TIME, ORACLES, AND MARRIAGE IN THE *TRACHINIAE*

Sophocles' *Trachiniae* uses marriage as its major field to exhibit the tragedy of human passions, violence, and mistake or miscalculation. Through its images of the disrupted wedding ritual, the play also uses marriage as a microcosm of order in the individual's passage through life, in the family, and in society. The violations of marriage lead to an inversion or confusion of the normal stages of the human life-cycle. But marriage here involves far more than individual happiness or even the relation between the individual and society. It reflects the precariousness of the civilized order in general. More specifically, the end of the play, as I shall try to show, dramatizes a deep-seated Greek ambivalence between endogamy and exogamy, and also a related sensitivity about relinquishing part of the property of the *oikos* in exchange for a bride from a different *oikos*.

As Bruno Gentili has shown for the *Medea*, the marriage bed is protected by its own form of retributive justice or *dike*[1]. Transgression of the rights of the marriage bed turns back upon the transgressor, in this case Heracles, with a series of reversals that are symmetrical with his violations of the marriage. Heracles, having callously disregarded the rights and dignity of his wife in his house, comes to act out all the roles of the marriage ceremony, but in a grotesquely distorted form. In the retributive logic of tragic justice, Heracles gets the kind of wedding rite that he has deserved. Deianeira's share in the responsibility also takes the form of a bridal death - what Seaford calls the «tragic wedding»[2]. Hyllus' misguised invocation of ποίνιμος Δίκη against her in 808 (the only personification of Dike in the play) closely interweaves the themes of marriage and justice, but also forms part of

[1] B. Gentili, *Il 'letto insaziato' di Medea e il tema dell'adikia' a livello amoroso nei lirici (Saffo, Teognide) e nella 'Medea' di Euripide*, SCO 21, 1972, 60-72.

[2] R. Seaford, *Wedding Ritual and Textual Criticism in Sophocles' 'Women of Trachis'*, Hermes 114, 1986, 50-59 and *The Tragic Wedding*, JHS 97, 1987, 106-30, especially 119f., 128ff. For other aspects of the theme of marriage in the play see Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, Cambridge, Mass. 1981, 62f., 75ff. and also *Mariage et sacrifice dans les Trachiniennes de Sophocle*, AC 44, 1975, 30-53; T.C.W. Stinton, *Heracles' Homecoming and Related Topics: The Second Stasimon of Sophocles'* Trachiniae, Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar 5, 1985, 403-32, especially 410ff. For the question of Deianeira's responsibility see 582f., with the comments of W. Kraus, *Bemerkungen zum Text und Sinn in den 'Trachinierinnen'*, WS 99, 1986, 99f.

the cruel inversions of both sets of values, male and female, in Deianeira's tragedy. These inverted rites in turn make visible the disorder that the wedded pair (on Heracles' initiative) has allowed to enter the most intimate space of their house, the *muchoi* or *thalamos* of the familial space (578f., 686; 900, 913).

The play places marriage in the foreground as a social institution, represented firmly by Deianeira in the prologue. In the background, however, lurk the 'disease' (*nosos*) of uncontrolled lust and the 'persuasion' that eventually produce the utter destruction of the family: bestial suitors, rape, the sack of houses and cities, wives who kill husbands, husbands and sons who would kill wives and mothers, a new bride giving birth to an Erinys, the fusion of the sexual union of the bridal night with penetration by the sword, and the close embrace of a poisoned garment that converts the metaphorical heat of desire into the literal ravages of a deadly fever[3].

The vicissitudes of Deianeira's marriage become the figure in which is writ large the lesson of man's mortal subjection to time's changes. As Iole's fate acts out in the present the terrors that Deianeira had felt as a young woman in the past, so all the normal times and gender categories of the marriage rites are mixed up, with the resultant replacement of chaos for order, misery for joy, death for life and fertility.

The distortions of the wedding ritual also contribute to the play's device of foreshortening time. As we shall see, the play collapses the beginning and later stages of marriage as it collapses the beginning and end of life for both of its protagonists. Marriage is thus parallel with the recurrent oracles, which also collapse the stages of life. Through the wedding motif for Deianeira and the oracles for Heracles, the play explores the tragic pattern wherein the suffering at the end of a life is at every moment mysteriously present beneath the surface appearance of its vigor and happiness. The oracles seem to identify the end of life with its supposedly happy continuation in mature strength, success and triumph in the present. Thus they apparently offer an alternative between death in the present and 'escaping the end (fulfilment) of time' (ἢ τοῦθ' ὑπεκδραμόντα τοῦ

[3] For the imagery of lust as 'disease' and 'persuasion' as dangerous seduction, with deadly effects, see C. Segal, *Sophocles' Trachiniae: Myth, Poetry, and Heroic Values*, YCS 25, 1977, 99-158, especially 111-15, with the further literature there cited.

χρόνου τέλος, 167), with a resultant existence without pain (166-68). But in fact the alternative does not exist. As Heracles recognizes the truth at the end, the 'painfree existence' is itself death (1169-73)[4]. The oracles' ambiguous message is that the powerful destructive forces from the past are still alive in the present (see 79-81, 1169-71).

Like the oracles, marriage holds both endurance in suffering (*ponos*, 26-30) and the promise of happiness to come (205ff., 640ff.). But instead marriage becomes the area in which suffering is most intense. Deianeira opens the play with an account of this suffering (1-35), but she does not yet know just how deep it will prove. Her opening lines, as Seaford has shown, are a cruel inversion of the *makarismos* of the bride in the wedding ceremony[5]. Instead of the pronouncement that the married couple will be happy throughout their lives, she repeats the ancient, cautionary apophthegm that no one may be considered happy until he sees the end of his life (*aiôn*, 2); and she harks back to the time of her wooing, when she might have received the bridal *makarismos*, as the beginning of her life of unhappiness, toil, and worry (9-35; cf. *aiôn*, 34). Hers has been a marriage where the 'lifetime' (*aiôn*) will indeed turn out to be the very opposite of 'happy'.

This inversion of the bridal *makarismos*, however, is also closely interwoven with the oracles, which, like marriage, cover the entire *aion* with happiness or its reverse. Marriage for the woman and oracles for the man make visible the changes that a mortal being undergoes in time. The analogy appears in the close verbal and thematic connnections between Deianeira's remarks on marriage in her prologue (1-3, 21, and 26f.) and the ambiguous oracles about a happy end of life or a peaceful *telos* from Zeus at various points later in the play (79-81, 166-68, 1169-71). In particular, we may compare Deianeira's opening *gnome* with her first account of the oracles to Heracles:

> ὡς οὐκ ἂν αἰῶν' ἐκμάθοις βροτῶν, πρὶν ἂν
> θάνῃ τις, οὔτ' εἰ χρηστὸς οὔτ' εἴ τῳ κακός· (2-3)

[4] I cannot enter here into the many problems of the oracles in the play. For discussion see Segal, *Sophocles'*, 134ff; Albert Machin, *Cohérence et continuité dans la tragédie de Sophocle*, Paris 1980, 151-62.

[5] Seaford, *Wedding*, 55 and *Tragic*, 122.

Ὡς ἡ τελευτὴν τοῦ βίου μέλλει τελεῖν,
ἢ τοῦτον ἄρας ἆθλον εἰς τό γ' ὕστερον
τὸν λοιπὸν ἤδη βίστον εὐαίων' ἔχειν. (79-81)

Her remarks about a *telos* from Zeus, in the context of being wooed and won in marriage also resemble the oracles from Zeus that Heracles understands at the end:

Τέλος δ' ἔθηκε Ζεὺς Ἀγώνιος καλῶς,
εἰ δὴ καλῶς. (26f.)

ἔφασκε μόχθων τῶν ἐφεστώτων ἐμοὶ
λύσιν τελεῖσθαι· κἀδόκουν πράξειν καλῶς·
τὸ δ' ἦν ἄρ' οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν θανεῖν ἐμέ. (1170-72)

Deianeira's account of the change from the girl's *bios amochthos* to the anxieties of marriage (147-50) is also the woman's house- and marriage-oriented version, as it were, of the oracle that predicted Heracles' change in this present time from toils to a life free of suffering (*mochthoi*, 1170, 1173; *ponoi*, 179; cf. also 166-68). The reversal in the meaning of the oracles that turns the ostensibly happy *telos* of life into the stark *teleutê* of death (cf. 79, 167, 1255f.), then, proves to be exactly parallel to the *makarismos* of the wedding ceremony that has turned into woe and worry (1-3).

