

THE DATE OF THE *TRACHINIAE*

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To the memory of Cedric Whitman

THERE IS NO EXTERNAL EVIDENCE AT ALL for the date of the *Trachiniae* and no internal evidence that is decisive. The resulting disagreement has been overstated in his own inimitable way by Kitto: "About the *Trachiniae*, naturally, everything has been said, that Sophocles wrote it young, before he had learned his trade, that he wrote it old, when he had forgotten it, and that he did not write it at all."¹

There seems a consensus that the *Trachiniae*, in its dramatic form, is less developed than most of Sophocles. I do not intend to review here the arguments that have been adduced in a number of excellent studies,² except to note that on the basis of them a general presumption of earliness can be claimed, though "earliness" is a vague term. Johansen, almost twenty years ago, said that "writers on Sophoclean style and language, if they discuss chronological problems, are unanimous in assigning an early date to *Trach.*"³ The criterion of style and language did not, at least in Johansen's account, include metrics, and there were later suggestions on metrical grounds that a date near the *Oedipus Tyrannus* was indicated. But nothing conclusive was claimed for them, and one remembers that previous attempts to establish an earlier date on metrical grounds had likewise proved indecisive.⁴ In general it can be said that, although internal considerations are not the strongest evidence, still they are all we have and, with most of what weight they possess, they come down on the side of early composition. I am going to suggest in this essay that early composition means ca 450 B.C.

First, I shall consider the argument that the *Trachiniae*'s archaic style may be due to deliberate reversion by Sophocles late in his career.

¹H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy*² (London 1954) 292. The statement is not in the 3rd edition (London 1961).

²E.g., F. R. Earp, *The Style of Sophocles* (Cambridge 1944) 161 ff.; G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca 1958) 289 ff.; Karl Reinhardt, *Sophokles*³ (Frankfurt 1947) 42 ff.; Ernst-Richard Schwinge, *Die Stellung der Trachinierinnen im Werk des Sophokles* (Göttingen 1962) *passim*.

³H. F. Johansen, "Sophocles 1939-1959," *Lustrum* 7 (1962) 143.

⁴See H. A. Pohlsander, "Lyrical Meters and Chronology in Sophocles," *AJP* 84 (1963) 280 ff.; D. S. Raven, "Metrical Development in Sophocles' Lyrics," *AJP* 86 (1965) 225 ff. T. B. L. Webster attaches more conclusiveness to these fine studies than do the authors themselves: see *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 56 n. 34. See also H. D. F. Kitto, "Sophocles, Statistics, and the *Trachiniae*," *AJP* 60 (1939) 178 ff.

Secondly, I shall contrast the *Trachiniae*'s use of the sophistic argument from likelihood with the use of it in two other plays, especially the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Thirdly, I shall treat two special aspects of the relationship between Bacchylides XVI and the *Trachiniae*. Fourthly, in the longest part of the essay, I shall consider the relationship between the *Agamemnon* and the *Trachiniae*. Fifthly, that between the *Prometheus Vincitus* and the *Trachiniae*. Finally there is a brief coda.

Charles Segal, in a recent and brilliant essay on the *Trachiniae*, touches briefly on chronology and revives the argument that Sophocles could have deliberately adopted an archaic style, even late in his career, to match the archaic subject matter of the play. Schwinge had already noticed this argument and dismissed it with the comment that Reinhardt had said everything about it that needed saying. But Reinhardt said only that the idea did not interest him and that criticism should be concerned with advances rather than reversions. Obviously, and as Reinhardt conceded, this still leaves the possibility open of a late and deliberate reversion to an earlier style.⁵

But I do not think it is more than a possibility and what I propose to do in this essay is to advance a number of arguments from likelihood to support an early date of composition. Deliberate reversion to an earlier style seems especially unlikely with Sophocles and most especially in the case of this play. He himself spoke of phases in his development, clearly preferring the later to the earlier. Why should he go back to what he himself considered inferior? This seems even more unlikely with the *Trachiniae* which contains an amount of not merely immature but even defective work. Unlike the improbabilities in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, some of those in the *Trachiniae* have no justifying cause whatever, such as Aristotle allows for in the *Poetics*.⁶

Dramatic defects in the *Trachiniae* are ably discussed by Adams, though he is embarrassed by them to the point of renewing the suggestion that the play may be by someone else. He finds Sophocles to be the perfect dramatist but in the *Trachiniae* he finds "splendid poetry . . . but, in some respects, indifferent drama."⁷ Two passages escape his criticism, though they seem to me most clearly of all to reflect the style of a young dramatist who is concerned to make a point or produce an effect, but betrays a lack of finish in how he does it. They involve the shooting of Nessus (559 ff.) and the arrival of Lichas in advance of Heracles (283 ff.).

⁵C. P. Segal, "Sophocles' *Trachiniae*: Myth, Poetry and Heroic Values," *YCS* 25 (1977) 103, and cf. A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants: Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge 1969) 30 and 89 n. 3, with references there given; see also Schwinge (above, note 2) 128 n. 1 and Reinhardt (above, note 2) 190.

⁶*Poetics* 1460 b 24-30.

⁷S. M. Adams, *Sophocles the Playwright* (Toronto 1957) v and 124.

Sophocles has Heracles slay Nessus with the bow rather than the club or sword. Besides being in general agreement with the literary tradition, this is the only way to convey the venom of the hydra and to provide time for the centaur's fatal directives to Deianeira. Dugas makes the point that an actually violated Deianeira would be a less plausible protagonist in this play and that it would in any case be rather un-Sophoclean to push things to such a pitch of grosser realism.⁸ But in order to preserve these delicate Sophoclean effects, the poet has involved himself in improbabilities that could easily have been avoided. He has Heracles shoot the centaur in midstream (564), in a deep river (559), instantly on Deianeira's outcry (565 f.). Obviously the improprieties cannot happen but neither can anything else. Sophocles has been criticized for this from ancient times,⁹ but it has not been stressed enough that the midstream wounding was totally unnecessary. Sophocles could have used the version preserved by Diodorus,¹⁰ with the single difference that the reaction of Heracles be instantaneous upon Deianeira's cry. Nessus and Deianeira could have reached shore before the sexual advances began and there could then, upon her outcry, have come an instant transfluvial arrow from the opposite bank. Sophocles is so singlemindedly concerned with eliminating gross sexual realism and preserving the heroine's chastity at all costs that he goes to unnecessary extremes.

The arrival of Lichas in advance of Heracles is insufficiently motivated though a precise motivation lay ready to hand. The tradition reported by both Apollodorus and Diodorus has Heracles send Lichas to fetch the robe, which was needed for the sacrifice.¹¹ In the *Trachiniae* it is Deianeira who thinks of the robe; the arrival of Lichas, if motivated at all, seems vaguely intended to secure lodging for Iole and the captives, as though it were a matter of urgency for them to receive advance billeting. The whole arrival is only slightly less random than that of the herald in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. The reason for the herald's appearance in the *Agamemnon* is an external one: the dramatic effect it can produce in the theatre by anticipating the later arrival of the king himself. And that is exactly the reason for the arrival of Lichas in the *Trachiniae*. Sophocles has his Aeschylean model in mind. Kapsomenos pointed out that the *Trachiniae* imitates the *Agamemnon* in that the victory is announced in two stages with powerful dramatic effects as a result.¹² But Sophocles is so intent on the model and the theatrical potential it affords him that he has little thought for the internal logic of events or for the motivation that is

⁸Charles Dugas, "La Mort du Centaure Nessos," *REA* 45 (1943) 23 ff.

⁹Dio Chrysostom 60.1.

¹⁰4.36.3-5.

¹¹Apollodorus 2.7.7 and Diodorus 4.38.1.

¹²G. Kapsomenos, *Sophokles' Trachinierinnen und ihr Vorbild* (Athens 1963) 41, 57 ff.

available in the tradition if he would only notice it. Here again there is a certain lack of touch, perhaps because Sophocles is still in his Aeschylean phase.

