ONE SHIP OR TWO AT LEMNOS?

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WHEN SOPHOCLES WROTE and produced *Philoctetes,* did he wish the audience (and subsequent readers) to understand that Odysseus and Neoptolemus had come to the island on one ship, or on two ships? Richard Jebb (1898, p. xx, n. 1) says, "Odysseus came in one ship, and Neoptolemus in another." J. C. Kamerbeek (1980, p. 42, n. 2) concurs, noting, "It seems desirable to assume that Odysseus and Neoptolemus have sailed each in a ship of his own, although nowhere this is [*sic*] stated explicitly" (cf. also R. G. Ussher [1990, p. 18, n. 62, and p. 116, ad 125]). William Calder (1971, 164–65) and Antony Raubitschek (1986) argue that Odysseus and Neoptolemus came in one ship and that the audience was aware of this. There is no clear and definitive answer to the question in the drama as it has come to us. The question itself may be thought to be strictly speaking "outside the drama" since the issue is not expressly referred to in our text. But the answer has important consequences for the interpretation and understanding of certain aspects of the play: Neoptolemus' character; the role of Odysseus; the use of deception and the line between falsehood and truth (as outlined below at the end of the discussion in alternatives 2a and 2b, pp. 14–17). The purpose of this paper is to examine those portions of the play that can be taken to refer to the question, to see if they can provide a satisfactory answer, and to discuss the results of the investigation.

We start tentatively with two assumptions. First we assume that Sophocles, when he composed the play, thought of Odysseus and Neoptolemus arriving at Lemnos either on one ship or on two; secondly, that he wished to make clear to the audience the situation at hand.

The situation may, indeed, have been clarified early in the play, at lines 217–18, with the words of the chorus just before Philoctetes appears (the text of Sophocles in this paper is that of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a). The chorus hear Philoctetes before they see him. They remark that he seems to lurch either under the stress of a loud shout ἢ ναὸς ἄξενον αὐ- / γάζων ὅρμον. The lines clearly refer to Philoctetes looking at a harbor (presumably a stretch of beach near the setting of the play, an area in front of the cave in which Philoctetes lives), but the precise interpretation of the phrase is in dispute. Jebb translates, "or as he gazes on the haven that hath no ship for a guest." Hugh Lloyd-Jones (1994b, 279) represents a more common

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view[1] when he translates, "or because he descries the ship in her inhospitable anchorage." The difference lies in the interpretation of the adjective ἄξενον. Jebb links the adjective to the genitive of the word "ship," takes the expression to be a "more forcible" alternative to ναυσὶν ἄξενον, "inhospitable to ships," and applies the phrase to the noun ὅρμον. He argues that this version fits the situation better, that "his [that is, Philoctetes'] cry is caused, either by physical pain, or by a feeling of despair as he looks at the lonely sea."[2] Lloyd-Jones joins the adjective only with ὅρμον and takes the phrase to describe the desolate shore on which a ship is beached.

If Lloyd-Jones' translation is right, the natural interpretation would be that the anchorage was visible from the scene of the action, that Philoctetes knew—or could know—from the outset that his new visitors had come in a single ship, and that Sophocles wrote the lines so that the audience would understand that Philoctetes was aware of the situation at the shore. As the entire phrase is constructed, however, it would seem to favor Jebb's version. The spectator would first hear the genitive of "ship" and then the adjective an instant before understanding that the adjective modified "harbor." In that time the link between the adjective and the genitive desired by Jebb could have been formed in the spectator's mind before he became aware of the noun "harbor" so that the adjective-genitive combination could be taken as a unit to apply to the harbor, as in Jebb's translation. In Lloyd-Jones' version the spectator would have had to leave the genitive of "ship" unattached until he heard the full phrase, and only then would grasp the full import of the genitive, that it specified the contents (so to speak) of the inhospitable harbor. Further, if Sophocles had wished to say what Lloyd-Jones translates, it would seem more natural that he would have added the definite article, or some other such indication, to the word "ship" to accord with the dramatic circumstances. The chorus is composed of sailors under Neoptolemus' command (135–37), who would be referring in these lines to their own ship, "the ship,"[3] the only one on the beach at Lemnos. On these grounds we conclude (tentatively, since certainty seems impossible in this regard) that Jebb's interpretation is right and that at this point in the play Philoctetes was not meant to know if the new arrivals had come in one ship or in more.

David Robinson, who supports the view implied in Lloyd-Jones' translation, maintains (1969, 40) that Philoctetes refers in line 220 to the ship he has just seen when he asks the visitors with what "naval oar" (ναυτίλῳ πλάτῃ)[4] they have put into this desolate and harborless land. The phrase, however, need not suggest that Philoctetes saw the ship. Philoctetes' abode as depicted by Sophocles in this play could be approached only by sea. That is indicated by Philoctetes' question and is made clear in a later passage (300–

1. See, e.g., Robinson 1969, 40; Webster 1970, 85; Kamerbeek 1980, 54.

2. Jebb rejects a translation along the lines of the alternative version. Citing line 467, he argues that the ship is not visible from Philoctetes' cave; cf. a similar statement in the introduction (Jebb 1898, xx). Line 467 will be discussed below.

3. As Lloyd-Jones translates ναός in his version. Jebb's interpretation is favored by Ussher 1990, 119, who also notes the appropriateness of this view to the dramatic situation.

4. The reading is not in the majority of MSS, but is "in all probability" right: see Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990b, 184; cf. Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1997, 105.

313). In these circumstances it is natural for Philoctetes to assume, without having seen a vessel, that any strangers he meets have arrived by ship.

Line 467 is pertinent to our discussion. Here Neoptolemus is pretending that he is about to leave Lemnos. Philoctetes asks (466) if he is to set off now. Neoptolemus answers (466–67): . . . καιρὸς γὰρ καλεῖ / πλοῦν μὴ 'ξ ἀπόπτου μᾶλλον ἢ 'γγύθεν σκοπεῖν. Neoptolemus says that it is to his advantage to await favorable sailing conditions from nearby rather than ἐξ ἀπόπτου. The difficulty in the sentence lies in the untranslated phrase. Ἄποπτος can mean "seen or to be seen from a place" (LSJ, s.v. I) and "out of sight of" or "far away from" (LSJ, s.v. II.1).[5] Jebb translates the lines: "Aye, prudence bids us watch the weather near our ship, rather than from afar," and notes (1898, 82): "μὴ 'ξ ἀπόπτου, not at a distance (from the ship); strictly, so that the quarter in which their ship lies shall not be ἄποπτος, i.e, 'seen (only) at a distance.'" The translation is consistent with Jebb's view (1887, 230) that the phrase ἐξ ἀπόπτου is adverbial and means that a place can be seen at a distance,[6] but surprising in light of Jebb's suggestion in his note to line 217 that line 467 supports the view that the ship was not visible from the cave of Philoctetes (above, n. 2). There the ship was not in sight; here it seems to be.[7] Lloyd-Jones' translation of lines 466–67 (1994b, 301) is also surprising: "Yes, to seize our opportunity we must watch for the chance to sail from near at hand, not from where we cannot see." If that which cannot be seen is the ship (and not the general area of the anchorage; cf. n. 7), the translation would seem to support Jebb's view of lines 217–18 and to contradict that of Lloyd-Jones. However that may be, it is clear that the line is open to differing interpretations.

