I

PASSIVE VERBS AND AGENT CONSTRUCTIONS

Beginning students of Ancient Greek soon learn that the agent of a passive verb is marked with the preposition ὑπό followed by the genitive.[1] Then, of course, the exceptions come to light. The most common of these is the dative of agent, which, for the beginner at least, may be explained away as occurring with perfect passives and -τέος verbals. Later, however, one comes across other irregularities, notably the use of prepositions other than ὑπό$^{+G}$. The conditions that motivate these apparently anomalous agent markers have not yet been satisfactorily explained. The aim of this book is to do so.

I begin with an introductory chapter that lays a theoretical foundation for the work and discusses the reasons why these passive-with-agent constructions (PACs) occur in the first place. In Chapter 2, I move on to Homer, as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* represent the earliest texts that are syntactically complex enough to have PACs. Because the Homeric data are so different from the later evidence – in particular, these constructions are far less common in Homer – they are best dealt with separately. Next, in Chapter 3, I look at the dative of agent. It is relatively well understood already – it occurs most prominently with perfect verbs – but one question in particular deserves further treatment: When do perfect verbs take ὑπό$^{+G}$ rather than the dative one might otherwise expect? Then, Chapter 4 treats the central issue I shall examine, namely, the conditions motivating the use of prepositions other than ὑπό$^{+G}$ as agent markers in the classical prose authors. Because these conditions were different for poetry than for prose, I reserve discussion of tragedy and comedy for Chapter 5. Finally, in Chapter 6, I trace the development of agent constructions in post-classical Greek, ending with the Byzantine Greek of Digenis Akritis.

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[1] Henceforth I shall refer to the use of a preposition governing a particular case as e.g. ὑπό$^{+G}$.

I

Passive voice

If this work is to explain the conditions that influence what agent
marker is used in a PAC, it must first set out guidelines for determin-
ing what constitutes such a construction. Essentially, such guide-
lines must be formulated so as to identify the two components
of a PAC, a passive verb and an agent. Now the idea of a pas-
sive verb at first glance would seem fairly straightforward to most
speakers of English, who will be familiar with the passive voice
of their native language. If a verb occurs in the passive voice, then
the subject of the verb is not the agent, but rather the patient of
the action of the verb. Broadly speaking, such an account is suf-
ficient to describe the voice system of English, and, indeed, it is
the opposition between active and passive that has dominated the
Anglo-American literature on voice. But, while it will be the focus
of this study as well, the situation is more complicated in Greek,
where, in addition to the active and passive, there is also a middle
voice, the general function of which is to indicate that the effects of
the action described by the verb in some way affect the subject of
the verb.[2] Additionally, it will be crucial to maintain a distinction
between the form and function of a voice. For, as the Greek passive
was only ever partially independent of the middle, the two could
quite easily be confused: a middle form can have a passive function
and vice versa.[3] Such contamination is not surprising in light of
the overlap between the functions of the middle and passive.

Now the voice opposition most prominent in theoretical linguis-
tics is the contrast of active and passive voice, as proponents of
transformational grammar have taken it up as an example of a
transformation exhibiting noun-phrase movement in the shift from
deep to surface structure.[4] This approach is sensible, because it is,

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[2] In addition to expressing the active-passive and active-middle oppositions that are of
   interest here, voice can also be used as a marker of various pragmatic functions, including
   focus constructions and direct/inverse systems. For a discussion of this type of voice, see
   Klaiman 1991: 31–5.

[3] Cf. Th. 1.2.1 βιαζόμενοι ὑπό τινων on the one hand, the aorists of the so-called passive
   deponents like ἐμάνην on the other. Andersen considers the -(θ)η- aorists to be active
   rather than passive in form and derives their passive significance from a 1-valence value
   assigned to the suffix -(θ)η- (1993: 198–201). See also the following note.

