

## THE END OF SOPHOCLES' *O.T.* REVISITED \*

During the period of time that has elapsed since an article of mine with almost the same title as above was printed (1), a number of important and interesting studies of this topic have appeared (2), most of which favour (or at least are highly compatible with) the idea that the end of Sophocles' *OT* has suffered large-scale interpolation. But these more recent studies fail to take into account all the arguments that could be (and have been) raised against authenticity (3), because they ignore earlier expositions of this view (4). It therefore seemed a good idea to re-examine the issue, devoting much more space to the question of authenticity than was possible (5) in my earlier

\* Throughout this article I quote the *OT* and other Sophoclean plays from the new Oxford text of Sophocles (Oxford 1990) by H. Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson. I am grateful to these scholars for having allowed me to see the final proofs of this edition and also of their accompanying volume of notes *Sophoclea* (Oxford 1990), which I quote when apposite below.

(1) *The end of Sophocles' OT*, "Hermes" 110, 1982, 268 ff.

(2) To wit Dawe's commentary on the play (Cambridge 1982) pp. 245 ff., the closing section of Taplin's essay *Sophocles in his theatre* in *Sophocle*, 'Entretiens Hardt' 29 (1983), pp. 166 ff., D. A. Hester's *The banishment of Oedipus* in "Antichthon" 18, 1984, 13 ff., and J. R. March, *The Creative Poet*, "BICS" Suppl. 49 (1987), 148 ff. All these works are henceforward referred to by author's name alone.

(3) For a general bibliography of treatments of the end of the *OT* see Hester p. 13 n. 1. The best-known (though see below n. 4) argument against authenticity is P. L. W. Graffunder's article *Über den ausgang des 'König Oedipus' von Sophokles* in "NJPhP" 132, 1885, 389 ff., henceforward abbreviated as «Graffunder».

(4) Alois Patin, *Die Exodos im König Oedipus in Festgabe für M. Schanz* (Würzburg 1912), pp. 63 ff. raises several difficulties about the passage in question without doubting its authenticity. But I am thinking in particular of Eva Eicken-Iselin, *Interpretationen und Untersuchungen zum Aufbau der Sophokleischen Rheseis* (Diss. Basel 1942) pp. 275 ff. This study, by a pupil of (*inter alios*) Eduard Fraenkel and Gunther Jachmann (by whose attitudes to interpolations she has clearly been influenced) is in general very little-known. (It might have been cited, for instance, in several places within M. D. Reeve's *Interpolations in Greek Tragedy III*, "GRBS" 14, 1973, 160ff.: e.g. p. 227 n.1 could have been cited on p. 161 à propos of the deletion of Aj. 966-970). In fact, opponents of the end of the *OT*'s authenticity have hardly read up on each other. Dawe fails to refer to Graffunder. Dawe and everyone else fails to refer to Eicken-Iselin, who in turn fails to mention Graffunder. For Fraenkel's view of Eicken-Iselin see "MH" 20, 1963, 103=Kl. Beitr. I.409 n.3.

(5) As I explained at the end of this article (p. 278 n. 26), I had originally appended a detailed refutation of Graffunder's theory. The editors of "Hermes", however, were reluctant to include it on grounds of space and this was by no means unreasonable of them: at the

article. I begin with what one opponent (6) of authenticity has termed "Einzelanstöße", minor causes for concern on the syntactical level, and then turn to wider problems of dramatic technique and the like. My conclusion will be that, although the arguments against the genuineness of the *OT*'s end are more numerous and potent than any scholar (myself included) has yet appreciated, they still do not suffice to establish the case.

## I

Scholars have disagreed as to how extensive the tampering with the end has been (7). The net has been cast most widely by Eva Eicken-Iselin (p. 276) who finds cause for concern as early as 1419-23, that is, in effect, with the entrance of Creon. But her remarks on this earlier portion are unhelpfully vague (1419-23, "zum grössten Teil schwächlich, matt, unanschaulich und von nichtssagender Breite in der Formulierung"... "Besonders unschön ist Vers 1440 und die erste Hälfte von 1442") and only at 1455-1514 does she settle down to really specific comment. Graffunder (pp. 403 ff.) detects oddities in 1424-31 so we had better begin there.

