

FOR GILBERT HIGHET

Sophoclean Apologia: *Philoctetes*

William M. Calder III

“Denn wenn auch ein Kunstwerk losgelöst von seinem Schöpfer ein eigenes Leben führt, kann es doch ganz richtig nur aus der Seele dessen verstanden werden, der es schuf.”

WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF

I. Introduction

THE UNDERSTANDING of *Philoctetes* has been obscured by romanticism and deflected by scholarly emphasis on what scarcely matters, the nature of the oracle and its piecemeal revelation, who possesses Achilles' arms, the history and diagnosis of Philoctetes' malady, the putative collusion of the chorus, the purpose of the *deus ex machina*. Interpretations of the whole that exist often are repetitious. One detects the *déjà lu*. A radical cure may be in order. Then, too, there has been little effort to see *Philoctetes* as a document of its time. Over fifty years ago Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff pronounced a dogma that has never ceased to affect subsequent criticism of the play:¹ “Kein Vers weist aus dem Drama heraus auf irgend etwas in der Gegenwart des Dichters. Keine Spur des Alters, nichts verrät etwas über seine Person. Ein gelungenes zeitloses Kunstwerk.”

The sentences were unfortunate. The criticism of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* must begin from what is known. *Philoctetes* is the only extant Sophoclean tragedy, if we exclude the posthumous *Oedipus Coloneus*, precisely dated. Therefore, it is the only extant tragedy by one of the

¹ See Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *apud* Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, “Die Dramatische Technik des Sophokles,” *Philologische Untersuchungen* 22 (Berlin 1917) 316–17 (henceforth cited: *DramTech*). The judgement is repeated by Albrecht von Blumenthal, *Sophokles: Entstehung und Vollendung der griechischen Tragödie* (Stuttgart 1936) 215, who remarks that among other things nothing is said of the fall of Selinus, an event which in fact had not yet taken place; and by F. J. H. Letters, *The Life and Work of Sophocles* (London and New York 1953) 274, who writes: “What is the lesson? It is certainly not even broadly political; still less one closely bound to the specific fortunes of Sophocles' Athens.” See earlier H. Patin, *Études sur les tragiques grecs: Sophocle* (Paris 1913) 126.

three which we know to be the third treatment of the same theme. The priority of either *Electra* can never be proven. Hence it has unique importance for the historian of literature. The thesis that I shall propound here is radical and therefore unpleasant. Briefly, I believe that the play has been fundamentally misunderstood because the character of Neoptolemus has been fundamentally misunderstood. He, I shall argue, rather than Odysseus, is the archdeceiver. The play further, and contrary to Wilamowitz, is intimately concerned with the events that preceded March 409 B.C.

II. *Neoptolemos Dolios*

I base my thesis that Neoptolemos is the archdeceiver on six points which I shall present in the order that an audience, seeing the play for the first time, would absorb them. I beg only that my reader will momentarily put away preconceptions and confess that the modern *opinio communis* of an ancient play can be quite the opposite of its historical reception by an original audience.² This has been the case with *Alcestis*³ and *Antigone*.⁴ *The Merchant of Venice* likewise is often staged today as the tragedy of Shylock.

1. On a morning in March 409 the audience knew only the title of Sophocles' play.⁵ The action began with the entrance of two actors and at least one sailor (line 45) up the left parodos into the orchestra. They are a youth and a middle-aged man. They have not yet said a word. Who does the audience think that they are? Euripides' *Philoctetes* was produced with *Medea* in 431 B.C. Aristophanic parodies attest its popularity.⁶ A prose paraphrase of the Euripidean prologue has survived (Dio Chrys. 59). That play began with the entrance of a youth down the left parodos into the orchestra. He may even have been accompanied by a middle-aged man. The youth was Odysseus, disguised by Athene as a young Nauplian to escape detection by the

² See H. D. F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama: A Study of Six Greek Plays and of Hamlet* (London 1956) 91: "Perhaps there are two separate questions: What does the play mean to this generation? and, What did it mean to the dramatist and his generation?"

³ See C. R. Beye, "Alcestis and her Critics," *GRBS* 2 (1959) 109-27.

⁴ See *GRBS* 9 (1968) 389-407, and D. L. Page, *apud* J. M. Bremer, *Hamartia: Tragic Error in the Poetics of Aristotle and in Greek Tragedy* (Amsterdam 1969) 139 n.1.

⁵ At the *proagon* each poet "announced the subjects of the plays which he was about to produce": see Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, ed.² rev. by John Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford 1968) 67.

⁶ See *Ar. Ach.* 424 and *Ran.* 282.

armed enemy, Philoctetes. Diomedes, Wilamowitz implied,⁷ who in the third episode stole the bow of Philoctetes,⁸ entered with Odysseus, a *persona muta*. The alert and informed in the audience of 409, seeing again a youth beginning a drama called *Philoctetes*, would recall the Euripidean Odysseus.⁹ From the very start, before a word has been said, the poet has devised a visual reminiscence. Already Neoptolemos is the deuterio-Odysseus.

2. The prologue is of crucial importance. Here only—while the plotters are alone—can we hope that they speak candidly.¹⁰ Not quite always. Neoptolemos briefly (86–95; cf. 108, 110) alleges a reluctance to lie. He is clever. This raises his price (112), and he is soon satisfied (120). Odysseus requires only one truth (57): “You are Achilles’ son. This must not be misrepresented.”

The couplet 72–73 reads:

cὺ μὲν πέπλευκας οὔτ’ ἔνορκος οὐδενὶ
 οὔτ’ ἐξ ἀνάγκης οὔτε τοῦ πρώτου στόλου.

Jebb renders:¹¹ “*Thou* hast come to Troy under no oath to any man, and by no constraint; nor hadst thou part in the earlier voyage.” There is no Troy in the Greek. Jebb has added words. Yet it has become an unspoken assumption of criticism¹² that Neoptolemos earlier had sailed from Skyros to Troy and later sailed from Troy to Lemnos with Odysseus and would now be returning to Troy for the

⁷ See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Griechische Tragödien* IV (Berlin 1923) 11 (henceforth cited: *GrTr* IV): “Diomedes war nur als stumme Figur dabei.”

⁸ See Paus. 1.22.6; L. Preller and C. Robert, *Griechische Mythologie* II.3.2.1⁵ (Dublin/Zürich 1967) 1211 n.5; and Clelia Laviosa, “Sculptura Tardo-Etrusca di Volterra,” *Raccolta Pisana di Saggi e Studi* 14 (Milan 1965) 62–67.

⁹ C. H. Whitman, *Sophocles: a Study of Heroic Humanism* (Cambridge 1951) 179–80, quite wrongly argues that Sophocles’ Odysseus is modelled after the Odysseus of Euripides’ *Philoctetes*; rather Neoptolemos is. The Sophoclean Odysseus is Aeschylean: see *GRBS* 11 (1970) 171ff.

¹⁰ J. Geffcken, *Griechische Literaturgeschichte* I.2 (Heidelberg 1926) 185 n.42, best appraises the situation: “nur praktische Schurkerei, keine Sophistik.”

¹¹ Sir Richard C. Jebb, *Sophocles: the Plays and Fragments, Part IV. Philoctetes*² (Cambridge 1898; repr. 1932) 19 (henceforth cited: *JEBB, Phil.*). Wilamowitz, *GrTr* IV.37, is more careful: “Dich hat kein Eid, kein Zwang nach Ilion / geführt, du kamst nicht mit dem ersten Zuge.” Lewis Campbell, *Sophocles* II (Oxford 1881) *ad Ph.* 72 (p.373), alleges: “πλεῖν is used here and elsewhere without further definition to denote the voyage to Troy.”

¹² Christ-Schmid, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* I.2 (Munich 1934) 400, may be the exception: “eben erst aus Skyros herbeigeholten Neoptolemos.” The view oddly is never argued.

second time.¹³ Need this be the case? Is it not also possible that Odysseus sailed on a Skyrian ship with the former sailors of Achilles to Skyros to fetch Neoptolemos and take him to Troy? On the return voyage to Troy the two have stopped for a few hours at Lemnos to secure Philoctetes, without whom victory is denied the Greeks.

