

## NOTES

### Prometheus and the wedge: text and staging at Aeschylus, PV 54-81\*

- HΦ καὶ δὴ πρόχειρα ψάλια δέρκεσθαι πάρα.  
 KP. βαλὼν νυν ἀμφὶ χερσὶν ἐγκρατεὶ σθένει 55  
 ῥαιστήρι θεῖνε, πασσάλευε πρὸς πέτραις.  
 HΦ. περαίνεται δὴ κού ματῶι τοῦργον τόδε.  
 KP. ἄρασσε μάλλον, σφίγγε, μηδαμῆι χάλα-  
 δεινὸς γάρ εὐρεῖν κάξ ἀμηχάνων πόρον.  
 HΦ. ἄραρεν ἦδε γ' ὠλένη δυσεκλύτως. 60  
 KP. καὶ τήνδε νυν πόρπασον ἀσφαλῶς, ἵνα  
 μάθῃ σοφιστῆς ὢν Διὸς νωθέστερος.  
 HΦ. πλὴν τοῦδ' ἂν οὐδεὶς ἐνδίκως μέμψαιτό μοι.  
 KP. ἀδαμαντίνου νῦν σφηνὸς αὐθάδη γνάθον  
 στέρνων διαμπᾶξ πασσάλευ' ἐρρωμένως. 65  
 HΦ. αἰαὶ Προμηθεῦ, σῶν ὑπερστένω πόνων.  
 KP. σὺ δ' αὐ κατοκνεῖς τῶν Διὸς τ' ἐχθρῶν ὕπερ  
 στένεις· ὅπως μὴ σαυτὸν οἰκτιεῖς ποτε.  
 HΦ. ὀρᾶς θέαμα δυσθέατον ὄμμασιν;  
 KP. ὀρῶ κυροῦντα τόνδε τῶν ἐπαξίων. 70  
 ἄλλ' ἀμφὶ πλευραῖς μασχαλιστήρας βάλα.  
 HΦ. δρᾶν ταῦτ' ἀνάγκη· μηδὲν ἐγκέλευ' ἄγαν.  
 KP. ἦ μὴν κελεύσω κάπιθωῶζ γε πρὸς.  
 χῶρει κάτω, σκέλη δὲ κίρκωσον βίαι.  
 HΦ. καὶ δὴ πέπρακται τοῦργον οὐ μακρῶι πόνωι. 75  
 KP. ἐρρωμένως νῦν θεῖνε διατόρους πέδας,  
 ὡς οὐπιτιμητῆς γε τῶν ἔργων βαρύς.  
 HΦ. ὁμοία μορφῆι γλῶσσά σου γηρύεται.  
 KP. σὺ μαλθακίζου, τὴν δ' ἐμὴν αὐθαδίαν  
 ὀργῆς τε τραχυτήτα μὴ 'πίπλησέ μοι. 80  
 HΦ. στείχωμεν, ὡς κῶλοισιν ἀμφίβληστρ' ἔχει.

54 ψάλια· M

55 βαλὼν Pearson, νυν Blaydes: λαβὼν νιν Ω (νιν et Σ)

59 πόρους sch. Ar. (ex Ar.): τρόπον O<sup>1</sup>Lc

60 ἦδέ M, ἦδέ Rc, ἦδέ D  
 δυσεκχύτως Orus (cod.)

61 νῦν Ω

64 νυν Blaydes

66 ὑποστένω M<sup>2</sup>O

67 δ' οὖν Q<sup>c</sup>λ

69-70 ὀρῶ...ὀρᾶς Briggs (ὀρῶ in 69 iam Bourdelot)

71 πλευράς O μ

73 γε| δὲ B + δ: σε OK

75 χρόνω O + λ

76 νυν Blaydes

77 τῶνδ' Blaydes

78 ὁμοῖα Nc μ γαρύεται α Q<sup>2</sup>K

80 τραχύτητα proparox. fere Ω (θρασύ- K + XR Eust. Macr.): corr. Dind.<sup>1</sup>

\* A version of this paper was read to the Greek Drama Conference held at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, in February 1992. I am grateful to those who made comments on that occasion, and to others who commented on various versions, notably my colleague Dr M.J. Athorp, Mr E. Flintoff of Leeds University and the *JHS* referee.

