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OLIVER TAPLIN

SOPHOCLES IN HIS THEATRE

I shall conclude with some big questions about the end of *OT*: I start with a small one about the beginning of the play. In Sophocles' original production was Oedipus presented as lame; was he "majestic but for his tell-tale limp"?¹ The question gambols in the wake of Jean-Pierre Vernant's new and characteristically brilliant essay on "Lameness, Tyranny, Incest in Legend and History"². I maintain, though not confidently, that Sophocles' Oedipus did *not* limp, because such a peculiar stage device would call for some comment, and yet the text nowhere alludes to any abnormality of gait (nor does *OC*). In his dialogue with old Corinthian (1031 ff.) the pinning of his feet as a baby is referred to as an ἀρχαῖον κακόν and δεινόν γ' ὄνειδος, and as the origin of his name; but neither here nor anywhere else is there any allusion to a persisting disability. This is not the mere musing it might seem at first sight. If Oedipus were to limp this would be, right from the start, a flaw betokening the imperfection of his lot and his eventual downfall. This flaw would undermine

¹ F. FERGUSSON, *The Idea of a Theater* (Princeton 1949), 19; quoted with approval by B. KNOX, *Oedipus at Thebes* (Yale 1957), 263 n. 68, and in a stage-direction in his new collaboration with R. FAGLES (New York 1982), 139.

² *Arethusa* 15 (1982), 19 ff. (published as I was making my final draft).

the paradigmatic extremity of Oedipus' tragedy, the complete reversal of life-lot which has been well brought out by Vernant himself³. I shall return to this at the end; my point for now is that issues such as that of Oedipus' limp, which face any director (whether or not he feels any compunction about respecting Sophocles' own conception) cannot and should not be shirked by the scholar and literary critic (whether or not the man of the theatre takes any notice of him). In fact the barrier between the academy and the theatre is slowly breaking down, and scholars are now asking some of the questions that confront any conscientious director or actor.

I have heard this kind of approach to literary interpretation through the dramatist's use of his theatre attacked because it attempts to limit, or close, the possible readings of the play. Some modern literary studies set polysemy and multivalence against definitive accounts, and advocate the openness of autonomous reading rather than the dictates of authorial intention. In keeping with this tendency Charles Segal has recently tried to save both presentations of Oedipus—both limping and apparently flawless—in the early scenes of *OT*: "In the paradoxes of this play the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive and may in fact be mutually necessary"⁴. The fact remains that in Sophocles' own production Oedipus either did or did not limp. We may not be in a position to decide with confidence, but the call for a decision will not go away. The critic, if he is determined to maintain the unrestricted creativity of the reader, must turn his back on at least one restriction, Sophocles' own realization in his own theatre.

³ *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece* (Paris 1972; English transl., Brighton 1981), chapter 5; first published in *Echanges et communications. Mélanges offerts à Claude Lévi-Strauss* (Paris 1970), II 1253 ff.

⁴ On p. 139 n. 25 of his excellent study of visual symbolism in Sophocles, in *CW* 74 (1980/81), 125-142.

I shall try to show how Sophocles carefully gives significance to his stage space and to the movements within it, how he charts a kind of theatrical geography⁵. I would single out this sense of stage direction, along with his use of stage-objects (the chief subject of Segal's essay), as Sophocles' specialities in theatrical technique. In our intimate enclosed theatres it is not usual to create a strong sense of locality. It may be because of the interior stage-space that most plays are set in a place that lacks definition. (In fact some of the best local scenes are created by a demarcation within the area of the stage, such as the hovel on the heath near Dover, or the chalk circle at Nuka.) Within his huge acting space in the open air in the light of day and set in the surrounding physical landscape, Sophocles could fashion a more definite locality. The grove of the Eumenides and the bronze threshold at Colonus come first to mind; but I hope to show that this is the culmination of a persistent concern with the theatre as a representation of men moving or staying still within the physical terrain of the world.

The Greek stage is, in a sense, a place where three roads meet. Rather as Greek tragedy captures a crucial 'now' within the past and future on either side⁶, so the *orchestra* is a fateful place where the drama gravitates from all others, a place where journeys converge and culminate. This concentration of time and place is not some mere dramaturgical rule. To either side are the two *eisodoi*. These are roads⁷. The actor cannot step in or out of sight in a couple of paces as in most indoor theatres. These roads may lead to the city, or may lead away, abroad; they can be the beginning and end of

⁵ It was with mixed feelings that I found similar metaphors used of the theatre of Racine by Roland BARTHES, in *Sur Racine* (Paris 1960), 15 ff.

⁶ Cf. J. de ROMILLY, *Time in Greek Tragedy* (Ithaca 1968), chapter 1.

⁷ Cf. N. C. HOURMOUZIADES, *Production and Imagination in Euripides* (Athens 1965), 77. For the term *eisodos* rather than *parodos* see my *Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977), 449.

momentous journeys. A particular significance may be established for them within each play. By contrast the third way, the door of the *skene*, usually leads into a house or palace, and is, so to speak, a 'cul-de-sac'—as in all Greek houses, there is no back door. The house is fixed, introverted, enclosed: the *eisodoi* lead outside, beyond, towards openness and change.

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Oedipus' limp is unlikely but not ruled out. Can we say with more confidence from which side of the scene Polynices arrived at *OC* 1254? I have no answer to the historical question of whether he entered by the right or left, east or west *eisodos*⁸; but that is a more restricted and restrictive challenge than to map Polynices' movements in relation to the overall geography of the play. In suppliant plays part of the pattern of expectations is that one direction leads abroad, while the other leads to the protecting city—it is more important to recognise this division than to know which was right and which left. The suppliant arrives or has arrived from one direction, the pursuer follows from there, the side of danger: the rescuer, usually the friendly king, comes from the other direction, that of safety⁹.

In *OC* these bearings are firmly and straightforwardly established. In one direction lies Athens and Colonus: from there comes any hope of protection—the Colonean, the chorus, above all Theseus. The other direction, which Oedipus and Antigone come from at the very beginning,

⁸ I discuss this question briefly, but with full bibliography, in *Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, 450–1. The most significant recent discussions are HOURMOUZIADIS (*op. cit.* in p. 157 n. 7), 128–36 and K. JOERDEN, in *Die Bauformen der griechischen Tragödie*, ed. W. JENS (München 1971), 369 ff.

⁹ Cf. *Stagecraft*, 239; 451, on Aeschyl. *Supp.*

leads abroad, especially to Thebes: thence come pursuit and danger. Ismene prepares for the threat, and Creon embodies it (see 396 ff.; 455 ff.; cf. 653 ff.). She does not, however, prepare for Polynices also; we do not suspect another approach until Theseus at 1156 ff. breaks the news that a man is nearby. He is a suppliant,

προσπεσόντα πῶς
βωμῶι καθῆσθαι τῶι Ποσειδῶνος, παρ' ᾧ
θύων ἔκυρον ἡνίχ' ὀρμώμην ἐγώ.

