

POLITICS AND THE LOST EURIPIDEAN *PHILOCTETES*

EURIPIDES' *PHILOCTETES* was performed in 431 B.C., along with *Medea*, *Dictys*, and the satyr-play *Reapers*.¹ Although the play is preserved today only in scattered fragments, we do have *Medea*, Sophokles' *Philoctetes* of 409 B.C., a few fragments of Aischylos' tragedy on the same theme, and some scattered allusions to the tale in Homer, the epic cycle, and the lyric poets.² Perhaps most important, we have Dio Chrysostom's *Orationes* 52 and 59, which compare the Euripidean *Philoctetes* to the Sophoklean and Aischylean versions of the story and preserve the play's prologue in paraphrase.³ Although the reconstruction of lost tragedies is always a risky business, much of the basic action of *Philoctetes* and the intellectual and dramatic conflicts that figured in it can thus be recovered.⁴ Euripides' play, it seems, is both part of the age-old poetic tradition of the war at

¹ Hypothesis to Euripides, *Medea*. Euripides took third place. Euphorion son of Aischylos took first, perhaps with three revived plays of his father. Sophokles took second with an unidentified trilogy.

Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

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| Aélion | = R. Aélion, <i>Euripide héritier d'Eschyle</i> I, Paris 1983 |
| Calder | = W. M. Calder III, "A Reconstruction of Euripides, <i>Philoctetes</i> ," in <i>Greek Numismatics and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson</i> , O. Mørkholm and N. M. Waggoner, edd., Wetteren 1979, pp. 53–62 |
| Jebb | = R. C. Jebb, <i>Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments</i> , IV, <i>The Philoctetes</i> , Cambridge 1932 |
| Jouan | = F. Jouan, <i>Euripide et les légendes des chants cypriens</i> , Paris 1966 |
| Kamerbeek | = J. C. Kamerbeek, <i>The Plays of Sophocles</i> , VI, <i>Philoctetes</i> , Leiden 1980 |
| Séchan | = L. Séchan, <i>Études sur la tragédie grecque dans ses rapports avec la céramique</i> , Paris 1926 |
| Stanford | = W. B. Stanford, <i>The Ulysses Theme</i> , Oxford 1954 |
| Webster, 1967 | = T. B. L. Webster, <i>The Tragedies of Euripides</i> , London 1967 |
| Webster, 1970 | = T. B. L. Webster, <i>Sophocles: Philoctetes</i> , Cambridge 1970 |

Thanks are due to Matthew R. Christ and the editors and anonymous referees for *Hesperia* for their helpful comments on and criticisms of earlier drafts of this paper. The translations in this article are my own.

² Substantial fragments of a prose hypothesis to the play are preserved among the Oxyrhynchos papyri (Oxy. Pap. 2455, fr. 17, cols. xviii–xix) but contain little new information.

³ The extant fragments of the Euripidean prologue (Euripides, fr. 787–789 N²) show that the imitation is close in sense, but not in wording, to its dramatic exemplar. Dio's fascination with Philoktetes' story, and particularly with Euripides' version of it, may reflect in part his own circumstances, particularly the time he spent in exile, and also his general tendency to see his life as fulfilling patterns established by traditional literary and philosophical heroes. In fact, the choice of Philoktetes represents the choice Dio believed confronted all thoughtful men who felt "that to be involved in common affairs and take part in politics is natural to man" (*Or.* 47.2) but nonetheless found this impossible in practice. For a general survey of Dio Chrysostom's life and thought in its political and social context, cf. esp. C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, Cambridge, Mass./London 1978. For Dio's exile and his tendency to cast his life story in a heroic mold, cf. J. L. Moles, "The Career and Conversion of Dio Chrysostom," *JHS* 98, 1978 (pp. 79–100), pp. 95–99. On Dio's aesthetic judgments in the *Orationes* and their intellectual underpinnings, cf. M. T. Luzzatto, *Tragedia greca e cultura ellenistica: L'Or. LII di Dione di Prusa (Opuscula Philologica 4)*, Bologna 1983.

⁴ Earlier attempts to reconstruct Euripides' *Philoctetes* include Séchan, pp. 485–488; Jebb, pp. xv–xix; J. S. Kieffer, "Philoctetes and *Arete*," *CP* 37, 1942 (pp. 38–50), pp. 40–42; Webster, 1967, pp. 57–61; Webster, 1970, pp. 3–5; Calder, pp. 53–62; Kamerbeek, pp. 4–6; Aélion, pp. 68–72. The fragments have also been treated by H. J. Mette ("Euripides, Bruchstücke," *Lustrum* 23, 1981 [pp. 5–448], pp. 287–292). For a history of scholarship on the Euripidean fragments and further bibliography, cf. H. Van Looy, "Les fragments d'Euripide," *AntCl* 32, 1963, pp. 162–199.

Webster and Calder rely heavily on archaeological evidence to reconstruct the stage-action of Euripides' drama. The assumption that this sort of evidence, and particularly vases of late date, can be used to reconstruct

Troy and an important document for a broad debate in late 5th-century Athenian society about the citizen's duty to his state and the nature and difficulties of public service in a democracy.

THE TRADITION

The basic outline of Philoktetes' story is not particularly controversial and is known to us today primarily from Sophokles' extant play of 409 B.C.⁵ Philoktetes, the son of Poias and possessor of the famous bow of Herakles (cf. *Or.* 59.2, 4), was among the original captains of the Greek expedition against Troy. During the course of a sacrifice on behalf of the army at the altar of Chryse on Tenedos, he was struck on the foot by a viper (cf. *Or.* 59.9). The wound rotted and festered, and the combination of the stench and Philoktetes' agonized cries drove the army to distraction. Finally, at Odysseus' suggestion and with the approval of the Atreidai, he was abandoned on the island of Lemnos (cf. *Or.* 59.3, 9). There he remained for nine years, nursing his wound and surviving off what his bow and the kindness of passers-by provided. In the tenth year of the war, however, the captured Trojan seer Helenos declared that Troy could not be taken without Philoktetes and his bow (cf. *Or.* 59.2). Odysseus and Diomedes (or, in Sophokles' version, Odysseus and Neoptolemos) were accordingly dispatched to bring the wounded hero back. They eventually succeeded, although only by stealing his bow, leaving him little choice but to follow them to Troy.

The epic sources for this story are few and are highly compressed and allusive. Homer refers only three times to Philoktetes, mentioning his skill with the bow (*Il.* 2.718; *Od.* 8.219–220), his agonized exile on Lemnos and eventual summons back to Troy (*Il.* 2.721–725), and his ultimate safe return to Greece (*Od.* 3.190). The story in *Iliad* 2 probably conceals a much fuller version, familiar to the poet and his audience and only alluded to in the Catalogue of Ships. As it stands, however, Homer's account contains no hint that the abandonment on Lemnos was for anyone's good except Philoktetes' own and no evidence that Odysseus took a leading role in the exposure.⁶ Philoktetes was simply wounded and left behind by the *νῆες Ἀχαιῶν*, who then forgot about him (esp. *Il.* 2.721–725). The first part of the story was told in the *Cypria*, although Proklos tells us only that "when they were feasting [i.e., after the sacrifice at the altar?],⁷ after Philoktetes was

lost 5th-century tragedies depends on a series of unsupportable assumptions: that pot-painters remembered exactly what they had seen on stage and never misrepresented it consciously or unconsciously; that traditional elements of stories not included in the versions presented on stage were never mingled with "real" dramatic elements; that theatrical scenes on pots always represent a single dramatic version of a story and never a "contaminated" amalgam of several; that the theatrical scenes represented depend on tragedies of which we know something, rather than on one of the many lost versions of every story. Until these presuppositions can be justified, it is probably better to regard the analysis of artistic representations of the stories as creating more problems for the reconstruction of specific versions than it solves. Cf. Séchan, pp. 491–493.

