

## Συζύγιοι Χάριτες, HIPPOLYTUS 1147

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In the epode of the third stasimon of the *Hippolytus*, the chorus conclude their lament in an angry tone of moral indignation: Hippolytus is suffering a wretched fate, his mother bore him in vain, and they as witnesses are enraged at the gods. Why, they ask the συζύγιοι Χάριτες, have you sent away into exile this poor innocent youth (1147-50)?

συζύγιοι Χάριτες, τί τὸν τάλαν' ἐκ πατρίας γᾶς  
οὐδὲν ἄτας αἴτιον  
πέμπετε τῶνδ' ἀπ' οἴκων;

The adjective συζύγιοι is ambiguous. Is one to read it in an active or a passive sense?<sup>1</sup> Some readers, taking it in a passive sense, imagine the Charites either physically holding hands<sup>2</sup> or simply united in a unanimous sisterhood.<sup>3</sup> The former, for example Barthold, Mahaffy, and most recently Barrett, allude to the contemporary Greek sculpture which offers many examples of the three Charites with joined hands.

<sup>1</sup> Such active and passive adjectives are not uncommon. See e.g. ἀνιπρός, ἀργός (B), ἀσυνής, ἄσκοπος, ἄσχυλτος, ἀσπούδαστος.

<sup>2</sup> So T. Barthold, *Hippolytus* (*Ausgewählte Tragödien des Euripides*, vol. 4) Berlin 1880; J. P. Mahaffy and J. B. Bury, *The Hippolytus of Euripides*, London 1889; and W. S. Barrett, *Hippolytos*, Oxford 1964. Two translations read: "O Graces / Aye linkèd in loving embraces" (A. S. Way, *Euripides*, vol. 4, London 1912) and "Chariten, zum Reigen verbunden" (E. Buschor, *Euripides: Medeia, Hippolytos, Herakles*, Munich 1952).

<sup>3</sup> So F. A. Paley, *Euripides*, vol. 1, London 1872; U. von Wilamowitz, *Euripides Hippolytos*, Berlin 1891; and W. Bauer, *Euripides Hippolyt*, 2nd ed., Munich 1915. See also the translations of R. Potter, 1823 ("Ye Graces, sweet-according band"); Wilamowitz, 1891 ("Drillingsschwestern"); G. Murray, 1904 ("Ye love-linkèd Graces"); R. Warner, 1949 ("you band of the Graces"); P. Vellacott, 1953 ("You sister Graces"); H. Berguin and G. Duclos, 1954 ("Grâces, o soeurs divines"); R. Cantarella, ed. by S. Musitelli, 1962-63 ("O Cariti compagne"); and D. Ebener, 1966 ("Ihr Chariten, ihr innig verbundenen"). *LSJ*, s.v. συζύγιος 1, offers the meaning "joined, united" and cites the *Hippolytus* passage.

They fail, however, to produce any evidence which might support the connection between the word *συζύγαι* and such sculpture. As far as I can determine from the examples in *LSJ*, none of the *ζυγ*-derivatives is used to describe the joining of hands. The others, who see a unanimous trinity in the word, rely on a common meaning of these *ζυγ*-derivatives and on the well-known fact that the Charites were always presented by Greek writers, sculptors, and painters, from the sixth century at least, as a unified group with no single Charis enjoying an individuality. Yet not only does the word never occur in this passive sense, but such a reading would render the adjective purely ornamental, irrelevant, and therefore jejune.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, there are those who read the adjective in an active sense. For them the Charites are here presented, like Hera, as guardians or promoters of marriage, or, like Aphrodite, as inspirers of desire, i.e. those who "bind couples in one."<sup>5</sup> Though I should hesitate to rule out completely the possibility that the word may be passive, there are several considerations which convincingly support the active meaning.

1. The word occurs elsewhere only twice. Each time it is used to describe Hera and only in an active sense. Stobaeus, 2.7.3a, comments on the word *τέλος*: *ὥς ὁ γάμος παρὰ τοῖς Δωριεῦσιν. . . καθὸ τὴν γαμήλιον "Ἦραν <ῆ> συζυγίαν καὶ τελείαν ἐπονομάζουσιν.* Pollux, 3.38, on words relating to marriage, writes: *προτελεῖσθαι δ' ἐλέγοντο οὐ μόνον αἱ νύμφαι ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ νυμφῖοι, καὶ τέλος ὁ γάμος ἐκαλεῖτο, καὶ τέλειοι οἱ γεγαμηκότες. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ "Ἥρα τελεία ἡ συζυγία.*

2. The active sense is maintained in the scholia, though the first remark does offer an oddly interpreted passive sense: *αἱ συνεζευγμέναι*

