

Gaius Gracchus, after her husband's death.³² Whatever his attitude toward the radical Gracchans, he refused, as a strict constructionist, to be rushed into precipitate action on that day in 133 B.C. when Roman politics took a fateful turning in the wrong direction.

32. Cic. *Dom.* 136; *Dig.* 24. 3. 66.

33. T. P. Wiseman's "Note on Mucius Scaevola," *Athenaeum*, XLVIII (1970), 152–53, did not come to my attention in time to incorporate it into this essay. It was heartening to see that

Can anyone doubt that the Republic would have benefited had the precedent followed later been Scaevola's rather than Nasica's?³³

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his views generally accord with my own; however, his conclusion that a man who did not engage in factional politics was therefore not a "political activist" misses the point.

AESCHYLUS SUPPLIANTS 673

In a recent discussion of the phrase *πολιῶ νόμῳ* in *Suppliants* 673, Martin Ostwald raises a question about the translation.¹ Is the dative to be taken as a dative of cause, which yields "by virtue of a hoary ordinance," or as dative of means, "with hoary ordinance"? Is Aeschylus referring to an ordinance antedating Zeus and surpassing him in power, or is he referring to Zeus' governance itself as an establishment of great antiquity? Ostwald chooses, probably rightly, the latter alternative. Aeschylus wished the Danaids to attribute a rather vague antiquity to Zeus' control of *aisa*.

Closer study of the context, however, shows that Aeschylus chose the adjective, which occurs only here in his preserved plays, with additional considerations in mind. The phrase is part of the Danaids' blessing of Argos, a prayer that they announce and begin in the strophe (656–65), where their main concern is the safety of the young men from plague and war. The antistrophe (667–77) turns to the older, noncombatant men and then to the city taken as a whole. May the *πόλις* be well regulated, they pray, because it demonstrates *sebas* toward Zeus and in particular toward

Zeus Xenios. These lines contain a remarkable assonance: *πόλις εὖ νέμοιτο* (670) and *πολιῶ νόμῳ* (673). Ostwald remarks, "There is universal agreement, as far as I know, that [*νόμος*] is derived from the same root as *νέμω*. . . ."² The assonance between lines 670 and 673 could possibly reflect this root connection.³ The assonance of *πόλις* and *πολιῶ* blends two of the Danaids' obsessions: first, that Zeus Xenios will help to retrieve them from their situation because of his long-past affair with Io; second, that Pelasgos and the city of Argos owe them protection because of Io's Argive origin. Zeus they constantly picture as exalted and all powerful; Pelasgos they identify with the *polis* itself (370: *σύ τοι πόλις*). The word *πολιῶ*, therefore, has a double justification: it mentions the antiquity of the *nomos* by which Zeus directs *aisa*; it also strongly suggests that the welfare of cities, Argos in this case, is bound up with that *nomos*. Pelasgos may fear for his city (*πόλις*) if the Argives do not respect Zeus Xenios and his ancient (*πολιῶ*) regulation.

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1. *Nomos and the Beginnings of the Athenian Democracy* (Oxford, 1969), p. 28.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 9. E. Laroche, *Histoire de la racine nem- en grec ancien* (Paris, 1949), p. 163, summarizes the ancient consensus about *νομος*: "Déjà les Anciens, tout en admettant sa parenté avec *νέμω* étaient impuissants à définir le sens primitif et à expliquer, en partant de là, les dérivations ultérieures. Ils ne considéraient guère que le sens classique 'loi', qui est en réalité secondaire, et leurs étymologies se réduisent souvent à des jeux de mots ou à des rapprochements fantaisistes."

Laroche is not concerned to record "jeux de mots"; the earliest "etymology" that he cites is Plato *Laws* 714A.

3. In lines 402–6, where the chorus also reminds the Argive king that Zeus holds the balance and surveys everything, the words also occur close together: *νέμων εικότως / ἄδικα μὲν κακοῖς, ὅσα δ' ἐννόμοις*. Cf. also the adjective *πολισσονόμος* (*Pers.* 852) that describes the good life that Persians enjoyed under Darius; *Sept.* 233–35, where the only use by Aeschylus of *νέμεις* in the plays occurs soon after the phrase *πόλιν νεμόμεθα*; and the blessing on Athens in *Eum.* 916–20.