⁵ On the story and the sources, cf. K. Fiehn, *RE* XIX, 1938, s.v. "Philoktetes", cols. 2500–2509. On the various versions of events leading up to Odysseus' return to Lemnos, cf. esp. Jouan, pp. 308–317; Aélion, p. 62. There were also plays entitled *Philoktetes* by Philokles (24 F 1 Snell) and Theodektes (72 F 56 Snell). The *Philoktetes* of Achaïos (20 F 37 Snell) seems to have been set in Troy. For Accius' Latin *Philoktetes*, cf. most recently H. J. Mette, "Die römische Tragödie und die Neufunde zur griechischen Tragödie (insbesondere für die Jahre 1945–1964)," *Lustrum* 9, 1964 (pp. 5–211), pp. 129–132.

⁶ Cf. Jouan, p. 313.

⁷ Cf. Jouan, pp. 313–314. For possible contemporary representations of the shrine and altar, cf. E. M.

struck by a water-snake, he was abandoned on Lemnos due to the bad smell" (εὖωχου-
μένων αὐτῶν Φιλοκτήτης ὑφ' ὕδρου πληγείς διὰ τὴν δυσοσμίαν ἐν Λήμνῳ κατελείφθη:
Chrest. 144–146). As for the conclusion of the story in Lesches' *Little Iliad*, we know
nothing certain beyond Proklos' terse report that "Diomedes brings Philoktetes back from
Lemnos" (Διομήδης ἐκ Λήμνου Φιλοκτήτην ἀνάγει: *Chrest.* 212–213).⁸

The extant fragments of Aischylos' undated *Philoktetes* are also extremely few, and our
best source for the action in the play is Dio Chrysostom's *Oration* 52.⁹ The Chorus was made
up of Lemnians (*Or.* 52.7), to whom Philoktetes described his abandonment by the Greeks
and everything that had happened to him since (*Or.* 52.9).¹⁰ Odysseus appeared undisguised
(but nonetheless went unrecognized) and was "shrewd and treacherous" (δριμὺν καὶ δόλιον)
but not base (*Or.* 52.5).¹¹ Although his plan turned on "deception and arguments" (ἀπάτη
and λόγοι: *Or.* 52.9), the plot involved no elaborate scheming. Instead, the anonym-
ous visitor simply announced great troubles among the Greeks, in particular the death of

Hooker, "The Sanctuary and Altar of Chryse in Attic Red-Figure Vase-Paintings of the Late Fifth and Early
Fourth Centuries B.C.," *JHS* 70, 1950, pp. 35–41.

⁸ Since Dio Chrysostom's remark that the presence of both Diomedes and Odysseus on Lemnos in Euripides' play was "Homeric" (Ὅμηρικῶς: *Or.* 52.14) cannot be a reference to either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, Odysseus as well may have appeared in the deuterio-Homeric *Little Iliad*. Perhaps it was Diomedes' actions that were decisive there, and Proklos accordingly assigned credit for the action to him. That Odysseus is present in all three tragic versions of the story, and has a part in the Sophoklean Sea Captain's lying account of the expedition sent to summon Philoktetes as well (esp. *Phil.* 570–571; 591–594), is a further indication that he was a regular part of the traditional story. Cf. Pindar, who says that φαντὶ δὲ Λαμνόθεν ἔλκει τειρόμενον μεταβάσσοντας ἔλθειν | ἥροας ἀντίθεους Ποίαντος υἱὸν τοξόταν (Pindar, *Pyth.* 1.52–53), which implies that Diomedes did not carry out the mission alone. Apollodoros too reports that Odysseus and Diomedes together brought Philoktetes back (*Bibl.* 5.8); the story was also told by Bacchylides in a dithyramb (Schol. to Pindar, *Pyth.* 1.52 = fr. 7 Snell). On the other hand, Odysseus and Diomedes do regularly work in concert in the Troy stories; cf., e.g., the *Doloneia* (Homer, *Il.* 10), the theft of the Palladium in the *Little Iliad* (Proklos, *Chrest.* 228–229), and story of the Wooden Horse (Homer, *Od.* 4.280–281). It is thus possible that Dio Chrysostom means nothing more than that the teaming-up of the two heroes was by itself thoroughly traditional. On Odysseus in the Cycle, cf. esp. Stanford, pp. 81–86.

⁹ Recent work on the play includes H. J. Mette, *Der verlorene Aischylos*, Berlin 1963, pp. 103–104; W. M. Calder III, "Aeschylus' *Philoktetes*," *GRBS* 11, 1970, pp. 171–179; Aélion, pp. 63–68. Oxy. Pap. 2256, fr. 5a preserves a very small portion of what was probably a hypothesis to a *Philoktetes*, which includes portions of the names of Neoptolemos, Philoktetes, and Odysseus, in that order. This has led B. Snell (review of E. Lobel, E. P. Wegener, C. H. Roberts, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XX, London 1952 [*Gnomon* 25, 1953 (pp. 433–440), p. 439]) and H. J. Mette ("Literaturbericht über Aischylos für die Jahre 1950 bis 1954," *Gymnasium* 62, 1955 [pp. 393–407], pp. 400–401) to argue that we have here a list of πρόσωπα for Aischylos' *Philoktetes* and thus evidence that Sophokles was not the first to include Neoptolemos in the story. The Oxyrhynchus editors note, however, that the fragment may not be in the same hand as the others with which it is published and thus may not be Aeschylean at all. S. G. Kossuphoupoulou («Ἡ ὑπόθεσις τοῦ Φιλοκτήτη τοῦ Αἰσχύλου», *Hellenika* 14, 1955, pp. 449–451), moreover, argues that the position of the names in the column is inconsistent with their belonging to a catalogue of characters. Instead, this is a continuation of the hypothesis, which mentions Neoptolemos only in order to draw a contrast with Euripides' play (cf. π]αρ' Εὐρι[).]

¹⁰ Dio Chrysostom recognizes that this extended recital of presumably well-known facts might seem unrealistic to some but excuses Aischylos by reminding his readers that those who have problems are wont to annoy their listeners, detailing their woes "even to those who already know them in detail and have no need to hear about them" (*Or.* 52.9).

¹¹ Dio Chrysostom once again defends Aischylos' account from potential charges of dramatic improbability, arguing that Philoktetes' lapse of memory in failing to recognize his own worst enemy was an understandable side-effect of ten years of isolated suffering (*Or.* 59.5–6). Sophokles deals with the same problem in a very different way, by having Philoktetes approached by Neoptolemos rather than Odysseus (esp. *Phil.* 70–76).

