

## On Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 258–264

By Mauro Agosto\*

In this paper, the author deals with Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, 258–264. These lines are highly relevant to the development of the play, but their interpretation and textual tradition are problematic. These pages are intended to provide a background for understanding the striking anacoluthon (inconsequent syntax) inherent in the selected passage. According to the author, that anacoluthon reveals an intertextual reference from *Iliad* 18.99-106 and has very consequences for the comprehension of the plot. The author proposes a new translation of the words ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδ' in l. 264 ("because that is me" instead of the current solution "which is why I (will face) this (battle)"). Moreover, he reassesses the whole interpretation both of this line and of the immediate context. In addition, in line 260, the author proposes the oldest extant Sophocles manuscript, **L** (*Laur.* 32.9), to be superior to the generally accepted text.

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### Introduction

(S. OT 255–265)<sup>1</sup>

οὐδ' εἰ γὰρ ἦν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ θεήλατον, 255  
ἀκάθαρτον ὑμᾶς εἰκὸς ἦν οὕτως εἶναι,  
ἀνδρός γ' ἀρίστου βασιλέως τ' ὀλωλότος,  
ἀλλ' ἐξερευνᾶν· νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ κυρῶ τ' ἐγὼ  
ἔχων μὲν ἀρχὰς ἃς ἐκεῖνος εἶχε πρίν,  
ἔχων δὲ λέκτρα καὶ γυναῖχ' ὁμόσπορον, 260  
κοινῶν τε παίδων κοῖν' ἄν, εἰ κείνῳ γένος  
μὴ δυστύχησεν, ἦν ἂν ἐκπεφυκότα –  
νῦν δ' ἐς τὸ κείνου κρᾶτ' ἐνήλαθ' ἡ τύχη·  
ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδ', ὥσπερ εἰ τοῦμοῦ πατρός,  
ὑπερμαχοῦμαι, ... 265

**258.** νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ editores plerique : νῦν δ',  
ἐπεὶ Hermann, Ritter 1870, 157 "wie aber  
jetzt die Sache steht (nunc vero)" | ἐπεὶ κυρῶ  
τ' ἐγὼ Laur. Conv. Soppr. 66, S, conl. Pierson  
and Burton : (νῦν δέ) γ' ἐπικυρῶ τ' ἐγὼ Paris.  
gr. 2820 : ἐπικυρῶ rell. | τ' libri : γ' Benedict |  
**260.** ἔχων δὲ] ἔχω δὲ LAP<sup>ac</sup>Zc

Lines OT 258–264 are highly relevant to the development of the play. They mark the transition from the previous inert attitude of the city to Oedipus' strong engagement in promoting a thorough investigation into Laius' murder.

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<sup>1</sup>Textus vulgatus. Apparatus is mine. Where not otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

Even though the oracle had issued no command, you ought not to have allowed the death of so excellent a man and monarch to have gone unpunished; now however fortune has willed that he should perish: his throne and widow have come into my possession, and had he left offspring, that offspring would have been in common to him and me: wherefore it is my duty to take care, as if I were taking care of my father, that his assassin be put to death (Mitchell 1840: 58).

The coherence between ll. 255–264 is clear, but a major problem lies in their syntactical structure. "The sentence does not proceed on a regular grammatical course [...], and it gets off to an unpromising start here, since τ' is irregularly placed" (Dawe 1982: 120). In fact, the succession ἐπεὶ (l. 258) – ἀνθ' ὧν<sup>2</sup> (l. 264) produces a strong anacoluthon (cf. Brown and Halsall 2012: 46: "A change of construction in the middle of a sentence that leaves its beginning uncompleted;" for Sophocles, see Moorhouse 1982: 21, 77; Budelmann 2006: 49, fn. 41; Battezzato 2012: 315-6) in respect to which the commentators have nothing better to quote than a Latin example from Cicero (Trollope 1825: 25).<sup>3</sup> As Finglass (2018: 255) remarks, "the stylistic effect of anacoluthon is rarely obvious", and – according to his interpretation – Oedipus' complicated syntax mirrors his tricky family relations. Oedipus' case is not complicated in itself: he is the second spouse of a widow having no children by the first marriage. Everything gets complicated with the discovery of incest, but this does not happen before the line 1,060 at least. In my view, such an allusion would be a premature anticipation of what is to follow. According to other commentators, it is a "free and conversational form" (Mitchell 1840: 58), as in a sort of stream of consciousness (Stella 2010: 204, "flusso di pensieri") where

"l'anacoluto deve far pensare. [...] Sembra [...] che il locutore stia seguendo ora il filo di un soliloquio interiore. Edipo passa dal rimprovero ai Tebani [...] a elencare, come tra sé e sé, i diversi motivi per cui combatterà in favore di Laio" (Stella 2010: 204)

But, even under the assumption of such an Oedipus of Shakespearean taste (Cousins and Derrin 2018) a soliloquy seems rhetorically unfit for the context. A soliloquy is an important dramatic tool that performs the function either of conveying the development of the play to the audience, or of providing an opportunity to scrutinize thoughts, feelings, and motivations of a certain character; which does not seem to be the case here: Oedipus talks about well-known facts (he is the king, he is the successor to Laius, he married with Jocasta and fathered four children), not to mention that "no surviving Attic drama furnishes a true instance of soliloquy" (Gray 2018: 113). In fact, an Oedipus who, oblivious to the hearers present, stops in the middle of a harangue to the crowd, and starts

<sup>2</sup>This expression means "For all which reasons" and is in itself perfectly correct (see, e.g., S. Ant. 237, El. 575, OC 967).

