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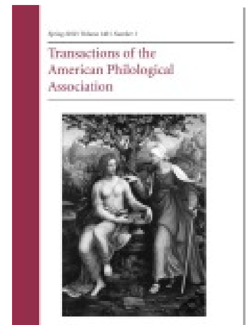
Transactions of the American Philological Association, Volume 130, 2000, pp. 189-237 (Article)



Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: 10.1353/apa.2000.0003

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Transactions of the American Philological Association 130 (2000) 189–237

Deianira's Guilt

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> Everyone already knows the story and understands from the beginning what she will do and that she thereby wreaks the greatest ruin utterly without blame.
>
> Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles*, 148

The protagonist of *Trachiniae* is virtually fixed in modern interpretation as the long-suffering housewife who meant no harm. In this regard Tycho's assumption is shared by most scholars: Sophocles' Deianira is guiltless from the outset; for she slays Heracles unwittingly, by the wiles of Nessus and not by her own intent. Tycho himself assumed that Deianira the innocent was well known to an ancient audience long before Sophocles elevated her from bystander to protagonist.[1] More recently, scholars have argued that Sophocles invented Deianira's innocence: she was known from saga as a vindictive murderess, and the character in *Trachiniae* reversed the expectations of the audience. By either theory Sophocles' Deianira is an innocent victim of schemes that others devised—this at least is a given, that "everyone knows." Whatever Sophocles has done to shape the story, his protagonist remains a blameless instrument of the god's impenetrable design.[2]

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[1]Tycho's Deianira cannot lie (151–52); that would be, "impossible..., an unbearable stain on the image of the true and long-suffering wife." As protagonist she is a "figure entirely conceived by Sophocles himself" (155, "...eine Figur die in der Sage nur Nebenperson war"); but her essential character was fixed by tradition; see below §2.1, at n. 41.

[2]As Davies remarks (1991: xix), the Homeric phrase Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή "might almost serve as the play's subtitle." For Dodds (1966: 46), the doom of Deianira the innocent confirms the lesson of Oedipus, that Sophocles "did not believe or did not always believe that the gods were in any human sense 'just' "; answered by Lloyd-Jones 1983: 126–28. For Stinton (1976: 138), "Deianeira must be innocent, and cannot therefore know what effect the charm will in fact have"; Zeitlin (1990: 69–70) sees Deianeira "[as] the innocent, virtuous wife... [who] loses none of our sympathy when

This essay challenges the cardinal assumption that Sophocles' Deianira is guiltless in the eyes of the ancient audience. For the modern reading proceeds invariably from the notion that she is blameless because she acts without malice: evil intention is the measure of culpability, and Deianira did not intend to kill. But the Athenians approached such cases with a different moral calculus: the criterion of murder is knowledge of the lethal effect, not the specific intent to kill. Deianira emerges in *Trachiniae* as a figure endowed with innocent intentions but burdened with guilty knowledge. And by complicating her predicament in this way, Sophocles gives her story a profoundly different shape.

In the first section we extricate Sophocles' innovation from the interwoven traditions. Since the 1940s, some scholars have argued that Deianira the innocent suddenly appears in *Trachiniae* without any precedent in the art and literary remains before Sophocles. By this theory, Bacchylides' dithyramb portraying Deianira as an innocent victim of ineluctable divinity (c. 16) is drawn from the dramatic model of *Trachiniae* itself. But as we shall see, Bacchylides' tale is not without context in earlier representations, and Sophocles seems to have departed from this earlier tale of innocence to implicate our protagonist by her own machinations. For Bacchylides' character received the fatal cloak ready-made and then acted in ignorance of its deadly effect. But Sophocles' character must use a cloak of her own making and she knows the nature of its power.

As we see in section 2, the first half of the play emphasizes this complication—that she acts without intending to kill, but not without awareness that her magic will endanger her husband. Here we consider the evidence on how such therapies were supposed to work, and how guilt was assessed for the inevitable casualties. The record of erotic magic confirms that the wife's charm upon her husband typically worked by toxic effect. And we have consistent evidence in Antiphon and Aristotle that the criterion of guilt in law and popular reasoning was precisely the question of knowledge, not whether the accused intended but whether she recognized the threat to life and limb.

This is not to say that Sophocles' Deianira is denied redemption for her innocent intentions. Hyllus forgives her on that account. But, as we see in section 3, that forgiveness provokes the conflict that dominates the latter part of the play. The son acquits his mother by the standard of acceptance that governs close kin in the *oikos,* but the father condemns her by the stricter standard that governs disputes among the menfolk in *agora* and assembly. In obedience to that "noblest law" that the son must follow the father, the boy coming of age

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unwittingly destroying her husband...the agent designated to fulfill the deceptive, riddling oracles, which predict...the tragic destiny of Herakles."

must come to terms with this adversarial standard. The ephebe's dilemma that concludes the play is thus created by the new characterization that Sophocles has given Deianira with the cloak of her own devising, innocent in her intentions but guilty by reason of her knowledge.

§1.

Deianira is a woman with a history and she keeps reminding us of it. She uses her narratives of the past to dispose of puzzling events at hand.[3] In the process she foreshadows the disaster she does not foresee. Her story is inextricably linked with her husband's doom, and much that she says seems to draw upon the audience's recollection of that famous tale, only to unsettle their expectations. At least it is reasonable to suppose that Sophocles' audience would be familiar with the prevailing pattern of stories on the death of Heracles,[4] and Deianira recasts this familiar tale in an ominous way: in the traditional version, her wedding must have come late in the hero's career and in close connection with his death;[5] but, by her own telling, her wedding to Heracles comes early in his labors, and she has had to endure his neglect all these years. The conflicting references to Heracles' oracles, foretelling "the end of labors," are also calculated to stir recollections and rouse uncertainty.[6] Indeed, the "ancient saying" that she discounts in her prologue—"you fathom no man's life until his death"—signals the irony that her own doom will not be as she thinks and the story that everyone knows will turn out otherwise.

[1.1] But what did Sophocles' audience assume about the guilt or innocence of this protagonist? Among the various traditions in the surviving record, one feature is remarkably consistent: the Deianira who haunted the ancient imagination was not the submissive creature that scholars have often imagined.[7] Her very name, meaning "Manslayer," suggests an Amazonian figure; and her family connections, as the daughter of Althea and sister of the Meleager who hunted with Atalanta, indicate a vigorous character, perhaps a huntress in her own right.[8] Add to this the testimony that she proved a fit consort for Heracles,

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[3]Cf. C. Kraus (1991: 81–83) on Deianira reasoning by analogy from earlier experience.

[4]Holt 1989 argues convincingly that the self-immolation was familiar to the Sophoclean audience. Cf. C. Kraus 1991: 97–98. The older traditions are outlined below.

[5]Thus reasoned Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 100–102), rightly.

[6]See Tycho 126–32 on the oracles; cf. Lloyd-Jones 1982: 229–30; Davies 1991: 268–69.

[7]Errandonea, 1927 and 1958, noted the persistent association with Clytemnestra ([Plut.] *Mor.* 881d), and concluded "either [*Trachiniae*] is an impossible plot in the age of Pericles, or the usual interpretation [of innocence] is wrong." See below at n. 77.

[8]Wilamowitz *père* (1895: 78) gives a representative characterization: "she is an Aetolian, and the women of this tribe are endowed by saga with the most vigorous traits,

fighting alongside him, clad in armor, and shedding her own blood in battle. Apollodorus reports (1.8.1) "She drove the chariot and practiced the arts of war."[9] This note finds support in a scholion to Apollonius' *Argonautica* 1.1212, following a reference to Archilochus, that Heracles armed her for battle against the Dryopes, and in that encounter she was wounded in the breast. The testimonia on Deianira the warrior are late, but there is pictorial evidence of a similar character going back at least to the seventh century.

In what may be her earliest appearance in extant art, a proto-Attic vase in New York, she stands in the chariot holding the reins, as Nessus kneels before Heracles pleading for mercy.[10] The detail, with reins in hand, appears to be an identifying feature, probably reflected in Apollodorus' ἡνιόχει.[11] This proto-Attic tableau is also consistent with a somewhat later picture where Deianira escapes from the centaur by her own prowess as Heracles pursues him.[12]

In these images we have no clue that Deianira is innocent of murdering her husband. When she has escaped from the centaur's grasp and Heracles kills him at close quarters, Nessus has no chance to deceive Deianira with his dying words. It is only when the hero shoots down the beast from a distance, with the helpless victim in his very grasp, that we recognize that obvious window of opportunity—as it is presented in *Trachiniae*. Instead, in the earliest material she is a figure of fierce defiance, outrunning the centaur or breaking free of his grip.

The fragment of Archilochus in Dio Chrysostom presents a picture of Deianira's rescue that is consistent with the earliest paintings and at odds with the version in Sophocles.[13] For Dio tells us that Archilochus was criticized for

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as is Althea, Deianira's mother, who killed Meleager with a similar malice, as her daughter slew Heracles." Cf. Errandonea 1927 and Stoessl 1945: see below n. 20.

[9]Apollodorus 1.8.1: ἡνιόχει καὶ τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον ἤσκει. Cf. Nonn. *D.* 35.89–91. Σ in A. R. 1.1212: Δηιάνειραν καθοπλίσαι, ...καὶ κατὰ τὸν μαζὸν τότε τετρῶσθαι.

[10]Proto-Attic amphora New York MMA 11.210.1 (*LIMC* s.v. Nessos 36). On the name-vase of the Nessos painter, from the same period (Athens NM 1002), Deianira is strangely absent. Hoppins (1900: 455 n. 1) supposed that Deianira might have been portrayed on the other side; Baur (1912: 10), to the contrary.

[11]Also seen in Athens NM 354, Melian amphora (=*LIMC* s.v. Herakles 1690).

[12]Deianira running ahead of Nessus, Heracles pursuing: *LIMC* s.v. Nessos 43–45 (ca. 550); and nos. 22 and 27 (ca. 515). In none of the surviving material is she clearly shown bearing arms, but see below, n. 21.

[13]D. Chr. 60.1 (von Arnim): φασὶ γὰρ οἱ μὲν τὸν Ἀρχίλοχον ληρεῖν, ποιοῦντα τὴν Δηιάνειραν ἐν τῷ βιάζεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ Κενταύρου πρὸς τὸν Ἡρακλέα ῥαψῳδοῦσαν, ἀναμιμνῄσκουσαν τῆς τοῦ Ἀχελῴου μνηστείας καὶ τῶν τότε γενομένων· ὥστε πολλὴν σχολὴν εἶναι τῷ Νέσσῳ ὅ τι ἐβούλετο πρᾶξαι· οἱ δὲ

allowing so long a delay in the rescue that Deianira might sing the whole tale of her wooing while Heracles failed to use his bow. That criticism could as easily apply to the early paintings, where Heracles comes on the run to slay the monster by sword, while Deianira deals with her pursuer.[14] If Archilochus choreographed the encounter in this way, with Heracles killing at close quarters, he, too, left Nessus no opportunity to deceive. To fashion the fatal robe, Deianira was left to her own devices.

Thus in the earliest material there is no suggestion that Deianira was beguiled by the centaur to gather his blood—indeed, there is no obvious opportunity. So how did she come to devise the fateful robe?

Most scholars have supposed that the *Siege of Oechalia* composed by Creophylus of Samos in the seventh century was influential in shaping the story of Heracles' doom and the role of Deianira. The fragments are few but were sufficient for the elder Wilamowitz to conclude that Deianira here became the agent of Heracles' demise, for surely the death and apotheosis would form the natural conclusion to the *Siege*. The apotheosis was already envisioned in the latest strata of the *Odyssey* and clearly established in the traditions that later formed the Hesiodic *Catalogue*.[15] And in one reliable fragment of the *Siege* (fr. 1) Heracles seems to taunt Iole with the ruin she has brought upon her people, not without the irony that she will also be *his* ruin. If Deianira's *pharmaka* formed part of the story, she probably devised her fatal gift purposely to punish Heracles for his betrayal. For, again, in the archaic material we find no

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τὸν Σοφοκλέα πρὸ τοῦ καιροῦ πεποιηκέναι τὴν τοξείαν, διαβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἔτι τὸν ποταμόν· οὕτως γὰρ ἂν καὶ τὴν Δηιάνειραν ἀπολέσθαι, ἀφέντος τοῦ Κενταύρου. In what follows (2–3), Dio insists that Nessus would not have attacked Deianira while Heracles was in view with bow in hand. Cf. March 1987: 55.

[14]It is sometimes suggested that the proto-Attic amphora showing Deianira with reins in hand (above, n. 10) may allude to the story told by Archilochus: apparently the fight with Nessus was prelude to the battle where Deianira fought in armor. The treatment by Archilochus is indicated in Σ A. R. 1.1212 and D. Chr. 60 (above, n. 13). Dugas (1943: 23–25) also linked Archilochus to the tradition in D. S. 4.36 and Apollod. 2.152, where the rape was consummated (below, n. 47); similarly Lesky 1983: 143.