Agamemnon and the disgrace of Odysseus, “with the intention of causing Philoktetes to rejoice” (ὥστε εὐφρᾶναι τὸν Φιλοκτῆτην: *Or.* 52.10). Odysseus’ plan must thus have been to encourage Philoktetes to return to Troy under the impression that his worst enemies had been eliminated.¹² At some point in the action, however, Odysseus got control of the bow (*Or.* 52.2; cf. Aischylos, fr. 251 R).¹³ Presumably he then revealed his identity and forced Philoktetes to accompany him “for the most part unwillingly, but to some extent also by the persuasion of necessity” (τὸ μὲν πλέον ἄκων, τό δέ τι καὶ πειθοῖ ἀναγκαίᾳ: *Or.* 52.2).¹⁴

THE ACTION

It was this long poetic and folklore tradition that Euripides inherited and adapted in his own tragedy of 431 B.C. Euripides’ *Philoktetes* clearly echoes Aischylos’, at one point even borrowing a line virtually word-for-word from the earlier version (Euripides, fr. 792 N²; cf. Aischylos, fr. 253 R). All the same, Euripides’ play seems designed to tell a more realistic and believable story than his predecessor’s, although new characters and complicating factors are added to the action.¹⁵ The setting is once again before Philoktetes’ cave on Lemnos, and the *dramatis personae* include not only Odysseus, Philoktetes, and the Chorus of Lemnians but also an embassy of Trojans, Diomedes, and Aktor the Lemnian. As in *Medea*, but in distinction from Aischylos’ play, however, it is not the tragedy’s central character who begins the action. Instead, it is Odysseus, who has apparently just arrived on the island and enters from the wing, who opens the play and speaks the first half of the prologue (*Or.* 59.1–5).¹⁶ He has

¹² Contrast Sophokles, *Phil.* 410–450, where Neoptolemos gives Philoktetes a precisely opposite view of events at Troy, in order to fan his disgust with the army and the war, and the lie of Odysseus in Euripides’ play (*Or.* 59.8, 10), discussed below. The hostility that Aischylos’ Philoktetes obviously felt toward Odysseus in turn suggests (*contra* Jouan, p. 316) that already in this version it was the Ithakan who was responsible for the Greeks’ decision to abandon Philoktetes on Lemnos and that this was presented as an act of cruelty. The fact that this detail occurs in all three tragic accounts of the story may suggest that it was part of the Cyclic version as well. Cf. Apollodoros, *Bibl.* 3.27: Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτὸν εἰς Λῆμνον . . . ἐκτίθησι κελεύσαντος Ἀγαμέμνονος.

¹³ There is no solid evidence to show this took place when Philoktetes fell ill, although this is probably a reasonable assumption. Aischylos, fr. 255 R, which in any case shows nothing more than that in Aischylos’ version Philoktetes was still in great pain when Odysseus arrived (cf. Aischylos, frs. 252, 253 R), is only conjecturally attributed to this play.

¹⁴ There is no reason to accept Welcker’s emendation of ἄκων to ἐκὼν (cf. Aélion, pp. 71–72).

There are substantial parallels here to the plot of Aischylos’ *Prometheus Bound*: a hero is held captive in a deserted place far from all human traffic; he is tortured physically; he hates and is mistreated by the highest authorities in the world (Zeus in *Prom.*, Agamemnon in *Phil.*); his solitude is interrupted by the visit of the Chorus and a sympathetic listener (Okeanos in *Prom.*, Odysseus in *Phil.*), to whom he describes his troubles at length (cf. *Prom.* 197–276, 436–471, 476–506).

¹⁵ For Euripides’ tendency to “correct” Aischylean stories, cf. esp. Euripides, *Elec.* 520–544, which makes fun of the tokens used to recognize Orestes’ arrival in Mykenai in the *Choephoroi*. Additions to Euripides’ *Philoktetes* for the sake of probability include Odysseus’ disguise, the Chorus’ explanation for their failure to visit Philoktetes previously, and the presence of Aktor to make Philoktetes’ survival more believable (*Or.* 52.5–8). Philoktetes’ elaborate explanation of his skin clothing (*Or.* 59.11) also sounds like an implicit criticism of earlier stagings, although this sort of costuming seems to have been typically Euripidean (cf. esp. Aristophanes, *Ach.* 412–436).

¹⁶ Cf. Schol. to Sophokles, *Phil.* 1: “Also in this author Odysseus speaks the prologue, as in Euripides. That [plot], however, is different, to the extent that Euripides puts everything onto Odysseus, while this author [i.e., Sophokles], by introducing Neoptolemos, handles matter through him” (καὶ παρὰ τούτῳ προλογίζει Ὀδυσσεὺς κατὰ καὶ παρ’ Εὐριπίδῃ, ἐκείνο μέντοι διαφέρει παρ’ ὅσον ὁ μὲν Εὐριπίδης πάντα τῷ Ὀδυσσεὶ περιτίθῃσιν οὗτος δὲ τὸν Νεοπτόλεμον παρεισάγων διὰ τοῦτον οἰκονομεῖται). That the Scholiast does not

come, he says, in response to the prophecies of Helenos, intending to seize Philoktetes and the bow (*Or.* 59.2). He is well aware the wounded hero is his bitter enemy, since he played a central role in the decision to abandon him on Lemnos and has therefore come in disguise, miraculously transformed by his patron Athena, who has promised her protection (*Or.* 59.3).¹⁷ Halfway through the prologue, Philoktetes enters from the opposite wing (*Or.* 59.5), limping, clad in animal skins (*Or.* 59.5; cf. *Or.* 59.10; Aristophanes, *Ach.* 424–425), and carrying his bow (*Or.* 59.7).¹⁸ He is hostile to the stranger from the first (esp. *Or.* 59.6) and threatens to kill him the moment he learns he is “one of the Argives, my worst enemies” (*Or.* 59.7). Odysseus, however, immediately claims to be in the same situation as Philoktetes: “I shall not appear to be someone different from you” (*Or.* 59.6). He too is an exile from the Greek camp, he says, a friend of Palamedes, who barely escaped destruction when his commander was falsely accused of treachery against the army and executed (*Or.* 59.8, 10).¹⁹ This is what he and Philoktetes have in common, he insists, and the reason Philoktetes must spare his life and recognize him as a natural friend and ally: “I have suffered the sorts of things at their hands that I would with justice be your friend and their enemy” (*Or.* 59.8). Although he made it over to Lemnos during the previous night, he claims to have no further resources and no hope of getting back to Greece by himself (*Or.* 59.10–11). It is on this basis that Philoktetes finally accepts him, as a fellow outcast who will be allowed to stay in the cave until some help comes along (*Or.* 59.11).

Odysseus is carrying out an elaborate deception here, doing his best to win Philoktetes’ confidence on the grounds that the two of them have the same set of enemies.²⁰ Odysseus’ insistence that he wants to be rescued and carried away to Greece (*Or.* 59.10), however, suggests that he is planning to stage precisely that later in the play, presumably using his own ship, which has brought him to Lemnos and must now be hidden somewhere on the island. If he can lure Philoktetes aboard with the promise of taking him back to his homeland, he can then make for Troy and thus carry out his mission. Philoktetes’ reference at the end of the prologue to the possibility that *ἑτέρα σοι παραπέση σωτηρία ποθέν* (*Or.* 59.11) clearly foreshadows the working out of this plan later in the action.

Philoktetes now invites Odysseus into his cave, apologizing all the while for the unpleasant sights (presumably bandages and other signs of sickness) within (*Or.* 59.11). It is certainly here that Euripides, fr. 790 N² belongs:

offer a comparison to Aischylos’ version as well is further evidence that Odysseus arrived later there, after Philoktetes has finished detailing his troubles to the Chorus.