**1424 ἀλλ'**: Graffunder insists that the particle here must not mean "sondern": rather it strengthens αἰδεῖσθ' in 1426. This interpretation leads him to find in 1422-3 an awkward and incomplete insertion. He declines to follow Schenkl and Bonitz in placing a lacuna after 1423, and Nauck in transposing 1424-31 to the end of Oedipus' *rhesis* (after 1415), and prefers to discover in the transmitted text evidence of reworking by an alien hand. His negative verdicts are surely correct, but the problem he detects is largely imaginary; ἀλλ' carries on from the negatives οὐχ... οὐδ' in 1422-3 ("I have come *not* to mock *nor* to reprove, *but* to tell you to withdraw") though the construction changes with a Sophoclean anacolouthon (8).

time of writing, Graffunder's article was rarely cited, so that refutation would have first entailed resurrection of what might have seemed a deservedly neglected theory. Admittedly, a brief remark by Hester ("PCPS" 23, 1977, 46) apparently promised a revival of Graffunder's case. But this in itself might seem good reason to postpone consideration of the issue until the new assault could also be evaluated. This postponement has, in fact, also had the advantage of enabling me to consider the other recent treatments listed in n. 2 above.

(6) Eva Eicken-Iselin. But I have not limited myself to the features she finds objectionable.

(7) Cf., for instance, Hester p. 22 f.: "If we are dealing with a mixture of Sophoclean and non-Sophoclean phraseology, rather than with a passage inserted *en bloc*, that would well explain the unevenness noted by Dawe" [see p. 6]. "... The interpolator wished to make the smallest possible changes" to both *OT* and [see p. 16] *OC*.

(8) Cf. Pearson, "CQ" 24, 1930, 162.

**1446 καί:** here too a particle causes Graffunder concern about a point of transition. "And" he finds the wrong word: following on Creon's remark in 1445 it produces a misleading implication that Oedipus has previously doubted the oracles and an apparent concession (contradicted by 1449-50) to Creon's wish that he remain in Thebes. But again the worry is unnecessary: we are dealing not with καί alone but with καί... γε which, as Dawe *ad loc.* observes, "are progressive (Denniston, *GP*<sup>2</sup> 157) as Oedipus switches from something that the *god* will decide to something else, a request made to *Creon*."

**1455 καίτοι:** yet again a particle is a source of grief, this time to Eicken-Iselin, who extracts from it (coming as it does straight on the heels of the verb θάνω) an inference on Oedipus' part that death on Cithaeron is unlikely because neither disease nor anything else could destroy him. Once more, Dawe's commentary explains the particle adequately: "a reflective afterthought, qualifying [Oedipus'] preceding sentence". When Eicken-Iselin proceeds to demand to know whether the misfortune for which Oedipus claims he is reserved is a different mode of death or something he will survive, she is raising an important issue, but not one that need reflect on authenticity (9).

**1459-60:** see below on 1466.

**1462 ff.:** Eicken-Iselin observes that these lines combine two different modes of expression: (i) my daughters have never eaten apart from me and (ii) I have never eaten without sharing the food with my daughters. So they do, but that hardly seems sufficient ground to dub the verses "impossible" or for interposing a caustic "wie rührend!" in parenthesis after (i). Dawe notes the combination of (i) and (ii) and observes that it would be eliminated by Schenkl and Arndt's ἄλλη for ἡμῆ in 1463. He also notes how difficult