[15]Wilamowitz 1895: 70–81, esp. 78: earlier epic made no connection between the wooing of Deianira, the slaying of Nessus, the poisoned robe, and the death of Heracles. Friedländer 66–83 offers a similar reconstruction: the apotheosis was originally the conclusion to the Twelve Labors and had nothing to do with the siege of Oechalia; in the *Odyssey* Eurytus died at the hands of Apollo (8.226), and afterward Iphitus came to Heracles as a friend (21.13–38). The sack of Oechalia at the hands of Heracles was probably invented by Creophylus or his predecessor. On dating the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and traditions it drew upon, see West 164–68.

connection between Nessus the deceiver and the hero's death. So, it is sometimes supposed, Deianira took vengeance by her own design, perhaps following Medea's example.[16]

But the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* presents a picture of Deianira as she was known in epic, and here we find a clue often overlooked, an intriguing allusion to her mental process. In the *Catalogue,* as in the earlier representations, there is still no suggestion that the death of Heracles was blamed on Nessus' deception or that Deianira was thus provided with an excuse: the cataloguer evidently conceived of the fatal cloak as Deianira's own device. But if the restoration is correct, this author also thought of Deianira's crime not as an act of intentional murder but of reckless disregard. Thus he characterizes her: "cunning Deianira...terrible were the deeds she did, deep in reckless delusion (ἀάσατο μέγα θυμῷ), when she dyed the robe with fatal *pharmaka* and gave it to the herald Lichas to convey."[17] We are not told what she intended, but surely what "cunning Deianira" did "in reckless delusion" is not a blameless error, any more than Agamemnon's offense against Achilles was blameless because he was afflicted by *atê*. Her wrong, like his, may largely consist in disregarding the will and dignity of another. As we shall see (§2), the treatment in *Trachiniae* seems to draw upon this reckless character.

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[16]Didymus (Σ E. *Med*. 264) tells us that the work of Creophylus included a formative version of the tale of Medea: in Corinth she slew Creon by her *pharmaka* and fled to Athens; she left her sons behind at the altar of Hera Acraia where they were slain by the Corinthians. Wilamowitz the elder (1880: 486) argued that this tale must belong to the little-known work of a later historian, Creophylus of Ephesus. He is followed by Jacoby (*FGrH* 417 F3) and Davies (1989: 470). But we have only two fragments for the prose writer from Ephesus (fourth century or third) and nothing to suggest that he dealt with such material. Wilamowitz dated the fragment on Medea later than Euripides because it seemed dependent on Euripides' version. But Leo 311–12 saw the Creophylus fragment as evidence *against* Euripides' invention. Also against Wilamowitz: Galli 9–18; Roussel 158–61; Robert 187, 870; Sèchan; followed by Page xxiv. Burkert treated the problem as insoluble. McDermott defends Euripides' invention (esp. 9–20) without denying that the fragment should be ascribed to Creophylus' *Siege*.

[17]Fr. 25 MW, 17–23. Earlier editors offered δειν[ὸν τεύξεν πόσει] μεγαθύμῳ in line 20. Merkelbach and West read δεῖν' ἔρξ' [ἔπει ἀάσατ]ο μέγα θυμῶι, followed by March 49–50. 'Αάσασθαι conveys reckless delusion (*atê*) born of arrogance, especially in disregarding the right of another; it does not absolve the offender from blame, as in the case of Agamemnon himself (*Il.* 9.116, 119; 19.137). In archaic hexameter μέγα θυμῶι is found only with this verb: in *hCer.* 246, ἀάσθη μέγα θυμῶι, of Metaneira's protest; ἀάσατο μέγα θυμῶι, *Il.* 11. 340; and notably at 9.537, of Deianira's father, Oineus, neglecting sacrifice to Artemis.

Already in the sixth century, to be sure, we find a more victimized Deianira in the paintings: as Heracles attacks, the beast has the maiden in his clutches; this becomes what we might call "the standard rescue." But the weaponry is still significant: a glance at the examples in *Lexicon Iconographicum* will confirm that early versions of this encounter almost always have Heracles slay the centaur at close quarters, not by poisoned arrow but by sword or club.[18] That image is all the more remarkable because in epic Heracles is cast characteristically as the archer. The standard rescue, without archery, carries on to the end of the sixth century. But the picture then changes dramatically within a generation.

[1.2] Those who have taken up this investigation generally agree that Deianira was not an innocent victim of Nessus' deception before the fifth century. In epic she somehow devised the fatal cloak by her own design; she may have acted vindictively or in reckless delusion, but there is no suggestion that she was deceived by the centaur. Then, when we turn from the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and the paintings of that era to the story in Bacchylides and the paintings that correspond to it, there is much disagreement. Here we find that Nessus is made the instigator and Deianira the instrument. How do we account for this radical departure from tradition?

Dubious dating of *Trachiniae* has complicated the question. Tycho, like his father before him, dated *Trachiniae* rather late in Sophocles' career.[19] The elder Wilamowitz had argued ingeniously that the final scene of Sophocles' play was patterned on the Schlafszene in Euripides *Heracles:* it thus belongs sometime after 420. Tycho therefore supposed that Bacchylides' version represents the same basic story perhaps fifty years (or more) before *Trachiniae.* He offered no speculation on the inventor of this tale of innocence, but he had to conclude that the story was well established long before Sophocles took it over—hence the pronouncement with which we began this essay, "Jeder kennt ja die Geschichte...".

But the late dating is precarious at best, and more recently the opinion has prevailed that *Trachiniae* must be one of Sophocles' earliest efforts. The early dating opens a window of opportunity for Bacchylides to imitate Sophocles. Thus, where Deianira in her earlier manifestations was neither bystander nor

[18]Of the plates in *LIMC* 6.2 s.v. Nessos, over 25 of the black-figure alone show this standard rescue. Note particularly nos. 1 and 15, Louvre E 852 (ca. 565–50) and E 803 (ca. 550).

[19]See Tycho 90–97, defending his father's theory (1895: 152–54). Heinz emphasized the echoes of *Alcestis.* Lesky 132–33 found the latter connection persuasive. Solmsen (1932: 10–14) argued for the 430s or 420s, emphasizing similar *mechanêmata* in Euripides.

blameless, Sophocles introduced the centaur's deception and transformed Deianira from valkyrie to victim; and it was in response to this dramatic reversal that Bacchylides also altered his characterization. This theory was suggested by Bruno Snell and developed by Franz Stoessl in the 1940s.[20] Let us call it "Stoessl's theory," though it has been revised and well argued by others, notably Jennifer March in her *Creative Poet*.

As we have seen (1.1), archery is strangely absent from the early paintings; the "standard rescue" with sword in hand tends to support Stoessl's theory. Without archery we have neither the deceptive mixture of blood and venom nor the opportunity for Nessus to instruct the innocent wife beyond her husband's hearing. Heracles appears with his bow to rescue Deianira as early as the late sixth century.[21] But March explains, quite plausibly, that this innovative painter introduced archery out of his own ingenuity, in order to wrap the scene around the vase. We should also recognize that this device is a natural development of the story, for in these paintings Deianira makes her own escape; she is free of the centaur's clutches. This picture of Deianira's escape emerges from the warlike character of proto-Attic Deianira holding the reins and the athletic figure of the early sixth century, running away from the centaur. And such variations practically invite the hero to use his bow; for by making her escape Deianira gives Heracles a clean shot.[22]

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[20]Stoessl 27–66; cf. Schwinge 128–33; Hoey 214–20; March 56–71. Snell regarded B. 16 as a departure from the older story reflected in B. 5 and in *Pap. Berol*. 16140 (see below, n. 30). Stoessl 30–31 found a similar evolution in *Trachiniae:* the hapless victim of the centaur's deception is a "Sophoclean overlay" upon "the cunning adulteress in Archilochus or the murderess in Creophylus and Panyassis."

[21]*LIMC* s.v. Nessos 80 and 91a (= Louvre Cp 10228), dated ca. 530–20; March 54 with plates 23a–b. There may be an earlier rendition of Nessus' death by archery in a fragment from the Argive Heraeum dated to the early seventh century, but identification is uncertain and March is right to reserve judgment. In the original publication (Waldstein [1902–5] 2: 161–64 with plate 67), Hoppins identifies Deianira hanging on, pleading for deliverance; the centaur has been struck with an arrow; there is a sword raised high to deliver the coup de grace. Hoppins also suggests that the arrow strikes a war belt (on such accessories, see now Bennett). The later published photos (Dugas fig. 2, March pl. 20) are not helpful, and Hoppins' reconstruction remains doubtful. There is no indication of Heracles. Given the contortion of the figure, it might be the woman who is holding the sword, if she is Deianira; as Baur pointed out, she may be standing at or in a chariot.

[22]For Deianira's escape, see above, n. 12. In one version from around 500 she stands safe at Heracles' side, as Nessus falls with arrows embedded (Munich 1905 = *LIMC* 81). Dio's impatience with Archilochus (above, n. 13) may reflect the natural constraint of the

Stoessl's theory is still viable down to the end of the sixth century: the earliest paintings with archery leave little room for the centaur's deception, for, if she escapes from the centaur before the arrow strikes him down, he has no clear chance to deceive her with his blood and his dying words. Presumably the Deianira who escapes by her own prowess would later fashion the robe by her own design. In the early fifth century, however, Stoessl's theory runs into difficulties; for here we must account for Bacchylides' dithyramb 2 (c. 16 Snell) and a painting that is contemporary with Bacchylides and consistent with the dithyramb (figures 1–2).

Bacchylides portrays Deianira as the innocent victim of inscrutable destiny: "invincible divinity (ἄμαχος δαίμων) wove for her a shrewd device of much sorrow"; she was destroyed by "far-reaching envy and a dusky cloak of things to come"—δνόφεόν τε κάλυμμα τῶν ὕστερον ἐρχομένων—when she received from Nessus the fateful portent—δαιμόνιον τέρ[ας (23–35).[23] Stoessl and March conclude that Sophocles invented this character and that Bacchylides, very late in his career, recast his Deianira from the Sophoclean innovation.[24] Other commentators remain unpersuaded by this theory but have not offered to disprove it.[25]

A closer examination of this crucial connection is certainly in order. However early we wish to date *Trachiniae,* the evidence argues strongly against Stoessl's theory. Despite her warlike beginnings, Deianira the innocent victim is probably indicated in painting a generation before Sophocles took to the stage. And the treatment of Deianira in Bacchylides in itself suggests that Sophocles' character was not the model.

There are two essential features of Bacchylides' vignette that distinguish it as independent of the Sophoclean treatment and probably prior to it in plot

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early story: Heracles could not use his bow so long as Deianira was hanging upon Nessus like a shield.

[23]Scholars usually take ἐπίφρον' as agreeing with μῆτιν, not with Deianira, despite the echo of Hes. *Cat.* 25.17. In Homeric usage ἐπίφρων refers to the plan, not the person: *Od.* 3.128; 16.242; esp. 19.326, ἐπίφρονα μῆτιν. For δαιμόνιον τέρας, cf. S. *Ant.* 376: the discovery of Antigone is inscrutable but true to the family curse.

[24]The chronology is uncertain but poses no great obstacle. Recent scholarship prefers an early date for *Trachiniae* in the 440s, esp. Schwinge; cf. Reinhardt 42–48 with nn. (pp. 250–51); Hoey argues for a date ca. 450. Pointing to an early date for *Trachiniae* are the diptych structure and minimal use of three-part dialogue. If we allow Bacchylides a long life (with birthdate ca. 517), he may well have responded to Sophocles' earliest work.

[25]Snell's suggestion was quickly rejected by Dugas. Among recent skeptics: Davies 1991: xxii–xxxvii; Easterling 15–23; Burnet 123–28, with nn. (pp. 192–97).

development. There is first a basic discrepancy in movement and motivation: how did Deianira come to know that Heracles would wed Iole? Bacchylides tells us (26–29) that Deianira "learned a sorrowful message"—πύθετ' ἀγγελίαν ταλαπενθέα—that Heracles would bring home a shining bride—ἄλοχον λιπαρὸ[ν] ποτὶ δόμον πέμ[π]οι. Iole has not yet arrived; when Deianira makes her fateful decision, her rival is presumably still with her husband.[26] This is, in fact, the version followed by Diodorus, Apollodorus, Ovid in the *Metamorphoses,* and later reports:[27] Deianira learned of Iole by word of mouth, not by direct meeting. In this tradition it was Heracles' bidding, conveyed in the sorrowful message, that she send him suitable raiment.

In Sophocles, of course, Deianira meets Iole face to face and then decides to send the robe on her own initiative.[28] That encounter is crucial to the plot and it separates the Sophoclean character from the hapless victim in Bacchylides. Sophocles' Deianira takes pity on Iole, and bears her no enmity: like Odysseus in *Ajax*, she sees her own condition in the suffering of others. But she is all the more determined not to be supplanted by her rival. Unlike the Bacchylidean victim, this Deianira no longer relies on the word of others; she discovers her rival despite concealment and then decides to send the robe of her own devising. If Bacchylides meant to evoke the Sophoclean story, he would not have discounted this defining moment, the meeting with Iole.

The second and decisive difference lies in the emblematic cloak. For, in acquiring this talisman, Bacchylides' Deianira is unequivocally guiltless: she is a casualty of inscrutable doom woven for her by an invincible *daimôn.*[29] Her

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[26]As noted by Kamerbeek 6; Scodel 31 with n. 5 (p. 137). Bacchylides' phrasing does not absolutely exclude the meeting of rivals (Iole's very arrival might impart the "sorrowful message"?), but the grammar and sense would be strained. There are also minor discrepancies in the details of sacrifice: cf. B. 16. 17–22, *Tr.* 752–62, with Kapsomenos 5–9.

[27]D. S. 4.37.5–38.2; Apollod. 2.7.7 (cf. Eus. 2.2.32); Ov. *Met.* 9.137–45 (*fama loquax*). In *Her*. 9.121–30, however, Deianira beholds her rival.

