

Conjectures on *Oedipus at Colonus*

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Sophocles, like the honorand of this volume, seems to have suffered no diminution in his creative vigour with the passing of the years. But whereas the scholarship of Marcovich will be protected in the centuries to come by the permanence of the printed word, the text of Sophocles has had the benefit of no such safeguard. In this paper we shall take the play he wrote at around the age of ninety, and see if in a few places we may be able, by conjecture, to restore the pristine clarity of the poet's words to a text which has been dulled during the centuries of its transmission. In each case the excerpts are taken from the second Teubner edition of 1985.

450–54

ἀλλ' οὐ τι μὴ λάχωσι τοῦδε συμμάχου,
 οὐδέ σφιν ἀρχῆς τῆσδε Καδμείας ποτὲ
 ὄνησις ἦξει· τοῦτ' ἐγώϊδα, τῆσδέ τε
 μαντεῖ' ἀκούων, συννοῶν τε τάξ' ἐμοῦ
 παλαίφαθ' ἄμοι Φοῖβος ἦνυσέν ποτε.

453 τε τάξ Heath: τά τ' ἔξ codd.

Heath's popular conjecture does not meet the main objection which has to be levelled against this passage as it is most commonly printed, namely that we have "*from me*" where the sense at first sight should be "*about me*"; hence Rauchenstein's τὰπ' ἐμοί, an unwelcome duplication of the ἐμοί which is to follow in the next line. The Oxford editors, Lloyd-Jones and Wilson, adopt the hob-nailed boot approach just as they do with the next crux we shall consider, and substitute Heimsoeth's συννοῶν τε θέσφατα. But I suspect the true answer is already implicit in Mazon's translation, which Kamerbeek cites at the end of his note ad loc., "et quand je songe en moi-même aux vieilles prophéties." We should write τε κάξ' ἐμοῦ, with Oedipus adding to the external evidence he has just heard from Ismene the internal evidence of his own knowledge. Kamerbeek points out that Dain's note and Mazon's translation are at variance with each other. Dain is correct as against Mazon in identifying these prophecies as the ones "concernant le parricide et l'inceste d'Édipe." Only such an interpretation

is easily reconcilable with both ἦνυσεν and ποτε. Oedipus knows, from his own knowledge, that what Apollo predicts will happen.

503–05

- ΙΣ. ἀλλ' εἴμ' ἐγὼ τελοῦσα· τὸν τόπον δ' ἵνα
 χρῆ στέμμ' ἐφευρεῖν, τοῦτο βούλομαι μαθεῖν.
 ΧΟ. τοῦκείθεν ἄλσους, ὧ ξένη, τοῦδ'...

504 χρῆ στέμμ' Elmsley: χρῆσταί μ' vel sim. codd.

Ismene announces her intention of making the sacrifice according to the ritual which has been prescribed by the chorus in the dialogue at 465 ff. "Very well, I shall go and perform the rites; but the place where I must find the offering with which I shall garland them, that I desire to know." Such is the meaning of the text given above, based on what, from a purely technical point of view, one has to concede is a brilliant emendation by Elmsley. Jebb was not so easily seduced, and retained χρῆσταί, translating "but where I am to find the spot"—impossible, since ἵνα is never interrogative. The trouble with Elmsley's στέμμ' is that even if it could be used for an offering of which a woollen wreath forms only a part, honey and water being the items which the Eumenides will actually consume, the question "Where shall I find all the stuff which you tell me I shall need?" seems strangely literal and prosaic, almost in the manner of Euripides parodying the shortcomings of some myth or other. The Oxford editors show themselves aware of this, and once again march boldly in, this time printing Reiske's ὑπουργεῖν for ἐφευρεῖν. But far more likely would be ἀφιερῶν, "consecrate," with τοῦτο adjusted to ταῦτα, an alteration which will also obviate the unpleasant equation τοῦτο = τόπον. A virtually identical corruption has occurred at *El.* 278: ἱεροῦσ' Seyffert for the manuscripts' εὔροῦσ'.

720–21

- ὧ πλείστ' ἐπαίνοις εὐλογούμενον πέδον,
 νῦν σὸν τὰ λαμπρὰ ταῦτα δὴ κραίνειν ἔπη.

721 σὸν et κραίνειν Nauck: σοι et φαίνειν codd. | δὴ L: δεῖ rell.

