

PATTERNS OF GENDER IN AESCHYLEAN DRAMA:
SEVEN AGAINST THEBES AND THE DANAID TRILOGY

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One organizing principle of extant Aeschylean drama is the confrontation and interaction of masculine and feminine polarities. These confrontations may be benign or hostile, but ordinarily on stage male does not confront male or female female, and if they do, these encounters do not bear the decisive weight of the dramatic actions of the play.¹

Not only does the confrontation of male and female provide the structural foundations of the extant Aeschylean plays, but the dramatic stances themselves are sometimes strongly contrasted. If, for example, Prometheus is fixed and immobilized, Io, his female opposite is highly kinetic.² If the Theban women are agitated, Eteocles is at first cold and calm. If he is beset with inquietude, they plead for temperance and good counsel.

These theatrical distinctions are representative of the more general ways in which Aeschylean drama replicates the ideological configurations of the division of the sexes in his society; there is a prevailing tendency towards maintaining (and prescribing) the cultural distinctions between masculine and feminine spaces, activities, characterizations, modes of thought, and spheres of interest.³ We can inventory these rules in fact through their transgression—either when the representatives of each sex seem to embody an extreme, and hence unacceptable, version of masculine or feminine behavior (e.g., Eteocles and the women of the chorus in the *Seven*; the Danaids and their Egyptian suitors in the *Suppliants*) or when the gender lines are crossed, and virilized women, such as Clytemnestra of the man-counselling mind in the *Agamemnon*, take control of the proceedings and work their will on men whose concomitant weaknesses are thereby revealed.

These violations, although socially and morally transgressive, especially for the female, are also intrinsic and essential to the conduct and themes of the drama. The extreme positions, which are often taken up at the beginning of a play (or trilogy), establish the issues at stake and the sources of contention. They are already signs of the tragic conflict to come as well as harbingers of the dramatic imperative that dictates disaster (as in the *Seven*) but also moves towards modification, moderation, and forms of compromise or alliance (*Oresteia*, Danaid trilogy, *Prometheus*).

Although Sophocles too has his strongly paradigmatic contrasts between male and female characters like Creon and Antigone, his drama does not seek solutions to antagonism or polarization between the sexes. But his aim is not, [104]like that of Aeschylus, to treat the drama as an aetiological testing ground for the validation or “creation” of social institutions (e.g., law court, religious cult) under the integrative rule of the *polis*. This is why Aeschylus can and does use confrontation between the sexes to address the broadest social and even cosmic issues and, at least in two trilogies, to establish a system of checks and balances in the civic domain to guard against masculine aggrandizement and exclusiveness but also to control and modify the “unnatural” exercise of feminine power.

This interaction between the genders (involving both chorus and characters) works then as a powerful means of exchange around which Aeschylus most often focuses the dynamic energies of his drama and whose effects he expands to include not only questions of male and female, self and other, individual and society, but also the situating of all these issues in the wider, more comprehensive world he constructs as a complex network of interdependent relations, conflictual forces, shifting alliances, and finally, organized hierarchies of value and power.

These last named features of Aeschylean drama are well known. What I want to stress is first the highly patterned, even schematic nature of this theatrical world in which dramatic figures are highly codified types, endowed with certain clusters of attributes and interests, and functioning at times as almost abstract ideational entities. Second, there is enough consistency, even formal regularity, in the extant plays to warrant our exploring some facets of these gender categories and how and why they are deployed in his theater. Such an approach is by necessity quite drastically simplified; it cannot take account of the resplendent textures of Aeschylean language, nor even of the nuances of the elaborate arabesques traced out in this interplay between the sexes. Rather I can sketch out only certain trajectories in briefest form for the purposes of this essay. Yet granting these restrictions, there is something to be gained, I think, from examining the contrapuntal relations between different plays with very different aims and outcomes. This strategy will help to clarify the specific features of their respective dramatic structures as well as to grasp some of the larger abstract principles that inform the dynamic rhythms of Aeschylean drama in which male and female have their important parts to play, not only in the “politics of gender,” but in the implications of the kind of *polis* Aeschylus envisions as he presents the differing patterns of power relations between the sexes and invokes the qualities symbolically associated with each. I have therefore chosen to compare and contrast a pair of dramas, the *Seven* and the *Suppliants*, precisely because the first puts the spotlight on the male, Eteocles, the second on the female Danaids.

