From:

Vision and Stagecraft in Sophocles

David Seale

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8 *OEDIPUS THE KING*: BLINDNESS AND SIGHT

Oedipus the King opens with a movement, not a tableau.[1] Before a word is spoken a group of suppliants enters from a *parodos* and makes rapidly for the altars in front of the palace. The manner of their arrival bespeaks the earnestness of their supplication; they are in need of salvation. They are dressed in the traditional style of suppliants, in white tunics and cloaks, their hair bound in fillets, also of white. In their hands they are carrying olive branches, wreathed in wool, which they lay on the altars.[2] The composition of the whole gathering is made up from three separate groups which are later pointed out (16–19): children, chosen young men and aged priests, who perhaps marshal the others. This division into three groups was presumably reflected in the stage presentation[3] and seems to confirm that this initial entry was indeed a kind of formal procession. They all sit down by the altars where they have laid their olive branches, in the posture of supplication. The old priest, who is to be their spokesman and who likely led the procession, may remain standing – although initially, until he is called upon to speak, he too may be seated like his fellow suppliants. As this large movement comes to an end and the crowd settles there is an air of expectation.[4] Then, as if summoned by the silent throng, Oedipus, the king of Thebes, comes forth from the central door. Those at his feet press closely around him.

The visual relationship between the 'solitary'[5] standing figure and the prostrate assembly is immediately reinforced in a particular and striking way: 'Children . . .' This, the first word of the tragedy, Oedipus addresses to young and old alike. On the one hand, it is a natural expression of the role which the presence of the suppliants confers upon him. He is the leader, the protector, the patriarch. On the other hand, there is the real father, the polluted one, who at the last is compelled to relinquish the daughters born of his own incest. The image of the father is the instant link between the external political circumstance and the lurking family horror. Oedipus' relationship with his 'children' begins and ends the drama.

Our first view of Oedipus, then, is of a man in the public eye, a beloved king who is sought by his people. This matching of the large group against the single figure provides the scenic background for the developing interplay between the public and the private domain. All

that the words of the old priest make him, the wise monarch, the intellectual, the saviour, the almost god, is enhanced by the stage picture. And 'appearances' are founded in facts: this scene is a repeat, made visual, of a past calamity when the city was similarly 'cast down' and 'raised' by the wisdom of Oedipus. The outsider who solved the riddle of the Sphinx and became king is a man uniquely qualified to solve the current mystery of the plague.

But Oedipus' private past is no less prominent, uncannily and inextricably interwoven with the playing of the public part. When he appears before the waiting crowd he comes of his own accord, to be among his people and to hear their appeals in person (6-7). This 'instinctive' entry is consonant with the fact that, after the pretence of enquiry, he *already knows* the significance of their presence. But, ironically, this initial understanding of others' suffering leads directly to the unconscious intuition of his own doomed existence: he takes on the suffering of the entire city *as a personal belonging*. The identification is real and appalling; he is a native Theban, he is the monumental sufferer, his 'sickness' is their sickness. The public spectacle is suddenly a spectre of private disaster as the single figure 'absorbs' the mass of woe before him, as he becomes the true embodiment of the fallen city. Visually, the crowd which exalts him is also the measure of his ruin. Moreover Oedipus eradicates his own personal existence only to light upon it in the very adoption of the public stance. And this sets the pattern for nearly all his utterance in the early scenes; the public role makes him the unconscious voice of his own secrets.

In no other of the extant plays of Sophocles does the action open with a public ceremony. Even more remarkable is the contrast between the expectations of the myth and the first theatrical impression. The man with the most celebrated secret steps, unasked and unhesitating, into the limelight of a large open assembly. And the setting is more than a physical context; Oedipus understands it by instinct, he identifies with it, it is his conscious world. But the apparent splendour resonates with another more sinister meaning. This truth is no remote and buried thing, it is at hand in the public crisis, lying in wait for the man of public conscience, almost visible in the public gesturing. Illusion and reality co-exist under the same aspect, overlapping and confused the one with the other.[6] Every self-conscious response to the public situation opens up a recess of the private inner realm which, to the spectator's eye, more aptly and with increasing fascination fulfils the meaning of the stage presentation.

The impressive start to the play also discloses a whole world looking

to a single figure. The course of events rests upon him; he is the one who must act.[7] No, rather he has *already* acted. Oedipus himself tells us that he has sent Creon, his brother-in-law, to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. And he is even now restless about the unreasonable delay, so ready is he to 'act' upon all that god 'makes plain'. These last words coincide explicitly with a signal on-stage which announces Creon's approach (79); the suppliants, or perhaps only those nearest to the *parodos* on the left, make some visible sign to the old priest that they have caught sight of Creon.[8] The stir creates more than the usual expectancy for an entrance and we should perhaps remember that the audience is not quite sure how the truth that they already know is destined to be revealed. The opportune connection between Oedipus' commitment to god's clear guidance and Creon's appearance is fraught with suspense. Then, as Creon strides into view, Oedipus makes a brief and fervent plea:

> O Lord Apollo, would that he come *bright* in saving fortune, even as he is bright in *looks* [*ommati*]. (80-1)

Creon's arrival is a message of light from the revealing god, a sight which betokens hope and comfort. Yet Oedipus' words are cautious, they allow, ominously, for the discrepancy between brilliant 'appearance' and brilliant fortune. The visual interpretation is taken up by the priest with a similar undertone of uncertainty: Creon wears a crown of bay leaves, which is rich with berries, a further token, 'to all seeming', of welcome news. Creon is still at a distance when Oedipus addresses him directly, anxiously enquiring about the tidings the moment Creon is within earshot. 'Good': the first response of Creon, now before Oedipus, summarily corroborates the apparent indications.

Creon is a visual symbol before he speaks. He is not simply the bringer of news, he is the first arrival on the scene and he introduces the whole problem which confronts Oedipus: 'appearances'. Such is the coming of Apollo's light. The character of Creon's arrival determines the character of the scene which it initiates; the dilemma between appearance and reality simply emerges in greater detail. The long introduction of Creon is a good example of the cumulative effect which can be created out of the entry from the *parodos*. His appearance is one that gradually comes into sharper and sharper visual focus. The concern about his absence, the theatrical warning of his approach, the general impression of his 'bright' countenance, the detailed splendour of his Delphic crown and the final confirmatory contact, all dramatise

a movement which must pass by the crowd before halting in front of the figure of Oedipus himself. Visual effect coincides with visual meaning. And the audience is already being manoeuvred into the position of marking Oedipus' perceptions, the very matter of the tragedy.

After the peremptory reassurance Creon is ready to go within to divulge the actual content of the oracle in private. But Oedipus expressly demands a public disclosure, confident in the public gaze, open before all,[9] making good his identification with those around him. At this Creon delivers Apollo's 'manifest' (*emphanōs*) bidding; there is a defilement in the land which must be driven out. The murder of Laius, king before Oedipus, must be expiated by a banishment or by retaliatory bloodshed; the language of Creon at this point carefully avoids mention of the number involved in the crime. We now observe Oedipus showing his preference for visual rather than hearsay evidence, but at the same time a tone of unconcern, a sense of his own remoteness from his dead predecessor is ingeniously conveyed:[10]

> I know it well from what I hear. For I never yet *saw* him. (105)

The irony is luxuriant: he has not only seen Laius, he has killed him, while more truly than he knows Oedipus has 'yet' to see.

This ground illusion about his true circumstance is supported by one apparent fact of the crime which gradually materialises in the course of Creon's reconstruction of the event. The 'murderers', as they are first casually referred to, become the 'robbers' of an eyewitness report which emphatically discounts the idea of a single culprit. After Creon's initial vagueness the number and nature of the criminals are established, in the most natural manner, as a visible fact. At the same time it is the notion of the single perpetrator which subconsciously takes root in Oedipus' mind, his own words circling back on himself as the real criminal.[11] Thus Creon's spoken message matches the message of his entry: 'appearance' is substantiated. And everything is made to hang on the single thread of visual evidence. All the servants in Laius' retinue were killed *except* the fleeing eyewitness and all that he saw was uncertain *except* the 'robbers'.[12] The king, however, takes up the threat to kingship; the eyewitness himself is passed over, a nameless nobody. But the man who *simply saw* is waiting in the wings. The foundation of final revelation, the meeting between the great king and the faceless servant, has been laid.

The report of robbers quickly engenders the suspicion of bribery and implants a whole new illusion which belongs to the drama, which is inherent in the very theatrical situation and fostered by it: the actual threat to Oedipus himself becomes a threat to the city which he embodies and to the office of the king which increasingly preoccupies him. The given illusion of the traditional tale begins to be propped up not only by apparent truth but by its collusion with dramatic circumstance.[13] And why, asks Oedipus finally, was a crime of such magnitude not followed up? Creon's last response yields the result of the whole enquiry, a *pattern* of mystery:

> The riddling Sphinx had made us let *unseen* things [*aphanē*] go and was constraining us to *look at* what was at our doors. (130-1)

Oedipus seizes on the words which summon him to his appointed role:

> No, from a new start I shall *again bring them to light* [*phanō*]. (132)

The symbolism which introduced Creon returns in full prominence to link his coming with a mystery of the past. Creon's arrival represents a second visual challenge, Apollo's on this occasion, not the Sphinx's. Moreover, the outcome of the meeting with Creon is the outcome of the prologue itself. The taking up of the challenge is the culmination of Oedipus' part in the opening scene. For the solver of riddles this is not a new and strange encounter but a confident resumption of his proper calling: Oedipus is *again*[14] the great bringer of light.[15]

Before Oedipus retires to the palace he bids the suppliants rise with all speed from the altars and lift their suppliant branches. But, in the same breath, he demands another assembly of the Theban people as proof of his intention; he leaves the stage 'to act', which is, by his own explanation, 'to be made manifest':

> For either *we shall be seen* [*phanoumeth'*] successful with the god's help or fallen. (145-6)

The last speech itself, of which these are the parting words, is framed by the visual imagery, but its meaning has switched from active to passive. The role of revealer implies the fate, revelation, but in a way which finally casts the victor as the victim.[16]

Oedipus makes his exit, followed by Creon who probably allows a moment to pass in order to underline Oedipus' first step to discovery. Now, at the request of the old priest, the crowd of suppliants rises, each taking their branch from the altars, and makes its way down the *parodos*. As before, the priest leads them. The symmetry is important. There is no awkwardness in the departure of such a large number before the arrival of the Chorus, as has been suggested. They are not to be hurriedly removed from the scene as a nuisance. The ample space of the theatre facilitates such movements and here there is a theatrical pattern which has meaning. The entry and exit of the great king is surrounded by the arrival and departure of the large procession. When king and people come together they are fallen, he is exalted. When they go their separate ways, they are raised, he is fallen. 'Fallen' is the last word on Oedipus' lips. His downfall is already accomplished in the exit which leads to truth.

There is a momentary pause before the arrival of the Chorus, elders of Thebes but also representatives of the whole community, here at the summons of the king. The connection of theme is immediate. The old priest leads off the procession with a prayer for salvation to Apollo and it is Apollo and his oracle which introduce and dominate the thought of the new arrivals. Thus the imagery of the god's arrival, through his messenger, Creon, reappears to characterise the whole performance:

> The paean *shines forth* blended with the voice of lamentation. (186)

So also in the invocation to Athena we are especially reminded of Creon's symbolic arrival:

> For these things, golden daughter of Zeus, send us the *bright eye* of support. (187-8)

And a triad of deities, which includes Apollo, is summoned to 'shine forth' (*prophanēte*, 164) as aid against doom. The position of the Chorus's entry, after Creon's arrival has delivered its meaning, allows for a more emotional re-statement of the initial issue,[17] the quest for light amidst death and disease. On this occasion it is not the human representative who is probed for meaning; the gods themselves are besought directly.

Thus, when Oedipus returns to the stage at the end of the great Choral invocation, he appears like a god. And he fulfils the prayer asked of god:[18] he is, by the proceedings of the previous scene, the great bringer of light. Moreover, he comes again before an imploring assembly and he adopts the same self-conscious public manner (223), launching immediately into authoritative speech. His second entry is in fact impressive in the same way as his first. Again, he 'joins himself' to his citizens; the 'stranger' cannot search alone, without a clue (220-1), he needs the co-operation of those who were on the spot at the time. This declared alienation from the crime is accompanied by a statement of the moderation with which he would treat the culprit. But as his words more and more fulfil the requirements of his own entanglement, there is a growing fury against the unknown polluter, which finally explodes in terrible imprecation. The sentence of exile, free from harm, ends up as a curse of excommunication, the violence of Oedipus' self-revenge already foreshown in the gathering vehemence of his self-conviction.