If it is unlikely that a mature Sophocles would have reverted to some of the dramaturgy we find in the *Trachiniae*, there are indications that he would not gladly have reverted to its subject matter either. In his old age he was interviewed on the subject of love, which is also in large part the subject of the *Trachiniae*, and he is one of the first persons in history to go on record as being glad he's not young any more. Asked whether his youthful capabilities had vanished, his first word is *εὐφήμει* ("hush") and he goes on to speak in grateful terms of having escaped the bonds of love as though it were "a raging and savage beast of a master."¹³ The language is reminiscent of the *Trachiniae* where love tends to be associated with bestial imagery and destructive forces.¹⁴ The poet seems to be recalling an earlier chapter in his personal history to which he would not willingly return. This again is an argument from probability and it is always possible, if one does not like the way it points, to say we should not take such stories too seriously. But even when apocryphal, they tend to have a basis in reality, so that this one is likely to reflect a late attitude of Sophocles toward Aphrodite.

Since the topic of likelihood (*eikós*) keeps recurring, it is interesting to observe how this argument is used in two Sophoclean plays which in several respects invite comparison. As the fifth century progressed the argument from probability tended to supplant the argument from external testimony in the lawcourts of Athens.¹⁵ If we compare the scene from the *Trachiniae* (351 ff., 421 ff.) involving the messenger and Lichas with the scene from the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (583 ff.) involving Creon and Oedipus, an interesting contrast emerges. In the Trachinian scene, which seems especially forensic, the messenger relies essentially on the testimony of witnesses who heard what Lichas said, and he makes only a fleeting reference at the end of a speech (368) to the argument from probability. It is as if this argument were something new which deserved to be invoked but not relied on. But in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* things are exactly reversed. Creon relies essentially on the argument from probability to demonstrate his innocence of treason, and fleetingly at the end he invites Oedipus to seek the external testimony of the Delphic oracle (603 f.). The argument from probability was well established and familiar by the 420s when the *Oedipus Tyrannus* was probably produced and was new at about 450. If the *Trachiniae* were produced at that time it would

¹³Plato, *Republic* 329c. The translation is Shorey's, in the Loeb text.

¹⁴See Segal (above, note 5) especially 104 f., 109 f., 113 ff.

¹⁵G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton 1963) 30 ff., 39, 89; J. W. Jones, *The Law and Legal Theory of the Greeks* (Oxford 1956) 140 n. 2, 143.

accord well with the way the argument from probability is employed in it. In fact even the *Ajax* (1367) seems to display a more familiar touch than the *Trachiniae* in the use of the argument from probability and its easy conflation with the argument from self-interest.

The argument that Bacchylides XVI depends on the *Trachiniae* has been developed by Schwinge and others,¹⁶ and I have only three things to add to it. It is conceivable but not likely that both works depend on a common source. Why should two separate imitators copy their model in such a strikingly identical way, *especially if one of them was an original genius like Sophocles*? Denys Page, in a different connection, where the resemblances between Herodotus and a fragment from a lost tragedy are certainly no more striking than those between Bacchylides and the *Trachiniae*, declares without a shadow of misgiving that one writer had the other in his hands or in his head at the time of composition.¹⁷ Moreover, as Kamerbeek states in an admirable discussion, Bacchylides treats the story *more tragico*, as though it were a tragedy he is drawing on.¹⁸ Admittedly other genres deal in tragic situations, and there has been a recent suggestion that a Deianeira epic may have existed.¹⁹ The fact remains that Bacchylides seems to suppose a fresh and vivid remembrance in his audience and surely the likeliest source for this would be a recent presentation in the popular theatre.

It is curious to see Kamerbeek, after establishing his case, throw away his advantage for no good reason. He says the only thing which keeps him "from the fairly obvious conclusion" that Bacchylides depends on the *Trachiniae* are the words *ἐπεὶ πύθετ' ἀγγελίαν ταλαπενθέα, Ἰόλαν ὅτι . . . πέμπει*. This he says, should naturally imply that Iole is not yet present and so Bacchylides could not have had the *Trachiniae* in mind since in that play Iole has arrived on the scene when Deianeira hears the sad news. He continues: "I concede that the words admit of another interpretation, if we compare *Trach.* 365 sq., but it would be a strained one, more or less *pour le besoin de la cause*." At 365 ff. *πέμπων* is used with Heracles as subject and Iole as object, when Iole has arrived on the scene and Heracles has not. But this is not the only such usage in Sophocles. At *Ajax* 781 and *Electra* 406 and 427 we find *πέμπει* used by a sendee who is present to describe the action of a sender who is absent. The Bacchylidean usage is therefore not so strange, or at any rate it is not so un-Sophoclean. And even if we did not have these other examples from Sophocles, but only the single one from Bacchylides and the single one from the *Tra-*

¹⁶(Above, note 2) 128 ff., especially 131 f.; cf. *Bacchylidis Carmina Cum Fragmentis*¹⁰, post B. Snell ed. H. Maehler (Leipzig 1970) xlviii and liv.

¹⁷*A New Chapter in the History of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1951) 6 and 39 n. 2.

¹⁸*The Plays of Sophocles: Commentaries, Part II. The Trachiniae* (Leyden 1959) 6.

¹⁹See G. W. Dickerson, *The Structure and Interpretation of Sophocles' Trachiniae* (diss. Princeton, 1972) 27 ff.

chiniae, might not their very resemblance to one another in an unusual construction *imply* dependence rather than negate it?

Echoes are difficult things to certify, and Schwinge has done a remarkably thorough study of those between Bacchylides and the *Trachiniae*. But I wonder if he may not have omitted the most striking one of all. As a second component in the *hamartia* of Deianeira, Bacchylides assigns *δνόφεόν τε κάλυμμα τῶν ὕστερον ἐρχομένων*. The idea that the future cannot be known and that this fact is decisive in determining one's happiness or misery is everywhere in the *Trachiniae*: at the beginning (1 ff.), the end (1270), the transition between the two main parts of the play (943 ff.), and frequent other places throughout. Ignorance of futures is given a causal role in Deianeira's tragedy at 592 f. when she is told she must act first, then discover if her act was wise. The whole idea is almost the *Trachiniae* in a nutshell and perhaps should be connected with two of the play's obvious sources of inspiration. Solon said nobody knows at the beginning of an action just how it is going to turn out, so that someone with good intentions may still, because he lacks foreknowledge, fall into the worst kind of tragedy. Herodotus has Cambyses declare in the moment of his personal tragedy that he made a mistake as to the future event: *τοῦ μέλλοντος ἔσεσθαι ἁμαρτῶν*.²⁰ These two explicit statements concerning this special kind of tragic *hamartia* occur independently of the celebrated passage where both Solonian and Herodotean influences merge as Herodotus describes Solon's visit to the court of Croesus.²¹ In Bacchylides what ruins Deianeira is the dark veil over the things that are to come in after times, and here again we have the fleeting expression of a theme that is treated more extensively in the *Trachiniae*. At the same time this expression is weightier and more solemn than other Bacchylidean ones which reflect the *Trachiniae*. For Bacchylides to conceive *hamartia* precisely and explicitly—almost as if formulating a definition—in terms of the veiled future rather than of specific mistake here and now, seems unusual and very Trachinian.

If Sophocles influenced Bacchylides in the foregoing way, he had himself been influenced by Aeschylus. Of course we already know this to be true in a general sense,²² but there seem special indications for the *Trachiniae*. The play reflects the influence of the *Agamemnon* most of all, but it may also reflect the *Prometheus Vincitus*, if that play is by Aeschylus, and indeed even if it is not.²³

²⁰See *Fr.* 40.65–68, in I. M. Linforth, *Solon the Athenian* (Berkeley 1919) 168, and Herodotus 3.65.4.

²¹Herodotus 1.29 ff.

²²*Vita* 4 and Plutarch, *Moralia* 79 b.