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The *Seven* and the *Suppliants* can be contraposed as opposites and complements of each other, both centering on the problematic which is

fundamental to Aeschylean thought and dramaturgy: namely, the interrelationships of the *genos* (family of origin, family of procreation) and the *polis* (the civic, military, and political domains).⁴

The *Seven* is the last play of a trilogy (whose first two members are lost) while the *Suppliants* is the first play of a trilogy with only a few fragments [105]surviving from its sequels. One takes place in the city of Thebes, the other in Argos; each exemplifies the ideological traits, which, as I have argued elsewhere, tend to be associated in Athenian drama with the representation of specific locales.⁵ Thebes is the place of defeat and exclusion; Argos here is the place of inclusion and potential integration. Thebes must expel its own in the son of Oedipus, while Argos can introduce and incorporate outsiders into its city. This dialectic between inside and outside operates at a number of levels in both plays, within the city itself and without, and both plays are constructed around the issue of bringing in from the outside (the alien warriors attacking Thebes, who though Greeks and Argives, are said to speak with a “foreign tongue” [ἐτεροφώνωι στρατῶι, *Se.* 170], and the suppliant Danaids coming from Egypt, whose acceptance will entail in turn the hostile incursion of their barbarian suitors).

The most important linking point between the two trilogies, however, resides in their mutual concern with the maturational process of the individual in society. For the *Seven*, the issue is that of the male, who, although already in a position of authority as general (*stratêgos*), must individuate from his brother in order to claim his father’s position in both public and private spheres. In the case of the *Suppliants*, the female is the focus of interest, and the issue is not war, the exemplary masculine activity in which the warrior may win his renown, but rather marriage, the critical event of female life which effects her passage to social adulthood.⁶ The fact that marriage does indeed become war when the Danaids slay their husbands on their wedding night and that the forthcoming doom of Eteocles is shadowed with a certain erotic diction of desire (*erôs*, *Se.* 688; *himeros*, *Se.* 692) demonstrates the crucial value, in dealing with ideological and mythic structures, of working with a dialectic structure in which the terms are both fixed and yet interchangeable and causally interrelated.

Similarly, the opposition between male and female, so constantly and starkly established, should not obscure the fact that for both genders, entry into adulthood requires the abandoning of dreams of autonomy—inviolability, and avoidance of intimate relations with others. For Eteocles, this refusal takes place in his desire to maintain control over others. He sees himself as “helmsman of the ship of state” (*Se.* 62), as “one among the many” (*Se.* 6), and, as the interpreter of the shields, he confidently seeks to control and appropriate the resources of language and intellect for a wholly masculine world and expresses his contempt for all women (*Se.* 181-95; 256).

The Danaids’ refusal is at first corporeal in nature, represented as the vehement defense of their virginity. In the *Seven*, armor protects the body; the shields are the means of defense for both attackers and defenders. In the

Suppliants, on the other hand, feminine untouchability is manifested in their dual status as both virgins and suppliants. Those who sit at the altars are, by religious conventions, sacred to the god and are therefore equally untouchable. In this sense, the suppliant and the virgin are isomorphic categories, although they function too as antithetical to each other inasmuch as the virgin is courted by suitors, while the suppliant must, as the Danaids in fact do, court the good will of their host and press their suit for formal acceptance as aliens in the city.

[106]The most significant point of contact, however, between Eteocles and the suppliant Danaids is, in fact, their extreme positions with regard to the opposite sex: the misogyny of Eteocles' outburst against all women of whatever variety (*Se.* 181-202) has its counterpart in the seeming misandry of the Danaids, who although opposed to their Egyptian cousins in particular (marriage with them is incestuous, they are violent men) often extend their objections to include the race of males as a whole and view their cause as a passionate contest between the sexes (cf. *Su.* 29, 393, 487, 818, 951).⁷

Additionally, for both Eteocles and Danaids, the problem of separation from the father and his far-reaching authority is a crucial factor in their dramatic situations. As the last play in a trilogy which spans three generations, the *Seven* reveals the ineluctable power of the father over his offspring in the fulfillment not only of Oedipus' curse but also of the oracle given to his father, Laius, in the first generation, a confluence which at the moment of crisis insures the brothers' doom. The case of the *Suppliants* also involves the overwhelming influence of two paternal figures—the maidens' own father, Danaus, who is their commanding leader, guardian, intercessor, and legislator of their actions and comportment, and also the supreme god, Zeus himself, who is called upon not only as *Hikesios*, protector of suppliants, but in his capacity as father of their race. Zeus is invoked as “the first begetter” (*γεννήτωρ*, *Su.* 206), “the father lord and planter by his own hand, the great ancient artificer of their race” (*πατήρ φυτουργὸς αὐτόχειρ ἄναξ γένους παλαιόφρων μέγας τέκτων*, 592-94; cf. 313, 172), and his union with their ancestor Io is continually recalled (*Su.* 15-17, 40-46, 291-315, 524-37, 575-89, 1062-67).

