harmony with them, although there are intriguing contrapuntal motifs. While the chorus abandon their retributive tones for the blessings of Eumenides, Athena sounds increasingly like the Furies earlier in the play, emphasizing the need for the old laws and respect for ties of blood.

A subsidiary chorus of women, the attendants of Athena's temple, enter to escort the Eumenides to their new homes. The women bring torches, sacrificial animals, and purple robes that the chorus put on, and they sing a final song in praise of the new residents of their city. The entire company including Athena parades out of the theatre, mirroring two great processions of Athens – the Panathenaic festival, which celebrated Athena as patron goddess of the city, and the City Dionysia, in which the performance of the *Oresteia* itself was a part.[17]

But we needn't look outside the play for the relevance of the costumes and visual detail, since the chorus's dark-red robes re-introduce the colour of the tapestries on which Agamemnon walked. Once a symbol of bloodshed, the colour now celebrates the peaceful inclusion of the Furies into the city. The torch-led procession takes the audience back to the opening scene of the trilogy, where a lone watchman struggled to see a single beacon under the panoply of the stars. The fiery message of conquest broke out like the sun at dawn, only to rise over a scene of destruction. Now, the torchlights signal a different kind of victory, one in which the city truly wins and the defeated party not only shares in the triumph, but is essential to it.

The exit of the Furies from the theatre is not a departure but a homecoming, marked by blessings of fertility, health, prosperity, and hope. Transformed into spirits of birth and regeneration, the Eumenides reunite the animating forces of nature with life-producing marriage, a synthesis that seemed hopelessly shattered in *Agamemnon*. However, the promise of civil concord, of men and women finding their way together, remains only a promise. No secure solution could follow the acts of bloodshed in *Agamemnon* and *Choephori* without trivializing the plays and ignoring the complex network that made the murders necessary. Looking at the Furies, Athena proclaims 'from their terrible faces/ I see great gain for my people' (990–91). Although their bodies are covered in robes of respectability, the horrifying masks remain. The visual dialectic is essential to the *Oresteia*, where good news turns to defeat, homecoming leads to death, and the forces of vengeance and justice are inextricably linked. As the dramatic workings of the *Oresteia* make clear, Aeschylus' trilogy offers at best a provisional resolution, one that must be fought for again and again in the theatre and in the society that produces it.

7

SOPHOCLES' *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS*

Long considered the 'classic' Greek tragedy, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* holds a special place in the history of Western theatre. In some respects the notoriety of the play helps it work on the contemporary stage, since most audiences know the outline of the story. Compare the lack of familiarity with Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, or Euripides' *Ion*, or Sophocles' own *Philoctetes*. However, exposure to the Oedipus myth has its drawbacks as well, for much of the modern fascination with the play derives from Freud's use of the story as the paradigm for his psychoanalytic theory of male infantile desire. There is no denying the importance of the Oedipal complex as a psychological and interpretive model, but it sheds little light on the play Sophocles wrote and, when applied to a production, leads the audience down a theatrical blind-alley.

So, too, does the application of psychological realism to the play, epitomized by questions like 'Why did Oedipus marry someone old enough to be his mother?' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is not a cautionary tale of crime and punishment, where the audience are meant to think that Oedipus and Jocasta should have known better. The issue held no dramatic interest for Sophocles since it never is hinted at in the text.

A more insidious form of theatrical reductionism arises from the mistaken belief that the characters in the play are simply puppets in the hands of the gods. Although Oedipus is born to doom, everything he does on-stage he freely chooses. Even while matching his life to the terrible fate inscribed for him, Oedipus continues to act autonomously, following the best information available. Thinking he is the son of Polybus and Merope, he strives to avoid the pollution of parricide and incest by fleeing Corinth; as political leader of Thebes, he struggles to rid his city of the plague by tracking down the killer of Laius; and, when the opportunity arises, he applies his energies relentlessly to untangle the riddle of his own identity.[1]

This last effort, the most compelling in the play, returns Oedipus to the riddle of the Sphinx on which his earlier fame rests. The answer to the question 'What creature goes on two, three, and four feet?' is man. Oedipus himself personifies the enigma, a tragic figure who is more than

one (terrible) thing at a time. It is important to note that in his confusion Oedipus manifests no moral failing or 'tragic flaw', a (mis)translation of Aristotle's term *hamartia*, which literally implies an archer 'missing the mark', not hitting a bull's-eye. Oedipus errs through simple ignorance of the material facts of his own birth. Out of that situation Sophocles crafts a play that is both keenly particular (Oedipus is like no man) and broadly universal. Do any of us know who we really are, what we are doing, the full consequence of our actions?

The audience's familiarity with the story operates to best advantage in the play's ubiquitous ironies. As Oedipus drives towards the truth, he unwittingly participates in a remarkable series of puns, perhaps nowhere more striking than on his own name. Meaning 'swollen-footed', a reference to the pierced ankles he suffered when exposed as a child, 'Oedipus' contains the Greek word *oide* meaning 'I know', literally, 'I have seen'. The prophet Teiresias taunts Oedipus with 'not knowing who lives with you' (337–38), prompting the retort 'but I/the one who knows nothing, Oedipus, I stopped the Sphinx' (396–97). The verbal play, more prominent in the Greek than in most English translations, suggests that Oedipus' name signals his destiny. A man of intellect, whose rational gaze saw through the riddle of the Sphinx, gradually comes to realize how flawed his vision and understanding have been. His self-blinding adds further irony to his name, 'Oedipus – the one who has seen'. He stabs his eye-sockets (Greek *arthra*, 1270), the same word for ankle-joints (*arthra*, 718) that were pierced as a child. And as he stumbles forth in his blindness, Oedipus' troubled feet and failed vision bring the ironies of his life to their physical fulfilment.

The audience in the theatre resemble the gods who foresee Oedipus' destination but are ignorant of its precise course. That is, we know in general terms where the play is going, and we watch galvanized with horror as Oedipus leads himself (and us) to recognize what always has been present. Critics from Aristotle onwards have marvelled at the working of the plot, unwinding with the precision of a perfectly balanced watchspring. But formalist criteria cannot account for the fact that Oedipus' struggle draws us into the emotional turmoil of his situation, gradually undermining our god-like position as ironic observers until, by the end of the play, we are less sure of the future than Oedipus is.

