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Manuscripts, Editors and Sophocles, Philoctetes

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Abstract: “Manuscripts, Editors and Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 671-675.” The thesis of the article may be briefly summarized as follows: Lines 671-673 in all of our ancient MSS are consistently assigned to *Philoctetes*. Modern editors however, following in the footsteps of nineteenth century scholars regularly assign these lines change in line assignment was made on purely subjective grounds for no reason that can be substantiated by the dramatic situation therefore, the article concludes that in the absence of any sound reasons for the alteration we should return to the readings of the major manuscripts and the earliest editions of the play.

In modern editions¹ of Sophocles' PHILOCTETES, verses 671-673 are uniformly assigned to Neoptolemus. A consideration of our major manuscripts² for the play reveals that these lines are there attributed to Philoctetes whose speech begins 663: $\square\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \tau\epsilon\ \phi\omega\nu\epsilon\ \square\zeta\ \square\sigma\tau\iota\ \tau\ \square$, ...and continues uninterrupted until 674 where, in a line marked by antilabe, Neoptolemus offers the somewhat ambiguous: $\chi\omega\rho\omicron\ \square\zeta\ \square\nu\ \epsilon\ \square\sigma\omega$. Furthermore, our earliest editions³ of the play (in stark contrast to modern editions, post-Doederlein) consistently attribute the lines to Philoctetes. The decision to assign lines 671-673 to Neoptolemus can be traced to the nineteenth century⁴, where editorial intervention, variously stimulated, accounts for the present attribution. We will argue that there are no sound reasons-textual or dramatic for abandoning the MSS in favor of editorial conjectures.

An examination of the Laurentian codex⁵ for Sophocles reveals that speaker-change is regularly indicated in a double fashion. First, all changes of speaker are foreshadowed by: located at the preceding verse-end in addition to a siglum for the character's name which is aligned neatly to the immediate left of the text. Both sigla and \square are the usual practice for change of speaker.⁶

At our crucial text 671, we note the absence of the customary: at verse-end 670 to mark a new speaker in the following verse. Furthermore, we do not find the usual siglum for Neoptolemus aligned to the immediate left of the text. It is noted, however, that to the farthest left of the page and intra lineam in a hand and pen different from that of either the scribe or the scholiast-diothetes⁷ appears a mark unique to the manuscript for the character Neoptolemus. In addition to its unusual location, far left and intra lineam, the premonitory: to mark speaker-change does NOT accompany the text at this point. Even in the stichomythic passages, where merely a bold dash marks speaker-change in the left margin, the preceding verse-end is consistently characterized by: \square .⁸ Any attempt to conclude that the unique mark near line 671 of the Laurentian refers to Neoptolemus will have to account for the fact that the usual appearance of this mark and its atypical location, we should discount it as unworthy of attention and remain faithful to what version of the text unadorned by hands subsequent to S, the scholiast-diothetes.

In conformity with the Laurentian, the so-called Roman family, GRQ, attributes lines 671-673 to Philoctetes. 674a is given to Neoptolemus; antilabae at 674b returns the dialogue to Philoctetes.¹¹

A consideration of the Parisinus (Ms.Grec 2712) confirms the readings of the Laurentian and of the Roman family, GRQ. Unlike the Laurentian, the Parisinus disposes its text in columns from left to right rather than vertically. Thus verse 671 is located in the far left column; 672 in the middle beside 673 in the far right column. Lines 662-673 are clearly assigned by the Parisinus to Philoctetes. Indeed at the crucial 671 there is no siglum for Neoptolemus. Yet at 674a Neoptolemus is clearly marked and, as with other manuscripts, 674b is given to Philoctetes.

Our final witness in the absence of papyrological remains, the Leiden palimpsest, presents an illegible text for this passage thus depriving us of an important and possibly independent witness for the line assignment at 671.

An examination of the earliest print editions (Aldine 1502; Stephanus 1568 and Canter 1593) reinforces the authority of L. Although it is often impossible to determine precisely what manuscripts these editions represent, one is nevertheless struck by the textual uniformity of this passage in all of our manuscripts and in the earliest editions. Furthermore printed texts from Brunck¹² and those based upon him¹³ through Dindorf's 1825 Teubner edition¹⁴ are in complete agreement with the manuscripts P, L and GRQ in so far as line assignments at 671 and 674a/b are concerned.

