

HYMN TO GAIA /MOTHER OF THE GODS (391-402) IN SOPHOCLES' *PHILOKTETES**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present article is to analyse the function of the Hymn to Gaia (vv. 391-402) in Sophocles' *Philoktetes* and to examine Sophocles' re-appropriation of the hymnic tradition. I shall attempt to find the reasons for some of Sophocles' departures from the tradition in the specific performance's context. Indeed, the choice of the gods praised in hymns can be related with the notion of "athenocentrism" of Sophocles' tragedy, that is to say, tragedies that were not located in Athens offer an *aition* (an explanation of origins) of Athenian's customs and cults.

Keywords: Greek Hymn, Tragedy, performance

I propose to examine the hymn to Gaia or Mother Goddess (391-402) in Sophocles' *Philoktetes*, taking into account that it is an imitation (μίμησις) of cultic hymns performed in the context of the dramatic fiction. The hymn is sung by the chorus of Neoptolemus' sailors; they want to help their young and inexperienced leader in his attempt to persuade Philoktetes, and support him in achieving the deception devised by Odysseus. We might think that the hymn creates an environment of trust, as the chorus prays to the goddess to punish perjurers,¹ giving further credibility to the story of Neoptolemus. However, we should ask why the chorus invokes Gaia or the Mother Goddess. Segal (1981: 307) suggests the choice is related to the fact that Sophocles had much knowledge about the cults and myths of the West Aegean. Nevertheless,

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¹ Cf. *Il.* III 103; XV 36, etc. This aspect is to be examined in our analysis of the *Homeric Hymn* XXX.

this is a rather simple explanation and we consider that a more interesting reason could emerge from the examination of the hymnic tradition, which allows us to propose a possible answer to the question about the reasons that lead to invoke this goddess.

Lemnos is one of the favorite places of Hephaestus. The god himself relates how he reached the island for the first time; in the middle of a big fight with Hera Zeus threw him from Mount Olympus, and the wretched god was looked after by the Sinties (*Iliad* I 590 ff.).² According to Hellanicus (*FGrHist* F 71), they were the first inhabitants of the island.³ In the *Odyssey*, the bard Demodocus sang about the island of Lemnos which Hephaestus was most fond of (viii 283-4). In the mythical tradition Hephaestus and the Sinties were linked with other gods, the Cabiri. Diodorus Siculus points out that the latter are also related to fire and metallurgy.⁴ He also provides two versions of their origins. He says that some authors argue that they lived on Mount Ida in Crete while others claim they were born on Mount Ida in Phrygia, then went to Europe and instituted their mysteries in Samothrace.⁵ In antiquity they were worshiped in Lemnos, Samothrace and even in Troy.⁶

Remarkable information is provided by the lexicographer Photius,⁷ since he associates the Cabiri not only with Lemnos and Hephaestus but also with a relevant mythical event: the crime of the Lemnian women. According to Apollodorus, they neglected the worship to Aphrodite (I IX. 17, αἱ Λήμνιαι τὴν Ἀφροδίτην οὐκ ἐτίμων) and provoked the goddess' wrath, who throws a

² Homer *Iliad* I 590 ff.: ἤδη γάρ με καὶ ἄλλοτ' ἀλεξέμεναι μεμαῶτα / ῥῖψε ποδὸς τετάγων ἀπὸ βηλοῦ θεσπεσίσιο, / πᾶν δ' ἤμαρ φερόμην, ἅμα δ' ἠελίῳ καταδύντι / κάππεσον ἐν Λήμνῳ, ὀλίγος δ' ἔτι θυμὸς ἐνήεν· / ἐνθά με Σίντιες ἄνδρες ἄφαρ κομίσαντο πεσόντα.

³ Hellanicus (*FGrHist* F 71) θ 294: εἰς Λῆμνον μετὰ Σίντιας ἀγριοφώνους] Σίντιες ἐκαλοῦντο οἱ Λήμνιοι, ὡς Ἑλλάνικος ἱστορεῖ ἐν τῷ Περί Χίου Κτίσεως τὸν τρόπον τοιοῦτον· ἐκ τῆς Τενέδου ὄϊχοντο εἰς τὸν Μέλανα κόλπον, καὶ πρῶτον μὲν εἰς Λῆμνον ἀφίκοντο.

⁴ Diodoro Siculus V 64 5: οἱ δ' οὖν κατὰ τὴν Κρήτην Ἰδαῖοι Δάκτυλοι παραδέδονται τὴν τε τοῦ πυρὸς χρῆσιν καὶ τὴν τοῦ χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου φύσιν ἐξευρεῖν τῆς Ἀπτεραίων χώρας περὶ τὸν καλούμενον Βερέκυνθον, καὶ τὴν ἐργασίαν δι' ἧς κατασκευάζεται.

⁵ Diodoro Siculus V 64 3.4: πρῶτοι τοίνυν τῶν εἰς μνήμην παραδεδομένων ᾤκησαν τῆς Κρήτης περὶ τὴν Ἴδην οἱ προσαγορευθέντες Ἰδαῖοι Δάκτυλοι. τούτους δ' οἱ μὲν ἑκατὸν τὸν ἀριθμὸν γεγονέναι παραδεδόκασιν, οἱ δὲ δέκα φασὶν ὑπάρχοντας τυχεῖν ταύτης τῆς προσηγορίας, τοῖς ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ δακτύλοις ὄντας ἰσαριθμούς. ἐνιοὶ δ' ἱστοροῦσιν, ὧν ἔστι καὶ Ἐφορος, τοὺς Ἰδαίους Δακτύλους γενέσθαι μὲν κατὰ τὴν Ἴδην τὴν ἐν Φρυγίᾳ, διαβῆναι δὲ μετὰ Μυγδόνοιο εἰς τὴν Εὐρώπην· ὑπάρξαντας δὲ γόητας ἐπιτηδεῦσαι τάς τε ἐπαφθὰς καὶ τελετὰς καὶ μυστήρια, καὶ περὶ Σαμοθράκην διατρίψαντας οὐ μετρίως ἐν τούτοις ἐκπλήττειν τοὺς ἐγγχωρίους·

⁶ Strabo 10. 21. 3: μάλιστα μὲν οὖν ἐν Ἴμβρῳ καὶ Λήμνῳ τοὺς Καβείρους τιμᾶσθαι συμβέβηκεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν Τροίᾳ κατὰ πόλεις·

⁷ Photius <Κάβαιοιο>: δαίμονες ἐκ Λήμνου διὰ τὸ τόλμημα τῶν γυναικῶν μετενεχθέντες· εἰσι δὲ ἤτιο Ἥφαιστοι ἢ Τιτάνες.

noisome smell against them; for this reason the men rejected their wives and bedded Thracian slaves. Consequently, Lemnian women felt dishonored and murdered their husbands. This provokes the anger of the patron gods, the Cabiri, and they left the island after that; so Lemnos became a place without men or gods. Normal life begins anew with the arrival of Jason and the Argonauts.⁸ Furthermore, Jason is related to this mythical narrative by another event, since he makes sacrifices and prays to the Mother of Dindymune when he travels to Colchis.⁹ Moreover, the hypothesis of *Philoktetes* refers to the mythic tradition that Jason founds a shrine to Chryse in Lemnos (cf. *Imago* 17 of Philostratus the Younger).

In addition, the island was inhabited by a mysterious goddess; Burkert (1970: 4) speaks of “the Great Goddess who was called Lemnos herself”.¹⁰ And Philoktetes also mentions the mysterious goddess Chryse, called ὠμόφρων (*Ph.* 194), whose altar is protected by a snake (vv. 1327-8). As well Kybele is worshiped here as evidenced by a marble statuette of the deity found on the island. “The figure is of the usual seated goddess type and is identified as Kybele by the lion on the right-hand side” (Sealy 1918/19: 172).

Likewise a statue head of the Great Mother was discovered in Samothrace near the area where the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, *Theoi Megaloi*, is located. We do not know their identity because the Samothracian inscriptions are silent about that. Cole (1984: 2) says that Mnaseas (III. BCE) named these gods Axieros, Axiokersa, Axiokerso, and Kasmilos. Meanwhile, Welch (1996: 472) believes that the exotic names Axieros, Axiokerso, and Axiokersa were part of the mysteries, so they could not be revealed. Welch’s theory is that “The cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace involved the worship of several divinities, who were grouped around a major figure. This major figure was the Mother of the Gods” (1996: 470). This discovery is significant because “it is the only sculpture of this type to have been found in the Sanctuary at Samothrace, which was one of the most important places of worship of the Great Mother” (Welch 1996: 467).

