the weapon (1225) . . . The play depicts no erasure of evil, but an exchange of like for like: *amoibai kakōn* (1147)', a fact which is emphasized by 'superimposing the memory of the old wrong of Agamemnon's death on the new wrong of the queen's death', in the choral ode.[67] Beyond the implications of these parallels, the irony of the dramatic events of the play, seen through the distortion of the events of the Heraia, bears further witness to Euripides' negative conception of the myth.

In conclusion, the festival of Hera, as a public celebration in Argos, had, by contrast, at first objectified the alienation of Electra from home, city, and normal family life and gave a new thrust to her hostility. It established and focused the motif of sacrifice, which unified past and present events, and which structured the intrigues of the play. It stimulated the deceptive mood of celebration which was framed by lamentations at the beginning and the end, and the subtle inversion of its events enhanced the ironical presentation of the myth. At the same time, the festival itself remained as an exemplar of ritual regularity and proper cult worship against which the distorted rituals of the play could be measured. Finally, by the connection of Hera with the sanctity of marriage and childbirth, the festival was thematically integrated into the issues of the drama.

After the murder of Clytemnestra, Electra asks: what dance can I participate in now? What marriage can I make now? What husband will receive me in his nuptial bed? (1198–1200). The Dioscuri later answer her questions. She will marry Pylades, but at the cost of separation from Orestes and exile from Argos. Orestes must also go into exile; he has never even set foot in the city of Argos, his primary goal.[68] The victory for both has been bought at a high price, a price which is epitomized by the festival of Hera in Argos.

[67] O'Brien 1964, 31 and n. 31.

[68] Cf. the chorus' joyful statement: 'your brother shall set his foot (*embateusai*) in the city', 595 and the words of the Dioscuri: 'you may not set foot (*embateuein*) in the city any longer, since you killed your mother', 1250–1.

13

The Rejection of Suicide in the Heracles *of Euripides*

JACQUELINE DE ROMILLY

It is right to read a Greek tragedy closely. To understand its deep import, however, one should read all of them—and, moreover, read many other Greek texts, for they all hang together. I should like to offer as an example the *Heracles* of Euripides, and in particular the ending of that tragedy. This ending, in which the problem of suicide is discussed, may disappoint from the dramatic point of view,[1] but it is essential from the point of view of Euripides' thought. Its importance, however, really becomes clear only if we compare the scene both with the *Ajax* of Sophocles and with all Greek thinking about suicide.

Considered from this viewpoint, an analysis of the scene between Heracles and Theseus, with its stichomythia and its three speeches, ought therefore to allow us to define Euripides' originality. We will indicate its perspectives here, without going into the detail of particular textual problems, and contenting ourselves with indicating the accepted solutions in passing: after all, they do not much affect the overall interpretation, which is all we are concerned with here.

The link with Sophocles' *Ajax* is already apparent in the situation, which seems to impose suicide on both heroes. Both have committed murder, under the influence of an illusion created by a god. Ajax, believing he was massacring the army commanders, has in fact slaughtered their flocks: he awakes to find himself dishonoured. Heracles, thinking he was massacring the children of Eurystheus, has in fact slaughtered his own children: he awakes a criminal—and, what is more, without hope.

[1] Cf. Ehrenberg 1946, 144–66.

Beyond the parallel nature of the two situations, this slight difference is not insignificant: Euripides' hero is doomed to greater suffering, which is well in line with the taste for the pathetic which is reflected in the author's work in general. At the same time, this heightened suffering ought further to reinforce Heracles' desire for death, and so make his decision to live even more striking. In fact this suffering will continue even after he has made his decision, and the text is very insistent in this respect (1365: *ἀθλίως* ('wretchedly'); 1375: *ὡς ἀθλίως*; 1385: *ἀθλίως*; 1393: *ἄθλιοι* ('wretched ones')).[2] It will still be present at Heracles' final departure, and will be conveyed by his tears, which he justifies to Theseus (cf. 1410 ff.).

Apart from this difference, however, the situations of the two heroes are much the same, and their reactions are also very similar. From the beginning, Heracles, like Ajax, sees refuge only in death.[3] Then, like Ajax, he is condemned to defend his wish to die in a sustained speech.

