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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments

*With Critical Notes, Commentary and
Translation in English Prose*

VOLUME 5: THE TRACHINIAE

EDITED BY RICHARD CLAVERHOUSE JEBB



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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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THE PLAYS AND FRAGMENTS.

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PART V.

THE TRACHINIAE.
—————

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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THE PLAYS AND FRAGMENTS

WITH CRITICAL NOTES, COMMENTARY, AND
TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH PROSE,

BY

R. C. JEBB, LITT. D.,

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK AND FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE, AND M.P. FOR THE UNIVERSITY:

HON. D.C.L. OXON.: HON. LL.D. EDINBURGH, HARVARD, DUBLIN, AND GLASGOW;
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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION	page ix
§ 1. Divergent views of the <i>Trachiniae</i> . Difficulty of judging it rightly.	
§ 2. The Heracles myth.—Argive legends. Boeotian legends. Thessalian legends. § 3. Heracles in the Homeric poems.	
§ 4. The <i>Heracleia</i> of Peisander. The <i>Heracleia</i> of Panyasis. The <i>Capture of Oechalia</i> . § 5. Lyric poets on Heracles. Archilochus. Stesichorus. Pindar. Deianeira associated with Heracles.	
§ 6. Heracles in drama. Comedy. Satyr-drama. § 7. Tragedy. The <i>Mad Heracles</i> of Euripides.	
§ 8. The <i>Trachiniae</i> of Sophocles. The two mythic elements. Later digests of the Heracles legends. Freedom of the fifth century poets. Sequence of events in the <i>Trachiniae</i> . § 9. The antecedents of the plot.	
§ 10. Analysis of the play. § 11. The characters.—Deianeira. § 12. Heracles. § 13. Hyllus. § 14. The minor persons. The Chorus. § 15. The incident of the robe. Comparison with the <i>Medea</i> . Supposed solar imagery. § 16. The oracles. § 17. Dramatic structure. Unity of time neglected.	
§ 18. Seneca's <i>Hercules Oetaeus</i> . The Latin Deianeira. § 19. The fable in art.	
§ 20. Diction. Successive phases in the style of Sophocles. § 21. Distinctive traits of the <i>Trachiniae</i> . § 22. Supposed influence of Euripides.	
MANUSCRIPTS, EDITIONS, ETC.	li
§§ 1, 2. The Laurentian and other MSS. § 3. Scholia. § 4. Interpolation. § 5. The theory of two recensions. § 6. Emendations. § 7. Editions, etc.	
METRICAL ANALYSIS	lv
DRAMATIS PERSONAE; STRUCTURE	4
TEXT	6
APPENDIX	185
INDICES	209

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

§ I. IT has been the fortune of the *Trachiniae* to provoke a singular diversity of judgments. Dissen and Bergk refer the play to a period when the powers of Sophocles were not yet fully matured¹. Bernhardt regards it as a mediocre production of declining age². Schlegel, in his Lectures on Dramatic Literature, goes further still; he pronounces the piece unworthy of its reputed author, and wishes that the responsibility for it could be transferred from Sophocles to some feebler contemporary,—his son, for instance, the ‘frigid’ Iophon³. Yet there has never been a lack of more favourable estimates. In the very year when Schlegel was lecturing at Vienna (1808), Boeckh pointed out the strong family likeness between this and the other six plays⁴; A. Jacob made a direct reply to Schlegel’s censures⁵; and Godfrey Hermann said that, whatever faults the work might have, at any rate both the spirit and the diction

Divergent views of the *Trachiniae*. Difficulty of judging it rightly.

¹ Dissen, *Kleine Schriften*, p. 343; Bergk, *De Sophoclis Arte*, p. 26.

² Bernhardt, *Gk Lit.* II. pt ii. p. 375: ‘ein mit mässiger Kunst angelegtes und matt durchgeführtes Werk aus spätem Lebensalter.’

³ A. W. Schlegel, *Lect.* VII. All that he says of the *Trachiniae* is contained in one short paragraph, and the grounds of the condemnation are indicated only in vague terms. ‘There is much both in the structure and plan, and in the style of the piece, calculated to excite suspicion.’ ‘Many critics have remarked that the introductory soliloquy of Deianeira, which is wholly uncalled-for, is very unlike the general character of Sophocles’ prologues.’ ‘Although this poet’s usual rules of art are observed on the whole, yet it is very superficially; nowhere can we discern in it the profound mind of Sophocles.’

With regard to the prologue—the only passage which Schlegel specifies—some remarks will be found below, § 22.

⁴ A. Boeckh, *Græcæ trag. princip.*, c. xi. p. 137 (referring to the *Electra* and the *Trachiniae*): ‘tantum cum ceteris similitudinem habent ut nefas esset de auctore dubitare.’

⁵ A. L. W. Jacob, *Sophocleæ quaestiones*, vol. I. p. 260 (1821).

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

INTRODUCTION.

were unmistakably those of Sophocles¹. During the last half century, with the growth of a better aesthetic criticism in relation to all things Hellenic, a sense of the great beauties in the *Trachiniae* has decidedly prevailed over the tendency to exaggerate its defects; indeed, the praise bestowed upon it, in these latter days, has sometimes perhaps been a little too indiscriminate. The play is in fact an exceptionally difficult one to appreciate justly; and the root of the difficulty is in the character of the fable. A necessary prelude to the study of the *Trachiniae* is to consider the form in which the Heracles-myth had been developed, and the nature of the materials available for the dramatist.

The
Heracles
myth.—
Argive
legends.

§ 2. The Argive legends are those which best preserve the primitive Dorian conception of Heracles. They are alloyed, indeed, with later elements, of a political origin. Thus, in order that the Dorian conquerors might have some hereditary title to the land, Heracles was made the son of Alcmena, and, through her, a scion of the Perseidae; Tiryns was his heritage, of which he had been despoiled. Again, the struggles between Argos and Sparta for the headship of Peloponnesus have a reflex in those wars which the Argive Heracles wages in Elis or Messenia. But, when such elements have been set aside, there remains the old-Dorian hero, slayer of monsters, purger of the earth, who triumphs over the terrors of Hades, and brings the apples of immortality from the garden of the Hesperides.

