

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RESPONSES TO SOPHOCLES' *OEDIPUS AT COLONUS*

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Abstract

This thesis is a synchronic reception study of a single play, the *Oedipus at Colonus*. Rather than providing a commentary, or extracting one or two themes in isolation for examination, it considers the play through the lens of the eighteenth century. In so doing it offers a variety of disciplinary approaches, looking at the OC through the eyes of an aesthetic philosopher, creative writer, textual critic, artist, politician, historian, art historian, composer, musicologist, teacher or clergyman. After an introduction outlining some basic presuppositions for the thesis, chapter 1 covers aesthetic philosophy, chapter 2 books, chapter 3 staged reworking, chapter 4 paintings and chapter 5 opera. In reflecting on the play from such a broad range of perspectives, a range of insights emerge. The major theme is the way in which aesthetics develops over time and how these developments are reflected in the wide range of material under discussion. This thesis is about the sublime. Reading the OC through eighteenth-century eyes prioritises certain aspects of it which can, in various guises and at various times, be understood as sublime. This places great emphasis on themes such as religion and the role of landscape, while diminishing others, such as that of blindness, which might usually seem obvious ways to think about the play. Each act of reception draws out something slightly different from the Greek model, and by examining a range of material, our overall appreciation of the play and the eighteenth century is significantly enhanced, particularly in respect to the aforementioned themes.

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In memory of Patrick Lovett

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Introduction

In *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture* (2001), Tim Blanning seeks to demonstrate the reciprocal interconnectedness of culture and power, taking his model from Habermas' view of the essentially political character of culture. His focus is Ancien Régime France, which is compared and contrasted with Prussia, Germany and England, the former's weaknesses and faults set against the lessons it could have learned from the latter three. This approach offers an inevitably broad sweep of cultural politics and political culture. In this thesis I focus such an approach around the specific example of Sophocles in England. I attempt a deeper dissection and analysis of artistic culture and how it interacts with religious and political culture in eighteenth-century England. I return to France and Blanning's thesis in my final chapter. No straight-forward stage version of the *Oedipus at Colonus* (henceforth OC) is recorded until 1845,¹ but there was increasing interest in it over the eighteenth century, as people became aware of it through a variety of media. This thesis is therefore limited by time-frame (the eighteenth century) and core subject (the OC), but ranges over a number of disciplines, demonstrating the profitability of an interdisciplinary approach to studying a play. In this introduction I present a summary of the reception history of the OC, demonstrating its importance in the eighteenth century. I outline the theoretical approach and interdisciplinary format of my work. I then concentrate on discussion of some key issues and themes in the play, which remain important throughout this thesis.

¹ This was a production in Germany. See the APGRD database: (<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/asp/database.htm>) (ed. N. Setchell) production ID 2240 for further details.

Reception Studies

I begin with some reflections on the nature of reception studies. Lorna Hardwick and Chris Stray offer a fivefold set of approaches to reception, deliberately promoting the multivalent nature of the discipline:

- i. Start from particular examples in order to draw out patterns and threads (although this is 'condemned by some critics as 'list-making' or 'positivist').²
- ii. Concentrate on the historical contexts of ancient and subsequent receptions (although this may prompt charges of cultural materialism or ignoring the text).³
- iii. Emphasise formal, aesthetic or transhistorical relationships between the ante-text and the receptions (although this may be challenged for ignoring social and political elements in the construction of judgements, or for neo-Kantian idealism).⁴
- iv. Chart histories of particular texts, styles and ideas (although this can be attacked for privileging the ancient text and assuming it has a fixed meaning, or for progressivism).⁵
- v. Emphasise the impact of receptions in shaping the perceptions of ancient texts and contexts (although this can be criticised on the grounds of cultural relativism and the denial of the autonomy and value of ancient material).⁶

² Hardwick and Stray (2008) 2.

³ *ibid.* 2-3.

⁴ *ibid.* 3.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

Despite the possible pitfalls, in this thesis I use all the above methods, in order to investigate the nature of the OC and the eighteenth century. As Hardwick and Stray continue:

'It is sometimes said that reception sheds light on the receiving society but not the ancient text or context. Most people involved in reception would accept that on the contrary the relationship between ancient and modern is reciprocal...and some argue that classics itself is inevitably about reception.'⁷

I combine aspects of both performance and scholarship histories, in order to demonstrate that performance and scholarship are both, in essence, acts of reception, albeit with different agendas, and to this extent, enlighten us about ancient works and receiving cultures. In his textual criticism, Richard Bentley was trying to reconstruct what he thought the original text of Sophocles said. In writing *Oedipe à Colone* Sacchini was aiming to entertain. Their primary aims may have been different, but this does not mean that we, several centuries later, cannot look at both a text and an opera with the aim of using them to enhance our insights into the nature of the ancient world and the receiving culture. As Fiona Macintosh writes:

'Histories of classical scholarship must widen their brief to include not just the wider political, social and cultural contexts, but also to ally themselves with that second cousin of classical reception, performance history.'⁸

Reiterating Hardwick and Stray's point, James Porter has recently expressed the idea that all work on the Greco-Roman world is a form of reception studies, and this thesis follows in his wake:

⁷ *ibid.* 4.

⁸ Macintosh (2008) 257.

'[R]eception in a strong sense is all there is (Martindale 2007). One of the greatest ironies of classical studies is that they are *themselves* a form of reception studies, though professing classicists have been the last to acknowledge this.'⁹

Porter goes so far as to say that reception and transmission are the same thing.¹⁰ While this view may seem extreme, I take his underlying point that reception and transmission are forms of the same process, that is, the afterlife of Greco-Roman literature, and this thesis reads the products of both disciplines alongside each other.

Greek drama has long been a major focus of classical reception studies, but research has mainly dwelt on post-1800, post-colonial material.¹¹ The theories used to examine this material have been developed to deal with it. My area of interest is the eighteenth century, primarily England 1711-1788, with a particular focus on 1757-1764, and 1776-1788.¹² The eighteenth-century material deals much more with the fashioning of British identity within and between its home borders, whereas nineteenth-century material is more a response to Britain as empire. The eighteenth century was largely unconcerned with disciplinary distinctions, and the same people were clergymen, philosophers, politicians, writers and artists; the overlap was far greater, in a far smaller community, than could possibly be the case now, or indeed in the nineteenth century.¹³ I have therefore had to develop my own theoretical

⁹ Porter (2008) 469.

¹⁰ *ibid.* 473.

¹¹ Significant examples include Goff (2005), Hardwick (2000, 2003), Hardwick and Gillespie (2007). A counter-example is Hall and Macintosh (2005), which is discussed further in chapter 3. Stray (2006) deals with travel in Greece, but not with the reception of the non-archaeological material back in England. He has also written and edited a number of books on Classics 1800-2000, which are not discussed in this thesis.

¹² 1711 saw the publication of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism*. 1786 is the publication date of Brunck's edition of Sophocles, which marks a significant point in the development of Sophoclean scholarship, as discussed in chapter 2. My material continues two years further in order to cover significant English translations and re-editions. With the advent of the French Revolution in 1789, however, cultural politics changed so rapidly that further discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹³ McKeon (1994) discusses clearly the origins of disciplinarity in the eighteenth century and the effect this has on interdisciplinary study.

approaches, making this thesis a study in the nature of reception studies as well as of the OC.

Chapter 1 offers a history of intellectual pursuits in the realm of aesthetics, in order to demonstrate how Greek and Roman philosophy shaped the eighteenth-century intellectual climate. Longinus became increasingly important, and a concept of the sublime emerged which helped make the OC a more popular play, along with the biographical view of Sophocles as the perfect sublime poet. In chapter two I discuss how this theory of the sublime can be traced through the scholarly material produced on the text, and how pedagogical aims change our readings of texts, dealing with a range of textual and paratextual issues. Chapters three to five provide more case-study based analyses of particular creative receptions of the OC. In chapter three I examine the first modern reworking of the play, William Mason's *Caractacus*, and chart the geographical, political and religious aspects of the play that made it successful.¹⁴ Chapter four focuses on the first known paintings of the OC, by Henry Fuseli. It engages with discussions concerning art as an appropriate medium for expressing literature, and charts development in the history of the practical application of the sublime. My final chapter moves to France in order to investigate the first known production of the OC under its own name, as the opera *Oedipe à Colone*.

Each chapter takes a different disciplinary viewpoint. I place the OC at the heart of this thesis, and examine what benefits there are from looking at classical material with the eyes of a philosopher, textual critic, art historian or musicologist, reading the same material from several different viewpoints.¹⁵ This is in contrast with previous studies of the reception of the OC, which have done one of three things. Books such as Markantonatos (2007), Morwood (2008) and Kelly (2009) make

¹⁴ The term 'reworking' is taken from Kelly (2009) 134.

¹⁵ See Kelly (2009) ch.8, especially 134 on the benefits of such an approach.

reception a final episode in their discussions of the plays, almost an appendix, without discussing the works in their own rights. Rodighiero (2007) focuses solely on the reception of the play, but covers two and a half thousand years in a hundred and eighteen pages, and ‘tra Sette e Novecento’ (my period of interest) in just twenty-three pages.¹⁶ Hall and Macintosh (2005) treat an individual work in more depth, but do not contextualise it within the greater framework of the OC in particular. This thesis, therefore, intends to take a new approach in focussing solely on one play in one century in an attempt to appreciate the works of reception in their own temporal and generic context, as well as with reference to their shared Sophoclean model.¹⁷

Table 1 – the performance frequencies of the plays of Sophocles by century.

| | <i>Ajax</i> | <i>Antigone</i> | <i>Electra</i> | <i>OC</i> | <i>OT</i> | <i>Philoctetes</i> | <i>Trachiniae</i> |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| C16 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| C17 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| C18 | 9 | 16 | 8 | 4 | 17 | 2 | 3 |
| C19 | 9 | 95 | 23 | 30 | 72 | 13 | 18 |
| C20 | 58 | 646 | 294 | 108 | 632 | 88 | 36 |
| C21 | 19 | 154 | 98 | 26 | 133 | 18 | 22 |
| Unknown | 1 | 15 | 7 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 95 | 928 | 434 | 167 | 871 | 124 | 81 |
| No. Musical¹⁸ | 26 | 266 (213) | 152 (105) | 74 | 271 (242) | 31 | 23 |
| % Musical | 27.4 | 28.7(24.3) | 35.0 (27.1) | 44.3 | 31.1 (28.7) | 25.0 | 28.4 |

¹⁶ See Ryan (2009) for a complete review of the book.

¹⁷ Further mention of individual modern receptions of the play can be found in Flashar (2009) *passim*. For the initial ancient reception of Sophocles, see limited comments in Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) and then Taplin (2007) 5ff, and on the OC, Easterling (2006b) 8-9 and Taplin (2007) 100-102.

¹⁸ The figures are from the APGRD database (www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/asp/database.htm), supplemented by other sources of information on musical productions. I have bracketed the figures for Strauss’ *Elektra* (11.9%), Mendelssohn’s *Antigone* (4.3%) and Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* (2.4%) from this analysis, as these are operas whose frequent reproduction make the figures misleading. There are problems with such a statistical approach. These statistics are inherently flawed in that the APGRD database is incomplete and partially random – systematic entry has only been done for certain areas. Given that the data is random for all plays, however, as Sophocles has not yet formed the basis of any of the Archive’s more thoroughly researched publications, I assume that plays’ relative performance frequencies are reasonably representative.

The OC is unusual in not being performed in any version until the eighteenth century. The first performance of a work directly linked to the OC, William Mason's *Caractacus*, was published in 1759, but not performed until 1776.¹⁹ It is not unique, as this position is shared by *Trachiniae*. Unlike *Trachiniae* however, which remains the least-performed Sophoclean play, the OC has 'caught up', and is the fourth most often performed.²⁰

A reading of the OC

This thesis, then, asks what it is about the OC that appealed to the eighteenth century and consequently brought it once more into the modern cultural psyche. The answer, I suggest, lies in a reading of the play which unites elements of religion, politics and landscape alongside themes of old age, inheritance and wandering, all themes which became particularly important to eighteenth-century Britain. The OC can sometimes be maligned as the inferior work of a failing mind, a poor relative of the other Theban plays. Some modern criticism has suggested that it is peculiar and uncomfortable, sitting poorly with our preconceptions concerning Attic tragedy. Yet it is also often praised for its majesty and power. Linforth summarises this position well when he writes: 'The quality of greatness in the play is secure from ravage. The

¹⁹ *Trachiniae* was first performed in the guise of Handel's *Heracles*, and in its own right in 1776, in the context of Samuel Parr's Greek play.

²⁰ The majority of this performance data is collated from the APGRD database, as cited in note 1. They are supplemented by further information from other sources. They remain at best a sample of the true performance figures. Research into archives has failed to unearth earlier productions than detailed here, and although the absolute figures change over time, the relative frequencies of performance remain largely stable. I therefore take these figures as a representation of the true picture directing me towards points of further interest, rather than a complete performance record. The figures were last updated on 24th September 2009. I have also catalogued 54 works of art (1776- present day) which appear to be related to the play. One might suggest that the relative popularity is due to the links with the other Theban plays. This thesis goes some way towards arguing why the OC has been popular in its own right. We should also notice that just 47/168 productions are linked to other Greek plays, which demonstrates a clear independent life for the OC.

sublimity of its conception and of the poetical power which gives expression to the conception is fixed, and no quibbling of criticism can shake it'.²¹ Linforth's description of the play as sublime provides the key to understanding its eighteenth-century popularity. They found in it a unique combination of exquisite poetry on topics which mattered to them and a mystical tenor in keeping with developing ideas of aesthetics. The play contains some extraordinary moments, including the longest extant literary curse, rare staged violence, and two famous choruses (the Colonus Ode 668-719 and the ode to old age 1211-1248). The works of reception I discuss tend to exaggerate these aspects, and promote readings of the play with which a modern reader might not agree, but which resonated more clearly with contemporary audiences. At this point I give my response to just two issues which affect our understanding of the eighteenth-century position, in order to contextualise later analyses. I discuss whether Oedipus leaves the stage at any point or attains daimonic status. All my readings and views are necessarily coloured by the works of reception I have encountered; this discussion therefore also demonstrates the subjectivity of reception studies at work.

David Seale writes that Oedipus leaves the stage during the *parodos*, but I think this is unlikely.²² Charles Segal notes that the grove is a symbol 'which stands at the crucial point of Oedipus' passage between wandering and settledness, pollution and cultic honour as a "hero"'.²³ Oedipus cannot enter the grove until he has been transfigured, shedding his former horrors and, I argue, reaching daimonic status. This does not happen until after his episode with Polynices. Oedipus can retreat, but must not go offstage or out of the audience's sight (at 113-116, 138), or it

²¹ Linforth (1951) 76.

²² Seale (1982) 118.

²³ Note that Sophocles never calls Oedipus a ἥρωας (see Linforth [1951] 98). Indeed, Sophocles does not use the word ἥρωας at any point in the extant tragedies. Aeschylus uses it just once in an extant play (*Agamemnon* 516) while the only Euripidean examples are in fragments. Heroism is dealt with in other terms, a topic which would merit further study. See further Langerwerf and Ryan (2010), especially pages 12-16.

is no longer under his control, and in this play Oedipus owns the stage at every point, even when most vulnerable.²⁴ Singh and Wiles point out further that the doorway in the σκήνη, representing the path to Oedipus' final resting place once he has exited through it, provides a physical barrier between Athens and Thebes in theatrical terms, making it even more important that this exit is not used until Oedipus has attained that enhanced status.²⁵ Whether Oedipus is omnipresent affects our understanding of his character and of the means by which Sophocles draws it. Making a decision on this point has an effect on how one directs the play, how one imagines it in one's mind. The theoretical and practical sides of the question meet.

Disagreement continues over whether Oedipus achieves daimonic status at any point in the play, following Linforth's denial that Oedipus becomes a hero.²⁶ For the sake of the eighteenth-century interpretations, it is important to accept that he may. Oedipus does not become a god, that is clear, but he is called both offstage by divine thunder (from 1456), and away from the grove by an unnamed god (1627-1628).²⁷ Gaining in power throughout the play he appears to transcend human status. In his rehabilitation as a man (promised by the gods at 392) he overshoots the mark and leaves mankind behind. This play remains a tragedy of excess, of the failure of the protagonist to conform to the principle of μηδὲν ἄγαν.²⁸ Adams notes Sophocles' interest in heroes and *daimons*, but only describes Oedipus in the OC as the former.²⁹ Some commentators read his curse as a true call to the gods, who then

²⁴ Segal (1980) 126. Some commentators leave it ambiguous, such as Burton (1980) 254 who simply says that they retire from view into the grove, without specifying whether this entails leaving the stage.

²⁵ See Wiles (1997) 146 and Singh Dhuga (2005) 356. On the (non)use of the backdoor see also Rehm (2002) 20-21.

²⁶ See Kamerbeek (1984) 19, referring in particular to Linforth (1951) 97-104 where he denies any simple reading of Oedipus as a hero.

²⁷ One of the clearest expressions of the assumption of Oedipus' apotheosis and heroisation comes at Reinhardt (1979) 193-194.

²⁸ See Reinhardt (1979) for a particularly forceful declaration of this, especially 204, 216, 219-20.

²⁹ Adams (1957) 18.

effect it, as with Theseus in *Hippolytus*. For Winnington-Ingram, however, the mystery of the play rests at least in part on the gods being able to take Oedipus to themselves as one of their own, while Wallace suggests that a lack of divine reaction to the first version of the curse tells us that Oedipus is coming closer to the divine sphere.³⁰ For Waldock, the play is about Oedipus' apotheosis.³¹ Bernard Knox concurs: 'Oedipus Coloneus who in the first scene is a resigned, humble, feeble, old man, taught, as he says, by time (7), ends by condemning his enemies to defeat and his sons to death at each other's hand before he transcends human stature and time alike in his mysterious god-directed death'.³² A theme of transfiguration permeates discussions of the play,³³ as we can imagine that Oedipus effects his own curse, which has ramifications for our interpretations of any resolution further on.³⁴ Further themes in the OC which are of interest in this thesis are religion and geography.³⁵ Before looking at the works of reception, therefore, I offer a reading of these themes which underpins the rest of the thesis.

Religion

'The holiness of the Christian religion is of an order different from the heroic-tragic sense of the Greeks, and Oedipus (of the *Oedipus at Colonus*), although different, still stands closer to Christian holiness than Prometheus does.'³⁶

³⁰ Winnington-Ingram (1954) 17, Wallace (1979) 45.

³¹ Waldock (1966) 219, in disagreement with Bowra. See also Musurillo (1967) 131, Markantonatos (2002) 219 and Kelly (2009) 74 & 82 for a summary of prior opinions.

³² Knox (1966) 26-27. Bowra (1940) 311, Adams (1957) 176 and McDevitt (1972) 22 agree.

³³ See also Burton (1980) 251.

³⁴ See in particular the forced happy ending to *Oedipe à Colone* discussed in ch.5. On the potency of the curse see also Morwood (2008) 80-81.

³⁵ Other themes such as old age, legacy and family are tangentially important and will be discussed at important points. I do not, however, deal with them as systematically as with religion and geography.

³⁶ Opstelten (1952) 11.

As Musurillo wrote, even if tragedy did not originate with religious ritual (as according to Gilbert Murray), it does at least represent religious themes.³⁷ The play is set in the grove of the Eumenides, next to the hill of Demeter.³⁸ This is an extremely charged religious location, as demonstrated by the multiple (and conflicting/confusing) forms of Athene and Poseidon found throughout the play.³⁹ I am therefore not inclined to accept Linforth's dictum that the play is not religious even if it contains religious elements.⁴⁰ Instead, I mainly agree with Seaford, who describes how this play is involved in a process of establishing a cult aetiology.⁴¹ Sources tell us that Oedipus was a cult figure in Athens, linked with worship of both Demeter and the Eumenides.⁴² The OC can be read as providing a cult aetiology for Oedipus, providing the initiation for both an internal audience (notably Theseus) and external audience members.⁴³ He has purification rituals performed for him,⁴⁴ but otherwise, each episode allows him to pitch himself against another character until he is strong

³⁷ Musurillo (1967) 3.

³⁸ Lloyd-Jones (1990) 210 notes how in some places Demeter has the name 'Erinys', connecting and conflating the divinities important to the OC. See Kelly (2009) 81-82 on the links between Demeter, Eleusis and Oedipus. These links are discussed further below, particularly: pp. 22, 25, 27, 141, 147-148, 310-311.

³⁹ See Kirkwood (1986) and Kelly (2009) 68 on the multiple forms of Athene and Poseidon in this play and the importance of such multiplicity.

