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978-1-107-00161-9 - When Heroes Sing: Sophocles and the Shifting Soundscape of Tragedy

Sarah Nooter

Excerpt

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Introduction

Poetry, tragedy, and Sophocles

In tragedy, the trappings of character – gestures, stance, and even action – are mediated by a scrim of language: the audience member, reader, and critic watch shadows on the scrim in order to formulate images of character and action.¹ The scrim is what connects us to the dramatic world of a given play. The linguistic material that constitutes the scrim of Sophoclean tragedy turns out to be a complex weave: both gauzy and dense, lucid and opaque, sung and spoken, poetry and rhetoric. This book looks at one thread of this weave of Sophoclean language: the voice of the hero. How is voice identified and how does it confer identity in turn?²

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To answer these questions, one must determine the features that distinguish one voice from another. In the case of Sophocles' heroes, their voices are inflected with lyrical markers, features that are found in monodic and choral poetry from the archaic and classical periods. Such lyrical markers are not only aesthetically affecting, they also influence audiences' perception of the heroes: they confer on the heroes a poetic identity. The heroes' poetic identities are connected to the traditional identity of Greek choruses, yet the heroes are often alienated from the choruses and communities of their own plays.³ These heroes stand apart in Greek literary history when they turn away from their society and sing.

¹ Cf. Seidensticker (2008) 341. Nietzsche (1956) 59 constructs a different, but instructive image of tragic character: "a character at bottom [is] no more than a luminous shape projected onto a dark wall." Cf. Stanford (1983) 49–75 on the various aural elements of tragic expression.

² Voice is inevitably a marker of identity. Cf. Dolar (2006) 22: "We can almost unfailingly identify a person by the voice, the particular individual timbre, resonance, pitch, cadence, melody, the peculiar way of pronouncing certain sounds. The voice is like a fingerprint, instantly recognizable and identifiable."

³ The Sophoclean hero has been viewed as a thing apart since Bernard Knox (1964) delineated the heroic temper that characterizes the central figures of most Sophoclean plays. Knox (1964) 9 argues that the hero's character is formed by strong gestures and a stance of isolation. He also asserts that

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Although all Sophoclean language is poetry, some parts of his language are more poeticized than others. This question of what makes poetic language more or less poetic can be meaningfully posed by placing the dramas of Sophocles in the context and tradition of archaic and classical lyric poetry.⁴ The similarities between the language of Sophocles and the language of lyric poetry have never been fully investigated, aside from the discrete case of the chorus' language. As a result, the ways in which lyricism increases the authority of Sophocles' heroes have been overlooked.⁵ This is not to suggest that there have not been instructive studies of language in Sophocles. On the contrary, the subject has provoked valuable scholarly contributions, at least since Nietzsche's observation in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), that "The language of Sophocles' heroes surprises us by its Apolline precision and lucidity."⁶ Lewis Campbell raises many key interpretative questions on Sophocles' language (whose lines he admits are "difficult to trace"⁷) in his landmark essay, "On the Language of Sophocles," first published in 1879.⁸ More recently, A. A. Long has explored the particular

Sophoclean heroes follow patterns of "character, situation, and language," but his own observations on language are almost exclusively concerned with diction. One exception is his examination of the heroes' use of verbal adjectives and future tenses as elements of "the tone that brooks no argument" (10).

⁴ This issue can be located within the larger question of whether a generic language of tragedy can be defined, as scholars like Michael Silk (1996) and Simon Goldhill (1997) have explored. Goldhill (1997) outlines various elements of tragic language, including formal elements, traces of public discourse, echoes of Homeric language, references to ritual, and so forth. Silk (1996) 465 makes fruitful observations on how elements of "compulsion, excess, and identity" are expressed in tragedy: "[i]n concrete linguistic terms, tragedy tends to foreground *must* and *too* and the *name*." I find it more productive, ultimately, to distinguish among the tragedians' styles of language and characterization, as Silk (2009) 134 himself does, attributing to Sophocles' language a "kind of magisterial elusiveness." Cf. also Lattimore (1958) 59 on the "essential" poetry of Sophocles' drama and Gould (1978) 51–4.

⁵ One exception is the work of Garner (1990), who looks at certain poetic features in the plays of the three tragedians, particular similes and metaphors, that allude to the prior poetic tradition from Homer through lyric poetry.

⁶ Nietzsche (1956) 59. This is about the extent of his concrete comments on the language of Sophocles' heroes.

