

THE PERSISTENT BONDS OF THE *OIKOS* IN EURIPIDES’ *HERACLES**

ABSTRACT

Interpretations of Euripides’ Heracles often focus on Theseus’ and Heracles’ cooperative social values in the final scene as a culmination of themes of philia. I argue that the relationship Theseus forges competes with Heracles’ attachment to his household, oikos, which is the central social relationship Euripides describes. The drama consistently develops Heracles as his household’s leader by inviting the audience to compare Heracles with interim caretakers Megara and Amphitryon, and later through the protagonist’s performance of emotional attachment before and after his madness. The closing scene continues to reveal the value and vulnerability of household attachment by accentuating Heracles’ exclusion from the identity of human family member. This trajectory suggests a painful misalignment between Heracles’ experience in the oikos and the public position Theseus offers at Athens: of a semi-divine hero receiving public cult and honours. Euripides emphasizes this tension to distinguish the experience of oikos-membership.

Keywords: Euripides; Heracles; Theseus; drama; tragedy; myth; household

The final rehabilitation of a broken Heracles has attracted humanizing interpretations for Euripides’ *Heracles* and its protagonist. After Theseus and Amphitryon recall Heracles from suicide, Theseus resituates Heracles at Athens. This therapeutic interaction has frequently impressed the modern reader as completing a trajectory of a glorious, but traumatized and isolated, hero to a more human protagonist.¹ In particular, Theseus’ friendship has been characterized as imparting a social identity to Heracles, reforming and even redeeming him.² A recent distillation identifies the humanism that emerges from their friendship as the choice to be human in the face of genetic divinity: ‘for

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¹ This broad scholarly emphasis on the play’s ‘humanistic’ conclusion and the value of ‘human, especially civic, relationships in the aftermath of disaster’ is identified by B. Holmes, ‘Euripides’ Heracles in the flesh’, *CA* 27 (2008), 231–81, at 232 n. 3. Examples include the overarching argument of H.H. Chalk, ‘Ἀρετή and βία in Euripides’ *Herakles*’, *JHS* 82 (1962), 7–18, who sees Heracles finally pioneering a new *aretē* that encompasses *philia* and recognizes human vulnerability. Scholars emphasizing Heracles’ ultimate participation in the *polis* and democratic community at Athens include H. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), 147–204; J. Gregory, ‘Euripides’ *Heracles*’, *YClS* 25 (1977), 259–75, at 274–5, *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians* (Ann Arbor, 1991), 130–5; and S. Mills, *Theseus, Tragedy and the Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1997), 129–59.

² We find the characterization of ‘the redeeming power of the love of friends’ in U. von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Euripides: Herakles* (Berlin, 1895²), 250 on 1234. J.T. Sheppard, ‘The formal beauty of the *Hercules Furens*’, *CQ* 10 (1916), 72–9 characterizes friendship as the central theme of the play. Similar interpretations include G. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (London, 1941), 259–60; D.J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama: Myth, Theme and Structure* (Toronto, 1967), 82–8; G.W. Bond (ed.), *Euripides: Heracles* (Oxford, 1981), xxiii and 416 on 1425; A. Lesky,

Heracles, it is not some divine standard external to the world, but it is humanity that is to be the measure of all things'.³ But if the values Heracles and Theseus perform in their concluding exchange—human interdependence, friendship and survival—have come to emblemize Heracles' humanity, they may have overshadowed one competing human value in this final scene.

In respect to losing his household, *oikos*—that central Greek family unit encompassing human members, possessions and physical house⁴—Heracles becomes less human in the course of the play.⁵ This insistent trajectory conspicuously resists the values Theseus finally performs. Euripides immediately stresses his protagonist's positive socialization in both *oikos* and *polis*. That Heracles finds himself more isolated at the drama's end is primarily Hera's fault, but Theseus' intervention also contributes to dehumanizing Heracles' social identity. As the protagonist finally leaves his household for an alternative position in Attic society, his heroic and divine destination cannot accommodate the identity of *oikos*-member. The pain from this transformation is palpable in the friction between a reticent Heracles and Theseus' vigorous persuasions. The strain calls attention—ambiguously and perhaps ironically—to the contrast of a redemptive interpretation of Theseus' friendship with Heracles' established household identity.

Heracles' attachment to his *oikos* appears as a core meaning of the drama when viewed in relation to its vicissitudes.⁶ The household persists through the play's entire course, which is notable since numerous reversals have historically drawn criticism of *Heracles*' formal unity or lack thereof.⁷ A first reversal answers anticipation in the initial five hundred lines that Heracles is dead or will arrive too late; instead he arrives to save his family from the tyrant Lycus and memorably pronounce his familial identity. An unusual mid-play divine epiphany from Lyssa and Iris marks the next plot turn, also

Greek Tragic Poetry (New Haven, 1983), 282; and J.F. Johnson, 'Compassion and friendship in Euripides' *Herakles*', *CB* 78 (2002), 115–29.

³ C.W. Marshall, 'Heracles: the perfect piece', in J. Gregory (ed.), *A Companion to Euripides* (Malden, MA, 2017), 182–95, at 191 channels Protagoras' famous man-measure statement (DK 80b1). Marshall's interpretation of Heracles' humanistic values coheres with the interpretation of M.S. Silk, 'Heracles and Greek tragedy', *G&R* 32 (1985), 1–22, at 16–18.

⁴ On this definition of the *oikos*, see F. Pesando, *Oikos e ktisis. La casa Greca in età classica* (Rome, 1987). D.M. MacDowell, 'The *oikos* in Athenian law', *CQ* 39 (1989), 10–21 describes a narrower legal application to the property. Earlier scholarly characterizations of a primitive, clan-like structure resisted by the *polis* have been revised in favour of a vital fifth-century *oikos* in mutual relationship with the *polis*. Articulating a consensus view are S.B. Pomeroy, *Families in Classical and Hellenistic Greece* (Oxford, 1997), 17–66 and C.B. Patterson, *The Family in Greek History* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 4–43.

⁵ Readers have pointed to some qualities that would frame Heracles as less human at the end of the play. J. Assaël, 'L'*Héraclès* d'Euripide et les ténèbres infernales', *LEC* 62 (1994), 313–26, at 323–6 argues that Euripides frames time in the underworld as transforming his character and psychology: he is not a total victor but characterized by death. J. Gibert, *Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy* (Göttingen, 1995), 141–3 compares Heracles' outlook at the end of *Heracles* to old age or even death.

⁶ E. Griffiths, 'Euripides' *Herakles* and the pursuit of immortality', *Mnemosyne* 55 (2002), 641–56, at 655 suggests a similar insight, arguing however that Heracles finally undervalues the *oikos* throughout the drama in favour of individual pursuits.

⁷ See Bond (n. 2), xvii–xxvi for synopsis of the scholarly discussion. For Euripides' structure as an artistic choice, see W. Arrowsmith, 'Heracles', in D. Grene and R. Lattimore, *The Complete Greek Tragedies II* (Chicago, 1956); Conacher (n. 2); and M. Cropp, 'Heracles, *Electra* and the *Odyssey*', in M. Cropp, E. Fantham and S.E. Scully (edd.), *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy: Essays Presented to D.J. Conacher* (Calgary, 1986), 187–99. Unifying themes proposed have included friendship (*philia*, Sheppard [n. 2]), Heracles' two fathers (Gregory [n. 1]) and the critique of traditional notions of *aretē* and *bia* (Chalk [n. 1]; J.C. Kamerbeek, 'Unity and meaning of Euripides' *Heracles*', *Mnemosyne* 19 [1966], 1–16).

one of the grimmest scenes of family destruction in extant Greek tragedy: Hera makes Heracles go mad and kill his wife and children. This scene, performed through the messenger, externally perverts the hero's core values and vulnerability. Theseus' final plot twist redirects the drama for a third, final time even after Athena ends the slaughter and corpses appear. The offer of a new social relationship at Athens, I will argue, further reveals Heracles' household identity.

Other social relationships, such as Heracles' position in the Theban *polis* and as Theseus' friend, further reinforce the *oikos*-theme. To be clear, the household does not exclude the value of friendship in the final scene; instead the *oikos*-theme explores the difference between family relationships and *philia*-bonds outside it. That these two bonds are not interchangeable is perhaps not surprising; David Konstan has argued that, at least in some genres of Classical Greek usage, there was a distinction in the term for 'friend', *philos*, from family relations (although the broader category of *philia*-relationships combined both family and friends).⁸

In the first part of this paper I will show that Euripides makes an explicit issue of Heracles' strong *oikos*-values in the play's first two sections: before and after arriving in Thebes, and during and after his rampage. Here Euripides refashions Heracles' mythological narratives and massages away less civilized attributes. By reforming anti-social excesses of lust, gluttony and violence, Euripides enhances Heracles' socializing associations with marriage and children, which are notably evident in Athenian cult from the same period. My second argument focusses on the final Theseus-scene that follows Heracles' rampage. I will demonstrate how Heracles struggles with Theseus' proposal and with a future that is heroic and political but not familial. While generally positive, the values Theseus articulates create an ambiguous and unavoidable conflict for Heracles' familial identity so intensively developed in the bulk of the play.