⁴⁰ Linforth (1951) 75. See Kirkwood (1986) for a direct refutation of Linforth. Given the politico-religious nature of the whole dramatic festival (see Goldhill [1987] and Longo [1990] for example), it seems hard to imagine that even 'mere' religious elements would not have had an intensified resonance with the audience.

⁴¹ Seaford (1994). See also Garland (1992) on *αἰτία* in the OC, and Reinhardt (1979) 193-194 on the OC as the enactment of a cult legend.

⁴² Primary sources for the Colonian aspects of the story include: *Phoenissae*, the scholion to *Phoenissae* 1703-1709, the scholion to *Odyssey* 271, which draws on Androtion's history of Attica. For further discussion of the Attic context of Sophocles' last play see Markantonatos (2007) 35-40, Kelly (2009) 9-24, and on the myth: March (1987, 1998), Dowden (1992), Graf (1993), Ganz (1993), Markantonatos (2007) 43-49. For the history of the cult and of Oedipus' death in literature see Farnell (1921), Edmunds (1981), Burkert (1985), Kearns (1989) and Cingano (1992). Evidence for a pre-Sophoclean cult of Oedipus at Colonus is scarce, suggesting that it may have been inspired by the play. Lefkowitz (1981) 84 certainly reads the links this way round, denying an autobiographical reading of the play (76).

⁴³ On hero cults established in Sophoclean plays, see: *Ajax* Henrichs (1993); *Heracles in Trachiniae* Easterling (1981), Holt (1989); *Philoctetes* Harrison (1989); *Oedipus in the OC* Méautis (1940), Easterling (1967), Burian (1974) and Calame (1998) 343-8.

⁴⁴ On the relationship between these rituals and those performed at Oedipus' death, see Kelly (2009) 72-73.

enough to lead himself off to his mysterious death.⁴⁵ At first, Antigone speaks on his behalf, to the chorus:

ὦ ξένοι αἰδόφρονες

Sophocles OC 237⁴⁶

When Theseus enters, Oedipus is better able to defend himself and takes greater command of the situation, convincing Theseus that he has something to offer and that Theseus ought to look after him.⁴⁷ He wins an *agon* against Creon, but is not physically strong enough to resist Creon's use of force against him and his daughters; a contrast is drawn between his verbal and physical strength.⁴⁸ He then rails against Polynices, having acquired sufficient power to curse him, before finally achieving physical rehabilitation when he leaves the stage having regained some sort of sight.⁴⁹ Oedipus knows that Colonus is the place where he will find rest because of an oracle from Apollo (see his speech at 84-110), and is called to his final resting place by thunder from Zeus (95).⁵⁰ Human intervention is unnecessary.

This sense of mystery religion and redemption has led to the play being interpreted and reconfigured in Christian terms, most overtly in Lee Breuer and Bob

⁴⁵ See Shields (1961) 73.

⁴⁶ In chapter 2 I discuss textual criticism and the differences between eighteenth-century editions and quotations are attributed to different editions. Elsewhere all quotations are from the Lloyd-Jones and Wilson OCT text (1990) unless otherwise specified.

⁴⁷ See Reinhardt (1979) 207-208 and Kelly (2009) 75-78 on the difference this makes to Oedipus' suppliant status. Wilson (1997) *passim* disagrees with the notion of Oedipus as suppliant, which was most clearly put forward at Burian (1974).

⁴⁸ See Kelly (2009) 121-122 on Oedipus' contrasting strength and weakness.

⁴⁹ Shields (1961) 71 claims that Oedipus 'for all practical purposes regains his sight'. For Adams (1957) 176 it is a supernatural, heroic sight rather than a physical one. For Bernidaki-Aldous (1990) 143, the light is not a literal one to be seen. Rehm (2002) 5 describes Oedipus' loss of external vision as leading to a growth in inner personal sight.

⁵⁰ For more on the thunder of Zeus as a key moment in interpreting the play, see McCartney (1932) 205.

Telson's 1982 musical *The Gospel at Colonus*.⁵¹ The practical outcomes of such a reading will be discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis, particularly in chapters three to five, but at this point I offer a summary of some of the main themes.

Links between Oedipus and Job have long been drawn.⁵² The basic idea of a good man suffering due to some greater, arbitrary divine plan is clear. For L.S. Colchester, Sophocles is 'trying to find the solution to the problem of evil and its relation to the Deity', and finds that solution with the OC: 'for he, like Arthur and Elijah, is transported to another life, without passing through the intermediate stage of death'.⁵³ Musurillo suggests that in the OC the quest for the meaning of man's life is settled, finding a position of hope and belief.⁵⁴ I argue the opposite; despite many attempts over the past three hundred years to read the OC as a play with positive Christian messages of redemption and resurrection, I demonstrate throughout this thesis that the OC in fact becomes a reading in the futility of life and the impossibility of a true redemption for mankind in general.⁵⁵ Richard Seaford has argued that tragic hero cults were established as a means to create political harmony out of the chaos of intrafamilial violence common to so many tragic heroes.⁵⁶ Such an attitude applied to the OC promulgates the view that in some senses the ending of

⁵¹ Although see Kelly (2009) 137 on the difficulties of a Christian reading in terms of reconciliation and redemption. For more on *The Gospel at Colonus* see Breuer (1989) alongside Rabkin (1984, 1989), Cody (1989), D'Aponte (1991) and Albin (2001).

⁵² 'So Job served as the subject of a divine demonstration, which was beyond his understanding, and was in the end recompensed for his sufferings.' Knox (1966) 146. See also Opstelten (1952) 65 and Whitman (1966) 40. Fortes (1959) discusses Oedipus and Job and their interaction and complementarity in West African religion.

⁵³ Colchester (1942) 21, 23. Oedipus is even made a wanderer in search of the Grail and a Parsifal figure (24). See also Hiroshi (1983). For more on links between Arthurian legend and the OC, see chapter 3, p. 177-178). For Oedipus as a migrant, see chapter 4. Couch (1943) 255 reads the link more in terms of judgement: 'Sophocles, returning to the tale of Oedipus, presents almost a Christian concept of judgement for which no Christian vocabulary is available'.

⁵⁴ Musurillo (1967) 130.

⁵⁵ Thus the third stasimon carries a message of universal pessimism. See Kelly (2009) 97 on the validity of a pessimistic interpretation of this stasimon, contra Kiso (1984) 104-105, for example, who argues, for a reconciliation and optimistic ending to the play.

⁵⁶ Seaford (1994).

the OC is a relatively 'happy' one. Yet the play does not end with the messenger speech establishing redemption through cult worship. Rather, the double tragedy of the curse leading to the mutual fratricide alongside the death of their father destroys the girls (albeit not within the framework of the play itself).

This pessimistic ending without emphasis on redemption is incompatible with a Christian reading of the play. Such a reading is not unusual, however. Oedipus appears in European folk mythology as Christ or Pope Gregory.⁵⁷ He is a Christ figure because of his transformation and 'ascension', because of his undeserved suffering, carrying the guilt of his ancestors.⁵⁸ Folk tales in Latin, Greek, Finnish, Karelian, Russian and Irish make Judas Iscariot an outcast who killed his father, married his mother and on discovering what he had done, went to be redeemed by the Saviour.⁵⁹ The reunion with his father almost invariably occurs in an orchard or garden and he often kills his father with an apple. The garden of paternal betrayal foreshadows the ultimate betrayal at Gethsemane, while the Christian symbolism of the destructive apple is also acknowledged. Important characters in Christianity are represented as Oedipus, which makes it feasible to interpret Oedipus as Christian.

Modern classical scholarship has taken issue with such an interpretation. Winnington-Ingram warns us not to end up with a Christian theodicy.⁶⁰ Whitman points out that there is no Messiah in Greek theology, but that man must reach the

⁵⁷ See Edmunds (1996) for a collection of Oedipus analogies.

⁵⁸ This interpretation is most clearly seen in twentieth-century productions such as Stravinsky's 1927 opera *Oedipus Rex*.

⁵⁹ Edmunds (1985). There is a further subtradition according to which Pope Gregory committed incest with his sister and is therefore viewed as an oedipal figure, see Edmunds (1985) 79-88. Judas has been appropriated into American-Indian rituals, where he is represented as a 'backdoor saint' and scapegoat protector in a similar way to how Oedipus functions in the OC, negotiating boundaries as a *pharmakos* figure who may protect if he does not destroy; see Schechner (1993) 121 on Judas in the Yaqui Wahema ritual.

⁶⁰ Winnington-Ingram (1980) 253.

divine by himself.⁶¹ For Whitman, Oedipus in the OC does precisely this.⁶² We repeatedly see that the particular combination of Christian and pagan themes and models with which the OC can be made to engage is particularly relevant to the eighteenth century.

Geography

The name Colonus is only mentioned three times in the play, yet this is a play rich with description and discussion of the local area (59, 670, 889); moreover the geographical and religious aspects of the play are closely linked, partly through their mutual dependence on the sense of community.⁶³ There are six further ways in which the local area is referred to in the OC:

- (i) Antigone and the stranger give detailed descriptions to Oedipus in order to compensate for his not being able to see it.
- (ii) Theseus has important entrances, which are accompanied by descriptions.
- (iii) The 'Colonus' ode.
- (iv) The 'kidnap' ode.
- (v) The messenger speech.
- (vi) Methods of address.

⁶¹ Whitman (1966) 214.

⁶² The idea of man reaching some form of divine status is echoed in Longinian poetics, which is discussed further in ch. 1.

⁶³ See Wallace (1979) 40 and Kelly (2009) 92. As Kelly (2009) 98 writes: 'Setting is arguably more important to the OC than any other extant Attic tragedy'. On the locality and its aesthetic and political resonances see also Blundell (1993), Krummen (1993), Wilson (1997) ch.4.

The three references to Colonus all fit within these categories, the first to i) and vi), the second to iii) and the third to ii). I now turn to some further evidence for each category.

i.) Oedipus' questioning about the place.

Oedipus opens the OC by asking Antigone where they have arrived:

τέκνον τυφλοῦ γέροντος Ἀντιγόνη, τίνας
χώρους ἀφίγμεθ' ἢ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν;

OC 1-2

Their first encounter is with a place, not a person;⁶⁴ place is clearly important from the outset. Antigone replies by describing the place in terms of what she can see far off, moving steadily closer in, as close as the seat right next to him, in the manner of a camera panning a scene then focussing in on the important detail:

πάτερ ταλαίπωρ' Οἰδίπους, πύργοι μὲν οἱ
πόλιν στέφουσιν, ὥς ἀπ' ὀμμάτων, πρόσω·
χώρος δ' ὄδ' ἱερός, ὥς σάφ' εἰκάσαι, βρύων
δάφνης, ἐλαίας, ἀμπέλου· πυκνόπτεροι δ'
εἴσω κατ' αὐτὸν εὐστομοῦσ' ἀηδόνες·
οὐ κῶλα κάμψον τοῦδ' ἐπ' ἀξέστου πέτρου·
μακρὰν γὰρ ὥς γέροντι προὔσταλῃς ὁδόν.

OC 14-19

She mentions features which recur throughout the play: the sacred nature of the land, the laurel, olives, ivy and nightingales and rock seat. Antigone cannot, however, name the land precisely. She knows that it is Athens, but no more. The

⁶⁴ See Seale (1982) 114.

references to the exact location must come from its inhabitants, which happens when the stranger enters, followed by the chorus. At this point, Oedipus retreats and their search for him increases our awareness of the shape of the stage. When they find him, and force him to move step by step until he is beyond the sacred threshold, on his new rocky seat, we focus in again on the detailed setting. The chorus' description of the grove thus parallels Antigone's approach.

Oedipus is blind, and consequently the description has to be particularly full, in order to give him as detailed a picture as possible. It includes auditory data (nightingales) that we might have expected him to have picked up for himself, since it is his eyes and not his ears that are damaged, but their inclusion adds to the poetic coherence of the play;⁶⁵ nightingales are mentioned again at 672 in the Colonus ode, for example.⁶⁶ As birds associated with the underworld, and with familial disorder, they are thematically appropriate for the play. Aara Suksi has also argued that the nightingale here should be read less as a symbol of death and more as one of transformation, as well as a marker of poetry.⁶⁷ Procne, the original nightingale, was transformed when the gods took pity on her as she fled Tereus into the woods. Similarly Oedipus wandered in exile to a grove in hope of pity from the gods and undergoes a transformation during the play. The reference to the nightingale from Antigone thus anticipates his final rise to power.⁶⁸ The description also helps the audience to imagine the scene, without elaborate staging or stage directions. Where the σκήνη would usually represent a palace, here it represents a sacred grove. The

⁶⁵ On the importance of these aural features, see Easterling (1973). On the nightingales as something Oedipus could notice, see Jebb (1885) *ad loc.* and Edmunds (1996) 42.

⁶⁶ For Shields (1961) 70, the references to hearing also emphasise the sight imagery by implication.

⁶⁷ Suksi (2001) 646. See also Kelly (2009) 94.

⁶⁸ The nightingale is also best known for its sweet song, which is what the poet creates. Oedipus could also be read as a representation of the poet Sophocles himself, an old man born at. See Van Hook (1934) 741, Knox (1966) 55-58, Burton (1980) 251, Lefkowitz (1981) 76, Jouanna (2007) 14-15. For Daly (1986b) 65, this play is no less than 'the playwright's personal repayment for rearing to his native land', echoing his earlier statement that it forms 'the poet's personal return for rearing to his native Athens' (1986a) 77. For an opposite view of the contemporary political resonances, particularly of the Colonus ode, see Griffin (1999).

sanctity is conveyed by the fact that one goes inside in order to enter the grove, penetrating its dark, mysterious interior. Given that this is an unexpected subversion of stage conventions, it is important that the description is clear and full, to help the audience visualise what is happening. These initial responses to Oedipus' questions provide a brief explanation of the setting, but also begin the process of integrating the location with the broader poetics of the play, extending our diegetic awareness.⁶⁹

ii.) Theseus' entrances

Theseus twice comes rushing in at Oedipus' request, having promised to protect him. Both times a description of where he came from is included, and both times it was from a sacrifice to Poseidon. This helps set the location and give a sense of Colonus as linked to Poseidon, even though the sacrifices were not carried out there.⁷⁰

τίς ποθ' ἢ βοή; τί τοῦργον; ἐκ τίνος φόβου ποτὲ
βουθυτοῦντά μ' ἀμφὶ βωμὸν ἔσχετ' ἐναλίῳ θεῷ
τοῦδ' ἐπιστάτῃ Κολωνοῦ; λέξαθ', ὥς εἰδῶ τὸ πᾶν,
οὗ χάριν δεῦρ' ἤξα θᾶσσον ἢ καθ' ἡδονὴν ποδός.

OC 887-890

The first time, Theseus names Poseidon as Lord of Colonus, to suggest that he was sacrificing nearby, which lends theatrical plausibility to the scene, allowing him to

⁶⁹ Elam (1980) provides a thorough study of theatrical diegesis.

⁷⁰ The statue to Colonos Hippios mentioned at line 59 has already marked Poseidon's involvement with Colonus, as the giver of horses to Athens. See Stinton (1976) on Colonus and Poseidon, alongside Seale (1982) 128 and Jouanna (2007) 13. Wallace (1979) 43 notes that Ismene's unexpected arrival on horseback provides a further link to Poseidon. Note that Poseidon is introduced at 54-55.

have reached Colonus with sufficient speed to help Oedipus. It also reinforces the general sense of locality.⁷¹

τίς αὖ παρ' ὑμῶν κοινὸς ἤχεϊται κτύπος,
σαφῆς μὲν αὐτῶν, ἐμφανὲς δὲ τοῦ ξένου;

OC 1500-1501

This time Theseus is about to enter in order to witness Oedipus' exit. Here the chorus supply a description of what they think Theseus might be doing, which is again a sacrifice to Poseidon. He does not correct them or comment further when he enters, so we assume this is accurate. This description through assumption is a function they perform several times in the play. Theseus happening to be in the area both times he is needed gives the play a sense that people spend time in this area, that it has a range of gods sacred to it, with people, with altars, with rites of its own. It has an identity apart from Athens.⁷²

iii.) The Colonus ode

'For beauty of language the Colonus ode and the messenger speech are unsurpassed. Athenian, aristocrat, believer, dramatist, and poet have united to produce a final perfect work.'⁷³

The first stasimon in the OC is commonly known as the Colonus ode because it eulogises Colonus as a location, and is accepted as one of the finest pieces of lyric Sophocles wrote.⁷⁴ Adrian Kelly writes: 'Sophocles constructs here a beautiful, noble

⁷¹ Burton (1980) 266 notes how these are the only trochaic tetrameters in the play, adding further emphasis to the lines in drawing the audience's ears to them.

⁷² See Kelly (2009) 99-100 on the power of this borderline.

⁷³ Webster (1936) 170-171.

⁷⁴ Although it receives only cursory mention in Hyde (1915) on 'The Ancient Appreciation of Mountain Scenery', with reference to the hill of Demeter, which is not, in fact, mentioned in this

and awesome image of Athenian grandeur and power.⁷⁵ His words not only summarise the sentiments expressed by generations of scholars, but also reflect the aspects of the sublime which I discuss in chapter 1. It can be compared to the second stasimon of *Medea* (824-845),⁷⁶ but there are significant differences in the two treatments of Athens, and the Colonus ode remains unique and extraordinary.⁷⁷ Understanding the Colonus ode lies at the heart of interpreting the play.

εὐίππου, ξένε, τᾷσδε χώ
 ρας ἴκου τὰ κράτιστα γᾶς ἔπαυλα,
 τὸν ἀργῆτα Κολωνόν, ἔνθ'
 ἅ λῖγεια μινύρεται
 θαμίζουσα μάλιστ' ἀη-
 δὼν χλωραῖς ὑπὸ βάσσαις,
 τὸν οἰνωπὸν ἔχουσα κισ-
 σὸν καὶ τὰν ἄβατον θεοῦ
 φυλλάδα μυριόκαρπον ἀνήλιον
 ἀνήνεμόν τε πάντων
 χειμώνων· ἴν' ὁ βακχιώ-
 τας αἰεὶ Διόνυσος ἐμβατεύει
 θείαις ἀμφιπολῶν τιθήναις.
 θάλλει δ' οὐρανίας ὑπ' ἄ-
 χνας ὁ καλλίβοτρυς κατ' ἡμαρ αἰεὶ
 νάρκισσος, μέγαιιν θεαῖν
 ἀρχαῖον στεφάνωμ', ὃ τε
 χρυσαυγῆς κρόκος· οὐδ' αὔ-
 πνοι κρῆναι μινύθουσιν
 Κηφισοῦ νομάδες ῥέε-
 θρων, ἀλλ' αἰὲν ἐπ' ἡματι
 ὠκυτόκος πεδίων ἐπινίσσεται
 ἀκηράτῳ ξὺν ὄμβρῳ
 στερνούχου χθονός· οὐδὲ Μοῦ-
 σᾶν χοροῖνιν ἀπεστύγησαν, οὐδ' αὖθ'
 ἅ χρυσάνιος Ἀφροδίτα.
 ἔστιν δ' οἷον ἐγὼ γᾶς Ἀσίας οὐκ ἐπακούω,
 οὐδ' ἐν τᾷ μεγάλῃ Δωρίδι νάσῳ Πέλοπος πρόποτε βλαστὸν (696)

particular ode. Van Hook (1934) 741 also cynically suggests that the beauty of the passage is at least partially intended as a way to captivate the judges, rather than for the sake of the play. See also Burton (1980) 274, Markantonatos (2007) 91-93 for brief overall discussions of this stasimon.

⁷⁵ Kelly (2009) 95.

⁷⁶ See Kelly (2009) 94. On *Medea* as a play with links to the OC in its use of Athens as a space, see Rehm (2002) 24, 268.

⁷⁷ See Bowra (1944) 347-348 for example.

φύτευμ' ἀχείρωτον αὐτοποιόν,
 ἐγχείων φόβημα δαΐων,
 ὃ τᾶδε θάλλει μέγιστα χώρα,
 γλαυκᾶς παιδοτρόφου φύλλον ἐλαίας.
 τὸ μὲν τις οὐ νεαρός οὐδὲ γῆρα
 συνναίων ἀλιώσει χερὶ πέρσας·
 ὁ δ' αἰὲν ὄρων κύκλος
 λεύσσει νιν Μορίου Διὸς
 χὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθάνᾳ.
 ἄλλον δ' αἶνον ἔχω ματροπόλει τᾶδε κράτιστον,
 δῶρον τοῦ μεγάλου δαίμονος, εἰπεῖν, <χθονός> αὔχημα μέγιστον, (710)
 εὐῖππον, εὐπωλον, εὐθάλασσον.
 ὦ παῖ Κρόνου, σὺ γάρ νιν ἐς
 τόδ' εἶσας αὔχημ', ἄναξ Ποσειδάν,
 ἵπποισιν τὸν ἀκεστήρα χαλινὸν
 πρῶταισι ταῖσδε κτίσας ἀγυιαῖς. (715)
 ἃ δ' εὐήρετμος ἔκπαγλα χοροῖσιν
 παραπετομένα πλάτα
 θρώσκει τᾶν ἑκατομπόδων
 Νηρήδων ἀκόλουθος.