In deferring to their father's experience and authority, the Danaids are only conforming to typical family patterns of filial subordination and dependence, especially of unmarried daughters. But the intensification of that dependence through their appeals to both Danaus and Zeus and their emphasis on the mating of mortal and immortal of a bygone mythic time alert us to the potential dangers for their future in their continuing and violent aversion to marriage. There are also other more sinister signs in the autocratic rule of the father over his daughters which might hint at developments to come. For as some have suggested, Danaus himself may have become a political *tyrannos* in the next play in keeping perhaps with his autocratic paternal temper,⁸ and it is likely that he exerted pressure on his daughters to kill their bridegrooms.⁹ Moreover, if the one daughter, Hypermestra, spares her husband, she is at the same time defying her father, an act that may have led to her public trial in Argos at his behest.¹⁰ According to the social rules, marriage necessarily entails

the father's agreement to give away his daughters to other males and not to keep them forever at the paternal hearth, a role he might also have had to adopt at the end of the trilogy in sanctioning the re-marriage of his daughters to other suitors.¹¹ Whatever the particular details of the ending, the celebration of the state of matrimony on the analogy of the *hieros gamos* of Uranus and Gaea (fr. 44 Radt) implies some limitations placed upon paternal power against monopolizing (and curtailing) the destiny of his descendants. In the downward spiral of the *Seven*, however, not even does death itself disjoin the son from the father (or his brother). All three, as the chorus predicts (*Se.* 1004), will lie in [107]close proximity to one another, mingling their blood as authentic bloodkin (*homaimoi*, *Se.* 937-40) of a single *genos* in an eternal family reunion.

There is yet a further set of implications for the characteristic arc of developments assigned to each sex. Eteocles, at the beginning of the play, had seen himself as "one" (*Se.* 6), alluding in the context, of course, to his role as *stratêgos* of the Theban warriors, and emblematic too of the male desire to forge a unique name and identity. Yet this self-reference ironically conceals another and determining distinction between himself and the group that will develop in the course of the play to reveal the split between the Cadmeians and the autochthonous Spartoi, to whom the city belongs, and the family of Laius, whose presence both within and without the walls must be eliminated if the *polis* is to be saved. Eteocles' singular concern for his *kleos*, the warrior renown that is embedded in the etymology of his name, Eteo-kles, leads instead to defeat and non-differentiation, as remarked above, and even to the submerging of his identity with the pluralizing force of his brother's antithetical name (Poly-neikes; full of strife) in the choral lament after his death (*Se.* 829-30).¹²

The opposite holds true for the Danaids, who are not only subordinated to their father, but themselves constitute an unindividuated collective, speaking (or singing) with one voice, dressed in the same costume, and adopting the same attitudes towards their status as virgins. The problem then is one of individuation, of emergence from this collective group into separate figures, each to be assigned to a particular partner. If the split chorus at the end of the first play represents, as some have suggested, the first antiphonal interchange between them¹³ and the first sign of a breach in their unanimity, Hypermestra, it is quite certain, must have later at least singled herself out from the group.

Each trilogy also orchestrates its own modulations of the continuing Aeschylean preoccupation with the relations between the *polis* and the *genos*. In the *Seven*, the family of Laius has proved unviable for the well-being of the city. It poses, in fact, a radical menace to the city's continuation as a communal entity, first by having confounded normative family structures in incest and parricide, and then by translating the disorder of the family lineage into the new and current problem of attack upon the mother land and the father's city. *Polis* and *genos* are shown to be fundamentally incompatible in Thebes. This conflictual relationship is exemplified in the original oracle given to Laius that "dying without issue you will save the city" (*Se.* 745-49), a pronouncement

whose full meaning is realized only in the third generation with the death of the two childless brothers and the end of the family.

Eteocles' strategy had been to align himself wholly with the interests of the city, with the identification between the mother as earth and her autochthonous Spartoi who are bound by the military code to defend her. The corollary of this attitude is the initial refusal to recognize his identity as the son of Oedipus (family of origin); and in his damning of all women, he effectively rejects what would have been his family of procreation. This overvaluation of one term over the other (*polis* vs. *genos*) and the concomitant confusion in the treatment of kin as non-kin began with the two acts of Oedipus (incest, parricide), continued with the brothers' neglect of the nurture (*trophê*) they owed their father (the act that occasioned his curse), and culminated finally in their [108]mutual desire for fratricide. These factors explain the logic of Eteocles' behavior at the fateful moment, when he reverses his original patriotic stance on behalf of the city and determines to stand against his brother in battle. For dramatic *peripeteia* depends on a balancing out of one excess with its precise opposite so as to serve as a pivot between the first and second parts of a play. It is, in fact, in attending to the fine calibration between the initial representation of the character and what later happens to him (or her) that retrospectively the underlying themes, motivations, and transgressions of each particular drama are revealed.

