

DO WE HAVE THE END OF SOPHOCLES' *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS*?\*

**Abstract:** The objections against the transmitted ending of *OT* (1424–1530) raised by scholars since the eighteenth century and most recently by R.D. Dawe deserve to be taken seriously, but only the last 63 lines (1468–1530, called B below) are open to truly serious objections, both verbal and dramaturgical. By contrast, objections against 1424–67 (called A below) are mostly slight, and in addition they are protected by an earlier passage in the play that seems to prepare the audience for Creon's demand that Oedipus re-enter the palace. A is genuine and gives us the end of the play as Sophocles wrote it: probably we have lost only a brief reply by Creon to Oedipus' requests and some choral anapaests. A postscript discusses the meaning of 1451–57. I argue that these look to the future (infinitive  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\sigma\alpha\iota$  plus  $\acute{\alpha}\nu$  standing for optative plus  $\acute{\alpha}\nu$ ), and that  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota$   $\tau\omega\iota$   $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\omega\iota$   $\kappa\alpha\kappa\omega\iota$  means that Oedipus is being saved 'for some dreadful mischief', i.e. to cause such mischief to others, an allusion to the cursing of his sons and its result, the war of the Seven against Thebes.

So far as is known, doubt was first raised about the genuineness of the end of *OT* in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The question surfaced again in the nineteenth but was more or less ignored in the twentieth<sup>2</sup> until the 1980s. Since then it has generated a lot of discussion.<sup>3</sup> Neither attackers nor defenders seem to have noticed that the serious objections are concentrated in the last 63 lines. Evidence for spuriousness or genuineness is of two kinds, verbal (individual words and phrases) and dramaturgical (for example, what the plot demands, whether the staging implied by the text is plausible for Sophocles).<sup>4</sup> The verbal evidence against the Sophoclean authorship of 1424–67 (referred to below as A) is very much less plentiful and impressive than that against 1468–1530 (referred to below as B). The same is true of the dramaturgical evidence. The only suspicious dramaturgy in A is that it clearly implies that Oedipus' final exit will be into the *skene* – three further objections are merely the consequence of this choice – and yet this stage direction turns out to have been prepared for earlier in the play and is thus presumptively Sophoclean. By contrast, B contains several instances of unparalleled dramaturgy.

The question, however, is complicated since A and B each contain both suspicious features and features that are *prima facie* Sophoclean, so that both kinds of evidence will have to be weighed. I will examine A and B separately, from both the verbal and the dramaturgical standpoints, listing the principal objections that have been made, adding a few of my own but also noting Sophoclean features. After each feature, I note by means of the letters  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$  how weighty it seems to me as evidence against or for genuineness. In this my ambition is to be thought un-idiosyncratic, and my hope is that most of my readers will agree that the arguments I mark  $\delta$  carry no, or virtually no, weight, that ones marked  $\alpha$  are strong and that those marked  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  are somewhere in between. A numerical tally of points with any weight to them, both for and against genuineness, will give us an indication which way the evidence inclines.

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars mention Schneidewin (1853) 206 and Graffunder (1885) as the earliest to propose excision. Finglass (2009) finds it proposed more than 120 years before Schneidewin by Boivin de Villeneuve (1729a and 1729b).

<sup>2</sup> But note Eicken-Iselin (1942) 275–79.

<sup>3</sup> Davies (1982); Taplin (1982); Hester (1984); Gellie (1986); March (1987); Davies (1991); Hester (1992); Müller (1996); Dawe (2001); Serra (2003); Dawe (2006); Budelmann (2006); Finglass (2009). A catalyst was Taplin's remark, (1978) 45–46, that the final exit is 'one of the most problematic stage-directions in all of Greek tragedy'.

<sup>4</sup> Dawe (2001) 1 rightly insists on the importance of linguistic detail. But Fraenkel, (1950) 2.305, points out that there is also a 'grammar of dramatic technique'.

## I. VERBAL EVIDENCE AGAINST AND FOR A (1424–67)

(a) The following have seemed suspicious.

(1) In 1422–28 Dawe ((2001) 3) points to many things that surprise. ‘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.’ But in his 1996 Teubner and his 2006 Cambridge edition he marks a lacuna after 1423 following Schenkl (1857). The suggestion is plausible, and if lines are missing here it is reasonable to suppose that the problems Dawe notes result from this accidental mutilation. The loss is easily explained: if Creon did indeed say why he came, his speech would have continued with ἄλλ’, and the omission would be owing to a *saute du même au même*. A couple of lines suffice, for example, the first two in my longer supplement below. No evidence here, therefore, for interpolation. (δ)

(2) Dawe continues, ‘Suddenly we find [Creon] 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 γένεθλα’. Why Sophocles made Creon insist that Oedipus be taken indoors is discussed in Section II. Here I treat the absence of a pronoun or any other means to indicate the change of addressee. We must determine first whom Creon is addressing. Since he finds them derelict, they can scarcely be his own attendants, who have just arrived with him and have not had time to neglect their duty. The Chorus too are a poor fit: Creon is unlikely to address the city’s elders (*cf.* 1223) so brusquely. I believe he addresses two servants who had guided the blind Oedipus out of the palace: blind persons elsewhere in tragedy have guides, and in our play both 1287 and 1292 seem to suggest such a guide.<sup>5</sup>

But why is there no ὑμεῖς δέ? It is quite true that addresses to stage extras are frequently marked by status nouns such as δμῶες or πρόσπολοι or by pronouns such as σὺ δέ, ὑμεῖς δέ, τις, ἄλλος and the like. But there are some 33 cases where orders are given without an indicator of either kind.<sup>6</sup> Of these, sixteen involve change of addressee in mid speech, as in our passage.<sup>7</sup> The handling of the change of address has one feature that might provoke suspicion: ἄλλά is common with imperatives (*GP* 13–14), but imperatives addressed to stage extras, being more abrupt, usually dispense with it. Still, there are instances at *Med.* 820 and *IT* 168. The chief difference between our passage and these is that in the latter the speaker gets more quickly to the business of giving orders. Anyone troubled on this point may fill the lacuna we have already seen reason to mark in a way that satisfies this objection as well, for example,

οὐχ ὡς γελαστής, Οἰδίπους, ἐλήλυθα  
οὐδ’ ὡς ὄνειδιῶν τι τῶν πάρος κακῶν  
<ἄλλ’ ὡς νοσοῦσαις ἐν τύχαισι πορσυνῶν  
γένει τε τῶμῳ καὶ πόλει τὰ πρόσφορα.  
ὑμεῖς δὲ κρύψατ’ ἐν δόμοις τὸν Λαΐου  
ὡς μὴ μιαινῆι τοὺς ἀναίτιους μύσος.>

Here too, obviously, if the text is lacunose, discontinuities in it are not evidence of interpolation.

<sup>5</sup> Creon’s orders to them are in effect countermanded by their master Oedipus, and thus Bain’s Law is preserved: see Bain (1981) 2, 8–12.

<sup>6</sup> *Sept.* 675; *Cho.* 712, 973, 980, 983; *Aj.* 593, 1003; *El.* 1123, 1458, 1468; *Ant.* 491, 760, 885–87; *Phil.* 1003, 1054; *Alc.* 266, 1110; *Med.* 820; *Hip.* 1353; *Su.*

811, 815, 1104; *Tro.* 1156, 1246; *IT* 168, 468; *Ion* 1266, 1402; *Pho.* 1660; *Or.* 474; *Ba.* 451, 503, 509. For *mutae personae* in tragedy and comedy see Richter (1934).

<sup>7</sup> *Sept.* 675; *Cho.* 712; *El.* 1468; *Ant.* 491, 885–87; *Phil.* 1054; *Hip.* 1353; *Su.* 1104; *Tro.* 1246; *IT* 168, 468; *Ion* 1266; *Or.* 474; *Ba.* 509.

