

Yokemates in Euripides' *Heracles*

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Although few readers of Euripides would now agree with Gilbert Murray that *Heracles* is inartistic, "broken-backed,"¹ many continue to find the play divided not only within itself, but against itself. Because the absent hero glorified by the Chorus in the first half of the play slaughters his wife and children upon his return to Thebes, *Heracles* can indeed appear to be divided: divided in time (past and present), divided in expressive means (epinician hymn in the first part, brutal direct action in the second), divided in the "character" of the protagonist and his actions (past hero in the Twelve Labors, present crazed killer); divided, ultimately, even in world-views, seeming to be god-centered in the first half, man-centering in the second. Although such insistent division may commend Euripides as an iconoclastic thinker, it tends to call the play as a work of art into fundamental question. Therefore, even though negative reaction to *Heracles* has at times indicated nothing more than nostalgia or reaction, it also has asked, quite correctly, whether *Heracles* is not a single flawed play at all, but opposing works upon opposed versions of Heracles.²

Studies otherwise as unlike as those of Verrall and Arrowsmith concur in the diagnosis of the division, with Arrowsmith stressing vertical separation of the two parts and Verrall a continuous horizontal division between an open and "ostensible" plot and a cryptic, but decisively ostended, second plot.³ Critical studies reluctant to concede such absolute division in either kind have attempted to look through,

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or beyond, division, in order to perceive a single cause, process, or end for the play. The alteration of Heracles near the center of the work thus has been taken to be an episode of *grand mal* or the transformation (or loss) of heroic *arete*.⁴ The crime of Heracles in the second half has been attributed either to recurrence of an original divine wrath or to Heracles' present repetition of an impiety manifested earlier in the play by both his father and his wife.⁵ The Labors considered in the first half have been dismissed, on the one hand, as illusion; on the other, the violence lauded in the Labors has been said to recur in Heracles' post-heroic murders.⁶ It has sometimes been argued that the play evinces a tripartite, sequential form which overrides the central division.⁷ The most frequent and most favored argument against division would have it that both the hero and the play are involved in a general conversion, within which conventional religious and cultural belief (as represented in Hera and the absent Heracles) is replaced by *polis* and *philia* (as embodied in Athens and Theseus). In this reading, Euripides is said to be intent not upon a demystifying reduction of a hero from demigod to beast, but instead upon elevating Heracles from mythic into social man.

Whether emphasizing or contesting division in *Heracles*, most studies of the play concentrate almost all their attention either upon Heracles, or upon the progress of the play from Hera and Argos, to Theseus and Athens. Either explanation, however, tends to exclude vital elements of the play from consideration. Concentration upon Heracles can silently remove Amphitryon, Zeus, Megara, Lykos, Eurystheus, Lyssa, and Athena--along with Hades, Thebes, Argos, and Athens. Emphasis upon a social progress, on the other hand, can eliminate most of Heracles, as well. Although emphasis upon a hero at the expense of a play (or vice versa) is not confined to *Heracles*, in this play it is unusually damaging. Because of the character of Euripides' protagonist, exclusion of almost any element from the play becomes exclusion of an element of Heracles. Oddly receptive, even passive, he is motivated and represented far more by his servitude to Eurystheus, his possession by Lyssa, and his friendship with Theseus than by his own being, will, or individual strength. Because he is absent from half of the play and is "possessed" during much of the remainder, he often exists to the play only as he is reported by other characters--foes as well as friends. Even the temporal and political positioning of Thebes between Argos and Athens is assignable less to Heracles than to the interactions of Amphitryon, Eurystheus, Lykos, and Theseus. Within the text of the play, too, recurrent figures of speech form complex associations linking Heracles with other characters, past and present. Thus Hera, Heracles, and his doomed children are all described as "gorgon-eyed"; Heracles, Lyssa, and

Athena all enter the play as "phantoms"; several characters feel that the events that they experience are a "dream"⁸; and, in a famous parallel, both the Heracles who leads his children to death and the Theseus who conducts Heracles to life are described as pilots, towing lesser craft. Given these unexpected, but insistent, cross-references among the elements of the play,⁹ together with a protagonist who often is absent and always is relatively passive, the play must always be considered as an ensemble action.

Although the play is "of" Heracles and "of" division, then, it is not centrally about either the one or the other. It is instead best seen as a clinical analysis of the idea and practice of the hero (epic or tragic), as developed within the idea and practice of tragedy. In a radical insistence upon such analysis, Heracles is first gloriously celebrated for his Labors, then reduced to the criminal slaughter of his own family. Far from disabling either the hero or tragedy, however, this probative "division" eventually confirms both.

