Heracles and Greek Tragedy

M. S. Silk

Greece & Rome, 2nd Ser., Vol. 32, No. 1. (Apr., 1985), pp. 1-22.

Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0017-3835%28198504%292%3A32%3A1%3C1%3AHAGT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-4

Greece & Rome is currently published by The Classical Association.

Greece & Rome, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, April 1985

HERACLES AND GREEK TRAGEDY[1]

By M. S. SILK

I

Heracles was the greatest and the strangest of all the Greek heroes. A long list of superhuman acts of strength and courage stood to his name, and above all else the famous twelve labours, which began with the killing of the Nemean lion and ended in the capture of the monstrous watchdog Cerberus in Hades. He was a great slayer of monsters, also a great civilizer, founding cities, warm springs, and (as Pindar was fond of reminding his audiences) the Olympic festival.[2] He suffered prodigiously, and he maintained prodigious appetites, for food, drink, and women. He may have had friends, but none close (as, say, Patroclus and Achilles were close), but he did have one implacable and jealous enemy, the goddess Hera. He had two marriages: the first set of wife and children he killed in a fit of madness; the second brought about his own death. He was the son of a mortal woman, Alcmena, and the god Zeus, with Amphitryon as a second, mortal, father; and after his death (by most accounts) he became a god himself and lived on Olympus.[3]

And Heracles is the suffering hero of two surviving Greek tragedies, Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Euripides' *Hercules Furens* (*H.F.*). The *Trachiniae* tells the story of his death at the hands of his devoted second wife, Deianeira. Heracles is on his way home, to Trachis, from one of his many tours abroad. Ahead of him comes a group of captive women. Deianeira, waiting at home, learns that one of the captives is Heracles' latest woman, a princess, Iole. With a mixture of emotions she accepts Iole, but seeks to win her husband back by means of what she thinks is a love-charm, given to her once by the dying centaur Nessus, one of Heracles' many monstrous victims. The 'charm' is in fact a noxious mixture of the centaur's blood and the venom on the arrow that shot him: the gift to Deianeira is his revenge.

Deianeira applies the mixture to a robe, and sends the robe to her husband as a special present. The ointment duly turns into a corrosive acid which brings Heracles to the verge of an agonizing death, as Deianeira soon learns from her son Hyllus. Hyllus had gone in search of his father, and comes back now to denounce his mother as a murderess. Without apology or explanation she kills herself, and Hyllus finds out too late what she had meant to do.

Heracles at last comes back in mortal agony, raging against his wife. When Hyllus succeeds in explaining the truth about the love-charm,

Heracles forgets her and recalls certain oracles once given to him about his death and an eventual 'release from his labours', which he now sees as a euphemism for the same thing; and to Hyllus' distress he binds him to two promises: first, Hyllus is to see that Heracles is burned alive on a pyre; secondly, he is to marry his father's concubine, Iole. Once Hyllus has reluctantly agreed, Heracles greets his imminent departure from this world, 'and all this' – as the closing line of the play assures us – the gods have done: 'all of it is Zeus' (*κοὐδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεύς*, 1278).

Euripides' *H.F.* deals with an earlier episode in the hero's life and his first marriage, to Megara at Thebes. Once again Heracles is away, this time on the last of his great labours, the capture of Cerberus in Hades. He returns to Thebes to find his wife and children, along with his father Amphitryon, threatened with death by a tyrant, Lycus. Taking Lycus by surprise, Heracles kills him, but the general acclamation of justice back on earth is suddenly disrupted: Heracles' old enemy, the goddess Hera, chooses this moment of triumph to humble him. She sends Iris, messenger of the gods, with Lyssa, spirit of madness, to drive Heracles mad and, in his mad state, kill the wife and children he has just rescued.

When Heracles regains sanity and discovers his crime, life seems worthless to him. At this moment, his friend Theseus, whom he had helped in Hades and who had heard of the trouble with Lycus, arrives to offer his assistance. Finding Heracles in desperate need, he persuades him to live on, and offers him a new home in Athens. Friendship is the final theme of the play.

Even a bare recital of their plots reveals these to be two strange plays. And the list of strange features in them is substantial, even if we discount mere exoticisms like lurid deaths and Madness herself on stage. In the *H.F.* we have, in the first place, the bizarre rhythm of the play. The opening is a slow suppliant scene in which Megara and Amphitryon wait for death or deliverance; the end is the confrontation, also slow, of Heracles and Theseus. Right in the middle comes all the action: the return of Heracles from the world of death, the melodramatic killing of the tyrant Lycus, the dissonant scene of Madness and Iris, the chilling narrative of the killings of Megara and the children. To achieve this remarkable sequence, Euripides has apparently changed the myth, which put the great labours *after* the mad killings, and indeed made the labours penance and purification for them.[4] This in its own right is a surprising feature of the play.

There is also a surprising Euripidean silence: Heracles is sent mad by Hera, but *why* Hera does this is not made clear, nor even – on the surface – comprehensible. Before he is sent mad, furthermore, Heracles

himself is curiously unconvincing as a represented character: here too is a feature of the play requiring explanation. (Critics convey their recognition of this phenomenon less by their eagerness to discuss it directly than by a reluctance to raise the question at all; nevertheless, no one who has seen a production of the play could doubt it.) And finally, after all these problems and agonies, the play comes to rest with a long articulation of the theme of friendship. Why this emphasis on friendship? Again, no answer from the play.

Trachiniae is no less strange. Its rhythm, certainly, is as surprising as that of Euripides' play. Both dramas are νόστος plays, whose primary centre of interest is a returning hero and whose primary emotional sequence is the sequence of anticipation and fulfilment.[5] In a νόστος play the returning hero's return is likely to be delayed, as it is in both *Trachiniae* and *H.F.* But normally, however delayed his return, the returning hero does at least encounter those he is returning to (normally his wife and family). In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the returning hero does briefly meet Clytemnestra before she kills him. In *H.F.* the hero meets Megara, before he kills her. But in *Trachiniae*, remarkably, Deianeira and Heracles, though mutually destructive, never meet.

The returning hero of *Trachiniae* is strange too, strangely distant, unlike other Sophoclean heroes. Singled out for suffering as they are, Sophocles' central figures tend to embody a determinate – and determined – isolation from the 'ordinary' characters,[6] but none, not even the mad Ajax or the doomed Oedipus, is so remote. And associated with this remoteness, there is an extraordinary gulf between our view of Heracles as repellent husband and father, heedless or insensitive to his wife and son, and *their* perception of him as great and glorious. And the gulf is peculiarly obvious, because both Hyllus and Deianeira are peculiarly sympathetic figures themselves: Deianeira, in particular, is by common consent one of the most attractive of all tragic characters. There is, therefore, a huge imbalance of sympathy between our feelings for her and for her great and glorious husband.