Someone determined not to mark a lacuna could defend the integrity of the text here at need. Creon, it could be maintained, says only why he has not come because during his entrance up the *eisodos* he has heard Oedipus' comments on his own earlier mistreatment of him. He speaks 1422–23 to deprecate Oedipus' fears (in much the same way that Prometheus deprecates those of the Oceanids at *PV* 128<sup>8</sup>) before getting down to business in 1424–26. On the whole, then, whether the text is lacunose or not, there are no clear grounds for suspecting interpolation. (δ)

(3) Dawe says that in 1430–31 we have as yet no idea who is referred to by τοῖς ἐν γένει and remarks further, 'how exactly piety (εὐσεβῶς 1431) is best served by locking up Oedipus with his all too closely related children also taxes the imagination', which implies that the primary referent of τοῖς ἐν γένει is the children. But by οἱ ἐν γένει Creon probably means, in effect, himself. As we will see below, it is likely that Creon enters the *skene* with Oedipus. He is the new occupant of the palace at Thebes, and he must deal with the polluted person now revealed to be ἐγγενής: as the son of Creon's sister Jocasta, Oedipus is now a blood relation. Piety is served if Creon deals with his kinsman in a way that does not involve others in pollution. (δ)

(4) Dawe objects to ἐλπίδος μ' ἀπέσπασας in 1432, saying the the verb is 'oddly forcible' and also does not appear to suit the context, one of appreciation of kindly condescension. But the second objection, he admits, is addressed if we take ἐλπίδος as 'expectation': Oedipus expected the settling of old scores, and this fear has proved false. That leaves only the question whether ἀπέσπασας is too vigorous a word. To me it seems no more so than ἐκκέκρουκας με ἐλπίδος (*Pl.*, *Phdr.* 228E) or δόξης ἐξέπεσον εὐέλπιδος (*HF* 460). There is a slight catachresis in that one might think that an expectation from which one was 'wrenched' would be a good one, but the author of such a catachrestic usage is more likely in my view to be Sophocles than an interpolator: κληροῦχος, for example, normally means someone who possesses a share in something good, but at *Aj.* 507–08 the genitive with it means 'old age'. (δ)

(5) Dawe also objects to 1440–41, in which Oedipus says that Apollo ordered Thebes to ἀπολλύναι the guilty man since the god allowed exile. But it is clear from the context that Oedipus is not asking to be put to death and is using ἀπολλύναι as shorthand for the two possible penalties. Again it is more likely to be Sophocles than an interpolator who chose the literally false but emotively powerful word in preference to its metrical equivalent ἀνδρηλατεῖν. (δ)

(6) In 1444 the plural πένσεσθ' seems odd to Dawe. But it seems possible for Oedipus to regard Creon's consultation of Delphi as an action undertaken on behalf of, and in effect by, the Thebans. At 306 Oedipus uses the plural of his own consultation. (δ)

(7) Dawe describes Creon's answer to this question as a *vix sequitur*. He explains his doubts: 'But Oedipus has placed confidence in the god, insisting that there is no need to ask Apollo again. It is rather Creon who needs reassurance'. But Creon's 'now' contrasts with an earlier time when Oedipus doubted both Teiresias' prophecy and Creon's report of what the oracle said. (δ)

(8) Dawe points to the disparity of tense in 1446 between ἐπισκήπτω and προ(σ)τρέψομαι.<sup>9</sup> The use of the future exemplified by the second verb is discussed by Radt (2002) 310–14, who cites numerous earlier discussions, including Page on *Med.* 259. Jebb (1893) points out that such a future is found connected to a present at *Thuc.* 2.44.1 (οὐκ ὀλοφύρομαι μάλλον ἢ παραμυθήσομαι) and Finglass (2009) compares the two verbs at *Trach.* 216 (αἶρομαι οὐδ' ἀπώσομαι). (δ)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Taplin (1977) 72–73 says that usually there is no suggestion that an arriving character hears words spoken during his arrival, but he cites as exceptions *PV* 128, *Ant.* 387 and *Alc.* 141.

<sup>9</sup> Though I see no way to decide with confidence

between the two variants, I incline toward προτρέψομαι, 'I shall exhort you'.

<sup>10</sup> I discuss problems in the sequence 1445–46 in Section II below.

Dawe exempts 1447–57 (all but one line) from excision. As we will see below they are recognizably Sophoclean. Of the remaining lines in A, Dawe makes no specific objection to the lines about Oedipus' sons, restricting himself to the passage on the daughters, the very end of A. Here are 1462–67, lightly corrected by Jebb and Schneidewin:<sup>11</sup>

τοῖν δ' ἀθλίαιν οἰκτραῖν τε παρθένοιον ἐμαῖν,  
οἶν οὔποθ' ἡμῆ χωρὶς ἐστάθη βορᾶς  
τράπεζ' ἄνευ τοῦδ' ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' ὅσων ἐγὼ  
ψάυοιμι, πάντων τῶδ'<sup>12</sup> ἀεὶ μετειχέτην, 1465  
τοῖν μοι μέλεσθαι· καὶ μάλιστα μὲν χεροῖν  
ψαῦσαί μ' ἔασον κάποκλαύσασθαι κακά.

1462 τοῖν Jebb: ταῖν codd. 1463 οἶν Jebb: αῖν codd. οὔποτ' ἄλλη Schenk and Arndt, οὔποτ' ἀμῆς B.H. Kennedy. 1465 τῶδ' Schneidewin: τῶνδ' codd. 1466 τοῖν Jebb: ταῖν Zr: αῖν rell.

(9) Of 1463–65 Dawe complains, '[O]ne expects either "their table was never set apart from me", or "my table was never set apart from them", not the unhappy amalgam "For whom my dining table was never set up apart without me"'. But as Finglass (2009) shows, adverbs and adjectives implying separation are often amplified in Sophocles by another phrase. I take the sentence to mean 'For whom my dining table (i.e. the one I provided) was never set separately, apart from me'.<sup>13</sup> The lines seem to provide no clear evidence of spuriousness. (δ)

(10) Dawe remarks, 'It is 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'. The topic of food does seem to arise unexpectedly here. Defenders, however, could point to the importance of the serving of food in the epic stories of Oedipus' quarrel with his sons. This suggestion will be amplified below in the postscript. (δ)

(11) Dawe objects that 'table of food' is 'just about unknown in classical Greek'. But Barrett (1964) 316 and Diggle (1994) 417–18 give lists of similar adnominal genitives. (δ)

(12) He claims further that βορᾶς is a word with the wrong overtones (starvation, feeding in the manner of a brute beast), but it seems to be without these overtones at Eur., *Ion* 1169, *Or.* 189 and Soph., *fr.* 675 Radt. (δ)

(13) He says further that 'Look after them, and for preference let me touch them' comes close to nonsense. But μάλιστα attached to the second command marks it as Oedipus' more immediate desire: 'look after them, and most especially let me embrace them as I bewail my misfortune'. I see nothing here that makes interpolation a likely diagnosis. (γ at best)

(14) There is a grammatical oddity in that a complete genitive object, τοῖν ... ἐμαῖν, starts the sentence and serves as antecedent to a relative clause, but instead of the main verb simply governing this genitive object the object is resumed by the article τοῖν used as a demonstrative

<sup>11</sup> In keeping with contemporary Attic inscriptions – see Thraette (1996) 91–3; Meisterhans (1900) 121–23 – Jebb, Dawe and others restore the feminine pronoun duals in -ῶ and -οῖν at 1462, 1463 and 1466. The separate feminine dual forms do not count as evidence against the passage since feminine τοῖν, οἶν and τούτοιον are easily corrupted by scribes to ταῖν, αῖν and ταύταιν, the forms of a later age. In 1465 τῶδ' was corrupted in a different direction because of the neighbouring genitive and therefore is evidence that the passage originally had the forms in -ῶ and -οῖν. In 1505 τούτοιον is the reading of one ms. For the possibility that the later-attested forms might also have been

available to Sophocles see Finglass (2007) 406.