Nevertheless, at first glance Heracles and his action after returning from Hades seem too idiosyncratic to yield a hero and a tragedy at all: and far less, any general analytical perception of the hero and tragedy. Almost the reverse is true, however. Euripides' work lays bare elements of the hero and of tragedy that are contained or even concealed in more conventional works. If *Heracles* is compared not (as is usually done) with *Ajax*¹⁰ but with *Oedipus the King*, the means and the effects of such analysis become clear. In each work, the hero celebrated in one part of the play is revealed to be (or to have been) a murderer. However, partly because of an interinvolvement of three generations and of oracular interconnections of past, present, and future in *Oedipus*, division in both hero and play is contained. By contrast, in *Heracles* the central family is either destroyed or rendered irrelevant, and both the past and the present seem obliterated. In *Oedipus*, characters and audience alike are assumed to be enlightened by the unfolding action; in *Heracles*, both are stunned and baffled by reversal upon reversal. Perhaps even more pointedly, if in more conventional tragedy the protagonist merely seems to be a "different person" before and after the central revelation, in *Heracles* he can appear to be two quite opposite men, dramatized in opposing half-plays. Finally, if in less unblinking works the hero is distanced or insulated from the violence implicit in both heroism and tragedy, in *Heracles* he is all but defined in violence--both as "hero" and as criminal. In effect, then, Heracles and this particular action bring the ideas or norms or expectations of the hero and tragedy to the test: and vice versa. In the ensuing analysis, either he and his action must be seen to fall outside all such ideas and expectations, so that the work becomes an anti-heroic anti-tragedy, or else the norms and

definitions will have to be expanded, or perhaps simplified, to include him and his present action. Heracles may then come to define, rather than to defy, the heroic and the tragic.

Although any analysis or "unloosing" of the received hero and customary tragedy (especially in ancient Greece) must appear to challenge or even to explode those revered concepts and practices, the analysis which in effect constitutes the "plot" of *Heracles* is not negative, pejoratively "intellectual," or even demystifying. In the long run, its concentration upon the elements rather than the ends of tragedy is more nearly an alteration of directed attention, than of kind. Whereas an *Oedipus* reaches outward to the achievement of a formally perfected tragedy, including the predictable effecting of pity and terror in its audience, Heracles probes inward, adducing the separate constituents of the tragic hero and of the action that develops from those constituents. The audience to *Heracles* therefore is involved less with the formal experience of tragedy than with a carefully deployed identification of the elements of tragedy. Although *Heracles* cannot compare with *Oedipus* in aesthetic power and beauty, it achieves some compensating merits of its own. It always assumes that the hero and tragedy are worth thinking about, even if that thought is skeptical. Ultimately, of course, its analysis as drama may also be more deeply religious than a somewhat automatic ritual, and more astingently theatrical than works that are not generically self-critical.

Such analysis will intimate that every hero may--and probably must--contain both the criminal and the redeemer; and every tragedy, an often violent opposition between men and extrahuman conditions or forces (if only in the energies such as War and Wrath that arise among men and are carried out by men). In both Heracles as hero and *Heracles* as tragedy, those usually concealed polarities are insistently displayed: most flagrantly, perhaps, in causing the hero to "become" a criminal, rather than the reverse. If an audience is not to be baffled and unsettled by such a process, it will have to engage this hero and this play with a cooperative assent to analysis, both as the practice of the play and as its end. It then will never expect this hero to offer the coherent minister-and-scourge or destroyer-and-healer possible in most of Shakespeare or most of Sophocles. He instead will appear to be first the one, then the other. However, within the continuous analysis of this work, each such pole eventually will reveal virtual identity with the other, so that the initial impression of complete division gradually is adjusted to receive equally compelling impressions of identity within that "division." Although seeming to stress polarity and division where most tragedies intimate unity, then, *Heracles* ultimately far more completely--and perhaps more

effectively--denies the division. The same analytical procedure that had insisted upon division in the elements of the hero and tragedy thus finally discloses their identity.

By continuously insisting upon the seeming division of heroic and tragic elements into the oppositions of *either-or* or *neither-nor*, *Heracles* becomes able to penetrate to the demanding identity of those elements within the enclosure of *both-and*. Something of this process had long since become characteristic of Euripides, when at moments of crisis one character would say of another that he or she both *is* and *is not*. In *Heracles*, that penetration from perceived division to realized identity is centrally intimated in the term "yokemating."