That Oedipus will lead us through the drama is manifest in the opening scene. Before any dialogue takes place, a group of suppliants gathers at the orchestra altar – small children, young adults ('the unmarried youth'), and older men (probably the chorus itself), the entire assembly led by an old Priest.[2] If the three age-groups represent the three ages of man from the riddle of the Sphinx, as some critics think, then the stage-picture suggests Oedipus' past success as well as his present challenge, the task of saving the city again. Emerging from the palace, Oedipus addresses the suppliants as 'children' (the first word in the play), establishing his paternal responsibilities

as ruler and hinting at the underlying cause of the plague that ravages the city – the child who killed his own father and then fathered children by his own mother.

The Priest describes the wasted earth of Thebes, the dying flocks, the stillborn cries of women, the teeming house of death, the city like a storm-tossed ship whose prow is swamped in blood. Looking to Oedipus for guidance, the Priest does not consider him 'equal to the gods' (31), but first among men, and Oedipus accepts the challenge, declaring to the crowd that 'no one/ among you can make his sickness equal to my own' (60–61). Metaphors of 'making equal', of number, sum, and balance, recur throughout the play, suggesting the equilibrium that Thebes has lost and the hidden truth that Oedipus is 'equal to himself' in truly horrifying ways. Slowly the numbers turn on him, until the notorious place where three roads meet will show him to be equal to his father's killer.

These figures of speech, and the verbal play on ones, twos, and threes, find their theatrical correlative in the organization of actors in successive scenes. Sophocles masterfully exploits symmetry and imbalance in each dramatic encounter, shifting from one-, two-, and three-actor scenes as the play drives towards its climax. At the outset, for example, Oedipus' entrance balances the Priest and suppliants who have gathered in silence, until the arrival of the third actor, playing Creon, tips the action in a new direction. Apparently symmetrical scenes, such as that between Oedipus and the prophet Teiresias, end in discord, and the play's masterfully written triangular scenes – each involving the protagonist and two other characters – eventually reveal Oedipus as the perpetrator of the very deeds he has tried to avoid. He stands alone as the paradoxical still-point where the imbalances of the play – the plague, the murder, the oracles, the three roads – all come together.

When the Priest begs him to help with the plague, Oedipus announces that he already has sent Creon to consult Apollo's oracle at Delphi. As if on cue, Creon returns with the prophetic response, one of many juxtapositions that keep the play moving at speed. Learning that the plague arises from the unsolved murder of Laius, Oedipus vows to find the criminal and 'drive off the pollution/ for no absent loved ones, but for my own sake, and self' (137–38). He means that he will make his rule more secure by finding the killer of the previous king, but the audience hears the unintended irony that twists Oedipus' proclamation back on himself.

In their *parodos*, the chorus graphically evoke the plague that sweeps the city. At one point (190–94) they link the sickness to Ares, the god of war, not the normal Greek divinity associated with disease. It appears that Sophocles intended the epidemic ruining Thebes to call to mind the great plague that ravaged Athens in the early years of the Peloponnesian War (429 and again in 427–26), around the time of *Oedipus*' first production.[3] The predominant dactylic metre, with several lines in full hexametre, points to Apollo's oracle,

since prophetic responses from Delphi took that metrical form. The chorus's pleas for divine help also give parts of the ode the feeling of a fifth-century cult hymn. Clearly the horrific description of the plague and the desperate search for some remedy carried specific contemporary relevance for the audience.

After the *parodos*, Oedipus returns to the stage and vows to track down the killer of Laius 'as if this man were my father' (264). Standing alone before the chorus and the audience, Oedipus curses the murderer and brands him a pariah. The next time Oedipus stands as the sole actor on-stage will be after his self-blinding, when he is caught in the curse that he now, unknowingly, pronounces on himself. The chorus suggest that Oedipus consult Apollo's prophet Teiresias, only to find that Oedipus has sent for him already. As with Creon's return from Delphi, Teiresias arrives almost as soon as he is mentioned, adding to the feeling of irrepressible momentum. Holding a staff for support, the blind prophet is led into the orchestra by a child, a memorable image that foreshadows the appearance of Oedipus at the end of the play, holding onto his children and clutching a blind-man's stick.

Oedipus begs Teiresias to save the city that lies in supplication before him (326–27). Unlike the suppliant scene at the opening of the play, however, this appeal to community and civic responsibility falls on deaf ears. A far cry from the gentle English vicar that classicists once imagined, Teiresias is a dark, uncompromising character, shrill, unpleasant, inaccessible, but one who happens to know the truth and prefers not to share it. Teiresias' intransigence in the face of such desperate public need strikes Oedipus as treasonous, and he suspects collusion between Apollo's prophet and Creon who brought word from Apollo's oracle. The accusation of treachery leads Teiresias to denounce Oedipus himself as the city's pollution, the very murderer he seeks to find. The claim seems so outlandish, and the dramatic pitch rises so quickly, that Oedipus hears nothing but mockery and abuse, and the scene degenerates into one of invective and diatribe. Oedipus taunts Teiresias with blindness and failure to solve the riddle of the Sphinx, and the prophet counters by predicting the blinding insight that awaits Oedipus, the revelations that will 'make you equal to your own children' (425).

The paired speeches give way to a short stichomythic exchange, allowing a real question to surface out of the virulent recriminations. Provoked by a comment about his background, Oedipus asks Teiresias about his parents, and again the prophet answers enigmatically: 'This day will give you birth, and ruin' (438). Oedipus counters that his personal fate is of little consequence 'so long as I save the city' (443), but Teiresias is unmoved and calls his young attendant to lead him off. The prophet's final speech comes somewhat unexpectedly, and it may well be that he delivers it out to the audience while Oedipus stands behind him, back by the palace door. The

words ring out with terrible clarity, but not to the man for whom they are intended:

> That man [Laius' murderer] is here, present: a foreigner by name,
> but he will show himself born a Theban,
> a great occasion, but it will not make him happy.
> A blind man after seeing, a beggar after being king,
> he will feel the ground before him with a stick
> as he makes his way. And he will show himself
> to be both father and brother to his own children;
> to the woman who bore him, both son and husband;
> a fellow-sower with his father, and his blood-letter.
>
> (451–60)

This daring summation of the truth, revealed so early in the play, reminds us that Sophocles has not written a detective story or murder mystery. Rather, his dramatic technique involves the projection of an overriding pattern, guaranteed by the oracle and grounded in the myth, but one that his protagonist cannot see. Acting on his own best instincts, Oedipus must uncover the truth on his own, and the audience watches riveted as he comes upon what has always been there.