In the extant works of Sophocles ἄποπτος is found in three other passages: *Ajax* 15; *Oedipus the King* 762; *Electra* 1489. In the first passage Odysseus is addressing Athena after her opening words at the beginning of the play. Many commentators take the word to mean "out of sight," but the interpretation of the word depends on the view taken of the staging. If Sophocles meant the audience to understand that Athena was not visible to Odysseus, "out of sight" would be appropriate. If Athena was meant to be seen by Odysseus then another translation (e.g., "dimly seen": LSJ, s.v. II.2) would be more suitable.[8] The line in *Oedipus* occurs in Jocasta's account of the reaction of Laius' servant when he returned to Thebes and found Oedipus as the new king. The servant asked that he ὡς πλεῖστον εἴη τοῦδ' ἄποπτος ἄστεως. Here the consensus among commentators seems to

5. For a slightly different analysis of the various meanings of the word see Jebb 1887, 230.

6. This is also the interpretation of Ellendt (1872, 81), who cites with approval Triclinius' gloss μακρόθεν.

7. It is not clear why Jebb cited 467 as support for his view of 217–18. His line of thought may depend on his use of the term "the quarter in which their ship lies" in the note to 467. He may have thought that 467 referred to the general area in which the ship was beached without necessarily implying that the ship itself was in sight. If that is the case he may have been oversubtle in his interpretation. Kamerbeek (1980, p. 54, n. 1) noticed an inconsistency when he rejected Jebb's view of lines 217–18 and noted that he (Kamerbeek) does not "see how it follows from 467 that the ship was not visible from the cave." In his comment to 467 (1980, 83) he agrees with Jebb's interpretation of that line and assumes that Jebb had the ship, not the general area, in mind: "ἐξ ἀπόπτου amounts to 'at a distance.' The ship should not be ἄποπτος 'seen from a distance.'"

8. For a survey of various views and discussion of the dramaturgical issues see Stanford 1963, 56–57.

be that "out of sight" is the probable meaning.[9] *Electra* 1489 is part of Electra's impassioned plea to Orestes to kill Aegisthus immediately (1483–90). Once dead, Aegisthus should be handed over to those who are suited to dig a grave that would be ἄποπτον ἡμῶν. Here it seems unlikely that Electra would want the grave to be within sight, and the commentators seem to agree that the desired meaning is "out of sight."[10]

Our discussion of Sophoclean usage shows that Sophocles could use ἄποπτος to mean "out of sight" in a variety of circumstances. While that does not confirm the meaning in *Philoctetes* 467, the balance is tipped in the direction of "out of sight." Since that meaning accords with our interpretation of 217–18 and establishes a consistency in outlook on the part of the playwright in this respect, we conclude that "out of sight" is the right translation and that Sophocles wished the audience to understand that the location of the ship (or ships) was not visible from the scene of the action and that Philoctetes was unaware at this point in the drama of the number of ships that had come to Lemnos.

We turn now to examine the instances in the play of the word "ship," when it refers to the means by which Odysseus and Neoptolemus were transported to Lemnos and by which they planned to leave. There are twelve occurrences.[11]

1. 125: Odysseus at the end of his colloquy with Neoptolemus says that he will send πρὸς ναῦν the lookout who had been watching for Philoctetes.

2. 132: Several lines later Odysseus says he will go πρὸς ναῦν.

3. 461: Neoptolemus, announcing to Philoctetes his feigned departure, says that he will go πρὸς ναῦν.

4. 516: The chorus have heard Philoctetes' plea to be taken to Greece; they now urge Neoptolemus to take pity and declare that they would convey Philoctetes home "on a swift, well-outfitted ship" (ἐπ' εὐστόλου ταχείας νεώς).

5. 527: Neoptolemus agrees to transport Philoctetes and says that the ship will take him (χἡ ναῦς γὰρ ἄξει) and that it will not refuse.

6. 540: Just as Philoctetes and Neoptolemus are supposedly about to depart from Lemnos, the chorus announce that two men approach, one a νεὼς σῆς ναυβάτης, the other a stranger (that is, the false merchant).

7. 543: The false merchant says to Neoptolemus that he has met his guide who, with two others, was guarding νεὼς σῆς.

8. 648: After the false merchant leaves the scene, Philoctetes and Neoptolemus make plans to depart; Philoctetes wishes to take things from his cave and Neoptolemus asks, "What is this that is not on my ship?" (τί τοῦθ' ὃ μὴ νεώς γε τῆς ἐμῆς ἔπι;)

9. See, e.g., Jebb 1887, 105 and 230; Kamerbeek 1967, 157; Lloyd-Jones 1994a, 403.

10. Jebb 1894, 199: "far from our sight"; Kamerbeek 1974, 191: "far from our eyes"; Kells 1973, 229: "out of my sight"; Lloyd-Jones, 1994a, 319: "out of our sight."

11. Omitted here are occurrences of the word that do not apply to the conveyance of Odysseus and Neoptolemus: 217 (in accordance with the interpretation discussed above); 626 (the ship to which the pseudo-merchant says he is returning after telling his false tale to Philoctetes); 630 and 636 (references by Philoctetes to the ship on which he thinks, because of the merchant's story, Odysseus is coming to fetch him).

9. 881: Philoctetes, on waking from his coma, is overjoyed to see Neoptolemus still at his side; he urges that they go ἐς ναῦν and not delay the sailing.

10. 891: Philoctetes refers to the hardship that the sailors will endure on the ship ([ἐ]πὶ νηί) because of his wound.

11. 1076: Neoptolemus tells the chorus that they can remain with Philoctetes until τὰ . . . ἐκ νεώς are arranged for departure.

12. 1180: In the kommos the chorus respond to Philoctetes' wish that they leave by declaring that they will do so gladly and then urging each other to go to their assigned places on ναός.

The absence in these passages of the plural of the word "ship" creates a difficulty for those who advocate separate ships for Odysseus and Neoptolemus (see, e.g., Calder 1971, 164–65), but the situation is not as clear-cut as it might seem. It is noteworthy that in only two of the instances listed above (items 5 and 8) does Sophocles use the article with the word. On both occasions Neoptolemus is speaking deceitfully for Philoctetes' benefit, to convince him that he will be transported home on Neoptolemus' ship. The use of the article appears to add little to the action; Philoctetes believed, until the presence of Odysseus was revealed (974), that only Neoptolemus and his crew were on the island and he would have had no reason to think that a reference to a ship applied to anything but Neoptolemus' vessel. That view is reinforced by the explicit reference in the two intervening passages (items 6 and 7) to "your [that is, Neoptolemus'] ship," first by the chorus and then by the false merchant. These two passages seem designed to impress on Philoctetes that there is a ship at the shore[12] and that Neoptolemus is its sole commander. The articles in items 5 and 8 also appear to tend in the same direction. In 527 (item 5) the effect is to underscore Neoptolemus' authority—or his claim to authority—over "the ship," his vessel, that it will do as he directs and will not deny his commands. At 648 (item 8), the thrust of Neoptolemus' question seems to be, What could you possibly want out of the cave that is not available on *my* ship? Here again there appears to be a desire to emphasize Neoptolemus' mastery of his ship, and, by extension perhaps, of events in general.[13]

Also noteworthy is the complementary observation that eight (in addition to 540 and 543) of the allusions to "ship" have no article. The first two passages occur in the prologue, when Odysseus and Neoptolemus are planning the strategy for approaching Philoctetes and managing his transfer to Troy. Here an article would seem natural if there were only one ship: the lookout and Odysseus were to return to "the ship." At the same time, the lack of an

12. This point may support the view argued above, that the poet wished to convey that the ship could not be seen by Philoctetes.