We do not know exactly when the 'twelve labours' of Heracles became a definite legend. The earliest evidence for it is afforded by the temple of Zeus at Olympia, about 450 B.C. The twelve labours were there portrayed on the metopes,—six on those of the western front, and six on those of the eastern. All the twelve subjects are known from the existing remains². The list agrees, in much the larger part, with twelve labours

¹ G. Hermann, Preface to the *Trachiniae*, p. vi: 'Ego quidem, quomodo qui Sophoclem cognitum habeat, an genuina sit haec fabula dubitare possit, non video. Nam quae duae res in poesi maxime produnt a quo quid scriptum sit, ingenium poesis et dictio, eae ita sunt in hac fabula eadem atque in ceteris, ut miraturus sim, si quis proferat aliquid, quod alienum ab Sophocle iudicari debeat.'

² The subjects of the western metopes, in order from left to right, were: (1) Nemean

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xi

enumerated by the Chorus in the *Hercules Furens* of Euripides¹, a play of which the date may be placed about 421—416 B.C. Neither list knows any places, outside of Peloponnesus, except Crete and Thrace; nor does either list recognise any of those later myths in which Heracles symbolises the struggles of Argos with Sparta. In both lists the journey to the Hesperides has lost its original meaning,—the attainment of immortality,—since it precedes the capture of Cerberus. These are some reasons for thinking that a cycle of twelve labours had become fixed in Dorian legend long before the fifth century B.C.² The Dorians of Argolis were those among whom it first took shape, as the scenes of the labours show. But nothing is known as to the form in which it first became current.

One thing, however, is plain. Although the twelve tasks are more or less independent of each other, the series has the unity of a single idea. Heracles is the destroyer of pests on land and sea, the saviour of Argolis first and then the champion of humanity, the strong man who secures peace to the husbandman and an open path to the sailor: with his club and his bow, he goes forth against armed warriors, or monsters of superhuman lion: (2) Lernaean hydra: (3) Stymphalian birds: (4) Cretan bull: (5) Ceryneian hind: (6) Hippolytè's girdle.

Those of the eastern metopes were: (1) Erymanthian boar: (2) Mares of Diomedes: (3) Geryon: (4) Atlas and the Hesperides: (5) Augean stables: (6) Cerberus.—Treu, *Ausgrabungen zu Olympia*, iv. c. 4: W. Copland Perry, *Greek and Roman Sculpture*, ch. xxi. pp. 225 ff.

¹ Eur. *H. F.* 359—429. The exploits there enumerated are:—(1) Nemean lion: (2) Centaurs: (3) Ceryneian hind: (4) Mares of Diomedes: (5) Cynus: (6) Hesperides: (7) Sea-monsters: (8) Relieving Atlas as supporter of the heavens: (9) Hippolytè's girdle: (10) Lernaean hydra: (11) Geryon: (12) Cerberus.

No. 2 in this list,—the fight with the Centaurs at Pholoè,—was merely an episode in the ἀθλος of the Erymanthian boar, the first subject of the eastern metopes at Olympia. Hence the list of Euripides has really nine ἀθλοι in common with the temple. The three ἀθλοι peculiar to the temple are, Stymphalian birds, Cretan bull, and Augean stables; instead of which Euripides has, Cynus, Sea-monsters, Relief of Atlas.

An express mention of the number *twelve*, as the fixed limit to the series of ἀθλοι, occurs first in Theocr. 24. 81, δώδεκά οἱ τελέσαντι πεπρωμένον ἐν Διὸς οἰκῆν | μύχθους.

² Preller (*Gr. Myth.* II. 186) adopts the view that the number of twelve labours had probably been first fixed by Peisander, in his epic Ἡράκλεια, circ. 650 B.C. (cp. below, § 4). Wilamowitz, Eur. *Heracles*, vol. I. p. 308, regards the cycle of twelve labours rather as the invention of some Dorian poet of Argolis,—perhaps of Mycenæ,—who lived not later than the 8th century B.C., and of whose work no trace remains.

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

INTRODUCTION.

malignty, reliant on his inborn might, and conscious of a divine strain in his blood. This is no Achilles, no image of that chivalry which Aeolian legend had delineated and Ionian poetry adorned; no steeds, swift as the wind, bear his chariot into battle; no panoply of bronze, wrought by Hephaestus, flashes on him, 'like the gleam of blazing fire, or of the sun as it arises': in the gentle graces of human existence, in the softer human sympathies, he has no portion; no music of the lyre soothes his rest in the camp; he has never known such tears as came into the eyes of the young Achaean warrior, when the aged king of Troy, kneeling at his feet, kissed the hand that had slain Hector; nor has he anything of that peculiar pathos which is given alike to Hector and to Achilles by the dim presage of an early doom, the uncertain shadow which now and again flits across the meridian of their glory; the golden scales, lifted in the hand of Zeus, have never trembled with the fate of Heracles, for his destiny was fixed before his birth, and is inseparable from his origin,—that he must toil while he lives, and must live until his task has been accomplished. He embodies a sterner ideal; one in which there is less of spiritual charm and of flexible intelligence, but which has a moral grandeur of its own; we might say that relatively to the Ionian view of life it is as the Hebraic ideal to the Hellenic. And this ideal may rightly be called 'Dorian,' in the sense that it presumably represents a conception of the primitive Dorian folk, bearing a general stamp which can be traced in historical expressions of the Dorian nature.

That conception appears in only two other sets of legends besides the Argive. And these belong to near kinsmen of the Dorian stock, the Boeotians and the Thessalians.

Boeotian
legends.

The Boeotian legends concern the birth, childhood, and youth of Heracles. Argive tradition claimed his manhood; and this claim could not be ignored. Nor was it disputed that he sprang from the Argive Perseidae. The Boeotians sought only to reconcile his Argive lineage with a belief that he was born at Thebes. Alcmena, his mother, is the daughter of Electryon, king of Mycenae: she is betrothed to her first-cousin Amphitryon, son of Alcaeus, king of Tiryns. Amphi-

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xiii

tryon accidentally kills his uncle, Electryon, and flies, with Alcmena, to Thebes. She requires him, as the condition of their union, to avenge her on the Taphii in western Greece, who have slain her brothers. He sets forth from Thebes to do so. Just before his triumphant return, Zeus visits Alcmena in his likeness, and becomes the father of Heracles. Amphitryon was originally a Theban hero; but the Thebans made him an Argive in order that they might make Heracles a Theban. The name 'Heracles' is itself a proof that Argive legend was predominant enough to extort such a compromise. Hera was the goddess of the pre-Dorian Argos. The story of her hatred towards the Dorian Heracles expressed the hostility of her worshippers to the Dorian invaders. But, when the Dorians had conquered, their legendary champion came to be called 'Ηρακλῆς, 'the glorified of Hera'; not in the sense that he had won fame by surmounting her persecutions, or through her final reconciliation to him in Olympus; but in the sense that he was the pride of the city which, though it had changed its earthly masters, was still Hera's—the now Dorian Argos. The old story of her spite against him lived on in poetry, but it had lost its first meaning. It is recorded that an earlier name of 'Heracles' had been 'Alcaeus,' 'the man of might'; and traces of this lingered in Boeotia¹.

