INTRODUCTION

1 PHILOKTETES IN MYTHOLOGY, LITERATURE, AND FIGURATIVE ART

1.1 The myth in archaic poetry

The myth of Philoktetes was well established in Greek poetic tradition long before Sophokles' play was produced in 409 BCE and would have been familiar to his audience. Philoktetes was the son of Poias, King of Meliboia, in the region known as Magnesia in southeastern Thessaly, near Mt Oita and the Malian Gulf. As a youth he was the companion of Herakles, in whose conquest of Troy he participated and with whom he was numbered among the Argonauts (as was his father Poias). When Herakles was dying in agony on Mt Oita, Philoktetes alone was willing to light his funeral pyre, for which he received from Herakles his bow (originally the gift of Apollo) and deadly arrows. (In another version of the story, Poias lit the pyre, received the bow, and gave it Philoktetes.) Philoktetes commanded seven ships in the Greek fleet that sailed against Troy to avenge Helen's abduction by Paris. On the way to Troy, while sacrificing at the shrine of Chryse on Tenedos (or on the island of Chryse), Philoktetes was bitten by a water snake. The wound was incurable, his cries of pain so loud and disturbing, and his odour so foul and unendurable that Odysseus, at the command of Agamemnon and Menelaos and on behalf of the Greek army, marooned him on Lemnos. After ten years, the Greeks learned from the Trojan prophet Helenos that they could not win the war without the aid of Philoktetes and his Heraklean weapons, so they sent – in different versions of the story – Diomedes, Odysseus, or both Diomedes and Odysseus to bring him back from Lemnos. Initially, Philoktetes refused to go to Troy, out of hatred for the Greeks, especially Odysseus and the sons of Atreus. The Greek envoy(s), however, overcame his reluctance by some combination of persuasion, trickery, and force. When he arrived at the Greek camp before Troy, he was healed by Machaon and/or Podaleirios, the sons of Asclepios, then killed Paris in an archery duel and participated in the sack of the city.[1]

[1] Cf. *Il.* 2.716–24, *Od.* 3.188–90, 8.219–20, *Cypria*, *Argumentum*, *Ilias Parva*, *argumentum*, Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 50–6 with Σ *ad* 100 = Bacchyl. fr. 7, Σ on Soph. *Ph.* 194, Ov. *Met.* 13.45–54, 313–38, D. Chr. 52, 59. Late mythographers and other sources sometimes preserve features of the myth that go back to the Cyclic epics, but often include mythical details invented to account rationally, realistically or ethically for one or another aspect of the traditional story. Cf. [Apollod.] *Epit.* 3.27, 5.8, Hyg. 102, Quint. Smyrn. 9.327–527, 10.167–245; Serv. on *Aen.* 3.401–2, Eust. *Il.* 323, 44, 330, 1–20. Cf. Masciadri 2008: 38–111; C. Müller 2000: 25–71; Pipili 1994: 376–7; Avezzù 1988.

At *Il.* 2.716 ff., the *Iliad* refers to

> Οἳ δ' ἄρα Μηθώνην καὶ Θαυμακίην ἐνέμοντο
> καὶ Μελίβοιαν ἔχον καὶ Ὀλιζῶνα τρηχεῖαν,
> τῶν δὲ Φιλοκτήτης ἦρχεν τόξων ἐῢ εἰδὼς
> ἑπτὰ νέων· . . .
> . . . .
> ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήσοι κεῖτο κρατέρ' ἄλγεα πάσχων,
> Λήμνοι ἐν ἠγαθέηι, ὅθι μιν λίπον υἷες Ἀχαιῶν
> ἕλκεϊ μοχθίζοντα κακῶι ὀλοόφρονος ὕδρου·
> ἔνθ' ὅ γε κεῖτ' ἀχέων· τάχα δὲ μνήσεσθαι ἔμελλον
> Ἀργεῖοι παρὰ νηυσὶ Φιλοκτήταο ἄνακτος.
>
> those who lived around Methone and Thaumakia
> and held Meliboia and rough Olizon,
> Philoktetes led them, skilled with the bow,
> (led) their seven ships . . .
> . . . .
> But he lay in the island suffering overwhelming pains,
> in sacred Lemnos, where the sons of the Achaians had left him
> labouring in agony from the evil wound of the malignant water
> snake;
> there he lay in pain, but soon the Argives beside their ships
> were going to remember King Philoktetes.
>
> (*Il.* 2.716–25)