<sup>4</sup> See L. Méridier, *Euripide* 2 (Paris 1927) 73 note 1: "Les trois Charites sont généralement représentées enlacées ou se tenant par la main. On peut entendre ainsi *συζύγαι*. Mais l'épithète n'ajouterait pas grand chose à l'idée. Mieux vaut comprendre: *qui présidez à l'hymen.*"

<sup>5</sup> So T. Fix, *Euripidis Fabulae*, Paris 1844, and L. Méridier (see above, note 4). I know of only two translators who utilize this interpretation: D. Sutherland, *Hippolytus in Drama and Myth*, Lincoln, Neb. 1960 ("You three Graces who bind couples in one") and M. Delcourt-Curvers, *Tragiques grecs, Euripide*, Paris 1962 ("Et vous, / Grâces qui présidez à l'entente des coeurs"). Both S. Gsell, *DS*, s.v. "Gratiae," 1661 note 37, and Escher, *RE* 3 (1899) 2162, s.v. "Charites," read the word in this active sense.

Χάριτες τῷ Ἰππολύτῳ. αἱ συζευγνῶσαι, ὃ ἐστὶ γαμήλιοι. ἀντὶ τοῦ· ὦ Χάριτες ἔφοροι τῆς συζυγίας.

3. There is extensive literary evidence that the effective nature of the Charites since the time of Homer was just what an active interpretation of συζύγιοι would imply. *Κουροτρόφοι* and *καλλιγενεαί*, companions of Peitho, Himeros, and Eros, *συμβώμοι* and *πάρεδροι* of Aphrodite, they shared with Hera and Aphrodite, especially the latter, the province of marriage and love,<sup>6</sup> as their ubiquitous appearance in Greek and Roman literature well illustrates.<sup>7</sup>

4. That the adjective συζύγιοι evoked those very functions of marriage and love which were so characteristic of the Charites is demonstrated by the fact that one of the most common meanings of the ζυγ- derivatives is that of marital or amatory union. In Euripides the following ζυγ- derivatives occur in such a meaning at least thirty-seven times: ἄζυξ, ἀποζεύγνυμι, ζεύγνυμι, ζυγόν, νεόζευκτος,

<sup>6</sup> See Escher (above, note 5) 2162-63.

<sup>7</sup> In Homer they weave her peplos, bathe and dress her, and dance with her (*Il.* 5.338, *Od.* 8.364-66, 18.194. See also *Hom. Hym. to Apol.* 194-96; *Cypr. ap.* Athen. 15.682D-F). Homer makes one of them, Charis, the wife of Hephaestus (*Il.* 18.382-83), Hesiod names her Aglaia (*Theog.* 945-46); elsewhere it is Aphrodite. They, like Aphrodite, were born in the sea (*Fr. Adesp.* 85.10-11 Bergk, PLG). Pindar joins them with Aphrodite in an invocation (*Fr.* 90), sings of the field of Aphrodite and the Charites (*P.* 6.1-3) and of the Χάριτάς τ' Ἀφροδισίων ἐρώτων (*Fr.* 128). His garden of Aphrodite (*P.* 5.31 and schol. *ad loc.*) might have been the hill of the Charites (*Ol.* 9.40). They appear with Aphrodite in Aristophanes (*Ach.* 989; *Pax* 40-41 and 456; see schol. *ad Pax* 41). Compare Theocritus 16.108-9 with Mimnermus 1.1-2. Bion sees them weeping for Adonis (1.93); Moschus places Aphrodite in their midst (2.71). Four epigrams in *AP* sing of them together with Aphrodite (9.623, 625, 634, 639). They are closely joined with her as children of Zeus by Diodorus (5.72.5), and dance with her in Horace (*C.* 1.4.5-7 and 3.21.21-22), while for Seneca (*De benef.* 1.3.9) they are her *comites*. Pliny (*NH* 13.142) describes a plant, *Chariton blepharon*, as effective in love-charms. Amor and Gratia appear together in Statius' epithalamium (*Sil.* 1.2.19-21). Along with Peitho and Hermes, they are *σύμβωμοι* and *πάρεδροι* of Aphrodite, according to Cornutus (*Theol.* 24), while for Arrian, τὰ ἐρωτικά are in the hands of Aphrodite, Eros, Peitho, and the Charites (*Cyn.* 35.2). Lucian has Aphrodite lend Paris the aid of Himeros, Eros, and the Charites to win Helen (*Deor. dial.* 20.15-16). When Pausanias found statues of the Charites near one of Eros, he remarked that they were "of all deities the nearest related to Aphrodite" (W. H. S. Jones' Loeb translation, 6.24.6-7). Alciphron (1.11.3) describes a beautiful face in terms of the Charites and Aphrodite. Aphrodite appears on Achilles' shield (*Q. Sm.* 5.71-72) as she arises from the sea surrounded by Himeros and the Charites. Servius says that the Charites are daughters of Venus (*ad. Aen.* 1.720). They sit at her court (*Perv. Ven.* 50) and live with her (Nonn. 31.204 and 41.7). For Coluthus (*Rapt. Hel.* 16), she is their queen.

