

Civilization and Duality in the Heracles Myth

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Abstract

This thesis will discuss the character of the mythic hero Heracles within various, primarily Greek, texts between the *Iliad* (eighth or seventh century BCE) and the *Bibliotheca* (first or second century CE). Heracles is commonly depicted in these texts in two ways. First, as a civilizer, his action benefitting humanity and the gods by defeating dangerous creatures and people; and second as a brutish and uncivilized individual who frequently breaks social taboos, commits violent and impious acts. The thesis will argue not only this dichotomy in the depiction of Heracles, but also that these two sides to Heracles' *persona* are strongly related to one another, as it is Heracles' uncivilized nature that makes him so successful in fighting the uncivilized. To argue this case, the thesis will be structured into four chapters, each one addressing a common element of Heracles' myth and discussing how it contributes to his *persona* as an uncivilized civilizer. The first chapter will address Heracles' early life, including his conception, birth and youth. This chapter will deal with Heracles' relation to the civilized and will show what a destructive force Heracles can be in a civilized setting. The second chapter will discuss Heracles' practice of archery and how it represents his status as a social outcast. The third chapter will continue this theme, discussing Heracles' empathetic connection to the animals that he fights, and is particularly focused around the Nemean Lion whose skin he wears as a cloak. The fourth and final chapter will discuss Heracles' death and his apotheosis. Here it will be argued that Heracles' death represents his ultimate redemption, in so far as his *persona* is divided between his uncivilized self, who appears as a ghost in Hades, and his civilizer self, who is rewarded with immortality and divinity on Olympus.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signed:



Joseph Dunn 27/3/17

Introduction

It is not an exaggeration to say that Heracles is one of the most enduring heroes, with a legacy that continues to this day. There is something endearing about this wild character and his laborious forays beyond the domain of civilized man to fight gods, animals, monsters and men. These have fascinated audiences and storytellers both ancient and modern. Perhaps the appeal lies in the diversity of myths in which he features. A popular figure in both comedy and tragedy, Heracles emerges in myths that often balance the two sides of his character, with his drunken revelrous behaviour teetering on the edge of, and occasionally spilling over into, violence and madness. This can be seen as indicative of Heracles' character at large, as he is a man of extremes and contrasts. Just as his myths may contain both comedy and tragedy, so both mortality and divinity help define Heracles' character. Being depicted as both a mortal and a god, sometimes even simultaneously, Heracles is both destined to transcend mortality and be welcomed onto Olympus, and also to be condemned eventually to die and reside in Hades as a shadow of his former self.

These contrasting aspects of the Heracles myth are the subject of this thesis: specifically Heracles' nature as an 'uncivilized civilizer'. Many of the myths concerning Heracles, particularly those codified into his twelve labours, depict Heracles as a civilizer, fighting to protect and expand human civilization and championing the interests of both humans and the Olympian gods. However, while his often violent actions push out the boundaries of the civilized world, and make it safer for humans and gods, he himself remains a threat to the very civilization he defends. This threat is demonstrated by his frequent outbursts of violence, his unlawful and uncivil behaviour, and his violation of religious and cultural taboos, and it is ultimately indicative of his uncivilized nature. In this thesis it will be argued that Heracles is often depicted in his myth simultaneously as both a defender and champion of civilization and an uncivilized violent individual who has no place in the civilized world that he defends.

This thesis will discuss Heracles by delving further into the dichotomy created in his character by his actions as both civilizer and an uncivilized man. It will explore how a character who frequently transgresses what is socially or even legally acceptable in what was considered civilized society contemporary to the creations of these myths is so venerated; a character who demonstrates more kin with the uncivilized world where he fights monsters than with the civilized world of the *polis* or home. We will discuss how a character can be possessed of these qualities, which are frequently depicted as negative, yet still be considered a great hero whose actions benefit civilized society. We will seek to demonstrate why such a figure is venerated above all other heroes, to the extent that after his death he was deified and welcomed among the Olympian pantheon.

Despite his popularity in Greek culture more broadly, early sources pertaining to Heracles are sparse and references to him in primary texts are often fleeting. Heracles is nonetheless obviously a figure of great renown in these texts and is often given a position of respect. He is also used as an example of the extremes of both heroism and immoral behaviour, to which the actions of other heroes are compared. As we will see, this is the case especially in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but also in the later victory odes of Pindar. Elsewhere we are given brief references to episodes of Heracles' life such as in Hesiod's *Theogony* or the *Homeric Hymns*. Significantly both these kinds of texts often refer to myths about Heracles that seem to be part of a greater narrative in such a way that indicates the audience is expected to know them already. This has given rise to a theory that an unknown Heracleian epic or epics lie behind the *Iliad*.¹ The earliest complete telling of Heracles' entire myth that we have is the Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* dating from around the first or second century CE.² Even here, however, variations within the myth are noted. This thesis will refer often to the Heracles myth but it is important to remember that before the *Bibliotheca* the myth is compiled from parts of different myths, often not about Heracles himself. Because of this, there are variations in the Heracles myth and these will be noted where appropriate. This thesis will use 'the Heracles myth' to refer to the overarching narrative of Heracles' life. 'The Heracles myths' will refer to the collection of primary sources that contribute to the narrative.

This thesis will draw on Greek and Roman sources from the *Iliad* (first written down around the eighth or early seventh century BCE but likely older in the oral tradition) to the *Bibliotheca* in first or second century CE. A number of the texts from the earlier period are fragmentary with summaries, such as the works of the Epic Cycle, *Cypria*, *Little Iliad*, *Aethiopis*, and *Iliou Persis*. Such texts are still useful as even some understanding of the content of these myths can contribute to our understanding of the mythic cycle. We will also address several Athenian plays, including *Heracles*, *Children of Heracles*, *Alcestis* and *Philoctetes*. A later text, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from the early first century, will be of particular importance in the fourth chapter when discussing the myth of Heracles' death and his *apotheosis*. Because this is Latin text it refers to the character this thesis is examining as 'Hercules' rather than 'Heracles'. However the inclusion of such a text is justified as it does not deviate significantly from earlier Greek accounts of this myth and its embellishments reinforce themes that are also present in Greek versions of Heracles' death. Where appropriate

¹ See Richard P. Martin, *The language of heroes: speech and performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989), 229 for a discussion of the *Iliad* as a text intended to compete with one or more Heracles epic(s), Noel Robertson, 'Heracles' 'Catabasis'', *Hermes*, 108. Bd., H. 3 (1980), 274-300 discusses the possible content, style, author and date of the Archaic Heracles epic and maintains it is about his descent into Hades to retrieve Cerberus.

² Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of Classical Myth: Primary Sources in Translation* (Indianapolis, Hackett Pub, 2004) 17.

we will also briefly address the artistic tradition as it pertains to the Heracles myth. Heracles' profile within the artistic tradition is huge and deserving of far more attention than it can receive here. As such this thesis will restrict its discussion of Heracles' appearance in the artistic tradition primarily to two specific instances. Firstly, we will use it to reinforce and expand on the details of a specific myth. Heracles attacking Hades within the *Iliad* (5:449-457), for example will be discussed with reference to artistic depictions of this scene in chapter two. The second way we will use art is to suggest how early certain elements of the myth appear. This will be used in discussing several of the labours in chapter three.

There is a great deal of critical discourse on the figure of Heracles, which will be dealt with within this thesis. Some examples of this can be found in both Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* and Timothy Gantz's *Early Greek Myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*. Both these authors address the Heracles myth though in very different ways. Graves' *The Greek Myths* contains synchronic collations and analyses of Greek myths, including that of Heracles. Gantz on the other hand in his *Early Greek Myth* is more focused on discussing the sources, both literary and artistic, for each element of the myths he discusses. Both provide an overarching narrative of the Heracles myth, as well as many others, but while Graves is more inclined to analyse the myth as a whole, Gantz is more concerned with where the pieces of the myth originate. There is also a great deal of discussion about Heracles' chosen weapons and armour, something this thesis will delve into albeit with a different argument. Examples for this area can be seen in works such as Philip Holt and Ph. Nolt's article *HERAKLES IN ARMOR : PHILOKTETES V. 727*, Seth Benardete's *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey*, which discusses Heracles' archery, and Beth Cohen's *From Bowman to Clubman: Herakles and Olympia*. This last text is an excellent catalogue of Heracles' changing depictions in both art and literature, with particular focus on his weaponry. This thesis will occasionally have to rely on artistic sources, however for the most part we will rely on the written tradition around Heracles. For this we are fortunate to have Frank Brommer's *Heracles: the Twelve Labours of the Hero in Ancient Art and Literature*. In this book the author discusses the artistic tradition surrounding the cycle of Heracles' twelve labours. Particularly he focuses on when each labour entered the canon. Brommer is able to make assumptions about which labours predate the earliest stories that feature Heracles, as well as when later labours were invented.

Despite all of this, there is nonetheless a significant gap in the research regarding Heracles' dual nature as few critical sources discuss it at any significant length. For the most part when it is addressed it is only as a side note. Furthermore it is rare that the civilizer and uncivilized sides of Heracles' character are linked. Loukas Papadimitropoulos calls Heracles "probably the most contradictory of all the Greek heroes", citing the contrast between the twelve labours

that establish him as a civilizer and his frequent immoral transgressions.³ While this assumes that there are two sides to Heracles' character, it presents them as not related. G. Karl Galinsky is closer to our discussion as he not only identifies the dual nature of Heracles but also suggests a single source for both behaviours in Heracles' superhuman strength. This is seen in his book *The Herakles Theme*, where he says "like most human qualities, physical strength is ambivalent. It can be used for bad purpose with terrifying results" and "if Heracles' strength and prowess were super-human so were his weaknesses".⁴ Sophie Mills, in her book *Theseus, Tragedy and the Athenian Empire*, presents a similar argument to that of Galinsky. She also recognises, in a chapter concerning Heracles, the duality of his character, stating that the character performs deeds aiding humanity and human civilization, but that he still has a bestial side.⁵ She also says Heracles' superhuman strength "can be exercised either in excess and violence or in civilizing deeds".⁶ Both these texts make much of Heracles' physical strength as his means of accomplishing both his civilizing deeds and his uncivilized crimes. However, again they present Heracles as a divided character rather than connecting the two sides of his character into one persona. Walter Burkert also links Heracles' civilizing deeds to his violence. This is seen in his book *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, where he says that Heracles' lion skin "represents man's domination of nature through violence."⁷ Again the emphasis on Heracles' violence is present. The notion that Heracles' strength or violence is responsible for his civilizing actions is close to the argument of this thesis. However this thesis will argue that it is not only Heracles' strength but his uncivilized nature that allows him to perform civilizing deeds.

The subject of Heracles' violent, uncivilized nature is sometimes touched upon in relation to his animal labours. For example this is briefly addressed by Forbes Irving in *Metamorphosis in Greek Myth*, where he says that "the greatest of all hunters, Heracles, takes on many of the qualities of the animals he kills and tames and in whose skins he dresses".⁸ Beth Cohen also tangentially mentions Heracles' lion skin as a symbol of his wild nature, saying "an animal skin, understood as a hunter's trophy, is worn by figures associated with nature or the uncivilized wilderness in Archaic Greek art".⁹ Away from the lion skin Heracles' uncivilized

³ Loukas Papadimitropoulos, 'Heracles as a Tragic Hero', *The Classical World*, 101/2 (2008), 131.

⁴ Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: the Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1972), 3.

⁵ Sophie Mills, *Theseus, Tragedy, and the Athenian Empire* (Oxford England, Clarendon Press, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 137.

⁶ Ibid. 137.

⁷ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979), 98.

⁸ P.M.C Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myth* (Oxford England, Clarendon Press, New York, Oxford University Press 1990), 84.

⁹ Beth Cohen, 'From Bowman to Clubman Herakles and Olympia', *The Art Bulletin*, 76/4 (Dec., 1994), 697.

nature is also discussed in relation to his use of archery. Richard P. Martin in *The language of heroes: speech and performance in the Iliad* suggests Heracles is set up as a negative exemplum in the *Iliad* specifically, where he is intentionally called to task for his uncivilized behaviour in order to glorify Achilles as his opposite.¹⁰ With this in mind it can be no coincidence that Heracles uses a bow in this poem, a weapon associated with Troy, while Achilles uses a spear, depicted as a nobler weapon in the *Iliad*. Chris Mackie in his book *Rivers of Fire* however suggests that Heracles in the *Iliad* is a representative of an earlier generation hero. He maintains that Heracles is part of a heroic milieu that held different values from the main heroes of the *Iliad*. Because of this he believes that Homer's depiction of Heracles as an archer is not intended to be pejorative. This differs from other depictions of archers within the *Iliad*, who are either Greeks associated with illegitimacy, cowardice, foreignness or Trojans. Heracles' exceptional treatment is certainly reason to examine this specific depiction of him, as while he retains the characteristic of an uncivilized civilizer, he is still accepted by civilized society as a heroic figure.

From these discussions of contemporary scholarship on the Heracles myth it can clearly be seen that the notion that he is both a civilizer and uncivilized is well established. Generally this central conflict of his character is mentioned only incidentally, not fully expressing the significance to the character. The purpose of this thesis then will be to expand on the idea of Heracles as an uncivilized civilizer, to explore the reasons and reactions both textually and socially to his depictions as such, and to describe how this contrasting nature is central to key elements of his myth. To this end this thesis will discuss Heracles' archery, his lion skin cloak, his birth, youth and his death. The reason for this is that these elements of the Heracles myth are among the most iconic and well represented. In addition to this each of these elements speaks to Heracles' character in a stage of his life. In discussing these elements we hope to demonstrate that Heracles does not perform civilizing deeds in spite of his uncivilized nature, nor is he uncivilized in spite of his deeds. Rather Heracles is a character of extremes and it is this inherent excess that makes him both great and terrible. Different from other discussions of Heracles' character this thesis will demonstrate that Heracles in Greek myth is a man who achieves great things for the cause of civilization because he exists outside of it.

It is important to define what is meant in the context of this thesis by civilization. Simply put, our designation of 'civilization' is associated with the notion of human settlement as it pertains to the home and the *polis*. This is because these are places that are commonly under the control and subject to the order of humans and the authority of the gods.¹¹ Order and

¹⁰ Richard P. Martin, *The language of heroes*, 229.

¹¹ See Stephen Scully, *Homer and the Sacred City*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1990, where he describes the *polis*, at least in the Homeric works, as being an inherently sacred place.

divine authority are important elements of this notion of civilization, as opposed to what is the uncivilized world which is characterised as wild and uncontrolled by humans and gods. In this way this thesis links the ‘uncivilized’ to nature, and the ‘civilized’ to culture. The definition of civilization that will be used here is not arbitrary, but is based on ancient Greek notions of what is civilized and uncivilized.¹² To say Heracles is a civilizer then is to imply that he not only defends civilization but spreads its influence. By his deeds and especially his labours Heracles tames the uncivilized world for civilized humans and gods. He ensures their safety by defeating monsters and uncivilized men, and by taming wild animals. He spreads civilization by exploring and seeking restitution for wrongs perpetrated against him and others.

Our definition of the uncivilized world is that it is the opposite of the civilized world: unordered, wild, rural and subject to the authority of monster and impious or immoral men. When we say that Heracles is uncivilized then we mean he is a man of the world he inhabits: sometimes impious, sometimes immoral and sometimes even as much a monster as the lion whose skin he wears. Heracles subjugates the uncivilized world but he also embodies it. He murders his family in a fit of madness (*Heracles* 966-971). He murders Iphitus while a guest in his home and steals his horses (*Odyssey* 21:27-35). He mutilates emissaries sent to collect tribute from his father’s city (*Bibliotheca* II.IV.11). He attacks the gods with his bow (*Iliad* 5:446-462). These crimes encapsulate the core conflict and interplay within Heracles’ character as an uncivilized civilizer.

The uncivilized world discussed in this thesis is not simply an untamed world. It is in many ways in keeping with Joseph Campbell’s notion of the exterior world which he describes as follows:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural power: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man

(Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, pg30)

¹² This is linked to the notion of Greek civilization in the context of the emergence of a ‘national identity’, an aspect of civilization that will especially become relevant in subsequent chapters. It is difficult to definitively define this however as there are various theories regarding when and under what circumstances the idea of being ‘Greek’ emerged. Edith Hall for example suggests it is a result of the Persian invasion. However others theorise there is evidence of it even in the *Iliad*. It is also common that a stronger sense of identity might be associated with one’s home city. This is something we will discuss at some length in chapter one in regards to how Athenian propaganda uses a negative depiction of Heracles and his family to criticise Sparta and the Peloponnese, which were in myth founded by Heracles’ children. For more on the subject of Greek national identity see: Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek self-definition through tragedy* (Oxford England, Clarendon Press, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989).

While we will be drawing on this idea of the uncivilized exterior world as a place of supernatural power where our hero wins his greatest victories, it also carries a negative connotation, a corrupting effect that causes a hero to return home not only with boons and power, but with a darkness inside that manifests as violence and madness.

I will present evidence of this dichotomy within the Heracles myth, organising this thesis into four chapters. These chapters will at times address the events of Heracles' myth chronologically, from his birth to death and apotheosis. While the discussion of the Heracles myths will usually be synchronic, the chapters will roughly follow the course of Heracles' life. We will begin by discussing his birth and youth, then his labours and the deeds from his later life, and then finally we discuss his death, afterlife and apotheosis. More generally, however, each chapter will be structured around a specific aspect of the Heracles myth. The first and fourth chapters will be framed around periods of his life, his birth and youth as well as his death and apotheosis respectively. The second and third chapters will be structured around his practice of archery and his lion skin cloak. These subjects will serve to demonstrate the emerging identity of Heracles as an uncivilized civilizer that permeates a great deal of the Heracles myth. These specific elements have been chosen not only because they relate to iconic myths concerning Heracles, but also as they each demonstrate how these iconic myths relate to his dual identities.¹³

The myths surrounding Heracles' birth and youth set this theme into motion from the point of his conception and justify it through the genesis of his enmity with figures associated with civilization, namely Hera and Eurystheus. This chapter will primarily focus on the representation of Heracles as an uncivilized individual, but will also point out where the good works he will do are foreshadowed early in his life. This first chapter also allows us to discuss Heracles' behaviour within the context of a civilized society, with the intention of demonstrating his incompatibility with such a civilized setting. This manifests in both his violent behaviour to those close to him, as well as in his rude, impious and even illegal actions. It is the former of these that will lead to Heracles' exile from civilized society.

This leads into our discussion of Heracles' archery. This next chapter will focus on archery as it is associated with both uncivilized behaviour and uncivilized locations. The mode of this

¹³ While the subjects presented as the themes of each chapter are entirely defensible, one notable omission that will be afforded little regard is Heracles' use of a club. While this weapon certainly ties into the uncivilized of Heracles' character, it is not as contentious as the bow, which is the subject of several discourses within the narrative over the moral defensibility of Heracles' use of it. The second reason for the club's absence is that this thesis is primarily relying on mythological texts and the club features most prominently in the artistic tradition surrounding Heracles. While there is doubtless much that could be said about the club, this thesis will rather focus on the bow as Heracles' primary weapon due to its relevance to its argument.

argument stems partially from Chris Mackie's book *Rivers of Fire*, which uses archery as a means to identify social outsiders who contrast with socially acceptable spear-wielding heroes within the *Iliad*.¹⁴ While the *Iliad* will be examined, this chapter will look at the bow in a wider variety of texts with the intent of deducing what Heracles' archery says about his relationship with the civilized and uncivilized worlds in a variety of texts from different time periods.

The third chapter will also examine a physical object that is significant within the Heracles myth. Of all the labours that could be discussed, Heracles' first task, the one that produces the subject of this chapter: the lion skin cloak, seems the most relevant to the subject of this thesis. Being the first and marking Heracles' exit from the civilized city into the uncivilized wilderness, this labour is significant as it marks a transition for the character of Heracles. This includes his actual fight with the lion as well as his adoption of its skin as his cloak. There is significance in the wearing of an animal's skin, especially when it is worn as iconically and closely as in the case of Heracles. In addition to exploring Heracles' fight with the lion and subsequent use of its skin as his garb, this chapter will also examine the significance of lions more generally in Greek myth, in hope that we can identify common traits attributed to them with some elements of Heracles' character.

Finally we will discuss Heracles' death in the context of his identity as an uncivilized civilizer. In this fourth chapter we will examine the myths associated with Heracles' death and apotheosis, as well as with his subsequent role as an Olympian God. This elevation from a mortal man to the Olympian pantheon is almost unique to Heracles and this chapter will examine the possible reasons and justifications for this event, with the hope of discovering some link to Heracles' dual identity as an uncivilized civilizer.

Through these topics, this thesis will seek to demonstrate a theme through much of the canon of myths depicting Heracles. It is a theme of the conflict inherent in a character doing good through violent actions when such actions are not deemed good by society. It is a theme of a character protecting a society he is not and should not be a part of for the sake of himself and others. When we say that Heracles is an uncivilized civilizer we mean that he is a man who is set apart from the notion of civilization he protects. He fights its enemies but we cannot help but see him in the denizens of the uncivilized world. It is this narrative that this thesis will seek to illuminate in the Heracles myth, tracking his fragmented narrative through various myths and other sources of Ancient Greece.

¹⁴ C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad* (Washington, DC, New Academia Publishing, 2008), 92.

Chapter 1: The Birth, Youth and Madness of Heracles

In this first chapter we will explore how the myths of Heracles' conception, birth, infancy and youth establish his relationship with the civilized and uncivilized. We will see how, before he is even conceived, he is intended to be a hero who protects humanity and the gods, and how, even in the earliest stages of life, he demonstrates the characteristics that will later make him a civilizer. The first section of the chapter will focus on Heracles as a civilizer, as most of the myths dealing with his conception and birth pertain to elements of this side of his character. Despite this, the two sides of Heracles' *persona* can be hard to separate, and there is foreshadowing of Heracles' more uncivilized traits also present in these myths of his early life, especially in his youth. In the second section of this chapter we will begin to see how Heracles is at odds with a civilized surrounding, and that the same qualities that make him a civilizer can be ruinous in a civilized setting. This will be seen in its most extreme manifestation when we examine Heracles' infamous bout of madness, when he is driven to attack and kill his family. This event also marks Heracles' departure from civilization, as afterwards he leaves the city and undertakes his labours as a penance. This first chapter will argue that Heracles is born to be a civilizer, and that he is endowed with traits and abilities that speak of this identity. However, it will also be argued that these gifts are as much a burden as a boon, and that Heracles is equally blessed and cursed by his fate. His misfortune is a key element of his myth, and to understand it we must also discuss his step-mother Hera, and how her interactions with Heracles affect his development into an uncivilized civilizer. To discuss how his misfortune affects the development of his character, this chapter includes a discussion of Heracles' cousin Eurystheus, who forms an opposite to Heracles with regard to behaviour and actions.

Heracles' Conception

Briefly, the myth of Heracles' conception found in the *Bibliotheca* is as follows: while Alcmena's husband Amphitryon is away, Zeus comes to her. He makes himself look like Amphitryon and, during a night that Zeus makes last as long as three, conceived Heracles with Alcmena. The next day Amphitryon returns, learns what has happened and conceives with Alcmena Heracles' half-brother Iphicles. This child is born one day after Heracles, as he was conceived a day after him as well (*Bibliotheca* II.iv.7-8).

This is the basic version of the myth of Heracles' birth. However certain extra details from other texts warrant discussion and will also be addressed below. On the most basic level this myth serves to place Heracles among the myriad of heroes in Greek myth who possess one mortal (Alcmena) and one divine parent (Zeus). This myth already shows Heracles as a man

of conflicting identities, being both mortal and divine (That these two sides of his character might correspond to his identities as both civilizer and uncivilized is something that will be explored later in this thesis). The most significant detail for us within the myth of Heracles' conception is found in *The Shield of Heracles*.¹⁵ In this version of the myth we find Zeus, before going to Alcmena, on Olympus planning to conceive a son who will become a protector. This foreshadows the civilizer aspect of Heracles' character, which we will often see manifesting itself throughout his life in his protection of civilization. Because *The Shield of Heracles* is a relatively early text (especially compared to the *Bibliotheca*) and also quite detailed in its description of Heracles' conception, many of the details of Heracles' conception myth discussed below draw on *The Shield of Heracles* as their source.

The beginning of *The Shield of Heracles* puts a great deal of focus on Heracles' mother Alcmena. This includes the events leading to the conception and birth of Heracles and his half-brother Iphicles. The poem begins with a brief description of Alcmena:

she who, for stature and beauty,
surpassed all the generation
of female women; and for intellect also
she had no rival
among any of those who, mortal themselves,
lay with mortals, and bore them
children; and from her head
and her dark eyes there was
a blowing grace, as if it were
from Aphrodite the golden

Shield of Heracles: 4-8

We also learn that Alcmena is married to Amphytrion and is the daughter of Electryon (whom Amphytrion killed) making her the granddaughter of Perseus. The significance of her lineage is especially important in light of Zeus's promise to make a descendent of Perseus' line the king. This is mentioned in Book 19 of the *Iliad* which we will discuss below, in so far as it relates to both Heracles and Eurystheus. Alcmena's heroic and royal lineage, along with her own potent attributes, provides Heracles with a powerful and prestigious lineage from his maternal line. Alcmena also serves as an early reminder that Heracles is not just of divine but

¹⁵*The Shield of Heracles* is a poem attributed to Hesiod but is probably a later work, dating from the sixth century BCE and written by an unknown author, see Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth; 7th Edition* (Boston, Pearson, 2012), 377. One reason why this work may be attributed to Hesiod is it takes its first 56 lines from the text of his *Catalogue of Women*. This was posited by Aristophanes of Byzantium and has since been supported by literary evidence, see R. Janko, 'The Shield of Heracles and the Legend of Cycnus', *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (1986), 38-59.

also, mortal lineage. This becomes significant as a few lines later he is predicted to be a protector of both his mother's and father's people.