<sup>12</sup> Dawe, who calls transmitted τῶνδ' 'lack-lustre', nevertheless does not accept Schneidewin's τῶδ', apparently believing that the demonstrative is incompatible with position inside the relative clause. But Smyth (1956) §2517 shows that where English repeats the relative in different cases ('daughters, for whom was never set ... and who always shared') Greek omits the second relative and often replaces it with a demonstrative or personal pronoun.

<sup>13</sup> Awkwardness may also be the result of corruption: Schenk and Arndt made the attractive proposal ἄλλη for ἡμῆ.

(only one ms. in fact has ταῖν, the others having the relative αἶν).<sup>14</sup> For the use of ὁ ἢ τό with demonstrative force even without μέν or δέ see Moorhouse (1982) 140–41. That leaves the resumption itself. West (1990) 8 gives examples of the resumption of a noun already in the structure of the sentence by a later and unnecessary pronoun, as do K.-G. 2.660–61, who cite *OT* 248 and 270 and *Trach.* 287–89. (γ at best)

(b) The following are verbal points in favour of A (1424–67).

(1) The syntax of αἰδεῖσθε, construed both with accusative object φλόγα ἀνακτος 'Ἡλίου ('respect') and consecutive infinitive δεικνύναι ('so as to refrain from showing'), seems Sophoclean: compare *El.* 103–09 and 132–33 where verbs of ceasing take both their own objects and an infinitive. (γ)

(2) In 1427 τό is used as the relative pronoun, though forms in τ- are usually confined to lyric. But Moorhouse (1982) 267–68 cites fifteen instances in Sophoclean dialogue, of which only one is doubtful. There are many fewer examples from Aeschylus and Euripides. This seems like a Sophoclean tic. (γ)

(3) There is a typically Sophoclean enjambment of the conjunction ὅπου at 1436. For Sophoclean enjambment see Griffith (1977) 96–97. (β)

(4) μηδενὸς προσήγορος (1437) involves a loose Sophoclean genitive, as if with a privative adjective. Sophoclean parallels are given by Moorhouse (1982) 75. (γ)

(5) πρῶτιστα (1439) is used three times in Sophocles, only twice in the considerably longer Euripidean corpus and once in an Aeschylean fragment. Again, perhaps a Sophoclean tic. (γ)

(6) ἴν' ἔσταμεν / χρείας (1442–43) recalls *Trach.* 1145 ξυμφορᾶς ἴν' ἔσταμεν. (β)

(7) In 1447–48 the enjambment of τάφον / θεοῦ shows a strong pause after an initial short word, and Dawe (2006) on 545–46 notes this as Sophoclean. (β)

(8) The synzesis of εα in forms of ἐάω is rare (it does not occur in Aeschylus or Euripides), but monosyllabic ἔα (1451) occurs also at *Ant.* 95 and *OC* 1192. (α)

(9) The forceful phraseology of 1458, ἀλλ' ἢ μὲν ἡμῶν μοῖρ', ὅποῖπερ εἶσ', ἴτω, sounds rather like Oedipus' signature tune: cf. 1076 ὅποῖα χρήζει ῥηγνύτω. See also *Trach.* 467–68. (γ)

(10) In 1463–64 the enjambment βορᾶς / τράπεζα seems Sophoclean: cf. line-final adnominal genitive followed by line-initial governing noun at 334, 406, 459 and 1378, and a similar collocation of line-final adjective and line-initial noun at 20, 29, 42, 63, 122, 253, 288, 796, 1112 and 1242. (β)

Let us try to describe this evidence quantitatively. If we give a value of 3, 2 and 1 to α, β and γ, we can compare the number and quality of the suspicious verbal features to the number and quality of the *prima facie* Sophoclean ones.

against Sophoclean authorship

mark	value	x	#	=
α	3		0	0
β	2		0	0
γ	1		2	2

Total 2

for Sophoclean authorship

mark	value	x	#	=
α	3		1	3
β	2		4	8
γ	1		5	5

Total 16

<sup>14</sup> We need the demonstrative unless Jebb is right in thinking that there is an anacolouthon here. The suggestion, mooted by Kamerbeek (1967), that τοῖν ...

παρθένων is a second object for προσθῆ μέριμναν seems highly artificial and should almost certainly be rejected.



Clearly, even if my estimate of the gravity of these points is off in a few cases, the verbal evidence, so far from casting doubt on authenticity, goes some way toward proving Sophoclean authorship. Since two of the points in favour of genuineness occur in a section Dawe does not challenge, I should perhaps lower the score by one alpha and one beta, making it 11 to 2. That still suggests that Sophoclean authorship is the likelier hypothesis.

## II. THE DRAMATURGICAL EVIDENCE AGAINST AND FOR A

(a) The following aspects of the dramaturgy of A have been regarded as suspicious. I refrain here from adding marks since all the points are answered in (b) below.

(1) The biggest dramaturgical objection to the end as a whole (including A) is that it ends the play by having Oedipus re-enter the *skene*. This stands *prima facie* in contradiction with Teiresias' prophecy of exile. The certainty that this prophecy must be fulfilled has been an important argument for those who doubt the genuineness of the transmitted ending, for it is certain (despite Calder's 1962 attempt to prove otherwise) that when the text we have was performed, Oedipus made his last exit into the *skene* and not down the foreign *eisodos*.

(2) Dawe says of 1424–31 that Creon's insistence on sparing the bystanders and the all-seeing sun the sight of a polluted man is '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'.

(3) Similarly, it might seem *prima facie* suspicious that Oedipus, who begins (1440–41) by regarding a second consultation of Delphi as superfluous, seems in 1444 to view it as a great favour conferred on his undeserving self: 'Will you inquire then on behalf of one so wretched?'

(4) Between 1445 and 1446 the connection has been thought difficult. In fact Dawe (1996) marks a lacuna after 1445, following Wunder (1847), and in his 2001 article he corrects the location of the speaker sign  $\text{O}\Delta$ ., giving the lost line to Oedipus, not Creon. If a line of Oedipus has been omitted, the lack of join between 1445 and 1446, as Dawe admits, would be the result of textual corruption and not evidence of interpolation.

(b) A defence of the dramaturgy of A.

(1) Teiresias predicts that Oedipus will be exiled. But though the prophecy must be fulfilled, this can happen in more than one way. He could, like Seneca's Oedipus, go into exile at the end of the play. But he also could go into the palace at the end provided the audience receive a clear impression that he will be exiled at a later time.<sup>15</sup> If it can be shown that such an ending, though not obvious, is one a competent dramatist might find choiceworthy, the objection loses much of its force.

There is nothing inevitable about Creon's demand that Oedipus go inside or that the oracle be consulted again. But to end the play with a scene of conflict in which Creon is victor has seemed a possible proceeding to some scholars. Davies (1982) 276 thinks that the point of the ending is the unchangeability of Oedipus' character or (what comes to the same thing) his failure to learn anything. Additionally Creon's countermanding of Oedipus' demand makes visible the *peripeteia* by which Oedipus, who once sentenced Creon to death, now finds himself in his power. For these reasons the final stage direction and the conflict that leads up to it have seemed possible.

<sup>15</sup> Certainly Oedipus' insistence that Apollo's will is already known (1440–41) and the fact that after yielding to Creon's order to go inside he insists that Thebes be spared having him as its living inhabitant (1449–50) creates the impression that the future holds exile for Oedipus. Those who envisage permanent incarceration have a much more difficult case to make. Taplin (1982)

172–74 seems to be suggesting that Oedipus will never go into exile and that his exit into the *skene* represents the more extreme punishment. If that is what he means, I do not find it convincing: as March (1987) 148 observes, no one makes this point, and it is too subtle to go without saying.

