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THE LEGEND OF OEDIPUS IN FIFTH CENTURY TRAGEDY AT ATHENS

A THESIS SUBMITTED BY S.K. BAILEY FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF LETTERS

The aims of the thesis are (a) to mark what has been altered or added to the legend of Oedipus by the three great dramatists of the fifth century, and (b) to show that these alterations and additions were made with a specific end in view. To further these aims it has been necessary to broaden somewhat the scope of the thesis so as to include in it a gathering together of the pre-Aeschylean versions of the story; in the case of Aeschylus a reconstruction of the two lost plays of the trilogy, and in the case of each poet a personal interpretation of the plays connected with the Oedipus legend.

The thesis contains four chapters:

1. The history of the myth.
2. Aeschylus : the Oedipodeia.
3. Sophocles : the Oedipus Tyrannos.
the Oedipus Coloneus.
4. Euripides : the Phoenissae.

A bibliography of works cited is placed at the end.

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AND WRITTEN UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PROFESSOR J.B.SKEMP

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

According to Aristotle the early dramatists based their tragedies on any tragic story that came to hand, but as time went on they began to build their tragedies about the histories of a few great houses. Obviously there were many stories, factual or otherwise, which would furnish situations suitable for staging. When Aeschylus in 472.B.C. produced the *Persae*, the dramatisation of contemporary events was no new thing, for Phrynichus had staged in 493 "The capture of Miletus" and in 476 his account of the Persian war. But in spite of this, it was no easy task to dramatise events which still lived on in the minds of the audience. There was always the danger that the poet might find himself between two stools, trying on the one hand to infuse into the story the spirit of tragedy, and on the other trying to keep closely to established facts. In such an invidious position the dramatist might well be led by the latter to neglect the former, and so produce something more akin to epic than tragedy. Phrynichus, it seems, had fallen into this trap by making his plays spectacular threnodies. (vide Herod. VI.21.) Aeschylus, however, was a bolder poet. He had no hesitation in sacrificing historic truth for his own tragic idea. For him the important thing about the Persian war was that the hubris of Xerxes had engendered the disasters which followed, and everything else was subordinated to this idea. Even so the *Persae* was not a complete success, and many a lesser man might fail utterly where Aeschylus had come within an ace of success. It was not without purpose that the tragic poets turned to their own native legends for their plots.

But obviously this was not the only reason why the poets turned from plots based on contemporary events to those which were based on legend. Because the audience already knew the main outlines of the story, the poet could concentrate his energies on the working out of his tragedy, and was saved the trouble of a lengthy exposition. There were of course elements so fundamental to the story that no poet could

ignore them, but otherwise they were at liberty to develop or modify the themes as they felt inclined. There was too plenty of scope for tragic irony which depends for its effect upon the foreknowledge of the audience. Moreover, while the themes are somewhat simple in themselves, they are profoundly suggestive in their content. Thus the poet can, while retaining the simplicity of the theme, bring out the implications of the story to form his tragedy. Above all, the poet saw, as modern French playwrights have seen, that the legends have a deep significance for men of every age. The legends are permanent because they deal with such things as love and hate, sin and virtue, peace, war and tyranny, and all, in one way or another, deal with the question of man's relation to God, questions which occupy the minds of men to-day no less than they did in the past.

Handed down from generation to generation by a verbal tradition, these legends came, in the course of time, to form the subjects of many epic poems. Some we possess to-day, some are known to us from fragments and notices, some have vanished beyond recall. The details of the stories were variously told, and received many additions, sometimes self-contradictory, and often remote from the spirit of the original, but the kernel of the story remained the same. In these stories the dramatists found a wealth of material upon which to build their tragedies; into them they poured their own thoughts. They had something to say, and they found in the stories a convenient medium through which they could express themselves, as Shakespeare found in Holinshed's histories, and North's Plutarch the material for his dramas. The stories were well known, but the formative idea and everything that mattered most came from the poets. What they did not find, they invented; what they found inconvenient, they simply left out. Hence the changes brought about by artistic motive have tended to obliterate the original lines of the stories. The legends which form the background to the tragedies then are stories remodelled, sometimes drastically remodelled, to fit the particular poet's own scheme of tragedy. But this does not mean that epic poetry has merely donned the tragic boot; it means that superimposed upon the epic material is

the tragic thought which animates it and makes it tragedy. Had the tragic poets been interested in merely dressing up the epics to suit the stage, we should have in our possession a series of plays containing "The mixture as before", what we have shows conclusively enough that each poet has used his material with a definite purpose in mind. The difference between the epic and the tragic poet is that the epic poet tells a story over a broad sweep of events, the tragic poet, by concentrating his energies upon a single issue, penetrates to the very heart of things. We might point out here that the Iliad is perhaps to be distinguished from other epic because it has a unity and a tragic pattern respecting Achilles in books I, IX, XVI - XVIII. Priam's encounter in XXIV has tragic tensions but ends optimistically, Homer should be picked out from epic cycle material by reason of his awareness of drama and plot, though not necessarily of tragedy in its fifth century sense.

So far, then, from being the slaves of legend, the tragic poets made legend serve them. The tragedies which are based on the Theban legends illustrate this point particularly well. Here was God's plenty for a dramatist seeking a plot. Some of the epic, moreover, was written in such a way as to suggest tragedy, as for example, Od.XI.271.sqq where the poet has seized upon the tragic significance of the discovery that Oedipus is guilty of parricide and incest. Here was a hint a dramatist might well accept in forming his own tragic pattern. But for the most part the epic which treated of the Theban legend was pure narrative, and it was left to the tragic poet to breathe into the story the breath of life.

While little attempt will be made in this thesis to speculate on the difficult question of primary sources, it will be useful to our purpose to recover as far as is possible the early versions of the story which the poets found ready to hand. Owing to our fragmentary knowledge of the early accounts, we shall find that it is not always possible to say with absolute certainty that the poet invented this or that version. In some cases we must be content to discover the poet's version of the story, and to attempt to find the motive for his

preferring it to other versions. We hope to show that it is never personal foible or eccentricity which leads a poet to alter the traditional accounts, but that it is always done with a specific aim in view. Why, for instance, is it that in the version of Aeschylus, Oedipus curses his sons at Thebes before the strife had broken out between them, while in Sophocles' version of the story, Oedipus does not utter his curse until after the quarrel between the sons? Why does Aeschylus describe the seven Argive champions in considerable detail, while Euripides finds a description of them a waste of time? These are the kind of questions we shall attempt to answer, but before we go on to examine the plays themselves, we must first gather together the pre-Aeschylean versions of the history of Laius and his ill-fated house.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF THE LEGEND

HOMER

There are three passages in Homer which have reference to the Theban legend of Oedipus:

(1) Od. XI. 271.sqq.)

"And I saw the mother of Oidipodas, fair Epicaste, who wrought a monstrous deed with unwitting mind, in that she wedded her son; but he had slain his father ere he wedded her, but suddenly ($\alpha\phi\alpha\rho$) the gods made these things known unto men. Yet he still ruled over the Cadmeans in lovely Thebes suffering woes through the dire counsels of the gods; but she went to the house of Hades, the strong warder, having fastened a noose on high from the roof beam, possessed by her pain; and to him she left full many woes afterward, even all that a mother's Avengers bring to pass."

The meaning of the word $\alpha\phi\alpha\rho$ is uncertain. The scholiast on the passage writes $\text{οὐκ εὐθὺς. ἔπειτα πῶς ἔσχε παύσας; ἀλλ' ἐξαίφνης}$ i.e. "suddenly" but he may be guessing when he says that $\alpha\phi\alpha\rho$ is equal to ἐξαίφνης . Pausanias (IX. 5. 11.) takes the word as meaning "forthwith". "How then," he asks, "could they make it known"forthwith" if indeed Epicaste bore four children to Oedipus?" Of the modern authorities vide Deubner (Oidipusprobleme p.36.) Robert (Oidipous p.112.) Legras (Les legendes Thebaines p.56.) Shipp (Studies in Homeric language) On the whole it appears that that the word means"suddenly" with no reference as to the exact point of time.

There is no agreement as to who was the mother of the children of Oedipus. Pausanias (ibid) writes: "In point of fact, the mother of these children was Euryganeia, the daughter of Hyperphas. In proof of this are the words of the author of the poem called the Oedipodeia, and moreover Onasias painted a picture at Plataea of Euryganeia bowed in grief on account of the fight between her children." The scholiast

on Phoen. 1760. writes: "They say that after Jocasta's death he married a maiden Euryganeia, who was the mother of the four children." The scholiast A. on Il.IV.376 says that Oedipus ἀπεσαλίωσεν Jocasta, married Astumedousa. Pherecydes (schol. on Phoen.53.) says that Oedipus had by Jocasta two children, Phrasta and Leonytus, and that after a year he married Euryganeia, daughter of Periphras, by whom he had Eteocles, Polyarchus, Antigone and Ismene; and that after her death he married Astumedousa.

There are then many variants. It is possible that, as Robert (op.cit.p.111.) has suggested, the wife-mother of Oedipus was in the Oedipodeia called Euryganeia, in the Odyssey Epicaste, by the tragedians and Pherecydes Jocasta, and in another work Astumedousa, i.e. different names for the same legendary character. But whatever the earliest versions of the story were, the whole tradition after Aeschylus agrees that Oedipus had children by Jocasta.

What were the woes which Jocasta bequeathed to Oedipus? We are rather in the dark here. Homer tells us no more, consequently we are driven to conjecture. On the whole it seems that the reference is to the self blinding, and the cruel treatment meted out to Oedipus by his sons. Vide, however, Deubner (op.cit.p.34.sqq.) for other suggestions.

(11) Il.IV.679.sq. makes a brief reference to the story of Oedipus where Mecisteus is said to have visited Thebes to attend the funeral games which were celebrated after the death of Oedipus:

Mecisteus "who

came of old to Thebes, when Oedipus had fallen (δεδουπημένος) to his burying."

The word δεδουπημένος refers to death in battle or by some other violent means. (cp. Ap.Rhod. l. 1304., Euph. 40.) It cannot be used as Jebb (Introd. C.T.) says in the figurative sense as being a fall from greatness. Thus in this version Oedipus died a violent death and was buried at Thebes. According to the scholiast (ad.loc.) Hesiod agrees with Homer's version. Pausanias (1.28.7.) says that the tomb of Oedipus was situated within the precincts of the Eumenides in Attica,

and that he discovered after diligent enquiry that the bones were brought from Thebes.

(111) Il.IV.376.sqq. also knows of the war of Polyneices and his allies against Thebes. It is a remarkable story in that Tydeus appears as the protagonist. He joined the exiled Polyneices and gathered together an army for an attack on Thebes. He himself was sent forward as a messenger of the host, possibly to demand the restoration of Polyneices. The rest is a tale of primitive daring and treachery. Of the actual course of the war we are told nothing.

"Of a truth he

came to Mycenae, not as a foe, but as a guest with godlike Polyneices gathering together an army, for at that time they were raising war against the sacred walls of Thebes, and they besought them to give goodly helpers. And they were willing and made assent to their prayers, but Zeus giving evil omens turned them. And when they had gone far on their way and had reached rushy Asopus in her grassy bed; there did the Achaeans send forth Tydeus to be their messenger. And he went and found many Cadmeans feasting in the house of mighty Eteocles. And knightly Tydeus, though a stranger, feared not being alone among many Cadmeans, but challenged them to feats of strength and conquered all easily; such a helper unto him was Athene. And the Cadmeans, urgers of horses, were wroth, and, as he returned, set up a strong ambush, bringing fifty youths and two leaders, Maeon, son of Haemon, like unto the immortals, and the son of Antophones, steadfast Polyphontes. Even on them Tydeus brought cruel fate; yea he slew them all, save one he sent home alone, Maeon he sent forth obeying the signs of the gods. Such a man was Tydeus of Aetolia."

HESIOD

Lost poems of Hesiod touched on the tale of Oedipus as the scholiast T. on Homer XXIII. 679.sq. (Loeb, Hesiod et Homericæ 99.A. 216.) shows, (cp. Loeb. op.cit. frag. 99.p. 217.sq.) but in the extant

works there is merely a passing reference to the war at Thebes.

Op. 162.sq. "And them baneful War and dread Battle slew, some before seven gated Thebes, the land of Cadmus, fighting for the flocks of Oedipus."

Hesiod also knows the Sphinx as the daughter of Echidna, and the pest of Thebes:

"She (Echidna) bare the deadly Phix, destruction to the Cadmeans."

It is possible that Hesiod had the riddle of the Sphinx in mind when he calls an old man walking with a stick "The three legged one." Op. 533.

LATER EPICS

The story of Oedipus was treated very fully in the lost epics which deal with the Theban cycle of myths. Of these one was the Oedipodeia, attributed by the Tabula Borgiaca to Cinaethon of Lacedaemon, (cp. however Paus. 1X.5.11.) and which we have already quoted in reference to Od. XI.271.sqq. There is unfortunately only one fragment of this epic poem extant:

Schol. on Phoen. 1750. "The authors of the Oedipodeia say of the Sphinx - though no one else does - 'But furthermore (she killed) noble Haemon, the dear son of blameless Creon, the comliest and loveliest of boys.'"

Another poem belonging to the Theban cycle was the Thebais, which was thought worthy, on account of its superior literary merit, to be attributed to Homer. Certainly Pausanias (1X.9.5.) ranked it next to the Iliad and Odyssey. Welcker, from a doubtful restoration of the Tabula Borgiaca (I.G. XIV. 1292.1.2.) gives Arctinus as the author. The schol. Laur. Apol. Rhod. 1.308. says "the writers". Athenaeus (XI.465.E., and Apollodorus 1.8.4.1. both refer to "the writer".

The poem seems to have been written from the Argive standpoint, opening as it does with the words "Ἀργὸς ἄειδε θεῶν" (Cert. Hom. et Hes.

323.) Hence as Legras (op.cit.p.85.) says although the Theban traditions on which the poem is based doubtless gave all the advantages to Thebes, the author of the Thebais so treated them as to glorify Argos and put her in the right.

Apart from the opening line of the poem quoted above some twenty lines survive. Happily the longest fragment gives us the earliest account of the curse of Oedipus:

Athenaeus XI.465.E. "Then the heaven-born, golden-haired Polyneices first set before Oedipodas a fair silver table of Cadmus, the divinely wise, and afterwards filled a goodly golden cup with sweet wine. But when he perceived the precious treasures of his father were before him, great misery fell upon his heart. Forthwith in the presence of both his sons he uttered dire curses, and the avenging fury failed not to hear him as he prayed that they should divide their heritage in no kindly spirit, but that war and battles should ever be between them."

Another fragment, again dealing with the same subject, is quoted by the scholiast on Sophocles O.C.1375.

"The story is this: Eteocles and Polyneices being accustomed to send their father the shoulder from the sacrifice, once from forgetfulness or whatever cause, sent him the haunch, and he, thinking he was slighted, in a petty and ignoble spirit cursed them. The author of the cyclic Thebais relates it as follows: 'When he marked the haunch he cast it on the ground and said "Alas, my sons have sent this mocking me," and he prayed to Zeus, the king, and the other deathless gods, that they might go down to Hades slain by each other's hands."

We learn from the scholiast on Pindar Ol.VI.26. that the history of Amphiaraus was also told in the Thebais.

The Cypria we learn from fragments of Proclus (Chrest. 1.) gave an account of the meeting of Menelaus and Nestor, where the latter in a digression told the story of Oedipus. There is, however, nothing

to show what the story was.

Besides these earlier writers Antimachus of Colophon, a contemporary of Euripides, wrote a Thebaid. The scholiast on Horace (A.P.146.) says of him that he filled twenty four books before he brought the seven champions to Thebes. The extant fragments of the poem tell us nothing which may help us here.

PINDAR

Pindar's evidence has special interest as he gives a version of the story almost exactly contemporary with Aeschylus.

Ol.11.38.sqq. (476.B.C.)

"From the day when the son of Laius in the hands of fate, met his father and killed him and fulfilled the word given aforetime at Delphi. But the swift Erinys beheld it and slew his warlike sons by each other's swords."

This is the first explicit mention of the oracle at Delphi foretelling that Oedipus should slay his father. A completely different colour is given to the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices. Pindar represents the Erinys as destroying the sons of Oedipus in direct retribution for the slaying of Laius, not in answer to the curse of Oedipus. The passage implies that Oedipus was the unwitting murderer of his father. There is, we may note, no mention of Jocasta in Pindar, and we might well expect this. As Jebb (O.T.p.Xv.) points out, poets who desired to preserve the favour of the Dorians had good reason for avoiding that version where Jocasta bears children to Oedipus, for there were Dorian princes as Theron, tyrant of Acragas, who traced their descent from Thersandros, the son of Polyneices. (cp.Ol.11.35.)

A fragment of Pindar (Turyn 206.) refers to the riddle of the Sphinx, and in Pyth.IV.263. there is an allusion to the wisdom of Oedipus.

Nem.IX.16.sqq. (c.472.B.C.) tells the story of the Argive expedition against Thebes and mentions Amphiaraus, the seer.

"But when they had given to the son of Oicleus for his wife, as one should give surety of an oath, Eriphyle, the slayer of her husband, they became the greatest of the fair-haired Danaoi. Therefore on a time they led a host to seven gated Thebes, but not by a route of signs propitious; nor would the son of Cronos speed them on their mad journey from their homes, but by the quivering lightnings he darted forth he bade them hold from their journey. But unto foreseen destruction sped that company with armour of bronze and the gear of steeds; and on the banks of the Ismenos, stayed from their sweet return, they fed the white smoke with their bodies. For seven pyres devoured the youth' limbs; but for Amphiaraus Zeus cleft the deep-bossomed earth with almighty thunderbolt, and buried him with his steeds ere his warrior spirit was shamed, pierced in the back by Periclymenos' spear."

Ol.VI.12.sqq. (464 - 468.B.C.) adds a little to the same story:

"For thee, Agesias, is that praise prepared which justly and openly Adrastus spoke of old concerning the seer, Amphiaraus, the son of Oicleus, when the earth swallowed him and his shining steeds. For afterward, when on seven pyres dead men were burnt, the son of Talao spoke in Thebes this word: I mourn for the eye of my host, both wise in prophecy and brave in war."

The scholiast affirms that the last words are borrowed by Pindar from the cyclic Thebais. It seems that Pindar is following the epic version when he says that the expedition was fated to fail from the first. cp.Hom. Il.IV.381.

AFTER PINDAR

Besides Pindar the poetess, Corinna, contributed greatly to the story. She actually wrote a Seven against Thebes, but unfortunately nothing remains of it. We are, however, indebted to her for one

detail of the story. According to Corinna (schol. on Phoen.26.) Oedipus killed the Sphinx. The other version of the story is that the Sphinx threw herself from the rocks after Oedipus had solved the riddle. (Diod. Sic.IV.64.3.) That the version used by Corinna is much the earlier is proved by the discovery in Thisbe of two gems belonging to the Minoan-Mycenean period. (J.H.S. XLV.p.27.sqq.) One shows a young man about to attack the Sphinx, while the other shows the same figure aiming his bow at a man in a chariot who is preparing to shoot at him. The resemblance to the defeat of the Sphinx and the slaying of Laius is so marked that it appears impossible not to conclude that the figures are Oedipus and Laius. Here then in this very early form of the legend the Sphinx is attacked by Oedipus, and the other version that she was overcome by the reading of the riddle is completely excluded. There are, however, traces in Athenian art of a mixture of both versions. On a vase described in J.H.S. VIII. 320. the Sphinx has cast herself from the rocks before being slain by Oedipus.

THE LOGOGRAPHERS

Lastly come the Logographers.

(1) Hellanicus of Mytilene, who in the Boeotica wrote a history of Boeotia, is mentioned several times by the scholiast on the Phoenissae. He agrees with Euripides as to the self blinding of Oedipus. (Phoen.61.) and that Polyneices gave up the kingdom willingly to Eteocles. (Phoen, 150.)

(11) Pherecydes of Leros, who treated the legends of Thebes in the fifth of ten books on Greek traditions, and whom we have already quoted as giving Euryganeia as the second wife of Oedipus. He says in contradiction to Hellanicus (schol. on Phoen.71.) that Polyneices was expelled by force, and gives (schol. on Phoen. 39.) the name of Laius' chariot driver as Polypoites.

But as both these writers were contemporaries of Euripides, it is unlikely that he would use them as authorities, for the materials used by them could be used by him also.

Putting together these scattered hints we have a story something like this:

When Laius was king of Thebes, there came to him an oracle that he was destined to die at the hands of his own son. A child was born to him, and Laius, thinking to cheat fate, exposed the babe to die. But not thus easily does one escape one's destiny. The child was saved. He grew up without knowledge of his true parents, and one day meeting his father on a journey slew him in a quarrel. Oedipus, for so the child was named, passed on into Thebes, the city of his birth. At this time Thebes was suffering under the ravages of a monster called the Sphinx. The Sphinx asked of its victims a riddle; failure to answer meant death. Oedipus, however, solved the riddle. The Sphinx was defeated, and for delivering Thebes Oedipus was rewarded with the hand of the widow of Laius, Jocasta, and with the throne of Thebes. Sooner or later all came to light. Oedipus learnt the terrible truth: he had slain his father and married his mother. Jocasta in her agony of mind committed suicide, but Oedipus continued to rule over Thebes. His sufferings, however, knew no end, for his sons, perhaps conspiring for the throne, treated him shamefully, and he, in his anger, cursed them, praying that there should be battle and strife among them always, and finally that they should die by each other's hands. After the death of Oedipus, Polyneices went into exile, it may be voluntarily, it may be that he was driven out by his brother, Eteocles, but whatever the case, he, with the help of the Argives, gathered together a mighty army, among the warriors Tydeus and Amphiaraus, and despite the warnings of heaven, levied war on Thebes. At the seven gates of the city they fought, one champion and his company at each gate. At one of the seven gates Polyneices met his brother, and there they died at each other's hands. The curse of Oedipus was fulfilled.

C H A P T E R T W O

AESCHYLUS

In the spring of the year 467 B.C. Aeschylus (n.1.) brought to the stage four plays connected with the Theban legend: the Laius, Oedipus, Seven against Thebes, and the Sphinx, a satyric play. With these plays Aeschylus was victorious over the other competitors in the tragic contest. (n.2.)

The Seven against Thebes, which, with the exception of a few fragments from the other plays alone remains extant, was in antiquity one of the most admired of all the tragedies, but in modern times it has tended to fall in esteem owing to the uncritical and unsympathetic treatment to which it has been subjected. (n.3.) To see this play in its proper perspective it is necessary to say a few words on the nature of the trilogy of which it forms the climax.

The essential feature of the trilogy is that it contains three tragic situations related to the other plays of the group by a single dramatic idea. Each play provides a distinct and highly dramatic atmosphere of its own, but the real unity comes from the tragic idea which runs through the entire trilogy. The last member interprets the whole.