The principal difficulty resides in the apparent use of δεῖ with the dative σοι, a use so suspect¹ as to lead editors to accept L's δὴ instead, which in turn necessitates some such further alteration as Nauck's σόν. So much for grammar; but what of the tone of the whole? Antigone's words follow a choral ode in praise of Athens, and her first line clearly indicates that that

¹ At Eur. *Hipp.* 940, the only example that editors can quote from tragedy, the nuance is presumably not "the gods will have to add another land" but "there will be a need for the gods to add another land."

praise has not been lost on her. If she now follows 720 with a line saying, as Jebb puts it, "now is it for thee to make those bright praises seen in deeds!" she might seem to be casting doubt on the validity of those praises, as if all that talk of an ἐγγέων φόβημα δαΐων (699) were just that, talk. In the absence of some strengthening particle we cannot interpret as "now (and not some hours or days hence) is it for thee . . ." On the other hand a sentence tacitly acknowledging the truth of the ode of praise, and asking, rather like those prayers, "if ever you helped me in the past, help me now," for another manifestation of Athenian merit, would be ideal. So write νῦν σ' αὖ τὰ λαμπρὰ ταῦτα δεῖ φαίνειν ἔπη. Nauck's other emendation, κραίνειν, never strictly necessary, is rendered less necessary still once Athens's help on this occasion is seen as another item in the series of excellences on which the chorus have just been dwelling.

1224–27

μη̄ φῶναι τὸν ἅπαντα νι-
 κᾶι λόγον· τὸ δ', ἐπεὶ φανῆι,
 βῆναι κεῖσ' ὀπόθεν περ ἦ-
 κει πολὺ δεύτερον ὡς τάχιστα.

1226 κεῖσ' ὀπόθεν Blaydes: κάκειθεν ὄθεν KZnZo: κείθεν ὄθεν tell.

The definite article in τὸν ἅπαντα λόγον is hard to justify, and the next Teubner edition will, following Blaydes's τιν' ἅπαντα, print τινὰ πάντα: not the whole λόγος, but every λόγος, for which the most apt translation might be, in the current term, "scenario." But the real problem in these lines is the famous crux κείθεν ὄθεν. There is no need to rehearse former discussions. The plain fact is that κείθεν cannot possibly mean "to that place," and no convincing parallel to the alleged attraction of ending to the following ὄθεν can be found. Blaydes's κεῖσ' ὀπόθεν has been the most popular solution to date: "to that place, wherever it is that he has come from." The precision imparted by περ, "to the very same place," does not sit well alongside the indefinite ὀπόθεν, which cannot be a mere synonym of ὄθεν; and one wonders why the required straightforward "go to that place" should ever have been altered to "go from that place."

Perfect sense would be given by a smaller change: βῆναι κεύθε' ὄθεν περ ἦκει. Κεύθεα stands in contrast to φανῆι, the word chosen by Sophocles here in preference to the φῶνι which a close adherence to the Theognidean model (425 ff.) would have suggested, and which Mähly in fact conjectured. In a way κεύθεα corresponds with the ἄδηλα and κρύπτεται in *Ai.* 647: φύει τ' ἄδηλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται. The idea that the life-force not only goes to the Underworld after death but also comes from there at birth is echoed by Plato's words (*Phaedo* 70c–d): σκεψώμεθα δὲ αὐτὸ τῆιδέ πηι, εἴτ' ἄρα ἐν Ἄιδου εἰσὶν αἱ ψυχαὶ τελευτησάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἴτε καὶ οὐ. παλαιῶς μὲν οὖν ἔστι τις

λόγος οὐ μεμνήμεθα, ὡς εἰσὶν ἐνθὲνδε ἀφικόμεναι ἐκεῖ, καὶ πάλιν γε δεῦρο ἀφικνοῦνται καὶ γίνονται ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων. . . οὐδαμῶθεν ἄλλοθεν γίνονται οἱ ζῶντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων. My colleague Nicholas Denyer reminds me too of a passage from the Seventh Letter, where soon after mention of "old and holy stories" the word νοστήσαντι, "returning," is used of the ψυχή of some one in connection with his life ὑπὸ γῆς (335c). If returning, then it is from those hidden depths that the life-force of men arises. The fitness of such a doctrine in *Oedipus at Colonus* may be judged from the mention of the μεγάλαιν θεαῖν at 683 and from 1050 ff. Although there is no reason why the chorus's reflections here should have anything other than a universal applicability, those reflections are prompted by the special case of Oedipus, and the overtones of the word κεύθεα fit very well with what will in the end prove to be his fate; cf. ἄσκοποι δὲ πλάκες ἔμαρψαν / ἐν ἀφανεῖ τινι μόρῳ φερόμενον (1681 f.); ὦ τὸν αἰεὶ κατὰ γῆς σκότον εἴμενος (1701); κοίταν δ' ἔχει / νέρθεν εὐσκίαστον αἰὲν (1706 f.). Compare too Oedipus's own use of the word κέκευθε at 1523.