Because Heracles is absent from the first half of the play, analysis and action in *Heracles* begin with Heracles' mortal father, Amphitryon. Although at first he seems to offer nothing to an inquiry into the heroic and tragic, being almost eerily non-analytical in himself, he nevertheless is a great source and center for such analysis. He glories in having been a "yokemate," homogamous with Zeus, in mating with Alcmena and in fathering Heracles. In his slant, entirely masculine, version of a divine-human marriage, that union had conjoined man and god. As celebrated by Amphitryon, joyful in cuckoldry, this mating--which was bound to be anomalous or perilous to any human creatures involved, even if the "coupling" were wholly imaginary--had ignored the other divine and human yokemates, Hera and Alcmena. Amphitryon's claim of a divine-human intercoupling announces to the play a radical division that must also involve radical identity. If it plays as comedy in Amphitryon, it will position tragedy for the "hero," Heracles.

Similarly, the name "Heracles" itself had always contained most of the elements and much of the implied analysis of the play. At once oppositional and compound, this name for the hero claims--and dares--human association with a jealous goddess. "The glory of Hera": for a child born under her original wrath and subject to its effects during all his life, the name can seem unbearably ironic, unsuccessfully propitiatory, or heedless of the implication of any conjunction between the human and the divine. Yet the name also conjoins Hera and hero. Within the Labors that Heracles had performed for Eurystheus (and so, ultimately, for Hera), his servitude had been the condition of his heroism. It had saved Hellas from an entirely unequivocal and unambivalent servitude to beasts and tyrants. Furthermore, Heracles' servitude had conferred glory not only upon Heracles and Hellas but also, indirectly, upon Hera. Conversely, when he returns from Hades, "free" from his degrading Labors, he kills not only his enemy Lykos but also his own family. If he now freely duplicates the slaughters that had characterized the Labors,¹¹ he hideously confuses the

quarries. If his past slavery had been the condition of his heroism, then, his present freedom seems to be the condition for his criminality.

By embracing both division and identity within the elements of the hero and the tragedy, such "yokemating" explicitly demands the analysis which it implicitly registers. That double registry reappears sharply in a question when in Heracles' absence his wife Megara is threatened with death by Lykos. Standing (of her own free will) before the altar to Zeus *soter* raised by her absent husband, Megara demands to know, who here is to be the priest, and who, the butcher? Within that implied analysis of an implied tragic ritual, the play answers her not with a priest *and* with her enemy Lykos, but with Heracles. He will be each, and both, and neither, when in his mania he strikes down Megara and their children. Accordingly, when he reflects later upon his heroic Labors and criminal murder, he in turn cries, "[My weapons] must be borne; but in pain I bear them" (1385).¹² In English translation, the pun possible within "to bear" yokes division and identity in his birth, his life, and (by implication) in his eventual death.

Such yokemating of polar elements in the heroic and in the tragic continuously holds that Heracles both is, and is not, hero and criminal. He was but also was not a hero in the celebrated Labors, in that he had always been a slave, performing often menial and disgusting actions. He is and is not a criminal when killing Lykos and his family, recapitulating his action in the Labors; for the murder of Lykos is "right," that of his family, "wrong." During the course of the work Heracles relatedly is (but is not) by turns associable with Amphitryon, then with Lykos, and finally with Theseus.

Ultimately, however, *Heracles* does not come to rest in this "yokemating" of division and identity. Even while continuing to consider apparent division and residual identity, the play moves beyond them by isolating a major element or condition in the heroic and the tragic that is at least relatively free from innate reversibility. That forward impulse is centrally intimated within a question by Heracles. Freed from his heroic Labors, positioned between his past labors and his ensuing criminal action, he wonders if he will ever again be given the epithet, *kallinikos*: if, that is, his past heroism had been so defined by servitude that his present freedom must be unheroic. For a time, the play will answer, terribly, in the affirmative. As if extending his heroism into the present in a "thirteenth" Labor, he kills Lykos; but almost immediately, strikes down his family. Perceiving that although the objects of his action were entirely different, he and his actions had been "identical" toward them, Heracles considers repeating the action and the perception in his suicide. Within it, the

hero would act against the criminal; but also, the criminal against the hero.