In the Danaid trilogy, these same two issues of *genos* and *polis* are foregrounded in even more explicit ways and involve much higher degrees of complexity. The overarching theme, after all, is how to establish marriage as a necessary social institution that both establishes separate households and yet integrates them into the larger community of the city. The Danaids are centered on their family of origin under the auspices of their father and dedicated to the ancestral myth of their *genos*. Yet, as the prevailing ideology dictates, it is expected that they will eventually make the transition to the family of procreation. Yet the problem of *genos* is complicated further by the fact that one of the major objections the Danaids raise to marriage with their Egyptian cousins is the fact that they consider it a form of incest, although the first play never makes quite clear why this should be so, given what we know of both Egyptian and Greek laws of consanguinity.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it would seem that on these grounds the Danaids' insistence on exogamous partners, if any, provides a direct and significant contrast with the disastrous arrangements of the family of Laius.¹⁵

The counterclaim raised by questions of *genos*, however, also faces in the other direction, away from Egypt to Argos, and compels the king (and the democratic council of citizens) to confront the potential conflict between the interests of family and those of the *polis*. As suppliants, the Danaids claim rights of protection and sanctuary to which all those who are weak and defenseless are entitled.¹⁶ But they also insist on the further justification of their demands by the fact of their kinship, through their ancestor Io, with the city of Argos. The king's dilemma is whether to honor these claims (both of

supplication and of kinship) in view of what his acceptance of them entails. Taking the Danaids into the *polis* poses a serious political hazard for the citizens who will have to do battle with the pursuing Egyptians and to risk their lives and even the city's security in order to guarantee the safety of those who are related to them only by a remote connection of kinship. Thus despite the vastly different implications of *genos* and kin (*homaimoi*) in the *Seven* and the *Suppliants*, in both cases the claims of the *genos* on the *polis* are potentially disruptive and dangerous.

The fact that Pelasgus and his citizens consent finally to extend their protection to the Danaids is a sign that this community, idealized as a proto-democratic city, accepts the principles of kinship but balances them with the political needs of the group. Pelasgus is perhaps the antitype to Eteocles in that he is conscious from the start of the demarcation line between public and private domains, first distinguishing between his own altars and those of the [109]city (*Su.* 365-66), and later, between his private quarters of residence and the public ones of the *polis* (*Su.* 957-61). The Danaids, in turn, by their need to address the king and to gain the approval of his people in a politically approved procedure, are already compelled to consider a countervailing principle to their exclusive emphasis on the primacy of the *genos*, domestic concerns, and ritual power.

The most marked contrast finally between the roles and interests assigned to male and female is the fundamentally asymmetrical nature of their relationships to one another and to their society. That the male claims precedence and priority over the female as a matter of hierarchical principle is evident in the institution of marriage, as Apollo proclaims and Athena ratifies so definitively in the *Eumenides*. It is even more taken for granted, of course, in the political arena which is viewed exclusively as the domain of men.

The male is expected to take his place in the central space of the city in the spheres of public action and to take up positions of authority and leadership in both war and politics. While the *oikos*, the household, is also in his charge and belongs to him in his roles as father and husband, Aeschylean drama, as indeed all tragedy, as in fact the social standards ordain, situates him outside and reserves the interior domestic space for the woman. What this spatial restriction means is that the female is generally out of place when she comes outside, whether out of the house or on the stage.¹⁷ It is this transgression of the norm and all that it implies in its challenge to masculine control that is often the focusing point for the dramatic conflict between the sexes; it is the tell-tale sign of the typical tragic situation and of the crisscrossing claims of male and female interests.

Eteocles' diatribe against the women who have rushed out, unbidden, from their homes to the city's acropolis in their fear at the enemy's advance categorically and succinctly states the case: "What is outside is a man's province: let no woman debate it: within doors do no mischief" (*Se.* 200-201). The house contains and confines the woman, providing, of course, that she has a house and is not a suppliant fleeing to alien shores. The king and his citizens

may grant the Danaids temporary shelter but it is the institution of marriage that will give her social space and status.