Alteration to the MSS readings is first made by Doderlein, who decided to assign the lines 671-674a to Neoptolemus, drawing to his support Hermann and Wunder; both of whom, according to Doederlein¹⁵, “inierunt emendando et transponendo.” Inspired, no doubt, by his predecessors’ boldness, Doederlein offered his own alteration since “vicio laborare hunc locum pridem intellectum est.”¹⁶ Indeed verse 671-674a are given to Neoptolemus because “non Philoctetae hercle, hominis miserrimi, est testari, haud se gravatum esse obventu Neoptolemi; at Neoptolemi personae talis oratio convenit.”¹⁷ On the strength of such argument even Dindorf, who in an earlier edition of 1825 supported the MSS reading, in the 1896 edition of his text by Mekler was persuaded to reconsider the lines as spurious.¹⁸ So pervasive is Doederlein’s authority that Wecklein in his 1875 edition of Wunder’s text, who in an earlier edition had provided Doederlein with the necessary support for altering the text (see above), now quotes Doederlein as decisive on this passage:¹⁹

Rectissime hi versus qui in libris Philoctetae continuantur
a Doederleino Neoptolemo dati sunt.

At times the circularity of the argument dazzles. Indeed the appropriateness of the lines to Neoptolemus is by no means unequivocal (pace Doederlein) as was observed by Paley:²⁰

Whether these lines belong to Neoptolemus or to Philoctetes is uncertain.. We have no clear indication who is the speaker of the three verses in question, beyond the fact that οκ χθομα is perhaps more appropriate to a new speaker, i.e. Neoptolemus.

A consideration of stage business provides further confirmation of the MSS. Since line 654 the subject of the dialogue has been the bow: τ κλειν τόξ(α) which in 656-7 Neoptolemus desires to handle: and even worship: προσκύσαι...θέον Philoctetes’ emphatic response 658 Σοίγ, τέκνον...reveals his trust in Neoptolemus who, in turn, repeats his request and adds the further condition 661 ε μοι θέμις, ...In reply, Philoctetes’ repetition of: θέμις in 662 reinforces the religious aspect of the scene at this point. Of further interest is the fact that his next reference to Neoptolemus’ handling of the bow 667 comes at the end of a series of five relative clauses characterized by asyndeton, clearly emphatic, which are meant to carry the force of dialogue over to 667. Here θάρσει, παρέσται τατά σοι κα θιγγάνειν²¹ ought to be accompanied by a stage action. Perhaps Philoctetes hands over the bow as he delivers:²²

Κα δόντι δο να κ ξεπεύξασθαι βροτ ν
ρετς κατι τ νδ μιψα σαι μόνον.

Thus from 667 on we would like to assume that Neoptolemus is in possession of the bow.²³ Furthermore, Philoctetes delivers 670 while the youth scrutinizes the bow which at 657 he had hoped to worship as a god: προσκύσαι θ σπερ θεόν. The religious and ritual contexts within which προσκθνέω frequently appears in literature of the 5th century (vide: Liddell and Scott sub: προσκθνέω) presuppose a reverent attentiveness characterized by a slow and careful examination of the bow. Thus at our crucial text, 671, it seems rather awkward for Neoptolemus to deliver the sententious 672:

στις γ ρ ε δρ ν ε παθ ν πι σταται

while he offers obeisance (προκύσαι) to the bow which he has already described as θεόν in line 657. A consideration of verse 671:²⁴ will indicate that this verse can quite reasonably be delivered by Philoctetes if we remember that the topic of conversation is the bow²⁵ (and has been since 654) and not the arrival of Neoptolemus as supposed Doederlein.²⁶ Therefore, when Philoctetes says 671: οκ αχθομαι σ δων τε κα λαβ ν φίλον he means that: I am not distressed at seeing you handling the bow²⁷ since I have recognized (πδών with the meaning of

“perceive” see Liddell and Scott sub εἶδω) and I have accepted you as a friend. Note the force of the aorist participles with the present tense of the indicative.²⁸

Verses 672-673, proverbial in tone, are more appropriate to Philoctetes, since he, more than Neoptolemus, has benefited from recent events and, consequently, is more likely to appreciate a friend. The best sense that a literal translation of the lines gives is as follows:

He would be a friend better than any possession the man who, because he has benefitted (εἶπαθών) knows how to return the favor.

