

EURIPIDES' *HERACLIDS* AND PERICLES' FUNERAL ORATION: SOME NOTES ON THEIR IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITIES

The political aspects of the Euripidean tragedy and the political prism through which almost the entire Euripides' production can be approached and analysed have long been established.¹ Euripides' flagrant (or less overt, at times) praise of the city of Athens has been treated both as cheap flattery intended to stir the souls of the audience, and mostly those of the judges, and conversely as genuinely heartfelt and deeply sincere. *Heraclids*, in particular, is a play that has been much debated and repetitively contested; it has even been characterised as a «lifeless failure».² Nonetheless, there have been some recent reevaluations of it, by and large advanced by John Wilkins³ and William Allan.⁴

Within this renewed interest in the poetics of *Heraclids* the present article aims to highlight the intertextuality between this play and Pericles' Funeral Oration (hereafter referred to as «the Epitaph»), in Thucydides Book 2.35-46, and thus enrich our knowledge of the common ground shared between Euripides and Thucydides.⁵ Specifically, through a close and parallel reading of these two works I shall attempt to reveal the propinquity of ideas conveyed by the poet and the historian. In addition, cross-references will be made to various other passages from Euripides echoing similar concepts.

1. See e.g. G. Zuntz, *The Political Plays of Euripides*, Manchester 1955, *passim*; LaRue van Hook, «The Praise of Athens in Greek Tragedy», *The Classical Weekly* 27, nr. 24 (1934) 185-188; H. R. Butts, *The Glorification of Athens in Greek Drama*, Ann Arbor-Michigan 1947, pp. 99-175, 223-227; T. A. Tarkow, «The Glorification of Athens in Euripides' *Heracles*», *Helios* 5 (1977) 27-35.

2. A. P. Burnett, «Tribe and City, Custom and Decree in Children of Heracles», *CP* 71 (1976) 4.

3. J. Wilkins, *Euripides: Heraclidae*, Oxford 1993. Cf. Id., «The Young of Athens: Religion and Society in the *Heracleidae* of Euripides», *CQ* 40 (1990) 329-339; Id., «The State and the Individual: Euripides' Plays of Voluntary Self-Sacrifice», in A. Powell (ed.), *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality*, London 1990, pp. 177-194.

4. W. Allan, *Euripides. The Children of Heracles*, Warminster 2001. See also P. Burian, «Euripides' *Heraclidae*: An Interpretation», *CP* 72 (1977) 1-21; E. Hall, «The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy», in P. E. Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge 1997, p. 121, n. 64.

5. Cf. e.g. J. H. Finley, *Three essays on Thucydides*, Cambridge-Massachusetts 1967, pp. 1-54. Finley treats exhaustively the issue of resemblance between the tragic poet and the historian as far as ideology, style and linguistic register are concerned.

To begin with, what should not escape detection is the fact that *Heraclids* and the Epitaph share the accident of chronology. According to Thucydides (2.34), Pericles delivered his funeral speech in the winter of 431 BC, in honour of the dead of the first year of the Peloponnesian War;⁶ *Heraclids* followed, in all likelihood, only a few months later, in the City Dionysia of 430 BC.⁷

Nevertheless, a note of caution is in order, for these are two distinct genres we are dealing with; the genre of tragedy and the genre of ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι. Each genre is governed by its own conventions and is further distinguished by its own defining attributes that relate to linguistic register, ideological background, mythological tradition, and religious backdrop. As a result, each genre generates its own perception of reality.⁸ Even so, as Grethlein notes: «... die Gegenüberstellung des panegyrischen Athenbildes und der tragischen Vergänglichkeit eine besonders tiefe Affirmation des athenischen Idealbildes bewirkt» (op.cit., pp. 151-152). Indeed, in the following discussion we shall see that both *Heraclids* and the Epitaph formulate a eulogy for the city of Athens and its citizens.

It is astonishing how much *Heraclids* and the Epitaph resemble, in terms of both the particular vocabulary used and the specific ideology expressed. In our analysis we shall discuss the affinities of the two texts following the unfolding of *Heraclids*' plot.