The references to Alcmene are followed in the *Shield of Heracles* by the most significant detail of Heracles' conception. Zeus is first depicted in the poem on Olympus planning the creation of Heracles and devising the role his son will play throughout his time as both a mortal and god. Mary Lefkowitz in her book *Greek Gods, Human Lives* points out that this pattern is repeated often in the *Catalogue of Women* as each child conceived in this text is part of a plan by the gods to accomplish something.¹⁶

Meanwhile,
the father of gods and mortals
was weaving another design in his mind,
how, both for gods
and for men who eat bread,
he might plant a protector against destruction.

Shield of Heracles: 27-29

These lines encapsulate one half of the core argument of this thesis: that Heracles is a born protector of humanity and the gods. This is very much in line with what we established as our definition of civilization in the introduction, which is tied to the persons and works of humans and gods. In addition, enactment of Zeus' prediction, by protecting gods and men against ruin, can also by our definition be considered a civilizing act on the part of Heracles. This is not to say that Heracles acts altruistically, or even that every feat benefits the gods or humanity. Rather, there is a distinct theme to the majority of his works that they in some way benefit the cause of expanding or protecting the influence of civilization, as represented by the gods and humans. These types of feats include but are not limited to exploration, cultivation, fighting brigands or uncivilized men, and slaying or domesticating animals and monstrous beasts. These subjects will be further discussed in this thesis.

The above quotation from the *Shield of Heracles* explicitly states that Heracles is meant to be a defender of the gods as well as of humanity. While Heracles' record in this context is hardly exemplary, there are notable instances of where he does act in the gods' interests. Throughout most of the *Shield of Heracles*, Heracles fights Cycnus, a fellow half-god, being the son of Ares, who has taken to attacking pilgrims on their way to worship Apollo (*Shield* 57-58). Despite the fact that the meeting of these two is an accident, as Heracles is on his way to Trachis (354), it is implied that Apollo has set Heracles against Cycnus (69). The depiction of Heracles as the vanguard of piety and protector of the gods' interests seen in the *Shield of*

¹⁶ Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Greek Gods, Human Lives: What We Can Learn From Myths* (New Haven, London, Yale University Press, c2003), 32.

Heracles is also at odds with a number of other myths regarding *Heracles*, where he is frequently guilty of blasphemous or impious actions. We need look no further than the *Iliad* for an example of this. In Book 5, having been attacked by Diomedes, Aphrodite goes to her mother Dione who speaks of the impiety of men who attack the gods, specifically targeting *Heracles*.

“Think of that breakneck *Heracles*, his violent work,
not a care in the world for all the wrongs he’d done-
he and his arrows raking the gods who hold Olympus!”

Iliad 5:460-462

In this same segment Dione points to two examples of times when *Heracles* has attacked the gods, specifically *Hera* and *Hades* (*Iliad* 5:446-462), an incident we discuss in chapter two. It is important to remember, however, that the conflicting interests of the gods are often the reason why *Heracles* comes into conflict with them. Again, for an example of this we can look to the *Shield of Heracles*, where in defending *Apollo*’s interests *Heracles* offends *Ares* by killing his son and is brought into armed conflict with him. While *Heracles*’ defence of the gods is present in several myths it is offset by more instances where *Heracles* comes into conflict with the gods, either physically, verbally and otherwise. Owing partly to this, as well as the relative infrequency with which these episodes appear and the often conflicting agendas of the gods, *Heracles*’ actions as a protector of the gods can be considered a less common theme within his myths than that of *Heracles* helping humanity or civilization. This can be viewed as an extension of *Heracles*’ behaviour in relation to civilization in general, as while he is its proponent from afar, he is known to come into conflict with its denizens. It can also be viewed that in certain instances, the above mentioned fight with *Ares* as a key example, the gods transgress themselves what is considered civilized behaviour and are brought into conflict with *Heracles*. In either case it is apparent that *Heracles* is more likely to champion the interests of mortal civilization than to support the sanctity of the gods.

The conception myth of *Heracles* portends much of his later life. He is intended to be a protector and destined to be a king. In many ways *Heracles* will live up to this destiny, though it is a good deal more complicated than the *Shield of Heracles* implies. Nevertheless, the conception of *Heracles* lays the groundwork for much of his later life, marking him as both royal and divine and foretelling greatness in his future. Yet while his bloodline and his destined role may be significant components of his character, they are not what will make *Heracles* great. *Heracles* is defined (as a character) by the challenges he overcomes and the suffering that he endures. With this in mind let us now discuss *Heracles*’ interactions and pre-natal enmity with *Hera*, the goddess who will make him great.

Heracles' Birth

Heracles' frequent impious behaviour is not always without provocation, as there are many instances of the gods affecting and sabotaging his life, none more so than that of his step-mother Hera. Hera's enmity towards her husband's progeny is, despite being omnipresent in the Heracles myth, rarely explored in depth. Most often it is implied to be ill will stemming from her husband's infidelity directed at his child. Perhaps more significantly than this for us is the thematic opposition of Heracles and Hera, with the latter being associated with the domestic and the civilized, the antithesis of what Heracles will come to represent. It is also possible to read into Hera's treatment of Heracles a more brutally benevolent motive; a desire to see the man to greatness through hardship. This is chiefly event in our interpretation of Pindar below. In discussing the birth and infancy of Heracles we come across two significant examples of Hera's sabotaging of Heracles. First is Hera's sabotage of Heracles' rightful claim to kingship before he is even born. The second is when she sends snakes to kill him in his crib. The former myth is recorded in the *Iliad*, where Agamemnon recounts this story, telling how Hera caused Eurystheus to be born two months premature while delaying the birth of Heracles. She manipulated these events so that an oath sworn by Zeus, stating that the first born of Perseus' bloodline would rule all around him, would cause Heracles to be born into servitude rather than as a ruler as Zeus had intended. Zeus intends Heracles to be ruler, as he is to be due to be born first. However Hera delays Heracles' birth and causes his cousin Eurystheus to be born first and become Heracles' ruler according to Zeus' edict. Heracles' service to Eurystheus will ultimately lead to the performance of his famous labours (*Iliad* 19:110-146). Heracles is made great by his endurance of hardship which leads to his greatness.

This myth of Heracles' birth found in the *Iliad* demonstrates the type of divinely inflicted misfortune that will be a feature of his later life. Book 19 of the *Iliad* is part of a turning point in the poem. Achilles has re-joined the army, received new armour from the gods, and will soon be tearing through the Trojan ranks, during which his fighting will be likened to a monster of myth as he attempts to avenge the fallen Patroclus¹⁷. When Agamemnon tells this story of Heracles' birth it is to the assembled Greek soldiers. Achilles has given what for him is a fairly humble apology for allowing himself to be so upset as to leave the fighting over his argument with Agamemnon. After Achilles has spoken, Agamemnon then stands up and attempts to absolve himself of any guilt by blaming the gods, specifically Zeus, Fate and Fury.

“But I am not to blame!

Zeus and Fate and the Fury stalking through the night,

They are the ones who drove that savage madness in my heart”

Iliad 19:100-102

Above all the others though Agamemnon specifically blames the eldest daughter of Zeus, Ruin, whom he claims blinds people to their folly. This is where the story of Heracles'

¹⁷ C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad*, 100.

delayed birth is told, with Hera perpetrating the deception while Ruin blinds Zeus to the rashness of his oath that ends up condemning his son to servitude.

This depiction within the *Iliad* of Heracles' suffering, coming as a result of Hera's meddling in his life is in keeping with the depiction of him within the *Odyssey*. Here, like Odysseus himself, Heracles is a man who suffered great hardship over the course of his life, much of it at the hands of the gods. This similarity is put forward fairly directly when Odysseus meets Heracles in Hades and the later compares their lives:

“Royal son of Laertes, Odysseus famed for exploits,
luckless man, you too? Braving out a fate as harsh
as the fate I bore, alive in the light of day?”

Odyssey 11:708-710

Like the Iliadic episode where Heracles is born in servitude and like the story of Odysseus within the *Odyssey*, Heracles endures hardship and bad luck, much of it owing to the interventions of the gods. This theme of Heracles enduring and overcoming hardship will eventually form the basis for one of the most enduring aspects of Heracles' myth, namely the murder of his family. Heracles is driven to this act by a divinely inflicted fit of madness originating from Hera or an agent of hers. Purifying himself of this horrific event is one of a number of reasons Heracles is forced to undertake the labours. Ultimately, in this section of the *Iliad* Agamemnon likens the hardships that he and the Greeks' army have gone through since Achilles refused to fight and had his mother turn Zeus against them to the hardships endured by Heracles. In likening the Greeks suffering to that of Heracles, Agamemnon places the responsibility on the gods, while also promising the suffering they endured will lead them to glory (*Iliad* 19:221-229).

That Heracles' life is defined largely by suffering resulting from divine meddling is apparent even in the etymology of his name. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World* says that Heracles' name means “Glorious through Hera” and that it was probably chosen so that the man would live under her protection.¹⁸ At first this seems a supremely ironic name based on all we have seen and all we will see of Heracles' relationship with his step-mother. However an alternative reading of this is seen in Pindar, where Hera gives Heracles his name (renaming him from Alkides, which was also the name of Heracles' grandfather) as all he will accomplish will be the result of her harassment.¹⁹ In this sense Heracles is glorious through Hera's actions against him, as he is forced to endure great trials and accomplish great feats as a result of Hera's sabotaging his life. The *Bibliotheca* similarly has Heracles renamed from

¹⁸ J. W Roberts, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*, (Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), 332.

¹⁹ Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 378.

Alkides, though here he is given the name by the oracle at Delphi when he is instructed to serve Eurystheus and complete the labours set to him. Diodorus also has Heracles renamed, in his version by the inhabitants of Argos shortly after Heracles strangles two snakes that Hera sends against him, as “he had gained glory (*kleos*) by the aid of Hera” (*Library of History* 4.10.1). The implication here again is that Heracles will achieve greatness as a result of Hera’s meddling in his life. In this way it is suffering and endurance of hardships which are the source of Heracles’ *kleos*, particularly those that emanate from Hera. These are mainly the labours, which Heracles undertakes after Hera drives him to kill his family. It is also foreshadowed by an incident where Heracles strangles two snakes in his crib that were sent by Hera, which we will discuss next.

This notion of a hero earning the ire of one or more gods is fairly common to Greek epic poetry (examples include Agamemnon and Apollo, Odysseus and Poseidon). However, rarely is it so pronounced as in the Heracles myth. Hera giving Heracles his name suggests not only that Heracles’ suffering is core to his myth, but it is also intrinsically tied to his accomplishments. Heracles’ misfortune often places him in situations where he must perform deeds that ultimately benefit men and gods, in keeping with his prophesized role. The greatest example of this is the labours which he undertakes while serving Eurystheus. It is apparent then that the divine meddling of Hera, and the frequent misfortunes in Heracles’ life, are necessary for his role as a civilizer, as he is pushed to perform civilizing deeds.

Heracles’ Infancy

Heracles’ uncivilized civilizer persona emerges when, while in his crib, Hera sends two snakes to kill him (Pindar, *First Nemean Ode*). The infant Heracles seizes these snakes and strangles them. This is the first, but by no means the last, instance when Heracles will have to fight against a monster or beast sent against him by his step-mother. Indeed, as we shall see in this section, Heracles’ first heroic action contains several elements that will echo through the civilizing deeds of his later life, including a number of the labours. For example, snakes appear several times within Heracles’ myth, and often are important to establishing and developing his character. Heracles’ combat with the snakes in his infancy foreshadows his later conflict with the hydra, one of the most significant episodes of the Heracles myth. This myth also helps to bookend Heracles’ life around the theme of snakes. While he defeats snakes shortly after his birth, his death will be brought on by the poison of the hydra, returned to him from its use on his own arrows through a lengthy series of circumstances. For now, however, we shall focus on the snakes strangled in Heracles’ crib and what significance this has in relation to his later life’s work.

In Pindar's *First Nemean Ode* shortly after the infant Heracles defeats these snakes, his step-father summons the seer Tiresias who then predicts Heracles' life-time of fighting monsters and evil men and generally civilizing the world for which he will be rewarded with immortality:

what lay in wait for Herakles-
 how many savage beasts he would slay
 on land and sea, beasts
 with no sense of justice...

Pindar *Nemean* 1:61-2

This episode contains several elements that will be repeated in later civilizing deeds of Heracles. One of these is his way of fighting the monsters bare-handed. Heracles' most iconic fight, one that is depicted in art more often than any other of his feats²⁰, is his bare-handed combat with the Nemean Lion. In his combat with the Lion, as in his infant encounter with Hera's serpents, Heracles wins by strangling the creature sent against him. This can be seen again in Heracles' twelfth labour where he defeats Hades' herdsman Menoites, this time by crushing his ribs, and later also defeats Cerberus barehanded (*Bibliotheca* II.v.12). The importance of Heracles fighting creatures bare-handed, and grappling with them specifically places him on the same level as the creature he is fighting,²¹ in the same way as a duel may be carried out with two similarly armed warriors. That he does this with animals contributes to his image as a savage and uncivilized man.

The otherworldly nature of the serpents is something else we will see repeated later in Heracles' life. In Hesiod's *Theogony* many of the monstrous beasts that Heracles fights in the course of his labours are stated to be the children of the monstrous Titan Typhon and his mate Echidna, including the Hydra, the Nemean Lion, Cerberus and Orthos²² (*Theogony* 309-311). Other creatures that Heracles comes against in the course of his labours have divine associations rather than parentage but are presented as no less otherworldly than the snakes. The Ceryneian Deer for example is described as having golden horns and being sacred to Artemis. This episode even has the goddess appear with Apollo in tow to chastise Heracles for hunting her sacred animal (*Bibliotheca* II.v.3). Another incident of this is Heracles' capture of the Cretan Bull. It is suggested by the *Bibliotheca* that this creature is the same one

²⁰ Frank Brommer, *Heracles: the Twelve Labours of the Hero in Ancient Art and Literature* (New Rochelle, N.Y., A.D. Caratzas, 1985), 5.

²¹ Heracles' fighting barehanded is sometimes, but not always, justified in the text. For example the Nemean Lion's hide was impenetrable to weapons and Menoites challenged Heracles to a wrestling match. At other times he is simply without a weapon, such as when he strangles the snakes as an infant.

²² A two headed dog that Heracles defeats while he is stealing the cattle of Geryon. The Pseudo-Apollodorus responsible for the *Bibliotheca* calls this creature the offspring of Typhon and Echidna (II.v.10). Hesiod agrees though also claims that he is another partner of Echidna's, and that they together sired the Sphinx (*Theogony* 309, 326-327).

sent out of the sea by Poseidon to be sacrificed by King Minos (II.v.7), which would make this bull sacred to Poseidon. In this way these creatures are seen to have a connection with Heracles, who himself is of otherworldly origin. Heracles' empathetic connection with the monsters he fights is something that will be delved into later in this thesis. Having a connection to such creatures does however reinforce his uncivilized nature.

The fact that the serpents are sent against Heracles by Hera also links them to monsters that Heracles will fight in his later life, specifically the Nemean Lion and Hydra. Hera's agency in raising (though rearing may be the more appropriate term) these monsters and setting them against Heracles is a detail found mainly in the *Theogony*, alongside the discussion of these creatures' common ancestry. The Hydra is the first of these mentioned (313-315) and while Hera is said to have "nourished" the creature, it is ambiguous as to whether she intended it to fight Heracles, though her anger at its death is mentioned. The second is the Nemean Lion (327-329). Again Hera is described as having raised the creature, though whether she meant it to do harm to Heracles specifically is ambiguous. Furthermore, Hera's hostility towards Heracles, though not explicitly expressed within the *Theogony*, is certainly well established prior to the *Theogony*, as seen in the above mentioned birth myth within the *Iliad*. Furthermore, the suggestion that Hera raised the creature to destructive ends is clear in the following lines.

...the Nemean Lion
whom Hera, the queenly wife of Zeus,
trained up and settled
among the hills of Nemea,
to be a plague to mankind

Theogony 327-329

Overall Hera's motivation for raising these two creatures is unclear, however it is hard to imagine that the hostility between Heracles and Hera was not a factor, whether in the myth, the text or in Hesiod's mind. It seems too great a coincidence that the two monsters Hera is mentioned as having raised within the *Theogony* both end up in conflict with Heracles, with whom she has an established enmity.

The hostility that Heracles' step-mother bears him is one of the most enduring aspects of the Heracles myth, as is her influence over the course his life takes. This early attempt to kill Heracles by sending snakes against him acts as a precursor for much of Heracles' life, which will be spent fighting divine beasts, monsters and the machinations of his step-mother. Furthermore, this episode of the Heracles myth also adheres to the formula seen in many of

his later fights with monsters. In an alternative version of the myth²³ it is Amphitryon who set the snakes on the infant brothers to discern which of the children his son is and which is fathered by Zeus (*Bibliotheca* II.iv.8). This version makes the implied purpose of the snakes in the version where they are sent by Hera more overt: the snakes are a test of greatness for the young Heracles, one that he passes by not fleeing like his brother but by fighting and defeating them. This aspect of Heracles' character will be essential in later myths, especially those of the labours. In defeating monstrous animals in such a way, Heracles establishes his domination over creatures representing untamed nature through his physical might. In this way Heracles demonstrates throughout his life and labours the same qualities Amphitryon believed to be indicative of divinity within him even as an infant. It is apparent that such civilizing behaviour is what Zeus had intended for Heracles in *The Shield of Heracles*. However, as we will soon see, the same strength and capacity for violence that mark Heracles as divine and enable him as a civilizer can and will be exercised in uncivilized acts as well.

Heracles' Youth

In contrast with his heroic defeat of the two snakes as an infant, Heracles' youthful deeds present the first evidence that Heracles is neither welcome nor does he belong in a civilized context. However we also see that when removed from this setting he is capable of accomplishing great things, serving the interests of humanity. There are three events of note that are associated with Heracles' youth relevant to this discussion: the murder of Linos, the hunting of the Cithaironian Lion, and his instigation and participation in Thebes' war against Egeus. Specifically we will discuss how Heracles' excessively violent predilections, while themselves depicted as uncivilized, can be directed towards either civilizing or uncivilized behaviour. Furthermore we will suggest that Heracles' surroundings affect how he behaves; while he behaves violently in both civilized and uncivilized settings, his violence manifests itself in different ways depending on his context. In a civilized setting Heracles' violent nature is manifest in violent behaviours, specifically murder and theft. In an uncivilized setting however his violent tendencies are most often directed at an enemy of civilization, and thus he fights for the cause of civilization.

The first event of Heracles' youth we will discuss is his murder of Linos, who was Heracles' lyre teacher. In the myth Linos strikes Heracles first, possibly for being a bad student, whereupon Heracles becomes enraged and kills him in return. In the *Bibliotheca* II.iv.9 Heracles kills him by hitting him with a lyre. Timothy Gantz also makes reference to a red figured vase (fifth century BCE) depicting Heracles wielding part of a stool to kill Linos.²⁴

²³ Attributed to Pherecydes by the Pseudo-Apollodorus who wrote the *Bibliotheca*.

²⁴ Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, 379.

When Heracles is prosecuted for this murder he cites a law absolving himself of guilt as he was not the instigator. Regardless of this, his step-father Amphitryon sends him away from the city lest he do something like this again (*Bibliotheca* II.iv.9). Already in this myth we see Heracles' violent temperament emerging. That he was not the instigator is beside the point as it is clear that his reaction was in excess to what was acceptable. No reason is given within the *Bibliotheca* why Linos struck Heracles first, but the law Heracles reads in his defence states that instigating violence is unjust. However, it is not implied in the text that Linos meant Heracles any lasting harm and whether or not the strike was unjust, killing the instigator in this situation was disproportionate. This interpretation is compounded by the fact that Amphitryon had Heracles sent from the city and that he did so in order to prevent his step-son from doing anything like this again. This suggests that Amphitryon at least believed that this behaviour was unacceptable, and that such violence was within the boy's character and would likely manifest itself again within the city.

When Heracles is growing up tending cattle outside the city he takes it upon himself to hunt the Cithaironian Lion. The main source of this myth of Heracles fighting a lion, the *Bibliotheca* II.iv.10, suggests that he fought this lion to defend his step-father's cattle, which he had been sent to tend, and it is this lion, not the Nemean one, that is the source of his famous cloak (*Bibliotheca* II.iv.10). It is important to note that it is here outside of the civilized setting of Thebes that Heracles performs arguably his first civilizing deed. Whereas in the city he was making a nuisance of himself committing violent acts of questionable morality, when his violent behaviour is directed towards a destructive force, such as the lion, he is able to rid the region of this threat. This emphasises how Heracles is at his best when he is far from a civilized setting (having hunted the lion to its lair) while within the city his violent nature causes him to harm those close to him. In addition this is a rare instance of Heracles undertaking a civilizing deed himself, rather than being sent or manipulated into doing it.

Finally we discuss Heracles' war against Eginos. As the myth goes, Thebes was paying tribute to Eginos (the king of the Minyans) after a Theban charioteer killed Eginos' father and he had marched on the Thebans, ending with a promise that Thebes would pay him tribute for twenty years. Heracles came across several heralds of Eginos going to collect the tribute. In a staggering act of brutality Heracles mutilates the heralds, cutting off their ears, noses and hands, tying these around their necks and telling them to take those back as tribute to Eginos. Eginos marches against Thebes, and Heracles, having received arms and armour from Athena, leads the Theban forces to victory, (though his step-father is killed in the battle) and kills Eginos. Heracles then forces the Minyans to pay double the tribute Thebes had been paying them (*Bibliotheca* II.iv.11).

It is worthwhile establishing the immorality of Heracles' mutilation of Egeus' heralds in the context of the tradition of *Xenia* (Guest Friendship). Because of this, despite the fact that there is a significant time gap between the two texts, it is worthwhile to compare the instance to two similar acts of mutilation in the *Odyssey*. The first of these is in book twenty one of the *Odyssey*, where a story is told about the centaur Eurytion getting drunk, and offending his host Pirithous who punishes him by throwing him out of his house and cutting off his nose and ears.

“Wine - it drove the Centaur, famous Eurytion,
mad in the halls of lionhearted Pirithous.
There to visit the Lapiths, crazed with wine
The headlong Centaur bent to his ugly work
In the Prince's house! His hosts sprang up,
seizing with fury, dragging him across the forecourt,
flung him out of doors, hacking his nose and ears off”

Odyssey 21:330-336

Within the *Odyssey* this serves as foreshadowing Odysseus' plans to attack the suitors, who are guests (or intruders as he sees them) in his home for having offended him and will similarly mutilate one of their conspirators. This incident is the second example discussed and can be seen in book twenty two. This mutilation is the punishment meted out to Melanthius, a servant who had abused Odysseus when he was disguised and had helped the suitors who had invaded Odysseus' home while he was away at Troy by giving them armour when Odysseus was trying to kill them.

“They hauled him out through the doorway, into the court,
lopped off his nose and ears with a ruthless knife,
tore his genitals out for the dogs to eat raw
and in manic fury hacked off hands and feet.”

Odyssey 22:501-504

That Melanthius could survive this treatment seems unlikely, and indeed it is held at least by Manuel Fernandez-Galiano that what is described in this passage is a murder. However, Malcolm Davies suggests that Homer would not have left out that he died and points to the previous example of Eurytion to show that in Homer's mind it is possible for someone to survive mutilation.²⁵ The second part of this argument is flawed as Eurytion is firstly not human and secondly did not endure the castration and removal of limbs that Melanthius did.

²⁵ Malcolm Davies, ‘Odyssey 22.474-7: Murder or Mutilation?’ *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1994), 534-536, 534.

However, the fact that Melanthius' death is implicit rather than explicit could mean that he survives his injuries and this incident may be considered a mutilation rather than a murder. This is important in relating Heracles' act of mutilation to this one as Heracles explicitly does not kill the heralds he mutilates.

The connection between the mutilations of Eurytion and Melanthius, as well as with Heracles' treatment of the Minyan heralds, seems to be a perceived insult to the mutilator. In the two instances in the *Odyssey* this is associated with bad behaviour on the part of a house guest, in keeping with the overall theme of hospitality in the *Odyssey*. For Heracles, it is the demanding of tribute from his city. On the one hand this behaviour may be excused by the texts, as in the *Odyssey* the mutilated parties are clearly portrayed as being in the wrong while in Heracles' case his actions can be seen as him defending the interests of his city. On the other hand it seems a disproportionately cruel act even within the context of the text for the transgressions being punished. By this point of the poem, Odysseus has become, like Heracles, affected by the uncivilized outside world, resulting in acts of extreme cruelty such as this and the wholesale slaughter of the suitors which, even if justified by the law, is still depicted as excessive by the text. In this regard it may be the case then that the morality is less the issue than the sheer brutality of both acts, as even if the victims were in the wrong, it is still a cruel and uncivilized punishment to mete out.