[28]The divergence was noted by Beck 1953. The vase painting in London, British Museum E 370, which Beck did not notice, probably represents the version indicated in Bacchylides; see below at n. 38 with figures 3–4.

[29]Bacchylides' ἄμαχος δαίμων supposedly recalls *Tr.* 910—the *daimôn* of her own doom that Deianira calls upon. If so, it is an ironic echo: see below §2.4. Bacchylides' invincible divinity in c. 16 seems closer to the abstract, as in Aeschylus' ἄμαχος δαίμων, *Ag.* 768. For personal *daimones,* cf. B. 3.367; 5. 113, 135; S. *OT* 1193.

disaster is symbolized in the *daimonion teras;* its fatal effect was already determined when she received it, ignorant of its power.[30]

Bacchylides' description suggests that Deianira received her cloak of things to come directly from her abductor. In this detail, the version Bacchylides had in mind was like the one Ovid later recalled:[31] Nessus bequeathed a cloak that was already dyed in the hot blood of his wounds—*calido velamina tincta cruore*. If we did not have *Trachiniae* to prejudice our reading of the dithyramb, this would be the most natural understanding of Bacchylides' δνόφεον κάλυμμα: the dusky cloak was dark with blood and venom when Deianira received it.[32] The garment that later proved fatal was a memento of the wedding journey, strangely dyed in the fateful crossing, which the wife now sent to the hero for his new marriage.[33] Bacchylides' *kalumma* at least suggests an association with the wedding *anakalupteria*.[34] Sophocles, on the other hand, describes the fatal cloak as a *peplos,* suitable for clothing male figures in sacred roles:[35] it is a

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[30]Bacchylides seems to foreshadow this fatal ignorance in his earlier mention of Deianira as a maiden "yet innocent of Aphrodite's witching power" (νῆιν ἔτι...Κύπριδος θελξιμβρότου, 5. 173–75).

[31]*Met.* 9.131–33: *et calido velamina tincta cruore / dat munus raptae velut inritamen amoris*; cf. 153, *imbutam Nesseo sanguine vestem*; *Her*. 9.142–44.

[32]The usual understanding of Ovid is that the cloak tainted with thecentaur's blood is the centaur's cloak, and this twist to the story is Ovid's own device: cf. Bömer, vol. 4 (1977) 302–10. But Roman centaurs of Ovid's time typically wear animal skins in token of their savagery, as in the painting from Pompeii, ca. 10 B.C.E., Naples Mus. Naz. 111474 (=*LIMC* s.v. Nessos 73). Greek centaurs usually wear nothing at all (except Pholus and Chiron: Baur 1912: 91–92). There are few exceptions until the late mosaic in Budapest (Baur 27; *LIMC* 87). On the *tunica molesta*, supposedly inspired by the "shirt of Nessus," see Mayor 1997.

[33]Such a cloak might have been worn by Deianira for the journey to her husband's house. In the early sixth century Deianira wears a mantle for the wedding journey, and her father Oineus wears an outer garment of the same design: Athens NM 354 (=*LIMC* s.v. Herakles 1690). A peplos is easily adapted for various functions (below, n. 35). See Loraux's discussion (1995: 125–30), "The Peplos of Heracles"; cf. Delcourt 2–21 and Vidal-Naquet 156–58, regarding transvestic associations in transitional rites.

[34]The "veiling" of the bride for the *exagôgê* is usually indicated simply by drawing the robe over the head (as Deianira is often shown); cf. Rehm 141–42. In *Tr.* 1078–79 Heracles seems to mock the wedding ritual, drawing aside his *kalummata* to reveal his ravaged body; cf. Seaford 56–57; Rehm 79.

[35]Sophocles significantly calls the robe a *peplos* (674, 758, 774) or *peploma* (613), esp. ταναυφῆ πέπλον (602). Cf. Bieber 1928: 54, noting that the *peplos* unfastened can be worn as a mantle (such as is indicated in many of the Deianira paintings). See also Bieber 1967: 28–34, esp. 28–29 on the shifting styles of the late archaic period (and on

garment that Deianira prepared specifically for her husband's triumphal sacrifice (610–13), and as such it represents a significant departure from the tale of the wedding cloak that preceded it.

From the early fifth century, contemporary with Bacchylides, we find the vase in figures 1–2, complete with all the elements essential to this older version:[36] Heracles shoots the centaur while Deianira is in his fell clutches, to be deceived by his dying words, with the cloak inevitably tainted in his blood. Leaping about in the foreground are dolphins to indicate a body of water. That element was missing in the earlier paintings, and it was probably essential to the original tale of deception.[37] For it is the dyeing of the cloak in the bloodied stream that gives it such a deceptive appearance; there is no gruesome clot of hydra's venom, such as Sophocles describes. The gushing wound turns the river red: Bacchylides alludes to this effect in describing it as *rhodoeis;* the stream and everything in it is tainted with the blood. Ovid explains, *infecit sanguis equinus aquas* (*Her.* 9.142).

This cloak bloodied in the stream was probably the original means of deceiving Deianira; Nessus had only to tell her that the cloak steeped in his blood would have power to bind her husband's affection; she kept this portent from her wedding journey and sent this same cloak, laden with irony, to her husband in celebration of his new marriage. There is a painting that seems to portray this aftermath: figures 3–4.[38] The vase is dated ca. 440–30, described in the manner of the Washing Painter. Side A shows a young woman presenting the robe to Heracles as he doffs his lion skin; an older woman stands forlorn on the other side. Beazley identified the younger woman as Deianira herself, with no known parallel for the scene and no role for the older woman. But if we draw the natural implications, we recognize in this painting the story line that

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Hdt. 5.87.3), and 34 on the functional similarity of male and female garments. On the broad usage of *peplos* in epic, cf. Marinatos 1967: 6–14; Amelung 1899, noting the peplos on male figures, esp. Apollo.

[36]Now in Rome, Museo Barracco 223, once attributed to the Diosphos Painter, now to the Haemon Painter: cf. Fittschen 161–71.

[37]The fording of an irresistible stream was probably an essential feature as early as Archilochus, perhaps the only device by which Nessus could get Deianira in his power. But as Dio Chrysostom suggests (above, n. 13), Archilochus postponed the slaying of Nessus until sometime after the fording (and probably without archery).

[38]London, British Museum E 370. Beazley *ARV*^{2} 1134 describes side A as Heracles and Deianira, side B as an unidentified woman. March 47 gives a photo of side A only. The full vase is sketched by Greifenhagen (1977) pl. 7 with comment pp. 207–8 (previously unpublished).

Bacchylides followed: Deianira has learned of her rival by a "sorrowful message"; she sends the robe to Heracles, and Iole is with him to receive it. The original author of the story that appears in Bacchylides and in this vase probably cannot be identified.[39] But we find confirmation in the painting, as scholars have often supposed of the dithyramb, that this version was the stuff of tragedy. The painter did not quite draw the mask, but the stance and expression of the older woman suggest a character drawn from the stage.

We can see that Sophocles responded to a similar story: he retains the arrow striking the centaur in midstream (564) even though it no longer suits his scenario. Dio Chrysostom reports that Sophocles was faulted for the incongruity (above, n. 13): How is the maiden to survive when her abductor is shot down in a raging river? Of course, we can easily imagine Nessos staggering ashore. But why have him shot in midstream at all if his victim is supposed to gather up his blood in a jar? The arrow striking in midstream is a part of the background that has lost its significance in Sophocles' tale of the robe that Deianira must dye by her own hand.

From the agreement of Bacchylides and the paintings, it appears that Sophocles' tale was preceded by an earlier version of innocence based upon the crisis in midstream and the blood-stained cloak that came of it. Before this tale of the cloak dyed in the river, tradition may have portrayed the death of Nessus by archery, but the fatal blow only came after the river was safely forded—and apparently after Deianira had broken free. Sophocles' predecessor introduced the cloak bloodied in the stream, and it was this device that allowed for a radical redemption of Deianira. For in that version she is utterly without blame; she has no reason to suspect the lethal power hidden in the robe. In this regard Tycho was probably right: the tale of pure innocence was well known before Sophocles. But Stoessl's theory is also right in this respect, that Sophocles invented a character to challenge the assumptions of his audience. Like the innocent victim who so impressed Bacchylides, she acts with the righteous aim of regaining her husband's devotion. Yet, recalling the character sketched in the Hesiodic *Catalogue,* she acts with reckless cunning to ensnare her man in a dangerous web of her own making.

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[39]Aeschylus is just possible, as Zielinski speculated (1921–22). A fragment from Aeschylus' *Heracleidae* describes the agony of Heracles in the poisoned robe, καυσίμοις ἐνδ[ύμασιν / οἰδοῦν]τα καὶ λοπῶντα φαρμάκου, fr. 110 Mette =*Pap. Fayum* 2; Fritsch 1936: 14–16.

§2.

Sophocles introduces this ambiguous character in the first two episodes, where she deals with Lichas [2.1] and consults with the Chorus [2.2]. In these scenes we are shown how she reasons about her predicament and decides upon deception with a certain consciousness of her own guilt. To understand how the ancient audience would react to her decision, let us also weigh the testimony on comparable cases [2.3]. Finally, to fathom Deianira's guilt, we need to unravel the complex motivation of her suicide [2.4]. For it is often supposed that she takes her life simply in horror at the discovery that she has slain her husband; but that outcome is one she had already reckoned with. There is a second and more tragic reversal that determines the timing and the manner of her death.

[2.1] The key to this character as a tragic figure is the defining act of deception, as Karl Reinhardt recognized.[40] In deceiving others she irrevocably alters her place among them: she will act as she had never dared and take on a character that is hateful to her.

Deianira introduced herself in the prologue as a character most unlikely to make any such change in her condition. She is resigned to a bitter fatalism: she knows the sum of her life before it is done; her lot is all grief and misfortune. This is an outlook that she has learned from experience: her beauty was nearly the cause of a hideous wedding to a monster; and then when Heracles rescued her and she had hopes of happiness, her life settled into a cycle of abandonment and anxiety. However propitious a circumstance, she has learned, the outcome will be ultimately unhappy. With this conviction she has been a passive observer of the events that shape her life; she has done nothing to avert misfortune—indeed, when Heracles wrestled Achelous for her hand, she could not even bear to watch. How is this meek creature driven to act so precipitously in order to alter her situation?

For those who insist upon her innocence, Deianira's change of heart is perhaps the most awkward feature of this character—that she should first profess such submissiveness in the prologue and then plot to deceive her husband. Zielinski found the answer in romantic obsession: he constructed an elaborate vision of how the scene would unfold, as in a lyric opera (1896: 521–26). Deianira opens the play working at her loom, nearing completion of the great robe that she is weaving from devotion to her lord; and then, as the bitter truth emerges, she is driven to make desperate use of this labor of love. Tycho, of course, ridiculed the romantic psychology and dismissed the contradictions in

[40] Reinhardt 55, comparing Deianira and Ajax: "In deception they outwardly touch their destiny and grasp the truth."

this character as negligible conflation. But Zielinski was probably right to insist that the original audience would be struck by the change of purpose and by the handling of Deianira's cloak as an emblem of it. He was only wrong about the motivation.

For Deianira tells us about her driving motives, and love of the hero is not much of a factor. The figure of dogged devotion is bound to her condition by shame. As we shall see in her later confessions, she despises women who take daring action; she must conceal her own daring for fear of shame; and when she foresees that her spell has gone wrong, she vows to die rather than endure the shame of discovery. She is driven to risk such shame only by a worse fear, that she will lose her place in the *oikos*. Rather than lose this cherished status, she will change her characteristic way of dealing with adversity: for once she will act decisively, in defiance of the pattern of events around her.

She comes to this determination in the course of extracting the truth from Lichas and deceiving him in turn. Deianira misleads Lichas on two points: to convince him that she bears no grudge, she claims or at least clearly implies that there have been many other rivals like Iole. And once Deianira has wrestled the truth from him, she bids Lichas wait for her to prepare an offering in return, "gift for gift," as though she accepts her new chattel with a good grace and has no hostile purpose.

The first deception, that she has tolerated other such rivals, may seem innocent enough. She says only, "Has not my one man wedded many others, and none met with any reproach from me?" (459–62). This is true only insofar as the earlier erotic exploits of Heracles lay elsewhere; Deianira has never had to endure another mistress in her own house. But she certainly suggests that she has dealt with such rivals before, and she uses this pattern of experience to convince Lichas that she offers no opposition to the intrusion of Iole.

Tycho disposed of the deception by merging conflicting traditions. In its original conception, the tale of Deianira must have come after the great labors; after all, Heracles' meeting with Meleager among the dead belongs to the twelfth and final task. Sophocles has backdated the wedding with Deianira to a time long before the labors were done; thus the notorious "weddings" of so many *parerga* come within her purview. The apparent deception is an incidental product of this adaptation; "everyone knows the story" well enough to overlook the incongruity.[41]

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[41]It is here (148) that he assures us, "Jeder kennt ja die Geschichte und weiß von Anfang an, was sie tun wird, weiß auch, daß sie ohne alle Schuld damit das größte Unheil anrichtet."

But, of course, the audience did not all know that Deianira would emerge in the character that Sophocles gives her. Within the previous generation or so, Deianira had been portrayed as the innocent victim; but she would also be known to many among the Periclean audience as the defiant figure of saga, and there is much in what she says that strikes a defiant note.

Indeed, her later confessions will confirm that the coming of Iole is a new indignity that she had not learned to accept. To an audience not so conveniently predisposed to assume her innocence, her first deviation from the truth may have seemed an ironic reflection: indeed, her man has "wedded many others," but none before has ever come to take her place. She has endured abandonment all these years and here at last is her reward, her payment for housekeeping, as she later calls it. Her first venture into deception comes with the bitter realization that the role she has clung to will soon be taken from her.