But we can do better and point to lines earlier on (1409–15) that seem to be preparation for the clash of wills in 1424–54. So although Creon's demand is surprising, we have reason to look at it not in terms of the logic of everyday occurrences and conversations but as a dramatically purposeful set of lines brought into existence by the will and mind of Sophocles.<sup>16</sup> 1409–15 are preparation for the Creon-Oedipus dialogue. In these lines Oedipus pleads with the Chorus in the most vehement and repeated terms for exile. The idea of Oedipus' exile, considered objectively, should require no advocacy since both Delphi and Oedipus' decree demand it, yet the vehemence of his plea to the Chorus treats it as something un-obvious, which is most easily understood as dramatic preparation: it helps to prepare the audience for the opposition the plea will in fact receive. (The plea to Creon is vehement in the same way, and Creon notes the vehemence in 1435.) Additionally, in 1411–12 Oedipus urges that he be hidden from the sight of men. This too could be said to anticipate Creon's view (1421–31) of what should be done with him. And in 1416–18 the Chorus Leader, who might have said 'That is what the god commands and your own edict has decreed: so it shall be', says that it will be up to Creon to grant Oedipus' request. The conflict of wills between Creon and Oedipus, unexpected from one point of view, has thus already been anticipated: the immediate exile of Oedipus will not be the obvious course it once seemed to be.<sup>17</sup>

The other three objections are specific consequences of this dramaturgical choice. (2) Creon's philosophy on how to treat polluted persons is different from Oedipus'. But it fulfills an essential function in the scene as we have it. If Sophocles wants his play to end with Oedipus' re-entry into the palace, someone needs to object to the exile, and that someone must be Creon. Sophocles must therefore give Creon *some* reason for his opposition to the more obvious course of immediate exile. The religious reason Creon puts forward serves this purpose in good tragic form: *cf.* *HF* 1159–62 and *IT* 1207.

(3) As noted, it is odd that Oedipus, who had treated further consultation of Delphi as superfluous, by 1444 seems grateful for it. But again, if Sophocles wished to end his play with Oedipus' exit into the *skene*, it is plain that Oedipus must acquiesce in this, and the dramatist will give him whatever reason to do so he thinks will pass muster in the theatre. Oedipus must give up his opposition to Creon's order at some point, yet to have him simply climb down would be out of character. Transmitted 1444 allows Oedipus to concede the point at issue while continuing to insist on the same attitude of self-loathing that was behind his demand to be exiled.

(4) It is just possible, I believe, to explain the connection between 1445 and 1446 without postulating a lacuna between them. As noted above, in 1444 Oedipus prepares to give up his opposition to returning to the palace by asking whether the Thebans will really make enquiry for a wretch like himself. Creon's 1445 answers this affirmatively, giving as a reason that now at any rate Oedipus will be ready to listen to Apollo's word. If we do not mark a lacuna, in 1446 Oedipus agrees (γ') that this time he will be receptive to Apollo, but he also seizes upon Creon's σὺ and answers it with σοί: 'Yes, and upon you also I lay a task and to you also I will make an exhortation'. The καὶ σοί thus makes a new point, that although he means to enter the palace, he first intends to lay a duty on Creon and to exhort him. The duty is burying Jocasta. The exhortation makes it plain that his desire to be exiled to Cithaeron is unaltered and unalterable. This is to be no weak climbing down but a concession made in such a way as to highlight Oedipus' still strong will. If, on the other hand, we mark a lacuna after 1445 as Dawe does (1996; 2001), any difficulties would be the result of textual mutilation, not interpolation.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Dawe's brilliant exposition ((1982) 6–22 = (2006) 5–17) of the plot of *OT* shows that Sophocles makes it work by sometimes having his characters behave in ways that from a real-life standpoint are unnatural. That applies no less here.

<sup>17</sup> Sophocles' choice may have been influenced by a further reason. I reserve this for the postscript below.

<sup>18</sup> In (1996) Dawe gives Creon a second line after 1445 but in (2001) assigns the missing line to Oedipus. My preference would be to keep the stichomythia going

## III. VERBAL EVIDENCE AGAINST AND FOR THE GENUINENESS OF B (1468–1530)

## (a) Suspicious verbal features.

(1) Dawe says ‘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’, citing Ellendt’s lexicon (1872) for confirmation. The point would seem to have some weight even though Finglass (2009) cites *Phil.* 733 (749–50 seem to conform to Dawe’s rule). (γ)

(2) Oedipus’ 1469–70, ‘If I could touch them with my hands, I would imagine that I possessed them just as when I had sight’, implies that the blinded Oedipus no longer has daughters. (γ)

(3) In 1475 λέγειν τι, ‘to be right’, like οὐδὲν λέγειν, ‘to be wrong, talk nonsense’, is a colloquialism<sup>19</sup> unattested elsewhere in Sophocles (λέγειν τι at *Ant.* 757 is a different use) but twice in Euripides (*HF* 279; *Phrixus* B fr. 820b3). (γ)

(4) Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990) 112–13 defend τὴν παροῦσαν τέρψιν ἢ σ’ εἶχεν πάλα in 1477, but even if we translate sympathetically as ‘knowing of your present delight, which you have felt for a long time’, under the circumstances it seems odd to emphasize insuring Oedipus’ delight: cf. 1375–76. Furthermore Oedipus’ *present* delight cannot be identical to the one he felt some time ago. Pearson (1924) tried to avoid the latter problem by placing a comma before πάλα so that it goes with γνούς. This artifice has not found favour, but it serves to show that there is a problem. (γ)

(5) Dawe claims that both the construction and meaning of τῆσδε τῆς ὁδοῦ in 1478 are difficult. For the causal genitive Dawe himself cites *OT* 47–48, which surely gives some support here. And the word need not mean ‘sending’ or ‘conducting’ but simply refer to *the girls*’ coming. But this still leaves an Oedipus who, instead of wishing the gods’ blessing on Creon, prays merely that they will guard Creon better than they have guarded himself. What Oedipus’ fate illustrates is not failure to guard but determination to destroy. And one could have a better fate than Oedipus’ and still be miserable. (γ)

(6) Dawe translates 1482–83 as ‘Hands whose good offices have brought it about that my formerly bright eyes see like this’ but objects both to the sense and to the construction with accusative and infinitive. The catachresis seems much more violent than that in 1432. The construction of προξενέω with accusative and infinitive seems not to occur elsewhere. (γ)

(7) It is hard to make sense of προσβλέπειν γὰρ οὐ σθένω (1486). (a) They make no sense as an explanation of δακρύω unless we presuppose the following syllogism:

*oculis aut uidemus aut lacrimamus;*  
*ego autem uos uidere non possum;*  
*illacrimo ergo uobis.*

(b) Dawe prefers to take it as an explanation of νοούμενος and writes ‘intuitively – for I cannot actually see you – understanding what the rest of your life will be like’. But Dawe’s adverb is not easily supplied. Furthermore, even with perfect eyesight one cannot see the future. (β)

(8) Dawe notes that in 1488 βιῶναι represents the sole instance in Aeschylus or Sophocles of the verb βιόω, which occurs in *Alc.* 784 and trag. adesp. 566a. (γ)

(9) Dawe takes exception to πρὸς ἀνθρώπων with βιῶναι, but for such a brachylogy Finglass (2009) cites *Trach.* 934–35, ἄκουσα πρὸς τοῦ θηρὸς ἔρξειεν τάδε. See also *OT* 1221–22 where a prepositional phrase expressing agency complements an intransitive and a transitive verb, ἀνέπνευσά τ’ ἐκ σέθεν καὶ κατεκόιμησα τοῦμὸν ὄμμα. (δ)

by marking the disappearance of two single-line speeches, for example, <Οἱ. καὶ θεοῖς τε καὶ σοὶ τὰπὸ τοῦδε πείσομαι. Κρ. νῦν οὖν σ’ ἄνωγα τῶνδ’ ἔσω

στείχειν δόμων.>

<sup>19</sup> See Stevens (1937) 189.