<sup>3</sup>"ἐπεὶ is followed, v. 264. by the relative ὅς instead of οὗτος. Elmsley compares Cicero, Orat. I. 14. *Nam, quoniam, quicquid est quod in controversia aut in contentione versetur, in eo, aut sitne, aut quod sit, aut quale sit quaeritur: – sitne, signis; quid sit, definitionibus; quale sit, recti pravique partibus; quibus ut uti possit orator, &c.*" The reference is to Elmsley 1825: 22.

speaking to himself, is not suitable to the context, especially at a time of high emotional distress. As Lausberg (1998: 395, §888.1) warns us, "The speaker's isolation from the concrete environment, caused by the emotion, borders on the comical." An anacoluthon is a legitimate tool for poetical effect, but it must serve a clearly defined purpose. At present, however, such a purpose is anything but evident in these lines, and we see a disproportion between the means (an abrupt break in the sentence) and the end (the alleged speaker's confusion or emotion needing dramatization). But if that irregularity is not the result of design, I am reluctant to attribute it to Sophocles' negligence or carelessness ["aus Nachlässigkeit und Unachtsamkeit" (Kühner and Gerth 1898-1904, II 2, 589, § 602, 1)], with the implicit assumption that "the protasis has run to such length that it is thought of as an apodosis: ἐπεὶ is forgotten" (Earle 1901: 174). I believe that there is still a need for discussion on this passage, and this paper aims to investigate the root cause of the problem in order to design a better solution. Wherefore, we will focus on two main questions: i.) is there in our lines any real anacoluthon? ii.) If so, what is the desired effect?

### The Manuscript Evidence

The evaluation of the manuscript evidence should form the basis of every discussion about the textual shape of every ancient literary record.

In the first instance, we could call into question the soundness of the transmitted text either in l. 258 or l. 264. This last line is consistently transmitted by the manuscripts and it seems to be beyond suspicion. In l. 258 all important witnesses agree in their reading, νῦν δ' ἐπικυρῶ τ' ἐγώ, making the syllable -πι- long (Ellendt 1835: 1002).<sup>4</sup> Ms. *Paris. gr.* 2820 (188<sup>v</sup>)<sup>5</sup> of the fourteenth century (see Turyn 1949: 165). transmits νῦν δέ γ' ἐπικυρῶ τ' ἐγώ. This reading received the honour of being adopted in some old editions (Brunck 1808, Dalzel 1811: 22) but the most acute critics did not fail to reassert its manifest character of interpolation (Elmsley 1825: 22, "manifesta interpolatione"). Here, "we swiftly come to recognise [...] the universal panacea γε [...] for adjusting quantities" (Dawe 1964: 44)<sup>6</sup> The slight metrical uncertainty of the manuscript tradition was restored by Pierson (before 1752) (Finglass 2009: 205. cf. Augustus 2016, Finglass 2018 *apparatus ad l*) and Burton (1779: 27),<sup>7</sup> and, notwithstanding some disagreement (Heath 1762: 28, 1791: 292)<sup>8</sup> it was recognized as an

<sup>4</sup>The element corresponding to (ἐ)πί cannot be occupied by a short syllable. Dawe 1973: 109 reports, "ἐπικυρῶ **R**"; *ibid.* 220, "Only Laur. *Conv. Soppr.* 66 has the correct reading, but **R** comes close to it with ἐπικυρῶ." **R** is the siglum for *Vat. gr.* 2291, but this codex (f. 45<sup>v</sup>) shows exactly the same reading as **VGN** (ἐπικουρῶ), as it is easy to verify at [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.2291](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.2291) (retrieved 2018-02-16). I don't know from whence Dawe's report came. s.v. κυρέω, "Oed. R. 258, ubi pro ἐπεὶ κυρῶ, quod *certa emendatione* [emphasis added] Burtonus intulit, libri ἐπικυρῶ." On the periphrastic use of κυρέω, see Bentein 2012.

<sup>5</sup>It is readable online at <https://bit.ly/2YIT8O9> (retrieved 2019-01-16).

<sup>6</sup>We must likewise judge the proposal afforded by Heath 1791, 292, νῦν δ' ἄρ' ἐπικυρῶ τ' ἐγώ.

<sup>7</sup>"Lege ἐπεὶ κυρῶ pro ἐπικυρῶ [ut Ed. vulg.] cum hoc postulet tum metrum tum etiam sententia."

<sup>8</sup>Under verse 266 = 258 of modern editions), "τὸ ἐπεὶ respuit plane et syntaxeos et sententiae ratio".

irrefutable emendation (Ellendt 1835: 1002).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the issue was considered closed after the same wording was later found to be the reading of two manuscripts that were not available to Pierson and Burton: *Laur. Conv. Soppr.* 66 (around 1291) and *Vat. Urb. Gr.* 141 (early xiv cent.). From that moment on, no critic or editor of OT (Lloyd–Jones and Wilson 1990, Bollack 1991, Dawe 1996, Manuwald 2012, Augustus 2016, Finglass 2018) has ever (quite rightly) assailed that reading. In fact, the witness of ms. *Laur. Conv. soppr.* 66 (Battezzato 1996: 33 n.19)<sup>10</sup> is especially prominent, owing to its relatively early date, shortly after the start of the large-scale flourishing of the Byzantine scholarship that began circa 1290 (Turyn 1949: 94). For "copies made before c.1300 are more likely to remain unaffected by the operations of Byzantine scholars" (Lloyd–Jones and Wilson 1990: xi). It is generally accepted that Byzantine scribes or readers were hardly inclined to replace crabbed and obscure expressions with perfectly clear equivalents, although the transmitted text was obviously corrupt (Zuntz 1965: 154).<sup>11</sup> This is even more relevant when dealing with the metrics of a text (Campbell and Abbott 1886: lxxxix).<sup>12</sup> Exceptions sometimes occur, but Byzantine scholars skills are unlikely to exceed the level we can find in the aforementioned ms. *Paris. gr.* 2820 (188<sup>f</sup>). Conversely, ms. *Laur. Conv. soppr.* 66 offers an entirely dissimilar solution, as it is not content with patching up a damaged verse, but offers instead a reading which involves a different word division combined with a divergent syntactical structure. These circumstances strongly suggest that the metrically correct reading transmitted by *Laur. Conv. soppr.* 66 has really been preserved by genuine tradition and it was not arrived at by conjecture.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, we can rule out the possibility of any verbal emendation.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup>s.v. κυρέω, "Oed. R. 258, ubi pro ἐπεὶ κυρῶ, quod *certa emendatione* [emphasis added] Burtonus intulit, libri ἐπικυρῶ."

