# THE CREATIVE POET

## STUDIES ON THE TREATMENT OF MYTHS IN GREEK POETRY

by

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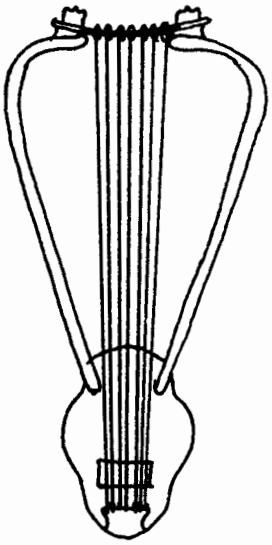

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# DEIANEIRA

# and

# HERAKLES

δεξαμένῳ δέ οἱ αἶψα τέλος θανάτοιο παρέστη·
καὶ θάνε καί ῥ' Ἀΐδαο πολύστονον ἵκετο δῶμα.

Ps.- Hes. 25 MW, 24-5.

# DEIANEIRA AND HERAKLES

## DEIANEIRA AND HERAKLES IN HESIOD

We turn now to consider the legend of Deianeira, sister of the great Meleagros, and wife and killer of the even greater hero, Herakles. We begin with the brief tale of Herakles' death at her hands told in the *Catalogue of Women*, the first literary account of his killing which survives.

**25 MW, ll.14-33**[1]

τοὺς δ' ἄλλους Οἰνῆϊ [τέκ'] Ἀλθαίη κυα[ν]ῶ̣[π]ις,
Φηρέα θ' ἱππόδαμ[ον καὶ ἐυμ]μελίη̣[ν Ἀγέ]λαον
Τοξέα τε Κλύμενό[ν τε ἄνακ]τ' ἀτάλαντ̣[ον] Ἄρηϊ
Γόργην τ' ἠύκομον κ̣[αι ὑπέρ]φ[ρ]ονα Δηϊάνειραν,
ἣ τέχ' ὑποδμηθεῖ̣[σα βίηι Ἡρ]ακλη̣[ε]ίηι
Ὕλλον καὶ Γλῆνον καὶ [Κτή]σ̣ιππον καὶ Ὀνείτην·
τοὺς τέκε καὶ δείν' ἔρ̣ξ̣[', ἐπεὶ ἀάσατ]ο̣ μέγα θυμῶι,
ὁππότε φάρμακον ο̣[ὖλον ἐπιστά]ξασα χιτῶνι
δῶκε Λίχηι κήρυ[κι] φ[έρειν· ὁ δ' ἔνει]κεν ἄνακτι
Ἀμφιτρυωνιά[δ]ηι Ἡ[ρακλῆϊ πτολιπό]ρθωι.
δ̣[εξ]αμένωι δέ ο̣[ἱ αἶψα τέλος θανάτοι]ο̣ παρέστη·
καὶ] θάνε καί ῥ' Ἀΐδ̣[αο πολύστονον ἵκε]το δῶμα.
– νῦν δ' ἤδη θεός ἐστι, κακῶν δ' ἐξήλυθε πάντων,
– ζώει δ' ἔνθά περ ἄλλοι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες
– ἀθάνατος καὶ ἄγηρος, ἔχων καλλ[ίσ]φυρον Ἥβην,
– παῖδα Διὸς μεγάλοιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου·
– τὸν πρὶν μέν ῥ' ἤχθηρε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη
– ἔκ τε θεῶν μακάρων ἔκ τε θνητῶν ἀνθρῶ̣[πων
– νῦν δ' ἤδη πεφίληκε, τίει δέ μιν ἔξοχον ἄλλ̣[ων
– ἀθανάτων μετά γ' αὐτὸν ἐρισθενέα Κρ̣[ο]νίωνα.

'These others too dark-eyed Althaia bore to Oineus: Phereus, tamer of horses, and Agelaos of the stout ashen spear, and Toxeus, and lord Klymenos, peer of Ares, and lovely-haired Gorge, and proud Deianeira, who was wedded to mighty Herakles and bore Hyllos and Glenos and Ktesippos and Oneites. These she bore, and she did terrible deeds, greatly deluded in mind, when she sprinkled the destructive poison on the robe and gave it to the herald Lichas to convey. He took it to his master Herakles, sacker of cities, son of Amphitryon. And when Herakles received it, death's end came quickly to him, and he died and went to the grievous house of Hades.

But now he is a god, and is set free from all ills, and he lives where the others have their homes on Olympos, deathless and ageless, with lovely-ankled Hebe as his wife, the daughter of

[1] The three papyri which contribute to this text are *P. Oxy.* 2075 fr.1, 2481 fr.5(b) col. ii, and 2483 fr.2.

mighty Zeus and gold-sandalled Hera. Once the white-armed goddess Hera hated him most of the blessed gods and mortal men, but now she loves and honours him above the other immortals, next only to the most mighty son of Kronos.'

This version of the text is slightly different from that offered by Merkelbach and West, and thus some comment is required.

l.17 ἐπίφρων (suggested by Lobel, when publishing *P. Oxy.* 2481, and by Merkelbach and West) is a strange adjective to apply to Deianeira, both to the well-intentioned but foolish Deianeira of Sophokles' *Trachiniai* and later tradition, and to the vengeful and murderous Deianeira who appears from the following examination of the evidence for the myth in earlier tradition. ὑπέρφρων (or possibly δύσφρων) seems an adjective far more in keeping with the Deianeira who emerges from a consideration of the pre-Sophoklean version of the legend.

l.20 Like Merkelbach and West I adopt Lobel's suggestion of ἔρξ[', ἐπεὶ ἀάσατ]ο, rather than ἔρξ[εν· ἀάσσατο γά]ρ (for this verb-restoration with μέγα θυμῷ cf. *Il.* IX. 537, XI. 340), since the part-circle before μέγα is too small for ρ.

l.21 The readings of the two papyri which include this line differ:
*P. Oxy.* 2075 fr.1 reads:

] . ασα χιτωνι

*P. Oxy.* 2481 fr.5(b) col. ii reads:

]ποτε φαρμακον ο[ ]χιτωνα

The choice of which verb is to precede this final noun is obviously an important factor in deciding whether χιτών should here be in the accusative or the dative. The papyri give little help here, since the small trace of the letter before ασα in *P. Oxy.* 2075 could equally well be σ or ξ. Lobel, in his publication of *P. Oxy.* 2481 (and after him Merkelbach and West), adopts χιτῶνα and restores

ὁππότε φάρμακον . [ χρί]σασα χιτῶνα

on the grounds that χρίειν or a compound 'is the word properly applied to Deianeira's operation' as in Soph. *Trach.* 675, 689, 696, Apollod. II. 7. 7, and Diod. 4. 38. 1 (though in fact he admits that this is grammatically incorrect, since 'χρίειν and compounds are constructed with the accusative of the object anointed and a dative of the ointment used' — ie this line should read φαρμάκῳ . . . χρίσασα χιτῶνα). However this reasoning is invalid, since, as the first part of this chapter shows, Herakles' mode of death in early versions of this myth seems to have been very different from that described by Sophokles where the φάρμακον consists of the blood of the centaur Nessos. So, if Deianeira's φάρμακον in this fragment is not Nessos' blood, as in Sophokles, then there is no need to be tied to Sophokles' (and later authors', following him) χρίειν. Rather a verb which is grammatically correct with φάρμακον . . . χιτῶνι or φάρμακον . . . χιτῶνα should be preferred; and I would suggest that ἐπιστάξασα be adopted (preferable, perhaps, to Hunt's conjecture, when publishing *P. Oxy.* 2075, of ἐνιστάξασα), and thus the grammatically correct χιτῶνι of *P. Oxy.* 2075; with the χιτῶνα of *P. Oxy.* 2481 being simply a scribal error. *P. Oxy.* 2481 itself perhaps supplies confirmation of this, since the α of χιτῶνα is broken, and there is a stroke above it which seems definitely too high to be part of the α itself. This could possibly be instead the remains of a scribal correction, a small ι above the α, though it does seem perhaps a little low (cf. the scribe's η above l.13 — small, certainly, but not quite so low).

The letter-trace after φάρμακον is the left-hand arc of a circle, so Hunt's οὔλον would seem a good adjective here.

l.22 Perhaps ἔνεικεν here (suggested first by Lobel) is a stylistic improvement on the repetitious δῶκεν.

Here in Hesiod Deianeira engineers Herakles' death with the help of Lichas, the herald; and for the first time in literature we hear of the φάρμακον and the χιτών which are so familiar to us from the story of Deianeira and Herakles in Sophokles' *Trachiniai*. But these few lines in Hesiod are not necessarily a summary of this later familiar version of the myth; and we should not assume that this must be the same gentle, timid and loving woman whom we know from that play, nor that she kills Herakles here in the same way and from the same motives as she does in Sophokles. To understand Hesiod's early version of her story, we must examine evidence of the myth in literature and in art before Sophokles' time.

Only traces remain of the pre-Sophoklean character of Deianeira, but these nonetheless give clear indications of the kind of woman she was, and one very different from the gentle creature of the *Trachiniai*. Her name gives the first hint: Δηιάνειρα means 'husband-slayer' or 'slayer of men', and perhaps, as Jebb suggests,[2] she was originally an Amazonian character — just as the Amazons were called ἀντιανείραι — and one who lived up to her name.

Later writers retain evidence of this early Deianeira. Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1. 1212 tells of her fighting alongside Herakles:

> καὶ εἰς τοσαύτην ἀνάγκην κατέστη ὁ Ἡρακλῆς, ὡς καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα Δηιάνειραν καθοπλίσαι, καὶ λέγεται καὶ κατὰ τὸν μαζὸν τότε τετρῶσθαι.[3]

Nonnos speaks of her warlike spirit:

> θάρσος Ἐνυαλίης μιμήσατο Δηιανείρης,
> ὁππότε Παρνησσοῖο κακοξείνῳ παρὰ πέτρῃ
> θωρήχθη Δρυόπεσσι καὶ ἔπλετο θῆλυς Ἀμαζών.[4]

Apollodoros says of her:

> αὕτη δ' ἡνιόχει καὶ τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον ἤσκει.[5]

It is true that this evidence of a warlike Deianeira is late; but, as Hoey points out (p.219):

> 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.

There is perhaps a reflection of her early vigorous character (and in particular the chariot-driving later referred to by Apollodoros) in the New York Amphora from the first half of the seventh century BC (Plate 17).[6] This amphora depicts the contest between Herakles and the centaur Nessos, though Nessos seems to have given up the fight and is stretching out imploring hands to the victorious Herakles. Deianeira watches from a nearby chariot, where she is herself

[2] Jebb, pp.xxiff. See also Hoey, pp.219ff.

[3] 'And Herakles was brought to such a pitch of necessity that he even armed his wife, Deianeira; and it is also said that she was wounded in the breast at that time.'

[4] Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 35. 89-91. 'She imitated the boldness of warlike Deianeira, when beside the unfriendly rock of Parnassos she armed herself against the Dryopes, a woman turned Amazon.'

[5] Apollod. 1. 8. 1. 'She drove a chariot and practised the art of war.'

[6] Brommer A.28, p.154; Baur no.213a. See Richter, *passim*.

holding the reins and whip, ready to drive off as soon as her husband has finally dealt with Nessos.

This bold-hearted Deianeira would have been a fit sister for the great hero, Meleagros, and a fit mate for the even greater hero, Herakles. Certainly it seems likely that when Bakchylides composed his *Ode V* in 476 BC he saw her as having this same heroic spirit to match that of her brother and husband. In this poem Herakles meets the shade of Meleagros in Hades, and Meleagros tells him how he came to die: of how, after the hunt of the Kalydonian boar, he unintentionally killed his uncles in the ensuing battle between Kalydonians and Kouretes, and of how his own mother in revenge burnt the magic brand on which his life depended. Herakles is moved by Meleagros' cruel fate (155-8), and asks him (165-8) if he has a sister with a nature[7] like his own — σοὶ φυὰν ἀλιγκία — because he would like to make her his wife. Meleagros names Deianeira. Now since in this poem Bakchylides describes Meleagros as θρασυμέμνων (69, and in Homer the epithet of one hero only, Herakles himself), ἐγχέσπαλος (70), and μενεπτόλεμος (170), it would seem that he saw Deianeira — φυὰν ἀλιγκία — as bold-hearted and warlike also.

Furthermore, in abruptly breaking off his tale of myth with this mention of Deianeira as the future wife of Herakles, Bakchylides leaves a silent but vivid awareness of Herakles' future death at her hands which echoes Meleagros' own past death at the hands of his mother, Althaia. Thus, in creating a dramatic parallel between the similar fate suffered by Herakles and Meleagros, Bakchylides also matches Deianeira with Althaia as the cause of that fate; and just as both heroes are referred to (50-55) as mortals who are not blest in all things, and just as both die an unheroic death at a woman's hands, so perhaps we are to judge Deianeira, the future killer of Herakles, as Althaia, the killer of Meleagros, is judged: as δαίφρων (just as Artemis the implacable is δαίφρων in 122), and ἀτάρβακτος (137-9).

