

## When the *Exodos* is not the End: The Closing Song of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*

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WHEN THE DANAIDS begin the closing song of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, spectators have already heard a sympathetic, if unspecific, account of their quarrel with the Aegyptids. They have heard the Danaids reject the Aegyptids unequivocally, and they have seen the Danaids, with their father's help, successfully enlist the Argives to protect them from their unwanted advances. It is no surprise, then, when the Danaids ask in the closing song that Artemis protect them from the "the rite of Aphrodite under compulsion" (1030–1033). Yet this prayer is followed immediately by an encomium to Aphrodite that includes a kind word for Hera (1034–1051), whom the Danaids have previously mentioned only as Io's tormentor. Most critics now attribute the encomium to another chorus. The Danaid chorus continues to reject sex and marriage and the Aegyptids in particular. Another chorus, composed either of the Danaids' handmaidens or of their father's Argive bodyguards, sings here for the first time to challenge the Danaids' potentially sacrilegious view of marriage. If we assume that Aeschylus was concerned first and foremost with presenting consistent portraits of his characters, this is the only acceptable solution. If, however, we acknowledge that there is more to this story and recall that Aeschylus was famous for generating suspense in his plays and taking his spectators by surprise (cf. *Ar. Ran.* 907–926), we can consider a less drastic approach to the text.

I argue here that the closing song is sung in its entirety by the Danaid chorus, now split into hemichoruses that divide each strophe and antistrophe of the first two strophic pairs (1018–

1021 vs. 1022–1025; 1026–1029 vs. 1030–1033; 1034–1037 vs. 1038–1042; 1043–1046 vs. 1047–1051) rather than singing the pairs in opposition to each other (1018–1033 vs. 1034–1051) as is commonly done.<sup>1</sup> In this song, they reveal that, despite a rejection of marriage to the Aegyptids that at times appeared to be rejection of marriage to all men, they do not in fact oppose marriage and sex absolutely. They may even consider a kind of compromise with the Aegyptids in light of their suspicions that Zeus himself, who they hoped would save them from the Aegyptids, has in fact sanctioned the union. This sudden change of heart complicates our picture of the Danaids. If they are not absolutely opposed to marriage, why do they reject the Aegyptids? Will they remain steadfast in their opposition and risk divine anger? Will they seriously consider marrying the Aegyptids against their father's wishes? Or will they devise a new solution that acknowledges the necessity of the marriage while side-stepping sex and the threat of a potentially life-endangering son-in-law, i.e. the murder of the Aegyptids on their wedding night?<sup>2</sup> The prospect of a conclusion that emphasizes, even compounds, the play's silences and ambiguities surrounding the Danaids, their father, and the Aegyptids has understandably troubled modern critics trying to make sense of the play in the absence of its trilogy.<sup>3</sup> This uncertainty and

<sup>1</sup> The distribution in the dialogue remains the same; the hemichoruses divide the final two strophes between them (1062–1067 and 1068–1073) rather than reuniting to sing them. The text used here is West's 1990 Teubner.

<sup>2</sup> See below for the oracle according to which Danaus was to be killed by his son-in-law. I do not intend to argue here that the Danaids did not kill their husbands, that Danaus' oracle is not a factor, or even that the Aegyptids absolutely must have appeared in the next play of the trilogy. I am interested only in the expectations raised by the *Suppliants*. The next play may have met them or flatly contradicted them depending on the goals of the text.

<sup>3</sup> The introduction of a chorus of Argives or handmaidens, such that the Danaids simply maintain their original position, does not, however, explain the ambiguities regarding the circumstances of the Danaids' flight and their

heightened suspense would have been less bothersome and perhaps even enjoyable for ancient spectators, whose curiosity and anticipation (or apprehension) regarding the outcome of the action would be satisfied shortly in a subsequent play of the trilogy.

As an ambiguous and suspenseful conclusion that looks forward to another play, the closing song of the *Suppliants* is not alone in the Aeschylean corpus.<sup>4</sup> We find a close parallel in the *Choephoroi*, the only other extant installment of a connected trilogy that calls for a more or less direct sequel.<sup>5</sup> Like the

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motives in rejecting the Aegyptids. Most scholars suppose that these questions would have been answered in a subsequent play of the trilogy, now lost (so U. Wilamowitz, *Einleitung in die griechische Tragödie* [Berlin 1907] 196). M. Sicherl, "Die Tragik der Danaiden," *MusHelv* 43 (1986) 81–110, argues that underlying the Danaids' resistance to marriage is an oracle (attested in the scholia to the *Iliad*, *Prometheus Bound*, and *Orestes*, among other places), according to which Danaus was to be killed by one of his sons-in-law. According to Sicherl (98), the ambiguities of the *Suppliants* prepare for the surprise revelation of the oracle in a subsequent play. W. Rösler, "The End of the *Hiketides* and Aeschylus' Danaid Trilogy," in M. Lloyd (ed.), *Aeschylus* (Oxford 2007) 174–198 (from *RhM* 136 [1993] 1–22), accepts that the oracle is motivating Danaus and the Danaids but argues that spectators would only have been confused by the play's ambiguities, and that the oracle and the dispute between the Danaids and the Aegyptids must have been treated and explained fully in a play that preceded the *Suppliants*. See also the arguments in A. Sommerstein, "The Beginning and the End of Aeschylus' Danaid Trilogy," in *The Tangled Ways of Zeus* (Oxford 2010 [1995]) 89–117, and *Aeschylean Tragedy* (Bari 1996) 66.

<sup>4</sup> It should be clear that I do not mean the kind of deep ambiguity inherent in human experience and discussed by J.-P. Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," in J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet (eds.), *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York 1988) 29–48. I am referring to those ambiguities that raise questions about characters and situations those that pique curiosity and instill in spectators a desire for resolution.

<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the *Oresteia*, we possess only individual plays from connected trilogies. *Agamemnon* ends with Clytemnestra and Aegisthus assuming control of Argos; the events of the *Choephoroi* take place years later. The plays of the Theban trilogy, including the *Seven*, are likely to have treated the downfall of the Labdicides generation-by-generation. So H. Mette, *Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aeschylus* (Berlin 1959) 34; W. Thal-

*Suppliants*, the *Choephoroi* offers a largely sympathetic portrayal of its protagonists but ends on a note of surprise and uncertainty in preparation for the *Eumenides*: in spite of Apollo's command that Orestes kill his mother and assurance that he would stand "free from blame" (ἐκτὸς αἰτίας κακῆς, 1031), Orestes is beset by Clytemnestra's Furies (or a vision of them) in the closing scene.<sup>6</sup> The terms of this conflict will be explained in the encounter between Apollo and the Furies in the *Eumenides*. Those acquainted with other versions of Orestes' story might reasonably suppose that Apollo will purify him and rid him of his pursuers, just as spectators of the *Suppliants* might reasonably suppose that the Danaids will marry and murder the Aegyptids. Yet, the revelations that divine forces oppose Orestes and that the Danaids do not oppose marriage in all forms would raise questions and create not a little confusion in their present context. Spectators may well have taken seriously the threat, even if unfulfilled, of unexpected and untraditional outcomes for these stories.<sup>7</sup> These conclusions function as something akin

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mann, *Dramatic Art in Aeschylus's Seven Against Thebes* (New Haven 1978) 241; G. Hutchinson, *Aeschylus: Seven against Thebes* (Oxford 1985) xxix–xxx. The *Prometheus Bound* is another installment of a connected work that ends on a note of surprise when the Chorus, who initially advise Prometheus to give in to Zeus, decides to stand with him. The final scene adds to the dangers facing Prometheus and leaves unresolved his dispute with Zeus and the terms of its resolution. Most critics no longer consider it to be Aeschylus', however, and it is sometimes thought to be part of a dilogy rather than trilogy (see for instance A. Podlecki, *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound* [Oxford 2005] 28 n.74).