⁷ Campbell (1969) 4. Campbell does draw attention generally to "lyric elements," along with other elements, in Sophoclean language (3–4, 104). While noting that these elements are most frequent in lyric passages, he adds that they, along with "Epic elements" (9), can be found elsewhere in Sophocles' plays as well.

⁸ Campbell (1969). In a similar vein are the observations on Sophocles' language of Bruhn (1899), Schmid and Stählin (1934) 323–4, Webster (1936) 126–62, and Lesky (1956) 138–42. Most philological analysis of Sophocles has concentrated on diction and style above all else or simply on interpretations of ideology. Systematic investigations of Sophocles' language, such as Earp (1944), Nuchelmans (1949), and Moorhouse (1982), have tended to isolate the study of linguistics from literary commentary. Many scholarly works have focused on recurring words in relation to themes of the tragedies or ways in which these themes are artfully obfuscated or suspended in ambiguity: these include New Critical interpretations such as Goheen (1951) and Kirkwood (1958) and Structuralist works like Segal (1981), (1995), and Vernant (1988). In addition, Schadewaldt (1926) looks at Sophocles' use of invocation as a form of self-expression. Easterling (1973) makes the case that even simple repetitions in Sophocles deserve to be read with attention and (1999) points to other ways that Sophocles shapes

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significance of language as it relates to abstract thought in Sophocles' plays, while Felix Budelmann has shown how Sophocles' language and style work to engage audiences by withholding complete knowledge from them and Helma Dik has analyzed word order in the iambic trimeter of Sophocles (and, to a lesser degree, that of the other two tragedians) vis-à-vis clause structure.⁹ A recent essay by Richard Buxton develops the notion of "semantic landscapes" in Sophocles in order to discuss linguistic registers in Sophoclean tragedy¹⁰ and André Lardinois examines the gnomic language in Ajax's "deception" speech, commenting on "not only its prophetic character but also its extraordinary lyric quality and the broad vistas it paints."¹¹ Lardinois accounts for these linguistic registers by suggesting that "special status" is attained by heroes (Ajax, in this case) when they are nearly dead, or simply in an "extreme position."¹² This book builds on observations such as these. I hope to show that lyric poetry is the source of the heroes' marked language and, furthermore, that the heroes' voicing of lyrical speech and song brings them authority gained through poetic identity. This identity is that of an archaic poet as mythologized in fifth-century Athens.¹³

A character's poeticity evokes implications of both suffering and power. Sophocles inflects his heroes' voices with highly lyrical elements in order to grant them what I call poetic identity and what has also been known as "lyric authority" or "vatic personality."¹⁴ There were cultural associations and expectations attached to the role of poet in archaic Greece. Some of these were socially constructed. Poets were expected to spread the glory of kings and heroes, bring forgetfulness from troubles, teach people to be good countrymen, and provide enjoyable experiences through the medium

language, like through the juxtaposition of opposites or contradictory terms. Katsouris (1975) 41–50 looks at the playwright's use of several "stylistic means" to draw his characters and Schein (1998) has illustrated the role of verbal adjectives and other expressions of necessity in Sophocles. The playwright's vocabulary also has been mined for its possible allusions to social, ethical, and religious institutions of Athens, as in, among many others, Easterling (1977), (1983), (1993a), Seaford (1985), (1994), Blundell (1989), and Henrichs (1993), (1995).

⁹ Long (1968), Budelmann (2000) 19–60, and Dik (2007). Medda (1983) examines monologues in Sophocles, but reads them largely as if they were prose.

¹⁰ Buxton (2006) *passim*. ¹¹ Lardinois (2006) 223. ¹² Lardinois (2006) 223, 222.

¹³ This mythologized notion of a poet is distinct from the actual role of poets and professional performers of song in the fifth century, on which see Maehler (1963), West (1992) 34–6, Wilson (1999), West (2007) 27–31, and Kowalzig (2007) 7.

¹⁴ "Lyric authority" is a term used by von Hallberg (2008) 10, who discusses the difference between the authority of a poet and the power of a king: "Poetry's authority – however great or slight – derives from linguistic forms, not approved patterns of behavior." According to Johnson (1982), although *vates* is a Latin word, the "vatic personality" is an older invention: "Pindar recovered what was always surely the original function and meaning of lyric poetry (*vates* – "seer," "bard," "shaman," "prophet"), and so successful was this rethinking and reformulating of the vanished ideal that it is fair to say that in a sense Pindar invented the vatic personality" (59). Cf. also Steiner (1986) 37 on the role of the poet in "guard[ing] and multiply[ing] the vital force of speech."