After Teiresias and Oedipus exit, the chorus perform their first stasimon. They imagine the killer of Laius roaming the wilds, breaking through the timbers like a mountain bull hunted down by the prophetic voice from Delphi. For the audience, the description of the desperate fugitive applies to Oedipus, his plight all the more pitiable given that he plays the role of hunter as well as the hunted. Twice the chorus call the charges levelled by Teiresias *deina*, an untranslatable word that occurs throughout the play, meaning 'terrible', 'strange', 'clever', 'awful', and 'wonderful' – in the sense of awe-inspiring and full of wonder – something that surpasses, or violates, the norm.[4] The chorus distinguish between the gods who are beyond question and their human interpreters such as Teiresias who are not. They reassert the civic priorities with which the play began, refusing to believe that the prophet's accusations convict the man who once saved the city from the Sphinx.

Creon enters from an *eisodos* to answer the charges against him, charges that he, too, labels *deina*. He reminds the chorus that his life is bound up with theirs, that he considers nothing worse than to be called evil by the city he loves. Time and again Creon describes Oedipus as not thinking or seeing straight, the figure of speech suggesting the underlying twistings of the truth that prompted the charge of treason in the first place. Oedipus confirms how off the mark he is when he bursts onto the stage, accusing his brother-in-law of suborning the prophet and plotting against the throne. Creon mounts a strong defence in a speech that became a *locus classicus* for the disadvantages of holding power, explaining that he prefers

the status and sway of second-in-command to the responsibilities of rule. Reasonable, cautious, well intentioned, sober, Creon reveals the gulf that separates him from Oedipus, who is excessive and impulsive, driven by duty and circumstance to press beyond where a reasonable man would go.

Creon points out that Oedipus rules in Thebes with 'power equal to Jocasta' (Creon's sister and Oedipus' wife), and that he himself is 'equal with a third share' (579, 581), possessing the advantages of kingship without the worries. The image of Oedipus as first among three equals takes theatrical shape when Jocasta enters from the palace as the third party, diffusing the tension between the other two. She shames the men for 'stirring up/ private quarrels when the country is diseased' (635–36). Although she frames her commands as questions, Jocasta effectively takes charge, telling her husband to go inside and ordering her brother home. The only female in the play, Jocasta restores temporary sanity to the proceedings, and the chorus help by initiating a *kommos* with Oedipus, persuading him to let Creon live. After his departure, Jocasta joins the chorus and Oedipus in the *kommos* as she tries to find out what led to this confrontation. The lyric ends with an image of order restored, the ship of state with Oedipus at the helm guiding the city through the present storm.

Jocasta's forceful entrance, coupled with the *kommos* that follows, marks the key transition in the play. The first half of the lyric ushers Creon out of the action, and the second half recalls the situation facing the city and Oedipus' role in leading her to safety. When the lyric dies away, we are in a different dramatic world. Gone are the public pronouncements to the city, and gone too are the heated encounters between Oedipus and the men he suspects of treason. In their place, Sophocles presents an intimate, even confessional scene between husband and wife.

Jocasta calms Oedipus' fears of conspiracy linked with the Delphic oracle by disclosing a long-buried story from her past. An oracle came to her husband Laius that he would die at the hand of his own child, but the king was killed by brigands where the three roads meet. As for the child, mother and father pierced his ankles and left him to die on Mt Kithairon. On the basis of personal experience, Jocasta concludes that the gods can make the future clear, but their human intermediaries – prophets, oracles, and seers – should not be trusted.

One of several accounts of the murder of Laius in the play, Jocasta's story reveals a single detail so surprising to Oedipus that he fails to hear anything else she says. Deaf to her account of the exposed child, he zeros in on the fact that the murder took place where three roads meet. Oedipus begins to cross-examine Jocasta in stichomythia, driven to fit together the pieces of his past. The intensity is palpable, a kind of white heat that takes the play to a deeper dramatic level. Matching Jocasta's confessional tones, Oedipus then tells his wife of his youth in Corinth, the insult at a banquet that led him to wonder if he was a bastard, his trip to Delphi where he heard an oracle that

he would kill his father and sleep with his mother, and – most critically for the moment – his fatal encounter with an old man at a place where three roads meet.

Oedipus relives that meeting in vivid detail, a masterful description of spare, etched moments that culminate in a brief flurry of violence – the party tries to drive him off the road, he protests, the old man strikes him like a beast, he kills them all. If that man was Laius, then Oedipus stands self-cursed, condemned to exile from Thebes. Even in the face of so terrible a prospect, Oedipus fears a worse eventuality. No matter what happens to him at Thebes, he vows never to return to Corinth where he would risk killing his father Polybus and marrying his mother Merope, as the oracle foretold. The implicit reminder to the audience that worse discoveries lie ahead for Oedipus confirms the truth of his observation – 'Someone who judged that these things came against me from a raw, savage god,/ would he not speak in a straight line?' (828–29).

There remains a slim hope that the shepherd who survived the attack will confirm the initial report that several brigands and not a single agent committed the murder. Oedipus sends for the old man: 'If he still says/ that *they* killed him, the same number, then I didn't./ No, it's not possible for *one* to equal *many*' (843–45). Again, Oedipus finds himself in a numbers game where incommensurates come out equal. Jocasta insists that no matter what the shepherd says, the oracle did not come true, for Laius was not killed by his own son. In the cruel world of the play, she takes comfort from the fact that her baby, 'that poor, wretched thing' (855), died long before. Oedipus and Jocasta withdraw together into the palace, a wounded couple striving to make the best of their broken past. The audience see how ragged their hopes are, since their very union is the knotted curse they cannot escape.

Against this dramatic backdrop, the chorus dance out their sense of the sacred, the divine laws that order the world: 'No/ mortal nature, no man/ gave them birth, never will forgetting lull them to sleep./ A god is great in them, does not grow old' (868–71). The chorus then contrast the human drive towards excess that ultimately proves self-destructive, moving out from the killer of Laius to any mortal who acts irreverently and 'touches untouchable things' (an echo of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*). If these men prosper and their actions are honoured, the chorus wonder, 'Why should we perform the dance?' (896). The question is self-reflexive in the extreme, challenging the *raison d'être* of the tragic chorus, and asking the audience to examine their own presence in the theatre. If no divine force supports the world, if it is 'best to live at random as best one can' as Jocasta will claim later (979), then why bother to participate in dramatic festivals and attend the theatre? Why gather to watch the story of Oedipus being acted out?