Deianeira's opening speech on the mortal life-cycle (1-3) focuses particularly on the woman's changing roles as she enters and experiences marriage. Later, at the opening of the first episode, she demarcates these stages in her speech about the cares of marriage (144-50). She alludes to them again, indirectly, when she compares her declining beauty to the ripening bloom of Iole (547-49). The word she uses for herself, *phthinousa* (548), also carries the larger connotations of the 'waning' or 'decay' that belongs to the mortal condition in general. In struggling with the sufferings of her marriage, Deianeira thus becomes the agent who brings to Heracles the full experience of time. She causes him to suffer time's changes, like a woman, in and through his body. Reduced to the weakness of a *par-*

thenos (1071), he learns, as she did, how a single night can effect a massive change of status and condition (149)[6].

Viewed in the perspective of the changing cycles in a woman's life over time, Iole is not only Deianeira's rival; she is also her complement, a doublet of her younger self. As her rival, she has the bloom of youth that the older woman sees fading or 'perishing' in the inevitable rhythms of life (547-49). As her complement, Iole is a younger Deianeira, the new bride that Deianeira once was and can still vividly remember herself to have been (6ff., 144ff., 557ff.). Taken together, the two figures not only evoke the pre- and post-nuptial concerns of the Greek woman, but make manifest, in a single field of vision, all the different stages of a woman's life: the wooed, nubile girl, the young bride approaching her new house, the mother with her cares and children in the household, and perhaps even the mourning widow as Deianeira weeps over a husband she regards as dead and regards herself as 'abandoned', *erêmê* (904f., keeping the manuscript reading)[7]

Indeed, this last passage suggests the fusion of the beginning and end of a woman's married life if it evokes both the widow's lament and (as Seaford suggests) the disorientation of the new bride «abandoned by her kin and not yet incorporated into a new relationship»[8]. In a single moment Deianeira 'loosens her robe' like a new bride on her wedding night (924) and laments her desolation like an aged widow (905). The imagery of marriage calls up the woman's whole trajectory of life as the marital bed virtually turns into her bier and tomb in the 'hollow coverlets' where Deianeira dies (901)[9].

[6] For Heracles' 'female' suffering through the physicality of his body see Nicole Loraux, *Les expériences de Tirésias*, Paris 1989, 49-51, 148f. As Loraux shows, Heracles' shift of gender roles is part of the paradoxical play of opposites about a hero who is the 'supermale' but yet has particular vulnerabilities to women, as the story of Omphale illustrates (cf. *Trach.* 250-54).

[7] Recent editors accept Nauck's emendation, *genoint' erêmoi*: so P.E. Easterling, ed., *Sophocles, Trachiniae*, Cambridge 1982; H. Lloyd-Jones and N. Wilson, *Sophoclis Fabulae*, Oxford 1990; Malcolm Davies, ed., *Sophocles, Trachiniae*, Oxford 1991; but see contra Seaford, *Wedding*, 57f.

[8] Seaford, *Wedding*, 58, citing (*inter alia*) *Antig.* 887. *Erêmê* does not of course literally mean 'widowed' here, but it can still suggest an analogy between Deianeira's bereft state and widowhood: see Eur., *Hec.* 810f.; cf. also Aesch. *Ag.* 861f., Eur. *Alc.* 378-84, *Hipp.* 846f. At *Trach.* 176f. Deianeira has already expressed anxiety about being widowed, 'deprived of the best of all men' (*esterêmenê*).

[9] See Seaford, *Wedding*, 57.

In the chorus just preceding her confrontation with the threat of Iole as a new bride, Deianeira appears as the prize of a contest for a bride, the 'heifer' (530, presumably still 'unyoked') awaiting the 'bull' (509). Then, soon after, when she is meditating what to do about her situation, she calls Iole 'yoked', *ezeugmenê* (536). The repetition of this traditional marital imagery in so short an interval makes the difference in ages between the two women seem less important than their shared role as victims of their sexuality, both subject to the animal drives that determine the course of their lives, both waiting for their mate to determine the next phase of their lives. Yet precisely this overlapping sexual language also separates the two women in bitter rivalry[10].

The ensuing flashback to Deianeira's premarital experience (555 ff.) juxtaposes the two 'marriages' of Heracles, with her and with Iole, as ironical mirror-images of one another. The winning of a new 'bed-mate' (cf. 539f.) by the so-called 'faithful' husband (541; cf. 550) is superimposed both upon the original wooing of Deianeira in the previous ode and on the bestial violations that hovered about that fresh first marriage shortly afterwards (559-81). Heracles' acquisition of Iole, then, is seen against a double background: his winning of a legitimate bride in a heroic contest and his defense of that bride, once won, from the Centaur's rape. His winning of Iole inverts both of these praiseworthy deeds. He wins a new bride by martial force, but with the destruction of his established marriage; and he himself now plays the role of the bestial violator of marriage.

As Deianeira has a younger self in Iole, so does Heracles in his son Hyllus. Hyllus helps extend the experience of generational passage and marriage from the female to the male. For him, as for Haemon in *Antigone*, marriage marks the advancing time of the young man's life, with tragic implications for both of these characters. Haemon defies his father's commands, takes a forbidden bride-of-Hades, and ends his life in a marriage ritual that fuses with death. In the moment of this union with his 'bride', he becomes one of the *aôroi*, those who die before the fulfilment of marriage (*Antig.* 1234-43).

[10] The animal imagery here also implies how close the bestial world is to the human, especially in the area of sex, and how dangerous it is when it breaks through the surface. Here the conventional terms gain a new reality as actualized metaphors for human behavior. When Deianeira pulls her memories of the Centaur up from her past, that animal world does indeed enter her house, as a hidden poison of her mind and of Heracles' body.

Hyllus begins the play as a child among Deianeira's other children, defined as τέκνον and παῖς (61), and he is so referred to repeatedly throughout the play. But in making the journey from Trachis to Cenaeum he accomplishes what is virtually an initiatory passage from the sphere of the mother to that of the father. At this point he becomes an adult male, and Heracles addresses him as *anêr* (1238)[11]. He will perform the commands of his father, albeit reluctantly, including the command that pertains to marriage; and in this act of difficult obedience he will enter upon his adulthood (cf. 1158). His first manly duty is to marry, to found a new household after the disintegration of the old. Yet the circumstances of marriage that mark his passage to male adulthood are the reverse of the happiness that usually attends such an event.

The wedding motif is important because it is also linked with another of the play's major concerns, the honor or *timê* of the wife in her household. Deianeira's disastrous action is motivated by her wish to protect this status. It is essential to the wife's honor or *timê*, as Foucault remarks, «not to see another woman given preference over her, not to suffer a loss of status and dignity, not to be replaced at her husband's side by another - this was what mattered to her above all else»[12]. This loss of dignity is exactly what Deianeira suffers; and the affront constitutes *lobe*, an injury to the wife's basic rights in her house. Thus Deianeira uses the phrase λωβητὸν ἐμπόλημα τῆς ἐμῆς φρενός, 'a merchandise of injury for my mind' (538) for Heracles' sending Iole to the house. Received within as a *damar*, a second wife, Iole displaces Deianeira from her *timê* as well as from her bed (*lechos*, 545-51).

Having been dishonored in her wifely role, she kills herself not as a woman generally does in tragedy, with the noose, but with the sword, in an action that makes the chorus ask if 'a woman's hand had the courage to found such deeds' (898)[13]. Yet her 'male' death takes

[11] Heracles continues to call Hyllus *pais* or *teknon*, however, in 797, 1024, 1221, 1227. See 1017, where the Old Man attending Heracles addresses Hyllus as ὦ παῖ τοῦδ' ἀνδρός; cf. also 1225.

[12] M. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 1984, vol. 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. R. Hurley, New York 1985, 163, apropos of Xen., *Oec.* 10.9. Cf. also Eur. *Med.* 765ff., *Ion* 836ff. See also J.-P. Vernant, *Le mariage*, in *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne*, Paris 1974, 68.

[13] Segal, *Sophocles'*, 156; also Nicole Loraux, *Façons tragiques de tuer une femme*, Paris 1985, 33ff. The emergence of this heroic dimension in Deianeira is

place in the marriage-bed, the place of her role as wife and mother, and evokes the female role in the wedding ceremonies: Deianeira's 'loosening' of her robe (924) is suggestive of the new bride's 'loosening of the zone' on the wedding night[14]. Heracles, on the other hand, soon exchanges gender roles in the opposite direction: he weeps shamefully, like a woman or a *parthenos* (1070-75), and enacts the role of the new bride who removes the veil at the *anakalypteria* (δείξω γὰρ τάδ' ἐκ καλυμμάτων, 1078)[15].

