

THE REASON FOR THE DANAIDS' FLIGHT¹

The central question of Aeschylus' *Supplices* has usually been taken to be the reason for the flight of the Danaids. The most exhaustive guide to the many theories, of varying plausibility, which have been developed to account for this flight is provided by A. F. Garvie's book on the *Supplices*.² For present purposes, therefore, it is unnecessary to examine any but the two most acceptable theories in detail. Nevertheless, a brief summary, prior to this examination, of two other, initially attractive, views might be helpful to students of this problem, the first simply because it is so attractive to so many eminent scholars, the second because, while it fails to provide an acceptable solution, it suggests a useful approach to the problem.

(a) There are several grounds for the popular view³ that the Danaids suffer from an unnatural fear of marriage and excessive devotion to Artemis. It is argued that fifty girls could not otherwise find each of fifty suitors distasteful; the frequency of appeals to Artemis is noted; the description of the Danaids as Amazon-like (287) is cited; and Wilamowitz stresses *αὐτογενεὶ φύξανόρις* (8), translating it as 'aus angeborener Männerfeindschaft'. However, each argument is flawed. Such a naturalistic argument as the first is ill suited to Aeschylean tragedy and, besides, all fifty suitors might have committed a common fault in the Danaids' eyes; Artemis is the natural patroness of virgins and their prayers are more often to Zeus; the King likens the Danaids to several other non-Argive women apart from Amazons in the same speech; Wilamowitz's translation seems untenable.⁴

The most cogent argument, that the Danaids frequently object to marriage in general terms, can be met only by supposing that the original loathing of marriage with the sons of Aegyptus has increased so much in the Danaids' minds since their arrival in Argos that they categorize all marriage with any men together.⁵

Finally, why should Danaus feel it necessary to advise such fanatically virginal daughters as this theory creates to guard their chastity (996 ff.)?

¹ I am greatly indebted to Mr. A. F. Garvie of Glasgow University for reading the first draft of this article, thereafter providing a wealth of bibliographical information and, frequently, offering suggestions which corroborated and, occasionally, ran counter to my own opinions.

² A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Supplices: Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge University Press, 1969).

³ It has been espoused, in one form or another, by the following: U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Aischylos. Interpretationen* (Berlin, 1914), p.15; J. Vürtheim, *Aischylos' Schutzlebende* (Amsterdam, 1928), p.4; D. W. Lucas, *The Greek Tragic Poets* (Cohen and West, London, 1950), pp.82–4;

P. Mazon, *Eschyle* (Paris, 1958), p.7; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, 'The Danaid Trilogy of Aeschylus', *JHS* 81 (1961), 141–52; *et al.*

⁴ The complexities of interpretation at this early point in the play are more fully discussed on p.76.

⁵ In the most recent investigation of this problem—S. Ireland, 'The Problem of Motivation in the *Supplices* of Aeschylus', *RM* 117 (1974), 14–29—attention is usefully drawn to the fact that the chorus has two functions here, as chorus and protagonist, so that the general remarks of the Danaids *qua* chorus are to be set in the specific context which they provide *qua* protagonist.

(b) Couch⁶ argues that the Danaids, having preserved Greek traditions and worship in a barbarian environment, flee from marriage with Aegyptus' sons because the latter insolently despise the gods. The marriage is thus termed ἀσεβῆ (9; cf. 37–9, 226–8) because it would be with men whom the Danaids cannot reverence.

The idea that a conflict of cultures explains the flight is scarcely tenable. The King's concern with law (387–91) would be hard to credit if he saw clearly that the Danaids objected to their suitors' irreligion. Apart from the fact that only the charges of unholiness themselves support the notion that it is the alien culture of their suitors which repels the Danaids, it is worth noting that a contrast has been discerned between the foreign-ness of the Danaids and the Hellenism of the King.⁷ Still, the *Supplikes* could at least lend itself to the interpretation that two opposing views of the rightness of the marriage are put forward, and it might well be rewarding to look for some basis in Egyptian and Greek beliefs to explain the conflict. While the Danaids term the marriage impious, it may reasonably be inferred that Aegyptus' sons see it as right. The Herald, in asking by whom the sons of Aegyptus have been despoiled (932–3) and, more significantly, by denying that he acts δίκης ἄτερ (916–18), implies that the men feel they have a justifiable claim on these women. Any theory which would command conviction must explain why the marriage is described as 'unholy' and why the herald seems to consider right what the Danaids term unholy.

Two views seem to explain more of the play's enigmas than any of the others.

