In the tragic trimeters of an unknown author transmitted by PSI 1303 (= TrGF Ad. F 665 Kannicht-Snell) Eteocles and Polynices debate before Jocasta, who has contrived an interview between them. The dialogue quickly degenerates into a violent quarrel that thwarts the mother’s attempt to reconciliation.

The nature of this text, its date and above all its relation with the first episode of Euripides’ Phoenissae are debated. I shall delay

1 I would like to thank Luigi Battezzato for helpful comments on the subject discussed in this paper. I am also grateful to the two anonymous readers of the journal for their useful suggestions.

1 The fragment, written on the verso of a documentary papyrus found by Evaristo Breccia at Oxyrhynchus was first published by Medea Norsa and Girolamo Vitelli in 1935 (“Rifacimento di una scena delle Fenicie di Euri-pide”, Ann. R. Sc. Norm. Sup. Pisa, Classe di Lettere, Storia e Filosofia, s. II, 4, 1935, 14–6) and later included in the collection of the Papiri della Società Italiana with the number 1303 (cf. Papiri Greci e Latini, vol. XIII, fasc. 1, a cura di M. Norsa, Firenze, 1949, 57–60). I have examined a photograph kept in the library of the Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli”, Florence. The hand of the recto was dated to A.D. II by the first editors; that of the verso seemed to them “poco più recente”. In the edition of PSI 1303 Norsa assigned the latter to A.D. III (Papiri Greci e Latini, 57). Changes of speaker are marked by ἔκθεσις; there are no sigla, but the content of the dialogue allows to attribute many verses with certainty. Norsa and Vitelli, “Rifacimento di una scena delle Fenicie”, 14–15 labelled the fragment as a late reworking of the first episode of Euripides’ Phoenissae (446–637), a poor schoolroom exercise probably contemporary with the manuscript (see also Norsa, Papiri Greci e Latini, 60). They admitted however that the similarities with the Phoenissae are less strict than those normally found in texts of this kind (see for example the reworking of Verg. Aen. 1.477 ff. in PSI142). Relevant differences may be detected indeed between the fragment and Euripides. Polynices hands his sword to Jocasta; she bids him swear that he will abide by her verdict; the two brothers speak to each other,
to another occasion a thorough discussion of this subject. Here I focus only on the problems of ll. 10-13.

<ET.> Ἐτεοκλέης διδοὺς σκῆπτρα συγγόνον φὲρειν δειλὸς παρὰ βροτοῖς, εἰτέ μοι, νομίζεται;
<ΠΟ.> σὺ γὰρ οὐκ ἄν ἐδίδους μὴ στρατοὺς ἀγοντί μο[ν
<ET.> τὸ μὴ θέλειν σὸν ἔστι, τὸ δὲ δοῦναι τύχης·
<ΠΟ.> ἐμοὶ προσάπτεις ὅν σὺ δράς τὰς αἰτίας·  σὺ φέρειν γὰρ ἡµᾶς πολεµίου<ν> ἔχεις ἠ[νάκασας·
<ΠΟ.> εἰ γὰρ ἐμέρ[ι]ξες τὸ διάδηµ' ἀτερ µάχης,
<ΠΟ.> τις ἦν ἄναγκη τοῦ φέρειν στράτευµ' ἐµὲ;

Quae non notantur suppl. Norsa et Vitelli || 8-9 interr.
Page was the first to detect a difficulty in the passage: “I do not see how v. 11 can be interpreted to follow v. 10”. It is not easy indeed to explain how the words “you would not have offered it [scil. the sceptre], had I not brought armies hither” (10, Page’s translation) could be the cue for the answer “not to wish is in your power: granting your will, in Fortune’s” (11)³. Page suggested that something has been lost between 10 and 11, probably a question or a reproach by Eteocles that triggered Polynices’ answer at 12-13. Eteocles should have argued something like “you have brought an army to attack your own country”⁴.

Norsa rejected this proposal by emphasizing the connection between τὸ δὲ δοῦναι τύχης at 11 and οὐκ ἂν ἐδίδους at 10, that would be spoiled by the insertion of one or more lines between them (cf. also δοὺς σκῆπτρα at 8)⁵. She did not make any attempt, however, to solve the problem noticed by Page: the inconsistency of the passage, like other obscurities of the fragment, seemed to her a consequence of the mediocrity of the author.

A few years later Garzya, who accepted the argument of Norsa against Page’s lacuna, called attention to another difficulty of the passage: the unclear transition from 11 to 12-3. He observed that the words of Eteocles at 11 (“è in tuo potere il non volere, ma il concedere è della sorte”, in his translation) can hardly be interpreted as the appropriate antecedent for Polynices’ answer “a me attribuisci le cause di ciò che tu provochi”. According to Garzya, ll. 12-3 offer the response to a lost reproach by Eteocles, whose content should have been equivalent to Eur. Ph. 605 τις

³ The response of Eteocles at v. 11 would be understandable if τὸ μὴ θέλειν could be interpreted as “not to want that I retain the power”. This seems impossible, however, since an unexpressed object for θέλειν can be extracted only from the content of l. 10, where Polynices talks about διδόναι σκῆπτρα and στρατοὺς ἄγειν.

⁴ Page, Greek Literary Papyri, 176. In order to corroborate his suggestion, Page adds that the scribe “is evidently not copying the passage consecutively, but only certain portions of it”.

⁵ Norsa, Papiri Greci e Latini, 60. She also reacted to the statement of Page quoted above (n. 4): “questa supposizione non sembra giustificata dai fatti […] e soprattutto risulta inutile in base alla sostanziale mediocrità di tutto il brano”.