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of sound and the expansive quality of imagination. Yet they also were themselves objects of the imaginative process, themselves portrayed and mythologized. Along these lines, archaic poetry was considered to be of divine origin, as either a bequest or a lesson from Apollo or the Muses. Thus poets were presented as divinely connected, gifted, and sometimes possessed, just as prophets.¹⁵ Actual poets did not hesitate to promote this sort of mythology. Hesiod cites an intense, personal interaction with the Muses as the very origin of his poetic identity in the *Theogony* (22–34), and Sappho portrays herself as someone often in communication with her patron goddess Aphrodite, although more in the persona of lover than poet (*PLF* 1).¹⁶ Pindar was one of the most deft self-mythologizers among poets: his speaker asks Apollo and the Muses to accept him as a “spokesman of the Pierides [Muses]” (Πιερίδων προφάτων [*Paeon* 6.6]), while actually suggesting that his human audience do so.

Poets as mythological case studies were largely represented by several figures, the most well-known of whom was Orpheus. There are many mythic incarnations of Orpheus: Orpheus the lover of Eurydice, Orpheus who traverses the boundaries between life and death, Orpheus as the granter of cultic mysteries to men, Orpheus the prophetic, Orpheus torn apart by Maenads, and Orpheus the still-singing head.¹⁷ Among these Orphic identities, the ones that are most tied to Orpheus as poet involve his power over not only life and death, but also over nature through the power of song.¹⁸ The earliest image of Orpheus manipulating nature is in a fragment by Simonides, who pictures animals in the natural world conforming to the rhythms of Orpheus’ song:

τοῦ καὶ ἀπειρέσιοι
 πωτῶντ’ ὄρνιθες ὑπὲρ κεφαλᾶς,
 ἀνὰ δ’ ἰχθύες ὀρθοὶ
 κυανέου ἕξ ὕδατος ἄλ-
 λοντο καλᾷ σὺν ᾠδῇ.

(PMG 567)

¹⁵ Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a–245c, as well as Sperduti (1950), Murray (1981), and Detienne (1999).

¹⁶ While there is an important distinction to be made between Hesiod and Sappho as actual poets and their poetic speakers, both poems in question grant their speaker the same name as the purported poet (*Theogony* 22, *PLF* 1.20), encouraging the listener or reader to conflate the poet and speaker in these cases.

¹⁷ Cf. Graf (1987), Segal (1989a), Bremmer (1991), Brisson (1995), Faraone (2004), and Calame (2010).

¹⁸ Cf. Dolar (2006) 31: “The voice . . . seems still to maintain the link with nature . . . it promises an ascent to divinity, an elevation above the empirical, the mediated, the limited, worldly human concerns . . . When Orpheus, the emblematic and archetypal singer, sings, it is in order to tame wild beasts and bend gods; his true audience consists not of men, but of creatures beneath and above culture.”

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And countless
birds flew above his head,
and fish leapt straight up
from the dark-blue water,
in time with his lovely song.

Despite the lack of context for Orpheus' activities, we can see from the final line of the fragment that, while walking through a landscape, he is producing song. By means of this song, he conducts the natural world, represented here by birds and fish. Simonides' Orpheus thus re-fashions the world in which he lives. This is the sort of influence that ultimately extends in mythology to the power to transcend death.¹⁹

The notion that poets have power over the natural world – as represented by animals – and at the same time have the ability to cheat death is also implicit in Herodotus' story of Arion, another archetypal poet of Greek tradition. Arion performs a song on the deck of a ship, just before he is forced by his captors to leap into the sea, presumably to his death. Instead of dying, however, he is rescued by a dolphin. This aesthetically attuned dolphin,²⁰ apparently enticed by Arion's high song,²¹ scoops up the poet and brings him to safety:

λέγουσι . . . τὸν δὲ ἐνδύντα τε πᾶσαν τὴν σκευὴν καὶ λαβόντα τὴν κιθάρην, στάντα ἐν τοῖσι ἐδωλίοισι διεξελθεῖν νόμον τὸν ὄρθιον, τελευτῶντα δὲ τοῦ νόμου ῥῖψαί μιν ἐς τὴν θάλασσαν ἑωυτὸν ὡς εἶχε σὺν τῇ σκευῇ πάσῃ. καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἀποπλέειν ἐς Κόρινθον, τὸν δὲ δελφῖνα λέγουσι ὑπολαβόντα ἐξενεῖκαι ἐπὶ Ταίναρον. (1.24)

They say that . . . Arion, putting on all his regalia and taking his lyre, stood up on the half-deck and set forth the "shrill song," and when the song was finished he threw himself into the sea, as he was, with all his regalia. So the crew sailed away to Corinth, but a dolphin, they say, took Arion on his back and bore him to Taenarus.