This passage does not mention either the prophecy of Helenos or that Philoktetes would use the bow of Herakles to win the war for the Greek army. 2.724, however, describing Philoktetes, ἔνθ' ὅ γε κεῖτ' ἀχέων· τάχα δὲ μνήσεσθαι ἔμελλον ('there he lay in pain, but soon (the Argives) were going to remember (King Philoktetes)) recalls 2.694, referring to Achilles, τῆς ὅ γε κεῖτ' ἀχέων, τάχα δ' ἀνστήσεσθαι ἔμελλεν ('he lay grieving for her (*sc.* Briseis), but soon he was going to rise up'). The similarity between the two lines in sound and sense suggests (1) that Philoktetes is a hero comparable to Achilles in his power to affect the outcome of the war, (2) the inevitability of his return to the fighting after a period of personal suffering, and (3) the familiarity of his story to the poet and his audience. Both are bearers of divine weapons and a special destiny, and it is perhaps no accident that Philoktetes, in Sophokles' play, speaks of Neoptolemos as 'son of a father who was nearest and dearest (to me)' (242, cf. 242–3n.) and is more Achillean than Neoptolemos himself (cf. 601–2n.).

At *Od.* 8.219–20, Odysseus tells the Phaeacians, 'Only Philoktetes surpassed me with the bow | in the land of the Trojans, when we Achaeans used to shoot with bows', but he too does not speak of the bow of Herakles or Philoktetes' special role in the sack of Troy, understandably enough in a poem where Odysseus himself

is 'the sacker of cities' *par excellence*, and Odysseus' ruse of the wooden horse was the decisive factor in the fall of the city. The only other mention of Philoktetes in the *Odyssey* is at 3.188–90, where Nestor tells Telemachos, '[T]hey say . . . | . . . | that Philoktetes, the glorious son of Poias, came home successfully.'

The story was told more fully in the *Kypria* of how Philoktetes was bitten by a water snake, when the Greek army stopped at the island of Tenedos to sacrifice on its way to Troy, then was left behind on Lemnos because of his foul smell.[2] There is no indication of why Philoktetes was attacked by the snake.[3] In the *Little Iliad*, 'Odysseus ambushes and captures the Trojan prince Helenos, and when this man had prophesied about the capture of Troy, Diomedes brings Philoktetes back from Lemnos. And this man, healed by Machaon, kills Paris in single combat.' The wording suggests that Helenos said the Greeks needed Philoktetes (or Philoktetes and his bow) to take Troy, therefore Diomedes brought him back to the Greek army; there is no mention of how Diomedes brought him back – by persuasion, by force, or in some other way.

At *Pythian* 1.50–6 (470 BCE), Pindar makes Philoktetes a mythological parallel to Hieron, who won military victories despite a serious illness and whom 'by force of necessity even one who was proud fawned into a friend' (51–2). Both Hieron and Philoktetes, though ill, played a decisive role in triumphs over non-Greek enemies (cf. *Pyth.* 1.72–5, 79–80). Pindar does not mention that Philoktetes was cured of his disease before killing Paris and helping to win the war, in order to make him seem more like Hieron, who is reported to have campaigned successfully, even though he had to be carried in a litter.[4]

1.2 The myth in Attic drama

In classical Athens, Philoktetes was the subject of at least six tragedies, in addition to Sophokles' *Philoktetes*. Aischylos (*TrGF* 3 frr. 249–57), Euripides (*TrGF* 5.27 3 frr. 787–803), and Theodektes of Phaselis (fourth century, *TrGF* 1 72 fr. 5b) dramatized the same part of the myth as Sophokles, in which the Greeks persuade, trick, or force Philoktetes to leave Lemnos in order to help the army at Troy. Aristotle (*EN* 7.8.1150b9–10) mentions approvingly that Theodektes' Philoktetes tried to

[2] Bernabé, *Cypria*, *Argumentum*: 41 (= West 2003: 76). Apollod. *Epit.* 3.27 says that the sacrifice was to Apollo, and Odysseus 'put Philoktetes out on Lemnos with his Heraklean bow by the order of Agamemnon'.