But, above all, the end of the play cries out for explanation: Sophocles makes no mention of Heracles' apotheosis.[7] The great hero is dying a revolting death, he blackmails his loyal son into a most distasteful marriage, and 'all of it is Zeus'. On the one hand, this conclusion is disturbingly bleak. On the other, it ignores tradition. Like Euripides in his play, Sophocles has adjusted the saga, in which everything led up to Heracles' ascension to Olympus.[8]

These, we can agree, are two strange tragedies. But stranger, even, than the plays themselves is a remarkable, and widely neglected, fact about them. These tragedies may well be the first two ever composed on the theme of the suffering Heracles: there is in fact no clear sign

of any others among the several hundred known tragedies that were produced before the end of the fifth century.[9] And the absence of such tragedies seems yet more remarkable when we observe that in other contemporary dramatic contexts Heracles figures very prominently indeed. He was portrayed with considerable, and increasing, frequency in Attic comedy, as he is in Aristophanes' *Birds* and *Frogs*; he was the single most popular character in Attic satyr-drama, and the satyr-plays known to have featured him include examples by all three of the great tragedians; and he was apparently the mainstay of the Sicilian Epicharmus' mythological burlesques, early in the fifth century, where (as in Attic satyr-drama and as in Aristophanes) we see a grotesque hero whose gross appetites and huge feats of strength provoke laughter, not awe.[10]

In tragedy itself he makes his presence felt, but not as suffering hero: instead, as saviour.[11] This is his role in Euripides' *Alcestis*, although interestingly, in that pro-satyric play,[12] elements of the grotesque satyric Heracles figure too: the hero who rescues Alcestis from the dead also gets drunk first and upsets a household in mourning. The saviour Heracles is attested in the *Alcestis* of Aeschylus' older contemporary, Phrynichus; in the *Prometheus Unbound* of, or ascribed to, Aeschylus himself; in Sophocles' *Athamas*, Euripides' *Auge*, and Critias' *Pirithous*.[13] And a special version of this saviour is Heracles as *deus ex machina*, the divine figure who appears at the end to cut the tragic knot. This is his role in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and other plays, now lost.[14]

So Heracles is everywhere and everything – except tragic hero. Why should that be? When posed, this question tends to be treated in a perfunctory way and the answers given seem unconvincing and inadequate. For Wilamowitz the complicated and speculative explanation was that Heracles was a Dorian hero, celebrated in Dorian epic, which was lost at an early date and therefore unavailable for the Attic tragedians.[15] However, apart from anything else, Heracles is clearly pan-Hellenic.[16] Jebb's suggestion was that the burlesque Heracles made it difficult to stage the serious Heracles, and that in any case the legends were difficult for tragedy.[17] Recent explanations have concentrated on that second idea: Heracles was all fights against monsters, and these were unsuitable for staging; he was too remote from the world of ideas; his labours, in particular, were 'too lacking in obviously profound content'.[18]

But these explanations overlook precisely that freedom of the tragedians to change or select details of the saga which both our Heracles tragedies exemplify. We need a different kind of explanation, one that concentrates on what the tragedians could *not* change without

negating the compelling significance of the Heracles myth itself. Viktor Ehrenberg went part of the way. The trouble with Heracles, he suggested, was that he was a god:

> It was usual with the Greeks to make fun of their gods, and Hermes the thief, the sensual and intoxicating Aphrodite, or the voluptuary Dionysus were as old and as real as their severe and sublime counterparts. But no god, however much he might suffer, was ever tragic. ... Heracles, whether hero or glutton, was always superhuman and therefore essentially untragic.[19]

Ehrenberg's is a provocative insight,[20] but incomplete. There is one crucial difference between Heracles, on the one hand, and Hermes, Aphrodite, and Dionysus, on the other. Hermes, Aphrodite, and Dionysus *were* gods – even if Dionysus, like Heracles, was son of Zeus and a mortal woman. Heracles, however, was not strictly a god, any more than he was strictly a man: he was both and neither. This pecular status of Heracles provides, I suggest, the answer to our question. More than that: my contention is that it provides a coherent explanation *both* for the strange reluctance of the tragedians to portray the suffering Heracles *and* for the strange character of the two Heracles tragedies themselves. The corollary, then, is that we should relate the two plays more closely to each other and to religious ideology than is commonly done.[21]

Within Greek religion, Heracles is unique in his combination of human and divine properties.[22] The Greeks distinguished between sacrifice to a god and sacrifice to a hero. The rituals were different: blood on the altar for one, blood in the pit for the other. The hero-god – ἥρως θεός, as Pindar aptly called him[23] – uniquely received both types of honour.[24] Herodotus tells us that there were in fact Greeks who maintained a double cult of Heracles, with two temples, one for the divine Olympian, the other for the hero.[25] As befitted a hero, he had a human name, deferring to a god (*Hera*-cles), even if, paradoxically, that god was his mortal enemy; he founded the Olympic festival to a god (his father Zeus);[26] he died a human death on Mount Oeta. And yet, like a god, he showed superhuman powers in the cradle, where he strangled the snakes that Hera sent to kill him, and throughout his adult life, notably in such conflicts with death as his wounding of Hades and his capturing of Cerberus, episodes already celebrated in Homer.[27] And then, despite his own death, he had no grave, but instead was transfigured to Olympus to marry eternal youth, Hebe, goddess daughter of Zeus and Hera themselves.[28] The great hero, Heracles καλλίνικος, differs from other heroes – as Geoffrey Kirk points out – in 'his brutality, his capacity for dishonesty and his voracious appetites';[29] yet, as Ehrenberg's formula serves to remind us, gross vices too are as much divine dispositions as human ones.

Heracles is ambivalent; and despite local variations in myth and cult, it is apparent that, by the classical period, ambivalence is a firmly established part of his persona. Discussing this ambivalence in anthropological terms, Kirk has suggested that the Heracles myths represent a symbolic solution to a fundamental problem of existence, that 'basic opposition' between Nature and Culture which Lévi-Strauss identified as a central preoccupation underlying traditional mythology.[30] Granted the importance of Lévi-Strauss and his 'basic opposition', this is, I think, the wrong anthropological model and the wrong opposition, as far as the dynamics of the Heracles myth are concerned.

Heracles lies on the margins between human and divine; he occupies the no-man's-land that is also no-god's-land; he is a marginal, transitional or, better, *interstitial* figure. Following van Gennep, the anthropologist Mary Douglas defines the powerful significance of the interstitial in traditional cultures: 'danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others.' The unborn child is ambiguous, neither living nor dead: it is, accordingly, treated by some primitive groups as 'both vulnerable and dangerous'. In one traditional land-owning society, landless clients have an anomalous status and so may be credited with special powers, even treated as witches: 'here are people living in the interstices of the power structure, felt to be a threat to those with better defined status. Since they are credited with dangerous, uncontrollable powers, an excuse is given for suppressing them.'[31]

From his birth to his death, Heracles is a clear instance, an extreme instance, of an interstitial figure: both powerful and vulnerable; viewed with awe and admiration (as Hyllus, his son, persists in viewing him); also feared, wherever he goes. He is neither man nor god, so neither man nor god is ever entirely at peace with him. He is an ideal to dream of and a horror story to shrink from.[32]

The sense that Heracles is an anomaly of the kind outlined is absent from much of the literature of early and classical Greece. In many contexts he is compartmentalized and simplified and his disturbing implications are played down, as happens when the comic-satyric tradition makes him a giant buffoon, or again (to take a quite different fifth-century instance) when sophistic writers like Prodicus and Herodorus turn him into a prototype of the philosopher.[33]