(Polynices himself recalls his supplication to Poseidon at 1285-8.) Theseus here specifically reminds us how he rushed to the rescue at 887, leaving his rituals incomplete:

τίς ποθ' ἡ βοή; τί τοῦργον; ἐκ τίνος φόβου ποτὲ
βουθυτοῦντά μ' ἀμφὶ βωμὸν ἔσχετ' ἐναλίῳι θεῶι
τοῦδ' ἐπιστάτῃ Κολωνοῦ;

This hasty arrival will have been from the direction of Athens, the direction in which Theseus will have departed at 667—the opposite, that is, to that which Creon has come from, and by which Antigone has been dragged off, and by which Creon threatens to haul Oedipus. Only this opposition will reflect the dramatic shape of the action. So Sophocles makes it clear that Polynices enters at 1249 ff. from the 'Athens side' of the theatre ¹⁰.

This is, I suggest, a telling (as well as neglected) difference between Polynices and Creon. They duplicate the rôle of the pursuer, they both come to Colonus to fetch off Oedipus to help them at Thebes ¹¹. But once the parallel is

¹⁰ Cf. A. D. FITTON-BROWN, *Greek Tragedies as First Performances* (Leicester 1970), 13; K. JOERDEN, in *op. cit.* (p. 158 n. 8), 387; 395 (in contradiction of his table on p. 380); *contra* R. C. JEBB, *Sophocles. The Plays and Fragments. Part II. The Oedipus Coloneus* (Cambridge 1928), p. 199: "on the spectators' left", for him the direction abroad; also B. KNOX - R. FAGLES, *op. cit.* (p. 155 n. 1), 342.

¹¹ Cf. the good discussion by P. BURIAN, in *Phoenix* 28 (1974), 408 ff., esp. 422-4.

established the contrasts press in. They are particularly concentrated on the two arrivals, both marked by Antigone's reporting the approach to her blind father in a dialogue with antilabe (720-23 and 1249-53). Creon marches on boldly with the support of henchmen (οὐκ ἄνευ πομπῶν), and sets about softening the chorus: Polynices is alone and in tears (ἄνδρῶν γε μούνοσ. . . etc.), and he is at a loss to do anything except rebuke himself for his own negligence. As preparation for Creon there are the warnings of Ismene and the fears of Oedipus—he is man of violence: Polynices is a suppliant, Theseus has spoken for him, even more, Antigone has made a moving plea that Oedipus should speak to her brother, and, by implication, should be kind to him (1181-1203)¹². Possibly he is costumed as a suppliant rather than as a soldier?¹³ Add to all this that Creon arrives from the side of danger, while Polynices comes from the side of security. It is a small touch but carefully signalled and confirmed, comparable with Sophocles' insistence against tradition on the primogeniture of Polynices (Ismene at 374-5, as well as Polynices himself at 1292-6 and 1422-3).

The opposition of symbolic topography which opens these two scenes gives extra point to the way they end. After being exposed as an unscrupulous manipulator of lies and force, Creon is escorted off by Theseus and a guard of Athenians to recover the daughters. Polynices, on the other hand, tries no lies or threats and uses no force, yet he is even more terribly cursed. Oedipus repeatedly tells him to go to

¹² On forgiving in Greek tragedy see J. de ROMILLY, *La douceur dans la pensée grecque* (Paris 1979), 77 ff., esp. 84.

¹³ Admittedly he talks more than enough of his military support in 1301-25, but I am inclined to believe that there has been a large interpolation in that passage, even possibly all of 1308-25: see M. D. REEVE's case against 1313-22 in *GRBS* 11 (1970), 291-2. (I was glad to see this taken seriously by M. L. WEST, in *Gnomon* 53 (1981), 527 n. 19.)

his doom (ἔρρε 1383; στεῖχε. . . ἰὼν 1393; cf. the chorus at 1398 ἴθ' ὡς τάχος πάλιν). Polynices does not defy or deprecate his father's curse. He laments the way he has to go: it is a journey whose destination is the grave—οἶον ἄρ' ὁδοῦ τέλος. . . (1400). Antigone begs him not to go, and he argues with her (1432-5):

καὶ μή μ' ἐπίσχηις γ' · ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ μὲν ἦδ' ὁδὸς
ἔσται μέλουσα δύσποτμός τε καὶ κακὴ
πρὸς τοῦδε πατρὸς τῶν τε τοῦδ' Ἑρινύων ·
σφῶ δ' εὐοδοίη Ζεὺς, τάδ' εἰ τελεῖτέ μοι. ¹⁴

So he departs to Thebes, to death, by the road opposite to that he entered by. Charles Segal has remarked that "the road is the single most dominant spatial metaphor of the play" ¹⁵. While Prodicus' parable of the choice of Heracles is the most celebrated example of the image, the archetype of the rough and smooth roads of life goes back to Hesiod, and Theognis, facing a dilemma, pictures himself as one standing at a cross roads ^{15a}. As so often, the theatre is able to produce a powerful fusion of the metaphorical and the literal.

I cannot attempt here a proper account of the significance of Polynices within the play. It will be clear, however, that I do not regard his treatment as merely the punishment of another villain in the same class as Creon. It is not enough to point to Polynices' crimes and to Oedipus' Δίκη: Polynices

¹⁴ I follow R. D. DAWE's Teubner text unless otherwise remarked. Here I readily follow his athetesis of 1436 (first Dindorf).

¹⁵ Ch. SEGAL, *Tragedy and Civilization. An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981), 368; see also P. E. EASTERLING, in *PCPhS* N.S. 13 (1967), 11-12. For a good collection of material on the image in early Greek literature as a whole see O. BECKER, *Das Bild des Weges und verwandte Vorstellungen im frühgriechischen Denken*, Hermes Einzelschr. 4 (Berlin 1937).

^{15a} Prodicus Fr. 2 Diels-Kranz (*Vorsokr.* II 84 B 2), *ap.* Xen. *Mem.* II 1, 21 ff.; Hes. *Op.* 287-292 (see M. L. WEST, *ad loc.*); Theognis 911 ff. ἐν τριόδῳ δ' ἔστηκα· δύ' εἰσὶ τὸ πρόσθεν ὁδοὶ μοι / φροντίζω τούτων ἥντιν' ἴω προτέρην...