[3] Some later sources specify that Philoktetes was guiding the Greek army to the shrine of the goddess Chryse, because he had been there with Herakles on the expedition that ended in the sack of Troy. When he was showing the Greeks the shrine of Chryse, so that they might pray for success, he was bitten by the serpent (or, in another version of the story, was wounded when he dropped one of Herakles' poisoned arrows on his own foot).

[4] Cf. E. Cingano on *Pyth.* 1.54–5, in Gentili, Bernardini, Cingano, and Giannini 2000: 347. According to Σ *Pyth.* 1.100 = Bacchyl. fr. 7, 'Bacchylides too told the story that the Greeks summoned Philoktetes from Lemnos, after Helenos had prophesied, for it had been fated that Ilion not be sacked without the bow of Herakles'.

resist the pain resulting from the snakebite, though it eventually overcame him. Aspasios (second century CE), commenting on this passage of the *EN*, explains that when Philoktetes could no longer bear the pain, he had to reveal it. Another, anonymous commentator on the same passage says that Theodektes' Philoktetes cried out (ἐβόα) and quotes the only surviving words from the play, κόψατε τὴν ἐμὴν χεῖρα ('cut off my hand') to illustrate his comment that Theodektes' Philoktetes had been bitten by the snake in his hand, not his foot.[5]

In addition to the plays of Aischylos, Sophokles, and Theodektes that were set in Lemnos, Sophokles, in *Philoktetes at Troy* (*TrGF* 4 frr. 697–703), and Achaios of Eretria (fifth century), in *Philoktetes* (*TrGF* 1 fr. 37), dramatized events that took place after Philoktetes had come to Troy, including his healing by Machaon and/or Podaleirios and his slaying of Paris; in addition, *P.Oxy*. 3216 preserves a fragment by an unknown poet of what may have been a 'Philoktetes at Troy' (*TrGF* 2 *Adesp*. fr. 654). Nothing beyond the title is known of a *Philoktetes* by the fifth-century tragic poet Philokles (*TrGF* 1.24 fr. 1). Plutarch twice quotes two lines 'spoken to Philoktetes' and warning of his unsuitability as a bridegroom, which may come from a satyr play (*TrGF* 2 *Adesp*. fr. 10).

Several comic playwrights wrote Philoktetes-plays: Epicharmos (sixth–fifth century, *PCG* 1 frr. 131, 132), Strattis (late fifth–early fourth centrury, *PCG* 7 frr. 44, 45), and Antiphanes (fourth century, *PCG* 2 fr. 218). The fragments of Epicharmos and Strattis have no particular relevance to Sophokles' play, unless Strattis' was a parody, but Antiphanes' fragment, though its context is unclear, perhaps recalls the characterization of Sophokles' Odysseus: σοφόν γε τοί τι πρὸς τὸ βουλεύειν ἔχει / τὸ γῆρας, ὡς δὴ πόλλ' ἰδόν τε καὶ πάθον ('old age has some wisdom, at least in regard to planning, | since it has seen much and suffered much').[6]

The Philoktetes plays of Aischylos and Euripides are known from a few extant fragments and from the fifty-second *Discourse* (*c*. 100 CE) of the Greek orator and popular philosopher, Dio of Prusa, also known as Chrysostomos ('Golden Mouth').[7] Dio compares these two plays and Sophokles' *Philoktetes*, as if they were all staged in competition with one another in the theatre of Dionysos in Athens,

[5] Cf. Snell, *TrGF* 1 72 F 5b: 233.

[6] Cf. Soph. fr. 260 (from *Thyestes*): 'but good sense often accompanies old age, and planning what needs (to be planned)'.