It is the almost paradoxical nature of the trilogy which enables Aeschylus to give to his plays that tremendous breadth of vision so characteristic of his writings. In the other tragedians the evils which fell upon the house of Laius were portrayed in single plays, but the very nature of Aeschylus' tragic conception prevented him from restricting himself to any narrow time limit or concentrating everything on a single dramatic crisis. In Aeschylus alone Laius occupies a place of prime importance; he is more than the father of Oedipus, more than the father slain by his son, he is himself a tragic sinner

and he suffers for that sin. The story of his fall forms a complete play. For Sophocles the discovery that Oedipus is guilty of parricide and incest is the important thing; for Aeschylus however the discovery forms but a single episode in the history of the ill-fated house. That history can only be concluded in another play which provides the key to the interpretation of the whole trilogy and furnishes at the same time a situation which rivals any in Greek tragedy. (n.4)

However much we may lament the fact that the first two plays of the trilogy are lost, we are probably fortunate that it is the Septem and not the Laius which has come down to us, for even if we are not sure how Aeschylus dealt with the first play, it is quite certain that we should never have envisaged the unique situation of the Septem. There is another feature about the Septem which makes its preservation important: being the final play of the trilogy it provides a solution to the problems raised in the preceding plays. In the case of the Supplices and the Prometheus Vincetus we start under a grave disadvantage, for both pose a problem whose answer is missing. If therefore we can rightly interpret the Septem, we shall be in a position to speculate on the content of the Laius and Oedipus. I propose therefore to commence with the Septem and see what emerges from a detailed consideration.

THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

The Septem opens with Thebes threatened with the perils of war. The arrangement of the defence is under the direction of Eteocles, king of Thebes, who enters and addresses the citizens. We feel immediately that in this man lies a strength of purpose worthy to meet any eventuality. Calmly and prudently he disposes his defenders urging young and old to play a part in championing Thebes. His very strength of mind communicates itself to his audience and we feel fain to relax for surely all will be well.

But as we are left alone with the king and we hear his prayer to the gods, a chilling stab of fear strikes at our hearts, for he includes in his prayer his father's avenging curse, and we realise that it is not only an external foe which needs to be guarded against,

but a more terrible and unseen foe which is within the city's very gates. It all rushes back now: the curse which Oedipus had launched against his sons that they should divide their heritage by the sword. For a moment we had been content to accept these words in the opening speech at their face value, now we can appreciate their darker meaning. The earth (16.) is not only a mother to be defended but an inheritance to be divided; it is at once the place from which the curse of Oedipus is operating and to which the sons will go down ultimately, *παιδοκῶσα* suggesting the hospitality of death. (cp.860.) Again at 35: *εὖ τελεῖ θεός*. Yes, but for whom? Finally the words of the messenger at 68: *εἰδὼς τὰ τῶν θυράθην ἀβλαβῆς ἔση*. Will Eteocles be *ἀβλαβῆς* where τὰ *ἔνδορ* are concerned? It is perhaps not without design that the word *βλάβη* is used with *ἔνδορ* at 201.

In this scene there is no suggestion (in fact 49 for what it is worth seems to point the contrary) that in the attack foretold by the seer and confirmed by the spy Polyneices is to be one of the seven champions, nor is there any suggestion that Eteocles should be one of the defenders. The natural expectation is that Eteocles will direct the defence within, as Adrastos the offence without. (50) Hence the suspicion that the brothers will meet does not arise. (n.5.)

The chorus, however, bring matters to a different pass, for a crowd of maidens come bursting upon the scene panic stricken by the imminent danger to the city. Against this outburst Eteocles stands firm, but since their panic may spread through the city he endeavours to calm them by promising to stand at one of the seven gates himself. (283.sqq.) The alteration in his plans is scarcely noticed, but it is a fatal step for the improbability of an encounter between the brothers is appreciably lessened.

While Eteocles goes off to gather his champions, the chorus sing an ode on the horrors which befall a captured city. The ode keeps to the fore the external danger to the city. In the next ode, (720.sqq.) the focal point will have shifted to the royal family and the enemy is an internal one. Now, however, the important thing is that we fully appreciate the dangers which threaten Thebes, hence for the moment no

here. The man whose judgement has been so good in affairs of state becomes a man of the most violent passions wholly unable to prevent himself from leaping into the abyss of his doom. Now there takes place between Eteocles and the chorus a complete reversal of roles: the panic stricken women become counsellors of moderation and Eteocles completely beside himself with blood lust. That very spirit of bloodthirsty madness which will bring death to the Argive invaders is now in Eteocles. It will bring destruction to him too. And he rushes out to meet his brother and his destiny.

In the short lyrical ode which follows the present situation is viewed in the light of the previous history of the house. As they brood over the past, the chorus allow their thoughts to hover above Laius and his ill-fated house. They see only sin that brings suffering in its train: punishment involving fresh sin, and fresh punishment until the only possible end is reached in the complete destruction of the guilty race. The curse of Oedipus is now to be fulfilled.

The announcement of the victory and the catastrophe is brief: the city is saved, but the brothers have fallen. The strangely beautiful ode which follows almost defies comment. We are in a region where only lyrics can carry us, and on this lofty note the play ends.

As Smyth (Aeschylean Tragedy p.128.n.1.) recognises the chorus (720.sqq.) is vital for the interpretation of the whole trilogy. From it we can see that the leitmotif of the three plays is the onslaught of the Erinyes upon the guilty race. It will be of some advantage to us to examine the ode in greater detail.

The structure of the ode is in itself remarkable. In its intricate pattern we can discern a threefold reference to the Curse-Erinyes theme in a kind of A. B. A. arrangement. (I) Strophe 1 stresses the working of the malignant power in the house and the final destruction of the family. (II) (End of antistrophe 3 and the beginning of strophe 4.) The city too is in grave peril. (III) (Antistrophe 5.) The curse is being fulfilled upon the sons. The three passages are linked together by the themes of "fear" and "accomplishment". (vide infra.) The first strophe is amplified by

the following two stanzas which lead up to the reference to the ancient evils. Then there are two stanzas primarily concerned with Laius and his sin, and through the reference to Apollo's oracle, leading up to the danger which threatens Thebes. The next two stanzas again deal with the present situation, but this time from a different point of view. The first looks back over the whole range of events. The second transfers the attention to Oedipus. Of the remaining stanzas, two and a half deal with Oedipus and balance those on Laius, while the close of the third brings us back to the present and prepares us for the announcement of the messenger.

Strophe 1 The opening words are highly significant. At this very moment a battle is raging at each of the seven gates of Thebes. The whole future of the city is at stake, for in the event of defeat, there will fall upon the stricken city the horrors so vividly painted in the preceding ode, but the Argive threat is for the moment forgotten in the presence of a more deadly thing; the working of a malignant and unseen power upon the last representatives of the ruling house.

Ah, I shudder at the God who has blasted yon abode -
 God ungodlike, yet unerring, evil-boding, whom the prayer
 Of a father by its spell drew, a fury up from hell
 To fulfil the curse of Oedipus, his wrath of mad despair
 And the feud that blasts his children ever thrusts the demon on.

(Way's translation.)

The words are a direct answer to 718.sq. To the chorus' question "Wilt thou then shed the blood of thine own brother?" Eteocles answers: "When the gods dispose it, a man shall not escape his doom." The remarks of the chorus are at once specific. It is τὰν θεῶν who works his destruction; τὰν θεῶν. ὅν θεοῖς ὀμώλια, an Erinys. In other words the chorus has assigned the fate of the royal house to its effective cause. The Erinys has brought about the fall of Laius and Oedipus, now she works again, and she is equated with the curse of Oedipus upon his sons.

Antistrophe 1 With the mention of the curse of Oedipus there rises before our eyes the terrifying spectacle of the stranger from

Scythia dividing the possessions of Oedipus between the sons. The stranger now turns out to be the ὠμόφρων σίδκρος which shall allot them land enough to occupy. Perhaps we recall the kindly earth of 16.sqq. She is the mother, a most beloved nurse, now the sons of Oedipus shall rest in her arms.

Strophe 11 The splendid image is now fully translated into concrete terms. Death; death at each others hands is the bitter price the brothers must pay, and when the earth has drunk their murdered blood, there is no cure. (cp. Agam.1019.sq. Cho.48. Eum.261.) One man may slay another, and for that blood there is expiation, but if a brother spill a brother's blood, "There is no growing old of that pollution." (Sept.682.) But the house is no stranger to evils, there are:

Ills ancient and new side by side.

Antistrophe 11 Ills both ancient and new are mixed together in a single cup, and it is never drained of its sorrow. Ancient transgression is swift in its retribution, and it abides even unto the third generation. There is no escape, for sin gives rise to further sin. To Laius, anxious for a son, Apollo thrice said "Dying without offspring you shall save the city." The implication is clear: if you have a son, you endanger the city; in other words the safety of Thebes can only be assured by the extinction of the royal house. The central thesis of the trilogy is here very sharply defined. It is the statement of the problem to be solved in this play. The warning that Laius would meet his end at the hands of his son is put completely on one side; in its place stands a dreadful dilemma for Laius: if you have a son, you endanger the state, if you do not, you bring an end to the royal line. City and house are brought together by the oracle. Its dreadful warning underlines the sin of Laius, for he knew that by gratifying his desires he was plunging the city into unknown perils. Did he then think first of the city?

Strophe 111 No. Laius disregarded the oracle; he begat a son. He allowed his passionate desire for a son to decide the issue. (n.6.) The retribution was slow in coming, but it was none the less terrible

when it did. Laius fell by the hand of his son, the son whom he desired so much, and that son planted a bloody root in his mother's womb. Oedipus was the instrument by which the sin of Laius was carried a stage further.

Antistrophe 111 The present situation is now viewed in the light of the past. The whole range of events is covered. We can see that from the beginning the city has suffered because of the sins of Laius and his descendents. Laius had a son despite the warnings of Apollo. He then tried to escape the consequences of his actions by having the child exposed, but disobedience is not thus easily rectified. Oedipus survived to carry the tale of sin a generation further. He slew his father, begat children of his own mother, and finally cursed his sons that they should divide their heritage by the sword. In the quarrel which ensued the city did not escape, for she had to endure the threat of war. For three generations the forbidden race has survived, and throughout that time the city of Thebes has suffered. Well might the chorus fear that the city will perish with the princes. She is in precisely the same position as Amphiaraus, who, though noble and religious, became involved with irreligious men, and must needs suffer the same fate. Thebes was ruled by a race tainted with wickedness and in the price they had to pay she became part payer of the account.

Strophe 1V. "For 'tis brought to fulfilment - the heavy settlement of those curses which were uttered long ago." Oedipus had laid a curse upon his sons that they should die by each other's hands, and now they fight in mortal combat. It is indeed brought to fulfilment. "The fatal account by passes the poor": the full account cannot be paid by the citizens, but they may suffer notwithstanding. Defeat and slavery may be their lot; not death at the hands of a kinsman, but death at the hands of the cruel invader. But perchance the poor will escape the blows of misfortune. It is only the prosperous, only the happiest of men who are brought low.

Antistrophe 1V. For who was as great as Oedipus, honoured as he was by gods and men? He delivered the city from the Sphinx. The dreadful irony was that he delivered the city only to plunge it into

greater peril; the unknown terrors of an offended heaven.

Strophe V. For him, the happiest of mortals was reserved a terrible fate, for he slew his father and wed his mother. But when the full realisation of his actions came upon him, he wrought a twofold ill. He robbed himself of the light of day.

Antistrophe V. And laid a fearful curse upon his sons. Now we fear that the swift footed Erinyes will bring all to pass. (n.7.)

Reverting to the formal element in the ode, we noticed that the three main divisions of the ode are linked together by the key words of fear and the idea of accomplishment. The opening stanza commences:

πέφρικα τὴν ὤλεσίλοκον

θεόν

At 724 we have the words:

Τέλειαι τὰς περιθύμους κατάρτας

And at 764. sq. we hear:

δέδοικα δὲ σὺν βασιλεῦσι
μὴ πόλις δαμασθῆῃ

Which is immediately picked up by τέλειαι γάρ at the beginning of strophe IV, while at the end of the ode we have the words:

νῦν δὲ τρέω

μὴ Τέλειη καμψίπους Ἐρινύς

Ἐρινύς picking up the Ἐρινύν of 723.

The gradation is significant. First the chorus speak in shuddering fear of the Erinyes; we know at once the agent who works her fell designs. The second phrase specifically links the fate of the city with that of the royal house. The issue then is twofold - polis and genos. The final words draw the conclusion from the whole ode which we may regard as the premises of the argument. The doom that lies so heavily upon the house cannot be escaped. The Erinyes which has brought about the fall of Laius and Oedipus is now about to deliver its final blow. The Erinyes motif is clearly the connecting link between the plays. (cp. 832.sq. 840.sqq. 886.sq. 956.sqq.) As Solmsen (T.A.P.A. 68.p.197.sqq) has said: "Without it there would only be a continuity of subject, with it there is continuity of idea and leitmotif."

The ode closed on a note of foreboding: will the city perish with

its princes? The messenger enters and his first word is significant, **θαροῦντε** : "Be of good cheer." The words can only mean that all is well. The next words prove it: **πόλις πέφευγεν ἠδὲ δούλιον ζυγόν** (cp.74.sq. The words of the messenger are a direct answer to the prayer of Eteocles.) The city has escaped the yoke of slavery.

Still waters hath Thebes won, hath shipped no sea

In multitudinous buffetings of surge. (795.sq. cp.758.sq.)

The **Πύργος** holds safe against the **κῆμα κακῶν**. The news which hints very broadly at the fall of the brothers seems to escape the chorus. They are a little dazed, so their question goes back to the city: "What new ills to ancient Thebes?" The messenger starts again: "The city is saved, but as far as the princes are concerned ---." The matter quickly becomes clear, the city is saved, but the brothers have fallen.

In the long hymn which marks the end of the play the chorus is torn between joy and sorrow:

Shall I rejoice? - Shall I bid ring

Triumphant to our Saviour King

My thankful paean?

Or shall I weep the hapless slain

Ill-fated battle chieftains twain

The brother foemen? (825.sq.)

The first strophe gives the keynote to the whole ode:

Woe for the Curse, the black curse self-fulfilling

To end the race of Oedipus that came.

Throughout the ode the brothers are seen as the victims of the Erinys. There is no distinction made between them. (cp. 812.) Polyneices, who was responsible for unleashing war with its attendant horrors upon his native land, finds equal place in the lament with Eteocles. In the previous ode the chorus viewed the present in the light of past calamities; in this they are concerned with the curse and its fulfilment. (n.8.)

Just as there is in this play a double outcome - salvation for the polis: destruction for the genos, so there must have been from the

outset a twofold problem. From the oracle onwards the city has been in deadly peril, and it is delivered only when the messenger enters with his news. The polis theme runs through the entire play and it is underlined by the metaphor of the ship in storm. 1.sqq. 65.sqq. 114.sqq. 208.sqq. 758.sqq. 795.sqq. (n.9.) Eteocles is the captain of the ship of state, he is also the son of Oedipus. Thus he becomes a symbol of both polis and oikos and what he does affects them both. Of his actions the most important is his decision to meet his brother in combat. It may be of some advantage to us to consider this scene in rather more detail as there has been a tendency to see in it a struggle on the part of Eteocles to make up his mind and decide between two courses of action.

From the moment when Eteocles realises that he must meet his brother, his former prudence and self restraint desert him. He becomes filled with an unholy lust for his brother's blood. The whole speech stands in direct contrast to the speech on Amphiaraus, but it has a kind of symmetry of its own. The first five lines are devoted to his outbreak and lament on his father's curse. We may note that he is in no doubt as to what he owes his ruin. The following fourteen lines concentrate on the conflict of rights between himself and Polyneices, while the last five announce his intention to go and slay his brother.

In the dialogue between the chorus and Eteocles, we can discern three motives - honour, madness, and destiny - and each play a part in sending Eteocles to his doom.

677- 685 The chorus begs Eteocles not to show himself in anger like the man against whom he has spoken. There are sufficient men to meet the invaders without his fighting his own brother. Of that blood there is expiation, but fratricide is an undying *μείδιμα* Eteocles replies that if one must bear suffering let it at least be without disgrace, but where disgrace is added to the suffering there is no honour at all.

685 - 697 The chorus now swings over to his blood madness.
τὴ μείδιμα; The word can only mean that now Eteocles stands in no better

case than Tydeus. (cp. 343. 484. Note too all the other suggestions of madness *δορίμαργος ἄτα* 687. cp.380. 475. *κακῶ ἔρωτος* 687. cp. 380.392. *ὠμοδακῆς ἱμερος. ἀνδροκτασίαν* 692. cp.572.) Eteocles, however, does not deny his blood lust, instead he affirms his destiny. Since a god pushes the matter on, let the race of Laius so hated by Apollo go adown the wave of Cocytus. Who is the god? Is it Apollo who hates the race of Laius? Apollo took the seventh gate to himself. (800.sqq.) The chorus pick up the word and as it were deny the charge. It is not a *θεός* which drives you but an *ὠμοδακῆς ἱμερος*. They are referring to the madness brought about by the Erinyes, but they do not yet attribute this madness to the Erinyes. It is left to Eteocles to make the matter clear. *ὠμοδακῆς ἱμερος*. does drive me, for the black and hateful curses of my father sit near telling me of gain first and death afterwards. First to slay his brother and then be slain. (cp. Sidgwick op.cit. note ad loc.)

698 -711- The chorus again try to show that there is no dishonour in not going. Do not go, no one will call you a coward. You can, moreover, purge your house of the curse and win salvation by turning to the gods. Eteocles ignores the first plea. He answers that he is deserted by the gods.

The gods. Long since they ceased to care for us,
and marvel at gifts from lost ones such as we.

In other words only our deaths will satisfy them now. We are lost, and there is no escape. *τί οὖν ἐτ' ἂν σαίνουμεν ὀλέθρου μόνον;*

Tydeus had used similar words of Amphiaraus - 383 *σαίνειν μόνον τε καὶ μάκην ἀψυχία*. Eteocles will not allow them to be used of him.

The chorus do not give up, they still try to dissuade him. Yes.

ὀλέθρου μόνον is close, yield and avoid it. Soon fate - *δαίμων* - may be kinder to you, now it seethes. Eteocles with the mention of *δαίμων* returns to the curse which he knows has brought the Erinyes into action. He thinks too of the dreams which spoke of the division of the possessions of Oedipus, and which will now come true.

712 - 719 The lyrics have ended but the attack is still carried on. The three motives of honour, madness and destiny play their last

part. The chorus ask leave to make one last plea. The reply is uncompromising: do not make any vain request for me to desist, I have made up my mind. The request is made, and it is in vain, he is *τεθνημένος* and his appetite is not to be dulled, only blood can satisfy this mad craving. The chorus urge Eteocles to avoid the battle. This may be cowardly, but god honours even a base victory. Eteocles rejects the argument. Such advice a warrior could not embrace. The true warrior must choose the path where true honour is. One final desperate question: You have it in your heart to slay your own brother? The answer is final:

(note how *θεῶν δεδόντων* is led up to by 417. 427.sq. 562. 614. 625.)
θεῶν δεδόντων οὐκ ἄν ἐκφυγῶς κακὰ [cp. 282.]
 Eteocles affirms his destiny, and goes out to meet his brother. He goes because he must. As he sees it he cannot avoid his doom. He realises that his father's curse is now to be fulfilled, he realises, moreover, that his mad lust for his brother's blood is the result of the onslaught of the Erinyes, but at the same time he believes it to be cowardly even to try to avoid what fate has store for him. There is then no struggle on Eteocles' part. He simply acquiesces to his destiny, as Regenbogen (Hermes 68. p.50.sqq.) says. "Dass Eteocles zum Unausweichlichen 'ja' sagt, 'nur schnell, dass ein Ende wird,' kann man einen Akt der Freiheit nennen." (n.10.)

It is to be noticed that in the dialogue between Eteocles and the chorus, (677.sqq.) the chorus make a clear distinction between the Erinyes and the other gods. For Eteocles, however, the contrast is less well defined - *θεὸς ἐπισπέρχει τὸ πρᾶγμα* 689. *Φοῖβη στύγηθ' ἐν* 691. *θεοῖς παρημελήμεθα* 702. *θεῶν δεδόντων* 719. - Especially important is his comprehensive prayer at the beginning of the play 69.sqq. Zeus, (cp.8.) Earth, (cp.16.) Gods of the city, (cp.14.) - primarily those who are called upon by the chorus 110.sqq. - and Ara Erinyes. The dissimilarity between the Erinyes and the other gods is fully emphasised by the chorus at 720.sqq. 832.sqq. 822.sqq. In the last two passages the distinction is taken a stage further: the deliverance of the city is attributed to Zeus, while the destruction of the genos is assigned to the Erinyes.

But at 800.sqq. as at 691 (cp.722. *παναληθῆ κκκόμαντων* applied to the Erinyes.) there seems to be a close connection between Apollo and the Erinyes, for Apollo, so far from endeavouring to save Eteocles from the toils of the Erinyes, hates the whole race of Laius, and is intent upon destroying it root and branch. The role of Apollo in this play is of particular importance. In the Choephoroi 269.sqq. Orestes is warned by Apollo that if he fails to slay his mother, he will be hounded down by the Erinyes. Later in the Eumenides, though Apollo treats them with loathing and contempt, there is no escaping the fact that they are the instruments of his threat against Orestes. Apollo's role in the Oresteia has been brilliantly discussed by R.P. Winnington-Ingram in C.R. 47. p.97.sqq. There Apollo appears as the representative of an outmoded moral code. The Delphic conception of justice, which in spite of the fact that it was an advance on the justice of the Erinyes (in its essentials an endless vendetta) is yet barbaric and full of inconsistencies which only become explicit in the situation created by Aeschylus. In the Septem Apollo is scarcely to be distinguished from those blind agents of justice in that he associates himself with the ministers of the curse of Oedipus, and actually works the destruction of the last representatives of the family.

What of the other gods and Zeus himself? They are the *πολισοῦχοι θεοί*, and Zeus from the outset is *ἀλεξητήριος*. His name constantly occurs, in particular throughout the central scene, and significantly at 630, immediately before the seventh pair, and immediately after the news of the messenger. 822.sqq. The gods then have succeeded in saving the city, but only by the sacrifice of the family. Had a representative of the house survived, (n.11) the Erinyes would still have been active, and Thebes would still have been in peril. Now the Erinyes is satisfied.

At the last these curses have shouted the shriek of their terrible paean

Over the house that is shattered in utterest disarray.
Ruin's trophy is reared in the gates fratricidal, the gates
Kadmeia,

These two hath the fiend of the house destroyed; now his
hand doth he stay.

a dream motif.

(111) Teiresias, though not directly named in the Septem, is doubtless referred to at 24.sqq. He may have appeared in the Laius to interpret the dreams of Laius.

(1V) Eur. Phoen. 35.sqq. which gives the same reason as Robert for the journey, but mentions a different destination. In default of further evidence, however, we must leave the whole question undecided. It is not improbable that Aeschylus himself deliberately left the matter as vague as Sophocles.

Again where was Oedipus going and for what purpose? Beyond the fact that father and son met at the cross roads near Potniae, Aeschylus tells us nothing. Sophocles (O.T.787.sq.); and Euripides (Phoen.34.sq. cp. schol on Phoen 1760) agree in saying that he was on his way to Delphi to discover his true parentage. Nicolaus of Damascus (Frag. GR. HIST. 90 F.8.) tells a different story. He says that Oedipus was going to Orchomenus ἐπὶ ῥήτησιν ἵππων. He meets Laius and after slaying him returns to Polybus to whom he gives the horses (of Laius?) cp. schol. on Phoen 44 who quotes two lines from the Lyde of Antimachus.