The confusion of gender roles in this ruined *oikos* is paralleled by a confusion of a woman's generational passage. Although Deianeira is a mature, long-married woman with at least one grown son, she recapitulates the experience of the nubile girl, the *parthenos*, approaching marriage[16]. Her opening account of being wooed by Achelous draws on old myths about the metamorphic fluidity of water-gods; but the fear of a suitor who appears in the terrifying shape of a 'winding serpent' (12) may also reflect folk-traditions about young brides' anxieties. Psyche, in Apuleius' self-consciously mythicized tale, receives a similar image of her new husband's supposed serpentine monstrosity (*met.* 5.17). Deianeira's fears, like Psyche's, are (at least in part) sexual (anxiety about the 'monstrosity' of the phallus that will penetrate her); and her next lines make the sexual nature of these fears explicit: 'Ill-fated, awaiting such a suitor, I kept on praying always to die before ever coming near this bed' (15-17)[17]. Then, a few lines later, she moves from the new bride's fears of the first night to the married woman's fears in the night. These are not about a suitor but about a husband and the birth of children (27-35)[18]. As Deianeira comes to her present life as middle-aged matron, she also employs the imagery of birth, nurture, and agriculture - images appropriate to the

symmetrical with Heracles' pitiable weeping like a girl in 1070ff., and we may compare the more drastic reversal of gender and heroism in Euripides' *Alcestis*.

14 See Seaford, *Wedding*, 58 and *Tragic*, 119. Note too the repeated motif of the hand in the previous line (*syntonôi cheri*, 923), which takes up the male heroism of 897.

15 For Heracles' 'unveiling' and the Anakalypteria see Seaford, *Wedding*, 56f. See also G. Sissa, *Le corps virginal*, Paris 1987, 116ff., with the references there cited.

16 On this point see Seaford, *Wedding*, 55.

17 On this passage see Easterling, *Sophocles*, ad loc., and *Phil.* 677.

18 Note how 'awaiting' the suitor (*prosdedegmenê*, in 15, has become the 'receiving' a succession of toils, *diadedegmenê*, in 30.

mature woman, whose adult functions are often compared to that of the fertile earth[19].

These two basic stages of the woman's life-cycle, loss of virginity and motherhood, are again brought together, anomalously, at the arrival of Iole. This young girl (*neanis*, 307) might be the virgin bride, awaited and familiar (at least by name) to the new household that she is joining[20]. Instead, she is unexpected, anonymous, and of unknown parentage (310-18). Like Deianeira, she fuses what ought to be mutually exclusive conditions of the woman in marriage. She is both *neanis* and *teknoussa* (307f.), a *kore* who is already 'yoked' (536f.), a 'stranger' (*xenê*) who is already established as a *damar* (427f.), sharing the same *gamoi* in the same bed (539f., 546), the true 'wife' of the 'lord' in the house (545, 550). Her appearance suggests other possible female roles: she may be a mother, or without a husband. As a woman 'without a man' (*anandros*, 308), she may also be a widow. In this latter respect, her presence actualizes another fear of Deianeira - and one that Deianeira herself unintentionally realizes (cf. 904f., discussed above). The wife of the wandering hero has already been living a widowed life, with her 'husbandless bed' (*eunais anandrotoisi*, 109f.); and she recalls this phrase in her own tentative characterization of Iole in 308. At the peripety contrasting stages of marriage come together in a mutually destructive fusion of opposites. When the legitimate, long-married wife kills herself in a deadly re-enactment of the bridal night, the 'new bride' gives birth to an Erinys for the house (893-95).

As an inverted wedding, Iole's arrival is greeted not by the joyful music and shouting that awaits the new bride (*domos ho mellonymphos*, 205ff.)[21], but by silence and pity (312f.). The passage that describes her as the bride who 'gives birth to an Erinys' also calls her coming *aneortos*, 'without festivity'[22]. Yet 'voiceless Kypris' (860)

[19] The analogy is encoded into the marriage formula ἐπ' ἀρότῳ γνησίων παίδων: see Menander, *Perikeiromene* 1013, Sandbach; in general M. Detienne, *Les jardins d'Adonis*, Paris 1972, 215ff.

[20] Cf. *h. Ven.* 133-35, where the young girl (Aphrodite in the guise of a *parthenos*) expects to be introduced to the family of Anchises as part of the arrangements of the marriage.

[21] See Seaford, *Wedding*, 56.

[22] This reading of the mss. in 894 (instead of the scholiast's division *ha neortos*) is accepted (after Wilamowitz) by some recent editors: Lloyd-Jones and Wilson and Davies, ad loc.; contra, Easterling, *Sophocles*, ad 893-95.

proves to be vocal after all, for the love-goddess produces sounds of woe in the house (863ff.) rather than the joyful music of the wedding, whether old or new[23]. The eagerly awaited arrival of the 'groom' (cf. 655ff.) will echo not with the happy music of the flutes but with lamentation (947, 950ff., 962ff.) and fearful cries (983ff.) after a grim, uneasy silence (974ff.). The same negation of wedding festivity occurs soon after with Heracles' arrival in a 'soundless' procession (*anaudatos*, 968). The absence of voice not only cancels out the exultant sounds of voice or flute at the hoped for reunion (205-220; cf. *kalliboas aulos*, 640ff.); it also reminds us of the destructive power of Kypris, 'voiceless', in the background (860f.), where the context was also the bridal ceremony (cf. *nymphan agages*, 857f.). When the silence is broken, it is for the awful cries of pain and rage, not joy (1007, 1010, 1014ff.).

Deianeira feels an instinctive sympathy for the younger woman (312f.); but this sympathy has deeper roots than she recognizes, for Iole has suffered from Heracles the violence from which Heracles had protected her at the beginning of her marriage when she was just a girl (*pais et' ousa*, 557; cf. 563f.). Whereas Deianeira was rescued from a monstrous suitor by her victorious husband-to-be, Iole is carried off forcibly by a man who attacks her city. Whereas Deianeira enjoys the 'distinguished bed' (*kriton lechos*) of legitimate marriage (27) 'from the house of (her) father, Oeneus' (6), Iole is offered only the 'secret bed' (*kryphion lechos*) of concubinage (360) and both witnesses and shares the destruction of her father's house. Instead of solidifying the bond between *oikoi* in the ratified exchange of marital negotiations, Iole's union destroys both houses (cf. 362-65). The bond between these two households becomes one of death (cf. 281ff. and 1233ff.). As Iole is now anonymous, so Deianeira will herself lose 'the name of mother' (817f., 1065). She inquires whether the girl is 'without a man' (308), i.e., unmarried; but, as we have noted, she herself has been

[23] So 813ff, 863ff., 904ff. of Deianeira; 932-42 of Hyllus; 772ff., 790ff., 983ff. of Heracles. The inverted wedding-song has an analogy with the deceptive marriage-feast that Odysseus orders in his house to disguise the slaughter of the suitors (*Od.* 23.130-52). Here, as elsewhere in the play, the *Odyssey* is a paradigm for the happy homecoming and reunited house that Deianeira and Odysseus cannot achieve. In the *Odyssey* the festivity of the pseudo-marriage is appropriate, after all, to the reestablished marriage of the king and queen. In the *Trachiniae* the anticipated wedding music turns to discordant shrieks of pain or heavy silences.

worn down by a 'bed without a man' (109f.). Anomalously, the married woman has a 'husbandless bed', whereas Iole, the 'maiden' or *korê* (536) is 'yoked' and may truly have 'the man' of whom Deianeira has been deprived (550f.).

Iole's entrance as the silent captive in a victory train is a visual recall of Cassandra's entrance in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*[24]. She is also like the Aeschylean Helen, a woman whose beauty brings destruction to her city (*Ag.* 686ff.). Like Cassandra, Iole is taken to a new city and house from the smouldering ruins of the old (cf. 281-83 and *Ag.* 525ff.); like Helen her transfer to the new *oikos* means its doom.

The new bride would normally be welcomed by her mother-in-law, accepting her into the new family[25]. In this case, however, the woman who receives her is herself the wife whom she is displacing. Iole's processional arrival into a hostile setting may, as Seaford suggests, reflect something of the young bride's apprehension about her new family in a patrilocal marital system. While the new bride in such a situation may feel pain or anxiety at the irrevocable break with her childhood security and shelter, this pseudo-bride looks back to an *oikos* that her 'husband' has totally destroyed.