[7] There is little detailed evidence of the plot of Aischylos' play. Its major innovations seem to have been its vivid representation of Philoktetes' intense pain and emotion and its dramatic focus on the conflict between Philoktetes and Odysseus, who comes to Lemnos as the representative of the Greek army, instead of Diomedes who came to retrieve Philoktetes in the *Little Iliad*. For attempted reconstructions, see C. Müller 2000: 38–64; cf. Jouan and Van Looy 2002: 272–7, Sommerstein 2008: 250–6. Far more is known and can be conjectured about Euripides' play, in which Odysseus and Diomedes together come to persuade or force Philoktetes to accompany them to Troy. Dio gives a prose summary of the Prologue in *Discourse* 59. Cf. Müller 1997, Jouan and Van Looy 2002: 278–312, Collard in Collard, Cropp, and Gibert 2004: 1–34, Collard and Cropp 2008: 368–403. For a fragment of what may be the hypothesis of Aesch.'s. play, see *P. Oxy* 2256.5 = *TrGF* III fr. 451w. For a better preserved, but still fragmentary, hypothesis of Euripides' play, see *P. Oxy*.

during the City Dionysia, even though he knows that this is chronologically impossible and that tragic poets rarely (if ever) competed against one another with plays on the same theme (52.3–4).[8] In fact, Aischylos' play probably dates from the first third of the fifth century, Euripides' was produced in 431 BCE, in the same tetralogy as *Medea*, and Sophokles' was first staged in 409.

Dio describes the 'theme' (52.2. *hupothesin*) of the three Philoktetes-plays as 'the theft – or perhaps one should say violent seizure – of Philoktetes' bow . . . ', and says that at the end of each play Philoktetes, deprived of his weapon, is taken to Troy 'for the most part voluntarily, but to some extent by compelling persuasion (τὸ μὲν πλέον ἑκών, τὸ δέ τι καὶ πειθοῖ ἀναγκαίσι), since he had been robbed of the weapon which provided his means of living on the island and courage in the face of [his] disease, along with his glory' (52.2). Dio, however, in stating this common 'theme', ignores or obscures important differences between the plays of Aischylos and Euripides, on the one hand, and Sophokles' *Philoktetes*, on the other.

The most obvious difference is that in Aischylos and Euripides, Philoktetes is compelled or persuaded to go to Troy, when Odysseus or Odysseus and Diomedes steal the bow, probably while Philoktetes is asleep after suffering a paroxysm. In Sophokles, however, Philoktetes' paroxysm heightens the play's ethical complexity, by providing the occasion for Neoptolemos' crisis of conscience, which eventually leads him to return the bow. Even when he is helpless without the bow, which he has given to Neoptolemos for safekeeping before his paroxysm, Philoktetes resists Neoptolemos' attempts to persuade him to go to Troy, but voluntarily chooses to rejoin the army, after the deified Herakles, speaking *ex machina*, tells him to do so. Thus in Aischylos and Euripides, the main action of the play is Odysseus' successful intrigue, but in Sophokles it is Philoktetes' decision to embrace his destiny.

In the Philoktetes-plays of Aischylos and Euripides, as far as one can judge from the fragments and from Dio's summary, Philoktetes will go to Troy only because of the theft of the bow; there is no *deus ex machina* whom he chooses to obey, as he obeys Herakles in Sophokles' play. Divinity, to be sure, is present in both plays, insofar as the action is triggered by the prophecy of Helenos, and from the very beginning of Euripides' drama, Athena protects and supports Odysseus by altering his appearance. She does this, however, as his personal patron, not as the representative of Zeus and not as an old friend, formerly mortal, with whom Odysseus can identify and whose words and suffering have special meaning for him, as Herakles' words have special meaning for Philoktetes in Sophokles' play.[9]

2455.17 = *TrGF* v.2 T iii a (cf. C. Müller 2000: 144–7, 224–30; Jouan and van Looy 2002: 280–1; Collard, Cropp and Gibert 2004: 14–15 = Collard and Cropp 2008: 374–7).