honestly admits his faults and appeals to Αἰδώς¹⁶. We welcome the exposure and humiliation of Creon, but surely our response to the destruction of Polynices is not meant to be similar. Nor am I happy with the explanation that Oedipus has by this stage ceased to be human, that he is already before death demonic. At least I think Knox goes too far when he writes "he both foresees and determines the future"¹⁷. For Oedipus still has a 'blind spot'. He is much concerned for the future well-being of his daughters; almost his last act in this life is to entrust them to Theseus, enjoining him τελεῖν δ' ὅσ' ἄν / μέλλῃς φρονῶν εὖ ξυμφέρωντ' αὐταῖς αἰεὶ (1634-5). Clearly he does not foresee that Antigone is soon to come to an untimely end, alone, unmarried, unwept. Yet the play foresees this, and firmly though deftly insists on it. Bowra's claim that "at the end of *Oedipus at Colonus* no unresolved discords remain" is surely deluded¹⁸. Polynices, before he goes, pleads that, if he is killed and his sisters come home to Thebes, they should bury his corpse and give it due honours, and so win praise (1405-13, cf. 1435). At the very end (1769 ff.) Antigone asks Theseus for an escort to help her and Ismene go to Thebes and try to prevent the bloodshed. Theseus, as asked by Oedipus, agrees to do anything within his power that is πρόσφορα. The allusion is inescapable: Antigone will not prevent the bloodshed, the brothers must die, and she must die for caring for Polynices' body. Oedipus did not see that in cursing Polynices he was also dooming

¹⁶ Cf. P. BURIAN, *art. cit.* (p. 159 n. 11), 424. P. E. EASTERLING, *art. cit.* (p. 161 n. 15), 6-10 shows the justice of Oedipus' appeal to Δίκη, but does not convince me that his son's appeal to Αἰδώς is outweighed.

¹⁷ *The Heroic Temper* (Berkeley 1964), 160; cf. 148: "Now he does know surely, sees clearly; the gods give Oedipus back his eyes, but they are the eyes of superhuman vision."

¹⁸ *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944), 349; my gloomier view is similar to that of R. P. WINNINGTON-INGRAM, *Sophocles. An Interpretation* (Cambridge 1980), 248 ff., esp. 274 f.

Antigone. The final stage-movement of the play is Antigone's departure by the *eisodos* which goes in the direction of Thebes, an ironic outcome to Polynices' prayer σφῶ δ' εὐδοίῃ Ζεὺς—an unresolved discord.

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OC is not, I maintain, the only tragedy of Sophocles whose ending is equivocal, disturbingly divergent from a more straightforward resolution. The final stage-direction aggravates rather than relieves a tragic doubt. I shall look briefly at *Electra* and *Philoctetes* before going on to consider the earlier *Oedipus* play at greater length.

A choice of two obvious endings seems to confront us as *Electra* progresses; and most modern criticism has, in effect, been divided between the interpretations which each would imply. The 'traditional' view concludes with Orestes and Electra justly reclaiming their ancestral palace where they will live comfortably for the rest of their days. The 'ironic', and more pessimistic, view, which has become dominant in recent years, predicts that trouble will start moments after the end of the play—remorse, Erinyes, exile and all the rest¹⁹. Exile, at least, should be ruled out. By ending the play with the entry of Orestes into the palace (the *skene*) Sophocles is positively diverging from Aeschylus, whose play ends memorably with the flight of Orestes away from Argos pursued by Furies. Euripides' *Electra* is even more different (and while leaving the problem of priority open, I would not object if my observations on the endings were taken to weigh

¹⁹ Full bibliography for both views in CH. SEGAL, *Tragedy and Civilization*, 461 notes 2 and 3. There has since appeared a defence of the 'traditional' view of more than traditional sophistication by T. A. SZLEZÁK, in *MH* 38 (1981), 1-21.

in favour of putting Sophocles last). Euripides' play ends with the departure of both Orestes and Electra into separate exile. Orestes has not even reached the ancestral palace; his return from exile is, in effect, turned back at the borders of the land (see line 96). On the other hand the highly unconventional way that Sophocles stops his play abruptly half way through the standard sequence of the killing is, by itself, warning against over-confidence in the future. Of the many worrying points brought to bear by Winnington-Ingram, Segal and others—some more cogent than others—it is particularly Aegisthus' notorious question, just before being taken inside, which hangs over the ending without a reassuring answer (1497-8):

ἡ πᾶς ἀνάγκη τήνδε τὴν στέγην ἰδεῖν
τὰ τ' ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα Πελοπιδῶν κακά;

The stage topography seems purposefully to reject exile; but the future of Orestes and Electra *within* this ancestral palace does not look bright either.

It is a commonplace that *Philoctetes* has a double ending, one before and the other after the epiphany of Heracles. I have argued that there is a third, earlier, ending when Philoctetes has been deserted and goes into his cave to await death (1217)²⁰. I used to regard each succeeding conclusion as more satisfactory than the one before; but consideration of Sophocles' endings in his theatre has provoked second thoughts.

The *skene* represents Philoctetes' cave, the οἶκον... οἴκησιν (534), where he has eked out his solitary life for so many years. One of the two *eisodoi* is used, if at all, only for Philoctetes' first entry at 219; it leads to the interior of

²⁰ *GRBS* 12 (1971), 35-43. Structurally speaking we seem to have had a final lyric dialogue lament ending with an exit; only with retrospect does it emerge as an act-dividing lyric dialogue.

Lemnos, his private terrain, which he so vividly evokes (esp. 936 ff.; 1146 ff.)²¹. The other *eisodos*, by contrast, is used and about to be used throughout the play. It goes to the shore and Neoptolemus' ship; its destination does not end there, however, since the ship's voyage divides between the possibilities of Troy and of home in Greece²². The significance of this path to the ship changes repeatedly throughout the play, depending on whether the intended journey leads to Troy or Greece, and whether Philoctetes is about to go deceived or knowing, by force or choice.

When Philoctetes finds that he has been deceived he turns back to his cave (952 ff.; cf. 1081 ff.):

ὦ σχῆμα πέτρας δίπυλον, αὔθις αὖ πάλιν
εἴσειμι πρὸς σὲ ψιλός, οὐκ ἔχων τροφήν...

And when he finally goes inside at 1217, there is a certain grim rightness to this ending. The last χρηστός (see line 437) is left in his desert landscape to achieve a kind of ironic symbiosis with the wild creatures who had nourished him. We are bound, however, to feel much happier about the ending which is imminent at line 1402 ff., since Neoptolemus has been restored to friendship and honesty, and has discovered his own φύσις (see esp. 1310-3). The instinctive sympathy between the two men has now grown into a bond such that they will stand together against the dishonesty and cowardice of the rest of the world. As they begin to take the path to

²¹ I have come to doubt the entry from the cave advocated by A. M. DALE, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge 1969), 127-8, partly because the association of man and terrain is enhanced by using this *eisodos* on just this one occasion. οὐκ ἔξεδρος, ἀλλ' ἐντοπος ἄνθρωπος in 211 must mean "the man is not far off, but near" (Jebb). Cf. D. B. ROBINSON, in *CQ* 19 (1969), 34-9.

²² There is some comparison with the way that one *eisodos* in *Antigone* goes out of the city into the plain, and there divides to two places which are important for the play: (i) where the corpse of Polynices lies (see esp. 249 ff.; 407 ff.; 1196 ff.), (ii) the tomb-like rock chamber which is Antigone's place of punishment (see esp. 773 ff.; 1204 ff.).