At exactly the point at which analysis had seemed to fix the heroic and the tragic within this yokemating of division and identity, however, the play introduces Theseus. Although he has sometimes been considered a distraction or evasion, a human version of the *deus ex machina* who artificially resolves an otherwise insoluble problem, Theseus instead serves to confirm all preceding analysis by expanding the quantity and quality of elements so far adduced for the heroic and tragic. By recalling a major element in Heracles' past heroism and yokemating that had not been included within either the division or the identity of heroic elements, Theseus is able to lead Heracles into Theseus' own present action in that kind. The play can then embrace this additional element of the *kallinikos* within its tough-minded analysis.

This indicated but unconsidered element, with which *Heracles* had begun and with which it ends, is that of service, rather than either "heroic" servitude or "criminal" resistance to servitude. When in the past Heracles had "redeemed" Theseus during the mythic Labors, he had acted freely, in a friendship not only unenforced by his "heroic" labors, but also counter to the violence present in those labors. When in the present "realistic" action Theseus redeems Heracles from despair or suicide and plans to reestablish him in Athens, he not only repays a friend, but in his own way replaces the violence and servitude of Thebes and Argos with a new version of yokemating. Furthermore, by promising an altar to Heracles in Athens, he does not so much replace Zeus *soter* with a human equivalent as give full value to the general tragic awareness achieved by Heracles: an awareness that may be argued to be more "tragic" than the limited self-knowledge achieved by the protagonists of more conventional tragedies. By means of Heracles, the injunction "know thyself" thus has in effect been extended from a hero to the being and process of tragedy.

When Heracles asserted that he must bear his heroic (but murderous) weapons, yet bear them in tragic pain, he made himself and his particular action exemplary within a general consideration of the heroic and the tragic. Eventually, the heroic element of service makes those definitive weapons not only easier to bear, but easier to justify. Far from debunking the hero and tragedy, Heracles thus anatomizes their elements in order to recompose from them the possibility of the hero and tragedy. Analysis therefore is not only the central process of Euripides' play, but also the central experience of its audience.

I.

Division in *Heracles* is so open and aggressive that it at first seems determinant. When the hero returns, he becomes all the outlaws and beasts he had once conquered; when the victor over Death departs Hades, he bears death with him to his family. Accordingly, epinician celebration by the Chorus is replaced by horrified reports by a Messenger. As an extremely graphic index to division, most of the cast of the first part of the play is obliterated in the second, or (like the Chorus and Amphitryon) rendered irrelevant and virtually mute.¹³

Although this division is emphasized in the alteration in *Heracles* that determines the overt structure of *Heracles*, division actually had invested the play long before *Heracles* appeared. All the while that the Chorus was lauding the absent and heroic *Heracles*, his father, wife, and children were awaiting a terrible death at the hands of an outlaw and beast, Lykos. Ask for this redeemer now, and his venture in Hades seems an unheroic extravagance; for his family meets all that he as hero had met, and without his strength. In almost every sense, his absence is an absence of heroism, an irony dividing myth from actuality.

Division also appears from the beginning in the characters of Amphitryon and Megara, and rises into sharp focus with Lykos. During *Heracles*' absence, they supply analysis of the principal elements of the hero, usually in opposition to conventional expectations. By their means, *Heracles* is seen not only within his own division, as hero and criminal, but also in those who are perhaps opposite to him, yet implicated in the question of heroism.

The often parodic Amphitryon is all that *Heracles* must not be, if he indeed is to bear his weapons with pain. *Heracles* is stonily aware of Hera and Lyssa; Amphitryon blithely ignores the pain of yoke-mating. *Heracles* is almost painfully devoted to the family that he erases; Amphitryon apparently gave no *thought* to the suffering of his own wife and son. *Heracles* had sought to restore his father to Argos; Amphitryon had fled to Thebes. The guilty *Heracles* descends almost to suicide within his remorse; Amphitryon had reduced all his crimes to a subordinate clause.