1568–78

ὦ χθόνιαί θεαί, σῶμά τ' ἀνικάτου	
θηρὸς ὄν ἐν πύλαισι	
ταῖσι πολυξένοις	1570
εὐνάσθαι κνυζεῖσθαι τ' ἐξ ἄντρων	
ἀδάματον φύλακα παρ' Αἴδαι	
λόγος αἰὲν ἔχει·	
τόν, ὦ Γᾶς παῖ καὶ	
Ταρτάρου, κατεύχομαι	1575
ἐν καθαρῶι βῆναι	
ὀρμωμένῳ νερτέρας	
τῶι ξένῳ νεκρῶν πλάκας·	
σέ τοι κικλήσκω τὸν αἰένυπνον.	

1570 ταῖσι Bergk: φασὶ codd. || 1574 τὸν Hermann: ὄν codd.

The most valuable service to Sophoclean scholarship in recent years has been the one provided, with the least imaginable publicity, by Dr. van Paassen of Amsterdam: an astonishingly full list of all the conjectures ever put forward on the plays. Yet here, just for once, something of real value has escaped the trawl. It is Blaydes's λόχον for λόγος in 1573, recorded in his edition of 1859. All that remains to be done is to tidy up some of the peripheral damage which the corruption has brought in its train. But to begin with λόχον itself: Λόγος αἰὲν ἔχει means that there is a perpetual legend to the effect that Cerberus makes his bed and snuffles at the portals of Hades. The perpetuity of the legend is however of minimal importance compared with the constancy of Cerberus's watch, and the fact that his snuffling emanates from the cave is a pictorial detail which again is of secondary importance compared with the idea that the cave is the place

where he lies in wait, and from which he will, when he feels like it, issue forth. It is not for nothing that the poet has written ἐξ ἄντρων and not ἐν ἄντροις; and not for nothing that the eternal nature of Cerberus's watch is to be countered by τὸν αἰένουπνον (1578).

Blaydes's emendation confers another great benefit on the text of this antistrophe. Bergk's ταῖσι for φασί in 1570, substituting as it does a mere definite article as if the scribes had found the word baffling, is incredible in itself, and incredible too is the explanation that φασί is a dislodged gloss on the λόγος αἰὲν ἔχει three lines further on. Φασί is sound.

All that remains then in the immediate vicinity is first to alter ἔχει to ἔχειν, part of the *oratio obliqua* introduced by φασί (this in turn will remove any metrical argument for accepting Hermann's τόν for ὄν in the next line—though stylistically the emendation remains attractive and the next Teubner text will in fact retain it); and secondly to link ἔχειν to the two infinitives εὐνάσθαι and κνυζεῖσθαι by writing either ἐξ ἄντρων <τ'> or ἔκ τ' ἄντρων.

Finally, and on a separate point, since what the chorus are praying for is that Cerberus will stay in the clear for the traveller to the Underworld, the mildest alteration to the phrase ἐν καθαρῶι βῆναι, if alteration is needed, as many editors have insisted it is, would be ἐν καθαρῶι μεῖναι.

1695-97

XO.	οὐ-
	τοι κατάμεπτ' ἔβητον.
AN.	πόθος <-> καὶ κακῶν ἄρ' ἦν τις.

Here is another difficult appearance of βαίνω, and again the right answer may have been found by Blaydes in his edition of 1859: ἔτλητον, a conjecture repeated by Mähly in 1868. This at any rate would approach the sense rightly implied by Jebb's translation: "Ye have so fared that ye should not repine." However the purpose of the present note is not to extol the merits of Blaydes, but to warn against excessive reliance being placed on the supplement <τοι> after πόθος, the conjecture of Hartung accepted by Jebb, Pearson, and the current Oxford text. Kamerbeek gives it the more cautious welcome of "not unsatisfactory." It appears however from the list of tragic examples given by Denniston on page 555 of his *Greek Particles* that although τᾶρα is frequent, τοι and ἄρα *divisim* does not occur.