The first, and more stoutly resisted, of these is an attempt by Professor Thomson⁸ to argue that the Danaids take their stand on the principle of exogamy versus the demands of endogamy (as enjoined by Attic law in certain situations involving heiresses). The arguments for and against the theory have been so well rehearsed that only a summary is required.

He bases his theory largely on two passages, 335–41 and 8 ff., both seriously corrupt. In the former, he prefers ὠνοῖτο to ὄνοιτο (337) on the grounds that the suitors are not personally unacceptable; thus, the Danaids object to buying kinsmen to be their masters. 339 is translated so that it signifies that divorce is easy in endogamy if things go badly for the marriage. At 8 ff., he adopts Schadewaldt's ἀυτογενὴ φυξανορία, taking ἀυτογενή with γάμον and φυξανορία as a modal dative, 'in flight from men'. Thus, the Danaids reject 'marriage within the same family' as impious.

The most serious attack on the Thomson theory came from G. H. Macurdy,⁹ who pointed out that the Danaids are not in the position of Attic heiresses, because their father is still alive and opposed to the marriage; even if he were

⁶ H. N. Couch, 'The loathing of the Danaids' (abstract of paper), *TAPA* 63 (1932), liv–lv.

⁷ G. Méautis, *Eschyle et la trilogie* (Paris, 1936), pp.62–3. Garvie agrees with Méautis's notion, drawing attention to 234 ff. and commenting that the Danaids must presumably be as dark-skinned and foreign-looking as their cousins (155) and that, when the Danaids stress their Argive descent, they apparently forget that this

too applies equally to their cousins. (Private communication.)

⁸ G. D. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens, a study in the social origins of drama* (London, 1941), pp.298–309.

⁹ G. H. Macurdy, 'Had the Danaid Trilogy a social problem?', *CPh* 39 (1944), 95–100. See further A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens* (Oxford, 1968), pp.9–12, 132–8.

dead, the daughters could be claimed by the next of kin under Attic law only if he died intestate. As for divorce in these circumstances, Athenian heiresses, being under the archon's special protection, were far from easy to divorce.

His interpretation of 337 seems doubtful, both because φίλους is likely to be 'loved ones' in a line of such immediate proximity to that containing κατ' ἔχθραν (336) and because it is easier to see how ὦνοίτο was produced from ὄνοίτο than from ὠνοίτο.¹⁰ Moreover, at 8 ff., αὐτογενής is given an impossible sense. -γενής with other words in this play is always passive in sense; again, when αὐτο- is combined with a word of passive force, it must be taken with the force of an ablative reflexive pronoun.

The endogamy theory has not been abandoned however. In reply to Garvie's dismissal of it, Thomson has returned to its defence in an article which has not yet, to my knowledge, been answered.¹¹ Furthermore, Mr. E. W. Whittle accepts αὐτογενής with the sense 'of the self-same race' and would appear to give greater credence to the Thomson position than Garvie has accorded.¹²

At 8 ff., Thomson now accepts Headlam's restoration of the text ἀλλ' αὐτογενή τῶν φλυξαγορᾶν γάμον Αἰγύπτου παῖδων ἀσεβῆ τ' ὀνοταζόμεναι, 'abominating the incestuous, impious marriage with the folly-prating sons of Aegyptus'. 'Folly-prating' does not seem a particularly apposite epithet for the Danaids' enemies, as it is action and not words that would appear to trouble the Danaids, but the more crucial point is whether the translation of αὐτογενής will hold up. His objection to Garvie's calling αὐτογενής a ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, while technically fair (it does appear in Hesychius and schol. S. *Ant.* 864), is something of a quibble, in that αὐτογενής is assuredly a ἅπαξ in Aeschylus and in fact in all extant tragedy. Moreover the Hesychius entry supports the conventional view of its sense. αὐτογενεῖς does seem to have the desired sense in the scholiast's comment on *Ant.* 864—5 συνοῦσιν αὐτογενεῖς, although the passage explained, ἅται κοιμημάτα τ' αὐτογέννητ' ἐμῷ πατρὶ δυσμόρου ματρός . . . , would certainly not appear to yield a sense in αὐτογέννητ' equivalent to the scholiast's use of αὐτογενεῖς.¹³ Thomson is not in disagreement with these views; rather, he puts the case for a secondary sense, 'within the kin', underlying the primary sense, but the only instance of αὐτογενής used in the secondary sense, being in the scholiast, is of highly dubious validity for fifth-century poetry. Again, to show that αὐτογενής and συγγενής may have similar senses, he cites the use of αὐτοτράπεζος, ὁμοτράπεζος, and συντράπεζος all in the sense of 'at the same table'. On the other hand, this would appear to ignore the passive force of -γενής elsewhere in Aeschylus, a force which it is difficult to conceive of -τράπεζος as sharing. It is difficult also to detect sufficiently close correspondence between συγγενή . . . ἀνεψιών (*P. V.* 855—6) and αὐτογενή γάμον . . . παῖδων here. As has often been remarked, αὐτογενεῖ in the 'kin' sense would destroy the attractive antithesis between external (ψήφω πόλεως) and internal causes for flight.