<sup>1</sup> The text is as printed in M.L. West, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Stuttgart 1990). I would prefer to keep νιν in line 55 and to punctuate with a full stop at the end of line 69. It appears from the critical apparatus that the use of the wedge at lines 64-65 has not given rise to serious doubts about the text. In proposing the emendation recorded on lines 69-70 (*CJ* 3 (1811) 77) T. Briggs merely observes that he would supplement the change

At the start of the play Prometheus is brought on stage by two agents of Zeus, Kratos and Bia. He is to be fastened up against the side of a rock and exposed to the elements. Hephaestus, who enters with the others, is to provide the tackle and the skills to do the job. Hephaestus shows extreme reluctance to perform his duties, both in his initial utterances (17-21, 39-54) and during the actual process of fastening, particularly when dealing with the chest (66) and legs (78); Kratos, however, browbeats him brutally, at which Hephaestus acknowledges that he has no choice and obeys.

The chaining process progresses from arms to chest to legs, and it is noteworthy that there is a similar structure in the treatment of the arms and of the legs. In each case Kratos issues an initial command (55-6, 74), to which Hephaestus responds with an expression indicating compliance (57, 75). Then Kratos gives a further command, demanding that the bonds be made still more secure (58 and 61, 76-77), which is followed by a second expression indicating compliance from Hephaestus (60 and 63, 81). The sequence, varying only in that the two arms are given separate treatment and in that Hephaestus vainly protests at the severity of the treatment of the legs (78-80), is thus essentially as follows: 'Do it.' 'Done.' 'Make it firmer.' 'Done.'

The same sequence is observed in connection with the chest too, but with an important departure. The initial command is given at lines 64-65: 'Now with all your force peg the unyielding jaw of a steel wedge right through his chest.' Hephaestus protests and is further threatened (66-68) before indicating compliance at line 69: 'The grim sight is there for you to see.' Now Kratos issues a further command: 'Put the chest-bands round his ribs.' And in response Hephaestus utters a second expression of compliance: 'I have no choice, don't keep telling me.' If one compares this sequence with that employed in connection with arms and legs, it is immediately clear that in those two cases the further command requires intensification of the shackling, whereas here the further command is much milder. After 'Drive a wedge through his chest' the command to put bands round his ribs can only be an extraordinary anticlimax. Formally the sequence of command, compliance, further command and further compliance is observed, but the further command no longer requires that the bonds be made more secure. It is as if the further command about the chest-bands should be the initial command, and the initial command about the wedge, reinforced by protestations and threats, should be the further command. As it is, we have not merely a schematic anomaly but a remarkable enfeebling of dramatic impact. The wedge should surely *follow* the chest-bands.

The desired coincidence of formal pattern and dramatic climax can be obtained by the transposition of lines 72, 73, 71, in that order, to follow line 62. The passage will then run like this:

- HΦ καὶ δὴ πρόχειρα ψάλια δέρκεσθαι πάρα.  
 KP. βαλὼν νυν ἀμφὶ χερσὶν ἐγκρατεὶ σθένει 55  
 ῥαιστήρι θεῖνε, πασσάλευε πρὸς πέτραις.  
 HΦ. περαίνεται δὴ κού ματῶι τοῦργον τόδε.

already proposed for line 69 by reading ὀρᾶς in line 70, but he gives no reason for his suggestion.