The pronouncement is made against the 'defilement' which Apollo recently 'brought to light' (*exephēnen*, 243). Thus for the second time the audience is told that the 'defilement' is manifest. Here the speaker *is* the defilement in person, he is Apollo's revelation. The real 'alliance' between the divine and the human revealer comes grimly to the fore; Oedipus is himself the object of his own great search, Apollo's exhibit. It is the deepening of this irony which marks the development in a sequence of two apparently similar scenes. In the first scene the silent crowd invokes Oedipus' aid and he steps forth in his own right to become the great bringer of light. Nothing precedes his entry to diminish its impressiveness. In the second scene it is the gods alone whom the crowd invokes; Oedipus returns in the shadow of the long and magnificent hymn, which 'shines forth' in homage to the true givers of light. Much more obviously than the first entrance, the re-entry involves a confusion of appearance and reality: the one who reveals and the one who is revealed, the heir to god's part and the god's victim. This double vision is made even clearer by the Chorus who, under the impact of the protracted vehemence, declares that it is not the killer and that it cannot 'point to' (278) the killer, the very man who stands before it.

The failure to see prepares for the arrival of the famous seer, whose assistance is now suggested by the Chorus:

> I know that lord Teiresias *sees* very much in the same manner as lord Apollo; from whom, O lord, a man who *looks at* these things may learn them most clearly. (284-6)

The meeting is to bring together three 'lords' of sight,[19] Oedipus encountering Apollo through his highest worldly representative, Teiresias. The character of the arrival is strikingly similar to that of Creon; the seer's coming brings a visual interpretation of Apollo's word and has *already* been arranged by Oedipus at Creon's prompting (287–8). There is the same surprise at the delayed appearance and on this occasion two messengers have had to be sent. This pattern of anticipation not only shows the reputation of the great searcher borne out by action[20] but also invites the audience to make a comparison. What will come to light this time? The longer delay and the closer identification with Apollo's own vision arouse even greater expectation. Moreover, to give the idea of consulting the seer even further priority, the Chorus harks back to the faintness of the rumours about the murder. Oedipus typically demands to 'look at' every alternative, but when the story of the 'wayfarers' is brought up he is quick to discount it as the one he has already heard:

> I also heard it, but nobody *sees* the man who *saw*. (293)

The faceless eyewitness crops up again – to be dismissed again. On this occasion he is explicitly unavailable. Oedipus, we note, is again only interested in visible confirmation. But more than this, his expression has a curious jingle to it. In fact it repeats, with the same unconcerned scepticism, his earlier distinction between seeing and hearing in the matter of the dead Laius (105).[21] He is now slightly amused, it seems, about the thought of ever seeing the eyewitness. This light disregard of the man who holds the key to Oedipus' tragedy is ironic preparation for his eventual appearance, but the real twist of the jingle recoils back once more on Oedipus; the 'man who saw' identifies the true eyewitness and culprit before us, the one that 'nobody sees'. The unseen criminal is impressed upon us just as Teiresias is observed approaching. Thus the eyewitness discounted makes way for the lord seer of Apollo.

The arrival of the venerable seer,[22] along the other *parodos*, is immediately telling; its preparation may have been similar to Creon's; the actual event is different. The striding steps and bright eye are exchanged for reluctance and the eye of darkness. He is guided by a boy in the traditional manner. Oedipus' greeting is fulsome and respectful, crediting the man who 'cannot see' (302) with an inner sense of the city's extremity and placing himself and the Chorus in Teiresias' hands. He is met with an impersonal cry of dismay, a summary curse on knowledge as Teiresias realises the full horror of the secret which he is there

to disclose. He asks to be sent home and then, in face of the king's remonstrance, obviously turns round to leave.[23] Oedipus' reaction seems to imply that the whole Chorus joins him in abject supplication; Thebes now looks to another saviour and the great saviour himself turns suppliant. The exchange is interlaced with language which makes plain the significance of the visual sequence: leaving is knowing, 'stay' is the plea of ignorance (326–8). And Teiresias, for the moment, turns back but it is only to refuse to reveal what he knows:

> I will never *bring to light* [*ekphēnō*] my own ills, that I say not yours. (329)

Teiresias not only speaks with studied obscurity, he is defined as Oedipus' opposite, the great concealer.

Oedipus immediately equates Teiresias' stand with the destruction of the state. He confronts not silence but a series of refusals to speak. The first words of passion take a particular form:

> *Oedipus.* Will you never speak out, but will you be *seen* [*phanēi*] as relentless and never bringing matters to a head?
> *Teiresias.* You just blamed my temper but did not *see* the one of your own, dwelling close by, but you blame me. (335–8)

Apart from Teiresias' sinister hint at the incest, the conflict is beginning to take the shape it eventually assumes in all its explicitness, a contest between seeing and not seeing. Moreover, from the beginning sight is the language of angry insult, not revelation. Indeed Teiresias seems to divine already the futility of the present process of revelation and to foresee one which will overtake Oedipus against his will: even if he, Teiresias, does not speak, 'things will come out of themselves' (341). As in the whole episode of the prophet's reluctance, the truly unspeakable is subtly and tantalisingly couched in the terms of wilful concealment.

Oedipus reacts with rising anger and accuses Teiresias of complicity in a plot, a grudging and insulting concession to the blindness which must spell innocence of the actual deed (348–9). The prophet, reluctant before, is now stung into revealing: Oedipus is the defiler of the land. How much the bare and simple truth conceals. And it comes as anger! Oedipus, hardly able to believe his ears, presses for the charge to be repeated. Teiresias, after some resistance, becomes specific: Oedipus is

the very murderer he himself is seeking. This still hardly touches upon the real horror, but the reticence is broken and from this moment Teiresias avowedly (364) furthers the revelation on his own initiative as though once begun the process cannot be stopped:

> I say that you are living in unperceived shame with your dearest ones and do not *see* where you are in suffering. (366–7)

But after the blatant accusation of the murder, the greater enormity of incest, which is in any case not even in question, simply resists clear speech; it is only a vague generalisation, some unutterable place which Oedipus occupies in the realm of suffering. In fact instead of revelation there is a growing gulf of misunderstanding and eyesight is more and more the issue which tears them apart, the very ground of taunt and counter taunt:

> *Oedipus.* For you this [strength of truth] is not there, since you are *blind* in ear and in mind and in eye.
> *Teiresias.* Yes, and you are wretched in uttering taunts which every one of these here will soon be throwing at you. (370–3)

Oedipus has, at this point, reversed his earlier formula of paradox in favour of the literal equation: blind in body, blind in mind. Teiresias for his part shows how exquisitely appropriate Oedipus' words are to the fate of the man who speaks them, pointing, with awful insight, not only to the physical blinding but to its public exposure before the very people now present. In the blind figure of Teiresias Oedipus is face to face with his own imminent destiny.

The intensity of anger corresponds with the intensity of the visual imagery which now blossoms forth in full clarity to mark the first climax of the confrontation:

> *Oedipus.* You are nurtured by one unbroken *night*, so that you can never hurt me or anyone who *sees the sun*. (374–5)

This is not an elaborate poetic device to emphasise that Teiresias and the audience know a particular truth of which Oedipus is unaware. Oedipus calls into being two whole worlds of existence, separate and mutually exclusive. This is a crucial turning-point; Oedipus is no longer dealing with clues: Teiresias represents a world of light, the whole horror of revelation. Oedipus shuts out the *truth as a whole*. The

time for revelation has passed; the rest of the scene is played out from two separate regions. 'What is "light" for one is "darkness" for the other.'[24]

The next move is the logical outcome of this gulf in communication: Teiresias leaves the fate of Oedipus in the hands of Apollo. But at the mention of the god the answer suddenly flashes upon Oedipus. It was Creon who advised consultation of Apollo's minister, the seer who now torments him! The performer of the deed is uncovered, the motivation ready at hand. The illusion nourished all along by dramatic circumstance now emerges fully formed, more formidable than the original illusion which it shields:

> O wealth and kingly power and craft surpassing craft in the much envied life, how great is the jealousy that is stored up . . . (380–2)

Oedipus apostrophises the elements which have fashioned his role *in the drama*, the external order of existence, tangible, enshrined in the law of conventional wisdom, resistant to truth. Sensitive from the first about his royal power, he detects 'secret' machinations everywhere (386–8).[25] The contest of sight adjusts to Oedipus' change of ground and is fought within the boundaries established by the drama, Oedipus' domain of success. Teiresias is a suborned quack who 'has *eyes* only for gain but is *blind* in his craft' (388–9). Where was Teiresias' 'clear' prophecy when it was needed to solve the riddle of the Sphinx? The seer was not 'publicly seen'[26] (*prouphanēs*, 395) to have this skill. It was left to Oedipus, the 'know nothing' to silence the enchantress by his wit. Oedipus sets up his own native seercraft, made visible and publicly acclaimed by the impressive spectacle of the opening scene, against the mysterious and unforthcoming seercraft of Teiresias. The new illusion can invoke the support of visible fact.

Teiresias' answer is prefaced by a reminder of his equal status: as the servant of god, not man, he has the power to speak the truth, even to a king. And he reveals for a second time Oedipus' disastrous situation and his total unconsciousness of it all:

> And I tell you, since you did reproach even me with *blindness*, that you both have *keen sight* and do not *see* where you are in suffering nor where you dwell nor with whom you live. Do you know from whom you are? And you have been a foe to your own, in the world below and on the earth above; and the curse of your mother and

> father, double striking and deadly footed, shall one day drive you from this land, you who now *see straight* but then shall *see darkness*. (412-19)

The echoes of the first denunciation (366-7) are unmistakable. This is a more elaborate restatement, not clearer to the doomed man, however, but more bewildering. The paradox of sight, already a more enigmatic formula than before, presents one kind of blindness and then another. Oedipus has to comprehend the darkness that is and the darkness to come. The forecast of the physical blinding is much more explicit than in the first disclosure, but it is also more of a riddle. The sheer accumulation of the areas of blindness betrays the impossibility of a single total discovery.[27] The conclusion of the prediction follows: a throng of unguessed evils will make Oedipus 'equal with himself and his children'. Teiresias has returned, enigmatically, to his initial theme, equality, the real and dreadful status which awaits the towering figure of the play's beginning.

In a paroxysm of rage Oedipus thrusts Teiresias from the house. The plea for speech which inaugurates the encounter ends in a refusal to listen. And Teiresias, to mark the reversal, reminds his summoner of his earlier reluctance to come. He is ready to go but before he does so he refers to the reputation for wisdom which he enjoyed with Oedipus' parents. It is quite clear from what follows that, with this said, Teiresias has turned to leave.[28] But the mention of his parents, with its echoing words of birth, stirs something deeply in Oedipus: 'What parents? Stay! Who of mortals is my begetter?' This important moment is well dramatised by the piece of stage business which has Teiresias turn round in his tracks to face Oedipus again. Revelation, apparently aborted, threatens anew. But what issues forth from Teiresias is another riddle which he uses to taunt the solver of riddles.

Teiresias' resumption of his departure (444) signals that the moment for revelation has passed. Oedipus, no longer the anxious enquirer, is eager to 'speed' Teiresias on his way. But this time, *of his own accord* and against Oedipus' wishes, Teiresias pauses in his tracks once more and delivers for a third time the message he was sent to give. But, remarkably now, he does not speak to Oedipus directly. He points to a victim, to a third person' who simply illustrates his terrible prophecy. There is no attempt at enlightenment; the theatrical effect is a tableau in which Oedipus is the central figure, the unknowing onlooker of his own approaching doom.

> And I tell you – this men whom you have been seeking . . . this man is here, in name a foreign resident but soon he *shall be seen* [*phanēsetai*] a native Theban and shall not rejoice in his fortune. A *blind* man, he who now has *keen sight*, a beggar, who now is rich, he shall travel to a strange land, feeling the ground before him with a stick. And he *shall be seen* [*phanēsetai*] at once brother and father of the children with whom he lives, son and husband of the woman from whom he was born, partner in his father's bed and shedder of his father's blood. (449-60)

The repeated passive 'he shall be seen', the two hinges on which the whole prophecy hangs,[29] sounds and echoes the whole horror of visibility. The same visual imagery closes the first and second scenes, in each case immediately preceding an exit by Oedipus. Oedipus uses it to pose a question: success or ruin? Teiresias uses it like the hammer blows of fate. Apart from bringing the scene's central concern with light to a point of culmination Teiresias' vision of the future is the clear answer to Oedipus' balance of hope and fear.