⁸ Apollodorus I IX, 17: ἔτυχε δὲ ἡ Λήμνος ἀνδρῶν τότε οὖσα ἔρημος, βασιλευμένη δὲ ὑπὸ Ὑψιπύλης τῆς Θόαντος δι’ αἰτίαν τήνδε. αἱ Λήμνιαι τὴν Αφροδίτην οὐκ ἔτιμων· ἡ δὲ αὐταῖς ἐμβάλλει δυσοσίαν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οἱ γήμαντες αὐτὰς ἐκ τῆς πλησίον Θράκης λαβόντες ἀιχμαλωτίδας συνεννάζοντο αὐταῖς. ἀτιμαζόμεναι δὲ αἱ Λήμνιαι τοὺς τε πατέρας καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας φονεύουσι· Cf. Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica* I, 609 ff.

⁹ Cf. Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica* I, 1123 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Stephanus Byzantinus s. v. <Λήμνος,> νῆσος πρὸς τῇ Θράκῃ, δύο πόλεις ἔχουσα, Ἡφαιστίαν καὶ Μύριναν, ὡς Ἐκαταῖος Εὐρώπῃ. ἀπὸ τῆς μεγάλης λεγομένης θεοῦ, ἣν Λημόνον φασί· ταῦτη δὲ καὶ παρθένους θύεσθαι. ὤκισθη δὲ πρῶτον ὑπὸ Θρακῶν, οἱ Σίντιες ἐκαλοῦντο, ὡς Στράβων. οἱ δὲ αὐτοὶ οὗτοι καὶ Σαπαῖοι. ὁ οἰκῆτωρ Λήμνιος καὶ Λημνικός κτητικόν.

To summarize, Lemnos is the preferred location of Hephaestus, where he is worshiped together with the Sinties and the Cabiri. All these deities are connected with fire and crafts, which relate to the struggle for survival of Philoktetes. Other elements that were part of the mythic tradition taken up by Sophocles are the appalling scent, isolation and crime. Yet, the island is not an important center of the cult of the Mother of the Gods as an enigmatic goddess called Lemnos, Chryse or Kybele is venerated there. Two central sites where the Goddess Mother is worshiped are Samothrace and Cyzicus. We have seen that Sophocles combines the mythic traditions of the island of Lemnos, Samothrace and Cyzicus. The possible explanation for this is that all these gods and goddesses, mythical characters and places are linked in some way to the plot and the themes of the tragedy.

Before analyzing the Sophoclean ode, I propose to examine the hymns to praise the Great Mother, also called Mother Goddess, Gaia, Rhea, Kybeles, because I think it is the most effective strategy to attempt to find the reasons for some of Sophocles' departures from the tradition and to understand the function of the hymn in the dramatic context.

In mythical narrative wrath is a central/dominant main theme: in a domestic dispute Zeus throws Hephaestus from Olympus to Lemnos; Aphrodite's ire leads to the murder by the Lemnian women of their husbands; the gods are offended and leave the island. The Mother of Gods' anger is important in some of the related hymns (the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* from Epidauros; we make some brief references to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the stasimon of *Helen's* Euripides, 1301-68).¹¹ In dramatic fiction this theme is also relevant: Philoktetes is angry with the Achaeans; Odysseus plans a deception to bring the hero back to Troy. As part of this plan Neoptolemus pretends to be furious with the Atreides and Odysseus.

I believe it would be advisable to analyze these hymns in the light of the wrath, withdrawal and return story pattern (cf. Nickel 2003: 59-82). This design allows the praise of the Goddess, specifying her place and importance in the divine community, which maintains links with the supreme god, Zeus. I believe the key is that it allows to emphasize that the focus is her τιμή. In such a pattern it is narrated how the leader distributes τιμή or commits an offense against the honor of the Goddess. The defiled Goddess withdraws and her absence brings misfortune to the community. The chief sends ambassadors promising her the restitution of her honors but the deity refuses. New emissaries are sent with the promise of greater honors. Finally, the outraged Goddess returns to society, which is blessed with her presence. Nickel (2003: 62) argues "when the withdrawn god or hero returns, he does so with his position in the community reconfirmed and even augmented".

¹¹ I wish to focus on the Epidaurian Hymn to The Mother of the Gods but I should briefly examine the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the stasimon of *Helen's* Euripides 1301-68.

We might propose that the theme of anger is common to the three hymns, but basically this issue is related to the plot of the tragedy. Far from his former comrades in arms, on a desert island, Philoktetes is angry. The Achaeans at Troy are sent to search for him because his absence hurts them; finally the hero, thanks to the intervention of both human and divine agents, returns with his honor restored. And for this reason it could help to explain why Neoptolemus' sailors choose to praise this Goddess in a particular dramatic situation.

Further explanation on the function of the hymn in the dramatic structure requires an inquiry into the nature of the Goddess invoked. For this reason, we also analyze the hymns which define her characteristics and areas of power, as the Homeric hymns XIV and XXX, Pindar's 3rd *Pythian* and fr. 95-100 Snell-Maehler and the parodos of Euripides' *Bacchae* 64-169. The Mother Goddess resides and is worshiped in wild areas beyond the civilized world and her companions are wild animals. Her rites include riotous music and disorderly, ecstatic dances. These traits in some way refer to the hero's condition: he lives alone on a desert island in the company of wild animals that hunt for food. The groans and contortions of his body, when disease takes hold of him, refer to jerking movements and cries of the goddess' faithful.

THE WRATH OF THE MOTHER GODDESS *The Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* (from Epidaurus)

The hymn comes from the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus. It is engraved on a stele written in the third century a. C., but it is probable that the hymn is older. According to Pizzocaro (1991: 239-40), “L' inno mi sembra relativamente antico nella sua struttura compositiva e mitica” and then adds “l' autore potrebbe anche essere stato influenzato direttamente da una rappresentazione dell' *Elena* di Euripide (la prima ebbe luogo il 412 a. C.), col cui secondo stasimo ha importanti punti in comune”:¹²

[]ς θεαί,
δεῦρ' ἔλθεται ἅπ' ὠρανῶ
καί μοι συναείσατε
τὰν Μαιτέρα τῶν θεῶν,
ὡς ἦλθε πλαωμένα
κατ' ὄρεα καὶ νάπας

5

¹² Cf. Furley (2012) 247-8.

ἴσυρουσαρπα[.]τα[.]κομανῆ
 ἴκατωρημεναῖ φρένας.
 ὁ Ζεὺς δ' ἐσιδὼν ἄναξ
 τὰν Ματέρα τῶν θεῶν
 κεραυνὸν ἐβαλλε, καὶ
 τὰ τύμπαν' ἐλάμβανε·
 πέτρας διέρησσε, καὶ
 τὰ τύμπαν' ἐλάμβανε.
 Μάτηρ ἄπιθ' εἰς θεούς,
 καὶ μὴ κατ' ὄρη πλαν[ῶ],
 μή σ' ἦ χαροποι λέον-
 τεσ ἢ πολιοὶ λύκοι
 ...
 καὶ οὐκ ἄπειμι εἰς θεούς,
 ἂν μὴ τὰ μέρη λάβω,
 τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ οὐρανῶ,
 τὸ δ' ἥμισυ γαίας,
 πόντω τὸ τρίτον μέρος
 χούτως ἀπελεύσομαι.
 χαῖρ' ὧ μεγάλα ἄνασ-
 σα Μᾶτερ Ὀλύμπου.¹³

In this hymn it is possible to distinguish the three sections.¹⁴ In the *invocatio* (ἐπίκλησις) the goddesses, probably the Muses, are invoked to help to sing to the Mother of the Gods (τὰν Ματέρα τῶν θεῶν, 4). The *pars epica*, which should contain the praise to the deity, includes a narrative about her wrath (5-24). Finally, instead of a prayer (εὐχή), we find a final salutation (25-6), where there is another cultual title, *μεγάλα ἄνασσα Μᾶτερ Ὀλύμπου*.

