

SOPHOCLES *PHILOCTETES* 671-3: A RECONSIDERATION RECONSIDERED

ἦ ταῦτα γὰρ τὰ κλεινὰ τόξ' ἃ νῦν ἔχεις;

ταῦτ', οὐ γὰρ ἄλλ' ἔστ', ἀλλ' ἃ βαστάζω χεροῖν. 655

ἄρ' ἔστιν ὥστε κάγγύθεν θεῶν λαβεῖν,
καὶ βαστάσαι με προσκύσαι θ' ὥσπερ θεόν;

σοί γ', ὦ τέκνον, καὶ τοῦτο κάλλο τῶν ἐμῶν
ὁποῖον ἂν σοι ξυμφέρη γενήσεται.

καὶ μὴν ἐρῶ γε· τὸν δ' ἐρωθ' οὕτως ἔχω· 660
εἴ μοι θέμις, θέλοιμ' ἂν· εἰ δὲ μή, πάρες.

ὅσιά τε φωνεῖς ἔστι τ', ὦ τέκνον, θέμις,
ὅς γ' ἡλίου τόδ' εἰσορᾶν ἐμοὶ φάος
μόνος δέδωκας, ὅς χθόν' Οἰταίαν ἰδεῖν,
ὅς πατέρα πρέσβυν, ὅς φίλους, ὅς τῶν ἐμῶν 665
ἐχθρῶν μ' ἔνερθεν ὄντ' ἀνέστησας πέρα.
θάρσει, παρέσται ταῦτά σοι καὶ θιγγάνειν

καὶ δόντι δοῦναι κάξεπεύξασθαι βροτῶν
ἀρετῆς ἕκατι τῶνδ' ἐπιψαῦσαι μόνω·
εὐεργετῶν γὰρ καὐτὸς αὐτ' ἐκτησάμην. 670
οὐκ ἄχθομαί σ' ἰδῶν τε καὶ λαβῶν φίλον.
ὅστις γὰρ εὖ δρᾶν εὖ παθῶν ἐπίσταται,
παντὸς γένοιτ' ἂν κτήματος κρείσσων φίλος.

χωροῖς ἂν εἴσω. : καὶ σέ γ' εἰσάξω· τὸ γὰρ
νοσοῦν ποθεῖ σε ξυμπαραστάτην λαβεῖν. 675

Recently Arlene Allan has argued that lines 671-3 of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* were delivered by Philoctetes.¹ I believe that they were spoken by Neoptolemus, and in this article explain why.²

Above I cite the lines, with a generous portion of context, but without speaker designations. I merely mark with a line or *paragraphos* places where the mediaeval manuscripts indicate a change of speaker. Mediaeval manuscripts, and some ancient ones, contain speaker

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¹ Allan 2012.

² The first scholar to attribute 671-3 to Neoptolemus was Hermann 1839 *ad loc.*, although he additionally transfers the lines to after 675. (In his earlier edition of 1824 he had instead posited a lacuna after 670.) Doederlein 1842, 10 was first to attribute the lines to Neoptolemus in the position that they occupy in the manuscripts. An alternative approach involves deleting 671-3, as Dindorf does (1836, 359), but no-one to my knowledge has ever given a good reason why the lines should have been interpolated.

designations, but these do not go back to Sophocles. The playwright, and copyists after him until at least the third century BC, will have signified a change of speaker merely by a *paragraphos*: a horizontal stroke above the extreme left-hand edge of the first line of a new speech.³ Speaker change in the middle of a line was generally marked by a *paragraphos* in the usual place accompanied by a double point where the new speech begins; and so I have marked in 674.⁴ The abbreviated names found in our manuscripts therefore did not originate with the author. They may be right, they may be wrong; there is no presumption in their favour. The *paragraphoi* enjoy a certain authority, since any individual *paragraphos* could in theory originate with Sophocles. But it is easy for a mere horizontal stroke to wander, or to disappear, during the long process of textual transmission. Hence we should not resist excessively if, on grounds of sense, it seems prudent to assume speaker change in a place where it is not marked in the manuscripts, or to advocate continuity of speech where the manuscripts offer a text divided between different actors.⁵ The view for which I am arguing in fact requires the insertion of a *paragraphos*, as I set out below.

³ For the evidence see the classic paper that is Lowe 1962, which despite its title covers evidence for tragedy as well as for Aristophanes. After the third century, speaker designations are sporadic, especially in earlier papyri; even mediaeval manuscripts, such as L for Sophocles, often use just a *paragraphos* to indicate speaker change.

⁴ This was the most common method, but others were available, including omitting the double dot and simply leaving a space, or writing the divided line as two separate lines, each with its own *paragraphos* (Lowe (1962) 31, 33).