1. PERFORMING *OIKOS*-ATTACHMENT

In the moment before he fatefully enters his house for the only time in the play, Heracles universalizes his own care for his household in terms of a shared human identity.⁹ He embraces φιλοτεκνία, love of children: 'Both the nobler of mortals love their children as well as those who are nothing; they are unlike in property—some have it and some do not—but the whole race is child-loving' (φιλοῦσι παῖδας οἱ τ' ἀμείνονες βροτῶν | οἱ τ' οὐδὲν ὄντες· χρέμασιν δὲ διάφοροι· | ἔχουσιν, οἱ δ' οὐ· πᾶν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος, 634–6).¹⁰ Commentators have characterized Heracles' description as gnomic, noting that the same principle appears in other Euripidean tragedies.¹¹ Heracles, however, uses the maxim in an extraordinary way in this context. Applying it to himself, he challenges tragedy's and Greek literature's frequent classification of love of children as a female attribute.¹² Given his semi-divine lineage, Heracles' claim of humanity is

⁸ D. Konstan, 'Greek friendship', *AJPh* 117 (2006), 71–94.

⁹ E. Griffiths, *Euripides: Heracles* (London, 2006), 73–4 senses that Euripides distances Heracles from the φιλοτεκνία he describes. However, the fact that Heracles immediately preceded this statement by rejecting any shame in the childcare he performs (633–4) suggests that Heracles is applying this value to himself.

¹⁰ I cite the text of J. Diggle, *Euripidis fabulae. Tomus II* (Oxford, 1981). All translations are mine.

¹¹ See Bond (n. 2), 223–4 and S. Barlow (ed.), *Euripides: Heracles* (Warminster, 1996), who notes parallel statements at Eur. *Phoen.* 965, *Dictys* fr. 346 TrGF.

¹² On the frequent, although not normative, female gendering of φιλοτεκνία, see M. Golden,

equally striking here, especially because his human identity in a family is precisely what he will unwillingly lose.

His expression of *φιλοτεκνία* reflects Heracles' identity of actively caring family member established in the first section of the play. Elsewhere in (extant) tragedy, young and middle-aged men more frequently appear distant from the household at stake, whether by carelessness, preoccupation with other concerns or physical absence.¹³ But Euripides develops Heracles' active performance of strong affective attachment. This social value, and the coordinated vulnerability in loss of family, would have been conspicuous to an Attic audience steeped in a cultural imaginary of *oikos*-values and vulnerabilities attaching especially to their male leaders.¹⁴

As Amphitryon delivers his prologue (1–86), he, Heracles' wife and Heracles' three children surround the altar of Zeus Soter, a monument Heracles himself erected (47–53). The suppliant family members immediately direct attention to their unavailable guardian. Will Heracles be the aloof guardian of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, oblivious to the status of his household? Or will he follow the model of his own distant father Zeus? That god will turn out to provide a foil for Heracles' 'involved parent'hood.¹⁵

By way of answer Megara and Amphitryon introduce a protagonist who departs from Heracles' conspicuous traditional characteristics that are uncondusive to household stability.¹⁶ The hero Athenaëus will later call *φιλογύνης* for his extreme sex drive (12.556e–f) is not the monogamous *paterfamilias* of Euripides' play.¹⁷ Euripides has deftly excised those characteristics, especially lust and polyamory, which undermined Heracles' *oikos* so traumatically in *Trachiniae*. Caricatures of fifth-century Greek drama—tragedy, comedy and satyr drama¹⁸—contrast with *Heracles*' established family

Children and Childhood in Classical Athens (Baltimore, 1990), 97–9 and D. Mastronarde, *The Art of Euripides: Dramatic Technique and Social Context* (Cambridge, 2010), 250. In tragedy Andromache and Medea express particularly strong maternal emotion (Eur. *Tro.* 740–63, *Med.* 1021–77). Outside tragedy: Isae. 11.17; Xen. *Oec.* 7.24, *Mem.* 1.4.7. Reflections of maternal superiority in *φιλοτεκνία* include Eur. fr. 1015 *TrGF*; Lycurg. *Leoc.* 101; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1168a25–6.

¹³ Mastronarde (n. 12), 255 makes the case for Euripides' plays, which seems to hold similarly for Aeschylus' and Sophocles'. Sophoclean fathers, such as Heracles, Ajax and Oedipus, are frequently over-harsh and at least initially deficient in understanding the situation and perspectives of other household members.

¹⁴ In relation to this play, see J. Moore, 'House-razing and the relationship of *oikos* and *polis* in Euripides' *Heracles*', *ICS* 45 (2020), 25–48, at 28–33. H. Lehmann, *Feeling Home: House and Ideology in the Attic Orators* (Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2016) treats the performance of home in Attic oratory.

¹⁵ On Zeus's failed paternity, see J. Mikalson, 'Zeus the father and Heracles the son in tragedy', *TAPhA* 116 (1986), 89–98. M. Padilla, 'Heroic paternity in Euripides' *Heracles*', *Arethusa* 26 (1994), 279–302 and id., 'Myth and allusion in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and Euripides' *Herakles*', in R. Mitchell-Boyask (ed.), *Approaches to Teaching the Dramas of Euripides* (New York, 2012), 138–48, at 146 demonstrate that Euripides draws attention to Amphitryon's deficiencies alongside Zeus's.

¹⁶ A. Michelini, *Euripides and the Tragic Tradition* (Madison, 1987), 233 describes Euripides' 'reversionist view' of 'what would seem the most unlikely of subjects'. Foley (n. 1), 161 similarly calls Euripides' Heracles a 'model of paternal concern, piety, and justice'. The idea that Heracles' identity always hangs ambiguously between good and bad violence is discussed by T. Papadopoulou, *Heracles and Euripidean Tragedy* (Cambridge, 2005), 9–48.

¹⁷ e.g. Heracles' intercourse with fifty virgins in one night: Paus. 9.27.5–7; Diod. Sic. 4.29; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.10, 2.7.8.

¹⁸ Playwrights frequently draw upon the figure of Heracles as glutton and sex-crazed: E. Stafford, *Herakles* (Abingdon, 2012), 104–17; M. Padilla, *Myths of Heracles in Ancient Greece* (Lanham, MD, 1998), 28–9; K. Galinsky, *The Heracles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1972), 46. A gluttonous Heracles featured in the late sixth- or early fifth-century comedies of Epicharmus, *Busiris* and the *Marriage of Hebe*, and proved

man. We will find similarly refashioned Heracles' traditional liability to extreme outbursts of violence against family and friends.¹⁹

Literary depictions of Heracles' carnality often shift between comic, tragically violent and conducive to family values.²⁰ Euripides plays with several of these registers in the fragmentary *Auge* (c.415–406), where Heracles affectionately and humorously dandles his baby in several extracts: 'Who does not delight in childish playthings?' and 'I'm playing; always a change from my toils' (τίς δ' οὐχὶ χαίρει νηπίοις ἀθύρμασιν;, fr. 272; παίζω μεταβολὰς γὰρ πόνων ὅει φιλω̄, fr. 272a). These fragments resemble the passage in *Heracles* where Megara describes a sentimental Heracles playing with his sons (462–79),²¹ discussed below. But while Heracles may perform paternal affection in *Auge*, he is also a lust-driven rapist and unwitting father. *Heracles'* protagonist adds unassailable principles to his familial affection.