But there are exceptions. In Homeric epic, Heracles is an extravagant figure outside the normal heroic sphere. He is an isolated superman who fights monsters, not a feudal warrior within a social hierarchy who fights with, and against, others like himself. He took on the

gods, Hera and Hades, in combat; as such, he is alarming (*σχέτλιος, ὀβριμοεργός*).[34] His life, as he tells Odysseus in Hades, was a constant paradox: son of Zeus, but endless pain (*Ζηνὸς μὲν πάϊς ἦα Κρονίονος, αὐτὰρ ὀϊζὺν | εἶχον ἀπειρεσίην*).[35] Even in death he is unique, with his self (*αὐτός*) among the gods on Olympus and his ghost (*εἴδωλον*) in Hades; and even this ghost is an isolated and isolating figure, such that its fellow-shades scatter and shriek as it approaches.[36] This last passage, and a comparable one in the Hesiodic corpus, may embody different layers of composition, with an earlier description of a mortal Heracles modified in the light of a new conception; for later writers, even so, such passages would serve to sum up Heracles' ambivalence and give it an epic authenticity.[37]

Pindar's treatment of Heracles is noteworthy too. In Pindar, Heracles figures prominently and positively: he is the mighty civilizer, the founder of the Olympiad, a model hero, albeit a very distinctive one.[38] Yet even in Pindar ambivalence comes to the surface. The man who becomes a god, the *ἥρως θεός*, prompts a disquieting reflection about the 'law' of the world: the *νόμος* which rules mortal and immortal alike and justifies violent, Heraclean acts.[39] Pindar, again, has much to say about mortals and immortals and their respective territories: human beings have their limits, beyond which, in the name of piety and their own security, they dare not go. And as a recurrent symbol for those limits, he offers the pillars of Heracles, which 'that hero-god set up' as the world's boundary, 'witnesses to the extremes of our voyaging' (*ἥρως θεὸς ἃς ἔθηκε ναυτιλίας ἐσχάτας | μάρτυρας*).[40] 'Extreme' is the operative word – *ἔσχατος* – and again and again Pindar uses this word and its derivatives in connection with Heracles,[41] thereby pointing at his special status as precisely as any Greek writer ever did.

However, to allude to, or even to identify, an anomaly, as Pindar does, is considerably less painful than to expose us to its implications with the immediacy that tragic drama involves. The reason why the tragedians avoid Heracles as suffering hero is that a serious treatment of his sufferings means coming to terms with anomalous status, with crossing the limits, with disturbing contradictions. If (to speak in formulae) tragic-suffering man is man's image of his own essential condition, and if god is his projection of what he would, but dare not, aspire to, and is, instead, a helpless prey to, then the enactment of tragic-suffering god-man threatens to involve its audience in an existential inquisition of an uncommonly powerful and painful kind. The pure god, pure hero, pure buffoon, are safe subjects. The suffering Heracles, as a project for tragedy, is exceptionally sensitive material, almost too disturbing, almost taboo. And when tragedy does, eventually, dare to focus on this anomaly, disturbance is conspicuous.

II

The *Trachiniae* is generally dated to the 440s or 430s, the *H.F.* to around 414.[42] The relative chronology these datings imply is not essential to my argument, but I shall assume it for the purposes of discussion.

The *Trachiniae* begins with Deianeira, waiting for Heracles. Her first mention of him is as Zeus' and Alcmena's famous son (19); her first description of him is as fighting the river Achelous, who was her ardent suitor (9ff., 20ff.). After the fight, Heracles claimed the frightened woman as his bride, and fear (albeit now, chiefly, fear for him) has remained her companion ever since (27–30). The audience is left to infer the analogy between Heracles and the terrifying monsters he fights. Recent discussions make much of the point: he is a monstrous beast in his behaviour, as in his body code – lionskin, Tarzan club, appetites, and all: he fights monsters because he is one.[43] This is true, so far as it goes. What it conceals is that most of his monstrous opponents belong to the realm of the gods and are often, like Achelous, the great Hellenic river-deity, gods themselves: he fights gods, then, because he is (in part) one too.

As a husband, Deianeira tells us, Heracles is distant: away, always away; forever on the move; not concerned to see the children or to communicate with her in his absence (31–45). Where she is ordinarily dependent on him, on home, on social contact, Heracles is apparently self-sufficient, *αὐτάρκης*. In the *Politics*, Aristotle notes that the person who through *αὐτάρκεια* needs no social organization to support him is either to be classed as an animal – or a god.[44] Against Deianeira's nature, then, Heracles' stands out in sharp relief long before his appearance on stage; and we may say of Deianeira what the herald Lichas says of her: being mortal, she is human with human feelings (*θνητὴν φρενοῦσαν θνητά*, 473). Above all, she feels the human feeling of pity: pity for the captive women, pity for Iole herself, pity still evoked even when she knows who and what Iole is (243, 298ff., 312f., 464ff.).

Heracles pities no-one: not Iole, when he wipes out her city and her family; not Hyllus, when he makes him agree to marry Iole; not Deianeira, when he gathers, grudgingly, that she killed herself in innocence; not Lichas the herald, who, in innocence, brought the fatal robe, and Heracles, now certainly in great pain, 'caught him by the foot where the ankle turns in the socket and hurled him at a rock in the sea, beaten by the surf, so that his skull split blood, and the white brain oozed out of his hair' (779ff.).

However, there is one occasion when Heracles, now in mortal pain, asks for pity himself. Not yet knowing of Deianeira's suicide and spewing out his fury against her, he commands Hyllus to bring her

to him, so that he can give her a tortured death like his own and (with Hyllus looking on) Heracles can judge which parent Hyllus feels more for (1066ff.). Heracles' inhumanity at this moment is astonishing, yet at the same time we perceive the god-man stripped bare – to man's condition. In this condition he weeps, as never before; he calls out for the pity his despised wife was so good at giving; he acts like a woman himself: 'no spears of battle, no army of giants, no strength of beasts has ever done this to me . . . , but a woman, female, by herself, without a weapon, has destroyed me' (1058–63), 'I sob, I cry like a girl: pity me. No-one ever saw this man like this before. I always took my pain without a sound; now misery finds me out a female' (1070–5). Heracles fights monsters and takes on their monstrousness; faced with a woman, he becomes a woman.[45] There is a curious impression here of a faceless combatant, defined by his particular combats, who takes on the colour of his particular opponents.

In the passage just quoted, Heracles refers to himself as 'this man' (*τόνδ' ἄνδρα*, 1073)[46] and man reduced to woman (*παρθένος*, 1071; *θῆλυς*, 1075), and all because a woman, *θῆλυς οὖσα* (1062), beat him. That odd expression *θῆλυς οὖσα* is modelled on, and alludes to, a phrase in the *Iliad* (19.97): Zeus, greatest among men and gods, was once tricked by Hera – 'though a female' (*θῆλυς ἐοῦσα*) – on the day when Alcmena was to give birth to Heracles in Thebes: tricked into denying Heracles the lordship due to him in favour of Eurystheus. The *Iliad* passage comes from the distinctive context of Agamemnon's apology to Achilles and is thus readily called to mind. The effect of the allusion is to counterpoint Heracles' reduction to the status of a mere weak human with an evocation of his hard path, his mighty parentage, and the superhuman powers associated with it that are, nevertheless, still fallible.