While a link may be drawn between the actions of Heracles and Odysseus, a significant component present in only Heracles' act of mutilation is the fact that the victims were heralds. Traditionally heralds were under the protection of Hermes and were considered inviolable, even in times of war. Heracles attacking them, let alone mutilating them to send a message to their king must be considered a supremely barbaric, even blasphemous act, even if it was done to protect the interests of his city. It is safe to assume then that in this instance, much like in his murder of Linos, Heracles' actions are morally transgressive at best. As with the death of Linos, emphasis is on Heracles' disproportionately brutal reactions to provocation, suggesting that even when Heracles' acts may be technically within the bounds of civil behaviour, they are performed in a decidedly 'uncivil' and excessively violent manner.

Heracles' Madness

Perhaps the greatest indication within the Heracles myth of his incompatibility with civilized society is the fit of madness that he experiences in Thebes, during which he kills his family. After Heracles defeats the Minyans, Creon, the king of Thebes, marries him to his eldest daughter Megara and together they have several children. Already in the myth of Heracles we have seen his rage cause the death of his music instructor and arguably his step-father who died in the battle Heracles instigated. However it is with the murder of Megara and their

children that Heracles' uncivilized nature and the toxicity of his love are truly driven home. In the most basic version of the myth, found in Euripides' *Heracles*, he is driven into a fit of madness by either Hera or an agent of hers. During this spell of madness Heracles attacks and murders several members of his family. The details of his madness, who exactly is killed and how, as well as how his madness is ended and how Heracles reacts vary between myths but this much is common. Sophie Mills in *Theseus, Tragedy and the Athenian Empire* suggests that Heracles' madness was known to the writer of the *Cypria*,²⁶ meaning this element dates from at least the second half of the 6th century BCE,²⁷ though it may be earlier.

While the fit of madness that causes Heracles to murder his family is usually depicted as divinely inspired, Heracles is not entirely absolved of this act. While it marks another instance, perhaps the crowning one, of the gods, specifically Hera, manufacturing his misfortune, it also demonstrates that this kind of extreme violence is within Heracles' nature. Evidence of this can be seen in Euripides' play *Heracles* which portrays this scene with the detail that Heracles perceives his children, wife and father as his enemies as he kills them. Specifically he perceives his own children to be the children of his cousin and enemy Eurystheus and his father to be Eurystheus' father (966-971). Heracles believes he is murdering Eurystheus' family and is gleeful at the prospect. This clearly demonstrates how his violent nature makes him a danger to those close to him, as while the madness may be divinely inspired the willingness and even eagerness of Heracles to commit horrific acts of violence on those he believes to be the family of Eurystheus is ultimately his downfall.

It is noted that Heracles' madness is not his own but is inflicted on him. In Euripides' play this is the action of Lyssa, a goddess of madness, at the behest of both Hera and Iris (*Heracles* 856). Lyssa as a goddess is strongly tied to battle rage, as well as more animalistic rages, particularly those of dogs including rabid dogs, through the word *lussa*.²⁸ There is also an association between Lyssa and the madness-induced betrayal or slaying of loved ones. In addition to Heracles, as Ruth Padel points out, she is responsible for driving Acteon's dogs to attack their master after he is turned into a stag and for making Lycurgus kill his wife and son.²⁹ Interestingly, in the *Bibliotheca*'s version of Lycurgus' myth, he is made to see his son as a trunk of ivy, which is sacred to Dionysus, the god whose wrath he had incurred by attempting to forbid his worship and imprisoning his followers (*Bibliotheca* III.v.1). Lycurgus is made to think he is cutting away at this ivy, attacking his enemy, when he is in fact

²⁶ Sophie Mills, *Theseus, Tragedy, and the Athenian Empire*, 132.

²⁷ Martin L. West, *Greek Epic Fragments: From the Seventh Century to the Fifth Century BC* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, Harvard University Press, 2003), 121.

²⁸ Ruth Padel. *Whom Gods Destroy: Elements of Greek and Tragic Madness*, (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 18.

²⁹ Ruth Padel. *Whom Gods Destroy*, 18.

mutilating his own son. This can be seen as associated with Heracles' situation, where he sees his family as the family of his enemy. In both cases Lyssa causes these men to turn their violent inclinations on their own families, punishing them and those around them. In the case of Heracles this shows how the violence he usually reserves for his enemies, often used in civilizing deeds, is still reflective of an uncivilized side of his character. The violence he uses itself is uncivilized, or at least has no place in the civilized world, hence his exile.

This is not the first or last time familial relation or friendship to Heracles has led to hardship or death. As mentioned above Linos is killed by him and Amphytrion dies in the war Heracles starts. In Euripides' *Heracles* Amphytrion is not killed, however he and the children of Megara and Heracles are threatened with death by the usurper Lycus (37-40). Heracles' mother Alcmene, nephew Iolaus and his children by his second marriage suffer at the hands of Eurystheus after Heracles' death. They are exiled and chased in another of Euripides' plays *The Children of Heracles* (more below). Heracles is responsible for the centaur Cheiron's death, as he accidentally shoots him with a poisoned arrow (*Bibliotheca* II.v.4). His second wife Deianeira hangs herself after she is tricked into poisoning Heracles' robe. For unwittingly delivering the poisoned robe Heracles throws his herald Lichas off a cliff (*Bibliotheca* II.vii.7). While Heracles is not directly at fault for some of these incidents, in many of them the common theme of Heracles' rage and violent behaviour causing harm to come to those close to him can be seen. Cheiron is shot by Heracles when he is attacking Cheiron's enraged fellow centaurs, who Heracles provoked by opening a wine jar. Deianeira is tricked into poisoning Heracles by a centaur, Nessus, whom Heracles had mortally wounded. Heracles' herald Lichas is a direct victim of Heracles' rage. The same assets that allow him to defeat monstrous enemies- his strength, courage, powerful weapons and willingness to fight in a more civilized context ruin both him and those he holds dear.

Heracles and Eurystheus

As seen above in the myth of Heracles' birth, Heracles' cousin Eurystheus, due to his earlier birth, holds a position of power over Heracles and also plays a role in the establishment of Heracles' identity as an uncivilized civilizer. While Eurystheus had no agency in depriving Heracles' of his intended birth right, in myths of their later life he does take a more actively antagonistic role. Eurystheus is second only to Hera in his spite towards Heracles and is his greatest mortal enemy. He is in every regard Heracles' opposite. Where Heracles is strong and brave, Eurystheus is weak and cowardly. Where Heracles courageously ventures into the mythic wilderness seeking monstrous beasts and treasures, Eurystheus cowers in his city. The contrast is furthered when Heracles brings back his prize from the first labour, the Nemean Lion's skin. He is barred entry to the city as Eurystheus hides in a storage jar he has placed

under the earth (*Bibliotheca* II.v.1).³⁰ Heracles is driven further from the civilized city and into the uncivilized wilderness as Eurystheus retreats further into the city and away from Heracles. Eurystheus' efforts against Heracles, forcing hardship upon him, are one way he reinforces Heracles' identity as an uncivilized civilizer, much in the same way Hera contributes to this identity as discussed above. Eurystheus also serves as an example of why Heracles must be uncivilized to be a civilizer, and how hardship is core to his myth. He does this by symbolically being portrayed as Heracles' opposite. By embodying a figure favoured by Hera, born into luxury and rulership and never called upon to fight monsters and evil men, Eurystheus represents what Heracles might have been without the events of his life that make him uncivilized and lead him to commit civilizing acts. It is in being Eurystheus' opposite that Heracles becomes the uncivilized civilizer.

Eurystheus is relevant in three stages of the Heracles myth and is always Heracles' antagonist, profiting from his defeats and humiliated by his victories. The first of these is the above mentioned myth of the two descendents of Perseus' birth, where Eurystheus gains the sovereignty that was meant to be Heracles'. The second is the labours of Heracles, which are assigned to him by Eurystheus. Variations on this theme exist as to why exactly Heracles must perform these tasks assigned to him by Eurystheus. As mentioned above, in the *Iliad* Heracles is born into Eurystheus' service (*Iliad* 19:110-140). This version is supported by the *Odyssey* in which Heracles' ghost confirms that he was sent on a number of labours, including going to Hades to retrieve Cerberus, by a less worthy man he was forced to serve:

“Son of Zeus that I was, my torments never ended,
forced to slave for a man not half the man I was:
he saddled me with the worst heartbreaking labours.
Why, he sent me down here once, to retrieve the hound
that guards the dead”

Odyssey 11:711-715

It can be assumed that Heracles is talking about his service to Eurystheus, as there is no mention elsewhere in the *Odyssey* of Heracles performing the labours for any other man. It would make sense then that the *Odyssey* would subscribe to the same version of the myth of Heracles being born into Eurystheus' service. The other common reason for Heracles'

³⁰Sylvia Benton presents several examples of this motif appearing in ancient art between the fifth and sixth century BCE. The only difference is that Heracles is presenting Eurystheus with a boar rather than a lion's skin, obviously a reference to Heracles' capture of the Erymanthian Boar, his third labour. See: Sylvia Benton, 'Herakles and Eurystheus at Knossos', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 57/1 (1937), 38-43 and Alexandre G. Mitchell, 'Humour in Greek Vase Painting', *Revue Archéologique*, Nouvelle Série, Fasc. 1 (2004), 3-32.

servitude to Eurystheus, as detailed in the *Bibliotheca* (II.iv.12), is that he was sent into Eurystheus' service to purify himself from the murder of his family or else to earn his immortality. Either way, through his performance of the labours we see Heracles receive some measure of satisfaction from Eurystheus, as the king is repeatedly humiliated by Heracles' ability to perform the seemingly impossible tasks assigned to him. As well as this, Eurystheus reveals a distinct fear of the trophies that Heracles brings back to prove his accomplishments, when he hides and refuses to allow Heracles into the city when he returns carrying the lion's skin.

The final role Eurystheus plays in the Heracles myth actually takes place after Heracles' death. As detailed in Euripides' play *The Children of Heracles*, following Heracles' death Eurystheus is attempting to kill his rival's children who are now in the custody of Heracles' nephew Iolaus and his mother Alcmene (10-41). As the play starts Iolaus and Heracles' sons are hiding in a temple to Zeus at Marathon, having been exiled by every other city in which they have sought shelter. The reason for their exile from these other city states is fear of reprisal from Eurystheus' army for harbouring Heracles' family. The play progresses as the Athenians under Demophon are eventually convinced to fight in defence of Heracles' family, partially to repay the debt owed to Heracles for saving Theseus from the underworld. In the battle the now elderly Iolaus prays to Zeus and Hebe (Heracles' wife as a god) to have his youth restored to him for a day. This is granted and he captures Eurystheus and brings him before Alcmene who orders him killed and his body given to the dogs (1050-1051).

Children of Heracles contains many similar elements to Euripides' other works featuring Heracles. These include a young woman giving herself up to be sacrificed, as was seen in *Alceste*, as well as the children of Heracles being threatened by a tyrannical king and the favourable depiction of Athens also seen in Euripides' *Heracles*.³¹ *The Children of Heracles*

³¹The patriotism for Euripides' home city of Athens permeates this play, with the Athenian characters being torn between their innate nobility and piety and their passion for just and moral actions. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than when Demophon is ready to attack Eurystheus' herald in defence of the elderly Iolaus and the sanctity of Zeus's temple but is stopped by the Chorus (made up of the men of Marathon) who advise against the imprudent action of attacking a herald, allowing the herald to flee back to Eurystheus (269-273). There may also be a subtle jab at Sparta, Athens' enemy at the time of the plays performance, hidden in the text. After Eurystheus is captured the servant who brings him before Alcmene comments that it is the will of the rulers of Athens that a man taken prisoner should not be executed (961-965). Alcmene none the less has him killed and his body desecrated (1050-1051). Robin Waterfield in his commentary quotes Christopher Collard as saying that Euripides intends by having Alcmene flaunt the laws of Athens to bring out her "repellent vindictiveness" however this seems too shallow a reading in light of the connection between Heracles' family (his children having allegedly founded the Peloponnese) and Sparta, as well as the fact that Athens was at war with Sparta at the time of the play's performance (430BCE). This suggestion that the acts of Heracles' family are meant as an attack on Sparta is lent credence by the prophetic last words of Eurystheus, who predicts he will be buried in front of a temple of Athena (Athena Pallenis) protecting Athens from the descendants of Heracles' children:

"Looking
kindly on you and protecting the city, but unremittingly hostile

is significant in its depiction of Eurystheus, as it allows him for once to explain his enmity with Heracles. It should be said that it does still depict him as a coward. This is demonstrated in the account of the battle fought between Eurystheus and Demophon where Demophon offers Eurystheus the chance to duel with him in order to spare their armies needless bloodshed but Eurystheus refuses him out of cowardice (801-818). Eurystheus' cowardice being one of the defining attributes of his character, it is not surprising the play goes out of its way to establish this. Indeed his main motivation in hunting down Heracles' children is his fear of them:

“My safety lay in acting in that way. If you had been in my situation,
I suppose *you* would not have mercilessly harassed the
hate-filled offspring of the hostile lion”

Euripides *The Children of Heracles* 1004-1006

This could be seen as yet another contrast between Eurystheus and Heracles, in that the latter has transcended death and become a god, whereas Eurystheus is still living in fear of Heracles' reprisal. Eurystheus is obsessed with his own mortality and thus hunts down Heracles' last remaining family for fear that they might threaten his life.

More significant however is how Eurystheus justifies his original enmity with Heracles. It is unsurprising, given the circumstances of his life, that Eurystheus blames Hera for setting him against Heracles (990). After all, given the circumstances of Eurystheus' birth it is reasonable to say he was born to be Heracles' rival according to the will of Hera. Eurystheus certainly seems to believe this as he suggests his enmity with Heracles was not his choice but the role he was given by Hera:

“But my likes and dislikes didn't come into it, since
a god was involved: it was Hera who afflicted me with this
illness. Once I had initiated the enmity with Heracles, and
had appreciated that this was my struggle I was engaged
upon, I became a master at devising all kinds of suffering for him.”

Euripides *The Children of Heracles* 989-993

to these children's descendants when they betray the
kindness you have shown them today and invade in
strength”

Euripides, *The Children of Heracles* 1032-1036

For more on the political connotations of this and other plays by Euripides see J. A. Spranger, 'The Political Element in the Heracleidae of Euripides', *The Classical Quarterly*, 19/3-4 (Jul. - Oct., 1925), 117-128., Harry C. Avery; 'Euripides' "Heracleidai.", *The American Journal of Philology*, 92/4 (Oct. 1971), 539-565.

Euripides portrays a slightly more complex and tragic Eurystheus than is usually seen. In *Children of Heracles* he is changed from an underdeveloped narrative tool and foil, used to facilitate and accentuate Heracles' labours and accomplishments, to a pawn of the gods in his own right. He is presented as a man who is so resigned to his role as Heracles' enemy that even after their father's death he will continue to oppose Heracles' descendants.

Ultimately what was said at the start of this discussion of Eurystheus still stands: that Eurystheus is Heracles' nemesis and opposite. Whether by choice, circumstance, or the will of the gods, Eurystheus is set against Heracles from infancy to beyond the grave. By simple virtue of being Heracles' opposite Eurystheus serves to accentuate the heroic and even some not-so-heroic qualities that Heracles exemplifies: courageous and strong, disempowered yet powerful, wild and unrestrained by the laws of civilized society. The contrast with Eurystheus' weak and cowardly character certainly accentuates the difference between the two, but more than anything Eurystheus' status represents what Heracles might have been without Hera's enmity and the misfortune that results. Eurystheus has everything that Heracles was meant to be born to: kingship, wealth and authority. By his own strength Heracles will eventually come to these things, and so much more. He becomes a god, the reward of the labours Eurystheus gives him, while Eurystheus himself remains a mortal, terrified of death. Eurystheus exists within civilization, but he is not a civilizer. He fears the uncivilized and retreats from it, as seen when Heracles presents him with the skin of the Nemean Lion and Eurystheus bars him from the city and hides in a jar. Heracles does not fear the uncivilized because he has a strength Eurystheus does not, a strength born from the endurance of misfortune and familiarity with the uncivilized.

The myths of Heracles' conception, birth, infancy and youth contain foreshadowing elements for the events of his later life. His predisposition towards fighting monstrous creatures, his wild and often violent personality, and how he gains glory and accomplishment out of his ordeal are all present in these myths. As we have seen, Hera's role is crucial in the development of Heracles' character. Zeus may conceive of Heracles as a protector, but he is made glorious through Hera, as it is only through overcoming the misfortune and suffering that she inflicts that he is able to achieve greatness. In these myths of the early life of Heracles we have seen aspects of the civilizer and the much enduring hero he will later become. This will be dealt with in later chapters. We have also seen the seeds of the uncivilized behaviour he will demonstrate as a grown man, and how his violent nature will lead him to accomplish great things, including his labours. We will next see how this uncivilized aspect of Heracles' character manifests itself, and how his use of archery is used to accentuate these negative characteristics.

Chapter 2: Heracles, Archery and the Uncivilized

The previous chapter discussed how Heracles was born to be a civilizer, but possessed certain innate traits that made him ill-suited to live within civilization. We went on to demonstrate that when these uncivilized traits were directed at the enemies of civilization, Heracles was capable of performing great civilizing deeds. This chapter will demonstrate further Heracles' incompatibility with the civilized by examining the relationship between him and archery in Greek myth, and show how archery is depicted as a dishonourable method of fighting. We will also demonstrate how it is often associated with non-Greeks, and with immoral and impious behaviour. We will also discuss how Heracles and archery relate to civilization and its antithesis, the uncivilized exterior world. It will be argued in this chapter that Heracles' practice of archery is used to depict him as an uncivilized and dishonourable yet pragmatic hero, and that this is connected with the previous chapter's theme of Heracles becoming a civilizer when in an uncivilized setting. To this end it will also be argued that the bow itself in many Greek myths carries connotations of incivility and barbarism.

Unlike other chapters in this thesis, this one will discuss its sources *diachronically* rather than *synchronically*. The reason for this is that the chapter will be focused around several key texts that demonstrate the evolving attitude towards Heracles' archery, as well as archery in general. These texts include the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Cypria* and *Little Iliad* as well as two of the Athenian plays: Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and Euripides' *Heracles*. For the most part these texts will display a largely negative view of archery, with the exception of *Philoctetes*. However, this attitude towards archery, its morality and utility in combat evolves over time. We will also see this reflected in the changing depictions of Heracles between these texts, in which he is often synonymous with archery. For example, note the *Iliad*, where the emphasis is placed on individual duels with spears and glory, there is a decidedly negative attitude towards the bow as a weapon rejected by the Greek nobility. Heracles' use of the bow in this context is significant given this pejorative attitude towards archery. As we move to later texts, those of the fifth century Athenian theatre, we see an evolved attitude towards the bow, reflecting a more pragmatic view of warfare.

The *Iliad*: Nobility, Piety and Archery

Reference to Heracles in the *Iliad* suggests that he is a legendary archer, as even the gods are not beyond the reach of his arrows or his audacity. This is seen particularly in an instance when Dione recalls several instances of Heracles attacking the gods, specifically Hera and Hades (*Iliad* 5:446-462). However, it is apparent within these texts, particularly the *Iliad*, that Heracles' use of a bow is intended to associate him with a practice that is decried as cowardly, ignoble and uncivilized. This association comes from both Heracles' actions with the bow, as

well as those of other well known archers. The main archers of the *Iliad* are Paris, who is Trojan and depicted as cowardly, Medon and Teucer, who are both bastards and thus separate from the aristocratic heroes in the *Iliad*. Note too Philoctetes, whose absence is only briefly noted in the catalogue of ships (*Iliad* 2:819-821). From this it can be inferred that the poetic tradition intentionally avoided describing a Greek aristocrat using a bow at Troy. Heracles of course is also mentioned within the text but he himself is not present at Troy, having already sacked it while he was alive in a previous generation, an accomplishment for which he is held in high regard. The emphasis within the *Iliad* therefore clearly is placed on the spear as the weapon of the Greek aristocrats.

This is not to say Heracles' absence from the action of the poem means the text does not criticise Heracles' actions with the bow. The text specifically notes his hubristic habit of attacking the gods, recounting several instances when he fired his arrows at various Olympians, including Hera and Hades (*Iliad* 5:446-462). Note that the bow is the instrument of Heracles' blasphemous attacks. Furthermore, this highlights how Heracles is both held in high regard for his accomplishments and yet admonished for his more uncivilized actions. The implication of this within the *Iliad* is that the poetic tradition considered Heracles a great hero of the past. By the standards of the generation present in the *Iliad*, Heracles' style is antiquated, and the figures who are associated with it are targets of derision and accusations of cowardice.

Why the tradition should seek to diminish archery and Heracles in such a way is a valid question. An answer to this may be found in the generational rivalry between Achilles (as the hero of the *Iliad*) and Heracles. Richard Martin has suggested that the *Iliad* may have been composed with deliberate attempts to distinguish itself as an Achilles epic amidst a contemporary tradition of Heraclean epics.³² Martin suggests that this is done by attributing to Achilles accomplishments that deliberately overshadow those of Heracles as well as by presenting Heracles as a "negative exemplum".³³ This is not to say that Heracles is consistently vilified by the text; at several points he is revered, most often for having sacked Troy in a previous generation with fewer men (*Iliad* 5:737-738). Despite this however the text is certainly critical of Heracles, due to his practice of archery.

A significant component of Martin's theory is that there is an intentional contrast with Achilles within the *Iliad*; where Heracles is a negative exemplum and Achilles is a positive one. This contrast manifests itself in various ways. For example, Lefkowitz in *Greek Gods*,

³² Richard P. Martin, *The language of heroes*, 229.

³³ Ibid. 229.

Human Lives points out in the *Iliad* Achilles is frequently supported by Hera.³⁴ This is in stark contrast to her antagonistic relationship with Heracles as discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover Hera's use of Iris as her instrument builds another contrast between these two characters as well, as Iris is sent to return Achilles to battle (*Iliad* 18:194-195), while she is sent by Hera to induce the madness in Heracles that causes him to kill his family (*Heracles* 821-832).

Martin also discusses one specific example of Heracles' irreligious behaviour presented within the *Iliad*. This is the above mentioned scene in which Dione recounts two incidents where Heracles had attacked the gods³⁵ (*Iliad* 5:446-463). In these, Heracles' use of a bow is explicitly stated (*Iliad* 5:450, 5:462). It is significant to note that while Diomedes, who prompted this discussion of mortals attacking gods, is somewhat excused for Heracles' attacking the gods as they were encouraged by Athena, no such provision is made for Heracles (*Iliad* 5:463-4). This is an early example of one element of Heracles' uncivilized behaviour: his impiety. Heracles' disregard for the sanctity of the gods and their laws is something we saw in the previous chapter when he mutilated the heralds of Egeus. We will also see it later in this chapter when we discuss his behaviour as it relates to the treatment of house guests.

Briefly, it should be mentioned that Heracles' wounding of Hades with an arrow within the *Iliad* is similar to an image depicted on an early sixth century vase described by Gantz in *Early Greek Myth*. This vase depicts the hero threatening Hades with a bow and a stone, apparently to force the god to hand over Cerberus.³⁶ There is evidence that Heracles' retrieval of Cerberus, what would later be his twelfth and final labour, is known about in both the *Iliad* (8:419-421) and *Odyssey* (11:715). From this we can assume that the context of the pot described by Gantz provides a possible motivation for Heracles' attacking Hades, and suggests that an earlier version of the myth had Heracles attacking Hades and stealing Cerberus.

While Heracles is frequently mentioned within the *Iliad*, it is important to note that he is not a featured character, but rather a hero who belongs to a previous generation whose time has passed. In this way Heracles' actions are presented as being either revered, to be aspired to, or denounced as immoral by the gods and heroes alike. Heracles' distance from the narrative, both physically and chronologically, is very important within the *Iliad* as it indicates a change in heroic conduct across the generations. To these changed standards can be attributed the attitude towards the use of the bow itself within the *Iliad*. The difference between the

³⁴ Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Greek Gods, Human Lives: What We Can Learn From Myths*, 73.

³⁵ Richard P. Martin, *The language of heroes*, 229.

³⁶ Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, 413.

standards of Heracles' generation and Achilles' can also explain why Heracles is both revered and reviled, as while the extent of his accomplishments has not been diminished, many of his actions are unacceptable and uncivilized by the later standards of behaviour.

Note that while Heracles is depicted within the *Iliad* as an archer, the bow is, by and large, unused by the later generations of Greek heroes of the *Iliad* in favour of other weapons. This rejection of the bow may be meant to relate to the notion that it is used in more primitive conflicts and by foreign warriors such as Paris. Indeed this connection between Troy and archery is compounded by the fact that the patron god of Troy, Apollo, is depicted as an archer. It is significant to note however that while Greek heroes generally are not depicted as using bows in combat, several heroes within the *Iliad* are famous elsewhere for their use of a bow. For instance Odysseus is referenced in many texts as being an archer, even bragging at one point within the *Odyssey* that he is the second greatest archer of his generation, surpassed only by Philoctetes (*Odyssey* 8:246-251). Within the *Iliad* Odysseus is never depicted as using a bow; even though he carries a bow on one occasion he only uses it to whip horses.³⁷ Furthermore, while the famous archer Philoctetes is mentioned in book 2:819-821 of the *Iliad*, he is not present for the duration of the poem, despite his crucial role in the Trojan War myth as the one who kills Paris. This is indicative of the different attitude towards weaponry between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Possibly owing to his prominent use of a bow, Philoctetes is absent from the entirety of the *Iliad*, and his presence within the Greek army is only noted once.