Sophocles OC 668-717

The chorus are proud of their region, and describe it in vivid terms, with present tenses (μινύρεται, ἔχουσα, ἐμβατεύει), closely juxtaposed colour terms (χλωραῖς, οἰνωπόν),⁷⁸ multiple references to the gods (θεοῦ, Διόνυσος, βακχιώτας, θεαῖς), frequent superlatives and terms of plenty (κράτιστα, μάλιστ', μυριόκαρπον, πάντων).⁷⁹

The different aspects of the grove, as described here, reflect different themes that are important in the play. One of the most notable features is the link with religion. The named divinities are Dionysus, Aphrodite, Athene and Poseidon, the Muses, Zeus Morios and the Great Goddesses (Demeter and Persephone), and it is on Dionysus that I focus here.⁸⁰ Dionysus is invoked in the first strophe, for the sake

⁷⁸ On these colour terms, see McDevitt (1972) 232..

⁷⁹ I discuss the idea of these features making grove a *locus amoenus* in chapter 3, pp. 168ff.

⁸⁰ For the other gods: Poseidon is made a local god by means of Colonus' fame for horses. Athene is noted for bestowing the olive on Colonus. See Stinton (1976) on Poseidon and Athene's gifts in this

of the beauty of the place and his revelling in it.⁸¹ This may remind the audience that they are in an area sacred to Dionysus, the theatre. Mention of the Muses (691) continues the theme of poetic inspiration through the land. The ivy, described as οἰνωπὸν evokes another aspect of Dionysus, his association with wine.⁸² Dionysus's affiliation with mystery / death cult is also represented through the natural phenomena mentioned here.⁸³ The nightingale, as the bird of death, marks the grove as sacred to the Eumenides, goddesses associated with death, and also acts as part of the mystery / death cult aetiology for Oedipus established in the play.⁸⁴ The nightingale's association with the poet unites Dionysus with the Eumenides, and the different aspects of Dionysus' divinity.⁸⁵ The narcissus (683) is also associated with death, maintaining Dionysus and the Eumenides' presence in this chorus through the first antistrophe.⁸⁶ The description of the narcissus as καλλίβοτρυς (682) also evokes Dionysus, as an adjective most easily associated with bunches of grapes, the vine.⁸⁷ One could even interpret the reference to Asia (694) as Dionysiac allusion, strengthened by the presence of the crocus (685), which, through its association with the east, can also be seen as a Dionysiac flower.⁸⁸ The all-pervasive nature of

ode. Aphrodite is also associated with horses, perhaps evoking her role in *Hippolytus*. See also Burton (1980) 276.

⁸¹ See Bierl (1991) 100-103 for a brief analysis of how Dionysus' presence is felt throughout this ode, particularly the first strophe. For a metatheatrical reading of this, see Harald (1991).

⁸² Its more common use as an Homeric epithet for the sea perhaps helps to integrate Poseidon and Dionysus into the same vision depicted here. See Bierl (1991) 101 on the links between plants and gods.

⁸³ See Seaford (2006).

⁸⁴ See above (p. 11ff) for a more thorough grounding of the religious aspects of the OC. On the nightingale as a bird of death, see McDevitt (1972) 231. See also Calame (1998) 338.

⁸⁵ Suksi (2001) 655. Calame (1998) 338 notes the paradox of this luscious vegetation being linked to death.

⁸⁶ See McDevitt (1972) 234. Henrichs (1994) notes the links between Demeter and unknown gods, with the presence of a cult to Demeter Erinys (38) for example, and chthonian aspects to both sets of divinities. (Kelly (2009) 81-82 also discusses the links between the Eumenides and Persephone and Demeter.

⁸⁷ This is a Sophoclean *hapax*. It is otherwise an unusual word, found only in later literature: Nonnus, Chrysippus, Gregory of Antioch, Eustathius and the Suda.

⁸⁸ Wallace (1979) 47-48 interprets this rather differently. For him, Dionysus is linked to wine and the narcissus to grain, which are both community commodities and therefore the Colonus ode refers to the collective life of Athens. Continuing the theme of commodification, he notes that the crocus was

Dionysus' power continues to be evoked through words ἄβατον (675), not used elsewhere in Sophocles.⁸⁹ A similar idea is conveyed by ἀκήρατος, 'involute, untouched', used just twice by Sophocles, both in the *OC*, here at line 690 and earlier at 471 when Oedipus is preparing his purification ritual. The unusual word has parallels in Euripides, where it is used eleven times, four of which are in *Hippolytus*, another play with a hero cult aetiology.

Dionysus is also associated with light, particularly bright beams of light, again reflected in this ode.⁹⁰ In 670, Colonus is described as ἀργῆτα, 'bright, shining', in contrast to the grove, which remains ἀνήλιον (676), despite Dionysus' presence.⁹¹ This light imagery continues in the antistrophe when the crocus is described as χρυσάυγῃς (685), uniting themes of death and light. In summary, throughout the Colonus ode, there is a focus on gods who evoke horses, the sea, wisdom and love. Place description is used to evoke themes of luxuriant nature, death, mystery-hero cult, metatheatre and Dionysus as the god uniting all these features. These aspects of Dionysus are not unusual, but are in keeping with the depiction in other tragedies, most notably *Bacchae*. Richard Seaford demonstrates how these representations of Dionysus prefigure Christ, linking pagan and Christian divinities.⁹² Dionysus, Oedipus and Christ all share attributes and representations.

economically important as a source of saffron, as was the olive. This adds a further interpretative layer to the ode, but not one on which I focus further. Knox also notes that the crocus was planted on graves and had an Eleusinian connection: Knox (1966) 155. For the crocus as a flower also representing death, see McDevitt (1972) 234. See Kelly (2009) 94 on these flowers' links to Persephone and Demeter. Forster (1952) offers a brief discussion of the role of plants in tragedy, noting how the *OC* is exceptional in its attention to the botanic background.

⁸⁹ It is also only rarely used in Euripides; one instance is *Bacchae* line 10, where Dionysus praises the land as ἄβατον and says that he has covered it in vines. For further examples of the unusual Sophoclean language in this ode, see Burton (1980) 277-278. Bowra (1944) 347-348 also links the olive wood to war, suggesting links between this ode and the battles at Colonus imagined by the play and fought there in reality. Parsons (1988) 2 suggests that there is a link between *Bacchae* 10 and the ἀστιβὲς ἄλσος of *OC* 126.

⁹⁰ See Seaford (2006) 52-53 and 124 for example.

⁹¹ On Colonus as ἀργῆτα, see McDevitt (1972) 232.

⁹² Seaford (2006) 126-129.

iv.) The kidnap ode (1044-98).

When Theseus leaves the stage in order to rescue the girls after they have been kidnapped, the chorus sing an ode describing the potential chase. This proleptic narrative replaces a messenger speech upon their return.⁹³ After such a dramatic and unexpected staged scene of violence, the least the audience might expect would be a full account of what had happened. Instead, the chorus offer a hypothetical narrative of which might be happening and leave us to assume that this is the case. The audience's expectations are deliberately frustrated.⁹⁴ Nor are we ever given a clear account; a second opportunity occurs when Oedipus asks Antigone for an account:

Oedipus: καί μοι τὰ πραχθέντ' εἶπαθ' ὥς βράχιστ' ἐπεὶ
 ταῖς τηλικαῖσδε σμικρὸς ἔχαρκεῖ λόγος.

Antigone: ὄδ' ἔσθ' ὁ σώσας· τοῦδε χορὴ κλύειν, πάτερ,
 οὗ κᾶστι τοῦργον· τοῦμον <ᾧδ'> ἔσται βραχύ.

Sophocles OC 1115-1118

Oedipus mutes Antigone at the same time as asking for her words, her function as messenger (his long-term source of information about the world) over-ridden here by her status as a young woman. Again our expectations are frustrated. This ode and its surrounding context is sufficiently unusual to merit closer attention. We find it fits into the scheme already being discussed; the ode is less dense in geographical symbolism, but still reinforces some of the major religious themes of the play. The link between the two ideas is evident in the references to the un-named πότνιαι of 1050. Mentioned beside the σεμνὰ τέλη they recall the σεμναὶ θεαί, linked to the

⁹³ See Burton (1980) 3 & 282, Goward (1999) and Markantonatos (2002) 100-101.

⁹⁴ See Goward (1999) 36.

Eumenides.⁹⁵ Their rites along torchlit shores are reminiscent of the Eleusinian rites sacred to Demeter. These rites make a further indirect appearance through the reference to the προπόλων Εὐμολπιδᾶν (1053), the Eumolpids having an hereditary priesthood at Eleusis. The ode also successfully integrates these non-Olympian rites and divinities with the normal pantheon; Athene is named twice (1071, 1090), Poseidon referred to once (1072-3), the chase on horseback allowing further references and links to the *hippios* connection. Zeus and Ares are both named twice (1079 & 1086, 1046 & 1065), with further references to the gods throughout. The adjective δεινός is used four times (1065, 1066, 1077 x2) with reference to them, reflecting not only the religious awe of this ode, but the general tenor of the whole play.⁹⁶

v.) The messenger speech

At OC 1579 a messenger enters to announce Oedipus' supposed demise, expounded in full at 1586-1666. This is the longest extant Sophoclean messenger speech, yet arguably the least informative, as Oedipus' final destination is to remain a mystery and so the messenger's function as clarifier is undercut by simultaneous need for obscurity.⁹⁷ It has regularly been interpreted as a detailed and accurate

⁹⁵ See Henrichs (1994) and Ferrari (2003) on the uses of the different names, and the links to Eleusis in particular. For a summary of the Eleusinian links see also Calame (1998) 349-351.

⁹⁶ δεινός and its cognates are used twenty times in the OC. This compares with fourteen in *Ajax*, fifteen in *Electra*, twenty two in the OT, fourteen in the *Antigone*, nine in *Trachiniae* and fourteen in *Philoctetes*. It is used unusually frequently in the OC, and the Sophoclean hapax δεινῶπες, used of the Eumenides at line 84, makes the link with religion clear. δεινῶπες is only used elsewhere by the scholiast on Sophocles ad loc., or by Eustathius on the *Eumenides* (*Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem* Volume 2, page 759, line 6). See Shields (1961) 66 on the importance of the address.

⁹⁷ Or as Bowra (1940) 322 writes: 'The Messenger describes the passing of Oedipus in a speech unequalled even by Sophocles for mystery and grandeur, but the whole play illuminates what a hero is'. See also Kelly (2009) 101. De Jong (1991) makes just three references to the OC, all in footnotes (3n.4 [to note it is a first-person speech], 9n.20 [on the reference to the messenger as eye-witness], 19.n.47 [on how the messenger cannot in fact know what he is announcing, that Oedipus is dead]). Barratt (2002) 224 includes the OC speech in his appendix, but does not discuss it at any point in the book. For an extended narratological analysis of the speech, see Markantonatos (2002) 130-147.

description of the locality that the contemporary audience would have appreciated.⁹⁸ I offer an alternative reading, that the geographical description is far less than literal but is in fact a continuation of the theme present of symbolic geography.⁹⁹ The messenger opens with a vivid (yet not entirely clear) description of the journey and landscape:

τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἤδη κάποθαυμάσαι πρέπον.
ὥς μὲν γὰρ ἐνθ' ἐνδ' εἶρπε, καὶ σύ που παρῶν
ἐξοισθ', ὑφ' ἡγητῆρος οὐδενὸς φίλων,
ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἡμῖν πᾶσιν ἐξηγούμενος·
ἐπεὶ δ' ἀφῖκτο τὸν καταρράκτην ὁδὸν 1590
χαλκοῖς βάθροισι γῆθεν ἐρριζωμένον,
ἔστη κελεύθων ἐν πολυσχίστων μιᾷ,
κοίλου πέλας κρατῆρος, οὐ τὰ Θησέως
Περίθου τε κεῖται πίστ' αἰεὶ ξυνθήματα·
ἀφ' οὗ μέσος σταῖς τοῦ τε Θορικίου πέτρου 1595
κοίλης τ' ἀχέρδου καπὶ λαΐνου τάφου
καθέζετ'· εἴτ' ἔλυσε δυσπινεῖς στολάς.

Sophocles OC 1586-97

How are we to visualise Oedipus' exit? As suggested in i.) above, it seems likely that Oedipus retreats through the σκῆνη, entering into the grove by going into a building. The stage represents an outside corner of the grove, drawing the audience into the dramatic space beyond. Wherever the places referred to were, if indeed Sophocles was referring to specific places, there is intent to supply vivid sense of

⁹⁸ Scholiast on 1595, Jebb (1885) xxxv, Linforth (1951) 179, Whitman (1966) 166ff, Wallace (1979) and Segal (1981) 369 and 405 for example. Even Edmunds (1996) 79 while arguing for a metaphorical interpretation of theatrical space, agrees that this place is carefully and precisely defined.

⁹⁹ On the legitimacy of such an approach with Sophocles, see Jones (1962) on the importance of geography in this place and its interdependence with the characters, Halliwell (1986) on road junctions in the OT and Padel (1990) on the power of space in tragedy. On junctions in the Colan context see Jebb (1885), Halliwell (1986) and Kelly (2009) 101 (on the links with OT 753).

dramatic locality and progression, enabling the audience to follow Oedipus through the door.¹⁰⁰ The representation of the grove by the stage building lends it a secrecy appropriate for the potential mystery cult.

vi.) Methods of address

When characters speak to each other or interact with the chorus, they may use terms that are geographically located. The chorus, however, are never addressed in such terms. In the OC local colour is instead given by the ways in which the Eumenides are addressed. The Eumenides are only called Erinyes twice in the OC, both by Polynices (1299, 1434).¹⁰¹ For Bowra, Oedipus clearly calls the Erinyes by their euphemistic title of Eumenides when he associates them with Athens.¹⁰² Lloyd-Jones notes that: 'K[amerbeek].observes that nowhere in the play are the Eumenides called the Erinyes; that is true, but if, as has lately been argued, they are not the same, then the play loses much of its meaning.'¹⁰³ Both Lloyd-Jones and Kamerbeek have missed the two examples we do have, and their significance to the play. The Furies may not be names as such, but their multivalent roles as protectors and avengers are clear throughout the play.¹⁰⁴ This particular point will be discussed at greater length in chapter 5. I have examined the theme of geography at some length in this introduction, to lay the foundations for the landscape and patriotism discussions which permeate the rest of this thesis, where I explore the ways in which

¹⁰⁰ See Jebb (1885) and Edmunds (1985, 1996 ch. 3) for example, and above pp. 8-9.

¹⁰¹ See Winnington-Ingram (1954) 18n. 16, Wallace (1979) 41 and Kelly (2009) 71-72. On the power of names in Classical religions more generally see Pulleyn (1994).

¹⁰² Bowra (1940) 318. Winnington-Ingram (1980) 215-216, 266 notes that both references to them as Erinyes are in dialogue with Polynices, when their function as avenging furies is the most appropriate one. See Blundell (1989) 253 on Oedipus' supposed avoidance of the euphemism.

¹⁰³ Lloyd-Jones (1987) 148.

¹⁰⁴ Polemon, for example, links them to the Ἡρακλῆες, see Parker (1996) 298-299. With reference to the Melbourne *krater* discussed elsewhere in this thesis (pp. 200-201, 249). Taplin (2007) 101 refers to the winged figure as an Erinyes; this identity has stuck despite the lack of Greek evidence.

themes of religion, politics, pedagogy and geography interrelate and are expressed through various scholarly and creative media.

Conclusion

'Of all Greek tragedies none perhaps awaits a satisfying interpretation more than the
Coloneus...' ¹⁰⁵

The *OC* is a rich and exciting play whose perplexing nature but obvious merits have engaged many scholars over time. Whether described romantically as 'Sophocles' spiritual heritage to posterity' ¹⁰⁶ and 'a worthy last will and testament' ¹⁰⁷ or in religious terms as, for example, the place where quest for the meaning of man's life is settled, finding a position of hope and belief, ¹⁰⁸ the *OC* continues to be a work posing interpretative conundra. This thesis does not aim to provide a definitive answer to any of these problems, but to present the *OC* in its eighteenth-century context in order to demonstrate three things: what the eighteenth century made of it; what we can learn about a play from studying its reception, and what we can learn about the eighteenth-century context from studying its use of a play.

In 1947, L.S. Colchester wrote: 'Regarded aesthetically, the *Oedipus Coloneus* is unsatisfactory'. ¹⁰⁹ Such a view depends entirely on the model of aesthetics according to which the play is being judged. Aesthetics lies at the heart of understanding the success of the *OC* in the eighteenth century, and this thesis investigates the developing aesthetics of that time, and the nature of the relationship between

¹⁰⁵ Winnington-Ingram (1954) 16. A similar view is expressed by Bernidaki-Aldous (1990) 213: 'The *Oedipus at Colonus* is a play which, more than any other, demands exegesis', the use of the term exegesis also perhaps inviting a Christian reading of the play.

¹⁰⁶ Musurillo (1967) 130.

¹⁰⁷ Knox (1966) 144.

¹⁰⁸ Musurillo (1967) 130.

¹⁰⁹ Colchester (1947) 21.

eighteenth-century politics and poetics. The eighteenth century's main preoccupation with the play was with its potential for interpretation and rewriting as a sublime text in a Gothic mould. Both Sophocles the author (as imagined by the eighteenth century) and the *OC* as a play fit this changing aesthetic landscape's requirements. In studying the *OC* as a text in its eighteenth-century context, the themes of religion and geopolitics, recognised by all scholars as important, become discernible in new, linked, ways. The nature of the play's language and its potential for transference into different media (stage, music or canvas) raises interesting minute points about Sophoclean diction and generic conventions. The preoccupation of the eighteenth century with issues of religion and geopolitics, and the way in which these affected their pedagogical and aesthetic works, becomes much easier to understand by looking at it through a Sophoclean lens. We can chart the development of a century in cultural and political terms, exploring how themes intersected, and specific individuals influenced the course of history. Finally, although a large range of disciplinary tools are used in this thesis, the key passages and points of interest remain the same. The richness and depth of understanding gained demonstrates the value of such an interdisciplinary approach, revealing the subtleties of the play under consideration, and points of correspondence and difference between the genres. It becomes clear that reception studies is itself a tool for understanding the past as well as the present; what constitutes reception studies emerges as a broad spectrum of ways of thinking, which are not as separate as might sometimes have been expected.

Chapter 1: The discovery of a sublime Sophocles

One of the great developments of eighteenth-century English thought was made in uniting the genres of aesthetic philosophy and literary criticism. In this chapter I have three main aims related to this development, which underpin the intellectual climate in which this reception of the OC must be understood. I examine the relationship between different Greco-Roman philosophical approaches to the sublime, with a focus on areas of relevance for the interpretation of Greek tragedy. I also map the development of the eighteenth-century notion of the sublime against its historical background. Finally I use this language of the sublime to analyse eighteenth-century writing about Sophocles. I first offer a brief example of the kind of material to be scrutinised in this chapter, in order to demonstrate the nature of eighteenth-century writing about Sophocles, its dependence on conceptions of the sublime and its relationship with other ancient sources. The full application of the material to Sophocles and the OC in particular then closes this chapter. I suggest that the eighteenth century witnessed a shift in popularity between the OT and the OC as the concept of the sublime developed, in keeping with the increasing prominence of Aeschylean tragedy, partly due to the Aeschylean nature of the OC.¹¹⁰

The pivotal text for eighteenth-century English aesthetics was Edmund Burke's 1757 treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (henceforth *Philosophical Enquiry*). A complete analysis of its relationship with either ancient or contemporary aesthetic philosophy is beyond the scope of this chapter; I therefore confine myself to discussing the particular themes and

¹¹⁰ See Macintosh (2009) on the changing fortunes of Aeschylus in the eighteenth century, with reference to Dacier, Brumoy and James Thomson, for example, who are all discussed further in this thesis. At 462 she comments on French republican readings of both Sophocles and Aeschylus; this relationship between shifting political systems and changing fashions in Greek drama underpins much of this thesis, in particular chapter 3 on *Caractacus* (see Macintosh [2009] 448-449) and chapter 5 on *Oedipe à Colone*.

approaches most valuable for understanding the reception history of Sophocles and the OC. Fifth-century Athenian tragedy has been a focus genre for writers on aesthetics from Aristotle onwards; to consider the specific example of Sophocles and the OC therefore fits into this critical framework, even though Burke did not mention Sophocles himself.. Concepts of sublimity provide us with viewpoints from which to read the OC, and enrich our understanding of it, in terms of the mystical, subversive and satirical themes that then become more apparent. The eighteenth-century treatment of Sophocles in general and the OC in particular, however, betrays a clear reliance on Burkean aesthetics and therefore benefits from a close analysis in Burkean terms.¹¹¹ A range of ideas and ideals persisted throughout the century, influenced at different times by different strands of history. Authors, artists, dramaturges and composers only came to see the OC as they did as a result of the weight of cultural history behind them. Scholarship influenced culture and culture influenced scholarship. My aim in this chapter is to investigate the nature of this interdependence.

