'Tell me about a complicated man': Odysseus in Athens in the Fifth Century BC

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Abstract

This thesis explores the presentation of Odysseus in fifth-century Athenian tragedy. It seeks to explain why Odysseus was so appealing to Athenian dramatists in this period and how these writers transformed the character received from Homer and other Epic Cycle poems into one more relevant to a fifth-century audience.

To answer these questions, I analyse both extant and fragmentary plays in which Odysseus is a principal character or is significant to the plot, paying particular attention to vocabulary and lexical choices. Each chapter is centred around a particular character or group with whom Odysseus is shown in conflict: Palamedes, Achilles, Ajax, the Trojans, Philoctetes, and the Cyclops. This thesis gives a more complete picture of the fifth-century Athenian reception of this epic character. Additionally, it offers new insights into certain plays, particularly the dual Odysseus of Sophocles' *Ajax* and the metatheatricality of Euripides' *Cyclops*. Fragmentary material also shows us less typical presentations of Odysseus which challenge some standard ideas about how his presentation deteriorates ethically over the fifth century. On the contrary, fragments of lost tragedies show us that some of his more disreputable appearances came early in the century. Analysis of fragmentary material also questions the standard view of the consistency with which Euripides treats Odysseus harshly.

Odysseus is the epic hero most suited to a fifth-century *polis*, especially a democratic *polis* whose institutions relied so much on the power of speaking well. Furthermore, Odysseus was associated in epic with the military recruitment of various heroes, and this role became more relevant in an imperial *polis* that relied on maintaining the support of its allies. Therefore, by analysing Odysseus' presentations across fifth-century tragedy, we can also see ways in which tragedians dealt with issues relevant to their audience.

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Note on translations and dating

Unless otherwise specified, all texts and translations are taken from the most recent Loeb Classical Library edition. Editions of texts and fragments that are quoted extensively are listed at the start of the Bibliography.

All dates are BC unless otherwise stated.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations for authors and texts follow those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th Edition. Other abbreviated titles are as follows.

ABV	Beazley, J. D. (1956) *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
DK	Diels, H. & W. Kranz (1951–2) *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3. vols. Berlin: Weidmann.
FGrH	Jacoby, Felix et al. (1923-) *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden: Brill.
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*. Berlin (1873–)
LSJ	Liddell, H. G. & R. Scott (1996) *A Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th edition, revised and augmented by H. S. Jones, with a revised supplement ed. P. G. W. Glare. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. (1981–1999). Zürich, München, Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler Verlag.
P.Oxy	*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. London. (1898–)
PMich.	*Michigan Papyri* (1931–)
S-M	Snell, B. & H. Maehler (eds.) (1975) *Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis Pars II, Fragmenta. Indices*. Leipzig: Teubner.

Introduction

Emily Wilson's 2017 translation of the *Odyssey* opens with a new take on how to translate *polutropos* in the first line.[1] 'Complicated' perfectly encapsulates Odysseus, not only within the epic poem, but also in the more than two and a half millennia since. This hero is fundamentally a complicated character and as such can be reworked, reshaped, and reinterpreted time and again, while in some way still seeming true to form. Some of his chief characteristics, such as versatility or skill at speaking, mean that he can be moulded to shed light on political traits and ethical issues, and it is the socio-political shaping of Odysseus in the fifth century with which this thesis is primarily concerned.

The Homeric poems have been hugely influential in world literature and have been particularly prominent in the field of reception. Previous studies have been dedicated to the lasting influence of both Odysseus and the *Odyssey*. W.B. Stanford's *The Ulysses Theme* (first edition 1954, second edition 1963) and the later *Quest for Ulysses*, published with J.V. Luce in 1974, examine the popularity of Odysseus/Ulysses in literature from Homer to the twentieth century. Later explorations of the reception of Odysseus include *An Odyssey round Odysseus* by Beaty Rubens and Oliver Taplin (1989) and Piero Boitani's *The Shadow of Ulysses* (1994). More recently, Edith Hall's *The Return of Ulysses* (2008) is a study not of Odysseus but of the *Odyssey*; it explores the poem's reception in literature but also film and other media. In 2018, BBC Culture 'polled experts around the world to nominate up to five fictional stories they felt had shaped mindsets or influenced history'.[2] Of the eventual list of '100 Stories that Shaped the World', Homer's *Odyssey* came top. As this thesis was being completed in 2023, the National Theatre staged a multi-venue musical production of Chris Bush's new version across England, directed by Emily Lim.[3]

The Trojan War was the inspiration for countless fifth-century Athenian tragedies and satyr plays. It was also depicted in civic art in the city centre, for example in the

[1] Wilson (2017) 107.
[2] https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20180521-the-100-stories-that-shaped-the-world [Accessed 19th December 2021].
[3] https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2023/mar/08/travelling-homer-how-the-national-theatre-is-staging-a-multi-city-odyssey [Accessed 24th October 2023].

Stoa Poikile.[4] It was during this time, in democratic Athens, that portrayals of Odysseus underwent the greatest transformation, where he became painted as a much darker character than in the Homeric epics and in what survives of other archaic poetry. Although Odysseus only appears on stage in five extant plays – and is an off-stage presence in two others – the titles and fragments of lost plays suggest he was a frequent character on the fifth-century stage. By the time of the tragedies *Philoctetes* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* in the last decade of the century, he could be portrayed almost unequivocally as a self-seeking villain. This thesis sets out to examine how this transformation was effected in the fifth century and seeks to explain why it happened. Although visual art and other genres, and the cultures of other city-states, are sometimes used to provide comparative illumination, the primary source for my study is Athenian tragedy. Therefore, my overarching research question is 'How and why did the Athenian tragedians of the fifth century transform and complicate the figure of Odysseus?'

After laying out the parameters of the thesis' scope geopolitically, chronologically, thematically, and evidentially, I comment on my method with a brief review of previous scholarship, before concluding this first chapter with an overview of those to come. Other relevant scholarship will also be discussed within the exploration of each parameter.

i. Geopolitical Scope

I have selected fifth-century Athens as the geopolitical focus for my study. The primary evidence examined consists of texts that were produced in Athens between the Cleisthenic reforms of 507 and the end of the fifth century, and that feature Odysseus either as a character or prominent presence. However, it is important to note that there were several fifth-century writers and artists who were neither Athenian nor based in Athens, and who included Odysseus in their work. The only significant non-Athenian inclusion in the thesis is Pindar, discussed in Chapter 3, whose presentation of the judgement for the arms of Achilles between Odysseus and Ajax provides a useful comparison to Athenian sources.

[4] Pausanias 1.15.1–3; see Boedeker (1998) 189.

Other non-Athenian poets also engaged with Odysseus. The Cean poets Simonides and Bacchylides, for example, both feature him in their work. A scholiast on Homer tells us that Simonides' *Prayers* includes the story of Odysseus travelling to Delos to retrieve the Oenotrophoi.[5] Bacchylides focuses on the embassy to the Trojans for the return of Helen in his 15th Dithyramb. Odysseus is mentioned as participating (15.5), although none of his speech survives. Ode 13 may have also contained some material which overlapped with the *Iliad*.[6] Timotheus, a Milesian poet of the late fifth century, wrote a poem entitled *The Madness of Ajax* that may refer to Odysseus' role in the judgement of arms.[7] Some evidence from Aristotle tells us of another of his poems entitled *Scylla*, which features a lament from Odysseus.[8] The Cyclops episode also features in poems by both Timotheus and Philoxenus, a dithyrambic poet from Cythera also active in the late fifth century.[9]

In Sicily, Odysseus was a popular character for the comic poet Epicharmus and featured in several of his plays: *Odysseus the Deserter*, *Odysseus Shipwrecked*, *Sirens*, *Cyclops*, and possibly *Antenor* and *Philoctetes*.[10] A substantial fragment of *Odysseus the Deserter* exists, although its lack of context makes it hard to interpret.[11] Originally, this fragment was thought to be a monologue by Odysseus, who has decided to disobey an order to spy on the Trojans and is instead composing a fictitious report to give back to the Greeks.[12] Stanford, in 1950, asserted defensively that Odysseus is not shown in this fragment to be a coward.[13] However, a papyrus commentary on the play has since come to light that has changed how this fragment is understood.[14] The Oxyrhynchus commentary shows that there is a second actor in conversation with Odysseus.[15] After careful analysis, Willi concludes that the desertion of the title is not the fictional desertion of Odysseus' spying mission to

[5] Schol. Hom. *Od*. 6. 164 = Simon. fr. 537.
[6] Rutherford (2015) 452.
[7] Timoth. fr. 777.
[8] Timoth. fr. 793; Arist. *Poet*. 1454a28, 1461b30.
[9] Timoth. frr. 780–3; Philoxenus frr. 815–24.
[10] Phillips (1959) 63 notes that 'it is obvious that Epicharmos found Odysseus an excellent character where a shrewd and adventurous person was needed to carry out a comic plot, and also a convenient mouthpiece for some of his own opinions'.
[11] Epich. fr. 97.
[12] See Willi (2012) 65–7 with bibliography.
[13] Stanford (1950b) 167–9.
[14] *P. Oxy*. 2429 = Epich. Fr. 98.
[15] Willi (2012) 66.

Troy, but a real desertion.[16] Odysseus seems to have become a Trojan swineherd who runs afoul of his neighbour for losing a pig (frr. 97 and 99).[17] Willi demonstrates how Epicharmus subverts epic style in both language and plot and creates an 'anti-hero' out of Odysseus, who thus becomes relatable to a Syracusan audience.[18]

Interest in Odysseus and his exploits was, therefore, not limited to Athens, and we must bear in mind that these non-Athenian poems and plays may have influenced Athenian writers. However, we have a greater wealth of evidence for Athenian adaptations of stories featuring Odysseus, and we also have more evidence for the context in which these Athenian texts were performed. For this reason, I have chosen to limit my geopolitical scope to Athens, excepting the inclusion of Pindar in Chapter 3 and brief mention of Epicharmus' *Cyclops* in Chapter 6.

ii. Chronological Scope

I have taken the end of the fifth century as my cut-off point, because the complexities of the evolving ways in which Odysseus is discussed in fourth-century rhetoric and philosophy (Isocrates, Alcidamas, Xenophon's Socratic works and *Anabasis*, Plato's *Republic* and *Hippias*, Aristotle's *Poetics* and fragments, and the early Stoics) have already received more scholarly attention than those of the fifth, but also deserve a further substantial and separate study. The fifth century is my chosen period since in Athens this was the era of its empire and the early days of its democratic experiment, and it is enlightening to explore how writers and thinkers responded to these new circumstances. Furthermore, the fifth century is the first time period for which we have enough material to engage deeply with the reception of Homer and other Epic Cycle poems.

To fully understand the reception of Odysseus in the fifth century, we must consider the mythological traditions in which he featured. Focusing solely on the Homeric Odysseus gives an incomplete picture, especially when thinking of the fifth century, in which many retellings of Odysseus' exploits derive their material from outside the Homeric poems. Therefore, I will briefly discuss the state of the Epic Cycle leading up to the fifth century, Odysseus' place within it, and finally how both Cyclic and

[16] Willi (2012) 69.
[17] Willi (2012) 70.
[18] Willi (2012) 71.

Homeric material circulated prior to and during the fifth century, particularly through rhapsodic performance and lyric poetry.

The 'Epic Cycle' refers to a collection of epic poems that together present a relatively coherent story of the full Trojan War and the history of Thebes. Untangling the origins, inspirations, dates, and authors for these various poems is complex and a source of great debate. My aim here is not to dive into the thorny issues of Homeric or Cyclic authorship or methods of composition, on which many others have written. For the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to Homer as the poet of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and for the Cyclic poems simply to 'the poet of the *Cypria*', etc.

Some scholarly work on the Epic Cycle has been immensely useful. Davies' *The Greek Epic Cycle* (first edition 1989, second edition 2001) and Burgess' *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle* (2001) both provide thorough overviews of the poems, as well as their transmission and formation. The collection edited by Fantuzzi and Tsagalis, *The Greek Epic Cycle and its Ancient Reception* (2015), covers all aspects of the Epic Cycle and includes studies of each poem, as well as chapters on how the Cycle was adapted by lyric poets, tragedians, and others.

Burgess is convincing in his analysis of how and when the poems of the Epic Cycle were created and later edited.[19] He suggests that the poems were created independently of each other and were probably first recorded in writing by the beginning of the classical period.[20] However, rhapsodes 'may have prefigured an editorial manufacture of the Epic Cycle by joining together song performances from different epics'.[21] Finally, in the Hellenistic period, the Cycle itself was constructed from these various poems, with parts of the poems probably cropped and shortened so that they fitted together, though not always smoothly.[22] This means that in the fifth century, there was no coherent 'Epic Cycle' but a number of separate poems that

[19] Burgess (2001).
[20] Burgess (2001) 13; West (2015) 101 suggests a complete Trojan Cycle, though not necessarily forming a set or series, was current by 520.
[21] Burgess (2001) 13. See also Fantuzzi and Tsagalis (2015b) 4.
[22] Burgess (2001) 15–33.

each narrated different parts of the Trojan War, possibly with substantial amounts of repeated material or different versions of the same episodes.[23]

We can tell from fifth-century evidence not only that many stories about the Trojan War existed outside the Homeric poems, but also that they were popular.[24] Thorough examination of evidence from archaic art has shown a lack of influence from the Homeric poems until relatively late in this period.[25] Most representations are drawn from non-Homeric sources like the Epic Cycle. These poems had a much broader scale than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and were not focused on a single time period or character. It is even possible that some of the Epic Cycle poems in their original form narrated the whole Trojan War but were later slimmed down when fitted together.[26] These poems merely chronicled events, rather than expanding on individual episodes.[27] This wider scope and brevity meant that a vast array of episodes and stories circulated from around the start of the sixth century. The quantity and popularity of Epic Cycle stories make the Cycle a crucial source for any discussion of the mythological tradition of the fifth century.

The Epic Cycle is also critical in the case of Odysseus, since many Epic Cycle episodes in which he featured were adapted by tragedians. Fifth-century tragedians, when dealing not just with Odysseus but with the whole Trojan War, took their source material much more from the Epic Cycle poems than they did from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[28] It is essential, therefore, to trace the origins of some of these non-Homeric Odyssean themes and the means by which they were preserved and performed, in order to understand their influence in the fifth century.

The main source for the Epic Cycle is Proclus' prose summary, preserved in a tenth-century AD manuscript. The text is very late, which is problematic because the poems must have undergone various transformations and changes between their earliest conceptions and the summary recorded by Proclus. However, Proclus is

[23] Even in the fourth century, Aristotle's discussion of non-Homeric epic poems does not seem to indicate that they formed a connected cycle, *Poet*. 1459b; see Burgess (2001) 15.
[24] Davies (2001) 10, for example, states that what Homer left out clearly appealed to a substantial number of Greeks.
[25] Burkert (1987) 46; Shapiro (1992) 73; Snodgrass (1998) 141; Burgess (2001) 35 and 89–95; Muellner (2012) 197; Carpenter (2015).
[26] Burgess (2001) 21–5.
[27] See esp. Arist. *Poet*. 1459a–b.
[28] See Fantuzzi (2015) 406–7 and Sommerstein (2015) 461–86, esp. 482–5 where he lists all plays based on the Cyclic Epics.

generally regarded as being a reliable source for the Epic Cycle and probably depended on a much earlier source.[29] Proclus' work is supplemented by Apollodorus' *Epitome*, which often echoes Proclus but also contains additional details.[30] However, Apollodorus is not solely summarising lost epics and sometimes switches from one source to another without notice; his text must therefore be used cautiously.[31] We possess few fragments of the poems themselves, and reconstructing them beyond a simple list of episodes can be difficult. Nevertheless, some testimonia and fragments allow analysis of how the Cyclic poems presented some of the episodes. The relevant fragments and testimonia will be discussed within each chapter, but here I will discuss some overall points which can be made about Odysseus in the Epic Cycle.

In the Cyclic poems, Odysseus is one of the most frequently mentioned heroes and plays a variety of roles, from recruiter to murderer, purifier to spy. Clearly, his versatility and skills were important features of his characterisation from early in the tradition. The following table details the episodes featuring Odysseus and the Epic Cycle text in which they primarily feature, although, as already discussed, some episodes may have featured in more than one poem.

Cypria	Feigned madness Recruitment of Achilles Sacrifice of Iphigenia Embassy to Trojans for return of Helen Murder of Palamedes Death of Polyxena (?)
Aethiopis	Purification of Achilles after murder of Thersites Death of Achilles, Odysseus and Ajax carry the body and repel the Trojans Ajax's suicide (?)
Little Iliad	Judgement of arms Capture of Helenus Retrieval of Philoctetes Retrieval of Neoptolemus Entry into Troy in disguise, making agreement with Helen Entry into Troy with Diomedes to capture Palladium Creation of Trojan Horse, persuasion of soldiers to get inside
Iliou Persis	Trojan Horse Deaths of Astyanax and Polyxena

[29] Davies (2001) 7; West (2015) 105.
[30] Davies (2001) 7.
[31] Davies (2001) 7.

Telegony	Journey to the Thesprotians
	Death at hands of Telegonus

The *Little Iliad* is the most important of the Epic Cycle poems for a discussion of Odysseus because he features heavily in many of the events that this poem relates. From the death of Achilles to the sack of Troy, it is Odysseus who influences most of the action and becomes the main hero. Kelly observes that the focus on ambush and secret missions in the *Little Iliad*, combined with Odysseus' involvement in everything that happens, suggests that this poem was intended to be favourable to Odysseus.[32] Furthermore, he posits the possibility that the poet is reacting against other negative treatment of Odysseus, perhaps from the *Iliou Persis*, in which the Greeks as a whole are treated unsympathetically.[33] Aristotle comments that several tragedies were made out of the *Little Iliad* (*Poet*. 1459b) and particularly notes that the *Cypria* and *Little Iliad* inspired many more tragedies than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The bibliography on Homer is vast, and the presentation of Odysseus has been frequently discussed. It is important to note here, though, that others have recognised the uniqueness of Odysseus, particularly in the *Iliad*, in both the way he is described and the way he behaves.[34] If we add to this Odysseus' prominence throughout the whole Epic Cycle, including the centrality of his character to two full poems, the *Odyssey* and the *Telegony*, and the coincidence of the end of the age of heroes with the death of Odysseus, we can see that he was a central figure in the late archaic Greek imagination.

Next, we must consider how epic material spread through the Greek world. One key avenue was through the performance of rhapsodes. Just as for the Epic Cycle, the evidence is frustratingly limited for rhapsodic performance. We know that rhapsodes performed at the Great Panathenaea festival in Athens, but the precise content of these performances is unknown. Rhapsodic contests may have been added to the Panathenaea in 566, when the festival was expanded to include various poetic and

[32] Kelly (2015b) 324; see also Holt (1992) 327–9.
[33] Kelly (2015b) 324 n. 36. On the negative portrayal of the Greeks in the *Iliou Persis*, see also Finglass (2015) 353.
[34] Stanford (1963) 66–80 notes that Homer distinguished Odysseus by slight deviations from the norm in almost every heroic feature, such as ancestry and physique; see also Rutherford (1986) 149. Pache's excellent article (2000) stresses the significance of Odysseus being the only hero who does not cry in the *Iliad* and the only one who smiles at an enemy.

musical competitions.[35] The Homeric poems as well as other cyclic epics were probably included.[36] It is likely that self-contained episodes from epics were performed rather than an entire epic poem.[37] Aelian describes 'the ancients' singing verses of Homer which each had particular names, such as the funeral games for Patroclus, the foot-washing, and the death of the suitors (*VH* 13.14).

Two sources mention the reorganisation of rhapsodic recitation at the Panathenaea by either Hipparchus or Solon, in what has been labelled the 'Panathenaic rule':

> Τά τε Ὁμήρου ἐξ ὑποβολῆς γέγραφε ῥαψῳδεῖσθαι, οἷον ὅπου ὁ πρῶτος ἔληξεν, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεσθαι τὸν ἐχόμενον.
>
> Diogenes Laertius 1.57
>
> He [Solon] has provided that the public recitations of Homer shall follow in fixed order: thus the second reciter must begin from the place where the first left off.

> τὰ Ὁμήρου ἔπη πρῶτος ἐκόμισεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταυτηνί, καὶ ἠνάγκασε τοὺς ῥαψῳδοὺς Παναθηναίοις ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς αὐτὰ διιέναι, ὥσπερ νῦν ἔτι οἵδε ποιοῦσι
>
> [Plato] *Hipparch*. 228b7–c1
>
> [Hipparchus] first brought the poems of Homer into this country of ours, and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to recite them in relay, one man following on another, as they still do now.

Some have taken this to mean that rhapsodes were only allowed to perform Homer and that the poems had to be performed in full. However, Burgess states that both sources for the 'Panathenaic rule' suggest no more than that performers had to follow on from one another in a narrative sense, not that their passages had to be joined together.[38] Similarly, Tsagalis suggests that the rule merely reformed a practice in which only some favourite episodes were performed in a random order, regardless of what the previous rhapsode had recited.[39] As has been pointed out by others, the

[35] Shapiro (1993) 103; Tsagalis (2018) 46.
[36] Burgess (2004) 7–8; Tsagalis (2018) 47.
[37] Tsagalis (2018) 50.
[38] Burgess (2004) 10–2.
[39] Tsagalis (2018) 51–2.

Homeric poems are simply too long to have been performed in a single day at the festival.[40]

Nevertheless, the 'Panathenaic rule' does seem to have raised the status of the Homeric poems above the other Trojan War poems of the time. Lycurgus also refers to a law which said that, at the Panathenaea, Homer alone of all the poets should have his works performed (*Leoc*. 102), although it is unclear whether this meant only the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, since other Cyclic poems were at times attributed to Homer.[41] The favourite status of Homer in the archaic period did not, however, signal the decline in influence of the Cyclic poems. On the contrary, we can see that they had a large impact in the fifth century, based on both artistic and literary evidence. The stories outside those narrated by Homer still captured the imagination, especially of tragedians, who clearly preferred to adapt the more flexible Cyclic stories rather than the canonical Homeric episodes.

Rhapsodes may have performed Epic Cycle material at other festivals throughout Greece, possibly alongside excerpts from Homer.[42] The *locus classicus* for the itinerant competitive rhapsode in this era is Ion in Plato's *Ion*, who comes from Ephesus but has just won the competition at an Epidaurian festival. As Burgess suggests, in the fifth century 'we might well imagine that there were thousands of poets of varying skills and success through the ancient Greek world who sang of the Trojan War'.[43] Similarly, Tsagalis states that itinerant rhapsodes reciting epic at festivals was 'the standard picture on a local, regional, and panhellenic level'.[44]

It is important also to consider the political contexts in which this epic material was performed. Rhapsodic performances were used by tyrants of the sixth century to further their own political agendas. This could be done either by banning or endorsing certain epics. For example, Cleisthenes, the tyrant of Sicyon who ruled from 600–560, banned Theban and Trojan epic from being performed in his city because of his anti-Argive policies (Hdt. 5.67).[45] On the other hand, the Peisistratids,

[40] Burkert (1987) 49; Dowden (1996) 51; Burgess (2004) 8; Fantuzzi and Tsagalis (2015b) 15; *contra* West (2010) 3, who maintains that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were recited 'in their entirety' at the Great Panathenaea.
[41] Tsagalis (2018) 52.
[42] Shapiro (1992) 70; West (2010) 7.
[43] Burgess (2001) 12–3.
[44] Tsagalis (2018) 66.
[45] Tsagalis (2018) 60–2.

who claimed descent from Nestor, endorsed epic performances in Athens.[46] The large public festivals at which epic material was recited provided a good arena for political self-promotion.[47]

Finally, there are several ways in which traditional stories may have been spread and preserved beyond bardic performances, including other verse genres, nonprofessional and unmetrical renderings, folktales, and artistic representations.[48] Although by the start of the fifth century the Homeric poems had probably begun to become standardised and fixed, there was nevertheless substantial other material that existed in a more fluid and multiform fashion, which was open to the interpretation and innovation of fifth-century poets and artists.

A significant channel in the transmission of mythological material is early lyric poetry. We know that both Stesichorus and Ibycus developed epic material in their poems, including Cyclic material.[49] A few surviving fragments of Stesichorus explicitly mention Odysseus and, as he also composed an *Iliou Persis* and a *Nostoi*, it is likely that Odysseus featured elsewhere in his work.[50] Some fragments even quote the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* verbatim.[51] We can see that there were various outlets for Trojan War myths and several ways in which this material could be adapted and then circulated to a wider audience. Burkert sees the emergence of rhapsodes and the 'Panathenaic rule' as a direct response to the popularity of Stesichorean poetry, which provided a new and exciting method of performance for epic material.[52] He proposes that professional Stesichorean choruses, whose repertoire would have included both Homeric and Cyclic content, performed throughout Greece.[53] Whether this was the case or not, lyric poetry was certainly an important mode through which epic material was adapted and performed – and therefore spread – throughout the Greek world.[54] Lyric poetry, of course, continued in the fifth century with poets such as Pindar and Bacchylides, who also adapted Cyclic material.

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[46] Tsagalis (2018) 48.
[47] Tsagalis (2018) 67.
[48] Burgess (2001) 4.
[49] On Stesichorus and Ibycus, see Noussia-Fantuzzi (2015).
[50] In fr. 209 Helen discusses Odysseus with Telemachus, which seems to quote *Od*. 15.68 and 168. Fr. 225 describes Odysseus' shield. *Iliou Persis:* frr. 196–205, S 88–143; *Nostoi:* frr. 208–9.
[51] Burkert (1987) 50.
[52] Burkert (1987) 53.
[53] Burkert (1987) 52.
[54] See Finglass (2018) for a discussion of Stesichorus' influence on tragedy.

Overall, then, we have seen what Epic Cycle material was known at the start of the fifth century, including episodes featuring Odysseus. We have also seen how both Homeric and Cyclic material was circulated by rhapsodes and other performers in Greece at this time, which is important context when we start to look at how poets and dramatists built on and responded to this material in the fifth century.

iii. Thematic Scope

My primary thematic focus is the ethical and political presentation of Odysseus. The main concerns of this thesis amplify previous scholarship by asking the following questions: How did Athenian writers of the fifth century reimagine and reinterpret the stories that came down to them in which Odysseus appeared, to make them more resonant in their own time? How is he viewed from both a democratic and imperial perspective, and how does this affect the reception of epic episodes in which he featured? To what extent could it be said that in the character of Odysseus, fifth-century Athenian writers had a figure through whom they could explore the widest range of contemporary moral and political concerns?

To achieve precision in finding answers to these questions, it is important to establish what we mean by 'politics' in Greek tragedy, and its relationship to the Athenian democracy. As Carter rightly stresses, anyone attempting to study the 'political' in Greek tragedy must begin with a working definition of 'political'.[55] His own working definition of 'a concern with human beings as part of the community of the *polis*' is succinct and useful.[56] For this study, I am chiefly concerned with how Odysseus relates to the leadership of the *polis* and how he participates in certain civic institutions such as trials, voting, and assemblies. It is important to remember, however, that Athens of the fifth century was not just a democracy but also an imperial power. Before the performance of tragedy at the City Dionysia, tribute money from the Athenian empire was paraded in the theatre, at least by the time of the Peloponnesian War. This imperial element is also significant and under-recognised in presentations of Odysseus. In the Epic Cycle and tragedy, Odysseus is involved in the recruitment and retrieval of several heroes who are crucial to the Greek success at Troy, namely Achilles, Philoctetes, and Neoptolemus. This

[55] Carter (2007) 64.
[56] Carter (2007) 67.

recruiting role is particularly pertinent in the fifth century, as is the wartime setting of plays featuring Odysseus, especially during the Peloponnesian War. While Odysseus' rhetorical capabilities are relevant to the democratic context of the plays, his role as the pragmatic henchman of the allied Greek force's leaders is equally relevant to Athens' foreign policy.

Furthermore, Odysseus is an islander and comes from a region of Greece which, in the fifth century, was under Athenian imperial control despite physically being much closer to the Peloponnese.[57] Odysseus was not an Athenian hero; indeed, he seems to have had a hero cult in Sparta, as well as a select few cities which claimed him as their founder.[58] In *Dance of the Islands: Insularity, Networks, the Athenian Empire, and the Aegean World* (2007), Christy Constantakopoulou has shown that in the fifth century islands were considered the natural subjects of their empire by the Athenians and particularly by Thucydides. Furthermore, there was in Athens a contempt for islanders and island life which found expression in tragedy.[59] When discussing tragedy, scholars often associate the Greek force at Troy with Athens, but at times the Peloponnesian background of its two leaders is emphasised. This is relevant to the presentation of Odysseus since he is frequently portrayed as the right-hand man of the Peloponnesian Atridae (see esp. Aesch. *Ag*. 841–2). In addition, Odysseus is often called the son of Sisyphus in tragedy, thus linking him with the mythical king of Corinth, another of Athens' fifth-century enemies.

It is impossible for us to fully to reconstruct the political and ethical views of the original writers or their audience, which in any case will not have been uniform. However, we can still trace the debates they instigated, particularly regarding the democracy that existed around them; Odysseus was one key figure who provided a vehicle for various debates. Furthermore, we can only draw conclusions from the issues raised if we understand the historical context in which they were produced. For example, Odysseus' argument in Euripides' *Hecuba* that Polyxena must be killed to appease Achilles (309–10) would look different in a society that practised child

[57] Hall (2018a) 118. In 431 Athens won over the island of Cephallenia without having to fight a battle (Thuc. 2.30). Thucydides later states that Cephallenia, along with other Peloponnesian islands, joined the Athenian expedition to Sicily in 415 as independent powers, although he notes that since Athens commanded the sea, as islanders they had little choice (7.57.7).
[58] Hall (2008b) 37. On hero cult, see Farnell (1921) 326 and von den Hoff (2009) 57.
[59] Constantakopoulou (2007) 106–10.

sacrifice, as opposed to one in which it was strictly forbidden. Therefore, by looking at how some of the issues raised in the literary material relate to the real-life experiences of society, we will be better placed to understand how the audience may have reacted.

Discussions surrounding tragedy's political nature, its place in the ideology of Athens, and whether it reflects democratic concerns and views, have continued for several decades.[60] Most scholars agree that tragedy does not refer to any specific historical events or figures; many attempts to find such connections have been widely discredited.[61] The question of whether tragedy was political – and if so, to what extent it was democratic – has been more contentious. There is a general consensus that tragedy does have a political character and cannot be seen purely as art which bears no relation to its contemporary context.[62] Furthermore, scholars tend to agree that although tragedy mostly depicts mythological events in the distant heroic past, poets introduce various anachronisms and contemporary allusions to stimulate contemplation about civic, or political, concerns in an indirect way.[63] However, the extent to which these concerns were specifically *democratic* is the subject of continued debate.

The ancient Greeks themselves saw a link between tragedy and democracy.[64] The most famous example is Aristophanes' *Frogs*, which repeatedly puts forward the idea

[60] See e.g. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988); Goldhill (1987) and (2000); Gregory (1991); Meier (1993); Croally (1994); Goff (1995); Hall (1996) and (2006); Cartledge (1997); Pelling (1997); Saïd (1998); Griffin (1998) and (1999); Seaford (2000); Carey (2003); Rhodes (2003); Carter (2004) and (2007); Boedeker and Raaflaub (2005); Debnar (2005); Finkelberg (2006); Henderson (2007); Mastronarde (2010); Rosenbloom (2012); Allan and Kelly (2013); Flaig (2013); Giannotti (2019); Mills (2020). See also edited volumes on this topic: *Nothing to do with Dionysos?* (1990); *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis* (1993); *History, Tragedy, Theory* (1995); *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (1997); *Why Athens? A Reappraisal of Tragic Politics* (2011). Although now slightly out-of-date, Saïd's summary (1998) 277–84 of various approaches to the definition of 'politics' and 'political' when thinking about tragedy is useful.

[61] Hall (1990) 71; Gregory (1991) 6; Goff (1995) 20; Pelling (1997) 216; Saïd (1998) 279; Boedeker and Raaflaub (2005) 123; Carter (2007) 22 and 158; Burian (2011) 95.

[62] However, as Finkelberg (2006) 17 cautions, we must not go too far in the opposite direction and deny the literary dimensions of tragedy.

[63] Barlow (1986) 4–5; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988) 7, 24, 26 and 33; Hall (1990) 72; Raaflaub (1990) 49; Gregory (1991) 7; Cartledge (1997) 19; Boedeker (1998) 191; Seaford (2000) 35; Carey (2003) 486 and 496; Beer (2004) 3; Carter (2004) 2 and (2007) 84; Boedeker and Raaflaub (2005) 123; Flaig (2013) 89; Fantuzzi (2020a) 421; Mills (2020) 48.

[64] See e.g. Hall (1996) 287, who states that 'the understanding of Greek tragedy as a document of the Athenian civic imagination, undetachable from the historical, topographical, and political contexts of its original production and performance' is taken for granted in 'almost every text where tragedy is discussed or quoted in fifth- and fourth-century Athens'.

that a tragedian is the 'moral and political educator of his community'.[65] Furthermore, Cleon criticises the assembly during the Mytilenean debate, calling them 'spectators' of speeches (θεαταί, 3.38.4, 7) – a theatrical metaphor.[66] As part of his criticism of tragedy, Plato calls it a kind of public speech (*Grg*. 502b–d) and suggests that tragic poets only aim to please the *dēmos* (*Grg*. 502c, *Resp*. X.602b).[67] Elsewhere, he lists the theatre among other public meeting places, such as the assembly or law courts, as an example of where sophists may educate people (*Resp*. VI.492b–c).[68] Furthermore, Aristotle (*Poet.* 1450b6–7) and Dio Chrysostom (*Or*. 52.11, 14) also refer to the political nature of speeches in fifth-century tragedy.[69]

There are also several ways in which drama in Athens was closely tied to the democracy. Tragedy was controlled by the political authorities, particularly for performance at the Dionysia festival. Moreover, this festival was one of Athens' most spectacular and expensive undertakings and involved a significant number of people taking part in the organisation.[70] One of the nine Archons was responsible for selecting which three playwrights would perform at the Dionysia. He also selected the *chorēgoi* who would fund each production and assigned a principal actor to each playwright.[71] Vernant suggests that we should see tragedy not only as an art form but a social institution that the city set up alongside its political and legal institutions.[72]

Moreover, it must always be borne in mind that the democracy in Athens affected the everyday lives of its citizens, who served in political offices, on councils, as jurors in law courts, and attended assembly debates.[73] Thus, Fantuzzi argues that we should see tragic performances as 'an essential complement to everyday routine, which regularly included debates in the *ekklêsia* or the *boulê*'.[74] We know that Sophocles

[65] Raaflaub (1990) 49. See e.g. *Ran*. 1008–10, 1030–6, 1053–6, 1418–21, 1500–3. However, we should note, as Carter (2011b) 64 stresses, that at 1010 Euripides states a poet should be admired for making people better members of their cities (plural).
[66] Cartledge (1997) 20; Halliwell (1997) 122.
[67] Saïd (1998) 277. Elsewhere, Plato coins the term '*theatrokratia*' to refer to the dictatorship of the mass Athenian audience (*Leg*. III.701a); see Cartledge (1997) 9.
[68] Cartledge (1997) 9.
[69] Saïd (1998) 277.
[70] Henderson (2007) 180.
[71] Gregory (1991) 5; Croally (1994) 2; Cartledge (1997) 18; Saïd (1998) 275–6; Flaig (2013) 76–7.
[72] Vernant and Vidal Naquet (1988) 32–3; Carter (2007) 19. The festivals of Athens are also referred to as civic; see e.g. Pelling (1997) 213; Flaig (2013) 76.
[73] Raaflaub (1990) 34. See also Raaflaub (1998) 20–1 on the large number of citizens involved in the running of Athens and its empire.
[74] Fantuzzi (2020a) 420–1. See also Ober and Strauss (1990) on the interplay between political and tragic rhetoric.

himself served in political office, and there is even a suggestion recorded in the ancient hypothesis to *Antigone* that he was elected as general because of the success of this play.[75] Aeschylus and Euripides, too, may have at least had a turn on the council or in a jury given that they each lived long lives.

We will here examine a small selection of recent scholarship on the politics of Greek tragedy, particularly surrounding the debate around the influence of democracy on tragedy. On the festival setting of the plays, Goldhill's 1987 article, 'The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology', remains an influential study. Many others have responded to and advanced his argument, although his approach is not without its critics. Griffin, Rhodes, and Carter have all critiqued Goldhill's conclusions in different ways and with different levels of success. Goldhill's argument is that the pre-play ceremonies performed at the Great Dionysia, at least in the last third of the fifth century, were assertions of the power of the Athenian democratic *polis*.[76] Furthermore, he claims the tragedies that were staged questioned the democratic ideology put forward in these pre-play ceremonials.[77] It is important to be mindful of these festival rituals as they were the immediate context for the tragedies that were performed, at least from the 420s onwards. As we will see, however, some later critics have shown how some of Goldhill's points are applicable to more than just Athens and Athenian ideology.

Griffin is one of the staunchest opponents of the historicising trend in tragedy scholarship. In his 1998 article 'The Social Function of Attic Tragedy', and also in 'Sophocles and the Democratic City' (1999), he disagrees with earlier claims regarding the intention of creating social cohesion through tragedy and also with the concept of the audience of tragedy forming a collective. He is certainly right to suggest that politics is just one element of tragedy, to be considered alongside other elements such as intense emotion or religion.[78] He also does not deny that some plays have an important political element, although he dismissively suggests such plays are mere propaganda, which in his view explains their apparent unpopularity.[79]

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[75] Hyp. *Ant*. 1.
[76] On the pre-play ceremonies, see Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 58–9. For a recent reassessment of all the available evidence for each ceremony, see Giannotti (2019).
[77] Goldhill (1987) 68.
[78] Griffin (1999) 92.
[79] Griffin (1998) 48.

However, he implies that plays cannot have any relation to politics unless they contain explicitly pro-Athenian propaganda.[80] Griffin's definition of 'political' is too limited and overlooks many instances of anachronism in tragedy which demand further explanation. Many plays contain contemporary terminology, or even examples of fifth-century Athenian democratic political institutions, such as law courts, which should ordinarily have no business being used in mythological stories set in the distant past. Furthermore, he seems to ignore the connections which the Greeks themselves saw between tragedy and democracy (see above). Instead of the monochrome concept of 'political' and 'non-political' plays which he employs, we can see that many tragedies show various degrees of influence from the contemporary Athenocentric attitude to the world.

Regarding Goldhill's proposal, Griffin states that it is difficult to argue from the character of part of a festival to that of the whole festival.[81] Furthermore, he disagrees that the festival occasion was specifically democratic, citing its origin under tyrants in the sixth century and its continuation after the end of democracy.[82] However, this is not in itself a convincing argument as we need not imagine that nothing changed at the festival in that entire period. It is possible, and indeed likely, that many elements of the festival changed over time. Similarly, Rhodes in his 2003 article, 'Nothing to Do with Democracy: Athenian Drama and the *Polis*', refers to tragedy's original invention under the regime of the tyrant Peisistratus.[83] Again, even though tragedy originated before democracy, and was therefore not a democratic invention, this does not mean that it could not have changed at all once democracy was instituted. As discussed above, the democracy certainly had a strong influence on which tragedies were performed at the Dionysia each year.

Griffin, Rhodes, and Carter do, however, have legitimate concerns about Goldhill's argument that the Dionysia festival was democratic in nature and that this in turn makes the tragedies performed there democratic in their questioning of democratic

[80] See also the criticism of Griffin's view in Allan and Kelly (2013) 81.
[81] Griffin (1998) 47. See also Rosenbloom (2012) 273, who argues that it is insufficient and misleading to argue that drama is, or is not, 'political' from the inferred aims of the Dionysia ceremonies.
[82] Griffin (1998) 47. The origins of the Dionysia remain unclear. Cartledge (1997) 23, for example, states that there is much to be said for the view that the Dionysia did not become formalised as a theatre festival of tragic (and satyric) drama until around 500, thus making it a strictly democratic creation.
[83] Rhodes (2003) 106.

ideology. I think Rhodes and Carter put forward the more convincing case as they discuss in detail the fact that the pre-play ceremonies themselves are not distinctively democratic and also that some of the ideas Goldhill presumes are symptomatic of a democracy were held elsewhere, including in other democracies.[84]

My focus on Athenian material has emerged chiefly because most of the surviving evidence for Greek tragedy was produced in and first performed at Athens. This provides a useful geopolitical boundary for my research area. This is not to suggest that all the issues raised in the tragedies and other material here discussed are unique to Athens. Odysseus was a Trojan War hero known by all Greeks, and I am sure that his nature was a subject for debate elsewhere in the Greek world. Indeed, we have already seen that he featured in non-Athenian literature. The place of deception in politics and warfare, for example, is clearly an issue of much wider application and can be found elsewhere. In Thucydides, for instance, we see the Spartan commander Brasidas arguing against deception (4.86.6), although, just like the Athenians, the Spartans are still found to use deception in battles (5.6–11). Most concerns about leadership are also universal. However, some of the fifth-century adaptations discussed in this thesis engage with issues and concerns which would be far less relevant outside a democracy. In particular, issues related to law courts, committees, and councils, such as manipulative rhetoric, vote tampering, and the use of the courts to remove political rivals, were a major concern to the entire cross-class citizenry in Athens. Furthermore, although assemblies existed outside Athens, the rise of demagogues was largely an Athenian phenomenon. Thus, the plays which present Odysseus in the guise of a contemporary demagogue are also more Athenocentric.

We must bear in mind, as Carter stresses, that tragedies performed at the City Dionysia had a wider audience than Athenians only.[85] This international audience, he argues, encouraged playwrights to make their messages universal.[86] Furthermore, and importantly for one of the strands of this thesis, he argues that the Dionysia was

[84] Rhodes (2003) 106; Carter (2004) 13. See also Giannotti's analysis (2019) of the ceremonies, which shows that some were performed elsewhere in the Greek world.
[85] Carter (2004) 18–9 and (2007) 41. Some also suggest the presence of non-citizen Athenians in the audience, such as metics, slaves, and women. For further discussion, see Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 263–5; Gregory (1991) 5; Meier (1993) 58–9; Croally (1994) 4; Goldhill (1997); Boedeker and Raaflaub (2005) 112; Carter (2007) 48 and (2011b) 49–54; Henderson (2007) 183; Mastronarde (2010) 16 and 21; Roselli (2011).
[86] Carter (2004) 19; see also Giannotti (2019) 227.

an imperial display far more than it was a democratic one; one which aimed to promote Athens among other Greek *poleis*.[87] Tragedy was also performed in other settings outside the City Dionysia, such as the Lenaea festival, which was not an international festival but featured only an Athenian audience.[88] We also know that tragedy was performed in rural festivals, such as the Rural Dionysia, which did not share the pre-play ceremonies of the City Dionysia.[89] Therefore, we must be mindful that the ceremonies Goldhill discusses were only relevant to certain performances of tragedy. On the other hand, it is still significant that at their grandest, most international festival, the Athenians chose to refer to their imperial power before the performances of tragedy.

Athenian tragedy was performed in other locations, for example Sicily and Macedon. Some tragedies were also composed for performance outside Athens, such as Aeschylus' *Women of Etna* and Euripides' *Andromache*.[90] Consequently, tragedy must have been something with a wide appeal and not merely democratic propaganda. However, that tragedy was performed outside Athens is again not an argument that it was completely independent from a democratic context; rather, it merely reminds us that tragedy was not *exclusively* democratic in focus.[91] Athens did seem to be the centre of tragedy in the Greek world, with non-Athenian dramatists going there to compete at the Dionysia.[92] Plato, for instance, has Laches remark that anyone aspiring to be a dramatist goes to Athens (*Lach*. 183a–b).[93]

We must also remember that tragedies were written for competition and the judges were influenced by how much applause each play received.[94] Therefore, plays needed to appeal to the majority in the audience; a play which too overtly attacked the views of its audience members was not likely to do well.[95] Thus Plato complains

[87] Carter (2004) 11 and (2007) 17; see also Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 58.
[88] Cartledge (1997) 8; Finkelberg (2006) 18.
[89] Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 43–52; Meier (1993) 61; Cartledge (1997) 6; Finkelberg (2006) 18–9; Carter (2011b) 45.
[90] Hall (2006) 198; Duncan (2011).
[91] *Contra* Griffin (1998) 60; see also Rosenbloom (2012) 294–5, who argues against Griffin's point.
[92] Henderson (2007) 179–80; Allan and Kelly (2013) 113.
[93] Hall (1996) 304.
[94] See e.g. Pl. *Leg*. II.659a–c; Andoc. *Against Alcibiades* 20; Ael. *VH* 2.13. Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 97; Csapo and Slater (1995) 160 and 163–4; Hall (2018a) 119.
[95] Although this could help explain why Euripides came first only four times, since his plays often seem more critical of contemporary Athens and its politics; even the pro-Athenian *Suppliants* contains a lengthy anti-democratic argument from the Theban herald, although it is cast in a profoundly negative light. See Debnar (2005) 16 who, referring mainly to Euripides' *Suppliants*,

that tragedy has a tendency to confirm and reinforce society's values (*Resp*. X.605d–606b).[96] However, this fact does not mean that plays had to have a single message which appealed to all. Mills puts forward a convincing case that tragedy could refer to political ideas while at the same time giving less politically-minded members of the audience an entertaining spectacle to watch.[97] In this, she follows the work of Revermann, who stresses the varying competence of theatre audiences and concludes that plays were designed, and had to be designed, to appeal to all segments of the stratified audiences by whom the plays were evaluated.[98] Others have also stressed the 'polyphonic' nature of tragedy and that audience responses were not homogeneous and spectators would have been affected by their own opinions, presuppositions, and prejudices.[99]

The most measured exploration of all these issues comes in Carter's 2007 book, *The Politics of Greek Tragedy*. He provides a clear and concise assessment of the main schools of thought on politics in Greek tragedy, as well as some sensible recommendations and warnings for anyone attempting their own work on the issue.[100] Most importantly, he accepts that there is no unifying theory that can be discovered to explain all the manifestations of politics in Greek tragedy, since different tragedies are political in different ways.[101] This last point is particularly important as scholars sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that all Athenian tragedians approached political problems in the same way, using tragedy either to endorse or criticise democratic ideology.[102]

Furthermore, we must always consider that we possess such a small fraction of the output of the three major fifth-century tragedians and even less of all the 'minor'

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questions whether by raising the audience's emotional investment, the powerful contemporary references could have counted against Euripides when first prize was awarded.

[96] Mills (2012) 25; see also Pelling (1997) 219 and Kelly (2015a) 66–7.

[97] Mills (2012) 24; this is also her approach in (2020).

[98] Revermann (2006) 104 and 115.

[99] Goldhill (1987) 69; Gregory (1991) 6; Pelling (1997) 214 and 220; Finkelberg (2006) 24; Burian (2011) 117; Allan and Kelly (2013) 88–9 and 92.

[100] Chapter 2 assesses the merits and limits of six different approaches to the political in Greek tragedy.

[101] Carter (2007) 63–4; 68–73 details three ways in which tragedies can be political; 84–9 also shows how plays set in a mythic monarchical past can be brought politically closer to the present. See also Carey (2003) 501 who cautions against treating tragedy as a coherent body of literature, pointing out differences between tragedians but also the variety within the work of a single tragedian.

[102] See also Saïd (1998) 284 on these two opposing views.

tragedians whose plays were also performed at the Dionysia. As Goff points out, it is only through chance that one manuscript has been preserved containing three of Euripides' more 'explicitly Athenian' plays (*Suppliants*, *Children of Heracles*, and *Ion*). Without these, we might be less inclined to think of Euripides as the most political of the three major tragedians.[103] I will, therefore, not be treating the tragic genre, or even a particular tragedian, as a unified whole. Each play will be treated in turn as a separate entity but obviously in conversation with other earlier plays.

When taken together, the scholarship on 'politics' in Greek tragedy seems generally in agreement that tragedy was, to at least a minor extent, influenced by the democracy in which it was written and, usually, first performed. However, Boedeker and Raaflaub point out the danger that in some cases this has become an orthodoxy and has swung too far in one direction.[104] They suggest a possible approach to the challenge of developing a framework that enables us to base our interpretations on sound foundations, which is to pay close attention to clues poets themselves provide, not least in word choice and terminology.[105] Indeed this is my chosen method, discussed further below, since close focus on word choice and terminology in presentations of Odysseus is frequently illuminating; it reveals not only possible allusions to contemporary issues (both Athenian and universal) but also other aspects of tragedians' portrayals of such a complicated character.

To summarise, following close examination of the scholarship on 'politics', particularly democratic politics, in Athenian tragedy, the key conclusion is that nuance is essential; sweeping claims about the playwrights, the plays, or the audience should be avoided, and this is how I intend to approach my material.

iv. Evidential Scope

This focus on political and ethical aspects means that some fifth-century Athenian material is excluded. I have chosen to concentrate on tragedy because there is abundant material, some of which has been curiously overlooked, to show how Odysseus was presented and how the earlier epic episodes were adapted. I also include Euripides' satyr play *Cyclops* because Odysseus is prominent and because,

[103] Goff (1995) 21.
[104] Boedeker and Raaflaub (2005) 111 and 124.
[105] Boedeker and Raaflaub (2005) 125.

although satyr drama was in one sense a separate genre, in the period under discussion it was performed as part of the complete tragic production, *tragikē didaskalia*, after three tragedies. It was part of 'tragedy' in its broadest sense.[106] Moreover, its characters, mythological settings and, crucially, actors, chorusmen, and authors were the same as those of tragedy.

Some Athenian non-tragic material is therefore not directly addressed, except where it provides an instructive comparison. The main examples are several comedies, sadly lost to us, in which Odysseus featured. Odysseus, along with Heracles, seems to have been a popular hero in comedy, as in satyr drama.[107] Such comedies were mythological burlesques rather than the more political comedies of Aristophanes. The earliest known Attic comedy to feature Odysseus is Cratinus' *Odysseis*, which re-tells the *Odyssey* in comic fashion.[108] Cratinus' play will be briefly mentioned in Chapter 6, on the Cyclops, since comedies are important influences on Euripides' presentation. Theopompus, active from c.410, composed several plays inspired by the *Odyssey*: *Odysseus*, *Penelope*, and *Sirens*.[109] Several other late fifth-century or early fourth-century comedies also feature Odysseus, including Phyllius' *Washerwomen* or *Nausicaa*, Nicophon's *Sirens*, and possibly Polyzelus' *Bath-Scene*.[110]

Rhetorical and philosophical texts will be referred to only briefly where relevant. The main examples of such texts are Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* and Antisthenes' two speeches *Ajax* and *Odysseus*; these feature in Chapters 1 and 3 respectively. They provide important comparisons to the tragic texts as they deal with the same ethical issues and are both also likely to be late fifth-century texts. However, since my main focus is on tragedy, I do not conduct in-depth analyses of these speeches, which have in any case been well furnished by Worman, Montiglio, and Knudsen.[111]

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[106] See e.g. Easterling (1997) 38; Hall (2006) 149; O'Sullivan (2017) 219.
[107] See Phillips (1959) for an overview of Odysseus in comedy.
[108] Frr. 143–57. Phillips (1959) 63; Hall (2008b) 38–9.
[109] *Odysseus*: frr. 34–7; *Penelope*: frr. 48–50); *Sirens*: frr. 51–4.
[110] *Washerwomen* or *Nausicaa*: fr. 8; *Sirens*: frr. 20–2; *Bath-Scene*: no fragments remain except the title.
[111] Worman (1999) 55–60 on Gorgias; Montiglio (2011) 20–37 on Antisthenes; Knudsen (2012) 36–43 and 48–54 on Gorgias and Antisthenes respectively.

Visual art has also largely been excluded from the analysis of this thesis, although it is referred to where relevant to show the popularity of certain episodes or motifs. Odysseus was a popular figure in fifth-century art, both in Athens and elsewhere in Greece, and a wide variety of his epic exploits were depicted.[112] Many episodes featured in art came from Homer, but others were taken from elsewhere in the Epic Cycle. The episodes that featured most often – the embassy to Achilles, the judgement of the arms, and the encounters with the Cyclops and Circe – may have been popular due to more frequent rhapsodic performances of these particular sections. Some artistic depictions are intriguing, for example the painting by Polygnotus which adorned the inside of the building of the Cnidians at Delphi and in which Pausanias tells us the painter 'intentionally gathered into one group the enemies of Odysseus' (10.31.1).[113] However, it is not always possible to infer any particular ethical or political tone from these artistic depictions, and for that reason they are less relevant to my argument.

All extant tragedies featuring Odysseus as a speaking character or an instrumental off-stage presence will be discussed, along with fragments from plays in which Odysseus features. I include *Rhesus*, preserved in the manuscripts of Euripides, because it may be a fifth-century or very early fourth-century work and may be by Euripides. However, some extremely fragmentary material cannot sustain much comment, such as Aeschylus' possible 'Odyssean Tetralogy' based on the *Odyssey*.[114] Similarly, there are two plays that have not survived at all but whose testimonia suggest that Odysseus has the role of a tragic hero; both examples include unwitting kin-killing.[115] There are several other plays for which we can only guess at

[112] The entry on Odysseus by Touchefeu-Meynier in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (1992) is an invaluable source and shows the wide range of epic episodes that were depicted in visual art. For further discussion of particular depictions of Odysseus, see e.g. Thompson (1969); Williams (1980); Pinney and Hamilton (1982); Giuliani (2004); Giles-Watson (2007); Langridge-Noti (2009); von den Hoff (2009); Muellner (2012).

[113] Woodford (1994a) 167.

[114] *Ghost-Raisers* (frr. 273–8), *Penelope* (fr. 187), *Bone-Gatherers* (frr. 179–80) and the satyr play *Circe* (fr. 113a). In favour of a tetralogy: Katsouris (1982); Grossardt (2003); Sommerstein (2010) 249 and (2023) 203; Kalamara (2020) 1; Finglass (2023) 36; Podlecki (2023) 174. Against a tetralogy: Sutton (1980) 25; Hall (2008a) 507. On these plays generally, see Stanford (1963) 103–4; Hall (2008a) 506–8; Sommerstein (2010) 249–52; Mikellidou (2016); Wright (2018) 50, 52–3 and 62–3; Kalamara (2020).

[115] In Sophocles' *Euryalus*, he unknowingly murders his son, the title character. No fragments survive, but the plot may be summarised by Parthenius, *Love Romances* 3. In *Odysseus Wounded by the Spine*, also by Sophocles (frr. 453–461a), he is unknowingly murdered by his son Telegonus. On *Euryalus*, see Wright (2018) 90–1. On fr. 453, see Marshall (2000). On *Odysseus Wounded by the*

Odysseus' involvement from the title, or from scanty fragments or testimonia.[116] In these plays it is hard to draw any conclusions on the specific *political* nature of Odysseus' appearance. It is important to note here, therefore, that Odysseus was not always necessarily politicised when depicted in the fifth century. As our focus is on the ways in which he was politicised, we will be concentrating on those texts for which there is evidence of ethical or political references.

Previous analyses of Odysseus' reception in the fifth century have tended to focus only on complete tragedies, rather than introducing fragmentary material. It is a central contention of this thesis that omitting fragmentary material leads us to miss the lightest and darkest depictions of Odysseus in the fifth century. The Palamedes episode, for example, shows Odysseus' conduct in a far shadier light than any extant tragedy. Conversely, Euripides' *Telephus* is valuable evidence for a more favourable depiction of Odysseus by Euripides, a playwright whom most scholars assume only depicted Odysseus in the harshest possible way.[117]

v. Methodology and Literature Review

Within the parameters set out above, my method is to examine the material that features Odysseus, first for the way it has adapted earlier epic themes and second to look more broadly at its historical context to see if this can explain some of the choices made in the particular adaptation. Since much of the evidence is elusive and fragmentary, and only a few plays have certain dates, I propose to look at Odysseus' various fifth-century characterisations taking a thematic approach, rather than attempt to impose a chronological order on all the material. I analyse the presentation of Odysseus through groups of works in which he is contrasted with or opposed to other individuals, both allies and enemies, over whom he seems almost inevitably to

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Spine generally, see Kiso (1984) 31–2; Sutton (1984) 88–93 and 179; Hall (2008a) 508–9 and (2008b) 38; Wright (2018) 106–7.

[116] Odysseus was an especially familiar presence in Sophocles, perhaps more so than any other figure; see Worman (2012) 326. Plays in which Odysseus is likely to feature include: Sophocles' *Ajax Locris* (frr. 10a–8), see Fitzpatrick (2003), Wright (2018) 72–4; *Demand for Helen's Return* (frr. 176–80a), see Wright (2018) 87–8; *Iphigenia* (frr. 305–12), see Kiso (1984) 89, Sutton (1984) 65, Wright (2018) 97; *Laconian Women* (frr. 367–9a), see Kiso (1984) 90, Sutton (1984) 66, Wright (2018) 99; *Nausicaa* (frr. 439–41), see Sutton (1984) 84 and 179, Hall (2008a) 508, Wright (2018) 104–5; *The Footwashing* (fr. 451a; this may have been identical to *Odysseus Wounded by the Spine*), see Sutton (1984) 88–90 and 179; *The Madness of Odysseus* (frr. 462–7), see Kiso (1984) 89, Hall (2008a) 508, Wright (2018) 107–8; *Scyrians* (frr. 553–61), see Wright (2018) 116–7; Ion of Chios' *Watchmen* (frr. 43a–9), see Hall (2008a) 509, Wright (2016b) 32–3. Some unassignable fragments also feature Odysseus: Soph. frr. 799, 913 and 965.

[117] See p. 73 n. 35.

prevail. These different episodes illuminate and emphasise different aspects of Odysseus' epic character.

What I aim to examine is how the episodes featuring Odysseus, particularly those that show him interacting with others, were adapted from the earlier epic poems. What elements did each adapter choose to keep, insert, exclude, or emphasise? How were the episodes moulded to suit contemporary concerns? How was the role of Odysseus politicised? In the case of some fragmentary material where there is insufficient evidence to allow us a detailed analysis of Odysseus' presentation, I mainly look at how the episodes were altered from the received stories of the Epic Cycle. For extant tragedies, I focus on how Odysseus interacts with other characters but also analyse how other characters speak about him. Sometimes, the Odysseus we see on stage does not have the traits that other characters ascribe to him, and sometimes he does. By focusing particularly on the language, the precise semantic complexes, used to describe Odysseus (an area in which this thesis has uncovered new insights), we begin to see patterns in his presentations across various texts. Furthermore, we can also see similarities with descriptions of political figures and themes in both historical texts and comedies. Moreover, through a more linguistically-focused analysis we can see how Odysseus changes from his Homeric and epic presentations, such as in the way his epithets change in meaning and how he gains new descriptors which are not applied to him in Homer. The Thesaurus Linguae Graecae and Perseus Digital Library have been invaluable tools in this linguistic research.

While reading and analysing my primary material, I have engaged in systematic dialogue with previous works of scholarship. There is a vast amount of scholarship on many of the plays which I look at, but the following works, which deal at least partly with Odysseus in the fifth century, have been particularly useful.

The seminal text on Odysseus remains Stanford's *The Ulysses Theme* (see above), which traces the reception and adaptations of Odysseus from Homer to the first half of the twentieth century. However, this work does not go into great detail for any period and omits many fragmentary plays from the fifth century. Furthermore, Stanford does not often refer to the contemporary context of the texts beyond a general observation that Odysseus' reputation worsens in the late fifth century, when

Athens was performing badly in the Peloponnesian War. An earlier series of articles by Stanford in *Hermathena* looks in more detail at the fifth century and the change in Odysseus' reputation during this time.[118] Again, some fragmentary plays are not mentioned. Because of this omission, some of the conclusions that Stanford draws, for example that Euripides was universally hostile to Odysseus, are not accurate.

Some other useful discussions of Odysseus in the fifth century come from Silvia Montiglio and Nancy Worman. Montiglio's study, *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought* (2011), examines Odysseus in philosophical thought, beginning with the Socratics and ending with the Platonists of the second century AD. Montiglio treats the fifth century as background context in her introductory chapter and assesses the cultural climate which might have influenced the philosophers' approaches. Here, she makes some interesting, if sometimes cursory, points about the hostility to Odysseus from both tragedians and sophists and suggests how the Athenian audience may have reacted to each. For example, she proposes that in both cases it was aristocrats to whom dislike of Odysseus appealed.[119] This may be a more persuasive argument regarding the sophists, as we can be more specific when talking about their audience of wealthy Athenians. It is rather more difficult for the audience of tragedy, in which all classes were present, as well as non-Athenians.

Worman focuses exclusively on Odysseus in her 1999 article, 'Odysseus *Panourgos*: the liar's style in tragedy and oratory'; she also takes Helen and Odysseus as case studies in her 2002 book *The Cast of Character: Style in Greek Literature*. In both works, Worman looks at how Odysseus embodies the idea that one's visible, outward character may differ from who one really is. The 1999 article looks specifically at lying and identifies two techniques used by Odysseus in fifth-century texts, which she calls 'mirroring' and 'character exchange'. The concept of mirroring is particularly useful in my discussion of the Philoctetes plays. As Worman's focus is on lying and not on Odysseus' overall moral status, she excludes certain texts from detailed investigation. Her study of Odysseus in tragedy in *The Cast of Character* is limited only to Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, but her observations on poets and philosophers' attitudes to elusive figures such as Helen and Odysseus are instructive. Although Worman does not have a work dedicated to Odysseus overall in the fifth

[118] Stanford (1949a), (1949b), and (1950a).
[119] Montiglio (2011) 7.

century, nevertheless her analyses of Odysseus across several different works are extremely valuable. However, these analyses are not synthesised into a single work which looks at all texts featuring Odysseus (including fragments) together.

Hesk's *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens* is a useful study of the general topic of deception. Importantly, he shows the hypocrisy of Athenian culture, which rejected deception as something anti-Athenian, and yet used deception when it was expedient. One chapter explores the issue of the 'noble lie' and includes an examination of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* in relation to this. In particular, he brings a new approach to the analysis of Odysseus' role in this play by showing how the audience may be conflicted about Odysseus' use of trickery to aid the Greeks.[120] This nuance is something that I hope to extend to some other material to show how Odysseus' character raised ethical dilemmas in a sophisticated and multi-layered manner.

Two previous PhD theses have looked at Odysseus in fifth- and fourth-century texts, by Aara Lauren Suksi from the University of Toronto in 1999 and Andrew James Wong from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand in 2017. Both examine dramatic texts, and the latter also includes philosophical texts, since its primary focus is on Antisthenes' *Ajax* and *Odysseus* speeches. Both also situate these texts in their political contexts and especially compare Odysseus to Themistocles. However, my research differs in several ways. First, I have included more fragmentary tragic material which gives a fuller picture of Odysseus' presentation. Second, I have structured my chapters in order to show how the adaptations of mythic episodes developed across time and over multiple texts. Third, I have adopted a more linguistic focus on exactly how Odysseus is described by other characters in order to compare this to other texts, rather than focusing on the general characteristics of his presentation. Finally, as well as considering how the presentations of Odysseus have been influenced by the democratic context in which they were produced, I have also considered their imperial context, with particular attention to Odysseus' status as an islander.

Aside from these as yet unpublished theses, there has been no comprehensive treatment of Odysseus in the fifth-century Athenian imagination since Stanford, and

[120] Hesk (2000) 194–5.

his analyses were only of chapter and article length. I hope that my research can be added to this previous scholarship to give a more complete picture of Odysseus in Athens in the fifth century, especially the political aspects of his depictions, and to bridge the gap between the vast bibliography on Homer and the work of Montiglio and others on Odysseus in later philosophical texts.

vi. Chapter Structure

Each chapter has as its subject a different character with whom Odysseus interacts: Palamedes, Achilles, Ajax, the Trojans, Philoctetes, and the Cyclops. I have broadly followed the mythological chronology of the episodes when deciding the order but have deviated slightly in two places. I have decided to treat Palamedes first, although in the epic story his death probably occurs after the Greek arrival at Troy and therefore after the incidents with Achilles discussed in Chapter 2. However, Palamedes does not feature in these Achillean plays, nor is his fate mentioned.[121] Also, Odysseus' behaviour in this episode is untypical, and it is useful to discuss this anomaly first as it provides important and underappreciated context for the rest of his depictions.

I have also deviated by putting Philoctetes after the Trojans for two reasons. First, while the episodes of *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* take place in mythical time after the end of the Trojan War, and therefore after the retrieval of Philoctetes, *Rhesus* is set before the fall of Troy and before the deaths of Achilles and Ajax. Second, Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is one of the latest plays to be discussed and Odysseus features so prominently that it is useful to analyse this play after all the other tragedies so that we can look back over all Odysseus' tragic appearances.

Each chapter begins with an overview of how the characters interact in Homer and the Epic Cycle, so that we can then see how this epic material was received and reshaped in the fifth century to reflect contemporary issues and attitudes. This is followed by a brief summary of how their interactions were presented elsewhere in the fifth century, in other texts and art. The relevant texts are then discussed one by one, chronologically where possible, focusing on how the epic material was adapted and how Odysseus was presented, both in his own behaviour and words and also

[121] The chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis* only mention Palamedes when describing the Greek host assembled at Aulis (198).

how he is spoken about by other characters. Where there are key themes spanning several texts, a separate discussion of these will follow at the end.

Chapter 1 explores the enmity between Odysseus and Palamedes, a relatively unknown hero in the modern conception of the Trojan War myth but who in the fifth century was considered a culture hero. We will examine fragments from the three major tragedians, as well as the defence speech for Palamedes penned by the sophist Gorgias. In doing so, we will see why the story of Palamedes is significant in the fifth-century reception of Odysseus and how the story was made more relevant to a fifth-century audience.

In Chapter 2 we look at the interactions between Achilles and Odysseus. There is no single story featuring the two characters that was adapted by more than one tragedian. However, there are three plays that each show them in the early stages of the Trojan War. Sophocles' *Those Who Dine Together*, Euripides' *Telephus*, and Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* each show a very different relationship between Odysseus and Achilles. We will examine how the interactions of Odysseus and Achilles change over the fifth century and, in the Euripidean plays, how Odysseus is shown interacting in unusual ways with other characters besides Achilles.

The conflict between Odysseus and Telamonian Ajax over the arms of Achilles is the focus of Chapter 3. We start with Aeschylus and Pindar, whose presentations of the conflict are important starting points before we tackle Sophocles' *Ajax*. The discussion of Sophocles' play is structured around each character in the play and their interaction with Odysseus and/or the way they speak about him when he is absent. We also look at Antisthenes, who wrote speeches for Odysseus and Ajax. By analysing Sophocles' *Ajax* with a focus on each character we can more fully answer the question of how Sophocles has created an unusual and unique presentation of Odysseus in his play. Across all the texts we will also examine how the writers make the story more contemporary, both in the references to fifth-century institutions and to geopolitics.

Chapter 4 looks at Odysseus' interactions with his Trojan enemies over three plays: *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, and *Rhesus*. In each play the Trojans suffer a loss of life at the hands of or instigation of Odysseus: Polyxena, Astyanax, and Rhesus

respectively. The key question of this chapter is how and why the playwright of each play has foregrounded Odysseus as the chief instigator of Trojan loss and suffering.

In Chapter 5 we compare the three versions of Odysseus' retrieval of Philoctetes and his bow. We look at Aeschylus' and Euripides' portrayal of the episode before moving to Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. Here we move through the play sequentially, looking at Odysseus' interactions with Neoptolemus and with Philoctetes as the play progresses. We will examine how the presentation of Odysseus' mission to retrieve Philoctetes changed over the course of the fifth century and question some standard views on Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, concerning both its relation to the earlier versions, and its presentation of Odysseus as the 'villain'.

We finish in Chapter 6 with one of the most familiar episodes of the Odyssey: Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus. In the fifth century this was not a subject for tragedy but for comedy and satyr drama. After a brief survey of lost comedies and satyr plays inspired by this story, we look at Euripides' *Cyclops*, the only fully extant satyr play. As with *Ajax*, it is instructive to analyse this play by individuated character, examining in turn Odysseus' relationship with Silenus, the satyrs, and Polyphemus. This character-oriented study reveals new insights and allows us better to answer the question of how the satyric presentation of Odysseus differs from, and relates to, his tragic presentations.

Chapter 1

Odysseus and Palamedes

Palamedes, a Euboean hero of the Trojan War, is relatively unknown to modern audiences. He is absent from Homer and although the subject of several tragedies, none of them survives in full. However, Palamedes was clearly considered an important figure in antiquity. The inventions attributed to him in the archaic and classical periods were wide-ranging and significant. Typically, he is credited with inventing writing and dice games, among other inventions variously mentioned in ancient texts.[1] He is a hero of great intellect and wisdom, and this makes him Odysseus' closest rival.

In the fifth century, Palamedes' death was transformed from the straightforward murder of the Epic Cycle into a punishment for treason, after being convicted on false grounds. Palamedes' fate was depicted by all three of the major tragedians and was also the subject of a philosophical speech by Gorgias. All four authors use the same story; Palamedes is put on trial, falsely accused thanks to the efforts of Odysseus. After an analysis of key fragments and passages from each of these four authors, we will then discuss important themes arising from the texts – *sophia*, *phthonos*, treason, and trials – and how these may relate to contemporary Athens.

These themes would have been particularly resonant with fifth-century audiences as they all relate to how prominent citizens were treated under the democracy. Those who rose to prominence, thanks, say, to their wealth or intellect, were left open to envy. This envy could lead a scheming political rival to bring about their downfall. Sometimes politicians were ostracised, but at other times they were legally prosecuted.[2] Cohen demonstrates how prominent citizens had their merits judged by the *dēmos* when they competed in the courts.[3] The main concerns of this chapter will be to what extent, and how, fifth-century writers used the Palamedes myth as a

[1] A character in a fragment of Eupolis (fr. 385) jokes that an invention is worthy of Palamedes. Dionysus also calls Euripides 'Palamedes' in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1451); see Worman (1999) 50.
[2] For instance, Themistocles removed his rival Aristides by ostracism. He spread rumours that Aristides was attempting to establish a monarchy, leading him to be jealously hated (φθονεῖσθαι) and thus expelled (Plut. *Arist*. 7.1).
[3] Cohen (1995) 118.

demonstration of the destabilising effects of envy on the democratic legal system and its vulnerability to manipulation by adept speakers such as Odysseus.