(9) Although if Dawe's further gloss on 1455-6 were correct, it might: "Fate has some stranger end in store for [Oedipus]: what end that was Sophocles describes in *Oedipus at Colonus*". This is certainly the *communis opinio*; but it seems to me highly unlikely that Sophocles would already have mapped out in his mind the main features of the *OC*, including the highly original and unorthodox notion that he died in Attica. To detect an allusion here to the events of the *OC* is therefore to play into the hands of Graffunder *et al.* who suppose that the *OT*'s end has been altered to bring it in line with the *OC* (see p. 16, though Graffunder does not in fact cite 1455-6). But the concession is as unnecessary as it is dangerous: in the circumstances, what could be more natural (or rhetorically effective) than for Oedipus, having survived this grim concatenation of events, to suspect that he has been preserved for further (undefined) suffering? Cf. Hester p. 19 on vv. 1519-20: "Oedipus reasonably suspects that Apollo may still have some dirty trick in store for him (*which he said clearly in 1456-7*)" [my italics]. Not clearly enough for everyone.

βορᾶς / τράπεζ' at 1463-4 is to parallel (10).

**1466 τοῖν μοι μέλεσθαι:** Eicken-Iselin finds the ethical dative here (like that in 1459-60: παίδων δὲ τῶν μὲν ἀρσένων μή μοι, Κρέον, / προσθῆ μέριμναν in view of the first two words of 1460) "irreführend" due to the proximity of μέλεσθαι. Given the contexts, I fail to see how there can be the slightest ambiguity in either passage.

**1467-8 ἴθ', ὄναξ, / ἴθ', ὃ γονῆ γενναῖε:** to Eicken-Iselin the occurrence here of ἴθι, "als Aufforderungspartikel" without a following imperative is "singulär". The obvious parallels at *Phil.* 733 (ἀλλ' ἴθ' ὃ τέκνον) and 750 (ἴθ' ὃ παῖ) are dismissed (p. 276 n. 1) as "abgerissenes, zusammenhangloses Klagegestammel" where the entreaty has an independent effect without an appended amplification. This is surely hair-splitting, and besides our passage supplies imperative enough at 1467 (ἔασον). Eicken-Iselin further objects to the abruptness of the present entreaty and claims its effect to be diminished by the repetition of ἴθι, but these complaints are too subjective to carry much weight.

**1477:** by contrast, Eicken-Iselin's question about this line ("was soll es... heissen, dass Kreon die gegenwärtige Freude kannte, die den Vater schon lange beherrscht?") deserves an answer. But the solution lies not in further detecting an interpolator's hand. Rather one must suppose either (a) as Dawe *ad loc.*, following Hermann and Wunder, that πάλαι here refers to the immediate past and that the tense required is ἦ σ' ἔχει πάλαι where the final word is taken with γνούς. Or (b) – with the new OCT – that ἦ σ' εἶχεν πάλαι is a legitimate way of describing Oedipus' affection for his children (11).

**1478 τῆσδε τῆς ὁδοῦ:** Eicken-Iselin queries whether ὁδός can refer to the bringing of the children to Oedipus and implies dissatisfaction with the genitive, whether it be defined as one of thanks or as dependent on 1479's ἄμεινον. Dawe *ad loc.* takes the genitive as causal comparing *OT* 48, *Tr.* 288 and (?) 339 (12).

(10) See now the remarks of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson in *Sophoclea* *ad loc.* (p. 112): "though it might be supported by the considerations adduced by Barrett [on Eur. *Hipp.* 802], it is hard to resist the suspicion that ἡμῆ conceals an adj. agreeing with βορᾶς. Kennedy, *Journal of Sacred and Classical Philol.* 1 (1854) 325 conjectured ἀμῆς... 'for whom the table where I ate was never set up separately without me'".

(11) See *Sophoclea* p. 112 f. for the argument that delight in his children may "hold" a man over a long period, just as a man may be 'held' by old age (*Il.* 18.515), good reputation (*ibid.* 17.143), or life (*El.* 225)".

(12) My commentary on Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (Oxford 1990) treats 288's gen. as one of exchange; but see my note on 339 for other Sophoclean causal genitives.

**1481:** Eicken-Iselin objects that ὧς is elsewhere used only of persons. But since χέρες here is *pars pro toto*, with “my hands” equivalent to “me”, the extension is perfectly legitimate.

