Coo, L. (2019). Satyric nostalgia in the Aeschylean tetralogy. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 11-28.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-5370.12104>

Peer reviewed version

Link to published version (if available):
[10.1111/2041-5370.12104](https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-5370.12104)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is the author accepted manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via Wiley at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/2041-5370.12104> . Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>

SATYRIC NOSTALGIA IN THE AESCHYLEAN TETRALOGY

LYNDSAY COO

A fundamental issue in the study of satyr play is the question of its function in relation to the tragedies that, at least at the time of Aeschylus, preceded it in the tetralogy.¹ While some responses focus on the genre as Dionysiac ritual and others view it as a mirror that offered spectators a distorted reflection of their own cultural identity, citizenship, and masculinity, a commonly held theory is that the satyr play functioned as emotional relief following the typically more harrowing events of the accompanying tragedies.² With its boisterous chorus of satyrs and guaranteed ‘happy ending’—featuring, for example, weddings, the liberation of the satyrs, the overthrow of monstrous figures, and the triumph of the heroic character(s)—the satyr play may have offered decompression from anxieties generated by the preceding dramas, and to some extent counteracted the effect of tragedy by concluding the day on a more uplifting and ethically uncomplicated note.³ In relation to this, its engagement with tragedy, and in particular the reappearance in the satyr play of tragic characters, conventions, and themes, has often been read as parodic. Other interpretations, by contrast, have focused on the relationship between the genres as mutually reinforcing, seeing the juxtaposition of the dark and light of tragedy and satyr play as throwing each other into starker relief.⁴

Building on the latter approach, this article argues for a new theory of satyr play’s emotional positioning within the tetralogy. Focusing on Aeschylus’ thematically connected tetralogies, I suggest that one effect of his distinctive and consistent manipulation of their temporality was to encourage a nostalgic response in the audience. The concept of nostalgia has gained an extensive bibliography; here I adopt a working definition of the term as the desire for (aspects of) an idealized past.⁵ My analysis does not focus on the audience’s

I am grateful to audiences at the University of California, Davis (2014), the University of British Columbia (2017), and the University of Nottingham (2018) for their feedback. My warmest thanks go to Rebecca Lämmle, Oliver Thomas, and Anna Uhlig for many stimulating conversations about satyr play, and to William Kynan-Wilson, Genevieve Liveley, Alan Sommerstein, Anke Walter, and the *BICS* reviewers for their invaluable comments on this article.

¹ Throughout I use ‘tetralogy’ of the four co-produced plays and ‘trilogy’ of the three co-produced tragedies, regardless of whether they were thematically connected. Sansone 2015 has recently challenged the orthodoxy that the satyr play was performed fourth in the tetralogy in the fifth century. As this article makes clear, I find the grounds for his argument unconvincing. For a refutation of Sansone’s thesis, see Di Marco 2016.

² For overviews of these (and other) various proposed functions of the genre, see Seidensticker in *KPS*: 34–39; Voelke 2001: 381–412; Griffith 2002: 196–203; Lämmle 2013: 93–98; O’Sullivan and Collard 2013: 25–28..

³ This is not to suggest that individual tragedies and tragic trilogies did not feature happy endings; indeed, it seems that many tragedies—and Aeschylus’ connected trilogies in particular—ended ‘well’, with progress, deliverance from suffering, and the promise of future prosperity (Wise 2008: 385–87). Nonetheless, a widespread assumption is that the satyr play’s ending constituted a shift of tone from the preceding tragedies. The view of Wise (2008: 388) is fairly representative: ‘Because every tragedy that competed at the City Dionysia in the fifth century ended with a satyr play, it is crucial to recognize that, in performance, these tragedies were experienced by their audiences as works that ended well, regardless of how things turned out for individual characters within the first three acts’. On positive endings in tragedy, see further Wise 2008, with the response by Hanink 2011 and counter-response by Wise 2013.

⁴ See particularly Seidensticker 1979. See also Easterling 1997: 37–39 on the satyr play as a ‘culmination’ of the tetralogy rather than its after-piece; she notes that ‘[t]he meaning of tragic performance [...] needs therefore to be approached with satyr play in mind’ (38).

⁵ The word ‘nostalgia’ was coined by Johannes Hofer in 1688 to diagnose a medical disease (Hofer [1688] 1934); in the twentieth century it was used of various psychiatric disorders, and has come to denote a

longing to return to a time in their personal past or to a shared (mythical) past—although satyr play, with its recurring themes of origins, inventions, discoveries, babies, and childhood, may well have prompted such responses. Rather, I suggest that in certain tetralogies Aeschylus invites us to view the experience of the human characters in the satyr play through a nostalgic lens. By relocating these characters into happier and more innocent past times and contexts, Aeschylus juxtaposes their satyric ‘pasts’ with their tragic ‘futures’, thereby adding a dimension to his satyr drama that complicates the idea of a simple happy ending. The emotional impact of both the tragedies and the satyr play are intensified through the audience’s response to the way in which their plotlines converge. In this reading, the satyr play does not erase or parody the effect of its accompanying tragedies but contributes positively and productively to the tonal texture of the tetralogy as a whole.

Back to the beginning: Aeschylus’ connected tetralogies

We have evidence for five Aeschylean tetralogies:⁶

Tragedies	Satyr play	Date (BC)
<i>Phineus, Persians, Glaucus of Potniae</i>	<i>Prometheus</i>	472
<i>Laius, Oedipus, Seven against Thebes</i>	<i>Sphinx</i>	467
[<i>Suppliant Women, Egyptians, or v.v.</i>], <i>Danaids</i>	<i>Amymone</i>	470–60s
<i>Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, Eumenides</i>	<i>Proteus</i>	458
<i>Edonians, Bassarids, Youths</i>	<i>Lycurgus</i>	unknown

With the exception of *Prometheus*, in each of these cases the satyr play has a clear mythical connection to the tragic trilogy.⁷ My discussion starts from a simple observation: none of Aeschylus’ attested connected tetralogies present their four plays as a strict linear narrative. The satyr play does not pick up the story from where the third tragedy left off but instead jumps backwards in time to an episode that takes place before the events of the first tragedy, or, more commonly, to one that is located within the time frame of the trilogy.⁸ If we now turn to the Aeschylean satyr plays that have been hypothetically assigned to tetralogies, we find nothing to contradict this pattern; indeed, there is often positive evidence to suggest that the satyric episode took place either before or within the tragic time frame. So, *Argo/The Oarsmen* seems to have dramatized an early stage of the Argonaut story (perhaps around the time of its maiden voyage from Iolcus) and may have accompanied three tragedies about the Argonauts’ later adventures; *Circe* treats an episode from the *Odyssey* that precedes those dramatized in its probable accompanying tragic trilogy *Ghost-Raisers, Penelope, Bone-Gatherers*; the satyric *Lion*, which was probably about the slaying of the Nemean lion,

sentimental yearning for the past. For a recent overview of the concept, including its contemporary manifestations, see Lowenthal 2015: 31–54. In engaging with nostalgia within a literary framework, I make no attempt to subdivide it—as in, e.g., the influential study by Boym 2001, who distinguishes between ‘reflective’ and ‘restorative’ nostalgia—but employ a broad definition. Cf. Santesso 2006: 16, who, in relation to eighteenth-century poetry, specifies idealization as the defining element of nostalgia, which he views as ‘a longing for objects that are idealized, impersonal, and unattainable’.

⁶ For the testimonia, see *TrGF* 3 111.

⁷ There have been attempts to find a thematic link between the plays of the tetralogy containing *Prometheus*; most recently, see Sommerstein 2010a: 62–65 and 2012.