At the very beginning of *Heraclids* there already emerge two conjoint concepts of great importance: the notion of righteousness and justice towards one's neighbours and the notion of a useless citizen (vv. 1-11). Iolaus starts his prologue-speech with a moral *sententia*: he contrasts the citizen who is just to his neighbours (ὁ μὲν δίκαιος τοῖς πέλας πέφυκ' ἀνήρ; v. 2) with the selfish man who is good only to himself (ὁ δ' ... πόλει τ' ἄχρηστος ... αὐτῷ δ' ἄριστος; vv. 3-5). Iolaus' references to his old age (πάλαι ποτ' ἔστι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ δεδογμένον; v. 1) and his personal experience (οἶδα ... μαθών; v. 5) offer additional credit and diachronic truth to his assertions. Hence, using Iolaus' old age, wisdom, and experience as clinching arguments, Euripides

6. It is not within the scope of the present article to challenge neither the issue of the Epitaph's historicity nor the question of its composition date. For these issues I shall refer the reader to Gomme's arguments, which I consider both punctual and convincing (A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, v. II, Oxford 1956, pp. 104, 126, 129-130, 136).

7. See Zuntz, op.cit., pp. 81-88; Allan, op.cit., pp. 54-56.

8. Cf. J. Grethlein, *Asyl und Athen: Die Konstruktion kollektiver Identität in der griechischen Tragödie*, Stuttgart 2003, pp. 123-199. For a detailed study of the ideas expressed in the Epitaph (with parallel references to the dominant characteristics/motifs of the genre of funeral speeches in Athens) see N. Loraux, *L'invention d'Athènes. Histoire de l'oraison funèbre dans la «cité classique»*, Paris 1981, pp. 107-109, 183-195, 207-218.

communicates and establishes a model of proper behaviour, fit for a citizen of a city-state like Athens; and in this he meets with Thucydides. This ideal model of behaviour, which is based on justice and freedom, is attributed by Pericles in the Epitaph to his fellow citizens: ἐλευθέρως δὲ τὰ τε πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν πολιτεύομεν καὶ ἐς τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους τῶν καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ὑποψίαν, οὐ δι' ὀργῆς τὸν πέλας, εἰ καθ' ἡδονὴν τι δρᾶ, ἔχοντες, οὐδὲ ἀζημίους μὲν, λυπηρὰς δὲ τῇ ὄψει ἀχθηδόνας προστιθέμενοι (2.37.2). Pericles emphasises the freedom entailed by the democratic regime of Athens, which does not suppress the voice of the individuals or the minorities, neither in public nor in private affairs. Athenians are presented as ideal citizens, who abide by the very same behavioural code that old age and life experience have taught Iolaus. As to a citizen's duties and responsibilities towards the city, Iolaus declares that he has so far rejected idleness (ἐξὸν ... ἡσύχως ναίειν; v. 7) and has instead participated (μετέσχον; v. 8) to Heracles' labours, thus distancing himself from the egocentric type of citizen (αὐτῷ δ' ἄριστος; v. 5). In parallel, Pericles speaking on behalf of the whole city of Athens condemns anyone who abstains from the public affairs: μόνοι γὰρ τὸν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε (sc. τῶν πολιτικῶν) μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ' ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν (2.40.2). It is noteworthy that quasi-similar vocabulary is used: Euripides, through Iolaus' mouth, calls an otiose citizen ἀχρηστον, while Pericles calls such a citizen ἀχρεῖον.

The second point that is designedly highlighted in both *Heraclids* and the Epitaph is the image of Athenians as benefactors; i.e. the firmness of the Athenians' character and their steadfast determination in befriending and succouring the weak. In vv. 176-178 the Argive herald seeks to dissuade the Athenian king Demophon and the Chorus from allying – once again – with the weak: μηδ' ὅπερ φιλεῖτε δρᾶν / πάθης σὺ τοῦτο, τοὺς ἀμείνονας παρὸν / φίλους ἐλέσθαι, τοὺς κακίονας λαβεῖν.⁹ Similarly, in vv. 303-306 Iolaus ascertains that in a moment of utmost disaster the Athenians alone in all Greece proved to be true friends and offered their support to Heracles' sons (Ἑλληνίδος γῆς ... προύστησαν μόνοι; v. 306). Later on, the Chorus takes pride in exactly this old tradition of their fatherland: αἰεὶ ποθ' ἦδε γαῖα τοῖς ἀμηγάνοις / σὺν τῷ δικαίῳ βούλεται προσωφελεῖν (vv. 329-330). The protection of the weak features as a major imperative in the Epitaph too. Regarding the home affairs of the city of Athens, Pericles emphasises the existence of laws that are purposely designed to defend those who are being wronged: οὐ παρανομοῦμεν, τῶν τε αἰεὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντων ἀκροάσει καὶ τῶν

9. Allan (op.cit., p. 146) detects the ambiguity of the terms κακίονας and ἀμείνονας, which can refer to both justice and power.

