

ECHOES FROM TROY: HOMERIC ALLUSION IN SOPHOCLES' *AJAX* AND *PHILOCTETES*

Associate Professor Temple Cone
United States Naval Academy

Mythical figures live many lives, die many deaths, and in this they differ from the characters we find in novels, who can never go beyond the single gesture. But in each of these lives and deaths all the others are present, and we can hear their echo. Only when we become aware of a sudden consistency between incompatibles can we say we have crossed the threshold of myth.

—Roberto Calasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*

Sometimes they speak to us in dreams;
sometimes, in thought, the mind hears them.

And with their sounds for a moment return
sounds from our life's first poetry—
like music at night, far off, fading out.

—C. P. Cavafy, "Voices"

When introducing students to the concept of tragic irony, instructors often point out that audiences in fifth-century Athens knew the myths they saw performed on stage; familiar with the developing narrative, they could fully attend the foreboding that would reassert the rule of fate and initiate the catharsis Aristotle details in the *Poetics*. To an extent, this view is correct, in that the myths dramatized by Greek playwrights were mainly, as Aeschylus puts it, "slices from Homer's banquet." It is worth noting that Homer was not the only source for the mythological narratives, nor were these narratives, which arose out of longstanding oral traditions, rigidly fixed in their details. Sophocles and other playwrights drew upon or responded to different versions of the same myth, from earlier sources like Hesiod and Pindar to their own contemporaries, and they were free to alter or recombine events from these myths (sometimes with tacit or even direct reference to major historical figures and events of the day). However, Homer was still the most important source for these myths, so much so that one cannot help but notice parallels between Homer's characters and their representation by later writers. Perhaps

more interestingly, one also notices parallels between Homer's characters and other, unrelated characters, an appropriation of details, characteristics, speeches, and actions from Homeric champions that adds resonance and depth to their portrayal on stage.

For students and instructors to cross "the threshold of myth" and experience the tragedies of Sophocles as a fifth-century Athenian audience might, we must be attentive to the ways in which his plays, directly or indirectly, allude to Homer, as well as to the different myths Sophocles draws upon as he produces his own versions of the myth. Peter Burian writes that "(T)ragedy is not casually or occasionally intertextual, but always and inherently so.... a tragic plot inheres not simply in a poetic text, but also in the dialectic between that text in performance and the responses of an informed audience to the performance as repetition and innovation" (179). Thus, to say that an Athenian audience 'knew' the myths behind the *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* of Sophocles is true, since spectators would have known not just one but several versions of the stories of Ajax's shame and suicide and of the abandoned Philoctetes' return to the Trojan War. Yet it is also incorrect, since these plays alter and synthesize details from their source myths, alluding all the while to Homer in ways that force the audience to reconsider the myths from which the tragic narratives arise. This essay, therefore, offers a survey of the classical background relevant to *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, focusing on the rich play of Homeric allusions and alternate versions of the myths, and exploring their thematic significance.

The stories of the siege at Troy and of its aftermath not only haunt later Greek writings, but are themselves haunted by echoes. Throughout the *Iliad*, heroes repeat each other word for word in their speeches, deed for deed in their acts. These repetitions may be partly explained by the poem's origins in the oral tradition, which would favor the memorization and repetition of set phrases or passages. One could conceivably argue that they evoke archetypal patterns, though as

Robert Graves has noted, “Despite a sameness of pattern in Greek myths... the theory that Chimera, Sphinx, Gorgon, Centaurs, Satyrs and the like are blind uprushes of the Jungian collective unconscious, to which no precise meaning had ever, or could ever, have been attached, is demonstrably unsound” (20). Yet perhaps because the allusions occur on both the broadest and minutest of scales, we should perhaps accept that it is in the nature of Greek myth to be concerned with origins and patterns, and how these operate at the lexical, psychological, and thematic levels. As Roberto Calasso observes, “Stories never live alone: they are the branches of a family that we have to trace back, and forward” (10).

The *Iliad* itself begins with a quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles over Agamemnon’s attempt to replace his slave-girl Chryses (Χρυσήϊς) with Achilles’ own slave-girl Briseis (Βρισηϊς), their names identical save for two letters, and leads to Achilles’ singular decision to defend his honor by withdrawing from the war. When he petitions Achilles to return to battle, Odysseus repeats Agamemnon’s generous offer of recompense almost verbatim (Fagles, 9.147-187 and 9.321-360)¹, substituting only a promise of future victory over Hector for Agamemnon’s parting insult—“Let him submit to me! Only the god of death / is so relentless” (9.189-190). Wearing the armor of Achilles, Patroclus fights Hector in Achilles’ place, and his death at Hector’s hands foreshadows Hector’s own death at the hands of Achilles, yet in Patroclus’ last words, that later event already feels strangely present and played out: “Already I see them looming up beside you—death / and the strong force of fate, to bring you down / at the hands of Aeacus’ great royal son ... Achilles!” (16.998-1000).²

These echoes resonate not only within Homer’s works, but in those of later writers, too, though behind them all is the blind poet. Pindar interweaves his odes in celebration of athletes with references to the heroes from Troy, honoring, for instance, a champion pentathlete by

calling on Neoptolemus to bear witness, Neoptolemus, whom Pindar praises for having “sacked Troy’s city” (Nemean VII, 35), but whose slaughter of King Priam and murder of Hector’s child Astyanax he tactfully omits. Euripides dramatizes the lives of Helen, Andromache, and other female characters associated with the Trojan War, their untold stories echoing in a society that esteemed women as little better than slaves. And we find that the entire war is fought, according to the 6th century poet Stesichorus, over an echo, a simulacrum. Stesichorus claims that the actual Helen was taken to Egypt and that the Greeks and Trojans fought over a ghost who took her place, though all that remains of Stesichorus’ testimony is a brief reference to it in Plato’s *Phaedrus*:

Now for such as offend in speaking of gods and heroes there is an ancient mode of purification, which was known to Stesichorus, though not to Homer. When Stesichorus lost the sight of his eyes because of his defamation of Helen [Stesichorus wrote a poem condemning Helen as an adulterer, and was, as legend has it, struck blind as a consequence], he was not, like Homer, at a loss to know why. As a true artist he understood the reason, and promptly wrote the lines:

False, false the tale.
Though never didst sail in the well-decked ships
Nor come to the towers of Troy. (243a)