**1482-3 προξένησαν:** that the verb should mean “cause” or “bring about” is certainly as surprising as Eicken-Iselin finds it, but *Tr.* 726 ἐλπίζ, ἦτις καὶ θράσος τι προξενεῖ is a good Sophoclean parallel.

**1484-5:** deleted by Todt, “*Zeitschr. f. Gymnasialwesen*” 1, 1867, 225.

**1484 οὐθ' ὄρων οὐθ' ἱστορῶν:** denounced by Eicken-Iselin as “reines Füllsel” (cf. below on 1517) and also as contradicting by their two negatives the general sense of the passage. Whether we adopt Herwerden’s ἀροτήρ for πατήρ in 1485 (as does Dawe) or retain πατήρ (as do the editors of the new OCT) there is no real difficulty. “οὐθ' ὄρων οὐθ' ἱστορῶν suits the *action* of sowing seed much better than the *fact* of being father to Antigone and Ismene” says Dawe *ad loc.* Rather, we have characteristic fusion of *illustrans* and *illustrandum* (13) whereby ὄρων goes better with sowing seed and ἱστορῶν with begetting children

**1494-5:** Eicken-Iselin refers to the dissatisfaction felt by critics over these lines. They are certainly corrupt – see Dawe *ad loc.* and now Lloyd-Jones and Wilson in *Sophoclea* p. 113, the latter deeming Herwerden’s ἄ τοισί τε (for τοῖς ἐμοῖς) / γονεῦσιν the most plausible emendation so far – but that tells us nothing about their authenticity.

**1507:** Eicken-Iselin castigates this line as displaying “besondere Unschönheit”, but since she declines to be more specific there is no way of answering her.

**1512-13:** the ambiguity of μοι here – is it an ethic dative or are the children really to pray for something for Oedipus? – rouses Eicken-Iselin’s ire and she cannot see how the prayer fits with the phrase οὐ καιρὸς ἀεὶ ζῆν. If we read not εὐχεσθέ μοι but εὐχεσθ' ἐμὲ (Deventer: εὐχεσθέ με DXr) all these problems vanish. Alternatively, with Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (14) we may prefer Jebb’s explanation “I would have this be your prayer”.

**1515-30:** ironically enough, after her previous exertions Eicken-Iselin has nothing to say against these lines. But others more than compensate for her silence: “dem überarbeiter zuzuschreiben sind” (Graffunder p. 405); “it may be that everything from 1515 to the end of the play is spurious” (Dawe

(13) See my commentary on *Tr.* 32 and my remarks in “*Hermes*” 114, 1986, p. 403 n. 21.

(14) As they observe, “What follows perfectly applies” to his daughters “since Oedipus has just said that they will never be able to marry”.

*ad loc.*); “spuriousness... obvious” (Hester p. 22). Graffunder conceded that there was no syntactical evidence for revision. Dawe claims that there is no clear proof of the employment of trochaic tetrameters in Greek tragedy between the end of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (from 458) and that of Euripides’ *Troades* (in 415). The use of them here would be quite similar to what we find in Aeschylus’ play, where they convey the clash of personality and standpoint between Aegisthus and the chorus, a clash unresolvable except by the brute fact of Aegisthus’ assumption of power. The position between Creon and Oedipus is not very different.

**1517 λέξεις καὶ τότ’ εἶσομαι κλύων:** Creon’s reply is “abject line-filling” according to Dawe. It has often been taken to characterise the speaker: e.g. “Creon, who always thinks before he speaks and then says less than he means, who is content, parasitically, to enjoy the fruits without the risks of power, a cautious man”(15). The contrast with Oedipus’ impetuosity could hardly be clearer.