The woman belongs to the inside, but in entering through the doors of the marital household, she is indeed an outsider—an other, whom the husband must take in for his own. The suppliant maidens therefore also serve as ideal representatives of the feminine position. By their genealogy they are really insiders to the city-primordial insiders—but by their upbringing in Egypt, they are exotic outsiders. Pelasgus uses a technical term, *astoxenoi* (*Su.* 356), to describe their status as foreigners linked to the city by *genos* (or *phusis*),¹⁸ but the term might be applied metaphorically to all marriageable and married women.

Furthermore, there is a certain important parallel between the situation of the suppliant and that of the virgin maiden. Both are untouchable, as I have remarked above, but both also stand outside the social system on its threshold. Thus incorporating the suppliant into society by bringing her first inside the *polis* functions as a preliminary phase of that other ceremony that will [110]incorporate the virgin into marriage and bring her inside to her husband's house. We are reminded here of the Pythagorean injunction which instructed husbands to be faithful to their wives and to beware of mistreating them by neglect or base conduct, and advised that "they should also consider that a man has brought his wife into his home after having taken her, to the accompaniment of libations, from the hearth, like a suppliant, in the presence of the gods" (*Iamb. VP* 9.48; cf. 18.84).¹⁹

The other side of the story, however, is the larger question of control and rule over women, who are not merely humble suppliants but also unruly and disruptive forces. As such, they represent not only the passions and emotions considered characteristic of women, but all such ungovernable instincts of fear and ill-omened anxiety, the expression of which elicits Eteocles' violent reproach. The male appeals to reason, calculation, and rational strategy of a military encounter. The females turn to those other ungovernable forces—the gods—as their single resort. The battle between the two opposing views is first staged as one between the women's view of the gods as all-encompassing forces and Eteocles' more practical and rationalizing outlook.

But the battle is also in truth a contest of words. It is framed initially as Eteocles' wish to deny the chorus the right to speak at all, insisting, as the cultural rules would have it, that women should always be silent.²⁰ If women are to speak at all, it is men who will coach them in the proper forms, as Eteocles does with the chorus in directing their prayers (*Se.* 261-81) and as Danaus instructs his daughters (*Su.* 197-206; cf. 710).²¹

Men may try to dictate the proper mode of expression. But another contrast in speech obtains between the sexes. The women's voice, as befits a chorus, is primarily lyric, hymnal, and prayerful, like that of their collective counterparts, the suppliants, and in the first stasimon they also seem to blur a number of important distinctions in envisioning a battle within the city that has not taken (and as it turns out, will not take) place, and one where enemy and

defender are strangely equated—ostensibly in the confusing turmoil of armed struggle (e.g., ἄλλος δ' ἄλλον, *Se.* 340; πρὸς ἀνδρὸς δ' ἀνῆρ, 346; κενὸς κενόν, 353). The women therefore mix (and mix up) both the categories of present and future as well as those of inside and outside. Eteocles, on the other hand, is a man who characteristically is careful to discriminate and maintain differences, as he chooses each time the appropriate Theban to stand against the Argive attacker.²²

That the son of Oedipus should be confident of speech, especially when it comes to questions of riddles and oracles (as the shields of the attackers are posed), is both ironic and predictable. It is also the means to his doom, when he finds his brother at the seventh gate; and with the death of the two of them, the chorus, as I have remarked earlier, takes up the interpretive role to link up past and present, enemy and defender, which had seemed so contrary to fact in that earlier stasimon.

Eteocles' strategy had been concerned with the *kairos*, the exact moment of present time. It had rejected (or repressed) the *muthos* of the family, which with the return of the brother equally signals the return of the *muthos* of the house of [111]Laius and the burden it bears for the immediate future together with its attendant Erinys.

This visionary quality in Aeschylean theater is assigned to women, whether to Clytemnestra in the beacon speech and the subsequent description of the fall of Troy, or to Cassandra, the priestess, who is truly the clairvoyant. It is Cassandra, like the chorus of the *Seven*, who can put together past, present, and future, where the chorus of male elders remains baffled and confused. The visionary outlook also links up with that other significant attribute assigned to the female: namely, her close associations not only with the gods, but with both myth and ritual.