[8] Cf. Hunter 2009: 39–48, who shows that Dio's *synkrisis* is shaped by a 'classical' tradition of criticism, going back to Aristophanes' *Frogs*, that viewed Sophokles as occupying 'the midpoint between "simple" Aeschylus and "complex" (ποικίλος) Euripides' (44).

[9] Cf. Kott 1974: 178–9, H. Flashar 1999: 90, 2000: 149.

Another fundamental difference between the Philoktetes-plays of Aischylos and Euripides, on the one hand, and Sophokles' *Philoktetes*, on the other, is that no character in either Aischylos' or Euripides' play undergoes the ethical growth evident in Sophokles' Neoptolemos. Odysseus in Aischylos and Odysseus and Diomedes in Euripides do not hesitate, in the first place, to use deceit in order to gain possession of the bow, as Neoptolemos does in Sophokles' play (86–95), nor do they change their minds out of sympathy and friendship with Philoktetes and decide to return it.

As Dio notes, Aischylos and Euripides represent Lemnos as populated, while in Sophokles the island is 'untrodden and uninhabited' (2). This means that the isolation and misery of Philoktetes in Sophokles' play are absolute, until the arrival of Odysseus and Neoptolemos: ἄνδρα δύστηνον, μόνον, | ἔρημον ὧδε κἄφιλον κακούμενον (227–8, cf. 1018).[10] In Euripides, however, Philoktetes has a friend, the shepherd Aktor, who comes to see him from time to time, and may bring him the news that a Trojan embassy has arrived to plead for his assistance (Dio 52.8, cf. Hygin. *Fab.* 102.2). In addition, both Aischylos and Euripides make the chorus consist of Lemnians, who visit Philoktetes (for the first time in ten years!), while in Sophokles' play there is a chorus of Neoptolemos' soldier-sailors. Dio finds Aischylos' chorus 'altogether simpler and more tragic' (τῶι παντὶ τραγικώτερον καὶ ἁπλούστερον) than Euripides', which he calls 'more civil and correct' (πολιτικώτερον καὶ ἀκριβέστερον), noting that Aischylos' chorus, when they first arrive, say nothing about their previous neglect of Philoktetes, but Euripides' chorus apologize 'because in ten years they neither approached Philoktetes nor gave him any assistance at all' (52.7–8).

The contrast Dio draws between the two choruses is analogous to the way in which he distinguishes between the 'grandeur and archaic flavour' of Aischylos' play, with its 'ruggedly original thought and expression appropriate to tragedy and to the ancient manners of the heroes' (52.4), and the 'intelligence' and 'concern for every detail' of Euripides' play, which is antithetical to Aischylos' in the way in which 'it is realistically political and oratorical and can be most useful to its readers' (52.11). Aischylos' Odysseus does not bother to disguise himself out of fear that he might be recognized, while Euripides' Odysseus is, realistically, anxious about being recognized, even though his appearance has been transformed by Athena. Aischylos' Odysseus gains Philoktetes' trust by a lying story that Agamemnon and Odysseus are dead and Odysseus shamefully disgraced; he does not, however, use 'elaborate art and scheming' (ποικίλης τέχνης καὶ ἐπιβουλῆς, Dio 52.10), and Dio comments that 'shrewd and crafty, as men were in those days, Aischylos' Odysseus is far removed from the malignity of today' (δριμὺν καὶ δόλιον, ὡς ἐν τοῖς τότε, πολὺ δὲ ἀπέχοντα τῆς νῦν κακοηθείας, Dio 52.5). Euripides' Odysseus, on the other hand, is modern in a way that recalls

[10] In making Lemnos uninhabited, Sophokles departs strikingly from both mythological tradition and historical reality. Cf. 2n.

fifth-century Athenian political leaders, and 'he compels himself more than others to toil for the common victory and salvation' (Dio 59.1), in order to maintain the glory he has won and stand out in the city (Dio 59.2, Eur. frr. 787.1–2, 788.2–3).[11]