⁸ As outlined below, the events of *Sphinx* and *Proteus* probably fall between the first and second tragedies of their trilogy. It is unclear whether the events of *Amymone* precede or fall within the time frame of the Danaid trilogy. *Lycurgus* seems to present a case of a satyr-play ‘re-booting’ its trilogy by rewriting and directly contradicting the content of the first tragedy, *Edonians* (see Sommerstein 2008b: 126–27). In this unique example, the satyr play takes us back to a point in the story that we have seen before, but splits off into an alternative timeline.

Heracles' first labour, may have been produced alongside *Children of Heracles*, which was set after the hero's death; *Diktyoulkoi* features Perseus as a baby and may have been produced with two tragedies about his adult life; and *Thalamopoioi* ('*Chamber Makers*'), hypothetically assigned to the 'Achilles' tetralogy, may have dramatized a wedding that took place prior to the start of the Trojan War.⁹

In some senses, this is unsurprising. In the case of a trilogy with an overarching central narrative it would be unthinkable for this to be left hanging in the third tragedy so that it could be resolved in the satyr play: for example, we cannot imagine an *Oresteia* in which the denouement of Orestes' trial occurred not in the Athens of *Eumenides* but in the world of the satyrs.¹⁰ Nonetheless, it is striking that in every case in which Aeschylus connected his tetralogy around a theme, his satyr play appears to have rewound the action to an earlier point in the mythical narrative.

This phenomenon of Aeschylean practice was first discussed at length over a century ago by Levi and has been noted in passing since.¹¹ In recent years, however, it has attracted renewed critical interest. In a self-consciously provocative article of 2015, Sansone drew attention to Levi's observations and coupled these with doubts over the reliability of our evidence for the conventional ordering of the tetralogy. By then proposing reconstructions of Aeschylean tetralogies that in each case placed the events of the satyr play prior to those of the first tragedy, Sansone argued that the fifth-century satyr play was likely to have been performed *before* the trilogy and not after it. In Sansone's view, the chronological disruption caused by Aeschylus' satyr plays constitutes an inexplicable and unacceptable 'violation' of the mythic temporal sequence, which is rectified by his radical suggestion:

We must, then, ask ourselves why Aeschylus has gone out of his way to include the satyr-play in the mythical context of the three tragedies on those occasions when the tragedies themselves form a coherent narrative sequence, only to compose, as a pendant to those tragedies, a satyr-play that violates that sequence. No plausible answer suggests itself.¹²

An alternative interpretation for this chronological dislocation is proposed by Nelson. Rather than perceiving it as an aesthetic problem, she argues that its effect is to balance the genres:

Such an arrangement gives satyr play the last word in the performance, while the trilogy still narrates the last word in the myth. By returning to the beginning, the satyr play recalls the trilogy that preceded it and, rather than blotting out the impression that the tragic trilogy had made, provides a balance of tragedy and comedy. The result juxtaposes the two moods of necessity and release, with neither outweighing the other.¹³

⁹ On *Diktyoulkoi* and *Thalamopoioi*, see below. For the argument that *Argo/The Oarsmen* may have been set at Iolcus, see Sommerstein 2008b: 14. For overviews of the evidence for each of these satyr plays, see the discussions in KPS.

¹⁰ Cf. Levi 1908: 242: 'Il grande poeta aveva ben compreso che l'azione tragica non poteva essere continuata satiricamente oltre la catastrofe finale senza perdere gran parte del suo effetto patetico sugli animi degli spettatori'.

¹¹ Levi 1908: 230–42. He thought that the events of the satyr play tended to take place between those of the first and second tragedies, and this pattern is sometimes referred to as 'Levi's Law' (e.g. by Gantz 1979: 300 n. 67). See also Guggisberg 1947: 98–99.

¹² Sansone 2015: 21.

¹³ Nelson 2016: 89; see also 77–78, 84–89.

My discussion rises to Sansone's challenge to propose a 'plausible answer' to the so-called problem of the temporally disrupted narrative. Instead of questioning whether the ancient audience found sitting through non-linear episodes intolerable, I start from the assumption that these plays were performed last and ask *why* Aeschylus might have chosen to structure his tetralogies in this way. What were the dramatic effects of returning the audience to an earlier stage in the story? My argument builds on Nelson's observation of the two end points in the tetralogy: the chronological end of the mythical sequence, which coincides with the end of the third tragedy, and the end of the complete performance, which coincides with the end of the satyr play. However, rather than seeing the result as a balancing act, I suggest that the audience's very recent memory of the tragic trilogy has the potential to destabilize the sense of closure offered by the satyr drama. An often underappreciated point is that the tetralogy gave ancient dramatists the rare opportunity to juxtapose, within the same performance space and in front of the same audience, their work in two different genres, allowing them to comment on their own texts in an unusually immediate way and in a contrasting generic voice.¹⁴ I propose that one way in which Aeschylus exploited this opportunity was through his manipulation of temporality and that this encouraged his audience to interpret the tragedies and satyr play with, against, and through each other.

My discussion focuses first on *Sphinx*, which offers a particularly suggestive illustration of this dynamic. I then turn to *Proteus* and two plays, *Diktyoulkoi* and *Thalamopoioi*, for which the co-produced trilogy is not known, but where there have been plausible attempts to link them to attested tragedies.¹⁵ The reconstruction of these plays is beset with difficulties and my discussion is necessarily compressed, but in each case enough evidence survives to permit some analysis—however speculative—of the effect of the satyr play's positioning with regard to its accompanying tragedies.

Past glories: Sphinx

Only two words, one testimonium, and the start of a hypothesis survive for *Laius*,¹⁶ and nothing at all for *Oedipus*, so we can reconstruct only the bare contours of the two plays that began Aeschylus' Theban tetralogy. Nonetheless, it is possible to proceed on the reasonable assumption that they were broadly consistent with the summary of Labdacid family history narrated in the third play, the extant *Seven Against Thebes*.¹⁷ There, the chorus sings of how Laius brought death upon himself by disobeying an oracular warning not to have children (743–51); of Oedipus the father-killer and mother-marrier (752–57); the renown he won for his victory over the Sphinx (772–77); and his discovery of his true identity, self-blinding, and cursing of his two sons (779–90).

¹⁴ Cf. Di Marco 2017: 21: 'Ciò offriva al tragediografo la singolare opportunità di poter occhieggiare retrospettivamente alle tragedie precedenti e sollecitare così il pubblico—seppur implicitamente—a cogliere il gioco di riflessi e di contrappunti sulla base del quale determinati motivi tornavano a essere trattati, in ben altra chiave, nel 'divertissement' finale'.

¹⁵ There have been numerous conjectured dilogies, trilogies, and tetralogies, including unconvincing attempts to arrange all of Aeschylus' known work into connected tetralogies by filling the gaps with unattested titles: see, e.g., *TrGF* 3 111–19, with discussion in Gantz 1979 and 1980. For a sceptical approach to the assumption that the connected trilogy was Aeschylus' preferred form, see Yoon 2016.

¹⁶ Frr. 121–22a. For the hypothesis, see *P.Oxy.* 2256 fr. 2+1. Tsantsanoglou 2016 has made a good case for joining these with fr. 4 (= fr. 451v Radt), as in Mette's edition, which prints fr. 2+4+1 as Aesch. fr. 169; more (self-avowedly) speculative is his proposal that fr. 6+8 should be assigned to the prologue of *Laius*.

¹⁷ See Robert 1915: I.252–83; Podlecki 1975: 8–14 and 2009: 329–31; Gantz 1980: 137–49; Hutchinson 1985: xvii–xxx; Sommerstein 2010a 84–90; on *Sphinx* in particular, see Simon 1981; Germar and Krumeich in KPS: 189–96; Podlecki 2005: 7–8.