[4] See Chomsky 1957: 42–3 and 1965: 103–6, Radford 1988: 420–35; Van Valin 2001:
   172–225 provides a brief synopsis of recent syntactic theories, with particular attention

in most cases, easy to trace the relation between a passive sentence and its active "prototype." In essence, the passive voice rearranges the relations of the verb to its core nominals (that is, the subject and object), in particular indicating a reduction in the verb's valence (that is, a transitive verb becomes intransitive). Generally, this process involves the demotion of the subject of the unmarked construction (usually the agent) to an oblique relation in the marked construction, typically accompanied by the promotion of the object (usually the patient) to the subject relation.[5] Diagrammatically, with brackets indicating optional elements:

Subj	Vb-Act	Obj		Subj	Vb-Pass	[Obliq]
|		|	→	|		|
Agt		Pat		Pat		[Agt]
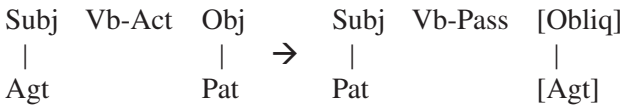
The English passive fits in well with this schema:

Achilles killed Hector   →   *Hector was killed [by Achilles]*

to how they treat the passive. Andersen takes a different view of the passive, arguing that what are commonly called passive markers are in fact usually markers of monovalency (and not valence-reduction) (1994: 27–8). The passive would then be "synergetically" determined by means of contextual inferences from the presence of a monovalent verb, a middle verb, or indeed any other verb whose semantics are potentially passive. He argues this position from the occurrence of (i) non-passive -(θ)η- (see 1993: 99 for examples, most notably in Homer, but also ἐπορεύθησαν, ὡρμήθησαν, ὑπελείφθη in Thucydides), (ii) middle forms used as passives, (iii) active verbs in passive constructions (the type πίπτω ὑπό). However, it must be noted that there are -(θ)η- aorists that are polyvalent, contradicting Andersen's hypothesis. Two examples: *Il.* 4.402 αἰδεσθεὶς βασιλῆος ἐνίπην αἰδοίοιο, Lys. 2.40 ἢ τίς τῆς τόλμης αὐτοὺς οὐκ ἂν ἠγάσθη; Considering that in the aorist, where a three-way opposition exists (e.g. ἔλυσα: ἐλυσάμην: ἐλύθην), the third form functions as a valence-reducing, object-promoting voice, it seems best to call this a passive. Additionally, Andersen places high importance on the Greek dichotomy of active and middle endings in his treatment of voice. Yet in Attic Greek, the futures in -(θ)ήσομαι play roughly the same role as the aorists in -(θ)ην, suggesting that these two formations should be considered as different tenses of the same voice, not as representing two different voices. It was, after all, the existence of the specifically passive forms in -(θ)ην that led to the creation of the -(θ)ήσομαι forms in the first place (Hartmann 1935: 127). Note further that, just as -(θ)ην and -σάμην were interchangeable, so too were -σομαι and -(θ)ήσομαι (Schwyzer–Debrunner 1950: 238).

5 Other variations on the passive include the impersonal passive with a dummy subject "Es wurde im Nebenzimmer geredet" (Palmer 1994: 127–32) and the promotion of roles besides the patient. Malagasy, for instance, in addition to a passive that promotes the patient, also has a "circumstantial" voice that promotes the dative and instrumental (*ibid.* 125, with examples). Similarly, in response to English constructions like "He was given a new tie," Fillmore sees the passive as a means of marking the choice of a "nonnormal" subject: "The verb *give* also allows either O[bject] or D[ative] to appear as subject as long as this 'nonnormal' choice is 'registered' in the V. This 'registering' of a 'nonnormal' subject takes places via the association of the feature [+passive] with the V" (1968: 37).

The primary functions of the passive follow naturally from the syntactic remappings it occasions. First, the passive can be used when it is advantageous for the patient of the action to be the grammatical subject, either pragmatically, because it is a narrative theme, or syntactically, so that it may serve as a pivot. As an example of the first, Palmer offers, "The child ran into the road. He was hit by the car" (1994: 136). The second is illustrated by the frequent use of passive participles in many different Indo-European (IE) languages. As Jamison notes, "A passive *participle* is of far more use in speech [than a finite passive verb], for it provides a more concise and elegant means than a relative clause of embedding into a matrix clause any clause whose object would be coreferential with a noun phrase in the matrix clause" (1979b: 203, italics hers). Secondly, a speaker can use the passive to avoid naming the agent, because it is so obvious as to be unnecessary, or because it is unknown, or even to obfuscate the responsibility for an action. Not all languages, however, are able to express the agent of a passive verb. Latvian provides the textbook IE example of a passive that cannot construe with an agent.[6] Still, Greek can express the agent, and it is precisely the variety of its agent constructions that makes it so interesting.