¹⁷ Compare the papyrus hypothesis to the play (footnote 2 above), lines 260–261. Dio Chrysostom’s remarks leave it unclear whether the change of appearance at Athena’s hands was only a detail borrowed from Homer’s *Odyssey* (cf. *Or.* 52.13) or whether Euripides was following the Cyclic version of the story (cf. *Or.* 52.2), which naturally used many of the same devices as the earlier epic (cf. *Or.* 52.13).

¹⁸ Compare the opening of *Medea*, in which the Nurse appears first and addresses the audience alone and is then joined on stage by the Tutor, whom she engages in dialogue. These are, admittedly, secondary characters, but the formal structure of the two scenes is very much alike.

¹⁹ It is tempting to assign Euripides, fr. 801 N² here as well, as part of Odysseus’ report on the alleged disasters at Troy: *ἀπέπνευσεν αἰῶνα* (“he breathed out his life”).

²⁰ W.-H. Friedrich (“Exkurse zur Aeneis,” *Philologus* 94, 1940 [pp. 142–174], pp. 160–164) points out the similarities between this deception and Sinon’s lie in Virgil’s *Aeneid* but concedes that Euripides’ play was probably not an immediate prototype for the later epic (pp. 163–164).

δύσμορφα μέντοι τᾶνδον εἰσιδεῖν, ξένε.

The things within are ugly to look upon, stranger.²¹

At this point, with the stage empty, the Chorus of Lemnians enters. The Chorus have never visited Philoktetes before, and their motivation for appearing must thus be either curiosity or talebearing, or perhaps a combination of the two (cf. *Medea* 148–159, 173–183). In any case, they are certainly aware that exciting things are about to happen on Lemnos and have come to Philoktetes' cave in order to be in on the action. Euripides, fr. 791 N² is anapestic and sung by someone who has never experienced the sickness and impoverishment Philoktetes has. Most likely, these lines belong to the Chorus in the parodos:

ἄλιν ὦ βιοτά. πέραινε
πρὶν τινα συντυχίαν
ἢ κτεάτεσσιν ἐμοῖς ἢ σώματι τῷδε γενέσθαι.

Enough, life! Come to an end
before any misfortune
occurs to my possessions or my body here.

The Chorus are thus old men, ready to die and anxious to escape the sort of troubles that have dogged Philoktetes.²² The distinction they make between physical possessions (κτεάτεσσιν) and one's body (σώματι), moreover, seems to point to a basic theme in the drama: Philoktetes' bow is the sole support of his wretched life (cf. esp. *Or.* 59.11), and Odysseus must get both man and weapon back to Troy if the city is to be taken (*Or.* 59.2).

Odysseus says in the prologue that a group of Trojans is bound for Lemnos, armed with bribes and bent on persuading Philoktetes to take their side in the war (*Or.* 59.4; cf. 52.13). It is probably at this point, at the beginning of the first epeisodion, that the Trojan embassy appears on stage. Dio Chrysostom calls Euripides' drama "most rhetorical" (ῥητορικωτάτη: *Or.* 52.11) and says innovations of this sort were introduced into the story specifically as "starting points for arguments" (λόγων ἀφορμάς: *Or.* 52.13).²³ The scene that follows is the first of what are probably several extended debates in the play. The Trojans' motivations here are transparent: Helenos' prophecies have revealed that Troy cannot be taken without Philoktetes and his bow (*Or.* 59.2). If he is won over to the Trojan side, therefore, victory is theirs (cf. *Or.* 59.4).²⁴ They accordingly offer him money (cf. *Or.* 59.4) and the opportunity

²¹ Compare Sophokles, *Phil.* 38–39, where Neoptolemos describes the "rags, full of some unwholesome pus" (ῥάκη, βαρείας του νοσηλείας πλέα), which he sees within Philoktetes' cave.

²² Euripides, fr. 800 N², which represents further horrified moralizing on Philoktetes' fate, also probably belongs to the Chorus at some later point in the play:

φεῦ, μήποτ' εἶην ἄλλο πλὴν θεοῖς φίλος
ὥς πᾶν τελοῦσι, κἂν βραδύνωσιν χρόνῳ.

Ah! might I never be anything except a friend to the gods,
since they accomplish everything, even if they act slowly.

²³ Compare also the inclusion of Philoktetes in the catalogue of Euripidean fast-talkers at Aristophanes, *Ach.* 415–434 and Aristotle's praise of Euripides' use of the rhetorical device of *antiprokatalepsis* (making a response to an opponent's attempt to refute one's arguments in advance) in the debates in the play (*Rhet. Alex.* 1433b). *Medea* too turns on debate, discussion, and preparation for a single great decision.

²⁴ This is one of the very few new details recoverable from the fragmentary hypothesis to the play (footnote 2 above), lines 254–256: "Ἐλενος εἶπεν τ[οῖς] Τρωσ[ι] τοῖ[ς] | Ἡρακλέο[υς] τόξοις ἀσφαλίσασθα[ι] τὴν πόλιν.

to become king of Troy (cf. *Or.* 52.13), and it is clearly to them that Euripides, fr. 794 N² is to be assigned:

ὁρᾶτε δ' ὡς κὰν θεοῖσι κερδαίνειν καλόν,
 θαυμάζεται δ' ὁ πλείστον ἐν ναοῖς ἔχων
 χρυσόν. τί δῆτα καὶ σὲ κωλύει <λαβεῖν>
 κέρδος, παρόν γε κάξομοιοῦσθαι θεοῖς;²⁵

Observe that even among the gods profit is a good,
 and the one who has the most gold in his temples
 is admired. What then hinders you as well from making
 a profit, when it is possible also to make yourself equal to the gods?

The Trojans' offer is sophistic in the worst sense of the word, in that it offers the degraded behavior of the traditional gods as an example and excuse for human outrage.²⁶ It is also a recipe for *hybris*, since it invites the hero to make himself equal to divinity. Worse than this, the Trojans' arguments have a certain surface plausibility and offer Philoktetes a chance to take a decisive vengeance on those who have wronged him.

It is to Odysseus that responsibility for arguing the opposite case falls, although he is in a delicate situation here. Like Neoptolemos in Sophokles' play (*Phil.* 343–388; cf. 58–65), Odysseus is acting the part of a man alienated from the Greek army (*Or.* 59.8, 10). An abrupt switch of positions would thus make obvious nonsense of the elaborate lie developed in the prologue and, given Philoktetes' tremendous hostility to the Greek army (esp. *Or.* 59.7), would be certain of failure in any case. On the other hand, the last thing Odysseus wants is for Philoktetes to throw his allegiance to the Trojans, since that would put an end both to his own mission and the war. Fortunately, and perhaps by design, Odysseus' supposed quarrel is not with the Greek army as a whole but with the expedition's leadership alone, and particularly "Odysseus", "the common destroyer of the Greeks" (ὁ κοινὸς τῶν Ἑλλήνων λυμεών: *Or.* 59.8). It is probably to the beginning of his speech in response to the Trojans that Euripides, fr. 796 N² is to be assigned:²⁷

ὑπὲρ γε μέντοι παντὸς Ἑλλήνων στρατοῦ
 αἰσχρὸν σιωπᾶν, βαρβάρους δ' ἔαν λέγειν.

It is shameful to be silent in defense of the
 whole army of the Greeks but allow barbarians to speak.