Purged of many problematic attributes, *Heracles'* protagonist can convey the familial associations present in his cultic figure, which seem to have been especially significant in Attica.²² Here, at at least six locations, Heracles received unusual recognition in cult worship alongside his whole family.²³ Heracles held the function of κουροτρόφος,²⁴ received a libation from ephebes (Ath. 11.494; Hsch. ο 325 Latte–Cunningham, s.v. οἰνιστηρία), and was affiliated with gymnasia throughout Attica.²⁵ Attic cult associations combine with Heracles' abundance of children and variety of amorous unions including, finally, the goddess Hebe (herself associated with youth and marriage),²⁶ Athenian vaseware frequently depict him in the company of wives and children.²⁷ Later-attested household invocations of Heracles *alexikakos*²⁸ suggest Heracles became known as protector of families generally. Heracles' emphatic pronunciation of φιλοτεκνία in Euripides' play may gesture towards these strands of representation.

a capacious drinker in Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* (fr. 22 Finglass). Satyr plays also capitalized on this; in *Omphale* by Ion of Chios Heracles gobbles down coals with his meat and in Euripides' *Syleus* Heracles consumes all his host's food, killing the host and raping his daughter. Heracles in *Frogs* (405) plays expert on brothels and taverns (54–9, 62–3, 112–14) and even in *Alcestis* causes a scene with his drinking (747–802).

¹⁹ e.g. the *Odyssey* already mentions Iphitus' murder (21.26) and Odysseus' encounters with Heracles' fierce *eidōlon* (11.605–6).

²⁰ This ambivalence runs parallel to the noted tension between Heracles' outbursts of violence and his civilizing efforts as mentioned, for instance, by Galinsky (n. 18); G. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore, 1979), 318–91; Foley (n. 1), 159–61 and 190–2; and N. Loraux, 'Herakles: the super-male and the feminine', transl. R. Lambertson, in D.M. Halperin, J.J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin (edd.), *Before Sexuality* (Princeton, 1990), 21–52, at 24–5.

²¹ Stafford (n. 18), 94–5.

²² A useful overview of the evidence in Padilla (n. 18), 146–7.

²³ See M. Jameson, 'The family of Herakles in Attica', in L. Rawlings and H. Bowden (edd.), *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring A Graeco-Roman Divinity* (Swansea, 2005), 15–36. J. Wilkins, 'The young of Athens: religion and society in *Herakleidae* of Euripides', *CQ* 40 (1990), 329–39 relates Heracles' Attic association with youth to *Heraclidae*.

²⁴ E. Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (London, 1989), 35–6.

²⁵ S. Woodford, 'Cults of Heracles in Attica', in D. Mitten (ed.), *Studies Presented to G.M.A. Hanfmann* (Mayence, 1971), 211–25, at 214.

²⁶ Padilla (n. 18), 27 suggests several of Heracles' associations with marriage such as establishing the etiology for marriage ritual at Cos (Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 304c–e).

²⁷ LIMC s.v. *Herakles* 1674–9; R. Volkammer, *Herakles in the Art of Classical Greece* (Oxford, 1988), 32.

²⁸ C. Faraone, 'Heracleian labors on ancient Greek amulets: myth into magic or magic into myth?', in E. Suárez de la Torre and A. Pérez Jiménez (edd.), *Mito y Magia en Grecia y Roma* (Saragoza, 2013), 85–101.

Signposting the effort to develop a protagonist with family values at his core is Euripides' reversal of the traditional order of Heracles' labours and madness. Instead of undertaking labours in restitution for murdering his family, Heracles returns from his labours to *protect* his threatened family.²⁹ The labours still force him to leave the human society and roam the peripheries, but now prove his tenacity in familial attachment which he explicitly names as more important than labours (574–82). The closest tragic comparisons for Heracles' familial devotion are Euripides' older men such as Amphitryon and Peleus, who express strong attachment to their families and willingness to sacrifice for them.³⁰ Heracles embraces a similar attitude while still in his 'middle' age, if we loosely designate a 'middle-aged' category for literary figures who actively lead an *oikos* with children and are not marked for old age.³¹

Amphitryon's prologue emphasizes that Heracles did not take on his labours to purify himself from murdering his own children (12–18), the most traditional narrative. Euripides' Heracles laboured to regain his fatherland Argos for his own sons who eagerly wait for their father (13–22). Amphitryon himself takes blame for forfeiting Heracles' patrimony in Argos; Amphitryon had to be 'resettled' (κατωκίσθην, 13) in Thebes after murdering his father-in-law Electryon (16–17). This provides significant oikal motivation for Heracles, who 'yearned to dwell within the Argive walls and the Cyclopiian city' (Ἀργεῖα τεῖχη καὶ Κυκλωπῖαν πόλιν | ὠρέξασ' οἰκεῖν, 15–16) and was 'wishing to dwell in his fatherland' (πάτρων οἰκεῖν θέλων, 18). To realize this dream he agreed to Eurystheus' 'great price' (μισθὸν ... μέγαν, 19): the famous labours. The drama's fresh account of a family-centred Heracles will coexist with public-facing interpretations of his traditional heroic labours, such as the chorus celebrates in its first stasimon (348–52) and Amphitryon recognizes in his prologue (99–100, 181–7). Theseus' emphasis on Heracles' public persona will later bring them into their strongest contrast with the *oikos*-centred values Euripides emphasizes for the protagonist.

Megara further exposes Heracles' paternal motivations and develops Amphitryon's claim that Heracles left Thebes to provide an inheritance for his sons. She remembers her husband playfully discussing these plans with his children, assigning a kingdom for each one to inherit (462–79).³² He promised one son he would inherit Argos (462–4), the patrimony lost by Amphitryon. Heracles further plans for his first son to dwell in Eurystheus' house (463) and for the next to inherit Thebes through Megara's dowry (ἔγκληρα, 468). The third son, presumably the youngest, will inherit the smaller Euboean territory of Oechalia (463) that Heracles conquered.

The light-hearted intimacy Megara remembers illustrates Heracles' care and affection for his children.³³ He playfully places his lion skin (a symbol of Argos) over one son's

²⁹ Bond (n. 2), xxviii–xxx argues convincingly that Euripides departs significantly from the traditional order of events that later authors preserve.

³⁰ Mastronarde (n. 12), 255.

³¹ A contemporary parallel for Euripides' depiction of an attached household leader are Aristophanes' affectionate and even indulgent fathers, also significant care-providers for children, as discussed by V. French, 'Aristophanes' doting dads: adult male knowledge of children', in R. Mellor and L. Tridle (edd.), *Text and Tradition: Studies in Greek History and Historiography in Honor of Mortimer Chambers* (Claremont, CA, 1999), 163–81. Offstage, Odysseus performs strong attachment and care for his *oikos* in the *Odyssey*, and Louise Pratt has shown how affective paternal relations pervade the *Iliad* in 'The parental ethos of the *Iliad*', *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007), 25–40.

³² Megara must describe a visit between labours since Heracles has his distinctive lion skin (465) but has not yet gone to the underworld.

³³ Michelini (n. 16), 250–4 emphasizes how humour contributes to an effective mixture of low and high style in this scene and throughout many of Euripides' plays.

head (465–6). As if inspired by his father's promise to his brother, the middle child next begs Heracles to inherit Thebes (ἐξέπειθες, 469). Heracles acquiesces and play-acts that his son is actually the Theban lord; Megara reminds her son: 'you were (in imagination) king of Thebes, which loves chariots' (σὺ δ' ἦσθα Θεβῶν τῶν φιλαρμάτων ἄναξ, 467). Continuing make-believe, Heracles hands the boy his club, the Theban emblem, as a 'mock gift' (ψευδῆ δόσιν, 471) that also performs the affective bond underlying the father's planning for his children.³⁴

Through *Amphitryon* and Megara each substituting the familial care that absent Heracles cannot provide, Euripides anticipates Heracles' performance once he arrives at his household. Megara particularly conveys the relationship of the collective *oikos* through imagery and choreography of physical bonds.³⁵ She is described as a trace-horse 'dragging' (ἐλκουσαν, 446) her children like a horse team by 'tow ropes' (σειραίοις, 446), perhaps in reference to their clasping onto her robes.³⁶ Similarly capturing the collective suffering of the *oikos* unit, Megara characterizes her clustered family as a 'hideous yoke of corpses, the old and young and mothers all together' (ζεύγος οὐ καλὸν νεκρῶν, | ὁμοῦ γέροντες καὶ νέοι καὶ μητέρες, 454–5). She also refers to the hoped-for stability of marriage alliances meant to assure her sons 'a blessed life' (βίον ... εὐδαίμονα), 'as though fastened thoroughly on the stems with ropes' (ὡς ἀνημμένοι κάλωι | πρυμνησίοισι, 478–9).³⁷ Tragically, the sort of ties which promised support for the children now drag them to apparent death.³⁸ As we will see, Heracles allusively re-performs and transforms Megara's pathetic image and choreography of family bonds.

