

## ON INTERPOLATIONS IN THE TWO OEDIPUS PLAYS OF SOPHOCLES

The purpose of the present article is to examine: a) whether the end of *Oedipus Rex* is authentic, and if not, how much of it is spurious; b) whether there are substantial interpolations in *Oedipus at Colonus*; c) whether, perhaps for an occasion when both plays were produced together in a revival, the earlier play has been modified to bring it into conformity with the latter, or the latter with the former, or whether both were interpolated at the same time. In the course of this examination we may find an answer to two apparently unrelated questions: 1) Why has the end of *Oedipus Rex* found such disfavour with certain men of letters like Voltaire and Sir Denys Page? 2) Why is *Oedipus at Colonus* of such unconscionable length? To put the second point in focus: the average length of the six other plays of Sophocles is something like 1425 vv. In a recent article<sup>1</sup> C. W. Müller notes with satisfaction that if we accept all his proposals for deletion, *Oedipus at Colonus*, at present 1779 vv. long, will conform pretty closely to that figure.

Our enquiry begins with the end of *Oedipus Rex*. But not with the very end, since it is now commonly agreed that 1524–1530 are a spurious tailpiece, and as Antigone very reasonably remarks, τίς ἀλκή τὸν θανάοντ' ἐπικτανεῖν; The question before us is how far back interpolation extends, and its nature: are we confronted with a wholly non-Sophoclean text from a definite point onwards, or are fragments of genuine Sophocles to be found floating amid the wreckage? In pursuing our inquiries we shall attach more weight to matters of linguistic detail than to such generalities as whether the conclusion of the play is aesthetically satisfactory. Every interpolator must hope that his efforts will be judged successful, and if

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1) C. W. Müller, Die Thebanische Trilogie des Sophokles und ihre Auf-  
führung im Jahre 401. Zur Frühgeschichte der antiken Sophoklesrezeption und der  
Überlieferung des Textes, RhM 139 (1996) 193–224. Wilamowitz in the chapter on  
O.C. which he added to his son's posthumous book 'Die dramatische Technik des  
Sophokles' (Berlin 1917) had already sighed over 'die überlange Tragödie' 329.

some people find that the end of the play meets all their requirements in terms of substance, that need mean no more than that an interpolator has done precisely that – met their requirements. Equally if we find that the poetry is not bad, but not particularly good, that may mean no more than that Sophocles was not composing at the peak of his form. Lastly, when we find textual problems, we shall have to make up our minds whether those problems arise from the ordinary processes of corruption, or from the deficiencies of whoever composed the text. These points may sound obvious, but it cannot be emphasised enough that most of what has been written about the end of *Oedipus Rex* is contradictory and inconclusive precisely because the authors concerned have not taken a magnifying glass to the detail of the text and asked themselves whether the fingerprints they see are those of Sophocles or someone else. It is not even enough to do what Bernd Seidensticker has done,<sup>2</sup> who very properly wanted to go beyond the platitude that *Oedipus Rex* represents a fall from prosperity to misery, and *Oedipus at Colonus* the reverse, and so looked at what one might describe as mirror-images of language, and any dovetailing between the two plays. ‘The opening of *O.C.* answers the questions with which the poet sent the audience away at the end of *O.T.*’ says Seidensticker, qualifying this comment in his first footnote on p. 261 with the words ‘Sophocles did not of course leave the end of *O.T.* so open in order to be able to join on to it a second, already planned, play about Oedipus.’ We might then ask, why did he leave it open, or more fundamentally still, did he actually leave it open? Seidensticker has taken one step away from generalities, but his work is essentially on the relationship of the two plays as they stand today, taking his evidence as he finds it, without probing too deeply into ugly questions of authenticity. For ourselves, we shall approach the end of *Oedipus Rex* on our guard against that attitude which Dr Eva Eicken-Iselin<sup>3</sup> in her examination of the

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2) B. Seidensticker, *Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Oidipusdramen des Sophokles*, *Hermes* 100 (1972) 255–274.

3) ‘Was sich noch interpretieren lässt, das ist auch in Ordnung.’ Eva Eicken-Iselin, *Interpretationen und Untersuchungen zum Aufbau der Sophokleischen Rheseis* (Basel 1942) 280. Like that other great Basel scholar, Peter Von der Mühl, Eicken-Iselin had the gift of concise writing very much to the point, and a sound ‘Sprachgefühl’. I came to this dissertation late, and it is a pleasure to record my almost total agreement with the criticisms it makes.

problems involved summed up in the words ‘If you can still get sense out of it, it is all right.’

The rot sets in immediately after v. 1423. The play is really over, and when Creon appears once again after his long absence we may reasonably expect him to usher things to the conclusion which has been so long and so often predicted. What ensues is a series of surprises. Creon does not comment on his sister’s suicide, Oedipus’s self-blinding, or – less important in view of 1418 – the transfer of power to himself. In telling us that he has not come as one who mocks, he omits to tell us what he does come as. Suddenly we find him addressing nameless attendants without so much as a *ὑμεῖς δέ* to mark the transition, and he includes in that address uncalled-for censorious remarks about their apparent lack of respect for what he is pleased to call the *θνητῶν γένηθλα* (‘children of men’ [Jebb]). This evidence of a lack of continuity and authenticity was diagnosed long ago by, respectively, Schenkl and Graf-funder.<sup>4</sup> But worse is to follow.