13. Sophocles may have included the articles in the two passages not only to fortify the idea that Neoptolemus had come on his own ship, already suggested at 354–56 and 383 (while leaving open the question of whether or not Odysseus—whose presence was known to the audience, but not to Philoctetes—had come on that ship or a ship of his own), but also to show Neoptolemus asserting control of his ship (and the course of events) in order to mask his uneasiness at acting under orders from Odysseus and to hint, by putting bold proclamations of authority in Neoptolemus' mouth, at his nervousness in the face of the lies he and the false merchant had been relating to Philoctetes.

article also seems natural since both Odysseus and Neoptolemus know the ship that is being referred to. Yet, there remains a slight ambiguity, noticeable perhaps only when the question of one ship or two has been raised: Is Odysseus saying that he will return to the only ship, or is he saying that he will return to the ship on which he[14] sailed from Troy, a ship other than that of Neoptolemus? Did Sophocles think that "ship" without an article was sufficient to convey his meaning, or did he intend to create doubt? In the third passage (at line 461) Neoptolemus, while deceiving Philoctetes, uses the same phrase as in the first two passages, πρὸς ναῦν. As we noted above, there can be no question concerning Philoctetes' perception of the phrase; but does the lack of an article suggest an ambiguity? Is Philoctetes to be taken to "the ship" (as he imagines), or is he to be taken to "a ship"? Is he going to be transported to Troy (against his will, if he goes at this point) on Neoptolemus' ship, or does the lack of an article suggest the existence of another ship? In the next item (4) the chorus' admonition to take Philoctetes home "on a swift, well-equipped ship" (516) is also deceitful and meant for Philoctetes' ears, but the phrase seems natural enough as it stands. If, however, Sophocles has meant to create ambiguity in the previous three passages, then it is possible that the article is deliberately omitted to be in accord with them. Items 9 and 10 are spoken by Philoctetes and are in keeping with his belief at this stage that Neoptolemus and his crew have come alone. Yet, again, if uncertainty has been developed earlier, the lack of an article could carry on the equivocation. Sophocles has Philoctetes utter a phrase that has one meaning to him, because he labors under a false impression, but that is open to a different interpretation by the other characters and the chorus—and by the audience.

The eleventh item occurs when Odysseus and Neoptolemus are apparently preparing to leave Lemnos with the bow but without Philoctetes. Philoctetes begs the chorus not to desert him (1070–71) and the chorus turn to Neoptolemus for permission to stay (1072–73). Neoptolemus says that they may remain until "sailors prepare things on board and we pray to the gods" (1075–77). Here there seems to be a distinction between those who will prepare the ship for departure and the members of the chorus, who are sailors on Neoptolemus' ship (see, e.g., 531).[15] Is the distinction meant to suggest that there were two crews: one, Neoptolemus', represented by the chorus, would now remain behind, while the other, Odysseus', remaining at the shore, would prepare for departure? The phrase we are discussing, τὰ ἐκ νεώς, would seem to indicate one ship, but again the lack of an article leaves open the possibility that the phrase applies to everything that needs to be done to prepare for departure on board the ship or ships in question. Finally, at 1180 the lack of an article seems not to create ambiguity. The chorus, in

14. And perhaps the lookout (see below, n. 17), a man who takes orders from Odysseus (125) and who will return as the false merchant with further instructions from Odysseus (126–31). In contrast, the chorus seem to take orders exclusively from Neoptolemus (e.g., 135–43, 1072–80).

15. The distinction has been noticed by Gardiner (1987, 16), and has been used in an unpersuasive attempt to argue that the chorus was not composed of sailors, but of "fighting men of military age."

exasperation at Philoctetes' stubbornness, are glad to return to their ship, the one they came on and will leave on, whether or not there was another ship.

Our survey of the references to "ship" seems to point to the assumption in the play that there is one ship on the beach at Lemnos; but the lack of an article in most of the passages and the possible reference to sailors other than the chorus in the eleventh item create enough doubt to leave the question unresolved.

We turn now to a related problem. Who was in command of the expedition to Lemnos? Would that person also be commander of the ship, if there was only one? It is clear from the text that the chorus regard Neoptolemus as their leader. That is evident especially in the chorus' first song (135–218) and in a passage alluded to earlier when the chorus ask Neoptolemus' permission to stay behind (1070–80). In the course of the drama the chorus address Neoptolemus as δέσποτα (135) and ἄναξ (150, 507, 510, 963), and they refer to him as their ναυκράτωρ (1072).[16] In contrast, the chorus never speak to Odysseus in such terms. On the one occasion when they do address him they say Ὀδυσσεῦ (1046). From that point of view Neoptolemus is clearly the master of his ship.

The precise position of Odysseus is less clear. He exercises authority, but its exact nature is not spelled out. At the outset Neoptolemus calls him ἄναξ (26—with Ὀδυσσεῦ; 94; cf. Λαερτίου παῖ, 87). That is in keeping with the tenor of the prologue, in which Odysseus seems to be in command and expects Neoptolemus to do his bidding (15, 53).[17] Neoptolemus, for his part, although he prefers to fail acting nobly than to win shamefully (93–95), is hesitant at the outset to betray the cause and finally defers to Odysseus by agreeing to lay aside his scruples (96–122). Even here, however, the relationship is not unambiguous. Neoptolemus considers himself a collaborator

16. In this passage the chorus call "Neoptolemus a παῖς ("this boy is our captain"). In the parodos, even while emphasizing Neoptolemus as their leader, the chorus address him as παῖ (201) and τέκνον (141, 210). Elsewhere, when giving advice, they address him as τέκνον (833, 843, 845, 855) and παῖ (863). These forms of address are probably meant to stress Neoptolemus' youth, rather than to indicate that the sailors in the chorus are elderly (as suggested in the second ancient hypothesis: Jebb 1898, 4) or to diminish Neoptolemus' stature as commander of their ship. For discussion of such forms of address in the play see Avery 1965, 285–87.

17. In the prologue Odysseus may exert authority over Neoptolemus in another respect also. After Neoptolemus has discovered and described Philoctetes' cave and it has been ascertained that Philoctetes is not present, Odysseus says to Neoptolemus: τὸν οὖν παρόντα πέμψον ἐς κατασκοπήν (45) so that Philoctetes does not come upon them unaware. The line refers to a silent character, presumably a sailor accompanying the two heroes, who is to keep watch nearby during the scene. Does the imperative πέμψον indicate that in this matter also Odysseus is giving commands to Neoptolemus? Or is the imperative to be taken more as a request and an acknowledgement by Odysseus that he has no authority over the sailor, who is subject to the command of Neoptolemus? Commentators (e.g., Jebb 1898, 14) assume that the man is Neoptolemus' "attendant," presumably at his beck and call, and they would seem to take the imperative as something less than a peremptory order. Neoptolemus' response to Odysseus' command is equivocal. He says that the man is going to his post and will watch for signs of Philoctetes' return (48). That could be interpreted as Neoptolemus' validation of Odysseus' command, a word that the man awaited before acting on instructions from someone other than his commander. Or it could be interpreted as Neoptolemus' unconditional acquiescence, indicating that he was not in a position to challenge Odysseus' orders. Later in the same scene it is Odysseus who commands the same man to return πρὸς ναῦν (125), suggesting that while he may have been deferring to Neoptolemus earlier, the authority to direct the man (whatever his actual status may have been; cf. n. 19, below) belongs to himself. In support of that view is Odysseus' statement that he will later send this same man back to the scene of the action in the guise of ship's captain (126–29).