The *pars epica* relates her expression of pain and despair (7-8) and describes where the Mother wanders, places usually associated with the deity, “hills and valleys” (6). However, as Furley (2012: 234) says, “the major mythological theme – the breach between the Mother of the Gods and Zeus– still calls

¹³ ...Goddesses [of music] / come down from heaven / and sing with me a hymn / to the Mother of the Gods: / how she came wandering/ over the hills and vales / her [long] hair trailing,/ distraught in her senses./ Zeus the great king saw her/ -the Mother of the Gods-/ he aimed a thunderbolt and/ made to take her drums,/ he split rocks in two and - /made to take her drums./ ‘Mother, be off to the gods!/ Don’t wander over the hills/ in case the ravening lions/ or timber wolves [get] you...’ / ‘... I won’t go off to the gods/ unless I receive my share:/ a half of the sky above/ and a half of the earth/ and, third, a half of the sea./ Only then will I go’ / Hail! Great Queen! / Mother of the all Olympus!.

(*Greek Hymns*. Vol. 1: *The Texts in Translation*. W. D. Furley; I. Bremer. Tübingen, 2001).

¹⁴ Cf. Janko (1981) 9-24; Clay (1997) 489-507; Furley-Bremer (2001). For hymns’ sections we carry on with the denominations of these researchers.

for satisfactory explanation". The hymn does not explain why the deity is angry; it only describes her withdrawal and Zeus' reaction to this attitude and, finally, her reconciliation and her return along with the other gods. This scholar does not agree with authors like Pizzocaro (1991: 243) who claims that the "originality" is a feature of the mythical narrative in this hymn. The Italian researcher declares that the hymn was performed in the mystery ritual of the Mother Goddess in Epidauros, then the poet could not tell a story that only the initiated should know.

Probably a text that may be dated around the fourth century, the Derveni Papyrus¹⁵ could give us some information. The Derveni author makes a remark about an Orphic cosmogony and in column XXII specifies that the Mother of the Gods has many names in the mythic tradition; she is called Ge, Rhea, Hera, Hestia, Demeter, and Deo. And he elucidates the etymological explanation for Demeter's cultual name, Deo;¹⁶ she received this name because καλεῖται γὰρ καὶ Δηῶ ὅτι ἐδη[ύθη] ἐν τῇ μείξει.¹⁷ And this explanation is important to restore the myth. We could not agree with Kouremenos when he states that the meaning of μείξει is "parturition" and not "copulation". I think Furley (2012: 242) is right when he argues that "The natural interpretation of the passage in the Derveni text is that Demeter was ravaged, physically injured, in the course of sexual intercourse". In this passage the Derveni author does not provide more information; but this reading could be corroborated by the reconstructed passage of column XXV and a preserved fragment of column XXVI which recounts on Zeus' violent and incestuous desire for his mother. The Derveni Papyrus thus confirms that in the fourth century both the Mother Goddess was identified with Demeter and the myth of her rape by Zeus were well known. It is likely that the omission of the narration of the myth in the Epidaurian hymn "can be supplied from sources revealing, or alluding to, a *hieros gamos* in the mysteries of Deo/ Demeter" (Furley 2012: 243). Such mysteries were performed in Epidauros in the context of worship to the god Asclepius, and the story was part of the *hieros logos* that only the initiated could know. This would explain then the silence of the Epidaurian poet.

¹⁵ Furley (2012: 239-241), to elucidate the myth narrated in the hymn, also refers to two Christian authors Clement of Alexandria and Arnobius.

¹⁶ Δηῶ should be considered a writing mistake, because Δηῶ is one of the names of Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn* II 47, 211 and 492; Eur. *Hel.* 1343; Soph. fr. 754. According to Robertson (1996: 244), early evidence is found that shows the syncretism between Mother and Demeter / Deo in Attica, hence cultic elements and characteristic of the Goddess, such as the *tympana* and the φιάλη appear early in iconographic representations in Eleusis. This fusion between Demeter and the Mother of the Gods can be viewed in the stasimon of Euripide's *Helen*. Cf Kannicht, vol. II (1969) 329-330.

¹⁷ Kouremenos *et al.* (eds) (2006) col. XXII.

In the *pars epica* the poet should also relate how the distressed and humiliated deity leaves the company of the gods, but only describes her withdrawal and the aggressor's reaction to the behavior of the Goddess. The violence and arrogant actions of the god did not decrease at all,¹⁸ he did not regret anything. When Zeus observes the Goddess' manners he feels angry and throws his thunderbolt and breaks rocks (9 ff.). And he even wants to take away one of the sacred symbols associated with Mother, the *tympana*; the verse τὰ τύμπαν' ἐλάμβανε· (7, 9) does not mean that the god plays them to bring happiness to the Mother but rather, as Furley stated (2012: 246), "he was presumably striking at the heart of the Mother's identity"; he seeks to subjugate her. In this hymn Zeus does not send ambassadors, he himself gives her orders and threatens her (15-18). But despite the violence and menaces, the Mother remains firm and will only agree to end her anger and return to Olympus if she is awarded with the domain of the third part of the universe as compensation (19-23). The reconciliation is suggested by two brief speeches of the gods.

Finally, the hymn ends with a salutation, without any request or thanking for old favors; the poet only praises her with cultic epithets, μέγ' ἄνασσα Μᾶτερ' Ὀλύμπου. (25-6).

If we take the wrath, withdrawal and return story pattern, we will notice the similarities and the differences with the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the stasimon in *Helen's Euripides* (1301-68).¹⁹ The grief of the Mother Goddess and her wanderings are narrated using very similar language in the Homeric Hymn and in the poem of Epidaurus (cf. Richardson 1974: *ad hoc* 40 ff.). But in the Homeric Hymn, when Demeter leaves the company of the gods (90-4), she has a dual purpose, since if humankind was destroyed by death, the gods would be deprived of their τιμή (cf. Nickel 2003: 79). These objectives are connected with the concerns of Demeter, "the return of her daughter and the restoration and augmentation of her place within the divine hierarchy, in short, her τιμή" (Nickel 2003: 80). In Euripides's tragedy, the chorus also sings that the Mother of the Gods longs for her daughter and wanders looking for her (1301-7). The maidens describe how Artemis and Athena try to avoid the abduction, but Zeus prevents it (1308-18). The Goddess' wrath, as in the Homeric Hymn, endangers the survival of human life and therefore the gods will be deprived of the appropriate sacrifices; she will only be appeased when he returns her daughter (1338-58).

¹⁸ At this point we follow Furley's interpretation (2012), which departs from that of Pizzocaro's (1991).

¹⁹ It is also possible to establish links with other important stories that follow the wrath, withdrawal and return pattern: the priest Chryses and Achilles in *Iliad* I are both outraged by Agamemnon and they leave the Achaean camp. This departure causes misfortunes and consequently their return is requested, recognizing in this way, their worth. In the case of Achilles, when he finally returns, his τιμή is greater than before.

Zeus, in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, sends different ambassadors to appease her, with the promise of giving her great gifts (Iris 313 ff.; Hermes to Hades 334 ff.). The Goddess does not give a positive response but finally she agrees to remove the curse from the land and accepts Rhea's message about her daughter return to her (384 ff.; 441 ff.). In the stasimon of *Helen*, Zeus sends the Graces, the Muses and Aphrodite to conciliate the Goddess with the rest of the gods, using the music of flutes (1351) and *tympana* (1347) and ritual howls (1344, 1352). Apparently, she is pacified and does not require anything else.

If we consider these hymns, we could think that in the Epidaurian Hymn to the Mother of the Gods the poet's design is incomplete. He does not tell us what caused the anger, the isolation and the unfriendliness of the goddess. Nor does Zeus send messengers, he attempts to compel her. It is highly probable that these modifications to/of the pattern may be due to the fact that this ritual hymn could not reveal secrets to the uninitiated in the mysteries of the Goddess.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MOTHER GODDESS

The Mother Goddess, who delights in the company of untamed animals and lives in rough and lonely places, resembles the hero of Sophocles' tragedy. Philoktetes also lives alone on a barren and wild island (μοῦνος 183; cf. μόνον, 227; ἔρημον 228, 266, 269). Separated from his comrades in arms, he merely survives and has the existence of a solitary predator, a hunter whose lack of social manners is closer to wild beasts than to that of men (162-168). But we should point out an important difference, while the Goddess enjoys listening to the sounds of tympana, castanets and cymbals; the hero is away from the pleasant music of the syrinx since on the island of Lemnos only his cries of pain are heard (213-218). For these reasons we should consider examining the possibility that these links between the Goddess and the tragic hero could be one of the reasons why the poet made the chorus perform in honor of the Goddess.