In his own way *Amphitryon* anticipates his son's household identity. When describing his care for the *oikos* and the children in the interim the old man says '[Heracles] leaves me at this house as nurse of the children and house-tender' (λείπει ... με τοῖσδ' ἐν δώμασιν | τροφὸν τέκνων οἰκουρόν, 44–5). Both titles τροφός 'nurse' and οἰκουρός 'house-watcher' (45) most often apply to women and the latter has a frequent derisive connotation.³⁹ Yet there is reason to see something more than self-pity or derision in *Amphitryon*'s claim of childcare. First, as Michel Menu notes, by asserting these practical identities *Amphitryon* contradicts the statement that he is a 'useless old man'

³⁴ Bond (n. 2), 186–7 supports this reading against the manuscript reading.

³⁵ N. Worman, 'The ties that bind: transformations of costume and connection in Euripides' *Heracles*, *Ramus* 28 (1999), 89–107 discusses the extensive imagery of clothing and binding. S. Barlow, *The Imagery of Euripides: A Study in the Dramatic Use of Pictorial Language* (London, 1971), 107 discusses the imagery of yoking and mooring.

³⁶ In this vexed passage the vocabulary relevant to our discussion is relatively secure: Bond (n. 2), 178–9.

³⁷ Worman (n. 35), 99. Compare Eur. *Med.* 770, where Medea refers to Aegeus as the harbour onto which she will tie her stern's cable: ἐκ τοῦδ' ἀνανόμεσθα πρυμνητὴν κάλων.

³⁸ A counterpoint to Megara's imagery of ties is the elderly chorus members who interact with her. In the faltering entrance of their parodos they present themselves as bound together, enjoining each other to hold onto each other's hands and garments so as to brace their neighbour (λαβοῦ χερῶν καὶ πέπλων, 124). This support they compare to a horse's yoke (ὥστε ... ζυγηφόρον πῶλον, 120–1) and also frame their mutual reinforcement in the martial terms of a hoplite collective (126–30).

³⁹ M. Menu, 'À propos d'Euripide, *Héraclès*, 45: réflexions sur la "teknotropie" et la "gèrotrophie"', in J.A. López Férez (ed.), *La tragedia griega en sus textos* (Madrid, 2004), 287–306, at 288–9 notes that of six tragic individual references to *oikouria*, house-tending, the two men included are old men: *Her.* 45 and *Heracl.* 700, a derisive reference to Ialaos and *Amphitryon*. οἰκουρός is used with a negative association to describe men who stay home during the war in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (343) and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1625). See Bond (n. 2), 73, who notes that 'οἰκουρέω eventually developed the technical sense "avoid military service" (LSJ s.v. II i)'.

(γέροντ' ἀχρεῖον, 42).⁴⁰ Also, the presence of Megara, the children's mother who naturally fills both roles that Amphitryon suggests, indicates that he has not been forced to adopt these.⁴¹

Amphitryon's *oikos*-care anticipates what will become a central and positive (but not exclusive) male value in the drama. While female slaves, wet-nurses and mothers most often appeared in the τροφός-functions of feeding, watching and cleaning children, Phoenix (*Il.* 9.437–44) and Strepsiades (*Ar. Vesp.* 1380–90) are literary witnesses to a likely reality that men's responsibilities could include childcare.⁴² Amphitryon's assertion of the τροφός and οἰκουρός identities thus stresses the same male household leadership that his son will claim. Surveying archaic and classical literary depictions, Michel Menu compares the τροφός epithet with the nurture (τροφή) Greek city-states and the earth provide in tragic poetry and with divine care for the young, such as Hesiod depicts.⁴³ Athenian oratory also commonly frames childcare as an investment (generating care in one's own old age) that is not gendered as female.⁴⁴

Male emotional attachment to children is also expressed by Amphitryon's self-characterization as nurse, since the nurse figure, especially in tragedy, emblemizes a particularly strong bond to her charges.⁴⁵ Indeed the vocabulary of love, even *erōs*, frames Amphitryon's motivation towards the children. It impels him to hold onto hope that Heracles will arrive, to resist Megara's assumption that death is inevitable and to refuse to submit the family members immediately to Lycus. Amphitryon expresses hope in terms of love, responding to Megara's question 'are you so *fond* of the sun's light?' (φιλεῖς οὕτω φάος, 90) with the answer 'I am *fond* of hopes' (φιλῶ τὰς ἐλπίδας, 91). Megara's scepticism towards Amphitryon's plan and her concern for the family's reputation emphasize Amphitryon's apparently more sentimental perspective. Later in their conversation, Amphitryon states that, since death seems inevitable for the children, 'in vain I seem to be *in love with the impossible*' (ἄλλως δ' ἀδυνάτων ἔοικ' ἐρᾶν, 318).⁴⁶

Amphitryon proves the value of his affectionate familial care, to some degree, by the successful result of his strategy: Heracles arrives, and in time. Heracles now further validates his father's stance by proudly including childcare in his identity as a male household guardian. Over the course of the play Amphitryon's attachment to the children and family emerges as the same value—and vulnerability—to which the middle-aged Heracles brings his vigour as Greece's pre-eminent hero.

Between his entrance at line 523 and his exit into the house at line 636, Heracles unequivocally embraces the identity of child-tender and household member and leader. When he hears how Lycus has abused his family, Heracles immediately renounces his heroic labours in deference to protecting his family (574–82):

⁴⁰ Menu (n. 39), 288.

⁴¹ Heracles will himself commend Megara as *oikouros* (1373).

⁴² S. Vilatte, 'La nourrice greque: une question d'histoire sociale et religieuse', *L'Antiquité Classique* 60 (1991), 5–28, at 17.

⁴³ Menu (n. 39), 289 (on examples in tragedy), 291–2 (on Hesiod).

⁴⁴ Menu (n. 39), 294–300.

⁴⁵ The emotional relationship of nurse Eurycleia and Odysseus provides a model. In tragedy nurses expressing strong love for their charges include Orestes' nurse in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* (749–65) and the Euripidean nurses of Phaedra, Medea and Hermione. See Vilatte (n. 42), 13, 16.

⁴⁶ Also emphasizing how Amphitryon's hope anticipates his son's outlook is S. Taragna Novo, 'L'APETH di Eracle e la sorte dell'uomo nel contrasto tra Lico e Anfitrione (Eur. *H.F.* 140–239)', *RFIC* 101 (1973), 45–69. Menu (n. 39), 300–3 relates Amphitryon's ἐλπὶς to Pindar's lyric description of a rejuvenated 'sublime' old age.

τῷ γάρ μ' ἀμύνειν μάλλον ἢ δάμαρτι χρῆ
καὶ παισὶ καὶ γέροντι; Χαίροντων πόνοι· 575
μάτην γὰρ αὐτοὺς τῶνδε μάλλον ἦνυσα.
καὶ δεῖ μ' ὑπὲρ τῶνδ', εἴπερ οἶδ' ὑπὲρ πατρός,
θνήσκειν ἀμύνοντ'· ἢ τί φήσομεν καλὸν
ὔδρα μὲν ἐλθεῖν ἐς μάχην λέοντι τε
Εὐρυσθέως πομπασί, τῶν δ' ἐμῶν τέκνων 580
οὐκ ἐκπονήσω θάνατον; οὐκ ἄρ' Ἑρακλῆς
ὁ καλλίνικος ὡς πάροιθε λέξομαι.

For whom is it more necessary that I defend than my wife and children and old man? Farewell labours, for I vainly undertook them instead of these labours here. And I must die on behalf of these ones, protecting them, if these ones would do so for their father. What kind of fine thing will we call going into combat with the Hydra and the lion on Eurystheus' missions, if I will not labour to prevent the death of my sons? For I will not be called Heracles *kallinikos* as before.

Privileging heroic *kleos* before family responsibility reframes the chorus' copious praise for Heracles' labours (348–429). This is no begrudged concession; Heracles intimates a trained resolution to give precedence to his *oikos*. His sensitivity to the contributions of his family members, especially to the sacrifice his sons were prepared to make for him (577), signals attunement to his family rather than an identity principally formed by his individual pursuits.

Before entering his house to entrap Lycus—unbeknownst to him the cue for Hera's violent scheme—Heracles pauses to reaffirm emotional attachment and responsibility for his children. Here he heavily re-engages the image of interpersonal bonds or ties introduced by Megara and the chorus. As he returns his sons to their home from which Lycus evicted them, Heracles describes the figure he and the children present together (627–33):

καὶ μέθεσθ' ἐμῶν πέπλων·
οὐ γὰρ πτερωτὸς οὐδὲ φευξείω φίλους.
ᾧ,
οἶδ' οὐκ ἀφιᾶσ', ἀλλ' ἀνάπτονται πέπλων
τοσῶδε μάλλον· ὧδ' ἔβητ' ἐπὶ ξυροῦ; 630
ἄξω λαβῶν γε τοῦσδ' ἐφορκίδας χερσῖν,
ναῦς δ' ὡς ἐφέλξω· καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἀναίνομαι
θεράπευμα τέκνων· πάντα τάνθρώπων ἴσα·

and you [children] let go of my *peplos*. For I am not winged nor will I flee my dear ones. Ah, they do not let go, but they are holding all the more tightly to my *peplos*. Did you come to such a point of danger? I will lead them taking these towed boats by the hand, and will draw them like ships. For I am not ashamed of caring for children. This is shared alike among humankind.