<sup>6</sup> See A. Garvie (ed.), *Aeschylus: Choephoroi* (Oxford 1986) 317.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Sommerstein, *Tangled Ways* 194, on the *Choephoroi*. Most critics maintain that tragedians did not, at least before Euripides, diverge significantly from the myths' defining elements (the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, the murder of Clytemnestra by Orestes, Oedipus' murdering his father and marrying his mother, etc.). Thus, spectators could never really be surprised. This view depends on questionable assumptions regarding the mindset of ancient spectators and a presumption of uniformity that did not exist in Greek myth. We do not know enough about any, let alone all, of the versions of a myth available to Aeschylus' audience to say with any certainty

to a cliffhanger.<sup>8</sup> They concisely restate the essential tensions around which the plays are structured,<sup>9</sup> bring these tensions to the fore, and create a conflict in need of resolution.

1. *A Second Chorus*

Given what we know of Greek tragic conventions, the introduction of a new chorus in the *Suppliants*' closing song would be highly unusual.<sup>10</sup> The text neither explicitly introduces nor specifically acknowledges another chorus, as happens in the case of other supplementary choruses.<sup>11</sup> Garvie notes that secondary choruses in other extant tragedies "play only a small and unimportant part" and are not "used as a foil for or in opposition to

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whether he was adhering to expectations. See P. Burian, "Myth into *Muthos*: The Shaping of Tragic Plot," in P. Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1997) 178–208, for a fuller discussion of the role of myth in tragedy.

<sup>8</sup> The threat of an untraditional outcome at the end of one installment in order to achieve suspense leading into another has ancient origins. *Iliad* 3, for example, ends with Agamemnon's suggestion that, given Paris' disappearance from the battlefield, Menelaus has won the duel and Helen should be handed over to him. This early conclusion to the war would run contrary to tradition. It takes divine intervention in *Iliad* 4 to guide matters back to a more familiar course. It is difficult to say whether the game is to convince one's audience to take seriously the possibility of an early end to the war (and an early end to the performance) or to make them wonder how in the world the poet will be able to turn matters back to their proper course.

<sup>9</sup> In the *Choephoroi*, Orestes restates the facts of the case, claiming that the murder was just, reminding spectators once more of Clytemnestra's crime, and alluding to Apollo's injunctions (1026–1033). In its final lines, the chorus recalls the family curse and wonders whether he will be the savior of the family or destroy it (1065–1075).

<sup>10</sup> Extant tragedies with secondary choruses are an extremely small sample (only the *Eumenides*, *Hippolytus*, and Euripides' *Suppliants*), thus limiting the explanatory power of arguments of this nature. In the *Eumenides*, the secondary chorus also appears at the end of the play, but this elaborate measure seems better suited to this, the last play of its trilogy, than to a first or second play like the *Suppliants*.

<sup>11</sup> O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 237.

the main chorus.”<sup>12</sup> McCall observes that two choruses never take part in the kind of lyric dialogue that we see at the end of the *Suppliants*.<sup>13</sup> In short, this is no safe solution to the problems posed by the text. I suggest, then, that the burden of proof lies with those who would introduce a new chorus.

So why introduce another chorus? What do we gain from it? Manuscripts of the *Suppliants* lack *paragraphoi* to mark any change of speaker in the closing song, essentially giving it to a unitary chorus of Danaids. But the song includes a dialogue portion that requires two parties, one opposed to marrying the Aegyptids, one less opposed, if not exactly in favor (1052–1061). The absence of *paragraphoi* here, where all agree that they are needed,<sup>14</sup> suggests that they may have fallen out elsewhere as well. The Danaids’ call to their attendants (ὄπαδοί 1022), along with their previous allusions to their handmaidens (997–999) and to Danaus’ Argive bodyguard (985–990), alert us to their presence on stage and make them contenders for the part. Though no longer thought actively to solicit a response from their attendants, the Danaids’ request that these attendants “accept their song” (ὑποδέξασθε <δ’> ὄπαδοὶ μέλος) could look forward to an intervention.<sup>15</sup> Such an intervention

<sup>12</sup> A. Garvie, *Aeschylus’ Supplices* (London 1969) 193.

<sup>13</sup> M. McCall, “The Secondary Choruses in Aeschylus’ *Supplices*,” *CSCA* 9 (1976) 124.

<sup>14</sup> G. Dindorf, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Leipzig 1870), and H. Weil, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Leipzig 1889), divide only the dialogue section with *paragraphoi* and do not introduce new singers.

<sup>15</sup> If anything, the request calls for passive acceptance. See e.g. H. Freericks, *De Aeschyli Supplicum choro* (Duderstadt 1883) 73–75; T. Tucker, *The Supplices of Aeschylus* (London 1889) 191; C. van der Graaf, “Les suivantes dans le chœur final des Suppliantes d’Éschyle,” *Mnemosyne* III.10 (1942) 283; Garvie, *Aeschylus’ Supplices* 194; McCall, *CSCA* 9 (1976) 123; D. Hester, “A Chorus of One Danaid,” *Antichthon* 21 (1987) 13. These critics distinguish ὑποδέχομαι from διαδέχομαι, which asks the addressee to “take up the song in succession.” See, however, M. Griffith, “A New Edition of Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*,” *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 339, who argues in favor of an active request.

would justify the otherwise un- or under-motivated references to handmaidens and Argives, though not to both at the same time.<sup>16</sup> Introducing a new chorus allows us to place the first-person expression of fear on behalf of third-person “fugitives,” i.e. the Danaids (*φυγάδεσ<σιν> ... προφοβοῦμαι*, 1043–1044), in the mouth of another singer, where it might sit more comfortably.<sup>17</sup> Most importantly, it allows us to give to another singer the praise of Aphrodite and marriage in the second strophe (1034–1051), which appears, on the surface, to be at odds with the praise of Artemis and rejection of (forced) marriage in the first antistrophe (1030–1033) as well as the Danaids’ previous references to marriage.<sup>18</sup> With another

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The second-person address here looks forward to use of the second person in the dialogue.

<sup>16</sup> On the reference to the handmaidens see e.g. H. Lloyd-Jones, “The *Suppliants* of Aeschylus,” in E. Segal (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* (1983 [1964]) 49; Garvie, *Aeschylus’ Suppliants* 195; H. Johansen and E. Whittle, *Aeschylus: The Suppliants* (Copenhagen 1980) III 307; Sommerstein, *Aeschylean Tragedy* 140 n.5. Sommerstein (following Reinkens) discusses the possibility of deleting the reference altogether. Taplin, *Stagecraft* 228–230, questions the reliability of lines 966–979.