Greece we must desire and endorse this outcome²³. But Heracles blocks it: he has come to tell them the will of Zeus, κατερητύσων θ' ὁδὸν ἣν στέλλῃ (1416). They will finally depart by that same *eisodos*, but it will lead to Troy, to cure and glory and reintegration into society. We are, I suggest, bound to compare this journey with the two we have seen earlier, the first with Philoctetes staying on Lemnos by himself for ever, the other leading to a noble stand with Neoptolemus against a society not worth reintegration. I am now persuaded that, having set up the comparison, Sophocles encourages our doubts about his final ending by including lines 1440-41, the call for piety at the sack of Troy²⁴. Addressed to almost anyone but Neoptolemus, the sentiment might have been a mere cliché. His deeds at the sack of Troy were so notorious that even this small warning suddenly grows into an insistent black cloud on the horizon that had seemed set fair. Once again Sophocles refuses the road of unsullied redemption; again he subtly yet devastatingly flaws our untragic hopes for happiness and integrity.

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The basic stage-map of *OT*, finally, is simple and conventional. The *skene* represents the royal palace, one *eisodos* leads to the city of Thebes, the other leads abroad. From the city direction come and go the priest and suppliants, the chorus, Teiresias and Creon (after his first

²³ Alexis Minotis told me that at the Greek National Theatre production at Dodona in 1981 (where he directed and played *Philoctetes*) there was enthusiastic applause by the audience who thought the play had ended, before they were interrupted by Heracles; when the applause was resumed at the end it was less enthusiastic.

²⁴ See esp. R. P. WINNINGTON-INGRAM, *op. cit.* (p. 162 n. 18), 297-303. P. E. EASTERLING, in *Illinois Class. Studies* 3 (1978), 34-39 and Ch. SEGAL, *op. cit.* (p. 161 n. 15), 355-61 still find the actual ending ultimately more satisfying ("we surely must feel that going to Malis is a second best. . .", Easterling p. 37).

entry). It appears that Oedipus himself does not use that *eisodos*, but makes all his appearances from the palace, as does Jocasta of course. For most of the play everyone, including Oedipus, believes that he originally came to that house from outside. It turns out that he is the true-born heir, yet that discovery brings no joy (cf. Teiresias at 452-4). Teiresias, riddling with imagery of a sea voyage, warns that the navigation of Oedipus' life has not been as fortunate as it seems (420-23):

βοῆς δὲ τῆς σῆς ποῖος οὐκ ἔσται λιμήν,
 ποῖος Κιθαιρῶν οὐχὶ σύμφωνος τάχα,
 ὅταν καταίσθῃ τὸν ὑμέναιον, ὃν δόμοις
 ἄνορμον εἰσέπλευσας εὐπλοίας τυχών; ²⁵

For it transpires that this is the house where he was born, and indeed conceived, in the ancestral θάλαμος. It is there, to the νυμφικὰ λέχη, that Jocasta goes to kill herself (1241 ff.), and there that Oedipus finds her and puts out his eyes (1260 ff.). Not all the waters of Istros and Phasis could wash this palace clean (see 1223-31).

The third direction gathers associations in a more complex way, for Sophocles pieces together, beyond it, a sort of chart of Oedipus' past. The three characters who come from that *eisodos* are Creon, returning from Delphi, the old man from Corinth, and the old shepherd from Mount Cithaeron ²⁶. These are three of the four landmarks which (as though viewed from the top of Parnassus) are linked by the route of Oedipus' life-journey.

²⁵ The language is strained, but Dawe's lacuna after 422 seems provoked by an insistence that the seer should speak plainly.

²⁶ K. JOERDEN, in *op. cit.* (p. 158 n. 8), 386-7 seems to neglect 758-64 and other passages in having the old shepherd come from the side of the city. Also I can see no basis for his division of the *eisodoi* into a side of truth and a side of falsehood. This seems to be a temporal rather than spatial division: in the past delusion came from all three directions, now truth comes from all three.

The fourth landmark is the first to be mapped in the course of the play. In the dialogue between Oedipus and Jocasta at 729 ff. we learn about the junction of the three roads in Phocis. Before long (774 ff.) this is plotted on a journey which led from Corinth to Delphi and from Delphi to Thebes. We have heard often how Oedipus arrived in Thebes²⁷: now we realise that he came to face the Sphinx fresh from his encounter in Phocis. Oedipus' voyage continues to be reconstructed in reverse. Next comes the revelation that the Corinthian had taken the baby Oedipus from Mount Cithaeron, and given him to Polybus at Corinth (1025 ff.). He had him from another shepherd on the mountain (1038 ff.); and there the track stops for the brief choral song at 1086 ff. It is not long before Oedipus is pressing the old servant on the question of where *he* got the baby from—τίνος πολιτῶν τῶνδε κακ ποίας στέγης; (1164). The person who best knows the last link is inside the very palace before which they are standing: ἡ δ' ἔσω / κάλλιστ' ἄν εἴποι σὴ γυνὴ τάδ' ὥς ἔχει (1171-2). The journey has come full circle.

Oedipus does not use that *eisodos* during the entire play, yet we are made to reconstruct the two fateful occasions in the past when he moved along it. First, carried away by the servant, when he was less than three days old (717-8); then returning, years later, fresh from his triumph over the Sphinx—the bridegroom on his hymeneal procession. The journey starts and ends in the same θάλαμος, in the same harbour:

ἰὼ κλεινὸν Οἰδίπου κára
 ὦι μέγας λιμὴν αὐτὸς ἤρκεσεν
 παιδὶ καὶ πατρὶ
 θαλαμηπόλῳ πεσεῖν. (1207-10)

²⁷ First and especially at lines 35-6; cf. also 258 ff.; 396.

Sophocles' play embodies physically Vernant's analysis of the whole shape of the myth: "the story of Oedipus is that of his return to his place of origin"²⁸.

This carefully plotted circuit underlies Oedipus' powerful speech at 1369-1415. Now that he knows the truth there could be no pleasure or point in seeing his parents, his children, the city of Thebes or the citizens (1369-90). He tells over the sequence which has brought this about.

First,	ἰὼ Κιθαιρών, τί μ' ἐδέχου. . .	(1391-3)
then	ὦ Πόλυβε καὶ Κόρινθε καὶ τὰ πάτρια λόγῳι παλαιὰ δώμαθ' . . .	(1394-7)
then	ὦ τρεῖς κέλευθοι καὶ κεκρυμμένη νάπη, δρυμός τε καὶ στενωπὸς ἐν τριπλαῖς ὁδοῖς. . .	(1398-1401)

and so to Thebes (δεῦρ' ἰὼν 1402), and to the last of Oedipus' apostrophes of past landmarks ὦ γάμοι γάμοι. . . (1403 ff.)²⁹. When this track leads him ineluctably to deeds too monstrous to name, Oedipus pleads for release, for a way out of the circle of his life (1410-12)

ὅπως τάχιστα, πρὸς θεῶν, ἔξω μέ που
ἐκρίψατ', ἢ φονεύσατ', ἢ θαλάσσιον
καλύψατ', ἔνθα μήποτ' εἰσόψεσθ' ἔτι.