<sup>10</sup>"per le tragedie sofoclee della triade il modello sembra unico", which exempts us from a closer analysis of *Vat. Urb. Gr.* 141, the more recent of the two witnesses.

<sup>11</sup>"the corruption is of the most obvious; the need for correction, with Byzantine scholars, hardly so".

<sup>12</sup>"A test of Byzantine metrical knowledge is afforded by O.T. 1505, where παρίδης passed unquestioned. The line had twelve syllables, and that was enough!". See also Di Benedetto 1965: 166–7, "Giorgio Pisides, del settimo secolo, è secondo il Maas [to wit Maas 1903] l'ultimo poeta che segue la prosodia antica pressoché senza eccezioni. Dall'ottavo secolo alla metà del X, invece, non si riscontra una regola fissa: si constatano continuamente errori prosodici [...]. D'altra parte, se queste "licenze" prosodiche si / permettevano i versificatori dell'epoca, ancora di più è da ritenere che fossero disposti a tollerare inesattezze simili i grammatici dell'Università che venivano a contatto con un testo già corrotto in tal senso. In realtà, sino alla fine del secolo XIII l'ignoranza perfino delle regole più elementari del trimetro giambico deve essere stata assoluta. È Manuele Moschopulo, infatti, il primo che abbia incominciato ad intuire la natura del trimetro e alcune sue correzioni rappresentano il primo riaffiorare di una sensibilità metrica dopo secoli di ignoranza."

<sup>13</sup>The ancient *scholia* do not offer any new insights, the only exception being an intriguing interlinear scholion in ms. *Paris. gr.* 2820 (188r): κ(αι) ὁ θ(ε)ς κινεῖ κ(αι) ἐγὼ ἐπιβεβαιῶ. It heads in the direction of κυρῶ (instead of the periphrasis κυρέω ἔχων). Reading ἔπη instead of ἐπεῖ seems to be the only way we could make sense of κυρῶ (in this regard, see Dawe 1973, 109 and 220, as discussed on footnote 14 above). But the absence of the article is difficult to justify. Moreover, if, as seems to be the case, ἔπη mean the divine oracles, we cannot hide the fact that Sophocles never uses ἔποσ/ ἔπη ("oracle(s)") without a modifier that may clarify this

As for the rest, the postpositive form ἐγὼ has no special weight (see Dik 2003: 535-550) and the transmitted τε is certainly to be preserved against γε proposed by Benedict (1820: 64–65). It is a "non-connective" τε and marks the passage from the speaker's perspective to a shared knowledge ("as is known") and anticipates an immediately following enumeration ("μὲν... δέ...").<sup>15</sup> We could render it in this way: "This time, however, *as is known*, ..." Moreover, in this passage the μὲν ... δέ complex "conveys little more than τε ... καί" (Denniston 1970: 370 adds: "This is particularly the case when the same word is repeated before μὲν and δέ"), with no idea of strong contrast. Now, research shows that, with the μὲν ... δέ complex, a "transition from participial to finite construction is often found" (Denniston 1970: 369) and such a syntactical change usually involves a new topical spin<sup>16</sup> "or it may mark a new intonational contour" (Bonifazi et al. 2016: IV.2.2.3, § 34). If that is the case, probably the reading transmitted by L, Λ (see Scattolin 2016: 120) P<sup>ac</sup> and Zc (to wit: ἔχω δέ: ἔχων δέ cett.) is to be preferred as *lectio difficilior*. Besides, avoiding a too obvious symmetry, underlined by anaphora, it is perfectly suitable for a magniloquent style (see Denniston 1970: 372, n. 1).<sup>17</sup> Thus, these statements can be processed through three distinct argumentative levels (l. 258-259: the political motivation; l. 260: the moral supporting reason; ll. 261–3: the emotional appeal or pathos, yet almost incidentally enunciated) and possibly as many intonation units.

### Questioning the Translations

To come back to the main subject, the textual basis seems to be above suspicion. The problem could be with the translation, not with the original text. For the moment, I shall set aside some minor issues (τάδε in l. 264) to focus on the syntactic articulation νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ - ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδ'. In the sequence νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ, we can easily recognize a standard idiom. I would mention, for example, *Il.* 9.344; 18.101 (with anacoluthon) and 333; 23.150 and 225; *Od.* 6.191; *Soph.* OT 985; *E. Heraclid.* 9, to confine myself to the poets. Most times νῦν δ'

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peculiar connotation (cf. OT 89; Tr. 822; OC 624 and 629). And besides, "to confirm" is not the meaning that we would expect. "To accomplish" would be much more suitable, but κυρώω does not convey this meaning as early as Sophocles.

<sup>14</sup>At a certain point, I considered the possibility of changing ἐπεὶ into ἔπει, which should be understood either as κυρέω + dative ("I am faced with an oracle"; a very disputable solution), or as "owing to a word I happen to have..." (with reference to the word ἄνθρωπος by which Oedipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx). This latter is a more acceptable Greek, but νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ is an idiomatic chunk and it ought certainly to be preserved.

<sup>15</sup>I owe this analysis to the online publication Bonifazi, Drummen, de Kreij 2016, IV.2.3.1, §§ 54–69 and 2.3.6. §§ 85–87 at <https://bit.ly/2Zooarx> (retrieved 2019–02–06).