Family dependency and ties are at once embraced in their physical intimacy and cast as a source of stability in suffering. The boys' grasping to their father's clothing (627, 629) recalls the description of Megara leading the same children.⁴⁷ Heracles introduces a new representation of interdependence by comparing the boys to towed boats (*ἐφορκίδας*, 631) that strain on him. This nautical figure develops the yoking and mooring imagery that earlier expressed the collective bonds of the distressed household members and chorus.⁴⁸ Heracles brings new assurance to the stance, as one who will stand fixed so

⁴⁷ Worman (n. 35), 98–102.

⁴⁸ Heracles reverses this image at the end of the play, referring to himself as the straining boat (1424).

that others may grasp onto him. In this vein he promises his children he is not 'winged' (περωτός, 628) and will not flee from them (οὐδὲ φευξείω), a rejection of Lycus' earlier characterization of Heracles the archer 'ready for fleeing' (τῆ φυγῆ πρόχειρος ἦν, 161).⁴⁹

Heracles' familial stance also encompasses Amphitryon's self-depiction as 'nurse' (τροφόν, 45), with a female association that had seemed—on the surface—to satirize Amphitryon's aged status. Heracles identifies with this characterization expressly by anticipating a critical reception of his nurturing identity: 'I am not ashamed to take care of children' (οὐκ ἀναίνομαι | θεράπευμα τέκνων, 632–3). *θεράπευμα* suggests the physical and intimate labour involved in childcare.⁵⁰ Heracles goes further, insisting on *θεράπευμα τέκνων* as a generally shared human activity (πάντα τῶνθρώπων ἴσα, 633). This embrace of childcare is the context for Heracles' following description of *φιλοτεκνία* (634–6) as a value that defines humans as discussed above. In this way intimate physical labour and affection deeply characterize Heracles' embodiment of love for children as a shared humanistic value.

The complement to this embodied and affective form of family care is Heracles' ritual performance in his house which, as the messenger recounts it, casts Heracles as a successful male household leader in socially recognizable terms. The audience hears that, after killing Lycus, Heracles led the *oikos* in a purificatory sacrifice for himself and the *oikos* at the altar of Zeus Herkeios (920–32).⁵¹ The central male ritual performance is notable since tragedy more frequently displays women involved in family rituals, especially funerary activities. Heracles' tending the altar of Zeus Herkeios, however, was exclusively the father's role.⁵²

Heracles' ritual is also unusually decorous for tragedy: the messenger describes a religiously correct and *kalos* sacrifice, where the family, arranged in a 'beautifully formed circle' (χορὸς ... καλλιμορφος, 925), holds religiously correct silence (φθέγμα ... ὅσιον εἴχομεν, 927) while anticipating Heracles' initiation. Euripides encapsulates Heracles' identity as father and religious overseer of a well-disposed household by capturing him mid-motion, dipping into the chernips to sprinkle his family (928–9). The beauty of the ceremony conveys a positive social identity for the *oikos*-leader,⁵³ and also provides Euripides opportunity to craft his drama's signal inversion. As co-dramaturgs of the rampage, Euripides and Hera chose to corrupt a moment of sacrifice which iconically depicts Heracles' positive *oikos* relationship.

⁴⁹ Heracles also differentiates himself from his 'winged arrows' (περωτοῖς ... τοξεύμασι, 571); unlike them he is fixed and constant as far as his family is concerned.

⁵⁰ As Michelini (n. 16), 254–5 notes, the reference to *θεράπευμα* engages the theme of care and service in the play. Michelini (n. 16), 255 n. 103 compares Pylades' words in both *IT* 314 and *Or.* 791–803, which describe care without shame. As iconic friend figure, Pylades' statements suggest how Heracles' care for his children will resemble the care Theseus offers in friendship.

⁵¹ Zeus's altar (922) is most easily understood as of Zeus Herkeios, as, for instance, Philostratus (*Imag.* 2.23.3) interprets the scene.

⁵² J.D. Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion. Second Edition* (Oxford, 2010), 13 notes that there are no known formal female religious rituals *inside* the *oikos*. While the hearth has a female connection (J. Morgan, 'Women, religion and the home', in D. Ogden [ed.], *The Blackwell Companion to Greek Religion* [Oxford, 2007], 301–3), there are male and patrilineal associations to the hearth and domestic altars of Zeus Ktesios, Zeus Herkeios and Apollo Agyieos: Bond (n. 2), 215–16.

⁵³ Consider the rhetorical function of a scene in *Isae.* 8, where the speaker describes his grandfather as a leader who 'was most serious' about his *oikos*' sacrifice to Zeus Ktesios (μάλιστ' ... θυσίαν ἐσπούδαζε, 8.16); the speaker uses his presence at the domestic sacrifice his grandfather led as proof of his family identity and right to inherit.

Consequentially, Heracles' household attachments undergo a painful (but external) perversion, but also appear as the play's persistent theme.⁵⁴ Hera's choreography deconstructs, wholesale, both house and personal family members. The audience follows a maddened Heracles to his house's *andrōn* (954), through its courtyard and porticos, and even into the women's quarters that Megara locks (996–1000). At every turn an inversion of Heracles' positive *oikos*-attachment makes the narrator sound like an Athenian orator eliciting discomfort and indignation from audience members who care for the autonomy and security of their own households.⁵⁵ Thus the *oikos* is doubly exposed not only to violence but also to the public view. Heracles' duped perception of each intimate interior space as a public one marks this public register.⁵⁶ His domestic demolition re-emphasizes—now by inversion—the social *oikos*-values that Euripides has established.

Recurring contemporary vocabulary of house-razing, *κατασκαφή*, points to Heracles' identity as *oikos* leader.⁵⁷ Historical examples of *κατασκαφή* involve a Greek *polis* razing the house of a male citizen to the ground,⁵⁸ their clear target being the collective household which frequently endured additional severe penalties at the same time.⁵⁹ Heracles' repeated evocation of *κατασκαφή* thus brings the social values and image of the *oikos* to the drama's forefront.⁶⁰

Euripides invites the audience to critically engage with this particular form of violence to an *oikos* by having Heracles gain the double experience of house-razing as both inflictor and victim. Heracles first threatens to raze Lycus' house (565) just before he reflects on the universal value of love of children. Later, while mad, Heracles articulates his perception that he is razing the house and city of another enemy, Eurystheus of Argos. Given Heracles' readiness to raze others' houses, the audience might be justified in questioning whether Hera simply redirects back upon Heracles his own inclination to this sort of violence. Euripides withholds an answer to this, while repeatedly underscoring how affective relationships to the *oikos* create the context for particular forms of suffering and violence.

⁵⁴ I agree with A. Provenza, 'Madness and bestialization in Euripides' *Heracles*', *CQ* 63 (2013), 68–93, at 70–1 that the interruption emphasizes the injustice of Hera's punishment. On the typical significance of corrupted sacrifice in Euripides, see Foley (n. 1); E. Krummen, 'Ritual und Katastrophe: Rituelle Handlung und Bildersprache bei Sophokles und Euripides', in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (Stuttgart, 1998), 296–325.

⁵⁵ Lehmann (n. 14), 28–34 discusses the narration of house invasions as an oratorical topos, emphasizing that a shared identity in the *oikos* underlies its rhetorical use.

⁵⁶ C.S. Kraus, 'Dangerous supplements: etymology and genealogy in Euripides' *Heracles*', *CCJ* 44 (1999), 137–57, at 152.

⁵⁷ Since the punishment addressed a male household leader's civic crime and executed a liability, Greek and Athenian males frequently acknowledged in public oaths upon the destruction of their houses and family members; see Moore (n. 14), 30–2.

⁵⁸ See W.R. Connor, 'The razing of the house in Greek society', *TAPhA* 115 (1985), 79–102, who mentions *Heracles* at 89–90.

⁵⁹ Connor (n. 58) adduces the eleven attestations of this punishment and discusses (at 84) its relationship to other familial punishments.