What of the tone of Antigone's reply? Should she be echoing the τοι in the chorus's οὐτοι? It is at least possible that to their words, which amount to "you haven't done so badly, you know," she replies with a more direct counter, "on the other hand . . .," i.e. <δ' αὖ>.

* * *

Oedipus at Colonus contains 1779 lines. The average length of the other plays is 1427. It is at least possible that some of the disparity originates from interpolation by people who wished to develop yet further the political, patriotic, and religious aspects of the play. To reduce *OC* to the Sophoclean average would require the deletion of 352 lines—a prospect to daunt even the boldest critic. But we may make a more modest start by looking at two more passages, this time printed, to assist clarity, from the third, not second, Teubner edition.

1018–35

KP.	τί δῆτ' ἀμαυρῶι φωτὶ προστάσσεις ποεῖν;	
ΘΗ.	ὁδοῦ κατάρχειν τῆς ἐκεῖ, πομπὸν δέ μοι χωρεῖν, ἴν', εἰ μὲν ἐν τόποισι τοῖσδ' ἔχεις	1020
	τὰς παῖδας ἡμῖν, αὐτὸς ἐνδείξῃς ἐμοί.	
	εἰ δ' ἐγκρατεῖς φεύγουσιν, οὐδὲν δεῖ πονεῖν· ἄλλοι γὰρ οἱ σπεύσοντες, οὓς οὐ μὴ ποτε χώρας φυγόντες τῆσδ' ἐπέξωνται θεοῖς. ἀλλ' ἐξυψηγοῦ· γνώθι δ' ὡς ἔχων ἔχη.	1025
	[καί σ' εἶλε θηρῶνθ' ἡ τύχη· τὰ γὰρ δόλωι τῶι μὴ δικαίωι κτήματ' οὐχὶ σώιζεται. κούκ ἄλλον ἔξεις εἰς τόδ'· ὡς ἔξοιδά σε οὐ ψιλὸν οὐδ' ἄσκευον ἐς τοσῆνδ' ὕβριν ἤκοντα τόλμης τῆς παρεστάσης τανῦν, ἀλλ' ἔσθ' ὅττωι σὺ πιστὸς ὦν ἔδρας τάδε. ἂ δεῖ μ' ἀθρῆσαι, μηδὲ τήνδε τὴν πόλιν ἐνὸς ποῆσαι φωτὸς ἀσθενεστέραν. νοεῖς τι τούτων, ἢ μάτην τὰ νῦν τέ σοι δοκεῖ λελέχθαι χῶτε ταῦτ' ἐμηχανῶ.]	1030 1035

1019 δέ μοι Heath: δέ με codd. || 1021 ἡμῖν Elmsley: ἡμῶν codd.: οἶμον anon. | ἐνδείξῃς Mähly: ἐκδ- codd. | ἐμοί] ὅπου Halbertsma | post hunc versum lacunam indicavit Dawe || 1022 σφ' ἄγουσι Otto | οὐ με δεῖ Halbertsma || 1023 πολλοὶ seu ἄλλις Nauck | σπεύδοντες codd.: corr. Mekler: futurum iam desideraverat Blaydes

The apparatus given above is abbreviated, and we may skim rapidly through the early part of our passage, full of difficulties though it is. Heath's δέ μοι is accepted to avoid the inelegance of πομπὸν δέ με (or δ' ἐμέ) as a paratactic expression of a subordinate thought, exceedingly harsh following τί προστάσσεις ποεῖν; In 1021 ἐνδείξῃς is the proper compound for "putting the finger on" some one: Ἐκδείξῃς would mean "display." Thereafter a lacuna is suggested by two things: First, we need a brief statement of what Theseus will do if he does find the kidnappers *in situ*; second, ἐγκρατεῖς can scarcely mean "the people holding them captive" even with Housman's dubious addition of the article, οὐγκρατεῖς. But it can stand very well as "having power over them" as opposed to

“surrendering power over them,” part of the sense of the putative lacuna. As for 1023, the apparatus speaks for itself.