These critical terms of myth and ritual are a mode of establishing the rule of temporality—for the first, as a narrative structure (myth), and for the second, as a calendrical punctuation in time (ritual). But this outlook also reaches outside of temporality, beyond temporality, to the timeless cycles of repetition. It is perfectly consonant with cultural ideology that the Danaids be concerned less with the *logos*, as men define it, and more, like the Theban chorus, with questions of myth and ritual worship. The suppliants, bound to their past by the myth of their ancestor, Io, view time precisely in this mode of repetition, and yearn for nothing more than the impossible wish to relive and repeat her story (e.g., νέωσον εὐφρον' αἶνον, *Su.* 534). Eteocles, by contrast, in his obliviousness to the past—the *muthos* of the family—is condemned to repeat (and thus conclude) it. He moves ahead only to find that he has returned back to the place of origin, at the converging point of the oracle to Laius and the curse of Oedipus upon his sons.

The conclusion to the Danaid trilogy must provide an escape from the mythic bind. It must open the Danaids out to the future, even as it requires them ultimately to give in to ordinary sexual union with a male and to renounce the miracle by which Io conceived Epaphos through the touch and breath of

Zeus. The *hieros gamos* of Uranos and Gaea recounted in the fragment of the last play attributed to Aphrodite maintains a mythic paradigm but shows Earth longing to be penetrated (*τρῶσαι*) by her mate.

If the loss of Io as their model is turned into a gain through resort to a still more primordial and world-creating myth, the loss of their autonomy in the human domain may have been balanced out by the compensatory bestowal of a ritual of their own. Such a solution can only be speculative, of course, but it has been suggested that the Danaid trilogy ended (among other things) with the founding of the Thesmophoria festival,²³ reserved only for women. It was the one opportunity for women to leave the restrictions of their homes in favor of the independence (and exclusiveness) of a feminine world, and, unlike Apollo's rewriting of the woman's role in reproduction, the festival celebrated the essential contribution of the female to society.

Ritual occupies the middle space, as it were, between the normative self-effacement of the female and the transgressive emergence into the outside world, especially in the domain of politics. Ritual also, paradoxically, reaffirms the social roles, by reconnecting female fertility to that of the earth with its implications of woman's place in the social structures. But the foundation of the festival and the honoring of her role can work as the recompense for [112]surrendering the feminine body to the violence men's sexual advances might seem to inflict. Herodotus (2.171) tells us that the Danaids brought the Thesmophoria from Egypt to Argos. The establishment of this cult would be an appropriate conclusion that accords well with the logic of the trilogy, even as it is set out in the first play. The conduct and aims of the Thesmophoria involve a cross between abstinence and fertility,²⁴ and the foundation of the festival would appease the Danaids, even as the cult of the Eumenides is offered to the angry Erinyes.

The Erinyes, like the Danaids, are also received into the city and given a home, where they may retreat out of sight. But in the *Seven*, the Erinyes of the house of Laius has not been deflected from her purpose, and, as the chorus tells us, there is no question of including her among the other gods of the city (*Se.* 720-26). Blessings in the *Suppliants* and curses in the *Seven*—the first to end in the beneficence of a fruitful *hieros gamos* of Earth and Heaven (fr. 44 Radt), the second in the allotment of earth only for burial (*Se.* 819-20, 906-07, 914, 947-50, 1002-1004). The two trilogies are finally contraposed to one another in the matter of earth, that which supports the life of the city and upon whose soil the tragedies are played. Male and female are, for the moment, put to rest.²⁵



NOTES

1. Throughout his long and varied career of scholarship, Thomas Rosenmeyer has turned again and again to the study of Aeschylus. Beginning with an early provocative

piece on the relations between the poet's theology, the sophist Gorgias, and the concept of *apatê* and continuing with a study on the *Seven*, as insightful and readable today as when he wrote it, he has given us the recent book-length study of the dramatist, which caps a lifetime of study of Aeschylus, Greek drama, and Greek poetry in general. This work bears the unmistakable stamp of Thomas Rosenmeyer at his very best: his awesome command of later literature (and music) over which he ranges with tact and assurance, his penetrating gaze into the complexities of thought and expression, and above all, his remarkable attunement to language that is reflected not only in his analyses (and translations) of individual poetic passages but in a style of writing, so rich and arresting as to be worthy of its mighty subject. I offer this essay to him in affection and homage.

2. I accept the authenticity of this drama.

3. On conflicts and divisions between the sexes in Aeschylean drama, see in particular, R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Clytemnestra and the vote of Athena," *JHS* 88 (1949) 130-47 (revised in *Studies in Aeschylus* [Cambridge 1983] 101-31), Michael Gagarin, *Aeschylean Drama* (Berkeley 1976) Index. s.v. "Female Forces and Values," and Froma I. Zeitlin, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*," *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 149-84 (now in John Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan, eds., *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers* [Albany 1984] 159-94).