The second deception, the exchange of "gift for gift," goes hand-in-hand with this first deviation, and it marks a crucial departure from the earlier tale of Deianira the innocent. There is Iole standing mute upon the stage: Deianira no longer learns of her by a sorrowful message. She meets her rival face to face, and having learned the true nature of this new acquisition, she determines to take up the robe that she has labored over so long and use it to match the gift her husband has sent her.[42] She does not say that she cannot bear to lose his love; the only note of regret at his lost affection comes in her last remark to Lichas, in the next scene, that she will make no profession of love until she learns if it is answered (630–32). Significantly, her gesture of love is a transaction; she bargains for one last chance of happiness. She will cast aside her passive character to save the one asset she cannot bear to lose, her place in the *oikos*.

Thus in the deception of Lichas Deianira comes to her fateful decision: she will use the blood of Nessus to infuse the robe with magic power, to repay her wayward husband. Much like Ajax, Deianira embraces a character inimical to her and decides her fate by embarking upon an uncharacteristic act of deceit. Her method in itself might suggest that she reverts to the vindictiveness or vicious recklessness that inspired her character in saga, where she devised the death of Heracles by her own design, undeceived by the centaur. And, if as Zielinski suggested, the robe of her own weaving was already there on stage from the prologue, it would be a visible symbol of that ancient tradition, as though to signify, "This is not the innocent mishap of the robe dyed in the

[42]For the significance of this "transaction," cf. Wohl xxx–xxxi, 17–37; and see below, §3.3. Heracles will be captured in a "woven net" (1052), "mastered by an unbreakable snare" (1057).

river." Through the opening scenes, as the chorus commiserates and Lichas leads in the captive Iole, Deianira stands over her work. Then, as the true meaning of his mission is discovered, she bids Lichas wait for her to prepare "gift for gift"; and then, gathering up the robe that has so ominously occupied center stage, she takes it into the house for finishing.[43]

She will reveal her rationale more fully in the next episode, but let us note what she has already told us about her way of reasoning. She convinces Lichas by arguing from experience. Human nature in the thrall of Eros will invariably act in a certain way; it is foolish to expect otherwise. There is, of course, the irony that one proof from experience proves false: Heracles had many such "wives" and Deianira never quarreled—till now. Despite her history of acceptance, she will now act to thwart her husband's will. But her way of reasoning is essentially unaltered; it is the same turn of mind she revealed in the prologue. And it will be therefore all the more striking in the next scene when she resolves to act in disregard of what might be learned from actual experience.

[2.2] When Deianira returns to the stage she brings the robe in a sealed container, and as she tells her tale we naturally imagine that it is the same bronze vessel in which she had kept the blood. That sealed vessel now symbolizes the dangerous decision she has to put into action. She slipped out of the house unnoticed (*lathrai*) to take the chorus of young women into her confidence, to reveal to them what she has by her own hands devised (χεροὶν ἀτεχνησάμην, 533–34).

She explains her fears with bitter irony (536–42): "The girl—I think a 'girl' no longer but a 'wedded woman'—I have taken in, as a shipper takes on ruinous cargo.… And now the two of us await his embrace under one blanket. Such recompense for keeping house so long a time has Heracles sent me, the one called 'good and trusty to us' (ὁ πιστὸς ἡμῖν κἀγαθὸς καλούμενος, 541)." She does not know how to be angry at this "illness" that he has suffered so often. But she is driven to seek a cure by the realization that she will be supplanted by the younger woman. This she deduces from the pattern of experience—"the eye likes to pluck the bloom" of youth and turns away from what fades with age (547–49).

Deianira then recounts how she comes to have a remedy at hand and takes the chorus into her confidence. This explanation and the chorus' response deserve close scrutiny. Consider first the conclusion to her speech, following Davies' text (552–87):

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[43]Perhaps signaled at 494–95, ἀντὶ δώρων δῶρα…καὶ ταῦτ' ἄγῃς.

᾿Αλλ᾿ οὐ γάρ, ὥσπερ εἶπον, ὀργαίνειν καλὸν
γυναῖκα νοῦν ἔχουσαν· ᾗ δ᾿ ἔχω, φίλαι,
λυτήριον λύπημα, τῇδ᾿ ὑμῖν φράσω.
ἦν μοι παλαιὸν δῶρον ἀρχαίου ποτὲ 555
θηρός, λέβητι χαλκέῳ κεκρυμμένον,
ὃ παίς ἔτ᾿ οὖσα τοῦ δασυστέρνου παρὰ
Νέσσου φθίνοντος ἐκ φονῶν ἀνειλόμην,
ὃς τὸν βαθύρρουν ποταμὸν Εὔηνον βροτοὺς
μισθοῦ ᾿πόρευε χερσίν, οὔτε πομπίμοις 560
κώπαις ἐρέσσων οὔτε λαίφεσιν νεώς.
ὃς κἀμέ, τὸν πατρῷον ἡνίκα στόλον
ξὺν Ἡρακλεῖ τὸ πρῶτον εὖνις ἑσπόμην,
φέρων ἐπ᾿ ὤμοις, ἡνίκ᾿ ἦ ᾿ν μέσῳ πόρῳ,
ψαύει ματαίαις χερσίν· ἐκ δ᾿ ἤϋσ᾿ ἐγώ, 565
χὠ Ζηνὸς εὐθὺς παῖς ἐπιστρέψας χεροῖν
ἧκεν κομήτην ἰόν· ἐς δὲ πλεύμονας
στέρνων διερροίζησεν· ἐκθνῄσκων δ᾿ ὁ θὴρ
τοσοῦτον εἶπε· "Παῖ γέροντος Οἰνέως,
τοσόνδ᾿ ὀνήσῃ τῶν ἐμῶν, ἐὰν πίθῃ, 570
πορθμῶν, ὁθούνεχ᾿ ὑστάτην σ᾿ ἔπεμψ᾿ ἐγώ·
ἐάν γὰρ ἀμφίθρεπτον αἷμα τῶν ἐμῶν
σφαγῶν ἐνέγκῃ χερσὶν ᾗ μελάγχολος
ἔβαψεν ἰὸς θρέμμα Λερναίας ὕδρας
ἔσται φρενός σοι τοῦτο κηλητήριον 575
τὴς Ἡρακλείας, ὥστε μήτιν᾿ εἰσιδὼν
στέρξει γυναῖκα κεῖνος ἀντὶ σοῦ πλέον."
Τοῦτ᾿ ἐννοήσασ᾿, ὦ φίλαι, δόμοις γὰρ ἦν
κείνου θανόντος ἐγκεκλῃμένον καλῶς,
χιτῶνα τόνδ᾿ ἔβαψα, προσβαλοῦσ᾿ ὅσα 580
ζῶν κεῖνος εἶπε· καὶ πεπείρανται τάδε.
κακὰς δὲ τόλμας μήτ᾿ ἐπισταίμην ἐγὼ
μήτ᾿ ἐκμάθοιμι, τάς τε τολμώσας στυγῶ.
φίλτροις δ᾿ ἐάν πως τήνδ᾿ ὑπερβαλώμεθα
τὴν παῖδα καὶ θέλκτροισι τοῖς ἐφ᾿ Ἡρακλεῖ 585
μεμηχάνηται τοὔργον, εἴ τι μὴ δοκῶ
πράσσειν μάταιον· εἰ δὲ μή, πεπαύσομαι.

As I have said, it's no good getting angry, for a woman with good sense. How I have a remedy that brings deliverance with pain, I now shall tell. I got a gift long ago from an ancient beast, kept hidden in a bronze kettle. I was just a girl when I gathered up the gore of shaggy-chested Nessus, as he lay dying. For hire he used to ferry folk across the deep-rushing river Evenus, with his bare hands, with neither oars

> nor ship's sail to propel him. And so he carried me, bearing me on his shoulders, when I followed my father's bidding and went with Heracles, newly married. But in midstream he laid his reckless hands on me. I shouted out, and straightaway the son of Zeus drew back and shot a feathered arrow; into his lungs, the whirring barb struck through his chest. The savage creature died with these last words: "Daughter of old Oineus, so shall you profit from my ferrying, if you obey, as you are the last I brought across: if you take up the clotted blood from my wounds, there where it is stained with the black-biled venom, spawn of Lerna's hydra,[44] you shall have a charm to bewitch the wits of Heracles, so that he will never look with desire upon another woman more than you." Mindful of this—for since his death I had it safely locked up in the house—I dyed this tunic in it, applying it just as he told me, just before he died. So this is already done.
>
> But vicious daring I would not know, nor would I learn—I hate daring women. Yet, if I can overthrow this girl with love charms and enchantments upon Heracles—the deed is already devised. Unless I seem to be doing something reckless (or, in vain). If so, I'll stop.

Deianira is troubled by the nature of her act; indeed, she despises women who undertake such vicious daring—*tolmai kakai.* The reason for her apprehensiveness is plainly revealed in the record of erotic magic: such remedies work by causing pain and suffering. It was a harsh but familiar reality.[45] The effective agent was usually a known toxin, intended to weaken the victim and thus render him compliant. The practitioner achieves the desired effect by administering the poison in tolerable doses. Too strong a dosage is easily detected: it can be crippling or lethal.

At line 573 there is a flaw in the text, but the substance of what she says is not in doubt:[46] she clearly realizes that the blood is tainted with the venom, "spawn of Lerna's hydra," and that poison is the essential ingredient**.** She has

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[44]For the sense of θρέμμα Λερναίας ὕδρας, see esp. Long 1987: 276, describing θρέμμα as a "strictly verbal noun expressing the result of τρέφειν…commonly 'offspring'." In this sense the poison in the arrows is the hydra's "growth or nursling." Cf. Long 1968: 103, "the poison which grew in the hydra."

[45]Faraone 1994; cf. Winkler 1991. See also Mayor's intriguing account of combustible garments. In Seneca's *Hercules Oetaeus,* Deianira begins with murderous intent (271–438) but turns to erotic magic, knowing that the active ingredient is strong poison (esp. 565–68).

[46]The mss. have μελαγχόλους…ἰούς, but see Davies (1991) ad loc. and *Tr.* 717.

kept it sealed in a bronze kettle all these years for that reason.[47] And now she decides to risk it on the robe.

Thus at the end of the speech she is afraid that her remedy resembles the sort of vicious daring that she despises in other women;[48] but she is driven to it, to keep her place in the *oikos.* The wife's love charm is typically designed to do just that—not to make the husband "fall in love," but by his suffering to make him dependent upon her.[49] It is a way for the woman to impose her will and control.

With this understanding, we can solve two old problems at the beginning and the end of this speech. First, we can salvage a phrase that is often emended or explained away: at 554, Deianira introduces her remedy as a λυτήριον λύπημα, a pain that brings deliverance.[50] Λυτήριον suggests both "release," as in the separation spells (above, n. 48), and "requital." Victorian editors found such ruthlessness out of character for their devoted Hausfrau, but for a woman scorned in antiquity, it is just what the witch doctor ordered.

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[47]Another device is indicated in D.S. 4.36.4 and Apollod. 2.152 (Eus. 2.2.28): Nessus was struck down in the very act of consummating the rape and he told Deianira to gather his semen in a jar or a shell; she is then to add oil and stir the arrowhead in the jar.

[48]The intent to cause pain and suffering is amply illustrated in the magical papyri: *PGM* 4.1496–1595, by a male spellcaster (as often); burning bitter myrrh, he chants "sear her innards, her breast, her liver, her breath, her bones, her marrow, till she comes to me longing to please me." Cf. Theoc. *Idyll* 2.23–26: as the bay leaves burn, "so may Delphis feel his flesh wither in the flame." Separation spells, to disengage the beloved from a rival, have a special appeal to the violent Seth/Typhon: *PGM* 12.365–75; *PDM* 12.50–61, 62–75; 12.76; cf. *PGM* 445–65. Various spells invoke a death-demon, *nekydaimôn* (victim of violent death): *PGM* 16.1–75, "I adjure you [*daimôn*] of the dead... (14) brand his heart and cause it to melt, suck out his blood." Using remains of the untimely dead: *PGM* 19a. 49–54, "lord *daimôn* inflame…cause her to swoon for me as she burns"; similarly 19b. 4–18; 4.2574–78 (including the heart).

[49]The role reversal in *Trachiniae* plays upon this potent fear: erotic magic makes a man subject to his woman. See below §3.2. Deianira's suicide by sword (925–31) emphasizes the reversal, as often noted; cf. Gould (1980) 57; Loraux 1987: 55; 1995: 42. Dio Chrysostom 60 also recognized this aim, ironically suggesting that she should make him "subject to her" by habituating the hero to a life of ease.

[50]Against various conjectures, Lloyd-Jones defends λυτήριον λύπημα as parallel to the common ἄκος τομαῖον ("cutting cure," e.g., A. *Ch.* 539), and this view is rightly preferred by Davies *ad loc.* (155). This meaning is ironically recalled in the final act: *Tr.* 1035, ἀκοῦ δ' ἄχος, where Heracles calls for a sword to end his misery; 1207–8, where Heracles calls upon Hyllus to arrange the pyre, to cure his disease, παιώνιον…ἰατῆρα. Conversely, Stinton (1976) 138 maintains that λυτήριον λύπημα refers to "the pain of the dying Centaur." Heiden (86–90) takes it for Deianira's own pain at recalling the incident.