The hypothesis to *Laius* indicates that Laius himself spoke the prologue (*P.Oxy.* 2256 fr. 1); and if editors are correct in joining this with fr. 4, it seems that the chorus consisted of old men or (less likely) old women.¹⁸ The *Etymologicum Genuinum* records that in *Laius* someone ‘tasted the blood and spat it out’ as a gesture of purification after committing murder (fr. 122a). This is often taken to indicate that Oedipus’ patricide occurred within *Laius*.¹⁹ Alternatively, it has been proposed that the play dealt with an earlier stage of the story, Laius’ rape of Chrysippus.²⁰ However, a setting after the birth of Oedipus is supported by fr. 122 χυτρίζειν (‘to put [a baby] in an earthen pot’).²¹ This seems highly likely to refer to the exposure of the infant Oedipus, although it offers no hint as to how long ago the event occurred: the play may have been set around the time of Oedipus’ birth or it may have treated Laius’ death many years later. Oedipus’ discovery of his identity, self-blinding, and cursing of his sons will have been dramatized in *Oedipus*. This play may have represented him as elderly, if this is a correct inference from the detail in *Seven Against Thebes* that Oedipus cursed his sons because of their ‘wretched maintenance [of him]’ (ἀθλίας [Prien: ἀραίας codd.] ... τροφᾶς, 785–86).²² In addition to these scanty remains, we should attribute to either *Laius* or *Oedipus* the unassigned fr. 387a, in which a speaker describes coming to a triple crossroads at Potniae; the detail strongly suggests a reference to the location of Oedipus’ fateful encounter with his father.²³

The title of the satyr play, *Sphinx*, and the description of the monster at fr. 236 Σφίγγα δυσαμεριᾶν πρύτανιν κύνᾳ (‘the Sphinx, dog presiding over evil days’) are sure indications that this play dealt with this creature’s menacing of Thebes and, following the conventions of the genre, it is as good as certain that it concluded with her defeat. The identity of the Sphinx’s vanquisher must be Oedipus. As noted above, this event is described at *Seven Against Thebes* 772–77.²⁴

τίν’ ἀνδρῶν γὰρ τοσόνδ’ ἐθαύμασαν
θεοί τε ξυνέστιοι
πολύβατός τ’ ἀγὼν βροτῶν,
ὅσον τότ’ Οἰδίπουν τίον 775
τὰν ἀρπαξάνδραν
κῆρ’ ἀφελόντα χώρας;

For whom among men did both the gods with their shared hearth and the much-trodden assembly of mortals admire as much as they then admired Oedipus, who rid the land of the man-snatching doom?

It is, therefore, very likely that Oedipus is referred to at *Sphinx* fr. 235:

τῷ δὲ ξένῳ γε στέφανον, ἀρχαῖον στέφος,
δεσμῶν ἄριστον ἐκ Προμηθέως λόγου

¹⁸ See Tsantsanoglou 2016: 13.

¹⁹ Sommerstein 2008b: 141–44. Hutchinson 1985: xix suggests that the testimonium should be assigned to *Oedipus* and comes from a narration of Laius’ murder.

²⁰ See Lloyd-Jones 1971: 120–21; Thalmann 1978: 15–17; Segal 2001: 25.

²¹ Translations are mine; those of Aeschylus are often adapted from Sommerstein 2008a and 2008b.

²² So Gantz 1980: 139; Sommerstein 1989: 440–45 and 2008a: 146; *contra*, see Hutchinson 1985: xxv, who understands τροφᾶς as ‘origins’.

²³ On the significance of the τρίδος as the meeting place of Laius and Oedipus, see Finglass 2018: 393–94.

²⁴ I print Sommerstein’s text (2008a).

and for the stranger a crown, an ancient garland, the best of bonds according to the word of Prometheus

The στέφανος must refer to a garland awarded for defeating the Sphinx and/or the crown of Thebes, which formed part of the victor's reward.²⁵ The fragment may have been spoken after Oedipus' victory, describing the honours he is shortly to receive; the speaker could be Silenus, or a Theban character such as Creon, Jocasta, or an elder.²⁶ Oedipus, his true identity still unknown, could aptly be described by any of them as a foreigner (ξένος). Alternatively, the lines could come from a prophecy of Oedipus' imminent success. In this case, a possible speaker is the Sphinx herself, who is called the 'oracle-singing virgin' (παρθένον χρησμοδόν) at Soph. OT 1199–200. No further clue is offered by *Sphinx* fr. 237 κνοῦς, which the testimonium glosses as 'the noise made by feet' (ὁ τῶν ποδῶν ψόφος). The reference may be to dancing, which is a favourite activity of the satyrs,²⁷ or perhaps it was connected to the arrival of Oedipus or the Sphinx,²⁸ or even to the Sphinx's 'feet' riddle.

Sansone considers an alternative reconstruction of *Sphinx*, which is based on a fourth-century bell krater from Paestum on which a satyr holds a bird in front of a seated Sphinx. Crusius had already connected this with the fable recounted at Aesop 36 Perry, in which a man outwits the Delphic oracle by asking her whether he is holding something dead or alive and then producing the bird—crushed or not, depending on the answer—to disprove her.²⁹ Following Robert, Sansone suggests that *Sphinx* dramatized this story instead, that the satyrs outwitted the Sphinx without any further aid, and that this took place prior to the events of *Laius*, with fr. 235 predicting the monster's future and final defeat by Oedipus.³⁰ However, as Di Marco has argued, this is unlikely: traditionally, the solution of the Sphinx's riddle results in her final, not temporary, defeat. Moreover, the presence of Oedipus fits what seems to be a common satyric pattern in which the satyrs require the assistance of a heroic/divine figure in order to escape from danger, and much of the humour seems to have derived precisely from the incongruity and interplay between these two sets of characters.³¹

A connection is frequently posited between *Sphinx* and a hydria of c. 470–60 BC from the Fujita collection (Würzburg ZA 20), which depicts a group of satyrs sitting on stools in front of the Sphinx. Unusually, they are depicted as elderly, with white hair and beards, and are decked out with robes, diadems, and staves or sceptres. The dating of the vase strengthens the case for seeing some connection with Aeschylus' 467 BC tetralogy, and on this basis it has been suggested that in *Sphinx* the satyrs impersonated a council of Theban elders, advising the city on how to deal with the monster before the arrival of Oedipus; the satyrs would then recall, in a different key, the elderly chorus of *Laius*.³²

The evidence therefore suggests that *Sphinx* treated the events of Oedipus' arrival in the city, fresh from his murder of Laius on the road to Thebes, his defeat of the Sphinx, and

²⁵ For the kingship and hand of Jocasta as the set reward for defeating the Sphinx, see Apollod. 3.5.8.

²⁶ Sommerstein 2008b: 241 and 2010a: 90 notes that the phrasing τῷ δὲ ξένῳ γε implies that just before these lines another reward has been specified for a different party; he suggests that the speaker is Silenus, who has proposed that he himself should be given the kingship and Jocasta. This hypothesis is attractive since the sexual pursuit of women is characteristic of the satyrs and there would be humour in Silenus' attempt to fob off Oedipus with a garland while claiming the real prize himself. As Sommerstein has suggested to me (*pers. comm.*), the satyr play would then fleetingly raise the prospect of 'the might-have-been', i.e., an incest-free future for Oedipus in which he avoids marriage with his mother because of the actions of the satyr(s). Cf. n. 55 below, and below on *Diktyoulkoi*.

²⁷ Lämmle 2013: 199 n. 201.

²⁸ Tiverios 2000: 482 n. 41.

²⁹ Crusius 1893.