There is a definite moment in the play when Heracles stops behaving like a female or a human being of any kind. When he permits Hyllus to tell him why Deianeira sent the robe, what she meant by applying the ointment to it, whom she got the ointment from, his tone suddenly changes. When Hyllus comes out with the word *Nessus* (1141), Heracles senses the relation of events to the old oracle about his fate (1143ff.). Henceforth he speaks with no more amiability, but with a new authority: he now has access to divine ordinance, to *θέσφατα* (1150). He continues to refer to himself as 'this man' (1175, 1201), but his perspective is that of a higher being which can look into the future. 'I shall reveal', he says to Hyllus, *φανῶ δ' ἐγώ* (1164), as Greek gods often talk to men, with 'I' and the simple future.[47] If Hyllus disobeys his instructions about the funeral pyre, Heracles threatens him with a curse from the underworld, like a daemonic Fury, and again employs the authoritative

idiom: 'I shall wait for you' (*μενῶ σ' ἐγώ*, 1201). The curse, of course, is not to come from heaven: Heracles shows no sign of going there.

Hyllus is also to do Heracles 'a small favour' (*χάριν βραχεῖαν*, 1217) and marry Iole. Hyllus, a man, is shocked at what should not be; but Heracles, like a Dionysus faced with a Pentheus, is concerned about his rights and what *must* be. Hyllus must give him his *μοῖρα*, his due fate (1239), and again he threatens Hyllus with the gods' curse (1239f.). Iole is part-cause of the death of both of Hyllus' parents, and to Hyllus the idea of marriage to her is 'impiety' (*δυσσεβεῖν*, 1245). To Heracles it cannot violate any sacred principle: it is his own pleasure, his *τέρψις* (1246): the logic is a god's.

What can this cruel play mean? Despite many warnings, we are used to approaching Sophocles through his characters, so that we naturally focus on the contrast here between Heracles and the others, especially Heracles in his distant inhumanity and Deianeira in all her human fallibility, not least her human shifts of mood, to which our sympathies are powerfully attracted. The portrayal of her sequence of feelings about Iole is particularly impressive. We follow it through the first naive questions –

> Lichas, this one, who is she? She looks special...
> One of the royal family?
> Eurytus: did he have a daughter? (~310–6)[48] –

to her first attempt to come to terms with the truth –

> Love: no-one can fight Love.
> Rules me, rules gods – so why not her?
> ...
> Whatever they do together,
> No shame in it, no harm to me
> Either. I know the truth –
> What agony is there, now I know the truth?
> He's had his women: none of them
> Have heard me say a word against them.
> Neither will she, even if
> She's lost in love.
> I'm sorry for her ... (~441–64) –

and then her reaction against such passive generosity, but a reaction itself of subtle shifts

> We'll both spin
> Under the same sheet. My reward – share him!
> ...
> I should be angry – but I can't...
> ... But can
> I share a man: could any woman
> Do it? Look at her: she's in blossom.

Show me a man, watch his eyes
Pick the flower. Someone like me,
Withered: they don't
Want to know. He'll still be called
My husband, he'll *be* hers.
But angry –
No, I can't. (~539–53)

And instead of anger, she makes her fatal plan to win her husband back.

This sympathetic portrayal of Deianeira is naturalistic,[49] but not entirely. On a naturalistic level, it is impossible to gather what she could possibly see in Heracles: can the Heracles she pines for conceivably be the brutal, self-absorbed, yet also featureless phenomenon that we behold? The discrepancy, and equally the featurelessness of Heracles itself, should serve to warn us that something more than character-study (ἠθοποιΐα) is involved in the contrast between the two figures. The difference between them – indeed between Heracles and most other tragic heroes – is that they belong to different cosmic orders. This is why, in the play, they must never meet: Heracles *cannot* meet his fellow men as such. Heracles and Deianeira communicate only through the death-robe;[50] Heracles and Hyllus only through the threats and commands of one and the total acquiescence of the other.

As a god, Heracles is self-sufficient, αὐτάρκης: hence his distance from the human world of the other characters in the play. As a man, he has a need for relationship with others, which his divinity disrupts and distorts. Gods control men: men are their suffering victims. Accordingly, Heracles in this play is both god the controller (as he controls Iole and Hyllus) and man the suffering victim of a human mistake. Men and gods represent spheres of interest which, in Hegelian fashion, come into conflict, and Heracles, as both, is a Hegelian conflict all in one. He wants something and, as a god, destroys everything that stands in his way; but, as a man, he is vulnerable and so destroys himself as well as Deianeira: they share that, if nothing else.

And what emerges from the conflict? The temptation is to say, 'Heracles *the god*' – at which point the real significance of the strange end of the play comes into view. The apotheosis of Heracles is an established part of the myth, yet Sophocles leaves it unsaid. Heracles' divine aspect, as son of Zeus and slayer of monsters, bulks large in this play, yet Sophocles leaves its natural fulfilment unsaid. At the end of the play, Heracles is dying and, along with his bitter and disillusioned son (1264ff.), seems confined to the human sphere which the gods, in a separate existence, manipulate and mock: 'all of it is Zeus', though it implies acceptance of tragic reality, is also said in this spirit. The consequence is a poise between expectation and presenta-

tion, a conclusion as startling as it is bleak, and a pursuit of painful contradiction to the last.

In his brutality the Sophoclean Heracles embodies a mode of life which, by any human standard, must seem repellent; yet the devotion he inspires in his son and wife, who are the chief victims of his repellent behaviour, seems to place him in some kind of ideal, supra-human plane beyond judgement. The contradiction is fundamental. Situated on the margins between the human and the divine, on the verge of an apotheosis that never comes, Heracles represents *both* those deep, immortal longings which all men feel or repress, and which the Greeks felt to be too dangerous to admit, *and* the huge but human sufferings and dislocations that are felt to go with them. Having chosen to dramatize this disturbing anomaly, Sophocles confronts us with its implications right up to the end.

III

If we take *H.F.* to be later in date than *Trachiniae*, it is tempting to take it as a Euripidean reaction to Sophocles' work. In its representation of Heracles as god and man, *Trachiniae* has a latent schematic quality: Euripides makes the schema more defined. *Trachiniae* embodies a conflict between the god and man in Heracles whose outcome is left open: the comparable conflict in the Euripidean Heracles leads, however painfully, to a resolution. In *Trachiniae* humanity is crushed: in *H.F.* all the movement is towards humanity. The Sophoclean suffering hero is repellent as well as distant: his Euripidean counterpart is honourable and, as the play resolves itself, more and more an identifiable man.

At the beginning of Euripides' play, the suppliants Amphitryon and Megara wait at the altar of Zeus the Saviour. Much of their talk is of Heracles, and they present him to us as the now familiar hero-god, yet also as an unselfish, loving man. He agreed to serve Eurystheus (Amphitryon tells us) in order to help this human father of his, and as a result civilized the world and conquered, or at least set off to conquer, Hades itself (17ff.). When Heracles at last comes back from this conquest, Megara proclaims him the equal of Zeus the Saviour himself (521f.); and yet to her he is also a model husband and family man, considerate and even playful with the children (465ff., 631ff.), 'most dear' to her in his absence (490), 'most dear' when, against all hope, he does return (514).