Phillips suggests that Palamedes' innocence and high-mindedness, combined with his inventive cleverness, made him a favourite character with dramatists and rhetoricians with democratic or progressive sympathies.[4] However, I think that this myth is also used in the fifth century as a critique of the abuse of a major democratic institution – the law court – and of demagogic rhetoric. The courts were used as a weapon for politicians to remove rivals, as Odysseus removes Palamedes. In the later part of the century, the numerous political trials were a mark of the power that the radical democracy held, and democrats such as Cleon freely used the courts to eliminate rivals, which Aristophanes subjects to comic treatment in *Knights* and *Wasps*.[5] Furthermore, the myth of Palamedes and Odysseus raised issues concerning the use of speech, and these issues were pressing in a democratic context.[6]

In the treatment of envy, the story of Palamedes in the fifth century is significant for two reasons. First, the *Palamedes* tragedies are unusual cases of plays whose actions are primarily motivated by envy. Second, Odysseus is typically a hero associated with good judgement and a sound mind, and thus it is unexpected to find him motivated by envy. Elsewhere, Odysseus may be self-serving or opportunistic, but we never see him purely driven by envious feelings or rivalry, except in the case of his desire to be awarded the arms of Achilles. The consideration for the common good cannot be used to absolve him of his crimes as it is often elsewhere. This makes the Palamedes story one of the darkest portrayals of Odysseus that we have from the fifth century.[7]

This episode, largely forgotten in modern scholarship, is also important context for Odysseus' other portrayals. Audiences would remember Odysseus' treatment of Palamedes when watching other plays, and so it colours his presentations elsewhere. It is also a key episode in establishing the ambiguity of Odysseus' *sophia* and his position as a *sophos*, which will be a recurring theme throughout this thesis.

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[4] Phillips (1957) 271.
[5] See Bauman (1990) 49–60 on 'The judicial reign of Cleon'. On jokes about Athenian litigiousness in Aristophanes, see e.g. Wyles (2020) 9–11.
[6] Bassino (2022) 46.
[7] Cf. Stanford (1963) 84, who calls the murder of Palamedes the 'worst crime' in Odysseus' epic career.

1.1. Odysseus and Palamedes in the Epic Cycle

Palamedes' appearances in the Epic Cycle are probably confined to the *Cypria* alone.[8] One of his most famous exploits is compelling Odysseus to join the Trojan expedition.[9] Odysseus, who did not want to go to Troy, pretends to be mad by either sowing his fields with salt or ploughing with mismatched animals. Palamedes tricks him into revealing his sanity by threatening the infant Telemachus, forcing Odysseus to rescue his son and expose his ruse. In another episode, the Greeks are suffering from a famine, and Palamedes is tasked with finding a solution.[10] He brings the Oenotrophoi, descendants of Dionysus who had the power to produce oil, corn, and wine from the earth, who feed the Greeks and end the famine.[11] Pausanias states that in the *Cypria*, Odysseus and Diomedes murder Palamedes on a fishing trip (10.31.2 = *Cypria* fr. 27 West). No further detail is given by Pausanias, and Palamedes' death is not mentioned by Proclus, so we do not know the motive.

Palamedes' father Nauplius takes revenge on the Greeks for the death of his son. Apollodorus describes how Nauplius first encourages the wives of the Greek leaders to commit adultery and then lights a beacon on Mount Caphareus to lure the Greek ships to their destruction while they sail home from Troy (*Epit*. 6.9). There are no fragments from the *Nostoi* that refer to Nauplius' revenge, but Proclus does mention a storm around Mount Caphareus (Arg. §3 West). Nauplius' beacons are mentioned in Euripides' *Helen* (766–7), and his revenge was depicted in tragedy (see below). One addition to this story suggests that Nauplius induces Odysseus' mother Anticleia to commit suicide.[12]

Outside the Epic Cycle, we have evidence for brief mentions of Palamedes in Hesiod and Stesichorus. In one fragment, Hesiod discusses Palamedes' parentage (fr. 234). We are told that Stesichorus, in his *Oresteia*, mentioned that the alphabet was invented by Palamedes (fr. 213). This latter fragment is useful as it shows that from a date earlier than tragedy, Palamedes has a role as inventor and benefactor of the Greek army.

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[8] For speculation on why he was not mentioned by Homer, see Strabo 8.6.2; Philostr. *V A* 4.16.6; Davies (2001) 48.
[9] *Cypria* Arg. §5 West; Hyg. *Fab*. 95; Lucian *de domo* 30; Apollod. *Epit*. 3.7; Serv. Schol. *Aen*. 2.81.
[10] Schol. on Lycoph. 581 = *Cypria* fr. 26 West.
[11] Schol. on Lycoph. 570, 580 = *Cypria* fr. 26 West; Apollod. *Epit*. 3.10.
[12] Schol. *Od*. 11.197, 202.

1.2. Odysseus and Palamedes in the Fifth Century

Palamedes originates from the island of Euboea, which was part of the Athenian Empire. Euboea revolted in 446 but was swiftly recaptured by Pericles (Thuc. 1.114). It later became a key part of the Athenian alliance, and Thucydides even said that it was more valuable to Athens than Attica itself (8.96.2). Palamedes is therefore an islander like Odysseus and is associated with an integral part of the Athenian empire. Despite his absence from Homer, Palamedes was vividly alive in men's imaginations in the fifth century.[13] The story of his death is just one of a handful of Epic Cycle stories that we know for certain was treated by all three major tragedians.[14] Despite this popularity, he did not feature much in visual art in the fifth century.[15]

In the fifth century, the story of Palamedes' death had changed from drowning to being stoned to death after a trial.[16] It seems that there were common elements in all the tragic versions: Odysseus has a letter forged supposedly from Priam to Palamedes offering him gold to thank him for betraying the Greeks. A quantity of gold is then hidden under Palamedes' tent as further evidence of his treachery. Once the letter and gold are discovered Palamedes is put on trial for treason.[17] It is not certain whether it was Aeschylus or one of the lyric poets who invented the trial of Palamedes. Aelius Aristides quotes Pindar as having remarked on the absurdity of Palamedes being defeated by his inferior in a trial, especially since it is a contest not of physical strength but of intelligence; an area in which he is superior (*Or*. 3.478, quoting Pindar fr. 260 S-M). This suggests that the story of Palamedes' trial was known to Pindar, though whether he was inspired by an earlier text is unknown. Pindar's labelling of Palamedes as superior (κυριώτερον, fr. 260.7) is important as it gives a clue to how the episode was viewed in the fifth century. The concept of the inferior Odysseus unjustly defeating his superior is similar to the case of Ajax, particularly Pindar's presentation of Ajax's fate.[18]

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[13] Woodford (1994a) 164. See also Nightingale (1995) 149 and Barrett (2001) 5.
[14] Sommerstein (2015) 464. Interestingly, the stories of Philoctetes and Iphigenia, two other episodes in which Odysseus is heavily involved, are among the others.
[15] Woodford (1994b) 148.
[16] On stoning as a punishment in Athens, see Rosivach (1987).
[17] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.7–8; Serv. Schol. *Aen*. 2.81; Hyg. *Fab.* 105; Schol. Eur. *Or.* 432.
[18] See 3.2.1.

1.2.1. Aeschylus

Aeschylus transforms the simple story of Palamedes' murder from the Epic Cycle into a more complex, tragic, and political situation. Sommerstein has argued that fr. 451k Radt comes from the prologue of Aeschylus' *Palamedes*.[19] As he shows, the scenario described in this fragment would not apply to any of Aeschylus' other Trojan War plays.[20] If the placement in the prologue is correct, then the action of this play begins when the dispute is already under way. The speaker prays for a resolution of the grievous quarrel among the captains of the Greeks. This would mean that Odysseus is not the speaker of the prologue and that his scheme is already underway by the start of the play.

In two fragments assigned to the play, Palamedes invokes those of his inventions that had benefited the army, and we can assume that these passages come from his defence speech (frr. 181a, 182):

> ἔπειτα πάσης Ἑλλάδος καὶ ξυμμάχων
>
> βίον διῴκησ᾽ ὄντα πρὶν πεφυρμένον
>
> θηρσίν θ᾽ ὅμοιον· πρῶτα μὲν τὸν πάνσοφον
>
> ἀριθμὸν ηὗρηκ᾽, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων
>
> Then I organized the life of all the Greeks and their allies, which previously had been as chaotic as that of beasts. To begin with, I invented the ingenious art of number, supreme among all techniques.

> καὶ ταξιάρχας χἀκατοντάρχας στρατῷ
>
> ἔταξα, σῖτον δ᾽ εἰδέναι διώρισα,
>
> ἄριστα, δεῖπνα δόρπα θ᾽ αἱρεῖσθαι τρίτα
>
> And I appointed brigade and company commanders for the army, and I taught them to distinguish their meals, to take breakfast, dinner and thirdly supper.

These two fragments are particularly interesting when compared with the presentation of Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*, probably penned at least in part by

[19] Sommerstein (2000).
[20] Sommerstein (2000) 119.

Aeschylus or his son Euphorion. Palamedes appears to be the mortal equivalent of the Titan, and both describe their invention of number in identical language (*PV* 459; fr. 181a.4). A scholiast on *Prometheus Bound* 457 says that Prometheus bestowed his discoveries on Palamedes. It is uncertain whether all the inventions listed in these two fragments are taken from the Epic Cycle or are additions of Aeschylus. The mention of beasts in fr. 181a emphasises how Palamedes is not just an inventor but is instrumental in humanity's progress to sophistication. It was this that linked Palamedes to pre-Socratic philosophers and sophists such as Protagoras, who were also interested in the origins of mankind.

The technical term ταξιάρχας (fr. 182), used to refer to army commanders, alludes to contemporary Athenian military practices. A taxiarch in classical Athens was a hoplite commander; this term is not used before the fifth century.[21] Palamedes, therefore, describes his contribution to the army in the current military terminology of the day. This would have created a closer affinity with the audience. Any audience member who had served in the army – and there were probably many – would appreciate the military-based inventions listed here by Palamedes and understand their importance to army life.

We have no other evidence of how a trial scene might have been staged in this play. However, we can look to Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, in which the trial of Orestes takes place on the Athenian Areopagus, for clues. Of especial relevance is Apollo's reassurance of Orestes that in Athens there will be judges (δικαστάς, 81) whom they can persuade with enchanting words (81–2). Bauman interprets these lines to mean that Apollo intends to 'pack the court and win by trickery'.[22] This conduct may be similar to how Odysseus behaves in Aeschylus' *Palamedes*.

Finally, another fragment from this play is strong evidence that Nauplius appears on stage (fr. 181):

> τίνος κατέκας ἕνεκα παῖδ᾽ ἐμὸν βλάβης;
> On account of what injury did you kill my son?

[21] See e.g. Thuc. 4.4; Dem. 4.26.
[22] Bauman (1990) 34.

The play could end with him swearing revenge on the Greeks. This would be a significant reminder of the far-reaching consequences of Odysseus' actions, which leads to the deaths of many Greeks thanks to Nauplius' false beacons. This fragment also reiterates the injustice of what the Greeks have done. Palamedes was innocent, and the 'injury' was only to the pride of Odysseus. Nauplius' question is addressed to a single individual, probably Odysseus, though it could be Agamemnon. Sommerstein suggests that in this play the chorus, as the representatives of the Greek army, depart from the stage to carry out the stoning.[23] His cites as evidence for this the threats of stoning by the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Orestes*.[24] However, it would be quite radical to have the chorus depart from the stage to execute one of the other characters. This is unheard of in other surviving tragedies, and it is more likely to have been other Greek soldiers who carry out the punishment which is then narrated to the chorus by a messenger.

Aeschylus' adaptation of this episode set a trend for the other major tragedians, who follow his general plot of the trial scene. From the scant fragments we have it seems that Aeschylus presented Palamedes in a similar way to Prometheus, as a benefactor to mankind who is unjustly treated. As with his *Award of the Arms*, which stages the contest between Odysseus and Ajax, Aeschylus brought a rhetorical contest onto the tragic stage, this time between the Greek army's most consummate speakers.[25]

1.2.2. Sophocles

Sophocles, as far as we can tell, featured the Palamedes myth in at least three plays – four if there are two separate Nauplius plays. We have no fragments of *The Madness of Odysseus*, but based on the title we can surmise that it shows a battle of wits between the two intellectual heroes, with Palamedes in the end victorious. This play probably follows the Epic Cycle version of Odysseus' feigned madness, as discussed above. If so, it would have sown the seeds of Odysseus' envy, which would later find satisfaction when he avenged himself in *Palamedes*, and it could even have formed a trilogy with *Palamedes* and one of the Nauplius plays.[26]

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[23] Sommerstein (2000) 125.
[24] *Ag*. 1615–6; *Or*. 48–50, 440–2, 536, 612–4.
[25] See 3.2.2 on the *Award of the Arms*.
[26] Lloyd-Jones (1996) 249 says this possibility cannot be ruled out. Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 140 suggest some problems with the notion of *Palamedes* and two Nauplius plays forming a trilogy, although they do not mention *The Madness of Odysseus*.

Scholars agree that Servius on Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.81 is likely to have been influenced by Sophocles' *Palamedes*.[27] According to Servius, Odysseus' murderous envy is aroused after Palamedes was able to procure corn for the army during a famine after Odysseus himself had failed. After the discovery of the forged letter from Priam, Odysseus feigns support for Palamedes and suggests his tent be searched. This leads to the discovery of the gold and the execution of Palamedes.

We unfortunately only have two fragments from Sophocles' play itself. The first is an exhortation to a female to keep quiet when setting out somewhere (fr. 478), which could be addressed to a female slave.[28] The second is a passage that refers to the famine mentioned by Servius (fr. 479):

> οὐ λιμὸν οὗτος τῶνδ' ἀπῶσε, σὺν θεῷ
> εἰπεῖν, χρόνου τε διατριβὰς σοφωτάτας
> ἐφηῦρε φλοίσβου μετὰ κόπον καθημένοις,
> πεσσοὺς κύβους τε, τερπνὸν ἀργίας ἄκος;
>
> Was it not he who drove famine away from them, be it said with reverence towards the god, and he who discovered the cleverest ways of passing time for them when they were resting after their struggle with the waves, draughts and dice, a pleasant remedy against idleness?

The use of the third person shows that someone else in the play at some point defends Palamedes. If the defender is Odysseus, this would be consistent with Servius' mention of his false support for Palamedes.[29] This duplicitous move by Odysseus would make it impossible for Palamedes to protest and to unmask the deception, for he would make himself look guilty.[30] This is something that Sophocles could have exploited for its full tragic potential, and Odysseus' false defence speech may induce misplaced optimism in both Palamedes and the chorus.[31] Odysseus would, therefore, be shown at his cold-hearted and calculating worst.

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[27] Scodel (1980) 53; Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 118–20 with bibliography.
[28] Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 119 suggest that this line is spoken by Odysseus towards the start of the play to a female slave, one of those whom Servius says he had 'corrupted', whom he is sending on a secret mission to hide the gold.
[29] Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 119 show that, since *houtos* is used to refer to Palamedes, he cannot be the speaker, as it would need to be the demonstrative pronoun *hode* instead.
[30] Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 126.
[31] Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 125.

Unlike Aeschylus' and Euripides' *Palamedes* plays, we do not have any hint of how Sophocles' version ends. Since at least one of his other plays told the story of Nauplius, it is unlikely that the grieving father appears at the end of this play to hint at the revenge. Furthermore, if the trial scene is the central part of the play, we do not know who speaks for the prosecuting side. If Odysseus is a false supporter of Palamedes during the trial, it is perhaps Agamemnon in the judging role who opposes Palamedes.

Sophocles composed at least one play on Palamedes' father Nauplius. Two titles exist: *Nauplius Sails in* and *Nauplius Lights a Fire*; these may have been two separate plays, or different titles for the same play. Unhelpfully, some of the fragments are preserved only with the title *Nauplius*. If these are two separate plays, the generally accepted suggestion is that *Nauplius Sails in* depicts Nauplius coming to the Greek camp to demand justice for Palamedes' death, whereas *Nauplius Lights a Fire* shows his revenge by lighting false beacons that cause some Greeks to die in shipwrecks.[32]

The longest fragment, assigned simply to *Nauplius*, lists the inventions of Palamedes (fr. 432):

οὗτος δ᾽ ἐφηῦρε τεῖχος Ἀργείων στρατῷ,
σταθμῶν, ἀριθμῶν καὶ μέτρων εὑρήματα
τάξεις τε ταύτας οὐράνιά τε σήματα.
κἀκεῖν᾽ ἔτευξε πρῶτος, ἐξ ἑνὸς δέκα
κἀκ τῶν δέκ᾽ αὖθις ηὗρε πεντηκοντάδας
καὶ χιλιοστῦς, καὶ στρατοῦ φρυκτωρίαν
ἔδειξε κἀνέφηνεν οὐ δεδειγμένα.
ἐφηῦρε δ᾽ ἄστρων μέτρα καὶ περιστροφάς,
ὕπνου φύλαξι πιστὰ σημαντήρια
νεῶν τε ποιμαντῆρσιν ἐνθαλασσίοις
ἄρκτου στροφάς τε καὶ κυνὸς ψυχρὰν δύσιν

[32] Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 127–9 and 130–5; Sutton (1987) 122. Marshall (2003) 278 suggests Odysseus may have been a character in *Nauplius Lights a Fire*.

> And it was he who devised the wall for the army of the Argives; his was the invention of weights, numbers and measures; he taught them to marshal armies thus and how to know the heavenly signs. He was the first, too, who showed how to count from one to ten and so to fifty and to a thousand; he showed the army how to use beacons, and revealed things that earlier were hidden. He discovered how to measure terms and periods of the stars, trustworthy signs for those who watched while others slept, and for the shepherds of ships at sea he found out the turnings of the Bear and the chilly setting of the Dogstar.

Sommerstein argues that this fragment must come from *Nauplius Lights a Fire*. He cites the speaker's references to the army of the Argives, which would not appear in a speech addressed to the Argives themselves.[33] It may form part of the prologue of this play as a justification for revenge. If so, it would be fitting that Palamedes was the inventor of beacons (6), since these are the means of Nauplius' revenge for his son's death.[34]

We cannot be certain whether Odysseus appears in the Nauplius play(s). If *Nauplius Sails in* does depict either a retrial of Palamedes, or a trial of Odysseus for slander, then this would be significant – a rare chance in tragedy to see Odysseus put on the spot to defend his actions. However, we know that Nauplius is unsuccessful in his attempt to clear Palamedes' name.[35] Nauplius' revenge with the false beacons is successful in that it kills many Greeks. However, it does not hurt those most responsible for Palamedes' death; Locrian Ajax is the only notable victim.

Like Aeschylus', it is hard to draw many conclusions about Sophocles' presentation of Palamedes' story since the fragments are scarce. However, we can see that he retained the emphasis on Palamedes' beneficial inventions and his role as benefactor of the army. If Servius' reconstruction of the plot is correct, we can also say that Sophocles probably differed from Aeschylus and Euripides by having Odysseus feign support for Palamedes instead of opposing him. This would have made Odysseus' treatment of Palamedes all the crueller by giving him false hope and

[33] Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 136.
[34] Wright (2018) 103.
[35] Schol. Eur. *Or*. 432; Apollod. *Epit*. 6.8–9.

trapping him in an impossible situation. Sophocles may have found a way to make Odysseus' darkest moment even darker.

1.2.3. Euripides

The earliest known mention of Palamedes in Euripides comes in *Philoctetes*, performed in 431. Odysseus disguises himself to approach Philoctetes and pretends to have been an ally of Palamedes. We will look at this episode in more detail in Chapter 5, but it is important to note here that Philoctetes' responses to Odysseus reinforce the picture of Palamedes as a figure well-known for his intelligence and his role as a benefactor.[36] Philoctetes states that Palamedes was 'no ordinary comrade' and was 'of no little worth to both army and commanders' (fr. 789d.8). After learning of Palamedes' fate, Philoctetes laments (fr. 789d.9):

> ΦΙ. οἷον αὖ τοῦτον ἄνδρα
> ἀνήρηκας ὃς οὐδὲν ἧττον ὠφέλιμος ἦν τοῖς ξυμμάχοις ἢπερ
> οἶμαι σύ, τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ σοφώτατα ἀνευρίσκων καὶ
> συντιθείς·
>
> Ph: What a man you've
> again done away with in Palamedes—he was not less useful
> to the allies than you were yourself, I think, in his invention
> and contrivance of the finest and cleverest things.

Philoctetes directly compares Palamedes to Odysseus in their role as inventors and contrivers of things for the army. As in other texts, the adjective σοφός is used to describe Palamedes' inventions.

A decade and a half later, in 415, Euripides fleshed out the death of Palamedes as described in *Philoctetes* into its own tragedy. Whether this play was part of a connected tetralogy with *Alexander*, *Trojan Women* and *Sisyphus* will be discussed in Chapter 4.[37] As previously mentioned, political trials at Athens increased in frequency in the later part of the fifth century, and this is important context for Euripides' play. All three plays of Euripides' 'Trojan' trilogy contain a trial scene, a forensic *agon*, at their centre. In *Alexander*, the titular character is forced to defend

[36] See pp. 186–8.
[37] See p. 155.

himself before Priam. In *Trojan Women*, Helen is accused by Hecuba, who tries to convince Menelaus to kill her.

Sommerstein and Collard suggest that a scholion to Euripides' *Orestes* 432 preserves the plot of Euripides' *Palamedes*.[38] This version differs from the standard one in that Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes all conspire against Palamedes and contrive the plot against him. Collard, when giving his reconstruction of the play, ignores the significance of the suggestion that Agamemnon is part of the scheme.[39] If Agamemnon is in league with Odysseus to bring about Palamedes' death, the trial would be completely biased against Palamedes from the start. Fr. 580 is addressed directly to Agamemnon, suggesting that he serves as judge in the dispute:

> Ἀγάμεμνον, ἀνθρώποισι πᾶσαν αἱ τύχαι
> μορφὴν ἔχουσι, συντρέχει δ᾽ εἰς ἓν τόδε·
> †τούτου† δὲ πάντες, οἵ τε μουσικῆς φίλοι
> ὅσοι τε χωρὶς ζῶσι, χρημάτων ὕπερ
> μοχθοῦσιν, ὃς δ᾽ ἂν πλεῖστ᾽ ἔχῃ σοφώτατος.
>
> Agamemnon, men's fortunes take every form, but there is concurrence upon one thing: †of this† all, both those friendly to the arts, and those who live without them, labour for wealth; and whoever has most, is wisest.

Scodel suggests this fragment is evidence that Agamemnon is outside the intrigue, and that therefore the scholion does not describe the plot of Euripides' version.[40] However, I agree with Sommerstein that this is not enough evidence to argue that the scholion was not influenced by Euripides.[41] These lines are probably spoken by Odysseus, since the accusation is that even one friendly to the arts, such as Palamedes, is driven by a desire for wealth.[42] That the fragment begins with a direct address to Agamemnon suggests that this is the opening of a speech, probably Odysseus' prosecution speech.

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[38] Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 95; Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 118.
[39] Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 95.
[40] Scodel (1980) 51.
[41] Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 121. Koniaris (1973) 88 and Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 95 also agree that Agamemnon is judge.
[42] See pp. 199–200 on Odysseus' linking of profit and being called *sophos* in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.

Agamemnon also has the role of judge in Euripides' *Hecuba* from the previous decade. There, he oversees the *agon* between Hecuba and Polymestor after the Thracian king has been blinded. At this point in the play, Agamemnon has already given his tacit support to Hecuba, though cannot give her support outright since Polymestor is an ally of the Greeks. Only after Hecuba has taken her revenge does a quasi-trial take place, which makes a mockery of Agamemnon's claim that he will judge the situation properly (1131–2).[43] This may provide evidence as to how Agamemnon's role as judge functions in *Palamedes*. Sympathy would be heightened for the innocent Palamedes if both Odysseus and Agamemnon are working in league against him in a trial not only trumped-up but with a crooked judge.

As in Aeschylus and Sophocles, Palamedes seems to recount some of his inventions and highlight how they were beneficial, probably as part of his defence speech (fr. 578):

> τὰ τῆς γε λήθης φάρμακ᾽ ὀρθώσας μόνος,
> ἄφωνα καὶ φωνοῦντα, συλλαβὰς τιθείς,
> ἐξηῦρον ἀνθρώποισι γράμματ᾽ εἰδέναι,
> ὥστ᾽ οὐ παρόντα ποντίας ὑπὲρ πλακὸς
> τἀκεῖ κατ᾽ οἴκους πάντ᾽ ἐπίστασθαι καλῶς,
> παισίν τε τὸν θνήσκοντα χρημάτων μέτρον
> γράψαντα λείπειν, τὸν λαβόντα δ᾽ εἰδέναι.
> ἃ δ᾽εἰς ἔριν πίπτουσιν ἀνθρώποις κακά,
> δέλτος διαιρεῖ, κοὐκ ἐᾷ ψευδῆ λέγειν.
>
> On my own I established remedies for forgetfulness, which are without speech and (yet) speak, by creating syllables; I invented writing for men's knowledge, so a man absent over the ocean's plain might have good knowledge of all matters back there in his house, and the dying man might write down the size of his wealth when bequeathing it to his sons, and the receiver know it. And the troubles that afflict men when they fall to quarrelling—a written tablet does away with these and prevents the telling of lies.

[43] Hall (2010) 258.

Palamedes here focuses on the wide-ranging usefulness of his invention of writing.[44] The reference to men or mankind shows how the invention is for everyone's benefit. The idea is repeated that writing bestows knowledge. The reference to knowledge spreading across the ocean through writing clearly alludes to his brother Oeax's method, probably depicted later in the play, of alerting Nauplius to Palamedes' fate by writing the story on oars.[45] Although Palamedes is condemned thanks to a written tablet, the writing on the oars redeems him and disseminates the report of his unjust treatment.[46] As with the beacons in Sophocles, one of Palamedes' inventions again proves instrumental in the avenging of his death.

The reference to a man accurately writing down his wealth is ironic, since the quantity of gold stated in the false letter tallies with the amount buried under Palamedes' tent.[47] Similarly ironic is Palamedes' claim that a written tablet prevents the telling of lies.[48] Palamedes displays his naïveté in not suspecting that writing could be used for falsehood, as it will be used against him by Odysseus.[49] This creates a contrast between the two intellectual heroes. Palamedes is virtuous and believes that his inventions will be used only for good purposes; Odysseus, on the other hand, is cunning and does not fail to see an opportunity to use something to his own advantage, as he does with the forged letter. Furthermore, the knowledge that writing can bring is contrasted with lies, something that Odysseus specialises in spreading. While Palamedes brings knowledge to the world, Odysseus brings its opposite, by misinforming through lies and deception.

We have several more fragments from Euripides' *Palamedes* than we do for Aeschylus and Sophocles. Many seem to come from the trial scene, although it is often difficult to determine whether it is Palamedes or Odysseus speaking. Two fragments are chiefly concerned with wisdom. The first is likely to refer to Palamedes as a wise commander (fr. 581):

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[44] On references in Euripides to the alphabet and writing, see Dunn (2017) 448–51.
[45] Kovacs (1997) 169.
[46] Rabinowitz (2017) 200.
[47] Kovacs (1997) 169.
[48] False letters appeared in at least two other Euripidean tragedies: *Hippolytus* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*. On *Hippolytus*, see Steiner (1994) 38–40. Cf. the letter carried by Bellerophon, mentioned in *Il.* 6.168–70 and depicted in Euripides' *Stheneboea* (test. iia).
[49] See Nightingale (1995) 153–4 for a discussion of possible references to Palamedes in Plato's *Phaedrus*, and the reassessment of Palamedes' wisdom.

στρατηλάται τἂν μυρίοι γενοίμεθα,

σοφὸς δ᾽ ἂν εἷς τις ἢ δύ᾽ ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ.

Countless men among us might become commanders, but
just one or two in a long time would become wise ones.

The speaker of this fragment is unknown; it could be Palamedes speaking about himself, or one of his supporters defending him.[50] The second fragment could be spoken by either Palamedes or Odysseus about the other (fr. 583):

ὅστις λέγει μὲν εὖ, τὰ δ᾽ ἔργ᾽ ἐφ᾽ οἷς λέγει

αἴσχρ᾽ ἐστί, τούτου τὸ σοφὸν οὐκ αἰνῶ ποτέ.

One who makes a fine speech when the actions upon which
he speaks are shameful—I never praise this man's wisdom.

If spoken by Odysseus, this would be a piece of cunning that accused Palamedes of doing what Odysseus is guilty of himself. The 'shameful' actions in this scenario would be the treasonous crime of which Palamedes is accused. However, the accusation naturally applies more to Odysseus, since his actions in the play and elsewhere are shameful yet disguised by persuasive speech. A similar sentiment is expressed in *Alexander*, which preceded *Palamedes* (fr. 56). The speaker, perhaps Alexander, complains that the ineloquent man loses out to an eloquent man even though his case is just.[51]

Two other fragments are concerned with justice (frr. 584 and 585):

εἷς τοι δίκαιος μυρίων οὐκ ἐνδίκων

κρατεῖ, τὸ θεῖον τὴν δίκην τε συλλαβών.

One just man masters countless thousands who are not just, if
he has the gods and justice with him.

τοῦ γὰρ δικαίου κἀν βροτοῖσι κἀν θεοῖς

ἀθάνατος αἰεὶ δόξα διατελεῖ μόνου.

[50] Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 101 suggest Palamedes, Oeax, or Nauplius. Szarmach (1975) 264 suggests Ajax or Achilles.
[51] Cf. pp. 99–100 on the ineloquence (ἀγλωσσία) of Ajax.

A just man's reputation, and his alone, continues for ever
undying among both men and gods.

The emphasis on justice means that these two fragments probably refer to Palamedes, spoken either by him or by one of his supporters. A crucial part of the fifth-century version of this myth is that justice is not served but is instead miscarried by Odysseus' deception.[52] Justice is a recurrent theme in Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* (see below). The reference to undying reputation in fr. 585 could be hinting at Palamedes' own standing, since he is remembered throughout this century (and beyond) as a just man who has done no wrong. The strong sense of injustice also links Palamedes with Ajax who, as we shall see, was widely considered to have been unjustly deprived of Achilles' arms.

Fr. 588 may shed some light on who functions as the judge(s) in this play:

. . . ἐκάνετ᾽ ἐκάνετε τὰν

πάνσοφον, ὦ Δαναοί,

τὰν οὐδέν᾽ ἀλγύνουσαν ἀηδόνα Μουσᾶν.

…you have killed, you have killed, O you Danaans, that all-
wise nightingale of the Muses, that harmed no man.

If these lines are spoken by the chorus, this would be evidence that they were not the ones who pass the sentence. Philostratus introduces this fragment by saying that Protesilaus approves of this dirge and 'he likes even better what follows, where Euripides says they did this persuaded by a clever and shameless (δεινῷ καὶ ἀναιδεῖ) man' (34.7). Though this is not a direct quotation of Euripides, it gives a hint of what follows fr. 588. If this fragment is spoken by the chorus, for them to blame Odysseus' persuasion suggests either that they were Palamedes' supporters throughout the play, or that this fragment comes at the stage where the truth of Odysseus' plot has been revealed. Alternatively, this could suit Oeax as a speaker since he would be suspicious of Odysseus' intentions throughout.

[52] Odysseus can be viewed as aware of this himself. When in disguise in Euripides' *Philoctetes*, he says of 'Odysseus', 'How could anything whatever of that man's actions be just?' (fr. 789d.8).

Scholars began suggesting over a century ago that in fr. 588 Euripides is referring to the fate of the sophist Protagoras.[53] Several late sources record a story that Protagoras was put on trial for impiety and either exiled or sentenced to death, after which he fled Athens and then died at sea on his way to Sicily.[54] The most detailed discussion of this theory comes from Sutton, who suggests that fr. 588 reveals Euripides' 'fundamental' aim in writing *Palamedes*: 'to rebuke the Athenians for the condemnation of Protagoras'.[55] As discussed in the Introduction, it is generally accepted that tragedy addresses contemporary issues, viewed through the lens of the distant heroic past, but does not make explicit references to events and people.[56] Furthermore, it is also doubtful that a trial actually took place.[57]

A papyrus hypothesis for *Palamedes* shows that the play ends with the attempted murder of Oeax and his rescue by the Nereids.[58] In a parody of Euripides' play in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* (770–1), the kinsman refers to Oeax's idea to write down Palamedes' fate on oars, and to throw them into the sea to carry the message to Nauplius. It seems also that Nauplius is present at the end of *Palamedes* to threaten the Greeks with revenge. This would then have led neatly into *Trojan Women*, which begins with the planning of the storm that would punish the Greeks, this time devised by Athena and Poseidon following the fall of Troy. Although they do not mention Nauplius or Palamedes, they do mention Euboea (84) and the Capherean cliffs (90), reminding the audience of Nauplius' false beacons and the shipwreck that he will cause.

1.2.4. Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes*

Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* is a rhetorical text from the second half of the fifth century. Its precise date is unknown, and we cannot know if it was an influence on any of the tragedies or was influenced by them, or both.[59] This text is a display of

[53] See e.g. Bury (1900) 388; Morrison (1941) 4; Davison (1953) 36. See also Ostwald (1986) 532, who does not mention Euripides but accepts without question the story of Protagoras' exile and the burning of his books, as does Bauman (1990) 67.
[54] Plut. *Nic*. 23; Cic. *Nat. D*. 1.23.63; Diog. Laert. 9.52; Philostr. *V S* 1.10; Sext. Emp. *Against the Physicists* 1.56; Joseph. *Ap*. II.266.
[55] Sutton (1987) 113.
[56] See p. 20 above.
[57] Schiappa (1991) 143–5; Filonik (2013) 39.
[58] *PMich*. Inv. 3020(a); Luppe (2011).
[59] Scodel (1980) 90 n. 26 is convinced that Euripides used Gorgias' speech as a source for his play. Segal (1962) 100, meanwhile, suggests that stylistic criteria favour a date at the very end of the fifth century or early in the fourth.

Gorgias' rhetorical talents and takes the form of a defence speech for Palamedes against the accusation of treason.[60] The use of a mythical case, rather than one drawn from supposed real life, like those in Antiphon's antilogies or rhetorical handbooks, may have been intended to add entertainment value to an instructional model speech.[61] Unlike Antisthenes, who composed a pair of speeches for Ajax and Odysseus, Gorgias did not write a speech in Odysseus' voice; our impression of Odysseus comes only through Palamedes' words. Through Gorgias' speech, we may gain some insight into what Palamedes' defence speeches were like in the tragedies.

One thing that may strike us as odd is Gorgias' choice of Palamedes as his fictitious defendant, since the story goes that Palamedes' defence is unsuccessful and does not save his life. Though the speech itself is cogent in that Palamedes' arguments are convincing, ultimately this is a scenario in which the persuasion fails. The speech shows both the power and limitations of human λόγος, since the truth that Palamedes knows cannot be communicated to the judges effectively through speech.[62] Towards the end of the speech, Palamedes admits that judgements are not based on the truth of the speeches alone (35).

One crucial difference between this text and the tragedies is the absence of physical 'evidence' of Palamedes' crime; there is no false letter and no gold. As Gorgias is concerned with logical arguments and their presentation, he deviates from the tragic tradition and focuses instead only on the speeches. Therefore, it is Odysseus' word against Palamedes', and this is important for the arguments of the defence. At its core, this speech is an epistemological exploration of truth and how it can be known and demonstrated.

Gorgias contrasts the two opponents in several ways. Palamedes, for example, advises the jurors to pay attention to deeds and not words or speeches (34). This provides an interesting contrast, since both Odysseus and Palamedes are heroes typically associated with words. The tension between words and deeds will be seen again with both Achilles and Ajax, especially in Antisthenes' speech for Ajax.[63] Here, despite his reputation as an intelligent hero and the eloquence of his current

[60] Gagarin (2001) 287 states that the primary aim of the speech is not to persuade but to demonstrate Gorgias' skills.
[61] Knudsen (2012) 34.
[62] Bassino (2022) 51–2.
[63] See pp. 130–1 on Antisthenes. See also p. 76 on Achilles.

speech, Palamedes associates himself instead with deeds. Elsewhere, Palamedes contrasts his good deeds with Odysseus' evil ones but asserts that he will not dwell on the latter as he wishes to be acquitted because of his own good actions (27).

The first half of the speech consists of arguments from probability to demonstrate that the accusation is unfounded. However, some sections are direct addresses to the accuser which may give us some clues as to the sorts of points made by Palamedes concerning Odysseus in the tragedies. Palamedes accuses Odysseus of being an undeserving man (22). Just as Pindar considered Odysseus the inferior in wisdom, so here Palamedes casts himself as superior to his accuser in general character. Palamedes tries to convince the jurors not to trust Odysseus, contrasting the lack of logical sense in Odysseus' accusation to his own flawless logic in the defence (25). The irony here is that the audience of this text knows that Odysseus cannot be trusted but also that his prosecution of Palamedes nevertheless succeeds.

Palamedes also accuses Odysseus of arguing on both sides of an issue, a typically sophistic manoeuvre. Given that Odysseus is elsewhere considered to be a suitable representation of a sophist, most notably in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, it might seem surprising to us that sophists disowned him.[64] As someone associated with good rhetorical skills, flexibility and excellence in persuasion, Odysseus may seem an ideal mouthpiece for sophistic thought. Hippias too, in Plato's dialogue, criticises Odysseus for his flexibility (*Hp*. *mi*. 365b). Montiglio suggests that the denigration of Odysseus might have appealed to the upper-class Athenians to whom the sophists catered.[65] Therefore, to approve of Odysseus would mean going against the opinions of their constituency. Furthermore, she adds that the sophists may have wanted to distance themselves from a character used elsewhere to criticise them, such as in Sophocles.[66]

[64] See p. 191 n. 43 for bibliography on the sophistic Odysseus in *Philoctetes*.
[65] Montiglio (2011) 7.
[66] Montiglio (2011) 7.

1.3. Major Themes

1.3.1. *Sophia*

One of the most important aspects of Palamedes' character is his *sophia*, usually translated as wisdom or intellect. This features prominently in all the fifth-century texts we have looked at. Palamedes was viewed as a *protos heuretēs*, the first inventor or discoverer of various things.[67] Across the texts we have discussed, Palamedes is credited with a great number of inventions. Evidently, he was considered a crucial mythical figure in the fifth century and a hero to whom humanity owed a great deal, the mortal equivalent of Prometheus. The *heuretēs* was also a topic of interest for the sophists, perhaps explaining Gorgias' interest in Palamedes.[68] The Greeks may have viewed him as a kind of intellectual culture-hero or exemplar of human progress.[69] Thus, in all three tragedians we find words either derived from the verb to discover or referring to inventions: ηὕρηκ' (Aesch. fr. 181a); ἐφηῦρε (Soph. frr. 432.1, 432.8, 479); εὑρήματα (Soph. fr. 432.2); ἀνευρίσκων (Eur. *Phil*. fr. 789d.9); ἐξηῦρον (Eur. fr. 578). Gorgias on several occasions has Palamedes call himself a 'benefactor' both for the Greeks and for all humans (εὐεργέτης, 30, 36). Webster, when discussing Euripides, calls Palamedes a 'pure scientist', in contrast to Odysseus as a 'careerist'.[70]

That such benevolence and utility could be disregarded by the judges – who have been beguiled by the deceptive persuasion of Odysseus – shows the power of speech and rhetoric. Odysseus uses his intellect for selfish purposes instead of using it to benefit the Greeks. He also appropriates Palamedes' greatest invention, writing, to use for his own means and cunningly finds an opportunity to use this tool for deceptive purposes. The army does not hold Palamedes' past utility in high esteem; Odysseus manages to turn the Greeks against their benefactor by spreading lies. We may see this as a reflection of real-life behaviour among the ruling class in fifth-century Athens. For instance, Themistocles' father supposedly warned his son against engaging in politics by pointing out neglected triremes as a metaphor for those who had outlived their usefulness (Plut. *Them*. 2.6).

[67] Farioli (2010) 208.
[68] Sutton (1984) 83.
[69] Scodel (1980) 116; Sutton (1984) 83.
[70] Webster (1967) 176.

We also see in the tragic fragments and in Gorgias an abundance of words with the σοφ- root: πάνσοφον, σοφισμάτων (Aesch. fr. 181a); σοφωτάτας (Soph. fr. 479); σοφώτατα (Eur. *Phil*. fr. 789d.9); σοφώτατος (Eur. fr. 580); σοφός (Eur. fr. 581); σοφόν (Eur. fr. 583); σοφίᾳ (Gorg. *Pal*. 16). The adjective *sophos* is a key term in fifth-century presentations of Odysseus. Part of the reason for this is the ambiguity of its meaning. One the one hand, *sophos* can refer to someone who is wise or skilled in some way, as Palamedes is.[71] On the other hand, *sophos* can also mean clever in a negative sense, as Odysseus often appears.[72] The differing kinds of *sophia* seems to be especially prominent in Euripides' version of the story.[73]

Palamedes and Odysseus become embodiments of the two contrasting forms of *sophia*. Barrett, for instance, calls Palamedes a 'wise σοφός' and Odysseus a 'clever σοφός'.[74] The two heroes are contrasted, with one showing the beneficial qualities of intellect and the other the danger of its abuse. Elsewhere, Odysseus, though a suspect sort of *sophos*, will benefit the army through his various schemes and deceptions as we will see throughout this thesis. In his contest with Palamedes, however, he is entirely self-serving, motivated only by envy, which is the next key theme we will consider.

1.3.2. *Phthonos*

It is Palamedes' superior intellect that attracts the envy, *phthonos*, of Odysseus. Φθόνος is not a term which we find in Homer. The related verb, φθονέω, does appear a few times in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but there has the meaning 'to hinder, debar, withhold'.[75] In Greek society, envy was aroused when any man grew popular and gained increased honour. As Walcot observes, in Athens the institution of ostracism catered for widespread envy.[76] At times, envy was even considered an emotion worth killing for; Plutarch suggests that Pericles was accused of killing Ephialtes because of envy of his reputation (*Per*. 10.6). In Aristotle's view, envy is the characteristic of

[71] LSJ s.v. σοφός.
[72] See e.g. Soph. fr. 913, where he is referred to as πάνσοφος.
[73] Morgan (2022) 97. Rosenbloom (2009) 204 notes that the condemnatory use of *sophos* to characterise a false or unjust but eloquent speaker is a Euripidean *topos*; see *Med*. 579–87, *Hec*. 1187–94, *Antiope* fr. 206.
[74] Barrett (2001) 12.
[75] Herrmann (2003) 73; e.g. *Il*. 4.55–6; *Od*. 1.346.
[76] Walcot (1978) 54.

base men, since envy – unlike emulation, which spurs men on to obtain goods – pushes men to deprive others of goods.[77]

Goldhill asserts: ''jealousy' and 'envy' both appear within the rhetoric of explanation and within the destructive exchanges of tragedy, but neither motivates a plot, dominates the action, or even receives extensive representation or debate'.[78] While this may be true of extant tragedies, it is certainly not true of the *Palamedes* tragedies, in which Odysseus' envy is the main motivator of the action.[79] The scholion to Euripides' *Orestes* 432 specifically refers to Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes being envious (φθονήσαντες). This comes after Palamedes has made a 'great name' for himself among the Greeks. Just as in historical accounts of influential Athenians, here we see an illustration of the envy that honour and acclaim can invite.[80]

In Gorgias' defence speech, Palamedes acknowledges that to hear him praise himself may arouse envy in the jurors. He starts by warning them that he will say something invidious (ἐπίφθονος, 28) but true about himself. Then, he asks that no one feel envy (μηδένα φθονῆσαι, 28) at what he says. This suggests an anxiety that jurors in trials may make their decision influenced by envy rather than by the logic of the defence. Earlier on, Palamedes suggests that if Odysseus' accusation is fashioned from jealousy, this would make him the worst of men (3).

As Cairns discusses, identifying envy as a motive of the masses can be a political strategy that serves the interests of the elite.[81] The anxiety that an over-ambitious, self-serving man who is skilfully persuasive might incite the envy of the masses could have been very real among prominent men, including creative types like our authors. Furthermore, prominent intellectuals were the targets of politically motivated trials, as will be discussed in the next section. It is possible, then, that the fear of being treated like Palamedes existed among the fifth-century elite.

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[77] Arist. *Rh*. 2.1388a30–4.
[78] Goldhill (2003) 169.
[79] See Sanders (2014) 118 who also disagrees with Goldhill. *Phthonos* is also an important theme in Euripides' *Alexander*, since Alexander's victory in the athletic games staged at Troy aroused the envy of Deiphobus, who then plotted his murder; see Karamanou (2017) 36.
[80] See Walcot (1978) 54, who calls this the 'standard paradox for a Greek': 'one wants to be honoured and this is impossible for a poor man, and yet honour and wealth inspire envy in others and this envy must not be fostered'.
[81] Cairns (2003) 237.

1.3.3. Treason and Trials

In many cases, the best way to remove a rival in Athens was through the courts. Antiphon, for example, tries to prove that Lycinus had no motive for murdering Herodes because if he had, he would have brought him into court on a charge which carried the death sentence, thus enlisting the help of Athens' laws in dispatching his enemy (5.61).[82] Similarly, Andocides opens one of his speeches by referring to his enemies' attempts to do him harm, his present predicament of having to defend himself in court being an example (1.1–2).

We see in historical texts that many prominent Athenians of the fifth century were put on trial at least once, often on charges of *prodosia*, a general term for treason and treachery.[83] This term is applied to Palamedes' case in Euripides and Gorgias.[84] Often, one of the motives for these trials is envy or political rivalry (discussed above), as, for instance, Plutarch says was the case for Themistocles (Plut. *Them*. 23). Therefore, the manipulation and abuse of the judicial process to remove Palamedes from the scene was just like real-life situations from the fifth century.

Scholars have long discussed the connections between tragedy and performances by speakers in the Athenian law courts.[85] Palamedes has often been overlooked in these discussions, and the plays of all three tragedians, which each featured a trial scene, have not been mentioned. Furthermore, evidence suggests that all three major tragedians had experience with the law courts.[86] Aeschylus and Euripides were possibly put on trial for impiety.[87] Aelian even suggests that the people were on the verge of stoning Aeschylus (*VH* 5.19). Sophocles may have also been put on trial by his sons and for his involvement in the Council of the Four Hundred.[88] We must also remember that the Athenian audience would have had more experience of legal

[82] Cohen (1995) 104.
[83] Bauman (1990) 6.
[84] Eur. *Phil*. fr. 789d.8; Eur. *Pal*. test.*va; Gorg. *Pal*. 6, 13; cf. Schol. Eur. *Or.* 432.
[85] See Hall (2006) 353–92 and (2021) 500–4.
[86] See Hall (2021) 500–4. The comic poet Aristophanes was also famously subjected to a legal challenge by Cleon (*Ach*. 370–84).
[87] Aeschylus: Arist. *Eth*. *Nic*. 3.1111a9–10; Ael. *VH* 5.19; Anon., *Comm*. *ad Arist*. Eth. Nic. 3.2 = Heraclides fr. 97 Schütrumpf. Euripides: Arist. *Rh*. 3.1416a8. For further discussion of the trials, see Bauman (1990) 45–7.
[88] On the prosecution by his sons, see *Life of Sophocles* 13; Cic. *Sen*. 22; Plut. *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs* 3 = *Moralia* 785a; Hall (2021) 500–1. On his trial for involvement with the Council, see Arist. *Rh*. 3.1419a30–1; Hall (2021) 503. See also p. 190 below on Sophocles' involvement with the Council.

proceedings than a modern audience; many thousands, especially the elderly poor, served as jurors and could view public trials as spectators. Some may have personally experienced similar treatment to Palamedes since rivalrous prosecutions as part of ongoing feuds were not restricted solely to prominent politicians. Cohen's analysis of litigation within the context of a feuding society shows how courts were used as competitive arenas for the pursuit of revenge as part of private feuds.[89] Therefore, allusions to contemporary trials or the typical behaviour of those giving speeches in court would be recognisable to many in the theatre.

For the three *Palamedes* plays, we do not have firm evidence of how the trial scenes are staged or who pronounces the verdict. However, from all three we have fragments showing that characters discuss Palamedes' past inventions. Just as in Athenian trials, in which the speaker in a trial attempted to present himself as a man of moral worth and a provider of valuable public service, here we find reminders to the judge and/or jury of Palamedes' value to the army.[90] These passages may constitute arguments from probability, like those in Gorgias, to show Palamedes' devotion to the army and therefore the unlikelihood of his betrayal of them. Arguments based on probability, including a focus on the character of the defendant, are common in surviving legal speeches.[91]

We also have little evidence from the fragments for what Odysseus' prosecution speech is like in Aeschylus and Euripides. Part of his indictment of Palamedes rests on the false letter, demonstrating why it was sensible for Athenian trials to avoid the use of written documents, which could be easily falsified.[92] One thing that may help us imagine his prosecution is Alcidamas' fourth-century speech, *Odysseus, Against the Treachery of Palamedes*.[93] This may have been written as a response to Gorgias, since Alcidamas was a pupil of the elder sophist and a radical, daring thinker. In this speech, Odysseus attempts to undermine the importance of Palamedes' inventions, either claiming that they ought to be attributed to others or that they are a danger to society. He also implies that Palamedes' wisdom is a danger and should be feared.

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[89] Cohen (1995) 118.
[90] Cohen (1995) 61–3; Carey (2011) 18; Wolpert and Kapparis (2011) xxv and xxviii; Knudsen (2012) 39.
[91] Carey (2011) 19; Wolpert and Kapparis (2011) xxvi.
[92] Wolpert and Kapparis (2011) xxvii.
[93] Some have suggested that this speech is not a genuine speech of Alcidamas. For further discussion, see Stanford (1949a) 47 and (1963) 96, Worman (1999) 60, and Edwards (2007) 49.

This speech follows trends in fourth-century oratory in relying more on character assassination than arguments from probability, as in Gorgias.[94] Euripides fr. 580 fits with this style of character assassination, since it implies that despite his wisdom Palamedes is not above greed, which supports the accusation that he would betray Greece for Trojan gold. Therefore, in the tragedies Odysseus probably tries to undermine the importance of Palamedes' inventions or in some way incite envy of his successes. Naturally, there would be more focus on the physical evidence than in Gorgias' speech, in which it is non-existent.

We see criticisms of the courts elsewhere in the fifth century, mostly in Aristophanic comedies. In *Acharnians*, for example, Dicaeopolis says the old men look forward to 'biting with their ballots' (376). Next, he describes Cleon's treatment of Aristophanes in court, saying 'he hauled me before the Council, and slandered me, and tongue-lashed me with lies' (379–80). *Wasps* too is critical of some aspects of behaviour in the courts and those men who love to be jurors and cast vindictive sentences. Philocleon says humorously that the Delphic Oracle told him that if he ever acquitted anyone he would 'dry up and blow away' (158–60). Litigious politicians, such as Hyperbolus (*Ach*. 846), are mentioned by name in Aristophanes. Cicero would later condemn the assemblies of Ancient Greece, noting that legal decrees are 'the wild decisions of a mob, the voice of every nonentity, the din of ignoramuses' (*Flac*. 19).

Court activity in Athens seems to have intensified in the latter part of the fifth century. Bauman describes this period as follows: 'Philosophers were rounded up, dead men were put on trial, and – the ultimate madness – brilliantly successful commanders were executed'.[95] We can see from as early as Aeschylus that there was an anxiety about being falsely charged by an adept manipulator such as Odysseus, and in the late fifth century prominent Athenians experienced this first hand. As Morgan puts it: 'his [Palamedes'] fate, and the focus on it by the tragedians, reflects the nightmare scenario for fifth-century Athenians: finding oneself on trial for one's life in a lawcourt and opposed by an expert and unscrupulous opponent'.[96]

[94] Edwards (2007) 49.
[95] Bauman (1990) 61.
[96] Morgan (2022) 97; see also Alwine (2015) 131 on the general fear of a prosecutor deceiving a jury with trumped up charges in pursuit of vengeance.

The unjust consequences of Odysseus' actions in the reimaginings of the myth were played out in real life when Athenian citizens turned on each other and used the courts to settle scores and remove rivals. The Palamedes myth in the fifth century thus became a cautionary tale. It warns of what can happen when deceitful and self-serving men use the courts as their weapon and how juries can be easily misled by such men. The most famous example of this is the trial of Socrates. Socrates refers to the unjust punishment of Palamedes in both Plato's and Xenophon's accounts of his defence speech.[97] Furthermore, in the *Apology*, Plato is concerned with distinguishing *sophia* from other practices and establishing distance between the *sophia* of Socrates and that of the sophists.[98] Palamedes is therefore an appropriate analogy as he too, as we have seen, was at the centre of a contest over the meaning of *sophia*.[99]

1.4. Conclusion

Scholars over the years have argued that plays such as Euripides' *Hecuba* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes* show Odysseus at his worst and most cruel. However, the Palamedes myth paints a far fouler picture of him. In this story, his actions are thoroughly unjustified; there is no argument from expediency or utilitarianism that could be made as there is elsewhere. In other episodes we will look at, no matter how callous he is, it could be argued that Odysseus is always trying to do what is best for the group, usually the Greek army. However, in Palamedes' case this is not so. Odysseus is motivated purely by envy, and this leads him to have an innocent man condemned. The difference is fascinating, and the loss of the tragedies in which this plays out is regrettable. It would have been interesting to see how the trial of Palamedes was portrayed and how deceptive, manipulative, and unlikeable the tragedians may have made Odysseus. By looking at this largely forgotten fragmentary material, we can therefore build a more complete picture of fifth-century responses to Odysseus. We also build a more complete picture of tragedy itself, since the emphasis on envy in these plays is unusual, not just in presentations of Odysseus but in the genre as a whole.

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[97] Xen. *Ap*. 26; Pl. *Ap*. 41b. Cf. Xen. *Mem*. 4.33. See Barrett (2001) 26–30 on the similarities between Plato's *Apology* and Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes*.
[98] Barrett (2001) 24.
[99] Barrett (2001) 24.

The Palamedes episode also portrays Odysseus differently from his appearances in other tragedies by placing him in a law court setting. In the fifth century, the story of Palamedes became a cautionary tale that warns how a skilled politician could manipulate jurors to discredit and remove a rival, as happened often in fifth-century Athenian life. As we see in the case of Socrates, Palamedes is the archetypal hero for innocently accused men, particularly intellectuals. Unscrupulous deceivers like Odysseus could persuade judges to overlook positive contributions made to the city by the accused. The sympathy for Palamedes is all the stronger because what happens to him could happen to any prominent Athenian.

This episode also foregrounds a key feature of Odysseus' portrayal in the fifth century – the questionable quality of being *sophos*. Palamedes and Odysseus represent two different kinds of *sophia*, one beneficial and the other more problematic. When contrasted to Palamedes, the suspect and unsavoury nature of Odysseus' kind of *sophia* is much more obvious. We will seem him labelled *sophos* by his opponents throughout this thesis, and occasionally by his allies.[100] His contest with Palamedes is therefore an important subtext for these many references.

Odysseus' jealousy and scheming against Palamedes cost not only one innocent life, but also tainted the lives of other Greeks who were taken in by Odysseus' deceit and agreed to condemn and kill Palamedes unjustly. Finally, the revenge of Nauplius shows what can happen when courts are used for unjust purposes. In contrast to Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, which shows the ideal scenario of a court ending violent retribution, Nauplius has no choice but to take matters into his own hands, since legal procedure cannot be trusted to deliver justice.

[100] See pp. 73–4, 119–20, 157, 172, 200, 206–7, 219, and 245–6.

Chapter 2

Odysseus and Achilles

Achilles was a popular figure in fifth-century literature and art.[1] He featured or was referred to in many tragedies, was depicted on numerous Athenian vases, and was also used as an example to illustrate points in various philosophers' work. By the fifth century, Achilles is often contrasted with Odysseus or is strongly associated with another who is contrasted with Odysseus, such as Ajax, Philoctetes, or Neoptolemus. Odysseus and Achilles typically represent two different forms of heroism, brains and brawn, but the two heroes are not as opposed in the Epic Cycle as Odysseus and Ajax.[2] Odysseus and Achilles never reach the level of animosity which Odysseus achieves with all the other characters discussed in this thesis.

In the Epic Cycle, both Odysseus and Achilles try to avoid joining the Trojan expedition and both do so by using deception. Similarly, both of their plots are foiled, and they are then forced to enlist. However, their attitudes to the expedition once they join are less alike. Achilles in both Homer and later literature remains headstrong and easily provoked to quarrel with other leaders. Odysseus, on the other hand, is presented in Homer and in tragedy as a loyal servant of the expedition and willing to undertake any task, no matter how degrading, to ensure the Greeks' success.

The three plays discussed in this chapter – Sophocles' *Those Who Dine Together*, Euripides' *Telephus*, and Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* – are all set at the outset of the Trojan War, before the Greek force has reached Troy. All of them contain quarrels among the Greek forces that Odysseus either participates in or tries to resolve. Particularly in the case of the two Euripidean plays, both of which can be dated, we can see how the presentation of Odysseus changed significantly by the end of the fifth century. In Euripides we will also have the chance to examine some unusual relationships between Odysseus and other characters, particularly Telephus, Agamemnon, and Menelaus.

The headstrong and stubborn Achilles often presents an obstacle to the progression or advancement of the Greek force, through withdrawal or refusal. Therefore, in

[1] See e.g. Michelakis (2002) 8–16.
[2] See Chapter 3 on Odysseus and Ajax.

order for the Greeks to succeed, Achilles' mind has to be changed or his resentment assuaged in some way. In both epic and tragedy, Odysseus is often the character responsible for the attempt to remove the obstacle created by Achilles. In tragedy, his methods vary, and by the late fifth century, Odysseus' vehicle for persuading Achilles and the other leaders is not words but force.

2.1. Odysseus and Achilles in Homer and the Epic Cycle

Odysseus and Achilles feature together in a variety of episodes across several Epic Cycle poems. They are never opponents in violence or combat but sometimes have differences of opinion. Before the Trojan War starts, Odysseus is involved in recruiting Achilles to the expedition and foils his disguise among a crowd of girls on Scyros. This episode is not mentioned by Proclus but probably featured in the *Cypria*. According to a scholiast on the *Iliad*, the Greeks send Odysseus, Phoenix, and Nestor to Scyros to retrieve Achilles.[3] Odysseus suggests playing a trick by scattering weapons and work baskets in front of the girls; while the girls take up the baskets, Achilles goes for the weapons, thus exposing himself.[4] The story encapsulates the stereotypical differences in the style of heroism of Odysseus and Achilles; Odysseus is the resourceful schemer while Achilles is the soldier.

Later in the *Cypria*, the Greek forces are trapped at Aulis, and Agamemnon receives an oracle stating that he must sacrifice his daughter to receive winds for the fleet to sail. According to Apollodorus, Agamemnon dispatches Odysseus and the herald Talthybius with instructions to fetch his daughter Iphigenia by claiming that she will marry Achilles (*Epit*. 3.22). In the Epic Cycle, therefore, Odysseus is part of the deceit which brings Iphigenia to Aulis. We have no record of Achilles' reaction to being involved in the scheme; his reaction will become a major issue in Euripides' staging of Iphigenia's fateful arrival at Aulis.

In the *Iliad*, the most famous interaction between Odysseus and Achilles is the embassy to persuade Achilles to rejoin battle. In his response to Odysseus' speech, Achilles vows to speak his mind and then says his oft-quoted simile: 'hateful in my eyes as the gates of Hades is that man who hides one thing in his mind and says another' (9.312–3). In this speech, Achilles is referring to himself, since he does not

[3] Schol. (D) *Il*. 19.326 = *Cypria* fr. 19 West.
[4] Schol. (D) *Il*. 19.326 = *Cypria* fr. 19 West.

want to say the opposite of what he thinks. But the audience may also apply his words to Odysseus.[5] Odysseus' persuasion is unsuccessful, and he is unable to reconcile Achilles and Agamemnon. Similarly, later in the *Iliad* Odysseus fails again in persuading Achilles, this time to have a meal before entering battle (19.154–237).

A quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles is mentioned briefly in the *Odyssey* by the bard Demodocus (8.76–8). The cause of the quarrel is not mentioned, implying that it was a well-known episode to Homer's audience and needed no further explanation.[6] Scholiasts expanded the story and claim that Agamemnon was given an oracle which said that the Greeks would capture Troy after their best men quarrelled.[7] This episode was possibly one of the inspirations behind Sophocles' *Those Who Dine Together*.[8] The *Cypria* also mentions a quarrel at a feast on the island of Tenedos, this time between Agamemnon and Achilles, who is angry at being invited late (Arg. §9 West).[9] In both cases, we do not know how the quarrels are eventually resolved.

Odysseus and Achilles have another famous encounter in the underworld in *Odyssey* Book 11. Odysseus meets Achilles among the shades of the dead and congratulates him on the honour he received in life and the power he now has among the dead. To this Achilles responds, in another famous line, that he would rather work as a serf and be alive than be king of the dead (489–91). Scholars have seen in this exchange an admission from Achilles that the Odyssean heroism is superior; life is preferable to death, and Odysseus' versatility has enabled him to avoid Achilles' fate.[10]

2.2. Odysseus and Achilles in the Fifth Century

In Homer, Achilles states that his home is in Phthia (*Il*. 1.155), a city in Thessaly in northeastern mainland Greece, but he is also associated with the island of Scyros, where Thetis hides him to avoid him travelling to Troy. Scyros was colonised by the Athenians, under the leadership of Cimon, in around 475 (Thuc. 1.98.2).[11] Scyros remained a member of the Delian League and does not seem to have been required to

[5] Parry (1964) 52.
[6] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 85.
[7] Schol. *Od*. 8.75, 77, 80. Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 85.
[8] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 86.
[9] Davies (2001) 45 suggests this is the inspiration for *Those Who Dine Together*.
[10] Edwards (1985) 227; Nagy (1999) 35; Schein (2006) 137; *contra* Schmiel (1987), who argues that Achilles' response to Odysseus is entirely consistent with what we know of Achilles from the *Iliad*.
[11] On the date, see Podlecki (1971).

pay tribute.[12] Furthermore, Scyros is not mentioned by Thucydides as ever revolting from Athenian rule. Achilles is therefore associated with an island seemingly loyal to Athenian rule, which had been an early member of Athens' growing empire.

At the start of the fifth century the embassy to Achilles became popular on Athenian pots.[13] Some of these pots have several figures appealing to Achilles, but others condense the embassy to just Odysseus. Even on those pots with several figures, Odysseus is the central figure contrasted with Achilles. Achilles is usually draped with his eyes fixed on the ground, whereas Odysseus often has a much more open posture, either leaning back on a chair or standing over Achilles.[14] The clustering of these embassy scenes in the earlier fifth century suggests a high point of popularity for the episode at that time, perhaps inspired by Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*.[15] This play depicts the embassy to Achilles as part of a trilogy centred around Achilles.[16] It is tempting to speculate that Odysseus is a character in *Myrmidons* given his presence on the pots. However, there is no mention of Odysseus in the fragments and no concrete evidence that he features. Nevertheless, *Myrmidons* was an important early play in Achilles' fifth-century reception and no doubt influenced the later representations of Achilles on stage in Sophocles and Euripides.

Odysseus and Achilles also appear together in Euripides' *Scyrians*.[17] This play shows the retrieval of Achilles from Scyros. Odysseus, as he did in the Epic Cycle version, probably devises a trick to force Achilles to reveal himself. Odysseus is also likely to be involved in persuading Achilles to leave Scyros and fight in the Trojan War.[18] Unfortunately, there is not enough surviving evidence from this play for us to draw any conclusions about how Odysseus was presented. However, it is important to note

[12] Constantakopoulou (2007) 263.
[13] Kossatz-Deissmann (1981) *LIMC* I.1 s.v. 'Achilleus' nos. 439–54. On the embassy scene on pots, see e.g. Shapiro (1994) 19–21, Langridge-Noti (2009), and Muellner (2012).
[14] Odysseus seated: see e.g. red-figure *stamnos*, attributed to the Triptolemos Painter, c.480. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig: BS477 [= *LIMC* Achilleus no. 453]. Odysseus standing over Achilles: see e.g. the inside of a red-figure cup, c. 480. London, British Museum: 1843.11-3.61 [= *LIMC* Achilleus no. 444].
[15] Shapiro (1994) 19 points out that these vases all share in common the figure of the 'mourning Achilles', which contrasts to the Achilles of the embassy scene in the *Iliad*, suggesting an intervening telling of the story, which the vase-painters are depicting.
[16] See Michelakis (2002) Chapter 2 on Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*.
[17] Frr. 681a–6. On this play, see Wright (2018) 199.
[18] Fr. **683a is preserved by Plutarch who says that Odysseus rebukes Achilles (*How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* 13 = *Moralia* 34d).

that there was at least one other play in which Odysseus persuading Achilles played an important part.

2.2.1. Sophocles' *Those Who Dine Together*

Sophocles' *Those Who Dine Together* dramatises a quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles when the Achaeans are still on their way to Troy. The action of the play takes place before the Greeks have reached Troy, and the likely setting is Tenedos, the scene of the feast in the *Cypria*. If the plot follows the story from the *Cypria*, then Achilles takes offence at being invited late.

Some fragments from the play have an untragic tone, and so scholars have been undecided about whether this play is a tragedy, a satyr play, or even a prosatyric play.[19] Sommerstein, after considering a wide range of evidence, concludes that the play is prosatyric because it refers to gluttony, chamber-pots, and baldness, and 'there is no evidence whatsoever for a chorus of satyrs'.[20] However, one problem with his conclusion is that the only other surviving prosatyric play is Euripides' *Alcestis*, which has a markedly different tone to that of *Those Who Dine Together*.[21] Furthermore, while we cannot prove the presence of satyrs in the play, we also cannot prove their absence. Given the lack of other prosatyric plays for comparison and without further evidence on the identity of the chorus, it is prudent to treat *Those Who Dine Together* as a satyr play.

We know that Odysseus is a speaking character, but there is differing opinion on what role he plays in the plot, as the fragments do not make this clear. Based on their interactions in the *Iliad*, we might presume that Odysseus tries to reconcile Agamemnon and Achilles. On the other hand, closer inspection of the fragments suggests that Odysseus could also be involved in an altercation with Achilles himself.

Plutarch preserves an exchange in which Odysseus challenges Achilles on his wish to leave (fr. 566):

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[19] López Eire (2003) 398–400 suggests that it is a satyr play because of the reference to a chamber pot in fr. 565. Wright (2018) 84–5 suggests likewise because no other tragic scene exhibits the same level of silly infantile humour as we find in this play. See also Lloyd-Jones (1996) 281 and Michelakis (2002) 181.

[20] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 101–3.

[21] See Sutton (1974a) 139, who asks, 'What business do we have, in the absence of very strong evidence, to categorize *Syndeipnoi* with a play that it patently does *not* resemble?'.

ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ	ἤδη τὰ Τροίας εἰσορῶν ἑδώλια
	δέδοικας; . .
ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ	(διαγανακτεῖ καὶ ἀποπλεῖν λέγει)
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ	ἐγῷδ᾽ ὃ φεύγεις· οὐ τὸ μὴ κλύειν κακῶς;
	ἀλλ᾽ ἐγγὺς Ἕκτωρ ἐστίν· οὐ μένειν καλόν;
Odysseus	Are you afraid already at the sight of the buildings of Troy?
Achilles	(expresses distress and says that he wants to leave)
Odysseus	I know what you wish to flee from! Is it not from illrepute? But Hector is near! Does not honour demand that you remain?

Plutarch uses this exchange to illustrate how to dissuade individuals from making mistakes, by ascribing to their actions 'unnatural or unbecoming motives'.[22] This implies that Odysseus attempts to persuade Achilles to stay with the army and reconcile with Agamemnon. Plutarch's view of Odysseus' motives in this exchange with Achilles is accepted by Michelakis, who does not discuss the possibility that Odysseus and Achilles quarrelled in this play.[23] On the other hand, Sommerstein suggests that Plutarch has taken the passage out of context, either carelessly or deliberately, and therefore misrepresents the plot of Sophocles' play.[24] He argues instead that Odysseus' words are 'calculated to inflame' because the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles is already underway by this point and Odysseus has already received physical abuse from Achilles (see below). However, a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles in this play is not incompatible with Plutarch's remarks about Odysseus' motives. This conversation, or even *agon*, could come straight after Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon; at this point Odysseus intervenes to prevent Achilles from sailing away, but his intervention is unwelcome. Furthermore, there is no evidence for this fragment's position in the play or its relation to the other fragments.

[22] *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 36 = *Moralia* 74a–c.
[23] Michelakis (2002) 180.
[24] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 130.

It seems likely that Odysseus receives both physical and verbal abuse in this play and, in both cases, it is probably at the hands of Achilles. This would suggest that Odysseus has a fairly active role in the plot and probably does intervene in the original quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. Whether his intervention is aimed at calming things or exacerbating tensions is unclear. However, that he receives abuse suggests that his intervention is unwelcome.

In fr. 565, an unknown speaker describes being hit with a chamber pot hurled by an angry companion. This passage is almost identical to a fragment of Aeschylus' *Bone-Gatherers* (fr. 180) in which the speaker, probably Odysseus, complains of similar treatment, likely to have been received from the suitors. Therefore, it is probable that Odysseus is also the receiver of this treatment in Sophocles. The aggressor is likely to be Achilles as the focus of the play is on Achilles' anger.

Odysseus certainly receives verbal abuse in the play, but we do not know from whom (fr. 567):

> ὦ πάντα πράσσων, ὡς ὁ Σίσυφος πολὺς
>
> ἔνδηλος ἐν σοὶ πάντα χὠ μητρὸς πατήρ
>
> You who are up to everything, how clearly in all things does one see in you much of Sisyphus and of your mother's father!