- KP. ἄρασσε μᾶλλον, σφίγγε, μηδαμῆ χάλα·  
δεινὸς γὰρ εὐρεῖν κὰξ ἀμηχάνων πόρον.
- HΦ. ἄραρεν ἦδε γ' ὠλένη δυσεκλύτας. 60
- KP. καὶ τήνδε νῦν πόρπασον ἀσφαλῶς, ἵνα 61  
μάθῃ σοφιστῆς ὧν Διδὸς νοθέστερος.
- HΦ. δρᾶν ταῦτ' ἀνάγκη· μηδὲν ἐγκέλευ' ἄγαν. 72
- KP. ἦ μὴν κελεύσω κάπιθωδέξω γε πρὸς. 73  
ἀλλ' ἀμφὶ πλευραῖς μασχαλιστήρας βάλε. 71
- HΦ. πλὴν τοῦδ' ἂν οὐδεὶς ἐνδίκως μέμψαιτό μοι. 63
- KP. ἀδμαντίνου νῦν σφηνὸς αὐθάδη γνάθον 64  
στέρνων διαμπᾶξ πασσάλει' ἐρρωμένως. 65
- HΦ. αἰαὶ Προμηθεῦ, σὼν ὑπερστένω πόνων.
- KP. σὺ δ' αὖ κατοκνεῖς τῶν Διδὸς τ' ἐχθρῶν ὕπερ  
στένεις· ὅπως μὴ σαυτὸν οἰκτιεῖς ποτε.
- HΦ. ὄραϊς θέαμα δυσθέατον ὄμμασιν;
- KP. ὄρῳ κυροῦντα τόνδε τῶν ἐπαξίων. 70  
χῶρει κάτω, σκέλη δὲ κίρκωσον βίαι. 74
- HΦ. καὶ δὴ πέπρακτα τοῦργον οὐ μακρῶι πόνωι. 75
- KP. ἐρρωμένως νῦν θεῖνε διατόρους πέδας,  
ὡς οὐπιτιμητῆς γε τῶν ἔργων βαρῦς.
- HΦ. ὅμοια μορφῆι γλώσσά σου γηρύεται.
- KP. σὺ μαλαθακίζου, τὴν δ' ἐμὴν αὐθαδίαν  
ὀργῆς τε τραχυτήτα μὴ πληρησέ μοι. 80
- HΦ. στείχωμεν, ὡς κώλοισιν ἀμφίβληστρ' ἔχει.

With this order of lines, the treatment of the arms remains unaltered except that Hephaestus' further compliance is signalled now not by line 63 but by line 72: 'I have no choice, don't keep telling me.' This is a perfectly good reply to the further command of lines 61-62, which, following as they do the series of three imperatives in line 58, provide a context of reiteration of orders which explains Hephaestus' irritated reaction. The fastening of the chest now falls properly into line, with the initial command to affix the bands (71) drawing the initial compliance: 'Nobody except him would criticize my work' (83). The note of rueful acknowledgement at the success of his own performance here matches the similar tone to be found in the two other initial expressions of compliance (57, 75), and the line functions perfectly in this position. Next comes the further command (64-65) with its demand for the bonds to be made more secure, for the chest-bands are to be reinforced by the horrific expedient of a wedge driven through the chest. After the vain laments and tergiversation of Hephaestus ominous threats introduce the further expression of compliance as in the manuscripts (69), and the process of shackling moves with an easy transition from line 70 to line 74, leaving the chest and attending to the legs, with which all is as before.

This order of lines achieves, I believe, a flawless sequence of commands and responses. The treatment of each part of the body now is fully parallel. The objectionable anticlimax in the timing of the use of the wedge is replaced by a climactic completion of the fastening of the chest, with the complementary summaries of lines 69-70 (ὀραῖς.....ὄρῳ.....), so clearly expressing the contrasting views of the two speakers, now perfectly rounding off the whole episode of the chest before we move on to the legs. Line 72 is much better placed in this new position, responding to a series of commands, than it is in the manuscript order, where it follows the single command of line 71 and thus must be taken with much less force as a general reaction to the whole situation. Finally, the specification 'now' at lines 61, 64

and 76 is concerned with the further command in dealing with each part of the body (although not actually introducing the further command as a whole at line 61) as if to imply that after Hephaestus has completed each task to a level which he thinks sufficient, he should in the judgement of Kratos now go on to make additions.

Without affecting the force of the above argument, which yields, I believe, a text superior to that of the manuscripts no matter what the precise function of the wedge is considered to be, the proposed transposition may have some bearing on the question of precisely how Aeschylus expected his audience to understand Prometheus to be fastened. In some respects the method seems to be related to that dismal form of execution called ἀποτυμπανισμός, in which it appears that the victim was spread-eagled against a board, to which he was at least in some cases fastened by iron clamps across the wrists, throat and ankles; the board was then set upright in the ground so that the miserable sufferer died of exposure in agony.<sup>2</sup> Prometheus, of course, needs to speak, which would be sufficient reason for his chest, rather than his throat, to be fastened, but it is certainly clear that he is, as it were, stapled to the rock by means of metal bands that go externally across his arms, chest and legs (52, 55, 71, 74, 81). However, in *Prometheus Lyomenos* Prometheus is apparently fastened by a number of wedges, used as nails it would seem, at a number of points on the body:

Saturnius me sic infixit Iuppiter,  
Iovisque numen Mulciberi adscivit manus.  
hos ille cuneos fabrica crudeli inserens  
perrupit artus; qua miser sollertia  
transverberatus castrum hoc Furiarum incolo.<sup>3</sup>

If this passage is taken at its face value, it would seem that two methods of securing Prometheus are in question, wedges that penetrate the body as well as bands that clamp it. And indeed in *PV* there are passages which might imply that the prisoner is pierced; cf. πόρπασον 61, διατόρους 76, προσπορπατός 141.