Philoctetes the master archer had led them on
in seven ships with fifty oarsmen aboard each,
superbly skilled with the bow in lethal combat.
But their captain lay on an island, racked with pain,
on Lemnos' holy shores where the armies had marooned him,
agonized by his wound, the bite of a deadly water-viper

Iliad 2:819-825

It is likely that the tradition removed the famous archer in this way from the narrative of the *Iliad*. As it stands, it is unexplained within the *Iliad* why Philoctetes was not brought to Troy for treatment. The *Cypria* says that he was left behind because of the smell emanating from his wound,³⁸ while the *Iliad* only says that he was in terrible pain (*Iliad* 2:825). Though the *Iliad* makes vague reference to Philoctetes' retrieval and eventual role in the fall of Troy (*Iliad* 2:826), Oscar Mandel suggests that the portion of the *Iliad* that refers to Philoctetes'

³⁷ C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad*, 100.

³⁸ Martin L. West, *Greek Epic Fragments*, 123.

return could be a later addition to the text.³⁹ If this is true it means that originally the *Iliad* had neither reference to an archer playing any significant role in the fall of Troy nor any indication that Philoctetes could or would be healed. The length of time Philoctetes spends suffering on the island Lemnos is only a problem then in the *Little Iliad*, as there Philoctetes is rescued only after the prophecy mentions his bow is needed. Only then is he brought to the Greeks at Troy and immediately healed.⁴⁰

It is significant to note that in the *Iliad*'s description of Medon, the substitute commander of Philoctetes' archers, the text specifically states that he is a bastard (*Iliad* 2:829). According to Chris Mackie the character of Medon is introduced in such a way as a replacement for the aristocratic Philoctetes in order to further marginalise the role of archery by essentially barring a true noble from engaging in such a practice within the pages of the *Iliad*.⁴¹ There is another illegitimate archer within the *Iliad*, Teucer. The notion that the bow is the weapon of illegitimate Greeks (and various Trojans) may also be applied to Heracles, as he is after all the illegitimate son of Alcmene and Zeus. As with Medon it seems that the bow is intentionally taken out of the hands of the true nobility such as Philoctetes and Odysseus and put in the hands of illegitimate characters. However it is important to remember that Heracles' divine parentage sets him apart from other illegitimate characters to a certain degree. None the less we should remember that Achilles, the true hero of the *Iliad*, who seems to compete with Heracles, is also the child of a mortal and a god.

In addition to these negative associations with the bow, there are instances within the *Iliad* where the weapon is decried outright. An example of such an incident can be seen in book 11:453-465 of the *Iliad*, where Diomedes delivers a speech, having just been wounded by an arrow fired by Paris from a hiding place, in which he condemns the use of the bow.

So brave with your bow and arrows - big bravado -
glistening lovelocks, roving eye for girls!
Come, try me in combat, weapons hand-to-hand-
bow and spattering shafts will never help you then.
You scratched my food and you're vaunting all the same-
but who cares? A woman or idiot boy could wound me so.
The shaft of a good-for-nothing coward's got no point
but mine's got heft and edge. Let it graze a man-
my weapon works in a flash and drops him dead.

³⁹ Oscar Mandel, *Philoctetes and the fall of Troy: plays, documents, iconography, interpretations* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 7.

⁴⁰ Martin L. West, *Greek Epic Fragments*, 121.

⁴¹ C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad*, 112.

And his good wife will tear her cheeks in grief,
 his sons are orphans and he, soaking the soil
 red with his own blood, he rots away himself-
 more birds than women flocking round his body!

Iliad 11:453-465

It is obvious that Diomedes is speaking out of rage, frustration or even possibly humiliation. His foot has been injured, preventing him from retaliating against Paris. Even so, the thrust of his argument is clear; that were he (a spearman) to fight Paris (an archer) face-to-face he would defeat him. This speech is often viewed as the standard attitude towards archery for most of the Greek nobility featured in the *Iliad*.⁴² In addition, Diomedes' line "The shaft of a good-for-nothing coward's got no point but mine [Diomedes]'s got heft and edge." (*Iliad* 11:459-460) can be taken as a direct comparison of the types of weapons wielded by Paris and Diomedes, and by Heracles and Achilles, namely the bow (or rather the arrow) and the spear. Again the text is fairly straight forward as to its attitude towards the use of the bow. While few can disagree with Diomedes' assessment of Paris, that he is a "good-for-nothing coward" it is difficult to divorce the character from the bow within this episode. This speaks to an association between Paris and the bow within this text and, by extension, forms the basis of a peculiar parallel between Paris and Heracles.

At first glance Paris' character within the *Iliad* could not be more different from that of Heracles. He is a Trojan while Heracles is a Greek. While Paris defends his city, Heracles sacked it in the previous generation (*Iliad* 5:738). The link between the two characters however extends beyond the use of the bow and is illustrated in the thematic similarities of their accomplishments, specifically Heracles' defeat of a sea monster (*kêtos*), in defence of Troy (alluded to in *Iliad* 20:171-173) and Paris' defeat of Achilles (as prophesised in *Iliad* 22:423). To understand properly the link between these two actions we must first address another comparison between generations. In *Rivers of Fire* Chris Mackie suggests that several of the monsters referenced within the *Iliad* are an analogue for Achilles, specifically the enraged Achilles as he returns to the fighting after the death of Patroclus.⁴³ The monsters referred to are those that were fought by the heroes of the previous generation and include the sea monster that Heracles faced, the Chimera (faced by Bellerophon) and the Gorgon (faced by Perseus).⁴⁴ The latter two aside, Achilles certainly shares several traits with the sea monster. For instance, both are depicted coming from the ocean. For Achilles this can be seen in *Iliad* 16:39-40 and is largely metaphoric, as Patroclus is suggesting that Achilles' relentless

⁴² C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad*, 100.

⁴³ Ibid. 42.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 42.

temper must mean he is born of the ocean. It is also worth noting that Achilles' mother is Thetis, the daughter of "the Old Man of the Sea" (*Iliad* 1:424-425), so Achilles' connection to the ocean is more than just symbolic. The sea monster that Heracles fights is sent to attack the city by Poseidon, after he is cheated by its king Laomedon. Similarly Achilles is set against Troy after Paris robs Menelaus and kidnaps Helen. The sea monster's connection is far more straightforward, as *Iliad* 20:171-175 describes it attacking Heracles from the shore. The parallels between these two "monsters" of the sea have some important implications; Heracles is associated with the defenders of Troy, as it is his defence of the city rather than his sacking of it that this imagery evokes. With Martin's theory in mind, this is especially significant as it casts Heracles as the predecessor of the Trojans within this section of the *Iliad*, and associates Achilles with Heracles' monstrous, yet justified, enemy.

In addition to their parallel enemies, if we can call them that, Paris and Heracles also share the circumstances of their fights against these "monsters", as both are fought in the defence of the city of Troy. For Heracles this is alluded to in *Iliad* 20:171-175, where reference is made to a fortress that was built for him by the Trojans and Athena for him to fall back to while fighting the sea monster. Although Paris does not kill Achilles within the *Iliad*, it is foretold within the text itself (*Iliad* 22:423). In addition, another text from the Trojan Cycle, the *Aethiopis*, continues the story of the Trojan War and tells of Paris' involvement in the death of Achilles.⁴⁵ In this epic poem, as summarized by Proclus, the details of Achilles' death are revealed: he is killed by both Paris and Apollo while pursuing the Trojan army into the city.⁴⁶ The manner of his death is consistent with what has been foretold of this conflict within *Iliad* 22:423 where Hector's last words predict the defeat of Achilles by a combined force of Paris and Apollo.

So far it seems that the comparison in the *Iliad* between Heracles and Paris paints Heracles in a more favourable light than the rest of the text. Heracles defends the city of Troy against a monster, just as Paris does. However while the *kêtos* and Achilles may have monstrous traits we must remember that they are sent against Troy by a divine will. As mentioned above this sea monster is sent by Poseidon while Achilles is supported by numerous gods including Hera and Athena and wears divine armour. Furthermore it should be noted that both the sea monster and Achilles are sent against Troy to answer an immoral act of deception: cheating

⁴⁵ Though the exact date of the *Aethiopis*' conception is not known, its introduction of the character Penthesilea may date it around 600BCE when she first begins to appear in art, see: Martin L. West, *Greek Epic Fragments*, 15. Part of the reason for the difficulty in dating the *Aethiopis* is that only a few fragments of the text survive. Our knowledge of what the *Aethiopis* contains comes to us through summaries of the text provided in Proclus' literary handbook, the *Chrestomathy*, dating from between 410-485 CE, see Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of classical myth*, 378.

⁴⁶ Martin L. West, *Greek Epic Fragments*, 113.

Poseidon out of what he is owed, and the taking of Helen and robbing Menelaus respectively. In this regard, by his connection to Paris, the poem reminds us that Heracles in the past defended Troy against the manifestation of the justified anger of the gods, taking the side of the city's immoral king for personal gain. It was only when he himself was cheated out of his reward for this action that he turned on the city and sacked it himself.

While Heracles' association with Paris aligns him with the Trojans and against justice and the gods, his association with Philoctetes connects him with the other side of the conflict.

Philoctetes has a crucial role in the sacking of Troy, and therefore he has an intergenerational connection with Heracles. Both heroes use the bow, though in Philoctetes' case the association with Heracles is far more important because he is gifted Heracles' own bow.

Oscar Mandel suggests that the use of Heracles' bow by Philoctetes presents an example of a narrative device often used where, through the inheritance of a weapon, characters may share their glory.⁴⁷ In the specific case of Heracles and Philoctetes, Mandel says the inheritance of the bow increases Philoctetes' standing through the association with Heracles, while Heracles benefits from the exchange by winning a vicarious victory in the second defeat of Troy.⁴⁸ As we have discussed, however, in the *Iliad* the bow was used by Heracles in his impious attack on the gods, and by Paris to avoid having to fight hand to hand. Philoctetes on the other hand is excluded from the text almost entirely.

The *Little Iliad* contains reference to a prophecy that Heracles' bow is necessary for Troy to be defeated.⁴⁹ The reverence for Heracles' bow and its current wielder Philoctetes, as well as the significance placed on the bow as a necessary component in finishing the Trojan War indicates a very different view of the bow from the one seen in the *Iliad*. The fact that the arms and fighting style of Heracles are regarded as not only acceptable, but necessary, for the fall of Troy is a significant deviation from the *Iliadic* perception of the bow, being that "the shaft of a good-for-nothing coward's got no point" (*Iliad* 11:459). To better understand how both the bow and Heracles are viewed in the other texts of the Trojan Cycle, it is necessary to elaborate on the myth of Philoctetes. Furthermore Philoctetes' absence from the *Iliad*, as well as the presence of his substitute commander, the illegitimate Medon, provide interesting insights into how Greek archers are dealt with in the *Iliad*.

Significantly, within the *Iliad*, the Trojan nobility does not seem to be subject to the same restrictions as the Greeks with regard to the use of archery. Indeed Paris, a Trojan noble, is principally an archer. Furthermore, Teucer is half-Trojan himself, and therefore a bastard, as far as the Greeks are concerned. It is apparent that archery is the pursuit of noble Trojans

⁴⁷ Oscar Mandel, *Philoctetes and the Fall of Troy*, 18.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 18.

⁴⁹ Martin L. West, *Greek Epic Fragments*, 121.

(Paris) and lower class Greeks (Teucer and Medon). Finally, as has been mentioned, Heracles' defence of the city and his association with archery further links the city with archers. The presentation of archery as socially acceptable to the Trojans is possibly due to different cultural expectations on the part of the author and audience; while the Trojans certainly adhere to some Greek practices (they revere and receive favour from many of the same gods, they demonstrate the same battlefield protocol insofar as stripping the armour from a defeated opponents); at the same time they are not Greek, and therefore not constrained by the same expectations. This can be seen as associating the Trojans and Troy itself, with the same uncivilized exterior world, not uncivilized *per se* but nonetheless outside of what can be considered Greek civilization.

It is apparent then, that, in reference to Martin's argument, Paris is set up as a "negative exemplum". The character also can be said to have a connection to Heracles through the use of a bow, common enemies and circumstances. It would be presumptuous to assume that this link is made solely with the intention of diminishing Heracles' character. None the less many of the traits associated with the bow through Heracles' and Paris' actions remain in later myths dealing with the practice of archery.

The *Odyssey*: Odysseus and Heracles

The *Odyssey* presents a very different view of Heracles from that of the *Iliad*. Furthermore, a very different value system in regard to archery is in place. The *Odyssey* seems to paint Heracles not as a negative *exemplum* to be outdone by its hero but rather as a wild, uncivilized and often amoral hero whose actions Odysseus at first condemns but ultimately imitates by the end of his journey. It is clear from the outset that the *Odyssey* is not attempting to compete with a Heracleian epic in the same way the *Iliad* appears to do. At certain points within the *Odyssey* both the bow and Heracles are depicted in a more favourable way than in the *Iliad*. This is particularly the case in the scene where Odysseus demonstrates his prowess with the bow. In this episode he comments that he is still no match for Philoctetes nor the archer heroes of previous generations, including Heracles (*Odyssey* 8:250-256). However, even this is tinged with a slight rebuke. Odysseus mentions that the archers of the previous generation, Heracles included, fought against the gods which was something he would never do. Heracles within the *Odyssey*, though depicted as an individual of great skill, is still presented as a ruthless individual with little regard for the rules and expectations of civilized society. This can be seen in book 11, where Heracles' ghost is depicted in Hades terrorising the dead by brandishing his bow (*Odyssey* 11: 695-698). It can also be seen in Book 21 when Odysseus remembers how his friend who gifted him his bow was murdered by Heracles for his horses while Heracles was staying as a guest in his home (*Odyssey* 21:15-34) breaking sacred

customs of hospitality in addition to committing murder and theft. This is in keeping with the notion of the bow as Heracles' instrument of wrongdoing used by those who reject what is expected of them by civilized society. Again this is also how the bow is depicted in the *Iliad*, where the bow is used by Heracles to practise his impiety by attacking the gods and by Paris to avoid fighting Diomedes in single combat.

Odysseus, the protagonist of the *Odyssey* and a noble hero of legitimate birth, prominently and proudly uses a bow. This deviates significantly from the *Iliad's* representation of archers, which consists of Paris (a coward), Medon and Teucer (who are illegitimate), Philoctetes (who is absent) and Heracles, who is a product of an earlier time. The reason Odysseus is different from these other archers may lie with Martin's theory that the *Iliad* is a competing text with an unknown Heracles epic. This would suggest that Odysseus is free from the pressures on Achilles' character in the *Iliad* of having to compete with Heracles by being his opposite. This might be why, while Odysseus only ever used a bow to whip horses in the *Iliad*, the bow he received from Iphitus is featured prominently among the treasures in his house (*Odyssey* 21:11-14). As has already been mentioned while archery receives a far more generous treatment in the depiction of both the practice of archery and (most of) the archers themselves, Heracles himself is still depicted as an immoral character. This may not be an entirely fair statement. While Heracles' actions are certainly presented as negative, morality within the *Odyssey* has to be viewed differently from how it is within the *Iliad* due to the difference in setting. In the *Iliad* the heroes fight a very civilized war, as far as that goes, more often than not fighting each other in one-on-one duels. Within the *Odyssey* however Odysseus' fights are rarely so simple or honourable, as he is often forced to fight against monsters or other supernatural enemies, harking back to Heracles' battles as mentioned in the *Iliad*. Odysseus is also forced to fight men who are unlikely to fight him according to the rules of combat seen demonstrated within the *Iliad*. As a result he more often resorts to trickery, defeating his opponents in underhanded ways. An example of this can be seen with Polyphemus, whom Odysseus blinds after getting him drunk before he and his crew escape his cave (*Odyssey* 9:284-515).

A more relevant example to demonstrate the difference between the morality of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* can be seen when Odysseus and his son Telemachus slaughter the suitors. Odysseus uses his bow in order to remove the advantage of their superior number, striking them from a distance as they try to get close enough to use their weapons (*Ody* 22:72-116). A parallel can be drawn between this incident and the one in the *Iliad* where Paris from hiding shoots Diomedes in the foot, leaving Diomedes unable to get close enough to use his spear (*Iliad* 11:433-444). The episode was already cited earlier in this chapter as a prime example of not only Paris' cowardice but also of Homer's contempt for archery, as Diomedes' speech makes

it clear that Paris is no match for him in close combat and that anyone could wound him with a bow, regardless of their skill (*Iliad* 11:453-465). This is to a large extent indicative of the attitude towards the bow in Greek warfare, extending to the time of the Peloponnesian War. The bow, while dishonourable and uncivilized, is nonetheless an effective weapon for many of the same reasons it is considered dishonourable. It is wielded by those who are desperate, such as Odysseus, cowards, such as Paris, or those whose battles take place outside the social constraints that demand combat be carried out honourably, such as Heracles and again to a lesser extent Odysseus.

The association of archery with the world beyond Greek civilization and its social expectations can be seen in both Heracles' and Odysseus' myths. For Odysseus, this uncivilized place where archery is practised is represented by the lands he visits while attempting to get home. Similarly, for Heracles, it is represented by the feats he accomplishes in the wilderness, including many of his labours. The impact that exposure to this outer world has on Heracles' character, as well as other characters, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three. For now we will discuss how exposure to the uncivilized world affects both Heracles and Odysseus in relation to hospitality customs and archery within the *Odyssey*.

In book 21 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus reminisces, while preparing his bow to kill the suitors, about his friend, Eurytus, who gave him the weapon. Shortly after exchanging gifts with Odysseus, the man, Iphitus, was killed by Heracles while staying as a guest in Heracles' home.

The same mares that would prove his certain death
when he reached the son of Zeus, that iron heart,
Heracles-the past master of monstrous works-
who killed the man, a guest in his own house.
Brutal. Not a care for the wrathful eyes of god
or rites of hospitality he had spread before him,
no, he dined him, then he murdered him, commandeered
those hard-hoofed mares for the hero's own grange.

Odyssey 21:27-35

Odysseus then proceeds to trap the suitors and kill them with his bow, and later the spear. There are several ways this is interpreted, implicating different characters of wrong doing. Galinsky, in *The Herakles Theme*, suggests an association between Heracles and the suitors is made in the Iphitus story as they both break hospitality customs.⁵⁰ As Vayos Liapis says "The

⁵⁰ Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, 12.

bow...is a strong reminder of a violation of hospitality on Heracles' part".⁵¹ With these interpretations in mind this scene can be read as Odysseus, and the author, symbolically punishing Heracles for his uncivilized behaviour. This reading of the scene may be supported by another scene within the *Odyssey* when Odysseus confronts Heracles in the underworld. While Heracles' shade is there, the text makes it clear that this is not the actual Heracles, who is on Olympus living happily (*Odyssey* 11:691-694). Seth Benardete suggests that this episode was included in the *Odyssey* to underline what to a large extent is the theme of the book: the unfairness of death.⁵² Many of Odysseus' honourable comrades suffer in Hades yet Heracles, for all his crimes, not least of which is the murder of Iphitus, is made a god. Even Heracles' shade is depicted in a thuggish manner, stalking the underworld with his bow drawn, bragging of his great deeds as the other dead flee before him (*Odyssey* 11: 695-698). Aside from supporting the idea that the *Odyssey* intentionally depicts Heracles in a negative way, this scene and Benardete's reading of it suggest Heracles is deserving of punishment for his crimes and uncivilized behaviour that he will not receive. The connection between Heracles and the suitors made in book 21 of the *Odyssey* allows Odysseus some measure of justice for his dead friend Eurytus. Heracles may be beyond his reach but he can still symbolically bring him to task.

Alternatively, Benardete suggests a very different reading of the killing of the suitors. He defends the actions of the suitors, saying that their plan to kill Odysseus' son, Telemachus, is formulated only after they learn he plans to kill them (*Odyssey* 2:360-366), and that their plan is ultimately abandoned when they receive an ill omen while seeking counsel from Zeus(*Odyssey* 16:444-452).⁵³ From these assertions we conclude that when Odysseus takes up his bow against the suitors, who have exploited the hospitality of his house, the true crime of inhospitality is that of Odysseus. In this reading it is Odysseus, not the suitors, who is analogous to Heracles in the murder of Iphitus. They are connected by their disregard of social expectations of hospitality by attacking guests in their home and not just by their use of a bow. This reading seems to be the more likely intended one, as both Heracles and Odysseus hold the position of host to the murdered party.

Benardete also points to the analogies between eating and killing made in the *Odyssey* while Odysseus is killing the suitors. He suggests that a parallel is being drawn between this scene and the cannibalism of Polyphemus.⁵⁴ In this scenario we see Odysseus as analogous to

⁵¹ Vayos Liapis, 'Intertextuality as Irony Heracles in Epic and in Sophocles', *Greece & Rome, Second Series*, 53/1 (Apr., 2006), 50.

⁵² Seth Benardete, *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 43-44.

⁵³ Ibid. 131&135.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 131.

Polyphemus; the respective characters killing/eating those they have trapped in their house. Again we see how Odysseus' experience with incivility changes his character, echoing in his change of weapons from the spear and shield in the *Iliad* to the bow in the *Odyssey*. It is possible then that the culminating scene of the *Odyssey* where Odysseus traps and kills the suitors in his home is analogous to both Heracles' murder of Iphitus, and Polyphemus' cannibalism of Odysseus' crew. The conclusion that may be drawn is that Odysseus, through exposure to the cruelties of the uncivilized exterior world, is himself made cruel. His memory of Heracles' murder of Iphitus does not inspire righteous fury against those who trespass against the laws of hospitality but rather a bitter realisation, as he strings his bow, that he has become the same as the man who murdered his friend. This conclusion is given credence by the words Heracles speaks to Odysseus in Hades, comparing their fates:

Royal son of Laertes, Odysseus famed for exploits,
 luckless man, you too? Braving out a fate as harsh
 as the fate I bore, alive in the light of day?

Odyssey 11.708-710

To conclude, while the two Homeric texts deal with very different conflicts in very different ways, they nonetheless present a common depiction of archery. In these texts archery is a barbarous occupation associated with an exterior world divorced of the social standards of honourable society. Those men who engage in its practice are tainted by this savage exterior world from which archery emanates; a world in which they might lose their moral principles and cast aside common customs. This is demonstrated by Paris' cowardice, Odysseus and Heracles' disregard of hospitality taboos, and Teucer and Medon's illegitimacy. At this point of the chapter we move forward to more recent texts, specifically those Athenian plays that are relevant to the subject of this chapter: Euripides' *Heracles*, *Children of Heracles* and *Alcestis* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. In many ways these texts continue the association of archery with foreignness, probably owing in no small part to the Persian invasion in 490 and 480 BCE.⁵⁵ These texts also demonstrate how the Athenian attitudes to warfare emerged and evolved especially in the fifth century BCE during and after the Persian and Peloponnesian wars.

The Athenian Theatre's engagement with the Issue of Archery: The Bow as the Pragmatist's Weapon

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* show only a limited respect to the archer and his weapon. The *Iliad* attaches the practice to negative exempla such as Paris and illegitimate characters such as Teucer and Medon. The *Odyssey* meanwhile depicts it in association with uncivilized

⁵⁵ Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek self-definition through tragedy*, 57.

behaviour and thuggery. Other ancient texts such as the *Little Iliad* or the *Cypria* are more forgiving of the practice, judging from their treatment of Philoctetes. However the priority in these texts is still given to spear wielding heroes. This very much reflects the emphasis on warfare in the *Iliad*. The *Odyssey* has little to do with warfare due to its more fantastical tone and emphasis on Odysseus using his bow and his cunning. However, it is important to note that while archers may be depicted as dishonourable, cowardly, illegitimate and not holding with social conventions, they are not depicted as ineffective. As we have seen, Paris takes Diomedes out of the fight with a bow, despite the latter being a far superior warrior. He also later kills Achilles with an arrow. Odysseus defeats 108 suitors in his home with his bow, while in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, despite being crippled by the snake bite, the hero is fearsome enough while wielding Heracles' bow to cause Odysseus and his crew to flee. This neatly encapsulates another attitude towards the bow: that it is an effective and pragmatic weapon.

This can be seen especially well in some of the Athenian plays produced during the Peloponnesian War. In these plays Heracles, through his synonymy with the bow, was used to extol and discuss the virtues of archery and, to an extent, the value of a new form of lightly armoured ranged fighters. These including archers, slingers, peltasts and javelin-men that had begun to be used in warfare during the classical period,⁵⁶ versus the spear wielding hoplites used by the more common phalanx. The argument over the virtues and uses of this new type of warrior can be seen particularly in Euripides' *Heracles* as well as to a lesser extent in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, as represented by the archer protagonists of each. The discussion of archery was extremely pertinent during this period, as the methods of warfare had evolved considerably from its depiction in the *Iliad*. Rather than being primarily composed of heroes fighting one-on-one duels, warfare during the Peloponnesian War had become far more about cooperation through the use of hoplite soldiers in a phalanx formation.⁵⁷ These soldiers were still heavily armoured and equipped with spear and shield like the heroes of the *Iliad*, though with interlocked shields that protected the unit as a whole rather than the individual. While certain standards in regard to warfare had changed, archers were still a lower class of soldier, often being non-Greeks or Greeks from the peripheries of the Hellenistic world, such as Thracians, Rhodians or Cretans.⁵⁸ This suggests a further connection between these fighters and Heracles as he too skirts the peripheries of Greek society, often travelling outside its borders and displaying uncivilized and barbaric behaviour.

⁵⁶ Mary Frances Williams, 'Philopoemen's Special Forces: Peltasts and a New Kind of Greek Light-Armed Warfare (Livy 35.27)', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 53, H. 3 (2004), 263.