So, on this evidence, it does indeed seem that the Deianeira who lay behind the lines of Hesiod in 25 MW was traditionally a bold-hearted and courageous woman, one very different from the later Sophoklean Deianeira. Moreover further investigation into the details of the myth points to other and crucial differences between Sophokles' version of the death of Herakles at Deianeira's hands and the traditional earlier version of his death. Certainly we have here in Hesiod Deianeira killing Herakles with φάρμακον and χιτών, which must remind us of the plot of the *Trachiniai*, where she kills him by sending him a robe (χιτών, 580) smeared with what she believes is a lovecharm, given to her by the centaur, Nessos, and aimed at curing Herakles of his love for his new mistress, Iole, but which is in fact a deadly poison (φάρμακον, 685). Nessos had once attempted to molest Deianeira while carrying her across the river Euenos, but had been shot and mortally wounded by an arrow from Herakles' great bow. Hoping for revenge on Herakles, he had in his dying moments offered Deianeira this supposed lovecharm composed of his blood, but also of some of the Hydra's poisonous venom from the tip of the arrow which had pierced him. In the course of the *Trachiniai*, through Deianeira's credulity, he has his revenge.

But here in Hesiod there is no mention of Nessos, nor explicitly of a lovecharm, so we must ask how Herakles is killed in this brief fragment. Are we simply to assume the presence of Nessos and his lovecharm behind these allusive words? This is surely not the case, for the extant references to the story of Nessos, Deianeira and Herakles down to the classical period show no clear evidence for any connection at all between Nessos and Herakles' death. If the Nessos episode is to be connected with the death of Herakles and is to provide the φάρμακον for the murderous χιτών, then clearly it is essential for Nessos to be killed from a distance by

[7] φυή, line 168, meaning inborn qualities, as in Pindar: *Ol.* 2. 86; 9. 100; *Pyth.* 8. 44; *Nem.* 1. 25.

bow and arrow, so as both to provide the deadly element of the Hydra's venom as part of Deianeira's lovecharm, and to give Nessos the opportunity of passing it secretly to her. A death in close combat with Herakles would achieve neither of these two aims. But until the fifth century — and Sophokles' *Trachiniai* and Bakchylides' *Dithyramb* 16, which are the two earliest extant works that tell of Herakles' death by Nessos' lovecharm — it seems that neither in art nor in literature is this connection made, since Nessos is killed in close combat either by Herakles' sword or by his club.

We possess many vases which show Herakles fighting with the centaur Nessos as he tries to carry off Deianeira. Brommer lists over eighty vases which may depict this scene[8] and which were produced before the middle of the fifth century. But, although when Herakles fights groups of centaurs on other vases he usually shoots them with bow and arrow, here in these scenes where he attacks Nessos his weapon is the sword or the club (see, for instance, Plates 17 and 18). Certainly in some vase-paintings he is armed also with a bow,[9] but here too his actual weapon of attack is still the sword or club, and Nessos is killed in close combat. However among these many depictions of the Nessos episode there are two exceptions to this rule: one on a small fragment of an Attic dinos from the Argive Heraion, of about 660 BC, and one on a hydria from Caere, of about 520 BC; and these have been taken by some scholars[10] to prove that the death of Nessos by the bowshot and his giving of the lovecharm to Deianeira must therefore have been a version of the myth known to the artists who painted these two scenes. But a closer investigation will show that this is not likely.

The Argive Heraion fragment (Plate 20)[11] depicts an alarmed woman, and a centaur who has been hit in the flank by an arrow and is now threatened by what appears to be a sword-blade. It is generally assumed that these are Deianeira and Nessos, and that the man behind the sword-blade is meant to be Herakles. While this must of course remain uncertain, since there are vases which depict general centauromachies and yet have women present,[12] it does seem quite likely. If this is so, then again Nessos is about to die in close combat with Herakles, by the sword; and the arrow in his flank can best be explained as a motif brought in from other general centauromachies, where Herakles usually fights with the bow. There is a similar scene on a fragment of a vase by Sophilos (Plate 21),[13] where Herakles fights three centaurs wounded by his arrows and has thrown down his bow and is attacking with his sword. Motifs from these more general scenes are not infrequently brought into representations of the Nessos episode: for instance, centaurs fighting Herakles are often armed with branches, and, although these would have had no place in the story of Nessos trying to carry off Deianeira, yet in the New York Amphora[14] Nessos is shown armed with a branch, which he has just dropped so as to plead for mercy. Again, the trio of Nessos, Deianeira and Herakles are sometimes supplemented by the figures of other centaurs who would have had no place in the usual story; and these would seem to change the scenes into general centauromachies if it were not for the figure of Deianeira. In

[8] Brommer, pp.153ff. It is possible, of course, as Brommer points out, that when these vases are not inscribed some may show Herakles and the centaur Eurytion (for the myth, see Apollod. II. 5. 5). Certainly, for instance, as Jahn notes, Brommer A.57, p.156 (Munich 1905, Jahn 772), would be Eurytion, since this is an indoor scene.

[9] As in, for instance, Brommer A.22, p.154, where he is armed with bow and arrows, sword and club (Plate 19).

[10] For instance Schwinge, p.133, Dugas, pp.21ff.

[11] Brommer A.63, p.156; Baur no.227.

[12] For instance: (1) a hydria at the British Museum of about 550 BC — Brit. Mus. B 50; Brommer A.38, p.86; Baur no.22; *ABV* 120, 2; (2) a Tyrrhenian amphora at the Capitoline Museum of about 560 BC — *CVA* 1, 9; Brommer A.4, p.84; *ABV* 99, 50.

[13] Brommer A.32, p.86; Baur no.21; Pll.9 and 10 in G.Bakir, *Sophilos* (Mainz am Rhein, 1981).

[14] Plate 17. See n.6 above.

a Tyrrhenian amphora, for instance, two other centaurs come to Nessos' aid armed with rocks (Plate 22).[15]

So here in the Argive Heraion fragment the arrow is most convincingly interpreted as a motif transferred from other centauromachies, where Herakles usually fights with the bow. This is especially the case since this dinos was painted in the first half of the seventh century, before the standard iconography of Nessos' death by sword or club alone had fully developed, and at a time when Herakles' most usual weapon in all scenes was the bow.[16] This dinos fragment is, as Payne sums up, 'a loose composition based on the centauromachy of Herakles';[17] and it must certainly not be taken for granted that its painter knew of Nessos offering Deianeira a 'lovecharm' from his arrow-wound, the version of the story which was to be current in Athens some two hundred years later.

The hydria from Caere (Plate 23a) was published by Santangelo in 1950.[18] Here the Nessos episode, painted by an Ionian artist, is a minor scene at the back of the vase, and Herakles, wielding a bow and arrow, is separated from Deianeira and Nessos by the hydria handle and by the usual palmette below it. We know of two other such scenes by the same artist, both produced some ten years earlier,[19] but here Herakles is armed with a bow in his left hand, while in his right hand is a club with which he is about to attack Nessos; Deianeira has almost reached him as she flees from the centaur; Oineus stands as a spectator. It is clear, as Santangelo points out, that the scene on the later hydria is based on the two earlier versions of the same scene, but has been adapted so as to fit round the handle: to balance the two halves of the broken scene Oineus, a secondary figure, has been omitted and Deianeira has been moved back somewhat towards Nessos. Furthermore the painter, who saw Herakles' standard weapons as bow and club,[20] has here armed him with only the bow, as being the more convincing weapon for use against Nessos, because he is of necessity distanced from him by the handle of the hydria. Since, moreover, Deianeira has already escaped from Nessos and is running back to Herakles before the arrow has actually been fired, there can have been no thought in the artist's mind of Nessos offering Deianeira a lovecharm.

Thus it seems clear that in both of these vases there is a simple iconographical explanation for the appearance in the first case of an arrow, and in the second case of a bow and arrow, in their depiction of the death of Nessos; and that neither of them gives sufficient grounds for believing that their painters knew a version of the story which included Nessos' death at Herakles' hands by a bowshot, from the wound of which he offered a lovecharm to Deianeira. The story familiar to all of these pre-classical artists and depicted on their vases seems to have been a simple one, in which Nessos tried to carry off Deianeira when ferrying her across his river,[21] but was intercepted by Herakles and was killed, presumably on or near the river bank, in

[15] Brommer A 5, p.154; Baur no.36. See also Brommer A.1, p.153, Baur no.32; Brommer A.7, p.154, Baur no.33; Brommer A.4, p.154, Baur no.38.

[16] See T. Dunbabin, *The Greeks and their Eastern Neighbours* (London, 1957), p.52 n.12; H. Payne, *Necrocorinthia* (Oxford, 1931), pp.126ff. In Homer his weapon is the bow: *Il.* V. 393; *Od.* VIII. 225, XI. 607.

[17] H. Payne, *Perachora*, I (Oxford, 1940), p.145.

[18] Hydria A in M. Santangelo, 'Les nouvelles Hydries de Caeré au Musée de la Villa Giulia', *Mon. Piot*. 44 (1950), pp.1ff and pl.I; Brommer C.3, p.157.

[19] Hydria C of Santangelo's article; and the Nessos Hydria in P. Devambez, 'Deux nouvelles Hydries de Caeré au Louvre', *Mon. Piot*. 41 (1946), pp.51ff and pl.VI (my Plate 23b); Brommer C.2 and C.1, p.157. These three hydrias are nos.16, 17 and 20 in J. M. Hemelrijk, *Caeretan Hydriae* (Mainz am Rhein, 1984), pp.30-2, 36-7, and pll.70, 72-3, and 82.

[20] He never uses the sword — see Santangelo, p.23.

[21] Most vases give no indication of a river background; but in, for instance, Brommer A.22, p.154 (Plate 19), dolphins suggest the watery setting.

close combat by either sword or club, depending on the whim of the vase-painter. Therefore no lovecharm was involved, and thus no connection was made between the death of Nessos and that of Herakles.

This seems also to have been the case in pre-classical literature. The earliest version of the story for which we have evidence is a poem by Archilochos, and we know from Dio Chrysostom that he treated the story in some detail:

> ἔχεις μοι λῦσαι ταύτην τὴν ἀπορίαν, πότερον δικαίως ἐγκαλοῦσιν οἱ μὲν τῷ Ἀρχιλόχῳ, οἱ δὲ τῷ Σοφοκλεῖ περὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν Νέσσον καὶ τὴν Δηιάνειραν ἢ οὔ; φασὶ γὰρ οἱ μὲν τὸν Ἀρχίλοχον ληρεῖν, ποιοῦντα τὴν Δηιάνειραν ἐν τῷ βιάζεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ Κενταύρου πρὸς τὸν Ἡρακλέα ῥαψῳδοῦσαν, ἀναμιμνήσκουσαν τῆς τοῦ Ἀχελῴου μνηστείας καὶ τῶν τότε γενομένων· ὥστε πολλὴν σχολὴν εἶναι τῷ Νέσσῳ ὅ τι ἐβούλετο πρᾶξαι· οἱ δὲ τὸν Σοφοκλέα πρὸ τοῦ καιροῦ πεποιηκέναι τὴν τοξείαν, διαβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἔτι τὸν ποταμόν· οὕτως γὰρ ἂν καὶ τὴν Δηιάνειραν ἀπολέσθαι, ἀφέντος τοῦ Κενταύρου.[22]

As Kamerbeek points out (p.3), since Dio blames Sophokles but not Archilochos for the ἄκαιρος τοξεία, it seems likely that in Archilochos Herakles used a different weapon, presumably the familiar club or sword. Moreover it would seem that his attack took place on or near the bank of the river,[23] partly because this is implied in the contrast with the midstream attack in Sophokles, and also because Dio allows the possibility for Nessos ὅ τι ἐβούλετο πρᾶξαι — to have intercourse with Deianeira — which would surely be unlikely except on the bank, or in shallow water. So this poem of Archilochos, from what we can deduce of it, would agree with the picture familiar from the vase-paintings.

The same picture emerges from a fragmentary poem published as *P. Berol.* 16140 and almost certainly by Bakchylides.[24] This obviously describes the fight between Herakles and Nessos. One person ferries another across a river:

πορθμευοντ[ (l.9) . . .

διὰ ποταμὸν . [ (l.12)

We have ἀφροδισιᾶν (l.15) and Κένταυρος (l.16).

A woman cries out and begs her husband to hurry:

κελάδησε δὲ δ[

φίλον πόσιν ἱκ[ετευ

σπεύδ[ει]ν (ll.17-19).

This man must surely be Herakles, from

Ἀλ[κ]μην[ (l.6).

He, full of rage,

πυριδαὲς ὄμμα [ (l.21),

attacks the φὴρ ἄγριος (l.27). His weapon here also is the club —

ῥόπαλον μέγα [ (l.26),

[22] Dio Chrys. 50. 1. 'Can you solve this problem for me: whether or not people are justified when they find fault with Archilochos and with Sophokles in the way they treat the story of Nessos and Deianeira? For some say that Archilochos is being nonsensical when he makes Deianeira chant a long story to Herakles while the centaur is forcing his attentions on her, reminding him of Acheloos' wooing of her and of what happened at that time: as a result of which Nessos would have had plenty of opportunity to achieve his desires. And others say that Sophokles introduced the arrow-shot too soon, while they were still crossing the river; in which case Deianeira too would have died, because the centaur would have dropped her.'

[23] Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1. 1212 mentions that in this poem Herakles ἀνεῖλεν ἐν Εὐήνῳ ποταμῷ Νέσσον Κένταυρον, and although the natural interpretation of these words might be that Herakles killed Nessos in the river, yet they can also mean on the bank, as Quilling points out in Roscher, *s.v.* Nessos.

[24] See Maehler, pp.liv and 116-8; also Snell, pp.182-3.

and with this he beats the centaur:
οὔατος μέσσαν [
συνάραξέ τε π[
ὀμμάτων τε σ[
ὀφρύων τε (ll.28-31).
He also, it seems, kicks him:
πόδεσσιν αθα[ (l.32).

