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THE END OF SOPHOCLES' *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS*: THE SCEPTICAL CASE RESTATED

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Abstract: An earlier article of mine, Kovacs (2009a), discussed *OT* 1424–1530, whose genuineness was impugned most recently by Dawe (2001; 2006). I argued that 1424–67 (which I call A) are genuine, but that 1468–1530 (which I call B) are spurious. Sommerstein (2011), accepting my defence of A, undertook the defence of all but a few lines of B as well, dismantling much of my case against it and adding the argument that the transmitted ending mirrors the play's beginning and is therefore presumptively Sophoclean. The present article, in part a reply to Sommerstein's reply, restates some of my earlier arguments and also presents new evidence for the spuriousness of B.

Keywords: Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, interpolation, stagecraft

In *JHS* for 2009 I published an article on the end of *OT* with two principal theses, one conservative and one sceptical. On the conservative side I argued, against R.D. Dawe (2001; 2006) and others, that although suspicions of interpolation had been raised about the play's last 107 lines (1424–1530), the first 44 of these (1424–67), which I called A, are sound, apart from ordinary corruptions and perhaps the accidental loss of a line or two. In particular, I argued that the final exit of Oedipus into the palace, there to await the result of a second consultation of Delphi, is part of Sophocles' original design, prepared for earlier in the play, and does not constitute evidence that the ending has been reworked by a later hand. My sceptical thesis was that the play's last 63 lines (1468–1530), which I called B, are spurious. I argued that the addition of B resulted in the deletion of a brief speech by Creon, responding to Oedipus' requests, and some final anapaests by the Chorus.

In *JHS* for 2011 Alan Sommerstein published a characteristically thoughtful and courteous reply, accepting my case in favour of A[1] but dismantling much of my case against B. After reading this and re-reading a few other articles on the same subject, I have come to the conclusion (a) that I argued the sceptical part of my case poorly but (b) that there is still a case to be made. The present article is in part a reply to Sommerstein's reply (much of section I and the whole of section III), arguing against a few of Sommerstein's replies to my objections and against the positive argument for genuineness with which he ends. But it also contains some new arguments I had either not thought of when writing my earlier article or was prevented by lack of space from making.[2]

I. Some objections, verbal and dramaturgical, restated

I made both verbal and dramaturgical objections to B. Sommerstein's counterarguments against the former convince me that most of them have little or no weight and deserve to be retracted.[3] But in other cases, in my judgement, Sommerstein defends without success, and in one case he

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[1] And declaring himself convinced, I was pleased to see, by the novel interpretation of 1456–57 diffidently presented in my postscript.

[2] All references to Sommerstein without other specification are to Sommerstein (2011). Similar references to myself are to Kovacs (2009a).

[3] I retract (the numbers refer to items on my pp. 60–61) my objections to ἴθι (1), to the colloquialism λέγειν τι (3), to catachrestic προυξένησαν (6), to βιῶναι (8) and to ὧδε (12). In 1470 (2) ἔχειν might very well mean 'have them with me' (thus Jebb). As regards 1477 (4), my first objection is answered by Sommerstein and my second could be met by any of several conjectures and is thus not strong evidence of spuriousness. I do not now feel that my objection to Oedipus' wish that fate may guard

provides, *ultro*, further evidence against three of B's lines (I discuss this in section II). All but one of the objections I now retract were rated γ by me to begin with.[4] I now find that one of those I retain can be shown to be considerably more telling than space allowed me to demonstrate and that a second is not negligible.

(1) I noted (61) that many words for 'kill' are used in tragedy, but that simplex πεφνεῖν, common in epic, occurs in tragedy only here (1497) and at *Andr*. 655,[5] and that Nauck had proposed the deletion of *Andr*. 655–56. The appearance in only two places of a word that is elsewhere avoided requires explanation. That Sophocles and Euripides, who used numerous words for 'kill', decided in one place each to use a word from which tragic poets elsewhere abstained might be motivated by something peculiar to the two passages, but I can see nothing about either that would explain the exception. A more attractive hypothesis, I suggest, is that both were interpolated by actors who did not share fifth-century tragedy's (perhaps irrational but apparently quite real) avoidance of the word.