⁵⁷ Victor Davis Hanson, *A War Like No Other: how the Athenians and Spartans fought the Peloponnesian War* (New York, Random House, 2005), 90.

⁵⁸ Mary Frances Williams, 'Philopoemen's Special Forces: Peltasts and a New Kind of Greek Light-Armed Warfare (Livy 35.27)', 263.

The association between archery and uncivilized behaviour is also reflected in Euripides' *Heracles*, dating from 416BCE. However the play also puts forth an argument in favour of its use citing pragmatism, not honour. This argument is made in the text by Heracles' foster-father Amphytrion. He attempts to justify his son's use of a bow in a scene that takes place at the start of the play, before Heracles has appeared. Lycus has usurped rulership of Thebes by killing Creon, is now planning to kill Creon's daughter, Heracles' wife Megara, as well as her and Heracles' children so they may never grow up and seek revenge. Lycus justifies his actions by calling into question the greatness of Heracles' deeds, suggesting that he is no great hero, merely a coward. To illustrate Heracles' supposed cowardice, Lycus first points out how he is famous only for fighting animals, such as the Hydra and Nemean Lion; the latter Lycus claims Heracles defeated with a trap rather than his bare hands (153-154). Heracles' identity as a hunter-hero, and how it reflects on his identity as an uncivilized civilizer, is something we will discuss in the next chapter. The second reason Lycus gives for calling Heracles a coward is his use of the bow and, more specifically, his apparent refusal to fight in close combat with a spear and shield as part of a phalanx formation. This is evident in his choice of words to criticize Heracles:

A bow is no test of a man's courage: a brave man is one who, without flinching,
keeps his place in the ranks while facing squarely a spear cut furrow racing towards
him

Euripides' *Heracles* 162-164

Lycus sees courage as co-operation and, ironically, valuing the needs of the unit as a whole above personal safety. In his eyes Heracles is a coward for remaining back from the fighting while using a bow, rather than standing shoulder to shoulder in a shield wall. He is also a coward for fighting alone rather than co-operating with others. These two facts suggest a different objection to archery than was seen in the Homeric texts, as while not fighting hand to hand is still frowned upon, the idea of seeking personal glory through fighting alone as the heroes of the *Iliad* did is also portrayed as cowardly.

As a rebuttal Amphytrion presents an argument in favour of the use of a bow. It is important to note that he does not directly challenge what Lycus claims but instead lists the benefits of archery. Most significantly he points out that a man armed with a bow can keep his enemies at a distance, saving his own life.

A man in heavy armour is a slave to his
weapons, in the sense that if he breaks his spear he cannot
protect his body against a deadly assault, since he has just the
one means of defence. And if the others in his line of battle

lack courage, the cowardice of his neighbours causes his death. But those who take up the straight-shooting bow have one outstanding advantage: they can shoot countless arrows and still have others with which to protect themselves from death. A Bowman stands far away to defend himself against the enemy, wounding them with arrows which go unseen by their eyes, and he does not expose his body to his opponents, but keeps himself safe. In a battle, there's nothing more clever than harming the enemy while keeping yourself safe

Euripides' *Heracles* 190-201

In a very real sense Amphitryon is suggesting that survival be prioritised over honour. His attitude to warfare is more cynical than that of Lycus, suggesting that relying on others is difficult and it is cleverer to rely only on oneself. In a strange way it is archery in Amphitryon's argument that more closely resembles the Iliadic notion of personal glory, over Lycus' favouring of the spear wielding and cooperative efforts of a phalanx. Significant also is his reference to archers not exposing themselves to danger as much as a person in a phalanx does. This again resembles how the light-ranged troops were used to fight as they apparently most often attacked from a position of relative safety such as firing down on enemies in a mountain pass or defending the walls of a city during a siege.⁵⁹ With this in mind it seems apparent that Euripides is having Amphitryon argue in favour of this new type of soldier. Finally, it is noteworthy that the advantages Amphitryon attaches to the archer are similar to those that prompts Diomedes to call Paris a coward in the *Iliad* as well as the advantage Odysseus has over superior number of enemies as demonstrated in the *Odyssey*.

While this debate does not have a resolution, it is apparent that Euripides is siding with Amphitryon, as Lycus is the antagonist and a hypocrite; he embodies none of the courage that he advocates, attacking Heracles at a distance, so to speak, by slandering him and threatening his family in his absence. Richard Hamilton, however, suggests that Euripides is less sympathetic to the bow than at first he seems. He points to the end of the play when Heracles has murdered his family and wishes to die. At this point Theseus, whom Heracles saved from Hades before the beginning of the play, enters. He advocates against suicide and encourages Heracles to endure his guilt by coming to Athens with him. Hamilton points to the language Heracles uses in this section of the play, when he has come around to agreeing with Theseus, as advocating the opposite behaviour that Amphitryon associated with archery in the debate with Lycus. Heracles states that he must face his enemy, much in the same way Lycus said a

⁵⁹ Mary Frances Williams, 'Philopoemen's Special Forces: Peltasts and a New Kind of Greek Light-Armed Warfare (Livy 35.27)', 264.

hoplite might stand face to face with his enemy and Heracles says he must be a slave, just as Amphytrion says a spearman is a slave to his weapon.⁶⁰ This reading of the text would suggest Euripides is aware of the pragmatic value of the bow, yet still devalues it. Rather, he espouses the role of the hoplite spearman, associating the characteristics of its use with the values of Athenian civilization, as embodied by the values put forward by Theseus (the founder of Athens) and Heracles who has agreed to become an Athenian Citizen at Theseus' invitation.

Even though the bow received a more respectful treatment within the Athenian theatre, it still carried a connection to the barbarous uncivilized exterior. This connection may have been a continuation of the Homeric attitude towards archery, however, a connection with the Persian Empire was certainly also present, following the above mentioned invasions after the time of the *Iliad*'s composition. This is evidenced in the play *Persae*, which Edith Hall points out draws a comparison between the Greek spearmen and Persian archers.⁶¹ Hall also points out however that in reality both Greek archers and Persian spearmen were in use, and suggests that "neither weapon was historically confined to either side".⁶² It may be the case then that the tradition seen in Homer of the archer as the outsider was applied to the Persians, to paint them as foreign and divorced from Greek values.

Another text from this period⁶³ that relates to Heracles' practice of archery and uncivilized character is Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. The protagonist, Philoctetes, has been mentioned before in this chapter in relation to Heracles and specifically to his archery. It is often the case that Heracles is removed from the narrative of these texts to a large extent. This leaves us to draw conclusions about his character and his archery from the words of other characters, as well as from the actions of characters associated with him in some capacity. Connections can and have been drawn between several characters and Heracles in this chapter, centring on the common use of archery and strengthened by other common elements. Of these characters (Odysseus as he is within the *Odyssey* and Paris within *Iliad* particularly) Philoctetes arguably possesses the strongest connection to Heracles, due to his possession of Heracles' bow. Philoctetes does not feature directly in the Homeric texts. His presence in the *Odyssey* is not much stronger than in the *Iliad*, though his importance is stated by Odysseus who notes that he is the only archer of his generation greater than himself (*Odyssey* 8:250-251). While he receives such high praise in the *Odyssey*, it is little wonder that he is all but absent from the *Iliad*, given his use of the bow. As with the other characters mentioned in this chapter though,

⁶⁰ Richard Hamilton, 'Slings and Arrows The Debate with Lycus in the Heracles', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 115 (1985), 23.

⁶¹ Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek self-definition through tragedy*, 85.

⁶² *Ibid.* 85.

⁶³ Dated around 409 BCE, Oscar Mandel, *Philoctetes and the Fall of Troy*, 5.

Philoctetes' prowess at archery is not his only connection with Heracles. Rather he could be seen as a successor to Heracles. As was mentioned, he inherits the hero's bow upon Heracles' death. In addition to this, many of the incidents of Philoctetes' life reflect instances from Heracles' own myth.

Philoctetes is something of an aberration in terms of archers, as he is not presented as a savage outsider, at least not once he finally reaches Troy with his bow, nor is he foreign or illegitimate or of a previous generation. Furthermore, the role of Heracles' bow in the Greek victory at Troy is a departure from the grudging respect for the utility of a bow. One possible explanation for this is that much like Heracles himself, the bow is seen as dishonourable unless it is used to pursue a noble cause, whereupon its true worth shines through. In keeping with the overall argument of this thesis then, it can be said that the bow, much like Heracles, is uncivilized, but may still be used for civilized pursuits, such as seeking restitution for the wrongs committed by Troy and Paris specifically. It is fitting then that Paris is eventually killed by Philoctetes.

Philoctetes' primary connection to Heracles comes from the inheritance of the latter's bow. According to the *Bibliotheca* by pseudo-Apollodorus (first or second century CE),⁶⁴ Heracles presents the bow to Poias, Philoctetes' father, for the service of lighting the pyre on which Heracles will commit suicide (*Bibliotheca* II.vii.7). Regardless of how Philoctetes came by Heracles' bow, its symbolic significance is clear: it was involved in the sacking of Troy once already. Later, on his way to Troy, Philoctetes is marooned on the island of Lemnos by his comrades, after he is bitten by a water snake. He is left behind on the island while his soldiers continue on to Troy under the command of Medon.

While his connection to Heracles comes first and foremost from Philoctetes' possession of his bow, a parallel connection can be drawn from the fact that both characters are poisoned in their myths and both are poisoned while making a sacrifice. Also, both are poisoned by snakes.⁶⁵ This could be seen as further evidence that Philoctetes' and Heracles' poisonings are meant to be seen as being connected. The poison is not the death of Philoctetes, though he endures ten years on the island as the Trojan War is waged. Again the endurance of a long period of suffering far from civilization echoes the Heracles myth, much as *Odyssey* does. Finally an embassy is sent to retrieve Philoctetes to fulfil a prophecy that Heracles' bow must be present for Troy to fall. Here Philoctetes is called upon to walk in Heracles' footsteps,

⁶⁴ Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of classical myth*, 17.

⁶⁵ In Philoctetes' case he is merely bitten by a snake. Heracles on the other hand is poisoned by the hydra's venom on a robe he wears (see chapter four). It is also worth noting that Philoctetes is poisoned by a water snake and that the word hydra translates to water snake. Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of classical myth*, 502.

accomplishing the same feat Heracles did earlier while wielding the hero's weapon. As we can see there are many shared aspects between the characters and myths of both Heracles and Philoctetes beyond their archery. The overt reference to Heracles indicated by Philoctetes' use of his bow suggests this is intentional. That Philoctetes survives being poisoned, while poison is the death of Heracles, suggests a conscious effort to make Philoctetes a successor to Heracles, and his myth a continuation of that of Heracles.

Several details of the Philoctetes myth are changed in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. Emphasis is placed particularly on Philoctetes' isolation, not only physically but psychologically. He has been abandoned alone to fend for himself for all these years, and the strain, both mental and physical, of being alone this long is a key element of the text. Earlier texts were more ambiguous about the state he was left in. Heracles also makes a personal appearance in the play as a *deus ex machina*, when towards the end of the play Philoctetes has refused the call to war and has chased away the envoy sent to collect him he is visited by Heracles as a god who tells him of the role he will play in the Trojan War, predicting that he will kill Paris and sack the city. Odysseus also plays a key role in Sophocles' version. In the play Odysseus is the one who abandoned Philoctetes as well as the one who is sent to retrieve him. In the earlier versions found in the *Cypria* it is Diomedes who is sent to retrieve Philoctetes. Most significantly though to our analysis is the play's use of Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, whose significance emanates largely from a connection to his father akin to that of Philoctetes and Heracles. Like these two heroes, Neoptolemus and Achilles share a connection through the inheritance of arms. As was mentioned above, this practice of arms inheritance is common in Greek myth, as it enhances the prestige of both wielders. Beyond this, however, it is possible that Neoptolemus' link with his father and proximity to Philoctetes is meant to evoke the dichotomy of Achilles and Heracles mentioned above in regard to the *Iliad*.

The dichotomy between spear wielders and archers is an analogue for pragmatism versus honour in combat, as well as of uncivilized versus civilized modes of warfare. The argument that we saw play out in Euripides' play can also be seen reflected in the depiction of Philoctetes' injured foot. This injury is obviously a significant aspect of his myth. Usually in the myth, Philoctetes is healed upon his arrival at Troy, however, as Mandel points out, Pindar removes the cure from the myth in order to better fit an analogue he makes to a king who fought a battle while ill.⁶⁶ This is a rather clumsy edit and probably does not take into account all that Philoctetes accomplishes at Troy, though from what we see in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the injury does not seem to affect his ability with the bow. There lies the crux of the argument. Philoctetes' injury highlights an attribute often attached to archery in Greek

⁶⁶ Oscar Mandel, *Philoctetes and the Fall of Troy*, 11.

myth: the notion that it is a pragmatic form of combat. Whilst injury, lameness or simply weakness of the feet or legs often leads to the death or defeat of a spear wielding warrior, it is not nearly as severe an injury for an archer. Evidence of this can be seen not only in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, but also in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and other texts as well. For spear wielding warriors, particularly in Greek myth, the feet hold a special significance. Stuart Ian McNally in his thesis 'The Role of Feet in Early and Classical Greek Literature' says of this that "The Warrior hero holds a pre-eminent position in society, and in order to sustain his honour and standing he must continually demonstrate his physical prowess in tests of strength. Due to the nature of warfare it is the feet of a warrior which principally determine his fighting ability".⁶⁷ To illustrate this McNally points to the example of Achilles, who is the greatest fighter present at Troy, and how he is often referred to in this *Iliad* with reference to the swiftness of his feet.⁶⁸ Conversely, McNally points out that for warriors who are cowardly or about to falter, emphasis is drawn to their incorrect use of their legs. This can be seen in the episode in the *Iliad* where Hector confronts Achilles before the gates of Troy, particularly to the focus on Hector's legs.⁶⁹

The importance of feet is also relevant to the oft referenced episode of the *Iliad* where Paris shoots Diomedes in the foot (*Iliad* 11:433-444). While we have discussed Diomedes' great prowess and Paris's underhanded tactics, we should not understate the significance of his injury being to the foot as a factor in Paris' victory over a greater opponent. As Diomedes makes clear in his speech the distance between the two warriors, initially capitalised on by Paris through his archery and maintained by Diomedes' injury, is the only thing keeping Paris alive. From what we understand of Diomedes this is far from mere posturing, and we do believe that were it not for this distance between them he would have no problem overcoming Paris. However, because he is injured, he has no choice but to retreat.

Having established the importance of strong feet to spear-wielding warrior heroes such as Achilles, Diomedes and Hector, we can now consider the lame Philoctetes, the archer. An important fact is that while, in Sophocles' play, Philoctetes is presented as a feeble, diminished, pitiable and, most significantly, lame man, Odysseus makes it clear that while he has his bow he is also extremely dangerous. This fact after all drives the entire plot of the play: it is the reason Neoptolemus is forced to take part in Odysseus' underhanded plan to disarm Philoctetes as he was more than capable and certainly inclined to kill Odysseus, injured as he was, provided he was armed with his bow. Furthermore when Philoctetes is

⁶⁷ Stuart Ian McNally, 'The Role of Feet in Early and Classical Greek Literature', M.A. Thesis (University of Melbourne, Dept. of Fine Arts, Classics and Archaeology), 1998, 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 4.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 5.

rearmed with Heracles' bow, Odysseus flees immediately, knowing the danger posed even by the injured archer. It is this fact that is pivotal to the argument being presented here- that while weak or injured feet mean death or defeat to the spear wielding warrior hero within Greek myth, to an archer such a wound is not nearly as dire. This is additional evidence of the pragmatic benefit attached to archery in Greek myth.

Heracles himself has an incident where his foot is incapacitated. During his second labour, his battle against the Hydra, Heracles first fires flaming arrows at the creature to draw it out. He then attempts to grapple it but it wraps around his leg. Following this a giant crab comes out and again attacks his leg. He dispatches the crab but is forced to seek assistance from Iolaos, thus invalidating the labour in the eyes of Eurystheus (*Bibliotheca*, II.v.2). This is the version of the myth presented in Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*; however there is evidence of the crab in earlier versions of the Heracles myth, even if the detail of it attacking his legs is not mentioned. Palaephatus, in his work *On Unbelievable Things*, also makes reference to the crab attacking Heracles while he is engaging the Hydra.⁷⁰

Finally, in the *Bibliotheca's* version of the myth Heracles is wielding a bow, and uses it to draw the hydra out, then discards it in order to grapple with the hydra and engage it with his club.

By pelting it with fiery shafts he [Heracles] forced it to come out, and in the act of doing so he seized and held fast. But the hydra wound itself about one of his feet and clung to him. Nor could he effect anything by smashing its heads with his club, for as fast as one head was smashed there grew up two.

Bibliotheca, II.v.2

Yet again we can see the benefits of archery. Heracles is able to fight the Hydra while shooting from a distance but is incapacitated once in combat with his club and hands when his feet are disabled. If anything, this demonstrates that it is not just the archer's range that puts him at an advantage but also his lack of reliance on his feet. Feet in the context of Greek myth represent many things including sturdiness, courage and good health. What can be inferred about archers from Sophocles' version of the myth's emphasis on the injury on his foot is that the bow is an equaliser that allows an individual to be dangerous even to a foe who is sounder in body. Clearly the pragmatic benefits of the bow are extolled in this play.

To conclude, it can certainly be said that Heracles, for most of his mortal life, inhabits a world removed from Greek social expectations. It is here that he hunts and fights monstrous animals

⁷⁰ Palaephatus' *On Unbelievable Things* is believed to be dated from either the third or fourth century BCE. Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of classical myth*, 329.

and goes to war with mythical foreign armies such as the Trojans or Amazons. These are far flung places where honourable combat is not considered important and where survival is paramount. The advantage the bow gives over the spear in this world is undeniable, even to those myth-makers who regard the practice of archery with contempt. With this in mind what can be concluded about Heracles and the bow in Greek myth is clear: Heracles engages in an essentially unheroic practice in the world of Achilles (*Iliad*) and in the world of fifth century Athens. Nonetheless the bow is a useful weapon that aids Heracles' survival; just as it helps Odysseus overthrow the suitors, Paris to bring down Diomedes and Achilles, and Philoctetes to survive the island of Lemnos then bring an end to the Trojan war by killing Paris. The connection to the uncivilized world is also evident in all of these examples of archers. Each has some association with it, either coming from a non-Greek civilization, like Paris, or existing for extended periods in the uncivilized world like Philoctetes and Odysseus. In the end the bow is Heracles' instrument for performing both civilizing and uncivilized deeds. However, the negative connotations and connection with the uncivilized attached to the bow mean that even Heracles' civilizing deeds are tainted by the uncivilized means through which he achieves them.

Chapter 3: Heracles and the Lion Skin Cloak

In the previous chapter we discussed how Heracles' weaponry, predominantly the bow, informs his character. We concluded that Heracles' practice of archery associated Heracles with a form of dishonourable pragmatism and removal from Greek civilizations, often literally. Archery, we showed, was not only considered an uncivilized practice, but further it was associated with characters enduring in uncivilized places. As discussed in the first chapter Heracles thrives in such wild settings as his many and varied triumphs over barbaric or monstrous foes demonstrate. However as we also discussed, Heracles' comfort in the outside world comes at a cost. His symbolic transition into this world, represented by his adoption of the lion skin cloak, coincides with him being sent out of the city before hunting the Cithaironion lion or barred from the city after returning with the Nemean Lion's skin. It is this symbolic transition between the civilized and uncivilized world that will be the subject of this chapter.

This chapter is structured in two sections, each relating to the significance of the lion to Heracles' role as both civilizer and an uncivilized individual. The first section will focus on his combat with the lion, as well as the significance of the lion in Greek myth, outside of its connection to Heracles. This section will also include a discussion of several of Heracles' other animal-related labours, as many of them contain similar themes to the combat. It will show that Heracles tames the land by defeating the Nemean Lion and other monstrous beasts, serving the cause of civilization. In taming the land however a connection is made between Heracles and the beasts he fights that highlights and accentuates the hero's uncivilized traits. The second section focuses on Heracles' wearing of the lion skin. In this section the importance of clothing to a hero will be discussed, as well as the significance of wearing an animal skin. We will demonstrate how the transition between the civilized and uncivilized world is symbolized by Heracles' taking and wearing of the lion skin and how by wearing its skin Heracles inherits traits from the lion he defeats, and becomes more receptive to the influence of the other, uncivilized world.

Lions in Greek Myth

To understand the significance of what it is to fight a lion as well as to wear its skin in Greek myth it is important to first establish what a lion signified culturally and spiritually. This is because in addition to the lion fight and lion skin, similes relating Heracles to a lion are quite common. The *Homeric Hymn* to Heracles adds the suffix "the lion hearted" after his name. In Seneca the Younger's play *Hercules Oetaeus*, Philoctetes likens the dying Hercules to "some huge, suffering lion". At *Iliad* 5:735 Heracles' son Tlepolemus refers to his father with allusion to a lion. It may seem that such analogies are simply due to Heracles' connection

with lions via his cloak and the fight with a lion in which he acquired the skin. However, Heracles is not the only hero in Greek myth to be likened to a lion. Michael Ferber, writing on lions in myth, notes that lions are referred to no fewer than thirty times within the *Iliad*, almost always as similes, and that they are used to describe nearly every warrior during battle.⁷¹ This suggests that qualities other than Heracles' cloak or having fought a lion qualify him to be likened to a lion, as many of the warriors at Troy do not share these attributes with Heracles. This section then will aim to discuss what some of the commonly accepted leonine qualities are within the context of Greek myth, and how they are reflected in Heracles' character.

It is implied by Burkert that lions were at the very least not a common sight at the time Heracles was depicted fighting them, possibly even rarer than that, appearing to the Greeks only in foreign myths.⁷² Lawrence J. Bliquez further states that the only lions native to Greece were a species of mountain lion in the north, who had no mane nor tuft at the end of their tail and were in fact quite small.⁷³ He further adds that, barring the existence of a now extinct species of lion in the region, the most likely model for lions in art would have been either African or Persian lions, which were not a common sight until the Hellenistic period, when they might be viewed in circuses or zoos.⁷⁴ Realistic portrayals of lions only seem to have become a trend between 350 and 330BCE.⁷⁵ This suggests that the creature might have appeared to the eyes of the Greek myth-makers and artists as something of a mythical creature, separate from other more mundane and commonly occurring animals. Indeed Jeffrey M. Hurwit suggests certain artistic representations of lions from as early as the mid sixth century BCE may have been deliberately depicted as hermaphroditic (possessing both mane and teats) in order to make the creature seem "more "awe-ful", mysterious and strange than it otherwise is".⁷⁶ Certainly it can be said that Greek myth-makers put forward the lion as a force of supernatural destruction. In the case of the Nemean Lion this supernatural element is established in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where, as has been mentioned, it is listed as one of the monstrous offspring of the Titan Typhon and half-snake nymph Echidna. Similarly two other beings that feature lion body parts are listed among the offspring of Typhon and Echidna, namely the Chimera who is depicted with the head of a lion, and the lion-bodied Sphinx. It is

⁷¹ Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, Cambridge, UK, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 116.

⁷² This can be inferred from his belief that few Greeks would have ever seen a lion and that those Greek myths containing lions emanated from eastern sources. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1987), 209.

⁷³ Lawrence J. Bliquez, 'Lions and Greek Sculptors', *The Classical World*, 68/6 (Mar. 1975), 384.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 381.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 381.

⁷⁶ Jeffrey M. Hurwit, 'Lizards, Lions, and the Uncanny in Early Greek Art', *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, 75/1 (Jan. - Mar., 2006), 133-134.

significant to note that the Nemean lion's invulnerability to weapons is a detail not found in the *Theogony*, further suggesting the creature possessed (in Hesiod's mind) an almost mythical quality simply by virtue of being a lion.⁷⁷

Hesiod also provides the detail in the *Theogony* 327-329 that the Nemean lion was raised by Hera, and that before Heracles killed it, it was responsible for the destruction of entire villages. The first point is included mainly, it seems, to emphasise the antagonism between Hera and Heracles. This seems to be the case as the structure of these lines, Hera's involvement in rearing the Nemean lion followed by a brief description of how Heracles subdued it, is an echo of a few lines previous where the same structure is used to describe Hera's raising of the Lernaian Hydra followed by Heracles' defeat of it. Significantly, however, the lines regarding the Hydra imply that Hera raised the creature to set against Heracles.

Aside from this, Hera's involvement in raising the Nemean lion also creates a strange parallel between it and Heracles. Both are divine progeny, Heracles being the son of Zeus. Both are reared by supernatural beings, the lion by Hera, while a sixth century black-figure amphora depicts Heracles being taken to be trained by the Centaur Cheiron.⁷⁸ Various other myths have Hera being tricked into nursing the infant Heracles. Despite the similarities one could draw from the youths of these two creatures, Heracles and the Nemean lion have diametrically different purposes set before them. The *Theogony* says that Hera raised the Nemean lion "to be a plague to mankind" (*Theogony* 329). On the other hand, in the pseudo-Hesiodic *The Shield of Heracles*, it is implied that Heracles is conceived for the purpose of protecting both men and the gods. When Heracles and the Nemean lion meet then, it is as nemeses, set against each other by divine forces.