¹⁰ Garvie, in a private communication, points out an additional objection, that, although one expects the article not with the predicate but with the object, Thomson has to take φίλους as object and τοὺς κεκτημένους as predicate.

¹¹ G. D. Thomson, 'The Supplices of Aeschylus', *Eirene* 9 (1971), 25—30.

¹² E. W. Whittle, 'Textual Notes on Aeschylus', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 29 (1972), 1—15.

¹³ Jebb takes αὐτογέννητ' as μετὰ τοῦ αὐτῆς γεννήματος on the analogy of κτύπος . . . διόβολος in the *O. C.* as κτύπος τοῦ ἐκ Διὸς βέλους.

On the passage 335–9, it is not difficult to accept his view that *φίλους* covers the two senses of 'dear' and 'kin', but harder to agree that, in answer to the King's question, which does involve alternatives, the Danaids reply that both are true. The analogy which is offered (*Ag.* 626–9) does not demonstrate this sort of question and answer very convincingly. The most natural way to read the latter passage would be that the Herald agrees with the second alternative—that Menelaus was lost from sight in a storm and did not (as the first part of the question seems to imply) leave Troy alone.

Thomson's inference that Garvie takes *οὕτως* as 'even so' is not entirely fair, since the latter offers (p.220) a paraphrase rather than a translation. 'Line 338 can mean "Marriage may be advantageous in strengthening power, even if it is not based on love . . ."' There is no Attic parallel for *μέν* adversative, but there is such a use in Homer, *Il.* 24.92.¹⁴ Denniston¹⁵ takes the present *μέν* as an example of the so-called *μέν solitarium*, quoting from Tucker, 'strength at least (whatever may be the case in other respects)'.

While Thomson's renewed defence of these points is not convincing, especially since his article still fails to meet the objections raised on the legal issues, he is justified in objecting to Garvie's assent to Miss Wolff's cavalier dismissal of *ἀπαλλαγή* in 339 as meaning 'divorce', because '... divorce would be the very thing that the Danaids would presumably want'. There are two usual interpretations of 339 in its albeit perplexing context. It is taken to mean either that divorce is easy when things go wrong, or that it is easy for the king to rid himself of his troubles. If the Danaids' objection were based on kinship, the former would be the more attractive explanation, since, when marriage is within the family, the wife has no other family to whom she may run when things go wrong. Even then, it should be recalled that the archon protected Athenian heiresses, at least, from suffering indignity. Nothing in Thomson's argument has proved, however, that the Danaids' loathing is based on kinship. Still, it is ridiculous for the Danaids to state as a relevant objection to the king's apparent viewpoint in 338 that divorce is easy. Whatever view of their objection is taken, they would indeed, as Miss Wolff states, hardly mind being thus separated from men that they dislike so intensely that, according to the Promethean account, they are soon to slay them, thus incurring a worse reproach than that which, as Euripides' *Medea* says, attaches to divorced women. On the other hand, it is difficult to accept that the Danaids feel that the King has an easy method of release from his troubles, or that they themselves have. If the latter were so, they would not be so dependent on his aid. The only alternative which they seem to have is death (154–61). This death might conceivably be designated as *εὐμαρῆς ἀπαλλαγή* and certainly the audience has previously learned of the Danaids' intention to commit suicide in the last resort. The King, however, knows nothing of this intention until line 465. His puzzled questioning of the chorus's meaning, from 455, shows his ignorance of any hint of suicide prior to this. Therefore, unless there is a lacuna after 339, the King believes that the chorus has now made some sufficiently cogent point, other than a suicide threat, by reason of which his remark about the value of marriage is vitiated, and that he must now consider his righteous duty to them. If the former were so, and

¹⁴ And see A. Sideras, *Aeschylus Homericus* (Göttingen, 1971), for parallels in language between Homer and Aeschylus.