Odysseus thus argues vigorously against the Trojan proposals and "on behalf of the whole army of the Greeks," while nonetheless declining to encourage Philoktetes to return to Troy to fight on their side. In particular, he makes a case against κέρδος (cf. Euripides, fr. 794

²⁵ The plural ὁρᾶτε in the first line has puzzled scholars, and, as the apparatus to Nauck's text shows, numerous emendations to a singular form have been proposed. Given our extremely fragmentary knowledge of the context, emendation is probably a bad idea, and we must simply resign ourselves to the fact that we cannot know exactly what the Trojans are saying.

²⁶ Cf. esp. Aristophanes, *Cl.* 902–907, where the Unjust Argument denies Justice exists, since Zeus bound his father, and *Cl.* 1079–1082, where he suggests an adulterer caught in the act might plead that he is only acting as the gods do. Cf. also Euripides, *Her. Fur.* 1314–1319, 1341–1346.

²⁷ Thus Jebb, p. xviii; Webster, 1970, p. 4; Kamerbeek, p. 6; Calder, pp. 57–59.

N²) and in favor of *αἰσχύνη* (cf. Euripides, fr. 796 N²) and insists on the impossibility of helping people he characterizes contemptuously as “barbarians”.²⁸

Beyond this, we can say nothing about the specific content of the debate, although the Trojans and their offer were clearly rejected, and they must then have exited. Odysseus is now free to carry out his plot, and it must be here that Diomedes has his part in the play. Dio Chrysostom tells us expressly that Diomedes was on Lemnos along with Odysseus (*τὸν Ὀδυσσεά παραγιγνόμενον . . . μετὰ τοῦ Διομήδους*: *Or.* 52.14), although he is clearly not on stage during the prologue.²⁹ Odysseus’ plan, however, requires a co-conspirator, who can play the part of a wandering sailor and offer to take the two castaways off to “safety”. It must be Diomedes who fills this role.³⁰

We can thus say five things with some degree of assurance about the action that follows in the play. 1) Diomedes arrives, playing the part of “the Sea Captain”, and offers to take Odysseus and Philoktetes back to Greece. Euripides, fr. 793 N², with its strong nautical flavor and its identification of the good life as a peaceful existence at home, may well belong in this context:

μακάριος ὅστις εὐτυχῶν οἴκοι μένει·
ἐν γῇ δ’ ὁ φόρτος, καὶ πάλιν ναυτίλλεται.

²⁸ Calder (p. 61) suggests that the unity of the trilogy was to be found in this contrast between Greek and barbarian manners. Euripides, fr. 795 N² may belong to Odysseus in this scene as well:

τί δῆτα θάκοις μαντικοῖς ἐνήμενοι
σαφῶς διόμνυσθ’ εἰδέναι τὰ δαιμόνων;
οὐ τῶνδε χειρώνακτες ἄνθρωποι λόγων.
ὅστις γὰρ αὐχεῖ θεῶν ἐπίστασθαι πέρι,
οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον οἶδεν ἢ πείθειν λέγων.

Why then do you who sit on oracular seats
swear you know divine matters clearly?
Men have no mastery for these pronouncements.
For whoever claims to have knowledge about the gods
knows nothing more than how to speak persuasively.

In the context of the play, the prophecy in question can only be Helenos’ oracle about Philoktetes (cf. *Or.* 59.2). The lines cannot belong to the Trojans, who clearly believe in and are motivated by Helenos’ prophecies. They are so emphatically cynical about human motivations, moreover, and so clearly intended to prevent a third party from being persuaded (esp. *οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον οἶδεν ἢ πείθειν*), that they make good sense as part of Odysseus’ (thoroughly deceptive) attempt to convince Philoktetes to stay out of the troubles at Troy altogether.

²⁹ Cf. Webster, 1970, p. 4: “Even if [Diomedes] had been a silent character . . . it is hardly possible that neither Odysseus nor Philoktetes made any mention of him.” In his description of the action at *Or.* 52.12, Dio Chrysostom also speaks of Odysseus’ arrival in the singular (*ἐλήλυθεν*). Cf. Webster, 1967, p. 60. That the solitary Odysseus makes no mention of his accomplice in his prologue speech is actually not particularly surprising, given that he does not spell out any other details of his plan there either. Instead, the prologue establishes the characters and their motivations. Odysseus’ plot must only have been revealed gradually as the action progressed.

³⁰ There is no reason to follow Jebb (p. vii) in believing that Diomedes arrives on stage *in propria persona* and “has . . . no difficulty in persuading Philoktetes to accompany him,” or that Philoktetes would simply “accept these overtures in a speech of dignified magnanimity.” Philoktetes is a great hero, embittered by years of exile and suffering, predisposed to murder anyone who claims any association with the army in Troy (esp. *Or.* 59.6–7). He would thus be much more likely to behave like Achilles in Homer’s *Iliad* than to accept the Greek proposals gracefully.

Blessed is he who remains at home and is fortunate.
His cargo is in (his) land and sails back again (to him).

Philoktetes must again resist leaving Lemnos, however, because 2) Odysseus is forced to steal his bow (cf. “being deprived of his weapon . . . by Odysseus”: *Or.* 52.2).³¹ Most likely this occurs, as it does in Sophokles’ play (*Phil.* 732–766), when 3) Philoktetes suffers one of his recurrent seizures, an event clearly anticipated by his remark in the prologue that “I myself am not pleasant to keep company with, whenever the sickness falls on me” (*αὐτός τε οὐχ ἡδὺς ξυγγενέσθαι, ὅταν ἡ ὀδύνη προσπέσῃ*: *Or.* 59.11).³² It may be in the context of this scene of sickness that Aktor, Philoktetes’ Lemnian friend (*Or.* 52.8), has his place in the drama as a sympathetic companion like Neoptolemos in Sophokles’ play (esp. *Phil.* 730–820, 869–871).³³ 4) Once he has the bow, Odysseus can reveal his true identity and justify his apparently treacherous behavior. Calder has argued that Athena must appear in the final scene of the play to reveal Odysseus’ true identity to the other characters and to order the still reluctant Philoktetes to fulfil his obligations and return to Troy, presumably with the promise of great glory, just as Herakles does in Sophokles’ play (*Phil.* 1409–1444, 1449–1451).³⁴ Unfortunately, there are a number of significant difficulties with this thesis. First of all, there is no positive ancient evidence whatsoever to support the idea that Athena appeared in Euripides’ *Philoctetes*. Certainly no divinity intervenes at the end of *Medea*, the first tragedy of the trilogy, which plays itself out entirely on the human level. Nor is there any reason why Odysseus could not have revealed his identity independently of the goddess as he does in the *Odyssey*, e.g., to Philoitios and Eumaios (*Od.* 21.188–225). The language of the final line of the hypothesis (“[granting (him)] security compels [him] to follow along together [to the] ship”), finally and particularly the infinitive *συνακ[ο]λουθεῖν*, which seems to imply that the subject of the finite verb *ἀναγκάζει* boards the ship as well, fits Odysseus better than it would Athena.³⁵

Euripides, fr. 797 N² is usually assigned to the debate with the Trojan envoys in the first epeisodion and put in Odysseus’ mouth as a response to an admission that the chief envoy (Paris?) has somehow wronged Philoktetes (by killing Achilles?):³⁶

λέξω δ’ ἐγώ, κἄν μου διαφθείρας δοκῇ
λόγους ὑποστὰς αὐτὸς ἡδίκηκέναι·

³¹ Jebb (p. xviii), Webster, 1967 (pp. 60–61), Webster, 1970 (p. 4), Kamerbeek (p. 6), and Aélion (p. 71) all defy Dio Chrysostom’s express witness by insisting it is Diomedes who seizes the bow.