<sup>17</sup> F. Johansen, “Progymnasmata,” *ClMed* 27 (1966) 63; A. Sommerstein, “Notes on Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*,” *BICS* 24 (1977) 78; Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 308. It is worth noting that the third-person does not accord with the second-person address used elsewhere in the song. Giving these lines to a Danaid did not disturb a long line of proponents of hemichoruses (see McCall, *CSCA* 9 [1976] 125). If sung by a Danaid hemichorus, it could be translated simply “I fear for us as fugitives.” The Danaids’ use of the third-person *γυναιξίν* at 1068 (“let there be power for women”), where they appear to be referring to themselves, might offer a kind of parallel for the use here. This instance also is less jarring, however, without a first-person verb. The phrasing may be excused as an attempt to echo the Herald’s *εἴη δὲ νίκη καὶ κράτος τοῖς ἄρσεσιν* at 951 (“Let there be victory and power for the men”), where he is referring not to himself but to the Aegyptids. It is in keeping with generalizing references to men and women elsewhere in the play (cf. 643–645).

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Lloyd-Jones, in *Oxford Readings* 366; Garvie, *Aeschylus’ Suppliants* 195; McCall, *CSCA* 9 (1976) 126; Sommerstein, *BICS* 24 (1977) 76, for statements of this position.

chorus, the Danaids restate the case that they have been making throughout the play, reaffirming their aversion to marriage and rejecting the Aegyptids' suit in particular. The other chorus attempts to temper their potentially sacrilegious rejection of Aphrodite and suggests that the Danaids may not have the full support of the gods.

A chorus of the Danaids' handmaidens was widely accepted through most of the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> This is a relatively small textual step from Danaid hemichoruses, but it drastically changes the effect of the scene. We can reject the idea that handmaidens forcefully rebuke the Danaids.<sup>20</sup> They speak to the Danaids as intimates,<sup>21</sup> attempting to steer their mistresses back to a righteous path. Habitual and intimate contact might explain the Danaids' failure to acknowledge them formally.<sup>22</sup> The intervention is likely to have had a greater impact on spectators than it has on the Danaids: even if the handmaidens have good intentions, their implicit criticism of the Danaids'

<sup>19</sup> E.g. N. Wecklein, *Die Schutzflehenden* (Leipzig 1902); G. Murray, *Aeschyli septem quae supersunt tragoediae*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1955); R. Murray, *The Motif of Io in Aeschylus' Suppliants* (Princeton 1958); H. Rose, *A Commentary on the Surviving Plays of Aeschylus* (Amsterdam 1957); Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants* 194–195 (with reservations); D. Page, *Aeschyli septem quae supersunt tragoediae* (Oxford 1972); Lloyd-Jones, in *Oxford Readings* 42–72; D. Conacher, *Aeschylus: The Earlier Plays and Related Studies* (Toronto 1996). A. Boeckh, *Graecae tragoediae principum* (Heidelberg 1808), G. Schneider, *Aeschylus: Tragoedien* (Leipzig 1834), and A. Kirchhoff, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Berlin 1880), are early proponents of the handmaiden chorus.

<sup>20</sup> Van der Graaf, *Mnemosyne* 10 (1942) 284, and Hester, *Antichthon* 21 (1987) 14, find handmaidens chastising their mistresses an unlikely action. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants* 195, argues that “the supposed impertinence of the maids ... need hardly be taken seriously.”

<sup>21</sup> Something approaching this kind of relationship between slave and master can be found in Sophocles and Euripides but is less common in Aeschylus. Only the *Choephoroi* presents slave-women on anything like equal footing with other characters (the relationship between Xerxes and his subjects is a different matter).

<sup>22</sup> This is, however, a naturalistic explanation for the absence of what appears to be a formal aspect of Greek tragedy.

view of marriage and their embodiment of the very feminine ideal that the Danaids are flouting offer the first overt indication that the Danaids' relationship to sex and marriage is inappropriate.<sup>23</sup> A closing song divided between the Danaids and their handmaidens makes it absolutely clear that the Danaids maintain a socially unacceptable, highly problematic, and potentially impious aversion to marriage in any form. As a result, some spectators may have come to doubt the Danaids' one-sided account of their flight from Egypt and their Aegyptid suitors.

Recent criticism has gravitated toward a supplementary chorus composed of Danaus' Argive bodyguards. Johansen observed that the references to attendants that originally prompted editors to elevate the handmaidens to a chorus are just as, if not better, suited to a male or mixed group.<sup>24</sup> He revived the suggestion of the bodyguards as the closing song's supplementary chorus.<sup>25</sup> A number of critics have followed Johansen,<sup>26</sup> but they disagree about the implications of dividing

<sup>23</sup> Previously, spectators may have forgiven the Danaids their extreme views on marriage in light of (the reports of) the Aegyptids' brutality and their herald's misbehavior.

<sup>24</sup> ὀπαδοί can refer to either male or female attendants, but the Danaids describe them with a masculine participle, γανόοντες ("rejoicing," 1019), and Pelasgus earlier described the attendants as φίλοις (954). C. Schütz, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Halle 1808), emended this to φίλαις in order to reflect the presence of, in his view, silent handmaidens. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants* 195, notes that φίλοις is a problematic way for the Danaids to describe male soldiers. See also McCall, *CSCA* 9 (1976) 119–123, who offers a convenient collection of the relevant passages with commentary.

<sup>25</sup> Johansen, *ClMed* 27 (1966) 61–64. Freericks, *De Aeschyli*, was the first to put forth the Argive bodyguards as a possible chorus.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Taplin, *Stagecraft* 232; Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 307–308; R. Seaford, "L'ultima canzone corale delle *Supplici* di Eschilo," *Dioniso* 55 (1984) 221–229, and "The Tragic Wedding," *JHS* 107 (1987) 114–115; West, *Aeschyli tragoediae*; W. Rösler, in *Oxford Readings* 188. See also Sommersstein, *Aeschylean Tragedy* 140–141, and *Aeschylus* I (Loeb 2008), though it is not entirely clear whether he disavows all of his earlier arguments in favor of handmaidens made in *BICS* 24 (1977) 67–84. Johansen, *ClMed* 27 (1966) 63,

the song between Danaids and Argives. The Danaids still oppose marriage in any form. If we assign the role of their interlocutors to Danaus' Argive bodyguards, we now have a group of strange men advocating sex and marriage to a group of young women under their protection. This has led to some resistance.<sup>27</sup> Johansen dismisses any sexual content in the Argives' song: like the handmaidens, they are innocently challenging the Danaids' sacrilegious pronouncements regarding Aphrodite.<sup>28</sup> We can accept this so long as the discussion remains theoretical. But when the issue shifts to marriage to the Aegyptids in particular (1051–1052) and the Argives are still urging marriage, we must concede that, unless they have themselves in mind, they are arguing in favor of marriage to the Aegyptids. Seaford, on the other hand, embraces the implications of Argive men promoting marriage. He argues that the back and forth between the Danaids and the Argives “would evoke in the minds of the audience ... the wedding song.”<sup>29</sup> In it, the Argives fail to persuade the Danaids of the virtues of marriage and Aphrodite, presaging the Danaids' future problems with marriage.<sup>30</sup> But, as Sommerstein notes, the rejection of persuasion under these conditions is more likely to illustrate the Danaids' modesty than their inappropriate views on

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argues that *εὐφρων* has previously been used of “the friendly attitude of the Argives towards the Danaids” and that the same should hold at line 1034. See also Johansen and Whittle 308. Sommerstein, *BICS* 24 (1977) 78, and McCall, *CSCA* 9 (1976) 125, are less convinced on this point.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. Sommerstein, *BICS* 24 (1977) 76–78; McCall, *CSCA* 9 (1976) 125; Hester, *Antichthon* 21 (1987) 14.