ἔπειτα δὲ φωνήσας Πολυβῆ, θραπέτηρα τοῦσδε
ἵππους τοῖς δῶσω δυσμενέων ἑλάσας

Now the route from Corinth to Orchomenus or Delphi is the same as far as Coronea. Potniae is itself of uncertain whereabouts, but it seems at any rate to be nearer Thebes and possibly south of Coronea and still therefore on a possible route to either Orchomenus or Delphi. The Orchomenus version which appears only in Nicolaus is possibly a local Boeotian variant and it does not help us much here. But in any case Potniae is likely to have meant some diversion from the main route, and if this is so we are still left with the problem as to why Oedipus should have diverged from his route.

The rest of the story is, however, fairly clear. The news of Laius' death was brought to the city by a messenger, one of the king's escort, who told the whole story in a speech of which fragment 173, usually attributed to the Oedipus (n.16) forms a part. In this connection we may notice Reitzenstein (Ind. Lect. Rost. 1890-91.) ὅτι δὲ καὶ ἐγένετο τοῦ αἵματος καὶ ἀπέπτυν, Ἠλοχύλος ἐν ταῖς Περραλβίδων ἰστορίαι καὶ ἐν τῷ περὶ Λαίου.

From this it appears that murderers, as a defence against pollution, followed the practice of drinking the blood of their victims and spitting it out again. This obviously belongs to the speech announcing the murder of Laius.

If, as I have suggested, the play began with Thebes suffering from the Sphinx, then it must end with its defeat and death at the hands of Oedipus. Thus there would be a double outcome to the first play as to the last. Salvation for the polis, destruction for the genos with the death of Laius. The terrible searing irony of the situation is that the city's deliverance is only apparent, even as is the destruction of the house. Oedipus lives to plunge his house and the city into still greater perils.

Robert, however, suggests that the play must contain the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta which he regards as the result of *Liebesleidenschaft*. This is contradicted in ARIST. Frogs 1044, as Robert himself recognises, (Ch. VI. note 61.) his main evidence however is Septem 756. *Παράνοια συνάγει Νυμφίους φρενώνης*. But surely these words refer to Laius and Jocasta, not to Oedipus and Jocasta. The emphasis in this stanza is on Laius; *Παράνοια* returning to the idea of *ἀβουλίαν* and so rounding off the stanza. (cp. Mazon. op. cit. p. 136. n. 3. Sidgwick, op. cit. note ad loc. supports Robert.)

This is not the whole story by any means. There remains much we should like to know but perhaps never shall. It is possible, for example, that Jocasta came into the play, but where? Perhaps a dialogue between her and Laius; but we have nothing to guide us. The essential points are, I think, clear. The oracle of Apollo states the problem, Laius disobeys and begets a son, the Sphinx is sent to ravage the city and Laius is slain by the hand of his son. But Oedipus survives, and through him the tale of sin and punishment is to be carried a generation further. The terms of the oracle are still effective.

THE OEDIPUS.

A general idea of the content of the Oedipus can be gained from the Septem 772.sqq. At the beginning of the play Oedipus stood at the pinnacle of his fame. He had delivered the city from the Sphinx, and was in consequence regarded as the first of men. But when the full horror of his position as the slayer of his father and the husband of his mother came upon him, he wrought a twofold ill in that he blinded himself and called down on his sons a curse that they should divide their heritage by the sword. The curse as Jebb has said (O.T. XVll.) "was essential to the poet's main purpose which was to exhibit the continuous action of the Erinyes in the house. -- -- The true climax of the AESCHYLEAN Oedipus would thus have consisted not in the discovery alone but in the discovery followed by the curse."

The sequence of events then was discovery, self-blinding, and curse. A further question, however, poses itself: in what way was Thebes involved in the evils which came upon Oedipus? The polis - oikos theme must have run through this play too. We are unfortunately very much in the dark here. The only passage which may help us, and that by implication, is Septem 680.sqq., where the chorus say that fratricide is an undying *μιάσμα*. Is not parricide a *μιάσμα* too? The idea that the gods send plague and famine against the land which polluted by the presence of a homicide is a common one in antiquity. Antiphon (Tetr. I. I.IO.) says that the presence of a slayer in the land causes barrenness and brings disaster to man's undertakings. Herodotus (VI.139.) records that when the Lemnians had slain their children, the earth refused to bring forth its fruits and there was barrenness among the women and the flocks and the herds. Likewise in the Tyrannos the people of Thebes suffer from the pollution incurred by the slayer of Laius. (97.sqq.) Here we have a direct analogy for the plague, which I suggest is the second trial for Thebes, and which, as in the case of the Tyrannos, was brought about by the murder of Laius, and the only way she could find relief from her miseries was to search out the cause of the pollution.

This would bring about the discovery. It is unnecessary to envisage anything quite so ingenious as the way in which the discovery is handled by Sophocles. The identity of the murderer probably arose from something rather simple as the words *ἐπὶ τῷ ἀετρίφρονι* (778.) suggest. There would be room here for the seer, Teiresias, as there may have been in the preceding play, but we have nothing to guide us.

Robert (op. cit. p. 282.) assigns the discovery to the interval between the Laius and the Oedipus. I cannot think, however, that a dramatist of Aeschylus' calibre would allow such a scene, loaded as it is with such tremendous dramatic possibilities, to fall in the interval. Robert's reconstruction appears to me most unsatisfactory. For him the play opens with Oedipus blinded and imprisoned, Jocasta dead, and Eteocles and Polyneices in control of Thebes. It dealt with the death of Oedipus, the dreams of Eteocles, and his agreement with Polyneices by which the latter left the state. According to him the actual curse may or may not have been uttered in the play, it may have been reported as was the discovery, the self-blinding and the suicide of Jocasta. Much of this ignores the data given in the Septem (772, sqq.) and relies too much upon the story (Aristotle Nich. Eth. 1111.A.10. et schol.) that in this play Aeschylus divulged the mysteries. The story of course may be true, but we are very much in the dark here, and it seems rash to conclude anything from it. Robert's preoccupation with the religious aspect of the myth has led him to overlook the fact that there is a problem to be solved in the trilogy. His reconstruction is a history rather than a drama and it seems to destroy fairly effectively any connection between this play and the others, at least from the point of view of dramatic art.

The first part of the Oedipus must have unfolded what has happened in the interval between the Laius and this play. Some twenty years must have elapsed since Oedipus slew the Sphinx. Now we see him as the king of Thebes, and the father of grown up children whose mother is Jocasta. This much is sufficient for the understanding of the play, but it is essential from Aeschylus' standpoint that the audience be told this for he has introduced a trait which does not belong to

any pre-Aeschylean version, namely that Jocasta not Euryganeia is the mother of the children of Oedipus. (cp. Jebb O.T. Introd.) Robert (op.cit.p.108.sqq.) suggests that the version which makes Euryganeia a second wife, married by Oedipus after the death of Jocasta is the result of a late misunderstanding. If this is correct it still appears rather odd that Aeschylus should have missed the possibilities offered by the discovery, but if in fact Aeschylus is responsible for making Jocasta the mother of Oedipus' children one may reasonably ask why he introduced the version if it was not required dramatically.

To the first half of the play belongs a statement on the burden of woes under which Thebes labours. As we have said, a search for the cause of the pollution would bring about the discovery, possibly through the agency of Teiresias. Here there is room for the continuation of the dream motif. What is certain is that in some way the true circumstances came to light, and there followed the self-blinding of Oedipus and the suicide of Jocasta.

The second half of the play was concerned with the curse of Oedipus upon his sons. Oedipus was enraged by the treatment meted out to him by his sons. (786.) He became mad with rage, (725. 780.sqq.) and prayed that they should quarrel over his possessions, and die by each other's hands. It is possible that Oedipus was endowed with a prophetic vision which reinforced the curse. At any rate he used words clothed in the language of prophecy. The fine image of the Pontic stranger occurs in various forms time and time again in the Septem: 727.sqq. 816.sqq. 940.sqq. cp. 697. 788. 884. 907. 912., and must have occurred in the Oedipus for the allusions have a reminiscent tone like the repeated mention of the bath, the net, and the robe in the Oresteia. (n.17.) This was the speech which prepared the way for the Septem, and here might be the place for the presence of Eteocles and Polyneices. The primary function of the curse was to carry over to the third play the tale of sin, and the tale of suffering. At the close of the play the audience must have been in little doubt as to what would take place in the third and final play. (n.18.) There the metaphorical language of Oedipus would be translated into concrete terms.

The curses of Oedipus we are told were the utterances of a madman. (n.19.) What was it that brought about his madness? The behaviour of his sons? That was but the outward sign. We can see behind this the working of the Erinyes, the spirit sworn to avenge a father's death and a mother's defilement. Only thus can the play have meaning. The curse of Oedipus is as much the result of the working of the Erinyes as was the punishment of Laius and the death of Eteocles and Polyneices.

Thus Aeschylus has traced the action of an inherited curse through three generations, and has linked the fortunes of the polis to the fortunes of the genos. The problem propounded in the first play and developed in the second, finds a solution in the third and final play. The state survives but the family perishes. Thus the full implications of the oracle are developed. As Thomson (Aeschylus and Athens. p.315.sq.) has put it: "The Theban kings were under an ancestral curse which brought successive calamities on the people as well as on themselves, and therefore it is necessary that the primitive system of kingship, which the ancestral curse implies, should be superseded by the higher organisation of the state, in which the clans lose their identity in common citizenship."

AESCHYLUS' TREATMENT OF THE THEBAN LEGEND.

The problem of the Aeschylean trilogy we have discussed; our task is now to consider Aeschylus' treatment of the legend in connection with the epic account. Obviously we cannot say as much as we could wish on this topic, for we are faced, on the one hand, with only a general outline of the epic account, and on the other, with the loss of the first two plays of the trilogy. We must therefore concentrate on the Septem which well illustrates Aeschylus' handling of his material.

As the subject for the final play of the trilogy Aeschylus had the fulfilment of the curse of Oedipus, as material the Argive expedition

against Thebes and the death of the two brothers. From the use he made of this material we can see that he arranged his plot with his own tragic conception uppermost in his mind, and that the philosophical and religious considerations account for the main divergences from the earlier accounts of the myth.

The Thebais which was the principal source for the story of the Argive invasion treated it from the Argive standpoint as the opening line of the poem shows. (Cert. Hom. et. Hes. 323.) The epic was chiefly concerned with the actual fighting which went on round Thebes, and it doubtless told in some detail the story of the combats between the rival champions. (vide. Pind. Ol. VI. 12.sqq. et schol., Nem. IX. 30.sqq.) As far as Aeschylus is concerned with the war at all, it is from the Theban standpoint. We may observe that while the epic treated the story from without, Aeschylus treated from within, and that the further the tragedy proceeds the more the internal danger is emphasised. The danger takes on a twofold aspect: the danger to the city, and the danger to the royal house. In the first part of the play it is the threat to Thebes which holds our attention, the curse is there but it is deliberately minimised so that we may appreciate to the full the danger to the city. The curse begins to take precedence during the central scene, and from there to the point where the messenger enters, it holds the chief place in our minds. With the messenger's announcement that Thebes is saved but that the brothers have fallen, the two themes are merged, until once more in the chorus that ends the play, the thought uppermost in our minds is the curse of Oedipus and its fulfilment. It is perhaps not quite correct to speak of the merging of the themes. What actually happens is that Aeschylus throws the weight first on the one theme, then on the other in order to bring out the significance of each. But while the one theme is being treated there is always an undercurrent of the other. In other words the two themes are never entirely separated. In dealing then with the war between the Argives and Thebans, Aeschylus treats two aspects of it: the preparations against the final assault, and the issue of the combat between the brothers and with this the final deliverance of Thebes. In other respects Aeschylus is simply not interested in the war and the battles

which were fought at the gates of Thebes. If he had been, almost certainly we should have had a vivid description of the combat between the brothers. Instead we are told nothing save that they have fallen by each others hands. "Ce ne sont pas les details du combat qui important ici;" says Croiset (Eschyle - p.122.) "c'est l'effet de l'imprecation, c'est l'accomplissement du dessein des dieux."

The central scene is purely Aeschylean in conception. We have seen how the scene generates a tremendous dramatic tension because we know that the brothers will meet at the seventh gate; but it is of considerable significance for the wider issues. To five of the Argive champions Aeschylus gives a single broad characteristic - impiety - (We can imagine that this was not so in an epic written with an Argive bias.) Tydeus, who in Homer (Il. IV.376.sqq. XIV. 113.sqq.) and very likely also in the Thebais is essentially a mighty warrior, becomes the villain of the tale, His irreligion and blood lust is revealed and underlined by contrasting him with Amphiaraus, who remains the virtuous, yet tragic figure he was in the epic accounts. (Hom.Od. XV.244.sqq. cp. Pind.OL.VI.12.sqq. et schol on 26.Nem.IX.30.sqq. vide Solmsen. Hesiod and Aeschylus. p.219.n.156.) Thus in general Aeschylus was able to contrast the impiety of the Argives with the religion of the Thebans and so anticipate the ultimate ^victory of Thebes. (n.20.) The important characters are however Tydeus and Amphiaraus, not in relation to the rest of the Thebans, but in relation to Eteocles himself. The question, which becomes more pressing as the roll of the champions is unfolded, is - can Eteocles apply to himself the lessons these two offer? The answer is given in startling fashion. Far from applying to himself the lesson of Amphiaraus, Eteocles becomes a man of blood no less than Tydeus. The contrast is at once sharper and subtler. The whole scene is carefully contrived to give the freest rein to the emotions. The slow and stately method of describing the champions, the mounting feeling of horror as at every step the king comes nearer to his doom, then Amphiaraus, a formidable warrior in that he too is a man of religion. In further contrast to the other Argives, he alone carries no device on his shield. (Sept. 591.

cp. Eur. Phoen. 1112.) He prefers not to seem the best, but to be the best. Eteocles ponders on the fate of noble men who become involved in a net of evil, and then on to the seventh champion - Polyneices with his emblem of Justice. In a moment all is changed, suddenly the pace has quickened and Eteocles races headlong to his doom. The thing is a masterpiece.

Yet there are those who find the scene undramatic. Sidgwick (op. cit. p.XX. cp. Haigh op.cit. p.108.) has said "Aeschylus had but two actors at this date, and in the Septem he hardly made real use even of two." This is to misunderstand the dramatic technique of Aeschylus. Sidgwick seems to imply that because Aeschylus did not contrast his characters in the best Sophoclean manner his tragedy was to that extent the poorer. There is nothing which better illustrates Aeschylus' use of his characters than the omission of Polyneices in the Septem. Polyneices is twice mentioned in the fragments which survive of the Thebais, and he may have appeared in the Oedipus. Why then was he omitted in the Septem, in a play which was concerned with the conflict between the brothers? Not, I venture to suggest, because Aeschylus did not know how to manage a scene between the brothers, but because this is exactly what he did not wish. The whole play deals with one man and his destiny. Aeschylus wanted us to see the hero alone, quite alone, with his fate. Thus nothing must be allowed to intervene between us and the king. The introduction of Polyneices would have implied an interaction of character. That was not Aeschylus' method at all. "The spy is a mere mouthpiece," says Sidgwick, "and to see ethos in his part is to see through a brick wall." Again not because Aeschylus could do no better - consider the watchman or the herald in the Agamemnon - but because a spy fully characterised would distract our attention from the one person who mattered - Eteocles. The true function of the spy is that he brings certain forces to bear on Eteocles and so enables the plot to move. (cp. Kitto op.cit. ch.VII.) He does this by bringing in his news, and once this is done he has no further function to perform. The isolation of Eteocles is complete. The only other element that is allowed to enter is the chorus. It is

important in that it shapes the tragedy by virtually forcing Eteocles to take an active part in the defence, but once that is done it helps, even in the scene 677.sqq., to emphasise his loneliness.

The most remarkable of Aeschylus' inventions in the trilogy is the oracle of Apollo. Its importance cannot be too fully emphasised, for it is this which both shapes the entire trilogy and serves as a connecting link between the plays. The oracle brought into prominence the twofold issue at an early point in the *Laius*, and from there to the close of the *Septem* it is the central theme. We can only appreciate the full importance of this invention if we compare this statement of the oracle with the earlier version (Robert op.cit.p.66.) that Laius should die by the hand of his own son. The Sophoclean version has reference only to Oedipus, the Aeschylean version has a potential reference to the entire house. Laius by his disobedience of the oracle becomes a tragic sinner. Any question of Laius being a sinner himself is deliberately suppressed by Sophocles. In Aeschylus, however, Laius sins and is punished; his punishment involves further sin which in its turn involves further punishment until finally the *genos* is destroyed. Added to this is the fact that the oracle in Aeschylus brings into tragic relation the *genos* and the polis, thus introducing a problem of religious and political significance. The Argive expedition motivates the *Septem* but the oracle of Apollo motivates the entire trilogy. There is possibly no better instance of the poet's freedom to manipulate the mythical accounts.

Aeschylus and the other poets after him represent the discovery of Oedipus' relationship with his mother as taking place some time after the marriage, and his four children as all born to him by Jocasta. We have seen above that there is some confusion in the accounts, but whatever the truth of the matter, the version which makes Jocasta the mother of the children of Oedipus has obvious advantages to a dramatist. It adds greatly to the pathos of the situation, and heightens the tragedy of the discovery. Moreover, from Aeschylus' point of view it has the added advantage of enabling him to spread his tragedy over three generations.

It is in Aeschylus too, as far as we can judge from a corrupt text, that we first meet the tradition that Oedipus blinded himself. Of course it is possible that in the Thebais Oedipus was represented as blinding himself, but the fragments leave the matter quite uncertain. What-ever the case the dramatic advantage of such a version is again obvious. It adds to the horror of the discovery, and it emphasises Oedipus' reliance on his sons, a reliance which proved ill-founded, and which, when finally discovered, gave rise to the curse.

Both in Aeschylus and in the other poets there is some divergence between the epic and tragic accounts concerning the names of the various champions, as for example, Lasthenes in the Septem is the opponent of Amphiaraus, while in Pindar, who is doubtless following the epic account, the adversary of Amphiaraus is Periclimenes. (Nem. lX.24.sqq.) The point seems to be immaterial. I see no significance in discrepancies of this nature. (n.21.) They merely prove the diversity of the accounts, and do not affect our estimate of the plays as works of dramatic art.

It appears from the Septem (725.) that Aeschylus regarded the curse of Oedipus as the act of a madman. (cp. Alcib. ll. 138.B.) The madness of Eteocles then had some parallel in the second play. The cause of the madness is the same in both cases - the onslaught of the Erinyes upon the representative of the royal house. Aeschylus' version of the curse we have discussed; (vide n.8.) one point remains - the fine poetic image of the Scythian stranger. It is entirely Aeschylean. Used at salient points throughout the play it underlines the Erinyes motif just as the metaphor of the ship of state emphasises the polis theme.

We cannot trace the modifications which were introduced into the story under the influence of Delphi, but Pindar's reference to the oracle of Apollo (Ol. ll.28.sqq.) shows that the importance of the god to the story was not an invention of the dramatists. The originality of Aeschylus lies in the stress that is given to the Pythian god. We have seen that the close association of Apollo with the Erinyes is crucial to the tragedy, but unfortunately the complete pattern is difficult to trace where we have only one play of the three to go on.

The problem is further complicated by the poet. What Aeschylus himself felt is not at all clear. It seems that the vagueness here is as intentional as it is in the Oresteia, where again we have a Zeus- Erinyes problem, and where Apollo plays an enigmatical role. It is interesting to see how the Oedipodeia and the Oresteia deal with essentially the same problems but use as material different myths. In both plays there are religious and political problems, the political issues depending for their solution on the solving of the religious issues. On the religious plane the Oedipodeia ends in a compromise between the two powers, each side reserving its own rights; the Oresteia ends in reconciliation. On the political plane the Oedipodeia ends in the sacrifice of the individual, whereas the Oresteia ends with his deliverance. In both cases the solutions are satisfying because they take place in different periods of time.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

(1) Of those plays connected with the Theban legend the extant evidence is virtually confined to Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. It must be understood however that many other poets wrote plays based on the story of Oedipus. (Vide Haigh "The Tragic Drama of the Greeks" appendix 11 for a list of titles and authors.)

(2) Vide the didascalia preserved in the Medicean MS.

(3) Vide Ar. Ran. 1021 where the Septem is called a drama "Ἀπεως μυστηριῶν" cp. Plut. Quaest. Symp. p.715.E. Of modern critics Norwood (Greek Tragedy p.91.) writes "The first half of the play is in strictness not dramatic at all." G. Murray (Aeschylus p.141.) "The play is no doubt rhetorical rather than dramatic." Sidgwick (Septem contra Thebas XVlll.) "It is all foreseen from the first: there is no uncertainty, no change of purpose, no surprise, no struggle." cp. however Verrall (Septem XI.sqq.) and Kitto (Greek Tragedy p.45.sqq.) for a different valuation. I may state here that I have derived much help and encouragement from Professor R.P.Winnington-Ingram who has been kind enough to read this chapter and who has allowed me to read his own lecture notes on the Septem. He is, however, in no wise responsible for the views here expressed.

(4) Verrall (op.cit.XXXll.) seems to think that the Septem does not form the conclusion to the trilogy. I do not believe that there can be any doubt that the Septem together with the Laius and the Oedipus formed a trilogy in the full sense of the word. I agree with those scholars who regard the final scene of the Septem (1009.sqq.) between the herald and Antigone as an interpolation inserted some time after the Antigone of Sophocles. (Vide for example Pohlenz (Griech. Trag. 11.27.) Platt (C.R. 1912. p.141.sqq.) Robert (Oidipous p.376.sqq.) A full list of the literature on the question is given in Schmid-Staehlin l.2.215.n.4. Did Aeschylus actually end the play at 1009? We cannot be certain of this. The interpolator of the final scene may have cut out something to make room for his interpolation. Similarly the play itself may have been tampered with at 861-873 to

prepare the audience for the entrance of the two daughters of Oedipus.

(5) The exposition of the Septem is surprising in many ways. The chief question that occurs to us is whether it would have been intelligible to an audience unless they had been given some clear indication of the action of Pölyneices in the preceding play. Eteocles introduces himself at once (6) but Polyneices is not mentioned until 577 - preceded by Erinys 574 - then again at 641. His existence and action are not mentioned before that, though they are implied by the mention of the curse at 70, by *δίκη ὀμάρων* at 415, and the whole dike theme in the central scene, but the suggestion throughout the first half of the play is, quite deliberately, of a normal foreign war, and strangely enough, sometimes of a war against non-Hellenic enemies - perhaps to remind the audience of the Persian invasion - (vide n.20.) The Argives are mentioned quite early - 28, Adrastos at 50, but Polyneices is carefully withheld. The silence about Polyneices is dramatically very effective, but even so it might have been impossibly obscure unless the Oedipus gave some indication that Polyneices would associate himself with the Argives, or at least with some foreign foe. Of course Polyneices must have been mentioned in connection with his joining a foreign invader, and I have tried to account for this in reconstructing the Oedipus. I have suggested there that Oedipus prophesied the attack when brother would meet brother in mortal combat. cp. Soph. O.C. 1370.sqq. where Oedipus is endowed with prophetic vision.

(6) Mazon (Eschyle p.136. n.2.) "Laius succombe a doux egarement." i.e. "L' irresistable desir d' avoir des enfants." cp. Robert (op.cit. p. 253.) for a différent interpretation: Laius did not believe the oracle and for his disbelief and disobedience was punished. Sidgwick (op.cit. note ad loc.) is quite wrong. He takes the view that Laius was prevailed upon by Jocasta. i.e. taking *φάων* as substantive not as adjective.