So this poem also agrees with the Nessos story as depicted on the vase-paintings. It even appears from ἵπποις ἔχων (l.13) that here too there is a chariot, as on the New York Amphora.[25]

We know also of several epics about Herakles which may have included an account of the Nessos episode.[26] The Οἰχαλίας Ἅλωσις, ascribed to Kreophilos of Samos, whom tradition linked with Homer, dealt with Herakles' love for Iole (fr.1K) and his capture of Oichalia. There was a *Herakleia* by Kinaithon of Lakedaimon,[27] though its scope is unknown. Peisandros of Rhodes wrote a *Herakleia* which, judging from the extant fragments, was chiefly concerned with the Labours for Eurystheus. Finally, Panyassis of Halikarnassos, the uncle of Herodotos, wrote a *Herakleia* in fourteen books, which seems to have had a much wider range than that of Peisandros, and certainly included the Omphale episode and the capture of Oichalia.[28] Some, or even all, of these epics may have told of the death of Nessos (and indeed of Herakles' own death also). But, since we know no details of their versions of the episode, we have no evidence for assuming that Nessos was necessarily killed by an arrow, nor that Herakles' death was subsequently caused by Nessos' lovecharm.

Thus, from all the known representations of the Nessos episode in art and literature before the classical period, it must be concluded that in this earlier age Nessos' death does not seem to have been caused by a distant arrow-shot, and thus that there seems to have been no connection between the death of Nessos and the later death of Herakles.[29] Therefore we cannot assume that behind Hesiod's reference in 25 MW to Deianeira's φάρμακον and χιτών there was any knowledge of Nessos and his lovecharm. So why and how did Herakles die in early versions of the myth?

On line 20 of fragment 25 MW, Mrs Easterling notes: 'It is a pity that there is a lacuna . . . at the point where Deianeira's action is being described, so that we cannot be certain how her motives were interpreted, though if Lobel's ἀάσατο (or ἀασαμένη) is correct the text is nicely ambiguous: the verb might equally well refer to her mistake in believing the poison to be a lovecharm or to an act of deliberate malice.'[30] But if Hesiod knew nothing of Nessos and his lovecharm, then it would seem that the latter interpretation of these words is the more natural

[25] See n.6 above. See also Snell's comments on this, pp.179-80.

[26] On these early epics about Herakles see G.L.Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis* (London, 1969), pp.99-112.

[27] See schol. Ap. Rhod. 1. 1357.

[28] See V. J. Matthews, *Panyassis of Halikarnassos* (Leiden, 1974): fr. 17K (Omphale); frr. 12, 13, 14K (the quarrel with Eurytos); fr. 27K (the sack of Oichalia).

[29] Dugas, referring (pp.21ff) to the mention in Apollod. II. 7. 6 and Diod. 4. 36. 5 of the semen, γόνος, which formed part of Nessos' lovecharm, feels that this touch sounds primitive, and that therefore the lovecharm must have been part of the early version of the myth. But I feel that this motif sounds far more like a Hellenistic innovation — cf. the story of Erichthonios, born from the γόνος of Hephaistos, which is told in Apollod. III. 14. 6, but is also told in almost the same words in schol. A on *Il.* II. 547, where we learn that the source for this story was Kallimachos' *Hekale*.

[30] Easterling (1), p.16.

one, and that Deianeira's killing of Herakles was rather this act of deliberate malice.[31] Presumably she was enraged by jealousy because of Herakles' love for Iole, for whose sake he had sacked Oichalia;[32] and just as Klytaimestra killed Agamemnon when he brought Kassandra home from the sack of Troy, so perhaps originally Deianeira killed Herakles when he brought Iole home from Oichalia, acting from the same passion which was later expressed by Euripides' Medea, who in her jealous rage also used a poisoned robe for vengeance, in this case against Kreon's daughter, her rival for her husband's favours:

> ὅταν δ' ἐς εὐνὴν ἠδικημένη κυρῇ,
> οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλη φρὴν μιαιφονωτέρα.[33]

It is interesting to note that in the Οἰχαλίας Ἅλωσις Medea also was described as using φάρμακα for murdering Kreon, king of Corinth;[34] so it is quite possible that the author of this poem, in telling of Herakles' death, used Medea's murder of Kreon as a parallel for Deianeira's killing of Herakles.[35]

These motives of anger and jealousy appear all the more likely when we consider the probable character of the woman whom we glimpse as the traditional pre-Sophoklean Deianeira:[36] a woman δαίφρων and ἀτάρβακτος; one, surely, quick to anger, and the more likely to kill from rage rather than mistakenly from love. Perhaps, then, there is in Bakchylides' *Ode V*[37] a closer correspondence between Deianeira and Althaia than we realise if we read the poem only with Sophokles' Deianeira in mind. If in 476 BC, when Bakchylides composed his poem, Deianeira as well as Althaia was known as a deliberate murderess, then the fates of Meleagros and Herakles are paralleled even more closely than appears at first sight; and the dramatic effect of Meleagros' last words to Herakles about Deianeira, abruptly ending this tale of myth and already ringing with tragic implications for the future, must surely be greatly increased.

The story of Herakles' death which has emerged from a consideration of these early lines of Hesiod is thus completely different from that which was to become the standard version of the legend in and after the fifth century BC. But there is another early version of his death, mentioned in the *Iliad*, which is also completely different from the later legend; and I would suggest that both Homer and Hesiod may perhaps have been telling two separate parts of what made up a single early story. Hesiod told how Deianeira, with the help of Lichas, sent the poisoned robe to Herakles, and thus killed him. Homer told how Herakles was killed by moira and the wrath of Hera:

[31] Hoey suggests (pp.219ff) that since the mythographers, while retaining traces of an early rather masculine Deianeira, yet make her act in ignorance in causing her husband's death, 'it is likely that in the earlier tradition Deianeira was simply depicted as a *de facto* husband-slayer, without reference to her intent'. This is not necessarily so, particularly as we do not know enough about the mythographers' early sources to be categoric on this point. Furthermore they tended to treat facts rather than motives; and, while Deianeira's early participation in war would have been seen as a fact which should be included, her early motives in killing Herakles might be omitted since the facts of the story of his death were amply covered by the retelling of Sophokles' version of the myth.

[32] See 26 MW II.31-3: τιοὺς δ]ὲ μεθ' ἱόπλοτάτην τέκετο ξανθὴν Ἰόλειαν/ τ[ῆς ἕ]νεκ' Οἰχ[αλ]ίη[ν . . . / Ἀμφι]τρυωνιάδ[ης | . . . And on Iole, see further below, p.61.

[33] Eur. *Med.* 265-6. 'When a woman is wronged in marriage, there is no other spirit more murderous.'

[34] Schol. Eur. *Med.* 273: τὴν Μήδειαν λέγεται . . . Κρέοντα ἀποκτεῖναι φαρμακοις.

[35] Though it could also, of course, have been used as a contrast of deliberate with unintentional murder.

[36] As discussed above. See also T. Zielinski, who, in his article 'De Hercule Tragico deque Heraclidarum Tetralogia Aeschylea' (*Eos*, 1921/2, pp.59ff), argues for an Aischylean Deianeira who intentionally murders Herakles; Stoessl, pp.29ff; Webster, pp.172ff.

[37] See above, p.52.

οὐδε γὰρ οὐδε βίη Ἡρακλῆος φύγε κῆρα,
ὅς περ φίλτατος ἔσκε Διὶ Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι,
ἀλλά ἑ μοῖρ' ἐδάμασσε καὶ ἀργαλέος χόλος Ἥρης.[38]

But in Homer Hera must have had a human agent for Herakles' death, just as Apollo had to have human agents, Euphorbos and Hektor, for the death of Patroklos, which is described in almost exactly the same way:

ἀλλά με μοῖρ' ὀλοὴ καὶ Λητοῦς ἔκτανεν υἱός.[39]

So perhaps the human agent for Hera was Deianeira: Hera, in her never-ending hostility against Herakles, put it into Deianeira's angry heart[40] to send to Herakles the poisoned robe which brought him to his death. This, I suggest, is the story which may lie behind both Homer's and Hesiod's tantalisingly brief references to Herakles' death. If this is so, and the influence of Hera on Deianeira was assumed in Hesiod's résumé of the tale, then this would explain why, when he wrote the lines telling of the apotheosis which followed Herakles' death (25 MW, ll.26-33), he chose also to mention Hera's old implacable hatred of Herakles, and to stress that now he is a god she loves him more than anyone apart from Zeus.

As to how Herakles died: the details of his death in the early version of the legend were also in all likelihood different from those of the later and familiar story. The lines which follow Hesiod's account of Herakles' death at Deianeira's hands and which refer to his apotheosis were obelised in the papyrus, most likely[41] because their subject matter was objected to as a late insertion. Similar lines in *Od.* XI. 602-4[42] and in Hes. *Theog.* 950-55, were likewise athetised; so clearly the story of the apotheosis was agreed not to be ancient. It seems to have become a familiar part of the myth by the beginning of the sixth century,[43] and was a favourite subject for vase-painters from around the middle of that century.[44]

We do not know the age of the legend of the pyre on Mount Oita.[45] This pyre was of course to be closely associated with Herakles' later apotheosis, so it is possible that this story too developed fairly late and that originally Herakles died as a direct result of the corrosive poison of the robe. Perhaps there is a recollection of this early manner of his death in the later story that the poisoned robe caught fire in the sun, and Herakles, maddened by the agony of it, jumped into a nearby stream and was drowned; while the waters of the stream, afterwards called Thermopylai, have been hot ever since.[46] Perhaps also the *Kypria* agreed with this

[38] *Il.* XVIII. 117-9. 'For not even the strength of Herakles fled away from destruction, although he was dearest of all to lord Zeus, son of Kronos, but his fate beat him under, and the wearisome anger of Hera.'

[39] *Il.* XVI. 849 (Patroklos speaking). 'No, deadly destiny, with the son of Leto, has killed me.'

[40] In Hesiod's judgement Deianeira was blinded by ἄτη if ἀάσατο is the correct supplement at l.20 of 25 MW. And see E. R. Dodds' excellent analysis of ἄτη in Homer, in *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), pp.2ff. According to Dodds, ἄτη in Homer 'is a state of mind . . . a partial and temporary insanity; and . . . ascribed . . . to an external "daemonic" agency'; and its agents are 'always supernatural beings'(p.5).

[41] See Hes. *Theog.*, ed. M. L. West, p.417.

[42] This is in contrast to the reference to Herakles' death in the *Iliad*, XVIII. 117-9, which seems to assume that he died and stayed in the underworld in view of Achilles' comment in 120-1:ὣς καὶ ἐγων, εἰ δή μοι, ὁμοίη μοῖρα τέτυκται, κεῖσομ', ἐπεί κε θάνω. ('So I likewise, if such is the fate which has been wrought for me, shall lie still when I am dead.')

[43] See West *ad loc.*; Gruppe *RE* Suppl. iii, 924; Mühl, pp.111ff. For details of the various cults, see Woodford, pp.11ff.

[44] See Mingazzini, *passim*, and Boardman (1), pp.60ff. See also my Plate 26.

[45] But there was a cult of Herakles on the summit of Oita from at least archaic times — see Nilsson, *passim*; Linforth, pp.261f; A. Brelich, *Gli eroi greci* (Rome, 1958), pp.193-4.

[46] Tzetzes schol. on Lykophron, 50; see also Frazer's note in Apollodoros vol.1, pp.270-1. It does not seem likely that this version of Herakles' death would have originated after the story of the pyre on Mt. Oita became the standard one. Herodotos (7. 176) speaks of an altar of Herakles at the springs of Thermopylai, which would

version of his death, for we learn from Proklos' summary that, after Helen eloped with Paris, Menelaos visited Nestor who told him the story of ἡ Ἡρακλέους μανία, together with stories of Epopeus being destroyed after seducing Lykos' daughter, of Oidipous, and of Theseus and Ariadne. Nestor, of course, may very well have been telling the story of Herakles' madness which drove him to murder his family, as in Euripides' *Herakles*. But since these other tales all seem to be aimed at consoling Menelaos for his loss of Helen by showing what tragedy love can bring to a lover, so perhaps the story of Herakles was such a one also; and thus it is possible that Nestor's tale told of Herakles' tragic marriage to Deianeira, and that ἡ Ἡρακλέους μανία referred to the madness which the agony of the poisoned robe induced on Herakles and which drove him to his death.

Be that as it may, if the apotheosis of Herakles was indeed a late addition to the legend, as the obelised lines of 25 MW and elsewhere indicate, then the earlier account of his death must have ended simply and finally with his descent to Hades. In the *Trachiniai* Herakles was later to say as he went to his death:

> . . . παῦλά τοι κακῶν
> αὕτη, τελευτὴ τοῦδε τἀνδρὸς ὑστάτη.[47]

Yet here his apotheosis, though outside his knowledge, was waiting for him beyond the pyre,[48] and this death was not his final end. But originally, at Deianeira's man-slaying hands (δεῖν' ἔρξεν indeed!) it was:

> . . . οἱ αἶψα τέλος θανάτοιο παρέστη·
> καὶ θάνε καί ῥ' Ἀΐδαο πολύστονον ἵκετο δῶμα.[49]

Before we pass on to consider the legend of Deianeira and Herakles in the fifth century, two other fragments of the *Catalogue of Women* — one already recognised as such and the other a new one — remain to be examined.