The middle voice, on the other hand, best known to linguists from its occurrence in Greek and Sanskrit, cannot be reduced to a similarly neat syntactic description.[7] Unlike the passive, which has a relatively clear syntactic function, the middle can only be

[6] The agent can, however, be expressed in informal language (Nau 1998: 37).

[7] Cf. Brugmann 1916: 688–9, Delbrück 1897: 428–30 for warnings against neat syntactic divisions among the uses of the middle. Barber 1975 attempts to make just such divisions by positing that the middle voice signals the identity of the subject nominal with various grammatical relations in the predicate. For example, middle marking on a verb with a direct object would indicate that the subject is to be understood as the indirect object (thus, αἱροῦμαι μοῖραν would be equivalent to αἱρῶ μοι μοῖραν). However, Klaiman notes that this model would not account for detransitivizing middle usages such as ὁ κλὼν κάμπτεται, which by Barber's reasoning would have to be interpreted as reflexive (1991: 28). The position that the middle cannot be readily defined in syntactic terms is lent support by the frequent misuse of the middle by non-native speakers. This difficulty is seen in the deterioration in active-middle distinctions in Koine (Wackernagel 1950: 123–4) as well as the problems foreign speakers of Spanish have in correctly using *se* in constructions like *Juan se cayó del tercer piso* "Juan fell (unintentionally) from the third floor" (example from Arce-Arenales *et al.* 1994: 6).

defined in vague, semantic terms as indicating that the effects of the action in some way accrue back to the subject.[8] Consider the two sentences: ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς φέρει τὸ δέπας and ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς φέρεται τὸ δέπας. The difference between the active and middle sentences does not lie in so discrete a factor as the valence of the verb, for, in both sentences, the verb predicates two arguments, an agent-subject and a patient-object. Rather, the use of the middle indicates that the action affects the subject to a greater extent. Achilles does not simply carry the goblet, but rather has an additional interest in the object: he wins it. This definition of voice accounts for all the functions of the IE middle described by Wackernagel, including direct and indirect reflexives, reciprocals, and verbs of taking (the type μισθόω "let out for hire": μισθόομαι "hire") (1950: 124–9).[9] An additional difference between the middle and the passive is that a voice like the IE middle does not seem to be subsidiary to the active: just as there are verbs that only occur in the active, so too there are verbs only found in the middle.[10] Furthermore, passive forms can correspond to a middle as well as an active: αἱρεθῆναι

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[8] Here are some of the various definitions of the middle. Benveniste: "Dans le moyen . . . le verbe indique un procès dont le sujet est le siège; le sujet est intérieur au procès" (1950: 125). Lyons: "The implications of the middle (when it is in opposition with the active) are that the 'action' or 'state' affects the subject of the verb or his inter-ests" (1968: 373). Strunk argues that the primary function of the middle is to denote "Verhaltensträger-Orientierung" but notes that other verbs exercise this function simply by virtue of their lexical semantics (*moritur* vs. *vivit*) (1980: 323). Andersen has refuted Klaiman's attempt at a rigid definition (1994: 49–61). Still, her initial characterization of the middle is still valid and in line with the other definitions: "[Voice systems like the middle] reflect alternations of the subject's status *vis-à-vis* the denoted action, in terms of whether or not the principal effects of the action devolve upon the subject" (1991: 11). In Andersen's opinion, the middle corresponds to Dionysius Thrax's term πάθος and denotes "the fact that the [subject] stood in an *experiential* 'disposition' to the predication, i.e., it represented that particular participant which experiences the predication" (1994: 35, italics his). Finally, compare Pāṇini's terms for the active and middle, *parasmai padam* "word for another" and *ātmane padam* "word for oneself" respectively.