<sup>28</sup> Johansen, *ClMed* 27 (1966) 61–62. See also Taplin, *Stagecraft* 232; Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 316.

<sup>29</sup> Seaford, *JHS* 107 (1987) 114.

<sup>30</sup> Seaford, *Dioniso* 55 (1984) 221–229, suggests that this failure to persuade looks forward to later “subversions” of wedding ritual in the trilogy. He notes, however, that Hypermestra's sparing her husband shows that the Danaids are “partially” persuaded by the Argives' song (*JHS* 107 [1987] 115).

marriage.<sup>31</sup> Echoes of a wedding song may look forward to a possible remarriage of the Danaids at the conclusion of the trilogy.<sup>32</sup> But, unless the evocation is very subtle indeed, we are back to strange men propositioning defenseless girls under very questionable circumstances. One of the original reasons for positing a chorus other than Danaids also proves problematic for Argives: in their mouths, the fear of “suffering” and “bloody wars” *for the fugitives* (1043–1044) suggests a worrisome lack of confidence in their fighting ability that gives the lie to Pelasgus’ claim about their bravery (952–953) and makes one wonder why they are not also afraid for themselves and for their families. Finally, whether the Argives are rebuking the Danaids or attempting to seduce them, it is hard to imagine this as an unremarkable intervention. The Danaids’ failure to acknowledge their interlocutors and their interlocutors’ failure to identify themselves reemerge as serious barriers to this attribution.

Few today divide the first and second strophic pairs of the closing song between Danaid hemichoruses. The primary stumbling block is that this attribution requires the Danaids to momentarily oppose one another on the subject of marriage despite the fact that they present a unified front throughout the play and reunite again to sing the final strophic pair, and despite the fact that they will, with one exception, be unified in the murder of the Aegyptids.<sup>33</sup> Murray argues that the Danaids’ divergent views on marriage look forward to Hypermestra’s dissent,<sup>34</sup> but Wills wonders why half of the chorus would take the side of Hypermestra and marriage in this play only to rejoin their other sisters in the next.<sup>35</sup> Hester answers

<sup>31</sup> Sommerstein, *BICS* 24 (1977) 77.

<sup>32</sup> See Garvie, *Aeschylus’ Suppliants* 226, cf. 166.

<sup>33</sup> See the arguments of Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 306; R. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1961) 60 n.20.

<sup>34</sup> Murray, *Motif* 82. See also van der Graaf, *Mnemosyne* 10 (1942) 284, and S. Ireland, “The Problem of Motivation in the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus,” *RhM* 117 (1974) 26.

<sup>35</sup> G. Wills, “*Agamemnon* 1346–71, 1649–53,” *HSCP* (1967) 256–257. One

this objection by positing Hypermestra as the other singer in the closing song.<sup>36</sup> This argument has found some support,<sup>37</sup> though, as Hester notes, having a member of the chorus leave the chorus to sing independently is, at the very least, unprecedented in extant tragedy.<sup>38</sup> McCall offers dramatic arguments for the division: this conclusion “offers a glimpse of the ultimate reconciliation of the trilogy” but “turns the dramatic course of events back to conflict and strife”; the suggestion that they do not absolutely oppose marriage heightens the impact of their subsequent decision to murder the Aegyptids.<sup>39</sup>

On the basis of these arguments, one would conclude that no one could reasonably attribute to the same singer the praise of Aphrodite and the rejection of the “rite of Aphrodite” under compulsion. Almost as unlikely: that Danaids would praise Aphrodite and Hera in the first place. Yet this has not always been the case. With only a handful of exceptions, early editors of the *Suppliants*, even those who posited another chorus, attributed to the same Danaid chorus not only the prayer to Artemis and condemnation of forced marriage but also part of the praise of Aphrodite and marriage.<sup>40</sup> The closing song

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might argue that the Danaids are divided on the issue of marriage in general and the Aegyptids in particular but that only Hypermestra will take a positive stand against her father’s wishes.

<sup>36</sup> Hester, *Antichthon* 21 (1987) 9–18.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. C. Turner, “Perverted Supplication and Other Inversions in Aeschylus’ Danaid Trilogy,” *CJ* 97 (2001) 31 n.18.

<sup>38</sup> Hester, *Antichthon* 21 (1987) 16. See above, however, for the dangers of arguing from tragic convention. We do see instances in which chorus members speak as individuals (e.g. Aesch. *Ag.* 1348–1371).

<sup>39</sup> McCall, *CSCA* 9 (1976) 128.

<sup>40</sup> Citations of early editors in support of modern divisions of the song are often misleading in this regard. The majority of early editors cited in N. Wecklein, *Aeschyli fabulae* II (Berlin 1893) 136–137, have the same Danaid chorus sing the prayer to Artemis and some or all of the praise of Aphrodite. Add to his list Schütz, *Aeschyli*, J. Scholefield, *Aeschylus* (London 1828), and F. Paley, *The Tragedies of Aeschylus*<sup>4</sup> (London 1879). Hermann, *Aeschyli*, interestingly, introduces hemichoruses as early as line 100. Tucker is among the

evinces consistent and corresponding sense breaks in the strophes and antistrophes of the first two strophic pairs (at 1021 and 1029, 1037 and 1046)<sup>41</sup> that are all but ignored by modern editions.<sup>42</sup> The break at 1046, in which the question at 1045–1046 (“how did [the Aegyptids] make safe passage in swiftly-escorting pursuit?”) appears to be answered at 1047–1049 (“What is fated will be; the great, boundless mind of Zeus is not to be overcome”), is especially awkward if attributed to the same singer.<sup>43</sup> These editors therefore divided the parts not into opposing strophic pairs (1018–1033 and 1034–1051) but within the strophes. One chorus sings 1018–1021, 1026–1029, 1034–1037, 1043–1046 while the other sings 1022–1025, 1030–1033, 1038–1042, 1047–1051.<sup>44</sup> These hemichoruses still disagree with each other, but theirs is not an absolute disagreement about marriage in the abstract. They disagree about the proper course to take in light of the Aegyptids’ safe arrival in Argos in spite of their prayers to the contrary.<sup>45</sup>

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first editors to divide the rejection of forced marriage (1018–1033) and the praise of Aphrodite (1034–1051) between two distinct choral groups (he follows Kirchoff, *Aeschylus*), but even he does not consider the views expressed in these two passages to be at odds with each other (*Supplices* 191).

<sup>41</sup> Haupt, *Aeschylus*, extends the dialogue portion of the song to the first three strophic pairs.

<sup>42</sup> West, *Aeschylus*, who uses indentation to mark the divisions, is an exception.

<sup>43</sup> If given to the same singer, 1045–1046 must be understood as a rhetorical question: “you want to know why they arrived safely? I’ll tell you why: what is fated...” Yet, if the same chorus sings the strophe and antistrophe, the resignation to fate expressed in these lines does not sit well with the fear expressed a moment earlier.