νόμων, καὶ μάλιστα αὐτῶν ὅσοι τε ἐπ' ὠφελίᾳ τῶν ἀδικουμένων κείνται (2.37.3).¹⁰ Equally, when it comes to the relations of Athens with foreign cities, Pericles reiterates the spirit of the Herald's words: καὶ τὰ ἐς ἀρετὴν ἐνηντιώμεθα τοῖς πολλοῖς· οὐ γὰρ πάσχοντες εὔ, ἀλλὰ δρῶντες κτώμεθα τοὺς φίλους (2.40.5). Euripides reverts to the Athenians' reputation as protectors of the weak in the *Suppliants* vv. 184-191 (esp. vv. 188-189: ... πόλις δὲ σὴ / μόνη δύναται' ἄν τόνδ' ὑποστῆναι πόνον) and vv. 377-380.

Whilst replying to the Herald, Iolaus ventures a *captatio benevolentiae* towards Demophon and the Chorus. In this context, there appears the belief that dying gloriously is much preferred to living in disrespect (an idea championed further down by Macaria too; see below).¹¹ Iolaus claims that he is well aware of both the nature and the spirit of the Athenians: θνήσκειν θελήσουσ'· ἢ γὰρ αἰσχύνῃ (πάρος) / τοῦ ζῆν παρ' ἐσθλοῖς ἀνδράσιν νομίζεται (vv. 200-201). In the same way, the unyielding courage of the Athenian citizens/soldiers is extolled by Pericles: καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ἀμύνεσθαι καὶ παθεῖν μᾶλλον ἡγησάμενοι ἢ [τὸ] ἐνδόντες σώζεσθαι, τὸ μὲν αἰσχροὺν τοῦ λόγου ἔφυγον, τὸ δ' ἔργον τῷ σώματι ὑπέμειναν, καὶ δι' ἐλαχίστου καιροῦ τύχης ἅμα ἀκμῆ τῆς δόξης μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ δέους ἀπηλλάγησαν (2.42.4). The ideal of a glorious death, as a result of heroic feats, recurs in *Helen* and is voiced by Menelaus: δρῶντας γὰρ ἢ μὴ δρῶντας ἥδιον θανεῖν (v. 814).¹²

Thereupon, Iolaus acknowledges that there are limits to praise: πόλει μὲν ἀρκεῖ· καὶ γὰρ οὖν ἐπίφθονον / λίαν ἐπαινεῖν ἐστι (vv. 202-203). In analogous terms Pericles ascertains how easily envy arises from praising others: μέχρι γὰρ τοῦδε ἀνεκτοὶ οἱ ἔπαινοί εἰσι περὶ ἐτέρων λεγόμενοι, ἐς ὅσον ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος οἴηται ἰκανὸς εἶναι δρᾶσαί τι ὧν ἤκουσεν· τῷ δὲ ὑπερβάλλοντι αὐτῶν φθονοῦντες ἤδη καὶ ἀπιστοῦσιν (2.35.2). Euripides had already admitted this (bitter) truth in *Medea* (produced in 431 BC, i.e. just one year before the *Heraclids*) vv. 300-301: τῶν δ' αὖ δοκούντων εἰδέναι τι ποικίλον / κρείσσω νομισθεῖς ἐν πόλει λυπρὸς φανῆ.

When Demophon announces his decision to succour Iolaus and the children, he explains that he chose this path of action (i) out of respect towards Zeus (v. 238), (ii) because of kinship (τὸ συγγενές, 240), and (iii) most importantly (οὔπερ δεῖ μάλιστα φροντίσαι, 242) because it is shameful

10. Cf. Isoc. 4.52 and X. *HG* 6.5.45.

11. See K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle*, Oxford 1974, pp. 236-242.

12. For a thorough analysis of the notions of honour and shame (αἰδώς) in Euripides, see D. Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford 1993, pp. 265-342.