This brings us to the last exploitation of the *eisodos* which leads abroad: the way that it is *not* used at the end of the play³⁰. I do not need to detail all the passages which prepare

²⁸ *Art. cit.* (p. 155 n. 2), 23. Cf. also R. LATTIMORE, *The Poetry of Greek Tragedy* (Baltimore 1958), 100; J. HAY, *Oedipus Tyrannus. Lane Knowledge and the Homosporic Womb* (Washington D.C. 1979), 93-101.

²⁹ On the interpretation of 1403-8 see C. W. MACLEOD, in *CQ* 32 (1982), 232-3, now reprinted in his *Collected Essays* (Oxford 1983), 45-6.

³⁰ I made a beginning on this topic in my *Stagecraft* (*op. cit.* in p. 157 n. 7), 184 (a discussion of 'false endings') and in *Greek Tragedy in Action* (London/Berkeley 1978), 45-46. Since then I have had the benefit of reading a draft of an article on the end of *OT* by Dr. Malcolm Davies, now published in *Hermes* 110 (1982), 268-77. Among those few others who have seen that there is a point worth discussing I would single out H. D. F. KITTO, *Poiesis. Structure and Thought* (Berkeley 1966), 200-242, esp. 214-6, and B. SEIDENSTICKER, in *Hermes* 100 (1972), 260.

us for the play to end with Oedipus' departure from Thebes into exile—there are over twenty, some slight, many prominent. They include a prophesy by Tiresias (417-9, though note the indefinite ποτε):

καὶ σ' ἀμφιπλήξῃ μητρός τε καὶ τοῦ σοῦ πατρὸς
ἐλᾷ ποτ' ἐκ γῆς τῆσδε δεινόπους ἀρά,
βλέποντα νῦν μὲν ὄρθ', ἔπειτα δὲ σκότον.

And he adds the detail ξένην ἐπὶ / σπήπτρῳ προδεικνὺς γαῖαν ἐμπορεύσεται (455-6). Once he knows the truth, Oedipus' desire to leave his ancestral home and to be cast out into the wild is violent and almost obsessive. The messenger warns of it even before the blind Oedipus is seen (1290-1):

ὥς ἐκ χθονὸς ῥίπων ἑαυτὸν, οὐδ' ἔτι
μενῶν δόμοις ἀραῖος ὥς ἠράσατο.

Oedipus sings of exile (1340-44)

ἀπάγετ' ἐκτόπιον ὅτι τάχιστα με,
ἀπάγετ' , ὦ φίλοι, τὸν μέγ' ὀλέθριον. . .

and then he speaks of it in the great rhesis summarised above (1381-2, 1410-11 quoted). When Creon arrives Oedipus' first request to him is (1436-7):

ῥίπον με γῆς ἐκ τῆσδ' ὅσον τάχισθ' , ὅπου
θνητῶν φανοῦμαι μηδενὸς προσήγορος.

And he reiterates his pressing requirement at greater length in 1449-58, where he specifies Cithaeron—οὐμὸς Κιθαιρῶν οὗτος (1452)—as the place he will go to die.

These passages must be the foundation of what has probably been the single most potent idea, or deep structure, in recent interpretations of *OT*, the ritual of the φαρμακός, the scapegoat³¹. This is constantly assumed, and never denied, in Vernant's influential essay, and he presumably endorses the observation, which he says others had already made, that "at

³¹ For an account of this ritual see W. BURKERT, *Griechische Religion*. . . (Stuttgart 1977), 139-42.

the end of the tragedy, Oedipus is hounded from Thebes just as the *homo piacularis* is expelled. . .”³². Yet it is not in fact Sophocles’ *Oedipus* which ends like this, it is Seneca’s. The comparison with Seneca is revealing since he spells out the kind of ending which Sophocles has led us to expect—magnificent, cathartic, off into the wild taking with him the sins of the world—*mortifera mecum vitia terrarum extrabo*³³. Those who have looked closely at Sophocles’ ending are agreed that that is not the way it is. We might wish that the wording of the trochaic dialogue at 1515-23 were clearer, but there can be little doubt, even without the preliminary covering of the same ground at 1422-45, that, when at 1521 Oedipus says ἄπαγέ νύν μ’ ἐντεῦθεν ἦδη and Creon confirms this, σταῖχέ νυν. . ., Oedipus goes into the palace to await a Delphic decision³⁴. We are left free to think that sooner or later he will go into exile, if that is what the god grants (see 1438-9; 1518), that he will sooner or later (ποτε) fulfill Teiresias’ prophecy. But not

³² J.-P. VERNANT, *op. cit.* (p. 156 n. 3), *passim*; the quotation is from p. 100 of the English translation. Two other influential expositions of the scapegoat Oedipus are the first chapter of F. FERGUSON, *op. cit.* (p. 155 n. 1) and R. GIRARD, *Violence and the Sacred* (Paris 1972; English transl. Baltimore 1977), esp. chapter 3.

³³ Line 1052 to the end: *quicumque fessi corpore et morbo graves
semanima trabens pectora, en fugio exeo;
relevate colla. mitior caeli status
post terga sequitur: quisquis exilem iacens
animam retentat, vividos haustus levis
conciat. ite, ferte depositis opem;
mortifera mecum vitia terrarum extrabo.
violenta Fata et horridus Morbi tremor,
Maciesque et atra Pestis et rabidus Dolor,
mecum ite, mecum. ducibus his uti libet.*

³⁴ In order to avoid this conclusion W. M. CALDER III, in *CPh* 57 (1962), 219 ff. has to stretch the words unconvincingly; for example he glosses τοῦ θεοῦ μ’ αἰτεῖς δόσιν in 1518 as “CR (*still sympathetic but with a slight tone of surprise*): You are asking me for what the god has already granted you”. D. A. HESTER, in *PCPhS* 23 (1977), 45-46 has recently revived the theory that lines 1515 *ad fin.* replace Sophocles’ original ending which was similar to that in Seneca. This easy way out disregards the preliminary dialogue at 1422-45.

yet. Twice in *OC* at 433-44 and 765-71 Oedipus recalls, at some length and with some bitterness, how when at first he had longed for exile it had not been granted; and how when he had eventually grown reconciled to staying at home and his θυμός had subsided (see 438; 768), then—χρόνιον 441—then he was cast out³⁵. This possible future does not diminish the grim burden of the end of *OT* as it is.

In terms of stage geography Creon refuses to let Oedipus escape down the *eisodos* that leads abroad, away, elsewhere: instead he commands him to go back inside the *skene*, the 'cul-de-sac', by himself without even his daughters—back into his ancestral palace, the place where he was conceived and wedded, where he put out his eyes. The easy ending, which would be a kind of second start for Oedipus, is refused. As Colin Macleod put it "he has to go on being humiliated and guilt-ridden where he belongs"³⁶.