<sup>44</sup> These divisions result in even divisions in the first strophe and antistrophe but uneven divisions within the second strophic pair. It is worth noting here that most of the divisions adopted for the dialogue portion of the song also result in an uneven distribution of lines between the two speakers (only Kirchoff’s does not; see below).

<sup>45</sup> Van der Graaf, *Mnemosyne* 10 (1944) 284, suggests that the division between hemi-choruses “is an easy way to represent a chorus that is not entirely unanimous.” See also Ireland, *RhM* 117 (1974) 26.

Nineteenth-century support is as likely to dissuade potential supporters as convince them, but it puts into perspective the number of steps required to adopt an Argive supplementary chorus. These steps may follow from what immediately precedes them but do not necessarily add up. Danaic hemichoruses sharing strophes requires little to no change to the manuscripts. Replacing one hemichorus with a chorus of handmaidens requires the introduction of another chorus but maintains a tone similar to that of hemichoruses. The Danaids' failure to acknowledge them is, if unusual, at least explicable. Dividing the parts between the first and second strophic pairs ignores sense breaks within the strophes but allows for more internally consistent views with regard to marriage. This division makes the handmaidens the more likely singers for the second, pro-marriage strophic pair. At this point, we can simply exchange an Argive chorus for handmaidens on the grounds that the references to attendants better suit them. Never mind that this attribution is at odds with the relative unobtrusiveness of the handmaidens that suggested them as a possible supplementary chorus in the first place.

In short, the passage of time and the orthodoxies of each successive generation have conspired to make the current approach to the text of the *Suppliants'* closing song appear more intuitive and less adventurous than it actually is. We should adopt it only if we can make no sense of a more conservative song divided between Danaid hemichoruses. I argue in favor of such a song in the following section. The Danaids' praise of marriage is unexpected but nevertheless consistent not only with their prayer to Artemis but also with their previous references to marriage. This development generates suspense leading into the next play of the trilogy.

## 2. *A Shared Closing Song*

A closing song divided between Danaid hemichoruses begins with praise of Argos and rejection of Egypt (1018–1021, 1022–1025, 1026–1029). This song is addressed to their attendants,

either the Argives alone or to the Argives and the Danaids' handmaidens (1022–1023).<sup>46</sup> Hemichorus B ends the first antistrophe with a prayer to Artemis and a rejection of a forced union (1030–1033); Hemichorus A responds with reverence for Aphrodite (1034–1037) that is taken up by Hemichorus B (1038–1042). In the second antistrophe, Hemichorus B responds to A's fear for the future and question regarding the Aegyptids' safe arrival (1043–1046) by asserting the power of fate, alluding to Zeus's will, and offering a statement in favor of marriage (1047–1051). In the third strophic pair's dialogue, Hemichorus A asks Zeus to avert marriage to the Aegyptids; B advises a more flexible position. In the fourth strophe, Hemichorus A asks that Zeus deprive them of marriage to bad men (1062–1067); in the antistrophe, Hemichorus B calls for strength for women, embraces that which is more good than bad, and prays for god-given deliverance in accordance with their wishes (1068–1073).

Hemichorus B's prayer at 1030–1033 that Artemis look down on them in pity and that the "rite of Aphrodite not come under compulsion" (*μηδ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκας τέλος ἔλθοι Κυθερείας*) makes sense in light of the Danaids' earlier pronouncements on the Aegyptids and marriage. They have made no secret of their aversion to the Aegyptids thus far in the *Suppliants*. In the first three quarters of the play, this aversion appears to extend to all men and to marriage in any form.<sup>47</sup> The Danaids ask Artemis to save them, one "untamed" (*ἀδάματος*) female to another (143, 153); they ask to "escape the beds of men, unmarried and unsubdued" (151–153). In a moment of panic, they ask for death before marriage (804–805). They repeatedly characterize

<sup>46</sup> Given the masculine participle (*γανόοντες*) and the specific context, those glorifying the gods of Argos and the tomb of Erasinus are likely to be the Argives. It makes sense that the Danaids address their praise of Argos to a group of Argives, but it would also be important that the handmaidens be made aware of their new affiliation.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies* 60; Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants* 221–223.

their struggle against the Aegyptids as a conflict of women against men: they pray that they are never “subject to the power of men” (392–393), denounce the “*hybris* of men” (426, 528), at one point refer to *hybris* “born of men” (*ἀρσενογενές* 818), and in reference to the Argives’ support for the Danaids observe that by not siding with “the men,” they have avoided dishonoring the “the women” (643–645).<sup>48</sup> We might add Pelasgus’ likening the Danaids to Amazons (287–289). Taken together, these pronouncements give the undeniable *impression* that the Danaids oppose marriage in all forms.<sup>49</sup>

Yet for all their frequency, force, and apparent generality, the Danaids’ rejections of marriage and men can, either through a direct reference to the Aegyptids or proximity to one, be understood as exaggerated rejections of the Aegyptids in particular.<sup>50</sup> And there is mounting evidence toward the play’s conclusion of a less extreme view of marriage. The Danaids mention in passing a dowry given them by their father (978–979),<sup>51</sup> and Danaus enjoins them to remain temperate at an age when they will inflame men with desire (996–1009). Danaus may be more worried about the men than his daughters, but the suggestion that the Danaids might be

<sup>48</sup> See F. Zeitlin, “The Politics of Eros in the Danaid Trilogy of Aeschylus,” in *Playing the Other* (Chicago 1996) 140, on the opposition between the “race of women” and the “race of men” in the play.

<sup>49</sup> See Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* I 31–32, for a list and discussion of the passages in which the Danaids’ stance toward marriage is in question. See also Garvie, *Aeschylus’ Suppliants* 218–221.

<sup>50</sup> Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* I 31–32. A. Lesky, *Greek Tragic Poetry* (New Haven 1956) 68, likewise argues that the passages “leave ... open the interpretation for the specific case.” Griffith, *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 325, warns against Johansen and Whittle’s assertion that the Danaids do not oppose marriage, but argues only that “some of their utterances ... do *suggest* ... an abnormal horror of men and marriage” (my italics).

<sup>51</sup> Taplin, *Stagecraft* 222–230, casts some suspicion on these lines, though he “can hardly fault the anapaests for language or expression” and sees “no obvious motivation for the interpolation,” except perhaps to bring the handmaidens to the stage.

susceptible to men's advances and should "honor self-control (*τὸ σωφρονεῖν*) more than life" (1013) may strike some spectators as odd if the Danaids truly hate sex and marriage.<sup>52</sup> Even lines 1030–1033 themselves are less than definitive. Allegiance to Artemis is no guarantee of perpetual virginity. The Danaids have prayed to Artemis in her role as a virgin goddess but also as the goddess of childbirth (675–678).<sup>53</sup> The rejection of the *τέλος Κυθερείας* *under compulsion* may also reflect reverence rather than disdain for the goddess.<sup>54</sup>

Hemichorus A's assertion, "not to neglect Cypris: this is a wise rule" (*Κύπριδος <δ> οὐκ ἀμελεῖ<ν>, θεσμὸς ὄδ' εὐφρων*, 1034) and the praise of Hera and Aphrodite that follows (1035–1042) are, then, at variance with the Danaids' previous statements but do not contradict them directly. Even if reflection revealed that the text had prepared for this eventuality, however, the Danaids' coming out in favor of marriage would certainly come as a surprise to most. With this revelation, the *Suppliants* calls into question in its final scene the assumption under which spectators have been operating through most of the play, just as the conclusion of the *Choephoroi* reveals that the murder of Clytemnestra may not in fact have the (unanimous) divine support that Apollo's injunctions clearly implied. As in the case of Orestes, spectators must reevaluate their assump-

<sup>52</sup> Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants* 222, suggests that if the Danaids are absolutely opposed to marriage, "Danaus' advice at 980 ff. would be superfluous and pointless." Turner, *CJ* 97 (2001) 30, points out that this is not necessarily evidence of "a pro-marriage stance on their part." See Griffith, *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 325, for a critical appraisal of the evidence for a positive view of marriage.