With his prophecy given Teiresias turns abruptly on his heel and is slowly escorted from the stage by his young guide. True insight and physical blindness could not be more dramatically demonstrated. His final insistence on staying and speaking is an exact reversal of his initial move to leave and the tactic of silence.[30] Oedipus for his part, after acting himself as suppliant to get Teiresias to stay, is glad to see him leave and speak no more. The two antagonists exchange the postures of silence and speech, each in the end coming to occupy his opponent's former ground. The survival of separate worlds in the context of such a switch asserts the impasse of communication. And the whole pattern of frustrated revelation is made visible in the dilemma between leaving or staying. The actual separation of the two men confirms the final, unbridgeable gulf. Oedipus, who starts the meeting with fulsome address, is left in utter silence.[31] In the *Antigone* the assault of truth, which comes late and on the initiative of the seer himself, is successful. Here, it is repelled when it has been invited.

Despite the scene's emphasis on the paradox of sight and despite the detailed revelations of Teiresias, we are not meant to conclude how incredible the blindness of Oedipus is but how natural. The man with knowledge is there and he has the status and, in the course of events, the will to reveal it. The truth is delivered three times, each disclosure more full and more powerful than the preceding one. But the psychology of the confrontation shows how impossible it is for Oedipus to

accept the whole truth, in one single revelation and at this early stage. The kind of knowledge which is involved must be arrived at by detours; the revelation must be piecemeal. The position of the Teiresias scene forces the issue to a premature climax. A kind of conclusion has been reached; the play must begin on a new track. In this sense the structure is reminiscent of that in the *Ajax* and the *Oedipus at Colonus*. There is a preliminary sequence of search and revelation which uncovers the essence of the hero's situation *for the spectator*. The spectator then watches a second movement to the same point by a more elaborate route, the path to discovery for those on-stage. The compression of the opening movement in both the *Ajax* and *Oedipus the King* is exemplified in the language; at this stage it must be all paradox. The Teiresias scene weaves a riddle, it does not unravel one.

The Choral ode which follows underlines the conclusion of the Teiresias scene. They first wonder who the murderer is, of whom Apollo speaks, but reject the answer offered by the seer. The stage search that figures prominently in a number of the plays is here supplanted by the vivid search of the Chorus's imagination; for here Apollo himself is the stalker:

> For recently from snowy Parnassus the message *came to light* [*phaneisa*] and *flashed forth* to make all search for the *unseen* man. (473–6)

Oedipus' own image of light now pursues him. The hunter is also the hunted. But when the elders actually turn to the accusations against their king they cannot bring themselves to believe that he is the culprit. And they echo Oedipus' own argument: visual evidence. Their loyalty is stretched by the seer's dreadful utterance and they admit to not 'seeing' clearly either the present or the future. On the other hand, there is no previous quarrel between the line of Oedipus and the line of Laius which they might bring as 'proof' to assail the popular reputation of Oedipus in vengeance for the 'unseen' murder. They will not condemn Oedipus until they 'see' the word of the prophet made good. Their reasoning? Oedipus' publicly acclaimed wisdom which *they have seen*:

> For *before the eyes* of all [*phanera*] the winged maiden came long ago against him, and he *was seen* to be wise and in the test of experience dear to the state. (507–10)

The Chorus here grants Oedipus what Oedipus pointedly denied Teiresias (395): the *visible* possession of wisdom in the test of the Sphinx. Again, it is the pattern of mystery which determines the state of perception, which frames the whole of the Chorus's thought; the 'clear' (*phaneisa*) message of Apollo opens the ode, the 'clear' (*phanera*) coming of the Sphinx concludes it. And can the 'unseen' fugitive (475) from the one be the 'manifest' conqueror of the other? Oedipus' visible success is the last impression of the ode.[32] We are back to the world of the prologue, to public events and the power of 'appearance'. The private inner realm is fugitive still, enigmatic words, not yet brought to visibility.

Immediately following the Choral song Creon bursts on to the scene. Oedipus is not there to receive him on this occasion and the point about his return is that he has not been sent for. Here, then, is the supposed fugitive, indignant and ready to confront his accuser. His very reappearance shows forth an innocence which is substantiated by his subsequent performance. The issue of the upcoming confrontation is sounded in the preliminaries between Creon and the Chorus. Creon, in disbelief, tries to establish the facts:

> Was the word *made clear* [*ephanthē*] that the seer was speaking falsehoods through my persuasion?[33] (525–6)

And then, more pointedly:

> And was this charge laid against me from steady *eyes* and from steady mind? (528–9)

The theme of blindness and sight does not recede with the departure of Teiresias; it becomes less explicit, lurking beneath the new development. The second meeting between Oedipus and Creon, like the first, proceeds from the problem of visual perception. But a change has occurred; Oedipus' entry, on the heels of Creon, not only makes Oedipus the attacker but also allows him to point to the 'culprit' in plain view:

> Have you such a front of boldness that you came to my house, who are *manifestly* [*emphanōs*] the murderer of this man and the '*visible*' robber of my crown? (532–5)

The visual dilemma of Creon's first entry has become the visual certainty

of his return, Oedipus' words here bitterly echoing the clarity of Apollo which Creon purported to bring (96). More immediately, the visibility looked for by the Chorus has received an answer and the great revealer has fulfilled his proper role.

As the interrogation proceeds Oedipus suddenly brings up the name of Laius, surprising Creon, who, while being aware of Oedipus' charge against himself, is obviously in the dark about Teiresias' accusations against Oedipus:

> *Oedipus.* How long ago, then, is it since Laius –
> *Creon.* Did what? I don't understand.
> *Oedipus.* – has *vanished from sight* by deadly hand of violence?
> (558-60)

Oedipus' characterisation of Laius' death as a 'disappearance' not only fits the dramatic terms of his central continuing role – what is obscure is now manifest – but also brings back the rather colloquial tone to his language, opposing his own confident remoteness from the crime against the palpable guilt he has just uncovered. The point which Oedipus goes on to make gives strong support to his order of perception; following the mysterious death there was a search which proved fruitless. Why, therefore, did the wise prophet not tell his tale *then*? Semblance once more has a demonstrable plausibility.

But now the man under attack moves on to the offensive,[34] introducing a new focus to the battle of conflicting appearance, friendship. The 'false friend' which Oedipus 'clearly sees' (*phainei*) in Creon is confronted with the real friend, equally visible. Creon speaks at length, the reasonable man, without cause for ambition, aware of his own innocence. Let Oedipus not condemn him on 'unseen' opinion (608). Had he been a traitor it would have 'shown up' before now (614-15). It is Creon who has the last word before Oedipus' wife, Jocasta, intervenes when the quarrel is at its height.

The part which Jocasta plays is defined for us in advance, in the Chorus's announcement of her arrival. She is the appeaser. More than this her entry changes the whole external framework of the play; the private life of Oedipus, hitherto concealed beneath the surface of the spoken word, materialises in a concrete way, a sudden interruption of the political action. The real relationship of mother and son, however, is not spelled out; it is conveyed by the tone of communication, by the eclipse of kingly authority. In keeping with her abrupt intervention, Jocasta is abrupt in manner, seizing the initiative the moment she enters. She scolds the two men and orders them to their separate homes. But the actual separation is accomplished by the exit of Creon only. Oedipus stays for his important scene with Jocasta. The business of leaving and staying is highlighted by a brief *kommos* which gives the separation a special significance and effects the transition to the confidential encounter between Oedipus and Jocasta.

The *kommos* is divided into two separate segments by the exit of Creon and the brief passage of dialogue which accompanies it. The first segment, between Oedipus and the Chorus, is a lyrical elaboration of Jocasta's initial peremptory attempt to get Oedipus to take Creon at his word. But what is noticeable is that the Chorus employs the very argument which Creon made earlier: Oedipus is accusing a 'friend' on the grounds of 'unseen' (*aphanei*) rumour (656-7). Thus the main issue of visual perception is re-stated in Creon's favour and with the greater power of the full Chorus. Oedipus, desperately appealing to the Chorus's loyalty, raises the stakes. It is either Creon or himself. The question of guilt comes to hinge on Creon's departure, on whether Oedipus will let his 'manifest' culprit go. And Oedipus yields. The winner is the one who leaves. Creon not only has the last word; it is a parting jibe at Oedipus' lack of discernment. The departure of Creon is the departure of the first visual certainty, the end of the illusion of an outside conspiracy.

Oedipus stays and his staying is dramatised by the resumption of the *kommos*. The Chorus turns to Jocasta and asks her why she has not quickly conveyed Oedipus into the house. This we remember was Jocasta's initial intent, to get both men out of sight. But the phrasing of the question clearly implies that Oedipus needs looking after and his exclusion from the first lyrical exchanges following Creon's departure comes as a dramatic silence after Creon's final insult. Creon's exit leaves Oedipus a shattered man. And in the lyrical exchange which Oedipus finally has with the Chorus he clearly feels betrayed by it. But why has Jocasta changed her mind about Oedipus leaving? She wants to find out what has happened. Oedipus stays to be revealed; Jocasta will be his comforter. The transition is complete.

From the start Jocasta, like Creon, wants to be clear about things. How will Sophocles handle the pressure of revelation in the intimate encounter of two people so tragically entangled in each other's doom? The intimacy is implied, not stated. Each in turn is prompted to open up with the other. Jocasta reveals herself first. No sooner does she discover that Oedipus has been accused of Laius' murder by the seer than she dismisses the idea:

> Learn for your comfort that nothing of mortal birth shares in the art of prophecy. And I shall *bring to light* [*phanō*] concise evidence [*sēmeia*] of that. (708–10)

Jocasta's attitude to Teiresias is a more confident reiteration of the Chorus's; the fallibility of human prophecy is proved by the 'visible' facts. The effect of the repetition is clear: Jocasta is *rebuilding* the visual certainty which has been lost with the departure of Creon. In doing so she appropriates the language of the great revealer himself and there is a sense that she is taking over his role. Appearance is now bound up with a new role: the desire to comfort.

And why should Jocasta not be confident in her tokens of truth?[35] She recounts an oracle that once came to Laius – Jocasta does not say from Apollo himself but from his ministers – that he should die at the hands of his own son. Yet as it turned out Laius, according at least to the report, was slain by foreign robbers at the three ways and Laius had his son exposed, left to die, not three days old and his ankles pinned together. So much for the saying of prophets:

> Pay no attention to them at all. For what the god finds need to track he himself will easily *bring to ligh:* [*phanei*]. (724–5)

Jocasta's conclusion is a repetition of her opening injunction,[36] but with one crucial difference: her visible 'truth' is overshadowed by the surer visible truth of god which even now is gradually unfolding.

The process by which Apollo's light will come has indeed, before Jocasta finishes her proof, dramatically begun. The very matter which was meant to bring comfort strikes fear. All that the organised and elaborate revelations of Teiresias could not accomplish is achieved by one single casual word: 'the three ways'. The design is deliberate. It is quite clear from Oedipus' immediate response that the word, which brings back a vivid incident in his past, has sent his mind in a whirl (726–7). He fastens on this alone.[37] There is perhaps a problem in that Oedipus does not *seem* to hear the rest of Jocasta's speech, the story of the child's exposure and, in particular, the pinioning of its feet which might be thought to have effected the complete revelation. But have we not just been shown that complete revelation is impossible? The unveiling of the whole long-buried truth is a gradual process, of which this is only the first presentiment. And it is quite natural that Oedipus only catches on to the murder; the death of Laius is the issue on the surface, not parricide or incest, and Oedipus *knows* that he killed a man. The thought that it may be Jocasta's husband is dreadful enough to fill his mind.