<sup>2</sup> The fundamental discussion is by A.D. Keramopoulou, 'Ο Ἀποτυμπανισμός (Athens 1923), who deals with *PV* from this angle on pp. 61-66. His views, as far as the mode of execution is concerned, are largely accepted by L. Gernet in his discussion of capital punishment in *REG* xxxvii (1924) 261-93, and by R.J. Bonner and G. Smith, *The administration of justice from Homer to Aristotle* ii (Chicago 1938) 279-87.

<sup>3</sup> Frag. 193. 5-9, in *TrGF* iii, ed. S. Radt (Göttingen 1985) 311. The fragment is discussed by H.D. Jocelyn, *YCS* xxiii (1973) 90-111, who suggests that Cicero in his translation may have paraphrased the Greek original with Roman crucifixion in mind. However, the wedge driven through the chest seems inescapable in *PV*, where the phrasing of line 65 (στέρνων διαμπᾶξ πασσάλει') certainly suggests that it is being used as a fastening implement; and if the chest, then perhaps the arms and legs too may be so secured. And indeed the plurals *hos ... cuneos* and *artus* seem overly emphatic for poetic plurals. On any interpretation the use of a wedge for the operation described seems odd; one might have expected a wedge to be used to tighten the bonds without piercing the body directly, but *PV* 65 appears to be incompatible with this view. Cicero, at least, must have thought the word *cuneus* applicable to a fastening implement which pierces, perhaps a sharp, tapering rivet with a broad blunt end, or he would hardly have written lines 6-8; and if so, Aeschylus may have used σφῆν likewise.

None of these passages, of course, obliges one to understand that Prometheus is actually transfixed, although that is the natural interpretation of line 76 above all. Nailing was a method used in Roman crucifixion, and similar practices may not have been unknown to the Greeks of Aeschylus' day.<sup>4</sup> I would suggest that the best way of reconciling the evidence for the fastening of the hero in the *Prometheia* is to see him as bound by semi-circular metal bands which are reinforced by nails the blunt ends of which are broad enough for the term 'wedge' to be applied to them. These wedges may either pierce the clamps and the body beneath,<sup>5</sup> or pierce the body adjacent to the clamps. If these somewhat lugubrious ruminations are on the right lines, then the transposition of lines proposed above makes the relationship between wedge and chest-bands intelligible: the wedge is not a single gratuitous instrument of torture, or a puzzled misinterpretation of Hesiod,<sup>6</sup> but a horrific reinforcement of the clamp applied to the chest in conformity with the parallel treatment of arms and legs. In each case the initial command contains a reference to external bonds (55, 71, 74), while the further command implies transfixing (61, 64-65, 76). Admittedly things are much clearer with the chest, and I take this to have been selected for extended dramatization simply because of its greater potential for dramatic impact. Prometheus is an immortal, and in a play where the only human character has a cow's head one should not grumble at a certain lack of realism. A wedge through the chest would terminate a mortal's agony, but enhances that of Prometheus and foreshadows the visitations of the vulture that will rend his liver through centuries to come. I should add that in my view fastening by means of a wedge or wedges could easily be represented in the theatre without either damage to the actor or recourse to a dummy figure.