Everything in the play so far has led us to suppose that Oedipus, as the guilty party, will go into exile. Indeed if he does not go into exile we shall have the unparalleled spectacle of a prophet’s prediction being falsified. Exile for the guilty party is a hitherto unquestioned datum of the plot. One need look no further than 96–98 (Apollo), 228–229, 236 sqq. (Oedipus), 417 sqq., 454–456 (Teiresias). It is in accordance with this requirement that at 1410–1412 Oedipus himself asks to be exiled. But now Creon, who had himself brought Apollo’s ruling from Delphi, declares that the sun, rain, and light should be protected from the sight of Oedipus – a philosophy very different from Oedipus’s own at 1451, in what Dr Eicken-Iselin and I both believe to be a surviving fragment of genuine Sophocles, where Oedipus regards Cithaeron as the right place for him to be. It was the place where Teiresias had predicted he would soon be: *τάχα* 421, cf. *τάχιστα* 1436. Instead Creon or-

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4) K. Schenkl, in: H. Bonitz [review of ‘Sophokles, erkl. v. F. W. Scheidewin’] ZÖG 8 (1857) 195; P. L. W. Graffunder (who disclaims priority for the idea), *Über den Ausgang des König Ödipus von Sophokles*, JbKPh 132 (1885) 389–408. M. Davies, *The End of Sophocles’ O. T. Revisited*, Prometheus 17 (1991) 2 explains *ἀλλά* in 1424 as ‘I have come *not* to mock *nor* to reprove, *but* to tell you to withdraw.’ This ignores the switch of the persons being addressed from Oedipus to the chorus. An airy ‘Sophoclean anacolouthon’ is not an adequate defence.

ders that Oedipus be confined to the palace to be looked after by τοῖς ἐν γένει – though just who they may be we have as yet no idea; and how exactly piety (εὐσεβῶς 1431) is best served by locking up Oedipus with his all too closely related children also taxes the imagination. When Oedipus protests, Creon says he will consult the Delphic oracle again, though as Oedipus at once points out there is not the slightest need for this. At 96 Creon had himself described Apollo's order as unambiguous. Equally unaccountable is Oedipus's remark, sandwiched between Creon's two couplets 1438–1439 and 1442–1443 announcing the decision to do nothing until Apollo has been consulted again, that Apollo had ordered the death of 'me, the guilty party'. Apollo had ordered either exile or death (100), though even there just whose blood should be shed is not spelled out. We have perhaps here an unfortunate idea which owes its origin to a sort of *tu quoque* reminiscence of 622–623, where Creon asks an angry Oedipus 'What then do you want? To exile me?' and receives the reply 'Far from it: I want your death, not your exile.' Straight after this comes another peculiarity: 'Will you (why plural?) make enquiries like this on behalf of a wretch?' is met with the *vix sequitur* answer 'Yes, because you might now place confidence in the god' (1445). But Oedipus has placed confidence in the god, insisting that there is no need to ask Apollo again. It is rather Creon who seems to need reassurance.

The oddities continue thick and fast. The connection between 1446 and 1447 ('and I charge you, and will make an entreaty') was explained in my student commentary with the words 'Oedipus switches from something that the *god* will decide to something else, a request made to *Creon*.' That was too glib. Quite apart from the unexplained mixture of tenses, the progression simply does not ring true. In the third edition of the Teubner text I have marked a lacuna here (Wunder). I ought also to have printed the ΟΙΔ. *personae nota* opposite the row of dots, since there is no reason why Creon should feel the need to amplify his 1445, and every reason why something should precede what looks like a switch to a new topic at 1446. However, this may be a matter of ordinary textual corruption, not evidence of an interpolator's incompetence. Whatever the truth, the mixture of tenses needs explaining.

One of the most interesting problems in this whole enquiry is the interpretation of 1451–1457: 'Let me live on the mountains, on this famous Cithaeron of mine which my mother and father set to

be my grave<sup>5</sup> while I was alive, so that I may die through those two who wanted to do away with me. Yet this much I know, that neither disease nor anything else could destroy me: I would never have been saved as I was dying, unless for something terrible.' The reason why we may call this a most interesting problem is that these lines have seemed to many to provide a link, in their last words, with *Oedipus at Colonus*. Perhaps I may penitently quote the entirely erroneous note in my elementary commentary: 'καίτοι τοσοῦτόν γ' οἶδα] A reflective afterthought, qualifying his preceding sentence ... ἂν πέρσαι means 'could destroy' not 'could have destroyed'. Fate has some stranger end in store for him: what end that was Sophocles describes in *Oedipus at Colonus*.' The *καίτοι* connection, which Eicken-Iselin rightly calls 'sonderbar', is inexplicable unless it follows 1453 (the grave) and refers back to the time when Oedipus was exposed as an infant on the mountain. 'A reflective after-thought' – words which have met with the approval of Dr Davies<sup>6</sup> – can hardly stand after the pointed epigram, on which the interpolator doubtless prided himself, of 'I may die through those two who wanted to do away with me.' We must delete the intrusive 1454, and then *καίτοι* is no longer 'sonderbar'. *θνήσκων* describes the likely condition of the infant at the time it was exposed, and *ἂν πέρσαι* does mean not 'could destroy (now or in the future)' but 'could destroy/could have destroyed (then)'. In the light of events Oedipus can be sure that nothing could have destroyed him then; he can have no such confidence for his future as a blinded beggar exposed to the rigours of Mt. Cithaeron. The *δεινὸν κακόν* which he shrinks from defining further is what has already happened to him in the course of the play. It is absurd as a description of the near apotheosis which awaits him in *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the phraseology rules out the 'Auskunftsmitteln' of referring 'something awful' to unknown events taking place in the interval between the actions of the two plays. Our analysis of this problem depends on the assumption that in the section 1451–1457 only 1454 is spurious. Some of the older generation of scholars have been much more ruthless: thus 1451–1457 were

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5) I have omitted the word *κύριον*, since even after consulting Roget's Thesaurus I can find no suitable word with which to render it: the ideas of 'official', 'authoritative', 'final', and 'having power over me' all seem blended.

6) Davies (n. 4 above) 3 n. 9.

deleted by van Deventer in 1858, 1449–1457 by J. Kohm in 1894–5, and 1446–1523 by Conradt in 1895. But like Eicken-Iselin we may believe ourselves to be hearing, especially in 1451–1453, the authentic notes of Sophoclean style. Whatever the exact truth, here at any rate, in 1455–1457, the attempt to forge a link with *Oedipus at Colonus* belongs only to modern scholarship. We cannot say the same about the next curiosity to cross our path.