²³Mark Griffith in *The Authenticity of 'Prometheus Bound'* (Cambridge 1977) renews the challenge to Aeschylean authorship and leaves the date wide open between 479 and 415 (13). W. Schmid, one of the foremost attackers of Aeschylean authorship, would still date the play to the middle of the fifth century; *Untersuchungen zum Gefesselten*

It is a plausible hypothesis that the *Trachiniae* was written in reaction to, and soon after, the portrayal of Clytemnestra by Aeschylus in the *Agamemnon* of 458. This need not imply criticism of Aeschylus. Perhaps Sophocles merely wished to contrast his heroine with the figure of Clytemnestra and the use of a totally new cast of characters involving a different myth and different names is the kind of graceful indirection that may well have appealed to Sophocles. It might be objected that the striking correspondences between the *Oresteia* and the *Trachiniae* are matched by equally striking ones between the *Trachiniae* and Euripides, and that in all such correspondences it is difficult or impossible to determine which play came first, or by how long an interval, and therefore such considerations are useless as aids to chronology. But this is not true. Schwinge has argued convincingly against Euripidean influence in the *Trachiniae* just as Kapsomenos has argued convincingly for Aeschylean.²⁴ Not all of Kapsomenos's arguments have equal weight, but he would need to be nine-tenths wrong if the array of correspondences, both large and small, which he alleges between the *Trachiniae* and the *Oresteia* did not far outweigh any supposed Euripidean ones. The reception scenes alone, of Cassandra by Clytemnestra and of Iole by Deianeira, stand in such pointed contrast to one another that conscious dependence seems inevitable. As to which play came first, it is of course possible that the *Trachiniae* did, and Ronnet does in fact so date it.²⁵ But most proponents of an early date for the *Trachiniae* would be content to place it after the *Oresteia*, and my own arguments suppose that the *Oresteia* preceded.

If we must look for Euripidean influence in the *Trachiniae*, which Whitman says it is "a little perverse" to deny altogether, we can take advantage of a hint dropped by Whitman himself when he says that the "suspicion arises therefore that the *Trachiniae* may have been written when Euripides was still fairly new."²⁶ It seems entirely plausible to combine alleged Euripidean influence with the undoubted Aeschylean stream and date the play to the vicinity of 455, when Euripides produced the *Peliades* with its magical Medea who Webster thinks "must surely have owed something to Aeschylus' Klytemnestra,"²⁷ and who is some-

Prometheus (Stuttgart 1929) 96. D. J. Conacher, "Prometheus as Founder of the Arts," *GRBS* 18 (1977) 189 ff., supports the view that the play was written by Aeschylus near the end of his life. This is also the view of C. J. Herington, *The Author of the Prometheus Bound* (Austin 1970), which I largely follow below. My arguments will work better if Herington and Conacher are right. Otherwise they will have to work, if not better, harder!

²⁴(Above, note 2) 14 ff.; Kapsomenos (above, note 12) 39 ff.

²⁵*Sophocle: Poète Tragique* (Paris 1969) 323 f.

²⁶*Sophocles: A Study of Heroic Humanism* (Cambridge, Mass. 1951) 47 f.

²⁷(Above, note 4) 32.

times thought, though with reference to the *Medea* of 431, to have influenced the Sophoclean Deianeira. Webster suggests that Euripides may from the first have been preoccupied with distinguishing between bad women on the one hand and unhappy women on the other and writing plays with either sort as his subject.²⁸ Sophocles too is clearly preoccupied with the distinction: if Aeschylus' Clytemnestra is a bad woman, Sophocles' Deianeira is contrasted with her in being a good but unhappy one, for she is carefully defined in terms of her unhappiness from the very first lines of the play. It is tempting to think of both Euripides and Sophocles as being simultaneously influenced by their great predecessor so shortly after his death. The fact of his death would naturally cause at least a temporary surge in his influence.

The *Likymnios* of Euripides can be dated with great probability before 449 and perhaps even to the same competition as the *Peliades*. It involved Heracles, perhaps the cremation of a returning hero, and perhaps also a messenger scene similar to the one with Lichas.²⁹ The possibilities of Euripidean influence from about the middle of the fifth century are abundant.

Of course the *Peliades* and *Likymnios* are lost plays, and can only partially be reconstructed, and we are on much surer ground with the relationship between the *Trachiniae* and the *Agamemnon*. I shall also argue that the *Trachiniae* reflects the *Prometheus Vincitus*, which Herington thinks was written by Aeschylus during his last days in Sicily.³⁰ If this is true it would be improbable that two such powerful influences, both from the end of Aeschylus' life, would have lain for a long time dormant in the mind of Sophocles, only to surface some decades later when most of their point for the audience would have been lost. In any event, as I shall seek to show, there are remarkable resemblances between the *Prometheus* and the *Trachiniae*, and at least one of them marks the *Trachiniae* as the borrower. But if the date of the *Prometheus* is uncertain, one must be cautious in using it to date the *Trachiniae*.

With the *Agamemnon* the probabilities are definitely stronger. If Sophocles had wanted to answer Aeschylus by writing a play about the same myth, he could well have waited. He did in fact write an *Electra*, as did Euripides, after the lapse of many years. But the *Trachiniae* uses a different myth and different names, and the audience will not be prompted to make the desired comparisons if the interval between the plays is too long. The poet must rely on fresh and vivid remembrances of specific dramatic developments in the *Agamemnon*. On this score the *Trachiniae* would reasonably be dated within the decade after 458, unless we are to

²⁸*Ibid.* 31 ff.

²⁹*Ibid.* 36 f.

³⁰Above, note 23.

think that the fresh recollection it supposes in its spectators was supplied by some revival of the *Oresteia* after Aeschylus' death.³¹

It is unlikely that Sophocles would have waited so long. Clytemnestra is one of the theatre's more notable husband-slayers, and in addition to her singularly horrific example there had been Aeschylus' portrayal, fairly soon before, of the fifty Danaids who (all but one) slew their husbands on their wedding night. In Aristophanes the women of Athens are represented as being resentful of Euripides for giving them a bad image and Aeschylus is made to reproach Euripides for bringing on the stage the lovesick females Phaedra and Sthenoboea. Statements in the *Vita* of Euripides and in the second argument to the *Hippolytus* suggest that there also was serious contemporary criticism of Euripides for his treatment of the love theme, causing him to rewrite the *Hippolytus* in the version we now possess.³² One would think that the women of the mid-fifth century had at least equal cause for grievance against Aeschylus, whose criticism of Euripides could be turned against himself. His Clytemnestra and Danaids did much more violence to the idea of love and marriage. It is true that Clytemnestra received her due punishment and Hypermestra her due vindication, and this may be part of the reason why both trilogies won the prize; but the image of womanhood cannot have been enhanced in the process, particularly in the case of Clytemnestra, who keeps calling attention to the fact that she is a woman while implicitly demonstrating the truth of the watchman's remark that she has a man's mentality.³³ In making her points she estranges our sympathy, and she proves herself the equal of men at the expense of her own femininity.

If Sophocles felt this, there were two options open to him. The first was to present Clytemnestra again in a more sympathetic light, as Euripides would later do in his *Electra*. But Sophocles in his own *Electra* did not do this, though the interval was perhaps four decades.³⁴ To do it soon after the *Agamemnon* would have been even less likely to appeal to him, for it might have implied a more overt criticism of Aeschylus than the urbane sensibilities of Sophocles would allow.³⁵ Moreover, as noted

³¹See *Vita Aeschyli* 12–13 for the statement that after the poet's death anyone who wished could produce the works of Aeschylus and also that Aeschylus won many victories after his death. Cf. also Garvie (above, note 5) 21 ff.

³²*Vita Euripidis* in Budé I (Paris 1947) 68 ff. and 100 ff. Cf. Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae* 372 ff. and *Frogs* 1043 f.

³³*Agamemnon* 11, 348, 590 ff., 1401.

³⁴On the date of the *Electra* see Whitman (above, note 26) 51 ff.

³⁵If Aristophanes *Frogs* 788 ff. is to be believed, Sophocles had great reverence for Aeschylus; and we are told in the *Vita Soph.* 4 and in Plutarch *Moralia* 79 b that he learned the art of tragedy from Aeschylus. This does not preclude the possibility that he thought himself capable of improving on his master. In the same passage of Plutarch he clearly implies that his own developed style is better, and he is quoted by Athenaeus

above, there would be no wish to criticize Aeschylus at all but only to give equal time on the stage to another version of a female protagonist who in similar circumstances reacted in a different, indeed in a totally feminine, way. If there were difficulties in the way of taking a murderess and making her sympathetic, there was a second possibility open which would serve the purpose equally well and would have commended itself to a writer like Sophocles. In its indirect way it might even be more eloquent. Instead of an *actual* murderess, Sophocles could take a *nominal* one, whose circumstances were strikingly similar to Clytemnestra's, who by tradition and even the etymological suggestions of her own name was *supposed* to be a husband-slayer, and portray her in a totally different light. If he wished to do this on behalf of the image of womanhood, or for whatever reason, it is unlikely, since he was dealing with a different set of characters, that he would have waited for twenty or thirty years; he would have acted soon. Tragedy is quick to register its influences in any case, and here there must have seemed a special urgency.