The normal wedding ceremony, as Seaford points out, contains hints of the bride's reluctance that correspond to her feelings of abandonment and isolation as she leaves her familiar home for the unknown house of her husband: «The transition expressed and effected by the ritual contains a negative tendency, the ritualised reluctance of the bride, which must be overcome, perhaps by persuasion or perhaps by rites of incorporation»[26].

In the *Trachiniae*, however, this resolution never occurs; Deianeira is a long-married woman who has never fully experienced a 'release' (*lusis*, 20, 554) from these anxieties of transition. Hence at three major points of the action she dwells at length on the dangerous passage between her girlhood and marriage (1-27, 141-52, 555-77); and at the peripety, as we have noted, she brings the two stages fatally

[24] See Segal, *Sophocles'*, 119f., with the references there cited; also Segal, *Greek Myth as a Semiotic and Structural System and the Problem of Tragedy*, Arethusa 16, 1983, 173-198 = *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1986, 48-74, especially 57f.

[25] On this part of the marriage ceremony see R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Life*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1990, 221, citing Eur., *Tro.* 315 and Schol. ad Eur. *Phoen.* 344.

[26] Seaford, *Wedding*, 54, with the literature cited in notes 19-20.

together in the wedding-night/Liebestod scenario of her death (900-26). The chorus, which probably consists of unmarried women[27] is a responsive audience and so can vividly identify with the picture that they draw of the brutal transition between girlhood and marriage (503-30). As Seaford remarks, «We feel that the negative tendency, the anxiety of the bride at her *eremia*, has spilled out over the limits that should have been set to it by the ritual and has engulfed her whole life»[28].

Viewed in this light, Iole's arrival is a horribly exaggerated form of the strangeness of bride and groom to one another in the bride's passage to her new abode. Yet the husband and wife in the original, long-established household of Deianeira and Heracles are equally strangers to one another (31-35) and remain so to the end. Iole's arrival both reveals and increases the loneliness of Deianeira's marriage and her emotional as well as physical distance from Heracles. While the husband is off wandering in far-flung places, the faithful wife in the house is duplicated, as it were, by a younger woman who arrives as a stranger, nameless and mysterious, from what is virtually an enemy city. Her anonymity increases Deianeira's distance from Heracles, for it embodies a whole area of his life from which Deianeira has been excluded and of which she has only faint knowledge (31ff., 63ff.). The 'new' marriage is not only played off against the old, but fuses destructively with the old in a series of confusions and reversals of events in the wedding ceremony that expand as the play goes on. When the 'new marriage was rushing upon' the house (νέων ἀΐσσόντων γάμων, 841-45), Deianeira tried to forestall 'great harm to the house'[29]. Only too late does she become aware that she has destroyed house and marriage by her attempt to save them. The ritual cry of joy (*ololygê*, 205) that awaits the new bride is answered later by terrible cries and wails, first of and for the wife

[27] See Cynthia Gardiner, *The Sophoclean Chorus*, Madison, Wisc. 1987, 120ff. The 'maiden' (*parthenos*) addressed at the end (1275) probably refers to the chorus: see P.E. Easterling, *The End of the Trachiniae*, ICS 6, 1981, 70f.; H. Lloyd-Jones and N. Wilson, *Sophoclea*, Oxford 1990, 177f. With this interpretation, with which I agree, the speaker of the closing lines must be Hyllus.

[28] Seaford, *Wedding*, 58.

[29] Nauck's emendation, ἀΐσσουσαν, accepted by Wilson and Lloyd-Jones in the new OCT , makes 'the harm of new marriages' rush upon the house rather than the 'marriages' themselves (or, the marriage itself); but this does not substantially change the allusion.

(863-70), then of the husband (984ff.) in a house whose bridal chambers are filled with death instead of love (900ff., 915ff.). The joining of boys and girls in a 'common shouting' (*koinos klanga*, 207) to celebrate the reunion of man and wife in the *domos mellonymphos* (205-15) will emerge in just the reverse form. The coming together of a *pais* and a *korê* in marriage seals the end of the union from which the new pair came.

The happy summoning of a bride to a new hearth (205-7) fuses simultaneously with the most unhappy summoning of the husband to an old hearth. The change from *hestia* as 'hearth' to *hestia* as 'altar' (206 and 607) marks the unstable and mutually destructive relation between domestic and heroic space, male and female spheres of action[30]. The center of the household that is going to celebrate a happy (re)marriage (205-7), the hearth, turns into the place where marriage-gifts wreak destruction, and a particularly sexual form of destruction through the imagery of fire that describes the activation of the poison on Heracles' robe (cf. 606ff.; also 954f.)[31]. The original husband and wife will never meet; and their *oikos* will remain divided between the bride/wife's inner chamber where she lies on her nuptial couch/grave (905ff.) and a house approached only from the outside and never in fact entered by the husband. Just before Deianeira fatally recognizes the nature of the 'wedding gift' that she has sent, the chorus joyfully sings of their hope that Heracles will arrive, 'exchanging his island hearth/altar, where he is called sacrificer', for the city where he is so eagerly awaited (655-60)[32]. But by sacrificing at the 'altar', Heracles will destroy the possibility of arriving at his (and Deianeira's) 'hearth'.

Heracles is now both the new 'bride' who is awaited in 'her' new *oikos* and the husband who is supposed to renew the suspended life of the old. Instead of the sexual 'melting' and seductive talk of marriage (*parphasis*, 660-62), there will be the 'melting' in the poisoned robe's embrace thanks to the seductive talk, 'persuasion' and 'charm' of the Centaur who tried to disrupt a new marriage by rape (cf. 710, 1141)[33].

[30] On the spatial division between the two protagonists see Segal, *Sophocles'*, 123ff.; also P.E. Easterling, *Women in tragic Space*, BICS 34, 1988, 15-26, especially 18f.

[31] For the motif of the hearth and its destructive meaning see Segal, *Tragedy*, 68 and 85f.

[32] The preceding antistrophe also recalls the chorus' song of 205ff. in the motif of the joyful flute and lyre: cf. 640-43 and 205ff., 216ff.

One of the major dynamic motifs of the plot is the sacrifice of thanksgiving and triumph that turns the hero into the victim[34]. Given the bridal context, this sacrifice probably carries associations of the *proteleia*, the sacrifices performed as part of the preliminaries of the new marriage[35]. But since Heracles is the center of this sacrifice, he undergoes a double set of inversions: from the returning husband to the arriving new bride, and from the human celebrant to the bestial victim.

Heracles' last word about his wife is the regret that she did not die at his hand. This is the ultimate destruction of the marital union, and it comes in his son's attempt to exonerate his mother. Her death, he explains, was by her own hand and 'from no one outside' (οὐδενὸς πρὸς ἐκτόπου, 1132). This last phrase reinforces the spatial separation between husband and wife in the two isolated spheres of this divided *oikos*.

Some twenty lines before this exchange, Heracles prays to Zeus, 'May she only come' (προσμόλοι μόνον,) so that she may prove a lesson to all men of his retribution (1109-11). His words are a bitterly ironical echo of the chorus' prayer for the husband's arrival at the house in the second stasimon, just after Deianeira has sent off her welcoming gifts (cf. 'Αφίκοιτ' ἀφίκοιτο, 655; μόλοι, 660). The ominous significance of that 'arrival' emerges again in the figurative use of the same verb to describe the suffering of the wife. What does in fact come to the house is neither a bride nor a groom but suffering (ἐπέμολε<ν> πάθος οἰκτίσαι, 854f.). This inversion of happy 'arrival' thus reaches its ultimate form in the transformation of love to hatred in Heracles' wish for Deianeiara's 'arrival' in 1109 (προσμόλοι μόνον).

The inversions of the bridal procession become even sharper in the light of what comes after the chorus' statement of the 'arrival of Heracles' suffering' in 854f., for they go on to apostrophize Heracles' 'dark spear' with which he won his 'swift bride' (*nymphê*), meaning

[33] On these motifs see Segal, *Sophocles'*, 111ff.; Stinton, *Heracles'*, 406; H. Parry, *Aphrodite and the Furies in Sophocles' Trachiniae*, in M. Cropp, E. Fantham, S.E. Scully, eds., *Greek tragedy and its Legacy: Essays Presented to D.J. Conacher*, Calgary, Alberta, 1986, 103-14.

[34] See Segal, *Tragedy*, 65ff.

[35] Cf. Aesch., *A.* 433 and 718f. and for discussion Seaford, *Tragic*, 109.