We try to define the main features that the tradition ascribed /adjudged to her in the Homeric Hymns, Pindar's poetry and the tragedy. These hymns are attributive (cf. Janko 1981: 11 f.), because the poet does not relate a myth but describes the deity in terms of her appearance, possessions, favorite places and areas of activity.

HOMERIC HYMNS

Furley (1995: 29) states on the Homeric Hymns: “Their content may give us authentic material about a god and his attendant myths, but the context of their performance seems distinct from worship proper”. However, in recounting the exploits of the gods, the Homeric Hymns define their characteristics and their areas of power, which become the basis and legitimization of worship. This leads Parker (1991, 1-17) to denominate them “theogonic”.

Homeric Hymn XIV (To the Mother of the Gods)

In their edition of the Homeric Hymns Allen, Halliday and Sikes (1936: 395) assert that the absence of a personal name (Gaia, Rhea or Kybele) in the hymn does not indicate antiquity. Instead Càssola (1994: 327) alleges that the title “Mother of the Gods” accurately reflects the way in which she was most often invoked in worship both in Asia Minor and Greece. However, Roller (1999: 144) claims that the title *Μήτηρ Θεῶν* appears initially in this hymn. According to this scholar (1999: 123), the mention of the *tympana* allows us to date the poem mid-sixth century, since these instruments do not appear in the iconographic representations of Mother until this century. This detail is amazing, since the company of the *tympana* and the presence of lions are the characteristic attributes of the Goddess in artistic representations, votive offerings and poetry. This musical instrument comes from the Near East, Anatolia or Cyprus, although there is no evidence that it was used in Phrygia in the worship of Goddess Mother. The Greeks probably attribute the *tympanon* to the Mother of the Gods only for its oriental origin (cf. Roller 1999: 137).

Μητέρα μοι πάντων τε θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων
 ὕμνει Μοῦσα λίγεια Διὸς θυγάτηρ μεγάλοιο,
 ἧ κροτάλων τυπάνων τ' ἰαχῆ σύν τε βρόμος αὐλῶν
 εὔαδεν, ἦ δὲ λύκων κλαγγῆ χαροπῶν τε λεόντων,
 οὔρεά τ' ἠχήμεντα καὶ ὑλήεντες ἔναυλοι.
 Καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαῖρε θεαί θ' ἅμα πᾶσαι ἀοιδῆ.²⁰

5

²⁰ I Prithee, clear-voiced Muse, daughter of mighty Zeus, sing of the mother of all gods and men. She is well-pleased with the sound of rattles and of timbrels, with the voice of flutes and the outcry of wolves and bright-eyed lions, with echoing hills and wooded coombes.

And so hail to you in my song and to all goddesses as well!

(*The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1954).

The formula Μητέρα πάντων τε θεῶν πάντων τῷ ἀνθρώπων (1) belongs to poetic language (cf. Aristophanes *Birds* 875-6) and we could suppose that it was motivated by a syncretism between the Mother of the Gods, Rhea and Gaia. Probably the reason for this fusion arises from the fact that Rhea is the mother of the Olympian gods and Gaia is the origin of the gods and also of the race of mortals.

In the *epiklesis* the poet invokes/asks the Muse to sing a hymn to the Mother (1-2) and in the final salutation, the expression χαῖρε (6) is both an expression of farewell and of desire to please the god/the goddess. However, of the three sections of the hymn, we focus on *eulogia* (3-5) where the poet details the Goddess' typical attributes: she loves listening to raucous music (3). The sound of her favorite instruments is accompanied by the howling of wild animals (wolves and lions, 4). The sharp resonance of these instruments brings to mind the orgiastic rites performed by her worshipers in honor of the goddess.

Roller (1999: 122) suggests that these untamed animals are associated with her favorite places: the mountains and wooded valleys. Her preference for mountainous places gives rise to her cultic title Μήτηρ Ὀρεῖα (cf. Eur. *Hel.* 1301, *Hipp.* 144; etc.). The mother is a goddess of natural and wild areas, lives outside the civilized world of cities. This feature is viewed ambiguously, because for the Greeks community life was an essential feature of civilization; for example, Odysseus objects to the beauty of the landscape inhabited by Cyclops, since there is no evidence of human culture (cf. *Od.* ix 125-139). In Lemnos, Philoktetes does not cultivate the land, he only makes rudimentary utensils for subsistence (707, 714-5, 35). The Lemnian earth is hostile and aggressive and supports him beyond civilized life.²¹

Homeric Hymn XXX (To Gaia, Mother of All)

Allen-Halliday-Sikes (1936: 430) states that this is a genuine Homeric *Prooimion* and its probable date of composition would be the sixth century. The Mother Goddess is identified with the Earth, Γαῖα, the source of all life.²² She is rarely represented in art and she does not take part in mythical stories (cf. Roller 1999: 170; Munn 2006: 33). Nevertheless, Gaia is a main character in Hesiod (*Theog* 116-156). It is worth noting that in this poem she is often called “monstrous Earth” (Γαῖα πελώρη, 159, 173, 479, 821, 858).²³ This monstrosity is probably due to the fact that she has an

²¹ This aspect will be developed to analyze the tragic hymn.

²² In the Derveni papyrus this identification between the Mother and *Gaia* (column XXII) is also present.

²³ Gaia in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (333 ff) plays a hostile role when the goddess collaborates with Hera and helps her with Typhaon's birth.

ambiguous character, since she is simultaneously “an enemy and a friend of order” (Felson 2011: 257). Gaia/ Rhea helps her child gain power and for this reason “she acts as a helper or an obstrucater” of the cosmic stability. However, she does not proceed randomly but rather she acts by her own personal goals and plans that look after the cosmic and political stability (Cf. Felson 2011: 257, 261).²⁴

Γαῖαν παμμήτειραν αἰείσομαι ἠϋθέμεθλον
 πρεσβίστην, ἣ φέρβει ἐπὶ χθονὶ πάνθ' ὀπόσ' ἐστίν·
 ἤμην ὅσα χθόνα διὰν ἐπέρχεται ἠδ' ὅσα πόντον
 ἠδ' ὅσα πωτῶνται, τάδε φέρβεται ἐκ σέθεν ὄλβου.
 ἐκ σέο δ' εὐπαιδές τε καὶ εὐκαρποὶ τελέθουσι 5
 πότνια, σεῦ δ' ἔχεται δοῦναι βίον ἠδ' ἀφελέσθαι
 θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισιν· ὁ δ' ὄλβιος ὅν κε σὺ θυμῷ
 πρόφρων τιμήσῃς· τῷ τ' ἄφθονα πάντα πάρεστι.
 βρίθει μὲν σφιν ἄρουρα φερέσβιος, ἠδὲ κατ' ἀγροῦς
 κτήνεσιν εὐθηνεῖ, οἶκος δ' ἐμπίπλαται ἐσθλῶν· 10
 αὐτοὶ δ' εὐνομίησι πόλιν κάτα καλλιγύναικα
 κοιρανέουσ', ὄλβος δὲ πολὺς καὶ πλοῦτος ὀπηδεῖ·
 παῖδες δ' εὐφροσύνη νεοθηλεῖ κυδιώωσι,
 παρθενικά τε χοροῖς φερεσανθέσιν εὐφρονη θυμῷ
 παίζουσαι σκαίρουσι κατ' ἄνθεα μαλθακὰ ποιήσῃ, 15
 οὓς κε σὺ τιμήσῃς σεμνὴ θεὰ ἄφθονε δαῖμον.
 Χαῖρε θεῶν μήτηρ, ἄλοχ' Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος,
 πρόφρων δ' ἄντ' ὤδις βίοτον θυμήρε' ὄπαζε·
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' αἰοιδῆς.²⁵

²⁴ Another example of the ambiguity of the goddess is also related to the oracle of Delphi. Gaia has overseen the oracle before Apollo. In some mythical versions Apollo's succession is represented as a peaceful process (cf. Aesch. *Eum.* 1–20; Paus. 10.5.6; Diod. 16.26.1–6; *Orph. Hymn.* 79; etc.). But other stories speak of the use of force, when Apollo slays the serpent that guards the oracle (cf. Pind. fr.55; Eur. *IT* 1235–1283.; Apollod. 1.4.1; Paus. 10.6.3; etc.).