This is a reasonable hypothesis, in that it fits what Sophocles actually did. Perhaps the most striking thing about his portrayal of Deianeira is the way he has turned her traditional character around. In the tradition she is a mannish figure with a gusto for warfare; she drives chariots, is skilled in the use of weapons, and can stand the sight of blood, including her own.³⁶ This is the character she presents in Apollodorus and in the scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius, and it surely represents the prevailing tradition about her. It might be objected that such information is too fragmentary and too late to support any general statement about her traditional character. But this is not true. If tradition had represented her as notably feminine, so that when Sophocles also represented her that way he was conforming to tradition rather than departing from it, it is unthinkable that the late mythographers would have resisted the combined force of Sophocles' play and the tradition in general. The fact that they contradict the Sophoclean version implies that their version was the traditional one, so strongly entrenched that not even Sophocles could supplant it. On another point, however, the mythographers agree with Sophocles (and with Bacchylides): they make Deianeira act in ignorance

1.22a as saying that Aeschylus composed from inspiration rather than from conscious art. Yet when dealing with the Oresteia legend in his own *Electra*, even though many years later, he was careful not to provoke direct comparison with Aeschylus; see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *In wie weit Befriedigen die Schlüsse der erhaltenen griechischen Trauerspiele?*, ed. W. M. Calder III (Leiden 1974) 70.

³⁶See Apollodorus 1.8.1 and the scholion to Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 1.1212; also W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* I (Leipzig 1884–1890) s.v. Deianeira, col. 976, and R. C. Jebb, *Sophocles, The Plays and Fragments: The Trachiniae* (Cambridge 1892) xxxi f.

when she causes her husband's death.³⁷ This implies either that she was so represented in the tradition or that, prior to Sophocles' time, the distinction between witting and unwitting action had not yet been made in her regard. If the main stream of tradition had represented her as acting wittingly, it is hard to see why the mythographers would not have followed it in this respect as they had in respect of her masculine character. Since the *emphasis* on the distinction between intentional and unintentional action, though probably not the distinction itself, seems to date from the late sixth or the early fifth century,³⁸ it is likely that in the earlier tradition Deianeira was simply depicted as a *de facto* husband-slayer, without reference to her intent.

In Sophocles the emphasis upon her lack of intent, in fact upon her desire to *conserve* a husband, is explicit and recurrent. If the matter of intent had been left indeterminate in previous versions of the story, then Sophocles would not be contradicting tradition here but merely developing it in a way that adds to, but does not clash with, what went before; and even in the unlikely event that the tradition had in fact shown Deianeira acting with full knowledge and volition, Sophocles would still be within his rights, at least as construed later by Aristotle, in changing her action from witting to unwitting. The *Poetics* declares that, while one may not change the basic facts of myth, such as who killed whom, one may nevertheless give them an artistic turn, especially by having the tragic deeds done, not with full knowledge and awareness, as in the "old poets," but in ignorance of the consequences.³⁹ If the old poetry here referred to is earlier than tragedy, then perhaps Deianeira would have been represented in the *Capture of Oechalia* or the Hesiodic *Catalogue* as acting with full knowledge.⁴⁰ It would seem more natural to refer the phrase to earlier tragedians such as Aeschylus, since tragedy is the chief subject of the *Poetics* and Aeschylean characters do tend to act with full knowledge, even when, like Agamemnon sacrificing Iphigeneia, they act reluctantly. Action in ignorance seems peculiarly Sophoclean. When Aristotle exemplifies what he means by this element in tragic drama, he cites three plays, two from the fifth century and one from the fourth. The fifth-century examples are the *Oedipus Tyrannus* and the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, both by Sophocles, and both displaying strong thematic resemblances to the *Trachiniae*. If Sophocles did in fact introduce ignorance as a new component in the action of Deianeira, he would have been following a formula that seems characteristically his own.

And he would have been acting conformably to the times in which he

³⁷Apollodorus 2.7.7 and Diodorus Siculus 4.36 and 38; Bacchylides 15.11 ff.

³⁸Below, note 50.

³⁹*Poetics* 1453b 22–37.

⁴⁰For a summary of possible earlier treatments of the story see Kamerbeek (above, note 18) 1 ff.

wrote, since the preoccupation with awareness and consent as criteria of moral judgment seems a late sixth- or early fifth-century development. By the middle of the fifth century the debate on the topic would have acquired considerable momentum, so that the repeated references to it in the *Trachiniae* could be taken as topical. In connection with the idea of intent as conveyed by the two Oedipus plays of Sophocles, J. W. Jones writes: "during the fifth century there had clearly been a greater emphasis upon fault as the basis of liability."⁴¹ As will appear below, I am not suggesting that the distinction between intent and lack of intent appeared then for the very first time but rather that it only then became a lively issue of ethical speculation. Such a philosophical climate might well have prompted Sophocles to introduce the distinction in his treatment of Deianeira and so contrast her still further with the figure of Clytemnestra.

She is also contrasted with Clytemnestra, and with her own traditional image, in what Méautis calls her "féminité féminine."⁴² She is a paradigm of femininity, some would even say of shrinking femininity, not only after her marriage to Heracles but even before. She is not simply one of the wild things that Heracles overcame so that she then settled down to domesticated living; the Sophoclean Deianeira never *was* wild. In this respect Sophocles has flatly contradicted the tradition; and he has, to some ways of thinking, run the risk of disqualifying Deianeira for a heroic role in his drama, since it is a frequently remarked fact that the heroines of drama tend to exhibit masculine traits of character. Given the tradition, it would have been the most natural thing in the world to portray Deianeira along Clytemnestran lines, but Sophocles has done the opposite. The mannish quality of Clytemnestra's thoughts, words, and deeds is a recurrent motif in the *Agamemnon*.⁴³ The Sophoclean Deianeira is depicted in evident contrast to this Clytemnestra, as Webster and others have remarked.⁴⁴

⁴¹(Above, note 15) 264; cf. R. J. Bonner and G. Smith, *The Administration of Justice from Homer to Aristotle I* (Chicago 1930) 112 ff., 124; D. M. MacDowell, *Athenian Homicide Law in the Age of the Orators* (Manchester 1963) 6 f.; H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley 1971) 196, n. 86. Although the characters he created for the stage seem to act with full knowledge (cf. Aristotle's *εἰδότες καὶ γιγνώσκοντας*, *Poetics* 1453b 28), Aeschylus in his own person provides two interesting examples of action without it. I am grateful to G. M. Paul for pointing out the relevance of Aeschylus' reported self-defense on the charge of divulging Eleusinian secrets: he said he had not known (*οὐκ εἰδέναι*) they were secret (Aristotle *E.N.* 1111a 9). This implies that Aeschylus was aware of the legal and ethical implications of witting versus unwitting action. For Sophocles' opinion that Aeschylus composed *οὐκ εἰδώς*, see Athenaeus 1.22a, and cf. Plato, *Apology* 22b-c, where a similar judgment seems to be pronounced by Socrates on Sophocles himself and contemporary tragedians.

⁴²G. Méautis, *Sophocles: Essai sur le héros tragique* (Paris 1957) 253.

⁴³See, e.g., 11, 351, 1231, 1384 ff.

⁴⁴T. B. L. Webster, "Sophocles' *Trachiniae*," in *Greek Poetry and Life* (Oxford 1936) 164, 168, 170 f. On the contrast between the Sophoclean and the traditional Deianeira, see Jebb (above, note 36) xxxi f.

How did Sophocles achieve this contrast? By depicting Deianeira in equally evident contrast to herself as traditionally conceived. Obviously this was a pointed thing to do, and the point of it would not be lost on the Athenian audience. As Webster says, they might expect to see a second Clytemnestra.⁴⁵ What they got was a striking contradiction of their expectations in the form of a double contrast, both with the Deianeira of tradition and with the Clytemnestra of recent memory. The Sophoclean Deianeira is no warrior maiden; she has been transformed.