This is of course the unexpected appearance of the children, about whom we have heard nothing in the play beyond a perfunctory mention at 425, and a statement at 1375–1376 that if Oedipus had been able to see, the sight of them would have been abhorrent. More firmly lodged in our memory is likely to be the negative mention of the children that Jocasta and Oedipus might have had in common if Laius had not died childless (261–262), an odd topic to touch upon if Oedipus and Jocasta were known to have two sons and two daughters of their own: the boys apparently grown up (1460), the girls not (1492). It is the girls who are paraded before us, and many scholars have regarded them with the same suspicion with which they view their appearance at the end of Aeschylus's *Septem*. In both cases it is thought that they have been written in to take account of plays composed later on allied themes. Most objections are based on aesthetic grounds, but there are a number of linguistic peculiarities which give substance to those objections, and a number of expressions which leave us asking 'Why exactly do you choose to mention this, and in these terms?' Let us list them.

1) Is it not strange that Oedipus at 1463–1464 should stress how close he was to his daughters by pointing out that he never sat at a separate table? 'How touching!' is Eicken-Iselin's comment, who draws attention to the way in which two ideas seem to be mixed up, first that the daughters never ate without Oedipus, and second that Oedipus never ate without giving his daughters some of the same food he had himself. But we can go further than this. 'Table of food' is an unparalleled expression for a Sophocles: the nearest we could get to it would be the 'night of stars' at *Electra* 19, but that line was deleted by Schöll, and belongs to a group of four which I bracketed in the Teubner text for quite different reasons. Moreover the word used here for 'food', βροῦ, is, so far as we can judge, inappropriate. The lexicon invites us to compare Aesch. *Pers.* 490, where the nuance is that people were starved of anything

they could eat even as animals; and Soph. Phil. 274, ‘rags and a bit of something to eat’. Such a contemptuous word is conspicuously unsuited for the present context.

2) At 1466 we have *μάλιστα μὲν*. The sentence ‘Look after them, and for preference let me touch them’ comes perilously close to nonsense, and the *ἔχειν* (1470) is very weak: Blaydes’s *ἰδεῖν* is an improvement, though in direct conflict with 1375.

3) *ἴθι* is much too vigorous for the context, and where it does not actually mean ‘go’ or ‘come’ should be accompanied by another imperative either immediately or at a short interval. (See Ellendt’s lexicon for confirmation.)

4) 1478–1479 is supposed to mean ‘because of this sending, or conducting, here of the children, may the god watch over you better than (he has) over me’. But *ὁδός* has no such active force, and we have to be content with ‘because of this journey here’. However, it is not only the meaning of *ὁδός* which gives us pause, it is its construction. We seem to need, what indeed Hartung supplied, an *ἀντί*. The interpolator perhaps misunderstood O. C. 1506: *τύχην τις ἐσθλὴν τῆσδ’ ἔθηκε τῆς ὁδοῦ*, and believed this gave him warrant for a ‘genitive of cause’. It is highly doubtful whether there is any such thing. Moorhouse<sup>7</sup> lists another 17 examples besides the one in front of us, from which we may at once subtract 6, which belong to a category of anger ‘over’ something: Ai. 41; Trach. 269; O. T. 698; Ant. 1177; Phil. 327 and 1309. Another three concern praise (O. C. 1413) or blame (Ai. 180; Trach. 122) of or from something. Three more give us tears (Ant. 931), laments (Phil. 751), and suppliants (O. T. 184) ‘over’ something. Two passages (Trach. 339 and frg. 697) are corrupt, and one (El. 1096) Moorhouse himself will scarcely admit as evidence. At Ant. 1074 we need Kern’s *λωβητῆρ’ ἔθ’*, on which an ordinary objective genitive *τούτων* depends. Ai. 1117 is explained by Jebb as arising from analogy with the compounded verb *ἐπιστρέφομαι*, but comes in any case in a passage which was first, and rightly, deleted by Reichard. El. 920 disappears in the punctuation favoured by Jebb, *φεῦ τῆς ἀνοίας*, but may otherwise be defended by appeal to Aesch. Agam. 1321, Prom. Vinct. 397, and other examples in Kühner-Gerth I 388 § 420 – still leaving us with a huge gap between ‘I pity you for’ and ‘guard you in return for’. El. 1027 has

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7) A. C. Moorhouse, *The Syntax of Sophocles* (Leiden 1982) 71.

the normal genitive with ζηλώω, Trach. 287–288 has θύματα . . . τῆς ἀλώσεως, ‘sacrifices in connection with the capture’, virtually ‘capture-sacrifices’.<sup>8</sup> This leaves us only with O. T. 48 σωτήρα κλήζει τῆς πάρος προθυμίας, where I would conjecture κλήζει (<κ>), the ἐκ being of the type described in Kühner-Gerth I 460 § 430, but also sharing some of the purely temporal sense of ‘after’, taking up the idea implicit in the νῦν of the line before. We conclude then that, as with βορᾶς above, the interpolator has his own ideas, not shared by conventional grammar, as to the role of the genitive case.

5) The mention (1481) of the hands that will caress being those of a brother is very fairly described by Eicken-Iselin as revolting. On the difficulty of ὡς as ‘to’ the standard commentaries may be consulted; but note that the supposed parallel of Trach. 366 has been eliminated in many reconstructions of the text.

6) προξενέω (1483), a word which is most at home in later prose, is strangely used here with an infinitive, and in a way which has so far confused the compilers of the lexicon that they render the sentence as ‘have granted to you to see thus my once bright eyes’. The brotherly hands have not granted anything, but have brought it about that my once bright eyes see like this, i. e. not at all. Ellendt’s ‘*proprie adduco et commendo tanquam hospitem: tralate efficio*’ gives us a useful starting-point. ‘Efficio’ is certainly a later meaning of the word, but only when the metaphor had faded. So far as tragedy is concerned, there are five appearances of the verb. O. C. 465 causes no problems, and neither does Eur. Med. 724, or Ion 336 and Hel. 146 once Owen’s and Dale’s notes respectively have been consulted. The only slightly adventurous use of the verb comes at Soph. Trach. 726: ‘Hope which προξενεῖ some confidence’, that is to say, Hope, through whose good offices confidence may come. If Hope could be a doctor at Aesch. Cho. 699, we can easily accept it as a πρόξενος here, and even admire the poetic mind that lies behind the turn of phrase.

How different the present passage! Hands whose good offices have brought it about that my formerly bright eyes see like this!