In the *Ilias Parva*,¹⁴ after the oracle has been extracted from Helenus, Diomedes fetches Philoctetes from Lemnos to Troy. There he is healed by Machaon and slays Paris in single combat. The body is defiled by Menelaos but recovered and buried by the Trojans. Deiphobos marries the widow. Only then does Odysseus bring Neoptolemos from Skyros, at best months *after* the arrival of Philoctetes. Apollodoros (*Epit.* 5.8–11), although differing in several details from Lesches, agrees that Neoptolemos was fetched long after Philoctetes. The conclusion is obvious. An audience, familiar with the epic version, would not have expected Neoptolemos to have anticipated Philoctetes in Troy.¹⁵

Has Jebb translated the couplet (72–73) correctly? The crux is *πέπλευκας*. Why has Sophocles preferred the rare perfect of *πλέω* to the ubiquitous aorist? I suggest that whereas *ἔπλευσα* means ‘I arrived by ship and my voyage is done’ (e.g., Eur. *El.* 3 and often), *πέπλευκα* means ‘I have arrived at a place in the course of my voyage, sc. my voyage is still underway.’¹⁶ Let us examine the examples of the perfect in tragedy. There are none in epic, lyric, or Aeschylus. It is first and thrice found in Eur. *Helena* (412 B.C.). All examples concern Menelaos, whose destination was Sparta, but whom the gods or adverse winds repeatedly drive off his course. He has visited every harbor in Libya (404–05):

*Λιβύης τ' ἐρήμους ἀξένους τ' ἐπιδρομάς
πέπλευκα πάσας . . .*

The logic of the perfect tense entails that the voyage is incomplete. And now he has arrived at Egypt, where he does not intend to stay (461):

¹³ B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1964) 187ff (henceforth cited: Knox, *Temper*), accepts an earlier visit to Troy without argument.

¹⁴ See G. Kinkel, *EGFI* (Leipzig 1877) 36–37, transl. G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis* (Cambridge 1969) 145.

¹⁵ On the whole matter see K. Ziegler, *RE* 16 (1935) 2444.62ff.

¹⁶ See P. Chantraine, *Histoire du parfait grec* (*Coll. Linguistique* 21, (Paris 1927) 71ff.

Αἴγυπτος; ὦ δύστηνος, οἱ πέπλευκ' ἄρα.

Helen accurately reports of her husband (532–33):

*πορθμὸν δ' ἀλάσθαι μυρίους πεπλωκότα
ἐκεῖσε κάκειν' . . .*

A. M. Dale¹⁷ well translates: “he wanders hither and thither sailing countless straits.” The perfect was a novelty, and it is no coincidence that Aristophanes a year later parodied Euripides at *Thesm.* 878 (πεπλώκαμεν).¹⁸ *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1040 reads:

ἐτ' ἐν δόμοις βρέτας, ἐφ' ᾧ πεπλεύκαμεν.

Russia is only a temporary stop for Orestes and Pylades, who intend ultimately to return with the statue to Greece. Then and not before will their voyage be completed. The Euripidean perfect is once again in Sophocles at *Phil.* 404, where Philoctetes, addressing the sailors, uses *πεπλεύκατε* of their incompleting voyage. They have temporarily beached at Lemnos and not yet reached what the speaker believes to be their ultimate goal, Skyros. Finally in a satyr-play, Eur. *Cyclops* 18, the perfect is used of the satyrs, whose destination was to find Bacchus. They had been shipwrecked in Sicily and must move on.

I should, therefore, translate Soph. *Phil.* 72–73: “You have arrived here by ship under oath to no man. You were not forced, nor were you a member of the first expedition.”¹⁹ The perfect cannot refer, as Jebb would have it, to an earlier completed voyage to Troy, and may not be adduced as evidence that Neoptolemos had earlier visited Troy. The verb must refer to a journey just completed, either (1) Troy to Lemnos or (2) Skyros to Lemnos. *ἔνορκος* (72) rules out the first alternative. No oath would be required for a sail from Troy to Lemnos. For a first voyage to Troy (with a stop on the way at Lemnos) the denial of the oath makes perfect sense. While the other heroes shared in the oath of Tyndareus when they journeyed from home to

¹⁷ See A. M. Dale, *Euripides, Helen* (Oxford 1967) 101.

¹⁸ P. Rau, *Paratragodia* (*Zetemata* 45, Munich 1967) 59–60, and Richard Kannicht, *Euripides, Helena* II (Heidelberg 1969) 136–37, detect only the parody of an Ionism. The perfect sounded equally exotic.

¹⁹ See P. Masqueray, *Sophocle II*² (Paris 1942) 81: “Tu as fait voile ici . . .”; A. Dain and P. Mazon, *Sophocle III* (Paris 1960) 12: “Tu as pris la mer . . .” T. B. L. Webster, *Sophocles, Philoctetes* (Cambridge 1970) 74, has the considerable merit among English critics of seeking perfect force, but mistranslates: “You are now a member of the expedition . . .” (henceforth WEBSTER, *Phil.*).

Troy, Neoptolemos in his journey from home to Troy has not and, therefore, can better persuade Philoctetes.

One must establish that Neoptolemos has not yet been to Troy in order to understand the ‘Messenger Speech’ at verses 343–90. The critical problem of these lines has always been, how much are we to believe? A blatant lie begins the speech. Odysseus, accompanied not by Diomedes but by Phoenix (344), earlier fetched Neoptolemos to Troy. The detail signals a bogus embassy. Neoptolemos has devised a pathetic touch to win the sympathy and trust of the credulous Philoctetes. In the *Odyssey* (11.508) and *Ilias Parva*, Odysseus alone fetched Neoptolemos. In Quintus Smyrnaeus (6.64ff) Diomedes accompanies him. Here first we have Phoenix.²⁰ οὐ γὰρ εἰδόμην (351), in spite of vigorous whitewashing,²¹ is a second lie. Neoptolemos is not ten years old. His assertion that he is now sailing home (382–84), in spite of the sophistries of Adams,²² is denied by the action of the prologue. This is the third certain lie. The more astute critics have regularly impugned Neoptolemos’ report (363–81) that the Atreidai defrauded him of his arms at Troy.²³ Only one detail survives that no critic has dared deny. Neoptolemos saw his father’s corpse at Troy and wept for him (359–360). He must, therefore, already have been at Troy.

The orthodox nineteenth century view, bequeathed by Wilamowitz and Jebb,²⁴ considered part of the speech “true” (namely that Odysseus and Phoenix had earlier fetched Neoptolemos to Troy,

²⁰ See J. G. Frazer, *Apollodorus, The Library* II (Cambridge/London 1946) 224 n.3 *ad* Apollod. 5.11, who follows Soph. *Phil.* 344, and R. Pfeiffer, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. W. Bühler (Munich 1960) 89ff. I am not convinced by A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* II (Cambridge 1917) 192, K. Ziegler, *RE* 16 (1935) 2443.14ff, S. L. Radt, *Pindars zweiter und sechster Paian* (Amsterdam 1958) 154 n.1, and Pfeiffer, *loc.cit.*, that Phoenix had already shared in the embassy of Soph. *Skyrioi*. The decisive fr.557 P. might easily have been spoken by Neoptolemos to Lykomedes. The alternative need not be, as Pearson *ad loc.* would have it, that Diomedes addresses Lykomedes.

²¹ The most influential have been Jebb *ad* Soph. *Phil.* 351 and Campbell *ad* Soph. *Phil.* 351: see however Campbell p.363.

²² See S. M. Adams, *Sophocles the Playwright* (*Phoenix* Suppl. III, Toronto 1957) 143.

²³ See lately Knox, *Temper* 128, 191.

²⁴ See Jebb, *Phil.* p. xx: “Phoenix and Odysseus had gone to Scyros, and had brought the young Neoptolemus thence to Troy; where his father’s armour was duly given to him. (In his false story to Philoctetes, he represents the Atreidae as having defrauded him of it.)”; and Wilamowitz, *GrTr* IV.19: “Dann kommt Pyrrhos mit der Lüge heraus, die ihm Odysseus angegeben hatte, wobei aber zu bemerken ist, wie er seine Abholung aus Skyros und sein erstes Auftreten im Griechenlager ganz wahrheitsgemäss erzählt, darunter auch manches hier Entbehrliche, das ihm unsere Sympathie gewinnt.”

where he mourned his father) and part “a lie” (namely that the Atreidai had defrauded him of his father’s arms and that he had retired from Troy). S. M. Adams, dissatisfied with such a compromise (indeed in production it is impractical to hope that an audience could discern “the truths” from “the lies”), boldly argued in 1957 that throughout the whole speech Neoptolemos “is stating what we know to be fact . . . he is telling nothing but the truth.”²⁵ B. M. W. Knox²⁶ has easily refuted Adams. We have returned to an enlightened Jebbism.