³² It must also be in reference to this sickness that Philoktetes at some point says (Euripides, fr. 792 N²):

φαγέδαιν’ αἰεί μου σάρκα θοινᾶται ποδός

The ulcer always feasts on the flesh of my foot.

³³ Cf. Séchan, p. 487. Webster (1967, p. 59) and Calder (p. 57) both regard Aktor as little more than an errand boy. Hyginus (*Fab.* 102), on the other hand, identifies him as the king of Lemnos and his shepherd, Iphimachos, as the one who befriended Philoktetes ([*Philoctetem*] *expositum pastor regis Actoris nomine Iphimachus Dolopionis filius nutrit*). Presumably the same actor played Aktor and Diomedes, as well as the chief Trojan envoy.

³⁴ Calder, p. 61; cf. Séchan, p. 488. Aélion (pp. 71–72) rejects the idea.

³⁵ Cf. Webster, 1967, p. 61. The masculine participle *δούς* is supplied by the editor and tells us nothing about the gender of the person actually referred to in the text.

³⁶ Cf. Séchan, p. 487; Webster, 1967, p. 60; Webster, 1970, p. 4; Calder, pp. 57–60; Aélion, p. 70.

ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ γὰρ τ' ἄμ' ἀναμαθήσῃ κλύων,
ὁ δ' αὐτὸς αὐτὸν ἡμφάνιζέ σοι λέγων.³⁷

But I shall speak, even if he seems to have destroyed my arguments by admitting that he himself has done injustice.
No, you shall hear my arguments over again from me, while he has revealed himself to you in his speech.

The traditional assignment of the passage, however, makes no sense in the larger context of the play. ἀδικία seems an eccentric way at best to refer to killing an enemy in battle, and the character who has personally (αὐτός) wronged Philoktetes *par excellence* is Odysseus. Euripides, fr. 797 N² is thus much more likely a response to Odysseus' final speech of self-justification and presumably belongs to Aktor. Dio Chrysostom gives Aktor no titles or office (*Or.* 52.8), and he is thus most likely precisely what Odysseus pretends to be throughout the first half of the play but is not, a simple private citizen with no concern for or voice in larger affairs. There must therefore have been one final debate, in which Odysseus confessed to all the wrongs he had done Philoktetes in the past but argued that he had only been doing what seemed at the time to be the best and then urged the wounded hero to let bygones be bygones and return to Troy. Euripides, fr. 799 N² may well belong to this speech:

ὥσπερ δὲ θνητὸν καὶ τὸ σῶμ' ἡμῶν ἔφν,
οὕτω προσήκει μηδὲ τὴν ὀργὴν ἔχειν
ἀθάνατον ὅστις σωφρονεῖν ἐπίσταται.

But just as our body too is mortal,
so neither is it appropriate for a man who knows how
to be self-controlled to keep his wrath immortal.

In response, Aktor presumably told Philoktetes to beware of this sort of deceptive persuasion, reciting again the catalogue of Odysseus' outrages and advising his friend to stay clear of any further political involvement. In the end, Aktor must have proved the more persuasive, for Dio Chrysostom says that 5) it was "for the most part, unwillingly" that Philoktetes went to Troy, yielding to "the persuasion of necessity" since he had lost his bow (*Or.* 52.2).

THE ISSUES

Dio Chrysostom tells us several times that the dialogue in *Philoktetes* was deeply political (πολιτικωτάτη: *Or.* 52.11; λαμβεῖα . . . πολιτικῶς ἔχοντα: *Or.* 52.14),³⁸ and Odysseus begins the play by talking not about his specific plans on Lemnos but about the social situation in which he finds himself and the reason he acts as he does (esp. *Or.* 59.1–2). Although this aspect of the tragedy has never received much critical attention, it contains

³⁷ There is clearly some corruption in the text here, and I have printed lines 3–4 from the text of H. A. J. Munro, "On the Fragments of Euripides," *JPh* 10, 1882 (pp. 233–252), pp. 247–248.

³⁸ When Dio Chrysostom says Euripides' *Philoktetes* was able "to bestow the greatest benefit on those who come into contact with it" (τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι πλείστην ὠφέλειαν παρασχεῖν: *Or.* 52.11), he is referring to its usefulness in teaching a man to be an orator. Compare his very similar remarks about Euripides at *Or.* 18.7 and particularly his observation that Euripidean tragedy is "altogether beneficial to a political man" (πολιτικῷ δὲ ἀνδρὶ πάνυ ὠφέλιμος). Cf. Friedrich (footnote 20 above), p. 158; Luzzatto (footnote 3 above), pp. 42–47.

much of the intellectual substance of Euripides' tragedy.³⁹ At the beginning of the prologue (*Or.* 59.1–5), Odysseus says he worries that his decision to come to Lemnos may cost him his reputation for great wisdom, since he could instead have remained an anonymous and untroubled member of the crowd:

πῶς δ' ἂν φρονοίην, ᾧ παρῆν ἀπραγμόνως
ἐν τοῖσι πολλοῖς ἡριθμημένῳ στρατοῦ
ἴσον μετασχεῖν τῷ σοφωτάτῳ τύχης;

How would I be acting sensibly, when it was possible for me, without hassles, numbered among the masses in the army, to have an equal share of (good) fortune with the “wisest”? (Euripides, fr. 787 N²; cf. *Or.* 59.1)

Odysseus' remarks here are not an expression of deliberate, calculated wariness of political obligation or of dissatisfaction with his social position. Odysseus is afraid (*φοβοῦμαι*: *Or.* 59.1) not that his actions are misguided but that they will be misunderstood by those who do not see that good sense can be compatible with personal risk taking. He is, in fact, in considerable danger, since Philoktetes hates him for his role in the exposure on Lemnos (*Or.* 59.3). Nonetheless, he has made a free, conscious choice to come, although he could have refused the job and actually did so initially (*Or.* 59.2–3). What drives him to accept the burden of political action and responsibility (*πράγματα*)⁴⁰ is his love of honor and his hope of securing a claim on social status and prestige, or *τιμή*:

οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτω γαῦρον ὥς ἀνὴρ ἔφν
τοὺς γὰρ περισσοὺς καὶ τι πράσσοντας πλέον
τιμῶμεν ἄνδρας τ' ἐν πόλει νομίζομεν.

For nothing is so haughty as a man.
For we honor more those who are remarkable and who accomplish something,
and we consider them “men” in the city. (Euripides, fr. 788 N²).⁴¹

Nor is this the first time Odysseus has behaved this way. Indeed, he has accomplished many similar labors in the past but recognizes he must continue “to labor more than the others” (*Or.* 59.1):⁴²

³⁹ Kieffer ([footnote 4 above] pp. 38–50), however, does use the play as an occasion to attack what he takes to be Euripides' misguided definition of *ἀρετή*.

⁴⁰ Cf. *τι πράσσοντες*: Euripides, fr. 788.2 N²; *ἐν πράγμασι*: *Or.* 52.12; contrast *ἀπραγμόνως*: Euripides, fr. 787.1 N²; *ἀπραγμόνως ζῆν*: *Or.* 52.12.