³⁰ Robert 1915: I.259; Sansone 2015: 16–17.

³¹ Di Marco 2016: 12–14. Against Robert's reconstruction, see Klotz 1917/18: 623–24.

³² See Simon 1981 and 1982: 141–42; cf. Germar and Krumeich in KPS: 195–96.

his taking possession of the concomitant rewards. Based on this reconstruction of the tetralogy, we see that *Sphinx* returns us to a moment located between the first and second plays, *Laius* and *Oedipus*, and crucially it reintroduces at least one character—Oedipus (perhaps played by the same actor as before)³³—whose misdeeds, suffering, and eventual death have been treated at length in the trilogy. *Sphinx* brings him back as a young man about to rise to the height of his fame and prosperity, and places him in an episode with what appears to be a happy ending: victory over the monster, the crown of Thebes, and a royal marriage to Jocasta. Even if *Sphinx* did not end with the wedding itself, the union was probably predicted, with the city's salvation from the monster and the installation of a new king naturally viewed as a joyous occasion.

Previous critical responses have tended to see this ending of *Sphinx* as parodic of the preceding tragedies. Sutton characterizes the reappearance of characters, situations, and themes from the trilogy as 'an element of self-parody',³⁴ while Gantz notes that the audience may be 'surprised' at the return of 'a wretched and deceased figure from the tragic narrative'.³⁵ For others, the ending is unambiguously positive: Hutchinson writes that it 'dispell[ed] the accumulated darkness' of its preceding plays,³⁶ and Tiverios reconstructs the conclusion as 'a magnificent feast with amusing and jolly conversation [...] in celebration of the many fortunate events that have followed on one another'.³⁷ Seidensticker notes that one effect of this positive ending is to contrast with the preceding tragedies: '[T]he satyr-play's representation of Oedipus' greatest success [...] deepens the effect of his fall'.³⁸ This is true, but the juxtaposition does more than paint a picture of light and dark. More in tune with my own reading is Yziquel, who identifies in *Sphinx*, alongside a liberating sense of triumph, 'l'expression possible d'un sentiment de nostalgie qui vient raviver la souffrance inhérente à la condition du héros tragique'.³⁹ This element of nostalgia, I suggest, offers a key to unlocking the particular dynamic between the genres in this tetralogy.

In the ending of *Sphinx* we witness the collision of two impulses: the audience's (satyric) expectation of a satisfying ending and their (tragic) knowledge of how the mythical story will continue. In satyr play, of course, things do tend to work out happily, with ogres defeated and obstacles surmounted: *Sphinx* concludes with the city of Thebes restored to peace and stability. At the same time, it is impossible to invest wholeheartedly in the notion of a 'happy ending' for Oedipus and Jocasta after sitting through three plays about the miseries of this particular family, including the disastrous consequences of Oedipus' return to Thebes. The audience of *Sphinx* knows both what Oedipus has just come from (*i.e.*, the murder of Laius) and what he will go on to do, and this knowledge of the wider tragic storyline forms an emotional counterpoint to the satyr play's joyous ending. Indeed, even if *Sphinx* had been produced in an unconnected tetralogy, the concluding betrothal would hardly be less problematic from the audience's perspective, since the incestuous wedding of Oedipus and Jocasta is *tout court* an ill-omened, indeed monstrous, act: the unhappy event is recalled (analeptically by the Chorus, but proleptically in the tetralogy in terms of looking

³³ We do not know whether the same actor always played a character that appeared in more than one play of the tetralogy, but it seems plausible. Scholars often assume that there was consistent casting in the *Oresteia*: see the summary and argument of Marshall 2003, in whose reconstruction the casting of the recurring characters Clytaemestra, Aegisthus, and Orestes remained consistent across the trilogy.

³⁴ Sutton 1980: 35.

³⁵ Gantz 1980: 139–40.

³⁶ Hutchinson 1985: xxx.

³⁷ Tiverios 2000: 483.

³⁸ Seidensticker 2005: 54 n. 4.

³⁹ Yziquel 2001a: 22. See also Nelson 2016: 86, who notes that 'Oedipus' success with the Sphinx leads back into the curse that the trilogy had just dramatized'.

ahead to *Sphinx*) at *Seven Against Thebes* 756–57 παράνοια συνᾶγε | νυμφίους φρενώλης ('deranged madness brought the bridal couple together').⁴⁰

All four plays of the tetralogy thus take place in the same physical space of Thebes and its environs, but they overlay it with two different universes, the tragic and satyric. This overlapping of space and time, as well as the return in the satyr play of at least one familiar character, encourages the audience to view the works as interlocking, so that our involvement in the celebration of Oedipus' victory in *Sphinx* must be informed by the knowledge of his tragic future. The joyful conclusion of the satyr play, carried out in ignorance of what is to come, is thus made more poignant by the audience's understanding of its fleeting nature within the wider mythical trajectory.

Meanwhile, in Egypt: Proteus

The title *Proteus* and its co-production with the tragedies of the *Oresteia* have indicated to most scholars that this play treated Menelaus' encounter with the sea god Proteus on his way back from Troy. In the account narrated by Menelaus at *Odyssey* 4.351–80, he is stranded on the island of Pharos off the coast of Egypt, having failed to sacrifice to the gods beforehand. Following the instructions of Proteus' daughter Eidothea, Menelaus apprehends the shape-shifting god and extracts both advice on how to return home and news of the other Achaeans. Proteus' supernatural nature and the comically inflected manner of his capture, which involves Menelaus and his men hiding among the seals and beneath stinking seal skins, would have offered great potential for Aeschylus to develop into the fantastical and humorous elements of satyr play. In other versions, however, Proteus is a king of Egypt who detains Helen for the duration of the Trojan War while her *eidolon* (image/phantom) is dispatched to Troy in her stead.⁴¹ This has led some to suggest that Aeschylus' play treated the *eidolon* story, with Proteus revealing the truth to Menelaus;⁴² or that it focused on a different episode altogether, with Proteus encountering Paris and Helen on their way to Troy,⁴³ or reuniting Menelaus with the real Helen after the conclusion of the War.⁴⁴

The fragments, although meagre, offer hints that the Homeric account was important for *Proteus*. From fr. 212 we learn that Aeschylus used the name Eido as an alternative form of Eidothea; the mention of this figure, who plays such a crucial role in *Odyssey* 4, has clinched the Homeric reconstruction for many. Additionally, in the *Odyssey* Menelaus recounts how, their supplies exhausted, his men were driven by hunger to fish for their food (*Od.* 4.367–69): this is a sign of dire straits, since the usual meat-based heroic diet excluded fish.⁴⁵ There may be a reference to this hunger in the evocatively violent fr. 210:

σιτουμένην δύστηνον ἀθλίαν φάβα
μέσακτα πλευρὰ πρὸς πτύοις πεπληγμένην

an unfortunate, wretched pigeon, its ribs shattered in half by the winnowing-fans as it feeds

⁴⁰ The νυμφίοι are likely to be Oedipus and Jocasta (the subjects of the immediately preceding lines 752–56), rather than, as is sometimes suggested, Laius and Jocasta: see Hutchinson 1985: 168.

⁴¹ Proteus probably played this role in Stesichorus' first *Palinode*: see Davies and Finglass 2014: 312, 340. See also Hdt. 2.112–20, Eur. *El.* 1280–83, *Hel.* 44–48, Apollod. *Ep.* 3.5.

⁴² Droysen 1832: I.153–58; Cunningham 1994: 68. Marshall 2014: 79–95 argues for both Homeric and Stesichorean influence on *Proteus*, even if the *eidolon* itself was not mentioned.

⁴³ Sansone 2015: 14–16.