Before we dismiss the question as too much for any play to ask of itself, recall that fifth-century tragedy was no mere entertainment or celebration of individual expression, but rather a means of engaging the city in a process

of self-questioning, self-correction, and self-definition. If someone literally gets away with murder, as the killer of Laius seems to have done, if one can toy with the world, profit from injustice, trample the sacred with impunity, then on what meaningful basis can the theatre exist? Sophocles' answer seems to be radically simple and humanly complex – tragedy can neither justify nor sustain itself if the world is as random as it appears to the chorus at this moment in the play. This does not mean that the order behind the apparent chaos is pleasant or comforting, for the truth that the play reveals is uncompromising and cruel. Nonetheless, it takes on meaning and significance in the very process by which a character like Oedipus exposes it, and then finds the strength to stare it in the face.

For all its broad implications, the question is grounded in the dramatic situation, the chorus's considered response to the turmoil of the play. The cross-currents batter them as well as the main characters, and in the final antistrophe they threaten to abandon Delphi and the other sacred shrines 'unless these things fit together,/ pointing the way for all men' (901–02). Recalling Jocasta's view that oracles need not be heeded, the chorus fear that 'the things of the gods have passed away' (910). It is as if the physical anguish caused by the plague, vividly present in the prologue and *parodos*, has metamorphosed into a more fundamental, existential fear. The process of that fear is suggested by the last lines of each strophe and antistrophe, moving from faith to disbelief: 'A god is great in them [the sacred laws] and does not grow old' (872); 'Always the god is champion' (882); 'Why should we perform the dance?' (896); 'The things of the gods have passed away' (910). Until Oedipus is found out, the gods and their oracles *must* seem false. Until the murderer is discovered, the civic and religious institutions that make up the *polis* are under attack.

The very moment the chorus proclaim that worship of the gods has left the city, Jocasta enters from the palace and makes her way to the altar of Apollo, bearing a suppliant's wand and offerings to the god. Jocasta's striking about-face underlines the radical insecurity that affects her and everyone else in the play. The queen prays to Apollo to 'untie the knot and make us clean' (921), desperate for her husband who now fears he is Laius' murderer and still is haunted by the oracle that he will kill his father and sleep with his mother. As if answering her prayer, a messenger from Corinth arrives unexpectedly, bearing the news that Polybus has died and Oedipus has been proclaimed the new king. The juxtaposition is remarkable, and Jocasta calls her husband from the palace, overjoyed that the part of the prophecy involving parricide now lies in the grave.

Normally a father's death would be met with grief and lamentation, but the world into which Oedipus and Jocasta have been thrown reverses such natural reactions, and they rejoice at the news. Learning that Oedipus still fears he will sleep with his mother, the Corinthian Messenger happily lifts the burden by informing him that neither Polybus nor Merope was his natural

parent. Oedipus learns that he was found as a baby on Mt Kithairon and handed over to the very man now speaking, who pulled the pins out of his ankle-sockets and named him Oedipus, 'swollen foot'. The Corinthian received the baby from an old shepherd, the same man Oedipus sent for at the close of the previous scene as the sole surviving witness to Laius' murder.

Throughout the stichomythia between the two men, Jocasta says nothing, but the audience knows that her worst nightmare is coming true. Sophocles exploits the potential of the three-handed scene with keen precision, as the spotlight turns inexorably back on the figure who had dropped out of the dialogue. Jocasta finds herself caught by the very forces of chance she hoped would free her husband from divine prediction. The principle of living at random reveals the world (and the oracles) making brutal, all-too-coherent sense, and she begs Oedipus to stop: 'If you have any care for, any love of your own life,/ don't track this down. My disease is enough' (1060–61). The plague that afflicts Thebes now finds its source in Jocasta, who sees the truth, and in Oedipus, who does not. But he knows that he is on its trail, and he will not be side-tracked by anyone, even his wife. Jocasta races into the palace keeping the horrible knowledge to herself, behaviour that strikes Oedipus as the vanity of a woman who fears she married beneath her. Ironically, Oedipus now adopts Jocasta's principle, valorizing the randomness of his own birth: 'I consider myself a child of Chance [or 'Fortune']/ . . . / . . . Such is my nature/ and I would never wish to be otherwise' (1080, 1084–85).

Oedipus and the Corinthian Messenger remain on-stage during the lyric celebration of the chorus, who praise Mt Kithairon as the mother, nurse, and native land of Oedipus, a child of Fortune. Did some god beget him – Pan dallying on the slopes? or Apollo lying with a nymph? or Hermes? or Dionysus cavorting in the meadows? Given the ominous departure of Jocasta, this outburst in honour of Oedipus and his mountain-mother is shockingly out of place. The audience may compare this surge of lyric eroticism and fertility to the opening plague chorus, describing the stillborn labours of the Theban women. In the previous stasimon the chorus had asked 'Why should we perform the dance?' and now they seem to answer the question with a dance for Mt Kithairon. Something is terribly wrong. Whatever 'chance' and 'fortune' are, whatever Mt Kithairon symbolizes, they do not represent the order on which the life and health of the city rest. The radical shift in choral mood underlines the instability at the heart of the play, as the dramatic pendulum swings back and forth with increasing violence.

Into the imaginary world of Mt Kithairon, this sexual playground for gods and mortals, enters a real dweller of the place, the mountain Shepherd who was summoned earlier as a witness to Laius' murder. His arrival begins the final three-handed scene, drawing together the separate strands of Thebes, Corinth, and Kithairon. As before, Sophocles couples the speakers in

different combinations – Oedipus interviews the Shepherd; the Messenger takes up the questioning, pressing the old man about the child he handed over years before; and when the old Shepherd grows reticent, Oedipus resumes the interrogation, threatening him ruthlessly to get at the truth. At this point neither Oedipus nor the play can tolerate delay:

> *Shepherd*: Ahhh! I am on the verge of it, of saying it – *deina*.
> *Oedipus*: And I on the verge of hearing it. It must be heard.
> (1169–70)

The child was Laius' son, whom the Shepherd took from Jocasta with orders to kill it because of a fearful prophecy. Feeling pity, the Shepherd disobeyed and gave the baby to the Corinthian to raise far from Thebes. Now, years later, the same three parties stand together, reunited, confronting what that original meeting has led to.