νεόζυγος, νεόζυξ, παραζεύγνυμι, συζεύγνυμι, σύζυγος, and σύζυξ.<sup>8</sup>

5. In the *Hippolytus*, which displays more than any other Greek tragedy the nature of love, it is not surprising that of the seven appearances of ζυγ- derivatives, not counting our passage, three denote marital or amatory meanings.<sup>9</sup> Two occur in the first stasimon. The chorus sings of the power of Aphrodite who brought together (ζευσᾶσ') in a terrifying manner the maiden Iole (ἄζυγα) and Heracles. One might suggest that Euripides, anticipating the adjective συζύγιοι in our passage, has emphasized here the metaphor of the sexual yoke by an arresting tautological clarification (545-48):

πῶλον ἄζυγα λέκτρων, ἄναν-  
δρον τὸ πρὶν καὶ ἄνυμφον, οἷ-  
κων ζεύξας' ἀπ' Εὐρυτίων . . .

Again, Artemis, describing the future rites which will be paid to Hippolytus, explains that unmarried maidens will offer up a lock of their hair to Hippolytus (1425-26):

κόραι γὰρ ἄζυγες γάμων πάρος  
κόμας κεροῦνται σοι.

These arguments, then, the other appearances of the word, the interpretation of the scholia, the character of the Charites, the marital and amatory meaning of ζυγ- derivatives, and the use of ζυγ- derivatives in the *Hippolytus*, all testify to the hypothesis that συζύγιοι is

<sup>8</sup> ἄζυξ, *Med.* 673, *Hipp.* 546, 1425, *Tr.* 537, *Ba.* 694, *IA* 805. ἀποζεύγνυμι, *Supp.* 791. ζεύγνυμι, *Alc.* 994, *Supp.* 822, *Ion* 10, 901, 949, *Tr.* 676, *El.* 99, *Hel.* 1654, *Ph.* 338, 1366, *Ba.* 468, *IA* 698, 907, *Fr.* 4.2, 24.1, 773.65, 914.1, *Hyps.* *Fr.* 8/9.15 (Bond). ζυγόν, *Med.* 242. νεόζευκτος, *Alex.* 23.17 (Snell). νεόζυγος, *Med.* 804. νεόζυξ, *Fr.* 781.20. παραζεύγνυμι, *Fr.* 520.1, 1055.2. συζεύγνυμι, *Alc.* 166, *Ion* 343. σύζυγος, *Alc.* 314, 342, 384. σύζυξ, *Alc.* 921.

Elsewhere e.g. see ἄζυγος, *Luc. Am.* 44. διαζεύγνυμι, *Pl. Ly.* 784b. διαζύγιον, *Eust.* 893.51, 1667.33, *Just. Nov.* 140.1 intro. ζύγιος, *Nonn.* 47.450. καταζεύγνυμι, *Ael. VH* 4.1. κατάζευξις, *Plu.* 2.750C. νεόζευκτος, *AP* 9.514, *Nonn.* 2.594. νεόζυγής, *Nonn.* 48.237. νεόζυξ, *A. R.* 4.1191. συζεύγνυμι, *Xen. Oec.* 7.30, *Arist. Pol.* 1335A16, 1269B28, *Apollod.* 3.6.1. σύζευξις, *Pl. Lg.* 930B, *Arist. Pol.* 1253B10, 1335A10. συζυγής, *LXX*, 3*Ma.* 4.8. συζυγία, *AP* 5.220, 10.68. συζύγιος, *Stob.* 2.7.3a, *Poll.* 3.38. σύζυγος, *Aesch. Ch.* 599.

<sup>9</sup> Three others (11, 1131, and 1183) occur in connection with horses and are thus not completely without sexual connotations. See C. Segal, "The Tragedy of the Hippolytus," *HSCP* 70 (1965) 125, 144-47.

active in meaning. A consideration of the context of the passage will show, I believe, that the adjective, if taken as active, participates thematically in the basic idea of the play.