⁵ Cf. Lowe's conclusion (1962, 39): 'Where it is possible, therefore, to infer a change of speaker in the archetype, this is part of the παράδοσις and can claim prior consideration. However it represents a shaky tradition not free

As far as speaker change is concerned, then, the information that has survived from antiquity is as represented above. The first six *paragraphoi* may be accepted; content makes clear that the first, third, and fifth introduce speeches by Neoptolemus, the rest speeches by Philoctetes. The double point in 674 also seems essential:⁶ a single character could hardly declare χωροῖς ἄν εἴσω· καὶ σέ γ' εἰσάξω 'please go in; I will bring *you* in', since the emphasis on σέ afforded by καὶ . . . γε indicates a new idea, not the mere repetition of any preceding statement.⁷ The content of 675 indicates that the closing line and a half belong to Philoctetes, and consequently that Neoptolemus delivers the beginning of 674. The seventh *paragraphos* is ambiguous: it either marks change of speaker at the start of 674, or merely draws attention to the double point in the middle of the same line.⁸ Allan takes the former view. I adopt the latter, and additionally believe that a *paragraphos* has dropped out at the start of 671.

I have two main reasons. My first is a matter of grammar: the lack of a connector between 670 and 671. The asyndeton is impossible Greek, and *prima facie* evidence for a change of speaker.⁹ Allan attempts to deal with this point by emending οὐκ at the start of 671, either to

from interpolation and can be rejected without qualms if there is a good reason, particularly if there are special factors in the context which might explain a corruption. The only safe guide is the text.'

⁶ *Pace* Cavallin 1875, 132, who gives the whole of 674-5 to a single speaker (Philoctetes).

⁷ 'The effect of γε in καὶ . . . γε is to stress the addition made by καί' (Denniston 1954, 157).

⁸ Cf. Lowe 1962, 31: 'this system of double marking, if used without the speakers' names, could lead to ambiguity in rapid dialogue'.

⁹ Cf. Finglass 2009, 338, on Soph. *Aj.* [966] (with further references): 'asyndeton . . . is found throughout tragedy and classical literature, but always as a particular stylistic feature. To give just two examples, it can introduce a brief maxim as an explanation, or juxtapose brief statements at moments of high emotion to give a pathetic effect. There

κοῦκ or το οὐδ'.¹⁰ Either would do as a connector, and neither is in itself a large change. But the very fact that Allan requires an emendation needs to be emphasised for the benefit of anybody looking for a solution to this problem which involves no change to the *paradosis*. Such a solution does not exist; whatever we do, we must change something.

Furthermore, it is worth weighing Allan's preferred change against mine. If Sophocles originally wrote κοῦκ or οὐδ', as Allan believes, it would be odd for such a word to become οὐκ in this context, since the need for a connector was a feature of classical Greek very familiar to scribes. Small words these connectors may have been; nevertheless, they drop out only rarely when their absence would leave a sentence in asyndeton. By contrast, it would be easy to mistake the point at which there is a change of speaker in our text. χωροῖς ἄν εἴσω in 674 marks the move from statements to a potential optative with imperatival function, from general reflection to action. A copyist could be forgiven for assuming that Philoctetes' speech lasted for an additional three lines (the character is not averse to long speeches), and that the change of mood at 674 is accompanied by a change of speaker. Another possible source of confusion lies in the change of speakers in the middle of 674. A later scribe, unfamiliar with the convention whereby such a change was signalled by both double point and *paragraphos*, might have taken the *paragraphos* at the start of 674 to indicate a change of speaker at the beginning of the line. He would have

is no such feature which could justify it here.' No-one, to my knowledge, has attempted to justify the asyndeton in our passage: Allan and I are agreed that it is a fault that needs mending.

¹⁰ The former conjecture is owed to Paley 1880, 52, as Allan notes; for the error caused by removal of crasis see Finglass 2011 on *Aj.* 1136. οὐδ', which Allan tentatively advances as her own suggestion, was in fact conjectured by Wakefield 1794, 217; less modestly than Allan, Wakefield remarks 'agnoscent veritatem Sophocleam statim eruditi'.

inferred that Neoptolemus begins to speak at that point, and hence that a putative *paragraphos* above 671 indicating the end of Philoctetes' speech was wrong and needed to be removed.

Whatever the precise mechanics of the error, it is not difficult to sketch a plausible scenario. I therefore conclude that the textual corruption posited by my preferred solution is certainly no more severe, and quite possibly rather less severe, than that posited by Allan's.

My second reason is a matter of sense. In 672-3, the speaker declares that 'Whoever knows how to requite good deeds with good [lit. to act well having experienced good treatment], he would be a friend worth more than any [lit. every] possession'. If we attribute 671-3 to Philoctetes, he is speaking about his companion: Neoptolemus has received a promise from Philoctetes that he will be able to hold the bow (εὖ παθῶν), and will now demonstrate his value as a friend by taking Philoctetes home (εὖ δρᾶν). This account is at variance with the text. Neoptolemus agrees to take Philoctetes home as early as lines 519-29. After the departure of the False Merchant, Neoptolemus proposes to delay the journey because of the weather, but quickly gives in to pressure from Philoctetes for an immediate sailing (639-45). Only now comes the reference to the bow. Therefore Neoptolemus is not taking Philoctetes back home on the ground that he has been promised the chance to handle this illustrious weapon. As far as Philoctetes knows, Neoptolemus is performing this service out of simple altruism.