(10) In 1497 ἔπεφνε deserves comment. Their subject matter being what it is, we may expect that the tragic poets will employ several synonyms for 'kill', and so they do<sup>20</sup>: in Sophocles κτείνειν and compounds in κατα- and ἐπι- (some 60 times in the seven plays), ὀλλύναι and compounds in ἀπ-, δι- and ἔξαπ- (89x), ὀλέκειν (3x), φονεύειν (6x), φθίσαι and compounds in ἀπο- and κατα- (6x), ἐναίρειν (3x), ἐναρίζειν and κατ- (4x), σφάζειν and κατα- (3x), καίνειν (6x), φθείρειν and compounds in δια- and κατα- (13x). But the evidence suggests that πεφνεῖν, used some 75 times in the corpus of epic, was deliberately avoided by the tragic poets of the fifth century as an epicism. In Sophocles it appears only here, in Euripides only at *Andr.* 655 (655–66 del. Nauck) and nowhere else in tragedy.<sup>21</sup> Sophocles twice (*Aj.* 901; *El.* 488) uses the compound καταπεφνεῖν. Both passages are lyric, where epicisms are most at home. (β)

(11) Dawe notes that that δηλαδὴ (1501) is rare in Euripides and found nowhere else in tragedy. (β)

(12) Just what word ὧδε in 1508 qualifies is not easy to see. τηλικόσδ' means 'so young' and cannot accommodate another 'so'. Perhaps ἐρήμους, but although one can be 'so destitute', the expression 'so destitute of all things' seems odd. (γ)

(13) As far as our evidence goes, trochaic tetrameters were out of fashion from the death of Aeschylus until Euripides reintroduced them ca. 415. Sophocles has them in *Phil.* and *OC*, both securely dated to his last decade, but not in *El.*, *Ant.*, *Aj.* or *Trach.* *OT* is usually dated to the 430s or 420s. Accordingly, the tetrameters in *OT* look out of place chronologically. The only other post-Aeschylean Greek tragedy that ends with tetrameters is *Ion* (ca. 413). (The tetrameters that are the second-last utterance at the end of *Pho.* are no defence since they are part of a long interpolation.) The fact that the last seven tetrameters are so awkwardly written<sup>22</sup> tends to cast a shadow over the remainder of them. (γ)

(b) The following should be noted in B's favour.

(1) In 1482 and 1484 ὑμῖν with short ultima occurs. A short ultima in the datives of ἡμεῖς and ὑμεῖς is nearly unique to Sophocles among the tragic poets (but note Aesch. *Eum.* 347). (β)

(2) The appearance among full trimeters of lines consisting of a lone bacchius or amphibrach (1468, 1471, 1475) is arresting, and the relevant parallels are Sophoclean: see *Trach.* 865, 868; *Phil.* 750, 785, 787, 804; *OC* 315, 318, 1271. (The only example elsewhere in tragedy is *IA* 1132, likely to be spurious.) (β)

(3) In 1496–97 the enjambment πατήρ / ὑμῶν is Sophoclean. (β)

(4) However we emend the nonsensical τοῖς ἐμοῖς in 1494, we seem to have another instance of Sophoclean enjambment, with the article at or near line end followed by line-initial noun. (β)

Again, we can make a quantitative summary:

<sup>20</sup> The figures below are approximate since often the decision between 'kill' and 'ruin' or the like is difficult. I note also Sophocles' occasional use in an extended sense of words that properly mean 'finish', 'use up', 'take down' or the like: διεργάζεσθαι, διαπράσσειν, ἀναλίσκειν and καθαίρειν are used one time each in contexts where 'kill' is a likely translation. These are obviously in a different category from πεφνεῖν and offer it little, if any, protection.

<sup>21</sup> Hesychius α 7040 Latte gives ἀργῆν ἔπεφνεν, and this penthemimer is duly entered by Kannicht and

Snell (1981) as fr. adesp. 199, but there is nothing to show that it belongs to the great age of tragedy, and it may not even come from a tragedy. The perfect passive participle of this verb figures as one of many conjectural supplements at Aesch. fr. 154a.11 R., but it is by no means certain that a verb meaning 'killed' is required there. It should be noted, however, that two compounds, Ἀρείφατος and πυρίφατος, occur in tragedy.

<sup>22</sup> Dawe (1973) 266–73 makes a strong case for spuriousness.

against Sophoclean authorship					for Sophoclean authorship					
mark	value	x	#	=	mark	value	x	#	=	
α	3		0	0	α	3		0	0	
β	2		3	6	β	2		4	8	
γ	1		9	9	γ	1		0	0	
<hr/>					<hr/>					
Total			15		Total			8		

Troubling verbal features are more plentiful in B (15 points) than in A (2 points). I admit that the eight points in favour of Sophoclean authorship (*cf.* the 16 points in A) mean that the evidence is less univocal. But here is the choice we face: either the passage was written by Sophocles and the verbal objections are hyperfinical, which is hard to credit; or, since the Sophoclean features in B are only of three kinds (half lines, ὑμίν and enjambment) and are all easy to imitate, they might indicate an author who grew up on the style of Sophocles, perhaps the poet's homonymous grandson, who was already a person of interest to the interpolation police. The dramaturgy of B will, I think, make this question easier to decide.

#### IV. DRAMATURGICAL EVIDENCE AGAINST AND FOR B

(a) The following are objections.

(1) By 1471 the two daughters of Oedipus are escorted from the palace at the order of Creon. There has been no verbal signal from Creon of the kind that is usual in tragedy (ἴτω τις or the like), though in 1476 he claims to be the responsible party. Are we to imagine a silent gesture, a mimed word of command on Creon's part? Presumably,<sup>23</sup> but I can find no other place where an order is given to extras without the use of words. It is grounds for deep suspicion when an order is given to a servant but it is not carried out (as at Eur., *Hel.* 892–93). It is no less suspicious when an order is carried out without being given. It is hard to see what would have led Sophocles to depart from the usual practice of Greek tragedy here. We will see below what might have motivated an interpolator. (β)

(2) In 1503–14 Oedipus pleads with Creon to be a father to the daughters he can no longer look after. Creon makes no verbal reply to this request. I can find no parallel for either ignoring a plea like this or replying to it by a mere nod of the head. (β)

(3) Furthermore Oedipus asks Creon to give his assenting nod, laying his hand on someone unspecified (either the daughters or Oedipus). If ξύννευσον is meant literally, Oedipus' request makes no sense since a nod would be invisible to the blind Oedipus. Nor can he see Creon laying his hands on the daughters. Only if he means 'Mark your assent by laying your hand on me' do his words make any kind of sense. The context, however, suggests supplying αὐτοῖν, not ἐμοῦ, with σῆι ψάσας χερί. There is in any case no parallel for such a silent mode of communication, and it raises the question why Oedipus does not ask Creon to mark his assent in the ordinary, spoken manner. No answer suggests itself except the desire for meaningless novelty. (β)

(4) Closely related is the apparent contradiction with 1521–52. There are two possibilities to consider. (a) Suppose that Creon has not assented to Oedipus' request.<sup>24</sup> In that case it serves no purpose to ask Oedipus to let go of the girls as he goes into the palace, for they are still in his care. Kamerbeek suggests that the girls will be taken to the γυναικωνίτις. But both Oedipus and the daughters must enter by the only *skene* door that has been in use in the play, and separating father from daughters here has no intelligible point. (b) By contrast, suppose that Creon *has* given his assent to look after the girls. That would mean taking charge of them. Under

<sup>23</sup> This is the view taken by Kitto (1966) 216. No one else even raises the question.

