

S. NIKOLAIDOU-ARABATZI, *Σοφοκλής. Φιλοκτήτης*, Athens: Papazisi, 2020, Σ. 420, €25.44, ISBN 978-960-02-3681-1.

This new edition of the Sophoclean *Philoctetes* provides our libraries with new insights and proposals on this play. The reader finds there an extensive Introduction (pp. 15-84), the edition of the tragedy, with a Modern Greek version and a very complete critical apparatus (pp. 85-191), a comprehensive commentary (pp. 193-383), the metrical analysis of the lyrical sections (pp. 385-90), a general bibliography (pp. 391-404) and two indexes (of ancient passages, pp. 405-10; onomastic, pp. 411-19). First of all we would like to emphasize the accuracy of the literal version, as well as the careful discussion of the adopted and rejected lessons. The author is not primarily concerned with the elaboration of an essay on metatheatre in the *Philoctetes*, actually a major contribution of the book, but with a fair presentation of the play.

Nikolaidou-Arabatzi acknowledges her main agreement with the 1982 Markantonatos edition and the 1970 commentary by Webster (p. 10)<sup>1</sup>. Her own position regarding the textual problems gets close to a strategy of deep intervention in the text (see, for example, p. 369 on l. 1383) instead of a more conservative option. Generally speaking, all the chosen options are explained by means of a strong argumentation (pp. 301-02 on l. 856). Still we feel somewhat disappointed because of the frequent omission of the critical options chosen by Dawe in his edition for the Bibliotheca Teubneriana, since very often only the Oxonienses are quoted (so in ll. 196, 491, 576, 771, 933, 1000). In l. 557 (p. 264) we have to remark that Dawe's rejected conjecture προθυμίας in front of the transmitted lesson προμηθ(ε)ίας goes in the contrary way of Antipho II γ 3 προθυμίας, where Bekker suggested to correct in προμηθίας, an emendation which is usually accepted in the modern editions. As for our own opinion, just in l. 1019 we would take as preferable the lesson of part of the manuscript transmission, so that the text should be ὄλοιο καὶ σύ· πολλάκις τόδ' ἠϋξάμην.

The Introduction satisfactorily covers all the required aspects to be dealt with. Maybe the link between the plot of the tragedy and the return of Alcibiades (p. 19) would have deserved longer attention. This problem, however, opens the *uexata quaestio* of the relationship between history and tragedy, given that according with the common theory their mixing should be limited to the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup>. cent. BC. If we now turn on our

<sup>1</sup> Γ. Μαρκαντωνάτος, *Σοφοκλέους Φιλοκτήτης*. Κριτική και ερμηνευτική έκδοση, Athens 1992; T.B.L. Webster, *Sophocles. Philoctetes*, Cambridge 1970 (Greek translation issued in 1992).

attention on the poet himself, the point on the influence of Lesches' *Minor Iliad* (p. 23) becomes a perfect match with the conclusions reached by Radt on the fragmentary Sophoclean corpus and the currently neglected epic of the *Nostoi* and the like<sup>2</sup>. A Sophoclean trend is also evident in the lack of any kind of fatal outcome or even misadventure at the end of the play (p. 28), but Nikolaidou-Arabatzi rightly recalls the contemporary Euripidean tragedies (first of all *Helen*, performed in 412 BC), also characterized by their happy ending (p. 49). This approach to the Euripidean *untragic* tragedy is underlined by the author (p. 63), and it could be interesting to enlarge the picture to obtain a more detailed contrast: on 431 Euripides presented a *Philoctetes* where Lemnian men played the role of the chorus (as recalled on p. 27), while now Sophocles prefers to place the unfortunated hero on a desert island. Always in accordance with the text itself, Nikolaidou-Arabatzi states how Sophocles was coincident not only with some dramatical solutions in the Euripidean *Philoctetes* (p. 63), but also with many of the theological apories raised by Euripides (p. 64). It is probably in this context where the internal conflict of Philoctetes has to do with the myth on the creation of humanity, which is known to us under the form of the Platonic *Protagoras* (p. 48).

Some informations given below should have had their place in the Introduction, cf. p. 205, on ll. 60-1, on the proposal suggested by Webster on the other plays of the trilogy, *Skyroi* and *Philoctetes at Troy* in his opinion; p. 265, on ll. 561-2, on the preceding tragedies on the subject. Maybe the central role accorded to the metatheatrical subject did not allow to focus on a diachronical perspective, including the former plays on the subject and the later reception of the tragedy.