¹ Dion Chrysost. or. 31 (p. 615 Reiske) *ἐν γούν Θήβαις Ἀλκαῖος ἀνάκειται τις, δὴ Ἡρακλέα φασὶν εἶναι, πρότερον οὕτω καλούμενον*. Preller (II. p. 180) quotes the inscription shown in a Farnesian relief on the tripod which Amphitryon dedicated, in his youthful son's name, to the Ismenian Apollo at Thebes: 'Ἀμφιτρύων ὑπὲρ Ἀλκαίου τρίποδ' Ἀπόλλωνι. Sextus Empir. *Adv. dogm.* 3. 36 gives a like inscription, also connecting it with a Theban *ἀνάθημα*. Diodorus (4. 10) ascribes the change of the hero's name to the Argives: 'Ἀργεῖοι... Ἡρακλέα προσῆγόρευσαν, ὅτι δι' Ἡραν ἔσχε κλέος, πρότερον Ἀλκαῖον καλούμενον. According to the popular tradition, this change of name was prescribed by the Delphic oracle, when the hero went thither for purification, after the slaughter of his children at Thebes. (Apollod. 2. 4. 12; Aelian *V. H.* 2. 31.)

'Ἀλκείδης was probably a gentilician name, rather than a patronymic in the narrower sense, as Wilamowitz remarks (Eur. *Her.* I. p. 293), adding that 'Ἀλκαῖος, the father of Amphitryon, 'was not invented to explain 'Ἀλκείδης,' since in that case the form would have been Ἀλκεύς.

But Pindar, at any rate, seems to have been thinking of Ἀλκαῖος, father of Amphitryon, when he wrote Ἡρακλέης, σεμνὸν θάλος Ἀλκαῖδᾶν (*O.* 6. 68). And on the other hand Suidas, *s. v.* Ἀλκείδης, has Ἀλκείως γὰρ παῖς Ἀμφιτρύων.—A similar name to Ἀλκαῖος was Ἀλκάθοος, a Megarian hero analogous to Heracles. Cp. also Ἀλκμήνη.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

There, too, as in Argolis, the myth is blended with facts of local warfare; Heracles fights for Thebes against the Minyae of Orchomenus. But the true Dorian Heracles is seen in other parts of the Theban story,—as when he strangles the snakes in his cradle, and slays the lion of Cithaeron. His last act at Thebes is that which he does in the madness sent on him by Hera,—the slaughter of the children borne to him by Megara, daughter of Creon. This Theban tradition was another compromise with Argive legend, which claimed his best years for the twelve labours. How, then, was he to be severed from Thebes, the home of his youth? He must be forced to fly from it, as blood-guilty—the guilt being excused by Hera's visitation. Further, Thebes had to account for the non-existence of Theban nobles claiming a direct descent from him. Therefore he slew his Theban children.

Thessalian
legends.

Lastly, there are the Thessalian legends. These belong especially to Trachis, the chief town of Malis, and to the neighbouring region of Mount Oeta. Here, too, there is an element of disguised history; Heracles is the friend of Dorians; he works for the honour of Apollo, the god of the Thessalo-Delphic amphictyony; he conquers aliens, like Cyncus, or establishes good relations with them, as with the Trachinian king Ceyx. But the spirit of an older conception animates one part of the Thessalian legend,—the hero's fiery death on the summit of Oeta, when Zeus receives him into heaven. The journey to the Hesperides was probably an older symbol of immortality attained after toil; but if that fable has the charm of the sunset, the legend of Oeta has the grandeur of the hills.

These three cycles of myth,—the Argive, the Boeotian, and the Thessalian,—alone reveal the true old-Dorian Heracles. The traditions found elsewhere are either merely local, expressing the desire of particular Dorian communities to link their own deeds with his name, as at Rhodes and Cos; or they show the influence of non-Dorian poets, who altered the original character of the story by interweaving it with other threads of folk-lore. Thus in the *Trachiniae* the legend of Oeta is combined with legends of Aetolia. We shall understand this process better if we consider the place of Heracles in that

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xv

portion of Greek literature which precedes the rise of Attic drama.

§ 3. The Homeric poems contain only incidental allusions to Heracles, who is associated with the generation before the Trojan war. We hear that he was born at Thebes, being the son of Zeus and Alcmena. His life-long foe, the goddess Hera, defrauded him of his inheritance, the lordship of Argos, by ensnaring Zeus into a promise that this dominion should be held by Eurystheus¹. Heracles performed labours (*ἄεθλοι*) for Eurystheus, whose commands were brought by the herald Copreus: but only one of these tasks is specified,—viz., the descent in quest of ‘the dog of Hades².’ Apart from the ‘labours’ proper, some other exploits of the hero are mentioned. He delivered Laomedon, the father of Priam, from the sea-monster (*κῆτος*) sent by the angry gods; and, when the false king withheld the due reward, he sacked Troy. Returning thence, he was driven by storms to Cos³. Further, he made war on Pylos, killing the Neleidae, Nestor’s brethren, and wounding the immortals, Hera and Hades, who opposed him⁴. Under his own roof he slew his guest Iphitus; but no motive is assigned by the Homeric poet. The victim’s father, Eurytus, king of Oechalia (in Thessaly), is not attacked or killed by Heracles; he is more quietly despatched by Apollo, who is jealous of his skill in archery⁵. The Homeric weapon of Heracles is the bow; there is no mention of the club. His Homeric wife is Megara, daughter of Creon. Finally he dies, ‘subdued by fate and by the wrath of Hera⁶.’ There is no hint of his apotheosis, except in one passage, which clearly bewrays interpolation⁷.

¹ *Iliad* 19. 95—136.