²⁵ [1] I will sing of well-founded Earth, mother of all, eldest of all beings. She feeds all creatures that are in the world, all that go upon the goodly land, and all that are in the paths of the seas, and all that fly: all these are fed of her store. [5] Through you, O queen, men are blessed in their children and blessed in their harvests, and to you it belongs to give means of life to mortal men and to take it away. Happy is the man whom you delight to honor! He has all things abundantly: his fruitful land is laden with corn, his pastures are covered [10] with cattle, and his house is filled with good things. Such men rule orderly in their cities of fair women: great riches and wealth follow them: their sons exult with ever-fresh delight, and their daughters in flower-laden bands [15] play and skip merrily over the soft flowers of the field. Thus is it with those whom you honor O holy goddess, bountiful spirit.

Hail, Mother of the gods, wife of starry Heaven; freely bestow upon me for this my song substance that cheers the heart! And now I will remember you and another song also.

(*The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1954).

In the *epiklesis* the poet announces that he will give praise to the Goddess Γαῖαν παμμήτηραν (1), to the Mother of all life, resource of abundance (2-4). The *eulogia* (5-16) is focused on the benefits of Mother to mortals. She nourishes all men, thus the poet emphasizes agricultural and livestock aspects. Although her cult is not very widespread in Greece, in general, the Earth is worshiped as the mother of young humans (κουροτρόφος) and is considered as the nourishing Mother (cf. Paus. X 12, 10; Càssola 1994: 431).

But also the Goddess provides all kinds of goods (ἔσθλων, 10). The word used, ἔσθλων, has ethical and moral connotations. Probably the poet remembered that Gaia “is omnipresent to all living things, and because all depend on her, Gaia is often named first of all deities as witness and as enforcer of oaths” (Munn 2006: 33, cf. Homer *Il.* III 103, XV 36). Furthermore, the Goddess, who guarantees the fulfillment of oaths, according to mythical tradition was related to the prophecies and was the first owner of the oracle at Delphi (cf. Aeschylus *Eumenides* 1-3). From the attributes acknowledged in the *eulogia*, we could establish an important relationship with Sophocles’ tragedy, since both the oracles and loyalty to oaths are central themes in *Philoktetes*.

In the final salutation, the phrase χαῖρε is accompanied by the name of the goddess θεῶν μήτηρ (17), adding information which should usually go in the *epiklesis*; she is the wife of Uranus. Therefore, this expression shows the fusion between Gaia and Rhea, an identification which is formal in sixth century poems (cf. Solon fr. 36). The expression of greeting is not a mere farewell but a wish on the part of the poet to propitiate the goddess and a promise for another song as a reward (18-19). This relates to the fact that the Homeric hymns are προοίμια to the recitation of epic poetry.

PINDAR

Pindar²⁶ mentions the Mother of the gods in *Pythian* 3, where he prays to the deity for the recovery of Hieron of Syracuse.

ἀλλ’ ἐπεύξασθαι μὲν ἐγὼν ἐθέλω
Ματρὶ, τὰν κοῦραι παρ’ ἐμὸν πρόθυρον σὺν
Πανὶ μέλπονται θαμὰ
σεμνὰν θεὸν ἐννύχια.²⁷

78

²⁶ In this section we also refer to Euripides’s *Bacchae* 64-169.

²⁷ Yet, even so, ‘tis my wish to offer a vow to the Mother-goddess, that adorable queen, whose praises, with those of Pan, are oft sung of maidens in the night beside my portal. (*The odes of Pindar*, including the principal fragments; Sir Sandys, John Edwin, London Heinemann, 1915).

In these verses the poet only declares that this august Goddess is venerated with Pan, and specifies the type of worship that they receive: night dances performed by young girls; Jeanmaire (1931: 241) notes that the rites in honor of Dionysus were often night celebrations (cf. Robertson 1996: 263). In Thebes the Mother and Pan are venerated in the Kabirion; the Kabiri are assistants of the goddess in the mystery cult (cf. Schachter 1986: 139). It is worth noting that the goddess is called σεμνά, epithet that is usually used to refer to Demeter.

Haldane (1968) reconstructs the possible content of the *parthenion*'s fragments, probably a hymn to Pan (frs. 95-100 Snell). Fragment 95 is almost certainly part of the *invocatio*, where Pindar refers to the kinship of God, his favorite places, his functions and his divine associates:

Ἦ Πάν, Ἀρκαδίας μεδ<έω>ν
καὶ σεμνῶν ἀδύτων φύλαξ,

Ματρὸς μεγάλας ὄπαδέ,
σεμνᾶν Χαρίτων μέλημα
τερπνόν²⁸

The Mother Goddess together with Pan and the Charites are worshiped in a shrine near Pindar's house. Haldane (1968:19) conjectures that it is the same shrine that he has indicated in *Pythian* 3 and explains: "The 'hallowed shrine' is that of the Mater Dindymene and Pan which Pindar established next to his home probably not long before 474". According to Roller (1999: 161), the rites refer to a mystery cult in a private foundation, but the language used by the poet also suggests the altar was open to anyone who wanted to worship the Mother.

In another passage, fr. 80, the Mother is called Kybele ([δέσπ]οιν[αν] Κυβέ[λαν] ματ[έρα]). The title δέσποινα (Powerful Woman) is also applied to other goddesses; but here for the first time the name of Kybele is associated with the designation of Mother (cf. Roller 1999: 125). Furthermore, in Euripides' *Bacchae* (78-79) the Goddess receives this epithet and is simultaneously called Mother Rhea (59, 126-9). The Great Mother-Kybele is venerated in the mountains as the chorus of the *Bacchae* narrated (cf. Timolo 55, 65). In this way the Goddess is also called Μήτηρ Ὀρεία (cf. Roller 1999: 144, 172).²⁹

²⁸ O Pan, that rulest over Arcadia, and art the warder of holy shrines . . . thou comanion of the Great Mother, thou dear delight of the holy Graces!

(*The odes of Pindar*, including the principal fragments; Sir Sandys, John Edwin, London Heinemann, 1915).

²⁹ Cf. the Homeric Hymn XIV and Euripide's *Helen* 1301-2. In the tragic hymn the Goddess receives this title.

HYMN TO GAIA (391-402) IN SOPHOCLES'
PHILOKTETES

As in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, *Philoktetes* has the wrath, withdrawal and return story pattern (cf. Nickel 2003: 59-82; see pp. 5 ff.). But the outline in the tragedy becomes more complex because we might ask: who is angry, Philoktetes or Neoptolemus? If we think of Philoktetes, the tragedy would have double wrath. First, unlike Achilles in the *Iliad* he does not become angry and withdraw from the war, he is forced into a state of fury because the Achaeans abandon him on the island (260-7; 1040-4; 1285-6). Then when he finds out the real intentions of Neoptolemus and Odysseus (cf. 929 ff.; 1350-60), he becomes really angry. In the case of Neoptolemus, it would be deceptive anger, because the Atreidai and Odysseus do not strip him of his possessions. Although this hymn says it is *hybris* when the Atreides and Odysseus deprive Neoptolemus of the father's weapons, we must not forget that it is part of the misleading plan devised by Laertiádēs. However, given the dramatic situation it is possible to consider that Neoptolemus' wrath is the basis of the friendship between the son of Achilles and the hero. Philoktetes would consider that the hymn is a confirmation of his story.