¹⁵ J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*² (Oxford, 1954), p.380.

the King had an easy release from trouble, he would not react so strongly to the thought of danger of war (154–61), a danger of which the Danaids cannot surely be ignorant when they ask not to be delivered up (341). Again, the suppliants cannot think their suicide to be an easy means of release for the King (472–3).

The only explanation which seems feasible, unless there is a lacuna, is that the line should be read as an indignant, rhetorical question, which would imply that divorce is *not* easy for women to obtain. Denniston¹⁶ says, 'και, not followed by an interrogative, sometimes introduces surprised, indignant or sarcastic questions', and proceeds to quote examples from Sophocles and Euripides. That this should be an indignant question seems highly likely. The King has tried to divert the Danaids' attention from the hatefulness of the suitors to the value of marriage itself. The chorus concedes his point, but brings him back sharply to the immediate problem, which is not a consideration of marriage as such, but of their personal happiness in this particular marriage. He has said that strength increases in this way (οὕτως). They counter with an expression whose sense approximates to, 'Indeed. And is release from marriage [i.e. divorce], if things go ill, easy?' The King has to abandon his standpoint, one which he takes to avoid embroiling his land in warfare, and to proceed to ask how he may deal righteously with them. This appears to give the passage coherence, although the thought of the stichomythia is so compressed.¹⁷

Despite all that has been written above on Thomson's view of the Danaids' reasons for flight, I believe that he has provided us with an invaluable clue to part of the play's meaning. While he has not, in my view, convincingly established the theory that the Danaids take a stand on exogamy, there appears to be no better theory for the Egyptians' behaviour than that they take a stand on endogamy. It has already been noted that the sons of Aegyptus would appear to have some sort of right on their side and that the Herald thinks of the Danaids as his property (918). Note that he asks who despoils the sons of Aegyptus of their cousins (932–3). Here, he implies that the Egyptians have a claim on the Danaids, on the grounds of their relationship. Elsewhere, the mention of the Danaids as kindred may show no more than that the charge of violence is aggravated by neglect of kinship duties. The sons of Aegyptus treat the Danaids harshly in prosecuting an unwelcome marriage, even though they ought to be kindly disposed towards their cousins. Again, it may be merely for descriptive purposes. At this point, however, the mention of the blood relationship by the Herald gives the fact that they are cousins sufficient stress to permit the conclusion that the men have a claim on the Danaids as cousins. It would hardly be suitable for the Herald, however hybristic by nature, to call attention to the harshness of cousin to cousin here, where he is attempting to find bases for taking the girls away, and where he believes that he is acting according to right (916, 918). One can scarcely accept that the epithet is purely descriptive if the audience is reminded so unfortunately but inescapably of the relationship, and hence of the normally good offices of cousin to cousin, by such a suggestive descriptive epithet as ἀντανέψιον (933). Moreover, it is noteworthy that, when

¹⁶ J. D. Denniston, *op. cit.*, p.311.

¹⁷ Garvie makes the point that a less clearly enunciated link in thought between 338 and 339 is possible; the Danaids, suspecting an attempt to find an excuse to refuse their appeal in the King's question

about θέμις, voice 339 less as an answer to 338 than to the King's implied attitude, the translation being, with δυστυχοῦντων taken as masculine, 'It is easy to get rid of people when they are in trouble.' (See A. F. Garvie, *op. cit.*, p.220.)

the King wishes to apply legal standards in his decision and so questions the suppliants about Egyptian law (387–91), they make no direct answer to this point, appealing instead to heavenly justice. While it is unknown whether the audience would, from the context or prior knowledge, associate endogamous marriage with Egypt, and therefore assume that Aegyptus' sons' implied legal claim rested on this basis, current practice in Athens, in the event of an heiress's father's dying intestate, would suggest to the Athenians that Aegyptus' sons' interest in the Danaids is based on desire for property, rather than lust for these women, although that too may be present.¹⁸

Here, it may be objected that, if the sons of Aegyptus believe in endogamy as right and the Danaids object to these suitors, then the Danaids do indeed, by implication, take their stand on exogamy, as Thomson has always argued. However, the refusal by the Danaids to tackle questions of law must be considered, especially when they could have argued on a legal basis, for both in heroic times and in fifth-century Athens the father's legal right to marry his daughter to whom he pleases is customarily recognized. Nevertheless, there is no appeal to earthly law by Danaus or the Danaids throughout the play. However, if 337 follows 336 directly in the play, and if one accepts *ὄνοιτο* in 337, there is an implicit refusal to discuss the legal aspects. Emphasis is thus displaced on to personal feelings and the impurity of disregarding these. The King wishes to apply legal standards in his decision and so questions the suppliants about Egyptian law (387–91), but they make no direct answer on this point, appealing instead to heavenly justice (395–6, 402–6).