Fittingly, this story portraying Helen as an echo at the heart of the Trojan War reaches us through an echo.³

Yet the stories from Troy, whether in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, or in later works that draw on events from the Trojan War, often seem to hinge on slight variations between these internal and intertextual echoes. At times, the heroes seem almost to operate in a metacritical space, wherein they try to resist or negotiate the very patterns of repetition which they are ever on the verge of falling into, at the cost of their distinct identity, defined either as φύσις (*phusis*, nature or temperament) or δαιμόνιον (*daimon*, genius, indwelling destiny, or divine power). The desire

to be unique, without equal, and distinct from the many heroes of divine or semi-divine birth who comprise the Achaean and Trojan tribes, is at the heart of the *Iliad* and of Achilles himself; with Odysseus, on the other hand, we see the complex and modern effort to navigate and even manipulate these patterns, these repetitions of identity. The first words of each poem indicate this particular focus on the individual. The *Iliad* opens with μῆνιν (*menin*, rage), Achilles' outrage at being treated by Agamemnon as interchangeable with other heroes, and his sense of injustice sets in motion events that will lead to the fall of the city and the end of the war. The *Odyssey* immediately announces its focus on ἄνδρα (*andra*, man), for the poem is deeply concerned with the experience of the individual, of every man; it is no surprise that the first epithet Homer gives Odysseus, πολύτροπον (*polutropon*), means not only 'much turned' but also 'many-masked,' nor that the pseudonym Odysseus gives to the Cyclops Polyphemus, οὐ τις, means 'no one.'⁴

About Achilles, Roberto Calasso writes:

With Achilles we witness, in Homeric radiance, the emergence of a quality that Vedic mathematics never guessed at: the unique, unsustained by the sacred, precarious, fleeting irreplaceable, not exchangeable, entrusted to a brief appearance ending in death, and for this very reason incommensurable. That which exists only once, and for only a short time, cannot be measured against any other commodity. (116)

“Unique, unsustained by the sacred”: Calasso here identifies the humanism at the core of Homer's epic, the emphasis on the special quality of the human subject, of mankind apart from the gods, of the individual apart from the collective. With Achilles' decision to withdraw from the Achaean ranks, we see not only an absolute adherence to the conventions of honor that are part of the heroic code, but also the assertion of the individual against the pressures of tribal conformity (qualities which the hero Ajax likewise exhibits, though to different effect). In the face of Agamemnon's injunction—

(I) f our generous Argives *will* give me a prize,
a match for my desires, equal to what I've lost
well and good. But if they give me nothing
I will take a prize myself—your own, or Ajax'
or Odysseus' prize—I'll commandeer her myself
and let that man I go to visit choke with rage! (1.159-164)⁵

Achilles asserts—

My honors never equal yours,
whenever we sack some wealthy Trojan stronghold—
my arms bear the brunt of the raw, savage fighting,
true, but when it comes to dividing up the plunder
the lion's share is yours, and back I go to my ships,
clutching some scrap, some pittance that I love,
when I have fought to exhaustion.

No more now—
back I go to Phthia. Better that way by far,
to journey home in the beaked ships of war.
I have no mind to linger here disgraced,
brimming your cup and piling up your plunder.” (1.192-202)⁶

Achilles' insistence on honor (or glory) might strike the modern reader as *hubris*, an arrogance that imperils the individual before the gods, as indeed it will seem to be in the case of Ajax. But Calasso argues that the age of heroes leads to a new conception of glory. “Glory is a pact with time,” he writes. “Thanks to the death of the heroes, men would win themselves a bond with time. The most arduous of bonds and metaphysically superior to all others. Zeus wanted the death of the heroes to be a new death. What had death meant until now? Being covered once again by the earth. But, with the heroes, death coincided with the evocation of glory. Glory was something you could breathe now” (359). Achilles is asserting his self—“fleeting, irreplaceable”—in the face of the tribal anonymity to which Agamemnon would consign him.

Odysseus resists this obliteration no less than Achilles, though what he confronts is not the loss of self through absorption into the tribe, but the loss of self through stasis. Living seven

years with the nymph Calypso on the island Ogygia, an *omphalos* or navel in the middle of the sea, he finds himself, as Calasso points out, surrounded by “alders, cypresses, black poplars, willows: the trees of the dead” (370). David E. Belmont observes that “the name Calypso itself means ‘the concealer,’ ‘she who divests one of his identity’” (52). The island isolates the hero from the mainland, from the twists and turns that comprise any hero’s narrative, but particularly the narrative of *polutropos* or ‘many-turned’ Odysseus. Hermes himself finds the task of bearing Zeus’ message to Calypso appalling: “It was Zeus who made me come, no choice of mine. / Who would willingly roam across a salty waste so vast, / so endless? Think: no city of men in sight, and not a soul / to offer the gods a sacrifice and burn the fattest victims” (*Odyssey* 5.111-114). Odysseus would risk his life to depart, in spite of the pleasant beauty of the island and of his lover: “I long—I pine, all my days—to travel home and see the dawn of my return. / And if a god will wreck me yet again on the wine-dark sea, / I can bear that too, with a spirit tempered to endure” (5. 242-246). But why give up this earthly paradise? Achilles provides the precedent, Achilles who rejects the long but anonymous life his mother Thetis offers him: “If I voyage back to the fatherland I love, / my pride, my glory dies... / true, but the life that’s left me will be long, / the stroke of death will not come quickly” (*Iliad* 9.502-506). Odysseus renounces Ogygia and Calypso because the life they offer is an echo of the alternate future Thetis offers Achilles, and he does so even after learning from the spirit of Achilles in Hades that he would “rather slave on earth for another man— / some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive— / than rule down here over all the breathless dead” (*Odyssey* 11.556-558). “Talking to Achilles in Hades, Odysseus had come up against the horror of death,” writes Calasso. “Now, all around him, he found another death, one that presented itself in the uncertain guise of a better life but was in fact a static wallowing in time” (370). And the threat of the island’s deathly isolation echoes once

more in the grief-stricken cries of Sophocles' Philoctetes, whose Lemnos is far more horrible than Odysseus's Ogygia:

(L)et me tell you of this island.
No sailor by his choice comes near it.
There is no anchorage, nor anywhere
that one can land, sell goods, be entertained.
Sensible men make no voyages here. (*Philoctetes* 300-304)

A hero who withdraws from glory-seeking to preserve his honor, another who forsakes the self-loss that comes with earthly paradise: these two patterns that emerge from Homer will challenge and beguile the other heroes of Troy, heroes like Ajax, Philoctetes, and Neoptolemus, crucial to the outcome of the war but, measured against Achilles, Hector, and Odysseus, of a lesser status. Only with the latter figures in mind can we assess the former as heroes demonstrating either *sôphrosunê* (temperance, soundness of mind) or *hubris*, and suffering *até* (ruin) in the appropriate degree. Only with the latter figures in mind can we determine whether the former are to be regarded as distinct and individual, or as part of the mass from which the greatest of champions distinguish themselves. And only with the latter figures in mind can we assess the motives and the leadership qualities of the former.

