless those who believe that the Danaids are not amazonic in temper may invoke *Supp.* 996-1009 in their support (cf. 222); on the other hand, if the Danaids were not averse to marriage on principle and were not in need of being reconciled to their future roles as wives and mothers, both their altercation with the supplementary chorus (*Supp.* 1034-73) and Aphrodite's splendid celebration of marriage in the last play of the trilogy (*Danaides* fr. 44 R.) would make little dramatic sense⁹. G. goes on to review the merits of another explanation for the flight of the Danaids that 'seems to be gaining ground' (xvii): that the reason for the girls' refusal to marry their cousins was an oracle warning Danaus that he would be killed by one of Aegyptus' sons. This oracle crops up in a few versions of the tale (165)¹⁰, and its use by Aeschylus would mean that the first play of the trilogy was *Aegyptians* and not *Supplices* (xvii, cf. 186). Thus the Danaids' rejection of their suitors and their later parricide

⁸ See *Lonjas del banquete de Homero*, 338-50.

⁹ See e.g. D.J. Conacher, *Aeschylus. The Earlier Plays and Related Studies*, Toronto-Buffalo-London 1996, 107.

¹⁰ See also Friis Johansen-Whittle, I, 47, Conacher, *The Earlier Plays*, 109-11.

would be motivated by filial duty (xvii) and not by an innate hatred of the male sex. G. objects to using Sch. *Supp.* 37 ὧν τὸ δίκαιον ἡμᾶς εἶργει διὰ τὸ μὴ θανατωθῆναι τὸν πατέρα in support of this theory on the grounds that in Classical Greek διὰ + acc. is not usually equivalent to ἔνεκα. That is doubtlessly so, but in any event the parallel to this construction discovered by P. Sandin (*Aeschylus' Supplices: Introduction and Commentary on vv. 1-523*, Gothenburg 2003 [corr. edn Lund 2005], 11 n. 30: Sch. *Pers.* 353 διὰ τὸ μὴ παραδοθῆναι ταύτην τῷ Ξέρξῃ) seems to indicate that a purpose sense is not unthinkable here. However, this need not imply that either this scholium or that on A. *PV* 853a must follow Aeschylus' own material closely or reliably enough to guarantee a secure reconstruction of the trilogy (xix): it is not uncommon for scholia to explain tragic texts with the aid of stories extracted from alternate or even contradictory versions, culled often from non-tragic sources¹¹. Furthermore, as G. had already shown in 1969 (171), Sch. A. *PV* 853a, invoked often in support of the validity of the oracle-motif for the reconstruction of the Danaid trilogy, seems to indicate, on the contrary, that Aeschylus' version did *not* use the oracle as the reason for the Danaids' flight, whatever other poets said: καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀληθῆς τῆς ἱστορίας οὕτως ἔχει [sc. that the Danaids fled from Egypt to stop their father from being killed]: ὁ δὲ παρῶν ποιητῆς [sc. Aeschylus] φησιν ὅτι διὰ τοῦτο ἐλεύσεται εἰς τὸ Ἄργος ... αἱ πεντήκοντα θυγατέρες τοῦ Δαναοῦ, διὰ τὸ μὴ θέλειν συνελθεῖν εἰς γάμον τοῖς ἑξαδέλφοις αὐτῶν. G. concludes his excellent Preface with a complaint, and a desideratum (xix-xx): now that *Supplices* 'is seen to belong to the period of Aeschylus' ripe maturity', it comes as a disappointment that 'so little has been written to guide readers into some understanding of why it is such a good play' (xix). G. himself, in studying the role of foreboding, suspense, and surprise in the tragedy of Aeschylus ("Aeschylus' Simple Plots", R.D. Dawe et al. [eds.], *Dionysiaca*:

¹¹ Conacher, *The Earlier Plays*, 111, R. Falchetto, "Il Palamede di Euripide: proposta di ricostruzione", *Quaderni del Dipartimento di filologia A Rostagni*, Bologna 2001, 107-8. Compare e.g. with Sch. E. *Or.* 432, which may have stitched together (at the very least) Aeschylus' and Euripides' *Palamedes* plays to form a single account.

Nine Studies in Greek Poetry presented to Sir Denys Page, Cambridge 1978, 63-86, esp. 74-6), had pointed the way to a subtler and more nuanced understanding of the neglected virtues of *Supplices'* dramatic construction. This insight may surely prove very fruitful¹².

The Preface to Second Edition includes also a list of corrections of some minor misprints (xx)¹³ and an updated bibliography (xx-xxiii) listing editions and commentaries on *Supplices* published since 1969, as well as some monographs and articles which fulfilled the condition of being 'particularly relevant to the subject of this book' (xx).

It has been long recognized that *Supplices. Play and Trilogy* is one of the most essential books on Aeschylus' *Supplices* ever written. Published in the shadow of the ground-shaking 1952 publication of *POxy 2256 fr. 3*, it helped turn the tide against the until-then nearly universally accepted early date for *Supplices* and aided in establishing a date in the late 460s as the new consensus. The addition of G.'s thoughtful and stimulating response to some of the new arguments that seek to date *Supplices* in the 470s makes this book as relevant and indispensable now as it was when it first came out.

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¹² On the relevance of G.'s analysis for e.g. *Seven against Thebes* see *Lonjas del banquete de Homero*, 197-236.

¹³ It is all the more regrettable that misprints that are clearly not to be imputed to the author should become apparent in the updated bibliography. The most visible of these mars the title of M. Vílchez's (†) 1999 edition of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* and *Suppliants* for Alma Mater.