<sup>53</sup> A prayer to Artemis is as appropriate on the lips of a young woman on the threshold of marriage (cf. Eur. *IA* 433–434) as it is on the lips of a virgin hoping to escape an assault.

<sup>54</sup> If we accept the manuscripts' *γάμος* rather than Weil's *τέλος*, it is possible, if somewhat forced, to take *Κυθερείας* with *ὑπ' ἀνάγκας* such that the Danaids reject marriage "under the compulsion of Aphrodite." The Danaids may mean that Aphrodite is compelling them or that she has instilled in the Aegyptids the sexual desire that motivates them.

tions regarding the Danaids' motives, decisions, and actions up until now. In the *Suppliants*, the effect of these questions is heightened by questions about the source of the Danaids' conflict with the Aegyptids, their current intentions, and the role of their father.

The second antistrophe returns to the threat posed by the Aegyptids. Hemichorus A fears impending suffering and bloodshed in battle (1043–1044), presumably the war threatened by the Egyptian herald (950). They ask why, despite all their prayers to Zeus to stop them (811–816, 823–824, 842–846, 867–871), the Aegyptids have been allowed to make safe passage in their pursuit of the Danaids (1045–1046). Hemichorus B suggests that the arrival is fated and willed by Zeus (1047–1049). Their reassurance that marriage has been the fate of many women before the Danaids (*μετὰ πολλᾶν δὲ γάμων ἄδε τελευτὰ προτερᾶν πέλοι γυναικῶν*, 1050–1051)<sup>55</sup> implies that they believe (or fear) an Aegyptid-Danaid marriage to be the ultimate aim of fate and the gods. In favor of giving these lines to Danaids is the resemblance of the description of Zeus here to the more extensive one in the Danaids' prayer to him at 86–103.<sup>56</sup> There they emphasize not only Zeus' power but also the impossibility of fully comprehending his will. These pronouncements book-end the play with a satisfying contrast: in the *parodos*, the Danaids prayed that Zeus would save them from the Aegyptids; now, in the *exodos*, the Aegyptids' safe arrival reveals that his will is indeed hard to grasp.

<sup>55</sup> The manuscript reading has the singer actively praying for marriage. Most editors and critics, on the basis of their feeling that such a wish is out of place in this context, have attempted to remove it by replacing *πέλοι* with the indicative *πέλει* or by reading *πέλοι* not as an optative of wish but as a potential optative. This requires the continuing force of the *ἄν* from line 1047 (treating the intervening lines as parenthetical). Cf. Sommerstein, *BICS* 24 (1977) 78–79. See Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 334, for a discussion of the problems surrounding these lines. They argue in favor of a potential optative but believe that the text must be drastically emended to make it so.

<sup>56</sup> Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 332.

In the third strophic pair, Hemichorus A reacts to the implication that marriage to the Aegyptids is the will of Zeus by reasserting their prayer that he save them from such a union. Hemichorus B suggests that this prayer may be in vain:

- A: ὁ μέγας Ζεὺς ἀπαλέξαι  
γάμον Αἰγυπτογενῆ μοι.  
B: τὸ μὲν ἂν βέλτατον εἴη.  
A: σὺ δὲ θέλγεις ἂν ἄθελκτον. 1055  
B: σὺ δὲ γ' οὐκ οἶσθα τὸ μέλλον.  
A: τί δὲ μέλλω φρένα Δίαν  
καθορᾶν, ὄψιν ἄβυσσον;  
B: μέτριόν νυν ἔπος εὖχου.  
A: τίνα καιρόν με διδάσκεις; 1060  
B: τὰ θεῶν μηδὲν ἀγάζειν.<sup>57</sup>
- A: Great Zeus, protect me from  
marriage to the sons of Aegyptus.  
B: That would be best, but—  
A: —but you are trying to convince the unconvincible.  
B: But you do not know the future.  
A: How am I going to look into Zeus's mind,  
the depths of which cannot be seen?  
B: So offer now a measured prayer  
A: What is appropriate?  
B: Do not ask too much of the gods.

<sup>57</sup> West, *Aeschylus*, follows Haupt's division of the dialogue, which has the virtue of maintaining the same divisions in the strophe and antistrophe. Tucker, *The Suppliants*, gives the μὲν/δέ clause of 1054 and 1055 as well as lines 1057–1059 to Hemichorus B. In this version, B confirms that it would be best to avoid marriage to the Aegyptids but argues that Zeus' will cannot be contravened. Hemichorus A complains that they do not know the future, and B acknowledges that they cannot possibly comprehend the will of Zeus, echoing their earlier sentiment at 1048–1049. The content of this exchange makes sense but requires highly irregular divisions of the lines that do not correspond from strophe to antistrophe. See Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 327–335, for a discussion of the most common divisions of the dialogue.

Hemichorus B acknowledges that A's unequivocal rejection of the Aegyptids would be preferable. Before they are able to explain why the Danaids may nevertheless be forced to marry them, Hemichorus A reaffirms its initial rejection. But Hemichorus B's assertion that A does not know the future forces A to admit that they cannot, after all, predict what Zeus has in store for them.<sup>58</sup> Their request for Hemichorus B's suggestion as to how they should proceed (1060) signals their growing doubts. Hemichorus B advises them to ask less of the gods (1059, 1061). Even to consider marriage to the Aegyptids represents an extreme change of heart on the part of the Danaids. We might explain it with reference to the Danaids' assurance to their father at 1016–1017 that they would maintain their current course unless “something new is ordained by the gods.” The Danaids now appear to interpret the Aegyptids' safe arrival in Argos as a sign that the gods have indeed ordained something new and that they must alter their position accordingly.

In response to Hemichorus B's advice, Hemichorus A begins the final strophic pair with a prayer that Zeus “deprive [us] of a hostile marriage to bad men” (*Ζεὺς ἄναξ ἀποστεροίη γάμον δυσάνορα δάλον*, 1062–1064). This prayer resembles the one at 1052–1053. At first glance, we might conclude that Hemichorus A is simply restating their earlier rejection of the Aegyptids: “deprive us of *this* hostile marriage to bad men.” This is, by necessity, the position of critics who believe that the Danaids are absolutely opposed to marriage. Some spectators may have reached the same conclusion.<sup>59</sup> Yet, it is reasonable to suppose (1) that Hemichorus A does not ask B how to temper their prayer (1060) only to ignore the advice a moment

<sup>58</sup> They demonstrate their agreement with the second hemichorus by echoing their views on Zeus (1048–1049).