When suspicions are raised by a phenomenon that is rare to the vanishing point, it is reassuring to defenders to have a second instance to point to.[6] Just how little cover is provided to defenders of *OT* 1496–97 by *Andr*. 655–56 will become apparent when we examine the latter passage closely. Menelaus is speaking to Peleus:

αἰσχρὰ μὲν σαυτῷ λέγεις
ἡμῖν δ' ὀνείδη διὰ γυναῖκα βάρβαρον
τήνδ', ἣν ἐλαύνειν χρῆν σ' ὑπὲρ Νείλου ῥοὰς
ὑπέρ τε Φᾶσιν, κἀμὲ παρακαλεῖν ἀεί,
οὖσαν μὲν ἠπειρῶτιν, οὖ πεσήματα
πλεῖσθ' Ἑλλάδος πέπτωκε δοριπετῆ νεκρῶν,
τοῦ σοῦ τε παιδὸς αἵματος κοινουμένην.
Πάρις γάρ, ὃς σὸν παῖδ' ἔπεφν' Ἀχιλλέα,
Ἕκτορος ἀδελφὸς ἦν, δάμαρ δ' ἥδ' Ἕκτορος.
καὶ τῇδέ γ' εἰσέρχῃ σὺ ταὐτὸν ἐς στέγος, κτλ.

Sommerstein notes that 655–56 were challenged by Nauck and others but defends them as follows:

> [T]hese lines are indispensable in their context. Their deletion leaves Menelaus' claim that Andromache 'has a share in the blood of [Peleus'] son' (654) to stand without any explanation whatever (see Stevens (1971)); the claim is absurd enough even when backed by 655–56 (Andromache's 'share in the blood' is that she is the *sister-in-law* of Achilles' slayer!), without these lines it will be scarcely intelligible.

Creon better than it has himself (5) has much weight. My objection to δηλαδή (11) may, as Sommerstein says, be weak in itself. The argument (13) that trochaic tetrameters are unlikely for the period when *OT* was written would be much stronger if we knew for sure that it antedated, say, 417, but however likely it may seem that it belongs in the 430s or 420s, we do not know for sure. On the date, see now the sober remarks of Finglass (2011) 1–8.

[4] The ratings by means of α, β and γ were meant to indicate – candidly – how much weight I judged a particular point to have in determining authenticity. I continue this practice, despite its undeniable element of subjectivity, since those readers who have commented on my earlier article seem to regard most of my judgements of weight as un-idiosyncratic, which was my intent (53).

[5] A compound of this verb, I also noted, is used twice by Sophocles in lyric (*Aj*. 901; *El*. 488), where epicisms are more at home.

[6] I had mentioned (61, n.21) *trag. adesp.* 199, ἀργῆν ἔπεφνεν, and Sommerstein (87) regards this as a third instance. But we do not even know if this is a tragic penthemimer (scansion as part of a hexameter is also possible). If the two words should happen to be tragic *and* fifth-century, the subject, the killing of a monstrous snake, would account for the epicism.

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In fact, there is no reason to think that Menelaus is being absurd here (Euripides has not portrayed him as buffoonish but as ruthless in pursuing his daughter's interests as he sees them), and his claim that in defending Andromache Peleus is defending one of the enemy is based not on far-fetched claims of either consanguinity or marital ties but on geography: she comes from the continent of Asia, 'where Greeks fell by the spear in large numbers, and is [thus] a sharer in the slaying (αἵματος) of your son'.[7] The argument that Andromache, being a barbarian, is *ipso facto* an enemy of all Greeks is of a piece with many similar statements in the play: see 168–76, 243, 247 and 261, spoken by Hermione, and 515–16, 537–44 and 663–66, spoken by Menelaus.[8] The offending couplet both renders this argument unintelligible – it offers a competing and absurd explanation in place of the one already implicit in the context – and blurs the Greek/barbarian theme. On grounds of sense it is thus ruinous.[9] It looks very much like an 'explanatory' interpolation (see Page (1934) 74, 76, 90, 117), no different in principle from, for example, *IT* 59–60. In relying on this couplet as a defence of ἔπεφνε in *OT* 1497 Sommerstein leans on a broken reed. I had earlier assigned this argument a β because I did not have space to discuss *Andr*. 655–56 in detail. But with that passage unmasked as a later addition, ἔπεφνε at *OT* 1497 is a striking and unexplained tragic *unicum*, a smoking gun (α).