### *P. Oxy.* 2493, 229 MW

]λείην καλλιχ̣[
]ης· θαλερὴν δ[
] . δ' ἀναίνετο τ[
]τὸν δ' ἔκταν[
]ασσε δ' ἀναγκα[ι-
Ὄλυμπ]ον ἀγάννιφον ε[
ναίει ἀπήμαντος] καὶ ἀκηδὴς ἤ[ματα πάντα

support the antiquity of the tale. And compare what effect the sunlight has on the poison in Soph. *Trach.* 684-704, perhaps a reminiscence of this earlier story.

[47] Soph. *Trach.* 1255-6. 'The true respite from suffering is this — my final end.'

[48] See the discussion below, pp.72ff.

[49] 25 MW, ll.24-5. '. . . death's end came quickly to him, and he died and went to the grievous house of Hades.' The *Catalogue* was probably composed in its present form in the first quarter of the sixth century (see Appendix). But West (see p.xi n.1 above), pp.137ff, sees the poet as using genealogical and mythical material which had been developing from the eighth century onwards, and perhaps also incorporating portions of older texts in his work (pp.166ff). So here in 25 MW, although the apotheosis of Herakles may indeed have been 'a firm article of the *Catalogue* poet's belief' (West, p.130), we may yet have, perhaps, echoes of the earlier traditional version of Herakles' absolute death, or even, in ll.24-5, a direct quote of an earlier literary version, since ll.26-33 give the same feeling of interpolation as does the passage in *Od.* XI. 602-4.

ἀθάνατος καὶ ἄγη]ρος ἔχων μεγαλ[ Ἥβην
παῖδα Διὸς μεγάλο]ιο καὶ Ἥρης χρυ[σοπεδίλου·
τὸν πρὶν μέν ῥ' ἤχθη]ρε θ[εὰ λ]ευκώλ[ενος Ἥρη
ἔκ τε θεῶν μακάρω]ν ἔκ τε [θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,
νῦν δ' ἤδη πεφίλ]ηκε, τίει δέ μιν [ἔξοχον ἄλλων
ἀθανάτων μετά γ'] αὐτὸν ἐρισθενέ[α Κρονίωνα
]δι φίλην πόρε γ[
Ὄλυμπο]ν ἀγάννιφον· ε[
]σι φυὴν καὶ εἶδ[ος
Ἡρ]ακλῆϊ πτολι[πόρθωι
]υρροον ἀργυρ[οδίνην
]υ ῥέει εἰς ἅ[λα δῖαν
]. γ[ . ] . ν[

Lines 6-13 of this fragment form a passage about Herakles' apotheosis very similar to that of 25 MW, ll. 26-33. As for the previous lines, too much is lost, as Lobel pointed out when publishing the papyrus, for any attempt at recovery of the words to be profitable. But their probable contents should be discussed.

Lobel, and Merkelbach and West, suggest that these first five lines are a reference to the events leading up to the sack of Oichalia, where Herakles desires Iole, and Eurytos refuses him, and Herakles gets his revenge by killing Eurytos (l.4) and sacking his city. But the tale of Herakles' immortality and presence among the Olympians is a strange and sudden insertion into such a story. So there is another possibility: that here the person killed is Herakles himself, after which the lines telling of his apotheosis would follow naturally, just as they do in 25 MW (and cf. *Od.* XI. 602-4): Herakles died . . . but *now* he is a god . . . .

Thus perhaps this fragment does indeed contain a reference to Herakles' desire for Iole, or to his bringing her home; but then it leads on to tell not of his murder of Eurytos but of his own death at Deianeira's vengeful hands. Deianeira could well be the subject of ἀναίνετο in line 3, since the ὃ which Merkelbach and West print at the beginning of this line (ὃ δ' ἀναίνετο, implying Eurytos as subject) is in no way verifiable, the trace of ink here on the papyrus being so small that it could belong to almost any letter. Instead this line could read

τ]ὰδ' ἀναίνετο τ[

Deianeira refused to accept Iole as Herakles desired, and killed him; but now he is a god . . . etc, with line 6 beginning as Lobel suggested:

νῦν δ' ἤδη κατ' Ὄλυμπον ἀγάννιφον . . . .

Lines 14ff would then refer back to the earlier story of Iole, with a similar sense to that of West's reconstruction:[50]

ἀλλ' Ἰόλην ὠῖ παι]δὶ φίλην πόρε γ[ῆμαι ἄκοιτιν,
πρίν γ' ἐλθεῖν ἐς Ὄλυμπο]ν ἀγάννιφον· ε[ὖ δ' ἐπεωίκει·
ἥ μὲν γὰρ Χαρίτεσ]σι φυὴν καὶ εἶδ[ος ὁμοίη
ἦν, ὃ δὲ πατρὶ ἑωῖ Ἡρ]ακλῆϊ πτολι[πόρθωι.

[50] M. L. West (see p. xi n.1 above), p.112.

**Herakles and Iole**

The fragment which has not yet been recognised as being from the *Catalogue of Women* is to be found on an Attic red-figure cup-fragment (Plate 24) of about 460 BC by the Akestorides Painter.[51] A seated youth is shown holding a book-roll, and facing him a draped male figure who seems to be listening to him. On the book-roll, held horizontally, is written:

HOIHA
MEPAK
ν EEI
IOν EO

This has been taken[52] as being written entirely in the Attic alphabet, where H = h (rough breathing) and E = η or ε (as opposed to the Ionic alphabet, where H = η and E = ε and there is no rough breathing), and thus as reading

οἱ ἅμ' Ἡρακλέει· Ἰόλεω[ς . . .

But in fact mixtures of Attic and Ionic letters on Attic red-figure vases were by no means uncommon, as Kretschmer's analysis of vase-inscriptions shows conclusively,[53] including combinations on the same vase of both H = η (Ionic) and E = η(Attic). I would suggest that this is what we have on this cup-fragment: H = η (Ionic) instead of being a rough breathing,[54] and E = η (Attic) and = ε (Ionic). Thus, with this mixture of alphabets, the inscription now reads:

ἦ οἵη ἅμ<α> Ἡρακλέει Ἰόλη ο[

making the beginning of a section of the *Catalogue* which deals with Iole, who comes somewhere, together with[55] Herakles; and perhaps even of the section of which 229 MW is a part.

Further and convincing support for this comes from Immerwahr's analysis of 38 vases with representations of book-rolls, and his conclusion that the writing on papyrus rolls on vases was always intended to indicate a text, and that the texts, moreover, were always poetic.[56] When faced with the inscription on our cup-fragment, assuming it to be prose, he later modified this conclusion.[57] But he had no need to do so.

[51] *ARV* 1670 (for further details, see my List of Plates); and see H. R. Immerwahr, 'More Book Rolls on Attic Vases', *Ant. Kunst* 16 (1973), pp.143f. My especial thanks go to Professor Herwig Maehler for drawing my attention to this cup-fragment.

[52] By Beazley and Immerwahr — see n.51 above.

[53] P. Kretschmer, *Die griechischen Vaseninschriften* (Guetersloh, 1894); and see especially the table on p.105.

[54] And note that if this inscription is read as Beazley and Immerwahr have it, using only the Attic alphabet, Herakles lacks his aspirate.

[55] And ἅμα is a poetic word, and is used (except by Herodotos) almost exclusively in poetry and not prose.

[56] H. R. Immerwahr, 'Book Rolls on Attic Vases', *Classical, Mediaeval, and Renaissance Studies in Honour of Berthold Louis Ullmann*, ed. C. Henderson (Rome, 1964), pp.17-48.

[57] Immerwahr (see n.51 above), p.143.

## DEIANEIRA AND HERAKLES IN SOPHOKLES AND BAKCHYLIDES

The earliest extant works that we possess which connect the centaur Nessos with the death of Herakles are Sophokles' *Trachiniai* and Bakchylides' *Dithyramb* 16. Here both Sophokles and Bakchylides tell of Deianeira killing her husband in all innocence, by using the lovecharm which Nessos had given to her and thus hoping to win back Herakles' love. These two works show such distinct similarities of vocabulary, content and treatment, as detailed below, that it appears highly likely that one of them depends on the other.

In the short poem by Bakchylides, Herakles, after sacking Oichalia (Bakch. l.14, cf. *Trach.* 750), goes to Cape Kenaion —

ἀμφικύμον᾽ ἀκτάν (Bakch. l.16),

ἀκτὴ . . . ἀμφίκλυστος (*Trach.* 752) —

to make sacrifices. He is about to sacrifice —

θύεν . . . μέλλε (Bakch. ll.18-20),

μέλλοντι . . . πολυθύτους τεύχειν σφαγάς (*Trach.* 756) —

bulls taken from his booty —

ἀπὸ λαΐδος (Bakch. l.17),

λείας (*Trach.* 761) —

when, we are to assume, the deadly robe is delivered. A messenger has brought Deianeira the news (Bakch. l.26, cf. *Trach.* 335ff) that Herakles was sending Iole home as his mistress —

᾽Ιόλαν ὅτι λευκώλενον

Διὸς υἱὸς ἀταρβομάχας

ἄλοχον λιπαρὸν ποτὶ δόμον πέμποι[58] —

whereupon she had embarked on her tragic course and had innocently — there being a

δνόφεον . . . κάλυμμα τῶν

ὕστερον ἐρχομένων (Bakch. ll.32-3) —

used Nessos' δαιμόνιον τέρας (Bakch. l.35) which he had given her at the river Lykormas, the same river as Sophokles' Euenos.[59] This dark veil over the future (Bakch. ll.32-3) ruins Deianeira, just as in Sophokles she acts in ignorance —

ἀλλ᾽ εἰδέναι χρὴ δρῶσαν, ὡς οὐδ᾽ εἰ δοκεῖς

ἔχειν, ἔχοις ἂν γνῶμα, μὴ πειρωμένη (*Trach.* 592-3) —

and learns too late to what future disaster her action must lead.

These clear similarities between the two works led F. G. Kenyon in his 1897 edition of Bakchylides to comment that Sophokles 'has had Bacchylides in his mind' (p.148). But this does not necessarily follow, since it is chronologically possible for either of the two works to have preceded the other. Sophokles' first victory was in 468 BC,[60] and Bakchylides was composing until at least 452 BC, since of his preserved poems V1 and V11 belong to that year. Thus there was a long overlap in the working lives of these two poets. Now Snell dates Bakchylides' *Dithyramb* 16 on stylistic and metrical grounds as a late poem (p.182); and an

[58] Bakch. ll.27-9. Cf. *Trach.* 365-8. To Kamerbeek, πέμποι is an obstacle to his accepting that Bakchylides was influenced in his poem by the *Trachiniai*. Hoey (pp.214-5) answers this doubt satisfactorily.

[59] *Trach.* 559. See RE XIII. 2, 2385, *s.v.* Lykormas.

[60] Marm. Par. 5-6: *IG* II. 2. ii 2325. But this was probably not Sophokles' first production. It is true that Plutarch (*Kim.* 8. 7-8) states that this was his first tetralogy; but at the VIIIth FIEC Congress held in Dublin, 27 Aug. — 1 Sep. 1984, S. L. Radt argued most persuasively that Plutarch (or his source) had in fact conflated Sophokles' first victory with his first production, since Plutarch's own context implies that the Athenians had witnessed at least one performance of a Sophoklean tetralogy before that date.

early dating for the *Trachiniai*, even a very early dating indeed in Sophokles' working life, is accepted by most scholars.[61] Clearly either work could have preceded the other, if we judge them by chronological criteria. However they both show such striking similarities that it seems highly unlikely that they depend on a common source. Hoey, on this point, asks (p.214): '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 . . . where the resemblances between Herodotos and a fragment from a lost tragedy are certainly no more striking than those between Bacchylides and the *Trachiniai*, declares[62] without a shadow of misgiving that one writer had the other in his hands or his head at the time of composition.' Adding to this the fact that Bakchylides' poem is extremely allusive — so much so that it would be quite incomprehensible without prior knowledge of the story in Sophokles — we must conclude that Bakchylides' *Dithyramb* 16 depends on Sophokles' *Trachiniai*.[63]

This conclusion is further strengthened by the conspicuous similarity between Bakchylides' tragic interpretation of Deianeira's fate[64] and that of Sophokles. In Bakchylides her fate is the work of an

ἄμαχος δαίμων (Bakch. l.23), cf.

αὐτὴ τὸν αὑτῆς δαίμον' ἀνακαλουμένη (*Trach.* 910);

and Schwinge notes that this is the only time in his work where Bakchylides uses the word δαίμων in the new tragic and not the conventional sense (p.132 n.2). This ἄμαχος δαίμων weaves for Deianeira a πολύδακρυν μῆτιν (ll.24-5); a φθόνος εὐρυβίας (l.31) destroys her; and a δνόφεον κάλυμμα (ll.32-3) hides the future from her (cf. *Trach.* 841-50). The end is tragedy:

ἃ δύσμορος, ἃ τάλαιν', οἷον ἐμήσατο (Bakch. l.30);

τέθνηκεν ἡ τάλαινα (*Trach.* 877).

Certainly Bakchylides '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'.[65] Perhaps he himself had been particularly moved by this representation of a new Deianeira, so different from his own conception of her in his *Ode V* of 476 BC.