I would therefore reverse Charles Segal's pronouncement that "Oedipus begins and ends as a man without a house"³⁷. At the beginning of *OT* he seems to be without an established house, but in truth he has one and is already living in it (cf. Teiresias at 452-3 ἐγγενής / φανήσεται Θηβαῖος). At the end he must live on in that house. He longs to leave it, to dwell in the wild mountains, but he is not allowed to. The point is, I think, that exile would be some sort of release, to be a scapegoat would be a kind of redemption; Sophocles insists that Oedipus' paradigmatic reversal of fortune should be

³⁵ While these passages might be seen as a conscious link between the two plays, it is not as close as is claimed by B. SEIDENSTICKER, *art. cit.* (p. 169 n. 30), 261.

³⁶ Personal communication quoted in full in my book (*op. cit.* in p. 169 n. 30), 46.

³⁷ Ch. SEGAL, *op. cit.* (p. 161 n. 15), 224. Throughout his chapter Segal seems to me to be trying to have it both ways: to retain the scapegoat pattern (which looms large throughout the book and is applied to *Aj.*, *Ant.* and *OC* as well as *OT*), and yet not to deny the fact that the play does not end with the cathartic departure. This does not face the way that Sophocles invokes the scapegoat solution in order to *reject* it.

complete, without mitigation. Even worse than the homeless lot of the man who in Achilles' account draws only from the jar of evils (Hom. *Il.* XXIV 531-3), it is even more realistic and painful to live on in the same house with the past ³⁸.

The scapegoat pattern is not the only way that modern interpretations of *OT* have found redeeming gains in the final scenes. One thinks, above all, of the final chapter of Knox's *Oedipus at Thebes* which concludes ^{38a} "Sophocles' tragedy presents us with a terrible affirmation of man's subordinate position in the universe, and at the same time with a heroic vision of man's victory in defeat". In most accounts there is a strong compensating undertow near the end, such as "But surely the *Oedipus Rex* is also a play about human greatness" or "Yet in the very excess of his suffering lies man's claim to dignity. Powerless and broken, a blind beggar hounded out of the city, he assumes a new grandeur", or "Yet what ultimately emerges from the *OT* is not a sense of total chaos and despair but a quality of heroism in the power of self-knowledge" ³⁹. But there is no power. Oedipus is free with imperatives, but they are not obeyed. His last words are μηδαμῶς ταύτας γ' ἔλθι μου, and Creon overrules him with

πάντα μὴ βούλου κρατεῖν.

καὶ γὰρ ἀκράτησας οὐ σοὶ τῶι βίῳ ξυνέσπετο. (1522-3) ⁴⁰

³⁸ I think that Jeannette KING misses this point about *OT* (and also about Creon at the end of *Ant.*) in chapter 2 of her generally admirable *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge 1978). She writes (p. 47): "On the one hand there is the traditional tragic ending—the hero's death—and on the other the modern 'unfinished' ending—life goes on". I am not sure that any of Sophocles' surviving tragedies has her 'traditional' ending.

^{38a} B. KNOX, *op. cit.* (p. 155 n. 1), 196.

³⁹ The quotations are from E. R. DODDS, *The Ancient Concept of Progress* (Oxford 1973), 76 (first published in 1966); G. STEINER, *The Death of Tragedy* (London 1961), 9 f.; Ch. SEGAL, *op. cit.* (p. 161 n. 15), 247.

⁴⁰ I am taking it that lines 1524-30 are not by Sophocles, while leaving it open whether they replace some choral lines; see R. D. DAWE, *Studies on the Text of Sophocles I* (Leiden 1973), 266-73.

And if Oedipus needs to be told this, how much has he gained in self-knowledge? ⁴¹

Oedipus does not depart in the direction he so desperately wishes to take; he does not keep his daughters with him; the things he used to have κράτος over have not stayed with him. We, the audience, share Oedipus' disappointment and duress: we long for the resurgence, the grand gesture, the cathartic departure. Sophocles denies them by changing the direction of a few paces. He uses his theatre to stop *us* from finding a way out of his tragedy.

⁴¹ The main purpose of M. Davies' article (see p. 169 n. 30) is to raise this question. He phrases his answer epigrammatically: "To put it positively, his character is so strong that it has remained intact amid the rubble of his outer state. To put it negatively, he has learned nothing". I should like to thank Professor John Gould and Mr. R. B. Rutherford for their good advice.

DISCUSSION

M. Knox: On that limp, I now rather regret that I was led astray by Francis Fergusson's attractive phrase, because that limp has now become part of the Levi-Straussian incest-autochthony stew. Not that I ever thought of him as trailing his leg like Laurence Olivier in *Richard III*: a slight hint of lameness was all I thought of. It was based of course on the exchange between Oedipus and the herdsman at 1031-35 but I would like to renounce it now.

M. Taplin: I wonder if the point of ἄλγος in 1031 might be that a male child would not normally be exposed unless it had some physical weakness or deformity? Line 1033 suggests to me the reluctant acknowledgment of something long concealed, rather than an allusion to an obvious limp.

M. Radt: But ἄλγος would be a very strange word to denote a physical defect.

M. Knox: I am impressed by your treatment of the entrances in *OC*: as you present them, they reinforce the themes of the play eloquently. But I wonder about the Polynices entrance. Theseus comes back from the 'Theban' side, after his rescue of the daughters. He knows that there is a suppliant sitting at the altar of Poseidon (so he has been told, λόγος 1150, φασιν 1156). How has he been told? The altar of Poseidon, at which he was sacrificing when he was interrupted by the cries of the Chorus lies, according to you, in the other direction, towards Athens and so it is from that direction that Polynices enters, not from the same direction as Creon. So some messengers must have gone to tell Theseus, on his way back from the pursuit, about Polynices at the altar. But why does the altar have to be in the direction of Athens? We are told that Poseidon is the tutelary deity of Colonus (54). Theseus comes from Athens (549) and leaves Oedipus at 667 to go and offer sacrifice to Poseidon. Why does he have to go back in the

direction of Athens? Why not in the direction of Thebes? In that case he would have seen Polynices on his way back from the pursuit. One more point. Polynices is sent on his way by the chorus $\nu\upsilon\nu\ \tau'\ \acute{\iota}\theta'$ ὡς τάχος πάλιν—*back* to Thebes (1398).

M. Seidensticker: Ist es denkbar, dass der Altar Poseidons (1158) uns einen Hinweis auf die Richtung gibt, aus der Polyneikes kommt? Muss dieser Altar nicht auf der Seite von Kolonos und Athen liegen? Auf jeden Fall scheint es mir *dramatisch* wirkungsvoller, wenn der Hiketes Polyneikes nicht von der gleichen Seite kommt, wie der Aggressor Kreon, sondern von der 'Seite der Sicherheit', auftritt und nach dem Fluch des Vaters, auf der 'Seite der Gefahr', d.h. in Richtung Theben, wo er seinen Tod finden wird, abgeht.