Odysseus is frequently associated with Sisyphus in both tragedy and satyr drama, but here his descent from his maternal grandfather Autolycus, another renowned trickster, is also mentioned.[25] The reference to Odysseus' family connections with tricksters may suggest a role for Odysseus that features trickery, perhaps to achieve a reunion between Agamemnon and Achilles. ὦ πάντα πράσσων could be another reference to trickery; Sommerstein suggests that this phrase may be regarded as an elegant alternative to the colloquial term *pan(t)ourgos*, a term elsewhere applied to Odysseus.[26]

However, πάντα πράσσων could refer mainly to interference or being a busybody rather than to deceit specifically. A similar expression appears in a fragment from

[25] Eur. *IA* 524, 1362, see p. 87; Aesch. fr. 175, see p. 102; Soph. *Aj*. 189, see p. 115; Soph. *Phil*. 385, 417, 1311, see pp. 204–5; Eur. *Cyc.* 104, see pp. 235–6.
[26] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 133; Soph. *Aj*. 445, Eur. *Phil*. fr. 789d.9.

Euripides' *Oenomaus* which refers to 'the man who tries to do most' (ὁ πλεῖστα πράσσων, fr. 576). There is also a similar reference in *Suppliants*, when the Theban herald complains that Theseus and Athens are busybodies (πράσσειν σὺ πόλλ', 576). Collard and Cropp note that this expression in *Oenomaus* suggests *polypragmosyne*, which usually means excessive activity, ambition, or interference, sometimes litigious.[27] *Polypragmosyne* is a quality particularly associated with Athens in the fifth century; one which the Athenians were proud of, but for which others criticised them.[28]

We can compare what is being said here of Odysseus to criticisms elsewhere of *polypragmosyne*, along with its cognate verb πολυπραγμονέω and adjective πολυπράγμων. These criticisms occur in comedy (e.g. Ar. *Plut*. 913, Eup. fr. 238) and in legal speeches (e.g. Isoc. 7.80, 8.58, 15.98; Lys. 24.24).[29] Isocrates claims that the 'meddlesomeness' of the Athenians caused their allies to defect to Sparta (8.108). Herodotus also refers to the meddlesomeness of Megabates using πολλὰ πράσσω (5.33.4), in a closer similarity to what is said of Odysseus. In Plutarch, Pericles is said to have always been trying to restrain the 'extensive meddlesomeness' of the Athenian people (πολυπραγμοσύνη, *Per*. 21). Therefore, Odysseus is possibly accused of being a busybody rather than specifically a trickster. This might be more appropriate if he is interfering in a quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles; the speaker of the fragment could be Achilles, who is warning Odysseus to mind his own business.

The final fragment that may refer to Odysseus is only a single word: μάσθλης (fr. 571). This noun means leather but can also be used metaphorically to mean someone supple or slippery.[30] It has this meaning in two different Aristophanic comedies (*Eq*.

[27] Collard and Cropp (2009) 45. Its opposite, being ἀπράγμων, was similarly unwelcome. See e.g. the Corinthian representative at the Peloponnesian assembly in 432 who says that the Athenians find laborious activity less of a misfortune than a quiet (ἀπράγμων) life (Thuc. 1.70.8). See also p. 184 below on the Odysseus of Euripides' *Philoctetes* considering how he might have spent his life ἀπραγμόνως.

[28] For a discussion of *polypragmosyne* and Athens, see e.g. Ehrenberg (1947), Whelan (1983), Brock (1998). See also Suksi (1999) 77, who points out that Pericles underscores the Athenian characteristic of *polypragmosyne* in the funeral speech (Thuc. 2.40.2).

[29] The fourth-century comic playwrights Diphilus, Heniochus, and Timocles all had plays entitled *Πολυπράγμονι* (Ath. 6.225a, 271a; 8.339f). See also Aristophanes' *Birds* where the two main characters seek a new home free of the excessive litigation of Athens; they explicitly want somewhere ἀπράγμων (44).

[30] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 97 attribute it to Achilles; LSJ s.v. μάσθλης A II.

269, *Nub*. 449).[31] It is tempting, therefore, to think of this as a metaphorical description of Odysseus, but there is no solid evidence to confirm this.

In fr. 562, Thetis refers to arriving in haste, which implies that she appears as a *deus ex machina*, as she does in Euripides' *Andromache*. Her appearance suggests that a crisis point is reached at the end of the play which necessitates divine intervention. A likely possibility is that Achilles may have been about to carry out his threat to sail away and Thetis prevents him from doing so. Sommerstein, however, suggests that the feuding in the play gets so out of hand that the leaders plan to murder each other. He specifically points to Odysseus, the characteristic schemer, as the likely plotter.[32] There is little evidence to support this theory, and Thetis' appearance may more easily be explained as preventing Achilles' departure from Troy.

The fragments suggest that Odysseus and Achilles do quarrel in this play. Odysseus definitely receives verbal abuse and, given the similarity to the Aeschylean fragment, probably physical abuse as well. It is not unreasonable to surmise that Achilles is Odysseus' opponent in both cases. However, it is certainly unclear to what extent Odysseus inflames Achilles' anger or tries to assuage it. A satyric Odysseus and Achilles might behave quite differently from how they do in tragedy. We have evidence from Euripides' *Cyclops* for a satyric presentation of Odysseus, and we also know of at least one satyr play, Sophocles' *Lovers of Achilles*, featuring Achilles.[33] Achilles' anger and its pettiness in this play made it notable to later authors such as Aristotle, Plutarch, and Philodemus.[34] Odysseus' usual calm and diplomatic response to Achilles' temper as seen in the *Iliad* and in *Telephus* (see below) might have been absent in this more rambunctious presentation of the myth and his roguish side brought to the fore.

2.2.2. Euripides' *Telephus*

In Euripides' *Telephus*, produced in 438, Odysseus seems to have a conciliatory role more akin to his characterisation in the *Iliad*, rather than an antagonist role as in other Euripidean plays. The play is therefore important evidence against the

[31] See p. 260 on the relevance of this passage of *Clouds* to Odysseus.
[32] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick, and Talboy (2006) 97.
[33] See Chapter 6 on *Cyclops*. See Michelakis (2002) 172–8 and O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 306–13 on *Lovers of Achilles*.
[34] Arist. *Rh*. 2.1401b14–9, Plut. *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 36 = *Moralia* 74a–c, Phld. *De ira* 18.16.24; see Michelakis (2002) 178–81.

suggestion that Euripides was wholly deprecatory in his depictions of Odysseus.[35] Telephus was a popular figure in tragedy and appeared in at least two plays by Aeschylus and at least three by Sophocles, possibly part of a *Telepheia* tetralogy.[36] Aristotle also includes Telephus in his list of characters about whom the best tragedies are written (*Poet*. 1453a 19–20). *Telephus* was one of Euripides' most famous plays in antiquity and was especially notable for the rags worn by the hero and the near-legendary performance of the star actor Callipides in the role.[37] Telephus' disguise seems to have been a Euripidean invention.[38] We have no evidence that Odysseus appears in Aeschylus' or Sophocles' versions, nor that he is mentioned in the Epic Cycle story of Telephus. His involvement in the story could have been an innovation made by Euripides.

This play is important not just for the interactions between Odysseus and Achilles but also Odysseus and Telephus. Much of the evidence for Telephus' character in this play, both from the fragments and Aristophanic parodies, suggests that Telephus displays characteristics similar to those of Odysseus.[39] Euripides' Telephus is noted for his rhetorical skill and his famous disguise; attributes that demonstrate a greater resemblance to Odysseus' craftiness than to Palamedes' practical wisdom. We will discuss, therefore, not just the pairing of Odysseus and Achilles in the play but also the pairing of Odysseus with this other 'Odyssean' character.

Euripides' play depicts Telephus' search for a cure to his wound, which was inflicted by Achilles when the Greeks attacked Mysia. In the first part of the play, Telephus appears disguised as a beggar to defend the Trojans. This defence speech was parodied twice by Aristophanes (*Ach*. 496–556, *Thesm*. 466–519). The defence of the Trojans shocks the Greeks, and it is likely that at this point someone comments on Telephus' eloquence with reference to Odysseus (fr. 715):[40]

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[35] See e.g. Stanford (1963) 116 who suggests Euripides has a 'consistent tone of antipathy and disparagement towards Odysseus' both in extant plays *and* in fragments, which 'seems to confirm the view that Euripides personally disliked the character of Odysseus as he saw it'. Suksi (1999) 146 states that Odysseus is always a villain in Euripidean tragedies. See also Roisman (2014) 910.

[36] Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995) 25. On the *Telephus* plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, see Wright (2018) 56–7 and 119 respectively.

[37] Csapo (2002) 130–1; Wyles (2007) 111–38; Hall (2010) 337; Wright (2018) 200 notes that the play was popular for at least 50 years after its first performance.

[38] Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995) 23; Hall (2018a) 119, and esp. Wyles (2007) 111–38.

[39] On the difficulties of using Aristophanes to reconstruct the play, see Handley and Rea (1957) 22–5.

[40] This fragment is considered part of the reaction to Telephus' speech by Heath (1987) 278 and Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995) 18.

οὐκ ἆρ᾽ Ὀδυσσεύς ἐστιν αἰμύλος μόνος·
χρεία διδάσκει, κἂν βραδύς τις ᾖ, σοφόν.
Not only Odysseus, then, is a crafty speaker.
Need makes a man clever, even if he is slow to learn.

The comparison to Odysseus is a natural one to make because Odysseus is the clever speaker *par excellence* and is also well known for his disguises, both in the *Odyssey* and Epic Cycle, and elsewhere in tragedy.[41] Αἰμύλος and σοφός are both used in other plays to describe Odysseus.[42] However, it is difficult to tell without context how condemnatory this comparison to Odysseus is intended to be. If these lines come from a hostile reaction to Telephus' speech, then it is likely that Telephus is being criticised, but the choice of Odysseus as comparand makes it ambiguous, since Odysseus is one of the Greek leaders. Furthermore, αἰμύλος and σοφός can both be ambiguous, the latter especially so. Odysseus is never called αἰμύλος by an ally in tragedy; it is always by an enemy.[43]

Telephus' talents as a speaker are referred to in one of Aristophanes' parodies of this play. In *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis visits Euripides to borrow the rags of one of his tragic heroes. After the two go through a list of various Euripidean characters who appear in rags, Dicaeopolis specifies that he wants the costume of the man who is 'a beggar, a smooth-talker, an awesome speaker' (προσαιτῶν, στωμύλος, δεινὸς λέγειν, 429), i.e. Telephus.[44] Although these exact descriptors are not applied to Odysseus in other texts, their meanings are certainly consistent with Odysseus' presentations elsewhere, and Dicaeopolis' description could easily be applied to Odysseus. It is

[41] His disguised entry into Troy is mentioned in *Hecuba* (239–41) and *Rhesus* (503–5, 710–9), and it may have been depicted in Sophocles' *Laconian Women*. He is also disguised to a certain extent in both Aeschylus' and Euripides' *Philoctetes* plays; see Chapter 5.

[42] Αἰμύλος: Soph. *Aj*. 388, see pp. 111–2; Eur. *Rhes*. 498, 709, see pp. 161–2 and 170. Σοφός: Soph. *Aj*. 1374, see pp. 119–20; *Phil*. 190, 431–2, 1244–6, see pp. 200, 206–7, and 219; Eur. *Tro*. 1225, see p. 157; *Cyc*. 450, see pp. 245–6; *Rhes*. 625, see p. 172. Cf. p. 57 on the use of σοφ- words in texts concerning Odysseus and Palamedes.

[43] Ajax, Hector, and the Trojan chorus of *Rhesus*. On the suggestion that Odysseus is on stage during the scene from which these lines come, Heath (1987) 274 n. 7 notes 'one might even argue that αἰμύλος is a sufficiently uncomplimentary term to imply his [Odysseus'] absence'. Handley and Rea (1957) 34 also suggest that Odysseus is not present when these lines are spoken.

[44] O'Sullivan (2020) 575 notes that here Aristophanes describes Telephus in 'sophistic terms, since being δεινὸς λέγειν was seen as the sophistic area of expertise *par excellence*'. Socrates describes the sophist Thrasymachus as δεινός (Pl. *Phdr*. 267c–d), and indeed Thrasymachus seems to have adapted a line from Euripides' *Telephus* in one of his speeches (Thrasym. B2 DK = Eur. fr. 719).

interesting, therefore, to have two such similar characters together in this play and furthermore for them not to be enemies but to come together in order to persuade Achilles (see below).

We unfortunately do not know whether Odysseus is present during the scenes which feature Telephus' speech or the subsequent revelation of Telephus' true identity. A scholion suggests fr. 710, asking a question about something Telephus should not have done, is spoken by the disguised Telephus to refute Odysseus.[45] Reconstructions of the play also suggest that Odysseus brings news of Telephus' infiltration of the Greek camp.[46] Heath even suggests that Odysseus interrogates Telephus and tries to establish his identity.[47] The establishment of Telephus' Greek heritage also seems to have been an important issue in the play.[48] The interrogation of Telephus was therefore similar to many Athenian trials in which proving or disproving identity, citizenship, or ethnicity were key features.[49] If it is Odysseus who successfully penetrates Telephus' disguise through cross-examination and/or probes his claims to Hellenic ancestry, this would be a fascinating detail as it would show Odysseus besting another who is equally skilled in rhetoric and also make Odysseus similar to real prosecutors in Athenian law courts.

We do have more evidence for Odysseus' involvement in the later sections of the play. Fr. 727c preserves part of a discussion in which Achilles appears impatient to begin the campaign, and Odysseus tries to convince him that things are in hand (fr. 727c11–24):

ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ μῶν καὶ σὺ καινὸς ποντίας ἀπὸ χθονὸς
ἥκεις, Ὀδυσσεῦ; ποῦ ᾽στι σύλλογος φίλων;
τί μέλλετ᾽; οὐ χρῆν ἥσυχον κεῖσθαι π[ό]δα.
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ δοκεῖ στρατεύειν καὶ μέλει τοῖς ἐν τέλει
τάδ᾽· ἐν δέοντι δ᾽ ἦλθες, ὦ παῖ Πηλέως.

[45] Schol. Aristid. p.376–9 Dindorf. This evidence is discussed by Heath (1987) 274 who suggests that Telephus makes two speeches – one defending the Trojans and the other defending himself – and that fr. 710 belongs to the latter.
[46] Handley and Rea (1957) 33 and 35.
[47] Heath (1987) 278. See also Miller (1948) 182, who suggests that *Thesm*. 626 is modelled on a line from *Telephus* probably spoken by Odysseus when starting his cross-examination.
[48] Handley and Rea (1957) 32–3.
[49] Hall (1989) 174–6.

ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ οὐ μὴν ἐπ᾽ ἀκταῖς γ᾽ ἐστὶ κωπήρης στρατός,
οὔτ᾽ οὖν ὁπλίτης ἐξετάζεται παρών.
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ ἀλλ᾽ αὐτίκα· σπεύδειν γὰρ ἐν καιρῷ χρεών.
ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ αἰεί ποτ᾽ ἐστὲ νωχελεῖς καὶ μέλλετε,
ῥήσεις θ᾽ ἕκαστος μυρίας καθήμενος
λέγει, τὸ δ᾽ ἔργον [ο]ὐδαμοῦ περαίνεται.
κἀ[γ]ὼ μέν, ὡς ὁρᾶ[τ]ε, δρᾶν ἕτοιμος ὢν
ἥκω, στρατός τε Μ[υρ]μιδών, καὶ πλεύσ[ομαι
τὰ [τ]ῶν Ἀτρειδ[ῶν οὐ μένων] μελλήμ[ατα.

Achilles Are you too newly arrived here from your island home, Odysseus?
Where are our comrades gathered? Why do you all delay?
You ought not to be lying idle here.

Odysseus We have agreed to start the campaign, and those in charge are seeing to it.
You have come just at the right moment, son of Peleus.

Achilles And yet our rowing force is not on the shore, nor indeed is our infantry present and being inspected.

Odysseus It will be soon enough; one should press on when the time is right.

Achilles You people are always sluggish, always delaying; each of you sits and makes a thousand speeches, while nothing gets done to finish the job. For my part, as you can see, I have come prepared for action, and my Myrmidon force with me; and I shall sail (without waiting on) Atreus' sons' delays.

Achilles complains about Odysseus and the other Greeks delaying their departure for Troy. This exchange encapsulates the differences between Odysseus and Achilles as Achilles himself notes that he is ready for action, for 'finishing the job' (ἔργον),

while others, including Odysseus, are busy speaking (λέγει).[50] Achilles is clearly presented here as impatient and headstrong in contrast to Odysseus' more diplomatic and advisory tone.

The criticism of the Greek force for its hesitancy may also have had some contemporary relevance. In Herodotus, the Spartans missed the battle of Marathon because they could not leave Sparta during the Carneia (6.106, 120). The Carneia also prevented the Spartans from sending their whole army to Thermopylae (7.206). Spartan slowness and hesitancy were stereotypes in Thucydides as well.[51] Thucydides' account of the allied conference held at Sparta in 432 contains several attacks on Sparta for her hesitancy in coming to the aid of her allies.[52] This hesitancy is contrasted to the swiftness of the Athenians (1.70.2). This conference took place after the premiere of Euripides' *Telephus*, but the evidence from Herodotus shows that the stereotype was probably in circulation well before 432. Therefore, Achilles' criticism may have reminded the audience of the alleged slowness of the Spartans in defending their allies, in contrast to the speed of the Athenians.[53] This possible allusion is all the more potent as the leaders of the Greek force are Peloponnesian themselves.

Several reconstructions of the plot of *Telephus* place fr. 727c towards the end of the play and suggest that it is followed by a scene in which Odysseus, possibly along with Telephus himself, persuades Achilles to agree to heal Telephus.[54] Two other fragments containing requests for another to control their temper probably come from this persuasion scene (716 and 718). Fr. 718 may be spoken by Odysseus in an attempt to persuade Achilles to help Telephus:[55]

> ὥρα σε θυμοῦ κρείσσονα γνώμην ἔχειν.
>
> It is time for you to let your mind rule your temper.

[50] See elsewhere pp. 54, 97, and 130–1 on the contrast between words and deeds that often surfaces in depictions of Odysseus.
[51] Wassermann (1964) 290; Roisman (1987) 385.
[52] 1.69.4, 71.1, 71.4.
[53] Hall (2018a) 121.
[54] Heath (1987) 279; Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995) 20–1; Collard and Cropp (2009) 209.
[55] Handley and Rea (1957) 39; Heath (1987) 279; Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995) 51.

Similar expressions are found in poetry and in Euripides' *Medea*.[56] It would be fitting if Odysseus is the speaker of this line as he is a character who is typically in control of his temper and who is ruled by his mind. It also bears similarity to a comment Odysseus makes to Achilles during the embassy in the *Iliad* (9.255). In the end, Achilles is persuaded and agrees to heal Telephus and accept him as a guide to Troy. It seems, therefore, that Odysseus is instrumental in the resolution of the play by collaborating with Telephus successfully to persuade Achilles. It is intriguing that Telephus and Odysseus work together because it suggests that by the end of the play an interpersonal relationship may have formed between these two clever speakers.

We do not have enough evidence to show how Odysseus was presented in this play. However, given his role in the plot and the importance of his persuasion of Achilles for resolving the crisis, we can be confident that it was dissimilar to his presentation in other Euripidean plays. King suggests that this play clearly opposes Achilles and Odysseus as the doer and the speaker.[57] She goes on to speculate that if one of the two is singled out for admiration, it is Odysseus.[58] She reasons that this play was written during the great days of Athenian democracy, at which time optimism was high about the working of the assembly, and delight in the power of words was not yet soured by the perversions of demagogues.[59] I agree with King's argument as we can see that Odysseus' role in this play is different from other Euripidean plays. Odysseus' role in *Telephus* seems to be most like his role in *Ajax*, in which he argues in favour of the tragic hero and resolves the impasse that prevents the resolution of the action. This depiction would create a stark contrast with the presentations of Odysseus' manipulative skills in other Euripidean tragedies, such as *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

2.2.3. Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*

There are several similarities between *Telephus* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Both are set before the Greeks have reached Troy and show the force being delayed.[60] In both plays the Atridae quarrel, Achilles has an instrumental role, the resolution at the end

[56] Thgn. 631; Pin. *Pyth*. 5.107; Eur. *Med*. 1079; Callim. fr. 384.59; see Collard, Cropp, and Lee (1995) 51.
[57] King (1987) 70.
[58] King (1987) 70.
[59] King (1987) 70.
[60] Achilles' complaints about the delay in both plays are similar, see e.g. *Telephus* fr. 727c11–3 and *IA* 801–3; *Telephus* fr. 727c19–24 and *IA* 814–8; see Michelakis (2002) 114.

allows the Greeks to continue on their voyage to Troy, and finally, Odysseus has an influence on the resolution. However, on this last point there is a vast difference; in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, first produced three decades after *Telephus*, Odysseus has a different relationship with the other Greek leaders. In the intervening years between the production of these two plays, Athens had witnessed the rise of demagogues and had also experienced their disastrous Sicilian Expedition, the oligarchic coup of 411, and the subsequent reprisals in the law courts. This was likely to colour the presentation of Odysseus and accounts for some of the changes made to his characterisation.

Odysseus is involved in bringing Iphigenia to Aulis in the Epic Cycle, as noted above, and this involvement was maintained in several fifth-century versions of the story. Aeschylus wrote a lost *Iphigenia*, and the fragments of Sophocles' *Iphigenia* reveal that Odysseus is a speaking character in this play. He speaks to Clytemnestra about the great husband her daughter will be marrying (fr. 305), which strongly suggests that he is part of the deception. This is the only evidence we have of Odysseus' part in the play, so we cannot say with any certainty how Sophocles presented him. Euripides, in his *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, also has Iphigenia describe the 'ruse of Odysseus' (Ὀδυσσέως τέχναις, 24) and she wishes death to Odysseus when she hears that he has not yet reached home (535).

Later in the fifth century, Euripides gave a fuller treatment to the sacrifice of Iphigenia in his *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Scholars are fairly certain that this play was first performed in 405, along with *Bacchae*, *Alcmaeon in Corinth*, and an unknown satyr play. These plays were produced posthumously by Euripides' son or nephew because Euripides himself had died the previous year.[61] *Iphigenia at Aulis* is therefore one of the latest plays we will look at and was produced at a time when Athens was on the brink of losing the Peloponnesian War.

Odysseus does not appear on stage in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, but he still has an influence on the story from behind the scenes. We learn at the start of the play that only Calchas, Odysseus, Menelaus and Agamemnon are aware of the plan to tell

[61] Schol. Ar. *Ran*. 66–7. See Hall (2016) on the dating of the tetralogy and for a wider discussion of the plays and their impact at their first performance.

Clytemnestra to bring Iphigenia to Aulis so that she can marry Achilles (107).[62] As the play goes on, we see that Odysseus' knowledge makes him dangerous to Menelaus and Agamemnon when they change their minds about sacrificing Iphigenia. As Odysseus remains off stage, we do not see his interactions with the other characters of the play. Instead, the on-stage characters imagine their interactions with him. As we will see, the descriptions of Odysseus in this play are sinister and menacing but also create a slightly different picture of him to the one usually seen in fifth-century literature.

The presentation of the Trojan War in *Iphigenia at Aulis* is especially negative. The Greek expedition to Troy is exposed as folly, and the army is repeatedly described as if it were mad.[63] This presentation of the army undermines the patriotic claims made in the play about the war.[64] The play also shows the failures of the Greek leadership as they squabble amongst themselves, fail to agree on a course of action, and face mutinous action from the soldiers. It is tempting to think that the moral crisis shown on stage was intended to be seen by the audience as a condensation of the political crisis in Athens at the time, but we have no way of knowing exactly when Euripides wrote this play or those with which it was performed.[65]

Rhetoric plays a large role in the play as characters try both to persuade others to change course and to defend their own changes of mind.[66] All the on-stage characters in the play, barring Agamemnon's old slave, change their minds in the course of the drama. The play is characterised by indecision, and it is upon the morally weak characters that the almost spectre-like off-stage Odysseus works his unusually threatening persuasion. The abrupt reversals of opinion also resemble certain real-life situations in the Athenian assembly, most notably the decision in 427 to execute

[62] See Lush (2015) 210–1 with further bibliography on the suggestion that the 'secret oracle' motif is part of a later interpolation and that certain lines should be removed. There is certainly an inconsistency in the play regarding the army's knowledge of Calchas' prophecy. Removal of this motif means Odysseus would no longer be one of a privileged few who know about the prophecy, but it would not affect his overall presentation in the play, as he is still the focus of Agamemnon's fears about the authority wielded by the army.

[63] Agamemnon mentions madness several times in his speech 378–401, cf. 1264; see Siegel (1980) 309.

[64] Siegel (1980) 301; D. L. Burgess (2004) 45.

[65] Markantonatos (2012a) 193 suggests that the audience is encouraged to read this play as a symbolic condensation of the current social and political crisis in Athens. See Hall (2016) 17–8 on when the plays of this tetralogy were written and whether they were intended by Euripides to be performed together.

[66] Hall (2016) 23. On the moral inconsistency, see also Hall (2005) 26–8.

all the adult males of Mytilene before the abrupt change of mind the following day (Thuc. 3.36). The year before the play's first performance, the Athenians put several of their own generals on trial and executed them but then regretted their decision (Xen. *Hell*. 1.7.35). Again, we cannot know when Euripides first wrote *Iphigenia at Aulis*, but this last incident in particular must have been present in the minds of the audience when witnessing the indecision over the sacrifice of Iphigenia.[67]

In the parodos, the chorus list the Greek commanders gathered at Aulis in a condensed catalogue of ships like that of *Iliad* Book 2. For some of the heroes the chorus mention their hometown, but when they get to Odysseus they only name him as the son of Laertes from 'rugged islands' (νησαίων τ᾽ ὀρέων, 203–4). Ajax is another islander hero, but he is merely described as being the pride of Salamis (194). Only Odysseus' introduction emphasises that his home is an island. Νησαῖος is a rare word in fifth-century texts. It is only used in two other Euripidean plays (*Ion* 1583; *Tro*. 188) and in Aeschylus' satyr play *Net Haulers* (fr. 46a). The passage from *Trojan Women* in which νησαῖος is used is identified by Constantakopoulou as an example of the contempt for islanders shown in tragedy.[68] Given Odysseus' presentation elsewhere in *Iphigenia at Aulis* it is possible that this reference to his island home is intended as derisive.

Later in the play, Agamemnon's emotional reaction to the news that his daughter has arrived in Aulis provokes a change of mind in Menelaus, who insists that Agamemnon not go through with the sacrifice. Agamemnon argues that he must, because there is a compulsion forcing him on (511–2). He fears that the army will force him to make the sacrifice because they will find out why Iphigenia is in Aulis. At first, he claims that Calchas will tell the army, to which Menelaus replies that it would be easy to silence Calchas and kill him (518–9). However, this does not assuage Agamemnon's fear, and he is then explicit about who is behind the compulsion that forces his hand (524–35):

ΑΓΑΜΕΜΝΩΝ τὸ Σισύφειον σπέρμα πάντ᾽ οἶδεν τάδε.
ΜΕΝΕΛΑΟΣ οὐκ ἔστ᾽ Ὀδυσσεὺς ὅ τι σὲ κἀμὲ πημανεῖ. 525
ΑΓΑΜΕΜΝΩΝ ποικίλος ἀεὶ πέφυκε τοῦ τ᾽ ὄχλου μέτα.

[67] Hall (2016) 23.
[68] Constantakopoulou (2007) 106–8.

ΜΕΝΕΛΑΟΣ	φιλοτιμίᾳ μὲν ἐνέχεται, δεινῷ κακῷ.	
ΑΓΑΜΕΜΝΩΝ	οὔκουν δοκεῖς νιν στάντ᾽ ἐν Ἀργείοις μέσοις	
	λέξειν ἃ Κάλχας θέσφατ᾽ ἐξηγήσατο,	
	κἄμ᾽ ὡς ὑπέστην θῦμα, κᾆτ᾽ ἐψευδόμην,	530
	Ἀρτέμιδι θύσειν; οὐ ξυναρπάσας στρατόν,	
	σὲ κἄμ᾽ ἀποκτείναντας Ἀργείους κόρην	
	σφάξαι κελεύσει; κἂν πρὸς Ἄργος ἐκφύγω,	
	ἐλθόντες αὐτοῖς τείχεσιν Κυκλωπίοις	
	συναρπάσουσι καὶ κατασκάψουσι γῆν.	535
Agamemnon	The son of Sisyphus knows everything we have been discussing.	
Menelaus	Odysseus will cause no pain to you and me.	
Agamemnon	He is always unreliable and sides with the rabble.	
Menelaus	To be sure, he is affected by ambition, a dread mischief.	
Agamemnon	Don’t you think that he will stand in the midst of the Greeks and mention the omens Calchas interpreted and say how I promised to make a sacrifice to Artemis and then went back on my word? Will he not grab the Greek army and order them to kill you and me and then slaughter the girl? If I run to Argos, they will come and plunder and dig up the land, Cyclopean walls and all!	

Ποικίλος means many-coloured or spangled but can metaphorically mean changeful, and hence subtle or wily.[69] In Homer it is only used in this metaphorical sense once, to describe a cunning knot tied by Odysseus (*Od*. 8.448); otherwise, it is only used literally, e.g. of finely wrought armour or weapons. However, in Homer Odysseus does have the epithet ποικιλομήτης, which means ‘full of variegated wiles’.[70] Elsewhere, this epithet is only applied to the typically clever gods Zeus and

[69] LSJ s.v. ποικίλος.
[70] *Il*. 11.482; *Od*. 3.163, 7.168, 13.293, 22.115, 202, 281.

Hermes.[71] This Homeric compound cannot be used in iambic trimeters, so it is possible that ποικίλος is substituted for ποικιλομήτης here.[72]

In the fifth century, ποικίλος is much more frequently used metaphorically.[73] It can also be used as an epithet for people, as it is here of Odysseus. Detienne and Vernant point out that 'shimmering sheen and shifting movement' are important parts of the nature of *metis*, and therefore when ποικίλος is applied to an individual it is enough to show that he is 'a wily one, a man of cunning, full of inventive ploys (*poikiloboulos*) and tricks of every kind'.[74] Prometheus is described as ποικίλος and ποικιλόβουλος by Hesiod (*Theog*. 511, 521) and ποικίλος by Oceanus in Aeschylus (*PV* 310). Agamemnon's description of Odysseus as ποικίλος refers not just to his cunning but also his plural nature and unpredictability.

Fear of public opinion appears in other tragedies, and Carter has shown how the *dēmos* can be a significant player in tragic plots even though it does not appear on stage.[75] Ὄχλος more generally means a crowd or throng but often has a pejorative sense of the mob or the populace, which is how it is used here by Agamemnon.[76] It is also used in this sense elsewhere by Euripides.[77] Other fifth- and fourth-century texts talk about appealing to or misleading the mob.[78] Earlier in the play, Agamemnon states that the highborn become slaves to the ὄχλος (450). Menelaus also warns Agamemnon that he should not fear the ὄχλος so much (517). However, it becomes clear that Agamemnon is afraid of the mob with someone as cunning and as knowledgeable as Odysseus leading it.

Thucydides presents crowds (using ὄχλος or ὅμιλος interchangeably) as easily manipulated and deceived.[79] He comments with contempt on the behaviour of not just the Athenian assembly but groups in other city states when using one of these two terms (e.g. 2.65.4; 6.17.2 of the changeable mob of Sicily). In one particular

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[71] Zeus: *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 322. Hermes: *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 155 and 514.
[72] See pp. 144–5 on the use of ποικιλόφρων in Euripides' *Hecuba* (131) as a different alternative to using ποικιλομήτης.
[73] See e.g. Bacchyl. *Ep*. 10.43, 11.33; Pin. *Nem*. 5.28; Aesch. *Eum*. 460; Soph. *OC* 761, *Phil*. 130; Eur. *Hel*. 411, *Phoen*. 470, *Bacch*. 888; Ar. *Eq*. 686; Pl. *Resp*. II.365c.
[74] Detienne and Vernant (1991) 19.
[75] Carter (2010) 84.
[76] LSJ s.v. ὄχλος; see Carter (2010) 48.
[77] *Hipp*. 989, *Hec*. 868, *Or*. 119, 801, fr. 200, fr. 1029.
[78] See e.g. Thuc. 6.89.5, 7.8.2; Isoc. 2.49, 3.21; Pl. *Euthyd*. 290a, *Grg*. 455a, *Resp*. VI.494a; Arist. *Pol*. 5.1305b, *Rh*. 2.1395b.
[79] Hunter (1988) 25–6.

instance (4.28.3), the ὄχλος pushes Cleon to take command in Pylos after Nicias has offered to resign his command. Elsewhere, Thucydides describes Cleon's influence over the Athenian people because he is the most persuasive (πιθανώτατος, 3.36.6, 4.21.3).[80] The people are referred to in these instances as the δῆμος rather than an ὄχλος or ὅμιλος, but the portrayal of Cleon as a rabble-rouser is still made clear, and he is specifically called a demagogue (4.21.3).

However, we must bear in mind that Thucydides' criticism of the ὄχλος comes from an aristocratic standpoint. Just five years before the first performance of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, a naval mob (ναυτικὸς ὄχλος) had been responsible for the restoration of the Athenian democracy (Thuc. 8.72.2).[81] We must ask, therefore, as Collard and Morwood do, what the audience's reaction would have been to this description of Odysseus' influence with the ὄχλος, along with the later suggestion that he was chosen to lead the clamour for Iphigenia's death 'willingly' (1362–4).[82] It is of course impossible to answer this, but we must not forget that a large proportion of the audience watching the first performance of the play were ordinary Athenian citizens who formed the 'mob' which Thucydides disparages.

Φιλοτιμίᾳ, ambition, is not always a fault in Greek literature; Pericles, for example, praises ambition in his funeral speech (2.44.4). However, it can also be a destructive vice. Thucydides contrasts Pericles' successful moderate policy at the start of the Peloponnesian war with the behaviour of the Athenians after his death, who were led by private ambitions (φιλοτιμίαι) and private interests into unjust projects (2.65.7). The attitudes of both Pericles and his successors towards the *dēmos* are also contrasted. Thucydides claims that Pericles led the people but did not flatter them and was not afraid of contradicting them, whereas his successors competed with each other and therefore committed the conduct of state affairs to the whims of the people, which led to many blunders. Thucydides also identifies φιλοτιμίᾳ as one of the chief causes of the civil strife that spread through Greece (3.82.8).

The only other use of φιλοτιμίᾳ in tragedy comes in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, in which Jocasta calls 'Ambition' the worst of deities and a goddess who has left homes and cities in ruins (531–4). Elsewhere in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the related

[80] Hall (2018b) 344. Athanagoras of Syracuse is introduced with the same description at 6.35.2.
[81] Collard and Morwood (2017) 13.
[82] Collard and Morwood (2017) 14.

adjective φιλότιμος, ambitious, is used when Agamemnon, while denouncing Calchas, calls the race of prophets ambitious (520), just a few lines before he turns his attention to Odysseus.

Odysseus is clearly presented as an ambitious rabble-rouser in Euripides in a similar style to that of demagogues in Thucydides.[83] His rhetorical abilities allow him to stir up the soldiers at Aulis. Significantly, Agamemnon imagines Odysseus addressing the troops not from the front, but in their midst (ἐν Ἀργείοις μέσοις). Thus, he appears as their equal rather than their superior, in contrast to his behaviour in *Iliad* 2.[84] Agamemnon explicitly states his fear that Odysseus will tell the army about him reneging on his promise to sacrifice Iphigenia and will then stir up the army and order them to kill not only Iphigenia but Agamemnon and Menelaus as well. Συναρπάζω usually means to snatch or seize but is used here metaphorically of Odysseus 'seizing' the army with persuasive arguments.[85] This use of the verb emphasises Odysseus' cogency but, given its usual definition, has violent undertones. Another similarity to Thucydides is Agamemnon's claim that Odysseus will lead the army to Argos and tear down its walls, which can be compared to Athens' treatment of allied cities that revolted from their leadership.[86]

The suggestion of Odysseus inciting mob violence is unusual as he is not a character typically associated with mutinous behaviour. On the contrary, in Homer he puts down Thersites' attempted mutiny and fends off a mutiny from his own lieutenant on Circe's island.[87] Here, however, Odysseus behaves more like Thersites in trying to stir up the soldiers against Agamemnon. This similarity to Thersites is present in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, produced a few years earlier in 409, where Neoptolemus mistakes a description of Thersites for Odysseus.[88]

Scholars have debated the extent to which Agamemnon is deluded or is using the compulsion of the army as a justification for his own ambition.[89] However, Agamemnon's fears are later confirmed by Achilles, who enters at 1345 to warn

[83] Michelakis (2006) 80; Torrance (2017) 295.
[84] Lush (2015) 216; Simmons (2023) 79.
[85] LSJ s.v. συναρπάζω. Cf. [Longinus], *Subl*. 16.2 for a similar usage.
[86] Michelakis (2006) 79. Thuc. 1.101.3, 108.3–4, 117.3, 3.3.3, 50.2.
[87] *Il*. 2.244–70; *Od*. 10.429–48.
[88] See pp. 206–7. See also pp. 218–9 where Odysseus threatens Neoptolemus with reprisals from the army when the young man tries to return Philoctetes' bow.
[89] Siegel (1981) 261 with bibliography.

Iphigenia and her mother about the murderous mob of Greek soldiers agitating for the girl's death.[90] Achilles reveals that the Greeks threatened to stone him for defending Iphigenia, and even his own Myrmidons turned on him.[91] Achilles bravely plans to stand against the whole army, and after he is brought his armour, Clytemnestra questions him further about who is leading the army (1361–6):

ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ	ἥξει δ᾽ ὅστις ἅψεται κόρης;	
ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ	μυρίοι γ᾽, ἄξει δ᾽ Ὀδυσσεύς.	
ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ	ἆρ᾽ ὁ Σισύφου γόνος;	
ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ	αὐτὸς οὗτος.	
ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ	ἴδια πράσσων ἢ στρατοῦ ταχθεὶς ὕπο;	
ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ	αἱρεθεὶς ἑκών.	
ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ	πονηράν γ᾽ αἵρεσιν, μιαιφονεῖν.	
ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ	ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ σχήσω νιν.	1365
ΚΛΥΤΑΙΜΗΣΤΡΑ	ἄξει δ᾽ οὐχ ἑκοῦσαν ἁρπάσας;	
ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥΣ	δηλαδὴ ξανθῆς ἐθείρας.	

Clytaemestra	Will someone come to lay hands on her?
Achilles	Yes, countless soldiers, with Odysseus leading them.
Clytaemestra	You mean the son of Sisyphus?
Achilles	That's the man.
Clytaemestra	Acting on his own or chosen by the army?
Achilles	Chosen, but with his full consent.
Clytaemestra	A terrible thing to be elected to, shedding blood!
Achilles	But I shall check him.
Clytaemestra	Will he drag her away against her will?
Achilles	Yes, by her blond hair.

[90] See Torrance (2017) 289, who states that Agamemnon is right to suspect Odysseus.
[91] The threat of stoning echoes Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* fr. 132c; see Michelakis (2002) 90. It is also a reminder of Palamedes' punishment from the army after his conviction; see Chapter 1.

Achilles, like Agamemnon, specifically names Odysseus as the leader of the soldiers who will enforce the sacrifice of Iphigenia and reveals that Odysseus has not appointed himself leader of the mob but has been chosen by the army. Nevertheless, Achilles says that Odysseus has been chosen willingly, which corroborates Agamemnon's picture of Odysseus as a rabble-rouser.

Michelakis notes the frequency with which characters in the play are identified through their family background, as well as the high number of patronymics and matronymics.[92] He suggests that these 'evoke a world of glamour, glory and power'.[93] Odysseus is twice given a patronymic, but unlike the other characters, whose genealogy is that of high status, Odysseus is instead linked to the trickster Sisyphus. Here, Clytemnestra does not even seem to recognise Odysseus' name without clarifying his connection to Sisyphus.

Clytemnestra, fearful for her daughter, speaks of Odysseus' actions in vivid terms. She asks if Odysseus will drag Iphigenia away, recalling Agamemnon's earlier fears of Odysseus seizing the mob. This image recalls the description of Iphigenia's sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (228–47), where Iphigenia is clearly depicted as reluctant and must be gagged to prevent her crying out. A few lines later in Euripides' version, Iphigenia resolves to die voluntarily (1375–6). It is possible that she sees her death as inevitable and so strives to die with dignity instead of being dragged off by the soldiers.

Iphigenia at Aulis shows a different relationship between Odysseus and Agamemnon to that presented in other tragedies and in epic. Agamemnon refers to Odysseus' loyalty in other tragedies, such as Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (841–2) and Sophocles' *Ajax* (1330–1), and remarks on their friendship in the *Iliad* (4.360–1). In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, on the other hand, Agamemnon clearly fears Odysseus' influence with the army, and he and Menelaus look down on him as an inferior. Odysseus' persuasive techniques that are so often useful to the Greek forces are instead shown to be destabilising; he pulls the strings of the action of the play without ever coming on the stage. The Atridae reframe him as a rabble-rouser who is motivated by ambition and consider him a threat to their authority.

[92] Michelakis (2002) 97.
[93] Michelakis (2002) 97.

Iphigenia at Aulis combines Odysseus' customary tragic presentation of an off-stage or behind-the-scenes manipulator with an uncharacteristic violent streak. It is similar in this regard to Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, first performed four years before *Iphigenia at Aulis*, in which Odysseus is more violent than in earlier fifth-century tragedies. In two earlier Trojan War plays of Euripides, *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, Odysseus advocates the sacrifice of a child.[94] However, in these two plays Odysseus is explicitly described as persuading an assembly that the sacrifices should be enacted. In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, on the other hand, Odysseus goes directly to the soldiers and does not attempt to persuade Agamemnon, Menelaus, or Achilles except by force. The presentation of the army as an unruly mob manipulated by a demagogue is similar to other Euripidean plays, such as *Hecuba* and *Orestes*, but there is a notable absence of an assembly at which a decision is taken by the army.[95] The off-stage army are more akin to the army of Sophocles' *Ajax* who threaten Teucer in the same way Achilles is threatened, and who are also under the apparent influence of Odysseus.[96]

The direct action of Odysseus stands in contrast to the lies and deception attempted and failed by Agamemnon and Menelaus. It is interesting that with so many references to lies and deception throughout the play, Odysseus is not really the orchestrator of any deceit.[97] He is involved in the original deceptive letter to Clytemnestra, although the audience is only told that he is aware of the deception, not that it was his idea. On the contrary, Agamemnon worries that Odysseus will expose his lie to the army and thus encourage them to kill not just Iphigenia but Agamemnon himself. Euripides has altered Odysseus' methods but not his general motivation – to pursue the course of action that benefits the Greek cause. The absence of any persuasion makes the Odysseus of *Iphigenia at Aulis* unusual and is the feature which most notably distinguishes his presentation from that in the earlier *Telephus* of Euripides.

[94] See Chapter 4.
[95] Michelakis (2006) 45.
[96] Michelakis (2006) 45.
[97] 105, 333, 444, 445, 530, 744, 852, 898, 957, 1145, 1457.

2.3. Conclusion

In the Epic Cycle, Odysseus and Achilles never quite reach the levels of enmity present in Odysseus' relationships with several other characters. This makes their relationship particularly interesting. By the fifth century the two heroes had come to represent opposing forms of heroism – brains and brawn.[98]

Odysseus' interactions with Achilles in fifth-century tragedy are quite disparate; there is not one story that was adapted by all three tragedians. The three plays we have looked at – *Those Who Dine Together*, *Telephus*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis* – do, however, share some things in common. They all feature a headstrong and easily offended Achilles who obstructs the progress of the Greek expedition and, as Michelakis puts it, 'threatens the narratives in which he participates'.[99] In all three plays, it seems that Odysseus attempts to remove this obstacle. However, his methods and the outcome vary greatly. In *Those Who Dine Together* he seems to accuse Achilles of cowardice to prevent him sailing away; this interference is probably unwelcome, and Odysseus then suffers Achilles' wrath. In *Telephus*, Odysseus successfully persuades Achilles, with the help of Telephus, to accept Telephus as guide to Troy. In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Odysseus threatens Achilles with mob violence to prevent him from saving Iphigenia.

For a long time, there has been a consensus that Euripides was universally hostile to Odysseus.[100] While this may be true of his extant tragedies, it does not seem to be true of *Telephus*. In this play, Odysseus is instrumental in the resolution of the plot and, unlike in other Euripidean plays, this is not achieved through deception or by persuading an assembly to sacrifice a child. On the contrary, Odysseus co-operates with the hero of the play to overcome the stubbornness of Achilles, who obstructs the progress of the Greek expedition. Therefore, by including this fragmentary play in our analysis we get a fuller picture of Odysseus in the fifth century and, as a counterpart to the new darkness we found in the Palamedes plays, we see new light in his portrayal by Euripides.

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[98] This is most explicitly stated in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* when the heroes at Troy are divided into two groups, with Achilles and Odysseus on opposing sides; see pp. 205–8 below. The differences between Odysseus and Achilles were also a subject of philosophical debate, most famously in Plato's *Hippias Minor*.

[99] Michelakis (2002) 21.

[100] See above p. 73 n. 35.

In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, we find another slightly unusual presentation of Odysseus. While he is accused of rabble-rousing and demagogic behaviour in other plays, most notably Euripides' *Hecuba*, we do not see Odysseus elsewhere colluding directly with the mob as he is described as doing in this play.[101] He is not responsible for any deception or verbal persuasion but instead achieves his typical aim of furthering the Greek cause with untypical mob violence and mutiny.

Euripides' two plays have also allowed us to examine Odysseus' unusual relationships with Telephus, Agamemnon, and Menelaus. Telephus is a hero much like Odysseus, but while the similarity between Palamedes and Odysseus leads to enmity, Odysseus and Telephus instead seem to work together to persuade Achilles. In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the often-loyal Odysseus has become mutinous and is feared by the Atridae. Rather than being the man on whom the two leaders of the Greek army can rely, Odysseus is instead a thorn in their side who threatens their plans, and they even fear he may make an attempt on their lives (532–3). As we have already seen, Odysseus has become like Thersites; he stirs up the mob of soldiers and is despised by the more noble leaders of the army.

[101] See pp. 144–5 and 147–9 on *Hecuba*.

Chapter 3

Odysseus and Ajax

Ajax, much like Achilles, is a different type of hero to Odysseus. This is true in both Homer and later literature. However, while Odysseus and Achilles only have minor disagreements and clashes, Odysseus and Ajax become mortal enemies after competing for the arms of Achilles. In the contest that followed, traditionally known as the judgement of the arms, Odysseus is declared the winner. As a result of this dishonour, Ajax takes his own life. In the epic tradition, Ajax is the best warrior after Achilles, and yet Achilles' arms are awarded to Odysseus. This contradiction presented a problem which poets were free to solve in various ways.[1] In each different version of the episode, the judges of the contest differ, as do their reasons for choosing Odysseus.

By the fifth century, two new elements were introduced into the story: speeches and a more democratic vote. The inclusion of speeches gave adapters more scope for Ajax and Odysseus to criticise each other and for Odysseus' speaking skills, both persuasive and deceptive, to come to the fore. The presence of voting allowed for allegations of corruption and tampering with votes. Both elements made the story more relevant in fifth-century Athens, at a time when forensic rhetoric had emerged and voting procedures were central to democratic processes.

Before looking at the most well-known depiction of the judgement of the arms, Sophocles' *Ajax*, we will first assess mentions of the contest in Pindar and Aeschylus. While Pindar, and perhaps Aeschylus, used their depictions of the judgement to emphasise Odysseus' deception and the injustice of the vote, Sophocles took a more nuanced approach. We will see how *Ajax* is structured around two contrasting personas of Odysseus and how Sophocles uses this structure to show the light and darkness in his character. Finally, we will look at Antisthenes' *Ajax* and *Odysseus* speeches and the ways in which they were influenced by both tragedy and fifth-century Athenian ideas.

We will also explore how different presentations of the episode handle the issue of the judging itself, i.e. who the judges are, how they vote, and on what criteria the

[1] Most (1985) 152–3.

heroes are judged. Finally, we will see how Pindar and Sophocles frame the geographical background of their heroes. This is significant because Ajax was not only an important hero to the Athenians but was also linked with both Aegina and Salamis. This fluid topographical and geopolitical heritage can be emphasised as anti- or pro-Athenian depending on the aims of each poet. Odysseus also has a significant role in this geopolitical framing of the judgement.

3.1. Odysseus and Ajax in Homer and the Epic Cycle

The conflict between Odysseus and Ajax is referred to in several Trojan War epics. It is also prefigured at the end of the *Iliad* during the wrestling contest between them at the funeral games for Patroclus (23.700–39). When Odysseus volunteers for the fight we are reminded of his crafty mind and many wiles (709), and later when Ajax tries to lift Odysseus, the latter 'forgot not his guile' (725). Odysseus matches Ajax's strength with cunning, and Achilles declares a tie because neither can lift the other. However, Ajax is not merely a brute warrior in Homer. Instead, he is shown as a fighter who also has strategic intelligence.[2] Furthermore, it is Ajax's speech that is successful in the embassy to Achilles in moving the intransigent hero, not Odysseus'.[3]

Achilles' death features in the *Aethiopis*, which covers events immediately after the *Iliad*. During the struggle over Achilles' body, according to Proclus and Apollodorus, Odysseus fights off the Trojans while Ajax carries the body.[4] This will be a crucial point in the later judgement of the arms.

The judgement of the arms episode seems to feature in two epics in the Epic Cycle or, at least, to span two of them. Proclus mentions the funeral games of Achilles as taking place in the *Aethiopis*, at which a quarrel arises between Odysseus and Ajax over the arms of Achilles.[5] He then opens his account of the *Little Iliad* by saying that the arms are awarded to Odysseus.[6] However, a scholiast commenting on *Isthmian* 4 says that Pindar took the detail that Ajax's suicide happens at night from the *Aethiopis*.[7] This strongly suggests that there was a complete version of the

[2] Bradshaw (1991) 105–113.
[3] Bradshaw (1991) 107.
[4] *Aethiopis* Arg. §3 West; Apollod. *Epit*. 5.4.
[5] *Aethiopis* Arg. §4 West.
[6] *Little Iliad* Arg. §1 West.
[7] Schol. Pin. *Isth*. 4.58b = *Aethiopis* fr. 6 West.

judgement in this epic poem, since Ajax's suicide would surely only follow after the awarding of the arms to Odysseus.

There is no evidence of how the judgement or the beginnings of the quarrel over the arms were treated in the *Aethiopis*. However, we do have two different sources of evidence for the presentation of the judgement in the *Little Iliad*. Proclus covers the episode only briefly, but it is significant that he specifies that Odysseus wins the arms 'in accord with Athena's wishes'.[8] This is supplemented by a scholiast on Aristophanes, who describes how the Greeks seek to choose between the two heroes (*Little Iliad* fr. 2 West):

> διεφέροντο περὶ τῶν ἀριστείων ὅ τε Αἴας καὶ ὁ Ὀδυσσεύς, ὥς φησιν ὁ τὴν Μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα πεποιηκώς· τὸν Νέστορα δὲ συμβουλεῦσαι τοῖς Ἕλλησι πέμψαι τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τὰ τείχη τῶν Τρώων ὠτακουστήσοντας περὶ τῆς ἀνδρείας τῶν προειρημένων ἡρώων. τοὺς δὲ πεμφθέντας ἀκοῦσαι παρθένων διαφερομένων πρὸς ἀλλήλας, ὧν τὴν μὲν λέγειν ὡς ὁ Αἴας πολὺ κρείττων ἐστὶ τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως, διερχομένην οὕτως·
>
> Αἴας μὲν γὰρ ἄειρε καὶ ἔκφερε δηϊοτῆτος
>
> ἥρω Πηλείδην, οὐδ᾽ ἤθελε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.
>
> τὴν δὲ ἑτέραν ἀντειπεῖν Ἀθηνᾶς προνοίαι·
>
> πῶς ἐπεφωνήσω; πῶς οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἔειπες;
>
> καί κε γυνὴ φέροι ἄχθος, ἐπεί κεν ἀνὴρ ἀναθείη,
>
> ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἂν μαχέσαιτο.
>
> There was a dispute over the prize for valor between Ajax and Odysseus, as the author of the *Little Iliad* says, and Nestor advised the Greeks to send some men to below the Trojans' wall to eavesdrop concerning the bravery of the heroes in question. They heard some girls arguing, one of whom said that Ajax was much better than Odysseus, explaining:
>
> Ajax, after all, lifted up the warrior son of Peleus and carried him out of the fighting, but noble Odysseus would not.
>
> But the other retorted, by providence of Athena,

[8] *Little Iliad* Arg. §1 West.

> What did you say? How can you be so wrong? Even a woman could carry a load, if a man put it onto her, but she couldn't fight.

Here we can see that their earlier roles when defending the body of Achilles become the vital evidence in distinguishing between the two heroes. This version also expands on Proclus' reference to the role of Athena in the judgement, as it is under her influence that Odysseus is defended. According to Porphyry, as cited by Eustathius, Ajax's burial is an issue in the *Little Iliad*. Agamemnon is said to have buried Ajax instead of cremating him in the usual way because he is angry with the dead man.[9]

The judgement is revisited in the *Odyssey* during Odysseus' description of his meeting with Ajax in the underworld. Odysseus says that Thetis offered the arms as a prize, and the contest was judged by 'the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athena' (11.546–7). This differs, therefore, from the *Little Iliad* version in establishing who made the judgement. A scholiast commenting on this passage states that Agamemnon questioned Trojan prisoners to get their opinions on the two heroes; they claimed that Odysseus caused the most harm to his enemies, and so he was judged the winner.[10]

Odysseus does not mention Ajax's suicide in his account, but he does express regret at having won the arms, since his victory led to the death of Ajax who was the best of the Greeks after Achilles (11.548–51). He claims that it was the work of Zeus, who hated the Danaans and so caused the doom of Ajax (11.559–60). This, coupled with his claim that Athena herself was one of the judges, absolves him of any blame for the outcome of the contest and emphasises the role of divine retribution against Ajax.

Multiple versions of the judgement of arms episode seem to have existed in the Epic Cycle. There are major differences in these stories, particularly on the issue of who made the judgement. As we will see, the variations in the practicalities of the judgement continued in the fifth century. The influence of Athena is made clear in at

[9] Eust. 285.34–5; Apollod. *Epit*. 5.7. See Holt (1992) for a fuller discussion of this peculiarity along with some speculation of how it arose.
[10] Schol *Od*. 11.547.

least two of the epic versions of the story, and her sway over the episode was also felt strongly in some fifth-century representations.

3.2. Odysseus and Ajax in the Fifth Century

Ajax became a significant hero for Athens in the sixth and fifth centuries and seems to have been adopted as an Athenian hero to legitimise Athenian control of Salamis. We will discuss in more detail the Athenian acquisition of Ajax, and the Aeacid dynasty, later. Probably because of these historical events, Ajax started to appear on many Athenian pots towards the end of the sixth century.[11] For example, a late sixth-century vase shows him in full hoplite armour with other Athenian heroes.[12] There are also around one hundred and sixty pots showing Ajax and Achilles playing a board game together.[13] Most importantly for our discussion, it is around this time on Athenian pottery that we first see speeches and voting as part of the judgement of arms episode. A late sixth-century pelike shows Odysseus on an orator's rostrum being scrutinised by Ajax while Achilles' arms sit on the floor nearby.[14] A series of drinking cups from the early fifth century, which we will examine later, show the judgement being decided by voting. Speeches and voting therefore appear in the judgement scenes around a similar time, which suggests a literary influence. This potentially unknown late sixth- or early fifth-century text on the judgement may have had a strong influence on the fifth-century texts that we will now discuss, which all feature references to speeches and/or voting.

3.2.1. Pindar

Pindar is included here for several reasons, even though he was not an Athenian and did not often write for performance in Athens. First, his references to the judgement of arms episode are quite detailed. Second, due to this detail his material provides a useful contrast to Athenian presentations of the story, particularly Sophocles' *Ajax*. Finally, Pindar wrote strongly in favour of the island of Aegina, a rival of Athens and subject of Athenian imperialism. It is useful, therefore, to see a non-Athenian

[11] Boardman (1991) 86–7.
[12] London, British Museum: E16, c.520–510.
[13] On this motif, see Romero Mariscal (2011).
[14] Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale: 81083, c.550–500; see Kowalzig (2006) 88.

presentation of Odysseus from someone who was sympathetic to an Athenian subject, and not Athens herself.

Pindar mentions Ajax's contest with Odysseus in three different poems: *Isthmian* 4, *Nemean* 7, and *Nemean* 8. Despite more commonly being associated with Salamis, Ajax, through his descent from Aeacus, is also connected with the island of Aegina. The two longest mentions of Ajax in Pindar come in odes to Aeginetan victors. As a result, Pindar focuses on the glory of Aeginetan heroes such as Aeacus, Telamon, Peleus, Achilles, and Ajax. Therefore, he casts Odysseus, and at times Homer by extension, in a bad light and places more blame on Odysseus for Ajax's defeat than we find in the Epic Cycle.

Isthmian 4, written for a Theban victor around 474/3, describes Ajax's suicide but does not mention Odysseus explicitly by name. However, just before Ajax is mentioned, Pindar describes how Fortune dispenses from various sides and how the skill of weaker (χείρονες) men can overtake and trip up a stronger (κρείσσων) man (34). Ajax's loss in the judgement is introduced in the next line as an illustration of this phenomenon in action; Odysseus is obviously thought of as the weaker man. Pindar states that Ajax's suicide brings blame to all the Greeks who went to Troy, laying responsibility for the dishonour done to Ajax on them (36). He specifically uses the present tense in this comment, indicating that the Greeks responsible continue to be blamed in his day.[15]

The judgement is mentioned in slightly more detail in *Nemean* 7, which was composed for an Aeginetan victor in the boys' pentathlon (20–3):

> ἐγὼ δὲ πλέον᾽ ἔλπομαι
> λόγον Ὀδυσσέος ἢ πάθαν διὰ τὸν ἀδυεπῆ γενέσθ᾽ Ὅμηρον·
> ἐπεὶ ψεύδεσί οἱ ποτανᾷ <τε> μαχανᾷ
> σεμνὸν ἔπεστί τι· σοφία δὲ κλέπτει παράγοισα μύθοις.
> I believe that Odysseus' story
> has become greater than his actual suffering
> because of Homer's sweet verse,

[15] Nisetich (1989) 11.

for upon his fictions and soaring craft
rests great majesty, and his skill
deceives with misleading tales.

Pindar introduces Odysseus to claim that stories of his suffering have been exaggerated thanks to the songs of Homer (21). This line begins with λόγον Ὀδυσσέος, the story of Odysseus, which is significant as we have already seen accusations of Odysseus that his λόγος is not matched by his actual ἔργον.[16] Ajax, on the other hand, suffers from the opposite problem. His deeds are clearly worthy but are not supported by λόγος and so go unrewarded.

Pindar's comment here conflates Homer with Odysseus and criticises both for the propagation of Odysseus' undeserved fame. The 'lies' (ψεύδη), 'craft' (μαχανᾷ), and 'misleading tales' (παράγοισα μύθοις) seem at first to be a continuation of the point about Homer. However, these qualities are more appropriate to Odysseus, and therefore it is Homer's 'sweet verse' that provides the vehicle for Odysseus' own lies in the central books of the *Odyssey* to spread and influence his reputation. Pindar refers specifically to Odysseus' πάθαι (21); this implies that he is focusing on Odysseus' wanderings in the *Odyssey*.[17]

After dismissing Odysseus' reputation and providing an example of the dangers of the deceptive seduction of poetry, Pindar turns to the example of Ajax. He says that if men could see the truth, Ajax would not have taken his life in anger over Achilles' arms (24–7). He states that Ajax was second only to Achilles in the Greek army (27). Pindar is explicit in stating that the arms should have been awarded to Ajax and in this version blames the outcome on men's blindness to the truth. He does not mention Odysseus as the victor, and Most has shown clearly that the previous point about Odysseus' undeserved reputation cannot refer to the judgement but must refer to the stories of his later exploits.[18] However, the proximity of the reference to Ajax's defeat to that of the lies and artifices which have benefited Odysseus certainly would have reminded the audience of the contest itself.

[16] See p. 54 and 76. See also pp. 130–1 below on Ajax's complaints in Antisthenes.
[17] Most (1985) 149.
[18] Most (1985) 149.

The longest reference to the judgement of arms is found in *Nemean* 8, which again was for an Aeginetan victor (21–34):

ὄψον δὲ λόγοι φθονεροῖσιν,
ἅπτεται δ᾽ ἐσλῶν ἀεί, χειρόνεσσι δ᾽ οὐκ ἐρίζει.
κεῖνος καὶ Τελαμῶνος δάψεν υἱόν, φασγάνῳ ἀμφικυλίσαις.
ἦ τιν᾽ ἄγλωσσον μέν, ἦτορ δ᾽ ἄλκιμον, λάθα κατέχει
ἐν λυγρῷ νείκει· μέγιστον δ᾽ αἰόλῳ ψεύδει γέρας ἀντέταται.
κρυφίαισι γὰρ ἐν ψάφοις Ὀδυσσῆ Δαναοὶ θεράπευσαν·
χρυσέων δ᾽ Αἴας στερηθεὶς ὅπλων φόνῳ πάλαισεν.

ἦ μὰν ἀνόμοιά γε δᾴοισιν ἐν θερμῷ χροΐ
ἕλκεα ῥῆξαν πελεμιζόμενοι
ὑπ᾽ ἀλεξιμβρότῳ λόγχᾳ, τὰ μὲν ἀμφ᾽ Ἀχιλεῖ νεοκτόνῳ,
ἄλλων τε μόχθων ἐν πολυφθόροις
ἀμέραις. ἐχθρὰ δ᾽ ἄρα πάρφασις ἦν καὶ πάλαι,
αἰμύλων μύθων ὁμόφοιτος, δολοφραδής, κακοποιὸν ὄνειδος·
ἃ τὸ μὲν λαμπρὸν βιᾶται, τῶν δ᾽ ἀφάντων κῦδος ἀντείνει σαθρόν.

since words are dessert
to the envious, and envy fastens
always on the good, but has no quarrel with lesser men.
It was that which feasted on the son of Telamon
when it rolled him onto his sword.
Truly, oblivion overwhelms many a man whose tongue
is speechless, but heart is bold,
in a grievous quarrel; and the greatest prize
has been offered up to shifty falsehood.
For with secret votes
the Danaans favored Odysseus, while Ajax,
stripped of the golden armor, wrestled with a gory death.

> In truth, unequal indeed were the wounds they tore
> in the warm flesh of their foes
> with succoring spears when they were hard pressed,
> both in fighting over Achilles newly slain
> and in the murderous days of their other
> labors. Yes, hateful deception existed even long ago,
> the companion of flattering tales,
> guileful contriver, evil-working disgrace,
> which represses what is illustrious,
> but holds up for obscure men a glory that is rotten.

The contrast between good and lesser men that we saw in *Isthmian* 4 is repeated here (22). This time the contrast is between a man who is good (ἐσθλός) and a man who is inferior (χείρων). As before, we can see that χείρων is a clear allusion to Odysseus. Pindar refers to Ajax when he talks about the man whose tongue is speechless (ἄγλωσσος, 24), or who is lacking eloquence. It is the fate of this type of man to fall into oblivion because without eloquence he cannot gain the recognition he deserves.[19]

In this version, Pindar mentions that the contest was decided by a secret ballot (26). He does not seem to imply that the voting was tampered with, but the secrecy of the ballot is important. Pindar's theme here is envy – the envy of the other Greek leaders towards Ajax; the secrecy of the ballot thus allows them to act on this envy where a public ballot would not have emboldened them as much.[20]

Unlike the Epic Cycle version, Pindar has both Ajax and Odysseus battling together over the body of Achilles. He distinguishes the two heroes on the criterion of martial prowess, stating that they did not do equal damage to their enemies, implying that Ajax was the greater of the two by this measure. However, the judgement as Pindar

[19] A similar sentiment is expressed in a fragment of Euripides (fr. 928b), where the speaker complains that wicked men have a ready tongue, but those who are good have an inability to speak; see Rosenbloom (2009) 202.

[20] Miller (1982) 116. Pindar's claim that envy affects good men more than lesser men is repeated by the chorus of Sophocles' *Ajax* (154–7). On envy and secret ballots in Athenian trials, see Fisher (2003) esp. 186–7.

describes it was made on the basis of their speaking abilities and how well they could persuade others, a criterion that clearly favours Odysseus over Ajax.

In the first part, Pindar concentrates on the dishonour done to Ajax by the other Greek leaders. Odysseus is mentioned in passing as the victor and referred to when Pindar states that the greatest prize was offered to 'shifty falsehood'. As Miller states, at this point Odysseus is the 'beneficiary rather than the architect or instigator of Ajax's disgrace'.[21] However, Pindar moves on from concentrating on φθόνος to παράφασις, which he introduces at line 32. Here, Odysseus' role in the injustice of the judgement comes to the fore, although he is not mentioned by name. Παράφασις is an uncommon word which can mean 'allurement', 'persuasion', or 'deceitful speaking'.[22] The description is reminiscent of *Nemean* 7, except this time it is not Homer to whom these lying tales are attributed but Odysseus.[23] His ability to tell αἰμύλων μύθων contrasts with the ineloquence of the ἄγλωσσος Ajax.

The dating of this particular ode is uncertain. Some claim that it was composed after the Thirty Years Peace agreement between Athens and Sparta in 446/5, which had serious consequences for Aegina.[24] Scholars have seen in the emphasis on envy and deception a reference to the treatment of Aegina in this agreement. According to informal Aeginetan complaints at the council held at Sparta in 432, they had been promised independence by the treaty, but this had not been granted by Athens (Thuc. 1.67). In this interpretation, Odysseus stands for Athens, the undeserving contriver who prevails through deceit, whereas Ajax stands for Aegina, a worthy hero who is brought low by the deceit and envy of others.[25] Mullen, for example, claims that in 445 there could have been talk of little else on Aegina than of betrayal through intrigue, and he also directly links παράφασις to Athenian sophistry.[26] Aegina is betrayed not just by Athens, however, but also by Sparta, which had failed to secure the island's liberation.[27]

[21] Miller (1982) 116.
[22] LSJ s.v. παράφασις A2.
[23] Park (2023) 65.
[24] Brown (1951) 13–4; Mullen (1973) 476.
[25] Carnes (1995) 29 n. 60 suggests that this analogy could have permeated the political discourse of Aegina at the time without us knowing.
[26] Mullen (1973) 476 and 489.
[27] Mullen (1973) 476.

One common feature of Pindar's three retellings of the judgement of arms is the absence of any divine intervention. This marks a clear break with the epic tradition, which frequently mentions Athena's influence on the decision, and the artistic representations showing Athena presiding over the vote (see below). Also, Trojans are not consulted as part of the decision. Pindar instead specifically blames the Greeks alone for having voted the way they did. He suggests that the secret ballot facilitated their actions.[28] He also, in *Nemean* 8, blames Odysseus by suggesting that he misled the Greeks with his persuasion and rhetoric. This also differs from the epic presentation; in the fragments and passages that we have there is no mention of a verbal contest between the two heroes.

Pindar's poems are some of the earliest surviving texts in which we can clearly see a direct attack on and criticism of Odysseus. His presentation of Odysseus is also influential on later writers. Most, for example, states that the critical picture of an Odysseus who is all *logos* and no *ergon* begins in Pindar and continues through Gorgias and tragedy to become one the clichés of Western Literature.[29] Pindar seems to have established Odysseus' reputation as a speaker rather than a doer. The poet challenges Odysseus' heroic standing in both *Nemean* 7 and 8 by claiming first, that his sufferings have been exaggerated and second, that deception gives obscure men unsound glory, which is surely a reference to Odysseus. Although in Homer Odysseus uses persuasion adeptly, he is also a man of action when action is required. For Pindar, however, Odysseus is a slanderer who seeks to defeat Ajax by use of verbal dexterity.[30]

3.2.2. Aeschylus

Aeschylus probably produced a trilogy featuring Ajax, the first play of which, *Award of the Arms*, deals with the judgement of arms. Aeschylus, unlike Sophocles, seems to have staged the contest itself. This would have given a chance for Odysseus to display his superior talent for speaking, especially against Ajax who, as a traditionally taciturn hero, is less of an equal to Odysseus in this field than someone like Palamedes. The fragments of this play are scanty, but fr. 175 is noteworthy:

[28] Rutherford (2015) 455.
[29] Most (1985) 149.
[30] Segal (1981) 133; Pratt (1993) 121–2; Worman (1999) 43.

ἀλλ᾽ Ἀντικλείας ἆσσον ἦλθε Σίσυφος,

τῆς σῆς λέγω τοι μητρός, ἥ σ᾽ ἐγείνατο

But Sisyphus came close to Anticleia—to your mother, I tell you, to her who gave birth to you!

Ajax's claim that Odysseus was fathered by Sisyphus, rather than Laertes, is a frequent allegation made against Odysseus which we have already seen and will see again.[31] This reference to Sisyphus is designed to insult Odysseus by implying he is descended from an infamous trickster. It also belittles his lineage as not as distinguished as that of Ajax and Achilles. Hadjicosti suggests that this reference to Sisyphus implies that Ajax senses some kind of deceit on the part of Odysseus.[32] The next fragment, therefore, might refer to the truthful words of Ajax as opposed to the deceitful words of Odysseus (fr. 176):

ἁπλᾶ γάρ ἐστι τῆς ἀληθείας ἔπη

The words of truth are simple.

Another fragment is addressed to Thetis (fr. 174):

δέσποινα πεντήκοντα Νηρήδων κορῶν

Mistress of fifty Nereid maidens.

The scholiast on Aristophanes introduces this line by saying that Thetis and the Nereids were called to decide or judge something, and it is hard to see what this could be other than the contest for the arms.[33] In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus states that the contest is instigated by Thetis (11.546), but she is not mentioned anywhere else as part of the judgement. On the other hand, fr. 174 may be addressed to Thetis by one of the two competitors seeking to bring her forward as a witness to their claims.[34] It is possible that Aeschylus depicted an on-stage vote, as he did in *Eumenides*, and it could be either Nereids or Greek soldiers voting.