So if we accept, as I believe we must, that the *Trachiniai* was earlier than Bakchylides' *Dithyramb* 16, then we must further accept that perhaps Sophokles himself introduced the arrowshot which killed Nessos and produced the lovecharm, and thus himself first connected

[61] I accept the arguments for an early date, and do not discuss them here. See E. R. Schwinge, who gives the fullest discussion and concludes on a date prior to 450 BC; T. F. Hoey, *passim*, who gives a good survey of literature on the subject and dates the play at about 450 BC; and G. Ronnet, 'Sophocle: Poete tragique' (*AJP* 92 (1971), pp.694-95), who dates it before the *Oresteia* of 458 BC. Alphonse Dain and Paul Mazon in their *Budé* edition (Paris, 1955) think it is the earliest play (p.9). V. Leinieks (*The Plays of Sophokles* (Amsterdam, 1982), p.8) agrees: 'The *Trachiniai* is probably the earliest of the plays. Many of the ideas characteristic of the later plays are absent in it, the connections among the ideas are not as frequent and as explicit, and the imagery is more exotic and Aischylean.' P. Easterling (1), p.23, dates it as one of the two earliest plays (together with the *Ajax*), and adds 'any date between 457 and, say, 430 would not be implausible; many scholars nowadays would prefer the earlier half of that period'. See also Reinhardt, pp.34ff and n.1, pp.239-40; and Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.341-2.

[62] D. L. Page, *A New Chapter in the History of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1951), p.6 and p.39 n.2.

[63] This argument is fully developed in Schwinge. The same conclusion is reached by Maehler, p.xlviii. Kamerbeek notes (p.7): 'It goes without saying that Sophocles did not borrow his subject matter from Bacchylides' allusive treatment.'

[64] Kamerbeek notes (p.6) the remarkable way in which Bakchylides treats her story *more tragico*, as though he were drawing on a tragedy.

[65] Hoey, p.214. Kamerbeek adds (p.6): 'Nothing prevents us from assuming that Bacch. did compose this dithyramb for an Athenian public, as is generally believed of the Ἡιθεοι.' If so, perhaps this is why Bakchylides changed Herakles' sacrifice to Zeus in the *Trachiniai* (753f) to a sacrifice to Athene and Poseidon, divinities particularly important to Athens, as well as to Zeus.

Nessos with Herakles' death.[66] Certainly it is possible that he took the story from an earlier source of which we know nothing. But we must not assume that this is so; and the inescapable fact remains that, on the evidence we possess, the earliest mention of this story comes, as far as we can tell, in the *Trachiniai*, and therefore Sophokles himself could well have been the first to make this connection between Nessos and the death of Herakles.

I would suggest that Sophokles did make this connection: that he was the innovator of the arrow-shot which killed Nessos, and thus of the lovecharm, composed of the centaur's blood and the Hydra's venom, which was in the course of time to kill Herakles himself. Further considerations support this suggestion. Certainly the idea of apparently right and well-motivated action in the past finally bringing man in some way to ruin or death seems thoroughly Sophoklean. Oidipous, for instance, leaves Corinth with a passionate urgency to escape the very fate of murdering his father and marrying his mother which awaits him on his journey; and here the Sphinx plays the same role, in a sense, as do Nessos and the Hydra with Herakles, for it is Oidipous' own triumph over the Sphinx which leads directly to his doom. Ajax and Hektor, too, both die by the gifts which they exchanged when neither could worst the other in heroic fight: Ajax by Hektor's sword, and Hektor by Ajax' belt with which he was tied, still living, to Achilles' chariot and dragged to his death. Here Hektor's death by the belt is certainly not in Homer, so was perhaps a Sophoklean innovation also.

So too does the idea of the dead reaching out to kill the living seem a favourite Sophoklean concept. This occurs in five of our seven surviving Sophoklean plays, as Kitto points out.[67] Here in the *Trachiniai* Nessos' blood and the Hydra's venom kill Herakles long after the deaths of these two monsters. Ajax dies by the sword of the dead Hektor — Teukros cries:

> . . . εἶδες ὡς χρόνῳ
> ἔμελλέ σ' Ἕκτωρ καὶ θανὼν ἀποφθίσειν;[68]

In the *Elektra*, while Klytaimestra is being killed, the chorus sing out:

> τελοῦσ' ἀραί· ζῶσιν οἱ γᾶς ὑπαὶ κείμενοι.
> παλίρρυτον γὰρ αἷμ' ὑπεξαιροῦσι τῶν
> κτανόντων οἱ πάλαι θανόντες.[69]

Antigone sees herself as dying by the dead hand of her brother:

> ἰὼ δυσπότμων
> κασίγνητε γάμων κυρήσας,
> θανὼν ἔτ' οὖσαν κατήναρές με.[70]

And Oidipous in the *Oidipous Tyrannos* wishes to go to Kithairon to die, so that his dead parents will at last kill him as once, long years ago, they meant to do:

> ἀλλ' ἔα με ναίειν ὄρεσιν, ἔνθα κλῄζεται
> οὐμὸς Κιθαιρὼν οὗτος, ὃν μήτηρ τέ μοι
> πατήρ τ' ἐθέσθην ζῶντε κύριον τάφον,

[66] As Snell first suggested (p.182): 'Es wäre das Nachtsliegende und Verlockendste, dabei an das Drama des Sophokles zu denken.' Perhaps Sophokles took the idea of the φίλτρον from popular folk-tales: see S. Trenkner, *The Greek Novella in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1958), p.47 n.2.

[67] See H. D. F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama* (London, 1956), p.193, and *Poiesis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), pp.179ff, for detailed discussions of this concept.

[68] *Aj.* 1026-7. 'Do you see how in time Hektor, though dead, was to destroy you?'

[69] *El.*1417ff. 'The curses are being fulfilled; those under the earth are alive; men long dead draw from their killers blood to answer blood.'

[70] *Ant.* 869ff. 'My brother, you found your fate when you found your bride, found it for me as well. Dead, you destroy my life.'

ἵν' ἐξ ἐκείνων, οἵ μ' ἀπωλλύτην, θάνω.[71]

This concept of the dead killing the living is, as Kitto says, habitual with Sophokles.

Perhaps also Sophokles' invention of the arrow-shot would account for his setting of Nessos' molestation of Deianeira in mid-stream and for the ἄκαιρος τοξεία of which Dio, as we have seen, complains: if all previous versions of the story had Herakles kill Nessos in close combat on or near the bank, then maybe he would have felt that a mid-stream setting of the incident would give a better reason for the innovative arrow-shot,[72] and would thus make it more plausible to an audience familiar with the old version. Furthermore it is possible that evidence from vase-paintings supports this suggestion that Sophokles invented the arrow-shot and thus created a new version of Nessos' death. Paintings of his death — by sword or club — had been extremely popular for a very long time, particularly on black-figure vases;[73] but, from about the time of the *Trachiniai*, Athenian interest in vase-paintings of the Nessos episode seems to have died out.[74] This was perhaps because the new Sophoklean version of Nessos' death made the old traditional vase-compositions seem invalid.

I would further suggest that Sophokles, by introducing the arrow-shot which killed Nessos and the consequent lovecharm, made two other crucial changes to the myth of Deianeira and Herakles which had existed before his *Trachiniai*. First, he created a transformed Deianeira who, in using the innovative lovecharm, was no longer a jealous and deliberate murderess but a woman who acted foolishly, but in all innocence, from love. This is the kind of change suggested by Aristotle's words where he distinguishes between a character who acts consciously and in full knowledge of the facts, as in the old poets — οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐποίουν εἰδότας καὶ γιγνώσκοντας — and one who acts in ignorance of the consequences — ἀγνοοῦντας . . . πρᾶξαι τὸ δεινόν.[75] Two out of the three examples which he cites for the latter type of character are from Sophoklean plays, the *Oidipous Tyrannos* and the *Odysseus Akanthoplex*. This suggests that the idea of changing a Deianeira who acted with full knowledge of the facts into one who acted completely in ignorance may well have particularly appealed to Sophokles.

Second, he entirely and completely changed the manner and meaning of Herakles' death, turning it from a sordid one at the hands of a jealous murderess, and one perhaps set in motion by the hatred of Hera, into a quite different death brought about by the monsters which the hero himself had killed for the benefit of mankind. Thus he made it, in fact, a death through Herakles' own great ἀρετή.

[71] *O.T.*1451-4. 'Leave me live in the mountains where Kithairon is, that's called *my* mountain, which my mother and my father, while they were living, would have made my tomb. So I may die by their decree who sought indeed to kill me.'

[72] He may also have meant it to stress Deianeira's chastity, as Dugas suggests (p.24).

[73] See Brommer's list, pp.153ff.

[74] It is true that two late fifth-century cups by Aristophanes (Boston 00.344, Brommer B.2, p.157 (my Plate 25), and Boston 00.345, Brommer B.3, p.157), painted long after the *Trachiniai* was first produced, still show Herakles killing Nessos with the club. But see B. Shefton, 'Herakles and Theseus on a Red-figured Louterion', *Hesperia* 31 (1962), p.342: 'Aristophanes on his two cups in Boston puts the centauromachy at the wedding of Peirithoos on the outside of the cup, but in the roundel inside, having painted what in effect is Theseus rescuing Hippodameia, he boggles and writes Herakles, Nessos and Deianeira against his figures, not forgetting to give Herakles his club, yet leaving him with a cloak falling off in the manner we see on our louterion as being peculiar to Theseus. He prefers to change the subject rather than face what he might feel to be faulty mythology.' And he adds: 'I do not put this forward as the only possible reason for this inconsistency. Some, considering the painter's capacities, will no doubt think this explanation too flattering.' (But even if Aristophanes had intended this scene to show the trio as named, this can be explained on compositional grounds, since it is clear that if he had wanted Herakles as part of his picture he had no space for a distant arrow-shot, and was compelled by the shape of his surface to depict Nessos killed in close combat.)

[75] Arist. *Poet.* 14. 1453b. 26ff. See on this Heey, p.220.

If we accept this theory — that Sophokles was the innovator of Nessos' death by the arrow-shot and of the lovecharm with which Deianeira poisoned Herakles, and thus the creator also of a transformed Deianeira and of this new manner of Herakles' death — and if we reconsider the *Trachiniai* in the light of this acceptance, then Sophokles' treatment of both Deianeira and Herakles is brought into a new perspective.

## Deianeira in Sophokles

In the long prologue to this play, Sophokles carefully depicts for his audience his own unique characterisation of Deianeira. This prologue has sometimes been criticised for its unnecessary length and slowness.[76] But these features are neither surprising nor unnecessary if Sophokles had to take time in putting across a character totally different from the one which his audience was expecting. This is no heroic and bold-hearted woman, but a timid and gentle creature. Time and again, both here in the prologue and throughout her whole part in the play, Sophokles stresses Deianeira's fear and dread. Fear has filled her life from her youth onwards; first, fear of her suitor Acheloos:

> ναίουσ' ἔτ' ἐν Πλευρῶνι νυμφείων ὄκνον
> ἄλγιστον ἔσχον, εἴ τις Αἰτωλὶς γυνή.[77]
>
> τοιόνδ' ἐγὼ μνηστῆρα προσδεδεγμένη
> δύστηνος αἰεὶ κατθανεῖν ἐπηυχόμην.[78]
>
> ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤμην ἐκπεπληγμένη φόβῳ
> μή μοι τὸ κάλλος ἄλγος ἐξεύροι ποτέ.[79]

Then fears throughout her marriage:

> . . . λέχος γὰρ Ἡρακλεῖ κριτὸν
> ξυστᾶσ' ἀεί τιν' ἐκ φόβου φόβον τρέφω,
> κείνου προσκηραίνουσα . . .[80]

fears which, she believes, are the lot of every woman in marriage:

> . . . τις ἀντὶ παρθένου γυνὴ
> κληθῇ, λάβῃ τ' ἐν νυκτὶ φροντίδων μέρος,
> ἤτοι πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἢ τέκνων φοβουμένη.[81]

Now, as the play opens, she feels the greatest fear of all:

> ἐνταῦθα δὴ μάλιστα ταρβήσασ' ἔχω.[82]

She is afraid of facing life without Herakles:

> ὥσθ' ἡδέως εὔδουσαν ἐκπηδᾶν ἐμὲ
> φόβῳ, φίλαι, ταρβοῦσαν, εἴ με χρὴ μένειν

[76] As by, for instance, Whitman (p.107): 'This prologue lacks the usual well-molded dramatic naturalness of other Sophoclean prologues, and the action fairly creeps at first.'

[77] ll.7-8. 'While I still lived in Pleuron I conceived an agonising fear of marriage. No other Aitolian woman ever felt such fear.'

[78] ll.15-16. 'I had to think this suitor would be my husband, and in my unhappiness I constantly prayed for death.'

[79] ll.24-5. 'I sank down, overwhelmed with terror lest my beauty should somehow bring me pain.'

[80] ll.27-9. 'Chosen partner for the bed of Herakles, I nurse fear after fear, always worrying over him.'

[81] ll.148-50. 'She is no longer called a maiden, but woman, and takes her share of worry in the night.'

[82] l.37. 'Now I find I am more than ever afraid.'

πάντων ἀρίστου φωτὸς ἐστερημένην.[83]

And she is later afraid — with reason — of what future evils fate may bring.[84]

Sophokles also depicts at an early stage Deianeira's strange lack of will:[85] in all of the fifteen critical months of Herakles' absence she has made no inquiries for him, and now it is the nurse who has to suggest that she sends one of her sons to seek him (54-7). This same lack of will appears again later, when she must get the Chorus' approval of the lovecharm before she sends the robe to Herakles (586-93). But she is not here cast as 'the obverse of the wilful male'.[86] This contrast is not, I suggest, the point of her characterisation. Rather she is the obverse of the traditional Deianeira, and here again Sophokles is stressing their differences.