Note the force of the aorist participle with the present indicative πείσεται

At 674, where antilabae occurs, our editions and the MSS are once again in agreement as all attribute 674a χωροῖς ἔνσω to Neoptolemus and 674b καὶ σέ γ’ ἐσάξω to Philoctetes. The clarity with which antilabae is presented in the Laurentian and the Parisinus should silence any doubt to its textual authenticity. In the Laurentian each verse half is accorded its own line, while the Parisinus clearly marks who speaks which portion of the line by placing an abbreviation for the speaker’s name at the appropriate point. Despite this explicit treatment of the antilabae Cavallin in his 1873 edition²⁹ of the play attempts to remove the antilabae and assigns the entire verse to Philoctetes. As with the other followers of Doederlein, Cavallin assigns 671-673 to Neoptolemus. Cavallin’s predecessor, Bergk, in his 1858 edition of the play³⁰, attempts a completely individual reorganization of the antilabae at 674. According to Bergk Neoptolemus delivers 671ff; at 674a Philoctetes says: χωροῖς ἔνσω to which Neoptolemus replies 674b: καὶ σέ γ’ εἰσαξω. τὸ γὰρ and continues to scene close with 675: νοσοῦν ποθεῖ σε ξομπαρασάτην λαβεῖν. For some reason Bergk feels the MSS readings are “preposterous” and emends the text as above.³¹

Given the fact that the stage business does not unequivocally favor one character over another with respect to line attribution, there appear to be no sound reasons for us to abandon the secure position offered by the unanimity of the MSS both at 671 ff and at the antilabae. At this point the comment of M. Reeve³² is particularly apposite:

...until modern scholars shake themselves out of their lethargy and regain the ground won by Wunder and Nauck, there will be no presentable edition of Sophocles.

Footnotes:

- 1) A.Colonna; Turin: 1983.
R.D. Dawe; Leipzig: 1975
J.D. Kamerbeek; Leiden: 1963
A.C. Pearson; Oxford: 1961 (rept. of 1928)
- 2) L= R.C. Jebb and E.M. Thompson; Facsimile of the Laurentian Manuscript of Sophocles; London: 1885 (Society for the Promotion of Hellenistic Studies)
GRQ (Roman Family) = P.E. Easterling; "Sophocles' Philoctetes: Collation of the Manuscripts GRQ." *Classical Quarterly* XIX, 1969 pp. 57-85
P = Parisinus 2712
Leiden Palimpsest = J. Vurtheim, *Der Leidener Sophokles Palimpsest*: Leiden: 1926
- 3) Aldus Manutius; Venice: 1502
Henricus Stephanus et I.Camerarius; France ? :1568
Guilhelmus Canter; Lugduni: 1593
- 4) Primarily:
Ludwig Doederlein; *Reden und Aufsätze v. 2 p. 273* ; Erlangen: 1843.
Theodore Bergk; Leipzig: 1858
Wunder-Wecklein⁴; Leipzig: 1875 (Teubner) = N. Wecklein ed. *Sophoclis Tragoediae, recensuit et explanavit Ed. Wunderus*; Leipzig: 1875
F.A. Paley; London :1880
E. Tournier; Paris: 1877 (Hachette)
A. Nauck ed., *Sophokles erklärt von F.W. Schneidewin*; Berlin: 1886
- 5) See n. 2 L = Laurentian
- 6) Jebb & Thompson, *op.cit.*p.5
- 7) *Ibid.* p. 17 "The writer of the scholia and the diorthetes ..are one and the same person."
- 8) *Idem.* p. 17 "The qualifications of the diorthetes were of a higher order than those of the scribe."
- 9) *Ibid.* vs. 810ff for the treatment of extended stichomythic passages.
Vs. 675 offers : at scene –close to mark the fact that the new speakers are the chorus.
- 10) The usual siglum in L for Neoptolemus occurs universally in the hand and pen of the scribe, whereas the Laurentian's scholiast-diorthetes designated as S by Jebb uses a finer pen for the scholia and corrections, none of which appear to include sigla for personae, although he does appear to indicate: on occasion to announce speaker-change.
- 11) *Ibid.* p. 18: Jebb on hands subsequent to S:
"Three at least of these (annotators) seem to have added notes in the course of the next two centuries (12th and 13th) after the manuscript was written. Still later hands contributed here and there. The hands later than S can nearly always be distinguished from S, but very often cannot be certainly distinguished from each other; nor is it of much moment to do so. As a rule the matter which they added is worthless."
- 12) Easterling, *op. cit.*, p. 75
"67-673 :Philoctetae continuant GRQ."
- 13) R.F.P. Brunck, *Sophoclis Philoctetes e recensione R.F.P. Brunck cum commentario perpetuo I.Koppen Pars Prior*; Bibliopolio Brunsvigensi: 1787
- 14) Anonymous: *Sophoclis Tragoediae in usum scholarum ad exemplar Brunckianum ..etc.* Halae: 1790