Iole, whom he has 'led from steep Oechalia' to her new home, with Aphrodite as the silent attendant (856-63). Once more, the diction strongly evokes the wedding procession, or *pompê*, especially in the verb 'lead', *agages*, and in the reference to a goddess as 'attendant' (*amphipolos*)[36]. In the depiction of wedding processions on vases in the archaic and classical period, divinities often accompany the married couple. In this case, however, that attendant (*amphipolos*) is a goddess who can be as dangerous to marriage as she is indispensable to it[37]. She has destroyed Heracles' already established marriage, particularly as she replaces Zeus, whom Lichas had claimed as the *praktor* for these events (250f. and 861)[38]. Kypris or Aphrodite had also presided at the contest that marked the beginning of the marriage between Heracles and Deianeira (497); now she stands behind another conflict, but one that threatens to replace the old bride with a new. The reversals go still a stage further as the chorus almost immediately after hears cries of grief from within the house (863ff.).

The change from Heracles as the warrior who defends marriage to a Centaur-like violator has a scenic realization as the procession of the victorious warrior doubles with a perverted wedding procession. The 'black spear' of Heracles which 'led this swift bride from steep Oechalia' (856-58) also associates Heracles' marital activity with the 'black' poison and the 'black' hair of the rapist Centaur (573, 717). The spear which might defend a marriage and household (cf. *promachos*, 856) here destroys both; and it is evoked at just the point where Kypris' damage to this house has become manifest (863).

The pendant to the pseudo-marital procession from Oechalia to the *oikos* of the 'newly married' pair is Lichas' conveyance of Deianeira's gift back to Heracles. This welcomes the long-absent husband, assures him of the wife's 'trust' (*pistis*, 623), and expresses (uneasily) the mutual 'longing' or *pothos* between them (630-32). Deianeira's language evokes yet another image of the wedding proces-

[36] Seaford, *Tragic*, 129 also suggests that the epithet 'swift', *thoa*, here makes «a poignant association between the urgency of the wedding procession which ends happily and the present arrival of the bride», and he cites Eur., *Suppl.* 993. On *pompê* and derivatives see also 560, 620, 872.

[37] On Aphrodite's unstable relation to marriage see Detienne, 120ff.; also Parry, 108ff.

[38] Aphrodite's silence here (*anaudos*, 860) is another negation of the joyful cries of the chorus in their premature joy early in the play (205ff.).

sion, or *pompê* (cf. 617, 620), which is here escorted by Hermes, as the god of exchange, whom Lichas invokes as the patron of his task (620). The marital implications of this 'procession' and its horrible inversions are recalled at Deianeira's suicide when the Nurse exclaims, 'O children, for this processional gift began no small sufferings to Heracles' (871f.)[39]:

> Ὦ παῖδες, ὡς ἄρ' ἡμῖν οὐ σμικρῶν κακῶν
> ἦρξεν τὸ δῶρον Ἡρακλεῖ τὸ πόμπιμον.

Far from welcoming Heracles home in a happy 'sending' that fuses with a wedding procession, this 'processional gift' becomes a deadly escort that transforms the wedding procession into a funeral procession. Hermes Pompaios, who presides over Lichas' transmission of the robe (620), becomes Hermes Psychopompos (cf. *Aj.* 832, *OC* 1548), sending Heracles to Hades (cf. 1085) rather than to the marriage chamber. This union of marriage and death in the *pompê* is reinforced by the parallel between Deianeira's 'going off' in marriage (ἄφαρ βέβακε, 529) and her 'going off on her ultimate journey' in death (βέβηκε ... τὴν πανυστάτην ὁδῶν, 874f.). This ominous echo is prepare for by the phrase ἄφαρ βέβακε in the parode (133), where it describes the sudden vicissitudes of joy and sorrow in human life generally. As the action develops, that gnomic generalization about joy and sorrow takes the specific form of marriage and death, the wedding procession and the funeral procession. For both protagonists, an anticipated *pompê* of return and reunion in marriage turns into the *pompê* of the funeral.

When Lichas promises to 'fasten upon' Heracles the 'trust' or 'good faith' of words that comes from Deianeira, his verb is *epharmosai* (623), a *terminus technicus* for betrothal in the marriage ceremony. Sophocles uses the word in *Antigone* 570 of the betrothal of Haemon and Antigone; and the term also figures prominently in the marital imagery of Pindar's Ninth *Pythian Ode*[40]. The previous scene

[39] I cannot agree with Easterling, *Sophocles*, ad 972, that «'pompimon' means no more than 'sent' here». The importance of *pompê* and related words, along with the importance of the processional motif in the scenic action, argues for a stronger meaning. In the following paragraph on Hermes Pompaios and Psychopompos I am much indebted to my colleague Albert Henrichs.

[40] See *Pyth.* 9.13 and 117; cf. A. Carson, *Wedding at Noon in Pindar's Ninth Pythian*, GRBS 23, 1982, 121f.

had ended, like this one, with a similar injunction by Deianeira to Lichas and another compound of the same verb (493-96):

χωρῶμεν, ὡς λόγων τ' ἐπιστολὰς φέρῃς,
ἃ τ' ἀντὶ δώρων δῶρα χρὴ προσαρμόσαι,
καὶ ταῦτ' ἄγῃς. Κενὸν γὰρ οὐ δίκαιά σε
χωρεῖν προσελθόνθ' ὧδε σὺν πολλῷ στόλῳ.

The language of reciprocity (ἀντὶ δώρων δῶρα, 494) is also appropriate to the marital context, and this too finds an echo in the later scene (618f.):

ἔπειθ' ὅπως ἂν ἡ χάρις κείνου τέ σοι
κἀμοῦ ξυνελθοῦσ' ἐξ ἁπλῆς διπλῆ φανῇ.

The joining of *charis* between husband and wife should lead to the consummation of their reunion in the mutual embrace of marital love. Tecmessa invokes a similar erotic reciprocity under the name of *charis* in her entreaty to Ajax (*Ajax* 522, χάρις χάριν γάρ ἐστιν ἡ τίκτουσ' ἀεί). In Deianeira's case the sexual union will be a union in death, a Liebestod on both sides. The 'fastening on' of gifts that plights a troth becomes the literal and physical sticking of the marriage-gift to the husband's flesh as he is enfolded in the deadly, quasi-sexual fire of the robe[41].

In arranging for a 'procession', accompanied by gifts, in a 'betrothal' (*harmozein*, 494, 623), Deianeira is effectively taking over the male role in the marriage ceremony. But these bridal gifts are displaced from the new 'bride' (Iole) to the betrayed wife, for these are the gifts that Deianeira sends out to welcome Heracles back into the house (493-96, 603ff.). When Deianeira sends out the gifts to welcome the man (Heracles) into the *oikos*, she is also reversing the gender roles in the bestowal of marriage-gifts and dowry. She also anticipates the more active male role in sexual desire in declaring her 'longing' or

[41] Cf. also Deianeira's *harmosaimi* in 687; also 767-69. On the sexual and marital imagery in these scenes see D. Wender, *The Will of the Beast: Sexual Imagery in the Trachiniae*, Ramus 3, 1974, 1-17, especially 13; Seaford, *Wedding*, 58 and *Tragic*, 119. We may add too the continuing motif of the language of 'fastening' in the verb *ephaptein* used of Hyllus' grief at his responsibility for Deianeira's suicide in 933, and the related *kathaptein* that Heracles uses to accuse her in 1051.

pothos before Heracles has declared his - an avowal not appropriate to the modesty of the Greek matron; and this role reversal is reflected in her malaise about her declaration of 'longing' here in 630-32.

In claiming these male roles, Deianeira veers toward the negative model of female sexuality in marriage, the Aeschylean Clytaemnestra, whose life-pattern she unwittingly imitates[42]. Simultaneously, Deianeira appears both as the new bride on the wedding night and as the wife long-established in the household, at the very center of the house (*en mychois*, 686; cf. 689), performing the wife's typical tasks of looking after the weavings and clothing that belong to her domain[43]. This image, in turn, harks back to the *Odyssey*'s juxtaposition of the good wife, of whom the paradigm is Penelope, and the evil wife, of whom the paradigm is Clytaemnestra, using robes and weavings to destroy her husband[44]. On the other side, the figure who actually corresponds to the new bride is, of course, Iole; what she brings to the house are not wedding gifts but 'harm', 'disaster', and the Fury of doom (*blaban*, 842; *atan*, 851; *Erinyn*, 895). The role of the new bride, however, is eventually taken by Heracles. When he finally enters, this masculine hero plays the part of the *parthenos/nymphê* (1071), escorted to the *oikos* of the 'husband' where he will 'throw off the covering' of his robe in a horrible parody of the bride unveiling herself in the ceremony of the Anakalypteria (1078).