(2) I had objected (60) that 'I weep for you (for I cannot look at you)' (1486) implies that his eyes must do one or the other. Sommerstein (86–87) admits that construed literally this is 'nonsense' but takes the indulgent view that 'Oedipus longs to be able to look on his daughters *with the pity he feels for them*; but his eyes no longer have the power to do this and *can express that pity* only with tears' (emphasis mine). The italicized words are unrepresented in the text, and to support their importation Sommerstein cites 1462 (τοῖν δ' ἀθλίαιν οἰκτραῖν τε παρθένοιν ἐμαῖν, more than 20 lines earlier) and 1508 (ἀλλ' οἴκτισόν σφας, more than 20 lines later). The present context says nothing about Oedipus' looking *with pity* on his daughters. The defence, in my judgement, fails (β).

I turn next to my dramaturgical objections and begin by withdrawing one and part of another. Sommerstein convinces me that the author of B is not as comically self-contradictory as my fifth objection made him out to be (63). I created gratuitous inconsistency when I took Oedipus' 'But I am hated by the gods' (1519) to mean 'They will deny me the exile I seek'. As to my sixth objection (63), Finglass (2009) 53–54, cited by Sommerstein, convinces me that the logical leap from Oedipus' particular request 'Do not take them from me' to Creon's 'Do not wish to have authority *in all things*' (1522) is paralleled elsewhere. (I discuss the further charge of pointless cruelty below.) But the rest of Sommerstein's defences seem unsuccessful.

(1) I objected (62) that to have Creon signal silently for someone to bring the girls out of the *skene* (between 1468 and 1471) is a piece of stagecraft without parallel in fifth-century tragedy. Sommerstein says that I do not explain why an interpolator might be motivated (by, for example, the desire for pathos) to break a convention of the genre but not Sophocles. I reply that actors and others who altered plays in the fourth century either did not know or did not care about the conventions observed by the poets whose work they were supplementing, and that they sometimes did things unthinkable for Sophocles or Euripides. Thus at *Helen* 892–93 Theonoe orders one of her servants to go and tell her brother Theoclymenus that Menelaus is in Egypt, a command that is not carried out. This is the sole place in tragedy where someone gives an order to a mute member

[7] That 652–54 are making a single point (Andromache is blood-guilty in your eyes because Trojan) and not two (Andromache comes from Asia where Greeks were killed and is also guilty of the death of your son) is borne out by the τε in 654, which should not be altered to δὲ. For μέν / τε see Denniston, *GP* 374–76.

[8] On the importance of group membership in the play (Greek vs barbarian, Phthian vs Spartan), see Kovacs (1980) 55–84.

[9] Metrically, in a play of this date the one-word dactyl in 656 is highly unusual: see Cropp and Fick (1985) 32, where their query-mark suggests that they view 655–56 with suspicion.

of his retinue that is neither obeyed nor countermanded. There is reason to think that this contravention of 'Bain's Law'[10] is to be laid at the door not of Euripides but of an interpolator: Euripides, we feel instinctively, would not have created excitement by means that are both puzzlingly inept (why should nameless servants ignore orders without anyone explaining why?) and contrary to the conventions of the genre, in which mute extras just do what they are told to do. The fact that this is a unique instance and one with no ready explanation tells against it. Yes, in theory Euripides might have done this for a good reason. But that bare possibility does not prevent sensible editors from assigning this exceptional dramaturgy to a later hand. Yes, proof positive that Euripides never violated this rule is not available. But to imply, as Sommerstein seems to, that aberrant stagecraft is no more likely to be the work of an interpolator than of a fifth-century tragic master mis-states the odds. Interpolators do things that fifth-century tragic poets do not, and Sommerstein's tolerant welcome extended to idiosyncratic dramaturgy would, if carried to its logical conclusion, mean accepting much that scholars from the age of Valckenaer to the present have rejected with good reason.

Sommerstein's second point is that the wordless signal can be avoided if we assume that Creon went into the *skene* himself to fetch the girls. But he admits that this would be equally unparalleled. Note too that 1468–70 (a bacchius and two trimeters) are not enough to 'cover' the business of Creon's moving from centre-stage to *skene* door, into the *skene* and back out. Neither of these stagings (Creon's signalling silently or entering the *skene* himself) makes plausible fifth-century dramaturgy. My earlier β was not sufficiently severe: this is strong evidence against genuineness (α).