We find Homeric allusions throughout Sophocles' earliest extant tragedy, *Ajax* (likely written between 460 and 441 B.C.E.), and Ajax's story depicts his struggle to assert his individual *daimon* ('indwelling destiny') against the pattern of repetition that the myths set in place. Ajax, the king of Salamis,⁷ is unquestionably a great hero, portrayed by Homer as the "bulwark of the Achaeans" (*Iliad* 3.274), "so powerful, so well-built [that] / He towers over the Argives, his head, his massive shoulders" (3.271-272). His physical might is closely tied to the heroic ethos, which values personal valor, physical might, and honor. It is a code best articulated by the Trojan warrior Sarpedon, who proclaims, "(*W*)e are the ones to head [the] front, / brace

and fling ourselves in the blaze of war” (12.366-367), adding, with the hero’s characteristic fatalism, “(N)ow, as it is, the fates of death await us, / thousands poised to strike, and not a man alive / can flee them or escape—so in we go for attack! / Give our enemy glory or win it for ourselves!” (12:378-381). Ajax himself proclaims the code in one of his greatest moments, while rallying the Greeks to push the Trojans back across the ditch and away from the Greek fleet: “No better tactics now / than to fight them hand-to hand with all our fury. / Quick, better to live or die, once and for all, / than die by inches, slowly crushed to death—helpless against the hulls in the bloody press—by far inferior men!” (15.590-595). We see Ajax enacting the rigors of this code again and again as he leads numerous attacks against the Trojans, covers the Achaean retreats, and feuds over the awarding of the arms of Achilles, a crucial conflict in Sophocles’ *Ajax*.⁸

Yet there is a painful sense of failure associated with Ajax, too. As he himself acknowledges, his own name is embedded with woe: “Agony. Who would have thought my name and fortune / Could square so well together! My name is Ajax: / Agony is its meaning” (*Ajax* 430-432).⁹ Throughout the play, Sophocles parallels Ajax with the great champions of the Achaeans and Trojans, Achilles and Hector, but also with Ajax’s rival and nemesis, Odysseus, and in almost every instance Ajax seems to fail by comparison, coming up short against his peers and rivals. It is a pattern of struggle and failure already present in Homer’s portrayal of Ajax. In his great duel with Hector in the *Iliad*, Ajax knocks the Trojan prince on his back with a great boulder, “(b)ut Apollo quickly pulled him up— / and now they’d have closed with swords, hacked each other / if heralds of Zeus and men had not come rushing in” (7.315-317). Thus gods and men prevent Ajax from taking the place of Achilles in his fated role as the slayer of Hector (*Iliad*, 15.86), and we begin to see the pattern that Sophocles will enact again and again in his

Ajax, the pattern of coming in second: first to Achilles, and by extension Hector, and later to Odysseus.

Sophocles' method is to allude to scenes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and to rely upon his Athenian audience's familiarity with the epics to recognize parallels and draw conclusions about theme and character from them. The play opens after the infamous 'Judgment of Arms,' when the armor and weapons of the slain Achilles have been awarded to Odysseus instead of Ajax, so we must rely on the accounts of the characters themselves as to what transpired. Agamemnon claims that the arms were awarded by "the court's majority verdict" (1245), though Ajax asserts that "(T)he sons of Atreus have contrived / That a man of most dishonest mind should have them, / Pushing my claims aside" (446-448), apparently by means of a rigged ballot.¹⁰

Regardless of the specifics of the case, however, the impact of the decision on Ajax is evident: held to be second only to Achilles in glory among the Achaeans, Ajax's desire to inherit the arms of Achilles is motivated by his desire to replace or, by a sort of metonymic substitution, to be Achilles. Sally Nesbit Lowell notes several parallels between Ajax and Achilles which might, for readers familiar with the *Iliad*, support such an association. She notes that both Achilles and Ajax withdraw to their tents away from the army, both duel Hector, both feel a great sense of injustice and of honor violated, both quarrel with the Atreidae, and that both have thoughts about leaving the war altogether (292). Yet in a strikingly harsh critique of Ajax, Lowell suggests the wish to take Achilles' place indicates Ajax's *hubris*, his vain belief that he, not Achilles, is the greatest hero of the Greeks and that accident alone has accounted for his failing (292).

Nowhere in Sophocles' *Ajax* is the hero's refusal to abandon his *hubris* more evident than in his parting scene with Tecmessa and Eurysaces. Covered in the gore of the animals he has tortured and slaughtered, a clear mark of the dishonor he has incurred both for his failure to

accomplish his ends and for his treachery against the Greek leaders, he nevertheless lifts his young son and claims, “He won’t be frightened, / Even by seeing this fresh-butchered gore, / Not if he really is my son” (545-547). Looking ahead to Eurysaces’ future and wishing for the sort of man he will become, Ajax advises, “My boy, have better luck than your father had, / Be like him in all else; and you will not be base” (549-550). The scene parallels the famous parting between Hector and Andromache in Book 6 of the *Iliad*, where, just like Ajax, Hector holds up his infant son, Astyanax, while dressed in his armor. But when Astyanax “scream[s] out at the sight of his own father, / terrified by the flashing bronze, the horsehair crest, / the great ridge of the helmet nodding, bristling terror” (6.559-561), Homer notes that “his loving father laughed” (6.562) and “quickly lifting the helmet from his head, / set it down on the ground, fiery in the sunlight, / and raising his son he kissed him, tossed him in his arms” (6.564-566). Not only does Hector demonstrate greater empathy than Ajax, but his own prayer for his son’s future shows greater humility and balance than the one Ajax offers: “Zeus, all you immortals!” prays Hector, “Grant this boy, my son, / may be like me, first in glory among the Trojans, / strong and brave like me, and rule all Troy in power / and one day let them say, ‘He is a better man than his father!’” (568-571).

