17. See West's comments, p.322, on the probable but ambiguous reference to orgasm at fr.94.23. Page does not agree: *Sappho and Alcaeus* 79f. and cf. 144–146; but he does concede that fr.31 describes 'Sappho's uncontrollable ecstasy,' p.33.

Louisiana State University

ROBERT J EDGEWORTH

**RECURRENT METAPHORS IN AESCHYLUS’ PROMETHEUS BOUND**

Our knowledge that Prometheus taught men to yoke and harness animals, which he himself boasts of at 462–6, lends a particular irony and poignancy to the excruciatingly protracted scene with which *P. V.* begins. Prometheus, a god and a benefactor of humanity, is reduced to the level of an animal. The first verb Kratos uses in ordering Hephaestus to bind him is ὀχυμάσω (5), later echoed by Io at 618, which according to the scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius 1.743 is properly used of subduing horses. The implements of Prometheus’ fettering and humiliation include ἄλλων (54), a curb chain or cavesson which was fixed to a horse’s nostrils and apt to cause pain. Even if the word is used more generally here for a bridle, the flavour of the specialised word remains. In keeping with this are μασχαλιστήρες (71), girths which pass round a horse behind the shoulders to be fastened to the yoke. Some readers may think even of μασχαλίζειν, applied at Ch. 439 to the mutilation of a corpse. The sympathetic Hephaestus is eager to be off from his handiwork, which he calls ἰμφίβληστρον, normally a casting net and recalling also the murder of Agamemnon (*Ag.* 1382). But Prometheus’ own spirit emerges in the use of τομοντείρεται (29, 960) and τομοντείρεται (174), preceded by a negative. Neither before his punishment nor after it will he cower like an animal.

Just as a link exists between the binding of Prometheus and his earlier teaching of men to yoke and harness animals, a reversal of fortune not always noticed, so the recurrence of this image in metaphorical senses gives the play additional unity, with reality and metaphor merging quite easily. Prometheus describes himself as yoked to constraints: ἀνάγκας ... ἡνεξελεγμαί (108). When the platitudinous Oceanus urges Prometheus not to kick against the pricks — ὀοκουν ... / πρὸς κέντρα κάθον εκτενεῖς (322–3) — the familiar and well-worn proverb μὴ λάκτιζε πρὸς κέντρα, slightly varied in wording, regains some life through Prometheus’ actual predicament. To the chorus the literal shackling of Prometheus appears to symbolise the metaphorical shackling of all humanity (550),
and the chorus is itself warned by Hermes against becoming enmeshed in calamity (1072, 1078). Io’s confused description of Prometheus ‘in rocky bridles’ (χαλινωτες ἐν πετρίνωσιν, 562) reflects her own state of mind, but the adjective applies to Prometheus’ actual setting as well as indicating hardness and relentlessness. (One recalls how exactly Prometheus’ plight has been mirrored in the chorus’ dual metaphor of the man of iron and stone [σιδηρόφρον τε κόκ πέτρας εἰργασμένος—242] who would remain unmoved by Prometheus’ plight.) The association between Io and Prometheus is hinted at by the metaphor of her being yoked to suffering (579). Now Zeus has two victims, the one of his hatred, the other, literally horned, of his lust, and his ignorance that it will be through the latter that the former will be rescued (772) constitutes an additional irony which is inherent in the play. The metaphor of Zeus’ bridle extends even to Io’s father Inachus (672), and from his point of view Io is ἀφέτερος (666), which recalls animals ranging freely, especially sacred ones. Since Io, Hera’s priestess, is destined to become a cow, the merging of metaphor and reality is quite complex. One may compare the metaphor of the heaven-sent scourge (μαστιξ θεία, 682), which is applied to the torment of Io by the gadfly, and presently Io’s very words become a two-pronged goad (ὑμήρκεις κέντρον, 693) for the chorus. The simile in which Hermes likens Prometheus’ stubbornness to that of a newly-harnessed colt champing at the bit (1009–10) does far more than merely sustain an image well-established in the play. It shows Hermes’ utter failure to understand Prometheus’ personality. Whereas one may believe that the newness of Zeus’ domination accounts for its harshness (35), Prometheus’ behaviour arises not from his new plight but from an intrinsic conviction that he is right and that he will eventually triumph. His adjective δυσχειμοσ (hard on the neck) at 931 for Zeus’ future pangs serves both as a pointed reference to his own present situation and as a hint that fortune will turn full circle: the binder of Prometheus, Io, Inachus and all humanity will eventually be repaid in kind.