⁴¹ Cf. *ὑφ' ἧς φιλοτιμίας κἀγὼ προάγομαι*: *Or.* 59.2; *φιλότιμον*: *Or.* 59.1; *φιλοτιμίαν*: *Or.* 52.12; and L. B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian*, Oxford 1986, pp. 1–25. The fragment justifies the political ideology it expounds through a theory of human nature: man is by nature proud (*γαῦρος*), and therefore a system which offers *τιμή* will motivate him to action. Compare Dio Chrysostom's remark that Philoktetes went to Troy to some extent by necessity, since he was deprived of the arms in which was his *εὐκλείαν* (*Or.* 52.2).

⁴² The position Odysseus rejects is thus precisely the one the withdrawn Achilles voices as his complaint at Homer, *Il.* 9.316–320: *ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι, καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολέμιοι* (*Il.* 9.318). The over-all parallel of the action to *Iliad* 9, in fact, ought not to be overlooked. Once again, Odysseus is given the task of bringing a reluctant, withdrawn hero back into society and thus of saving the common enterprise of the Greeks. In the *Iliad*, Achilles is a warrior, reintegrated into a relationship of *φιλότης* (cf. G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, Baltimore/London 1979, pp. 103–109). In Euripides' play, on the other hand, Philoktetes and the other men of his rank are above all else advisors and leaders (esp. *Or.* 59.9) in a much more explicitly political (rather

ὀκνῶν δὲ μόχθων τῶν πρὶν ἐκχέαι χάριν
καὶ τοὺς παρόντας οὐκ ἀπωθοῦμαι πόνον.

Hesitating to squander the thanks earned by my previous labors,
I do not reject even the present toils. (Euripides, fr. 789 N²)

Odysseus has thus accepted what Davies defines as a basic social contract in the Athenian democracy: "The motivation [to public service] was *φιλοτιμία*, the objective *λαμπρότης*, and the reward a steady income of *χάρις* from one's fellow citizens."⁴³ Men served the state not just for the public good (although that certainly entered into their calculations on some level) but also because it was advantageous to them personally. Thus Odysseus is fully aware of the risks he is taking on Lemnos but is convinced his actions are necessary both to assure the success of the Greek expedition to Troy and to maintain his own status (*Or.* 59.4). Both the army as a whole and he himself now have everything to lose (cf. Euripides, fr. 789 N², and *Or.* 59.4: "if the present undertaking is a failure, all the previous accomplishments, it seems, have been labored at in vain"), and it is in the context of this sort of political thinking in the play that Euripides, fr. 798 N² clearly belongs:

πατρίς καλῶς πράσσουσα τὸν τυχόντ' ἀεὶ
μείζω τίθησι, δυστυχούσα δ' ἀσθενή.

A prosperous fatherland always makes the successful man
greater, but one that is unlucky makes him weak.

Like the leadership of Athens throughout the first two-thirds of the 5th century B.C., Odysseus is noble by birth (cf. *τῶν εὐφυῶν καὶ γενναίων ἀνδρῶν*: *Or.* 52.12),⁴⁴ and he labors not for himself alone but "on behalf of the common salvation and victory" (*ὑπὲρ τῆς κοινῆς σωτηρίας καὶ νίκης*: *Or.* 59.1). His reflections on his behavior, moreover, take the opinions of two distinct groups into account. On the one hand, there are the "allies" (*σύμμαχοι*: *Or.* 59.1), whom Odysseus is determined to protect and defend (esp. *Φιλοκτῆτην καὶ τὰ Ἡρακλέους τόξα κομίζοιμι τοῖς συμμάχοις*: *Or.* 59.2). His real concern, however, is with recognition in a different circle, for which he uses first-person plural verbs (*τιμῶμεν*; *νομίζομεν*: Euripides, fr. 788 N²) and which values above all else achievement in the "city" (*πόλει*: Euripides, fr. 788 N²).

Odysseus is thus a successful popular politician in the Athenian imperial government, concerned for the allies but most keenly interested in his reputation in the city itself,

than military) situation. A traditional story structure has thus been adapted to fit a radically different social situation.

⁴³ J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600–300 B.C.*, Oxford 1971, p. xvii. Cf. also J. de Romilly, *Thucydide et l'imperialisme athénien*, Paris 1951, pp. 119–121; N. Loraux, "Ponos: sur quelques difficultés de la peine comme nom du travail," *AION* (arch.) 4, 1982, pp. 171–192. M. R. Christ ("Danger and Its Rewards: A Study in Athenian Self-Presentation," diss. Princeton 1987) argues that Athenian self-presentation is based largely on the *πόνος/τιμή* equation.

⁴⁴ On the dominance of the traditional nobility in the city's leadership until after the death of Perikles, cf. esp. Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 28.1. That Odysseus distinguishes himself from *τοὺς βασιλέας* (*Or.* 59.3), even though we all know he is not "the man on the street", may be a discreet apology for the "truly democratic" nature of "the city".

anachronistically projected back into the heroic past and the war at Troy.⁴⁵ Philoktetes, driven into exile and ignored, is in a rather different situation. Although he has grown embittered toward his people (esp. *Or.* 59.7), he shares Odysseus' vision of politics as an essentially agonistic activity (cf. οὐδὲν ἦττον . . . ἥπερ . . . σὺ: *Or.* 59.5), a contest among a small elite who compete to offer the best service and advice to the city. Philoktetes therefore commends Palamedes for having been "beneficial to the allies, discovering and contriving the best and wisest things" (*Or.* 59.9).⁴⁶ He himself fell as a leader in a project almost identical to Odysseus' on Lemnos, making sure the Trojan expedition was not in vain (εἰ δὲ μή, μάτην ἐγίγνετο ἡ στρατεία: *Or.* 59.9; cf. πάντα τὰ πρότερον εἰργασμένα μάτην πεπονῆσθαι ἔοικεν: *Or.* 59.4) and laboring ὑπὲρ τῆς κοινῆς σωτηρίας τε καὶ νίκης (*Or.* 59.9). This last remark is a precise verbal echo of Odysseus' description of his own political activities at *Or.* 59.1 and also the only point in the oration at which a single phrase is repeated word-for-word. Even if Dio Chrysostom is not reproducing a feature of the original text here, therefore, he is at least bringing out what strikes him as a crucial feature of Euripides' story: that Odysseus and Philoktetes (and presumably Diomedes and others like them) labor in the first instance not for their own but for the common good.

The central problem in Euripides' play, of course, is that Philoktetes no longer wants to aid his people when they call and ultimately does so only under duress and that our sympathies are in many ways with him rather than with the much more politically committed Odysseus. Some comparisons with Sophokles' version of the story are instructive at this point. In Sophokles' play, Philoktetes lives in virtually complete isolation on a desert island (esp. *Phil.* 301–304), which he is desperately eager to escape (esp. *Phil.* 468–506). Euripides' Lemnos, on the other hand, is inhabited, and not only does Philoktetes have a regular companion in Aktor (*Or.* 52.8) but the Chorus must actually apologize for not having visited earlier (*Or.* 52.7). This Philoktetes, moreover, displays no interest in escaping his exile but behaves instead like a hermit, determined to drive away any intruder (esp. *Or.* 59.6). Sophokles' Philoktetes is ecstatically happy to see someone in Greek dress and to have a chance to speak with him (*Phil.* 218–231). Euripides' hero, on the other hand, becomes murderously enraged the moment he learns the disguised Odysseus is one of the Argives (*Or.* 59.7). In contrast to Sophokles' tragedy, therefore, the Euripidean *Philoctetes* was not a tale of general isolation from humanity and rescue but one of alienation specifically from one's own community and of ultimate and unwilling reintegration back into it.