The contrast between Ajax and Hector is crucial for assessing the tragedy of Sophocles’ *Ajax*. Homer has already linked the two warriors by having them exchange gifts following their great duel in the *Iliad* (7.349-351). Sophocles, in a move of profound irony, has Ajax commit suicide with the very sword that Hector gave him, so that Ajax is slain by the very model of conduct which he cannot uphold. Yet Ajax continues to place blame for his ruin (*até*) on others: “(N)ever since I took [the sword] as a gift, / Which Hector, my great enemy, gave to me, / Have I known any kindness from the Greeks. / I think the ancient proverb speaks the truth: / An enemy’s

gift is ruinous and no gift” (661-665). Vincent J. Rosivach notes that Sophocles’ *Ajax* is deeply concerned with issues of honor and humiliation, and he writes that “Ajax, Agamemnon, and Teucer are all motivated by a fear of humiliation, Ajax unwilling to accept second place, Agamemnon fearing to lose face if he allows the burial (cf. 1362), Teucer trying to shun the disgrace of his slave birth. Such fears of humiliation are the concern only of the proud, and not of a man like Odysseus who recognizes the vanity of such pride” (60). While we may admire Ajax’s absolute adherence to his principle, a fidelity which drives him to suicide, when we attend to the parallels between him and Hector, we cannot help but see him as a figure of great *hubris* and little *sôphrosunê*. W. Edward Brown emphasizes the divergences between Ajax and Hector in order to show how “(t)he difference lay in Hector’s... acceptance of the limitations of human power and the obligation of human living, which his enemy rejected” (120). Hector dies defending family and country; Ajax destroys himself as “a useless sacrifice to his concept of honor” (119). Peter Burian, writing more broadly about intertextuality and narrative patterning in the tragedies, likewise calls attention to the farewell scenes between Hector and Andromache and between Ajax and Tecmessa, contrasting “the heroes’ hopes for their sons” (194). The key for Burian is in Hector’s wish that his son be better than him; Ajax believes his son will be blessed if he grows to be just like him, only luckier.

When Agamemnon and Menelaus award Achilles’ arms to Odysseus, it is a clear blow to Ajax’s honor, not only because of the loss of arms, but because of the individual who receives them: Odysseus, Ajax’s rival and antithesis among the Greeks. In truth, both men rescued Achilles’ body from the Trojans, so a judgment to decide ownership would have to be held. But this judgment must seem especially unjust, since it is not the first time that Ajax has recovered the body of a comrade but failed to take his arms; his rescue of Achilles echoes his earlier rescue

of the body of Achilles' friend Patroclus, though not until after the Trojans had stripped Patroclus of the armor of Achilles that Patroclus was wearing (with Ajax, intertextual echoes always reinforce the sense of his failure). Homer establishes the conflict and contrast between these Ajax and Odysseus during the funeral games for Patroclus in Book 23 of the *Iliad*, when Ajax wrestles Odysseus to a draw, then loses a match to him, only to lose again in shameful fashion in the footrace that follows. During the race, Odysseus calls on Athena to help him beat Ajax, and she makes Ajax slip on a cow patty, so that he falls into a pile of dung and comes in second:

(S)hining long-enduring Odysseus flashed past him
to come in first by far and carry off the cup
while Ajax took the ox. The racer in all his glory
just stood there, clutching one of the beast's horns,
spitting out the dung and sputtering to his comrades,
'Foul, by heaven! The goddess fouled my finish!
Always besides Odysseus—just like the man's mother,
rushing to put his rivals in the dust!' (23.863-870)

Ironically, Sophocles opens *Ajax* with a continuation of the abasement of Ajax, though this time it is far more degrading. While the final image of Ajax in the *Iliad* is of the great hero covered in dung after a mishap wrought by Athena, the image at the start of *Ajax* is of the great hero drenched in sweat and the gore of slaughtered livestock: "blood-smear'd / among the broken bodies, clawing / at his face and hair" (Golder, 345-347). Each time, he is cast down through Athena's intervention, first slipping on a cow patty, then slaughtering the captured livestock which he believes to be the Atreidae and Odysseus. That Athena proves his divine antagonist is critical, for she is the goddess of wisdom and balance and is the patron goddess of Odysseus. As Vincent J. Rosivach observes, "Ajax' basic weakness [is] an inability to accept reality when it conflicts with his preconceptions, especially preconceptions involving himself" (49). Ajax

cannot accept that the Judgment of Arms was decided on the basis of intellect, not physical might, and this denial extends beyond the denial of the intellectual to denial of the divine itself, a clear expression of *hubris*: “Don’t you know by now / That I owe the gods no service anymore?” (589-590). In this way, he contrasts sharply with Odysseus, whose *sôphrosunê* (temperance) is evident when he sees the bloody and humiliated Ajax, “a man I hate” (19), yet nevertheless admits: “I pity / His wretchedness, though he is my enemy, / For the terrible yoke of blindness that is on him. / I think of him, yet also of myself” (121-124). It is a contrast crucial to one of the great moments of the play, the crux where tragedy might seem to be averted, and where our sensitivity to the intertextual echoes Sophocles invokes enables us to anticipate the suffering that Ajax will bear. In his farewell speech to Tecmessa and to the chorus of Salaminian sailors, Ajax invokes a profound resignation and Odysseus-like acceptance of time’s endless cycle of creation and destruction:

Strangely the long and countless drift of time
Brings all things forth from darkness into light,
Then covers them once more. Nothing so marvelous
That men can say it surely will not be—
Strong oath and iron intent come crashing down. (645-649)

Yet for Ajax to revoke his heroic ethos by assuming an Odysseus-like character is contrary to his nature (*phusis*). While seemingly resigned, he speaks of his future actions in terms of images of anointment and burial, anticipating his later suicide:

But now I’m going to the bathing place
And meadows by the sea, to cleanse my stains,
In hope the goddess’ wrath may pass from me.
And when I’ve found a place that’s quite deserted
I’ll dig in the ground, and hide this sword of mine,
Hatefulest of weapons, out of sight. (655-660)

Thus, when he describes the restoration of a calm and obedient mood through a series of seasonal images, one cannot but contrast the images of natural rebirth with the inevitable destruction needed to generate that rebirth:

I must give way, as all dread strengths give way,
In turn and deference. Winter's hard-packed snow
Cedes to the fruitful summer; stubborn night
At last removes, for day's white steeds to shine.
The dread blast of the gale slackens and gives
Peace to the sounding sea; and Sleep, strong jailer,
In time yields up his captive. (668-674)

“Shall not I / Learn place and wisdom?” he asks (674-675), and this evocation of a *sôphrosunê* associated with Odysseus signals the end of Ajax, since to assume the identity of his rival is to forsake his very being.