1.3 Lemnos

Sophokles' audience in 409 BCE would have been surprised, even shocked, to find Lemnos uninhabited in the play. They would have known that the island, the largest in the north central Aegean Sea, had always been inhabited and for nearly a hundred years had been an Athenian ally, helping to secure the key trade route to Thrace and the Black Sea, on which the Athenians depended for supplies of grain and timber. The Athenian general Miltiades had settled some colonists on Lemnos in the early years of the fifth century (Hdt. 4.136–40), and in the early 440s Athens had established a colony of Athenian citizens, who not long afterward dedicated a bronze statue of Athena by Pheidias on the Athenian acropolis, which came to be known as the 'Lemnian Athena' (Paus. 1.28.2). These Lemnian Athenians maintained their ancestral dialect and customs (Thuc. 7.57.2) and fought alongside the Athenians throughout the Peloponnesian War (e.g. at Pylos and Amphipolis and in Sicily, cf. Thuc. 4.28.4, 5.8.2, 7.57.2).[12]

Sophokles' audience would have been familiar not only with the Aischylean and Euripidean versions of the Philoktetes story, but with other well known myths involving Lemnians. For example, at *Il.* 1.593–4, Hephaistos describes how once, when Zeus hurled him from heaven, he 'fell in Lemnos . . . , | where the Sintian men took care of me . . . '.[13] Elsewhere in the poem, Lemnos is called 'well inhabited' (21.40); its king, Euneos, sends wine to Agamemnon and Menelaos and is also said to have given Patroklos a beautiful mixing bowl as a ransom for Lykaon, whom Achilles had captured (23.746–7). In Aischylos' *Libation Bearers* 631–4, the Chorus sing: 'of evils, the Lemnian takes pride of place | in story and is lamented as abhorrent | by the people, and one compares | the terrible deed anew to Lemnian disasters', alluding to the murder by the Lemnian women of all the men in the island except King Thoas, who was spared by his daughter Hypsipyle (Apollod. 1.9.16). Hdt. 6.138.1–4 tells of another 'Lemnian evil', the murder by the Lemnian men of Athenian women abducted from Brauron as concubines, along with their children, and says that this crime and the murder of their men by the Lemnian women 'have made it customary throughout Greece to call shocking and abominable deeds "Lemnian"' (Hdt. 6.138.4).[14]

Despite these traditional myths, in Sophokles' play Lemnos is a harsh, physically demanding, and uninhabited (οὐδ' οἰκουμένην, cf. 2n.) landscape in which

[11] Cf. Olson 1991: 280–3, Collard 2004: 11 with n. 5. Dio's 'today' refers to the late first or early second century CE, when he was writing.
[12] Cf. Meiggs 1972: 524–5.
[13] The Sintians were pre-Greek inhabitants of the island, cf. Kirk 1985: 113.
[14] See Masciadri 2008: 201–58.

Philoktetes struggles to maintain a primitive, painful, and lonely existence. It is, in effect, not part of 'the inhabited earth' (ἡ γῆ οἰκουμένη), which was thought of 'as a region made coherent by the intercommunication of its inhabitants',[15] and because of his utter isolation from other human beings, Philoktetes on Lemnos is himself no longer fully human. He is in an 'eremitic space', a desolated wilderness unlike places where humans live in societies.[16] Odysseus describes this eremitic space not only as 'uninhabited' but also as 'untrodden' (2 ἄστιπτος), a paradoxical term, considering that the play refers on several occasions to Philoktetes' highly distinctive στίβος ('tread', 'way of walking'), e.g. 163, 206, 487, cf. 2n.). Yet this 'tread' is so unlike the 'tread' of other human beings that Odysseus can ignore it.