[9] It is certainly true that some of these functions could be described in syntactic terms. The last type, for instance, could be seen as a remapping of the beneficiary of the active μισθόω to the subject slot of the middle μισθόομαι. But, unlike the passive, which can consistently be defined in terms of a single syntactic remapping, the only common element to the various uses of the middle is the nebulous idea that the subject is somehow more affected by the action in question.

[10] For this reason, Klaiman terms the middle a "basic" voice, as opposed to a "derived" voice like the passive.

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can mean either "to be captured, taken," as a passive to the active, or "to be chosen," as a passive to the middle.[11]

It might seem tempting, then, to view the passive and middle voices as phenomena of quite different natures. The passive, on the one hand, always has a discrete effect on the syntax of the sentence: detransitivization accompanied by promotion of the object. The middle, on the other, need have no visible syntactic consequences: it merely emphasizes the subject's affectedness. To make a clear distinction between the two, however, would be wrong. A voice defined as vaguely as the middle can in fact be used with precisely the same syntactic effect as the passive.[12] Indeed, the passive could be described as an extreme case of subject-affectedness. As proof of the middle's ability to act as a passive, one need only consider the Greek use of the middle outside the aorist and future as the standard passive formation (the type λύομαι ὑπό) or the Russian use of the reflexive as a passive (*Novoe zdanie stroitsja inženerami* "The new building is being constructed by the engineers").[13] Accordingly, I will use the term passive in a functional sense to denote verb detransitivization accompanied by object-promotion, whether this be achieved by a morphologically distinct passive marking or through the use of a middle voice that encompasses other functions as well.

One further debate about the passive has concerned the role of the agent: is it necessary that there be some means of expressing the agent in order for a verb to be called a passive?[14] To some extent, this is a trivial question, as it is simply a matter of nomenclature whether or not one defines the passive so as to include instances of detransitivization with object-promotion that do not allow the agent to be expressed. Still, Klaiman does seek to distinguish sharply between the two types of detransitivization. In her view, the passive voice suppresses or downgrades the subject-agent

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[11] Kühner-Gerth: "Die Formen des passiven Aorist- und Perfektstammes können ihrer Bedeutung nach ebenso zum Medium, wie zum Aktiv gehören" (1898: 26). Examples from X. *An.*: (passive of the active) 5.4.26 ἐν τῷ πρότερον αἱρεθέντι χωρίῳ, (passive of the middle) 3.1.46 αἱρεῖσθε . . . ἄρχοντας . . . καὶ τοὺς αἱρεθέντας ἄγετε.

[12] See Kemmer 1993: 147–9.   [13] This example is taken from Kemple 1993: 64.

[14] See Schmidt 1963 and Jankuhn 1969: 22–7 for summaries and discussion of the views of Wackernagel, Meillet, Kuryłowicz, and others on the necessity (or not) of the agent-expression in defining the passive.

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but does not eliminate the logical notion of an agent; accordingly, it leaves scope for the agent to be expressed by grammatical means. In the sentence *The tree was felled*, an agent (e.g. a lumberjack) causing the falling of the tree is implied, if not explicitly stated, and could be expressed using the preposition *by*. The detransitivizing middle voice, however, termed an anticausative,[15] would have no logical agent assigned, as it "[expresses] spontaneous events, i.e. situations presupposing no participant's control" (Klaiman 1991: 83–4). In the sentence *The tree fell*, the force that brought about the action is not implied, and could not be introduced into the sentence by means of a grammaticalized preposition like *by*.[16]

But while it is valid to distinguish between two types of detransitivization – one that allows for the expression of the agent, one that does not – it is best not to align that difference with the distinction between passive and middle voice. On the one hand, there are voices like the Greek middle and Russian reflexive, best viewed as middles owing to their wide range of uses, that can detransitivize, promote the object, and express the agent with an oblique nominal. On the other hand, there are also voices like the Latvian and Arabic passive, which, as they do little more than detransitivize and promote the object, are best described as passives, but cannot express the agent. Accordingly, one should not consider the inability to express the agent to be particularly characteristic of the middle. It would be better either to call the syntax of detransitivization and object-promotion passive in all cases, noting that some passives allow expression of the agent while others do not, or to call such constructions passive only if the agent can be expressed, and anticausative otherwise. In any event, as this study is concerned with how the agent of a detransitivized verb is expressed, it is of little importance here whether detransitivized verbs that cannot be construed with an oblique agent are to be considered passive.

