A Compelling Case for Beauty: The Sophistic Alignment of Rhetoric with Aesthetic Power

by

Birney Richard Young

B.A. Rhetoric, UC Berkeley, 2013

B.A. Classics, Ancient Civilizations Greek Language, UC Berkeley, 2013

M.A. Communication: Rhetoric and Communication, University of Pittsburgh, 2015

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This dissertation was presented

by

Birney Richard Young

It was defended on

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and approved by

Dr. Caitlin Bruce, Assistant Professor, Communication

Dr. Gordon Mitchell, Associate Professor, Communication

Dissertation Co-Director: Dr. Jacques Bromberg, Assistant Professor, Classics

Dissertation Co-Director: Dr. David Marshall, Associate Professor, Communication

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Birney Richard Young, PhD

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This dissertation argues that rhetorical power is analogous to aesthetic power. This power operates distinctly from others and deprioritizes strength, presence, and actualizable ability. By examining what some of the earliest thinkers of the discipline of Rhetoric, the Sophists, said concerning the power of their art, this more dynamic power emerges as not being subject to the possessor's agency and can be simultaneously weaker than a strength-centered power yet able to overcome it at key moments. Sophistic thinking about beauty, personified by Helen, versus their thinking about strength, personified by Heracles, provides the evidence for this understanding rhetorical power as compelling but not compulsive.

The texts on Heracles find an admiration for what he stands for, raw strength as power, and makes use of it through analogy and subversion, making the mythic icon of deeds over words work to rhetorical ends by the juxtaposition of Heracles' might to his well-known weakness for beauty. The Sophistic texts concerning Helen find much to admire in the power of her beauty, yet they often focus on the curious position she holds as the possessor of a beauty whose power she has no agency over. Rhetoric, the Sophists seem to suggest, contains the benefits of the power of beauty but, being a matter of art rather than nature, are controllable and deployable with the proper training. Rhetoric becomes a hybrid between active might and passive beauty, a middle-voice, capable of the power of the beautiful object but directed with an agency in line with that of the powerful subject.

Table of Contents

Preface

The following is a list of key Greek terms used throughout the dissertation. Many terms appear in multiple parts and, after the transliteration and a brief description of each term, these locations are listed. Many terms are dealt with both more completely and with greater nuance in the dissertation itself, but I provide this list to help the non Greek-reader recognize and keep track of these terms and concepts.

Ἀνάγκη, ἀνάγκη – *anagke* – Well translated as 'necessity,' *anagke* is a force or compulsion against which there can be no struggle or resistance. The term is used in chapter 4.

Ἀρετὴ, ἀρετή – *arete* – A term that is often translated as 'virtue' but is better understood as 'excellence' as the morality of the term in the fifth-century BCE Sophistic context is more means oriented, giving one's all, then ends centric, the goodness of one's goal. Used in the introduction and chapters 1 and 3.

Βία, βία – *bia* – A coercive word, *bia* is well translated as 'force' or 'violence.' Used in the introduction and chapter 4.

Δύναμις, δύναμις – *dunamis* – One of many Greek words for 'power,' but *dunamis* is a dynamic term of power in the sense of 'ability,' 'faculty,' and 'potentiality' among others. An important concept for this dissertation and put in distinction to *kratos*, *dunamis* is used in the introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4, as well as in the conclusion.

Εἴδωλον, εἴδωλον – *eidolon* – The word means 'likeness,' 'image,' or 'phantom,' often with magical or mystical overtones, and carries a close etymological kinship to verbs of knowing and seeing. The term is used in chapter 3.

Ἔρως, ἔρως – *eros* – A word for 'love,' *eros* is a love that is often erotic and always passionate; it is the kind of love that drive one wild. Can be translated as 'lust,' though *eros* carries less moral censure than our ear hears in modern concepts of lust. The term is used in the introduction and chapters 1, 2, and 4.

Κακία, κακία as well as Κακίαν – *kakia, Kakian* – Often translated as 'Vice,' *Kakian* appears in the dissertation as a name derived from the noun *kakia* which means 'foulness,' 'cowardice,' and, generically, 'badness.' The adjective of the term, *kakos* is antithetical to *kalos* and, indeed, means 'ugly' on top of the of the other negative senses. 'Foul' still serves in modern English to carry across most of the valences. The term is used in chapters 1 and 2.

Καιρός, καιρός – *kairos* – A concept of time distinct from sequential chronological time. It is more akin to our use of 'timing,' such as comic timing, and is translatable as 'opportune moment.' The right word uttered at the right moment produces a much more profound effect. *Kairos* is used in the introduction.

Κάλλος, κάλλος – *kallos* – The word translates well enough as 'beauty' and is particularly used as such when referencing the body. However, the word and concept becomes more interesting in its adjectival form, *kalos*, which has some of the same moral sense of 'good' and 'noble' while still meaning 'beautiful.' 'Fair' still carries similar aesthetic and moral comingled valences in modern English. The term is used in the introduction and chapters 1, 3, and 4.

Κάλλιστος, κάλλιστος – *kallistos* – Superlative of *kallos*. 'Most beautiful' or 'fairest' are good translations. Used in introduction and conclusion as a way of positioning Helen.

Κόσμος, κόσμος – *kosmos* – An interesting term in that it means 'order' and 'fitting' as well as 'ornament' and 'jewelry,' the concept carries across the aesthetic appeal of everything having and being in place. The term appears in chapter 4.

Κράτος, κράτος – *kratos* – Another term for ‘power’ but also means ‘strength,’ ‘bodily might’ and ‘mastery.’ *Kratos* is a concept of power in the sense where being overpowerd means being forcefully overwhelmed. *Kratos* is an important term and theorize as meaningfully distinct from the power of *dunamis* and is used in the introduction and chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Κράτιστος, κράτιστος – *kratistos* – Superlative of *kratos*, ‘strongest’ or ‘mightiest’ serve well as a translation. The term is used in the introduction and conclusion to theorize Heracles.

Λόγος, λόγος – *logos* – A crucial word for Sophists, who considered themselves to be practitioners of *logos* rather than rhetoric, *logos* is often simply translated as ‘word’ but means a rich variety of reason-related concepts such as: ‘reason,’ ‘story,’ ‘calculation,’ ‘speech,’ and ‘argument.’ The term is used in the introduction and chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Ξένος, ξένος – *xenos* – A complicated word that is used to describe the foreign and alien with varying degrees of welcome or hostility depending on context. Can be used in reference to anyone from an official ambassador on an embassage to a nameless refuge begging for respite. Xenos is used in the introduction, chapter 2, and chapter 4.

Παίγνιον, παίγνιον – *paignion* – A ‘plaything’ or the act of ‘play.’ *Paignion* is used in chapter 4.

Πειθώ, πειθώ – *peitho* – Both the noun and verb for ‘persuasion’ as well as the name of the goddess of persuasion, *peitho* in certain uses becomes more difficult to translate and may mean ‘obey,’ ‘heed,’ or ‘ransom.’ The term is used in the introduction and chapter 4.

Σοφός, σοφός – *Sophos* – Meaning ‘skilled, ‘clever,’ and ‘wise,’ the adjective is important for Sophists as it is foundational to their identity. The term is used in chapters 1 and 4.

Σοφιστής, σοφιστής – *sophistes* – The noun means ‘adept,’ ‘wise person,’ and becomes the label for the intellectual movement of sophistry and can be simply translated as ‘sophist’ in relevant cases. *Sophistes* is used in chapter 4 and the conclusion.

Σοφώτατος, σοφώτατος – *sophotatos* – Superlative of *sophos*. Used in the conclusion.

Φάρμακον, φάρμακον – *pharmakon* – A complex term which seems to be an auto-antonym, meaning both ‘poison’ and ‘antidote, the word is often translated as drug and, indeed, serves as the root of the modern word ‘pharmaceutical.’ ‘Potion’ as a translation is perhaps the best way to preserve the polysemy though the antonymic concepts within potion do not contrast as strongly as they seem to in *pharmakon*. A compellingly polysemous word, made famous by Derrida’s analysis of the term in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, *pharmakon* appears in the introduction and chapters 3 and 4.

Φιλία, φιλία – *philia* – ‘Love,’ and ‘friendliness,’ this conceptualization of love does not preclude the physical but is not centered around such passion as *eros* is. The term appears in chapters 2 and 4.

Φίλος, φίλος – *philos* – The adjective of *philia*, it can be translated as ‘loved,’ and ‘friendly.’ Term is used in chapter 4.

1.0 Introduction

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme

- Keats, "Ode to a Grecian Urn"

How can rhetoric's power be conceived so as not to be violent, not to be coercive? There are times that a scholarly interest in rhetoric feels navel-gazy, distant, and safely academic. This is not such a time. The stakes inherent in the question of rhetorical power are high and growing higher. Citizens protesting police violence against black populations have been wielding their voices to bring social change but have been risking their bodies to the implements of state violence. Yet while we can hope that abuses of federal power such as the recent deployment of DHS agents in military gear—with neither agency or personal identification—arresting protestors without charge and taking them to undisclosed locations in unmarked vehicles will be nothing but a short lived and nightmarish aberration, the rhetorical violence of slander and slur which has made such tyrannical overreach even remotely legible in the public sphere will no doubt continue unabated. The agitation and public discourse surrounding police violence and the value of black lives, brought to its recent pitch in response to a police officer's slow and cruel slaying of George Floyd while other officers looked passively on and kept a crowd of onlookers from intervening, is a stark reminder that these issues are all too present and real. Similarly, while #MeToo has met with some success in curbing egregious acts of sexual predation of powerful men against subordinate women, the subtle discourses which permeated and seemed to permit such abuses for so long seems likely to continue well after Harvey Weinstein breathes his last breath in prison. The acts of racist police

violence and sexist abuse are of course abhorrent, but to some degree they are acts that were enabled by a structure of discourse which makes certain people seem to fit naturally as objects whose purpose is to receive the actions of properly constituted subjects. Such mindsets do not come into being *ex nihilo* but are instead born from discourse. The question, then, of how rhetoric can have power without that power needing to be coercive and violent is quite urgent.

I confess my own shame, here. I should not have to be startled into the existence of this exigence time and time again. It is, in fact, somewhat stunning that I should *ever* feel that questioning how to conceive of rhetoric without violence is somehow a low stakes question. That I do is not just a personal failing, though it is that, but also a consequence of how deeply embedded a violent view of power is in the legibility of the world. Without effort, it is the default mode I slip into, one where *of course* to be powerful is to be the subject able to exert their will upon the object. I feel a keen need for an answer which unsettles this worldview, a mindset alien enough to estrange it. In classical rhetorical scholarship I find just enough illegibility to make the too easily legible world a bit difficult.

The Sophists, originators of rhetoric as an artistic discipline, were not incognizant of the dilemma of rhetorical power. And while little of their work remains for us today, what little we have gives us enough to work with if we look at it closely. The fifth- and fourth-century BCE Hellenistic world is deeply and endearingly strange. The through line of our inheritance from this world is far muddier than the nationalist scholarship of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, recently revitalized by alt right amateur classicists such as Steve Bannon, would have us believe. Still, there remains enough of the familiar in their worldview that the world of fourth-century BCE Athens can be mistaken for legible at a distance. However, the closer we examine the period the more illegible and alien it becomes. This is a useful heuristic for examining rhetorical violence,

as what seems obvious at a remove becomes more wonderfully strange up close. The radical intellectuals of this age, the Sophists, were in their comfort zone pushing the boundaries of their era's norms, and so the Sophists double this estrangement effect in productive ways.

Of course, Sophists "invented" rhetoric no more than I "discovered" it ten years ago when I first took an undergrad course on the subject. What Corax and his students stumbled onto and what other Sophists expanded upon was born from the emergence of a peculiar set of conditions that suddenly rewarded devoted study of powerful speaking. By dint of these circumstances an accomplished Sophist might find it to their benefit to wander as a ξένος, foreigner and guest friend, from Hellenistic city-state to city-state, offering to teach people excellence in speech. Sophistic rhetoric was, in its own heyday, an insurgent form of power, establishing itself in competition with alternative and more traditional forms of power such as might, wealth, and tradition. To compete with the dominant power, Sophists would demonstrate the paradoxical superiority of *their* power by emphasizing the inferiority of its position. The weaker would have to overcome the stronger without becoming the new stronger. As more or less permanent foreigners themselves during this period of initial insurgence, early Sophists would rarely get to rule on their own. It is a strange dynamic, and the circumstances that led to it did not last very long, but sophistic rhetoric lasted long enough and left mark enough to leave us an enduring framework for a different understanding of rhetorical power, one that need not be violent nor coercive.

1.1 The Limits of Defining Power

If one looks up the definition of 'power' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one finds it initially defined thus, listed foremost "I: As a quality or property." And giving concrete definitions as "1. a. Ability to act or affect something strongly; physical or mental strength; might; vigor [sic], energy; effectiveness," "2. A. Control or authority over others; dominion, rule; government, command, sway," and "3. a. More generally: ability, capacity. Also *figurative."* It continues down providing ever more arcane and specialized definitions.[1] I have here elided the subcategories of the main definitions. But, as *OED* definitions are organized according to their dominance or relevance in discourse, and the *OED* has taken for itself the power of determining that precedence, I suggest that this ranking shows the priority of our thinking about power. Yes, the word remains strongly polysemous, but the primary two senses of the word suggest a default understanding of power that aligns power with strength, with violence, and with coercion. While the first definition has the qualifier "ability to," it is clear that "ability" is not contingent on circumstance but on agency. One has power when one decides to affect something strongly or not, but if one is not capable of such an affect at will then one does not have that power at their command. Power is tied in the common imagining of it to action, and having the capacity for something but not the ability to exercise that capacity is the functionally the same as being powerless.[2] The elucidating

[1] Emphasis in original. "power, n.1". OED Online. December 2019. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149167?rskey=XkopXT&result=1 (accessed December 21st, 2019).

[2] While I do not precisely ascribe to Foucault's views of power, he nicely defines this dynamic: "The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Which is to say, of course, something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action. . ." Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 777-795.

synonyms give the game away, ". . . physical or mental strength; might; vigor, energy; effectiveness . . . dominion, rule; government, command, sway . . ." and place power alongside agency. Power resides in the subject who determines whether to subject the object to its force. The third definition, "ability, capacity," is more plastic and may well be less of a binary than the prior two definitions, but it is still strongly suggestive that the deployment of one's ability or capacity is under the control of the powerful. I may have the power to lift *x* weight *y* times and, even when I am not at a gym, I will still have that power. Therefore, as it is an innate quality of my being it must, *ipso facto*, be under my control. This third definition aligns less well with violence and with force, but it remains the third listed behind the prior two.

'Power,' then, in its vulgar sense, is primarily a word of force and control in 21st-century America and our attendant discourses even if it secondarily maintains some of its older ambivalence. Looking at the word's origin, we find its more nuanced modern meaning to be dominant. 'Power' is the direct descendant of the Latin *posse* by way of the French *poer*. Originally it is a word of ability, or even faculty, but while those senses of the word are not lost to us, they take a back seat to more forceful and actualizing ideas as seen in the *OED*. True, 'power' retains its polysemy and the multivalence of meaning is still deployed in the subtle differences in the idea of the power to fly versus air power. However, in addition to the definitions offered by the *OED,* we can see in the common synonyms that *Merriam-Webster* provides for 'power' a demonstration of the strong vulgar bias towards power as violent, oppressive, and otherwise interested in forceful effect and actualizing. If both academically minded lexicons, such as *OED,* and popularly oriented dictionaries, such as *Merriam-Webster,* demonstrate the same biases towards 'power,' we can accept the conceptualization as worthy of note. *Merriam-Webster* gives the casual user "power, authority, jurisdiction, control, command, sway, dominion" and "force,

energy, strength, might" [3] as their only synonyms. Yes, *Merriam-Webster* is not giving a full thesaurus here, but that this is the slice of possible meanings they provide is telling. Words are, by their nature polysemous, and by tautological definition the popular understanding of a concept such as power is the popular one. Not every usage of 'power' is synonymous with coercion and force and, of course, good academic work is highly capable of nuanced usages of the term and concept. But the biases attending a word in its casual usage cannot help but find their way into academic readings, even against the author's intent, and the modern usage of power cannot help but have altered how scholars of rhetoric have engaged with rhetoric's power.

Let me acknowledge at the outset that I am caught up in seemingly minor arguments of definition. Definitions, even those with a qualifying article, e.g. *a* definition rather than *the* definition, tend to be exclusive. Even when a word has multiple definitions it seems that a word can only mean one thing at any one time, particularly for that rare breed of word that carries within itself opposite meanings. Cleave *must* mean to render asunder *or* bind together, to mean both simultaneously is an ambiguity at best and a contradiction at worst. However, I offer my definitions and critiques of other definitions less as a challenge of what logic calls the fallacy of equivocation and more towards what rhetoric calls the figure of antistasis. The same term, the same idea and concept, can and does carry simultaneous ambiguity. I am aware of the tendency that definitions have of stultifying meaning and delimiting boundaries, yet definition also permits the particular play enabled by constraints. Further, I offer mine less as pithy encapsulations that

[3] *Merriam-Webster's* definition, similar to the *OED's,* defines 'power' as the "ability to act or produce an effect," a "capacity for being acted upon or undergoing an effect," "possession of control, authority or influence over others," physical might." The other definitions provided also become increasingly specialized. Note the emphasis on ability so long as the ability produces an effect. "Power." *Merriam-Webster*. Accessed February 14, 2018. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/power?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld.

settle the issue once and for all and more in the vein of what Robert Scott calls for in his critique of rhetorical definitions: ". . . although particular definitions of rhetoric may be useful in particular circumstances, these definitions should set one toward knowing the reality of rhetoric on three levels: the strategic, the substantial, *and the dynamic*."[4] My definitions of rhetoric and related terms are meant to be as open as possible while still serving as definitions. Still, I must define my terms in some way so that I do not perpetuate the sin I am seeking to correct and my esoteric usages become simplified to the lowest common banalities. I am no more right than the scholars I am in conversation with, and they are no more wrong than I.

1.2 Discourses on the Power of Discourse

The polysemy of power makes it a source of endlessly fruitful rhetorical investigation. Slight differences in the notion of how power operates, as well as what rhetoric itself is, will return divergent analyses each of which is capable, by way of its divergence, of opening up new possibilities for the practice of rhetoric.

Michael Calvin McGee sums up rhetoric's ubiquitous relationship to power by claiming that "there is no difference at all between domination and empowerment. Power is power is power" and "Pick any rhetorical principle . . . and I'll show you how it's connected with power."[5] According to Kenneth Rufo, McGee is operating out of and responsible for

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[4] Emphasis mine. Robert Scott, "On Not Defining 'Rhetoric,'" *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, Vol 6, No 2 (1973). 82.

[5] Michael Calvin McGee and Carol Corbin, *Rhetoric in Postmodern America: Conversations with Michael Calvin McGee* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 32

instilling withing the discipline a default Foucauldian view of power that is always being negotiated through discourse.[6] Foucault's notions of power are wide ranging, but his main interest was in how power is able to manifest similar effects of control and domination as discipline, but more efficiently through softer mechanisms of possibility rather than actuality.[7] Rufo further outlines a history and tension between an aesthetic view of rhetoric, which is derived from Nietzsche,[8] and Scott's epistemic notion that rhetoric creates truths.[9] Rufo offers an alternative rethinking of rhetoric's relationship to power through Bourdieu's ideas of *habitus* and scene, suggesting that "Rhetoric functions as a technology of power, a *generative vehicle*. As such, rhetorical acts *perform* power, renegotiating its distribution."[10]

Both McGee's critique and Rufo's attempt at a rearticulating how we theorize rhetoric are direct, lacking an intermediary to help smooth the edges or mediate between rhetoric and power. McGee's sense takes as given that rhetoric is successful and impacts the target. That success is its most damning feature, because as it vanquishes the old it ushers in the new domination. Rufo provides a compellingly contingent understanding of power, where we are left with only marginal operations at the fringes of legibility. By shifting our *habitus* and scene we can perhaps cause the

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[6] Kenneth Rufo. "Rhetoric and Power: Rethinking and Relinking," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 40, no. 2 (2003), 65 – 84.

[7] Biopower, the regulation of the of possibilities of thriving, is an excellent example of this collision of power's effects and means. The most famous example is Foucault's analysis of Bentham's panopticon, a prison design where prisoners were always *possibly* under surveillance by prison guards, and so self-regulated their behaviors. While Foucault's notions of power seem to accord with δύναμις rather than κράτος, the key difference is that it is a δύναμις which actualizes an omnipresent threat of κράτος. The state always can discipline its citizens, an important part of biopower is that the state reserves for itself the power of meting out death to its population. So power in this sense is a δύναμις born from an overwhelming omnipresence of κράτος.

[8] For this aesthetic turn see Steve Whitson and John Poulakos, "Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79, no. 2 (1993): 131-145.

[9] There is a ton of revision and argument, but for the original claim see Robert Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal*, 57, 97-119.

[10] Rufo, 82.

slightly lesser to become the slightly greater. But what of the self-lauded ability of the Sophists for imbuing their students with the ability to modify convention? Such a site of possibility becomes difficult to imagine under Rufo's use of Bourdieu's theoretical umbrella.

The domination aspect of rhetorical power, which I label as κράτος, and its implications for women undergird feminist rhetorical theorists who have attempted to reconceptualize rhetoric without what they view as its masculine conquest-oriented ontology. Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin attempted to reconceptualize rhetoric away from "the patriarchal bias that undergirds most theories of rhetoric" with their own proposed Invitational Rhetoric,[11] the goal of which was not to dominate but to understand. They argue that rhetoric's power is inherently violent so long as it is conceived as the imposition of the speaker's will upon an audience:

> Embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and domination, *for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over the other*. In some instances, the power of the rhetor over another is overt, as it is, for example, in laws that exert control over women's bodies, such as those concerned with abortion . . . but even in cases where the strategies used are less coercive, rhetors who convince others to adopt their viewpoints exert control over part of those others' lives.[12]

Foss and Griffin ground their alternative rhetoric in feminist values and eschew persuasion as the rhetor's goal and replace it with understanding.

A strident, well-argued theory, invitational rhetoric generated a great deal of critique. Responding to what they thought the foremost criticism was, that they had argued all persuasion is violence, a commonsense call for rhetorical openness is advanced:

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[11] Sonja K, Foss and Cindy L Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," *Communication monograph* 62, no. 1 (1995): 2.

[12] *Ibid*, 3. Emphasis mine.

> . . . the theory of invitational rhetoric suggests two things—*some* persuasive rhetoric is violent (and the implications of this are worthy of further exploration) and rhetoric could profitably be defined as more complex than solely persuasive communication.[13]

Bone, Griffin, and Scholz are quite correct, there is great value to be found for rhetorical scholarship in broadening the definition of rhetoric. Rhetoric can be persuasive and invitation, sometimes at the same time! Sometimes rhetoric might be neither. And while Bone *et al* argue that invitational rhetoric only dispenses with agency if one can only imagine agency through a patriarchal lens, the issue of power, which Foss and Griffin had originally tried so hard to make absent from their theory, cannot help but rear its head.

Arguing that invitational rhetoric perpetuates inequities of power and privilege, Nina Lozano-Reich and Dana Cloud find assurances that merely thinking of agency differently from patriarchy resolves the harms of a rhetoric which surrenders that ground to patriarchal persuasion:

> Perhaps the core issue between us and Bone et al. is the calling for understanding and dialogue rather than material (institutional or economic) social change as the desired ends of rhetorical engagement, even inside relations of inequality. We value traditions of social change as having made significant improvements in the lives of the exploited and the oppressed throughout history. In situations of inequality, we side with Frederick Douglass (1857/1985), who said about ending slavery: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will." Dialogue and mutual respect are excellent goals inside social movement organizations and in classrooms; they may operate at country clubs and in boardrooms; but in relation to antagonisms between unequal parties, invitations can be tragically disarming.[14]

While Lozano-Reich and Cloud do not accuse Bone *et al* of ignoring these issues, they find their acknowledgements insufficient in the face of invitational rhetoric's focus on civility. In a neutral

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[13] Jennifer Emerling Bone, Cindy L Griffin, and T. M. Linda Scholz, "Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations of Rhetoric: Invitational Rhetoric and a Move Toward Civility," *Western journal of communication* 72, no. 4 (2008): 439.

[14] Nina M Lozano-Reich, and Dana L Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue: Invitational Rhetoric and the Problem of Inequality," *Western journal of communication* 73, no. 2 (2009): 223.

field, with all other rhetorical things being equal, as they must be in invitational rhetoric by design, the playing field will retain its tilt towards those in power:

> Historically, dominant groups have repeatedly enacted civilizing strategies to effectively silence and punish marginalized groups (e.g., labor; women and people of color; the poor; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT] people). Indeed, 19th-century notions of propriety and civility were used as cultural ideals to place legal, political, and physical restrictions on women—whereby relegating women to the private sphere (Oravec, 2003). Antifeminists frequently appealed to masculine norms of ''civilization'' to ''depict women as less civilized than men, less able to contribute to the advancement of the race'' (Bederman, 1995, p. 121). Extending this history, women of color have been silenced through civilizing strategies that deem legitimately angry speech to be ''uppity'' ''or ''illiterate'' (Anzaldu´ a, 1999; hooks, 1989). It has taken decades of critical feminist scholarship to resist politics of civility Western Journal of Communication 223 and overcome oppressive stereotypes so that women of color can be viewed as speaking subjects, and not as uncivilized subjects needing a firm hand.[15]

The weaker is kept the weaker through inaction, the stronger remains the stronger. Power, kept absent from invitational rhetoric, is not absent from the scene when invitational rhetoric takes place but is instead so tightly knit into the fabric of civility that resistance, calls for justice, are rude and not permitted.

While rhetoric has no shortage of theories about its relationship to power, some of the first recorded suggest that Foss and Griffin's complaint about rhetoric and domination may be later additions and not essential to the art itself. Soon after the discipline begins, such early Sophists as Protagoras promised of Rhetoric that in a dispute it could be possible "to make the weaker λόγος the stronger" (τὸν ἥττω δὲ λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν).[16] If Aristotle, our source for Protagoras' claim,

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[15] *Ibid*, 223-224.

[16] This translation, and all following translations unless otherwise noted, is mine. In this translation, as with all others, I am not trying to suggest that mine is the only or even best way to translate and read the text so much as to show it is a *possible* way to do so when that possibility allows us to find new meaning in what have become old bromides. In this case, while the Greek lacks an article for 'stronger,' I am treating this as a brachiologia, the eliding of parts of a sentence for effect which relies on the governance of earlier words to carry over, such as in Tennyson's "He works his work, I mine." In this case I view the article and noun as being modified by both comparative adjectives. The effect of such a reading is that rhetoric is not a substitution of weaker words for new stronger ones but, instead, an ability to transform the same single word from being the weaker into being stronger. Reinserting in brackets what

is to be believed, this bold assertion met with wide censure.[17] Yet, from at least this perhaps too arrogant claim of Protagoras onwards, the relationship of power to rhetoric has been a vexing question because there does not seem to be any mechanism within rhetoric which makes this so. Cannot rhetoric make the stronger stay the stronger as well? Complicating the question and assisting in its fruitful intractability is that both rhetoric and power are highly amorphous as concepts, and so ubiquitous in common use that they become difficult to adequately define. This presumption of common understanding, and its authoritative lack, has become an opportunity for scholars of rhetoric to play at the margins.

From studies of classical rhetoric several important books on this relationship exemplify the possibility the field can gain out of such play. The two most directly invested in power are Nathan Crick's *Rhetoric and Power: The Drama of Classical Greece* and Ekaterina Haskins' *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle*. They both produce wonderful arguments and readings of classical theory and thought regarding this very question of rhetoric and power. In addition, from outside the field of rhetoric, we find Mary Beard's *Women and Power: A Manifesto* which gives a classicist's account of rhetoric as a source of power long deliberately denied women. More recently, Deborah Hawhee's *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw: Animals, Language, Sensation* offers an intriguingly new avenue of critique against our anthropomorphic heuristics and uses classical rhetorical treatises to help disrupt them. Lastly, Crick recently has continued his musing of Rhetoric's relationship but has somewhat left the area of classical rhetoric to examine how the

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I am reading as elided would produce "To make the weaker word [the] stronger [word]." Trying to reproduce the elision in English is rather ungainly and creates "To make the stronger weaker word[s]." I have split the difference and reintroduced the article in my translation. It is probably no accident that Protagoras' simple phrase contains such a wealth of possible meaning.

[17] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1402a23

Transcendentalists disrupted forms and norms to put themselves athwart the power dynamics of their day in his newest book, *The Keys to Power: The Rhetoric and Politics of Transcendentalism*. All these books offer both intriguingly similar and fruitfully different notions of the relationship of rhetoric to power and deal with the problems of that relationship in their own way. They also broaden the scope, looking at the relationship from a macro and political view which offers different perspectives than the individual focus theories like invitational rhetoric are centered on.

Nathan Crick's *The Keys to Power* is more recent, and while classical rhetorical theory comes up, it is often as a foil to show how the transcendentalists forwent its use. The notions of power Crick is interested in remains the same as *Rhetoric and Power* and are bound to our common notions of power and capacity for efficacy.[18] In both period and topic, *Rhetoric and Power* is a direct parallel to my research, not just in subject but in methodology and sympathy to rhetoric. In it, Crick traces the rise and fall of Rhetoric *as* a kind of power in classical Greece. He is earnest, in his book, in his efforts to situate rhetoric as both disruption against and constitutive of power. This is a cunning move, quite in keeping with sophistic comfort in simultaneously expounding upon seemingly contradicting opinions, however by his acceptance of the idea of power in what I am defining as the form of κράτος, a word which more properly means strength and is 'power' in the sense of 'conquest,'[19] there are gaps in his readings.

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[18] Nathan Crick, *The Keys to Power: Rhetoric and Politics of Transcendentalism* (University of South Carolina Press, 2017).

[19] The LSJ gives us a series of related definitions, starting with "strength, might, in Homer especially of bodily strength" but the following definitions of "power" and "mastery, victory" clearly show the valence of the definition.
"*κράτος*." Greek Word Study Tool. Accessed February 6, 2018.
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=κράτος&la=greek#lexicon.

These gaps necessarily diminish the potential of rhetorical power because from among the first words of his Introduction, which is a transcription of the first part of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Crick accepts κράτος as simply 'power.' He is not wrong to do this, of course, but doing this has implications that Crick does not fully interrogate. He does not ignore the more dynamic ideas of how Sophists such as Gorgias describe λόγος, 'speech,' as a 'powerful lord' and create λόγος as a δύναμις, a word which also means 'power' but in a more dynamic sense.[20] But even when he is reading power as δύναμις, Crick accepts the traditional translation of power with all of our current connotations. Power, in its κράτος form, is the pivot of Crick's readings of sophistry, and in *Rhetoric and Power* he makes explicit a notion of power as actualization:

> Although likely not in the design of the speech, *Helen* also exemplifies two distinct forms of the *dynamis* of *logos* which find expression in political life: the power of making (*poiesis*) and the power of acting (*praxis*). On the one hand, *Helen* looks at *logos* from a distance and describes the mechanisms by which rhetoric can fabricate an audience through words, molding and manipulating it into an ideal form envisioned by the speaker. On the other hand, the publication of the *Helen* is a deliberate action on the part of Gorgias, a *logos* composed and disseminated both for his own gratification and as a contribution to the ongoing conversation of Greek culture. In other words, the *Helen* demonstrates the power of *poiesis* insofar as it is a fabricated object (a written text) which in turn articulates the methods by which *logos* can fabricate a product external to itself (the will of Helen); but it also exemplifies the power of *praxis* insofar as the sheer act of creating and expressing a *logos* gives an individual the capacity to satisfy intrinsic standards of excellence. . .[21]

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[20] I am offering δύναμις as a disrupting alternative because δύναμις resists the criterion of success/failure and operates within a continuum of constant flux. The LSJ begins with the same definition as in κράτος, that of strength and might, demonstrating the close relationship the words and their senses have. However, nuance is quickly added through a wealth of further possible related translations, "outward power, influence, authority," "force for war, forces," "a power, quantity," and finally "means." It moves onto another definition, this time "power, faculty, capacity" with such varied specific translations as "elementary force," "property, quality," "function," and "value." Moving through the definitions we finally hit upon the sense that distinguishes this power from others in the rich vocabulary of Greek power words: "capability of existing or acting, potentiality, opp. Actuality." "*δύναμις*." Greek Word Study Tool. Accessed February 6, 2018.http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=δύναμις&la=greek#lexicon Aristotle makes great use of *δύναμις* throughout his works and Foley uses his use of the term as potential when discussing *techne* to great effect as we shall see later. But that *δύναμις* is translated alternatively in Aristotle according to his usage, as "faculty" in *Rhetoric* and "potential" in *Metaphysics* rather than simply as "power" in all cases is what makes the term useful and interesting as an understanding of power.

[21] Nathan Crick, 2014, *Rhetoric and Power: The Drama of Classical Greece* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press), 80-81.

Crick is clearly aware of a difference between power as an actualizing force and the capability of potential as he says "capacity to satisfy" rather than "power to satisfy" and "power of *praxis*" rather than "capacity of *praxis*" for a reason, after all.

Rhetoric in such a dynamic of doing as power privileges the deeds side of the old 'word and deed' antithesis. This antithesis is set up such that rhetoric must always be found wanting. The "power of *praxis,"* after all, is in the effect, the doing. In as much as failure is possible in a doing, it is not power, but 'capacity.' Crick invokes the power of rhetoric as "*dynamis,"* as that which "*can* fabricate a product external to itself."[22] The use of "can" qualifies this actualization, true, but it is clear that Crick is interested in rhetoric as an actualizing force rather than a latent possibilizing power. Crick, it is clear, has a bias towards examining rhetoric in relationship to a κράτος oriented power. Such a power, centered around action and being, is the basis of understanding rhetoric as a βία, "force." It is through the strength and conquest of κράτος that the rhetorical violence of βία is enacted. Therefore, Crick is, of course, right to read the Sophists in such lights. Rhetoric does indeed have a power to do violence, and to resist it, and understanding this power of rhetoric as βία is, as we shall see, both well established in the literature and important work to do in the exigencies of modernity. Such studies of Rhetoric as a domain of βία by way of κράτος, however, cannot help but be tragically limited and overlook the possibilities contained in sophistic theories. Rhetoric does not have to be might; it does not have to be violent.

Hawhee's *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw* is a novel approach to classical rhetoric from an angle that attempts to preclude just such assumptions of force, violence, and might. From the too little used perspective of how nonhuman animals are deployed within rhetorical texts, Hawhee

[22] Emphasis mine.

attempts to use the strangeness of this *aisthesis* to make us more aware of the queer profligacy of non-human animals in rhetorical deployments. From antiquity until the middle ages, she demonstrates, the rhetorical habit is either to deploy animals for their non-human senses or as metaphors-in-being of kinesiology.[23] Hawhee is determined to show that we can use the same old texts and read them in entirely new ways through her non-human animal lens. She finds in her readings that animals ". . . may begin in a metaphorical register, but they soon exceed it" and that they serve to complicate our sensuous metaphorical toolkit:

> I am less inclined to see what's going on as beginning and ending with the human, a tale of strict, one-way co-optation. Instead, animals work their way into these texts, leading with lessons from their own words, inspiring in the theorists who write about them a profound sense of intermixed worlds. Animals are used (passive voice), yes, but they also in many cases *show* what then gets *told*. If for Derrida 'thinking perhaps begins' with cross-species encounters, this history draws out the sensuous and feeling dimensions of such thinking. And it does so by hovering at the very line thought to distinguish humans from other animals: language, the artful use of which forms the contours of rhetoric.[24]

She demonstrates this through artful readings of classic texts as well as close readings of little attended to encomiums of various animals. While power is not Hawhee's explicit concern, the use of non-human animals as a rhetorical resource cannot but implicitly be a critique of the hierarchies, and the power dynamics implied or constituted by those hierarchies, that such animal metaphoric resonances enforce. Examining classical rhetoric for this purpose gives Hawhee license to focus on her own sense of *aesthesis*. It simply is not terribly important to her what Aristotle may have meant by his deployment of dogs in *Rhetoric*. Instead it is both more interesting and more compelling to see we can read out of what he wrote.

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[23] For example, cats are an always available metaphor-resource for describing certain types of entirely human agility.

[24] Deborah Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw: Animals, Language, Sensation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Haskins, by contrast, is focused more tightly in a critique of Aristotelian Rhetoric in *Logos and Power*. Power is less overtly touched on than in Crick but is more interestingly nuanced because she associates power with agency and performance. This spin on power is the foundation of her criticism of Aristotle and his elitism. She finds that his formulations of how to practice rhetoric are designed to limit rather than enable. From this she suggests that an attendant domestication of the radicalism of rhetoric necessarily flows from Aristotle's elitism, since it situates rhetoric and power as existing outside the periphery of human political being. By contrast, her view of power permits her valorization of Isocrates and his demarcated practice of rhetoric as *paideia* along with his attendant attitudes in favor of a relatively radical democracy centered around, and performed through, rhetorical meritocracy. Power, even in Haskin's more complex reading, is still equivalent to strength in that it operates within a success/failure binary as a measure of power. The agency for the deployment and execution of that power lies within the holder of it: "The power of *logos* [for Gorgias] is akin to brute force (*bia*)" and later that page, "speech in Gorgias appears as a potent force that can be deployed by human agents to different ends."[25] Haskins accepts rhetoric as a more democratic form of power, but one that in the final measure remains centered around βία.

Like Crick, Haskins credits Gorgias with power but, unlike his implicit views of that power as κράτος when it makes or does, Haskins chooses to describe that power as "brute force." While the adjective of 'brute' suggests a negative valence, it is precisely rhetoric's democratic power of persuasion, its force, that gives Haskins optimism. The force lies in its ability to make the world

[25] Ekaterina Haskins, *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina press, 2004), 14.

otherwise, and her fault with Aristotle lies in how he, like Plato, attempts to restrain access to this power to an elite few. Yes, Haskins desires βία to be harnessed to a more democratic politic, a noble end, but it nonetheless, through its means, reproduces a repressive sense of power as violence or force because it implies the goal is to successfully actualize one's individual desires as a political being.

Haskins' attacks on Aristotle are nothing less than brilliant, and her aim of rehabilitating the history of rhetoric and bringing about a better understanding of the consequences of its divide from what we now call philosophy deserve approbation. However, like with Crick, by reading power backwards into sophistry she accepts power as κράτος. Doing so, even in her nuanced way, leaves gaps and avenues of attack on her project. Isocrates, after all, was winning the argument that the proper education was in his *philosophia* of λόγος, as Haskins points out, but in the long run it proved the weaker definition and the Platonic won out.[26] Failure, if we look at the long history of Rhetoric as a discipline, is a more fitting paradigm than strength and force. Trying to fit Rhetoric into a κράτος-centric heuristic in a way that is alien to it cannot help but fail in the long run, and that failure, from within that understanding, will look like impotence. Rhetoric must either become forceful and indistinguishable from violence, as some theorists have come to suggest,[27] or powerless. Haskins is well aware of other possibilities of understanding the idea of

[26] It is true that Aristotle wrote the book which neutralized the radical potential of rhetoric so successfully that it has codified the field as a baseline level from which even the scholars of sophistry must operate from. However, the exigence of his project was born from Plato's criticism of rhetoric and distrust of its radical, upsetting potential. It is unkind, but true, to call Aristotle one of the first of the series of footnotes to Plato of Alfred Whitehead's famous formulation.

[27] For an excellent variety of articles making arguments along these lines see the special *Quarterly Journal of Speech* forum of articles on the violence of rhetoric, Volume 99, issue 2, 2013. Among the articles published are Nathan Stormer's "On the Origins of Violence and Language," Claire Sisco King and Joshua Gunn's "On a Violence Unseen: The Womanly Object and the Sacrificed Man," Bradford Vivan's "Times of Violence," and Jeremy Engels and William Saas' "On Acquiescence and the Ends-Less War: An Inquiry into the New War Rhetoric." Megan Foley's "Of Violence and Rhetoric," covered later, also appears in this forum.

power and, by dint of her project, she is rightly suspicious of Aristotle. I, however, am less interested in what the giants of the classical age meant and more intrigued by what they say. Understanding rhetoric by the lights of philosophies antithetical to it results in circumlocution and a mistaking of rhetoric's effects for its nature. Haskins accepts the rigged deck the rhetorical acceptance of Aristotle has given her even as she critiques it, as do we all.

Crick and Haskins demonstrate that even trained and knowledgeable rhetoricians can find it difficult to escape the default assumptions about rhetoric's relationship to power. Outside the field, this misconception seems ubiquitous. Mary Beard's *Women and Power* is composed of two lectures. Beard, not being a specialist in Rhetoric, provides the voice of an intelligent outsider to the field, speaking within the knowledge-framework and general understandings of power as seen in the *OED* and *Merriam-Webster*. She proclaims in the first lecture, "The Public Voices of Women," that women have been historically cut off from power through the mechanism of denying them public speech, that is to say, rhetoric. Beard thus situates power in a nearly one to one relation with speech, and the book's success is strongly suggestive that this relating of power to rhetoric is popularly legible. The second lecture, the nearly eponymous "Women in Power" starts with the understanding of power as actualized will and is situated in very conventional ideas of where power is found, as Beard herself admits. Towards the end of the lecture, Beard determines that power needs to be structurally changed and understood differently, as "the *ability* to be effective. . ."[28] Here we see an echo of Crick's desire for rhetoric to be able to "fabricate a product external to itself." Given Beard's earlier chapter associating power and public speaking, the exigence for

[28] Mary Beard, *Women & Power: a Manifesto (*New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 87. Emphasis mine.

rhetoric as δύναμις becomes clear. Intriguingly, Beard comes to this desire for an ability to be efficacious after concluding that old understandings of power have rigged the game, ". . . treating power very narrowly, as an object of possession that only the few – mostly men – can own or wield . . . On those terms, women as a gender - not as individuals - are by definition excluded from it. You cannot easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male; you have to change the structure."[29] Just as Haskin's takes Aristotle to task for crafting definitions and understandings of rhetoric which limit who gets to be powerful agents with it, Beard feels the need for greater dynamism in understanding power. For her, the answer to the problem is not to simply put women in positions already understood as power, as this does little to nothing to change the systems which have historically coded power as masculine, but instead to redefine power so that more women, in states they already are in, are thought of as powerful. However, unlike Haskins, Beard's push for a new understanding does not require, and attempts to distance itself from, the masculine implications of βία and κράτος.

Haskins, Crick, and Beard collectively show that we share a common, and limiting, understanding of power, that rhetoric is yoked to that understanding to its detriment, and that a more dynamic understanding is called for. Just as Hawhee seeks to use new readings of old texts to see what otherwise is hidden in our comfortable old habits of reading, I wish to do the same for power. The politics of such a reordering may seem obvious, but even more conservative critics have pointed out that power should be understood more dynamically. Paglia, for instance, produced a sympathetic counter argument to Beard 30 years ago, suggesting that women did not

[29] *Ibid,* 86-87.

lack power but simply had access to different sites of power and that such power operates in different ways.[30]

Haskins has more clearly articulated her views of rhetorical power in her 2013 *Philosophy and Rhetoric* article, "On the Term '*Dunamis*' in Aristotle's Definition of Rhetoric." It is both close to and informs my own project, but Haskins reads the openness of δύναμις through a more antagonistic lens:

> I would like to probe another, perhaps not so reassuring, implication of *dunamis* as a term for rhetoric—that as "an ability to see all available means of persuasion," it does not need to become (or emulate) practical oratory. In what follows, I suggest that Aristotle's terminology, however neutral it may appear, constitutes an intellectually and politically motivated act of naming that severs rhetorical knowledge from historically specific rhetorical practices and thereby erects a protective barrier between practical rationality and discourses of democracy.[31]

Haskins rightly ascribes elitist motives to Aristotle, and his use of δύναμις understood through that lens becomes a means of distancing rhetoric into a theory for analysis distinct from the suspect practice and thus safe for philosophers to practice. While Haskins admits δύναμις to be a power word, she accretes to Aristotle's use of δύναμις a dry, neutral flavor which is well captured by Kennedy's translation as ability. And if we take δύναμις as Haskins convincingly shows us Aristotle meant it, then it becomes a power of observation and analysis only, not one of producing an effect. However, δύναμις has life and meaning outside of Aristotle and his intents, and Gorgias of Leontini himself was happy to call the power of λόγος a δύναμις as a way of praising and aggrandizing it. Haskins, by throwing out δύναμις along with Aristotle, cedes to Aristotle his usage and definition of the idea.

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[30] Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[31] Ekaterina Haskins, "On the Term "*Dunamis*" in Aristotle's Definition of Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 46, no. 2 (2013): 234.