(7) The closing words of the Choephoroi are remarkably close in spirit to this ode. "Lo, now again for the third time has the tempest of the race blown over the royal halls, and swept it through. First came the cruel woes of the children devoured; next came a hero's kingly

sufferings, when murdered in a bath perished the warrior chieftain of the Achaeans. And now once more has come, I know not whence, a third, a deliverer - or shall I say a doom? Oh, when will it work its accomplishment; when will the fury of calamity, lulled to rest, find an end and cease?"

Sophocles seems to have had the Septem in mind where his chorus in the Antigone 582.sqq. speak of the action of an hereditary curse in the house. They too find that in the past there has come destruction upon the house of Laius, and now it will come upon the "tree's last root." (Ant. 593.sqq. cp. Sept.739.sqq.) The curse which has worked upon Laius and Oedipus sending a doom upon them is now working on Antigone, and there is an Erinys in her heart. (Ant. 603. cp. Sept.725.) In the same way the chorus compare the successive blows of the curse on the family to the successive waves of the stormy sea. (Ant. 586.sqq. Sept. 578.sqq. cp. O.T.23.sqq.) Finally just as there runs through the Septem chorus an "accomplishment" motif, so the motif of the Antigone chorus is "doom". (584. 614. 624. 625.)

(8) Mazon (op.cit. introd.) writes "Le crime commun de Laius, d' Oedipe, de Polynice a ete de sacrifier leur pays a leurs passions: le gloire d' Eteocle, c'est de se devouer entierement a lui." He is not alone in taking this view. cp. Pohlenz (op.cit.p.91.sqq.) Klotz (Rhein. Mus. 72.p.616.) Murray (Classical Tradition. p. 66.) Jaeger (Paedeia. p.335.) Robert (op.cit. p.264.sqq.) but if ever anything went to disprove this view, surely this ode does. Why Polyneices, who openly boasted that he would destroy the city, (Sept. 631.) should be mourned in exactly the same terms as his brother, who according to this view laboured to save it, and deliberately gave his life to save it, is nowhere explained. The brothers find equal place in the lament because they are equally victims of the Erinys. The fact that Eteocles was the determined defender of the city is not to the point, at least not in the latter half of the play. He might equally well have been the one determined to destroy it. The essential thing, and Aeschylus never allows us to forget it, is that the race is accursed, and nothing the brothers do can save them. Was Eteocles guilty of some crime in

the past? The natural assumption is that in some way the brothers behaved badly, just as both were implicated in the curse of Oedipus. Was he right in his quarrel with Polyneices? Aeschylus seems to have raised the question of dike without settling it. One point deserves notice: the conduct of Polyneices is condemned out of the impartial mouth of Amphiaraus (576.sqq.) so that we are bound to regard the following conflict of claims, especially 662.sqq, in the light of this. On the whole Eteocles appears to have right on his side. The whole question of his behaviour towards his father is obscure. Septem 785.sq. refers to ~~ἀρχαίως~~ τροφῶς but the text is an emended version by Wilamowitz, and is not accepted by everyone. Robert (op. cit. p.264.) reads τροφῶς. It is almost certain that Aeschylus has followed the account given in the Thebais. The scholiast on Sophocles O.C. 1378. expressly says that Aeschylus in the Septem has followed the epic account. The version which he quotes is that the sons were accustomed to send Oedipus the shoulder of the victim sacrificed, but one day they sent the loin, and he in anger prayed that they should go down to Hades slain by each others' hands. Another version, again belonging to the Thebais, is that Polyneices set before his father the precious relics of Cadmus, whereupon Oedipus, in the presence of both his sons, cursed them, praying that they should divide their heritage in no kindly spirit, but that war and strife should ever be between them. It would seem, as Mazon has suggested, that Aeschylus has condensed these imprecations into one. In his version, Oedipus prays that his sons might divide his possessions by the sword. Robert's conjecture refers to the second version, Wilamowitz's to the first, and there is little to choose between them on this score. In view of the fact that the scholiast quotes the first version - τροφῶς - being more suitable to the context, some of the MSS moreover read τροφῶς - - - and names Aeschylus as following the epic poet, I prefer to read with Wilamowitz. It seems extremely unlikely that the scholiast would give one version and quote Aeschylus if the poet had followed another version.

(9.) Sophocles (Ant.162.) uses the same metaphor in speaking of the deliverance of Thebes from the war.

(10) I have found Regenbogen's article suggestive in connection with this scene.

(11) The word *ἐπιγονός* Sept. 903. has given concern to some scholars for example Robert p.268. They see here a reference to the tradition that Polyneices, having married the daughter of Adrastus, left a son, Thersander, who took part in the second expedition against Thebes. The trilogy is quite incomprehensible if we are to understand a reference to the Epigoni. The Septem 828 specifically says that the brothers died childless. cp.187.sqq. The fact is, as Klotz (op.cit.) says the word does not refer to the Epigoni at all, but means posterity in general. That Aeschylus wrote an Epigoni himself is nothing to do with the question, it merely shows the complete freedom enjoyed by the dramatist in utilizing the myths. cp. Wilamowitz (Interpret. p.82. Smyth (op.cit. p.130.n.1.)

(12) In the Eumenides (150. 162. 172. 333.sqq. 347. 390.sqq. 778.sqq.) the Erinyes claim that they hold their powers by virtue of an ancient covenant between the old gods and the new. Their privileges are the dispensation of Moira. The attack made on their age old powers is bitterly resented.

(13) If we grant that the Sphinx was the first threat to Thebes a further question poses itself: who sent the monster? In the Septem she is described as the reproach of the city, a man-slaying monster. She is, it appears, an avenger, as she is in Pausanias (l. 43. 7. cp. Anthol. Pal. VII. 154.) Pausanias tells an interesting story: Psamathe, the daughter of the king of Argos, had a child by Apollo which she exposed. The child was killed by sheep dogs, whereupon Apollo sent Poine on the city of the Argives. (Aeschin. OR.1.190. gives the attributes of the Erinyes to the Poinai.) Poine snatched the children from their mothers, until she was slain by Koroibos. After he had slain her, a second pestilence fell upon the city and it lasted until Koroibos went to Delphi to expiate his sin. Likewise in the O.T. 469.sqq. Apollo to the chorus is the minister of vengeance, and after him swarm the unerring Keres. Laius begat a son in defiance of the god, and at the last Apollo wreaked vengeance on the sons of Oedipus

for that ancient sin. I conclude therefore that Apollo was responsible for sending the Sphinx in the capacity of an Erinys. (According to Pisander (schol on Phoen 1760.) the Sphinx was sent *κατὰ χολὸν τῆς Ἥρας*, but this version probably comes from the Chrysippus of Euripides.) Was the god responsible for that too?

(14) Sept. 748.sq. *Θιάσκοντα γένως ἄτερ σώζειν πόλιν*

Such a line may have formed in itself a leitmotif. cp.

Agam. 1282. *Φυγὰς δ' ἀλήτης τῆσδε γῆς ἀποζένος.*

Cho. 1042. *Φεύγω δ' ἀλήτης τῆσδε γῆς ἀποζένος*

(15) The passage in Aristophanes' Frogs 1182.sq. is extremely interesting. As Robert (op. cit. p.255.sqq.) says it is a question of primary importance to decide whether Aeschylus is here using his own version of the story, or a version taken from one of the plays of Euripides, or whether, in the true spirit of comedy, Aristophanes is mixing the versions. He concludes that Aeschylus is using the prologue to the Phoenissae to criticise the opening words of the Antigone of Euripides (The scholiast ad loc. notes that Frogs 1184.sq. is a paraphrase of Phoen. 1597.sqq. vide Robert op. cit. p.67. cp. Powell Phoenissae Introd. p.17.) but at 1190 Aeschylus turns to his own version of the actual mode of exposure, but keeps to the reason given for it by Euripides at 1191. The reason for the adoption of the Aeschylean version on this single point was that the situation was thus made more pathetic; not only was the child exposed in an earthenware vessel, but it was in winter. The scholiast expressly says that *Χειμῶνος ὄντος* is an innovation by Aristophanes, but Robert suggests that the words are from Aeschylus' own version and that he is here preserving an ancient form of the myth, the sufferings of the infant representing the tribulations of the year god Oedipus. We can neglect this rather far fetched explanation. But, apart from Robert's too ready acceptance of the story of the exposure in Winter as being Aeschylus' own version, (As M. Delcourt Oedipe p.46.n.l. says "Il suffit de relire le passage des Grenouilles pour voir qu' Aristophane y accumule a plaisir, et independamment de toute donnee traditionnelle, tout ce qui peut rendre Oedipe pitoyable.") we can, I think, accept

ἐν ὀστέκῳ as being taken from Aeschylus' version of the exposure. There are, then, three stages involved: (1) Aristophanes puts into the mouth of Aeschylus most of the prologue to the Phoenissae: the wounded ankles, Polybus, Oedipus' marriage with Jocasta, who is portrayed both in the Frogs and in the Phoenissae as an aged woman, and finally the self blinding. (11) He goes to Aeschylus for ἐν ὀστέκῳ cp. Aesch. Frag. 122. et schol., which helps to prove the connection. (111) He himself adds Χειμῶνος ὄνκος for additional effect.

(16) Fragment 173 Valckenaer (Phoen. 38. cp. Schneidewin Philol. 111. p. 352.) assigns to the Oedipus, but there are no certain grounds for assigning it to this play. Hermann (De Aesch. Tril. Theb. Opusc. VII. p.190.) assigns the fragment to the Glaucus Potnieus, but the mention of the cross roads suggests the place of the murder of Laius. (cp. schol. Soph. O.T.733.) Wecklein (Aesch. Fab. et Frag. 1.) says "Frag. 173 quod Oedipo tribuit Valckenaer ad nuntii narrationem sub finem Laii fabulae ponendum referri debet." cp. Robert. op. cit. p. 273.sqq.)

(17) The practice of Aeschylus in alluding in one play of the trilogy to a preceding play is nowhere better illustrated than in the frequent references to the bath, the net, and the robe in the Oresteia:

(1) Eum. 461. 631.sqq. cp. Cho. 491. 668.sqq. 998.sq. Agam. 1107.sqq. 1128.sq. 1538.sqq.

(11) Eum. 460. cp. Cho. 492. 999. Agam. 1114.sqq. 1380.sqq.

(111) Eum. 458.sqq. 634.sq. cp. Agam. 1126.sqq. 1383. 1492.sqq. 1580.sq. Cho. 493.sq. 1000. 1011.

Likewise P.V. gives a summary of the preceding play 201 - 240.

(18) I do not agree with Kitto (op. cit. p.98.) where he says "no doubt it (the Oedipus) prophesied the fall of the brothers, but ended with its own climax, the fall of Oedipus." Surely the chief memory for the audience of that play must be the curse of Oedipus upon his sons. The order of events must have been discovery, curse; otherwise the opening of the Septem would have been impossibly obscure. It is, moreover, difficult to see why Oedipus should curse his sons while he is at the summit of his fortunes. The curse follows naturally

after the discovery when Oedipus is reduced to a dependence on his sons.

(19) What of the death of Oedipus? It appears from the Septem (1004. cp. Hom. Il. XXIII. 679.sq.) that he was buried at Thebes, but there is no mention of the manner of his death. Robert. (op.cit. p.274.) says that a natural death is unknown in Greek tragedy. This may be so, but there is nothing to prevent a natural death occurring in the interval between the Septem and the Oedipus. I find it difficult to believe that Robert (op.cit.p.275.) is right in suggesting for the Oedipus a dramatic handling of the burial at Eteonos.

(20) As Solmsen (op.cit.) says "It is plausible that Aeschylus wrote the play with the events of 490 - 480/79 in his mind. The Thebans are Athenian hoplitae and the aggressors are brutal barbarians i.e. Persians. Whereas Eteocles' fate is determined by the family curse and by religious factors of an archaic non-political nature, the city survives and triumphs because, like Athens in the Persian war, she is engaged in a defensive war in which she has justice and the Olympian gods on her side."

(21) Robert (op. cit. p. 237.sqq.) has with characteristic thoroughness listed all the divergences.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

SOPHOCLES

Sophocles, like Aeschylus, wrote three plays connected with the Theban legend: the Oedipus Tyrannos which is concerned with the fall of Oedipus, the Oedipus Coloneus which deals with his last moments on earth, and the Antigone which is concerned with the history of his children subsequent to his death. The plays were, however, not written or produced in the order in which they are here placed - the order of events in the story. The order of their production was: Antigone, Tyrannos, Coloneus, and perhaps as much as forty years separated the first play from the last. (n.1) The three plays therefore do not form a trilogy in the accepted sense of the word at all. There is no unity of theme or treatment connecting them, and save in so far as they are all concerned with the same legend, each play is distinct and self contained.

The Antigone begins where the Septem ended, and it is not unlikely that it owed its origin to the situation at the end of that play. We may remember that in the closing moments of the Septem the bodies of Eteocles and Polyneices are brought on to the stage where the chorus sing a lament for them, for the one who died defending his native land as well as for the other who died while seeking to enslave it. The apparent contradiction in the situation may well have suggested to Sophocles a tragedy where the question of Polyneices' burial becomes a matter of ultimate principle. (n.2) It is also possible that the theme of the Aeschylean trilogy suggested the central thesis of the Antigone. The polis - genos motif is again taken up, but this time the antithesis is duty to the polis versus duty to the genos. In these instances Sophocles may have taken a hint from the older poet, but it is no more than a hint, the actual working out of the tragedy is Sophocles' own. But since the Antigone deals with a phase of the story which lies outside the scope of this paper, we must confine

ourselves to the Tyrannos and the Coloneus, referring to the Antigone only where it actually touches upon the story of Oedipus.

THE OEDIPUS TYRANNOS

The Oedipus Tyrannos is Sophocles' masterpiece, but according to one tradition (n.3) Sophocles was defeated for the first prize by Philocles, the nephew of Aeschylus. This may well be true. Indeed it may have afforded the poet some amusement to reflect that after all his play was written to demonstrate the frailty of man, and the need for a truly balanced judgement. (n.4)

The essential difference between the Aeschylean and Sophoclean treatment of the story of Oedipus is one of dramatic emphasis. In the Tyrannos we find practically all the elements of the Aeschylean trilogy, but a subtle modification has taken place. Aeschylus had profoundly altered the spirit of the legend. Sophocles had no need to. The story of Oedipus provided him with a perfect vehicle for expressing the central theme of the Tyrannos. The essential feature of the story was that Oedipus by slaying his father so fulfilled a decree of the gods. By slightly shifting the emphasis from the gods to the more mysterious universe of circumstance, and strongly characterising the hero, already famous for his wisdom, his greatness, and his sudden fall, the poet had the framework of the story ready to hand. The details could be filled in by referring to the mass of material available, or by introducing fresh elements which would serve to smooth the working of the plot, intensify a particular situation, or accentuate character.

The fall of Oedipus is perhaps as inevitable as the fall of Eteocles in the Septem but we are not made to feel that it is inevitable. In the Septem we watch Eteocles accommodate himself to certain circumstances which we may be justified in saying have been brought about by the Erinyes. For him there is no chance at all; at every

turn he plays into the hands of his enemy and he goes to his death caught fast in the toils of doom, and in the background all the while are the malignant Erinyes and the vindictive Apollo waiting to deal the last deadly blow. Now in the Tyrannos the ravages of a terrible plague (n.5.) have been unleashed upon the city of Thebes, and in answer to an enquiry, Apollo says that the city harbours a polluted being which it must expel. (96.sqq.) A situation has been created which will give rise to the ruin of Oedipus. It is exactly of such a kind as to bring out all the virtues and vices of the king. In other words he will accommodate himself to the circumstances even as did Eteocles. Is there then any chance for Oedipus? Is he not likewise forced to his doom? To be sure he cannot escape, and Teiresias makes this clear at the beginning:

Though I hide all in silence, all must come. (341. cp. 724.sq 1213. n.6.) but there is this difference: the gods of the Septem - Apollo and the Erinyes - are malignant gods, and the final blow is theirs; the gods of the Tyrannos are not malignant, and the final blow is dealt by Oedipus himself. In the Septem we feel that whatsoever Eteocles does he cannot escape, he is free only in so far as he acquiesces to the inevitable: in the Tyrannos on the other hand we watch the hero weaving the pattern of his own destruction, and at each turn we feel that he might do something else. Oedipus falls, not because he is hounded down by Aeschylean furies; he falls because the power of circumstance is too strong for him; it attacks him where he is weakest. In Aeschylus the emphasis falls upon the working of an ancestral curse, in Sophocles it falls upon character.

We have seen how in the Septem the descendants of Laius, together with the state they rule, become the subject of a divine conflict. Apollo takes an active part with the Erinyes and strikes the final vengeful blow against the house. In the Tyrannos likewise we can discern a duality of action, but the gods take no active part, they are rather the constant background to the action. Justice does not come through divine intervention, but through the natural sequence of events. The background to the Tyrannos is, as Sheppard says "the

mysterious potency of Zeus and Apollo." Apollo is the minister of Zeus: Zeus wills; Apollo interprets that will, but he is no longer the god who will at the last strike down his victim, Oedipus himself is responsible for that fateful act.

In Aeschylus the tragic sufferer is in some way responsible for his fall. It may be that he is the guilty sinner who is punished for his crime; it may be that like Eteocles he is remote from the original transgression and yet suffers because he is connected with it by the ties of kinship, and thus has within him some inherited tendency to evil. (n.7) But whatever the case suffering must follow. The Aeschylean Oedipus doubtless slew his father and violated the sanctity of his mother's person all unwittingly, but the story was probably presented in such a way as to suggest his guilt. Aeschylus made no distinction between the involuntary and the voluntary act. Sophocles did; for him Oedipus is both morally and legally innocent because the crime was committed unwittingly, but he is responsible for the act of mutilation. That was self imposed and voluntary. (n.8) In the first case Oedipus slew his father in self defence and in utter ignorance of the truth, (800.sqq.) in the second he acted with full knowledge and intent. The distinction between these acts has, as Sheppard (op.cit.p.XXIX.sq.) points out, been made by Sophocles at the crisis of the play. The messenger "sharply distinguishes 'those many secret evils that lurk in the house - - - so foul, not all the waters of Phasis and of Ister could wash it clean' - - - from those 'other evils' which in a moment shall be displayed to the light, 'ills voluntary, not unpurposed.' - - - Oedipus himself makes a like distinction: it was Apollo that brought these things to pass, the things which are the worst; but the blinding stroke upon the eyes was inflicted, not only by the hand, but with the full will and intent, of Oedipus."

And yet, ultimately it makes no difference whether he acted in ignorance or not, for in spite of the fact that he is innocent he has incurred by his act the taint of pollution, and his very presence brings upon Thebes a plague. The laws of nature have been violated and:

There must be banishment, or blood for blood

Be paid.

(100.sq.)

The hideous irony of it is that Oedipus should himself seek and find the slayer. But even had he not accommodated himself so tragically to the circumstances, had he not so recklessly and fearlessly pressed on to discover the murderer, and with that to solve the secret of his birth, yet all would have come to light in the fulness of time. The ruin of Oedipus is assured; the tragedy is that the innocent act of a man should forge a chain of circumstances that end in his ruin, and that he should be the instrument of his own destruction.

Essentially the two elements in the Tyrannos are the gods, who stand for the power of circumstance, and the character and life of the hero. For an interpreter there are obvious difficulties. If too much stress is laid on the part played by the gods, there will be a tendency to interpret the play as Bowra has done: (Sophoclean Tragedy p.167.) "They - the gods - have ordained a life of horror for him and they see that he gets it." This view ignores human responsibility, and makes man nothing but the plaything of the gods. Sophocles, however, is not an extreme pessimist, nor is Oedipus a mere cipher. If, on the other hand, the emphasis falls too heavily on character, there will be a tendency to see in the play a study of the tragic flaw in an otherwise noble person. (n.9)

It must be conceded that Oedipus is hasty, suspicious, obstinate and over-confident. This is apparent in the Teiresias and Creon scenes. In the speech which Oedipus delivers before the assembled citizens there is an undercurrent of impatience, (233) and he ends by laying a fearful curse upon the slayer, (n.10) but we have to wait until Teiresias appears before we see his passionate nature. When Teiresias enters he is plainly nursing some gloomy secret, but he refuses to unburden his soul, until, charged with complicity in the murder of Laius, he reveals the truth, but by this time Oedipus is blind with rage and cannot see it. Likewise in the scene with Creon, Oedipus listens unmoved to the arguments advanced by his brother-in-law, and is finally carried away by his temper. Creon is saved by Jocasta and is allowed

to depart, but Oedipus in no wise relents, in fact he chides the chorus for speaking on Creon's behalf. (687.sqq.) Clearly Oedipus has not wholly escaped the perils of his position, but as Sheppard has said (op.cit.p.XLl.) "Although Oedipus is imperfect, and imperfect in just those ways which naturally occasion the suspicion that he is a wicked tyrant, he is essentially good, and is to suffer not because of his guilt, but in spite of his goodness." Oedipus has certain faults of character but they are not the cause of his fall. "These are faults," says Lucas (Greek Tragic Poets p.136.) "which make Oedipus flesh and blood rather than cardboard."

The essential goodness of Oedipus is clearly demonstrated in the first scene of the play, and indeed in the very first line:

My Children, sons of Cadmus and his care. (cp. 6. 58.)

It is at once obvious that Oedipus is a good king, the kind of king who is a father to his people. It is plain too, as we listen to the priest of Zeus, that Oedipus' people are entirely devoted to him. When the play opens, Thebes is suffering from a deadly plague. Oedipus appears before his people, sympathetic and eager to do everything he can to rid them of their miseries. He has of old delivered the city from the Sphinx, (36.sqq.) and now his people look to him again. Nor do they find him wanting, for when he learns of the Pythian god's command, he at once accepts his responsibilities. He will himself seek out the slayer, and throughout the play he adheres to his purpose. Thus inspired by the noblest of intentions Oedipus forges the first link in the chain that will end in his ruin. It is his virtues rather than his vices which bring about the destruction of Oedipus.

Circumstance proved too strong for Oedipus. It attacked him where he was most vulnerable. It appealed to him as a good king to save his people, and he naturally accepted his responsibilities; it appealed also to his curiosity and intellect. Oedipus was proud of having read aright the riddle of the Sphinx (396.) and now, when faced with another problem, he must prove himself again, he must find the slayer of Laius. His search is perhaps carried on with a certain recklessness, but there

is an honesty about it, for he does not shirk his task even when it is virtually proved that he is himself the guilty one. When his attention is diverted to the secret of his birth, he again naturally and again fearlessly but again recklessly hurries on to the truth. A secret has always been a challenge to his intellect; just as he could not allow the reflection upon his birth to pass unnoticed but had to know the truth for the thing ever rankled in his heart, (781.sqq. cp. 437.) so now when, on the verge of discovery Jocasta in her agony tries to deter him, he cries:

For me it is not possible — to hold

Such clues as these and leave my secret so. (1058.sq. cp. 1076.) and so on he plunges to the truth, when he discovers that he is not only the slayer of Laius but also his son, and utterly unnerved by the horror of it, he dashes into the palace there to blind himself with his own hand.