As abovesaid, the exposition on metatheatre in the Greek dramatists occupies a central position in this *Philoctetes*. From the very beginning we are told that metatheatre in the ancient drama and especially in Sophocles is at the core of this publication (p. 9). It is interesting how the role of Odysseus acts as a fulcrum of the whole action and rules the behaviour of Neoptolemos and Philoctetes (p. 11). It seems indeed all but easy the attempt of the author to explain how metatheatre works in tragedy, given that it is in comedy, mainly because of the *παράβασις*, where the matter becomes more evident. Important progresses in this field are due to the investigations of Segal on Euripides' *Bacchae*<sup>3</sup>, of Ringer on Sophocles' *Ajax*, *Electra* and *Philoctetes*<sup>4</sup>. Pivotal concepts in this research were, respectively, the role of the god Dionysos in *Bacchae* and the quarrel between truth and lie,

<sup>2</sup> S.L. Radt, "Sophokles in seinen Fragmenten", in J. de Romilly (ed.), *Sophocle*, Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1983, 185-231.

<sup>3</sup> C.R. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, Princeton 1982.

<sup>4</sup> M. Ringer, *Electra and the Empty Urn: Metatheatre and Role Playing in Sophocles*, University of North Carolina 1998.

honesty and trickery. In this regard, the author devotes a tribute (pp. 71-2) to the Professor Daniel Iakov, a scholar reputed for many reasons, mainly his accuracy in editing, translating and commenting Euripides. Iakov elaborated a theory on metatheatre based on the self-referential function displayed by the poet, the actors and the tragedy itself<sup>5</sup>. We would also stress a contribution by Falkner, who called the attention on Gorgias' *Helen* as a reflection on reality and fiction<sup>6</sup>.

The theoretical background argued by the author is well constructed and developed. Our question in this regard, probably for the lack of a better understanding of the matter, asks for the incardination of this split of the authorial voice in other literary genres such as cletic hymns and epinicia. There are in fact many occasions in which the poet must place himself both in and out of her/his discourse, so that the speaker and summoner is also hearer, the rite officiant is also attendant. Another doubt arises when we are told that the actors always spoke with their male voices (p. 79). It seems more probable that there was an aim for realism, similar to the practice attested for the Roman comedy<sup>7</sup>. In her view, Rabinowitz underlines the need that the actor plays more than an only gender, that is to say, he had to become 'she' in order to give to his character the female voice required<sup>8</sup>. Of course this is not the case of *Philoctetes*, where no female characters are given a role –maybe as a reaction against the Euripidean tragedy? But it must be the case for the Aristophanic *Thesmophoriazousai* when Agathon represents a man disguised as a woman. This is not the place for giving any answer, any proposal to the question on how tragedy presented the female characters, but the matter seems to us a central one regarding metatheatre on the ancient Greek scene<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, it raises some doubts that the tragic poet could be

<sup>5</sup> Δ. Ιακώβ, *Η Ποιητική της αρχαίας ελληνικής τραγωδίας*, Athens 1998; “Είναι οι Βάκχες του Ευριπίδη μετατραγωδία;”, in Δ. Ιακώβ & Ε. Παπαζόγλου, eds., *Θυμέλη Μελέτες χαρισμένες στον Καθηγητή Ν.Χ. Χουρμούζιάδη*, Heraclion 2004, 49-62.

<sup>6</sup> T.M. Falkner, “Containing Tragedy: Rhetoric and Self-Representation in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*”, *CA* 17, 1998, 25-58.

<sup>7</sup> T. Moore, *Music in Roman Comedy*, Cambridge 2012, 88-90, where quotations from Pomponius, Quintilian, and Plautus support the view that actors playing female roles spoke with a different voice. On this *uox muliebris* see also T. Moore, “Music and Gender in Terence's *Hecyra*”, in D. Dutsch, S. James, D. Konstan, eds., *Women in the Drama of the Roman Republic*, University of Wisconsin 2015, 68-87.

<sup>8</sup> N.S. Rabinowitz, *Greek Theater*, Malden & Oxford 2008, 27,

<sup>9</sup> F.I. Zeitlin, “Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama”, *Representations* 11, 1985, 63-94, pp. 79-80 (= J.J. Winkler, F.I. Zeitlin, *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, Princeton 1990, 63-96), does not face the problem. S.-E. Case, “Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts”, *Theater Journal* 37, 1985, 317-27, p. 324, reckons the possibility, in theory at least, that female characters were played by drag men. (...) *A middle voice*, (...) *a third gender*, so to speak, that was strictly speaking neither male or female, is the concept coined by N.S. Rabinowitz, “The Male Actor of Greek Tragedy: Evidence of Misogyny or Gender-Bending?”, *Didaskalia* 7, 1995, <https://www.didaskalia.net/issues/supplement1/rabinowitz.html>.

aware of all the movements on the stage (p. 347, on ll. 1218-21), unless he was also the dramatic director, not the case of Euripides' *Bacchae* and hardly conceivable for a 87-year-old Sophocles in 409 BC, when the *Philoctetes* was represented.