The solution rather is that the entire speech from start to finish is one lie. Neoptolemos has not yet been to Troy. Odysseus instructed him (60) to tell Philoctetes that the Atreidai had earlier summoned him there. Phoenix never visited Skyros. As a child he had seen his father. He had not retired from Troy. The Atreidai had not deprived him of his father’s arms. He had not seen his father’s corpse nor shared in his father’s funeral. The choral oath therefore (391–402) is no perjury. The sailors refer to “the original award of the arms to Odysseus,”²⁷ when presumably the Atreidai had slandered Neoptolemos (τόνδ’ 396). Neoptolemos still does not possess the arms. He will receive them upon his arrival in Troy. Thus we have a second “bogus Messenger Speech” in *Philoctetes* to match the famous tale of Orestes’ death in a chariot-race at Soph. *El.* 681–763.

3. *Philoctetes* 445 is a monument to the persistence of critics who swallow camels. Neoptolemos-idolatry has reached the point that when the boy declares Thersites still to be alive in opposition to the otherwise unanimous tradition that Achilles slew him, the most learned critics believe him or even postulate an otherwise unknown source.²⁸ Not until 1967 did an acute student of the epic cycle, G. L. Huxley, state the simple truth, that in fact Neoptolemos here lies. His brief note²⁹ is one of the most important contributions to modern

²⁵ See S. M. Adams, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.22) 142.

²⁶ See Knox, *Temper* p.191 nn. 29 and 30.

²⁷ Thus rightly Knox, *Temper* p.192 n.33. Knox’s further point that “The chorus, who are Scyrian subjects of Neoptolemos (139ff) cannot have been present as they claim, for this happened long before Neoptolemos was called from Skyros,” is unnecessary. The chorus were earlier at Troy as subjects of Achilles. After his death they witnessed the award of their late king’s arms and heard the arguments to keep them from his son. They have sailed to Skyros with Odysseus and are now on the return voyage under the command of their new king, Neoptolemos.

²⁸ See e.g., Jebb on Soph. *Phil.* 442; Joh. Schmidt, *LexMyth* 5 (Leipzig 1916–24; repr. Hildesheim 1965) 667.58ff; von Blumenthal, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 227 (Sophocles changed the saga to placate the Athenian mobs!).

²⁹ See G. Huxley, “Thersites in Sophokles, *Philoctetes* 445,” *GRBS* 8 (1967) 33–34.

criticism of the play. *Difficile est longum subito deponere errorem*. In 1968 Ed. Fraenkel still called Neoptolemos' fib "una volgarizzazione posteriore."³⁰ In 1970 T. B. L. Webster held that Sophocles was denying the *Aethiopsis* "to vindicate Achilles' character."³¹ This will not do. Huxley proved that Neoptolemos is willing to lie gratuitously when he thinks that the lie will profit his cause.

4. A. J. A. Waldock,³² with his acute sense for the dramatic and healthy independence from philological presuppositions, vigorously drew modern English critical attention to *Phil.* 1054–80. The problem briefly is, in Waldock's words,³³ that "The bow is now in the possession of the conspirators, and Philoctetes himself has been bound.³⁴ Then suddenly Odysseus gives orders to release him." The crucial verses are 1054–55. Jebb³⁵ in despair suggested: "Odysseus is resigned to Ph. carrying his point by staying in Lemnos." Whitman's solution was temporary amnesia.³⁶ But Odysseus (981–83) knows the oracle. Helenus stipulated that bow and Philoctetes are required. Waldock, in fact independently reviving an earlier view,³⁷ argued:³⁸ "what

³⁰ See D. Alecu, A. C. Cassio, *et al.*, *Seminario di Eduard Fraenkel sul Filottete di Sofocle* (Rome 1969) 20 ad 445ff (henceforth: FRAENKEL, *Phil.*).

³¹ See Webster, *Phil.* p.99 ad 442.

³² A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951) 211–14 (henceforth cited: WALDOCK). ³³ See Waldock 211–12.

³⁴ In this detail Waldock is mistaken; *cf. ibid.* 213, "the binding of Philoctetes"; Whitman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 176, "Philoctetes is left alone in chains"; *ibid.* 184, "Manacled"; *id.* *The Religious Humanism of Sophocles* (Diss. Harvard 1947) 286, "He is seized and manacled." The protagonist does not perform the remainder of the action in chains he never mentions. He is simply seized and later (1054) released: see Jebb on *Phil.* 1004f; I. M. Linforth, "Philoctetes, the Play and the Man," *UCPCP* 15 (1956) 134 (henceforth cited: LINFORTH, *UCPCP*); Knox, *Temper* 192 n.40; and Peter Arnott, *Greek Scenic Conventions in the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1962) 26–27. For the action Anna Spitzbarth, *Untersuchungen zur Spieltechnik der griechischen Tragödie* (Zürich 1946) 36, compares OT 1154 and for the hindering of a possible suicide Eur. *Tro.* 1285. Karl Reinhardt, *Sophokles*³ (Frankfurt am Main 1947) 195, well observes, "Denn mehr noch als durch körperliche Fesseln steht jetzt der Befreite durch den eignen Groll und Widerstreit gefesselt."

³⁵ See Jebb on Soph. *Phil.* 1052f: contrast p. xxvii, ". . . in 1055 ff., Odysseus must be conceived as merely using a last threat, which, he hopes, may cause Philoctetes to yield." The contradiction points Jebb's confusion.

³⁶ See Whitman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 182: "Far from remembering that Philoctetes must come of his own free will, he even thinks the man himself is unnecessary if only the bow be secured."

³⁷ The hint is in Jebb (*supra* n.35), who probably drew on F. W. Schneidewin/A. Nauck/L. Radermacher, *Sophokles Philoktetes*¹¹ (Berlin 1911) on Soph. *Phil.* 1059: "Od. sucht den Philoktetes zu schrecken, obwohl er weiss, dass es auf dessen Person ebensosehr wie auf den Bogen ankommt." See further Kitto, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 98: "Odysseus must be bluffing at 1055." ³⁸ See Waldock 213.

Odysseus is supposed to be doing is enticing Philoctetes by a bait.” The suggestions (1056–59) that Teucer or Odysseus himself can as well do the job,³⁹ once they have the magic bow, contradict Helenus. Odysseus knows this. They are intended provocations. Odysseus knows too that Philoctetes’ ‘tragic flaw’ is his loneliness, the *νόκος-νηκος* motif.⁴⁰ This ‘bait’ provides the explanation for the lame excuse that Neoptolemos gives his men to remain in the theater.⁴¹ I should translate 1074–80 as follows. Neoptolemos: “I shall be told by this fellow [*with a gesture to Odysseus*] that I am too soft-hearted.⁴² But even so, stay here, if he [*with a gesture to Philoctetes*] wants it, until the sailors have everything shipshape and our prayers are done. Perhaps even he’ll grow a bit smarter towards us. So let us two be off. And you [*to the chorus*—when we send orders—come right away.”

The fifteen choreuts are the sailors. We know as well the sailor who played ‘the false merchant’, his companion, and two others who are guarding the ships (542–43). This already yields a crew of nineteen plus the two officers. All would naturally prepare the ship and share in parting prayers (Thuc. 6.32). Further, if Odysseus’ suggestion that he or Teucer might draw the bow were an honest one, there would be no need to coax the intractable and unpleasant Philoctetes or to linger until he might change his mind. Either there is a contradiction within twenty lines and Sophocles is a slipshod writer; or, as Waldock suggested with Reinhardt and Kitto,⁴³ “It is almost as if Neoptolemos has ‘caught on’—has detected Odysseus’ manoeuvre.” Waldock is hesi-

³⁹ See Schneidewin-Nauck-Radermacher on Soph. *Phil.* 1061f: “Zuletzt gibt Od. dem Phil. zu bedenken, dass er durch seine Weigerung dem verhasstesten Feinde die Ehre gönne, die ihm selbst bestimmt gewesen.”