One might consider the *Hippolytus* as constructed on two levels of action, the divine and the human, both progressing simultaneously and only apparently distinct from each other. The first, the conflict between Aphrodite and Hippolytus, is introduced in the prologue. Hippolytus has rejected the goddess and she plans her revenge. Hippolytus is to die. This divine plan is perpetrated on the human level through the interaction of Phaedra, Theseus, and Hippolytus. As the play progresses, one becomes less attentive to the divine level, less aware of the insinuations of Aphrodite's strategy against Hippolytus, the more one is captivated by the inner drama of three human beings acting out a highly dramatic conflict of personalities on clearly human motivation.

The three stasima intricately bind the divine and human levels. The chorus, unlike the audience, have not seen the prologue. Yet their first stasimon, though motivated solely by what they have seen in the preceding episode, is a forceful statement of Aphrodite's power demonstrated in the Iole-Heracles and Semele-Zeus encounters, and is a reminder to the audience of the plan of Aphrodite proclaimed in the prologue. Love is an omnipotent and violent divinity whom men fail to worship at their peril. When she attacks, she is invincible and destructive. In the second stasimon, the so-called "escape ode," the chorus offer their presentiment of the death of Phaedra, which they see as a consequence of her inextricable predicament, but which the audience may remember as a necessary step in Aphrodite's proclaimed plan of revenge.

The chorus watch Hippolytus ride away into exile as they sing the third stasimon. Their concern is deep-felt for this innocent youth who has been unjustly trapped in the consequences of his own virtue. They strongly emphasize the ironic outcome of his commendable refusal either to cede to the scheme of the nurse or later to tell Theseus the truth and thereby break his vow. Their faith in divine providence, in the just interplay of the divine and human, is shaken by what they are now witnessing. There is no relationship between human action and divine dispensation. Men are no longer justly rewarded or

punished. Here is their example: the most illustrious youth of Athens is being sent away unjustly.

But in the closing lines of this song they make three observations, the import of which though unknown to them must be obvious to the audience who had witnessed the prologue, wherein Aphrodite had declared her war on Hippolytus: the maidens will no longer compete for Hippolytus' hand in marriage (1140-41), a mother's birth pangs were all in vain (1144-45), and the Charites, those divinities of love, marriage, and child-bearing, the *κουροτρόφοι* and *καλλιγενεΐαι*, goddesses who bind couples in one, are sending away a youth who is innocent of wrong (1147-50). The competition for Hippolytus' hand, the bearing of children, and the conjugal Charites are aspects of Aphrodite, whom Hippolytus, by his absolute denial of love, has outraged. Though on the human level Hippolytus, in his interaction with Phaedra and Theseus, is indeed innocent of wrong (*οὐδὲν ἄτας αἵτιον*), on the divine level, that is in his conflict with Aphrodite, he has committed hamartia.

This conflict between Aphrodite and Hippolytus involves a universal moral principle. Hippolytus has refused to honor Aphrodite properly. Why he has not done so is not explicitly exposed, though Grube's theory of bastardy seems as convincing as any.<sup>10</sup> The point is that Hippolytus has attacked divine law and Aphrodite must take her revenge. This is why the Charites, the sisters, the companions, or the daughters of Aphrodite, are sending him into an exile which the messenger at this very moment arrives to describe.

Here, then, is an example of dramatic irony. The chorus, limited to an awareness only of the human level of the play, the interaction between Phaedra, Theseus, and Hippolytus, unwittingly recall to the audience, in their very lament over the injustice of what they are seeing before them, that fatal conflict between Aphrodite and Hippolytus.<sup>11</sup> The chorus' description of the consequences of the lack of divine concern offers the audience, at least, the evidence to conclude

<sup>10</sup> G. M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (New York 1961) 184-85.

<sup>11</sup> This juncture of the two levels of the play may be implied in the chorus' phrase: *πότμον ἄποτμον* (1143-44). What Hippolytus is suffering is, on the divine level, *πότμος*, but on the human level *ἄποτμος*, i.e. undeserved. Though this type of figure is a common one in tragedy (see Barrett 376), it has here a thematic function.

that they need lament no longer. There is, indeed, justice in this world; there is a relationship between heaven and earth. The gods do see and heed us. However, as divine dispensers, Euripides seems to say, goddesses like Aphrodite and Artemis, though real and effective forces in this world, are beyond the human standards of right and wrong, and this he demonstrates by the pathetic but humanly refreshing final moments of the exodus.

The word *συζύγιοι*, then, is powerfully thematic. Rather than evoking the sentimental and irrelevant notion of the arm-clasping Charites of contemporary sculpture, the adjective denotes the very aspect of those handmaidens of Aphrodite which Hippolytus has denied and which ultimately destroys him. The word radically participates in that juncture of the two levels of action where, more so than at any point in the play, the moral thesis on which the tragedy rests is exposed.