M. Winnington-Ingram: Polynices enters from the altar of Poseidon, i.e. from Colonos. I find it difficult to suppose that Colonos was envisaged as lying on both sides of the stage-area, though doubtless it was close at hand. Is it too hard to suppose that a message had come to Theseus behind the stage, as it were? (Of course, if we knew that the Chorus entered by *one eisodos* only, this would virtually settle the question.)

M. Taplin: I can see that there is a danger of circularity in the argument from 'dramatic sense', none the less I do not think that Bernard Knox's arguments outweigh those in favour of having Polynices enter from the 'Athens side'. πάλιν in 1398 need not be pressed literally: he should go away again. Bernard Knox himself points to the clear indications in 1150 and 1156 that Theseus has only heard about the stranger at the altar of Poseidon and has not seen him: this militates, if anything, in favour of an entry by Polynices from the opposite side from Theseus at 1096.

M. Winnington-Ingram: In *Electra*, Electra ends up, with Orestes, inside the house. I feel that Sophocles wished neither to exclude the subsequent pursuit of Orestes (which would go against the legend), nor positively to imply it (which would raise issues and rouse emotions that he did not wish to develop). Remember that Erinyes have been at work in the house for a long time. One will still be there: Electra (cf. 185-192)!

M. Taplin: Good point. Cassandra at Aeschyl. *Ag.* 1188 ff. sees the κῶμος of the Erinyes ἐν δόμοις. . . δύσπεμπτος ἔξω. Those who maintain that the legend did not dictate the exile of Orestes point, of course, to the *Odyssey*.

M. Winnington-Ingram: As for the entry of Philoctetes, the main argument for the view that he enters from the cave is not that a sudden appearance (with the famous bow) would be dramatically effective (though this it would be), but that, if he entered by an *eisodos*, he would be seen for some little time by the audience, though *not*, apparently, by the Chorus, who use words of sound, but not of sight (201-19). This for me is conclusive.

M. Taplin: If, as I prefer, Philoctetes was to make his entry along the *eisodos*, it would be a long painful stage-movement. I imagine that he would first come into sight at about line 210; and I do not see why the chorus should not be supposed to have seen him. It is admittedly strange dramatic technique for them to comment so exclusively on the sound he makes.

M. Knox: On the ambiguous end of *Philoctetes*, I too am convinced by Winnington-Ingram's demonstration that the reference to εὐσέβεια at Troy casts a shadow over the future. I have always felt that it was a disturbing ending and pointed out in *The Heroic Temper* that the nostalgia in Philoctetes' final address to the island suggests his dismay at the prospects of the future.

M. Steiner: My own bias is to emphasize the absolute character of certain tragedies. But is Oliver Taplin not placing *too* much weight on the single detail of blind Oedipus' return to the palace? The play has been rich in indications that the carrier of pollution must be removed from the city. Oedipus himself alludes to an as yet unknown future. He will await the oracle in the palace. This does not really constitute the Sartrean 'zero-ending' suggested by Taplin. Moreover, though it seems unlikely that this play could have been related to others in a trilogy, the point is not absolutely certain. Finally, even *if* the re-entrance into the palace shows Oedipus to be stripped of all power, it most certainly does not rob him of his paradoxical magnificence.

M. Winnington-Ingram: The situation is somewhat similar to that at the end of *Electra*, the main difference being that the exile is specifically fore-shadowed (which the pursuit of Orestes is not). Sophocles, however, wished to concentrate upon the individual destiny of the hero as at the point the action has reached. Apart from the two great unwitting crimes, the past is vaguely handled, and the future (including the cursing of the sons) is left in "the lap of the gods". Oedipus is left not only shut in with his memories by his blindness, but shut in within the house.

M. Knox: I think you go much too far in your presentation of the dark aspects of the final scene in *Oedipus Tyrannos*. Certainly Oedipus has been deprived of power, as Creon tells him: the fact that he had to tell him speaks volumes for his unconquerable spirit. And he dominates the last scene with three long speeches. The other character, Creon, does nothing after his first attempt to get Oedipus off stage (1424 ff.), but react to the blind polluted hero. And there is one passage in which he looks forward to the future 1455 ff. He knows that his destiny must be some δεινὸν κακόν otherwise he would not have been saved from death: nothing else can touch him, no disease or anything else. He is reserved for something κακόν but it will also be δεινόν—strange, terrifying, something to be wondered at—nothing, in any case, ordinary.

M^{me} de Romilly: Je crois qu'il ne faut pas considérer seulement le *sort* du héros (même au futur), mais l'impression morale qui se dégage pour le spectateur. Celle-ci tient vraiment à l'œuvre, à la façon dont elle oriente les sympathies, dont elle entoure le héros, dont elle explique sa conduite. L'écrasement de fait n'est pas tout: il laisse la place à un «and yet...»!

M. Seidensticker: Wenn ich Sie richtig verstanden habe, Herr Taplin, sind Sie der Auffassung, die ich durchaus teile, dass die Schlüsse von *Elektra*, *Philoktet* und *Oedipus in Kolonos* dramatisch offen und emotional ambivalent sind? Warum wollen Sie im Falle des *Oedipus Tyrannos* auf diese Komplexität verzichten?

M. Taplin: Yes, I concede that my argument is too extreme, and is inconsistent with my case that other Sophoclean endings are not black and white. And we must at least pity Oedipus. I hope that, none the less, there

was value in putting the extreme position, and in emphasising the way that the final stage-direction purposefully contradicts the preparation for immediate expulsion. But I am swayed by the considerations raised and particularly by lines 1455-7. There is, so to speak, a chink of light, a suggestion of future release; but the ending is still very dark. I think I am influenced by the fate of Creon at the end of *Antigone*. He is denied the release of death, and at the end of the play is shut in his palace with the corpses of his wife and son. He must live with this own disaster.

M. Winnington-Ingram: On Mr. Steiner's point about connected trilogies: trilogies may have been an option for tragedians after Aeschylus, but there is virtually no evidence that it was taken up by Sophocles. The three Theban plays, as we all know, were not a trilogy.

M. Radt: Our only testimony for a connected Sophoclean trilogy is the inscription mentioning Sophocles' Τηλέφεια (DID B 5,8, in *TrGF* I p. 39). What the *Suda* has about Sophocles having given up writing tetralogies (T 2,5 f., in *TrGF* IV p. 41) cannot be built upon because of the corruption of an essential word.

Mme de Romilly: La disparition des trilogies s'accorde bien avec l'augmentation de la longueur des pièces, du nombre des acteurs, des péripéties de l'action. La pièce, avec de tels moyens, peut se suffire à elle-même.