But what of the rest? In skeletal form the speech develops as follows: (1) Lead the way. (2) <I shall deal with the villains if I find them still there.> Others will, if they have fled with the girls in their power. (3) Lead the way, and recognise that the game is up. (4) Fortune has caught you, the hunter. (5) Gains made by trickery are not permanent. (6) You will have no one else for this purpose. (7) I make this remark because I'm sure you would not have attempted this enterprise alone. (8) Which is something I must consider, and not make the city weaker than one man. (9) Do you think I am bluffing, either now or then?

This is an astonishing farrago. At first all is well, for the repetition of (1) in (3) “lead the way” can be accepted as increasing the sense of urgency; and with our proposed lacuna (3) will in any case stand further from (1) than it does at present. (4) Why fortune? The idea has minimal relevance to the story told. (5) Why trickery? Creon was acting not by trickery but by force. (6) What purpose? (7) The idea that Creon could not have been acting alone does not need to be spelled out now: It has already been taken for granted in ἐγκρατεῖς above. (8) A total *non sequitur*. “I have to bear your numbers in mind, and not make this city weaker than a single individual.” (9) Rodomontade, of only the sketchiest relevance.

The only clean solution to all these problems, which are problems not of textual corruption but of thought, is excision.

1139–49

ΘΗ.	οὐτ' εἶ τι μῆκος τῶν λόγων ἔθου πλέον, τέκνοισι τερφθεῖς τοῖσδε, θαυμάσας ἔχω, οὐδ' εἰ πρό τοῦμοῦ προύλαβες τὰ τῶνδ' ἔπη. [βάρος γὰρ ἡμᾶς οὐδὲν ἐκ τούτων ἔχει.] οὐ γὰρ λόγοισι τὸν βίον σπουδάζομεν λαμπρὸν ποεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς δρωμένοις. [δείκνυμι δ' ὧν γὰρ ὄμοσ' οὐκ ἐνευσάμη οὐδὲν σε, πρέσβυ· τάσδε γὰρ πάρεϊμ' ἄγων ζώσας, ἀκραίφνεῖς τῶν κατηπειλημένων.] χῶπως μὲν ἄγων ἠιρέθη, τί δεῖ μάτην κομπεῖν, ἅ γ' εἴσηι καὶ τὸς ἐκ τούτων ξυνών;	1140
		1145

1141 οὐτ' Elmsley || 1142 del. Lazarewicz || 1148 ἄγων οὗτος codd.: corr.
Heath | vv. 1148 sq. ante v. 1143 trai. Tournier

“Es scheint mir undenkbar, dass dieser nüchterne und unpassende Vers [1142] von Sophokles herrühre” commented Nauck, and the verse was condemned by Mekler too. If we look for more specific arguments, βάρος seems too strong a word for the context, whether taken as anger or depression of spirits. The correct emotional tone has already been given by θαυμάσας ἔχω. Secondly, the reference of τούτων after τῶνδε in the

preceding line is none too clear. Would Theseus really count Oedipus's address to his children and their words to him as two separate things, justifying a plural? Alternatively, would he, in his dismissal of βάρος, really treat it as something which might have emanated from, or be caused by the children? But very likely the interpolator did mean τούτων to refer to the children; cf. ἐκ τούτων at 1149, which unquestionably does so refer. He may also have thought that the γάρ sentence (1143) had to explain θαυμάσας ἔχω, and that to introduce it something stronger than surprise was required. But the sentence can very well be taken as developing the idea inherent in τούμοῦ; indeed one might go so far as to say that the choice of τούμοῦ in preference to something more obvious meaning "what I have to say myself" is best explained on precisely those lines.

But, as with the previous passage discussed, what follows is a *non sequitur*, or at any rate a *vix sequitur*. What Theseus should be doing is citing some previous episode to throw light on the present case: "I give you evidence to prove that I am not the man to win glory by self-praise, hence I shall not be doing it now." If Theseus uses the present case as proof, his argument becomes transparently circular, quite apart from the fact that having said he will not use λόγοι to glorify himself he immediately does precisely that. There is also a technical argument, by no means conclusive, but carrying some weight, to support the idea that 1145–47 are intrusive. The καί concealed in ἄπῳς (1148) gives a perfect connection with 1144 as we pass immediately from the general τοῖς δρωμένοις to the specifics of the recent struggle. If 1148 had been intended to follow 1147, ὅπως δέ would have been the likelier mode of progression.

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