There is, however, another 'inhabitant' of Lemnos with whom Philoktetes shares this 'way of walking', the lame god Hephaistos. Mythologically, Hephaistos was not only thrown from heaven by Zeus and rescued by the Sintians, but also was once thrown out by Hera, landed on Lemnos, and was saved and cared for by Thetis and Eurynome, for whom he made metal jewelry for nine years (*Il.* 18.395–405). Historically, Lemnos was sacred to Hephaistos as the god of fire and craft;[17] the Kabeiroi, blacksmith gods with cult centres on Lemnos and at Thebes, were Hephaistos' sons or grandsons.[18] In the play, Philoktetes wishes to perish in 'the fire famously called Lemnian' (800, cf. 799–801n.), and also invokes 'the all conquering blaze wrought by Hephaistos' (986–7), which he associates with the 'Lemnian land' itself (Λημνία γῆ). When Odysseus threatens to take him by force, Philoktetes sees himself as under the protection of the land and the god: 'is this truly to be endured', he asks rhetorically, 'that [Odysseus] will take me from *your* [precincts] by force'?[19] Philoktetes himself might be seen as a human version of Hephaistos: an exile on Lemnos whose identity is bound up with the natural features of the island and whose lameness is a sign of his helplessness, but who also has a special 'artistic' power, that is, as it were, the other side of this helplessness and that will manifest itself when he leaves the island.[20]

1.4 The myth in figurative art

Although Philoktetes was well known in epic and lyric poetry of the archaic period, the earliest figurative representations date from the second quarter of the fifth century, and one fifth-century statue and two paintings seem to have been particularly famous. Pliny (*HN* 34.19.59) describes a bronze statue by Pythagoras

[15] Romm 1992: 37. [16] Cf. Rehm 2002: 114–15, 138, Romm 1992: 35–7.
[17] Lemnos is one of the few places apart from Athens where there is evidence of a cult of Hephaistos. See Burkert 1985: 167–8.
[18] Burkert 1985: 167, 281. [19] For the emphasis on 'your', see 987–8n.
[20] For interpretation of the connection between Philoktetes' weakness, on the one hand, and his power, on the other, see Wilson 1941, Freidenberg 1997: 153–4. Morin 2003 argues for parallels between Philoktetes, Hephaistos, and Polyphemos; see below, p. 17.

of Rhegion (early-mid fifth century), which stood in Syracuse and was known as 'The Limping Man' (*Claudicans*), 'the pain of whose wound even viewers seem to feel' (*cuius ulceris dolorem sentire etiam spectantes videntur*).[21] Lessing's suggestion that 'The Limping Man' should be identified as Philoktetes has found favour with most scholars,[22] and it is tempting to identify this statue as the one described in an anonymous epigram (*AP* 16.112): 'My maker was my enemy more than the Greeks, another Odysseus, | who called to mind my evil, accursed disease. | My rock, rags, blood, wound, and wretchedness were not enough: | but he actually worked into the bronze even my pain.'

Two fifth-century paintings of *Philoktetes* are mentioned by later writers. One, by Aristophon, the brother of Polygnotos, found favour with Plutarch for giving pleasure through the excellence with which it represented pain.[23] The other, by Parrhasios, seems to have inspired epigrams by Glaukos ('in [Philoktetes'] parched eyes a tear dwells | mutely, and the wasting pain is within him', *AP* 16.111.3–4, tr. D. Page) and by Julianus, ('[Philoktetes] makes clear to all | his pain, even when they gaze from far off. | He has his hair wildly combed; look here at the locks | on his temples, matted, in harsh colours; | he has his skin parched and shrivelled to look at, | and perhaps dry to the hands' touch; | his tears stand frozen beneath his dry | eyes, a sign of (his) sleepless misery' (*AP* 16.113.1–8). In addition to these two paintings, Pausanias (1.22.6) describes another in the Picture Gallery of the Propylaia in Athens (possibly by Polygnotos himself, the text is vague), which showed Odysseus stealing the bow of Philoktetes on Lemnos (as in Aischylos) and Diomedes stealing the statue of Athena (the Palladion) from Troy.[24]

Vase painters represented Philoktetes frequently, and he appears on coins, gems, and mirrors and in other media from *c.* 460 BCE through to the third century CE.[25] He is usually depicted at specific moments of what might be called the standard mythological narrative. In the earliest examples (460–450), he is shown as Herakles' young attendant at his death and apotheosis (*LIMC* 3, 4, 10), and he sometimes holds a bow and quiver as Herakles leaves by chariot over his pyre (*LIMC* 8, 9). In other fifth- and fourth-century depictions, he is present when Herakles sacrifices to the goddess Chryse on his expedition against Troy

[21] The notion that the suffering shown in the statue could give rise to sympathetic pain in the viewer is in accordance with the comment by Pliny (*loc. cit.*) that Pythagoras 'was the first [sculptor] to express the nerves and the veins' (*primus nervos et venas expressit*).