⁴⁰ See Andreas Spira, *Untersuchungen zum Deus ex Machina bei Sophokles und Euripides* (Kallmünz/Opf. 1960) 17: “*νόκος-νηκος* bleibt das beherrschende Motiv: Qual der Krankheit—Qual der Einsamkeit und Heimatferne.”

⁴¹ Error abounds among the critics. Linforth, *UCPCP* 136, misses the whole point: “Neoptolemos, out of kindness to Philoctetes, even though Odysseus may not approve, tells his men to remain until the ship is ready to sail.” Whitman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 176, embraces the opposite extreme: “Odysseus . . . drags Neoptolemos away, saying the bow is all they need.” He has missed Odysseus’ bluff and Neoptolemos’ collusion. R. C. Flickinger, *The Greek Theater and its Drama*⁴ (Chicago 1936; repr. 1960) 158, appeals to the convention that forbade the chorus to leave the orchestra until the play was done in spite of whatever embarrassment this might involve.

⁴² “weichherzig und weibisch” gloss Schneidewin-Nauck-Radermacher on Soph. *Phil.* 1074 and compare *Aj.* 580.

⁴³ See Waldock 213; Reinhardt, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.34) 196: “Die beiden rechnen wohl mit einer schnellen Umkehr des jetzt ganz Verlassnen, Preisgegebenen”; and Kitto, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 124: “Neoptolemos knows, and we know, that it is bluff.”

tant⁴⁴ largely because of preconceived notions about the sterling character of Neoptolemos. If we discard any idea that Neoptolemos' alleged Achillean heritage is already asserting itself, his complicity becomes quite natural. He is continuing his earlier behaviour, and at the time of his exit at verse 1080 is already accomplice in an elaborate ruse. The subsequent panic of Philoctetes⁴⁵ is proof of Odysseus' success. This interpretation, which I believe to be the correct one, leads to a crucial argument, the staging of *Phil.* 1222–60.

5. First a brief capitulation of the action that precedes the scene. At 1080 *exeunt* Odysseus and Neoptolemos, the latter with the bow, down the left *parodos* toward the ship. Philoctetes is left unarmed, ostensibly to perish of slow starvation. In a lengthy *kommos* (1081–1215), encouraged by the chorus, he laments his plight and swallows Odysseus' bait. The chorus remind Philoctetes that he has only himself to blame,⁴⁶ and skilfully as before play into the hands of their officers.⁴⁷ Philoctetes blames the treacherous Odysseus (1111ff) but the chorus counter, rather futilely, that all this was his fate.⁴⁸ Philoctetes' further vilification of Odysseus (1121ff) is countered by the argument, familiar from Euripides (*Hec.* 220; cf. *Sen. Tro.* 524ff), that Odysseus was simply following orders (*εἰς ἀπὸ πολλῶν* 1143). They urge Philoctetes again to reconsider (1162ff). To go on to Troy is still abhorrent, and he orders them away (1177). They sense a cue and, adopting the trick of their master, appear glad to withdraw (*ἴωμεν, ἴωμεν* 1180). Philoctetes is torn and begs them repeatedly to stay (1181ff), although he cannot bring himself to join them (1197). He decides finally on suicide (1207f)⁴⁹ and exits into his cave in despair at 1217 with the line *ἔτ' οὐδέν ἐμι*. This we know, for at 1263 he is within the cave. The chorus at the close of the *kommos* in suspected lines (1218–21)⁵⁰ announce the entrance of Odysseus and Neoptolemos. This begins the crucial scene.

⁴⁴ See Waldoek 214: “. . . it is hard to feel confidence in the reading.”

⁴⁵ See Waldoek, *ibid.*: “the panic of Philoctetes is no fancy.”

⁴⁶ *κατηξιῶσας* (1095) means ‘you thought it right’ and not ‘decreed’ as Jebb and *LSJ* after Ellendt's *decrevisti*: see Fraenkel, *Agamemnon*, II.288. For the choral sentiment in an earlier *kommos* see *Ant.* 853, 875.

⁴⁷ See Kitto, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 124: “the chorus, left behind for the purpose of persuading him, if they can.”

⁴⁸ *πότμος* (1116) is quasi-predicative: see Jebb on *Phil.* 1116ff, and Groeneboom on *Aesch. Pers.* 750, followed by Rose and Broadhead.

⁴⁹ See von Blumenthal, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 232: “die Todbereitschaft wird zur Todessehnsucht.”

⁵⁰ O. Taplin, *GRBS* 12 (1971) 39–43, provides good reasons to excise them and suggests that they may have replaced a choral ode.

Demosthenes learned that the meaning of speeches in Greek dramas depends on their delivery (Plut. *Dem.* 7.2). The meaning of scenes, too, depends on their staging. Our texts are only scripts, and scripts are not a constant. I wish to argue that what we may call (1270 *μεταγνώναι*) 'Neoptolemos' Repentance Scene' (*Phil.* 1222–60) is a ruse, the continuation of the provocations and staged exits of 1054–80. There has been no change of heart off-stage. Neoptolemos has exited an accomplice. He re-enters still an accomplice. He restores the bow to Philoctetes because he knows—like Odysseus—that the bow alone is not enough and that he must win the allegiance of Philoctetes before he can convince him to cooperate. The audience must be made aware that all is pretense; but Philoctetes must be deceived. The scene, therefore, must be overplayed in the manner of comic acting,⁵¹ whose aim is *Verfremdungseffekt* rather than involvement. Can we detect comic devices in the 'Repentance Scene' or devices from the drama of intrigue? And are there any other clues that might convince us not to take everything seriously?

At the very beginning (1222) a comic note is struck with the dual entrance of two quarreling actors. Neoptolemos strides down the left *parodos* into the orchestra, bow in hand, pursued by a protesting, gesticulating Odysseus. The conversation is meant to have begun off-stage. The device is rare indeed in tragedy⁵² but common in comedy.⁵³ The audience would be alerted from the start. The quarrel is couched in 'run-on' lines typical of the spirited dialogue of comedy.⁵⁴ And the quarrel concerns the possession of a prop, the bow.⁵⁵ It could almost be about a cook's ladle. Like a *servus intricans*,

⁵¹ For this distinction between tragic and comic playing see R. Morrell, "The Psychology of Tragic Pleasure," *Essays in Criticism* 6 (1956) 22–37, and for the comic in tragedy see A. Rearden, "A Study of Humor in Greek Tragedy," *University of California Chronicle* 16 (1914) 30–60, and B. M. W. Knox, *The Rarer Action* (New Brunswick 1971) 68–96.

⁵² For the entrance of quarreling actors cf. Eur. *IA* 303ff and Sen. *Tro.* 203. At Eur. *Hipp.* 601ff actors enter continuing a conversation begun indoors. See W. Steidle, *Philologus* 94 (1941) 279 n.41.

⁵³ See Taplin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.50), 40 with n.33.

⁵⁴ See Jebb on *Phil.* 1226. Christ-Schmid, *GGL* I.2.405, notice: "Da kommt Neoptolemos vom Hafen zurück in heftigem stichomythischem Wortwechsel mit Odysseus." For stichomythic re-entry in tragedy Taplin (*supra* n.50) 40 n.31, compares Soph. *Phil.* 730, Eur. *IT* 67, Rh. 565, *Alexandros* fr.23 Snell.

⁵⁵ J. Dingel, *Das Requisit in der griechischen Tragödie* (Diss. Tübingen 1967) 225, rightly notes that the fact that Neoptolemos re-enters with the bow and not Odysseus informs the audience "dass Philoktets Sache noch nicht endgültig entschieden ist . . ."

Odysseus anticipates his worst fear (1233), “You don’t intend to give it back?,” which is immediately confirmed. Notice the large number of questions that Odysseus rapidly asks. There are eleven of them.⁵⁶ The effect is that Neoptolemos has been rehearsed and is being prompted.