Another source from which we may glean how the Greeks viewed lions is their depiction in Aesop's *Fables*. Dating from around the 6th century BCE⁷⁹ Aesop frequently depicts various anthropomorphised animals as representative of certain human characteristics in order to deliver his moral messages. For example, the ass is simple and unimpressive while the fox is clever and mischievous. Aesop's lions are depicted as voracious and rightly feared apex predators. This placement at the top of the food chain within the fables may explain why the

⁷⁷ Wm. Blake Tyrrell, 'On Making the Myth of the Nemean Lion', *The Classical Journal*, 98/1, (Oct.-Nov. 2002), 70. Tyrrell states that both Pindar and Bacchylides mention the Nemean Lion's invulnerable hide. Interestingly he also suggests that this feature of the lion may be a joke on the mountains in Nemea where Heracles was said to have fought it, as their name can translate as "'to pierce, bore through, perforate'".

⁷⁸ Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, 378.

⁷⁹ Aesop, *The Complete Fables*, tr: Olivia Temple & Robert Temple (London, Penguin Books, 1998), X.

lion is also depicted as having sovereignty over other animals, as seen in *The Royalty of the Lion* (*Fables*, 195) and *The Lion and the Wild Ass* (*Fables*, 207). The predatory role of these lions is very much in keeping with the depictions we have so far discussed. The association with royalty too is something we will address below in the examination of the lion skin as clothing for various heroes, though it fits with Heracles' noble birth. There is also a strong association within the *Fables* between the lion and hunting, with the creature at times taking the role of both hunter and quarry. Again this serves to reinforce their predatory depiction, as well as highlight the contrast of both wild animal and regal monarch.

Heracles' Lion Fights: The Nemean and Cithaironion Lions

Heracles' combat with the Nemean lion and subsequent adoption of its skin as his preferred form of dress is one of the most iconic elements of his myth. Depictions of Heracles battling the lion in art outnumber representations of any other labour undertaken by the hero while in literature it is given prominence as the first labour he performs in service to Eurystheus.⁸⁰ According to Timothy Gantz, this placement of the lion fight is to get Heracles more quickly into the iconic cloak, highlighting its importance as, along with the club, one of the distinguishing articles identifying the hero.⁸¹ While the image of Heracles wearing the lion's skin did not become pervasive until the sixth century BCE, it is evident that the combat with the lion is represented prior to this in the Heracles myth. For example, the lion fight is depicted as early as either the 8th or possibly early 7th century in Hesiod's *Theogony*,⁸² although without the skinning and wearing of the lion-skin. There are also artistic depictions of the lion fight predating by two centuries those of Heracles wearing the lion skin. For example, an 8th century Attic earthware stand depicts a figure, most likely Heracles, in combat against a lion.⁸³ Significantly, "Heracles" in this incarnation is depicted fighting the lion with a sword in one hand and a lance in the other.⁸⁴ This could be seen as alluding to the part of the Heracles myth before he realises the creature is invulnerable to such weapons and Heracles abandons his weapons to use his hands. It could also imply that the lion's invulnerability was a detail of the myth added later or possibly not ascribed to by the artist. Alternatively, this might depict Heracles' combat with the Cithaironion lion, although it may not be Heracles at all but some other figure fighting a lion. It is difficult to identify Heracles without some distinguishing, unique feature such as the lion skin or club. This issue aside, the evidence seems to suggest that the lion fight at least was an early part of the Heracles myth, even if the

⁸⁰ Frank Brommer, *Heracles: the Twelve Labours of the Hero in Ancient Art and Literature*, 5.

⁸¹ Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, 383.

⁸² Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of classical myth*, 129.

⁸³ Frank Brommer, *Heracles: the Twelve Labours of the Hero in Ancient Art and Literature*, 7-8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 7-8.

detail of Heracles' cloak was added later. As such it is appropriate to examine the significance of Heracles fighting the lion as a separate aspect of the myth to that of his wearing of its skin.

While Heracles' lion skin cloak is most often attributed to being from the Nemean lion, an alternative version of the Heracles myth in the *Bibliotheca* has Heracles acquire his cloak from the Cithaironion lion in his youth, long before he fights the Nemean lion. This incident was referred to in chapter one and holds the significance of being Heracles' first combat with a monstrous beast and the first instance of him using his strength and prowess in the interest of humanity and civilization (not counting the snakes in his crib). Significantly also the Cithaironion lion is not depicted with any supernatural attributes and is killed by Heracles with weaponry. It could be taken that simply by being a lion it stands among the many mythic monstrous beasts Heracles fights during his life; this certainly fits with the notion of the lion as an alien and mythical creature to the Greeks as suggested above. The placement of this myth early within the hero's life, long before he undertakes the labours, does not fit as conveniently into our argument that the killing of the lion and adoption of its skin marks a transition for the character of Heracles from the civilized to the uncivilized worlds. This is because Heracles returns to the city after this deed. However this episode can still be considered a transition. It marks the beginning of Heracles' adulthood, and of his undertaking the responsibility for defending the civilized world.

The more well-known story of Heracles' lion skin cloak involves his combat with the Nemean lion as his first labour. Therefore it may benefit us to examine Heracles' combat with the lion in the context of the other labours he undertakes. Many of these labours feed into the image of Heracles as a hunter hero, as he is called upon to track, trap, kill or capture several mythical animals in the course of his labours. However when we consider the difference between the animals he kills and those he captures alive it seems there is slightly more to the labours. The monsters Heracles kills are those based on dangerous and predatory animals such as the lion and snake (hydra). However Heracles captures alive the creatures that might be domesticated (the hind, the boar, the bull, the horses, the cattle and in some versions the birds). In addition, there are also the labours where he is forced to clean the Augean stables and harvest the apples of Hesperides, the former involving him building a dam. With these things considered, it is possible to surmise that there is a pervasive theme of domestication and civilization present in the cycle of the twelve labours. Indeed, early in Euripides' *Heracles* his reason for doing the labours is given by his father as attempting to tame the wild, after which he will be released from Eurystheus' service.⁸⁵ An alternative translation by Robin Waterfield has Heracles promise to "clear the earth of its wild elements" (Euripides *Heracles* 20). Heracles

⁸⁵ Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, 382.

not only exists in the wilds of the uncivilized world, but masters it and brings the fruits of his labour, literally in the case of the apples, back to the gates of civilization. It could also be possible to read these labours as representative of Heracles advancing civilization not just as a hunter but by contributing to the development of agriculture. While this is not explicit, Heracles' role as both a hunter and tamer of animals should be noted.

Another perspective on Heracles' lion-combat, and indeed on several of his other labours is put forward by Robert Graves, who points to a tradition of a ritual combat as part of a king's coronation in which the king fights several animals associated with the constellations and/or seasons of the year.⁸⁶ He suggests that Heracles' battles with the lion, water snake (hydra) and bull are related to this ritual, and that the fourth beast, the scorpion, is replaced by the boar in all versions except the Orion myth, which he considers a variation on the Heracles myth.⁸⁷ Graves claims this is also found in the Bellerophon myth, where the hero fights the Chimera, an amalgam of three creatures a lion, a snake and a goat (which Graves suggests is standing in for a ram).⁸⁸ After defeating this creature and performing several other great deeds Bellerophon is made successor to Iobates kingdom (Apollodorus 2.3.1-2.3.2). While Graves' theory is superficially persuasive, it is lacking in several areas. Firstly he provides no reason why he suspects the boar has replaced the scorpion. Furthermore, while there are many reasons why Heracles undertakes the labours, his motivation for fighting these monstrous animals has never been to prove himself as a king. Certainly there is the implication in Euripides' play that Heracles will be allowed to return to his city as its king after having completed the labours, but, as has been mentioned, the express purpose in the text for Heracles' performance of the labours is to free himself from Eurystheus' service by taming the uncivilized world. More often the reason given is that Heracles is redeeming himself for the crime of murdering his family, or that he is earning his immortality and place among the gods. Another problem with Graves' theory is that he gives no explanation for the other labours attributed to Heracles, though it is perhaps possible that these extra labours are later additions that fit with the above mentioned hunting theme.

Heroic Garb

Before discussing at length the significance of Heracles' lion skin cloak, it is important to examine the significance of clothing in myth. 'Clothes make the man' so the idiom goes, and it is certainly the case for heroes both past and present. What they wear, as well as what they do not wear, affects their character far beyond their garb's utilitarian function. This is similar in many ways to how in the previous chapter a character's choice of weapon could be related

⁸⁶ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (New York, Penguin Books, 2012), 466.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 466.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 466.

to their place in, or out of, civilized society. This is doubly true of the Greek artistic depictions of characters, as in a medium where characters are frequently depicted in heroic nudity, special attention must be paid to any clothing added as there is usually a reason for its inclusion.

For an example of a hero whose clothing either reflects or defines his character, we can look to Achilles. His own divine lineage and fiery demeanour following the death of Patroclus is reflected in the armour he wears after his friend's death. Forged by the god Hephaestus on Olympus, Achilles' armour is frequently described in terms of flashing, burning and instilling fear into any who looks upon it, whether friend or foe.⁸⁹ In this way the motif of fire that pervades Achilles' depiction not only in the *Iliad*, but also in the *Odyssey*, is hammered into the armour he wears.⁹⁰ Achilles' own divinity, as well as the fact that he is favoured by many of the gods is also reflected in his wearing of this divine armour. Similarly, the shield which Achilles receives from Hephaestus, depicting all aspects of Greek life, is indicative of Achilles' role as an avatar of the Greek army leading up to his microcosmic battle with the Trojan champion Hector. The competition between these two spear-wielding heroes then is a display by the poetic tradition of Greek superiority in this field, facilitated in part by Achilles' shield establishing him as the exemplar of the Greeks.⁹¹ Again, the favour of the gods is represented in Achilles' armour and shield through its divine source, though by also making Achilles the avatar for the Greeks, it also reiterates the support of much of the pantheon for their army.

In *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology*, Richard Reynolds states that a "Superhero's costume...proclaims his individuality" and more importantly that the identity created by the costume is unique and separate from their alter ego.⁹² An example that Reynolds discusses is the transition between Superman and his meek alter ego, Clark Kent, and how the transition between the two characters is tied to the change of costume.⁹³ The comparison between Heracles' lion skin and a superhero's costume is an apt one though it has several flaws. Heracles' donning the lion skin can be seen as symbolic of a transition in his identity: it marks his abandonment of previous allegiances and of the civilized world to fight to further the cause of civilization as a whole in the uncivilized world. It "proclaims his individuality" by making him an instantly recognisable figure. Furthermore, like many superheroes who take on the name, the form, and abilities of an animal (such as Batman, Spiderman, *et al.*) Heracles

⁸⁹ C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad*, 181-182.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 174.

⁹¹ This parallels the later combat between Philoctetes and Paris which is used to depict the Greek archer as superior.

⁹² Richard Reynolds, *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology* (Jackson : University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 26.

⁹³ Ibid. 14-15&32.

can be said to embody many of the qualities of the lion whose skin he wears. An important distinction however is whilst the concept of the superhero is built around one person having dual identities, there is no transition back for Heracles to the man he was before he dons the lion cloak. Even when he leaves the wilds and is welcomed back into civilization he brings the uncivilized exterior with him, wearing its influence in his lion skin cloak. It is arguably only after his death, when his lion skin is burned over his body, that he transcends its influence, abandoning his uncivilized mortal ghost to Hades and ascending to his well-earned godhood. This, however, will be discussed in chapter four.

Heracles' Lion Skin Cloak

Just as Heracles' lion fight, and subsequent animal labours, can be considered part of a civilizing effort, his lion skin can be seen as a symbol of Heracles' domination of the natural world, a pre-eminent predator like the lion, whose skin he wears. Burkert says that Heracles' lion skin "represents man's domination of nature through violence."⁹⁴ It is this violence however that both empowers Heracles yet distances him from the civilization he fights for. The lion skin symbolises for the character of Heracles a transition in which he will turn away from the civilized world of the city and assume the characteristics of a lion portrayed in Greek myth. He will also inherit the lion's place in the world and remove himself from the old one. As mentioned in chapter one, Heracles is barred from the city once he returns wearing the lion's skin.

Heracles' appearance in his lion skin is certainly one of the more iconic aspects of his character. However, the image of Heracles was not at all static and did not always include the lion skin. Prior to the 6th century BCE in Greek art there was a trend towards depicting characters in generic warrior regalia; while this did not always consist of full armour, these depictions of Heracles did include him with a helmet and wielding a spear. Interestingly in Heracles' case the shield was often omitted from the ensemble.⁹⁵ There were of course also examples where Heracles is depicted in heroic nudity.⁹⁶ This trend of depicting characters as generic figures encouraged showing characters without the iconic accoutrements that might aid in their identification. For example, Zeus was depicted without his thunderbolt or his eagle.⁹⁷ Understandably, Heracles from this time does not have his lion skin. This practice began to recede towards the beginning of the sixth century when Heracles' portrayal as a generic warrior was stripped away piece by piece (first discarding the spear, then the helmet).

⁹⁴ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, 98.

⁹⁵ Frank Brommer, *Heracles: the Twelve Labours of the Hero in Ancient Art and Literature*, 65.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 65.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 65.

At the same time his depiction in his iconic lion skin cloak became prevalent.⁹⁸ Heracles' lack of his lion skin prior to the 6th century BCE is sometimes reflected in the literature. Certainly a great deal is made of his belt (on which is depicted, among other creatures, a lion) and other aspects of his appearance when Odysseus meets Heracles in Hades in the *Odyssey*, but there is no mention of his lion skin (*Odyssey* 11: 699-705). The myth of Heracles' lion combat was certainly in circulation by this point; however it is unclear if his wearing of the lion skin was.

As was mentioned above, Heracles' club is probably the most common means of identifying him in art besides the lion cloak. His club is something that we have not addressed before now, as it is more commonly depicted in artistic representations of the hero, than in literary ones. This places it outside the general scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, it seems pertinent to discuss the club here in this chapter, as it is often paired with the lion skin. The two together contribute to the uncivilized appearance of Heracles. Heracles' club often appears as roughly hewn from wood with clear indication where the branches have been cut from. It begins appearing in art in the early sixth century.⁹⁹ That Heracles' club is carved from wood is significant. Beth Cohen suggests that in Archaic Greek art such a weapon is primarily used against wild animals.¹⁰⁰ She cites several examples where this is the case in art, depicting both Heracles and others wielding a wooden club against animals. She also mentions how, while Heracles may use his bow against both men and beasts, his club is reserved only for use against animals. The association then between the club and the lion skin is that they both serve as accoutrements of a hunter, as the weapon he uses to fight animals and the trophy he has won.

The fact that Heracles takes the lion's skin as a cloak feeds further into the notion of Heracles as a hunter hero (suggested in the previous chapter). Forbes in *Metamorphosis in Greek Myth* mentions how many hunter-heroes take on aspects of the creatures they hunt.¹⁰¹ This can be seen demonstrated in a literal sense by Heracles, specifically in his fights with both the Nemean lion and the Hydra as Heracles wears the lion's skin and takes the poison of the hydra for his arrows. (A less literal adoption of aspects associated with lions will be discussed below.) Significantly, Heracles' adoption of the Hydra's poison and wearing of the lion's skin contributes to an interesting parallel between Heracles' monster battles and the duels of the Iliadic heroes. In certain versions the Nemean lion's hide is impervious to weapons, and Heracles wears it as a kind of armour. It is arguable then that the act of Heracles first defeating the lion then wearing its skin as armour echoes the tradition seen in the *Iliad* of a

⁹⁸ Ibid. 66.

⁹⁹ Beth Cohen, 'From Bowman to Clubman Herakles and Olympia', 696.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 698.

¹⁰¹ P.M.C Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myth*, 83.

hero stripping the arms and armour from a defeated enemy and wearing them in battle. While there are several examples of this, perhaps the most relevant of these is Hector's defeat of Patroclus after which he takes Achilles' armour, which Patroclus was wearing, and is later depicted wearing it (*Iliad* 22:379-381). This comparison would suggest then that Heracles, a hunter hero, treats the monstrous animals he fights the same way a warrior hero such as Achilles or Hector treats other warriors. This is compounded by the fact that Heracles defeats the Nemean lion with his bare hands, killing it on even terms if you will: two divine progeny matching strength against strength with the human member of the duel unable to resort to his obvious advantage of weaponry. Such a comparison speaks not only of the savagery inherent in Heracles' character but also of his uncivilized nature, a lion and not a man is treated as his equal.

It has been mentioned already that Heracles is not the first or only hero, Greek or otherwise,¹⁰² to don a lion skin cloak. For this reason it is appropriate that other prominent examples of this practice be considered in the analysis of the significance of the cloak in the Heracles myths. It may also be of significance to consider the use of other animal hides in the dress of heroic figures, particularly the hides of predatory animals. While the image of Heracles dressed in his lion skin within art only became prevalent in the 6th century BCE, there is evidence from the late eighth or early seventh century BCE¹⁰³ within book 10 of the *Iliad* of several heroes wearing lion-skin cloaks, specifically Agamemnon and Diomedes (*Iliad* 10:28&209). Contextually, it may be significant to note that this is neither their standard dress nor what they wear into battle (even though both are carrying spears while wearing the skins) rather it is what they put on when going to seek the war council of Nestor.

...round him [Agamemnon] slung the glossy hide of a big tawny lion,
Swinging down to his heels, and grasped a spear.

Iliad (10:27-28)

And round his back Diomedes slung the hide
of a big tawny lion, swinging down to his heels,
he grasped a spear...

Iliad (10:208-210)

Though several heroes attend this council only these two are dressed so, though the rest are also armed and Menelaus is mentioned as wearing a leopard skin (*Iliad* 10:34). Why these

¹⁰² See for example Othniel Margalith, 'The Legend of Samson/Heracles', *Vetus Testamentum*, 37/1 (Jan., 1987).

¹⁰³ Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, 5.

two and no others are wearing lion skins is unclear. For Diomedes it could be representative of his violent nature, as he has up to this point in the text been quite brutal in battle, at one point stabbing Aphrodite as she was trying to protect her son Aeneas (*Iliad* 5:347-382). Significantly, Dione later compares this action of Diomedes in attacking a god to Heracles, giving three anecdotes about occasions when Heracles attacked the gods (*Iliad* 5:446-463). It would however be something of a stretch to assume the lion-skin is associated with attempted deicide, especially considering Agamemnon's use of it as well. It is possible, but unlikely, that the myth of Heracles' lion cloak predated the *Iliad* and that Homer is attempting to create a link between the two characters, based on their similar acts of impiety. It should be noted here that the tenth book of the *Iliad*, referred to as the *Doloneia*, is considered by some to be a later addition to the text.¹⁰⁴ Of course the reverse is also possible, that Diomedes inspired Heracles' lion skin. More likely in the case of both Agamemnon and Diomedes is that the lion skin is here simply meant to evoke the association between lions and kingship.

In examining the notion of the lion-fight in myth, there is a strong case for a connection between the lion in Greek myth and the ancient near east, according to Walter Burkert, who, as we discussed earlier, suggests that the myth of the lion-fight migrated from eastern sources into Greek myth. He also questions how likely it is that any Greek would have actually seen a lion.¹⁰⁵ Certainly there is no shortage of myths regarding lions emanating from this source. Indeed Homer's use of lions, which he mentions frequently, may owe something to his time in Ionia, present day Turkey.¹⁰⁶ *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, for example, tells of its hero, the Sumerian hero-king Gilgamesh, killing a group of lions while he is wandering the wilds in mourning for his friend Enkidu (tablet IX:9-18). Furthermore several of Heracles' other labours share details with near-eastern myths. Burkert also describes a depiction of a figure beheading a seven headed serpent, as well as one of a hero, believed to be Ninurta or Ningirsu, fighting lions, bulls and snakes; these images emerge from the mid-3rd and even as far as 4th millennium BCE Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁷ These depictions bear remarkable similarity to several of Heracles' animal labours, as does Gilgamesh's combat with the Bull of Heaven, a divine bull similar in many ways to the Cretan Bull Heracles defeats as one of his labours. Furthermore emerging from Sumerian sources we have depictions of a hero clad in a lion skin and wielding a bow and club.¹⁰⁸ The similarities between early eastern depictions and Heracles' dress and labours suggest that at least some of the Heracles myth may have been influenced by Mesopotamian and Sumerian sources, including Heracles' combat with the lion

¹⁰⁴ C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad*, 99.

¹⁰⁵ Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 209.

¹⁰⁶ Maureen Alden, 'Lions in Paradise: Lion Similes in the Iliad and the Lion Cubs of IL. 18.318-22', *The Classical Quarterly*, 55/2 (Dec., 2005), 336.

¹⁰⁷ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, 80.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 80.

and wearing its skin. With this in mind it is no stretch of the imagination to connect Heracles' adoption of a lion skin cloak to the similar actions of Gilgamesh.

In this case, Heracles' adoption of the lion skin could also be linked to his entering a period of exile, mourning and questing for immortality, demonstrated in the common use of the lion skin in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* repeated reference is made to Gilgamesh's intention to clad himself in the skin of a lion and wander the wild (*Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet VII 147, VIII 91) in mourning for Enkidu's death. After announcing his intentions in previous tablets, Gilgamesh finally does this, as recounted on Tablet IX when after Enkidu's death Gilgamesh leaves the city, comes across a number of lions, kills them and wears their hides. Thomas Van Nortwick offers as explanation for this episode that Gilgamesh does this in order to be close to the beast-like Enkidu. His adoption of the lion's skin is a rejection of his friend's death and that his subsequent quest for immortality is really a quest for Gilgamesh to accept death and the death of his friend specifically.¹⁰⁹ As has already been established, several of Heracles' feats could be inspired by Gilgamesh, including his combat with the lion. It is worthwhile to compare the myths as they pertain to wearing a lion's skin. Within the cycle of the twelve labours of Heracles, the defeat of the Nemean lion, from whom Heracles takes his cloak in most versions, is the first labour performed. A common motivation for Heracles undertaking the labours is penance for the murder of his children (*Bibliotheca* II.iv.12). Another motivation seen also in the *Bibliotheca* is the promise of immortality upon their completion (II.iv.12). It is not impossible that these two elements of the Heracles myth relate to some degree to Gilgamesh's use of the lion skin as his mourning garb. Following the death of his friend Enkidu, Gilgamesh also adopts garb made from lion's skin and undertakes a quest to seek immortality. In this regard a correlation could be drawn between Gilgamesh and Heracles' wanderings following the death of their loved ones. Both make their exile from the civilization of the city after the deaths of their loved ones and after undertaking a quest to gain immortality by donning a lion's skin. In this reading the lion skin is not simply mourning garb but a symbolic gesture of rejection of the civilized world, the city, humanity and even of death, by making oneself akin to the denizens of the uncivilized outside.

Much has already been made of the notion that Heracles' adoption of the lion skin marks a transition for him from the civilized to the uncivilized world, and a subsequent change in his character to acclimatise. The artistic tradition also supports this conclusion, as there are examples that depict Heracles wearing the lion's upper jaw and scalp above his head, occasionally accompanied by the lower jaw beneath it. This is the subject of Joseph

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Van Nortwick, *Somewhere I have Never Travelled: the Second Self and the Hero's Journey in Ancient Epic*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 31-32.

Campbell's theory of heroic transitions at the commencement of a journey. In one respect, the way Heracles wears the lion's head resembles depictions of Jason being swallowed by the dragon, where his head is depicted emerging from the creatures' mouth. Joseph Campbell discusses this in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* where heroes are swallowed and then emerge again from inside a creature. Campbell considers this act, along with a hero's entrance and exit of a temple or "land beyond, above, and below the confines of the world", representative of an inward journey of self-realization and ensuing rebirth.¹¹⁰ A key difference with the Heracles myth is that Heracles' head remains within the lion's mouth, neither swallowed nor regurgitated, a state which, if the emergence from the creature symbolizes the rebirth of the hero, would mean Heracles is stranded from the time he first dons the lion skin on the cusp of rebirth, trapped in the portal between the civilized and the uncivilized worlds. It is only upon his death and the immolation of both Heracles and his lion skin cloak (as related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), that his rebirth is actualized, whereupon he achieves godhood and is taken to Olympus where his life begins anew, accompanied by a new family in the form of his wife Hebe and their children. In Campbell's model he also presents death, albeit often symbolic death, as a necessary step in the transition of the hero from one state to another, quoting Ananda Coomaraswamy as saying "no creature...can attain a higher grade of nature without ceasing to exist."¹¹¹ Heracles' life then, between the point when he acquires his lion skin and his death, is his journey to realize his actual existence as a god. This is in keeping with the geography of Heracles' life, as much of it is spent beyond what could be considered the confines of the civilized world, ranging from Hades to Troy to Hesperides and to the land of the Amazons.

Heracles' adoption of the lion skin as garb marks a transitional point in his myth. This is the case in both versions of the myth of his acquisition of the skin. In the version where Heracles acquires the cloak from the Nemean lion, Heracles' journey is not only one of self-mastery but also of redemption. Heracles must atone for his violent crime and innate savagery by making the world a safer and more civilized place by removing many of the dangerous animals and men. This addresses the core argument of this thesis, namely that Heracles is a civilizer who does not behave in a civilized manner himself. This reading is more attractive due to the proximity of events; Heracles acquires the lion skin shortly after entering the temple to be purified after he murders his family, the temple being associated with Campbell's "outer world". Alternatively there is the version where Heracles acquires his lion skin from the Cithaironian Lion just after he is sent from the Thebes by his father after killing Linos. Here again Heracles' acquisition of the skin marks his exit from civilization (the city)

¹¹⁰ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (USA, Princeton University Press, 1949), 91-92.

¹¹¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 91-92.

and the commencement of his lifelong predisposition towards fighting monsters in defence of civilization. Furthermore, the emphasis is taken away from repentance, which indicates that Heracles' journey is primarily concerned with becoming worthy of the apotheosis that happens upon his death.