<sup>24</sup> Eicken-Iselin (1942) 276 takes this view.

those circumstances, Oedipus' μηδαμῶς ταύτας γ' ἔληι μου (there is no qualification like 'at least for the moment', and μηδαμῶς seems to exclude any qualification) contradicts his plea that Creon shall protect them. As we will see below, the departures from tragic practice and common sense in this passage seem motivated by a desire for pathos at any price. (β)

(5) The dialogue at 1518–20 reveals a pointless divergence of presuppositions between Oedipus and Creon. Oedipus insists that he must be exiled. Creon says 'You are asking me for what the god must give'. To this Oedipus replies 'But I am hated by the gods'. The implication seems to be that they will withhold exile from him because they hate him and he wants to be exiled.<sup>25</sup> Creon says, 'Therefore you will soon get your request'. The implication of this is that the gods *will* exile Oedipus because they hate him. The interchange sounds almost comic: cf. *Ar., Knights* 30–35. The next line makes it worse, for Oedipus immediately gives up his own view in favour of Creon's: 'Do you really mean it?' To this Creon replies 'Yes, for I am not accustomed to saying what I do not think'.<sup>26</sup> This dialogue would sparkle well enough in a comedy, but it is arguably no way to end a tragedy. (γ)

(6) Creon's reply to Oedipus' μηδαμῶς ταύτας γ' ἔληι μου erects a great edifice on a slender foundation: Oedipus should not desire to have authority *in all things*, as if he were making any such claim. 'For', says Creon, 'the authority you exercised did not follow you throughout your life'. Of course Oedipus is no longer king, but this has no bearing on the question of his daughters. Strained logic accompanied by pointless cruelty is not, one would think, a Sophoclean way to end a tragedy. (γ)

(b) I know of nothing to set against these points.

If we were to draw up a scoring chart for the dramaturgical evidence, there would be four betas and two gammas (ten points) against authenticity, and nothing in favour of it.<sup>27</sup>

B, then, is likely to be an interpolation. Why was it made? The idea, proposed by Schneidewin and accepted by Müller, Dawe and others, that the play was altered to harmonize its plot with *OC* so that the two could be produced in 401 will no longer serve since we have seen that A too presupposes an entry into the palace at the end and A is almost certainly Sophoclean.<sup>28</sup>

If we read the lines of B closely, it becomes apparent that the sole reason for their existence is pathos, the representation of helpless misery.<sup>29</sup> It is pathetic (1) that Oedipus has to beg for his

<sup>25</sup> Both Davies (1991) 6 and Dawe (1982) *ad loc.* interpret this as 'The gods hate and will therefore exile me', but this takes insufficient account of ἀλλά. Furthermore, it seems likely that in 1520 (note the οὔν) Oedipus is adopting Creon's position in preference to his own of 1519.

<sup>26</sup> This is the interpretation of Lloyd-Jones (1994). The tone of the passage becomes more comically inconsequential still if with Kamerbeek and others we interpret Oedipus' words as 'Do I have your promise then?' and Creon's as 'No, for ...': then Creon in effect says 'yes' and 'no' in quick succession to Oedipus' exile.

<sup>27</sup> Further evidence against these lines comes from an excellent performance of the play at my university. My wife, though aware that some scholars had problems with the ending, was speaking from first-hand experience when she said to me 'That was terrific. But why did all the life go out of it when the little girls were brought on?' In other words, someone watching the play in English located the beginning of the trouble

almost precisely where my examination of the Greek text locates it.

<sup>28</sup> Müller (1996) 193 says that *OC* was the only play Sophocles left behind at his death, hence the necessity for his grandson to fill out a trilogy with other plays. But, (1) tragedies already performed at the Dionysia, apart from those of Aeschylus, were not eligible for reperformance there; and (2) Sophocles was almost certainly planning to enter the competition again and would have had a whole trilogy 'on the stocks' at the time of his death, as did both Aeschylus and Euripides. Nor can we imagine *OT* and *OC* produced together after 386, for the records show that there was only one παλαιὰ τραγωδία produced each year.

<sup>29</sup> Helpless misery is a staple of Greek tragedy (see de Romilly (1980)), and I do not intend my enumeration of the helpless miseries depicted in B as an argument against genuineness: analogues to most of them can be found elsewhere in Greek tragedy, including the depiction of the future miseries of children who can be only dimly aware of them.

daughters to be brought to him; (2) that since he is blind and since Creon gives his order silently, he does not know that his request has been granted until he hears them weep and must ask Creon whether he has sent for them; (3) that he must ask them where they are and request that they come to his arms; (4) that he weeps for them, imagining the social isolation they will endure and their dismal marriage prospects; (5) that he must beg Creon to take charge of them and perhaps may not know whether his request has been granted; (6) that his daughters are too young to understand the exhortations he might otherwise have made to them; (7) that he can therefore ask them only to pray, and for two simple things; (8) that he is ordered inside, with his attempts to set conditions on his entry rebuffed; (9) that his daughters are taken from him and he is lectured on his powerlessness. What is remarkable here is the concentration on pathos to the exclusion of everything else. Page (1934) 66 says that some interpolations show ‘the tendency of actors to exaggerate and expand a pathetic moment – this is what I have called “melodramatic interpolation”’. B is a fine example of this tendency. A vase of the second half of the fourth century establishes that Oedipus’ daughters were part of the play by that date: see Taplin (2007) 90–92. This gives us a *terminus ante quem*. The *terminus post quem* is 386, when an ‘old tragedy’ was added to the festival program.

#### V. HOW MUCH IS MISSING?

If B is interpolated, 1462–67 are the last Sophoclean lines in the transmitted text. Oedipus, after requesting that Creon look after his daughters, begs most particularly for the present to be able to embrace them as he bewails his own misfortune. There is no need for the girls to be brought out in order that he may do so<sup>30</sup> for he has already agreed to re-enter the palace. All he requires is a guiding hand to bring him to them. That guiding hand might as well be Creon’s since Sophocles has a good reason to send him, as the land’s new king, into the palace of Laius.

How many lines were lost when B was added? We do not know for sure, of course, but to judge from Sophocles’ practice not much would seem to be lacking for a characteristically Sophoclean ending. The ends of Sophoclean plays were discussed ably by Roberts (1988), (1993) and (1987). Her analysis has not been bettered in more recent literature, and I turn to three observations of hers to make the case that not much is missing and to a fourth for guidance in the *exempli gratia* restoration of that ‘not much’.

Sophocles, says Roberts (1988) 178, does not make an issue of ending his plays: they achieve closure principally by the fact that the expectations raised in them have all been fulfilled. In *OT* everything the play has led us to expect has been fulfilled by 1467: the discovery of the killer of Laius, the discovery of Oedipus’ identity as son of Laius and Jocasta, the transformation of Oedipus from respected king to polluted outcast and his blinding. Only his exile from Thebes has yet to be accomplished, but the audience can be sure, as Oedipus himself is, that Apollo will again command Oedipus’ exile: his entrance into the palace is only a retardation of the inevitable.<sup>31</sup> Sophoclean closure (see Roberts (1993) 573–74) is also effected by references to burial, as at 1447–48.

The play, so far as we can tell, is all but over. A final brief speech by Creon will have acceded to Oedipus’ request, agreeing to escort him into the palace to his daughters, to take care of them himself and to bury Jocasta. Some closing anapaests (the metre used to end all the other extant plays and also *Tereus*) will have accompanied their progress into the *skene* and the Chorus’

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, such an act would contradict the urgency of 1424–31 by needlessly prolonging Oedipus’ contact with bystanders and the all-seeing sun.

<sup>31</sup> Roberts also notes (1988) 178–79 that several of the plays contain near the end an indirect allusion to

future events known to the mythical tradition, events often shedding an ironic light on what has just happened. If the interpretation of 1451–57 proposed in the postscript below is correct, *OT* would be a further example.

journey down the *eisodos*. Roberts (1987) 58 gives a typology of such parting speeches, both the anapaests and the preceding iambics, and it seems most likely that Sophocles here would have concentrated on the immediate future, the departure of Oedipus into the palace and the burial, with a glance at the Chorus' sense of personal loss. I venture, therefore, to offer future producers of *OT* a supplement that will enable them to end the play without the noticeable falling off (see above, n. 27) of the last 63 transmitted lines.