and disgraceful (αἰσχρόν, 242) to allow for an altar to be impiously violated by a foreigner (εἰ γὰρ παρήσω τόνδε συλᾶσθαι βίᾳ / ξένου πρὸς ἄνδρὸς βωμόν, 243-244); this – for an Athenian such as Demophon – would constitute a blatant violation of the system of Athenian values, a system that was first and foremost structured and based upon the respect of personal freedom. Otherwise, i.e. if he were unable to defend this freedom, Demophon would consider himself not befit to be inhabiting a free land, such as Athens (οὐκ ἐλευθέραν / οἰκεῖν δοκήσω γαῖαν, 244-245). If we project the Athenian king's words against the political canvas of 5th century Athens, the resulting political statement is that every compromise regarding human and civic rights (of either an Athenian or a foreigner) amounts not only to an annihilation of the well-governed state of Athens, but also to a self-annihilation of every single Athenian who is flattered to believe that their city is indeed an Ἑλλάδος παιδευσίς, as Pericles asserts (2.41.1). Indeed, throughout the Epitaph Pericles reiterates, time and again, that Athens functions as a school for the entire Greek world, since it serves as an exemplar of a well-governed and law-abiding state, which adheres to and promotes fundamental and diachronic values, such as equality of civic rights, personal freedom, self-respect and respect towards all individuals. In emphasising Athens' supremacy Pericles avers: δι' ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐμήκυνα τὰ περὶ τῆς πόλεως, διδασκαλίαν τε ποιούμενος μὴ περὶ ἴσου ἡμῖν εἶναι τὸν ἀγῶνα καὶ οἷς τῶνδε μηδὲν ὑπάρχει ὁμοίως, καὶ τὴν εὐλογίαν ἅμα ἐφ' οἷς νῦν λέγω φανεράν σημείους καθιστάς (2.42.1-2).

Furthermore, it is instructive that a paramount statement about justice as a principle that should dominate the exercise of politics is emphatically put in the mouth of the king Demophon, who proudly declares that his ruling is not an arbitrary monarchy, but that he rather rules with justice: οὐ γὰρ τυραννίδ' ὥστε βαρβάρων ἔχω· / ἀλλ', ἦν δίκαια δρῶ, δίκαια πείσομαι (vv. 423-424). Later, the Chorus eulogises the just course to which their city adheres: ἔχεις ὁδὸν τιν', ὧ πόλις, / δίκαιον (vv. 901-902). Pericles too throughout the Epitaph praises the Athenians for handling their private and public affairs with justice. Particularly outstanding is the passage 2.44.3-4, where Pericles asserts that in discussions about war the decisions should be taken by those citizens who do have sons to send to war (to die) and not by those who have none to lose: οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἴσον τι ἢ δίκαιον βουλευέσθαι οἱ ἂν μὴ καὶ παιῖδας ἐκ τοῦ ὁμοίου παραβαλλόμενοι κινδυνεύωσιν. A memorable reference to the principle of justice, with an explicit application to the city's governance, is also made by the Chorus in *Andromache* vv. 785-787: ταύταν ἦνεσα ταύταν καὶ σέβομαι βιοτάν, / μηδὲν δίκας ἔξω κράτος ἐν θαλάμοις / καὶ πόλει δύνασθαι. Likewise, the Chorus in *Helen* confesses

their dedication to justice: οὐδεὶς ποτ' ἠτύχησεν ἔκδικος γεγώς, / ἐν τῷ δικαίῳ δ' ἐλπίδες σωτηρίας (vv. 1030-1031).

Further down, Demophon, reflecting on Heracles' offspring, expresses his certainty that they will grow to emulate and revenge their father: δεινὸν γὰρ ἐχθροῖς βλαστώνοντες εὐγενεῖς, / νεανίαί τε καὶ πατρὸς μεμνημένοι / λύμης (vv. 468-470). Pericles is also concerned with the offspring of the deceased, for whom he foresees an arduous struggle (μέγαν τὸν ἀγῶνα), in an attempt to emulate the feats of their fathers: καὶ μόλις ἂν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἀρετῆς οὐχ ὁμοῖοι, ἀλλ' ὀλίγω χείρους κριθεῖτε. φθόνος γὰρ τοῖς ζῶσι πρὸς τὸ ἀντίπαλον, τὸ δὲ μὴ ἐμποδῶν ἀνανταγωνίστω εὐνοία τετιμῆται (2.45.1). Of course, as was the norm in Athens, the orphans were brought up to manhood at public expense: τοὺς παῖδας τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦδε δημοσίᾳ ἢ πόλις μέχρι ἡβῆς θρέψει (2.46.1).