The further question is whether Oedipus' arrested attention is translated into stage movement. Jocasta's reaction seems to indicate that Oedipus has actually 'turned away' (728) from her, presumably at the moment he hears the fatal words.[38] Such an effect would strike an echo with the stir caused by Teiresias' mention of 'parents' and would mark, unmistakably, his separation from the greater truth of Jocasta's disclosures. How the first inkling strikes fear and how remote it is from the ultimate horror! A miniature revelation follows, the anxious progress to a first threshold of truth. The location, the time, the age and appearance of the murdered man are all established by a flurry of questions from Oedipus. When everything clearly tallies with an adventure of his own, the 'publication' of the incident barely preceding his 'visible' (*ephainou*) accession to the throne (736–7), his apprehension grows:

> I am terribly afraid that the prophet has *sight*. (747)

Thus, he applies the sweeping paradox of his previous conflict to this much more limited encounter with truth. One last detail – significantly nothing is said here about the number of assailants – is pressed for confirmation, the size of Laius' escort. Only then, in final agitation, does he utter his cry of revelation:

> Alas! It is now *manifest* [*diaphanē*]. (754)

Ironically, when he has come to a part of the truth, his language suggests that all is transparent; the anguish here is only half of the anguish in store.

But there remains the final requirement for visible substantiation, the eyewitness. Is he available? Oedipus now eagerly seeks the man he has twice passed over. Jocasta knows of his whereabouts and vividly recalls his departure from the city:

> As soon as he came from there and *saw* you holding power and Laius dead, he supplicated me . . . to send him to the fields . . . that he might be far *out of sight* of this city. (758–62)

Only now does it emerge that the eyewitness has 'seen' more than the incident at the three ways. More obviously and more ominously than

before (736–7), the death of Laius is visibly linked to Oedipus' accession to the throne. And the eyewitness is not simply a repository of evidence connected with the murder; he has put two and two together; he has a vision. This newly acquired significance is also adapted to the paradox which expresses the basic tension between the will to reveal and the will to conceal; his vision is coupled with a determination to keep 'out of sight'.[39] But he *is* available and, according to Jocasta, he will come.

It is now Oedipus' turn to reveal himself, to explain his forebodings. But what he does is unburden himself completely. He speaks of his parents in Corinth, Polybus and Merope, of the drunken taunt that he was not their true son, and of his visit to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi to find out the truth of the matter. But instead of answering this enquiry Apollo 'flashed forth'[40] (*prouphanē*) in speech, saying that Oedipus was doomed to lie with his mother, that he would 'manifest before the eyes of men a breed unendurable to *see*', and that he would slay his own father. The impression is one of evil clarity, fashioned from the light of the oracular god and, significantly, unendurable to the eye. Oedipus, when he flees Corinth (794), is fleeing the fate which the eyes cannot endure; he makes for some place where he should 'never see' fulfilment of the evil prophecies (796). The horrendous content of the revelation is foreshown: incest, and with it the logic of self-blinding.

But only now comes the part of the story where he has to brace himself to be frank and truthful (800), the meeting at the three ways. In his mind what has preceded is an *escape* from a mysterious fate, something he wants to share with Jocasta but irrelevant to his main concern, the slaying of a man whom he shudders to think is Laius, Jocasta's former lord. There is no inkling that the man he has killed is his own father – because this is what he still fears in relation to Polybus; prompted by the prospect of being exiled from Thebes, the old anxiety returns and again his eyes are the objects of the assault foreboded. The thought that he must on no account 'see' his own kind in Corinth (824) grows into the final dread-filled prohibition:

> Forbid, forbid, O pure and awful gods, that I should *see* that day! No, may I *disappear* [*aphantos*] from men's sight before I *see* such a stain of disaster fixed on me. (830–3)

Thus, at the conclusion of his personal history, it is the horrendous

vision of Apollo that returns to haunt him. The conscious apprehension, concerning the incident at the three ways, is enclosed by the deeper terror of seeing, which is mysteriously brought to the surface by his recollection of the fatal meeting. And how the confident tone and phrasing of his given language has changed. This now is the language of a man who will blind himself. And there is something else forewarned in the wish to obliterate himself; the polluted one will himself be an unendurable sight to the eyes of others.

But even as regards the lesser fear concerning Laius' death he entertains a hope: there is the eyewitness. This is the second time in this scene that the eyewitness has been brought up and a certain design in detectable. The real and ominous visual significance of his coming is matched by the illusory and hopeful. The sequence is important. The illusion comes as a response to the visual terror of Apollo and, fed by desperation, is manufactured from the single detail omitted from the initial anxious process of corroboration. Oedipus is the one to reintroduce the 'herdsman', as he is now called. Jocasta, now more reluctant than before, questions the need:

> Whatever is the confidence you place in his *appearance* [*pephasmenou*]? (838)

It is consistent with Jocasta's primary purpose and natural to her way of speaking that she wants to know what his arrival represents in visible terms. She is already preparing to use him as a prop for her own cause against prophecy. And she receives the answer she needs; there is still the contradiction of the number, the story that Laius was killed by many. Clinging to the role she came to fulfil Jocasta, in the face of Oedipus' hesitancy, transforms the verbal report into a permanent and unalterable visible fact, a matter of public record:

> No, be sure that the word was thus *brought to light* [*phanen*] and he cannot unsay it, for the city heard these things, not I alone. (848–50)

Jocasta presses it further. Even supposing that the servant were to modify his tale, she regards her main visual evidence to be unassailable by the herdsman's:

> Never, lord, can he *bring to light* [*phanei*] that Laius' death at least truly conforms with prophecy, since Loxias expressly said that he

would die at the hands of my child. (851-4)

Jocasta has not moved from her opening stance and the 'facts' of the second declaration are the same. But whereas previously the visual proofs were 'concise' and sweeping, here they are put back together in a more elaborate formulation which is not quite logical and which has the air of desperation.[41] Jocasta has it that, whatever the herdsman says, her visual world remains intact. Her intention is clearly *to account for* the herdsman, to provide comfort and allay the fears on her own and once and for all. This is no longer the confident demonstration of a manifest truth, it is a struggle to maintain appearance. But it will not do for Oedipus; his response to Jocasta's more passionate reassertion of faith is non-committal and he insists that she summon the herdsman. The scene in fact ends ambiguously, with Jocasta's role unfilfilled. When she takes Oedipus into the house he is still the troubled one, she still the comforter. The man that 'nobody sees' or has bothered to see is not the hinge of the whole visual dilemma. And he who has persistently spoken of a single culprit now pins all his hopes on the tale that the murder was committed by many. It is not simply this scene which waits upon the crucial seizure of the eyewitness's importance but the whole of the preceding action, since he was first mentioned. The omen of his 'unique' survival approaches fulfilment.

The scepticism of Jocasta and Oedipus' acquiescence is followed by the central Choral ode of the play which is an impassioned appeal for purity and piety.[42] The elders' mood has become one of grave disquiet at what they take to be blasphemy and they assert the traditional values of religion and morality. Without explicitly censuring the two figures who have just withdrawn, they complain of a criminal and arrogant contempt for the gods. In particular the whole of divine prophecy is threatened and they pray, without realising the dire implications for their lord, that the 'fading' oracles of Laius may be fulfilled. Their whole utterance converges on the decline of Apollo's worship which is summed up in a last despairing thought:

And nowhere is Apollo *manifest* [*emphanēs*] in honours and religion is gone. (909-10)

The eclipse of Apollo is particularly impressive in the light of their previous ode of which the present utterance is to a large extent a recantation. There the visibility of Apollo was proclaimed but counterbalanced by the visibility of Oedipus. Here the vindication of Oedipus seems to entail the fading of Apollo. As we have seen, the play can be

viewed in terms of the relationship between Apollo and Oedipus, both bringers of light. At this important stage the balance which was previously conceived is now shown to be impossible. It is man *against* god.

Enter Jocasta, accompanied by an attendant bearing emblems of Apollo's worship. The god, with marvellous irony, is given visible honour on cue, as it were, and by the one who blasphemed against him. Her entry is quite unexpected and gives the impression of unfinished business, to bring release from fear. She has been trying to comfort Oedipus inside and now, quite clearly as an afterthought and as a last resort, approaches the altar of the god whom she has just scorned and who happens to be 'very near'. Jocasta has brought with her offerings of incense and a branch wreathed in wool to lay on the altar. No sooner has she offered her brief prayer for deliverance than an old traveller appears from the *parodos*, eagerly entering the acting area but strange to his surroundings and obviously looking for something. The timing is miraculous and it is evident from the messenger's first words, addressed as they are to the Chorus, that Jocasta is still before the altar. Apollo has answered; the 'unseen' god is made manifest.[43]

Thus Apollo has come, as he always does, as an 'appearance' of truth: the intervention seems to be fortuitous, the messenger seems to be a stranger, the news seems to be good. But immediately the spectator sees through to a reality which comes in the nature of a reversal. For Jocasta's approach to Apollo is the second such supplication, designed to remind us of the adoring crowd of the opening ceremony.[44] And it is not simply that concern for the whole city is now concern for the king. How different is the answer to prayer! There Oedipus appeared forth like a god, the giver of light and comfort. Here he is behind the scenes, stricken with fear (922-3); and it is god himself who comes to Oedipus. But this is not all. Taken with Jocasta's reappearance, the effect is of one unexpected entry after another. This is not the herdsman summoned 'in haste' but a complete stranger from Corinth. There is a sudden waywardness about the action which contrasts noticeably with the planned appearances of Creon and Teiresias and which actually sets back Oedipus' latest arrangement, the arrival of the herdsman. This 'loss of control' is made all the more apparent by the conspicous absence of Oedipus, who has overseen previous arrivals. In fact this man has to seek Oedipus out and he does so in a curiously playful way, his first homely enquiry seemingly making sport of the similar sound in Greek of Oedipus' name and the word for 'where'.[45] And, for the first time, there is a play on the double role of Jocasta, who is

introduced as mother and wife. What is new, then, about this arrival is the sense of a *pursuing* doom, of a fiendish game in which appearance actively seeks out its victim, that the reality which awaits may be all the more crushing.

The absence of Oedipus also plays up the dominant but still unfulfilled role of Jocasta. It is her prayer that is answered, one charade calling forth another. But let it be said that she is not looking for her own comfort but, as is hinted in her manner of enquiry into the messenger's purpose, for some further 'token' (*sēmēnai*) perhaps that will bring comfort to her husband. The fact that she is there to receive the news means that she can usurp the messenger's function and relieve her husband's anxieties personally and in her own way. The old man gleefully lingers over his secret, mysteriously characterising it in advance as joyful, yet somewhat distressing, and holding back the actual word till the last moment: the people of Corinth will make Oedipus their new king – Polybus is dead. Jocasta, true to her nature, is immediately satisfied, despatching her maid-servant to bring Oedipus, while she proclaims the falseness of oracles. The irony of the visual sequence, the prayer and the response, is here marvellously brought out. Jocasta, who only approached the god as a last resort, takes a clear demonstration of the divine power as confirmation of her scepticism. Moreover, it is for her a visible thing: Oedipus is summoned to 'look at' the state of prophecy. His re-emergence, which is instant upon the summons, is the last of a flurry of entrances which immeasurably increases the excitement of the unexpected turn of events. Jocasta is the one to tell him, but only of the death of Polybus; the old man is very put out at having to 'clarify' the last and, to him, distressing part of his news. And Oedipus yields to a way of seeing, the one no less to which he was summoned: 'Why, indeed, my wife, should a man *look at* the hearth of the Pythian seer?' The messenger looks on in astonishment as the joy now rings out between the two people before him. The exclusion of the 'stranger' from the dialogue is important: for the moment he is out of things, his signals of good and bad confused, his role spoiled.