For the purposes of analysis, Megara is a far better index to the heroic in *Heracles*. However, she registers almost too much of the conventional hero. When she laments her fall from high place into captivity and the expectation of death, she suggests the "fall" that occurs in one way or another to all tragic heroes. She may also suggest the hubris sometimes associated with that fall. Unlike the fatuous Amphitryon, she all but refuses hope in either gods or men: and in doing so, all but refuses heroism and tragedy. In rejecting

sanctuary at the altar of Zeus *soter* that had been raised by her husband, that is, she rejects hope in a dead (or mythic) husband or in either a threatening or a promising deity. She thereby establishes the self-sufficiency that will help Heracles later to overcome despair, within his post-mythical mastery over death. Megara's will to receive death on her terms rather than those of any convention or any enemy also predicts Heracles' later costly freedom from servitude in any kind whatsoever: even "servitude" to despair. Although the grieving autarchy of Megara is perhaps impious, shot through with the dangerous freedom of men who deny, refuse, or outgrow all myths and gods, she nevertheless registers much that is the best in a divided Heracles.¹⁴

Even the Chorus discloses some division within the heroic. As if reflecting the "falling" structure of the play, it admits that the triumph song for a hero usually leads into a lament for his death. It knows that the Labors arose not from the will and strength of Heracles, but from a servitude imposed upon him. And it, too, implicitly challenges the gods and questions heroic myth. Although it concludes its account of the Labors with Heracles' provocative descent to Hades, it now thinks of the descent not as the crown to his Labors, but as an ordinary death to a man needed in Thebes.

This division and opposition within the heroic, as seen apart from a particular hero, is most completely and destructively coded within the figure of Lykos. As the tyrant and beast once mastered by Heracles, he is now in a position to be master over Heracles, in his generations. He also can explode all the notions of heroism and redemption just sung by the Chorus. Derisively, he demystifies the hero of the Labors as a slave impressed in disgusting labor.¹⁵ He translates the descent into Hades as the dumping of a corpse into the soil. By killing Heracles' father and children, he intends to obliterate all traces and all memory of this supposed son of god and man. Given Lykos' iconoclastic degradation of Heracles, Heracles' "fall" later in the play is not so much a surprise as a fulfillment. However, this association with Lykos will make those uncomfortable who welcome the "conversion" of Heracles into the post-heroic.

Division also marks the grief and joy with which the returned Heracles thinks of the ending of his heroic Labors. He, too, may reject that heroism for having exposed his family to peril. He murmurs, "Great toils, farewell! Vainly I wrought them, leaving these unhelped" (575-576). Within the division of the heroic into the public and private, Heracles too easily elects the private, the non-heroic. However, he cannot in any case say farewell to his origins, nor to the conditions of the hero within which he has lived. Disclosure of identity within opposition or division will indicate how very little he

can divide himself from division. The mutual activity of division and identity then is seen in names for the agon of the hero, the play, and the audience: toils, labors, work, pains, glory.

II.

Under ordinary expectations, the reappearance of Heracles at the center of the play, "just in the nick of time," would have resolved division in the play and brought the work to a comfortable close. If Heracles never quite became an Odysseus returning to a Theban Ithaca, he at least would have validated his legendary past within present action against Lykos: he again would have opposed the tyrant, and once more have saved a "people." Furthermore, this "Labor" would have been undertaken as his own heroic choice, not as an action forced on him by Eurystheus and Hera. And if Lykos and Heracles had indicated a division between criminal and hero not only in the conditions for the hero but within the hero as well, the elimination of Lykos would eliminate any possibility of the equation. Although a work ending in this way would not have been a tragedy, it would have reconfirmed an undivided hero.

But the Heracles who returns to the extreme tension in Thebes silently, marginally, like a phantom, "is," but also "is not," the mythic hero glorified by the Chorus. He enters the work not as Death's master, but as an image of death. Furthermore, no longer the solitary hero of the Labors, he now behaves like an ordinary son, husband, and father. Whether as a phantom of the hero or the exhausted head of a small alien family, he moves under his own direction and speaks (unChorically) in his own language. In a world that has been purged of myth and ritual (in no small part, by his Labors), he trudges the dust of unheroic history, within the light of common day. If he is now free from Eurystheus and Hera, he also seems to have been emptied of his definitive heroism.

During the interval between his return and his killing of Lykos, Heracles therefore sees ahead of him only a "free" vacancy, an absence. He supposes that he will never again be called a hero. The Chorus that has made him the subject of its odes is more far-seeing, yet is also totally unseeing, of his future. In a hymn not now upon Heracles but upon men like themselves who are in no way heroic, who are descending not into Hades but only into old age and the certainty of dying, they welcome the returned Heracles into a second, and greater, "work": that of becoming either a model or an agent of virtual resurrection. He can then increase, and even transcend, heroism, freeing not a few men from tyranny, but all men from death. His deliverance first of Theseus and then of himself from Hades seems to

the Chorus to liberate all men. However, even though they assume that Heracles had in that gesture grown from a hero into a savior, they attribute nothing of the achievement to the Labors, nor to the sense of Mystery in which the Labors had ended. Instead, they credit this second life to Heracleian man alone: as if they, as mere men, might uncomplicatedly receive that life. Under the assertion that only a good man may have two lives, they elevate him from the heroic into the "good": almost at the moment that he becomes the bloody killer of his family.