To mark (and perhaps extenuate) her stage appearance,¹³ Heracles' daughter (Macaria¹⁴) makes a comment on what was considered proper behaviour for a woman (at least for the propertied classes): γυναικὶ γὰρ σιγή τε καὶ τὸ σωφρονεῖν / κάλλιστον εἶσω θ' ἥσυχον μένειν δόμων (vv. 476-477). The seclusion of women at home was a primary feature within the system of male and female relations; and the less a woman was talked of the greater the honour assigned to her.¹⁵ Accordingly, Pericles gives some similar advice to the widows and the bereaved mothers in the Epitaph: εἰ δέ με δεῖ καὶ γυναικείας τι ἀρετῆς, ὅσαι νῦν ἐν χηρείᾳ ἔσσονται, μνησθῆναι, βραχεία παραινέσει ἅπαν σημανῶ. τῆς τε γὰρ ὑπαρχούσης φύσεως μὴ χείροσι γενέσθαι ὑμῖν μεγάλη ἢ δόξα καὶ ἥς ἂν ἐπ' ἐλάχιστον ἀρετῆς πέρι ἢ φόγου ἐν τοῖς ἄρσεσι κλέος ἦ (2.45.2).

Subsequently, Macaria engages in a rhetorical, yet emotional, *tour de force* (vv. 500-538). As she examines (and rejects) the possible alternatives to her sacrifice, she asseverates her willingness to die, thus securing salvation for her brothers, instead of living in shame. Her speech is deliberately furnished with terms and phrases that pertain to the contrasting concepts of honour and shame: e.g. γέλωτος ἄξια (507), κακοῦς ... χρηστοῖς (510), ἄτιμα πατρὸς οὖσαν εὐγενοῦς (513), ἐκπεσοῦσα ... ἀλητεύσω (515), αἰσχυνοῦμαι (516), φιλοψυχοῦντες (518), κακοῖς (519), ἀναξίαν (526). It would not be hyperbole to suggest that Macaria adopts the male code of honour, just like Medea

13. Cf. L. McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama*, Princeton 1999, p. 25.

14. Within the play the maiden remains anonymous. Macaria is the name assigned to her in the play's hypothesis; cf. Allan, *op.cit.*, pp. 32-34.

15. See Dover, *op.cit.*, pp. 95-98, 209-213; J. Gould, «Law, Custom and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens», *JHS* 100 (1980) 38-59.

does (though in a much greater scale).¹⁶ The maiden particularly highlights that she is 'πίσημος (v. 527), i.e. distinguished. In the same vein, Pericles draws attention to the fact that the death of the Athenian soldiers was glorious and meaningful for one more reason: these men did not live in misery, in which case they would not have minded to risk their wretched lives; instead, they were illustrious with a promising future ahead of them; yet they chose to die in glory: οὐ γὰρ οἱ κακοπραγοῦντες δικαιότερον ἀφειδοῖεν ἂν τοῦ βίου, οἷς ἐλπίς οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ' οἷς ἢ ἐναντία μεταβολὴ ἐν τῷ ζῆν ἔτι κινδυνεύεται καὶ ἐν οἷς μάλιστα μεγάλα τὰ διαφέροντα, ἦν τι πταίσωσιν. ἀλγεινότερα γὰρ ἀνδρὶ γε φρόνημα ἔχοντι ἢ μετὰ τοῦ [ἐν τῷ] μαλακισθῆναι κάκωσις ἢ ὁ μετὰ ῥώμης καὶ κοινῆς ἐλπίδος ἅμα γιγνόμενος ἀναίσθητος θάνατος (2.43.5-6). Just like Macaria, the dead praised by Pericles were not tempted to shrink from danger at the thought of any future pleasures: τῶνδε δὲ οὔτε πλούτου τις τὴν ἔτι ἀπόλαυσιν προτιμήσας ἐμαλακίσθη οὔτε πενίας ἐλπίδι, ὡς κἂν ἔτι διαφυγῶν αὐτὴν πλουτήσειεν, ἀναβολὴν τοῦ δεινοῦ ἐποιήσατο (2.42.4); on the contrary, they preferred the immortality generated by noble death: κοινῆ γὰρ τὰ σώματα διδόντες ἰδίᾳ τὸν ἀγήρων ἔπαινον ἐλάμβανον καὶ τὸν τάφον ἐπισημότατον, οὐκ ἐν ᾧ κείνται μᾶλλον, ἀλλ' ἐν ᾧ ἢ δόξα αὐτῶν παρὰ τῷ ἐντυχόντι αἰεὶ καὶ λόγου καὶ ἔργου καιρῷ αἰείμνηστος καταλείπεται. ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος (2.43.2-3).¹⁷ It is remarkable that Macaria ends her speech in the self-same spirit: εὐρημα γὰρ τοι μὴ φιλοφυχοῦσ' ἐγὼ / κάλλιστον ἠῶρηκ', εὐκλεῶς λιπεῖν βίον (vv. 533-534). The notion of voluntary sacrifice is explicitly repeated by Macaria shortly after: τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ἐγὼ / δίδωμ' ἐκοῦσα τοῖσδ', ἀναγκασθεῖσα δ' οὐ (vv. 550-551). Later Macaria's self-sacrifice is eulogised by the Chorus (vv. 621-629), who stresses the glory and the posthumous fame that await the noble maiden: εὐδόκιμον γὰρ ἔχει θανάτου μέρος (v. 621); οὐδ' ἀκλεῆς νιν / δόξα πρὸς ἀνθρώπων ὑποδέξεται (vv. 623-624). The motif of self-sacrifice recurs in *Iphigenia in Aulis*:¹⁸ τοῦμὸν δὲ σῶμα τῆς ἐμῆς ὑπὲρ πάτρας / καὶ τῆς ἀπάσης Ἑλλάδος γαίας ὑπερ / θῦσαι δίδωμ' ἐκοῦσα (vv. 1553-1555).