Ajax's speech (430–80) begins with the hero lamenting the dishonour that has befallen him—the dishonour that sets him against his father (cf. 440: *ἄτιμος*, 'dishonoured') and consigns him to ridicule (cf. 454: *ἐπεγγελῶσιν*, 'they exult').

Then Ajax wonders what he can do: going home and returning to combat are both out of the question. Finally he decides that honour demands he should die (473: *αἰσχρόν*, 'shameful'; 479: *ἢ καλῶς ζῆν ἢ καλῶς τεθνηκέναι*, 'either to live gloriously or to die gloriously'). Heracles, on the other hand, enumerates all his ordeals and evils, the murder of his children being only the last of the ordeals and the greatest of the evils.[4] In other words, we see again the difference that

[2] Nauck's correction for *ἀθλίωι*: the presence of the adjective *ἀθλίου* describing the dog of Hades is more suspect: it might have been suggested to the copyist by the repetition of the term throughout the passage. I do not believe that this suffering renders vain Heracles' *ἀρετή* ('virtue': cf. Adkins 1966).

[3] I do not believe it possible to retain the text *κατθανεῖν* ('to die') in line 1241; for it makes Theseus' incomprehension absurd: and it appears that *καὶ θενεῖν* (Parmentier) with the ambiguity attached to this word (knock at the door, strike a blow) would represent a considerable improvement. But in any case it is clear that Heracles is here announcing his suicide, and he makes it clear unambiguously in line 1247.

[4] It has sometimes been suggested that lines 1291–1300 (or at least 1291 and 1299) should be taken out of Heracles' tirade, bearing in mind that it is a contradiction to have Heracles say that he has been overwhelmed by woes since birth, and then to say that his misfortune is made worse by contrast with his former happiness. But there are two points of view here: trial follows unrelentingly on trial,

was evident from the start: for Ajax it is a matter of dishonour, and for Heracles one of suffering. The two endings will provide confirmation: where Ajax finds that life would be without honour, Heracles finds that it would be without profit (1301: *τί δῆτά με ζῆν δεῖ; τί κέρδος ἕξομεν . . .*; 'Why should I live, then? What profit will I have . . .?'). But apart from this difference the two texts are parallel, and Ajax's argument ('What can I do ?') corresponds to Heracles' ('Where can I go?'). One can only note that Sophocles has recourse to this theme, which is a sort of commonplace, solely to bring out more strongly the complete absence of hope. Euripides, on the other hand, introduces it to prepare the eventual response and solution: Theseus, the Athenian, the hospitable one, will in effect reply to Heracles that he need only come to Athens, where he will be purified, welcomed and honoured (1322–40).

The starting point is therefore presented in remarkably similar terms. But what leads to suicide in Sophocles leads to the rejection of suicide in Euripides. This rejection is achieved through two sets of reasons: those advanced by Theseus and those held by Heracles.

Where the reasons advanced by Theseus are concerned, one may be in some doubt. In the opening dialogue, he seems to appeal to Heracles' pride and self-respect. Heracles, as we shall see, will not be at all insensitive in that regard. On the other hand, these reasons do not reappear in his sustained speech as we have it. The question has been raised as to whether they were not in fact there originally, for a material accident seems to have occurred after line 1312, at the start of the speech. Something is missing. But what? A line?[5] Or even a possibly important sequence of lines, perhaps including that appeal to the hero's honour? The relative brevity of Theseus' speech (which has only twenty-eight lines whereas each of Heracles' has over fifty) may plead in favour of this latter hypothesis. It would, however, be unwise to take it as proven, and the text holds together very well without needing to resort to it. If the argument appealing to Heracles' courage has been suggested in the stichomythia, that is sufficient: the hero's pride is at stake, and gradually the feeling grows in him, to

but the outcome, formerly always happy, has become disastrous. As for the problem of the enclitic *ἔστι* (1293), a minor correction would be enough to deal with it: writing *ἔσχ'*, for instance.

