Aeschylus’ Revisionist View of Women
CAMWS, Albuquerque, April 12, 2018 (gagarin@austin.utexas.edu)

1. Prometheus Bound 887-908.

str.  

Μή σοφὸς ἢ σοφὸς ἢν  
ὁς πρώτος ἐν γυώμα τόδ᾽ ἐβάστασε καὶ  
γλώσσα διεμυθωλόγησεν,

890 Ὡς τὸ κηδεῦσαι καθ᾽ ἐαυτὸν ἀριστεύει μακρῷ,

καὶ μήτε τῶν πλούτων διαβρυτοπομένων

μήτε τῶν γέννα μεγαλυκομένων

όντα χεριῆταν ἐραστεύσαι γάμων.

ἀντ.  

μήποτε μήποτε μ᾽ ὡς

905 Μοῖραι ἵππο ἐνούν  
διεμυθολογοῦν ἰδοιζεῖ πέλουσαν,

μήτε πλαθεῖσα γαμετὰ τινὶ τῶν ἐς οὐρανοῦ·

ταρβῷ γὰρ ἀστεργάνορα παρθεύναν

εἰσορῶν Ἰοὺς ἀμαλλαπτομέναν

900 δυσπλάνοις Ἡρας ἀλατεῖας πῶνων.

ἐπιδ.  

ἐμοὶ δ᾽ ὅτε μὲν ὀμαλὸς ὁ γάμος,

ἀφοβὸς ἐφ᾽ ἐδίδος καὶ μή

κρεισσόνων θέων ἐρω ἐρω μ᾽

ἀφίκτων ὄμμα προοδράκοι.

905 ἀπόλεμος ὁδε γ᾽ ὁ πόλεμος, ἀπορίας πόριμος· οὐδ᾽

ἐξοτι τί ἀν γενοίμαιν·

τὰν Δίος γὰρ οὐχ ὀρῷ

μήτιν ὀπʼ ψυγοῦ ἀν.

 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. Suppliant 144-61.

πρ.  

θέλουσα δ᾽ αὖθελουσαν ἄγ·

145 νὰ μ᾽ ἐπιθέτω Δίος κόρα,

ἔχουσα σέμν᾽ ἐνωτὶ ἀ·

σφαλῆ, παντὶ δὲ σθένει

dιογμοις ἀσχαλῶς·

ἀδημήτας ἄδημήτα

150 ῥύοιος γενέσθω·

απερία σεμνᾶς μέγα ματρός εὐνάς

ἀνδρῶν, ἐ, ἀγαμόν ᾠάματων ἐκφύγειν.

πρ.  

εἰ δὲ μή, μελανθές

155 ἡλιόκτυπον γένω

tῶν γάιων, τῶν πολυενώτατων

Ζῆνα τῶν κεκηπχώτων.
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.


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.

Works Cited