δ’ ἂν κλύοι σου πατρίδ’ ἐπεστρατευµένου; and 609 ἀλλ’ οὐ πατρίδος ός σὺ πολέµιος. In other words, we are led again to the hypothesis of a lacuna, to be placed after l. 11 instead than before it⁶. This solution is based on Garzya’s main thesis, i.e. that the fragment is part of a large-scale reworking of Euripides’ Phoenissae (see above, n. 1). This is far from certain, however, and even if a direct connection of the fragment with Euripides could be demonstrated, the suggestion that the content of the lacuna was similar to Ph. 605 and 609 would still be questionable.

I would not follow then either Page or Garzya in marking a lacuna before or after l. 11⁷. Nonetheless, I am persuaded that they were right in asserting that something is wrong in the sequence 10-3. In my view, the problem lies with the content of l. 11, which in the transmitted form seems inappropriate to the context. Why should Eteocles underline the obvious fact that it is in his brother’s power “not to wish” (τὸ µὴ θέλειν), i.e. to give up his decision to fight? Moreover, it is not easy to understand in what sense τὸ µὴ θέλειν can be opposed to τὸ δὲ δοῦναι, the latter being described as Fortune’s prerogative. The structure of the sentence makes likely that θέλειν and δοῦναι have the same unexpressed object (i.e. “to obtain the power by fighting”)⁹: but if Polynices decided “not to wish” to fight for the reign, he would have no need of Fortune’s assistance to see his wish fulfilled.

What one would expect here from Eteocles, as a response to his brother’s mention of the necessity of an armed expedition, is a reference to the uncertainty of the outcome of war, which very rarely corresponds to human expectations. It may be

⁷ Kannicht and Snell, TrGF 2, 252 print 10-13 as they stand in the papyrus, noting in the apparatus “ante 11 lac. statuit Page, post 11 Garzya”.
⁸ See the translation of Kannicht et al., Musa Tragica, 265: “Verzichten steht in deiner Macht, in der des Schicksals, zu gewähren”.
⁹ It would be very harsh to understand two different objects in order to translate “you have only the power not to wish (to fight for the reign): the power to give you back (the reign) is in the hands of Fortune”. Even if one could put up with this, anyway, the response of Polynices at 12 would remain difficult to explain.
noted (though the coincidence is probably only incidental) that
the same argument occurs in the last peroration that Seneca’s
Jocasta addresses to Polynices (Sen. Ph. 625-9): nunc belli
mala | propone, dubias Martis incerti vices. | licet omne
tecum Graeciae robur trahas, | licet arma longe miles ac late
explicit, | fortuna belli semper ancipiti in loco est. A very
slight correction gives us the expected sentence, by restoring a
natural couple μὲν / δὲ:

τὸ μὲν θέλειν σὼν ἐστί, τὸ δὲ δοῦναι τύχης
“to wish is in your power: granting your will, in
Fortune’s”\(^\text{10}\).

Polynices can only θέλειν to obtain the power over Thebes by
fighting: τὸ δοῦναι (\textit{i.e.} to grant that his wish will come true) is
a different matter, that ultimately depends on τύχη\(^\text{11}\).

The main advantage of this emendation is that it restores a
smooth transition both from 10 to 11 and from 11 to 12-3, thus
making any hypothesis of lacuna unnecessary. By saying at 10 σὺ
γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἐδίδους µὴ στρατοὺς ἄγοντί µοι, Polynices implies
that the threat of the impending battle should persuade Eteocles
to surrender, unless he wants to see Thebes destroyed. Eteocles
reacts at 11 by reminding his brother \textit{quantum in bello fortuna
possit}, as Caesar put it\(^\text{12}\): Polynices should not be over-confident
in planning what only Fortune can decide.

\(^\text{10}\) The cause of the corruption may have been the confusion between N
and H, and the subsequent fall of E (MEN > MEH > MH), or perhaps the
presence of another µή at l. 10.

\(^\text{11}\) For the dependence of the outcome of war on τύχη see for example
Thuc. I 78 τοῦ δὲ πολέμου τὸν παράλογον, ὡσος ἐστὶ, πρὶν ἐν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι
προδιάγνωστον: µηκυνόµενος γὰρ φιλεῖ ἐς τύχας τὰ πολλὰ περιίσταται,
ἐὼν ἵνα τε ἀπέχοµεν καὶ ὁποτέρως ἐσται ἐν ἀδήλῳ κινδυνεύεται and
Isoc. Archid. 92 εἰσὶ δὲ αἱ τῶν πόλεων κακίαι καταφανεῖς οὐχ ἤττον ἐν
tois τοιούτοις βουλεύσαι ἢ tois ἐν τῷ πολέµῳ κινδυνός. Τὸν µὲν
γὰρ ἐκεῖ χαλκομένου τὸ πλεῖστον µέρος τῇ τύχης μέτεστιν. The same idea
is widespread in Latin authors: see the note to Sen. Ph. 625-9 in M. Frank,

\(^\text{12}\) Caes. Bell. Gall. VI 35.2: hic \textit{quantum in bello fortuna possit et}
quantos adferat casus cognosci potuit.
As for the connection between 11 and 12–3, it becomes fully understandable now that at 11 Eteocles ascribes to his brother the will (τὸ θέλειν) to put an end to the quarrel by the use of force. This is the same as accusing him of being responsible for the war. Hence the strong reaction of Polynices, who turns the accusation back upon his opponent: “the blame you fasten on me, but the deeds are yours! It was you that compelled me to bring enemies”.

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