The whole scene is a play within a play, intended to deceive a third character. An exact parallel is the deceiving of Theoklymenos by Helen and Menelaos (Eur. *Hel.* 1186ff), a scene produced three years earlier, or the false funeral at *Aspis* 343ff. At 1252 the pair are about to come to blows. Odysseus’ hand is on his swordhilt (1254–55). Neoptolemos, however, is prepared to fight (1255–56); and Odysseus concludes that it is more prudent to withdraw. He exits with a threat (1257–58):

καίτοι σ’ ἔάσω· τῷ δὲ κύμπαντι στρατῷ
λέξω τάδ’ ἐλθών, ὅς σε τιμωρήσεται.

Two questions reward attention: would an audience believe this threat? and does Odysseus in fact exit at 1258? The answer to the first involves the problem of the number of ships. Jebb, who interprets the ‘Repentance Scene’ at face value, makes the necessary deduction:⁵⁷ “Odysseus comes in one ship, and Neoptolemos in another. Each chief has his own men. Hence Odysseus can threaten to sail at once, leaving Neoptolemos behind, and denounce him to the Greek army (1257f).” Not only must he postulate a second ship and crew; he is involved in a philological anomaly:⁵⁸ “Where the singular *ναῦς* is used, with or without the definite article, it refers to the ship of Neoptolemos.” Campbell would agree.⁵⁹ This will not do. Wilamowitz⁶⁰ was more honest. He saw, as Dio Chrysostom had before him,⁶¹ that the text allows only one ship, and had the courage, at whatever the cost, to be

⁵⁶ See Soph. *Phil.* 1221–22, 1225, 1227, 1229 (two), 1231, 1233 (two), 1235, 1237 (two). I owe this observation to J. S. Mautner.

⁵⁷ See Jebb *Phil.* p. xx n.1.

⁵⁸ See Jebb, *ibid.*, who cites Soph. *Phil.* 125, 461, 527, 881, 1076, 1180. He is saying that there are two ships, although a plural is never used to refer to them.

⁵⁹ See Lewis Campbell, *Paralipomena Sophoclea: Supplementary Notes on the Text and Interpretation of Sophocles* (London 1907; repr. Hildesheim 1969) 195: “It is clearly assumed, unless the point is ignored as too external, that Odysseus and Neoptolemos are in command of separate ships.”

⁶⁰ See Wilamowitz, *GrTr* IV.29, n.1.

⁶¹ See Dio Chrys. 52.15: ἐν τῇ νῆϊ, sc. one ship only for Odysseus and Neoptolemos. The address to Odysseus in the Aeschylean parodos of Accius, *Philoctetes* (523 Ribbeck), *Achiuis classibus ductor*, does not mean that a fleet has beached at Lemnos.

consistent. When Neoptolemos decides at 1402ff to sail with Philoctetes to Malis, he intends, declared Wilamowitz, to abandon Odysseus on the shore. Only the fortunate intervention of Herakles avoids this. The way to cut this Gordian knot is to see that Odysseus' threat is not meant seriously. There is only one ship with only one crew, but Odysseus has no idea of sailing off in it. His threat is only intended to convince Philoctetes that he is enraged with Neoptolemos.

At 1258 Jebb writes "Exit Odysseus." If Odysseus' threat is meant seriously, Odysseus must exit "to his ship." This would mean that Odysseus leaves the orchestra and stalks down the left parodos, *sc.* not an exit into the *scaenae frons*. But at the very moment that Neoptolemos returns the bow to Philoctetes (1291–92), Odysseus re-enters *exactly on cue*. A moment's consideration of the theater building will convince one that "a legitimate exit" makes "the re-entry on cue" impossible. Odysseus cannot dash the length of the parodos and across the orchestra—over thirty meters—in time to make the re-entrance effective. Patin,⁶² Linforth,⁶³ and most recently Webster⁶⁴ have seen the answer. The latter observes of Odysseus' "exit" at 1257: "he stays below the cave to see what will happen." Webster's familiarity with the ancient theater was behind his improvement of Jebb. His weakness is that, because he still takes Neoptolemos' repentance seriously, he can provide no convincing motivation for Odysseus' lingering in the orchestra. A good one exists. The whole 'Repentance Scene' is a fraud, staged to deceive Philoctetes. The audience watch the intriguing Odysseus eavesdropping,⁶⁵ a tried comic device,⁶⁶ already used long ago by Sophocles in *Ajax*.⁶⁷ From this the audience will deduce that Neoptolemos has not repented. Kirkwood⁶⁸ noted that Neoptolemos does not answer the impassioned words of Odysseus at 1293–94 and argued that the breach between them was complete. Quite the contrary. They are working closely together and must be

⁶² See Patin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 122: "Mais il n'est pas évident qu'il quitte maintenant la scène pour y reparaitre quelques moments après . . ."

⁶³ See Linforth, *UCPCP* 140.

⁶⁴ See Webster on Soph. *Phil.* 1257.

⁶⁵ See Linforth, *UCPCP* 140: "He does not, however, disappear from the sight of the audience."

⁶⁶ For the device in tragedy and comedy see Ed. Fraenkel, *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes* (Rome 1962) 22–26.

⁶⁷ See Soph. *Aj.* 91ff, and for the staging my note at *CP* 60 (1965) 114–16.

⁶⁸ See G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (*Cornell Stud.* 31, Ithaca 1958) 145–46.

quiet in order to learn Philoctetes' crucial reaction to their trick. They have not to wait long. Philoctetes draws his bow and tries to murder Odysseus,⁶⁹ who—the last comic device—turns his back and runs for his life,⁷⁰ like the Phrygian eunuch at Eur. *Or.* 1526.

An elaborate trick, a play within a play, intended to deceive a character who never hears a word. Does this rule out the ruse? Surely not. When the two actors enter quarreling they cannot know that the protagonist has withdrawn. When they do not see him, they cannot know that he does not hear them. Sophocles makes this particularly clear by having the chorus address Philoctetes at 1218–20⁷¹ after he has exited and in fact does not hear them.⁷² Odysseus earlier (11, 14, 22, 29) feared that while in the orchestra he might be heard by Philoctetes in the cave. Sophocles chose to remove the victim from the dialogue. The artificiality of a contrived three actor scene would detract from the concentrated development of the intrigue. How many spirited three actor trialogues do we have? Rather *agones*. Compare the silence of Menelaos while Helen deceives the king (Eur. *Hel.* 1186–1251).

6. After the hurried final exit of Odysseus at 1299⁷³ (the actor must return as Herakles after a full costume and mask change at 1409), Neoptolemos assures himself (1308ff) that he has acquired the good will of Philoctetes. He then tries again (1314–47) to persuade the hero, reminding him of the hopelessness of his plight and the glory that awaits them both this very summer, if Philoctetes will but come willingly (*ἐκὼν* 1332) to Troy. Neoptolemos can argue convincingly for expediency. Philoctetes in his reply, although uneasy (1348–72), is still resolved. Pohlenz⁷⁴ well drew attention to the point that Neop-

⁶⁹ The situation derives from Euripides (Dio Chrys. 59.7): see Schneidewin/Nauck/Radermacher on Soph. *Phil.* 1300.

⁷⁰ For the device in comedy see, e.g., Ar. *Aves* 859–1057, where Peisthetairos drives a series of small part characters off the stage. Taplin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.50) 37, observes that the device of a brief appearance, as Odysseus' here, is a rarity in tragedy and would compare Antigone's twelve verses at Eur. *Phoen.* 1270–82 and Agamemnon's five at *IA* 1621–26, if the latter passage be authentic.

⁷¹ If the verses are indeed Sophoclean: see n.50 *supra*.

⁷² See Linforth, *UCPCP* 139: "These words are addressed to Philoctetes, but there is no indication that he hears them."

⁷³ I should not hesitate to have Odysseus begin his exit at 1299. There is no need to delay until 1302 with Wilamowitz (*GrTr* IV.102), 1304 with Jebb (p.201), or 1307 with Dain-Mazon (*Sophocle* III.59A).

