

AESCH. FR. 13 RADT: A SEXUAL PUN?



ABSTRACT: In the present paper I discuss two possible dramatic contexts for Aesch. fr. 13 Radt, an iambic line deriving from Aeschylus' satyric *Amy-mone*. The two contexts are tied to the possible speakers of the line, who, even though they are diametrically different stage characters, are equally appropriate (or justifiable) for the specific fragment.

IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, Amymone was one of Danaus' fifty daughters. Unlike her forty-eight sisters who killed their husbands on their wedding night (save Hypermestra), Amymone's fate was rather different. Her story is (variously) treated by pseudo-Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 2.1.4) and Hyginus (*Fab.* 169 and 169a): Amymone either goes hunting or to fetch water (for a sacrifice her father wants to perform, or because Poseidon dried up Argos out of anger at Inachus for admitting that the land belongs to Hera). She casts a weapon (dart/spear) at some prey (a deer) and hits a (sleeping) satyr (/Amy-mone herself falls asleep in the middle of nowhere). The (/A) satyr attempts to rape her, but Poseidon appears (because the desperate Amymone calls on him), and the satyr disappears (/the god disposes of the satyr with his trident). Poseidon makes love to Amymone (and Nauplius is born from this union). Poseidon reveals to Amymone a spring (streaming from the rock his trident hit when he threw it at the satyr), thus assisting her to find water. This spring is called Lernaean (and the stream Amymonian).¹

In an uncertain year, possibly 463 BCE, Aeschylus won first prize at the city Dionysia with a thematically connected (Danaid) tetralogy: the *Suppliants*, the *Egyptians*, the *Danaids*, and the satyric *Amymone*.² Only three

1. See ps.-Apoll. *Bibl.* 2.1.5, 2.5.2; Eur. *Phoen.* 187-9; Call. *Hymn* 5.45-8; Apoll. Rh. *Arg.* 1.133-8.; Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 8.; Philostr. *Imag.* 1.8; Sch. *II.* 4.171; Sch. Eur. *Or.* 127; Propert. *Eleg.* 2.26C.45-50; Ovid *Her.* 19.129-32, *Met.* 2.239-40. Further, Strabo *Geogr.* 8.6.8.11-12; Paus. *Descr.* 2.37.1,4. See also Obbink (2004).
2. On the (re-)dating of Aeschylus' *Supp.* see, concisely, Garvie (2006) pref. ix ff.: 463 BCE is (plausibly) favored by this scholar. About *Amymone* see Sutton (1974), *id.* (1980) 14-7;

scant fragments (sixteen words overall) survive from *Amydone*, fr. 13, 14, and 15 Radt, and thus there can be no secure reconstruction of the plot. If, by any chance, the surviving mythographic accounts reflect Aeschylus' treatment of the story,³ then the satyr-play of his Danaid tetralogy should be tied to Amydone's attempted and completed seduction, by the Silenus and Poseidon respectively. In fact, there is "uncertainty among our sources as to whether Amydone was raped by Poseidon or whether she consented: some accounts (all in Latin, not Greek) speak explicitly of rape, others use expressions like 'lay with' which leave the question open; the one Greek account, by pseudo-Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 2.1.4), says that 'Amydone lay with *him*' [(*Ἀμυμόνη δὲ τούτῳ συνευνάζεται*)], which implies consent fairly strongly. And, as several scholars have seen, persuasion by Poseidon and consent by Amydone would create in the satyr-play a close, if distorted and burlesqued, echo of the main theme of the trilogy: an attempt to effect sexual union through forcible seizure is forcibly prevented, and superseded by a consensual, mutually desired and fruitful union under divine auspices, associated with water and with the fertility of the soil."⁴ In a nutshell, Aeschylus' *Amydone* is a satyr-play most likely about how the Silenus unsuccessfully attempted to have sex with Danaus' daughter Amydone, and how the god Poseidon succeeded in doing so.

With the above in mind, one can propose two equally possible (but not equally entertaining) dramatic contexts for the iambic Aesch. fr. 13 Radt, which is, in all likelihood, spoken by Poseidon or the Silenus:⁵

Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (1999) 91-7; Yziquel (2001) 13-9; Podlecki (2005) 8-9; and Sommerstein (2008b) 8-9. See also Lämmle (2013) 72; Griffith (2015) 54-5, 86 n. 7, 325-6, 354-5. On the Danaid tetralogy see, most recently, Sommerstein (2019) 10-20.