Yet she has not been deprived of her heroic character. When Aristotle says that women in drama should not exhibit ἀνδρεία,⁴⁶ he surely means that they ought to be feminine like the Sophoclean Deianeira rather than masculine like the Aeschylean Clytemnestra or the virago of the Deianeira legend. He does not mean that they should be uncourageous. The Sophoclean alteration of the legend is implicitly approved by Aristotle. It is also tempting to think Sophocles may have introduced the idea of Deianeira's acting unintentionally in the death of Heracles. This kind of alteration was to win Aristotle's explicit approval,⁴⁷ and it is an artistic touch which seems particularly Sophoclean and might the more readily have occurred to him if questions of intent were being eagerly debated in contemporary philosophic circles.

This brings us to the relationship between the *Trachiniae* and the *Prometheus Vincitus*. Intent as an ethical criterion is a recurrent idea in the *Trachiniae* which here seems to reflect the *Prometheus*. Herington thinks the *Prometheus* may itself reflect a contemporary debate on the paradox that virtue is knowledge.⁴⁸ Prometheus says ἐκὼν ἐκὼν ἡμαρτον (266) and one version of the so-called Socratic paradox (which would have to be earlier than Socrates to influence a *Prometheus* written by Aeschylus) is οὐδεὶς ἐκὼν ἀμαρτάνει.

If at the middle of the fifth century there was a lively debate in progress concerning intentional and unintentional *hamartia*, the elements of it had been present at least since the Homeric poems. The expression ἐκὼν δ' ἡμάρτανε φωτός occurs in the *Iliad* (10.372) with reference to the physical act of missing a target. The distinction between the terms ἐκὼν and ἄκων ("willing" and "unwilling") as descriptive of psychological states, but again without ethical implications, also occurs, as does the notion of tragic deeds done in ignorance (ἀιδρῆῃσι νόοιο).⁴⁹ If our late fifth-century versions

⁴⁵*Ibid.* 164.

⁴⁶*Poetics* 1454a 23–24.

⁴⁷*Ibid.* 1453b 25–31.

⁴⁸(Above, note 23) 94 ff.; cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* 3 (Cambridge 1971) 25 and 250 ff.

⁴⁹*Odyssey* 11.272. For ἐκὼν and ἄκων as descriptive of contrasting psychological states, see *Iliad* 7.197 and especially 4.45, where there is implied the sophisticated distinction

of the Code of Draco are not anachronistic, the distinction between premeditated (ἐκ προνοίας) and unpremeditated homicide had been legally formulated as early as 621 B.C. This might seem to invalidate the contention made, for instance, by Webster in connection with the *Trachiniae* that the supremely important distinction between motive and action originates in the late sixth or early fifth century and our first acquaintance with it comes from Simonides.⁵⁰ It is difficult to think that our version of the Code of Draco is anachronistic with regard to the distinction between premeditated and unpremeditated homicide. All that we have extant of the Code concerns unpremeditated homicide and seems predicated upon the distinction. Falsification on this capital point would raise the question whether the extant Code is of any worth at all. And if the distinction was made as early as 621 B.C., it is unlikely, with an extremely litigious and argumentative people like the Athenians,⁵¹ that it would have remained locked away in the recondite fastnesses of legal tablets; it would have come out into more general circulation and become an eager subject of debate. What may have taken time, however, is for the concept to have developed from a narrowly juridical one, formulated to fit a specific legal case, into a more generally ethical one applicable to the whole field of morals. One could readily believe, particularly in the light of Simonides' poem, that this was a later development. If so, debate on the question might well have been achieving its full momentum at about the middle fifties, after cosmological speculation had proved sterile, and thinkers were turning to ethics as a more fruitful field of endeavor. What Herington calls the "astonishing phrase" ἐκὼν ἐκὼν ἡμάρτον would accord well with such a contemporary situation, and the *Trachiniae's* repeated concern with the relationship between knowledge and responsibility, expressed in terminology which remarkably echoes the *Prometheus*, would be one among several other similarities between the plays.

Schmid lists a number of passages in which he finds the *Prometheus* showing the influence of contemporary sophistic philosophy, and to one of these I shall return below. Herington cites Schmid's examples and adds three of his own in which he detects what he calls "sophistic/rhetorical

between volition and feeling. Zeus wills to accede to Hera even though he does not want to: ἐκὼν ἀέκοντί γε θυμῷ. Something similar seems implied at *Trachiniae* 1262 f.: ἐπίχαρτον τελέουσ' ἀκούσιον ἔργον.

⁵⁰ *An Introduction to Sophocles*² (London 1969) 35, with reference to Simonides F 4.20; cf. C. M. Bowra, "Simonides and Scopas," *CP* 29 (1934) 234 ff.; Leonard Woodbury, "Simonides on ἀρετή," *TAPA* 84 (1953) 135 ff.; A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford 1960) 165 ff. and 355 ff.; Bonner and Smith (above, note 41) 111 ff.

⁵¹ R. J. Bonner, *Lawyers and Litigants in Ancient Athens* (Chicago 1927) 96 ff. In favour of the authenticity of our version of the Code of Draco, preserved on a stele of 409 B.C., see R. S. Stroud, *Drakon's Law on Homicide* (Berkeley 1968) 60 ff.

echoes" in the *Prometheus*.⁵² It is significant that under each of his three headings one can find related terminology in the *Trachiniae*. Sophistic/rhetorical influence in the *Prometheus* would accord well with Herington's suggestion that the play was composed in Sicily. Sophistry is in large measure the product of Sicily, emanating partly from such rhetorical schools as those of Corax and Tisias and partly from noted philosophers such as Protagoras and Gorgias, of whom the latter came from Sicily and the former had a notable sojourn there, perhaps beginning ca 458/7 B.C., when he may have been expelled from Athens. The visits of Protagoras to Sicily and Athens admit of no confident dating. Davison conjectures that the decree of expulsion may not have been revoked until after the Thirty Years' Peace in 445, though it also seems possible that this might have happened soon after the death of Cimon, so that Protagoras could have returned to Athens about 450.⁵³ In that case he would have been a possible vehicle, though not the only one, for the influence of the *Prometheus* upon the *Trachiniae*.

The first of Herington's three examples (ἐκὼν ἐκὼν ἡμαρτον) has already been cited, and it powerfully attests that with Prometheus, as with Clytemnestra and the Danaids, the tragic deed was not done in ignorance but in full awareness. The *Trachiniae*, while strikingly echoing the terminology of the *Prometheus*, insists on the point that Deianeira did act in ignorance. Sophocles appears to be changing the Aeschylean formula

⁵²Schmid (above, note 23) 75; Herington (above, note 23) 94 ff.

⁵³J. A. Davison thinks Protagoras may have settled in Athens ca 464/3, been expelled (partly to make way for the recall of Cimon) and gone to Sicily ca 458/7, where he influenced the composition of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincitus*, being recalled to Athens ca 445 shortly before his commission to Thurii. It might also seem plausible for the expulsion to have been revoked soon after Cimon's death and the failure of the Cimonian policy in Egypt. In a vague way a sentiment ascribed to Protagoras, and supposedly reflected in the *Prometheus*, to the effect that his rescue would come to him from Egypt would thus be fulfilled. See "Protagoras, Democritus and Anaxagoras," *CQ* n.s. 3 (1953) 37 ff., and "The Date of the Prometheia," *TAPA* 80 (1949) 66 ff. The chronology of Cimon's recall and his later death is very uncertain, but there are good arguments for placing them in 452 and 451; see R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford 1972) 111, 125, 422 f. A revoking, as soon as possible, of the banishment of Protagoras, whose reputation in Sicily was immense, might well have promoted good relations between Athens and Sicily. These had been inaugurated, most probably in 458/7, less probably in 454/3, with the reception at Athens of an embassy from Segesta and a resulting treaty between Athens, Segesta, and Halicystae, in which has been seen "a continuation by Pericles of that policy of developing Athenian connections, political and commercial, with the West which had been foreshadowed by Themistocles . . ." (*CAH* 5 159). On the date of the treaty, see D. W. Bradeen and M. F. McGregor, *Studies in Fifth-Century Attic Epigraphy* (Norman, Oklahoma 1973) 71 ff. It seems likely that Pericles, whatever political differences might previously have come between himself and the philosopher, would have welcomed an intellectual stimulus so captivating to himself that he is reported on one occasion to have spent an entire day in philosophical conversation with Protagoras on, as it happens, responsibility for unintentional homicide, see Plutarch, *Pericles* 36.5 f. Cf. V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954) 96 ff.