In the same vein, Robert Graves suggests that a different element of Heracles' lion fight serves as a metaphor for transition between worlds, albeit only into the underworld. Graves points to the two-mouthed cave that the Nemean lion lives in and suggests a link between that and the two-mouthed cave featured in the *Odyssey* Book 13, whose northern entrance was for men and southern entrance was for gods.¹¹² Graves, citing Porphyry, further suggests that the cave here is a place where "rites of death and divine rebirth were practised" and that with this in mind the cave of the Nemean lion is meant as a metaphor for Heracles' beginning down a passage that will lead to his death.¹¹³ This would perhaps make more sense in the second labour, as the Hydra's poison is ultimately the cause of Heracles' death; however the connection makes sense since the labours are linked to Heracles' death and apotheosis. An alternative reading could be that Heracles both fulfils and overcomes this fate with his final labour, where he descends to and returns from Hades. This episode could be seen as a symbolic death, marking the completion of his labours and, as per the *Bibliotheca*, ensuring that he will never die but will live forever as a god. While the similar structure of these two caves is perhaps too little to connect the two, in light of what we have discussed above regarding the significance of Heracles' combat with the Nemean Lion as a thematic turning point for his character, Graves' interpretation of the cave's significance is certainly apt in the case of the Heracles myth. Furthermore it can be noted that Odysseus' proximity to the cave (even though he never enters it) is referenced with his return to his home of Ithaca (*Odyssey* 13:109-129).

There may be some veracity in Graves' theory that the two-mouthed caves of both the Nemean lion and Odysseus myths are symbolic of a transition for the character who encounters them. It seems appropriate to augment his analysis with the inclusion of a third two-mouthed cave occurring within Greek myth and emanating from a myth that has already been discussed in this thesis. In the myth of Philoctetes, as recounted within Sophocles' play, a detail relating to this discussion can be found: Philoctetes, while he is marooned on the isle of Lemnos and suffering from a poisoned snakebite on his foot, takes shelter within a cave with two mouths (Sophocles' *Philoctetes* 17-19). Graves' original analysis could be considered relevant in this instance, as it is possible to view Philoctetes as a man sheltering along the transition to death, poisoned and at times longing for death but still very much alive

¹¹² Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 467.

¹¹³ Ibid. 467.

years later. It is equally possible however that the two-mouthed cave is meant as a metaphor both here and in the *Odyssey* and Heracles myths for the above mentioned transition between worlds, in this case between Philoctetes' home where he longs to return in the play, and Troy where Philoctetes will be brought to finally win the war for the Greeks.

Philoctetes' living in the cave then would be symbolic of his stalled transition between worlds. He set off for the outer world inhabited by the barbaric Trojans but was stopped half way when he was injured and marooned. His leaving the cave then represents the recommencement of his journey to the exterior world Campbell talks about, as well as the undertaking of his greatest achievement: sacking Troy and killing Paris. So too with Heracles, he must pass into the cave to catch the Nemean lion and thus take his first step into the barbaric world in which he will redeem himself for the murder of his family and earn his place among the gods. For Odysseus, however, the opposite is the case, as his transition is from the barbaric outer world, including Troy and the other places he encounters on his *Odyssey*, to the mundane human-born peril at home.

The reason for Heracles' adoption of both the qualities and the skin of a lion could be explained by Forbes' discussion of Greek myth as a metaphor for various rituals, either of initiation or purification. The pattern Forbes puts forward, is "separation from family and society, a liminal period often associated with a reversal of status (and sometimes including a disguise or disfigurement) and finally reintegration into society".¹¹⁴ This is certainly applicable to Heracles, with the reintegration into society being either when he is purified after his labours or when he is accepted into Olympus after his death. It is also important to note that the pattern Forbes' posits is a fairly common one in terms of mythology. Forbes himself, however, says that the evidence for such initiation rites is sparse.¹¹⁵ He also suggests a connection with purification rites, specifically for "unlawful killing which has caused a plague or famine".¹¹⁶ That Heracles undertakes his labours in order to purify himself after the killing of his family is a common element in his myth. Forbes also suggests that some rituals feature metamorphic elements, specifically involving the subject becoming an animal for a period of time before being reintegrated into society. He also points to one such ritual linked to the myth of a king of Arcadia called Lycaon. During this ritual the subject is turned into a wolf at a sacrifice to Zeus. However the wolf may be returned to human form after nine years if it abstains from eating human flesh. This ritual is also referred to by both Pliny and Augustine.¹¹⁷ As has been demonstrated above Heracles does embody leonine qualities by

¹¹⁴ P.M.C Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myth*, 51.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 51.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 52.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 54.

wearing the skin of a lion and at times even symbolically becomes a lion. With this in mind it is perfectly possible that the pattern of these rituals may have relevance to him.

To conclude: in both versions' telling of Heracles' acquisition of the lion skin cloak the event marks a period of transition for Heracles. This may seem strange as the hunting of the Cithaironian lion seems relatively mundane compared to the labour of slaying the Nemean lion. Certainly the latter is more grandiose: two divine beings locked in combat, Heracles, barehanded, fighting for redemption and symbolically to transcend the violent, uncivilized nature of the beast he recognises reflected in himself. However, in both cases we see a symbolic synthesis occur when the fight is done. Heracles, having left the civilized world of the city finds a new place for himself within the skin of the lion. In wearing the creature's skin he embodies this apex predator of the uncivilized world, a world he will dominate and tame with his violence. Heracles wearing his lion skin is probably the best way to encapsulate the concept of the uncivilized civilized. The skin depicts him as a predator, leonine and animalistic, a hunter of hunters. Yet underneath is still the human and more than that, the son of Zeus, the protector of gods and men. The synthesis between the two lies in how the violence of the uncivilized is turned to the cause of civilization.

Chapter 4: The Death of Heracles: The Division of the Civilized and Uncivilized

In the previous chapter we discussed how Heracles associates himself with the monsters he fights, and the uncivilized world they inhabit, and how this further distances Heracles from civilization, represented by the city. He is effectively cut off from this world when he is barred from the city when he returns wearing the lion skin. This may be for the best, as we have also seen how Heracles does not thrive in an urban environment surrounded by friends and family, as his violent nature makes him a danger even to them. Because of these factors we concluded that this uncivilized side of Heracles meant he could never fully enjoy the benefits of the civilized world he fought to protect and expand. In this final chapter, concerned with the death and *apotheosis* of Heracles, we will see the culmination of his identity as an uncivilized civilizer.

It will be argued that Heracles' death represents a split in his character between the mortal and the divine, as well as between the uncivilized Heracles and the civilizer side of his persona. To understand this division as the culmination of the Heracles myth, this chapter will also examine the details of the various mythological accounts of Heracles' death. Of particular note in this chapter will be the theme of clothing, some of which will expand on what was discussed of the lion skin cloak in the previous chapter. The reason for this is that the myth of Heracles' death prominently features clothing: the lion skin cloak, the poisoned robe he wears to sacrifice, and even his own skin all have meaning in this myth, in the way he puts them on or takes them off. Fire will be discussed at length in this chapter, as Heracles' immolation in fire is one justification for his *apotheosis* after he dies. A number of other reasons for Heracles' *apotheosis* will also be examined, in order to establish how it is that the civilizer side of Heracles' persona is associated with his eventual divinity. The final section of this chapter will examine Heracles' actions as a god and how they relate to his deeds as a civilizer.

While there are many versions of the myth of Heracles' death, probably the most comprehensive one is that found in the *Bibliotheca* II.VII.7. This version of the myth goes as follows: having captured the city of Oechalia, Heracles sends a herald to his wife Deianira, asking her to send a fine article of clothing for him to wear as he offers sacrifice. Having learned that Heracles had captured a woman named Iole in the city, Deianira fears she will lose her husband's love. In a previous myth Deianira and Heracles had come into contact with a centaur named Nessus. Nessus had offered to carry Deianira across a river but when they were separated from Heracles Nessus had tried to rape her. Heracles upon hearing her crying out shot the centaur with his arrows that had been poisoned with the venom of the Hydra. As Nessus was dying however he told Deianira his blood would ensure Heracles' love for her. Ignorant of the fact that Nessus' blood in fact contained the poison of the Hydra, Deianira

now smeared the blood on the clothing requested by Heracles and sent it to her husband to wear while sacrificing. Once Heracles dons this garb and begins to make sacrifice the poison begins to affect him¹¹⁸. Once he is affected by the poison Heracles is overcome by the pain. He attempts to tear off the garb but it sticks to him and he tears his own flesh. Upon hearing what has happened, Deianira hangs herself. Heracles meanwhile travels to Mount Oeta where he builds a pyre and climbs on top of it. Various versions have either Poeas or his son Philoctetes answer Heracles' request for the pyre to be lit, a service for which they are rewarded with Heracles' bow. As his mortal form is burnt away, Heracles' spirit is escorted to Olympus where he is welcomed among the gods. He reconciles with his step-mother Hera and is married to her daughter Hebe. That Heracles is not only deified in the myth of his death, but is welcomed among the Olympian gods (including Zeus and Hera) and is married to Hebe, a legitimate daughter of Zeus and Hera, suggest that Heracles becomes an Olympian god himself.¹¹⁹

Poisoned Clothing in Heracles' Death Myth

The lion skin cloak holds a prominent position in the immolation of Heracles. After Heracles builds a pyre which is lit by Philoctetes, a service for which he is rewarded with Heracles' bow and arrows (*Metamorphoses* 9:232, 13:401), he climbs onto the pyre: "And while the flames were licking the sides of the funeral pyre, Heracles covered the piled-up wood with the skin of the lion of Nemea, then laid himself down on the pyre with his club for a pillow" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 9:234-236). In this way, while his bow is left to mortal hands to be part of his legacy, it is not accompanied by the lion skin or club which are burned along with Heracles' mortal half. While these two elements certainly added to Heracles' more savage depiction, we have already seen that the bow did something similar. The bow is the element he does not take into the fire with him. All three are significant in the Heracles myth, and we have covered the bow and lion skin extensively already. The bow passing on to Philoctetes ensures the succession of Heracles' archery into the next generation of heroes. That the lion skin burns with its wearer however suggests that when Heracles dies, his lion skin is no longer needed in the mortal world. This could be taken as suggesting that with Heracles' death his practice of fighting monsters by assuming their form and features is no longer

¹¹⁸ Some sources, particularly Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (9:161-272) make mention of how the poison only begins to take effect once it is warmed by the sacrificial fire.

¹¹⁹ Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek myth: a Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, 461 discusses the artistic tradition depicting Heracles' ascent. One of the earliest versions from around the 600 BCE depicts Heracles and his future wife Hebe being taken in a chariot accompanied by other gods to Olympus where Zeus and Hera are seated. In later depictions, variants include Hebe being replaced by Athena or the chariot being led by Hermes or a different configuration of the gods in the procession but the common theme in most of these depictions is Heracles being escorted to meet his father on Olympus.

needed. This interpretation may be undermined by the survival of the hydra's poison through Philoctetes' inheritance of Heracles' bow. However, Philoctetes may be seen as something of an anachronistic hero¹²⁰ and furthermore the bow is associated more with Heracles' fights with humans than with his monster battles.

Heracles' adoption of the lion skin represents his empathetic relationship with the animals which he fights, as well as his assumption of leonine qualities. The empathy he feels for his prey may well tie into the nature of Heracles' death. Forbes' theory regarding the hunter hero is that "the identification and sympathy of the hunter with the prey, and the sense of guilt he feels in killing, have been recognised as an important element in many old hunting rituals and superstitions."¹²¹ This can certainly be related to the myth of Heracles' death. Forbes is specifically referencing the myth of Actaeon, in which the hunter Actaeon angers the goddess Artemis who turns him into a stag.¹²² His own dogs are then set on him, in some versions maddened by Artemis, and they duly tear him apart. In this context Forbes also mentions how the myths of several other heroes, such as Orion and Callisto, have them being mistaken for animals and shot.¹²³ These examples demonstrate how the hunter hero suffers the same wounds as his prey and in doing so symbolically becomes the prey himself. This may be as a manifestation of the hunter's guilt, or perhaps just consequences of his actions. While Heracles does not die from being mistaken for an animal, his death certainly contains similar elements as his death is the direct result of his means of hunting - the hydra's poison he uses on his arrows. Again the hunter's means of hunting is turned against him, just as in the case of Actaeon, and through this he experiences the pain of his prey. The adherence in the myth of Heracles' death to the common features of a hunter hero further emphasises what was discussed in chapter two regarding Heracles symbolically becoming one of the creatures he has killed. It further associates him with the uncivilized creatures he has killed with his poisoned arrows, including Nessus, Cheron and many other Centaurs (*Bibliotheca* II.VII.6).

The role of snake poison in Heracles' death also needs to be understood in context. Within Greek myth three other significant instances of characters being poisoned by snake venom

¹²⁰ As an aside, in chapter three we discussed at length Heracles' assimilation of leonine traits from the Nemean lion, in addition to invulnerability, after he defeats it and begins wearing its skin. Significantly a similar occurrence happens with the Hydra, as after Heracles kills it he takes its poison for his arrows. These arrows will become the most enduring aspect of Heracles through Philoctetes later actions and, just as the lion's skin granted Heracles the beast's invulnerability, so does the poison make both Heracles and Philoctetes all the more deadly with the bow.

¹²¹ P. M. C. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek myths* (Oxford England, Clarendon Press, New York, Oxford University Press, 1990), 80-81.

¹²² The exact crime Actaeon is being punished for varies between versions. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3:161-193) he comes across the Goddess while she is bathing. The *Bibliotheca* (III.iv.4) says that he was Zeus' rival for the affections of Seleme. Euripides in *Bacchae* has him claiming to be a better hunter than Artemis.

¹²³ P. M. C. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek myths*, 80.

are: Heracles accidentally poisoning the centaur Cheiron with his arrows (*Bibliotheca* II.VII.6), Philoctetes' injury on Lemnos and, finally, Orpheus' wife Eurydice, who is bitten by a snake and dies prompting Orpheus to travel to the underworld to retrieve her (*Bibliotheca* I.III.2). In all but the last instance the snake's poison results in great suffering but not necessarily death. Heracles has to end his own life in fire (*Bibliotheca* II.VII.7), Cheiron is unable to die until he gives up his immortality to Prometheus (*Bibliotheca* II.V.4), and Philoctetes endures the pain of his wound for many years before he is brought back to Troy to be cured. Philoctetes is symbolically depicted in a state between life and death, unable to complete the transition. From these examples we can see that there is some variance in the significance of snake venom in different contexts. The fact that it is not immediately lethal to Cheiron, Heracles or Philoctetes, but is to Eurydice is probably due to the fact that the former trio are linked in their myths. In these three cases the snake venom seems to be a metaphorical conduit to a state between life and death, from which either can be chosen. As has been mentioned in chapter three, Philoctetes in Sophocles' version inhabits his two-mouthed cave after he is poisoned, symbolic of a place of transition. The connection to the un-earthly or divine is also emphasised as both Heracles and Philoctetes are poisoned while sacrificing to the gods. Finally, it is important to note that all three make a choice regarding whether to live or die. Heracles and Cheiron choose to give up their lives willingly while Philoctetes is encouraged by Heracles, appearing as a god, to survive by travelling to Troy and being healed (as will be discussed later). Even Eurydice is given a chance to return to life. Snake venom in the Heracles myth then seems to symbolise the suffering born from the uncivilized world and an invitation to the release from suffering that is death.

That the snake poison is delivered into Heracles via his clothing seems to be part of a tradition of poisoned clothing in both Greek and other myths. Probably the closest analogy to Heracles' situation is found in the myth of Medea, where she poisons her husband Jason's new wife Glauce by gifting her a poisoned gown. Michelle Maskiell and Adrienne Mayor in their article *Killer Khilats* discuss at length the elements and meanings behind such myths of poisoned clothing. While the main subject of their article is poisoned garments presented in early modern Indian mythology, the conclusions they draw are nonetheless relevant to the current discussion as they themselves draw parallels between their subject matter and the myth of Heracles' death. One element of the poisoned clothing myth they discuss is the idea of "an ordinary scenario (here, a gift of special clothing) produces extraordinary results (the garment causes the death of the wearer)."¹²⁴ In relation to the Heracles myth we can see this as a continuation of the theme in which Heracles' endeavours are hampered by bad luck

¹²⁴ Michelle Maskiell and Adrienne Mayor, 'Killer Khilats, Part 1: Legends of Poisoned "Robes of Honour" in India', *Folklore*, Vol. 112, No. 1 (2001), 23.

(often influenced by some supernatural will, in this case Nessus). Mayor and Maskiell theorise that these myths of poisoned clothing are related to real life fears surrounding clothing, chiefly the fear of clothing carrying disease.¹²⁵ This may well be the origin of the myth of Heracles' poisoning via clothing, despite the explicit explanation being the hydra's poison in Nessus' blood. Ultimately Heracles' poisoning seems to be an expression of fear at the certainty of death: "Not even Heracles fled his death, for all his power, favourite son as he was to Father Zeus the King" (*Iliad* 18:139-141), as Achilles reminds us. This certainly is borne out in the myth of Heracles' death, for despite all his power and favour, in which no man, woman or beast could defeat him, Heracles' fate is sealed by the marriage of the poison gathered from the uncivilized world he wanders and a robe sent from the civilized world he protects.

Fire and Divinity

While the poison of the hydra can certainly be blamed for Heracles' death, his actual death occurs in the fire that he prepares for himself. However, even before Heracles climbs atop his own funeral pyre, the motif of fire is present from when he is poisoned. Most versions describe the pain that Heracles experiences in terms of burning such as in *Metamorphoses*:

Even his blood gave a hiss, like the sounds of a plate of hot metal
Plunged into icy water, and boiled in the fire of the poison

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 9:170-171

Even aside from the association between the poison and burning, fire is still significant to Heracles' poisoning. A common detail is that the poison only began to affect Heracles after it was exposed to the fire of Heracles' sacrifice:

So Heracles...proceeded to offer sacrifice. But no sooner was the tunic warmed than the
poison of the hydra began to corrode his skin

Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, II.VII.7

This detail is seen again in *Metamorphoses*. Heracles' suffering and death happens via fire. His *apotheosis* as well occurs after he passes through fire. In this case the role of fire can be interpreted as allowing Heracles to act as a symbolic sacrifice. This interpretation ties in with the Greek religious practice of burning offerings. Equally important is the role of fire in Greek myth as a catalyst for either burning off, and thus separating the mortal from the immortal, or as a catalyst for something mortal becoming divine.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 27.

An example of this can be found in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, in which the goddess attempts to make a mortal child Demophoon immortal. She does this by nursing him herself, holding him on her lap, anointing him with ambrosia and by placing him in a fire each night over a period of time (*Hymns* 2c). Ultimately she is unsuccessful, as the child's mother Metaneira discovers the goddess' activities and puts a stop to it. Interestingly, in this version, as opposed to the Heracles myth, Demophoon's mortal form is not killed by being placed in the fire. Also the fact that he was placed in a fire over a series of nights suggests a slower process of *apotheosis* than we see in the case of Heracles, who goes quickly from being mortal to divine. Finally, while Heracles' death is very much an ending to his myth, and his *apotheosis* has been earned through his labours, there is no such implication in the case of Demophoon as he is obviously very young. In this sense then the myth perhaps bears more resemblance to the myth of Thetis attempting to make her son Achilles immortal by dipping him in the river Styx as seen in the unfinished first century Roman poem Statius' *Achilleid* (late first century CE). Both stories pertain to goddesses attempting to make children immortal. While this myth of Achilles deviates from the common use of fire seen in the other examples presented here¹²⁶, there is an alternate version of Achilles' immortality myth put forward in the *Argonautica* which resembles the myth of Demophoon even more closely. It includes such details as Thetis anointing her son with ambrosia and placing him in a fire.

...nightly in the dark hours she'd flame his mortal
flesh all about with fire blaze, and day by day
rub ambrosia into his tender body, to make him
immortal, free his skin from the ravages of age.

Apollonios, *Argonautica* 4:869-872

Again the attempt to make the child immortal fails as the goddess is interrupted and the process is left incomplete. Regardless, the myth of Demophoon within the *Homeric Hymn* and the myth of Achilles' youth within the *Argonautica* both clearly present passing through fire as a transitional process between mortality and immortality. Because in both cases the goddess is stopped from making the child immortal, we cannot conclusively say that the result would have been the same as was in the case of Heracles' immolation. This is because Heracles dies in the fire and his mortal form is destroyed, unlike Demophoon and Achilles.

In Heracles' case, being burned while still alive has the apparent effect of separating the two halves of his nature. His mortal side is harmed by the fire while the divine half endures. As Zeus puts it in *Metamorphoses*:

¹²⁶Arguably this myth of Achilles being placed in the river Styx resembles more closely the myths of Heracles fighting Thanatos or entering and leaving Hades with Cerberus while still alive, discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

“...The hero who conquered all will conquer the fire you are watching.
 Vulcan’s power will only affect the part of him he derives from his mother’s side.
 The part he derives from me is eternal,
 it cannot be touched by death and is fully resistant to fire.
 This part, when his time on earth is complete, will be welcomed by me
 to the realms of the sky...”

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 9:250-255

This separation of mortal and divine is also present in the *Odyssey* where Heracles appears as a ghost (*eidolon*) in Hades, just as it also specifies that Heracles is really on Olympus as a god and married to Hebe:

And next I caught a glimpse of powerful Heracles -
 his ghost, I mean: the man himself delights
 in the grand feasts of the deathless gods on high,
 wed to Hebe

Homer, *Odyssey*, 11:690-93

Heracles achieves this division of character through his death in fire, in keeping with the role of fire in the transition to divinity as maintained in many other Greek myths. More important, however, is that such a reading suggests an association with the mortal and uncivilized parts of Heracles’ persona, as well as with his divine and civilizer parts.

The myth of Heracles’ death reflects a common theme in Greek myths of heroes offering sacrifice through fire. From the *Iliad* onwards this is a frequent occurrence in myths wherein the heroes honour the gods either in thanks or in hope of receiving their favour. This behaviour reflected real religious practices to a large extent. Theophrastos says “there are three reasons to sacrifice to the gods: to give them honour, or to render thanks, or because we need good things...”¹²⁷. While as F.T. Van Straten says that not all sacrifices were necessarily burnt¹²⁸ and that even when the offering was to be burnt it was not the only stage to the sacrifice, it can certainly be said that within a mythological context burnt offerings are commonly depicted.

The notion that Heracles made himself a symbolic sacrifice to the gods by climbing on to his pyre while still alive is hampered somewhat by the fact that, as Van Straten points out, there is little to no evidence that in ancient Greece human sacrifice was practised. Certainly there is evidence of symbolic human sacrifice, such as in the cult of Artemis at Hyampolis in Phocis

¹²⁷ Emily Kearns, *Ancient Greek religion: a Sourcebook* (Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 214.

¹²⁸ F.T. Van Straten, *Hiera kala: Images of Animal Sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Leiden, New York, E.J. Brill, 1995), 167.

where human images were burned as part of a festival¹²⁹ or at the site of Heracles' immolation and *apotheosis*, Mount Oita, where offerings and an effigy of Heracles were burned.¹³⁰ However, as Van Straten also points out, human sacrifice is certainly a popular feature depicted within Greek myth. Van Straten points to several vase depictions of human sacrifice, all but one being identifiable as scenes from myth; among these are scenes of Achilles' son Neptolemus sacrificing Polyxena at his father's tomb.¹³¹ Other depictions of human sacrifice can be seen in literary sources. For example, Achilles sacrifices twelve Trojans at the funeral of Patroclus, throwing their bodies on his funeral pyre along with three horses and two of Patroclus' dogs (*Iliad* 23:196-201). Other examples can be seen in the attempted sacrifice of Hesione to the *kêtos*, or sea monster (*Bibliotheca* II.V.9) as well as the tribute demanded of Athens by Minos of seven young men and seven young women to be fed to the Minotaur (*Bibliotheca: Epitome* I. 6-9). Further, before submitting to Minos' tribute the Athenians sacrificed four women who were the daughters of Hyacinthos.¹³² Another example can be seen in the play *Electra* by Sophocles where, having angered Artemis by killing an animal sacred to her and claiming to be her equal at hunting, Agamemnon is punished with a lack of wind with which to sail to Troy. To placate the goddess Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia. As we see from these examples, whether or not human sacrifice really occurred in Greek religion, it was certainly not uncommon in Greek myth.

The theory that Heracles is meant as a symbolic sacrifice is given further credence when we consider the detail that the poison in his robe is activated by the heat from the sacrifice that he is performing. In this way it seems that there is meant to be a link between the sacrifice Heracles is originally trying to make, and the sacrifice of himself later on the pyre that he builds. The detail of the sacrificial fire is present in most versions of the myth, including the *Bibliotheca* and *Women of Trachis*, supporting this interpretation. However nowhere is this notion of Heracles as a sacrifice more obvious than in *Metamorphoses*, in which Heracles all but proclaims his sacrificial status:

¹²⁹ Martin P. Nilsson, 'Fire-Festivals in Ancient Greece', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 43, Part 2 (1923), 144.

¹³⁰ Philip Holt and Ph. Nolt, 'HERAKLES IN ARMOR : PHILOKTETES V. 727', *L'Antiquité Classique*, T. 55 (1986), 306.

¹³¹ F.T. Van Straten, *Hiera kala: Images of Animal Sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece*, 113.

¹³² This may be a poor example as it is not clear to whom they were sacrificed, though they were sacrificed at the tomb on the Cyclopes Geraistos.