<sup>16</sup>It can be spelt out in conjunction with Oedipus' not being related to the victim by bonds of blood (as he thinks) and the highly significant, in this play, tension between kin and nonkin. Cf. Segal 1998: 141 and Steadman and Palmer 2003: 342, 347.

<sup>17</sup>"Demetrius (De Eloc. 53), in discussing τὸ μεγαλοπρεπές, deprecates excessive regularity: Χρὴ δὲ καὶ τοὺς συνδέσμους μὴ μάλα ἀνταποδίδοσθαι ἀκριβῶς, οἷον τῶ 'μὲν' συνδέσμῳ τὸν 'δέ'· μικροπρεπές γὰρ ἢ ἀκριβεία· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀτακτοτέρως πως χρῆσθαι."

has not a time-related meaning, as pointed out by Ritter 1870, 157, "wie aber jetzt die Sache steht (*nunc vero*)" (cf. Earle 1901: 174 (*ad* OT 263), "νῦν δ': in its idiomatic sense (= ὡς δ' ἔχει τὰ πράγματα)"). This is regularly reflected in the translations (e.g. Benloew *ap.* Ahrens 1877, 74, "nunc vero") and the commentaries (Dawe 1982: 120, "as at 222 and 263: 'as things are'"; Finglass 2018: 255, "As it is"). Nevertheless, in this particular case, I share the view expressed by Earle (1901: 173),

"νῦν δ': these words have not here their ordinary idiomatic meaning (cf. v. 222) after an unreal case. Were it so, ὅμως (256) would be unemphatic (and ἤμας (*sic*) would stand more naturally), and ἐπεὶ here would be followed by something like τὸ πρᾶγμα θεήλατόν ἐστι. Sophocles has not written for the eye primarily here. Harsh as it seems, we must, I think, understand ἐπεὶ κυρῶ τ' ἐγὼ νῦν, with νῦν contrasted with πρὶν (which is otiose else): 'but since, as luck would have it, it is I that now,' etc., – unless, indeed, Sophocles wrote ὡς δὲ νῦν."

In both cases, the anacoluthon remains unaffected.

Difficulties increase as we reach l. 264. There, "the subordinate sentence ἐπεὶ ... ὁμόσπορον, after the two declarative sentences in 261–263, suggested by ὁμόσπορον, have been thrown in parenthetically, is made dependent not on an independent member, as would be legitimate, but on the relative sentence, ἀνθ' ὧν" (White 1874: 101). In other words, "the protasis has run to such length that it is thought of as an apodosis: ἐπεὶ is forgotten" (Earle 1901: 174) and Sophocles "uses ἀνθ' ὧν as a resumptive formula" (Dawe 1982: 121, Finglass 2018: 256). Scholars, however, do not agree on its translation, and whilst some of them interpret it as "ἀντὶ τούτων or the like" (Earle 1901: 174, cf. also Benloew *ap.* Ahrens 1877: 74, "horum vice"), others favour a neutre pronoun (e.g., White 1874: 101, "for which things' sake"; Dawe 1982: 121, "for those reasons"; Finglass 2018: 257, "Because of this"). Both choices are grammatically possible, but the first one seems to be ruled out by the context, because it should include Oedipus' children and Laius' unborn offspring amongst those on whose behalf Oedipus intends to fight his battle. The second option<sup>18</sup> is more in line with the context, but it can barely erase the impression of an unnecessarily complicated syntax. Maybe there is a third way that no one has explored, to my knowledge. As witnessed by Ant. 1068 (ἀνθ' ὧν ἔχεις μὲν τῶν ἄνω βαλὼν κάτω, "For you have thrust below one who belongs above", transl. by Fainlight and Littman 2009: 178), ἀνθ' ὧν sometimes takes a quasi-causal meaning. Hence, Wunder (1846: 117) wrote, "ἀνθ' ὧν esse idem fere atque διότι notum est", and Humphreys (1891: 173) explained,

"*Because* [emphasis original] – an unconscious extension of ἀνθ' ὧν = ἀντὶ τούτων ἃ (cogn. obj.) as in ἀνθ' ὧν εἶ ἔπαθον,<sup>19</sup> and hence equiv. to ἀντὶ τούτων, ὅτι. So Ar. Plut. 434. Rare in prose, as Plat. Menex 244 C [...] Id. Min. 321 A [...]. Analogously Dem. xvi.13."

<sup>18</sup>See also S. El. 575; OC 275, 1010, 1295.

<sup>19</sup>The reference is to S. OC 1489.

The complete formulation is used, e.g., by Theocritus (epigr. 20, 3-4 = A. Pal. vii.663, ἐξεῖ τὰν χάριν ἅ γυνὰ ἀντὶ τήνων, / ὧν τὸν κοῦρον ἔθρεψε), as indicated by Matthiae (1818: 694-5), who writes, "for this reason, that, and without/ a pronoun demonstrative, ἀνθ' ὅτου, ἀνθ' ὧν, in the sense of 'because.'" A more balanced analysis would emphasise the primary meaning of ἀντί, "in exchange for". So, for instance, Woolsey (1835: 104), "*in requital for, on account of this, viz. that [emphasis original]*", or Griffith (1999: 306), "in return for the fact that." That is an important point, but, though such wordy renditions are acceptable in commentaries to emphasise the meaning, one has to wonder if they are stylistically valid in a literary translation, especially when compared to the shortest original ἀνθ' ὧν. At any rate, and here comes the answer to the first question, the omission of the preceding demonstrative pronoun produces "a kind of ἀνακολουθία" (Matthiae 1818: 694), with a slight syntactical irregularity, but without sense-break. In this context, however, the content of the causal proposition intimated by ἀνθ' ὧν needs to be clarified. Its content, I think, is represented by the words ἐγὼ τάδε(ε). The current interpretation of τάδε(ε) in l. 264 is at least as old as Wunder (1847: 42, see also Finglass 2018: 258 ("internal accusative")):