[5] Some believe the lacuna to be very short, perhaps just a single line (e.g. Drexler 1943, 333).

be asserted at the end as his deep personal conviction: 'I have considered the matter' (1347: ἐσκεψάμην).[6] By means of a happy allocation of thoughts, the author has therefore been able to give Theseus only the argument set out in our text, that of τύχη ('fortune'), and leave the hero that of honour. In this case, the link between the rejection of suicide and Heracles' courage is even closer: Theseus offers support, he spurs on, he gives encouragement; but he lets Heracles discover his true reasons himself.[7]

This argument from τύχη ('fortune'), by the way, is not as insignificant as one might think.[8] It does indeed have a slightly immoralist side, in that it evokes the misdeeds of the gods, as the poets describe them; and in that sense Heracles' protestation is justifiable. This protestation, which has been rather exaggeratedly described as 'Platonism', fits in with the arguments that were at the time fashionable and dear to Euripides.

But Theseus is not content to say, like the nurse in *Hippolytus*, for instance,[9] that the gods' misdeeds excuse those of men. He considers these misdeeds, like those of Heracles, to be misfortunes; and so the misdeed then becomes a situation in which one finds oneself, without having any hand in it: one suffers it, as Oedipus suffered being parricidal and incestuous.[10] This interpretation, quite usual in the thinking of antiquity, therefore serves for Theseus as a basis for a moral rule, consisting of remaining serene with regard to anything brought about by fate. The insistence of the text here is characteristic; the development is framed by the repetition of the word τύχη: 'fortune' (1314: ταῖς τύχαις; 1321: τὰς τύχας). Here we shall not go into the problem of the general meaning of the tragedy;[11] it is well known that interpretations such as Wilamowitz's, which see the principle of the hero's misfortune in his soul and his character, are opposed to others, like Chalk's,[12] for instance, which see in his misfortune a purely external *peripeteia*: clearly Theseus presents

[6] This sense of ἐσκεψάμην is strongly stressed by Drexler 1943.

[7] This concurs with the general interpretation of the play in Chalk 1962, 7–18.

[8] Cf. Kamerbeek 1966, 1–16, esp. p. 9.

[9] Cf. *Hipp.* 440 ff., *Tro.* 947 ff. The comparison with *Hippolytus* is more interesting, because there too it is a matter of dissuading Phaedra from dying the death to which she aspires.

[10] With regard to this form of culpability in tragedy, see Saïd 1978.

[11] Cf. on this point Kamerbeek 1966.

[12] Chalk 1962, 7–18.

Heracles' madness in this light. For our purposes it is more important to note that the argument he extracts from it is not immaterial from the moral standpoint.

Moreover, it is not without effect on Heracles. For if the hero begins by rejecting the most shocking myths relating to the gods, he none the less accepts the idea of τύχη ('fortune'), and understands that yielding to it is in no way dishonourable. The text in which he declares himself resolved to live closes with the idea that, in spite of his tradition of heroism, τύχη is a fact: 'this time, clearly, fate must be obeyed' (1357: τῇ τύχῃ δουλευτέον). The word δουλευτέον (lit. 'one must be a slave') reminds us that that costs him dear. But he resolves to do it just the same.[13] Even on this point, Theseus' thoughts have not been useless.

In any case, they constitute a real moral doctrine, establishing the wise man's independence with regard to the blows struck by fate. The fact is all the more remarkable because in *Ajax* Tecmessa also certainly begins by talking about ἀναγκαία τύχη, 'a fate of compulsion' (485); but only extracts from it the idea of her own isolation and what Ajax owes her. Where she makes play with sentiment, Theseus develops a doctrine of general relevance. What is more, it is a doctrine which in a sense is already paving the way for Stoicism. To the wise man's serenity the Stoics will only have to add the idea of liberty to give Theseus' reasoning its true import.

However, it is not this argument which convinces Heracles, but the argument about courage, which is developed suddenly in Heracles' second speech, and is by far the more original.

Theseus, as we have seen, had already paved the way for him, still in a veiled fashion, in the stichomythia. In fact, his language was more suggestive of a critique delivered in the name of reason: suicide was presented there as ἀμαθία, 'stupidity' (1254):[14] the word evidently

[13] In his eyes, this fate remains a blow dealt by Hera (1393): "Ηρας μιᾷ πληγέντες ἄθλιοι τύχῃ, 'wretched ones, struck by one fate from Hera'. Something there does not fit with the opening statements against anthropomorphic gods. But it would be difficult for Heracles not to believe in at least the adulteries of Zeus and Hera's jealousy—and the myths to which Theseus alluded were graver and more remote.