[31] Soph. fr. 567, see p. 70; Eur. *IA* 524, 1362, see p. 87; Soph. *Aj*. 189, see p. 115; Soph. *Phil*. 385, 417, 1311, see pp. 204–5; Eur. *Cyc.* 104, see pp. 235–6.
[32] Hadjicosti (2007) 55.
[33] Schol. Ar. *Ach*. 883.
[34] Williams (1980) 142 suggests that it is perhaps the wily Odysseus who called to Achilles' mother for her to come and judge whether or not he is the rightful heir to the arms.

If the Nereids are the judges, Aeschylus' intention may have been to distance the responsibility for the vote and its consequences from the army. Hadjicosti suggests that Aeschylus was reluctant to present Ajax as being in dispute with the army, because of his importance as a cult hero in Athens in the fifth century.[35] However, Ajax's suicide comes as a result of him trying to murder members of the Greek army, and so the idea of a dispute between them can never be completely absent, even if it is not the army that votes in Odysseus' favour. Furthermore, if the Nereids judge the contest, there is less room for an accusation of an unfair vote, or of cheating, as in Pindar and Sophocles.[36] This fragment also raises the question of whether the Nereids are the chorus of this play. If they are, this might suggest greater neutrality when compared with the partisan Salaminian chorus in Sophocles' *Ajax*. In Aeschylus, if the chorus are not biased and stay neutral throughout the contest, more emphasis would be placed on drawing conclusions based only on Ajax's and Odysseus' performance in the contest and their rhetorical skills.

We cannot know for sure how Odysseus was presented in this play. Based on the outline of the plot, we can say with more certainty that there is an *agon* depicted between Odysseus and Ajax, and that Odysseus is the more persuasive and wins a victory. The reference to Sisyphus (fr. 175) may imply that Odysseus' speech in the *agon* is deceitful in some way.

Award of the Arms was followed by *Thracian Women*, which covers the same ground as Sophocles' *Ajax*. We have no evidence that Odysseus appears in this play. It is more likely that the chorus of Thracian women defend Ajax's right to a proper burial, if the issue of his burial is raised.[37] As Odysseus is probably nowhere to be seen, he does not have the magnanimous part to play that he does in Sophocles, in which he is on hand to resolve the conflict at the climax.

A papyrus fragment of Aeschylus also survives that describes the fate of Ajax (fr. 451q 6–12):

> τὸν δὴ περιρρῠ̣[τ] . . [
> ὥλ[εc]ᾳ̣ν ῥ̲υ̲cίπ̲τ̲ο̲λ̲[ιν

[35] Hadjicosti (2007) 54–5.
[36] Pind. *Nem*. 8.28; Soph. *Aj*. 1135.
[37] Hadjicosti (2007) 86.

π[οι]μ̲ανδρίδ̲αι̲ [
ὄρχαμ[οί] τ̲᾽ ἐπίσκο̲[ποι
τευχ[έ]ω̲ν [ἀ]πε̲[λ]πίσα̲ντ[
δίκᾳ δ̲᾽ Ὀδυ̲σσῆϊ ξυνῇσαν [
ο]ὐκ ἰσο̲[ρ]ρ̲[όπ]ῳ φρενί·

The [commander (?)] from the sea-girt [land (?)],
the defender of the cit[y], was des[tro]yed
by the s[he]pherds of men [. . .]
and the control[ling] ruler[s]
when he [lost] the hope of gaining the [divine (?)] armour.
In the dispute [the rulers (?)] sided with Odysseus –
their minds were [n]ot evenly [b]al[anc]ed.

We do not know the context of this fragment, but there are two points to make. First, it strongly suggests that the judges of the contest were the Greek leaders themselves, the 'shepherds of men', rather than Trojans or Nereids. Second, the last line here implies that the speaker's allegiance is to Ajax and not to Odysseus as they claim that the leaders were mistaken to award the arms to Odysseus and not Ajax.

Sommerstein points out that it is unlikely that this passage comes from *Award of the Arms*. He suggests that it comes from the third play in the Ajax trilogy, *Women of Salamis*, and that the fate of Ajax is being compared with the fate of Teucer.[38] Another possibility is Aeschylus' *Philoctetes*.[39] In the remains of Euripides' *Philoctetes* and in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* we see the eponymous hero being informed of the fate of fellow Greek heroes. Neoptolemus informs him about the death of Ajax and, more relevantly, the disguised Odysseus in Euripides describes the fate of Palamedes at the hands of 'Odysseus'. It is possible, therefore, that in this fragment the as-yet-unrecognised Odysseus could be telling Philoctetes about the fate of Ajax.

[38] Sommerstein (2009) 341.
[39] Lloyd-Jones (1957) 584–6.

3.2.3. Sophocles

Sophocles' *Ajax* depicts the events after the judgement of arms and begins on the morning after Ajax has killed the Greek livestock. Odysseus does not spend much time on stage in this play but, much as we saw in *Iphigenia at Aulis* and will see in *Trojan Women* and *Philoctetes*, he has a menacing off-stage presence communicated by the way other characters talk about him. However, his on-stage behaviour is quite at odds with the way he is portrayed by other characters.

Scholars who discuss Sophocles' *Ajax* rarely look in detail at the presentation of Odysseus by Ajax and the chorus. The image created by them is sinister and frightening. Having seen a contradictory characterisation of Odysseus in the prologue, and because of his stage reputation, the audience were likely to have had a sense of unease when he reappears at the end about which side of Odysseus they might see. This makes his behaviour at the climactic impasse reached at the end of the play even more surprising. What is especially fascinating, and rarely mentioned, is the way that Ajax describes Odysseus using many terms much more familiar from comedy in lampoons of contemporary politicians such as Cleon.

After briefly dealing with the issue of dating, we will look at Odysseus in interaction with other characters – Athena, Agamemnon, and Teucer – and through the eyes of other characters – Ajax and the chorus. In this way, we can see how his appearances at the start and the end frame the play and contradict many of the accusations made in the main section when he is off stage. We will also see the two distinct personas of Odysseus, the one that appears to us on stage and the one in the imagination of Ajax and the chorus. After the focus on each interaction in turn we will then look at some of the broader issues across the whole play.

The dating of *Ajax* is far from certain.[40] Victorian scholars tended to label the play as early based on its similarity to *Antigone* (the date of which is also uncertain), its use of epic vocabulary, or its similarity to Aeschylean style.[41] There has been a desire to see it as an 'early' play on account of its rugged 'archaic' protagonist, but Sophocles could have chosen this type of subject matter, with style to fit it, at any point in his

[40] See Garvie (1998) 6–8 for a discussion of various theories on the date. See also Finglass (2011) 1–11.
[41] Blaydes (1875) 4; Campbell (1881) 6; Paley (1888) 10; Jebb (1896) li–liv.

career.[42] There has also been a desire from some to link it to the politics of the 450s and 440s and so to see Cimon as the political figure behind the character of Ajax, but this is only speculation.[43] As Hesk points out, it is hard to read Ajax as an allegorical representation of a specific Athenian leader, because there are a number of candidates who fit his profile in some respects but not in all.[44] The use of metrical criteria gives the play a date in the 440s, but this is not necessarily a reliable method, especially since only two of Sophocles' extant plays, *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, have certainly known dates for those analysing metrical data to work with.[45] The anti-Spartan feeling towards Menelaus at the end of the play (1102) and the curse on the Atridae in Ajax's final speech (835–49) may suggest a date closer to the start of the Peloponnesian War or even later.[46]

Odysseus and Athena

The play opens with a conversation between Athena and Odysseus. Athena speaks the opening lines, which makes her influence on the episode clear and contrasts with Pindar, where she is notably absent, and possibly Aeschylus, where there is no evidence for her appearance. The play's opening is unusual; no other extant tragedy begins with a god in conversation with a mortal. Furthermore, tragic prologues featuring gods usually involve some prediction of the future action of the play rather than simply explaining the situation.[47] Athena, on the other hand, does not mention Ajax's fate and only alludes to the importance a single day can have in bringing

[42] Hall (2010) 301. See also Kennedy (2009) 141 n. 1: 'what one person calls an archaic or undeveloped style could, in fact, be a revolutionary style or a first attempt in a new direction for that author'.
[43] Ferrario (2012) 453; Osborne (2012) 275. On Ajax and Cimon, see Brown (1951) 18–20; Finley (1967) 11; Rose (1995) 71; Garvie (1998) 6; see also Scodel's summary (2003) 31 of the main similarities between Ajax and Cimon, and the several major divergences.
[44] Hesk (2003) 20.
[45] Finglass (2011) 4–7 sets out the case for the metrical dating. See, however, Kennedy (2009) 141 n. 1, who states that it is too difficult to date Sophocles on metre, and also Hall (2018a) 116, who notes that using the same metrical criteria used for Euripides on Sophocles' plays would give *Ajax* a very late date.
[46] Hall (2010) 316 and (2018a) 116–7; Kennedy (2009) 113–4 argues that the presentation of Athena, the relationship she has with Ajax, and the shifting meanings of the concepts *sôphrosunê* and *summachos* reflect the years after the start of the Peloponnesian War. Finglass (2011) 8 n. 30 dismisses the idea of dating the play to the years leading up to the Peloponnesian War, yet also concedes (p. 9) that the play could be dated to the mid-430s. Lloyd-Jones (1994) 9 dates the play to 430–20. Rosenbloom (2001) 127 is convinced that dating the play to 450–440 is a mistake and suggests that the placement of Ajax and Odysseus in opposition to Peloponnesian leadership, along with Odysseus' espousal of the ideals of Athenian hegemony, might support a date in the 420s.
[47] Finglass (2011) on 1–133.

down mortals (131–2). The prologue becomes even more unusual when we see Athena toying with the mad Ajax while she makes Odysseus look on.

The presence of Odysseus and Athena on stage together naturally recalls Homer, but Odysseus cannot see the goddess, so they do not meet face to face to make their plans, as they do in *Odyssey* 13. Odysseus' comment that Athena's hand has steered him in the past and will do so again in the future (34–5) is a clear reference to their epic relationship. Athena's opening words contain references to hunting (1–2), creating an expectation of Odysseus' attitude towards Ajax that will then be disproven by his own words throughout the prologue. That Odysseus has volunteered to look for Ajax links him with his epic tendency to undertake dangerous missions for the group.[48] Furthermore, he describes his voluntary assumption of the yoke (24), which stresses his submission to the common good.[49]

Later in the prologue, Athena establishes a key theme when she invites Odysseus to laugh at the mad Ajax (79). The idea of laughing at an enemy recurs many times throughout the play, and Odysseus will be accused of it several times.[50] Odysseus, however, does not wish to laugh at Ajax, nor does he want to see the maddened hero. He does not state his reasons. Despite suggestions that this is either cowardice or prudence, it is more likely that Sophocles has created deliberate ambiguity so that the audience is not sure what to expect from Odysseus.[51] In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is notably wary of revealing his true feelings; even when he meets Athena on the shore of Ithaca, he remains cautious, and Sophocles continues this characterisation.

Odysseus tells Athena that he pities Ajax, even though he is his enemy, because he is thinking of his own fate and realises how powerless mortals are in comparison to the gods (121–6). These lines are crucial, because they show Odysseus' compassion for Ajax, even though Ajax had just been discussing with Athena the torture of the 'Odysseus' that he has captured. Odysseus' reaction is surprising; because of their enmity, the audience might expect him to gloat rather than sympathise with Ajax.

[48] This was particularly prominent in the *Little Iliad*, which featured several missions that Odysseus undertook either alone or with Diomedes; see Kirkwood (1965) 64.
[49] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.
[50] 303, 382, 454, 957–8, 961.
[51] Cowardice: Linforth (1954) 3; Paillard (2020) 74–5. Prudence: Evans (1991) 71.

Odysseus' opposition to boasting and his enlightened view of the powerlessness of humans both have antecedents in Homer. In the *Odyssey*, while disguised as a beggar, Odysseus warns the suitor Amphinomus of the changing fortunes of men who are at the mercy of the gods and encourages him to leave before the suitors are all killed (18.130–50).[52] He describes the reversals of his own life and concludes that a man should quietly accept whatever the gods give him.

Odysseus is not always averse to boasting in Homer. In the *Iliad*, he exults after killing Socus (11.449) and, more notably, his boasting over the blinded Cyclops in the *Odyssey* leads to the suffering of him and his men. On the other hand, towards the end of the *Odyssey*, after the suitors' slaughter, the nurse Eurycleia comes upon Odysseus standing in the palace hall covered with blood (22.401–6). He forbids her from rejoicing and cautions her that it is impious to gloat over men who have been killed (22.407–16). This applies to his attitude towards Ajax at the beginning and end of the play. In Homer, Odysseus understands that the suitors' crimes brought about their end but still does not gloat. This contrasts with Ajax, who in Sophocles is also surrounded by the bloodied corpses of his victims when he appears on stage. Unlike Odysseus, who in Homer is merely compared to a lion who has devoured livestock (22.402), Ajax himself has actually killed livestock. When Ajax speaks to Athena in his maddened state, she asks if he has stained his sword with the blood of the Argive army (94–5), in response to which he claims that he has a right to boast (96). Ajax is therefore the reverse of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 22, as he has failed to kill his intended targets yet still boasts about his actions (96, 303).

The prologue establishes Odysseus' pity for Ajax and his behaviour contradicts the accusations which will be made about him by other characters. Furthermore, Odysseus' lack of information and his opportunity to view the spectacle of the mad Ajax put him on the level of the audience.[53]

Ajax talking about Odysseus

Ajax and Odysseus do not meet face-to-face in the play. Although both are on stage for the prologue, Ajax is unable to see Odysseus. Ajax and his supporters speak about Odysseus during the play several times, and each time they present him in a

[52] Gould (1983) 38.
[53] Ringer (1998) 34; Hubbard (2000) 326; Hof (2021) 126.

similar fashion to Pindar's earlier depiction. They emphasise his cunning speech and his apparent efforts to slander Ajax by stirring up the army against him. At no point in the play does Ajax actually mention Odysseus by name, and only once does he identify him by his patronymic (380). He does not refer to his enemy as the son of Sisyphus, which is curious given his hostile view of him. Ajax first speaks about Odysseus when conversing with Athena in the prologue. His own encounter with Athena contrasts with that between Odysseus and Athena and displays the differences between the two men. Odysseus follows Athena's instructions when she gives them, whereas Ajax rejects her instruction not to torture Odysseus.

Athena entices Ajax into revealing what he thinks he has done to the Greek leaders. After she enquires about the son of Laertes, Ajax responds (103):

> ἦ τοὐπίτριπτον κίναδος ἐξήρου μ᾽ ὅπου;
> Did you ask me where the cunning fox was?

The literal definition of ἐπίτριπτος is 'one who deserves to be crushed', and the usage is almost exclusively comic.[54] In Aristophanes' *Wealth*, for instance, it is used to describe the clever slave Cario (275). Similarly comic in use is κίναδος, 'fox', which does not occur in any other tragedies but does in a few comedies and oratorical speeches.[55] Strepsiades, for example, in Aristophanes' *Clouds* lists everything he will become after training with Socrates and includes a κίναδος on his list (*Nub*. 448).[56]

The more common Greek word for fox is ἀλώπηξ, and the fox was considered one of the most cunning of all animals.[57] Zenobius, for example, preserves a proverb mentioned by both Archilochus and Homer about a fox having many tricks but a hedgehog only one, adding 'the proverb is said of the greatest scoundrel'.[58] Alcaeus describes someone, possibly Pittacus, as having the cunning of a fox (fr. 69).[59] In Plato's *Republic*, Adeimantus discusses virtue and the appearance of virtue,

[54] Sannyrion fr. 11; Ar. *Ach*. 557, *Pax* 1236, *Plut*. 275, 619, cf. *Clouds* 1004 where it forms part of a long compound word; see Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.
[55] Callias fr. 2; Ar. *Birds* 429; Andocides seems to refer to this line in one of his speeches (1.99); see also Dem. 18.162; Aeschin. 3.167.
[56] See p. 260 on this passage in *Clouds*.
[57] Detienne and Vernant (1991) 34.
[58] 5.68 = Archil. fr. 201. Cf. Archil. fr. 185.
[59] Detienne and Vernant (1991) 36.

suggesting that one ought to cultivate a façade of virtue while dragging behind him on a lead Archilochus' cunning and wily fox, a reference to Archilochus fr. 185 (*Resp*. II.365c). Later, Aristotle describes the fox as 'mischievous and wicked' (πανοῦργα καὶ κακοῦργα, *Hist*. *An*. 1.488b20). Even ἀλώπηξ is not used in tragedy but features in comedy.[60] Ajax's characterisation of Odysseus as a fox not only points to his cunning, but also sets the tone for the peculiarly comic way in which Ajax will describe Odysseus throughout the play.

After later regaining his sanity, Ajax bemoans his failure to kill his enemies to Tecmessa and the chorus. Unprompted, he directs a complaint against Odysseus (379–82):

> ἰὼ πάνθ᾽ ὁρῶν, ἅπαντ᾽ ἀίων,
>
> κακῶν ὄργανον, τέκνον Λαρτίου,
>
> κακοπινέστατόν τ᾽ ἄλημα στρατοῦ,
>
> ἦ που πολὺν γέλωθ᾽ ὑφ᾽ ἡδονῆς ἄγεις.
>
> Ah, you who see all things and hear all things, instrument of every crime, son of Laertes, filthiest trickster of the army, how you must be laughing in your delight!

This description enhances the way in which Odysseus is depicted as a menacing presence watching over everything. His omnipresence is almost supernatural but is clearly malicious from Ajax's point of view. The description of him is similar to the comment of Demosthenes in Aristophanes' *Knights* that the Paphlagonian (Cleon) has an eye that is everywhere (75).

Ajax describes Odysseus as an ὄργανον, an 'instrument', which is an unusual word to use of a person rather than an object. It seems to be rarely, if ever, used in ancient literature of a person. To call Odysseus this suggests that he is not necessarily the instigator of all evils or crimes but is the implement by which they are carried out. This could be a reference to Odysseus' role in the army as an enforcer who carries out tasks for the Atridae.

Ἄλημα is only present in Sophocles' *Ajax* (here and again at 389) and in no other literature. It is derived from the verb ἀλέω which means 'to grind' and therefore

[60] Eup. fr. 3.6; Cratinus fr. 135; Ar. *Eq*. 1067–78, *Thesm*. 1133, *Ach*. 678, *Av.* 653, *Pax* 1067, 1190.

should mean ‘something that is ground’. It seems to have the metaphorical meaning of something fine-grained or tricky and, therefore, a trickster.[61] A similar derivation occurs with παιπάλημα, which comes from the word for flour, παιπάλη; both παιπάλημα and παιπάλη are used in Aristophanes to refer to cunning or subtle speakers (*Av*. 429–30; *Nub*. 260).[62]

Ajax’s suggestion that Odysseus is laughing in delight is clearly not the case, as the audience has seen in the prologue. The fear of Odysseus and the Atridae laughing at the plight of Ajax and his friends is repeated often.[63] The description of Odysseus’ laughter also recalls Tecmessa’s earlier story of Ajax torturing the animals he thought were the Atridae and Odysseus, and how he laughed loudly at the violence he had inflicted (303). Ajax imagines that Odysseus will behave towards his enemy the same way he did himself when he mistakenly believed that he was victorious over his enemies.

Ajax follows up this complaint with an appeal to Zeus a few lines later (387–91):

> ὦ Ζεῦ προγόνων προπάτωρ,
>
> πῶς ἂν τὸν αἰμυλώτατον,
>
> ἐχθρὸν ἄλημα, τούς τε δισσάρχας
>
> ὀλέσσας βασιλῆς,
>
> τέλος θάνοιμι καὐτός;
>
> O Zeus, forebear of my ancestors, if only I could destroy the craftiest of all, the trickster that I detest, and the two brother kings, and at last die myself!

Ajax uses the superlative form of αἰμύλος to refer to Odysseus, which is not used of Odysseus in Homer but is used to describe him elsewhere in tragedy.[64] A fragment of Solon condemns the Athenians for trusting the tongue and words of a crafty

[61] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*. See pp. 162–3 for a similarly obscure word with a -μα suffix, κρότημα, which is used of Odysseus at *Rhes*. 499.
[62] Cf. Aesch. 2.40 on παιπάλημα.
[63] 303, 382, 454, 957–8, 961.
[64] Eur. *Telephus* fr. 715; *Rhes*. 498, 709. Cf. Pindar’s description of Odysseus’ flattering tales (*Nem*. 8.33). Αἰμύλος is only used once in Homer, of Calypso’s sweet and cunning words (*Od*. 1.56).

(αἰμύλος) man instead of looking at what he does, at his ἔργον (fr. 11.7–8).[65] Other fifth-century uses of αἰμύλος occur in two Aristophanic comedies. In *Knights*, the chorus congratulates the Sausage-seller for outdoing Paphlagon (Cleon) in 'intricate schemes and wheedling (αἰμύλοι) words' (686–7). Meanwhile in *Lysistrata*, αἰμύλος is connected with ἀλώπηξ when the Spartan delegate announces that Sparta will do away with 'foxy stratagems' (1268). For Ajax to describe Odysseus as αἰμύλος is consistent with his tragic character, but the adjective also has roguish overtones as in the comic uses. As with many of the descriptions of Odysseus from Ajax and the chorus, αἰμύλος emphasises Odysseus' speech and contributes to the overall characterisation of him as a manipulative and deceptive speaker.

Ajax refers to Odysseus a further two times in the play. The first reference comes when he asserts that if Achilles were alive and awarding the arms no one else could have defeated him; he goes on (445–6):

> νῦν δ᾽ αὖτ᾽ Ἀτρεῖδαι φωτὶ παντουργῷ φρένας
>
> ἔπραξαν, ἀνδρὸς τοῦδ᾽ ἀπώσαντες κράτη.
>
> But now the sons of Atreus have made them over to an unscrupulous fellow, pushing aside this man's mighty deeds.

Φρήν, 'mind' or 'character', contrasts with κράτος, 'strength', in the following line. Campbell, in noting this contrast, adds that 'Ajax speaks with scorn of those varied mental resources of which he does not feel the need'.[66] A similar phrase is used in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* when Eteocles states that Justice would be false to her name if she consorted with his brother Polynices, a man with 'so utterly audacious a mind' (φωτὶ παντόλμῳ φρένας, 669). While Polynices is called πάντολμος, all-daring, Odysseus is called παντουργός, more commonly spelled πανοῦργος, meaning 'ready to do anything' or 'wicked'. It is used often in tragedy and even more frequently in comedy and is used elsewhere of Odysseus.[67] In tragedy it can mean wicked, and its use alone would not indicate a deliberately comic tone,

[65] This particular fragment also contains a reference to following in the footsteps of the fox (ἀλώπηξ, fr. 11.5), though what this line is referring to and whether the fox is to be a negative or positive paradigm is unclear. See Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010) 334–5 on various interpretations of this line.
[66] Campbell (1881) *ad loc*.
[67] Used of Odysseus: Eur. *Phil*. fr. 789d.9. See also Odysseus described as engaging in πανουργία, a related noun, Gorg. *Pal*. 3; Soph. *Phil*. 408, 927.

but it is not the only word used by Ajax to describe Odysseus that is frequently used in comedy. One of the most prolific uses of πανοῦργος is in Aristophanes' *Knights*, where it is predominantly used of Cleon.[68] In addition to being a man who sees and hears all (379), Odysseus is also here characterised as one who is ready to do anything.

Later, when contemplating his death, Ajax declares that his arms are not to be set before the Achaeans, and here he refers to Odysseus as his 'corrupter' (λυμεών, 573).[69] This line is slightly hard to interpret. In Lloyd-Jones' version, Ajax is worried that his weapons will be set forth as a prize by either the Atridae or Odysseus. I agree with Finglass' alternative interpretation that there is a lacuna in this line and that the meaning is more that Ajax is afraid that his weapons will end up being awarded to Odysseus.[70] It makes much more sense for Ajax to worry about Odysseus being the recipient of his weapons rather than Odysseus setting up the contest.

Chorus talking about Odysseus

The chorus enter after Odysseus and Athena have departed at the end of the prologue. The parodos shows them full of anxiety as they have heard stories of what Ajax has done and presume (or perhaps hope) that these are false rumours being spread by Odysseus. They create an image of Odysseus stirring up violence among the soldiers against Ajax and his friends. This is at odds with the Odysseus that the audience saw at the start; he took pity on Ajax despite his attempts to kill the Greek leaders. The chorus begin by repeating the story they have heard about Ajax's behaviour, adding (148–53):

> τοιούσδε λόγους ψιθύρους πλάσσων
> εἰς ὦ̃τα φέρει πᾶσιν Ὀδυσσεύς,
> καὶ σφόδρα πείθει. περὶ γὰρ σοῦ νῦν
> εὔπειστα λέγει, καὶ πᾶς ὁ κλυῶν

[68] 45, 56, 247, 249, 250, 317, 451, 684, 823, 902, 950. See Rosenbloom (2001) 124 n. 39 who notes that Cleon is the only politician in extant fifth-century comedy ridiculed as this figure. Sycophants and teachers of rhetoric are also referred to as πανοῦργος in comedy: Ar. *Av*. 1468, 1695–9; Eup. fr. 99.85; cf. Archippus fr. 37.3; Ar. *Ecc*. 436–40.

[69] Odysseus, in disguise, calls himself this when recounting the fate of Palamedes to Philoctetes in Euripides' *Philoctetes* (fr. 789d.8); see p. 187 on this line.

[70] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.

> τοῦ λέξαντος χαίρει μᾶλλον
>
> τοῖς σοῖς ἄχεσιν καθυβρίζων.
>
> Such are the whispered words which Odysseus is putting together and carrying to the ears of all, and he is most persuasive; for what he is now saying about you is plausible, and each hearer takes greater pleasure than the teller in your troubles, exulting over you.

The chorus believe that Odysseus has been lying to the Greeks about Ajax. Odysseus' words are described as ψίθυροι, which means 'slanderous' as well as 'whispered'.[71] It has this usage in Pindar where those who mutter slander are compared to foxes (*Pyth*. 2.74–7), just as Ajax himself referred to Odysseus as a fox (103). That Odysseus has fabricated these words is shown by the participle of πλάσσω, which means to 'form' or 'mould' but can be used metaphorically to mean 'fabricate' or 'forge' and is used to describe stories that are invented.[72] It is not a common verb in tragedy or comedy but is used often in legal speeches to refer to false accusations.[73] The cognate words πλαστός and πλάσμα have a similar double meaning, the first an adjective to mean 'moulded' or 'fabricated', the latter a noun to mean 'anything formed' but also a 'forgery'. The verb's double meaning gives Odysseus a more manipulative role as he is not only telling false stories, from the chorus' perspective, but moulding them to be persuasive (εὔπειστος, 151) by playing on the army's prejudices against Ajax.

Furthermore, that these words are carried directly to people's ears (εἰς ὦτα) is another way of suggesting slander; the same phrase is used in Euripides' *Andromache* to describe Orestes stirring up the Delphians against Neoptolemus (1091).[74] The chorus mention the exultation of the Greeks over Ajax, using καθυβρίζω, the first of several uses of ὑβρίζω and its compounds throughout the play.[75] Here, the chorus do not specifically say that Odysseus is the one exulting, though that accusation will appear later on (see below).

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[71] LSJ s.v. ψίθυρος.
[72] LSJ s.v. πλάσσω A I, V. See e.g. Hdt. 8.80.2; Aesch. *PV* 1030; Pl. *Ti*. 26e, *Ap*. 17c, *Cra*. 415d; Xen. *An*. 2.6.26.
[73] E.g. Lys. 12.48; Dem. 18.121, 25.28; Isoc. 12.25; Aeschin. 2.20.
[74] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.
[75] Καθυβρίζω: 153; ὑβρίζω: 367, 560, 971, 1081, 1151, 1258; ἐφυβρίζω: 955, 1385.

Later in the parodos the chorus call on Zeus and Apollo to avert the 'evil rumour of the Argives' (186), adding (187–9):

> εἰ δ' ὑποβαλλόμενοι
> κλέπτουσι μύθους οἱ μεγάλοι βασιλῆς,
> χὠ τᾶς ἀσώτου Σισυφιδᾶν γενεᾶς,
> But if the great kings and he of the worthless line of Sisyphus
> are trumping up charges and spreading false stories

They then call on Ajax not to remain in his hut while his enemies all 'run riot with their tongues' (198–9).[76] The chorus speak as if Ajax is under attack and must defend himself, but his enemies' weapon of choice is not a sword or spear but the tongue. We are reminded of Pindar's description of Ajax as ἄγλωσσος (*Nem*. 8.24), and so he must match the tongues of his enemy with brute force.

The chorus here emphasise the deceit practised by Odysseus and the Atridae. Ὑποβάλλω means 'to deceive', and κλέπτω means 'to steal', but it has other meanings such as 'to cheat' or 'to do something secretly or treacherously'.[77] It is in these senses that the word is used by Pindar, for example, when he states that Homer deceives with misleading tales (*Nem*. 7.23).

The chorus are particularly damning about Odysseus' lineage. Ἄσωτος occurs only once elsewhere in tragedy. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Aegisthus describes the meal fed to Thyestes, which contained his own children, as ruinous for the family (ἄσωτον… γένει, 1597). It can mean 'abandoned' in a moral sense, as it is used here in *Ajax*, but also 'to be past recovery' or 'having no hope of safety'.[78] Furthermore, the chorus do not merely call Odysseus the son of Sisyphus but refer to the entire line of Sisyphus. The chorus' description, therefore, of Odysseus' lineage in this way is extreme and will make their change of heart at the end of the play more dramatic.

[76] Finglass (2011) and Garvie (1998) *ad loc*. assert that the verb here should be καχάζω, 'to laugh aloud' or 'to mock', instead of βακχάζω; this would retain the element of laughter, which appears so often throughout the play.
[77] LSJ s.v. κλέπτω A IV.
[78] LSJ s.v. ἄσωτος A II. In oratory and comedy, along with its related noun and verb, it can also refer to profligacy, see e.g. Dem. 40.58, 45.77–8; Isoc. 15.5, 288; Demades fr. 77.3; Crobylus fr. 4; Strattis fr. 54; see Rosenbloom (2001) 124 n. 38.

After the discovery of Ajax's dead body, Tecmessa claims that Athena has created woe for Odysseus, to which the chorus responds (954/5–8):

> ἦ ῥα κελαινώπᾳ θυμῷ ἐφυβρίζει
>
> πολύτλας ἀνήρ,
>
> γελᾷ δὲ τοῖσδε μαινομένοις ἄχεσιν
>
> πολὺν γέλωτα, φεῦ φεῦ,
>
> In truth the much-enduring man exults over us in his dark mind, and laughs loudly at our frenzied sorrows

A 'dark mind' or 'black soul' (κελαινώπας θυμός) is a sign of evil.[79] Orestes, for example, calls his mother black-hearted (κελαινόφρων, Aesch. *Eum*. 459). The chorus repeat their earlier claim that Ajax is being exulted over (153), and here they do specify that it is Odysseus who is exulting.

Πολύτλας is a frequent Homeric epithet used of Odysseus.[80] It does not appear in any other texts before Sophocles other than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the epithet is only ever applied to Odysseus. It is derived from the verb τλάω which means both 'to endure' but also 'to dare to do' something in either a good or bad sense.[81] Πολύτλας could therefore mean 'much enduring' but also 'much daring' or 'over audacious'. This makes the epithet an ambiguous one and the chorus certainly do not use it here in praise of Odysseus.[82] The chorus also repeat Ajax's fear about Odysseus laughing at them. Just as when Ajax made the claim, the audience knows he behaved differently in the prologue.

Later in the play, Odysseus reappears during the debate between Teucer and Agamemnon over Ajax's right to burial. His entry interrupts the usual *agon* pattern; a third party rarely enters during the stichomythia after an *agon*, so his entrance is a surprise.[83] Also surprising is the chorus' reaction to Odysseus' entrance (1316–7):

> ἄναξ Ὀδυσσεῦ, καιρὸν ἵσθ᾽ ἐληλυθώς,

[79] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.
[80] It is used of him five times in the *Iliad* and thirty-seven times in the *Odyssey*.
[81] LSJ s.v. τλάω A I and II; see Montiglio (2011) 11.
[82] Cf. p. 114–5 on ποικιλόφρων and p. 217 on πολυμήχανος. See also p. 213 and 217 on words derived from τολμάω, a verb associated with Odysseus in Homer.
[83] Holt (1981) 286; Barker (2004) 15.

εἰ μὴ ξυνάψων, ἀλλὰ συλλύσων πάρει.

Lord Odysseus, know that you have come at the right moment, if you have come not to make the tangle worse, but to untie it!

The chorus look to Odysseus to find a solution to the stalemate. This is remarkable given the intensity of their previous complaints about him.[84] When they earlier saw Menelaus approaching, for example, the chorus call him an enemy and presume that he has come to mock them (1042–3). However, they address Odysseus with an honorific vocative and note the good timing of his entrance.[85] Similarly, they use two verbs in the second line prefixed with συν-, common in contexts of help and assistance, which also makes clear their hope that Odysseus will help them.[86] The conditional εἰ, however, reveals some lingering suspicion that Odysseus might have come to make things worse and not better.[87] Nevertheless, their attitude towards Odysseus is markedly different from that throughout the rest of the play.

Odysseus and Agamemnon

The closing scene mirrors the prologue in that Odysseus defies an ally and unexpectedly shows pity for Ajax, despite the invitation to laugh at or trample his stricken enemy. Odysseus' intentions are clear from his first words after entering the stage, when he states that he heard the shouts of the Atridae over Ajax's 'valiant' corpse (1319).

Odysseus disagrees with Agamemnon and argues that Ajax should be allowed burial (1332–45). He focuses on the injustice of refusing burial and uses his own attitude to Ajax as an exemplar, since he recognises Ajax's merit despite their enmity (1339–41). Agamemnon has as little understanding for Odysseus' flexible approach to friendship as Ajax does. At this point, the focus of the debate shifts from Ajax's burial to an examination of Odysseus' character and his claim to friendship with Agamemnon.[88] Agamemnon, like Athena, asks Odysseus if he would express his antagonism towards Ajax, this time by trampling on his corpse (1348). Odysseus

[84] Barker (2009) 310.
[85] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.
[86] Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.
[87] Heath and Okell (2007) 378; Barker (2009) 310–1.
[88] Hawthorne (2012) 391.

responds by instructing Agamemnon not to take pleasure in a superiority that is ignoble (1349).

Odysseus stresses twice that he recognises Ajax's nobility and excellence despite their former enmity (1355, 1357). He also makes explicit his view of friendship when he states that many people who are friends may at some point become enemies (1359). Agamemnon shows his distaste for this flexibility when he asks if Odysseus approves of making friends of such people (1360). Odysseus, in reply, says that it is not his way to approve a stubborn mind (1361). This reiterates the contrast between two types of attitude, flexible and stubborn, which has been present between Odysseus and the other characters throughout the play.

Agamemnon's final objection is that his acquiescence will make the Greek leaders seem like cowards (1362). Odysseus counters by stating that the leaders will be just in the sight of all the Greeks (1363). Odysseus sees the bigger picture and has the whole army in mind. He resumes the theme of justice from his earlier speech but also panders to Agamemnon's fears about his authority by reassuring him that his actions will be well received by his men.

At the climax of the debate, Odysseus admits to Agamemnon, just as he does to Athena, that he is thinking of himself in his pursuit of a fair burial for Ajax (1365).[89] His claim to self-interest makes him trustworthy in the way that prosecutors in Athenian trials sought to prove their personal grievance to avoid being labelled sycophants.[90] Odysseus' point is also applicable to Agamemnon himself, since he too one day will need to be buried.[91] At this point, Agamemnon concedes to the burial so long as it be called Odysseus' action and not his own (1368). Odysseus' friendship is examined during the course of the debate, and his *philia* is found to be intact, and therefore Agamemnon can agree to granting him the favour. Even though Odysseus persuades Agamemnon to allow the burial, he does not convince him to take a more understanding attitude or impress upon him the importance of accepting the excellence of others.

[89] See p. 150 for his focus on his own burial in his arguments to Hecuba in Euripides' *Hecuba*.
[90] Hawthorne (2012) 395.
[91] Hawthorne (2012) 395.

Despite his pity for Ajax in the prologue, it is not certain that Odysseus would side with Ajax in the final scene. His intervention is particularly unexpected given the way he has been presented by other characters. Throughout the play, Ajax and his supporters have tied Odysseus and the Atridae together in their fears at being laughed at or in their blame for Ajax's dishonour. By the end of the play, Odysseus stands apart from the Atridae in his behaviour and principles. He does not condemn Ajax for his one transgression but instead sees past it to his nobility and excellence, and understands that these qualities deserve honour.

Finglass suggests that the Athenian audience would not have regarded Odysseus' intervention as something specifically Athenian or democratic because he speaks not before an assembly but a single ruler who gives way because of personal friendship.[92] What he argues is true, but Hawthorne's insightful analysis shows that what is new is not Odysseus' ethics, but his method of argumentation.[93] If the closing scene were about nothing more than Agamemnon granting the burial as a favour to Odysseus, the scene would not take so long and would not require a further debate between the two characters.[94] Instead, the debate which examines the legitimacy of Odysseus' *philia* is similar to an example of the 'ethical proof', or character *pistis*, later put forward by Aristotle.[95] Hawthorne demonstrates the ways in which this final debate mirrors democratic practice, since Athenian rhetors relied on the same sort of character *pistis* to convince the *dēmos* of their trustworthiness and their democratic commitments.[96] Therefore, while the values that Odysseus advocates in the closing scene may be universal and not linked to any particular political setting, the method he uses to persuade Agamemnon does show the influence of democratic practices.[97]

Odysseus with Teucer and the chorus

Once Agamemnon has left, the chorus commend Odysseus for his intervention (1374–5):

ὅστις σ', Ὀδυσσεῦ, μὴ λέγει γνώμῃ σοφὸν

[92] Finglass (2017) 316.
[93] Hawthorne (2012).
[94] Hawthorne (2012) 388.
[95] *Rh*. 1.1356a, 2.1378a; Hawthorne (2012) 391.
[96] Hawthorne (2012) 399.
[97] On the universality of Odysseus' arguments, see Scodel (2003) 42 and Finglass (2011) 45.

φῦναι, τοιοῦτον ὄντα, μῶρός ἐστ᾽ ἀνήρ.

Odysseus, whoever says that you are not wise in your judgement, when you are like this, is a fool!

They describe Odysseus' judgement as σοφός which, as we have already seen, is a frequent adjective used of Odysseus and can be ambiguous in its meaning.[98] However, it is used here to praise Odysseus, as it is used to praise others such as Palamedes.[99] These lines, combined with those spoken at Odysseus' entrance, show the chorus' complete change of perspective towards him, a reversal of the kind endorsed by Odysseus and recommended by Ajax during the 'deception' speech (678–83).

Teucer is particularly complimentary to Odysseus in the closing scenes. He addresses him as 'noble' Odysseus (ἄριστος, 1381), echoing Odysseus' description of Ajax as the best of men (1340). As Paillard notes, this is significant since being described as ἄριστος makes Odysseus equal to men such as Ajax, despite his questionable ancestry and unheroic characteristics.[100] Teucer goes on to say to Odysseus: 'you have completely belied (or deceived) my expectations' (μ᾽ ἔψευσας ἐλπίδος πολύ, 1382). There is word play at work here in the use of ψεύδω – Odysseus has 'deceived' Teucer's expectations by being honest and doing the right thing.[101] Teucer also commends Odysseus for not mocking Ajax (ἐφυβρίζω, 1385), explicitly contradicting the earlier suggestions of both the chorus (955) and Tecmessa (971) that Odysseus was exulting over them. Just as in the prologue, here at the end of the play Odysseus' behaviour disproves the accusations that have been made against him throughout.

At the end of the play, Teucer refuses Odysseus' request to participate in Ajax's funeral. In his response, Teucer uses Odysseus' standard and more heroic lineage (1393), unlike the chorus who earlier called him the son of Sisyphus. Teucer's refusal to allow Odysseus to assist in the burial is a clear reminder of the meeting in

[98] See p. 57; Eur. fr. 715, see pp. 73–4; Eur. *Tro.* 1224–5, see p. 157; *Rh*. 625, see p. 172; Soph. *Phil*. 119, 431–2, 440, 1244–6, see pp. 200, 206–7, and 219; Eur. *Cyc*. 450, see pp. 245–6.
[99] See p. 57 and 206 for its use in describing the sympathetic Palamedes and Nestor respectively.
[100] Paillard (2020) 73.
[101] Hesk (2003) 128. See also Platt (1911) 103, who suggests that the audience are also deceived by Odysseus' actions because they have been taken in by the words of Ajax, the chorus, and Tecmessa.

the underworld in the *Odyssey*, in which Ajax's hatred continues even in death. Teucer ends by saying that in all his dealings Odysseus has been noble (ἐσθλός, 1399). This is further praise for his former enemy and a reversal of an allusion by Pindar to Ajax as the ἐσθλός man and Odysseus the inferior (*Nem*. 8.22).

Odysseus in *Ajax*

Sophocles' *Ajax* is the only extant play in which Odysseus features where he is clearly not the outright villain of the piece. Despite that, the play still has plenty of unsavoury descriptions of him which would not be out of place in any other tragedy featuring him. The audience is constantly reminded of what he can be capable of when seen through the eyes of his enemies. As we saw in *Iphigenia at Aulis* and will see again in *Trojan Women* and *Philoctetes*, a powerful image of Odysseus' malevolent off-stage presence is created by the on-stage characters. In *Ajax*, this image is particularly malign: his soul is black, he can see everything, is willing to do anything, and he exults over the bereft Ajax and his friends in their darkest moments. However, *Ajax* differs greatly from the other three plays, in that Odysseus' on-stage behaviour contrasts strongly with the image created of him.

Scholars who discuss the presentation of Odysseus in the play concentrate only on the scenes where he appears on stage. Those who see contemporary references in the play, for example, talk about Odysseus as displaying democratic values in his exchange with Agamemnon at the end.[102] In response, some argue that there is nothing about Odysseus' behaviour that is not already present in Homer.[103] Both sides of this discussion are lacking somewhat because they do not consider the *other* Odysseus in the play, the one in the imagination of Ajax and the chorus, as that is where some of the strongest contemporary references are, and also where Odysseus is most un-Homeric. Worman has demonstrated how behaviour behind the scenes is crucial to Odysseus' fifth-century reputation, and we should, therefore, not ignore the presentation of Odysseus in the middle section of the play.[104] Worman is, in fact, one

[102] Knox (1961) 22; Kirkwood (1965) 65; Winnington-Ingram (1980) 62; Segal (1981) 110, 135, and 339; Goldhill (1986) 161; Sorum (1986) 374–5; Worman (2001) 249; Badger (2013) 50. Meier (1993) 179 calls the second part of the play the 'political' part. The Atridae are also seen as more contemporary than Homeric, see e.g. Kirkwood (1965) 56 and Winnington-Ingram (1980) 61.
[103] Scodel (2003) 42; Finglass (2011) 45 and (2017) 316.
[104] Worman (1999) 45.

of the few scholars to recognise the interplay between Odysseus' two personas in the play:

> In Sophocles' tragedies Odysseus combines a sometimes unscrupulous equivocation with the cleverness and eloquence of the politician. *Ajax* depicts this unsettling combination as a contrast between what this diverse hero is and what others think a pragmatic politician must be – that is, mercenary and manipulative.[105]

Sophocles captures the multiplicity of Odysseus and combines the Homeric and tragic Odysseus in one tragedy. The descriptions of Odysseus by other characters are not incidental, but are an essential part of Sophocles' characterisation of him. Only through a full examination of Odysseus' presentation, both on stage and in the words of other characters, can we appreciate some of the ways in which Sophocles has given his character political allusions.[106]

We will begin with the Homeric Odysseus, which is predominantly the Odysseus we see at the start and end of the play. Despite a few exceptions, such as his relationship with Athena, Sophocles' portrayal of the on-stage Odysseus is largely based on Homer. We have already seen how Odysseus' caution against boasting and his awareness of the reversals of fortune have an origin in the *Odyssey*. As well as these specific examples, Odysseus in the *Iliad* is shown in general as a hero who is alert to the needs of the army and the importance of proper conduct. To achieve this harmony and proper conduct he is willing to disagree with Agamemnon and try to persuade him of the right course of action (e.g. *Il*. 14.82–102). Agamemnon in the *Iliad* is grateful for Odysseus' advice, and, after Odysseus takes issue with Agamemnon's suggestion that he is avoiding battle, Agamemnon soothes his anger by saying that the two of them think the same as each other (*Il*. 4.360–1; cf. 19.185–6). The relationship between Odysseus and Agamemnon at the end of *Ajax* is similar

[105] Worman (2012) 342.

[106] Some have suggested, however, that the play has no interest in politics. See e.g. Griffin (1999) 84 and Finglass (2011) 57–8, who both cite as evidence the fact that *polis* is only used twice in the play. However, any mention of a *polis* in a play set in a military camp should, as Carter (2013b) 141 has stressed, attract our attention, and demands an explanation. Similarly, there are also references to Athens in the play (861, 1222), and the chorus are associated with Athens by being described as coming from the race of the sons of Erechtheus (202). See also Scodel's suggestion (2003) 35 that Sophocles' choice to make the chorus sailors and emphasise this over their position as soldiers associates them with the *dēmos*; cf. Rose (1995) 69.

to that in the *Iliad*. Furthermore, in the underworld scene of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus shows a desire for reconciliation with Ajax and regret at having won the arms which cost Ajax his life. These epic scenes clearly influenced Sophocles' presentation of Odysseus.

We now turn to the other Odysseus of the play, the one portrayed by Ajax and the chorus. This Odysseus is distinctly un-Homeric, and the portrayal more closely matches his appearances elsewhere in tragedy, along with other characters in comedy.[107] It is also reminiscent of Pindar's presentation of him. As the date of *Ajax* is uncertain, it is difficult to say what other texts could have influenced Sophocles' play. However, as is shown throughout this thesis, the prevailing characterisation of Odysseus in Greek tragedy is particularly negative and shares several traits with the 'Odysseus' that Ajax and his followers describe. The scanty evidence from Aeschylus' depiction of the judgement, for example, suggests that Ajax there too lambasted Odysseus' deception, though whether his complaints were justified or not is impossible to say.

Πολύτλας is the only description of Odysseus used by Ajax or the chorus that is also used of him in Homer. Even this seems to carry an alternative meaning from the Homeric use, implying that Odysseus is audacious and 'much-daring' rather than 'much-enduring'. Αἰμύλος and παντουργός are used of Odysseus elsewhere in tragedy, but both also have comic use. Ajax especially deploys terms to describe Odysseus that are otherwise more commonly or even exclusively used in comedy. Terms such as ἐπίτριπτος, κίναδος, αἰμύλος and παντουργός in comedy are all used of roguish characters like Cleon, the Sausage-seller, and the sophists. Ajax feels that the arms of Achilles were unjustly awarded to Odysseus and says as much. However, he does not simply call Odysseus a lesser hero but explicitly casts him as a deceptive and devious politician. If anything about Odysseus in *Ajax* points to contemporary politics, it is the ways in which he is criticised for his shiftiness by the other characters.

The key question to consider is how we are to interpret the contradictory characterisations of Odysseus in the play. Was the aim to show that Ajax and the

[107] Rosenbloom (2001) 124 suggests that the Odysseus of *Ajax* is the first attested tragic figure to attract the kind of ridicule reserved for sycophants and politicians in comedy and oratory. Okell (2003) 298 also suggests that in tragedy Odysseus fills the role taken by the demagogue in comedy.

chorus were wrong about Odysseus, or was it the point that Odysseus has both virtues and vices just as Ajax does?[108] Scholars do not tend to consider this question, but most seem to imply that they would choose the first answer. Brown, for example, suggests that Sophocles attributed Pindar's concept of Odysseus to Ajax and his followers, and that the denouement of the play proves this concept misconceived.[109] However, although Odysseus' actions at the end of the play contradict the earlier descriptions of him, there is more going on than a complete rejection by Sophocles of Pindar's view of Odysseus. In the *Iliad*, for example, Agamemnon and Achilles both refer to Odysseus' less-desirable qualities with distaste; however, these qualities are not actually on display in the epic.[110] Therefore, the reminder is present that Odysseus is not a consistent character and always has the potential to be deceptive and self-serving. Even though Odysseus behaves admirably at the start and end of the play, Sophocles reminds us that we cannot trust him as he is changeable and keeps his true feelings hidden.

Sophocles' *Ajax* is one of rather few examples of successful persuasion on the tragic stage but is also the only extant example of the positive aspects of Odysseus' persuasion.[111] Despite this, the central portion of the play casts Odysseus in purely negative terms. Ajax and the chorus (at first) are unable to comprehend Odysseus' flexibility and do not consider the possibility that Odysseus is not still targeting Ajax as an enemy as vehemently as Ajax is targeting him. In one sense, the chorus and Ajax are incorrect as Odysseus does not behave as they describe in the play itself. In another sense, though, their descriptions of Odysseus are accurate as he is depicted in the way they describe elsewhere. This contrast adds to the unsettling nature of Odysseus and allows Sophocles to keep his audience in suspense about how he will behave at the end of the play.

Odysseus' role in helping Ajax is not unique in Sophoclean drama. As a counterpart to Knox's concept of the Sophoclean 'heroic temper', Carter has added the 'co-

[108] See Finglass (2011) 51–3 on the unity of the play being structured around the rehabilitation of Ajax after his death, esp. p. 52 where he notes that 'Sophocles brings his audience to a complex view of his protagonist, which ignores neither his virtues nor his vices'.
[109] Brown (1951) 23; see also Suksi (1999) 151.
[110] Agamemnon: *Il*. 4.339; Achilles: *Il*. 9.309.
[111] Worman (2012) 326. As discussed in the previous chapter, pp. 77–8, Odysseus is probably part of the successful persuasion of Achilles at the end of Euripides' *Telephus*.

operative temper', of which Odysseus is an example.[112] Carter shows the similarities between Odysseus and other co-operator figures in Sophocles, particularly Creon in *Oedipus the King* and Theseus in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Odysseus' role is most akin to Theseus' as both have the role of facilitating the burial of the hero, which is vital for the establishment of their hero cult.[113] It is common that these co-operator figures have no obligation to assist the hero and might, at earlier stages of their respective plays, be expected to do the opposite.[114] Odysseus does differ from the others, however, in that he is derided consistently by the hero he eventually helps. His co-operation, therefore, is even more unexpected than that of the other figures.

The Odysseus of Sophocles' *Ajax* is a fascinating hybrid of his Homeric and tragic characterisations. It is difficult for us to imagine watching the play for the first time without knowing that he will resolve the problem at the end and redeem Ajax. However, during its first performance, when Odysseus walks back on stage, the audience do not know what will happen or which Odysseus they will see, since at that point they have two conflicting ideas about him from earlier in the play. As far as we know, there was no precedent for Odysseus' involvement in the burial of Ajax. First, they saw him on stage showing pity for Ajax and defying Athena's invitation to laugh at him. Second, they heard from Ajax and the chorus how Odysseus was spreading tales throughout the army, turning men against the hero, and exulting over him. Sophocles' dual characterisation of Odysseus serves a dramatic purpose because it creates suspense, and for a playwright, the versatile and changeable Odysseus is one of the best characters to use to keep your audience guessing.

Politically, Odysseus is shown by Sophocles as a hero who is at home in both the Homeric world and the fifth-century world. Therefore, being not much changed from his Homeric portrayal in the final scene is not an argument against his relevance to democratic (and other) audiences but one in favour, because he is one of the only epic heroes whose world-view is not out of place in the fifth century. It is not just his world-view which is at home in the fifth century, but his heroic attributes. Both his persuasion and flexibility, as seen at the end of the play, and his potential for manipulation and deceit, as imagined by Ajax and his followers and seen in other

[112] Carter (2005).
[113] Carter (2005) 167.
[114] Carter (2005) 171.

tragedies, are familiar to a fifth-century audience as belonging to their contemporary world. To achieve this, Sophocles has cleverly blended Odysseus' Homeric and tragic characterisations to create a character who is admirable and yet retains a sinister unsettling quality, as he always has the potential to turn on you once he is out of sight.

Teucer

This potential for betrayal is likely to have been brought to light in another of Sophocles' plays dedicated to the family of Ajax. After discovering Ajax's body in *Ajax*, Teucer imagines the reaction he will receive from his father Telamon when he returns home (1008–21).[115] He predicts his exile from Salamis, and this was depicted in a separate and most intriguing play by Sophocles: *Teucer*. Aristotle refers to it in his *Rhetoric* (3.1416b) and reveals that Odysseus is a character in the play. Lloyd-Jones claims that 'the part played by Odysseus in the *Ajax* suggests that he may have turned up to plead for Teucer with Telamon', but this overlooks what is said by Aristotle:[116]

> Κοινὸς δ᾽ ἀμφοῖν ὁ τόπος τὸ σύμβολα λέγειν, οἷον ἐν τῷ Τεύκρῳ ὁ Ὀδυσσεὺς ὅτι οἰκεῖος τῷ Πριάμῳ· ἡ γὰρ Ἡσιόνη ἀδελφή· ὁ δὲ ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ ἐχθρὸς τῷ Πριάμῳ, ὁ Τελαμών, καὶ ὅτι οὐ κατεῖπε τῶν κατασκόπων.
>
> Common to both parties is the topic of tokens, as, in the *Teucer*, Odysseus reproaches Teucer with being a relative of Priam, whose sister his mother Hesione was; to which Teucer replied that his father Telamon was the enemy of Priam, and that he himself did not denounce the spies.

This passage strongly suggests that Odysseus' role in this play is not to plead Teucer's case to Telamon, but the exact opposite. Odysseus accuses Teucer of having a connection to Priam, which implies that Teucer is being accused of treachery. Like several other fragmentary plays featuring Odysseus, this play may have contained a trial scene, in which he prosecutes Teucer for treason.[117] One crucial detail omitted by Aristotle is Odysseus' motive.

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[115] Teucer also describes his exile in Euripides' *Helen* (87–92).
[116] Lloyd-Jones (1996) 287.
[117] Pausanias describes Teucer in court defending himself (1.28.11); see Sutton (1984) 133–4. See also Wright (2018) 118 who suggests that evidence from Aristotle seems to place the play 'within an

The reconciliation between Teucer and Odysseus at the end of Sophocles' *Ajax* would seem different if there were already a play in which they are enemies, or would seem different in retrospect if *Teucer* came later.[118] Since the *Ajax* focuses on the instability of friendship, this second breakdown of friendship between Odysseus and Teucer would be fitting.[119] It would also demonstrate the instability of Odysseus, making his appearance in *Ajax* seem less sincere, particularly if his advising of Telamon against Teucer is for some personal profit. It is a shame that we do not know more about this play, since it could inform the interpretation of Odysseus in the *Ajax*.

3.2.4. Antisthenes

The philosopher Antisthenes, an Athenian and a disciple of Socrates, composed a pair of speeches for Ajax and Odysseus in which each sets out the reasons that they should be awarded the arms of Achilles. The speeches have been largely ignored until recently.[120] They appear to be the only complete texts of Antisthenes' to have survived. Since Antisthenes was born in the mid-440s, and was an Athenian resident, these rhetorical exercises may well have been composed in the same period as the later of the tragedies we discuss and are therefore of direct relevance.[121] Antisthenes seems also to have discussed Odysseus in several other works which are now lost.[122]

Scholars are generally, though not universally, of the opinion that Antisthenes favours Odysseus in the speeches.[123] Ajax gives the first speech, and then Odysseus responds in a speech of approximately double the length. Ajax's speech contains several themes that are present in other texts we have looked at in this chapter. In particular, the concept of words *versus* deeds, as well as the idea that Odysseus is

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intellectual context of the sophistic movement' and is reminiscent of set-piece debates and rhetorical displays, such as those of Gorgias and Antisthenes.

[118] Hubbard (2003) 159 n. 9 suggests a date earlier than *Ajax*, whereas Heath and Okell (2007) 379 suggest that Teucer was part of a trilogy in which *Ajax* was the first play. On the evidence against a trilogy including *Ajax* and *Teucer*, see Finglass (2011) 34–6. *Teucer* is quoted by Aristophanes (*Nub*. 583, *Teucer* fr. 578), so the play must be earlier than 423; see Wright (2018) 119.

[119] Heath and Okell (2007) 380.

[120] See e.g. Kennedy (2011); Montiglio (2011) 20–37; Prince (2015) 188–232; Meijer (2017) 176–91.

[121] Scholars are not agreed on the dating of Antisthenes' *Ajax* and *Odysseus* speeches. Worman (1999) 62 and (2002a) 185 suggests 415–410; Koning (2022) 65 posits 380; Prince (2015) 197 states that the speeches are unlikely to come from early in Antisthenes' career and also suggests that the trial of Socrates seems to be evoked, which would date them to the fourth century.

[122] Kennedy (2011) 66.

[123] Stanford (1963) 97; Worman (2002a) 185; Montiglio (2011) 20; Knudsen (2012) 51; O'Sullivan and Wong (2012) 1; Prince (2015) 200; Koning (2022) 66. See, however, Kennedy (2011) 61–75, who suggests Antisthenes was more sympathetic towards Ajax.

willing to endure anything – even things shameful and unheroic. The presentation of Odysseus in both speeches contains many traits, both positive and negative, which we see elsewhere in tragedy. Antisthenes seems to be responding to the standard portrayal of Odysseus from tragedy and his interactions with other Trojan War heroes. As we will see, Ajax's criticisms of Odysseus bear similarities to those from tragedy spoken by Ajax, Philoctetes, Hector, and Rhesus.

Both Antisthenes and Pindar refer to a secret ballot (*Aj*. 8.5, Pin. *Nem*. 8.26). In the former, Ajax demands that the judges judge correctly and openly instead of secretly. In both texts it is implied that secret votes are unfair and enable judges to make poor decisions, since they are not held accountable. Ajax's instruction to judge correctly also foreshadows the common view that the inevitable result in Odysseus' favour will be 'incorrect' and unjust.

Several elements of Ajax's speech have more in common with Sophocles' portrayal of Odysseus in *Philoctetes*, particularly the implication that he is mercantile and interested in profit. Ajax claims that Odysseus intends to sell Achilles' arms since he would be too cowardly to use them (3.5–6). Philoctetes complains at having been sold when he sees Odysseus for the first time (978), and there are further mercantile associations with Odysseus in the play, particularly surrounding the 'False Merchant'.[124] Ajax also claims that Odysseus would endure anything if he could derive profit from it (5.6). Odysseus himself in *Philoctetes* claims that it is good to do things for profit (111).[125] Finally, Ajax contrasts Odysseus' unwillingness to do anything 'openly' with his own unwillingness to 'dare to do anything surreptitiously' (λάθρᾳ τολμήσαιμι πρᾶξαι, 5.4). Philoctetes accuses Neoptolemus of being deadly by stealth (λάθρᾳ) when he took the bow while acting under Odysseus' instruction (1271).[126] He also complains of Odysseus' daring using the verb τολμάω as Ajax does here (634, 984).[127]

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[124] See pp. 210–1 for further discussion of these mercantile traits in *Philoctetes*. Odysseus is also portrayed like a merchant in Euripides' *Cyclops*, particularly where he tries to trade with Silenus and is then accused by the satyr of planning to sell Polyphemus (ἀποδίδωμι, 239), using the same verb as in Antisthenes. See p. 241 on the mercantile language in *Cyclops*.

[125] On this line, see pp. 199–200.

[126] See also Rhesus' assertion, in response to Hector's description of Odysseus, that no brave man kills an enemy through stealth (λάθρᾳ, *Rhes*. 510; see p. 167 on this passage). Hesk (2000) 121 notes that in Antisthenes there is a sense of a connection between military cunning and 'low' social status.

[127] On these uses, see p. 213 and 217.

Ajax's complaints against Odysseus are also reminiscent of the Trojans' denigration of him in *Rhesus*.[128] In particular, Ajax's vivid descriptions of Odysseus' beggarly appearance when entering Troy match those given by both Hector and the chorus (*Aj*. 6.1–4, *Rhes*. 501–5, 710–6). In his reply, Odysseus claims that he takes action to harm the enemy, even if this entails dressing as a slave or beggar, and even if no one is watching (9.3–6). Both Ajax and Rhesus also call Odysseus a temple robber (*Aj*. 3.2, *Rhes*. 516–7).[129]

Odysseus counters Ajax's accusations and defends his own form of heroism. In the first few lines of his speech, he states that he has done the army greater good than anyone and would say this even if Achilles were alive (1.2–4). He recounts his entry into Troy to steal the Palladium, emphasising that he did so alone and that this deed was a necessary requirement to take Troy (2.3, 3.2–5). Furthermore, he considers himself braver than Ajax because he entered the enemy city unarmed (8.1–3). He also states that he did not shirk any danger because it was shameful and was willing to act both during the day and at night (9.1–2, 7). Overall, Odysseus presents himself in a way which both matches Ajax's accusations – that he would do and endure anything – but also casts this as a desirable quality. He is a hero who will go to any lengths to achieve his aims and the aims of the Greeks as a whole. This emphasis on going to any lengths is most akin to Sophocles' portrayal of Odysseus in *Philoctetes*, where he stresses the common good frequently as well as his own willingness to go to any lengths, even if they are considered shameful.[130]

Antisthenes draws on both Homer and the Epic Cycle in the speeches. Both speakers refer to events outside Homer that took place in other Epic Cycle poems, in particular the theft of the Palladium (*Aj*. 3.2, *Od*. 3.2–5), Odysseus' entry into Troy as a beggar (*Aj*. 6.1–4, *Od*. 8.2–3), and the carrying of Achilles after his death (*Aj*. 2.1–2, *Od*. 11.1–12.6). Ajax also mentions Odysseus' reluctance to come to Troy (9.3) and Odysseus predicts Ajax's suicide (5.8–9, 6.6–7). However, Odysseus'

[128] See Montiglio (2011) 28 who says that Rhesus' speech (510–7) 'could be spoken by Ajax in Antisthenes'.

[129] Cf. the opening of Aristophanes' *Wealth* (30–1), where Chremylus complains that temple robbers, along with demagogues and sycophants, have amassed wealth, using the same term for temple robbers as Ajax does of Odysseus; see Rosenbloom (2009) 207.

[130] See esp. Odysseus' claim in *Philoctetes* to be whatever kind of man the situation requires (1049–52); on these lines, see below pp. 215–6. Prince (1999) 61 notes that Odysseus' ethical mode in Antisthenes is familiar from Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.

speech ends with a clear reference to Homer when he predicts the ways in which a future poet will describe them both (14.1–7).

Antisthenes' speeches are influenced not just by tragedy but other fifth-century literature. Ajax repeatedly contrasts words and deeds, λόγοι and ἔργα, throughout his speech (1.6–7, 7.2–3, 7.4, 7.7, 8.2–3). We have already seen this contrast voiced by both Palamedes and Achilles.[131] Ajax rejects all forms of λόγοι and insists that ἔργα are all that matter; war, he claims, is decided by action and not argument (7.3–4). Ajax's attitude towards words and deeds contradicts Homeric ideals, which valued skill in both.[132] His aversion to λόγοι also contradicts fifth-century ideals presented in Thucydides and other philosophical and rhetorical texts. When first introducing Pericles, Thucydides calls him mightiest in speaking and doing (1.139.4). Gorgias, who Diogenes Laertius claims was an influence on Antisthenes, describes the power of λόγος in his *Encomium of Helen*.[133] In Plato, Protagoras states that he aims to teach pupils how they may have 'most influence on public affairs both in speech and in action' (*Prt*. 319a). Lysias and Isocrates also both stress the importance of λόγος, with the former stating that convincing by argument sets men apart from animals (2.19) and the latter that the best statesmen are those who give most study to the art of words (15.231).[134]

The fifth-century idea that both words and deeds were important is made particularly explicit in Pericles' Thucydidean funeral speech. Pericles states that the Athenians do not consider argument as harmful to action, but on the contrary consider it indispensable for any wise action (2.40.2). Furthermore, he states that the truly brave are those who know the dangers but perform an action regardless (2.40.3). Pericles' view is the opposite of Ajax's, but it is, unsurprisingly, shared by Odysseus who stresses the risks he has taken and the dangers that he faced.[135] In Thucydides, we find Cleon in the Mytilenean Debate making similar arguments to Antisthenes' Ajax regarding words and deeds. Cleon criticises the Athenians for caring too much about

[131] See p. 54 and 76.
[132] The assembly and the battleground are both said to be places where men win glory (*Il*. 1.490); cf. the reminder to Achilles to be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds (*Il*. 9.443). Characters are also praised for their speaking skills (*Il*. 1.247–9, 2.370–4, 3.209–24). See O'Sullivan and Wong (2012) 2–3.
[133] Diog. Laert. 6.1.1; Gorg. *Hel*. 8–10; see O'Sullivan and Wong (2012) 4.
[134] O'Sullivan and Wong (2012) 10–2.
[135] On the similarities between Pericles' funeral speech and Odysseus' speech, see O'Sullivan and Wong (2012) 6–9.

speeches while only listening to accounts of action (3.38.4). In response to this, his opponent Diodotus states that anyone who maintains that words cannot be a guide to action is a fool (3.42.2). Diodotus' opinion undoubtedly matches that of Pericles in the funeral speech. Odysseus may not state the same opinion explicitly in Antisthenes, but he is frequently associated with λόγος and clearly considers himself to have both cleverness and bravery. I agree with O'Sullivan and Wong that Antisthenes has presented Odysseus with 'Athenian qualities' in his proficiency with both word and deed, as opposed to Ajax's stubborn assertion that only the latter is of any value.[136]

Antisthenes was clearly influenced by tragedy when composing both speeches. Many of the condemnations of Odysseus are similar to those voiced in various tragedies. Odysseus gives a fuller defence of himself than is present in any extant tragedy, although we have seen some similarities to the ways in which he defends his actions in *Philoctetes*.

3.3. Major Themes

3.3.1. The Vote

In the Epic Cycle, it seems that the outcome of the judgement of arms is largely influenced by Athena. She wants Odysseus to win and so inspires mortals to side with him. It is only towards the end of the sixth century that we start to see evidence of a rhetorical contest as part of the judgement. At a time in Athens when the ability to persuade others to support you was more important than ever in a democratic setting, it is significant that the judgement of the arms takes on this rhetorical element. In addition, we start to see more democratic methods of voting in both texts and images depicting the judgement, such as voting pebbles and references to secret ballots. Again, this is significant because the judgement is adapted to suit a fifth-century audience with more contemporary practices. We have already seen Odysseus' involvement in one sphere of fifth-century life in the trial scenes of the Palamedes plays, and in the next chapter we will see his influence over assemblies in both *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*. The Ajax story, therefore, fits in to these wider anxieties about Odysseus' potential for misleading persuasion and the destructive

[136] O'Sullivan and Wong (2012) 12.

consequences it can have. This is more prominent in Pindar but is not entirely absent in Sophocles. We will look briefly at how the judgement itself is depicted in the fifth century and particularly at these issues of corruption in the vote as well as the defence of the decision in *Ajax*.

The voting is handled differently in each of the fifth-century adaptations of the judgement of arms episode. Scenes of voting are rare on Greek pots, and yet at least eight depictions of the vote for the arms of Achilles survive, which suggests that this particular vote was a popular subject.[137] Typically, one outer side of a drinking cup shows the two heroes drawing their swords and being restrained, while the other outer side shows the voting in process. Men place voting pebbles on a central platform with Athena usually standing over them, and most vases show the final stage of the voting where the outcome is clear. Odysseus and Ajax are depicted at either side reacting to the result. The orderly voting presided over by Athena contrasts with the violent conflict on the opposite side of the cups, which shows Odysseus and Ajax coming to blows.[138] The voting takes place in the open, and men place pebbles on a central platform, with more pebbles visible on Odysseus' side. The margin of victory is usually narrow, and he wins by only a few votes.[139] In Pindar and Sophocles, on the other hand, the margin of victory is never mentioned.[140]

In contrast to the explicit reference to a secret vote in Pindar and a probable vote, either on or off stage, in Aeschylus, the judgement of arms itself is not mentioned in detail in Sophocles' *Ajax*. Ajax and Teucer both refer to the judgement and reject the decision; Ajax considers it dishonourable, and Teucer calls it rigged.[141] Crucially, they both explicitly refer to the judgement as a vote. Ajax does not go into detail about his allegations against the vote, since for him the fact that he did not win is enough to show that the vote was unfair.[142] He says that had he succeeded in killing

[137] See Williams (1980) and Spivey (1994) for further discussion of these cups. Williams (1980) 144 speculates that the pots could have been commissioned for members of the new Aiantis tribe or recent settlers on Salamis. Spivey (1994) 49 suggests that the pots may have been based on monumental wall paintings.
[138] Spivey (1994) 50; Wyles (2020) 17 and 41.
[139] Carawan (2022–3) 136–8.
[140] Carawan (2022–3) 146 and 148.
[141] Ajax: 98, 440; Teucer: 1135.
[142] Finglass (2011) 38.

the Greek leaders, they would not have been able to vote (ψηφίζω) against another man in a similar way (447–9).

Teucer makes a slightly more detailed reference to voting corruption in his exchange with Menelaus (1135–6):

ΤΕΥΚΡΟΣ	κλέπτης γὰρ αὐτοῦ ψηφοποιὸς ηὑρέθης.
ΜΕΝΕΛΑΟΣ	ἐν τοῖς δικασταῖς, οὐκ ἐμοί, τόδ᾽ ἐσφάλη.
Teucer	Yes, you were shown to have cheated in the voting.
Menelaus	This set-back was the work of the judges, not my work.