**1519:** “On hearing the words τοῦ θεοῦ (sc. Apollo) μ’ αἰτεῖς δόσιν Oedipus ought to have replied ‘in that case we may proceed at once with my expulsion, since Apollo’s wishes in the matter have been well known to everyone since you announced them yourself at 96-8, a point you have already conceded at 1442 above, though you immediately tried to fudge the issue there by lapsing into a vague and unsatisfactory bid for extra time’”: Dawe *ad loc.* Appreciative connoisseurs (like myself) of the styles of Sophocles and Dr. Dawe will have no difficulty in deciding which of the two the passage quoted more closely resembles. More to the point, the composer of these tetrameters has decided to split each one between the two speakers so that there would be no room for the rather luxuriant fullness of Dawe’s sentence. The technique of dividing the lines entails rather elliptical thought-sequences and extremely compressed Greek. When this is born in mind I wonder whether the Greek of the present and following line is really as incompetent as Dawe finds. ἀλλὰ θεοῖς γ’ ἔχθιστος ἦκω of course implies, in the expansion Dawe himself provides, “But I am hateful to all the gods <, of whom Apollo is one, and in that case they, and he, are sure to favour my expulsion>”. Why are the lines thus divided between speakers? Surely to bring out, as vividly as possible, the irreconcilable clash of personalities and positions alluded to above and more fully argued in my earlier article.

**1524-30:** most scholars (16) seem now united in regarding these lines

(15) So Winnington-Ingram, “JHS” 91, 1971, 135 = *Sophocles An Interpretation* (Cambridge 1980) p. 204.

(16) Lloyd-Jones earlier seemed convinced (*Justice of Zeus*, [1983<sup>2</sup>], p. 247) but the

as spurious (with the ironical exception of Graffunder (p. 405) who thinks they must "als echt betrachtet werden, da gar keine bedenken gegen dieselbe vorliegen"): see Dawe *ad loc.* and March p. 152. This in itself proves nothing either way about the authenticity of the preceding hundred or so lines.

## II

### (i) *Mt. Cithaeron: expectation cheated*

The most frequently voiced objection to the end of the *OT* is its defeat of our carefully nurtured expectations that Oedipus will depart in exile to Mt. Cithaeron. Graffunder, Taplin, Hester (to name but three) have all stressed, in the light of numerous references earlier in the play, that such a conclusion is what the audience must expect (17). Defeat of audience expectation is, of course, a common and legitimate dramatic device, but if we detect such a device here we must provide a reply to the question posed by, for instance, Graffunder (p. 395): "was würde dadurch für unser drama gewonnen werden?". There are several ways in which this question might be answered.

### (ii) *Permanent incarceration*

Graffunder (p. 394) was eager to stress that this (rather than merely temporary retirement to the palace) is what Creon envisages for Oedipus at the end of the *OT* ("nicht bloß für den augenblick in der palast eintreten solle [Ödipus], sondern fortdauernd dort bleiben solle"). If not merely Creon but the audience as well anticipates such a future, various types of explanation are to hand.

In the first place, the question of tradition might be considered. Earlier epic treatments (18) had Oedipus stay on in Thebes (Homer certainly: *Il.*

new Oxford text actually leaves the lines unbracketed and the editors' discussion (*Sophoclea* p. 114) issues in the conclusion that "a case can be made against them, but it cannot be regarded as established".

(17) It is also argued that (quite independently of what we may call the Cithaeron motif) the whole logic of the play points in the direction of exile. So Graffunder p. 393 f.: "den zürnenden manen des Laios ist nur dann genugthuung geleistet wenn der mörder aus der heimat hinausgestossen wird" – self-blinding is not punishment enough. Similarly Hester p. 15: "Oedipus will go at once into exile, and in doing so save his city (as he himself foretold 443)". But against the latter we might observe that the entire drama illustrates the inadequacies of Oedipus' perceptions of the future and his own position. And to the former we could reply that Laius' anger would be still better appeased should Oedipus stay on in the city and (ultimately) by cursing his sons, complete the absolute extirpation of the house of Labdacus. See note 20.

(18) For a recent investigation of these see my *The Theban Epics* (Göttingen 1991). Graffunder himself, be it noted, is far too sanguine about what can be inferred as to the lost epics in question (following Schneidewin).