Thus he makes it clear that his Deianeira is a weak and timid woman, and he leaves no doubt also that she is one who loves her husband. She misses him deeply in his absence:

. . . . . πλὴν ἐμοὶ πικρὰς
ὠδῖνας αὐτοῦ προσβαλὼν ἀποίχεται . . .[87]

as the nurse also says:

δέσποινα Δηιάνειρα, πολλὰ μέν σ' ἐγὼ
κατεῖδον ἤδη πανδάκρυτ' ὀδύρματα
τὴν Ἡράκλειον ἔξοδον γοωμένην.[88]

And she is concerned and anxious for him continually.

A more general tenderness and compassion shine from her pity for the Oichalian captives (283-306) and for Iole in particular:

ἡ δ' οὖν ἐάσθω, καὶ πορευέσθω στέγας
οὕτως ὅπως ἥδιστα, μηδὲ πρὸς κακοῖς
τοῖς οἶσιν ἄλλην πρός γ' ἐμοῦ λύπην λάβῃ·
ἅλις γὰρ ἡ παροῦσα . . .[89]

and also, of course, from her speech when she seeks to persuade Lichas to tell her the truth about Iole (436-69). This is by no means the stuff of which a deliberate murderess is made.

But the audience who watched this play for the first time, being ignorant of this new treatment of the myth which depends on Nessos and his lovecharm, may still have expected this gentle woman, when she learned the truth, to become the intentional murderess familiar to them. It seems to me that Sophokles encouraged this expectation for a time, handling his material with great skill. He began by creating a dramatic contrast between the first two stage-exits of Lichas, who at first lies about Herakles' motives in sacking Oichalia and about Iole. After these lies Deianeira turns to the house with him and says, 'let us go indoors . . . ':

. . . . . πρὸς δὲ δώματα
χωρῶμεν ἤδη πάντες, ὡς σύ θ' οἳ θέλεις

[83] ll.175-7. '. . . so that I leap up from pleasant sleep in fright, my friends, terrified to think that I may have to live deprived of the one man who is finest of all.'

[84] Her fears are referred to in 296-7, 306, 550, 630, 663, 666, 671. And see Winnington-Ingram, p.75: 'One might say the rhythm of the first half of the play is the rhythm of Deianira's fears.'

[85] What Waldock calls her 'extraordinary passivity' (p.90).

[86] As Gellie suggests (p.55): 'Deianeira, who is cast as the obverse of the wilful male, must seem to lack will, and the nurse is only the first person supplied by the play to make good the lack.'

[87] ll.41-2. 'I only know he's gone, and left with me a sharp pain for him.'

[88] ll.49-51. 'Deianeira, my mistress, many times before I have watched as you wept and sobbed, bewailing your absent Herakles.'

[89] ll.329-32. 'Then let her be, and let her go into the house however she please. She should not have further grief on my account to add to her present unhappiness. What she has already is enough.'

σπεύδῃς, ἐγὼ δὲ τἄνδον ἐξαρκῆ τιθῶ.[90]

But only Lichas goes inside, and she herself remains to hear the truth about Iole and Herakles from the first messenger. When Lichas returns she persuades the truth from him, too; then again turns towards the house, saying 'let us go indoors . . . .' But this time she speaks ominously of 'suitable return gifts' for Herakles, in return for Iole:

ἅ τ' ἀντὶ δώρων δῶρα χρὴ προσαρμόσαι . . .[91]

and προσαρμόσαι is particularly ominous with its hint of the deadly clinging robe. She adds:

. . . . . κενὸν γὰρ οὐ δίκαιά σε
χωρεῖν, προσελθόνθ' ὧδε σὺν πολλῷ στόλῳ . . .[92]

with bitterness in her words.[93] The audience must think at once of the expected χιτών and φάρμακον.[94] They have until now seen a quite unfamiliar Deianeira, one who in her hesitancy and fear has seemed quite incapable of carrying out her expected role of murderess. But here, as soon as she learns the truth, she speaks simply a few decisive words which must refer to the poisoned robe, then goes indoors to make her preparations. Here the audience feel themselves again on familiar ground. Then after this, until Sophokles finally brings in the story of Nessos and the lovecharm, he keeps them swinging tantalisingly between doubt and certainty as to what the outcome will be.

With Deianeira's mention of return gifts they think that they see her intentions clearly. But then in her absence the chorus sing of Herakles' fight with Acheloos, and they are reminded of Deianeira telling this tale in the prologue, and of her fear and timidity; and here too they see her again as lonely and afraid:

κἀπὸ ματρὸς ἄφαρ βέβακεν
ὥστε πόρτις ἐρήμα.[95]

So once again they must doubt her intentions. But then she comes back on stage together with the wrapped-up robe (τόδ' ἄγγος, 622), and speaking words which seem to point to murder. She tells of what she has done, 'ἀτεχνησάμην' — and the connotation 'cunningly' is almost always implied in this verb.[96] She speaks with extreme bitterness of Iole, whom she has had to accept into her home:

κόρην γὰρ, οἶμαι δ' οὐκέτ', ἀλλ' ἐζευγμένην,
παρεισδέδεγμαι, φόρτον ὥστε ναυτίλος,
λωβητὸν ἐμπόλημα τῆς ἐμῆς φρενός·
καὶ νῦν δύ' οὖσαι μίμνομεν μιᾶς ὑπὸ
χλαίνης ὑπαγκάλισμα.[97]

[90] ll.332-4. 'Let us all enter the house, so you may hasten wherever you wish to go, and I may see to the preparation within.'

[91] l.494. '. . . and there are gifts to match the gifts you brought.'

[92] ll.495-6. 'It would not be right to leave empty-handed when you came so well provided.'

[93] See Easterling's comment *ad loc*.

[94] Scholars disagree as to whether the thought of the robe is already in Deianeira's mind. Given the very pointed contrast between the two exits of Lichas, there can be no doubt that it is, and that the listener too is meant to think of the robe and the poison.

[95] ll.529-30. 'And then she was gone from her mother, like a calf that is lost.'

[96] See especially Soph. *Ant*. 494.

[97] ll.536-40. 'For here I have taken on a girl — no, I can think that no longer — a married woman, as a ship's master takes on cargo, goods that outrage my heart. So now the two of us lie under the one sheet, waiting for his embrace.'

This is the reward which she has been granted for long years of faithfully keeping house for Herakles:

> . . . . . τοιάδ' 'Ηρακλῆς,
> ὁ πιστὸς ἡμῖν κἀγαθὸς καλούμενος,
> οἰκούρι' ἀντέπεμψε τοῦ μακροῦ χρόνου.[98]

But then she hesitates and says she cannot be angry:

> ἐγὼ δὲ θυμοῦσθαι μὲν οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι
> νοσοῦντι κείνῳ πολλὰ τῇδε τῇ νόσῳ.[99]

Then again she returns to bitterness; she cannot bear it — τίς ἂν γυνὴ δύναιτο — and she is old, too old, in comparison with Iole's youthful bloom:

> ὁρῶ γὰρ ἥβην τὴν μὲν ἕρπουσαν πρόσω,
> τὴν δὲ φθίνουσαν· ὧν ἀφαρπάζειν φιλεῖ
> ὀφθαλμὸς ἄνθος, τῶν δ' ὑπεκτρέπει πόδα.[100]

It is only with the words

> ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ, ὥσπερ εἶπον, ὀργαίνειν καλὸν
> γυναῖκα νοῦν ἔχουσαν . . .[101]

that she begins finally to show her real intentions. It is at this point, significantly, that the audience hear for the first time the whole unexpected story of Nessos and the lovecharm. Now at last they are in no doubt that Sophokles has changed not only the character of Deianeira but also her motivations and the whole manner of Herakles' death. This crucial scene ends with a moving reiteration of Deianeira's unquestionable love for Herakles and of her belief in the lovecharm:

> τί δῆτ' ἂν ἄλλο γ' ἐννέποις; δέδοικα γὰρ
> μὴ πρῷ λέγοις ἂν τὸν πόθον τὸν ἐξ ἐμοῦ,
> πρὶν εἰδέναι τἀκεῖθεν εἰ ποθούμεθα.[102]

This presentation of the new Deianeira makes possible certain dramatic effects and ironies, for instance in Deianeira's own words:

> κακὰς δὲ τόλμας μήτ' ἐπισταίμην ἐγὼ
> μήτ' ἐκμάθοιμι, τάς τε τολμώσας στυγῶ.[103]

It has been suggested that this is intended to remind the audience of Medea; or — and perhaps more suitably, since their situations were similar — of Klytaimestra.[104] But how much more dramatically effective it is if it reminds them instead of the traditional Deianeira.

[98] ll.540-2. 'This is the gift my brave and faithful Herakles sends home to his dear wife to compensate for his long absence!'

[99] ll.543-4. 'And yet, when he is sick as he so often is with this same sickness, I am incapable of anger.'

[100] ll.547-9. 'For I see her youth is coming to full bloom while mine is fading. The eyes of men love to pluck the blossoms; from the faded flowers they turn away.'

[101] ll.552-3. 'But no sensible woman, as I've said before, should let herself give way to rage.'

[102] ll.630-2. 'What else is there to tell him? For I am afraid you would be talking too soon of my longing for him before I know if *he* feels longing for me.'

[103] ll.582-3. 'I am not a woman who tries to be — and may I never learn to be — bad and bold. I hate women who are.'

[104] See, for instance, Gellie, p.65 and n.18; Reinhardt, p.34 and p.241 n.2. Certainly this sounds to be a reference to murder, as was pointed out in the scholia: μὴ εἰδείην, φησί, κακοῖς πράγμασιν ἐπιχειρεῖν, οἷον δολοφονῆσαι αὐτὸν, ἤ τι τοιοῦτον.

But certainly this new Deianeira is also in some places set in deliberate contrast to Aischylos' Klytaimestra.[105] Her gentle and sympathetic reception of Iole and her willingness to let her go into the house in silence are very different from Klytaimestra's haughty attempts to make Kassandra speak. There is also a clear echo of Klytaimestra's murder of Agamemnon in Herakles' accusations of Deianeira:

> . . . ἡ δολῶπις Οἰνέως κόρη
> καθῆψεν ὠμοις τοῖς ἐμοῖς Ἐρινύων
> ὑφαντὸν ἀμφίβληστρον, ᾧ διόλλυμαι.[106]
>
> ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον, ὥσπερ ἰχθύων,
> περιστιχίζω, πλοῦτον εἵματος κακόν.[107]
>
> . . . ὑφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων.[108]

And the robe in the *Trachiniai* is likewise called a fetter:

> . . . ἀφράστῳ τῇδε χειρωθεὶς πέδῃ . . .[109]

as it is in the *Choephoroi*:

> πέδαις γ' ἀχαλκεύτοισι θηρευθείς . . .[110]
>
> πέδας τε χειροῖν καὶ ποδοῖν ξυνωρίδα.[111]

Here there is a dual irony, in that Herakles is grossly misjudging Deianeira who has acted throughout from love, and is like neither Klytaimestra nor her own traditional self. Herakles, tortured by the pain of the poisoned robe and wholly ignorant of her real motives, bitterly wishes to kill her himself:

> ἀλλ' εὖ γέ τοι τόδ' ἴστε, κἂν τό μηδὲν ὦ,
> κἂν μηδὲν ἕρπω, τήν γε δράσασαν τάδε
> χειρώσομαι κἀκ τῶνδε· προσμόλοι μόνον,
> ἵν' ἐκδιδαχθῇ πᾶσιν ἀγγέλλειν ὅτι
> καὶ ζῶν κακούς γε καὶ θανὼν ἐτεισάμην.[112]

Perhaps he is echoing an earlier Herakles: perhaps in the pre-Sophoklean version of the legend, instead of committing suicide by the sword as here, Deianeira did die at his hands. Her own words may hint at this death:

> καίτοι δέδοκται, κεῖνος εἰ σφαλήσεται,
> ταὐτῇ σὺν ὁρμῇ κἀμὲ συνθανεῖν ἅμα.[113]

[105] As has often been noted. See, for instance, Hoey, pp.216ff; Webster, pp.168ff; Segal (1), pp.119ff; Kamerbeek, p.14. And if the *Trachiniai* was indeed an early play of Sophokles, and thus chronologically close to the *Oresteia*, then this new Deianeira would have been set in even greater contrast to Aischylos' Klytaimestra, as well as to the traditional Deianeira.

[106] *Trach.* 1050-2. 'The false-faced daughter of Oineus has fastened upon my shoulders a woven, encircling net of the Furies, by which I am utterly destroyed.'

[107] *Ag.* 1382-3. 'As fishermen cast their huge circling nets, I spread deadly abundance of rich robes, and caught him fast.'

[108] *Ag.* 1580. '. . . in the woven robes of the Furies.'

[109] *Trach.* 1057. '. . . conquered by these unspeakable fetters.'

[110] *Choeph.* 493. '. . . caught like a beast in fetters no bronzesmith made.'

[111] *Choeph.* 982. '. . . coupling fetters for his hands and feet.'

[112] ll.1107-11. 'But I tell you this, even if I am nothing, nothing that can even crawl, even so — only let her come who has done this to me — these hands will teach her, and she can tell the world: alive I punished the evil, and I punish them in death.'

[113] ll.719-20. 'And yet I have made a decision: if Herakles goes down, under the same blow I will die with him.'