⁴⁴ Griffith 2002: 237–50.

⁴⁵ See Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth 1998: 216–17.

The pigeon mortally wounded in its attempt to eat might be a metaphor for Menelaus and his men, driven by desperate need for food.⁴⁶ Some emphasis on food is also suggested by the reference to fermented fish sauce, *garos*, in fr. 211 καὶ τὸν ἰχθύων γάρων ('and the *garos* made from fish'). Sommerstein takes this to mean that, as in the *Odyssey*, Menelaus and his men are subsisting on fish and hence cannot have been in the civilized palace of a (human) king Proteus.⁴⁷ However, *garos* is not 'fish' but a fish-based liquid used as an ingredient or condiment rather than eaten in its own right; moreover, it was considered a delicacy, taking several months to produce.⁴⁸ It is more likely that *garos* was mentioned either as a foodstuff the men were lacking⁴⁹ and/or tried to acquire upon meeting another party, such as Eidothea or the satyrs.⁵⁰ It could even have been mentioned with regard to its pungent smell as a comparison for the briny stench of the seals, which in the *Odyssey* is emphasized as being particularly nauseating (4.405, 441–46). Less plausibly, Sansone, attempting to locate the events of *Proteus* before those of *Agamemnon*, connects the fragment with Hdt. 2.113.1 where Paris and Helen are said to have arrived at Taricheae (lit. '[Fish] pickling-factories') in Egypt.

Overall, the fragments provide some evidence to support the idea that *Proteus* followed something along the lines of the Homeric episode and, if so, it may have had a close connection to the trilogy beyond the fact of featuring Agamemnon's brother in a starring role. In the *Odyssey*, Proteus relates an account of Aegisthus' murder of Agamemnon, sending Menelaus into a fit of weeping (4.512–40). If, as has been suggested, *Proteus* contained a corresponding speech, the satyr play would recapitulate the central event of the opening play of the trilogy, *Agamemnon*.⁵¹ The focus of the speech would be Clytaemestra rather than Aegisthus; it is possible that the unassigned fr. 375 ἀμήχανον τέχνημα καὶ δυσέκδυτον ('the device that renders one helpless, hard to shake off'), referring to the robe in which she trapped Agamemnon before striking him down, should be ascribed to this speech.⁵²

Two scholars who argue for a different reconstruction of *Proteus* do so partly on the perceived dramatic redundancy of such a speech. Griffith judges that it could only be a 'bland narrative from Proteus that would make no difference at all to our understanding or appreciation of the preceding trilogy',⁵³ while Sansone deems it an awkward moment 'unworthy' of Aeschylus.⁵⁴ Instead, I suggest, Aeschylus is playing a sophisticated chronological game in his linking of tragedy and satyr play. In the *Odyssey*, after Menelaus has had his fill of weeping for Agamemnon, Proteus addresses him (4.543–47):

μηκέτι, Ἀτρείος υἱέ, πολλὸν χρόνον ἀσκελὲς οὔτω
κλαῖ', ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄνυσίν τινα δήμεν· ἀλλὰ τάχιστα
πεῖρα ὅπως κεν δῆ σὴν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἵκηαι.
ἢ γάρ μιν ζῶόν γε κινήσεται, ἢ κεν Ὀρέστης
κτεῖνεν ὑποφθάμενος· σὺ δέ κεν τάφου ἀντιβολήσαιο.

⁴⁶ Germar and Krumeich in KPS: 181; Marshall 2014: 85. However, van Herwerden 1903: 138 may be correct to see the metaphor as denoting human cupidity in general rather than hunger in particular.

⁴⁷ Sommerstein 2008b: 221–22 and 2010b: 77–78.

⁴⁸ See Dalby 2003: 156–57 on this and the Roman equivalent *garum*.

⁴⁹ Di Marco 2016: 15.

⁵⁰ Marshall 2014: 84–85, comparing Menelaus' request for food upon arriving in Egypt at Eur. *Hel.* 420–21. Cf. Odysseus' attempt to buy food from the satyrs at Eur. *Cycl.* 97–98, 133.

⁵¹ See, e.g., Sommerstein 2010a: 135–36.

⁵² For the ascription of this fragment to *Proteus*, see Weil 1867: 126 (already considered by Conington 1857: 3); von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1896: 252 n. 3, although other editors assign the line to *Libation Bearers*.

⁵³ Griffith 2002: 246.

⁵⁴ Sansone 2015: 13.

No longer, son of Atreus, weep for a long time and intently like this, since we will achieve nothing by it. But, as quickly as you can, try to reach your native land. For either you will find Aegisthus alive, or Orestes may have arrived there beforehand and killed him, and you may happen upon his funeral.

We have already learnt from Nestor that the second of Proteus' scenarios did in fact happen: the day of Menelaus' return coincided exactly with the funeral of Aegisthus (*Od.* 3.309–12).⁵⁵

ἦ τοι ὁ τὸν κτείνας δαίνυ τάφον Ἀργείοισι
μητρός τε στρυγερῆς καὶ ἀνάλκιδος Αἰγίσθοιο·
αὐτῆμαρ δέ οἱ ἦλθε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Μενέλαος,
πολλὰ κτήματ' ἄγων, ὅσα οἱ νέεσ ἄχθος ἄειραν.

And when he [Orestes] had killed him [Aegisthus], he made a funeral feast for the Argives over his hateful mother and feeble Aegisthus. And on the very same day Menelaus, good at the war cry, arrived there, bringing many possessions, all the load that his ships could carry.

If *Proteus* followed these details, then the impact of this moment is less to remind the audience of the plays they have just watched than to show how the satyr play loops back into the tragedies by sending its main character straight into the events of the trilogy.⁵⁶ It has been widely noted that *Proteus* responds to a question posed in *Agamemnon*, when the chorus quiz the herald as to the whereabouts of Menelaus, who has vanished on his way back from Troy (*Ag.* 617–33); the herald ends his recounting of the storm that scattered the fleet with the statement that Menelaus, if he is alive, may yet return home (*Ag.* 674–79).⁵⁷ Aeschylus would then construct a thematic Möbius strip in which the first play's speculation as to the fate of Menelaus is answered by the content of the final play and the final play's enquiry as to the fate of Agamemnon is answered by the events dramatized in the first play.

This also provides a clue as to how *Proteus* might have constructed the 'happy ending' expected of the genre. In the *Odyssey*, Proteus' advice to stop crying and hurry home dissipates Menelaus' tears (4.548–49):

ὥς ἔφατ', αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
αὐτίς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι καὶ ἀχνυμένῳ περ ἰάνθη.

So he spoke, and my heart and manly spirit were cheered again within my breast, despite my grief.

Menelaus is encouraged by Proteus' words and, following his instructions, sacrifices to the gods, thereby appeasing their anger that has kept him pent in Egypt; he raises a funerary mound for Agamemnon and sets out successfully for home (4.581–86). Despite the bleak news of his brother's death, Menelaus is able to pacify the gods and depart from Egypt with

⁵⁵ This coincidence is noted, with regard to *Proteus*, by Levi 1908: 236. See also Sommerstein 2010b: 78–80 on how the use of this detail in *Proteus* could have 'undercut' the trilogy: if Menelaus had not been detained in Egypt by his failure to sacrifice, he would have returned home in time to avenge Agamemnon himself—thereby sparing Orestes from the pollution of matricide and persecution by the Erinyes. Once again, the satyr play would raise the prospect of 'the might-have-been', whereby the possibility of actions that would avert the human characters' future suffering is raised, but left unfulfilled: cf. n. 26 above, and below on *Diktyoulokoí*.

