

Beyond Aristotle: Webs of Emotions in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*.
Claudia Zatta (Wabash College)

Modern scholarship considers the emotional effects of tragedy a coessential feature of ancient drama (Heath 1987, Griffin 1998). Thus, it ordinarily follows Aristotle's view in the *Poetics* that the proper pleasure of tragedy rests on feelings of pity and fear (1449b27-8). Even when the emotional spectrum of tragic effects is widened to encompass other emotions (such as anger, shame, or longing) that are not mentioned in the *Poetics*, (i.e. Stanford 1983), Aristotle's influence is still present; for, as in the *Poetics*, for modern scholars emotions depend on deeds that happen among friends (i.e. Stanford 1983, des Bouvrie 1988, Belfiore 2001; *Po.* 1453b18-22). In this paper, I offer a more nuanced reading of tragic emotions and pleasure, by drawing attention to the dimension of collective misfortune that often looms over individual falls in drama. I argue that because the heroes' actions not only hinge upon friends, but also have profound repercussions on the polis to which they belong, tragedy's effects upon the audience are webs of multiple, fluid, and at times discordant feelings, rather than single, clean-cut emotions. Aeschylus' *Suppliants* offers a good example of such emotional intricacies. It represents the intersection of characters at the verge of a crisis that is different in both nature and outcome. In this tragedy, Danaus and his fifty daughters, Pelasgus and the city of Argos are all exposed to misfortune, but at different tempo and under contradictory circumstances. While the suppliants progress towards safety, which coincides with their introduction within the walls of Argos, king and city face a second supreme danger. For if the acceptance of the suppliants rescues Argos from an imminent pollution, it throws it into the menace of a siege. Pelasgus spoke truly when he claimed that "there is no issue without grievous hurt" (*Su.* 442). These alternate vicissitudes of the play's characters elicit a continuum of emotions. New fears for Argos, its king and its inhabitants must follow the joy that derives from the temporary rescue of the suppliants and the respect of religion whose positive consequences the maidens voice in the famous ode of blessings they invoke upon Argos and also in their successive addresses to the gods (*Su.* 625-709; cf. *Su.* 600; 1018-1032). In facing the temporary safety of heroines and city, the prospect of blessings, and, at the same time, the obscure, impending dangers for Argos and its ruler, the audience feels a pleasure that goes beyond the mere emotions of fear and pity for the individuals of the play. Rather, after a detour through the joys of anticipation, the tragic pleasure stems from deep fears for the collective destiny of Argos and its anonymous people, whom –we know from scholarly reconstruction (Winnington-Ingram 1983)—will become the subject of pathos in the rest of the trilogy.