- Κρ.     στεῖχ' ἐς δόμους, δύστην' ὀδηγήσω σ' ἐγώ·  
παῖδοιν τ' ἔχεσθαι συμφοραῖς τ' ἐπιστένειν,  
οὔτω νοσοῦσης σοι τύχης, οὐδεὶς φθόνος.  
κορῶν δέ, τὰ γενεῇ γὰρ αἰδεῖσθαι χρεῶν,  
ὥσπερ μ' ἐπαιτεῖς, τημελεῖν ὑφίσταμαι.  
τᾶνδον δ', ὅσον γ' οἶόν τε, θήσομαι καλῶς,  
θάψας ἀδελφὴν ὡς πρέπει. τὰ δ' ἐκ θεῶν  
δοθέντα, δύσκλητ' ὄντα, χρή στέργειν ὅμως.  
Χο.     ἀλλ' εἰσέρχεσθ' ἡμεῖς δ' ἴομεν  
δάκρυ' εἴβοντες πύκν' ἀπὸ βλεφάρων,  
τὰ μέγιστα φίλων  
καὶ σωτήρων ὀλέσαντες.)<sup>32</sup>

As noted above, the daughters are within, and since Oedipus has already consented to go in as well, there is no need to bring them out. It also makes sense for Creon to enter the *skene* along with Oedipus: this is the palace in which he will live as Thebes' new king, and his going in is a visual marker of the transfer of power. Creon must accede to Oedipus' request to bury Jocasta and to care for his daughters (such requests are never ignored elsewhere in tragedy), but once he does so the play needs no more than a final brief utterance of the Chorus.

Let us pause to contemplate a paradoxically cheerful turn of events. We began prepared to listen to the sceptic's evidence that the end of the play might not be the poet's work and to refuse the fool's paradise of a blinkered textual conservatism. The answer to the question 'Do we have the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*?' might have been 'Alas, no': most who have written from the sceptical point of view have brought us the gloomy tidings that the end of the play is lost beyond recovery. But if I am right, the sceptical position, for once, has good news to tell: the statue Sophocles made has survived all but complete, and only a little plaster-of-paris is needed to supply the toes of its forward-placed right foot.

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<sup>32</sup> Cr.: Go into the house, poor man: I shall be your guide. Your fortunes being so ruined, no one will find fault if you embrace your children and weep for your troubles. Since one must respect the tie of blood, I promise to care for your daughters as you ask. I will set affairs in the house in as good order as circumstance

allows, giving my sister the burial custom ordains: we must bear what the gods send, though the bearing be hard. Cho.: Go in, then. For our part we go our way shedding many tears since we have lost our greatest friend and saviour.



## POSTSCRIPT ON THE PROBLEMS OF 1451–57:

What does μή 'πί τῶι δεινῶι κακῶι mean?

The present section, more speculative in nature, explores another possible reason why Sophocles might have chosen to end this play with Oedipus entering the palace. It is speculative because it involves an interpretation of 1455–57 that has not to my knowledge been put forward by any previous scholar.

Dawe (2001) 3 says that Oedipus' instructions to Creon at 1451–57 are genuine Sophocles, a fragment of the original ending that the interpolator incorporated into his revision. Dawe (2006) prints the whole passage in full-sized type, marking only 1454 as an interpolation. The principal proponent in our day of large-scale deletion thus joins defenders of the transmitted ending in being prepared to accept these lines as genuine.

But scholars take quite different views of what they mean. There are two questions, and Dawe himself changed his mind on both of them. (a) In ἄν πέρσαι (1455–56) does the aorist infinitive with ἄν stand for aorist indicative or aorist optative? (b) Does the phrase μή 'πί τῶι δεινῶι κακῶι (1457) refer to what Oedipus has already suffered or to something in the future? In deciding either question we virtually decide the other as well: if ἄν πέρσαι is contrary-to-fact, 'some terrible woe' refers to the events of the present play (which is in itself plausible) but then 1454 looks intrusive; whereas if the infinitive plus ἄν stands for potential optative, the woe refers to something yet to come, and 1454 can stay, but we must then think of some plausible *future* woe for Oedipus (none has been suggested thus far).

(1) Dawe (2001) and (2006) takes the aorist infinitive as standing for an aorist indicative, 'I know well that neither disease nor anything else *could have* killed me'.<sup>33</sup> In view of the implications of καίτοι he concludes that 1454, a line about Oedipus' death in the future, interrupts the sequence of thought that leads from Oedipus' parents' intention that Oedipus should die (1452–53) to his firm knowledge that nothing could have killed him (1455–56) and that therefore 1454 must go. In this case the phrase 'some terrible woe' refers to the events of the play itself. To me it seems a sound inference that *if* ἄν πέρσαι is counterfactual, 1454 is intrusive and presumably spurious. But if 1454 is genuine, the future reference of θάναω will incline the audience to take the infinitive as referring to the future. There is nothing suspicious in itself about the line and no obvious motive for an interpolator to write it. Dawe (2006) writes that '1454 has been inserted by an interpolator who thought he saw a chance for spicing up the text with a touch of dramatic irony, but the idea that turning out the helpless king onto Mt Cithaeron would make Laius and Jocasta his killers after all is highly artificial'. To me the conceit seems very unlike an interpolator and very much like Sophocles. The paradox of the dead killing the living is Sophoclean: see *Aj.* 1026–27; *Ant.* 871; *Trach.* 1159–61.

(2) Dawe had earlier (1982) taken ἄν πέρσαι as standing for a potential optative.<sup>34</sup> Taking it thus, of course, allows us to save 1454, which is too good, in my view, to delete. Other considerations point toward ἄν πέρσαι as potential. (a) Oedipus' emphatic assurance that he *knows* that nothing πέρσαι ἄν αὐτόν makes more sense if directed to the future: it almost goes without saying that nothing could have prevented an event from happening that has actually happened. One says that things could not have been otherwise, but there is no reason to insist that one *knows* it. (b) The same tale is told by τοσοῦτόν γ'. At this point Oedipus knows quite a bit about his past, and there is no reason for him to say 'this much, at any rate, I know for sure' about it. The locution makes excellent sense if it is about the future. (c) νόσος does not suggest Oedipus' original exposure since it is hunger, cold or predatory animals that threaten an exposed child, not illness. (d) Finglass (2009) points to the future references in 1454 and 1458, which suggest that 1455–57 also refer to his future. We thus have good reason to translate 'Let me dwell [on Cithaeron] so that I may die at the hands of those who tried to kill me. And yet I know that no sickness or any other thing *can* kill me. For I would never have been saved from death if not for some dreadful calamity'.

The difficulty for this hypothesis is the meaning of the last phrase. For if πέρσαι refers to the future, Oedipus must be talking about some harm yet to come. Yet attempts to elucidate this reference have so far been unsuccessful. (a) Dawe (1982) says 'Fate has some stranger end in store for him: what end that was Sophocles describes in *Oedipus at Colonus*'. But there are difficulties. (i) As Davies (1991) 3 points out, the idea that Sophocles at this point was thinking of a highly original sequel, written decades later, in which

<sup>33</sup> Thus also Lloyd-Jones (1994).

<sup>34</sup> Davies (1991) 3 apparently approves.

Oedipus ends his days on Attic soil, is implausible. And (ii) the phrase doesn't describe what happens in *OC*, which ends not in calamity but in Oedipus' acceptance by the gods. (b) Davies (1991) 3 believes the reference is quite general and writes 'in the circumstances, what could be more natural (or rhetorically effective) than for Oedipus, having survived this grim concatenation of events, to suspect that he has been preserved for further (undefined) suffering?' But what further harm is naturally anticipated by a man who has been reduced to nothingness (1186–95), suffered a fate worse than the worst (1300–02), a fate from which no calamity is lacking (1283–85)? Surely life as a wandering beggar is not δεινόν in the same degree as Oedipus' discovery of his parricide and incest.

