

The *Hiketides*' Closing Song: One Chorus Divided
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Though no paragraphos marks a change of speakers in the manuscripts, modern editors divide the Danaids' closing song between two choruses primarily on the basis of the song's contradictory attitudes regarding marriage and Aphrodite: the Danaids (at least half of them) maintain their stance against marriage (1018-1033), and they are answered by a second Chorus that favors marriage (1034-1051). Critics have variously identified the second Chorus as the Danaids' handmaidens, Argive bodyguards, and a subgroup of the Danaids. Although most agree that the song is shared by two choruses, none of the proposed semi-choruses is a perfect fit, and no consensus has been reached in the scholarly community.

In this paper I take a more conservative textual approach and attribute the song to a unified chorus of Danaids. I argue that the conflicting views that have motivated others to divide the song are in fact perfectly in keeping with the *Hiketides*' ambiguous presentation of the Danaids' view of marriage. The Danaids have spoken vehemently against marriage to the Aegyptids and at times appear to reject marriage altogether. Their position is more complicated, however, as evidenced by Danaus' fears that his daughters will be seduced (996-1005) and his plea immediately before the *exodos* that they honor continence and that they not bring him shame (1012-3; 996, 1008-9) (evidence that critics in favor of the division are forced to ignore). Thus, in the closing song, we find the Danaids expressing their aversion to marriage with the Aegyptids (1031-1033) but approving marriage that comes as a result of yearning, persuasion and love (1038-1042) rather than violence and acknowledging that, in any case, marriage may be fated for them (1043-51).

This reading of the *Hiketides*' closing song offers a more satisfying conclusion to this play and a clearer indication of how the plot will proceed in the next. Those who argue for a divided song in which the Danaids remain vigilant against marriage are forced to posit an extreme development to bring about their marriage with the Aegyptids that ill befits the traditional story. Under my reading, the Danaids have begun to consider marriage, even to the Aegyptids, if they prove less horrible than has been suggested. In this way, the *Hiketides* points the way to the marriage and the deception (cf. their praise of the αἰολόμητις θεὸς at lines 1036-7) that will result in the death of the Aegyptids on their wedding night. At the same time, the play creates suspense by suggesting, if only for the moment, the possibility of a happy conclusion to the Danaus' and Aegyptus' feud.