4. In what follows, I have drawn upon some of my earlier analysis of the *Seven* in *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes*, (*Filologia e Critica* 44, Rome 1982) to place more emphasis on the women of the chorus. For the *Suppliants*, I have made some preliminary remarks about the trilogy in [113]"Configurations of Rape in Greek Myth," in S. Tomaselli and R. Porter, eds., *Rape* (Oxford 1986) 137-43, and the further discussion in "La Politique d'Eros: Féminin et masculin dans les *Suppliantes* d'Eschyle," *Métis* (1989). This material is part of a larger study in process. Citations to the *Seven* are from the Oxford Classical Text, ed. D. L. Page (Oxford 1972). Citations to the *Suppliants* are from the edition of H. Friis Johansen and E. W. Whittle, 3 vols. (Copenhagen 1980).

5. See "Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian Drama," in P. Euben, ed., *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* (Berkeley 1986) 101-41.

6. "Marriage is for the girl what war is for the boy: for each of them these mark the fulfillment of their respective natures as they emerge from a state in which each still shared in the nature of the other. Thus a girl who refuses marriage, thereby also renouncing her 'femininity,' finds herself to some extent forced towards warfare and paradoxically becomes the equivalent of a warrior. This is the situation of females like the Amazons and, in a religious context, of goddesses such as Athena: their status as warrior is linked to their condition as *parthenos* who has sworn everlasting virginity." So J.-P. Vernant, "City-State Warfare," in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (tr. J. Lloyd, Sussex and Atlantic Highlands, N. J. 1980) 24. The piece originally appeared as the introduction to *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne*, ed. J.-P. Vernant (Paris and the Hague 1968).

7. The Danaids' motives for rejecting their suitors are overdetermined in the play and are never made entirely clear. There is a large bibliography on the topic. For the most recent discussion, see E. Lévy, "Inceste, mariage, et sexualité dans les *Suppliantes* d'Eschyle," in *La Femme dans le monde méditerranéen* (Lyon 1985) 29-45. The objections to the misandric tendency of the suppliants in Friis Johansen-Whittle (supra n. 4) vol. 1, 30-33, are unconvincing.

8. Any interpretation of the Danaid trilogy must, of course, remain conjectural, given the loss of the two following plays (except for some fragments and other testimonia

pertinent to the myth itself) and the badly corrupt text of the one that remains. I concur with much of what is suggested by R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "The Danaid Trilogy of Aeschylus," *JHS* 81 (1961) 141-52 (revised version in *Studies in Aeschylus* [supra n. 3] 55-72). See also A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Supplikes: Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge 1969) 163-233, for a full repertory of suggestions, and see too A. J. Podlecki, "Reconstructing an Aeschylean Trilogy," *BICS* 22 (1975) 2-8, and Friis Johansen-Whittle (supra n. 4) 40-55. I accept the following: Danaus assumes the kingship but becomes a *tyrannos* (for the evidence, see the sources in Friis Johansen-Whittle, 48). The state was threatened in some way by the Danaids' action and this threat was complicated by the *miasma* of kin murder and violation of *xenia* obligations. In the sequel altars played an important part and the Danaids may well have had to return to the altars, now as homicides. In addition, there was perhaps a legal procedure of some sort and the inauguration of a new dynasty for Argos through the union of Hypermestra and Lynceus. I concur in the theory that the drama ended with the establishment of the Thesmophoria, as I shall argue infra. I am not sure of the recent, but very interesting, proposal of R. Seaford, "The Tragic Wedding," *JHS* 107 (1987) 112-17, who suggests that the last play staged the remarriage of the Danaids and provided the aetiology of the *hymenaios* or wedding song.

9. This detail is in almost all the sources, as Friis Johansen-Whittle (supra n. 4) 48 point out.

10. Pausanias 2.19.6, 2.20.7, 2.21.1.

11. See especially Seaford (supra n. 8).

12. See my *Under the Sign of the Shield* (supra n. 4) 37-42.

13. See in the last instance Lévy (supra n. 7) 43-45 and his note 140.

14. For an excellent recent discussion, see again Lévy (supra n. 7) 29-37.

[114]15. The *Seven* too invokes exogamy as the counterpart to incest (or excessive endogamy), but it too is in its extreme and unacceptable form, when the chorus in the first stasimon envisions the forcible seizure and abduction of the city's women by the alien attackers (*Se.* 321-35, 363-68). The fear that hostile men will invade their territory and abduct and violate women is therefore a theme common to both the Danaids and the Theban chorus, although the issues of endogamy and exogamy are reversed.