² Labours for Eurystheus, *Il.* 8. 363, *Od.* 11. 622; Copreus, *Il.* 15. 639: ‘the dog of Hades’ (first called Cerberus in Hes. *Th.* 311), *Il.* 8. 368.

³ The *κῆτος*, *Il.* 20. 144—148: sack of Troy, 5. 638—642: Cos, 15. 28.

⁴ War against Pylos, *Il.* 11. 690—693: wounding of Hera and Hades, 5. 392—397.

⁵ Iphitus, *Od.* 21. 22—30: Eurytus, 8. 223—228.

⁶ The bow, *Il.* 5. 393, *Od.* 8. 225, 11. 607; Megara, *Od.* 11. 269: Death of Heracles, *Il.* 18. 117—119.

⁷ *Od.* 11. 601—605:

601 τὸν δὲ μετ’ εἰσενόησα βίην Ἡρακλεῖην,

602 [εἰδῶλον, αὐτὸς δὲ μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

INTRODUCTION.

The parts of the Homeric epics in which these allusions occur are of various ages; and the allusions themselves are derived from various regions,—Argos, the western Peloponnesus, Boeotia, Thessaly, the Dorian colonies in Asia Minor. Several of the passages have a more or less intrusive air; one¹, at least, has manifestly been adapted to the *Iliad* from some epic in which Heracles was a principal figure. Speaking generally, we may say that in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* the Dorian hero is a foreign person.

But this negative result is not the only one which the Homeric notices suggest. They make us feel how difficult it would have been for epic poetry, working in the Homeric spirit, to treat the story of Heracles as a whole. His acts are too incoherent to derive a properly epic unity from his person,—such an unity as the *Odyssey*, for example, derives from the person of Odysseus. The original Dorian legend of Heracles had, indeed, the unity of a moral idea; but that is not enough for an epic.

The
Heracleia
of Peisan-
der.

§ 4. Little is known of the efforts made to solve this poetical problem. The Dorian Peisander, of Cameirus in Rhodes, is named as the author of an epic poem on Heracles, a *Heracleia*². He seems to have confined himself to the 'labours' which Heracles performed for Eurystheus; and he was the first poet,

603 *τέρπεται ἐν θαλίῃς καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην,*

604 [*παῖδα Διὸς μεγάλιοι καὶ Ἥρης χρυσοπεδίλου.*]

605 *ἀμφὶ δέ μιν κλαγγὴ νεκῶν ἦν ὠωνῶν ὥς, κ.τ.λ.*

The second and third of these verses (602, 603) were rejected by Aristarchus (schol. on *Od.* 11. 385, with Dindorf's note, ed. 1855). The fourth verse (604) seems not to have been read by Aristarchus, nor by the schol. on v. 385. It is identical with Hes. *Theog.* 952. Onomacritus, the diaskeust in the time of Peisistratus, was credited with the interpolation of vv. 602, 603, acc. to schol. Vindob. 56 (quoted by Merry *ad loc.*). Such a tradition at least suggests that the interpolation was pre-Alexandrian and presumably Attic. It is probably by a mere confusion that schol. H on 604 (*ap.* Dindorf) speaks as if verse 604, and it alone, had been inserted by Onomacritus.

¹ I refer to *Il.* 19. 95—136, where see Leaf's note. The episode occurs in a speech of Agamemnon, who, contrary to Homeric usage, quotes the very words spoken by the gods. Elsewhere it is only the inspired poet himself who reports Olympian speech.

² Bernhardt, *Gr. Lit.* vol. II. pt 1, p. 338, collects the principal notices of Peisander.

Cambridge University Press

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xvii

we are told, who gave Heracles the lion's skin and the club¹. Peisander is usually placed about 650 B.C.; but, according to one view, that date is too early². In the Alexandrian age he enjoyed a high repute.

The Ionian Panyasis³ of Halicarnassus, *circ.* 480 B.C., also The Heracleia of Panyasis. composed a *Heracleia*, in no less than fourteen books. He took a wider range than Peisander's, and aimed at a comprehensive digest of all the principal legends concerning Heracles. Merits of style and arrangement made him popular; but he did not reach the Homeric level, or work in the Homeric spirit⁴. Possibly his large composition, with its survey of heroic deeds in many lands, may have borne some analogy to the great prose-epic of his younger kinsman, Herodotus. That kinship interests us here, since it increases the probability that the epic of Panyasis may have been known to the author of the *Trachiniae*.

But to minds in sympathy with Homeric epos it would be evident that there was another way of dealing with the theme of Heracles; a way different from that of Peisander, and still more different from that of Panyasis. Some one episode might be singled out from the mass of legends, and developed by itself, as an epic on a small scale. Hesiod and the Hesiodic school worked thus; they produced, for instance, the *Marriage-feast of Ceyx*, relating how Heracles was entertained by that king of Trachis; the *Aegimius*, turning on the league of Heracles with that Dorian prince; and the extant *Shield of Heracles*, concerning his fight with Cycnus.

¹ See n. on *Philoctetes* 727. The club was no doubt an original trait of the old Dorian legend.

² The 20th epigram of Theocritus is an inscription in hendecasyllables for a Rhodian statue of Peisander, who, with respect to the deeds of Heracles, is called *πρῶτος τῶν ἐπάνωθε μουσοποιῶν*. Wilamowitz (*Eur. Her.* i. p. 309), acknowledging the genuineness of the epigram, nevertheless suggests that the name of Peisander may have been a mere invention of the Asiatic Dorians in the 3rd cent. B.C., and holds that the *Ἡράκλεια* ascribed to him was not older than the 6th cent. B.C.

According to Theocritus, Peisander described Heracles *τὸν λεοντομάχαν, τὸν δέξυχειρα, ... χῶσους ἐξεπύνασεν εἰπ' ἀέθλους*.

³ The penultimate syllable of this Carian name is probably long; another, perhaps more correct, form of it was *Πανύασσις*. Little weight can be attached to the fact that Avienus, writing about 370 A.D., has *Panyāsi* at the beginning of a hexameter (*Arat. Phaen.* 175).

⁴ See the testimonies in Bernhardt, *Gr. Lit.* II. pt 1, p. 340.

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978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xviii

INTRODUCTION.

The *Capture of Oechalia*.