⁵⁶ Cf. Nelson 2016: 87: '[H]is escape again leads to the tragedy that the audience had just experienced'.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Fraenkel 1950: II.313, 387; Sutton 1984: 129; Lämmle 2013: 88.

his spirit fortified.⁵⁸ This ending could have been used in *Proteus*, where a satisfying conclusion would be provided by Menelaus' escape from the island—perhaps taking the satyrs with him as in the ending of Euripides' *Cyclops*, in which the newly liberated satyrs accompany Odysseus on his departure from Sicily. Yet in this ending Menelaus sets off from the fantastical world of satyr play towards the grim world of tragedy, since we know the circumstances that await him on the precise day of his return. Despite the levity of a play dealing with satyrs, seals, and the shape-changing Proteus, Menelaus' departure at its conclusion propels us on a journey back towards a harsher tragic universe.

Satyrlic fantasies: Diktyoulkoi

The fragments of *Diktyoulkoi* ('Net Haulers') demonstrate that the play was satyric, set on the island of Seriphus, and dramatized the satyrs' discovery of the chest containing Danae and the infant Perseus, who had been set adrift by Danae's father Acrisius. The satyrs make unwanted sexual advances towards Danae and the play will have concluded with her rescue by Dictys, brother of the king of Seriphus, Polydectes.

Many scholars have proposed that *Diktyoulkoi* was produced alongside *Polydectes* and *Phorcides*, although there is no play among Aeschylus' attested titles that would complete a connected tetralogy. There are no fragments of *Polydectes*, but it is likely to have centred on the titular figure's pursuit of marriage with Danae: in order to be rid of her protector Perseus, Polydectes dispatches him on the seemingly suicidal mission to fetch Medusa's head.⁵⁹ The title of *Phorcides* indicates that it treated Perseus' encounter with the supernatural 'daughters of Phorcys', which can refer to both the Graeae and the Gorgons. We learn from Eratosthenes' *Catasterisms* and derivative texts (fr. 262) that Aeschylus portrayed the Graeae as the Gorgons' 'advance guards' (προφύλακας) and that after throwing away the single eye shared between them, Perseus reached the sleeping Gorgons and beheaded Medusa. *Phorcides* thus appears to have conflated the episodes of the Graeae and the Gorgons into a unified encounter, and the one surviving fragment, which tells of Perseus going down into a cave (fr. 261), probably refers to the habitat of the Graeae and/or the Gorgons.⁶⁰

If we assume that *Polydectes*, *Phorcides*, and *Diktyoulkoi* were indeed produced together, we find once more that the events of the satyr play transport the audience back to a time before (or, depending on the content of the fourth play, within) the time frame of its preceding trilogy. The satyr play again inhabits the same physical space as at least one of the tragedies (the island of Seriphus) and brings back characters encountered during the trilogy, namely, Perseus and Danae. The tragedies explored Perseus' eventful adulthood, while the satyr play treated his infancy. Similarly, the tetralogy traced the ongoing story of Danae, who escapes the lustful satyrs only to attract the unwanted attentions of Polydectes, necessitating her rescue by the adult Perseus. *Diktyoulkoi* thus creates the same kind of dynamic we have seen in *Sphinx* and *Proteus*, where what appears to be delivery from trouble for the human characters at the end of the play turns out to be a starting-point for their trials dramatized in the tragic trilogy. However, *Diktyoulkoi* goes further than this: it raises the possibility of a different kind of future for both Perseus and Danae.

Upon discovering mother and son, Silenus offers himself to Danae as 'official host and protector' (πρόξενόν ... καὶ προπράκτορα, fr. 47a.768–69) and compares himself to

⁵⁸ For Menelaus' actions as a less destructive mirroring of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia, see Sutton 1980: 26–27 and 1984: 129–30; Sommerstein 2010a: 135–36; Nelson 2016: 86–87.

⁵⁹ Werre-de Haas 1961: 8–10.

⁶⁰ The Gorgons live in a cave in Nonnus (*Dionysiaca* 25.59, 31.8–25) and a rocky cavern would be an appropriate home for these petrifying sisters; see Ogden 2008: 41, 47–50.

Perseus' 'honoured nurse' (μαῖαν ὡς γερασμίαν, fr. 47a.770).⁶¹ Danae reacts with utmost horror at the thought of falling into the hands of 'beasts' (κνωδάλοις, fr. 47a.775). The baby, however, seems fascinated by Silenus' bright-red φαλακρός (fr. 47a.786–88), which refers to the satyr's bald head and/or, by *double entendre*, the tip of his penis.⁶² Silenus then elaborates his vision of their future (fr. 47a.806–20):⁶³

ἴξῃ παιδοτρόφους ἐμά[ς,
 ὦ φίλος, χέρας εὐμενεῖς,
 τέρψη δ' ἴκτισι κα[ί] νεβρο[ῖς]
 ὑστρίχων τ' ὀβρίχοισ[ι]
 κοιμήσῃ δὲ τρίτος ξὺν
 μητρὶ [καὶ π]ατρὶ τῷδε. 810

ὁ πάπα[ς] δ' ἐπαρέξει
 τῷ μικκῷ[ι] τὰ γελ[οῖ]α
 καὶ τροφὰς ἀνόσους, ὅπως π[ρὸς]
 ἄλδων αὐτὸς ε....[.]... 815
 χαλᾷ νεβροφον[οῦ] ποδ[ὶ]
 μάρπτων θήρας ἄνευ δ[ο]ρὸς
 θῶσθαι μητρὶ παρέξεις
 κ[αὶ] ἡδεστῶν τρόπον οἷσιν
 [.]ντροπος πελατεύσεις. 820

... you'll [*i.e.* Perseus] come to my kind child-rearing hands, my dear, and delight in martens, fawns, and baby porcupines, and you'll sleep as third in the bed with your mother [and] your father here. And papa will give his little one fun times and an upbringing without sickness, so that [...] when you're grown up, you yourself [...] chasing down wild beasts with the hoof of your fawn-killing foot, without a [spear], will provide them for your mother to feast on, just like the in-laws with whom you'll be raised as a dependent.

Silenus predicts for Perseus an idealized rustic childhood and adolescence with the satyrs, and imagines his own happy cohabitation with Danae. In the light of the preceding plays, this prediction rings hollow since the audience is well aware that neither Danae nor Perseus will fulfil Silenus' satyric fantasy. For Danae, this is a lucky escape: we have already witnessed her distraught reaction and her situation now worsens as the satyrs push for a quick 'wedding', believing her to be sex-starved after so long adrift (fr. 47a.820–32). We know that the satyrs' hopes will be frustrated and that Dictys will rescue Danae and escort her and Perseus back to civilization; he is present at the start of the play when a fisherman notices the chest out at sea (fr. 46a) and seems to have attempted to protect mother and son (fr. 47a.800–01) before apparently abandoning the scene, presumably in order to fetch help. Dictys will later have reappeared to save Danae and Perseus, so that the satyrs' sexual aspirations remain, as usual, unfulfilled. *Diktyoulkoi* thus offers a happy ending for Danae through her delivery from both the chest and the predatory satyrs, although when set within the scope of the whole

⁶¹ I follow Siegmann's attribution of these lines to Silenus, which seems the only way to make sense of Danae's reaction at 773–85.

⁶² On the φαλακρός / φαλλός (ἄκρός) pun in satyr play, see Seaford 1987; Shaw 2014: 73–75.

⁶³ I print Radt's text (but with Setti's εὐμενεῖς at 807 and Lobel's δ[ο]ρὸς at 817), without underline dots, and follow Lloyd-Jones' attribution of the lines to Silenus, although others assign either the whole song or the antistrophe (812–20) to the chorus. For a recent overview of questions of attribution, see Dettori 2016 *ad loc.*

tetralogy her relief from harassment turns out to be temporary, since she will go on to be pursued by Dictys' less sympathetic brother in *Polydectes*.