(ξυνεργάτης, 93) and has to be persuaded before consenting to take part in Odysseus' plan. In the course of the play the relationship changes. By the end Neoptolemus is defiant and the two appear to be bitterly at odds (1222–1304). It is perhaps significant that after the prologue Neoptolemus is never depicted as addressing Odysseus with any specific designation.[18] Is the lack of direct address to be taken as a measure of the gulf that has opened between the two former collaborators?

Though Neoptolemus is clearly in command of his ship, Odysseus also has men at his command. He has authority over the lookout in the prologue (see n. 17), who later appears as the false merchant. While the point is not made explicitly, it seems clear that Odysseus also exercises authority (offstage) over the silent character who accompanies the false merchant onto the stage and who is called by the chorus a sailor (ναυβάτης) on Neoptolemus' ship (539–41).[19] When Odysseus returns to the scene (974) he is accompanied by several mute actors who are under his command. They are mentioned first at line 983 when in the altercation with Philoctetes Odysseus threatens that they will take him by force (. . . βίᾳ στελοῦσί σε).[20] A little later in the scene Odysseus directly orders at least two of the silent actors to seize Philoctetes when he threatens suicide, and later commands them to release him (1003, 1054–55).[21]

Further, throughout the play Odysseus is vested with the full authority of the Greek army at Troy. He acts on behalf of the army and his actions are all directed toward success at Troy. That is established in the prologue. Even at the beginning of the war Odysseus acted at the behest of the army's

18. The same pattern may be observed in the forms of Odysseus' address to Neoptolemus. In the opening dialogue Odysseus stresses Neoptolemus' status as the son of Achilles (4, 50, 96; cf. 57) and affectionately calls him παῖ (79) and τέκνον (130). Later Odysseus addresses the younger man directly only twice: 974, in anger, when he interrupts Neoptolemus apparently in the act of returning the bow to Philoctetes (ὦ κάκιστ' ἀνδρῶν) and 1237, in desperation and with anything but affection, when he can scarcely believe that Neoptolemus intends to return the bow (Ἀχιλλέως παῖ; cf. Odysseus' sarcastic reference to the "son of Achilles" at 1297–98).

19. At this stage the chorus are lying in order to deceive Philoctetes. They declare that the false merchant, the former lookout and one of their comrades, is a stranger. If they are lying in that respect, the accompanying statement, that the sailor is from Neoptolemus' ship, may also be false (they could hardly have identified him otherwise in Philoctetes' presence), opening the possibility that both the sailor and the false merchant were under Odysseus' command on a second ship. The uncertainty concerning the veracity of the chorus' statement is heightened by the elaborate fabrication retailed by the false merchant immediately afterward. The merchant begins his tale, however, with a piece of specific information. He says that he asked his guide, who was guarding Neoptolemus' ship with two other men (σὺν δυοῖν ἄλλοιν), to inform him of Neoptolemus' whereabouts (542–46). Sophocles may have included the curious detail expressed in the dual in order to lend verisimilitude to the false merchant's story and to make it more plausible to Philoctetes.

20. There is no subject for the verb in the text; for attempts to provide a subject see the apparatus in Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a, ad 983, but it is not clear that an explicit subject is necessary at this point (see Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990b, 203). Odysseus' threat is the second of two alternatives. In the first he says, "it will be necessary for you στείχειν ἅμ' αὐτοῖς." Commentators are divided on the question whether αὐτοῖς is neuter and refers to the bow of Heracles or is masculine and refers to the mute actors (if the latter, that would be the first reference to them). For an urbane discussion of how the mutes should be referred to see Jackson 1955, 124.

21. In 1003 many modern editors, including Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990a), accept Bernhardy's conjectured dual imperative in place of the plural of the MSS. Reading the dual is one way of healing the meter of the line, but there are other solutions (for details see Kamerbeek 1980, 142, and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990b, 204). In favor of the MSS reading is the use of the plural imperative three times when Philoctetes is set free at 1054–55.

commanders and for the common good of the expedition (5–11). Now his chief interest is to secure a Greek victory (see especially 66–82, 109, 115). Later in the play, when Odysseus reappears on stage, he again emphasizes that his goal is the capture of Troy (997–98, 1055–59). In the ensuing kommos the chorus underscore the purpose of the visit to Lemnos and Odysseus' role in achieving that goal when they say that Neoptolemus has been directed on instructions from Odysseus to provide a general benefit for the army (1143–45).[22] Even greater stress is laid on this aspect of Odysseus' position after Neoptolemus has decided to return the bow to Philoctetes and Odysseus tries to dissuade him. Again and again the text alludes to the fact that Odysseus represents the army at Troy: Neoptolemus says that he erred when he was persuaded by Odysseus and "the entire army" (τῷ τε σύμπαντι στρατῷ, 1226); Odysseus asserts that there is someone who will prevent Neoptolemus from acting, the whole Achaean host (ξύμπας Ἀχαιῶν λαός, 1241, 1243); Odysseus asks if Neoptolemus does not fear the army of the Achaeans (1250);[23] Odysseus says that if Neoptolemus persists in his plan to restore the bow, the Greeks will no longer fight the Trojans but will turn against him (1253); Odysseus threatens that he will report Neoptolemus' actions to the whole army, which will punish him (1257–58); in his last attempt to prevent the transfer of the bow Odysseus forbids the action in the name of the Atreidae and of the whole army (1294) and declares that he will carry out his mission to take Philoctetes to Troy, whether or not the son of Achilles wishes (1297–98).

More important, perhaps, for the question of the extent of Odysseus' authority in the play are the words that Sophocles puts in Odysseus' mouth indicating that he believes he is acting as an agent of the gods. That is adumbrated in the prologue, first at the outset, when religious justification is offered for the original abandonment of Philoctetes (that is, that his wild and ill-omened cries prevented the army from orderly sacrifice to the gods: 8–11), and then with Odysseus' last words as he leaves the scene, when he calls on Hermes and Athena to guide him successfully in the enterprise (133–34).[24] Soon after his return to the stage at 974 Odysseus asserts in forceful terms divine sanction for his mission to take Philoctetes to Troy: "Zeus it is, that you may know, Zeus, who rules this land, Zeus, who has decreed these events; and I am his servant" (989–90). Philoctetes immediately contests the assertion, claiming that Odysseus has called on the gods to make the gods liars (991–92), but Odysseus insists that his version is true (993). The two continue to disagree (994). Sophocles appears to leave the

22. The paraphrase in the text is an interpretation of a controversial text: κεῖνος δ' εἷς ἀπὸ πολλῶν / ταχθεὶς τοῦδ' ἐφημοσύνᾳ / κοινὰν ἤνυσεν ἐς φίλους ἀρωγάν. Here we take κεῖνος to refer to Neoptolemus and τοῦδε to Odysseus (for support of this view see Kamerbeek 1980, 157, and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990b, 207). The alternative interpretation (see Jebb 1898, 179–80) takes κεῖνος to refer to Odysseus and requires emendation of τοῦδε.