(2) I objected (62) that Creon gives no audible reply to Oedipus' plea (1503–09) that he take care of the daughters and that Oedipus' request for a non-verbal reply (1510) is not only ambiguously expressed but also, however interpreted, without parallel. Sommerstein argues (89) that the request is not ambiguous but that Oedipus asks Creon to respond by touching *him*, yet Lloyd-Jones (1994) translates, 'Nod your assent, noble one, and touch them with your hand!'. But even if we resolve this ambiguity in favour of Creon's hand on Oedipus – since only thus can a blind man be wordlessly answered – the fact remains that nowhere else in tragedy is anyone asked to convey information in this way.[11] When Oedipus at 1413–15 and *OC* 1130–31 asks others to touch him, it is to guide him out of the city or to allow him to express his affection. Touching as a means of conveying information is without parallel. I gave these objections two betas before. I now see that they are a single objection. But my original β for each was overly generous: dramaturgy that is without fifth-century parallel and is also ineptly signalled constitutes strong evidence of spuriousness (α).

(3) Creon, we must suppose, assents in some visible fashion to Oedipus' request that he take charge of the girls. Even so, it is unexplained (a) why Creon should order Oedipus to relinquish them (1521) before his departure from Thebes and (b) why Oedipus should reply to this order in such unqualified fashion, i.e. not 'Do not take them from me yet' or 'before it is necessary' but 'Do not *in any way* (μηδαμῶς) take them from me' (1522), as if he had not already asked Creon to take charge of them. According to Sommerstein the situation is that Oedipus 'apparently takes it for granted that Creon will not prevent him from spending as much time in their company as he wishes, during whatever period remains to him before he finally departs from Thebes. He will eventually, he knows, have to part from them – indeed he has in effect asked for it – but he is not prepared to *be parted* from them by force or to live in the same house without being allowed

[10] The regularities of tragic drama on this point are described by Bain (1981). His discussion of *Hel*. 892–93 (32–33) suggests either interpolation or corruption.

[11] Sommerstein says 'Such a gesture would have all the greater significance because Oedipus is a man polluted; and this special significance is a sufficient reason for Oedipus to request that assent be given in this manner'. But the text unfortunately gives no hint that this is Oedipus' meaning. It would have been easy enough to supplement σῇ ψαύσας χερί with, for example, <ἀνδρὸς πολεμίου μὲν θεοῖσιν ἀλλ' ὅμως>. But this is left unsaid.

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contact'. Yet while this explains Oedipus' reaction (though not its lack of any qualification), Sommerstein suggests no plausible reason why Creon should deprive Oedipus of his daughters' company before Oedipus himself takes his leave of them or why Sophocles should have caused him to do so. I do not think that 'pointless cruelty' (63) is too strong an expression.[12]

Such cruelty is also out of character. Creon has shown himself to be magnanimous at 1422–23 (as Oedipus acknowledges at 1433). He is also a man concerned with religious observance. But εὐσέβεια is in no way promoted by separating the polluted father from his incestuously begotten daughters: the principle Creon formulates at 1431–32 is that the populace in general should not have contact with the polluted Oedipus, but only his relations. Why the gratutious change of attitude in the play's last lines? Furthermore, when one of the leading themes of all that follows the *peripeteia* is the fragility of human happiness in the face of the divine (see, for example, the stasimon 1186–1222, Oedipus' sung accusation of Apollo in 1329–35 and his confident assertion in 1455–57 that he was saved for great mischief),[13] to make Creon into an independent source of Oedipus' misery, and for reasons that are never explained, seems thematically a colossal anti-climax. I think the original grade of β is still richly deserved. Other temperaments might think that α better describes the case.

Sommerstein's defence, in my judgement, leaves two of my verbal objections with their force unimpaired. As regards stagecraft there are two smoking guns and a third objection that is far from trivial.

II. Some new objections

But there is more to be said against B. Here are two verbal points I did not mention in 2009, the first because I had not succeeded in formulating it and the second because it required too much space.