When he learns of the danger from Lycus, Heracles plans a revenge of god-like amplitude, which seems to involve a threat to the whole citizen body of Thebes (568ff.). This response is (in the words of one critic) 'unusually indiscriminate in its ferocity',[51] but only unusual in

human terms. In punishing an offender, Greek gods were always liable to respond like this, even a 'moderate' god like Apollo: one thinks of the devastation he inflicted in retribution for the offences of Agamemnon, for instance, and Coronis.[52] In enunciating his threat, furthermore, Heracles uses phraseology which has the unmistakable violent directness of a god: 'time for me to act: I shall go, I shall annihilate the house':

> ἐγω δέ, νῦν γὰρ τῆς ἐμῆς ἔργον χερός,
> πρῶτον μὲν εἶμι καὶ κατασκάψω δόμους. (565f.)

The simple threat, the confident cast of thought, and (as with the Sophoclean Heracles) the assertive ἐγώ and future tense combine to evoke the menace of (say) the Aeschylean Furies –

> ἐγὼ δ', ἄγει γὰρ αἷμα μητρῷον, δίκας
> μέτειμι τόνδε φῶτα κἀκκυνηγετῶ –

or the primitive Hesiodic Zeus –

> ἐγὼ ἀντὶ πυρὸς δώσω κακόν –

and Cronus –

> ἐγώ κεν τοῦτό γ' ὑποσχόμενος τελέσαιμι
> ἔργον.[53]

And when Heracles threatens to fill Ismenus with dead bodies and make Dirce's clear water turn to blood –

> νεκρῶν ἅπαντ' Ἰσμηνὸν ἐμπλήσω φόνου
> Δίρκης τε νᾶμα λευκὸν αἱμαχθήσεται (572f.) –

he talks like retributive Poseidon in another Euripidean play:

> ταράξω πέλαγος Αἰγαίας ἁλός,
> ἄκται δέ...
> πολλῶν θανόντων σώμαθ' ἕξουσιν νεκρῶν.[54]

Yet amidst Heracles' vengeful protestations, human tones are still audible: goodbye, labours! what can be better than fighting for one's family (574f.)? And our last sight of him before madness intervenes is of an affectionate man philosophizing about men, with his children clinging to him like little boats on tow (ἐφολκίδες), and not a trace of Sophoclean self-sufficiency (631–6).

Before Heracles' return, his god-heroic aspect was amplified in a magnificent choral ode celebrating his labours (348ff.). Between his exit and the appearance of Madness and Iris, the revenge is carried out and the tyrant killed; divine justice is perceived as having returned to mankind and another largely choral section reinforces the presen-

tation of Heracles as god-hero in association with this access of divinity (735–814):

ἰὼ δίκα καὶ θεῶν παλίρρους πότμος. (738f.)

Heracles seems at once a divine agent of justice and one among its human beneficiaries.

At this point we switch without warning to divine terror. By a chain of command from Hera to Iris and Iris to Lyssa, Heracles is sent mad, and despite an idea once floated by Wilamowitz which has enjoyed some favour,[55] there has been no sign of any insanity in Heracles up to now: the revenge scene, in which Wilamowitz thought he detected the seeds of Heracles' madness, rather, as we see, reveals a god's capacity for action.

Iris and Lyssa appear in person. They are gods, and they refer to Heracles as a man (ἀνήρ, ἄνθρωπος: 825, 835, 846, 849). The opposition between themselves and Heracles is explicitly on this basis. Iris declares that Heracles must pay a penalty – must 'give justice', in Greek idiom – or else 'gods will be nowhere and humanity great':

ἢ θεοὶ μὲν οὐδαμοῦ
τὰ θνητὰ δ' ἔσται μεγάλα, μὴ δόντος δίκην. (841f.)

Another lyrical section follows, during which the murders of Megara and the children take place and the chorus and Amphitryon lament. For the time being, Heracles, intermittently so human, is referred to only as 'son of Zeus': ὁ Διὸς ἔκγονος (876), Ζεῦ, τὸ σὸν γένος (887), ὦ Διὸς παῖ (906). In this stress on his divine affiliation, the choral perception of 'disaster from the gods' (θεόθεν ... κακά, 919f.) serves to associate him with Hera: he is indeed the gods' victim, as before he was their beneficiary; yet he is also, himself, a divine force for evil, as before he was a divine force for good.

For the rest of the play, Heracles is a man. Suddenly the evocations of his divine parentage disappear, or reappear only to be contradicted.[56] In the long messenger-speech that recounts the murders, he is simply 'Heracles' (924, 1004) and 'mortal', 'human' (θνητός): 'I know no mortal man more wretched' (οὐκ οἶδα θνητῶν ὅστις ἀθλιώτερος, 1015). He is a master, a son, a husband, a father, gone mad (952, 965f., 975f., 988f.). When he wakes among the bodies of his loved ones, in ignorance of his breakdown, he reaches out towards his recent exploits in Hades, but only in an effort to make sense of the terrible sight all around him (1101–5). He calls for those dear to him, φίλοι, like an ordinary social being (1106): he shows no pride, only confusion (1091ff., 1105ff.) – unlike a hero, let alone a god. Amphitryon treats him as a man. He tells his

son what happened, blaming it on Hera and referring to Hera as to a wholly external dimension to which Heracles himself is not related. When Heracles asks who the killer was, Amphitryon's formula for the answer is 'you and your bow and the god who did it' (*σὺ καὶ σὰ τόξα καὶ θεῶν ὃς αἴτιος*, 1135), which he glosses with the one word *μανείς*, 'sent mad' (1137). The difference between Heracles sane and Heracles mad is 'the god', divinity, separate from him.

In self-disgust, Heracles thinks of suicide, but is checked by the arrival of Theseus, his relative and friend (*συγγενὴς φίλος τε*, 1154). Like a man, he is ashamed and hides his face (1159f.). Amphitryon tells Theseus of the catastrophe and identifies the half-hidden figure as his son, who once fought alongside the gods, *σὺν θεοῖσι* (1191). Theseus asks: 'what man was born to such unhappiness?' Amphitryon agrees: 'he suffers more than all *other* mortal men' (1196f.). The whole sequence embodies a distancing of Heracles the suffering man from his divine connections. Theseus' first address to his friend is in terms of friendship (1215). He alludes to Heracles' recent rescue of himself in Hades (1222), but without reference to, or evocation of, any divine status or powers on Heracles' part. When he finally succeeds in rousing his friend, it is by appealing to him as a man enduring heaven's blows (1227f.), and this polarization is enforced, a moment later, by an ironic variation on a metaphorical *topos*: 'you reach to heaven itself in your wretchedness' (*ἅπτῃ κάτωθεν οὐρανοῦ δυσπραξίᾳ*, 1240). Heracles' literal distance from the gods is now so marked that he becomes a suitable occasion for the metaphor. He sees himself opposed to the gods against whom men are helpless (1243, 1253), and so, as Theseus says, like an 'ordinary man' (*ἐπιτυχόντος ἀνθρώπου*, 1248), he proposes to die.