Aristotle's ideas of rhetoric, and thus critiques of them, are by necessity political. That is, they are played out at a macro level even when the focus is on persuasion and its analysis. Some scholars have kept an interest in mass persuasion while maintaining Foss and Griffin's rightly suspicious view of rhetorical power as dominating violence. Rhetoric understood as this sort of macro political violence requires it to be understood in association with πειθώ, 'persuasion,' or the divine Πειθώ, goddess of persuasion. Kennerly and Woods are explicit in doing this in an article which otherwise embraced the openness and diversity of rhetoric's long history, "The power of the word was tantamount to *Peitho's* power."[32] For them it is the power of the free citizen in free debate in constitutions where the people were strong. Foley, in "*Peitho* and *Bia*: The Force of Language" takes this a step further and suggests that rhetoric as πειθώ is a δύναμις for βία:

> *Bia* steps in when *Peitho* gives way. Yet while this substitution of *Peitho* for *Bia* sets up a disjunctive antithesis between violence and rhetoric, it also establishes a conjunctive equivalence between them. The substitution renders *Peitho* and *Bia* interchangeable, and violence becomes rhetoric's double.[33]

This observation compels Foley to brilliantly produce a reading of βία where this association is less forceful, and she uses δύναμις as her device for doing so, "The relation between rhetoric and violence is an *aporia*, a point of inflection and intersection where the impotential force of *bia* and the rhetorical *dunamis* bend and blend together, moving toward the immovable and unbendable limit of necessity."[34] Foley found δύναμις to be a power word of possibility and potential, but by yoking it to βία, a word for force and violence, by way of πειθώ, she forestalls a more capacious and less doomed to violence conceptualization of power. Why accept rhetoric as βία, no matter

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[32] Michele Kennerly and Carly S. Woods, "Moving Rhetorica." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2018): 3-27.

[33] Megan Foley, "Peitho and Bia: The Force of Language," *Symploke* 20, no. 1 (2012): 173.

[34] *Ibid*.

how yoked, if we can conceptualize it as a capacious δύναμις? Similarly, while I am sympathetic towards and indebted to Michelle Ballif's argument in *Seduction, Sophistry, and the Woman with the Rhetorical Figure,* that rhetoric should be less interested in correspondence to the eternally true and embrace its feminine power of seduction,[35] I feel like a close reading of early sophistic thought will permit rhetoric access to truth as equally eternal and contingent, to power both as invitation, seductive or otherwise, and compulsion.

Antiquity itself is responsible for this desire to talk of rhetoric as βία and πειθώ together. John Kirby's 1990 article "The 'Great Triangle' in Early Greek Rhetoric and Poetics" brings the threads together in a compelling weave which continues to influence scholars such as Foley and Haskins. He creates a triad of interrelated associations centered around rhetoric with "a particular constellation—one might call them psychological phenomena—that recur in Greek literature from its very earliest stages on: namely, *peitho, bia, and eros*."[36] Kirby argues that the triangle of these terms shows their dynamic relationship, how Greek thought valorized and feared them similarly. Each gives rise to new connections between each and from these pairs they form the triad, forming still further complexities of association that eventually are broken up by Aristotle making rhetoric more a study rather than use of πειθώ.

As Kirby suggests, in Rhetoric it all too often comes back to Aristotle. Modern theorists would not be in this mess without Aristotle's clever defining of the discipline: "Let Rhetoric be the power to theorize concerning the in-any-way-possible persuasive (word/proof)" (ἔστω δὴ ἡ

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[35] Michelle Ballif, *Seduction, Sophistry, and the Woman with the Rhetorical Figure* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001).

[36] John T. Kirby. "The "Great Triangle" in Early Greek Rhetoric and Poetics." *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 8, no. 3 (1990): 213.

ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν).[37] We have no similarly concise and compelling definition of the Sophistic art of λόγος for his famous definition to compete against, so it becomes the default. What is more, it seems a rather excellent definition. No translation can escape bowdlerizing its material. Choices must be made which cut out the richness of the original and substitute a limited fetish in the new language. In the original Greek, Aristotle's definition is wanting because he yokes rhetoric, albeit lightly, to πιθανόν, the 'persuasive.' As Haskins has noted, Aristotle uses δύναμις and θεωρῆσαι, 'to theorize,' as a way of distancing the study of rhetoric from its actual democratic use. But worse than that is his maintained linkage to an effect. Are words that fail to persuade not rhetoric? Must one have the intent to persuade for it to be rhetoric? Yes, of course persuasion is an element of rhetoric. Rhetoric may well, in fact, produce it. But as Quintilian points out centuries later when rejecting Aristotle's definition, many things persuade but are not rhetoric and much that is rhetoric is not persuasive. Reject Aristotle and Plato as the field's base, particularly their emphasis on persuasion, and the implications of rhetorical violence change. The field of Aristotle's critics is a crowded one, and I am certainly not the first to decry either his definitions or the translations of them, nor will I be the last. Still, he remains a central and important figure for rhetorical thought and one that many, even his critics like Haskins, default to when they think of Rhetoric.

Nonetheless, Aristotle will not be the source for my understanding of Rhetoric. The field is indebted to him, and I mean no disrespect by pointing out, as others have, that his ideas come from a point of view that privileges philosophy over rhetoric. The accretion of centuries of

[37] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b. Kennedy translates as "Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion."

Aristotle-as-heuristic has only taken us away from what rhetoric can be and I will instead look to the Sophists and their sense of what the art could be. I will come to my understanding of Rhetoric through analyzing what certain among them use as allegory.

This is not in itself a novel practice. At least long ago as the 1st century CE Quintilian, in his pragmatic defense of ill-defined boundaries for arts in *Institutio Oratoria,* mentions a wide variety of definitions only to reject them and provide his own. In book 2 chapter 15 Quintilian gives an overview of various theories of rhetoric and critiques them before giving his own. Starting at the most common definition, Quintilian states "The most common definition (of Rhetoric) is: 'rhetoric is the *power* (*vim*) of persuading.' Now what I call *power* (*vim*), many call *potestatem*, and some *facultatem*. To avoid ambiguity, what I call 'power' I mean δύναμις."[38] After running through some Latin verbs of types of power, many of which have given us English words corresponding to ability or possibility, Quintilian clarifies that by power he means power in the sense of the Greek δύναμις.

It is telling that Quintilian himself had similar difficulties conceptualizing the power of rhetoric as I have outlined and, to find the right power word, used one from Greek. It suggests that he was using '*vim'* because he found it to be the closest Latin power word to δύναμις. Of interest here is that *facultatem,* faculty, and *potestatem,* potential, are passed over. After rejecting tying Rhetoric to persuasion despite the vast weight of opinion seeming to favor such, he concludes the chapter by giving a definition which has the virtue of simplicity: "Rhetoric is the science of speaking *eloquently* . . . and if it is the science of speaking eloquently its end and sum is to speak

[38] *Est igitur frequentissimus finis: 'rhetoricen esse vim persuadendi.' Quod ego vim apello, plerique potestatem, nonnulli facultatem vocant: quae res ne quid adferat ambiguitatis, vim dico dunamin.*
Emphasis mine. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria,* 2.15

well."[39] The popular citation of this definition is "the good man speaking well." However, I have opted to translate '*bene,'* the adverb of *bonum*, 'good,' somewhat differently. *Bene* is a rich word, and Lewis and Short allow it to be translated as "eloquent" when paired with *dicere*, which it clearly is in Quintilian. Neither *dicere* nor *bonum* have the strong association with beauty that the Greek equivalent of κάλος does, but neither is it completely absent as the Spanish descendant of *bonita,* pretty, shows. *Bonum*, deep within Lewis and Short, eventually allows for beauty, quoting Horace as attestation, "*tam bona cervix, simul ac jussero, demetur*,' fine, beautiful."[40] 'Eloquent' tends to be the word we use for the beauty of words, and so I suggest a better understanding of Quintilian's definition of rhetoric can be found in "The good man speaking eloquently" even if it loses the pleasing parallelism of 'good' and 'well.' It permits, even encourages, a view of rhetoric as aesthetic prowess rather than persuasive and works with the chapter's repeated rejection of definitions associated with persuasion or force.

This aesthetic preference, I must admit, aligns me on one side of what Scott Consigny calls the "two camps" of sophistic thought as staked out by Poulakos and Schiappa.[41] An aesthetic and dynamic view of sophistic rhetoric operates in somewhat antagonistic fashion towards Edward Schiappa, who prizes a sophistic λόγος bound to logic and philosophic truth seeking. His readings of the origins and motivations for the term '*rhetorike'* are accurate, but continue to be beside the

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[39] *. . .rhetoricen esse bene dicendi scientiam . . . nam siest ipsa bene dicendi scientia, finis eius et summum est bene dicere*
Ibid.

[40] *"Bonum*" Latin Word Study Tool. Accessed February 9, 2018. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=bonum&la=la#lexicon

[41] Scott Porter Consigny, *Gorgias, Sophist and Artist* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

point.[42] Yes, sophists were unlikely to have used the term instead of λόγος, yes, of course they engaged in what we now call philosophy and engaged with each other in discourses on truth, but what fragments we have about what they said and meant by truth and by λόγος is strongly suggestive that Plato's critiques, while malicious in intent, were not incorrect in content. Sophists did upset convention, they did seem to maintain that reality was a matter of that very same convention, they certainly prized the power of λόγος to alter that convention over all other arts, and some of them managed to get rich teaching this power to anyone who paid. And while it is true that sophistry condemned Socrates, it is also true that Socrates himself was charged with sophistry and that the popular imagination of the time labelled him as a fitting icon for sophists everywhere.[43]

On the other hand, I don't seem to fit neatly within the Poulakos camp either, whose oft cited definition, "Rhetoric is the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible"[44] strangely eschews beauty. However, my conceptualization of beauty is similarly contingent, similarly caught in the καιρός of what is appropriate for the opportune moment. The greater daylight between myself and Poulakos is that my reading of rhetoric as δύναμις is not, and cannot, be captured simply by the sense of "that which is possible." The possible and potential, once actual, becomes something else, and seem to no longer be rhetoric for Poulakos. The *bon mot*, the beautiful word at the right moment, may strike a spark, that spark may kindle a flame, but the flame is not the spark nor the spark the beauty

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[42] He goes into great length proving this case in Chapter 3 of Part 1 of *Protagoras and Logos*: Edward Schiappa, *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric* 2nd ed. (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

[43] See Aristophanes' use of Socrates as a central character which serves as an amalgam of famous sophists in *The Clouds*.

[44] John Poulakos., "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 16, 1983, 36.

that gave rise to it. The beautiful, in either the actuality or potentiality of its presence, is always rhetorical even when the καιρός has not struck. The beauty of Helen exists outside the καιρός of Menelaus seeing her in Troy with murder in his heart, as does the beauty of Demosthenes' speeches long after their echoes in the agora have died. Poulakos' seemingly benign use of 'capture' is more in line with βία and κράτος. It suggests a stasis, a point which must be caught and euthanized and pinned to a board, making rhetors more akin to lepidopterists, killing their passion in order to possess it and make it theirs forever, than Sophists. Much as a butterfly soaked in ether is no longer a butterfly in any meaningful way, so too the captured καιρός cannot be the δύναμις of Rhetoric, of beauty, but is instead its hollow carapace. A rhetor should not capture the moment, they should recognize and bend to it. A rhetor ought not capture beauty, they should embrace and be embraced by it. Possibility is important, it is central to δύναμις, but a δύναμις once captured becomes a κράτος. The only solid foundation for δύναμις is Heraclitus' constant flux.

I turn, as a metaphor for a fluid and ever shifting foundation, to the notion of the middle voice. The middle voice is most famously deployed by Derrida, in his essay "Difference,"[45] and Roland Barthes, in his essay "To Write: An Intransitive Verb,"[46] and English scholars, as well as others of a post-structuralist bent, have made use of the middle voice as a way of unsettling meaning making. Rhetoric has strangely little use for the middle voice despite Bradford Vivian's compelling case for understanding rhetoric through this lens in his chapter, "Rhetoric in the Middle Voice."[47] Briefly, the middle voice is a grammatical voice which lies between the active and

[45] Jacques Derrida, "Difference," *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

[46] Roland Barthes, "To Write: An Intransitive Verb?" in *The Rustle of Language*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986).

[47] Bradford Vivian, *Being made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

passive voice of communication. Rather than a subject acting upon an object, as in the active voice, the middle voice may lack a subject, or the subject may be acting upon itself as the object, or the action upon the object rebounds to the object's or subject's benefit. It's a messy grammatical voice for languages that lack it, and in English it is often translated as reflexive, "a way finds itself," or intransitive, "a way is found." It is because of this difficulty understanding the middle voice that it is a useful metaphor for rhetorical δύναμις because the moment the difficulty is resolved, the moment the act can be conceptualized as an object being subjected to the subjects will, it ceases to be a δύναμις of middle voiced rhetoric and becomes the κράτος of active. This permits a view of rhetorical power that does not exclude persuasion, that does not deny power and violence, but that also simultaneously permits itself to be invitational.

1.3 A Power for the Powerless

The middle voice, however, will not save rhetoric because being saved should not be the goal. Saving implies a static state of salvation and, having become static and settled, the dynamism of δύναμις is no more. Simply making the powerless powerful does not solve powerlessness so long as our notions of power are bound to the ability to affect ones will upon others. New subjects affecting new objects simply repeats that which it overthrew but reinscribes the terms. That is not to say that such reinscription is useless or without merit, the incarcerative system of labor is better than the chattel slavery of the antebellum, but one should not let the relative improvement from one state be blinding. The problems of rhetorical violence do not exist in the rhetoric of their expression, they exist in us and find their perpetuation through discourse, yet who are we but

agents whose agency has been pre-prescribed by the very discourses we are giving voice? Judith Butler explains the dilemma of this controversy concisely in *Excitable Speech:*

> The interpellative name may arrive without a speaker-on bureaucratic forms, the census, adoption papers, employment applications. Who utters such words? The bureaucratic and disciplinary diffusion of sovereign power produces a terrain of discursive power that operates without a subject, but that constitutes the subject in the course of its operation. This does not mean that there are no individuals who write and distribute the forms. It means only that they are not the originators of the discourse they convey and that their intentions, however strong, are not finally what control the meaning of that discourse. Although the subject surely speaks, and there is no speaking without a subject, the subject does not exercise sovereign power over what it says.[48]

Butler's view of rhetorical violence is bound in Althusser's notion of interpellation and its implications for the reproduction of ideology. In interpellation, the subject is constituted by recognizing themselves when hailed and, through such recognition, brought into a subject position not of their own choosing.[49] Not everyone gets to be subjects equally, as Butler observes, and while the subject is still a position of prestige and power, they are no more the agents of their own agency than those they act upon.

Such an observation seems to foreclose the possibility for resistance and redemption. If even those in power are agents of their own subjecthood, then the arc of justice will be long and bend towards asymptotic irrelevance. Each success of inverting the symbolic order and disrupting existing modes of violence and oppression would thus become iteratively both more difficult and provide ever diminishing returns. The Sophists cannot rehabilitate us, we are beyond their help. They are foreign and alien in ways that our issues of race and patriarchy overshadow and overwrite. While we can read into the sophistic era's fanatic xenophobia our own racialized heuristic and

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[48] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 34.

[49] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)," *On Ideology*, (London : Verso, 2008).

make it fit with surprisingly little effort, but to use an order of the world that preexists the invention of such notions of race to supplant our own is impossible and almost certainly undesirable. While not racist, as race as we conceive of it was nonexistent, the cultural milieu of sophistic Greece had its own peculiar and distasteful forms of bigotry that were as ubiquitously and invisible to them as ours are to us. Looking back on the era will not rehabilitate rhetoric from the sins we use it to perpetuate, but it can help to make those sins visible in ways which will allow us to disrupt in small, iterative, and meaningful ways the chains of discourse which have constituted us as subject and which we use to constitute others. Sophistic ideas of power, a power rooted in aesthetic appeal, a power that is fickle and inconstant, a power that overthrows without supplanting, are not useless as a model for emulation. However, we cannot ask too much from such use. The reading of rhetorical power of this dissertation is an iteration, not a revolution.

Such small, incremental moments of disruption where ease of meaning is momentarily deferred are somewhat unsatisfying in a culture which values the broad, sweeping, world changing promise of κράτος. Refusing to acknowledge or admit this is not the same as refusing to permit it, subjects are always being subjugated even in resistance and refusal:

> Imagine the quite plausible scene in which one is called by a name and one turns around only to protest the name: "That is not me, you must be mistaken!" And then imagine that the name continues to force itself upon you, to delineate the space you occupy, to construct a social positionality. Indifferent to your protests, the force of interpellation continues to work. One is still constituted by discourse, but at a distance from oneself. Interpellation is an address that regularly misses its mark, it requires the recognition of an authority at the same time that it confers identity through successfully compelling that recognition. Identity is a function of that circuit, but does not preexist it. The mark interpellation makes is not descriptive, but inaugurative. It seeks to introduce a reality rather than report on an existing one; it accomplishes this introduction through a citation of existing convention. Interpellation is an act of speech whose "content" is neither true nor false: it does not have

> description as its primary task. Its purpose is to indicate and establish a subject in subjection, to produce its social contours in space and time.[50]

A power which overthrows power without becoming it is the only power the powerless, by definition, are capable of having. Anything else is power, and powerless, reinscribed. Give the powerless power and you have altered *their* nature forever, but you have left the nature of power untouched. So long as power is the power to affect one's will upon others, the power to dominate, even by persuasion, someone must exist as the relatively powerless to be acted upon. One, personally, may well find this abhorrent and unjust, but so long as one is preconfigured in a κράτος seeped world it is a reality that must be understood lest the world be illegible or you be illegible to it. Changing the relative inequities is all to the good, police ought not be able to kill with impunity, but even when successful the order of the world which has permitted certain police officers to kill with no fear of justice will still have its remit. The dynamic will reassert itself, albeit hopefully in ways less intolerable and unjust.

Changes in meaning will not always result in meaningful change. The #MeToo movement has called to task powerful men who have abused their positions to sexually harass, assault, and rape women who were in positions of relative powerlessness to them. Some of these men are, rightfully, paying some much-delayed consequences for their actions. However, these consequences have produced counter-intuitive effects in the workplace. Studies show a shift in work-place norms and hiring practices have taken place in recent years where women are further disadvantaged.[51] This post #MeToo response is partially born from a hyperbolic and unreasoned fear on the parts of men in business that an 'innocent gesture' might be misconstrued and lead to

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[50] Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 33-34.

[51] Leanne E Atwater, Allison M Tringale, Rachel E Sturm, Scott N Taylor, and Phillip W Braddy, "Looking Ahead," *Organizational dynamics* 48, no. 4 (October 2019).

undue consequences, but it is mostly the norms and terms of power reinscribing themselves after a period of some turbulence. The logic that leads powerful men to feel safer simply not hiring attractive women and with giving them fewer opportunities for advancement if those opportunities involve close proximity with them is one that finds injustice easier than ceasing harassment and assault. Is it really so difficult to see a beautiful woman and not desire sex that simply not hiring qualified and talented employees is the preferred answer? The answer seems to be yes, and such an answer is highly suggestive of the resilience of power and the role of gender in our current understandings of power dynamics. The same logics of avoiding the beautiful object for fear of harassing or assaulting it does not pervade the business world when it comes to beautiful architecture, art, or motivational speaking. The #MeToo movement has managed to halt some horrific and unjust behaviors, but the underlying symbolic register which makes women targets and prey will now simply reset and perform itself in different ways.

Nonetheless, it is in such moments of reification, where the bounds of appropriate expressions of power are reset, that small tweaks in the terms of reiteration become an opportunity to tweak the foundation of ideological self-perpetuation. Tweaking the terms of subjugation will result in a somewhat altered, a somewhat less foreclosed, subject:

> Because I have been called something, I have been entered into linguistic life, refer to myself through the language given by the Other, but perhaps never quite in the same terms that my language mimes. The terms by which we are hailed are rarely the ones we choose (and even when we try to impose protocols on how we are to be named, they usually fail); but these terms we never really choose are the occasion for something we might still call agency, the repetition of an originary subordination for another purpose, *one whose future is partially open*.[52]

[52] *Ibid*, 38. Emphasis mine.

It seems small enough hope, that the best a resistance to power can accomplish is a future only partially open. The openness does not even promise a better or more just future, just a different one. Yet, here, using sophistic rhetoric as an inspiration for rhetorical power offers some unlooked-for hope in exactly how utterly alien it is. The world *has* changed, how power is performed has been reiterated and reified countless times and small iterative interventions have managed to produce outsized results in the roughly two and a half millennia since Corax started pedaling his pedagogy in Syracuse. Some of these changes are horrific, like the institution of race theory, an ideology created to legitimize the new economic mode of chattel slavery, but tweaks that lead to such ends can and must be tweaked yet again.

Deploying sophistic rhetoric's aesthetic understanding of its δύναμις is simply a tool in tweaking the inscription of the norms of legibility. It can look like critical capacity for theorizing means of persuasion, it can look like mindfulness of which tropes and schema produce pleasure in which audiences at which moments, it can even be rigid adherence to formal logic when confronted with an audience who finds such λόγος beautiful. Let it take whatever from is appropriate to its situation. All that is called for is a mindfulness about deploying beauty to its best middle voiced effect. Like De Certeau's tactics,[53] in time, with use and repetition and familiarity, such rhetoric will fail and its δύναμις devolve into κράτος. It will become persuasive or prescriptive or otherwise the coercive and, when that happens, when the beautiful rhetorical weaker becomes the new stronger, then begin anew and use beauty to lift up those that need uplifting.

[53] Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

1.4 Sources and Methods

There is a reason that the question of rhetoric's relationship to power is both ancient and ongoing. There is no more being outside of power than there is being outside of rhetoric and arguing for a final and definitive boundary with clear cut and static relations between power and rhetoric is to imitate Sisyphus. Instead, I would like to offer *an* answer to the problem rather than *the* answer. Further, I offer my answer because it opens up possibility rather than closing it down. My readings of sophistic sources are not meant to negate the readings of Haskins, Crick, Beard, Foley, nor anyone else. They are meant to be contributions, and my use of these superlatives and my desire to trouble the idea of power through a reading of them with δύναμις provides a more fluid and vital sense rhetoric, beauty, and power.

I investigate two seemingly antithetical superlatives of the classical Greek world: Helen as κάλλιστος, the superlative of beauty, and Heracles as κράτιστος, the superlative of strength. Superlative figures, by their very nature and as suggested by their grammar, are larger than life. They are iconic and exist on the very edges of mundane legibility. A mortal stronger than Heracles has gone beyond mortality and a person more beautiful than Helen is no longer a person.[54] By being mythic markers of the extreme ends of these traits, of strength and of beauty, Heracles and Helen both are positioned as simultaneously static and fluid. Heracles is always the superlative for strength, no matter what its emblematic markers are, and Helen for beauty regardless of what beauty standards are. We know what an attractive person looks like to us, but Helen lies just on

[54] Both Heracles and Helen had cult followings in antiquity, in the literal sense of the term. Heracles' hero cult, tellingly, was wider spread. These cults, however, are an honoring of the dead. A postmortem promotion, as it were. The tales of them while living treat them as human and mortal.

the edge of such imagining. We know what strength looks like, but Heracles' feats exist at the eschaton of credulity. To try and imagine someone stronger than Heracles or more beautiful than Helen beggars the imagination or compels us to move to a new category, that of the divine.

My project is one of rhetorical theory and history. It is one that takes up these figures as myths and stories, narratives which have only accreted more meaning through time, rather than as philosophic touchstones of truth. Their use in this project comes from their nature; as signs they are static but as meaning they are fluid. I read key sophistic texts of these superlatives in order to perform a form of cultural topography, a post structural mapping out of myths as mostly self-contained cultural milestones. Being a post-structural mapping, there is no attempt to supplant or replace the mappings of previous readings. Instead, the map suggests that if we look at the superlatives of Helen and Heracles in the way I suggest, a new conceptualization of rhetorical power emerges as being possible. The myths are self-contained in that they are whole and coherent systems in and of themselves, and that this is true of them even as they are dependent on their interaction with other myths, equally whole and coherent in themselves. It genuinely is both useful and interesting to know something of the mindset of the ancient world that produced these myths. Indeed, I myself take advantage of such knowledge to produce my own readings. It is important to remember that even as the world in general has mostly abandoned rigorous knowledge of the classical world this cultural ignorance has not stymied the survival of Helen and Heracles as superlatives of their respective virtues. Our knowledge of the myth is clearly enriched by our knowledge of context in much the same way and for much the same reason as the meaning of a symbol gains resonance in its exchange and relationship to other symbols. Still, we must remember that the symbol is equally apart from as it is embedded with others, and so too myth. Vernant, in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* describes the project like so:

> Once rescued from the sphere of affective confusion and the spontaneity of fantasy in which Wundt situated it, the mythical symbol can be defined in terms of, on the one hand, the social conditions that affect it and, on the other, the rules of linguistics. Myth is no vague expression of individual feelings or popular emotions. It is an institutionalized system of symbols, a codified verbal behavior that, like language, conveys various modes of classifying facts – by coordinating, grouping, and opposing them, various ways of recognizing both resemblances and differences, in short, ways of organizing experience.[55]

This cultural topographic approach is appropriate for my project precisely because both objects of mythification, Heracles and Helen, still serve as semiotic exemplars of their superlative essence, strength and beauty, even while the mythic details of their feats are no longer in common parlance. This should come as no surprise given the observations of Vico, an 18th-century Italian professor of Rhetoric whose readings of Homer in the *New Science* treated him as one of many poets of the rhapsodic age. David Marshall's reading of Vico puts explains that the heroes of epic poetry function as a proto predicate, an ur-polis which outlines a crucial space for being and becoming which transcends geography and even time. The ur-polis is the space that opens up the future space of the possibility of legible being. It is the groundwork which allows the foundation of the common spaces of social being:

> Homer's function in the *Scienza Nuova* is to establish a public domain in which co-presence is possible for a diversity of Greek peoples disaggregated in place and time. *Homer is a kind of agora that is a condition of possibility for the common life of persons scattered across Greece and divided by centuries who have little in common*—that is to say, no point of connection other than parts of the language that they use.[56]

For Vico the heroic epic waxes and wanes and, while this rise and fall is interesting, the stubborn persistence of these superlatives points to their fulfilling a necessary function. Before an articulation of such superlatives existed they had to be referred to by performance, and so Heracles

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[55] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (New York; Cambridge, Mass; Zone Books, 1988), 241-242.

[56] Emphasis mine. David Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric in Early Modern Europe* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 241.

and Helen came to serve that function. Even as language caught up, the myths persevered in fulfilling the same function of delimiting strength and defining the boundaries of mortal beauty. Sophists of Greek antiquity, whose interest in λόγος included the function of λόγος as narrative and as reason, took advantage of them to articulate a vision of what would come to be known as rhetoric. By closely examining their use of the myths of Heracles and Helen, particularly the twists they add to these commonest of common topics for the time, we can map out the cultural topography of Rhetoric's place within the power dynamics of the era.

As I have repeatedly mentioned, the idea is not to reproduce the conditions of the past but to use them to warp our own reflection made visible by moments of difficulty in the act of reading the past. The cultural topography, in particular, need not reproduce the noxious toxicity of the culture whose *topos* it is exegetically examining. Bad faith and reductive readings of the classics may have such an intent and design, but a cultural topography of the period has zero need to assume and reproduce the specific misogynistic neuroses of the period for oneself when examining the myths, practices, and relationships to power the sophists traded in. They can never be absent, of course, but neither should they be intentionally excised nor absented from a reading. The toxicity we see most easily in alien texts are, by definition, the ones closest and most recognizable to ourselves. Absenting them from an exegesis is to perpetuate an invisibility.

All texts contain the toxicity of their moment. Finding that a text goes beyond one's tolerance is, of course, sufficient reason for not reading it. However, if a text is read it should be read as fully and mindfully as one can. Just as one need not be a fascist to read and get some good out of Heidegger, and just as it is important to remember while engaging with his ideas that he, in fact, was a national socialist, so too it is imperative upon the reader to attend to what they can while reading texts from the past. The cultural topography does not require a deep dive into the

particulars of Greek misogyny, but it does not excise the misogyny performed in any text. I would hope that is preposterous to read *The Women of Trachis*, a play which blames raped women for their rape, as an ideal form of gender dynamics. Instead, one should read the play and see the absurdity of those dynamics and, in the work of making sense of them, make visible the horror and absurdity of our own sexual power dynamics. The particular relationships of power to gender and beauty which made Iole obviously responsible for the destruction of her homeland are absurd, but so too were the defenses mounted on behalf of supreme court justices Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh. Finding in the strange the shock of the familiar, even the unpleasant familiar, is one of the bonus benefits of engaging with sophistic texts.

A weakness of the cultural topography is that it has a weak resistance to well-meaning anachronism. I see this weakness as a strength and, while the sophists equivalent of our ideologies of race are difficult for us to comprehend, our own raced notions of beauty are easy to read into the past. One need only a passing familiarity with geography, history, and American Christianity to see the absurd lengths this backwards reading can take as an ahistorically Caucasian, Germanic even, Christ is plastered everywhere. Helen's beauty is apparently remarkable but not remarked upon. The only physical description we ever receive from Homer is a stock epithet, λευκώλενος, 'white-armed,' used more to keep the meter than describe a character. One cannot even use the epithet to know Helen's race, not just because race didn't exist as we understand it, but because to be white-armed was more referential to one's status as being wealthy enough to avoid the sun than to some innate pallor one is born with. The fifth-century BCE Attic world had its own notions and prejudices of beauty which they no doubt imagined when they imagined Helen, notions and prejudices which we can read as raced, but so too do we, and ours are undeniably raced. The ease with which one imagines Helen in certain ways but not others, as Caucasian but not Semitic nor

African perhaps, tells us more about our own racialized notions of beauty than those of blind Homer and his poetic heirs.

The significant emptiness of Helen as signifier for κάλλιστος is no doubt one cause for her endurance as a protopredicate. The history of the reception of these figures from antiquity to today, with their legibility still intact despite the myths having fallen in and out of public consciousness, permits this study of the cultural topography of Heracles and Helen as rhetorical devices articulating a vision of power ideal artefacts for modern scholars of ancient rhetoric. What was said about them millennia ago may seem alien to modern sensibilities, but that alienation from modernity is the point. The figures by themselves do not provide an opportunity to excavate understandings we imagine to be lost. However, productive moments of difficulty trying to understand these figures and their relationship to power allows us new perspectives on our own, current, views. Both figures in classical sophistic texts share some intriguing points of overlap despite their seemingly distinct superlative attributes. These points of intersection are where I want to focus my analysis: rhetoric's relationship to beauty understood through ἔρως and power as κράτος or δύναμις.

The most powerful, in a colloquial sense, can be none other than Heracles. His exploits spread across the Mediterranean and his famous defining feature is his strength. To demonstrate part of the conversation fourth-century BCE Athens was having about Heracles I examine Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Xenophon's account in book 2 of *Memorabilia* of a parable attributed to Prodicus, *Heracles at the Crossroads*. I also examine a text, Lucian's *Heracles*, that comes centuries later and in the radically different cultural climate of the Second Sophstic in order to show how the sophistic play with Heracles' might continued even as it subtly changed with the circumstances. Heracles becomes, in Lucian's account of a picture he saw in Gaul, the superlative

of κράτος not for his strength, but his eloquence with rhetoric and the overpowering effects he produces with it. Rhetoric also plays an important role in *Heracles at the Crossroads.* While we do not have direct access to Prodicus' fable, it is preserved in some fashion by Xenophon's recounting of Socrates' retelling of a story made famous by the sophist Prodicus. The factors of beauty and δύναμις are crucially important within that allegory, and that they survive the second or third hand transmission of Xenophon's account hint at their importance in Prodicus' thought. Sophocles' *Trachiniae* is a play which underscores an anxiety of beauty holding a δύναμις greater than Heracles' κράτος, and is a cautionary tale of the effects of ἔρως, themes which become championed by Sophists when they speak of Helen.

To investigate the superlative of beauty I will focus on Euripides' *Helen* and *Trojan Women* as well as Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*. Helen's fraught relationship with power, as an object power seeks to take as well as a vessel containing her own curious power, gives beauty a fascinatingly ambiguous position. Helen is beautifully artful with speech and body, but these strengths of hers may overpower men only on occasion. In no way can her power be mistaken as that of κράτος. While in critical moments Helen's beauty is capable of making a vengeful Menelaus drop his sword, his lust for vengeance blotted out by his ἔρως of her beauty, Helen's is not an omnipresent power. While the beauty of Helen's face may have launched a thousand ships, it was incapable of sending them home. Helen, as we shall see, is an object of κράτος, taken without regard to her will because of the power of her beauty, and she is thus simultaneously powerful and powerless. In her beauteous speech and form she is an embodiment of δύναμις for sophist orators expounding on rhetoric's abilities.

The rhetorical use of protopredicates Helen and Heracles is the object of study for this dissertation. The texts selected have been chosen for the access they provide to the implications

of the uses of these myths. The result, like any exegesis, is a textual φάρμακον, 'potion,' and so the particular texts, the readings produced by them, and the order of their arrangement have combined to produce a new site of possibility for the power of rhetoric. Other texts, or even the same texts arranged and read differently, would produce a different result. It is a mistake born of Plato's influence in philosophy to assume a natural, or correct ordering and reading of texts which produce a universal and univalent truth. My texts are not the correct texts, they are not superior to the texts that Crick has chosen or that Haskins examines or Foley teases apart in any way but that, as I have deployed them, they interact together to produce new insights into each other. Add more texts, such as Isocrates' response to Gorgias, and what we get from all the texts in the whole becomes subtly altered. Add another protopredicate, perhaps one for Wisdom or one for Cunning, and what the whole and the parts provide may well become radically different. The guiding principle for textual selection should always be which texts open up new sites of meaning and which foreclose upon them and the means by which they produce that effect. I have chosen texts *I* find to be rhetorical, to be concerned with beauty and open to productive rather than reductive reading. Texts, like theorists, should be used to enable rather than deny.

Two aesthetic theorists have invisibly opened up how I use Helen and Heracles. First, I am indebted to Elaine Scarry's work on the implications of putting words to the ineffable.[57] In addition, her work on aesthetics and politics defends beauty in a way I can only hope to imitate.[58]

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[57] While the dichotomy I am examining concerning power differs from Scarry's interest in pain as unmaking and language as making, her thinking on the nature of the inexpressible and its effects helped to promote my own interest in Helen and Heracles as superlatives for ideas which, at the borders of the human capacity for reason, become inchoate. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford University Press, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[58] Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Secondly, despite Stroud's excellent reading and arguments for a Kantian Rhetoric,[59] I have little direct use for Kant's inimical conceptualization of rhetoric. I do not deny Stroud's point, Kant clearly has a place for a type of rhetoric, yet the very rhetoric Kant despises is the rhetoric I seek to valorize:

> Rhetoric, so far as this is taken to mean the art of persuasion, i.e., the art of deluding by means of such beautiful semblance (as *ars oratoria*), and not merely excellence of speech (eloquence and style), is a dialectic, which borrows from poetry only so much as is necessary to win over men's minds to the side of the speaker before they have weighed the matter, and to rob their verdict of its freedom.[60]

Kant is suspicious of rhetorical beauty and eloquence, seeing in it a means of bypassing reason and instituting coercion. However, Kant's distaste for rhetorical eloquence aside, I remain indebted to him and his writing on aesthetics and the sublime for how I read Heracles and Helen as superlatives and protopredicates:

> If, however, we call anything not merely great, but, without qualification, absolutely, and in every respect (beyond all comparison) great, that is to say, sublime, we soon perceive that for this it is not permissible to seek an appropriate standard outside itself, but merely in itself. It is a greatness comparable to itself alone.[61]

Accepting Helen and Heracles as epitomes and superlatives of their respective traits has implications beyond the narrow focus of rhetoric's early years which bounds this dissertation. And while this dissertation does not delve fully into the implications of their mythic function as a proto-predicate nor present the succession of representations of each and explore the implications of each as the same signified even as the representations of their signification alters it cannot help but be informed by these origins and our reception of them through history. Indeed, the arguments made

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[59] Scott R. Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

[60] Immanuel Kant and Nicholas Walker, *Critique of Judgement* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008), 155.

[61] *Ibid*, 80.

herein require them. The proto-predicate function that Marshall outlined in a defense of Arendt's notion of judgment is the step that establishes the ur-polis because "The role that imagination plays for the faculty of judgement . . . is not simply one of making present that which is absent by reproducing it in representation."[62] One does not wish the ur-polis into being where it does not exist, one encounters a point of transcendent commonality that lacks all prior predication, and myth forms as a point of common accretion around these encounters.

Just as an oyster covers objects it cannot incorporate into itself so do myths become pearls surrounding moments of sublimity which exceed the ur-polis' ability to take into itself without modification. Both Helen and Heracles for the Sophists and their contemporaries serve this purpose and may well continue to do so if their continued mythic vitality is any indication. They are semi-constant referents even as what they reference, what *is* strength and what *is* beauty, alters. While a history of what is mutable and what fixed in the transmission of these myths is beyond the scope of this dissertation, being a vast project in and of itself, it is important to recognize the role of understanding these myths as such names while reading them. The Sophists looked at the accreted myths of Helen and Heracles in order to both use the old and build a new sense around their own ineffable experience of the power of rhetoric. These myths came to them from a provenance probably well over a millennium old, but they were no less useful for their age. The resilience of these myths, then and now, gives me my ability to look back on distant and alien thinking about an inarticulable concept. My ability to use these myths in such a way is dependent

[62] The protopredicate is a mythic/poetic topical creation of the imagination that occurs to give a polity a point of common consensus and to give the cultural vocabulary of established predicates time to catch up. The creation is driven by the need for a point of common discernment and judgement which is a pre-requisite for the polity's space for being. David L. Marshall, "The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment," *Political Theory* 38, no. 3 (2010): 367-93.

on the chain of transmission where Helen, though altered, is still beauty beyond words and Heracles, unweakened by age, remains the mightiest of the mighty. The reference the myth serves remains pearlescent even as the referent alters.

The truth of Heracles as the superlative of strength and Helen as the superlative of beauty may be sustained through the millennia in the persons of their respective myths, but the specific details and nuance with which they operated in fifth and fourth-century BCE Athens is lost to us. The sophistic texts deploying Helen and Heracles, as well as others that are delved into as productive asides in order to clarify key components and their place in the cultural topography I am mapping, are useful precisely because of this interplay of constancy and alienation. These texts, like the superlatives they depict, are intrinsic to modern culture while being equally alien to it. The 'slut shaming,' as we have now come to call the practice out as, of Helen is simultaneously familiar to our own patriarchal practices of control in theme even as it is alien in execution. So too the idolatry of Heracles can be found, the same love of κράτος, undergirding the soap-operatic simulacra of his feats found in the WWE, all while the madness of ἔρως central to his virile manliness survives translation through the ages barely legible to our more prudish ears. Similarly, the texts themselves are in a foreign language that, even at the height of its place in education, was legible to only a small fraction of the people in the cultures classical Greek antiquity informs. To try and maintain this ambivalence of foundational importance and productive unintelligibility, I have performed my readings and translations of my central texts in a particular way. Early attempts at striking this balance resulted in too much unintelligibility, but slowly I have developed a consistent system of trying carry across meaning and sense while preserving the distance which has made sophistic views of beauty and power so intriguing.

My practice in this dissertation deviates from the common practice in Communication as well as that of Classics, but I have done so for a reason. Communication, with its disciplinary interest in promoting access and increasing legibility, transliterates ancient texts and, through constant revisitation of the same authoritative texts, has reduced the alien to the milquetoast. Such common terms of art as *ethos, pathos,* and *logos* almost no longer need to be italicized, so familiar are they to Communication scholars of rhetoric. This practice is all to the good, but a consequence of it is that scholars begin to believe they understand the terms they engage with. We thereby risk our beloved terms of art becoming flattened into modern and legible concepts simply from their modern and legible transcription. Classicists, of course, do not fall into this particular trap. But, following their own disciplinary prerogatives and training, can become too narrowly focused on the artefacts of their examination and adhere too closely to it.[63] If anything, I err too much on the side of adhering to the text, but I attempt to keep a freer hand through the cultural topographic approach of how the text interact with each other. I have eschewed transliteration entirely, but longer translations are simply given in the body of the text and the Greek or Latin I am translating placed in the footnote along with its citation. However, for short phrases, I have kept the Greek or Latin in the body of the text followed by my translation. Lastly, for key concepts not directly quoted, I have simply kept the word in its Greek or Latin nominative case, and I go into an in-depth articulation of that concept where it is appropriate to the flow of the argument. I have provided in the preface a list of these key words, a transliteration, and a basic translation to aid the reader as they encounter them. I apologize for the labor this puts the reader to, but it is, I hope

[63] This is becoming increasingly less true of modern classical scholarship, and the rigidity born of disciplinary specification is in no way unique to Classics nor, even, often a problem!

productive and, eventually, not onerous. As these words are key components, they are repeated often and throughout the paper. Ἔρος, for instance, shows up well over fifty times over four chapters, intro, and conclusion and, even by this exact point will no longer require recourse to the preface for the reader. This practice of reading is intended to produce familiarity with these key terms at the same time as it visually reproduces a reminder of the terms inherent unintelligibility. It is a mistake to think we understand λόγος as word, or logic, or story, or reason, or math, or any of the different translations possible and contained within the word. Even transliteration instead of translation, by rendering λόγος as *logos*, permits more familiarity and ease of access than I would like. I do not want my translations and transcriptions to be difficult, but I do want them to resist being easy, lest what I find valuable in antiquity be lost.[64]

This translation practice permits the form of close reading essential to producing a cultural topography. By maintaining, as best I can, the Greek and Latin of my sources, I also maintain their valuable polysemy. I compare and contrast my translations to authoritative editions not so as to argue for my superiority, but to show how taking the invitation of polysemy elsewhere can produce profound shifts in meaning. While I initially strove to translate each author's felicity of style, I quickly gave up as the challenges of doing so legibly in English were beyond me. Instead, I have translated mostly for legibility and make note of style when it is productive to do so. This will sometimes result in a closer examination in the body of the chapter examining an earlier

[64] Note, however, that usage of Greek is not superior by way of authenticity or accuracy. It is in no way a "closer" reproduction of what Gorgias may have written then transliteration or even translation. Even ignoring the millennia long history of transmission and the brilliant editing that the last two centuries have undertaken fixing errors introduced in that process, it is worth noting that I am using, as is standard, modern conventions of capitalization and scripting, with spaces between words and capital Greek letters where the rules of English demand them. These conventions did not exist at the time of these texts' authorship, and there's *still* division concerning these conventions. For instance, some editions prefer the lunate for the medial sigma and Cambridge refuses to utilize the sub-iota. For this dissertation, I will use the conventions as practiced by Harvard's Loeb series of Greek and Latin texts.

translated passage. These reexaminations are where I produce and explain a clunkier, less English pleasing syntax and may even choose a different translation for a word altogether. By easing into the alien nature of the text by such degrees, I hope to maintain both legibility and translational rigor as both are essential to my close readings of the texts.

1.5 Preview

The dissertation examines Heracles as κράτιστος in the first two chapters and Helen as κάλλιστος in the final two. The first chapter in each half provides an accounting of each figure's mythic status so as to provide a baseline for understanding how the superlatives are being deployed in keeping with or in subversion of that common understanding.

The first chapter establishes Heracles' enviable position as the strongest of the strong and how that position was subtly subverted in sophistic thought. It analyzes two texts focused on opposite ends of his life by two sophists at the opposite ends of the sophistic movement. Prodicus provides an allegory of living correctly by looking at Heracles as a young man, before he was driven mad by Hera and set out on his labors in order to be cleansed of his sins. The text is interesting from a transmission standpoint, being a story Xenophon is attributing to Socrates' recounting, but the central theme of beauty and goodness intersects interestingly with the sophist Prodicus' defining concern of selecting precisely the right word. Lucian, a Sophist far removed from the other sophistic texts, comes into prominence during a renaissance of the importance of the sophistic intellectual movement during the Roman Principate. He performs a different approach regarding Heracles' might, directly and without subtlety conflating the power of Heracles

with the power of beautiful speech. What subtlety there is can be found through the insinuation made to Lucian's own relationship to age, being at this point in his career an old man. Thus, the suggestion that honeyed words are superior in might to a surplus of muscle operates on a similar plane to Prodicus' reported but not reproduced use of precisely the correct words at precisely the correct time to subtly disrupt accepted wisdom and ethics. Might, it may be seen, is mighty indeed and serves as competitor, albeit an inferior one, to the power of proper beauty properly applied. Heracles' position as the strongest of the strong is both maintained and subverted by these sophistic texts and are born from the peculiar exigence of the fragility of that position.

Chapter two displays this fragility through the curious ambiguity of desire for and fear of the beautiful by the mighty. It examines Sophocles' repeated concerns with ἔρως, and is centered around a close reading of Heracles' downfall in *The Women of Trachis*. Despite being a play concerned with the downfall of Heracles the center of attention throughout the tragedy is his wife, Deianira. She has a complicated relationship to power, beauty, and the power of her own beauty on the powerful and it is these relationships of power and beauty which drive the action throughout the play. Sophocles, in this and in other plays, finds the ability to produce an erotically driven madness inherent in beauty. Thus beauty, in the mode of those objects possessing it, are curiously powerless to resist the attempts of the powerful to possess them and, simultaneously, responsible for possessing the powerful with madness. While the Greek world did not deny this beauty to men, it nonetheless often coincided with weakness, allowing the weak and beautiful to overwhelm the strong. That it is a power both without agency and without direction is established in multiple ways throughout Sophocles' works. And the need to find some method to the madness of beauty is later epitomized in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which repeats the classical account about the power of beauty to produce madness manifesting as the incarnation of a divinity, Ἔρος, known as Cupid

to the Romans. The tale of Apollo and Daphne is simultaneously an attempt to establish some method to the madness as well as denying to the necessarily permanently weaker any power over the mighty and this understanding of beauty as a metaphysical power over which there could be no defense underlies Deianira's words and actions throughout the play. The same fears and complaints that Plato articulates for rhetoric's ability to subvert truth are apparent in Sophocles' fears about ἔρως and its ability to overthrow strength, establishing as an anxiety something the Sophists see as productive. The fragility of might suggests a strength still stronger yet which, itself, is curiously weak.