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8) Davies in his commentary speaks of a genitive of exchange, citing Eur. Med. 534, which is simply ‘you got more from/out of my rescue . . .’, and Rhesus 467, which will disappear as a valid example for those who take the hint from the note in Diggle’s Oxford Text apparatus.



No wonder Gomperz conjectured προσέλησαν.<sup>9</sup> But how then to construe ὀρώων?

7) The fact that the eyes were formerly bright does not prevent the poet from continuing with οὐθ' ὀρώων when describing Oedipus's marriage with Jocasta.

8) 'I weep for the pair of you – for I cannot see you – thinking of the rest of your bitter life ...' (1486–1487). The interjected 'for I cannot see you' are either an utterly tasteless labouring of the obvious, or else anticipate νοούμενος in a way an audience would grasp only with difficulty if at all. Moreover νοούμενος is a unique use of middle for the active participle.<sup>10</sup>

9) The extraordinary grammar of βιώναι πρὸς (1488) is excused in certain quarters by appeal to Trach. 935 ἄκουσα πρὸς τοῦ θηρὸς ἐρξείην τάδε. But that line comes in one of the play's numerous doublets, a passage which Jernstedt offered up for sacrifice. In any case the alteration of a single letter (ἀλουσα Heimreich) will cause the anomaly to disappear. But not merely is the grammar of βιώναι πρὸς inexplicable, the choice of the word βιώω is itself a ground for suspicion. The verb is not found anywhere else in Aeschylus or Sophocles, and Euripides has only one example (Alc. 784): 'No mortal knows if tomorrow he will be alive'.

10) 1491 ends with a superfluous ἀντι τῆς θεωρίας, almost 'What festivals will you go to from which you will not come home in tears instead of seeing the festival!' Then the ἀλλά immediately afterwards (1492) involves a usage which Denniston<sup>11</sup> can parallel only from prose, almost exclusively Plato and Aristotle.

11) The theme of the daughters' marriage is taken up at 1500 as if it were something new, not already spoken of at 1492–1495, itself a passage whose shortcomings we may charitably ascribe to corruption. The word δηλαδὴ (1501) occurs elsewhere in tragedy only at Eur. Andr. 856, in a phrase deleted by Triclinius; at Iph. Aul. 1366 in a passage which Diggle's generosity labels as 'perhaps by Euripides'; and Orestes 789, where Stevens and Willink think it a colloquialism – hardly the tone here at O. T. 1501.

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9) A word whose rarity, complained of by Jebb, I have sought to reduce by conjecturing it for the barely intelligible and barely metrical προτρέπει at El. 1193.

10) See W. Veitch, Greek Verbs Irregular and Defective (Oxford 1887) 468.

11) J. D. Denniston, Greek Particles (Oxford 1954) 241.

12) 1505–1507. The expression δὺ ὄντε is used in a perfunctory manner. Contrast the way it is effectively exploited at Trach. 539 καὶ νῦν δὺ οὔσαι μίμνομεν μιᾶς ὑπο / χλαίνης ὑπαγκάλισμα, two women in one man's embrace; Ion 518 σὺ δ' εὖ φρόνει γε, καὶ δὺ ὄντ' εὖ πράξομεν, 'You behave yourself, and both of us will be all right'; Iph. Aul. 887 Κλ. ἤκεις ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ καὶ σὺ καὶ μήτηρ σέθεν / Πρ. οἰκτρὰ πάσχετον δὺ οὔσαι; Plato, Gorgias 481d ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ νῦν τυγχάνομεν ταῦτόν τι πεπονθότες, ἐρῶντε δύο ὄντε δυοῖν ἐκότερος. Passing over the problems of the last word of 1505 and the ἐγγενεῖς of 1506 we come to 'And do not put these girls on the same level as my own misfortunes'. This piece of advice is so specific that it is best explained by the assumption that the person who wrote it knew that in *Oedipus at Colonus* the girls would indeed be on the same level as their father.

13) All of the section 1503–1514, in which Oedipus entrusts his children to Creon, is ignored by the new regent.

14) 1515–1530. The use of the trochaic tetrameter may be an argument against Sophoclean authorship, but the date of the play is uncertain, and so the absence of this metre from surviving tragedies produced between 458 and 415 may be an irrelevance. But it will not be judged such by those who accept the conclusions of, e.g., C. W. Müller, who names 433 as his preferred choice.<sup>12</sup>

15) 'You will speak' (a future, not an imperative) 'and then, on hearing, I shall know' I once described as 'abject line-filling'. This verdict on 1517 was possibly too harsh, but one cannot argue with Eicken-Iselin when she points out that the plea for exile broached in this line and the next is introduced as if it were something entirely new. So too is the theme of consulting the god again, notwithstanding his original very clear instruction.

16) 1519. 'But I come very hateful to the gods.' 'That is precisely why you will soon get your wish' is as ill phrased as anything could be,<sup>13</sup> and if Creon believes his own logic he should accept this as a reason for not consulting the god a superfluous second time.

12) C. W. Müller, *Zur Datierung des sophokleischen Ödipus* (Wiesbaden 1984) 59.

13) 'The technique of dividing the lines entails rather elliptical thought-sequences and extremely compressed Greek.' So Davies (n. 4 above). One may suspect that Dr Eicken-Iselin would have given short shrift to this explanation.

17) At 1522–1523 Creon tells Oedipus, who is protesting against having his children taken from him (although at 1511–1514 he had appeared to resign them to Creon’s care in a final farewell), ‘Do not want to be master in everything’ – as if the pitiful blind suppliant had any such pretensions – and then continues with a line which must have been intended to mean in effect ‘your royal power is now at an end’, but actually says ‘the exercises of your power did not accompany your life’. The phraseology is so inept that one wonders what can ever have suggested it, until one comes to O. C. 839, where this time it is Creon who is being told to let go of a child of Oedipus, and replies to the chorus, with whom the quarrel is taking place, μή ’πίτασσε’ ἄ μή κρατεῖς: ‘Command not where thou art not master’ (Jebb).