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[15] Others use the term "neuter" for such a use of the middle.

[16] I treat both *be felled* and *fall* as intransitive verbs corresponding to the transitive *fell*. The first is a passive; the second, although not a grammaticalized anticausative (*fall*, of course, being the verb from which the causative *fell* was formed secondarily), nevertheless illustrates the point adequately for a language that does not have a middle voice. It is true that, in Greek, agents can be expressed by grammatical means with verbs such as πίπτω and ἀποθνήσκω. But these intransitives, though active in form, do act as lexical passives to corresponding transitive verbs, such as ἀποκτείνω.

One final point remains. Most frequently it is the semantic role of agent that is mapped to the subject relation of an active sentence and consequently demoted to the oblique in the passive.[17] But there are also other semantic roles that can serve as the subject of a sentence. For example, *Achilles*, in *Achilles saw Hector*, may be labeled an experiencer or a perceiver, rather than an agent, as Achilles' seeing Hector does not involve the same level of deliberate participation on Achilles' part as would, say, his striking Hector. In this work, however, the term agent will not refer in this narrow sense exclusively to the participant that is responsible for effecting an action, but rather will denote more generally the noun that would be mapped to the subject relation in a transitive sentence, whatever its more precise semantic role may be. This broader definition captures better the fact that ὑπο^{+G} performs essentially the same function both in ὤφθη ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως and in ἐπλήγη ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως.

Origins and development of the passive voice in Greek

An examination of the passive voice and the expression of the agent in ancient Greek inevitably raises questions about the historical development of voice in the Greek verb. Although many problems remain unsolved, it is generally acknowledged that, by the time of classical Attic, Greek had undergone a transition from a two-voice system, with opposition between an active and middle, to a three-voice system, with the addition of a passive. The transition, however, must be regarded as incomplete, for the passive only became independent of the middle in the aorist and future.[18] A look at this development should begin with Proto-Indo-European (PIE) itself.

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[17] I use the term semantic role in the same sense as Blake 1994: 64. For further discussion of these points, see Palmer 1994: 8–10, who uses "Agent" to refer to the grammatical relation and "agent" to refer to the semantic role.

[18] The picture is further complicated by the perfect, which, in PIE, probably lay outside the active-middle opposition, but became incorporated into it during the evolution of Greek. Already in Mycenaean, the perfect had begun to be incorporated into the active-middle opposition of the present and aorist stems. As the Greek perfect passive is set apart from the present and aorist by virtue of its construing with a dative of agent, the development of the perfect is treated separately in Chapter 3.

PASSIVE VERBS AND AGENT CONSTRUCTIONS

The verbal systems of Greek and Sanskrit suggest that PIE had a two-voice system, with a primary opposition between the active and the middle.[19] First of all, there is a clear historical relation between the morphology of the Greek and Sanskrit middle (e.g. present thematic third singular -εται : -*ate*, third plural -ονται : -*ante*), while the distinctively passive forms in each are clearly unrelated formations: Greek's -(θ)η- aorist (and future) passive marker on the one hand, Sanskrit's -*i* third singular aorist passive and -*ya*- present passive markers on the other. Second, the middle is used similarly in the two languages: both exhibit a reflexive middle, be it direct or indirect (cf. λούομαι (τὰς χεῖρας) and *vahate* "(direct reflexive) go; (indirect reflexive) marry"), a reciprocal middle (cf. διαλέγομαι and *vivadate* "dispute with one another"), and a dynamic middle, indicating the total involvement of the subject (πόλεμον ποιεῖν "cause a war to come about" vs. πόλεμον ποιεῖσθαι "conduct a war," compare *tiṣṭhati* "stand" vs. *tiṣṭhate* "hold still").[20] Third, some of the same verbs in both languages inflect either only in the active or only in the middle (the *activa* and *media tantum*): βαίνω/*gacchati*, ἐστί/*asti* on the one hand, ἧσται/*āste*, κεῖται/*śete* on the other. Latin too, though traditionally described as having an opposition between active and passive rather than between active and middle, provides some evidence for the contrasts of voice detailed above, for instance the direct reflexive *lavari*.[21]