As Heracles personifies might, Helen does beauty, and as it is in beauty that the Sophists place their bets it is Helen whom they deploy to make their case. Helen is introduced in the third chapter, an account of sundry myths regarding her and her beauty given, and Euripides' use of Helen in several of his plays are shown to have clear alignment with ideas of rhetoric. The same questions of agency and power are tackled in Euripides' *Helen* and *Trojan Women* as in Sophocles, but Euripides comes to subtle and intriguingly different answers. Helen comes across not just as a woman more sinned against than sinning, but as a woman well aware of the power the beauty of her body has, and her attempts to attenuate or use its power is, itself, inherently rhetorical. She moves Menelaus in both plays not through a baring of her breast, as was said of Phryne, but by artful articulation and explanation of her position and the weakness of it. Helen is well aware that hers is a power she has no agency over, and so she uses a power she possesses and has control over, the beauty of her reasoning, to produce both effects and affects her enemies all too readily and believably blame on the beauty of her body. Euripides' use of Helen for these arguments mirrors and reproduces the sophistic interest in Helen found in Gorgias and Isocrates as an allegory for the power that they wish to offer and hints towards a more dynamic idea of power, one found

in beauty and in rhetoric, suggesting that the two are more akin than kind. Helen's beauty, both its power and weakness, thus stands in for the power of Rhetoric in these sophistic musings.

Nowhere is this tension of power and weakness more explicit than in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen.* The much-studied text is the focus of the fourth chapter and reads as clearly being more about rhetoric than it is about Helen. For Gorgias, rhetoric is an artful deployment of beauty. His arguments about the temporal, pharmaceutical, and psychic impacts of beauty on others point to a possible way of understanding the power of eloquent speaking as a power that does not subject objects to slavery nor one that makes itself an object for the mighty to possess. Instead of being active or passive, rhetorical persuasion is a middle voiced structural power, one that is compelling but does not compel and one that enchants the object into togetherness with the subject, wanting what they want, rather than enslaving the mind. Such a concept of rhetorical power aligns with all we know of sophistic practice and its radical relativism. Further, it still permits the rhetorical misuse and violent excess modern and ancient critics found concerning, but this theory of rhetorical δύναμις does not define rhetoric by those outrages any more than the madness of ἔρως truly defines beauty. As an object acted upon and the subject which acts, persuasion both elides and encompasses strength and weakness, making it a power of pure δύναμις.

There is work of note yet to be done within this theory of rhetoric as the middle voice: the implication of ethics and wisdom, the concern of Socrates; the response of allies, such as Isocrates; and the complaints of critics, Plato's in particular, read somewhat differently through the lens of rhetorical δύναμις and provide fertile ground for future explanation. However, reclaiming a space for rhetoric to be powerful without being violent is an important first step to such investigations. This view does not preclude rhetoric as being the power of reason, but instead suggests that reason itself is motivated by something external to it.

2.0 Chapter 1: Lucian and the Prodical Path to Old Man Heracles

Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.

- Tennyson, "Ulysses"

The Sophists trafficked in words, it was their stock and trade. Words were their means and, often, their end. And while the choice between words and deeds is not a zero-sum continuum, it often seems treated as such. Indeed, the binary pair where deed, action, is clearly superior to word, speech, seems a mainstay of Western metaphysics. It was certainly very much alive in antiquity. Aeschylus, formulating in tragic poetry a commonplace still heard echoed in children's rhymes,[65] makes sharp the distinction between mere display of versus actual violence when he has Eteocles respond to a scout's vivid report in *Seven Against Thebes*. Tydeus, the scout explains, is a one-man martial spectacle guarding the Proetid gate, and the scout concludes his report with a plaintive rhetorical plea about who could bear to face such an opponent. Eteocles finds himself less than impressed:

> Well *I* would not flee a man's *ornaments,*
> And *symbols* are not wounding.
> For neither helmet's crest nor watchman's bell bite without the spear.[66]

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[65] Such as sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

[66] The pronoun has been italicized to translate the emphatic inclusion of an unnecessary first person singular pronoun at the end of the first line and 'ornaments' and 'symbols' are marked emphatically by their placement bracketing the first part of Eteocles' answer:

> κόσμον μὲν ἀνδρὸς οὔτιν᾽ ἂν τρέσαιμ᾽ ἐγώ,
> οὐδ᾽ ἑλκοποιὰ γίγνεται τὰ σήματα:
> λόφοι δὲ κώδων τ᾽ οὐ δάκνουσ᾽ ἄνευ δορός.

Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*, 397-399.

Eteocles may well be engaging in the bravado of a tragic hero, but it is precisely this preference for actual action over symbolic that makes the basis of heroic temperament. It is not just a bias of the dramatic medium of a play, either, as a similar privileging of action over speaking undergirds Plato's initial critique of rhetoric in *Gorgias*.[67]

The relationship of rhetoric to κράτος, the kind of might that gets things done, and how Prodicus and Lucian sought to answer the problem implied by that relationship is examined in this chapter. To do so, I analyze what was being said about Heracles, superlative of this form of might, by the early Sophist Prodicus (fifth century BCE) and Lucian of the Second Sophistic (second century CE). Prodicus is among the first generation of Sophists while Lucian belongs to an intellectual revival of the movement centuries later, making the common and divergent points of their usage of the myth of Heracles fruitful for analysis. There is a pleasing and not incidental symmetry to their projects as well, with Prodicus using Heracles the youth and Lucian deploying a geriatric variant of the myth. Heracles' myths inform the conversation, and how the cores of these myths are taken up and adapted by the two relevant sophists suggest a curious ambivalence to the role of Heracles' might which is explored further in the second chapter.

This chapter will make clear through an examination of his myths to see both the superior position of κράτος as a power and rhetoric's anxieties about how best to appropriate it. Heracles' continued cultural standing as an enduring figure of might within the popular imagination suggests that his strength can be understood as signifying power of the type the introduction argued power is commonly understood as. After all, the specifics of his once famous labors are not what become

[67] Gorgias' claim in the dialog that rhetoric in no way involves actually doing anything (450b) and his boast that he can convince people to undergo his brother's medical interventions when his brother cannot (456b) is done so as to set him up for Plato's categorization of rhetoric as a flattery of politics (464a-e). Plato, *Gorgias*.

translated in more recent tellings and invocations, at least not the nonviolent ones. Instead, his physical ability to overcome, to kill and/or destroy, is centered.[68] After unpacking some of the relevant mythology that makes up the Heraclean corpus, especially those parts which did not make the Disney cut, Heracles' deployment by two key sophistic texts will be analyzed. One, Prodicus', has been received secondhand through Xenophon. The other has come directly from Lucian of the second sophistic, a period several centuries removed from the birth of rhetoric this dissertation focuses on. Both, however, play with Heracles' popular understanding within the era as a way of claiming for themselves a similar standing for the power of λόγος, albeit a power of radically different form, substance, and effect than the κράτος of Heracles. The similarities and differences of these claims provide the ground that undergirds sophistic attempts at finding a different formulation for the power of rhetoric.

Through a close reading of Xenophon's account of Prodicus' "Heracles at the Crossroads" in the *Memorabilia*, I establish the beginnings of sophistic interest in how the power of beauty compares and contrasts to that of κράτος. Prodicus often seems, in part no doubt due to the relative friendliness Plato demonstrates in his *Sokratikoi logoi*,[69] to be a more conventionally aligned thinker than his Sophist brethren. In particular, he seems to be interested in promulgating traditional ethical values through his rhetoric in a way that is simpatico to the Platonic project of promoting virtue, yet I will argue in this chapter that this seeming allows his radicalism to be more subversive, hidden, as it were, in plain sight. While this is a chapter centered on the mythical

[68] Particularly filmic adaptations of the myth focus on the strength aspect. Disney's 1997 animated film, for instance, adumbrates a great deal of Heracles' myths and instead fills much of the run time with fights against supernatural creatures from Hades.

[69] More commonly referenced as Socratic Dialogues, the *Socratikoi Logoi* directly translates as "Socrates Stories" and was a genre of writing that many of his students undertook, though we have only fragments from most of them. Xenophon and Plato alone have complete works which have survived through the ages.

superlative of κράτος, κάλλος, as later chapters will show, is never too distant from sophistic thought and, I will argue, is central, albeit in absence, to Prodicus' use of Heracles.

Lucian's use of Heracles comes much later, and for the purposes of this chapter serves as a bounding agent, a demonstration of the trajectory of sophistic thought on the subject of the strength of rhetoric. The Gallic Heracles is a striking image, and one opportunistically deployed by the aged Lucian. While many of the same arguments regarding the relationship of rhetoric's power to bodily might are deployed, Lucian has foregone the earlier sophistic interest in κάλλος in the interests of eloquence as a means of utilizing σοφός. The subtle distinctions that the rest of this dissertation suggests were central for sophistic understandings of rhetoric as δύναμις are abandoned for a plain deployment of rhetoric as analogous to the violence of κράτος.

Heracles, the mythic figure who operates to this day as a superlative of strength, would at first glance seem to operate in an antonymous manner to sophistic rhetoric. Stories about Heracles, after all, are mostly centered around his impressive might and indomitable spirit and excellent accounts of these stories can be found in Emma Stafford's *Herakles.* Her section on Key Themes narrows the focus on Heracles' mythic function even further, stating at the start: "The most abiding image of Herakles is that of the strong man fighting a monster."[70] While it is true that some of his famous labors involve cunning and persuasion[71] these stories all serve to foreground the power of his body in creating the circumstances for the cunning of his blandishments to take hold.[72] Sophistic Rhetoric was an art of λόγος, the word, rather than σῶμα, the body, so Heracles, despite

[70] Emma Stafford, *Herakles* (New York, Routledge, 2012), 23.

[71] Such as the Apples of Hesperides, in which Heracles tricks Atlas back into holding up the world by asking for a moment's respite with which to rearrange his cloak as padding.

[72] For instance, Heracles has to first possess the bodily might to uphold the world upon his own shoulders before he can trick Atlas back into the task.

his enduring popularity, would seem to make a poor exemplar of the skills sophists sought to teach. There are, however, two striking incidents of Heraclean invocations in the corpus of sophistic rhetoric. The first is by Prodicus of Ceos (*ca.* 465 – 395 BCE), of which we only have a secondhand account related by Xenophon (*ca.* 431 – 354 BCE) that was produced in the heady days of Rhetoric's initial ascendance. The second is in the *prooemium* of a speech by Lucian of Samosata (*ca.* 125 – 180 CE), a member of the Second Sophistic. The Second Sophistic, so named by Philostratus, a member of the movement, was a rebirth of sophistic principles founded in the climate of the Roman Principate circa the late first century CE. Given the political realities of the Caesars ever increasing agglomeration of power to themselves as well as their jealousy of possible rivals, it was a rebirth necessarily shorn of some of the original ascendancy of rhetoric's ambition.[73] Both Prodicus the early sophist and Lucian the later, in their own way, separate Heracles from his famous might in order to serve their own ends. Yet the differences in how they do so is telling: Prodicus makes Heracles' might incidental or irrelevant to the story he tells while Lucian takes from Heracles his trademark physicality through a sardonic and secondhand anthropological report of a vase from Gaul where Heracles is said to be wizened into weakness with age yet remains the most powerful as he is potent in speech. The accounts differ, but both serve the same purpose, to make a claim about the superior power of oratorical eloquence.

[73] See Tacitus, *Dialogue of the Orators*.

2.1 The Common Myths of Heracles

Heracles as mythic figure is too vast a topic to be easily encapsulated. Even the common basics of his myth, the enmity of Hera and his quest to cleanse himself of a crime he committed under her influence, have multiple variants. This was not uncommon in Greek mythology; the idea of narrative fidelity was centered not on details but essence and the only thing necessary for a story to be a "true" story about Heracles is that it expound on his quintessence. Diodorus Siculus (*ca.* 90 – 30 BCE) and his massively ambitious *Bibliotheca Historica*, which was to be an account of everything in the world from its beginning to the present moment, compiled and curated many of Heracles' stories into a coherent narrative from which I have drawn to provide a synopsis.[74] Heracles was born to Alcmene after Zeus disguised himself as her husband, Amphitryon, who was away but expected back soon. Indeed, Amphitryon arrived back later that night and also slept with Alcmene, leading Heracles to be born with a mortal-sired twin of a different father, Iphicles. Even stories of the infant Heracles put his strength on display. Alcmene, knowing of Hera's tendency to vent her wrath against Zeus' infidelities with extreme prejudice, sent Heracles to be exposed. However, Athena intervened and swept up the starving infant. She went to Hera with the babe, who, ignorant of the paternity of the child and being in one of her aspects the goddess of matrons, took pity and fed Heracles from her own breasts. Heracles fed too strongly and caused the goddess pain, making her draw back and allowing a spurt of milk to stain the sky.[75] Note that Heracles, as a baby, was strong enough to hurt a goddess simply through suckling. Athena then returned infant Heracles to Alcmene, who recanted and took him in. Hera, in her nondiscriminating rage, sent

[74] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 4.8-39.
[75] This being the mythic origin of the milky appearance of the night sky, hence the name the milky way.

snakes to kill both infants, Heracles and his twin brother, but even though he was only weeks old he killed the snakes and amused himself by playing with their corpses. These foundational events suggest the thematic tone which surrounds the myth of Heracles.

Hera's attempts to kill Heracles directly failed, but she showed an aptitude for attacking his mental faculties. She drove him temporarily insane and in this fit of madness Heracles killed his first wife, Megara, and their children. To cleanse himself from these heinous killings, he obeyed the Oracle at Delphi and put himself into the service of his hated rival and relative, Eurystheus. Eurystheus sent Heracles out to perform ten impossible labors and, upon vacating two of Heracles' victories for spurious reasons, gave him two more, leading to the famed total of twelve labors of Heracles. He had other, non-labor related adventures and these, like the famous twelve, prioritize his might and, sometimes, seem to be slightly different variants of one of the established labors.

These variant labors serve another purpose, however, in allowing every locality of the Mediterranean to claim a Hercules story and, given his prodigious sexual appetites, descent from the popular hero. The Dorian conquerors especially claimed membership in the Heracleidae, and used this membership as the just cause of their rule of Hellenic city-states through tracing their lineage from his eldest son from Deianira, Hyllus.[76] This may see risible but is quite plausible given Heracles' love for sex was as ubiquitous as his famed strength. Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*,[77] a crucial compendium of ancient myth, recounts that Heracles, while wondering about, happened upon a city under threat from the Lion of Cithaeron.[78] Thespius, king of the city

[76] Centuries later the prestige of association remained so great that even Roman Caesars would claim membership in the Heracleidae.

[77] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 2.4.9-10.

[78] This is an instance of an echo from his labors, as his commonly accepted first labor was the Lion of Nemea.

of Thespiae and father of fifty virgin daughters, offers Heracles all of them as a reward for killing the lion. Heracles accepts the task, kills the lion, accepts his reward, and ends up fathering fifty sons from this adventure. Heracles' sexual appetites, these being tales from a culture with highly fluid views of sexual desire, is not constrained to beautiful women in his myths but also includes beautiful men. Indeed, Heracles' membership in Jason's Argonauts was interrupted by his lover, Hylas', abduction by Nymphs who were charmed by his beauty. Not being able to find him, Heracles went mad with grief.[79] Indeed, so famous was Heracles' carnal nature that in Plutarch's *Erotikos* it is claimed that while "on the one hand to speak of the multitude of other lusts of Heracles is hard work, yet still Iolaus is honored and provokes awe because he, by convention, is *the* loved of Heracles, and lovers take oaths and assert proofs of love at his grave."[80] Plutarch's use of ἔρως for love inserts a carnality to this description, a physical desire that is rapacious, which is itself another constant of Heracles. It is not just Hera that drives him mad, as we saw from in the story of Hylas, but frustrated desire for beauty has a similar impact. Heracles' insatiable lust for beauty, in fact, features prominently in his death.

2.2 Xenophon's Socrates' Prodicus' Young Heracles

While the body of original and secondary literature concerning Heracles is vast Prodicus, like many of the early sophists, has little remaining of his theories and practices save fragments.

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[79] Theocritus, *Idylls*, XIII and Appolonius' *Argonautica* I.1207-1357

[80] Ἡρακλέους δὲ τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους ἔρωτας ἔργον ἐστὶν εἰπεῖν διὰ πλῆθος: Ἰόλαον δὲ νομίζοντες ἐρώμενον αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι μέχρι νῦν σέβονται καὶ τιμῶσιν, ἔρωτος ὅρκους τε καὶ πίστεις ἐπὶ τοῦ τάφου παρὰ τῶν ἐρωμένων λαμβάνοντες.
Plutarch, *Erotikos*, 761d.

However, much has been said over these few remnants. These fragments, as Douglas Stewart in his forward to his translations in Sprague's *The Older Sophists* lays out, align to form a general picture of a man somewhat notoriously punctilious in precise wordage, somewhat of a pecunious dilettante, and possessing a deep vocal register that often got lost in rooms with poor acoustics.[81] As a result, despite his connections to Protagoras and his relevance to other contemporary sophists of his era, scholars of rhetoric have had little to say about him. Eric Robinson, for instance, only briefly mentions Prodicus as an example of an early sophist whose democratic roots are distinct from Athens in his argument for decentering Athenian democracy from our understanding of sophistic interrelation to democratic government.[82] Susan Biesecker finds the formal elements of Xenophon's paraphrase of Prodicus' parable of the *Choice of Heracles* to be intriguing and argues that it "simultaneously works within and resists the epic tradition" and thereby works in harmony with the radicalism of the other founders of Sophistry.[83] Robinson's argument is important and necessary, the fixation on Periclean Athenian democracy is an inherited bias brought over from most of our sources and the alien status of the original Sophists is, indeed, crucial to remember not just for the danger inherent in being a ξένος, 'foreigner,' during the era,[84] but also in understanding the origins of sophist cosmopolitanism and the universal domain of λόγος in political affairs.

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[81] Douglas Stewart, "84. Prodicus,*" The Older Sophists*, ed. Rosamond Kent Sprague (Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 2001). From the testimony in fragment DK 84A2. Lower vocal registers may sound more pleasant or carry more authority to the modern ear, but they carry less well than higher pitches. Much of Greek social life would occur in the *agora*, a literal open place, where a deep voice would easily be lost at anything greater than interpersonal distance and in the fragment, from Plato's *Protagoras*, the voice cannot carry outside of the room Prodicus is speaking in.

[82] Eric W. Robinson, "The Sophists and Democracy Beyond Athens," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 25, no. 1 (2007): 109-122.

[83] Susan L. Biesecker, "Rhetorical Discourse and the Constitution of the Subject: Prodicus' *The Choice of Heracles," Argumentation* volume 5 issue 2, 1991, 161.

[84] The base of the word xenophobia, ξένος as a term means 'stranger,' someone alien to a community. While it came to be bound in customs of hospitality, somewhat akin to 'ambassador,' it continued to carry an element of fear of the foreign and denoted a precarious position outside of the *polis* proper.

Susan Biesecker's formal close reading of Xenophon's account of Prodicus' narrative offers a way of reclaiming his sophistic radicalism is necessary recuperative work to save him from being read as a precursor to Socratic ethics as Plato seems to want to. I build upon Biesecker's work in my reading, agreeing with her premise that if Prodicus belongs with the Sophists in regards to the power of speech and the relativity of meaning then it makes sense to read him as, by default, propounding revolutionary critiques even if at first they read more milquetoast than radical. I similarly work within Robinson's contention by extending it, Prodicus' status as a visiting alien, albeit one with ambassadorial status, suggests that by his very presence his pronouncements, even if at first glance banal, can be read through the inherent radicalism inseparable from utterly provincial audiences hearing the trite from a foreign perspective. Pablum in the mouths of a foreigner simply produces meaning differently than pablum produced domestically, and Prodicus is not so congenial to conventional Greek morality as he might at first blush seem.

Classicists have more to say, performing close readings of everything from arguments concerning the size of Vice's breasts, or at least her presentation of them,[85] to an intriguing, detailed, and technical back and forth between David Sansone and Vivienne Gray regarding whether Xenophon's account can be read as a faithful reproduction of Prodicus' actual words rather than a paraphrase. Sansone argues that the parable's word choice does not correspond well to the extant Xenophon corpus and there is a prodigious use of synonyms in lieu of repeating the same word. Both traits, as Sansone points out, are well known characteristics of Prodicus and thus the fable of Heracles might be closer to direct quotation than is generally credited.[86] Gray

[85] David Sider, "Vice's Secret: Prodicus and the Choice of Heracles," *The Classical Quarterly*, 2019, p. 1-3.
[86] David Sansone, "Heracles at the Y," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 124 (2004): 125-42.

disagrees, showing linguistic evidence that both word choice and synonym use are quite in keeping with the general pattern of Xenophon's writings and Sansone's arguments are insufficient to conclude that these are not Xenophon's words in paraphrase of Prodicus' original speech.[87] Sansone currently has the final word in this debate, and admits that scholars have found Gray's arguments conclusive, but continues to press the claim that while Xenophon may have enjoyed eclectic vocabulary in general, the specific word choices and pattern of synonym use in "Heracles at the Crossroads" are unique to that story.[88] Sansone's argument is well researched and compelling, but he is nonetheless pushing uphill against the likelihood of paraphrase.

After all, in antiquity direct quotation of long works was far less common than inventive paraphrase and epitome. To make this argument more difficult, Xenophon has his Socrates conclude the recounting of the speech with an acknowledgement that Prodicus had said the same thing far more beautifully than he had. This conclusion may well be irony and without any actual text attested accurately to Prodicus himself, this is an unresolvable dispute. However, taking a stand on direct quotation or epitomization has important implications for how Prodicus is understood. For my part, it should be remembered that Xenophon is not even claiming to produce a faithful account of Prodicus' words but is instead recounting Socrates' retelling. The very best case for fidelity is that Xenophon perfectly recollects Socrates' perfect recollection of Prodicus' version, and that is vanishingly unlikely. I find it more productive to assume that Xenophon has given a fair summary and decent imitation of Socrates' own decent recounting, but the "Choice of Heracles" we have available to us simply cannot be read as though it were recounted with the full

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[87] V Gray, "the Linguistic Philosophies of Prodicus in Xenophon's 'choice of Heracles'?" *The Classical Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2006): 426-435.

[88] David Sansone, "Xenophon and Prodicus' Choice of Heracles." *Classical Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2015): 371-377.

fidelity of precise word choice that Prodicus was famed for. This imprecision, and concern Socrates has regarding it, only makes the text more productive, however. It is precisely through Prodicus' account filtered through Xenophon's Socrates that we can see performed the dialog's concern with the facsimile of beauty vs its actuality, these being key components of the choice Heracles is being asked to make.

Wolfsdorf attempts to add to the scant body of fragmentary commentary on Prodicus by suggesting that we take seriously the fifth-century CE scholist Hermias' commentary giving more detail regarding Prodicus' distinction on various words for pleasure. He admits Hermias is narrowly focused on his specific concern regarding various words for delight, but is no less important for demonstrating that Prodicus' demand for the exact correct word did not arise from an arbitrary sense of words, so that any word for pleasure was interchangeable with another, but instead clearly came out of a coherent, systemic logic that Plato and Aristotle fail to credit because of their default dismissiveness of sophistry.[89] Papageorgiou writes a similarly tightly focused argument, suggesting we read the famed *kreitton* ν *hetton* λόγος debate in Aristophanes' *The Clouds* not just as a parody of Protagoras' well known argument about the weaker beating the stronger but also as an oblique parody of Prodicus' fable of Heracles at the Crossroads.[90] Both cases are strongly made and compelling, and they both point towards a greater relevance and importance for Prodicus than the scant remnants remaining of his work testify to. Trusting the audience to get the reference and the joke requires Prodicus to be floating around in Athenian consciousnesses and for a scholar seven to eight centuries removed from Prodicus' theories and

[89] David Wolfsdorf, "Prodicus on the Correctness of Names: The Case of ΤΕΡΨΙΣ, ΧΑΡΑ and ΕΥΦΡΟΣΥΝΗ," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 131 (2011): 131-45.

[90] Nikolaos Papageorgiou, "Prodicus and the Agon of the Logoi in Aristophanes' 'Clouds,'" *Quaderni Urbinati Di Cultura Classica* 78, no. 3 (2004): 61-69.

works to detail the distinctions of the words for pleasure according to those theories demonstrates that Prodicus' importance endured through antiquity even if it only survives in echo now. For all the importance of this work for Prodicus' textual transmission, *Memorabilia* only recounts his dialog as a very small part of its larger project.

More important than any notion of word for word fidelity is that it is beyond dispute that Prodicus deployed Heracles towards some end in alignment with his sophistic interests. Heracles, regardless of how exactly he was used, cannot help but invoke the complex weave of association and meaning which stem from his position as a protopredicate of κράτος. Xenophon's citation of Prodicus in a dialogue of book 2 of *Memorabilia* is our best extant attestation to Prodicus' famous Heracles parable, and, before getting to Xenophon's account of Prodicus' story, the context the account is situated within must be analyzed. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* is a collection of *Sokratikoi Logoi* which, unlike Plato's, are less interested in producing *aporia* than solid ethical lessons. There are similarities, like the use of the Socratic method, but the stories in *Memorabilia* do not produce a coherent philosophy but instead seem more like a touching commentary on a beloved teacher. Book I, in particular, is a moving defense of Socrates against the charges which condemned him to death. The structure begins with Xenophon recounting qualities of Socrates which give the lie to specific charges such as impiety and corruption of the youth, and slowly builds towards recounting conversations and arguments.[91] In book 2, this process culminates into recounting a story where Socrates himself recounts a story, Prodicus' "Heracles at the Crossroads," in order to promote self-control to one of his students, Aristippus of Cyrene.

[91] Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 1.1-7.

Given his lack of self-control, Heracles would seem a curious choice for this particular moral lesson. As an exemplar of power and might he hardly serves as a bastion of restraint and moderation. However, it makes sense given the use of Aristippus as the recipient of the tale. Whether the account Xenophon gives is literally true is incidental. Regardless of whether Aristippus was actually lectured in this manner by Socrates or not, he serves as an excellent exemplar audience for the morality play about to unfold. Aristippus can be seen to have strayed far from Socrates' teachings if we accept Plato's account of Socratic values and judge from the limited corpus of Aristippus' historical actions. Some accounting of Aristippus as well as the preamble up to the "Choice of Heracles" is necessary before the implications for rhetoric and κράτος are explored.

Aristippus founded the Cyrenaic School, which centered around practicing what has come to be known as ethical hedonism and advocated a more radical idea of a life devoted to pursuing pleasure than the later Epicureans.[92] His successor in leading the school was his daughter, Arete, whom he had taught his philosophy to.[93] Through a curious accident of Roman alphabetization, Arete shares a transliterative equivalence to a central figure in Prodicus' story, *Arete*, or Virtue as she has come to be translated. The difference between Aristippus' daughter Ἀρήτη and the character of Prodicus' vignette, Ἀρετή, is fascinatingly slight even in Greek. While Arete the daughter undoubtedly gets her name from Homer,[94] the difference in the two names is a matter of vowel quantity. The *e* sound of epsilon versus eta is that of a short *e* and a long one. It is perhaps

[92] For an account of the influence of Aristippus' school of thought, see Kurt Lampe, *The Birth of Hedonism: The Cyrenaic Philosophers and Pleasure as a Way of Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[93] Strabo, *Geographica*, 17.3.22

[94] Nausicaa's mother. She is first introduced in *Odyssey* book six, but is not named until 7.141. Famous in Homeric Greek classes everywhere for weaving her curiously colored sea purple yarn early in book 6.

like the distinction between how long the *oo* sound is carried in the word mood versus moo. The accentual inflection, which syllable the pitch of the speaker briefly rises, serves to keep the name and the word distinct more than the difference in letters, as the name is accented on the penultimate syllable while the concept is accented on the ultimate. Of course, the timeline is too indistinct to make claims regarding the cause of Aristippus' choice of name, nor is there any reason to suspect that Socrates in reality ever did recount to Aristippus Prodicus' tale, but naming his daughter a slant rhyme equivalent of the ethical path he most definitely had not taken is perfectly in keeping with what little we know of Aristippus of Cyrene.[95]

The initial impetus for the account is Xenophon reminiscing on Socrates' advice to friends and students regarding self-control in all matters of pleasure. The first salvo is Socrates asking Aristippus about the correlation of power and restraint, getting the future founder of ethical Hedonism to agree that deferred gratification and the wherewithal to bear suffering are traits worth training the powerful for. Socrates then asks whether Aristippus views himself as among those fit for rule. Aristippus happily denies being fit in such a way, explaining that it would be utter folly to put the pleasures of others ahead of his own, as a ruler must. Up to this point the set up for Socrates' recounting of Prodicus has been fairly long, over a third of this short dialogue, and has followed the generic constraints of a Socratic dialogue. Socrates keeps asking Aristippus leading questions the answers to which lead to further questions. However, unlike most of Plato's versions of Socrates' interlocutors, Aristippus does not content himself with Glaucon-like affirmation and giddy appreciation whenever Socrates brings up a site of seeming contradiction in a line of

[95] Curiously, teaching his daughter philosophy brings Aristippus closer to Socrates than their divergent views on ethical living would suggest, as Socrates, unlike the vast majority of his Athenian contemporaries, often seems to think nothing amiss to finding wisdom and philosophical skill in women, particularly in Xenophon's accounts in *Memorabilia* and *Oeconomicus*.

questioning. Indeed, when Socrates seeks to press Aristippus about his professed refusal to be a member of the ruling class, which Aristippus refuses so as to maximize his personal pleasure, it sounds like a traditional gotcha moment familiar to readers of early Platonic dialogues. The ruled are clearly the weaker, and while rulers must learn self-restraint and control in order to rule, it would seem on its face absurd to suggest the enslaved enjoy life more than their rulers:

> But I think you see that the stronger impose upon the weaker, both in communal and individual lives, in order to set them, wailing, to be made into slaves. Can it escape your notice that, while others are planting and sowing, some cut down both grain and trees and at all turns are beleaguering the weaker if they are not willing to do service? All until they might be persuaded to take slavery for themselves as opposed to being at war against the stronger?[96]

The suggestion is that the weak surrender their freedom in exchange for a reprieve against the strong and that, while the strong surrender their own freedom in order to subjugate the weak, this surrender is voluntary and permits the possibility of pleasure in life in ways which servitude do not precisely because it is a matter of choice.

It is the invocation of the stronger versus the weaker antithesis that merits attention here and begins to make sense of using Prodicus' tale of Heracles. While it is a commonplace of Greek thought and writing, it nonetheless has special relevance in this part of *Memorabilia*, given that it presages the upcoming appearance of a related antithesis in Prodicus' story. Protagoras' promise that rhetoric would "make the weaker word stronger" (τὸ τὸν ἥττω δὲ λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν),[97] was a rare point of common convergence for the diverse body of thinkers known as Sophists. There is

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[96] οἶμαί σε ὁρᾶν ὡς ἐπίστανται οἱ κρείττονες τοὺς ἥττονας καὶ κοινῇ καὶ ἰδίᾳ κλαίοντας καθίσαντες δούλοις χρῆσθαι: ἢ λανθάνουσί σε οἱ ἄλλων σπειράντων καὶ φυτευσάντων τόν τε σῖτον τέμνοντες καὶ δενδροκοποῦντες καὶ πάντα τρόπον πολιορκοῦντες τοὺς ἥττονας καὶ μὴ θέλοντας θεραπεύειν, ἕως ἂν πείσωσιν ἐλέσθαι δουλεύειν ἀντὶ τοῦ πολεμεῖν τοῖς κρείττοσι;
Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 2.1.12-13

[97] As found in Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.24.11. The context of Aristotle's quotation is expanded on in chapter four.

little evidence either way for whether Prodicus himself held such a belief, but if we accept Papagorgiou's argument concerning the agon in *Clouds*,[98] then in the popular imagination, at least, Prodicus would be a fellow traveler in making weaker words the stronger. Thus, Xenophon having Socrates front this promise of Sophistic rhetoric is a first glimpse that not all is as it seems in Prodicus' vignette on the choice of Heracles. Sophists, as a class, have a weakness for the weaker argument that arises both from a natural predilection as well as their mercenary approach to pedagogy. All examples of sophistic skill simultaneously served as advertisements for students, and therefore making cunning arguments to support obvious and stronger arguments is less compelling as evidence of the power of rhetoric than cleverly overturning convention. The easy interpretation, the one which upholds convention, of the deliberately unresolved story is thus suspect.

Of course, rather than agree and set up the coming aporia, as in Plato's Socrates stories, Aristippus attempts to forestall the argumentative momentum by positing a third condition for a free person, neither an individual nor part of a community: "'But I,' he said, 'these options, I shall not suffer them, I shall not entrap myself in citizenship but [instead] am an alien everywhere.'"[99] Socrates, famed for prizing his belonging in his *polis* before his very life, is being thwarted by an aggressive expression of individualism defining itself in opposition to the very idea of the *polis*, one artfully expressed both in content and in form. The first-person singular is invoked no fewer than five times in the short utterance, twice through pronoun and three times in verbal conjugation. His statement of individuality strongly marks that very individuality and, by doing so, Aristippus

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[98] Nikolaos Papageorgiou, "Prodicus and the Agon of the Logoi in Aristophanes' 'Clouds,'" *Quaderni Urbinati Di Cultura Classica* 78, no 3 (2004): 61-69.

[99] ἀλλ᾽ ἐγώ τοι, ἔφη, ἵνα μὴ πάσχω ταῦτα, οὐδ᾽ εἰς πολιτείαν ἐμαυτὸν κατακλείω, ἀλλὰ ξένος πανταχοῦ εἰμι. *Ibid,* 13.

denies the limits of freedom that come both from membership or rulership of a polity and instead, perhaps somewhat tongue in cheek, provocatively claims for himself a middle option with a status of universal ξένος.[100] A *xenocosmopolitan* to counter Diogenes' contemporaneous proclamation of being a universal citizen, *cosmopolitan*. There is some literal truth to this, Aristippus being a stranger in Athens, but given the context of the dialogue and the performed relationship of the two men in it, the answer feels more playful than provocative, leading Socrates to comment wryly that it was a clever dodge, since clearly no one since Theseus had harmed ξένοι. Socrates then coyly suggests that Aristippus, when entering a city-state, is protected from harm less because of some magical property of being a ξένος but because "who would desire to hold a man in their home who on the one hand desires to do nothing and on the other takes pleasure in expensive living?"[101] The implication about the status of the ξένοι is clear, in every land they come to they enter "being weaker than all the citizens" (τῶν πολιτῶν πάντων ἥττων ὤν).[102]

The conversation returns to Aristippus' expressed doubt that voluntary suffering made any sense and Socrates doubles down by suggesting that self-control and voluntary enduring of suffering was a prerequisite for pleasure, suggesting that the toil of the hunter was necessary for the reward of the hunt. Socrates then resorts to a rapid citation of supporting authorities, first quoting a segment of Hesiod's *Works and Days* followed by separate lines of verse from a fifth-century comic poet, Epicharmus. He then launches into his recounting of Prodicus' demonstration

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[100] It is certainly not incidental that Aristippus' claim runs counter to both Socrates' strong parochial attachment to Athen as well as Diogenes' κοσμοπολίτης. The cosmopolitan, the universal citizen, argues for a polity composed of all mankind, and Diogenes was famous for foregoing all comfort. Aristippus, hedonist that he was, would naturally gravitate towards an opposed answer as seeking one's individual good with no regard to one's membership in the larger polity was antithetical to Greek political life.

[101] τίς γὰρ ἂν ἐθέλοι ἄνθρωπον ἐν οἰκίᾳ ἔχειν πονεῖν μὲν μηδὲν ἐθέλοντα, τῇ δὲ πολυτελεστάτῃ διαίτῃ χαίροντα;
Ibid, 2.1.15

[102] *Ibid.*

speech[103] on Heracles with little preamble other than to compliment Prodicus' wisdom. The basics of the story are simple, Heracles is at the crisis point of youth, where he must set out to decide what kind of man to be. He heads out to contemplate his options and is approached by two women, translated as Vice and Virtue, and both attempt to persuade him to take their path. Vice offers easy pleasure at no cost, Virtue a difficult life with future renown as the only guaranteed reward. The story ends without Heracles making his choice but, on the merits, Virtue provides the more compelling arguments and has the final word and is therefore commonly thought to be the choice Heracles makes.

To read the parable and conclude that Heracles chose Virtue is at odds with what we know of Heracles. By his choice he sets out for a life of sloth, of idleness and ease, of marriage and kids and a life with no renown. It is only after he is driven mad by Hera and kills Megara as well as his children that he is driven to the path of suffering and greatness. The myths of Heracles are filled with his seeking instant gratification rather than future renown, and as a heroic figure he would seem a fitting paragon of Aristippus' Cyrenaic school. That Plato and Xenophon's Socrates seems to like Prodicus' story, that Aristotle approves of the ethical message of it, suggests a very subtle radicalism in which the hearer of the tale is allowed to get out of it what they find most pleasing. This productive ambiguity and its quiet radicalism is hinted at even in Xenophon's reconstructed account, as we shall now begin to discover.

[103] While the speech on Heracles was part of a greater work, Xenophon has Socrates refer to it by itself as something Prodicus πλείστοις ἐπιδείκνυται, presented to the greatest many. The verb would be what was used for exhibiting an orator's skills with a demonstration speech.

The two competitors for Heracles' attention appear at the very start of the parable and, while Virtue may indeed be as modest as her nature demands, she is no less shy about signaling her aspect than Vice is.[104] The first thing of any note in the tale is their appearance:

> And to him two great women appeared. The one, on the one hand, was both comely to see and was of noble physique, the body having been adorned by purity, the eyes modest, the shape temperate, garments white. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the other had been reared up to both plumpness and softness, the face having been made beautiful in such a way that more color, both white and red, then there naturally was would seem to appear and her shape to seem more erect than was to be found in her actual physique, the eyes thrown wide open, and her dress was such that the sight of her might most shine through.[105]

They are yet to be named, but already the language, the precision of words Prodicus was famed for and which Xenophon's Socrates later suggest he has not lived up to, is performing judgement for us. Both women share common words of common parts, the same word is used each for eyes, for shape, for body, for physique but how these parts are described is tellingly different. The first woman, who we will learn is Virtue, has the briefest description and is described less in terms of her physicality as her virtues. She is "of noble physique," "temperate shape," has "modest eyes" and her body is "adorned by purity." What modest eyes and a body adorned by purity actually look like is left to the listener and, presumably, the hearer, understanding from this choice of words that this is a virtuous woman, will envision her in accordance with those values. However, the

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[104] Virtue signaling has entered popular discourse, albeit as a pejorative, and vice signaling has recently begun to see use as an explanation of Trump's marked refusal to be caught on camera wearing a mask during the Covid19 pandemic. The fronting of the physical performances of their aspects before their stated arguments about themselves in Xenophon's account may or may not have their origin in Prodicus' original parable, but the implications are nonetheless interesting that appearance comes before argument and, to an extent, makes the arguments which follow redundant.

[105] καὶ φανῆναι αὐτῷ δύο γυναῖκας προσιέναι μεγάλας, τὴν μὲν ἑτέραν εὐπρεπῆ τε ἰδεῖν καὶ ἐλευθέριον φύσει, κεκοσμημένην τὸ μὲν σῶμα καθαρότητι, τὰ δὲ ὄμματα αἰδοῖ, τὸ δὲ σχῆμα σωφροσύνῃ, ἐσθῆτι δὲ λευκῇ, τὴν δ' ἑτέραν τεθραμμένην μὲν εἰς πολυσαρκίαν τε καὶ ἁπαλότητα, κεκαλλωπισμένην δὲ τὸ μὲν χρῶμα ὥστε λευκοτέραν τε καὶ ἐρυθροτέραν τοῦ ὄντος δοκεῖν φαίνεσθαι, τὸ δὲ σχῆμα ὥστε δοκεῖν ὀρθοτέραν τῆς φύσεως εἶναι, τὰ δὲ ὄμματα ἔχειν ἀναπεπταμένα, ἐσθῆτα δὲ ἐξ ἧς ἂν μάλιστα ὥρα διαλάμποι:
Ibid, 2.1.22

woman we shall shortly come to know as Vice has been described to leave little left to the imagination and, indeed, flaunts herself in such a way precisely in order to leave no room for ambiguity. Vice is neither noble nor so gentle a word for attractive as comely. She is plump and soft and, interestingly she has been reared into this rather than simply *being* that way by nature.[106] Indeed, it is made abundantly clear that Vice is beautiful more as a matter of art and artifice than from any innate quality she may possess. She has applied cosmetics to make her face appear both paler and more flushed, she contorts her posture to flaunt her breasts,[107] and she brazenly dresses in such a way as to draw attention towards herself not by virtue of her natural beauty but instead by the results of her artifice labor.

The more attention given to Vice, the gaudier she seems and the greater her vanity and thereby our condemnation of her for it. That Prodicus' tale is so laconic about Virtue and prodigious on Vice, however, is another example where things are not what they seem to be in this story. This is being given as an account of a demonstration speech, after all, and if Prodicus means to procure students by means of his artful arrangement of perfect words then in it should stand out as strange indeed that in this example speech he is offering to make his students the very hussy his beautiful words have besmirched. Of course, this is Xenophon's version of Socrates' account of Prodicus, and it may well be that the wording of the actual speech was carefully crafted to an

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[106] The word used that I have translated as rear is a wonderful example or imitation of Prodicus' punctiliousness. The word used is the perfect passive of τρέφω, *trepso*, a verb which has a rich variety of meaning but centers around the idea of thickening. The LSJ first offers "thicken or congeal" followed by "increase" and so on. Many of the definitions apply to livestock or agriculture and it would not be inaccurate to use the verb fatten to describe the connotation were our culture not so invested in fat shaming. The idea is that she has been thickened deliberately and to her profit, like a pig or calf, as what we now consider plumpness would have been a desirable train in a woman of the time so long as it was not excess.

[107] I find Sider's reading of ὀρθός, 'uprightness,' compelling. A bearing or posture of ὀρθός does not conform with the hyperbolic femininity Vice has constructed, whereas using corsetry or posture to aggressively make her breasts stand out is perfectly fitting for her character and, sadly, translates rather easily into modern conceptions as well. David Sider, "Vice's Secret: Prodicus and the Choice of Heracles," *The Classical Quarterly*, 2019, p. 1-3.

opposite effect. The "Choice of Heracles" becomes more interesting when we do the following: accept the story as transmitted and consider that Heracles does not make a choice, combine that with our knowledge of Heracles' deeds and how he had to be driven to them, recall that Aristippus went on to found his Cyrenaic school of ethical hedonism, and keep in mind that perhaps Prodicus was known as a Sophist for a good reason.

After this descriptive introduction of the two antithetically beautiful women,[108] Vice presses herself forward in quite immodest fashion and makes her case to Heracles. Leisure and pleasure and rest are his and, best of all, he need literally do nothing to obtain them! At no point in the dialogue does Heracles give word or sign of his impressions of the women, he is a cipher barely contributing to the story: "And Heracles hearing these things said "Woman, what is your name?"[109] That, in its entirety, is Heracles' contribution to this story concerning his choice in this account. Vice gives a rather intriguingly honest answer: "'Some, my friends,' she said, 'they call me Happiness, but others, the haters, having belittlingly named me, they call me Vice.'"[110] The names, here, should catch our interest as it seems likely that such a detail would be faithfully rendered by both Socrates and Xenophon, even if the rest of the work is paraphrase. Vice initially says her name is Εὐδαιμονίαν, which accurately translates into 'happiness' but literally means something like 'well-spirited.' The *daimonion* is an important part of the Socratic lore as Xenophon himself recounts earlier in *Memorabilia*,[111] it is his spark of the divine peculiar to

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[108] Virtue being artlessly beautiful and Vice artificially so.

[109] καὶ ὁ Ἡρακλῆς ἀκούσας ταῦτα, ὦ γύναι, ἔφη, ὄνομα δέ σοι τί ἐστιν;
Ibid, 2.1.26

[110] ἡ δέ, οἱ μὲν ἐμοὶ φίλοι, ἔφη, καλοῦσί με Εὐδαιμονίαν, οἱ δὲ μισοῦντές με ὑποκοριζόμενοι ὀνομάζουσι Κακίαν.
Ibid.