Sophocles has endeavoured to show that a man may suffer, sometimes because of his faults, sometimes in spite of his virtues. He saw in human affairs as in natural phenomena, (n.l.) a pattern, and a power that shapes the course of things that therewith the order in the universe be preserved. The symbols of this power are Zeus and Apollo, but they are no more than symbols; their names do nothing to explain the nature of this mysteriously potent power, nor indeed was Sophocles interested in explaining; the power is there, he simply accepts it, and illustrates its presence through the tragedy of Oedipus. Ultimately man is not the absolute controller of his life, but this fact does not deprive him of his freedom. The bitter truth is that freedom and happiness are in part attainable by man, in part beyond his reach. As Sheppard says (op.cit.p.XXXVIII.) the position taken up by Sophocles is "nearly, though not quite exactly" expressed by Theognis (133.sqq.) I give Sheppard's translation:

"No man, O Kyrnus, is the cause of his own ruin or his own advantage. The gods are givers of both: nor hath any man, as he works, the knowledge in his heart whether the end of his labour be good or evil. Often he thinks to make the issue evil, and lo, he hath made it good,

or thinking to make it good he hath made it evil. To no man also cometh all that he desires. The limits of a cruel helplessness restrict us. We are but men, and so our thoughts are vain; no certain knowledge have we; and it is the gods that bring all ends to pass according to their mind."

When Oedipus begins to suspect that he is the slayer of Laius he attributes his misfortune to some malignant deity:

If any man judge my life and find therein

Malignant stars at work, he hath the truth. (828.sqq.)

This evil daemon is referred to by the chorus at 1195. 1301.sqq., and again by Oedipus at 1311.sqq. The position here is not that the gods have lured him into sin, but rather that that part of human misfortune which cannot be ascribed to man himself is attributed to a daemon, or Apollo (1329.sqq.) or Zeus (738.) as being representative of the incalculable element in the universe which at one time seems to thwart man's best desires and at another to leave him free to commit acts of folly. When a man essentially noble and pious is plunged into the deepest of calamities through no fault of his own, it is perhaps natural for him to ascribe his miseries to a malignant force, but in fact, as Sheppard says: (op.cit.XXXV.) evil comes "not by miraculous intervention but through the normal processes of human will and human act, of human ignorance and human failure." We mortals speak of the incalculable chance in the universe simply because we do not discern the pattern which is slowly working itself out. It is only at the last that Oedipus in his new found wisdom notices the existence of a pattern for himself when he says, not without some melancholy pride:

And yet this much I know. There is no hurt

Nor sickness that can end me. Since from death

I lived, it was to finish some strange woe. (1355.sqq.n.12.)

But Sophocles has done more than illustrate the frailty of man. He asks how best a man may use the prosperity that may be his today, or face the misfortune that may be his tomorrow. He gives three answers, none of which is a counsel of despair, Sophocles, though he may have known the mood of utter gloom, (vide O.C. 1224.sqq.) is not

the prophet of an extreme pessimism. He gives three answers and each is a way of life. In the first place there is Jocasta, whose way is best summed up in her own words:

Why, what should a man fear? Luck governs all.

There's no foreknowledge, and no providence.

Take life at random. Live as best you can.

That's the best way. (977.sqq.)

Oedipus stands for self sufficiency in all things:

O Wealth, O Kingship and thou gift of wit

That conquers in life's rivalry of skill. (380.sq.)

Upon them comes ruin:

So from these twain hath evil broken; so

Are wife and husband mingled in one woe.

Justly their ancient happiness was known

For happiness indeed; and lo, today

Tears and Disasters, Death and Shame and all

The Ills the world hath names for - all are here. (1280.sqq.)

Jocasta trusted to her Luck, but Luck is a fickle mistress, and while the incense which she had poured before Apollo's shrine was still wafting its way to heaven she lay dead within the palace. (n.13) Oedipus too calls himself Luck's child, (1080.sq.) but as she is fickle so her gifts are transitory, too soon they pass away, and within the hour he who had been so great is a blind and abhorred beggar. But though both in a moment of triumph lay their trust in other gods, yet that is not the cause of so prodigious a calamity. The cause of that dire catastrophe lay deeper than that moment of impiety; it lay deep within the nature of god and man. Sophocles does not try to plumb its depths; he merely illustrates its workings.

The third answer lies in Creon's way of life: the way of moderation. When you have knowledge, judge; when you have none, be silent; be guided by your reason, not by your passions; and above all, due measure in all things is best. (n.14.) These are the lessons that Oedipus has found so hard to learn, but at the last he knows by his own suffering that man's best defence against the manifold chances here on earth is the pursuit of moderation; from misfortune, if misfortune comes, it cannot

save him, but at least it will help him to bear it well, will prevent him from adding new ills to ancient ones, And so having learnt his bitter lesson he can ask of his children this:

----- Children, out of much

I might have told you, could you understand,

Take this one council: be your prayer to live,

Where fortune's modest measure is, a life

That shall be better than your father's was. (1511.sqq.cp.

Aj.ax.545.sqq.)

For a moment he clings to his children, but Creon is firm, (n.15) and so he passes from our sight, and as he goes we hear the final exhortation which is the lesson to be drawn from this tragedy:

Look, ye who dwell in Thebes. This man was Oedipus.

That Mighty king, who knew the riddle's mystery,

Whom all the city envied, Fortune's favourite.

Behold in the event, the storm of his calamities,

And, being mortal, think on that last day of death,

Which all must see, and speak of no man's happiness

Till, without sorrow, he hath passed the goal of life. (n.16.)

Sheppard, (op.cit.p.XX.cp.Wilamowitz Interpret.p.60 Croiset op.cit. p.107.) notices a "fundamental similarity of conception" between the opening scenes of the Septem and those of the Tyrannos. In both cases there is the same rich gathering of people assembled before the palace, and a king prepared to do his utmost to deliver his people from the danger which threatens. Like Eteocles, Oedipus appeals for courage, and like him betrays the fact that he has not wholly escaped the moral perils of greatness, In each case we have the chorus praying for deliverance; and in each case the principle of moderation is of vital importance for the understanding of the tragedy.

Sophocles was deeply interested in the portrayal of character.

(n.17.) This implies a difference of dramatic technique. It is here particularly that we can see why a comparatively simple story should become in the hands of Sophocles the master-piece it is. It is not merely the effect we gain from the tragedy as a whole, where after the long steady movement of the introduction the momentum quickens until we

are rushed headlong to the catastrophe, and after the crisis we are at last sent away :

" With calm of mind, all passion spent."

It is because each scene is so contrived to give the freest possible rein to the emotions, and to make our understanding of the hero complete. In Sophocles our knowledge of the hero at the beginning of the play is still rather one sided. As the drama unfolds we see other facets, of the hero's character. Generally in Aeschylus there is no character to be developed: the hero is complete at the beginning of the play; we simply watch the chasm between him and safety become wider and wider until finally the ground crumbles beneath his feet and ^{HE} plunges into the abyss of doom. Thus in the case of Agamemnon we hear more and more of his hubris, and the more we hear the more we realise that destruction for him is inevitable. The Septem, however, which in many ways is the most Sophoclean of the plays of Aeschylus, is a play of character in that we watch the hero react naturally even if inevitably to a certain situation. Nevertheless between the Septem and the Tyrannos there is this great difference: in the Septem there is no interaction of character, in the Tyrannos there is. Eteocles stands alone with his destiny, and the other characters serve to emphasise that loneliness: Oedipus, on the other hand, is a complex figure and to understand him fully we have to see him matched against as many different people as possible. Therefore the tragedy demands more actors.

Though Teiresias and Jocasta are nowhere expressly named in the Septem, we may be justified in saying that they appeared in the two preceding plays. Creon is named, (Sept. 474,) but only as the father of the Theban champion Megareus, and though he may not have played any part in the previous plays, his name is sufficient to show that he is not the invention of Sophocles. But whatever the part played by these characters in the Aeschylean trilogy they all have a very considerable part to play in the Tyrannos, and while each one has a definite role to play in other respects, they are all used with one great object in view: they all serve to illuminate the chief character. We must see how Oedipus reacts to them and, equally important for the tragedy, how they react to him. It is not enough, for example, to see how Oedipus acts

before his subjects, we must see how they act in his presence. Thus he regards them as a father regards his children, and they, as his children, look to him for protection. From this one important fact emerges: Oedipus is a good king.

Sophocles' method of displaying character is to throw into relief an overriding trait in the principal actor by contrasting it with the opposite trait in another person. Such scenes naturally occur in the early part of the play. In the Teiresias scene prophetic vision is opposed to human ignorance and blindness; in the Creon scene prudence and reason are opposed to recklessness and prejudice; in both scenes Oedipus is carried away by his high temper and reveals a tyrannical disposition which we had suspected in the scene where he addresses his people. Twice it happens that a trait is emphasised not by contrasting it with its opposite but by establishing a point of agreement between the two characters as in the Oedipus - Jocasta scene where these characters reveal their affection for each other. Similarly in the scene with Teiresias, Oedipus is at first full of deference before the older man, but when faced with the seer's stubborn refusal to tell what he knows, he goads the old man to meet anger with anger, taunt with taunt and finally to reveal the truth which he had determined to keep hidden. The Creon scene is rather different. Taken by itself it tends to develop on similar lines to the preceding scene. The charge of complicity in the murder of Laius is flung in the teeth of Creon and anger mounts until Oedipus appeals to the power vested in kingship thus starkly revealing his tendency towards despotism. The scene in conjunction with the Jocasta scene opens on a note of certainty and ends on one of doubt and fear. At the beginning of this scene Oedipus is quite certain that Creon is the guilty person, at the end it appears that he is almost certainly the slayer himself, and he goes into the palace "much overwrought and in every way distacted." (914.sq.) Thus within the space of a single scene the hero passes through a series of emotions so designed that each scene is a miniature of the tragedy as a whole.

So far save for the brief scene with Jocasta Oedipus and Creon, Sophocles has made use of only two actors; now in the two great discovery

scenes the action becomes triangular, and the third actor is used with tremendous power. On these scenes Kitto (op.cit.p.152.sq.) is well worth quoting: "The conversation between Oedipus and the Corinthian messenger is itself painfully dramatic, but the addition of Jocasta more than doubles the power of the scene. The progress of Jocasta from hope, through confidence, to frozen horror, and that of Oedipus from terror to sublime resolution and assurance, the two connected by the commonplace cheerfulness of the Corinthian - - - this makes as fine a combination of cross rhythms as can well be imagined. Nor is the effect of the following scene inferior to this. Here it is Oedipus who ends in horror, while the direct contrast lies between the Corinthian, even more cheerful and helpful this time, and the shepherd whose life's secret is being torn from him." It was for such scenes as this that Sophocles needed the third actor.

In the *Septem* the chorus is still so much an actor that it actually shapes the course of the drama by virtually forcing *Etéocles* to promise to take his stand at one of the seven gates of Thebes. Elsewhere it tends to emphasise the extreme loneliness of the hero, and provides an atmosphere by emphasising at one time the political aspect, at another the *Erinyes* motif, and then by linking the two themes together underlines the central thesis of the trilogy. In the *Tyrannos* the chorus no longer shapes the course of the action, but it is always concerned in it. (n.18.) In the opening ode the chorus, like that of the *Septem*, is concerned with the perils that beset the city, and it appeals to the gods for deliverance. From that point the political aspect disappears from the play, and the chorus takes on a definite role, keeping its finger on the pulse of the drama throughout, and helping to make the cross rhythms of the play as in the ode before the discovery (1086.sq.) where they take up the triumphant note of Oedipus and emphasise it by speculating on his miraculous origin.

Sophocles, as we have seen, uses the Corinthian messenger and the Theban herdsman to create two scenes which in their dramatic power are almost unparalleled in Greek tragedy, but such is the economy of the drama that this is but the secondary function of these two lowly figures; their primary purpose is to bring about the discovery. It is from their

joint evidence that Oedipus discovers the bitter truth. The pre - Sophoclean versions give only one form of the discovery, a discovery by means of the wounded ankles of Oedipus, to which Sophocles delicately refers at 1032. (n.19) But a recognition brought about by such means would be wholly unsuitable for the mature tragedy of Sophocles, so he invents a second herdsman - - the Corinthian. In the previous accounts Sophocles found in the first place the old servant who exposed the child, (n.20) and secondly the companion of Laius on the journey to Delphi. Sophocles has made them one and the same person (cp. Waldo op.cit.p.164.) - - the Theban herdsman who not only exposed the babe but also accompanied Laius. (n.21) But Sophocles cannot end here, for according to an earlier phase of the legend, the child was discovered by herdsmen, (vide Robert op.cit.p.72.) -It is this version that Euripides adopts in the Phoenissae 25.sqq. - but in order that the two men may know each other, Sophocles has made the Theban actually deliver the child into the hands of the Corinthian. (1038.sqq.) Thus the discovery can be brought about by confronting the Theban with the Corinthian. The Theban knows of the deliverance of the child into the hands of the Corinthian, and he knows Oedipus, the king, as the slayer of Laius, (758.sqq.) but he does not connect the two; (n.22.) the Corinthian knows Oedipus as the child whom he received and took to Corinth, and he knows him as the king of Thebes; thus by joining the two threads of evidence together, Sophocles brings about the discovery : Oedipus has slain his own father and wed his own mother.

One final point we have to consider: the oracles of Apollo. In the Aeschylean trilogy the oracle which Laius received at the shrine of Apollo contained a terrible implication: it linked city and house together and made the deliverance of the one dependent upon the destruction of the other, and its force continued through three generations of men. In the Tyrannos there is a considerable difference of approach. At the beginning of the play Thebes is suffering from a terrible plague because as Apollo says the city harbours the murderer of Laius. At first sight it appears that once more there is a twofold issue at stake, but at this point there is nothing to show

that the royal house is in any way connected with the fate of Thebes save in that as the priest reminds Oedipus that if the citizens perish the city perishes:

Better to master men than empty walls.

The desolate ship is nothing, ramparts nothing,

Deserted, with no men to people them. (55.sqq. n.23.)

The oracle (n.24.) then performs a different function: together with the plague it simply creates a situation, and leaves Oedipus to face it as he will. The first oracle - the one given to Laius - forms part of the data of the play, and in itself has no further significance; it simply states that Laius shall fall by his son's hand. (713.sq.) The second - the one given to Oedipus- is again without further implication, but well calculated to send Oedipus rushing in terror from Corinth; it also helps to show that on past occasions as now Oedipus had the same overwhelming urge for the truth. (cp.437.sqq.) and at the same time accentuates the succession of malignant circumstances that brings about his fall. The oracle would never have been given had it not been for the insulting remark of a drunkard, and Oedipus would never have consulted Apollo had it not been for his determination to solve every mystery that presented itself. Thus in Sophocles the oracles of Apollo have a twofold purpose: in the first place they provide the necessary data to the story and motivate the action; in the second they help to give expression to the enigmatical element in the universe.

Sufficient has been said to show that it is dramatic technique rather than tragic thought which accounts for the alterations made by Sophocles in the traditional versions of the story. The movement proper to the plays of Aeschylus is our increasing sense of the inevitability of the hero's ruin. From the moment when Oedipus lays his curse upon his sons we realise that there is no escape from the dread agents that have been called into being, and in the Septem we watch the hero become more and more entangled in the toils of doom. Aeschylus takes the story of the house of Laius, and traces the action of an inherited curse through three generations. Concomitant with

the tale of sin and punishment are the moral and political issues that have been imposed by Aeschylus upon the ancient story so that it assumes the proportions of a world problem, a problem to be taken up and further developed in the Oresteia. With Aeschylus we may say that philosophicā considerations account for the chief alteration in the myth. No moral and political issues are to be found in the Sophoclean version of the story; there is no suggestion of an inherited curse. Sophocles is concerned with a single episode in the history of the unhappy race of Laius. The Aeschylean sense of foreboding that deepens with the progress of the tragedy is gone; in its place is the tragic irony so characteristic of Sophocles. The use of irony is a dramatic device depending for its effect upon the foreknowledge of the audience and the ignorance of the actors. At the beginning of the Tyrannos Oedipus is full of confidence in his own position, but everything that he says assumes a new meaning for the spectators. Eteocles, on the other hand, secretly fears the outcome of the war because he knows only too well the terms of his father's curse, and everything he does increases the audience's certainty of his fall. Again, as we have shown, Sophocles invents the Corinthian messenger and deftly alters the traditional accounts of the exposure of Oedipus in order to heighten the dramatic effect of the play and to perfect the general structure of the plot. Once more it is dramatic technique, not tragic thought, that governs his choice of material.

But obviously Sophocles attaches a different significance to the story. As Sophocles envisages it Oedipus does not suffer because of his sin, nor does he suffer because he is connected with an accursed race by the ties of kinship; he suffers because circumstances are too strong for him. This different conception of tragedy governs the difference in characterisation. Aeschylus achieves his purpose by bringing certain forces to bear on Eteocles. The situation, the chorus of terrified women, the spy, and the challenge of Polyneices all make fresh demands upon Eteocles, and in answer to them he acts in a way that increases the sense of the inevitability of his fall. Throughout, the hero is alone with his destiny - no one else is concerned in it,

With Oedipus the case is different. In the first place we must be made to see in exactly what way the hero is unequal to the sudden demands made upon him by circumstances, secondly we must see that he falls not so much because of his faults but in spite of his goodness; such considerations require the fullest possible characterisation. Others, moreover, besides him are concerned in the catastrophe and they likewise must be characterised. Thus we see Oedipus opposed to a variety of people and them opposed to him. The tragedy is no longer simple but complex; destruction comes not as a result of inherited sin, but as a result of the tragic combination of character and circumstance.

THE OEDIPUS COLONEUS

Greek tradition tells us that the Coloneus was produced by the poet's grandson and namesake, Sophocles, the son of Ariston, four years after the author's death in 406/5.B.C. (n.25.) There seems no good reason to doubt the external evidence which assigns the play to the closing years of the poet's life, indeed it is confirmed by the evidence of the play itself, for it seems that some parts of it required the employment of a fourth actor, (n.26.) an innovation indicating a relatively late period in the development of Greek tragedy.

When the Tyrannos opens, Oedipus in the very prime of life is at the supreme height of his fortunes; when it closes he is led within the palace, blinded and utterly abhorred. When the Coloneus opens Oedipus appears as an old man, a beggar and an outcast, with only his daughter to guide his faltering footsteps; at the close of the play, accepted as a citizen of Athens, and endowed with a spiritual power far greater than his former temporal power, he passes from this earth to become a hero, a being with certain divine attributes. Thus the Coloneus is the Tyrannos in reverse. Instead of the sudden plunge from supreme good fortune to utter misery, there is a gradual movement from physical weakness to spiritual power. Such a conception

demands a completely different technique. The Coloneus, though it does not entirely lack excitement, has not the speed of the Tyrannos because the action is taking place on a spiritual rather than on a physical plane.

The Coloneus differs from all the other plays on the subject of Oedipus in that the essential elements of the play belong rather to mythology than to saga. Though it is impossible to say with certainty how far the tradition of the Oedipus cult at Colonus goes back, it is unlikely that Oedipus' connection with that place is the invention of Sophocles. (n.27.) Pausanias (I.28.7.) rather thought it was. At Colonus he had found a cult devoted to Oedipus, and was worried by the disparity existing between the Sophoclean version of the death of Oedipus and that of Homer. To explain the contradiction he made diligent enquiry and found yet another account:- that the bones of Oedipus had been conveyed to Colonus after his death. It is just possible that the version unearthed by Pausanias is the original version of the story invented by the Athenians to explain the Oedipus cult at Colonus, and that the account which states that Oedipus himself came to Colonus and died there, is later, or even Sophocles' own, suggested to him by the closing scene of the Phoenissae. The story told by Pausanias seems to be analogous to the transportation of the bones of Theseus from the island of Scyros to Athens in 473. This event had an obvious political significance, but it was also important from the religious aspect. Whatever the case this much is certain, that in direct contrast to the epic version which states that Oedipus remained at Thebes after the discovery and was buried there, (n.28.) we now meet an Attic tradition that Oedipus was driven into exile from Thebes and was buried at Colonus.

When Sophocles came to write the Coloneus, he may have found himself in much the same position as Voltaire when composing his Oedipe. Voltaire said of the Tyrannos that there was scarcely sufficient material in it to furnish him with two acts, and to supply the deficiency he turned to By-plot - the episode of Philoctetes. Sophocles had a fine beginning and a truly wonderful ending for his tragedy for the middle of the play he turned to his earlier dramas on the subject

of Oedipus. The Tyrannos and the Antigone provided him with the supporting cast, while the situation at the beginning of the latter play may well have suggested to him a detailed dramatic treatment of the incidents imagined to have taken place before the play opened. In addition to this since Colonus, situated within sight of Athens and traditionally associated with the cult of Oedipus was to provide the setting for the drama, (n.29.) an atmosphere of religion and patriotism could pervade the whole. The middle of the play then consists of a series of episodes, varied in pitch as with a varying cast, and all played about Oedipus who helps to give the play its unity.

It is a remarkable fact that while an analysis of the Coloneus reveals only a series of episodes, the play as a whole leaves one satisfied as to its unity. (cp. Kitto op.cit.p.393.) We shall find that the true unity lies in the strong antitheses which either emanate from the central character, are brought to bear on him, or are felt in the atmosphere. We may notice the initial physical helplessness of Oedipus and his final spiritual power; his love for his daughters and his hatred for his sons; the blessings bestowed upon Attica and the curse on Thebes; the violence of man and the calm of the abode of the gods; the crash of thunder and the singing of the nightingale; the selfishness and deceit of Creon and Polyneices and the generosity and honesty of Theseus. Linked up one with another in a kind of trellis arrangement the separate themes become inextricably connected and the play is given a unity which otherwise it does not possess. But let us look at the play a little more closely and see how it is that Sophocles has achieved this effect.

The first thing to observe is how often Sophocles turns to the past and future history of the house of Laius. (cp. Waldock op.cit. p.221.sqq.) Three times Oedipus curses his sons and each time he reverts to the time when, blinded by his own hand, he was led within the palace there to await the decision of Apollo as to his fate. Then he had begged to be thrust from the land but no one was there to fulfil that desire. Instead he remained at Thebes until Time's healing hands had soothed away his anguish. But then, when he no

longer wished to leave the seclusion of the palace, he was cast out to wander a beggar in foreign lands. But if, when giving the reason for the utterance of his curse, he looks to the past, he looks to the future when he calls down destruction on his sons, an eternal blight on Thebes, and an old age full of misery on Creon. He looks forward to the time when all those curses have been fulfilled in the Antigone.

Three times Oedipus protests his essential innocence. (n.30.) Again he turns to the past, telling of the time when all unwittingly he slew his own father and married his own mother. Further back in time still, he tells us, at the beginning of the play, of the oracle he received in his youth from Apollo. Again we have references to the future as well as to the past. There are further allusions to the past when Ismene is welcomed by Oedipus and he enlarges on the services both his daughters have rendered to him; further references to the future, when Antigone, anticipating her role in the play which bears her name, displays her love for her brother, Polyneices, and he asks for burial at her hands if he should fall on the ill-omened expedition to Thebes, (n.31.) and finally when Antigone begs Theseus to send her back to Thebes to try to avert the strife between the brothers. (n.32.) Thus throughout the play links are forged between the past and future history of the house. In effect they are links connecting the Coloneus with the Tyrannos and the Antigone.

Curses, oracles and protestations of innocence, the play is full of them. Why? Partly because Sophocles is consciously linking this play with his previous plays on the subject of Oedipus - a complete history of the house as it were - partly for the purpose of filling in the background to the story here unfolded. But there are stronger reasons.