18) The miscellaneous collection of repetitions, listed by Eicken-Iselin: 1421/1423 τὰ / τῶν πάρος; 1435/1443 χρείας; 1413/1444 ἀνδρὸς ἀθλίου; 1410/1432/1472 πρὸς θεῶν; 1439/1443 τί πρακτέον / δραστέον; and a whole row of κακός words all at verse end: 1414/1421/1423/1431/1457/1467/1507 [1420/1445 πίστις / πίστιν can fairly be excluded].

19) Certain expressions which, while not abuses of language, may displease the fastidious, like the over-done ὦ γονῆι γενναῖε (1469) and τὰ φίλτατ’ ἐγγόνοις ἐμοῖν (1474); the latter either a pompous periphrasis or else differentiating, in the light of O. C., between the male and female children.

These then are specific reasons why the end of O. T. described by D. Wender<sup>14</sup> as ‘unquestionably the work of Sophocles’ is unquestionably spurious (with some genuine lines sparsely surviving). Purely literary arguments may supplement these reasons, but cannot refute them.<sup>15</sup>

Granted then that the end of O. T. has been remodelled, we have to ask the reason for that remodelling. The inclusion in the

14) Dorothea Wender, *The Last Scenes of the Odyssey* (Leiden 1978) 64.

15) Typical of a mass of literary frothing is G. Gellie, *The last scene of the Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Ramus* 15 (1986) 35: ‘The dramatist works to generate new tensions and excitements around the figure of Oedipus. When he and his daughters meet, the play is back on high ground.’ Like so many defenders of authenticity, Gellie does not dirty his hands with philological detail. Jennifer March, *The creative poet. Studies on the treatment of myths in Greek poetry*, *BICS Suppl.* 49 (1987) 148 effectively sees off the arguments of Macleod and Taplin who think that Oedipus’s removal to the palace gives the play just the ending it needs.

palace may have been partially dictated by the plot of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, dated by Mastronarde<sup>16</sup> to 411–409 B.C. But more likely is the old hypothesis that an Oedipus on Mt. Cithaeron could not be squared with the requirements of the plot of *O. C.*, and that the alterations took place when, on whatever occasion, the two plays were produced together. The same hypothesis also better accounts for the presence of the children.

But that is not the end of the matter. Has *Oedipus at Colonus* itself suffered re-writing? If it has, was the motive a) a desire to bring the play into line with the end of *O. T.*, and if so, do we mean the authentic end or the revised end? or, b) a desire to take account of changed political circumstances?

In terms of the history of modern scholarship the first major assault on these problems was that of A. Schöll,<sup>17</sup> who, without questioning the end of *O. T.*, believed that the later play, whose original date he leaves undefined, was extensively interpolated at the end of the fifth century to show Thebes in a better light. His central thesis takes some swallowing.<sup>18</sup> According to this the generous reception by Athens of the Theban exile Oedipus was meant to be a mirror-image of the realities of the time, when Thebes had given shelter to the Athenians who had fled from the regime of the Thirty Tyrants. Schöll took as his point of departure a suggestion by K. F. Hermann that we should delete vv. 919–938; and Schöll in addition wished to remove 911–912. Certainly it may seem inconsistent to keep in the reference to acting unworthily of your country (912) when one motive for excising the much larger section was precisely to eliminate the distinction drawn there between Creon the evil individual and Thebes, the state he claims to represent. But Schöll's extra deletion has to be rejected, since the ὄστις (913), plainly of the *quippe qui* variety, will not fit after 910, but does fit after the sentence with κατὰξίως in it.

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16) Euripides *Phoenissae*, edited with Introduction and Commentary by H. Mastronarde (Cambridge 1993) 14.

17) A. Schöll, Die Überarbeitung des sophokleischen Ödipus auf Kolonus, nachgewiesen an den Widersprüchen in allen Handlungsmotiven, *Philologus* 26 (1867) 385–445, 577–605.

18) Jebb's opinion may be inferred from his note on 919: 'It has been seriously suggested that all these touches must have been inserted by Sophocles the grandson, because in the poet's time Athens and Thebes were not usually on the best terms.'

So our pruning has to be more drastic, or else not be done at all. We may feel legitimate surprise at the sudden switch from third person to second person at 909, in a manner reminiscent of O. T. 1424 which we have already condemned. Another point of suspicion is the μοι in 917 (κόμην Blaydes). It cannot be an ethic dative. The only possibility is that the construction is εἶναι μοι, i. e. 'I have'. The word order is surprising, and the rhetoric sounds wrong: we need 'You thought Athens was a city without true men, and I did not amount to anything'. That the verse is genuine seems, on the other hand, to be proved by Creon's first words at 939 (ἄνανδρον), and at the same time one of the best arguments for accepting K. F. Hermann's deletion of 919–938 is precisely that it brings κένανδρον (917) and ἄνανδρον so close together that the allusion cannot be lost on the audience, as it might be if one of those words was buried some 22 lines back. In the same way ἀφ' ὧν μὲν εἶ (937) picks up ὧν πέφυκας (912).<sup>19</sup> 919–938 are highly dispensable; they do nothing but amplify 912. The differentiation between Creon the individual and Thebes, his city, comes as a surprise after what we have been told by Ismene at 396 about Creon acting as the agent for the Thebans and by Creon's own words, which we had no reason to question at the time, at 741–742, 'The whole Theban nation calls for you, and no one more than I'. For most of the play there is a constant assumption that Oedipus's tomb will be a bulwark against Thebes, i. e. that Athens and Thebes are enemies. That being so, Schöll and K. F. Hermann were surely right to wonder why the same poet should suddenly hymn the praises of Thebes as the home of decent citizens. Their case for deletion is a strong one; in fact it does not go far enough if we still object to the switch to a second person address at 909. But however much we cut out, there remains one massive objection to our excisions, namely that, if we exclude the μοι of 917, where in any case our misgivings may be groundless, there is nothing in the actual language of the passages to be excised which betrays a non-Sophoclean origin.

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19) On the other hand ἄβουλον (940) does not allude to κάμ' ἴσον τῷ μηδενί or indeed anything to do with Athens. It is to be construed with τοῦργον τόδ', and the end of 939 is a finite verb, as LKQR. Schneidewin, though keeping the participle, was right to prefer a thinking to a saying word, and his νέμω[v] is supported by the correspondence it gives with both ἔδοξας (918) and γιγνώσκων (941).