Metaphors involving storms and seafaring afford some counterpoint to the scheme outlined above. Prometheus, the deviser of seafaring (467–8), first appears in a chasm buffeted by storms (φόραγε δυσχειμερος, 15), and the play ends with his being overwhelmed by the turmoil of the elements (1080 f.). Io’s compassionate description of him as storm-tossed (χαμαζώμενον, 563) lends itself to both a literal and a metaphorical interpretation. Her heaven-sped storm (θεοσκότον χαμάν, 643) is metaphorical but in keeping with her wanderings (cf. 838) and her misfortunes in general. Those in store for her Prometheus calls ‘a stormy sea of baneful anguish’ (δυσχειμερον γε πέλαγος ἀτηρας δύνης, 746). Coming just after one from chariot-racing, this maritime image re-appears in 886 as the climax of a string of vivid, rapidly changing metaphors, each of which conveys, in a complementary way, a different phase of Io’s convulsions. The exchange between Hermes and Prometheus has a recurrent theme: Hermes, who had previously described Prometheus as moored to woe (ἐς τάοῦτε σαυτόν πυμονας καθίσμεσας, 965), picks up his simile of futility κοι’ ὁποις παρηγορόν (as if addressing a wave, 1001) in a metaphor which leads neatly to his
foreshadowing the real storm about to engulf Prometheus. The conventional χειμών is intensified by τρικυμά, either a succession of three waves or just one towering wave (1015). When the chorus speaks of Prometheus as on a voyage, wanting him to put to shore (κέλσαντ' ἐπίσημα, 183), his reply includes a reference to Zeus' future shipwreck (ὀταν... δρασθη, 189). The verb ραίειν, being principally applied to ships, is an ominous choice for the steersman Zeus (149), who turns out to be not the ultimate steersman after all, being subject to the Fates and the Erinys (515–9). Finally, Prometheus’ statement ἁντλήσω τὸ χίον (375) stems from the bailing out of bilge-water, even if one is tempted to translate it ‘I shall drain fortune to the dregs’.

Medicine is listed among Prometheus’ benefactions to mankind (478–483), so that the double metaphor in φιλογοσφάστα σήματα / ἐξωμάτωσα πρόσθεν δὲντ’ ἐπάργεια (498–9) gains especial point, with a neat parallelism between the hypallage inherent in the use of ἐξωμάτωσα (restore sight to) and of ἐπάργεια (having a film over the eyes). It was, of course, humanity, not the signs, whose vision was faulty. Translation will, regrettably, reduce Aeschylus’ phrase to something like ‘I made clear previously obscure signs from flames’. A telling pointer to Aeschylus’ striving for a certain superficial smoothness of composition is the choral interjection which had provoked Prometheus to speak of his teaching medicine. He had acknowledged the paradox that all his ingenuity had not shown him a way to extricate himself from his present sufferings (469–71). The chorus introduces the simile of the doctor unable to cure himself (473–5), a conceit as old as Homer (II. 11. 834–5). Prometheus ignores the remark and talks, instead, of real medicine. The transition is contrived. We have here not the happiest example of Aeschylus’ blending metaphor with reality. But some subtlety is added to a platitude of Oceanus, who sees his proposed intervention with Zeus in medical terms (ἐργίς νοσοφότης εἰς ἑαυτόν ἰατρὸν λόγοι) (words are doctors of a diseased temper, 378). Harking back to the notion that Zeus’ rule is harsh because of its newness (35), Prometheus implies that the time for the approach has not come: an ulcer or tumour is not to be forcibly reduced while plump, i.e. it will soften and that will be the time to apply pressure—even so with Zeus (379–80). Oceanus, less pointedly, picks the metaphor up a little later by describing his alleged simplicity of mind as a disease (384). Indeed one must acknowledge a certain tediousness in the rather indiscriminate way in which Aeschylus equates with disease almost everything that goes awry in human or divine affairs: 225, 249, 596, 606, 632, 685, 698, 924, 977–8, 1069.

Such relative dullness is, fortunately, not typical of the metaphors in P.V. Fitting applications, with some fine nuances, have been noticed elsewhere. Prometheus’ benefactions are linked to his punishment; Zeus’ victims are associated with each other; the miseries inflicted by Zeus are made to foreshadow his eventual overthrow; and Aeschylus slips from reality to metaphor and back again with conspicuous ease.

R.W. GARSON

University of Adelaide
Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

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