Let us begin with the curses. As Jebb has pointed out (O.C. p.XXIV. cp.Bowra op.cit.p.324.sq.) in the versions of Aeschylus and Euripides Oedipus curses his sons at Thebes before the strife breaks out between them, and the subsequent quarrel was the direct consequence of the curse. According to Sophocles, however, the curse had nothing to do with the quarrel. The strife between them was the result of

their own sinful thoughts. "There is" Jebb says, "a twofold dramatic advantage in the modification thus introduced by Sophocles. First, the sons no longer appear as helpless victims of fate; they have incurred moral blame, and are just objects of the parental anger. Secondly, when Polyneices appeals to Oedipus, the outraged father still holds the weapon with which to smite him. The curse descends at the supreme crisis, and with more terrible effect because it has been delayed." We may go further than this and say that for Aeschylus it was necessary to show that the quarrel between the sons was the direct consequence of the curse, since there is in the trilogy a curse motif. For Sophocles, on the other hand, it was just as necessary to show that the curses did not bring about the quarrel. The sons must show their evil natures before the curse descends upon them, hence the curse is postponed and instead of being delivered at Thebes is delivered at Colonus. The function of the curse in Aeschylus was to carry the action of the inherited curse a generation further. In the Septem the terms of the curse and the terms implied by the oracle of Apollo are fulfilled. The sons die by each other's hands and the race of Laius becomes extinct. In Sophocles, however, the curses have a different function. By means of three curses, each one gathering in its power, Sophocles was able to achieve the great dramatic effect of the final curse. In addition, by placing the utterance of the curse after the expulsion of Polyneices from Thebes Sophocles could lend a degree of plausibility to his suit. Polyneices could not well have come before his father at Colonus had the terrible curse already been laid upon him. But there is a further reason for the employment of the curses: in each case they strengthen one side of the terms of the oracle pronounced by Apollo -- that in his death Oedipus would bring benefit to his friends, ruin upon his enemies. Oedipus is a more potent foe to his enemies when he lies buried at Colonus because he was their implacable foe in life.

In contrast to Oedipus' hatred for his sons and the land of his birth stands his love for his daughters and the desire to bring benefit to the land of his adoption. Throughout the play Oedipus insists on the loving care his daughters have bestowed upon him. We feel that

love as he first comes to Colonus and throughout the play the theme of reciprocated love is continued. Especially important are 324.sqq. where Oedipus greets Ismene, and dwells upon the sacrifices his daughters have made for him. Soon after - 421.sqq - falls the first of the curses upon the sons. 1101.sqq. where Oedipus is re-united with his daughters - before their abduction he had cursed his sons for the second time, and in cursing them had cursed Thebes 787.sqq. - 1610.sqq where he takes his final leave of them. - earlier, (1383.) he had uttered his third and final curse against his sons. Thus the themes of love and hate alternate throughout. On the other side stands Oedipus' regard for Theseus and Attica. Important here are 551.sqq. where Theseus first meets Oedipus and straightway extends a welcome to him (note the contrast between the Theseus scene and that where the chorus would in their first horror drive Oedipus from the land.) There is the further contrast of the attitude of Theseus and that of the Thebans towards Oedipus. The Thebans want control of the body but they will not allow it to rest in Theban soil. Theseus at once gives Oedipus the rights of citizenship and even offers him his own house. 1120.sqq. where Oedipus bestows on Attica his blessing for the restoration of his daughters. (On Theseus he bestows his blessing: on Creon his curse.) 1518.sqq. where Oedipus tells Theseus of the benefits his dead body will bring to Attica. Thus Oedipus' capacity for love no less than his capacity for hate, manifested in his lifetime, will be effective, even more effective in his death.

Just as in Aeschylus the oracle of Apollo is important for shaping the course of the trilogy, so in Sophocles the oracle is important for shaping the Coloneus. We first hear of an oracle from the lips of Oedipus himself. (87.sqq.) Sophocles has invented the story that when Oedipus went to Delphi seeking to know his true parentage, Apollo told him of the evils which lay in store for him, and also of his final resting place at the seat of the Eumenides. There he would end his life and bring benefit to his friends, ruin to those who drove him from Thebes. And as an indication that his end was near there should come a sign from heaven. The function of the oracle is clear: through

it is given the motivation for the entire dramatic treatment of the play. It gives the audience the theme of the play, and prepares them for the sign which will announce the moment of Oedipus' passing. But Sophocles cannot end here. He must show that both Thebes and the sons of Oedipus are aware of the terms of the oracle. Ismene is therefore introduced and a new oracle is invented. Ismene tells her father of an oracle recently received by the Thebans: the welfare of Thebes depends on Oedipus in life and death. At a single stroke Sophocles has prepared the audience for the entrance of Creon and Polyneices, (455.sqq.) for upon the actions of Oedipus depend not only the safety of Thebes, but the success of Polyneices' expedition. In addition, since Oedipus now knows that the Thebans are acquainted with the oracle, it places him - and the audience - in a position of power. Both can discern in the persuasions of Creon and Polyneices the selfish motives behind them. (As Whitman op.cit.p.207. has said "like Odysseus in the Philoctetes, Creon and Polyneices both wish to use the great man's power without accepting the man himself.") The audience are thus left in a pleasant state of anticipation. They have been told something of what will happen, but not all. They have yet to witness the excitement of the Creon scene, have yet to hear the concentrated passion of Oedipus' final denunciation. If the audience feel any complacency in their knowledge, they will have a rude awakening.

The third time we hear of an oracle is from the lips of Polyneices. The terms are again slightly different: victory shall be with those whom Oedipus joins - - the implications are, however, the same: benefit to his friends; ruin to his enemies. Whether Polyneices received the oracle from soothsayers (1300.) or refers to the one given to the Thebans and known to him (419.sq.) is doubtful, but whatever the case its purpose is to lay bare the selfish motives of Polyneices who only comes to his father when he learns that victory depends upon his father's actions.

Twice before the chorus (265.sqq. 521.sqq.) and once before Creon (960.sqq.) Oedipus justifies himself. (n.33.) Before the chorus

Oedipus registers two pleas. In slaying his father and marrying his mother he acted unwittingly and in the former case on provocation. (n.34.) Before Creon Oedipus delivers his magnificent pro vita sua. Substantially it is a repetition of his former defence, but this time it is handled dramatically. In effect the speech is as much an attack on Creon as it is a defence of Oedipus, and it owes much of its power to this factor. But apart from the dramatic effect achieved, it is intended to show the beginning of a steady growth in confidence. In the scene with Polyneices we shall have further proof of it. In this connection we may quote Kitto (op.cit.p.395.) "The first denunciation is couched in optatives, the wish mood - - - when next the topic occurs it is treated in more definite language: 'there remains to my own sons an inheritance of my soil, enough - - to die in.' Finally, when the unhappy Polyneices stands before us, there are no longer optatives and conditionals, but confident futures." The final proof of the newly-won confidence comes with his passing.

The passing of Oedipus is magnificently conceived. With the crash of thunder and the flash of lightning Oedipus is transformed. He who had been weak and faltering of foot when first led to that sacred place is weak and faltering no more. Firmly and surely as one inspired with an inward vision he eagerly beckons his former guides on to his eternal resting place. And the chorus pray for the soul that is passing from this earth.

Bear him with gentle breath,

O endless sleep, away. (1576.sq. Trans. Watling.)

Magnificent and mysterious too is the account of the passing.

There was a silence. Suddenly a voice

Came summoning him, and straightway all in fear

Were shaken, and their hair stood on end.

The god was calling him and called again:

Oedipus, Oedipus, why do we delay

To go? Too long have you been lingering.

(1623.sqq. Trans. Bowra.)

I agree with Waldock (op.cit.p.226.) when he says it would have been good if we could have been left awed and stilled by the messenger's

account.

In his choice of characters for the Coloneus Sophocles could do no other than to turn to the figures traditionally associated with the story of Oedipus. Hence we have Antigone, Ismene, Creon, Polyneices and a mention of Eteocles. But since the scene is laid in Attica, Sophocles had to have representatives of that country. Obviously no ordinary Athenian would do. It had to be someone who could with authority extend to the suppliant the friendship of the land. Sophocles could have chosen no better person than Theseus to fill that role. Traditionally depicted in Attic legend as the champion of the oppressed (Plut. Theseus.7.) Theseus was the ideal character, and to add to that fitness his bones had been brought to Athens in 473 B.C. to confer blessings on the state. He is painted in much the same colours as Creon in the Tyrannos and Odysseus in the Ajax. All are men of moderation who know that present prosperity is no proof of its continuance. And like Oedipus himself Theseus has experienced the misfortunes of exile. Thus he is able to sympathise fully with the old man. With regard to the chorus; obviously they could not be Thebans, but rather than choose a chorus of Athenians, Sophocles made it consist of the elders of Colonus. The choice is again admirable. They can acquaint Oedipus with the prescribed rites for the propitiation of the Eumenides, and can with fitness sing of the beauties of Colonus with which they are so familiar.

Antigone retains something of the heroic character she possesses in the play which bears her name. We can see this throughout the play, but it is particularly noticeable in the closing scenes where she pleads with her father on Polyneices' behalf, and finally asks to be sent to Thebes to try to avert the doom which threatens her brothers. The poet has in addition brought Ismene into the play. The Ismene scene is an excellent example of the dramatic economy of Sophocles. (cp. Freeman op.cit.) In the first place Ismene's entrance is well motivated. She has throughout the exile of her father stayed at Thebes in his interest, and has from time to time brought news of oracles concerning him. These are obviously invented to create a

pious duty for Ismene and to lend plausibility to her entrance at this juncture. Secondly it is necessary to show that the Thebans and the sons of Oedipus are acquainted with the oracle. She fulfils this office by bringing news of a recent oracle. Finally as her entrance is well contrived so is her exit. She goes to the spring for water to discharge the rites of propitiation and it is there that Creon finds her. In contrast to the timidity and selfishness she displays in the Antigone, Ismene in this play is as loyal as her sister. But as Jebb (O.C.324. note.) says the contrast between their circumstances indirectly exalts Antigone.

Polyneices (n.35.) who in Euripides (Phoen.71.) is the younger brother of Eteocles, (In Aeschylus Sept.804. it seems that they are twins.) is in Sophocles portrayed as the elder. Jebb (O.C. 375. note.) notices in the innovation a twofold dramatic advantage. Polyneices can be treated as the foremost offender, while Eteocles now has a special fault: that of expelling the rightful king, (374.) thus the curse on both sons is further justified. But there is an additional reason for the choice of Polyneices rather than Eteocles. We can witness the particularly tender relation in which Antigone stands to Polyneices. The dialogue between brother and sister illustrates Antigone's affection for her brother and further strengthens the link between this play and the Antigone. We may notice too a reminiscence of the Septem which we may be sure is not wholly accidental. The somewhat tragic figure of Polyneices, doomed yet determined to go on, recalls to our minds the figure of Eteocles in the Septem, likewise doomed and likewise determined to proceed with his purpose. In the Septem the chorus plead with Eteocles to desist from his purpose, in the Coloneus Antigone does the same with Polyneices.

In direct contrast to Theseus stands Creon. The Creon of the Coloneus has none of the virtues of the Creon of the Tyrannos nor is he the rigidly conscientious tyrant he is in the Antigone. Here Creon is a hypocritical villain prepared to use violence if he cannot obtain his desires by any other means. But why? Robert (op.cit.p.463)

suggests that the Creon of Euripides' Oedipus was the pattern for the Creon of the Coloneus, but even if this is so, it still does not explain why Sophocles made Creon a rogue. (n.36.) The reasons are clear: Oedipus, forewarned by Ismene, can reveal Creon's deceit and fling it in his teeth. The audience, also forewarned, can fully appreciate Creon's clever wooing. Moreover, since Creon is a villain, he can turn to violence without falsifying his character. Indeed it is difficult to see how he could be portrayed in any other colours. The difference in character well illustrates the freedom enjoyed by the dramatists to characterise the legendary figures as they saw fit. But why, we may ask, did Sophocles introduce Creon instead of Eteocles? Chiefly because a scene between Oedipus and Eteocles would have suggested a statement of the rivalry of claims between the brothers and that would have been too like the Polyneices scene. (cp. Robert op.cit.p.463.) By making Creon representative of Thebes Sophocles can contrast the attitudes of Theseus and Creon and Athens and Thebes to Oedipus and his attitude to them. Thus the motif of benefit to friends and harm to enemies is further strengthened.

But though Creon is given a completely different character in the Coloneus, Oedipus remains the same person he was in the Tyrannos. The old man has not lost any of his former violence. He feels that nothing he has done demands his repentance. One thing only he regrets: that in his first excess of self-aborrence he blinded himself. (438.sq.) He has suffered but his suffering was undeserved. But for all that he slew his father and married his mother unwittingly, he is still the polluted being he was. For a moment he forgets himself, when, overcome by his sense of gratitude, he reaches for the hand of Theseus, but he hurriedly corrects his action. (1130.sqq.) Both in character and in fate Oedipus is the same, and to emphasise the point, as Whitman (op.cit.p.200.) says, the first thing Sophocles makes him do in this play is to step on consecrated ground. But why did Sophocles portray Oedipus in the same colours and if anything make his violence more savage? In the first place the idea of Oedipus softened and purified by his suffering is wholly Christian. A hero, as we should remember, is a very different thing from a saint. A man

does not necessarily become a hero because of his outstanding piety, indeed he may be thoroughly bad and still qualify for that honour as did Bellerophon who was worshipped at Corinth. (Paus. 11. 2. 4.) More important from Sophocles' point of view, however, was the fact that in the Coloneus as in the Tyrannos, Oedipus' passionate nature offered plenty of scope for dramatic effect.

Unlike the earlier plays of Sophocles the Coloneus gives considerable scope to scenic effects - those appeals to eye and ear so much deplored by Aristotle. In a play where there is a diffusion rather than a concentration of interest this was inevitable. The poet had to appeal to different emotions. To enlist the immediate sympathy of the audience Oedipus appears with Antigone, poverty-stricken and homeless, clad in the miserable garb of a beggar. Both Creon (744.sqq.) and Polyneices (1254.sqq.) preface their remarks to him by commenting on his squalid appearance, and the chorus (141.) are horror stricken at the sight of the old man.

In the Creon scene we have all the action and excitement of the abduction and rescue of Antigone and Ismene, and the personal violence of Creon where he attempts to lay hands on Oedipus himself. Sophocles has also appealed to local colour and Athenian sentiment throughout and especially in the Colonus ode. Then there was the actual scenery. The stage arrangements for the setting of the play must have severely taxed the ancient producer (vide Jebb O.C.XXXVII.sq.) but his ingenuity must have been strained to breaking point when he found that the dramatist demanded thunder and lightning to herald the approaching end of Oedipus.

For Aeschylus the Erinyes is the leading motif in the Theban trilogy. In the Tyrannos nothing is heard of their dread agency. Indeed, as Jebb has pointed out, (O.T.p.XVIIII.) Sophocles transfers the meeting between father and son from Potniae which was associated with the worship of the Erinyes, to Phocis which was under the influence of Delphi. In the Coloneus, on the other hand, Oedipus is actually buried within the sanctuary of these goddesses at Colonus. But these are very different Furies from those of Aeschylus. Instead of

Erinyes, the avengers, the deities intimately associated with the Oedipus story, they are now the Eumenides, the kindly ones, who belong to an Athenian tradition. But these goddesses have not altogether lost their dread function; they are still the ministers of a curse, and it is as such that Oedipus calls upon them when cursing Creon (864.) and his own sons. (1391.) The emphasis, however, falls upon the benign character of the Eumenides. (n.37.) They dwell in the tranquility of the sanctuary at Colonus, and the only sound that is heard is the singing of the nightingale. Into that sanctuary they receive their suppliant,

Finally we may ask if there is any deeper motive behind the Coloneus other than the ostensible one - the heroization of Oedipus. Personally I do not think that this alone can account for Sophocles having written it. Any assessment of the play should take into account the religious and patriotic elements contained therein. Sophocles wrote the Coloneus a little before the complete collapse of Athens. But whereas Aristophanes had turned to the realm of pure fancy by founding a city in the clouds, and Euripides to the religious abandonment of the Bacchantes, Sophocles at this time turned to the past glories of Athens and the peace of his own little Deme at Colonus. "Cette piece," says Meautis (L'Oedipe a Colone. p.38.) "est comme un cri desespere de confiance et de foi dans les destins d'Athenes, un rappel de l'antique ideal d'autrefois." But this does not give the whole answer. To find that we must look to those sharp antitheses between physical weakness and spiritual power. Then it becomes clear that the final message of Sophocles is that man in spite of his weakness, in spite of his evil lot, can still achieve a full significance.

THE SOPHOCLEAN TREATMENT OF THE THEBAN LEGEND

Though we cannot go as far as Wilamowitz (*Die Dramatische Technik des Sophokles* p.39.sqq.) and say that with Sophocles the purpose of the play was ultimately the effectiveness of its principal scenes, it has become clear that in his approach to a traditional story Sophocles generally, while having regard for the general structure of the tragedy, for the full realisation of his central theme, either invented or preferred those features which had reference to dramatic effectiveness. When a choice of versions lay before him it appears that Sophocles invariably chose or invented that version which would serve to heighten the dramatic effect. We can see this particularly in the *Tyrannos* where Sophocles invents the Corinthian messenger partly out of a regard for the smooth working of the plot, but partly with an eye on the possibilities offered in the two great recognition scenes. By introducing the Corinthian, the poet can make the scenes triangular and so considerably enhance the dramatic power.

Sometimes he modifies or completely alters an earlier or foreign tradition and gives it a later or Attic colouring as, for example, in his account of the death and burial of Oedipus, and in his portrayal of the Erinyes as the kindly spirits dwelling amid the serenity of Colonus. In the first instance Sophocles is left with almost a free hand to fashion the play as he wishes. The result is the most imaginative and the most patriotic of the plays of Sophocles, *Illud mollissimum carmen* as Cicero (*De Fin.* 5.1.) calls it. In the second case the Erinyes become purely Athenian in character. This kind of transformation is an example of Sophocles' advance on the more primitive religion. We see the same process at work in his treatment of Oedipus. To Sophocles Oedipus is legally and morally innocent of parricide and incest because these acts were committed unwittingly. Sophocles has made the distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary act.

Generally in Sophocles we find that he paints the subsidiary characters in particular colours to illustrate the chief character from several points of view. This is seen particularly well in the

Tyrannos where Sophocles has introduced Creon, Teiresias and Jocasta to illustrate by contrast the character of Oedipus. Sometimes a character is introduced out of a regard for the general structure of the plot. We have already noticed the Corinthian messenger in this connection. Ismene is introduced in the Coloneus for the same reason. She can bring in the all important news that the Thebans know of the oracle, and so motivate the following scenes.

We may notice too that Sophocles alters the traditional order of events for additional effect, as for example, Oedipus in the Coloneus curses his sons after the quarrel had broken out between them, not before as in the other dramatists.

Finally we must consider what we may call the deliberate inconsistency. In the Coloneus there is considerable confusion about the actual head of the city of Thebes. Masquerey (vide Kitto op. cit. p.395.) has pointed out that four distinct situations are imagined in the course of the play: (I) the brothers have never enjoyed sovereign power. (367.sqq.) (II) they might have prevented Oedipus' exile. (427.sqq.) (III) they jointly decreed their father's exile. (599.sqq.) (IV) Polyneices alone was responsible for it. (1354.) Why these shifts? Once more the answer is dramatic technique. "Not only," says Kitto, "does the curse increase in definition and certainty, but also, thanks to these delicate shifts, what was a curse launched impartially at two absent men becomes one launched with particular violence at the one who is present." In this connection we may notice a similar confusion with regard to the expedition of Polyneices. (vide Robert op.cit.p.407.sqq. and note XXXI.) At 377 Ismene tells her father that Polyneices is gathering together an army for an attack on Thebes. At 1311 Polyneices tells Oedipus that his army is already encircling the walls of the city. Yet shortly before this Creon comes from Thebes which we gather is not yet threatened. Another deliberate confusion perhaps. The dramatic advantages are clear. Creon can enter with his suite and the inconsistency is not felt because Polyneices has not yet spoken of his expedition. When he does

he is condemned out of his own mouth. He is, on his own admission, bringing war on his own country and fully deserves his doom.

Thus Sophocles, sometimes by subtle strokes, sometimes by ruthless cutting and alteration, extracts the fullest possible effect from particular scenes, and at the same time secures by his devices the harmonious development of the drama.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

(1) The probable dates for the plays are: Antigone 443 or 441; Tyrannos 429; Coloneus 401. Vide Webster (Sophoclean Tragedy p.4.sqq.)

(2) Vide however Jebb Antig. p.1. Robert op.cit.p.332.sqq. where the suggestion is that the story of the burial of Polyneices by Antigone belongs to local tradition.

(3) Sophocles O.T. Argumentum ll.

(4) Sheppard (The Oedipus Tyrannos of Sophocles) to whom I am indebted for this interpretation of the play, "Sophocles has made his story a reminder of the fallibility of human endeavour and of the importance of moderation."

(5) Did the plague belong to an earlier version of the story or did Sophocles introduce it to commemorate the Athenian plague which broke out in 430.B.C. ? It is perhaps inviting to assume that the latter is the case especially as scholars are generally agreed that the Tyrannos probably belongs to the early years of the Peloponnesian war and there is no evidence that the plague formed an early part of the story, but as we have said above the idea that the gods send plague and famine upon the state which harbours a homicide is by no means an uncommon one, and the fact that Sophocles was quite certainly influenced by the Athenian plague when composing his play does not come within a mile of proving that there was no mention of a plague in an earlier version of the legend. As I have tried to show above plague may have been the second threat to Thebes in the Aeschylean Oedipus. Assuming that this is so whether Aeschylus invented the plague himself or found it in the original story it is impossible to say. In Aeschylus the plague would be almost certainly a mere trigger for starting off the action of the play. In Sophocles it was something more. The general psychological situation which Thucydides describes finds a parallel in Sophocles' crowded temples and withal a lingering doubt of the gods and their oracles. Thucydides (11.53.) gives the results of the Athenian plague in an unforgettable passage: "Men now coolly ventured on what they had formerly done in a corner,

and not just as they pleased, seeing the rapid transitions produced by persons in prosperity suddenly dying and those who before had nothing succeeding to their prosperity. So they resolved to spend quickly and enjoy themselves, regarding their lives and their riches as alike things of a day. Perseverance in what men called honour was popular with none, it was so uncertain whether they would be spared to attain the object; but it was settled that present enjoyment, and all that contributed to it, was both honourable and useful. Fear of gods or law of man there was none to restrain them. As for the first, they judged it to be just the same whether they worshipped them or not, as they saw all alike perishing; and for the last, no one expected to live to be brought to trial for his offences, but each felt that a far severer sentence had been already passed upon them all and hung ever over their heads, and before this fell it was only reasonable to enjoy life a little." (Crawley's trans. Everyman edit.)

Here was something which took place under the very eyes of Sophocles and which prompted him to treat of the same problem in the *Tyrannos* where there too evil falls upon the innocent for no apparent reason; when men in the face of a danger for which there seemed no reason or self defence turn to other gods -- led him too to suggest that the answer lay still in piety, moderation and endurance.

(6) I have used Sheppard's translation throughout.

(7) Oedipus in the O.C. 964.sqq. cp. 1298. does suggest that his sufferings might be due to inherited guilt, but it is only a suggestion; he does not dwell on it.