And then, at the end of her speech, there is the puzzling exchange with the chorus, lines 588–95. Deianira considers that she is doing as women of "vicious daring" often do; and then, oddly, she says, "If I seem to be doing something reckless (or in vain, *mataion*), I'll stop." They respond, "But if there is any trust in the doing, you seem to us to have planned quite well": ἀλλ' εἴ τις ἐστὶ πίστις ἐν τοῖς δρωμένοις, / δοκεῖς παρ' ἡμῖν οὐ βεβουλεῦσθαι κακῶς. The chorus seems, at first, to regard her scheme as innocent, but they are making a crucial distinction between innocence and viciousness. She has asked if her act is "reckless" or in vain; they assure her that it is not, ***if*** she has trust in her remedy from actual practice, τὰ δρώμενα. The chorus distinguishes between recklessness and "good planning" or deciding well; the latter requires grounds for trust (*pistis),* and that can only derive from experience. Deianira has to admit she has made no test or trial (*peira*); she has no other grounds for trust, only that it seems plausible: οὕτως ἔχει γ' ἡ πίστις, ὡς τὸ μὲν δοκεῖν / ἔνεστι.

Deianira herself has reckoned the future outcome by the previous pattern of events. So the chorus cautions her by her own principle: to act without some ground for trust is, indeed, "recklessness"; such a basis for trust can only be established from experience. Many commentators, convinced of her innocence, have denied the implication of the chorus' words. But Deianira's own response shows that she understands their warning all too well: there is this much trust, that it seems plausible; she has *not* put her remedy to the test.[51] And if she had any doubt of the chorus' meaning, their next response should make it clear: (592–93) "But you *must know* when you act (ἀλλ' εἰδέναι χρὴ δρῶσαν), as you could have no basis for trust (*gnôma*) without trial, (even) if you think you have."[52] As A. A. Long observed, this *gnôma* that the chorus demands is "not an alternative to *gnômê*," but "the 'test' of Deianira's love charm, which cannot be made without experiment;" it is a superior sort of *pistis* that trumps the mere plausibility (τὸ δοκεῖν) that Deianira relies upon. She must know the drug's effect, and that knowledge can only derive from some actual test.

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[51]See esp. Solmsen 1985, emphasizing the contrast of knowledge and belief. Cf. W. Kraus (1986: 99–100), seconding Solmsen's interpretation; he is followed by Heiden 91–92.

[52]ὡς οὐδ' εἰ δοκεῖς / ἔχειν ἔχοις ἂν γνῶμα, μὴ πειρωμένη. As W. Kraus (1986) 99–100 observes, the usual interpretation (Jebb, Mazon, Kamerbeek, *et al.*) treats δρῶσαν as though aorist, δράσασαν, even though this makes the following clause redundant: You must know from experience, since you can only know from experience. For the sense of *gnôma* as "test" or "proof," see Long 1968: 39, noting Arist. *HA* 577a–b, where *gnôma* refers to an animal's teeth as proof of age; cf. Hdt. 7.52, where it is used of Ionian loyalty proven on the Scythian expedition.

Of course, at that very moment Lichas emerges from the house, ready to return to Heracles, and Deianira must decide. She answers: "But we will know soon (enough)." The chorus has tried to warn her of the recklessness of what she is about to do, but, in that defining moment, she goes irrevocably on. In her last aside to the chorus, before Lichas speaks, she urges her confidants to keep her secret in the dark (596–97): "for thus, even if you do what is shameful, you may never meet with shame." She knows the nature of her act: she will do just as those women of "vicious daring" have done.

How can the long-devoted wife suddenly turn to a device that she herself regards as possibly "reckless," when the chorus expressly warns her against it? Part of the answer lies in the very ambiguity of the term. She is preoccupied with one aspect of recklessness while they warn her against another. *Mataion,* after all, has two implications: sometimes the speaker emphasizes the intended *purpose*—what is *mataion* is futile, "in vain"; in other instances the speaker emphasizes the unintended *consequences*—what is *mataion* brings disastrous results which should have been anticipated.[53] When Deianira promises, "[if I am] doing something *mataion*, I'll stop," she is apparently speaking with the first implication: she is not wondering about unwanted consequences, whether her remedy may cause pain and suffering—that she has acknowledged. She seems chiefly concerned that she may fail to accomplish her purpose, to rouse her husband's passion. Her last remark to Lichas is that she is afraid to profess her love until she knows if Heracles returns it. To attempt such a remedy and fail would be shameful if discovered; her husband might suffer from the drug's effect and yet be unaffected by the passion that she hopes to arouse. She is preoccupied with this concern, that she may fail to achieve what she desires. The chorus cautions her against recklessness in the worse sense, that she is acting without reckoning the unwanted result of this hurtful remedy. She is preoccupied with her own intent; the chorus addresses the unintended consequences.

This ironic exchange reveals the essence of Deianira's error. Her reckless decision is a product of her characteristic way of reasoning about the workings

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[53]See *LSJ* s.vv. μάταιος and μάτην; the basic sense is "to no (good) purpose or effect." The conflicting implications are well illustrated in the play: Deianira recounts that the centaur laid hands on her in vain (565), and implies that his violence failed (that he did not, as in a rival tradition, consummate the rape); similarly when the nurse recounts how helplessly she watched Deianira's last lament, the chorus at first cries out ὢ μάταια (888). But Hyllus' error is emphatically "reckless" (940) in the sense that he did not reckon with the outcome (now to be bereft of both parents, 941–42). And the chorus then comments (944–45), reaffirming the "ancient saying" that Deianira discounted: anyone who reckons on (λογίζεται) events two days ahead is foolish (μάταιος).

of the world. She reasons from experience by a subjective standard: she focuses upon the intended happiness and the pattern of disappointment that meets her every hope. The chorus invokes an objective standard. They urge her to reason from actual consequences, not from the pattern of intentions: what has been the observed effect in previous trials? But Deianira either cannot or will not look beyond the subjective view: however propitious a turn of events, for her the outcome is always a disappointment of her desires. She is thus characteristically convinced of the worst, and that fatalistic outlook leads her to undertake a desperate measure. Her remedy "that brings deliverance with pain" is a device she herself regards as shameful, if discovered; she acknowledges the risk that it may prove "reckless" and fail. But then, forewarned that her act is reckless in the more damning sense—that the drug may do unforeseeable harm if she has made no trial of it—she dismisses the warning. She will not seek a favorable sign, for even the most propitious beginnings go wrong.

It is still possible to argue in her defense that she does not contemplate the likelihood that the poison may prove lethal; indeed, the chorus does not pose that danger specifically. But let us consider how the ancient audience would respond to the cumulative impression of this theme. Deianira herself has repeatedly asserted the principle that one can know the end result from past experience. From past disappointment, she worries that her action may fail and only bring her shame. And so she calls upon the chorus to advise her whether her act seems reckless. They warn her, in effect, that without certain knowledge from actual experience her remedy is indeed reckless—you must *know* the effect when you take such action, and you can only know from actual practice. Then, in the face of that warning, the protagonist who has embraced the principle of knowing the end from the proof of experience dismisses their concern: "But we will know soon (enough)." Many of the men in the audience might regard this response as the worst kind of recklessness: a wife recognizes the danger to her husband, perhaps without imagining his death but certainly with the awareness that she is putting him at risk; yet she decides to bring on the consequences she cannot foresee.

[2.3] Erotic poisoning by its very nature is potentially lethal. Therefore the careful practitioner tests the effect with a safe dosage, often a series of doses. It is this aspect of the accepted therapy that the chorus emphasizes: to use such a remedy one must test the drug. In the usual circumstances of a household where the wife has regular access to her husband, the safe standard would require her to test the drug incrementally, to see what effect a smaller dosage has before consummating a "cure." Indeed, the poisoner was sometimes discovered by this

very trail of preparations and previous attempts.[54] In the Athenian evaluation of guilt or innocence this aspect of the crime is crucial because it informs the act with *pronoia*. From the previous trials the poisoner will know the nature and severity of the drug's effect.

From the classical era we have testimony regarding two trials for murder by erotic poisoning: a speech of Antiphon and an Aristotelian comment.[55] This evidence is sometimes brought into Deianira's case, to acquit her on the basis of innocent intentions, but the two reports require closer scrutiny in this regard. Both accounts confirm the principle that knowledge, not intention, is the truest measure of guilt. One of the two cases clearly corroborates and the other is quite consistent with the chorus' assumption that the accepted practice requires safe trial of the drug. But most important for our inquiry is the very disparity between Deianira's case and the others: by the standard observed in the court cases, Deianira's responsibility is all the more difficult to assess and disturbing to ponder. The usual proof of guilt or innocence—a prior test to prove the drug dangerous or safe—is unavailable. But that does not necessarily mean she will be acquitted on all counts. On the contrary the tragic complication seems to require a certain *aporia* with which the son coming of age must struggle (§3).

In the Aristotelian *Magna Moralia* 1188b.32–39 we are told that a woman was once tried for poisoning her husband but pleaded that she had acted for love. She admitted giving the drug but was acquitted because she had acted without *pronoia*.[56] This case is often construed as proof that *pronoia* was largely equivalent to intent: she was acquitted because it was not her aim or purpose to kill.[57] But the Athenians did not decide guilt or innocence upon specific intent, and on close examination this turns out to be a case in point.

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[54]Aretaphila of Cyrene planned to murder the tyrant Nicocrates, proceeded with a series of subtle doses, but was discovered in the course of this therapy (Plut. *Mor* 256b–c, διαπειρωμένη πολλῶν δυνάμεων οὐκ ἔλαθεν . She then convinced Nicocrates that she had done it to secure his love against the wiles of other women, indicating that a series of doses was the usual method.

[55]Both cases are suspect on various points; cf. Carawan 1998: 223–42. Whether historical or not, the two cases represent popular understanding of what would be at issue in such a case.

[56]Of course the Areopagus would not have issued a legal opinion explaining the verdict; what is meant is simply that she was acquitted and this was her plea. The case is sometimes discounted as abstruse philosophy; but the author presents it to illustrate common usage. Cf. *Rh.* 1.10. 3–4 (1368b 9–12): ἑκόντες δὲ ποιοῦσιν ὅσα εἰδότες καὶ μὴ ἀναγκαζόμενοι.

[57]Loomis (1972: 89); followed in this regard by Gagarin 1981: 34.

Our passage regarding the fatal potion comes in a general discussion of volition and responsibility. The author determines that the measure of a culpable attitude, *to hekousion*, is neither "desire" (*orexis*) nor "deliberate choice" (*proairesis*). Crucial is the element of "thought" or "understanding," *dianoia*. The **in**voluntary and blameless, *to **a**kousion,* includes not only what is done by necessity or compulsion but what is done in ignorance, unaware that such would be the outcome. Thus "whenever someone strikes or kills another or commits some similar act, without contemplating the event beforehand (μηδὲν προδιανοηθείς), we say he acted *akon,* since the voluntary is in the understanding" (διανοηθῆναι).[58] Thereupon the author gives the example of the woman who unwittingly poisoned her husband. The Greek is quite clear: she was acquitted because she gave the drug "without thought of him dying" (οὐ μετὰ διανοίας τοῦ ἀπολέσθαι αὐτόν). Thus her acquittal shows that "the voluntary coincides with understanding" (τὸ μετὰ διανοίας).[59] The measure of responsibility is not the aim or purpose but the awareness of a likely outcome. The same point is made in *Eudemian Ethics* 2.9, where the *akôn* acts without knowledge, and again among the examples is the case of a love potion that proved lethal.[60]

Unfortunately, in the Aristotelian case we are not told how the woman proved her innocence of *pronoia.* But we may have a clue in Antiphon 1, the case against the so-called Stepmother. The trial, if there was one, probably came within a decade or two of *Trachiniae.* The plaintiff is a young man seeking retribution for his father's death at the hands of his wife. This defendant evidently provided a dangerous drug to another woman, a concubine, for her to administer to her own *kyrios* and to the plaintiff's father. As in the Aristotelian case, there seems to be no dispute about the fact that the defendant provided the drug and the victim died of it. Once again, the wife's defense seems to be that she did not act with *pronoia*—with prior understanding that death could be the

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[58]For this analysis of *MM* 1188–89, I am greatly indebted to GailAnn Rickert who argued the point in a paper at the APA meeting in San Diego, 1995 (as yet unpublished). For the force of *hekôn/akôn*, see Rickert's 1989 study, esp. 71–78; cf. Ostwald's classic rendering of the key terms in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1962: 52 n. 1, p. 304).

[59]This passage is often rendered as though specific intent is the issue: even MacDowell translates with that implication (1963: 46; 1978: 115), "not…with the thought of killing him."

[60]*EE* 1225b.1–14. Especially indicative is the ambiguous case, where "he that has knowledge but does not use it might rightly, on the one hand, be called 'unknowing' (*agnoôn*), but on the other, is not rightly so, inasmuch as [he acts] through disregard (*ameleia*)." Inasmuch as he is not ignorant, he is not innocent.

likely result.[61] The plaintiff's half-brother would have to argue this defense on his mother's behalf.

The young plaintiff, in the initial statement of his case (3), demands that the jury give him vengeance "if I show that their mother was our father's killer by 'plotting and planning' and that she was 'caught in the act' not just once but many times devising his death."[62] He claims that on more than one occasion the wife had actually administered the drug and this had been discovered. The discovery was probably prompted by the symptoms. On one prior occasion, the suffering was so intense that the husband had accused her of trying to kill him. Our plaintiff insists that on that occasion the wife admitted what she had done but swore that she acted out of love, not with an intent to murder.