But then the seeming settlement of Oedipus' anxiety concerning his father is suddenly overshadowed by the lingering fear of his mother. How like Oedipus to be cautious in hope and how Jocasta responds in her way: a man must dismiss such notions; many before now slept with their mother in dreams also (981–2). The point about this most famous passage is not primarily the technical one,[46] that dreams as well as oracles were regarded as prophetic, but the ironic one that Jocasta is discounting such horror as 'fantasy' when the horror is real, there before us in the relationship on the stage. But the haunting fear of his 'living' mother is not laid to rest and Oedipus' apprehension draws forth Jocasta's best effort, perhaps the most striking example of her technique:

> But yet the tomb of your father is a great *eye*. (987)

There is in the equation of a death with comfort a single-mindedness of purpose which epitomises Jocasta's whole performance and it turns out to be her last attempt to console. But it is the concreteness of the expression which also impresses. The metaphor not only gives the sense of a bright and sudden comfort but is also delivered as the concise summary of the gathering visual meaning which is being created out of the messenger's arrival: the tomb of Polybus helps them to see that oracles are of no account.[47]

But Oedipus is not completely satisfied, still troubled by the nagging fear of 'her who lives'. This is the opportunity that the old man has been waiting for: he is bursting with the very news that will allay Oedipus' residual fear. He can be important again and win his reward. It is now Jocasta's turn to look on, powerless to stop the joyful chatter of the man who now takes over from her. The 'real' movement of the scene which takes place in its latter half is contained in her silence. She is, from first to last, the visual focus of the remaining action, and it is not simply the fact of her protracted silence which makes her so. Almost immediately, as the herdsman first prepares, with obvious relish, the ground for his new and staggering revelation, Oedipus returns regretfully to the parents he has had to keep away from:

> But nevertheless it is the sweetest thing *to see the eyes of parents*.[48] (999)

This striking image is one of Oedipus gazing at his parents and his parents gazing at him, a picture of cheated rapture which is the natural preface to his eventual excitement at the prospect which the herdsman is about to offer, new parents. But said in the presence of Jocasta the actual effect is one of terrible unawareness. Thus with increasing emphasis the long stage relationship begins truly to be exploited as a blind encounter; and what the silent Jocasta brings finally into full play – and it should be noted that the end of her role is approaching – is the fundamental ambiguity of perception which the beginning of

the scene introduced, the double role of mother and wife.

The stranger's actual words of 'comfort' are that Polybus is no more the father of Oedipus than he himself is. And it is his greatest joy to tell the story of how he personally rescued Oedipus as a foundling long ago, on the slopes of Mount Cithaeron. The lowly 'stranger' turns out to be a virtual father to the king as the mask of formality is dropped and the homely and playful manner of the old man becomes true familiarity:

> *Son*, it is *pretty*[49] clear that you don't know what you are doing. (1008)

Meanwhile Oedipus, too, has changed the style of address from 'stranger' to 'aged sire'.[50] Strangeness is suddenly closeness. It is impossible to know whether the reallocation of the speaking part, from Jocasta to the messenger, implies a realignment of the groupings on-stage, but the clearest impression of the long and exclusive exchange between Oedipus and the messenger is that Jocasta has become detached in consequence of Oedipus' new involvement. As she is brought to the realisation of her real and dreadful closeness, he is withdrawing into the humble world of the messenger, the world of final illusion.

Oedipus' long inquisition of the messenger leads ultimately to the herdsman, who has already been summoned; the man who handed over the child to the old man is identified as none other than the man who saw the murder of Laius. This is not simply a device to serve dramatic economy. The external intrusion of the Corinthian and the inner struggle before the palace at Thebes converge upon the same ominous figure; chance turns out to be the mere appearance of chance, the deceptive vehicle of a single gathering doom. Moreover, this *review* of the herdsman's stage appearance gives a clear indication of the ironic turnabout: Jocasta's illusions about his coming (848ff.) are now replaced by Oedipus'. The symmetrical design is marked by the return of the visual imagery which gradually rises to a second peak of intensity, defining anew, through Oedipus' eyes, the visual expectations of the awaited arrival.

At first, before the identity is realised, Oedipus is anxious 'to see' the man in question. Then he demands the 'sign' (*sēmēnath'*) which he is sure is the key to final revelation (1050) has anyone present 'seen' him? The Chorus thinks that it is the same man that Oedipus was seeking 'to see before' but suggests that Jocasta might best speak to that. Thus, marvellously, the task of identification falls, like a stone,

on the long-silent 'wife'. She has to struggle against an identification which has already been made. And the herdsman is already on his way! Her desperate attempt to dismiss his significance, which marks the climax of her growing fear about his arrival since she first volunteered that he was readily available, is now a losing cause; it merely promotes Oedipus' more and more vehement belief in the ultimate visual meaning which the herdsman represents for the fulfilment of his great role; at this point he will not be satisfied until he 'sees' him:

> It could not be that, with such *signs* [*sēmeia*] in my grasp, I will not *bring to light* [*phanō*] my birth. (1058-9)

Within the context of his 'scene' with Jocasta his words are reminiscent of her first presumptions (710). He ends the meeting where she began; and it is his turn to claim what will and what will not be made visible by the herdsman:

> Take courage; even if I *shall be seen* [*phanō*] thrice a slave from a mother who is thrice a slave, you *will not be seen* [*ekphanēi*] base. (1062-3)

The climactic formulation of the imagery, taken with the one that immediately precedes, involves a noticeable switch from the active to the passive mode; it is the victim once more who speaks. Here, at last, the concern round which his images of sight cluster, is the fundamental one, birth. But what he 'visualises' is all a final and most desperate illusion; he disassociates from his own origins the woman who is most horribly bound up with them, her true intimacy made evident by her silence. The illusion does not materialise out of the blue; it arises from the external situation. The arrival of the old messenger, now silent once more, has given the dilemma of appearance and reality yet another shape: the paradox of the mother and the wife is reinforced by the paradox of the lowly and the noble. This last divergence of perception is set up by the figure of Jocasta, who becomes the medium through which Oedipus and the spectator interpret the situation: a wife's silence for Oedipus, a mother's for the spectator. The issue is resolved by Oedipus' insistence that the herdsman be brought forthwith. Once finalised, the arrival prompts the sudden and immediate departure of Jocasta. The appearance which the inner drama has all along been preparing for and which has here emerged as the final battleground for the contest between illusion and reality is at hand. With

his certain coming reality approaches in its final disguise. And there will be no power of easy comfort or concealment to meet this last challenge; Jocasta is gone and the contest is over.

Jocasta 'rushes' from the scene with a cry of anguish, her last avowed utterance. The silence (1075) to which the Chorus ominously draws our attention is not a theatrical silence but rather reticence;[51] the Chorus is underscoring Jocasta's own parting threat, that she will speak no more.[52] Thus the long initial silence ends in the permanent silence of a last anguished purpose. The passionate dissuasion which intervenes is a brief and hopeless struggle. Oedipus misperceives Jocasta's entire performance and the 'silent' exit is the culmination of the deception, not only entrenching his original illusion – he immediately reacts by repeating his unalterable resolve to 'see' his origins even if they be lowly (1076-7) – but also elevating it into a new and more thrilling vision. Sophocles makes it clear that this is an *exchange*; Oedipus dismisses the 'vain wife'[53] (1078-9) to embrace the 'mother' who gave him birth, *beneficent* Fortune. The real mother has been exchanged for the illusory. The end of the scene makes finally explicit the underlying irony of perception with which the scene began, the still inconceivable mingle of mother and wife in the one figure.

Oedipus' mood of elevation infects the loyal Chorus who, with all foreboding miraculously gone, fills out Oedipus' vision of his birth with the most exalted possibilities, the supreme delusion before the most hideous revelation. The brevity of the ode makes a preceding exit by Oedipus unlikely since he would have to return almost immediately, a movement made doubly awkward by the presence of the messenger who would have to accompany him. No, the man perched on the abyss is there; so too is his newly important companion, the old man who represents the half-realised past which awaits fulfilment.[54] The messenger, silent since the devastating disclosure of his encounter with a herdsman long ago, is the visual link between the first and second scenes of revelation. His staying is unusual, his meddlesome role clearly not yet complete. Cithaeron – in the Chorus's exultant imaginings the natural haunt of gods and so the native soil of Oedipus' divinity – is about to come alive in the recreation of a far more humble, a far more painful scene of the hero's first beginning. The third party of those fateful events is awaited.

The introduction of the man who will reveal all is finely conceived. The arrival is an elaborate affair, very similar to Creon's in its exploitation of the long entry from the *parodos*, but also reminiscent of Teiresias' entry. The herdsman appears supported on either side by two

of Oedipus' attendants. He is of venerable age, clothed in rustic garb, and probably rests upon a shepherd's staff. His progress is slow and he is led towards Oedipus. The contrast with the eager and playful entry of the Corinthian which immediately precedes is very striking; here is the man who has purposely avoided facing the king. And the messenger, we remember, had to seek Oedipus out; the herdsman enters to a waiting reception. Indeed the most clearly marked antithesis is the sudden unexpectedness of the Corinthian's arrival against the weight of expectation which the Theban inherits. And this expectation is immediately put on the highest stretch by the commentary from the stage which accompanies the last reluctant steps of the herdsman towards the fateful meeting with Oedipus.[55] As with the very first arrival of Creon, it is a question of 'seeing' and Oedipus, bringing to bear the same calculating mind, makes guesses and pieces together a visual encounter which 'he has not yet come across' (1110). As the old man first comes into view, Oedipus 'seems to see' the herdsman whom they have been seeking. But he turns to the elder, since they have 'seen' the man before. After the Chorus's reassurance he turns to the old messenger for his: yes, this is the man whom you 'see'. The role of eyewitness to which so much was originally attached is forgotten; the new evidence from Thebes and Corinth *converges* to certify the real but elusive visual significance of the herdsman. He is trapped and when he actually comes before the king it is quite clear from Oedipus' first insistent command that he will not 'look' his master in the face (1121)! This long-delayed appearance is the perfect one for the man who saw but who did not wish to be seen. Moreover, it is marvellously ironic that Oedipus alone 'seems to see' the figure of fate *for the first time*. The stage is set, finally, for the second meeting and the true seeing.

The scene reunites the three people involved in the meeting on Mount Cithaeron long ago. The mysterious pain of a long-forgotten past is brilliantly re-created. One of the great achievements of the play is the vivid sense we have that we are watching a repeat, a psychological re-living of the events rather than a dramatisation of the events themselves. As the play opens in the aura of Oedipus' success – the solving of the Sphinx' riddle – so now, and most naturally at the end, his most remote past – the second riddle – is brought to its light. The long years are carried in the figures on-stage: Oedipus – and the text is explicit on this point – is surrounded by old men,[56] and the one that matters, the old herdsman, is vague and forgetful. The contrast in the entries of the two old men is carried over into this, their second meeting: the Corinthian, who interferes almost immediately, cannot

stop chattering; the herdsman in the event has to be forced to speak. The messenger takes it upon himself to jog the other's memory and, all unknowingly and with matter-of-fact cheerfulness, hurries on the approaching doom. When he triumphantly points to Oedipus as the very boy that the Theban gave him the herdsman first absorbs the full horror of what is unfolding. He screams at the Corinthian to hold his tongue; but it is too late. The rest of the scene takes place between Oedipus and the herdsman with the old messenger looking on, much like Jocasta in the preceding scene, while his 'help' turns into disaster. His role is over at the moment that he traps the herdsman.

Oedipus extracts the truth from the horror-stricken herdsman word by word, threatening him with torture and death if he does not speak out. It is important and highly dramatic that the herdsman comes to his full realisation at the precise instant that Oedipus takes over. The final confrontation is between one who knows all and one who must know all. After the initial evasion Oedipus orders his attendants to twist the old man's arms behind his back and every word of truth that comes out is forced from a prisoner and a slave. Only thus is revelation achieved.[57] Moreover, the physical seizure of the herdsman is the theatrical culmination of a development, the tangible grasping of an elusive truth. From the first insubstantial rumour the drama has progressively closed in on a figure of constantly shifting significance. The very scene in which he makes his appearance is a gradual process of entrapment; he arrives reluctantly and under escort; he is first identified by all, disarmed by the messenger, cornered and finally pinned down by Oedipus. With all that has been unearthed it is amazing how many questions need to be answered and how many connections confirmed: he did hand over the child to the Corinthian; it belonged to the house of Laius; it was the son of Laius; Jocasta gave it to him in the first instance; it was given to be exposed; she heard an oracle that it would kill his father. The actual facts are now established; the last question of all,[58] is of a different order: *why* did the herdsman save him? The whole meaning of the tragedy rests on the reply, the herdsman's final utterance: it was an act of simple human pity that preserved Oedipus for this most horrible of fates. The scene on Cithaeron has given up its secret and only now, after the answer to this last enquiry, is the cry of revelation heard:

> Ah! Ah! Everything has come out *clear*. O light, may I now look upon you for the last time, *I have been seen* [*pephasmai*] accursed[59] in being born from those I was born from, accursed in living with those I have lived with, accursed in the killing of those I killed. (1182-5)

Thus is the climactic scene, like those which precede it, a process of visible substantiation, a final true act of seeing. With these last agonised words Oedipus rushes frantically into the palace.[60] The great bringer of light, now that light has come, cannot bear to look upon it. This is the anguish of a man who leaves to destroy his sight. Revelation is one brief, piercing moment of physical light before darkness; and the horror of his whole existence flashes before us, all falling on the single word, 'I have been seen'. The final emphasis is not on his seeing, but on the object of sight which he declares himself to be. The phase of revelation is over and a new phase announced, the exhibition which the imagery foreshadowed from the first.