23. At this point Neoptolemus declares that he has no fear since he is acting justly (1251); but later, after agreeing to take Philoctetes to Greece, he says that he does not know how he will escape blame from the Achaeans and he fears that they will ravage his land (1404–5); at this time he has to be assured by Philoctetes that he will provide protection with the arrows of Heracles (1405–6).

24. The reference to Athena in line 134 has been questioned, but seems sound: Kamerbeek 1980, 43, and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990b, 181.

issue unresolved, though Philoctetes' cry of despair in 995 (οἴμοι τάλας) may be taken to indicate that Odysseus' view will no longer be disputed.[25] Later, at 1050–51, Odysseus, answering the chorus' comment on the harshness of Philoctetes' diatribe against him, maintains that wherever there is a judgment concerning good and just men no one would be found more pious (εὐσεβῆ) than himself.[26] Again, in his penultimate words in the play Odysseus, seeking to prevent the return of the bow to Philoctetes, calls out (1293–94) that he forbids the transfer in the name of the Atreidae and the whole army, calling on the gods as his witnesses (ὡς θεοὶ ξυνίστορες). Here in a powerful invocation[27] to the gods Odysseus lays claim to divine approval for his plan, a claim that is rejected first by Philoctetes and then by Neoptolemus when he agrees to sail to Greece (1402–8). The claim, however, is validated by Heracles, who says he has come from heaven to inform Philoctetes of the "plan of Zeus" (τὰ Διὸς . . . βουλεύματα, 1415), that is, precisely the project that Odysseus has been advocating throughout the play. Thus, whatever we may think of Odysseus' tactics during the play, Sophocles seems to depict him from beginning to end as acting in conformity with the plans of the gods and apparently with their approval.

Our survey of Odysseus' status as a commander in the play shows that, while he is presented as exercising authority in the name of the gods and of the army at Troy and as issuing orders to various silent characters, there is no firm indication that he himself commanded a vessel, that is, a ship other than that of Neoptolemus.

25. However the exchange may be interpreted, Philoctetes appears on one level not to lose his faith in the gods; at 1036 he seems to believe that the gods are still interested in justice and at 1040–42 he calls on his native land and its gods to punish those who have tormented him. On another level, however, Sophocles may have wished to suggest that Philoctetes' confidence in the gods' approval had been undermined. In the kommos Philoctetes refuses to accept the chorus' advice to go to Troy. Towards the end he reiterates that he will never go, "not if the fire-bearing lord of lightning comes to consume me in the blaze of his thunder" (1198–99; translation by Lloyd-Jones [1994b, 375]). Zeus is not named here, but the reference to him is unmistakable. Philoctetes at this point seems to think that if he refuses to go to Troy he is liable to suffer the ultimate punishment at the hand of Zeus.

26. The interpretation of this passage is difficult. Piety is emphasized in the final scene of the play. Heracles ends his speech by urging Philoctetes and Neoptolemus εὐσεβεῖν τὰ πρὸς θεούς after they have sacked Troy (1440–41). Piety is also said to live beyond mortal life (1443), but this line is sometimes thought to be spurious (cf. the apparatus in Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a). If Odysseus' statement about himself at 1050–51 is to be taken at face value, then he would be counted among the pious of the world. But it is just at this point in the drama that Odysseus orders his men to release Philoctetes and tells him that he is not needed at Troy so long as the Greek army has the bow of Heracles. Odysseus then says that he is about to return to Troy, leaving Philoctetes at Lemnos (1054–62). It is uncertain, and a matter of controversy, whether Sophocles intended the audience to understand that Odysseus did in fact plan to leave Lemnos at that time, or whether the audience was meant to understand that he was bluffing. If the threat was feigned and known to be so by the audience, that would cast Odysseus in the role of a trickster and would seem to undercut the validity of his claim to piety a few lines earlier. Also relevant to Odysseus' attitude toward piety is his statement in the prologue when he is trying to convince Neoptolemus to deceive Philoctetes. Odysseus ends his speech by urging Neoptolemus to give himself to shamelessness for the space of one short day and then in the future Neoptolemus will be called the most pious of all mortals (νῦν δ' εἰς ἀναιδὲς ἡμέρας μέρος βραχὺ / δός μοι σεαυτόν, κἄτα τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον / κέκλησο πάντων εὐσεβέστατος βροτῶν, 83–85). In this passage Sophocles seems to be depicting Odysseus as cynically manipulating the concept of piety, arguing that any tactics would be justified and that the mantle of piety could be assumed afterward.

27. This call on the gods is of a different order from conventional invocations uttered by Odysseus, as in 1233 and 1235.

In regard to the question of one ship or two ships we do not know how the original audience understood the situation. We do know, however, the opinion of one ancient reader. Dio Chrysostom describes in *Oration* 52 a day spent reading and comparing the plays dealing with Philoctetes at Lemnos by Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles. In the account of Sophocles' version Dio mentions that the chorus consisted not of local inhabitants, as in the other two plays, but of τῶν ἐν τῇ νηὶ συμπλεόντων τῷ Ὀδυσσεῖ καὶ τῷ Νεοπτολέμῳ (sect. 15). For Dio the situation was clear. There was one ship on which both heroes sailed.

The evidence that we have reviewed thus far seems to suggest that there was only one ship in the harbor at Lemnos. At the same time our discussion indicates that, despite Dio's view, that conclusion is not indisputable. In addition, apart from the issues noted above, serious problems arise on the assumption that one ship came from Troy. For example, would the audience accept the premise that Odysseus, the leader of the expedition to bring Philoctetes to Troy, the representative of the Greek army, the advocate of the gods' will, would have come to Lemnos as a passenger on a ship commanded by a young subordinate? Or would the audience have assumed that such a person would have traveled on a ship of his own, under his own command?

Also, what was the audience to think about the fate of Odysseus if, as the play seemed to be ending, Neoptolemus and Philoctetes were on their way to Greece? Was he to be taken to Greece with Philoctetes? An unlikely solution since Philoctetes could hardly be restrained from shooting Odysseus with an arrow at his last appearance on stage. Was he to be abandoned on Lemnos? A just fate in the eyes of Philoctetes, but scarcely one that could have been contemplated by the poet without comment. Odysseus warns, when arguing with Neoptolemus, that if the young man takes Philoctetes to Greece, the Greek army will be informed and turn its wrath against Neoptolemus (e.g., 1250, 1253, 1257–58). Those threats seem to assume that Odysseus has the means to return to Troy independently of Neoptolemus. Neoptolemus also assumes that the Greeks at Troy will learn of his actions and exact revenge (1404–6). Do those points indicate that the audience would take it for granted that Odysseus had a ship of his own at his disposal?

Further, what is the audience to understand in regard to Philoctetes' view of the situation after he learns (at 974) of Odysseus' presence on the island? Up to that point Philoctetes would assume, in the absence of clear indications, that only Neoptolemus' ship was at hand. The tale of the false merchant, however, leads him to believe that Odysseus was approaching on another ship (628–38). After Philoctetes becomes aware of Odysseus' presence, the text does not make it clear whether Philoctetes is still under the influence of the merchant's story, or whether now he assumes what the audience knows, that Odysseus arrived with Neoptolemus.