We cannot rely on what the plaintiff says for the facts, but the way he belabors the point, even on dubious evidence, shows that the question of previous attempts is crucial to the case. He challenged his brothers to present slaves for torture on this very question—not on the fatal event itself but to establish the previous attempt, when the accused was caught in the act and admitted giving the drug, claiming she acted for love. Of course, the defender refused the torture, but for the plaintiff this is evidence of a sort; for he can argue that the torture would have proved the previous attempt.[63] From the previous episode, when the husband accused her of trying to kill him, she knew the risk. To find her persevering in such a scheme, after the danger was known, is a quintessential proof of *pronoia.*

That at least appears to be the plaintiff's case. We can certainly anticipate a case for the defense on the same grounds: she had repeatedly tried to regain her husband's affections by means of the drug; such remedies are hazardous, as everyone knows, but the previous attempts show that she had proceeded with some caution. After all, the victim did not die of the earlier treatment. She had simply done what women driven to erotic magic have always done: she tried and tested a safe dosage. One gauges the effect from the previous applications; she

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[61]On the legal implications of *pronoia* in this case, see Carawan 1998: 223–27. The crux of the case appears to be the previous attempt from which the harmful effects were known; prior knowledge is more easily proved and is thus something the plaintiff can more readily swear to than specific intent.

[62]To be apprehended *ep' autophorôi* (often rendered "caught in the act") means caught in patently incriminating circumstances—like a thief with the goods in his possession.

[63]It might suggest a probability on the question of fact, but the plaintiff says nothing to that effect and offers no evidence or argument that she provided the drug. Likewise, he says nothing to establish motive or specific intent.

had no reason to think the drug would be lethal if properly administered.[64] In the Aristotelian case, again, we have no explanation of how the woman's innocence was proved, but it was probably a similar line of defense, based on previous experience, that proved she had acted "without thought of him dying."

The two cases thus confirm the implications of Deianira's case: the measure of deepest guilt is knowledge or understanding of the consequences; and that knowledge usually depends upon some prior test. On the model of the two court cases, she might well be judged innocent. Unlike the wife in Antiphon 1, Deianira has not acted with specific knowledge gained from a prior test. And, like the woman acquitted in *MM* 1188b, she apparently does not contemplate the likelihood of death. But she acts with a level of knowledge that is perilously close to *pronoia.* For she was confronted with the question of whether her drug was tested, whether she has the vital proof from experience. The chorus cautions her that she can only trust in her magic if she has made trial of it: she says she has not even approached an actual trial—πείρᾳ δ' οὐ προσωμίλησά πω (590–91). She acts without knowledge because she refuses to confront it. Warned by the chorus "you must know when you act," she indicates a bitter resignation: "We will know soon."

Such an attitude is certainly culpable in the eyes of the Athenian audience. The law declares that the perpetrator or planner is guilty of homicide and subject to exile "*even if* [he acted] *without pronoia*."[65] The punishment in such a case is not quite so harsh; the culprit faces exile with the prospect of reconciliation and safe return rather than execution. But it is still exile under pain of death. The severity of this response to an unintended wrong is commensurate with Deianira's consciousness of guilt. For the law suggests that the killer who decides upon a course of events that proves fatal, without foreseeing or acknowledging that danger, is culpable for that very reason. Deianira's wrong is just such willful disregard of reasonable precaution.

Indeed, when she realizes the knowledge that she has denied, she condemns her own "eagerness doubtful of the outcome."[66] Presented with an accidental proof of the poison's effect, she is stricken with remorse at her "wrong planning" (μὴ καλοῖς βουλεύμασιν, 725). She now recognizes that she has done a terrible deed (701), acting in reckless disregard; in this she perhaps resembles the profile

[64] In fact, in Antiphon's speech (1.19), the plaintiff has to admit that the concubine altered the dosage, then to argue that she was doing just what the wife prescribed.

[65] The defendant choregus in Antiphon 6 is thus charged with complicity in an unintended death; cf. Carawan 1998: 251–61 and see below at n. 84.

[66] κακὸν μέγ' ἐκπράξασ' ἀπ' ἐλπίδος καλῆς.... ὥστε μήποτ' ἂν προθυμίαν ἄδηλον ἔργου τῳ παραινέσαι λαβεῖν, 667–70.

in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*.[67] Unlike the epic figure, however, Sophocles' character is endowed with innocent intentions as the victim of another's device: so she protests that Nessus charmed her, plotting to destroy his killer. But this protagonist cannot rid herself of guilt because of the centaur's deception: she says "I alone…shall destroy [my husband]; for ***I know*** the arrow…destroys every creature it touches and crippled even the immortal Chiron. How shall the black poison…fail to kill even him?" (712–18).

This is not newfound knowledge. She had known that her remedy would work by causing pain and suffering. She simply had not recognized how severe the injury would be. The chorus had warned her that she must test the drug's effect, but she discounted their warning, determining to do just as those women of vicious daring whom she despises. Now she seems to accept the ominous sign with characteristic resignation. She determines resolutely to take her own life, *if*, indeed, her husband dies. The outcome is yet uncertain—it is only a matter of plausible opinion (718–19)—but she readily assumes that her remedy will be the death of her man. For she knew the nature of her act as she devised her own cloak of doom. Where a character acts with such knowledge, her innocent intentions are not easily proved, and even if proved may not altogether acquit her of guilt.

[2.4] The scene leading up to Deianira's death and the nurse's report of it serve to confirm this aspect of her guilt—that in sending the robe she had acted with a level of knowledge that she and her audience would regard as culpable. The scene is often interpreted as though it is the sudden realization that she has killed her husband that drives her to her death. But she knew the traumatic risk when she presented the fatal cloak; and, with the discovery that the envenomed blood is utterly corrosive, she has prepared herself for the news that Heracles is dying. It is the discovery of a horror that she has not contemplated, the curse of Hyllus, that drives Deianira to take her life at the critical moment. There are three aspects of the dramatic sequence that focus our attention upon this motivation: she prepares to take her life prematurely without waiting to know her husband's fate; in her preparation and her lament, she reacts to the presence of Hyllus in the house; and she then takes her life in a manner that responds to his curse, not as a repentant wife would act in order to win her husband's forgiveness.

Her will to die is, of course, overdetermined. When she realized how lethal her gift to Heracles might be, she determined "to die with him, by the same stroke" ***if***, indeed, he is destroyed by her magic; "for to live with such infamy is

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[67]See above, n. 17. Her "learning too late" (710–11) refers to the centaur's motive, not the nature of her remedy.

unbearable" (719–21). We have no doubt that upon seeing her husband dead or dying, she would do as she had decided. But she acts irrevocably when that outcome remains uncertain. Her determination to die by the same stroke with her husband is overtaken by a second motive. It is her condemnation at the hands of her son that drives her to take her life at that moment, before knowing whether her husband will live or die.

No sooner has Deianira sworn to her pact with death than Hyllus returns, coming ahead of Heracles in order to allow for this exchange. His tale of his father's agony and rage concludes, "you shall see him here any moment, yet alive or just now dead" (805–6). And Deianira then departs in silence. But let us not be misled into thinking it is the imminent approach of Heracles that drives her so precipitously to her death. It is the irrevocable condemnation with which Hyllus concludes his speech (807–12): "For this crime may you be repaid by avenging Justice and the Erinys. If it is right, I invoke the curse." [68] The chorus calls after her not to slink away in silence, which speaks like an advocate for her accuser. But Hyllus bids her farewell with further abuse, "Let her slip away, and may there be a fair wind at her back to take her out of my sight.… Let her go and good riddance. May she meet with the same satisfaction she gave my father."

Then, somewhat awkwardly, Hyllus follows her into the house, and the chorus reflects predictably upon the disastrous turn of events. Scholars who refused to heed the chorus' warning to Deianira when she pondered the danger must also find a suitable explanation for the chorus' appraisal here (843–45): "part (of what befell) she brought on, the rest came of another's design, in fatal recompense."[69] In light of the chorus' earlier caution, this reflection suggests that Deianira is partly the victim of Nessus' deception, but largely responsible, for she had knowingly enlisted that hostile agent.

The presence of Hyllus inside the palace, in the courtyard, reinforces her desperate decision. At 901–3 the nurse tells that Deianira went in alone, but then, when she saw her son there readying a litter for his father, she shut herself up where no one else could see. Tycho would have us delete these lines as an

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[68]On the implications of ἐπεύχομαι in such a vow of vengeance, cf. S. *OT* 244–51; Carawan 1999: 205–8. See below, n. 83.

[69]At 841–43, the chorus seems to speak of her resolve, "unflinching, when she looked upon the great menace of a new marriage darting at the house"; cf. Heiden 122. Lloyd-Jones renders ἄοκνος as "[with] no foreboding": the chorus declares that Deianira had no suspicion of the danger (for the reading, cf. Davies 1991: 202–3). But the natural meaning is "unhesitant," not heeding the danger, not that she was ignorant of it.

actor's interpolation.[70] With the same suspicion, most editors bracket 911, where she is pictured lamenting "her lot, henceforth childless." But both passages contribute to the dramatic motivation: she will take her life *at this moment* because of Hyllus' curse.

Of course she wails over all that she will miss, in a scene that reminds us of Alcestis. But, by the nurse's account, she says nothing of the husband forever lost. It is the *oikos* and the life she led there that she mourns.[71]

Then she takes her life in her unwomanly way, by the sword. Scholars have usually interpreted this final act as a gesture of repentance to the husband she has wronged: Deianira makes the bed as for a reunion with her mate and then penetrates her body with the male weapon.[72] Seen as a gesture of repentance, it tends to confirm the presumption that in sending the robe she had acted in utter innocence and is now devastated by the unforeseen disaster. But if we settle for that rather modern reading we may be missing other implications that would have struck the ancient audience more forcefully.

By bloodshed she breaks the bound vessel that defines the woman's body in the Greek imagination.[73] In the version known to Apollodorus, Deianira hanged herself, as was proper for a woman in taking her life. Such was probably the death of the doomed character that Bacchylides drew upon. This version of Deianira's death was so dominant in the tradition that it even found its way into the manuscripts of Sophocles, when the original epitome for *Trachiniae* was lost and the corresponding excerpt from Apollodorus was put in its place.

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[70]The text is defended by Seaford 1986 and Davies 1991. The nurse explains (914) that she was watching from concealment. The only real problem is the unlikely οὐσία, for which plausible emendations have been offered. Even if these two passages are actor's interpolations, it does not much diminish the implication that the ancient audience would have assumed this motivation.

[71]Cf. Reinhardt 1947: 63–64; Loraux 1995: 42.

[72]Even so perceptive a critic as Loraux insists (1987: 54–56) that by stabbing on the left side, Deianira somehow submits to the laws of her sex; for sinistrality is the mark of the weaker. The stage meaning is not so subtle. The text says only that she bared her left arm and "whole side" (925–26). The nurse would gesture to illustrate: Deianira unpinned the garment at the left shoulder (as a right-handed person would naturally do), letting the fabric hang from the right shoulder; she might then drive the sword beneath the diaphragm (as the nurse describes the blow, 931). The significant gesture is that she would bare her body, as shown by the nurse's reaction; when she sees Deianira undo her gown, she runs to Hyllus.

[73]See esp. King 1983: 118–20, 1998: 80–86, on hanging as proper to the "bound body" of the woman.

But by putting the sword in her hand Sophocles constructed the scene to reinforce the resolute character he gave his protagonist. Because Hyllus is in the house, she must use the swifter method. Hanging in the Greek manner is a slower death than the modern gallows;[74] and in that lingering death there is the chance that her will to die will be thwarted. Suicide by the sword signifies greater resolve.[75] Like Ajax, she makes of herself a sacrifice for vindication.[76] Calling upon her *daimôn,* she will steep the marriage bed in her blood. It is not a gesture of repentance toward the husband who brought home another bride to share his bed. Rather, her suicide comes in answer to the son who condemned her on his father's accusation. Thus the chorus cries out, as soon as they learn she has taken her life by the sword, "The bride without wedding has given birth, given birth to a great Erinys in the house" (893–95). The Erinys that Hyllus invoked (809) has found its prey, even before the victim's ghost is at large.

Her suicide is the final gesture in a characterization constructed to make the judgment of her guilt or innocence difficult and disturbing. With sword in hand, she recalls the warlike character of saga who shed her blood in battle; crying out to her *daimôn*, she also shares something with the victim of inscrutable divinity we met in Bacchylides. The latter was a character already known to the Athenian audience—probably from Sophocles' immediate predecessor—but this sympathetic characterization was by no means the presumptive version, as Tycho supposed. Indeed, even in Periclean Athens Deianira is readily associated with Clytemnestra and Medea. That persistent association led Ignacio Errandonea to argue that, if Deianira is innocent, *Trachiniae* cannot be genuine.[77] But if we accept the natural implication of the character's own words and gestures, there is no contradiction. Deianira knows the risk and the wrong of what she is

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[74]On hanging women, generally, cf. Loraux 1987: 15–21. The slow execution by strangulation is reflected in *Od.* 22.462–72. Suicide by hanging would often be death by asphyxiation; rescue is indicated in And. 1.125.

[75]Cf. Garrison (1995: 64), "the resolute suicide for fear of disgrace."

[76]Cf. Ajax (*Aj*. 831–44) calling upon Hermes to help him to a swift end and the Erinys to witness his ruin at the hands of the Atreidae. Deianira calls upon her *daimôn* (910) and then addresses the marriage bed where she will shed her blood (915–22); cf. Reinhardt 61. Similarly Eurydice in *Ant.* 1301–5 is driven to suicide by the loss of her son and dies with a curse upon the father. If she meant to appease her victim, Deianira would do as Adrastus does in Hdt. 1.45.