The play opened with Deianeira depicting the regular order of the woman's life-cycle, from being wooed to bearing children (6ff., 27ff.) and from girlhood to motherhood (145ff.). But with Iole's entrance, Heracles' massive violation of the order of the household becomes pressingly tangible, and the normal succession of events in the wedding ceremony is jangled, until Heracles himself suffers a kind of poetically just punishment not only in weeping like a girl but in taking on the gestures of the new bride. This lustful violator of a maiden is made to reenact, grotesquely, the sacred and modest gestures of a girl on her wedding night. In the fire of his lust he has brutally destroyed the sanctities surrounding the new bride; and so he is burned himself in the 'fastening'/betrothal of the robe that simultaneously

[42] See especially 1050-52, 1064ff., 1125; see also the references cited above, note 24.

[43] Cf. Hom. X 438-49, 510-14; o 101-8.

[44] Bacchylides 16.23-26, 30-35 seems to be exploiting this imagery of female 'weaving' and its ambiguities in his metaphorical 'weaving' and the 'covering' (*kalymma*).

evokes the gifts in a bridal pact with a new wife and the gift of 'trust' from the older, established wife waiting in her house. The poison of rape and lust from a remote and violent past invades and destroys the fresh hopes of the present. Though physically 'dead', this venomous heat still has murderous life for Heracles (cf. 1160-63)[45].

These displacements of the ritual occur not only in individual scenes but in the movement of the play taken as a whole. The play begins with a scene of wooing (Deianeira's account of the suit of Achelous in 6ff.) and ends with a betrothal (Heracles' marrying Iole to Hyllus). Yet this apparent completion of a marriage ritual is undercut not only by the literal presentation of a marriage destroyed but also by the ways in which the normal order of the ritual events is mixed up. The first episode, for example, moves from wooing to a version of the marriage procession in Iole's arrival and then back to an evocation of the betrothal in Deianeira's instruction about the gifts from the house in 492-96. And that disturbed order of the rites is further emphasized by the juxtaposition of the older and younger women and Deianeira's shifting, through memory, between girlhood, wifehood, and motherhood (cf. 27ff., 144ff.).

The first stasimon returns us to the early stages of marriage, the violent wooing contest (503ff.), which harks back in turn to the role of *Zeus enagônios* whom Deianeira mentioned in her prologue (26). The following episode then moves from the completed wedding and *pompê* (560) back to the gestures of betrothal (616ff.) and the hoped for arrival of the 'bride' in the second stasimon (655ff.). Here too the suggestion of orderly marriage rites is clouded by the violence of the attempted rape.

In the fourth episode the violent derangement of marriage rites parallels the literal destruction of the union. Deianeira's suicide, as we have seen, plays off against the consummation of the marriage on the wedding night. From here, however, we move backwards, in terms of the ritual, to the arrival of the 'bride': Heracles, as a pseudo-*parthenos*, comes in a pseudo-nuptial procession from Cenaeum to the house of his/her pseudo-husband, Deianeira. The rite moves forward again to a grotesque parody of the 'awakening song', or *egertikon*, for the new couple after their first night; but these songs are horribly transferred to the awakening of Heracles from his bed of pain (974ff.).

[45] For some of these multiple associations of the robe see Segal, *Sophocles'*, 109ff., 127ff., 138; also *Tragedy* 72, 89; Loraux, *Les expériences*, 159.

We then swing backward in ritual time once more, to Heracles' grotesque enactment of the Anakalypteria (1078ff.), the bride's removal of the veil, probably on the evening of her arrival at her new home, after which comes a grotesque consummation of the wedding night with the new 'bride' consumed in the fires not of legitimate desire but of the Centaur's venom, itself a metaphorical doublet of Heracles' destructive lust. These inversions go a stage further if, with Nicole Loraux, we recognize in the suffering body of Heracles also the birth-pangs of the wife in travail[46]. This pseudo-birth after the pseudo-union would then be symmetrical with the new bride's (*nymphê*) 'giving birth to an Erinys for the house' (893-95).

This large pattern also contains many other reversals at specific moments. If we consider the Nurse's cry at Deianeira's suicide, for instance, we have the following reversal of a normal marital sequence, each of which pertains to one of the figures in the love-triangle:

(a) a new bride giving birth in the house (Iole in 893-95);

(b) the consummation of the union on the wedding night as Deianeira dies in the conjugal bed with gestures that evoke the new bride's defloration on the wedding night ('loosing her peplos', 924-26);

(c) the unveiling of the bride as part of the wedding ceremony (Heracles in 1078).

Instead of the normal order of the corresponding acts in the marital rites - that is, c-b-a -, we have exactly the reverse. These mixed up time sequences gain added force from the reversals of gender and from the substitution of pain for joy, death for new life, at every point. By bringing a new bride to his house, Heracles has not only reversed male and female roles in marriage but has also virtually destroyed the marriage ceremony mimetically by the jangled order of the ritual events. In the retributive logic of tragic justice, he gets the kind of wedding rite that he has deserved; and this wedding makes visible the chaos that the wedded pair (on Heracles' initiative) has introduced into their house.

In the play's final scene these chronological inversions of the wedding ceremony evoke a still earlier phase of the marriage rites. Heracles here forces his son to keep his promise of obeying his father; Hyllus must take Iole as his bride (προσθοῦ δάμαρτα, 1224). By being

[46] Loraux, *Les expériences*, 50.

forced to take Iole as his bride (1224), Hyllus now takes over her previous situation, marriage against one's will. Marriage by force thus moves from the house of Iole to the house of Heracles. Furthermore, this fiancée, far from being the *parthenos* protected by her family of origin, is bestowed on the son precisely because the father who gives her has already had her in bed and wants no other man to possess her (1225-27):

> μηδ' ἄλλος ἀνδρῶν τοῖς ἐμοῖς πλευροῖς ὁμοῦ
> κλιθεῖσαν αὐτὴν ἀντὶ σοῦ λάβοι ποτέ,
> ἀλλ' αὐτός, ὦ παῖ, τοῦτο κήδευσον λέχος.

Having violated the rights of Iole's *oikos* by taking this 'bride' from her city by force, without the exchange of gifts and property in the normal union between two *oikoi*, Heracles would now go to the opposite extreme and keep her within his oikos, in a kind of incestuous union of his 'wife' and his son. In both cases, though by opposite means, the normal economy of marriage as exchange and reciprocity between houses is overthrown[47].

In marrying Iole to Hyllus, Heracles now changes roles with Iole's father, Eurytus. Having demanded her, as a suitor, albeit for a shameful *kryphion lechos*, he now gives her away, as if he were her father, in 'legitimate' marriage, commanded with the rather solemn ritual phrase *kêdeuson lechos* (1227)[48]. The irony of the reversal is further underlined by the language of 'trust' and 'gratitude', *pistis* and *charis* (1228), which recalls the language of Deianeira's exchange to welcome back a legitimate husband for the 'saving' of a house (616-26).

Hyllus is fully sensitive to the horror of such a union and objects that instead of 'sharing a house' that would be strengthened by the

[47] The description of Heracles' sack of Oechalia in 282, «They are all inhabitants of Hades», literally 'house-dwellers of Hades', *Haidou oikêtores*, reminds us that the *oikos* of the 'bride' has been transferred to the Underworld, so that in this respect too the reciprocity between *oikoi* is perverted. Cf. the probable irony in the *oikos* theme reflected in 119-21, 1159-61.

[48] On *kêdeuein* and the formality of 'contracting' a marriage see R. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments*. Part 5, *The Trachiniae*, Cambridge, 1892, ad loc., citing Aristot., Pol. 5.1307a.37; see also Kraus, *Bemerkungen*, 108. On the scene and its problems generally see J.K. MacKinnon, *Heracles' Intention in his Second Request of Hyllus: Trach. 1215-16*, CQ 21, 1971, 33-41; Easterling, *The End*, especially 61-64.

new union, he would be 'sharing a dwelling' with his worst enemies (*synnaiein*, 1237; cf. *synoikein*, 545). This new 'bride', furthermore, has already destroyed the old house, being responsible, as he sees it, for his mother's death (1233f.). We are reminded too that she has already 'given birth to an Erinys' for this house (895-98).

The scene between Hyllus and Heracles takes us back to a stage in the marriage ceremony anterior to all the others so far envisaged in the play, namely the arranging of the marriage by the bride's 'father'. Ironically, the closest analogue to the action of this scene is Heracles' proposition that Eurytus give him his daughter as his 'secret concubine' (*kryphion lechos*, 360). The father naturally refused and paid with his life for it. Heracles' offer to Eurytus was in fact a double subversion of marriage, for it disregarded the rights of the *parthenos* and of the already wedded wife in his own house.