Perhaps with some intimation of the complex conditions of their wishes and of Heracles' divided action, the Chorus that had tried to erase divisions acknowledges that to the gods no distinction stands between good and evil or life and death. Unless not only the gods but the ordinary experience of human life is denied, their hope for radical simplicity for the human being must be set in balance with their awareness of the Other, which seemingly insists upon both division and identity. That second thought by the Chorus turns their celebration of the redeemer into question: have the Labors continued, or not? do they redeem men, or not, and can man redeem men, or not? are life and good distinct from death and evil, or not? is the hero divided from, or one with, the criminal or the redeemer or both? Within such questions, Heracles takes up his bow: first against Lykos, then against his family.

Several recent studies of *Heracles* have taken the interval between the return of Heracles and the appearance of Theseus to constitute the medial section of a three-part play. It may also be useful to consider it as the interfacing of two modes of analysis: analysis by division, and analysis by identity. Neither mode is so separate as this description suggests, of course, for they cooperate ultimately within a single perception.

Almost at the center of the play, and in one sense marking its "division," Lyssa concentrates that interfacing of analyses. She is the visible registry of a manic possession that seizes upon Heracles after he has killed Lykos, within which he carries out the execution of his family that Lykos had intended.¹⁶ As "phantom," Lyssa replaces, but also realizes, the human "phantom," Heracles. If in one sense she is only old Hera writ new, denying any distinction between Heracles' past heroic servitude and his present criminal possession, in another, she stands against all such reduction. As with Heracles, her weapons must be borne, but she bears them in pain. She notes incidentally that the completion of the Labors has also freed Heracles *from* the protection of Zeus. Now that Heracles seemingly has been released from the complex balance of Zeus and Hera into the complex division of his own psychology and history, it is a tight question, whether he

abandons the gods or the gods abandon him. Within his apparent new freedom, he in any case now makes no distinction among objects. Whether he is controlled by Lyssa or merely performing the indiscriminating violence implicit in the hero, Heracles is *kallinikos* to friend and foe alike, as indifferent as the Chorus had supposed the gods to be.

Within his single action against his enemy and his family, Heracles makes Argos and Thebes one. The crimes of Amphitryon and Lykos now have become interinvolved with the revenge, and then the crime, of Heracles. When in killing his wife and children Heracles believes that he is killing the family of his old enemy Eurystheus, he not only conflates himself with that enemy, too, but hands him a terrible victory over Heracles. With redemption by violent means having come into identity with extermination by violent means, Heracles moves into a violent will against his own seemingly undivided life. Far from having achieved any understanding of himself, his world, or the gods either within his action or his awareness of its implications, Heracles can only stare suicidally into blackness.

In destroying his family, Heracles had "become" his enemies Lykos and Eurystheus, as well as the beasts and outlaws he once had overpowered. As the Chorus recognizes, he directly threatens the civilization he had once effected. He also threatens all the literary forms and attitudes of heroism and tragedy. When in a massive parody of heroism he wrestles with nobody, and when in hideous parody of Choric praise he proclaims victory over nothing whatsoever, Heracles exceeds even Lykos in debunking the hero. Even his servitude and descent into Hades are rendered ridiculous when he is bound as a madman or falls into a death-resembling coma. At the center of the play, within the interfacing associable with two murders, Heracles has been shown to be identical with his anti-heroic enemies, divided now only against all that he had been as hero.

Like the appearance of Heracles earlier, this incident intimates an ending. Had Euripides been intent upon reducing or exploding the conventional hero, he might have concluded *Heracles* with the protagonist electing suicide, turning his arms against himself with something like relief. Although such a work might have offered timely warning to a Hellas "possessed" by its own will to suicidal war, insisting that a man or people defined by the sword (or bow) eventually will turn it against its own, the result would have been admonitory political drama, not tragedy. If analysis (to say nothing of tragedy) were to proceed, the division and identity that had come to yoke Heracles with the murderous Lykos would have to be opposed by a similar yokemating of Heracles with an uncontaminated hero. The unexpected entrance of Theseus into the play serves to revise most of

the preceding questions and answers. It also "redeems" the hero and tragedy.