Odysseus himself is a particularly allusive figure, for he is not only present in both of Homer's epics, but also in both *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*. In *Ajax*, where he and Ajax regard each other as enemies, Odysseus is a figure of proper balance and piety; W. K. C. Guthrie argues that Sophocles sets the noble humaneness of Odysseus against the raw power of the gods:

We have here neither the brave, resourceful hero of epic nor the cold and remorseless plotter which he becomes in the *Philoctetes*. We have a very human figure, reluctantly consenting to an ally who is divine only in the sense of being more powerful, while his heart is heavy to think that both he and Ajax alike are mere playthings for such powerful beings to deal with as the whim may take them. (117)

At the start of the play, Odysseus is reluctant to look upon the depraved Ajax, even though ordered to do so by Athena, his patron goddess, who clearly relishes Ajax's downfall, and even though the heroic ethos accepts and even encourages taunting enemies in their fallen state; Athena asks, “(T)o laugh at your enemies— / What sweeter laughter can there be than that?”

(78-79). By the conclusion of the play, Odysseus' arguments for a proper burial for Ajax establish him as a figure of considerable wisdom, balance, and self-control. Guthrie explains:

When a truly noble action is to be performed, when Odysseus shows his generosity by not only insisting on the due burial of his fallen enemy but effecting a reconciliation with that enemy's brother, then it is human beings who are the protagonists: the powers of heaven are conspicuously absent. (119)

In this way, Odysseus comes to parallel the figure of Priam, the Trojan king who at the end of the *Iliad* must petition Achilles to return of the body of his dead son, Hector, so that he may be given the appropriate funeral rites, just as Odysseus must persuade the Atreidae to honor Ajax.¹¹

Odysseus implores Agamemnon:

Don't cast out this brave man's body
Unburied; don't in the gods' name be so hard.
Vindictiveness should not so govern you
As to make you trample on the right. I too
Found this man hateful once, beyond the rest
Of all my fellow soldiers, since the time
I won Achilles' armor. Nevertheless,
In spite of his enmity, I cannot wish
To pay him with dishonor, or refuse
To recognize in him the bravest man
Of all that came to Troy, except Achilles.
It would be wrong to do him injury;
In acting so, you'd not be injuring him—
Rather the god's laws. (1332-1344)

Priam confronts Achilles with a similarly forceful appeal to pity and piety:

(O)ne, one was left to me, to guard my walls, my people—
the one you killed the other day, defending his fatherland
my Hector! It's all for him I've come to the ships now,
to win him back from you—I bring a priceless ransom.
Revere the gods, Achilles! Pity me in my own right,
remember your father! I deserve more pity...
I have endured what no one on earth has ever done before—
I put to my lips the hands of the man who killed my son. (24.584-591)

In both *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, Odysseus is the first human character to speak and is in conflict with the title character, so that in each play he provides a chord against which the conduct of other major characters resonates. In *Ajax*, he is first seen addressing and showing due deference to Athena, and his conflict with Ajax signals that the latter is neither reverent nor deferential, as Ajax himself acknowledges: “I cannot look / To any of the race of gods for help, / Being no longer worthy” (397-399). Odysseus’ status as a reasonable mediator is confirmed by Ajax’s half-brother, Teucer, who thanks Odysseus for his help: “(T)hough you hated him worst of the Argives, / You alone came to help, and did not wish, / Because you lived, to outrage him in death” (1382-1384). Yet Teucer does not unequivocally praise Odysseus or accept this offer: “Son of Laertes, / I feel some hesitation at your offer / And fear I cannot let you touch the corpse: / That might offend the dead” (1393-1396). This reluctance of Teucer’s is important to remember as we consider the other Sophoclean tragedy that features Odysseus, *Philoctetes*, for as Homer observes, Odysseus is *polutropos* (many-turned), and between *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, his morally ambiguous character indeed takes many turns.

In *Philoctetes*, the pious Odysseus is replaced by a scheming politician, committed to success at all costs, since “the prize of victory is pleasant to win” (81). Admittedly, Odysseus does not seem stricken by the same *hubris* that afflicts Ajax; he is driven by a desire for Greek victory, not personal glory, and he will do whatever it takes to accomplish this end. He shows no scruples about sacrificing his own honor and reputation to achieve his ends, advising Neoptolemus to “(s)ay what you will / against me; do not spare me anything” (65-66) when deceiving Philoctetes about his reasons for landing on Lemnos, for “(n)othing of this will hurt me” (66). Nor is he particularly bent on dominating Philoctetes, though he clearly detests the man; his goal is securing Greek victory, no matter how he does so. Odysseus proves an

opportunist at heart: “As the occasion / demands,” he says, “such a one am I” (1048-1049). At the start of the play, believing that the bow of Heracles will suffice to bring about the fall of Troy, Odysseus sets upon the simpler task of acquiring it, rather than attempting to persuade Philoctetes to rejoin the Greek cause; only later does he try to ensnare Philoctetes himself. Odysseus’ unwavering desire to win at all costs creates a moral confusion for the audience, especially one familiar with Sophocles’ *Ajax*, and for Neoptolemus, whom Odysseus urges to forsake his principles to ensure Greek victory: “For one brief shameless portion of a day / give me yourself, and then for all the rest / you may be called most scrupulous of men” (83-85).