Iole, in effect, resembles the *epiklêros*, the young woman who is the sole surviving heir of her father's property and so has to be married to a relative of her father. In the present case, however, the agent who disposes her in marriage is also grimly responsible for her status as an *epiklêros* since he has killed her male relations, has raped and 'married' her himself, and is forcing her into a quasi-incestuous union with his own son. And the end result, as Hyllus points out, will not be to strengthen the paternal *oikos*, which is the aim of marrying the *epiklêros* within the father's family, but to seal its destruction (1233-37).

If we take a broad view of Heracles, we see that he has played virtually all the major roles in the marriage-ceremony. He has been the 'bride' escorted to the *oikos* in an elaborate procession accompanied by special gifts. As 'bride', he has also performed the rite of the Anakalypteria. He has, of course, been the groom, long awaited for the joyous entrance (207ff.). He is the 'father' of the bride, arranging her marriage. But he is also the father of the groom, whom he commands, with *patria potestas*, to take the wife that he the father has designated for him. When Heracles gives the bride/daughter to the bridegroom/son, moreover, he is also continuing the pattern of destructive exchanges initiated by the rapist-Centaur Nessus, for Hyllus regards receiving Iole within the house as taking in the source of its destruction (1230-37); and this act is, in turn, analogous to Deianeira's accepting Nessus' poison within the *mychoi* of her domestic space (680-87). The gift that Nessus exchanged with Deianeira as a return

for his last ferrying (570f.), we may recall, is not only a literal poison for the house but is another perversion of the marital *pompê* (cf. *pompimois kopais*, 560f.).

This last scene not only juxtaposes the rapist's destruction of erotic reciprocity with the proper exchanges of property and of trust and love in marriage; it is also marks an extreme contrast between the heroic exogamy of Heracles' first union and the ambiguous endogamy of his last[49]. Heracles has won a bride far from his own house, and it is during the transport of this foreign bride back to his own house in Thebes that Nessus makes his attack on Deianeira in the river Euenus. Deianeira, in fact, is, as she says, accompanying Heracles in her newly married state (ξὺν Ἡρακλεῖ τὸ πρῶτον εὖνις ἐσπόμην, 563) after the sending forth from the house of her father (cf. τὸν πατρῷον ... στόλον, 562)[50]. She was 'still a girl' (*pais et' ousa*, 557), as Iole is now. And the reference to the journey from her father's house in 562 harks back to her opening speech, as she reflected on the course of her life and recalls the time when she still 'dwelt in her father's house' and awaited with dread her first suitors (5-8). The echo of this opening speech clearly places her account of the Centaur's attack in the context of marriage procedures, especially wooing and the wedding procession. The content of her memories (the attempted rape) clashes violently with the civilized character of the institution of marriage; and the shelter of the city and house that she leaves contrasts sharply with the wild setting of this threatened wedding procession through a dangerous landscape to her new home.

Even the positive meaning of the exogamous bridal journey from Deianeira's home in Aetolia to Heracles' in the Argolid has connotations that suggest a disruption of marriage rituals. The battle with Nessus to defend Deianeira parallels the battle with Achelous to win Deianeira. But what is heroic self-affirmation from the bridegroom/hero's point of view - defending his marriage by defeating another

[49] For the importance of the issue of endogamy versus exogamy in Greek views of marriage, see below, note 54. The issue is, of course, central for Aeschylus' *Suppliants*: see Seaford, *Tragic*, 110, with note 45.

[50] Jebb, *Trachiniae*, ad loc., translates «by my father's sending», and suggests that Deianeira here «thinks of the long-past day when her father gave her to her husband and sent her forth with him» (ad 562f.). Similarly Easterling, *Sophocles*, ad loc., who refers also the phrase to the father's disposition of his daughter in marriage at the moment «when D(eianeira) left home, given by her father Oeneus as bride to Herakles».

monster - is a grotesque and terrifying parody of the marriage-procession from the bride's point of view. This *pompê* is not the traditional cortège of wagons loaded with gifts and accompanied by joyful families within the limits of the *polis*. It is a long and dangerous journey in a wild place, alone, and across water (557-68). The means of conveyance is not the bridal chariot on which bride and groom stand happily together, but a Centaur who carries the bride on his bare shoulder (564) and lets the hands that provide the *pompê* (cf. 560) wander to touch her in sexual violation (565).

Heracles has won a bride far from his own house, and it is during the transport of this foreign bride back to his own house in Thebes (or Tiryns) that he defends her against Nessus' attack in the river Euenus. In marrying Hyllus to Iole, however, Heracles creates the extreme antithesis of his marriage to Deianeira, and one that belongs outside the pale of proper Greek behavior (we may compare Aeolus in *Odyssey* κ 5-12, marrying his six sons to his six daughters). Just as he violated the marital propriety of his house from *outside*, as it were, in bringing a second *damar* into it, so at the end he continues that violation, but from *inside*, in insisting on the union between son and his own newly (and disastrously) won 'bride'.

In defending Deianeira from Nessus' attack, Heracles was reasserting the validity of the traditional sanctity of marriage and its rituals. And yet the underlying parody of the wedding-procession also works in the opposite direction, subverting marriage rites, also because it evokes the equally grotesque parody of the wedding *pompê* at Iole's arrival. The action and imagery of the play suggest repeatedly that Heracles does to Iole what Nessus tried to do to Deianeira.

The terms in which Heracles disposes of Iole suggest another subversion of the normal pattern of exogamous union. Exogamy has the social function of establishing bonds of alliance and interest through the exchange of women among separate patrilocal *oikoi*[51]. Being exiled in Trachis, however, Heracles has no neighboring *oikoi* to think about (cf. 38-40). When he would summon his family for his last journey to Oeta, he learns that they are far away, in Tiryns or Thebes (1151-56). This is a hero, then, without *polis* or *oikos*, an exile

[51] See R. Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life*, London and New York 1989, 79ff. Heracles possessiveness about Iole may also evoke the pattern of the royal father who refuses to part with his daughter, like Oenomaus in the Pelops myth.

because he is stained with the blood of murder (cf. 38-40, 258)[52]. As a result, his marital relations partake of the rudeness and violence of the wild Centaur in his river[53]. Marriage in his house swings between contradictory, impossible extremes: both rape and betrothal, both secret concubinage (360) and legitimate marriage in bringing Iole to his *oikos*; both 'normal' exogamous marriage in leading Deianeira from remote Aetolia to Tiryns (and eventually to Trachis) and a quasi-incestuous endogamy in giving Iole to his son.

Endogamy has a certain attraction for the patriarchal *oikos* because it obviates the necessity of alienating property from the family in the form of the dowry and wedding gifts and strengthening ties within the family[54]. In marrying Iole to Hyllus, Heracles does not in fact obtain one of the chief goals of exogamy, strengthening and expanding the wealth and influence of the *oikos* by exchanging women with a different *oikos*. This marriage effects no exchange at all, but only turns this house back upon itself, as Hyllus' reluctance implies (1230-37). The marriage that Heracles commands only continues his disregard of the *oikos* and of marriage in the *oikos*. In ordering the marriage he does not in fact mention the *oikos*; his only concern is his personal possession of Iole's body and the execution of his will.

The multiple roles of all the participants further confuse the clarity of distinction between endogamy and exogamy. Iole, after all, is simultaneously a *parthenos*, a *damar* from a distant city already introduced into the house, the heiress or *epiklêros* of both the houses into which and out of which she is being married, and also a spear-prize won in war (cf. 856-63), like Tecmessa in the *Ajax*. The result of all this overlapping is to make the two sets of extremes, endogamy and exogamy, cancel one another out[55]. A civilized *oikos* can hold these contradictions no more than Deianeira can bear the thought of two

[52] On the details of the mythical background that Sophocles is using see Jebb, *Trachiniae*, ad 1151ff.

[53] On the contrast of civilized and savage in the play and its relation to the Centaur see Segal, *Tragedy*, 62ff., 72ff.

[54] See Vernant, *Le mariage*, 73f. From a practical point of view, given the restrictions on young women, it may have been easier for romantic interests to develop within the family than in other contexts: see Just, *Women*, 80.

[55] The tensions between endogamy and exogamy are especially keen in the case of the heiress or *epiklêros*: see R. Seaford, *The Structural Problems of Marriage in Euripides*, in A. Powell, *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality*, London 1990, 162, apropos of Euripides' *Antiope*.

'wives' of the same 'marriage' in one bed (543-51).