(1) Sommerstein (87) finds my objection (61) to δηλαδή in 1501 not particularly strong but comes forward with his own objection to 1500–02: since 1486–99 describe *two* unwelcome features of the girls' future lives, the summary in 1500–02, which mentions only one of them, is inept. I am not quite sure that 1500–02 are intended as a summary of the whole of 1486–99, but Sommerstein's objection draws attention to the management of the argument. Anyone who tries to memorize B will, I predict, have the sense that in 1480–1502 the argument traverses the same terrain repeatedly. Oedipus begins by calling his daughters to his fraternal embrace, which is such because he showed himself a begetter to them in the very place where he had been begotten (1484–85). The same point is made again some ten lines later (1497–99) in quite similar language (with two iterations of the idea). The reproaches they will endure are discussed both in 1494 (τοιαῦτ' ὀνείδη λαμβάνειν) and six lines later in 1500 (τοιαῦτ' ὀνειδιεῖσθε). The hopelessness of their marriage prospects, a point already made in 1492–95, is repeated at 1500–02. Ring composition is invoked by Finglass (2009) 50–51, but he does not find a place in his summary for 1484–85 ~ 1497–99. I conclude that 1500–02 are not substantially worse than the rest of the passage (of which the difficulties in 1500–02 are merely a symptom) and that to delete only these three lines is less the course of prudence than a timid half-measure. The structure of the whole *rhesis* is similarly meandering: 23 lines to the mute daughters, eight lines to the silent Creon and four more to the mute daughters. No doubt there are scholars who are prepared to argue that all this is tremendously moving.[14] But to others such aimless retracing of steps may suggest another hand than that of

[12] Davies (1991) 13–14 defends our text from this charge by conjuring up a less satisfactory alternative, that Creon relents and allows Oedipus to keep his daughters. While it is true that such a *volte-face* would not be tragic, this does not answer the question why the order to separate Oedipus from his daughters is given in the first place. It need not have been.

[13] I discuss the theme of divine hostility to Oedipus in Kovacs (2009b).

[14] Davies (1982) 270 sagely declines: 'The encounter between Oedipus and his two daughters would require a more sensitive hand than mine to describe'. His later treatment of the play (Davies (1991)) continues this wise policy of reticence: though he has further comments, he still does not *describe* the scene.

Sophocles. Since there is nothing exact and measurable about my objection, i.e. it does not concern any word, phrase or construction demonstrably absent from the productions of tragedy's great age, I do not venture to give it a mark. I do not, however, think it trivial.

(2) 1511–14:

σφῷν δ', ὦ τέκν', εἰ μὲν εἰχέτην ἤδη φρένας,
πόλλ' ἂν παρήνουν· νῦν δὲ τοῦτ' †εὔχεσθέ μοι†
οὗ καιρὸς †ἀεὶ ζῆν, τοῦ βίου† δὲ λῴονος 1513
ὑμᾶς κυρῆσαι τοῦ φυτεύσαντος πατρός.

1512 εὔχεσθέ μοι codd. plerique: εὔχεσθ' ἐμοί Dawe olim; εὔχεσθέ με **DXr**: εὔχεσθ' ἐμὲ van Deventer
1513 ἀεὶ] ᾗ Meineke: ἐᾷ Dindorf | τοῦ βίου codd. plerique: βίου **HO**

I have daggered the two areas where the text is uncertain, but I need not discuss these in detail here. If we eliminate Dindorf's ἐᾷ on the grounds that in the TLG καιρός is found as the subject of ἐάω only in rhetorical contexts (for example Isoc. 6.24; Philostr. Jun. *Imagines* 884.8; or Greg. Naz. *Epist*. 182.2, where time allows, or does not allow, the mention of a certain subject),[15] and if we bear in mind that either 'you' or 'I' might be the subject of ζῆν,[16] the meaning of 1512–14 is 'But as things stand, pray that I (or 'you') may live wherever it is (there is) καιρός for me (or 'you') to live, and that you may get a better life than your father got'.

The difficulty here is the meaning of καιρός. Race (1981) 212 says it means 'wherever occasion allows you to live', but, as noted, there is good reason to reject Dindorf's ἐᾷ. Much of Race's article up to this point argues against either spatial or temporal meanings ('right time', 'right place') and in favour of what he calls the normative meaning. So perhaps 'wherever it is proper for me (or 'you') to live'. Another possible meaning is 'advantage, profit' (Race (1981) 205–08). Delling (1965) 455–56 suggests that there is often an element of the fateful about καιρός, and that it may connote a divine dispensation of events, so 'where it is divinely ordained'. A further meaning is suggested by Creon's πάντα γὰρ καιρῷ καλά (1516). The line alludes to Hesiod *WD* 694 and Theognis 401, and Creon means that excessive weeping must be stopped since 'all things are good in moderation'. So 'wherever moderation ordains that I (or 'you') live' must be considered as well.