"Dictum hoc est ex usitatissima Graecorum consuetudine loquendi, a viris doctis tamen, quod sciam, nondum explicata. Solent enim Graeci saepissime pronomem aut adiectivum casu accusativo et genere neutro elatum cum verbis cuiusvis fere generis sic coniungere, ut id ad notionem substantivi, quae verbo, quocum iungitur, continetur, referendum sit. Itaque ταῦτα ὑπερμάχεσθαι τινος breviter dictum pro ταύτην τὴν μάχην μάχεσθαι ὑπὲρ τινος. Sic Ai. 1346: σὺ ταῦτ', Ὀδυσσεῦ, τοῦδ' ὑπερμαχεῖς ἐμοί;"

But, apart from the obvious difference between ταῦτα and τάδε (see Taylor 2017: 57),<sup>20</sup> we have no exact parallel for the phrase τάδε ὑπερμάχεσθαι τινος, and its supposed similarity to Aj. 1346 rests on a gratuitous assumption: particularly when there is a more direct explanation to hand. In fact, as Matthiae (1818: 728) explains, "Especially in the poets, τάδε is often found as a substantive followed by a noun masculine or feminine in the predicate. *Soph. Oed. T.* 1329 Ἀπόλλων τάδε ἦν 'that was Apollo', especially in negative propositions" (see also Finglass 2018: 575, "It was Apollo"). As a consequence, I firmly believe that the phrase ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδε means 'because that is me'<sup>21</sup> and it highlights Oedipus' authority and status among the Thebans. Oedipus' words convey his purpose of re-assuring the subjects by the assertion that his actions will be fundamentally in accordance with his own character and history. He is Oedipus, and not anyone else. He primarily refers to the obligation to act

<sup>20</sup>"Words that are virtually synonymous most of the time can acquire idiomatic distinctions in a particular context: we saw [...] the difference between εἶπε ταῦτα *he said this (already quoted)* and εἶπε τάδε *he said this (about to be quoted)* [emphasis original]." As Oedipus' fight is described in ll. 235-241, we would expect to read ταῦτα in l. 264.

<sup>21</sup>Purists' eyebrows might have been raised by such a syntax (but, for a thorough examination of this topic, see Alford 1864: 142-145), but this phrase is not more incorrect than Oedipus' anacoluthon in l. 264.

honorably and generously owing to his high rank and celebrity. He is ὁ πᾶσι κλεινὸς Οἰδίπους (l. 8), the κράτιστον πᾶσιν Οἰδίπου κάρα (l. 40), the saviour of the city (l. 443; also ll. 1200-1), the best of all the marksmen (ll. 1196-98), the pillar of the city (l. 1201), the king keen to obey the god's command (l. 77) in order to overcome the existing problem. As Amerasinghe (1970: 204) remarks:

"In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* Oedipus is the good citizen and the good ruler. As good citizen he identifies himself totally with the well-being of his people. As good ruler he takes it for granted that it is his responsibility to save his people from the troubles which afflict them. The people in their turn look to him as spontaneously as he assumes his responsibility. In the pursuit of his task he shows the singleness of purpose and fortitude that are characteristic of the hero. He will let nothing deter him from his task."

Oedipus' words, though slightly narcissistic,<sup>22</sup> are not unjustified, and here he is not boasting: owing to what he represents for the Thebans, Oedipus is expected to satisfy higher standards of accountability and more exemplary sense of duty than common people. And even the lexical choice for ἀντί is revealing. After a long series of contingent causes, all introduced by ἐπεὶ ("after that", a temporal conjunction with an accessory idea of cause, "since, because, inasmuch as"), we get to the real reason for Oedipus' involvement: ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τὰδ'. These words, when literary translated, mean "in exchange for me being that", or even "as the price of being what I am." They rely on his sense of noblesse oblige and what he believed were his responsibilities towards the kingdom. Yet, in those words ("because that is me") we can recognise the root of Oedipus' future misfortune. "Impelled by heroic dedication to his task, he transgresses against *sophrosyne*" (Amerasinghe 1970: 204). He is the man who is convinced that he is even superior to Teiresias (ll. 391-2), and he has no doubt about his future achievement (l. 441, τοιαῦτ' ὀνειδίζ', οἷς ἔμ' εὐρήσεις μέγαν) and his good luck (l. 1080): he can shape his destiny to suit himself (ll. 1081-85). Just as in ll. 1084-85 ("Such is my nature, I have no wish / to change it" transl. by Fainlight and Littman 2009: 47), we could repeat Dr Dawe's (1982: 205) comment: "Here Sophocles himself [...] makes Oedipus' own character the determining force in his exposure and downfall." Oedipus' sense of self-worth ("because that is me") is thick with dramatic irony. He is really the only entitled person to pursue that struggle precisely because he is himself (Laius' son), though he doesn't yet know it. All Oedipus' insistence, in vv. 258–264 and in the proclamation in general, that his possession of the kingdom is contingent (l. 258), that Laius' death – a work of chance, τύχη (cf. l. 262), and that he is a "stranger to the story and the deed" (l. 219f.) is charged with tragic irony. For none of it is obviously true and Iocasta's and Oedipus's belief in the rule of τύχη (977–9, 1080) will prove delusional in the end. Those words, however, "because that is me", are the cornerstone of the entire situation. Oedipus' self-

<sup>22</sup>How can we forget Narcissus' exclamation upon perceiving himself in the water of the fountain, *Iste ego sum* "that is me" (Ov. *Met.* 3.463)?