- 15) Dindorf's 1825 edition of the plays for the Teubner series reproduces this text as given in the manuscripts. However, a later edition, the sixth, edited by Mekler (S.Mekler ed., *Sophoclis Tragoediae ex recensione Guielmi Dindorfii*; Leipzig: 1896) gives the text of 671-673 in brackets. The *Adnotatio Critica* p.xcv reveals that: "671-673 del D. "(=Dindorf)
- 16) Doederlein, op. cit., p. 278 vol. 2.
- 17) Idem.
- 18) Ibid. p. 279, vol. 2
- 19) Mekler, ed. Dindorf. See note 14.
- 20) Wunder-Wecklein⁴, op. cit. note ad loc.
- 21) F.A. Paley, *Sophocles*, v. 2; London: 1880. P. 52
- 22) cf. Phil 364 ..τ□□λλα μ□ν παρέστι σοι/πατρ□ □λέσθαι
 Antig. 213 ..το□τ□□νέστι σοι
 S. Elec 959 ..□ παρέσι μ□ν στένειν
 1454 .. παρεστ□□ρ□□μ□ν □στε κ□μφαν□ μαθε□ν
- Note the consistent use of the dative *c/ παρέστι*. Nauck's conjecture cited by Dawe (op.cit. ad loc) of μόν□ no doubt to agree with σοι is interesting but by no means necessary.
- 23) Many editors influenced by the scholiast to L: □ντ□ το□, □ποδο□ναί μοι τ□ δόντι σοι. Itnerpret as does Jebb: "The bow shall be thine to handle, and to return to the hand that gave it." R. Jebb, *The plays and fragments with critical notes, commentary and translation*²; Pt. IV *Philoctetes*: Cambridge: 1932
- 24) Brunck in his 1787 edition (see note 12) emends the line as follows:
 "Vulgo legitur: ουκ □χθοναί δ□δών τε κα□ λαβ□ν φιλόν Plane inepta sentential & manifesta duarum vocum depravatione. Nemo non vidit pro participiis verba infinitiva reponenda esse: ο□κ □χθομαί σ□□δ□ειν τε κα□ λαβε□ν φιλον.
- 25) see Paley, note 20.
- 26) So too Spengel, *Philologus* 20, 1863; p. 292
 "Die Beziehung hiebei auf die τόξα des Philoktet ist unkenbar and schon daraus klar, dass die Verse nicht dem Neoptolemus zufallen können."
- 27) Doederlein, *Reden*, op.cit., v. 2, p. 273
- 28) So too Ratallerus quoted by Brunck (1787) op. cit., note ad loc.: Non molestum erit si tu quoque attractaveris.
- 29) Jebb, *Philoctetes*, op.cit., p. 110 translates 671 ff which he attributes to Neoptolemus:
 I rejoice to have found thee and to have gained thy friendship; for whosoever knows how to render benefit for benefit must prove a friend above price.
- 30) C. Cavallin; *Sophocles Philocteta*: Lundae: 1875
- 31) Bergk, op.cit., p. lxii, *Adnotatio Critica*:
 671-673 Neoptolemo tribui, vulgo Philoctetae sunt; item in proximis verba χωρο□ς □ν ε□σω Philoctetae dedi, quae errant Neoptolemi ut jam Neoptolemus dicat: κα□ δέ γ□ε□σάξω etc. quae hucusque plane praepostere Philoctetae tribuuntur.
- 32) Idem
- 33) M.Reeve, "Interpolation in Greek Tragedy;" *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 14.1973; p. 146.