If Aeschylus will not allow his play to include a legal discussion, although he can argue the legal rights of the Danaid cause convincingly there must be a good reason for this omission. This is surely that he does not wish to have interest deflected from the main theme to a subsidiary one, which could become engrossing if allowed to develop at all. Zeus' justice is, arguably, the main theme of the *Oresteia* and almost certainly of the *Prometheia*. It may be paramount in this trilogy, also. Zeus upholds *δίκη* in the opinion of the chorus and punishes *ὑβρις*. *δίκη* throughout is considered in connection with the Danaids, *ὑβρις* with Aegyptus' sons. It would be distracting to introduce the theme of the conflict of legal systems. This would inevitably happen if any discussion of the legal side of the question were allowed to develop, since Aegyptus' sons appear to take their stand on Egyptian law, and the Danaids would presumably have to appeal to Argive (Athenian) usage. Aeschylus would then have to answer the question of Zeus' relation to foreign law. As the upholder of statute law, can he decide in favour of Attic law's supremacy over Egyptian law, thereby undermining the position of Egyptian statutes?

The most widely accepted theory of the motive for the Danaids' flight is that the violence of the sons of Aegyptus is abhorrent to the women. This is especially so, perhaps, because these violent suitors are their kin, and male kin are traditionally supposed to protect womenfolk. Thus, the frequent references by the Danaids to the blood-relationship of their suitors, though suggestive of incest or

¹⁸ The Danaids do, certainly, attribute lust to them (758, 820). D. M. MacDowell, 'Hybris in Athens', *Greece & Rome* 23 (1976), 14–31, concludes that 'hybris in

the *Supp.* refers primarily to excessive male desire for women' (p.17). What is primary to the Danaids' thinking may be secondary, however, to the sons of Aegyptus.

endogamy as the root cause of loathing, are intended to demonstrate the heightened sense of horror at violent suitors who are also cousins.

The sons of Aegyptus are accused of ὕβρις,¹⁹ and marriage with them is contrary to θέμις (37–9). The use of words apparently more suited to religious defilement has diverted scholars' attention from the most reasonable explanation and sidetracked them to considerations of such pollution as that occasioned by incest, for example. One passage alone demonstrates fairly unequivocally that it is the violence of the suitors which is deplored. This is 226 ff., where Danaus compares his daughters with doves menaced by hawks. The impurity of Aegyptus' sons lies in their wresting an unwilling bride from an unwilling father. It is to be observed that a word with religious connotations, ἀγνός (228), is used, indicating that the suitors' violence is considered irreligious. Danaus goes on to talk of punishment from Zeus even in Hades (228–31).

The bird imagery of the play may help us to substantiate the cause of the Danaids' flight, when it appears in passages other than the crucial area discussed above.²⁰ However, the bird imagery is only one part of a wider image of hunters and hunted, creatures which are predators and creatures which are prey. The Egyptians are hawks and the Danaids doves at *P. V.* 857. The former are also like ravens (751) in their lack of respect for altars. At 510, the Danaids are saved from being a prey to winged creatures. At 351, the chorus is like a wolf-chased heifer appealing to the herdsman King for protection. The Egyptian herald is that predatory insect, the spider, at 887, and, shortly after, at 895, a snake.

Once the notion that the Danaids flee from an enforced marriage is accepted and when the frequency of the predator/prey metaphors is noted in this connection, Prometheus' words (*P. V.* 857–9) may be given a new interpretation. It is always taken that he claims that the marriage hunted by the sons of Aegyptus is 'wrong', 'forbidden', 'unholy', etc., when the most likely sense is, to coin an epithet, 'un-hunttable'. In other words, Aegyptus' sons hunt a marriage, but marriage is not something to be hunted. A similar notion of the inappropriateness of the chase may be offered by *Supp.* 87—

Διὸς ἕμερος· οὐκ εὐθήρατος ἐτύχθη.

which is usually translated to signify that Zeus' desire is 'hard to trace'. The difficulties of this corrupt passage have induced Page and Friis Johansen to accept Westphal's transposition of lines 93–5 to follow line 87 immediately. Thus, Zeus' desire is not well able to be hunted, 'for in thickets and darkness stretch the ways of his mind'.²¹ Is it not possible that the Danaids identify themselves with Zeus in this respect and that neither will yield to the compulsion of predators?