A pattern of how the Greeks imagined their poets emerges from these stories: poets were not only thought of as skillful, pleasant to hear, and capable of bestowing glory upon their subjects, but were also imagined

¹⁹ See Segal (1989a) 8: "The version in which Orpheus triumphs over death is only the logical extension of his song's power to move animals, stones, and trees: it mediates between the life-giving joy of human creativity and the creative energies in nature."

²⁰ Dolphins are mentioned elsewhere as lovers of music: ὁ φίλαυλος . . . δελ-/φίς (Euripides, *Electra* 435–6).

²¹ Of course, Herodotus does not tell his readers what motivates the dolphin. It may perhaps be that a divinity, such as Poseidon or Apollo, has sent the animal to rescue the poet. Such a reading would underscore the influence of Arion more in the divine than natural world. Cf. Bowra (1963), Munson (1986) 99, and Gray (2001) 13–14.

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as powerful in terms that had nothing to do with human listeners and everything to do with audiences of birds, fish, and dolphins. In Arion's case, this ability saves his life.

These were not just isolated or exceptional instances of mythologizing. Other poets and poeticized figures were commonly represented in these terms. Their power to influence or even control the natural world is referred to frequently and in idiomatic shorthand, especially in tragedy, a genre far more self-conscious about its status as poetry than is often recognized. One example comes from a choral ode in Euripides' *Alcestis*, which describes the effects of Apollo's lyre-playing on animals:

σὺν δ' ἐποιμαίνοντο χαρᾷ μελέων βαλῖαί τε
 λύγκες,
 ἔβα δὲ λιποῦσ' Ὀθρυος νάπαν λεόντων
 ἅ δα φοινὸς ἴλα·
 χόρευσε δ' ἄμφι σὺν κιθάραν,
 Φοῖβε, ποικιλόθριξ
 νεβρὸς ὑψικόμων πέραν
 βαίνουσ' ἑλατᾶν σφυρῶ κούφῳ,
 χαίρουσ' εὐφροني μολπᾶ. (579–87)

The spotted lynxes were beguiled [lit: shepherded]
 by delight at his songs,
 and, leaving the vale of Othrys, there came
 a tawny band of lions.
 The dappled fawn danced, Phoebus,
 around your lyre, stepping
 beyond the towering pines with its light ankle,
 rejoicing in your joyful melody.

According to the story of *Alcestis*, Apollo (here called Phoebus) is serving time as a mortal and servant in the capacity of shepherd. Nonetheless, his poetic abilities allow him to transcend his (temporary) mortal and servile bounds. Song conflates poetic and divine power.

In another choral passage, from Euripides' *Bacchae*, the chorus of maenadic women seek to locate their patron god, Dionysus, and wonder aloud whether he is in the realms of poetry, as defined metonymically by Orpheus:

τάχα δ' ἐν ταῖς πολυδένδρεσ-
 σιν Ὀλύμπου θαλάμαις, ἐν-
 θα ποτ' Ὀρφεὺς κιθαρίζων
 σύναγεν δένδρεα μούσαις,
 σύναγεν θήρας ἀγρώστας.
 (560–4)

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Perhaps he is in the many-treed caves
of Olympus, where once
Orpheus, playing on his lyre,
gathered the trees with his songs,
gathered the wild beasts.

Again, as in *Alcestris*, the chorus conjoin the role of poet, Orpheus, with that of the god, this time merely by situating them literally in the same place. The reference to Orpheus' power over the wild – his bringing together of trees and beasts – forecasts what is to come in this play. Soon the audience is told that Dionysus' other maenads are dancing cheek to cheek with beasts, nursing antelopes and wolves, and fastening their dresses with snakes. Their extreme harmony with nature culminates in a large-scale performance of Bacchic dance and song, in which the "entire mountain" and all the beasts join:

αἱ δὲ τὴν τεταγμένην
ὥραν ἐκίνουν θύρσον ἐς βακχεύματα,
Ἰακχον ἀθρόω στόματι τὸν Διὸς γόνον
Βρόμιον καλοῦσαι· πᾶν δὲ συνεβάκχευ' ὄρος
καὶ θῆρες, οὐδὲν δ' ἦν ἀκίνητον δρόμῳ.
(723–7)

Throughout the appointed hour,
they shook about their wands in revelries,
calling out, "Iacchos," in unison,
"child of Zeus, Bromios!" And the entire
mountain and [all the] beasts
reveled with them, and nothing
was unstirred by their course.