But none of these is satisfactory. (a) Can Oedipus ask his daughters to pray that he or they may live where it is *proper* to live? But Oedipus has arranged where *they* are to live, and he himself, since his arrival in Thebes, has lived (unwittingly) where the heir to the Theban throne ought properly to live. Perhaps the reference is to Cithaeron as the place where he should live until his death (*cf*. 1451–54), but, if so, why the indefinite formulation?[17] (b) Where it is *advantageous*? He has already arranged for his daughters' advantage by securing Creon as their guardian, and a prayer for his own advantage seems unlikely in view of his premonition (1455–57) that what lies in his future is not advantage for himself but disaster for others. (c) Where it is *divinely ordained* for him or them to live? There is no need to pray for what is divinely ordained, and in any case what is ordained for the most god-accursed of mortals is not something to be prayed for. (d) Where *moderation* bids him live? I can attach no concrete sense to this combination of words. On balance I suppose that the author may have meant (b) or (c), and that Oedipus is alluding (unwittingly) to his divinely ordained reception, honorific to himself, as a hero in Attica, but such an allusion would be much easier for an audience to grasp if they were familiar with *OC*, which, of course, the first

[15] Also Sophocles permits synizesis of the imperative ἔα (*OT* 1451; *Ant*. 95), but neither he nor any other tragic poet permits synizesis of any other form of this verb.

[16] Dawe's and van Deventer's conjectures make Oedipus the subject of ζῆν, which is arguably desirable.

[17] Oedipus says (1511) that he will tell his daughters only what their tender years are able to understand. Yet he asks them to pray that he or they may 'live where there is καιρός', a highly abstract thing for someone of any age to pray for.

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audience were not.[18] I do not rate this objection because it seems to me within the realm of the possible that someone will come up with a convincing elucidation of the vague and woolly language Oedipus here employs. But defenders should realize that elucidation is what is needed and that it will not be enough to dismiss vague language as inadequate proof of spuriousness.

In favour of authenticity I have two additional verbal points I omitted in 2009. (1) Denniston *GP* 223 says 'Soph. eight times has οὐ δή followed by που or ποτε to introduce a surprised or incredulous question. The idiom seems peculiar to him'. Thus the particle collocation in 1472 is a Sophoclean one (β). (2) Note too that the *comparatio compendiaria* at 1507, μηδ' ἐξισώσῃς τάσδε τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς, has several good parallels in Sophocles: see Bruhn (1910) 117 (β?).

Of new dramaturgical points there are three. (1) I should have pointed out with greater force than at 64, n.30 that Creon's ordering the girls to be brought out at all is inconsistent with his earlier stance (1429) that the danger of pollution requires that Oedipus be taken into the palace with all speed (ὡς τάχιστ'). Sommerstein (88, n.17) mentions this point as his second argument against Dawe's staging without (apparently) seeing its relevance as an argument against the genuineness of B (β).

(2) A further point is provided by 1446–48, three lines from A:

καί σοί γ' ἐπισκήπτω τε καὶ προστρέψομαι,
τῆς μὲν κατ' οἴκους αὐτὸς ὃν θέλεις τάφον
θοῦ – καὶ γὰρ ὀρθῶς τῶν γε σῶν τελεῖς ὕπερ – κτλ.

Oedipus makes an earnestly worded request to Creon that he bury Jocasta. But nowhere in the transmitted text does Creon respond. I know of no parallel for simply ignoring a request. This one is more important than most. Roberts (1993) points out the importance of burial not only culturally but also as a closural element in tragedy, and that a request for it should be made and then ignored seems almost unthinkable. There is reason to think that in deciding to add the scene between Oedipus and his daughters the adapter lost sight of both social and dramatic proprieties. Unless defenders can think of a good reason why the request is ignored here, this is strong evidence against B (α).