[111] *Ibid,* 1.1.2

Socrates himself, yet the word itself was not peculiar to Socrates and to possess a *eudaimonian* would be to possess good fortune indeed. The name is opulent and well in keeping with Vice's lack of shame or modesty. Yet, something compels her to tell Hercules what her enemies, those who hate her, call her, and that name is Vice, Κακίαν. The word means badness in both a qualitative and moral sense. With very little effort, the means evilness and ugliness. It is a common antithesis of ἀρετή, excellence, which, it turns out, is the other woman's name. However, interestingly, unlike honest and self-reporting Κακίαν, Ἀρετὴ never names herself to Heracles. She is left without a name until the narration finally names her before the peroration. Whether this is faithfully carried over or Xenophon's own contribution cannot be known, but by not pushing her own name Ἀρετὴ wonderfully performs a concept much closer in the imagination of the era to our notion of virtue, σωφροσύνη, 'temperance, modesty.'[112]

Ἀρετὴ is often translated as 'virtue.' Such a translation is not entirely inaccurate but it loads the word with a moral and ethical framework alien to it. While the Latin *virtus* has a closer conceptual core to ἀρετή than virtue does, meaning as it does manliness, it still fails to carry the essence of the term. Ἀρετὴ is excellence in the most literal sense of the word, the going beyond the utmost and exceeding the mundane. It is to give one's all and to excel in the pursuit. It is, in fact, a perfect encapsulation of the notion of self-control and willingness to endure suffering that Socrates is trying to push upon his student. However, while Ἀρετὴ is presented in Prodicus' tale as being naturally excellent while Κακίαν is an artificial simulacrum of excellence, it bears remembering that ἀρετή is a component of rhetorical practice, appearing in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as

[112] An important term popular in the philosophic discourses of the 4th century BCE which valued self-control, σωφροσύνη would seem a perfect name for Ἀρετὴ if virtue were the aim of Prodicus' dialog. That she is named Excellence instead is important and one of the few choices which we can safely assume are accurately carried across from Prodicus in Xenophon's account.

one of the three components of *ethos*. And Aristotle was not a rhetorical theorist but a philosopher compiling a platonically compatible version of rhetorical theory and practice which, combined with what we know of Sophistic promises to teach anyone, suggests a rhetorical conceptualization of ἀρετή which aligns more with the labor of Κακίαν than Ἀρετὴ. Note that both are great women and beautiful, but one is so by nature and the other by artifice. Also note that both, therefore, are performing the opposite of their embodied natures. Ἀρετὴ is excellent by dint of sloth, were she to work on her appearance her qualities of modesty and temperance as described would no longer apply! Κακίαν, however, has seized her beauty for herself by toil, and hers is the more honest and attainable by the mechanism of making a choice. Which would a sophist looking for students valorize?

The two speeches given by Ἀρετὴ are artful performances of the points Socrates had been making as well as a masterful denunciation of the pleasures of idleness. Heracles, Ἀρετὴ tells him, will find glory at the end of her hard road and will find nothing at the end of Κακίαν's. The rewards she offers him are the sleep of the tired rather than the bored, the satisfaction of the ambitious rather than the ennui of the listless. It is given to Ἀρετὴ to rule over others and enslave the weak, and only the struggle of Ἀρετὴ will provide the pleasure of meaning in a mundane world devoid of one. Toil and renown lie down the road Ἀρετὴ lays out, idleness and obscurity the path of Κακίαν. And so the account ends, yet Heracles has made no choice and spoken words only to Κακίαν. The context of the account, that Socrates is telling it to an indolent and pleasure loving Aristippus, suggests what the outcome is assumed to be. It could be Xenophon had finished as much of the story as he cared to, but it seems likely that Prodicus' speech similarly ends unresolved. It is that lack of resolution which provides the story with its radical power against

convention. Concluding the story with a choice, having Heracles take up one or the other, would leave some of the audience unsatisfied in a way hardly becoming to a master of *λόγος*.

We are denied the closure of Heracles making his choice. More tellingly, we do not get a response from Aristippus. The dialectical partner in the exchange has not been reticent in agreeing nor in disagreeing with Socrates and his disappearance now might suggest that Xenophon was well aware that Aristippus would get from Prodicus' story an outcome different from what Socrates would have had in mind. Even Xenophon's Socrates, however, has his final word not on the moral or ethical lesson of the story, but instead the beauty of words used to relate the tale: "Thus Prodicus sets in motion Heracles' education under Ἀρετὴ. To be sure, h*e adorned the thoughts in still more splendid speech than I do now*."[113] This compliment, given the nature of the story Socrates has recounted, provides a third level of ambiguity. The adorning verb, ἐκόσμησε, is the 3rd person singular aorist active of κοσμέω, and is related to both the modern English word cosmos as well as cosmetics. The sense of the word is order and arrangement, and thereby it gets an aesthetic sense of the pleasing beauty of symmetry. It is used in the Choice of Heracles to describe the garb of Ἀρετὴ, yet she is adorned in "purity" while Prodicus had adorned the idea of this story with speech, and speech that compared to Socrates' was μεγαλειοτέροις, the comparative of an adjective that already signifies a step above great. Such excessive overabundance of eloquence yet again aligns more with Κακίαν than Ἀρετὴ, but the combination of verbal association with hyperbolic gaudiness perhaps gives a proper resolution to this ambiguity.

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[113] Emphasis mine. οὕτω πως διώκει Πρόδικος τὴν ὑπ᾽ Ἀρετῆς Ἡρακλέους παίδευσιν: ἐκόσμησε μέντοι τὰς γνώμας ἔτι μεγαλειοτέροις ῥήμασιν ἢ ἐγὼ νῦν.
Ibid, 2.1.34

The overall body of Heracles mythology suggests that he chose Κακίαν and was thrust into Ἀρετὴ. It is possible that Prodicus is engaging through such ambiguity in the classical rhetorical practice of having his cake and eating it too. His students could attain pleasure and learn to hussy their words into appearing pleasant but would all the while also be engaged in the hard work and toil necessary for excellence. Happiness, then, is found not in a life devoted to hardship and toil, to ruling and enslaving others through dint of constant effort, and nor is it found in a life of surrender and effortless submission to those mightier. Instead, rhetoric would offer a strength born of artifice in harness with excellence, one where the work to build the skill to beguile with word would provide the discipline necessary for virtuous usage. Mighty as Heracles was, large as he loomed over the public consciousness of the Greek world of the third and fourth century BCE, his κράτος was nearly irrelevant save as the frame and setting for Prodicus' beautiful weaving of words. Prodicus removed from Heracles the power of his κράτος in order to subtly suggest the great disruptive power of beauty. Like Κακίαν, Prodicus' charms were out in the open for all to marvel at and the care she must take to display those charms mirror his with his λόγος.

2.3 Old Man Heracles at the Renaissance of Sophistry

From Heracles as a strong youth competed over by various representations of beauty and excellence at Rhetoric's dawning we come to an aged and decrepit Heracles summoned forth during Rhetoric's revenant phase of the Second Sophistic. Lucian, a rhetor of the period famed for his dry use of irony and sarcasm, begins a speech, the remainder of which is lost to us, in his later life with an account of his master's almost certainly apocryphal encounter with a vase in Gaul

depicting Heracles as weak and old, but no less mighty thanks to his power of speech. Gallic Heracles seems to be a Heracles gone down the path of Κακίαν, but is still potent and admired for it. Convenient to the particular occasion Lucian found himself in, giving a speech in old age, and thus clearly a touch ironic and reflexively self-serving, this introductory allegory also takes place in a brief renaissance of rhetorical importance. Beauty is absent in the image, and words are figured to have power to enslave through coercion rather than allure. The alliance of rhetorical excellence with the beautiful thus becomes forsworn to some extent. Heracles in this tale is ugly, the erotic force of Eros would fly past one such as him unheedingly, and therefore all he has left to recommend him is the eloquence and beauty of his words and how they will compel others. For this, in the age of the Second Sophistic, Heracles is jokingly said to be admired by the Gauls.

Lucian is well known to be a satirist and delights in ironic inversions of the cultural myths of the time. Thus, his use of Heracles is almost certainly an ironic and tongue-and-cheek performance meant to delight an audience well aware of his reputation, as Lucian claims this speech is being made in his old age. The risk of dry wit and the intermixing of the serious and the comic is that some may miss the joke. Indeed, Lucian's *prooemium* to this particular lost speech is taken up with remarkable seriousness by Italian humanists in their scholarly and linguistic project of rediscovery during the Renaissance, and would thereby even find a curious afterlife as iconographic triumphalism for monarchical power. The resilience of Heracles' mythic might is thus made clear through even a cursory examination of Lucian's *Heracles* being appropriated. Hallowell, in his argument concerning the French poet Ronsard's knowing invocation of the Gallic Hercules myth, produces a genealogy of its use in popular art of the time in order to show its

ubiquity in the consciousness of scholars in the 15th and 16th centuries.[114] The interest in classical antiquity served the imperial interests of the consolidating and centralizing monarchs of the time, and Baldwin suggests that the Italian humanists situated the soul of imperialism in language, explaining the appeal of Lucian's Gallic Heracles in these terms:

> Similarly intimidating to its viewers, whose simple minds made them particularly dependent on revealed deities and doctrine, the correct and sumptuous Latin form of Lippi's fresco also evokes Italian Humanistic ideas about linguistic imperialism and the political power of language. Thus, Alberti argued that a Roman emperor "probably derived from the eminence of that position which he held by fortune's favor, no more power and authority than from his knowledge of the Latin language and familiarity with Latin letters.... It even seems to me that our imperial splendor was not wholly extinguished until the light and the far-reaching influence of Latin and of Latin letters faded away." For his part, Lorenzo Valla insisted, "there is the Roman Empire where the Roman language rules" while Tommaso Inghirami praised Cicero's rhetoric by noting its "magnitude of eloquence which certainly was equal to the Roman Empire." The most vivid image of rhetoric's rule appeared in the Renaissance revival of Lucan's legendary Hercules, who used eloquence to overcome adversaries. This inspired the life-size *Hercule Gaulois* with the four estates chained to his mouth, who rose gloriously on a triumphal arch in Henri II's 1549 entry into Paris.[115]

Dominion through the arts, through eloquence of words, was dominion nonetheless, and the powers and intellectuals of Europe interpreted Lucian's allegory as a sincere paean to power in any form. It is both glib and reductive to reduce renaissance practices into simple trial runs of modern practices and ways of thinking. The post-Westphalian nation state did not evolve from its antecedents and 'naturally' develop its ideologies but instead picked and chose attributes from the past when and as they were found to be useful. That it seems to have chosen to appropriate this tradition of might through any means and taken up the self-serving grasping of medieval potentates

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[114] Robert E. Hallowell "Ronsard and the Gallic Hercules Myth." *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 (1962): 242-55.

[115] Robert Baldwin. "Triumph and the Rhetoric of Power in Italian Renaissance Art." *Notes in the History of Art* 9, no. 2 (1990): 7-13.

to inform views of power in general should not serve as defining for the nature of the power of rhetoric.

In an article suggesting a connection between Lucian's Gallic Heracles and Shakespeare's Petruchio from *Taming of the Shrew*, Rebhorn argues that Renaissance thinkers glommed onto Heracles so strongly because he embodied the answer to a problem that bothered them mightily. Rhetors were, of course, men. After all, rhetoric was a device of power wielded in the public square, a space for men. Yet rhetoric seemed inescapably feminine in the majority of its classical trappings, valorizing words over deeds and even having the goddess Peitho as its patron. Heracles, Rebhorn suggests, solved this dilemma: "While they could easily have identified rhetoric with Mercury, the fortuitous publication of Lucian's Herakles in 1496 allowed them to avoid associating rhetoric with deception (Mercury was the patron deity of thieves) while instead emphasizing 'masculine,' Herculean qualities such as force and rule."[116] Yet the force and rule of Lucian's Gallic Heracles was softer, more palatable, then the brute force and coercion of the more κράτος-centric Heracles. Just as Petruchio's debasement of Katherine in Shakespeare is less off-putting than if he had debased her through brute force, so too the power of the monarchs over the state.

It seems an odd marriage, the old and bent Heracles of Lucian wed with the gormless youth yet to accomplish anything of Prodicus, but this combination is no accident. In an overview of the portraiture of Heracles during through the Renaissance, Friedrich Polleroß finds that both Prodicus and Lucian are important to the renewed uptake of Heracles in the period of the 15th to 17th centuries. Heracles becomes an icon of power wielded both softly and virtuously through this

[116] Wayne A. Rebhorn, "Petruchio's" Rope Tricks":" The Taming of the Shrew" and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric," *Modern Philology* 92, no. 3 (1995): 294-327.

marriage of the two rhetorical accounts of Heracles, important to all sides of the many conflicts of the age. Clearly important to France and thus to Catholicism, Heracles is nonetheless taken up by protestants such as Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, who combined Libyan Heracles (an emblem of overwhelming κράτος-like power) with the iconography of Lucian's chains binding men through eloquence and wisdom.[117] The ambiguity and complexity of the Heracles myth made it wonderfully malleable for every purpose even as Heracles' mythic meaning, that of being powerful, remained static. Lucian could not have known how badly the future might miss his joke, but he no doubt would have predicted it as he clearly was relying on the popular fixation on Heraclean might for the power of his surprising inversion of it.

2.4 Lucian Forges a New Wrinkle in Power Dynamics

While Lucian is not the first to have credited Heracles for the power of his mind,[118] he is the first to divorce Heracles from what was commonly understood to have made him Heracles, his κράτος, physical might and, by so doing, also rob him of his beauty through old age. Prodicus, at the birth of Rhetoric as a discipline, situated his use of the myths of Heracles during youth, before Heracles had come into the peak of his strength but was still possessing his beauty and, of course, his desire for the beautiful. By contrast, Lucian's allegory is at a remove, a story of an image the recounting

[117] Friedrich B. Polleroß, "From the" exemplum virtutis" to the Apotheosis: Hercules as an identification figure in portraiture: an example of the adoption of classical forms of representation," in *Iconography, Propoganda, and Legitimation*, ed. Allan Ellenius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 37-62.

[118] Isocrates suggests in his letter asking Philip of Macedon to become Hegemon of the Hellenic peoples that he live up to his ancestor Heracles' mental attributes of κατά γε τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἦθος καὶ τὴν φιλανθρωπίαν καὶ τὴν εὔνοιαν, "character of spirit and love of humanity and goodwill." Interestingly, the words used, ἦθος and εὔνοιαν become central to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as *ethos* and *eunoia*. Isocrates, *To Philip*, 115.

of which is simply designed to put listeners into a proper state of *pathos* before Lucian gets into his speech proper. The *prooemium* is a hard-hitting set of antitheses, and not all of them are without precedent in the Heracles myths. Indeed, even Prodicus' account through Xenophon has Ἀρετὴ decrying Κακίαν and deploying old age as an antithetical state to power and beauty:

> For who (when you are old) will trust your speaking? And who supply your wants? And who of sound mind would dare to be one of your band? For while one is young their bodies will lack power, and as old men one's spirit will become thoughtless. While on the one hand the youth reared lazily will be sleek, on the other, suffering and squalid, they will complete old age. By their past doings they will be shamed, by their current doings, distressed. For even while in youth they had raced through pleasure for old age they had been stowing hardships.[119]

Through this dire warning of Prodicus' Ἀρετὴ we should first view Lucian's description of Heracles in Gaul. The duality of the choice of Heracles is starkly laid out, pleasure now for hardship later, indolence now for weakness later, dishonor now for ill-repute later. Ἀρετὴ does not offer the logical alternative of this antitheses, a happy old age, but instead suggests her path echoes the earlier myths of Achilles and his own decision in Homer.[120] She suggests and offers a long life in legend in song, one of renown if not in flesh.[121]

Ogmius, the name Lucian credits the Gauls with giving their Heracles, is as stridently unlike the Heracles of popular myth as it is possible to be. In fact, it is only by certain iconic

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[119] τίς δ᾽ ἄν σοι λεγούσῃ τι πιστεύσειε; τίς δ᾽ ἂν δεομένῃ τινὸς ἐπαρκέσειεν; ἢ τίς ἂν εὖ φρονῶν τοῦ σοῦ θιάσου τολμήσειεν εἶναι; οἳ νέοι μὲν ὄντες τοῖς σώμασιν ἀδύνατοί εἰσι, πρεσβύτεροι δὲ γενόμενοι ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀνόητοι, ἀπόνως μὲν λιπαροὶ διὰ νεότητος τρεφόμενοι, ἐπιπόνως δὲ αὐχμηροὶ διὰ γήρως περῶντες, τοῖς μὲν πεπραγμένοις αἰσχυνόμενοι, τοῖς δὲ πραττομένοις βαρυνόμενοι, τὰ μὲν ἡδέα ἐν τῇ νεότητι διαδραμόντες, τὰ δὲ χαλεπὰ εἰς τὸ γῆρας ἀποθέμενοι.
Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 2.1.31.

[120] In book IX of the *Iliad* the Trojans are nearly triumphant and Agamemnon swallows most of his pride to send an embassage to beg Achilles to rejoin the fight. Achilles is reluctant, and eventually shares that two fates lie before him. If he stays at Troy he will die but earn undying renown, whereas if he leaves for home he has a long life guaranteed him (Homer, *Iliad* 9.410-416). Achilles chooses life but is eventually driven to death and glory. In the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus visits the land of the dead, Achilles famously complains about his lot, telling Odysseus he would rather work as the lowliest peasant than be lord of all the dead (Homer, *Odyssey* 11.486-493).

[121] *Ibid*, 2.1.33.

signifiers, the club, the lion's cape, his bow, that Heracles can be recognized at all. His physical embodiment, however, is, "to them" that of an "old man to the utmost end, bald in the front of his head exactly like a grey haired elder, and his skin wrinkled and burnt to the darkness of an old fisherman."[122] This is a description of Heracles, remember, and a balding, grey haired, elder with wrinkled skin shocks the conscience of an imagination reared with him as the paragon of might. It is illegible with the Heracles who in all imaginings signifies power and virility. Such a Heracles cannot have chosen the path of Ἀρετὴ. Such a path leads no more to dotage than Achilles' path for glory. Only the path offered by Κακίαν allows for a Heracles with such a visage, and so this Heracles cannot be a wise elder who lived a virtuous life worthy of respect but is the outward manifestation of a type of ugliness imagined in the Greek mind to go with inner vice. The image tracks with Κακίαν's dire warnings. Who, indeed, would be in such a man's company if they were of sound mind? Lucian imagines that this is a sophisticated revenge of Hellenic culture and imperialism by the Gallic tribes, an intentional shaming of the icon of the Greek world's cultural and physical power as, in his labors, Heracles had "run down the peoples of the west."[123] Such an imagining of Heracles is so difficult to comprehend that, were it not for his iconic accoutrements, Lucian would prefer to believe him to be a chthonic deity such as Charon[124] or Iapetus.[125] It is precisely the difficulty of this imagining that gives the image its power, however. The idea of power is so strongly invested in the myth of Heracles that it *must* be present. His listener is left

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[122] γέρων ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐς τὸ ἔσχατον, ἀναφαλαντίας, πολιὸς ἀκριβῶς ὅσαι λοιπαὶ τῶν τριχῶν, ῥυσὸς τὸ δέρμα καὶ διακεκαυμένος ἐς τὸ μελάντατον οἷοὶ εἰσιν οἱ θαλαττουργοὶ γέροντες:
Lucian, *Heracles*, 1.

[123] *Ibid*, 2.

[124] Ferryman to the underworld, described by Roman poets such as Vergil and Seneca as foul and unkempt looking.

[125] Titan god of mortality. Banished to Tartarus. Interestingly, also the father of Prometheus.

unsatisfied until Lucian explains where it resides within his allegory. A weak Heracles makes as much sense as an ugly Helen.

Lucian does not leave his audience in this state of aporic dissatisfaction for long, as he finally quickly brings the most important element of the allegory into focus and makes it the object of focus: "For old man Heracles *drags about* a plethora of a great many people all bound together to him by their ears."[126] This is the introduction to the most striking part of the allegory, and how it became famous to renaissance humanists, as these chains are, as is made clear, allegories to eloquence and wisdom. That is to say, to rhetoric. Yet before analyzing how that allegorical connection is made, it is important to take notice of the verb Lucian chooses to describe this bondage. I have emphasized my translation of 'ἕλκει' as 'drags about,' yet the verb also means 'to tear asunder.' It is a rather radically violent verb for a condition that Lucian goes to great lengths to describe as voluntary, suggesting that the bondsmen could escape but do not desire to, that they make haste to keep slack in the chain not out of fear but out of desire to stay close, and that they are singing the praises of their captor as they follow him. There is no dragging nor tearing asunder in the description, yet the verb is deliberately chosen for its violence and force, as the men are no less compelled than they would be by a mighty Heracles who drove them forward through brute might. In fact, the insinuation is clear that they are *more* compelled than they would be by force, as they are each driven by their own impetus, kept in line by their own wariness of going astray.

[126] ὁ γὰρ δὴ γέρων Ἡρακλῆς ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρώπων πάμπολύ τι πλῆθος *ἕλκει* ἐκ τῶν ὤτων ἅπαντας δεδεμένους. Lucian, *Heracles*, 3.

It is an ugly, off-putting image, and Lucian describes himself as being taken aback by it multiple times. However, in the midst of his consternation, he nonetheless does credit to describing the chains that connect the throng to Heracles, from their ears to his tongue, describing them as "more akin to the most beautiful necklaces" (ὅρμοις ἐοικυῖαι τοῖς καλλίστοις).[127] The use of καλλίστοις is telling as it is the superlative of καλός, beauty, and is one of two times the word appears in the brief *prooemium*. The second time is as he concludes and, indulging in some prosopopoeia, bids a winking farewell to his own "worthy strength, swiftness, beauty, and body"[128] as he is an old man no longer in possession of these qualities, but he finds comfort in his memory of this account of Heracles as his command of the beauty of language is greater than ever.

Lucian undergoes this shift, from incredulous questioning to acceptance of this Heracles, thanks to the intervention of a kindly Gaul who clarifies the allegory. It is explained to Lucian that Gauls think Heracles no less mighty than do the Romans and Greeks but that they credit his prowess to his wisdom and eloquence rather than might: "And for our part we credit Heracles to have accomplished all his doings by λόγος, born of innate wisdom, and to have accomplished through violence the greatest tasks by persuasion."[129] The use of the verb βιάζω, 'force,' in conjunction with persuasion reduplicates the ambivalence of the early violent verb choice for leading. Rhetoric as a force, albeit one where the verb is in the middle voice, is now being bandied about as a desirable way of advertising rhetoric while beauty is reduced to a fleeting mention. In a character deprived of all might, all capability of forcing people, the same verbiage is being used

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[127] *Ibid.*

[128] ὥστε ἰσχὺς μὲν καὶ τάχος καὶ κάλλος καὶ ὅσα σώματος ἀγαθὰ χαιρέτω
Lucian, *Heracles*, 8.

[129] τὸ δ᾽ ὅλον καὶ αὐτὸν ἡμεῖς τὸν Ἡρακλέα λόγῳ τὰ πάντα ἡγούμεθα ἐξεργάσασθαι σοφὸν γενόμενον, καὶ πειθοῖ τὰ πλεῖστα βιάσασθαι.
Ibid, 6.

as would have been for the traditional myths of Heracles. He remains a myth of might, of power, but his device has shifted from strength of his arms to the power of his wit which, the Gaul assures Lucian, is well known to only grow stronger with the coming of age even as bodily strength diminishes. The terms may have shifted, but Heracles remains an embodiment of the superlative of power as strength and thus continues to satisfy the cultural need that perpetuates him even as it shifts. The particular need for such a protopredicate, the need for Heracles, is unique to its age but the symbol of Heracles is uniquely fitted to satisfy it in all of them. It is this dynamic that lays the groundwork for his revival in the renaissance when alternate imaginings of power become necessary.

But this Heracles is someone who ensnares through cunning words rather than valorous deeds and does not seem to have chosen the path of Ἀρετὴ. His followers are *compelled* to be in his band, they do not join through choice. His body shows how he cannot have taken the advice of Ἀρετὴ because such a path for Heracles would preclude his growing old enough to have such a body. Yet Lucian's account suggests that Rhetoric is the anodyne for its own ills. That even as beauty and might of the body fade, the beauty and might of words increases in greater measure. The end of Lucian's account is an unflattering account of his own state and his own hesitance of subjecting himself to public scrutiny, and so his concluding valediction to his strength, swiftness, beauty, and body become an ironic salute to the waxing of his rhetorical power. He is mightier, this valediction suggests, in his self-described dotage, than he was in his prime.

One curious note, however, sours this rosy picture of geriatric splendor. Lucian makes a point to proclaim an indifference to the power of a well famed divinity: "Even Eros, as the poet of Teos has it, seeing me somewhat grey, 'may wish to take wing and escape,' Hippocleides don't

care."[130] The comment seems off-handed and little worthy of notice, but it is richly packed with allusions that complicate the seemingly simple project of Lucian's speech. Eros, better known in modernity as Cupid, is a figure and concept of great import both to Rhetoric and to the myths of Heracles.[131] His use in a throwaway and joking set of nested references is a curious move to make, as is obvious once the references are unpacked. The idiomatic expression, "Hippocleides don't care" (Ἱπποκλείδης οὐ φροντιεῖ), is a reference to Herodotus' account a drunken Athenian youth, one who would one day become Archon, who, as a young man wooing the daughter or a powerful lord, had drunkenly done a handstand and while dancing to the music. The lord, Cleisthenes of Sikyon, pushed past his decorum as host of the party, snapped that Hippocleides had danced away his chance at marriage. Hippocleides replied in the eminently quotable form that Lucian, some three centuries later, was still referencing with every expectation his audience would understand.[132] What keeps this from simply being an amusing cultural touchpoint is the oblique reference to Anacreon, the "poet of Teos." Lucian's phrasing, remember, was in layered references, and Hippocleides' comic quip is the payoff to the far more serious poetry of Anacreon.

While "May wish to take wing and escape" seems to be from a poem that is no longer extant, thematically the corpus of Anacreon suggests a great deal of work being done in this simple sentence. Anacreon writes of love in the form of ἔρως, of old age and youth, and even of dancing both joyously and foolishly. The role of ἔρως regarding rhetoric and power and Heracles will be

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[130] καὶ ὁ Ἔρως ὁ σός, ὦ Τήϊε ποιητά, ἐσιδών με ὑποπόλιον τὸ γένειον χρυσοφαέννων εἰ βούλεται πτερύγων ταρσοῖς παραπετέσθω, καὶ ὁ Ἱπποκλείδης οὐ φροντιεῖ.
Ibid.

[131] The notion of *eros*, embodied in the deity *Eros*, plays a prominent role in Heracles' downfall as will be made clear in Chapter 2.

[132] Herodotus, *Histories* 6.129
I have translated it somewhat roughly to align with a similar modern meme of similar sense and usage, that "Honeybadger don't care," though the Greek is perfectly grammatical.

examined further in the next chapter, but, given the thematic of Lucian's deployment of the mythos of Heracles, it is worth briefly examining what Anacreon has to say about beauty and about λόγος. In one of his more complete poems we have from antiquity, Anacreon lists the gifts given to several creatures, one line each, and, on the seventh line, mentions that φρόνημα, 'reason,' was given to men but not, on the eighth line, to women. To them, instead, was given κάλλος, 'beauty,' and the next six lines of the poem are devoted to how much mightier beauty is than implements of violence such as spears and flame.[133] Beauty, by this reference, is greater than but not equivalent to violence, it is a power with a curious relationship to power, and suggests that we would do well to take Lucian's invocation of Heracles with some salt.

The verbal violence associated with eloquence in this anecdote belongs, after all, to the Gauls. Lucian himself does not attest that he ascribes to it. Recall that the common understanding, a common understanding that, we shall see, flies in the face of a reasonable reading of Heracles' life, was that Prodicus had Heracles choose the path of Ἀρετὴ over Κακίαν. There is no virtue in compulsion, of forcing adulation through brainwashing others with one's rhetorical excellence. It is a barbarous view of the power of eloquence, an understanding of power which can see it only as force. Lucian lived as a rhetor in a time when rhetoric had little power at all. However, he was talking to an audience that shared his ethnocentric feelings of superiority to the Gauls and, of course, was familiar with his habit of irony and satire. They would enjoy the perversity of this account of Heracles because they well knew there were powers mightier than he. Lucian's account resonates differently in an intellectual movement trying to revive a school of thought in a soil quite different than the radically decentralized and democratic polity of classical Athens. It is, I fear,

[133] Anacreon, Ode 24.

meant to be a cautionary tale of the fate of rhetoric in a world where the might and power of the Emperor was increasingly the only legible exercises of power. Verbal violence was but a pale shadow that the Emperor could command with but a word.

Prodicus and Lucian lived in different eras, but both deliberately eschewed the might of Heracles in their use of him as a myth for their sophistry. Prodicus used Heracles as a youth whose strength had yet to find outlet, Lucian as a man whose might had wasted away. Both, by such usage, suggest something about the nature of rhetoric's relationship to power. It is not, cannot be, the kind of physical might Heracles embodied else they would have happily used the metaphor of his bodily strength to lend it to their words. Instead Prodicus, a foreign teacher of a new art, used Heracles in a cunning way to impart the importance of detail and appearance. Lucian, an eloquent man from the borderlands living in an age where eloquence was a danger to those in power, used a Heracles placed in the hinterlands and robbed of his might to perform the toothless might of rhetoric. Strength, both Sophists demonstrate similarly despite dissimilar locales in time and space, was never rhetoric's strong suit.

It is possible that this disavowal of might is a relic of their respective positions. Prodicus in danger by way of being a foreigner and Lucian by living in world where there is a monopoly on words with power. In both worlds, beauty is dangerous. The curiously fickle power of beauty over reason, over force, therefore, is seen to be a key component of sophistic thought. Indeed, it was an important part of their radical intellectual project and is intrinsically linked to the idea of ἔρως. Glossing over this facet of rhetoric so seemingly glibly is an acknowledgement that to be too clever, too eloquent, too popular through the power of your words was to bloom too high above your fellows and to be lopped off by a jealous power. Κράτος was ascendant in Lucian's day, and such might can brook no rival to its strength. This anxiety is well established in Hercules' myths,

and the next chapter demonstrates the prevalence of this anxiety as well as demonstrates the dynamic nature of the power of beauty.

3.0 Chapter 2: Sophocles' Heracles and the Fragility of the Stronger

Whatever they can, the mighty, being superior, do and the weak yield.

- Thucydides[134]

Sophistry may have produced its end runs around power simply because the κράτος of Heracles was out of the reach of old men more accustomed to talking than fighting. Like the turtle who cannot reach a bunch of grapes and so decides they must be sour, the playful theft of Heracles' might by Prodicus and Lucian could simply be poorly disguised envy. However, by examining what playwrights had to say we see in this chapter that the might of κράτος was ambivalently viewed within the greater culture and society at the time, not just by the Sophists. If the play done by Prodicus and Lucian with Heracles' might was not sour grapes, then it must serve a purpose. The complexity of the associations as well as the depth of the ambivalence argues against a simple metaphoric appropriation of the myth. Something more interesting must be going on. As the previous chapter demonstrates, Sophists were not interested in using the myth of Heracles as a way of claiming his κράτος and must have been deploying the protopredicate for some other effect. This chapter finds that the focus on the cause of the ambivalence, beauty's power to instill madness, may be the target of Sophist deployment of the Heraclean myths in their efforts to extol the power of their rhetoric.

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[134] δυνατὰ δὲ οἱ προύχοντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς ξυγχωροῦσιν from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* book V chapter 89. More commonly quoted in English as some variant of "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

So, in this chapter I examine the myth of Heracles as the epitome of κράτος when it is troubled by a strange fragility born from the very nature of his overwhelming might. No matter how powerful Heracles was, he remained susceptible to the μανία of ἔρως brought forth by κάλλος. That no one, not even Heracles the mightiest of mortals nor Zeus the mightiest of the Olympians, was immune to the allure of ἔρως is, in itself, not remarkable. However, it suggests that a body possessing κάλλος is superior to the person holding κράτος. That this is obviously not so interestingly complicates the position of the stronger. κάλλος seems to remain inferior to κράτος in Sophocles' telling of the death of Heracles, suggesting a curious fragility to the power of κράτος, that it might be overcome by a weaker power. Rhetoric is not directly mentioned in the play, yet the themes that Sophists will attribute to their art are here manifest as a close examination of the *Trachiniae* (*Women of Trachis*) makes abundantly clear. The play is easily read as the story of the downfall of Heracles brought low by a jealous wife, but I find within it a great deal of sympathy for κάλλος coexisting alongside a disquiet for how easily beauty can overthrow κράτος.

Sophocles' *Trachiniae* is little looked at within the field of rhetoric and understandably so as it was not until the latter half of the 20th century that it was much read or looked at by anyone at all.[135] Such analyses as exists use rhetoric as a device for looking at speeches describing the action of the play, such as Bruce Heiden's 1989 commentary, *Tragic Rhetoric: An Interpretation of Sophocles'* Trachiniae, which focuses on the effect of narrative lyricism vividly presenting lurid events occurring offstage.[136] Such commentaries are useful and inform how I offer this chapter's reading of the play to demonstrate the relevance of its themes and concerns to the questions and

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[135] Mark Griffith and Glenn W. Most, "*The Women of Trachis*: Introduction." *Sophocles II* 3rd edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[136] Bruce A. Heiden, *Tragic Rhetoric: An Interpretation of Sophocles'* Trachiniae. Vol. 1. (New York: P. Lang, 1989).

issues of sophistic rhetoric. In particular, the abundant rhetoricity of Deianira's narrative exposition is central to complicating how we read the play's central anxiety.

In examining the play, it becomes clear that while κράτος retains its privileged site for power, κάλλος has its own peculiar power which can be the undoing of even the greatest κράτος. Yet κάλλος does not exert itself upon the powerful, quite the opposite in fact, as the beautiful in the *Trachiniae* is taken with the violence of the strong repeatedly. However, through this conquest is κράτος conquered. The action of the play is read through this lens to reproduce the anxiety fourth-century BCE Athens would have felt in the depiction of a famously mighty, yet curiously fragile, strength being undone by the conventionally fragile, yet contingently powerful, allure of beauty. It is not enough to simply understand, as we saw in the first chapter, how the might of Heracles was considered distinct from beauty during this era. These anxieties are not unique to the milieu of the fourth-century BCE Attic world, but their prevalence at the time and place of sophistic ascendance is useful in understanding how and why sophistic rhetoric would disdain bodily might as a metaphor for its power even centuries later, as Lucian's use of a geriatric Heracles shows. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Lucian's situation and context was radically different to Prodicus', yet both similarly eschewed the seemingly easy metaphor of Heraclean might in service to their arguments for rhetorical efficacy. To understand how the early Sophists conceptualized their power, the weaknesses of κάλλος as well κράτος needs to be properly situated.

Some optional digressions from Sophocles' *Trachiniae* are taken to further examine the concepts of ἔρως and μανία when they become crucial to understanding the central *agon* of the play. A close look at the "Ode to Eros" in Sophocles' *Antigone* assists the chapter in performing the shift towards beauty as a distinct power in its own right and exemplifies the exigency that

informed Sophistic attempts to align rhetorical power with beauty. The cause of the madness that overthrows reason and might is found, it seems, in κάλλος and while κράτος remains a concern in the final chapters the focus shifts to how sophistry theorizes rhetoric's ability to harness beauty for the wielder's ends.

3.1 Deianira's Tale

Unlike any of Sophocles' other extant plays, *Trachiniae* opens with a soliloquy whereby Deianira, who at this point of the play has been wife to Heracles for long enough that their sons are reaching adulthood, introduces herself to the audience.[137] More interesting, this soliloquy is not used to set up the action of the play, like in Euripides, but instead gives unfettered access to the inner thoughts of Deianira. We get to her backstory soon enough, but her state of mind is what brings us into the action:

> There is a word from the dawn of time having come to light from mankind,
> that one could not learn thoroughly within the lifetime of mortals, before
> someone might die, if theirs was a good or bad life;
> But *I,* for my part, even before going into Hades,
> *I* know full well I am bearing a misfortunate and oppressive (life).[138]

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[137] Sophocles and P. E. Easterling. *Commentary to Trachiniae* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 71.

[138] λόγος μέν ἐστ᾽ ἀρχαῖος ἀνθρώπων φανείς,
ὡς οὐκ ἂν αἰῶν᾽ ἐκμάθοις βροτῶν, πρὶν ἂν
θάνῃ τις, οὔτ᾽ εἰ χρηστὸς οὔτ᾽ εἴ τῳ κακός:
ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν ἐμόν, καὶ πρὶν εἰς Ἅιδου μολεῖν,
ἔξοιδ᾽ ἔχουσα δυστυχῆ τε καὶ βαρύν.
Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 1-5.

This is a commonplace of Greek thought, attributed by Herodotus to Solon, an almost mythic Athenian statesman, and referenced in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon.*[139] No one can be called happy before they are dead.[140] Deianira's opening is a contradiction of this wisdom.

Deianira contradicting this wisdom in order to emphasize how miserable her life has been and she proclaims her personal experience as meriting the judgment of being wretched even before her death. Her misery, however, is not found in her present circumstances but dates back to her coming of age and the terror that came with being desired:

> Even while I was in the dwelling of my father Oeneus
> in Pleuron, a fear of the marriage bed
> I held more than any other woman in Aetolia.
> For my suitor, I am saying, was the river, Achelous,
> who took three forms to demand me from my father:
> First in the form of a roaming bull, at another time a writhing,
> coiled dragon, at another time a human
> with the face of an ox: and from his bushy beard
> A torrent of drink from a spring flowed in all directions.
> I was to accept such a suitor as this
> Wretched me, I was always praying to utterly perish
> before being brought ever near this marriage bed.[141]

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[139] As part of Clytemnestra's character assassination prelude to the murder of her husband, she finds ways to do him too much honor, such as having him walk across expensive fabrics rather than for his feet to touch the ground. Agamemnon protests and sums up his arguments with, "It is necessary for a life to end well to call it happy" (ὀλβίσαι δὲ χρὴ / βίον τελευτήσαντ᾽ ἐν εὐεστοῖ φίλῃ). Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 928-929.

[140] Herodotus, *Histories,* 1.32.7. The famed utterance occurs after Croesus demands from Solon an explanation for why he, Croesus, hasn't even made Solon's top list of happiest people despite all his wealth and power. Solon replies that it is necessary "to refrain and not call such a person happy, but well-fortuned, before he is dead." πρὶν δ᾽ ἀντελευτήσῃ, ἐπισχεῖν, μηδὲ καλέειν κω ὄλβιον ἀλλ᾽ εὐτυχέα. A theme that serves as the moral of the early section of the the *Histories*. Sophocles' use of δυστυχῆ, misfortunate, highlights Deianira's antithesis to Solon's maxim and, as the events of the play will demonstrate, she is quite correct in her too early judgement.

[141] ἥτις πατρὸς μὲν ἐν δόμοισιν Οἰνέως
ναίουσ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἐν Πλευρῶνι νυμφείων ὄκνον
ἄλγιστον ἔσχον, εἴ τις Αἰτωλὶς γυνή.
μνηστὴρ γὰρ ἦν μοι ποταμός, ,
ὅς μ᾽ ἐν τρισὶν μορφαῖσιν ἐξῄτει πατρός,
φοιτῶν ἐναργὴς ταῦρος, ἄλλοτ᾽ αἰόλος
δράκων ἑλικτός, ἄλλοτ᾽ ἀνδρείῳ κύτει
βούπρῳρος: ἐκ δὲ δασκίου γενειάδος
κρουνοὶ διερραίνοντο κρηναίου ποτοῦ.
τοιόνδ᾽ ἐγὼ μνηστῆρα προσδεδεγμένη
δύστηνος αἰεὶ κατθανεῖν ἐπηυχόμην,

Achelous, it bears noting, is indeed a terrifying suitor but is also being strangely civil in his pursuit of Deianira compared to other Greek divinities such as Apollo and Zeus and, indeed, Heracles' own coming suit. Most of the Olympic pantheon simply take the beautiful mortal they want or sleep with her through deceit, trickery, or strength and we need look no further than Zeus pretending to be Alcmene's husband when he fathered Heracles or how he overpowered Leda while in the form of a Swan when he begat Helen.

However decorous by the standards of the gods of the day, Achelous desire for and pursuit of remains a classic case of the powerful subject taking the beautiful object. It does not matter to him in the least that Deianira would rather die than sleep with him. He presses his suit regardless, overcome with his desire to have her. Note the verb tense and voice of ἐπηυχόμην, the verb for 'praying' in "I *was always praying* to utterly perish. . ." Ἐπηυχόμην is imperfect, a past tense which carries the aspect of incomplete action. Deianira *was* praying for death, but the aspect does not tell us that she ever stopped this prayer. Nor, of course, does she suggest that she still is praying for death and, indeed, suggests otherwise later in her account of events, but nonetheless it is important to note this suggestion, which stacks with many others through this opening monologue, that Deianira's troubles did not end with Heracles' rescue of her. Achelous eventually intimidates Deianira's father into agreeing to the marriage, and Deianira is at the river awaiting her fate, when, "luckily" for Deianira, her beauty attracts another demigod suitor, Heracles.

> The renowned child of Zeus and Alcmene arrived:
> Who, into this site of contest, crashed in battle
> and freed me. And the turns of the labor
> I am not able to tell fully: for I did not know: but someone

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πρὶν τῆσδε κοίτης ἐμπελασθῆναί ποτε.
Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 6-18.

At the seat, unafraid of the sight, they might say;
but I, I was driven out of my senses by fear
Lest to me beauty might win grief at any time.[142]

This passage contains a wealth of wonderful nuance in the vocabulary, with Deianira suggesting herself to be the prize of this fight. Thus, even while Deianira beholds the spectacle from a safe remove, she is nevertheless the target, the receptacle of the violence of this contest of strength being fought out over which divine figure gets to possess her. The use of ἀγῶνα is particularly subtle, as it is a word which marks a gathering or assemblage, such as a wedding party, but also has a highly particular meaning about being the site of a contest for prizes. In Deianira's own recounting she is a living trophy for their contest, one to be borne off by whichever of the two proves to be the most powerful. Also note that in this account, Heracles arrives without knowledge of what is transpiring nor any of the context. He simply sees a river god and a pretty girl at some ceremony or other and decides to fight the god in order to take the bride.[143]

Centered on weakness and told through the perspective of the object of a contest for strength, these first twenty-five lines of the *Trachiniae* are a curious way indeed to start a play

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[142] ὁ κλεινὸς ἦλθε Ζηνὸς Ἀλκμήνης τε παῖς:
ὃς εἰς ἀγῶνα τῷδε συμπεσὼν μάχης
ἐκλύεταί με: καὶ τρόπον μὲν ἂν πόνων
οὐκ ἂν διείποιμ᾽: οὐ γὰρ οἶδ᾽: ἀλλ᾽ ὅστις ἦν
θακῶν ἀταρβὴς τῆς θέας, ὅδ᾽ ἂν λέγοι:
ἐγὼ γὰρ ἥμην ἐκπεπληγμένη φόβῳ
μή μοι τὸ κάλλος ἄλγος ἐξεύροι ποτέ.
Ibid, 19-25.

[143] Of note here is that while there existed a perfectly serviceable word for marriage and marrying, γάμος, *gamos*, and γαμέω, *gameo*, respectively, ancient Greek had a distressingly rich variety of euphemism and metonymy to draw upon for forcibly marrying young women. Hence many words of marriage being related to beds or acts of taking. I have tried when translating such terms in such a way as to keep the conjugal aspect in English. Lest we be tempted to consider this an oddity of the misogyny of antiquity, the most popular English wedding vows retain a sense of this in variants of the medieval Sarum Rite's consecration of marriage, "I <name> *take* thee, <name>, to be my husband/wife. . ." (emphasis mine). While the original ceremony dates to the period when the ceremony would have been conducted entirely in Latin, it is interesting to note that the vows were written in the English of the age. Here, in this passage, we have a curiously vibrant literalization of violence of this persisting metaphor of taking someone to wife.

centered around the death of the strongest mortal to have ever walked the earth. While we get to witness his strength by hearing testimony of him killing a deity the most pertinent parts of this monologue all center around Deianira. Concerning her, there are three other things bearing notice. The first concerns how we are given to understand that Deianira is beautiful. While we do not see the word "beautiful" until the end of this sequence, the audience is left in no doubt of Deianira's beauty. Of course, the play would be performed in a mask, giving the audience no visual marker of this beauty, but her beauty can be read textually as a way of making sense of the actions of the river god and Heracles. Indeed, their fight over Deianira makes her beauty clearer than any poetic assertion or description of it could. She is so beautiful she moved two incredibly powerful beings to fight to the death to possess her.

Second, and not unrelated, when beauty comes up it arrives as the subject of a sentence concerned that Deianira's beauty might harm her, "lest to me beauty might win grief at any time" (μή μοι τὸ κάλλος ἄλγος ἐξεύροι *ποτέ*). I chose to translate ἐξεύροι as 'win,' an option both allowed and suggested for Sophocles by the Liddel, Scott, and Jones lexicon[144] in order to underscore her role as prize of the contest. My translation also highlights the temporal indifference of ποτέ, 'at some time,' as the emphatic concluding placement hints not just to the possible climax of the fight coming at any moment but, more generally, that Deianira's beauty was not finished threatening her with grief and still might do so at a moment's notice. And make no mistake, the sentence is unambiguous in signaling that it is Deianira's beauty which is threatening her, not the river deity nor the wandering demigod.