This apparent musical harmony between maenadic women and the surrounding mountains and beasts can be contextualized within the mythological expectations of song: it makes its power felt in the answering echoes of the natural world.²² In this scene of the *Bacchae*, however, such power is not just wondrous but also dangerous. Musical power soon becomes martial power when the unarmed Bacchic women drive off their male attackers and plunder nearby towns.

The poetic voice in tragedy thus can imply not only power but also menace. An instance of such a threat diverted comes late in Aeschylus'

²² Cf. also *OT*, 421 (on which, see Taplin [2010] 244–6), *Homeric Hymn to Pan*, 19–21, and Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae*, 995–1000.

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Agamemnon, when Aegisthus, Clytemnestra's lover, is squaring off against the chorus of old men, and mocks their verbal parries:

Ὅρφεϊ δὲ γλώσσαν τὴν ἐναντίαν ἔχεις·
 ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἦγε πάντ' ἀπὸ φθογγῆς χαρᾶ,
 σὺ δ' ἐξορίνας νηπίοις ὑλάγμασιν
 ἄξιη. (1629–32)

But you have a tongue that is the opposite of Orpheus'.
 For while he led all things by the delight of his voice,
 you, exasperating [me] with childish yelps,
 will yourself be led away.

Aegisthus states that Orpheus “led all things,” using the same verb (ἄγειν) that the chorus of the *Bacchae* use to describe Orpheus' bringing together the trees and animals, but here the verb shows Orpheus' physical power and the old men's lack thereof: though Orpheus could lead all things, they will be forcibly “led away.” This example, along with others like it, shows how the poetic tongue of Orpheus, even removed from the context of nature, connotes actual power.

The myth of poets may have begun, as Alice Sperduti argues, with the notion of their divine origin, but evolved into the expectation of miraculous effect.²³ Poets were thought to cause amazing things simply by opening their mouths. One of the more seductive of poets' claims was their promise to loosen the constraints of mortality, as Theognis' speaker grandly asserts:

σοὶ μὲν ἐγὼ πτέρ' ἔδωκα, σὺν οἷς ἐπ' ἀπείρονα πόντον
 πωτήσῃ καὶ γῆν πᾶσαν ἀειρόμενος
 ῥηϊδίως
 . . . καὶ ὅταν δνοφερῆς ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης
 βῆις πολυκωκύτους εἰς Αἴδαο δόμους,
 οὐδέποτε' οὐδὲ θανὼν ἀπολεῖς κλέος, ἀλλὰ μελήσεις
 ἄφθιτον ἀνθρώποις αἰὲν ἔχων ὄνομα
 Κύρνε. (IEG 237–9; 243–7)

To you I have given wings, with which over the boundless sea
 you will fly and over all the land, floating along
 easily.

. . . And when you go beneath the depths of the dark earth,
 to the house of Hades, rich in lament,
 not even then, nor ever, will you, though dead, lose your glory; rather, you will
 be a care for men, and will always have an imperishable name,
 Cyrnus.

²³ Sperduti (1950).

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This speaker creates an impression of influence and the power to offer glory and immortality itself (or to take it away [253–4]).²⁴ In the classical period, such claims to poetic power became more ambitious as sophistic thought and philosophy challenged the cultural primacy of poetry.²⁵ Hence Pindar's suggestion that the power of song can simultaneously move the world and quiet it, bringing equal measures of delight to gods and terror to monsters (*Pyth.* 1.1–16). This fantastical claim coexists with his insistence that the fame granted by poetry alone reveals and allows judgment on the life of mortal men (*Pyth.* 1.92–100).

These poets, whose poems vaunt the powers of song, were also portrayed by themselves and others as serially harassed, helpless, and otherwise beleaguered. Hesiod regularly claims to be bullied and impoverished. Sappho configures herself as victim of unrequited desire, while Anacreon depicts himself as not only undesired but also mocked. As Todd Compton has argued, in ancient Greece and other Indo-European traditions, many poets were viewed as powerless and victimized in ways that counterbalanced their power and proximity to the divine.²⁶ A tragedian, such as Sophocles, could inflect his heroes' voices with highly lyrical elements in order to endow them with aspects of the vulnerability and power of poets. The lyricism of such a character's voice would have evoked implications of both suffering and authority that specifically derived from the classical Greek ideal of an archaic poet.