<sup>59</sup> If we accept this interpretation, Hemichorus B gives way to A's rejection of the Aegyptids despite their reservations. Knowing that this decision means war, they ask that Zeus give them victory, acknowledge that this solution is more good than bad, and pray that the matter proceed as they wish.

later, (2) that there is a reason why they fail to specify the Aegyptids in this prayer, and (3) that the prayer represents a compromise that is more good than bad, as Hemichorus B goes on to describe it (1069–1070). We might conclude, then, that the Danaids are not asking that Zeus deprive them of marriage unequivocally but rather *only* if it is a hostile one to bad men.<sup>60</sup> In this way, the Danaids leave open the possibility of marriage to better men than the Aegyptids.<sup>61</sup> Their formulation of the prayer also makes possible, whether we suppose that Danaids are aware of it or not, a Danaid-Aegyptid marriage—if the Aegyptids turn out to be less horrible than the Danaids suggest.

This is not as implausible as it may sound. After all, the lack of detail regarding the Danaids' flight and their recent change of heart cast suspicion on their account of themselves. The Egyptian herald was almost certainly exaggerating in an attempt to marshal the Danaids to the Aegyptids' ship (cf. 837–841). And the Aegyptids have yet to make their case in person. Spectators have only half of the story. It is entirely possible, and consistent with Aeschylean technique, that the *Suppliants* is laying the groundwork for a surprising revelation, giving spectators an impression of the Aegyptids that will be dispelled, or at least complicated, in a subsequent play.<sup>62</sup> This will almost certainly be the case for Lyceus, the lone Aegyptid who is spared by his wife, Hypermetra. We can imagine it for the others. If, for instance, the Danaids flee marriage because of Danaus'

<sup>60</sup> With its more positive view of marriage, this version of the prayer makes better sense of the Danaids' reference in their prayer to Zeus' rescue of Io, which results in Zeus and Io's (chaste) union and her impregnation (cf. 1064–1067). Cf. Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* I 38. Murray, *Motif* 59–67, argues that the Danaids do not fully understand the implications of their prayers to Zeus in his role as savior of Io.

<sup>61</sup> Seaford, *JHS* 107 (1987) 115, who cites Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* I 32.

<sup>62</sup> Garvie, *Suppliants* 196.

oracle, the Aegyptids' only crime may be their desire to marry the Danaids.<sup>63</sup>

The Danaids' praise of Aphrodite and Persuasion offers an indication of how a change in the Aegyptids, or the Danaids' view of them, might come about. They single out for special attention Yearning and Persuasion (1038–1041), and these may be the means through which either the Aegyptids or the Danaids are tamed. The juxtaposition of Hemichorus A's claim that they cannot be convinced (σὺ δὲ θέλγεις ἂν ἄθελκτον, 1055) and their praise of “convincing Persuasion, to whom nothing is denied” (<ᾗ> τ' οὐδὲν ἄπαρνον ... θέλκτορι Πειθοῖ, 1039–1040), foreshadows such a shift. So would Pelasgus' claim that the Aegyptids can lead the Danaids away “willing and with good will, if pious arguments persuade them” (ταύτας δ' ἐκούσας μὲν κατ' εὐνοϊαν φρενῶν ἄγοις ἂν, εἶπερ εὐσεβῆς πίθοι λόγος, 940–941).

In this way we can make sense of a closing song divided between Danaid hemichoruses. Divisions within the strophes do justice to the sense breaks within them. They avoid the absolute split of opinion within the Danaid chorus that has been the primary argument against hemichoruses:

<sup>63</sup> Spectators may also learn that Danaus and the Danaids have broken Egyptian law and that Danaus is endangering his daughters and willing to sacrifice any hope of a normal life for them out of a selfish desire to save himself.

Hemichorus A		Hemichorus B	
ἴτε μὰν ἀστυνάκτας μά<α>ρας θεοὺς γανόοντες, πολιούχους τε καὶ οἷ χεῦμ' Ἑρασίνου περιναίουσιν παλαιόν.	1018	ὑποδέξασθε <δ'> ὄπαδοὶ μέλος· αἶνος δὲ πόλιν τάνδε Πελασγῶν ἐχέτω· μηδ' ἔτι Νείλου προχοῶς σέβωμεν ὕμνοις,	1022
ποταμοὺς δ' οἷ διὰ χώρας θελεμὸν πῶμα χέουσιν πολύτεκνοι, λιπαροῖς χεύμασι γαίας τόδε με<ι>λίssonτες οὐδας.	1026	ἐπίδοι δ' Ἄρτεμις ἀγνὰ στόλον οἰκτιζομένα, μηδ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκας τέλος ἔλθοι Κυθερείας· Στύγιον πέλοι τόδ' ἄθλον.	1030
Κύπριδος <δ'> οὐκ ἀμελεί<ν>, θεσμὸς ὄδ' εὐφρων· δύναται γὰρ Διὸς ἄγχιστα σὺν Ἥρα, τίεται δ' αἰολόμητις θεὸς ἔργοις ἐπὶ σεμνοῖς.	1034	μετάκοινοι δὲ φίλα ματρὶ πάρεισιν Πόθος <ᾶ> τ' οὐδὲν ἄπαρνον τελέθει θέλκτορι Πειθοῖ, δέδοται δ' Ἀρμονίᾳ μοῖρ' Ἄφροδίτας ψεδυρα<ι> τρίβοι τ' ἐρώτων.	1038
φυνγάδεσ<ιν> δ' ἐπιπνοία κακὰ τ' ἄλγη πολέμους θ' αἱματόεντας προφοβοῦμαι. τί ποτ' εὐπλοῖαν ἔπραξαν ταχυπόμοισι διωγμοῖς;	1043	ὅ τί τοι μόρσιμόν ἐστιν, τὸ γένειτ' ἄν· Διὸς οὐ παρβατός ἐστιν μεγάλα φρῆν ἀπέρατος· μετὰ πολλῶν δὲ γάμων ἄδε τελευτὰ προτερῶν πέλοι γυναικῶν.	1047
ὁ μέγας Ζεὺς ἀπαλέξαι γάμον Αἰγυπτογενῆ μοι.	1052	τὸ μὲν ἄν βέλτατον εἶη.	1054
σύ δὲ θέλγεις ἄν ἄθελκτον.	1055	σύ δέ γ' οὐκ οἶσθα τὸ μέλλον.	1056
τί δὲ μέλλω φρένα Δίαν καθορᾶν, ὅψιν ἄβυσσον;	1057	μέτριόν νυν ἔπος εὔχου.	1059
τίνα καιρόν με διδάσκεις;	1060	τὰ θεῶν μηδὲν ἀγάζειν.	1061
Ζεὺς ἄναξ ἀποστεροί- η γάμον δυσάνορα δάϊον, ὅσπερ Ἴω πημονῶς ἐλύσατ' εὖ χειρὶ παιωνία κατασχεθῶν, εὐμενῆ βίαν κτίσας·	1062	καὶ κράτος νέμοι γυναι- ξίν. τὸ βέλτερον κακοῦ καὶ τὸ δίμοιρον αἰνῶ, καὶ ἴδικα δίκαστ' ἔπεσ- θαι, ξὺν εὐχαῖς ἐμαῖς, λυτηρίους μαχαναῖς θεοῦ πάρα.	1068

The Danaids' support of marriage raises new questions about how (and perhaps if?) the traditional murders will come about. Yet problems remain. Can we take seriously a song in which the Danaids, of all women, praise marriage and sex? How do they find kind words for Hera, whom they have, until now,

mentioned chiefly as Io's tormentor (162–166, 296, 562–564, 586–587)? How can we make sense of their considering marriage to the Aegyptids given their repeated and vehement denunciations of them throughout the play? Why does the same hemichorus that rejects forced marriage embrace the idea that Zeus's will compels them to marry?