With ruthless honesty, Sophocles shows that the noble intentions and simple instincts of men and women have wreaked havoc on Oedipus. The Shepherd responded with pity and saved the baby Oedipus; the Corinthian felt sympathy and took the infant to Corinth; the childless king Polybus and queen Merope adopted the orphan as their own, lovingly raising him to be heir to the throne; the Corinthian as Messenger brought the good news that Oedipus was king of Corinth, and then removed his fear regarding his Corinthian 'parents'. As for Oedipus, he strove to avoid the parricide and incest he was warned of at Delphi, only to bring about the very predictions he tried so hard to escape.

The three parties who originally came together on the mountain years before now go their separate ways – the Shepherd and the Corinthian leave via the two *eisodoi*, and Oedipus returns to the palace. For the first and only time in the play, all three passages are used simultaneously, a powerful visual image of the various triads that have led Oedipus to self-knowledge, in particular the three roads that brought him, blindly, face to face with his destiny.

Left alone in the orchestra, where the three theatrical paths converge, the chorus sing a moving tribute to their king. They recount the mutability of all human fortune, where joy and accomplishment vanish like a dream, where success and honour turn to agony and shame. From general observations that mankind is 'numbered equal to nothing' (1188), the chorus turn to the paradigm of Oedipus himself, who surpassed all men, defeated the Sphinx, saved the city single-handedly. In the second strophe they consider his fall 'into the marriage-bed of both son and father' (1209–10), the mark of Oedipus' undying infamy. Time, the agent that brings all things to light, judged Oedipus' and Jocasta's marriage to be no marriage at all, revealing breeder and child to be one and the same. At the close the chorus shift into a more personal mode, wishing they had never seen Oedipus, and yet mourning his fate as if lamenting the dead: 'I shut my eyes in a sleep of death' (1222).

The images of light, darkness, revelation, and sleeping eyes anticipate the news that the Messenger brings from the palace. He tells the audience they have been spared much of the horror, since they did not have to view it with their own eyes. This incessant concentration on eyesight and seeing is more than an ironic foreshadowing of Oedipus' self-blinding. Via the chorus and the Messenger, Sophocles seems to be encouraging the audience to adopt Oedipus' new mode of perception, to 'close our eyes and see', creating from the Messenger's words the dreadful events that have taken place off-stage, out of sight.

We hear first of Jocasta's suicide, and because it is her response, it cannot be Oedipus'.[5] As he earlier dismissed Jocasta's pleas to stop his search, he rejects her answer to what that search unravelled. Instead of ending his life, Oedipus chooses to make literal what was figuratively true about him, and he blinds himself. The Messenger's vivid description of the self-blinding suggests that Oedipus begins the first in a series of confrontations with his past. We hear how he smashes through the bolted bedroom doors, cuts down Jocasta who has hung herself over the bed, and then repeats an action he had performed for so many years. He undresses his wife, taking out the pins that hold her dress, but now he uses them against himself:

> . . . again and again, not just once
> he stabbed and spitted his eyes. Each time the gore
> from the sockets soaked down his cheeks,
> not spurting out drop by drop, but in a gush
> like a black cloud of hail, till the blood softened his face.
> (1275–79)

With the specificity of a sexual nightmare, the final meeting of Oedipus and Jocasta, of son and mother, becomes a telling re-enactment of the physical relationship they enjoyed as man and wife. Gouging out his eyes in the bedroom beside Jocasta's corpse, Oedipus confronts the person with whom he has been most intimate and most ruinously unaware. With that encounter behind him, Oedipus is prepared to return on-stage and face the public.

The palace doors open to reveal the blind hero, and the chorus find the sight *deina* (1297), most *deina* (1298), a judgement they repeat later (1312, 1327) in the *kommos* they share with Oedipus. Drawing on the heightened intensity of the lyric, Oedipus expresses an almost Beckettian amazement that even a disembodied trace of his life remains: 'My voice/ why does it fly/ why does it carry?' (1309–10). He knows the world around him only by sound: 'though all is shadow, I recognize your voice' (1326). Wishing he had died on Mt Kithairon, Oedipus curses the Theban Shepherd for saving his life, and the chorus take his comments to their logical conclusion. Leaving the lyric for regular speech, they suggest that Oedipus would have done better to kill himself rather than to live blind.

Their pronouncement has an immediate effect – Oedipus follows the

chorus into iambic trimetres, delivering a speech that begins unequivocally, 'What I did was done for the best./ Don't instruct or advise me' (1369–70). He vehemently defends his action as the harsher and more fitting punishment. By living blind, Oedipus has cut himself off from all society, fulfilling the curse he pronounced on the killer of Laius early in the play. Moreover, blindness will free him from gazing upon the father he killed when they meet in the underworld, and he will never have to look his incestuous children in the eye.

The competing tensions within Oedipus give the speech its exceptional power, and the actor playing the part must convey the desire both to close off the past and to remember it; to terminate experience and to prolong it; to give up and to fight on. The specificity of the details etched in Oedipus' memory provide their own paradoxical rationale for continuing the struggle: 'Three roads and a hidden glen,/ the oaks closing in where the three ways join – / you drank my father's blood, and my own, shed by these/ hands of mine – do you still remember me?' (1398–1401). The turn of the last question is remarkable, revealing something of the depth of Oedipus' character, a man who earlier wanted to 'wall off the ears/ and dam up the flowing stream of sound, close it all off . . . and dwell outside all reminders of evil' (1386–90). But Oedipus cannot help but remember, to the point of wondering if the signal places in his life remember him.

Oedipus' need to resurrect and reiterate the past reflects what one critic has called a 'definitional fondling of the truth'.[6] By confronting his prior life so forcefully, Oedipus emerges from the chorus and takes the stage on his own. In the final step of his orchestrated return to full strength, he now steels himself for a scene with another actor, facing again the drama of dialogue and conflict. As Creon enters, Oedipus recalls their earlier encounter when he wrongly accused his brother-in-law of plotting to seize power. The reversals of the play are such that Creon, who had no desire for the throne, now stands as the new ruler, and Oedipus is at his mercy.