The presence of the two old men should not be forgotten.[61] This is their revelation too. The great king of the grand opening scene is discovered before their humble presence and through their crude agency. In Sophocles the irony of appearance and reality often breaks down into a contrast between the lowly and the noble; it is the humble who are the carriers of truth and here Oedipus' fallen greatness is set beside the simple humanity which can know no such fall. With the frantic departure they are left stricken and uncomprehending for a moment before they go their separate ways and slowly out of sight, down the *parodoi*. This is a triple departure. The image is one of disintegration; a whole world has been shattered.

The ode which ensues is a lamentation of the fall.[62] The fate of the great king is presented as a universal paradigm of man's transitory and shadowy existence. And the main constituents of the reversal are exposed within the framework of his, mankind's, inevitable expulsion from illusion, the movement which we have just watched accomplished on-stage. The lesson is immediately and vividly drawn at the start in the form of a question:

> For what man, what man wins more of happiness than a seeming and after that a falling away? (1189-92)

The elders are referring not only to Oedipus' illusions about himself, but also to their own illusions about him. And the answer is given in terms of the theatrical presentation: the images of Oedipus' former popular fame make up a lyrical reminiscence of the opening spectacle, the very 'seeming' which has dominated the play's

perspective. In like fashion the second part of the ode asks the question and answers with the 'evidence' of the new reality, incest. Here, in preparation for the closing spectacle, the language – which now carries its literal meaning – sets forth a reality now truly visible:

> Time the all-seeing has found you out against your will. (1213)

The traditional idea of time as revealer is a favourite one of Sophocles but here the unwillingness of the victim is introduced as an important special element which attunes us to the initial distinction to be made between what has been seen and what remains to be seen; Oedipus, even at the last, did not foresee the result of his search,[63] whereas the spectacle he is about to make of himself comes after knowledge has been achieved, a deliberate self-chosen act. At the end the horrified Chorus can only wish that it had never 'seen' Oedipus (1217–18) and the ode draws its final bitter conclusion:

> To say it true, through you I got new breath and through you I have now laid my eye to sleep. (1220–2)

The image of the closed eye is the prelude to the most shocking visual disclosure.

Enter the second messenger from the palace. He has two tales of woe to reveal, one which will be heard and one which will be 'seen' (1224), one which the palace conceals and one which it will soon 'bring forth to the light' (*phanei*, 1229). The distinction prepares for the great exhibition of suffering which focuses on Oedipus alone: Jocasta's suicide will only be heard; we shall behold Oedipus' self-mutiliation. And this visual revelation is to be of a different kind than that which preceded; these woes are 'willed' this time, not 'unwilled' (1230) and we are warned that those sufferings are most painful which are 'seen' (*phanōs*) to be 'self-chosen'. For all the climactic power of the previous revelation words cannot carry the culmination of truth and pain. The true climax is to be an actual visible presentation.[64]

As promised, we first hear of the suicide of Jocasta, the pain of which, the Chorus is reminded, is absent because it is not for them to 'see'. Moreover, even in the telling, the fate of Jocasta is not presented fully or in its own right, but in its effect on Oedipus. We are pointedly deprived of a visual description of her last moments: she has locked herself away and Oedipus had prevented anyone from 'seeing' her death through to the end (1253). All eyes in fact switch (1254) to the

frantic figure of Oedipus; he breaks down the bolt to reveal and to see for himself her hanging corpse. And her woe immediately gives way to the 'terrible sight' on which the whole narrative converges and whose horror by contrast is described in loving detail. Snatching the brooches from her dress and right before her outstretched corpse, Oedipus smites his own eyes again and again, addressing them directly:

> Saying words like these, that *they would not see* more the evils that he was suffering and working but henceforth in darkness *they would see* those whom *they ought never to have seen*, and not know those whom he once desired to know! (1271–4)

The assault on himself is made against the single offending part, his eyes, eyes which have seen what they should not have seen and not seen what they should have seen. He is punishing the eyes which did not in the past perform their due function and also shutting himself off for the future from a light he can no longer endure. The emphasis is on the darkness that he imposes but there is in the confusion of seeing and non-seeing an impression that the eyes that *did not see* in the past *will see* in the future – albeit in darkness. The self-blinding contains the suggestion of true seeing.

The tale of the horror within prepares us for the exhibition which the messenger first promised and to which he now gives final introduction. Oedipus cries for someone 'to open the bolts' and 'show' him to all the Thebans. As has been well observed there are no biers, no *eccyclema*, no apparatus.[65] The hero of this play puts himself on show. After the self-blinding comes self-exposure[66] and the self-blinding becomes other than it was. It is no longer a personal affair; this is done for Thebes. He makes an emblem of himself, he brings to light what was always there, his own blindness. This is the awesome fulfilment of the public commitment he first made. Moreover, the circle of doom which the visual imagery, now active in meaning, now passive, kept ever before us is perfectly realised in the entry of one who is both revealer and revealed. What the messenger also tells us is that Oedipus' purpose as well is self-exile, but that he lacks strength and someone to guide him. This third and final self-infliction is the issue which is worked out in the course of the scene. For the present, as the messenger reaches the climax of his long introduction, the sight itself fills all thought:

> For the sickness is too great to bear. And he will *show* it to you also, for, look, the barriers of the gates are opening, and you will

soon *see a sight* which even one who hates must pity. (1293-6)

The immediate preface to Oedipus' return is thus framed, in a very striking way, by the same blending of images; the barriers are unlocked, the cavern opens, the gruesome truth breaks forth.

The emergence of Oedipus is a shocking spectacle. After the long and grisly tale of woe – and the constant warnings that we are on the verge of seeing it – the entry possesses an imagined aspect of horror which is fully matched by the actual physical impression.[67] He stumbles on to the stage, groping in his blindness, with his mask, now blood-stained, showing the terrible self-mutilation. He does not speak for a moment; the Chorus responds to a sight only:

O terrible suffering for men to see, O most dread of all that I have met. (1297-9)

And then they actually turn away from a 'sight' (1303), which fills them with fascination and horror at the same time (1305). After the great climax which saw Oedipus' departure, his return posed the danger of being anti-climactic.[68] But the sensational visual event that Sophocles creates out of the return is not a gratuitous theatrical gesture. It is prefigured in the play's imagery, it is the seer's vision realised, it is the sight of sights in a tragedy which is about seeing. As in the beginning so in the end Oedipus draws the gaze of all.

The Chorus's shock at Oedipus' physical condition is from the first bound up with the question which dominates the *kommos*: what possible purpose did Oedipus have in blinding himself?[69] The elders' horrible fascination with the suffering that they see (again at 1312) is set against Oedipus' new experience of darkness, its physical torture and the tortures of memory. There is at first no communication and recognition is effected by the sound of his loyal friend's voice. The question is put again: how did he endure to 'quench' his own vision? What spirit moved him to it? His answer: it was Apollo, but it was his very own hands that did the deed. This is a true insight;[70] he sees, behind his own self-willed acts, the mysterious agency that the spectator has been aware of all along. As with the revelation so with the self-blinding, Apollo is somehow responsible. When Oedipus recognises Apollo he recognises the larger pattern of his tragedy, the strange and irresistible coming of self-knowledge.[71] This is not to deny Oedipus' own despairing purpose which he goes on to declare:

What need was there for me to *see*, for whom in *seeing* there was nothing sweet to *see*? (1334-5)

But this is a more rational formulation than his first instinctive accusation of his eyes (1271), and its inadequacy as a final solution is almost immediately felt in his anguished demand for a more comprehensive excommunication, exile. And certainly with the further explication of his suffering, the Chorus is not convinced that living in blindness is better than death. The *kommos* concludes with its main question unanswered: why the blinding?

The failure invites Oedipus to justify his act, now for a third time[72] and at length. The first part of the speech is a catalogue of the visual ordeals he has escape from, the first one countering the Chorus's specific challenge that death were better:

For, if I had *sight*, I did not know with what *eyes* I could ever have *seen* my father when I came to the house of Hades, or my unhappy mother . . .

But do you suppose that the *sight* of children, born as they were born, was desirable for me to *gaze upon*? No, never with my *eyes*.

Nor was the town [for me to see] nor the tower nor the holy statues of the gods, of which I deprived myself, by my own command that all should thrust away the impious one, the one seen [*phanenta*] to be unholy and of Laius' line.

After branding such a stain on me was I to *see* these citizens with steady *eyes*? No, least of all! (1371-86)

With what rhetoric now is one sight after another raised and dismissed by the blind one! What an array of visions is now banished from his eyes. But it is not enough. The very explicitness and cumulative power of the justification anticipates its falsification. There is no escape from memory; and the last part of the speech is a long apostrophe of the horrors in his life, not banished but vividly before him. The sequence of the speech and of the whole scene shows the illusion of Oedipus' solution: with the subsidence of physical pain the mental torment takes over. And the outcome proves the point: Oedipus ends up in a self-contradiction. After demanding to be brought into the light he now demand to be 'hidden' away – where the Chorus will 'see' him no more – after arguing against death he now begs to be killed. What also impresses is his utter helplessness. The blinding makes the once great

man of action a totally passive figure; unable to make his way to the Chorus, he bids the elders approach and touch him and not be afraid. But any possible movement is prevented by the approach of Creon.

The problem – what to do with Oedipus – is left to Creon, king in Oedipus' stead (1418). The visual scene at this point, with Oedipus begging to be approached, is the scene in the prologue in reverse, and Creon's arrival, there eagerly awaited, is here cause of grave apprehension. The words which are assigned to Oedipus are carefully chosen:

> What ground for trust can be *made visible* [*phaneitai*] by me? For in the past I have been discovered *false* to him in everything. (1420-1)

The very accusation he made against Creon before is applicable to himself. The arrival of Creon brings reversal. Whatever is made of this controversial final scene, this fact is inescapable. It is reversal that Oedipus must stand up to, it is reversal which supplies the elusive true meaning of the self-blinding.

Creon first gives reassurance that he is not there to mock or cast reproach.[73] This basic humanity provides the context for the working out of the issue which he inherits from the Chorus: will Oedipus be taken into exile, his own first and insistent desire and the finale promised throughout the play? But Creon, shocked by the impiety of the 'uncovered head' immediately orders that Oedipus be moved *into the house*, as an affront to the sun and to the light of day, as a 'sight' fit only for kinsmen. The actual conflict does not appear to be significant: Oedipus presses for his own method of removing himself from all contact with men, exile. But a massive reversal of direction is at stake.[74] The oracle of Apollo, Teiresias' dire predictions, Oedipus' own imprecations, all point to the exile of the polluted one. And there is even a place marked out for the wanderer, Cithaeron. It was Creon who first declared the 'manifest' bidding of Apollo. Yet now that it is literally manifest before him he wants to consult the god again and be sure. So, too, Oedipus, the one who saw mystery, now has the clearest understanding of the oracle (1440); he knows that exile is his destiny, he knows that he has been preserved for some special fate. Moreover, the myth of his wanderings tells the audience that he will be proved right. The resurgence of Oedipus' imperious manner which has been well recognised in this final scene[75] is connected with this sure vision of his future. In this he sees more than the pious Creon.

The display of suffering comes to its climax with the arrival of his two daughters. Oedipus has begged Creon to be allowed to touch and hold them. Already he is contradicting the whole purpose of the self-mutilation: his hands are to be his eyes (1469-70). The generosity of Creon is immediately substantiated, an unquestioned thing. Oedipus hears their sobs, he gropes for them, and they come and cling to their father: 'O children.' With this repeated echo of the opening spectacle the reversal is brought home with crushing power, the tableau of exaltation set against the tableau of ruin. As the crowd was silent so now are his daughters. Here, at last, is the real father with the real children. He stoops down, bringing his bloody sockets level with his children's gaze:

> Come here, come to these hands of mine, hands of your brother; hands of your father, which made these once *bright eyes to see* in this way – his, who neither *seeing* nor knowing *was seen* [*ephanthēn*] to become your father by her from whom he himself was born. For you also I weep since I have no power to *see* you, when I think of the bitter life in the future. (1480-7)

The whole visual meaning of his fate is condensed into this, the final formulation of the play's controlling imagery. Still there is the seeing and the being seen. After showing himself to Thebes he shows himself to the silence of children and horror turns to pity. The hands which so tenderly hold them are the hands which are imbued with the blind and the knowing abominations which he has done to himself. But, above all, they are the hands that 'see': he 'feels' the horror he has created and again in his blindness he speaks of 'seeing', which at this point is not the fulfilment of his first anguished purpose, the physical assault, but a new kind of inner vision.