Scholars on both sides of the question agree that ἐπί τῶι δεινῶι κακῶι means that Oedipus was saved 'to suffer some terrible woe', some identifying this with the misery Oedipus suffers in the play itself, others with a woe lying in the future. I suggest, however, that Oedipus' premonition is that he was saved from death 'for some dreadful mischief', i.e. in order, at some future date, to *cause* some dreadful mischief. Sophocles' audience will have understood this as a foreshadowing of the War of the Seven, which Oedipus will cause by cursing his two sons to fratricidal strife. Though no one, as far as I can tell, has ever suggested this, I believe the case for it is not negligible. The evidence is of two sorts: (1) examples of ἐπί with a dative of like meaning elsewhere in Greek literature; and (2) sundry difficulties in the context itself that my interpretation removes.

(1) Ellendt (1872) 260, col. 2 says of the use of ἐπί with dative exemplified by *OT* 1457 *consilium significatur aliquid faciendi*. His examples bear out the active sense, for example, *Phil.* 50. Likewise the examples in *Italie* (1964) 105, col. 2 such as *Sept.* 879 δόμων ἐπὶ λύμηι show the active sense I argue for. In Euripides I note *Andr.* 649, 1111; *HF* 881; *Pho.* 534, *IA* 550–51, 1237, 1288. Here are examples from other genres of ἐπί construed with a dative of like meaning with κακῶι, such as ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι, οὐκ ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι, ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ: *Thuc.* 1.131.1; Pausanias πράσσων τε ἐσηγγέλλετο αὐτοῖς ἐς τοὺς βαρβάρους καὶ οὐκ ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι τὴν μονὴν ποιούμενος; *Thuc.* 5.27.2 the Spartans οὐκ ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ καταδουλώσει τῆς Πελοποννήσου σπονδὰς καὶ ξυμμαχίαν ... πεποιήνται; *Ar., Frogs* 1487–89 Aeschylus is to return to Athens ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι μὲν τοῖς πολίταις, ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι δὲ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ ξυγγενέσι τε καὶ φίλοις; *Thesmo.* 83 Euripides says the women in his case mean to ἐκκλησιάζειν ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ; *Xen., HG* 5.2.35 Ismenias, it is said, ξένος τῶι Πέρσῃ ἐπ' οὐδενὶ ἀγαθῶι τῆς Ἑλλάδος γεγεννημένος εἶη; 6.5.33 Athenians and Spartans ἀεὶ ποτε ἀλλήλοις ... παρίσταντο ἐπ' ἀγαθοῖς; *Xen., Cyrop.* 2.2.12 witty persons are those who produce laughter μήτε ἐπὶ τῶι ἑαυτῶν κέρδει μήτ' ἐπὶ ζημίαι τῶν ἀκουόντων, μήτ' ἐπὶ βλάβῃ μηδεμιᾶ; 7.4.3 ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι τῶι Κύρου καὶ Περσῶν; [*Xen.*] *Athen. Resp.* 2.19 the Athenians do not think τὴν ἀρετὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τῶι σφετέρῳ ἀγαθῶι πεφυκέναι, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῶι κακῶι. Note that in every every one of these cases ἐπί expresses purpose, and the purpose is that of causing benefit or harm to others, the only exceptions being the last example and the third from last, where σφετέρῳ and ἑαυτῶν make the reflexive reference plain. I know of only one counter-example: at *IA* 886, ἦκεις ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ means that Iphigenia has arrived to suffer, not to cause, destruction. In most of the above examples the prepositional phrase is accompanied by the genitive or dative of the person whose good or harm is being intended, but the two Thucydides' examples show that it need not be. In the *OT* context, one of vague premonition, there is a good reason for Sophocles to allow Oedipus to be indefinite about those who are fated to suffer this dread mischief.<sup>35</sup>

(2) We have seen that the reference in πέρσαι ἄν is for a variety of reasons more likely to be to the future than to the past, and one of the advantages of this interpretation is that we need not delete 1454. But that will be a satisfying result only if we can find a plausible interpretation of μὴ 'πί τῶι δεινῶι κακῶι. Oedipus' cursing of his sons escapes the difficulties that beset other candidates. I paraphrase thus: 'Send me out to Cithaeron so that I may there fulfill my parents' intention that I should die there. Yet I am quite sure of this, that nothing *will* kill me, not disease or anything else, until I have caused the calamity for which my life has been hitherto spared'. Oedipus here sees in a moment of prophetic insight that the whole course of his existence is the working out of a malign purpose. He has, of course, already caused the death of his father and mother, but he has a premonition that this is not the end of it, that he will be the cause of

<sup>35</sup> The view that Oedipus means a calamity he will suffer could be defended by arguing that since ἐσώθην is passive, the agent might be the gods and the 'others'

whose harm is intended might be exclusively Oedipus himself. But while this is theoretically possible, I do not regard it as likely.

some more general and awful calamity. The climax of Oedipus' woes is his premonition that he is born to inflict misery, that his destiny since birth is to live on to be the cause of the war that is named in Hesiod, *WD* 161–65, along with the Trojan War, as the cataclysmic event that brought the age of heroes to an end.

This allusion is made again, I would argue, by the lines that immediately follow. In 1458–61 Oedipus tells Creon that he need have no worry about his sons. These are the very ones, of course, whom he will curse. Not only that but he says that Creon need not worry about them since they are men and can get a livelihood *wherever they are*. This suggests the possibility that one or the other may take up residence elsewhere. In fact, one of them will get his livelihood in Argos by marrying Adrastus' daughter, using his adoptive city as a staging ground to march against Thebes. I suggest that Oedipus' ἐνθ' ἂν ἴσσι (1461) will have made Sophocles' audience think of Polynices in Argos.

The next lines, about Oedipus' two daughters, make the same suggestion more obliquely. They always enjoyed table fellowship with their father, young as they were, and he and they ate the same food. This would be an irrelevant detail but for the fact that in the epic versions of the story Oedipus' sons offended their father in a context of table fellowship, both by serving him the wrong cut of meat and by using a vessel of Laius' that he had forbidden them to use.<sup>36</sup> Lines 1456–65 are thus a premonition of disaster and a pair of allusions to the nature of that disaster.

There are two further benefits to this interpretation. First, as Roberts (1988) 178–79 has shown, Sophocles several times ends his plays with a glance at the future, a specific story, known to mythic history, that is still to come. An allusion to the War of the Seven would be as characteristic of Sophocles as a vague reference to undefined future trouble would be anomalous.

Second, the allusion to the Seven explains the final stage direction, *Exeunt in scaenam Oedipus et Creon*. For if a hint is dropped that something is going to happen, it must be feasible for it to happen, and the closing events of the play must not make it impossible. That, I suggest, is why Oedipus must go not into exile but into the *skene*: he has not yet quarreled with his sons or cursed them.<sup>37</sup> If he leaves Thebes without doing so, the War of the Seven, of which Sophocles has three times reminded his audience, will never happen.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See Davies (1988) 22–23 and Bernabé (1988) 23–24.

<sup>37</sup> Davies (1991) 8, n. 20, while noting that the motifs of curse, quarrel and attack on Thebes lie outside the drama, argues cautiously that a knowledge of them may have given the audience a reason to find Oedipus' return to the palace unsurprising. Obviously

if I am right about 1455–57 Davies' suggestion is confirmed.

<sup>38</sup> Never happen, that is, apart from the mythical innovation of *OC*, where Oedipus is on Athenian soil when he curses his sons. Presumably in the epic tradition the meal which was the occasion of the sons' offence against Oedipus took place in Thebes.

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