We appear to have reached an impasse. The way out of it we shall postpone for the moment. For the time being we may say that we have seen enough to put us on the alert for other possible interpolations. Schöll found much to displease him, but his arguments are all too often based on considerations of what would be probable in real life, a criterion of as little concern to the writers of tragedy as it is to the composers of opera. In addition he seems to have taken the end of *Oedipus Rex* as authentic, and so to have drawn incorrect conclusions from places where the text of *Oedipus at Colonus* cannot be reconciled with it. But he did raise two questions which stand out from the rest. 1) When, and under what circumstances, was Oedipus exiled from Thebes? 2) What is the role of Ismene?

We have seen the confusion over Oedipus's expected exile at the end of *O. T.* Now, in *O. C.*, we find either an attempt to accommodate both the exile and the non-exile themes; or else we find an original, if fluctuating, statement of the position, which clashed with the authentic end of *O. T.*, and so led to the re-writing which we believed ourselves to have detected there. The critical passages are *O. C.* 427–444, 599–601, 765–771, 1354–1357. The first passage accuses the children, Eteocles and Polynices, of doing nothing to prevent the exile. Since exile is precisely what Oedipus had wanted, lines are added to explain that his first desire had been for exile, or death, but that when his emotions had simmered down, he wanted to stay, but the city exiled him, the children not offering any word in opposition to this decision. 599–601 puts the emphasis differently: Oedipus says that he was exiled by his own children. When he adds that he may not return, being a parricide, this is a statement of fact, echoing Ismene's at 407, though in the context one might prefer to see it more as a pretext used by the children. 765 ff. presents us with a similar picture, except that Creon is himself substituted for the city or the children. Finally, at 1354–1357, the sole responsibility is attributed to Polynices. In the last two cases we need to bear in mind that the person who is being held responsible is the person who is being addressed.

So the simple question is, which came first, *O. C.* or the end of *O. T.* as it now stands? Schöll (582), commenting on the first and third of the four passages cited above, wrote 'This corresponds entirely with the last act of the first play.' So it may, but the question still remains, which came first? We find that there are no major

stylistic objections to the *O.C.* passages as there were with the end of *O.T.*, and since the plot of *O.C.* requires an involuntary exile, whereas the plot of *O.T.* requires a voluntary one, and the play could have ended with exactly that, it must be that *O.T.* has been tailored to fit the later play, and the later play is seeking to account for the original end of *O.T.*, voluntary exile, in a way that can be reconciled with the involuntary exile needed to account for the hostility between Oedipus and Athens on the one hand, and Creon, Polynices and Thebes on the other.

That *O.T.* has been interpolated to take account of *O.C.* does not carry with it the corollary that *O.C.* is itself free from interpolation. It could in turn have been modified to take account of *Antigone*, especially if all three plays were to be re-staged together as a trilogy. Suspicion has focused in particular on Ismene. With her absent, *O.C.* would cease to be the only Greek tragedy to require four actors. We need then to scrutinise her role more closely, to see whether she might be no more than a κωφὸν πρόσωπον. C.W. Müller has set out to eliminate her altogether, with the highly desirable result, though this was not his intention, of bringing the play down to a more conventional length.

Not all his arguments are of equal weight. He does not like the interest in the provenance of the colt Ismene is riding (312–313), or in her sun-hat (313–314) – but similar objections could be raised against the attention to clothing at Aesch. Suppl. 234–237. Unfair too is the criticism that Oedipus asks Antigone to repeat what she has just said the moment before Ismene arrives (322) ‘as if Oedipus were not only blind but deaf’. Presumably Oedipus is doubly deaf at 1099: τί φής; πῶς εἶπας; while just ordinarily deaf are Philoctetes (Phil. 246,414,917,1288), Jocasta and Oedipus before his blinding (*O.T.* 943,1017), Deianeira (*Trach.* 184,744) and Hylus (1203), Electra (*El.* 407,1220); and in our play the same disability affects also Theseus (896,1513) and Antigone (1759). More seriously to be taken, but still far from compelling, is the allegation that 321 with its Ἴσμήνης κάρα is a deliberate echo of Ant. 1 – but if true, why cannot Sophocles echo himself? – and that the verses 324–334 with their ἀντιλαβαί achieve nothing and do not take the action forward – but we might say the same of *El.* 1220–1226. But when we have stripped away these somewhat captious criticisms, Müller is still entitled to make his main point, which is that the introduction given to Ismene is abnormally long, and not in the So-

phoclean manner. Moreover it is surprising that the Ismene who at 331 was anxious to include herself in a trio of misery together with Oedipus and Antigone should have at her disposal a trustworthy servant (334).

Valid too are some other points: 1) At 335 the question to Ismene about his sons suits an Oedipus who feels that he has been scandalously neglected, but not one who claims, as he will later, to have been either actually or virtually driven into exile by them. 2) At 445–447 Ismene is one of the two props of Oedipus in his exile. This can hardly be reconciled with an Ismene who lives in Thebes and makes periodic reports to him (353–356) about oracles concerning his person (ὁ τοῦδ' ἐχρήσθη σώματος 355). One might have expected the one foretelling his death to be among those oracles; but it would be a trivialisation if such knowledge came to Oedipus only at second hand: hence the attempt at 452–454 to blend the two versions, 'hearing from her and conscious on my own account of oracles spoken long ago', the same blending technique as was used with the different versions of the sons' guilt in having him expelled. However, the deduction to be drawn from this is surely that Ismene and her oracles must have been an inconvenient datum of the plot that the putative interpolator found before him, not that 452–454 represent an attempt by the composer of the Ismene scene to bridge a divide which he had himself created.<sup>20</sup> 3) There is chronological confusion in Ismene's account 365–420, as Schöll had noted. At 366 Ismene says she comes to tell of the fraternal quarrel. Polynices has been driven out by his brother, and has gone to forge an alliance in Argos. At 387 sqq. she reports a Delphic oracle, consulted recently, and so after the outbreak of the quarrel.<sup>21</sup> But 417–419 read most naturally if we suppose both brothers were at that time still in Thebes. We have to concede this point to Schöll and Müller. It is not a necessary concession, but it is a reasonable one, if reason is to be our guide. We should not, however, make the further concession that Oedipus's following

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20) Cf. Müller (n. 1 above) 212: 'Der Verfasser der Ismene-Szene sucht den von ihm selbst verursachten Zwiespalt dadurch zu überbrücken.'