[14] ἀμαθία certainly does not refer to Heracles' fit of madness, which would be the cause of his death (as some seem to understand it, e.g. Marie Delcourt). The word can be explained if it is compared with other Euripidean expressions intended to dismiss the idea of suicide: they will be quoted later. In fact, it is just as foolish to wish to die out of despair as it is to try and resist without any chance of success (*Heracles* 281–3). And it is another form of 'foolishness' not to want to save one's friends (347). All morality is a matter of judgement.

refers to any behaviour that is impulsive and unconsidered. But beneath the reprimand relating to intellect there already lay hidden both a moral reprimand and a call for courage. Heracles could not act like just anybody (1248: ἐπιτυχόντος ἀνθρώπου, 'a chance-met fellow'): he had to reject a suicide which did not befit a man who had endured so many trials (1250: πολλὰ δὴ τλάς, 'having endured much') and rendered so many services to mortals (1252: εὐεργέτης βροτοῖσι, 'a benefactor for mortals'). This was clearly making it understood that the true hero does not commit suicide.

Now that is the argument that convinces Heracles, and at the end of the scene he formulates this new *credo* with rare force. The most remarkable word is spoken at the start: Heracles does not want to be accused of cowardice (1348: δειλίαν). Living becomes an act of courage. Standing up against the blows of misfortune is like resisting enemy onslaughts. Cowardice, then, no longer means loving life too much, but means not having the courage to live: one cannot imagine a more comprehensive reversal of the usual definitions.

And this reversal is then illustrated by a formula so remarkable that it has shocked scholars. 'Ἐγκαρτερήσω θάνατον, 'I shall stand firm in the face of death', says Heracles (1351). Now, at *Andromache* 262, Hermione is astonished by the resistance of Andromache, who is not frightened by death: ἐγκαρτερεῖς δὴ θάνατον; 'you stand firm in the face of death?'; and those are the only two examples in classical Greek of the verb used transitively.[15] As in *Andromache* the expression means 'to face death bravely', whereas in *Heracles* the reverse is the case, scholars such as Wecklein have not hesitated to replace the word θάνατον in *Heracles* by its contrary, βίοτον ('life').[16] This reaction demonstrates how striking is the new sense Heracles gives to the expression. 'To stand firm in the face of death' no longer means to brave its danger, but to brave its temptation. Just as courage no longer consists of dying, but of living, so death is no longer the hard solution, but the easy solution, which one must be able to resist.

[15] The expression can be found also in Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 8. 26: in this case it concerns prisoners who are simply 'waiting for death'.

[16] Murray also accepted this correction. Wilamowitz thinks that the current text is not a copying error, but an adjustment reflecting the evolution of ideas. Why not then admit that this evolution happens specifically in *Heracles* itself?

This new attitude to suicide is never suggested in Sophocles. Tecmessa does attempt to show Ajax that nobility requires one to repay debts to those who have given help; but there is a great difference between that and saying that dying is cowardly! In fact neither Tecmessa, nor Agamemnon or Menelaus later, suggest in any way that Ajax's suicide could be criticized. So everything happens as though Heracles, at first so similar to Ajax, were suddenly emerging as an anti-Ajax. There has often been debate about the extent to which Heracles discovers a new virtue in the play;[17] in fact, one thing is certain: by intensifying his heroism in that sense, he allows Euripides to present a new doctrine concerning suicide, destined to know great success in the future.

The contrast is so clear[18] that it suggests the existence of a deliberate polemic. And Euripides can be admired for choosing the hero most worthy of incarnating courage to sustain his thesis, and for placing him moreover in the very situation most worthy of inspiring a wish to die. The choice of character is therefore brilliantly explicable. But it is also possible that this choice too is serving a preoccupation with polemic.

For after all Sophocles too devoted a play to Heracles; and he too showed him broken after his labours. In fact, similarities have been discovered in the two plays, even with regard to expression.[19] But to that must be added that *Trachiniae* deals with the death of Heracles. Heracles dies because he has put on the poisoned tunic sent to him by Deianeira. That is certainly not suicide. But it turns out that, by a strange distortion, this imposed death almost becomes a voluntary death. At the end of his tragedy, indeed, Sophocles has brought onto the stage a hero at the very height of his suffering, screaming for death, begging to be finished off no matter how. And finally, combining death by the tunic with the tradition of death on Mount Oeta,[20] Sophocles showed Heracles making his son Hyllus take him there and light the fatal pyre.