In a long speech to Theseus (1255–1310), Heracles puts under scrutiny his whole life – divine birth, heroic exploits and status, all the labours and the madness that went with them – and from a human perspective rejects its meaning. That life was, and always had been, *ἀβίωτος*, no life at all (1257). There was a continuity of excess, he senses, between his superhuman labours and the mad killings, which he sums up by designating the killings as his 'last labour' (1279); and now he turns his back on it all. Other people, in scorn, may call him 'son of Zeus' (1289), and Zeus, 'whoever Zeus is', may indeed have begotten him (1263) (and the liturgical formula, *ὅστις ὁ Ζεύς*, serves as another confirmation of his distance from heaven), but Amphitryon is his real father now (1265). Human relationship, *φιλία*, is what he craves (1281–4). Even as the first man of Greece, he stands opposed to heaven (1303–10); and the opposition is reiterated by Theseus a little later (1320f.). Theseus tempts him back to life with an offer of *φιλία* and a new home in Athens, where Heracles will be honoured in

stone memorials and sacrifices after his death (1323–35). The honour is a hero's honour and presupposes Heracles' heroic past, but what is stressed is his death, stressed by a double formula: 'when you die, when you go to Hades' (1331). Euripides, therefore, does what Sophocles had never done, and negates Heracles' apotheosis altogether.

Heracles' second long speech (1340–93), notoriously disjointed, begins with a much-discussed proclamation of the self-sufficiency of the gods:[57] a *real* god 'lacks nothing' (δεῖται ... οὐδενός, 1345f.). Its relevant significance is that Heracles is, and can only be, proclaiming such a conviction as a far from self-sufficient man: it is a man's pious idealism, not a god's inside knowledge, that informs these words. Heracles accepts Theseus' offer, recalling his labours, but in tears, like a man (1356). He is just another of Hera's victims – Megara, children, himself (νεκρούς τε κἀμέ), all human victims on a par together (1392f.). The final moments of the play show him as all-too-human, still in tears (1394), too distraught to move (1395), praying for some escape from his pain (1397), led by his friend's hand, as if by his own son (1398–1401). No longer the famous Heracles of the labours (1410, 1414), behaving like a woman (1412), humbled by his fate (1417), he follows his friend like a little boat on tow (ἑφολκίδες, 1424) – therefore (as we recall his own earlier image for his children, 631) like a child himself. In this moment, as in the whole of the last part of the play, Heracles is presented as a man who thinks and feels as a man; and he appeals directly to, and engages, human feelings. He does so by courtesy of Theseus, whose arrival, of course, is as arbitrary as that of any *deus ex machina*: Theseus, let us say, is a *homo ex machina*, whose *humanitas*, literal and spiritual, presents Heracles at last with the perspective from which to dismiss and disown his divine patrimony.

If the obvious 'problem' in *Trachiniae* is the invisible apotheosis, the equivalent in *H.F.* is the unexplained madness. There are two questions here. First, in the madness scene, Iris speaks of Heracles' 'punishment': he must 'give justice' (842); but *for what* should he 'give justice' and be punished? Secondly, what is the status of Madness, Lyssa, herself? To take the second question first: Lyssa, on the face of it, is an external, independent deity, presented as such by her staging alongside Iris. Unlike Iris, though, Lyssa is not an established deity. She is a personification – not invented by Euripides,[58] but still a personification – and what she personifies can be taken to be Heracles' madness as easily as madness *tout court*. There was, indeed, another myth about a manic killing by Heracles (the victim then was Linus, his music-teacher): an audience would find no difficulty in taking this madness as Heracles' own.[59]

More to the point, the way Euripides represents the character Lyssa

itself invites the audience to start thinking along these lines. The dialogue between Iris and Lyssa is, by any standard, extraordinary. Iris calls for Lyssa to send the hero mad; yet Lyssa, Madness herself, demurs, is embarrassed, points to Heracles' virtues and achievements, sees no reason for punishing him at all (843ff.). Her words, furthermore, suggest an identification with him. She hesitates, she seeks to protect him, she refers to him as φίλος (846) (and there was an old proverb that a φίλος is a second self).[60] Her response is calculated to evoke a parallel image of Heracles striving to fight off the madness in himself. And when she agrees to do her job, the identification is verbalized more pointedly still. She will cast her being onto the house and 'do the killing first, and he, the killer, will not know' (ἀποκτείνασα πρῶτον· ὁ δὲ κανὼν οὐκ εἴσεται, 865). The phraseology looks back to the traditional Greek conception of double determination for inexplicable events,[61] but in a way that sums up the intimate relationship between Heracles and herself. He is the killer and she is the killer, because she is both independent of him and an aspect of him. The staging makes her external; the words tend to suggest her internality; she is, therefore, both, even more clearly than other destructive deities of the psyche, like Dionysus in *Bacchae*.[62]

But it is not – to restate the point – that Heracles was 'mad all the time'. There is no psychological continuity between Heracles now and before:[63] there is, rather, a metaphysical continuity between Heracles and the divine realm of which madness (as Greek ideology tended to affirm) was one part.[64] When Heracles, in Theseus' presence, rejects his divinity in recoiling from his madness, he is himself tacitly affirming their affinity.

And for what is Heracles punished? We all know Hera is jealous: her jealousy is assumed in the play.[65] But jealous of what? There was a traditional motive that Hera, as consort of Zeus, was jealous of his bastard son, but this reason is both too general and too remote from the play itself to be persuasive, and it is certainly nowhere mentioned in the text. The nearest thing to an answer in the play is those words by Iris on the punishment: if Heracles does not pay the penalty, 'gods will be nowhere and humanity great' (841f.). This is hardly an answer itself, but if we are to put a gloss on it, we might say: the cosmic order will be upset, Heracles is a threat to it, not because he is a man, nor indeed because he is a god, but because he is anomalous and neither.[66] What Euripides does is leave the question open in favour of the new emphasis on friendship, and therefore on Heracles' humanity, which dominates the rest of the play. However, that emphasis itself, perhaps, provides confirmation that our gloss is to the point.

Heracles ends the play as a credible man: wretched, special, but

credible. He begins it as a wholly incredible combination of man and god. The god-man whose whole life, virtually, has been spent on the superhuman plane, who can come back from the kingdom of death and behave like a good family man who has been kept late at the office, represents a quite fantastic aggregation of attributes. Euripides' play is not and never becomes a psychological study in the sense that (say) *Bacchae* is. What matters is Heracles' status, as it matters in *Trachiniae* (for all the many differences between the two plays); but Euripides solves the problem of Heracles' status by first presenting him as a psychological impossibility and thereby creating a need for credibility which is satisfied by exploding all his anomalousness out of him in a monstrous aggressive explosion.

That explosion – the madness – is presented as an arbitrary explosion such as gods create, but also as a necessary explosion, necessary in metaphysical terms as well as necessary on the level of character. The combination of god and man is unstable and must be blown apart to permit a new, simpler and comprehensible stability, whereby Heracles becomes a suffering man in whom we can believe and to whom we can relate. The cost of the explosion is very great. Much is destroyed: not only Megara and the children and Heracles' life in Thebes, but his status as a god. Hera and the gods are arbitrary and inexplicable. The pious, wretched figure who leaves the stage leaning on a friend is a representative of lucid humanity with no god left in him.