whereby actions are performed with full awareness into a Sophoclean one whereby they are performed through *hamartia*, in the sense of intellectual mistake. The chorus declare, with respect to Deianeira's action, that where error is unintended (μη' ἔκουσias 727 f.) the resulting resentment against the agent is wont to be gentle. Hyllus defends Deianeira on the score that she erred unintentionally (ἡμαρτεν οὐχ ἔκουσία 1123), and that her whole action was a mistake committed with the best intentions (ἅπαν τὸ χρῆμ' ἡμαρτε χρηστὰ μωμένη 1136). It is clear from the words, and especially from the context of the play, that Deianeira is not simply the unwilling performer of a deed whose significance she understands, as when Hephaestus fastens Prometheus to the rock (*PV* 19), but that she acts in ignorance. It is a further similarity between the plays that in connection with unwitting *hamartia* Deianeira rebukes the chorus as being uninvolved themselves in the catastrophe (727 ff.) and Prometheus utters the same rebuke to his chorus in connection with the same terminology (263).

On the merely verbal level it may not be fanciful to find in the *Trachiniae* at least one reflection of the *Prometheus*' curious tendency toward double-barreled phrasing in contexts where volition is implied. In the *Prometheus*, besides ἐκὼν ἐκὼν ἡμαρτον, there are several other striking instances. At 218 Prometheus says that once he had allied himself willingly with a willing Zeus (ἐκόνθ' ἐκόντι), and slightly earlier, at 192, he says that at some time in the future Zeus will eagerly accept a reconciliation that will be eagerly offered (σπεύδων σπεύδοντι). On the negative side of the terminology, Hephaestus at 19 is an unwilling crucifier of an unwilling victim (ἄκοντα σ' ἄκων) and at 671 Inachus is an unwilling banisher of an unwilling Io (ἄκουσαν ἄκων). This back-to-back positioning of such adjectives occurs only once otherwise in Aeschylus (at *Supplices* 227), so that its frequency in the *Prometheus* is noteworthy. It may be reflected in the *Trachiniae* where the messenger says regarding Lichas that he is being detained against his will but in accord with the will of his interrogators (οὐκ ἐκὼν, ἐκοῦσι δὲ 198). This is the only place in Sophocles where the adjective ἐκὼν is doubled in this way, and there seems something self-satisfied about the messenger's use of the phrase, as though conscious of its cleverness. In so far as the script itself can make its oblique points, it seems to be recalling an earlier script and saying in effect: "There is division here—I cannot give you the first half of the double ἐκὼν (therefore οὐχ ἐκὼν) but I do give you the second half (therefore ἐκοῦσι δὲ)." In the *Prometheus* the doubling had indicated unanimity, whether in willingness or unwillingness. Here in Sophocles, and again in a somewhat analogous phrase at 1262 f. (ἐπίχαρτον τέλειον' ἀεκούσιον ἔργον) there is division. It might have been more natural for the messenger to say ἄκων ἐκοῦσιν and the fact that here Sophocles stays with the Promethean doubled ἐκὼν, but with a difference, is a sophisticated touch and accords

well with the character of the messenger who otherwise sounds and argues like a sophist.⁵⁴

Herington's second example of sophistic/rhetorical echoes in the *Prometheus* is ἀρχαῖος used pejoratively at 317 to signify "archaic" or "outmoded." He says this is the first time he can find it so used in Greek literature and he plausibly argues that it must have acquired this sense in a sophistic context. The term also makes a conspicuous appearance in the *Trachiniae*, in the very first line. Here its primary meaning is not pejorative; it helps to convey the authority that befits a saying of Solon.⁵⁵ But one should note that *the saying is rejected by Deianeira* as no longer applicable to herself. Experience has taught her otherwise, and for her the saying is archaic in the sense of being outmoded.

The λόγος ἀρχαῖος was opposed to Deianeira's experience of reality, and this leads into the third sophistic echo attested for the *Prometheus* by Herington: the antithesis λόγῳ/ἔργῳ ("in word/in deed") at 336 and 1080. Herington remarks that the antithesis is a broad one and involves the "sophisticated contrast between Word and Reality." In the *Trachiniae* the expression λόγῳ . . . ἔργῳ does not occur verbatim, but the antithetical idea is strongly present and there seems to be a preoccupation with the terms λόγος and ἔργον themselves. One of the most fundamental concerns of the *Trachiniae* is with the difference between truth and seeming, and part of that difference is the difference between word and reality.

Related to the debate between truth and seeming is Schmid's discussion of the theme of illusion in the *Prometheus*. He argues that in Athens at the middle of the century the attitude toward illusory hope was ambivalent: men disagreed as to whether such hope was a good or bad thing. He thinks this implies a contemporary sophistic debate on the subject. Prometheus in the play is represented as a benefactor of men for implant-

⁵⁴He expects pay for his information (190 f.) and professes total knowledge of his subject (338); he has an argumentative and forensic mentality, being obviously at home with the language of cross-examination and confutation (κρίνει παραστὰς 195, ὥστ' ἐξελέγχειν 373), and sensitive as to what will stand up in court (δίκης ἐς ὀρθόν 347, which phrase may reflect the ὀρθοέπεια of Protagoras, as may also his expression ὀρθὸν ἐξείρηχ' 374). He argues by way of a dilemma (346 f.); he employs both the argument from witnesses (350 f.) and that from εἰκός (368); he picks up Lichas' verb ἱστορέω (cf. 317 and 382) and much play is made of it in the subsequent exchange (395, 404, 415, 418); he suggests that Lichas should pay a forfeit (δοῦναι δίκην 410) if confuted on cross-examination, which is not unlike that attitude of Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic* 337d-338b. Lichas calls him a dealer in subtleties (ποικίλας ἔχεις 412), and, as though himself infected with the sophistic influences bearing in upon him, Lichas says it is not the same thing to state an opinion (δόκησιν εἰπεῖν) and to substantiate it with proof (κάξακριβῶσαι λόγον 426). As though impressed by the novel word δόκησιν, the messenger repeats it (427). This may be its first appearance in extant literature, and it evidently has sophistic affinities, cf. A. A. Long, *Language and Thought in Sophocles* (London 1968) 18.

⁵⁵Herodotus 1.30 ff.

ing false optimism in their hearts, thus supplying the kindly illusion which in the Pandora story had been withheld. Here Schmid sees Prometheus as espousing a contrary position to that of the older sophists known to us, all of whom rejected the idea that illusion can be a blessing. Schmid also suspects that there may have been other old sophists not known to us who regarded hopeful illusions as a blessing.⁵⁶

Chiefly on the strength of this one statement by Prometheus, Schmid sees the *Prometheus* as reflecting a mid-century sophistic debate on the question of illusory hopes. This aspect of Sophism finds a much more sustained reflection in the *Trachiniae* where there is recurrent reference to ἐλπίς ("expectation") in both its senses, good and bad, and the idea of illusion is omnipresent. Twice the chorus say of Deianeira that she rejects fair hope: in the parodos they say she is expecting an evil destiny (κακὰν δύστανον ἐλπίζουσιν αἴσαν 110 f.) and that she ought not to wear out good hope (ἀποτρύνει ἐλπίδα τὰν ἀγαθάν 124 f.) but cherish in her expectations the fact that life is cyclical and sometimes turns from bad to good. Deianeira had earlier, at the very beginning of the play, rejected that position as being illusory, at least for her. The λόγος ἀνθρώπων φανείς, which declared that only at death could a man be called happy or unhappy, had no relevance to Deianeira who knew already that to hold out any hopes for her own happiness was complete illusion. She rejects the gift of Prometheus whereby mankind was prevented from seeing the end result: she knows the verdict on her own life already.⁵⁷ Later she tells the chorus that she will have wrought a great evil as a result of fair hopes, and the chorus reply that hopes should not be judged prior to the event. Deianeira disagrees and declares that sometimes, when a course of events has been prejudiced, it is possible to tell beforehand that there is no hope. She again rejects the gift of Prometheus.