In the first episode, the chorus invokes Gaia with a hymn which is considered an ὑπόρχημα or "song-dance" (391-402):

Ὅρεστέρα παμβῶτι Γᾶ,	
μᾶτερ αὐτοῦ Διός,	
ἃ τὸν μέγαν Πакτωλὸν εὐχρυσον νέμεις,	
σὲ κάκει, μᾶτερ πότνι', ἐπηροδῶμαν,	395
ὄτ' ἐς τόνδ' Ἀτρειδᾶν	
ὑβρις πᾶσ' ἐχώρει,	
ὅτε τὰ πάτρια τεύχεα παρεδίδοσαν,	
ἰὼ μάκαιρα ταυροκτόνων	400
λεόντων ἔφεδρε, τῷ Λαρτίου,	
σέβας ὑπέρτατον. ³⁰	

³⁰ Goddess of the hills, Earth all-nourishing, mother of Zeus himself, you through whose realm the great Pactolus [395] rolls golden sands! There, there also, dread Mother, I called upon your name, when all the insults of the Atreids landed upon this man, when they handed over his father's armor, that sublime marvel, [400] to the son of Laertes. Hear it, blessed queen, who rides on bull-slaughtering lions!

Sophocles. *The Philoktetes of Sophocles*. Edited with introduction and notes by Sir Richard Jebb. Sir Richard Jebb. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1898.

Unlike cultic hymns, the Hymn to Gaia only has the following sections: *ἐπίκλησις* which includes the name of the goddess, and her cultic epithets (391-395 and 400-402) and the *εὐλογία*, which contains an ekphrasis, the description of the area where she exercises her power (392). The hymn has no *εὐχή*, but rather a kind of curse on the Atreidai and Odysseus for seizing the weapons that belong to Neoptolemus (396-8). According to Bers (1989: 502), a delayed appeal to the goddess might arouse suspicion in Philoktetes, because they should have shown it at Troy when their leader was outraged and not now when they tell Philoktetes about Neoptolemus' past misfortunes. It should also be noted that in this Sophoclean hymn the *εὐλογία* and the *ἐπίκλησις* are fused, as cultic names (391-2, 395 and 400-1) and the description of the place frequented by the goddess (394) are intertwined.

A particular feature of this hymn is that its purpose is not to invoke the presence of divinity; the chorus sings to help Neoptolemus carry out his mission (cf. 149). We must remember that the chorus of sailors is closely related to their leader, the success or failure of his plans affects their own welfare. That is, this is not an impartial chorus (Kirkwood 1958: 186-187); the sailors can manifest sympathy and pity for Philoktetes' fate (169-190), but they obey without questioning the orders of the son of Achilles and with the hymn they corroborate Neoptolemus' story about the insolence of the Atreidai and of Odysseus when he was despoiled of his father's arms.

We must ask why the chorus of sailors, amid a scene of deception, performs this hymn in honor of the Mother of the Gods. However, the consideration of her nature could help us answer this issue. And also it is important to look at Sophocles' re-appropriation of the hymnic tradition.

First, we must bear in mind the place where the tragedy is developed. Sophocles departs from the mythological tradition and makes the populous island of Lemnos an uninhabited place ³¹ (cf. Schein 2013: 116). In Homer, the Achaeans buy wine (*Il.* VII 467 ff.) or sell their war prisoners (XXI 40) in Lemnos. Also the island receives positive epithets; it is called the sacred Lemnos (*ἡγάθεος*, II 722; XXI 58, 79) where it is a good place to dwell (*εὐκτίμενος*, XXI 40), it has many cities (XIV 281). The only ominous tone could be found in the words of Hecuba when she tries to dissuade Hector. She depicts Lemnos as *ἀμυχθαλόεις*, adjective which can be translated as both "smoky" as "inhospitable" (cf. LSJ). Odysseus describes it: *Ἀκτὴ μὲν ἦδε τῆς περιρρύτου χθονὸς / Λήμνου, βροτοῖς ἄστιπτος οὐδ' οἰκουμένη* (1-2). Neoptolemus explains that the place where Philoktetes lives is "the furthest part" of the known world (*ἐσχατιαῖς*, 144).

³¹ Schein (2013: 7) points out: "Sophocles' audience in 409 BCE would have been surprised, even shocked, to find Lemnos uninhabited in the play. They would have known that the island, the largest in the north central Aegean Sea, had always been inhabited and for nearly a hundred years had been an Athenian ally, helping to secure the key trade route to Thrace and the Black Sea, on which the Athenian depended for supplies of grain and timber".

In the prologue Odysseus and Neoptolemus reveal the miserable life that Philoktetes has endured. He lives in a cave that provides him with shelter, but whose rocky nature is associated with the desolation of the island itself (16, cf. 272, 952, 1002, 1262). In the lines 150-60 Philoktetes' home is called κοίτη, a word that "can be used not only of human dwellings but, e.g., of the birds' nest (cf. Eur. *Ion* 155) or a spider's lair (Arist. *HA* 623 a12)" (Schein *ad loc.*). The hero is alone (μόνος, 227), abandoned (ἐρήμιος 228, 269) by his former comrades in arms; he leads the existence of a solitary hunter (162-168) and Schein (2013: 8) points out: "and because of his utter isolation from other human beings, Philoktetes on Lemnos is himself no longer fully human". The similarity between Philoktetes' life and that of the beasts is suggested by the term φορβή, which means fodder, used to refer to the hero's food. In addition, Poeas' son does not step but drags his snake bitten foot (163; cf. 698), making a huge effort to mobilize (698 ff.). The features of Lemnos and the lifestyle which supports Philoktetes could obviously be related to the Mother of the Gods. She likes dwelling in wild spaces, away from the cities and of civilized life in the company of undomesticated animals, like lions.

Furthermore the hymn is performed by the men of Neoptolemus, the Myrmidons were before led by Achilles. But now they have come from the Troad, which was the homeland of the "Idaean Mother", the Phrygian Goddess who is worshiped by the Greeks as the Mother of Mountains (cf. Roller 1999: 144). Likewise it is possible to think that for this reason the chorus invokes the goddess with the epithet "mountainous" (ὄρεστέρα, 391),³² but it is also possible that they see Γαῖα as the Mountain Mother, the *genius loci* of this wild place. But this adjective is followed by another, "all-nourishing" (παμβῶτις), whose meaning contradicts not only the first epithet but also the whole hymn. Because Lemnos is not a cultivated land; the same chorus says the hero for ten years lacked the food that "holy land" produces (οὐ φορβὰν ἱερᾶς γᾶς, 707). Agriculture is only mentioned as a contrast to Philoktetes' hunter wild life, since his food consists of prey, killed by arrows (711).

The expression "Mother of Zeus" (μᾶτερ Διός, 392) allows the identification with Rhea.³³ According to Roller (1999: 171) the term ὄρεῖα has a similar sound to Ῥέα; likeness which collaborated with the fusion between the Phrygia Mother and the Mother of Zeus and other Olympic Gods. But the Goddess lives near the "great Pactolus" (μέγαν Πακτωλόν, 392), establishing a relationship with Lydia. Further this line may serve as confirmation that the cult of the Mother Goddess was introduced from Anatolia (cf. 391-4); and

³² Cf. Homeric Hym XIV, Eur. *Bacchae* 78-9; *Hel.* 1301-2.

³³ Cf. Homeric Hym XIV, XXX; Eur. *Bacchae* 59, 126-9.

the Greeks also call her Kybele. Herodotus says that Κυβήβη is the goddess of Sardis (Hdt. 5. 102). Archaic poets, like Hipponax and Semonides of Amorgos, mention Kybele and the lexicographers assimilate the Mother of the Gods, Rhea and Kybele³⁴ (cf. Roller 1999: 124-5).

Neoptolemus' men invoke the goddess as "Sovereign Mother" (μᾶτερ πότνι, 395), an epithet which recalls the title *Potnia Theron*, "Sovereign of the Animals", deity that is often depicted in Minoan and Mycenaean art and with whom the Mother of the Gods is also linked. *Potnia Theron* was usually represented flanked by wild animals, here the Goddess is "sitting on lions" (λεόντων ἔφεδρε, 401). *Potnia's* identity is uncertain and it is possible to consider her the protective *genius* of nature or wild areas (Cf. Roller 1999: 135). The lion, the animal that frequently appeared accompanying the Greek Mother, symbolizes the strength and the power of the Goddess but also it is a token of her Anatolian origins (cf. Roller 1999: 148). The title "killer of bulls" (ταυροκτόνων, 400) refers probably to the rite of *taurobolion*. This ritual, according to the analysis that Loucas, Loucas (1986: 394-6) did of the inscriptions in a shrine of Rhea-Kybele and the Great Goddess in the Attic demos of Phyle, is performed in the worship of these deities.

