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The Athenian Asklepieion and the End of *Philoctetes*

Sophoclean scholars, from Winnington-Ingram (1980) to Roberts (1988, 1989), neglect how Heracles innovatively names Asclepius as *Philoctetes*' healer. This paper attributes the shift to the Asklepieion's construction above the Theater of Dionysus. *Philoctetes*, to rephrase the title of Taplin's 1987 article, warrants "remapping" on the Acropolis' south slope. Scholarship has increasingly focussed on the interplay between the topographies of a drama's setting and the Acropolis. Wiles (1997) shows how the performative space of the Theater of Dionysus affects how we read Athenian drama. Asclepius' inclusion at *Philoctetes*' close thus reconfigures the performative space, from a rocky shore on Lemnos, as Athenian. Odysseus evokes Athena Polias, protector of the city, uniquely in extant Greek tragedy, where there is no city. The text points to healing cults of Athena on the Acropolis and to the recently completed Erechtheion, the home of Athena Polias.

Heracles' epiphany awakens a dormant Asclepian network in *Philoctetes*. Heracles recalls that Philoctetes' illness extends beyond his body to his relationship with society, twice linking healing to Philoctetes' presence at Troy (1423-4, 1437-8). Sophocles prepares us for Asclepius with a Hymn to Sleep (827-32). Haldane's analysis (1963) of the Hymn's generic aspects discusses neither the adjacency of Asklepieion and Theater nor links the Hymn to the drama's close, which the paeon prepares.

The promise of Asclepius' healing arrival at Troy appeals to the Theater's environment. Sophocles shifts the healer's identity to exploit the Asklepieion's adjacency, engaging the dynamics of social and personal healing to extend that healing beyond the acting area, into the audience and beyond. Perched above the *skênê*, Heracles surveys the acting area, to the spectators and above them, and points over the audience's heads to Asclepius' new home, a gesture that, in keeping with the scene's earlier anapests, momentarily ruptures the dramatic illusion, yet simultaneously draws Athens into the Theater as part of the drama's meaning. How Philoctetes and Neoptolemus exit strengthens these connections. Wiles, following Taplin, has sketched out the symbolism of the *eisodoi*, with the audience's left (and true east) unused entrance representing nature and the active entrance as the path to the bay, and thus civilization and culture. Neoptolemus reminds Philoctetes that he will never be healed "while the sun which rises here sets there." If Sophocles uses the Theater's real orientation, Neoptolemus points east and then west, anticipating Heracles' significant gesture. The two exit together to the right, towards the Asklepieion. The movement, a consequence of Heracles' instructions, in a sense reverses them as the actors enact them, since Heracles not only sends Asclepius to Philoctetes in Troy, but he also dispatches Philoctetes to Asclepius in Athens.

The dramatic space of *Philoctetes*, thus remapped, raises new questions. What does this mean for the audience in the Athenian Theater of Dionysus in 409? Since Sophocles gives such an intense sense of the place of Lemnos, why would he then also point his audience towards their own city? Greek drama elsewhere engages in a double setting for a drama's action, placing a clearly Athenian framework around the primary city by

referring to Athenian institutions. Philoctetes can be saved by something, in a sense, visible to him, and visible to the audience.