Besides the section on sophistic/rhetorical echoes, Herington's study contains one other section of particular relevance to the *Trachiniae*. It deals with possible Sophoclean features in the *PV*: Knox is cited for a similarity between Prometheus and the Sophoclean hero in general, and it is ironical that the *Trachiniae* is the one Sophoclean play he excludes from consideration; Friedrich is cited for an alleged similarity between Sophocles and the *Prometheus* in the treatment of the tragic emotions of pity and fear, and in this connection the *Trachiniae* does receive special mention as a prime example.⁵⁸

Knox finds a notable similarity between Prometheus and Sophoclean

⁵⁶*PV* 248 ff.; Hesiod *Works and Days* 96 ff.; Schmid (above, note 23) 95 f.

⁵⁷For a striking antithesis to the sentiment of Deianeira, contrast John Denver's "My life is worth living, I don't need to see the end."

⁵⁸Herington (above, note 23) 91 f.; B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper* (Berkeley 1966) 44 and 172 n. 48; W. H. Friedrich, *Vorbild und Neugestaltung* (Göttingen 1967) 188 ff.

heroes generally, with the exception of those in the *Trachiniae*. He says that this play "does not conform to the pattern" and that Heracles, "though certainly cast in the heroic mold, comes on late in the play and dying; there is no question of heroic resolve or action."⁵⁹ If it be true in this technical and dramaturgical sense that Heracles, always a notable absentee, is not on stage long enough to display a sustained pattern of heroism, there is another sense in which he and Prometheus more closely resemble each other than do any other two heroes of the Greek drama. If one had to classify protagonists for sheer *δῆκος* ("size"), wherein Sophocles said his early plays resembled Aeschylus,⁶⁰ then Prometheus and Heracles are in a class by themselves. Though Heracles is actually present on the stage for only the last quarter of the play, he is *virtually* present from the beginning and a very definite picture of him emerges. Like Prometheus he is world-sized and cosmic, sometimes almost seeming to outreach geography. When he is represented as resting on two continents (100), one is scarcely surprised at the impression thus created, however one may interpret the phrase. Both Heracles and Prometheus have final destinies that seem to overspread the universe. Heracles dies, if he does die, on the lofty rock of Mount Oeta like the blazing sphere of the sun.⁶¹ Prometheus is on high beetling cliffs at the edges of the world, a mediator between gods and men. Both protagonists are saviour-figures, as gigantic in their achievements as in their persons. Heracles in a physical, Prometheus in a technical way, are great archetypal benefactors of mankind at large. They import a sense of wide space and early time, the one engendered by the vast sweep of geographical reference in both plays, the other by the picture of a world that has just emerged from physical and intellectual helplessness. The geographical references are frequently connected with the names of monsters or savages, and these primitive shapes from the earliest phase of mythology loom large behind the scenes, imparting their own kind of *δῆκος*.⁶²

Another allegedly Sophoclean characteristic to be found in the *Prometheus* has special relevance to the *Ajax*, which almost everyone concedes is early, and to the *Trachiniae*. Friedrich has shown that the *Prometheus* evokes the emotions of pity and fear in a manner like that of

⁵⁹*Ibid.* 172 n. 48.

⁶⁰Plutarch, *Moralia* 79b; cf. C. M. Bowra, "Sophocles on His Own Development," *AJP* 61 (1940) 385 ff., and L. A. Post, "Aeschylean *Onkos* in Sophocles and Aristotle," *TAPA* 78 (1947) 242 ff. On Sophocles' early indebtedness to Aeschylus, see *Vita Sophoclis* 4.

⁶¹*Trach.* 94 ff.; cf. my study of this passage in "Sun Symbolism in the Parodos of the *Trachiniae*," *Arethusa* 5 (1972) 143 ff.

⁶²See, e.g., *PV* 676 ff., 707 ff., 790 ff., 829 ff., 846 ff., and *Trach.* 98 ff., 248 ff., 633 ff., 1091 ff.

Sophocles, especially in the *Ajax* and *Trachiniae*.⁶³ Lessing's interpretation of Aristotle ("Diese Furcht ist das auf uns selbst bezogene Mitleid")⁶⁴ is verified only in the *Prometheus* among Aeschylean plays but in Sophocles generally, and most of all by Odysseus in the *Ajax* and Deianeira in the *Trachiniae*. (Herington curiously singles out the choruses of these two Sophoclean plays without mentioning Odysseus or Deianeira.) In pitying Ajax, Odysseus has as much regard for himself as for Ajax, since he sees how easily all things mortal can be brought low; and Athena seconds his sober thought. Deianeira, in the moment of apparent good news, declares her fear of reversal and says it is inspired by her pity for the captive maidens whose fortunes have so dramatically turned from good to bad. These reactions of Odysseus and Deianeira are akin to the reaction of the Promethean chorus of Oceanids. After expressing their tearful pity for the plight of Prometheus they turn to thoughts of themselves and pray never to be the objects of Zeus's hostility or give offense in their words. Later they are moved to fear by the pitiful plight of Io and pray that they may not similarly become objects of divine *eros* but marry according to their station.⁶⁵

It is thus apparent that, in the above two areas of alleged resemblance between the *Prometheus* and Sophocles generally, the position of the *Trachiniae* is altogether special. If Sophocles' earliest plays served as exemplars for the Promethean treatment of the tragic hero and the tragic emotions, it would appear that the *Trachiniae*, and, to a lesser extent, the *Ajax*, were in turn influenced by the *Prometheus*.⁶⁶ There is also a marked resemblance between the *Trachiniae* and the *Prometheus* in respect of the three themes of disease, release, and divinity. This need not of course imply conscious copying, but it may well suggest unconscious influencing of one play by the other.

Both plays have in common a large incidence of medical terminology. *vóσos* and *voσέw* are used to signify physical sickness, as in the statement of Prometheus that he showed mankind with what medications to cure diseases (*PV* 478 ff.) or in the repeated description of the disintegration of Heracles' body (*Trach.* 981, 1013, 1084). The terms are also used in a figurative sense, as when the *έρως* of Heracles is called a disease (*Trach.* 445 f., 544) or the intransigence of Prometheus is called diseased and in need of the healing effect of good counsel (*PV* 378). The easy transition from primary to figurative sense is illustrated in the chorus's admonition to Prometheus that he is behaving like an unskilled physician who has fallen into sickness (*ές νόσον* 473) and cannot discover by what medication

⁶³Above, note 58.

⁶⁴G. E. Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, 75 Stück, January 19, 1768.

⁶⁵See *Ajax* 121 ff., *Trach.* 296 ff., *PV* 144 ff., 526 ff., 887 ff.

⁶⁶Cf. Knox (above, note 58) 48 f. and 173 n. 70; Herington (above, note 23) 91.

(*φαρμάκοις* 475) to cure himself. The linking of *νόσος* and *φάρμακον* occurs four times in the *Prometheus*, representing almost half the incidence of *φάρμακον* in Aeschylus.⁶⁷ The figurative senses of *νόσος* include tribulations like those of Io (596, 632, 698 f.), unrelenting hatred like that of Prometheus for the gods (997 f.), unavailing persistence in good offices (384), willingness to desert friends (1069 f.), disturbances in nature (924). The noun *νόσημα*, with its perhaps significant suffix,⁶⁸ occurs three times in figurative senses: it is a disease of tyrants to mistrust friends (224 f.); it is a disease to utter artificial speech (685 f.), and it is not a disease to hate one's enemies (978). The *Prometheus* does not make an *equation* between *ἔρως* and *νόσος*, but it does declare a causal nexus in as much as *ἔρως* causes *νόσος* in someone else. It is the *ἔρως* of Zeus that causes the tribulations of Io which are repeatedly called a *νόσος*, and the chorus pray that no divine *ἔρως* glance their way (903 f.). Thus *ἔρως* implies *νόσος*, but is not yet identified with it.