Two further points might be made in connection with the view that a hunted marriage is wrong and that the Egyptians are attracted to the Danaids primarily for their property and in violent lust, not at all from ἔρως.

Aphrodite's speech in the last play of the trilogy has always been recognized to concern cosmic ἔρως and the fruitfulness of the earth as an oblique justification of marriage. Nobody, however, appears to have been impressed by the

¹⁹ At 30, 81, 104, 426, 487, 528, 817, 845, 880 ff.

dans la poésie d'Eschyle (Paris, 1935).

²⁰ For bird imagery in the *Supplices*, see Chapter I of Jean Dumortier, *Les Images*

²¹ H. Friis Johansen, *Aeschylus: The Suppliants*, Vol. i (Copenhagen, 1970), 59.

attribution of ἔρωσ to each partner in the union, although it is emphasized by the appearance of the related verb and noun at the beginning of the first and second lines respectively and further stressed by μέν and δέ. It would not merely be the Danaids who would need to be converted to another view of Aphrodite on this reading, but any male suitors. If the endogamy theory is correct, and the sons of Aegyptus are scarcely more driven by ἔρωσ than the Danaids, surely a radical change is suggested for both parties in the dispute, and the reverse of the hunted marriage, associated as it is here with love of property, compulsion, lack of consent, is presented as an ideal, a marriage that involves mutual attraction and consent. Any doubts inspired by the Aristophanic Aeschylus' boast that he never depicted a woman in love may be stilled by reference to *Ag.* 540–5, where there is evidence, albeit indirect, that reciprocated ἔρωσ may be valued as a desirable element of life even in Aeschylus. The Herald's tentative guess at the chorus's meaning in this passage suggests that they are playing with words, using terms appropriate to personal passion in an alien context. (Note especially *τερπνῆς* . . . *νόσου* at 542.)

The logical connection of that part of the Aphrodite fragment which concerns fertility has usually been taken to be that sexual union is necessary because without it no living thing is created. The Danaids would have to be inordinately naïve to require such information. More importantly, the stress on ἔρωσ goes for nothing in this explanation. If the presence of ἔρωσ in both partners is passed over, then the fragment could be taken to justify even the 'hunted' marriage.

If, then, the Aphrodite fragment implies that all generation is a process of mutual attraction and consent, leading to fertilization and birth, a perennial problem in Prometheus' speech about the Danaids may be more easily soluble than hitherto realized. Many scholars have been distressed by the ambiguity of *P. V.* 865:

μίαν δὲ παίδων ἕμερος θέλξει τὸ μῆ . . .

a crucial line in that it indicates Hypermnestra's reason for sparing Lynceus. The words may be taken as 'desire will charm one of the children' or 'desire for children will charm one', and there is nothing in the passage to allow us to decide for one or the other, since *παίδων* need not necessarily be taken with *πεντηκοντάπαις* of 853. Our inability to separate the themes of desire and motherhood may well be because, in Aeschylean thought, mutual desire and fertility are inextricable. Whether the split choral song at the end of the *Suppliques* is sung by two semi-choirs, or a chorus of Danaids accompanied by handmaids or by Argives,²² it is clear that the Danaids, who have prayed for fertility in the Pelasgian land, are at this point becoming, or are being made, aware of Aphrodite's workings. To restrict the Greek of *P. V.* 865 to one significance only is to deny it its economically allusive power and to confine Aeschylus' thought in limits too narrow to be truly representative.²³

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²² See esp. V. van der Graaf, 'Les suivantes dans le chœur final des Supplantes d'Eschyle', *Mnemosyne* (Ser. 3) 10 (1942), 281–5; H. Lloyd-Jones, 'The Suppliques of Aeschylus: The New Date and Old Problems', *AC* 33 (1964), 356–74; H. Friis Johansen, 'Progymnasmata', *Classica*

et Mediaevalia 27 (1966), 61 ff.; A. F. Garvie, *op. cit.*, 194–5; E. W. Whittle, *CR* N.S. 20 (1970), 296–9.

²³ For a thorough appreciation of the frequency and value of ambiguity in poetry, see W. B. Stanford, *Ambiguity in Greek Literature* (New York and London, 1942),

and, for information on ambiguity in
Aeschylus, A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia*.
A Study in Language and Structure (The

Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington
D.C., 1971).