Philoctetes' bitter invective against Odysseus when he has been restrained on the latter's orders (1004–44) provides the most information, but seems to point in both directions. At the beginning Philoctetes recants his earlier attacks on Neoptolemus (esp. 927–51) and, now that he knows that Odysseus is present, seems to absolve the youth (1008–15). Philoctetes says

that Odysseus used the boy unknown to him (Philoctetes) as a cloak. He says that Neoptolemus, unworthy of Odysseus but worthy of Philoctetes, knows nothing but what he has been directed to do. The young hero, now clearly in pain because of his errors and Philoctetes' agonies, has been corrupted by Odysseus who has taught him to be wise in doing evil (ἐν κακοῖς εἶναι σοφόν, 1015). In this passage Sophocles seems to indicate that Philoctetes is somehow aware of Odysseus' coaching of Neoptolemus in the prologue, but there is no suggestion in the text how Philoctetes would have acquired the knowledge.

As the speech progresses, however, the situation seems to change. After 1015 Philoctetes turns his full attention to Odysseus and it is not clear that he has Neoptolemus in mind any longer. At 1019 Philoctetes curses Odysseus (ὄλοιο). Later (1035) he utters the same imprecation in the plural. It is uncertain whether at this time Neoptolemus is included, or whether the plural was meant to apply to the sons of Atreus, who were introduced into the speech at 1023–24 as further objects of Philoctetes' hatred. At 1029 Philoctetes asks, "Why are you [plural] now taking me? Why are you [plural] leading me off? For the sake of what [if τοῦ is neuter and not masculine]?" If the plurals refer to Odysseus and Neoptolemus it would seem that Philoctetes is thinking of them as a pair who had arrived at the island together, were acting in concert, and perhaps traveled in the same ship. In the next line, however, he goes on to say, "I who am nothing and have long been dead to you [plural]." Here the use of πάλαι suggests that the plural refers to Odysseus and the sons of Atreus.[28] In that case the plurals of the previous lines should also be taken in that sense and the curses, spoken in the plural a few lines later (1035), should apply to Philoctetes' longtime enemies.[29] A verb and a pronoun in the plural are found at 1037–39, when Philoctetes asserts his belief in the gods' interest in justice by declaring that "you would not have sailed on this expedition on account of a wretched man unless some divine goad for me led you on" (. . . οὔποτ' ἂν στόλον / ἐπλεύσατ' ἂν τόνδ' οὕνεκ' ἀνδρὸς ἀθλίου, / εἰ μή τι κέντρον θεῖον ἦγ' ὑμᾶς ἐμοῦ).[30] Here the plural forms might be taken to refer to Odysseus and Neoptolemus: they clearly sailed to Lemnos in search of Philoctetes. But the use of the cognate

28. In the attack on Neoptolemus Philoctetes says that he is a corpse, a shadow of smoke, an image (946–47) and that he is nothing (951; cf. 1217); and earlier in this speech Philoctetes declares that he is a corpse among the living (1018). But the reference in line 1030 to being considered long dead more probably refers to his utter abandonment, in deed and in thought, by the leaders of the Greek armada for the last ten years.

29. In the interval, at lines 1031–32, Philoctetes continues to rail at Odysseus, "How am I not now lame and foul-smelling to you [sing.], you who are most hated by the gods?" Another question follows (1032–33), which in the manuscripts includes a second person plural verb (εὔξεσθ'): "how shall you declare to the gods . . . that you will burn sacrifices?" (for the translation and a defense of the reading see Campbell 1881, ad loc.); but most editors emend to ἔξεσθ': "how is it possible . . .?" If the second person plural verb were kept, the situation would be more doubtful; but even then the plural would probably allude to Odysseus and the sons of Atreus since Philoctetes plainly refers in this passage to the original complaint against him when he was abandoned on Lemnos (4–11), as Sophocles himself notes (1034, or—if that line is deleted with Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a; cf. 1990b, 205—as is noted by the interpolator and the scholiast).

30. The text here shows the conventional punctuation rather than that favored by Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990a, which separates ἐμοῦ from the conditional clause and connects it with ἀνδρὸς ἀθλίου in the previous line.

accusative allows greater latitude in the understanding of the verb, suggesting perhaps a causal implication: you (that is, Odysseus and the sons of Atreus) brought about this expedition. This view is supported by the conditional clause that looks to the origins of the expedition to Lemnos, an enterprise conceived by the leaders in the Greek camp at Troy rather than by Neoptolemus. Also, the "divine goad" may refer to the oracle of Helenus and the determination it roused in Odysseus to bring Philoctetes to Troy, events that occurred before Neoptolemus' arrival at Troy and that were reported to Philoctetes by the false merchant (603–19). Thus it seems probable that Philoctetes in this passage has the leaders of the Greek forces in mind, not Neoptolemus. Finally, Philoctetes ends the speech (1040–44) by calling on his native land and the gods that oversee it to punish, if they pity him, "all those" (ξύμπαντας αὐτούς, 1042) "at some time even if late" (ἀλλὰ τῷ χρόνῳ ποτέ, 1041). He goes on to say, "If I would see these men destroyed [ὀλωλότας / τούτους, 1043–44] I would think that I had escaped my illness." The plural forms in these lines again seem to refer, especially in light of the temporal phrase, to Philoctetes' old enemies, the leaders of the Greek forces, rather than to Neoptolemus.[31]

To summarize: At the beginning of the speech Philoctetes wishes to exonerate Neoptolemus and to separate him from Odysseus. Philoctetes at this stage seems to know—or to have guessed—what was presented to the audience in the prologue, but the poet does not say how Philoctetes knew—or guessed—the earlier action, or what he thought in regard to the number of ships on the beach. In the rest of the speech our discussion of the plural forms indicates that at this point in the drama Philoctetes is conceived as not thinking of Odysseus and Neoptolemus as a pair of conspirators plotting against him. Instead Odysseus is connected with Philoctetes' old adversaries, the sons of Atreus, while Neoptolemus seems to be dropped from consideration, until Philoctetes appeals to him twenty lines after the end of the speech (1066–67). That interpretation would suggest, but not prove, that, with respect to what the audience perceived Philoctetes thought concerning Odysseus' arrival at Lemnos, the hero was still under the impression conveyed by the merchant's false tale.

The remaining sections of the play provide no clear indications concerning Philoctetes' assumptions in regard to the number of ships in the harbor. When Odysseus and Neoptolemus leave the scene, ostensibly to depart from Lemnos (1054–1217), there are only ambiguous references to a ship (1076 and 1180; items 11 and 12 in the list of passages discussed above). In the quarrel between Odysseus and Neoptolemus (1222–1302) there appears to be the assumption, discussed above, that Odysseus had the means to return to Troy on his own if Neoptolemus took Philoctetes to Greece, but there is no new information bearing on Philoctetes' assumptions. Similarly, in the discussion between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus when the former has the

31. Ussher (1990, 147) suggests that the first phrase, "all those," might refer to the Greek army as a whole. While that is possible, especially if the ξύμπαντας were emphasized so that it included more than the leaders only, the pronoun τούτους in the second phrase brings the objects of Philoctetes' wrath closer to hand and supports the interpretation advocated in the text.

bow (1302–408), no clear light is shed on Philoctetes' knowledge of the ships in the harbor. It may be significant, however, that Philoctetes restates, and apparently accepts as true, one of the lies told to him by Neoptolemus, that is, that Odysseus and the sons of Atreus had deprived him of his father's armor (1364–65;[32] see 354–81 for Neoptolemus' story). Philoctetes' acceptance of the fiction as true may indicate that the hero was still laboring under the influence of fabricated stories he had been told in the course of the play. That may be taken as another suggestion that he still believed the merchant's story and thought that Odysseus had arrived on a separate vessel later than Neoptolemus. If that is the case, however, the point is made most obliquely and it is not clear how the information, even after the implications of Philoctetes' earlier speech (1004–44), would have been conveyed unambiguously to the audience. The final scene, the epiphany of Heracles, also supplies no new information, making clear only that the three heroes were to go to Troy, without indicating the means of transportation.

