

*Amicus ex Machina: The Figure of Herakles in Philoktetes*

1. Philoktetes, 1197-99

οὐδέποτ' οὐδέποτ', ἴσθι τόδ' ἔμπεδον,  
οὐδ' εἰ πυρφόρος ἀστεροπητῆς  
βροντᾶς ἀυγαῖς μ' εἴσι φλογίζων.

Never, Never, know that for certain, not if the fire-bearing lord of the lightning comes to consume me in the blaze of his thunder!

2. Neoptolemus, 1314-1320

ἦσθην πατέρα τὸν ἀμὸν εὐλογοῦντά σε  
αὐτόν τ' ἔμ'· ὦν δέ σου τυχεῖν ἐφίεμαι  
ἄκουσον. ἀνθρώποισι τὰς μὲν ἐκ θεῶν  
τύχας δοθείσας ἔστ' ἀναγκαῖον φέρειν·  
ὄσοι δ' ἐκουσίοισιν ἔγκεινται βλάβαις,  
ὥσπερ σύ, τοῦτοις οὔτεσυγγνώμην ἔχειν  
δίκαιόν ἐστιν οὔτ' ἐποικτίρειν τινά.

I am glad to hear you praise my father and myself; but hear of the favor which I am asking of you! The fortunes given them by the gods men are obliged to bear; but those who are the prey of damage that is self-inflicted it is wrong that any should be sorry for or pity!

3. Neoptolemus. 1329-1335

καὶ παῦλαν ἴσθι τῆσδε μή ποτ' ἂν τυχεῖν  
νόσου βαρείας, ἕως ἂν αὐτὸς ἥλιος  
ταύτη μὲν αἶρηι, τῆδε δ' αὖ δύνη πάλιν,  
πρὶν ἂν τὰ Τροίας πεδί' ἐκὼν αὐτὸς μόλῃς,  
καὶ τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν ἐντυχῶν Ἀσκληπιδῶν  
νόσου μαλαχθῆς τῆσδε, καὶ τὰ πέργαμα  
ξὺν τοῖσδε τόξοις ξὺν τ' ἐμοὶ πέρσας φανῆς

And know that you will never have respite from grievous sickness, so long as the sun rises in one quarter and sets again in another, before you come of your own will to the land of Troy, and meeting the sons of Asclepius that are with us you are relieved of this malady, and with this bow and with me you are revealed as the conqueror of the towers.

4. Philoktetes, 1348-1353

ὦ στυγνὸς αἰὼν, τί μ' ἔτι δῆτ' ἔχεις ἄνω  
βλέποντα, κοῦκ ἀφῆκας εἰς Ἄϊδου μολεῖ;  
οἴμοι, τί δράσω; πῶς ἀπιστήσω λόγοις  
τοῖς τοῦδ', ὃς εὔνοους ὦν ἐμοὶ παρήνεσεν;  
ἀλλ' εἰκάθω δῆτ'; εἶτα πῶς ὁ δύσμορος  
ἐς φῶς τάδ' ἔρξας εἴμι; τῷ προσήγορος;

O hateful life, why do you still keep me alive above the ground, and have not let me depart to Hades? Alas, what am I to do? How am I to disbelieve the words of this man, who gave me advice for my own good? But am I to give in? Then how can I come into men's sight, unhappy one, after doing this? Who will speak to me?

5. Herakles. 1409-1417

**μήπω** γε, πρὶν ἂν τῶν ἡμετέρων  
αἰῆς **μύθων**, παῖ Ποίαντος·  
φάσκειν δ' αὐδῆν τὴν Ἡρακλέους  
ἀκοῆ τε κλύειν λεύσσειν τ' ὄψιν.  
**τὴν σὴν δ' ἦκω χάριν οὐρανιας**  
**ἔδρας προλιπών,**  
τὰ Διὸς τε φράσεων βουλευμάτα σοι,  
κατερητύσων θ' ὁδὸν ἣν στέλλῃ·  
σὺ δ' ἐμῶν μύθων ἐπάκουσον.

**Not yet**, before you have listened to my *commands*, son of Poëas; and say that your ears hear and your eyes view the form of Heracles. **For your sake I have come, leaving my home in heaven**, to tell you of the plans of Zeus, and to restrain you from the voyage on which you are embarking. Do you listen to my words!

6. Herakles, 1423-1440

ἐλθὼν δὲ σὺν τῷδ' ἀνδρὶ πρὸς τὸ Τρωικὸν  
πόλισμα πρῶτον μὲν νόσου παύση λυγρᾶς,  
ἀρετῇ τε πρῶτος ἐκκριθεὶς στρατεύματος,  
**Πάριν μὲν, ὃς τῶνδ' αἴτιος κακῶν ἔφυ,**  
τόξοισι τοῖς ἐμοῖσι νοσφιεῖς βίου,  
πέρσεις τε Τροίαν, σκῦλά τ' ἐς μέλαθρα σὰ  
πέμψεις, ἀριστεῖ' ἐκλαβὼν στρατεύματος,  
Ποίαντι πατρὶ πρὸς πάτρας Οἴτης πλάκα.  
ἂ δ' ἂν λάβῃς σὺ σκῦλα τοῦδε τοῦ στρατοῦ  
**τόξων ἐμῶν μνημεῖα πρὸς πυρὰν ἐμὴν**  
**κόμιζε.** καὶ σοὶ ταῦτ', Ἀχιλλέως τέκνον,  
παρήνεσ'· οὔτε γὰρ σὺ τοῦδ' ἄτερ σθένεις  
ἐλεῖν τὸ Τροίας πεδῖον οὔθ' οὔτος σέθεν·  
**ἀλλ' ὡς λέοντε συννόμῳ φυλάσσετον**  
οὔτος σὲ καὶ σὺ τόνδ'. ἐγὼ δ' Ἀσκληπιὸν  
παυστήρα πέμψω σῆς νόσου πρὸς Ἴλιον.  
τὸ δεύτερον γὰρ τοῖς ἐμοῖς αὐτὴν χρεῶν  
τόξοις ἀλῶναι. τοῦτο δ' ἐννοεῖθ', ὅταν πορθῆτε  
γαῖαν, εὐσεβεῖν τὰ πρὸς θεοῦς ὡς τᾶλλα πάντα  
δεύτερ' ἡγεῖται πατὴρ Ζεὺς.

You shall go with this man to the city of Troy and first be cured of your grim sickness. And you shall be judged first of the army in valor, by means of my bow depriving of life **Paris who was the cause of these troubles**, and taking Troy, and bringing the spoils to your abode, after receiving the greatest prize of the army, for your father Poias to the topmost plain of Oeta, your native place. The spoils you receive from this expedition you must **bring to my pyre as a memorial of my bow**. And to you I give the same counsel, son of Achilles; for you have not the strength to conquer the land of Troy without him, neither has he without you; **but guard each other like two companion lions!** And I will send Asclepius to Ilium to put an end to your disease. For it is fated to be taken once again by the aid of my bow. But remember when you conquer the land to show reverence to the gods, for all things come after this in the mind of Zeus my father.

7. ὦ φθέγμα ποθεινὸν ἐμοὶ πέμψας, χρόνιός τε φανείς, οὐκ ἀπιθήσω τοῖς σοῖς μύθοις.

O you who have brought to me a voice I longed for, you who have appeared at last, I will not disobey your orders!

All Greek text and translations from Harvard Loeb, edited and translated by Hugh Lloyd Jones, unless otherwise indicated. (Italicized text is my translation.)

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