III.

With a vigorous structural yokemating, Theseus brings *Heracles* full circle. He repeats for Heracles on earth the redemptive service Heracles had performed for him in Hades. Although each of those actions is associable with the heroic Labors, neither is causally involved with them. Heracles' aid to Theseus had derived freely from friendship, not the command of Eurystheus or Hera; and Theseus' redemption of Heracles has almost nothing to do with Argos or Thebes. Within their friendship, an heroic but violent and solitary servitude has been replaced by nonviolent mutual service.

Although the unexpected arrival of Theseus supplies a very broad "identity" between past and present and continues what might otherwise have been an arrested analysis, it can also seem to insist upon a continuity of idiosyncratic problems. It is a final unexpected turn in a play notorious for such "reversals." Like earlier theatrical shocks, this too threatens to wrench *Heracles* from possible tragedy into an opposing kind: here, a mutant romance. Within it, *philia* might generate a nonviolent, social Labor of civilization, sited within a post-religious, post-heroic, post-tragic city. But Euripides is not interested in making Heracles a new Amphitryon, blithely abandoning a dense past by seeking out a new city. His Heracles continues within his division and identity, bearing his arms, but with pain. Theseus, too, is not that easy redeemer once desired by the Chorus. If the mutual service between Theseus and Heracles now privileges that element of the hero which is redemptive, their likeness in violent origin and violent ending will maintain the element of violence in their heroism and their tragedies. In this sense, they together register not so much a conversion of the hero and his condition as a completion.

Therefore, although the conclusion of *Heracles* can indeed suggest an evolution from miasma into clear light, and from irrational religion into a Thesean version of situational ethics,¹⁷ legend constructs its own extraliterary circle, rehabilitating the time and values of the heroic Labors within a post-heroic time. The play similarly denies heroism in order to inquire of it again, as well as asking of it in order to deny. Division accordingly insists upon identity when Theseus and Heracles confer:

Theseus: Art thou so all-forgetful of thy toils?

Heracles: All toils endured of old were light by these.

Theseus: Who sees thee play the woman thus shall scorn.

Heracles: Live I, thy scorn? Once was I not, I trow!

Theseus: Alas, yes! Where is glorious Heracles?

Heracles: What manner of man wast thou midst Hades' woes?

Theseus: My strength of soul was utter weakness then.

Heracles: Shouldst thou, then, name me a man by suffering
cowed?

The extension of division and identity into the relationship of Heracles and Theseus revises, but also confirms, the analytical discoveries of the play. Because Theseus is associated primarily with the past Heracles, not with the post-heroic man who had "become" Lykos, Heracles can be associable with Theseus in the future. This association permits *Heracles* to "save" the seemingly discredited mythic section of the work. With past and present comprehensible not by mutual negation and contrast but by some elements of correspondence, the heroic is never entirely erased by the social: nor the social by the heroic. What is more, the "saving" fruits of this relationship extend well beyond the individual characters, Theseus and Heracles. The autarchy once questioned in Megara now can be praised by Theseus as fortitude. Similarly, past complaints against the gods (or denials of them) reappear, but are in effect redeemed, in Heracles' refusal to believe anything ungodly of the gods. It is perhaps a question, whether in Heracles man has outgrown primitive gods or has matured into a fit conception of the gods by achieving a fit conception of man. The implications of the name "the glory of Hera," that is, remain at once oppositional and analytic.

Although Euripides can be said to be as interested in the division and identity between Heracles and Theseus as in that between Heracles and Lykos and perhaps between Heracles and Amphitryon, so that Heracles is seen progressively within the pre-heroic, the heroic and the pragmatically post-heroic, it seems clear that he is not *more* interested in this final relationship. Among other things, the interfacing of Theseus and Heracles does not alter the given elements of heroism nor the given conditions of tragedy. Analysis of the hero does not even come to an end with the final lines of the play, but remains in prospect with Theseus in Athens in the new cult of Heracles. *Heracles* thus has produced no "happy ending." Far from turning its back upon analysis, the inclusion of Theseus assures that it is comprehensive and unsparing.

