

The Presence of Absence: The Persistence of the *polis* in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*
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Translations are by Kristin Lord unless indicated.

1. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 1-14

λόγος μὲν ἔστ' ἀρχαῖος ἀνθρώπων φανείς,
ὡς οὐκ ἂν αἰῶν' ἐκμάθοις βροτῶν, πρὶν ἂν
θάνη τις, οὐτ' εἰ χρηστός οὐτ' εἴ τω κακός·
ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν ἐμόν, καὶ πρὶν εἰς Ἅϊδου μολεῖν,
5 ἔξοιδ' ἔχουσα δυστυχῆ τε καὶ βαρύν,
ἥ τις πατρὸς μὲν ἐν δόμοισιν Οἰνέως
ναῖουσ' ἔτ' ἐν Πλευρώνι νυμφεῖων ὄκνον
ἄλγιστον ἔσχον, εἴ τις Αἰτωλὶς γυνή.
μνηστῆρ γὰρ ἦν μοι ποταμός, Ἀχελῶν λέγω,
10 ὃς μ' ἐν τρισὶν μορφαῖσιν ἐξήτει πατρός,
φοιτῶν ἐναργῆς ταῦρος, ἄλλοτ' αἰόλος
δράκων ἐλικτός, ἄλλοτ' ἀνδρείῳ κύτει
βούπρωρος· ἐκ δὲ δασκίου γενειάδος
κρουνοὶ διερραίνοντο κρηναίου ποτοῦ.

2. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 76-81

Δηιάνειρα

ἄρ' οἶσθα δῆτ' ὃ τέκνον, ὡς ἔλειπέ μοι
μαντεῖα πιστὰ τῆσδε τῆς χώρας πέρι;
Ἵλλος
τὰ ποῖα, μήτερ; τὸν λόγον γὰρ ἀγνοῶ.

Δηιάνειρα

ὡς ἡ τελευταῖα τοῦ βίου μέλλει τελεῖν
80 ἡ τοῦτον ἄρας ἄθλον εἰς τό γ' ὕστερον
τὸν λοιπὸν ἤδη βίοτον εὐαίων' ἔχειν.

3. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 64 (Hyllus)

ποῖον; δίδαξον, μήτερ, εἰ διδακτά μοι

4. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 375-378 (Deianira)

οἶμοι τάλαινα, ποῦ ποτ' εἰμι πράγματος;
τίν' εἰσδέδεγμαι πημονὴν ὑπόστεγον
λαθραῖον; ὃ δύστηνος· ἄρ' ἀνώνυμος
πέφυκεν, ὡσπερ οὐπάγων διώμνυτο;

5A. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 582-583, 590-596

(English and more Greek on p. 2)

(Δηιάνειρα)

κακὰς δὲ τόλμας μήτ' ἐπισταίμην ἐγὼ
μήτ' ἐκμάθοιμι, τάς τε τολμώσας στυγῶ...

There is a saying among men, revealed long ago,
that you should not judge a mortal's life
before he dies, whether it is good or bad;

But I now that mine, even before I go to the house
of Hades, is ill-fortuned and heavy,
I who, still living in the halls of my father Oeneus
at Pleuron, had the gravest fear of marriage
if any Aetolian woman (did). For my suitor was a
river-god—I'm speaking of Achelous—who in
three shapes was (always) asking me from my
father, coming as a bull in visible form, sometimes
as a glittering, coiled serpent, other times **ox-faced**
with a human chest; well-heads of spring-water
flowed all over from his bushy beard.

D.: But do you know, my son, that he left me
trustworthy oracles concerning this land?

H.: What kind, Mom? I don't know the story.

D.: That he is either about to meet the end of his
life, or, having undertaken this contest,
he shall after, forthwith, have a happy rest of his
life.

Teach, mother, if these things can be taught to me.

Oh wretched me, what is happening to me?
What secret plague have I received under my roof?
Was she born nameless, as her escort swore?
("nameless.... swore:?" untranslatable pun)

οὕτως ἔχει γ' ἡ πίστις, ὡς τὸ μὲν δοκεῖν
ἔνεστι, πείρα δ' οὐ προσωμίλησά πο·

Χορός

ἀλλ' εἰδέναι χρῆ δρῶσαν, ὡς οὐδ' εἰ δοκεῖς
ἔχειν, ἔχοις ἂν γνώμα, μὴ πειρωμένη.