⁷⁴ See Max Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie I*² (Göttingen 1954) 331, and similarly Linforth, *UCPCP* 142.

toleamos has won: “Da war das Nein leicht. Aber jetzt bestürmt der noch einmal sein Herz. Achills Sohn stehen keine zarten Worte an.” Philoctetes could not bear to consult with those who had wronged him.⁷⁵ He detects also an embarrassing inconsistency in Neoptolemos’ behaviour. After—by his own admission—being cheated of his father’s arms by Odysseus and the Atreidai, can he now agree to help their cause (1362ff)? The question is difficult to resolve in terms that Philoctetes could approve.⁷⁶ Again in a final stichomythy Neoptolemos avoids ethics to concentrate on healing the injured foot, a friend who speaks in friendship (1385). Again refusal (1392). Neoptolemos pretends to conclude that the easiest course is to depart and leave Philoctetes to live on as he has been for almost ten years *ἄνευ σωτηρίας* (1396). He makes no suggestion of conveyance to Malis. Philoctetes then reminds the boy of an earlier pledge at 813 and requests to be brought home. Neoptolemos at 1402 immediately agrees, *εἰ δοκεῖ, στείχωμεν*, and the change to trochaic tetrameters marks the beginning of their movement from the stage. The change of heart is as unexpected as Odysseus’ had been at 1054–55 and as convincing.⁷⁷ The ancient scholiast⁷⁸ on the lemma *στείχωμεν* reads: *ἐπὶ τὴν πατρίδα· ἀπατᾶ δὲ καὶ θέλει ἄξαι εἰς τὴν Τροίαν*. The conclusion is unavoidable. Indisputable evidence exists to prove that the notion of Neoptolemos Dolios is ancient.⁷⁹ Neoptolemos’ last, desperate trick is to pretend to agree.

This is the case for Neoptolemos Dolios in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, so far as can be argued from the text itself.⁸⁰ A more general point ought

⁷⁵ *κύκλοι* at 1354 are certainly ‘eyes’. To the parallels adduced by the commentators I should add Pl. *Rep.* 4.440A.

⁷⁶ Again an Euripidean situation. Neoptolemos’ proposed dilemma reflects the predicament of Odysseus in the second episode of Eur. *Philoctetes*, where, although alleging himself a victim of the Greeks at Troy, Odysseus must before Philoctetes urge their cause against Paris: see Laviosa, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 58 pl. xxv. Paris in the Florentine urn there illustrated is deprived of his crucial cap, but an undamaged duplicate of Volterra (no.332) makes the identification certain.

⁷⁷ See Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 311: “Als Neoptolemos . . . plötzlich fügt mit den Worten *εἰ δοκεῖ στείχωμεν*, da muss der antike Zuschauer völlig überrascht gewesen sein, denn was er hier vor Augen sieht, ist eine Unmöglichkeit.”

⁷⁸ On Soph. *Phil.* 1402 (393.3–4 Papageorgius). A. E. Raubitschek first drew my attention to this remarkable and neglected scholium.

⁷⁹ Contrarily Dio Chrys. (52.17) believed Neoptolemos; but he read the play (52.1) and did not see it performed.

⁸⁰ One passage remains that deserves elucidation. After his dreadful fit (730ff), Philoctetes (821ff) falls into a deep slumber. A *kommos* (827–64), replacing the second stasimon,

to be made. The Sophoclean Neoptolemos, as regularly interpreted, has become a glaring anomaly in the orthodox tradition of the hero and Troy. Elsewhere Neoptolemos was “an especially pitiless, blood-thirsty fighter,”⁸¹ a blasphemer and brutal murderer. G. Huxley calls Neoptolemos in the *Ilias Parva* “a merciless butcher.”⁸² Polygnotos in his *Iliupersis* at the Treasury of the Knidians in Delphi painted Neoptolemos alone of the Greeks still slaughtering the foe (Paus. 10.27.1). His three most famous deeds were the murder of the aged Priam at the altar of Zeus Herkeios,⁸³ the execution of Polyxena,⁸⁴ and the savage killing of the child, Astyanax.⁸⁵ In Euripides’ *Hecuba*, *Troades* and *Andromache*, not to speak of Pindar, *Paian* 6,⁸⁶ he is a thorough villain who commits atrocities without a twinge of conscience. At Eur. *Andr.* 1127ff he is lynched by a crowd of enraged Delphians. In Sophocles alone we have: “das Bild des vornehmen, lauterer jungen Helden, der keiner Falschheit fähig ist, . . . das Idealbild des körperlich und seelisch gleich wohlgeratenen, reinen, edlen und tüchtigen jungen Mannes, in dem diese Zeit, wie wir ja nicht nur aus Platon wissen, das Höchste, Schönste und Begeisterndste sah, das es auf der Welt gibt.”⁸⁷ There is no need but preconceived opinion for this anomaly. In Sophocles too Neoptolemos is the young opportunist, attrac-

indicates the passage of time, and at 865 Philoctetes begins to stir. Soon, while still reclining, he expresses his grateful thanks (867–81) to Neoptolemos and the sailors. Neoptolemos helps him to his feet (893–94). After several steps, he stops (so Dain-Mazon, *Sophocle* III. 42A); and at 895 cries out, *παπαί· τί δήτ’ ἄκνυ δρωίμ’ ἐγὼ τοῦνθένδε γε*; a *cri de coeur* and no simulation. Does this herald the alleged change of heart? Thus most recently W. Steidle, “Studien zum Antiken Drama,” *Studia et Testimonia Antiqua* 4 (Munich 1968) 174ff. Neoptolemos falters certainly. He is callow. He has not been to Troy. He has never witnessed intense physical pain. The conspicuous torment of Philoctetes unnerves the boy. His response is emotional, a shock that precludes a change of attitude. But “a gut reaction” is not a reasoned change of mind. Neoptolemos soon recovers himself. He will not return the bow (925–6), although pity (965) still makes him hesitant. The entrance of Odysseus (974) restores his confidence. When he next speaks (1074), he is the accomplice who will never falter again.

⁸¹ Thus K. Ziegler, *RE* 16 (1935) 2460.37–38.

⁸² See Huxley, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 156.

⁸³ Ziegler, *RE* 16 (1935) 2445.52ff.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 2446.53ff.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 2446.39ff.

⁸⁶ See Radt, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.20) 170.

⁸⁷ Thus Ziegler, *RE* 16 (1935) 2460.63ff. Modern imitations of Sophocles’ play have conspired with misdirected criticism to turn Neoptolemos into Parzifal: see K. Heinemann, *Die tragischen Gestalten der Griechen in der Weltliteratur* II (Leipzig 1920; repr. Darmstadt 1968) 104ff.

tive, clever, a realist through and through, like Alcibiades, unencumbered by conscience.⁸⁸

A word is due Herakles, who has been more discussed than he deserves.⁸⁹ Clearly my interpretation requires that Herakles appear to instruct Philoctetes, who thinks that he is going home when he is not, rather than Neoptolemos, who has no intention of delivering Philoctetes to his father in Malis. The deceptions must all be untangled and details made clear for characters and for audience.⁹⁰ A divinity may have ended Aeschylus' *Philoctetes*.⁹¹ Athene is needed for the end of Euripides' *Philoctetes*.⁹² The audience of a *Philoctetes*-tragedy would expect a god. Sophocles had used one before.⁹³ The surprise is only that Herakles has replaced Athene.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Refined critics have alleged an erotic theme. Von Blumenthal, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 216–18, reads Platonic dialogues into the play. J. T. Sheppard, *Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1911) 119, describes “his love for the youth whom he regards as his deliverer.” What evidence exists? One can assert Greek proclivities: see G. Devereux, “Greek Pseudo-Homosexuality,” *SymbOsl* 42 (1967) 69–92. At 434 Philoctetes calls Patroklos Achilles' *τὰ φίλτατα*, a word from the *sermo amatorius*: see Fraenkel *ad loc.*, who compares Ar. *Ach.* 1093, and *id.*, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.66) 29ff. We know that elsewhere Sophocles treated homosexual themes, e.g., *Troilus*, *Achilles' Lovers*. For Euripidean examples see A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen* (Göttingen 1956) 169. A famous myth about desertion on an island contained a clearly erotic motif. Euripides had dramatised Theseus' desertion of Ariadne: see T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 107. In any case, Sophocles is not showing Neoptolemos falling in love with Philoctetes, as von Blumenthal, the George pupil, would imply. Neoptolemos is the deceiving beloved, a type known to philologists from Plato and the epigrams.