A notable epic of this class was the *Capture of Oechalia*, *Οἰχάλιας ἄλωσις*, ascribed to the Ionian Creophylus of Samos, whom tradition called the friend, or even the son-in-law, of Homer¹. An epigram of Callimachus² attests the fame of this poem, which was probably as old at least as the eighth century B.C., and must have had the genuine ring of Homeric epos. The subject was the passion of Heracles for Iolè, and the war which, in order to win her, he made on Oechalia, the city of her father Eurystus, which was placed, as by Sophocles, in Euboea. It is not known whether this epic introduced Deianeira, the envenomed robe, and the hero's death on Mount Oeta³. But in any case it must have been one of the principal sources from which Sophocles derived his material.

Lyric poets on Heracles. Archilochus.

§ 5. Lyric poetry also, from an early time, had been busied with these legends. The Ionian Archilochus (*circ.* 670 B.C.) composed a famous hymn to the victorious Heracles. It was known as the *καλλίνικος*⁴, and was a counterpart, at the Olympian games, of 'See, the conquering hero comes,'—being sung at the evening procession in honour of a victor, if no special ode had been written for the occasion. But it was in the choral form, a distinctively Dorian creation, that lyric poetry rendered its loftiest tributes to the son of Alcmena. Stesichorus of Himera, a city in which Dorian and Chalcidic elements were blended, gave the

Stesichorus.

¹ Welcker, *Der epische Cyclus*, pp. 212 ff.: Bernhardt, *Gk Lit.* II. pt 1, p. 252.

² *Epigr.* 6:

Κρεωφύλου πόνος εἰμί, δόμῳ ποτὲ θεῖον Ὀμηρον
δεξαμένον· κλαίω δ' Ἐϋρυστον, ὅσσ' ἔπαθεν,
καὶ ξανθὴν Ἴόλειαν Ὀμήρειον δὲ καλεῦμαι
γράμμα· Κρεωφύλῳ, Ζεῦ φίλε, τοῦτο μέγα.

³ That the *Capture of Oechalia* ended with the pyre on Oeta, and the apotheosis, is Welcker's view (*Cyclus*, p. 233). He remarks that the hero of a Cyclic poem was often raised to immortal bliss at the end,—as Amphiarus in the *Thebais*, Achilles in the *Aethiopsis*, Menelaus in the *Nostoi*, Odysseus in the *Telegonia*. The apotheosis of Heracles has already a place in the *Theogony* of Hesiod, vv. 950—955.

The war against Oechalia may possibly have been, as Welcker suggests, the subject of the Ἡράκλεια ascribed to Cinaethon of Lacedaemon (8th cent. B.C.?) by schol. Apoll. Rhod. I. 1357, where it is cited with reference to Trachis; but this is pure conjecture.

⁴ In Pindar *Ol.* 9. 2 *καλλίνικος* ὁ *τριπλῶς*, since the burden was thrice repeated. Bergk, *Poet. Lyr.* II. p. 418 (4th ed.).

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978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xix

spirit of Homeric epos to his choral hymns (*circ.* 620 B.C.). Into this new mould he cast three exploits of Heracles,—the triumphs over Geryon, Cycnus, and Cerberus¹. Pindar's range of allusion Pindar. covers almost the whole field of the hero's deeds; but it is in the first Nemean ode that the original significance of the legend is best interpreted. When the infant has strangled the snakes sent by Hera, the Theban seer Teiresias predicts his destiny; how he shall destroy 'many a monstrous shape of violence' on land and sea; subdue the men 'who walk in guile and insolence'; beat down the Earth-born foes of the gods; and then, for recompense of his great toils, win everlasting peace in the blest abodes, and, united to Hebe, 'dwell gladly in the divine home of Zeus²'.

For readers of the *Trachiniae* this lyric literature has one point of peculiar interest. It is there that we can first trace the association of Heracles with Deianeira. The Dorian Heracles had no original connection with the old heroic legends of Aetolia. The stamp of those legends, and their relation to others, indicate that they come from a pre-Dorian time, when Calydon and Pleuron, surrounded by fertile lands and blooming vineyards, were the strongholds of a chivalry devoted to war and to the chase; a chivalry from which popular tradition derived the images of Deianeira, of her parents Oeneus and Althaea, and of her brother Meleager. The story that Heracles had married Deianeira expressed the desire of immigrants, who had displaced the old Aetolian order, to claim kinship with the Dorian invaders of Peloponnesus. Deianeira associated with Heracles.

Pindar, in a lost poem,—of what class, is unknown,—told the story somewhat as follows³. Heracles, having gone down to Hades for Cerberus, there met the departed Meleager, who recommended his sister Deianeira as a wife for the hero. On returning to the upper world, Heracles went at once to Aetolia, where he found that Deianeira was being wooed by the river-god Acheloüs. He fought with this formidable rival,—who wore the shape of a bull,—and broke off one of his horns. In order to

¹ Bergk, *Poet. Lyr.* III. p. 207.

² Pind. *Nem.* 1. 60—72.

³ Schol. on *Iliad* 21. 194. The schol. on *Il.* 8. 368 probably has the same passage in view when he quotes Pindar as saying that Cerberus had a hundred heads.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx

INTRODUCTION.

recover it, Acheloüs gave his conqueror the wondrous 'cornucopia' which he himself had received from Amaltheia, daughter of Oceanus. Heracles presented this, by way of *ἔδνα* or 'bride-price,' to Oeneus¹, and duly received the hand of the king's daughter.

Long before Pindar, Archilochus had related how Heracles overcame the tauriform suitor², and won the fair maiden; how, after their marriage, Heracles and Deianeira dwelt with Oeneus at Calydon, until they were obliged to leave the country, because Heracles had accidentally slain the king's cupbearer; and how, at the river Evenus, the Centaur Nessus offered insult to the young wife, and was slain by her husband³. It may be added that the prose mythographer Pherecydes (*circ.* 480 B.C.) had told the story of Deianeira⁴. His birthplace was the island of Leros, near Miletus; but his home was at Athens, and his work, it can hardly be doubted, was known to Sophocles.

Heracles
in drama.

§ 6. Such, then, was the position of the Heracles-myth at the time when Attic Tragedy was advancing to maturity. This legend had become the common property of Hellas; and its primitive meaning had been, to a great extent, overlaid by alien additions or embellishments. Particular episodes had been successfully treated in epic poetry of the Homeric or Hesiodic school, and also in lyrics, both Ionian and Dorian. But the whole legend had not been embodied in any poem which took rank with the foremost creations of the Greek genius.