With this ambivalence between exogamy and endogamy at the end, the play completes its problematization of marriage and sexuality as the area where humanity and bestiality, order and disorder, lust and restraint fuse destructively with one another. Heracles' re-enactment with Iole of Nessus' attempted rape of Deianeira undercuts any notion of progress in the orderly exchange of women through legitimate marriage[56]. This unstable meeting of opposites - Nessus and Heracles, rape and marriage - underlies the last scene. On the surface the apparently orderly transmission of Iole from father to son fulfils the normal procedures of marital exchange. But these procedures, and with them the centrality of marriage as the focus of civic and domestic order, are subverted by the slippages between the incestuous handing down of a rape victim and the betrothal of a new bride and groom, between a desperate man's selfish possessiveness and a father's provision for the future of is *oikos*.

In terms of the *dikê* appropriate to the bonds between men and women, the destruction of this unstable, egregious *oikos* is worked out in just the sphere that Heracles' 'disease' of lust has most violated, the marriage bed and the rites of marriage. All the confusions of sexual roles analyzed above derive from Heracles' decision to confound the marital relations within his house. Hence the marital terms frame and define the doom of all the major characters in the drama.

In exploring the consequences of this breakdown of the norms of marriage, the play gradually traces the marriage ceremony back in reverse order, from the wife with her grown children in the first scene to the premarital scene of the 'father' giving his 'daughter' in marriage at the end. Heracles himself is forced to change places with the bride, while Deianeira and Iole are brought together as mirror-images of the married woman at different stages of her life. Both women suffer a traumatic displacement from the house of origin to a new, patrilocal household. Iole is raped and forcibly removed from a house which is left in smouldering ruins. Deianeira has survived, intact, a violent struggle with monstrous suitors, once for her hand in marriage, once for her body in attempted rape; but every aspect of her position as

[56] Page duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, Ann Arbor 1982, 95-107, especially 102, suggestively focusses the play's ambivalence between exogamy and endogamy on Heracles and Nessus and on the beast-man's rape of Deianeira as a negation of the exchange of women in marriage.

wife and mother is overturned.

Conclusion

It can perhaps be set down to the positive side of what the play has to say about marriage that men are made to experience the otherness of the woman's position, especially because the male passage through the life-cycle and its attendant losses of strength and beauty, are projected upon the female, with whom Heracles is forced to identify in assuming the role of the *parthenos* and the new bride. The women, if there were any in the theater, would have the satisfaction of seeing their woes given utterance and expanded to immense proportion. Deianeira's anxieties in the prologue give voice to the worries that can surround a woman's life and spread an atmosphere of suppressed hatred and violence over the entire household. The figures of Clytaemnestra, Medea, Eriphyle are familiar examples of wives who have such an effect on their household. It is an essential part of Deianeira's tragedy that she is by nature more a Penelope than a Clytaemnestra, but is drawn into the destructive pattern against her will (cf. 727, 1137ff.)[57]. The play, however, does not just blame the woman; it is equally emphatic about Heracles' lust and violence as a dangerous 'disease' that destroys his house.

Like *Agamemnon*, *Medea*, and *Bacchae*, the *Trachiniae* exposes and acts out anxieties that may often have existed just below the surface of full articulation. The play reflects the young girl's fears that she is being violently carried off to a strange and hostile place, the new bride's fears that her husband will be a monster of unbridled sexuality, an aging wife's fears that he will turn to younger women, a son's fears that he may be forced to marry a repugnant bride, and a husband's fears that his wife has secret powers of a sexual nature that may leave him weak and impotent, no better than a weeping girl (1046-75, 1089-106). Tragedy projects these worst fears into a remote, mythical situation and a geographically marginal part of Greece. This remote geographical and mythical setting can serve as the screen upon which can be projected, in terrifying enlargement, the everyday concerns involving household, marriage, property, sexuality.

[57] See above, note 24.

It would be easy to read the marital and sexual themes of the play as a validation, *per contrarium*, of the status quo, a warning about the dangers of intemperate desire and the destabilizing effect of sexuality in general, even or especially in marriage. Deianeira and Heracles both release their potential sexual violence, covertly and indirectly in the one case, shamelessly and with gross disregard for human rights or human lives in the other. The two areas of sexual excess interact for mutual destruction.

Yet the play is more than a warning about lust or even about marital anxieties. It also highlights the problem of power and responsibility in the household. Deianeira's power comes from its hidden source in the Centaur's venom. This is a fearsome power, and it destroys both her and her husband. Heracles, however, has all the power to initiate, to give commands, to decide how long he will be away and when he will return, and with whom. The female membership of his house is full of longing for him, not he for them (cf. 630-32). At the end of the play, even though he is frantic with pain, he can command almost absolute obedience from his son. With that patriarchal power he can make a new marriage from the shambles of the one that he has helped destroy. His suffering is equal to Deianeira's, but it unfolds in a public world where he can still issue all the orders and coerce others to participate in his last agony, as he had earlier urged his son to risk 'joining in his death' (798). Deianeira's resolve to 'join him in death' (720), by contrast, can only take the form of the lonely suicide in the enclosure of her bedchamber.

We should not, then, necessarily leap to conclusions about the play's ideology of male control over women or of female lack of control over themselves, however tempting such a step may be. We should remember that even Heracles' closing gestures of control are seen against the background of his lust and brutality and that Deianeira's desperate last resort of suicide is seen against the background of her devotion and patience and the bitterness of their betrayal. The play is neither a critique nor a defense of a social institution such as marriage or the patriarchal household but an exploration of human behavior within a double set of limits: the mysterious power of the gods and a social order, reflected in microcosm in the rituals of marriage, that circumscribes and patterns our relations to one another. The two divine *praktôres* (250f., 860f.) are Zeus, who somehow gives our life the shape it has, and Aphrodite,

whose presence in marriage is both necessary and potentially destructive. Her attendance at the wedding marks the tempering and ordering of sexuality in the house (497f., 860f.). But her counterpart is the poisoned blood of the Centaur stored away secretly in the women's chambers.

Deianeira's marriage bed has both of these divine powers in attendance. The two divinities shape the enigmatic 'justice' of the gods so hard for men to discern and understand, as we see in Hyllus' reaction in the play's final lines. To allow the Centaur's poison out into the light and to convey it to her husband in imagery of marital exchange, as Deianeira does, is to risk transgressing and effacing, from inside, the boundaries between elemental sexuality and marriage, male desire and female resistance (cf. 630-32). To disregard the social frame and the restraints of marriage, as Heracles does, is to set into motion hidden forces of unknown dimensions and thus to cause widespread devastation that reaches back to engulf the agent as well as his three innocent victims.

Approaching the play, as we have, from the human perspective of marriage, violation, and retribution, we naturally want to find in the outcome the hand of just gods who deservedly punish a brutal Heracles, somewhat in the spirit of *King Lear's* Edgar:

> The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us.
> The dark and vicious place where thee he got
> Cost him his eyes[58].

Yet this is not the play's only perspective. Heracles, in his last speech, rises to a noble endurance worthy of the death of a hero (1259-63), while his stern commands about the pyre are an intimation, even if not certain knowledge, of the apotheosis that awaits him, despite all his crimes and violence[59]. The repugnant and brutally ordered union

[58] *King Lear*, 5.3.171-74.

[59] On Heracles' last utterance at 1259-63 see Segal, *Sophocles'*, 136-38, and *Tragedy*, 104-05. On the question of the apotheosis see Segal, *Sophocles'*, 131ff. and *Tragedy*, 99ff., with the bibliographies there cited. For more recent treatments of these endlessly discussed problems and further bibliography, see Easterling, *Sophocles*, 9-12, 17-19; Ph. Holt, *The End of the Trachiniai and the Fate of Heracles*, JHS 109, 1989, 69-80, especially 78f.; Davies, *Sophocles*, Introduction, xix-xxii.

between his son and the woman whose life he has shattered will produce the line of Dorian heroes. The gods use mysterious ways and strange instruments to fulfil their ends.

If the pattern of retributive justice working through marriage and sexuality leaves no doubt about Heracles' violation of basic human rights, Hyllus' last words point to the gap between the human and divine perspectives on these events. This gap is an essential part of Sophocles' tragic vision. 'The tragic' arises, in Sophocles' view, when the powerful and moving sufferings of great men and women (cf. 1276 f.) make manifest such a gap and force us to ponder it, not just in mortal lives and human institutions but in a vision that reaches out beyond this tormented *oikos* to the star-dappled night, the ever-consumed and reborn fire of the sun, and the turning paths of the stars (94-99, 129-31).

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