confidence will fall victim to his lack of knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Teiresias warns him against his own ignorance (ll. 366-7), and Oedipus himself (l. 397) claims with tragic irony that he is ὁ μηδὲν εἰδὼς Οἰδίπυτος, "Oedipus, the ignorant." Jocasta's final wish is that Oedipus may never learn who he is (l. 1068 ὃ δύσποτμ', εἴθε μήποτε γνοίης ὃς εἶ, "Unhappy man, may you never know who you are!") and Augustus (2016: 56) was probably not wrong to correct l. 1348 so as to read ὃς σ' ἠθέλησα μηδὲν ἄν γνῶναι ποτ' ἄν, "how I wish you had never known anything!" All this, however, requires a clear starting point, which can only be in those words ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδ(ε) "because that is me." It is hard not to hear the echo of *Odyssey* xvi 205 (ὄδ' ἐγὼ "this is me"), where Odysseus reveals himself to his son Telemachus and announces that the end of misfortunes has begun. And after all, since his first appearance on the scene, Oedipus speaks like a new Odysseus (OT 8 "I, Oedipus renowned by all" has long since been recognised as an echo of *Od.* ix 19-20 "I am Odysseus, who am known among men, and my fame reaches unto heaven") (see Dawe 1982: 86, Augustus 2016: 64). But maybe Sophocles owes Homer more than a few concise expressions.

### Homeric Intertextuality

It is no secret that the Homeric imagery survives to a large extent in Sophocles, the most Homeric of playwrights (cf. Saravia de Grossi 2017). Particularly with regard to *Oedipus Tyrannus*, it has been known for a long time that there is a significant parallelism between Sophocles' Oedipus and Achilles, who, in *Iliad* xviii, "learns of the death of Patroclus, and immediately realises his own responsibility and his past errors" (Rutherford 1982: 145). In Oedipus' case, Sophocles exploits "the Iliadic themes of self-knowledge and understanding of the divine plan" (Rutherford 1982: 145). Achilles passionately invokes divine revenge for the murder of Patroclus, "but with bitter and ironic consequences for himself. (See i 407—12, 505—10; xviii 73—84)" (Rutherford 1982: 145). The analogies with the story of Oedipus are there for all to see. Both Achilles and Oedipus receive warnings and prophecies (from Thetis and Teiresias, respectively), but "human advice and divine forewarning are insufficient guides" (Rutherford 1982: 156) since the two heroes are deeply convinced that they can dominate events thanks to their intrinsic superiority.

"Thus the *peripeteia* of the *Iliad*, like that of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, depends on a change in the hero's knowledge of his position, a change that confirms and explains past foreknowledge. This new knowledge also reveals the extent and the catastrophic consequences of past ignorance and / error." (Rutherford 1982: 145-6)

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<sup>23</sup>According to Paul Ricoeur (1970: 616), "Oedipus calls down curses upon the unknown person responsible for the plague, but he excludes the possibility that that person might in fact be himself. The entire drama consists in the resistance and ultimate collapse of this presumption. Oedipus must be broken in his pride through suffering; this presumption is no longer the culpable esire of the child, but the pride of the king; the tragedy is not the tragedy of Oedipus the child, but of Oedipus Rex."

Just as Achilles, Oedipus must eventually admit his own incapacity, despite his power and prestige, to influence the course of the affair, and the conclusion of his personal story shows that his knowledge and weakness grow hand in hand (Rutherford 1982: 146).<sup>24</sup> All these findings convinced me of a possible intertextual relationship between OT 258-264 (see above) and Il. 18.99-106:

ὁ μὲν μάλα τηλόθι πάτρης  
 [100] ἔφθιτ', ἐμεῖο δὲ δῆσεν ἀρῆς ἀλκτῆρα γενέσθαι.  
 νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οὐ νέομαί γε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,  
 οὐδέ τι Πατρόκλω γενόμην φάος οὐδ' ἐτάροισι  
 τοῖς ἄλλοις, οἳ δὴ πολέες δάμεν Ἑκτορι δίῳ,  
 ἀλλ' ἦμαι παρὰ νηυσὶν ἐτώσιον ἄχθος ἀρούρης,  
 [105] τοῖος ἐὼν οἷος οὗ τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων  
 ἐν πολέμῳ: ἀγορῆ δέ τ' ἀμείνονές εἰσι καὶ ἄλλοι.  
 ὡς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ...

"Far, far from his own land hath he fallen, and had need of me to be a warder off of ruin. Now therefore, seeing I return not to my dear native land, neither proved anywise a light of deliverance to Patroclus nor to my other comrades, those many that have been slain by goodly Hector, but abide here by the ships. Profitless burden upon the earth—I that in war am such as is none other of the brazen-coated Achaeans, albeit in council there be others better—so may strife ..." (translated by Murray 1947: 295-7).

The term *intertextuality* was first coined by Julia Kristeva (Kristeva 1969) to identify the relationship between a text and other texts, but it has been "used indiscriminately by students of allusion of every stripe and critical inclination" (Pucci 1998: 15) over the years. In real terms, intertextuality may occur in a number of forms (e.g., "direct quotation, citation, allusion, echo, reference, imitation, collage, parody, pastiche, literary conventions, structural parallelism" Zengin 2016: 300), but it chiefly denotes any "transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another" (Kristeva 1984: 59). Hence, it is not to be confused with comparative analysis and "study of sources" (cf. Kristeva 1984: 59). Broadly speaking, to be identified as an intertextual pair, two texts "usually require some similarity or opposition of ideas, and by an unwritten convention, connections between at least two identical or related words in each text, though a single word may suffice if particularly rare" (Kelly 2008: 166). In our case, the joint appearance of both νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ and the anacoluthon is a good starting point. However, many scholars have developed more sophisticated criteria. Among them, one of the most promising approaches for determining a conscious or intentional allusion was provided by New Testament scholar MacDonald (2001: 2-3, his criteria have proved to be valid for classical authors, too. cf. Friesen 2015: 67, fn. 58) some years ago. He recommended six

<sup>24</sup>"Finally, Achilles is the archetypal tragic figure in his inability, for all his power and greatness, to dictate or influence the course of future events: for even when he seems most in control, his own plans and prestige form part of a wider picture which he can see only in details. And even in the later books of the poem, as his knowledge and understanding of events increase, so too does his helplessness."

criteria to check the trustworthiness of a possible intertextual reference: (i) accessibility (the likeliness the hypotext was available to the author), (ii) analogy (the popularity of the same text with other authors), (iii) density (the amount of parallels between two texts), (iv) order (the similarities between the sequences of the two texts), (v) distinctive traits (unusual shared characteristics predicting an imitation), and (vi) interpretability (the capacity of the hypotext to make sense of the authorial intent hidden in the hypertext). In this paper, we will use these criteria to assess the intertextual status of Sophocles' OT 258-264 over *Iliad* 18.99-106.