The external victory is Creon's. Oedipus first wins his way: he gets Creon to give him his hand in promise that he will care for his daughters. But then, immediately, Creon puts an end to the lamentation and enforces his wishes that Oedipus go into the house. There is still one last flash of the old Oedipus as he resists and imposes the condition that he will proceed to exile. But Creon insists that he wait for what is god's gift. And it is not simply an exit but a forced and heart-wrenching separation from his children. However much we may perceive the 'recovery' of Oedipus in this final scene, the sequence is decisive.[76] The departure and separation come last and they represent the most devastating reversal; not only is the immediate will of Oedipus

defeated, the direction of the drama and Oedipus' control over it is handed over to the untragic man, to the cautious Creon. Even in the final steps into the palace reversal is proclaimed; Oedipus, blind and helpless, is led off by Creon.[77] How different from his first impressive appearance! The final departure may contradict the expectations of exile, but it is a superbly appropriate answer to the initiative of Oedipus' first entry.

The tragedy of Oedipus is a pattern repeated, the solving of a second riddle. The hero sets out from a world erected on his previous success; the light he first brought is for the eyes to see; his intellectual reputation a visible and proven truth. The highly theatrical opening is a declaration of this visibility. What matters above all about Oedipus' stature, with all its determinants, is its clarity, the material impression. The rest of the play may rightly be regarded as the struggle to dismantle a vision, how Oedipus is seen and how he sees himself. The end of the play is the end of this struggle: when another vision materialises.

Between the two great tableau-scenes there are exits and entrances which determine the scenic structure. And here visual significance is built in by imagery. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that Sophocles' favourite technique, the linking of visual image and visual effect, is the organising principle of composition. It is not sufficient merely to draw attention to the paradoxical imagery of the Teiresias scene, or to remark in a general way on the density of the visual imagery throughout the play.[78] The imagery of sight constitutes a whole connected sequence which has a distinctive pattern and which is inseparable from the development of scenes. Almost every arrival introduces a scene which begins and ends with a cluster of visual images; a visual problem is posed, a visual interpretation offered. This framework of imagery defines the character of each unit of development as a self-contained process of seeing, one step in the larger pattern of revelation. Once Oedipus has taken the stage he is confronted with a series of stage entries which test the great talent with which he is endowed in the opening ceremony, his capacity to see through a mystery.

The sequence and pattern of the arrivals is all-important. There is an evident symmetry in the first and last pairs of scenes. The eagerness of Creon and reluctance of Teiresias are paralleled by the eagerness of the Corinthian and the reluctance of the Theban. In performance these long entrances from the *parodos* would have made an impression: a rhythm of appearance and reality, joy and grief. Moreover the effect is of a *repeated* process. And this is exactly the intent of the playwright.

The man who comes first, Teiresias, carries the most expectations: he knows all. But the climax is premature and revelation fails. The man who comes last, who starts with the least expectations, who is dismissed in favour of Teiresias, is successful where the seer failed. After the full power of prophetic disclosure we must wait on the last detail. It is not the lord seer of Apollo who brings light but the humble herdsman. The impression of success after failure is very much a matter of scenic effect. And the sequence of scenes mirrors the sequence of imagery, the massive paradox anticipating the stage by stage revelation.

Throughout the final phase Oedipus plays the active role, the interpreter of the visual signs. But his language from the beginning contains a passive as well as an active sense, an ominous indicator of the circular process. The re-entry of Oedipus after the self-blinding, helpless, groping forward, horribly mutilated, is the theatrical realisation of the visual imagery, but in its real and sinister significance: he becomes an object of sight. More than this, it is conscious self-revelation. Thus while externally the last portion of the tragedy shows others coming to terms with the sight of Oedipus it is also a process whereby Oedipus, in darkness, comes to terms with himself. Indeed the climax of the final sequence, which moves from the horror of the Chorus to the horror of Creon, is the silent innocence and incomprehension of the children, the deliberate contrast with Oedipus' awful understanding of himself. His first entry, the very embodiment of initiative and understanding, is the illusion. Only when he is forcibly separated from his children and leaves under the control of another is his true knowledge declared: self-knowledge.

While it is true that Oedipus dominates the process of revelation he is yet surrounded by a whole cast of revealers. Whether reluctant or eager, unconscious or conscious, all bring their own visible 'truth'. And they are all dramatised as the agents of the divine revealer, Apollo. The god, who is detected, more or less dramatically, behind every arrival, becomes more and more manifest until that fine theatrical moment when he is summoned by the sceptical Jocasta from 'obscurity' and materialises in the guise of the old Corinthian. The climax is reached when Oedipus himself is also disclosed as the agent of Apollo: when the purpose of the hero is shown to merge with the purpose of god and the grim alliance stands revealed. The elders too, who are so closely bound up with the attitudes and moods of their king, are seized by the idea of visibility. Thus the images of sight are not monopolised by the great bringer of light, they are

'the language of the play', which is to say the language of 'Apollo's coming'.

The play, which is generally regarded as typifying the genius of Sophoclean artistry, is also most typical of the playwright's stagecraft. In the first place, while *Oedipus the King* does not have the theatricality of the *Philoctetes* it is, contrary to the impression often given, a drama of enormous visual power. The opening processional, with its divisions of age, its ritualistic character, its silence, is a truly spectacular beginning to the tragedy. The end is equally spectacular, the tableau of the two helpless children, also silent, clinging to their ruined father. The exploitation of children to evoke pathos is supposed to be Euripidean. Yet in two of seven plays, the *Ajax* and *Oedipus the King*, Sophocles employs just such an effect. And this is not to mention the heart-rending separation and reunion of the two daughters in the *Oedipus at Colonus*. Enormity confronts innocence, terrible knowledge silent incomprehension. And how important is this scene in *Oedipus the King*; it comes last and it is that against which the beginning is measured. From success to ruin, from authority to impotence, from kingship to beggary, the reversal worked out by the whole play is very much a visual demonstration. Moreover, the scene of final pathos is but the climax of a long display of horror and suffering. The emergence of Oedipus, stumbling and self-mutilated, introduces a sight which is with us until the end of the play, no shorter 'a spectacle of horror' than the sight of Pentheus' impaled head in the *Bacchae* of Euripides. Best known for the brilliance and tautness of its plot-construction, for its exemplification of the Aristotelian ideal, *Oedipus the King* is very much a play for the stage.

But it is in the harmonious blending of this spectacular element with the whole verbal and visual texture of the play that *Oedipus the King* of all the plays is most typical. The scenic form of the entire play is constructed from the relationship between visual language and visual effect. As the opening and closing spectacles are, beyond what they depict, visible declarations, so each scene of the development which links them is a visual process. And could there be a more logical outcome of the scenic design than the climax of self-disclosure? Could there be a more telling theatrical emblem of Sophocles' tragic view of man than the sightless and stumbling figure? This close harmony of visual technique and visual meaning, which achieves perfection in *Oedipus the King*, reveals the essence of Sophoclean dramaturgy, where stagecraft and tragic conception are always united by the idea of vision.

Notes

1. The question, much discussed, turns on whether the entry represents an arrival proper or a conventional expedient to allow the opening tableau to be formed, the so-called 'cancelled entry'. P. Burian, 'The Play before the Prologue: Initial Tableaux on the Greek Stage', *Ancient and Modern: Essays in Honour of G.F. Else* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1977), pp. 83–4, presents a convincing case for the complete stage presentation, which is fully formulated in the text as a ritual procession and which, as B.M.W. Knox has shown, *Oedipus at Thebes* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1957), pp. 159–60, is dramatically of great significance; they come to Oedipus as to a god. The opening scene introduces an important ambiguity: the suppliants approach altars which are god's but also Oedipus' (16), and it is not make explicit at this point that one altar at least is Apollo's. At all events it is Oedipus who appears. The 'equation' with god is the first expression of a relationship which is only truly revealed when Oedipus at the last acknowledges the divine master of his fate, in a cry which recognises Apollo (1329) and in the final return to the house, in which, hidden away, he must await the god's word. For a thorough discussion of the general problem of the 'cancelled entry' see O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977), pp. 134–6.

2. R.C. Jebb's visualisation of the scene, in Jebb (ed.), *The Oedipus Tyrannus* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1893).

3. There has been a certain reluctance to accept the presence of a large assembly. The main concern is the inconvenience of the exit of too large a number just prior to the arrival of the Chorus. This inconvenience is overstressed, given the spaciousness of the Greek theatre. For the extreme view see W.M. Calder III, 'The Staging of the Prologue of *Oedipus Tyrannus*', *Phoenix*, vol. 13 (1959), pp. 121–9, who supposes that the audience was addressed from the stage as the people of Thebes, two mute boys being all that was required for the actual supplication. The notion of 'audience address' in the case of Greek tragedy has, however, been brought into serious doubt by D. Bain, 'Audience Address in Greek Tragedy', *Classical Quarterly*, n.s., vol. 25 (1975), pp. 13–25, whose arguments are further reinforced by Taplin, *Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, pp. 129–30. Most editors in fact accept the employment of a significant number of extras. But one word of caution is in order; clearly the group should not be larger than the Chorus that comes later as the representative body of the Theban people. On the question of composition, the text (16–19) has been suspected. See especially A.S. Henry, 'Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*: The Interpretation of the Opening Scene and The Text of l. 18', *Classical Quarterly*, n.s., vol. 17 (1967), pp. 48–51. The three divisions of age, however, are accepted by most editors and represent categories appropriate for supplication. It may be that the children are in the majority.

4. It is possible, as Burian suggests, 'The Play before the Prologue: Initial Tableaux on the Greek Stage', p. 83, that the spokesman of the group, the priest of Zeus, is given a prominence on-stage which might lead the audience to believe that he was there to open the proceedings. In this case the entry of Oedipus, unannounced as it is, would occur as something of a surprise.

5. There may be a retinue; Oedipus is a king and his wealth is not an insignificant aspect of his status. It is one of the three ideas apostrophised by Oedipus (380) and figures in the prophet's vision of the great reversal (455). But on-stage any attendants that Oedipus might have would not take away from the essential relationship of king and subjects.

6. The importance of this theme is the main concern of K. Reinhardt's brilliant study, *Sophocles*, trans. by H. and D. Harvey (Blackwell, Oxford, 1979), pp. 94–134.

7. The 'active' energy of Oedipus in his search for truth is reflected throughout

in the explicitness of his language and in the control he exercises over events.

8. Jebb's stage direction, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on 78.

9. Thus Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, p. 97.

10. Jebb notes, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on 105, how the colloquial usage skilfully conveys the tone of unconcern.

11. The skill and intricacy with which the theme of 'robber' and 'robbers' is developed is beyond the scope of this study. See especially the perceptive commentary of J.T. Sheppard (ed.), *The Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1920).

12. The uniqueness of the survivor and his visual evidence, very pronounced in the original, already hints at the irony of the dismissal.

13. The joining of the new illusion to the innate illusion is well brought out by Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, p. 99.

14. Surely 'again' has reference to the riddle (Jebb, *Oedipus Tyrannus*) not to the mystery of Laius' death (Sheppard, *Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles*) which was left unsolved.

15. He becomes, in Reinhardt's memorable phrase, 'the mighty revealer', but it is only with these words, at this culminating point and not, as Reinhardt implies in *Sophocles*, p. 97, earlier in the scene, that he may truly be called such.

16. The visual imagery is simply one feature of the whole pattern of 'reflexion' which is built into Oedipus' manner of speaking. T. Gould (ed.), *Oedipus the King* (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1970), for example on 107, draws attention to Oedipus' often emphatic mention of 'hands' in the prologue and throughout the play. For the hand that will avenge the murder (107) is the same as the hand of the murderer, the hand which will in fact be used against himself in the self-mutilation. Cf. 139–40, 231, 266, 810–11, 821–2, 996, 1329–35, 1481–3. And perhaps, as Gould suggests, there are gestures of the hand to accompany the verbal references.