But the lack of a distinct passive morpheme does not imply that PIE could not express the passive, as many languages can use the middle in this function. In both Greek and Sanskrit, the middle was often used to denote passivization.[22] That Latin's inherited middle

[19] For a bibliography on voice in PIE, see Szemerényi 1996: 255–7. Standard references include Delbrück 1897: 412–39, Brugmann 1916: 678–711, Wackernagel 1950: 119–44, Schwyzer–Debrunner 1950: 222–42. It suffices here to consider the "classical" reconstruction of the late PIE verbal system, leaving aside the problematic position of Hittite.

[20] Examples from Brugmann 1916: 690, 696, Wackernagel 1950: 127, and Delbrück 1897: 426.

[21] For further description of uses of the Latin passive that resemble the Greek middle, see Hofmann–Szantyr 1965: 288–9 and Joffre 1995: 81–155, especially 115–32. While Touratier takes a different approach in explaining the significance of deponent verbs, he likewise speaks of a mediopassive sense that can be exhibited by Latin passives (1994: 175).

[22] For Greek, see Schwyzer–Debrunner 1950: 237–8; for Sanskrit, see Delbrück 1888: 263–5.

voice (admittedly morphologically different from the Greek and Sanskrit) came to be used primarily as a passive also hints that the PIE middle could assume a passive function. Additionally, several living languages provide evidence that a reflexive construction, similar in function to the PIE middle, can take on the functions of the passive: the Romance languages have a middle that can express an agentless passive (French *la porte s'ouvre*),[23] while the Russian middle can express the passive with the agent.[24]

It does not appear possible, however, to reconstruct a single uni-fied agent expression for PIE, for the daughter languages show a bewildering variety of constructions, presented most recently by Hettrich.[25] This proliferation of agent expressions, it must be noted, does not prove that PIE could not express the agent of a passive verb, let alone that it had no passive. One need only con-sider the different agent expressions in the Romance languages (Spanish *por*,[26] French *par*, Italian *da*) – none of which directly continues Latin *ab* with the ablative – to find a parallel for the replacement of a single agent expression in the mother language by a variety of constructions in the different daughter languages. Nevertheless, certain patterns do emerge among the attested IE languages: the genitive is frequent with participles, the dative with participles of necessity and perfects, and instrumental and ablatival expressions with finite verbs. Such tendencies can be followed in Greek but must not be pressed too closely. The loss of cases can

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[23] The Italian equivalent can be used with the agent, if only occasionally: *Il vino si beve dai ragazzi*, "The wine is drunk by the boys" (Maiden 1995: 164).

[24] See the example on p. 6.

[25] Hettrich 1990 concludes that the genitive, dative, ablative, instrumental, and locative could all be used to express the agent. Earlier, Schwyzer had described various similarities of construction among the IE languages but attributed them all to later development: "Nur weniges stammt in dieser besondern Funktion aus indogermanischer Zeit, selbst wenn die verwendeten Mittel die gleichen sind" (1943: 13). Other studies primarily address narrower concerns. Schmidt 1963 notes the frequency of agents with participles, adding that the genitive and dative were common with participles, the instrumental with finite verbs. Jamison has written two articles dealing with this question, one arguing unconvincingly that the instrumental was the sole agentive case in PIE (1979a), the other discussing the use of compounding to express agency with participles (1979b). Finally, Luraghi 1986, 1995, and 2001 explore the relationship between agent expressions and those of similar roles such as instrument.

[26] The agent marker in Spanish had earlier been *de*, which was replaced by *por* in the sixteenth century (Penny 1991: 103).