(i) The first criterion requires no further proof after Rutherford's (1982) article. (ii) Analogy is a less obvious assumption. Our verses (*Il.* 18.99-106) are not quoted by Hunter (2018) in the large study he devoted to the ancient reception of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Nevertheless, two fragments from Aeschylus' *Myrmidones* (TrGF III 138 and 139) are likely to present Achilles lamenting Patroklos (van Dijk 1997: 169-171; Rodriguez Adrados 1999: 243), and "this is not unlike what happens in the *Iliad* (cf. 18.97-104), where / Achilles in his grief considers himself responsible for the death of Patroklos because he failed to protect him when needed" (Hadjicosti 2013: 127-28). The lack of further data is the likely consequence of the loss of countless literary works through the centuries. (iii) Density constitutes an important parameter to be taken into account. *Il.* 18.99-106, and the broader context in which those verses are situated, could be summarised in this way: when Achilles

"learns of Patroklos's death, he expresses not guilt for causing it but terrible grief at such a loss (18.22ff.), regret for not having been able to protect him and his other companions who were slain by Hector (18.98-99, 102-103), [56] and a desire to avenge his death (18.114-115) and so win *kléos* (18.121) at the expense of his own life." (Muellner 1996: 161)

The contact points with OT are evident. When Oedipus learns of Laius's death, he expresses not guilt for causing it (l. 219 ξένος μὲν τοῦ λόγου, "a stranger of this account") but terrible grief at such a loss (l. 257), regret for the citizens not having been able to act worthily of Laius (*Il.* 255-58), his own commitment to protect Laius' former kingdom and family (*Il.* 259-261), [56] and a desire to avenge Laius' death (l. 265) for the sake of his own honour (l. 264 ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδ'), cost what it may (l. 265). (iv) Order is related to density. However, in the narrow context of OT 258-264, other sequential parallels are detectable: both Achilles and Oedipus begin by mentioning their country (*Il.* 101; OT 259, where ἀρχὰς is an indirect reference to the city he ruled). Then their thoughts are with the closest persons to them (*Il.* 102, Patroclus; OT 260, the spouse), the other loved ones (*Il.* 102, the other comrades; OT 261, the children). Then the picture becomes wider and the number of the characters in the background increases (*Il.* 103, those many that have been slain by goodly Hector: OT 261, Laius' hypothetical offspring, for his children were practically killed with him before coming into the world). The section ends with a short mention of the superiority of the hero over the others (*Il.* 105, I am such as is none other; OT 264 ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδ'), and that is from where the motive for

future action will come. v. Distinguishing characteristics are represented by the phrase  $\nu\upsilon\nu\ \delta'\ \epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$  (*Il.* 101; OT 258), the unexpected change of syntax, or anacoluthon (*Il.* 107; OT 264), which leaves the above hanging. vi. Finally, interpretability leads us to examining why Sophocles may have targeted that model for imitation. Lines 258-264 of *Oedipus Tyrannus* meet at least two purposes. Firstly, they reveal much about Oedipus' self-concept. He sees himself as having a heroic stature (l. 264  $\alpha\nu\theta'\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\ \epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\delta'$ , "because that is me"), and heroic mission (l. 265  $\alpha\nu\theta'\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\mu\alpha\chi\omicron\upsilon\mu\alpha\iota$ , His criteria have proved to be valid for classical authors, too. cf. Friesen 2015, 67, fn. 58. "I shall fight in his defence"), with a unique commanding role (l. 258-9  $\nu\upsilon\nu\ \delta'\ \epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\ \kappa\upsilon\rho\acute{\omega}\ \tau'\ \epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\ / \acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega\nu\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ , "but now I hold the power") that could not be carried out by anyone else (the subjects were completely inadequate for the task, cf. ll. 255-8, and the only ally worthy of Oedipus is god himself, cf. ll. 244-5  $\tau\acute{\omega}\ \tau\epsilon\ \delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\mu\omicron\nu\iota\ \dots / \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\mu\mu\alpha\chi\omicron\varsigma\ \pi\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ , "I am an ally to the god"). There is no possible comparison between what others experience and what he senses (cf. ll. 60-1 "though you are enduring affliction I know well that there is not one of you who suffers equally with me"). Such a heroic temper can only be compared to that of Achilles, who desired to die owing to the loss of his beloved friend, Patroclus,<sup>25</sup> and had only one aim in mind - to find Patroclus' slayer (*Il.* 18.114):  $\nu\upsilon\nu\ \delta'\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu'\ \omicron\phi\rho\alpha\ \phi\acute{\iota}\lambda\eta\varsigma\ \kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\acute{\eta}\varsigma\ \omicron\lambda\epsilon\tau\eta\rho\alpha\ \kappa\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\omega$  "But now will I go forth that I may light on the slayer of the man I loved" (transl. by Murray 1947: 297). His statement is extremely similar to that pronounced by Oedipus (OT l. 265-6):  $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\pi\iota\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau'\ \acute{\alpha}\phi\acute{\iota}\xi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota\ / \zeta\eta\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \phi\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\upsilon\ \lambda\alpha\beta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ , "I will go to any lengths, eager to seize the slayer." But, as Lausberg (1998: 199, § 420.2) teaches us, "Every *simile* (owing to the lack of complete identity) also has an inherent *dissimile*: this very tension between *simile* and *dissimile* makes for the value and attraction of the *simile*." In our case, the dissimilarity lies in the quality of the expected outcome. Achilles knows that the gods are not on his side and he is ready to resign himself to fate (*Il.* 18. 115-16  $\kappa\eta\rho\alpha\ \delta'\ \epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\ \tau\acute{\omicron}\tau\epsilon\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\xi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota\ \omicron\pi\acute{\rho}\omicron\tau\epsilon\ \kappa\epsilon\nu\ \delta\eta\ / \text{Ze}\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\alpha\iota\ \eta\delta'\ \acute{\alpha}\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$ , "for my fate, I will accept it whenso Zeus willeth to bring it to pass, and the other immortal gods" (transl. by Murray 1947: 297)). Instead, Oedipus is intimately convinced of his own success and he firmly believes that the gods are on his side and he is a champion of justice: "may our ally Justice, and all the gods be propitious for ever" (OT 274-5). This optimism later turns out to be unfounded and will prove to be the fruit of Oedipus' ignorance.