3. According to Sommerstein (2010) 107, the fact that the "surviving accounts of [Amydone's] myth introduce a satyr [...] is so unusual in mythographic narratives[,] as to raise a strong presumption that these accounts are derived from Aeschylus' play."
4. See Sommerstein (2010) 107. See Slenders (1992) 154-5 with bibliography for a parodying relationship between the Danaid trilogy and *Amydone*. That Amydone consented could also be supported by the god's "compensation" gift to her: *καὶ ἀδῆρῃ Ποσειδῶν τὰς ἐν Λέσβῳ πηγὰς ἐμήρυσεν* (ps-Apoll. *Bibl.* 2.1.4).
5. For the possible speakers of the fragment, proposed in literature since 1822, see, concisely, TrGF III, 132. See further Sutton (1974) 193 n. 5; Sommerstein (2008b) 11. Lämmle (2013) 207 n. 238, suggests that the speaker is "Silen oder ein Satyr." Yet, is it actually possible that a satyr (Chorus member) became a *persona loquens* in the drama, detaching himself from his companions? Contra Sutton (1980) 15: "[o]nly one point can be made with assurance. In a satyr-play Amydone would not be pursued by a *satyr*."

σοὶ μὲν γαμεῖσθαι μόρσιμον, γαμεῖν δ' ἐμοί.

The γαμέω word-play could be indicating lawful marriage, consensual sexual intercourse,⁶ or even rape.⁷ The line could be construed in two ways.

Literally:

*It is your destiny to get married (become my wife),
and mine to marry you (make you my wife).*

Or euphemistically:

*It is your destiny to get fucked (deflowered),
and mine to fuck (deflower) you.*

Interestingly enough, two lexicographic sources attesting Aeschylus' line, *On Differences Between Related Words*⁸ 120 and *On Incorrect Vocabulary*⁹ 3, also provide evidence about the linguistic use of γῆμαι and γήμασθαι in Anacreon, that is in fr. 54 G.= 424 P.¹⁰: γῆμαι τοῦ γήμασθαι διαφέρει, ὅτι γαμεῖ μὲν ὁ ἀνὴρ, γαμεῖται δὲ ἡ γυνή ... καὶ Ἀνακρέων (sc. τὴν διαφορὰν τετήρηκεν) διασύρων τινὰ ἐπὶ θηλότητι. In the lyric poet's verses, used as mockery of some effeminate man according to the sources, the difference in meaning between γαμεῖν and γαμεῖσθαι seems to have been

6. Cf. Eur. *Cycl.* 181 about Helen, who πολλοῖς ἡδεται γαμουμένη: “enjoys getting married to/fucked by many men.” In the previous line, the Chorus of satyrs strikingly asks Odysseus if they, the Greek army, all banged Helen, taking turns, when they got her back from her Trojan “husband.”

7. See LSJ s.v. Also, Slenders (1992) 154 n. 44 and *id.* (2005) 42 for γαμέω (marry/“fuck” (*sic*)) specifically in reference to Aesch. fr. 13 Radt. Even when used euphemistically (and in an abusive manner) in classical times, the Greek γαμέω would lack the coarse, non-al-lusive, vulgarity of the modern English term “to fuck”. The reason I purposefully choose to use it in translation, is that it is the only one that indicates in the form of a single verb, as in the Greek text, what the phrase comes down to denoting; even though the words in Greek and English do have different weights and cultural connotations.

8. *Περὶ ὁμοίων καὶ διαφορῶν λέξεων* “is preserved in late manuscripts under the name of Ammonius, but it is generally agreed not to have been composed by any of the known bearers of that name”. —See Dickey (2015) 469.

9. *Περὶ ἀκρολογίας*, attributed to the grammarian Herodian. See Dickey (2014) 331; Dyck (1993) 791.

10. καὶ θάλαμος ἐν †ϕ† κεῖνος οὐκ ἔγημεν ἀλλ' ἐγήματο: “and the chamber in which he did not ‘take’ a bride, but he was ‘taken’ himself as a bride.”

tied to the passive role in male homosexual intercourse, which would have clashed with the active role in heterosexual intercourse.¹¹ In the Aeschylean line — however construed — *γαμείσθαι* and *γαμείν* seem to be closely tied both to how heterosexual intercourse is performed, and to the respectively passive and active roles of women and men in marriage as an institution.¹² There the poet, among all else, uses syntax to semantically highlight the “place” of women as “receivers”: of the male “substance” in coitus, and of predetermined decisions in marriage. This stylistic device also occurs in *Danaids*, the third play of the Danaid tetralogy. In Aesch. fr. 44.1-2 Radt, the Sky, the archetypical male, passionately desires to — actively — *penetrate* the Earth, while the Earth is — passively — taken hold by a passionate desire to *experience marital intercourse*.¹³