[17] With regard to this debate, see Chalk 1962, and the reply from Adkins 1966, 209–19. This reply consists in saying that Heracles, at the end of the play, formulates his resolve in the terms of traditional ἀρετή, 'virtue'. It is possible in any case to note that its content and application are radically new, which supposes at the very least a certain internalization of values.

[18] Cf. also Pohlenz 1954, I. 301.

[19] Cf. for instance *Trach.* 1101 ff., compared with *Heracles* 1353 ff.. These similarities have been very widely discussed; see among others Kroeker 1938.

[20] On the subject of this combination of traditions, cf. Linforth 1952, 255–67.

Euripides' *Heracles* therefore appears to be a combined response to Sophocles' *Ajax* and to his *Trachiniae*.[21] The suggested dates for these tragedies are consistent with that. And the contrast is so striking that it seems that one could use it to reinforce the arguments for placing both *Ajax* and *Trachiniae* before *Heracles*.[22]

In that case it would be a matter not just of reactions and literary taste, but of a deliberate conflict between two conceptions of heroism. In Euripides, heroism has become internalized. It has been argued, contested, submitted to the moralist's analysis; and in the course of these debates the duty to live has in the end proved to be worth more than the epic ideal in which only glory and death shone brilliantly.

This is confirmed by the fact that Euripides' theatre is always very guarded in the matter of suicide. Phaedra's suicide is sullied by crime. Evadne's, spectacular though it is, is described as a terrible act (1072: δεινὸν ἔργον); and the whole development of this scene tends to bring to light the sufferings which this death leaves behind her (for Iphis, for instance, in 1073: ἀπωλόμην δύστηνος 'I am lost, poor wretch'). Without reaching the heights of Heracles' proud declarations, the disquiet is clearly sensed. There are also several occasions when suicide is criticized as being unreasonable. Wilamowitz quotes *Orestes* 415, where Menelaus says to Orestes: 'do not speak of death: for it is not wise' (τοῦτο μὲν οὐ σοφόν), and fragment 1070 N, according to which anyone praising suicide 'is not to be numbered among the wise' (οὐκ ἐν σοφοῖσι). Similarly, although it is here a question of a voluntary death, rather than a suicide, Achilles declares to Iphigenia that he will not let her die as a result of her folly (*IA* 1430: ἀφροσύνῃ). The censure may therefore be perceived more or less clearly in all Euripides' theatre: *Heracles*, with its proud declarations, is the brilliant expression of a thesis, which the rest of the oeuvre rehearses in muted fashion.

But how original this thesis is! Even Seneca, who took up the idea of a Heracles finally agreeing to live, explained this agreement as

[21] Pohlenz (1954, 1. 301) accepts this relationship between the *Trachiniae* and the *Heracles*.

[22] That is in any case the generally accepted chronology: Wilamowitz put *Trachiniae* late; he has been followed by some others (Schmid, Kitto, Perotta); but recent studies on the whole reach different conclusions; for the arguments against this late dating of *Trachiniae*, cf. Kamerbeek 1970, 27–8.

Heracles' concern not to bring about another death along with his own: no doubt Stoicism would have prevented Seneca from condemning suicide directly as Euripides does.