We assumed at the outset that Sophocles had an answer to our question in mind when he composed the play. If he did, however, he appears to have left the situation in the harbor in doubt, at least in the text as we have it.[33] What seemed plain to Dio Chrysostom appears on examination to be less than clear. Under these conditions a number of alternatives present themselves.

1. Sophocles deliberately created an ambiguity. He wished to leave the question up in the air. No doubt he had good reasons for that, but they are far from obvious and seem not to have been divined by commentators. I am unaware of any interpretation of the play that takes such an ambiguity into account.

2. Sophocles believed that he made the situation in the harbor unambiguously clear to the original audience, but that was done in a manner that is not apparent to modern commentators. He expected the audience to know throughout the play (or at least to become aware in the course of the action) whether Odysseus and Neoptolemus arrived on one ship or on two. And the audience did know, so that its understanding of the unfolding drama was based on knowledge that is obscure to us. This view allows two interpretations.

2a. Odysseus and Neoptolemus arrived on two ships, each commanding a separate vessel. Sailors from Neoptolemus' ship formed the chorus. Sailors, and other attendants, from Odysseus' ship acted under his directions, sometimes in speaking roles (the false merchant), sometimes as silent characters. That is the situation favored by most modern commentators (e.g., Jebb, Kamerbeek, Ussher) and it underlies most contemporary interpretations

32. The more detailed account inserted at line 1365, referring to the contest between Odysseus and Ajax, is usually omitted by editors.

33. It might be argued that gestures or stage action at certain points in the drama could have informed the audience concerning the ships in the harbor, but no such arguments, securely anchored in the text and for that reason convincing, have been advanced. Nor do reconstructions of the stage setting provide help. Various attempts, all based on information provided in the text, have been made to envisage the setting as it appeared to the original audience, but none has commanded general approval: see, e.g., Woodhouse 1912; Errandonea 1955, 141–42; Dale 1969, 127–29; and Craik 1990, 81–83. Dale's reconstruction seems at the same time the simplest and most plausible.

of the play. The drama is seen as a struggle for the heart and soul of the youthful Neoptolemus: will he succumb to the arguments of Odysseus, the practical man of many wiles, and be persuaded to bring Philoctetes to Troy by the use of deceit, or will he, influenced by his innate nobility and his compassion for Philoctetes, disdain falsehood and stay true to his heroic heritage as the son of Achilles? The literature in this vein is vast and varied, with many commentators adducing ingenious complications and seductive subtleties.[34]

2b. Odysseus and Neoptolemus arrived on one ship, with Neoptolemus as commander and Odysseus in a position to issue orders to the crew. The chorus was composed of part of the ship's complement. Other sailors remained with the ship following Odysseus' instructions. Throughout the drama Odysseus, Neoptolemus, and the chorus knew that there was only one ship at their disposal. Everything they said was said in light of that fact. What Sophocles wished the audience to think about Philoctetes' belief in this matter is not clear, but since the harbor was not in sight of the scene of action he could know no more than what was reported to him. If that is the case most modern interpretations of the play become untenable. Neoptolemus is willingly involved in deceit, perhaps to the very end. He may never have intended to take Philoctetes home to Greece. When he declares that he is about to do so he may be lying and the audience knows that. Neoptolemus continues to exhibit a certain nobility of character but there is no struggle for his soul. He acts as the collaborator of Odysseus from beginning to end. Odysseus emerges as a more attractive character: a master manipulator, yes, but one whose plans for the safety of society at large (in this instance the Greek armament at Troy) succeed with the imprimatur of heaven. Philoctetes, for all his stubborn willfulness, is tricked to some degree—perhaps absolutely—to do what he had sworn not to do for most of the play, submit himself, and bring aid, to the Greeks who had wronged him.

That interpretation, unattractive as it is to many modern commentators, has much to commend it. Aspects of the play that have bedeviled critics become less problematic. At line 57 Odysseus, when instructing Neoptolemus on the story he is to tell Philoctetes, tells him to say that he is the son of Achilles, "this need not be concealed" (τόδ' οὐχὶ κλεπτέον), with the implication that everything else in the tale should, or can, be a lie. Questions concerning the extent of truth and falsehood are among the most perplexing issues in discussions of the play. Neoptolemus reveals himself a particularly adept liar when he first confronts Philoctetes (esp. 343–90). When—if ever—he stops lying is open to discussion. If the one-ship view holds, Neoptolemus is lying when he first agrees to take Philoctetes to Greece (524–29), when he agrees again after the departure of the false merchant (645–46), when he seems about to yield to Philoctetes after telling him that their goal is Troy and he is interrupted by Odysseus (965–74). Further, Neoptolemus may be lying when he and Odysseus depart, ostensibly to abandon Philoctetes once more on Lemnos (1074–80), when he and Odysseus reappear on

34. For recent selections see Ussher 1990, x–xvii, and the works cited in Hawkins 1999.

stage apparently quarreling (1222–62), and when he finally agrees to take Philoctetes to Greece (1402). On another point, commentators have been troubled by the discrepancy between the noble youth of the conventional interpretations and the savage Neoptolemus whose brutal attacks in the fall of Troy stain the Greek victory and lead to his early death.[35] Other critics have been disturbed by the unseemly departure of Odysseus from the scene. At line 1298 he is last seen running for his life while Philoctetes tries to shoot an unerring arrow at him. If the audience knew that Neoptolemus was Odysseus' ally the departure would seem less abrupt: Odysseus' plan was still in progress.

Commentators who favor the one-ship version propose various interpretations. Calder (1971) argues that Neoptolemus was meant from the beginning to be understood as a liar and that at every step of the action he is deceiving Philoctetes, who is portrayed as a naive and innocent man manipulated by unscrupulous operators. Calder's view of a thoroughly corrupt Neoptolemus accords with the later history of the ferocious hero at Troy, but is difficult to reconcile with the noble aspects of Neoptolemus that are stressed in the prologue (esp. 86–95) and seem not to be undercut by his cooperation with Odysseus (see, e.g., 1066–69).[36] Raubitschek (1986, 198–99) argues that the deceptions practiced on Philoctetes by Odysseus and Neoptolemus are meant by Sophocles to show that even those kinds of actions are acceptable when they lead to the right conclusion, the "fulfillment of the divine will." That interpretation may account for the apparent discrepancy between the deceptions and their validation, but it scarcely satisfies the reader. Here, as in *Electra* (also cited by Raubitschek as an exposition of the same doctrine), Sophocles would seem to have been obscure in the extreme in making the point.