By contrast, the lines make sense when spoken by the younger warrior. Philoctetes, Neoptolemus declares, has received the promise of safe conveyance home (εὖ παθῶν), and now reciprocates by offering to let Neoptolemus handle the bow (εὖ δρᾶν). This corresponds to the order in which these promises were made. Crucially, it also corresponds to Philoctetes' own speech immediately before these lines. In response to Neoptolemus' tentative request for

permission to handle the bow, ‘if it is lawful’ to do so, Philoctetes replies ‘You speak righteously, and it *is* lawful, my child, for you who alone have allowed me to look upon this light of the sun, upon the land of Oeta, my father, my friends . . .’ (662-6). That is, Neoptolemus is accorded this awesome privilege because he has conferred such a benefit on Philoctetes. The theme is reprised in the lines that follow 671-3. Neoptolemus, Philoctetes declares, will receive the bow ‘because of his virtue’ (667-9), just as Philoctetes himself acquired it by good actions (670). Neoptolemus then takes up the same idea, elegantly turning it into a compliment: by demonstrating gratitude for an earlier benefit, Philoctetes has showed himself a priceless friend.¹¹

These two reasons are sufficient to establish that the lines are spoken by Neoptolemus. In the remainder of this piece, however, I briefly address some other points adduced by Allan in support of her thesis, in case readers should find them alluring. First, Allan argues that the pun on the name Philoctetes in 673 (παντὸς . . . κτήματος κρείσσων φίλος) is most appropriately spoken by Philoctetes himself (p. 290). Rather, the pun (if we accept it, which I am inclined to do) is more appropriately applied to Philoctetes. Significant names usually refer to a quality predicated of, not bestowed by, the bearer of the name.¹²

Second, in Allan’s view it is preferable for Neoptolemus to have a mere half line at 674, as this conveys both his reluctance to enter the cave and his inability to work out what he should

¹¹ Allan (p. 289) does not adequately address the question of chronology. She focusses on the order in which the promises were to be fulfilled, but this does not help her. As she admits, the conveyance of Philoctetes comes first, followed by the (temporary) transfer of the bow: ‘the receipt of the “good” Philoctetes offers is dependent upon Neoptolemos actually fulfilling his promise first’. (I would not use the phrase ‘is dependent on’, however; Philoctetes’ language throughout this passage evokes not conditionality but reciprocity.)

¹² Cf. Soph. *Aj.* 430-1 with Finglass 2011 *ad loc.*

do at this point (pp. 290-2). This judgment seems incorrect on both counts. There is no evidence that Neoptolemus is reluctant to go inside. Earlier Philoctetes asks him to come into the cave with him (533-8), a request that he accepts without demur; the chorus's dual imperative ἐπίσχετον at 539 indicates that both are moving in that direction as the False Merchant comes into sight. When the Merchant departs and the decision to sail is reconfirmed, Neoptolemus presupposes that only Philoctetes will go inside (645 λαβῶν, 651 ἔκφερε), but that does not indicate reluctance on his part; only Philoctetes is needed. Members of the audience who required a further reason could imagine that it might seem forward for Neoptolemus, even after his friend's earlier encouragement, to assume that he may enter the dwelling too. When Philoctetes does invite him to enter (674-5), he does so without complaint.

The evidence for Neoptolemus' alleged confusion does not withstand scrutiny either. Later, at the very moment that he is finally overcome by his doubts, he is given a whole line by Sophocles (895); in what follows, he speaks a combination of single and double lines, with one half-line. If we accept that his half-line at 674 reflects his bewilderment, we must conclude that he is less bewildered at 895-926 because of his greater fluency. The silences that Allan additionally adduces (p. 292 n. 15) are irrelevant: silences and short utterances create different effects and cannot be considered analogous in this context.

Third, Allan believes that if 671-3 are spoken by Philoctetes, the phrase γένοιτ' ἄν receives its full general conditional force, and 'draws attention to the yet future and, thus, unproven nature of the relationship between Philoktetes and Neoptolemos . . . [Philoktetes] has learned through bitter experience that not all men keep their word, so although Neoptolemos has thus far acted and spoken nobly, there remains some reserve on the part of Philoktetes' (p. 289).

Yet as lines 662-70 have shown, Philoctetes here treats Neoptolemus with no reserve whatsoever. γένοιτ' ἄν is standard in a general condition such as we find in 672-3,¹³ and does not imply that the speaker doubts his companion or is explicitly making his assessment of him conditional on future good behaviour.¹⁴

Grammar and sense thus require us to insert a *paragraphos* at 671. The actor who delivered *Philoctetes* 671-3 in 409 BC was playing Neoptolemus.

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¹³ Cf. *Aj.* 523-4, fr. 683 Radt, *Eur. Suppl.* 447-9.

¹⁴ Of course, Philoctetes' confidence in his new-found companion will not be shared by the audience, who are aware of the plot against him. Nevertheless, they may already be wondering whether or not Neoptolemus will continue to play his part in the deceit, especially given his earlier reluctance.

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