⁸⁹ See lately Spira, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.40) 12–32, and David B. Robinson, *CQ* 63 (1969) 53ff. I endorse Kitto, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 105: “Nowhere in the whole of Sophocles is there a speech less impressive than this one which he wrote for Heracles.”

⁹⁰ *καρτερητύτων θ' ὄδον ἦν τεύλλει* (1416) does not mean that Herakles will prevent Philoctetes from going to Troy but simply “wait a moment.” *ὄδον* is noncommittal and may even refer only to the actors' stage-movement; cf. *Phil.* 993.

⁹¹ See GRBS 11 (1970) 172.

⁹² Odysseus begins the action disguised by Athene as a Nauplian youth. He must be revealed for Philoctetes to learn the truth: cf. Ar. *Ach.* 120 for stripping off a mask to reveal a disguised man. Athene would effect the metamorphosis by her *ῥάβδος* in person and not by remote control: see *Od.* 13.429ff, 16.172ff, 16.454ff.

⁹³ See Spira, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.40) 32 n.51, who lists *Syndeipnoi* (Thetis), *Epigono* (Apollo), *Tereus*, *Tyro* 1 and 2 (Poseidon); and E. Müller, “De Graecorum deorum partibus tragicis,” *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 8.3 (Giessen 1910) 52ff.

⁹⁴ The patron saint was not to be contaminated by collaboration with oligarchs. Soph. *Phil.* 134 is a fourth century (?) interpolation, a doublet to 133, inserted by an ignorant chauvinist, possibly to accord with Euripides' version. Against its authenticity Fraenkel *ad loc.* argues (1) the anomaly of invoking Athene Nike and Polias at once (he compares a simultaneous invocation of the virgins of Loreto and Pompei); (2) that Athene after Hermes

III. *Philoctetes and 409*

Thucydides VIII chronicles events of the immediate past. Modern historians have refined details: treason, revolution, murder and civil war. Euripides revived a classic document of the *Klassenkampf*, Aeschylus' *Septem contra Thebas*.⁹⁵ His *Phoenissae* appeared on the same program at the Dionysia of March 409, the first program after the successful counter-revolution.⁹⁶ Its themes are indisputably contemporary.⁹⁷ They influenced Sophocles and suggested to him *Oedipus Coloneus*.⁹⁸ Yet the play received only second prize; *Philoctetes* won first. Did Sophocles' play succeed because it ignored its time?⁹⁹ Or did Wilamowitz fail to detect the truth? One to one equations I find confining and unconvincing. *Philoctetes* is not Alcibiades¹⁰⁰ nor Odysseus Kleophon or Peisander¹⁰¹ nor Neoptolemos the younger Pericles.¹⁰² Rather one must seek for themes, issues, political commentary.

The use of *γενναῖος*, a class term (e.g., Ps.-Xen. *Ath Pol.* 1.2), is remarkable.¹⁰³ The word is rare in the early plays: never in *Antigone*; once in *Trachiniae* (308); twice each in *Ajax* (938, 1355), *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1469, 1510), and *Electra* (127, 287). All the more surprising to find

is an anticlimax; (3) the incongruity of invoking Athene of the City on a desert island; and (4) the padded ending (from 297).

⁹⁵ The Berliner Ensemble revived the play on 28 May 1969. It is no longer performed. Western critics would do well to ponder the matter.

⁹⁶ See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *apud* Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *DramTech* 317 n.1.

⁹⁷ For an exemplary discussion of the matter see J. de Romilly, "Phoenician Women of Euripides: Topicality in Greek Tragedy," *Bucknell Review* 15.3 (1967) 108–32.

⁹⁸ See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *apud* Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *DramTech* 318. The view is endorsed by J. Geffcken, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) I.1.200.

⁹⁹ Kitto, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 102, once called *Philoctetes* "an elegant study in character and dramatic intrigue." For Whitman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 172, "the *Philoctetes* seems a romantic holiday." These are the naïve judgements of Western scholars, for whom drama was never more than sophisticated amusement. See N. Pratt Jr, *AJP* 70 (1949) 275ff, for a depressing history of unhistorical interpretations.

¹⁰⁰ The view was first advanced by M. LeBeau in 1770: see Patin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 125–26; Jebb pp. xl–xli, who is skeptical; and M. H. Jameson, *CP* 51 (1956) 219.

¹⁰¹ For Odysseus and Kleophon see Whitman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 179; for Odysseus and Peisander see Jameson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.100) 225 n.20, who in fact argues against any specific identification.

¹⁰² For Neoptolemos as the younger Pericles see Jameson (*supra* n.100) 222ff.

¹⁰³ Recently H. C. Avery, *Hermes* 93 (1965) 289, drew attention to the epithet but missed what Sophocles was doing: "At last he has progressed from being a *γενναῖος* in Odysseus' perverted sense to becoming a *γενναῖος* in the true sense. Now Neoptolemos has found himself and his true nature." I think not.

six examples in *Philoctetes*. Is a pattern discernible? When Odysseus and Neoptolemos use the word privately, it means ‘dependable’¹⁰⁴ for a class or cause. The passage is verse 51: “No matter what you may be asked to do, you must be *γενναῖον* for that for which you have come.”¹⁰⁵ *γενναῖος* in Philoctetes’ mouth implies an absolute and archaic scale of aristocratic, even Kimonian, values and means ‘noble’.¹⁰⁶ See verses 475–76, which Jebb *ad loc.* translates: “To noble natures, what is (morally) shameful is hateful, and what is worthy appears glorious.” Before his paroxysm, Philoctetes calls upon the ‘noble’ Neoptolemos to destroy him as he himself had Herakles (*cf. Phil.* 799, 801). At verse 1068 Odysseus exhorts Neoptolemos in the presence of Philoctetes: “Come on you; don’t keep looking at him, *γενναῖος* as you are, lest you wreck our good luck.” The word is almost a watchword, a *κύνθημα*, a secret exchange between the two conspirators. Finally at 1402, just after Neoptolemos has appeared to agree to take him to Malis, Philoctetes naively replies: *ὦ γενναῖον εἰρηκῶς ἔπος*.¹⁰⁷ If sincere, Neoptolemos’ utterance would have been ‘noble’ in Philoctetes’ sense. Because a hoax, it is ‘dependable’ in Odysseus’ sense. The word illustrates a larger theme. The coup of 411 proved the rottenness of the Athenian upper class. The clubs were loyal to their class and self-interest. Old words gained new meanings.¹⁰⁸ Philoctetes is an anachronism, ten years on a deserted island. He is a ‘noble’ of a sort that has ceased to exist and, in a changed society, ineffectual and infected. He can never understand Odysseus and Neoptolemos. Nor can they evaluate the dimension of his morality.

Deceit is the *Leitmotiv* of *Philoctetes*. Sophocles’ success in depicting its intricacies has blinded his most astute critics and confirmed the predispositions of his more naïve ones. Odysseus and Neoptolemos pursue success through deceit: *Staatsraison* of a sort that Thrasy-machos would rightly approve. Philoctetes, a decent, unfortunate man, who believes in honor, loyalty, self-respect, again and again,

¹⁰⁴ For the word in this sense see Fraenkel, *Agamemnon* III.552.

¹⁰⁵ See Jebb *ad loc.* Knox, *Temper* 187 n.18, tries unsuccessfully to refute him.

¹⁰⁶ For this traditional meaning see Wilamowitz on Eur. *Her.* 872.

¹⁰⁷ At Ellendt-Genthe, *Lexicon Sophocleum*² (Berlin 1872) 142A59, for *Phil.* 1462 read *Phil.* 1402.

¹⁰⁸ For the deceitful language of the play see A. J. Podlecki, “The Power of the Word in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*,” *GRBS* 7 (1966) 233–50, and for the deceit of the oligarchs see Jameson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.100) 224 n.16.

until the moment Herakles appears, is the dupe of people whose duplicity he cannot even estimate, much less repel.