[77]Thus Errandonea argued in 1927 and again in 1958 against Stoessl's theory. For the association with Clytemnestra, see esp. [Plut.] *Placita Phil.* 881D: Heracles was a victim like Agamemnon, slain by treachery. For the association with Medea see above, n. 16. Plutarch's report at *Per.* 24.9 puts her in the company of notoriously domineering women: the comic poets called Aspasia a "new Omphale, a Deianira, and a Hera."

driven to do. By endowing her with forgivable intentions but guilty knowledge, Sophocles has introduced a protagonist to personify the conflicting standards of blame and acceptance that sometimes divided a house asunder, pitting brother against brother or father against son.

§3.

The issue that occupies the latter part of the play is the ephebe's choice. Through the decision that led to her husband's death, Deianira makes an enemy of her son. By her own death she reclaims her son's devotion and thus creates the dilemma that troubles him down to his last lines in the play. As so often in tragedy, the young man coming of age must decide between his deepest loyalties. In taking this approach to the moral calculus of *Trachiniae*, I am drawing upon John Winkler's theory that the tragic chorus was ordinarily composed of ephebes, and that the moral struggles of tragedy are naturally drawn to that crisis of social identity when the boy must choose between childhood and manhood.[78] This is not to say that tragedy is reducible to lessons in the ephebe's civic education. But the surviving plays revert to such themes persistently, at least from the *Oresteia* to *Philoctetes*. And *Trachiniae* in particular suggests that Sophocles aimed at this kind of conclusion, where the young men in the orchestra were to find deeper conviction in their loyalty to the Männerbund, and perhaps the older men in the audience were to look back upon that difficult time of life with deeper understanding.

As he moves from childhood to maturity the boy trades one standard of responsibility for another. The child will cling to the intimate sympathy of the *oikos*, where errors are readily forgiven for innocent intentions. But the boy becoming a man must shoulder the burden of responsibility that he will bear among his peers in the community at large; he must accept a standard of blame that governs disputes in the *agora* and the assembly, where the group would often have to decide between inveterate rivals.[79] By that adversarial standard, a culpable state of mind is proved by evident knowledge: Did the offender know or reasonably expect that harm would come of his decision? That clash of standards is represented in the final scenes of our play. Hyllus defends Deianira by the sympathetic reckoning of the *oikos*, only to meet with irreconcilable condemnation of his mother's act from the father, the estranged husband. In scholarly treatment of the closing scenes it is, of course, the figure of Heracles

[78]See esp. Winkler 1990 and Goldhill in the same volume.

[79]Gernet 1917: 310–88 supposed that forgiveness of unintended wrongs was originally recognized within the clan united by kinship and cult, and was then extended to the polis (esp. 342–46, 365–82); but cf. Carawan 1998: 38–39.

that has dominated.[80] Tycho's analysis is typical of this preoccupation; the whole plot was contrived to make way for the dying hero. But if we look simply at what happens on stage, we can only conclude that this final act is the trial and tragedy of Hyllus.

For it is Hyllus, not Heracles, who undergoes a tragic anagnorisis, and it is certainly Hyllus in his *aporia* of guilt and conflicting loyalties who evokes our pity and fear. True, Heracles lives to learn of his error, but there is no suggestion of remorse or moral struggle: he simply misread the oracles. If he misjudged Deianira, he is not troubled by it. His physical torment is presented as spectacle, not to engage our sympathy; for we presume, as the ancient audience did, that he is going to his godhead.[81] Hyllus, by contrast, undergoes a moral crisis: he condemns his mother in ignorance, then recognizes the guilt of his own reckless judgment, and ends the play in an agony that all can comprehend. This second tragedy of the diptych begins in Hyllus' encounter with Deianira [3.1], builds upon the agon with Heracles [3.2], and concludes with the final transaction, the betrothal to Iole [3.3].

[3.1] Hyllus makes his first, rather awkward appearance in the prologue, in order for Deianira to send him in search of his father. When she reveals the ominous oracles regarding Heracles' homecoming, Hyllus hurries off vowing "to leave nothing undone in [his] quest to discover the whole truth of these events" (90–91). He does not reappear until he has indeed discovered what he believes to be the whole horrific truth: that the mother who sent him away has meanwhile devised his father's death.

In recounting his experience, he becomes convinced of her guilt.[82] For what he recalls is all proof against her: "Lichas brought your gift, the deadly robe, which he then put on, just as you instructed." Then Heracles in agony called for Lichas (772–76), "though he was blameless for your crime, (to tell) by what machinations he had brought the robe; but [Lichas], doomed by his ignorance, said that it was a gift from you alone, (delivered) just as it was sent." The herald by his death proved the truth of his words. Heracles no sooner disposed of the messenger than he cursed the marriage that put him at the mercy of such devices (791–93). And then he called upon the boy Hyllus to prove his loyalty (797–98), to come to him "not to flee my suffering, not even if it means to join me in death

[80] Most recently, Bowman.

[81] For the presentation of Heracles as unsympathetic yet destined for godhead, see Holt 1989, esp. 77–79. A witness often overlooked in this regard is Cicero, who rendered this passage as proof that stoic virtue does not require an indifference to pain: *Tusc.* 2.20–21.

[82] His first words, "of three choices I would choose any one..." (734–37), convey his initial *aporia.* The passage is well analyzed by Heiden 108–11.

as I am dying." It is only by his willingness to share his father's suffering, even to risk the contagion of it, that Hyllus has proved himself innocent of complicity. He has taken his father's side to demonstrate that he takes no part in the mother's betrayal.

It is the rehearsal of this trial—the proof of her guilt that Lichas has given and that he himself has affirmed—that leads Hyllus to his fatal curse (807–11): "You stand convicted of planning and perpetrating such wrongs against my father; for this crime may you be repaid by avenging Justice and the Erinys. If it is right (for me to do so), I invoke the curse—and it is right," he insists, "since you have thrust that duty upon me by slaying the noblest man of all."

This judgment takes a form readily recognizable to the Athenian audience, but often overlooked by modern commentators. The young man's curse, however faltering, declares that he will assume his proper role as avenger for his murdered father, much as Oedipus swore to avenge the killing of Laius as though for his own father.[83] By this formula he vows to drive out the killer or take vengeance upon her. It is a tragic mistake uttered in a moment when the boy is overcome by grief and betrayal; we can hardly imagine how he would have gone about fulfilling the vow. But its implications are unmistakable. And Deianira immediately goes about her preparations.

He has pronounced her guilty of "planning" her husband's death. He means, presumably, that she planned murder—she devised her husband's death with knowledge and intent. When he is convinced by her death that her intention was not to kill her husband but to bind his affection, he forgives her. But many of the older men in the audience, experienced jurors and observers of many a trial, would view this discovery in a different light. That she did not intend to kill does not altogether acquit her of guilt: the operative term in Hyllus' indictment, *bouleusai,* encompasses both intentional and "unintentional" planning. The rendering into English is paradoxical but the ancient concept is quite practical. In the original law the aim was that a "planner" who ordered or initiated the actions of another be held accountable for the outcome, "*even if* [he made his

[83]Stinton (1976: 139–40) saw a problem in the text, but he misses the implication of ἐπεύχομαι. When a person has sworn an oath or curse by the gods (as Hyllus invokes ποίνιμος Δίκη / τείσαιτ' Ἐρινύς τε) and then seals the oath with ἐπεύχομαι, the implication is that he vows to fulfill that commitment or suffer the same fate. Thus Oedipus vows to take vengeance on the guilty (κατεύχομαι) and then seals his vow with the curse (ἐπεύχομαι) that he suffer the same fate if he shelters the killer. Cf. And. 1.98.

decision] without *pronoia*."[84] By the same standard, Deianira is greatly to blame for acting *without knowing* how deadly her remedy would be.

Deianira herself has recognized that she is responsible for her "planning (gone) wrong," despite her innocent intentions (725); no one who shares in the suffering of his house at the hands of another would simply forgive such an injury (729–30). Her unintended wrong is fully forgivable only within the sympathetic circle of close kinship—and her estranged husband is not of that circle. She will be forgiven by her son when he is convinced that he knows her inner motive and is stricken with guilt at the wrong he has done her. But we should not be misled by that acquittal to suppose that it would be the prevailing judgment of the older men.

For even Hyllus is only convinced by her death. Thus he "learned too late that she did these things *akousa*, at the bidding of the beast" (934–35). He was told this by servants in the house. But the son who had just cursed his mother and sworn vengeance against her did not instantly accept the servants' tale. If he had, he would already have gone to her. It is only the news that she is about to take her own life that convinces him of her innocence and, in the same stroke, of his own guilt: "for at the sight of her...the poor boy realized that he had put this crime upon her in his anger" (932–33). In that realization he understands her error as he understands his own, for he meant to do the right thing, but acted "recklessly" (*mataiôs*, 940), without reckoning the unknown implications and the unwanted result.

In the scene that follows he will struggle with his conflicting commitments: he is burdened by natural loyalty and unreasoning conviction of his mother's innocence; in a second test of character, he must confront his father's irrational conviction of her guilt. In his first test, at the side of Heracles, he proved his loyalty to the father; now, convinced of his mother's innocence, he will defy the vindictiveness of his father.

[3.2] Heracles in agony demands of his son this ordeal: "Oh, my son, be a true-born son to me and respect the name of 'mother' no more: Bring her out of the house, the woman that bore you, and give her to me, yourself with your own two hands, so that I may know, plain and simple, whether you suffer more for my pain or looking on the sight of her maimed and rightly ruined" (1064–69). He will know the son's righteousness by the mother's punishment. One can suspect that he had given a similar charge, as his dying command, to his son when they last parted, to see to it that his killer met with vengeance. By his curse

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[84]On "unintentional planning" as a legal concept, see Gagarin 1991, followed by Carawan 1998: 255–70.

(807–9), the boy obeyed that commandment with as much conviction as he could muster. Now, to inspire the boy to cast off the mother and follow the father's command, Heracles lays aside his *kalummata* to show how Deianira has devastated the mightiest of men—here is the proof of her wrong. He then repeats his demand to get her in his hands: "Just let her come near me, so she may learn and be a lesson to all, that living and dying I have punished the wicked" (1111).

But Hyllus defies his father's command and defends his mother's memory. He calls her by that forbidden term of kinship (1122). And he will try three times to explain away her guilt, before at last, without meaning to accuse her, he acknowledges the depth of her complicity. First he says, "I come to tell you of my mother, what now is her fate, and what she did in error, unwittingly"; she has proved her innocence by her death. Heracles, of course, is outraged at the very mention of "mother" (1124–25). Hyllus insists that even Heracles will not condemn her when he learns "what was done today" (1128). That is, for Hyllus, her death has shifted the moral burden. But for Heracles it means only that she has cheated him of his vengeance (1133).

Now Hyllus repeats the plea of innocence: "All that happened she brought about in error, eager for worthy ends" (1136).[85] And then, in response to Heracles' consternation, he explains her motive: "she went wrong in thinking she would cast a spell of love upon you" (στέργημα γὰρ δοκοῦσα προσβαλεῖν σέθεν / ἀπήμπλαχ', 1138–39). But Heracles is not persuaded of her innocence: "Who is there among the Trachinians who is such a master of *pharmaka?"* He is skeptical not at the news that some drug has caused his disease—that is all too evident—but at the very idea that she could be deceived in the action of such a drug, that some magician could present it as a viable remedy when its effects were so immediately devastating (as Medea deceived the daughters of Pelias). Then, when Hyllus reveals the instigator of it all, "Nessus persuaded her...", Heracles understands that his doom is sealed. He expresses no forgiveness for Deianira, because her guilt is not much mitigated by this discovery. He turns instead to the further services that Hyllus must render in order to prove himself a true son. And the last of these demands is, for Hyllus, a repudiation of his mother.

There are two aspects of Deianira's innocence that weigh heavily with Hyllus, neither likely to evoke forgiveness from the victim: it was Nessus who persuaded her long ago; and her aim was "to madden [Heracles'] passion." That is, she was persuaded to act against him by his enemy; and the therapy she undertook was expected to have a violent effect, ἐκμῆναι πόθον. So, while

[85] ἅπαν τὸ χρῆμ' ἥμαρτε χρηστὰ μωμένη (thus K; other mss. read μνωμένη).

Hyllus argues to exculpate his mother, he only deepens her husband's conviction of her guilt. For in this disclosure Heracles must suppose that he is suffering much as Deianira planned. His emasculated condition simply confirms the known effects of erotic poisoning. His suffering is woman's agony, like childbirth.[86] This imagery may seem to us contrived, but it is significant for the hero's motivation: it is the loss of virile integrity that drives his final commandments (1062–63, 1090–1111). Deianira's pharmaceutria has worked very much as such remedies were supposed to work, rendering her man weak and womanly.

Heracles recognizes that this is the nature of his disease. There is no forgiveness in him because the known effects of erotic *pharmaka* were more hateful to the heroic character than death. Thus, in the Sophoclean conception, Heracles decides upon self-immolation not to escape from his pain or to hasten the inevitable, but to end the shame of woman's weakness.[87] And similarly with his last commandment, that Hyllus wed Iole, he reasserts patriarchal control and overthrows the woman who unmanned him.