Comedy.

As a person of drama, Heracles made his first appearance in Comedy. It was the Dorian Epicharmus who, in the first half of the fifth century B.C., thus presented the Dorian hero to Syracusan audiences. One of the pieces concerned Heracles in quest of the Amazon's girdle; another dealt with his visit to the jovial Centaur Pholos⁵. The Dorians of Sicily, though Dorian

¹ Strabo 10, p. 458.

² Schol. *Il.* 21. 237.

³ Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 1. 1212: Dion Chrys. or. 60.

⁴ This appears from schol. Apoll. 1. 1213 (frag. 38 of Pherecydes in Müller, *Frag. Hist.* 1. p. 82): and might have been inferred from the reference of Pherecydes to Hyllus (schol. *Trach.* 354, fr. 34 *ap.* Müller).

⁵ Ἡρακλῆς ὁ ἐπὶ τὸν ζῶσσηρα: Ἡρακλῆς ὁ παρὰ Φόλω. Cp. Bernhardt, *Gk. Lit.* II. pt 2, p. 529.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xxi

to the backbone in most things, had a strain of humour and vivacity which tempered the seriousness of their race; in this instance, it was much as if an Irish dramatist of English descent had applied a similar treatment to St George and the dragon.

That Ionians should feel the grotesque side of Heracles, was natural enough. Aristophanes tells us that this hero had become a stock-character of Attic comedy, and claims credit for having discarded him :—

- ‘It was he that indignantly swept from the stage the paltry ignoble device
 ‘Of a Heracles needy and seedy and greedy, a vagabond sturdy and stout,
 ‘Now baking his bread, now swindling instead, now beaten and battered about’¹.

Several comedies on Heracles are known by their titles, or by fragments. His powers of eating and drinking seem to have furnished a favourite point. He also figured much in satyr-drama,—a kind of entertainment which welcomed types of inebriety. Sophocles himself wrote a *Heracles at Taenarum*,—a satyr-play on the descent to Hades for Cerberus,—in which the Chorus consisted of Helots². His contemporaries, Ion of Chios, and Achæus, wrote each a satyr-play called *Omphalè*, depicting Heracles in servitude to the Lydian task-mistress. In Ion’s piece, he performed prodigies with a ‘triple row of teeth,’ devouring not merely the flesh prepared for a burnt-offering, but the very wood and coals on which it was being roasted³. Even in the *Alcestis*, we remember, the inevitable moment arrives when this guest, too hospitably entertained, fills the house with ‘discordant howls’⁴.

§ 7. Recollecting such traditions of the theatre, we cannot wonder if Tragedy was somewhat shy of Heracles. At the best, the legend was difficult to manage,—even more difficult for tragic drama than for epic narrative. And the difficulty was greatly

¹ *Pax* 741 ff., translated by Mr B. B. Rogers.

² Nauck, *Trag. Frag.* p. 178 (2nd ed., 1889).

³ For the ‘*Ομφάλη*’ of Achæus, see Nauck *op. cit.* p. 754: for that of Ion, p. 735, esp. fragments 28, 29, 30.

⁴ Eur. *Alc.* γβο ἔμουνσ’ ἵλακτῶν.

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978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxii

INTRODUCTION.

increased, now that the essential difference between this hero and the ordinary persons of tragedy had been brought into relief by frequent burlesques.

Aeschylus, indeed, in the *Prometheus Unbound*, introduced Heracles, who loosed the bonds of Prometheus; and then Prometheus described the route by which his deliverer must journey from the Caucasus to the Hesperides¹. It was a harder matter to take the legend of Heracles as the basis of a tragedy. There are only two such experiments of which we have any clear or definite knowledge. One is the *Mad Heracles* of Euripides. The other is the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles.

The *Mad Heracles* of Euripides.

Euripides has taken his subject from the Boeotian legend. Heracles, visited with madness by Hera, slays his children,—in whose fate the Attic poet involves Megara, probably because, with his plot, it was not easy to dispose of her in any other way. Now, as we saw, this Theban story was framed to explain why Heracles, in early manhood, forsook Thebes for Argolis. The murder is discordant with the general tenour of the Heracles myth, and the discord is but thinly concealed by the resort to Hera's agency. For Euripides, however, this very discord was an attraction. It allowed him, by a bold change of detail, to put a new complexion on the whole story. That change consisted in placing the terrible deed of Heracles not before, but after, his labours for Eurystheus.

The plot is briefly as follows. Heracles has long been absent from Thebes, toiling for Eurystheus; and it is known that he is now engaged in the supreme ordeal,—the quest of Cerberus. Meanwhile a certain Lycus from Euboea becomes master of Thebes, and slays Creon. Megara, her three sons, and the aged Amphitryon, are also doomed by him. They are about to die, when Heracles suddenly returns from the nether world, and kills Lycus. He then holds a sacrifice, to purify the house. While engaged in it, he is stricken with madness. He slays Megara and his children. On recovering his senses, he resolves to commit suicide. But Theseus appears,—the king of Athens whom Heracles has just delivered from Hades. Theseus combats his resolve, offering him an honourable refuge in

¹ Strabo 4, p. 183.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xxiii

Attica. Heracles at last accepts the offer, and departs with his friend.

This, then, is the goal of the great career; this is the result of the strength given by a divine sire, and spent in benefiting men. The evil goddess of Heracles triumphs utterly; at the very moment when his labours are finished, and when, as the old faith taught, his reward was near, he is plunged into an abyss of misery. He passes from our sight, to hide the remainder of his days in the seclusion of a land not his own. Yet, even in this extremity, he has given a proof of strength; he has had the courage to live. He has taught us that, though the mightiest human efforts may end in outward failure, yet no man, if he be true to himself, need suffer moral defeat. Zeus has been faithless to his human son, and Hera's infra-human malevolence has prevailed; but one consolation for humanity remains.

Such is the new reading of the Heracles myth which Euripides has propounded; with admirable power and subtlety, though scarcely with complete artistic success. His interpretation, though full of a deep suggestiveness, is, in fact, too modern for the fable on which it is embroidered.