Philoktetes has good reason for being embittered toward the Greeks and for feeling reluctant to enter the political fray again. When he was doing his best to serve his people, he was thrown away and utterly ignored for nine years, and he has now been summoned back only because he has once again become useful to them. Given the presence of the scheming Odysseus and the clear intentions of Athena (cf. *Or.* 59.3), however, Philoktetes ultimately has no choice but to return. His is a miserable choice, like Medea's decision to kill her children, and his ultimate lack of control over his own fate is a central element in his

⁴⁵ Cf. R. Goossens (*Euripide et Athènes*, Brussels 1962, p. 99), who calls Odysseus "par excellence le politique de l'épopée."

⁴⁶ Cf. Odysseus' observation that his reputation consists in the fact that he is σοφώτατος τῶν Ἑλλήνων (*Or.* 59.1).

tragedy. The return to Troy, finally, can only have been made more bitter by the realization that he has been outwitted and manipulated once again by his worst enemy, Odysseus.

Odysseus also has his dark side. He acts with one eye on his people's good but with the other firmly fixed on his own reputation. He is proud, and his pride gives him no rest, but he is at the same time, if not a coward, at least somewhat less than genuinely "heroic" and suspiciously concerned with his own personal safety. His actions are deceptive and underhanded throughout, even if they are always in some sense "for the common good." The execution of the innocent Palamedes and his men, denounced in the prologue as an outrage (*Or.* 59.8, 10), was, alas, all too real an event.

Euripides' *Philoctetes* must thus have ended not in joy but in resignation or despair, or perhaps a combination of the two. The play does not insist on the ultimate goodness of political action or the nobility of the hero's final decision. Instead, *Philoctetes* shows politics as a nasty but necessary business, in which men are driven by base (or socially useful) motives and individuals are sacrificed to the good of the group, and in which no behavior is ever absolutely free.

CONCLUSIONS

Sophokles told the story of Philoktetes again in 409 B.C. with significant additions and modifications. Odysseus' plan to get Philoktetes aboard a boat which would then unexpectedly make for Troy (cf. *Phil.* 461–531) was apparently part of the standard dramatic tradition and plays a part in the stories of both Aischylos and Euripides. The regular Chorus of Lemnians, on the other hand, has now been replaced by Greek sailors, thus adding to the impression of Philoktetes' isolation. The Trojan embassy, invented by Euripides and added by him to the story, has disappeared from the action once again, presumably because Philoktetes' decision about whether or not to go to Troy is no longer the central focus of the plot. Neoptolemos has taken the part of Diomedes as Odysseus' comrade, but his story about his disaffection with the leadership at Troy (esp. Sophokles, *Phil.* 360–390) is a straightforward adaptation of the Euripidean Odysseus' lie about his exile from the army. Sophokles' *Emporos* (*Phil.* 542–627) is probably a further reworking of the part of Diomedes in Euripides' play.⁴⁷ Sophokles' two most significant innovations, however, are the way in which he transforms the character of Odysseus and the decision to move the personal crisis of Neoptolemos to center stage while dropping the larger political points at issue in Euripides' tragedy.⁴⁸

In Aischylos' *Philoctetes*, says Dio Chrysostom, Odysseus was "shrewd and crafty, as men were then, but far removed from modern rascality" (*Or.* 52.5). In Sophokles' play, on the other hand, he is a complete scoundrel, a moral reprobate from start to finish.⁴⁹ Stanford includes the Odysseus of Euripides' *Philoctetes* among the degraded demagogues of later

⁴⁷ Cf. Calder, p. 62. As noted above, Neoptolemos' role as Philoktetes' comforter in his sickness (Sophokles, *Phil.* 730–876) may also be an adaptation of the part of Aktor in Euripides' tragedy.

⁴⁸ For attempts to read Sophokles' play in light of contemporary political developments, cf. esp. W. M. Calder III, "Sophoclean Apologia: *Philoctetes*," *GRBS* 12, 1971 (pp. 153–174), pp. 170–174, and C. E. Sorum, "Sophocles' *Ajax* in Context," *CW* 79, 1986, pp. 361–377.

⁴⁹ Cf. Stanford, p. 107: "From beginning to end he is undoubtedly the villain, though opinions may vary about the degree of his villainy. Each development in the play reveals a fresh depravity in his character."

plays like *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, but this is clearly unfair.⁵⁰ Instead, Odysseus in Euripides' play of 431 B.C. resembles much more the character in Sophokles' *Ajax*: overcautious and thoroughly political perhaps, but a decent individual trapped in a situation not of his own making.⁵¹ It was Sophokles, not Euripides, who transformed the tale of Philoktetes into a story of Odysseus' complete moral debasement and turned his character into a brutal indictment of the political man rather than an exploration of his complexities and the shadows in his character.

As Carter has shown, there was an increasingly vigorous movement toward personal political quietism in Athens in the final decades of the 5th century B.C.⁵² Citizens, particularly members of the city's upper classes, began to ask themselves whether involvement in public affairs was worth their while, particularly when it was possible to live at their ease in untroubled isolation, and more and more began to decide it was not. Odysseus himself acknowledges the potential force of this argument in the opening lines of Euripides' tragedy (Euripides, fr. 787–789 N²; *Or.* 59.1–2), although he makes clear by his actions that he rejects it. The play as a whole, however, takes a considerably more ambiguous attitude toward the problem of public action in the contemporary city. Philoktetes returns to political service only because he must, having apparently decided he is no longer interested in being involved in his people's affairs, and much of the force of his tragedy consists in the fact that he cannot live as he would. Odysseus, on the other hand, accepts the burden of political action with an eye on the *τιμὴ* and *χάρις* it will earn him, but he is no pure or altogether noble character. Political action, it seems, is a trap, in which Odysseus and Philoktetes find themselves caught by accidents of birth, circumstance, and fate, but from which we in the audience may be just as glad to have escaped.

Much remains obscure about Euripides' *Philoktetes* and, barring the discovery of a new papyrus or the recovery of a lost manuscript, much will probably always remain obscure. As I hope to have shown in this paper, however, we can recover more of the play's action and of the intellectual and dramatic conflicts built into it than has generally been supposed. Perhaps more important, what can be reconstructed of Euripides' tragedy of 431 B.C. helps us better understand the political and social atmosphere in Athens on the eve of the Peloponnesian War.

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⁵⁰ Stanford, pp. 115–117. Stanford's argument is in any case unhistorical, since he claims the transformation of the Euripidean Odysseus came in reaction to the rise of demagogues like Kleon after Perikles' death in 429 B.C.

⁵¹ Cf. Stanford, pp. 104–106. On the contrast between these two images of Odysseus, cf. also J. Boulogne, "Ulysse: Deux figures de la Démocratie chez Sophocle," *RPhil* 62, 1988, pp. 99–107.

⁵² Cf. Carter (footnote 41 above), *passim*, and the bibliography on ἀπραγμοσύνη cited there. Carter discusses fr. 787–789 N² of Euripides' *Philoktetes* on pp. 28–30.