

## Aeschylus' Revisionist View of Women

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### 1. *Prometheus Bound* 887-908.

- στρ. ἦ σοφὸς ἦ σοφὸς ἦν  
ὅς πρῶτος ἐν γνῶμα τόδ' ἐβάστασε καὶ  
γλώσσα διεμυθολόγησεν,  
890 ὡς τὸ κηδεῦσαι καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἀριστεύει μακρῶ,  
καὶ μήτε τῶν πλούτῳ διαθρυπτομένων  
μήτε τῶν γέννα μεγαλυνομένων  
ὄντα χερνήταν ἐραστεῦσαι γάμων.
- ἀντ. μήποτε μήποτέ μ', ὦ  
895 Μοῖραι <~ -- -->, λεχέων Διὸς εὐ-  
νάτειραν ἴδοισθε πέλουσαν,  
μήτε πλαθείην γαμέτα τινὶ τῶν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ·  
ταρβῶ γὰρ ἀστεργάνορα παρθενίαν  
εἰσορῶσ' Ἴοῦς ἀμαλαπτομέναν  
900 δυσπλάνοις Ἥρας ἀλατείαις πόνων.
- ἐπωδ. ἐμοὶ δ' ὅτε μὲν ὀμαλὸς ὁ γάμος,  
ἄφοβος ἔφν' δέδια δὲ μὴ  
κρυσσόνων θεῶν ἔρω μ'  
ἄφυκτον ὄμμα προσδράκοι.  
905 ἀπόλεμος ὅδε γ' ὁ πόλεμος, ἄπορα πόριμος· οὐδ'  
ἔχω τί ἂν γενοίμαν·  
τὰν Διὸς γὰρ οὐχ ὄρῳ  
μῆτιν ὅπα φύγοιμ' ἄν.

Truly wise, truly wise was he who first grasped this in his mind and expressed it clearly with his tongue, that it is best by far to marry in one's own station, and that a poor man should not yearn to wed either among those who luxuriate in wealth or among those who glory in their high birth.

Never, never, O ... Fates, may you see me as the sharer of Zeus's bed, nor may I be united with any partner from among the heavenly ones: for I am afraid when I see Io, the man-shunning virgin, devastated by the terrible, troublous, vagrant wanderings caused by Hera. For me, when marriage is on my own level, it inspires no fear; but I do fear

that the eye of a superior god, from which one cannot flee, may look on me with desire. Against such a campaign one cannot fight, against such craft one is helpless; there would be nothing I could do with myself: I cannot see how I could escape the wiles of Zeus.

### 2. *Suppliants* 144-61.

- ἀντ. η θέλουσα δ' αὖ θέλουσαν ἀγ-  
145 νά μ' ἐπιδέτω Διὸς κόρα,  
ἔχουσα σέμν' ἐνώπι' ἀ-  
σφαλῆ, παντὶ δὲ σθένει  
διωγμοῖς ἀσχαλῶσ'  
ἀδμήτος ἀδμήτα  
150 ῥύσιος γενέσθω·  
σπέρμα σεμνᾶς μέγα ματρὸς εὐνᾶς  
ἀνδρῶν, ἔξ,  
ἄγαμον ἀδάματον ἐκφυγεῖν.
- στρ. θ εἰ δὲ μή, μελανθῆς  
155 ἠλιόκτυπον γένος  
τὸν γαίον, τὸν πολυξενώτατον  
Ζῆνα τῶν κεκμηκότων

160 ἰξόμεσθα σὺν κλάδοις  
ἀρτάναις θανοῦσαι,  
μὴ τυχοῦσαι θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων.

May the chaste daughter of Zeus likewise watch over me, with a willingness matching mine, she who dwells behind august, secure temple façades: with all her might, aggrieved by the pursuit, let her, the Untamed One, become the rescuer of us the untamed ones, so that the offspring of a most august mother may escape the beds of men—ah, ah!— unwedded and unsubdued.

And if not, this dark-skinned, sun-beaten race will supplicate the underworld Zeus, the ever-hospitable Zeus of the departed, in death, with nooses instead of olive-branches, if we have not secured the aid of the Olympian gods.

### 3. *Prometheus Bound* 853-869.

πέμπτη δ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ γένηνα πεντηκοντάπαις  
855 πάλιν πρὸς Ἄργος οὐχ ἑκούσ' ἐλεύσεται  
θηλύσπορος, φεύγουσα συγγενῆ γάμον  
ἀνεψιῶν· οἱ δ' ἐπτοημένοι φρένας,  
κίρκοι πελειῶν οὐ μακρὰν λελειμμένοι,  
ἦξουσι θηρεύσοντες οὐ θηρασίμους  
γάμους, φθόνον δὲ σωμάτων ἔξει θεός·  
860 Πελασγία δὲ δεύσεται θηλυκτόνῳ  
Ἄρει, δαμέντων νυκτιφρουρήτῳ θράσει·  
γυνὴ γὰρ ἄνδρ' ἕκαστον αἰῶνος στερεῖ,  
δίθηκτον ἐν σφαγαῖσι βάψασα ξίφος.  
τοιὰδ' ἐπ' ἐχθροὺς τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἔλθοι Κύπρις.  
865 μίαν δὲ παίδων ἴμερος θέλξει τὸ μὴ  
κτεῖναι ξύνευνον, ἀλλ' ἀπαμβλυνθήσεται  
γνώμην· δυοῖν δὲ θάτερον βουλῆσεται,  
κλύειν ἄναλκῆς μᾶλλον ἢ μαιφόνος.  
αὕτη κατ' Ἄργος βασιλικὸν τέξει γένος.

The fifth generation from him, a female brood of fifty children, will come back to Argos, not by choice but in flight from a kindred marriage to their cousins; the cousins, their minds excited by lust, hawks following close behind the doves, will come to hunt marriages that they should not have been hunting, but god will deny them possession of their bodies. The Pelasgian land will be drenched with blood by deadly female violence when the men are audaciously slain in the wakeful night; for each woman will deprive her husband of his life, dipping a two-edged sword in his blood. So may the bridal night be for my enemies! But one of the girls will be charmed by desire into refraining from killing her bedfellow; she will choose the alternative of being called a coward rather than a polluted murderer. She will become the mother of a royal house in Argos.

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