§ 8. There is no external evidence for the date of the *Mad Heracles*; but internal evidence tends to show that the play probably belongs to the years 421—416 B.C.¹ The date of the *Trachiniae* is also unattested. But some traits of the work itself appear to warrant us in placing it among the later productions of the poet²; if rough limits are to be assigned, we might name the years 420 and 410 B.C. It has been held that the bold example of Euripides, in making Heracles the subject of a tragedy, induced Sophocles to do likewise³. As to this view, we can only say that it is quite possible, but that there is absolutely no proof of it. On the other hand, one thing is certain: the *Trachiniae* exhibits a conception and a treatment fundamentally different from those adopted in the *Mad Heracles*.

Two principal elements enter into the mythic material used

¹ Wilamowitz, *Eur. Her.* vol. I, pp. 340 ff.

² See below, §§ 21, 22.

³ Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* p. 383.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxiv

INTRODUCTION.

The two
mythic
elements.

by Sophocles. The first is the Aetolian legend of Deianeira, whom Heracles rescues from Achelöus, and in whose defence he slays the Centaur Nessus. This part of the subject had been treated by Archilochus and Pindar. The second element is the Thessalian legend which set forth the love of Heracles for Iolè,—his murder of Iphitus, leading to his servitude under Omphalè,—his capture of Oechalia,—and his death upon Mount Oeta. Here the epic *Capture of Oechalia* was presumably the chief source. Pherecydes and Panyasis were also available. Hesiodic poems, such as the *Marriage-feast of Ceyx*, may have supplied some touches. Ion of Chios, too, had written a drama called *Eurytidae*¹, but its scope is unknown. Nor can we say whether Sophocles was the first poet who brought the Aetolian and the Thessalian legend into this connection.

The Argive and Boeotian legends are left in the background of the *Trachiniae*; they appear only in a few slight allusions. But, if we are to read the play intelligently, the drift of these allusions must be understood. We must endeavour to see how Sophocles imagined those events of his hero's life which precede the moment at which the play begins.

Later
digests
of the
Heracles
legends.

Later mythographers, such as Apollodorus and Diodorus, sought to bring a fixed chronology into the chaos of legends concerning Heracles. They framed a history, which falls into six main chapters, thus:—(1) The Theban legends of the hero's birth and growth. (2) The Argive legends of the twelve labours. (3) The legends concerning Eurytus, Iolè, Iphitus, and Omphalè. (4) Campaigns against Troy, Cos, Peloponnesian foes of Argos, and the Giants. (5) The Aetolian legends: Deianeira, Achelöus, Nessus. (6) The legends of South Thessaly: Ceyx of Trachis, Aegimius, etc.; the capture of Oechalia; and the pyre on Oeta.

Freedom
of the fifth
century
poets.

But, in the fifth century B.C., poets were as yet untrammelled by any such artificial canon. They could use the largest freedom in combining local legends of Heracles, so long as they were careful to preserve the leading features of the myth. We have seen that Euripides, when in his *Mad Heracles* he placed the madness *after* the labours, was making an innovation which deranged the whole perspective of Theban and Argive legend;

¹ Nauck, *Trag. Frag.* p. 734.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xxv

so much so, that the Alexandrian mythographers, deferential to the Attic dramatists in much, never followed Euripides in that.

Sophocles has made no change of similar importance. Yet his way of arranging the fable differs in one material respect from that of the later compilers. They, as we have seen, place the marriage of Heracles with Deianeira very late in his career—after his labours for Eurystheus, and after most of his other deeds also. Sophocles puts the marriage much earlier,—so early, that Deianeira speaks as if it had preceded most, or all, of the hero's labours. Sophocles could do this, because he felt himself free to ignore the Theban legend of the hero's marriage to Megara. And he certainly was not alone in thus differing from the later mythographers. Pausanias mentions a tradition at Phlius, according to which Heracles had already won his Aetolian bride when he went for the golden apples¹. And Pherecydes represented Heracles as having at first asked Iolè's hand, not for himself, but for Hyllus—his son by Deianeira².

Sequence of events in the *Trachiniae*.

§ 9. The outline of the whole story, as Sophocles conceived it, can now be traced with clearness sufficient, at least, to explain the hints scattered through the play. The antecedents of the plot.

1. Heracles is born at Thebes (v. 116), and comes thence (v. 509), in early manhood, to Pleuron, where he wins Deianeira. We are not told whither he was taking his bride, when they met Nessus (v. 562). Since Megara is ignored, there is nothing to exclude the supposition that he was returning to his home at Thebes.

2. Constrained by Hera's wrath, he performs the labours for Eurystheus (v. 1048). The home of his family is now at Tiryns.

3. He visits Eurytus at Oechalia in Euboea (v. 262); who discourteously rebuffs his passion for Iolè (v. 359)³.

4. He goes on various campaigns, including that against the Giants (1058 ff.).

5. He slays Iphitus (the son of Eurytus), who was then his guest

¹ Paus. 2. 13. 8.

² Schol. *Trach.* 354.

³ The oblique *παίσιον* in v. 268 leaves an ambiguity. If the word used by Eurytus to Heracles was *ἐππαύον*, the labours for Eurystheus were over. But if it was *παίσιον*, they were still in progress. The second supposition gives more force to the passage.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxvi

INTRODUCTION.

at Tiryns. The lapse of some considerable time since his visit to Eurytus is implied by the word *αἰθῆς* (v. 270).

Heracles, with Deianeira, his children, and his mother Alcmena, is now forced to leave Tiryns. They are given a new home at Trachis by its king, Ceÿx (v. 38).

6. As a punishment for the treacherous murder of Iphitus, Zeus dooms Heracles to serve Omphalè, in Lydia, for a year (v. 274). Heracles goes forth from Trachis, leaving his family there (v. 155). They do not know his destination. During his absence, some of his children return with Alcmena to Tiryns; others are sent to his old home at Thebes (1151 ff.).

7. The year with Omphalè being over, he sacks Oechalia (v. 259).

We are now prepared to follow the plot of the drama itself.

Analysis
of the play.

I. Pro-
logue :
1—93.

§ 10. The scene is laid before the house at Trachis.

Deianeira is alone with a female slave, an old and attached domestic, who has been the nurse of her children. Communing with her own thoughts, rather than directly addressing her attendant, the wife of Heracles recalls the sorrows which have been her portion from youth upwards,—culminating now in a terrible anxiety concerning her absent lord. It is fifteen months since he left home; but no tidings have come from him. And she feels almost sure that something is amiss, when she thinks of a certain tablet which he left with her . . .

