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Aeschylus' Supplices: Play and Trilogy

A. F. Garvie

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This book's first appearance (1969) was a full response to the publication (in 1952) of a papyrus fragment from Oxyrhynchus which indicated a late production date (in the 460s BC) for Aeschylus' Supplices, thus upsetting the previous scholarly consensus that it was an early work - indeed the earliest Greek tragedy to survive. There was, the book argued, no longer good reason to suppose that the play belonged to an early stage in its author's development. A final chapter also examined the evidence for reconstruction of the other, lost plays of the trilogy.The present (and first paperback) edition remains essentially unchanged, though a new preface has been added to take account of scholarship since 1969. Few would now argue, as they used to, that Supplices belongs to the 490s but some still have the feeling that it looks like an early play; they attempt to put it back into the 470s. Stylistic and structural evidence, itself often subjective, is not strong enough to place the play in one decade or exclude it from the previous one; but Garvie remains convinced that, even without the additional testimony of the papyrus, all the internal evidence points to the 460s.While the view that Supplices is very early may now have died, some of the salutary lessons of P.Oxy 2256 fgt. 3 have still to be learnt and it is timely for this re-issue to be presented to a new generation of Aeschylean students and scholars.

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