More schematic, then, than Sophocles' play, *H.F.* dramatizes a conflict between the god and the man in Heracles, and ends by clearly destroying one element, the god, and isolating the other, the man. The whole shape of the play is calculated to throw the god-man opposition into relief. What Sophocles does through the antithetical presentation of Heracles and Deianeira, Euripides does through the violent concentration of action in the middle of the drama and especially the juxtaposition of Heracles the saviour-god and Heracles the manic killer: lucid humanity is isolated, however painfully, at the end, rejecting a divine potentiality, rejecting a capacity for madness, rejecting both as intolerably arbitrary manifestations of a cosmos which, in desperation, it invests with pious hopes.

The logic of Euripides' drama is dependent on his inversion of events in the myth. *Inter alia*, by abandoning the sequence of madness followed by labours, he avoids any suggestion that Heracles can be redeemed by a saviour-god's exercise of his superhuman powers. Only the human values of friendship can provide that redemption; and this representation of friendship as a Heraclean resource is itself a departure from mythic tradition of the most radical kind.

So, unlike Sophocles, Euripides resolves the great paradox. But as

in Sophocles the progress towards a resolution involves a violent collision of spheres which cannot peacefully coexist. And as in Sophocles the god-man Heracles cannot meet his 'fellow'-men, even his beloved family, without posing a threat to them and destroying them.

IV

My argument is that the distinctive features of the two plays derive from their special common feature, the hero Heracles. As a dangerously disturbing hero, he is avoided by the tragedians. Comedy values disturbance; other genres can simplify it; but not tragedy. When the tragedians do dramatize the sufferings of Heracles, he produces disruptions at various levels. His presence dislocates the overall structure. On the level of character, it produces a huge imbalance of sympathy in *Trachiniae* and a credibility gap, violently filled, in *H.F.* Besides this, it generates a number of otherwise inexplicable features, of which the coming of the madness in *H.F.* and the missing apotheosis in *Trachiniae* are the most obvious. The suffering Heracles embodies too much in the way of ideals and taboos to do anything less.

'The purpose of myth', according to Lévi-Strauss, 'is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction.'[67] The Heracles myth, on the contrary, is all contradiction itself, contradiction which the tragedians explore at some cost to the tragic norms and to our emotions.[68]

NOTES

1. This article is a revised version of a paper read in 1984 to the Classical Association at University College, Cardiff and to audiences at the Universities of Wrocław and Kraków in Poland. I am grateful to members of all these audiences for their comments.

2. *Ol.* 2.3, 3.11ff., 6.68ff., 10.43ff.; *Nem.* 10.32f., 11.27.

3. On the incongruities in Heracles' persona, see the concise discussion by G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 176ff.

4. See the cautious summary of the evidence by G. W. Bond, *Euripides, Heracles* (Oxford, 1981), pp. xxviii–xxx.

5. *νόστος* plays: see O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 124f.

6. See B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964).

7. The recent discussion by P. E. Easterling, *Sophocles, Trachiniae* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 8–11, 16–18, argues, in effect, that the original audience might have read the apotheosis in. The point is rather that Sophocles (without negating the apotheosis) gives them no encouragement to do so: see further above, pp. 10–12.

8. And, it may be, the burning of Heracles alive was a ritual act belonging to that ascension: see Karl Reinhardt, *Sophocles* (Eng. tr., Oxford, 1979), pp. 62f., and Easterling (above n. 7), pp. 17f.

9. On Zielinski's guess that Aeschylus' *Heracleidae* covered the ground of *Trachiniae*, see H. Lloyd-Jones, appendix to the Loeb *Aeschylus* (London and Cambridge, 1957), II. pp. 588f. There are no visual remains that suggest tragic representations earlier than an illustration of *Trachiniae*, for which see A. D. Trendall and T. B. L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama* (London, 1971), III.2.11. Heracles is presumed to have been a main figure in Ion's *Eurytidae*

(*TGF* I.99f. Snell), whose contents (as well as date) are a matter for conjecture, but there is no reason to suppose that this Heracles was a suffering Heracles. It has been suggested, however, that Ion's *Alcmene*, *Eurytidae*, and satyric *Omphale* formed three parts of a connected Heraclean tetralogy, of which the unattested play was a genuine suffering-Heracles tragedy, conceivably on the lines of *Trachiniae*. But these speculations (for which see Schmid-Stählin, *Gesch. Gr. Lit.* (Munich, 1934), I.2. pp. 88 and 517, A. von Blumenthal, *Ion von Chios* (Stuttgart, 1939), p. 33) are not evidence.

10. See the convenient summary in G. K. Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 81–100. Attested satyr-plays include Aeschylus' *Kerykes*, Sophocles' *Heracles at Taenarus*, and Euripides' *Syleus*.

11. By ignoring this distinction, Schmid-Stählin (I.2. p. 88) and others give a wholly misleading picture of Heracles as a tragic character.

12. See A. M. Dale, *Euripides' Alcestis* (Oxford, 1954), pp. xviiiff.

13. *Alcestis*, *TGF* I. 73 Snell: the play is generally presumed to have been a tragedy, but could have been a satyr-play: cf. Dale (above n. 12), p. xiii. *Prometheus Unbound*: M. Griffith, *Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 285ff.; *Athamas*: A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1917), I. pp. 1ff.; *Auge*: T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London, 1967), pp. 238ff.; *Pirithous*: A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*[3] (Göttingen, 1972), p. 525.

14. Such as Astydamas' *Antigone*: see G. Xanthakis-Karamanos, *Studies in Fourth-Century Tragedy* (Athens, 1980), pp. 49f.

15. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Euripides, Herakles* II[2] (Berlin, 1895), pp. 69ff.

16. As his presence in Homeric and Hesiodic heroic mythology obviously shows (see the survey in Galinsky (above n. 10), pp. 9–22) and as the cult evidence confirms (on which see L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921), pp. 103ff.). See also Bond (above n. 4) on *H.F.* 1254.

17. R. C. Jebb, *Sophocles, The Plays and Fragments*, Part V (*The Trachiniae*) (Cambridge, 1892), pp. xxif.

18. So P. J. Conradie, *Herakles in die Griekse Tragedie* (Utrecht, 1958), p. 134; Galinsky (above n. 10), p. 41; Kirk (above n. 3), p. 203.

19. *Aspects of the Ancient World* ('Tragic Heracles') (Oxford, 1946), p. 146.

20. Which raises fascinating questions about the origin of tragedy. If we believe, as most scholars do, that tragedy developed from the worship of Dionysus and originally dealt with the sufferings of Dionysus, we must take Ehrenberg's pronouncement as an argument that early tragedy was not 'essentially' tragic. Aristotle, at least, would have agreed, albeit on different grounds (*Po.* 1449a 19–24).

21. In reaching this conclusion, I have profited from the discussion by Ehrenberg (above n. 19), pp. 144ff., and from various remarks by A. P. Burnett in *Catastrophe Survived* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 157ff. ('The Madness of Heracles'), much as I would have to disagree with both interpretations in other respects.

22. And quite distinct even from those other heroes with two fathers, one human and one divine, like the Dioscuri and Theseus.