Here the aged Nurse ventures to interpose. Deianeira has several sons; why should not one of them,—Hyllus, for example, the eldest,—go in search of his father?

Just then Hyllus himself is seen approaching, and in haste; for he has news to tell. Heracles is, or soon will be, in Euboea, warring against Oechalia, the city of Eurytus. During the past year he has been in servitude to Omphalè, a Lydian woman.

Deianeira then tells her son the purport of the tablet to which she had previously alluded. It contains an oracle, which shows that this war in Euboea must decide the fate of Heracles; he will die; or he will thenceforth live in peace.

Hyllus at once resolves to join his father in Euboea, and departs for that purpose.

The Chorus now enters: it consists of fifteen Trachinian

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00842-6 - Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Volume 5

Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xxvii

maidens, full of kindly sympathy for the Aetolian princess whom a strange destiny has brought to dwell among them. Invoking the Sun-god, they implore him to reveal where Heracles now is. Deianeira, they hear, is pining inconsolably. Fate vexes, while it also glorifies, her husband; but he is not suffered to perish. Let her keep a good courage: sorrow comes to all mortals, but joy also, in its turn; and Zeus is not unmindful of his children.

Deianeira sadly replies that the young maidens cannot measure such trouble as hers; may they ever be strangers to it! But they shall know her latest and worst anxiety. When Heracles left home, he told her that, if he did not return at the end of fifteen months, she must account him dead. He even explained how his property was to be divided in that event. But, if he survived the fifteenth month, then he would have a peaceful life. Such was the teaching of an oracle which he had written down at Dodona. And the fulfilment of that oracle is now due . . .

II. First
episode:
141—496.

A Messenger is seen coming; the wreath on his head betokens glad tidings. Heracles lives, is victorious, and will soon come home. Lichas, the herald, has already arrived; but the excited Trachinians, thronging around him, have retarded his progress towards the house.

With an utterance of thanksgiving to Zeus, Deianeira calls upon the maidens of the Chorus and the maidens of her own household to raise a song of joy.

The Chorus respond with a short ode, in the nature of a paean.

Before it ceases, Lichas is in sight; a train of captive Euboean women follows him.

In reply to the eager questions of his mistress, Lichas says that Heracles is now at Cape Ceneae in Euboea, engaged in dedicating a sanctuary to Zeus. These maidens are captives, taken when Oechalia was destroyed: Heracles chose them out 'for himself and for the gods.'

And then Lichas tells how Heracles has been employed during the past fifteen months; how, for a year, he was the slave of Omphalè; and how, when freed, he avenged that

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Edited by Richard Claverhouse Jebb

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxviii

INTRODUCTION.

disgrace upon its ultimate author, Eurytus. Heracles himself, the herald adds, will soon arrive.

Deianeira rejoices, though a shadow flits across her joy as she looks at the ill-fated captives: may Zeus never so visit *her* children!

Among these captives, there is one who strangely interests her; the girl's mien is at once so sorrowful and so noble. She questions her; but the stranger remains silent. 'Who is she, Lichas?' But the herald does not know,—indeed, has not cared to ask. Deianeira then directs him to conduct the captives into the house.

She herself is about to follow him, when the Messenger, who had first announced the herald's approach, begs to speak with her alone.

He tells her that Lichas has deceived her. The mysterious maiden is no other than Iolè, the daughter of Eurytus. A passion for Iolè was the true motive of Heracles in destroying Oechalia. Eurytus had refused to give him the maiden. Lichas himself had avowed this to the Trachinians.

Lichas now re-enters, to ask for Deianeira's commands, as he is about to rejoin his master in Euboea. Confronted with the Messenger, and pathetically adjured by Deianeira, he confesses the truth. Heracles has an absorbing passion for Iolè; and, indeed, he gave no command of secrecy. But Lichas had feared to pain his mistress: let her pardon him; and let her bear with Iolè.

Deianeira requests Lichas to accompany her into the house. He is to take a message from her to Heracles, and a gift.

First
stasimon:
497—530.

In the ode which follows, the Chorus celebrates the resistless power of Love,—the power which now threatens Deianeira's peace, and which, in long-past days, brought Heracles to contend for her with Acheloiüs. The short but vivid picture of that combat has a singular pathos at this moment of the drama.

III.
Second
episode:
531—632.

Deianeira reappears. She has had time now to feel what it will be to live under the same roof with the young and beautiful girl to whom her husband has transferred his love; but she harbours no angry or cruel thoughts. Her sole wish is to regain the heart of Heracles. And a resource has occurred to her.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*INTRODUCTION.*

xxix

Long ago, when Heracles was taking her from Aetolia, they came to the river Evenus, where the ferryman, the Centaur Nessus, carried her across. He insulted her, and Heracles shot him with an arrow. As he lay dying, he told her that, if she wished to possess a love-charm by which she could always control the love of Heracles, she had only to collect some of the blood from his wound. She had done so, and had preserved her treasure, according to the Centaur's direction, in a place secluded from the warmth of sun or fire. She had now applied this love-charm to the inner surface of a festal robe, which she will send as her gift to Heracles. She brings with her a casket, in which she has placed the robe.

Lichas appears, ready to depart, and receives the casket, sealed with Deianeira's signet. She had vowed, she tells him, to send her lord this robe, whenever she should hear of his safety, in order that he might wear it on the day when he made a thank-offering to the gods. Therefore Heracles must not put it on, or produce it, before that day.

The herald promises fidelity, and departs.

In a joyous strain, the Chorus express their bright hope. The dwellers on the coasts and hills of Malis will soon welcome the long-absent hero; and he will come home full of rekindled love for his true wife. Second stasimon: 633--662.

But Deianeira now returns to them in an altered mood. A strange thing has happened. In applying the love-charm to the robe, she had used a tuft of wool, which she had then thrown down in the courtyard of the house. After a short exposure to the sun's heat, this tuft of wool had shrivelled away, leaving only a powder. And she remembers that the arrow which slew Nessus was tinged with a venom deadly to all living things. She fears the worst. But she is resolved that, if any harm befalls Heracles, she will not survive him. IV. Third episode: 663--820.

The Trachinian maidens are speaking faint words of comfort, when Hyllus arrives from Euboea.

He denounces his mother as a murderess. He describes how Heracles, wearing her gift, stood forth before the altar; how, as the flames rose from the sacrifice, the robe clung to him, as if glued, and spasms began to rend his frame; how, in the frenzy