[144] "ἐξευρίσκω," Greek Word Study Tool. Accessed January 23, 2020. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=eceuroi&la=greek#lexicon

Being in the nominative, κάλλος is marked as the subject of the sentence making beauty the doer of the action, and thus it is her beauty that might win her pain. While this is clearly poetic license and perhaps not quite meant to be taken literally, beauty, after all, being an abstract concept incapable of acting, we should nonetheless take heed of the trope being used here, personification. Κάλλος is being given a position of agency and control, it is being spoken of by Deianira as if it can act and, opposite of what one might expect given the current contest being described, her worry is not about how it will act upon others but rather how it will act upon her. This empowering of beauty in such a peculiar way becomes a theme throughout the play. Heracles' κράτος, and strength in general, is never so personified. This lack of personification, this lack of assigning to strength its own agency, subtly underscores the superiority of the power of strength compared to beauty. Strength, after all, is useful. It is at its possessor's command. Strength is the subject of its possessor while beauty subjects its bearer to possession.

Third, despite being the impetus for all the action Deianira is presented as utterly powerless. Through the use of the nominative form of κάλλος it is made clear that she herself is not the actor who brings together these titans of strength to fight. Instead her beauty is given credit. She appears, in her very own utterance and recognizance, only though the dative μοι, the first-person indirect object of the sentence, that to which her beauty is apportioning misery. Her beauty renders her weak, she is made the object of a prize by it, and she grammatically constructs events so that she lacks the agency of being the possessor of her own beauty even as she claims it compels two demigods to risk their lives in a contest of strength for the right to possess her. She is so powerless that she cannot even apprehend the events she is watching as she watches them, as her explanation for her lack of a blow-by-blow account of the fight shows: "And the turns of the labor / I am not able to tell fully: for I did not know: but someone / At the seat, unafraid of the sight,

they might say." Notice that she does not say she did not see, or that she looked away, but rather she does not *know*[145] what the twists were. Someone without her fear could have sat where she sat, seen what she saw, and given an account, but not she. Of course, her state is understandable, and she may well be forgiven for having her mind refuse to comprehend what is happening to her, but it is relevant that she is being presented as even *less* present in the moment than a hypothetical passive spectator. She presents herself as a passive object, a prize to be carried off by the strongest. In these first lines the stage is set not just for the action of the play but the dynamics between two forms of power. We have conquering κράτος, imbued in Heracles, and the first hints of the complicated power of δύναμις in Deianira's beauty, albeit in a negative capacity.

Not long into her new, nonvoluntary, relationship with Heracles, her beauty does in fact lead to further threats to Deianira's wellbeing. Heracles is taking her off to be his wife when they encounter a river running too swiftly to be crossed. A centaur, Nessos, offers to take them across the river but says he can only take one at a time. While swimming the river with Deianira on his back he starts groping her, she cries out, Heracles fires an arrow and kills Nessos with arrows coated with the poison of the Hydra's blood. While Heracles swims the river himself, Nessos tells Deianira that one day Heracles' passion for her will cool, and on that day she should find a way to anoint Heracles with some of Nessos' blood, which, so long as it has been kept away from sunlight, will make him love her more than any other woman. The blood, however, now has poison from the Hydra within it and Nessos is in fact laying out the groundwork for an elaborate and decades

[145] The verb of knowing used, οἶδα, is an interesting verb as it gets its form from the past participle of ὁράω, a verb of seeing. Much like in English the verb "to see" can connote understanding, οἶδα works in the same way. So Deianira is literally saying that she sat there, watching but unseeing, as the fight played out.

delayed revenge. Deianira, believing Nessos, does as instructed and bottles up some of his blood for later use.

Fast forward a decade and change and Deianira has had several kids from Heracles and Heracles has finished his fame making labors and is going around having adventures. She is living what would seem to be a happy life, yet we know from her introduction in the play that she is miserable. She claims her misery is out of fear for her husband, but it quickly becomes apparent that there is a different source. Lichas, her husband's herald, arrives with a group of slaves that Heracles had taken from a city he had sacked. Among them is a stunningly beautiful girl, Iole. Deianira, given her experiences and knowing what she does about her husband, asks about these slaves and Lichas proceeds to lie in response, claiming that they are from a town Heracles attacked in revenge for his being enslaved for a year. Eventually the truth comes out and it is revealed that, to no one's surprise, Iole had caught the eye of Heracles and, when her family would not let him have her, he sacked the city, killed the girl's family, and enslaved the populace including, of course, Iole, the desire for whom started it all.

3.2 Love is a Battlefield where Eros is Sole Invictus

It is difficult to overstate the role of powerlessness in the play so far. Without it, Deianira's behavior may strike the modern reader as odd, both in her ambivalent clinging to a relationship with Heracles and in her ability to take relationship advice from a Centaur that had just attempted to rape her. At this point in the play she has yet to hit the crisis point in the trope of being the loyal wife waiting back home. Will she be Penelope, putting off marriage out of fidelity to an almost

certainly dead husband for a decade, or a Clytemnestra who will take her man-killing axe to the returning husband as he relaxes in her bath? The pathos of Deianira's character is that the decision is not in her hands; she tries to be Penelope but ends up as Clytemnestra. Penelope's and Clytemnestra's separate vengeance are both well motivated within their stories and greater mythology.[146] Deianira's decision to stick with Heracles in the face of his absences and infidelities seem, at first, to be unmotivated and without reason. Her courtship, after all, is more remarkable for its spectacular violence than its spectacular romance. As we have established, however, by her own account all this violence and fear has one culprit responsible for it, and it is not Heracles. No, it is her beauty.

It seems that Deianira readily accepts that her lot is simply the way of the world for the beautiful. When, while pressing him for the truth, Deianira castigates Lichas and tries to reassure him that she is not jealous of Iole, she goes directly to the heart of the matter, Eros:

> Now whoever stands up to Eros
> like a boxer with respect to their hands, is not thinking well;
> For Eros rules both gods how he likes,
> and me; so how not another akin to me?[147]

Three things come together in rapid succession in this segment, Eros, a god of mania-inducing love, ἔρως;[148] the violent power of κράτος, particularly how it bends before such love; and, while

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[146] Foremost of Clytemnestra's reasons for murdering her returned husband is the fact that he had sacrificed their daughter, Iphigenia, in order to appease Artemis and summon a fair wind for the expedition to Troy.

[147] Ἔρωτι μέν νυν ὅστις ἀντανίσταται
πύκτης ὅπως ἐς χεῖρας, οὐ καλῶς φρονεῖ:
οὗτος γὰρ ἄρχει καὶ θεῶν ὅπως θέλει,
κἀμοῦ γε: πῶς δ᾽ οὐ χἀτέρας οἵας γ᾽ ἐμοῦ;
Ibid, 441-444.

[148] Of the three common words for love in classical Greek, φιλία, ἔρως, and ἀγάπη, ἔρως is the most erotically charged and, in fact, gives us the word "erotic." However, it's not exactly lust, but more of an overwhelming desire, of which lust is one type. Note that the Romans translated Eros, the child of Aphrodite and god of this love, into Cupid, from *cupido*, a word meaning desire or greed or lust from which The English word cupidity comes from.

not directly articulated, κάλλος, especially of the type embodied by and in Deianira. Their proximity in utterance suggests their proximity in Deianira's thought which, given her life, is not at all surprising.

The strength of violence clashing with the allure of beauty is the centerpiece of both Deianira's post pubescent history and the utterance, with the κράτος aligned specter of violence performed through standing up to a god like a boxer being considered as not "thinking well," a use of the adverbial form καλῶς from the adjective καλός, 'beautiful.' Of course, καλός the adjective is simultaneously a word for 'good' as well as 'beautiful,' and there is nothing terribly odd in its usage here, but beauty is very much on Deianira's mind when she utters the term. Standing up to the god Eros in a contest of κράτος is, indeed, not thinking beautifully! After all, the power Eros possess and is interested in does not reside in κράτος, and Deianira avoids invoking φιλία, a friendlier love of long-time partners and friends, preferring instead ἔρως, a passionate love, for precisely this reason. To paraphrase Shakespeare, Eros is not ἔρως which does not conquer where it conquerable objects of erotic fixation finds. Yet Eros the god does not conquer through violence, but through compulsion and madness that drive those he inflicts to do so. Heracles, Deianira is suggesting, could not turn his fists against the god Eros, but he *could* fight everything that stood between him and Iole, the target of his lust. Deianira, having been the object of such conquest herself, cannot help but know that Heracles is not interested in befriending Iole, but instead in bedding her. In exhorting Lichas to tell her what she already knows, Deianira reveals that she is well aware of the herculean appetites of her husband and tells him that "No man has married more than Heracles, in fact."[149] Yet, while professing aplomb at the nature of humans to be ruled by

[149] οὐχὶ χἀτέρας / πλείστας ἀνὴρ εἷς Ἡρακλῆς ἔγημε δή.

ἔρως, Deianira is nonetheless nervous. The story of the monologues suggests an ambivalence about the power of her beauty, but, if her own beauty no longer excites ἔρως, then this means she no longer will have any power over her famously powerful husband. We can understand that she is moved not to jealousy but rather to pity and still make sense of the dramatic action of the play in this light.

The power of ἔρως over mortals and immortals is a commonplace, and it is helpful to look more closely at this force and the god who was its embodiment. Sophocles wrote a choral ode about the god Eros in another of his plays and, looking at it, it is easy to see why Deianira is both phlegmatic and concerned by Iole's ability to excite ἔρως. In *Antigone,* When Haemon goes off to try and rescue the condemned Antigone against his father's orders, the Chorus chants a warning concerning Eros:

> Eros, the unconquered in battle,
> Eros, you who fall upon the wealthy,
> Who on a maid's soft cheek does slumber,
> You roam wildly about overseas and in
> the shelters in the open country,[150]
> And neither can any immortal flee you nor anyone
> Of ephemeral humans.
> He held by you is driven mad.
>
> Out of just (deeds) towards unjust
> You wrest the mind upon dishonor[151]

Ibid, 459 – 460.
Note that the verb used here, ἔγημε, is a form of γαμέω, *gameo*, the verb for marriage, but here its being used, horrifically to modern sensibilities, to politely describe rape or, even at best, concubinage.

[150] Literally "open ground," referring to low density landscapes. The Greeks, being a highly civic people, had disdain for ruralism, considering it a trait of barbarians. Our use of the Latin equivalent of polis, civilization, carries across this attitude as well as the slight pejorative force of descriptions like nomadic, unsettled. Mark Griffith's commentary in the Cambridge edition points out the curious ambiguity that neither people nor animals are mentioned, suggesting that "This vagueness perhaps adds to the universalizing effect of the doublets (water/land, animal/human . . .) and underscores Eros' ubiquity." Sophocles, *Antigone,* ed. Mark Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 258.

[151] Ἔρως ἀνίκατε μάχαν,
Ἔρως, ὃς ἐν κτήμασι πίπτεις,

That the chorus of Theban elders blames Eros for Haemon's decision to disobey his father is somewhat surprising, as his love for Antigone does not seem to be the passionate sort. In the heat of their debate Creon may have called his son a 'slave of a woman' (γυναικὸς δούλευμα), but the chorus has kept a calmer head throughout their agon. The play's presentation suggests that Haemon's feeling are more out of respect for Antigone and her virtuous concern for her duty to honor her fallen brother, Polynices, than an intense passion consuming him from lust for her beauty. Yet, when he discovers her corpse, he takes his own life rather than live without her. Antigone merits such a drastic response not for her *physical* beauty, but the beauty of her symbolic actions: the scattering of dust on her brother's corpse, the refusal to recant to a tyrant, taking her own life rather than endure his punishment. This, then, is the power of beauty in its most extreme state: to make someone forget themselves and do everything within their power to obtain the object of their desire. While it may be easier to notice in the throes of passion for physical beauty, it is no less potent a force for metaphysical beauty. However, while Sophocles' ode in *Antigone* and Deianira's own phlegmatic acceptance that her beauty engenders this lust plays up a more unbeatable than unbeatable strength aspect, the vast majority of the time Deianira is walking around in the play she is *not* being ravaged. Lichas spends most of the play with her and yet we

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ὃς ἐν μαλακαῖς παρειαῖς
νεάνιδος ἐννυχεύεις,
φοιτᾷς δ᾽ ὑπερπόντιος ἔν τ᾽
ἀγρονόμοις αὐλαῖς:
καί σ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἀθανάτων φύξιμος οὐδεὶς
οὔθ᾽ ἁμερίων σέ γ᾽ ἀν-
-θρώπων. ὁ δ᾽ ἔχων μέμηνεν.
σὺ καὶ δικαίων ἀδίκους
φρένας παρασπᾷς ἐπὶ λώβᾳ. . .

Sophocles, *Antigone*, 781 - 792.

are never given an indication that he has lost his mind to madness, and it is Deianira's reasoning that wins him over rather than any seduction she undertakes.

This fickleness suggests that beauty's power is kairotic, that it requires the right beauty at the right time deployed with and against the right mindset. Eros is the god who puts those qualities together and, by mixing the portions just right, can drive any and all to madness. Eros, after all, isn't the god of beauty but rather the god of the desire for beauty, and his role in myth is that of provocateur. But, precisely because of this role, his power is not to be underestimated. Failed contests against Eros are a common enough trope in his era. Sophocles can set out his boxing metaphor with no fear that anyone will mistake it. Just as boxers box for a prize at the game, so do the strong contend for the beautiful as objects to be possessed by strength. Beauty's power, in such a formulation, comes from the desire to possess the beautiful rather than any innate quality radiating outwards from beauty. Haemon desires to have Antigone because of her spiritual goodness and beauty and, denied this by his father and her suicide, takes some of the symbolic power of her death for his own by joining her in death. The operation of ἔρως on Heracles when he encounters the beautiful is blessedly straightforward and simple compared to Haemon's. Consistent between these two somewhat differing accounts from Sophocles, however, is that the madness of ἔρως is not simply one of carnal desire which can be satisfied through conjugal ministrations but is instead one of desire for dominance and possession. The beautiful which inspires ἔρως sparks a desire for taking, and that is the problematic power which Deianira possessed in herself and sees in Iole, and is why she is oddly phlegmatic over Heracles' lusts.

From this viewpoint, the power of κάλλος lies in beauty's ability to provoke ἔρως and is therefore contingent, fickle, less prone to enduring longevity and more to the lust of the moment. Yet the power of κράτος is different. From cradle to grave, Heracles is always strong. He was

strong as an infant when he slaughtered the snakes Hera had sent to kill him and, even now, in his coming and horrifying death throes, his strength is such that he alone can sever his mortal thread. This strength is such that he is granted a cult status and is revered as a mortal permitted to join the immortal gods. It is hard not to think, then, of Heracles when Deianira invokes the image of the pugilist standing with hands like a boxer against Eros. It recalls most obviously the wrestling match Heracles had to fight to win Deianira but, more than that, it is a rather chilling testament to the uselessness of Deianira, or of anyone beautiful who is not also strong, resisting the whims of men smitten by her beauty. She cannot help but be self-referential, whether she intends to be or no, by claiming it would be silly to be jealous over Heracles' lusts and past conquests. She may as well be referring to Iole, who was not able to stand up to Heracles' lust, or to her own younger self's lacking all power to resist Achelous, Heracles, and Nessos. Just as Heracles cannot stand against Eros, neither Iole nor Deianira can stand against him. This creates a curious circular ouroboros of power, as Eros has not smitten Heracles directly but indirectly through the beauty of men and women. Iole and Deianira in their beauty have sparked this madness in Heracles, giving them something akin to power over him, but he, in his physical strength, has consistent power over them. So, if power is a binary of powerful and powerless, who has power over whom? Both sides of the equation are simultaneously empowered and disempowered, yet not in the same way.

3.3 Strength Subjected to Beauty

Deianira gives an important clue as to the nature of the power of beauty. When she returns to the similarity she has to Heracles' newest conquest/woman, she relates a fascinating and telling moment of fellow feeling:

> . . . Since I,
> In fact, pitied her the most once I looked upon her, since
> Her beauty utterly destroyed her life,
> And the land of her forefathers unwillingly the ill-fated girl
> Sacked and enslaved.[152]

It is no coincidence that κάλλος, beauty, makes another appearance and leads off once again as the personified subject and Deianira's assigned agent in the downfall of Iole's home, people, and life. Deianira, too, feels her life destroyed by her own beauty and begins to feel her new, already miserable, life destroyed by Iole's. The most interesting part is the shift in subject in the last part, where we switch from beauty being the subject, to Iole herself. The switch is subtly made, and the two are closely conflated, but there is a change. While both ἔπερσε and ἐδούλωσεν are 3rd person singular aorist indicative active, they cannot have κάλλος as the subject because the adjective δύσμορος can be either feminine or masculine but cannot be neuter as κάλλος is. And while it is Heracles who has literally sacked and enslaved her home, Deianira does not mean for him to be the subject, as is clear from οὐχ ἑκοῦσα, a feminine nominative adjective. This sentence

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[152] . . . ἐπεί σφ᾽ ἐγὼ
ᾥκτιρα δὴ μάλιστα προσβλέψασ᾽, ὅτι
τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς τὸν βίον διώλεσεν,
καὶ γῆν πατρῴαν οὐχ ἑκοῦσα δύσμορος
ἔπερσε κἀδούλωσεν.
Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 463-467.

is both about and for Iole, and it is a neat use of hysteron proteron, with the cause listed before the actor, to add emphasis.

Deianira is well qualified to speak for the voiceless Iole simply by virtue of being powerfully beautiful herself. Easterling's commentary agrees with this reading, reminding the reader that "The beauty of Iole recalls the beauty of D[eianira]" in line twenty-five, and he goes on to unquestioningly repeat the logic of Deianira's pitying cast of the blame for Iole's enslavement upon her beauty: "At this stage D. does not know that both she and Heracles will *literally have their lives destroyed by the beauty of Iole*."[153] Note that Easterling quite literally appends the adjective "literally" to his assertion of beauty as instrument of destruction. He is pointing out an important moment of irony but, in doing so, he sees none of the irony in assigning responsibility for the coming tragic events to beauty itself rather than to Heracles' lusts or even the divine intervention of Eros. The oddity of victim blaming both operates with insidious ubiquity and is invidious once noticed. Nonetheless, this is a logic which remains as prevalent in modernity as antiquity and it is telling that now as then the practice centers around control and agency. To consider reflexively whether the victim of an assault was dressed in a particular way or wondering a certain neighborhood during certain hours is to turn the focus on aspects the victim can control and, thus, subtly, suggest that some of the culpability for the action lies with them. The practice shown in the *Trachiniae* denies the victim, Iole, any such agency even as it imbues her with a power to topple the mightiest of heroes of antiquity.

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[153] Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, ed. P.E. Eaterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 130. Emphasis mine.

Because Iole possesses beauty, Iole has destroyed her home and enslaved her people. Iole's beauty and Iole's ontological being are thus subtly conflated, the one substituted grammatically for the other as we move from "Her beauty utterly destroyed her life" to "And she . . . the land of her forefathers sacked and enslaved;" for what else is Iole but her beauty? And so Iole, through Deianira's sympathetic identification, is suddenly given the power and agency over her beauty that Deianira had begun the play refusing to herself. Iole's beauty brought about her tragic circumstances, and so Iole sacked and enslaved her homeland. Power and powerlessness coexist in a sense that would be intolerable to imagine in Heracles. Even as he is suborned by the madness of Eros he never relinquishes his power or control over action. He may be driven to action, but the deeds of his strength are his, not his strength's. His *κράτος* vanquished the Lion of Nemea and the Hydra, and so Heracles is credited with having done so, because he is strong. In those instances which Heracles finds himself bested, by Hera and the madness she produced in him for instance, it is in contests where his strength does not come into it. To be simultaneously powerful and powerless is a characteristic of δύναμις and, so far, seems to have applied most readily to the objects of κράτος, κάλλος.

To blame Iole and her beauty makes some narrative sense, as it is the catalyst that begins the tragedy the centaur Nessos had put into motion with his dying words. Deianira tells the chorus, "For I see on the one hand her youthful prime encroaching forward, but on the other mine decays; his eye will love to snatch (her) bloom, but his foot will spurn away mine."[154] The verb, correctly and most often translated as 'take' is ἁρπάζω, and when a woman is the direct object of the verb

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[154] ὁρῶ γὰρ ἥβην τὴν μὲν ἕρπουσαν πρόσω, / τὴν δὲ φθίνουσαν: ὧν ἀφαρπάζειν φιλεῖ / ὀφθαλμὸς ἄνθος, τῶν δ᾽ ὑπεκτρέπει πόδα
Ibid, 547-549

its meaning is often clearly rape. Nominally, ἁρπάζω means to take or snatch, but so does *rapare* in Latin. In this sentence the meaning is metaphoric, but perfectly clear. Iole is to be taken as Deianira was taken, and Deianira fears to find herself robbed of even that about herself which has brought her so much misery. Her faculty for engendering *ἔρως*. If we consider Deianira the tragic hero of this play rather than Heracles, here we find the contradiction which elicits pity. She fears to lose the power of her powerlessness and, from that fear, will act in a way that brings about her downfall.

That she is terrified of losing that which has brought her into that very state of terror is the great, circular pathos of Deianira's life. All the other tragedies that follow, killing Heracles by mistake, killing herself because of her son's accusation, all this follows from her being consumed by the power of others even as their actions are blamed upon and attributed to her beauty. Deianara, not surprisingly given the era and culture the play was written in, has bought into the systems of thought which have made her own life such a miserable and fear-bound one. Deianira has Lichas bear Heracles a shirt she has soaked in the centaurs envenomed blood and, when Heracles puts it on, he dies a gruesomely agonizing death with his flesh burning off his bones as if by acid. In a final feat of strength, he tears down some trees and creates his own funeral pyre. As he dies, he entreats his son, Hyllus, to marry Iole since Heracles cannot. Hyllus is horrified, as his disjointed utterance attests:[155]

> For who she, who in killing my mother was sole
> accessory and also to you, gripped as you are gripped,
> who this girl, unless sick with avenging spirits,
> would choose? Better for me too, father, to die
> than together to dwell with this most hated.[156]

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[155] As Easterling notes, "The structure of Hyllus' sentence reflects his emotional turmoil." Sophocles, *Antigone*, ed. Easterling, 226.

[156] τίς γάρ ποθ', ἥ μοι μητρὶ μὲν θανεῖν μόνη

Hyllus is utterly shocked by the suggestion he take to wife the woman he considers directly responsible for killing his parents, so much so that he finds it difficult to reference her save indirectly and cannot name her at all. How Hyllus has come to the conclusion that Iole is responsible is left unexplained, as if it were obvious, and, by the logic of the play and the agency of beauty within it, it is. Were Iole not possessed of the ability to drive men mad with her beauty none of this would have happened. However, Iole has been offstage almost the entirety of the play; she has done nothing and she has said nothing and she has been nothing other than beautiful for the entire story. Even more than Deianira's expressed inability to recall anything she witnessed during Heracles' fight to win her, Iole is presented as powerless and helpless. Yet she is powerful enough, for by being so beautiful she becomes the object of Heracles' lust and from there of Deianira's unease and finally the undoing of them both.

Recall from the beginning of the play, Deianira's remembered desire to die before sleeping with the river god? Her son echoes that desire at the end of the play, and as Deianira's desire for death was born from her feelings of powerlessness so too are Hyllus'. The action of the play has thus inverted the dynamic of power. At the start, the κράτος of the masculine had unquestioned supremacy but by the culmination of the action the beauty of an enslaved woman has Hyllus, the son of Heracles, too terrified to even refer to her directly.

The Greek attitude towards women and concern over how they might overturn power is of course born from a deeply misogynistic culture and the dangerous power attributed to beauty might

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μεταίτιος σοί τ᾽ αὖθις ὡς ἔχεις ἔχειν,
τίς ταῦτ᾽ ἄν, ὅστις μὴ 'ξ ἀλαστόρων νοσοῖ,
ἕλοιτο; κρεῖσσον κἀμέ γ᾽, ὦ πάτερ, θανεῖν
ἢ τοῖσιν ἐχθίστοισι συνναίειν ὁμοῦ.

Ibid, 1233-1237.

be hyperbolic, to put it lightly. The *Trachiniae* makes the case overtly, that beauty is dangerous in that it can overcome strength, yet this is a common, subtle theme in Greek culture, and it brings both gods and mortals low. The pitiably powerless plight of Deianira in the power of her beauty took place in a culture abounding with tales about Narcissus, Apollo and Daphne, and even Hesiod's formative accounts about the order of the divine and value of hard work. That Narcissus is so beautiful that he finds himself ensnared and ensorcelled by his own reflection is not just a cautionary tale about vanity, but a further testament that beauty is its own wild force, not at its possessor's control.

Yet precisely because of that pushing of the δύναμις of beauty to such extreme boundaries its qualities and relations to rhetoric can be made clearer. The anxiety that the strong can be overthrown by the weak, given the right circumstances, pervades the play's treatment of beauty and is at best only lightly tempered by the sympathy it performs for the fate of weak and beautiful in the face of the strong gripped by lust. The anxieties for beauty parallel those for rhetoric. Just as it was feared that rhetoric could turn the order of things upside down, so too with beauty. That the weaker could be made stronger with rhetoric, so too with beauty. However, most of the time, that the power of rhetoric is contingent and fickle and mostly loses to κράτος, so too with beauty. The next chapter shifts the focus to the mythic body of Helen and shifts to examining beauty with an eye on examining sophistic concern for the how beauty's peculiar power seems to lack control and agency.

Rhetoric's disavowal of violent strength as the exemplum of its own force in sophistry is deliberate, else why would the two Sophists from the first chapter–Sophists of two differing eras, times, and climes–decline to center their arguments around Heraclean might? The distance is born from the anxiety central to the rhetorical paradox of making the weaker into the stronger, and the

particular weaker overcoming the stronger-than-all-others, Heracles, is the weaker-but-beautiful, as this chapter demonstrated. The next chapter will focus on the already articulated problem inherent in this paradox. The beautiful, often being the weaker, do not become the new stronger after vanquishing them because beauty lacks control and agency over itself. In Sophocles, this has manifested by suggesting that the beautiful are a site for contest and conquest. As we focus on Helen and her function as exemplum of beauty, we will see Euripides complicate this arrangement followed by Gorgias' explicit alignment of rhetorical power with Helen.

4.0 Chapter 3: Euripides and Playing With Helen

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

- Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*

In this chapter we move from Heracles to introduce Helen as the myth representing the epitome of κάλλος. Rather than begin with Gorgias' famous *Encomium*, we continue the transition begun with the examination of Deianira beauty's role in the downfall of Heracles. Beauty is being thought out, in Euripides, as a type of power. However, it is distinct from the κράτος of Heracles not just in the imprecise nature of its efficacy but in the lack of agency the possessor of beauty wields with it. Helen is of great interest to sophist thinkers of the era and is the site they tease out this relationship of agency and power. Helen is completely ubiquitous and much reviled, as Euripides' plays demonstrate, and given the details of her life it seems strange to align the power of a new art with a woman who seems so powerless. Perhaps it is because of this odd fit that the sophists did it, by making an unlikely poster child of the seemingly powerless Helen they fulfill one of the performative aspects of self-advertisement, the demonstration of their efficacy. However, it seems more likely they chose Helen because she is *not* simply powerless but is also, simultaneously, supremely powerful. In Homer she is both sinned against and sinning, and Euripides in particular takes full advantage of this, quite literal, ambivalence. The myth of Helen is where the chapter starts and is replete with this dichotomy of power, from the Oath of Tyndareus to Paris' Judgement.

From the common myth of Helen we move to Euripides' treatments of her in two particular plays, the eponymous *Helen* and her appearance in *Trojan Women*. Euripides writes with

surprising sympathy about what must be true for the holder of beauty's power given the misogyny of the age.[157] In the *Helen,* this chapter examines the role of appearance and possession of that appearance within the play both as it relates to Helen and as it plays out for Menelaus' reaction to his wife's beauty. In *Trojan Women*, Helen's beauty is deployed by her not just through appearance but by a beautiful speech as *agon* to Hecuba's desire to have Menelaus kill her on the shores of Troy before he departs. Hecuba, we see, warns in the strongest terms against the allure of Helen's bodily figure but takes too little account of her rhetorical figures.

This chapter concludes with a quick analysis of Helen's appearance in the Odyssey, where she provides comfort in the form of a φάρμακον, 'a potion,' to a weary and distressed Telemachus visiting Sparta for news of his long absent father. Comingled with the drug, she also tells him tales of Odysseus during the siege. And, in a comingling of concepts which pays off in the concluding chapter, her beauty, drink, and words are a balm to Telemachus' turmoil in a rather insidious way. Helen's ambivalent φάρμακον in Homer paves the way for Gorgias' more purpose driven ensorcelling rhetoric in the final chapter. While the φάρμακον seems an obvious time to insert some Derridean deconstruction, Homer's use of Helen's φάρμακον tells us less about the nature of the metaphysics of presence and more about the metaphysics present in Helen that made her the superior protopredicate for Gorgias to frame his conception of rhetorical power around.

Helen, both in Homer and as Euripides dramatizes her, is far from powerless even though the narrative details of her life suggest an abject status to rival Deianira's. Sophistry finds in Helen a fittingly fickle and inconstant dynamic of always fluctuating power relationships. It probably

[157] For a good survey of the particular performances of misogyny of Greece and Rome, including several chapters on Athens during the fourth and third century BCE, see Sarah B Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975).

helps that Helen is as cunning in words as she is beautiful in body, but the aspect of her verbal eloquence is only demonstrated in Euripides and is not mentioned by Gorgias. It is the power of Helen's beauty, for all the chaos it brings, which shows the way for the otherwise inconquerable to be deliberately and intentionally overthrown. Unlike Sophocles' Deianira, Euripides' Helen's beauty renders her as powerful as it does powerless, and sophists such as Gorgias will pay keen attention to the circumstances which give her beauty purchase.

4.1 The Price of Beauty

The direct ties of Helen to rhetoric in the scholarship are mostly found in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* and Isocrates' *Helen*, and so much of the rhetorical scholarship dealing with the myth of Helen revolves around her. While Gorgias' account is upcoming in the next chapter, this chapter's reading of Euripides and Homer are, in part, intended to address the discipline's narrow, albeit rich, fixation on the directly relevant texts from the early Sophist, and so literature dealing with Gorgias is worth examining before we discuss Euripides' plays *Helen* and *Trojan Women* as well as Homer's *Odyssey*. Helen, after all, is a prolific figure who looms large in the body of Greek myth, she is the most beautiful mortal the world has known and her beauty serves as the catalyst for strife, war, and the interventions and machinations of the gods. She appears in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and is taken up as a subject for poets, artists, and dramatists as well as rhetors. For my part, this chapter will look at Helen both within the contexts of her appearances in sophistic advertisements for the power of rhetoric as well as her greater function in the works of Homer and Euripides.

Gorgias' *Helen* is one of the sites of contention for a disciplinary dispute between advocates of an epistemological view of rhetoric versus the aesthetic. Schiappa argues for a rhetoric of *logos* centered objectivity while Poulakos stakes his ground with a Nietzschean *rhetorike* of relativism. Poulakos therefore reads the *Helen* as a clear allegory for Rhetoric and a spirited defense of the new discipline.[158] Schiappa opposed this view and finds in Gorgias a predisciplinary theorization not of rhetoric or sophistry, but of *logos*, which was, indeed, their preferred term for their art.[159] This dispute between the two camps and their champions was just a skirmish over the larger fight about sophistry as a field of study, a fight famously played out in the pages of *Philosophy and Rhetoric* thirty years ago.[160] Since recent treatments of Gorgias continue to situate themselves in this now decades old conversation,[161] I will align myself with Johnstone's observation in his review of the argument, that the central dispute over terminology was obscuring that this was a fight over what rhetoric as a discipline was and *is*: "To revert to the question . . . whether the Older Sophists practiced rhetoric–the way to answer that question would be to see whether among the Older Sophists rhetoric was clearly recognized as a conceptualized, discrete verbal art with a body of identifiable teaching. Whether they were acquainted with the word *rhetorike* is beside the point."[162] I suppose, as this chapter will make clear, I find the answer to be a fairly easy one to come to. It does not matter that early sophists called their discipline

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[158] John Poulakos, "Gorgias' Encomium to Helen and the Defense of Rhetoric," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 1, no. 2 (1983): 1-16.

[159] I have left *logos* romanized but in italics, as Schiappa does, to help distinguish his use of the rhetorical concept from how I argue that the sophists deployed λόγος; Edward Schiappa, "Gorgias's Helen Revisited," Quarterly Journal of Speech 81 (3) (1995): 310.

[160] John Poulakos, "Interpreting Sophistical Rhetoric: A Response to Schiappa," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 23, no. 3 (1990): 218-228.; Edward Schiappa, "History and Neo-Sophistic Criticism: A Reply to Poulakos," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 23, no. 4 (1990): 307-315.

[161] Consigny divides the field among objectivists such as Schiappa and rhapsodists such as Poulakos; Scott Consigny, *Gorgias: Sophist and Artist* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

[162] Henry W. Johnstone, "On Schiappa versus Poulakos," *Rhetoric Review* 14, no. 2 (1996): 439.

λόγος, that some insisted it was philosophy, or that we currently have taken up Plato's definitions and use the term rhetoric; what matters is that there was a self-aware attempt to technicalize the use of language and that these early systems provide a foundation and common point of reference for what we, today, study as rhetoric.

Happily, not all of rhetorical scholarship looking at Gorgias is centered around this dispute. There are readings which find in Gorgias' *Helen* an intriguing possibility of anachronistic feminist politics.[163] Vessela Valiavitcharska finds in the *Helen* a Gorgian notion of *orthos logos*, a correct speech, tied to truth in a way at odds with the later Platonic attacks on Gorgias and sophistry in general.[164] Takis Poulakos wrote a chapter for Vitanza, making intriguing arguments about the questions of agency in the *Helen.*[165] The wonderfully titled book, *Seduction, Sophistry, and the Woman with the Rhetorical Figure*, devotes a chapter to Gorgias' use of Helen and the alternatives his deployment of the "woman with the rhetorical figure" offers to modern rhetorical studies.[166]

Classicists have written a great deal more about Helen as a figure and, for the most part, scholarship from Classics will have to ground my interactions with Homer and Euripides but are, no less than the musings of rhetorical scholars, important for looking at Gorgias and Isocrates. Pratt finds in Gorgias' *Helen* a playful use of irony to seem more interested in style over substance but, by so doing, to trick the prospective student into caring about ethical considerations.[167]

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[163] Andy Crockett, "Gorgias's Encomium of Helen: Violent Rhetoric or Radical Feminism?" *Rhetoric Review* 13, no. 1 (1994): 71-90.; Susan Biesecker, "Rhetoric, Possibility, and Women's Status in Ancient Athens: Gorgias' and Isocrates' Encomiums of Helen," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1992): 99-108.

[164] Vessela Valiavitcharska, "Correct Logos and Truth in Gorgias' Encomium of Helen," *Rhetorica* 24, no. 2 (2006).

[165] Takis Poulakos. "Human Agency in the History of Rhetoric: Gorgias's Encomium of Helen." In *Writing Histories of Rhetoric*, edited by Victor J. Vitanza, 59-80, 1994.

[166] Michelle Ballif, *Seduction, Sophistry, and the Woman with the Rhetorical Figure* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001).

[167] Jonathan Pratt, "On the Threshold of Rhetoric: Gorgias' Encomium of Helen," *Classical Antiquity* 34, no. 1 (2015): 163.

Blondell describes Helen's role in Gorgias in her book, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation,* as simply being a device readily ignored by the sophist in his eagerness to talk about his art.[168] Blondell's articles are more agonistic. She feels that Gorgias' excusing of Helen's behavior acts as a containment strategy for the power of Helen's beauty, a way of neutering its power.[169] She also credits Homer with a separate practice to an intriguingly different end, arguing that Helen's use of self blame is not just a deflection device, but an insertion of agency and, perhaps, ownership of her power in the face of an overwhelming misogyny that had no interest in crediting her with any save in negative terms.[170] Blondell's read of Homer's Helen is responding in no small part to the tone established by Doherty in *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey*, which describes all the ways that women's voices can be both dangerous and silenced in Homer.[171] Bettany Hughes has a more intriguing and nuanced view, finding that Helen simultaneously occupies positions of power and contempt within Homer.[172] An article by Doyle admits the more sinister aspects of Helen but resolves them somewhat by suggesting that her manipulations served to ease the grief of her husband.[173] I find Blondell's analysis of Helen compelling, and her focus on Helen's beauty aligns with my own project nicely yet, while Blondell acknowledges the power of female beauty and carnality, she views the objectification of Helen as a disempowering device,

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[168] Ruby Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[169] Ruby Blondell, ""Third Cheerleader from the Left': From Homer's Helen to Helen of Troy," *Classical Receptions Journal* 1, no. 1 (2009): 4-22.

[170] Ruby Blondell, ""Bitch That I Am": Self-Blame and Self-Assertion in the Iliad," *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 140, no. 1 (2010): 1-32.

[171] Lillian Eileen Doherty, *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

[172] Bettany Hughes, *Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore* 1st American ed. (New York: Knopf, 2005).

[173] A. Doyle, "'Unhappily Ever After?' the Problem of Helen in Odyssey 4," *Akroterion* 55, 2012.

a way of shutting it away and robbing it of effect. Hughes' view of Helen is more productively ambivalent, allowing her to be operate simultaneously in what seem contradicting ways.

Euripides made a great deal of wonderful drama from this dichotomy embodied in Helen's beauty and the crises it engendered. Helen's beauty was useful as an object as a way of accessing beauty's power, and Sophists were attempting to find ways of deploying beauty with an agency Helen was denied. Of course, Helen has produced a wealth of scholarship, leading to intriguing arguments about the implications of the κλέος, 'renown,' of weaving,[174] on how Helen's bodily "veiled mobility" is a textual resource for Gorgias as he models his argument on her difficult to pin down body.[175] The difficulty Helen's body presents is central to the unpublished research of Megan Foley, who presented at a University of Pittsburgh Agora Series lecture on Euripides' *Helen.* Foley advances a point that I here take up and expand upon, that Helen's εἴδωλον, 'image, phantom,' serves, to some extent, as a stand in for rhetoric.[176]

The body of literature on Helen is prolific and if one is willing to go further back in time or widen the scope of relevant texts there can easily be no end to it. This cursory list, however, should be sufficient to show that, while much of the scholarship is excellent, the focus for most of them is naturally centered on the texts Helen appears within. This has the effect of somewhat occluding Helen's mythic ontology, the role she plays and the function she serves in appearing in these texts, particularly the ones about rhetoric. Helen, after all, is the most beautiful woman in the world and it cannot be incidental that she is used by the progenitors of the first intellectual

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[174] Melissa Mueller, "Helen's hands: weaving for kleos in the Odyssey," *Helios* 37, no. 1 (2010).

[175] Nancy Worman, "The Body as Argument: Helen in Four Greek Texts," *Classical Antiquity* 16, no. 1 (1997).

[176] Megan Foley, "Helen, Rhetoric's *Eidolon,*" Lecture, Agora Speaker Series from the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa October 24, 2014.

discipline, one concerned with eloquence. I would broaden Poulakos' observation that ". . . *Helen* is a rhetorical statement, an address born out of a situation and seeking to influence its readers in reference to something over which they have a choice"[177] away from the specifics of Isocrates' encomium and towards a general understanding that Helen, the superlative of beauty, was a choice with a purpose other than simple convenience. There is no end, after all, to the attractive women in Greek mythology one could compose an encomium for, so why Helen? Helen's use *is* a rhetorical statement, it is an alignment with an object acted upon and a twisting of it into the new subject who will act upon others.

In chapter two, the precarity of notions of strength and power in relationship to beauty was established. Beauty was seen in its fickleness, its lack of agency for the person possessing it established, and we further found a precarity in κράτος, a power innate and under the owner's control, that provided the exigency for Helen's rhetorical championing. This chapter will look to establish and show that beauty, embodied by Helen, was its own idea of power, a δύναμις which always existed in possibility, and that rhetoric from its earliest stages was self-identifying, to some extent, with the δύναμις of beauty and claiming for itself the *techne* of agentful deployment of this δύναμις. Euripides establishes beauty as a power that is still ambivalent, but somewhat controllable. Rhetoric would be beauty channeled, controlled, deployed by technique rather than chance and inborn knack and so Helen, in her glorious complexity and unrivaled beauty, served well as an early patron of δύναμις and, unlike Prodicus' Κακίαν, was able to do so through her own ἀρετή, rather than that of the speaker's. She was, in fact, both an exemplar and an object lesson, and Euripides produced a lot of dramatic tension from this dichotomy.

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[177] John Poulakos, "Argument, Practicality, and Eloquence," *Rhetorica* 4, no. 1, 1986: 5.

4.2 Euripides and the Chimera of Beauty

Euripides' *Helen* begins with the eponymous character setting up the action and location of the play. But soon after establishing that she is in Egypt, Helen goes back and recalls to herself the judgement of Paris:

> I am called Helen. And we have suffered evils
> I could tell of. Three goddesses came, concerning their beauty,
> To a hollow of Idaios for Alexander (Paris),
> Hera and Cypris (Aphrodite) and the god-born maiden (Athena)
> Wishing that the judgement of beauty be decided.
> Cypris offered, if fair (beauty) (is the same thing as) misfortune,
> My beauty for Alexander to bed . . .
> She won. And leaving the oxstalls of Idaios, Paris
> To Sparta arrived so as to have me to bed.[178]

Not even Helen the person, but just her beauty, τοὐμὸν δὲ κάλλος, is the object offered by Aphrodite with the intent of swaying Paris' discernment during the beauty contest with the other goddesses. It is not Aphrodite's beauty that sways Paris but her offer of Helen's which tips the judgement in the goddess of love's favor. That the goddess of love feels free to give over the possession of a mortal's beauty suggests the goddess had a κράτος of dominion over human κάλλος. Bodily beauty, it would seem, falls within the aspect of Aphrodite as storms do Poseidon and medicine Apollo. That Helen's beauty was not itself present but invoked establishes at the

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[178] Ἑλένη δ᾽ ἐκλήθην. ἃ δὲ πεπόνθαμεν κακὰ
λέγοιμ᾽ ἄν. ἦλθον τρεῖς θεαὶ κάλλους πέρι
Ἰδαῖον ἐς κευθμῶν᾽ Ἀλέξανδρον πάρα,
Ἥρα Κύπρις τε διογενής τε παρθένος,
μορφῆς θέλουσαι διαπεράνασθαι κρίσιν.
τοὐμὸν δὲ κάλλος, εἰ καλὸν τὸ δυστυχές,
Κύπρις προτείνασ᾽ ὡς Ἀλέξανδρος γαμεῖ,
νικᾷ. λιπὼν δὲ βούσταθμ᾽ Ἰδαῖος Πάρις
Σπάρτην ἀφίκεθ᾽ ὡς ἐμὸν σχήσων λέχος.
Euripides, *Helen*, 22 - 30.

play's start the distance Helen the person has from Helen the beautiful bodily form. Helen's recounting of Paris' judgement at a beauty pageant of goddesses has a practical import for the play, it is directly related to why she is in Egypt as Hera, miffed at being passed over, creates an εἴδωλον, 'phantom,' of Helen's body for Paris to take. Zeus, seeing in this an opportunity to thin the herd of mortals, allows for the famed war at Troy to occur but sends Hermes to whisk Helen to Egypt. Paris thinks he has kidnapped Helen, Menelaus thinks Helen has run off with Paris, and Helen is left to wait out the war her beauty has caused far from the participants fighting over her.

The strife between gods is not an invention from whole cloth from Euripides, as the Judgement of Paris was a well-known part of the myth of Helen which maintained its popularity well into the Roman era. The immortal beauty contest is itself the result of the goddess Eris, Strife, who, at a wedding she was not invited to, spitefully threw a golden apple of discord, which became a fought-after prize among thee of the most important goddesses in the Greek pantheon. In the way of classic Greek myth telling, details of the account differ while the essence remains the same, and later writers felt it necessary to redouble on the themes of the story in an interesting way. Both Psuedo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* (*ca.* first to second century CE) and Lucian's (*ca.* second century CE) of the Judgement of Paris relate that the apple is literally inscribed with καλλίστῃ, 'to the most beautiful,' and Aphrodite, Athena, and Hera immediately decide that the apple is addressed to them.[179] Such an inscription, while thematically apropos, is not necessary as the goddesses need

[179] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, E3.2.; Lucian, "Judgement of Paris," *Dialogue of the Gods*. Lucian's *Dialogue* is a bit tongue and cheek, being a humorous take on Homer's depiction of the divine, but, as in so much of Lucian, his main method of humor is to bring to the surface the subtexts of Greece's mythic past. Literally inscribing the apple with the dative of beautiful nicely understates this super textualizing. By this one word in this case, understanding of the absurd competitiveness of the Greek pantheon is made readily apparent since there is a wealth of ambiguity possible (by the fairest, by means of the fairest, at the fairest, etc. But the ambiguity is instantly collapsed by the gods at the wedding and a common and unquestioned sentence effortlessly constructed which reads something like, "Award this apple to the fairest goddess." That this is the sense arrived at by the gods says a lot about them. That this is the sense we also 'naturally' arrive at is no less telling.

no further incentive to compete. These sources, Lucian and Pseudo-Apollodorus, are five to six centuries distant from Euripides' plays and writing in an era with a different audience with different concerns. Thus, it is difficult to know precisely what details of what myth were publicly popular contemporaneously with the play as Euripides' account of the trial in *Trojan Women* only goes over the bribes each goddess offered. But given Rome's adoration of Greek culture from the period, it is likely that Lucian and Pseudo Apollodorus were drawing from a body of mythic literature from near this era. As was common practice, the details may have been sites of invention for the authors, but the general outline of the story is likely to be accurate enough. The goddesses who were invited to the wedding all wanted to win the apples and, no doubt out of concern that a mortal might err in judgement, each offered gifts to Paris which aligned with the arena of their divinity: Hera, that Paris become a great lord of the land; Athena, that he become a renowned strategist; Aphrodite, that he bed the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris, of course, chose Helen, thus starting the chain of events leading to the Trojan War and, somewhat curiously, cementing Helen's status as its cause.