The mention of the arms of Achilles in the hymn (τὰ πάτρια τεύχεα, 399) could probably refer to a tradition on the island of Lemnos, since as Bremmer (2010: 195) notes, "weapons were supposed to have been invented on Hephaistos' island, Lemnos". The chorus describes the arms as σέβας ὑπέρτατον (402), because they were made by this god and "are an object of reverence like Philoktetes' bow" (Schein *ad loc.*). In addition, it is possible to see an allusion to hymnic tradition because, in the Epidaurian Hymn for the Mother of the Gods, Zeus uses his emblematic weapon, the thunderbolt, to try to intimidate the Mother (9 ff.).

Nevertheless in *Philoktetes* Lemnos is not a center of the cult of the Mother of the Gods; but there an enigmatic goddess was venerated, called Chryse, whose shrine is protected by a snake. Actually, as Schein (2013 *ad loc.*) points out, "Chryse is the nymph to whom the island of Chryse, near Lemnos, was consecrated". According to the metrical hypothesis of the *Philoktetes*, the shrine, where the hero was bitten, was dedicated to Athena (Ἐν Χρύσει Ἀθηνᾶς βωμὸν, 1). The authors that establish an identification between Chryse and Athena can only argue that the adjective χρύσεια applies

³⁴ Cf. Pindar fr. 80 (Snell); Eur. *Bacchae* 78. Hipponax fr. 127 West: Κυπρίων βέκος φαγοῦσι κάμαθουσίων πυρόν /καὶ Διὸς κόρη Κυβήβη καὶ Θερεΐκη Βενδῖς.; Hesychius <Κυβήβη> ἡ μήτηρ τῶν θεῶν; Suda, <Κυβήβη> ἡ θεῶν μήτηρ. Stephanus Ethnica, page 389, line 12: καὶ <Κυβέλα> ὄρος ἱερόν, ἄφ' οὗ Κυβέλη ἢ Ῥέα λέγεται [καὶ] Κυβεληγενής καὶ Κυβελίς. Eustathius Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam, v. 1, page 78, line 46: ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ δέ φασι κυφοῦ, καὶ Κυβήβα διὰ τοῦ <α> ἢ Κυβήβη διὰ τοῦ <η>, ἢ Ῥέα.

to weapons of the goddess in the Homeric Hymn XXVIII, but does not work as an epithet of Pallas. In fact, the only link between the two is the serpent deities. Schein (2013 *ad loc.*) asserts that in the lines 1326-8 “the language in which Neoptolemus describe the snake that bit Philoktetes is used elsewhere of the sacred serpent dwelling in the Erechtheum, the temple of Athena Polias on the Athenian acropolis”. In fr. 384 Sophocles equates Lemnos with Chryse: ὦ Λῆμνε Χρύσης τῷ ἀγγιτέρμονες πάγοι (Schein *ad loc.*; 194, 265-7, 1326-7). According to Roller (1999: 128-30), the snakes connect the Goddess with the Lydian mythical traditions. In Sardis the Mother Goddess is also depicted flanked by wavy lines representing snakes and accompanied by lions (cf. 401). Also we might think that Chryse is another shape that the Great Mother takes or we may also think that she is the hostile genius that protects the island from foreigners.

It is interesting to note, taking into account the wrath, withdrawal and return pattern, the name of the goddess, since Chryse alludes to the old priest, Chryses, who was dishonored by Agamemnon and left away from the Achaean camp (*Il.* I. 11 f.; 366 f.). Due to the disastrous consequences of this outrage (the plague sent by Apollo), Agamemnon sent Odysseus as an ambassador to reward him. That is to say, the name of the goddess refers to another story where anger plays a central role. Kirk (1985, *ad* 37-8) clarifies that Chryses “is the priest’s home town, and his name is taken from it. It probably lay on the west coast of the Troad some five miles north of Cape Lekton, near the site of the later city of Hamaxitos, where there are slight remains of a temple of Apollo Smintheus”. However, there is another possibility. According to Strabo (13-612f.), the city could be placed south of Mt Ida, which was one of the favorite sites of the Great Mother.

The inclusion of the patronymic “Laertes’ son” (τῷ Λαρτίου, 401), when the attributes of the Mother Goddess are mentioned in the last verses, is probably a way to indicate that they also sang a hymn to Gaia when the hybris of the Atreidai affected Neoptolemus. As a result, the sailors would not support the treachery, because they asked for help when the young was outraged. Nevertheless, it is also possible that this reference reminds us of the deception that this hymn tries to help.³⁵ Consequently, it establishes a strong connection between the ode and the tragedy’s plot. Neoptolemus’ sailors use the imperfect “appealed to” (ἐπηρώμαν, 395) to indicate that actions have been attempted but have not been successful (Jebb 1890 *ad. loc.*). The use of this verb has raised the question of why the poet did not choose ἐπικαλοῦμαι, since it is usually employed in prayers and invocations. Furthermore, the verb ἐπαυδῶμαι only appears in two lexicographers, Hesychius and Suda. The possible reason of

³⁵ Similarity the *Helena’s* hymn is sung in the context of deception.

this election is the definition given by Suda: Ἐπαυδῆσαι ἐπειπεῖν, i. e., say besides or afterwards. The chorus apparently calls the Goddess as a helper now, when the events have already happened. According to Schein (2013 *ad loc.*), the use of the middle voice suggests “the Chorus’ personal distress at Neoptolemus’ having been wronged by the Atreidai and Odysseus”. When they say that the previous invocation was ignored, they corroborate the story about the insolence of the Achaeans’ leaders. Another alternative is that we associate the form ἐπηυδώμην with the verb ἐπαείδω, whose passive-middle form has the meaning of singing as a manner of enchantment (cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1021).³⁶ So this hymn is a magical request; sailors beg the Goddess to do something for them. But this petition allows a double reading: one would be they want to cast a spell on Philoktetes so that he believes Neoptolemus’ veracity; and the other reading would be the hero thinks the followers of the young are cursing his enemies. This belief is reinforced by the reference to Odysseus’ name and the use of the verb ἐπαυδάμαι / ἐπαείδω, since both allow us to think about the magical curses, κατάδεσμος. Furley (1996: 100) defines this spell as “These forms of thin lead tablets inscribed with the name(s) of enemy, and sometimes with instructions to an underworld power (Hermes, Hekate, Ge, Persephone) to bid the person(s) named”. Although the κατάδεσμος was in a written form, the parallel with the hymn is notable, since they sing to Gaia and talk about the hateful enemy.

Nevertheless, it might call our attention that the chorus invokes the Goddess that is related to the punishment of the perjurers. In connection with this last point, Burton (1980: 232) argues that the appeal to Γαῖα could refer to the invocation of this goddess in Homeric oaths (cf. *Il.* 3. 278 s.; 19. 259; *Od.* 5. 184 s.).³⁷ The oath is a plea for divine witnesses to ensure compliance with the given word; the statement may refer to a past or future event. In this case, the last fact mentioned by the chorus is the refusal to give Neoptolemus his father’s arms. After listening to the chorus, Philoktetes could not doubt the truth of the words of the young hero (Burton 1980: 233). For these reasons, if we take into account the characteristics of the praised goddess, we will consider more appropriate to think that the hymn can be related to the anger of Philoktetes, since Gaia who castigates the perjurers will punish the enemies of the hero.

³⁶ It should be noted, however, that this verb (ἐπαυδάω) is connected morphologically with αὐδάω.

³⁷ In Athens Heliasts swore “by Zeus, Apollo Patroos (identified with Helios) and Demeter (assimilated to Gea)”; cf. sch. Aeschines *Against Timarchos*.

The wrath, withdrawal and return story pattern could be thought as Sophocles' re-appropriation of the current outline in the hymnody on the Mother of the Gods (the Epidaurian Hymn for the Mother of the Gods and the Homeric Hymn to Demeter). It allows us to establish a link between the song and the tragedy, that is, to analyze the hymn's role within the dramatic fiction.

