

*Heracles*

*Euripides 485/4-406 B.C.*

*(687-91)*

*In some sense Apollo and his offspring did invade the cosmic theatre of Dionysus, transforming the satyr-choruses and manic revels of pre-classical Attic culture into the tragedies and dithyrambic dances of the City Dionysia. Thus, despite the fears of Creusa's handmaidens, the creative and mysterious and irrational energies of the oft-hymned God were not suppressed by the cultivation of Apollonian rationality. They were disciplined, civilized, harnessed for artistic ends. When the Bacchantes of the theatre leaped in ecstatic possession, tossing their heads back in the air and waving their wanton wands, they were imitating the savage dance on the mountain-tops rather than actually surrendering to it. The frenzied chorus had become, paradoxically, a subordinate episode in an intricate poetic design. In his celebrated choral ode on old age in the Heracles, Euripides declared that Phoebus with his seven-stringed lyre, as well as Bromius with his wine, had inspired the art of tragic poetry. As an old man the poet would still sing the praises of the leader of the Muses -*

*Just as the maids of Delos sing a paeon Circling in their dance round the temple gates In honour of Leto's fair son, Apollo the beautiful dancer [kallichoron]...*

*Quoted by James Miller (Measures of Wisdom, see bibliography)*