Her son Perseus will also escape the satyric childhood of Silenus' vision and grow to adulthood in the civilized world. However, in this respect the play also generates a certain nostalgic sense of lost innocence.⁶⁴ Silenus' fantasy represents the baby's chance of a future full of fun and laughter (808 τέρψη, 813 τὰ γελοῖα)—in other words, a future that is emphatically both satyric and non-tragic.⁶⁵ Perseus' infant charm and the satyric projection of his idealized (if inappropriate) rustic upbringing are thus contrasted with his actual tragic future, in which—as the audience has just seen—he will face persecution from Polydectes, take on responsibility for his mother in a way that goes beyond hunting for her dinner, and pursue a far more dangerous prey than fawns in the shape of the deadly Medusa. The lyrics allow us briefly to imagine a different and less harrowing future for the hero, who, if the satyrs were to have their way, would never mature into a tragic figure but would remain with them in their rustic fantasy. By mapping out this alternative trajectory, the satyr play creates space for a nostalgic yearning, not just for the lost innocence of Perseus' infancy but also for his childhood that might have been: a carefree life of play with the satyrs.

As in the case of *Sphinx*, the characters and themes of *Diktyoulokoī* have been interpreted as parodic and/or light-hearted rewritings of the preceding tragedies. A representative view is that of Sutton, following Werre-de Haas, who sees Silenus' attempt to marry Danae as a parody of Polydectes' actions, concluding that '[t]he function of *Dictyulci* within its tetralogy is therefore to provide comic relief by burlesquing a situation in the preceding trilogy'.⁶⁶ In this reading, the genuine threat represented by Polydectes is replayed in a more benign (even comic) key by Silenus, since we know from both the myth and the conventions of satyr play that Danae is never in any 'real' danger.⁶⁷ However, this thematic repetition can be viewed as more than parodic, since it highlights the fact that for the human characters the ending of *Diktyoulokoī* is only a moment of temporary resolution that punctuates a more unsettled future. This sequence of threat and release recurs across the tetralogy, in which mother and/or son face and overcome the dangers of the floating chest, the satyrs, Polydectes, the Graeae, and the Gorgons. *Diktyoulokoī* thus not only contrasts its happy ending with the trials to come, but also offers the human characters a fleeting and unrealized glimpse of a way out of this cycle of tragic suffering and endurance: by embracing an alternative and—to the satyrs, if not to Danae and her child—idealized satyric future.

An ominous wedding: Thalamopoioi

My final example is the tantalizing, although extremely speculative, case of *Thalamopoioi* ('*Chamber Makers*'). In the sole attributed fragment (fr. 78), the speaker delivers instructions to add a moulding to the ceiling, thus confirming that the play was indeed about building a θάλαμος ('chamber'). *Thalamopoioi* has been placed in various tragic trilogies, but the

⁶⁴ See Griffith 2005: 186–90, who notes that while Perseus will 'soon enough grow up to bigger and better things' (189–90), the satyrs remain trapped in eternal arrested development.

⁶⁵ In several ancient literary treatises, the presence of laughter (γέλως, τὰ γελοῖα) is seen as a key marker that distinguishes satyr play from tragedy. Aristotle saw tragedy as having gained dignity only after evolving 'away from small stories and laughter-provoking diction, because of its development from the satyric (or 'the satyr drama-like')' (ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ, *Poet.* 1449a18–20), while Demetrius, in the famous passage in which he describes satyr drama as 'tragedy at play' (τραγωδία παίζουσα), states that while both satyr drama and comedy require laughter and charm, 'laughter is the enemy of tragedy' (ὁ δὲ γέλως ἐχθρὸς τραγωδίας, *On Style* 169).

⁶⁶ Sutton 1974a: 196 (cf. Werre-de Haas 1961: 74–75; O'Sullivan and Collard 2013: 257). For Silenus/Dictys as parallel to Polydectes/Perseus, see also Nelson 2016: 85–86.

⁶⁷ However, see O'Sullivan, this issue, for a reading of the satyrs in *Diktyoulokoī* as unusually menacing.

presence of a chorus engaged in manual labour, as indicated by the title, suggests that it was satyric.⁶⁸ Given the common nuptial connotations of *θάλαμος* and the genre's frequent associations with erotic pursuits and marriage, it is probable that what the satyrs are engaged in constructing is a wedding chamber.⁶⁹ Indeed, Wecklein (who, however, believed that *Thalamopoioi* was an alternative title for *Egyptians*) thought that Aeschylus' inspiration must have come from the description of the Trojan royal palace at *Il.* 6.242–50, which tells of the individual *θάλαμοι* of Priam's fifty sons and twelve daughters.⁷⁰

In 1955 Mette suggested that *P.Oxy.* 2254 (Aesch. fr. 4511 = fr. 78a Sommerstein) came from the satyr play that accompanied the hypothetical Achilles trilogy of *Myrmidons*, *Nereids*, and *Phrygians*.⁷¹ The remains of this text include Π]ρίαμε ('Priam', 12), θῆρες οἷδε ('these beasts', 15), *θάλαμον* ('chamber', 22), Τευκρίδ[('Teucrian', 25), and πλατιδ[('wife', 26). The presence of Priam (his name is in the vocative, suggesting that he was a character onstage) and something or someone Teucrian both indicate a Trojan setting, while the mention of 'these beasts' is plausibly explained as a reference to the satyrs. More recently, Mette's suggestion has been combined with the papyrus' references to a *θάλαμος* and a wife in order to conclude that the preserved play is, in fact, *Thalamopoioi*. If this is right, then it seems probable that the satyrs are building a wedding chamber for a Trojan royal couple. Di Marco has proposed Paris and Helen (comparing *Il.* 6.313–17, which describes the building of Paris' house, including its *θάλαμος*), while Sommerstein prefers Hector and Andromache.⁷²

If this combination of hypotheses—that *Thalamopoioi* both treated a Trojan wedding and followed the Achilles trilogy—is correct, then we find a situation similar to that of *Sphinx*, in which the ostensibly happy and optimistic event of a marriage is inextricable from our knowledge of how that particular union will turn out and where the disasters following on from the wedding have been treated at length in the accompanying trilogy. The wedding of Paris and Helen is in any case a notoriously ironic and ominous event, a joyful occasion whose consequence is the destruction of Troy. There are even more suggestive possibilities in Sommerstein's proposal of Hector and Andromache. The celebration of this couple's nuptials would similarly be set against the knowledge of their pitiable future; we can compare Sappho fr. 44, which glorifies Hector's imminent arrival at Troy with his new bride while at the same time evoking the audience's knowledge of the fate that awaits the newlyweds, their future child, and the city as a whole.⁷³ However, in *Thalamopoioi* the contrast would be particularly effective because of Hector's central importance for the preceding tragic trilogy.⁷⁴ *Myrmidons* treated Hector's killing of Patroclus, with *Nereids* probably covering Achilles' killing of Hector in revenge; there would be a striking impact in the juxtaposition of the satyr play with the final tragedy *Phrygians/The Ransoming of Hector*, which dramatized the ransoming of Hector's body. The audience would move directly from a play in which Priam

⁶⁸ For the satyrs as labourers, see Roselli 2013: 115–16. Those who consider *Thalamopoioi* a tragedy have suggested that it was an alternative title for *Egyptians* (Hermann) or *Danaiids* (Hartung), or have placed it in conjectured trilogies centring on Achilles and Memnon, Iphigenia, Perseus, or Ixion: see *TrGF* 3 111–19; Gantz 1980: 154; Poli Palladini 2013: 93–97.