(3) More telling still is the dramaturgy implied in 1472–73, a point I have not seen mentioned before:

οὐ δὴ κλύω που πρὸς θεῶν τοῖν μοι φίλοιν
δακρυρροούντοιν ... ;

These words clearly indicate what the audience heard: when this text was first performed there proceeded from the direction of the two small extras two voices uttering inarticulate sounds of weeping or sobbing. This is remarkable for several reasons. It is true that actors or the chorus are sometimes called upon to make inarticulate noises, though the effect is rare and the cries come (exclusively?) from offstage,[19] whereas the girls here must be onstage. More important, nowhere

[18] There is no reference in Greek literature to Oedipus' heroization in Attica earlier than *OC* (apart from *Pho*. 1703–07, almost certainly a later interpolation and in any case unlikely to predate *OT*). Sophocles probably used existing local legend as the basis for *OC*, but an allusion to it as glancing as οὖ καιρὸς ἀεὶ ζῆν presupposes, I suggest, an audience to whom its literary manifestation was well known.

[19] The growling or moaning (μυγμός) of the Erinyes (*Eu*. 117–31) probably proceeds from inside the *skene* (thus Taplin (1977) 369–74; Sommerstein (1989) 92–93 and (2009) 363 prefers to have them 'eccycled' after 63). The cries of Philoctetes (described at length at *Phil*. 201–18) come from beyond the *eisodos*. There is at least one cry from within the *skene* before *Hip*. 565. If we reject Meineke's supplement <ἰώ μοι> at *Trach*. 862, this would be another instance of inarticulate weeping from offstage. I do not think that στένων at *Su*. 23 indicates that Adrastus weeps audibly onstage: see LSJ s.v. 3 and *Ai*. 203. No audible sounds are to be inferred from δάκρ- words, as at *Ant*. 527, 803 or at *Tro*. 38.

else in Greek tragedy are otherwise silent extras, who have no dialogue lines at all, required to make any kind of sound.[20] A further point is that, though the weeping serves to alert Oedipus to his daughters' presence,[21] it is unexplained in itself: they do not understand the situation and no other reason for their tears is given.

There is, to be sure, one parallel case of a child who was asked to cry, but it is not a reassuring one for defenders of B: in *IA* Baby Orestes, played by a doll or mannequin, arrives onstage at 621–22 during the grand entrance of Clytaemestra and Iphigenia. He emerges again at 1119 in the arms of Iphigenia and is bidden at 1241–43 to add his wailing to his sister's plea for her life (this tactic had been foreseen by Agamemnon at 465–66.) In the end we hear no crying from him, and Iphigenia describes him as supplicating Agamemnon by his silence. There is strong evidence that Baby Orestes is part of an extensive fourth-century revision.[22] The sensibility that thought him a fine addition to *IA* is also, I would argue, at work in B. I regard B's implicit stage direction, without parallel in surviving tragedy, as another smoking gun (α).

III. A conservative argument answered

Sommerstein not only replies to my objections but also puts forward a positive argument in favour of B (91–92), pointing to a series of correspondences between this scene and the play's beginning. Thus Oedipus, who earlier addressed the Thebans as his children, expressing compassion and mentioning the tears he has shed for them (66), now confronts his own children, on whom he bestows unavailing pity and tears (1486); Oedipus earlier sent Creon to Delphi and his petitioners home and summoned the Theban citizenry, but now Creon does the sending (the daughters out of the palace, emissaries to consult Delphi, Oedipus into the palace); Oedipus, who earlier promised the citizens that he would answer the requests they had made to the gods (216–18), now makes a request to Creon and for something only Apollo can grant (1518); Oedipus, earlier described by various words from the stem κρατ- as in control, now hears this same verbal stem used of himself with a negative in 1522–23; and where Oedipus had previously come out of the palace spontaneously, now he goes in under duress. Sommerstein's conclusion: 'A very skilful and sensitive interpolator this must have been. Or else it was Sophocles.' It looks very much like game, set and match.

Appearances, however, deceive, for the same methods would also prove the genuineness of 1524–30, the final tetrameters that Sommerstein sensibly rejects. In the 53 lines of B he accepts Sommerstein has discovered five verbal or conceptual echoes of the play's beginning. But the seven final lines show the same number of echoes. (1) In a fashion parallel to the reversal Sommerstein detects in 1522–23 κράτιστος ἦν ἀνήρ (1525) reverses the κρατ- words in 14, 40 and 54. (2) τὰ κλείν' αἰνίγματ' recalls the fame of Oedipus in 8 (ὁ πᾶσι κλεινὸς Οἰδίπους). (3) In the same line ᾔδει recalls the instances (37, 43) where οἶδα or its compounds are employed to describe the solving of the Sphinx's riddle. (4) The image of the great seawave of trouble (1527), here used to describe Oedipus' present misery, recalls 22–24, where waves of trouble were besetting Thebes. (5) In 1527 τύχαις might be thought to echo τύχην in 52.