Helen, it is established early on in both the play and in her mythology, rarely is given any power of choice in who gets to have her. Aphrodite gives her to Paris, and her own father, we find out later on, had given her to Menelaus:

> Helen: ὦ χρόνιος ἐλθὼν σῆς δάμαρτος ἐς χέρας.
> Menelaus: ποίας δάμαρτος; μὴ θίγῃς ἐμῶν πέπλων.
> Helen: ἥν σοι δίδωσι Τυνδάρεως, ἐμὸς πατήρ.
>
> Helen: O, coming after so long to your wife's arms.
> Menelaus: A wife of what nature? Do not grasp my cloak.
> Helen: (The one) which Tyndareus gave you, my father.[180]

[180] Euripides, *Helen*, 566 - 568.

On top of constantly being given away, the theme of being taken pervades the whole play:

> Helen's story is explicitly made to parallel that of Persephone: The world believes that Helen was 'taken' by Paris (50), but instead she was taken away by Hermes while gathering flowers (243-9), just as Persephone was by Hades in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (6-8). Now Helen must resist Theoclymenus' attempts to 'taker' her (904).[181]

Menelaus, at the start of the play, thinks he has accomplished his mission and taken Helen back from Troy, and he thinks this up until he runs into someone who is the spitting image of the εἴδωλον he has hidden away in a cave, thinking it is the real Helen. Helen, worrying that Menelaus is dead in a shipwreck and that she will no longer be able to spurn the advances of Theoclymenus, the king of Egypt, laments her looming fate of being taken yet once again. Running into her husband, even a doubting one, angry at ten years spent at a war for control of her body, comes as a relief from this threat as well as a possible ticket back home and she yearns to be taken back by him enough that she strives to persuade him of the implausible truth of her condition rather than use it as an excuse for personal liberation.

Throughout Euripides' *Helen,* she surrenders herself to an object status, to being the plaything of agents more powerful than she. This fits well within a pattern Blondell finds in the Iliad: "This unabashed objectification plays to Helen's advantage in an important respect. Agency entails responsibility, and responsibility entails susceptibility to blame and, most importantly, punishment."[182] Euripides wastes no time stripping Helen of even a semblance of agency in order, it seems, to shrive from her any possibility of responsibility or guilt. Her introductory lament of her current situation hammers this home with its references to Aphrodite's awarding her to Paris and her very geographic position at the edge of the known world is the result of the whims of Zeus

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[181] From Burian's introduction; Euripides, *Helen,* trans. Peter Burian (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007), 12.

[182] Blondell, "Bitch that I Am," 4.

and Hermes rather than any choice she makes. And so, that she refers to herself as that which was given by her father to Menelaus is to take away even that small possible site of blame and responsibility. Helen did not run off with Paris, her Εἴδωλον did, and she sits in Egypt blamelessly and powerlessly, or so it seems, accepting her fate.

By stripping Helen bare of everything else, Euripides leaves her naked in her beauty, isolated from all else which makes her her. Indeed, even her good name is taken from her, perhaps explaining why she begins her contextualization with a forlorn assertion of identity, "I am called Helen." Helen, at the end of this monologue, declares her intention to live virtuously even as the renown for such living is denied her:

> . . . and I, for the sake of my old husband,
> Throw myself onto this memorial honoring Proteus
> As a supplicant, that for my man he might preserve my bed,
> That, if under Hellas a name ill-renowned I bear,
> My body, at least, here will not be cast into shame.[183]

The irony is obvious. Like Deianira and Iole, it is precisely Helen's appearance, her body, which has been the source of her grief and has been busy piling infamy onto her name. Not Helen in her own self. Helen's κλέος, her renown, is not the result of her actual deeds but her apparent deeds. Her εἴδωλον, her seeming, is what has poisoned Helen's name. Euripides extends the trend of considering the essence of Helen to be her great beauty to a point of utter absurdity and, in so doing, has isolated the intriguing variable of the δύναμις of, not Helen, but her beauty.

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[183] . . . τὸν πάλαι δ᾽ ἐγὼ πόσιν
τιμῶσα Πρωτέως μνῆμα προσπίτνω τόδε
ἱκέτις, ἵν᾽ ἀνδρὶ τἀμὰ διασῴσῃ λέχη,
ὡς, εἰ καθ᾽ Ἑλλάδ᾽ ὄνομα δυσκλεὲς φέρω,
μή μοι τὸ σῶμά γ᾽ ἐνθάδ᾽ αἰσχύνην ὄφλῃ.
Euripides, *Helen,* 63 - 67.

Beauty and rapaciousness ground Helen's very existence. It was for desire of Leda that Zeus raped Helen's mother as a swan. Violence of the powerful desiring the beautiful is the soil which begat Helen, and nothing in her life since the begetting seems to have deviated from this script. According to Pseudo-Apollodorus, when she came of marriageable age the problem became particularly acute and had to be resolved with Odysseus' cunning.[184] The key essence of Helen's or, rather, Tyndareus' problem with the suitors of Helen is that Helen's great beauty created an issue where every powerful lord and hero of the age wanted her hand in marriage and, no matter who Tyndareus selected, the others were powerful and important enough that Helen's marriage would result in strife. Odysseus, a suitor for Helen himself but one who changed his suit to Penelope, suggested a strategy in exchange for Tyndareus' support of Odysseus new suit. Acting on Odysseus' advice, Tyndareus bound all the suitors to a mighty oath that they would uphold the choice. The oath of Tyndareus is triggered when Paris arrives and collects his prize, spurring the lords, along with their relatives, to unite and thus began the process of the decade long siege and sack of Ilium.[185]

Helen's beauty, as far as everyone but she herself is concerned, *is* Helen and so, when Hera creates the εἴδωλον and lets Paris run off to Troy with this likeness of Helen, the message is clearly that while Helen's beauty is powerful, she herself is not. Thus her embittered aside when Helen describes her beauty as the prize Aphrodite used to entice Paris, "if fairness is misfortune" (εἰ

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[184] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 3.10.7-9

[185] Odysseus, in one of those complicated little codicils surrounding the events at Troy which make it such a fascinating and inexhaustible site, tried to weasel his way out of the oath he had engineered by pretending insanity. Palamedes was sent to Ithaca and decided to test Odysseus' sanity by placing the infant Telemachus in front of the plow Odysseus was using to sow his fields with salt. Odysseus revealed his sanity, spared his son, and bore a grudge against Palamedes against whom he avenged himself on during the war by forging evidence of Palamedes' treachery. *The Defense of Palamedes* is the other extant demonstration speech we have of Gorgias of Leontini.

καλὸν τὸ δυστυχές). The utterance would serve as a laconic understatement to do her Spartan fatherland proud. The ellipsis in this clause has removed the verb, thus placing an emphasis on what must be supplied. In this case, one defaults to supplying a copular verb, "if fairness *is* misfortune." Without the context of the situation the clause could well be read as interrogative rather than condemnatory, but Helen is using antithesis, and bringing the antithetical more closely together by omitting the linking verb, to highlight an irony in καλός. Καλός means, among other things, good, fair, and beautiful and, indeed, to be beautiful is good evidence of goodness. In *Helen*, Helen absolutely has been an ideal matron which would delight the most misogynistic of the Greek patriarchy, but nonetheless her name, her reputation, and her likeness have been dragged through the mud. Her beauty is equal to her misfortune; her beauty is her misfortune. Her beauty, though, is not *her*.

An attempt is made by a befuddled messenger who arrives to tell Menelaus that Helen, the εἴδωλον Helen, had vanished from the cave Menelaus had hidden her in after giving a speech coinciding in all particulars the details which Helen, the actual Helen, had recently finished explaining. The messenger, finishing his recitation of εἴδωλον Helen's farewell address, sees actual Helen and, despite being in possession of the facts, decides that the more likely explanation for events is that Helen has the ability to fly and, for reasons of her own, escaped Menelaus' guards in order to be captured by Menelaus. The messenger witnesses Menelaus' growing conviction that this is, at last, the real Helen but, alone of anyone in the play, makes insists on Helen's agency and culpability:

> Messenger: Is this not the arbiter of the hardships in Ilium?
>
> Menelaus: This is not. By the gods we were cheated
> And I had gloried in holding in my arms a baneful cloud.

Messenger: What are you saying?
That it was over a cloud we were bearing pointless toils?[186]

The messenger's choice of word to describe Helen's role in Troy, βραβεύς, which I translate as 'arbiter,' is a term for a judge who determines the awarding of prizes in a game. To the messenger, a simple soldier of Menelaus who had followed his lord to Troy and, presumably, had spent ten years besieging the place and was now lost in Egypt trying to get home, Helen was not the prize to win back from a rapacious Paris but the decider of the prize of her beauty. She, he feels, being beautiful, was responsible. The logic of the play has refuted this viewpoint at every turn. Helen was never an arbiter of her own fate nor of her own reputation. But the messenger was not present for any of this explanation and stands in for the hoi polloi. His feeling about Helen aligns with Deianira's description in Sophocles of her beauty as a prize to be won. However, Euripides has the messenger insist that beauty is a prize which determines for itself who wins it.

Menelaus, by contrast, immediately removes power and agency from Helen in order to continue absolving her from blame. Instead, he credits the gods with deceiving him by making a baneful cloud the object of the war. The line, and the messenger's response, have a curious formulation where the cloud brackets the semantic content, a device used to emphasize the connection of what is contained to what is containing it. Menelaus' "baneful cloud" is highly emphatic in the Greek, with νεφέλης, 'cloud,' being the first word of the line and its adjective, λυγρόν, 'baneful,' being the last. This doubles down on Menelaus' deception, that he "had gloried

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[186] Messenger: οὐχ ἥδε μόχθων τῶν ἐν Ἰλίῳ βραβεύς;
Menelaus: οὐχ ἥδε, πρὸς θεῶν δ᾽ ἦμεν ἠπατημένοι,
νεφέλης ἄγαλμ᾽ ἔχοντες ἐν χεροῖν λυγρόν.
Messenger: τί φῄς;
νεφέλης ἄρ᾽ ἄλλως εἴχομεν πόνους πέρι;
Euripides, *Helen,* 703 - 707.

in holding," something insubstantial and not real. The guard mimics this formulation, starting with a surprised exclamation and demand for clarity, "What are you saying?" followed by his own emphatic cloud bracketing. However, while Menelaus was using the formulation to emphasize the chimera of possession, the common soldier uses it to connect pointless toil to the cloud that was Helen's εἴδωλον. Even though concrete and manifestly embodied right in front of them as they speak, Helen's beauty is thus maintained as nebulous. For Menelaus, this is liberating and absolving. For the soldier, the absurdity of the past decade is made even more absurd. Beauty is chimeric in both sense of modern English usage: it is a fearsome beast of destruction while simultaneously being illusory and impossible to obtain.

4.3 Eloquence in *Trojan Women*

Euripides wrote many plays dealing with the aftermath of the Trojan War, but the only other play to deal with Helen has far fewer characters sympathetic to her plight, his *Trojan Women*. The play centers around Hecuba and her daughters by blood and by marriage, the royal women of Troy. The action takes place in that liminal moment after the victorious Greeks have divided them as spoils but have yet to take them away as slaves. Hecuba, at least, is in no doubt who has done this to her:

> . . . Trojan swells of the coast
> Menelaus pursued
> For (his) hated wife, to Castor a disgrace,
> And to Eurotas, ill-renown,
> She who slays on the one hand
> The father of fifty children,
> Priam, as well as myself, the miserable Hecuba,

Into this ruin am run aground.[187]

Hecuba tips her hand as to possessing the remarkable rhetorical skill which Euripides had her deploy to greater effect in another of his plays, *Hecuba,* and she makes effective deployment of multiple figures and tropes. She is euphemistic about Helen, refusing to name her. She deploys synecdoche to further serve this end–the river Eurotas serves as a stand in for Lacedaemonia, Sparta–rather than even mention Helen's home. In particular, this passage makes use of a nicely chiasmatic hyperbaton: "She who slays . . . the father of fifty children, / Priam, as well as myself, the miserable Hecuba, / into this ruin am run aground." This culminating condemnation of Helen is balanced around a line that begins with Hecuba's husband, Priam, and ends with her invocation of herself in the third person, Hecuba. The passage is difficult to translate well into English because it is written as a performance of someone spitting mad, nearly incoherent in their rage, and so there is left hanging the assertion that Helen has slain both Priam and Hecuba but, by the time Hecuba finishes the accusation, she switches to having been run aground into ruin by Helen. There are false starts and abandoned or under-supported accusations as Hecuba's bile outpaces her tongue's ability to articulate it. However, in the midst of this rant, one thing remains solidly clear: Helen is the agent and bringer of all this destruction.

Like with Deianira, beauty is to bear the blame of might. To Hecuba, Helen it was, not Agamemnon nor Odysseus nor even the great man-slaying Achilles, who slew Priam and has

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[187] . . . Τροίας ἐν κόλποις
τὰν Μενελάου μετανισόμεναι
στυγνὰν ἅλοχον, Κάστορι λώβαν
τῷ τ᾽ Εὐρώτᾳ δυσκλείαν,
ἃ σφάζει μὲν
τὸν πεντήκοντ᾽ ἀροτῆρα τέκνων
Πρίαμον, ἐμέ τε μελέαν Ἑκάβαν
ἐς τάνδ᾽ ἐξώκειλ᾽ ἄταν.
Euripides, *Trojan Women*, 131 - 137.

enslaved Hecuba and her daughters. This is not literally true, nor are to believe that Hecuba thinks it is. However, Helen's blame, whether assigned to her by her own self as Blondell points out, or heaped upon her with scorn by the women she had been living with for over a decade, is an assertion of agency and power. It is an assertion of responsibility. Helen, deployed in this diatribe of Hecuba's as a metonymy, is no less an effect of the fall of Troy then Hecuba herself, but Helen is substituted for the cause. It is a bitter and deliberate irony, that powerless women taken as slaves out of desire for their beauty—while Hecuba may be old, her daughters are famously fair—assign to a woman taken by their male relative, Paris, for *her* beauty, the very power they are being denied because of their own possession of desirous degrees of that beauty. Κάλλος may have a curious power, but as we have seen time and time again with Deianira, with Daphne, with Helen, and now with Hecuba and her daughters, there is nothing curious about κράτος and its ability to take what beauty it wants. It is in Euripides' plays that we begin to see an alternative view of the δύναμις of beauty, one where beauty *can* be put to the possessor's use. In this play, it is the justice of Hecuba's accusations against Helen that is put on trial. Helen is condemned for bringing to the women of Troy the fate a man of Troy had visited upon her. Just as it is with the men of Troy that κράτος lies, so too, by implication of this metonymy, with Helen.

When Andromache—the widow of Hector—tells Hecuba that Polyxena—a daughter of Hecuba's—has been sacrificed upon the tomb of Achilles, Hecuba mourns but finds some hope that her grandson, Astyanax, might grow to avenge them all and reestablish Ilium. No sooner is this hope breached then it is dashed by Talthybius, who reports that Odysseus has convinced the Argives that they should not rear the son of so brave a man as Hector, and so Astyanax is to be thrown off the city walls and, should the women make a fuss and blame the Achaeans, his body

will be denied burial rights.[188] Andromache is understandably upset and, keeping in mind Talthybius' threat, unloads her fury on Helen without naming her:

> Barbarous Helenes seeking evils,
> Why kill this child who is blameworthy of nothing?
> O offspring of Tyndareus, never of Zeus,
> But rather, I say, you are such as to have been born from many fathers:
> Of Alastor[189] first on the one hand, and then Envy,
> Both Murder and Death and also such evils as the Earth rears.
> But not ever, I declaim, were you to Zeus begat, I call you
> A blight to many, barbarians and Hellenes.
> May you be undone: for out of most beautiful eyes
> Shamefully you have destroyed utterly the famed fields of Phrygia (Troy).
> But bearing the child, carry him off, cast him away if you wish to cast:
> Feast on his flesh![190]

Helen is again metonymized in this speech of blame, the cause, or at least a cause, being used in place of the effect. Helen, after all, was no less a recipient of Greek ire and retribution than the other Trojan women. She was not present for the speech, making this a fine example of apostrophe, because she was even then being brought out of imprisonment, under guard, to face Menelaus' decision of her own fate. Helen's absence is important because it marks her as a liminal space for violence, both the possibly literal and the actual rhetorical. She, in her absence, is a subject of

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[188] The importance of which are, of course, central to ancient religious practice (cf. Sophocles' *Antigone*).
[189] An aspect of Zeus, that of dark vengeance, often paired with the Furies.
[190] ὦ βάρβαρ᾽ ἐξευρόντες Ἕλληνες κακά,
τί τόνδε παῖδα κτείνετ᾽ οὐδὲν αἴτιον;
ὦ Τυνδάρειον ἔρνος, οὔποτ᾽ εἶ Διός,
πολλῶν δὲ πατέρων φημί σ᾽ ἐκπεφυκέναι,
Ἀλάστορος μὲν πρῶτον, εἶτα δὲ Φθόνου,
Φόνου τε Θανάτου θ᾽ ὅσα τε γῆ τρέφει κακά.
οὐ γάρ ποτ᾽ αὐχῶ Ζῆνά γ᾽ ἐκφῦσαί σ᾽ ἐγώ,
πολλοῖσι κῆρα βαρβάροις Ἕλλησί τε.
ὄλοιο: καλλίστων γὰρ ὀμμάτων ἄπο
αἰσχρῶς τὰ κλεινὰ πεδί᾽ ἀπώλεσας Φρυγῶν.
ἀλλ᾽ ἄγετε φέρετε ῥίπτετ᾽, εἰ ῥίπτειν δοκεῖ:
δαίνυσθε τοῦδε σάρκας.
Euripides, *Trojan Women*, 764 - 776.

infinite malleability and a bottomless receptacle of interpolative force. The most beautiful body of Helen, it is clear, is capable of containing multitudes.

A legion of possibility is precisely what makes her a demon and Andromache's speech belabors the point. Helen is a "a blight to many barbarians (non-Greeks) and Helenes." She was fathered not by one, but "many fathers." Her beauty is referred to synecdochally by reference to "most beautiful eyes," which, coming as they do in pairs, is a distinct and deliberate choice on Andromache's part, differing from other bodily synecdoches of beauty such as body, form, shape, face, etc. . . It is no coincidence for Andromache to choose Helen's eyes as the shameful destroyers of "the famed fields of Phrygia," though it may be in some way ironic. It is through the eyes of men, after all, who behold Helen's beauty, that all this destruction is wrought. The eyes passively take in; they do not actively lash out. Helen's eyes cannot help but rebound as a reference to the Greeks Andromache has been forbidden to criticize, to the male gaze which has brought such turmoil. Helen's "most beautiful eyes" belong to Menelaus, to the flower of Greek heroism, even, perhaps, Paris himself who, in a different way from the Greek victors, also cannot be directly blamed. In this way, Helen's body is less the object of Andromache's ire and more a convenient punching bag to get around the threat of the Greek men.

The κράτος of these men is mostly absent the stage, but it is nonetheless omnipresent. Talthybius, the messenger, represents the collected Greek captains and has duly informed the Trojan women of Astyanax's fate. Immediately before Andromache's unleashed fury at Helen, he had warned the women in no uncertain terms:

> The city is undone, and your husband, and, by power, you,
> And, for my part, I alone am enough to battle against a woman.
> On account of these facts I strongly do not desire battle,
> Neither do I want you to accomplish shame or anything envious to you,

Nor for you to wish to cast harms to the Achaeans.[191]

His warning is couched in terms of naked strength, informing the women by what agent they are undone, "by power, you," (κρατῇ δὲ σύ), and it bears notice that *Trojan Women* was written and staged in the aftermath of the Siege of Melos, which Thucydides has famously boiled down to an episode of the amoral tyranny of power, "Understanding and having known that justice, on the one hand, in human argument is to be decided out of equal necessity, but on the other whatever possible the foremost do and the weak give way."[192] Whether a direct reference to Athenian injustices committed as their strength waxed or not, *Trojan Women* continues a trend in Euripides' plays which are consistent in portraying the human horrors of war. The tragic action is driven by precisely this focus on the plight of the weaker in the face of the stronger. In *Trojan Women*, most of these attempts by the weaker to reason with the stronger are shut down before they get properly started, with the counter argument being the bare fact of strength as power. The exception is the case of Helen, who finally gets to have her word.

It is no accident that Talthybius reminds the women of their weakness against the power of Greek manhood. He immediately puts this power into a personal level, "And, for my part, I

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[191]πόλις τ᾽ ὄλωλε καὶ πόσις, κρατῇ δὲ σύ,
ἡμεῖς δὲ πρὸς γυναῖκα μάρνασθαι μίαν
οἷοί τε. τούτων οὕνεκ᾽ οὐ μάχης ἐρᾶν
οὐδ᾽ αἰσχρὸν οὐδὲν οὐδ᾽ ἐπίφθονόν σε δρᾶν,
οὐδ᾽ αὖ σ᾽ Ἀχαιοῖς βούλομαι ῥίπτειν ἀράς.
Ibid, 731 - 735.

[192]ἐπισταμένους πρὸς εἰδότας ὅτι δίκαια μὲν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπείῳ λόγῳ ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης ἀνάγκης κρίνεται, δυνατὰ δὲ οἱ προύχοντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς ξυγχωροῦσιν
Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War,* 5.89.
The use of δυνατὰ, "the possible," is emphatically placed as the object of πράσσουσι, "do," and so closely tied to the subject οἱ προύχοντες, "the foremost." The term δυνατὰ is closely related to δύναμις, and Thucydides' use of it in a conversation about the realities of power, particularly power enacted as discourse, is intriguing. The Melians rely on justice and the assumption of equality of position where quality of arguments would determine truth and outcome, a proto public sphere of a sort, while Thucydides' Athenians understand the power of discourse to be contained in the possibility, but not yet actuality, of violent force. So δυνατὰ is the limitless qualifier for what is obtainable, whatever the relations of strength and weakness as deployed merit.

alone am enough to battle against a woman." Ἡμεῖς, a first-person emphatic which I translated as 'for my part,' begins the statement and the line ends with μίαν, which I translated as "alone." The next line begins with οἷοί τε, and marks the grammatical end of his statement. To translate οἷοί τε in context is difficult, it also means along, and makes this brief statement a triply redundant assertion of the fact that he, a man, is enough, by himself, to, alone, battle these women. And how many more men are there, each with the ability to end the Trojan women by their individual, much less massed, κράτος? The threat delivered, he continues by asking Andromache specifically, recall that Hecuba is also present, to not bring the Greeks αἰσχρὸν, 'shame,' nor to act out of ἐπίφθονόν, which I am translating as 'envy' but should be understood in the general sense of desiring another's lot, and in no way ῥίπτειν ἀράς, 'to cast harms,' against the Greek men. This litany of the forbidden is to be enforced on pain of denying the baby they are about to cast off the walls of Troy a proper burial. However, it is curious that the Greeks care enough at all to have sent Talthybius or that Talthybius is concerned enough to make these threats. If they are filled with such great κράτος that one of them is worth the whole lot of Trojan womanhood, what harms are they fearing these women might cast upon the Greeks? Are these women not powerless? Slaves? Helpless against the might of the flower of Greek manhood? So, what is there to fear to put so fearsome a prohibition upon them? What possibilities are even possible that they must be preemptively foreclosed upon?

Andromache makes use of Helen's absent body no less then did Paris. Helen and her beauty becomes the vessel for the very things forbidden Andromache on pain of the defilement of her son's corpse. In describing her, Andromache names for Helen the many fathers who are the very aspects of divine vengeance being denied the Trojan women: Ἀλάστορος, the particular personification of vengeance the killing of Astyanax will deny her even the hope of; Φθόνου, the

personification of the envy she is not allowed to act out of; Φόνου, Murder; and Θανάτου, Death; as well as all the evils the earth ever bore which Talthybius did not explicitly deny the women access to. Of course, it is no great leap of inductive reasoning to figure that these would also be taboo acts to visit upon their conquerors. The "to cast harms" portion of Talthybius' injunction covers them in any case. Indeed, Andromache makes note of this as well, saying of Helen that she is a "a blight to many, barbarians and Hellenes," but while I am translating Andromache's κῆρα as 'blight' to keep it distinct from Talthybius' ἀράς, the words are synonyms and mean much the same thing in tragic dialogue. "Shamefully" rears its head as the manner in which Helen's eyes utterly destroyed the Phrygian plains. And as a response to the dogged insistence of the singular on the part of Talthybios as the irreducible unit of κράτος, Andromache insists on the plural. It is not just that Helen's one body serves as the symbol for the gathering of the many bodies of Greek men, but her body is the vessel of their casus belli through which the men of Greece exercised their κράτος to take what they could get which, it just so happens, includes Helen's body. For Andromache and Hecuba, Helen can serve as the executor of the violence against them because, but for her body, the Greeks would not have come. Yes, there are other essential linchpins they could, perhaps more justly, blame, but Helen is the most Greek adjacent and that makes her the proper fetish to vent their ire upon.

She is not, however, Greek, though "the Spartan woman" she remains. Menelaus arrives on the scene glorying in the καλλιφεγγής, "beautiful-shining," sun that lights up the day he is come to reclaim Helen.[193] He announces that he did not come to win her back but to punish the men

[193] Euripides, *Trojan Women*, 860.

who took her which, having done, it is now his pleasure to bring her back home to Sparta and kill her. Yet he will not call her wife:

> But I come for the wretched woman—for it is unpleasant
> If I ever say to her the name of "wife"—
> To carry her off: For within these imprisoned homes
> She is reckoned to be among the others of the Trojan women.[194]

To the Greeks, including her husband, Helen has become a Trojan but, for the Trojan Women, she is the emblem of their ruin and thus Greek. Menelaus is accurate with his calling her simply "the wretched" (τὴν τάλαιναν). She has no power among the Greeks, as she is seen as another Trojan woman, albeit one already spoken for as Menelaus' spoil of war, and among the Trojan women, powerless though they are, they still have for themselves the power to deny her membership in their company. Helen is thus constituted in this moment as apolitical, without a polity to belong to and be within. Shrived of this identity and protection, she is less even then the enslaved Trojan women who, low though their new positions are, still have a space for their being.

Despite having the least power of position or place, Helen, however, is not nearly as powerless as she might seem. Hecuba, mother of Paris, knows better than most that Helen's beauty is a tactical power that can overthrow even the most entrenched strategic positions, and she undertakes to warn Menelaus:

> I should praise you, Menelaus, if you kill your wife.
> But flee before seeing this woman, lest she may seize you by yearning.
> For she arrests eyes of men, destroys cities,
> Burns dwellings: this is the magic of her charms.
> I know her, as do you, who has suffered.[195]

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[194] ἥκω δὲ τὴν τάλαιναν — οὐ γὰρ ἡδέως
ὄνομα δάμαρτος ἥ ποτ᾽ ἦν ἐμὴ λέγω —
ἄξων: δόμοις γὰρ τοῖσδ᾽ ἐν αἰχμαλωτικοῖς
κατηρίθμηται Τρῳάδων ἄλλων μέτα.
Ibid, 869 -872.

[195] αἰνῶ σε, Μενέλα᾽, εἰ κτενεῖς δάμαρτα σήν.

Hecuba gives a more thorough and direct accounting of Helen's powers and sins, it is no longer *her* eyes which level cities shamefully, but her magic that operates through the 'eyes of men' (ἀνδρῶν ὄμματ᾽). In particular, ἀνδρῶν is a strongly gendered word, it means men in the masculine particular rather than the generic unmarked default sense of humanity still found in words like 'mankind.' Hecuba holds nothing back, Helen's beauty is a 'magic charm,' (κηλήματα), which brings about ruin and suffering.

Helen enters right on cue and, despite Hecuba's dire warnings, no cities are lit ablaze at the sight of her. She begs Menelaus for her life, but he is implacable. She even begs simply for the chance to prove that her death will be unjust, and he refuses to listen until Hecuba decides to seize this opportunity to try and make matters worse for Helen. Menelaus allows this contest to be put before him, but makes clear that his bias is all against Helen. Not daunted, Helen proceeds to lay out an extremely clever and elegant case, not just pointing out that she was a prize of Aphrodite awarded as a bribe in a beauty contest, but suggesting that her beauty had thereby won freedom for all Greece:

> And Pallas (Athena) on the one hand to Alexander offered a gift,
> To be the Phrygian general to depopulate Hellas.
> On the other hand, Hera promised Asia and Europe as the bounds
> He would, as a tyrant, hold, if Paris were to choose her.
> But Cyprus (Aphrodite), speaking of it as if amazed,
> Promised to give my form, if of the goddesses she might surpass the others
> In beauty. And now take notice what the logic is thus far:
> Cyprus of the goddesses is victor, and so, sufficiently my bed
> Helped Hellas. (You) are overpowered neither from Barbarians,

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> ὁρᾶν δὲ τήνδε φεῦγε, μή σ᾽ ἕλῃ πόθῳ.
> αἱρεῖ γὰρ ἀνδρῶν ὄμματ᾽, ἐξαιρεῖ πόλεις,
> πίμπρησιν οἴκους: ὧδ᾽ ἔχει κηλήματα.
> ἐγώ νιν οἶδα, καὶ σύ, χοί πεπονθότες.

Ibid, 890 - 894.

Nor by spears raised up, nor by tyranny.
Yet that was good fortune to Hellas. I, I was undone,
The beauty of my form sold, and I am reproached
Out of reasons which should necessitate a garland to be placed at my feet.[196]

Helen neatly reverses the flow of condemnation, accepts responsibility for her actions, and pivots to demonstrating the good that has come from them. She owns responsibility for the lust her beauty has engendered and, if she is responsible for it, she therefore has earned credit in that, for lust over her body, Paris chose to spare Hellas rampaging armies and despotic rule. She accomplishes this impressive feat with nothing to lose and no leg to stand on. She is, it is made apparent, despised by her audience, and every word is forced to struggle against the suspicion that it might be an enchantment.

At least some of the audience feels the power of her speech and fears she may have bewitched some hearts and minds. The chorus cries out: "Oh Queen, defend your children and fatherland! / I prevail upon you into destroying this (woman's arguments), since she speaks / Beautifully such villainous being: Terrible, in fact, this (is)."[197] But either the bias of the jury is sufficient, or Hecuba's own skill at oratory prevents a thawing of Menelaus' hard heart. Helen

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[196] καὶ Παλλάδος μὲν ἦν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ δόσις
Φρυξὶ στρατηγοῦνθ' Ἑλλάδ' ἐξανιστάναι,
Ἥρα δ' ὑπέσχετ' Ἀσιάδ' Εὐρώπης θ' ὅρους
τυραννίδ' ἕξειν, εἴ σφε κρίνειεν Πάρις:
Κύπρις δὲ τοὐμὸν εἶδος ἐκπαγλουμένη
δώσειν ὑπέσχετ', εἰ θεὰς ὑπερδράμοι
κάλλει. τὸν ἔνθεν δ' ὡς ἔχει σκέψαι λόγον:
νικᾷ Κύπρις θεάς, καὶ τοσόνδ' οὐμοὶ γάμοι
ὤνησαν Ἑλλάδ': οὐ κρατεῖσθ' ἐκ βαρβάρων,
οὔτ' ἐς δόρυ σταθέντες, οὐ τυραννίδι.
ἃ δ' εὐτύχησεν Ἑλλάς, ὠλόμην ἐγὼ
εὐμορφίᾳ πραθεῖσα, κὠνειδίζομαι
ἐξ ὧν ἐχρῆν με στέφανον ἐπὶ κάρᾳ λαβεῖν.
Ibid, 925 – 937

[197] βασίλει', ἄμυνον σοῖς τέκνοισι καὶ πάτρᾳ / πειθὼ διαφθείρουσα τῆσδ', ἐπεὶ λέγει / καλῶς κακοῦργος οὖσα: δεινὸν οὖν τόδε.
Ibid, 967 – 968.

throws herself down and embraces his knees for mercy, an invocation of the many Greek pots which show variations of this theme, yet rather than drop the sword he had intended to use for killing, Menelaus simply orders his men to put her on board. Hecuba hectors him about not staying on the same ship as Helen, lest sight of her make him remember the love he once had and, agreeing, Menelaus wanders off leaving the Trojan women to their fate. However, for all Hecuba's concern with the effects of Helen's physical beauty, it was the eloquence of Helen's arguments which induced the chorus to beg for Hecuba's intercession. "She speaks beautifully such villainous being," (λέγει καλῶς κακοῦργος οὖσα), they moan. The chorus notices what Andromache and Hecuba do not, that Helen's beguiling eloquence might be more dangerous than the beguilement of her body, and so they beg for Hecuba to render anodyne the beauty of Helen's words. It is not just the beauty of Helen, which can well be mimicked with her εἴδωλον by the gods as Euripides shows in *Helen*, but the fairness of her skill with words that makes her so dangerous. Helen is the superlative of the beautiful and so it is natural that she is enchanting not just in her physical embodiment. In this way even, especially, her utterances might ensnare and enchant the senses.

4.4 Helen's Union of Opposites

The *Helen* was written after *Trojan Women* and, while the idea of it being a direct sequel should not be given too much strength, it would be silly to ignore how Euripides dealt with Helen before and to see what it implies for his treatment of her in *Helen*. Helen's marked emphasis on naming herself in the *Helen's* prologue feels like a blow struck against the circumlocutions of the women of Troy. Menelaus, quite in keeping with Hecuba's fears, *is* struck by Helen's beauty, his heart

softened upon encountering Helen on the shores of Egypt near the tomb of Proteus, and it would be foolish not read that interaction without Hecuba's warning ringing in our ears. Yet, while Helen's logical, sound, and beautiful arguments failed to thaw him out of hatred, the notion that he had been tricked by the gods into chasing the εἴδωλον of Helen does, for some reason, get him to forgive and embrace the true Helen as his wife. Looking at the treatment of Helen in both cases, it is clear that she is not absolved through being blameless. Helen made a compelling case not just of blamelessness but also of positive affect, that her ruin was the salvation of Greece, and she even suggested that Menelaus show his greatness by blaming the goddesses involved, something even Zeus feared to do. Whether Helen is blameless, blameful, or praiseworthy makes no difference as the point never really was Helen, it was her beauty.

Her beauty was the spell, it was an agent of destruction, it was a doer of destruction, it was a bane that brought ruin and leveled towns and depopulated empires. This would not be possible were it not for the objects of destruction having brought into, read into, Helen's beauty this power. Paris, during his judgement, does not actually see Helen, but has her talked up by Aphrodite. It seems unlikely that Paris was struck by ἔρος simply through a description. If not induced to madness by lust, he must have been sane and rational while making his choice, so why did he choose Helen? He would have to have seen more power in Helen's form than in the more concrete forms of κράτος centered power Hera and Athena offered. There is more possibility, it seems, in the δύναμις of Helen's beauty, as it is she who is eventually credited with accomplishments greater even than those the other goddesses had offered Paris. And Paris thought it could be his if he accepted Aphrodite's offer. Therefore, the power could not reside in Helen but is read *into* Helen, her beauty is a textual object as much as Daphne's when Apollo took her symbolically. The women of Troy were not wrong to blame her, Euripides' setting of the *Helen* not a mistake or ham-

fisted attempt to absolve her, they are a distillation of a disconcerting conceptualization that there are strengths stronger than strength, powers greater than power, and that these are fraught in conditions of possibility rather than the solidity of actuality.

In a curious but unremarked upon way, Aphrodite keeps her promise to Paris even in Euripides' *Helen*. Aphrodite offered him Helen's beauty, Helen is quite clear on this in her introduction, and that is precisely what he obtained. Paris was the favorite of other gods and goddesses, it is possible that in this imagining of Helen away in Egypt, first brought up by Herodotus, that he knew well that he had an εἴδωλον, it is certain he did not care. As long as he possessed the only likeness of Helen's beauty, he believed he possessed Helen's power. If the object of power is not Helen herself but her beauty, and her beauty can be possessed and controlled, distilled into a deployable form, then who needs Helen, herself, anymore? Menelaus forgives Helen not because he finds her blameless, but because the existence of the εἴδωλον and its having fooled him and all of Greece is a relief, the power to cause all that strife was not Helen's to wield at will! Her beauty was the tool of others mightier then she. Well then, why destroy what could be yours if instead it could be taken? Helen's beauty was controlled by the gods, so why not men? Why not, indeed, Menelaus?

4.5 Spare the Φάρμακον, Spoil the Telemachus

Euripides' *Helen* notwithstanding, an uxorious Menelaus may seem a surprise given his outrage, his promised violence, and Helen's undeniable guilt from his point of view. Euripides had to whisk Helen to Egypt in order to avoid the truth of Hecuba and Andromache's arguments. Yet

that is what we find in Homer's depiction of Helen's life after the Trojan War in Book 4 of the *Odyssey*. Homer uses this glimpse at the aftermath of the war to demonstrate still more of the beauty and allure of Helen's speech, as well as her figure. Helen and Menelaus are found in happy matrimony by a Telemachus sent by Athena to journey around the southern Peloponnese seeking out knowledge of his father from Odysseus' old friends and comrades.

In this encounter, Telemachus has disguised himself and gotten an audience with Menelaus. No one is fooled however, and at the least mention of Telemachus' famous father, he bursts into tears putting Menelaus at a loss. Fortunately for him, Helen appears, and, after taking in the scene, she acts:

> Thinking then of something else, Helen, born of Zeus,
> Immediately put a drug into the wine they were drinking from,
> One banishing pain and sorrow and allaying anger, causing forgetfulness of all evils.[198]

The φάρμακον, 'potion/drug,' she puts into the wine is a potent one. It not only banishes "pain and sorrow" while "allaying anger," it also causes "forgetfulness of all evils." Its effect is so strong, we are told, that one could witness the killing of one's dearest kin and shed not a single tear.

Only after the wine is thus drugged does Helen proceed to tell her story of how Odysseus snuck into Troy during the war and how Helen had known him at once, despite Odysseus being crafty enough to try and lie to her. However, Helen recounts that she had not betrayed him, and later felt glad in her heart when she heard he had escaped back to the lines of the besiegers after slaying many Trojans. Conscious of the fact she had two audiences for her assuaging speech, she

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[198] ἔνθ᾽ αὖτ᾽ ἄλλ᾽ ἐνόησ᾽ Ἑλένη Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα:
αὐτίκ᾽ ἄρ᾽ εἰς οἶνον βάλε φάρμακον, ἔνθεν ἔπινον,
νηπενθές τ᾽ ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἁπάντων.
Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.219-221

also takes the opportunity to assure her husband of her loyalty even while still addressing Telemachus in an artful peroration:

> Then the other women of Troy grieved hearing this, but my heart
> Rejoiced, since by this time my heart had been turned
> Away, towards home, and I was lamenting the ruin Aphrodite
> Gave me when she led me from the earth of my beloved fatherland
> And both child and bedroom had me turning my back on, as well as a husband
> Who wanted for noting, neither in inner core nor outward form.[199]

The story is perfect to the occasion. It gives a heroic account of Odysseus, it helps absolve Helen of blame as it was Aphrodite who led her to Troy, and it flatters Menelaus by praising his φρένας, 'core,' as well as his εἶδος, 'form.' Helen has smoothed over an awkward social interaction, made her guest feel welcome, and shared a story about his dad that makes everyone in the room look and feel good.

So why then such a potent φάρμακον? Is it merely an intensifier? Is it there to aid Telemachus and Menelaus into forgetting their griefs?[200] More sinisterly, perhaps a warning? Potions and magic from powerful women such as Circe and Calypso are upcoming in the narrative, so this φάρμακον may simply be a light taste of what is to come. This is certainly the reading Doherty espouses, arguing that Menelaus' follow-up story is meant to upstage Helen's, to clue in the drugged Telemachus that Helen was deceiving him and, and that her story itself reveals that

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[199] ἔνθ᾽ ἄλλαι Τρῳαὶ λίγ᾽ ἐκώκυον: αὐτὰρ ἐμὸν κῆρ
χαῖρ᾽, ἐπεὶ ἤδη μοι κραδίη τέτραπτο νέεσθαι
ἂψ οἶκόνδ᾽, ἄτην δὲ μετέστενον, ἣν Ἀφροδίτη
δῶχ᾽, ὅτε μ᾽ ἤγαγε κεῖσε φίλης ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης,
παῖδά τ᾽ ἐμὴν νοσφισσαμένην θάλαμόν τε πόσιν τε
οὔ τευ δευόμενον, οὔτ᾽ ἂρ φρένας οὔτε τι εἶδος.
Ibid, 4.259-264.

[200] Menelaus had been on the verge of a breakdown himself, reminiscing to Telemachus that his wealth came at the cost of the murder of his brother by Clytemnestra who, we should not forget, is Helen's sister.

she had attempted to deceive Odysseus.[201] It is, perhaps, even a cry for help from someone powerless in the grip of Helen's φάρμακον.

Menelaus has κράτος, but it is the contingent δύναμις of Helen that reigns in this household. Helen's power springs from the same source as her earlier troubles, her κάλλος. But this time she has beauty both in body and in word, and it is clear that Helen has found a way of wielding beauty to her advantage. Her artful words as much as her art of pharmacology soothes her husband and Odysseus' son, her craft in both woven together in a spell. Why else would Menelaus be so uxorious given the tale he tells? Consider that Menelaus' story of Odysseus serves as a stark contrast to Helen' account of her time in Troy. Odysseus, having come up with his famous Trojan Horse, and the rest of the famed Achaean captains are hiding in the horse when Helen, suspicious, begins smacking it with her palm and calling out the names of the leading men in Agamemnon's army:

> And thrice you went about, touching the hollow ambush (the Trojan Horse)
> And you named aloud all the names of the best of the Danaans (the Greeks)
> Sounding like the wives of all the Argives (the Greeks).
> While I and Tydeus' son and godlike Odysseus
> Had been seated in the middle and were hearing you call as such,
> And for my part I was eager, (so was Tydeus' son), we both wished to make a commotion
> Or go out, to immediately answer your calls from within.
> But Odysseus arrested and held up our nearly calling out.
> Then all the other sons of the Achaeons (the Greeks) were silent,
> And Antiklos alone was going to exchange a word with you
> But Odysseus upon his mouth squeezed his strong hand,
> Unrelenting, and so all the Achaeans were rescued.[202]

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[201] Doherty, *Siren Songs*, 86.

[202] τρὶς δὲ περίστειξας κοῖλον λόχον ἀμφαφόωσα,
ἐκ δ᾽ ὀνομακλήδην Δαναῶν ὀνόμαζες ἀρίστους,
πάντων Ἀργείων φωνὴν ἴσκουσ᾽ ἀλόχοισιν.
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ Τυδεΐδης καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
ἥμενοι ἐν μέσσοισιν ἀκούσαμεν ὡς ἐβόησας.
νῶι μὲν ἀμφοτέρω μενεήναμεν ὁρμηθέντε
ἢ ἐξελθέμεναι, ἢ ἔνδοθεν αἶψ᾽ ὑπακοῦσαι:
ἀλλ᾽ Ὀδυσεὺς κατέρυκε καὶ ἔσχεθεν ἱεμένω περ.

This is hardly as flattering a tale towards Helen as Helen's was towards Menelaus, and the ability for Helen to change her voice to call the names of the Greek captains while sounding like their wives is clearly deceptive in a way that *should* be difficult for her husband to shrug off. It certainly undercuts Helen's suggestion that she was eager to go back home to her husband if she was using sorcerous tricks to try and trick the Greeks out of their ambush. That she was even suspicious enough of the horse to try it suggests a desire to stay in Troy. Had she succeeded, had Odysseus not restrained the men, all of them would have certainly been killed. Yet Menelaus tells the tale with no malice and Telemachus hears none in it. Perhaps this, then, is the purpose of Helen's φάρμακον. After all, among its effects is the ability to, "cause forgetfulness of all evils" (κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἁπάντων). In fact, "cause forgetfulness" undersells the power of the potion, ἐπίληθον stems from λήθη, the forgetfulness of oblivion, suggesting an unmaking or undoing of all evils. The river *Lethe*, as well as the English word lethal stem from this concept. As used as a property of this potion, Helen's φάρμακον operates as a poignant inverse to Heidegger's arguments regarding ἀλήθεια, truth as an unobscuring.[203]

Note that the φάρμακον of Helen is not simply a thing in and of itself, but a coming together of many things, including the proper time for its deployment at the critical moment of crisis. The obliviating drug by itself is useless, as neither Telemachus nor Menelaus would have simply eaten

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ἔνθ᾽ ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἀκὴν ἔσαν υἷες Ἀχαιῶν,
Ἄντικλος δὲ σέ γ᾽ οἷος ἀμείψασθαι ἐπέεσσιν
ἤθελεν. ἀλλ᾽ Ὀδυσεὺς ἐπὶ μάστακα χερσὶ πίεζεν
νωλεμέως κρατερῇσι, σάωσε δὲ πάντας Ἀχαιούς:
Homer, 4.277-289.