With this aim in mind, I start with a sample of what is written about the Greek tragedians, in order to set the scene for an analysis of the aesthetic positions underlying eighteenth-century thought. In 1753, about the time that Burke was finishing his *Philosophical Enquiry*, Alexander Simm described the poets with the following similes:

¹¹¹ Material under consideration in the first two chapters of this thesis is drawn from: texts, sometimes with commentaries; translations; sections of plays included in literary compendia; scholarly works discussing Sophocles or citing him in discussing other authors; historical and biographical accounts of tragedy and Sophocles, largely contained in educational encyclopaedias; creative writing; epigrams and associated poems on Sophocles, particularly pertaining to his death. I have not aimed to trace passing references to or discussions of Sophocles in letters, journals or political speeches. Blanning (2001) 290 identifies the sermon as the single most important literary form in eighteenth-century England; Sophocles does not seem to have featured in these, but their contribution to the wider cultural context is considered in chapter 3, with reference to William Mason.

'*Aeschylus*, as the Inventor and Father of Tragedy, is like a Torrent rolling impetuously over Rocks, Forests and Precipices.- *Sophocles* resembles a Canal which flows gently through delicious Gardens; and *Euripides*, a River, that does not follow its Course in a continued Line, but loves to turn, and wind his Silver wave through flowery Meads, and rural Scena.

The sounding, swelling, gigantic Diction of *Aeschylus*, resembles more the beating of Drums, and the Shouts of Battle, than the nobler, and Silver Sound of the Trumpet. The Elevation and Grandeur of his Genius would not admit him to speak the Language of other Men; so that his Muse seemed rather to walk in Stilts, than in the Buskins of his own Invention. Perhaps he was too pompous, and carried his Language too high.

Sophocles understood much better the true Excellence of the dramatic style. He therefore copies *Homer* more closely, and blends in his Diction that honeyed Sweetness, from whence he was denominated *The Bee*, with a Gravity, which gives his tragedy the modest Air of a Matron, compelled to appear with Dignity in Public, as *Horace* expresses it.

The Style of *Euripides*, though noble, is less removed from the familiar; and he seems to have effected, rather the pathetic and the elegant, than the nervous and the lofty.'¹¹²

A similar description was given forty years later by Censor Dramaticus:

'*Aeschylus*, being the inventor and father of tragedy, is a torrent that rolls over rocks, forests and precipices. *Sophocles* is a canal, which waters delicious gardens: and *Euripides* is a river which does not always form its course in a straight line, but takes its delight in serpentizing itself through fields enamell'd with flowers. All the three have done for tragedy what the fables say the gods did in favour of Pandora. *Aeschylus*, who first opened the blossoms of tragedy, gave her an air a little rude, marked her with strokes too strong, made her advance too hastily, and assigned to her a gigantic appearance rather than the appearance of a heroine. *Sophocles* reduced her (according to the expression of *Horace*) to the decent appearance of a matron. *Euripides* again in giving her graces, made her sometimes a little philosophical.'¹¹³

In these comparisons, *Aeschylus* comes across as the rude, flawed genius, while *Sophocles* is divine and noble, and strangely perfect. *Euripides* is philosophical and

¹¹² Simm (1753) 240.

¹¹³ Censor Dramaticus (1793) 105-6.

rather unpredictable. This is echoed in further writings about the tragedians, at either end of the century, e.g.:

Basil Kennett: 'If Nature and the common Apprehensions of Men were always to be the Rules of *Sublimity*, Aeschylus would perpetually be a Transgressor.'¹¹⁴

Censor Dramaticus: 'If *Aeschylus* be stiled the Father, *Sophocles* will demand the Title of Master of Tragedy.'¹¹⁵

Between these accounts, Earl Harwood described the poets as follows:

'The Difference between these two Poets seems to consist in this: Sophocles transcends his Rival in the Sublimity and Loftiness of his Expression, but Euripides excels him in Neatness and Conciseness of Style: Sophocles from his Style seems to be rather a Man of Business rather than a professed Writer: whereas the Diction of Euripides favours more of the Scholar and the Orator: Sophocles preserves the Dignity and the real Character of his Persons: Euripides did not religiously consult the Truth of his Manners, and their Conformity to common Life. Sophocles wisely chose to represent the most noble and generous Affection: Euripides sometimes employed himself in delineating the more dishonourable, the more effeminate and abject Passions.'¹¹⁶

Aeschylus was described as sublime pre-dating Burke, but Harwood was the first to use the word sublime of Sophocles; this chapter charts the aesthetic development which bring about this specific application of the term to Sophocles the author, to his work, and finally to the OC in particular. The eighteenth-century treatises expanded the concept of the sublime far beyond its original literary, tragic scope. In the continuing expansion and development of the concept, the historical and biographical writers yet again remoulded the language of the sublime.

¹¹⁴ Kennett (1735) 93, 101.

¹¹⁵ Censor Dramaticus (1793) 5, 16-7 also describes Aeschylus as a genius.

¹¹⁶ Harwood (1778) 99.

1.1 Aesthetics

'In a sense, the study of the eighteenth-century sublime is the study of the Longinian tradition in England, although, as may be supposed, the student will be led far away from the Greek critic's views.'¹¹⁷

The general dependence of much of eighteenth-century aesthetics on Longinus' *Peri Hupsous* is mentioned frequently, but less often examined in any detail. I can only begin to trace the more precise relationship between Longinus and the treatises he inspired, but even the focused analysis offered here yields some interesting results. Burke's 1757 *Philosophical Enquiry* is one of the most important English treatises for comparison; discussion has, however, tended to focus on Burke's immediate contemporaries;¹¹⁸ consequently, there has not been a systematic study of the relationship between Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* and his Greco-Roman predecessors. References are made to the influence of Plato, and in particular Longinus, but they tend to be cited as a general influence and / or point of departure. A thorough analysis of the points of correspondence, departure and further influence has not yet been carried out, and this section aims to go some way to investigating more closely how the relationship between Burke and his Greco-Roman predecessors can be read. Similarly, Longinus does not mention Sophocles often, but he does cite the *OC* in particular (section XV) and his treatise was applied to Sophoclean criticism in the eighteenth century, making such analysis worthwhile.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Monk (1960) 10.

¹¹⁸ Monk's *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* first appeared in 1935, but all references here are to the revised 1960 edition. His teleological reading of aesthetics, with Kant as the *telos*, (first stated at Monk [1960] 4) is also present in Croce and Collingwood (1934) 157, but has been criticised, see for example Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 2-3 and Ryan (2001) 266.

¹¹⁹ See Boyd (1957) 40-41, Calder (1967), Platt (1921) 128 for the sorts of passing references to Sophocles most articles on Longinus make. Some discussion of ὄγκος and Longinus discusses Aeschylus versus Sophocles, see Bowra (1940) 388, Post (1947); see further Pinnoy (1984).

1.2 History of Longinus

There remains just a single surviving medieval manuscript of the *Peri Hupsous* (Paris gr.2036). This is damaged, with seven lacunae amounting to approximately a third of the text.¹²⁰ I am not here concerned with its authorship; eighteenth-century scholars thought that it was written by Cassius Longinus, the third century rhetorician and attendant to Queen Zenobia.¹²¹ The *editio princeps* was Robortello's 1554 Basel edition, followed swiftly in 1555 by the Aldine Venetian edition.¹²² This was known in England from 1573 but made little impact on the intellectual landscape until the eighteenth century.¹²³ Its reception in France was greater, and it is through French poetics that it becomes known in England.

Longinus was not mentioned by anyone writing in French before the seventeenth century. The earliest specific allusion to Longinus in a vernacular was Jean Baudoin's 1618 translation of Giulio Mazarini's *Practica breve del predicare* (1615).¹²⁴ Awareness and critical engagement with the *Peri Hupsous* was slow to start

¹²⁰ Russell and Winterbottom (1972) 460. For a discussion of the lacunae, see Russell (1964) on each point in the text, and Macksey (1993) 915.

¹²¹ See Smith (1739) in the Introduction to his translation of Longinus. Most modern commentators on Longinus no longer consider this to be the case. The title page of the Parisian manuscript attributes it to Dionysius Longinus, the first page to Dionysius or Longinus. Whether it was Dionysius of Halicarnassus, or another first century Longinus, is also disputed. The author appears to have had connections with both the Jewish and the Roman world, was well educated, and wrote in Greek. The text is addressed to one Postumius Terentianus whose identity is also not clear and so cannot help us. On Terentianus, see Roberts (1897b) 209, Sedgwick (1948) 199, Russell (1964) xxviii, Russell and Winterbottom (1972) 461. For further discussion of authorship see Roberts (1897a), Roberts (1897b) 190, Roberts (1897c) 433, Richards (1938), Boyd (1957), Brody (1958) 9 n.1, Russell (1964) xxii-xxx, Russell and Winterbottom (1972) 461, le Huray (1978-9) 96, Macksey (1993) 913, 915, Whitmarsh (2001) 57. *contra* these, Heath (1999) supports the idea of a third-century Longinus, also noted in Whitmarsh (2001) 57 n.69.

¹²² See Roberts (1897a) 176, (1897b) 189, Herrick (1948) 146, Abrams (1953) 74, Brody (1958) 9, Monk (1960) 18, Macksey (1993) 913, 925.

¹²³ See Ringler (1938), Brody (1958) 12; Monk (1960) 18 comments: 'One would expect to find in England during the last half of the sixteenth century some traces of the interest that was being manifested in Longinus by Continental humanists, but one looks for them in vain.' For a general bibliography of editions and secondary literature to that date, see Weinberg (1950) and Marin (1967).

¹²⁴ Brody (1958) 13-14.

even in the seventeenth century. Boileau's 1674 translation, appended to his *L'Art Poétique*, raised its profile.¹²⁵ *L'Art Poétique* only became available in English from 1711.¹²⁶ Greek editions abounded in the first half of the century.¹²⁷ The first English translation was John Hall's 1652 edition.¹²⁸ This was followed by an anonymous translation in 1698, which set Boileau's French alongside the Greek and English versions. This was also the first to use the word 'sublime' in the title, and remained the key edition during Burke's education.¹²⁹ Until Boileau's 1674 edition, the *Peri Hupsous* had been treated mainly as a rhetorical handbook alongside Quintilian and Cicero; his rhetorical sublime had not been valued as an aesthetic term.¹³⁰ In the eighteenth century, as critics began to place greater emphasis on the values of imagination and originality, it became a more central text to use.¹³¹ In the 'battle' between the Ancients and Moderns, Longinus was used by both sides, and by John Dennis as a middle ground.¹³² Longinus became the standard authority for reference on matters to do with the sublime, to the point of potential parody.¹³³ As Monk puts it:

¹²⁵ Abrams (1953) 74, Brody (1958), Monk (1960) 20, Terry (1992) 276. Spencer (1930) 141 offers a history of Longinian reception before Milton, Weinberg (1950) a summary of texts and translations before 1600.

¹²⁶ Monk (1960) 22.

¹²⁷ See Monk (1960) 21. He notes just two different eighteenth-century Greek editions, those of J. Hudson (1710, Oxford) and Z. Pearce (1724, London) printed and reprinted in 1710, 1718, 1724, 1730, 1732, 1733, 1743, 1751, 1752, 1762, 1763, 1773, 1778, 1789. There was also an edition by Toup published at Oxford in 1778. Note that Toup also worked on Greek tragedy, demonstrating that eighteenth-century scholars were working on both sets of material at once, the aesthetic and the tragic.

¹²⁸ Monk (1960) 19, Macksey (1993) 925.

¹²⁹ See Boulton (1958) xlv-v, White (1993) 510. Brody (1958) 18 notes the continuing usefulness of Boileau's edition for those without Greek.

¹³⁰ The relationship between rhetoric and sublimity will not be considered further here. For discussion of the relationship between Quintilian, Cicero and Longinus, see Abrams (1953) 150-151, 290, Brody (1958) 16, Monk (1960) Chapter 1, Guerlac (1985) 275, Terry (1992), Macksey (1993), Sircello (1993), Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 10, Caplan *et al.* (1997).

¹³¹ See Halliwell (1986) 310.

¹³² See Monk (1960) 25, 47, Macksey (1993) 926-927.

¹³³ See Roberts (1897a) 177, Russell (1964) ix, Jackson (1965) 309, Lamb (1981) 110, for example.

‘Longinus had evidently become the victim of a cult, and as the object of a constant lip-service he must have become a bore to the serious men of letters’, putting the peak of Longinus’ fame in 1738.¹³⁴

Longinian ideas were well-known and popular, but, by the time that Burke was writing, already beginning to become clichéd, hence their potential to be satirised by those such as Burke.

I suggest that it was not only the increasing popularisation of Longinian ideas, but also the inherent positivity of the *Peri Hupsous* that led Burke to draw on it so heavily. One of the remarkable aspects of the *Peri Hupsous* is the way in which it manages to integrate the different approaches used and positions taken by Plato, Aristotle and Horace.¹³⁵ Perhaps the largest difference lies in their aims. In the *Ion*, Plato tries to explain how a poet, rhapsode or audience is inspired. In the *Republic* he is concerned with how an actor might lose himself in representing another, and how an audience might be swayed by such representations, but he focuses less on what exactly it takes in a poet to create the representations. For Plato, poetry and inspiration are dangerous and should be banned; he takes a pessimistic view of aesthetics. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle treats the mechanics behind creating the plot of a good tragedy, and tries to explain the way in which these will have an effect on his audience. His theory of *mimesis* is less concerned with the role of the actor and a play’s effect on him. Given the fragmentary nature of the text, and the way in which it is structured, the *Poetics* comes across as an aporetic text, unable to teach the novice how to write affectively. There are subtle differences in each of the positions that make a direct comparison of their work difficult. The way in which Longinus addresses these makes this task somewhat easier. By removing the actor from the picture and focussing on the written word and its production, the picture is

¹³⁴ Monk (1960) 24. He chooses 1738 as the peak largely because of Smith’s edition.

¹³⁵ In this chapter I focus on Plato and Aristotle, leaving Latin literature aside.

simplified. The main thrust of the treatise is a practical explanation of what would make writing sublime. This involves looking backwards towards the nature of the author and of genius, and forwards to the effect of the sublime on the audience, but neither is the primary focus, and it is the link between them, the work itself, that is most discussed. For Henn, Longinus was simply a Platonist. I differ from Henn in seeing Longinus as drawing on Plato, but also on other authors in an attempt to remedy Plato's pessimism.¹³⁶ As Russell and Winterbottom put it, 'Longinus looks at literature as a whole, and not for its own sake'.¹³⁷ The result is a dense but delightful treatise whose effect on the history of literature was far greater than its author could have imagined. Longinus reconciles Plato's pessimism and Aristotle's unhelpfulness to create a forward-looking text of practical use.

1.3 A Structural approach

Samuel Monk was only partly correct when he wrote 'Burke simply did not discuss Longinus'.¹³⁸ Burke referred explicitly to Longinus at just two points in the *Philosophical Enquiry* but the rest of his text engages with Longinus and other authors, ancient and modern, in a range of more subtle ways which merit closer inspection, largely beyond the scope of this thesis.¹³⁹ I focus here on some similarities of theme and approach between the ancient and modern authors, and the application of these theoretical works to literature about Sophocles.

¹³⁶ Henn (1934) 11. Rutherford (1995) 234-237 notes that Plato leaves the door open for poetry, and that Longinus acknowledges him as a follower of Homer, but without discussing how this might work.

¹³⁷ Russell and Winterbottom (2004) xv.

¹³⁸ Monk (1960) 25.

¹³⁹ The two references are in the preface to the first edition and Boulton (1958) 51. See Boulton (1958) xlv n.1.

The new form of the sublime introduced by Longinus is particularly notable for its emphasis on rhetoric, passions and (lack of) rules.¹⁴⁰ Longinus sets out his position in section VIII, where he lists five sources of the sublime:

- i) The power to conceive great thoughts.
- ii) Strong and inspired emotion.
- iii) Figures, of thought and speech.
- iv) Noble diction (including choice of words, metaphorical and artificial language).
- v) Dignified and elevated word-arrangement.

The first two categories are attributed to nature, the remaining three to art. Longinus does not define sublimity itself, beyond remarking that ὕψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα.¹⁴¹

Burke referred directly to Longinus at just one point in the main body of his text, when discussing how the mind assumes the dignity and importance of the things it contemplates:

‘Hence proceeds what Longinus has observed of that glorying and sense of inward greatness, that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime;’ (I.xvii).¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ On Longinus and the reduction of rules, see Goodman (1934) 149, Brody (1958) 100-141, Monk (1960) 15, 26, Lamb (1981) 139.

¹⁴¹ *Peri Hupsous* IX.2. This is usually translated as ‘Sublimity is the echo of a noble mind.’ William Smith’s translation of this section is noteworthy: ‘the *Sublime* is an image reflected from the inward greatness of the soul’, Smith (1739) 28-29. He changes the metaphor from that of echo to image, which raises the issue of the eighteenth-century understanding of imitation and *mimesis*.

¹⁴² The other reference is in the preface, as noted above, n.139.

He was referring to *Peri Hupsous* VII, the section before Longinus' programmatic list of sources of the sublime. For the reader who is bearing the *Peri Hupsous* in mind, Burke could be read as invoking Longinus' list, as preparing the way for us to read it into the *Philosophical Enquiry*. He did not, however, follow it, but constructed his own definition of sublimity and list of sources for it. We must, therefore, look for more subtle points of correspondence between the two works, and examine carefully what it means for one work to draw inspiration from another.

In order to do this, I give a description of the nature of Burke's sublime. Burke opened the *Philosophical Enquiry* by contradicting the Lockean position that at any given point we are in a state of either pleasure or pain. He introduced a third state of indifference.¹⁴³ Moving between these states, we can experience pleasure, pain or delight. Pleasure involves moving from a state of indifference to a state of pleasure, or increasing a state of pleasure. Pleasure is therefore both the higher state and the experience of moving through this state. Pain involves harm, moving into the lower state of pain, while the removal of pleasure is indifference or grief, depending on the speed of the removal. Delight, however, is the amelioration of pain, to leave one in a less painful or an indifferent state (Sections I.ii- I.v).¹⁴⁴

The Burkean sublime pertains to our human desire for self-preservation and solitude and is linked to the experience of delight. For Burke, terror was also related to the desire for self-preservation:

¹⁴³ Boulton (1958) xli. see also Ryan (2001) 274. For further discussion on Burke and Locke, see Townsend (1991), Lock (1998) 92-93. Self-preservation is also one of the main themes of Ahrens Dorf (2010), suggesting an inherent sublimity about tragedy in an eighteenth-century context.

¹⁴⁴ As Ryan (2001) 274 summarises it: 'Delight is defined as the removal of pain or danger, which is important in differentiating the sublime experience from unmitigated terror'.

‘Burke associates the sublime with the terrible, especially with the compelling emotions evoked by the idea of pain and danger, which in turn directly affect the egotistic instinct of self-preservation.’¹⁴⁵

Sublimity is in direct opposition to Beauty. Burke opened Part II with the following:

‘The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect.’

Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, II.i.

Sublimity is the state achieved by the soul as a result of the astonishment of our senses. This is not achieved through anything beautiful or measured, but through excess which generates fear, that is, the apprehension of pain or death. The result is a disabling astonishment of the soul. The fear must be mediated or set at a distance, else it would be a source of pain, but once this has been achieved, the sublime is a source of pleasure. Astonishment is achieved by means of a long list of features: sights, smells, tastes, sounds and feelings that are associated with qualities of terror, obscurity, power, privation, vastness, infinity, uniformity, magnitude, difficulty, magnificence, darkness (or excessive light) and suddenness. Even from this simple list of sources of the sublime, it is clear that Burke’s version is very different from Longinus’. He expanded Longinus’ second source, passion, and made this the basis

¹⁴⁵ May (1960) 530. Quintan (1961) criticises Boulton’s edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry* but also focuses on the desire for self-preservation and terror.

of his text, marginalising the other sources.¹⁴⁶ The passions are not discussed in sequence with the other four Longinian sources, nor do we have the complete end of *Peri Hupsous*, where the passions may have been discussed; indeed the preserved end suggests leaving further points to another treatise.¹⁴⁷ By focussing on the unfinished theme of passions, then, Burke may also be modelling himself as Longinus' heir, accepting Longinus' influence but also marking that his is a new generation of work.