[20] Richter (1934), whose catalogue of mutes in tragedy seems to be complete, gives no example of any such person making a noise.

[21] A blind man may be made aware of the approach of others by means already in the repertory of tragic stagecraft: Oedipus could have remarked on the sound of their approaching footsteps (*cf. Hec*. 1069–70) or the Coryphaeus could have announced them. In short, Sophocles was not forced by the dramatic situation to adopt the unsatisfactory expedient our text gives us.

[22] Wecklein (1878) 731–32 and England (1891) *ad* 462–67, 622, 1117–19, 1241–48 were the earliest to think that the baby is a secondary addition. Page (1934) 206 deletes some but not all of the references to him. Further discussion in Kovacs (2003) esp. 79, 87, 95–97.

I hope I do not succeed in persuading Sommerstein or anyone else that 1524–30 are genuine Sophocles.[23] My point is that in paying less attention to exact and answerable questions of tragic style and lexicon (for example πεφνεῖν) or dramaturgy (for example wordless orders to servants or mute extras weeping audibly) and relying on questions that are inherently imprecise (Is Sophocles or an interpolator more likely to be responsible for the ring composition we find here?), we adopt methods that prove too much and thereby show that they prove very little.[24]

IV. The prosecutor's summation

Finglass (2009) 55 says 'There are scholars who would oppose almost any deletion of lines found in a medieval manuscript: I am not one of them'. It is obvious that Sommerstein is not one of them either. 'The onus', says Finglass, 'is on would-be deleters to make a case, and insofar as I can see no good case exists'. Neither I nor anyone cited on either side of this question would, I predict, disagree with the principle that those who would excise accept the *onus probandi*.[25] The question is whether at this point it can still be said, as it could in 2009, that no good case has been made. Consider the facts. In the space of 56 lines there are four instances of stagecraft unattested elsewhere in all of Greek tragedy: the silent giving of orders to servants;[26] the request for an answer to be conveyed not by words but by touch; the implicit stage direction 'the two (non-speaking) girls sob audibly', not only unique but also unexplained in its context; and Creon's failure to reply to Oedipus' request that he bury Jocasta. Furthermore, Creon's motive for separating Oedipus from his daughters so soon is left without any explanation. There is also the the aimless repetition in 1480–1502, which tells against the whole section of the speech and not just 1500–02. On the verbal level the author of B is less maladroit than Dawe and I thought him to be, but the absence of πεφνεῖν or its compounds from the rest of tragic dialogue – together with its presence in a couplet in Euripides' *Andromache* that is, in my view, a manifest interpolation – means that ἔπεφνε in 1497 deepens suspicion more than a shade. Nor is this the only verbal objection that survives with its force unimpaired. I think that together these constitute a case for believing that Sophocles, the son of Sophilus, is not the author of *OT* 1468–1530.

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[23] Boivin de Villeneuve (1729) was the first to propose tentatively that the ending of *OT* is spurious. But there was nothing tentative in his judgement that the last seven lines are spurious: see Finglass (2009) 56. The most complete case against them is Dawe (1973) 266–73.

[24] In general, arguments from thematic coherence, urged in favour of the authenticity of a passage suspect on other grounds, often sound more persuasive than they are. Thus it would be easy to show all kinds of thematic links between the Doloneia and the rest of the *Iliad*, but it would be foolish to accord much weight to this in determining whether it was originally part of the poem.

[25] The principle, though, needs some qualification if Taplin (1977) 222–23 is right to say that we should be able to see why a great playwright has resorted to unusual technique. If that expectation is reasonable, defenders have the burden of explaining why a passage they are defending is not guilty of pointlessly aberrant stagecraft. Future defenders of B will thus have some explaining to do.

[26] Or the equally unexampled entry of Creon into the *skene*, not only unmarked but also without enough dialogue to 'cover' it.

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