(8) Vide Sheppard (op.cit. introd.ch.11.) cp. Whitman (Sophocles p.127.sqq. Robert op.cit.p.295.sqq. Pohlenz op.cit.p.223.) for a full discussion of the innocence of Oedipus. In the O.C.Oedipus' innocence is forcibly stated, in this play it is more or less assumed.

(9) In general Bowra is committed to a sin and punishment formula. He thinks that the Sophoclean tragedies are essentially plays about the relationship between the gods and men. There exists a divine dispensation for men: for various reasons men disturb that plan and Sophocles shows them paying the penalty. The gods themselves function through

the character of the individual who does those things which make the catastrophe inevitable. A generalised theory on the nature of the Sophoclean tragedy however must perforce lead to inconsistencies which Bowra has either ignored or has been forced to twist the evidence of the plays in question, as for example in the Antigone where the conflict is not between gods and men, though the gods do take a hand in the action, but between mortal and mortal. Here as Whitman (op.cit.p. 28.) says he is constrained to draw the moral, not from the tragedy of the protagonists but from the punishment of the villains. Whitman points out too that Bowra's position on the Tyrannos is a puzzling one. He never makes it quite clear whether Oedipus is the responsible agent for his fall or not. He is capable of a frenzy of pride Bowra says (op.cit.p.165.) but his fall is not in the last resort "due to any fault of judgment or character" (p.175.) except that it is the instrument by which the gods who have predestined his fall, destroy him (p.192sq. 209.) yet his curse upon himself was an act of free will (p.172.) Indeed it seems that Bowra is saying that Oedipus is guilty of an overweening pride but that is not responsible for his fall. On the other hand to say that his fall was predestined by the gods (p.177.sqq.) is to make him a cipher. Man is nothing save the plaything of the gods. In fact the Olympians have not willed his fall, they have merely foretold it.

The tragic flaw theory seems at first sight especially applicable to the Tyrannos, yet if Oedipus' real failing was his temper as Barstow (vide L. Cooper The Greek Genius p.156.sqq.) holds, then surely he earns a punishment out of all proportion to his deserts. As Waldock (op.cit.p.145.) says "it is not quite proper to put the question in this way: whether a man of another character would have acted differently. The question is rather this: whether the character of Oedipus can reasonably be charged with his downfall!" Stated thus there is but one answer. To fasten upon one or more of the flaws (really they are evidence of his qualities; the way in which he displays his individuality.) in Oedipus' character and say that this is the

cause of his destruction reduces the play to an absurdity and deprives it of all moral and intellectual satisfaction.

Waldock himself finds no meaning in the Tyrannos. "There is merely the terror of coincidence, and then, at the end of it all, our impression of man's power to suffer, and of his greatness because of this power." (op.cit.p.168.) If Sophocles wrote this play with no other purpose than to demonstrate the measure of man's endurance why did he not take as his starting point the self blinding and go on to deal with the further sorrows Oedipus had to endure? Instead of this he has dramatised the search for the murderer and we see as the play unfolds the bitter irony of life when a man in spite of his efforts to do good suffers the greatest of calamities.

(10) The ban which was imposed upon the slayer of Laius by divine command is made more terrible by human ignorance. Oedipus has made his own perdition sure. 1230.sqq.

(11) Vide Ajax 670.sqq.) where Ajax compares his change of fortune to the changes which take place in nature. cp. O.C.607.sqq. Vide also Webster (op.cit.p.31.sqq.) and Kitto (op.cit.p.143.)

(12) It might be argued from these lines that Sophocles was already contemplating the Coloneus. Of course he may have been, but I do not think so. It is rather one of the means by which Sophocles manages to make Oedipus great even in his fall.

(13) Robert (op.cit.p.286.) notices that whereas in the Homeric version the Erinyes of Jocasta bring many woes upon Oedipus afterwards, there is no hint of the Erinyes in Sophocles. Overwhelming pity takes the place of vindictiveness.

(14) For the importance of moderation to the play vide Sheppard (op.cit. introd.ch.IV.)

(15) Robert (op.cit.p.285.) speaks of the brutality of the final scene of the play, and calls it the natural reaction of an innocent but lowly soul against the slanderous suspicion and accusation of Oedipus. Sheppard (op.cit.introd.ch.IV.) has shown how mistaken this view is. Odysseus (Ajax.121.sqq.) takes no savage delight in the humiliation of Ajax, but rather pities him. He takes

the broadest possible view: "pondering his case no more than my own." (cp.1346.sqq.) Similarly Theseus (O.C. 566.sqq.) sees himself as one who knows not what the morrow may bring forth. He is a man and therefore open to the chances of life. Creon, Odysseus, and Theseus are all alike in that they have a true sense of proportion. They are men and they know it; men have certain limitations and they recognise the fact; therein lies a good part of their wisdom.

(16) For the critical doubts cast on this passage vide Jebb app. crit. and note on 1524.

(17) Much of what is written on the dramatic art of Sophocles is derived from Kittò (op.cit.ch.VII.) and Webster (op.cit.ch.IV.)

(18) Robert (op.cit.p.286. says that the chorus plays a passive role. According to him they are rather like men who have eyes and see not, ears and hear not. This is nonsense.

(19) Vide Robert op.cit.p.285.

(20) Robert (op.citp.72. cp.Deubner op.cit.p.42. 3.) says that the oldest account of the exposure of Oedipus on Cithaeron is Sophocles' own.

(21) a. Sophocles cannot use the companion of Laius whom he found in the myth, since Polypoites, the driver of the chariot, was slain. (For the name Polypoites vide schol. on Phoen. 39.) (vide Robert op.cit. p.105.) Sophocles, as did Aeschylus, needs an eye witness who survives, so he invents a retinue for Laius; a herald and four companions. O.T. 752. 800.sqq. (vide Deubner op.cit.p.43.)

b. Sophocles sends Laius to Delphi but he does not inform us of his purpose beyond saying that he went to consult the god. Robert (op.cit.p.96.) believes Creon suspected that Laius was going to Delphi to consult the god about his son, but this seems to be an unwarranted inference. It is much more likely that Sophocles is deliberately leaving the matter vague.

(22) That the herdsman whom we may suppose lost no time in taking news of the affray to Thebes should find Oedipus already installed as king is impossible, but the inconsistency passes unnoticed. (cp.Waldock op.cit.p.163.)

(23) As Sheppard (op.cit.note to 46.) says "The problem for

Sophocles was to make his priest present a sufficiently moving picture of the city's suffering and need, without making us feel more concerned for the fate of the city than for the fate of Oedipus."

(24.) Whitman (op.cit.p.267.n.1.) well compares the oracle of Apollo with the two ultimata exchanged by Athens and Sparta in 431 B.C. to cleanse their hands of pollution. (vide Thuc. 1. 126. 2./ 128.1)

(25) Sophocles O.C. Argumentum 11.

(26) Vide Jebb O.C.p.7.sqq.

(27) Robert (op.cit.p.1.sqq.) has concluded that the legend is no older than the sixth century - - - The connection between Oedipus and the Areopagus even later (fifth century) and as far as the development of the legend is concerned of no significance - - Whatever the case it is certain that the identification of Oedipus with Colonus was permanently established after Sophocles. It is he who made the local traditions famous. (cp.Jebb O.C.p.XXX.) We may note here that the scholiast on O.C. 91. who quotes Lysimachus of Alexandria, gives a Boeotian account of the burial of Oedipus. It appears that when Oedipus died at Thebes his friends wished to bury him there, but were forbidden by the Thebans because of the disasters which would follow from the presence of the polluted being. Accordingly the friends of Oedipus carried the body to a place in Boeotia called Ceos, and buried him there. But misfortunes fell upon the inhabitants and they, attributing these to the presence of Oedipus, bade his friends to take the body from their lands. The corpse was transported from Ceos to Eteonos, and the friends wishing to inter it without the knowledge of the inhabitants, did it at night. Of course the matter became known and the inhabitants consulted Apollo on the action they should take. The god told them not to disturb the rest of the suppliant of the goddess. The body was therefore left to rest in peace, and the place where it was buried became known as the Oedipodeum. Robert (op.cit.p.1.) says of Eteonos "Es ist die Heimat dieses Heros und der Ausgangspunkt des ganzen Mythos." For our purpose, however, it is of more interest to observe how the Theban legend makes Oedipus' body a bane to the inhabitants of the place where it is buried, while the Attic legend regards the possession

of the body as a blessing.

(28) Homer Od. XI. 271.sqq. II.xxlll.679. et schol. Sophocles in the Antigone (50.sqq. 897.sqq.) had followed the epic version.

(29) Near Colonus in 407.B.C. Athenian cavalry had defeated a Theban force. (Xen. Hell.1.1.33., Mem.1.1.4., Diod.Xlll.72. Schol on O.C.92.) As Bowra (op.cit.p.308.) says "Some may have attributed the victory to the dead hero who was hidden near the battlefield." Besides this the event may have helped to suggest to Sophocles the oracle of Apollo which spoke of the benefits which would accrue to the land wherein the body was buried.

(30) We may notice that Oedipus never claims to be uncontaminated by his actions. Lucas (op.cit.p.144.) compares Sophocles' view with that of Euripides Herakles 1231.sqq.

(31) cp. Homer II.IV.376.sqq. Pindar Nem.16.sqq. Nem. IX.

(32) cp Eur. Phoen.1277.sqq. where Antigone goes out to the battlefield with Jocasta to try to avert the combat between the brothers. This is one of several reminiscences. Cp. O.C.1258.sq. where Polyneices expresses concern at the appearance of his father with Phoen 371. where he expresses a like concern for his mother's appearance. O.C.1250 where Polyneices comes in weeping with Phoen. 366. where he does the same. In both plays Antigone stands in a particularly tender relation to Polyneices. There is also a direct allusion to the Septem in the list of the Argive champions. Of the seven three, especially Amphiaraus (cp. O.C.1313.sqq. with Sept.609.sqq.) Capaneus (cp. O.C. 1318.sq. with Sept. 432.) Parthenopaeus (cp. O.C.1320. with Sept536.sqq.) live for us again.

(33) Freeman (C.R. 1923.p.50.sqq.) says that Polyneices condemns Oedipus as a sinner, and that Oedipus defends himself against the charge. I do not see this.

(34) Though as Kitto (op.cit.p.398.) rightly says there is neither discussion of nor judgment passed on Oedipus' sins, it is interesting to note that the chorus at 528.sq. say "To no man comes punishment from fate, if he requites deeds which are first done to him." The immediate meaning is that Oedipus has deceived them and therefore

their promises are invalidated. There may, however, be a secondary meaning: Laius had provoked the assault, therefore Oedipus is not guilty of murder.

(35) Robert (op.cit.p.407.sqq.) thinks that the Polyneices scene was introduced into the play at a later date by Sophocles. The idea behind it being the quarrel between Sophocles and his son, Iophon. We need not enter into any discussion on this point. It has, I think, been shown that the scene is an essential part of the drama.

(36) Kitto (op.cit.p.388.) says "He (Creon) is made false in order that the prophetic knowledge which is now accorded to Oedipus may be the more triumphantly displayed." I cannot see where the "prophetic knowledge" comes in. Ismene has already acquainted her father with the new oracle.

(37) Vide Paus. 1.28.6. where he notices that in the Athenian cult of the Eumenides the Erinyes have lost their more fearsome attributes.

CHAPTER FOUR

EURIPIDES

The great mass of material available in the Theban legends was a source of attraction to Euripides no less than to his predecessors. As often as they he went to this inexhaustible quarry for a plot; like them he altered or added to the story as he saw fit, and here as in his other plays he displays a preference for a less well known version of the story. Thus in his Oedipus, Queen Periboea discovered the infant Oedipus as she was washing clothes by the sea, and in the same play Euripides made the servants of Laius blind Oedipus when he was discovered to be his father's murderer. (n.1.) In the Antigone, which like the Oedipus is lost to us, the same tendency can be observed, for there Euripides actually marries off the heroine to Haemon, the son of Creon. (n.2.)

But besides dealing with the already well-worn themes of Oedipus and Antigone, Euripides has in the still extant Supplikes dramatised the story of the burial of the seven Argive champions who fell before Thebes, and in the lost Chrysippus had dealt with Laius' rape of the son of Pelops. (n.3.) The Supplikes, the Antigone, and the Chrysippus, however, all go beyond the main stream of the story and consequently lie outside the scope of this thesis. The Oedipus presents a different problem. The difficulties which lie in the way of a full scale reconstruction are so great as to render the task virtually impossible. In attempting a reconstruction of Aeschylus' Oedipodeia we had in addition to the fragments the very valuable evidence of the final play of the trilogy, and the Oresteia which furnishes us with a good deal of help on Aeschylus' attitude to the problems connected with an ancestral curse. In the case of Euripides' Oedipus there is nothing save a few insignificant fragments to help us, and so we shall pass on to deal with the Phoenissae which is our only complete record of Euripides' treatment of the Oedipus story. (n.4.)

THE PHOENISSAE

The Phoenissae is a lavish production. (n.5.) Essentially it deals with the same story as the Septem, but Euripides has set it against a vast background: the entire history of the line of Cadmus. Structurally therefore the Phoenissae consists of an outer and an inner framework. The outer framework, developed principally by the chorus, is purely decorative in function until we come to the final scene which foreshadows the total destruction of the race. The inner framework is concerned with the fate of the brothers and that of the city. Exactly what it owes to Aeschylus will only become clear on a comparison of the two plays.

The Phoenissae opens with a prologue spoken by Jocasta. This in itself must have been startling to an audience well versed in the story. For the moment, however, we shall content ourselves by saying of Jocasta that besides giving us a brief but effective history of the line of Cadmus, she brings together the twin themes of danger threatening the sons of Oedipus and the city of Thebes. (77.sqq.) In the following two scenes the themes are separated. In the first the emphasis is laid on the danger to Thebes, in the second on the danger to the brothers. This constitutes one of the major differences between the Aeschylean and Euripidean treatment of the story. Aeschylus never entirely separated the themes, Euripides does. Though in the Septem the emphasis shifted from one theme to another, they were never completely isolated. The sense of the Erinyes threatening both the house and the state gave the play a unity of theme. The Phoenissae lacks this unity, partly because Euripides has treated the Erinyes from an entirely different but thoroughly characteristic point of view, partly because instead of making the gods interested in the fate of the city as Aeschylus has done, he excludes them by stating almost at once (155.) that they are impartial as to the outcome of the attack, and partly because of Apollo's oracle, which in Aeschylus had bound the themes together by making the deliverance of the city depend upon the destruction of the royal house, in Euripides (17.sqq.)

refers only to the danger to the house.

Aeschylus, for reasons already stated, had in the Septem carefully avoided a meeting between Eteocles and Polyneices; Euripides brings them face to face. Because he does not see them as victims of the implacable Erinyes, but as victims of their own desires, it is all important that we see them together; only thus can we appreciate the contrast between their natures. They have, it is true, fallen under the curse of their father (66.sqq.) but their actions are in fact determined by their characters. The Erinyes, which in Aeschylus was the responsible agent for the destruction of the brothers, receives in Euripides a psychological interpretation. Injured pride activates Polyneices, unscrupulous ambition Eteocles, and these are the factors which bring ruin upon them. The end of the scene leaves no chance of compromise, and Jocasta's appeal to reason is as ineffective as the chorus' appeal to Eteocles in the Septem. The twin ideas of combat and death at each other's hands which are clearly stated in this scene (593.sqq. 621.sqq.) are repeated in the next where Eteocles prays that he might meet his brother and provides for the future of Thebes and final vengeance upon his brother in the event of his death. (753.sqq.)

With the entrance of Teiresias the interest is switched to the city. Teiresias prefaces his remarks by recording a recent success. The point is not trivial. Euripides wants his audience to realise that what they are about to hear is nothing less than the truth, and accordingly stresses the seer's prophetic skill. The brothers will perish; that much is certain, (880.) but so will Thebes herself unless steps be taken to preserve her. (884.sq.) Up to this point (vide 154.sq. 244.sq. 250.sqq. 571.sqq. 629.sq.) the deliverance of Thebes has seemed to depend upon the outcome of the strife between the brothers, and the present evils of the city seemed to be the result of the expedition of Polyneices. Now it appears that a blight has hung over Thebes from the time when Laius begat a son against the will of heaven, (867.sqq.) and the gods are displeased because Oedipus is kept hidden within the palace when his fate was intended to be an example to the whole of Greece. (n.6.) But not only are the gods angry with the sons of Oedipus,

Earth herself is hostile because she is polluted with the blood of the dragon slain by Cadmus. The old guilt must be expiated by a victim who is himself descended from the dragon, Only then will Earth prove herself a kindly mother to Thebes, and Ares, whose offspring was the dragon, take the part of Thebes in war. (936.sqq.) Menoeceus is the only possible victim, and he goes off to sacrifice his life for the sake of his country.

With the exit of Menoeceus the interest switches once more to the brothers. By their deaths in single combat the curse of Oedipus is fulfilled. Finally in the last battle between the Thebans and the Argives Thebes emerges victor. We may conveniently break off at this point to consider Euripides' debt to Aeschylus.

The city is saved, but the brothers have fallen. On the face of it the conclusion is the same as that in the Septem. The differences are, however, considerable. In the first place in Aeschylus the oracle of Apollo bound the fate of the city with that of the house. In Euripides' version of the oracle nothing is said of Thebes. Apollo simply declared that if Laius had a son he would die by his son's hand and the whole race would perish in bloodshed. Thus while for Aeschylus the safety of Thebes depends on the destruction of the royal house, for Euripides it does not, it depends upon the sacrifice of Menoeceus. (n.7.) Again, the curse of Oedipus which is fulfilled in both plays has not the same significance for Euripides that it had for Aeschylus. In Aeschylus the fulfilment of the curse implied the safety of Thebes, for with the fall of the brothers the last representatives of the house have perished. In Euripides the curse has no significance other than its immediate one: (n.8.) the race is not extinct with the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices, for Oedipus and his daughter live on. The safety of Thebes can only be won by the more primitive expedient of a human sacrifice. The polis - oikos themes which in Aeschylus were interdependent are in Euripides no longer so.

In the Aeschylean version of the story Thebes has justice on her side, and while the defenders are men of moderation, the invaders are filled with an impious lust for the destruction of the city. Euripides

puts justice with the Argives who are described from a purely physical point of view. The difference is again significant. The fate of Thebes is no longer a problem of divine justice. Indeed the whole moral tone of the Septem has vanished and in its place stands the sensationalism of human sacrifice. The same trend can be seen at work in the way in which Euripides has handled the combat between the brothers. For Aeschylus the actual combat was of no importance, the issue all important: for Euripides the combat is everything, the issue nothing.

Euripides' debt to Aeschylus is therefore a small one. While the broad outlines of the story are the same for both poets, the treatment is distinct and individual. We might indeed go as far as to say that in everything which really matters Euripides owes nothing to Aeschylus, that in fact the story itself suggested the features common to both plays. While Aeschylus took the story and wove into it those political and religious problems in which he was so intensely interested, Euripides takes the same story but attaches to it no significance. In short he is not developing a tragic theme at all, but is presenting a series of incidents important for their own sake and not for the sake of an overriding tragic idea. The Phoenissae is then a "dramatic pageant" and intentionally so. (n.9.)

Those who would see the Phoenissae as tragedy are all forced to indulge in criticism or apology. (n.10.) The ancient critic (Argumentum ad Phoen. lll.) started the ball rolling. He assailed the plot on the score of want of unity, describing it as episodic and full of padding. He objects to the Teichoscopia on the ground that it forms no part of the action, to the entrance of Polyneices as being to no purpose, and the Oedipus scene as irrelevant. If the play is a tragedy the criticisms are just, if it is not, they are misconceived. Once we admit that the Phoenissae is a deliberate fantasy, all the difficulties disappear. The play becomes first rate theatre.

To begin with, the very title of the play was as Powell (op.cit. p.79.) says "intended by Euripides to be a surprise to the audience who would be set wondering what was the connection with the Theban sagas." But if the title was a surprise, what was the appearance of Jocasta? In making her survive the discovery Euripides went against all accepted

dramatic tradition. (n.11.) It has been said that the audience must have been thoroughly startled by the appearance of Jocasta. Euripides intended them to be; he was out to startle. Jocasta can bring about the meeting between her sons and act as mediator between them, but anyone could have done this equally well. (n.12.) The chorus had reasoned with Eteocles in the Septem, they could have performed the same task here had not the poet wanted them for a different task - the development of the history of Thebes ab urbe condita. So Jocasta is given the duty and she satisfies at the same time the more personal interest of a mother mediating between her sons. Her main purpose, however, was purely sensational. Her dash to the battlefield is a step in this direction, but the great dramatic thrill comes with her suicide over the dead bodies of her sons. It is almost as if Euripides has dragged Jocasta back from Hades to die once more by her own hand. Certainly her death has none of the tragic effect that it had in Sophocles. In the Tyrannos there is nothing to prevent us from imagining Jocasta as in the very prime of life. In the Phoenissae, however, she is an old old woman (302.sq.) clad in the most piteous garments. (371.sq.)

The Teichoscopia which takes the place of the spy's report in the Septem, is obviously modelled on the celebrated scene in Homer, though by this time it had probably become a dramatic device used at will by the poets. (n.13.) Though Kitto (op.cit.p.359.note.) denies it, the scene underlines to some extent the danger to the city. Aeschylus had made the Argives terrifying by dwelling on their boastful and impious threats. Euripides cannot do this because for him the Argives fight in a just cause. Instead he refers to their general brilliance and superior numbers. (112.sq. 256.sq. 715.sq.) The threat to the city is as real in Euripides as it was in Aeschylus; the difference is that while in Aeschylus it forms one of the leading motifs of the trilogy, in Euripides it is used primarily to create a certain suspense in the minds of the audience. Aeschylus is thinking tragically, Euripides melodramatically, but to both this feature of the story is important. A further point of interest is the courtly manner of Antigone's entrance and exit reminding one rather of the French classical drama. "The careful emergence of Antigone on to the roof," says Kitto (op.cit.p.359.n.)

"and her careful descent are as much part of the total effect as the Argive army itself."

With the exit of Antigone and the paidagogos, a chorus of Phoenician maidens enter. Their presence calls for some explanation. We learn that they are dedicated to Apollo, and that on their journey to Delphi have sojourned with the Thebans, with whom they are distantly connected by kinship, only to be caught up in the present strife. As virtual strangers and the servants of Apollo they can view the scene with some impartiality. Thus they express their concern for the safety of the city, but admit the justice of Polyneices' cause. A more powerful reason for the chorus being composed of Phoenicians is that they can develop the outer framework of the play with peculiar fitness. (n.14.) As Kitto (op.cit.p.356.) says "Any chorus could have recounted these Phoenician legends, but it is infinitely more effective to have them recounted by a company of Phoenician maidens whose presence is a proof of the traditions they celebrate." He notices too that the chorus have the advantage of being more picturesque than a Theban chorus would have been, (cp.393.sqq. 1301.) for they doubtless were attired in barbaric splendour. Aeschylus had chosen a chorus composed of Theban women. The difference is significant. In the Septem the interest concentrated on the internal danger to the city and the house, and only those intimately connected with both could take part in the drama. In the Phoenissae, since the incidents are not grouped round a central focal point, Euripides requires a chorus which can deal with those events which lie outside the range of those closely connected with Thebes and her royal house. In the Septem the Theban women are really terrified by the threat to the city; in the Phoenissae the chorus is relatively undisturbed.