The commentary stands out for its richness and depth, which leave few details unexplored. The opening of the tragedy reminds of the Aeschylean tragedy (cf. l. 1 μέν, commented in a different way on p. 194). This first section of the play does not avoid a certain Homerizing style (l. 42 κήρ, l. 52 ἄνωγα, this last form accurately commented on pp. 202-3), but it is combined with the flavour of the contemporary Sophistics (e.g. l. 103, οὐ μή). Some matters of style have been neglected if our opinion is right, and we apologize if these observations miss their target. In l. 150, for instance, we notice an alliterative play by means of /m/ and /l/ at the opening line of a strophe sung by the chorus; in l. 216 we interpret a synesthesical play. We take as noteworthy that Philoctetes uses more linguistic innovations than the other characters, as in l. 409 the shortened form ποεῖν, in l. 418 the negative adverb μή instead of οὐ, in l. 459 the introduction of a temporal clause by means of ἵνα. In l. 267 the term ἔχιδνα has mostly a peculiar significance, for it is a rather uncommon word mainly used in mythical narratives<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, such a path seems finally misleading, since Sophocles had a predilection for this word, which is used without a specific mythical connotation (see, for instance, S. *Tr.* 771 and 1099, *Ant.* 531).

Many informations deserve a high appreciation, for instance, just to quote some close examples, when the author underlines the emotion expressed also by means of the iambic sequence (p. 289), or indicates a dochmiac interlude (p. 294), or the role played by Philoctetes in ll. 767-73 as an internal author (p. 292). Nikolaidou-Arabatzi writes also masterly pages on many scenes, for instance on the apparition ἀπὸ μηχανῆς of the god Heracles (pp. 373-4 on ll. 1409 ss.). Nonetheless, her interesting comments on the stage issues (just a couple of examples: pp. 217-18, on ll. 155-6; p. 266, in l. 574) do not appear to be decisive on the question of the metatheatrical interpretation of the play. Far from this controversial issue, the comments reach their full validity (p. 352, on ll. 1257-8). On the whole, the attention paid to the metatheatrical dimension helps to visualize the text in a real dramatic way, and it is this perspective that gives this edition its greatest merit. For example, the third episode of the tragedy, ll. 865-1080, stands out for its brevity. As the plot runs into a final solution, the movements on stage gain also speed.

A small amount of remarks fail to furnish a more complete information. Some Sophoclean new coinages, for instance, should have been underlined as such, cf. εὐδρακῆς in l. 846 and ἐνδόμυχος in l. 1457. The same applies to terms borrowed from other genres, as in l. 706 the compound δακέθυμος,

<sup>10</sup> The most valuable example is Hes. *Th.* 297.

which is already attested at Simon. 74 ed. Page l. 5 and must be related to Hom. *Od.* 8.185 θυμοδακῆς. In l. 954 the verb αὔαινομαι, usual in the medical *Fachsprache*, has been since Aeschylus onwards (*A. Cho.* 260, hapax in this author) incorporated into the tragic language. In l. 1250 the present participle has in our opinion a conative value. In l. 1272 the adjectival suffix must have the form \*-ηρός. In l. 1352 it should be stressed that the verb εικάθω is a Sophoclean term.

The impressive bibliography collected and discussed is by no way emendable. Just because of its recent publication we would like to indicate a paper on the religious meaning of the bow (p. 52)<sup>11</sup>. The printed book is also remarkable for the accuracy of the editors (we found an only typo on p. 238, ἦττονέπι) and for the comfort provided to the reader with large and clear fonts.

By way of conclusion, by means of this bright and deep *Philoctetes* Nikolaidou-Arabatzi has contributed an indispensable book for a full understanding of the Sophoclean theatre and the dramatic representation as a whole.

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<sup>11</sup> F. Pérez Lambás, "Sacralidad y funcionalidad del arco en Filoctetes", *Synthesis* 26, 2019, <https://www.synthesis.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/article/view/SYNe049/11479>