16. As Pelasgus tells the suppliants in regard to the coming vote of the *dêmos* concerning their petition: "It may well be that someone will feel pity at the sight of you and become hostile against the insolence (*hubris*) of the company of males, and that the people will be better disposed to you. For every man acts favorably (with *eunoia*) towards the weaker" (*Su.* 486-89). On supplication in tragedy, see J. Kopperschmidt, *Die Hikesie als dramatische Form. Zur motivischen Interpretation des griechischen Dramas* (diss. Tübingen 1967) 11-34, and J. Gould, "Hiketia," *JHS* 93 (1973) 74-103.

17. In the *Eumenides*, the Erinyes are out of place inside within Apollo's temple which is reserved for one and only one other female figure, the Pythia, his porte-parole. There are other legitimate reasons for women to be outside, such as ritual errands (thus in *Cho.*, Electra, and the women of the chorus, who are actually sent by Clytemnestra).

18. Friis Johansen-Whittle (above n. 4) *ad loc.*

19. For a further discussion of this and other relevant testimony to Pythagoras' ideas about matrimony, see C. J. de Vogel, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* (Assen 1966) 110-11. On the woman as *metoikos* at her husband's hearth, see J.-P. Vernant, "Hestia-Hermès: sur l'expression religieuse de l'espace et du mouvement chez les Grecs," in *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs* (Paris 1969) 103-105. In the Aeschylean context, it is worth noting another Pythagorean passage which instructs married women in their duties: "And as for their relationships to their husbands, he enjoined them to

remember that their fathers, too, had allowed their daughters to love the men they had married more than their parents. It was therefore right either not to oppose their husbands at all, or to consider that they would achieve a victory, if they gave in to their husbands" (Iamb. *VP* 11.54, tr. de Vogel).

20. Eteocles' injunction is entirely conventional, in keeping with the rules of social invisibility—neither to talk (nor to be talked about): Soph. *Aj.* 293 γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἢ σιγῇ φέρει ("silence is a woman's adornment," quoted by Aristotle, *Pol.* 1260a30), is a proverbial saying. Cf. also Soph. fr. 64.4 Radt, Eur. *Hclid.* 476, Ar. *Lys.* 515, and Democr. B274 DK. But when we consider the rules of dramatic convention, Eteocles' demand takes on a very different cast. How can one, in fact, forbid a chorus to speak (or dance)? Thus, if Eteocles would instruct the chorus how to speak and act, might we view him almost in the role of a *chorêgos* who is training his chorus on stage? In one sense, he is attempting to educate (*didasklein*) the women into the civic (and choral) role of the community to accord with his view of it. But, on the other hand, the power struggle between them, in which Eteocles tries and fails to silence the women, is on the theatrical level an early (and symptomatic) sign of Eteocles' incipient separation from the city, which the working out of the curse will require.

21. In the *Suppliants*, Pelasgus also intends to teach Danaus in what manner he should speak before the assembly of the people (διδάξω ... ποῖα χρῆ λέγειν, *Su.* 519) but it is never spelled out or reiterated.

22. On this contrast, see T. G. Rosenmeyer, "Seven Against Thebes: The Tragedy of War," in *The Masks of Tragedy* (Austin 1963) 19.

23. See Garvie (supra n. 8) with bibliography, especially D. S. Robertson, "The End of the *Supplikes* Trilogy of Aeschylus," *CR* 38 (1924) 51-53 and G. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens*, 3rd ed. (London 1966) 308.

24. On the Thesmophoria, best known in its Athenian form, see especially L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 50-60; L. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States* [115](Oxford 1896-1909) III.83-112; M. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig 1906) 313-25, and *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*² (Munich 1955) I.461-66; E. Fehrle, *Die kultische Keuschheit im Altertum*, *RGVV* 6 (Giessen 1910) 137-54; J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1922; repr. Cleveland 1966) 120-34; P. Arbesmann, s.v. Thesmophoria, *RE* VIA (1937) 15-28; W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 365-70; M. Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis* (Sussex Highlands, N. J. 1977, tr. of *Les Jardins d'Adonis* [Paris 1972]) 78-83, 129-30, and *passim*, and "Violentes 'eugénies,'" in M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, eds., *La Cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec* (Paris 1979) 183-214; F. I. Zeitlin, "Cultic Models of the Female: Rites of Dionysus and Demeter," *Arethusa* 15 (1982) 129-57, and "Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae*," in H. Foley, ed., *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* (London 1981) 169-217. K. Dahl, *Thesmophoria: En graesk kvindefest* (Copenhagen 1976) collects and comments on all the ancient sources.

25. My thanks to the editors for helpful criticism and comments.