

Sophocles, Ajax 799 and 802

Autor(en): **Allen, Archibald**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica**

Band (Jahr): **47 (1990)**

Heft 3

PDF erstellt am: **29.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-36897>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

Sophocles, Ajax 799 and 802

By Archibald Allen, University Park, Pennsylvania

I offer here some conjectures on two lines of the Ajax, printed below as they appear in R. D. Dawe's Teubner text of the play (Sophoclis Tragoediae I, Leipzig 1975).

Tecmessa has asked the Messenger where Teucer is and why he has ordered Ajax to be kept in his tent. He replies:

πάρεστ' ἐκεῖνος ἄρτι· τήνδε δ' ἔξοδον
799 † ὀλευρίαν Αἴαντος ἐλπίζει φέρειν†

Dawe's critical note on 799 reads: "ἐλπίζοι N^{sc} ἐλπίζων Q ἐλπίζειν A φέρειν] πέλειν Blaydes, et infinitivi aliis alii placent: φρενί mavult Dawe, sed si error ex φέρει (802) ortus est, possis ex. gr. etiam πάλαι supplere. at cave ne Αἴαντος glossema sit quod veram lectionem expulerit: ex. gr. ὀλευρίαν τιν' αἴσαν." Heeding the latter warning, I suggest that Sophocles wrote:

ὀλευρίον τι τάνδρος ἐλπίζει φέρειν

Teucer then will be said to expect that the forbidden exit brings 'something destructive of the man'. For the objective genitive with ὀλευρίος, one may compare Aesch. Ag. 1156, γάμοι Πάριδος ὀλευριοί φίλων (Kühner-Gerth 1, 371). The crasis τάνδρος = Ajax is found elsewhere in the play, at 119. 220. 806; it will have elicited a gloss here because of its proximity to ἐκεῖνος = Teucer in the preceding line. When Αἴαντος displaced τάνδρος, τι too was lost, and ὀλευρίον became feminine, after ἔξοδον.

To Tecmessa's next question, on the source of Teucer's information (800, τοῦ ποτ' ἀνθρώπων μαθών;), the Messenger answers:

τοῦ Θεστορείου μάντεως καὶ ἡμέραν
802 † τὴν νῦν ὅτ' † αὐτῷ θάνατον ἢ βίον φέρει.

That the subject of φέρει cannot be the destructive ἔξοδος mentioned in 798 – as, for example, Jebb and Kamerbeek supposed¹ – is clear from the alternance of the verb's objects, death and life. Nor can the seer Calchas be the subject, since φέρει must then mean 'portends' or 'intimates'², a meaning without parallel.

1 See Jebb's discussion in his large edition of the play (Cambridge 1896), and J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles I: The Ajax* (Leiden 1963) ad loc.

2 So L. Campbell, *Sophocles II* (Oxford 1881) ad loc. ("This very day, in which he intimates that life or death is in store for him"). To obtain a proper reference to Calchas' prophetic utterance, Blaydes emended φέρει to ὑποεῖ (in his edition of 1875), but the corruption would be unlikely.

Dawe felt that the subject can only be *ἡμέρα*: “one thinks of the similar idea at O.T. 438 *ἥδ’ ἡμέρα φύσει σε καὶ διαφύρει*. Some of our MSS felt this, and wrote unmetrical sense by substituting *ἦτ’* for *ὅτ’* ...” (*Studies on the Text of Sophocles I*, Leiden 1973, 152). Hence his obelised *τὴν νῦν ὅτ’*, along with this suggested emendation: *τὴνδ’, ἥτις αὐτῷ θάνατον ἢ βίον φέρει*³. But *τὴν νῦν*, after *καὺ’ ἡμέραν*, sounds just right; compare, for ‘this very day’ here, O.C. 2–3, *καὺ’ ἡμέραν / τὴν νῦν*.

I would suggest, therefore, that the *ὅτε* clause should stand, but that its subject is Ajax himself, and that Sophocles wrote not *φέρει* but *τρέφει* at the end of the line. Read:

τὴν νῦν ὅτ’ αὐτὸς θάνατον ἢ βίον τρέφει

‘... when he will have death or life as his very own.’ Emphatic *αὐτὸς* will stress self-determination⁴; on hearing the Messenger’s words, Tecmessa realises immediately that Ajax is bent on *self*-destruction, that she was deceived earlier by his apparent rejection of suicide (cf. 807, *ἔγνωκα ... ἡπατημένη*). And *τρέφει* will be a ‘futuristic’ or ‘prophetic’ present (Schwyzer, *Griech. Gramm.* 2, 273). Sophocles’ figurative use of *τρέφειν* is notable (cf. LSJ s.v. II 6). It is a *vox Sophoclea*, says Kamerbeek of *τρέφει* at Ai. 503, *οἷας λατρείας ... τρέφει* (‘what menial tasks are hers’, in Jebb’s translation); and at 1124, *ἡ γλῶσσά σου τὸν θυμὸν ὥς δεινὸν τρέφει* (= ‘only in your speech do you have courage’), he notes that “Soph. has a special liking for *τρέφειν* in the sense of a somewhat dynamic *ἔχειν*”, comparing O.T. 356 (*τάληθες γὰρ ἰσχυρὸν τρέφω*) and Ant. 897 (*κάρτ’ ἐν ἐλπίσιν τρέφω*). One may also compare Tr. 817, *ὄγκον ... ὀνόματος ... τί δεῖ τρέφειν*, cited by Jebb on Ai. 503 (see above), and O.T. 374, *μῖα τρέφῃ πρὸς νυκτός*, cited by W. S. Barrett on Eur., Hipp. 367 (*ὃ πόνοι τρέφοντες βροτούς*) with this note: “Soph. in particular allows *τρέφω* to extend from ‘maintain, keep’ (living creatures, animal and human) to ‘have as one’s own’ in a variety of ways ...” Even when used figuratively, however, *τρέφειν* must carry connotations of ‘nourishing’ or ‘nurturing’, and those would not be out of place in the present line⁵. Ajax will ‘nurture’ death in his suicide.

If *ὅτ’ αὐτὸς ... τρέφει* is what Sophocles wrote, *τρέφει* was easily mis-copied as *φέρει*, especially after the occurrence of *φέρειν* at the end of 799, and *αὐτός* was then changed to *αὐτῷ* to provide an indirect object for the verb.

3 He notes that *ἥτις* “is a gloss in some MSS which hopefully offer *ἦτ’* for *ὅτ’* ...” (*Studies I* 152).

4 Cf. 1099, *οὐκ αὐτὸς ἐξέπλευσεν ...*; (‘of his own accord’), cited by A. C. Moorhouse, *The Syntax of Sophocles* (Leiden 1982) 139, s.v. *αὐτός*.

5 W. B. Stanford (*Sophocles, Ajax*, London 1963) traces what he calls a “nurture theme” in the play. So, for example, Tecmessa will have a slave’s livelihood (499, *δουλίαν ... τροφήν*) and will ‘nurture’ servile chores (503, *λατρείας ... τρέφει*) when deprived of the protection or ‘nurture’ of her husband; Ajax will entrust Eurysaces to Teucer who will be steadfast in the boy’s *τροφή* (562ff.); and Ajax bids farewell to the springs, rivers, and plains of Troy, *τροφῆς ἐμοί* (863).