M. Taplin: I have worked on the usual assumption that Sophocles did not compose connected trilogies; and I do not think the fourth-century inscription from Aexone tells much against this. Our total dearth of Sophoclean *didaskaliai* means that we do not know the titles of any trio of plays which he produced in the same year.

M. Knox: I would like to add a few words to Oliver Taplin's remarks on the *pharmakos* theory which is so fashionable these days—Fergusson, Girard and Vernant have all evoked it in different ways. It is true that the play is full of references to pollution and to the expulsion of the man who is its cause. But this is the normal terminology of the law courts which dealt

with cases of φόνος—as we know from the orators. The ritual of the expulsion of the φαρμακός is something quite different and it is also a subject on which there is much less information than might be supposed from some of the interpretations in which it is invoked. The evidence for the active killing of a scapegoat figure, for example, is almost non-existent: what we have accounts of, or rather references to, are symbolic expulsions—beatings with plants and similar phenomena. The usual highly charged account of the expulsion and killing of the scapegoat is attributed to Hipponax but the fragments of Hipponax contain no such sensational details as the choice of the ugliest man, the killing of the *pharmakos* and the burning of the body: these all come from the accompanying text of that quite untrustworthy character Tzetzes.

M. Taplin: The fascination of the scapegoat for modern critics may be in part *interpolatio Christiana*, or rather *interpolatio Judaica*.

M. Radt: I have just a little question. I wondered why you had the shepherd come from Kithairon. At the time of Oedipus' birth, he used of course to drive his flock to pasture on Mount Kithairon. But now he is a very old man, whom I always imagine as spending his old age in a farmstead, far away from Thebes of course (cf. 760 ff.), but not in the mountains.

Mme de Romilly: J'avais dirigé autrefois un travail sur la montagne dans la tragédie grecque. Ce travail n'a pas été publié mais il était très suggestif (l'idée m'en était venue à la suite du livre de R. Lattimore, *The Poetry of Greek Tragedy*). On y voyait que la montagne était une sorte de lieu symbolique, s'opposant à la cité. On fuit la cité en allant εἰς ὄρος. La montagne comporte d'ailleurs deux degrés: en haut, sur l'Olympe, très loin, les dieux. Plus près, la nature sauvage, Dionysos, Pan, etc... Ceci expliquerait que l'on pense spontanément au Cithéron, où un berger est d'ailleurs à sa place.

M. Taplin: It is true that it is not specified that he has come from Mount Citheron; but he has been sent at his own request ἀγρούς . . . καπὶ ποιμνίων νομάς (761).

There is a memorable 'pan' of the Greek landscape in the superb simile at *Iliad* XII 277-86. The snow falls on the mountain peaks (κορυφάς) and the foothills (πρώνας ἄκρους) and the grasslands (πεδία) and the arable fields (ἔργα), and finally on shore and sea.

(I quite agree, by the way, about the excellence of Lattimore's neglected book.)

M. Steiner: Taplin's stress on the triadic geography of the tragic scene evokes the cardinal motif of the *triadoi* and the *trivium/trivia* in *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus* and the *Oedipus* of Seneca. Whereas Hercules' choice between *two* roads is characteristic of the binary typology of choices between virtue and vice, light and dark, life and death etc., a *triadic* configuration, as we find it in the Oedipus myths and on the Greek stage, points to what is structurally, topologically and existentially *undecidable*. It almost defines the recursively ambiguous, perplexing and formally indefinite ending of certain great tragic conflicts and their representations. Hecate of the *trivia*, the burial of suicides at the junction of three-roads, intimate some almost archetypal association between *triadoi* and the tragic. The very fact that the 'third road' is the one which leads backward, is key to the Oedipus myth. As Vernant says, this is a myth of fatal homecoming.

M. Irigoin: Une τρίδος est ce que nous appelons en français une «patte d'oie», c'est-à-dire un endroit où la route se divise en deux (σχιστή, v. 733), comme un Y avec ses deux branches. Le voyageur se trouve alors placé devant une alternative — prendre l'une ou l'autre des deux voies qui s'offrent à lui — mais non pas devant un triple choix, car la troisième solution, qui consisterait à faire demi-tour, le ramènerait à son point de départ. Remontant en quelque sorte le temps, annulant le parcours déjà fait, il aboutirait à une «remise à zéro».

M. Radt: I think we should make a clear distinction here. The τρίδος in Prodikos' myth and Theognis is a symbol for the choice between *two* things: there is no third possibility, since the third road is the one along

which one has been coming, i.e. one's life up to the moment of choice, and this cannot be turned back. The meeting of three roads in the theatre, on the other hand, to which Mr. Taplin has drawn our attention, does indeed give three possibilities.

Mme de Romilly: Je me demande en fait si la notion des 'trois routes' a une si grande importance symbolique pour l'ensemble de la pièce. Il n'y a aucune insistance chez Sophocle, et il semble s'agir surtout d'un endroit à la fois dangereux pour une rencontre et aisé à repérer pour la géographie. Le choix de l'endroit peut impliquer une ombre, sans pour autant engager tout le sens.

M. Seidensticker: Herrn Steiners Hinweis auf die Unlösbarkeit 'triadischer Konfiguration' erinnert mich daran, dass Oedipus, als er am Ende des *Oedipus in Kolonos*, am Ende seines langen tragischen Lebensweges erneut an einen Dreiweg kommt (1592), haltmacht und sich niedersetzt. Es sind die Götter, die mit Donner (1606) und auf direktem Anruf (1627) für ihn entscheiden; und vielleicht kann man auch sagen, dass im *Philoktet* erst göttliche Intervention (Herakles) das 'triadische Problem' (Troja, Lemnos, Heimkehr) löst, das alle menschlichen Versuche nicht haben lösen können.

M. Knox: I would just like to point out that the three roads are of no particular importance in the Oedipus story except as a means of identification and recognition: Oedipus does not have to choose between two roads—he knows where he is going—away from Corinth, as he says—and he could have got into a fight over right of way just as well on one road as at the meeting-place of three (or rather the bifurcation of one).

M. Taplin: I think some extremely interesting points have been made. In *OT*, Oedipus' return into the palace is a turning back down the road he has come along, back to his origins, but it is a route imposed on him, not of his choice. We must, of course, beware of any oversimple superimposition of the three ways in and out of the *orchestra* upon the choices, so often insoluble, of tragedy.

Of the three possibilities in *Philoctetes*, for instance, one lies inside the *skene*, both the others along one of the two *eisodoi*.

It would make a lot of sense if in *OC* the way by which Oedipus goes to his death (1555) were to be into the *skene*, representing the grove, rather than by either *eisodos*. The gods would then lead Oedipus by the third road. The problem is, as Bernard Knox has pointed out to me, that the messenger tells of familiar landmarks while earlier in the play it appears that the grove is inviolate, ἄβατον (37, 39, 167 etc.). The problems of Greek tragedy seem often to be insoluble on several levels!