1.4 Thematic issues

Plato's poet is not responsible for his genius, but for Aristotle and Horace, the gifted individual can be; this genius brings with it the responsibility for creating excellent work, and so the presence of faults and flaws within a work of literature becomes important in judging the worth of the author. At *Poetics* 1460b13-16 Aristotle wrote:

πρὸς δὲ τούτοις οὐχ ἡ αὐτὴ ὀρθότης ἐστὶν τῆς πολιτικῆς καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς οὐδὲ ἄλλης τέχνης καὶ ποιητικῆς. αὐτῆς δὲ τῆς ποιητικῆς διττὴ ἁμαρτία, ἡ μὲν γὰρ καθ' αὐτήν, ἡ δὲ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

Aristotle tries to play down the significance of faults in poetry by creating two categories, only one of which is important (the former). He does not explain what he means, and only has one further comment on the subject, when at 1461a22-32 he

¹⁴⁶ It is striking that the *Philosophical Enquiry* is in five sections, only the last of which is overtly concerned with words and rhetorical strategy. This could perhaps be interpreted as an indirect allusion to Longinus' five-part structure, which also finishes with words. The role of fear in the production of the sublime is considered further below.

¹⁴⁷ On the structure of the *Peri Hupsous* in relation to this programmatic section, see Russell (1981), Innes (2006).

explains how we must take into account the context of a work before condemning it for any problems. This theme is not of great importance to him.

For Horace, however, the presence of faults in a work of genius is far more important, and he takes it up at three points in the *Ars Poetica*. It is better to aim for excellence and fail than never to have tried, and he expresses this vividly:

maxima pars vatum, pater et iuvenes patre digni,
decipimur specie recti. brevis esse laboro, 25
obscurus fio; sectantem levia nervi
deficiunt animique; professus grandia turget;
serpit humi tutus nimium timidusque procellae;
qui variare cupit rem prodigialiter unam,
delphinum silvis adpingit, fluctibus aprum. 30
in vitium ducit culpae fuga, si caret arte.

Horace, *Ars Poetica* 26-31

Safety in writing is characterised as creeping along the ground, as lowly and ignoble. If one is gifted then it is morally wrong not to make use of that gift.

non quivis videt inmodulata poemata iudex,
et data Romanis venia est indigna poetis.
idcircone vager scribamque licenter? an omnis 265
visuros peccata putem mea, tutus et intra
spem veniae cautus? vitavi denique culpam,
non laudem merui.

Horace, *Ars Poetica* 263-8

A third state in the praise and blame model is introduced; avoiding blame is not the same as deserving praise. Staying safe is not acceptable. The poet who creeps along the ground avoiding the storm is not praiseworthy. If he is gifted but trying to stay safe, he is to be blamed. Even if he is not gifted, this second quotation suggests, he is still not to be praised, but left in obscurity, neither praised nor blamed.

Avoiding faults is also not the same as attracting praise on another level, since what is praiseworthy can still contain faults, but the great poet is sufficiently excellent in his praiseworthy parts that any faults can be forgiven.¹⁴⁸

verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
aut humana parum cavit natura.

Horace, *Ars Poetica* 351-3

Longinus raises this theme of the acceptable flawed genius at several points in the *Peri Hupsous*.¹⁴⁹ At III.3 he quotes the principle: μεγάλων ἀπολισθαίνειν ὁμῶς

¹⁴⁸ On this passage see Brody (1958) 14.

¹⁴⁹ Longinus frequently employs the methods of achieving sublimity which he discusses, including hyperbaton, apostrophe and rhetorical questions. In section XXII, for example, he discusses hyperbaton: 'ἔστι δὲ λέξεων ἢ νοήσεων ἐκ τοῦ κατ' ἀκολουθίαν κεκινημένη τάξις...' (XXII.1). XXII.3-4 then contains a complex sentence containing 101 Greek words. This enormous sentence does exactly what it describes, postponing the point, thus indirectly making it. The final sentence, just eight words long, is in sharp contrast with this. Longinus achieves the astonishment he seeks, and needs no further examples because he has been his own example. This is noted by Whitmarsh (2001) 65. At XXVI.1-3 Longinus recommends the use of apostrophe at moments of urgency, using an apostrophe. The apostrophe frames the whole text. Longinus employs his own technique of second person address, in the section on second person addresses. He demonstrates theory in practice and marks his work as metatextually aware. For further examples and discussion, see Ryan (2010). This feature of Longinus' writing did not go unnoticed in eighteenth-century treatises. Alexander Pope, for example, reflected his practice by writing his 1711 *An Essay on Criticism* as a poem that critics could criticise, but also as a criticism of both poetry and its critics. He invites a particularly Longinian interpretation of his work when he apostrophises Longinus at line 985 (as opposed to talking about him in the third person as he does with the other authors). The second person address recalls Longinus' recommendation of them, and the final lines note an awareness of the self-aware nature of Longinus' prose.

εὐγενὲς ἀμάρτημα. Longinus' dependence on Horace thus becomes increasingly evident, as is noted by Russell, who adds: 'the thought is commonplace, this formulation of it unique'.¹⁵⁰ We continue to see the links throughout the rest of the treatise. At VI.1 Longinus explains that being able to avoid faults is tied up with knowing how to achieve true sublimity, giving the avoidance of faults a central position in his mission. The rest of the treatise, however, demonstrates why faults do not, in fact, necessarily detract from the sublimity of a work. At IX.14 he apologises for a digression, by explaining that:

παρεξέβην δ' εἰς ταῦθ', ὡς ἔφην, ἵνα δείξαιμι ὡς εἰς λῆρον ἐνίστε ῥᾶστον κατὰ
τὴν ἀπακμὴν τὰ μεγαλοφυῆ παρατρέπεται

This demonstration of his principles in practice is characteristic of Longinus in the *Peri Hupsous*. Later in the work, at XXXII.8, Longinus inserts a much longer digression on genius versus mediocrity. He claims that a great genius is not pure, but includes flaws. As in the *Ars Poetica*, particularly lines 346ff, he says that because it does not take risks, correct literature is mediocre.¹⁵¹ He then gives examples of these two categories, works of flawed genius and of correct mediocrity. At XXX.IV he writes:

παρατεθειμένος δ' οὐκ ὀλίγα καὶ αὐτὸς ἀμαρτήματα καὶ Ὅμηρου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων
ὅσοι μέγιστοι, καὶ ἥκιστα τοῖς πταίσμασιν ἀρεσκόμενος, ὅμως δὲ οὐχ
ἀμαρτήματα μᾶλλον αὐτὰ ἐκούσια καλῶν ἢ παροράματα δι' ἀμέλειαν εἰκὴ που
καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν ὑπὸ μεγαλοφυΐας ἀνεπιστάτως παρενηνεγμένα, οὐδὲν ἥττον οἶμαι
τὰς μείζονας ἀρετάς, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐν πᾶσι διομαλίζοιεν, τὴν τοῦ πρωτείου ψῆφον
μᾶλλον ἀεὶ φέρεσθαι, κἂν εἰ μὴδενὸς ἑτέρου, τῆς μεγαλοφροσύνης αὐτῆς ἔνεκα.

¹⁵⁰ Russell (1964) 72.

¹⁵¹ See Russell (2006) 337.

The men of great genius from history are not to be blamed for their faults, which are mere oversights and lapses of judgement in the midst of otherwise excellent works. Longinus refers to Apollonius as without mistakes, to Theocritus' *Pastorals* as very felicitous, but when discussing who he would rather be, he still claims Homer and Demosthenes are the perfect role-models.¹⁵² Finally, at XXXVI.1, Longinus sums up his views on faults, reiterating the Horatian division between praise and blame:

καὶ τὸ μὲν ἄπταιστον οὐ ψέγεται, τὸ μέγα δὲ καὶ θαυμάζεται.

There is a link between Longinus and the *Ars Poetica* which is necessarily direct, but there is clearly a model of influence whereby the reception of thought patterns rather than precise quotations is at work. Although Longinus does not quote any Latin, the *Peri Hupsous* is undeniably Roman in this respect. On this particular point, the *Ars Poetica* has filled a gap left by Plato and Aristotle, and so Longinus demonstrates how multiple traditions can be integrated.

Longinus' insistence on the potential for greatness being less than perfect also functions as pre-emptive criticism of his own work; in stressing that flaws need not detract from the overall merit of a work, Longinus' work allows for its own defects.¹⁵³ The eighteenth century did find fault with Longinus, as well as praising him. This combination of praise and censure was viewed as part of writing a Longinian criticism. As William Smith wrote, in his 1739 edition of the *Peri Hupsous*:

'Whenever he lays open the Faults of a Writer, he forgets not to mention the Qualities he had, which were deserving of Praise.'¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² See Ruckh (1943) on Longinus' criticism of Theocritus.

¹⁵³ Roberts (1897a) 186.

¹⁵⁴ Smith (1739) xxi.

The greatest criticism of Longinus was that he failed to define the sublime, claiming it was unnecessary because Caecilius had, which was of no use to the eighteenth century, who lacked Caecilius' work. John Dennis wrote:

'it was a very great fault, in so great a man as Longinus, to write a book which could not be understood, but by another man's writings; especially when he saw that those writings were so very defective, that they were not likely to last.'¹⁵⁵

For Dennis, Longinus failed to do exactly what he criticised Caecilius for not doing, and such a reflexive and apologetic aspect of this part of Longinus' argument and content is in keeping with its metaliterary approach, its quotations and the eighteenth century's reception of this; form and content coincide in terms of their strategy and message.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 34, repeated at 36. Thomas Stackhouse in Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 46 also comments on Longinus being defective because he fails to give us precise ideas as to wherein the sublime consists. For a modern commentary on this, see Monk (1960) 15.

¹⁵⁶ I offer just one example, Longinus and Burke's use of Homer; others are discussed in Ryan (2010), taking a more positive view of Burke's intertextual strategies than e.g. Gilby (2006). Longinus uses Homer in a way related to, but not directly copying, his predecessors, demonstrating a model of indirect allusion I suggest permeates the whole work; 17/102 of his citations are Homeric. He does not use any of the same lines as Plato in the *Ion* or *Republic*, but there are some more indirect connections between the two. Longinus uses two quotations from *Odyssey* XI, one from *Odyssey* X and one from *Iliad* IV. In the *Republic*, Plato uses examples from each of these books, but not these exact lines. At 538d in the *Ion*, however, Plato quotes *Odyssey* XI. 369, which is close to the two sections of the book quoted by Longinus, XI.315-7 at VIII.2 and XI.563 at IX.2. It may be interpreted as merely coincidental that Plato and Longinus used adjacent quotations. The recurrent nature of the pattern, however, suggests otherwise. Longinus' use of Homeric lines close to those used by Plato constitutes an indirect reference to Plato and one, given the canonical status of Homer in the ancient world, which Longinus' learned contemporaries might be expected to have spotted. Such an indirect method of allusion thus is a plausible reading of the text. Longinus' use of Homer could be read as leading his readers to engage with Plato and Aristotle and compare them with the (new) views being expressed. Thus Longinus maintains the novelty of his own work whilst paying homage to those who have gone before him. I suggest that Burke may have noticed these indirect allusions and may consequently have employed a similar technique. In his 1998 biography of Burke, F. P. Lock refers frequently to the satirical nature of Burke's early work. He reads Burke's 1756 *Vindication of Natural Society* as the culmination of Burke's penchant for and delight in parody (53, 87) *The Philosophical Enquiry* is thus the first of Burke's works not treated by Lock as in some sense satirical. Completed as early as 1753, however, Burke was writing the *Philosophical Enquiry* at exactly the time he was engaging in these satirical debates and pamphlets; consequently, I suggest that we should read it with minds open to the potential for the satirisation and parody of his ancient and modern sources. Such a reading makes

The eighteenth century also took up the notion of flawed genius in both aesthetic philosophy and biographical tradition, beyond the simple reception of the text of Longinus. It features in Pope's *Essay on Criticism*:

'Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;'

Pope *An Essay on Criticism* 152-3

'Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.'

Pope *An Essay on Criticism* 257-8

'Content, if hence th' Unlearned their Wants may view,
The Learn'd reflect on what before they knew:
Careless of Censure, not too fond of Fame,
Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame,
Averse alike to Flatter, or Offend,
Not free from Faults, nor yet too vain to mend.'

Pope *An Essay on Criticism* 738-44 (final line)

The idea that works by great genius are inevitably but unimportantly flawed punctuates the poem. Longinus as a source for this idea is made more likely by the encomiastic apostrophe at lines 985-90:

'Thee bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,
And bless their critic with a poet's fire.
An ardent judge, who zealous in his trust,

the *Philosophical Enquiry* exuberant and joyful as well as serious and philosophical. This would reflect the age at which Burke wrote it, and the company he kept.

With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just;
Whose own example strengthens all his laws,
And is himself that great sublime he draws.'

Pope *An Essay on Criticism* 985-90

The use of the theme to finish the poem means that this is the lasting impression made on the readers, the final message that they take from the poem.

Expressed simply in Pope, the motif is also clearly apparent in the historical biographies of the Greek tragedians. Basil Kennett's biography of the poets describes Aeschylus as the acceptable Longinian flawed genius:

'It will easily be confessed, that our Poet by aiming continually at bold and hardy Strokes, has very often fallen into gross Thoughts and harsh Expressions, as the most admired *Longinus* observes of him. But then before he is condemn'd, he will claim the Benefit of the same Critick's Maxim, *that a Sublime Style with a great many Failures, is to be preferred to the middle Way, however exactly hit*. For they who, venturing nothing, go on gravely in the plain Road, lie under no great Danger of Miscarrying; while the more exalted Path is still the more slippery, the more it shines. And it is below the Stile, as well as the Persons, of Heroes to stoop to Trifles.'¹⁵⁷

Longinus is also applied to Aeschylus ninety years later in the *Biographia Classica*, where Aeschylus is praised for the boldness of his expression and his lofty and heroic judgements. Here also he is forgiven for his imperfections and crowned an excellent dramatist.¹⁵⁸ Aeschylus remained an authority in tragedy on a Longinian model, but we also see a development in the descriptions of Sophocles, who increasingly assumes the mantle of the great sublime tragedian.

¹⁵⁷ Kennett (1735) 93-4.

¹⁵⁸ Harwood (1778) 88-9. For more on Aeschylus as a sublime author in eighteenth-century literature see Macintosh (2009) and her bibliography.

Towards the end of the century, Sophocles is censured for failing to conform to this pattern:

‘He [Sophocles] so much respected the boundaries of true grandeur, that, through fear of overstepping, it sometimes happens that he does not even arrive at them. In the midst of his most rapid career, and at the moment when he is about universally to communicate his ardent flame, he is seen to stop short, and to become extinct. It may be affirmed that he preferred failure to extravagance.’¹⁵⁹

This is in contrast to the Longinian position. Longinus dismisses the *Odyssey* as the inferior work of a waning intellect. This attitude towards the epic as a whole does not, however, preclude parts of it from being excellent. Indeed, Longinus refers to the *Odyssey* twice before he refers to the *Iliad* (to *Odyssey* XI.315-317 at 8.2 and to XI.363 at 9.2), and at a further three points. The *Odyssey* is not a bad work in itself. Sophocles provides a further example of a sublime, flawed genius:

ἐν μέλεσι μᾶλλον ἂν εἶναι Βακχυλίδης ἔλοιο ἢ Πίνδαρος, καὶ ἐν τραγωδίᾳ Ἴων ὁ Χίος ἂν ἢ Δία Σοφοκλῆς; ἐπειδὴ οἱ μὲν ἀδιάπτωτοι καὶ ἐν τῷ γλαφυρῷ πάντα κεκαλλιγραφημένοι, ὁ δὲ Πίνδαρος καὶ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ὅτε μὲν οἶον πάντα ἐπιφλέγουσι τῇ φορᾷ, σβέννυνται δ' ἀλόγως πολλάκις καὶ πίπτουσιν ἀτυχέστατα. ἢ οὐδεὶς ἂν εὖ φρονῶν ἐνὸς δράματος, τοῦ Οιδίποδος, εἰς ταῦτ' οὐ συνθεὶς τὸ Ἴωνος <πάντ'> ἀντιτιμήσαιτο ἐξῆς.

Longinus *Peri Hupsous* XXXIII.5¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Anacharsis (1793-4) vol. VI, p. 30. This carries the footnote ‘Longin. de Sublim. cap. 33’, confirming the reference to Longinus. See also vol. I, p. 104.

¹⁶⁰ *Travels of Anacharsis* also refers explicitly to this passage, with a footnote to support the reference.

Longinus does not dismiss the OC as the poor work of a faded genius, but refers to the visualisation of Oedipus' death as one of the best examples of sublime visualisation. Sophocles' age does not preclude him from writing sublime literature.¹⁶¹ This can be interpreted as allowing sublime moments even in old age, or as counting against the idea that old age necessitates a decline in the sublime. A potential contradiction in Longinus can be overcome by either reading.

The eighteenth-century material assumes the latter reading. Cicero's *Cato Maior de Senectute* includes a story about the OC being used to demonstrate Sophocles' sanity:

quid iuris consulti, quid pontifices, quid augures, quid philosophi senes, quam multa meminerunt! manent ingenia senibus, modo permaneat studium et industria, neque ea solum in claris et honoratis viris, sed in vita etiam privata et quieta. Sophocles ad summam senectutem tragoedias fecit; quod propter studium cum rem negligere familiarem videretur, a filiis in iudicium vocatus est, ut, quem ad modum nostro more male rem gerentibus patribus bonis interdici solet, sic illum quasi desipientem a re familiari removerent iudices. tum senex dicitur eam fabulam, quam in manibus habebat et proxime scripserat, Oedipum Coloneum, recitasse iudicibus quaesisseque, num illud carmen desipientis videretur. quo recitato sententiis iudicum est liberatus.

Cicero *Cato Maior de Senectute* 22

This story is also present in Plutarch's *Moralia* 785A, where he claims the passage recited was the Colonus ode (668-719), the major locus of themes of nationalism and religion expressed through geographical description, as I discussed in my

¹⁶¹ This attitude has a Platonic precedent: see Plato *Republic* 329b3-c5 for the story about Sophocles using old age as a positive tool in combating lust, for example. This section is mentioned at Easterling (2006a) 10, but does not receive extensive treatment in secondary literature on the OC.

introduction.¹⁶² It is also used in discussions of Sophocles; Kennett's 1735 biography of Sophocles includes it, as does the 1789 *Biographia Classica* and *Historia Antiqua*, as well as Censor Dramaticus in 1793.¹⁶³ A 1788 translation of the OC discussed further below ends with a quotation from Melmoth, in turn quoting Valerius Maximus:

' "Sophocles had almost attained his hundredth year when he composed this tragedy; in which the marks of decayed genius are so far from appearing, that it was deemed by the ancients an unrivalled master-piece of dramatic poetry." – There are some modern critics who affect to speak of it with contempt. The translator gives it the preference to any of the tragedies of Sophocles;"¹⁶⁴

Valerius Maximus includes this story about the OC at 8.7.ext.12:

Sophocles quoque gloriosum cum rerum natura certamen habuit, tam benigne mirifica illi opera sua exhibendo quam illa operibus eius tempora liberaliter sumministrando: prope enim centesimum annum attigit, sub ipsum transitum ad mortem Oedipode ἐπὶ Κολωνῷ scripto, qua sola fabula omnium eiusdem studi poetarum praeripere gloriam potuit. idque ignotum esse posteris filius Sophoclis Iophon noluit, sepulcro patris quae retuli insculpendo.

Valerius Maximus discusses Sophocles at two further points:

4.3.ext.1 ac ne eiusdem laudis commemorationem externis invidemus, Pericles Atheniensium princeps, cum tragoediarum scriptorem Sophoclea in praetura collegam haberet, atque is publico officio una districtus pueri ingenui praetereuntis formam inpensioribus verbis laudasset, intemperantiam eius increpans dixit

¹⁶² Cicero also refers to the opening of the play at *De fin.* 5, writing about how the prologue came to his brother Quintus' mind when he was walking to Colonus from the Academy. He seemed to hear and see Oedipus arriving there. This is mentioned at Easterling (2006a) 10.