In his response to the maiden's vigorous speech Iolauus recognises in her a

16. Throughout the play *Medea* is concerned with her honour and assumes for herself the male code of behaviour; cf. D. Mastronarde, *Euripides Medea*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 15-22.

17. Of course, the moral behest for a glorious death, as opposed to a shameful life, traces back to Homeric ideology, which was inimitably taken up by Callinus (e.g. fr. 1D) and Tyrtaeus, e.g. fr. 6-7D: θνήσκωμεν ψυχῶν μηκέτι φειδόμενοι (v. 14).

18. Following of course the heroine's change of mind and heart; cf. Arist. *Po.* 1454a 31-34: τοῦ δὲ ἀνωμάλου ἢ ἐν Αὐλίδι Ἰφιγένεια· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔοικεν ἢ ἰκετεύουσα τῇ ὑστέρα. χρῆ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἤθεσιν ὁμοίως ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων συστάσει ἀεὶ ζητεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ τὸ εἰκόσ.

genuine scion of Heracles: ὦ τέκνον, οὐκ ἔστ' ἄλλοθεν τὸ σὸν κάρα / ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐκείνου· σπέρμα τῆς θείας φρενὸς / πέφυκας Ἡράκλειον (vv. 539-541); cf. the maiden's own awareness of and concern with her noble descent (v. 513). The comparison to one's ancestors and the zeal to approach, if not surpass, their valor were inherent traits of the heroic ethics. Hence, Pericles pays homage to the dead by acknowledging that they have been proven equal to their ancestry and worthy of the name of citizens of Athens, having become ἐραστάς of their city (2.43.1; cf. 2.36.1). Though such a praise is reasonably expected for the dead soldiers, it is not naturally anticipated for a woman; but, as mentioned above, Macaria may be conceived as adhering to the male sense of honour and code of behaviour.

Despite exhibiting a man's courage, Macaria requests to close the circle of her life in the hands not of men but of women (vv. 565-566). Upon granting her this request Demophon also reassures her that she shall receive proper funeral rites, worthy of her bravery; for otherwise it would be a disgrace to him: ἀμοὶ τόδ' αἰσχρόν, μή σε κοσμαῖσθαι καλῶς, / πολλῶν ἕκατι, τῆς τε σῆς εὐψυχίας / καὶ τοῦ δικαίου (vv. 568-570). Shortly after, addressing her brothers Macaria requests a proper burial from them too, whenever they are granted return to their homeland: μέμνησθε τὴν σώτειραν ὡς θάψαι χρεῶν / κάλλιστά τοι δίκαιον (vv. 588-589). Pericles in the Epitaph is similarly concerned with providing the dead with the appropriate funerary rites: εἴρηται καὶ ἐμοὶ λόγῳ κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὅσα εἶχον πρόσφορα, καὶ ἔργῳ οἱ θαπτόμενοι τὰ μὲν ἤδη κεκόσμηται (2.46.1; cf. 2.35.1).