Sophocles wastes no time in making the audience aware of how different their experience in the theatre would have been if the play were *Creon Tyrannus*. Although he brought word from the Delphic oracle himself that the murderer of Laius should be exiled, Creon now decides to send someone back to Delphi to make sure. Oedipus instinctively knows that his exile is best for the city (1449–58), and the audience too feels that the blind man's rightful place is the slopes of Mt Kithairon, a prophetic voice at home in the wilderness. But the new king insists on the cautious path, slowing down the momentum and refusing to allow the play the closure it has earned.

Deprived of his political and physical powers, Oedipus nonetheless asks the questions, makes the demands, and drives the action forward. Sophocles gives us a verbal *gestus* of the situation when Oedipus launches a long speech with the forceful words, 'And you [Creon], I command you – and I beg you . . .' (1446). The break mid-sentence reflects Oedipus' awareness of his weak

position, and yet it admits to no diminished authority.[7] Although there are moments of abject self-pity, the basic tone of Oedipus' speech remains one of natural dominance, so much so that the very last lines Creon speaks confront the blind man with his true situation: 'Don't think you can rule always./ You have survived, but not your power' (1522–23).

Nowhere is Oedipus' indomitable spirit more evident than in the meeting with his two young daughters, whom he begs to hold one last time. That these previously unseen and unnamed children make the final entrance of the play is a daring piece of dramaturgy. The image of a polluted father embracing his daughters/half-sisters would have seemed monstrous and indecorous to the original audience, something to be kept out of sight. Perhaps for this very reason, their brief scene of reunion achieves a kind of redemption. For the first time since he came to self-knowledge, Oedipus does not focus on himself but on others. His kingdom has shrunk from the great city of Thebes – whom he addressed as his children in the opening scene – to two small, incestuous daughters. Yet he is still *their* leader, predicting the harsh future that awaits them and imploring Creon to help soften it: 'Do not make them equal to my own evil' (1507). Earlier Oedipus asserted that the sight of his children would bring him no pleasure, that he wished he had died on Mt Kithairon, that he would like to cut off all sensory experience. Now he clings to his daughters and acknowledges in their embrace the tangled web of his own life:

> Children, if you were old enough, if you had understanding,
> the things I would tell you . . . But now, I pray only
> that you may live where occasion allows, that you find a life
> better than that of the father who brought you into it.
> (1511–14)

Thinking back over the play's long dénouement, we realize that Sophocles has recapitulated Oedipus' life, presenting a series of encounters between the protagonist and the major players in his past – Jocasta (as reported by the Messenger), the chorus (in the *kommos*), Creon (in their scene together), and his own daughters. Although there is no literal second meeting with Teiresias, Oedipus himself evokes the seer's presence. Groping for his daughters, he resembles the blind prophet led on and off the stage by a small child. Oedipus adopts a prophetic voice, predicting what lies in store for his children and prophesying his own future: 'I know this much – no disease/ no natural cause will kill me, nothing. For I never/ would have been saved from death if it were not for something strange [*deina*] and terrible' (1455–57). But for all their similarities, Oedipus remains essentially different from Teiresias. Oedipus vowed to save the city no matter what the personal cost, but when he and Thebes looked to Teiresias, the prophet turned away. Now, as he huddles with his wretched family in the orchestra, Oedipus again manifests the commitment to

human society that separates him from the self-contained prophet of Apollo.

For the first three-quarters of the play the audience knows what lies in store for Oedipus, and yet we marvel at the way the inevitable falls into place. The precise dovetailing of the plot, the collusion of fate and mortal choice, the dynamics of language and action draw us into the experience of the protagonist as he goes from ignorance to knowledge. After the blinding, however, Sophocles has Oedipus lead us in another direction, where the boundaries are not marked so clearly. With no riddle to solve, no blinding flash of insight to signal the climax, a humbled mortal struggles to live with the truth, and then slowly recovers his strength of purpose and need for human contact. There is no softening here, no sentimental concessions or surrender to heart-warming fellow-feeling. For the play ends with Creon separating Oedipus from his children and forcing him off-stage.[8] And yet the audience has rediscovered the Oedipus who was always there before them – accursed, wilful, inquisitive, courageous, inspiring. Ultimately, Sophocles' play appeals to the theatrical imagination not because of Freud, or fate, or human folly, but because it presents a compelling and fully tragic drama, one in which man is not destroyed, but found.

8

EURIPIDES' *SUPPLIANT WOMEN*

If there is something forlorn about an unperformed play, as Jonathan Miller puts it, then Euripides' *Suppliant Women* cries out with a particularly theatrical eloquence to be reclaimed by the living stage. Set at Eleusis, home of the famous Eleusinian Mysteries, the action juxtaposes the promise of spiritual rebirth with the basic human drive to bury the dead. Not one, but two choruses – the suppliant women of the title and a secondary group of their grandsons – occupy the stage before the action even begins. Later in the play, a long funeral cortège fills the orchestra, only to be followed by a *second* procession bearing the cremated ashes. In between these spectacles of the dead, a distraught wife enters unexpectedly and, from high above the orchestra, leaps into the funeral pyre of her husband. With unrivalled theatrical daring, Euripides explores the compulsions to violence and the costs of war in this neglected masterpiece.

The play opens with Aethra, the mother of the Athenian leader Theseus, making offerings before the temple of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis. The rite she performs, the Proerosia, was intended to guarantee fertile sowing and bountiful harvests for Attica, sharing with the Mysteries a focus on rebirth and regeneration as reflected in the agricultural season. Aethra takes her position in a cancelled entry, surrounded by suppliant women from Argos, who 'bind her' to the altar with suppliant wands (32). They have come to plead that Athens intervene on their behalf and procure the corpses of their sons, the famous Seven against Thebes, who have been denied burial by the Thebans. In addition to the cluster of women around the altar, the Argive leader Adrastus lies prostrate before the entrance to the temple, and near him stands a secondary boys' chorus representing the sons of the Seven.

Through the long opening scene the Eleusinian setting is never forgotten. The altar where Aethra stands (33–34, 291) is 'the holy hearth of the twin goddesses, Demeter and Kore' (as Persephone is called). The chorus admit that their request is inappropriate to Eleusis, given that the Mysteries represent a symbolic conquest over death, for they have come to consign corpses eternally to the underworld, to 'bury the dead' (173–74). That

Michigan, 1969, pp. 28–35; and J.-P. Vernant, 'Greek Tragedy: Problems of Interpretation', in R. Macksey and E. Donato (eds), *The Structuralist Controversy*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972, pp. 285–87.