This identification comes in the *Trachiniae* and is one of the most striking motifs of that play. Here the *ἔρως/νόσος* theme applies totally to Heracles who is the subject of both conditions, or rather, of the one condition which goes by two names. It is his inveterate ailment to be forever smitten with desire for women (445 f., 544). Even when *νόσος* is applied to him ostensibly in its primary and medical sense, it is likely to carry this lurking symbolic meaning. There is unconscious irony in the statement of Lichas that he left Heracles at Cenaeum *οὐ νόσῳ βαρύν* ("not afflicted with disease" 235), for of course we know that Heracles is afflicted with *ἔρως* for Iole. There is symbolic rightness in the fact that his final sickness unto death consists in being devoured by the fires of the supposed love charm, for he has during all his career been constantly devoured by the fires of desire, kindled by the recurring charms of countless Ioles and Deianeiras. The blaze that ultimately consumes him on Mount Oeta is a fitting epitaph. Whatever may be its significance for what he is now to become, it seems like a statement of everything he was.

There are a number of other metaphorical uses of *νόσος* or *νοσέω* in the *Trachiniae*. Deianeira says that to fight against Aphrodite's power would be to incur another affliction (*νόσον* 491) of her own making. After her suicide the chorus ask what afflictions (*νόσοι* 882) brought it about. Earlier they sang of a font of tears that burst, pouring out affliction (*νόσος* 852). In a less grievous sense Lichas had called the messenger a sick fool (*νοσοῦντι* 435), and the term is used in a somewhat similar way by Hyllus of someone driven mad by furies (*ἔξ ἀλαστώρων νοσοῖ* 1235). Shortly there-

⁶⁷*PV* 249, 472 ff., 480 ff., 606; *Agam.* 548, 848, 1260; *Fr.* 134 (Nauck²) and *Fr.* 110.6 and *Fr.* 250.11 in H. J. Mette, *Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aischylos* (Berlin 1959) 39 and 89.

⁶⁸Long remarks that the *-ma* suffix is a favourite of tragedians and also of philosophical and medical writers ([above, note 54] 19 f.).

after he applies it to the mental delusions of Heracles brought on by his physical agonies (ὡς νοσεῖς 1241), and here the physical and figurative senses seem almost to merge.

The *Trachiniae* also contains some remarkable terminology related to the idea of healing. φάρμακον, frequent in the *Prometheus*, occurs in the *Trachiniae* (685) in reference to the love charm which was to have cured Heracles' concupiscence. Its only other occurrences in Sophocles are once in the *Ajax* and twice in fragments.⁶⁹ φαρμακεύς in the sense of healer occurs at 1140 of the *Trachiniae* and not elsewhere in Sophocles. While ἱατρός does not occur in the *Trachiniae*, there is an intriguing employment of its cognates: ἱατροία ("healing" 1002), ἱατῆρ ("healer" 1209), each occurrence being the only one in Sophocles; and ἰάομαι ("heal" 1210), which has only two other occurrences, and those in fragments.⁷⁰ The play seems to be ringing some unusual linguistic changes on the medical theme. Its peculiar concern with this motif is reminiscent of the *Prometheus* which may well have been composed in Sicily under the influence of medical opinion current there in the middle of the fifth century.⁷¹

Healing is of course a kind of release. But the major theme of release, common to both the *Trachiniae* and the *Prometheus*, is that of release from toil, whether this implies death or something more positive. In the *Prometheus* there are numerous references to the release of Prometheus from his toils and also to the release of Io from hers.⁷² Even more emphatically in the *Trachiniae* the theme of release from toil is felt as pervading the play from first to last, for the whole premise is that a moment now impends when a mysterious release from toil is to be effected for Heracles, and derivatively for Deianeira whose inward and spiritual ordeals correspond to the outward and physical ones of her husband.

A final group of correspondences has to do with divinity. It is clear

⁶⁹*Ajax* 1255 and *Fr.* 530.4 and 770 Nauck².

⁷⁰*Fr.* 74.2 and 513.

⁷¹On composition in Sicily see above, note 53; also Herington (above, note 23) 114 ff. On medicine and Sicily, see Herington's observation that at the time of Aeschylus' sojourn there, "Sicily was still the home of the philosopher-poet Empedocles." Empedocles was also the founder of the Sicilian school of medicine (see Galen *Meth. Med.* I.1) and the rise of Sophism was greatly promoted by medical theory; see W. Jaeger, *Paideia*² (Oxford 1945) 306. For a further source of possible medical influence, cf. C. N. Cochrane, *Thucydides and the Science of History* (Oxford 1929) 14: "Ideas such as those enunciated by the Hippocratic school were unquestionably floating about in the Hellenic world as early as the middle of the fifth century B.C." At *Trach.* 662 a partly medical sense of the difficult word προφάσει would accord well with the context. On the medical sense of this word in Hippocratic writings see Cochrane 17, and cf. H. R. Rawlings III, *A Semantic Study of Prophasis to 400 B.C.* (Wiesbaden 1975) 36 ff. As to metrical difficulties in the reading of the MSS, Pöhlisander declines to emend here on such grounds, see *Metrical Studies in the Lyrics of Sophocles* (Leiden 1964) 140.

⁷²For Prometheus see 183 ff., 257, 316, 326, 339, 471, 754, 755, 773, 872. For Io, 587, 622, 684, 706, 749 f., 780, 823.

that Zeus is the preeminent agent of all the facts of both plays. Herington has developed this idea with regard to the *Prometheus*, and the famous last line of the *Trachiniae* declares of all that went before, "There is nothing here but Zeus."⁷³ One of the more striking testimonies to the predominance of Zeus is the fact that he controls the oracles in both plays. In historical times the premier oracle of the Greek world was that of Apollo at Delphi, though even there Zeus had a role to play since the chorus of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* refer to a Delphic pronouncement as the "voice of Zeus" (151). In the *Prometheus* and the *Trachiniae* the background is more primeval, and the operative oracle is the most ancient of all, that of Zeus at Dodona, mentioned in *Prometheus* 658 and 830 and *Trachiniae* 172. The only other reference to Dodona in either poet is in the lost *Odysseus Acanthoplex* of Sophocles,⁷⁴ a play much akin to the *Trachiniae* in thematic development. Another similarity between the *Prometheus* and the *Trachiniae* is that both plays mention Poseidon in his Homeric capacity of earth-shaker, the *Prometheus* at 924 and the *Trachiniae* at 502. Both plays also show a peculiar predilection for the goddess of love under her title of Kypris, a name which occurs six times in Aeschylus, two of them in the *Prometheus*, and seven times in Sophocles, three of them in the *Trachiniae* and the rest in fragments.⁷⁵

What follows now by way of a conclusion to this essay is conjecture and I attach no probative force to it whatever. But it is tempting to speculate as to the occasion when Sophocles gave up acting because of the smallness of his voice.⁷⁶ Is it possible that, faced with the necessity to play both Deianeira and Heracles in one performance, he suffered an acute attack of *μικροφωνία*? When would an actor be likelier to do so? Is it possible that he might then have consigned the task to an absolutely superlative performer whose name (rather felicitously) was Heracleides? If this had taken place in 450, with the actors' contest being instituted the following year, and with Heracleides winning it, as he did, in 449 and 447,⁷⁷ which is to say, in at least two of the first three years of its existence, this would be an entirely plausible series of events. It would, at least by hindsight, be a splendid example of *εἰκός*.

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⁷³Herington (above, note 23) 82 ff. and *Trach.* 1278. In the exodos Zeus is ubiquitous: by name at 983, 995, 1002, 1023, 1041, 1048, 1086, 1106, 1148, 1185, 1188, 1191, 1278, and in his role of father at 1159, 1168, 1269.

⁷⁴Where it is mentioned four times at least: see *Fr.* 417, 418, 422, 423.

⁷⁵For Aeschylus see *Septem* 140, *Suppl.* 1001, 1035, *Eum.* 215, *PV* 650, 864; For Sophocles see *Trach.* 497, 515, 860, and *Fr.* 290.1, 855.1 (twice), 855.17.

⁷⁶*Vita* 4.

⁷⁷*IG* 2² 2325 and 2318, reproduced by A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festival of Athens*² (Oxford 1968) 112 and 104 respectively.