¹⁶³ Kennett (1735) 100, Harwood (1778) 95, *Historia Antiqua* (1789) 104, Censor Dramaticus (1793) 19.

¹⁶⁴ Potter (1808) 130.

praetoris non solum manus a pecuniae lucro, sed etiam oculos a libidinoso aspectu continentes esse debere.

4.3.ext.2 Sophocles autem aetate iam senior, cum ab eo quidam quaereret an etiam nunc rebus veneriis uteretur, 'di meliora!' inquit: 'libenter enim istinc tamquam ex aliqua furiosa profugi dominatione'.

This potentially negative story about Sophocles redeems itself in the ending; old age can be beneficial. Indeed, Sophocles' death is later contrasted with the less fortunate ends met by both Aeschylus and Euripides.¹⁶⁵ Sophocles emerges as the perfect sublime playwright in being given the only noble death:

9.12.ext.5 sicut illi excessus inlustrum poetarum et moribus et operibus indignissimi: Sophocles ultimae iam senectutis, cum in certamen tragoediam demisisset, ancipiti sententiarum eventu diu sollicitus, aliquando tamen una sententia victor causam mortis gaudium habuit.

These three stories from Valerius Maximus are all found in eighteenth-century biographies of Sophocles. The story of Pericles, and the happiness of Sophocles' death, are related at Kennett (1735) 99-10, Harwood (1778) 94-5, Seally (1788) 95, *Historia Antiqua* (1789), 105 Censor Dramaticus (1793) 19, Anacharsis (1794) 22.¹⁶⁶

Longinus cites Sophocles as a genius, whose literary flaws cease to matter once we accept his ability. This picture of Sophocles as the flawed genius is not how we see him represented in the eighteenth century, however, where a more biographical approach was taken. The Longinian passages are noted, but the language of flawed genius is not used, nor examples given. Instead, Sophocles

¹⁶⁵ See Knöbl (2010) for further references, and discussion of the epigrammatic tradition concerning the death of Euripides. See Lefkowitz (1981) 84 for a summary of the accounts of Sophocles' death.

¹⁶⁶ Alternative stories about Sophocles' death are given at Kennett (1735) 100 and Timm (1753) 240.

appears as a noble and divine person. Sophocles as the perfect religious patriot is a more important role-model for the eighteenth century than Sophocles the sublime but unreliable genius. Sophocles is the genius whose old age and death stand as positive markers to the end of his life, even though he could be capable of lapses of judgement. The eighteenth century constructed an author Sophocles, put together from the traits of the sublime found in his work, read alongside what biographical facts they could garner.

This is most clear in some of the creative and biographical works. *Biographia Classica* mentions the story from Athenaeus of Chaerephon at the Delphic Oracle as a reason why Sophocles and Euripides could never have been friends. 'Sophocles is Wise, Euripides is more wise, but the Wisest of all Men is Socrates.'¹⁶⁷ As Basil Kennett summarised it, 'And, in short, *Sophocles* must be the greatest Poet, and *Euripides* the greatest philosopher.'¹⁶⁸ Despite this, one eighteenth-century book includes fictional letters from Euripides both to and about Sophocles.¹⁶⁹ Euripides writes to Sophocles 'congratulating his Escape from Shipwreck and condoling the Loss of his Plays'¹⁷⁰ Letter LXXXII 'Euripides to Cephisophon; being an Account of his Arrival in Macedon; together with the Consequences thereof; as likewise a vindication of that Journey' says of Sophocles:

'But to prove I am not guilty of that Mutability of Temper, either as to my Study, my Friends, or my Enemies, they shou'd reflect that I have always had the same in all these Particulars, except in *Sophocles* alone. But in regard of him, perhaps they have not ever found me the same. Him I never hated, but on the contrary, always admir'd, tho' I must confess I have not ever lov'd him in the same degree, neglecting him where he affected Contention, and receiving him earnestly into my Bosom, when he

¹⁶⁷ Harwood (1778) 98.

¹⁶⁸ Kennett (1735) 102.

¹⁶⁹ Savage (1703).

¹⁷⁰ Savage (1703) Letter LXXX, 219.

laid it aside. But since we came to a true Understanding, we have ever maintain'd a mutual Love, and I hope ever shall.'¹⁷¹

In Letter LXXXIII, also to Cephisophon, Euripides describes Sophocles as divine. Referring to Aeschylus he says:

'He knows not that the justness of the Dramatick Language appear'd not on the Stage, till *Sophocles* introduc'd it.'¹⁷²

He claims that Sophocles would have carried the crown of chief tragedian from Aeschylus, had Sophocles been the elder, and concludes:

'Should his Writings live beyond his life (which is a sort of Impiety to think) Posterity might in Reason believe so; but for the comfort of Athens, the Infamy of producing his Plays, will be lost, and the Glory of those of *Sophocles* be perpetual. You urge the Contempt he has for my Plays, as Low and Mean, as an Argument to examine his Last.'¹⁷³

John Seally compared the two as follows:

'if he did not possess the fire of Eschylus [sic], he carefully avoided his negligences and irregularities. In a word, Sophocles excelled in his descriptions, and surpassed his rivals in the art of interesting the passions of his spectators: antiquity has therefore considered him as the most noble, the most natural, the most learned, the most elegant, the most correct, and the most accomplished of all the tragic poets.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ *ibid.* 226.

¹⁷² *ibid.* 227.

¹⁷³ *ibid.* 228. He does, however, go on to dismiss Sophocles. These letters are repeated at *Epistolographi Graeci* (1873) 275-279, in Greek with a Latin translation. The volume does not contain any letters by Aeschylus or Sophocles.

¹⁷⁴ Seally (1788) 96.

This Sophocles is not the inspired genius, but the perfect master of tragedy. The likening of Sophocles to Homer continues, but one reason for this, the idea of a waning yet inspired genius, is lost. This is indicative of the way in which the development of the sublime treats the subject. Edmund Burke made only passing reference to the idea of flaws in association with great men. Just as he starts to disagree with Newton, at the start of Part IV, Burke added ‘if in so great a man it be not impious to discover anything like a blemish’.¹⁷⁵ This scarcely matches Longinus’ lengthy discussion of the theme. It is not that the theme simply became unimportant, however, as it appears again in Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, for example, first published in 1759, the same year as the revised edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry*.¹⁷⁶ The rationalisation of the sublime does not leave much room for inconsistent genius, and the increasingly authoritative status occupied by canonical literature in the rapidly developing educational world, meant that the flawed but brilliant ancient genius became much harder to integrate into an Enlightenment world view. It does, however, feed the Romantic notion of genius, and will become more important when considering some of the later adaptations of the OC.

1.4.1 The role of reason

‘The assertion that eighteenth-century critics read by reason alone is gross calumny.’¹⁷⁷

I have already noted that the eighteenth century witnessed a rise in the status of reason, and it is to the role of reason in aesthetics that I now turn. One of Plato’s greatest concerns about literature is that its effects cannot be controlled because literature is non-rational in its production and effects, damaging both poet and audience alike. In the *Ion*, Socrates develops a range of models for poetic inspiration.

¹⁷⁵ Boulton (1958) 129.

¹⁷⁶ See Lamb (1981) 121.

¹⁷⁷ Abrams (1953) 71.

None of these involves the engagement of rational thought, but each is centred on the idea of enthusiasm. The term ἐνθουσιάζω and its cognates occur 21 times in Plato, three of which are in the *Ion*. The poet is drawn to the Muses as iron rings to a magnet, dragging his audience in his wake (533, 536). For Plato, the audience are inspired in the same way as the poet / performer, although proving this is not straightforward.¹⁷⁸ The poet is inspired by the god / Muses, who possess his mind (534) and no man can compose while he has his reason and remains unpossessed. As Richard Janaway writes: 'Socrates tells Ion that fine poetry and the poetry-critic's impressive discourse stems from a kind of possession or inspiration not with the mind's conscious control'.¹⁷⁹ This has a consequently detrimental effect on the audience, who are in turn inspired in a similar way to the poet. Yet, Ion claims to be able to distinguish between the feelings he feels and those he portrays, suggesting he maintains some kind of rational control over his performance.¹⁸⁰ For Plato, inspiration is dangerous because the poet is not (entirely) in control of his mind. Further down the chain, the process of communicating ideas through poetry remains vague. Janaway summarises this as: 'what worries Plato is that while poetry's words convey thoughts, the process by which these thoughts come to lodge in the mind of the audience is suspect'.¹⁸¹ This problematic position provides a way in to understanding how both Longinus and Burke went about constructing their versions of the sublime. I therefore turn to examine the Platonic viewpoint more carefully in its broader context.

Plato says very little about the relationship between nature and art in the creation of works of genius. At *Republic* 598e4 he says that the good poet must compose with knowledge. Knowledge as an aspect of reason, being something possessed and exercised by the mind, contradicts Plato's model of inspiration as the

¹⁷⁸ See Janaway (1998) 21.

¹⁷⁹ Janaway (1998) 14.

¹⁸⁰ See Janaway (1998) 22.

¹⁸¹ Janaway (1998) 25.

mind being possessed, and thus maintains his negative view of the impossibility of rational, controllable poetry. Malcolm Heath remarks on one point where perhaps Plato may be trying to escape this negativity; through Proclus in *Timaeus* 1.64.11-65.3 Plato wants to distinguish between poetry that is inspired *ἐνθους*, and a product of human art, *τεχνική*.¹⁸² Plato's general position appears largely based on his concern over the role of reason in inspiration or art, as discussed above.

The role of enthusiasm in general is far less important to Aristotle and Horace. Of 19 uses of *ἐνθουσιάζω* and its cognates in the Aristotelian corpus, none are in the *Poetics*. The closest idea occurs at 1455a32-34 when he suggests that poetry is the work of a genius and not a madman, because a genius is naturally adaptable, while the madman is degenerate. This implies that the poetic genius must have kept his wits and be composing with his genius intact. Aristotle also has very little to add on the subject of art and nature, but comes close to it at *Poetics* 1451a22-30 when he says that Homer was correct in his depiction of Odysseus, whether by art or by nature:

ὁ δ' Ὅμηρος ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα διαφέρει καὶ τοῦτ' ἔοικεν καλῶς ἰδεῖν, ἥτοι διὰ τέχνην ἢ διὰ φύσιν. Ὀδύσσειαν γὰρ ποιῶν οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἅπαντα ὅσα αὐτῷ συνέβη, οἷον πληγῆναι μὲν ἐν τῷ Παρνασσῷ, μανῆναι δὲ προσποιήσασθαι ἐν τῷ ἄγερμῳ, ὣν οὐδὲν θατέρου γενομένου ἀναγκαῖον ἦν ἢ εἰκὸς θάτερον γενέσθαι, ἀλλὰ περὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν οἷαν λέγομεν τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν συνέστησεν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἰλιάδα.

Horace does not seem to make any use of the idea. Longinus' engagement with the particular concerns of creative poetic mimesis is particularly Platonic, and goes some way towards alleviating the pessimism of Plato's account. Longinus rehabilitates Plato's version of inspiration by returning an element of rationalism to it. He uses

¹⁸² Heath (1999) 64.

ἐνθεος and its cognate nine times in the *Peri Hupsous*.¹⁸³ All of these instances link the concept of inspiration / enthusiasm with either the emotions or acting emotionally like a Bacchant. This is reminiscent of Plato's use of ἐνθουσιάζω in the *Ion*, and so a general picture of the negative poetic enthusiast might be expected. Such a model of inspiration is confirmed at further points in the *Peri Hupsous* where Longinus discusses inspiration directly. At XIII.2 he depicts the effect of literary predecessors with a cave metaphor reminiscent of *Republic V*:

ἐνδείκνυται δ' ἡμῖν οὗτος ἀνὴρ [Plato], εἰ βουλόμενα μὴ κατολιγωρεῶν, ὥς καὶ ἄλλη τις παρὰ τὰ εἰρημένα ὁδὸς ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ τείνει. ποία δὲ καὶ τίς αὕτη; <ή> τῶν ἔμπροσθεν μεγάλων συγγραφέων καὶ ποιητῶν μίμησις τε καὶ ζήλωσις. καὶ γε τούτου, φίλτατε, ἀπρὶξ ἐχώμεθα τοῦ σκοποῦ· πολλοὶ γὰρ ἀλλοτρίῳ θεωροῦνται πνεύματι τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὃν καὶ τὴν Πυθίαν λόγος ἔχει τρίποδι πλησιάζουσιν, ἔνθα ῥήγμά ἐστι γῆς ἀναπνέον, ὥς φασιν, ἀτμὸν ἐνθεον, αὐτόθεν ἐγκύμονα τῆς δαιμονίου καθισταμένην δυνάμεως παραντίκα χρησμοδεῖν κατ' ἐπίπνοϊαν· οὕτως ἀπὸ τῶν τῶν ἀρχαίων μεγαλοφυίας εἰς τὰς τῶν ζηλούντων ἐκείνους ψυχὰς ὥς ἀπὸ ἱερῶν στομιῶν ἀπορροιαὶ τινες φέρονται, ὑφ' ὧν ἐπιπνεόμενοι καὶ οἱ μὴ λίαν φοιραστικοὶ τῷ ἑτέρων συνενθουσιῶσι μεγέθει.

¹⁸³ The following lists the uses of ἐνθουσιάζω and cognate words in the *Peri Hupsous*, in context:

- 1.) III.2 πολλαχοῦ γὰρ ἐνθουσιᾶν ἑαυτοῖς δοκοῦντες οὐ βακχεύουσιν, ἀλλὰ παίζουσιν. In his commentary on this passage, Russell (1964) 71 says simply 'L is very fond of metaphors from this sphere'. He does not notice that the metaphor seems to come directly from Plato.
- 2.) VIII.1 δεύτερον δὲ τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος·
- 3.) VIII.4 θαρρῶν γὰρ ἀφορισαίμην ἂν ὥς οὐδὲν οὕτως ὥς τὸ γενναῖον πάθος, ἔνθα χρή, μεγαλήγορον, ὥσπερ ὑπὸ μανίας τινὸς καὶ πνεύματος ἐνθουσιαστικῶς ἐκπνέον καὶ οἶονεὶ φοιβάζον τοὺς λόγους.
- 4.) XIII.2 see above.
- 5.) XV.1 ἤδη δ' ἐπὶ τούτων κεκράτηκε τοῦνομα ὅταν ἂ λέγεις ὑπ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθους βλέπειν δοκῆς καὶ ὑπ' ὅσιν τιθῆς τοῖς ἀκούουσιν.
- 6.) XV.6 ἐνθουσιᾶ δὴ δῶμα, βακχεύει στέγη. (quoting Aeschylus' *Lycurgus*).
- 7.) XVIII.1 νυνὶ δὲ τὸ ἐνθουν...
- 8.) XXXII.4-5 καὶ οὐκ εἴ τὸν ἀκροατὴν σχολάζειν περὶ τὸν τοῦ πλήθους ἔλεγχον διὰ τὸ συνενθουσιᾶν τῷ λέγοντι.
- 9.) V.1 Ἄπαντα μέντοι τὰ οὕτως ἄσεμνα διὰ μίαν ἐμφύεται τοῖς λόγοις αἰτίαν, διὰ τὸ περὶ τὰς νοήσεις καινσπόδον, περὶ ὃ δὴ μάλιστα κορυβαντιῶσιν οἱ νῦν·

Plato is explicitly invoked in the first line. That even bad poets can have good inspiration poured into them in this way recalls *Ion* 534d-e where the inspiration of the Muses accounts for the extraordinary paeon by Tynnichos the Chalkidean.

The effect on the audience is presented as equally non-rational, and Longinus takes up this idea. At XXXIX.3 Longinus discusses the way in which sublime compositions take complete control of our minds. Good poetry is not marked as rational, contradicting the emphasis on the need for some elements of reason discussed earlier.

This is not, however, a complete picture of the poetic process. The means of poetic inspiration, and the final effect of sublime compositions on their audience, are both described. The means by which the poet himself effects this is not. This section comes just before Longinus moves to discuss rhetorical, literary techniques in close detail. This very close, technical discussion seems to bring the reason back into the picture. A poet would not be able to make his choice of asyndeta, historic presents, hyperbaton etc. without careful and deliberate thought. Longinus thus addresses Plato's concerns that irrational poetic genius is dangerous, by installing a rational phase in his model of literature. At II.3 Longinus outlines the importance of mixing talent and art:

ὅπερ γὰρ ὁ Δημοσθένης ἐπὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀποφαίνεται βίου,
μέγιστον μὲν εἶναι τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὸ εὐτυχεῖν, δεύτερον δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαττον τὸ εὐ
βουλευέσθαι, ὅπερ οἷς ἂν μὴ παρῇ συναναίρει πάντως καὶ θάτερον, τοῦτ' ἂν καὶ
ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων εἴποιμεν, ὥς ἢ μὲν φύσις τὴν εὐτυχίας τάξιν ἀπέχει, ἢ τέχνη δὲ
τὴν τῆς εὐβουλίας.

Longinus, *Peri Hupsous* 2.3

This balance between natural talent and cultivated art combines the roles of non-rational inspiration and reason, allowing for a third way. On this topic, Horace provides the strongest prompt for Longinus to follow, but Plato’s concerns over the rationality of inspiration remain a motivating force.

The Greek material does not pursue the point further, but Horace poses the question in a more obvious way, yet still fails to answer it. He first says that art is important for avoiding faults:

in vitium ducit culpae fuga, si caret arte.

Horace, *Ars Poetica* 31

He then makes wisdom the font of good writing:

scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.

Horace, *Ars Poetica* 309

Both of these quotations are in contrast to Plato’s non-rational model of inspiration, but the latter also recalls *Republic* 598e4. Both involve the poet deliberately and rationally applying himself to his task, with skill and with wisdom. The question, however, is most clearly posed towards the end of the poem:

Natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte,
quaesitum est; ego nec studium sine divite vena
nec rude quid prosit video ingenium; alterius sic
altera poscit opem res et coniurat amice.

410

Horace, *Ars Poetica* 408-11

Horace asks whether nature or art are more important in shaping good writing, and answers that both are necessary, working in tandem.

This is the view taken by Longinus and explained at several points in the *Peri Hupsous*. It emerges as a concern early in the work, when, at II.1, he explains that art and nature must be combined for sublime literature to be written. This view is applied to the use of technical figures at several further points. Technical figures, deliberately created and used for conscious effect in a work are a sign of art and not of nature, but can still be allied with nature. At XVII.1 Longinus introduces the idea that a figure is generally thought to be best when it is concealed. He states this more explicitly at XXII.1:

τότε γὰρ ἡ τέχνη τέλειος ἡνίκ' ἂν φύσις εἶναι δοκῇ, ἢ δ' αὖ φύσις ἐπιτυχῆς ὅταν
λανθάνουσιν περιέχῃ τὴν τέχνην.

He summarises the point again at XXXVI.4 when he says that nature gives erratic brilliance, and art breeds impeccability. Neither of these make for sublime writing, and so the two need to be combined.

In summary, Plato was concerned about the poet composing without engaging his mind in the process, whereas Aristotle explained very technical ways in which to make a tragedy affective, but did not discuss the author's state of mind. Horace tried to address these two areas of art and nature in composition, but did not offer any answers. At XXXVI.1 Longinus writes that great geniuses are more than men, and that: τὸ δ' ὕψος ἐγγὺς αἶρει μεγαλοφροσύνης θεοῦ. This may be so, but they achieve this greatness through their manipulation of technical figures and rational features of art, so that in great genius, natural aptitude is mixed with technical application and it is this union which raises the author to a sublime status. For Tim Whitmarsh, the relationship between art and skill is a defining element in the *Peri*

Hupsous. He claims that the idea of art hiding artifice, yielding a complex intertwining of φύσις and τέχνη permeates the whole text.¹⁸⁴ He relates this back to the idea of controlling sublimity: 'Sublimity, then, does not simply proceed unilaterally from nature, but from the dialectic of control and chaos.'¹⁸⁵ He summarises and concludes: "'Longinus' is not simply a nihilist revelling in subversion and disorder, but a committed writer with deeply rooted, indeed at times conservative, ethical priorities'.¹⁸⁶ I hope to have demonstrated how this balance is achieved by drawing on prior texts. Longinus has attempted to process the questions posed by Horace and produce a model that is more satisfying than those by Plato or Aristotle. This use of an Horatian attitude to enliven the Greek position demonstrates Longinus' familiarity with Latin literature, and also the way in which different generations of writers reflect upon and readdress the works and ideas of their predecessors. Horace told us to use Greek models (*Ars Poetica* 268ff). Longinus did this but he did not ignore the contribution made by intervening Latin texts, and again tried to provide a more positive explanation for the questions posed.¹⁸⁷

Longinus' two-part model for inspiration, combining art and nature, also helps to address Platonic pessimism. The sublime may be like a thunderbolt, but it is achieved by means of coruscating technical brilliance. This rhetorical aspect provides the key to understanding the relationship between the sublime and reason. Sublime feeling comes in moments of inspiration, but is conveyed by careful, thoughtful, highly-structured writing. A balance between the two is possible, so that the rhetorical strategies provide the cool mechanism for expressing impassioned thought. A marriage between reason and emotion, between rhetoric and passion, accepts the blinding power of inspiration, while meeting Plato's criticism about the non-rational nature of art, giving art a way to progress. The tension I have read

¹⁸⁴ Whitmarsh (2001) 62-63.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.* 64.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.* 65.