15 See B.M.W. Knox, 'Euripidean Comedy' (org. 1970), in his *Word and Action*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, pp. 250–74.

16 Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1454a.37–1454b.2, faults the ending of *Medea* for arising from the machine and not from the plot. For an in-depth treatment of the convention, see D.J. Mastronarde, 'Actors on High: The Skene Roof, the Crane, and the Gods in Attic Drama', *Classical Antiquity*, 1990, vol. 9, pp. 247–94.

17 See B.M.W. Knox's excellent essay, 'The *Hippolytus* of Euripides' (org. 1952), in op. cit., pp. 205–30.

18 See W.S. Barrett, '*Niobe*: P. Oxy. 2805', in R. Carden (ed.), *The Papyrus Fragments of Sophocles*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1974, pp. 184–85.

6 AESCHYLUS' *ORESTEIA* TRILOGY

1 Some editors assign the announcement of the Herald's arrival (489–500) to Clytemnestra, arguing that she reappears from the palace at this point. Since manuscripts do not indicate entrances and exits *per se*, and rarely name a new speaker, editors must make such determinations from the dialogue itself and from their sense of the play. Does a production gain more by having Clytemnestra present and silent during the Herald's speech, or by having her appear suddenly and seize control of the scene after he has finished? The latter seems the better choice; the claim that Clytemnestra must be on-stage to learn that her husband has returned is more appropriate to theatrical realism than to Greek tragedy.

2 The question of Menelaus' whereabouts sets up the satyr-play *Proteus* (now lost) that followed the trilogy, telling of Menelaus' shipwreck in Egypt.

3 The Watchman refers to Clytemnestra as 'like a man in thought' (*Ag.*, 11). We meet Apollo the rapist again in Euripides' *Ion*, discussed in Chapter 9.

4 See R. Seaford, 'The Last Bath of Agamemnon', *Classical Quarterly*, 1984, vol. 34 n.s., pp. 247–54.

5 In *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare draws heavily on Ovid's treatment of the same myth.

6 If the *ekkyklêma* was used, then the platform holding the bodies of Agamemnon (in his tub) and Cassandra was rolled out, with Clytemnestra standing above them. If the device was not yet available (it may have been introduced later in the fifth century), then servants carried out the bodies and dumped them on the ground, while Clytemnestra took up her position behind them. See O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977, pp. 325–27, 442–43.

7 See A.F. Garvie (ed.), *Aeschylus, Choephori*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 201–23, for an analysis of the stasimon and a discussion of the dramatic device called a priamel, where a series of examples are used as a foil for the point of particular interest.

8 The Greek word is 'parent', but the masculine article implies the father.

9 It is uncertain if the bodies were carried out or revealed on the *ekkyklêma*. See above, note 6.

10 The staging of the opening section has generated endless controversy; the scenario adopted here takes cognizance of the fact that the orchestra was a far stronger playing area than the space back by the façade. It makes clearest sense of the action and enables the prologue of *Eumenides* to forge strong visual links with other key moments in the play and the trilogy as a whole. For a full treatment, see R. Rehm, 'The Staging of Suppliant Plays', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 1988, vol. 29, pp. 290–301.

11 If Aeschylus had four actors available, as some scholars argue, then Clytemnestra could have been part of the cancelled entry before the prologue, rising from the orchestra floor when it was time for her 'entrance'. A fourth actor also would simplify staging problems in *Choephori*, especially in the final confrontation between Clytemnestra, Orestes, and Pylades, when the servant has just left the stage.

12 To have a stagehand carry on a separate piece of stage-furniture to represent the cult-statue of Athena would disrupt an otherwise smooth transition from Delphi to Athens – the Furies exit at 231, Apollo leaves at 234, Orestes arrives at 235. Those who believe that the *ekkyklêma* was used for the *omphalos* and for Athena's cult-statue fail to consider the problems of upstaging that result, or the fact that such an arrangement pulls the action back to the façade, a relatively weak acting area given its distance from the audience. Moreover, movement is severely restricted if the *omphalos* and the cult-statue are placed on the roll-out machine – the Furies cannot surround Orestes in their binding song, drastically reducing the visual and emotional impact of their dance.

13 A.J. Podlecki (ed.), *Aeschylus, Eumenides*, Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1989, pp. 17–21, and A.H. Sommerstein (ed.), *Aeschylus, Eumenides*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 25–32, offer clear and persuasive accounts.

14 The idea that a crowd of spectators, in addition to the jurors, came on-stage is dramatically redundant, given the presence of thousands of Athenians in the audience.

15 Sommerstein, op. cit., pp. 184–85, pictures smaller urns on a table, but such props might be lost in the enormous theatre of Dionysus. Moreover, a solid table would arrest the movement of the jurors when they came to vote. It would be more effective if the jurors could stop between the urns, vote, and then pass through, suggesting the fluidity of the democratic legal process.

16 As a virgin goddess, Athena never subjected herself to sexual domination, a qualification that compromises her apparent subordination to the masculine point of view. R.P. Winnington-Ingram, 'Clytemnestra and the Vote of Athena' (org. 1949), in his *Studies in Aeschylus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 124–31, and S. Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 258–59, offer interesting analyses of the complex and transgressive character of Athena.

17 Athena's prominence indicates that the primary association was the Panathenaia, but resident aliens, referred to as 'metics' (as the Furies are at line 1011), wore purple robes at both festivals.

7 SOPHOCLES' *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS*

1 Excellent discussion of this aspect of the play can be found in E.R. Dodds, 'On Misunderstanding the *Oedipus Rex*', *Greece and Rome*, 1966, vol. 13, pp. 37–49; G. Gellie, *Sophocles: A Reading*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1972. pp. 79–105, 201–08; R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 150–204; and B.M.W. Knox, 'Introduction' to R. Fagles (transl.), *Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays*, New York, Viking, 1982.

2 Many different ideas have been proposed for the staging of the opening scene. Perhaps the most interesting alternative to the one I suggest is that *no* suppliants accompany the old Priest, and he and Oedipus both use the theatre audience as the crowd who has gathered to seek relief from the plague. Although this scenario handsomely links the plague in the play to the one in Athens around the time of the production (see following note), the Priest orders at least some of the suppliants

to leave with him (142–44), indicating that he is not alone. Obviously, in this staging the chorus come on later in a normal *parodos*. See P.D. Arnott, *Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre*, London, Routledge, 1989, pp. 21–22.