23. *Nem.* 3.22.

24. Summarized by Kirk (above n. 3), pp. 176f; see further Farnell (above n. 16), pp. 95ff., 155ff.

25. Hdt. 2.44.

26. Pi. *Ol.* 6.68ff., 10.43ff.

27. Pi. *Nem.* 1.35ff.; *Il.* 5.395ff and 8.367f.

28. First recorded in *Od.* 11.601ff. (on which see above, p. 7).

29. G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meanings and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 177. Heracles' gross features are summarized by Galinsky (above n. 10), pp. 16f., 81ff.

30. Kirk (above n. 3), p. 85 (cf. ibid. pp. 206ff.).

31. *Purity and Danger*[2] (London, 1969), pp. 96, 95, 104. See, further, Douglas, *Implicit Meanings* (London, 1975), ch. 17 ('Self-evidence'); on the concept of 'interstitial status' and its application to classical antiquity, W. M. Beard, *JRS* 70 (1980), 19ff.; and for a partial parallel to Heracles' own situation in ancient religious practice, rather than myth, S. R. F. Price, *JRS* 70 (1980), 28ff.

32. Like Faust, up to a point; and it may or may not be relevant that the Faust who breaks the bounds of ordinary mortality is also a grotesque folk-hero.

33. See Galinsky (above n. 10), pp. 56, 101ff.

34. *Il.* 5.403. The Homeric Heracles is surveyed by Galinsky (above n. 10), pp. 9ff.

35. *Od.* 11.620f.

36. *Od.* 11.601ff.

37. Hes. fr. 25.25ff. Both passages were suspected by the Alexandrians (see the *OCT* apparatus ad. locc.), but must be fairly early: cf. Easterling (above n. 7), p. 17 n. 29.

38. See Galinsky (above n. 10), p. 29ff.

39. *Isthm.* 3/4.71bff., *Nem.* 3.22; fr. 169.1ff. Fr. 169 is notoriously difficult to interpret: see the summary in G. Kirkwood, *Selections from Pindar* (Chico, 1982). pp. 347f.

40. *Nem.* 3.20ff.; cf. *Ol.* 3.43ff. and *Isthm.* 3/4.29f.

41. See M. S. Silk, *Interaction in Poetic Imagery* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 35 (with n. 5) and 137; in the light of the present discussion, the remark on p. 35 that Pindar's association between Heracles and *ἐσχατ-* is 'wholly personal' is somewhat misleading.

42. See Easterling (above n. 7), pp. 19ff., and Bond (above n. 4), pp. xxxff.

43. See especially Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: an Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), ch. 4, an interpretation dependent on the 'beast-man-god' series assumed by French structuralists to underlie much Greek mythologizing: see e.g. M. Detienne, 'Between Beasts and Gods' in *Myth, Religion and Society*, ed. R. L. Gordon (Cambridge and Paris, 1981), pp. 215ff.

44. *Pol.* 1253a 27ff., a passage rightly adduced by C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford, 1944), p. 136.

45. He has also been in servitude to a woman, Omphale (70), and been conquered by desire for another, Iole (489), thanks to the power of the goddess Aphrodite (497): cf. R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: an Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 85f.

46. Similarly in 1175 and 1201 (also spoken by Heracles) and 1018 and 1113 (spoken by the Old Man and the choregus).

47. See the passages cited above, p. 13 with n. 53.

48. This and the following set of Deianeira 'translations' (my own) represent a condensed version, whose verse idiom is aimed at conveying her moods and whole being with more immediacy and accuracy (cf. n. 49 below) than translationese can hope to. The lines originally formed part of a composite English-Greek verse drama called *Heracles* based on portions of *Trachiniae*, *H.F.*, *Alcestis*, and *Frogs*, which was devised for the King's College London Greek Play Tour of North America in 1983.

49. Hence the propriety of 'natural' modern English here.

50. Cf. Segal (above n. 43), p. 94.

51. Burnett (above n. 21), p. 165.

52. See *Il.* 1.8ff.; Pi.*Pyth.* 3.25–37.

53. Aesch. *Eum.* 230f.; Hes. *Op.* 57, *Theog.* 170f. Similarly (*ἐγώ* + future), *Il.* 21. 334f. (Hera), 24.462 (Hermes); Aesch. *Eum.* 232 (Apollo), 735 (Athene); Eur. *Hipp.* 1420–2 (Artemis), *H.F.* 871 (Lyssa).

54. *Tro.* 88ff.

55. Proposed by Wilamowitz (above n. 15), pp. 128f., but subsequently abandoned, *Deutsche Literatur-Zeitung* (1926), 853.

56. Disappear: apart from a single despairing question by the choregus (1087f., *ὦ Ζεῦ, τί παῖδ' ἦχθηρας ὧδ' ὑπερκότως | τὸν σόν ...;*). Contradicted: 1263–5, 1289 (on which see above, p. 15).

57. See Bond (above n. 4), on 1341–6.

58. We first meet her as goddess – and *dramatis persona* – in Aeschylus' lost *Ξάντριαι* (fr. 368 Mette).

59. For Heracles' killing of Linus, see Gow on Theocrit. *Id.* 24.105.

60. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1166a 31f.: *ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός* (likewise 1170b 6f.).

61. See E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), ch. 1, and cf. *H.F.* 1135 with Bond's note.

62. Cf. Bennett Simon, *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, 1978), p. 136.

63. Compare and contrast Ehrenberg (above n. 19), p. 159.

64. Cf. e.g. the daemonic language spoken by the mad Ajax (Soph. *Aj.* 243f.), the inspired direction possessed by Oedipus in a state of λύσσα (Soph. *O.T.* 1258), the popular beliefs attacked by the Hippocratic *Περὶ Ἱερῆς Νούσου*. It is noteworthy that the language of Heracles' revenge-speech (above, p. 13) is echoed by Lyssa: καὶ κατασκάψω δόμους (Heracles, 566) ~ καί καταρρήξω μέλαθρα καὶ δόμους ἐπεμβαλῶ (Lyssa, 864).

65. See Bond (above n. 4), pp. xxivff.

66. Cf. Burnett (above n. 21), p. 179. Bond (on 841f.) misses much of the point by considering, and duly rejecting, the Aunt Sallyish proposition that 'Heracles has become too great and has committed ὕβρις, for which he will now be punished'. It is not anything that Heracles has 'become' that matters, and ὕβρις (which is committed only by men) is not relevant.

67. 'The Structural Study of Myth' in *Structural Anthropology* (tr. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf, London, 1968), p. 206.

68. At a tangent to this conclusion, I note with pleasure the following formulation: 'The [Lévi-Straussian] assumption that the opposition is prior, the mediation [= the 'model capable of overcoming a contradiction'] the necessary response, is ... questionable.... [In most cases, if not all,] the so-called mediating term should be seen as logically prior to the opposition constructed around it.... I would suggest that Greek myth could be approached not as a system intended to mediate opposition ... but rather as a series of attempts to separate out oppositions from the features of problematic terms in order to "place" them' (from an unpublished paper by Helen King, read to the Warburg Institute, London, 1983: 'The Dynamics of Category: an approach to the generation of Greek thought-patterns').