The openings of *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* are formally quite similar, and by keeping the opening of *Ajax* in mind, we can see how Odysseus himself has come to exhibit a sort of irreverence we might previously have associated with Ajax. In both plays, Odysseus first appears on stage with another character, discussing the mischance and misery of the title character. But in *Philoctetes*, Odysseus’ place in the power dynamic is changed: we first see him addressing a younger, untried man, Achilles’ son Neoptolemus, in the absence of the goddess Athena, whom Odysseus previously revered and feared. Not only is the scene lacking the force of wisdom and moderation, but Odysseus appears to have supplanted the figure of divine authority. Just as Athena urged Odysseus in *Ajax* to “(g)et a grip on your nerves and wait,” promising that “(i)t’s no disaster to see the man. I’ll turn his glance away” (69-70), so Odysseus tells Neoptolemus that “I know... it is not your natural bent / to say such things nor to contrive such mischief” (79-80), but commands him to “Bear up: another time we shall prove honest” (82). Thus, Odysseus now makes himself the primary driver of another’s suffering and downfall (*até*), demonstrating a ruthlessness at odds with his supposedly balanced nature, just as Athena’s savagery towards Ajax seems to counter her own.

If Odysseus seems a rather singularly ruthless figure in *Philoctetes*, we might consider this portrayal a single emphasis on one facet of his character, rather than a definitive representation of his character, a view that would be contradicted by the complexity of the other Odysseus figures of *Ajax*, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey*. Such multifacetedness is not the case with *Philoctetes*, however; of all the Greek heroes, he remains perhaps the most enigmatic, in spite of the prophecy that the Trojan War could not end without his participation.¹² Indeed, as Edmund Wilson notes, *Philoctetes* itself is an enigmatic play, “since it culminates in no catastrophe, and... resembles rather our modern idea of a comedy” (273). His story is an odd one; he is absent for most of the war, laid low by a snakebite on the island of Chryse, an event that seems to break free of the mythic pattern in its randomness and apparent injustice, since *Philoctetes* was making a sacrifice to Chryse, the goddess of the island, when he was bitten. As the chorus of Salaminian sailors exclaims in *Philoctetes*, there is no one “whose destiny was more his enemy when he met it / than *Philoctetes*’, who wronged no one, nor killed / but lived, just among the just, / and fell in trouble past his deserts” (682-685). Homer makes only brief reference to *Philoctetes*, yet Sophocles draws interesting parallels between him and Achilles, partly to enhance his conflict with Odysseus, but perhaps more importantly to raise the stakes in their conflict over Neoptolemus.¹³

The allusive links between *Philoctetes* and Achilles are all the more fitting since *Philoctetes* will enter into a conflict with Odysseus about how Neoptolemus should conduct himself in the affair of the bow, a conflict in which both men will attempt to take the place of Neoptolemus’ father. Certainly the conflict between Odysseus and *Philoctetes* is steeped in the former’s desire to win the war and the latter’s desire to avenge his abandonment on Lemnos (a situation that parallels Odysseus’s later shipwreck on the island of Ogygia in the *Odyssey*). Yet

the conflict between these two characters is also a conflict between two teachers over the education of their pupil, and in the character of Neoptolemus we see Sophocles' treatment of the themes of *nomos* (nurture) and *phusis* (nature). We know that Sophocles was especially interested in Neoptolemus and his part in the war, since he in fact altered the story of Philoctetes' return. According to the lost *Little Iliad* (fragments of which are preserved in a commentary by Proclus), it had been the Greek prophet Calchas who prophesied that the Greeks needed Neoptolemus to win the war, while it was the captured Trojan prophet Helenus who made a similar assertion about Philoctetes. In *Philoctetes*, Sophocles has joined the two prophecies and has brought Neoptolemus to the fore, since according to the *Little Iliad* Odysseus was accompanied by the Greek warrior Diomedes, not Neoptolemus, in his quest to retrieve Philoctetes from Lemnos. Philoctetes himself is needed mainly as the one who bears the bow of Heracles. Neoptolemus, on the other hand, is needed precisely because of who he is: the son of Achilles. In a sense, it is his character which will decide the war, and as Mary Whitlock Blundell argues, Sophocles' *Philoctetes* revolves around a conflict over *phusis* and whether or not Neoptolemus should fulfill his own or forsake it. Odysseus urges Neoptolemus to forsake his character for the sake of his loyalty to the Greeks (138), frequently calling Neoptolemus 'child' in order to emphasize his need for guidance; Philoctetes calls for him to obey "the promptings of his *phusis*" "by avoiding something 'shameful'" (139); caught between the two, Neoptolemus remarks that "All is disgust when one leaves his own nature / and does things that misfit it" (902-903).

As a surrogate father, Odysseus assumes the role of instructor, and as many commentators have observed, *Philoctetes* is particularly concerned with issues of education, particularly how the nurture, or *nomos*, of the individual (especially the Greek male entering

adulthood) can actualize and fulfill his personal nature, or *phusis*. Neoptolemus' own name ('new war') indicates his youth, and we must remember that during the decade of the Trojan War, Neoptolemus grew up on the island of Scyros without his father Achilles; entering the world of men, he "had hope of seeing [Achilles] / while still unburied" (353-354), and now seeks another paternal model. Ironically, his situation parallels that of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, who grows up in the absence of Odysseus and whose search for the truth about his father's fate leads him to the company of king Menelaus. In his company, Telemachus shows "newfound tact" (*Odyssey* 4.667) when declining the king's offer of some inappropriate gifts and of an ill-timed stay in the kingdom of Lacedaemon (Sparta), prompting Menelaus to declare, "Good blood runs in *you*, dear boy, your words are proof" (4.688). As Mary Whitby observes, "(T)he *Odyssey* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes* can be seen as parallel texts in that each depicts the growth of a hero from youthful immaturity to a point where he has the stamina and independence to take his place alongside his elders" (35). Though the events chronicled in the *Odyssey* are years from happening during the events of *Philoctetes*, the Homeric allusions perhaps allow us to see Odysseus' fatherly guidance of Neoptolemus as less cynical than we might first presume. However, this facet of Odysseus's character is ultimately belied by his manipulation of Neoptolemus' sense of duty and obedience, as Philoctetes himself remarks: "Your shabby, slit-eyed soul taught him step by step / to be clever in mischief against his nature and will" (1013-1014).