Other critics, while not adhering explicitly to the one-ship view, attempt to explain troubling aspects of the play by advancing more unorthodox theories. Lattimore (1964, p. 45 and p. 92, n. 35) suggests that the appearance of Heracles at the end of the play is the last and most successful trick of Odysseus, who takes on the part of Heracles when all other stratagems seem to have failed.[37] Perhaps the most extreme interpretation of the play along these lines is that of Errandonea (1955 and 1956), who argues at length that it is Odysseus himself, played by the third actor who would in the course of

35. Neoptolemus' later history is related variously. In the underworld Odysseus delivers to Achilles a benign account of Neoptolemus' part in the fall of Troy (Hom. *Od.* 11.506–37). Vergil, following the tales of the epic cycle (*Cypria* frags. 14, 26, in Allen 1912, 122–23, 125; and *Ilias Parva,* frags. 16, 19, 21, in Allen 1912, 134–36) and using Neoptolemus' other name, Pyrrhus, depicts a bloodthirsty warrior who leads the assault into the palace of Priam and callously slaughters Priam (*Aen.* 2.469–558). Neoptolemus did not long survive the Trojan War. Pindar gives different versions of his death at Delphi (*Nem.* 7. 34–47 and *Pae.* 6. 98–122, where Pindar claims that Neoptolemus died young because of the slaughter of Priam). Pausanias saw the grave of Neoptolemus at Delphi (10.24.6).

36. Dio Chrysostom, in his essay on the three Philoctetes plays, describes Neoptolemus' character as portrayed by Sophocles as "surpassing in simplicity and high birth" (*Or.* 52.16: ὑπερβάλλον ἁπλότητι καὶ εὐγενείᾳ).

37. Lattimore ends his defense of the view (1964, p. 92, n. 35) with the following: "Finally, if this is in truth Heracles, it is the only case I know of where, in a situation of intrigue, Odysseus is left baffled and defeated, without another ace up his sleeve."

the drama also have acted the roles of the false merchant and Heracles, who comes on stage (recognized by the audience as Odysseus) first disguised as the false merchant and later presenting himself as Heracles. Errandonea's views, when they are noticed at all, have been treated with scant respect,[38] but his arguments are not unsound when his premises are granted. The difficulty is that the premises, about the staging of the play and the prominence given to Odysseus as the brilliantly successful master manipulator of men and deeds, are hard to reconcile with the text as we have received it.

3. Our initial assumption, that Sophocles had an answer to our question in mind when he wrote the play, may be wrong. On this view the issue did not occur to him, or if he did think of it, he considered it unimportant, without significance for the play he was writing. In this case the question is truly "outside the drama" and has no relevance to the work as conceived by its author. Critics who are troubled by the question and try to resolve it are dealing with an issue that is divorced from the drama as it was originally written and produced. This view approaches from a different angle the position described in 2 above. There Sophocles had an answer in mind but it is not clear to us. Here he had no answer in mind because he did not consider the issue. In both cases critics may assume whatever answer is most convenient for the interpretation that they espouse, as do the commentators mentioned above who support either 2a or 2b. The difference between this view and that in 2 is that there the assumption is that Sophocles had an answer in mind and that the interpretation put forward accords with that answer; here the presupposition is that Sophocles did not give any thought to the matter and commentators may proceed without further concerning themselves about the poet's intentions.

4. Another possibility remains. Sophocles may have been careless in the composition and construction of this play. The problems that critics see in the work, the murky border between truth and falsehood, the uncertain evaluation of Neoptolemus' character, the thwarting of the stratagems of Odysseus, the abrupt reversal at the end when Philoctetes seems to have prevailed only to be overruled by the appearance of Heracles, a situation that has led some commentators to talk of "two endings" (see, e.g., Robinson 1969, 51–56), the unusual role of the chorus, which has only one full-fledged choral song in the play and some of whose words are also plagued by doubt concerning their truthfulness, these problems—or some of them, if others were part of the poet's original plan—are on this view caused by inattention on the part of the author, who wrote and produced a play not up to his highest standards. That is not the way Sophocles is usually seen. Commentators seem to take it for granted that the plays of Sophocles that have come down to us show him at his best, working at the full extent of his powers. No doubt there is ample evidence in the seven extant tragedies of Sophocles' power as a poet, dramatist, thinker, and creator of plot, character, and

38. See Friis Johansen 1962, 249–50; Ussher 1990, p. 16, n. 27. Errandonea does not address the problem of one ship or two directly, but he seems to assume that there was more than one ship in the harbor (1956, 99). Accepting the single-ship view would have aided his case.

emotion. That should not mean, however, that every line or every scene or every song or even every play displays Sophocles at the full height of his creative powers.

Some scholars have seen flaws in Sophocles' work. Wilamowitz, in an influential study (1917), stressed Sophocles' interest in the dramatic impact of the specific scenes at the expense of overall dramatic unity and of development of character in the plays. His conclusions, however, have not been universally accepted, even by admirers of his work (see, e.g., Lloyd-Jones 1972, 218–19). Waldock (1951) mounted a spirited attack on what he perceived to be blemishes in the extant plays (the title of the chapter on the play under discussion is "Sophocles Improvises: The *Philoctetes*"). His efforts earned him a stern lecture for taking "the trouble to write a book about a dramatist who according to him had nothing to say and said it so badly" (Knox 1964, 170–71). Despite the flippant tone of the book Waldock's position is not absurd. Why should we assume that Sophocles never nodded? Are we to believe that he was incapable of making a mistake, or inserting a poor line into the text, or misjudging the impact of a scene, or allowing an inferior work to reach the theater? It appears, then, not unreasonble to suppose that this fourth alternative is at least a possible explanation for the problem we have been examining.

Our discussion has not led to a conclusive result. In view, however, of the lack of clarity in Sophocles' references to the situation in the harbor, it is hard to accept our original assumptions, that Sophocles had in mind an answer to our question and that he intended to convey to the audience the situation that he had in mind. If the assumptions had been valid, we would be forced to conclude that Sophocles failed in his purpose: the situation is not clear. A basic belief, however, is that Sophocles was a competent playwright and fully capable of informing the audience in unequivocal terms regarding the ships at Lemnos. If he had wished to tell the audience that there was one ship he would have done so. If he had wished to make clear that there were two ships he would have done that. That he did neither indicates that he did not intend to do so. Therefore, both parts of option 2 should be ruled out.

Of the remaining three options, the first (that the equivocation was deliberate) must remain remote until that ambiguity can be shown to have a role to play in the drama. The fourth option (that Sophocles was incompetent in this regard) may appeal to some, but it too is hard to accept. We would like to believe, as we did in considering the second option, that Sophocles was in control of his material and knew what he was doing—even if on occasion he did not hit the mark. There remains the third option (that the issue did not occur to Sophocles). On the evidence we have considered that seems the most plausible solution to our problem. The answer is far from satisfactory. Commentators have noted, as we have seen, that the question of one ship or two affects in important ways the interpretation of the play. The conclusion does, however, leave readers free to interpret *Philoctetes* without taking into account the question of the number of ships in the harbor at Lemnos. At the same time the conclusion precludes commentators from citing (or assum-

ing) in support of their interpretations, as do Jebb and Kamerbeek on one side and Calder and Raubitschek on the other, any argument based on the situation in the harbor—if, that is, commentators wish to understand the play as Sophocles wrote it.[39]

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