17. See the careful analysis of R.W.B. Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980), pp. 138–48.

18. Quite explicitly Oedipus is assumed to answer the prayers of the Chorus (216). He may, then, return to the stage at some point before the ode concludes.

19. For the repeated use of the word 'lord' see R.P. Winnington-Ingram, 'The Second Stasimon of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 91 (1971), p. 127, n. 41, and more recently, *Sophocles: An Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980), p. 193, n. 43.

20. Thus Taplin, *Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, p. 138, n. 2.

21. The repeat of the antithesis is noted by F.W. Schneidewin (ed.), *Oedipus Tyrannos* (Weidmann, Berlin, 1856), on 293. The text is dubious, but most editors retain 'the man who saw' against the anonymous conjecture, 'the doer', adopted by Pearson. The idea that the murderer himself is the witness is typical of the irony which refers back to the guilt of the speaker.

22. On the significance of blindness and seercraft in myth see the interesting article by R.G.A. Buxton, 'Blindness and Limits: Sophokles and the Logic of Myth', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 100 (1980), pp. 22–37.

23. At least Oedipus bids him 'not to turn away'. The move also seems to be confirmed by the way in which Teiresias breaks off his utterance, as though reminded of his reluctance. See J.C. Kamerbeek (ed.), *Oedipus Tyrannus* (Brill, Leiden, 1967), on 325.

24. Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, p. 106.

25. On Oedipus' preoccupation with his power and his tendency to behaviour which typifies the tyrant see Sheppard, *Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles*; and V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1954), p. 67.

26. Jebb's translation, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on 395.

27. As Reinhardt observes, *Sophocles*, p. 109, the words make up 'an expression of the whole of human existence'.

28. Thus L. Campbell (ed.), *Sophocles* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1879), vol. 1, on 437.

29. Kamerbeek's 'pillars of the prophecy', *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on 457.

30. For H. Drexler, 'Die Teiresias-Szene des *König Oedipus*', *Maia*, vol. 8 (1956), p. 6, one of the psychological incongruities of the scene is this later boldness compared with the initial refusal to speak. But the initial motive is not fear but compassion. The later revelation is delivered in temper and this is perfectly consistent with the psychology of the development.

31. The silence is ambiguous. Here the Teiresias scene in the *Antigone* is instructive; Creon stays on to speak, to show anxiety, finally to yield. The silence of Oedipus is intentionally more intriguing and it is not clearly one of defeat. He is not crushed by the truth – which he in fact cannot grasp – but he is left with vague anxieties. The lack of reaction has caused some critics to suggest that Oedipus departs at the *beginning* of Teiresias' last speech so that he does not hear the final revelation. This view of the stage action also solves the problem of the supposed stupidity of Oedipus in not seeing a truth which is spelled out for him. See most recently B.M.W. Knox, 'Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannos* 446: Exit Oedipus?' *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, vol. 21 (1980), pp. 321–32, whose defence of the early exit still does not convince. The main difficulty for Knox is the clarity of Teiresias' final speech in comparison with the earlier ones. But in fact the speech, as before, is constructed from paradoxes and contains the whole confusion of Oedipus' relationships, the whole pattern of his tragedy, past, present and future. Added to all this there is also the confusion of indirect and direct address. Knox also omits to mention the particular and, in terms of the confrontation, consistent emphasis that Teiresias gives to his final speech: he is not afraid 'to face' Oedipus (447–8). The idea that Teiresias, a blind man no less, is addressing an empty stage surely makes nonsense of the whole scene. And does not Oedipus act immediately and hereafter in accordance with the seer's last instruction: 'Go inside and consider these things'? We shall see the words of the seer come back to him. The position taken here is also supported by a quite different set of arguments in an excellent discussion by D. Bain, 'A Misunderstood Scene in Sophokles, *Oidipous* (*O.T.* 300–462)', *Greece and Rome*, vol. 26 (1979), pp. 132–45. Bain, who well appreciates the difference between the play performed and the play read, points out three important factors which help to play down the apparent unreality of Oedipus' blindness: the dramatic sequence, which makes almost no mention of Oedipus' terrible past before the confrontation with the seer, the variety of the versions of the Oedipus myth, which, even given its fame, would allow for some uncertainty on the part of the audience, and the willingness of the audience to succumb to the spell of the dramatist's art. Cf. also the pertinent remarks of P.E. Easterling, 'Character in Sophocles', *Greece and Rome*, vol. 24 (1977), pp. 124–5: 'Teiresias accuses Oedipus of killing a man he *knows* he has never met, a king what is more, whom he could hardly expect to meet and kill without realizing it in some casual skirmish.' For further valuable discussion see Shepphard, *Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles*, on 462, and O. Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (Methuen, London, 1978), pp. 43–4.

32. The sequence of the Chorus's reflections is often questioned on the natural assumption that the Chorus might have been expected to express its horror at the denunciation of Oedipus before dealing with the 'unseen' fugitive. Many of the reasons are well put by Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies*, p. 149, but one point seems to be that the Chorus's solid vision of Oedipus is not shaken by the Teiresias scene and this is reinforced by the sequence.

33. This reading is not certain but has received general acceptance (Jebb, Kamerbeek, Sheppard). Pearson, however, adopts an alternative.

34. This is well observed by Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, p. 111.

35. As Winnington-Ingram observes, *Sophocles*, p. 183: 'She argues from apparent facts.'

36. Again, noticeably, the imagery provides the framework for the speech.

37. Oedipus is quite clearly startled by the mention of the 'three ways' and by this alone. It is not at all strange that he remains deceived as regards the worst of his situation. As Sheppard points out, *Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles*, on 726: 'It is characteristic of Oedipus that he becomes absorbed with any idea which seizes him, and neglects for the moment every other thought.' See also J. Carrière, 'Ambigüité et Vraisemblance des *Oedipe-Roi*', *Pallas*, vol. 4 (1956), pp. 11ff. The rejection of the whole idea by P.H. Vellacott, *Sophocles and Oedipus* (Macmillan, London, 1971), whose main purpose is to show that Oedipus possesses his guilty knowledge from the beginning, is special pleading for an ingenious but unconvincing interpretation.

38. Suggested by Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 728.

39. The Greek word, 'out of sight', can be taken in an active or a passive sense. Most editors (Campbell, Jebb, Schneidewin) adopt the meaning that the herdsman 'does not want to see' the city. But the passive sense is surely present, if not prevalent: the herdsman does not want 'to have Oedipus see him'. Throughout the play and particularly when the herdsman actually appears, the issue very much involves Oedipus seeing the herdsman. See Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 762.

40. Gould's translation of the manuscript reading, *prouphanē*. G. Hermann's conjecture, quoted by Jebb and adopted in Pearson's text, 'he revealed' (*prouphēnen*), is much less dramatic and does not convey the sense of sudden surprise. See Schneidewin, *Oedipus Tyrannos*, on 790.

41. On the obscurity of her argument see Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, p. 257, n. 23.

42. On the dramatic significance of this difficult ode see especially Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, pp. 185–204. Cf. J.C. Kamerbeek, 'Comments on the Second Stasimon of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*', *Wiener Studien*, vol. 79 (1966), pp. 80–92; G.H. Gellie, 'The Second Stasimon of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*', *American Journal of Philology*, vol. 85 (1964), pp. 113–23; and most recently Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies*, pp. 158–69. See also D.A. Hester, 'Oedipus and Jonah', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, n.s., vol. 23 (1977), pp. 32–61, for this and other problems as well as an excellent bibliography.

43. This fine theatrical effect has been well discussed. But see in particular H.D.F. Kitto's still indispensable account, *Greek Tragedy*, 3rd edn (Methuen, London, 1961), p. 139.

44. The dramatic rhyme noticed by Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 913.

45. Surely this is a conscious effect on Sophocles' part; the messenger is 'delighted with his own cleverness' (Sheppard, *Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles*).

46. For which see Gould's thorough discussion, *Oedipus the King*, on 981.

47. Thus Jebb, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on 987.

48. Gould as ever insists that the visual image be given its full force; it is the 'eyes' which Oedipus imagines not the 'face', which the word commonly means. The mutuality of 'seeing' and 'being seen', as we have observed, is a feature of the imagery. Cf. *Ajax*, 70 and *Electra*, 1285–6.

49. As Jebb emphasises, 'thoroughly a colloquialism'.

50. After 'stranger' the address is noticeably respectful. Thus Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 990.

51. Recognised by Jebb, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on 1072: 'Jocasta . . . has spoken passionate words *immediately* before going.' Cf. the exit of Haemon in the *Antigone*. In one basic sense the exit is similar to that of Deianira: both are departures which are misconstrued. But here the delusion is much more significant. It is surely mistaken to assume a dramatic pause between her last anguished words and her departure.

52. See Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 1075.

53. 'Wife' is perhaps a rather forced translation of *gune*, which in the generalising context clearly refers to 'womankind' as well. But there is, throughout the scene, a play on the neutral meaning of *gune*, 'lady' or 'woman', and the more dramatic meaning, 'wife'.

54. The presence of the messenger is invariably forgotten by critics.

55. The long introduction is yet another example of the effective use which can be made of the entry from the *parodos*.

56. Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 990, rightly points out this important theatrical fact.

57. It is not clear that the scene would be played with the herdsman actually tortured. 1155 might indicate that the threat of violence is enough.

58. Not only in this scene but in the whole of the play thus far.

59. Jebb's translation.

60. It may be with the further terrible cry, later described (1252), as he passes through the doors (Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 1252).

61. Kitto's sure sense of theatre does not let him forget these two important characters, *Greek Tragedy*, p. 141: 'He [the Corinthian] sees his new King rush into the palace; and then – the final ode? Not yet. These two actors have to make their exit, by the long side-passages, in full view of the audience; some forty yards of exit. And as we watch them stumbling out we have time to reflect that this is the outcome for them, of their merciful interest in an abandoned baby.' For a contrary view see Taplin, *Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, p. 91: 'And at *OT* 1185 the Corinthian and the old shepherd go unnoticed in the high pathos of Oedipus' discovery.' But it is difficult to see how they could go unnoticed. While they are both secondary characters they have a significance beyond the conventional role of their counterparts in other plays. The scene is also a reunion; and this is the parting of the ways.

62. For the structure and content of the ode see Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies*, pp. 168–70.

63. Nor, originally, did he know that 'his actions were crimes' (Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, p. 174, n. 63).

64. The case is well made by A. Cameron, *The Identity of Oedipus the King* (New York University Press, New York, 1968), pp. 97–103. See also Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, pp. 176–7.

65. Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, p. 130.

66. See Cameron's perceptive interpretation, *The Identity of Oedipus the King*, p. 122, n. 16: 'Oedipus' insistence on showing himself is highly significant, the self-disclosure or self-revelation being the concrete expression of the man who discovers himself and marking the public character of this self-discovery.'

67. The technique of preparing the audience through speech and then showing the result is stressed by Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies*, p. 179.

68. The crucial problem noted by Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, p. 176.

69. The insistent question of the ode. See Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies*, p. 182.

70. Thus Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, p. 178.

71. Apollo was the god most concerned with self-knowledge. The importance of this for the play is rightly emphasised by Cameron, *The Identity of Oedipus the King*, pp. 15ff., and Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, p. 178.

72. Gould, *Oedipus the King*, on 1367, emphasises the insistent explanations of the mutilation.

73. While there is a certain coldness about Creon, there is no reason to doubt his sincerity which is not impugned by anything that he does in the course of the scene.

74. The whole problem of the final exit, which in fact reverses all the

expectations of the drama, is well treated by Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action*, pp. 45–6.

75. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes*, pp. 185–96.

76. This is an important qualification of Knox's interpretation which goes beyond the evidence.

77. The distribution and even the authenticity of the last lines of the Chorus are open to serious question. See especially the careful investigation of R.D. Dawe, *Studies on the Text of Sophocles* (Brill, Leiden, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 266–73, who concludes that they are spurious.

78. It is a common fallacy to think that imagery is accounted for by simply counting the number of times a word appears. Nor is it sufficient to mark accumulations of imagery. Variety in the formulation itself, position in the dramatic development, context and sequence are all important factors. Here the relationship between the imagery and the organisation of scenes is crucial.

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