⁶⁰ Discussed by A. Rodighiero, 'La casa che crolla: considerazioni su una metafora tragica', *SemRom* 22 (2013), 307–40, at 312–13; and Moore (n. 14), 38–43. For instance, Heracles threatens *κατασκαφή* at 565–8; Lyssa announces Hera's punishment in terms that strongly evoke it (864), the description of Heracles' household rampage emphasizes the physical dismantling with very suggestive vocabulary (e.g. 944, 998–9); and Heracles finally reflects on his tragedy in terms of *κατασκαφή* (1305–7).

In demolishing his own house Heracles appears ever more fused to it. He visually exposes his bonds when he emerges from the *skēnē* lashed to the house's cracked pillar. At this point the house and Heracles have already displayed sympathetic symptoms in their simultaneous disintegration. While the chorus describes the house with the words 'Look, look, a hurricane is shaking the house, the roof is collapsing' (ἰδοὺ ἰδοὺ, | θύελλα σειεὶ δῶμα, συμπίπτει στέγη, 904–5), Heracles' eyes roll and froth drips from his beard (932–3, 934).⁶¹ In a single blow Athena's intervention topples both Heracles and the house (1004–8). A recuperating Heracles reflects an identity merged with the house as he ponders that 'she [Hera] has accomplished the design she planned, she who turned upside-down the first man of Greece foundations and all' (ἔπραξε γὰρ βούλησιν ἦν ἐβούλετο, | ἄνδρ' Ἑλλάδος τὸν πρῶτον αὐτοῖσιν βάρθοις | ἄνω κάτω στρέψασσα, 1305–7). This comment encapsulates how, rather than separating Heracles from his household, Hera's violence implicates the protagonist more thoroughly into the material existence of the *oikos*.

2. HERACLES UNBOUND

Theseus' final scene may well surprise an audience by offering more than the expected denouement. We could imagine a simpler close: for instance one that anticipates the historical Theban cult for Heracles' children (which Euripides ignores)⁶² or Heracles' marriage to Hebe (receiving only an indirect suggestion at lines 655–64).⁶³ Instead Theseus shifts focus towards Athens, constructing an aetiology for Heracles' worship there and developing the drama's themes of human interdependence along new lines, especially in terms of human friendship.⁶⁴

Theseus' plot-twist does not, however, break the drama's fixation upon Heracles' *oikos*-bonds, which resist fading from view. Literal ropes still lash Heracles to the house's pillar, described as ropes 'for trace-horses' (σειραίων, 1009, in response to the earlier σειραίοις, 446, that appeared to link Megara to her sons). Regaining consciousness, Heracles describes himself as 'anchored with bonds like a ship' (δεσμοῖς ναῦς ὅπως ὠρμισμένος, 1094).⁶⁵ Once loosened and lying on the ground, the ropes remain present to Heracles and the audience (as do the corpses). Heracles may draw attention to them when he expresses feeling painfully 'unyoked': 'how wretchedly I have fared and am unyoked from my children and wife' (ὡς ἀθλίως πέπραγα κάποζεύγνυμαι | τέκνων γυναικός τ', 1375–6). This stagecraft of bonds

⁶¹ See R. Padel, 'Making space speak', in J.J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin (edd.), *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?* (Princeton, 1990), 336–65, who shows how the house in Greek tragedy can communicate interior realities and selfhoods of individual characters. Additionally, I suggest that the house communicates the individual imbricated within the identity of the *oikos* and the collective *oikos* that involves the house and people together.

⁶² Pind. *Isthm.* 79–84. A mention of this would have been analogous to Euripides' reference to Corinthian cult for Medea's boys at the end of *Medea*, as Padilla (n. 18), 146 remarks.

⁶³ In the earlier *Heraclidae*, Heracles already is married to Hebe (*Herac.* 910–18).

⁶⁴ See n. 2 above on friendship as the central theme of *Heracles*. On Euripides' increasing interest in friendship, see K. Matthiessen, *Elektra, Taurische Iphigeneia und Helena. Untersuchungen zur Chronologie und zur dramatischen Form im Spätwerk des Euripides* (Göttingen, 1964), 185 and D. Konstan, 'Philia in Euripides' *Electra*', *Philologus* 129 (1985), 176–85, at 183–5.

⁶⁵ Heracles reuses the participle, ὠρμισμένος, that Amphitryon applied to the dependency an archer usefully avoids (μὴ ἴκ τύχης ὠρμισμένον, 203) in contrast to a hoplite soldier. Heracles embraces the language of bonds to his family despite his hurt.

anticipates Theseus' interaction with Heracles, which significantly conflicts with and develops the hero's still-vital household ties.

Theseus shows that the particular bonds within the *oikos* contrast with *philia*-bonds outside it, particularly with friendship. To see how this is the case we can consider that Theseus is the first in the play to challenge family as defining Heracles' identity—even though Lycus, Hera and the Thebans have in other ways threatened the object of this value, Heracles' *oikos*. Our protagonist struggles emotionally to cooperate with his friend Theseus' vision: that Heracles will become an Athenian hero receiving cult worship based on his public status as hero, and not in an *oikos*. As Theseus pragmatically reproaches Heracles' *oikos*-attachments, the Attic king clashes not only with Amphitryon but also with Heracles' own defence of his attitude.

Within Theseus' impressive gesture of friendship the audience also can recognize that he treats Heracles apart from his human place within society and apart from his *oikos* (which cannot, at any rate, be restored). Theseus sets Heracles firmly in the category of a Panhellenic hero who will receive offerings, honour and worship from human society. The Athenian king's offer is also embedded in a relationship between two elite heroes and hints at Theseus' imperial ambitions for Athens. Theseus introduces an impetus to shift Heracles from a dismal family situation towards a relationship defined by individual *aretē* and a capacity for elite *xenia*: Theseus repays the *charis* Heracles earned by saving Theseus from the underworld. Up until this point, the drama has recognized Heracles' heroic *kleos*, but as clearly secondary to his family identity.

The terms on which Theseus reincorporates Heracles into *polis*-society emphasize the *oikos* because they bypass that institution as well as any regular human social position. Theseus' first promises are to purify Heracles (1324) before giving him a house (δόμους) and wealth (χρημάτων τ' ἐμῶν μέρος, 1325). While *domos* can refer to a household of persons, here there is no indication of an *oikos*, wife or children, and the other details of Heracles' status seem to exclude this. By emphasizing Heracles' need to be accepted in a new community, Theseus' proposal places Heracles squarely in the situation of epic and heroic exiles (with a large subcategory of homicides) who experience permanent estrangement from home, and who, especially in the Homeric motif, are 'never able to realize in their new homes the full heroic potential that they would have, and in some cases already have, realized in their old homes'.⁶⁶ Theseus promises Heracles the gifts which the Athenian citizens bestowed on Theseus himself as an Attic hero (1326–8). He will also share his honour of naming Attic land for Heracles, a benefit originally given to Theseus alone (1328–31). Theseus finally offers Heracles sacrifices and statues after death (θυσία, 1333). Emma Stafford notes that these θυσία are the sort offered to gods.⁶⁷ But whether he more resembles a hero or

⁶⁶ T. Perry, *Exile in Homeric Epic* (Diss., University of Toronto, 2010), 34. Examples of exiles for kin-killing are Peleus and Telemon, and Homer's Epeigeus (*Iliad* Book 16), Tlepolemus (*Iliad* Book 2), Odysseus' fictive character (*Odyssey* Book 13) and Theoclymenos (*Odyssey* Book 15). Tragedy frequently depicts the instances of kin-killing which will precipitate similar exile.

⁶⁷ See Stafford (n. 18), 92 and 171–97 on the topic of Heracles' historical cult as hero vs god. A. Verbank-Piérard, 'Héraclès l'athénien', in A. Verbank-Piérard and D. Viviers (edd.), *Culture et cité: l'avènement d'Athènes à l'époque archaïque* (Brussels, 1995), 5 argues that Heracles' cult at Athens was as a god. See also P. Lévêque and A. Verbank-Piérard, 'Héraclès héros ou dieu?', in C. Bonnet and C. Jourdain-Annequin (edd.), *Héraclès: d'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée: bilan et perspectives* (Brussels and Rome, 1992), who suggest that Theseus' offer in this play draws especially upon his own hero cult at Athens, and perhaps not as much upon Heracles' Attic cult.

a god, Heracles is not described in terms of a human ruler, household leader or citizen. Rather, Theseus proposes to join a Panhellenic superhuman into a relationship affording mutual honour to Heracles and the Athenian *polis*.