Δηιάνειρα

ἀλλ' αὐτίκ' εἰσόμεσθα, τόνδε γὰρ βλέπω
595 θυραῖον ἤδη· διὰ τάχους δ' ἐλεύσεται.
μόνον παρ' ὑμῶν εὔ στεγοίμεθ'· ὡς σκότῳ
κἂν αἰσχρὰ πράσσης, οὔ ποτ' αἰσχύνῃ πεσεῖ.

D.: May I neither become expert in deeds of wicked
daring nor learn anything about them — and I hate
women who attempt them... (Easterling)

5B Antiphon, F46A (=TAGF 62)

τὰ οὖν νόμιμα παραβαίνων ἐὰν λάθῃ τοὺς
ὁμολογήσαντας καὶ αἰσχύνῃς καὶ ζημίας
ἀπήλλακται· μὴ λάθων δ' οὔ.

6. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 434-5

τὸ γὰρ/ νοσοῦντι ληρεῖν ἀνδρὸς οὐχὶ σῶφρονος.

7A. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 719-22

Δηιάνειρα

καίτοι δέδοκται, κεῖνος εἰ σφαλήσεται,
ταύτῃ σὺν ὀρμῇ κα' μὲ συνθανεῖν ἅμα·
ζῆν γὰρ κακῶς κλύουσιν οὐκ ἀνασχετόν,
ἥ τις προτιμᾷ μὴ κακῇ πεφυκέναι.

7B. Antiphon, F46A (=TAGF 62)

[ἔστι]ν οὖν οὐδὲν τ[ῆ] φύσει φιλιώτ[ερ]α οὐδ'
οἰκειότε[ρα], ἀφ' ὧν οἱ νόμοι ἀποτρέπουσι τοὺς
ἀν[θ]ρώπ[ου]ς, ἢ ἐφ' ἃ [προτρέ]πουσ[ιν]. τ[ὸ] δὲ
ζῆν [ἔ]στι τῆς φύσεως κ[αὶ] τ[ὸ] ἀποθαν[εῖ]ν...

8. Homer, *Iliad* 6.454-458 (Andromache speaking)

ὅτε κέν τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
δακρυόεσσαν ἄγεται ἐλεύθερον ἡμᾶρ ἀπούρας·
καὶ κεν ἐν Ἄργει εἰοῦσα πρὸς ἄλλης ἰστὸν ὑφαίνοις,
καὶ κεν ὕδωρ φορέοις Μεσσηϊδος ἢ Ὑπερείης
πόλλ' ἀεκαζομένη, κρατερὴ δ' ἐπικεῖσετ' ἀνάγκη·

9. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 464-7 (Deianira re Iole)

ῥῥκτιρα δὴ μάλιστα προσβλέψασ', ὅτι
τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς τὸν βίον διώλεσεν,
καὶ γῆν πατρώαν οὐχ ἐκοῦσα δύσμορος
ἔπερσε κάδουλώσεν.

This is the ground of confidence, that it seems best,
but I am in no way conversant with it in experience.
Chorus: But it is necessary to learn by doing;
you wouldn't know if you don't try.

D.: But we'll quickly know, for I see (the herald)
already at the door. He'll be going quickly.

Let my counsel be kept secret by you:
even if you do shameful deeds in darkness, you will
never fall into shame. (Lord)

Thus one who transgresses the laws, if he eludes
those whose laws he agreed on, also escapes
shame and punishment, but if not, he does not.
(Daniel W. Graham, trans.)

To babble with the insane is not characteristic of a
prudent man.

And yet I am resolved, if he should fall,
to die together with him in the same onslaught.
For she who puts a higher honor on not being bad
by nature, cannot endure living badly spoken of

Now the actions which the laws try to discourage
are no more congenial or appropriate to nature than
those which they try to encourage; but life and
death are the concern of nature... (Daniel W.
Graham, trans.)

When some one of the bronze-clothed Achaeans
will lead you weeping, robbing you of your day of
freedom;
and you would in Argos weave a loom at another
woman's bidding
and you would bear water from Messenia or
Hyperia
greatly unwilling, and strong necessity shall be laid
upon you...

Indeed, looking at her I pity her greatly,
because her beauty has destroyed her life
and she, ill-fated, has unwillingly devastated
and enslaved her fatherland.

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