The corruption may be explained as follows: as he copied his exemplar the scribe reached *ωθέστερος* at the end of line 62. After a moment's inattention his eye returned to the page and lighted on the similar ending *γῆ πρόσ* in line 73. Thinking that that was the last thing he had written, he went straight on with line 71, thus omitting lines 72-73 which he would insert at the bottom of the page, in fact after line 70, when he discovered his omission. The finished version would then run in this order, 60, 61, 62, 71, 63-70, 72 onwards. When this manuscript came to be copied in its turn, the new scribe was faced with a disruption of the pattern of exchanges, one speaker having three consecutive lines at 61, 62, 71, and with a manifest break in sense between lines 70 and 72. The very easiest way to restore sense would be to make the minimum change and move the one line 71 to follow line 70; the true correction, involving the moving of two lines, would appear at this point less attractive. With the transfer of line 71 effected the manuscript order was established in what turned out to be the sole representative of the tradition.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Under the generalship of Xanthippus a Greek force avenged atrocities committed by a Persian governor of Sestos by pegging (*διεπασσάλευσαν*) the perpetrator alive to a board (Herodotus vii 33); the prefix perhaps implies nailing; cf. *προσηλώσθαι* (Demosthenes xxi 105).

<sup>5</sup> See the illustration in E. Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel Bd. 2* (Berlin 1845), *Tafel* 139, where Prometheus is apparently held by a rivet through the centre of a band fixed across his wrist. The mirror, probably of the late fourth century BC, is sketched and discussed by K. Bapp, 'Prometheus', *Roscher Lex.* col. 3093, fig. 5(a), and discussed also by L. Eckhart, 'Prometheus', *RE* xxiii 1 (1957) coll. 712-716, who notes that the mirror is known only in Gerhard's drawing, so that precise dating is impossible.

<sup>6</sup> See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 522. The wedge is so taken by M. Griffith, *Aeschylus. Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge 1983) 64-65.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of such an accidental dislocation compounded by a deliberate attempt at correction by transposition are hard to come by. For an instance exhibiting a degree of complexity similar to that which I suppose for *PV* I refer to Euripides *Heraclidae* 683-91, as corrected by G. Zuntz, *The political plays of Euripides* (Manchester 1955) 113-14 and printed in J. Diggle, *Euripidis Fabulae* 1 (Oxford 1984), whose text I give:

Ιο. καὶ μὴ μετασχεῖν γ' ἀλκίμου μάχης φίλοις.	683
Θε. οὐκ ἔστιν, ὦ τᾶν, ἢ ποτ' ἦν ῥώμη σέθεν.	688
Ιο. ἀλλ' οὖν μαχοῦμαι γ' ἀριθμὸν οὐκ ἐλάσσοσιν.	689
Θε. σμικρὸν τὸ σὸν σήκωμα προστίθης φίλοις.	690
Ιο. οὐδεὶς ἔμ' ἐχθρῶν προσβλέπων ἀνέξεται.	687
Θε. οὐκ ἔστ' ἐν ὄψει τραύμα μὴ δρώσης χερὸς.	684
Ιο. τί δ'; οὐ θένομι κἄν ἐγὼ δι' ἀσπίδος;	685
Θε. θένοις ἄν, ἀλλὰ πρόσθεν αὐτὸς ἄν πέσοις.	686
Ιο. μὴ τοῖ μ' ἔρυκε δρᾶν παρεσκευασμένον.	691

In the manuscripts two groups of three lines (684-686 and 688-690) have changed places, the error being partly explicable on mechanical grounds (e.g. homoearchon at lines 688 and 684) leading to the omission of some lines which would be later reinstated at the wrong place. However, if the scribe's eye went straight from line 683 to line 684 he would have overlooked not just three lines but four (688-687 as printed above), which would yield a line order 683, 684, 685, 686, 688, 689, 690, 687, 691. Zuntz explains the arrival of line 687 in the place where it is actually found as a subsequent deliberate transposition to patch up the text produced by the accidental disturbance. If this is correct, the transposer moved line 687 in order to preserve the stichomythia, for otherwise there would be consecutive lines for the servant (686, 688) and for Iolaus (687, 691). The implied level of awareness of the stichomythic pattern on the part of the transposer resembles that which I ascribe to the would-be corrector in *PV* who introduced the second stage of corruption in an attempt to preserve the pattern of exchanges. Zuntz's emendation is accepted by J. Wilkins, *Euripides Heraclidae* (Oxford 1993). A very similar double process of corruption is posited at Euripides, *IT* 766-84, by J. Jackson, cf. *Marginalia scaenica* (Oxford 1955) 9-12 (not accepted by Diggle). For an example of a two-stage corruption at the very simplest level in Ovid, see J. Willis, *Latin textual criticism* (Urbana 1972) 149.