[22] Lessing 1990: 30 = Lessing 1984: 18; cf. Milani 1879: 53–4, Pipili 1994: 381, M. Flashar 1999: 166–7.

[23] Plut. *How to study poetry* 18c; cf. *Sympotic questions*. 5.1., where Plutarch mentions a painting of Philoktetes but does not name the artist.

[24] Paus. 1.22.6. The Greek can also be construed in such a way that Diomedes is stealing the bow (in accordance with the Cyclic version of the myth) and Odysseus, the statue of Athena: . . . Διομήδης ἦν καὶ Ὀδυσσεύς, ὁ μὲν ἐν Λήμνωι τὸ Φιλοκτήτου τόξον, ὁ δὲ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν ἐξ Ἰλίου.

[25] Cf. Pipili 1994: 176–88, M. Flashar 1999: 141–67, Milani 1879: 51–110, 1882.

(*LIMC s.v.* Chryse 1–5) or in the garden of the Hesperides (*LIMC* 2); he is being bitten by the snake while sacrificing to Chryse on the way to Troy with the army led by Agamemnon and Menelaos (*LIMC* 12, 13); or he is alone on Lemnos, seated (*LIMC* 21, 22, 23) or leaning on a stick as he walks (*LIMC* 38). He also is represented on Lemnos with Odysseus, who is accompanied by either Diomedes or Neoptolemos and in one case by Athena (*LIMC* 55, 56), or he is shown being healed at Troy (*LIMC* 72, 73).

2 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Philoktetes was first produced in the tragic competition at the City Dionysia in March 409, in the twenty-second year of the Peloponnesian War, two years after the oligarchical *coup d' état* of 411 and less than a year after the restoration of the democracy in 410. It was one of the four plays that finished first in the competition; the names and subjects of the other three plays are unknown. The City Dionysia of 409, the first to take place after the restoration of the democracy, was especially charged politically, because for the first time in Athenian history gold crowns were awarded to individual civic benefactors as part of the proceedings. The recipients were Thrasyboulos of Kalydon and Apollodoros of Megara, who had assassinated Phrynichos, a leader of the short-lived oligarchy. The decree of the *boulē* and the *dēmos* (*IG*^{3} 102) praises Thrasyboulos 'for being a good man toward the *dēmos* of the Athenians' and confers Athenian citizenship on him.[26] Shortly before the festival, perhaps on the previous day, the Athenian people swore the Oath of Demophantos, in which they promised to support the democracy and to kill anyone who wished to replace it with another form of government or to make himself tyrant.[27] It is even possible that the oath was sworn in the Theatre of Dionysos itself,[28] though other evidence suggests the *agora*.[29] In any event, Athenian politics of the previous two years, culminating in the oath, might well have affected the ways in which members of Sophokles' audience understood and evaluated the political actions represented in the play and the political language of its characters. The Trojan War in the play would almost inevitably have reminded an Athenian audience of the war they had been fighting with the Spartans for over two decades and which they were eager to bring to a successful conclusion.

This is not to say that the play has a straightforward relationship to Athenian politics and history, or that its characters can simply be identified with, or read as allegories for, specific Athenian politicians. The best known example of such an approach identifies the marooned Philoktetes, who is destined to help win the Trojan War, with the exiled Alkibiades, whose return to Athens was considered by

[26] Cf. Wilson 2009: 10–11, Shear 2011: 141–3.
[27] For the wording of the oath, see Andoc. 1. 96–7.
[28] Wilson 2009: 17–18, 24. [29] Shear 2007: 157–8, 2011: 137–8.