21) Her report is couched in terms of the interests of τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (389), κείνων and κείνοις (392, 402), Creon (396) and 'they' (400, 405), Cadmeans (409); but then explicitly at 417 both children, and 'they' from now on are clearly the children, and are so taken in Oedipus's reply. We have then a drift from 'Thebes needs Oedipus' to 'the brothers each need Oedipus'.



speech presupposes that the sons already, at the time when Oedipus was exiled, knew of the oracle which Ismene now reports. To arrive at this conclusion Müller translates, and even puts his translation into italics, *πάρως* (418) as ‘vorher’, ‘previously’. For the correct interpretation, *πάρως* pleonastically with the *προ* in *προὔθεντο*, see Kamerbeek, or even, e.g., Wunder.

Equally at 461–509 we need not agree with Müller that Ismene offers the purificatory rites because she has to be got off stage, so that the same actor can re-emerge as Theseus. But what we can say is that from 464 to 485 instructions are given to Oedipus and to him alone, and he responds in similar terms: even in matters of detail he asks what he is to do, not what some one else is to do for him. But then at 488 (*κέῖ τις ἄλλος ἀντὶ σοῦ*) the door is opened to Ismene. In the lines which follow we find one linguistic oddity, meriting an Appendix to itself in Jebb’s edition (*χρηῖσται* 504), and one metrical one (*τοῦδ’ ἦν δέ του* 505) in the next line which might make Porson shift uneasily in his grave and over which West purses his lips.<sup>22</sup> Puzzling too is why Oedipus should launch into the irrelevant thought that one spirit (*ψυχὴν* 499) is enough to perform these rites for even a countless multitude, and having made the point that one spirit is sufficient, continue with a dual, *πράσσειτον*. Lastly, if Ismene now goes off through the grove of the Eumenides, and if Creon captures her from there – and it cannot be from anywhere else – why does no one ever comment on this momentous act of sacrilege in the terms appropriate to it?

If we accept the major proposal, to eliminate Ismene altogether, we shall have to eject all of 310–509, and for good measure Müller deletes also 510–548. This leaves us with a seamless join between 309, the predicted arrival of Theseus, and 549, his actual arrival. The question is, is this more in the manner of Sophocles than the existing arrangement? If we look at the other cases where a new arrival is introduced with the *καὶ μὴν* formula, we shall find the following: at Ai. 1164–1167 Teucer is told to see to a grave for Ajax, and immediately afterwards we get ‘*καὶ μὴν* his wife and child are here to attend to the burial’ (1168–1170). At 1223 there is

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22) ‘Noteworthy, though within the letter of the law’. M. L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford 1982) 85. See further my note on O. T. 219 and the references given there. In the present case it is the punctuation which makes the breach of the law seem particularly severe.

probably a lacuna, but enough remaining for us to see that the structure is ‘stand by until I come back’ (1184), then choral passage, then ‘καὶ μὴν here is Teucer’. At Ant. 526 Antigone is condemned, and Creon ends with ‘a woman shall not give me orders’; immediately ‘καὶ μὴν here is Ismene, weeping over her sister’. At 1179 we have, in effect, ‘Haimon is dead; thought will have to be given to where we go from here’, and in 1180 ‘καὶ μὴν Eurydice is here, perhaps having heard about Haimon whose death I have just mentioned’. At 1257, after the messenger has concluded his description of the young couple’s deaths, and the chorus have commented on Eurydice’s ominous withdrawal, ‘καὶ μὴν here is Creon, “bearing that which tells too clear a tale” (Jebb)’. At El. 1422<sup>23</sup> the sequence is ‘Bloody vengeance has been taken: καὶ μὴν here they are, their hands dripping with blood.’ Finally at O. C. 1249 we have the sequence ‘Oedipus is beset from all sides – and look, καὶ μὴν here comes this stranger’ (who will turn out to be Polynices).

In every case, then, καὶ μὴν is tightly connected with what precedes, and is never widely separated, let alone separated by 240 lines, from that with which it is thematically connected. But we can go further than this: the words κατ’ ὀμφὴν σὴν (550) are variously interpreted.<sup>24</sup> From Homer onwards ὀμφή is ‘usually of a divine or oracular voice’ (Jebb); thus at Pindar frg. 75.19 it is used of voices honouring a deity, and at Nem. 10.34 of voices ‘amid the sacred rites of the Athenians’ (Sandys), voices sounding what, it is more than hinted, is an omen for an Olympic victory. At Aesch. Suppl. 808 it is found in the company of μέλη λίτανα, voices raised to the gods. At Eur. Ion 908 we have ‘a divine response’ (Owen). In our own play at 102 we find the ὀμφάς of Apollo, and in 1351 Oedipus, conscious of his destiny, refers to his own ὀμφή pronouncing judgement. Even in a satyr play, Sophocles’s *Ichneutae* (329 Diggle, Radt, 321 Pearson), the rule is not breached, ὀμφά denoting the magical sound of a musical instrument devised by a god. The only possible exceptions are Pindar frg. 152, where the nuance could be anything,

23) I do not cite El. 78, which is different. Denniston (n.11 above) 356, is right to put it in a separate, though related, category: apart from anything else it follows, not precedes, words spoken by a new character.

24) τοῦνομα (301) and ὄνομα (306) have seduced critics like Kamerbeek into thinking that ὀμφὴν σὴν could mean ‘reports about you’. But 1) ὀμφή is not used in the sense of Virgil’s *Fama*, and 2) such a view is not easily reconcilable with any known use of κατὰ.

and Eur. Med. 175: ‘remarkably general’ comments Page, who thinks that O. C. 550 ‘where it is used of a solemn message or appeal’ affords a parallel. But there has been no solemn message or appeal in the section deleted by Müller. Schneidewin-Nauck refer us back to 72, ὡς ἂν προσαρκῶν σμικρὰ κερδάνηι μέγα, but 72 lies so far back that the allusion would scarcely be recognised, even with Müller’s massive deletion. But the thinking of Schneidewin-Nauck is essentially correct, and what would express the same thought, albeit in the form of a wish, and what does not lie so far back, indeed immediately precedes 549–550 if we accept the Müller excision, is 308–309 ἀλλ’ εὐτυχῆς ἵκοιτο, τῆι θ’ αὐτοῦ πόλει / ἐμοί τε.