Philoctetes would seem the more appropriate father figure for Neoptolemus, given the parallels Sophocles draws between him and Achilles. Like Achilles, Philoctetes threatens the outcome of the Trojan War with his absence, and like Achilles, he rebuffs Odysseus's attempt to persuade him to return. In doing so, Philoctetes condemns his manipulative appeals to his sense

of duty, saying that “you never would have sailed here for my sake / and my happiness, had not the goad of God, / a need of me, compelled you” (1037-1039). Like Achilles, Philoctetes rejects verbal deceit, condemning Odysseus as a liar—“Hateful creature, / what things you invent! You plead the Gods / to screen your actions and make the Gods out liars” (991-993)—just as Achilles once said in response to Odysseus’ plea for his return to battle, “I hate that man like the very Gates of Death / who says one thing but hides another in his heart. / I will say it outright. That seems best to me” (*Iliad* 9.378-380). Finally, in Philoctetes’ absolute refusal to return to the war, we cannot help but hear Achilles himself. “I will not think of arming for bloody war again,” says Achilles, “not till the son of wise King Priam, dazzling Hector / batters all the way to the Myrmidon ships and shelters, / slaughtering Argives, gutting the hulls with fire” (*Iliad* 9.795-798); Philoctetes urges Neoptolemus to “(r)emain in Scyrus yourself; let these bad men / die in their own bad fashion” (*Philoctetes* 1369-1370). Indeed, Philoctetes is so committed to resisting Odysseus and defying the prophecy of Helenus that he seems to have provoked Sophocles into the concluding *deus ex machina*, when the spirit of Heracles returns to command Philoctetes to join Neoptolemus in Troy: “I come / to tell you of the plans of Zeus for you, / to turn you back from the road you go upon” (1413-1415).

Ultimately, however, Neoptolemus rejects both Philoctetes and Odysseus as appropriate models of conduct, defying Odysseus by returning the bow to Philoctetes and by refusing to sail for Troy, and denying Philoctetes his (Achilles-like) vengeance against Odysseus. Ashamed that he “practiced craft and treachery with success” (1228) in his acquisition of the bow of Philoctetes, returns to his nature by feeling shame like Achilles, but also by changing his mind, unlike his father. Blundell asserts that “The way in which Neoptolemus actualizes his potential, confirming his *phusis* in action, is identical with none of the models available to him. He lives

up to his noble *phusis* in a distinctive manner, combining the best of Achilles' honesty and Odysseus' persuasiveness, while avoiding the concomitant vices of recalcitrance and treachery” (145). In a sense, Neoptolemus is a hero without echo, an original, like his father, the one who breaks through the constraints of an archaic heroic code that condemned Ajax to death at his own hand, while not forsaking his noble principles purely for the sake of victory, as with Odysseus. When Philoctetes takes aim at Odysseus after having his bow restored to him, Neoptolemus intervenes, neither pursuing vengeance like Achilles and Philoctetes nor weaving a web of protective lies like Odysseus, but acting instead as his own man. To Philoctetes' complaint, “Why did you prevent me killing my enemy, / with my bow, a man that hates me?” (1302-1303), Neoptolemus replies, “This is not to our glory, neither yours nor mine” (1304), rejecting the vengefulness of the heroic code that drives Achilles, Ajax, and Philoctetes, and asserting his own standards of honor, an act that in one sense consummates the individualism his father asserted when he withdrew from the Greek forces after his quarrel with Agamemnon.¹⁴

From Homer, patterns emerge—of action, speech, character—that seem to dominate the lives of the heroes. But from Homer there also emerges the will to resist such patterns, to exert the force of the individual, of singularity, of originality, against the limits of fate and necessity. As Roberto Calasso writes, “With the heroes, man takes his first step beyond the necessary: into the realm of risk, defiance, shrewdness, deceit, art” (70). By attending to the Homeric allusions that Sophocles deploys again and again in his plays, we witness the struggle of the individual against tribalism, heroic vengeance, blind obedience, and unthinking piety, all the codes that bind the individual in repeated patterns of violent action, patterns which threaten to erase the self and never end. Ajax's life represents the failure to resist repetition; his decision to commit suicide, however, is singular and sublime, evoking from this hero not known for words one of the great

soliloquies about the cycle of time: “Strangely the long and countless drift of time / Brings all things forth from darkness into light, / Then covers them once more. Nothing so marvelous / That man can say it surely will not be” (*Ajax* 644-647). Philoctetes’ refusal to sail to Troy is as angry and embittered as that of Achilles, yet he cleaves to it so absolutely that he almost overturns the fated narrative of the Trojan War and forces the demigod Heracles to descend from the heavens and command his obedience to fate. Neoptolemus seems to find his own path in the world, somewhere between Achilles’ absolute commitment and Odysseus’ remarkable flexibility: “I have no fear of anything... when I act with justice; nor shall I yield with force” (*Philoctetes* 1251-1252), he tells Odysseus. And perhaps it is in Odysseus alone that we find a hero whose patterns conform only to themselves, whose many turns allow him to understand the lives of others, so that when he sees the deranged Ajax, “I see the true state of all us that live— / We are dim shapes, no more, and weightless shadow” (*Ajax* 121-126); or as Calasso writes, “After Odysseus, our life without heroes begins; stories are no long exemplary but are repeated and recounted. What happens is mere history” (349).

Notes

¹ The translations of Homer are from Robert Fagles’ *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, unless otherwise noted. Lines listed correspond to Fagles’ own translation, not to the original Greek.

² Or as Christopher Logue has it in his *War Music*, an “account” or loose version of books 1-4 and 16-19 of the *Iliad*: “I can hear Death pronounce my name,” Patroclus tells Hector, “and yet / Somehow it sounds like *Hector*. / And as I close my eyes I see Achilles’ face / With Death’s voice coming out of it” (171). While Logue’s *War Music* is by no means a faithful translation, it is excellent English verse and often conveys the passions of the poem more powerfully than Fagles, et al. As Garry Wills says of Logue’s work: “Great poetry. But is it Homer? Yes—all the way down, in deepening gyres, to the *Iliad*’s inmost core” (Logue, xix).

³ An echo that seems to resonate across ages, from Euripides' play *Helen* (421-412 B.C.E.) to works like H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* (1961) and Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* (1998).

⁴ Fagles notes that when the other Cyclops answer Polyphemus' cry of distress, "Nobody's killing me," with "If... nobody's killing you," the form they use, *me tis*, is a homonym of *metis*, a key word in the *Odyssey*, meaning 'craft' or 'cunning' (*Odyssey*, 509-510).

⁵ Logue: "(A)s the loss of an allotted she / Diminishes my honour and my state, / Before the army leaves the common sand / Its captain lords will find among their own / Another such for me" (14).