[3.3] But with this last commandment, the father may have imposed too great a burden. Will the boy at last follow that "noblest law," to obey the father, even when his demands are inscrutable and intolerable? At first he rejects the immodest proposal, horrified at the very idea that he should consort with the one person tainted with his mother's death and his father's doom, ἥ μοι μητρὶ μὲν θανεῖν **μόνη / μεταίτιος**, σοὶ δ' αὖθις ὡς ἔχεις ἔχειν (1233–34). Lloyd-Jones' "sole cause" loses the implication of *metaitios:* she is "the only one to *share* in the blame" for both disasters. The first count of this indictment is that she shares the blame for his mother's death with Hyllus himself.[88] It is

[86]Loraux 1995: 39–41. The imagery of self-loathing is also drawn from womanhood: Zeitlin 1990: 72. Thus absurdly he cries out, "Pity me...for I am wailing in tears like a maiden.... I endured my hardships always without complaint, ...but now am found to be a wretched female" (1070–75). Thereupon Heracles lays aside his *kalummata* (1078–79): at death, he is like a maiden at marriage. The metaphor is perhaps reflected in vase paintings where a goddess leads Heracles to Olympus with her hand upon his wrist; see Jenkins 1983: 138.

[87]Cf. Garrison 11–33 on suicides honorable and shameful. On the final transaction, see below, n. 90.

[88]*Metaitios* as "sharing guilt," especially of those who are implicated in homicide as accomplices or accessories: A. *Ch.* 134, of Aegisthus; *Eu.* 199, the Furies insist that Apollo is not μεταίτιος but παναίτιος; Hdt. 2.100.3, 4.200.1–202.2 (the whole *plethos* is implicated in the murder of Arcesilaus); X. *HG* 5.1.34. Similarly in *Tr.* 260, Lichas says that Heracles blamed Eurytus as *metaitios* for his servitude; at 447 Deianira protests that Iole has no share in the blame for any harm to her. But Hyllus sees Iole as sharing in

dussebein for him to consort with anyone tainted by his mother's death (1245), and all the more horrific because of his own responsibility. That is, it makes Hyllus' guilt all the more unbearable that he must now wed his unwitting accomplice. For him to make his own household with her seems to repudiate Deianira, who died in the attempt to save her place in the *oikos*. But as Heracles calls the gods to witness the righteousness of his dying demand, the dutiful son consents (1249–51).

It is tempting to read the famous last lines (1275–78) as a dramatic rendering of the ephebe's answer: "And you maiden, do not be left behind at the house...".[89] The attribution is uncertain. It is often supposed that here the chorus speaks; presumably they address one of their own number. But it is simply not true of those who watched from the orchestra that any "has seen deaths great and recent, and sufferings many and strange." It is emphatically true of Iole, the prize of Oechalia; and she is significantly "at the house," ἐπ᾽ οἴκων. The bitterness of Hyllus is already clear in 1270–71, where he describes the outcome as shameful to the gods, whereas the chorus has voiced no such sentiment. Therefore my own inclination is to take the last clause "nothing that is not Zeus" as also Hyllus' words, and assume that the lines preceding it, "you maiden, do not be left behind," beckon to Iole who has silently appeared. For Hyllus to utter these lines toward her demonstrates his final commitment to obey his father. And if we take the lines in this way, the harshness of "nothing that is not Zeus" is tempered by a gesture of acceptance. He must accept the inscrutable will of the god as Heracles has done, with the same obedience that the son must show the father.[90]

Conclusion

Sophocles' Deianira is so constructed as to engage the audience not simply in her own crisis but in the aftermath, where Hyllus is put to the test. As Winkler argued, tragedy characteristically reflects upon the moral struggle of the young man coming of age, preparing for his proper role as comrade-in-arms and *kyrios*

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his mother's wrong; for Deianira erred "when she looked upon the bride within (the house)," 1139.

[89]λείπου μηδὲ σύ, παρθέν᾽, ἐπ᾽ οἴκων, / μεγάλους μὲν ἰδοῦσα νέους θανάτους, πολλὰ δὲ πήματα ‹καὶ› καινοπαθῆ, / κοὐδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεύς. The manuscripts are divided. Lloyd-Jones confidently assigns these lines to the chorus; but see the balanced assessment by Easterling (*ad loc.*). Cf. W. Kraus 1986: 102–3. Davies leaves these lines to Hyllus, but assumes some straggler in the house is addressed.

[90]The final transaction of the play also contributes to Heracles' redemption, as Wohl has shown (1998: 17–56). By exchanging the woman for the pledge of loyalty, he reasserts patriarchal control.

in his own house. That theme is especially striking in *Trachiniae*, and it is Sophocles' innovation in Deianira's character that puts so ponderous a burden on her son. For his predecessor, in presenting Deianira the innocent, had given her a radically redemptive treatment: the earlier figure whom we meet in Bacchylides and a few paintings of his era acted in ignorance of the venom lurking in the robe. Such a character was more readily forgiven, perhaps even pardoned by the dying hero or his omniscient ghost; and Hyllus need not have borne the guilt for slaying his mother by his curse. But Sophocles has combined her innocent intentions with dubious knowledge: like the character sketched in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, she acted with reckless cunning; she knew the risk and the wrong of what she was doing. By drawing upon both traditions, Sophocles created a more troubling character for Deianira and a more tragic predicament for the ephebe.

Both mother and son must come to terms with a harsher standard of blame. Beyond the circle of close kin, the measure of responsibility is knowledge; those who act with awareness of wrongful consequences or in disregard of the knowledge that is needed for responsible decision may be held liable, as guilty as the intentional wrongdoer. The importance of this theme is reflected throughout the play in the characters' pronouncements upon recklessness with twofold implications: *mataion*, "in vain," describes disappointed intentions; *mataion* is also "reckless" in the more damning sense, done without reckoning the likely consequences.[91] Without access to the inner mind, such reckless acts are indistinguishable from malicious intent. The young man coming of age must learn to recognize recklessness as a wrong akin to malice and act against it.

Such is the standard of responsibility that prevails in assembly and agora; it weighs against the natural sympathy that prevails among close kin in the *oikos*. It is also balances out the untested convictions that often inspire vindictive adversaries in court and on stage.[92] The case so often cited as a parallel to *Trachiniae*, Antiphon's *Against the Stepmother*, is most revealing in precisely this regard. The plaintiff, who has no kinship with the defendant, condemns her on the basis of his father's dying accusation. On the other side, the son who defends his mother has sworn to "know well" that she did not act with *pronoia*, but apparently his only basis for that conviction is filial trust. The defending son

[91]See above at n. 53.

[92]As Pelling (1996: 248) notes, in regard to "actor/observer effect," the Greeks tended to construct the motivation of other minds differently from modern western societies. But the judgments of Greek plaintiffs and tragic characters oddly approximate the western blame reflex: they assume that X did wrong because of an intrinsic disposition to do so, like the American respondents in Joan Miller's seminal study.

thinks he knows his mother's inner mind. The plaintiff son is just as convinced of her intrinsic malice, driven by his father's dying command to punish "this Clytemnestra." In *Trachiniae*, Hyllus plays both roles, first condemning his mother on the basis of his father's dying command, then defending her on his own conviction that her inner motives were innocent.

In court such claims would be weighed by a standard accessible to outside observers, based upon the knowledge revealed in overt acts. By this standard the Sophoclean character, in her ignorance, is perhaps innocent of the more serious murder with *pronoia.* Like the Aristotelian defendant (*MM* 1188b), she acted "without thought of her husband dying." Unlike the wife in Antiphon 1, she had made no prior attempt from which to judge the lethal effects of her drug. But the very fact that she "planned" recklessly, even without *pronoia,* burdens her with guilt. The chorus cautioned her to act only upon some proof of the drug's effect; and in the outcome they concede that she must bear much of the blame. In desperation she chose the untested danger, a means of deliverance that worked by pain and suffering; and she knew, even as she made her decision, that she was acting just as women of "vicious daring" do (582–83). She urged the chorus to conceal the act that she found shameful (597). She cannot believe that anyone affected by her decision would forgive her (729–30). Indeed, her husband found no forgiveness in his heart, and her son was compelled to carry out the father's will.

The drama presents the triumph of a moral standard that the ephebe must come to accept: the measure of guilt is not the specific aim or desire but knowledge of the wrong. By a similar principle Aristotle characterized tragedy in the older mode (1453b.27–29); "for the ancients (οἱ παλαῖοι) made their characters [act] with knowledge and awareness (εἰδότας καὶ γιγνώσκοντας) as even Euripides made Medea kill her children." Tragic characters in the later mode act or decide in ignorance and then discover an error about kinship or enmity, as Sophocles' Oedipus did. Aristotle thus distinguishes the older type of plot from the later, in two plays only a few years apart, not by the character's intentions but by her knowledge of the wrong to those dear to her. In this distinction he invites comparison of Medea and Aeschylus' Clytemnestra to the Sophoclean figure sometimes linked with them, Deianira. Unlike the other two, Deianira was mistaken about crucial circumstances. Thus she faced a tragic recognition, for she had not calculated that her decision would alienate her son—his curse marks a peripety εἰς ἔχθραν.[93] In her error she represents,

[93]Following Else 342–421. Ideally tragic errors are mistakes about *philia,* close kinship; recognition involves the discovery that a supposed enemy is kin, or a kinsman is an enemy. Sophocles' *Electra* serves as an especially instructive example (350): "Cly-

perhaps, Sophocles' first innovation in the direction of the later type of plot. But in her recklessness she invites disaster, and in that she is much like the other protagonists of the older type. For Sophocles' Deianira acts with the knowledge that she will do grievous injury to the husband she cannot bear to lose, and in this knowledge lies the burden of guilt.[94]

temnestra…recognizes that this is her son and he has come to kill her, in other words that he who was naturally φιλός is now her enemy—then we have a recognition εἰς ἔχθραν."

[94]This essay has profited greatly from constructive reading by the referees and the editor of *TAPA.* I am also indebted to friends at Austin and the University of Texas where this study took shape, especially Deena Berg, Michael Gagarin, Jack Kroll, and Douglass Parker.

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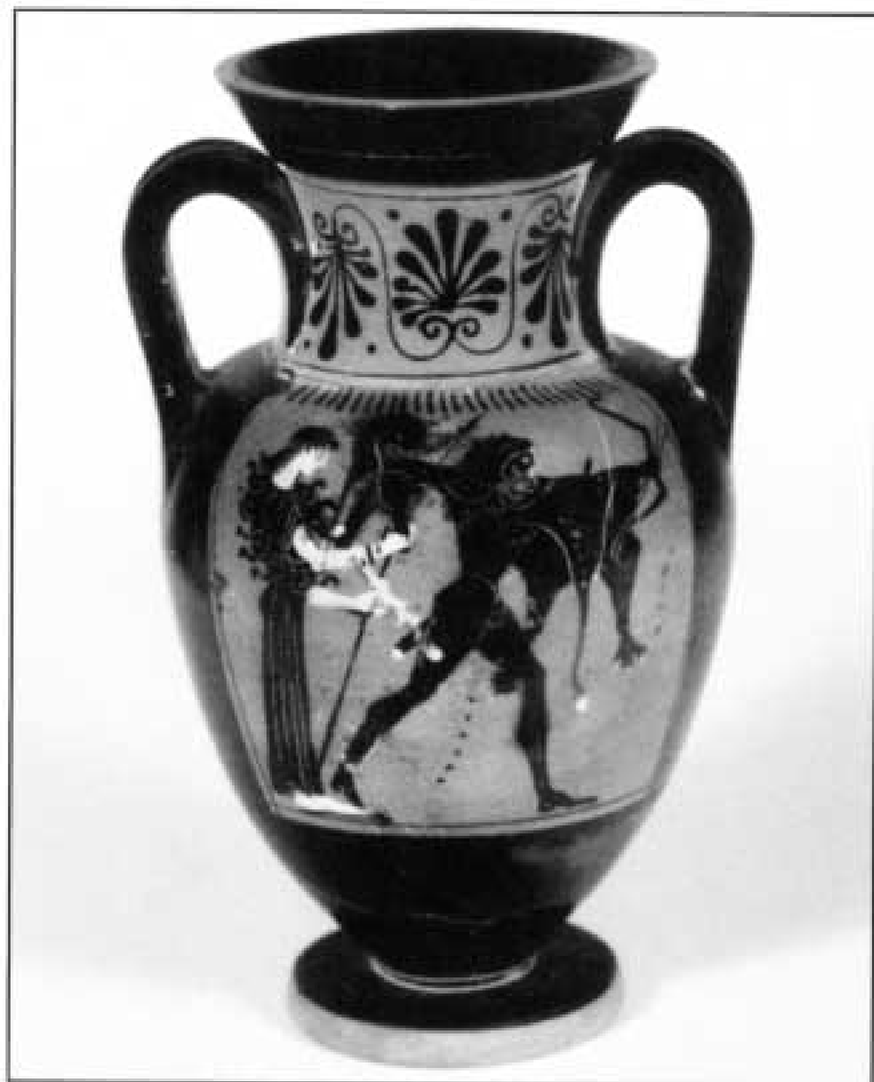

Fig. 1. Heracles with bow; early fifth century (Museo Barracco 223, side A). Photo by Antonio Idini; courtesy of Museo Barracco.

Fig. 2. Nessus and Deianira; early fifth century (Museo Barracco 223, side B). Photo by Antonio Idini; courtesy of Museo Barracco.

Fig. 3. Heracles and Iole; ca. 440–30. (British Museum E 370, side A). © Copyright The British Museum.

Fig. 4. Deianira:. ca. 440–30. (British Museum E 370, side B).
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