3 On this basis, and the parodies of the play found in Aristophanes' comedies of 425 and 424, experts date *Oedipus Tyrannus* between 429 and 425. For a careful discussion of the play's relationship to the contemporary Athenian situation, see V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1954. The account of the plague is in Thucydides, 2.47–55.

4 Sophocles uses the same word *deina* to open his famous Ode to Man chorus in *Antigone* (332): 'There are many things *deina* in the world, but nothing more *deina* than man.'

5 So, too, the suicide of Lady Macbeth makes it dramatically impossible for her husband to do the same in *Macbeth*, and Svidrigailov's suicide in *Crime and Punishment* tells the reader that Raskolnikov must follow a different path.

6 J. Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1962, p. 203, who finds that the process, 'far from being morbid, is the means to restoration, and almost an act of peace'.

7 Recall Lear as he speaks to Gloucester: 'The King would speak with Cornwall. The dear father/ Would with his daughter speak, commands – tends – service' (*King Lear*, 2.4.99–100). Like Oedipus, the shift in verbs suggests that Lear recognizes his changed circumstance, without fully admitting it. Although he does not mention this example, A. Poole, *Tragedy, Shakespeare and the Greek Example*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1987, makes many useful comparisons between the two tragic theatres.

8 Closing lines spoken by the chorus point to Oedipus as once having epitomized good fortune; now he provides the proof that no mortal can be sure of his happiness until his life is over. As with the closing 'choral tags' of other tragedies, however, the lines may be spurious.

8 EURIPIDES' *SUPPLIANT WOMEN*

1 Euripides returns to this issue in *Orestes* (902–30, 944–45), and Aristophanes exploits its comic possibilities in the parabasis of *Acharnians* (esp. 631–35) and *Wasps* (698–705, 719–21), and in the running attack on Cleon in *Knights* (41–70, 486–91, 710–809, 1111–20). See also L.B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, pp. 82–98; and R.K. Sinclair, *Democracy and Participation in Athens*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 203–08. Although his work constitutes an eloquent defence of Athenian democracy, J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, pp. 112–18, admits the elite status of public speakers in the Assembly.

2 A not uncommon ploy in Greek poetry is to put difficult truths in the mouth of an unsympathetic character, and then arrange events to vindicate the observations. In Homer's *Iliad*, Thersites' comments about the Trojan War are spurned, along with the speaker himself (*Il.*, 2.225–77), only to ring more truly – and more problematically – when Achilles repeats them in the embassy scene (9.315–37, 369–77).

3 The event is referred to obliquely elsewhere in the play (639, 860–61, 934, 1010–11) and described in detail in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (1172–86). The presence of a ladder identifies Capaneus in the art of the period, and the iconography was so pronounced that the Messenger's reference to the proud man on his ladder might have brought Capaneus immediately to the audience's mind.

4 The classic study of this practice is F. Jacoby, '*Patrios Nomos*', *Journal of Hellenic*

Studies, 1944, vol. 64, pp. 37–66; see also W.K Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 4, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 94–124, 249–50; and N. Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, A. Sheridan (transl.), Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1986, pp. 28–30, 56–72. Pericles' funeral oration is in Thucydides, 2.34–47.

5 J.W. Fitton, 'The *Suppliant Women* and the *Herakleidai* of Euripides', *Hermes*, 1961, vol. 89, pp. 438–39.

6 Some critics argue that Evadne climbed up a special structure (rising behind the temple façade) painted to appear like the crags of Eleusis, but such an anomalous construction would eliminate much of the surprise of Evadne's appearance, since the audience would expect it to be used. Evadne could appear on the *theologeion*, as Athena does as the *dea ex machina* at the end of the play, setting up a meaningful contrast between the overwrought young woman dressed for her wedding and the militaristic goddess with her traditional helmet and shield. However, the possibility that Evadne used the cavea – perhaps leaping off the top of the east analemma (the side wall supporting the slope where the audience sat) towards the area of the Odeion of Pericles – would allow the actor to be observed climbing ever higher as the chorus indicate she does (989), impossible to perform on the *theologeion*. A positive advantage of using a non-traditional area is the spark of pure dramatic surprise as Evadne leaps out of sight (and out of the theatre), a fitting scenario for an unprecedented scene.

7 For a summary of what we know about public support for war orphans, see R.S. Stroud, 'Theozotides and the Athenian Orphans', *Hesperia*, 1971, vol. 40, pp. 288–93.

8 See for example G.M.A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides*, London, Methuen, 1941, p. 242; D.J. Conacher, 'Religious and Ethical Attitudes in Euripides' *Suppliants*', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 1956, vol. 87, p. 26; R.B. Gamble, 'Euripides' *Suppliant Women*', *Hermes*, 1970, vol. 98, pp. 404–05.

9 For the play's date, see C. Collard (ed.), *Euripides, Supplices*, vol. 1, Groningen, Bouma's Boekhuis, 1975, pp. 8–14. V. Di Benedetto, *Euripide: teatro e società*, Torino, G. Einaudi, 1971, pp. 158–62, offers a good analysis of the political events surrounding the production.

10 For the vote in the Assembly, see Thucydides, 4.117.1–120.1; and A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 3, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956, p. 603.

9 EURIPIDES' *ION*

1 In a modern theatre a director might have Hermes exit into the audience and take a seat. Gods as both scene-setters and audience are as old as the *Iliad*, where, for example, Athena and Apollo arrange the single combat between Hector and Ajax and then perch in a nearby tree disguised as birds to watch (*Il.*, 7.17–45, 57–62).

2 The translation is Crawley's, *The Complete Writings of Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War*, New York, Random House, 1951, p. 331.

3 See B.M.W. Knox, 'Euripidean Comedy' (org. 1970), in his *Word and Action*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, p. 260.

4 The word *theatês* also is used for 'theatre spectator'. Perhaps Euripides is reminding the audience that the process of 'looking on' in the theatre also implies looking 'into', as Ion does in his soliloquy challenging Apollo (429–51) and here in his speech about Athens.

5 For the *genethlia*, see A.S. Owen (ed.), *Euripides: Ion*, Oxford, Clarendon Press,

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