The poet presents noteworthy similarities among Lemnos, the goddess and the hero's life. Philoktetes and the cruel goddess Chryse (290 ff.) dwell on a wild and desert island. The Mother of the Gods is kept away from civilized places because she loves living in the mountains and wild areas (Homeric Hymns XIV and XXX, Pindar, Euripides' *Bacchae*). However, in the Epidaurian Hymn the Goddess stays away from the community of the gods because she was outraged by Zeus. Both in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and in the hymn in Euripides' *Helen*, the deity departs because her *time* has been harmed by the actions of Hades and Zeus. In all these cases the Goddess' withdrawal causes devastation and destruction. Instead, the hero does not choose to live alone and while he and his bow are absent, Troy shall not be conquered.

We could see a modification of the story pattern here; as we have already pointed out, in the tragedy there are two kinds of anger and two withdrawals. At the beginning of *Philoktetes*, we could talk about the abandonment, anger and finally return story pattern. An important modification is that Philoktetes' departure from the community of Achaean warriors is the cause of his anger, since he is abandoned and left alone on Lemnos. The hero feels betrayed and abused by his former friends (260-7), because he is bitten by the snake when he is serving his army. This fact is not mentioned in the tragedy but the *hypothesis* and Σ 194 explain that Philoktetes is bitten when he is searching for the altar of Chryse or of Athena, founded by Heracles or Jason. It is the altar where the Achaeans will necessarily make a sacrifice to succeed in Troy (cf. Schein 2013: 114). Also in his first dialogue with Neoptolemus, the hero realizes that the ingratitude of the Greeks is even greater, since they kept silent about his misfortunes (254-9). Philoktetes bursts with anger when he imagines the laughter of his enemies before his suffering (1019-1024).

Within this main pattern, we may discern another manifestation of anger. When Philoktetes understands that he has been betrayed by Neoptolemus, who promised deceptively to take him back to his home, he puts a curse on the whole Achaean army (1040-1044, 1285). The hero's wrath, his curse and recriminations cause the regret of the young man, who after dealing with Odysseus decides to return the bow to its rightful owner. With this gesture, Neoptolemus renews his friendship with the wounded hero and tries to persuade him to accompany him to Troy (1315 ff.). At this time, Philoktetes is divided between his true friendship to Neoptolemus and the hostility towards Odysseus and Atreus' sons (1350-1360). He doubts the good advice of a friend, but he finally rejects the proposal of the young man

(1364 ff.). Neoptolemus, who has a similar role to the divine Ambassadors in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, fails in his attempt at persuading Philoktetes.³⁸ ____ As in this hymn only the goddess Rhea, the Mother of the Gods, persuades Demeter to return, in the tragedy Heracles must intervene, as *deus ex machina*, to achieve the return of Philoktetes (1424 ff.). Finally, the hero will achieve glory and be rewarded after his long and terrible suffering. Zeus's son also ensures that Philoktetes, unlike many other heroes, can successfully return home to his father (1430).

In the hymns analyzed the Goddess' return involves both the restoration of original *time* and the awarding with new *timai*. The same happens in tragedy; Philoktetes regains his place in the community of the Achaeans at Troy, as well as having his mysterious wound healed. Furthermore he does not only get the glory of the capture of Ilion but also reaches the desired *nostos*.

The chorus, in its role as a character in the tragic plays, sings songs of praise to the gods, but as a group of Athenian citizens, it performs a ritual in a civic festival. Tragic hymns, therefore, have a double function. On the one hand, they are an imitation (μίμησις) of cultic hymns performed in the context of the dramatic fiction. On the other hand, given that tragic performance is played in the framework of the Great Dionysia, hymns have a ritual function. For this reason, we believe that it is possible to think that Gaia is not only invoked as a response to a dramatic situation but, in a sense, it is a way to honor the Great Mother Goddess, whose cult has only been introduced in Athens around the year 430. That is to say, the song can be read as an αἴτιον to legitimize the cult of the Mother in the Μητροῦον amid the agora, in the political space par excellence. In this way we can state the hymn is an acknowledgment of the role of the Mother in Athenian civic life.

According to Roller (1999: 139), the discovery of cultic objects in various Ionian cities in Greece suggests that the Mother was worshiped mainly in extra-urban shrines. The evidence of her cult in urban centers is late. Terracotta figurines of the deity were found on the Acropolis of Athens in the sixth century but they seem to be individual "offerings" and they have no links with official cult. Only in the early fifth century the Mother has her place in the framework of the official cult in Athens, in the Μητροῦον (cf. Roller 1999: 161-3). Parker (1996: 188) argues that this cult "at the heart of religious and civic life" involves a paradox. In the Μητροῦον

³⁸ In *The Iliad*, as Chryses' anger arouses the wrath of Apollo, who desolates the Achaeans with a terrifying plague, Agamemnon sends Odysseus, who successfully appeases the old priest (I 303 ff.). In the book IX, Agamemnon and the Achaeans are desperate to not be able to resist the assault of Hector and the Trojans without the help of Achilles. Nestor suggests that an Embassy should be sent to Achilles, making him an offer of compensation by the king (IX 93-113). Agamemnon accepts and sends Phoenix, Ajax and Odysseus (IX 162 ff.). But they fail because the hero believes there is no sufficient wealth in the world to compensate the suffered outrage (IX 378-387).

the Great Mother is worshipped and, at the same time, there the public archives of Athens are kept (cf. Loraux 2004: 83-97). Thus, the Goddess is considered the “guardian” of all laws and decrees of democracy. In the here and now of the tragic performance, Athenians might think of the goddess as a benefactor of the legality of civic life. In the tragedy the chorus praises the Idaean Mother of Gods or *genius loci* of Lemnos, looking to vindicate the righteousness of Neoptolemus’ complaints. But also this deity refers to the main issues of *Philoktetes*: the wrath and the hero’s wild lifestyle.

Parker (1996: 189) points out that this goddess has features of the Phrygian Mother, Kybele, the Potnia Theron. He adds it was “very common for old Greek Goddesses such as Ge, Demeter or Rhea to be identified with Kybele by poets and theologians; syncretism was here a means of assimilating and domesticating the potentially disquieting foreign power” (189). The author emphasizes the fact that the Great Mother of the Μητρῶον has great symbolic importance in Athenian life. Thus, it would appear that the purpose of this tragic hymn was to contribute to Athenian cult honors of the Phrygian Kybele. References to the Great Mother are from the year 430 onwards and, as noted by Parker (1996, 1991), the cult statues of Phidias or Agorakritos in the Μητρῶον prove that her worship was publicly accepted as late as V century, but probably had already been previously revered. A proof is “by the 460’s, the worship of the Mother in the Lesser Mysteries at Agrai was preliminary to the Greater Mysteries of Demeter at Eleusis” (Schein 2013: 192).

When Sophocles identifies the Great Mother with Gaia, a goddess who belonged to the Greek orthodox pantheon, seeks to achieve the approval of recently formalized worship (cf. Roller 1999: 161 ff.). The tragic hymn thus becomes a form of legitimating the worship, namely, the poet supports the cult to the Goddess Mother settled in the city.³⁹

³⁹ It is important to mention Sophocles’ reputation for piety. A clear example is when the cult of Asclepius is introduced in Athens (cf. Parker 1996: 175 ss.). One source that tells us about the arrival of this God in the city presents Asclepius as a *xénos* and Sophocles as *próxenos*, since the poet may have given shelter to the cultic snake or to the statue of Asklepios until the temple was finished. The tradition relates that, as a reward for these noble and pious deeds, after his death he was honored as a hero and was called Δεξιόν. The philologists question the historical accuracy of this story. For example, Lefkowitz (1981: 78 f.) argues that anecdotes about the poet’s piety originate in information extracted from the tragedies and the hypothesis rather than from authentic sources. She does not agree with the version of Sophocles being honored as a hero, since she thinks that this story is based on the hypothesis of *Oedipus at Colonus*. Similarly, A. Connolly (1998) argues that there is insufficient evidence to confirm such link and he believes that most of the information provided by the *Vita Sophoclis* is a product of Hellenistic invention based on the tragedies. But beyond the question of the historicity of the poet’s relationship with the healing god, Haldane (1963) argues that Sophocles knows that the power of the poetic word could contribute to the strengthening of the worship of foreign gods.

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