Ψηφοποιός is not found in any other texts. It literally means 'making votes' and is a compound of ψῆφος, a voting pebble, and ποιέω, the verb 'do' or 'make', which can also mean 'bring into existence' or 'procure'.[143] Teucer's accusation is vague, and he does not go into detail about how the vote was corrupt. Menelaus is accused of *making* votes, which is reminiscent of accusations of corruption in the ostracism process, where ready-made *ostraka* would be distributed with names already inscribed.[144] The voting method shown on the drinking cups leaves little scope for tampering, since pebbles are placed out in the open. If, however, it was a secret ballot of the type Pindar describes then that would leave a greater margin for interference. Pindar uses ψῆφος to refer to the secret vote of the Greeks (κρυφίαισι…ἐν ψάφοις, *Nem*. 8.26). One amphora, which may depict the voting in the contest for Achilles' arms in progress, has men casting leaves for their vote into a vessel held by Athena, thus making it a secret ballot.[145]

The terminology in this exchange also describes the judgement in terms of a judicial proceeding. Menelaus' response at line 1136 begins with ἐν, which is used of tribunal and court scenes.[146] Δικαστής, 'judge' or 'juror', is a rare word in tragedy, except, unsurprisingly, in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, and is much more frequently used

[143] LSJ s.v. ποιέω A I.
[144] Pinney and Hamilton (1982) 583.
[145] Pinney and Hamilton (1982) suggest that this vase shows the judgement of arms. See also Carawan (2022–3) 143–4.
[146] Jebb (1896) and Finglass (2011) *ad loc*.; LSJ s.v. ἐν A I 5b.

in legal speeches.[147] Menelaus distances himself from these judges/jurors, as though he were not part of it, but does not specify who does make up the judging. Agamemnon also refers to the verdict as the majority decision of the judges (κριταί, 1243). The description of the judgement in Sophocles may be brief but it does seem to have been viewed as a democratic vote in which Menelaus and Agamemnon did not take part. The question of whether the voting was rigged or not is left open by Sophocles.[148]

Similarly, in Antisthenes the judgement is presented as a democratic judgement with a secret ballot.[149] Ajax bemoans that he is not being judged by his peers who were present during 'this venture', referring to his carrying of the body of Achilles (1.1–2). If he were, argument would not be necessary, and Ajax could stay silent and still be thought the winner (1.2–3); he insists instead that ignorant men are judging him (1.5). Later, he claims that the kings have arranged the current contest but have entrusted the judging to others (4.1–3). These comments imply that the imagined judges for this contest are the common soldiers, on whom Ajax looks down with disdain. Towards the end of his speech, Ajax instructs the judges to judge correctly and to do it openly instead of secretly (κρύβδην, 8.5). Odysseus does not make any direct comments about the identity of the adjudicators or the mechanism of voting in his speech, presumably because having judges who are swayed by argument works in his favour.

During the second *agon* in Sophocles, Agamemnon complains that Teucer refuses to accept the judgement for the arms, and he goes on to say (1250–2):

> οὐ γὰρ οἱ πλατεῖς
>
> οὐδ᾽ εὐρύνωτοι φῶτες ἀσφαλέστατοι,
>
> ἀλλ᾽ οἱ φρονοῦντες εὖ κρατοῦσι πανταχοῦ.
>
> It is not stout and broad-shouldered men who are the most reliable, but it is men of good sense that everywhere prevail.

[147] *Eum*. 81, 483, 684, 743.
[148] Garvie (1998) 5; Beer (2004) 63.
[149] See Kennedy (2011) 29 and 38, who says Antisthenes is 'likening Ajax's judges to a popular democratic jury'.

Agamemnon does not specify who he considers to be the φρονοῦντες εὖ, but these lines are surely a reference to the judgement of the arms and an explanation of why it had the outcome it did.[150] This is significant, because it is one of the only examples of a defence of the outcome of the judgement of arms after the fact. We saw already in the Homeric wrestling match the contrast between the brawny Ajax and the brainy Odysseus, but here in Sophocles, Agamemnon explicitly states that intelligence is superior to strength.[151] In Antisthenes, part of the disagreement between Ajax and Odysseus rests on the criteria by which they should be judged. Ajax believes his past exploits speak for themselves and that as a straightforward warrior who does not resort to stealth and tricks, the honour should naturally go to him. Odysseus disagrees and instead puts forward a similar statement to Agamemnon in Sophocles, that cleverness and bravery in battle are not the same as being strong (13.4–5). As discussed earlier, Odysseus' views seem more aligned with the fifth-century ideal put forward by Pericles, which values argument along with action.

3.3.2. Athens, Aegina, Salamis

In this final section we will consider how the geographical elements of this episode affect its interpretation, particularly in relation to Athens' fifth-century imperialism. Ajax was an important hero in Athens for several reasons. His ancestry linked him to the islands of Aegina and Salamis.[152] The former was a rival of Athens during the fifth century which was then incorporated into the Athenian empire in 458.[153] The latter was one of Athens' first imperial possessions in the sixth century and later the setting for Athens' most glorious naval victory. The battle of Salamis was a decisive moment during the Persian War and one of the earliest instances of Athens' new naval dominance thanks to the strategy of Themistocles.

In the sixth century the island of Salamis was contested by Athens, Megara, and possibly also Aegina. According to Plutarch, Ajax was cited in Athenian propaganda supporting its sixth-century takeover of Salamis. Plutarch reports a story that Solon inserted a line in the *Iliad* in the 'Catalogue of Ships', which said that Ajax landed

[150] Winnington-Ingram (1980) 65 also suggests that Agamemnon 'could well be thinking of Odysseus'.
[151] Cf. a similar sentiment in Euripides' *Antiope* (fr. 199).
[152] See Bradshaw (1991) 114, who notes that Ajax's heritage would have made him attractive to expansionists within the imperial *polis*.
[153] Thuc. 1.105.2, 108.4; Diod. Sic. 11.78.4. In 431 Athens even evicted all Aeginetans from Aegina (Thuc. 2.27).

his ships at Troy where the Athenians were stationed (*Il*. 2.557–8, Plut. *Sol*. 10). However, Plutarch also records that the Athenians believed an alternative story, which said that Solon proved that Ajax's sons had given Salamis to Athens in exchange for citizenship (*Sol*. 10).[154] Later in the sixth century, Cleisthenes chose Ajax as one of the eponymous heroes of his ten new tribes of Attica.[155] As Herodotus tells us, Ajax was the only non-Athenian hero in this list of ten but was included because of his status as a neighbour and ally (5.66). Therefore, unlike the other opponents of Odysseus discussed in this thesis, Ajax had a much deeper connection to Athens and to the Athenians in the audience watching these plays.

There was a statue of Ajax in the Athenian Agora, and the Aiantis tribe was represented by one of the ten *strategoi* each year. Plutarch claims that the Aiantis tribe could never come in last place in the judging of choruses because Ajax did not have the temper to endure inferiority.[156] Prominent Athenians, including Miltiades, Cimon, Alcibiades, and possibly the historian Thucydides, also claimed to be descendants of Ajax through one of his sons, Philaeus or Eurysaces.[157] According to Pausanias, there was a temple to Ajax on Salamis, and the Athenians even in his day paid honour to Ajax and his son Eurysaces in Athens.[158] Herodotus reports that the Athenians prayed to Ajax before the battle of Salamis and dedicated a trireme to him afterwards in thanks for his assistance in the battle.[159] Ajax was therefore deeply ingrained in the Athenian mind as an Attic hero. Members of Ajax's tribe would also have been present in the theatre to watch the tragic productions staging the downfall of their eponymous hero.

Despite all these links between Ajax and Athens, Pindar ignores Ajax's Salaminian heritage and instead concentrates on his descent from the heroes of Aegina. Pindar attaches an Athenian hero to one of Athens' contemporary enemies. In *Nemean* 8, which contains Pindar's strongest condemnation of Odysseus, Aeacus is depicted as

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[154] See Higbie (1997) for a detailed discussion of the various stories surrounding Athenian efforts to acquire Salamis. See also Farnell (1921) 307, who suggests that Athens' desire for Salamis was a stimulus to Attic reverence for Ajax.
[155] On the adoption of Ajax, see Kearns (1989) 82.
[156] *Table Talk* 1.3 = *Moralia* 629a.
[157] Miltiades and Cimon: Hdt. 6.35.1; Alcibiades: Plut. *Alc*. 1.1, 1.121a.; Thucydides was apparently related to Cimon: Plut. *Cim*. 4.1.
[158] 1.35.3. On Ajax's cult in Athens, see Kearns (1989) s.v.
[159] 8.64, 121. See also Plut. *Them*. 15.1.

a hero whose worth was beyond debate.[160] Aeacus represents an Aeginetan golden age when everything went right for Aegina, whereas fate is less kind to Ajax, whose true worth is unrecognised, as he is spurned in favour of Odysseus.[161]

We have already seen how Odysseus might be considered as an allusion to Athens in Pindar's references to the judgement of arms: Odysseus contrasts with the nobility of the Aeginetan Ajax. The subjugation of Aegina by Athens is reflected in Ajax's defeat by Odysseus. Sophocles, on the other hand, makes no mention of Aegina in *Ajax* and instead concentrates on Salamis, particularly the relationship of the Salaminian characters to Athens. Although Ajax himself is not presented as Athenian in the play, Sophocles chose to make the chorus of Ajax's followers sailors rather than soldiers, which ties them more closely to the Athenian spectators.[162] Moreover, Tecmessa even refers to them as Erechtheids (202), which identifies them as autochthonous Athenians.[163] Even though Ajax is not referred to as Athenian, he mentions Athens (861), and the ending of the play references the hero cult of Ajax in Athens by having the body of Ajax on stage with his son clasping him as a suppliant (1171–2).[164]

Genealogical heritage plays an important part at the end of the play when Teucer debates with Menelaus and then Agamemnon. The characters trade insults about the purity of their lineage and debate whether Ajax joined the expedition to Troy as an independent ruler or as an ally. Menelaus says that Ajax was brought as an ally (σύμμαχος, 1053) of the Achaeans, which Teucer then disputes, adding that Menelaus was not Ajax's commander (1098). This is an important discussion because Ajax's position as a σύμμαχος of the Athenians was the reason why he was chosen as a hero for one of the tribes (Hdt. 5.66.2). This discussion of the fair treatment of allies would have been relevant at a time when Athens and Sparta were each at the head of large alliances and had to cope with defections and revolts.[165]

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[160] Carnes (1996) 87.
[161] Carnes (1996) 91.
[162] Scodel (2003) 35; Debnar (2005) 12.
[163] Scodel (2006) 65.
[164] Eurysaces also had a hero cult in Athens, the establishment of which may have been referenced in Sophocles' lost *Eurysaces*; see Seaford (2019) 94.
[165] See Scodel (2003) 39–42 for an interesting discussion of the ways in which this point about the treatment of allies could be applied to relations between Athens and Sparta. She plausibly concludes (p. 41) that the play invites the spectators to worry that Athens could become like its enemies in its treatment of allies.

While the connections between Ajax, the chorus and Athens have been the subject of discussions, Odysseus' geographical origins are never mentioned.[166] Odysseus' home is not referred to in either Sophocles or Pindar, while Antisthenes does not mention the geographical background of either hero. In Athena's opening lines in Sophocles' *Ajax*, Odysseus is likened to a Spartan hound (8) and throughout the play is often mentioned in the same breath as the hated Peloponnesian Atridae. In the Athenian/Peloponnesian divide of the play, Odysseus is cast firmly on the Peloponnesian side and, after his entrance at the end, Agamemnon recognises him as his greatest friend among the Argives (1331). However, Odysseus does the unexpected at the end of the play and breaks away from his Peloponnesian allies to try to broker a truce, giving his support to the Athenian side. Although he fails somewhat, in that Agamemnon remains implacable, he does succeed in establishing Ajax's burial, which was essential for Ajax's Athenian cult status. In the context of fifth-century geopolitics, Odysseus is unattached with no geographical heritage mentioned, and he, like much of Greece, must choose a side between the Peloponnesians and Athenians. Sophocles not only establishes Ajax's Athenian hero cult at the end of the play but does so through the intervention of Odysseus, thus bringing the Peloponnesian coastal islander over to the Athenian side as well.

3.4. Conclusion

The contest between Ajax and Odysseus over the arms of Achilles was popular subject matter in the late sixth and fifth centuries and featured on pots and in dramatic and epinician poetry. For Pindar, Odysseus is the deceptive slanderer who deprives the Aeginetan Ajax of his rightful honour. Pindar's contempt for Odysseus is such that even Homer is brought into disrepute for perpetuating the unworthy reputation of Odysseus. In Aeschylus, the contest takes place on stage, and Odysseus is presumably the consummate rhetorician, perhaps deceitful but perhaps not. Sophocles, meanwhile, created an enigmatic and ambiguous Odysseus: magnanimous and alive to the need to pity and defend Ajax, but tainted by the criticisms from other characters. In *Ajax*, Odysseus is at times Homeric, at others the villain of Pindar and other tragedies, or a roguish politician of comedy. He is a pragmatic politician who persuades Agamemnon to do the right thing, but cannot

[166] Scodel (2003) and (2006); Kowalzig (2006).

escape his reputation for deceit and betrayal. In Antisthenes, Odysseus does not deny Ajax's accusations of operating stealthily or in unheroic ways but instead argues that his willingness to do so makes him more important to the Greek cause than any other.

The voting itself for the judgement comes under attack in both Pindar and Sophocles. We see again how Odysseus is implicated in the perversion of a democratic institution. We also see how Odysseus relates to Athenian imperialism. Pindar casts Ajax as an Aeginetan and thus ties him to an Athenian rival, and later subject, whereas Odysseus is the smooth talker who causes Ajax's ruin. Sophocles, on the other hand, ties his hero and chorus closely to Athens and has the Atridae as their Peloponnesian enemies at the end of the play. Odysseus mediates between the two and intervenes to rescue the important Athenian hero cult of Athens, thus bringing himself in his positive guise into the Athenian sway.

The adaptations of his clash with Ajax contain descriptions of Odysseus that are as sinister and deprecatory as any of him in the fifth century. However, Sophocles also weaves into his portrayal the opposite side of Odysseus' personality and shows his pragmatism at its best in his pity and intervention for Ajax.

Chapter 4

Odysseus and the Trojans

So far, we have seen Odysseus in conflict with his fellow Greek heroes. In this chapter, we will see him in conflict with his more natural enemies, the Trojans. In the three plays discussed here – *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, and *Rhesus* – Odysseus is an important figure in the development of the action of the play. He is also one of the chief instigators of the Trojan suffering seen on stage and is responsible for the death of a character in each play. Furthermore, in all three plays the playwright has diverged from the standard version of the Trojan War story specifically in order to make Odysseus more relevant to the play.

As is to be expected, the Trojan characters are unsympathetic to Odysseus and describe him in harsh terms. In *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* particularly, Odysseus is presented with demagogic qualities. In both plays, Odysseus persuades an assembly of Greeks to sacrifice a Trojan child, and because of this rhetorical motif there are strong contemporary references in both. Euripides' plays both date to the last third of the fifth century and so are both Peloponnesian War plays. The chance to present a city devastated by war was particularly pertinent in the second half of the fifth century, when Athens itself was at war, and those in the audience would all have been touched by it.

Odysseus' presentation in *Rhesus* is more complicated. Although appearing somewhat cowardly when on stage, and although several scholars argue that the playwright is explicitly hostile to Odysseus, there are several parallels created between the Trojan characters and Odysseus. The Trojans attempt to behave in Odyssean ways but fail, whereas Odysseus successfully undertakes his mission. The play shows the Trojans as hypocritical but also ineffectual in the successful use of disguise and stealth, which proves so effective for Odysseus and Diomedes. In all three plays we also see a recurrence of Odysseus' menacing off-stage presence that we saw in *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Ajax*, and will see again in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.

4.1. Odysseus and the Trojans in Homer and the Epic Cycle

In the *Iliad*, we hear the Trojan perspective on Odysseus early in the poem. In Book 3, the Trojans look down at the Greek warriors from one of their towers and ask Helen to identify some Greek kings. Odysseus is the second to be noticed by Priam, after Agamemnon. Helen describes 'Odysseus of many wiles' to Priam as knowing 'all manner of tricks and cunning devices' (200–2). Antenor joins the discussion and relates the story of Menelaus and Odysseus speaking to an assembly of the Trojans (203–24). He says that Odysseus looked down at the ground when he stood up to speak and held the speaker's staff stiffly, as if he had never held one before. However, he goes on to say that once Odysseus started to speak, his words fell like snowflakes and no other could rival him (222–3). Together, these two descriptions of Odysseus summarise the two key parts of his epic characterisation. Helen focuses on his tricks and cunning, whereas Antenor emphasises his superior speaking skill.

Over the course of the Epic Cycle, Odysseus undertakes several spying missions into Troy. In *Iliad* Book 10, Odysseus and Diomedes sneak into the Trojan camp and capture Dolon, who reveals the location of the Thracian Rhesus. This episode would be dramatised in *Rhesus*. On a different occasion Odysseus and Diomedes steal the Palladium from Troy in the night.[1] Perhaps Odysseus' most well-known mission into Troy, in which he disguises himself as a beggar, features in the *Little Iliad* (Arg. §4 West):

> Ὀδυσσεύς τε ἀικισάμενος ἑαυτὸν <καὶ πενιχρὰν στολὴν ἐνδὺς Ap.> κατάσκοπος εἰς Ἴλιον παραγίνεται· καὶ ἀναγνωρισθεὶς ὑφ᾽ Ἑλένης περὶ τῆς ἁλώσεως τῆς πόλεως συντίθεται, κτείνας τέ τινας τῶν Τρώων ἐπὶ τὰς ναῦς ἀφικνεῖται.
>
> Odysseus disfigures himself <and puts on pauper's clothes> and enters Ilion to reconnoitre. He is recognized by Helen, and comes to an agreement with her about the taking of the city. After killing some Trojans, he gets back to the ships.

Helen also narrates the story to Telemachus in the *Odyssey* (4.244–58), with details about Odysseus' slavish disguise and disfigured body. Helen says that she alone recognised Odysseus and swore not to reveal his identity. Odysseus' disguised entry

[1] *Little Iliad* fr. 11 West = Hesych. δ 1881, Paus. Att. δ 14; Cf. Conon, *FGrH* 26 F 1.34.

into Troy emphasises his cunning but also his willingness to undergo painful and humiliating ordeals to achieve his goal. As we will see, this episode will be an important feature of both *Hecuba* and *Rhesus*.

There is conflicting evidence in the remains of the Epic Cycle for the deaths of Polyxena, daughter of Priam and Hecuba, and Astyanax, son of Hector and Andromache. Achilles' son Neoptolemus is often responsible for the death of Astyanax. In texts he is usually described as hurling the boy from the walls of Troy.[2] In art, Neoptolemus is often shown brandishing Astyanax as a weapon when killing Priam at an altar. This image appears on several sixth-century pots.[3] However, Proclus states in his summary of the *Iliou Persis* that Odysseus kills Astyanax and that Polyxena is slaughtered by the Greeks at Achilles' tomb before they leave Troy.[4] According to a scholiast on Euripides' *Hecuba*, the sixth-century lyric poet Ibycus recounted the story that Polyxena is killed as a sacrifice by Neoptolemus.[5] Conversely, the same scholiast also records a different version of the story from the *Cypria*, in which Polyxena is mortally wounded by Diomedes and Odysseus during the sack of Troy.[6] Therefore, there is evidence that at least some variants existed in which Odysseus is responsible for the deaths of both young Trojan royals, and it was these versions of the stories that Euripides chose when writing both *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*.

4.2. Odysseus and the Trojans in the Fifth Century

The Trojan War was the most popular subject in fifth-century Athenian tragedy. Playwrights sometimes set their plays in Troy or the Trojan camp to tell an episode from the Trojan perspective.[7] Some Trojan war plays focused particularly on female characters; Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* are the most notable examples. Sophocles also had a play on the fate of Polyxena which featured the ghost of

[2] Paus. 10.25.9 = *Little Iliad* fr. 18 West; Tzetz. in Lyc. 1268 = *Little Iliad* fr. 29 West. The scholiast on Euripides' *Andromache* says that Astyanax is hurled to his death but does not specify by whom (Schol. Eur. *Andr*. 10 = *Iliou Persis* fr. 3 West).
[3] See Touchefeu-Meynier (1984) *LIMC* II.1 s.v. 'Astyanax I', nos. 7–24; Neils (1994) *LIMC* VII.1 s.v. 'Priamos', nos. 87–100, 115–30; Anderson (1997) 192–9.
[4] Astyanax: *Iliou Persis* Arg. §4 West. This may be because the *Iliou Persis* assigns one wrongdoing to each hero, and Neoptolemus is already assigned the murder of Priam; see Finglass (2015) 353. Polyxena: *Iliou Persis* Arg. §4 West.
[5] Schol. Eur. *Hec*. 41 = Ibycus fr. 307; see Anderson (1997) 59.
[6] Schol. Eur. *Hec*. 41.
[7] See e.g. Sophocles' *Alexander* (frr. 91a–100a), *Laocoon* (frr. 370–7), *Priam* (frr. 528a–32). On these plays, see Wright (2018) 77–8, 99–100, and 113 respectively.

Achilles.[8] However, there is no evidence that Odysseus is a character in this play, nor do we know whether Sophocles' play was earlier or later than Euripides' *Hecuba*. Another popular theme in tragedy, of which *Rhesus* is an example, was the death of Trojan allies, such as Sarpedon, Memnon, Cycnus and Eurypylus, usually at the hands of Achilles or Neoptolemus.[9]

4.2.1. Euripides' *Hecuba*

We have little information about the first performance of Euripides' *Hecuba*. Allusions to the play in Aristophanes' *Clouds* mean that the play must have been performed before 423. Scholars usually place the tragedy in the mid-420s.[10] We also do not know which other plays were performed with it. The play deals with the losses of two of Hecuba's children. Polyxena is sacrificed by the Greeks as a gift at the tomb of Achilles, and it is later revealed that Polydorus has been murdered by the Thracian king Polymestor, a former ally of the Trojans. Odysseus is heavily involved in the first part of the play and the decision to kill Polyxena. During the mid-420s in Athens, demagogues were rising to prominence, and we can see this reflected in the presentation of Odysseus. He is cold and focused only on expediency. Euripides increases this coldness by altering the epic material to have Odysseus indebted to Hecuba for previously sparing his life.

The chorus give Hecuba the terrible news of the impending sacrifice of her daughter and provide a second-hand account of the Greek assembly at which the decision was made. Unlike the assemblies in Homer's *Iliad*, at which decisions are made by kings, the assembly of *Hecuba* is more democratic.[11] The same kings from the *Iliad* are present, but they are seeking to persuade the whole army (118, 133).[12] The Trojan chorus' account of the assembly is prejudiced; they have a personal interest in the army voting against the sacrifice. They describe how the army was divided on the issue, with Agamemnon taking Polyxena's side while the two sons of Theseus both take the opposing side. The description of the assembly seems intended to remind the

[8] On Sophocles' version, see Wright (2018) 112–3; on the connections between Euripides' and Sophocles' depictions of Polyxena's death, see Mossman (1995) 42–7 and Battezzato (2018) 3. See also Michelakis (2002) 77–9 on the apparition of Achilles in Sophocles' *Polyxena*.
[9] See Fantuzzi (2005) 140–5 on the plays featuring the deaths of Trojan allies. Rhesus is unusual in not being killed by Achilles or Neoptolemus; see Fenik (1964) 10.
[10] Collard (1991) 34–5; Foley (2015) 4; Turkeltaub (2017) 137; Battezzato (2018) 2–4.
[11] Carter (2013a) 34. See also Turkeltaub (2017) 144.
[12] Carter (2013a) 34.

audience of Athenian practices.[13] The Theseids are described as ῥήτορες (124) who make 'double speeches' (δισσῶν μύθων, 123). Scholars have noted the parallel with the sophistic *dissoi logoi*.[14] This contemporary resonance of the assembly scene is continued with the introduction of Odysseus. The army is evenly split, and it is Odysseus who provides the decisive persuasion (130–40):

> σπουδαὶ δὲ λόγων κατατεινομένων
> ἦσαν ἴσαι πως, πρὶν ὁ ποικιλόφρων
> κόπις ἡδυλόγος δημοχαριστὴς
> Λαερτιάδης πείθει στρατιὰν
> μὴ τὸν ἄριστον Δαναῶν πάντων
> δούλων σφαγίων οὕνεκ᾽ ἀπωθεῖν,
> μηδέ τιν᾽ εἰπεῖν παρὰ Φερσεφόνῃ
> στάντα φθιμένων ὡς ἀχάριστοι
> Δαναοὶ Δαναοῖς τοῖς οἰχομένοις
> ὑπὲρ Ἑλλήνων
> Τροίας πεδίων ἀπέβησαν.
>
> The warmth of debate on either side was about equal until that wily knave, that honey-tongued demagogue Odysseus, urged the army not to reject the most valiant of all the Danaans merely to avoid shedding a slave's blood: none of the fallen, he said, should stand in Persephone's realm and say that Greeks left the plains of Troy without thanking Greeks who had died for Greeks.

Odysseus is introduced by the chorus with a string of negative descriptors, and his identity is not made explicit until the end, and even then only with his patronymic. The audience would surely have identified him before he is called the son of Laertes, perhaps even from the first word of the description. Ποικιλόφρων is only elsewhere used in a fragment of Alcaeus (fr. 69), when he describes someone with the cunning of a fox.[15] It has the same meaning as Odysseus' Homeric epithet ποικιλομήτης.[16]

[13] See Tzanetou (2020) 164 on the anachronisms in this passage.
[14] Michelini (1987) 143–4. See fr. 189 of Euripides' *Antiope* for another reference to *dissoi logoi*.
[15] See p. 109 on this fragment in relation to Ajax calling Odysseus a fox in Sophocles' *Ajax*.
[16] LSJ s.v. ποικιλόφρων.

Cleon is described as ποικίλος in Aristophanes' *Knights* (258), which was first performed in 424, around the time of the premiere of *Hecuba*. This suggests that the description here of Odysseus using the ποικίλο- prefix was intended to call to mind the demagogues of contemporary Athens.[17] It is also another example, following πολύτλας, of the changing definition of one of Odysseus' Homeric epithets into something with more suspicion attached to it.[18]

The rare word κόπις means 'liar', or 'one who talks at length', and is probably derived from the verb κόπτω, to 'strike' or 'cut'.[19] It is used of either Heraclitus or Pythagoras by Philodemus, who calls the subject 'the chief of glib speakers' (κοπίδων ἐστὶν ἀρχη||[γός]).[20] It is also used twice in the poem *Alexandra* attributed to the third-century poet Lycophron (763, 1464), both times to mean 'babbler'. It is clearly a reference to Odysseus' speaking ability, but with the fifth-century colouring that he is a glib or specious speaker in the manner of a demagogue.

Ἡδυλόγος means 'sweet-speaking' but can have connotations of flattery or fawning as it does here. A character in the comic play *Ephialtes*, by Phrynichus, discusses the 'hostile flower of youth' who speak pleasantly to everyone but behind their backs laugh at people they have spoken pleasantly to (fr. 3). Δημοχαριστής is used nowhere else. It is formed from δῆμος and the verb χαρίζω, 'to gratify', and so it literally means 'courtier of the people'. This is the culminating term in this string of descriptors and cements the image of Odysseus as a modern demagogue.[21]

Odysseus' arguments in favour of the sacrifice echo the language of Achilles in the *Iliad*. He refers to Achilles as the best of the Danaans, which echoes not only the many Homeric references to Achilles as the best of the Achaeans, but specifically Achilles' threat in *Iliad* Book 1 that the Greeks will regret not honouring the best of the Achaeans (1.244).[22] Odysseus also cautions the Greeks not to be thought of as ἀχάριστος, which introduces the concept of χάρις, 'gratitude' or 'favour', an important theme, especially here in the first part of the play, which is concerned with

[17] See Simmons (2023) 56 on the connection between Odysseus and Cleon in this play. See pp. 82–3 on Odysseus being called ποικίλος in *Iphigenia at Aulis*.
[18] See p. 116 above on πολύτλας and p. 217 below on πολυμήχανος. See also p. 213 and 217 on words derived from τολμάω, a verb associated with Odysseus in Homer.
[19] Collard (1991) *ad loc*. compares it to the English 'logic-chopper'.
[20] Rhet. 1, Col. 57.12–13 = Heraclitus D27.
[21] Michelini (1987) 144; Synodinou (1994) 194.
[22] King (1985) 55.

Polyxena's fate. His argument recalls Achilles' complaint to Odysseus that there is no χάρις for fighting without respite (*Il*. 9.316–7).[23]

After a short and emotional scene in which Hecuba tells her daughter what will happen to her, Odysseus enters the stage to retrieve Polyxena, and his opening speech to Hecuba is brutally blunt.[24] He instructs Hecuba not to attempt to resist him and to recognise the necessity of the situation. He opens by relating the Greeks' decision, using the language of the Athenian assembly (218–21):[25]

> γύναι, δοκῶ μέν σ᾽ εἰδέναι γνώμην στρατοῦ
> ψῆφόν τε τὴν κρανθεῖσαν, ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως φράσω·
> ἔδοξ᾽ Ἀχαιοῖς παῖδα σὴν Πολυξένην
> σφάξαι πρὸς ὀρθὸν χῶμ᾽ Ἀχιλλείου τάφου.
>
> Lady, I think you know the will of the army and the vote that was cast, but still I will tell you: the Argives have resolved to slay your daughter Polyxena at the high burial mound of Achilles' tomb.

Odysseus' reference to the vote that has been cast is phrased the same way as Pelasgus' description of the vote cast by the Argive assembly to shelter the Danaids in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (ψῆφος κέκρανται, 943). Odysseus also uses the impersonal verb δοκέω (220) to describe the Greeks' decision. This verb is used frequently of public resolutions and in decrees.[26] It might be better translated 'It seemed right to the Argives'; the phrase lessens the agency of the Greeks by not making them the subjects of the verb. Odysseus thus endows the decision with a sense of specious impersonal objectivity and attempts to make it sound official.[27]

Hecuba attempts to persuade Odysseus to spare Polyxena by reminding him of the time she spared his life when he was a spy in Troy (239–50). We saw already that this episode is narrated by Helen in the *Odyssey*, but Hecuba is associated with this

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[23] King (1985) 55.
[24] Abrahamson (1952) 125. On Odysseus' coldness, see also Segal (1990) 124 and Reckford (1991) 29. Stanford (1963) 112 notes that Euripides has Odysseus performing the duties normally assigned to a herald, which emphasises his harshness.
[25] Battezzato (2018) on 219.
[26] LSJ s.v. δοκέω A II 4b. See e.g. Thuc 8.79.1; Aesch. *Supp*. 605; Ar. *Thesm*. 372. Several fifth-century Athenian decrees begin with ἔδοξεν τῆι βολῆι καὶ τῶι δήμωι, 'The Council and the people decided', see e.g. IG I³ 10, IG I³ 56, IG I³ 69.
[27] Morwood (2014) 200.

story nowhere else. Euripides probably invented this to create a shared past between Hecuba and Odysseus. Hecuba questions Odysseus on this incident, attempting to reveal the extent of his debt to her.[28] After he does so, she criticises him for his current behaviour and accuses him of harming instead of helping her. She directs her criticism not just at Odysseus but all men like him who want political power (254–9):

> ἀχάριστον ὑμῶν σπέρμ᾽, ὅσοι δημηγόρους
> ζηλοῦτε τιμάς· μηδὲ γιγνώσκοισθέ μοι,
> οἳ τοὺς φίλους βλάπτοντες οὐ φροντίζετε,
> ἢν τοῖσι πολλοῖς πρὸς χάριν λέγητέ τι.
> ἀτὰρ τί δὴ σόφισμα τοῦθ᾽ ἡγούμενοι
> ἐς τήνδε παῖδα ψῆφον ὥρισαν φόνου;
>
> An ungrateful lot you all are, who want to be political leaders! Never may you be acquaintances of mine! You do not care that you harm your friends provided that you say something to gratify the crowd!
>
> But what cleverness did they imagine it was when they passed a sentence of death against this girl?

Hecuba calls Odysseus and those who aspire to be politicians ungrateful (ἀχάριστος). The repetition of this charge of ingratitude, which Odysseus earlier made against the Greek assembly (137), highlights a key theme of the debate between Hecuba and Odysseus over the decision to kill Polyxena. Odysseus' priority is the public debt to his male ally Achilles; for him this must take precedence over his own private debt to the female Hecuba.[29] Hecuba expects χάρις in return for her earlier sparing of Odysseus' life (276). As Michelini points out, the issue of whether the χάρις requested by Achilles is appropriate is not considered by Odysseus.[30] His only concern is the political consequence of not honouring Achilles. Therefore, in order to be grateful to Achilles he must be ungrateful to Hecuba.

[28] On the sophistic echoes in Odysseus' willingness to be cross-questioned, see Battezzato (2018) on 238.
[29] Mossman (1995) 114.
[30] Michelini (1987) 147.

Hecuba's accusations against Odysseus here continue the portrayal of him, introduced by the chorus, as an unprincipled and ambitious mob-courtier whose only interest is pleasing the crowd. Δημήγορος, when used as a noun, means 'popular speaker' but can also be used as an adjective, δημηγόρος, as it is here.[31] Hecuba refers to those who desire a speaker's honours, δημηγόρους…τιμάς. The word is only used once elsewhere in tragedy, in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (623), when Danaus describes to his daughters how the Argive assembly passed Pelasgus' motion that the Danaids be allowed sanctuary. Scholars are divided on the text of the Greek here. Some print δημηγόρους…στροφὰς, meaning that the Argive people were persuaded by the 'twists of public speech'. [32] An alternative reading, however, is δημηγόρου…στροφῆς to mean that the people were persuaded by the 'guidance of the orator'.[33] Reading the latter makes Pelasgus specifically labelled as a δημηγόρος, whereas in the former he only employs the techniques of orators. But it does not affect the overall sense, since δημηγόρος is used without explicitly negative connotations, primarily because Danaus is describing an assembly which reached his desired outcome.

The reference to speaking to gratify the crowd (πρὸς χάριν) is reminiscent of the term δημοχαριστής applied to Odysseus earlier. Πρὸς χάριν is used in several texts in expressions that refer to pleasing the crowd.[34] Hecuba accuses Odysseus of caring more about his popularity with the mob than doing the right thing in helping his friends. In addition to this suggestion of demagoguery, the Greek decision and Odysseus' defence of it are given sophistic overtones by being described as a σόφισμα by Hecuba (258).[35] Σόφισμα, an ambiguous term, could sometimes be used positively, e.g. Aesch. *PV* 459, but elsewhere has pejorative overtones. Hecuba's use here exploits this ambiguity as the sacrifice of Polyxena seems clever to the Greeks, whereas from her perspective, and perhaps the audience's, it is merely an artifice.[36]

[31] LSJ s.v. δημήγορος.
[32] Translation from Carter (2013a) 31, Greek text taken from Page (1972).
[33] Translation and text from Sommerstein (2009).
[34] Thuc. 3.42.6, 7.8.2; Xen. *Hell*. 6.3.7, *Mem*. 4.4.4; Pl. *Grg*. 521d; Isoc. 12.133, 140. See also Simmons (2023) 57.
[35] See also Turkeltaub (2017) 146 who notes that Odysseus acts like a sophistic teacher when instructing Hecuba to 'be taught' at 299.
[36] Battezzato (2018) *ad loc*.

In the mid-420s, when this play was probably first performed, the sophistry of the new class of demagogues in Athens was prominent. Aristophanes' *Knights*, performed in 424, is particularly scathing towards Cleon, the most prominent of these demagogues. In this play, the character Demosthenes explains the qualities needed for 'being a people-leader' (δημαγωγία, 191).[37] Cleon is also called a demagogue in Thucydides (4.21.3). These criticisms of Odysseus in *Hecuba*, therefore, would have been particularly potent in the 420s when Athenians experienced demagogues in their political life. Resentment towards demagogues was felt by certain groups of Athenian citizens who disliked the kinds of mob-flattering techniques of which Odysseus is accused.

After criticising Odysseus and the Greeks for their decision, Hecuba pleads with Odysseus to let Polyxena live, imploring him to persuade the Greeks to change their minds, adding that he has the prestige to persuade them.[38] Her suggestion that Odysseus reopen the debate (288) recalls the Athenian practice of retaking votes, most notably the second vote on the issue of Mytilene (Thuc. 3.36.5–6, cf. 6.14).[39] Odysseus responds with one of his longest speeches in extant fifth-century tragedy. Mossman aptly notes that Odysseus' speech has formal elegance but lacks the 'fire and conviction' of Hecuba's.[40] Odysseus does not attempt to justify either the choice of Polyxena or the necessity of human sacrifice.[41] Instead, he focuses on political expediency and why satisfying Achilles' request is vital for the army.[42] Again, we can see a similarity to Cleon here, particularly his arguments for expediency in the Mytilenean debate.[43] Scholars generally have seen in Euripides' *Hecuba* references to Athens' treatment of its allies.[44] In contrast to the Athenian suppliant plays, which show an idealised Athens that always supports those in need – something also praised by Pericles in his funeral speech (Thuc. 2.40–5) – *Hecuba* presents a more

[37] Hall (2018b) 340.
[38] See Rosenbloom (2009) 205, who notes that 'Thucydides attributes Pericles' freedom in controlling the demos to his prestige (*axiōma*, 2.65.8)'. The same word, *axioma*, is used here in Hecuba's speech (293). See also Battezzato (2018) on 293–4.
[39] Battezzato (2018) *ad loc*.
[40] Mossman (1995) 113. Conacher (1961) 17 calls Odysseus' reply a 'lawyer's masterpiece'.
[41] Michelakis (2002) 64.
[42] Conacher (1961) 5; Michelakis (2002) 64.
[43] Ackerson (2015) 39–40. Cleon also warns against granting favours to obtain the allies' good will (Thuc. 3.37.2); see Tzanetou (2020) 170.
[44] Gregory (1991) 85–6; Tzanetou (2020) *passim*.

realistic picture of the relationship between Athens and its allies as that between master and slave.[45]

Odysseus ends the first section of his argument by stating that in life he hopes for nothing more than what he needs but hopes for honour for his grave (317–20). This is reminiscent of his argument to Agamemnon at the end of Sophocles' *Ajax*, where he argues for Ajax to be honoured with burial, just as he would wish to be. Whereas in *Ajax*, Odysseus argues in favour of showing Ajax pity, here he argues against showing pity.[46]

Odysseus tries to prove that the Greeks are as deserving of pity as Hecuba.[47] He then ends his speech with a command to Hecuba that she endure her losses.[48] His final lines assert the superiority of the Greeks over the Trojans, who are merely barbarians; they neither honour their dead nor treat their friends as friends (328–31). This last complaint is ironic since Odysseus himself has acknowledged his debt to Hecuba yet has not repaid it. It also echoes Hecuba's earlier complaint about political leaders harming their friends (256). Odysseus' speech ends on a note of arrogance, which the chorus identify as the attitude of the master towards the slave (332–3).

After her attempt at persuasion fails, Hecuba encourages Polyxena to supplicate Odysseus. Polyxena, however, is resolved to accept her fate and die rather than live as a slave. In her opening words, she makes it clear that Odysseus has turned his face away from her and has hidden his hand inside his robes to avoid her supplication (342–4). This detail adds to the negativity of Odysseus' portrayal as it implies impiety and moral cowardice.

Hecuba makes one last attempt to dissuade Odysseus, asking first to die in place of her daughter. When Odysseus denies the request, she asks to die with Polyxena. This too is rejected, leading to one final argument between Odysseus and Hecuba before

[45] Tzanetou (2020) 166–7 and 170–1.
[46] Foley (2015) 40.
[47] See Battezzato (2018) on 321–5 on the resemblance of Odysseus' mention of Greeks sufferings to the arguments made by the Thebans in Thucydides, who use their own sufferings as justification for their demand of a cruel punishment for the Plataean prisoners (3.67.3). On the general similarity of Hecuba's appeals to Odysseus and the Plataeans' appeals to the Thebans, see Hogan (1972), Macleod (1983) 155, and Battezzato (2018) on 216–95.
[48] Tzanetou (2020) 170 calls this 'near-contemptuous indifference for Hecuba's suffering'.

Polyxena intervenes. She instructs Odysseus to be gentle with her mother (403), which calls attention to his lack of pity.

Odysseus remains on stage during the emotional farewell between mother and daughter before Polyxena is led away. This implies a deep emotional barbarism; he does not allow them a private farewell.[49] It also emphasises that he is the cause of the suffering on stage because he persuaded the Greeks to sacrifice Polyxena. In the next scene, both the emotive description of the sacrifice by Talthybius (518–82) and the image of Neoptolemus hesitating out of pity before carrying out the deed (566) contrast starkly with Odysseus' callousness. Furthermore, every character in the play except Odysseus expresses pity for Hecuba or is moved by her suffering.[50] Even Polymestor later says that he weeps for Hecuba (954), although the audience know that he is partially responsible for Hecuba's woes.

In *Hecuba*, Odysseus is presented as a calculating agent of expediency. His chief concern is placating the spirit of Achilles; he shows no sympathy for either Hecuba or her doomed daughter. Euripides has made a crucial change to the standard epic story by having Hecuba involved in Odysseus' disguised entry into Troy and by making her responsible for his survival. This change serves to increase Odysseus' amoral cruelty as he dispassionately claims that he is obliged to spare only Hecuba's life, not Polyxena's. The presentation of Odysseus from the perspective of the chorus and Hecuba recalls the demagogues of contemporary Athens. Emphasis is given to his attempts to gratify the crowd, and he is explicitly referred to as a political leader.

4.2.2. Euripides' *Trojan Women*

About a decade after he produced *Hecuba*, Euripides wrote another play centred on the fate of the women of Troy: *Trojan Women*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this was part of a dateable production for which we know the title of all four plays, and we will discuss later to what extent these plays were thematically linked. Scholars frequently treat Euripides' *Trojan Women* as a response to Athens' actions on the island of Melos in 415. In this reading, the actions of the Greeks towards the Trojan women are intended to recall the real-life actions of the Athenians and thus comment

[49] Cf. Andromache's denunciation of the Greeks as barbaric in *Trojan Women* (764).
[50] Polydorus: 55–7, Polyxena: 211–5, Talthybius: 582, Handmaid: 658–60, Chorus: 721–2, Agamemnon: 785. See Michelini (1987) 132–3 and 147.

negatively on Athenian imperialism. However, this orthodox view has been questioned on the grounds of both chronology and evidence from the play. There was not enough time between the massacre of the Melians in the winter of 416/5 and the first performance of *Trojan Women* at the Dionysia in March 415.[51] Furthermore, the play contains not only patriotic allusions to Athens but also several condemnations of Sparta.[52] Both Helen and Clytemnestra are referred to as Spartan (34–5, 250, 869). In Hecuba's first speech of the play, she also emphasises Helen's Spartan origin (131–6). It is the Peloponnesian characters, particularly Helen, along with Odysseus who are responsible for the suffering of the Trojan women.

At the start of the play, Hecuba and the Trojan women of the chorus speculate about where they might be taken and to whom they will be allotted. The chorus hope to be sent to Athens or to somewhere in the western Mediterranean rather than Sparta or Corinth (214–30).[53] Talthybius enters to tell the women which king they will each serve. Hecuba is told last and gives a bitter cry when she finds out that she will be the slave of Odysseus (282–7):

> μυσαρῷ δολίῳ λέλογχα φωτὶ δουλεύειν,
>
> πολεμίῳ δίκας, παρανόμῳ δάκει,
>
> ὃς πάντα τἀκεῖθεν ἐνθάδ' <ἀνστρέφει,
>
> τὰ δ'> ἀντίπαλ' αὖθις ἐκεῖσε διπτύχῳ γλώσσᾳ,
>
> φίλα τὰ πρότερ' ἄφιλα τιθέμενος πάλιν.
>
> It is my lot to be a slave to a vile and treacherous man, an enemy of justice, a lawless creature! He <twists> everything from there to here and back from here to there by his deceitful tongue, making enmity where before there was friendship!

Hecuba is nowhere else made a slave of Odysseus. Just as we saw earlier with the story of Hecuba being aware of Odysseus' disguised entry into Troy, Euripides

[51] van Erp Taalman Kip (1987).

[52] J. Roisman (1997) 39 and 42–5; Kovacs (1997) 163–4; Hall (2018a) 130–2; Mills (2020) 98–9. See also the scholiast who commented that Euripides wanted to please his audience when saying that the sons of Theseus took no booty from Troy (Schol. Eur. *Tro*. 31 = *Iliou Persis* fr. 6 West). The play also contains no allusions to Melos; see Koniaris (1973) 103.

[53] On the allusions to the western Mediterranean and their possible connection to the impending Sicilian Expedition, see J. Roisman (1997).

seems to have invented a new connection between Odysseus and Hecuba to include. Hecuba's response to the news is one of the harshest passages spoken about, or to, Odysseus in extant tragedy.

Μυσαρός is often used in Euripides of someone or something polluted and is usually associated with murder or blood.[54] We have to look to Aristophanes for another fifth-century usage of μυσαρός which has no association with either pollution or blood. In *Lysistrata*, the chorus warn that an angry mob of men are approaching with fire, threatening to 'burn these horrible women' (μυσαρὰς γυναῖκας, 340). Μυσαρός can therefore be used without referring to pollution, but given that almost all of its uses in Euripides are in that context, it is likely that its usage here is coloured. The pollution may be from Odysseus' unjust instigation of the murder of Palamedes, even though he did not commit the deed himself.

Δόλιος, 'crafty' or 'treacherous', comes directly after μυσαρός and is a more typical characteristic associated with Odysseus. Δόλιος is used again later in the play to describe the Trojan horse (530).[55] In this play Odysseus is not associated with inventing the Trojan horse; instead, Poseidon names Epeius as its architect and builder (9–10). In tragedy, δόλιος is used as an epithet for both Aphrodite (Eur. *Hel*. 238) and Hermes (Soph. *Phil*. 133). It is used only once elsewhere in tragedy directly of Odysseus, in *Rhesus* (894 – see p. 171 below). In Euripides' *Orestes*, Pylades is said to be crafty like Odysseus (1404) and in *Cyclops*, Odysseus calls his plan to blind the Cyclops δόλιος (449). The related noun δόλος, however, is much more frequently associated with Odysseus.[56]

The reference to Odysseus being an enemy of justice (πολέμιος δίκας) recalls his actions in several plays, especially Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Palamedes*, as well as the *Palamedes* of Aeschylus and that of Sophocles if it was performed before 415.[57] Similarly, παράνομος is a legal term meaning 'unconstitutional' or 'illegal'. It is only used in two other tragedies, both by Euripides. In *Medea*, the messenger who comes to report the deaths of the princess and Creon says to Medea that she has done a terrible deed unlawfully (παρανόμως, 1121). In *Bacchae*, after Pentheus has gone in

[54] *Or*. 1624; *IT* 383, 1212, 1224; *Med*. 1393, 1406; *El*. 1294, 1350; *Cyc*. 373.
[55] δόλος is also used to describe the Trojan Horse in the *Odyssey* (8.494).
[56] *Il*. 11.430, 23.725; *Od*. 3.121–2, 9.19; Soph. *Phil*. 101–7.
[57] See *Hec*. 263–71, in which Hecuba discusses the justice of Achilles' demand for Polyxena, and Eur. *Palamedes* fr. 584, which is concerned with δίκη. Cf. Eur. *Philoctetes* fr. 789d.8.

disguise to spy on the bacchants, the chorus address Dionysus and talk about the punishment that awaits those with 'unjust purpose and lawless (παράνομος) temper' (997) towards Dionysus' rites. Νόμος and δίκας are both important in the earlier *Hecuba*. Hecuba particularly reminds Odysseus of the νόμος preventing murder which applies to both slave and free (291).

Δάκος is not frequently used to describe people. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra asks what 'loathsome beast' she should call Clytemnestra (δυσφιλὲς δάκος, 1232). Also in *Agamemnon*, Agamemnon describes the Argive beast (δάκος, 824) which destroyed Troy, i.e. the Trojan Horse. Its original meaning was simply 'bite' (e.g. Pind. *Pyth*. 2.53), but it came to be used of a dangerous animal, particularly one with a noxious bite.[58] Calling Odysseus a beast dehumanises him and makes him seem dangerous and ferocious. Furthermore, the idea of having a dangerous bite is probably a reference to Odysseus' eloquence, an action done with his mouth.

Odysseus is described as having a double tongue (δίπτυχος γλῶσσα) which is a reference to his deceitfulness and ability to twist situations. It is possibly also a reference to the sophistic *dissoi logoi* and the ability to speak well from opposing viewpoints. Δίπτυχος is used a few lines earlier by Hecuba to describe her face as a double cheek (280). As Wright notes, Euripides has deliberately used this word twice in close proximity to create an association between Hecuba and Odysseus just as Hecuba is trying to emphasise the gulf between herself and her enemy.[59] The audience may possibly be reminded at this point of Hecuba's own conduct in *Alexander*, the first play of this tetralogy, in which Hecuba plots to murder Paris by deceitfully luring him into the palace.[60] It is possible also that Hecuba is Paris' prosecutor in the trial scene of that play, mirroring Odysseus' role in *Palamedes*.[61] Furthermore, Hecuba in *Alexander* is persuaded to murder Paris due to Deiphobus' *phthonos*, a further link between her and Odysseus, who also acts out of *phthonos* when plotting against Palamedes.[62]

[58] LSJ s.v. δάκος; see Fraenkel (1950) and Raeburn and Thomas (2012) on *Agamemnon* 824 and Barrett (1964) on *Hippolytus* 645–8.
[59] Wright (2016a) 198.
[60] Karamanou (2017) 255 and 263.
[61] Karamanou (2017) 183–5.
[62] On the *phthonos* theme in the *Palamedes* plays generally, see pp. 57–8.

Hecuba accuses Odysseus of making enmity where there was friendship. This is a strange accusation from a Trojan, one not formerly on friendly terms with the Greeks. This line is surely intended to recall *Palamedes*, which was performed just before *Trojan Women*.[63] The point is not that Hecuba knows about the fate of Palamedes, but that Euripides' choice of language here reminds his audience of the previous play, in which Odysseus can certainly be accused of making an enemy of a former friend in Palamedes. In the prologue of *Trojan Women* shared by Athena and Poseidon, the audience are already forewarned of the fate that awaits some of the Greeks on the way home from Troy. As already noted, the mentions of Euboea (84) and the Capherean cliffs (90) remind the audience at the start of the play of Nauplius' revenge for the death of his son Palamedes, which may have been foreshadowed at the end of *Palamedes*.

Most scholars agree that Euripides' Trojan trilogy is not connected in the same sense as earlier trilogies of Aeschylus, with sequential episodes in the same story. However, there is broad consensus that the trilogy was thematically linked.[64] The suffering of the Trojans seen on stage in *Trojan Women* and the impending suffering of the Greeks referred to in the prologue are considered the consequences of the plots of the preceding two plays.[65] In *Alexander*, the Trojans disregard Cassandra's warnings that Alexander will bring about the destruction of Troy and instead welcome him back into the royal household. In *Palamedes*, the Greeks are guilty of murdering the innocent Palamedes on false charges. Hecuba's overall vitriol against Odysseus in *Trojan Women* makes much more sense if we take it as a reference to his conduct in the previous play.

After hearing that her mother will be the slave of Odysseus, Cassandra prophesies Odysseus' difficulties in reaching home. She summarises the wanderings of the *Odyssey* in around ten lines (431–43), listing all the perils that Odysseus will face on his way home. Just as with the prologue, the audience are reminded of the impending suffering that the Greeks will face. Odysseus is singled out here for special attention

[63] Lee (1976) xiii; Poole (1976) 282; Scodel (1980) 72; Barlow (1986) 29; Worman (1999) 49.
[64] Lee (1976) x; Scodel (1980) esp. 64–121; Barlow (1986) 30; Rabinowitz (2017) 200; Karamanou (2016) 355, (2017) 31–7, and (2020) 441. Hall (2022) has recently argued for a much closer relationship between the plays centred on the theme of time. For the opposite interpretation, see Koniaris (1973). See pp. 47–8 above on the trial motif which linked the three tragedies.
[65] Lee (1976) x and xv; Barlow (1986) 30; Karamanou (2017) 36.

because his sufferings will be lengthy and will result from his role in orchestrating the suffering of the Trojans. Nevertheless, the audience know that Odysseus will survive his ordeals, and it is because of his cunning and his 'double tongue', as Hecuba puts it, that he will do so.

Odysseus is referred to again later when the issue of the fate of Hector's son Astyanax arises. The herald Talthybius enters to give Andromache the terrible news that the Greeks have decreed her son's death (709). The news is delivered briefly with no lengthy description of an assembly discussion like that in *Hecuba*, though there are some similarities to the presentation of the decision to sacrifice Polyxena. Talthybius uses the impersonal δοκέω (713) just as Odysseus does (*Hec*. 220). The two decisions are also similar in that Odysseus is the decisive influence. Talthybius describes the decision (721–5):

ΤΑΛΘΥΒΙΟΣ	νικᾷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐν Πανέλλησιν λόγῳ…
ΑΝΔΡΟΜΑΧΗ	αἰαῖ μάλ'· οὐ γὰρ μέτρια πάσχομεν κακά.
ΤΑΛΘΥΒΙΟΣ	…λέξας ἀρίστου παῖδα μὴ τρέφειν πατρὸς…
ΑΝΔΡΟΜΑΧΗ	τοιαῦτα νικήσειε τῶν αὑτοῦ πέρι.
ΤΑΛΘΥΒΙΟΣ	ῥῖψαι δὲ πύργων δεῖν σφε Τρωικῶν ἄπο.
Talthybius	Odysseus won the day, speaking in the assembly of the Greeks…
Andromache	Ah, ah once more! The misfortunes I suffer are beyond all measure!
Talthybius	…telling them that they should not raise to manhood the son of a noble father…
Andromache	May some one be similarly persuasive concerning his sons!
Talthybius	…but should hurl him from the Trojan battlements.

Odysseus' victory is said to have come when speaking to all the Greeks (ἐν Πανέλλησιν), which implies another assembly, but this is not made explicit. As with the argument to sacrifice Polyxena, Odysseus' case is pragmatic and aimed at furthering the Greek interest, but to the Trojans appears as brutality. Just as in *Hecuba*, Talthybius' sympathy provides a sharp contrast with Odysseus' cynical and

expedient brutality.[66] The pared-down description of the assembly decision contains no dissenting voices, unlike in *Hecuba*, and focuses solely on Odysseus. His culpability is emphasised more than in the earlier play where his is not the only voice advocating the sacrifice.

Odysseus is mentioned by the Trojan characters one final time after the body of Astyanax is brought on stage atop Hector's shield. As she prepares the corpse for burial, Hecuba addresses the shield, adding (1224–5):

> ἐπεὶ σὲ πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ τοῦ σοφοῦ
>
> κακοῦ τ᾽ Ὀδυσσέως ἄξιον τιμᾶν ὅπλα
>
> It is far better to honor you than the arms of the clever but cowardly Odysseus.

The ὅπλα are those of Achilles, now possessed by Odysseus. Hecuba calls Odysseus both σοφός and κακός. These two descriptors encapsulate Odysseus' behaviour in this play but also in the preceding *Palamedes* play. Odysseus uses his cleverness for base or evil deeds, here in persuading the Greeks to murder Astyanax and in *Palamedes* to murder the eponymous hero.

Euripides made two deliberate choices regarding the role of Odysseus in *Trojan Women*. First, he chose to make Hecuba the slave allotted to Odysseus. Cassandra's prophecy that Hecuba will die in Troy is ignored, and at the conclusion Talthybius twice refers to Odysseus as Hecuba's new master (1270, 1285). Second, Euripides chose the version of Astyanax's death that makes Odysseus responsible. We are not told that Odysseus himself hurls the boy from the towers, but he instigates the action by persuading the Greeks to kill Hector's son. These two choices combine to make Odysseus one of the chief architects, along with Helen, of the suffering seen on stage.

As we have already noted, the Spartan heritage of those most responsible for the suffering of the women on stage is repeatedly emphasised. Even the crime of the

[66] See Gellie (1980) 30, who contrasts Talthybius, the sympathetic announcer of brutal Greek decisions, with Odysseus, the cynical politician. See also Meridor (1984) 211–2, who notes that the 'considerate' herald Talthybius' carrying of the victors' orders to the Trojan women makes conspicuous the absence from the stage of all the Greeks directly responsible for the on-stage woes. I disagree with Poe (2020) 266, who argues that by having Talthybius come to fetch Astyanax, Euripides stops short of demonising the Greeks.

Locrian Ajax against Cassandra is only mentioned twice briefly (69–71, 618). Neoptolemus is mentioned almost as many times as Odysseus but with no comment. The story that Neoptolemus killed Priam is excluded, and Hecuba does not state who murdered her husband. The Athenians are also sidelined in this play; Poseidon states in the prologue that the Athenians, along with the Arcadians and Thessalians, have already received their allotted Trojan women (28–35).[67] The sons of Theseus, who feature unexpectedly in *Hecuba* siding with Odysseus on the issue of Polyxena's sacrifice, are not mentioned after the prologue in *Trojan Women*. Euripides, therefore, isolates the Peloponnesian characters for reproach, and Odysseus is included in this group. The chorus hope not to be sent to Sparta or Corinth but, as we see from Hecuba's reaction, Ithaca is an equally undesirable destination.

There are many similarities between *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* from around ten years earlier. The descriptions of Odysseus, from the chorus and Hecuba in *Hecuba* and from Hecuba alone in *Trojan Women*, have several similarities. For example, the emphasis on Odysseus' speech is similar: in *Hecuba* he is called sweet-speaking and in *Trojan Women* double-tongued. However, one key difference is that Odysseus appears on stage in the earlier play but is absent in the later one. His absence makes him appear more sinister, as in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and particularly with the decision on Astyanax we get the sense of him pulling the strings from backstage. In *Hecuba*, the Trojan queen has the chance to attempt persuasion to prevent her daughter's sacrifice, even though it proves fruitless. In *Trojan Women*, there is no opportunity to protest against events; only Talthybius is present to represent the Greeks, and he only delivers news of what will happen.

4.2.3. *Rhesus*

Rhesus stages the events of Book 10 of the *Iliad*, including the night-time spying missions of Dolon and of Odysseus and Diomedes, along with the death of the Thracian king Rhesus. It is the only surviving tragedy based on an episode from the *Iliad*, although we know of others such as Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*.[68] Both the authorship and dating of the play have been the subjects of much debate. There was an entry in the *didaskaliai* for a *Rhesus* by Euripides, and a comment in the scholia

[67] Hall (2018a) 131–2; cf. the scholiast discussed above p. 152 n. 52.
[68] See p. 67.

places this production early in Euripides' career.[69] However, there are reasons to believe that what has survived is not Euripides' *Rhesus*, but a play by a different author attached to Euripides' name through error. Furthermore, many suggest that it is not from the fifth century but is instead a fourth-century play, with a variety of dates and potential authors posited.[70] Some, however, still maintain that the play is a genuine play by Euripides and is one of his earliest – his youth being the supposed reason for the divergence from his usual style.[71] Given the many unusual elements in the play, it is likely that it is not Euripides' *Rhesus* but a later play. I will therefore refer to its 'author' or 'playwright' instead of Euripides. Despite its potentially late date, the play has been included here for several reasons: first, because there is a chance that it is a fifth-century tragedy of Euripides; second, even if it is a fourth-century play it could have been heavily influenced by the actual *Rhesus* of Euripides; and finally, there are many aspects of Odysseus' presentation that echo what we have already seen in fifth-century tragedies, and it is a useful comparison to see potentially how these fifth-century tragic traits were perpetuated subsequently.

Although in Homer the events in the Trojan camp occupy only a few lines of Book 10, *Rhesus* is set in the Trojan camp, and the chorus and most of the characters are non-Greek – either Trojan or Thracian. As with *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, therefore, the play unfolds from a Trojan perspective, and consequently the Greeks are heavily criticised. However, unlike the previous two plays in this chapter, the Trojan characters in this play are male, and the setting is not after the fall of Troy but during the conflict. As a result, the non-Greek characters are less sympathetically presented than in *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*. Dolon and Rhesus are boastful, and Hector is rash and dismissive of good advice. The confidence of the Trojans is unfounded as they will suffer during the course of the play at the hands of the Greeks whom, in the case of Odysseus, they have explicitly derided. We will look at the presentation of Odysseus first through the eyes of the Trojan and pro-Trojan characters: Dolon, Hector, Rhesus, the chorus, and the Muse, followed by the (pro-) Greek perspectives of Diomedes and Athena before finally considering Odysseus himself. Throughout we will also examine two other questions: how the playwright

[69] Ritchie (1964) 16–8; Schol. *Rhes*. 528.
[70] Macurdy (1943) 413; Michelakis (2002) 168; Hall (2010) 295; Fantuzzi (2011) 54 and (2020b) 15–50; Liapis (2012) lxxii–lxxv; Fries (2014) 22–47; Mattison (2015) 486–7.
[71] Burnett (1985) 51; Ritchie (1964) 361.

has adapted epic material to foreground Odysseus, and how the similarities between Dolon and Odysseus are stressed, a point often overlooked.

Dolon

The opening of the play sets up the Trojan spying mission. Hector believes that the Greeks are preparing to sail away and plans to attack them. Aeneas criticises this plan and suggests instead that they send someone as a scout to see what the Greeks are doing. The chorus agree enthusiastically with this plan: 'what is better', they ask, 'than for a swift-footed man to go and spy on the ships?' (133–4). Dolon volunteers for the task, and this scene establishes many of the similarities between Dolon and Odysseus. It also exposes an irony, that the Trojans are keen to use a spy and yet later strongly deny the heroism of the Greeks who have done what they hoped Dolon would do. The scene between the chorus and Dolon is heavy with dramatic irony considering the Iliadic episode and the fate of Dolon therein. Dolon states that he will kill Odysseus and bring back his head (219–20) – the first reference to Odysseus in the play. The audience would know that Dolon himself is the one who is beheaded in the *Iliad* (10.456–7).

Liapis suggests that Dolon is brave in *Rhesus* compared to his Iliadic persona.[72] However, Burnett's assessment of Dolon is more accurate. She notes that Dolon is presented as greedy and has a lack of moderation.[73] Furthermore, she states that Dolon erodes our sense of the value and magnificence of the Trojan cause.[74] The playwright, far from being entirely sympathetic to the Trojans, instead from the start of the play sets them up as foolish and boastful. The rivalry between Dolon and Hector for the prize of Achilles' horses reinforces this. As Michelakis notes, it shows the gap between the unheroic characters on stage and the world of heroic excellence, represented by Achilles, which is beyond their reach.[75]

Hector

After Hector informs Rhesus that he cannot face Achilles on the battlefield since the Greek hero is not taking part in the fighting, the Thracian asks Hector who the most

[72] Liapis (2012) xlix and (2017) 337.
[73] Burnett (1985) 21.
[74] Burnett (1985) 25.
[75] Michelakis (2002) 169. See also Burnett (1985) 22.

famous man in the Greek army is after Achilles. Hector's response is fascinating; it focuses almost entirely on Odysseus (497–509):

> Αἴας ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐδὲν ἡσσᾶσθαι δοκεῖ
> χὠ Τυδέως παῖς· ἔστι δ᾽ αἰμυλώτατον
> κρότημ᾽ Ὀδυσσεὺς λῆμά τ᾽ ἀρκούντως θρασὺς
> καὶ πλεῖστα χώραν τήνδ᾽ ἀνὴρ καθυβρίσας·
> ὃς εἰς Ἀθάνας σηκὸν ἔννυχος μολὼν
> κλέψας ἄγαλμα ναῦς ἐπ᾽ Ἀργείων φέρει.
> ἤδη δ᾽ ἀγύρτης πτωχικὴν ἔχων στολὴν
> ἐσῆλθε πύργους, πολλὰ δ᾽ Ἀργείοις κακὰ
> ἠρᾶτο, πεμφθεὶς Ἰλίου κατάσκοπος·
> κτανὼν δὲ φρουροὺς καὶ παραστάτας πυλῶν
> ἐξῆλθεν· αἰεὶ δ᾽ ἐν λόχοις εὑρίσκεται
> Θυμβραῖον ἀμφὶ βωμὸν ἄστεως πέλας
> θάσσων· κακῷ δὲ μερμέρῳ παλαίομεν.
>
> In my judgment Ajax is in no way his inferior, nor is Tydeus' son. Odysseus is a clever rogue: he is plenty bold of heart and has done more harm to this land than any other. He went by night to Athena's shrine, stole the statue, and carried it off to the Argive ships. And then he was sent to spy on Troy: he came within the walls dressed as a beggar in rags and uttering curses on the Argives. But he killed the sentries and gate guards before going out. He is always to be seen about the altars of Thymbraean Apollo near the city, lurking in ambush. He is trouble to wrestle with.

In his opening lines, Hector passes briskly over Ajax and Diomedes. The reference to Ajax is a reminder of the judgement of arms since Hector is essentially being asked who the best of the Achaeans is after Achilles. Ajax is mentioned first as being just as good as Achilles, but it is Odysseus who has harmed Troy the most and therefore

helped the Greeks the most.[76] The emphasis on Odysseus' deceptive qualities also reminds us of the contrast between him and Ajax.

Hector describes Odysseus stealing the Palladium and entering Troy in disguise as a beggar. As we have seen, these two events are taken from the *Little Iliad*, and the latter is described by Helen in the *Odyssey*. The disguise is also reminiscent of Odysseus' return to his palace in Ithaca dressed as a beggar. Odysseus uses this disguise to infiltrate the suitors as he uses it to infiltrate the Trojans. In the Epic Cycle the theft of the Palladium and Odysseus' entry into Troy as a beggar both take place *after* the deaths of both Hector and Achilles. This change in chronology is significant; it shows that the playwright is particularly interested in Odysseus and his exploits. It gives the characters the opportunity to emphasise Odysseus' talent for disguise and deception and allows a foreshadowing of both the upcoming events of the play and the fall of Troy through the Trojan Horse.

The stealing of the Palladium and Odysseus' mission to Troy as a beggar were probably depicted in other plays, such as Sophocles' *Laconian Women*, Epicharmus' comedy *Odysseus the Deserter*, and Ion of Chios' *Watchmen*.[77] Aristotle also mentions a tragedy entitled *Πτωχεία*, *The Begging* (*Poet*. 1459b), which is based on events from the *Little Iliad*. This probably refers to Odysseus' entry into Troy as a beggar. Hector refers to Odysseus' beggarly clothes (πτωχικήν, 503) and to his killing of the guards (φρουρούς, 506), which could respectively refer to the tragedy entitled *Πτωχεία* and to Ion's *Φρουροί*.

Αἰμύλος (498) and κρότημα (499) are both rare words in tragedy, and κρότημα especially is obscure.[78] κρότημα is used only once elsewhere in tragedy in a fragment of Sophocles which also describes Odysseus (fr. 913):

> <τὸ> πάνσοφον κρότημα, Λαέρτου γόνος
> The all-cunning piece of mischief, the son of Laertes.

[76] See also the scholiast on *Od*. 11.547, who suggests that to decide between Odysseus and Ajax, Agamemnon asked Trojan prisoners who had harmed the Trojans the most and they said Odysseus. On this, see p. 94.
[77] Sophocles: fr. 367–8; Epicharmus: Page *Literary Papyri: Poetry* fr. 37; Ion of Chios: Schol. Ar. *Ran*. 1425. On Epicharmus, see above pp. 9–10.
[78] See pp. 111–2 on αἰμύλος.

The exact meaning is difficult to decipher, and there have been some different theories on its origin. Some relate it to noise and to κρόταλον, which literally means 'a castanet' and could refer to someone who is a rattle or a glib talker; it is used to describe Odysseus in Euripides' *Cyclops* (104).[79] A different interpretation is to relate it to something that is wrought. The related verb κροτέω means not only 'to make something rattle' but also 'to weld together' or, in the passive, 'to be wrought'.[80] A scholiast on *Rhesus* relates κρότημα to the noun συγκρότημα, which is derived from the verb συγκροτέω, which again means 'to weld together'.[81] Liapis concludes that 'a κρότημα would then be someone as subtle and artful as an elaborately wrought bronze artefact'.[82] The word contains ambiguity as it can refer to something skilfully made yet with a negative colouring.

Following this introduction of Odysseus, two more words are used that can have ambiguous connotations: λῆμά and θρασύς (499). λῆμά means 'courage' or 'resolution' but also can mean 'insolence', 'arrogance', or 'audacity'. The chorus earlier expressed their amazement at the courage of Dolon (λῆμά, 245).[83] Similarly, θρασύς can mean both 'bold' and 'over-bold' or 'rash'. Eurylochus accuses Odysseus in the *Odyssey* of causing trouble for his men thanks to his reckless folly and calls him θρασύς (10.436). Elsewhere, the related noun θράσος is used twice in Aeschylus' *Persians* to mean 'rashness' (744, 831). However, θρασύς is used as one of Hector's epithets throughout the *Iliad* and there may not carry a pejorative sense.[84] The Phrygian slave in Euripides' *Orestes* compares Pylades to Odysseus, calling him crafty, but says that he is 'bold for the fight' (θρασὺς εἰς ἀλκάν, 1405). The word is used elsewhere in the play of both Odysseus and Hector.[85] Despite the negative connotations of these two words, other translators do not seem to translate them with the negative sense that Liapis suggests and uses in his own translation of this line: 'quite bold in his audacity'.[86] Kovacs chooses 'plenty bold of heart', and Lattimore opts to signal a contrast with the negative opening by saying '*but* [my italics] his

[79] Liapis (2012) on 498–500. On the use in *Cyclops*, see below pp. 237–8.
[80] LSJ s.v. κροτέω A and A II 4.
[81] Schol. *Rhes*. 499.
[82] Liapis (2012) on 498–500. See also Fries (2014) and Fantuzzi (2020b) on 498b–500.
[83] See Burnett (1985) 25, who points to this as confirmation of her assertion (mentioned above) that Dolon has been 'brought forward' by the poet 'to erode our sense of the value and the magnificence of the Trojan cause'.
[84] *Il*. 8.312, 12.60, 210, 725, 22.455, 24.72, 786.
[85] 579, 693, 707.
[86] Liapis (2012) on 498–500.

heart is brave enough'.[87] The way Kovacs and Lattimore have translated this suggests a certain amount of respect shown to Odysseus by Hector, who acknowledges his courage. The ambiguity of this description of Odysseus is clearly still alive.