The next scene brings on Polyneices. Though he comes under a truce arranged by his mother, he steals in with drawn sword looking carefully to left and right as if afraid to be caught in ambush. One wonders if the incident was inspired by Homer (Il.IV.376.sqq.) where Tydeus is sent into Thebes and is afterwards attacked by the Thebans in ambush. Whatever the case the reason for the elaborate circumspection is obvious. Like the sweeping obeissance of the chorus it adds to the

total effect. The meeting between the mother and son has a twofold purpose. Besides the patriotic flavour of the scene where the miseries of exile are dwelt upon, (387.sqq.) it again intensifies the human interest. But it also provides Euripides with a golden opportunity to deal with yet another aspect of the Theban legend - the marriage of Polyneices to the daughter of Adrastus. It is no ordinary account, for a few moments we are whirled from Thebes to Argos where a mysterious oracle of Apollo - doubtless invented by Euripides - found its solution in the meeting between Polyneices and Tydeus.

We have already discussed the significance of the meeting between Eteocles and Polyneices. It remains to consider their general characteristics. Eteocles, who in Aeschylus is presented in a favourable light (cp. Soph. Ant.110.sqq.) is in Euripides painted in the darkest colours. He is the originator of the strife. He has broken the compact to reign in alternate years with his brother (n.15.) and consumed with lust for power and hatred of his brother, can scarcely carry out his duties as king and defender of the city. (712.sqq.) Polyneices, on the other hand, is more unfortunate than blameworthy, and as such receives our sympathy. The difference in characterisation, however, has no profound significance. Whereas Aeschylus has followed the Oedipodeia which was written with an obvious Theban bias, Euripides is following the Thebais which is friendly in tone to Argos. In his choice of authority Euripides may have been influenced by his own sympathy with the rebel.

The scene between Eteocles and Creon prepares us for the entrance of Teiresias and looks forward to the combat between the brothers, the refusal to bury Polyneices and the disobedience of Antigone. (n.16.) The debate on tactics - note that instead of using a spy as Aeschylus had done, Euripides invents an Argive captive who brings in news of the assault to be made on the seven gates. (708.sqq.) - is the weakest part of the play which is after all depending upon speed for its effect. It may be as Pearson says (op.cit.p.XXIX.) that Euripides is trying to appear as realistic as possible, and it may be that the poet is gently poking fun at contemporary discussions on tactics, but for all that the scene remains something of a curiosity.

We come now to the Menoeceus episode. The history of Cadmus and his line which up to this point has been developed by the chorus, is now taken further by Teiresias, and for the first time the outer and inner frameworks of the play are merged. The sacrifice of Menoeceus has to be motivated ; but since Menoeceus is not connected with the house of Laius the poet cannot use any incident connected with that house to provide a plausible reason for the sacrifice. Accordingly he goes back into the remote past. Cadmus had slain the dragon, and both Earth and Ares must be propitiated by the blood of one who sprang from the dragon's teeth. (934.sqq.) It is all very ingenious, but the poet has not managed to introduce the sons without inconsistency. (cp. Meridier op.cit.p.165. note 2.) At first we are told that the gods are impartial. (155.sqq.) Next we learn that the gods have been wrath with the land from the time when Laius begat his son against the will of heaven. (867.sq.) Finally we learn that Earth and Ares have been hostile since Cadmus slew the dragon. (931.sqq.) Now according to Teiresias

What were most

To be desired were this: that none who spring
From Oedipus should here reside, or hold
The sceptre of this land, for they impelled
By malignant demons will overthrow
The city. (886.sqq.)

This is all very well, but the banishment of the royal house will not dispell the wrath of Ares, nor will it purify the Earth. Their anger is due to a still older crime. Perhaps Euripides himself felt the difficulty, for Teiresias goes on to say

But since evil thus prevails
O'er good. One other method yet remains
To save us. (889.sq.)

The sacrifice of Menoeceus:

He by his death will save his native land
Will cause Adrastus and his Argive host
With anguish to return. (947.sqq.)

But Euripides is little concerned with consistency. The Menoeceus

episode is excellent theatre, and inconsistency is a small price to pay for it. We may notice that the scene introduces yet another interest. For Creon the question is shall I sacrifice my son or my country. (cp. Robert. op. cit. p. 417.) Straightway he, like Eteocles, sets his personal interests above those of the state. His *Χαίρῃ τῷ πόλει* (919.) echoes the *ἔρρετῷ προπάσ Δόμος* of Eteocles. (624.) On the other side stands the heroic self-sacrifice of Creon's son, thus the stark realism of Creon and Eteocles is strongly contrasted with the pure idealism of Menoecus. Euripides, as Kitto (op. cit. p. 358.) remarks makes the best of both worlds.

A further question remains. Is the self-sacrifice of Menoecus Euripides' own invention? The scholiast on Sophocles' *Antigone* 1303. thinks not. He identifies the Megareus of the *Antigone* with the Menoecus of the *Phoenissae*, and considers the reference to Megareus' noble fate is to his self-sacrifice. In other words, as Meridier says (op. cit. p. 138.) the originality of Euripides on this view simply consists in a change of name. But as he points out there is no reason for believing that Euripides is dramatising an old version of the Theban legend: "Il est probable que Sophocle rappelle seulement la mort d'un brave, tombe dans la bataille en défendant sa patrie." Now in the *Septem* Megareus is one of the Theban warriors who defends the gates of the city, and his death is there foreshadowed. (*Sept.* 477.) This is probably the account to which Sophocles is referring in the *Antigone*. It seems on the whole that Euripides has invented the entire episode, and has created Menoecus (n. 17.) to play the part of the victim. (cp. Robert op. cit. p. 416. sqq.)

In the *Septem* the fate of Thebes formed one of the main threads of interest; in the early part of the *Phoenissae* too the danger to the city is emphasised to a certain extent, yet by the time we come to the incident which actually decides the fate of the city the interest lies in the situation itself rather than in the deliverance of Thebes. With the departure of Menoecus, Euripides' interest in him has gone. Beyond the briefest of references to his death (1090.) and Creon's lament (1310. sqq.) we hear no more of him. Menoecus has served his purpose;

he is as Kitto (op.cit.p.359.) remarks "very like the hero of a by-plot."

At the end of the Sphinx ode the first of the two messengers comes in. Both have to acquaint the audience with those events which lay outside the stage. Hollywood, we may be sure, would transport the spectator to the battlefield: Euripides has to content himself with messengers' reports, and since the interest lies in the incidents, he must make the descriptions as vivid and exciting as possible. To do this he completely refashions the account of the Argive attack and the combat between the brothers. With regard to the first part of the speech we may notice a point of particular interest. Aeschylus had in the *Septem* described in some detail both the Argive and the Theban champions. For him a description of both parties was of vital importance to the play. Thebes escapes because she has justice and the gods on her side, hence the piety and moderation of the Thebans is contrasted as strongly as possible with the impiety and bombast of the Argives. When we come to the *Phoenissae* we find that Euripides has described only the Argives, and that from an entirely different point of view. (.n.18.) The moral significance of emblems and boasts has gone, the description is now purely physical. Amphiaraus and Tydeus who occupy a special place in the *Septem* are but lightly treated in the *Phoenissae*. Capaneus becomes the figure of importance, and his destruction at the hands of Zeus becomes the climax of the story. (n.19.) Thus the whole emphasis is on sensationalism.

At this point the narrative is broken off. Even the most thrilling account will not hold an audience if it is carried on too long. Euripides has managed things very nicely (notice the break between the account of the attack and the challenge.) for he now taps a further source of interest. Jocasta calls to Antigone and together they dash off to the battlefield to try to avert the combat. Between the exit of Jocasta and the entrance of the second messenger there is an interval in which the chorus express their forebodings as to the issue of the combat, and Creon utters his lament for his son. The second speech rounds off the inner framework of the play. Again it is broken off at the critical moment (1424.) between the announcement of the fall of the brothers and the death of Jocasta. A continuous narrative would have

spoil the effect of the suicide, by breaking the account Euripides can achieve the maximum effect from both incidents.

But though the brothers have fallen and the city is finally delivered, the play cannot end here. The outer framework of the play is concerned with the history of the whole line of Cadmus. It is the function of the final scene to complete that history by dealing with the downfall of the line. Accordingly the last scene treats of the banishment of Oedipus, and implies the death of Antigone who refuses to comply with Creon's edict. (n.20.) As Kitto (op.cit.p.362.) says it involves one difficulty. Antigone who up to this point has been just a simple girl, must suddenly grow into heroic stature. Had Euripides been writing tragedy the difficulty would have been insurmountable; because he is not the change is scarcely noticed. This fantasy which began with the striking appearance of Jocasta now ends with the no less striking appearance of Oedipus who has been carefully kept in reserve all this while. (n.21.) The final picture then is of Oedipus slowly going into solitary and hopeless exile, watched by his daughter, soon to die for the part she is to play. As an ending for a play teeming with sensations surely nothing more sensational than this could be conceived.

With regard to the general details of the story, we may notice that according to Euripides Laius begat Oedipus while in the heat of wine; (21.sq.) that the child was exposed in the sacred meadow of Hera on Cithaeron; (24.) (n.22.) and that when the child was carried to her, the wife of Polybus (n.23.) persuaded her husband that she was the mother of the child (30.) It appears too that Oedipus did not actually learn from Apollo that he was destined to slay his father and marry his own mother. He slew Laius while on his way to Delphi to enquire of the god his true parentage, then returning to his home gave Polybus Laius' chariot. (33.sq.) Again, the hand of Jocasta was promised to the man who should solve the riddle of the Sphinx. (n.24.) As Kitto says (op.cit.p.363.) "none of these details come to anything in the play, all might be omitted without loss - except, significantly, loss of brightness." Euripides is from the very outset introducing novelty for the sake of effect.

Characterisation which Grube (Drama of Euripides p.372.) calls good, in fact plays little part in the Phoenissae. In a play in which as Kitto says (op.cit.p.354.) the dramatic interest lies in the incidents themselves and not in what the actors think and feel and do in relation to them, one cannot examine character and motives very closely. All the characters traditional to the story are here as well as Menoeceus, (n.25.) but with the exception of Eteocles and Polyneices, and possibly of Jocasta, not one holds the interest more than momentarily. (n.26.) In other words there is not one who reaches true tragic dimensions. The characters are interesting only in so far as the incidents in which they take part are interesting. Teiresias is a good example. In the Antigone (988.) and the Tyrannos (444.) Teiresias is escorted by a boy. Now he is led by his daughter, who for additional effect carries the implements of his craft. Again in the earlier plays (Ant.995. lo94.sq. O.T.563.) though the skill of the seer had not gone unquestioned, it was nevertheless strongly vouched for. In this play where speed is essential to success, there is no time to question the art of Teiresias. Indeed he anticipates any criticism by producing as it were a guarantee of his skill. (852.sqq.) Finally there is Oedipus himself. (n.27.) That he should survive the Argive expedition is Euripides' own notion, but he is a very different Oedipus from the other figures we have met. In the Coloneus, despite his misfortune, Oedipus still retained his essential nobility. (vide O.C.75.sqq.) In this play he is merely pathetic, utterly broken by his misfortunes, and a dim phantom of his former self. (1543.sqq.) The change is essential to Euripides' purpose. The poet requires the play to end with a final appeal to the emotions. Nothing is more impressive or more pitiful than the sight of the old man groping his way into exile.

Because the subject of the Phoenissae is the same as that of the Septem a comparison of the plays is perhaps inevitable, but if we are to appreciate the Phoenissae as a work of art, we should remember in the first place that while the Septem was produced at a time while tragedy was relatively in its infancy, the Phoenissae was produced at a time when Greek tragedy as such was in its death throes. A new attitude

towards dramatic art had grown up, an attitude which profoundly affected the form of tragedy. The Septem is intellectual drama, the Phoenissae melodrama. The Septem is distinguished for its simplicity, it offers no twists and turns, but is one long steady movement towards the catastrophe. The Phoenissae, on the other hand, relies for its effect upon the sudden and unexpected twists and turns. The difference in conception is in fact so great that comparison is illegitimate. The proper approach therefore to an appreciation of the Phoenissae is not by comparison and contrast with the Septem, but by isolation, or by comparing it with another play of the same type, as for example, the Iphigeneia in Tauris, against which the Phoenissae would show up very well. (n.28.) We shall therefore be doing the poet a grave injustice if we think that he intended the Phoenissae as tragedy. He aims at presenting the legend in such a way as to extract from a series of incidents, whose only connection is the fact that they centre round the story of a single house, the greatest possible effect. One has only to read the play to see that in this Euripides has been entirely successful.

EURIPIDES' TREATMENT OF THE LEGEND.

The great difference between Euripides' treatment of the story of Oedipus and that of his predecessors is that in Euripides the tone is less serious and the motive less deep. In the *Phoenissae* Euripides does not group his incidents round a central focus or a central character as he did in the *Medea*. The point is significant in that it displays at once the dramatist's purpose. Euripides' purpose in the *Phoenissae* was to deal with the sorrows of the house of Laius in such a way as to excite curiosity and surprise.

While Aeschylus and Sophocles had treated the traditional accounts in a free and original manner, their innovations are not so striking and extensive as those of Euripides. Taking as his point of departure the Argive attack on Thebes, an incident which occurs late in the legend, Euripides succeeds not only in bringing Oedipus and Jocasta upon the stage - a thing no other dramatist had done at this point in the story - but he includes in the play the self sacrifice of Menoeceus, the combat between the brothers, the suicide of Jocasta and the exile of Oedipus, and he surrounds all this with a history of the race from its very foundations. All these incidents and events are, however, required by the exigencies of the drama. The *Phoenissae* aims at being theatrically effective and it is this which explains its character. In dealing with the same subject as Aeschylus yet working with a different motive, Euripides was obliged to substitute a complex plot for a simple one. Thus while in Aeschylus the story is simple and contains a small number of incidents, in Euripides the story is complex and crowded with incidents. The results are threefold:(i) Some of the events which in Aeschylus were left to narrative had to occur on the stage, as for example the description of the Argives. Euripides brings Antigone to the walls of the city and allows her to view the enemy. Aeschylus had contented himself with the spy's report. (ii) There was a need for more action as, for instance, the meeting of the brothers and the Menoeceus episode. (iii) The play demanded the introduction of fresh characters: Polyneices, Menoeceus and Jocasta.

The originality of Euripides is shown in many ways. The truce, the meeting between the brothers, the mother's attempt at reconciliation are all original, but by making Jocasta survive the discovery and Oedipus the Argive expedition Euripides embarks upon an innovation that is far more striking than any to be found in Aeschylus or Sophocles. Again, the characters are conceived differently, and in the case of Eteocles and Polyneices the balance of sympathy has shifted so as to make Eteocles the unscrupulous tyrant and Polyneices the wronged victim. Oedipus has lost his essential nobility and becomes instead a pitiable old man. The chorus too, which in the *Septem* is of vital importance for the shaping of the action, and which in Sophocles forms an integral part in the structure of the drama, has lost its former grandeur and becomes an ideal and impartial spectator whose task is simply to show that about the house of Laius has always hung a cloud of sorrow.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

(1) For the exposure and deliverance of Oedipus vide schol. on Phoen.26. Hyginus (Fab.66.) Robert (op.cit.p.326. plate 49.) Deubner (op.cit.p.42.)

For the blinding vide schol. on Phoen 61. Robert (op.cit.p.307. plate 48.) Robert (op.cit.p.70.sqq.) thinks it likely that Euripides found both versions in the epic accounts.

(2) Vide Hyginus (Fab.72.) Robert (op.cit.p.381sqq.)

(3) Vide Robert (op.cit.p.396.sqq.)

(4) For a reconstruction of the Oedipus vide Robert (op.cit.p.305.sqq.) His general conclusion is that Creon discovering that Oedipus, of whom he was jealous, has slain Laius stirs up Laius' friends against him. Oedipus is blinded by the servants of Laius, but finds comfort in the devotion of his wife, Jocasta. A second discovery, however, follows: Oedipus finds out that he is married to his own mother. On this Jocasta commits suicide.

(5) When the Phoenissae was produced we do not know. It is generally regarded as being one of Euripides' later plays. Pearson (op.cit.p.XXX11.) places it between the years 409 - 407.B.C.

On the difficult question of interpolation vide Kitto ("The final scenes of the Phoenissae." C.R.L111.) Meredith (C.R.L1.) Powell (op.cit. introd.p.7.sqq.) Page (Actors interpolations in Greek Tragedy.") I have followed Kitto for the final scenes, and elsewhere Powell who concludes that the Teichoscopia (88 - 201.) and the dialogue (1264 - 83.) are an addition by Euripides himself. The other suspected passages 1104 - 40 and 1221 - 58. are not by him.

(6) This version of the story seems to be Euripides' own.

(7) cp Pohlenz (op.cit.p.406.)

(8) Aeschylus, as we have seen, has taken the two curses of Oedipus and welded them together. Euripides takes only one version: that the brothers shall divide their heritage by the sword. (66.sqq.) The second curse that they shall die by each other's hands is eliminated. The mutual slaying follows not from Oedipus' curse, but from the

character of the brothers. The motive for the curse is given by Teiresias. (874.sqq.) The brothers have failed to give their father the honour due to him, and have kept him a prisoner within the palace contrary to the will of the gods. By their treatment of him they have driven him mad.

(9) Kitto (op.cit.p.356.) cp. Sheppard (Greek Tragedy p.144.) Rivier (Essai sur le Tragique d'Euripide p.179.)

(10) Grube (op.cit.p.353.sqq.) takes the view that the Phoenissae is tragedy. All he succeeds in doing is to make it a very bad one.

(11) Robert (op.cit.p.415.) thinks that Euripides may have taken the version which makes Jocasta survive the discovery from the Thebais, possibly also her suicide over the bodies of her sons.

(12) Decharme (Euripides and the spirit of his dramas p.233.) who makes a more interesting Phoenissae than Grube says "only a mother's authority was strong enough to induce Eteocles to see his brother once more." I do not see this.

(13) As Robert (op.cit.p.427.sq.) says while in the Iliad the aged Priam asks the questions and the young Helen answers, here the young Antigone asks the questions and the old paidagogus answers. In Aeschylus the spy had brought in news of the proposed attack. In Euripides the paidagogus has gone through the enemy lines conveying the truce terms to Polyneices, (142.sqq.) hence he is able to describe the Argives to Antigone.

(14) The schol. on 202 suggests that the chorus is composed of Phoenicians in order that they can fearlessly criticise Eteocles' ambition. Decharme (op.cit.p.237.) says that Euripides chose Phoenicians simply because he did not wish to follow in Aeschylus' footsteps. Both suggestions are weak.

(15) In the Supplices (150.sqq.) Polyneices goes into voluntary exile to avoid the curse of his father.

(16) The debt to the Antigone is here obvious.

(17) Powell (op.cit.p.76.) compares the story told of Pelopidas before Leuctra. (Plut. Pel.XXI.) Pelopidas dreamed that he was ordered to sacrifice a golden-haired maiden if he was to conquer. He consulted

the prophets who quoted among other incidents that of Menoeceus. Powell says that the story of Menoeceus may have been suggested to Euripides by the Boeotian story of Androclea and Alcis.

(18) As Euripides says (751.sq.) it would be a waste of time to name the defenders. Obviously so, for there is, as far as he is concerned, nothing very special about them. Piety and moderation mean nothing in a play of this sort. For the possibility of a literary reminiscence vide Kitto (op.cit.p.357.sq) and Supplices 846.sqq.

(19) Vide Kitto (op.cit.p.361.) who makes this point and the following one concerning the breaking off of the narrative at critical points.

As Kitto (op.cit.p.362.) says Antigone has to go to the battlefield with Jocasta in order to lead the procession back and so be in a position for the exodus.

(20) The edict of Creon forbidding the burial of Polyneices, the disobedience of Antigone, and her engagement to Haemon are all taken from Sophocles. What is new is the banishment of Oedipus.

(21) That Oedipus survives the Argive expedition is Euripides' own idea. cp. Robert (op.cit.p.415.)

(22) There seems to be a reference here to Laius' rape of Chrysippus, the story of which was told in the Oedipodeia. Pelops had invoked the aid of Hera when he cursed Laius, hence to placate her the infant Oedipus was exposed in the sacred meadow of Hera. (vide Pearson op.cit.p.XVIII. Deubner op.cit.p.1.sqq.)

(23) In the O.T. (774.) Polybus was king of Corinth (other traditions made him king of Sicyon.) and Merope was his wife. In the Phoenissae Euripides does not say where Polybus was king, nor does he name his wife.

(24) At 1043 it appears that Oedipus went to Thebes to conquer the Sphinx by the command of Apollo.

To what extent Euripides adapted incidents from other writers cannot be determined, but the variants in the myth here tend to indicate earlier forms of the choral lyric. We know, for example, that Stesichorus wrote a Europa, (schol. on Phoen.670.) and there is a mention also of

an Eriphyle. It is not impossible that Stesichorus had dealt with other parts of the Theban story.

(25) Ismene who is mentioned by Jocasta at 57 does not come into the play.

(26) As Pohlenz (op.cit.p.404.sq.) says "Keine Einzelperson ist der 'Held der Tragodie', sondern die ganze Familie dessen Untergang wir erleben." cp. Meridier (op.cit.p.149.)

(27) Grube (op.cit.p.345.) finds in Oedipus "the ultimate unity of the play."

(28) The closest comparison is the Oresteia which deals with the Atreidai legend in much the same way as this play deals with the Theban legend. In the Iphigeneia in Tauris there is less background, more real drama.

C O N C L U S I O N

The chief aims in writing this thesis were (a) to mark what has been altered or added to the story of Oedipus by the three great dramatists of the fifth century, and (b) to show that these alterations and additions were made with a specific end in view. To further these aims we have broadened somewhat the scope of the thesis so as to include in it a gathering together of the pre-Aeschylean versions of the story; in the case of Aeschylus a reconstruction of the two lost plays of the trilogy, and in the case of each poet a personal interpretation of the plays connected with the Oedipus legend.

Since our conclusions have been stated in the main body of the thesis we may content ourselves here with a few general observations. We find that as each of the three tragedians came to deal with the legend of Oedipus he selected for his purpose those incidents in the story which best suited his form of tragedy. When he did not find exactly what he wanted he invented a version to suit himself. Each poet had his own special manner of innovating and each his own special motives. Aeschylus profoundly altered the whole spirit and intention of the legend not so much by alteration of the existing story as by infusing into it those religious and political ideas in which he was so interested. The novel features of the story either preferred or invented by Sophocles often have reference to the smoother working of the plot, the dramatic effect of the separate scenes, and the harmonious development of the drama. Euripides, always remarkable for his originality, has dealt with the legend in a very free manner, often adopting or inventing a more fantastic form of the legend in preference to the more traditional one.

We have discovered too that when the three poets differ in respect of the details of the legend it does not follow that the earliest version is that adopted by the earliest poet.

The legends of Greece had grown up free and abundantly, infinitely complex and varying widely, but none more than the legend of Oedipus. The old story of how Oedipus all unwittingly slew his father and wed

his own mother and in consequence brought ruin upon the whole race was a subject which kindled the imagination of successive generations of poets from the earliest times. Epic poet and Lyric poet had dealt with the story, and each one had left his own abiding mark on it, but it was left to the genius of the tragic poets to breathe into it the very breath of life. How and how well they have done this we have attempted to show in the foregoing pages.

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