⁶ Logue: "(H)onour is / No mortal thing, but ever in creation / Vital, free, like speed, like light / Like silence, like the gods, / The movement of the stars! Beyond the stars! / Dividing man from beast, hero from host, / That proves best, best, that only death can reach, / Yet cannot die because it will be said, be sung, / Now, and in time to be, for evermore" (22).

⁷ An island near Athens that in 480 B.C.E. was the site of the Greek naval victory over the Persians, an event which accounts for the strong presence of an Ajax cult in Athens during Sophocles' time and that might have created a conflict for Sophocles' audience when judging Ajax's attempted treachery against Odysseus, the hero beloved by the patron goddess of Athens, Athena. Thus, myth echoes across literature into history.

⁸ To understand the conflict driving Sophocles' *Ajax*, one must understand the value of war trophies for the Homeric heroes. To take the arms of a fallen enemy or to inherit those of a comrade is to add to one's public display of honor, as present-day military are awarded medals or ribbons for outstanding service; at a deeper remove, such trophies also signify an appropriation of the slain warrior's prowess.

⁹ Ajax's name in Greek, *Aias*, is similar to the Greek cry of grief and woe, *Ai!*

¹⁰ In the matter of the ambiguity about whether the ballot was rigged or simply a secret ballot, Pindar, who favors the archaic heroism of figures like Ajax over the democratic values of 5th century Athens, claims in Nemean Ode VII that the ballot was indeed rigged: "The mass of mankind is blind in heart; / if they had been able to discern the truth, / mighty Ajax would not have driven his polished sword / into his breast, angered over the award of arms" (*Verity*, 25-28).

¹¹ In this theme of the desecration of the dead, Sophocles makes an ironic parallel between Agamemnon, the king of the Achaeans who orders that Ajax's body be left for scavengers, and Achilles, who drags Hector's body about Troy for ten days (and whose quarrel with Agamemnon precipitates the events Homer describes in the *Iliad*). It is a theme that echoes as well in Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which Antigone resists the decree of the tyrant Creon that the body of her brother, Polyneices, be left for scavengers as punishment for his fighting against Thebes.

¹² One sure sign of Ajax's firmer place in Athenian culture was the presence of a hero cult in his honor. S. J. Harrison writes that there may have been a Philoctetes cult in Italy, but that the archaeological evidence is tenuous at best, indicating Philoctetes' lesser status in the culture (174-75).

¹³ In a lesser fashion, Philoctetes parallels Ajax in terms of his impiety. Ajax says, "(W)hen God / Strikes harm, a worse man often foils his better" (*Ajax* 456-457); Philoctetes claims that "nothing evil has yet perished. / The Gods somehow give them most excellent care. / They find their pleasure in turning back from Death / the rogues and tricksters, but the just and good / they

are always sending out of the world” (*Philoctetes* 446-450). Ironically, in his longing for home, Philoctetes also echoes Odysseus.

¹⁴ The terrible irony is that Neoptolemus will commit some of the most heinous acts of the Trojan War, slaying Priam before his family, throwing Hector’s son Astyanax from the city walls, and taking Hector’s wife Andromache as a slave (as recounted in Proclus’ commentary on the *Little Iliad*, in the plays of Euripides, and in the *Epitome* of Apollodorus). Though Sophocles portrays Neoptolemus in a sympathetic fashion, the final words of Heracles offer a darkly ironic comment on these future deeds: “But this remember, / when you shall come to sack that town, keep holy in the sight of God. / All else our father Zeus thinks of less moment. / Holiness does not die with the men that die. / Whether they die or live, it cannot perish” (1440-1444).

Works Cited

Belmont, David E. “Twentieth-Century Odysseus.” *The Classical Journal* 62.2 (1966): 49-56.

Blundell, Mary Whitlock. “The ‘Phusis’ of Neoptolemus in Sophocles’ ‘Philoctetes.’” *Greece & Rome* 35.2 (1988): 137-148.

Bowie, A. M. “Tragic Filters for History: Euripides’ *Supplikes* and Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*. *Greek Tragedy and the Historian*. Edited by Christopher Pelling. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997: 39-62.

Brown, W. Edward. “Sophocles’ Ajax and Homer’s Hector.” *The Classical Journal* 61.3 (1965): 118-21.

Burian, Peter. “Myth into *muthos*: the shaping of tragic plot.” *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Edited by P.E. Easterling. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997: 178-208.

Calasso, Roberto. *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*. Translated by Tim Parks. NY: Knopf, 1993.

Cavafy, C. P. *Selected Poems*. Translated by Avi Sharon. NY: Penguin, 2008.

Graves, Robert. *The Greek Myths*. 1955. Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, Ltd, 1988.

Guthrie, W. K. C. “Odysseus in the *Ajax*.” *Greece & Rome* 16.48 (1947): 115-119.

Harrison, S. J. “Sophocles and the Cult of Philoctetes.” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 173-175.

Homer. *The Iliad*. Translated by Robert Fagles. NY: Viking, 1990.

---. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Robert Fagles. NY: Viking, 1996.

- Lawall, Sally Nesbit. "Sophocles' *Ajax*: Aristos... after Achilles." *The Classical Journal* 54.7 (1959): 290-94.
- Logue, Christopher. *War Music: An Account of Books 1-4 and 16-19 of Homer's Iliad*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Pindar. *The Complete Odes*. Translated by Anthony Verity. NY: Oxford UP, 2007.
- . *The Odes*. Translated by C. M. Bowra. NY: Penguin, 1969.
- Plato. *Phaedrus*. In *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961.
- Rosivach, Vincent J. "Sophocles' *Ajax*." *The Classical Journal* 72.1 (1976): 47-61.
- Sophocles. *Ajax*. Translated by John Moore. *The Complete Greek Tragedies: Sophocles II*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1957: 6-62.
- Sophocles. *Philoctetes*. Translated by David Grene. *The Complete Greek Tragedies: Sophocles II*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1957: 194-254.
- Whitby, Mary. "Telemachus Transformed? The Origins of Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*." *Greece & Rome*, second series, 43.1 (1996): 31-42.
- Wills, Garry. "Introduction." *War Music: An Account of Books 1-4 and 16-19 of Homer's Iliad*. By Christopher Logue. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1997: xi-xix.
- Wilson, Edmund. *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1947.