Müller’s case for excision is thus even stronger than he thought. On the other hand there is a powerful counter-argument, namely that for almost all of the section under scrutiny there is next to nothing (only 504 sq.) which linguistically causes offence<sup>25</sup> apart from routine textual matters, and there is very little in terms of content which points to any lack of authenticity either. For several times Müller uses an argument which will strike many as peculiar, namely that if one passage agrees with or foreshadows another, it must be derived from it.<sup>26</sup> It is more usual for detectors of interpolations to point to discrepancies. But these have to be severe to be convincing. Müller finds the tone of 391–395 (though really only 395 is at issue) at odds with the earlier piety of 84–110. But 395 is not actually impious: in stichomythia, as in fencing, each fresh move calls for a blocking or a vigorous reply, and a momentary bitter reflection can hardly count as primary evidence for a theory.

We have then to examine another passage where Ismene appears to be present, 1405–1413, a passage which Müller, in accordance with his theory, also deletes. These verses, if they are spurious, look ahead to *Antigone* as the next play in a newly devised trilogy. If genuine, they can simply be taken as a backward glance at it. So what are they, spurious or genuine? If we look for linguistic arguments which might impugn the authenticity of the passage

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25) Müller objects to εἴποις ἄν (431) as inappropriate for words addressed to Ismene. But the same argument could be used to contest the authenticity of Ant. 646 (Creon to his son). Equally it is not more inappropriate for Oedipus to describe to Ismene the history of his expulsion than it was for him in the earlier play to tell his wife of many years who his (putative) mother was (O. T. 774 sq.).

26) 337–352/445–449/1365–1369; 387/603; 421–430/1383 sqq.; 431–444/765–770; 450–460/587–590.

we might pause over two manifestations of γε, even if one of them, the γ' after σφώ in 1407, owes its presence in the text to the ministrations of Elmsley. On this Jebb has no note, but he does do something for the γ' in his translation: 'do not, *for your part*, dishonour me'. Then in 1409 the γε after ἀτιμάσητε elicits a note all to itself in Denniston:<sup>27</sup> 'at least do not *dishonour*<sup>28</sup> me.' We may feel that the two types of stress, first on the sisters as different persons from Oedipus, and second on the difference between dishonouring and something else, cut across each other. We also observe that with the deletion στρέψαι in 1416 stands closer to ἀποστρέψαι in 1403, but the gain here is much less striking than it was with K. F. Hermann's bringing together of κένανδρον and ἄνανδρον by his removal of 919–938. We have then the makings of a case for deletion, but the case for authenticity is conspicuously stronger: first, the run-over of ἐπεί at the end of 1405 is one of Sophocles's trademarks – even if he does share it with the author of *Prometheus Vincit*.<sup>29</sup> More decisively, the scansion of ὑμίν (1408) with a short second syllable has the stamp of Sophocles all over it.<sup>30</sup>

1405–1413 must then be taken as proving that Ismene does exist as a character in *O. C.*, and since editors since Turnebus are largely agreed that she will appear again at 1688–1692 further argument would seem superfluous.<sup>31</sup> Without an Ismene to bring news from Thebes, the scenes with Creon and Polynices would lack the necessary preparation.

In the light of what we have seen, it would be rational to make the following assumptions:

1) The end of *Oedipus Rex* has been extensively refashioned from 1423 onwards, and the proof of this lies in its often maladroit writing.

27) Denniston (n. 11 above) 126.

28) 'Dishonour' is not a good translation here. The word is really being used in its specialised sense noted by LSJ s.v. 2: what is being said is 'do not withhold proper burial from me'. See also s.v. ἔτιμος.

29) See S. L. Schein, *The Iambic Trimeter in Aeschylus and Sophocles* (Leiden 1979) 63 n. 13.

30) See Jebb on *O. C.* 25, and note how the only apparent similar scansion in Aeschylus, at *Eum.* 349, disappears if we accept Wilamowitz's emendation; and how similar that emendation is to Tournier's on *Soph. El.* 84–85.

31) Müller, who is nothing if not consistent, would, however, excise everything from 1667 onwards, again without adducing linguistic grounds for his suspicions.

2) No such concentrations of maladroitness occur in the alleged major interpolations in *Oedipus at Colonus*.

3) The introduction of Antigone and Ismene, and the confusion over exile or retention in Thebes, can only have been suggested to the interpolator(s) of *O. T.* by the genuine requirements of the plot of *O. C.* (It would be unduly deferential to Euripides' *Phoenissae* to regard that play as a principal influence).

4) The likeliest occasion for the alteration of the end of *O. T.* would be when it was restaged at some late date together with *O. C.* The low quality of the interpolations at the end of *O. T.* rules out the suggestion that Sophocles's grandson<sup>32</sup> was responsible for them when *O. C.* was first produced in 401 B. C.

5) Notwithstanding 2) above, there remain problems of how certain large passages in *O. C.* are to be reconciled with, or integrated into, the larger framework. There also remains the question of the play's exceptional length. We have found nothing to discredit the old idea that the aged Sophocles left the play in an imperfectly finished state at the time of his death. We may have before us, in some places, authentic passages of Sophocles the poet which Sophocles the playwright and producer would not have included. As for possible alterations by others, the old dilemma still faces us: successful interpolations, like successful murders, are the ones where the perpetrator is either not detected, or else is acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence. As Wilamowitz (n. 1 above, 369) reluctantly concluded, 'Aber auflösen lässt sich kein Zusatz, und nirgend verrät sich eine fremde Hand'.<sup>33</sup>

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32) If we accept Müller's testimonial (194) that he was 'selbst nicht ohne Ambition und Talent auch er in der Kunst des Tragödiendichtens'.

33) I am indebted to my colleague Dr Neil Hopkinson for scrutinising this article before publication.