Furthermore, there is an additional concept (better say, a subtext) that runs throughout the *Heraclids*; it is the notion of freedom, of free land, which is applied to and exemplified by the city of Athens, despite the monarchic regime (whose just nature Demophon explicitly proclaims, vv. 423-424; cf. above). Pericles' chief exhortation to his fellow citizens relates to the very issue of freedom, as a fruit earned through bravery: οὖς νῦν ὑμεῖς ζηλώσαντες καὶ τὸ εὐδαιμον τὸ ἐλεύθερον, τὸ δ' ἐλεύθερον τὸ εὐψυχον κρίναντες, μὴ περιορᾶσθε τοὺς πολεμικοὺς κινδύνους (2.43.4). This *free* city of Athens is repeatedly pictured, idealised and longed for in the *Heraclids*: ἐλευθέρα τε γαῖ' ἐν ἧ βεβήκαμεν (62); γῆν σέβοντ' ἐλευθέραν (113); εἰ γὰρ τόδ' ἔσται καὶ λόγους κρινούσι σοὺς, / οὐ φημ' Ἀθήνας τάσδ' ἐλευθέρας ἔτι (197-8); εἰ γὰρ παρήσω τόνδε συλᾶσθαι βία / ξένου πρὸς ἀνδρὸς βωμόν, οὐκ ἐλευθέραν / οἰκεῖν δοκήσω γαῖαν (243-245); οὐ γὰρ Ἀργείων πόλιν / ὑπήκοον τήνδ' ἀλλ' ἐλευθέραν ἔχω (286-287); ἀλλ' ἡῶρες ἀνδρας καὶ πόλισμ' ἐλεύθερον (957). As a natural result, the citizens raised within such a free city are destined to embrace the city's ideology and identify themselves with their city's causes. Indeed, this is exactly what

Pericles admits: καὶ οἶδε μὲν προσηκόντως τῇ πόλει τοιοῖδε ἐγένοντο (2.43.1).

The political dimension not only of *Heraclids* but also of most of the surviving tragic plays remains a controversial issue.¹⁹ Tragedy is definitely not a tool for pursuing political propaganda; but it does not follow that the tragic poets maintain a totally detached and disinterested attitude towards the contemporary political and social issues. Whilst enveloped in the heroic past, tragedy remains in contact with the present, upon which the tragic poets persistently comment and reflect.

It should not surprise us that Euripides' *Heraclids* and Pericles' Epitaph coincide in both the overall tone and the details. As Finley points out, «the two men (sc. Euripides and Thucydides) lived for some years in the same city, surveyed throughout their lives the same march of events, and felt the force of the same rhetorical and speculative movements» (op.cit., p. 1). Besides, all three men, Euripides, Thucydides and Pericles, were zealous supporters of Athens' democratic system. What is also important is that Euripides' tragic play and Pericles' speech addressed the very same audience. The same people who listened to Pericles in the winter of 431 BC, many mourning the loss of their loved ones yet feeling proud of them, were the same people who watched the performance of the *Heraclids* in the City Dionysia of 430 BC. Neither Pericles nor Euripides are in any way concerned with flattering their fellow citizens in order to secure for themselves political support and theatrical victory respectively; such a thought would constitute a naive and blatant anachronism on our part. What both the poet and the orator (and, beyond him, the historian) do is simply reflect and register the actual milieu in which they live. Both works echo the moral beliefs, the political climate, the social norms and the public feeling, which were dominant in the city of Athens at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian war. Euripides had probably listened live to Pericles; and Pericles must have sat among the spectators of the front rows at the performance of the *Heraclids*. *Heraclids* is in most part a poetic version of the Epitaph; and the Epitaph is the mirror of the Athenian citizens' spirit and attitude at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War.

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19. See Allan, op.cit., pp. 43-46; Zuntz, op.cit., pp. 78-81; C. Meier, *The Political Art of Greek Tragedy* (Engl. trans. by A. Webber, Baltimore 1993), *passim*, but esp. pp. 204-216; T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides*, London 1967, pp. 28-29; V. Di Benedetto, *Euripide: teatro e società*, Torino 1971, pp. 105-129.