If spoken by Poseidon the line is, arguably, a “lever of persuasion” to convince Amynone to give in to a fated sexual union; the “marriage” Poseidon would “offer” is, evidently, a one-time intercourse. The dramatic context within which Poseidon would have spoken the line is most likely the following: Amynone is roaming alone in the countryside. She somehow encounters the Silenus and a group of satyrs (Chorus). The lustful Silenus “hits on” Amynone, and she pushes him away. To his persistent attempts to be united with her, lawfully or unlawfully, she responds by crying out for help. Hearing her cries, Poseidon appears and saves the maiden. He himself is bedazzled by Amynone’s beauty, and attempts to seduce her. Amynone resists his courtship, and the god tells her that, in actual fact, it is not for her — or even him! — to decide.¹⁴ It is fated for them to be united. Hence, Amynone succumbs, and their union is, plausibly, celebrated at the end of the drama. In other words, if spoken by Poseidon the line would put forward the god’s lust for Amynone, and his self-declared “appropriateness” to “initiate” her to coitus, as a solemn reference to a superior force: destiny, ruling over both humans and gods.¹⁵ In Aeschylus’

11. See *DGE* lexicon s.v. in v. med.-pas. (II.2). In fact, this connotation of *γαμέω* is misinterpreted in LSJ, even though the same examples are employed.

12. See, for instance, Carson (1990). Further, Sommerstein (2019) 23-7.

13. I have recently discussed these lines in light of their syntactic-semantic emphasis. See Manousakis (2021) in detail, where I focus on the imagery of sexual activity in Aeschylus, bringing to the fore the — rather neglected — sensuality in his poetry.

14. In *Eum.* 217-8 another god, Apollo, tells the Chorus that *εὐνή γὰρ ἀνδρὶ καὶ γυναικὶ μόρσιμος | ὄρκον ἔστι μείζων, τῆ δίκῃ φρορομένη*. Cf. *Od.* 16.392.

15. Cf. Apollo’s argument in *Eum.* 213ff. “[T]he marriages of deities are sometimes spoken of as being blessed by the Moirai in person (e.g. Pind. fr. 30, *Ar. Av.* 1731-6).” See Sommerstein (1989) 120.

Supp. 1034-1051, the Chorus of (in all likelihood) Argive Guards¹⁶ comments on the connection between the gods, especially Aphrodite, fate, and marriage, crucially pointing out to Danaus' daughters (in 1047-51) that *ὅτι τοι μόρσιμόν ἐστιν, τὸ γένοιτ' ἄν* | ... *μετὰ πολλῶν δὲ γάμων ἄδε τελευτὰ* | *προτερῶν πέλοι γυναικῶν*.¹⁷ *Supp.* is (as held by the majority of scholars) the opening play of the tetralogy to which *Amymone* belongs, and the echo of *μόρσιμον* in Aesch. fr. 13 Radt is probably no coincidence. Ultimately, what we are left with in a Poseidon scenario for *Amymone* (no matter any humorous solemnity in context) is a deeply Greek thought: also making love is fated, so yield to it.

If spoken by the Silenus to Amymone,¹⁸ the dramatic context that the line under discussion would fit into is practically the same, with one minor but highly amusing difference. The obscene Silenus, who most likely is quite sharply contrasted in the play with the powdered and perfumed Poseidon,¹⁹ attempts to seduce Amymone using elevated language.²⁰ The old satyr tells Amymone that it is her ineluctable fate to be united with him. By saying that, he either means — in context — that they are to be “officially” married,²¹ as is the case with the Silenus and Danaë in Aeschylus' satyric *Net-haulers* (see fr. 47a Radt 821ff.), or that Amymone, however reluctant, is to engage with him on the spot in sexual intercourse, and that is, at any rate, quite unavoidable. If the latter hypothesis holds, then the dramatic

16. See Friis-Johansen and Whittle (1980) 306-9 n. on ver. 1018-73, 319-20 n. on ver. 1034-42; Sommerstein (2019) 368ff. n. on ver. 1034-51. See also Sommerstein (2008a) 424-5 n. 215.