In the process of convincing Heracles to join him, Theseus criticizes Heracles' continued emotional attachment to his family. When Heracles asks to turn and look once more at his dead children, Theseus disparages Heracles' request, calling it a *philtion*, literally a 'love-charm': 'Why ever? If you have this *philtion* will you be easier?' (ὡς δὴ τί; φίλτρον τοῦτ' ἔχων ῥάων ἔση;, 1407).⁶⁸ Theseus characterizes Heracles with the same vocabulary of desire that earlier described Amphitryon's attachment to his grandchildren's survival. Rather than conceding to his friend's judgement, Heracles honestly recognizes 'I do desire it' (ποθῶ, 1408). When Heracles further asks to embrace his father, Amphitryon eagerly ignores Theseus' reproof and embraces his son, commenting that he shares his son's sentiment: 'for you seek the same things that are dear to me' (τάμα γὰρ σπεύδεις φίλα, 1409). While the tension between Theseus and Heracles is gentle, Theseus persists in criticizing Heracles for weeping for his family and tells the hero 'if someone sees you being a woman, he will not praise you' (εἴ σ' ὄψεταί τις θῆλυν ὄντ', οὐκ αἰνέσει, 1412), a characterization which reflects a negative interpretation of Amphitryon's and Heracles' self-portrayal as engaged child-rearers, discussed above.⁶⁹

Theseus' criticism does less to showcase his own leadership than to display Heracles' persistence in household values. The Attic king's rhetoric falls flat when he asks if Heracles has forgotten his labours (1410) and chides: 'you are not the famous Heracles while you are suffering' (ὁ κλεινὸς Ἡρακλῆς οὐκ εἶ νοσῶν, 1414).⁷⁰ Heracles has a retort ready: has Theseus already forgotten his own previous helplessness in the underworld (1415, 1417)? The comeback works especially because the audience knows that Heracles has already memorably subordinated his heroic labours to the labour of saving his family (574–82). While justifiably appealing to Heracles' manliness and reputation, Theseus betrays ignorance of the *oikos*-values established earlier in the drama and of Heracles' particular identification with the honour that can attach to his leadership of the *oikos*.

Rather than admitting Theseus' criticisms, Heracles kisses the corpses of his family and embraces the 'painful pleasures of [their] kisses' (λυγροὶ φιλημάτων τέρωεις, 1376–7). The weapons he pointedly picks up again convey attachment to his family: continued 'painful companionship' with 'familiar weapons' (λυγροὶ δὲ τῶνδ' ὄπλων κοινωνία, 1377) will remind him of his family and their fate (1380–1).⁷¹ Euripides

⁶⁸ Barlow (n. 11), 183 explains *philtion* as 'any means of producing affection'. See W.S. Barrett (ed.), *Euripides: Hippolytos* (Oxford, 1964), on 509–12 for the relation to *erōs*, even in a non-sexual sense as at Eur. *Tro.* 52. Two Euripidean fragments describe children as a *philtion*, each in the context of male desire. In *Protesilaus* fr. 652 *TrGF* an unidentified speaker calls children a '*philtion* of men's hearts'. It seems possible that this reflects Protesilaus' own perspective, who has died after a single night of marriage and before enjoying children. In *Alcmena* fr. 103 *TrGF* the chorus states that the gods made children as a 'fierce loved-charm (δεινὸν ... φίλτρον) for men' and suggests the desire for children of Amphitryon. See Holmes (n. 1), 269–72 on Heracles' *erōs* for the children in terms of a medical symptom which Theseus attempts to diagnose and heal.

⁶⁹ Michelini (n. 16), 260–2, by contrast, interprets Theseus here as gently teasing.

⁷⁰ G.B. Walsh, 'Public and private in three plays of Euripides', *CPh* 74 (1979), 294–309, at 308 notes that 'Theseus' tendency to see only public shame and public heroism makes him impatient of Heracles' grief, and blind to the personal side of his endurance'.

⁷¹ By contrast Padilla (n. 15 [1994]), 297 and Barlow (n. 11), 182 view these words as indicating a choice to replace his children with the accoutrements of his heroic labours. The interpretation of

emphasizes his protagonist's effort to redefine emblems of individual heroic identity into signs of continued affective bonds to his lost family.⁷²

As Heracles' household focus resists Theseus' perspective, two different *philia*-bonds are juxtaposed: these between heroic friends and those within the *oikos*. Theseus' performance of friendship resembles the closeness of a kin relationship. Theseus tells Heracles to give him his hand (1398), not to be ashamed to wipe his blood on Theseus' garment (1400) and to place his hand on Theseus' neck (1402). The intimacy of this contact and its threat of pollution (which Heracles notes at line 1399) gesture toward a familial relationship.⁷³ The vocabulary of ties and binding is also remobilized to frame extra-familial *philia* between friends. Heracles describes himself and Theseus as a 'yoke of friends' (ζεῦγός γε φίλιον, 1403). More noticeably, Heracles repeats the particular nautical metaphor used earlier when his children were towed boats attached to him (ἐφορκίδας, 631). Now Heracles is the boat (ἐφορκίδες, 1424) straining on Theseus. Even though Theseus and Heracles are distant cousins (συγγενῆς φίλος, 1154), Theseus' familiar relations draw a contrast with Heracles' familial ties. By reusing the towing metaphor at line 1424, for instance, Heracles gestures not only to his intimacy with Theseus but also to the unequal substitution for his ties to dependent children.

Amphitryon's presence especially contributes to this rivalry between family ties and the new bonds Theseus forges: while Theseus takes Heracles home, Amphitryon loses his son. Beside Theseus' physical interactions with the hero, the audience watches the old man boldly supplicate his own son upon his knees (1205–13) and, in their farewell, a tearful embrace and Amphitryon's wrenching question: who will bury him (1409 and 1419)?⁷⁴ Amphitryon stands by as Theseus and Heracles describe their relationship in familial terms: Heracles refers to Theseus as a son (παῖδ' ὅπως ἔχω σ' ἐμόν, 1401) and, reversing the image, Theseus' offer to Heracles of house, money and land frames Theseus as a father.⁷⁵ Even though Heracles has embraced Amphitryon as his 'real father' who wins out over Zeus's paternity (1265), the protagonist leaves him in Thebes; Heracles will retrieve Amphitryon to Athens only as a corpse for burial (1420–6).⁷⁶ Amphitryon watches his hopes obliterated, hopes implied in his

Heracles' relation to his weapons is tied to the difficult question of whether Heracles sets out to continue his heroic career or goes into retirement.

⁷² This material item commands a striking affective bond in the hero that simulates the personal presence of his family earlier. Reflecting on the affective bonds expressed by the material object are J. Fletcher, 'Weapons of friendship: props in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and *Ajax*', in G.W.M. Harrison and V. Liapis (edd.), *Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre* (Leiden, 2013), 199–215 and E. Weiberg, 'Weapons as friends and foes in Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Heracles*', in M. Mueller and M. Telò (edd.), *Materialities of Greek Tragedy* (Bloomsbury, 2018), 63–77, who shows how Heracles' weapons provide an opportunity to 'work through' the trauma.

⁷³ Bond (n. 2), 410.

⁷⁴ Padilla (n. 15 [1994]), 291–6 goes further than I would to characterize Amphitryon as an 'aging, cowardly foster father who manipulates his son's talents', because Amphitryon makes it necessary for Heracles to reclaim Argos and presents some emotional resistance to Heracles' attempt to leave Thebes.

⁷⁵ Padilla (n. 15 [1994]), 296–7 interprets Heracles and Theseus struggling over the paternal position. While Theseus' offer may be interpreted as like a patrimony, Theseus' offer is not outside the norm for heroic friendship, as evidenced by gifts Homer describes (*Il.* 6.194, 9.576, 12.313, 20.184). See also Barlow (n. 11), 180.

⁷⁶ I accept a general view of the problematic lines 1420–1, that Heracles means Amphitryon will remain in Thebes until he dies, and rules out further contact until his father dies. On the problems with the manuscript reading, see Bond (n. 2), 414–15, who like Diggle believes they are best solved by

extraordinary care for the children at the play's start—to receive care, in turn, from his son and household in his old age.