[203] Heidegger read ἀλήθεια as an un-obliviating or a removal of concealment, and the role of art and philosophy was "that is *brings forth* present beings as such beings *out of* concealedness and specifically *into* the unconcealedness of their appearance. . ." Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

whatever reagent the φάρμακον is composed from, but instead were given it mixed in wine. The wine was given at an appropriate moment, as Telemachus began but had not completely unraveled, and it was accompanied by a spell of words and Helen's soothing presence. Chemically, the φάρμακον may produce forgetfulness or death or good health or a change of tint, but it is the discerning timing and the rhetorical intervention of Helen, not just her pharmaceutical knowledge, which acts as the catalyst and guides it towards its outsized effect. Helen's φάρμακον is not the dry medical intervention of the terms descendant, the pharmacist, but a coming together of all elements into a potion for her intended effect. Either man, Telemachus, or Menelaus, could decide to turn upon her at any moment. Both are superior in status and strength to her and would have to answer only to the other should they have heard something in her story or witnessed in her behavior they deemed as demanding her life. Both, it turns out, have sufficient reason to suspect Helen has in some way wronged them, but Helen's φάρμακον neuters their potency and makes her mistress of the situation.

In what becomes a hallmark of Sophistry and a base of Plato's enmity against rhetoric, Helen either obscures the truth or creates her own. How else could Menelaus credit his wife's witchery while he lay in the hollow belly of the wooden horse to some divine greater power operating through her? How convenient he should come to an explanation which explains her uncanny power of mimicry as well as the deviousness of her ploy without crediting to her agency over them. It also absolves her of guilt. Helen does not need a drug to produce this result, as we saw from Euripides accounts of their reunions. Helen can accomplish quite a lot with the beauty of both her form and oratory. Her voice can bewitch and hold men, men who in stature and status are vastly her superior, spellbound with no need of wine. Helen's popularity, her fame, and the ordure of her blame endured and provided the Sophists a rich icon of their craft as we can see from

the popularity of her use with sophistic circles. Euripides was writing during the height of the sophistic movement and friends with many of its principals. Euripides' plays, in particular their concern with the plays for power among the powerless, the possibilities for overturning in key moments the hierarchy of their conditions, is a highly sophistic one, and depends on subtly overturning the Homeric notion of Helen as conniving and not to be trusted. There is very little sinister about her in *Trojan Women*, nothing sinister about her as a person in *Helen*—although her beauty maintains a certain sinister aspect—and while Homer may very well have been using Helen in book four to contrast Penelope's goodness,[204] the Sophists were happy to ignore that particular valence.

Beauty is not without agent in Helen, she wields it when and as she can to devastating effect. From Prodicus and Lucian's fixation on appearance over Heracles' might to Sophocles' ambivalence over beauty's madness inspiring power to overthrow the mighty it has seemed beauty produces an effect that engages other to act. That is to say, in the previous chapters, beauty was suspicious and without control of the possessor. This chapter has shown that beauty can be used with agency, even if that agency is not that of the possessor as seen with Euripides' Helen. However, Homer's Helen is frightening in the level of control she deploys over her particular brew of a φάρμακον, and Gorgias, in particular, has a wealth of good things to say about Helen and the potency of her φάρμακον in a speech where he barely talks about her at all but is instead talking about beauty's φάρμακον as it applies to λόγος.

[204] Doherty argues that we should read Odysseus' choice to keep his identity secret from Penelope in light of the stories Menelaus and Helen told in book four.

5.0 Chapter 4: Gorgias and the Potency of Beauty as Φάρμακον

When my love swears that she is made of truth / I do believe her, though I know she lies

- Shakespeare, "Sonnet 138"

Rhetoric's use of Heracles established a problematic relationship of sophistry to κράτος in the first chapter, the second dealt with how Heracles demonstrates its curious fragility, and the third chapter argued that Euripides worked to deploy Helen in a way that granted at least the possibility of having some sort of agency over the δύναμις of κάλλος. Helen only became more powerful and more dangerous and, indeed, more beautiful, with her own eloquence unleashed upon Menelaus. Helen's power being embodied in the beauty of that very body, or even through magical incantations, works well enough for narrative, as Helen can be absent or present from the action as necessary, but to serve as an exemplar for the power of rhetoric requires that the dynamic of her power become placed outside the body. How many prospective students, after all, would be capable of becoming superlatives of bodily beauty? And so, while the previous chapter established the nature of Helen's power this chapter demonstrates that Gorgias of Leontini (*ca.* 485 – 380 BCE) worked to align rhetoric itself with that power. He did so by embracing a view of the power of rhetoric as a δύναμις born from κάλλος and offered his teachings as a way of learning to possess beauty rather than be possessed by it as Helen often was. To do this, he contrasted rhetoric's power to the might of κράτος and praised the constitutive and intoxicating properties of κάλλος.

Gorgias' use of Helen as the mythic superlative of beauty in his *Encomium of Helen* is required to show how this is possible without sacrificing the efficacy of beauty's power. I argue

that, rather than the subject-acting-upon-the-object view of power contained within κράτος, rhetoric, because it aligns itself with the δύναμις of κάλλος, presents an intriguing possibility for power to operate through the metaphor of the middle-voice, a grammatical structure that disrupts the active and passive subject object relationship. Rhetoric, in this mode, borrows the effect of beauty and becomes compelling without being compulsion. The boundaries of the object and subject become blurred in a way which, while it can still be abused, is not itself necessarily coercive.

This middle-voiced metaphor for rhetorical power helps allay critiques of rhetorical violence and makes Gorgias' deployment of the rhetorical φάρμακον more convivial than compulsory. A skilled rhetor with their words can banish cares and griefs as well as any drug or potion, and Gorgias' *Helen* is akin to a generous patron buying a free round for the house. He deploys the notion of beautiful words acting as a φάρμακον to this end and unlike, Homer's unsettling mixing of wine, beauty, words, and magic, Gorgias argues that words and beauty are sufficiently spellbinding on their own, if only for and at the right moment. They do not fetter the listener, but they suggest and nudge and invite. Gorgias considers this speech an act of play, and what good is play on its own?

5.1 Playful Arguments

The question of play is both important and almost irrelevant. It only comes up once, mentioned in the very final words of Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* where to claims to have simply "wished to write a speech on the one hand, with regard to Helen, encomiastic, and, on the other, to myself,

playful."[205] Such a set of goals speaks to Gorgias' penchant to dabble with a multiplicity of purposes. It is an interesting conclusion, and a particularly interesting concluding word, to his demonstration speech. The point of a demonstration speech is that it is produced and delivered as an advertisement for the skills a teacher could give prospective students, and we can assume the speech was successful with regard to this intended purpose, as it is one of three addresses from Gorgias with any claim to authenticity having survived antiquity, and multiple attestations to Gorgias' wealth and success in attracting students can be found in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,* Diels–Kranz's collection of fragments.[206] The self-purported purpose of Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* is to set the record straight against her antagonists and praise Helen in accordance with her due, yet this conclusion seems to undermine this purpose and make his purpose solely playful. Scholars of a post-structural bent may find this insertion of play heartening, yet while παίγνιον, 'play,' is the quite literal final word Gorgias utters on this topic as we have received it, Schiappa is quite correct in his critique against undue emphasis on one word during his critical review of Consigny's book, *Gorgias: Sophist and Artist*: ". . . it is not clear why Gorgias' one use of the term *paignion* to describe his encomium of Helen should be used repeatedly as evidence of Gorgias' deconstructive playfulness, yet his use of the rationalistic term *logismos* in the same text to describe what he is doing is ignored."[207] Schiappa feels that Gorgias is using this demonstration speech to demonstrate the power of "fifth-century BCE rationalism"[208]

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[205]ἐβουλήθην γράψαι τὸν λόγον Ἑλένης μὲν ἐγκώμιον, ἐμὸν δὲ παίγνιον.
Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, 21, Emphasis mine.; DK 82B11.

[206] The ones relevant to sophists are collected in Rosamond Sprague. *The Older Sophists* (Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis, 2001), 31 - 67.
The fragments dealing with Gorgias' fame and success are in DK 82A1-35.

[207] Edward Schiappa, review of *Gorgias: Sophist and Artist*, by Scott Consigny, *Argumentation and Advocacy*, Spring 2003.

[208] Edward Schiappa, "Gorgias's Helen revisited," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (August 1995): 310.

as a sort of pre-disciplinary movement towards a more philosophically rigorous and logocentric rhetoric. To no one's surprise, Schiappa is pushing against a Poulakos oriented view, what Consigny calls rhapsodist, wherein Poulakos reads the *Helen* as an analogy for the situation of rhetoric in the Hellenic world of the fifth century BCE, and so Helen's beauty becomes rhetoric's beauty, and so too her strengths and weaknesses rhetoric's.[209] A simple answer is not to prize or privilege the single use of λογισμός, calculation and reason, over the one, albeit ultimate, use of play, παίγνιον. Gorgias prized and valued both and he was performing and advertising both because both had implications for the power of rhetoric. In this, my reading of Gorgias is closer to Consigny's antifoundationalism than either Schiappa's rationalism or Poulakos' sophistic rhapsody. I may be working within the aesthetic turn, but even if a third-century Roman rhetor's offhand anecdote about Gorgias wearing a rhapsode's purple robes,[210] that does not offset the importance of reason. Likewise, why would reason preclude beauty? Indeed, what kind of sophist would let themselves be constrained solely to any one device or means when they could believe, practice, and perform whatever was appropriate to the particular situation?

Unlike Consigny's interest in finding a more persuasive, and thus truer, account of Gorgias however, I am well satisfied and content that at best what we have in the extant corpus of Gorgias' works is a useful echo of what was lost in transmission. My interest is in Gorgias as a source of how sophists deployed the myth of Helen. It is helpful to realize that all of Gorgias' words as we have them are second and third hand accounts, many are epitomizations, and often from centuries after he had lived. The myth that survived the man tells us what students of rhetoric valued in him,

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[209] John Poulakos. "Gorgias' Encomium to Helen and the Defense of Rhetoric," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Autumn 1983).

[210] DK82A9

what they hungered for and sought in his imprimatur. All texts from antiquity have been altered in transmission and even such mundane activities as adding accents when reinscribing a script that lacked them or spaces between words when that innovation was introduced, alters the original and risk changing it profoundly. Indeed, a thriving source for scholarship is digging through the scholia and arguing about such seeming mundanities as whether a particular εστιν, a 3rd person singular verb of being, is enclitic, throwing its accent onto the preceding word, or not. An enclitic εστιν is said to be existential, denoting the existence of the subject, while one with an accent is copulative and works as copular verbs normally do. Given that English copular verbs similarly conflate the copula with existence (is, be, being), this sort of minutiae may seem unimportant. Yet, one need merely give a quick glance to Gorgias' own *On the Nonexistent* to see the importance of such minutiae.[211] I will happily cede the importance of fidelity concerning such a complex text and the nuance of its ideas, but for his *Encomium of Helen* and *Defense of Palamedes,*[212] whether they are word for word perfect in transmission is less important than their mythic, their thematic fidelity. *Helen* makes use of the mythic paragon of beauty and *Palamedes* of cunning. As I read *Helen* in similar close fashion as I did Euripides and Sophocles, it bears keeping in mind that the close reading is less of Gorgias as, and more of society as, author and, thus, the inevitable errors in transmission become opportunities.

We know of Gorgias of Leontini that he first came to note in the Hellenic world when he was dispatched by his *polis* in Sicily to be as part of an embassy to Athens. Once there, he astounded citizens with his flowery and nearly poetic prose. *Helen*, in particular, is a virtuoso

[211] DK 82B1-3.
[212] DK 82B11a.

performance of rare rhetorical device and a frustrating challenge to translate. George Kennedy begins his appendix to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* with an explanation that his "translation seeks to recapture some features of Gorgias' prose style, including antithesis, alliteration, pairing of clauses, homoeoteleuton, and other forms of paronomasia which came to be known as 'Gorgianic figures'"[213] while John Dillon and Tania Gergel explain that they, keeping in mind that "in the case of *Helen*, the purpose is not to mount a serious defense of Helen, but rather to hymn the power of persuasion . . . have chosen to present *Helen* in quasi-poetic form, distinguishing the cola, in an attempt to convey something of the impression it must have made on its hearers."[214] Unacknowledged in these translators' admissions of purpose is that Gorgias' *Helen* is a beautiful speech about beauty, a powerful speech about power, and a speech-filled speech about speech. These may seem like trite and unimportant observations but consider what little we know of Gorgias at the time the speech was being given, he was a powerless ξένος, 'stranger, foreigner,' at the mercy of powerful men and he, through nothing but beautiful words, held sway over them. The *Helen*, in particular, is an example of rhetoric that succeeds not so much through persuasion as performance. One need not buy into his logic for Gorgias to win this case, one need merely find oneself moved by his words. Beauty at his command, deployed and seemingly biddable, won him not just safety in the fourth-century BCE Hellenic world, but wealth and renown.

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[213] Aristotle and George A. Kennedy, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 251.

[214] John Dillon, ed. *The Greek Sophists* (Penguin UK, 2003), 76.

5.2 Giving Helen the Cosmetic Touch

The context of Gorgias' personal power dynamics cannot help but inform the speech and, while we do not know when precisely in his career he developed this speech, his very success later on stood as mute testimony of what he was proclaiming. Namely, that rhetoric has its own different type of strength that can overthrow established order, established truths. Helen is a fit subject for such a program in multiple respects: As should be abundantly clear by this point in the dissertation, women in the world of sophistic Athens possess less κράτος and what power they have is found in their beauty and they have little to no control of this power. It would be easy, then, to defend Helen, as Euripides' *Helen* does for herself, as being blameless. Such a speech would be sufficiently cunning as a demonstration of what Gorgias was offering to teach. However, unlike Palamedes, for whom Gorgias has written an ἀπολογία, traditionally rendered as a 'defense,' Gorgias proclaims that his speech concerning Helen is an ἐγκώμιον, an 'encomium.' This speech as demonstration is not a defense of the mythical figure encapsulating beauty, though it is easily read as such, but is to be a praise of her and, through her, beauty.

Much as the final word of the dialogue, 'play' is made important through its ultimate position, so too is the first word important as it demonstrates Gorgias' interest in Helen to be, well, cosmetic: "The adornment/order to a city, on the one hand, is good men, and to a body beauty, and to a soul wisdom, and to a deed excellence, and to a word truth, but the opposite of these, disarray/disorder"[215] Κόσμος and ἀκοσμία bound this sentence, with the first being the Greek

[215] Κόσμος πόλει μὲν εὐανδρία, σώματι δὲ κάλλος, ψυχῆι δὲ σοφία, πράγματι δὲ ἀρετή, λόγωι δὲ ἀλήθεια· τὰ δὲ ἐναντία τούτων ἀκοσμία
Gorgias, *Helen,* 1.

word for the notion of "order, arrangement." From this, an ancillary meaning arises, that of beauty and adornment, and it is from this meaning that English gets our word for cosmetics. But originally it meant order, in the sense of the opposite of chaos, and so we also derive the word "cosmos" from it. All these values operate simultaneously in the word, making it difficult to find a precise yet elegant word to translate it into. The word which ends the sentence is ἀκοσμία, and even not knowing Greek it should be apparent how similar the two words are. In effect, ἀκοσμία is un-cosmetic, un-cosmos, 'disarray' and 'disorder.' Κόσμος is the beauty of a well-ordered garden, of a well-executed maneuver where thousands move as one, and, indeed, of a symmetrical face aligning close by the golden ratio. Such a face, at the right time and the right place, might well launch a thousand ships.

Kennedy's translation chooses to translate κόσμος as 'fairest' and ἀκοσμία as 'unbefitting' in the version he provides in the appendix of his rightly famed translation of Aristotle.[216] Dillon and Gergel go with 'adornment' and 'disarray,' though they mark both translations with a transliteration of what's being translated to preserve the bracketing antithesis.[217] The best way to keep Gorgias' antithesis, however, would be to claim that it is cosmetic versus non-cosmetic, but since we currently think of cosmetic appearance as a fake and deceiving appearance, it would quite alter the feeling the words are striving for. The words, however, strive for this sense of beauty less through their meaning and more through their arrangement and order. *Helen's* first sentence uses the Dative case to great effect. The dative is a case of attribution, it is commonly translated in English as "to" or "with" or "by." This particular usage is interesting as it is attributive without

[216] Kennedy, *On Rhetoric*. 251.
[217] Gergel, *Greek Sophists*. 76.

ever using a copular verb. The verb "is," which makes all this list work, is only implied by the Greek. Likewise, there are no articles, definite or otherwise. Gorgias' syntactical economy here makes the list roll, it is as pared down and laconic a list as can be imagined, yet it goes on and on verbosely. Translating the first sentence yet again, this time less for accuracy and more for capturing the ponderous yet spartan nature of the prose: "fitting to a city is good men; a body, beauty; a soul, wisdom; a deed, excellence; a word, truth; but the opposite of these, unfitting." Aurally more than visually, the sentence proclaims its meaning through a profusion of laconic clauses. For this translation, I went with "fitting" for κόσμος, and 'unfitting' for ἀκοσμία, as the word is, itself, perhaps the most fitting. That is to say, it carries across the sense of order and arrangement in that the words literal first sense is in carpentry joining, yet the term still retains a certain sense of pleasure through satisfaction and beauty, such as "a fit body" and "a fitting end." This punctilious fixation on a fit translation for κόσμος may seem wasted, but while Prodicus may have been the most renowned for his fixation on the perfectly fitted word it seems clear that all Sophists chose their words for effect and Gorgias is starting his speech off on a cosmic and cosmetic note for a reason.

The *prooemium* clearly states a purpose for this speech, and beauty is central to that purpose by nature of the *prooemium's* execution. The listener and reader is forewarned, Gorgias' argument is performed as much if not more than it is declared. The declarations themselves are quite clear at this juncture, it is not only just but requisite to "praise the praiseworthy" and "blame the blameworthy:" "And it comes out of the same man to both speak rightly the necessary and refute those blaming Helen."[218] And so, the *prooemion* begins to wrap up with the purported purpose of

[218] τοῦ δ' αὐτοῦ ἀνδρὸς λέξαι τε τὸ δέον ὀρθῶς καὶ ἐλέγξαι τοὺς μεμφομένους Ἑλένην

the speech being revealed as the exigency of correcting an injustice and restoring honor to one unjustly defamed. Gorgias will stand against common opinion and the slander of the poets to do this. He even seems to disparage Aeschylus a touch, mentioning poets who "concerning this woman (Helen) are of the same voice and soul, both the heard proofs of poets and what is said of the name, which is a remembrance of misfortunes."[219] This seems a somewhat oblique reference to the *Agamemnon*, when it is said of Helen's name, which is a homophone of various forms of a Greek verb for taking, αἱρέω, 'take,' and that her name "…is fitting since: *taker* of ships, *taker* of men, *taker* of cities" (ἐπεὶ πρεπόντως *ἑλένας*, *ἕλαν*δρος, *ἑλέπ*τολις).[220] Kennedy, in the first footnote to his translation of *Helen* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, makes this observation in a footnote and underscores it by providing a different translation which somewhat egregiously mistranslates the literal meaning, but carries across a similar sense and the same aural association as the original Greek: "in Aeschylus' Agamemnon (line 689), a play on *Hel*en's name: '*Hell* to ships, *hell* to men, *hell* to the city.'"[221] It works better in English because of the homophonic properties, but in Kennedy's translation Helen is removed from being an actor, being a *taker* of ships, men, and cities and becomes reduced to a destination or attribute, a *hell to* them.

Regardless of if Gorgias is even making an allusion to Aeschylus, however, he is nonetheless doubling down on the play of Helen to ἑλεῖν,[222] "to take." The speech, still in its

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Gorgias, *Helen,* 2.

[219] γυναῖκα περὶ ἧς ὁμόφωνος καὶ ὁμόψυχος γέγονεν ἥ τε τῶν ποιητῶν ἀκουσάντων πίστις ἥ τε τοῦ ὀνόματος φήμη, ὃ τῶν συμφορῶν μνήμη γέγονεν
Ibid.

[220] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 686-87. Emphases mine.

[221] Kennedy, *Rhetoric*, 252, footnote 1.

[222] The rough breathing mark over the epsilon, ἑ, works somewhat like the English H

narration as Kennedy divides it, starts this project by praising her lineage, her beauty, and how her beauty brought men together for want of it:

> Born out of these (parents) she held beauty equaling the gods, which having seized and not let escape notice, she held; and she a great many desires of cupiditous love inflamed in a great many men, and by this one body many bodies of men came together, men greatly minded upon great things, of whom some were of great riches, and others of well thought of ancient noble birth, and others of great individual strength, and others that held the power of acquired wisdom; and they were all assembled by cupiditous love both for the unconquerable love of conquest as well as love of honor.[223]

This use of κάλλος is the second, and final, appearance of the word in the entire speech, the first appearing as the cosmetic property of the second item in the opening sentence, "to a body, beauty," (σώματι δὲ κάλλος), yet, while the word is absent, Helen operates as a personification of beauty and, later, so too does Paris.[224] Here, Gorgias explicitly states that Helen took her beauty, an intriguing proposition and one that frames the implications which are to follow throughout the speech. Beauty was, indeed, an attribute separate from Helen, "she held beauty equaling the gods," (ἔσχε τὸ ἰσόθεον κάλλος), and, this beauty "having seized and not let escape notice, she held," (λαβοῦσα καὶ οὐ λαθοῦσα ἔσχε). The use of the verb ἔχω, 'have, carry, hold, possess,' in relation to Helen's beauty bears notice as it is a strongly polysemous word with meanings ranging from a copular sense to cleaving to.[225] Many of its senses are carried in the English word 'hold,' and

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[223] ἐκ τοιούτων δὲ γενομένη ἔσχε τὸ ἰσόθεον κάλλος, ὅ λαβοῦσα καὶ οὐ λαθοῦσα ἔσχε· πλείστας δὲ πλείστοις ἐπιθυμίας ἔρωτος ἐνειργάσατο, ἑνὶ δὲ σώματι πολλὰ σώματα συνήγαγεν ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ μεγάλοις μέγα φρονούντων, ὧν οἱ μὲν πλούτου μεγέθη, οἱ δὲ εὐγενείας παλαιᾶς εὐδοξίαν, οἱ δὲ ἀλκῆς ἰδίας εὐεξίαν, οἱ δὲ σοφίας ἐπικτήτου δύναμιν ἔσχον· καὶ ἦκον ἅπαντες ὑπ' ἔρωτός τε φιλονίκου φιλοτιμίας τε ἀνικήτου.
Gorgias, *Helen,* 4.

[224] Helen's eye delighting in the figure of Paris in section 19 is to be discussed, though it is interesting to note at this point that Gorgias doesn't consider beauty a feminine attribute. In fact, the τὸ ἰσόθεον κάλλος/*to istheon kallos* (godlike beauty) is partially a reference to her divine father Zeus's beauty, not just Leda's.

[225] Ἔχω has 11 separate definitions in the LSJ divided in 3 categories of common usage (3 in the transitive, 4 in the intransitive, 4 in middle voice) and a total of 35 particular translations spread throughout those definitions. Ἔχω." Greek Word Study Tool. Accessed December 3rd, 2018.
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=esxe&la=greek#lexicon

while it is fair to simply translate the word in some flavor of the copula as Kennedy does, translating the first as "had" and the second as "kept" in his translation from Sprague[226] and "possessed" and "preserved" in the more recent translation he put in his *Rhetoric*.[227] I, however, have insisted on "hold" to impart the hint of Helen's agency in Helen's beauty. To underline this fact, between the first use of ἔσχε and the second, Gorgias uses two participles regarding her agency over her beauty: λαβοῦσα, 'having seized,' and οὐ λαθοῦσα, 'not having escaped notice.' Beauty is clearly set up as a force separate from Helen, it is not that she *was* beautiful, but that she held, seized, was not ignorant of her beauty. Gorgias' Helen, unlike the Helen of Euripides' ambivalence, is wholeheartedly valorized for her command of her beauty. All the praise that is to come follows from this fact. Her knowing of and holding onto her beauty, it is implied, is what granted her the ability to wield it to great and devastating effect.

As an ur-predicate for the superlative nature of the beautiful, control over her beauty makes Helen a power to be reckoned with. Having already established that bodies aspire to beauty as the most fitting and having just finished stating Helen's awareness of her beauty, her first accomplishment meriting praise, that "she a great many desires of cupiditous love inflamed in a great many men, and by this one body many bodies of men came together, men greatly minded upon great things"[228] is clearly and unambiguously *her* accomplishment. Even though the third person declination of ἐνειργάσατο, 'inflamed,' allows for the subject to be "it," and thus refer to beauty, the insistence on Helen's holding her beauty makes the distinction immaterial. Whether it

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[226] George Kennedy, "Gorgias," in *The Older Sophists,* edited by Rosamond Sprague (Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis, 2001).

[227] Kennedy, *Rhetoric,* 252.

[228] πλείστας δὲ πλείστοις ἐπιθυμίας ἔρωτος ἐνειργάσατο, ἑνὶ δὲ σώματι πολλὰ σώματα συνήγαγεν ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ μεγάλοις μέγα φρονούντων
Gorgias, *Helen,* 4.

is her beauty or her own self which inspires erotic desire, she is either the subject doing or the one in possession and control of the object impelling the action. Thus, Helen is to be credited precisely because "by [her] one body many bodies were brought together." Gorgias does not hide the nature of Helen's effect, she provokes a "desire of cupiditous love" (ἐπιθυμίας ἔρωτος). Ἔρως, as we saw with Heracles, is a threat to even the mightiest, and Helen's might with regard to ἔρως is boundless. Ἔρως, particularly, needs to remain distinct from φιλία, a more friendly love, and one invoked by the sentence's concluding with φιλονίκου, 'love of conquest,' and φιλοτιμίας, 'love of honor.' Ἔρως is a boundless topic of vast complexity, but for the implications on Gorgias' use of Helen it should be understood as a strong cupiditous attraction.

While the importance of ἔρως was well established in the second chapter, the question of translation is useful to tackle here. 'Lust' is an adequate translation for ἔρως, and better than translating it simply as 'love.' However, lust in our Christianity-shaped heuristic is more of a frowned upon fellow traveler of love rather than an honored love of its own.[229] Lust is shameful in a way that ἔρως simply is not. Gorgias is, after all, boasting of Helen's ability to engender lust. A more nuanced translation might be to translate ἔρως as "cupiditous love," as *cupidas* is the Latin equivalent of ἔρως, and the sense of rapaciousness in *cupidas* survives in the word cupidity. Thus, Helen in Homer, in Euripides, and in Gorgias possesses and deploys a beauty which engendered in men a greed to possess and deploy it. Even Homer and Euripides' nuanced interactions with Helen's power contain some suspicion, of the power of beauty itself if not of Helen herself, but Gorgias finds nothing but opportunity.

[229] In the Greek of early Christianity, *koine*, even φιλία loses ground to ἀγάπη, high minded love (familial or divine), a noun newly derived from an older Greek verb as Christianity spread.

In the context of the Greek world such a cupiditous love knew no gender or sex. Therefore, the gendering here, the use of ἀνήρ, 'man,' rather than ἄνθρωπος, 'human, person,' begins a subtle play of power that Gorgias continues through the speech. Immediately before beginning the passage praising Helen's beauty just examined, Gorgias had praised her for her parentage, a common enough gambit of an encomium. He alludes to her irregular parentage, that Helen was born to Leda, married to Tyndareus, but Zeus was the one who fathered her. He praises her for both paternal units, the one that begat her and the one that reared, saying "and one (Tyndareus) was most powerful of men and the other (Zeus) Tyrant of all things."[230] The specificity of ἀνδρῶν, 'men,' is nicely, and subtly, limiting. Using it instead of ἄνθρωπος limits the competition that Tyndareus is being compared to as being κράτιστος in a field that does not include his daughter. Yet, if we take the male gendered ἀνδρῶν seriously, and we should since Gorgias is producing a speech in praise of a woman, then it follows that Helen was more powerful still, even without being κράτιστος. Indeed, if Gorgias wanted to say Tyndareus was the most powerful of all he easily could have, but Gorgias uses "of all" (πάντων), when crediting Zeus' power, and this distinction is a strong hint and subtle antithesis to the genitive ἀνδρῶν. The specific delimitation of males was a deliberate limiting, as it cleverly elides the possibility that Tyndareus was more powerful than Helen without challenging the superior κράτος of males. After all, Helen's power brought together a veritable who's-who of heroic antiquity. As in English, superlatives need not be exclusive and can function as hyperbole, yet the gendering of men as the category Tyndareus is mightiest of is strongly exclusionary. It is not difficult to see how κράτος operates as a gendered

[230] καὶ ἦν ὁ μὲν ἀνδρῶν κράτιστος ὁ δὲ πάντων τύραννος
Gorgias, *Helen*, 3.

power, one of might and force and violence which was reserved for the masculine.[231] Δύναμις, especially that which Helen is the superlative of, has no such limit gatekeeping access or efficacy.

The multitude of bodies her singular body brought together included the wealthy, the noble, the strong, and "and others that held the power of acquired wisdom." This last group brought up as being gathered by Helen are an indirect citation of Gorgias' profession, a σοφιστής, 'sophist,' the category of public intellectual who professed to teach σοφία, 'wisdom,' and public speaking skills for a fee. As opposed to the masculine power of Tyndareus, κράτος, Gorgias refers to "power of wisdom" (σοφίας δύναμιν), using δύναμις. The power of strength goes to men, a more dynamic power to the wise, and Helen's beauty supersedes them all as wise and strong alike were excited to ἔρως by her beauty and, once together, wrought great deeds. Indeed, wisdom is mentioned in immediate proximity to beauty in Gorgias' introduction as the cosmetic accoutrement to the soul: "and to a soul, wisdom" (ψυχῆι δὲ σοφία). Body and soul are a classic antithesis, right up there with word and deed, the antithesis Gorgias concludes his list with, and, all without in any way seeming to diminish κράτος, he relegates it as inferior to wisdom and beauty since κράτος is an inferior cosmetic adornment to the body compared to beauty and so too is might less fitting to the soul than wisdom. Beauty, however, may well be superior to them all, as the beautiful alone are not among the great men brought together under the ἔρως of Helen.

True, κάλλος, never appears again. But this speech is a praise of Helen and that makes beauty omnipresent thematically by default since that is her function as a protopredicate. Gorgias' use of ἔρως as the force which drives all the great men to great deeds is, therefore, a paean to Helen's beauty and therefore cross applicable to beauty in general: "and all brought together under

[231] And the Amazons, though they are exceptions which prove the rule.

ἔρως" (καὶ ἦκον ἅπαντες ὑπ' ἔρωτός). Ἔρωτός is the genitive but, partnered with the preposition ὑπό, which literally means 'under,' signifies something similar to "by ἔρως." I have kept the prepositional sense of ὑπό in this closer examination because it nicely underscores a hierarchical position, the wealthy, noble, strong, and wise were all assembled under an ἔρως engendered by Helen's beauty. Gorgias subordinates his profession's eponymous σοφός *under* ἔρως, and this suggests that the best prize the he could offer his students would not be access to wisdom, but to beauty. Gorgias concludes this section with his own playful and mild antithesis of φιλία to ἔρως as he also credits the great men's gathering to: "unconquerable *love* of conquest and *love* of honor" (*φιλο*νίκου *φιλο*τιμίας τε ἀνικήτου). The prefix φιλο- relates to φιλία, which is itself more commonly known by the adjective φίλος, and is a less lustful version of love. Ἔρως is thereby distanced, made distinct through apposition, and men's desire for νίκου, 'conquest,' and τιμίας, 'honor,' subtly given a less forceful, though still ἀνικήτου, 'unconquerable, compulsive force.'

5.3 A Force of Words, Words, Words

Everything to this point in the encomium has been mere prelude and set up. Gorgias, by way of transition, announces that he is well over the time for introducing a speech and about to begin the speech proper: "but with the time on the speech, this now having been overstepped, I will step forward the start of the speech proper."[232] The λόγος is the point, and Gorgias, lest the audience be caught up in the purported purpose of praising Helen, reminds his potential customers of that

[232] τὸν χρόνον δὲ τῶι λόγωι τὸν τότε νῦν ὑπερβὰς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος λόγου προβήσομαι *Ibid*, 5.

through this mild breaking of the fourth wall. I have crafted a coding schema and visually scanned the text, later confirming my findings with a transcribed copy using search functions, to look for words of thematic importance. Helen, for instance, is mentioned seven times in a speech which runs to 1,318 words by my transcription. She is, of course, often referred to indirectly, such as in section 3: "the woman whom this speech concerns" (ἡ γυνὴ περὶ ἧς ὅδε ὁ λόγος), but even so Helen is markedly absent from a speech she is the confessed subject of, as Isocrates later points out.[233] There is an unhappy slight in this, that Helen is removed from a speech praising her similarly to how even her beauty, for which she is most often praised, is eventually taken from her by Euripides's Hera and Menelaus. But it is nonetheless telling for the purposes of rhetorical theory that Gorgias is less interested in Helen herself than the beauty her myth is centered around. Ἔρως, the feeling rather than the divinity, is mentioned just as often as Helen, seven times, and often in close proximity to her. The idea of desire for Helen is, much like she herself, often alluded to indirectly. However, the subject of the speech which overshadows all others in mention is that of speech itself. Λόγος and related words show up forty-six times.[234] Even combining Helen with ἔρως we are left with a large disparity, and one that makes abundantly clear how the speech's focus is somewhat narcissistic. Helen may be the organizing conceit, but the speech, with its abundant vanity, is the tautological subject of itself.

This should not be surprising; the purpose of demonstration speeches was to demonstrate the power of speech so that young students would be happy to pay a rhetor's fee to gain access. The vanity of the speech, a speech which fixates on itself foremost, is an auto-erotic lure to the

[233] Isocrates, *Helen*.

[234] Λόγος itself in various declensions 34 times, miscellaneous derivations, conjunctions, verbs, and participles a further 12.

listener, and while Gorgias is no Diogenes to pleasure himself in public and is not directly invoking masturbation in his concluding that his speech served to further his own pleasure, it is a fitting analogy nonetheless. What becomes revealing in this abundance of Helen and ἔρως and λόγος are how various forms of power and violence arise in the brief speech: κράτος related words come up five, δύναμις words eight, βία seven, and ἀνάγκη seven times. While modern conventions of diction tend to require avoiding repeating the same word multiple time in close proximity, Attic Greek had no such inhibition and Gorgias makes great use of rhetorical *polyptoton* for emphasis and comparison. Indeed, four of the instances of κράτος related words appear in two sentences in section six, using the comparatives of strong as an antithesis to weak:

> Yet it is natural not for the *stronger* to be hindered by the *weaker*, but the *weak* to be ruled and led by the *stronger*, and on the one hand for the *stronger* to take the lead, and on the other for the *weak* to follow. And a god is *stronger* than a human both in respect to force and wisdom and in other ways.[235]

The term for stronger being used, κρεῖσσον, is strongly related to κράτος and is clearly being used as a power word of conquest, hence the concerns with being hindered and with strength ruling. However, power as κράτος seems to be of little interest to Gorgias as regards the power of his speech. There is only one other appearance of a κράτος related word, it occurs earlier when the superlative is used to describe Tyndareus in section three during the discussion of Helen's partonomy. This κράτος dense section is the first, and briefest, exercise of the speech's purported purpose, the exoneration and praise of Helen, and it is composed of a brief and compelling claim

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[235] πέφυκε γὰρ οὐ τὸ κρεῖσσον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἥσσονος κωλύεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἧσσον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείσσονος ἄρχεσθαι καὶ ἄγεσθαι, καὶ τὸ μὲν κρεῖσσον ἡγεῖσθαι, τὸ δὲ ἧσσον ἕπεσθαι. θεὸς δ' ἀνθρώπου κρεῖσσον καὶ βίᾳ καὶ σοφίᾳ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις.
Gorgias, *Helen*, 6.

that being forced by Necessity[236] or the gods frees Helen of blame. Κράτος is thereby associated with divine power while humans, both by easy inference and direct comparison, to weakness. The ability of the gods to manifest their will, the compulsion of Necessity to bend all to its force, these are a κράτος and Gorgias does not directly compare the humble power of his words or Helen's beauty to them. Yet, unstated, there is an implication that while men are weaker than gods, words could be made the stronger.

The repeated contrasting between ἧσσον, 'weaker,' and κρεῖσσον, 'stronger,' cannot help but invoke Protagoras' famous dictum concerning the purpose of rhetoric. We have access to little from Protagoras, and much of that is fragmentary, but Aristotle's gives an important, if disfavorable recounting of one of the basic tenants of Protagoras' rhetorical practice:

> . . . And so this is, 'to make the weaker word stronger.' And this promise of Protagoras' people were justly incapable of enduring, for both it was a falsehood and also a not true, but instead an apparent, seeming, and was in no art other than rhetoric and sophistry.[237]

This κρείττω,[238] 'stronger,' and ἥττω, 'inferior,' antithesis that Aristotle attests to Protagoras is among the most foundational of concerns in sophistic rhetoric,[239] and while very few fragments are reliably attested to Protagoras, entire books have been written centered on the implications

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[236] I agree with Kennedy's early decision in Sprague to translate ἀνάγκης in the begining of this section as Necessity, the deified persona of the concept rather than just necessity, though it bears pointing out that nothing more than context in the original Greek suggests this and, indeed, he seems to have changed his mind in his translation with *Rhetoric*. See Sprague, *Sophists*, 51. and Kennedy, *Rhetoric*, 268.

[237] καὶ τὸ τὸν ἥττω δὲ λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν. καὶ ἐντεῦθεν δικαίως ἐδυσχέραινον οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὸ Πρωταγόρου ἐπάγγελμα: ψεῦδός τε γάρ ἐστιν, καὶ οὐκ ἀληθὲς ἀλλὰ φαινόμενον εἰκός, καὶ ἐν οὐδεμιᾷ τέχνῃ ἀλλ᾽ ἢ ἐν ῥητορικῇ καὶ ἐριστικῇ
Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.24.11.

[238] The Attic dialect preferred double Taus for double Sigmas, thus *kreitto* here in the later Aristotle versus Gorgias' *kreisso*.

[239] Aristotle's mention of Protagoras in fact immediately follows his description of Corax's famous rhetorical deployment of probability.

from the maxim.[240] However, for the moment it is sufficient to note that Gorgias seems to be tacking against the sophistic wind by making the near tautological point that stronger things are stronger than weaker things. Of course, despite such appearances, Gorgias is in fact marching alongside his fellow sophists. The possibility for this confusion comes, no doubt, from Aristotle. For instance, Kennedy clarifies and fleshes out Aristotle's quotation of Protagoras as "to make the weaker seem the better cause,"[241] while I have chosen a more laconic and spare "to make the weaker word the stronger" for τὸν ἥττω δὲ λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν. Kennedy's translation, understandably working within Aristotle's forthcoming insistence that this maxim is only apparently true, gives the quotation a sense of fixed value that is actually quite lacking. Making the weaker *seem* the stronger does not alter the facts, does not make things other than they are, it only masks the reality of things and replaces it with a tempting flattery. The stronger is still the stronger, the weaker the weaker. It only *appears* to be otherwise, making this a cosmetic power, but for sophists the power of that appearance is sufficient in the moment. This kairotic sufficiency will gird the back end of Gorgias' speech.

It is clear from the context of his citation of Protagoras that Aristotle disapproves of the temporary usurpation of the stronger by the weaker. However, given the radical relativism of early sophists, it seems unlikely that they would agree with such a negative reading of those words. Ἥττω is a comparative being paired with λόγον in Aristotle, but it is freely used as a substantive adjective in Gorgias to mean the "inferior, lesser, weaker." Gorgias' κρεῖσσον is similarly the comparative of κράτος used in the same substantive way which means stronger, more powerful,

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[240] For instance, see Michael Mendelson. Many Sides: *A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument* (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002).

[241] Kennedy, *Rhetoric*, 189.

more mighty. The verb being used in Aristotle's quotation, ποιεῖν, to make, completes the pithy utterance and, while the verb ποιέω has made its way into English as the noun "poem," it really harkens to the sense of the English word "art," the Latinate equivalent, as it is still used in "artisanal" and "artifact." Ποιεῖν is to make by craft, and while it is not utterly impossible to imagine the construction of such making as sheer artifice, to Protagoras, Corax, Gorgias, and others who rapidly expanded the boundaries of humanity's first academic discipline, the simpler and more expansive sense of make as creating is the most fitting. Thus, rhetoric *creates* the weaker argument *into* a stronger one. It alters reality and makes things otherwise, even if only for the moment. If, when, it is the *right* moment, that moment is enough. The stronger still triumphs over the weaker, as ἀνάγκη, necessity, compels, most of the time. But Rhetoric gives the skilled speaker the δύναμις, the ability, to add weight and tip the scales in key moments of κρίσις, 'crisis.'[242] Gorgias' coming claims about λόγος suggest that beauty, in body and in word, is, at the proper moment, that power more powerful than power, that strength stronger than strength. As Gorgias has already led us to conclude that Helen is more powerful than even her reputed mortal father, who was the most powerful of men, then rhetoric must similarly overstep all other forms of strength.

Just because Gorgias is finished with κράτος, however, does not mean he is done with power words. Βία and δύναμις appear throughout the text multiple times and without the same clustering as κράτος. However, a pattern nonetheless emerges. Four of the seven uses of βία are

[242] The term κρίσις gets its root from judgement and decision and, alongside the word crisis in English, also gives us critic. There is an important medical use of the term, wherein the κρίσις was a moment where the disease would break either way and, even if not recognize until later, set the patient on the path to recovery or death. Much as a skilled rhetor would wait for the kairos, the doctor trains to recognize the κρίσις. At this point, perhaps, it is of note to mention that Gorgias' brother, according to Plato, was a doctor.

paired with the verb ἁρπάζω, which is translated by the LSJ as "to take or snatch" but, much as the Latin *rapare*, means rape or kidnapping when used in reference to a woman. This conjunction of force and rape also appears in sections six, twelve, and twenty, but it is the foundation of the argument in Gorgias' second short reason for absolving Helen, section seven:

> And if by force she was raped and unlawfully abused by force and unjustly outraged, then clearly the raping (person), on the one hand, outrageously perpetrated injustice, and the raped, on the other hand, who had the misfortune to suffer the outrage. Therefore, it is worthy on the one hand for the barbarian perpetrating barbaric perpetrations in word and law and deed to suffer by word, accusation; by law, dishonor; and by deed, injury . . . he did the terrible, she suffered them. Therefore, it is just on the one hand to pity her and on the other to hate him.[243]

It may strike the modern ear as an overly pious and obvious point, that the raped ought not be blamed for their being raped, but Gorgias lived in an era when victim blaming was common and so this rationale for Helen's defense, which Euripides' *Helen* also relies upon, runs somewhat counter to the popular conventions of the age. Euripides himself, in another play, dabbles in the trope in *Andromache*. In the play, Andromache, enslaved in the sack of Troy, comes into conflict with Hermione over her captor's, Pyrrhus', affection. Pyrrhus' attentions are clearly unwanted and she unwillingly indulges him only in so far as it might save her son, yet Hermione blames her for rising above her station.[244] From Aeschylus we have Clytemnestra's curious jealousy of Cassandra when Agamemnon, the husband she is plotting to kill, brings her back from Troy as a spoil.[245] The treatment of Deianira and Iole in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* was gone over in chapter

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[243] εἰ δὲ βίᾳ ἡρπάσθη καὶ ἀνόμως ἐβιάσθη καὶ ἀδίκως ὑβρίσθη, δῆλον ὅτι ὁ μὲν ἁρπάσας ὡς ὑβρίσας ἠδίκησεν, ἡ δὲ ἁρπασθεῖσα ὡς ὑβρισθεῖσα ἐδυστύχησεν. ἄξιος οὖν ὁ μὲν ἐπιχειρήσας βάρβαρος βάρβαρον ἐπιχείρημα καὶ λόγῳ καὶ νόμῳ καὶ ἔργῳ λόγῳ μὲν αἰτίας, νόμῳ δὲ ἀτιμίας, ἔργῳ δὲ ζημίας τυχεῖν . . . ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἔδρασε δεινά, ἡ δὲ ἔπαθε· δίκαιον οὖν τὴν μὲν οἰκτῖρειν, τὸν δὲ μισῆσαι.
Gorgias, *Helen*, 7.

[244] Euripides, *Andromache*.

[245] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*.

two and, while a nuanced meditation on the power of beauty, blaming the beautiful object taken for its seizure is a key theme. As to Helen, Herodotus suggests that blaming the victim was offered as a serious way to head off war following her abduction.