If Herakles did kill her thus in an earlier version of the legend, then his most likely weapon would probably have been his sword rather than his great bow or club. And, if so, perhaps this is why Sophokles had Deianeira kill herself by the sword too, which was a method of suicide unusual for a woman. For an audience used to the old version of the myth, this would have been a means of greatly increasing the pathos of her death, by emphasising both her essential innocence in Herakles' murder and the loneliness of her own self-destruction.[114]

Sophokles' audience would surely have recognised a very real irony in this new and loving Deianeira, who wishes only to conserve Herakles and still ends by killing him. There is supreme irony in Hyllos' bitter condemnation of her when he tells of what her robe has done to Herakles and thus sends her in silence to her death (734ff). He wishes that her nature were changed for the better:

ὦ μῆτερ, ὡς ἄν . . . σ' . . . εἰλόμην . . .
. . . . . λῴους φρένας
τῶν νῦν παρουσῶν τῶνδ' ἀμείψασθαί ποθεν.[115]

But her nature has been changed — and by Sophokles. She no longer has an aggressive and masculine nature, as Herakles himself says:

γυνὴ δὲ θἠλυς οὖσα κἄνανδρος φύσιν
μόνη με δὴ καθεῖλε, φασγάνου δίχα.[116]

Yet still she kills him.

There is a deep and tragic realisation of what she has done — and perhaps an echo of Hesiod — in her words

ὁρῶ δέ μ' ἔργον δεινὸν ἐξειργασμένην.[117]

She has acted only from a deep love for Herakles, but she has achieved the same results as Hesiod's Deianeira — δειν' ἔρξεν — despite their different motives.

## Herakles in Sophokles

Herakles is onstage only for the last three hundred lines or so of the *Trachiniai*. Nevertheless it is he who gives the play its unity, since he is virtually present from its beginning: all that is said and done in the play converges on him; his fate and achievements are in the minds and mouths of all the characters, from Deianeira's first mention of him (19) onwards; and his arrival onstage is expectantly awaited by characters[118] and audience alike. From the play's very first verses he casts his great shadow. As Taplin has pointed out,[119] this is a *nostos* play: the return of Herakles is the dominant subject throughout, and the final scene after his arrival is 'the focus and conclusion of the tragedy'.

[114] This, to my mind, is a more direct and satisfactory explanation of this unusual method of suicide than that proposed, for instance, by Winnington-Ingram (p.81 n.28): 'Why did a woman, instead of hanging herself (as any decent conventional woman would), commit hara-kiri? . . . The answer is simple, and should attract a Freudian! For a woman to hang herself is not sexually suggestive; for a woman to strip herself half-naked in the marriage-bed — as she had often stripped herself for Herakles — and stab herself in the belly is very suggestive indeed.'

[115] ll.734-7. 'Mother! I wish I could have found you not as you are but . . . somehow changed and with a better heart than now.'

[116] ll.1062-3. 'A woman, a female, in no way like a man, she alone without even a sword has brought me down.'

[117] l.706. 'I see myself as someone who has done a terrible thing.'

[118] See V. Ehrenberg, 'Tragic Heracles', *Aspects of the Ancient World* (New York, 1946), p.148: 'In the large first part . . . the absent Heracles is always present in the mind of every single person on the stage.'

[119] O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), p.84.

Moreover it is these final three hundred lines which give the play its full significance, to appreciate which we must be aware that we are meant to see Herakles as approaching his apotheosis. Certainly to the other characters onstage Herakles is simply a man, though also indeed the best of all men (177, 811, 1112-3) and a great and splendid hero, superhuman in the way he seems to bestride 'the canyons of the sea, the continents of the world' (100-1). His life has been spent in helping mankind. He is Ἀλεξίκακος, averter of evil, as he was worshipped all over Greece, killing beasts and monsters and combatting the savagery that stalks the world:

> πολλὰ μὲν ἐν πόντῳ, κατά τε δρία πάντα καθαίρων
> ὠλεκόμαν ὁ τάλας.[120]

Before he tells of the labours which he has endured on behalf of mankind, he truly says of himself:

> ὦ πολλὰ δὴ καὶ θερμὰ κοὐ λόγῳ κακὰ
> καὶ χερσὶ καὶ νώτοισι μοχθήσας ἐγώ.[121]

The Chorus with justice exclaim on the loss which he will be to the world:

> ὦ τλῆμον Ἑλλάς, πένθος οἷον εἰσορῶ
> ἕξουσαν ἀνδρὸς τοῦδέ γ' εἰ σφαλήσεται.[122]

After his death his like will never be seen again:

> . . . ὁποιον ἄλλον οὐκ ὄψει ποτέ.[123]

So to the other characters in the play Herakles is simply the greatest of all men, not a god in the making. It is vitally important that there should be no direct reference within the play itself to his apotheosis, since part of the significance of Sophokles' depiction of Herakles depends on his going to his death completely in ignorance of his coming divinity.[124]

But to Sophokles' audience Herakles must have been seen as approaching his apotheosis, since his becoming a god was the familiar and fully-accepted ending to the legend of his life on earth. A cult of the divinised Herakles had been in existence in Attica since the beginning of the sixth century,[125] and indeed Diodoros has it that it was the Athenians themselves who first made Herakles a god.[126] Herakles being led by Athene to Olympos in the presence of the other gods was a favourite subject of Attic vase-paintings from the middle of the sixth century.[127] His apotheosis was also a familiar subject of Attic sculpture: it was shown on archaic temple pediments on the Akropolis of the sixth century;[128] perhaps also on the east pediment of the Temple of Hephaistos;[129] and quite possibly a sculpture of Herakles lying at ease among the

[120] ll.1012-3 (Herakles speaking). 'I destroyed myself, purging so many beasts from all the seas and woods.'

[121] ll.1046-7. 'Many are the toils for these hands, this back, that I have had, hot and painful even to tell of.'

[122] ll.1112-3. 'O unhappy Greece, I can see how great a mourning you shall have if you lose this man.'

[123] l.812 (Hyllos speaking). '(a man) such as you shall never see again.' 'It would certainly be rash to deny that Heracles . . . in *Trachiniae* is a supreme exemplification of *arete*' — Winnington-Ingram, p.309.

[124] See below, pp.76f. See also C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford, 1944), pp.159f; and H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, 1971), pp.127f.

[125] See references in n.43 above.

[126] Diod. Sic. 4. 39. 1. The Athenians were also the innovators of the story of Herakles' initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, which may well have arisen in the sixth century and was certainly current in the early fifth: see Woodford, chapter 3 *passim*; also Boardman (2), *passim*.

[127] See Plate 26, and references in n.44 above.

[128] See Boardman (1), p.70, and (2), pp.1f.

[129] See H. A. Thompson, 'The Pedimental Sculpture of the Hephaisteon', *Hesperia* 18 (1949), pp.230-68.

Olympians was very soon to be carved for the east pediment of the Parthenon itself.[130] It is clear also from the *Catalogue of Women* in the sixth century[131] and from Pindar's work in the fifth[132] that Herakles' apotheosis had certainly been established in literature before Sophokles' time; and Prometheus' prophecy to Herakles in Aischylos' *Prometheus* trilogy is likely to have ended with a prediction of his deification.[133] Thus to its audience the *Trachiniai* would not have raised the question of which version of the legend Sophokles was using here. Other plays had various differing versions of legends: Aischylos in his *Eumenides* had, like Euripides in his *Elektra*, the Furies pursuing Orestes, while Sophokles in his *Elektra*, like Homer, had not; Euripides in his *Helen* had, like Stesichoros, only an εἴδωλον of Helen at Troy while the real one stayed in Egypt, and in his *Troades* had, like Homer, the real Helen at Troy. But the legend of Herakles was different: by the fifth century there was only one version of his death — he died and became a god. So, although Herakles' apotheosis could have been ignored in a play not dealing with his death — like Euripides' *Herakles* — where it was not relevant, it would automatically have been recognised as the aftermath in a play which told of all the events leading up to that familiar death.[134]

Thus, references made in the *Trachiniai* by the oracles to what might have meant death in the case of an ordinary mortal would automatically have been taken in Herakles' case to refer to his divinity:

> ὡς ἢ τελευτὴν τοῦ βίου μέλλει τελεῖν,
> ἢ τοῦτον ἆρας ἆθλον εἰς τό γ' ὕστερον
> τὸν λοιπὸν ἤδη βίοτον εὐαίων' ἔχειν.[135]
>
> τότ' ἢ θανεῖν χρείη σφε τῷδε τῷ χρόνῳ
> ἢ τοῦθ' ὑπεκδραμόντα τοῦ χρόνου τέλος
> τὸ λοιπὸν ἤδη ζῆν ἀλυπήτῳ βίῳ.[136]

[130] As Figure D, a beardless man, with nude, powerfully muscled body, reclining on a lion or panther skin, and present with other divinities at the birth of Athena. F. Brommer (*The Sculptures of the Parthenon*, transl. M. Whittall (London, 1979)) assumes this figure to be Dionysos. J. Boardman (*The Parthenon and its Sculptures* (London, 1985), p.230) suggests 'Dionysos rather than Herakles'. But see E. B. Harrison ('Athena and Athens in the East Pediment of the Parthenon', *AJA* 71 (1967), pp.43ff) who argues strongly for this figure to be Herakles. C. M. Robertson (*A History of Greek Art* (Cambridge, 1975), I, p.302) adds: 'The skin suggests Herakles, and the case has been strongly argued and may be right, but he is more often thought Dionysus.' However Pheidias, as we know from Paus. 5. 11. 8, certainly included Herakles among the gods present at the birth of Aphrodite on the base of the statue of Zeus at Olympia; and on this disregard of genealogical chronology Robertson comments (p.318): 'Herakles led his mortal life and became a god long after the birth of Aphrodite; but we have seen that this is not the kind of point to worry a Greek artist, and it seems a particular feature of these bases for cult-statues that an event is taken as ostensible subject, but treated undramatically as the centrepiece of an assembly of immortals who take no part in the action.' Thus Herakles' presence at the birth of Athena should not be seen as anomolous. Also, as Harrison points out (p.45): 'It is Athena . . . who made Herakles able to perform his labors. As such she is the wellspring of his immortality.' Thus Pheidias, 'who expresses in the cosmos of attendant divinities the fullest meaning of the goddess who is being born, can have had no motive to omit Herakles, for in him we see the fulfilment of Athena's promise to humankind'. Moreover she notes two archaic vases showing Herakles present at the birth of Athena (pp.44-5, n.145), which demonstrate the archaic artist's 'valid conviction that Athena and Herakles belong together'. Perhaps Herakles was present also at the creation of Pandora on the base of the statue of Athene Parthenos: see Woodford, p.247.

[131] See West (p.xi n.1 above), p.130: 'The divinity of Herakles is a firm article of the *Catalogue* poet's belief (1.22, 25.26-33, 229.6-13).'

[132] Pind. *Nem.* 1. 69-72; 10. 17-18; *Isthm.* 4. 55ff.

[133] See G. D. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens* (London, 1967), p.335.

[134] Particularly in a play where careful details of the familiar means of death (how the pyre was to be built, who was to light it) were referred to — see further below, p.75.

[135] ll.79-81. 'It said that either he would come to life's end, or have by now, and for the rest of his time, a happy life, once he had carried out this task.'

[136] ll.166-8. 'Then he would either die exactly at this time, or, by getting past this time limit, he would in the future live a life without grief.'

ἔφασκε μόχθων τῶν ἐφεστώτων ἐμοὶ
λύσιν τελεῖσθαι· κἀδόκουν πράξειν καλῶς·
τὸ δ' ἦν ἄρ' οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν θανεῖν ἐμέ.[137]

Perhaps line 1270 also points forward to Herakles' apotheosis:

τὰ μὲν οὖν μέλλοντ' οὐδεὶς ἐφορᾷ.[138]

Moreover the frequent references throughout the play[139] to Herakles as the son of Zeus would also have reminded the audience of his coming acceptance among the Olympians.

The story of Herakles' death on the pyre on Mount Oita — the pyre which was to extinguish the mortal part of Herakles and leave his spirit free to be taken among the Olympians — was clearly also a familiar part of the legend by Sophokles' time. 'The myth that Heracles met his end there must have already been current as the aetiological explanation of a cult established long before Sophocles' time, in which bonfires were lighted on the top of the mountain and offerings made to Heracles. Excavations have yielded figurines and inscriptions which confirm the literary tradition. It is therefore very likely indeed that the direction to light and build the pyre on Oeta would relate for a contemporary audience to an institution and a story which were perfectly familiar to them.'[140] Thus the references to Oita throughout the play would have been recognised by the audience as pointing ominously forward to Herakles' death (200-1, 436-7, 635), and with particular significance when Deianeira, full of premature joy at Herakles' safety, cries:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τὸν Οἴτης ἄτομον ὃς λειμῶν' ἔχεις,
ἔδωκας ἡμῖν ἀλλὰ σὺν χρόνῳ χαράν.[141]

But Mrs. Easterling expresses doubt as to whether 'allusion to the pyre naturally carried with it thoughts of the apotheosis, and vice versa', since 'no specific link is made between the apotheosis and the pyre on Mt. Oeta in any of our sources before the middle of the fifth century'.[142] Yet it is difficult to see how this association between pyre and apotheosis could have failed to exist, given the general acceptance (which cannot be doubted) of the story that Herakles died on the pyre and after his death became a god, since the one was the means to the other. Doubt of a connection between pyre and apotheosis would seem to show an excess of caution. Moreover, to refer once again to vase-paintings, there exists a vase which gives evidence of divine attendance at Herakles' death on the pyre: on the fragments of an Attic bell-krater of about 460 BC (Plate 27),[143] one of the few vases which depict this scene, Herakles dies on the pyre while nymphs quench its flames and Athene stands waiting alongside — Athene who is almost invariably the goddess who takes Herakles to Olympos after his death;[144] and for

[137] ll.1170-2 (Herakles speaking). 'It told me that release from all the toils imposed on me would be complete. And I thought that then I would be happy. But it only meant that I would die then.'