There is, however, a second aspect inherent in the Homeric allusion. The eighteenth book of the *Iliad* marks the beginning of a new anger of Achilles, reconciled to Agamemnon, and eager to appease the Manes of his friend, Patroclus. The Homeric intertextuality hidden in OT 258-264 indirectly foreshadows Oedipus' anger, as he is eager to do justice to the memory of his slaughtered predecessor. As magistrally shown by Muellner (1996), for the

<sup>25</sup>Cf. *Il.* 18.98-9  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\ \tau\epsilon\theta\nu\alpha\acute{\iota}\eta\nu\ / \epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\ \acute{\alpha}\rho'\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\omega\ / \kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\alpha\mu\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$ , "Straightway may I die, seeing I was not to bear aid to my comrade at his slaying." (transl. by Murray 1947: 295).

Greeks, anger is not only a strong negative feeling but rather an "highly specialized social term denoting the cosmic sanction against tabu behavior" (Muellner 1996: 133). Anger is not only a destructive passion. It has also a creative aspect inasmuch it works as a cosmic sanction against behaviour that violates the most basic religious and social rules. Such a connotation is not absent in Oedipus' reaction. Nevertheless,

"Oedipus lacks the power to see the relation of one thing to another and to maintain a due proportion in the expenditure of energy. Oedipus can see only one thing at a time, and it is his habit to act immediately on half-knowledge with the utmost intensity and abandon. /... This is the flaw in the character of Oedipus - a weakness at the very centre of his being, from which all other weaknesses, such as his fatal tendency to anger, naturally arise." (Barstow 1917: 158-9)

His angry leaves a trail of destruction in Oedipus's life. Blinded by anger, he cannot tolerate the cautious reticence of Teiresias (ll. 316-446). He charges the old seer with Laius' murder (ll. 348-9), then he suspects Creon to seize the throne (l. 535), and, after many vicissitudes, in the end he turns his anger against himself. According to Ricoeur (1970: 517): "The underlying link between the anger of Oedipus and the power of truth is [thus] the core of the veritable tragedy." The Homeric reminiscence discreetly outlines that link and foreshadows what is about to happen next.

## Conclusion

As a result, having explained the high value of the anacoluthon in l. 264 and accepted ἔχω δέ instead of ἔχων δέ, I should translate the whole passage (ll. 258–264) as follows: "Now, however, since I happen to possess, as is known, the ruling power that he held in earlier days, / and, what's more, I possess his bed and the wife common to both of us / (and cognate<sup>26</sup> [brothers] of cognate children would have born to us, / if he had been blessed with descendants. / But evil fortune turned on that man), / because that is me, as if he were my own father, / I shall fight for his cause ..."

Expressed in these terms, the speech flows smoothly and logically from section to section; and our interpretation accounts for the otherwise disturbing anacoluthon. Moreover, our interpretation highlights the true nature of these lines: in this passage lies an extraordinary example of tragic irony.<sup>27</sup> These words encapsulate the central theme of the play: Oedipus proudly believes in the power of his sagacity<sup>28</sup> and underlines that his kingship is a matter of chance (not the result of inherited power). He is persuaded that his knowledge

<sup>26</sup>I translate "cognate", not "consanguineous", because they all would have been related by birth by being born from the same mother. On consanguinity (κοινῶν/κοινά), see Avezzù and Longo 1991: 25–61, 127–39.

<sup>27</sup>How can we forget Teiresias' savage irony in l. 440, οὔκουν σὺ ταῦτ' ἄριστος εὐρίσκειν ἔφυς;

<sup>28</sup>See also OT 441, τοιαῦτ' ὀνειδίξ', οἷς ἔμ' εὐρήσεις μέγαν.

of the truth is infallible, and he knows everything about himself, but the reality shows us Oedipus' will facing his destiny which lies hidden a new riddle, the mystery of his identity, from whence he will come out defeated.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>See Vernant 2006: 27-28, "Œdipe est double. Il constitue pour lui-même une énigme dont il ne devinera le sens qu'en se découvrant en tout point le contraire de ce qu'il croyait ou paraissait être. Le discours secret qui s'institue, sans qu'il le sache, au sein de son propre discours, Œdipe ne l'entend pas. Et nul témoin du drame sur la scène, en dehors de Tirésias, n'est non plus capable de le percevoir. Ce sont les dieux qui renvoient à Œdipe, en écho à certaines de ses paroles, son propre discours déformé ou retourné. Et cet écho inverse, qui/ sonne comme un éclat de rire sinistre, est en réalité un redressement. Ce que dit Œdipe sans le vouloir, sans le comprendre, constitue la seule vérité authentique de ses propos [...]."

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