17. “Whatever is fated, you know, that will happen— | ... and this outcome, marriage, would be shared | with many women before you.” The translation is by Sommerstein (2008a). See Friis-Johansen and Whittle (1980) 331ff. n. on ver. 1047, 1048-9, 1050-1. In Aesch. fr. 44 Radt from *Danaids*, Aphrodite in person makes, in cosmic terms, the very same argument about the unavoidable, divinely ordained, fertile union of man and woman. On this, see, most recently, Manousakis (2021). See also Sommerstein (2019) 368 about the association of *Supp.* 1034-51 with Hes. *Theog.*

18. Sommerstein (2010) 119 n. 21 suggests that in this fragment “the language is less that of a wooer than of one who considers himself entitled by right to the possession of the woman addressed, and the speaker may well be Silenus, leader of the satyrs, trying unskillfully to persuade Amymone to accept a union which he is determined she shall not escape in any case.”

19. See Aesch. fr. 14 Radt with the n. by Sommerstein (2008b) 11.

20. Cf. Silenus' use of “formal religious and theatrical language” (Shaw (2018) 34) in Euripides' *Cycl.* 36-40. Cf., also, *Cycl.* 589 for the “moral” tone of Silenus' final words in the drama; see O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 208 for some tragic parallels.

21. Conceivably, this could be why he uses *γαμέω* and not some actually vulgar term, such as *διαχοστέω*. Cf. Eur. *Cycl.* 180.

context within which Aesch. fr. 13 Radt is spoken is that of a comical pursuit — a slapstick attempted rape involving an elderly, ludicrous creature, and a swift maiden, eventually averted by Poseidon’s intervention. The Silenus would, most likely, be chasing Amymone with his phallus in plain sight, and she would be desperately trying to escape. He would be crying out for her to stop and give in to what is *μόρσιμον*, and she, like Danaë in the *Net-haulers* (see fr. 47a Radt 773-6), would be crying out to the gods something like: “are you [really now] going to deliver me over to beasts like these? I will be defiled [in deed, and not in wo]rld alone!”²² Even if the Silenus was speaking the line with lawful marriage in mind, the comic outcome of the scene would have been similar: a grotesque beast pompously informing a young and beautiful girl that it is her destiny to marry him, and hence, of course, have sex with him. In any event, whatever the kind of union Amymone’s “suitor” — whoever he was — would have proposed, the “knowing” marriage/coitus wordplay — no matter how it was “delivered” in context — would have definitely been at home in a satyr-play.

It seems that in *Amymone* “Aeschylus had taken up and translated into suitable satyric terms the theme of the contrast between rape and courtship which had already been developed in the [Danaid] trilogy.”²³ If this train of thought is on the right track, a farcial pursuit episode in which an old, crude satyr uses refined “marital” language while chasing — “in full glory” — a defenseless young girl he wants to have sex with, mirroring the attempted abduction episode in *Supp.* 825ff., would be quite an apposite choice for a dramatist (especially as ingenious as Aeschylus). Hence, Aesch. fr. 13 Radt would have been a suggestive sexual pun in *Amymone*,²⁴ central to the episode under discussion. In the Silenus scenario, the attempted rape is substituted for proper courtship when Poseidon comes into the picture. In contrast, if spoken by Poseidon, Aesch. fr. 13 Radt would have actually been the lofty, yet sexually charged, culmination (probably spoken at the climax of the drama) of a wooing episode between a god and a mortal.²⁵ Evidently, we will probably never know for sure who was speaking Aesch.

22. A slightly adapted version of Sommerstein’s (2008b) translation.

23. See Winnington-Ingram (1961) 147; Föllinger (2003) 191. See also Sutton (1980) 34-5, 164ff.

24. Cf. Aesch. fr. 15 Radt for the sexual language in *Amymone*.

25. As Winnington-Ingram (1961) 151 puts it, in Aeschylus’ *Amymone* “a woman who has rejected sexual desire under the mode of *βία*, of force and violence, comes to accept it under the mode of *πειθώ*, of persuasion and enchantment. She who would not be forced is successfully wooed.” Gantz (1993) 207 notes that Aesch. fr. 13 Radt — if spoken by

fr. 13 Radt: Poseidon or Silenus. Nevertheless, the latter option, introducing a hilarious antithesis of style between a character's words and deeds (/nature), remains an open, prototypically comic, hypothesis for Aeschylus' satyric *Amymone*.²⁶

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Poseidon — "may have deeper resonances as a paradigm for the acquiescence of Amymone's sisters to marriage when presented with the right suitor."

26. Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (1999) 93 n. 8 aptly indicate that "[d]ennoch muß in jedem Fall die sexuelle Konnotation mitgelesen werden."

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