The composition of Heracles from elements in other characters¹⁸ helps to establish him as a comprehensive figuration of the hero and tragedy, more than as a mere "character." Like those who are both opposite to him yet like him, and within his own yoking of heroism, criminality, and friendship, this Heracles never is a "process" in which

the hero finally is opposed to the criminal (and the mythic hero), within a life opposed metaphorically to death, in a universe within which man has been separated, if not exactly "freed," from unknowable gods. Instead, all his elements and his conditions remain suspended, yet dynamically interactional: a Calderian mobile, not a triptych. The play is not static, then, content to suspend division in identity and identity in division. In the service of Heracles and Theseus to one another at the beginning and the close of the play, Euripides strongly emphasizes that element of the hero that is realized in service,¹⁹ redemption, and civilization. In that sense, the Labors and the Chorus' praise for them have not been exploded or demystified, even though most of the context has been radically changed. Euripides thus redeems the hero within some circumstances of the convention, rather than decimating either the hero or the convention. Tragedy in *Heracles* therefore comes to be associated not so much with suffering and death (even though that "servitude" is never removed from heroic service) as with the initiation into Mystery that Heracles had not quite accomplished in Hades, but may be said to have performed within the total action of the play that bears his name. Yet the play never forgets that death and suffering either occasion the Mystery, or explain the human need to seek out, or invent, rituals and then analyses of Mystery.

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Notes

1. Gilbert Murray, *Greek Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946) 112.
2. Representatively, Gilbert Norwood, *Essays on Euripidean Drama* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1954) 46-47; and William Arrowsmith, introduction to his translation of *Heracles* in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, eds. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, 2 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1959-60) 266-281. See also the dissertation by Monika Schwinge, "Die Funktion der zweiteiligen Komposition im 'Herakles' des Euripides," Tübingen, 1972.
3. See William Arrowsmith, "Eliot and Euripides," *Arion* 4 (1965) 21-23.
4. On epilepsy, see E. M. Blaicklock, *The Male Characters of Euripides: a Study in Realism* (Wellington: New Zealand UP, 1952) 132; on *arete*, see H. H. O. Chalk, "Arete and Bia in Euripides' *Herakles*," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 82 (1962) 7-18, and A. W. H. Adkins, "Basic Greek Values in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Hercules Furens*," *CQ* n.s. 16 (1966) 193-219.
5. See Helene P. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 158-164, and Anne Pippin Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived: Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 160-179.
6. See A. W. Verrall, *Essays on Four Plays of Euripides* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1905) 134-198, and, in a distant reflection of the familiar thesis of Wilamowitz, Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, tr. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977) 40-41.
7. See Godfrey W. Bond, intro. to his edition of *Heracles* (Oxford: Clarendon,

1981) xvii-xix, and Shirley A. Barlow, "Structure and Dramatic Realism in Euripides' *Heracles*," *Greece and Rome* 29 (1982) 115-125.

8. In addition to Verrall, see L. H. Greenwood, *Aspects of Euripidean Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1953) 80-91.

9. See the brief discussion of studies that look to a "criss-crossing" of ideas in Barlow, "Structure and Dramatic Realism" 115. However, W. Geoffrey Arnott, in "Double the Vision: a Reading of Euripides' *Electra*," *Greece and Rome* 28 (1981) 179-182, suggests that in Euripides even the division in a character may be "bi-focalized," and so constitute a "double view."

10. See Shirley A. Barlow, "Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Heracles*," *Ramus* 10 (1981) 112-128.

11. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* 40. See also G. Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972) 62-64.

12. Quotations are from the "literal" facing translation of A. S. Way in *Euripides* 3 (London: Heinemann, 1912) 130-247.

13. Foley, *Ritual Irony* 150. See also Paul Decharme, *Euripides and the Spirit of His Drama*, tr. James Loeb (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1968) 290-337.

14. See Bond, *Heracles*, xx-xxv; Foley, *Ritual Irony* 168; and Barlow, "Sophocles' *Ajax*" 119.

15. See Chalk, "Arete and Bia" 10-11.

16. See Foley, *Ritual Irony* 158 and 192 upon Lykos/Lyssa.

17. For a traditional reading of Heracles' "debate" with Theseus upon the divine nature, see James Adam, *The Religious Teachers of Greece* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1909) 305-310; for a more contemporary reading, see Barlow, "Sophocles' *Ajax*" 118-120.

18. See J. C. Kamerbeek, "Unity and Meaning of Euripides' *Heracles*," *Mnemosyne* ser. 4, 19 (1966) 5-9.

19. Opposing an emphasis upon Heracles' achieved will to endure (as in Barlow, "Sophocles' *Ajax* 120), Adkins, in "Basic Greek Values" 219, lays greater stress upon his finding a reciprocal *agathos philos* ("holy friend").