¹⁸⁷ On Longinus' Latin reading, see Edmiston (1900) and Innes (2002).

between the Longinian sublime as both rational and non-rational continues in the eighteenth-century reception of the text, and in the discussion of Sophocles, and it is to this that I now turn.

As noted in the textual history given above, the *Peri Hupsous* became well-known largely due to Boileau's version. Given that it accompanied his own creative treatise, *L'Art Poétique*, it is hardly surprising that we find Boileau remodelling the *Peri Hupsous* as much as translating it. He smoothed over lacunae and corruptions, adding and subtracting sections and remarks as necessary, leading Brody to comment:

'The systematic suppression of what risked being pointed to as pedantic show, the doctoring of the text, the imposition of specious continuity on this fragmentary essay, were not measures taken by a mere student of Longinus: these are the gestures of an adept, a propagandist.'¹⁸⁸

Boileau's disproportionate emphasis on reason stands hostile to the Longinian spirit. Reason is linked to Longinus VIII.I, where the first and most important source of the sublime is the power of forming great conceptions.¹⁸⁹ Known as the Apostle of Reason, Boileau used the Reason of the Ancients against the Moderns in the 'Quarrel' that grew up between them at the turn of the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁰ Boileau's rationalism was not an obstacle to his understanding Longinus, but helped him to see more deeply into it as aesthetics and not simply rhetoric.¹⁹¹ He saw clearly

¹⁸⁸ Brody (1958) 24.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.* 54.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.* 76, 80. I have already mentioned that Longinus was used on both sides of this debate (p. 37). For a particularly interesting dramatic account of the 'battle', see Callières (1714).

¹⁹¹ *ibid.* 88. Boileau's rationalism is not, however, absolute. Boileau accuses Voltaire of over-rationalism, as Joseph Warton does Pope. See Lamb (1981) 124. Pope in particular is discussed further below.

that there was a rational streak in the *Peri Hupsous*, and that the Longinian sublime was not non-rational. The fine balance between nature and art, however, was lost.

In discussing Boileau's reading of Longinus, Jules Brody summarises the Longinian position thus: 'What is perhaps most deeply humanistic about the treatise *On the Sublime* and the tradition on which it draws is its forceful vindication of the individual act of judgement and its defense of the artistic sensibility against the reduction of the creative act to either demonic dispossession or pretentious, rigoristic scientism'.¹⁹² Stephen Halliwell notes that most (French) neoclassicists broadly aligned with Aristotle over art versus nature in poetic composition.¹⁹³ This topic is of relatively little interest to Aristotle. For Boileau to perpetuate, expound and develop a Longinian interpretation of the idea demonstrates an integration of this Aristotelian material with other traditions much earlier than the English critics, and thus helps to ground the English criticism on a Longinian foundation.

Burke's conception of the sublime, however, minimises the role of reason, and left an enduring mark on subsequent aesthetics. As described above, his source of the sublime is the soul suspended by fear and no longer able to reason. He first denied a role for reason in his discussion of sympathy at I.xiii:

'I should imagine, that the influence of reason in producing our passions is nothing near so extensive as it is commonly believed.'

and then again at the opening of Part II:

¹⁹² Brody (1958) 43.

¹⁹³ Halliwell (1986) 304.

'In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.'¹⁹⁴

His final section on words, however, makes such a straightforward reading of the sublime impossible. This is the shortest section in the book, and at V.viii Burke claimed that he did not need to discuss poetry, words and the sublime, because others had done so. He still included this section, however, and, in closing the text with a rhetorical emphasis, it is reminiscent of Longinus' discussion of figures. Some Longinian emphasis, and an underlying role for reason in supplying the mechanics of art, remains at least possible in Burke, even if it is not made explicit.

These ideas find their modern roots in the work of John Dennis. In his 1701 *The advancement and reformation of modern poetry*, Dennis defined poetry as 'an imitation of nature, by a pathetic and numerous speech'.¹⁹⁵ This relationship between rhetoric and passion is made even more explicitly Longinian when he added 'And in tragedy, and in epic, a man may instruct without harmony, but never without passion: for the one instructs by admiration, and the other by compassion and terror'.¹⁹⁶ Dennis argued that when the poet brings a terrible object close to us, our imagination becomes so inflamed that the soul is rendered incapable of reflection (and therefore cannot distinguish between images and things).¹⁹⁷ For Dennis, rationality and the sublime are linked insofar as the exemplary reaction to the sublime is characterised by the paralysis of our rational capacity by fear.¹⁹⁸ Addison then expressed the idea as: 'Fine writing consists of sentiments that are natural

¹⁹⁴ This idea of literature filling the mind is also an important metaphor for Addison. See Youngren (1982) 276.

¹⁹⁵ Dennis in Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 32.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.* Here we see the concept of fear, so important to later aesthetics, already beginning to be a feature of poetic writing.

¹⁹⁷ In Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 39.

¹⁹⁸ See Ryan (2001) 271.

without being obvious'.¹⁹⁹ Jonathan Richardson argued similarly that the sublime hides all defects by filling and satisfying the mind, linking this directly back to Longinus' attitude towards flaws.²⁰⁰ This is, however, in direct conflict with Longinus' insistence that the sublime be produced by a poet who is using talent guided by learned skill. Here the role of reason appears to have been subsumed by other aspects of the sublime.

Given the importance of reason to Boileau's conception of the sublime, a rejection of reason may be in part a rejection of Boileau, a rejection of continental aesthetics. The rapidly increasing importance of sensibility in English thought may provide some explanation for this. It is not that reason was wholly ignored, but that the way English philosophy and culture were developing emphasised the non-rational. The role of reason in the production of the sublime continued to be a concern for eighteenth-century aesthetics, notably for Kant. His *Observations of the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* appeared just seven years after the first edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry*.²⁰¹ Here Kant often argued empirically, eschewing his usual *a priori* method of reasoning. His description of the sublime mirrors his method. Arguing for a non-rational element to the sublime, he wrote: 'Even depravities and moral failings often bear, for all that, some features of the sublime or beautiful, at least so far as they appear to our sensory feeling without being tested by reason'.²⁰² Reason is not, however, wholly abandoned. The Kantian sublime allows us to intuit our rational capacity whereas the Burkean sublime involves a critique of reason, acknowledging a subject's sense of limitation and the value of a social and ethical context.²⁰³ Therefore:

¹⁹⁹ Quoted in le Huray (1978-9) 91.

²⁰⁰ In Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 46.

²⁰¹ Kant had access to a German translation of the *Philosophical Enquiry*, but does not seem to have read it in the original; see Goldthwait in his introduction to the text (1960).

²⁰² Kant (1960) 53.

²⁰³ See Goldthwait (1960) 23.

‘Reading Burke through such a Kantian perspective [where a teleological reading of Burke assumes the transcendence of the Burkean sublime] fails to recognize that Burke minimizes the role of the mind in the experience of the sublime and that he characterizes the sublime as a natural force that is by its very definition beyond man’s ability to control’²⁰⁴

This sense of over-powering force goes back to Longinus where the sublime robs us of our freedom and is therefore the opposite of Kant. Different conceptions of the sublime are able to encompass reason to varying degrees, and it need not be wholly excluded from aesthetics.²⁰⁵ This becomes clearer when we consider the role of reason in context, that is, applied to the Sophoclean biographies. Before I return to these, I move to the last thematic topic, that of pity and fear.

1.4.2 Pity, fear (and terror)

One key feature of the sublime, and in particular its development into the Gothic aesthetic, is the role of pity and fear. The application of the aesthetic of terror to Sophocles will be discussed at greater length in subsequent chapters.²⁰⁶ At this point, I simply outline the development of the theme through ancient philosophy into the eighteenth century, as far as Burke, and comment briefly on eighteenth-century secondary literature’s use of the theme. Longinus was clearly indebted to Plato and Horace in developing the nature of the sublime he developed in the *Peri Hupsous*, as discussed above, where he countered Platonic pessimism with Horatian skill. I have yet to consider his reliance on Aristotle in any detail, and it is to this I now turn. Again we see Longinus use an existing position to develop a more forward-looking, productive model.

²⁰⁴ Ryan (2001) 267.

²⁰⁵ A further tension is introduced by considering the religious argument; as Monk notes, eighteenth-century Christianity promoted reason and condemned passions: Monk (1960) 41.

²⁰⁶ Particularly chapter 4 on Henry Fuseli.

In the *Ion*, Socrates asks Ion how he reacts personally when he is acting passages of Homer to the audience. At 535b5 Ion answers:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅταν ἐλαινόν τι λέγω, δακρύων ἐμπίπλантаί μου οἱ ὀφθαλμοί· ὅταν τε φοβερόν ἢ δεινόν, ὀρθαὶ αἱ τρίχες ἴστανται ὑπὸ φόβου καὶ ἡ καρδία πηδᾷ.

When Ion performs, he feels the emotions of the passage, affecting him in the same way as he does the audience. Throughout his work, Plato objects to mimetic arts on this basis, criticising them for making a man what he is not. The reaction to fear that he suffers is couched in physical rather than psychological terms. This visible, external fear also remains an important experience for the philosophers.

In the *Republic*, Plato comments on fear only occasionally. At 381e1-6 he writes:

μηδ' αὖ ὑπὸ τούτων ἀναπειθόμεναι αἱ μητέρες τὰ παῖδια ἐκδειματούντων, λέγουσαι τοὺς μύθους κακῶς, ὥς ἄρα θεοὶ τινες περιέρχονται νύκτωρ πολλοῖς ξένοις καὶ παντοδαποῖς ἰνδαλλόμενοι, ἵνα μὴ ἅμα μὲν εἰς θεοὺς βλασφημῶσιν, ἅμα δὲ τοὺς παῖδας ἀπεργάζωνται δειλοτέρους.

Mothers are criticised for making their sons cowards through instilling fear in them, and for simultaneously blaspheming against the gods. Literature making men afraid is a bad thing, because this makes men cowards, and cowards, one supposes, will not protect their city. Plato does not leave any room for this fear to have a positive purpose.

The physicality of Platonic fear is again evident at 387b8-c5, where he recommends purging literature of anything that will make the hearer shudder or shiver:

οὐκοῦν ἔτι καὶ τὰ περὶ ταῦτα ὀνόματα πάντα τὰ δεινὰ τε καὶ φοβερὰ ἀποβλητέα, Κωκυτοὺς τε καὶ Στύγας καὶ ἑτέρους καὶ ἀλίβαντας, καὶ ὅσα τούτου τοῦ τύπου ὀνομαζόμενα φρίττειν δὴ ποιεῖ ὡς οἶεται πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας. καὶ ἴσως εὖ ἔχει πρὸς ἄλλο τι· ἡμεῖς δὲ ὑπὲρ τῶν φυλάκων φοβούμεθα μὴ ἐκ τῆς τοιαύτης φρίκης θερμότεροι καὶ μαλακώτεροι τοῦ δέοντος γένωνται ἡμῖν.

Plato uses a greater range of vocabulary for his fear here, with δέομαι and its cognates as synonyms for φοβοῦμαι, and the physical reaction to the fear as φρίττειν and φρίκης, but the concerns he has are continuous with the views expressed earlier in the book and in the *Ion*. Gorgias reflects a similar attitude at *Fragment* 11.9.55-58: ἥς τοὺς ἀκούοντας εἰσῆλθε καὶ φρίκη περίφοβος καὶ ἔλεος πολύδακρυς καὶ πόθος φιλοπενθήs, ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίων τε πραγμάτων καὶ σωμάτων εὐτυχία.²⁰⁷

In *Republic* X, Plato broadens the picture. The theme here is the relationship between drama and grief, rather than fear. In demonstrating how the relationship between poetry and the audience functions in terms of the expression of a negative emotion, however, it is comparable to the material already discussed. At 603-6 he states that good men will be more moderate when they feel emotions such as grief, especially when they are seen. He suggests that men are pulled towards acting normally by reason and the law, and towards acting out their grief by painful experiences. In order to have something to imitate, the imitative poet must represent those who do not resist emotions. These are inferior men. The audience appears to take pleasure in watching these inferior men. Poetry thus encourages a bad influence in us, because we should be learning that quiet and not public pain is appropriate.

²⁰⁷ This is quoted at Laird (2006) 11. See also Belfiore (2006) 113 n.44.

Poetry is therefore of no use in educating men in how to behave when exposed to negative experiences.

This is summarised at 604c5-d1:

τῷ βουλευέσθαι, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, περὶ τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν πτώσει κύβων πρὸς τὰ πεπτωκότα τίθεσθαι τὰ αὐτοῦ πράγματα, ὅπη ὁ λόγος αἰρεῖ βέλτιστ' ἂν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ προσπταίσαντος καθάπερ παῖδος ἐχομένους τοῦ πληγέντος ἐν τῷ βοᾶν διατρίβειν, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ ἐθίζειν τὴν ψυχὴν ὅτι τάχιστα γίγνεσθαι πρὸς τὸ ἰᾶσθαι τε καὶ ἐπανορθοῦν τὸ πεσόν τε καὶ νοσήσαν, ἰατρικῇ θρηνηδίαν ἀφανίζοντα.

Non-rational drama cannot provide a cure for grief; this must be left to the rationality of medicine. Grief and fear have no positive use for the audience, and poetry is no way to deal with them.

Aristotle's model of drama is in sharp contrast to this. At 1449b24-28 he defines tragedy in terms of a complete action involving pity and fear:

ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρῶντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.

He repeats this form of definition at 1452a1-3:

ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐ μόνον τελείας ἐστὶ πράξεως ἢ μίμησις ἀλλὰ καὶ φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν.

At 1452a38-b3 he says that anagnorisis accompanied by peripeteia will involve either pity or fear:

ή γὰρ τοιαύτη ἀναγνώρισις καὶ περιπέτεια ἢ ἔλεον ἔξει ἢ φόβον [1452b] οἴων
πράξεων ἢ τραγωδία μίμησις ὑπόκειται, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὸ ἀτυχεῖν καὶ τὸ εὐτυχεῖν
ἐπὶ τῶν τοιούτων συμβήσεται.

and then at 1452b30-33:

ἐπειδὴ οὖν δεῖ τὴν σύνθεσιν εἶναι τῆς καλλίστης τραγωδίας μὴ ἀπλὴν ἀλλὰ
πεπλεγμένην καὶ ταύτην φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν εἶναι μιμητικὴν ...

We thus find four formulations of the premise that tragedy must represent complete actions involving pity and fear. He does not, however, describe the nature of the fear, as either physiological or psychological. The fear is not the end in itself and so he moves on. The questions remain how to produce these, and what might be their effects.²⁰⁸ As Russell and Winterbottom put it: 'Aristotle's answer to Plato, so maddeningly undeveloped, seems to be that tragedy presents us with objects (great and good men suffering terrible fortunes) that are proportioned to the degree of emotion they arouse'.²⁰⁹

When he discusses *pathos* as the third element of plot, at 1452b11-12, he describes it as an act involving destruction or pain. Pity is felt for those who suffer this pain, fear for oneself. Pity and fear can be elicited by means of spectacle, but are more effective if achieved through plot. His example is *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which, he writes, causes us to shudder and feel pity (1453b29-31). Pity and fear are not

²⁰⁸ There are some further references to both pity and fear in Aristotle, see *Magna Moralia* 1.7.1-2, *De anima* 403a16-18 and *Politics* 1342a5-11. The most comprehensive discussion is at *Rhetoric* 1382b, and 1375a7-8, 1378a19-24, 1386a27-29.

²⁰⁹ Russell and Winterbottom (1972) 88. On Longinus and the Aristotelian mean see further Whitmarsh (2001) 65. On katharsis as purgation, see Bernays (2006).

necessarily inherently negative emotions, but, through the effect of katharsis in the audience, can be pleasurable. The importance of katharsis to this thesis lies in the fact that pleasure is found in pity and fear, which are the effects of a plot-driven mimesis.²¹⁰ Where Plato dismissed fear as unproductive, Aristotle has incorporated a further stage in the process whereby the fear produced by literature is not an end in itself, but the means to a further emotional state, one of productive pleasure.

Pity and fear feature at several points in the *Peri Hupsous*. At VIII.2 Longinus suggests that pity, fear and grief can be found divorced from the sublime, because, although they are necessary to the production and achievement of the sublime, the sublime is not identifiable with any emotional response. When he discusses the power of Homer's poetry at X.4, it is to the terrifying aspects of the Homeric storms that he refers. At XI.2, in his discussion of amplification, he writes that it is no good without the sublime, unless there is pity. Pity is a part of the sublime that is sufficient in itself to cause a positive reaction. Finally, at XXXIV.2, when discussing good authors who lack sublimity, he claims that Hyperides is good at exciting pity, but no good in general. In referring to pity, fear and grief it seems Longinus is engaging with both Plato and Aristotle. He uses pity and fear in his sublime, but neither is identifiable with it, and so cannot be made to bear the complete weight of either praise or blame associated with the pleasure that comes from the sublime. He does not discuss the effect of acting on an actor, and by removing this intermediate stage between the text and the author he can ignore part of Plato's objection. The effects of pity and fear are not described in the physical terms found in Plato, but in their application towards the raising of an author heavenwards begin to offer a more psychological interpretation which is developed more thoroughly by later commentators. Again, we find Longinus adding to the previous tradition in an

²¹⁰ For further discussion of katharsis beyond the Aristotelian material considered in the rest of this thesis see Ferrari (1999), Halliwell (1987).

attempt to elicit a position more sympathetic towards the merits of (inspired) literature.

Terror was appreciated as an element of the sublime early in the eighteenth century. For John Dennis, terror was the most common passion, and his discussion of it invokes Longinus:

‘Fear then, or terror, is a disturbance of mind proceeding from an apprehension of an approaching evil, threatening destruction or very great trouble either to us or ours. And when the disturbance comes suddenly with surprise, let us call it terror; when gradually, fear.’²¹¹

In order to hurt us and precipitate this disturbance, things need to be powerful. Religious objects are the most powerful, and consequently will produce the greatest enthusiastic terror. On this point he referred to Longinus on *Iliad* XX: ‘I now come to the precepts of Longinus, and pretend to show from them that the greatest sublimity is to be derived from religious ideas’.²¹² Dennis continued with a list of things productive of fear:

‘But that we may set this in a clearer light, let us lay before the reader the several ideas which are capable of producing this enthusiastic terror; which seem to me to be those which follow, *viz.* gods, daemons, hell, spirits and souls of men, miracles, prodigies, enchantments, witchcrafts, thunder, tempests, raging seas, inundations, torrents, earthquakes, volcanoes, monsters, serpents, lions, tigers, fire, war, pestilence, famine, &c’.²¹³

²¹¹ Dennis (1704) §133.

²¹² *ibid.* §152.

²¹³ *ibid.* §209. The relationship between concepts of sublimity, Sophocles and the Gothic are addressed further in chapter 4.

For Dennis, poetic representations of danger can be as effective as real instances of danger in producing terror. It does not matter whether the apprehension of danger is real or imaginary. The closer the danger is, the closer the terror will be. Poets are skilled in bringing absent terrible objects in front of us.²¹⁴ This is reminiscent of Aristotle's comment that an averted misfortune can be just as good as one that happens.²¹⁵

Terror in both an Aristotelian sense and a Longinian sense formed a clear part of the pre-Burkean sublime aesthetic. Where Burke relates more closely to Longinus is in the psychological nature of his fear and the sublime.²¹⁶ Longinus, particularly William Smith's 1739 edition, provided foundations on which Burke was to build and innovate.²¹⁷ The novelty of Burke's treatise lay in its sharp differentiation between the sublime and the beautiful as mutually exclusive categories, related to the two different emotions of fear and love.²¹⁸ This has been summarised by the term 'the aesthetic of terror'. Terror is put at the heart of Burke's enquiry, but 'In Burke's view anything operating analogously to terror may also give rise to the sublime. Burke holds not that the sublime *is* terror but that it is either terrible, or acts upon us like the terrible'.²¹⁹ The emphasis on the distancing from real pain needed for the sublime reflects both Dennis and the ancient texts. Terror needs to be put at a distance in order to afford us pleasure; Burke's emphasis on astonishment means that it is 'fast mental disturbance', that is, 'terror', that he takes over from Dennis.