### 3. *Marriage and Death*

If we keep in mind the tradition that the Danaids marry and murder the Aegyptids on their wedding night, these problems and apparent contradictions become assets to an attribution of the closing song to Danaid hemichoruses. We can detect in the *exodos* of the *Suppliants* nods to this version of the story. They suggest that (at least some of) the Danaids may already be considering something of the sort. Placing praise of Aphrodite and Hera on the lips of Greek myth's most famous husband-murderers is a provocative first step. An alert audience might note that Hemichorus A calls Aphrodite *αἰολόμητις*, "of cunning wiles" (1036), in their praise of the goddess. Elsewhere this epithet is attached to figures like Prometheus and Sisyphus,<sup>64</sup> who are famous for their guile, their transgressions, and their (misguided?) interventions on behalf of humanity. In the Danaids' mouth, it signals a conception of Aphrodite as patron not just of sex but of seduction and perhaps deception. Hemichorus B's praise of Yearning and Persuasion picks up on this idea and is in keeping with a plan on the part of the Danaids to use the promise of marriage and sex to persuade the Aegyptids to lower their defenses. The existence of a plan to murder the Aegyptids would explain why Hemichorus B gives way so easily to the idea that the marriage cannot be averted despite their fervent prayers against a forced union. They realize that if they cannot escape the Aegyptids, they can loosen the matrimonial bonds after the fact. For this reason, they advise Hemichorus A not to offer a futile prayer to stop the marriage, but rather to

<sup>64</sup> Hes. *Theog.* 511, fr.10a.26. See Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 323.

ask for something that the gods might be willing to grant. Hemichorus A's amended prayer suggests that they may have grasped B's meaning: they do not ask Zeus to ward off the marriage, but rather to take it away from them once it is already theirs (*ἀποστερέω*, 1062).<sup>65</sup> In essence, they are asking Zeus to approve their plan. A plan that requires going through with marriage to the Aegyptids represents a significant compromise for Hemichorus B, but we can see why they consider it a solution that is better than the evil of submitting to the Aegyptids wholly. Their prayers (1069–1073) for “victory for women” and for “means of loosening” (*λυτήριοι μηχαναί*) are all consistent with an unspoken intention on the part of the Danaids to use violence to free themselves from the bonds of marriage.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *ἀποστερέω* generally means to deprive someone of something that is already in his possession. If the Danaids are asking Zeus to prevent marriage to the Aegyptids in the first place, they must mean that he would be “depriving” them of marriage in the sense that it is their birthright as women. But, on this reading, the Danaids are speaking here specifically of marriage to the Aegyptids, not of marriage in general. Johansen and Whittle, *Suppliants* III 340, appear to recognize the discrepancy, when they assert that “the Danaids ask Zeus to withhold from them what is every woman’s proper lot, marriage...; the fact that it is not marriage in general that they wish to forfeit, but a particularly odious union ... is not (except to them) of central importance.”

<sup>66</sup> Medical imagery in the closing prayers may characterize the impending murder of the Aegyptids as a kind of necessary medical intervention. References to Zeus’ “healing hand” (*χεῖρ παιωνία*) and “kindly force” (*εὐμενῆς βία*) bring to mind the momentary violence of surgery that prevents greater harm. The idea of loosening that is present in these passages (*ἐλύσατ’, λυτηρίοις*) occurs elsewhere in reference to the removal of sickness or disease. This idea is strengthened by Pelasgus’ earlier reference to Apis, the doctor who used “cutting and loosening cures” (*ἄκη τομάα καὶ λυτήρια*) to rid Argos of monsters (268) and the Danaids’ previously stated desire to “cut a path of escape that would free [us] from marriage” (*ἀμφυγῶς τιν’ ἔτι πόρον τέμνω γάμου λυτήρα*, 806–807). Spectators may have been more likely to remember these passages because they too appear to allude to the murder of the Aegyptids. See T. Gantz, “Love and Death in the *Suppliants* of Aischylos,” *Phoenix* 32 (1978) 281, 286. On the implications of the reference

These are not unequivocal references to the Danaids' plan to murder the Aegyptids. But surprising developments and minor inconsistencies in the closing song remind spectators of a resolution to the Danaids' troubles that would be familiar from other versions of the myth but that lies outside of the evidence presented in the play.

#### 4. *Conclusion*

Everything we know about the Danaid myth tells us that before the trilogy is over the Danaids will marry the Aegyptids and all but one of them will murder their husbands on the night of their wedding. Hypermestra alone will spare her husband and found with him the Argive royal line.<sup>67</sup> Yet, even if we take into account the Danaids' profound hatred of the Aegyptids, their suicide-threat, and their conspicuous silences, there is a significant gap between the violent husband-killers of myth and the *Suppliants'* fearful, protection-seeking Danaids. The Danaids' shared encomium of sex and marriage forces spectators to engage with this disconnect directly. Is the reverence sincere or not? Will the Danaids kill the Aegyptids because the Aegyptids ignore Aphrodite's attendants, persuasion, yearning, and harmony,<sup>68</sup> or will the Danaids' faith in the power of Aphrodite and Hera lead them to reconsider their aversion?<sup>69</sup> Or have the Danaids already hatched a plan to

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to Apis see Murray, *Motif* 81; G. Bakewell, "μετοικία in the *Supplikes* of Aeschylus," *CA* 16 (1997) 216–218; Turner, *CJ* 97 (2001) 39.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants* 164.

<sup>68</sup> If we accept a closing song in which the Danaids sing in opposition to another chorus and continue to reject marriage in any form, the fateful marriages can only come about when the Aegyptids defeat the Argives in battle, take the Danaids captive, and force them to become their wives. The passion with which the Danaids denounce the Aegyptids and marriage in the *Suppliants* goes some way toward explaining why they are willing to murder the Aegyptids. We can find in the play no indication of why one of the Danaids would break away from her sisters.

<sup>69</sup> They may still murder the Aegyptids if it is not their own feelings on the matter but rather their father's commands that motivate them.

murder the Aegyptids so that they praise Aphrodite selectively, citing only those qualities that will aid them in carrying it out? In some sense, the answer to these questions is 'yes': one of the goals of the *Suppliants*' closing song must be to carve out the conceptual space necessary to encompass forty-eight women who murder their Aegyptid husbands but may also go on to remarry other men, one woman who cannot bring herself to kill her Aegyptid husband, and one woman who forms a sexual union with a god. But, in accommodating these outcomes, the closing song also opens up other, less traditional possibilities and generates real suspense as to how the Danaids will welcome their suitors in the next play of the trilogy. Those who try to predict on the basis of what they know from the Danaids' account of their circumstances and of themselves will find, by design, that they have precious little evidence upon which to judge. But they need only wait for the next play to begin.

*August, 2011*

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