All told, in the classical period and after, qualities of elevation and authority, but also of debilitation and instability, were embodied in the remembered and re-imagined figure of the archaic poet.²⁷ We read of poets

²⁴ Cf. Tarkow (1977) 103 and Goldhill (1991) 115.

²⁵ See Detienne (1999). As for the universal implications of such a shift, see the wistful and compelling Brown (1991) 4: "I sometimes think I see that civilizations originate in the disclosure of some mystery, some secret; and expand with the progressive publication of their secret; and end in exhaustion when there is no longer any secret, when the mystery has been divulged, that is to say, profaned. . . . And so there comes a time – I believe we are in such a time – when civilization has to be renewed by the discovery of new mysteries, by the undemocratic but sovereign power of the imagination, by the undemocratic power which makes poets the unacknowledged legislators of mankind, the power which makes all things new."

²⁶ "Typical legendary *pharmakos* pattern [was] . . . characterized by the bestness, the royalty, of the hero, his simultaneous worstness and encapsulation of worstness, the voluntary expulsion, and hero cult (Compton [2006] 18). Though Compton mainly describes ancient poets in these terms, this particular quote refers to Oedipus in Sophocles' *OC*."

²⁷ We can only assume that later in Greek history, in the Hellenistic period and following, the convention of dramatizing the lives of poets became stronger, for from this tradition we receive still more reports on the glory of poets and their tribulations. Some poets were reported to have suffered violent deaths: Alcaeus was supposedly killed in war, Sappho by suicide, Ibycus by bandits, Hesiod by vengeance, and Aeschylus by a falling tortoise. See Menander's *Leucadia* (fr. 258) and Lefkowitz (1981) 37. Also cf. Schmidt (2004).

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as fantastical individuals, sometimes powerful, sometimes cursed, and often both. Though poets as such were rarely dramatized in the tragedies of the fifth century,²⁸ echoes of such fantastic types – men and women who experience terrible blows but also achieve transcendent status – are plentiful in tragedy, especially the tragedies of Sophocles. Within the prodigiously varied medium of tragic poetry, it is possible for different registers of speech and song to signal not just moments of extreme emotions, as has often been suggested, but also extreme abilities and characteristics.

Sophocles uses the tropes of archaic poetry in the speech of his heroes, in order to signal to his audience that these protagonists communicate in a different register from other characters.²⁹ These heroes, despite their apparent weaknesses, often manage fairly miraculous successes: Philoctetes earns the attention of Heracles and the rewards of restored health, victory, and glory, Electra carries out her murderous plan (to her own satisfaction, if not to that of her many critics), and Ajax receives that which he holds in highest regard – honor. Heracles and Oedipus both gain privileged understanding of gods and maintain their preeminence over men, and the later Oedipus (at Colonus) experiences some manner of apotheosis. The high poeticity of these protagonists' language seems to place them fittingly on high moral ground and, in some cases, in proximity with the divine.

II

Meter, of course, matters a great deal in a discussion of poetry and poeticity. In this book, I focus on many other poetic features, but I also take into account the significant metrical patterns with which Sophocles characterizes his heroes.³⁰ As will be seen, sharp metrical shifts are very frequent in the lines of these heroes. For while the individual voice of each Sophoclean hero is internally consistent in characterization, it is bewilderingly

²⁸ There remain, however, tantalizing fragments of plays that might indeed have dramatized poets as heroes. A Sophoclean play called *Thamyras* involves the downfall and punishment of a poet-singer named Thamyras who boasts that he could beat the Muses at song. Plutarch gives us a few lyric lines from this play in which someone describes himself as seized by “music-mad necessity” (μουσομανεῖ δ' ἐλγῆθην/ ἀνόγκῃ [fr. 245]). For more information and speculation on *Thamyras*, see Platthy (1985) 226–8 and Wilson (2009) 60–79. Sophocles' *Searchers*, a satyr play, portrays Hermes as the inventor of the lyre, whose music is described as aural fertilization. See chapter 5 (p. 171) on this characterization of Hermes' lyre.

²⁹ Regarding the notion that the language of the plays sends “signals” to the audience, of which the characters were presumably unaware, cf. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1917) whose commentaries on Sophocles call attention to the processes of the dramas (“dramatische Technik”) and their effects upon the audience. Cf. also Bowra (1944) 3.

³⁰ Cf. Pohlsander (1964) on meter and metrical patterns in Sophoclean lyrics.