Hector says that Odysseus has done more harm to Troy than anyone else. He uses the verb καθυβρίζω, which means 'to treat despitefully' or 'to insult'.[88] In Sophocles, the Greeks are accused of exulting over Ajax (*Aj*. 153), and Philoctetes tells Neoptolemus that the Greeks, including Odysseus, have insulted Achilles' son by robbing him of his father's treasure (*Phil*. 1364).[89] Elsewhere in tragedy, this word is often placed in the context of other crimes or violations.[90] Considering the two episodes that Hector will discuss in the next few lines, the sense of humiliation and insult in this verb is appropriate; Odysseus singlehandedly enters the city and not only steals the Palladium but also kills guards and tricks the Trojans with his disguise.

After describing Odysseus' theft of the Palladium, Hector then remembers Odysseus' entry into Troy disguised as a beggar (503). He begins the recollection with 'already', which suggests that this beggar episode occurred before the Palladium theft. Hector says that Odysseus was sent by the Greeks as a spy (κατάσκοπος, 505). Terms referring to spies and spying are frequent throughout; both Dolon and Odysseus are called spies.[91] Hecuba also calls Odysseus a κατάσκοπος (*Hec*. 239) when she recollects the spying mission. This word is never used by Homer, nor by Aeschylus or Sophocles, although they do use the earlier form σκοπός. In the 'Doloneia', Dolon is three times referred to as a σκοπός, but it is not used of Odysseus and Diomedes.[92] Κατάσκοπος is also a rare word in Euripides and seems to be used more in historical works. The word is used several times in Herodotus, of

[87] Kovacs (2003); Lattimore (1958).
[88] LSJ s.v. καθυβρίζω.
[89] See p. 114 on this word in *Ajax*.
[90] Soph. *El*. 522, *OC* 960; Eur. *El*. 698, *Bacch*. 616.
[91] κατάσκοπος: 125, 129, 140, 505, 524, 592, 645, 657, 809. κατόπτης: 134, 150, 155, 558, 632.
[92] *Il*. 10.324, 526, 561. Despite being sent to gather information, the Greek mission quickly changes into one focused on murder and booty; see Gaunt (1971).

both Persian and Greek spying missions.[93] It is not clear whether there are negative connotations attached to spying in Herodotus.

Towards the end, Hector mentions Odysseus often waiting in ambush around the Thymbraean altar of Apollo, near the city (507–8). This episode does not seem to appear elsewhere.[94] Regardless, this picture of Odysseus as constantly lurking near Troy waiting for a moment to strike is unlike what we see in the *Iliad*. It is more suited to his escapades in the *Little Iliad*. The way that the chorus and Hector talk about him in *Rhesus* make him seem like a permanently threatening presence, who could attack at any moment. We have already seen this feature of Odysseus' presentation in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Ajax*, and *Trojan Women*, and we will see it again in *Philoctetes*.

Hector closes his speech by describing Odysseus as someone with whom the Trojans 'wrestle' (παλαίω, 509). Odysseus is both a literal and metaphorical wrestler elsewhere. In epic he has wrestling matches with both Ajax (*Il*. 23.700–39) and Philomeleides (*Od*. 4.343).[95] 'Wrestle' can also be used metaphorically, as when one wrestles with a calamity, as it is used here in *Rhesus*. Similarly, Odysseus is a described as a cunning wrestler in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (σοφὸς παλαιστής, 431).[96] Pindar also uses it in the same sense when he narrates how Ajax wrestled with death following his defeat in the judgement of arms (*Nem*. 8.27).

Odysseus is mentioned twice more by Hector after the murder of Rhesus has been revealed. Hector instantly recognises the plot as the work of Odysseus and tells Rhesus' charioteer as much (861–4). He asks what other Greek could have planned (βουλεύω) the deed (862), which again elevates Odysseus' status as chief threat. Βουλεύω is reminiscent of Aeneas' reproach to Hector that one man cannot be good at everything and that while he excels in fighting, others specialise in making good plans (βουλεύειν καλῶς 108). There is a contrast, therefore, between Hector the

[93] Persians or Medians: 1.100, 112; 3.19, 23, 25, 134, 136, 138; 7.208. Greeks: 1.152; 3.123; 4.151; 5.13; 7.145, 146, 147, 148; 8.21.
[94] Liapis (2012) *ad loc*. Fries (2014) on 507b–9a speculates that it could relate to the capture of Helenus.
[95] On the wrestling match with Ajax, see p. 92.
[96] On this line and its sophistic overtones, see p. 206.

fighter and Odysseus the planner, in the same way that Diomedes and Odysseus are contrasted in the play (see below).[97]

The (pro-)Trojans seem throughout to be respectful of Achilles and Ajax, whereas Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Diomedes are all wished dead at some point by the chorus or Dolon.[98] However, Odysseus is the only one whom Hector claims to fear (863). This is interesting and points to Odysseus' unconventional fighting style of espionage and disguise. The Trojans are clearly unable to defend themselves against such incursions, and the audience know that they will fall prey to a further trick when presented with the Trojan Horse.

Finally, after the Muse has revealed that Athena, Diomedes, and Odysseus are responsible for Rhesus' death, Hector responds that he needed no seer to tell him that Rhesus was killed by 'the devices of Odysseus' (Ὀδυσσέως τέχναισι, 952–3).[99] As with other words used in this play of Odysseus, τέχνη has ambiguous connotations. It is used of art and craft in a positive or neutral way, for example of the skills that Hephaestus and Athena teach a craftsman (*Od*. 6.234). However, it can also mean a 'cunning craft', such as in Hesiod's *Theogony*; Gaia's plan to punish Ouranos is called a 'tricky, evil stratagem' (δολίην δὲ κακὴν…τέχνην, 160); the dog guarding the house of Hades is said to have a 'cruel trick' (τέχνην δὲ κακὴν, 770). Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* also condemns Odysseus' 'treacherous plotting' (τέχνης… κακὴς 88).

Overall, Hector's view of Odysseus in this play is fascinating. He shows an awareness of Odysseus' various skills, including disguise, deception, and planning. The adjustments to the chronology of the Epic Cycle material elevate Odysseus' threat to the Trojans and establish his uniqueness at an earlier point in the war while Achilles and Ajax are still alive.

[97] Hesk (2011) 141 suggests that the play models Aeneas and Odysseus as positive exemplars of *euboulia*.
[98] Menelaus: 257; Agamemnon: 258; Diomedes: 222.
[99] Cf. Eur. *IT* 24.

Rhesus

After Hector's description of Odysseus (497–509), Rhesus responds with a condemnation not just of Odysseus but of all those who behave in such an unheroic manner (510–7):

> οὐδεὶς ἀνὴρ εὔψυχος ἀξιοῖ λάθρᾳ 510
> κτεῖναι τὸν ἐχθρόν, ἀλλ᾽ ἰὼν κατὰ στόμα.
> τοῦτον δ᾽ ὃν ἴζειν φῂς σὺ κλωπικὰς ἕδρας
> καὶ μηχανᾶσθαι, ζῶντα συλλαβὼν ἐγὼ
> πυλῶν ἐπ᾽ ἐξόδοισιν ἀμπείρας ῥάχιν
> στήσω πετεινοῖς γυψὶ θοινατήριον. 515
> λῃστὴν γὰρ ὄντα καὶ θεῶν ἀνάκτορα
> συλῶντα δεῖ νιν τῷδε κατθανεῖν μόρῳ.
>
> No brave man deigns to kill the enemy by stealth but fights face to face. This man you say lurks in thievish hiding-places and plots—him I shall capture alive, impale him through the spine by the city gate, and set him as a feast before the winged vultures. That's the proper death for a thief and a temple robber.

Rhesus displays an uncompromising view of the morality of warfare. To him, using stealth is never an option as it is not becoming of a hero. His view echoes certain historical figures who also disparage the use of trickery.[100] To Rhesus, Odysseus is no hero but merely a thief. Much like Ajax in Antisthenes, Rhesus explicitly connects the use of stealth with a lack of bravery, saying that no man of good courage (οὐδεὶς ἀνὴρ εὔψυχος), thinks it fit to kill an enemy through stealth (λάθρᾳ).[101] Εὔψυχος recalls an earlier line of Dolon's in which he states that Achilles' horses are a fair reward for his own stout-heartedness (εὐσπλαγχνία, 192). Therefore, we are pointed here not only to the stealthy Odysseus but also Dolon, who went to such effort to describe his plan to be stealthy in his wolf disguise. Λάθρᾳ is usually used elsewhere to mean secretly, although it is used once in the *Odyssey* to imply treachery (17.80).

[100] E.g. Hdt. 1.212.2, Thuc. 4.86.6; see Krentz (2000) 168.
[101] On Antisthenes' *Ajax*, see p. 129.

Rhesus describes Odysseus' hiding places as 'thievish' (κλωπικαί). This word is extremely rare; it does not occur elsewhere in tragedy and only appears one other time in this play when Dolon uses it to describe his task (205). This is clearly ironic as Rhesus' criticism applies as much to his ally Dolon as it does to Odysseus. The root of the word is thief (κλώψ); Plato uses the alternative κλοπικός to describe Hermes as 'wily' (*Crat*. 408a).

Rhesus proposes a punishment for Odysseus which is savage and barbaric. His wish to capture and torture Odysseus is reminiscent of the mad Ajax's delusion that he has captured Odysseus (Soph. *Aj*. 105–10). The desire to impale a victim is elsewhere considered a technique of barbarians and not Greeks.[102] In Herodotus, the Greek general Pausanias rejects the suggestion that Mardonius should be impaled as Leonidas had been, saying that this practice is more fitting for a barbarian than a Greek (9.78.3–79.2). It is likely, therefore, that a Greek audience would have found Rhesus' suggestion distasteful and cast him as a barbarian.

According to Rhesus, this punishment is fitting for a thief and a temple robber. This is a further parallel between Rhesus' speech and Antisthenes' *Ajax* speech in which Odysseus is also accused of being a temple robber.[103] Stealing from temples is more serious as it involves impiety and deserves divine punishment. The ghost of Darius in Aeschylus' *Persians*, for instance, lists the plundering of temples among the crimes of the Persians invading Greece (809–10). Similarly, in a fragment of Euripides' *Danae* a comparison is made between whoever has a plentiful household but starves his stomach, and someone who would plunder the images of the gods (fr. 428). In both cases, the verb συλάω is used of the plundering. Finally, Herodotus describes the Persians plundering temples after two Eretrians betray their city to them (6.101.3). Therefore, we can conclude that συλῶν is used here with strong negative connotations. However, the stealing of the Palladium is surely more complex for two reasons. First, it is one of the conditions which the Greeks must meet for the destruction of Troy, which is part of Zeus' divine plan. Second, the stolen statue is of Athena, which is made explicit by Hector (501), but Athena is a

[102] Liapis (2012) on 513–5; Fries (2014) on 512–7; Fantuzzi (2020b) on 512–5. In Herodotus it is practiced by several Persian kings: 1.128.2, 3.159.1, 4.43.6, 7.238. See also Hall (1989) 158–9.
[103] See p. 129.

patron goddess of both Odysseus and Diomedes and has enmity towards the Trojans. Therefore, this may not have seemed like a straightforward case of impiety.

Rhesus' speech has several layers of dramatic irony. First, the audience, who are familiar with Rhesus' fate from Homer, know that it is because of Odysseus' cunning that he will lose his life. Rhesus will be killed through stealth, and his horses will be stolen by Odysseus. There is no glorious death on the battlefield in single combat for Rhesus, but an 'inglorious' death, as his charioteer later calls it (761). Both Dolon and Rhesus leave the stage having imagined themselves as Odysseus' killer (219–23, 513–5) only to fall victim to Odysseus and Diomedes.[104]

Furthermore, Rhesus' certainty that he is in no danger from such an attack leads the Thracians to neglect establishing a watch, thus leaving them unguarded and unaware when the Greek spies arrive (764–9). This speech is also ironic in that it condemns the Trojan spy Dolon as much as it does Odysseus. Moreover, Rhesus inadvertently condemns his other Trojan allies as well, namely Hector, Aeneas, and the chorus, since they all approved of Dolon's spying mission.[105] Hector does not agree with Rhesus' condemnation but swiftly changes subject and tells Rhesus about where the Thracians will be camped.[106] Furthermore, comments from the chorus and Aeneas earlier in the play show that they are not wholly opposed to the use of stealth. Rhesus is alone in his stance on stealth as an unfitting military tactic.

Chorus

Unlike Hector, the chorus do not mention Odysseus until he and Diomedes have left the stage. After encountering the two Greeks and being persuaded that they are allies, the chorus wonder who was sighted in the camp. They ask who will boast at having escaped them (693–4). This recalls Odysseus' boasting after escaping from Polyphemus in the *Odyssey* (9.475–9, 502–5). The chorus have an eye on their reputations here and do not want anyone to boast at their expense, just as Ajax worries that Odysseus is gloating over him (*Aj*. 382). Hector later reproaches the chorus for allowing the invaders to have escaped 'untouched and much amused' at the feebleness of the Trojans (814). The chorus also wonder what land the unknown

[104] Burnett (1985) 30–1.
[105] On Hector, see Rosivach (1978) 66, who notes that 523–6 remind us of Hector's continuing complicity in the deception and trickery of Dolon.
[106] Rosivach (1978) 66.

man hails from and suggest he could even be someone who leads a vagrant islander's life (ἢ νησιώτην σποράδα κέκτηται βίον, 701). This contempt for islanders continues the trend we have already observed in other plays, and here the audience know that the islander Odysseus is the one responsible for infiltrating the camp.[107]

The chorus agree that the infiltration seems like the work of Odysseus, which leads them to reminisce about a previous encounter with him. One chorus member criticises another for praising Odysseus' bravery: 'Never praise the deceitful war craft of that robber!' (μὴ κλωπὸς αἴνει φωτὸς αἱμύλον δόρυ, 710). Κλωπός and αἱμύλος were already used of Odysseus by Hector. The chorus leader identifies Odysseus as a thief, although the chorus do not mention the theft of the Palladium in their recollection. The chorus, on the surface, seem to share Rhesus' negative view of stealth since the leader denigrates Odysseus for his 'crafty spear' (αἱμύλον δόρυ). When Hector used αἱμύλος, this could point both to Odysseus' speaking ability as well as his craft, whereas here the use of δόρυ, spear, focuses only on his technical war craft. However, the chorus earlier in the play lavish praise on Dolon for his crafty task, even praying to Hermes as the patron of 'slippery' men (φηληταί, 217).

The chorus recall Odysseus' mission as a beggar (711–21), already mentioned by Hector. Like Hector, they describe two different features of Odysseus' deception, his physical disguise as a beggar and his verbal disguise as an enemy of the Greeks. Both are techniques used elsewhere by Odysseus, such as in the *Odyssey* when he enters his home disguised as a beggar but also invents false life stories for himself which he tells the suitors and Penelope. The chorus specifically say that Odysseus spoke many ills of the Atridae as if he hated them (718–9), which he also does when deceiving the title character in Aeschylus' *Philoctetes*.[108] More immediately, these techniques have just been displayed on stage by Odysseus himself. Odysseus convinced the chorus that he and Diomedes are their allies, just as he had previously entered Troy by pretending to hate the Greeks.

The chorus end by wishing that Odysseus had died 'most justly' (πανδίκως, 720) before reaching Troy. Like Rhesus (514–7), the chorus believe that death is a fitting punishment for Odysseus' crimes. This claim of justice rings hollow, however, as the

[107] See above p. 19 n. 59 and 81; see also below p. 204. On this line, see Constantakopoulou (2007) 107–8.
[108] Dio Chrys. *Or*. 52.10.

audience have already seen in the play that Odysseus' actions are divinely sanctioned by Athena. Overall, the focus on Odysseus' physical and verbal disguise is ironic, since the chorus too were just fooled in the same way. Odysseus' outfit on stage does not mark him out as a Greek, and his words persuaded the chorus that he was a Trojan ally. While the chorus are recalling these past events, the Thracians are dying off stage and the Greeks are heading back to their camp with Rhesus' horses, having evaded capture; the chorus are describing a time in the past when Odysseus got the better of them, having just been duped by him again.

Muse

The Muse, in her lament for her son, castigates those responsible for his death: Odysseus, Diomedes, and Athena. Initially she names only Odysseus as his killer, calling him 'crafty Odysseus' (δόλιος Ὀδυσσεύς, 894). δόλιος refers to Odysseus' cunning in getting in and out of the Trojan camp but also applies more widely to his role in the Trojan war, since it is through several of his tricks that Troy falls. Her reproach is similar to that of Hecuba in *Trojan Women* (see above p. 153). However, it is also ironic as the Trojans sent out their own δόλιος agent in the form of Dolon.

There is no mention of Diomedes at first; the early emphasis is only on Odysseus as the doer of the deed. After this, the Muse – like Dolon, Rhesus, and the chorus – wishes for Odysseus' death (907). Later, the Muse belittles the role of both Odysseus and Diomedes, relegating them to the role of agents enacting the divine will of Athena (938–40). As we shall see, this is also how Athena speaks of their role; she orchestrates the murder in order to satisfy fate.

Diomedes

Diomedes is the traditional partner of Odysseus on several missions in the Epic Cycle.[109] In the *Iliad*, it is Diomedes who volunteers for the spying mission of Book 10 and then chooses Odysseus as his companion. In *Rhesus*, after Athena has instructed the Greeks to kill Rhesus, Odysseus gives Diomedes the choice of killing the Thracians or managing the horses (622–3), echoing lines from the *Iliad* (10.479–81).[110] Diomedes responds that he will do the killing and leave the horses to Odysseus, adding (625):

[109] See the list in Fenik (1964) 12–3.
[110] See Fries (2014) and Fantuzzi (2020b) *ad loc*.

τρίβων γὰρ εἶ τὰ κομψὰ καὶ νοεῖν σοφός.

You are good at clever deeds and have a sharp eye.

This line recalls Diomedes' praise of Odysseus in the *Iliad* after selecting him as his companion for the night mission (10.243–7). In Homer, Diomedes feels assured that he and Odysseus will return safely from the Trojan camp since Odysseus is skilled in understanding (νοέω, 10.247). Both σοφός and κομψός are elsewhere used of Odysseus with pejorative overtones.[111] Despite this, Diomedes uses them here in praise of Odysseus' skills. Odysseus' talents for deceit and cunning are damaging to the Trojans, hence their disparagement. However, Diomedes is willing to ignore any moral qualms because Odysseus' skills benefit the Greeks. Similarly, the chorus use σοφός twice when speaking to Dolon, stating that one should learn cleverness from a clever man (206). Diomedes goes on to say that a man must be placed where he can do the most good (626). This contrasts the two in a similar way to Aeneas and Hector earlier in the play, when Aeneas says that one man cannot be skilled in everything (107–9).

Athena

Athena comes to the aid of Odysseus and Diomedes as she does in *Iliad* 10, although in Homer she does not instruct the Greeks to kill Rhesus. In *Rhesus*, Athena's support for Odysseus and Diomedes involves masquerading as Aphrodite to Paris and protecting the Greeks from detection. Disguised gods are unusual for tragedy, though common in epic. The most notable occasion is in the *Iliad* when Athena appears disguised as a human to trick Hector into facing Achilles, thus leading to his death (22.226–57). The purpose of including Paris as a character in *Rhesus* has been questioned, and it seems that the only purpose is so that he can be deceived by Athena.[112] However, this is still important as it implies divine sanction from Athena for the use of lies and tricks.

Athena's appearance, which is hidden from the characters on stage, and her duping of Paris are reminiscent of her appearance at the beginning of Sophocles' *Ajax*.[113] As

[111] On σοφός, see pp. 57, 73–4, 157, 200, 206–7, and 219. Cf. its positive use of Odysseus in *Ajax* and *Cyclops*, pp. 119–20 and 245–6. On κομψός, see pp. 239–40.
[112] Liapis (2012) xl and lii.
[113] See pp. 106–8. Fantuzzi (2005) 159.

in that play, she is a commanding presence, and her interaction with Odysseus lacks the tenderness it has at times in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus' responses to Athena are also similar to the opening of *Ajax* (*Aj*. 14–7, *Rhes*. 607–9).[114] Bond notes that Athena's appearance shifts the attention from Diomedes to Odysseus as the more important figure in the night raid.[115]

Odysseus himself on stage

Odysseus and Diomedes appear on stage for only a short amount of time in the middle of the play (565–641, 675–89). Their appearance is not surprising given the Iliadic version of the story. However, within the play their presence has not been signalled at all, and their entrance at this point may have been unexpected. A prologue might be missing from the play which anticipated the imminent Greek incursion.[116] Their outfits must not identify them as Greeks, since later the chorus are persuaded that they are not enemies.[117] This suggests that the Greeks are, to a certain extent, disguised. Since they manage to escape the chorus, the disguise is effective, as was Odysseus' beggar disguise that Hector and the chorus describe.

The two Greeks appear cautious and suspect that there may be a trap waiting for them when they realise that Hector is not where they expected him to be. When they find that Hector is not sleeping in his area of the camp, Diomedes suggests going on to find another leader to attack (585–6). Odysseus, however, recommends that they return to the ships, as they cannot find the Trojan leaders in the dark without running into trouble (587–8). This scene emphasises the typical differences between Odysseus and his companion, namely that Odysseus is the more prudent and cautious of the two. Odysseus' suggestion that they leave could be viewed as either cowardice or prudence. Diomedes himself calls it shameful to return to the ships without achieving more (589). The audience soon learns from Athena that Rhesus will be unstoppable if he survives the night, which means that had Diomedes followed Odysseus' advice it would have been disastrous for the Greeks.[118] This makes it analogous to the disaster that does befall the Trojans, arising from Hector

[114] Bond (1996) 267; Fantuzzi (2005) 165.
[115] Bond (1996) 266.
[116] Ritchie (1964) 105–10.
[117] Liapis (2012) on 565–674.
[118] Rosivach (1978) 62.

following the advice of Aeneas and the chorus in sending Dolon and accepting Rhesus.[119]

After killing Rhesus, the two Greeks return to the stage and come face to face with the chorus. Diomedes does not speak at this point; only Odysseus talks to the chorus and convinces them that they are not enemies. This is evidence of what Diomedes said of Odysseus' quick-thinking skills, since Odysseus manages to point the chorus in the wrong direction, allowing him and Diomedes to escape.

For the playwright of *Rhesus*, Odysseus is the chief threat to the Trojans. This follows what we have seen of the *Little Iliad*, in which Odysseus is the foremost hero after the deaths of Achilles and Ajax. In the later stages of the Trojan War, as told in this part of the Cycle, standard battles have less significance and instead stealth, theft, and persuasion are needed to fulfil the necessary criteria for Troy's downfall. This is where Odysseus excels, and the author of this play has captured that spirit and altered the chronology, creating these conditions while Hector, Achilles, and Ajax are still alive.

Many of the things that Hector and the chorus say about Odysseus are ambiguous since they can have varied connotations. These words often refer to both skill and cunning. Furthermore, many of the things the Trojan characters say about Odysseus are ironic since the audience is aware that he will participate in the killing of Dolon and Rhesus, and will later be successful with the Trojan Horse in the final defeat of Troy. The presentation of Odysseus himself is less heroic than his Iliadic portrayal as he appears fearful and overly cautious, but the play does not denigrate Odysseus as much as Liapis suggests.[120] His confrontation with the chorus makes the Trojans appear foolish. Rhesus is overconfident, barbaric, and too easily dismisses the use of stealth as unheroic. Furthermore, the criticisms of Odysseus can in many cases be applied to Dolon, whom the Trojans were so eager to send out as a spy.

It is probable that *Rhesus* is not a fifth-century play. However, it is important to this thesis because it bridges the gap between the tragic Odysseus of the fifth century and the rhetorical/philosophical Odysseus of the fourth century. We can see several elements of Odysseus' tragic portrayal in this play, such as his menacing off-stage

[119] Rosivach (1978) 61.
[120] Liapis (2012) l–li.

presence. We can also see some (probably) fourth-century elements. In general, the emphasis on deception in this play and its clear endorsement by Athena could suggest a fourth-century date; Krentz suggests that by the fourth century, deceiving enemies was considered not only normal behaviour but a desirable tactic in warfare.[121] Furthermore, references to scouting increase in the fourth century.[122] Rhesus' condemnation of Odysseus resembles that of Antisthenes' Ajax and may have been inspired by that text.

4.3. Conclusion

In all three plays presented from the Trojan point of view, Odysseus has a significant influence on the action. He is responsible for the death of a character in each play, two through persuasion and one through direct action. Crucially, in all three plays the playwright has altered the standard epic story or chronology in order to tie Odysseus more strongly to the action and, more importantly, to the Trojan characters. In *Hecuba*, Euripides creates a new bond between Odysseus and Hecuba by including the detail that she was aware of Odysseus' disguised entry into Troy and allowed him to go free. In *Trojan Women*, Hecuba is assigned as a slave to Odysseus which does not seem to happen in any other texts. Furthermore, in these plays Euripides makes Odysseus responsible for the deaths of Polyxena and Astyanax which takes inspiration from less common Cyclic epic variants. In *Rhesus*, epic chronology has been altered to have Odysseus' disguised entries in Troy and theft of the Palladium take place before the deaths of Hector, Achilles, and Ajax. This serves to make him more of a menace to the Trojans and shows history repeating itself when Odysseus is again able to gain entry to the Trojan camp, this time with Diomedes, to kill Rhesus.

The changes make Odysseus seem the most hated and feared of the Greeks in all three plays. In *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, he is lambasted for his demagoguery: he is both honey-tongued and double-tongued, and appeals to the masses. His arguments to the Greek assembly in favour of sacrificing Polyxena and Astyanax focus on expediency in a manner reminiscent of Cleon's case in the Mytilenean debate. The suffering of the Trojan women in both plays, coupled with the sympathy shown towards them by the herald Talthybius, emphasises Odysseus' coldness and

[121] Krentz (2000) 169–70. Xenophon comments that the successful general should be a thief, *Mem*. 3.1.6, *Cyr*. 1.6.27; see Whitehead (1988) 47.
[122] Fantuzzi (2020b) 63.

cruelty in the pursuit of Greek expediency. In *Hecuba*, the Athenian Theseids take the side of Odysseus while Agamemnon takes the side of Polyxena. However, in *Trojan Women*, Athenians take no part in the events of the play; only the Peloponnesians, the Atridae and Helen, and Odysseus are responsible for, and blamed for, the sufferings of the characters on stage.

In *Rhesus*, we see an Odysseus inspired by the Epic Cycle, despite the play's Iliadic setting. The epic chronology has been altered so that Odysseus' exploits from the *Little Iliad* have already taken place. The playwright of *Rhesus* has made Odysseus the biggest threat to the Trojans, and he is an object of fear for Hector and the chorus. Despite the Trojans' disparagement of Odysseus, however, they spend the first part of the play trying to emulate him when sending the overconfident Dolon to infiltrate the Greeks.

Chapter 5

Odysseus and Philoctetes

The retrieval of Philoctetes from Lemnos was depicted in tragedy by all three major tragedians. Having been abandoned by the Greeks before their arrival in Troy, Philoctetes has become their enemy. However, it is revealed in a prophecy that Philoctetes' arrival in Troy is a necessary condition for the fall of the city, and he therefore must be persuaded, tricked, or forced into a reconciliation with the Greek army. In all three tragedies, Odysseus is the one tasked with finding a way to bring Philoctetes to Troy despite his enmity. The story of Philoctetes is therefore another example of a recruitment narrative in which Odysseus is involved.

Although the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides are lost, thanks to two discourses written by the first-/second-century AD philosopher Dio Chrysostom we have some vital details to help us analyse the different ways in which the story was staged. Dio's 52nd Oration is a comparison of the *Philoctetes* plays of the three major tragedians. Additionally, he wrote a prose summary of the prologue of Euripides' *Philoctetes* which forms his 59th Oration. These two texts are valuable evidence for the lost plays, especially Euripides'.[1]

The plays are extremely important to the argument of this thesis, because they span chronologically the whole 'golden age' period of the Athenian democracy and empire; from Aeschylus' version in the first half of the century, to Euripides' in 431, and finally Sophocles' in the last decade of the century. The different contexts for these plays in some ways affect the portrayal of Odysseus and, in particular, the manner in which he carries out his mission to retrieve Philoctetes. A constant feature in all three plays is Odysseus' exploitation of his own negative reputation to achieve his aim, and we will explore the different rhetorical methods he uses in each play. We will also see how Odysseus develops from the deceiver who needs no craft and scheming in Aeschylus, to the 'civic' and patriotic, yet less gentle, character in

[1] Dio's purpose in writing these two particular orations is not perfectly clear. Having himself been in exile, he may have felt some sympathy for the situation of Philoctetes. He also opens *Oration* 52 by describing his own ill health – another similarity to the hero of the plays in question. Lamar Crosby (1946) 336 notes that the Euripidean play 'clearly appealed to Dio's rhetorical instincts'.

Euripides, and finally the sophistic manipulator of the younger Neoptolemus in Sophocles.

5.1. Odysseus and Philoctetes in Homer and the Epic Cycle

Philoctetes is only mentioned briefly in Homer. In the catalogue of ships, Homer states that Philoctetes was left on the island of Lemnos by the Achaeans because of his anguish from a snake bite and alludes to his return (*Il*. 2.718–25). In the *Odyssey*, Nestor tells Telemachus about the returns of the Greek heroes from Troy and says that Philoctetes fared well in returning home safely (3.190). Odysseus himself tells the Phaeacians that Philoctetes was the only archer better than him (8.129). There is no mention in the *Odyssey* of how Philoctetes arrived at Troy.

Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* mentions the snake bite Philoctetes receives and his abandonment on Lemnos but does not name any particular heroes involved, whereas Apollodorus says that Odysseus leaves him on Lemnos on Agamemnon's orders (Arg. §9 West). In the *Little Iliad*, again according to Proclus, Diomedes is responsible for bringing Philoctetes from Lemnos to Troy, while in Apollodorus, Odysseus is also included (Arg. §2 West). There is no evidence that in the *Little Iliad* the task of bringing Philoctetes to Troy is a difficult one requiring persuasion, trickery, or force. However, we only have the brief mention in Proclus and Apollodorus and no further references to how this episode was treated in the Epic Cycle.

5.2. Odysseus and Philoctetes in the Fifth Century

Philoctetes' story was popular with fifth-century playwrights. In addition to the plays of Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, the tragedians Philocles and Achaeus also produced Philoctetes plays. Sophocles' *Philoctetes at Troy* depicts his arrival at Troy, where he is healed and then goes on to kill Paris.[2] There is no evidence as to whether or not Odysseus appears in this play. The story also featured in comedy; the Sicilian comic poet Epicharmus had a *Philoctetes* play, as did the Athenian comic poet Strattis. These were possibly parodies of tragic depictions of the story. Despite the popularity of the story in tragedy, and to some extent comedy, Philoctetes does not seem to have featured much in Greek visual art; the Beazley Archive Pottery

[2] Frr. 697–703. On this play, see Wright (2018) 103–1.

Database contains only four vase-paintings that may portray scenes dramatised in one of the *Philoctetes* tragedies, and only two which certainly do, including the famous squat lekythos portraying the lame Philoctetes alone, dated to the second half of the fifth century and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[3] Sadly, the only vase portraying Odysseus with Philoctetes and the cave, almost certainly related to Euripides' play, is too fragmentary to be instructive for our purposes.[4]

Pindar briefly discusses Philoctetes' return to Troy in his first *Pythian* ode (50–5). Philoctetes is introduced as a parallel for the ode's subject, Hieron, who was also called into battle despite illness. Pindar states that 'godlike heroes' came to fetch Philoctetes from Lemnos (52–3) but does not mention which. He also makes no mention of enmity between Philoctetes and the Greeks. Given Pindar's vehemence against Odysseus when mentioning Ajax, the lack of reference here to any conflict or any accusation against Odysseus for his role in abandoning Philoctetes may suggest that these elements were a later innovation. As already mentioned, there are no references in the Epic Cycle to any struggle when bringing Philoctetes to Troy. It is possible, therefore, that Aeschylus was the first to alter the Philoctetes story from a straightforward retrieval to a difficult undertaking requiring deception and persuasion.

5.2.1. Aeschylus' *Philoctetes*

Aeschylus' *Philoctetes* is the earliest of the three tragedies. The play is undated, but Aeschylus' death in 455 provides a *terminus ante quem*.[5] Few fragments survive, but we have some helpful clues from Dio's *Oration* 52 as to Aeschylus' version.[6] Dio tells us that Odysseus is not disguised in this play. Furthermore, given that Dio mentions him having companions in the other plays but not in Aeschylus', we may also presume that he comes to Lemnos alone. Diomedes, who is present in the epic version, seems to have been left out in favour of Odysseus.[7] This may have made the

[3] MMA 56.171.58
[4] H. Cahn Collection, Basel, HC1738.
[5] Raaflaub (2012) 485 suggests a date around 475 for Aeschylus' *Philoctetes* but gives no reasoning as to why. Calder (1970) 178–9 provides some justification for his suggestion of 484–473 (in a later article (1979) 53 n. 1 revised to 479–473), such as there possibly being only two actors and no prologue. However, given how little we know about the play this seems highly speculative.
[6] See Gianvittorio (2015) for the suggestion that frr. 301–2 also come from Aeschylus' play.
[7] Calder (1970) 177–8 calls this Aeschylus' great innovation, since substituting Odysseus for Diomedes creates a drama of intrigue. See also Hadjicosti (2007) 221.

face-to-face confrontation more intense than in the other two versions, in which Odysseus is accompanied by Diomedes (in Euripides) or Neoptolemus (in Sophocles).[8] We also know that the chorus of the play is composed of Lemnians unfamiliar with Philoctetes. This suggests that they have no loyalty to either side in the conflict but are somewhat neutral, although they presumably sympathise with the lonely and stricken Philoctetes.

Dio informs us that Odysseus deceives Philoctetes by telling him that the Greek expedition faces ruin (52.10). He tells Philoctetes that the Achaeans have met with disaster: Agamemnon is dead, Odysseus has been charged with a disgraceful act, and the whole expedition has gone to ruin. A similar method for winning over Philoctetes will be used in the two other *Philoctetes* plays as well. Odysseus concocts stories of Greek failures which will please the alienated Philoctetes. However, Dio describes this deception as lacking 'craft and scheming' (ποικίλης τέχνης καὶ ἐπιβουλῆς, 52.10), in contrast to the Odysseus of Euripides and Sophocles.

It is difficult to draw many firm conclusions about Aeschylus' *Philoctetes* based on the few fragments that survive and Dio's comments. However, we can see that Odysseus' prime method of deception – telling Philoctetes false stories of Greek hardships – is present in this early depiction of the story as well as in the later two. Dio comments on Odysseus' words winning over Philoctetes, implying that the conclusion of the play is at least in part effected by Odysseus' persuasion of Philoctetes, in contrast to Sophocles' version. Dio's account does suggest that Odysseus is not yet the wily, self-interested sophistic type that he will become in the subsequent versions. Aeschylus transforms the epic story into a more contemporary tale of clashing generals, one of whom was forced into political exile in a manner much like ostracism.[9]

5.2.2. Euripides' *Philoctetes*

Euripides' take on the Philoctetes story was first performed in 431 along with *Medea*, *Dictys*, and the satyr play *Theristae* in a tetralogy which came in third place behind Sophocles, and Aeschylus' son Euphorion. This was at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War but before the most concentrated critiques of demagogues and

[8] Wright (2018) 60.
[9] Hadjicosti (2007) 223–5.

rhetoricians which emerged in response to Cleon and other 'new politicians' of the 420s. This play also antedates Euripides' depictions of Odysseus in *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which came from the subsequent three decades spanning the Peloponnesian War.

Dio's account shows that Euripides' version differs considerably from Aeschylus'. He is said to have 'corrected' some of the elements in Aeschylus that were not logical or realistic, such as Philoctetes not recognising the undisguised Odysseus, or the chorus of Lemnians never having met Philoctetes before (*Or*. 52.5–7). In Euripides, the chorus are familiar with Philoctetes but apologise for neglecting to visit him (52.7). This suggests that the chorus in this version is slightly more sympathetic to Philoctetes than in Aeschylus.

Euripides also added innovative elements. The main difference is his inclusion of a Trojan embassy. The Trojans have also heard the prophecy stating that Philoctetes and Heracles' bow are necessary for Troy to fall and have decided to try to recruit him to their side, thus preventing a Greek victory. Euripides' inclusion of this embassy raises patriotism as an issue. It also means that the central part of the tragedy is the debate between Odysseus, still in disguise, and the Trojans, shifting the focus away from the personal conflict between Odysseus and Philoctetes, and widening the perspective to include a rhetorical examination of the whole Trojan War.[10]

Dio comments that Euripides' version had an amazing power of language with natural and urbane dialogue, along with lyrics that 'not only are delightful but also contain a strong incentive toward virtue' (52.14). Sophocles is also said not to have the shrewdness or acerbity (δριμύς) and political dimension (πολιτικόν) of Euripides (52.15). We can see from the fragments that Euripides' play contains more explicitly political issues, from Odysseus' soliloquy on political ambition in the prologue and Philoctetes' injury sustained when aiding the Greeks, to the Greek *versus* Trojan *agon* with its emphasis on patriotism.

When discussing Sophocles, Dio notes that his Odysseus is 'much more gentle (πρᾶος) and frank (ἁπλόος)' than in Euripides' depiction (52.16). Given what we

[10] Hadjicosti (2007) 236.

know of Odysseus' presentation in Sophocles this comparison is quite astounding.[11] Ἁπλόος especially is not a quality we would associate with Odysseus in Sophocles, given that it can be contrasted with deceit (e.g. Ar. *Plut*. 1158; Xen. *Mem*. 4.2.15–6). It is also the way Achilles describes himself in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, as having been taught by Chiron to be straightforward (ἁπλόος) in his ways (928). Πρᾶος and ἁπλόος are so unlike the ways we would describe the Odysseus of Sophocles that it is difficult to imagine him being even less like them in Euripides. Dio's comment is crucial to our understanding of the development of Odysseus over the three *Philoctetes* plays, and even across fifth-century tragedy as a whole, and it is frequently overlooked by those who wish to see a clear degradation of Odysseus as the fifth century progresses.[12] For instance Olson, who quotes so extensively from Dio, completely ignores this comment when he states that the Odysseus of Euripides' *Philoctetes* resembles that of *Ajax* and claims that it was Sophocles, not Euripides, who 'transformed the tale of Philoktetes into a story of Odysseus' complete moral debasement'.[13] It is hard to reconcile Olson's claims here with Dio's comparison of the Odysseus of Sophocles and Euripides.

With just a few fragments from the play and the paraphrase of the prologue it is difficult to say in what ways Odysseus is less πρᾶος and ἁπλόος than in Sophocles. Given that in Euripides Odysseus deceives Philoctetes directly by being the one in disguise telling him false stories and feigning friendship, there are perhaps more occasions for his callousness to be displayed.[14] However, it is still difficult to see a level of callousness surpassing that of Sophocles' Odysseus, who shows no pity whatsoever for Philoctetes and his plight, even mocking him when threatening to abandon him, by suggesting he take a stroll around Lemnos (1060).[15]

We learn from Dio that the prologue of the play is spoken by Odysseus, who inwardly debates questions of a civic, or political, nature (ἐνθυμήματα πολιτικά, 52.11). Dio also preserves for us a prose version of the prologue and part of the first

[11] Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 10.
[12] Among those who do discuss it are Kieffer (1942) 43; Beye (1970) 68; Stephens (1995) 160–1 n. 15; Roisman (2005b) 33.
[13] Olson (1991) 283.
[14] Christ (2004) 49 suggests that Dio's comment may stem from Euripides' presentation of the recruitment in such a bleak way, and because Odysseus forces Philoctetes to comply and go to Troy.
[15] Schein (2013) *ad loc*.

episode of Euripides' play in a separate Oration. This gives us a lot more material to analyse when considering the presentation of Odysseus in this play. Odysseus' prologue soliloquy offers a rare glimpse into the imagined intimate workings of his mind as he ponders his decision to undertake the task to retrieve Philoctetes.[16] It is a different exploration of his character than in Sophocles' prologue, as the latter is heavily focused on the interaction of Odysseus with Neoptolemus while Odysseus tries to persuade the young man to carry out his orders. A scholiast on the first line of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* notes that Odysseus speaks the prologue in both plays, but with the difference that in Euripides everything rests upon him.[17] Being given the prologue was thought to enhance sympathy for a character.[18]

In Euripides' psychologically 'interior' prologue, Odysseus talks about his need to keep undergoing dangerous and difficult tasks in order to maintain his reputation among the Greeks. As well as Dio's paraphrase of the prologue, we also have some fragments of the speech that show some of the political discussion to which Dio refers (52.11):

> πῶς δ᾽ ἂν φρονοίην, ᾧ παρῆν ἀπραγμόνως
> ἐν τοῖσι πολλοῖς ἠριθμημένῳ στρατοῦ
> ἴσον μετασχεῖν τῷ σοφωτάτῳ τύχης;
>
> Fr. 787
>
> How would I be in my right mind, when I could be counted
> among the army's masses and without exertion share equally
> in fortune with the cleverest man?
>
> οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτω γαῦρον ὡς ἀνὴρ ἔφυ·
> τοὺς γὰρ περισσοὺς καί τι πράσσοντας πλέον
> τιμῶμεν ἄνδρας τ᾽ ἐν πόλει νομίζομεν.
>
> Fr. 788

[16] Odysseus may speak in the prologues of Sophocles' and Euripides' *Palamedes* plays; see Sommerstein and Talboy (2012) 124 on Sophocles; Scodel (1980) 55 and Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 95 on Euripides. These suggestions are only speculative, as nothing survives of either prologue.

[17] Schol. Soph. *Phil.* 1. Translated in Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 17.

[18] Aristotle says that the famous actor Theodorus demanded that the character he was playing as protagonist be given the prologue, on the grounds that audiences always sympathise most with the first voice that they hear (*Pol*. 7.1336b27–31); see Hall (2006) 51.

> … for there's nothing so vain by nature as a man: we honour those who go beyond the ordinary and seek greater success, and count them real men in a city.
>
> ὀκνῶν δὲ μόχθων τῶν πρὶν ἐκχέαι χάριν
>
> καὶ τοὺς παρόντας οὐκ ἀπωθοῦμαι πόνους.
>
> Fr. 789
>
> In my reluctance to waste the credit for my former efforts, I don't refuse these present tasks either.

Odysseus considers the possibility of living a quiet and apolitical (ἀπραγμόνως) life but instead talks himself into going ahead and striving for more recognition.[19] Similar sentiments about refraining from political activity are expressed in other Euripidean plays, by Hippolytus and Ion, when they state that they would rather live quiet happy lives instead of seeking royal power (*Hipp*. 1016–20, *Ion* 621–32). An unknown speaker in Euripides' *Antiope* states that whoever is active when they could be inactive is a fool since one may live pleasurably without activity (ἀπράγμων, fr. 193). In *Philoctetes*, Odysseus is not seeking royal power but public renown. Carter discusses these fragments from *Philoctetes* in his exploration of the connection with the contemporary phenomenon of 'quietism'.[20] They are used as possible evidence of a view among upper-class Athenians that they were not well rewarded for their public services, potentially creating a disincentive for them to participate, unlike in Homer where heroes are always rewarded with material goods.[21] Pericles' funeral oration, delivered in the same year in which *Philoctetes* was first performed, chastises those who take no interest in public affairs, suggesting that they should not be called ἀπράγμων, but useless (ἀχρεῖος, Thuc. 2.40.2).

Odysseus later reveals that he originally declined the task of retrieving Philoctetes because he knew how implacable Philoctetes' hatred towards him would be (fr. 789b.3). This hesitancy is something we do not see often in portrayals of Odysseus. In *Ajax*, Odysseus is unwilling to confront the mad Ajax in the prologue (74–80).

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[19] Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 28 note the possible references in fr. 788 to *polypragmosyne*; cf. p. 71 above on a possible reference to *polypragmosyne* in *Those Who Dine Together*. In the fourth century, Plato has Odysseus willingly choose the quiet life in the *Republic* (X.620c); on this, see Montiglio (2011) 47–52.
[20] Carter (1986) 28–30.
[21] Carter (1986) 30.

Similarly, he turns away from Polyxena in *Hecuba* to prevent her supplication (342–4). However, here in *Philoctetes* the audience are given the full account of the interior decision-making process and the way in which Odysseus steels himself to action. Again, this is rare in fifth-century presentations of Odysseus. We may be reminded of the start of Book 20 of the *Odyssey*, when he overhears the suitors' mistresses and debates whether to put them to death or be patient in following through his plan (20.9–25). There, he addresses his own heart and steels himself to endure. In the fifth century, however, he is not alone on stage in any extant tragedies, nor is he shown to reveal his innermost thoughts, and so his true motives and subjectivity often remain a mystery.[22] There is a similar moment of hesitation in *Medea*, produced in the same tetralogy as *Philoctetes*, when Medea hesitates before killing her children (1021–80). There, we also have a window into her inner thoughts and decision making.

Euripides certainly differs from Sophocles, and possibly also from Aeschylus, in how he presents divine assistance for Odysseus' mission. In Aeschylus, Odysseus is not disguised, whereas in Euripides he is disguised by Athena, as he often is in Homer. Odysseus only decides to accept the mission to retrieve Philoctetes after Athena comes to him in a dream, in which she instructs him to go and offers protection by disguising him (fr. 789b.3). Athena's appearance as protectress of the Greek army would lead to the Athenians identifying this army with their Attic *polis*.[23]

At the end of his soliloquy, Odysseus sees Philoctetes approaching (fr. 789d.5). Here we see a glimpse of pity for Philoctetes' plight which will later be completely absent in Sophocles. Odysseus remarks on the grievous spectacle, calling Philoctetes' appearance frightful. After this expression of pity, however, he calls on Athena to aid him in his task, thus hardening himself for the deception he will be about to practise. Müller calls the Odysseus of this play 'the man without emotions', given that he puts his own behaviour to such rational scrutiny in the prologue.[24] For a brief moment, however, Odysseus drops his guard, as he does when he turns away from Polyxena's anticipated entreaties in *Hecuba*.

[22] It is possible that some lost plays featuring Penelope contained such an interiorised Odysseus.
[23] Müller (1993) 251.
[24] Müller (1993) 249–50.

In Euripides, as in Aeschylus, Odysseus both scripts and performs the false stories used to persuade Philoctetes. Later, in Sophocles, Odysseus will only script while Neoptolemus will perform. Especially in Euripides' and Sophocles' plays, Odysseus shows an awareness of his own unsavoury reputation and will use this to make his false stories both believable and more pleasing to Philoctetes. Euripides' Odysseus chooses the story of Palamedes' death as the basis for his false stories. The disguised Odysseus claims to be an ally of Palamedes, who after Palamedes' death has been driven from the army by Odysseus.[25]

Odysseus knows that Philoctetes hates him more than anyone else in the Greek army, and so his false story focuses on denigrating himself to Philoctetes to win his trust. He tells Philoctetes the story of Palamedes' demise, including an admission that Palamedes was falsely accused (fr. 789d.8):

ΟΔ.	τὸν δὴ τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα ὁ κοινὸς τῶν Ἑλλήνων λυμεὼν διέφθειρεν.
ΦΙ.	πότερον ἐκ τοῦ φανεροῦ μάχῃ κρατήσας ἢ μετὰ δόλου τινός;
ΟΔ.	προδοσίαν ἐπενεγκὼν τοῦ στρατοῦ τοῖς Πριαμίδαις.
ΦΙ.	ἦν δὲ κατ᾽ ἀλήθειαν οὕτως ἔχον ἢ πέπονθε κατεψευσμένος;
ΟΔ.	πῶς δ᾽ ἂν δικαίως γένοιτο τῶν ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνου γιγνομένων ὁτιοῦν;
Od:	Yes, it was just such a man [Palamedes] that that blight on all the Greeks [Odysseus] destroyed.
Ph:	Did he overcome him openly in a fight, or through some trick?
Od:	He charged him with betraying the army to the sons of Priam.
Ph:	Was there truth in that, or did he suffer from a false accusation?
Od:	How could anything whatever of that man's actions be just?

[25] See Scodel (2009) 53, who notes that Odysseus' false story implies that Palamedes was made to appear as the leader of a conspiracy of traitors. She adds: 'This lie, with its suggestion of political *stasis* in the Greek army and its (false) representation of the exiled member of the defeated faction, brings history and the contemporary *polis*, in which internal strife and external forces were regularly intertwined, powerfully into the play'.

The reference to bringing a charge of treason (προδοσίαν ἐπενεγκὼν) shows that this is the same version of the Palamedes story depicted in the Palamedes plays, involving a trial and conviction. Odysseus calls himself the 'corrupter' of the Greeks, something which Ajax also calls him in Sophocles' *Ajax* (λυμεών, 573). This acknowledges his role in misleading the Greeks to kill Palamedes, just as in Ajax's view he misleads the Greeks in the award of Achilles' arms. Notably, Philoctetes also asks whether Odysseus overcame Palamedes openly in combat or through a trick, which captures the essence of Odysseus' interactions with other heroes, particularly in tragedy. In Sophocles, Odysseus denigrates himself in the false stories he scripts for Neoptolemus and the False Merchant, but at no point does he openly admit a past wrongdoing as he does here. His commitment to the mission to retrieve Philoctetes is such that he is willing to admit his own unjust behaviour in contriving the murder of an ally. The introduction of the Palamedes myth into *Philoctetes* here serves to emphasise Odysseus' extraordinary moral cynicism, duplicity, and cruelty. It also allows Philoctetes to compare the fate of Palamedes to his own plight. This is a cold admission of guilt from Odysseus and a sophistic trick of arguing on the opposing side of an issue, this time in support of Palamedes. Another effect of using Palamedes to add credibility to his pretence is that it calls into question the point at which the fiction ends and the true story begins.[26]

Philoctetes responds by denouncing the real Odysseus, unaware that his own worst enemy is in reality in front of him in the guise of a man he now thinks of as a friend and fellow sufferer (fr. 789d.9):[27]

> ὦ μηδενὸς ἀποσχόμενος τῶν χαλεπωτάτων, λόγῳ τε καὶ ἔργῳ
> πανουργότατε ἀνθρώπων Ὀδυσσεῦ…
>
> You—you keep from none of the cruellest wrongs, Odysseus!
> You are the most villainous of men in word and deed!

This foreshadows the moment later in the play, unfortunately not preserved by Dio, in which Odysseus and Philoctetes come face-to-face after Odysseus' scheme is revealed. That Odysseus is called villainous in *both* word and deed is interesting,

[26] Worman (1999) 51.
[27] Müller (1993) 246.

given that in other texts the words of Odysseus are often unfavourably contrasted with the deeds of another, such as Achilles or Ajax.[28]

Philoctetes identifies envy as Odysseus' motive for his destruction of Palamedes and compares the latter's case to that of his own (fr. 789d.9). Both he and Palamedes have been of service to the Greek army. Philoctetes claims that he met with disaster when revealing Chryse's altar 'in the interest of common safety and victory' (fr. 789d.9). This version does not seem to exist outside Euripides.[29] The change to the standard story has great significance. It makes the abandonment of Philoctetes all the crueller, since he sustained his wound in the service of the army; he becomes a victim of his loyalty.[30] It also draws another parallel between Philoctetes and Palamedes, as both have done something of benefit to the Greeks. The phrasing echoes Odysseus' comment earlier in the prologue that he is working for the salvation and victory of the group (*Or*. 59.1). Both Odysseus and Philoctetes describe themselves as serving the common interest, and while the former has won himself renown, the latter has suffered for his efforts.

Euripides' *Philoctetes* may feature more than one debate scene. There is certainly one in which Odysseus patriotically confronts the Trojans and convinces Philoctetes not to help them, all while not revealing his true identity by being too sympathetic towards the Greeks – a typical demonstration of his rhetorical skill. As Odysseus' assumed character has claimed that his quarrel is with the expedition's leadership and Odysseus only, and not with the Greek army as a whole, he can argue the Greek cause without exposing his lie about being an exile.[31] As Scodel notes, there are similarities between Odysseus' situation in this part of the play and that of Telephus in Euripides' *Telephus*, produced seven years earlier.[32] The disguised Telephus must argue in favour of the Trojans without revealing his identity, whereas Odysseus must speak in defence of the Greeks even though he has pretended to have been exiled by their army. A second debate scene may take place between Odysseus and Philoctetes once the former's identity has been revealed.

[28] See pp. 54, 76, 97, and 130–1.
[29] Müller (1993) 246.
[30] Müller (1993) 246.
[31] Olson (1991) 275.
[32] Scodel (2009) 50. On the similarity of Telephus' opening soliloquy to that of Odysseus' in Euripides' *Philoctetes*, see Handley and Rea (1957) 28.

Evidence for the second half of the play is sparser. There are several fragments, but attributing them to a particular character is challenging, and so they cannot help us much with our analysis of Odysseus' presentation.[33] The central portion of the play is dominated by the patriotic debate, which was probably a consequence of the time when it was written, when a conflict affecting Greece was on the horizon and Athenian confidence was high. However, we do not know exactly how Odysseus acquires the bow, how his true identity is revealed to Philoctetes, nor how Philoctetes is eventually brought to Troy.

From the evidence for the first part of the play, we can see the political elements of the prologue, where Odysseus discusses his motivation for performing difficult tasks. We can also see how Odysseus succeeds in deceiving Philoctetes by presenting himself as an ally of Palamedes and by exposing his own guilt in admitting that Palamedes was unjustly killed. Based on the evidence we have, Odysseus' depiction seems a contradictory one. On the one hand, he expresses pity for Philoctetes in the prologue, his mission has clear support from Athena as she intervenes to disguise him, and he gives patriotic support for the Greeks in the central debate. It is easy to see why scholars may consider this one of Euripides' more positive presentations of Odysseus. And yet, we cannot ignore Dio's comment that Odysseus is *more* gentle and *more* straightforward in Sophocles – a play in which he seems anything but gentle and straightforward. Dio forces us to reassess what we think we know about Odysseus' presentation in Euripides and to question the thread we can trace between the three depictions of the Philoctetes story. This play is not part of a gradual decline of Odysseus' reputation throughout the fifth century, in a neat line from Aeschylus' play, in which Odysseus' deception is befitting a hero, to Sophocles' shabby manipulator. On the contrary, Dio actually describes Sophocles' version as midway between the two other depictions (52.15).

5.2.3. Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

Sophocles' *Philoctetes* was produced in 409, near the end of the playwright's life, and during the first Dionysia festival following the restoration of the democracy after the oligarchic coup of 411.[34] This was a tumultuous time in Athens, with the Sicilian

[33] See Müller (1993) and Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004) 1–35 for further discussion.
[34] Schein (2013) 10.

disaster also having occurred a few years earlier, when the Athenian people turned on those political leaders and public speakers they deemed responsible.[35] Significantly, Sophocles himself seems to have had a role in some of these events.[36] A comment in Aristotle suggests that Sophocles was one of a council of older men appointed following the defeat at Sicily, to give their advice on the situation.[37] In 411 this council was consulted on proposals to appoint a Council of Four Hundred. Aristotle reports that Sophocles was later asked if he had approved the setting up of the Four Hundred, and he admitted he had. He also admitted knowing that this was a wicked act. When asked if he did what was wicked, he responds, 'Yes, for there was nothing better to be done' (*Rhet*. 3.1419a30–1). Sophocles' popularity apparently did not suffer due to his involvement with the oligarchy in Athens; the group of plays to which *Philoctetes* belonged won first prize.[38] His experience may have informed the plot of *Philoctetes*, particularly the emphasis on deception and also, given the remark in Aristotle, the presentation of Odysseus' mission, which is a necessity but is enacted in shameless ways.[39]

The play is full of ambiguities, many of which have been hotly debated over the years.[40] As the play revolves around deception, the line between truth and fiction is often blurred. Scholarly responses to Odysseus in this play have varied enormously, from severely critical to apologetic and everything in between. Those on either end of the spectrum often do not sufficiently acknowledge the ambiguity of the play and instead come to an over-simplified conclusion, either that Odysseus is the outright villain of the play and is justly defeated, or that he should be seen as the hero, acting in such a way that would have been approved of by the audience.[41]

On the contrary, Odysseus' presentation in this play is his most ambiguous in extant fifth-century tragedy. Sophocles combines elements of Odysseus' earlier fifth-

[35] See Thuc. 8.1 for the Athenian reaction after the defeat in Sicily and 8.68.2 on the trial of Antiphon for his involvement in establishing the Four Hundred.
[36] See Jameson (1971) for further discussion of Sophocles' involvement in these events.
[37] Arist. *Rhet*. 3.1419a26–31 = Soph. T 27; on the establishment of the council see Thuc. 8.1.3.
[38] Sommerstein (2017) 274.
[39] Jameson (1956) 219; Biancalana (2005) 159.
[40] Woodruff (2012) 129–33 gives a summary of the plot and notes the many questions it raises, along with some scholarly responses.
[41] Stanford (1963) 108 and 110; Harsh (1960) 409–10; Knox (1964) 124; Craik (1980) 252; and Karakantza (2011) 43 are examples of the former, Daneš (2019) is the main example of the latter. See Kirkwood (1958) 149, who states that it is easy, but mistaken, to label Odysseus as the villain of the play.

century portrayals which often have not occurred together, such as the deception used in the Palamedes plays and the emphasis on expediency for the army in *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, as well as his off-stage manipulation in *Trojan Women*. In addition, the end which Odysseus tries to achieve is also the one that is best for the play's suffering protagonist, and which is divinely ordained.[42] This combination unleashes the full ambiguity of Odysseus' stereotypical characteristics and asks probing questions about potent political topics of the time, such as the appropriateness of deception in war, whether ends can justify means, and whether the happiness of the collective army is more important than an individual's wellbeing.

Many scholars have noted the sophistic overtones of Odysseus' presentation and have compared him to a type of late fifth-century politician.[43] Furthermore, the themes of persuasion and deception in the play have been frequently studied.[44] However, some facets of the play and Odysseus' presentation are less often discussed. The military context of both the story of the play and the time at which it was first performed is not frequently addressed. After nine years, the Greek alliance at Troy must call upon a reluctant former ally to help end the war. This play was first performed when Athens had spent two decades at war, during which time they faced dissent within their alliance. As Debnar rightly notes, these circumstances must have complicated the audience's responses to the characters' decisions, in particular Neoptolemus' disobedience and Philoctetes' stubborn refusal, both of which threaten the safety of the entire Greek army.[45] The Odysseus of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is arguably the most 'political' Odysseus in extant tragedy.[46] However, while most scholars focus on the references to sophistic teachings, the military context of the play must have seemed just as relevant to the Athenian audience.

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[42] See e.g. Hall (2010) 321: 'He [Odysseus] behaves appallingly in any human, moral sense, and yet there is a level on which he is right' and Hesk (2000) 194: 'I believe an audience could have entertained the argument that Odysseus had no choice but to use deceit'. Furthermore, Hesk argues that the audience's 'familiarity with a notion that good ends can sometimes only be achieved through lies would substantially affect their evaluation of Odysseus' behaviour'. See also Greengard (1987) 5.

[43] See e.g. Stanford (1949a) 42 and (1963) 111; Rose (1976); Craik (1980); Segal (1981) 333–5; Blundell (1987); Kittmer (1995); Falkner (1998) 40–1; Hawkins (1999) 344; Hesk (2000) 189; Koper (2002) 8–9; Biancalana (2005) 161–3; Schein (2006) 132.

[44] See e.g. Podlecki (1966); Garvie (1972); Buxton (1982) 118–31; Kirkwood (1994); Falkner (1998); Koper (2002); Hawthorne (2006); Taousiani (2011a) and (2011b).

[45] Debnar (2005) 19.

[46] See Scodel (2012) 4–5 for a concise summary of various political interpretations of *Philoctetes*.

Although some scholars have overreached in their attempts to see the return of Alcibiades to Athens as being explicitly referenced in the play, the controversial and unpredictable politician's schemes provide important general context.[47] Philoctetes is the character whose return from exile is needed, yet it is Odysseus who bears the strongest similarity to Alcibiades.[48] Between 411 and 409, Alcibiades was engaged in constant machinations and complex operations with the fleet around the eastern Aegean islands and at the Hellespont, narrated in Xenophon's *Hellenica* 1.1–5.[49] As discussed in the Introduction, references to specific historical figures are not typical of tragedy, and it is therefore unlikely that the audience was expected to see Alcibiades reflected in any of the characters. Nevertheless, the political strife both in Athens and among its military leaders was likely to influence the ambiguity of Sophocles' play.

The perennially successful Odysseus uncharacteristically fails to persuade Philoctetes, and towards the end he makes a series of ineffectual appearances on stage. One possible explanation for this that has not been mentioned is desperation. It is possible to see the Odysseus of this play as consumed by a desperation to bring about the end to the Trojan war, either for personal glory, the common good, or both. Because of this, he loses his characteristic temperance and forethought, instead making poor decisions. This desperation to end conflict may have been felt by many in the audience of the play's first performance, both Athenians and non-Athenians.

Scholars also often overlook the context of the two earlier depictions by Aeschylus and Euripides. Crucially, the implication that the 'villainous' Odysseus of this episode is an innovation of Sophocles or could only have come about at the end of the fifth century because of contemporary circumstances clearly ignores Dio's vital remark that Sophocles' Odysseus was gentler and franker than Euripides'. Furthermore, as scholars are often concentrating on an analysis solely of this play, they do not look deeply at the links between the Odysseus of this play and other tragedies – except sometimes the almost certainly earlier *Ajax*. However, when we look at Odysseus more widely in tragedy, as we have done in this thesis, we can see how the Odysseus of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, as in Euripides and to some extent

[47] See e.g. Vickers (1987) and Bowie (1997) 56–61. For opposition to this reading, see Jameson (1956) 219 and Calder (1971) 170.
[48] See also Tarnopolsky (2022) 476 on the similarity between Neoptolemus and Alcibiades.
[49] See e.g. Proietti (1987) 1–9.

Aeschylus, has an awareness of his own unsavoury reputation elsewhere in tragedy and makes use of this in his deceptions.[50] We can also see how Odysseus personifies more fully some attributes ascribed to him in the disparaging comments of earlier plays. Sophocles seems to toy with the stereotypical characteristics of Odysseus in the fiction created by Neoptolemus and the False Merchant but also has Odysseus admit to his vices openly – although he presents them as virtues.

For this analysis I have divided the play into sections that each revolve around interactions between the main characters.

Odysseus and Neoptolemus – the prologue (1–134)

The first words of the play are spoken by Odysseus, who sets the scene and recounts the abandoning of Philoctetes on Lemnos. This is not the interiorised soliloquy of Euripides, however, as Odysseus is this time joined by Neoptolemus. Sophocles differs from the previous depictions by introducing Neoptolemus as a character. This innovation creates a new line of conflict between Odysseus and Philoctetes, as they jostle to become the chief father figure for Achilles' son. It also feeds into the play's wider sophistic themes of education, and nature *versus* nurture. We can see from Euripides' *Orestes*, produced in the following year, that the political behaviour of young men was an important issue for Athenian playwrights at this time.[51] Neoptolemus is a young man who has lost his father in the ongoing war, a situation surely shared by many Athenian men at the time. The loss of Achilles leaves Neoptolemus vulnerable to manipulation by Odysseus who, as we shall see, argues that Neoptolemus should honour his father by acting in a way that was alien to Achilles.

On several occasions early in the prologue, Odysseus makes clear that he plans to stay as far away from Philoctetes as possible and has no intention of confronting him. Right at the start, Sophocles signals another departure from the two previous versions of Aeschylus and Euripides, both of which showed Odysseus himself playing the role which in Sophocles he will assign to Neoptolemus. Sophocles instead has Odysseus pulling the strings of the action from off stage, in a similar way

[50] In this, there is some similarity to the metatheatrical knowledge of the satyric characters of *Cyclops*, discussed in the next chapter.
[51] See e.g. Hall (1993) 265–70.

to other late fifth-century plays, such as Euripides' *Trojan Women*, first performed six years earlier, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, first performed four years later. It is also similar to his approach at the beginning of *Ajax* when he does not wish to come face to face with the hero. Paillard calls both cases cowardice, but given that both heroes wish Odysseus dead – Philoctetes even has to be forcibly restrained from killing him at 1250–1305 – it might instead be mere prudence.[52]

The prologue establishes Odysseus as a late fifth-century politician. Throughout the prologue he uses sophistic language, champions lying and deceptive speech, cares for victory and profit above being just, and uses impersonal expressions of necessity to justify his actions. In addition, he also uses language familiar to an Athenian audience. By the end of the prologue, he cynically corrupts Neoptolemus and persuades him to act against his nature by manipulating the language of honour.

Many of these features of Odysseus' characterisation are present in his first speech. His justification for the abandonment of Philoctetes, that he was following the orders of those in command (ταχθεὶς τόδ' ἔρδειν, 5–6), while not impersonal, is the first instance of his denial of responsibility for the harm he has previously caused. This contrasts with the Odysseus of Euripides' prologue who openly admits his responsibility for the abandonment (fr. 789b.3). As we will see, Odysseus also renounces responsibility for the harm he will go on to cause Philoctetes in the play. A similar phrase is used by Creon in *Oedipus at Colonus* (851) when attempting to seize Oedipus and Antigone. Creon in that play is an opportunistic politician of the same kind as Odysseus.[53]

After establishing that they are near Philoctetes' dwelling, Odysseus begins by telling Neoptolemus that he must show his nobility (δεῖ σ'… / γενναῖον εἶναι, 50–1), before a few lines later spelling out the chief task: 'You must (δεῖ) beguile the mind of Philoctetes by your words' (54–5). Here, and elsewhere, Odysseus uses δεῖ and other impersonal expressions of necessity, both to persuade an addressee to do as he says, and to justify his own words and actions.[54] At no point in the prologue does Odysseus explicitly state what compels them to act in the way he insists, although

[52] Paillard (2020) 74–5.
[53] Schein (2013) on 6.
[54] 77, 982–3, 993, 994; see Schein (2011) 87. See also Benardete (1965) 297 and Nussbaum (1976) 30.

we may infer that the necessity referred to is the fulfilling of the prophecy to bring about the end of the Trojan War.[55] He does not take personal responsibility for his behaviour throughout the play but instead evades accountability by citing obligation, orders from commanders, or the common good to justify his behaviour.[56] This raises the question for the audience of whether his end – winning the Trojan War for the Greeks – can justify the means he uses in deceiving Philoctetes and persuading Neoptolemus to act contrary to his nature. This question would have been resonant to its war-weary original audience.

Scholars have noted the contradiction in Odysseus' appeal to Neoptolemus to be noble (γενναῖος) or true to his birth.[57] Neoptolemus' nobility and descent from Achilles will assist him in creating a bond with Philoctetes, yet the task Odysseus wants him to perform is alien to this nobility. Thus, to live up to his father's standard he must execute a task to which his father would have never agreed. Odysseus rhetorically attempts to appropriate the concept of nobility and to change the meaning of γενναῖος to suit the current circumstances.[58] He says that Neoptolemus must be noble not just with his body but must give his help if he is told something new (51–3). Here it is implied that physical strength alone is not enough but that some new conduct is required. Thus, the Achillean heritage which Odysseus has praised is shown to be useless in the current situation.[59]

Neoptolemus is told 'you must give your help, since you are here to help me' (ὑπουργεῖν, ὡς ὑπηρέτης πάρει, 53). ὑπουργεῖν and ὑπηρέτης, along with ὑπηρετεῖν used earlier in line 15, create a sense of Odysseus' superiority over Neoptolemus. ὑπουργεῖν means 'to render service', while ὑπηρετεῖν literally means 'to serve as a rower' but can mean more generally 'to serve' or 'be subordinate'; hence the related noun ὑπηρέτης means both 'rower' and 'attendant'.[60] ὑπηρεσία was an Athenian term for rowing crews.[61] This is an example of Odysseus using language which for an Athenian audience would associate him with Athens or Athenian institutions.[62] As

[55] Schein (1998) 301.
[56] Blundell (1987) 317.
[57] Lada-Richards (1998) 15; Austin (2011) 54–5; Schein (2011) 88 and (2013) on 50–1. For a fuller discussion of the concept of nobility in this play, see Mills (2012) and Paillard (2020).
[58] Roisman (1997) 140; Tessitore (2003) 66; Mills (2012) 33–4; Paillard (2020) 75–6.
[59] Roisman (1997) 140–1.
[60] LSJ s.v. ὑπουργέω, ὑπηρετέω, and ὑπηρέτης.
[61] See e.g. Thuc. 1.143.1, 6.31.3, 8.1.2.
[62] Schein (2011) 93–4; see also Schein (2013) on 15.

we will see, with the introduction of a sailor chorus Sophocles will further this engagement with Athenian institutions.

Odysseus scripts what Neoptolemus should say to Philoctetes, telling the young man to cast himself as a victim of Odysseus' machinations. This echoes the earlier Aeschylean and Euripidean versions in which it is Odysseus himself who plays this role and while in disguise slanders 'Odysseus' to Philoctetes. All the versions are founded on the same principle of Odyssean deception from the *Odyssey*. In his false stories in Homer, Odysseus presents a persona whose story reflects the outlook of his audience, using a technique that Worman calls 'mirroring'.[63] He understands that Philoctetes will be more likely to form a bond with someone who has a similar hatred for the Greek leaders. To help create a fictitious story which will be most appealing to Philoctetes, Odysseus tells Neoptolemus to direct any insults he likes at him. This, he says, will cause him no harm, but he warns Neoptolemus that he will bring grief to the whole Argive army if he fails (67).[64] The proximity of these two statements suggests that Odysseus is more concerned with the good of the army than his own personal reputation, but his reputation will obviously benefit if the plan is successful.[65]

Whereas in Euripides Odysseus selected the death of Palamedes as the basis of his false story, here he selects the story of the judgement of arms to create the false narrative that Neoptolemus must deliver. He assigns to Neoptolemus the role of Ajax as the wronged party who is refused the arms of Achilles in favour of Odysseus. In both cases, Odysseus shows a cold awareness of his enmities within the Greek army and his actions that led to the deaths of two comrades, and he exploits the stories of their suffering to achieve his own ends. Unlike the Palamedes story in Euripides, however, Odysseus does not include in his script for Neoptolemus an admission of actual wrongdoing. Moreover, the story is more of a falsehood than the Euripidean story, since in the Epic Cycle, Odysseus gives Neoptolemus his father's arms.[66]

At the end of his instructions, Odysseus anticipates reservations that Neoptolemus might have about the scheme (77–80):

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[63] Worman (1999) 39–42; see also Emlyn-Jones (1986) 3.
[64] See Alwine (2015) 55, who notes that in law court speeches some speakers were willing to cast themselves in a negative light if they thought that would predispose the jury to accept their claims.
[65] Blundell (1987) 310.
[66] *Little Iliad* Arg. §3 West.

ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δεῖ σοφισθῆναι, κλοπεὺς

ὅπως γενήσῃ τῶν ἀνικήτων ὅπλων.

ἔξοιδα, παῖ, φύσει σε μὴ πεφυκότα

τοιαῦτα φωνεῖν μηδὲ τεχνᾶσθαι κακά·

This is the thing that we must scheme for, for you to steal the invincible weapon! I know, my son, that by nature you are not the sort of man to speak such words or to plot to harm others.

The impersonal δεῖ is repeated again in an attempt to persuade Neoptolemus to follow the orders he is given. Both σοφίζομαι and τεχνάομαι have sophistic overtones. Σοφίζομαι can mean 'to practice an art' but can also mean to 'deal subtly' or 'devise craftily'. Τεχνάομαι can mean 'to execute' either skilfully or cunningly. Odysseus' admission that it is not in Neoptolemus' nature to plot against people or lie shows an awareness of the dichotomy between the two types of heroism, Odyssean and Achillean, which is present throughout this play as well as Sophocles' earlier *Ajax*.

Having acknowledged Neoptolemus' potential doubts, Odysseus tries to persuade him to undertake the task by stressing the pleasure of acquiring victory (81). To this he adds that in the future they both will appear to be just (82). 'Give yourself to me for a few hours of shamelessness', Odysseus tells Neoptolemus, 'and later for the rest of time be called the most dutiful of mortals' (83–5). Here, Odysseus shows no awareness that acting shamelessly could leave a stain on one's character.[67] Nor does he have any fear of a providential divine justice; to him justice is not an absolute but is relative. His references to victory, to being thought just in the future, and to having a lasting reputation, show that he is focused only on the end which justifies the 'shameless' means.

In the face of Neoptolemus' reluctance, Odysseus offers some advice based on his own experiences as a youth (96–9):

ἐσθλοῦ πατρὸς παῖ, καὐτὸς ὢν νέος ποτὲ

γλῶσσαν μὲν ἀργόν, χεῖρα δ᾽ εἶχον ἐργάτιν·

[67] Reinhardt (1979) 164.

> νῦν δ᾽ εἰς ἔλεγχον ἐξιὼν ὁρῶ βροτοῖς
>
> τὴν γλῶσσαν, οὐχὶ τἄργα, πάνθ᾽ ἡγουμένην.
>
> Son of a noble father, I too when I was young had a tongue
> that was inactive but an arm that was active; but when I come
> to put it to the proof I see that it is the tongue, not actions,
> that rules in all things for mortals.

Schein is certainly correct to say that the language here 'calls to mind the power of speech in late fifth-century Athenian assemblies and jury-trials'.[68] The scholiast on these lines claims that Sophocles slanders contemporary Athenian political leaders as succeeding in all things through speech.[69] Hecuba in *Trojan Women* says that Odysseus has a deceitful tongue which twists things here and there (284–5).[70] In Euripides' *Cyclops*, Silenus advises Polyphemus to eat Odysseus' tongue in order to become 'clever and glib' (313–5).[71] In these lines, Odysseus openly endorses the behaviour with which he is elsewhere associated in tragedy and satyr drama.

Odysseus' frankness about the power of speech, along with his emphasis in the subsequent stichomythia of the necessity of δόλος and ψεῦδος to capture Philoctetes (101, 107, 109), evoke the words of Diodotus in the Mytilenean debate (Thuc. 3.43.2).[72] Diodotus presents a paradox wherein the Athenian assembly is so ready to suspect any speaker of corrupt motives that the honest speaker, just as much as an advocate of monstrous measures, must use deceit.[73] Athens, he states, is the only city that can never be served openly and without deception (3.43.3). Odysseus' emphasis on expedience throughout the prologue is reminiscent of the Mytilenean debate generally as both Diodotus and Cleon argue their case based on expedience.[74] His use of δόλος for public expediency is also reminiscent of the deceits of Themistocles, later condemned by Demosthenes who preferred the honest victory of Conon (20.73–4).[75]

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[68] Schein (2011) 92. See also Rosenbloom (2009) 200–7 on the fifth-century trope of rhetoric as 'tongue', and 203–7 particularly on Odysseus.
[69] Schol. Soph. *Phil*. 99; see Schein (2011) 92.
[70] See p. 154.
[71] See p. 239 below.
[72] Schein (2013) 20.
[73] Andrewes (1962) 74; Hesk (2000) 249–55; see also Debnar (2000) for a thorough discussion of this paradox and Thucydides' potential motives for including it in the speech.
[74] Ackerson (2015) 39.
[75] Taousiani (2011b) 20.

While Neoptolemus remains opposed to the plan, Odysseus gives justifications which continue to show that he considers the ends to justify the means. He claims that it is not disgraceful to tell a lie if it brings salvation (σωθῆναι, 109), referring to the fall of Troy and victory for the Greeks. This line encapsulates Odysseus' attitude, that the goal of bringing an end to the Trojan War justifies any means, no matter how shameful.[76] Σωθῆναι also recalls the use of σωτηρία as a political slogan in the years preceding the performance of *Philoctetes*.[77] It was particularly used by oligarchs, such as Pisander, who appealed to σωτηρία when attempting to persuade the Athenians to change the democratic constitution to gain the Persian king's support (Thuc. 8.53.3).[78] In Dio's summary of the prologue of Euripides' *Philoctetes*, Odysseus also discusses toiling for the salvation (σωτηρία) and victory of the group (*Or*. 59.1).[79] The term is also used several times in Euripides' *Orestes* by the title character, who shares other characteristics with the oligarch Antiphon.[80]

Two lines later, Odysseus claims 'when you are doing something to gain advantage (κέρδος) it is wrong to hesitate' (111). Having appealed to the motive of salvation which affects the whole army, Odysseus now turns to a more personal motivation in the form of advantage or profit. Odysseus is associated with κέρδος as early as Homer where it is used to describe Odysseus' cunning.[81] In Sophocles, Creon states that 'hope has often caused the love of gain to ruin men' (*Ant*. 222). Oedipus accuses Tiresias of only having sight when it comes to profit (*OT* 388–9). In an unassigned fragment, a speaker claims it is 'better to be punished than to make a dishonest profit' (fr. 807). In Sophocles' *Electra*, Orestes states that no word that brings gain (κέρδος) is bad (61). As Segal notes, Orestes' argument is similar to that of Odysseus here in *Philoctetes*.[82] Elsewhere, we see Thucydides criticising those who followed Pericles for allowing private ambitions and private interests (ἴδια κέρδη) to lead them into unjust projects (2.65.7). In Euripides' *Philoctetes*, a fragment assigned to

[76] Cf. Antisthenes, where Odysseus voices a similar statement (*Od*. 9.1–2).
[77] Schein (2013) 12.
[78] Bieler (1951) discusses further examples.
[79] Philoctetes in Euripides also claims that he was working for the salvation and victory of the group when he revealed Chryse's altar (fr. 789d.9).
[80] *Or*. 678, 724, 1173, 1188. On Orestes and Antiphon, see Hall (1993) 267–8.
[81] *Il*. 4.339, 23.709; *Od*. 13.297, 299, 19.285–6; see Schein (2013) on 578–9.
[82] Segal (1966) 511. See also Reinhardt (1979) 167, who comments that the prologue of *Philoctetes*, like that of *Electra*, ends with the triumph of 'cleverness' over 'justice'. Davidson (1999) 120 calls the Orestes of *Electra* an 'Odysseus figure'.

the Trojan envoy and directed at Philoctetes discusses the merits of seeking profit (fr. 794), suggesting that the disguised Odysseus argues against this point.[83]

Odysseus finally achieves his goal when he appeals to Neoptolemus' desire for victory and renown, enticing him by speaking of the two prizes he will win if he succeeds in capturing the bow: 'you would be called clever (σοφός) and at the same time valiant (κἀγαθός) (119). It is without question for Odysseus that to be called *sophos* is desirable. We have seen elsewhere, however, that he is often called *sophos* as a reproach, as he will be later by Philoctetes.[84] This line is also a play on a typical phrase, καλός τε κἀγαθός, which is used to denote excellence, especially aristocratic excellence.[85] As with γενναῖος, Odysseus manipulates the standard measures of honour, here substituting καλός for σοφός in order to suit the situation and his own personal code.[86]

After Neoptolemus has assented to take part in the deception, Odysseus leaves him with some final instructions, which prepare the audience for the later False Merchant scene. Odysseus tells Neoptolemus that he will send someone in disguise who will speak craftily (ποικίλως, 130). We have already seen Odysseus be described as ποικίλος in other texts.[87] Odysseus' comment makes the audience aware that the False Merchant will tell additional lies to Philoctetes to assist Neoptolemus' deception.

Odysseus instructs the young man to take whatever advantage (συμφέροντα, 131) he can from what is said. συμφέροντα comes from the verb συμφέρω, which means 'to bring together' but can be used impersonally to mean 'it is expedient'; when used in the participle form as it is here it means 'useful' or 'profitable'.[88] This can be a sophistic term, as in Plato's *Republic* where Thrasymachus claims that justice is the advantage of the stronger (τὸ τοῦ κρείττονος… συμφέρον, *Resp*. I.338c–e). Similarly, Antiphon suggests that self-interest is important for living well, referring

[83] Schein (2013) on 111.
[84] See pp. 57, 73–4, 157, 206–7, and 219. Cf. its positive use of Odysseus in *Ajax* and *Rhesus*, pp. 119–20 and 172.
[85] E.g. Hdt. 1.34.4; Thuc. 4.40.2, 8.48.6; Ar. *Eq*. 185, 227, 735, 738; Isoc. 9.51, 15.138; Xen. *Hell*. 2.3.12, 2.3.53, 5.3.9. LSJ s.v. καλός A.III.3; κἀγαθός A.I.1; see also καλοκἀγαθός. See Austin (2011) 70 and Schein (2016) 262.
[86] The substitution also serves to make the reputation offered to Neoptolemus a combination of Odyssean cleverness and Achillean valour; see Winnington-Ingram (1980) 283.
[87] See pp. 82–3 and 144–5.
[88] LSJ s.v. συμφέρω II.

to advantageous things (ξυμφέρ[οντ]α).[89] Elsewhere, Antiphon suggests that a man makes use of justice in a way which is most advantageous to himself, contrasting man-made laws with those of nature.[90]

Before his exit at the end of the prologue, Odysseus prays to the gods to aid him. He appeals first to Hermes and then Athena, addressing her as Νίκη τ᾽ Ἀθάνα Πολιάς (134), adding that she is always his protector. This way of referring to Athena is noteworthy as there were cults to both Athena Nike and Athena Polias in Athens.[91] A temple to Athena Nike stood on the Acropolis and a statue to Athena Polias was to be housed in the Erechtheion, which was still under construction at the time when *Philoctetes* premiered. These two cult titles would have resonated with the Athenian audience when the play was first performed. Odysseus' prayer solidifies his association with contemporary Athens, present throughout the prologue, as he appeals not just to Athena but to her roles as goddess of Athenian civic identity and imperial power.[92] This is the only mention of Athena in Sophocles' play; unlike in Euripides, Athena does not intervene at any point to provide aid to Odysseus.

Odysseus is presented throughout the prologue like a contemporary politician familiar from Thucydides.[93] In this way, he is similar to the Odysseus created by Euripides who in the earlier play dominates the prologue and inwardly debates matters of a 'political nature', as Dio puts it. Similar issues arise in the prologues of both plays, such as salvation and victory, but the emphasis varies. Odysseus in Euripides speaks of the salvation and victory of the group, whereas in Sophocles, he seems more driven by personal motives, particularly when discussing victory.

However, Sophocles makes several significant changes. First, by introducing Neoptolemus as a character, Sophocles has created more opportunities for Odysseus to defend his scheme. Unlike the monologue at the beginning of Euripides' play, Odysseus must explain the benefits of his scheme and persuade a reluctant party to participate. This gives Sophocles a chance to show Odysseus' persuasive skills as well as reveal his 'ends justifies the means' logic more explicitly, but, unlike in Euripides, without any moment of true insight into his innermost thoughts. Second,

[89] 87B44, fr. B, 3. 25–4. 18 DK.; see Bonazzi (2020) 162.
[90] 87B44A col. 1 DK.; see Blundell (1987) 328.
[91] Schein (2011) 93.
[92] Schein (2011) 93 and (2012) 433.
[93] Schein (2013) 20.

the Odysseus of Sophocles shows no hesitation about his task. He does not question why he should exert himself as Euripides' Odysseus does. In fact, the Odysseus of Sophocles shows no moments of hesitation throughout the play, whereas Neoptolemus, Philoctetes and even the chorus ask themselves several times 'what shall I do?'.[94] Finally, by giving Neoptolemus the task of approaching Philoctetes, Odysseus is able to manipulate the action from off stage in a similar manner to other late fifth-century plays in which he appears.

Neoptolemus and Philoctetes (135–541)

After Odysseus' departure the chorus of Neoptolemus' sailors enter, and it is clear from their language that they are involved in the intrigue.[95] The chorus look to Neoptolemus for instructions on what to do, just as Neoptolemus took instructions from Odysseus in the prologue.[96] They also speak of their concern for what is in Neoptolemus' best interests (151). Sophocles departs from the previous two versions by making the chorus subordinates of Neoptolemus rather than native Lemnians. This important alteration means the chorus have more loyalty to one side than in the earlier plays. It is also significant that the chorus are oarsman, since many Athenians in the audience would also have been rowers on Athenian ships. Naval skill was crucial to Athens' imperial success in the fifth century, and we have already seen Odysseus using language which refers to rowers. In the latter part of the Peloponnesian War, sometimes referred to as the Decelean War (413–404), maritime operations were especially important as the Hellespont was the main theatre of war and naval battles were frequent.[97]

From Philoctetes' first long speech we can see some similarities between him and the Ajax of Sophocles' *Ajax*. First, Philoctetes' anger is directed specifically at the Atridae and Odysseus, and second, he is frequently concerned with being mocked or laughed at by his enemies. He is concerned that nobody in Greece has heard of his plight, adding that those who expelled him quietly mock him (258). The main difference between the two heroes is that in *Ajax*, Ajax's accusations are contradicted

[94] Neoptolemus: 757, 895, 908, 969, 974; Philoctetes: 949, 1063, 1350; chorus: 963, 1191. See Roisman (2005b) 61.
[95] Schein (2013) on 135–218.
[96] Odysseus instructs Neoptolemus to render service at 53, and the chorus offer to render service to Neoptolemus at 143.
[97] Nash (2018) 120. See above, p. 192, on Alcibiades' involvement in this phase of the war.

by Odysseus' appearance in the prologue, whereas in *Philoctetes*' prologue Odysseus shows no concern or pity for Philoctetes' suffering. Philoctetes goes on to identify the culprits in his abandonment: the two generals (οἱ δισσοὶ στρατηγοί, 263–4) and the lord of the Cephallenians (ὁ Κεφαλλήνων ἄναξ, 264). Στρατηγός could be used to mean general or leader, but it was also the title of the ten annually elected generals at Athens, and this language of Athenian politics surely did not go unnoticed by its audience. Neither the Atridae nor Odysseus are introduced by name. The reference to Odysseus as lord of the Cephallenians recalls his introduction in the catalogue of ships in Homer (*Il*. 2.631).[98]

Philoctetes then describes his unwillingly adopted island home of Lemnos. Lemnos became an Athenian imperial possession in either the late sixth or early fifth century. Herodotus tells us that Miltiades gained possession of Lemnos while he was in the Chersonese (6.139–40), and so it must have happened before his death in 489.[99] Philoctetes later appeals to the island itself (986–8) and has clearly become attached to it. Although he is not originally an islander – his home was on the Greek mainland in Thessaly – after being abandoned and alone on Lemnos for ten years he has become one, cut off from the rest of the world. In the description here he stresses his isolation and the primitive nature of his existence.

Philoctetes now returns to the Atridae and Odysseus, wishing the same suffering on them. Here he calls Odysseus 'the mighty Odysseus', or more literally he refers to the violence of Odysseus (ἥ τ' Ὀδυσσέως βία, 314). This formulation is used of Odysseus three times in the play, once each by Philoctetes (314), Neoptolemus (321), and the False Merchant (592). This naming periphrasis is used in Homer but never of Odysseus.[100] The association of Odysseus with violence is striking because in the prologue he explicitly dismisses violence as a method for capturing Philoctetes' bow (103). It is also reminiscent of Thucydides' introduction of Cleon as the 'most violent' man in Athens at the time (βιαιότατος, 3.36.6), despite him being primarily a demagogue known for his speaking.

[98] It is also the way he introduces himself to Silenus in Euripides' *Cyclops* (103); see p. 235 below.
[99] Evans (1963) discusses possible dates for the capture.
[100] Schein (2013) 21. In Homer it is used of Aeneas: *Il*. 20.307; the Cyclops: *Od*. 10.200; Diomedes: *Il*. 5.781; Eteocles: *Il*. 4.386; Helenus: *Il*. 13.758, 770, 781; Heracles: *Il*. 2.658, 666, 5.638, 11.690, 15.640, 18.117, 19.98, *Od*. 11.601; Hyperenor: *Il*. 17.24; Iphiclus: *Od*. 11.290, 296; Patroclus: *Il*. 17.187, 22.323; Priam: *Il*. 3.105; and Teucer: *Il*. 22.859.

Neoptolemus states that he wishes he could satisfy his rage 'by violence so that Mycenae and Sparta may know that Scyros also is a mother of valiant men' (324–6). These lines draw attention, as in other plays, to the Peloponnesian leadership of the Greek army.[101] This comes after Philoctetes has already spoken of Odysseus by referring to the location of his dominion. Scyros was an Athenian imperial possession, as mentioned above (pp. 66–7). In Euripides' *Andromache*, of unknown date, we see Neoptolemus on the receiving end of contempt for his islander status. Andromache contrasts her former status in Troy with her current predicament of having been awarded to the islander Neoptolemus (12–5).[102] Within the space of less than one hundred lines, the audience has heard mentions of the island homes of all three main characters, Cephallenia, Lemnos, and Scyros, all of which were Athenian possessions.

Philoctetes invites Neoptolemus to tell his story about the insult he received from the Greek leaders. Neoptolemus begins by stating that Odysseus and Phoenix came to bring him to Troy.[103] Proclus records that in the *Little Iliad*, Odysseus alone brings Neoptolemus from Scyros (Arg. §3 West), whereas Apollodorus also includes Phoenix (*Epit*. 5.11). We also learn from the *Odyssey* that Odysseus brought Neoptolemus from Scyros to Troy (11.508–9). The beginning of Neoptolemus' story is therefore grounded in reality, and the shift to falsehood is hard to detect.

Neoptolemus ends his story by saying that he sailed away having been cheated by the 'most evil Odysseus, sprung from evil ancestors' (382–4). This is a reference to Odysseus' alternative Sisyphean lineage, mentioned at other points in the play (417, 1311); Neoptolemus follows the instructions to insult Odysseus, doing so in a way that many other tragic characters do.[104]

After Neoptolemus has finished his story, Philoctetes comments on the similarity of his own situation. He says that this endears Neoptolemus to him (403–4), which shows that the deception plan is working. Philoctetes recognises what Neoptolemus

[101] See p. 138, 152, and 158.
[102] Constantakopoulou (2007) 107.
[103] This episode is likely to have been the subject of another play by Sophocles entitled *Scyrians* (frr. 554–7). On this play, see Wright (2018) 116–7.
[104] Soph. fr. 567, see p. 70; Eur. *IA* 524, 1362, see p. 87; Aesch. fr. 175, see p. 102; Soph. *Aj*. 189, see p. 115; Eur. *Cyc.* 104, see pp. 235–6.

says as the actions of the Atridae and Odysseus (405–6). He then says of Odysseus (407–9):

> ἔξοιδα γάρ νιν παντὸς ἂν λόγου κακοῦ
> γλώσσῃ θιγόντα καὶ πανουργίας, ἀφ᾽ ἧς
> μηδὲν δίκαιον ἐς τέλος μέλλοι ποεῖν.
>
> For I know that he lends his tongue to every evil speech and every villainy that can help him compass a dishonest end.

This denigration of Odysseus is similar to Hecuba's in *Trojan Women*.[105] She also refers to Odysseus' tongue (285) and calls him an 'enemy of justice' (283). Odysseus is called παντουργός in Sophocles' *Ajax* (445) and also πανοῦργος by Philoctetes in Euripides' *Philoctetes* (fr. 789d.9). Here, Philoctetes uses a related noun, πανουργία, to describe the villainy or knavery that Odysseus exemplifies. Philoctetes' denigrations of Odysseus, therefore, match those of other characters in tragedy, who attack Odysseus' flexibility and lack of scruples. Unlike other plays, however, the Odysseus of Sophocles has already admitted and will again later admit openly to possessing such traits. He praised the use of the tongue in the prologue (99) and called his proposed actions κακά (80). However, he also claimed that he and Neoptolemus will be shown to have been right (δίκαιος, 82). Therefore, Odysseus and Philoctetes describe Odysseus' means in similar terms, but they disagree about the ends – for Odysseus, his ends are just, or will at least appear just, but Philoctetes thinks the opposite.

Philoctetes asks how other heroes could have allowed such an injustice to happen, which begins a quasi-catalogue of heroes in which Neoptolemus informs Philoctetes of the fates of certain heroes at Troy. After hearing that Ajax is dead, Philoctetes despairs that Diomedes and Odysseus, the son of Sisyphus 'bought by Laertes', are still alive (οὐμπολητὸς Σισύφου Λαερτίῳ, 416–7). This is the first explicit mention of Odysseus being the son of Sisyphus, although Neoptolemus alluded to it at 384. That Odysseus has been bought by Laertes implies mercantile activity. Odysseus will be further linked to such activity in the False Merchant scene.

[105] See pp. 152–5.

Philoctetes asks about Nestor, whom he describes as counselling wise things (βουλεύων σοφά, 423), in contrast to the connotations *sophos* has when used of Odysseus. A few lines later Neoptolemus says of Odysseus (431–2):

> σοφὸς παλαιστὴς κεῖνος, ἀλλὰ χαὶ σοφαὶ
> γνῶμαι, Φιλοκτῆτ᾽, ἐμποδίζονται θαμά.
> He is a cunning wrestler; but even clever plans are sometimes thwarted, Philoctetes.

We have already seen examples of Odysseus as a literal wrestler during his match with Ajax in the *Iliad* (23.725), and metaphorically being difficult to wrestle with in *Rhesus* (509).[106] Wrestling terminology could also be used of sophistic argument.[107] Aeschines, for example, warns jurors about Demosthenes using a courtroom trick, literally a wrestling trick (πάλαισμα, 3.205).[108] The chorus of Aristophanes' *Frogs* also refer to the crooked wrestling holds of subtle speaking men (877–8). The philosopher Protagoras had a work entitled *Καταβάλλοντες*, *Knockdown* [*Arguments*], or [*Arguments*] *that Throw Down* [*an Opponent*].[109] Arguments are also described as overthrowing others at *IA* 1013 and *Bacch*. 201–3.[110] Neoptolemus calls both Odysseus and his plans *sophos* but there is no similarity to the wise counsels of Nestor.

The culmination of the mini-catalogue of Greek heroes is when Philoctetes says (439–40):

> ἀναξίου μὲν φωτὸς ἐξερήσομαι,
> γλώσσῃ δὲ δεινοῦ καὶ σοφοῦ, τί νῦν κυρεῖ.
> I will ask about the fortunes of a man who is unworthy, but cunning and skilled in speech.

The description of this man is obviously applicable to Odysseus. He was described only a few lines earlier as σοφός by Neoptolemus, and Philoctetes referred to Odysseus' use of his tongue for evil deeds. In the prologue Odysseus himself

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[106] See p. 92 and 165.
[107] Schein (2013) *ad loc*.
[108] LSJ s.v. πάλαισμα A 3.
[109] Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math*. 7.60 = Protagoras D3. See Schein (2011) 91 n. 31 and (2013) on 13–4.
[110] Schein (2016) 264.

champions use of γλῶσσα and also entices Neoptolemus with the promise of being called σοφός. Ἀνάξιος, meaning unworthy, is used of Odysseus in Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* (22). Palamedes uses ἀνάξιος of both himself and his opponent, for while Odysseus is undeserving, Palamedes does not deserve his accusation. The ambiguity of Philoctetes' description is realised when Neoptolemus responds, 'About whom will you ask other than Odysseus?' (441).

Philoctetes clarifies that he meant Thersites, not Odysseus. Odysseus has now become the double of the man whom he and Achilles both despised in Homer (*Il.* 2.220–1). Sophocles has again separated Odysseus and Achilles into opposing figures, with Odysseus now standing with Thersites in opposition to Achilles. Thersites in Homer is also a non-aristocrat, and Odysseus' association with him here, just as with the references to his Sisyphean parentage, is designed to undermine his claim to aristocratic status.[111] We have already seen that in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, first performed four years after *Philoctetes*, Odysseus is depicted in a similar way to Thersites, particularly in his mutinous behaviour and links to the mob.[112]

Neoptolemus answers vaguely that he heard that Thersites was alive (445), which contradicts the story from the *Aethiopis* that Achilles kills Thersites for mocking his love for Penthesileia.[113] Scodel is correct to stress the significance of this change to the traditional Epic Cycle story.[114] In the *Aethiopis*, after killing Thersites, Achilles is purified on Lesbos by Odysseus.[115] This is an important moment of friendship between Odysseus and Achilles, and it is removed if the death of Thersites is excised.[116] A similar technique is used by Sophocles in *Ajax*, where there are no mentions of previous episodes in which Odysseus and Ajax fought as allies. The denial of any former goodwill between Odysseus and Achilles, or Odysseus and Ajax, deepens the divide between the styles of heroism embodied by the two pairs of men which both plays explore. In *Philoctetes*, this division is strengthened by Neoptolemus and Philoctetes' contrasting of heroes such as Achilles, Ajax, and Antilochus with Diomedes, Odysseus, and Thersites.

[111] Rose (1976) 98; Austin (2011) 95–6; Paillard (2020) 75.
[112] See p. 85.
[113] *Aethiopis* Arg. §1 West.
[114] Scodel (2012) 6.
[115] *Aethiopis* Arg. §1 West.
[116] Scodel (2012) 6.

Philoctetes is here presented as nostalgic for a past in which the best heroes were alive. This sense of nostalgia is common in other fifth-century writers, such as Thucydides and Aristophanes.[117] In 409, when Sophocles' *Philoctetes* was performed, many Athenian men had recently been lost in the Sicilian Expedition, and the leaders who followed Pericles had not been able to command the same sustained popularity. Philoctetes' view of the past might, therefore, have been shared by those in the audience, who had seen Athens' fortunes decline rapidly. However, Philoctetes' view of the heroic past is myopic because the heroes he idolises were alive and present with him at the start of the war, yet he was nevertheless abandoned.[118]

The meeting between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus and the false stories told by the latter bear many similarities with corresponding scenes in the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides. In the earlier two plays, Odysseus gives false information to Philoctetes about the misfortunes or misdeeds of the Greeks to win Philoctetes' trust. Odysseus willingly slanders himself, and Philoctetes denigrates Odysseus as well, unaware that his enemy is present. In Sophocles, however, this standard scene is given a twist as the true thoughts and opinions of Neoptolemus, as well as the extent of his falsehood, are uncertain.

This uncertainty is particularly strong at the end of this section, when Neoptolemus bids Philoctetes farewell and claims that he intends to sail away from Lemnos immediately (464–5). Philoctetes begs to be granted passage home, assuring Neoptolemus that the trouble of having him on board will last less than a day (480). This clearly recalls Odysseus' assurances in the prologue that Neoptolemus must only act shamefully for a day in order to succeed (83). There are several other similarities in the two older men's appeals to Neoptolemus, and this emphasises the two opposing forces between which Neoptolemus finds himself caught.[119] The chorus encourage Neoptolemus to assent to the request and he does so (507–29). The true motives of both the chorus and Neoptolemus are entirely unclear. At this point,

[117] See e.g. Thuc. 2.65, 3.82; Ar. *Nub*. 1258, *Eccl*. 521. See Scodel (2012) 11 and Hesk (2000) 190 n. 157.
[118] Kyriakou (2012) 155; Scodel (2012) 9.
[119] Schein (2013) on 473–81 lists the various parallels between the two appeals.

when Neoptolemus and Philoctetes are planning to sail together, Odysseus intervenes in the form of the False Merchant.

The False Merchant (542–627)

The chorus alert Neoptolemus and Philoctetes to the approach of two men, one a sailor from Neoptolemus' ship and the other a stranger (539–41). This is the intervention about which Odysseus warned in the prologue should Neoptolemus seem to be taking too long (126–31). Some have suggested that the so-called 'False Merchant' is actually Odysseus in disguise.[120] Others, who either do not agree or do not give an opinion, have noted the significance of the False Merchant being played by the actor who played Odysseus in the prologue.[121] I agree with those who think that Odysseus plays the False Merchant, because several things said either by or to the Merchant are particularly appropriate to Odysseus. Furthermore, a disguise suits not only Odysseus' character generally but also his behaviour in the earlier two *Philoctetes* plays. By having Odysseus play the False Merchant, Sophocles would retain this element of Odysseus approaching Philoctetes in disguise, but also give it a new twist by having Odysseus appear not as a fellow Greek soldier but a merchant with a less direct connection to the Trojan expedition.

Neoptolemus and the audience have already been told that this man will speak cunningly and therefore are primed to expect further deception. The False Merchant makes his account believable by playing on the stereotypical characteristics of Odysseus familiar from both Homer and other tragedies. Just like Neoptolemus' false tale, the story told by the False Merchant weaves together fact and fiction.[122] Both stories are crafted by Odysseus, whether or not Odysseus is the False Merchant in disguise. They also have the desired effect of making Philoctetes' bond with Neoptolemus stronger, which shows the effectiveness of Odysseus' schemes. However, the intervention of the False Merchant also strengthens Philoctetes' resolve to shun Troy.

The False Merchant begins by warning Neoptolemus that Phoenix and the sons of Theseus have sailed in pursuit of him (561–2). Neoptolemus and the audience know

[120] Ahl (1991) 211; Roisman (2001) 46–9; Daneš (2019) 561.
[121] E.g. Kittmer (1995) 25; Falkner (1998) 35; Worman (1999) 54.
[122] Roberts (1989) 168.

this to be false. Neoptolemus plays along with the deception and asks if they intend to bring him by force or with persuasion (563). This question recalls the discussion between Neoptolemus and Odysseus in the prologue (101–7) on the best method to ensnare Philoctetes. Neoptolemus' next question – whether Phoenix and the sons of Theseus are acting to please the Atridae (565–6) – also recalls the prologue since Odysseus is working on the orders of the Atridae.

At this point, Neoptolemus brings up Odysseus unprompted. He asks why Odysseus did not come as his own messenger (568–9). These lines receive little or no attention, but they require examination because Neoptolemus' mention of Odysseus is quite unexpected. He implies that Odysseus would be the most likely to be performing such a task for the Atridae and so his absence is notable. Neoptolemus' words are also ironic because this Merchant and his message are Odysseus' fabrications. In this sense, Odysseus is his own messenger, and the irony would be even stronger were the Merchant actually Odysseus in disguise.[123]

Philoctetes speaks for the first time since the Merchant's entrance, asking Neoptolemus what transaction he and the Merchant are carrying on in secret (578–9). The mercantile metaphor is informed by the False Merchant's profession, but we are also reminded of Philoctetes' description of Odysseus as having been bought by Laertes (417) and Odysseus' own praise of gaining profit in the prologue (111).[124] Later, after seeing Odysseus for the first time, Philoctetes will also complain that he has been sold (978). These lines (578–9) have a double meaning to the audience because Neoptolemus and the Merchant are in fact conducting secret business against Philoctetes: they are both engaged in the same deceptive scheme. Moreover, as Schein rightly points out, Neoptolemus and Odysseus bargained in the prologue over Philoctetes, as Odysseus enticed the young man with talk of profit and reward for the capture of Philoctetes' bow.[125] Odysseus is also associated with mercantile activity in Euripides' *Cyclops* when he barters with Silenus after arriving on Sicily.[126] In the *Odyssey*, Euryalus insults Odysseus by saying that he does not look

[123] Falkner (1998) 36.
[124] Falkner (1998) 35; Schein (2013) on 578–9.
[125] Schein (2014) 71.
[126] See p. 241 below. See also p. 128 on Ajax's accusations against Odysseus in Antisthenes for his mercantile behaviour.

like an athlete but more like a captain of merchants (8.159–64).[127] Sophists in Athens were criticised for selling political skills; in legal speeches political opponents could be discredited with suggestions that they had been involved in trade.[128] The Merchant's comment that he does many things for the army and is in turn rewarded (583–4) is also particularly applicable to Odysseus; throughout the play, and in tragedy in general, he presents himself as acting on behalf of the army.

The Merchant tells a false story about Odysseus and Diomedes' mission to retrieve Philoctetes (591–7). Odysseus is said to be accompanied by Diomedes (570, 592), which recalls not only several epic episodes in which the two act together but also the Epic Cycle version, which has Diomedes, or Odysseus and Diomedes, responsible for bringing Philoctetes to Troy. Euripides also included Diomedes in his *Philoctetes*. As the False Merchant continues, however, Diomedes fades out of the story, and after being referred to as 'the other' at 597 he is not mentioned again.[129]

The audience finally hears about the prophecy of Helenus, alluded to in the prologue. According to the Merchant, Odysseus went out at night to ambush Helenus (604–9). That he captured Helenus during a nocturnal ambush is appropriate to his epic character as he often undertakes night-time missions.[130] The Merchant calls Odysseus the man of whom shameful and outrageous, or abusive, things are said (607). This line is especially interesting as the False Merchant does not give his own opinion of Odysseus but reports on what others say about him. This reputation is consistent with how Odysseus is presented elsewhere in tragedy when abused by other characters.

The Merchant reports Odysseus' reaction to hearing the prophecy. He was apparently so confident that he promised to bring Philoctetes and display him to the Achaeans (614–6). If he failed to do this, then he 'would allow anyone who wished to cut off his head' (618–9). Odysseus has scripted these lines for the Merchant, or speaks

[127] Daneš (2019) 561 n. 50.
[128] Ober (1989) 275; Rose (1995) 310–1; Worman (1999) 35 n. 2. See also Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras*, who describes a sophist as 'a sort of merchant or dealer' in provisions for the soul (313c4–6); see Benitez (1992) 226.
[129] Budelmann (2000) 118.
[130] The 'Doloneia' of *Iliad* Book 10 takes place at night, as does Odysseus and Diomedes' stealing of the Palladium (*Little Iliad* fr. 11 West). Odysseus' reconnoitre into Troy disguised as a beggar surely also takes place at night. In Proclus' summary of the *Little Iliad*, Odysseus is said to ambush Helenus and capture him, but the time of day is not stated (Arg. §2 West).

them himself, so he wants Philoctetes to hear this threat. The likely intention is for Philoctetes to be scared into fleeing with Neoptolemus, who will then take him to Troy instead of Malis. Philoctetes and Neoptolemus were already planning to sail away, so it seems that the intervention of the False Merchant will not change much. Perhaps, as Roisman suggests, the aim is more to prevent Neoptolemus, who presumes only the bow is needed to take Troy, from taking Philoctetes home.[131]

Odysseus uses the same expression about his head being cut off in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and no other character in either epic uses such an expression.[132] Again, the false story incorporates real elements which make it more plausible. The reference to lines spoken by the epic Odysseus also calls attention to the divergences from his epic portrayal.[133] The difference in the contexts of his expressions of confidence is striking; in Homer, Odysseus says that his head can be cut off if he does not beat Thersites should he be found playing the fool (*Il*. 2.259); when in disguise in Eumaeus' hut he says that if he were Odysseus his head could be cut off if he did not kill the suitors (*Od*. 16.102). In both cases, Odysseus is pursuing proportionate measures against a foe. Yet here he is described as planning to humiliate the wounded Philoctetes by putting him on display.

When the False Merchant bids farewell to Philoctetes and Neoptolemus, he adds, 'may the god help you as best he may' (σφῷν δ' ὅπως ἄριστα συμφέροι θεός, 627). The use of the verb συμφέρω recalls Odysseus' instructions to Neoptolemus to take what is expedient from the Merchant's words (131). This line is also ambiguous: for Philoctetes it is expedient for him to return to his home, while for Neoptolemus it is for him and Philoctetes to go to Troy.[134] Similarly, the dual σφῷν may refer to Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, or it may refer to Neoptolemus and Odysseus.[135]

The False Merchant scene is puzzling as its purpose is not apparent and has been debated for many years. I think the most plausible suggestion is Schein's: the reports of Helenus' prophecy are designed to provide justification for Odysseus' actions.[136] This would be consistent both with Odysseus' behaviour in the prologue, as he tries

[131] Roisman (2001) 45.
[132] *Il*. 2.259; *Od*. 16.102; see Schein (2014) 74–5.
[133] Schein (2014) 75.
[134] Schein (2014) 69.
[135] Schein (2014) 69.
[136] Schein (2014) 77–8.

to renounce accountability for his actions, and with his later claim to be serving the will of Zeus (989–90). This motivation for the Merchant's intervention would also be appropriate for a disguised Odysseus who attempts to lend credibility to his scheme by appearing in the guise of an outsider. That the intervention of the Merchant seems to achieve little is also consistent with Odysseus' presentation throughout the play. His plan for Neoptolemus to seize the bow ends in failure, his attempt to force Philoctetes is similarly unsuccessful, and he is unable to prevent Neoptolemus from returning the bow.

Neoptolemus and Philoctetes (628–973)

After the departure of the False Merchant, Philoctetes resumes his condemnations of Odysseus.[137] He contrasts his own steadfastness with the flexibility of Odysseus: 'he will say anything and dare anything' (ἔστ᾽ ἐκείνῳ πάντα λεκτά, πάντα δὲ τολμητά, 633–4). The repetition of πάντα is similar to a line spoken by Ajax when he complains about Odysseus seeing and hearing everything (Soph. *Aj*. 379). Here Philoctetes' words emphasise Odysseus' lack of scruples. Πάντα also recalls Philoctetes' earlier description of Odysseus as lending his tongue to every evil speech and every villainy (407–8). The adjective τολμητός is related to the verb τολμάω, meaning both to dare and to endure.[138] In the *Odyssey* this verb is particularly associated with the much-enduring Odysseus and is used of him several times.[139] In a twist on his epic characterisation Odysseus is no longer the one enduring but the one daring to cause pain for another to endure.[140]

After Philoctetes succumbs to an agonising spasm, Neoptolemus has an opportunity to seize the bow. It is at a similar point in Aeschylus and Euripides that Odysseus is able to acquire the bow. However, we start to see the difference in temperament between Neoptolemus and Odysseus as the young man is torn between completing his task and staying true to his nature. Eventually, he admits the truth to Philoctetes but tries to encourage him to go to Troy, telling him that he is compelled by a powerful necessity (921–2). At this point, Neoptolemus still speaks like Odysseus,

[137] On lines 631–2 and the significance of Philoctetes comparing Odysseus to the snake that bit him, see Worman (2008) 54 and (2012) 345.
[138] LSJ s.v. τολμάω.
[139] 8.519, 9.332, 17.284, 20.20, 24.162; cf. *Il*. 10.232.
[140] See p. 116 for a similar process with the verb τλάω and its related epithet πολύτλας in *Ajax*.

claiming that what is right (τὸ ἔνδικόν) and what is expedient (τὸ συμφέρον) compel him to obey those in authority (925–6).

Neoptolemus' confession and his attempt to persuade Philoctetes to comply lead the latter into an outburst of anger and pleading. He begins (927–9):

> ὦ πῦρ σὺ καὶ πᾶν δεῖμα καὶ πανουργίας
>
> δεινῆς τέχνημ᾽ ἔχθιστον, οἷά μ᾽ εἰργάσω,
>
> οἷ᾽ ἠπάτηκας
>
> You fire, you total horror, you hateful masterpiece of dire villainy, what things you have done to me, how you have deceived me!

In Sophocles, Neoptolemus replaces Odysseus as the one who approaches Philoctetes directly, and here we also see him as a substitute Odysseus in the way he is lambasted by Philoctetes. Philoctetes earlier accused Odysseus of engaging in πανουργία (408). Τέχνημα, 'that which is cunningly wrought', recalls Odysseus' words in the prologue that Neoptolemus is unaccustomed to scheming against others using the verb τεχνάομαι (80). The suffix of this noun and its meaning of something wrought also has similarities in descriptions of Odysseus in other plays, particularly ἄλημα in *Ajax* (381, 389), and κρότημα in *Rhesus* (499) and Sophocles fr. 913.[141] The reference to fire recalls the Cyclops episode from the *Odyssey*. It is through both fire and deception that Odysseus overcomes Polyphemus, and Philoctetes has been susceptible to deception just as Polyphemus was.[142] Furthermore, there is a contrast between the fire and τέχνημα used by Neoptolemus and Odysseus, and the fire and craft of Philoctetes in his need for survival. Philoctetes describes to Neoptolemus how he learnt to create fire and how this has helped him to survive (295–9). When first inspecting the cave, Neoptolemus describes the cup made from wood as the τέχνημα of a poor craftsman (36). Philoctetes' simple survival skills have become his undoing in the hands of more sophisticated men.[143]

At the end of this section Neoptolemus begins to have doubts and admits his pity for Philoctetes. It is at this point that Odysseus appears unexpectedly.

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[141] On these, see pp. 110–1 and 162–3.
[142] Schein (2013) *ad loc*.
[143] Rose (1976) 85.

Odysseus, Philoctetes and Neoptolemus (974–1408)

Once Philoctetes has become aware of Odysseus' involvement in Neoptolemus' deception, he condemns him to his face. This is significant because in other extant plays, we have mostly seen Odysseus attacked while off stage, e.g. *Ajax*, *Trojan Women*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Only in *Hecuba* is Odysseus criticised to his face, but there Hecuba does not express the same level of vitriol as other characters since she is trying to win him over. It is therefore rare to see how Odysseus reacts and responds to such a verbal attack. In most of his responses Odysseus is brusque and to the point, giving instructions and not fully responding to Philoctetes' attacks.[144] On two occasions, however, Odysseus attempts to defend himself against Philoctetes' complaints.

First, he asserts that he serves Zeus, the ruler of the land of Lemnos (989–90). He uses the verb ὑπηρετέω, the same verb used earlier to describe Neoptolemus' status as subordinate. As we saw earlier with Odysseus' prayer to Athena, his words claim divine sanction for his schemes and are an attempt to provide justification for his deception. His reference to Zeus, who has 'decided this' (Ζεύς, ᾧ δέδοκται ταῦθ', 990) features yet another impersonal verb, δοκέω, which again is a way of renouncing responsibility.[145] This justification also recalls the attempts of the sophist Gorgias to defend Helen by claiming that if she had been compelled by the gods to go to Troy then she does not deserve blame (*Hel*. 6).

Later, Philoctetes makes a lengthy speech criticising Odysseus, especially for his manipulation of Neoptolemus (1004–44). Odysseus claims that he could say a lot in his reply but instead will say only one thing (1049–52):

> οὗ γὰρ τοιούτων δεῖ, τοιοῦτός εἰμ᾽ ἐγώ·
> χὤπου δικαίων κἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν κρίσις,
> οὐκ ἂν λάβοις μου μᾶλλον οὐδέν᾽ εὐσεβῆ.
> νικᾶν γε μέντοι πανταχοῦ χρῄζων ἔφυν,
> Where there is need of men like this, I am such a man; but
> where there is a test for just and noble men, you will find no

[144] E.g. 985, 993, 994, 1065.
[145] Schein (2013) *ad loc*.

> one more scrupulous than I. But it is my nature always to desire victory…

Here he openly displays his disregard for traditional morality and presents such disregard as a virtue, whereas this characteristic, in tragedy and elsewhere, is often considered a vice. It is this changeability and adaptability that Philoctetes has in mind when he says that Odysseus would apply his tongue to every evil speech and villainy (407–8), and that he would say and dare anything (633–4).[146] Similarly, it is this elasticity that Ajax so dislikes when he complains about Odysseus in *Ajax*. In this late fifth-century play, Sophocles has created an Odysseus informed by the denigrations of characters in earlier plays. In his behaviour, Odysseus is shown to be the shabby figure so despised by Ajax, the chorus of *Hecuba*, and the Hecuba of *Trojan Women*.[147] However, Sophocles has gone even further and has his Odysseus explicitly admit to such unscrupulousness as essentially being his moral code. In this way, Sophocles is similar to Antisthenes, who also has his Odysseus openly admit that there is no danger he shirked because it was shameful (9.1–2). War, Antisthenes' Odysseus claims, 'does not lend itself to making glorious displays, but to taking action continuously both by day and by night' (9.6–7).[148] We have seen in other plays that Odysseus is often focused on the end result, despite the suffering the means may cause to others. However, here and in Antisthenes he explicitly states that he considers only the end result important, rather than morality.

Odysseus here says nothing of the army, the gods, or the common good, only his own victory.[149] His words also potentially contradict his previous claim that he is a servant of Zeus. He states in this passage that where there is a need for just and noble men, no one will be more pious than he. This implies that the current situation is not such a case, and therefore he admits that he is *not* being either δίκαιος, ἀγαθός or εὐσεβής.[150]

Philoctetes' criticisms of Odysseus include several epic references used as insults. He responds to Odysseus' suggestion that he will be taken by force by calling Odysseus the 'greatest and most impudent of villains' (ὦ κακῶν κάκιστε καὶ

[146] Schein (2013) on 1049.
[147] Craik (1979) 23.
[148] Translation from Kennedy (2011).
[149] Blundell (1987) 314.
[150] Blundell (1987) 312 n. 26 and 314.

τολμήσατε, 984). Τολμήσατε is the superlative of the adjective τολμήεις, another word related to the verb τολμάω, used of Odysseus straight after the False Merchant's departure, which can mean both enduring and daring.[151] Later, Philoctetes contrasts his willingness to join the Trojan expedition with Odysseus' attempt at avoiding it. He states that Odysseus sailed after being 'kidnapped and compelled' (1025), referring to Odysseus' feigned madness and its exposure thanks to a ploy of Palamedes', which was depicted in another Sophoclean play, *The Madness of Odysseus*, and also featured in the *Cypria*.[152] The reference to having been compelled or yoked (ζεύγνυμι) recalls a particular version of the story in which Odysseus yokes incorrect animals to a plough to demonstrate his madness.[153]

After Odysseus and Neoptolemus have departed, Philoctetes, while bemoaning the loss of his bow, refers to it now being in the grasp of a 'cunning man' (πολυμηχάνου ἀνδρὸς, 1135). The epithet πολυμήχανος, resourceful or inventive, is used in Homer only of Odysseus, often translated 'of many wiles'.[154] Here, however, his Homeric epithet is associated with deceit.[155] These epic references, like the use of Odysseus's epic phrasing by the False Merchant, continue to call attention to the differences between the Odysseus of this play and the one seen in Homer. Odysseus' attributes have become corrupted, his endurance has become daring, his resourcefulness deceitfulness, and his claims of loyalty to the army are undermined by the reminder of his initial avoidance of the expedition.

Philoctetes is left alone to lament while Odysseus is in possession of the bow, a situation which was probably similar in both Aeschylus and Euripides. In the earlier plays, Philoctetes eventually concedes and is taken to Troy as he cannot survive without his bow. To the audience, it may have seemed as though Sophocles' play would end in the same way with the triumph of Odysseus. However, these assumptions are disrupted when Odysseus and Neoptolemus re-enter in mid-conversation, and it becomes clear that Neoptolemus intends to return the bow to

[151] LSJ s.v. τολμήεις.
[152] See p. 39 on this episode in the *Cypria*.
[153] Hyg. *Fab*. 95; see Schein (2013) *ad loc*. Agamemnon uses the same verb in Aeschylus when he says that Odysseus proved himself, once yoked, to be a willing right-hand man (*Ag*. 841–2).
[154] *Il*. 2.173, 4.358, 8.93, 9.308, 624, 10.144, 23.723; *Od*. 1.205, 5.203, 10.401, 488, 504, 11.60, 405, 473, 617, 13.376, 14.486, 16.167, 22.164, 24.192, 542.
[155] For similar changes to his Homeric epithets, see p. 116 on πολύτλας and pp. 144–5 on ποικιλόφρων.

Philoctetes (1222). The inclusion of Neoptolemus leads to the failure of Odysseus' plan, because the young man abandons the deceptive scheme and reverts to his nature by siding with Philoctetes against Odysseus. Although we do not know the exact details of how Aeschylus and Euripides ended their plays, there is no suggestion in Dio or any fragments that Odysseus is deprived of the bow once he manages to take it from Philoctetes.

Not only does Neoptolemus defy Odysseus in trying to return Philoctetes' bow, but he also bests him in the heated exchange in which the two are engaged when they enter the stage. The stichomythia in this section is the reverse of that between the two in the prologue.[156] Here, Odysseus asks the questions and is ineffective in achieving his desired outcome. Neoptolemus has returned to his original opinion on deception and wishes to right the wrong he has done by returning the bow. Odysseus remains incredulous throughout the exchange and cannot understand Neoptolemus' change of heart, nor his objections to the method by which the bow was acquired. Neoptolemus shows the difference between his values and those of Odysseus.

Odysseus resorts to violent threats and tells Neoptolemus that the whole of the Achaean army (ξύμπας Ἀχαιῶν λαός, 1243) will prevent him from returning the bow. The expression λαὸς Ἀχαιῶν is used several times in the *Iliad* to refer to the Greek army, and Odysseus uses it here to endow himself with Homeric status.[157] In *Ajax*, the chorus accuse Odysseus of turning the soldiers against Ajax, although their accusations are never proved within the play. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Odysseus turns the army against Achilles, and there is a violent standoff off stage in which Achilles is threatened by the soldiers. The suggestion of rabble-rousing is therefore a feature in several depictions of Odysseus; it makes him seem like more of a demagogue as he threatens fellow Greek leaders with mob violence from the common soldiers, over whom he exerts influence.

In response to this threat, Neoptolemus claims that Odysseus is not being clever (1244–6):

NEO. σοφὸς πεφυκὼς οὐδὲν ἐξαυδᾷς σοφόν.

[156] Schein (2013) on 1222–60.
[157] Schein (2013) *ad loc*.

ΟΔ. σὺ δ᾽ οὔτε φωνεῖς οὔτε δρασείεις σοφά.

ΝΕΟ. ἀλλ᾽ εἰ δίκαια, τῶν σοφῶν κρείσσω τάδε.

Neo. Clever as you are, what you are saying is not clever!

Od. Neither your words nor your intentions are clever!

Neo. But if they are right, that is better than being clever!

Neoptolemus does not attack Odysseus' epic qualities, as Philoctetes did, since *sophos* is never used of Odysseus in Homer. However, we saw in the prologue that Odysseus valued the quality of being *sophos*, despite others viewing such a quality with suspicion. Therefore, Neoptolemus does not target the value system to which the Homeric Odysseus aspired, but the value system of the fifth-century tragic Odysseus. Neoptolemus also rejects Odysseus' suggestion in the prologue that being just is simply a matter of appearance; instead, he gives more weight to being just than being clever.

Odysseus becomes more violent in the later part of the play, justifying the earlier references to ἥ τ᾽ Ὀδυσσέως βία. Odysseus threatens Philoctetes several times with being taken by force to Troy and also has him physically restrained (982–3, 985, 1003). In his second appearance, Odysseus continuously threatens Neoptolemus with the army (1250, 1253, 1257–8), even claiming that the Greek army will fight against him instead of the Trojans. Odysseus is uncharacteristically violent, but once Neoptolemus draws his sword Odysseus is forced to back down. His attempts to enforce his will through physical action fail completely. He retreats from the stage only to reappear a few lines later as Neoptolemus is handing the bow back to Philoctetes. Odysseus threatens once again to take Philoctetes by force (1296–8). Now, however, Philoctetes is armed with his bow, and he takes aim at Odysseus who flees at some point over the next few lines.

Odysseus' continuous failures to exert his will in the latter part of the play culminate in a humiliating retreat after this final brief appearance on stage. He has tried both words and violence to achieve his ends, but neither has been successful. Sophocles' presentation of Odysseus differs not only from the earlier two productions of *Philoctetes* in which Odysseus successfully captures the bow, but also many other

tragedies featuring Odysseus. As we have seen repeatedly, Odysseus is typically successful in his endeavours. Here, however, he is on the brink of failure. Neoptolemus has proved unsuitable for the task Odysseus persuaded him to carry out, and Philoctetes remains in possession of the bow, more adamant than ever about not returning to Troy. The two heroes essential to the capture of Troy are about to sail home with the required bow. Uncharacteristically, Odysseus has proved completely unable to achieve his mission and has arguably made the situation worse. It is ironic that the Odysseus of Euripides, who has such doubts about his ability to fulfil his mission, completes it successfully, whereas the Odysseus of Sophocles, who never shows such doubts, is not up to the task.

As Philoctetes and Neoptolemus seem about to sail, not to Troy but back to their homes, this must have been a moment of heightened tension for the audience.[158] They knew the story of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus going to Troy, and in the previous theatrical versions of the story Philoctetes is eventually forced to go to Troy after the loss of his bow. Here, though, the two men are ready to turn their backs on the traditional storyline, and they are only stopped by an intervention from Heracles.

Heracles (1409–1471)

Heracles appears suddenly and instructs Philoctetes to go to Troy with Neoptolemus. He tells Philoctetes of the cure and the glory that await him there. However, Heracles does not mention Odysseus or the Atridae. There is no reference to a reconciliation between Philoctetes and the rest of the army, only a promise that Philoctetes shall be judged first in the army for valour (1424–5).[159] Furthermore, there is no acknowledgement of the suffering Philoctetes has undergone or the ill treatment of him by his allies. Just as with the ambiguity in *Ajax* regarding the fairness of the vote on Achilles' arms, Sophocles here leaves unanswered the question of whether Odysseus and the Atridae are to be blamed for their abandonment of Philoctetes and whether Philoctetes' resentment is reasonable or not.[160]

[158] Koper (2002) 10.
[159] In this sense, the *deus ex machina* bears some similarity to the intervention of Apollo at the end of Euripides' *Orestes*, performed in the subsequent year, in which the characters are reconciled but the factional strife is left unresolved; see Hall (1993) 283 and (2010) 287.
[160] Winnington-Ingram (1980) 300.

Those who see Odysseus as the unquestionable villain of the play overlook the complexity of the play's ending. Philoctetes has finally agreed to go to Troy with Heracles' bow, which was Odysseus' objective throughout the play. Furthermore, Heracles' encouragement of this outcome shows that it was indeed the will of the gods, as Odysseus himself said. It vindicates Odysseus' earlier claim that he is the executer of Zeus' will (990).[161]

Heracles' instruction to Philoctetes that he must go to Troy means that he must also relinquish his anger at the Greeks and instead join in the common cause to take Troy.[162] The *deus ex machina* therefore emphasises co-operative goals over Homeric individualism.[163] This is strengthened by the reference to Philoctetes and Neoptolemus working together, 'like two companion lions', to conquer Troy, as neither can take it without the other (1434–5) – an interesting repetition of Odysseus' comment about Neoptolemus and the bow in the prologue (115). Heracles recognises the *philia* that has developed between Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, but significantly he does so with an 'epic' reference to Odysseus and Diomedes, who are described as lions when sneaking through the Trojan camp at *Il.* 10.297.[164]

The reference to the conquering of Troy reminds the audience of Odysseus' own role in that successful outcome, and that he is known as a sacker of cities.[165] Moreover, Heracles' warning against impiety (1441) is a reference to Neoptolemus' unsavoury behaviour during the sack of Troy, which featured in the Epic Cycle.[166] Neoptolemus' premature death, depicted in Euripides' *Andromache*, also contrasts with Odysseus' death in old age.[167] Therefore, the ending is not a straightforward repudiation of Odysseus and glorification of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, as we are reminded of the future successes of Odysseus and failures of Neoptolemus.[168]

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[161] Paillard (2020) 78 goes further and suggests that the end of the play 'could even be considered as eliciting from the audience a complete reversal in the perception of the values Odysseus embodies, if not his means'. See also Mills (2012) 34–5.
[162] Roisman (2005b) 106.
[163] Roisman (2005b) 107.
[164] Schein (2013) on 1433–7.
[165] Schein (2013) 20.
[166] *Little Iliad* fr. 29 West; *Iliou Persis* Arg. §2 West. See p. 142 n. 3 on Neoptolemus in art.
[167] Schein (2011) 83.
[168] On the significance of the lack of closure at the end of the play, see Tarnopolsky (2022) 487–8.

Odysseus in Sophocles

Although the appearance of Heracles somewhat validates Odysseus' claims to be acting in accordance with the will of Zeus, and shows that he was striving for the right outcome throughout, the Odysseus of *Philoctetes* is by no means successful in his mission.[169] Philoctetes agrees to go to Troy because of an event entirely outside Odysseus' control. In contrast, everything within Odysseus' control in the play is a failure. The man usually so adept at persuasion fails to adequately persuade Neoptolemus to complete his task and also fails to persuade or even force Philoctetes to come to Troy. This is not to say that had Neoptolemus been honest with Philoctetes from the start, or tried to compel him by force, the result would have been different. Due to Philoctetes' intractable anger, it seems that any course taken by Odysseus and Neoptolemus would end in failure and divine intervention would be inevitable.[170]

Sophocles' *Philoctetes* naturally invites comparisons with his *Ajax*, given the similarity of the heroes' predicaments. Both Ajax and Philoctetes feel betrayed, as well as humiliated, by their companions. Both also mourn the loss of the weapon(s) – Achilles' arms and Heracles' bow – which meant so much to them. Their anger is specifically directed at the Atridae and Odysseus. There are indeed several similarities between the presentation of Odysseus in both plays. His greatest concern in both plays seems to be for the common good of the army, and he champions adaptability as a way to achieve this end.[171] He is also portrayed as a character who differs from the model of aristocratic heroes such as Ajax, Achilles, or Philoctetes, both in the way he behaves – not wanting to face the heroes of each play, refusing to mock a stricken enemy, engaging in deceit, having a willingness to be slandered – and in the way other characters talk about him.[172]

However, there are also some striking differences in the two presentations of Odysseus. His pity for the stricken Ajax despite their enmity is completely absent in the case of Philoctetes. Instead, he is willing to cruelly threaten the wounded hero with a second abandonment, this time without his only means of survival in the form

[169] Easterling (1978) 38.
[170] Kampen (2016) 20.
[171] Paillard (2020) 74–5.
[172] Paillard (2020) 78.

of the bow. In *Ajax*, Odysseus is concerned with correct behaviour in allowing the burial of Ajax and invokes divine law to persuade Agamemnon (1343). The Odysseus of *Philoctetes*, on the other hand, cares nothing for treating Philoctetes justly or for behaving with any moral scruples. Furthermore, he makes no mention to Philoctetes of the glory and healing that await him at Troy.[173]

5.3. Conclusion

In all three plays, Odysseus' mission remains the same: to bring Philoctetes and his bow to Troy by any means necessary. The manner in which he carries out this task differs in each play, and yet some core elements remain. Chief among these is the use of false narratives to win over Philoctetes and gain his trust. In Aeschylus and Euripides these are delivered by Odysseus himself, whereas in Sophocles he delegates the task to Neoptolemus. Sophocles complicates the false narratives with the inclusion of the False Merchant, probably Odysseus himself in disguise, who tells a second layer of lies regarding the retrieval of Philoctetes. In each play these invented narratives exploit Odysseus' bad reputation and the enmity between him and others in the Greek camp, in particular Philoctetes himself, as well as Palamedes and Ajax.

The differences in the execution of Odysseus' task perhaps reflect the changing situation in contemporary Athens. In Aeschylus, Odysseus uses no sophisticated deception and instead is straightforward, which Dio states was the style at the time (*Or*. 52.5). Euripides' version was produced at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War at a time when Athenian confidence was high and before the rise of demagogues. As such we find that a large part of the play is dedicated not to the enmity between Odysseus and Philoctetes but that between Greece and Troy. The central *agon* of the play has a patriotic theme, as the disguised Odysseus must skilfully defend Greece while not revealing his true identity. Dio tells us that the Odysseus of Sophocles was more 'gentle' and 'frank' than that of Euripides, and so, as already mentioned, we must resist the temptation others have succumbed to in seeing Euripides as a stepping stone to the degeneration of Odysseus in Sophocles. As hard as it is to accept, the opposite is the case, and the Odysseus of Sophocles is the gentler character when compared to Euripides'. Yet again, we see that

[173] Kampen (2016) 14.

considering fragmentary material enables us to better understand the context of extant plays.

In the final decade of the Peloponnesian War we find Sophocles' play, in which we are introduced to a young man who has lost his father in war and now must submit to behaving against his character by being deceitful in order to help bring an end to war. Sophocles' version is less concerned with the patriotic theme introduced by Euripides.[174] However, it is no less political, as Odysseus explicitly uses and champions sophistic methods to achieve his aim, which he consistently reminds the audience is for the benefit of the whole army. He is also presented as an ageing politician in contrast to the youthful Neoptolemus and specifically compares his own past naïveté with Neoptolemus' current opposition to deceit (96–9). This gives us a more jaded Odysseus than we see in other tragedies; when added to his failures in this play, his threats of violence, and his specific admission of a lack of scruples, we see an altogether unusual Odysseus. Euripides' Odysseus was unusual too as we are given his interior deliberations in the prologue. However, his Odysseus steels himself for his task and proves successful. Sophocles' Odysseus first delegates his task, then intervenes as the Merchant, before losing his grip on events completely, resulting in his ignominious flight from a rearmed Philoctetes.

We can see the development of Odysseus' scheming across the three plays, with Sophocles seemingly having constructed the most complicated deception with the introduction of Neoptolemus and the Merchant. The inclusion of Neoptolemus opens up possibilities not only for sophistic themes of education, and nature *versus* nurture, but also for more scrutiny of Odysseus' scheming. In Aeschylus and Euripides, opposition to Odysseus' deception comes only from Philoctetes, and possibly the chorus. In Sophocles, however, Odysseus is under pressure to defend his scheming from the start of the play. This allows Sophocles to show Odysseus' ethos of deception and his lack of moral scruples more explicitly, as he tries to convince Neoptolemus the scheme is necessary.

Sophocles' play is ambiguous throughout about the true merits of Odysseus' plan. The intervention of Heracles shows that Odysseus was labouring for the correct end but makes no comment on whether his means were justified. Sophocles ends his play

[174] Taousiani (2011b) 80; Raaflaub (2012) 486.

by stressing the importance of co-operation over personal pride, but without fully answering the question of whether deception is justified in desperate times. When this play was first performed, Athens was in a desperate situation herself, having just come through an oligarchic coup and suffering in a war that had dragged on for over two decades. The audience therefore probably understood Odysseus' plight in having to deceive a former ally turned enemy to return in order to bring about an end to the Trojan War.[175] Whether they approved of his actions is difficult to say, but the play is certainly ambiguous, and its ending does not explicitly support the behaviour of any of the three main characters.[176] Those who call Odysseus the villain of Sophocles' play have a simplistic view. He is certainly an unheroic figure – in his disregard for both Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, and his lack of scruples – yet his aim of ending the Trojan War is a noble one and, more importantly, is divinely required. The means he employs and his increasingly desperate turns to violence and threats challenge the original audience to consider their own protracted conflict and the lengths to which one could and would go to bring it to an end.

[175] See Hesk's discussion (2000) 188–201 of the relation between Sophocles' play and the concept of the 'noble lie'.
[176] Roisman (2005b) 111.

Chapter 6

Odysseus and the Cyclops

Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops is one of the most well-known episodes from Homer's *Odyssey*. In antiquity it was the most popular episode from the epic in the visual arts.[1] In its reception in the millennia since Homer, the story has been used both as justification for exploration and colonialism but also as a critique of colonialism, focused on the perspective of the Cyclops.[2] Odysseus has, therefore, been seen as a pioneering explorer but also a brutal colonialist.

Unlike the other epic episodes discussed in the preceding chapters, this one does not seem to have been adapted for the tragic stage in the fifth century. Instead, it became an inspiration for both comedies and satyr plays. The survival of Euripides' *Cyclops* as the sole fully extant satyr play is useful not only for the study of Athenian drama but also for the study of Odysseus, as it provides a unique example of his interactions with satyric characters and his presentation in a more light-hearted setting. The characters of *Cyclops* seem to possess a knowledge of myth outside the confines of the play, and this gives them a perspective on Odysseus closer to that of the audience.[3] Satyr drama seems to have had a greater interest than tragedy in Odysseus-type characters. From surviving titles and fragments, we can see that tricksters such as Hermes, Sisyphus, and Autolycus were popular characters in satyr plays.[4] Therefore, the irreverent treatment of Odysseus in satyr drama and comedy was important background to his tragic appearances discussed in the preceding chapters, and may explain some of the unusual comic elements attached to him in those plays.[5]

In a further contrast to other epic episodes previously discussed, in this story Odysseus is not working for the benefit of the Greek army. He is not under orders from the Atridae, nor is he looking to recruit anyone to further the Greek cause. The

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[1] Hall (2008b) 90.
[2] On the reception of the Cyclops episode, see the chapters entitled 'Facing Frontiers' and 'Colonial Conflict' in Hall (2008b).
[3] See Turner (forthcoming) for further discussion of the looseness of theatrical time in satyr drama.
[4] Hermes appears in Sophocles' *Trackers* and *Inachus*. Aeschylus and Euripides each wrote a *Sisyphus* satyr play, and Sisyphus also appears in Euripides' *Autolycus A*. Euripides composed at least one *Autolycus* satyr play, possibly two. Sutton (1974b) 166 suggests that the trickster figure appears so frequently in satyr plays that he may be styled the typical 'satyric figure'.
[5] Craik (1979) 25.

Trojan War is over, and Odysseus is now looking out only for himself and his men. We know that there were at least a few other plays, both tragedy and satyr drama, showing Odysseus after the Trojan War, such as Aeschylus' possible 'Odyssean Tetralogy'.[6] However, nothing more than a few fragments of these plays survives, and so Euripides' *Cyclops* is also a valuable opportunity to see Odysseus presented outside the Trojan War context and without some of the elements we have seen in previous plays, such as working for the common good. Despite the generic expectations of satyr drama and the non-Trojan War setting, some core elements of Odysseus' presentation remain in this play, such as his trickery and his association with sophistic speech. However, the satyric genre reveals interesting new angles.

6.1. Odysseus and the Cyclops in Homer

Odysseus' escapade in Polyphemus' cave forms the central part of *Odyssey* Book 9. This episode demonstrates Odysseus' formidable cunning but also his recklessness and selfishness. His wish to explore the island of the Cyclopes, and then his desire to wait for the Cyclops to return in the hope of receiving gifts, lead to the death of several men. Furthermore, his reckless boast and the revelation of his name lead to his punishment by Poseidon.

Books 9–12 of the *Odyssey* are narrated by Odysseus himself, when telling the Phaeacians of his exploits since the fall of Troy. His first action after leaving Troy is to sack the town of the Cicones and rob its inhabitants. After a brief description of the land of the Lotus-eaters, Odysseus arrives at Goat Island, opposite the land of the Cyclopes. He notes the suitability of the island for settlers and mentions that as the Cyclopes have no ships, they could not colonise it (9.125–31). Rinon observes that while for Odysseus the absence of ships is characteristic of a (dystopian) primitive society, the Cyclopes may have no use for colonial expeditions since they already live in a (utopian) paradise.[7] Polyphemus clearly has some familiarity with seafaring because he questions Odysseus about his activities and destination, asking whether they are on business or roaming around as pirates (9.252–5). Rinon summarises the

[6] On this tetralogy, see p. 29.
[7] Rinon (2007) 313.

Cyclopean view nicely: ‘shipping is for merchandise or for robbery, and they will have none of either’.[8] We will see both activities emerge again in Euripides’ *Cyclops*.

When describing the race of Cyclopes, Odysseus emphasises many negative aspects. Some of his descriptions of them and their way of life are proved false by the events he later narrates. For instance, he presents the Cyclopes as loners who hold no councils and claims each has no concern for the others (9.112). However, after Polyphemus is blinded and cries out, the other Cyclopes come rushing from all sides to see if he needs help (9.401). Because Odysseus is the narrator, he can present the Cyclopes, and Polyphemus in particular, in ways that make his actions seem justified. Many have noted that both cannibalism and the inability to handle alcohol are standard xenophobic tropes in many cultures and, furthermore, that cannibalism is an accusation levelled at those who resist conquest.[9] Consequently, the aggression of overseas settlement can be justified as ridding the land of a dangerous and violent threat.[10]

The Cyclops episode is part of the transition in Odysseus’ journey from his glory at Troy to finding his place in a post-war world. He travels to the Cyclopes’ island not to steal but in the hope of receiving gifts which are a sign of honour and of guest-friendship. He behaves like a typical hero and incorrectly assumes that the Cyclopes share these values.[11] By the end of his travels, Odysseus has lost his colonialist perspective, and instead of anticipating encounters with strangers, he starts to dread them.[12] Indeed, once Odysseus has reached Scheria, he receives the treatment from Alcinous that he was expecting, or hoping, to receive from the Cyclops.[13]

The Cyclops episode is not without childishness and buffoonery, however.[14] The story was probably derived from folktale, and it obviously differs from the loftier epic tone of the *Iliad* and most of the *Odyssey*. This lower tone is what made the story suitable for comedy and satyr drama, but apparently not for tragedy, in the fifth century.