[138] 'No one can foresee what is to come.'

[139] Lines 19, 139-40, 288, 513, 566, 644, 753, 826, 956, 1087-8, 1106, 1148-9, 1168, 1185, 1268ff.

[140] Easterling (1), pp.9-10. See also the articles in n.45. The reference in Hdt. 7. 198 also points to the story of the pyre being well known.

[141] ll.200-1. 'O Zeus, master of the unharvested meadow of Oita, though it has been long, you have given us joy.'

[142] Easterling (1), pp.17-18. But she admits that 'this of course may be purely accidental'.

[143] See J. D. Beazley, *Etruscan Vase-painting* (Oxford, 1947), pp.103-5; C. Clairmont, 'Studies in Greek Mythology and Vase-painting', *AJA* 57 (1953), pp.85-9. Brian Shefton ('The Krater from Baksy', in *The Eye of Greece*, ed. D. Kurtz and B. Sparkes (Cambridge, 1982), p.175) says of these fragments: 'Herakles is on the pyre, lifeless', and there is no 'direct allusion to his apotheosis, as far as we can tell.' This is surely incorrect, because of the presence here of Athene.

[144] See n.44 above; also T. B. L. Webster, *Potter and Patron in Classical Athens* (London, 1972), pp.261-2. Sometimes Herakles and Athene pass to Olympos on foot, sometimes in a chariot. A Munich pelike (Plate 28) of

a myth to appear in the market-conscious medium of vase-painting would certainly suggest that it had been current even earlier.

Thus when Herakles gives Hyllos careful instructions for building his pyre — it must be built on Mt. Oita of oak and wild olive, and set alight with pine torches, and there must be no mourning or lamentations (1191ff) — the audience would have recognised this familiar story; would have remembered, too, who was to light the pyre when Hyllos shrank from being polluted by lighting it himself,[145] and would have thought of the pyre as Herakles' gateway to Olympos.[146]

So Herakles, this ἥρως θεός as Pindar calls him (*Nem.* 3. 22), is brought by Sophokles to a familiar death and apotheosis,[147] but in a new and unfamiliar way, since this death here on the pyre is caused by Nessos and the Lernaian Hydra, two of the monsters which Herakles himself has killed. This is graphically emphasised by the Chorus:

> εἰ γάρ σφε Κενταύρου φονίᾳ νεφέλᾳ
> χρίει δολοποιὸς ἀνάγκα
> πλευρά, προστακέντος ἰοῦ
> ὃν τέκετο θάνατος, ἔτρεφε δ' αἰόλος δράκων,
> πῶς ὅδ' ἂν ἀέλιον ἕτερον ἢ τανῦν ἴδοι,
> δεινοτάτῳ μὲν ὕδρας
> προστετακὼς
> φάσματι, μελαγχαίτα τ'
> ἄμμιγά νιν αἰκίζει [Νέσσου θ' ὕπο]
>
> φόνια δολιόμυ-
> θα κέντρ' ἐπιζέσαντα;[148]

the last quarter of the fifth century (Brommer B.5, p.188; *ARV* 1186.30; *AJA* 45 (1941), p.371) shows Herakles and Athene driving off in a chariot above the pyre; and similar scenes are on a krater of S. Agata de' Goti (Brommer B.2, p.188; *ARV* 1420.5), and a krater in New York (52.11.18; Brommer B.4, p.188; *AJA* 66 (1962), p.305 and pl.81).

[145] Either Poias (see Apollod. II. 7. 7) or his son Philoktetes (see Frazer on Apollod., pp.270-1). 'If the audience is not supposed to know already who *did* put the torch to the pyre, Sophocles is at best an incompetent bungler, for he has raised the question in the most emphatic terms' — B. Knox, *AJP* 92 (1971), p.695.

[146] See also H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, 1971), p.128; B.Knox (see n.145 above), pp.694-5. Segal (1), p.138, comments: 'It is inconceivable that the ending of the myth could not have been present in his [Sophokles'] and his audience's minds.'

[147] Because of this we should be careful not to judge Herakles in this play in human terms, as he is all too often judged — and particularly not in *modern* human terms. He is often condemned, for instance, for hurling Iphitos to his death because of a slight, or for sacking Oichalia for the sake of Iole, or for murdering Lichas because of his apparent treachery. But an ancient audience would not have reacted to these things in the same way as a modern one, for are these not ways in which they saw their gods as acting, particularly the older gods of epic? (On Herakles' being characterised more as divine than human, see Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford, 1944), p.136.) And the gods who appeared in their tragedies generally had, as far as we can tell from the plays left to us, little or no concern with the effects of their actions on humankind. Our reaction to these deeds are surely meant to be the same as Deianeira's and as those of Sophokles' audience would have been: πῶς δ' οὐκ ἐγὼ χαίροιμ' ἄν, ἀνδρὸς εὐτυχῆ / κλύουσα πρᾶξιν τήνδε, πανδίκῳ φρενί (293-4). Herakles' disposal of Iole on to Hyllos too is often seen as shocking. But gods not infrequently settled their loves on mortal men: cf. Zeus and Europe, Apollo and Kyrene, etc. On this point cf. J. K. MacKinnon, 'Herakles' Intention in his Second Request of Hyllos: *Trach.* 1216-51', *CQ* ns 21 (1971), pp.33-41, and Woodford, p.65; also Winnington-Ingram, p.215: 'A ruthless Heracles . . . is more like the gods than such human-beings as Deianira and Hyllus who are capable of pity . . . If Heracles became a god . . . he earned his status by the same ruthlessness and wrathfulness by which Oedipus in the *Coloneus* earned his status as a *heros*.' Perhaps also we are meant to see Hyllos as much subject to his father, Herakles, as Herakles is to his father, Zeus. Certainly Herakles makes continual references to his father/son relationship with Hyllos: ll.797-8, 1023, 1032, 1064, 1070, 1076, 1137, 1146, 1159, 1174, 1177-8, 1200-1, 1204-5, 1221, 1224, 1227, 1244, 1253. (Also of course, Hyllos and Iole were known as the ancestors of the Herakleidai, who had a definite historical reality for the audience — see Hdt. 9. 26, Thuc. 1. 9.)

[148] ll.831-40. 'If there clings to him in a murderous cloud the centaur's treacherous, sure trap, and his sides are soaked with venom that Death begat and the shimmering serpent bred, how shall he see another sun after today's,

So just as Pindar, aiming at making the myth relevant to his times, reshaped the character of Herakles,[149] so Sophokles with a like aim reshaped his death [150] to make it a fitting end for the son of Zeus — and we are continually reminded that such Herakles is, from the first time that we hear him mentioned.[151] This death is new. So then the oracle predicting this death is also new:

> ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἦν πρόφαντον ἐκ πατρὸς πάλαι
> πρὸς τῶν πνεόντων μηδενὸς θανεῖν ποτε,
> ἀλλ' ὅστις Ἅιδου φθίμενος οἰκήτωρ πέλοι.[152]

So after the mention of Nessos' name in line 1141 Herakles' attention, and that of the audience, must be centred on this new oracle and its results. This is why there is no thought here for Deianeira, nor need for wonder that she is forgotten: she has played out her all too human part — has suffered, in fact, the frequent fate of the human in contact with the god and come to destruction — and now at this point all attention must be concentrated on Herakles and his death, which dominates the play as it was always meant to do.

It is significant that before he hears the name of Nessos, Herakles shrieks and groans in his torment[153] and prays for death, for any death,[154] sounding as he does so like any mortal man in the grip of physical agony. But with the name of Nessos all is changed, and Herakles prepares heroically for the death which he now knows is the will of Zeus:

> ταῦτ' οὖν . . . λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει.[155]

He groans and laments no more, for he now knows that the gods will have him die, and he fully accepts this death and the ordained means to it. He now has a divinely-appointed role which he sees clearly and takes on wholly, and he goes to this god-decreed death with an unforgettable heroism and nobility which are all the more striking because he does not know that this death will lead to his apotheosis. His audience knows. But Herakles himself expects only to die;[156] and he is made to go to his agonising death on the pyre with a fierce and splendid courage, made all the more splendid because he has no hope:

> ἄγε νυν . . .

when the Hydra, horrible and monstrous, has soaked in? From the black-maned beast's treacherous words there comes to torture him a murderous confusion, sharp points brought to burning heat.' Easterling comments (1, *ad loc.*): 'The Chorus trace the disaster to its sources, Nessus and the Hydra, metaphorically representing Heracles' struggle in the robe as a physical encounter with these two monsters. His agony has two aspects: he is stung by excruciating pain . . . and "stuck fast" in a grip he cannot escape. The first is seen as the doing of Nessus, the second as that of the Hydra, which being a snake is easily imagined holding him in its grip.' We note that the poison attacks Herakles — πλευρά, 833 — where it attacked Nessos — πλευράν, 681.

[149] See Galinsky, pp.37-8.

[150] It would seem that Sophokles had a particular reverence for Herakles, for from *Vita Soph.* 12 (cf. Cicero *de divin.* 1. 54) we learn that according to Hieronymus (fr. 31 Wehrli) he established a shrine to him — see M. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London, 1981), pp.83f.

[151] See references in n.139 above. Easterling says (3, p.59): 'Zeus has a special role in this play as Heracles' father and we ought to be wary of treating him as if he were in any way comparable with Zeus in Aeschylus'; and (1, p.176): 'The theme of Heracles' relationship with Zeus is insistently repeated'.

[152] ll.1159-61. 'Long ago my father revealed to me that I should die by nothing that draws breath, but by someone dead, an inhabitant of Hell.'

[153] Lines 787, 790, 805, 986-7, 1004-6, 1026-30, 1072.

[154] Lines 1013-7, 1031-3, 1040-3, 1085-8.

[155] l.1174. 'What splendour, it all coheres': Ezra Pound (*Women of Trachis* (1956), p.66) recognises this as the 'key phrase for which the play exists'. In Herakles' subsequent preparations 'it is natural to assume that he is recalling the commands of Zeus' — Easterling (1), p.9.

[156] ll.1148-9: Alkmene was Διὸς μάτην ἄκοιτις. l.1202: νέρθεν. ll.1255-6: παῦλά τοι κακῶν / αὕτη, τελευτὴ τοῦδε τἀνδρὸς ὑστάτη.

. . . ὦ ψυχὴ σκληρά, χάλυβος
λιθοκόλλητον στόμιον παρέχουσ',
ἀνάπαυε βοήν, ὡς ἐπίχαρτον
τελέουσ' ἀκούσιον ἔργον.[157]

This is the right and fitting end for Herakles, this son of Zeus, and one that has been granted him by his divine father who, in this final scene of the play, seems almost to be on-stage with his son, so often is he mentioned.[158] Herakles' first words on waking are ὦ Ζεῦ (983). Zeus is the cause of all his torments:

ἱερῶν οἵαν οἵων ἐπί μοι
μελέῳ χάριν ἠνύσω, ὦ Ζεῦ·
οἵαν μ' ἄρ' ἔθου λώβαν, οἵαν . . .[159]

. . . τοιαῦτα νέμει Ζεύς . . . [160]

and their only cure:

. . . . . ὅς τάνδ' ἄταν
χωρὶς Ζηνὸς κατακηλήσει;[161]

The oracles of his death and, by implication, his apotheosis are from Zeus (169-72, 1159-73), and the place of his death is to be Oita, shrine of Zeus (200, 436-7, 1191). It is Zeus who has given him this death, answering in no uncertain terms the question that the Chorus asked at the beginning of the play:

. . . . . τίς ὧδε
τέκνοισι Ζῆν' ἄβουλον εἶδεν;[162]

For if Sophokles introduced the bowshot which killed Nessos, and thus made possible the lovecharm of Nessos' blood and the Hydra's venom, then this is no paltry death at the hands of an avenging woman, but the death of a hero killed, in the final analysis, by his own glorious deeds. It gives new meaning to the very last words of the play:

κοὐδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεύς.[163]

Zeus has indeed been mindful of his son: Herakles has been made worthy of his death and apotheosis.

[157] ll.1259-63. 'Come, my hard soul, fit on a bit of steel set with stones; come, cease your cry, and fulfill your reluctant task like an act of joy.'

[158] Zeus is mentioned by name in lines 983, 995, 1002, 1022, 1041, 1048, 1086, 1106, 1148, 1185, 1188, 1191, 1278; and by allusion in lines 1159, 1168, 1269.

[159] ll.994-6. 'Is this all the thanks you win me for all the sacrifice I made you, Zeus; torture, torture is all you give me!.'

[160] l.1022. 'Such is the will of Zeus.'

[161] ll.1001-2. 'Who can exorcise this curse, but Zeus?' And at other places in the play Zeus has been frequently mentioned as being in control of events: lines 26, 127-8, 251, 275, 303, 1188.

[162] ll.139-40. 'When has Zeus been unmindful of his children?'

[163] l.1288. 'There is nothing here which is not Zeus.'