Writing within the same century, Herodotus writes with the simple assurance of common opinion regarding the exchanges of raping women between the Persian east and Greek west. This exchange of kidnapping and assault is placed as part of a pattern which culminates in Paris snatching Helen. Herodotus' *Histories* places the uttering of this opinion in the mouths of the Barbarians, but it is a position he does not in any way rebut: "While on the one hand it is unjust to rape men's women, on the other to be anxious to avenge raping is foolish: wise men take no notice of such things. For in fact it is clear that, if they had not desired it to themselves, the women would never have been raped."[246] This is how he reports the argument of Troy to the proto-Hellenic people responded to Helen's abduction with a ten-year war with existential stakes but it nonetheless is presented as a credible and reasonable position to take. And, indeed, without Oedipus' trickery in the oath of Tyndareus, it may well have prevailed as sound reasoning. This, then, is the mindset Gorgias is struggling against in his defense and praise of Helen.

Βία, as force, is an outrageous power of violence, assault, and barbarism. Two of the other three uses of βία related words are in support of the conjunction of force and rape, with the verb ἐ*βιά*σθη, constrain, being used in the section already translated, and section twelve using εἰ

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[246] τὸ μέν νυν ἁρπάζειν γυναῖκας ἀνδρῶν ἀδίκων νομίζειν ἔργον εἶναι, τὸ δὲ ἁρπασθεισέων σπουδήν ποιήσασθαι τιμωρέειν ἀνοήτων, τὸ δὲ μηδεμίαν ὥρην ἔχειν ἁρπασθεισέων σωφρόνων: δῆλα γὰρ δὴ ὅτι, εἰ μὴ αὐταὶ ἐβούλοντο, οὐκ ἂν ἡρπάζοντο
Herodotus, Histories, 1.4.2.
While this attitude is clearly reprehensible, it is not wholly absent from modern attitudes concerning victim blaming and slut shaming. Our encoding has changed from that of classical Greece, but some key components of their deeply misogynistic attitude still find unexpected purchase in modernity.

*βια*τήριον *βία* ἡρπάσθη, "raped by force of great force,"[247] as an emphatic tripling of the violence. The last instance of βία occurs in the already translated and discussed section six sentence, as one of the areas mortals will always be wanting in when compared to the gods. The only use of βία of note outside the direct connection of rape is in section twelve, where Gorgias continues to expand on his immensely vaster third reason for rehabilitating Helen's reputation, that she was persuaded by λόγος. There is more to be said about this portion, it being the single greatest point of his speech by length, but as regards βία what is interesting is that section twelve in short order and with great density brings our epitome of beauty, Helen, together with λόγος, βία, πειθώ, ἀνάγκη, and δύναμις:

> Therefore, what responsible thing hinders a custom of Helen similarly being involuntarily raped by force of great force? For consider, (λόγος) possesses persuasion and, indeed, further, while, on the one hand, it does not possess the figure of necessity, on the other, (λόγος) has its own power. For λόγος persuades a soul, which, once persuaded, compels one both to obey those speaking and to consent to the doing. Therefore, on the one hand, the one persuading, compelling, does wrong and, on the other hand, the one persuaded, just as the one compelled, by the word foully hears a falsehood.[248]

Persuasion is here yoked to λόγος as an effect produced by its power, and is distinctly distanced from the compulsion of necessity: "And while on the one hand (λόγος) does not possess the figure of necessity, on the other it has its own power."[249] That power of λόγος is, quite explicitly, δύναμις. The masculine accusative articles in the final clause are curious as they lack an immediate referent, but they serve to demonstrate the distinct association of word to power. There is no masculine

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[247] Gorgias, *Helen*, 12.

[248] τίς οὖν αἰτία κωλύει καὶ τὴν Ἑλένην νομίσαι ἐλθεῖν ὁμοίως ἄκουσαν οὖσαν ὥσπερ εἰ βιατήρων βίᾳ ἡρπάσθη; ἡ γὰρ τῆς πειθοῦς ἕξις, καίτοι εἰ ἀνάγκης εἶδος ἔχει μὲν οὔ, τὴν δὲ δύναμιν τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει. λόγος γὰρ ψυχὴν ὁ πείσας, ἣν ἔπεισεν, ἠνάγκασε καὶ πιθέσθαι τοῖς λεγομένοις καὶ συναινέσαι τοῖς ποιουμένοις. ὁ μὲν οὖν πείσας ὡς ἀναγκάσας ἀδικεῖ, ἡ δὲ πεισθεῖσα ὡς ἀναγκασθεῖσα τῷ λόγῳ μάτην ἀκούει κακῶς.
Ibid.

[249] καίτοι εἰ ἀνάγκης εἶδος ἔχει μὲν οὔ, τὴν δὲ δύναμιν τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει
Ibid.

noun preceding them, save, perhaps, the rather distant Helen, that they can refer back to. Instead, I read them as pointing forward to the immediately following λόγος, as that λόγος is directly tied to persuasion: "for λόγος persuades the soul." (λόγος γὰρ ψυχὴν ὁ πείσας). The deferred λόγος works to differ λόγος from persuasion while simultaneously hammering home the closeness of the relationship. Λόγος produces πειθώ, πειθώ is distinctly *not* ἀνάγκη, but instead something with its own δύναμις.

5.4 Power in the Middle Voice

The εἴδωλον–so important to the power of compulsion embodied in Helen's beauty in Euripides–is the bifurcating point of distinction. It is being deployed by Gorgias with reference to ἀνάγκη, a term of basic force which means a sort of inevitable compulsion and "necessity." Yet, while I am reading Gorgias as saying λόγος is not the εἶδος of ἀνάγκη, Kennedy's older translation reads the negation as belonging to δύναμις: "persuasion has the form of necessity, but it does not have the same power."[250] The negative, οὔ, is oddly placed, and while the edition I have used for the Greek punctuates it to go with the first clause, a sense I have followed, there is no natural and obvious reason for that to be the case. Considering the sense of what follows, which is about the power of persuasion being akin to necessity, it seems more in keeping with Gorgias' purpose to suggest that persuasion is formally different from necessity but *can* produce similar effects. It is an important

[250] Kennedy, *The Older Sophists*, 53. This is a difficult passage, as the Greek is ambiguous. It is interesting to note that Kennedy's more recent translation in *The Rhetoric* takes this passage with loose rein and forgoes the set up antithesis entirely and simply says "Persuasion has the same power as necessity."

sentence, as ἀνάγκη is a force which cannot be questioned or resisted. It is what makes the strong naturally triumph over the weaker and the true to be superior to the false. Λόγος, however, has a power which allows for the opposite, for the upsetting of necessity.

After all, soon after setting up the antithesis of the power of ἀνάγκη and λόγος Gorgias provides examples of the power of persuasion, and his three exemplars are curious. He suggests we attend first to the words of astronomers for the power of "doing persuasion by word" (πειθὼ προσιοῦσα τῷ λόγῳ).[251] These men move from opinion to opinion and "make the untrustworthy and unclear to be seen (as true) by the eyes of opinion."[252] Second we should consider "the necessary contests of words" (τοὺς ἀναγκαίους διὰ λόγων ἀγῶνας) in which a speech "persuades and delights by skill" (ἔτερψε καὶ ἔπεισε τέχνῃ) but does not "speak truth" (ἀληθείᾳ λεχθείς).[253] The third and final example is the "striving for superiority of philosophic words" (φιλοσόφων λόγων ἀμίλλας), a practice of contesting arguments through the swift bandying about of words which renders, "mutable the belief in the opinions" (εὐμετάβολον ποιοῦν τὴν τῆς δόξης πίστιν).[254] All three examples are suspect. They are a deviation from what Plato will write Socrates as indefatigably championing, that truth trumps falsehood; good, evil; and the fixed, the mutable. Necessity compels the superior to triumph over the inferior, and the truth is superior to lies and good to evil and the permanent the changeable. So while the power of λόγος is no less a power than ἀνάγκη, it must follow a radically different form in order for these distasteful examples to be properly supportive of Gorgias' expansive claim.

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[251] Gorgias, *Helen*, 13.

[252] ἄπιστα καὶ ἄδηλα φαίνεσθαι τοῖς τῆς δόξης ὄμμασιν ἐποίησαν *Ibid*.

[253] *Ibid.*

[254] *Ibid.*

Gorgias does not shy away from the distasteful implications of this form of power. It is no coincidence that Gorgias is distinguishing the power of rhetoric from that of force with the set-up of Helen's rape, βιατήρων βίᾳ ἡρπάσθη, "raped by force of great force." He wants to claim for λόγος a δύναμις of even greater possibility that can affect compulsion without itself being force. This also marks the beginning of a shift in Gorgias' argument concerning Helen; to this point he has been defending her with claims that her will and agency simply would not matter to the gods, fate, or being forcibly taken. However, at this moment, he pivots to suggesting that even if Helen left her husband of her own will and provoked the Trojan War by so doing, it is still not her fault and she should be held blameless. Rhetoric, then, does not and cannot function similarly to force and violence. It may still compel but does so without removing willing consent. Instead, it, "compels both to **obey** those speaking and to **concede** to those doing."[255]

I have bolded πιθέσθαι, 'obey,' and συναινέσαι, 'concede,' the two paired infinitives that are the operation of rhetorical compulsion, because each subtly impacts the power of this compulsion. Πιθέσθαι is the aorist middle infinitive of πειθώ and συναινέσαι the aorist active infinitive of συναινέω, 'consent.' Συναινέω is a verb of agreement, and by pairing it with πειθώ Gorgias reads assent in the doing of the action that one is persuaded towards. Such a requirement for consent is telling, as it gives both the speaker and audience complicity in the power of rhetoric. Much like how a stage magician may require the willingness of the target of their hypnosis for it to be effective, so too the rhetor and their rhetoric. Callicles, the bad faith interlocutor who ends

[255] ἠνάγκασε καὶ πιθέσθαι τοῖς λεγομένοις καὶ συναινέσαι τοῖς ποιουμένοις
Ibid, 12.

Plato's *Gorgias,* would be an example of such an audience because he is an interlocutor who will not permit himself to be persuaded. No amount of Socratic reason or eloquence will shift him.

More intriguing, at least by way of implication, is that πειθώ, 'persuade,' in the middle voice is easily translated as 'obey.' The grammatical conventions which necessitate the same verb to be translated differently because English lacks a third grammatical voice presents a new angle for examining the peculiar power of rhetoric. The Greek middle voice is a generally difficult concept to translate into English without resorting to entirely different verbs, as it is a voice our language lacks. Grammatically, the active voice has the subject act upon an object and the passive has the subject being acted upon by the verb. The middle voice frequently is taken to be a sense where the "the action is performed with special reference to the subject" in a way that can be translated as reflexive. However, Smyth complicates that too easy translational trope with the next note, "The middle represents the subject as *doing something in which he is interested*."[256] Intransitive verbs in English often serve a similar purpose, for instance, "I exercise regularly" means something intriguingly different from "I exercise my right to bear arms regularly." There is an implication of self interest in the intransitive exercise, almost an absent reflexive "myself" appended to it. The Greek middle voice flirts with the reflexive but is usefully distinct from it. The distinction is important, and the implications of the difference carries important connotations for imagining power structured in a middle-voiced manner.

Not simply reflexive, the middle voice often carries a notion of benefit or effect to the subject. However, it does not have to use the verb's subject as its object the way the reflexive

[256] Herbert Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 1713-1714. Emphasis mine.

requires. For instance, the verb λύω is a verb used in a sense of undoing, "loosening, dissolving, opening," and in the active and passive voice translates as one would expect: I undo the knot, active; the knot is undone, passive. However, in the middle voice it takes on an interesting valence and can mean something akin to being ransomed or set free when used transitively. Πιθέσθαι, then, carries with it a duality of subject and object in subtle shades that, as we are incapable of thinking of persuasion in such a way, must be translated as "obey." Smyth himself offers precisely this translation but, perhaps because it is not entirely satisfactory, immediately suggests the reflexive "persuade oneself" after it.[257]

This moment in Gorgias is a site of possible intervention where we can employ Bradford Vivian's project of using Rhetoric to upset stable categories and identities of representation on rhetoric itself. In his chapter, "Rhetoric in the Middle Voice," Vivian vigorously argues for understanding the middle voice as inherently rhetorical and sets the ground for reclamation of the middle voice as a way to undo the damage philosophy has wrought:

> The very concept of persuasion, therefore, incited vigorous and widespread debate over the nature of law, justice, and virtue. Plato's unremitting suspicion of persuasion likely reflects the fact that, as a ubiquitous public preoccupation, its power of fascination posed an intellectual and cultural obstacle to one of the guiding aspirations of early philosophy: namely, to dictate universal standards of moral and civic conduct.
>
> Indeed, the middle voice of persuasion was inimical to this defining task of metaphysical inquiry . . . [In Plato's *Gorgias*] None of Gorgias' answers satisfy Socrates because persuasion connotes a process rather than an outcome, a gerund instead of a noun.[258]

Vivian disclaims a true return to rhetoric in the middle voice, and he is right to do so, but as Vivian does so I too find the middle voice a site for disrupting the slanders of Plato and Aristotle. Vivian

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[257] *Ibid*, 1737.

[258] Bradford Vivian, *Being made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 90.

retains a fixed interest on rhetoric as persuasion and uses Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* as his model for understanding rhetoric in terms of Foucault's discourse:

> The 'truth' of a discourse, therefore, is not categorical but historical. It is engendered by the rules or conditions of possibility that define whatever beliefs or premises can atain the status of truth in a given social or historical context.
>
> Such rules enable—*produce*—capacities for thinking, knowing, and speaking. They constitute, not an artificial constraint on otherwise plentiful forms fo thought, knowledge, and speech, but the practical, historical conditions of possibility from which thought, knowledge, and speech emerge.[259]

I, of course, am less interested in redeeming persuasion. Persuasion is an effect of rhetoric, but it is an effect too readily metonymized into rhetoric itself and while such a metonymy is not untrue it should not serve so easily for the whole truth. In particular, I find in Vivian's use of Foucault a slippage back into κράτος as Foucauldian discourse is bound tightly to state and institutional command, control, and power-as-effect. I would have the middle voice operate not as a literal incarnation of rhetorical persuasion but as a metaphor for understanding the δύναμις at play within it.

Happily, in aide of this play stride two giants of post-structuralist thought for whom the middle voice as a concept has a special valence in how power perpetuates itself. Both Derrida and Roland Barthes have toyed with the possibility that it can give a framework for disrupting the power relationship of the subject and object which, they argue, is endemic in most Western metaphysics. The Derridean usage stems from a seemingly incidental aside in his famous essay, "Différance." The essay is concerned with a word that, despite a difference in spelling, is no different in sound and contains two differing but not dissimilar meanings within it. The close

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[259] *Ibid*, 96.

English equivalent of 'différance' is to 'differ' and 'defer.' Derrida invokes the idea of the middle voice to resist what he views a harmful reduction to active or passive operation:

> And we will see why that which lets itself be designated différance is neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like, the middle voice, saying an operation that is not an operation, an operation that cannot be conceived either as passion or as the action of a subject on an object, or on the basis of the categories of agent or patient, neither on the basis of nor moving toward any of these terms. For the middle voice, a certain nontransitivity, may be what philosophy, at its outset, distributed into an active and a passive voice, thereby constituting itself by means of this repression.[260]

The suggestion that a structural power dynamic where the actor acts upon an actant and the one acting is prized above the acted required is a strong recommendation for it to operate as a locus of resistance to such κράτος-like dynamics. Utilizing a Derridean concept for resistance is, I think, a grave misconstrual of his ideas. Such use instantly resubstantiates the active/passive dynamic, albeit with terms reversed, and becomes self-defeating given enough time. However, using Derrida to play with κράτος is a useful means of differing and deferring meaning, of refusing, if only for a hopefully momentous moment, the sundry harms that come with definitional inscription and understanding.

Barthes, whose use of Saussure to create semiology helped invigorate structuralism and provided a foundation for later post-structuralism, finds the middle voice similarly intriguing and a useful foil for thinking of authorship in a short essay musing on the act of writing:

> According to the classical example, given by Meillet and Benveniste, the verb *'to sacrifice'* (ritually) is active when the priest sacrifices the victim in my place for me. On the other side, it is middle voice if, taking the knife from the priest's hand, I make the sacrifice for myself. In the case of the active, the action is accomplished outside the subject, because, although the priest makes the sacrifice, he is not affected by it. In the case of the middle voice, the subject affects himself in acting; he always remains inside the action, even if an object is involved. Therefore, the middle voice does not exclude transitivity.[261]

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[260] Jacques Derrida, "Difference," *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 9.

[261] Roland Barthes, "To Write: An Intransitive Verb?" in *The Rustle of Language* 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 18.

Barthes finds the middle voice a structure which is not exactly itself transitive, the grammatical construction of objects receiving the actions of subjects, but manages not to reject or deny transitivity. It allows for the author to write and the reader to read and for both to be acts of authorship of a kind that act upon the other but not necessarily as an object.[262]Derrida and Barthes' use of the middle voice point towards an expansion upon Vivian's which does not need to be centered around persuasion and the power and violence inherent in such persuasion. Rhetorical violence is predicated on the notion that to persuade as an action is to make someone feel, believe, or act otherwise than they would have otherwise. It is a forceful imposition. And to *be* persuaded is to have that force exerted upon one's self. Trying to imagine a middle voice of persuasion, where the persuaded is still acted upon by the outside power of rhetoric but still maintains control of their response, of being persuaded in accordance with one's interests, suggests to me a better word than "obey" to translate a middle voiced πειθώ into, 'heed.' To heed an oration is, in some sense, a mutual coming together of the one who speaks and the one who hears. Gorgias' λόγος explicitly lacks the seeming of κράτος-like power-as-forceful-compulsion precisely because he compares the power of λόγος to that forceful power which it is not. He clearly aligns that kind of power with the violent rape of Helen, and so the power of λόγος is superior both in effect and ethic as it is altogether different from strength's violent seizing of a body. This nuance of complicit agency is central to understanding Gorgias' view of the power of his art and the rest of the speech demonstrates this nuance, both as he finishes up his large point concerning persuasion as well as in his final point regarding ἔρως.

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[262] For an even more explicit look at this idea see Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, "Death of the Author," *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

5.5 Gorgias' Aesthetic Pharmacy

Gorgias transitions from his third point with a concluding pharmacological analogy, which we shall examine soon, to absolve Helen of blame if she herself were overthrown by ἔρως for Paris. He argues that "For, if ἔρως did all this, the erroneous sayings of blame shall flee without difficulty. For that which we might see does not hold the nature we, for our part, desire, but instead what each hits upon. And, through the eyes, the soul becomes impressed upon by a turning."[263] The power of ἔρως, which earlier was praiseworthy in Helen for its potency and ability to bring together the best and the strongest, is no less powerful and praiseworthy even when Helen, exemplar and superlative of the beautiful that she is, herself succumbs to Paris's beauty. Unlike with κράτος-centric power that, with all other things being equal, guarantees to the possessor of greater strength protection against those with lesser,[264] beauty's power is not rendered anodyne by possession of beauty. That beauty is a glass cannon, all offense with no defense, can be witnessed in a myriad of myths: Pygmalion, the maker of a beautiful object he falls for despite his mastery over it; Narcissus, who falls for his own beauty seen in reflection; Apollo, whose beauty availed him naught when assailed against by the arrow of Eros as we saw in chapter two.[265] And while this is

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[263] εἰ γὰρ ἔρως ἦν ὁ ταῦτα πάντα πράξας, οὐ χαλεπῶς διαφεύξεται τὴν τῆς λεγομένης γεγονέναι ἁμαρτίας αἰτίαν. ἃ γὰρ ὁρῶμεν, ἔχει φύσιν οὐχ ἣν ἡμεῖς θέλομεν, ἀλλ' ἣν ἕκαστον ἔτυχε· διὰ δὲ τῆς ὄψεως ἡ ψυχὴ κἀν τοῖς τρόποις τυποῦται
Gorgias, *Helen*, 15.

[264] Only rarely is strength pitted against strength with no modifiers and, indeed, central to this project is the notion that weakness can deploy beauty against strength and turn the tables. However, strength is a power that essentially operates through a binary, the stronger will always vanquish the weaker if the *only* thing being deployed is strength. Tactics, cunning, leverage, timing, etc are all ways to compensate for this and are so successful at doing so that it may become difficult to envision strength as power without them. Well and good. The point is not that strength as power exercises itself in the world this way, but to simply point out that it is in the nature of strength that it can. Beauty cannot.

[265] Strength, of course, can be turned against itself as well. But the interesting thing about beauty is that no agent need be involved. It is in beauty's nature to provide no amelioration against itself.

beauty which strikes through the eyes, there is also beauty which can impress the soul through the ears; the beauty of music, of poetry, and of rhetoric.

The mechanism of impression, that the beautiful enters through our senses and summons an immediate reaction, is not where western aesthetic theory has gone in the millennia since Gorgias, and to some extent I agree with James Porter's insight that Plato and Aristotle's idealism and formalism set the stage for our current fixation on aesthetic form rather than sense.[266] Hume, Kant, Hegel, Schiller, and Dewey understand aesthetic experience as mediated through paradigms of reason, *sensus communis*, politics, experience, play, etc. However, Gorgias' use of τρόποις, 'turn,' to describe the effect of that the impression of beauty has on the body is wonderful. The word is τρόπος, the word from which we derived "tropes," in the dative, and I have translated this as a dative of instrument because it points to a curious and surviving notion of immediated effect.

We say as a compliment, colloquially, that the beautiful person or object "turns heads" and we mean by it precisely what Gorgias is implying with, "through the eyes the soul becomes impressed upon by a turning (trope)."[267] The verb τυποῦται is a form of τυπόω, and it is a verb of impression, often quite literally the result of some die or press. The impression is pressed in, through the eyes, by a turning. There is a literal sense in which this is possible with a press, a small cylindrical die is used to stamp pottery with repeated impressions, but τρόπος is a word with rich use within Greek culture, and many of its uses survive today in atrophied forms. A *turning* point was where a battle was won, it literally marked the point that an opposing force of hoplites turned and fled, and was marked by a commemorative τρόπαιον, which survives in English as

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[266] James I. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece: Matter, Sensation, and Experience* (Cambridge;New York;: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[267] διὰ δὲ τῆς ὄψεως ἡ ψυχὴ κὰν τοῖς τρόποις τυποῦται
Gorgias, *Helen*, 15.

trophy. More topically, tropes compose an important set of rhetorical tools handed down to us through the tradition whereby words are twisted from their "literal" content by devices such as metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, litotes, rhetorical questions, etc. Such a twisting of words from their set and staid meanings, such as to say of Helen that her face launched a thousand ships, has a far greater ability to impress than simple and literal minded utterance. To say that Helen was very attractive, for instance, is less true even while not at all a lie than the literal lie that Marlowe spoke, claiming Helen's face launched a thousand ships. In our colloquial sense of beauty turning heads once encountered through the eyes, Helen, being the superlative of beauty, was certainly that which could turn heads upon the encounter and make an impression. In that phrase, that the beautiful was "head turning," can be seen the ambivalence Gorgias is arguing for in beauty that lacks the control his rhetorical teaching will offer. The reaction is immediate, one passes the beautiful object or person, and one's head, without thought, turns to observe it for longer than it would be able to otherwise. Yet the person who turns their head is found accountable for that action even as it seems to occur without their agency. Unlike an act of forceful aggression, compelling a head to turn, the power of the beautiful is not that of force, violence, or strength but rather a power of allure and invitation. It does not compel but is, instead, compelling; it is compelling in the middle voice.

If it is so with Helen, why not head turning and beautiful rhetoric? It is only mentioned obliquely that the case against Helen is one of words. Gorgias is, he claims, aiming to protect her not from physical threats but from "the erroneous sayings of blame." But that Gorgias is speaking *now* is mentioned constantly. Indeed, after going on at some length about how the sight of a fearful

enemy can inspire cowardice,[268] followed by moving on to the power of beauty in art to impress the soul,[269] Gorgias gives himself a bit of self-congratulatory praise: "I have taken away, by speech, the ill repute of a woman" (ἀφεῖλον τῷ λόγῳ δύσκλειαν γυναικός).[270] Ἀφεῖλον is the 1st person singular aorist of ἀφαιρέω, 'take away from.' The aorist is often understood as a form of the past tense, but it is more accurate to understand it as a form of aspect, an aspect of complete bounding. The simple past may still be ongoing, or may not, but the aorist is always understood to have been accomplished, and that full accomplishment need not be past but could be in the moment. Gorgias' speech is not over, after all, but already by it he has done what he promised to do at the start, to praise the praiseworthy. He does this not through simple lauding of her beauty and its power, but through an enactment of it. The beauty of Helen is being praised not just through what Gorgias is saying but in how he is saying it. Gorgias speaks, not ekphrastically, not in a rapturous recounting of precisely *how* she was beautiful, but through a performance of that beauty, of its power to charm and to bring together. All this with an audience well aware of his intent, that his words are designed to spellbind them, to turn their heads and lead them to sign up for his tutelage. It is his words, no less than Helen's beauty, which are meant to be intoxicating.

Such intoxication is entirely the point. Gorgias' point concerning the δύναμις of λόγος through its effect of πειθώ makes up nearly a third of the dialogue and culminates in deploying an analogy of λόγος being a φάρμακον. This rather complicates the following theme of involuntary agency which I have already looked at, but does so in a productive manner. Gorgias' φάρμακον

[268] Gorgias, *Helen*, 17.
[269] *Ibid*, 18.
[270] *Ibid*, 20.

moment bridges his third point regarding the power of λόγος to persuade with the involuntary reaction of aesthetic sensibility:

> In the word itself is held both the powers of speech as an array against the soul and of potions as an array against the physical body. For just as by potions are some humors led out of the body and also, on the one hand, death and, on the other, life halted, thus also from words do some vex, some delight, some frighten, some array courage in those hearing, and some intoxicate with potions and ensorcel the soul by evil persuasions.[271]

Before tackling the pharmacological implications of Gorgias' choices, it should be noted that this section is difficult to translate for all the right reasons. It is profoundly dense with meaning and connotation as well as arranged to particular effect. Equally correct decisions in translation will produce radically different meaning and, of course, it is likely Gorgias intended not any one sense over another but preferred for all of them to come across. For instance, I have used the verb "array" three times in the translation, twice to translate τάξις and once for καθίστημι. Τάξις is a quietly interesting word with strong military overtones, it is used to describe battle lines, battle formations, battle stations, etc. It is a term of military order but, unlike κόσμος, which begins the dialog, it seems to be an order without the cosmetic sense of beauty. Καθίστημι, on the other hand, is sometimes translated to 'set down' or 'establish,' but it also has a military sense of setting into order and arraying troops into position. Such militant word choices are not an accident, and the closest English sense I could find was 'array,' as it is a word with a history of arraying for combat but also simply means organization. Much as the right troop positioned at the right place at the

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[271] τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχει ἥ τε τοῦ λόγου δύναμις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς τάξιν ἥ τε τῶν φαρμάκων τάξις πρὸς τὴν τῶν σωμάτων φύσιν. ὥσπερ γὰρ τῶν φαρμάκων ἄλλους ἄλλα χυμοὺς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐξάγει, καὶ τὰ μὲν νόσου τὰ δὲ βίου παύει, οὕτω καὶ τῶν λόγων οἱ μὲν ἐλύπησαν, οἱ δὲ ἔτερψαν, οἱ δὲ ἐφόβησαν, οἱ δὲ εἰς θάρσος κατέστησαν τοὺς ἀκούοντας, οἱ δὲ πειθοῖ τινι κακῇ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφαρμάκευσαν καὶ ἐξεγοήτευσαν.
Gorgias, *Helen,* 14.

right time could turn the tide of battle,[272] so too the well-spoken word in the well-constructed sentence at the opportune moment. This special arrangement of words can ensorcel a person into a state of enchantment, not, perhaps, in the sense of a magic spell but more akin to the soporific powers of a lullaby.

Gorgias tells us no less than three times in close proximity that this power of beautifully arrayed words is like that of a φάρμακον, 'drug/potion.' Gorgias' immediate referent for beauty, Helen, a φάρμακον and their conjunction into a magic spell with evil overtones was the scene in book four of Homer's Odyssey we examined to close chapter three. Evil, Gorgias will admit, is doable with the power of beauty and the power of words. Unlike Helen's draught, which hampered sense and dulled pain to a disconcerting degree, Gorgias embraces the natural polysemous ambivalence of the φάρμακον. Gorgias, of course, had never read Derrida, but the Derridean φάρμακον rightly colors our reading of the word here in Gorgias' Helen because he is using the word precisely because it contains multitudes that seemingly contradict. I have chosen to translate the word, even in its verbal form, to "potion," as that English word carries a great deal of simultaneously contradicting senses and can be helpfully opaque as to which is being invoked at any one moment.

Derrida's use of φάρμακον in his famous chapter of *Dissemination*, "Plato's Pharmacy," is a close reading of a written account primarily concerned with speech about beauty and love, Plato's *Phaedrus*.[273] Derrida focuses his exegesis on a curious seeming addendum, the "Myth of Thoth," which is a fable about the dangers of writing as an erosion of memory. Derrida pays

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[272] Leonidas' sacrifice of his 300 at Thermopylae was already lore in the Greek world, and Alexander was soon to come onto the scene to definitively demonstrate that brining power to particular points was more important than simply possessing numbers.

[273] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, (Chicago: University Press, 1981).

particular attention to Plato's use of the word φάρμακον and uses its slipperiness to make it an exemplar of the trace and the "Myth of Thoth" the ur-text of logocentrism. The present word, the one present in a spoken speech, is more valued and preferred, Derrida tells us, than the dead word written down and read absent the author. Thoth, writing's inventor, proclaims his invention a φάρμακον, a helpful potion or, as often translated, a remedy, for memory. Amon, a deity whose utterances change the fabric of the universe, disagrees and proclaims it a φάρμακον, a deadly potion or, more simply, a poison.[274] The trace of both antithetical senses is omnipresent in the word, it is *differance*, the play of deference and difference simultaneously in language made explicit in one foundational word in western metaphysics. For Derrida, the λόγος as written is viewed as a fratricide to the λόγος as spoken.

Looking at this moment through a Derridean perspective grants us some insight into Gorgias. Gorgias seems not to have written nor sold his speeches, but rather to have performed them, much like Socrates. Indeed, part of the appeal of Gorgias was his extemporaneous skill, that he could provide learned seeming discourse on any subject without study or preparation other than that which rhetoric gave him.[275] Yet, while Plato plays with the ambivalence of the term, a play that Derrida makes much ado about, Gorgias requires neither difference nor deference to one settled meaning but, instead, embraces the ambiguity. Ambiguity which is the frustratingly inconstant key to understanding rhetoric as a δύναμις. Until the power of rhetoric is exercised, after all, it is impossible to determine whether the right word in the kairotic moment of crisis is remedy or poison, yet not knowing what it will be does not deny that the words have power.

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[274] See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274b-277a.
[275] This provides the setting and backdrop for Plato's dialogue, *Gorgias*.

Gorgias' φάρμακον is the potential for poison or for cure, it is the power to heal or harm and, as my choice of translation for τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφαρμάκευσαν, "intoxicate with potions the soul," suggests, it is no more a power that is imposed than is rhetoric. Rhetoric as a potent φάρμακον that may be given by a rhetor, but it must be imbibed by the listener.

Rhetoric can be violence, and of course Gorgias does nothing to take away from that possibility. It can bewitch, befuddle, and bedevil the soul. Yet, that it can do these things is not testament to its nature. Gorgias offers another possibility, one that does not preclude violence but which demonstrates that the power of rhetoric is not truly measured by souls deceived or people enlightened but rather in those invited towards being moved. Rhetoric finds its δύναμις in its ambivalence, in its simultaneous imposition upon and invitation to a soul. Gorgias' rhetoric is a convivial art rather than a violent one, an art for bringing things together by its allure, much as Helen did the heroes of antiquity through hers.

Thus, Gorgias' conclusion of the speech on the note of play is less a moment of disrespect towards Helen as his subject and more an admission that the beauty of his arrangement of words is perhaps a touch auto-erotic. There is still use to them, they accomplish their purported purpose, and his concluding sentence is brief, a simple declaration that he has done what he intended:

> By this speech I have removed infamy from a woman. I have continued by the custom I set at the beginning of the speech. I tried to dissolve the injustice of blame and ignorance of opinion. I wished to write the speech, on the one hand Helen's encomium, but on the other my plaything.[276]

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[276] ἀφεῖλον τῷ λόγῳ δύσκλειαν γυναικός, ἐνέμεινα τῷ νόμῳ ὃν ἐθέμην ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ λόγου· ἐπειράθην καταλῦσαι μώμου ἀδικίαν καὶ δόξης ἀμαθίαν, ἐβουλήθην γράψαι τὸν λόγον Ἑλένης μὲν ἐγκώμιον, ἐμὸν δὲ παίγνιον. Gorgias, *Helen,* 21.

If Helen and her beauty are more powerful than the mightiest, if beauty can, by itself, make the weaker into the stronger, if it is an invitation more powerful than the strongest coercion, what is Gorgias that he can make it all his plaything? For all his protestations about this speech being a just act, the final word of the dialogue betrays his interest in sophistic mastery over the power of beauty, albeit a mastery that seems playful in nature. Gorgias directs the beauty at his beck and call far better than Helen had been allowed to, but by ending with play he permits and performs this control as a δύναμις. Play is a fitting end, perhaps, as his profession is to teach others a similar control rather than exert control over them himself.

Gorgias does not make himself into a Heracles enslaving others by either might or eloquence. In his surviving works he aligns himself and his art with Helen, with Palamedes, and with nothing, with absence over presence. All three are markedly objects overwritten by subjects. These weaker, these acted upon by power, Gorgias rehabilitates not as an act of revenge or an overthrowing of power, but as an act of ongoing, constantly negotiated play. The audience's new sense of Helen, their newfound appreciation for the nature of her power, may not long survive the echo of his words, but it does not need to if it has moved them at just the right moment. Just as Helen's infatuation with Paris' beauty need not have lasted longer than her elopement, an act of dynamic play need not overthrow the structural systems it rebels against to be efficacious against them. Gorgias' *Helen* shows in his playing with Helen as the superlative of beauty and fetish for rhetoric that for the Sophist, for Rhetoric as δύναμις, the play's the thing.[277] The beautiful

[277] The kairotic energy of this notion is found in the origins of the reference, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as the entire contrivance is that Claudius, confronted with his crimes at an opportune moment when he least expected it, would reveal the truth of them to a discerning eye. Afterwards, everything could resume as before, the façade and structural protections of the monarchy surrounding him, but the moment was enough to alter the trajectory of everything which followed it.

rhetorical interplay of speaker and audience opens a contingent space that permits new possibilities of being for the recipient. That these possibilities may not long survive the peroration is a complaint that stems from demanding rhetoric be an efficacious κράτος. That sometimes these possibilities survive their moment and become codified into new structures give rise to the concerns of rhetorical βία is similarly situated in the sense of rhetorical power as κράτος. But play allows for definition to unwind and unravel, it permits for the one who speaks beautifully to blend their subject and object positions and thus channel beauty's power by deliberately permitting it its power.

Permission for play is a sticking point, however, as it still requires an ability to permit. Helen, after all, could not but be beautiful. Her beauty was found in her form and so her power was not hers to permit or deny if anyone more powerful than she by way of κράτος chose to not allow her that agency. The orator, however, chooses to speak beautifully. Theirs is a beauty of art and of craft that can be tweaked and, of course, taught to others. Thus, the great interest in Helen within these sources, as both the epitome of beauty's power and limits. The beauty of the body arouses the mania of ἔρως with or without the conscious deployment of it while the λόγος of the rhetor is at will. Further, Helen could only dim the beauty of others by dint of comparison while the eloquence of Isocrates was built on the foundation of his understanding and attempting to surpass the beauty of Gorgias.[278] That tastes and standards changed, that Isocrates formed a style dissimilar to his teacher's, brings a final valence to Gorgias' conclusion of play. Play cannot just be the speaker playing with words, nor the speaker playing with their audience, but in addition

[278] See Norlin's notes to Isocrates' *Helen* for the arguments regarding whether Isocrates was a student of Gorgias. Isocrates, George Norlin and La Rue Van Hook, *Isocrates* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961).

the words and the audience play back. The orated to, the played with, change the orator even as they are changed by the speaker, or else today we would still be listening to the same oratory which once enthralled Athens. Power understood as κράτος is, of course, serious, but it is also static. Strength, might, coercion—these look and act and perform so similarly today to how they did millennia ago, when the name Heracles was attributed to some encounter with nigh sublime strength, that there is little need to translate the signs which signify these attributes.[279] Conversely, explanations of the standards of beauty are often appended to images of Helen throughout the ages precisely because hers is a more playful, played with, power. Yet, however it may appear in a given age, we need a name for the δύναμις of beauty nearly beyond comprehension, and so Helen survives. Gorgias' *Helen* shows that Rhetoric, at its origins, purposefully aligns itself with the δύναμις Helen is the superlative of and cedes to her pride of place in her domain while taking for itself some of the agency found in κράτος.

[279] There is no need for a footnote to explain the musculature of the Farnese Hercules, for instance.

6.0 Conclusion

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness
- Keats, *Endymion*

This understanding of Rhetoric as having all of the power but none of the disadvantages of beauty is, of course, convenient, self-serving, and so plastic in meaning as to be akin to meaningless. It is perfect, then, as a sophistic understanding of the power they were offering to sell.

There is, of course, more to the story. The risk of the narrow focus within a particular band of Rhetoric's origins risks not only myopia but an over aggrandizement of a handful of thinkers in a movement replete with brilliant and iconoclastic scholars. The thinkers we call by a unified title, Sophists, are themselves hardly unified even with what little we have remaining from them. Still, this reading of how they may have viewed the power of this art they were busy inventing is designed to open fruitful ground for future work. Indeed, broadening the scope, even by the smallest increment, we find that Isocrates takes up Gorgias' use of Helen as an exemplar of Rhetoric's δύναμις but differs from the older sophist by making an explicit claim as to the *political* nature of that power. This is a focus of Isocrates' that has been the focus of excellent work by many in the field, of particular note the work done by Takis Poulakos and Ekaterina Haskins.[280]

[280] Takis Poulakos, *Speaking for the Polis: Isocrates' Rhetorical Education* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 1997); Takis Poulakos and David J. Depew, *Isocrates and Civic Education* 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); Ekaterina V. Haskins, *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina press, 2004); Ekaterina Haskins, "Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Cultural Memory: Rereading Plato's Menexenus and Isocrates' Panegyricus," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2005): 25-45.

There are subtle but interesting implications concerning rhetoric's constitutive power if we understand it to be a middle-voiced power of beauty, and these implications could inform new readings of Isocrates' own *Helen,* as the parallels and differences between his and Gorgias' work seem centered around this ability of rhetoric to bring together polities. Indeed, Helen is still the epitome of beauty and in so brief a span it is unlikely that the significations of her beauty have changed, but for Isocrates it seems her power is now an explicitly political one. Such a reading would allow us to understand Isocrates' musings on the power of λόγος, such as in *Nicocles,*[281] in productive new ways. Particularly, the emphases Isocrates expands upon in the myths of Helen that Gorgias brushes aside, such as the violent force of Theseus' abduction of Helen,[282] becomes a metric for the political power of beauty and, thus, rhetoric. Perhaps, then, Isocrates marks the beginning of the trend of Rhetoric since soon after its inception to measure itself by the standards of effects oriented κράτος and forgetting the possible power in δύναμις.

Isocrates would not have begun such a downgrading of the power of rhetoric if he had not felt pressured into it. So, if we are at all concerned with how Rhetoric found itself trying to measure itself by what it was meant to be antithetical to, then the larger shadow, and one marked largely by his vast absence so far in this reading of rhetorical power, is Socrates. As was mentioned in Chapter One when discussing Xenophon, we have nothing directly from Socrates but a great deal from his student Plato. Readings of Plato are their own particular eternal recurrent of the same, but if he serves, as Whitehead famously put it, as that to which all of Western Philosophy is a

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[281] In particular, the "Hymn to Logos," while not at all playful, proposes a strikingly dynamic and expansive view of rhetorical power. Isocrates, *Nicocles*, 5-9.

[282] According to Plutarch's *Theseus*, in 31.1-3, Theseus, the great hero of Athens, abducts Helen when she is a child and secrets her away with his mother until she reaches a marriageable age.
This abduction allows Isocrates to spend a great deal of time praising Theseus in his own encomium to Helen. Isocrates, *Helen*.

footnote, then it is even more true that most of Western Rhetoric is a series of concessions or *apologias* towards Plato. Even the rhetorical theories of Sophists can be read this way, despite their antecedence to Plato, because he situated his critiques within the genre of Socratic dialogs. That we even call the art the Sophists practiced rhetoric instead of λόγος or logography is testament to the success of his retroactive intervention and the power of his critiques. Plato even puts the word "rhetoric" into Gorgias' own mouth in the eponymous early dialog![283]

Beyond the definitional disputes, Plato's Socrates has a great deal to say about ἔρως and its relationship to beauty and rhetoric in his *Phaedrus*. Given my arguments and view of rhetorical power, my invocation of a Gorgian φάρμακον, and the central place of beauty within all of this, *Phaedrus* is an important part of the discourses attending Rhetoric's early days. Socrates' role as an object condemned to death by rhetoric-wielding Sophists as well as his refusal to use Lysias' sophistic defense speech all contribute to our inherited conceptions of rhetorical power as κράτος and are important moments to analyze through a properly sophistic δύναμις.

Indeed, Socrates seems to serve as a battleground for rhetorical power. I would have us take our cue from Nietzsche rather than Plato, and deny Socrates' position as an eminent Socratic-philosopher:

> All other cultures are put to shame by the marvelously idealized philosophical company represented by the ancient Greek masters Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Democritus and Socrates. These men are monolithic. Their thinking and their character stand in a relationship characterized by strictest necessity. They are devoid of conventionality, *for in their day there was no philosophical or academic professionalism.* All of them, in magnificent solitude, were the only ones of their time whose lives were devoted to insight alone.[284]

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[283] Plato, *Gorgias*, 449d.

[284] Emphasis mine. Friedrich Nietzsche and Marianne Cowan, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (Washing DC, Regnery Publishing, 1998), 31.

Nietzsche, in this unfinished work, allocates Socrates among a list of philosophers considered pre-Socratic and, while in his first book Nietzsche had railed against what Ronald Speir's translates as the "knowledge-lusting Socratism of today,"[285] the temporal aspect clearly shows that he separates Socrates the person and thinker from Socratism, what we have come to think and believe about Socrates through Plato. However, rather than have Socrates stand alone and monolithic, I suggest we reclaim Socrates as a member of his peer intellectuals and contemporaries and claim for him his proper place among the foremost of the Sophists. His contemporaries clearly viewed him as such, as Aristophanes has Socrates perform as a synecdoche for the entire intellectual movement in his role of headmaster of the Thinkery in *The Clouds.*[286] What is more, a great deal of Socratic practice aligns better with playful sophistry than the antagonistic philosophy of Plato. Socrates' preference for dialogs being spoken in the midst of the moment with the interlocutor rather than written post-facto, his performed interest in *aporia* rather than *monoousian* truth, and that his students all seem to have, in true relativist fashion, gotten something different out of their education with him points towards a person whose speech was eloquent, aims were dynamic, and interests varied.

To that end, I suggest Socrates can be understood as a protopredicate of his own. An epitome of his own particular nearly inhuman excellence, σοφιστής, 'wisdom,' he would be the σοφώτατος to Helen's κάλλιστος and Heracels' κράτιστος. A variant of Kirby's "Great Triangle" is thus constructed by these three superlatives, but this triangle is smaller in scale, concerned with Rhetoric's concerns with its identity and scope. The relationships between coercive power,

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[285] Friedrich Nietzsche and Raymond Geuss, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94.

[286] Aristophanes, *The Clouds*.

beautiful allure, and wisdom continue to form tensions even in modern rhetorical thought, and so a reading of Socrates as has been performed for Heracles and Helen seems necessary.

That these protopredicates have survived millennia of hazy transmission, speaks to a continued need for them. The role of Rhetoric's power is not a hazy one, not a matter of minutiae for cloistered scholars to argue over but a vital question speaking to the heart of the discipline's role in the politics of our age. To simply decry the violence of the rhetoric of one's opponents, to simply denounce the absence of any real truth to the hyperbolic hyperreal scapegoating of the Trump presidency, is to simply surrender to the structures of power and violence which have usurped the tools of rhetoric one of the few spaces open and dynamic enough to overthrow them. The more impoverished our shared discourses grow the greater the hunger for a return to eloquence harnessed to wisdom. For all that Sophists and their critiques alleged that artful rhetoric could reduce the free into slavery, it is important to note that the sophists themselves were teachers and not tyrants. The same people who decry the post-modernist hell in which we seem to be living are those who most vociferously denied the applicability of post-modernism to begin with.[287] It would be a fatal error to do the same with rhetoric just because it is deployed by those with meanness of spirit.

[287] The arguments of post-modernism have found their way into popular media, see Sean Illing, "The post-truth prophets," *Vox*, https://www.vox.com/features/2019/11/11/18273141/postmodernism-donald-trump-lyotard-baudrillard, accessed 01/23/2020.

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