Now feast on my ruin, Saturnian Juno!
 Feast, cruel goddess! Look down from above on this scene of destruction
 and glut the desires of your brutal heart!

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*: 9:176-177

While it is not explicitly stated that Heracles is making himself a sacrifice it should be noted that this scene occurs just before he builds the pyre that he will die on. The theory that Heracles is a sacrifice to Juno (Hera) to appease her anger may explain why after his death and *apotheosis* she and he reconcile with one another, and he is even allowed to marry her daughter.

Another interpretation of the use of fire in Greek myth is put forward by Chris Mackie in *Rivers of Fire*, where he points out that fire is used in the *Theogony* to signify, as well as to bring about, the end of one era and the beginning of another. He specifically refers to two examples within the *Theogony*: Zeus and his Olympians battle against the Titans, and Zeus' fight against Typhoeus. Mackie argues that fire is also used in the *Iliad* both as a dividing line between the first and second sacking of Troy (the first having been carried out by Heracles) as well as to foreshadow another era's end that will occur when Troy is burned.¹³³ Considering this foreshadowing, it can be assumed that the audience is meant to know the inevitable fate of Troy. In addition, it is well established within the poem that Achilles is aware that his fate is to die at Troy (*Iliad* 18:110-113). In a sense, the entirety of the *Iliad* occurs under the looming shadow of the inevitable destruction of Troy. Just as both Achilles and Hector are preemptively mourned by their respective parents (*Iliad* 18:67-68, 22:90-109) so too does the poem preemptively mark the passing by fire of this era and of its heroes.

This is seen most obviously at the funeral pyre for Hector (*Iliad* 24:924-930), as it marks the end of both the poem and one of its two protagonists. Mackie also suggests that Hector's immolation is linked in the text to the forthcoming burning of Troy.¹³⁴ It can also be seen earlier in the poem at the funeral for Patroclus (23:200-202). Again the funeral pyre is analogous to the fire marking the end of an era. It is possible to argue however that Patroclus' funeral pyre is also symbolically that of Achilles. Patroclus died impersonating Achilles, dressed in his armour and carrying his weapons (*Iliad* 16:156-166). In addition to this, after Achilles learns of Patroclus' death the focus of the poem shifts for a few lines to Thetis, Achilles' mother, grieving for her soon-to-die son: "Never again will I embrace him, striding home through the doors of Peleus' house." (*Iliad* 18:67-68). This marks the beginning of a

¹³³ C.J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad*, 155-156.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 165.

series of scenes where Achilles contemplates his own death before returning to the battlefield, dramatically changed.¹³⁵

Much in the same way is Hesiod's depiction of fiery wars among gods and Titans (*Theogony* 668-725). Just as the burning of Troy and Hector and Patroclus' funeral pyres all represent the end of an era, so Heracles' immolation can also be considered the same. Clearly it marks the end of Heracles' life as a mortal (since he ascends to godhood after his death). However, Heracles' funeral pyre can also be seen as the end of the era of a certain type of hero exemplified by Heracles. As has been discussed in previous chapters, Heracles' style of heroism is depicted as antiquated by the standard of later heroes such as those of the *Iliad*. The era of heroes fighting monstrous beasts declined with Heracles' death making way for a new era, one less concerned with the monster than the human sphere. This is the era of Iliadic war myths and of heroes such as Achilles. This of course is not representative of the chronology of myth making, as we have seen myths of Heracles and other heroes of his generation were produced before, during and after the *Iliad*. Rather Heracles' death simply marked the end of his generation's style of heroism, as later generations of heroes would hold a different standard of what it was to be a hero.

While Heracles' death by fire is his transition to immortality, there are several other possible reasons for Heracles' immortality. For example, there are three instances of him symbolically (and physically) overcoming death that can be seen as either related or foreshadowing his immortality. The first of these is his twelfth labour where he descends into Hades and brings back Cerberus and, in some versions, Theseus (*Bibliotheca* II.V.12). The second occurs in the play *Alcestis* where Heracles defeats Thanatos in combat, grabbing him and refusing to let go until he returns the deceased Alcestis (*Alcestis* 1140-1143). A third instance that we observe in the artistic representations of Heracles' fight with Geras, the embodiment of old age, recorded on at least five Athenian vases dated between 490 and 450 BCE.¹³⁶ In all three of these examples Heracles saves someone who is either already dead or housed within the afterlife, and defeats a guardian between life and death¹³⁷ or symbolically defeats old age. That Heracles is not only able to travel back and forth between the mortal world and the afterlife, but also demonstrates a mastery over the forces involved in collecting, guarding and governing the dead (through his physical defeat of Thanatos, Cerberus and in an unspecified incident Hades (*Iliad* 5:449-457)) suggest that Heracles is an individual capable of defying the natural order of life and death.

¹³⁵ See chapter one

¹³⁶ H.A. Shapiro, "Hērōs Theos": The Death and Apotheosis of Herakles', *The Classical World*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (1983), 8.

¹³⁷ Heracles was only allowed by Hades to bring Cerberus to the surface if he defeated it barehanded.

This contrasts with Homer's depiction of Heracles' mortality, as the poet stresses that even one as mighty as Heracles cannot escape the fate of all men to die. This is put forward in the *Iliad* when Achilles states that "Not even Heracles fled his death, for all his power, favourite son as he was to Father Zeus the King" (*Iliad* 18:139-141). It is also alluded to in the *Odyssey*, where Heracles' ghost is depicted among the dead of Hades while he is understood to have already been made an immortal god (*Ody.* 11:690-718). The implication is that even though he acceded to godhood a part of him cannot escape his fate to die and live among the dead.

Heracles as a God

The divine part of Heracles is said to have ascended to Olympus. As Hesiod puts it:

Herakles, the strong and courageous son
of light-stepping
Alkmene, after he had completed
his sorrowful labors,
took the daughter of great Zeus
and Hera the golden
sandals, Hebe, as his modest wife
on snowy Olympos,
blessed he, who having ended his long work,
loves now
among the immortals, without sorrow,
ageless all his days always.

Hesiod, *Theogony* 950-962

While Heracles' mortal labours are indeed done, his deeds as an Olympian god, as they are represented in myth, are also worth considering. Many of Heracles' appearances as a god in various myths can be linked to a common theme. Heracles is frequently represented inspiring mortals towards his own virtues of endeavour, his strong will and the other accomplishments that lead him to achieve glory and happiness. This suggested theme may well relate to the Heracles' worship as a god, particularly in the case of the *Homeric Hymn* to Heracles, which specifically beseeches the god to grant accomplishment and happiness. It is important to note however that we are less interested in the religious rites surrounding the worship of Heracles than the representations of him as a god within mythology and their significance. In this context we can also examine how Heracles as a god's character is different from when he was a mortal, particularly relevant to his former role as an uncivilized civilizer. Having become a god, the savage animalistic nature represented by the lion skin and thuggish and uncivilized personality linked to the bow and club have been shed by Heracles. As a god Heracles is

depicted as one who has overcome suffering and hardship and in doing so earned his happiness and divinity and now inspires and helps other mortals to do the same. It is this aspect of Heracles' character that he now encourages in mortals that once allowed him to perform civilizing deeds. In this way Heracles as a god can be said to be a civilizer. He encourages the better qualities in mortals and pushes them towards personal achievement (*arête*), and also to a reliance on themselves and not the gods.

As an example of Heracles as a god we can look at his role in the play *Philoctetes*. Towards the end of the play Heracles appears as a *Deus ex Machina* before the defeated Philoctetes, urging him to return to Troy with Neoptolemus, and prophesying their role in Troy's defeat. Philoctetes at this point in the play is at his most acute state of suffering still from the snake bite that leaves him lame. Feeling betrayed by Neoptolemus for his role in Odysseus' plan to steal his bow, he has declared that he will not go to Troy. Heracles' appearance brings hope to Philoctetes for the alleviation from his pains by the promise that Machaon will cure his wound. Heracles also brings hope for achievement through the promise that Philoctetes and Neoptolemus will be instrumental in finally winning the war at Troy. The replication of Heracles' own defeat of Troy, as foreshadowed in this play, further demonstrates how Heracles is used in this text as an example for others to follow.

Another example of this behaviour as a god can be seen in the 1st century Greek poet Babrius' *Fables*¹³⁸. The basic narrative includes a man's cart going off the road and into a ditch. The man then prays to Heracles to help him. Heracles appears to the man and tells him:

Grab the wheels and whip your oxen. Pray to the gods when you are doing
something or you'll pray in vain

Babrius, *Fables*, 20

The moral here is of course that the gods help those who help themselves. However in this role imparting this message to the cart driver we again see Heracles encouraging a mortal to take action and, through the exertion of their own will, achieve a goal. The basic formula of this fable again echoes that of Philoctetes at his lowest point: a character despairs at their misfortune until Heracles appears before them and promises that their situation can be improved through their own effort. Though less glorious than conquering Troy, the pattern holds true. In both cases the notion of divine assistance is certainly present. Philoctetes is to achieve victory over the Trojans through his use of Heracles' bow while the implication in the *Fables* is that Heracles may indeed help the cart driver if he tries to get the cart out on his

¹³⁸ Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of Classical Myth*, 61. This story is also found among Aesop's *Fables*.

own. However, the main role of Heracles as a god in these stories is not to intervene to help the mortal but to assure them that they have it within their power to help themselves.

A third example can be seen in the *Homeric Hymn to Heracles*. Though attributed to Homer, most of these hymns seem to date from between the seventh and fifth centuries, suggesting many different authors. The hymns likely functioned as preludes to longer poems.¹³⁹ Much in the same way Hesiod places a short prelude praising the Muses before his *Works and Days* (1-2) and *Theogony* (1-11). In the Hymn dedicated to “Heracles the Lion-Hearted”, emphasis is placed on Heracles’ deeds and endless travel. The Hymn ends with him on Olympus, happily married and with a request that he grant *arête* and *olbos*¹⁴⁰. *Arete* can mean excellence in any field however within the works of Homer it is also used in the context of godly actions to describe wonders and miracles¹⁴¹. Galinsky links the word with “manly virtue”¹⁴². *Olbos* means happiness or specifically worldly happiness¹⁴³. The happiness Heracles experiences upon being received in Olympus and marrying Hebe in the *Theogony* is conveyed using the word *olbos*¹⁴⁴. What can be inferred from this hymn, owing largely to the mention of Heracles’ deeds and his achievement of both *arête* and *olbos*, is that this text is invoking Heracles to help others receive the same happiness that he himself has acquired after his death. The implication is that this happiness must be earned through achievement, just as Heracles won his happiness.

What we can conclude from these episodes is that post *apotheosis* Heracles is treated in literary works as an example of how happiness (*olbos*) can be achieved through excellence/accomplishment (*arete*). This echoes the narrative of Heracles’ life. For he suffered greatly while he was mortal, as can be seen in the parallels drawn between Heracles and Odysseus as heroes who endure much suffering on their journeys (*Ody.*11:708). However through this suffering Heracles also accomplished great things. Being forced from the city as a youth led him to defeat the Cithaironion lion and his exile after being forced to kill his family led to his completion of the twelve labours. It is because of Heracles’ suffering hardships that he is able to protect many people by defeating dangerous men and monsters. Ultimately however, as Achilles says “*Not even Heracles fled his death*” (*Iliad* 18:139). The separation of mortal and divine within Heracles and his subsequent *apotheosis* provide the hero with the ultimate reward for his accomplishments, and the separation of the divine civilizer and the uncivilized man. And while his ghost remains in Hades, lamenting his mortal

¹³⁹ Stephen M. Trzaskoma, R. Scott Smith, Stephen Brunet, *Anthology of Classical Myth*, 168.

¹⁴⁰ G. Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles theme*, 15.

¹⁴¹ Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *A Greek-English lexicon* (Oxford University Press, 1940), 238.

¹⁴² Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, 15.

¹⁴³ Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *A Greek-English lexicon*, 1213.

¹⁴⁴ Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, 16.

life and service to a lesser man (*Ody.*11:690-717), Heracles the god is happy on Olympus, his reward for accomplishments in life. In turn Heracles appears to mortals such as Philoctetes and the cart driver in Babrius' *Fables*, and is invoked as a god to pass on what he himself has acquired: *arete* and *olbos*.

The myth of Heracles' death and *apotheosis* contains many aspects that pervade other Greek myths, each of which contribute to Heracles' identity as an uncivilized civilizer. This is seen in the ironic turn of his own weapons against himself as per the hunter hero tradition and the emphasis on Heracles' beast-like qualities that are so prominently represented in his myths, not only in his use of the lion cloak but in his behaviours as well. These elements highlight Heracles' uncivilized nature and behaviour. There is also the use of fire as the catalyst through which immortality is achieved and the use and depiction of human sacrifice to placate a god's anger. These remind us of Heracles' divine self, which is finally realised upon his death and *apotheosis*, where he is rewarded for his civilizing accomplishments with happiness everlasting. Ultimately Heracles is unique among Greek heroes, especially in the treatment that he receives after his death. Heracles' *apotheosis* is earned through his life, through his labours, through his achievements and through his many symbolic conquests over nature and death. In the end Heracles' final conquest can be considered to be a conquest of himself. His violent and uncivilized mortal persona is burnt away with his lion skin, sent down to Hades where Odysseus observes it tormenting the dead. Meanwhile his better nature, the divine civilizer in him, achieves happiness and inspires others to do the same. Heracles lives on in Olympus, enjoying his well-deserved *olbos*.

Conclusion

From the beginning this thesis intended to explore Heracles' character as he is depicted in the Greek mythic tradition. In researching the subject it became apparent that there are two sides to the hero. There is Heracles the civilizer, who fights for humanity and the gods by physically confronting monsters, wild beasts and impious and uncivilized people who come against them. Then there is Heracles the uncivilized brute who robs, murders, and terrorizes both friend and foe as he experiences animalistic episodes of frenzy and madness. This dual nature seemed slightly bizarre at first, however further reading into the scholarship on Heracles' character suggests an explanation best summarised by Burkert: "Heracles 'civilizes' the earth through violence."¹⁴⁵

That Heracles' violent, uncivilized nature is what allows him to fight for the cause of civilization, or that he is an uncivilized civilizer and that these two contrasting sides of his character feed into one another is something that is mentioned in passing by a few scholars including Walter Burkert (as quoted above). Sophie Mills and G. Karl Galinsky both attribute both halves of his character to his strength, describing his "superhuman strength, that can be exercised either in excess and violence or in civilizing deeds."¹⁴⁶ and "if Heracles' strength and prowess were super-human so were his weaknesses".¹⁴⁷ It is important to note that both of these scholars see Heracles' civilizing deeds as wholly separate from his more outrageous behaviour, connecting them only in that it is his physical strength that he uses for both. This thesis supports Burkert's statement, though it also expands on his point by arguing that the two sides of Heracles' character are not at odds with each other but rather reliant on each other. Heracles is enabled in his fight for the causes of civilization by his violent nature. Yet at the same time the fighting and exposure to the uncivilized that Heracles undergoes develops his own negative traits and puts him at odds with the very civilization he fights for. This thesis also takes Burkert's argument in a different direction. It examines the dual nature in the character of Heracles and how the most significant elements of the Heracles myth inform and relate to his identity as an uncivilized civilizer. The thesis also examined the origins of Heracles' dual nature within the narrative of his myth. It is interested in why Heracles might exercise his strength for both good and ill and why one born to such power and responsibility might have such weakness in his character. In this way the thesis examined not only how Heracles' identity as an uncivilized civilizer is manifest in his actions, but also why he is this way, within both the context of the narrative of the myth as well as in its symbolic significance.

¹⁴⁵ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, 97.

¹⁴⁶ Sophie Mills, *Theseus, Tragedy, and the Athenian Empire*, 137.

¹⁴⁷ Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, 3.

As we have seen, Heracles' identity as a civilizer was not only conceived of by Zeus even before the hero was born, but enacted even while he was still an infant in his strangling of the serpents sent against him. This act foreshadows many of the battles that Heracles will fight against other monsters later in his life, championing the cause of civilization. However, once he is grown, Heracles is set apart from civilized society by his violent and uncivilized behaviour. His use of the bow can be seen as symbolic of this. It casts Heracles as at odds with the newer archetype of the Greek spear-using warrior; distanced by his relatively archaic use of archery and the negative characteristics associated with this practice. The bow symbolises Heracles' physical distance from civilized Greek society, influenced by his exposure to the uncivilized world.

The idea that Heracles' uncivilized behaviour is caused or exacerbated by his exposure to uncivilized places and creatures led us to discuss Heracles' relationship to the creatures he fights and his identity as a hunter-hero. In this role Heracles demonstrates empathy for the monstrous animals he fights in the way he fights them and assimilates their characteristics into his own persona. The most overt examples of this are of course Heracles' adoption of the Nemean lion's skin as a cloak and, to a lesser extent, his use of the poison of the hydra on his arrows. This poison holds a greater significance for our discussion of Heracles' death and apotheosis. Heracles' identity as an uncivilized civilizer is prominently presented in his actions during his death myth. This is significant as the myth of Heracles' death portrayed a culmination of this identity, ultimately concluding with a separation of the two sides of his persona. Through the use of fire Heracles' civilizer and uncivilized sides are separated, with the best of him ascending to godhood on Olympus while his less admirable traits are present in his ghost that is encountered in Hades. This suggests that Heracles' civilizer persona was associated with his divine half, the half prophesised by Zeus to be a protector of men and gods, while his mortal self was associated with his uncivilized persona. As a mortal man Heracles is an uncivilized civilizer, but as a god he serves as an example of how happiness and accomplishment can be earned through effort and endurance.

One major factor in researching the topic of Heracles as an uncivilized civilizer is the dearth of ancient sources. It is odd, but this greatest of all Greek heroes has very few ancient texts (and no Greek epics) we know of that are focused on his mythical role. Much is made in chapter two of Martin's theory of Heracleian epic(s) with which the *Iliad* competed, though there is only speculation as to their content.¹⁴⁸ It is unfortunately a feature of research of this period that many important texts have not survived. Because of this it is hard to know exactly when many significant elements entered the Heracles myth, hence why this thesis has been

¹⁴⁸ See Noel Robertson 'Heracles' 'Catabasis', 274-300, which speculates on the author and content of this lost epic.

for the most part synchronic. It is also because of this that we have relied primarily on a few key texts. The *Iliad* specifically has been used a great deal due to its significant depiction of Heracles, as well as its value as the earliest text we have that refers to Heracles. This second aspect has been valuable as it allows us to speculate on what details of the Heracles myth predate the *Iliad*.

Another factor that qualifies the findings of this research is language. There has been some work on the etymology of Heracles' name which has been discussed, but for the most part this thesis has dealt with translations of the texts. It has examined the connection between Heracles as a god and the concepts of *arête* and *olbos*, as well as the etymology associated with Heracles' madness. This last point especially warrants further examination, as the madness of Heracles is one of the most significant details of his myth. There is also potentially more to be done by expanding into the Latin sources of the Heracles myth.

It is worth noting as well that like many mythological heroes, Heracles' exact origin is unknown. As we have just stated he may well have had an epic prior to his appearance in the *Iliad* and his existence prior to this text is demonstrated in the artistic tradition. However Heracles differs from the other heroes of the *Iliad*, due to being an antiquated hero from an older generation. This difference between generations of heroes is represented in many of Heracles' deeds. For example, as we discussed in Chapter three, many of the labours pertain to actions associated with animal domestication, in that Heracles is called upon to retrieve alive a mythical version of a commonly domesticated animal such as a bull, boar or horses. There is also his hunting of creatures that are ravaging farm lands, such as the two lions he fights in his lifetime, and his retrieval of fruit as something sacred.

His travel to mythical other-worlds such as the Garden of Hesperides or Hades also link Heracles to a shamanistic type of character, a link strengthened by his wearing of an animal skin and embodying characteristics of its former wearer. Heracles' connection to Hades is particularly strong. Many figures in Greek myth travel to Hades, and often their travel there is associated with Heracles. For example, while among the dead Odysseus encounters Heracles' ghost demonstrating his power over the dead by menacing them with his bow (*Odyssey* 11:695-699). Also in the farcical play *The Frogs* by Aristophanes, Heracles' advice is sought by Dionysus on how to reach Hades. While further research into this subject is a difficult prospect with the current limited texts regarding Heracles, it could be significant to examine earlier examples of Heracles' myths to establish whether he is simply an older model of hero or whether his role was always that of an outsider.

Throughout this thesis the term 'uncivilized civilizer' has been used again and again to describe Heracles' behaviours, both good and bad. While overuse of such a term can render it

meaningless, this thesis has endeavoured to both endow and draw meaning from the term in reference to the Heracles myth. At first glance the term seems to describe two separate facets of Heracles' persona: he is uncivilized yet he civilizes the world. However for Heracles these two elements are more entwined than a simple reading would suggest. For Heracles it can also mean that he performs civilizing deeds though uncivilized means, whether this pertains to the weapons he uses, the crimes he commits (i.e. murdering Iphitus and stealing his horses (*Odyssey* 21:27-34)), the people and creatures he associates with, or even just the places he goes. The term also leads us to question whether Heracles is by his very nature uncivilized or if it is something that manifests as a result of the uncivilized acts he performs. There is not a clear answer common to all texts. While there are certainly common elements and themes, Heracles is characterised differently by different myth-makers, depending on what purpose they wish his character to serve. Euripides, for example, has Heracles perform his labours before he kills his family. This is to suggest that the violence Heracles experienced in the labours affected his behaviour upon coming home to parallel the experiences of the soldiers returning from the Peloponnesian War at the time of the plays staging. This change also allows the inclusion of pro-Athens propaganda, as Heracles, whose children will go on to found the Peloponnese (including Sparta), finds redemption for his crimes in becoming an Athenian. The most widely valid answer however would be that Heracles was born an uncivilized civilizer, and through his life the forces of the gods and fate accentuated each of these characteristics, forcing him to perform greater and greater civilizing deeds through greater and greater uncivilized acts of violence and savagery.

As the above examples regarding Euripides' *Heracles* demonstrate, the culture that creates the myth is an important factor in deciding why certain characters and events are included, as well as why they are depicted in a certain way. This is something we saw especially when examining Heracles' use of the bow. Heracles is often used as a respected outsider, who despite possessing characteristics meant to endear him to us, is depicted as acting outside of what is socially acceptable. While this thesis has referred to such cultural influences on his character, more could be done, especially examining depictions of Heracles if the scope extended beyond the limited time period of this thesis. This thesis has after all restricted itself to a time period of between roughly the 8th century BCE and the 2nd century CE and even then almost all the sources considered have been Greek.

It is also important to understand that, just as this thesis has looked at Heracles in the context of the notion of the uncivilized civilizer; it may be useful to compare Heracles to other uncivilized civilizers in myth. As we have seen, many aspects of Heracles' character influence or are influenced by other heroic figures from myth. This thesis has discussed at length the common themes the myth of Heracles and those of Odysseus and Philoctetes share.

At other times we have discussed the similarities in Heracles' character to such figures as Diomedes, Gilgamesh and Enkidu. With this in mind it may be useful to examine how other heroic figures, both Greek and otherwise, relate to the themes surrounding Heracles' character as an uncivilized civilizer: the uncivilized exterior versus the civilized human dwelling, social attitudes to particular weapons or modes of dress, excessively violent or otherwise unacceptable behaviour within the social context. In this sense there is also possibly much more to be made of the influence the uncivilized exterior world has on heroes in a more universal sense, and how the portrayal of the hero is changed by it. This would tie in well with Joseph Campbell's notion of the exterior world, as well as the mythical concept of the wasteland. The opposite of this as well warrants deeper analysis, in how a hero relates to their home/city/country as a representation of civilization, as well as the difficulties leaving and especially returning to it. Again, using Heracles as a model, it may be worthwhile discussing the difficulty many mythical characters experience re-acclimatising to society, and how often in myth the hero finds the violence that they thought they had left behind in the exterior world returns with them, and even within them.

As was said near the beginning of this thesis the exact origin of Heracles is unknown. While he certainly takes influences from other heroes, primarily Greek and Near Eastern, among the Greek heroes he is unique. Partly this is because of his treatment after death, as only one other half god is elevated to the status of the Olympian pantheon. More than this however Heracles is unique in that he is almost always an outsider. In its simplest version the Heracles myth is about a person whose life is full of violence and strife, who struggles with his own nature and who finds peace at last in death. It is not surprising then to find that while changing values might cause the depictions of other heroes to change to coincide with what is socially acceptable, the changes to Heracles often still frame him as an outsider, antiquated often in his attitude and armament. More than simply being old fashioned however Heracles often embodies a primitive, almost animalistic, savagery. The word 'antiquated', while accurate, is inadequate to properly convey the substance of Heracles' character, hence our frequent use of uncivilized. However it is this very connection with the uncivilized, both within and without, that allows Heracles to be the civilizer that he is. Heracles tames the uncivilized world with both the violence within his nature and the violence he learns from existing in the uncivilized world. He ultimately triumphs over both, ridding the world of monsters that threaten humans and, upon his own death, ridding himself of his violent and uncivilized nature and enjoying the rewards of his accomplishments as a god. It is this dual nature, this synthesis and struggle between the two conflicting elements of Heracles' persona that we refer to when we use the term uncivilized civilizer. Heracles' embodiment of this term can be read as the overarching theme of many of the events and features of his myths, not least of which are his beginning

and end, his bow and his cloak. These objects and stories are iconic to the Heracles myth and not without good reason. For if Heracles is an uncivilized civilizer, then these four features are evidence of the depth of meaning this term has in the context of the Heracles myth.

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