Now the importance of the thesis which emerges in *Heracles* can be seen even more clearly if it is put in its place in the series of Greek texts dealing with suicide. Before Euripides, to be a coward is normally to live. A fragment of Sophocles, for instance (fr. 952 Radt), says that anyone wishing to prolong a wretched life is cowardly or insane (δειλός ἐστιν ἢ δυσάλγητος φρένας, 'a coward or suffering in his wits'). After him, on the contrary, the cowardice of suicide becomes one of the great themes of Greek thought on suicide. Plato, for instance, who in the *Phaedo* took so many precautions against the temptation of philosophic suicide, also singled out in the *Laws* the rare cases when suicide could be acceptable: those cases apart, anyone is to be censured who commits suicide 'out of weakness, and cowardice due to a lack of courage' (873c: ἀργίᾳ δὲ καὶ ἀνανδρίας δειλίᾳ). Although the fourth-century philosophers were not all agreed on this point, or perhaps just because they were not, Aristotle took up the same idea in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (3. 1116[a]): 'dying to escape poverty, or sorrows of love, or any other suffering, is the deed not of a brave man but rather of a coward' (οὐκ ἀνδρείου, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον δειλοῦ). Later the argument will appear again in Flavius Josephus (*BJ* 3. 25); and Plutarch will have his Cleomenes told: 'So, you wretch, you think that you will seem brave (ἀνδρεῖος) by committing the easiest act in the world, the act that anyone can manage, suicide, even though it would be an even more shameful escape than the first one (. . .). To shy away from trials, misfortunes, censure and the opinions of others—that is to be defeated by one's own cowardice' (*Cleomenes* 31. 7: μαλακίας). In the meantime the idea had passed into Latin.[23] Later it would be taken up by the moderns.[24]

The scene in Euripides' *Heracles* is therefore not of interest solely because of its contrast with *Ajax*. It is echoed in problems and debates

[23] Cf. Seneca, *Letters* 68 and 78: the first speaks of the cowardice involved in dying, the other of the bravery sometimes involved in living.

[24] Napoleon will repeat similar ideas: 'To give in to misery without resistance, to kill oneself to escape it, is to abandon the battlefield before achieving victory', or again, on the evening of the catastrophe: 'If I were to kill myself purely as an act of despair, it would be cowardly'.

which were long to be pursued.[25] If my analysis is accurate, it clearly demonstrates the way in which, at the end of the fifth century in Athens, ideas came into conflict, were adjusted and elaborated, and after this collective maturation were made ready to be taken up subsequently by the philosophers.

In short, this is one more proof that in the domain of Greek literature, where all texts are so closely linked, understanding of those texts always depends to a great extent both on constant comparisons and on the very history of ideas.

[25] Perhaps the difficulties and complications to be found in the text are even partly the result of alterations, cuts, or changes made by actors or later copyists.

14

Iconography and Imagery in Euripides' Ion

DONALD J. MASTRONARDE

Euripides' *Ion*,[1] like *Iphigeneia in Tauris* and *Helen*, the two extant plays closest both in spirit and in date of composition,[2] contains elements of romantic fairy-tale and melodrama, a recognition, and a happy ending. *Ion* in particular has been viewed as a precursor of New Comedy.[3] Nevertheless there are serious elements in all three plays. In *Helen* we find the riddling manipulation of appearance and reality, the recognition that men fight and suffer for phantoms, and a paradigm of the constructive force occasionally exerted by piety and good judgment in an uncertain universe. In *IT* the ignorance, confusion, and despair of the human condition are exemplified in Iphigeneia and Orestes before recognition comes and the protagonists

[1] For the major bibliography up to 1967 see Wassermann 1940, 587 n. 1; Burnett 1962, 101–3; Conacher 1967, 267 n. 1. The more recent contributions to the study of *Ion* include Radt 1968; Lembach 1971; Immerwahr 1972, 277–97; Willetts 1973, 201–9.

In my approach to the serious aspect of *Ion* I agree on many points with Burnett 1971, 101–29, and Wolff 1965*a*, 169–94. The present study also agrees on many points with the recent study of Athenian imagery in the play by Immerwahr, which R. S. Stroud kindly brought to my attention after the first version of this study was completed. In what follows I shall refer mainly to points on which we disagree, but Immerwahr's discussion is a very good one and it is to be hoped that it will be made more widely available in its English version. [Addendum. This essay is unchanged except for correction of typographical errors and minor additions in the notes set off by square brackets. Among works later than 1975 that elaborate some of the same themes touched upon here, see in particular Saxenhouse in Euben 1986, 252–73; Loraux 1993, esp. ch. 5 (transl. of Loraux 1984); Zeitlin 1993, 138–96.]

[2] See Dale 1967, xxiv–xxviii, for the metrical statistics, which are the best evidence and clearly indicate the grouping of these three plays within a few years *c.*412. The precise order of composition and the dates of first production of *IT* and of *Ion* are uncertain and do not matter to the interpretation of the plays; for speculation, see Webster 1967, 163.

[3] See, most recently, Knox 1970, 68–96 [repr. in Knox 1979, 250–74].

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