⁶⁹ On marriage as a theme of satyr drama, see Griffith 2006: 60–68; Coe 2018.

⁷⁰ Wecklein 1893: 413–14.

⁷¹ Mette 1955: 399; see also 1963: 121.

⁷² Di Marco 1993; Sommerstein 2008b: 80–83 and 2010a: 249. For previous suggestions, see Di Marco 1993: 49–50. On the particular significance of these two weddings for Troy, see Spelman 2017.

⁷³ See, e.g., Spelman 2017: 753: 'In Sappho's poem which blends epic and lyric, an audience joins in the happy wedding song so vividly described but also views with detachment through the lens of the epic tradition the ill-fated audience of that wedding song.'

⁷⁴ See Sommerstein 2008b: 81, who also notes that Aeschylus 'seems to have gone out of his way in *Phrygians* to mention Hector's marriage (fr. 267)'.

pleaded with Achilles for the return of his son's mutilated corpse to one in which he celebrated the event of that same son's marriage, unaware of the suffering to come. The satyr play thus invites the audience to share in the joy of Hector and Andromache on their wedding day, but that joy is informed, enriched, and made more poignant by knowledge of the tragic future they have just witnessed. As with Oedipus in *Sphinx*, the satyr play would revive, in the figure of Hector, a character whose wretched death had featured within the trilogy and his re-appearance would evoke both the happy innocence of times gone by and the inevitability of his future narrative arc, intensifying the emotional impact of both.

Alternate universes: tragedy and satyr play

Aeschylus' rewinding of time in his connected tetralogies did not present a dramatic problem so much as a dramatic opportunity. His anachronical structuring of the tetralogy—in which the 'ending' (of the satyr play, and of the tetralogy itself) is preceded by its 'aftermath' (*i.e.*, the events of the tragedies, viewed from the perspective of the final play)—primed his audience to approach the events of the satyr play in the light of what they already knew was to come in the 'future'.⁷⁵ The satyr plays discussed here treat self-contained episodes that conclude happily for the mortal characters; yet, when seen within the framework of the tetralogy, these turn out to be interludes of resolution embedded within larger patterns of difficulty and suffering. By thus presenting a vision of how things could turn out in a different and kinder satyric universe before dispatching the human characters back into the tragic world, the 'happy endings' of satyr drama permit a nostalgic reading: viewed in the shadow of tragedy, the joy of the satyric ending is not diminished by its transience, but rather assumes a bittersweet edge. Paradoxically, even as the satyric performance itself manifests the possibility of a return to the past, it highlights the *impossibility* of permanent return that lies at the root of nostalgia.

It could be objected that the different rules of satyr drama act to cocoon it from the implications and complications of the preceding tragedies. Are we really justified in reviewing the trilogy through a satyric lens, or should we simply see the satyr play as a totally different beast, focused on laughter and levity, in which it is understood that whatever happens is without bearing on the tragic universe?⁷⁶ I contend that by linking at least some of his satyr plays so closely and precisely to the mythical sequences of their tragedies and by recycling the same settings, characters (perhaps played by the same individual actors as before), and motifs, Aeschylus must have invited his audience to make this connection between tragedy and satyr play. These satyric endings do not overwrite and nullify the content and emotional impact of the tragedies, but instead present a kind of alternate universe that overlaps and intersects with that of the trilogy. In each case, the satyric plot branches off from within the tragic timeline, taking place in a world that is related but not wholly identical. This satyric timeline runs alongside and then, crucially, rejoins the tragic one, delivering the mortal characters back into their tragic mythical narratives. This modelling of the genres as alternative realities has been well expressed by Griffith:

⁷⁵ See Roberts 1997 for discussion of 'endings' and 'aftermaths' ('endings beyond the ending', 251–52) in relation to ancient (and modern) literature. Although none of her examples map exactly onto what we find in the Aeschylean tetralogy, where the 'aftermath' is fully dramatized, rather than hinted at, prior to the 'ending', her identification of marriage/death as the typical ending/aftermath sequence replicates what we find in the Theban tetralogy and (perhaps) the hypothetical Achilles tetralogy.

⁷⁶ The case for a 'de-politicized' satyr play with the primary aims of laughter and relief has recently been restated by Di Marco 2016: 21–22 and 2017.

[W]e should read satyr plays and tragedies as co-existing side by side, face to face (or back to back), presenting alternative realities or parallel universes, within a single tetralogy played to the same audience in the same performance space in an uninterrupted sequence.⁷⁷

To this we can add that while the tetralogy proceeds in an uninterrupted performance sequence, creating a unified viewing experience, it is the chronological *interruption* of the mythical sequence that can add a further layer of meaning to the tetralogy as a whole.

This reading is supported by the split experience enabled by the genre. Griffith has also explored how satyr drama offered its audience two contrasting perspectives and modes of identification: that of the childlike satyrs and that of the heroic/divine characters.⁷⁸ The play's endings are thus 'two-tiered', with the heroic characters finding deliverance of some sort and continuing on their journey, while the satyrs remain trapped in a state of eternal childishness. Yet the satyrs are immune from any real future suffering: they are immortal, and although they may encounter temporary trials, ordeals, and enslavements, we know they will survive to populate the next satyr play, working through endless cycles of separation from, and reunion with, their master Dionysus. Their dramatic lives are a never-ending sequence of 'happy endings'. But in the case of Aeschylus' connected tetralogies, the mortal characters' futures are equally certain, not only because the myths themselves are familiar, but because we have already seen the events that occur next within the time frame of their tetralogy. The transitory joy of the human characters, who must return to the world of tragedy, is thus contrasted with the limitless experience of the satyrs, who are able permanently to inhabit both 'the past' (the past of the tetralogy and the mythical past) and their own state of immortal childishness.

A comparable effect, albeit without the relationship with its accompanying tragedies, can be glimpsed in our one complete satyr play, Euripides' *Cyclops*. As the drama draws to a close, the Cyclops recalls a prophecy that predicted both his blinding and that Odysseus would pay the penalty for his actions by wandering for a long time at sea (*Cyc.* 696–700). This revelation is extremely brief—pointedly so when set against the corresponding Homeric moment when Polyphemus prays for Poseidon to give Odysseus a wretched and protracted return home (*Od.* 9.528–35). Euripides thus significantly downplays the impact of Odysseus' future miseries.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, he still reminds us that as a direct consequence of the actions we have witnessed in the play, Odysseus will face a long and hard *nostos*. The hero achieves his 'happy ending' through his victory over and escape from Polyphemus, but, as the audience knows full well, his departure simply marks the start of much greater trials at sea.

I do not propose this nostalgic model as a way of reading all satyr drama—or even all of Aeschylus' satyr plays—nor is it incompatible with other ways of interpreting the genre that have been suggested. Rather, this reading has sought to recognize, explore, and begin to theorize a particular tonal effect that was exploited by Aeschylus in some of his connected tetralogies, and from which satyr play emerges not as an attempt to efface the emotional impact of the preceding tragedies, but to affirm and enrich it. This emotional interlocking of trilogy and satyr play works to create what Seidensticker has described as a 'mutual intensification'⁸⁰ of both genres, where our engagement with and understanding of one can only be fully complete when it is informed by the other.

⁷⁷ Griffith 2010: 52.

⁷⁸ Griffith 2002 and 2005.

⁷⁹ See O'Sullivan and Collard 2013: 224: 'Notwithstanding Polyphemus' prophecies of hard times ahead and his threats of further violence, Odysseus' triumph dominates the mood of this last scene.'

⁸⁰ Seidensticker 2005: 54 n. 4.