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[8] Rinon (2007) 314.
[9] Dougherty (2001) 136; Hall (2008b) 91. Like the Cyclops, the Centaurs were thought to be milk drinkers who could not handle wine (Pin. fr. 166).
[10] Dougherty (2001) 138.
[11] Brown (1996) 25.
[12] Rinon (2007) 327.
[13] Dougherty (2001) 126.
[14] On the low tone, see Austin (1983).

6.2. Odysseus and the Cyclops in the Fifth Century

The Cyclops episode became one of the most popular depictions of Odysseus on pots. Before the fifth century, the blinding of the Cyclops was the more frequently depicted element of the story, whereas in the fifth century itself, Odysseus' escape under the ram seems to have been more popular. Several extremely similar Attic vases by the Athena Painter, usually oinochoai, show Odysseus under the ram, which suggests that this was a widely circulated, replicable, and easily recognised image.[15] The image of Odysseus and the ram was also depicted on gems, bronze reliefs, and terracotta reliefs and statuettes.[16] The frequency of depictions of the Cyclops episode, starting in the archaic period, implies that it became a popular epic episode, performed often by rhapsodes at the Panathenaea or elsewhere. The prevalence of the theme on oinochoai suggests that the Cyclops' first drinking bout was thought of as especially suitable for light-hearted wine-drinking contexts.

The popularity of this episode in the fifth century is evident also in literature. Odysseus' escape from the Cyclops under the ram is parodied in Aristophanes' *Wasps*, when Bdelycleon tries to escape from his house arrest under a donkey and calls himself 'Noman' when discovered (180–5). Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops became a popular story for more light-hearted and humorous treatment, featuring in several comedies and at least two satyr plays. The gluttony of Polyphemus is one of the major elements emphasised in these dramatisations of the Homeric episode, especially in the comedies. Of the one earlier satyr play on the Cyclops episode by Aristias of Phlius, son of Pratinus the supposed inventor of satyr drama, only one line survives (fr. 4):

> ἀπώλεσας τὸν οἶνον ἐπιχεάς ὕδωρ
> you ruined our wine by pouring water into it.

Aristias was the second poet to stage a *Cyclops* after Epicharmus, and the earliest known to produce this story in Athens.[17] We will look first at the comic fragments before turning to Euripides' *Cyclops*.

[15] See e.g. *ABV* 535.13–7.
[16] Giles-Watson (2007) 557.
[17] Shaw (2018) 105.

6.2.1. Comedy

The Cyclops episode was suitable material not just for satyr drama but also comedy. The Sicilian comic poet Epicharmus wrote a play entitled *Cyclops*, and although he was not an Athenian, and it is not known whether his plays were performed in Athens, his play is still important for our discussion as it is possible that he was the first to set the story in Sicily. Moreover, he was regarded as one of the founders of comic plots by Aristotle (*Poet*. 1449b5). Epicharmus' plays seem to have been similar to the genre of satyr drama in characters, titles, and plots. He also wrote a large number of plays featuring Heracles or Odysseus.[18] Only three short fragments survive of Epicharmus' *Cyclops*, two of which refer to drinking (frr. 70, 72), while the other refers to eating (fr. 71). Odysseus is not mentioned in any of the fragments, but as he was clearly a favourite character of Epicharmus, it is reasonable to assume that he does appear in this play.[19] Food and drink was clearly a theme in this early fifth-century comedic version of the Cyclops story, but we cannot know whether this began with Epicharmus.

In Athens, Cratinus' comedy *Odysseis* staged Odysseus' wanderings, including his encounter with the Cyclops. There is no evidence of where the play is set so we cannot say whether Cratinus chose to set it in Sicily.[20] The longest fragment from the play (fr. 150) is Polyphemus' detailed description of how he will cook and prepare Odysseus' men for his feast. Unfortunately, not enough survives for us to draw any conclusions about how Odysseus was presented. In one of the only fragments that mentions him, one character asks another whether they have ever seen Odysseus, and the second character replies that they saw him on Paros buying a pumpkin (fr. 147). This could suggest that Odysseus is presented as gluttonous, not just Polyphemus. Furthermore, in fr. 149 someone rebukes others for their gluttony, which could be Odysseus reproaching his men, suggesting that they too were greedy. Philips claims that the references to food in the fragments from Cratinus' play suggest that it had a moral of a sort: 'that gluttony led Odysseus and his men into a situation where they found that they themselves were the banquet'.[21] One fragment suggests a metatheatrical reference to the Homeric source of the story when one character,

[18] Katsouris (1999) 182–3; Shaw (2014) 60–1.
[19] See pp. 9–10 on Odysseus in Epicharmus.
[20] On the setting of the play, see Bakola (2010) 234–46.
[21] Philips (1959) 64.

probably Odysseus, instructs another: 'Now take and drink this, then ask me my name' (fr. 145). It is possible to see this as Odysseus telling the Cyclops that they need to follow the order of events from Homer.[22] This metatheatricality will appear again in Euripides' *Cyclops*.

Callias' *Cyclopes* was produced in 434. A few fragments remain which are mostly about food, with a particular emphasis on seafood, which was considered unheroic and unepic but comical.[23] However, there is no mention of Odysseus in the fragments of this play, so it is possible that it was not based on *Odyssey* 9 but on the Cyclopes in general.[24] Philoxenus also treated Polyphemus in a light-hearted way in the early fourth century in his dithyramb entitled *Cyclops*, which was then parodied by Aristophanes in his *Wealth*.[25]

One strong theme that seems to run through these comedies is that of food. In the *Odyssey*, Polyphemus is notable for his cannibalism, and he eats Odysseus' men raw (9.291–3). In the fifth century the Cyclops is transformed into a chef who has different methods for preparing and eating his food. This way of 'civilising' Polyphemus is also present in Euripides.[26]

6.2.2. Euripides' *Cyclops*

Of all the extant fifth-century plays featuring Odysseus, Euripides' *Cyclops* is the one in which he has the most stage presence and speaks the most lines. There are only three characters in the play – Odysseus, Silenus, and Polyphemus – as well as the chorus. Before we concentrate on Odysseus' interactions with these other characters, we will briefly discuss the play's date. The metatheatrical importance of this play has often been obscured by discussions of this unanswerable question. Once we have dealt with that, we can turn to the more interesting issue of the status of the satyrs as witnesses of theatre, and how this affects their interactions with Odysseus.

The performance date for *Cyclops* is unknown and so are its accompanying tragedies. Most scholars nevertheless agree that the play is a late work of Euripides. There are three main chronological theories. First is Sutton's theory that *Cyclops*

[22] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 5.
[23] Shaw (2018) 107.
[24] Storey (2011) 155.
[25] See Hall (2020) 227–9 on the parody of Philoxenus in Aristophanes.
[26] Tanner (1915) 177; Olson (2014) 60.

accompanied *Hecuba* in the 420s.[27] Seaford's metrical analysis of the play, however, suggests a date between 412–408, but this is based, perhaps without justification, on comparison with the metrical dating of Euripidean tragedy, which is itself a tendentious method.[28] Following Seaford, Wright selects 412 as the date and suggests that *Cyclops* followed the 'escape tragedies' *Helen*, *Andromeda*, and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.[29] Finally, Seaford himself suggests that *Cyclops* comes from 408, and several others support this idea.[30]

Besides the metrical evidence, the main arguments for the late date concern literary allusions in *Cyclops*. The first words of Polyphemus (222) are similar to lines from Euripides' *Andromeda* (fr. 125) of 412, which are then parodied in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* (1105–6), first performed in 411. The term used at the end of the *Cyclops* for the double-entrance cave (ἀμφιτρῆτος, 707) only seems to have been used here and in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (19), first performed in 409.[31] Scholars who argue for a late date believe that these two linguistic similarities are key evidence for the dating of *Cyclops*.[32]

The dating has an important impact on the interpretation of the play's content because of its Sicilian setting. If the play was first produced after Athens' disastrous Sicilian Expedition, this would certainly change the audience's perception of the action. We have already seen throughout our discussion of the fifth-century Athenian Odysseus that his character is often connected to locations, or people from locations – usually islands – that were important targets for Athenian imperialism: Ithaca and Cephallenia, Euboea, Scyros, Lemnos, Salamis, and Aegina. The Sicilian setting of

[27] Sutton (1974b) 167.
[28] Seaford (1982) 168. On the limitations of this dating method, see Hall (2010) 232–3.
[29] Wright (2006) 23; but see Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 40 n. 157, who suggest that *Iphigenia among the Taurians* should be dated a few years earlier than 412.
[30] Seaford (1982) 171; Marshall (2001) 238 and (2005) 106; Harrison (2005b) 250 suggests it is difficult not to see this play in light of the oligarchic coup of 411 and the reaction after its fall; O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 41 do not explicitly support this theory but imply it is the favoured one; Shaw (2018) 109 works on the assumption that the date is 408 but finds Wright's suggestion of 412 attractive. Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 38–46 have a detailed discussion of the date and the various evidence for the late date, but they are wisely sceptical of certain evidence others take for granted. One possible objection to the late date comes from Trendall (1991) 159–61, who supposes that a calyx-krater depicting the sleeping Polyphemus about to be blinded by Odysseus' men, which features satyrs, is inspired by Euripides' play but cannot be later than, or maybe even as late as, 408; Woodford (2003) 113 dates this vase to c.415–410. Giles-Watson (2007) 563 gives a date for the play of 424 but offers no rationale.
[31] As Seidensticker (2021) 304 notes, it is difficult to see what the function of this allusion to Sophocles' *Philoctetes* would have been.
[32] Seaford (1982) 170–1; Marshall (2001) 227 and 233.

Euripides' *Cyclops* is perhaps the most obvious case of this. According to Thucydides, Athens had an interest in expanding into Sicily from 427 and sent an expedition to assist Leontini (3.86.3).[33] However, he claims that their real aims were to prevent corn being brought to the Peloponnese from Sicily and to make a survey with a view to taking control of the island (3.86.4–5). The later Sicilian Expedition of 415–413 was one of the climactic events of the Peloponnesian War and a major undertaking for Athens. Thucydides opens his account of this expedition by saying that the earliest inhabitants of Sicily were the Cyclopes and Laestrygonians (6.2.1). This gives his narrative an epic framework, and the disastrous loss of life these two races inflict on Odysseus' men mythically prefigures the deaths of the Athenians inflicted by the Sicilians.[34]

Some of those who argue for a late date for Euripides' play suggest that the playwright makes explicit references to the disaster at Sicily. Seaford, for example, suggests that the Athenian audience would have been reminded of their fellow-citizens when seeing the Greeks trapped in Polyphemus' cave.[35] Similarly, Shaw maintains that Euripides composed the play with the Athenian defeat at Sicily in mind.[36] He claims that like the Athenians of the Sicilian Expedition, the overly proud Odysseus sails to a land he does not fully understand, and is unprepared for the ensuing encounter with the locals.[37] Although the current consensus is that *Cyclops* was produced after the Sicilian Expedition, these claims, particularly Shaw's, seem difficult to accept. While other late fifth-century comedies and tragedies generally take an anti-war stance and make references, explicit in the case of comedy, to the war, this appears to be a slightly different situation. We do not know enough about how satyr drama as a genre dealt with the contemporary world to make this hypothesis more than speculative. Hunter and Laemmle suggest that the play is from 408 but are sceptical about there being any references to the Sicilian Expedition. They rightly point out that no such connection is necessary to explain the play or anything in it.[38]

[33] See Kagan (1981) 159–67 on Athenian interest in Sicily.
[34] Frangoulidis (1993) 100.
[35] Seaford (1984) 55.
[36] Shaw (2018) 84.
[37] Shaw (2018) 84.
[38] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 44–5.

Even if satyr drama frequently made contemporary references, what Shaw suggests would have been unbelievably traumatic for the Athenian audience, especially if it were implied that their fellow citizens' deaths were caused by their own arrogance and ignorance.[39] Furthermore, we can see that Euripides made a deliberate alteration from his Homeric model by having Odysseus shipwrecked on Polyphemus' island rather than going there by choice to see what spoils he can find. This makes Odysseus seem less imperialistic, or at least not motivated by colonial aspirations. Finally, Shaw's claim that the Athenians were defeated due to their own ignorance of Sicily and its inhabitants derives from a Thucydidean passage whose truthfulness has been questioned (6.1.1). Kagan points out that only a few years before the Sicilian Expedition several thousand Athenians returned from Sicily and would have been familiar with its geography.[40]

Odysseus' interactions with the other characters

If we put to one side the distraction of the play's date, other extraordinary facets become apparent. Odysseus has varying interactions and forms different relationships with the other characters in the play: Silenus is a duplicitous figure who crosses Odysseus but then aids his plot of revenge; the chorus of satyrs quickly form a bond of friendship with him; and Polyphemus is his enemy, as he is in Homer. Each character Odysseus encounters undermines his former heroism by mocking the Trojan War or Odysseus' reputation. We will look at Odysseus' interactions with each character in turn: Silenus, the satyrs, and finally Polyphemus. Through this we will examine three strands of Odysseus' presentation. First, the metatheatrical knowledge of Silenus and the satyrs, and following this, the contrast between Odysseus' Homeric and tragic reputation within the play. Second, the relationship between Odysseus and Silenus, how they begin to behave like each other, and how Odysseus eventually supplants Silenus as attendant to the Cyclops and leader of the chorus. Finally, in Odysseus' interactions with Polyphemus we will examine his rhetorical and, potentially, political presentation.

[39] Phrynichus' *Fall of Miletus*, for example, was banned because it caused such grief when reminding Athenians of the sack of their colony (Hdt. 6.21.10). Thucydides describes the despair of the Athenians upon learning of the defeat at Sicily (8.1).
[40] Kagan (1981) 165.

There is one similarity between all the satyric characters in this play; they all have an awareness of who Odysseus is and of the events of the Trojan War. Hunter and Laemmle, in their recent commentary, have also noticed the metatheatricality throughout *Cyclops*, particularly surrounding the characters' knowledge of events outside the play. However, they confine their interpretation mainly to knowledge of Homer whereas, as we shall see, the characters have knowledge of both Homer and tragedy. Overall, satyr drama was a more metatheatrical genre than tragedy.[41] It was also a self-conscious and self-referential genre, due in large part to the invariable presence of the chorus of satyrs and their father Silenus.[42]

Silenus

Silenus is the first person with whom Odysseus converses when he arrives on stage. The elderly satyr begins by asking him who he is and where he has come from. Odysseus introduces himself honestly as king of the Cephallenians (103). Silenus' response after learning Odysseus' name is unusual and significant (104):

> οἶδ' ἄνδρα, κρόταλον δριμύ, Σισύφου γένος.
> I know of the man, the clever chatterer, Sisyphus' son.

I agree with those who see this third-person reference to Odysseus as a burlesque reference to the opening line of the *Odyssey*, which begins with ἄνδρα, referring to Odysseus; it playfully draws attention to the play's reliance on the *Odyssey*.[43] Silenus professes his familiarity with the lead character from Homer's epic. He then juxtaposes this Homeric reference with Odysseus' Sisyphean lineage, which is never mentioned in Homer. It is, as we have seen, frequently used in tragedy as a way of disparaging Odysseus.[44] The same expression (οἶδ' ἄνδρα) is used in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (429) by the character Euripides, although here the ἄνδρα refers not to his interlocutor, but to a fictional character from one of his tragedies. Silenus speaks of Odysseus as though he were an off-stage character, not an interlocutor.

[41] See Kaimio *et al*. (2001) on metatheatricality in satyr drama.
[42] Hunter (2009) 56–60.
[43] Wright (2006) 36; Hunter (2009) 60; Shaw (2018) 39. On the reference to the play's reliance on the *Odyssey*, see Shaw (2020) 486.
[44] Soph. fr. 567, see p. 70; Eur. *IA* 524, 1362, see p. 87; Aesch. fr. 175, see p. 102; Soph. *Aj*. 189, see p. 115; Soph. *Phil*. 385, 417, 1311, see pp. 204–5.

Silenus' comment also treats Odysseus almost like a stock character, identifying him as the one filling the satyric trickster role. Furthermore, it draws Odysseus' attention to his presence in a satyr drama and not the heroic world of epic or tragedy.[45] Sisyphus, a trickster *par excellence*, was a regular character in satyr drama.[46] Silenus would therefore have encountered Sisyphus on stage in other satyr plays. *Autolycus A* possibly featured the story of Sisyphus' impregnation of Autolycus' daughter Anticleia prior to her marriage to Laertes, thus depicting the alternative story of Odysseus' parentage on stage.[47]

Silenus refers to Odysseus almost like a mythological character, implying his knowledge of all previous Athenian drama. The chorus of satyr drama is always the same, and rather than being tied to the action like the choruses of tragedy, they are only 'caught for a moment' in the action of the satyr drama before escaping at the end.[48] Silenus and the satyrs, as theatrical characters, were placed in a variety of locations at any point during the entire sweep of mythological chronology, from the births of gods to the returns of Trojan War heroes. This temporal transferability means that they are assumed to have an intimate knowledge of many characters and stories. The way that Silenus and, as we will see, the satyrs describe Odysseus shows their familiarity with his tragic, as well as Homeric, reputation. It almost seems as if Silenus is saying that he has watched earlier tragedies in which Odysseus appeared. Rather than referring to Odysseus' conduct in a play of the same tetralogy, Silenus (and the satyrs) could be referring to all previous Athenian theatre, as though they have been spectators like the Athenian audience members.[49] There is evidence that a similar occurrence might have happened in another satyr play. In two fragments from Euripides' *Sciron*, there are allusions to other labours of Theseus – both his earlier conflict with the robber Sinis (fr. 679) and his later battle with Procrustes (fr. 676). It seems that Silenus and the satyrs may have had knowledge of Theseus' exploits from outside the play.[50]

[45] Seidensticker (2021) 307.
[46] See p. 226 n. 4 above.
[47] O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 384–5.
[48] Griffith (2002) 211–2; Shaw (2018) 69 also notes that the fact the chorus is always the same makes satyr drama a self-reflective genre. See also Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 24–5 and 33.
[49] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 18.
[50] Shaw (2020) 487.

Many Athenians in the audience at dramatic festivals would have had previous experience of performing in a chorus. Revermann suggests that the Athenian *polis* could rely on recruiting between two and four percent of its adult male citizen population each year for choral performance in drama or dithyrambs.[51] As he observes: 'as much as the spectators may have differed in terms of their educational and social background, a substantial portion of them would be united through the theatrical experience of having performed in the theatre of Dionysus themselves'.[52] While some may have portrayed Argive elders or Trojan women, Greek soldiers or Erinyes, almost all who had at some point served in a tragic chorus would have performed as a satyr. Being a satyr was a shared experience for many Athenians, and the satyrs' knowledge and wisdom, gained from their travels through the entire history of Greek mythology, was shared by the audience who were familiar with myth from dramatic performances.

In this one line, Silenus has linked both the Homeric and the tragic Odysseus by alluding to Homer's opening word and Odysseus' un-Homeric parentage. Furthermore, κρόταλον δριμύ neatly sums up Odysseus' usually negative tragic reputation as a clever speaker. We have already seen in the discussion of κρότημα in *Rhesus* some connections between Odysseus and rattling noises.[53] Κρόταλον usually refers to 'a rattle' or 'a castanet', emphasising Odysseus' relentless talking. The word is again used by Polyphemus when he enters and tells the satyrs that there are no castanets (κρόταλα, 205) on Sicily and no Bacchic dances. This is dramatic irony as Odysseus, who has been called a κρόταλον, is at the back of the stage, out of Polyphemus' sight. In Sophocles' *Inachus*, the chorus recognise the god Hermes by the noises he makes when entering (fr. **269c), probably a reference to his pipe.[54] Odysseus, however, is associated with noise not from an instrument but from his own throat.

The word κρόταλον is elsewhere associated with worship, referring to a musical instrument used in divine revels. Some texts refer to κρόταλα being used in the

[51] Revermann (2006) 108.
[52] Revermann (2006) 112.
[53] See pp. 162–3.
[54] O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 323.

worship of the mother of the gods.[55] However, κρόταλα are also used in Dionysiac rituals. An epigram of Antipater of Sidon describes five votaries of Dionysus dancing, each carrying a different item important to the god, including a heavy bronze κρόταλον (*Greek Anthology* IX.603.6). Pindar lists the clanging of κρόταλα as part of the rites for the mother of the gods, Cybele, among the Phrygians and connects her worship to Dionysiac worship among the Greeks (fr. 70b10). In *Bacchae*, Euripides also makes this same connection (72). Κρόταλα are also frequently shown on Greek vases and are usually held by maenads, sometimes accompanied by satyrs.[56] Silenus therefore links the hero with the god through whom, in his function as wine god, Odysseus will enact his revenge later in the play. It is also Odysseus who will return the followers of Dionysus to their master, allowing them to resume their Bacchic revels, which they have been denied on Sicily.

However, there is another usage of κρόταλον that is more appropriate to Silenus' description of Odysseus. The compound adjective πολύκροτος is used to describe Odysseus as cunning in Hesiod (*Catalogue of Women* 5.154c.3 [Most]):

> υἱὸς Λαέρταο πολύκροτα μήδεα εἰδώς
> Laertes' son, skilled in well-constructed counsels.

Furthermore, some ancient commentators on the *Odyssey* present an alternative reading of the first line of the epic poem, with πολύκροτος in place of πολύτροπος.[57] Despite typically referring to rattling or ringing noises, κρότος here is instead used to mean 'sly', 'cunning', or 'wily'.[58] Κρόταλον is used twice in Aristophanes' *Clouds* in connection with sophistry (260, 448).[59] In both cases, κρόταλον is listed alongside other qualities gained from learning at Socrates' 'thinkery', and from the context it clearly refers to being a smooth talker. Evidence for this meaning of the word is limited to Aristophanes and Euripides' *Cyclops*, but it clearly has associations with the sorts of lying, slippery speech that Odysseus elsewhere practices. This is further

[55] See e.g. *Homeric Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* 14.3; Eur. *Hel*. 1308; Heph., *Handbook on Metres* 12.3.
[56] The Beazley Archive Pottery Database has around seven hundred results in response to a search on 'krotala'.
[57] Schol. Ar. *Nu*. 260; Eusthatius on *Od*. 1.1; see Seidensticker (2021) 306.
[58] LSJ s.v. πολύκροτος A II.
[59] See p. 260 on the passage in which the second of these uses occurs.

evidence of Silenus' metatheatrical awareness of Odysseus' tragic reputation, but with a possible hint to the alternative reading of the first line of the *Odyssey*.

Δριμύς, meanwhile, is used in a negative sense in Plato, who compares those who often speak in a law court to true philosophers. The former, he claims, rush for the water clock and their speech becomes 'tense and shrewd' (*Tht*. 173a). Soon after this, Socrates calls such a man one of 'small and sharp (δριμύς) and pettifogging mind' (175d). Aristotle similarly discusses those who think themselves 'clever (δριμύς) at answering' (*Top*. 8.156b37). Δριμύς is also used to mean clever in Aristophanes' *Birds* 255 and to describe the shrewdness of Odysseus in Aeschylus' and Euripides' *Philoctetes* (Dio Chrys. *Or*. 52.5, 13). Again, this description seems more in keeping with the tragic, rather than Homeric, Odysseus. He is obviously renowned for his shrewdness in epic, but this shrewdness carries more negative connotations in tragedy; such connotations are neatly captured by the use of δριμύς.

Silenus takes a second opportunity to ridicule Odysseus and his clever speaking after Odysseus' appeal to Polyphemus to spare him and his men. Silenus' interjection takes the place of a usually neutral choral interjection between the main speeches in a tragic *agon*.[60] He advises Polyphemus to make sure that he eats Odysseus' tongue along with the rest of him, in order to assume his powers of speech (313–5):

> παραινέσαι σοι βούλομαι: τῶν γὰρ κρεῶν
>
> μηδὲν λίπῃς τοῦδ', ἢν τε τὴν γλῶσσαν δάκῃς,
>
> κομψὸς γενήσῃ καὶ λαλίστατος, Κύκλωψ.
>
> I want to give you some advice: don't leave untouched a
> single bit of this man's flesh. And if you chew on his tongue,
> you will become clever and glib, Cyclops.

As with his comment when first learning Odysseus' name, Silenus undercuts the hero's reputation for persuasive speech by mocking his skill, first as a sharp rattle and now as κομψός and λαλίστατος.[61] Κομψός is ambiguous since it can mean 'refined' or 'clever' but also, in a sneering sense, 'subtle'.[62] In Euripides this word is

[60] O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) *ad loc*.; Hunter and Laemmle (2020) *ad loc*.
[61] On Odysseus' tongue in tragedy, see p. 154, 198, and 205.
[62] LSJ s.v. κομψός 2.

almost always used in a negative sense.[63] In *Trojan Women* it is used of the clever talk of women (651–2). In both *Aeolus* (fr. 16) and *Antiope* (fr. 188.5), sophistries and the 'smart arts' are dismissed as κομψά. We saw in *Rhesus*, however, that Diomedes uses κομψός to describe Odysseus' skill in subtleties (625), which, from Diomedes' perspective as his fellow-warrior, seems meant as a compliment.[64] In *Suppliants*, Theseus calls Creon's herald, whom he regards with contempt, both κομψός (426) and λάλος (462). We will discuss the significance of these similarities to *Suppliants* below, when a further resonance appears in Polyphemus' speech.

Λαλίστατος is the superlative form of the adjective λάλος, meaning 'talkative' or 'babbling'. Other than in Euripides' *Suppliants* (see above), this adjective appears only once more, in a fragment of Euripides referring to heralds as a talkative breed (fr. 1012).[65] The related noun λάλημα, 'talk' or 'prattle', appears in Sophocles' *Antigone* when Creon chastises the guard and calls him a babbler (320).[66] In tragedy, therefore, the accusation of being talkative is made to humbler characters such as heralds and guards.[67] If the suggested reconstruction of the line is correct, Silenus also calls the chorus of satyrs λαλίστατοι in Sophocles' *Trackers* (fr. 314.135). Cleon and Alcibiades are both called λάλος in Aristophanes (*Peace* 652–3; *Ach*. 716). Similarly, in *Frogs*, both Euripides and Socrates are associated with chatter (954, 1292). Elsewhere in Aristophanes, the verb λαλέω can be used to mean chatter or prattle, but it can also mean gossip.[68] In a fragment of Eupolis, someone is described as 'very good at chattering, totally incapable of speaking' (fr. 116). Similarly, in a later passage from Demosthenes, there is a contrast between 'chattering' (λαλεῖν) and 'speaking' (λέγειν) (21.118). Silenus uses κομψός and λαλίστατος here, therefore, to insult Odysseus and to mock the speech he has just delivered as mere clever chatter. It also insults him in the same way that characters are lampooned in Aristophanes.

[63] Seaford (1984) on 315.
[64] See p. 172. This is also the case with Diomedes' description of Odysseus as σοφός in the same line.
[65] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) on 175.
[66] Λάλημα possibly also appears in *Andromache* 937, but this line is suspect and often deleted by editors.
[67] Mastronarde (2010) 207.
[68] Chatter/prattle: see e.g. *Nub*. 505; *Vesp*. 1135; *Ecc*. 1058. Gossip: see e.g. *Ran*. 751; *Thesm*. 578; *Ach*. 21.

Overall, there are some striking similarities between Odysseus and Silenus. They both find themselves on Sicily because they have been blown off course (109–10). This links Odysseus, the satyrs, and their father since they have all arrived by accident in their current inhospitable setting. Odysseus leads his men like Silenus leads the satyrs. They both come under the dominion of Polyphemus, and both are forced to attend on him. Odysseus then supplants Silenus as Polyphemus' assistant because the old satyr cannot be trusted with the wine (566).

Odysseus and Silenus also use similar expressions when arranging the exchange of their goods. When Silenus notices the Greeks approaching, he comments that they look in want of food (βορὰν…κεχρημένοις, 88). The same phrase is repeated by Odysseus in his opening lines (98). Both characters use an especially rare word for 'sell' (ὀδάω, 12, 98, 133; cf. the compound ἐξοδάω used by Silenus at 267).[69] Odysseus also comments that his men need bread, using the verb σπανίζω (133). Just a few lines later, Silenus uses the exact same expression to describe the satyrs' lack of wine (οὖ σπανίζομεν, 140). The two phrases complement each other, showing that wine is to Silenus what bread is to the Greeks.[70] Both characters use similar phrases – possible proverbial or marketplace sayings – when asking for a look at, or sample of, the product they are acquiring (137, 150).[71] The effect of these mercantile references could be to denigrate both characters. We have elsewhere seen Odysseus associated with mercantile activity, especially in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.[72] The mercantile activity also undermines Odysseus' boastfulness throughout the play.[73]

Both Silenus and Odysseus are boastful about their past exploits and former sufferings (1, 10, 107; cf. 110, 282). These exploits would have been shown on stage elsewhere, in other tragedies and satyr plays, and would be well known to the Athenian audience.[74] They also both use the same verb for their endurance (ἐξαντλῶ, 10, 110, 282). We see Silenus' boastful nature elsewhere in satyr drama, for example in Sophocles' *Trackers* (fr. 314.153–8) and Euripides' *Eurystheus* (fr. 373). In the

[69] Konstan (1990) 213.
[70] O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) *ad loc*.
[71] Konstan (1990) 213. Ussher (1978) *ad loc*. states that line 137 sounds like a piece of traditional wisdom; Seaford (1984) *ad loc*. suggests line 150 sounds proverbial; Hunter and Laemmle (2020) *ad loc*. call both lines proverbial.
[72] See pp. 210–1 on *Philoctetes*. See also p. 128 on Antisthenes' *Ajax* speech. See Worman (2008) 143 on Odysseus generally.
[73] Katsouris (1997) 7.
[74] Hunter (2009) 57.

former, Silenus chastises his sons for their fear at the unfamiliar sound of music, claiming that he has performed martial feats whose brilliance the satyrs now tarnish. Specifically, he says that he has not in the past turned to flight – similar to a boast made by Odysseus when he plans to stand his ground instead of fleeing from the approaching Polyphemus (198–9). Odysseus is similarly egotistical when he talks about his own exploits. Perhaps the audience was supposed to think less of Odysseus' boastfulness after seeing the ridiculous Silenus bragging about his past. Silenus has been placed inside a Homeric episode, and right at the start of the play we see him recounting his own exploits in the manner of an epic hero, with close references to Homer.[75]

Curiously, both Silenus and Odysseus describe themselves as assisting Polyphemus during his feasts. Silenus describes himself as the Cyclops' attendant (διάκονος, 31), and Odysseus says that he waited on him (κἀδιακόνουν, 406). In Silenus' case, we can presume that he does whatever Polyphemus wants because he is the monster's slave and is afraid of him. In Odysseus' case, it is harder to understand what is going on and why Silenus is not waiting on Polyphemus, since he too seems to be inside the cave. Silenus is not mentioned in Odysseus' description of events inside the cave, until the hero tells the satyrs that their father agrees with the escape plan but is weakened by his love of wine (431–4). Silenus is possibly too drunk to help the Cyclops with his feasting, and so Polyphemus turns to Odysseus, as he will later in the symposium scene.

The terminology used by both Odysseus and Silenus appears in other satyr plays. For instance, in *Trackers* Silenus criticises the satyrs as useless servants (διακονοῦντες, fr. 314.150). A character is addressed as a διάκονος in a fragment of Euripides' *Eurystheus* (fr. 375). Finally, Silenus is called the διάκονος of Sciron in the hypothesis of Euripides' *Sciron* (*P. Oxy*. 2455 fr. 6). Since the satyrs are frequently depicted as being enslaved in satyr drama, this term may be a frequent one. Why, though, does Odysseus perform this role? It is only mentioned in passing in his messenger-style speech to the chorus but is not fully explained.[76] Furthermore, it comes earlier in his narrative than his divine idea to get the Cyclops drunk and so cannot be explained as part of his plan to serve the Cyclops wine. Harrison suggests

[75] *Cyc*. 15, *Od*. 15.269–70; *Cyc*. 16–7, *Od*. 9.177–80, 472, 12.171.
[76] Seidensticker (2021) 315 lists this issue among other inconsistencies in the play.

– following Fletcher's proposal that Silenus' domesticated role in this play feminises him – that Odysseus too must be feminised here in order to make the recovery of his masculinity imperative.[77] This is plausible, and the humiliation could provide Odysseus with an extra motivation for revenge.

However, Odysseus' role as attendant can also be seen as part of the wider pattern of Odysseus replacing Silenus, both in service to the Cyclops and as leader of the chorus.[78] For example, both Odysseus and Silenus perform the role of wine-pourer for Polyphemus during the symposium (560, 566). Frustrated by the satyr's repeated attempts to quaff the wine behind his back, Polyphemus turns to Odysseus to perform the task for him. This provides Odysseus with the opportunity to encourage the Cyclops to keep drinking wine until he is suitably drunk. Silenus' role in the play diminishes after the Cyclops first appears, and Odysseus seems to take his place in relation to the chorus. Once the plan for revenge is set in motion, Odysseus gives instructions to the chorus. Silenus does not speak any further lines after he is dragged into the cave by Polyphemus at 580. It is not even made clear that Silenus escapes with the others at the end of the play, though he presumably does.

The rhetorical techniques of 'mirroring' and 'character exchange' are both on display between Silenus and Odysseus.[79] Silenus attempts more epic diction to match Odysseus, while Odysseus tries to ingratiate himself with the Cyclops in the way Silenus does. It is a source of amusement as both Odysseus and Silenus are tricksters, and they are both trying to manipulate the other to get what they want; Odysseus is desperate to escape, while Silenus desires wine. Odysseus proves the better of the two since he masterminds the escape from the island, while Silenus is raped by Polyphemus.

We unfortunately do not have enough evidence to know whether this close similarity between Silenus and the hero of each satyr play occurred regularly. At a basic level, it is likely that the hero of the play often finds themselves in the same predicament as the satyrs and their father. In *Cyclops* they have all been shipwrecked, and the same could be true in Aeschylus' *Proteus*, the satyr play which concluded the *Oresteia*, in which Menelaus is shipwrecked in Egypt. In many plays the satyrs are enslaved by

[77] Harrison (2005b) 245 n. 35; Fletcher (2005) 57.
[78] Hamilton (1979) 290.
[79] Worman (1999) 45.

an ogre-like figure, and the hero of the play may encounter the monster under similar circumstances. Furthermore, there does seem to have been a tendency for characters with some satyric qualities to be more often depicted in satyr drama, such as tricksters, technology gods such as Prometheus and Hephaestus, as well as gluttonous heroes like Heracles. It is possible, therefore, that it was a source of comedy in satyr drama that the old and foolish Silenus tries to copy the hero, and that the hero in turn behaves more like a satyr. On the Pronomos vase, for instance, Silenus stands face-to-face with Heracles and wears a lion skin which could be intended to mock the hero.[80]

Satyrs

Unlike their father Silenus, the satyrs make friends with Odysseus instantly. They stand against their father in support of him when Silenus lies about trading away the Cyclops' food, and even though they are too cowardly to assist with the blinding, they still want to support him. However, they also demean his heroic exploits in their comments on the Trojan War. Like Silenus, they have an awareness of Odysseus' reputation, although they express it in a more positive manner overall.

The satyrs question Odysseus about the outcome of the Trojan War, focusing particularly on Helen. Odysseus comically misunderstands their question and provides a general answer about the defeat of Troy. To describe the sack, Odysseus uses the verb πέρθω (178), the same verb used in the opening of the *Odyssey* (1.2). Again, we see Odysseus talking about himself in Homeric terms.[81] The satyrs' response shows that they are not interested in the fate of Troy so much as Helen and her sexual appetites. They call Helen a traitor (182), a label applied to her in other Euripidean tragedies.[82] Just as with Odysseus, the satyrs are familiar with Helen's tragic reputation. The satyrs' focus on sex undermines the heroism of the Trojan War, and Odysseus' boasting achieves nothing.

Soon afterwards, Odysseus refuses Silenus' suggestion that they flee from the Cyclops, boasting that Troy would groan if he were to flee from a single man and

[80] Collinge (1958/9) 31. For an illustration of this vase and detailed discussion of it, see Taplin and Wyles (2010).
[81] Ussher (1971) 172 comments that it is the note of boastfulness here that later leads Silenus to describe Odysseus as κομψός.
[82] *Andr*. 630, *El*. 1028, *Hel*. 834, 931, 1148. Cf. Aesch. *Ag*. 403–8 and 681–93. See O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) on 181–2.

instead, he will stay and preserve his 'reputation' (αἶνος, 198–202). At this point, Odysseus' reputation has been undermined by both Silenus and the satyrs.[83] In this early part of the play, Odysseus presents himself as a Homeric hero and boasts about his exploits. However, the satyric characters are not impressed by this, and instead they focus on the less noble aspects of both Odysseus and the Trojan War. As well as reputation, αἶνος can also mean simply 'story', leading Hunter and Laemmle to their intriguing suggestion that Odysseus here is referring to his story from the *Odyssey*. He must stay and confront the Cyclops so that he has the Cyclops story to tell the Phaeacians.[84] He makes a further reference to Homer later in the play after escaping the Cyclops' cave (376).[85]

Later, Odysseus and the satyrs discuss the plan to take revenge on the Cyclops. The chorus suggest pushing Polyphemus off a cliff or cutting his throat when he heads off to share his wine with the other Cyclopes. Odysseus responds that he has something more cunning in mind (449). The satyrs ask for more details of the plan, adding (450):

> σοφόν τοί σ᾽ ὄντ᾽ ἀκούομεν πάλαι.
> We have long heard about your cleverness.

Just as Silenus was familiar with Odysseus and his typical characteristics, so too are the satyrs. We have seen several instances of Odysseus being described as *sophos* to denigrate him.[86] Here, however, the satyrs seem to use it as a compliment, since they approve of the plan to trick and blind the Cyclops. We have already seen a similar situation in *Rhesus*, when Diomedes calls his ally Odysseus *sophos* (625) in praise of his sharp eye.[87]

The phrase ἀκούομεν πάλαι shows that Odysseus' reputation has preceded him, either to Sicily or to the satyrs. That *sophos* is used, as it is so often of Odysseus in tragedy but never in epic, shows that the reference here is to his *fifth-century*

[83] See e.g. O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) on 202, who observe that for Silenus Odysseus' renown 'conjures up a man of suspect ancestry and a relentless babbler', and Worman (2002b) 116, who states that the chorus leader has emptied Odysseus' war record of its noble tenor and refashioned it to focus on physical debasement and bodily urges.
[84] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) on 201–2.
[85] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) *ad loc*.
[86] See pp. 57, 73–4, 157, 200, 206–7, and 219.
[87] Cf. pp. 119–20 its positive use of Odysseus in *Ajax*.

reputation.[88] Silenus earlier showed that he is aware of both the epic and the tragic character of Odysseus, but here the satyrs are particularly aware of his theatrical reputation for ambiguous cleverness. Again, it seems as if the satyrs have been spectators of other Athenian plays.

When the time comes for the chorus to provide their promised aid to the hero in blinding Polyphemus, they all begin to feign injury or give excuses. This comically plays on the convention for a dramatic chorus not to leave the stage to be involved in any off-stage action.[89] It also presents a further opportunity for metatheatrical references. Frustrated by their cowardliness, Odysseus complains (649–50):

> πάλαι μὲν ᾔδη σ᾽ ὄντα τοιοῦτον φύσει,
>
> νῦν δ᾽ οἶδ᾽ ἄμεινον
>
> For a long time I have known that your nature was like this,
> but now I know it better.

Just as the satyrs are aware of Odysseus' stereotypical characteristics, he too is aware of theirs. He uses πάλαι, as the chorus did earlier, to show that their reputation is long since known to him. His complaint is reminiscent of a fragment from Hesiod, the oldest mention of the satyrs, which establishes their reputation for cowardice by calling them 'worthless and frivolous' (fr. 10.17–18 Most). Odysseus' words also point to the consistency of the satyr chorus; they are the same cowardly satyrs in every play.[90]

Despite Odysseus' frustration with the satyrs and his betrayal by Silenus, he still resolves to help them all escape from Polyphemus. In the last lines of the play, the chorus joins with Odysseus in the escape, stating that they are his shipmates (708), confirming their friendship with him. The triumphant escape of the hero along with the satyrs was no doubt a common ending to satyr plays, whose plots often centred around the overthrow of an ogre figure.

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[88] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) *ad loc*. miss this point when they state that 'Odysseus is of course known as both δόλιος and σοφός principally from *Od*.'. Not only is σοφός not used of Odysseus in Homer, but it is not used in Homer at all.
[89] Arnott (1972) 24–5; Catrambone (2021) 169.
[90] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) *ad loc*.

Polyphemus

Based on his earlier exchanges with Silenus, it seems that Odysseus has no prior knowledge of Polyphemus and the other Cyclopes. Polyphemus, meanwhile, does not know that the man he is speaking to is Odysseus. He knows of Odysseus through the prophecy that the Greek hero will blind him. However, it is not made explicit, as in the case with Silenus and the satyrs, that Polyphemus has a detailed awareness of Odysseus. Crucially, Polyphemus does not seem to be aware of his Athenian dramatic reputation.

When Polyphemus first sees Odysseus and his men, he asks whether they are thieves or pirates (223), echoing the *Odyssey* (9.254). This is apt considering that in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus spends much time at sea, engaging in several raids of the territory he encounters. Furthermore, in Homer, Odysseus' men try to persuade him to let them seize as much of the Cyclops' goods as they can (9.225–7), and then after escaping they steal the animals under which they hid (9.464–5). The reference to pirates in *Cyclops* could also be an allusion to Dionysus' capture by pirates – recounted in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* and mentioned by Silenus in his prologue (11–2) – since Odysseus is in possession of 'Dionysus' in the form of the Maronian wine that he carries with him.[91] Silenus also states that the pirates planned to sell Dionysus (12), which is what Odysseus does with the wine.

Polyphemus asks where the strangers come from (276), and Odysseus this time decides not to reveal his name. However, he does tell Polyphemus that they are on their way home after sacking Troy (277–9). Polyphemus has clearly heard of the Trojan War, as he asks if it was Odysseus and his comrades who sacked Troy because 'evil' Helen was carried off (280). Again, we see that Polyphemus is aware of the reputation of Helen in tragedy. Polyphemus, like the chorus, devalues Odysseus' achievements in the Trojan War by reducing the conflict to one fought for the sake of a woman. He calls this a shameful thing to have done (283). Arrowsmith suggests that Polyphemus 'loathes war' and condemns the burning of Troy.[92] However, I agree with O'Sullivan and Collard, who instead suggest that it is his

[91] Some go further and view Odysseus as Dionysus' captor, see e.g. Olson (1988) 504 and Shaw (2018) 104.
[92] Arrowsmith (1956) 8.

misogyny that informs his antipathy to the war, rather than any moral outrage at the sack or fatalities involved.[93]

The central section of the play is the *agon* between Odysseus and Polyphemus (285–346), in which Odysseus tries to persuade the Cyclops to show him and his men mercy by not eating them. Both speeches are partially informed by their Homeric counterparts but also have some contemporary additions. Odysseus argues that his men and the other Greeks who fought at Troy deserve credit for protecting Greece (290–8). Similar arguments are used in Herodotus' report of the appeals made in 480 by the Spartan and Athenian envoys sent to the Syracusans to request their help against the Persians. The Spartan envoy invokes Agamemnon, while the Athenian envoy refers to Homer's claim that the Athenians sent to Troy the best man for ordering an army (Hdt. 7.157–62). Later in the fifth century, Athenians made claims about their defence of Greece during the Persian Wars.[94] The Athenian embassy which addressed the Peloponnesian league in Thucydides recounts the Athenian successes of the Persian War (1.73.2). Embassies to Melos and Syracuse also claim that Athens is justified in holding its empire because of its defeat of the Persians (5.89, 6.82–3). This is not just a device used by the Athenians; the Plataeans, for instance, appealed to Sparta when they were on trial after their city was captured. They beg the Spartans to relent for the sake of their service to Hellas (Thuc. 3.57). Furthermore, Odysseus claims that Polyphemus has benefited from this protection since 'the land under Etna' is also part of Greece (297–8). This could be a reference to Athens' imperial designs on Sicily (Thuc. 3.86, 3.115, 6.1).

After Silenus' mocking interjection, discussed above, Polyphemus responds to Odysseus' appeal; he has clearly not been persuaded by the arguments made by the hero. Polyphemus disparages Odysseus' attempts to persuade him as mere bluff and pretty words (κόμποι καὶ λόγων εὐμορφία, 317). Κόμπος, a 'boast', can also mean a 'din' or a 'clash' – another association between Odysseus and noise, as with κρόταλον. Κόμπος is likely to be a pun on κομψός, which Silenus used to refer to Odysseus' speech a couple of lines earlier. Κόμπος is used in several of Euripides' tragedies. The most significant of these uses is in *Suppliants*, which was mentioned earlier regarding Theseus' description of the herald as κομψός and λάλος. Here,

[93] O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) on 280–1.
[94] Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 20.

again, we see a similarity between that Theban herald and Odysseus in *Cyclops*, as Theseus also calls the words of the herald 'boasts' (582). In a curious further link between these two characters, both are called 'villain' or 'knave' (ὦ παγκάκιστε): the herald by Adrastus (*Supp*. 513), and Odysseus by Polyphemus (689).

The several similarities between Odysseus and the Theban herald are unlikely to be coincidental. This therefore begs the question of why Euripides chose to have these characters described in analogous ways by their opponents. The content of their speeches is not alike, since the herald argues against democracy and in favour of tyranny, while also complaining about demagoguery. Odysseus, meanwhile, argues from a more democratic standpoint against the tyrannical Polyphemus. The similarity is perhaps more about style than substance. Both the herald and Odysseus attempt to convince someone committed to their political stance; their interference is therefore unwelcome and dismissed as rhetorical bluff and bluster.

Polyphemus also criticises those who have passed laws and 'complicated' (ποικίλλω) men's lives, adding that they can go hang (338–40). Ποικίλλω is related to the adjective ποικίλος, which we have elsewhere seen associated with Odysseus.[95] Again, Polyphemus disparages Odysseus' speech as being overly elaborate. We can see a parallel in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* when Polynices draws attention to his simple speech, since 'justice needs no elaborate (ποικίλος) presentation' (469–70).[96] A similar sentiment is also expressed by Cleon when he complains about those who place too much value on clever speeches rather than good decisions (Thuc. 3.37.4–5).[97]

Polyphemus is throughout the play shown as greedy; here in the *agon* he stresses that he considers his belly the greatest god of all (335). Dougherty and Worman have both shown how there is a connection in the fifth century, especially in comedy, between gluttony and violent politicians such as Cleon.[98] Dougherty in particular draws a link between Polyphemus and the imperial greed of the Athenians, typified by Cleon. In *Knights*, the Sausage-seller portrays the Paphlagonian (Cleon) as being like Cerberus, who will enter the kitchen and lick not just plates but islands (1033–

[95] See pp. 82–3, 144–5, and 200.
[96] O'Sullivan (2020) 583.
[97] O'Sullivan (2020) 583.
[98] Dougherty (1999) 324–6; see also Worman (2002b) 108–10, who gives other examples of eating imagery in oratory and philosophy.

4). Similarly, the canine caricature of Laches in *Wasps* is accused of eating Sicilian cheese, and of sailing 'right around the platter' and eating the rind of cities (922–4). Polyphemus' greed in this play, therefore, corresponds to this existing *topos* in Athenian literature; as a result, Euripides transforms the monster of Homer into a fifth-century politician.

It has been common for more than a century for scholars to suggest that Euripides references the sophists through the character of Polyphemus.[99] The chief example drawn on is that of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*, who puts forward a 'might is right' argument similar to that of Euripides' Polyphemus (483d).[100] O'Sullivan has argued against this orthodoxy and suggests that the Cyclops is not presented as a typical sophist by Euripides.[101] Instead, he argues that Polyphemus is better understood as 'embodying traits attributed to the tyrant', as construed in fifth-century Attic literature.[102] O'Sullivan is certainly right to point out some problems with the 'Polyphemus-Sophist' connection, and also to draw attention to the neglected tyrannical qualities of Euripides' character. However, as Shaw rightly cautions, this does not 'negate the various philosophical points with which Euripides (both in the figures of Polyphemus and Odysseus) engages in the *Cyclops*'.[103]

Euripides has clearly imbued his Homeric source material with contemporary intellectual ideas. The monster of the *Odyssey* is transformed into a fifth-century man who owns slaves, goes hunting, is a cultivated cook, and has intellectual opinions on politics and war.[104] Odysseus, meanwhile, puts forward democratic arguments which appeal to the rule of law, echoing real life arguments used by the Athenians in Thucydides.[105]

[99] See O'Sullivan (2005) 119–20 for an overview of the main proponents of this idea.
[100] Hunter (2009) 68 also notes the similarities between *Gorgias* 491e6–492a2 and *Cyclops* 332–41.
[101] O'Sullivan (2005). He also argues that Callicles is not a typical sophist (2005) 122–4. Marshall (2005) 113 similarly argues that 'it is not possible… to find an instance of direct unmediated influence of sophism on *Cyclops*'.
[102] O'Sullivan (2005) 120–1.
[103] Shaw (2020) 483.
[104] Hall (2010) 236; Storey and Allan (2014) 170; Dunn (2017) 459–61; Hunter and Laemmle (2020) 20–1.
[105] Hall (2010) 236.

Odysseus' portrayal

Odysseus' method of revenge (and that he takes revenge at all) is treated harshly by modern scholars. Some interpretations have gone further than the text allows in their harshness. Ussher, for example, calls the blinding a 'senseless outrage', which he claims Odysseus himself knows.[106] However, there is no evidence that Odysseus thinks the blinding is unjustified. Roisman is especially damning, stating that the happy ending of the play is 'tempered by Euripides' depiction of Polyphemus' blinding as a sadistic piece of sport carried out to the raucous cheering of half-men by a treacherous has-been who revels in its brutality'.[107] While it is true that the satyrs do cheer on the blinding as if it is a sporting event, it is not the case that Odysseus 'revels in its brutality'. When he presents the plan to the satyrs, he certainly seems proud of its cunning (449), but other than that he does not express any joy at the blinding – no more so than the Homeric Odysseus, who as he sails away taunts Polyphemus that nobody will ever heal him, not even his father Poseidon (9.525). I agree with O'Sullivan and Collard that there is nothing to suggest that we should pity Polyphemus when he appears after being blinded.[108] Moreover, as Burnett rightly states, Greeks of the fifth century did not admire monstrosity, alienation, or suffering, and they did not romanticise the Cyclops.[109]

The punishment of wrongdoers, particularly monstrous ogres such as Polyphemus, was a common theme in satyr drama, especially Euripidean satyr drama.[110] We may therefore compare Odysseus' comment to Polyphemus that he has been punished for his feast of Odysseus' men (693–5) with similar sentiments expressed in Aeschylus' 'Dike' play (fr. 281a 17–9), as well as Euripides' *Sciron* (fr. 678, probably spoken by Theseus) and *Syleus* (fr. 692, probably spoken of or by Heracles).[111] It is essential to look at Odysseus' actions in *Cyclops* in this broader context. Many satyr plays were

[106] Ussher (1978) 191.
[107] Roisman (2005a) 77.
[108] O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 55; O'Sullivan (2017) 328. See also Kovacs (1994) 56, who says that when Polyphemus is blinded 'no pathos is allowed to obscure the perfect justice of the punishment'.
[109] Burnett (1998) 78.
[110] See Burnett (1998) 73 n. 32 for a list of satyr plays with revenge plots. On the revenge motif, see also Sutton (1974b) 161–2; O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 29; Hunter and Laemmle (2020) on 441–2; O'Sullivan (2021) 393. On the 'ogre *versus* victorious hero' pattern being a favourite plot device of Euripides, see Shaw (2020) 467–70 and 475. Goins (1991) 193 stresses that the ogres are overcome by a divinely sanctioned hero.
[111] O'Sullivan (2021) 393.

constructed around what O'Sullivan and Collard refer to as 'a simple punitive ethic of transgression and punishment'.[112] These plays feature a hero pitted against some form of ogre or monstrous character who commits evil acts, usually involving death, and who is vanquished by the hero at the end of the play, thus also freeing Silenus and the satyrs from servitude. Given the regularity of this motif in satyr drama, it is highly unlikely that the audience was intended to sympathise with the monster and not with the hero.

There also seems to be no evidence from *Cyclops* itself that Euripides was going against this pattern in wanting his audience to sympathise with the blinded Polyphemus. Moreover, Polyphemus' response to Odysseus' appeals for mercy shows that he is hostile to many Greek ideals, such as reverence for the gods, as well as *xenia* and *philia*. Even if we are intended to see Odysseus' speech in the *agon* as an ill-judged, and at times specious, attempt at persuasion, especially when claiming that he and his fellow Greeks saved Sicily from the Trojans, it seems questionable that Euripides intended the audience to have any sympathy with Polyphemus.[113] Scholars' views on Odysseus in this play may be coloured by his largely disreputable appearances in tragedy, particularly Euripidean tragedy, and they are therefore incorrectly assuming that he must also be something of a villain in this play.

The focus of most scholars on the purported moral thrust of the play – condemning Odysseus as a sophist and his actions as cruel – means that other important elements of his portrayal have been overlooked.[114] First, his similarity to Silenus is demonstrated throughout, and he eventually replaces the old satyr as the leader of the chorus. Silenus' attempts to behave like the epic hero create humour and bring Odysseus' heroism down to earth, as it is reduced by Silenus to boastfulness and deceit. Furthermore, the metatheatrical knowledge of Silenus and the satyrs, in particular how this affects their interactions with Odysseus, is remarkable and seldom mentioned. Silenus and the satyrs refer to Odysseus' tragic reputation by calling him the son of Sisyphus and *sophos*. Their looseness in theatrical time affords them a unique insight into the character of Odysseus, and they, just as much as the

[112] O'Sullivan and Collard (2013) 29.
[113] O'Sullivan (2021) 385.
[114] On Odysseus' cruelty, see Ussher (1978) 191; Roisman (2005a) 77. On Odysseus as a sophist or corrupt politician, see Arrowsmith (1956) 5; Dougherty (1999) 326; Worman (2002b) 103; Shaw (2018) 65.

audience, know exactly what to expect from him. Their continuous and extra-dramatic status gives them a familiarity with the history of myth and theatre. This familiarity gives them a better basis to mock the hero and thus create some of the humour, and they mock in the way a well-versed spectator would, having seen Odysseus' many tragic outings. After seeing Odysseus triumphant in so many other plays, over enemies and former allies, the audience might have enjoyed the chance to laugh at him and how ill at ease he is in the satyric world; perhaps they found his unexpected rhetorical defeat amusing.[115]

Finally, should we see Odysseus as a representation of Athenian imperialism? The setting of the play on Sicily is an obvious reminder of Athenian interest in the island. Odysseus' questions to Silenus about the island and its inhabitants could be seen as him viewing the land as a settler would. In his speech to Polyphemus, he certainly uses arguments like those of Athenians in Thucydides who justify Athens' empire. On the other hand, Euripides has made a crucial alteration from his Homeric source material. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and his men go to the land of the Cyclopes in the hope of forming a guest friendship and receiving gifts (9.172–6, 228–9). Euripides, however, has Odysseus and his men shipwrecked on Sicily.[116] They are therefore in desperate need of food; instead of stealing from the Cyclops they try to purchase the provisions.

There are no clear references in the play to Athens' Sicilian Expedition of 415–413. Based on what we know of satyr drama, it seems as though the light-heartedness of the genre and its distance from the contemporary world, unlike in comedy, made it unsuitable for such allusions – explicit or implicit. Many scholars agree on a late date for the play, for reasons discussed earlier, but its possible relationship to the Sicilian disaster is troubling. Wright's suggestion of 412, for example, is based on *Cyclops* being an 'escape' play, but the characters escape from an island from which, only the previous year, many Athenians did not escape, which would hardly make it a play with a happy ending. Seaford's 408 suggestion is slightly further removed from the Sicilian disaster, but he still suggests that the intention was for the audience

[115] Seaford (1984) 56.
[116] Kovacs (1994) 55; see also Rosen (2007) 143: 'Euripides glossed over much of the moral ambiguity in the Homeric version by making Odysseus come to the Cyclops' island for a legitimate purpose (he and his men needed food) rather than simply to make mischief under the pretense of establishing *xenia*'.

to be reminded of it.[117] This allusion to Sicily would not be appropriate for this play, and this could suggest that the date may be earlier than the Sicilian Expedition. However, as mentioned earlier, the date of the play remains an unanswerable question.

6.3. Conclusion

Unlike the previous epic episodes we have considered, the Cyclops episode was not adapted into tragedy in the fifth century; it was instead ripe material for comedy and satyr drama. This allows us to see a more comic and light-hearted contemporary approach to Odysseus. In comedy, Polyphemus' gluttony is foregrounded, and he acquires more sophisticated means of cooking and preparing food, including Odysseus' men. It is difficult to draw any conclusions about how the comedies portrayed Odysseus, though he was probably a target of laughter too.

Odysseus' situation in Euripides' *Cyclops* is unusual when compared to the rest of the material discussed in previous chapters. He is not the henchman of the Atridae, nor is he acting or arguing on behalf of the Greek army. Instead, he is on the receiving end of violence and must defend himself verbally and physically. It is also the only extant example of Odysseus being bested in an *agon*; his persuasive skills have no effect on Polyphemus, who dismisses Odysseus' speech as overly elaborate bluff. This again makes the play unusual when compared to others in this thesis.

The most striking feature of the play is undoubtedly the metatheatrical knowledge of the characters. Silenus and the satyrs know who Odysseus is, both as the man from the first line of the *Odyssey*, and as the shrewd and *sophos* offspring of Sisyphus. Odysseus, meanwhile, is aware of the satyrs and their cowardly reputation. Silenus and the satyrs seem especially familiar with the tragic Odysseus, given their descriptions of him. These reminders of his tragic presentation contrast with the boastfulness with which Odysseus presents himself throughout the play, and the references to his Homeric exploits. Odysseus' pride in his Trojan success is undermined, first by Silenus' reference to his unsavoury parentage and reputation for shrewd speech, and then the chorus' exclusive focus on Helen's sexual appetites. The satyr chorus and Silenus, just like the audience, are aware of Odysseus' unsavoury

[117] Seaford (1984) 55.

lineage and reputation, yet they enjoy seeing his tricks and expect him to perform something *sophos* for them.

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the presentation of Odysseus in fifth-century Athens, with a particular focus on tragedy. It has argued that of all the heroes from the Trojan War cycle, Odysseus is the one whose characteristics most suit a democratic *polis*. In fifth-century Athens, Odysseus became an important figure with which to think about contemporary political issues. He was used by poets and philosophers to demonstrate some of the dangers of democracy, such as misleading the assembly, rabble-rousing, and corruption in the law courts. However, he continued to be a favourite hero, and people still enjoyed his triumphs over monsters and the Trojans. Furthermore, the usefulness of some of his qualities, such as persuasion in a diplomatic setting, was also explored by democratic authors.

Odysseus was not an Athenian hero, but he embodied many of the qualities idealised in Athens, as expressed in Pericles' funeral speech. As a consummate speaker, Odysseus was well suited as a character for fifth-century Athens, with its various arenas for showcasing rhetorical skill. On the other hand, his propensity for lying and manipulation also meant that he could be used by writers to demonstrate the dangers of rhetoric and the destabilising effect a manipulative rhetorician could have on political processes. Odysseus is presented like a contemporary demagogue in several plays. However, his focus is on expediency for the Greek force, despite the suffering this may cause others. As an imperial power as well as a democracy, Athens had to make tough decisions about its treatment of its allies. Despite the idealised memories of the mythical Athens coming to the aid of those in need, in reality Athens was often brutal towards its imperial subjects for reasons of self-interest.

When creating their tragedies, playwrights took inspiration from Homer and the Epic Cycle, often adapting this material by excluding some features and adding others. By analysing the changes made to epic narratives in each chapter, we have seen how playwrights emphasised Odysseus' involvement and made archaic, heroic stories more relevant to the contemporary audience by introducing references to the experiences of fifth-century citizens. Odysseus is a much more relatable figure in terms of his roles in fifth-century mythic episodes. He is involved in trials, votes, assemblies, diplomacy, army recruitment, and warfare – all true-to-life scenarios

with which ordinary fifth-century Athenian citizens had ample personal familiarity. Furthermore, his status as an islander working alongside the much wealthier monarchs of mainland Greece – though often with a degree of independence and in his own interests – took on new resonances in the cultural environment of classical Athens, with its large proportion of free, poor citizens. More than most other prominent epic heroes, Odysseus is relevant to the everyday political experiences of the mass of the fifth-century Athenian audience.

In Chapter 1, we saw how Palamedes' simple death in the *Cypria* was transformed in the fifth century into a treason trial orchestrated by Odysseus, through which the innocent Palamedes is convicted and condemned to death. The story of Palamedes presents a rare side to Odysseus; he acts not out of loyalty to the army or any motive of expediency but instead out of personal envy. The inclusion of a trial in the adaptations of this episode is politically important as trials were a key institution in Athens, and the ability to persuade jurors was an important skill. But it could be misused, as it is by Odysseus in these tragedies.

Chapter 2 examined the relationship between Achilles and Odysseus. This relationship differs from others in the thesis as they never become alienated despite some clashes in both epic and tragedy. Although the three plays discussed present different stories from early in the Trojan War narrative, they have several similarities. In all of them, Achilles threatens the progress of the Greek expedition, and Odysseus is to some extent responsible for removing this obstacle. In *Those Who Dine Together*, the two seem to clash, perhaps violently. In *Telephus*, Odysseus works with Telephus to persuade Achilles. Finally, in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Odysseus remains off stage, but his influence over the mob of Greek soldiers forces the hands of those shown on stage. In this way he ensures the sacrifice of Iphigenia without the use of persuasion and without inducing an assembly to vote for the sacrifice. This association with mob violence is unusual in presentations of Odysseus.

Odysseus and Ajax were the focus of Chapter 3. Explorations of Pindar and Aeschylus provided important context for Sophocles' *Ajax*, and we also saw how tragedy influenced the philosophical speeches of Antisthenes, written for the two competitors for Achilles' arms. For Sophocles' play, the character-oriented study revealed some significant features which are overlooked by others. Odysseus has two

distinct personas, the one presented on stage, and the one in the imaginations of other characters. While the former is a more Homeric figure, the latter is like a demagogue straight out of Aristophanes' *Knights*. We also explored the presentation of the vote in fifth-century texts and how it is presented like a democratic vote, with criticisms levelled at its secrecy and vulnerability to manipulation. Finally, we looked at the important geopolitical background of the Ajax story as Ajax's two island homes, Aegina and Salamis, are key components of the story and are of especial importance in Athens, since both islands were its imperial subjects.

In Chapter 4, we looked at three depictions of Odysseus with his Trojan enemies. In Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, Odysseus argues in a quasi-democratic setting that a Trojan youngster should die for the benefit of the Greeks. In *Hecuba*, he appears on stage himself to retrieve the condemned Polyxena and defends his position to Hecuba. In *Trojan Women* he is absent, but his off-stage influence is nonetheless felt by the on-stage women, who suffer from his machinations. *Rhesus*, meanwhile, an unusual play, shows Odysseus again responsible for a significant death. The Trojans try to match Odysseus in sending out a cunning spy in Dolon, but they fail in their efforts and are instead undone by the hero whom they have disparaged. In all three plays, the playwright has altered the epic story to make Odysseus more dominant. In *Hecuba*, Euripides invents the story of Hecuba's recognition of Odysseus during his spying mission to Troy. Similarly, in *Trojan Women*, Hecuba is made the slave of Odysseus, which is another innovation. Finally, in *Rhesus*, epic chronology has been shifted so that Odysseus' two espionage missions to Troy are in the past, thus confirming his status as the greatest threat to the Trojans while Achilles and Ajax are still alive.

Chapter 5 explored the story of Philoctetes across all three tragedians. We examined the evidence for the earlier versions of Aeschylus and Euripides as these are important contexts for Sophocles' play. This chapter showed that there was not a linear deterioration of Odysseus' character, culminating in the villainous and sophistic Odysseus in Sophocles. First, our chief source for Aeschylus and Euripides, Dio Chrysostom, explicitly states that the Odysseus of Euripides was worse than that of Sophocles. Furthermore, the analysis of Sophocles' tragedy showed that it is simplistic to treat Odysseus as the villain. Many have examined the sophistic influences on Odysseus' character, but few look at the military context of the action

and the necessity of ending the Trojan War by any means necessary, a sentiment that many in the audience must have shared. The portrayal of Odysseus by Sophocles is ambiguous: he freely admits to possessing what others characterise as vices, yet his ultimate aim is given divine approval at the end of the play.

Finally, in Chapter 6 we looked at more humorous presentations of Odysseus in his encounter with the Cyclops. The main part of the chapter was dedicated to Euripides' *Cyclops*, and we again took a character-by-character approach. This analysis showed how the satyric characters have extra-dramatic knowledge of mythology – partly from Homer, as others have suggested – but also of tragedy. Their awareness of Odysseus' epic and tragic reputation creates some of the humour, as they mock his well-known persona and undercut his heroic boasting and posturing.

This research matters because it gives a more complete picture of the presentation of Odysseus specifically in Greek tragedy, with particular attention to the dramatists' lexical choices – an approach that has been lacking in scholarship. Furthermore, it also shows more ways in which tragedians engaged with contemporary experience and institutions. Some issues that presentations of Odysseus explore were universal, such as the use of deception in warfare or the treatment of allies. However, some are of especial interest and concern for citizens of a democratic *polis*, such as voting, assemblies, and law courts. These institutions were not necessarily unique to Athens, but their openness to all and the importance of rhetoric for each means that a personality such as Odysseus is of particular interest.

Besides this overarching argument, this research has also presented some new insights, particularly into Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Cyclops*. The character-oriented study of both plays, engaging closely with vocabulary, reveals significant features which are overlooked by others. I also hope that my research has demonstrated the importance of considering fragmentary material when discussing Greek tragedy, particularly when focusing on a single character, but also to give important context for extant tragedies whose subject matter was presented elsewhere. The inclusion of fragmentary material has questioned some orthodox views on extant tragedies and on the tragedians. The Palamedes plays show an even darker side to Odysseus than that seen in extant tragedies. However, *Telephus* shows that Euripides, whom scholars have believed was nothing but hostile to Odysseus, was capable of

recognising the utility of Odysseus' persuasive skills. Finally, considering Sophocles' *Philoctetes* in the context of the two previous depictions shows that there was not, as has generally been assumed, a linear decline of Odysseus' reputation across the three plays leading to Sophocles' portrayal at the end of the century.

This final point could also be applied to Odysseus more generally in the fifth century. It has been common for scholars to discuss Odysseus' worsening reputation over the course of the fifth century and to link this to increasing suspicion in Athens of rhetoricians and clever speech. While this view holds some truth in that Odysseus has more demagogic qualities in later fifth-century plays, analysing fragmentary material from Aeschylus challenges it. Aeschylus' *Award of the Arms* and *Palamedes* must have premiered in the first half of the fifth century. Evidence for these plays is meagre, but Odysseus was certainly shown in conflict with his fellow Greek heroes.[1] *Award of the Arms* is likely to have been part of a trilogy focused on Ajax; Odysseus probably does not feature in the other plays to ensure the hero's burial as he does in Sophocles. Furthermore, *Palamedes* shows Odysseus plotting the unjust murder of an important benefactor of the Greek army. Both plays probably contain a contest of words in which Odysseus bests his opponent. Therefore, we can see from this evidence that the self-serving, eloquent Odysseus was not a character who emerged only in the later fifth century.

Odysseus was a hero suited to both tragedy and comedy. We saw in the discussion of *Ajax* in Chapter 3 how Ajax and his followers talk about Odysseus using descriptors that predominantly feature in comedy. Others have touched upon comic elements in some other plays in which Odysseus features, particularly *Philoctetes* and *Rhesus*.[2] Furthermore, the passage in Aristophanes' *Clouds* in which Strepsiades lists all the things he will become after training under Socrates (437–56) contains several words which are applied elsewhere to Odysseus.[3] Since his tragic appearances occurred

[1] See also the suggestions of Mikellidou (2016) and Kalamara (2020) that in his Odyssean plays Aeschylus undermines Odysseus' heroism.

[2] On Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, see Calder (1971) 163; Taplin (1971) 37; Craik (1979) 24–6; Kirkwood (1994) 431; Schein (2011) 80; see also Müller (1993) 245–6 on comic elements in Euripides' *Philoctetes*. On *Rhesus*, see Burnett (1985); Walton (2000) 138; Fantuzzi (2020b) 50–9.

[3] Θρασύς: *Rh.* 499, see p. 163; κρόταλον: *Cyc.* 104, see pp. 237–8; κίναδος: *Aj.* 103, see p. 109; μάσθλης: *Those Who Dine Together* fr. 571, see p. 71. Other words are similar to descriptions of Odysseus, such as τολμηρός: see p. 213 and 217 on words derived from τολμάω in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*; and εὔγλωττος: see pp. 154, 198, 205, and 239 on Odysseus' tongue (γλῶσσα).

against this comic backdrop, investigation of the links between the tragic and comic Odysseus would be a fruitful area for future research.

To date, there has not been a full-length study of Odysseus in Greek tragedy. Although others have discussed specific texts, or specific aspects of Odysseus' fifth-century representations, there has been no attempt to bring together all extant plays and fragmentary material. I also have had to be selective in choosing which fragmentary material to include; this thesis is not a fully comprehensive study of every detail of all Odysseus' manifestations in tragedy. However, the material which has been included gives a clearer picture of the ways in which Odysseus allowed playwrights to explore all manner of contemporary situations thanks to his adaptability, and other characteristics which were relevant specifically to fifth-century Athenian, democratic, imperial society. This research therefore reveals not just more about Odysseus, but also how tragedians responded to the society around them.

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