The tensions between Amphitryon's and Theseus' claims upon Heracles come to the fore when Amphitryon breaks into the dialogue and initiates a brief three-way *triloquium* such as Euripides normally avoids.⁷⁷ Amphitryon pays the ironic compliment to Theseus, 'how blessed with children is the fatherland that begot you' (ἡ γὰρ τεκοῦσα τόνδε πατρίς εὐτεκνος, 1405)! Here Athens is the parent receiving a traditional congratulatory *makarismos* from another, suffering, parent.⁷⁸ The wry implication of this commendation is that Theseus and Athens are acquiring Amphitryon's own son. As Barbara Kowalzig suggests, the Athenian trajectory of the play emphasizes the process by which Heracles' Panhellenic labours come to accrue to 'Athenian merit'.⁷⁹

In offering resistance to the momentum of Theseus' Attic appropriation, Amphitryon also marks the swift transposition through which Heracles' established Theban identity would give way to an Athenian one.⁸⁰ The old man's presence and embrace of his son intensify the conflict for Heracles. While Heracles has few alternatives, the coordinated reluctance of father and son to accept Theseus' proposal wholeheartedly emphasizes a strained quality in the interaction. Completely unanticipated are Theseus' entrance and the swift development that Heracles, a model Theban *oikos*-leader, is to become an Athenian hero in the mould of Theseus (a more minor hero by any accounting). Theseus' role is not only undeveloped but also marked in its incongruous relationship to Heracles' character in this tragedy. As a result, the Attic king implies Athenian imperial aspirations or looks a bit like a very non-authoritative *deus ex machina*.

Theseus supervises a much more positive transition by contrast, in Sophocles' later *Oedipus at Colonus*. Like Heracles, Oedipus moves from a defunct Theban *oikos* into the identity of a hero at Athens. But the whole drama works to develop Theseus' graceful incorporation of Oedipus into Athens, and little friction arises regarding Oedipus' embrace of the new identity. The painful untethering of family ties—especially to Antigone and Ismene—still resembles Heracles' break from Amphitryon and the corpses. In Sophocles' play a ritual bath for their father (1598–603) caps a sustained emphasis on the daughters' substantial τροφή for him; they afterward sob at Oedipus' farewell while 'draped around each other' (ἔπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ἀμφικείμενοι, 1620).

In a sharp distinction from this oikal intimate relationship, the girls in *Oedipus at Colonus* are quickly excluded from attending or even knowing the particulars of their father's death and burial (1640–4) which only Theseus will witness (1656–7). Yet the reasons for the new political relationship and hero cult have been clearly introduced by Oedipus—not Theseus—and form a central topic of Sophocles' drama. The gods play a further, crucial role in motivating Oedipus to leave his children: interrupting

reading 'when you die', ἡνίκ' ἄν θάνης, for 'when you bury ...' (ἡνίκ' ἄν θάνης τέκνα, 1420), in answer to Amphitryon's question 'coming when?' (πότ' ἐλθών;).

⁷⁷ Bond (n. 2), 410.

⁷⁸ Compare Odysseus' *makarismos* for Nausicaa's parents (*Od.* 6.154), or Hypsipyle's for the mother of baby Opheltes (*Hypsipyle* fr. 752d 5–6 *TrGF*), as noted by Bond (n. 2), 410–11.

⁷⁹ B. Kowalzig, 'The aetiology of empire? Hero-cult and Athenian tragedy', in J. Davidson, F. Muecke and P. Wilson (edd.), *Greek Drama III: Essays in Honour of Kevin Lee (BICS Supplement 87)* (London, 2006), 79–98, at 95.

⁸⁰ See P.A. Bernardini, 'La città di Tebe nell'*Eracle* di Euripide', in ead. (ed.), *Presenza e funzione della città di Tebe nella cultura greca* (Pisa, 2000), 219–32, who argues for the Theban definition of the hero in this play and, at 225–6, also notes that this play differs from other Theban tragedies since in *Heracles* the preservation of Thebes is secondary to the fate of the protagonist.

the family gathering with a thunderclap (1606) and prompting Oedipus to get going with a petulant divine voice from above (1622–8).

In fact, unlike Euripides' drama, Sophocles' whole play prepares for replacing the relationships of a Theban family with Attic cult. It seems possible that Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* offers a riposte to Euripides' more tense and complicated migration for his protagonist. Perhaps Sophocles perceived in Euripides' earlier play a forced or ironic tension between the *oikos* identity Heracles determines for himself and the undeveloped manner in which Theseus pushes against this grain. Euripides himself may have well intended the ironic or ambivalent tone. In any case, the tension in the final interaction undermines any fluid interpretation of Theseus' friendship triumphantly redeeming the less socialized hero.

CONCLUSION

The frictions I have highlighted in *Heracles*' final scene appear meaningful in themselves. Ironically, the same events lead Heracles to call Amphitryon his true father instead of Zeus (1263–5) and also force the protagonist to leave Amphitryon behind, becoming instead, as the drama implies and in a new sense, the son of Theseus' Athens. The Athenian adoption of Heracles carries with it a revived emphasis on the glorious hero of all Greece. Such a trajectory might not seem painful if it were not for the play's repeated development of Megara's, Amphitryon's and Heracles' investment of emotion and care in their Theban household. This theme tenaciously holds onto the finale: reminding us of the earlier familial performances are Heracles' persistent emotional attachment towards his family even as he leaves, and Amphitryon, whom Heracles deserts in all but emotional attachment. Amphitryon's isolation as he faces old age evokes his own—but also Heracles'—lost investment in the household.

Considering the pain involved in Heracles' transformation from Theban *oikos*-member to Athenian hero, can we say that Euripides complicates the positive values performed by Theseus' and Heracles' interaction as friends? To support this view one could point to the misalignment exposed between Heracles' value in his *oikos* and values of individual heroic excellence. It is this incongruity that infuses the final scene with a sense of isolation undermining to some degree Theseus' resuscitation of the hero through friendship.

Some of the final scene's ambiguity stems from the idea that the Attic *polis* appropriates the identity of Heracles' family, on some level.⁸¹ Heracles' prestigious new position at Athens certainly sits astride poignant familial loss at Thebes. If we are meant to see such a substitution, Euripides also highlights how this is unsatisfactory. For while *oikos* and *polis* are frequently analogized in fifth-century Athens,⁸² they are not interchangeable.

⁸¹ L. Kurke, 'Historicist hermeneutics and contestatory ritual poetics: an encounter between Pindaric epinikion and Attic tragedy', in I. Kliger and B. Maslov (edd.), *Explorations in Historical Poetics* (Fordham, NY, 2015), 90–127, at 105 suggests the insight that tragedy celebrates the family's need for the *polis*, while epinikion assimilates the *polis* into the kin group. Heracles would support this pattern while also emphasizing the unique needs the *oikos* supports which the *polis* cannot.

⁸² On the frequent analogy of *polis* and *oikos*, see B. Nagle, *The House as the Foundation of Aristotle's Polis* (Cambridge, 2006), 16–18; B. Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Athens: Ideology and Society in the Era of the Peloponnesian War* (Princeton, 1993), 36–52; D. Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love: Affection in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford, 2018), 166–8.

Since Heracles can neither preserve his *oikos* nor die with it, he moves towards a more divine and non-household-based identity. In staging the drama as his protagonist's defeat Euripides suggests that heroic and divine *oikos*-leadership are failed categories. Particularly in contrasting the categories of divine and human, Euripides inserts an irony of how the household-involved protagonist ultimately accomplishes as much as his aloof father Zeus.⁸³ Throughout the drama Heracles' care for his family contrasts with Zeus's remote stance. But Heracles ultimately finds himself unable to participate in the human institution of the *oikos*. Euripides applies the conundrum of Heracles' contradictory human and divine identities to the values of the family and shows that the *oikos* is a particularly human, mortal, category. Friendship, which can be contracted between individuals—human or divine—or between the individual and the *polis*, may outlast the family unit, or so it seems. But that transcendence potentially casts the category of friendship as *less* mortal.

Despite the success of Theseus' overtures in friendship, and despite Heracles' unsuccessful outcome in his *oikos*, Euripides promotes the value of human attachment to the household. Care for family members and for one's household stands as a particular human value separate from the value of friendships outside that structure.⁸⁴ Heracles' *oikos*-values are refined by distinction in the final Theseus-scene as the opportunity to go to Athens without a family offers a heroic exception that proves a rule for mortal humans: the bonds of the *oikos* are irreplaceable and irreducible.

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⁸³ On the significance of Heracles' dual paternity in the play, see Gregory (n. 1) and Michelini (n. 16), 254–8. See Mikalson (n. 15) on Zeus's betrayal of his paternal role as a central theme of both *Trachiniae* and *Heracles*.

⁸⁴ This is akin to Aristotle's expression 'a household is a kind of love' (οἰκία δ' ἐστὶ τις φιλία, *Eth. Eud.* 1242a.26), which D. Konstan, 'οἰκία δ' ἐστὶ τις φιλία: love and the Greek family', *Syllecta Classica* 11 (2000), 106–26, at 121–4 rearticulates as 'familial love is a value in its own right'.