What had been Sophocles' share in the recent politics of the right?¹⁰⁹ Had he collaborated? Was he a *πρόβουλος* or not? The crucial text is Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1419a25ff. I should render: "Sophocles, when he was asked by Peisander if he, like the rest of the Probouloi, had approved the establishment of the 400, said 'Yes'. 'Well then', said Peisander, 'didn't this matter seem repellent to you?' Sophocles agreed. 'Therefore, you did what was repellent to you'. 'Yes', said he, 'there was nothing better to be done'." Paul Foucart in the fundamental study of the problem,¹¹⁰ states that this text reveals: (1) An Athenian called Sophocles was a member of the Board of the Probouloi, which voted the establishment of the Government of the 400. (2) He voted affirmatively not because he approved but *faute de mieux*. (3) Later he criticized or attacked the Revolutionary Government; and Peisander, leader of the oligarchs, tried to silence him by contrasting his words with his earlier vote.

Foucart demonstrates that in Aristotle, Sophocles *tout court* can only mean the poet. Indeed Aristotle can (*Pol.* 1.1260a29) even refer to Sophocles simply as *ὁ ποιητής*. If Aristotle were referring to some different Sophocles, he would have added a distinguishing patronymic or demotic. Foucart further argues that we have nothing inconsistent with what we otherwise know of the poet's life and politics.¹¹¹ The critics¹¹² who allege that Aristotle refers to an almost unknown con-

¹⁰⁹ Almost alone of critics, M. H. Jameson has posed the question: see *op.cit.* (*supra* n.100) 217–18 with notes.

¹¹⁰ See P. Foucart, "Le poète Sophocle et l'oligarchie des Quatre Cents," *RevPhil* 17 (1893) 1–10. I summarize p.1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* p.3.

¹¹² A distinction was first proposed by Henri de Valois, or Valesius (1603–1676), in his posthumous notes to Harpokration (Leiden 1682) and revived without argument by G. Dindorf, another Harpokration editor, at *Sophoclis Tragoediae Superstites et Perditarum Fragmenta*, vol. VIII⁹: *Commentatio de Vita Sophoclis, Perditarum Fabularum Fragmenta* (Oxford 1890) xx: "Verum probabilior Valesii (ad Harpocrat. p. 181.) et Ruhnkenii (Hist. orat. p. 128. ed. Reisk.) opinio est diversum hunc ab tragico Sophoclem esse, eundem qui inter triginta tyrannos nominatur a Xenophonte Hist. Gr. 2, 3, 2. et cujus orationem pro Euctemone memorat Aristoteles Rhet. 1, 14." E. M. Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle with a Commentary*, ed. J. E. Sandys, I (Cambridge 1877) 263, presumably after an earlier edition of Dindorf, simply denies that Sophocles of *Rhet.* 1.1374b36 and 3.1419a26 is the tragic poet but rather the tyrant of Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2, where no patronymic was needed for the tragedian was already dead. J. E. Sandys, *ap.* R. C. Jebb, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle: a Translation* (Cambridge 1909) 60 n.1, 197 n.2, repeats the conclusion of Cope. H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*² (Graz 1955) 689^B provides a special lemma, *Σοφοκλής orator*, for these two loci.

temporary of the same name offer little more than an *a priori* repugnance to include Sophocles in a rightist putsch.¹¹³ This is scarcely cogent philologically, and one may recall that Aristotle presents Sophocles as a distressed moderate criticizing the excesses of the right. Foucart's conclusion was independently and forcibly advanced in the same year by Wilamowitz¹¹⁴ and has been accepted by the overwhelming majority of scholars entitled to an opinion on the matter.¹¹⁵ I should add myself to their number.

In short Sophocles naïvely voted for a dictatorial régime whose crimes and excesses he could not foresee. He realized his error to the

Only one reasoned defense of Valesius' suggestion is known to me. Hans Schaefer, *RE* 23 (1957) 1225.58ff, denies that the *proboulos* was the poet because (1) the only other known *proboulos*, Hagnon the Oikist, was "eine sehr bekannte und profilierte politische Persönlichkeit von grosser praktischer Erfahrung"; (2) the poet held mere "Ehrenämter" and never shared "im innerpolitischen Kampf"; (3) the tyrant, therefore, is the more likely candidate. Against Schaefer one may urge (1) his first reason is of unprovable pertinence; (2) *Hellenotamias* and *Strategos* were by no means "honorary posts" but elected offices of highest responsibility; (3) we know nothing of the tyrant's share in internal politics before his tyranny (the son of Sostratides need not be he: see *RE* 3A [1927] 1095); (4) he neglects the lack of a patronymic or demotic in Aristotle; (5) the whole point of Aristotle's anecdote, to present the view of a disillusioned moderate, is quite unsuitable for a man who would later be one of the Thirty.

¹¹³ See P. Foucart, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.110) 2: "C'est plutôt une repugnance instinctive à se figurer le grand poète tragique mêlé aux querelles des partis et s'occupant à rédiger une constitution anti-démocratique." Nothing makes an author more difficult to understand than his apotheosis.

¹¹⁴ See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen* I (Berlin 1893; repr. 1966) 102 n.6, and his later statement at *GrTr* IV.100. On the politics of Sophocles see his good general remarks at "Die Griechische Literatur des Altertums," *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, I.8² (Berlin/Leipzig 1907) 48.

¹¹⁵ For the tragedian as *proboulos* see: Julius Beloch, *Die attische Politik seit Perikles* (Leipzig 1884; repr. Darmstadt 1967) 65–66; G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte bis zur Schlacht bei Chaeroneia* III.2 (Gotha 1904) 1410 with n.2 (retracting the doubt of III.1.577 n.1); A. Dain and P. Mazon, *Sophocle* I (Paris 1955) xii; Victor Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954) 138 n.4; W. S. Ferguson, *CAH* 5 (Cambridge 1927; repr. 1953) 321; W. G. Forrest, *The Emergence of Greek Democracy* (London 1966) 34; Geffcken, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) I.1.167; G. Gilbert, *Beiträge zur innern Geschichte Athens* (Leipzig 1877) 289ff; G. Glotz/R. Cohen, *Histoire grecque II: La Grèce au Ve siècle* (Paris 1949) 465 n.61, 708; C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1952) 269; J. Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica* II² (Berlin 1966) 264 (no.12834); A. Lesky, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*² (Bern/Munich 1963) 302; M. Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie* I² (Göttingen 1954) 161; R. Y. Tyrrell, *Essays on Greek Literature* (London 1909) 41 n.1; and T. B. L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles* (Oxford 1936; repr. London 1969) 13: "the onus of proof is on those who deny the identification." Three scholars hesitate but do not deny the identification: von Blumenthal, *RE* 3A (1927) 1044.26: "fraglich"; Christ-Schmid, I.2.319; and Jameson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.100) 217.

degree that at the risk of his life he publicly criticized the tyranny. In 409, directly after the successful counter-revolution, he produced a tetralogy, only a fourth of which we know. Are we to believe that this play had nothing whatever to do with the catastrophic political events in which the author had played a pivotal part? His tragedy portrayed the helplessness of a decent man, albeit naïve and sick,¹¹⁶ before impenetrable and overwhelming duplicity. With the best of intentions the clearest head could not resist Neoptolemos or Odysseus, Peisander or Antiphon. Sophocles, like Philoctetes, had been taken in. He thought that he was going to Malis and not to Troy; and there was no Herakles to set him straight. The play is about defeat, disillusionment and honesty in a society of immorality and deceit. It is an old man's *apologia pro vita sua*.¹¹⁷

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¹¹⁶ For the metaphorical use of the disease theme in Sophocles see P. Biggs, *CP* 61 (1966) 223–35. For *νοσέω* of states see Hdt. 5.28; *Soph. Ant.* 1015; *Pl. Rep.* 5.470c; etc.

¹¹⁷ Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at the Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington, on 8 October 1970; to the University Seminar in Classical Civilization at Columbia University on 15 October 1970; at Duke University on 3 December 1970; at the University of Aarhus on 21 May 1971; and at the University of Copenhagen on 27 May 1971. I benefited from subsequent and vigorous reaction on all these occasions. I am especially grateful for detailed improvements to J. A. Coulter, B. M. W. Knox, J. S. Mautner, S. Østerud, W. Schindler, O. P. Taplin and J. Vaio, four of whom believe me. The proverbial hospitality of the Fondation Hardt, Vandoeuvres, provided me in July 1970 with the leisure required to complete my first draft.