²¹⁴ In Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) 36-8. See also Monk (1960) 54.

²¹⁵ See Halliwell (2006) 136, 138.

²¹⁶ For Burke, sublimity involves the use of a range of factors to overwhelm the soul with fear and thus paralyse it so that reason is suspended and sublimity achieved. The relationship between the physical and psychological is not, however, ignored. Terror derives simply and directly from what evokes apprehensions of pain or death; pain and fear consist in an unnatural nervous tension: see Morris (1985) 301. On the one hand, these nervous tensions have an effect on the brain, but on the other, mental fortitude can have the physical effect of guarding the subject from feeling pain. Burke's example is Campanella on the rack during the Spanish inquisition (*Philosophical Enquiry* IV.4).

²¹⁷ See Boulton (1958) li, Lamb (1981) 123.

²¹⁸ May (1960) 530.

²¹⁹ Ryan (2001) 275. See also Weiskel (1976) 87.

The difference between pity and fear discernible in the Greek treatises is lost in the eighteenth-century version of real versus imagined sources of fear. All responses to what is terrible are couched in terms of experiences of terror productive of the sublime. Pity as a vicarious response to the suffering of another was no longer made part of the concept. The individual was placed at the heart of the sublime, and not the individual's relationship with anyone else.²²⁰ As with Aristotle, for eighteenth-century writers such as Dennis, fear was not an end in itself, but an emotion valuable for its ability to produce a further state, the experience of the sublime. At the point at which the sublime is produced, however, what emotion is supposed to be felt? Is the experience of the sublime one of pleasure comparable to Aristotelian katharsis? The sublime *is* the suspension of the soul due to the feeling of terror produced by an apprehension of danger contingent on certain real or imagined circumstances, but what does the person undergoing a sublime experience feel? This is not answered by many eighteenth-century philosophers. To the extent to which the sublime is a potential explanation of katharsis, it is not a very satisfying or satisfactory one. The suspension of the critical faculty results in the inability to form judgements, and to a position of agnosticism as to what constitutes the sublime. Rather than meet the challenge of explaining katharsis, theories of the sublime simply avoid it entirely.

Burke challenged this position with his conception of delight. I described his scheme of pleasure and pain above.²²¹ Logical problems with this scheme complicate its usefulness in enabling us to understand how pity and fear relate to the sublime,

²²⁰ To this extent a teleological view of eighteenth century aesthetics leading to Kant's anthropocentric *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* is perhaps fairer. As Goldthwait (1960) 25 summarises: 'Did Kant add anything to the concept of the sublime? Or was there room for any addition, when the concept already included the infinite? Yes; Kant made an addition whose significance would obviously have been great, if it ever had been developed. Kant adds to the content of the concept of the sublime the one element that has always been the most important aesthetic object for man: namely, man himself.'

²²¹ p. 40.

and, more importantly for my purpose, to the role of Sophocles in the eighteenth century. First, Burke used the terms pleasure and pain to denote both a situation or state and a feeling. We can be in circumstances of pleasure, and feel pleasure, disappointment or grief as we move up or down the pleasure axis. The ambiguity over the nature of the term used to identify a key emotion is unhelpful in unravelling what emotion is associated with the experience of the sublime as opposed to the circumstances by which it is produced or which it produces. Secondly, delight describes the emotion accompanying the move up the pain axis, towards the state of indifference. Yet, sublime pleasure (delight) is only felt as we approach the ultimate bottom threshold of overwhelming pain or death, in maintaining a small but vital distance between the subject and this dreadful state.

Despite these problems, the idea of fear and terror being a positive and productive part of the aesthetic landscape is clearly reflected in material discussing Greek drama. Basil Kennett reported Aeschylus' ability to terrify and astonish audiences through the story of the Eumenides making children swoon and women miscarry, concluding:

'Yet even in this Care of making Terror the Chief End of his Pieces, he seems not so much to have been out in the Choice as in the Prosecution of his Design. For, however the soft Movement of the Passions may have been usurped the chief Place in Tragedy, it is certain the Audience ought at times to be transported as well as gently agitated. *Horace* reckoned it the noblest Power of a Poet, when he acts with the Violence of Enchantments on the Persons he entertains,

-----*vanis terroribus implet*

Ut magus, & modò me Thebis, modò ponit Athenis.

And *Horace's* Great Rival among the Moderns declares , that a Tragedian will lose his Labour, if he does not mix the Force of Terrour with the Charms of Agreeableness and Sweetness:

Si d'un beau mouvement d'agreeable fureur

*Souvent ne nous remplit d'une douce terreur.'*²²²

In 1778, Earl Harwood wrote of Greek tragedy: 'In this Infancy of the Drama, it was one of the principal Designs of Tragedy to infuse Terror into the Audience' and he described how the Epimenides [sic] intimidated people.²²³ For Censor Dramaticus in 1793, Euripides' *Orestes* was the best for evoking pity and terror.²²⁴ In his general introduction to the history of tragedy, covering Thespis, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, John Adams wrote:

'Terror and pity constituted the soul of the ancient Greek tragedy; for that ingenious people, who, in every art and science, made nature their sole model, discovered that these two passions were the best adapted to affect the minds of the spectators. They seem to have disdained to move their audience, by exhibiting their heroes as the slaves of the softer passions, and unmanned by the effeminate cares of love, for they regarded weakness of that sort as a stain on their characters.'²²⁵

This combination of pity and fear shows a clear awareness of Aristotelian poetics. The precise term, however, is terror and not fear, which recalls Burke rather than Aristotle. The use of nature as a model recalls Longinus' theory of good art being the combination of art and nature at 2.1-3 which was also taken up by Burke. In just one short example, the influence of a range of poetic models is evident.

²²² Kennett (1735) 94-5. The French quotations are from Boileau.

²²³ Harwood (1778) 88.

²²⁴ Censor Dramaticus (1793) 85.

²²⁵ Adams (1797) 138.

1.5 Sophocles (as opposed to other tragedians) as Sublime

The contemporary language and concerns of aesthetic philosophy were demonstrably reflected in the general discussion of ancient tragedians, even if the focus of these discussions did not always coincide precisely with that of the philosophical treatises. When treating Sophocles in particular, the two genres (philosophy and classical scholarship) differ more markedly. I now turn to examine the extent to which both Sophocles the man, and his plays, were presented as sublime, and the different emphases placed on individual traits of the sublime.

Sophocles was described as the perfect tragedian from Boileau onwards:

‘Then Sophocles, the Genius of his Age,
Increas’d the Pomp, and Beauty of the Stage;
Improv’d the Choral Song in every Part,
And polish’d rugged Verse, by rules of Art;
He in the Greek did those Perfections gain,
Which the weak Latin never could attain.’²²⁶

To see Sophocles as the arch-Longinian Boileau’s perfect tragedian lays a path down which many others would follow. The reference to Sophocles as a genius mirrors the language of Longinus’ naturally talented man who then uses the ‘rules of Art’ (4). ‘Polish’d’ as opposed to ‘rugged’, again recalls Longinus. The language of decline also echoes the end of the *Peri Hupsous*.²²⁷ The effect of Boileau on British essayists and biographers must not be underestimated. His *L’Art Poétique* is quoted in almost every discussion of the tragedians. Basil Kennett quotes him in French,

²²⁶ Boileau quoted in English by Harwood (1778) 97.

²²⁷ For Burke, however, rugged and not polished verse is sublime. This representation of Sophocles concurs with the Longinian sublime, but will not be taken up by Burke, again possibly marking a break with Boileau’s interpretation of Longinus.

Not all commentators, however, even aimed to agree that Sophocles was sublime in the terms I have discussed. Robert Potter published the most well-received translation of Aeschylus in the eighteenth century. He eventually worked on Sophocles, but the merits of his translation were debated even in its own times.²²⁹ Potter deliberately left translating Sophocles until last, until well after his translation of Euripides (1781-3) because he had not wanted to supplant the work of Thomas Francklin, whose translation of Sophocles first appeared in 1758 and was reprinted regularly. The translations themselves are discussed in the next chapter, but even Potter's introduction may help to explain his approach to the tragedians. He described Sophocles as well-educated, beautiful, musically gifted and instructed in 'the noblest of all sciences', which are 'Civil Polity and Religion'. He explained these two with:

'from the first of these he derived an unshaken love of his country, which he served in some embassies, and in the high military command with Pericles; from the latter he was impressed with a pious reverence for the gods, manifested by the inviolable integrity of his life'.²³⁰

²²⁸ Kennett (1735) 95 on Aeschylus, 101 on Sophocles. Harwood (1778) 88 on Aeschylus, 97 on Sophocles, Seally (1788) 93, 94, 96, Censor Dramaticus (1793) 5 on Aeschylus. For further citations of Boileau by people who also wrote on Sophocles, see Jortin (1731) 70-2, 302-3, (1790) 519, 520; Adams (1792) 66-7.

²²⁹ e.g.: 'When we give this translation the praise of fidelity, it is all that we can afford: if that can be called faithful, which does not always do complete justice to the sense of the original... His performance is less a paraphrase than Francklin's; but his diction is not always poetic, and is often scarce grammatical, and to understand his meaning, we must sometimes have recourse to the Original. After his translation of Aeschylus, Mr Potter would, perhaps, have done wisely had he reposed on his laurels.' Brüggermann (1797) 104, reprinted from the *Monthly Review* for November, 1789, pp. 302-205.

²³⁰ Potter (1808) iii. A number of the points made by Potter are drawn from the ancient *Life*, see *TrGF* vol.4, T 5, 83, 87 for fragments of the Sophoclean *vitae*.

This combination of devotion to religion and state are recurring features of receptions of the OC, and we see them here echoed in discussion of the author himself.

He described Sophocles as loving his country so much that he refused to leave it; it is striking that, of the three tragedians, Sophocles was the only one to die at home, and ‘enjoyed the uninterrupted esteem and affection of his fellow citizens, which neither the gallant actions and sublime genius of Aeschylus, not the tender spirit and philosophic virtue of Euripides could secure to them’.²³¹ Here we see the contemporary language of the sublime applied to the ancients. Potter pushed the point further, claiming that Aeschylus was the ‘true Sublime’.²³² Only Shakespeare can match Aeschylus with an equally ardent and sublime genius, refuting Aristotle’s claim that in fifth-century tragedy, the form had reached its perfection:

‘It is proof of the commanding force of genius that, as the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, with all its faults, excels any thing that remains to us of the Grecian drama, so there are many tragedies of Shakespeare, though with more and greater faults, which are superior to the *Agamemnon*.’²³³

Of Sophocles in particular he wrote:

‘Sophocles had a noble elevation of mind, but tempered with so fine a taste and so chastised a judgement, that he never passes the bounds of propriety; under his conduct the Tragic Muse appears with the chaste dignity of some noble matron at a religious solemnity; harmony is in her voice and grace in all her motions’.²³⁴

²³¹ Potter (1808) iv.

²³² *ibid.*

²³³ *ibid.* iv-v. Note the reference to faults; see above for discussion of the presence of faults as a marker of sublime genius.

²³⁴ *ibid.* iv. The idea of tragedy as a matron is also present at Horace *Ars Poetica* 231-234.

The perfection of Sophocles' work detracts from its brilliance and his genius, in accordance with Burke's dichotomy between the sublime and the beautiful. Summing up the three tragedians, Potter used a further set of similes. He wrote that Aeschylus was sublime and noble, as a martial and impregnable castle on a rock; Sophocles had the splendid glory of an imperial palace with perfect symmetry; Euripides was pathetic, with the solemnity of a Gothic temple, arousing pity and terror.²³⁵ On Burke's criteria, this left only Sophocles as not sublime. This likening of the poets to architecture follows Francklin's description of them as painters. He wrote 'He [Euripides] was the Correggio of ancient drama, while Aeschylus was the Julio Romano and Sophocles the Raphael'.²³⁶ This time it was Francklin who described Sophocles as elegant, noble and sublime, the prince of ancient dramatists.²³⁷

On the OC in particular, however, Potter wrote:

'Though a soft melancholy is diffused through most of the scenes of this drama, and Pity is the passion to which they in general apply, yet there are some of a stranger and a rougher nature; Oedipus is not to die like vulgar mortals; the fate of kingdoms depends upon his death, and it is attended with circumstances of sublime conception which awe and terrify.'²³⁸

Rougher passions which awe and terrify return us to the Longinian and Burkean sublimities. Sophocles may not, for Potter, be a sublime author in any obvious sense, but the OC is, apparently, a sublime play. Has Potter described the OC in terms of the sublime because he wanted to make Sophocles sound more like Aeschylus for the sake of this play? Or is it simply accidental that the OC fits with ideas of the

²³⁵ Potter (1808) v.

²³⁶ Clarke (1945) 150. He notes that Potter also uses the analogy from painting. See also Harwood (1778) 100. For more on poetry and painting, see chapter 4 on Henry Fuseli.

²³⁷ See Clarke (1945) 149 on Francklin's *Dissertation on Tragedy*.

²³⁸ Potter (1808) 66.

sublime so well? However we read this, it is clear that our understanding of Sophocles in general and the OC in particular profits from a close reading in Burkean terms, even if it is only to confound a simple reading. The Burkean sublime requires confusion and conflict, which is precisely what we find in these different conceptions and descriptions of the OC, offering the reader another sublime experience.

Characters for all three tragedians were constructed on the basis of their work and ancient biographies (themselves dependent on the authors' works in many cases). When considering the ancient evidence, Sophocles appears to be the ideal sublime tragedian, but this is *not* reflected in any consistent portrayal by those writing in the eighteenth century. A contrast emerges between comments substantiated by ancient evidence, and those inspired by the viewpoints that would become Romantic. Considering the material written on Greek tragedians, it becomes clear that the development of aesthetic philosophy and its application in the eighteenth century was not a linear progression away from Aristotle, or Longinus, towards Kant, or Romanticism, for example, but involved a series of threads which reflected various trends with different degrees of importance at different points. The OC offers a particularly interesting route into examining how these threads might have been understood and applied in contemporary culture.

1.6 A Burkean reading of the OC

Potter's reading of the OC as given above couches it in language reminiscent of the Gothic novel. The Gothic Literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is founded on Horace Walpole's two short works, the novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and the play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), and draws heavily on Burkean

aesthetics. *The Castle of Otranto* provided a template for later Gothic novels.²³⁹ *The Mysterious Mother* provides the first suggestion that, rather than just containing general incest stories, there is a link with the Oedipus of Greek tragedy, being based upon the incest of a mother with her (unwitting) son. This oedipal motif is also present in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, which features a parricide.²⁴⁰ The idea of the Oedipus story is in keeping with Gothic motifs. The OC is particularly important as it is the after-effects of these situations, the sense of darkness, fatal history and wandering exiles which are so apparent in the genre.

This link between Gothic literature and the OC becomes clearer when we consider the background against which the narratives are set. Martin Myrone summarises this as:

‘Castles and dungeons, blasted heaths and sepulchral cells, forests and storm-ravaged cliffs, maidens in distress, rugged heroes, alchemists, wizards, ghosts, rotting corpses, bleeding nuns, monks, mad priests and viragoes, distressed lovers and imprisoned virgins, overwrought widows, sex, death, madness, incest, infanticide, patricide, matricide, rape and torture...’²⁴¹

This list invokes a range of different elements variously invoked in the OC. A complex and symbolically dense geography permeates the play, and this will continue to be a major theme in my thesis. Antigone and Ismene are virgin maidens, kidnapped (in distress) whose matrimonial future is uncertain. Polynices is portrayed as the evil son, but finishes the play departing as the tragic hero as met in *Antigone*, doomed to become the corpse left to rot unburied. Oedipus ‘dies’; as a wandering blind old king he shares some traits with King Lear, and was read as

²³⁹ Braudy (1973) 7 also discusses how the novel presages Fuseli’s distinction between the details of horror and the (sublime) ineffability of terror; Fuseli’s versions of the sublime are considered further in chapter 4.

²⁴⁰ For comment see Napier (1987) 38.

²⁴¹ Myrone ed. (2006a) 100-101. Compare this with John Dennis’ list quoted above (p. 75).

such in the eighteenth century, taking on aspects of Lear's madness.²⁴² His eventual daimonic power casts him as a mysterious and dangerous figure, in a play suffused with mystery cult in worship of the Eumenides, the Dark Goddesses. He commits incest, should have been the object of an infanticide but instead commits it by cursing his son; he commits parricide prior to the *OT*, and in his pursuit of truth pushes his mother to suicide, an indirect matricide. In many ways, the *OT* and especially the *OC* provide the epitome of the Gothic situation.

This overwhelming, mysterious darkness has its roots in Burke. The sublime involved the overwhelming of all our senses. This was not achieved through anything beautiful or measured, but through excess. The result was a disabling astonishment of the soul and fear, as apprehension of pain or death. Greek and Latin expressed this through words such as δεινός, vereor and αἰδέομαι which carry this fear and astonishment combined. Despotism and religion both express the combination of fear and awe, Burke's example being druids in depths of woods among oaks. This is a dark, confused, uncertain, terrible situation, and therefore sublime.²⁴³ Similarly, wherever God speaks it is terrible, and therefore awesome, and therefore sublime.²⁴⁴ All of these situations are found in the *OC* and its eighteenth-century reception.

In the *OC*, there are two moments when the gods can be described as communicating with Oedipus. The first is the non-verbal sign of the thunder:

Chorus: ἔκτυπεν αἰθήρ, ὦ Ζεῦ

OC 1456

²⁴² See chapter 4 for further brief discussion of the Oedipus-Lear connection.

²⁴³ Burke (1958) 59.

²⁴⁴ Burke (1958) 69.

The second is in the messenger speech, when the direct speech of the god is reported:

Messenger: ὦ οὔτος οὔτος, Οἰδίπους, τί μέλλομεν
χωρεῖν; πάλαι δὴ τὰ πό σοῦ βραδύνεται.

OC 1627

Alternatively, reading the play as a rehabilitation of Oedipus, the point at which Oedipus curses Polynices could be read as the work of a god. It does make us identify with Polynices, fearing for his life. There is a communicative element to this aspect of the sublime, which I will discuss further in chapter 4.

The Druids in the dark wood trying to invoke the presence of the gods is found in William Mason's *Caractacus*, first published just two years after Burke's work on the sublime.²⁴⁵ Here the first act alone represents the druids at night (in the dark) trying to start an initiation ritual (mystery religion) in an oak grove. This develops the sacred grove of the Eumenides and the olive trees found in the OC, and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

Gothic Literature is marked by its emphasis on place and atmosphere. On *The Castle of Otranto*, Martin Myrone comments that it was:

'the first novel we think of as 'Gothic', meaning that it dealt with themes that were supernatural, horrific or perverse and the damp, dank darkness evoked by that author's invented word, 'gloomth'.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ The play is discussed in its own right in chapter 3.

²⁴⁶ Myrone ed. (2006a) 101.

I have already demonstrated how in the OC geographical setting is of utmost importance, from the opening lines onwards, and this exemplification of a Burkean aesthetic is evident throughout the play. Both thematically and literally, the OC is also concerned with issues of darkness and mystery. Oedipus is blind and regains his sight, reflecting an 'inner darkness' turned to light. The grove of the Furies is represented by the door that would usually lead into a palace, and so carries connotations of going 'inside' into the dark on entrance. The focus on the mystery cult associated with the Eumenides, the establishment of a mystery cult to Oedipus and possible echoes of the Eleusinian mystery cult provides a triple reading of the play in such mystery terms. The grove is the site of an entrance to the underworld, further consolidating the relationship between mystery cult, death and darkness, expressed by means of place description. In terms of its general mystical tenor, the curse scene and its setting, the OC is a very Burkean play. Further aspects of this will be drawn out through subsequent chapters, but suffice it to say that although Burke does not mention Sophocles, the OC can easily be read as a Burkean text.

1.7 Conclusion

Aesthetic philosophy provided one of the most fertile areas of study for the imaginations of eighteenth-century scholars to pursue. Over the rapid development of the genre, the concept of the sublime came to play a central role. Inspired by and reacting to continental treatises such as Boileau's *L'Art Poétique*, which brought Longinus' *Peri Hupsous* into contemporary thought-space, the English and Anglo-Irish Enlightenment thinkers soon produced their own models, also depending heavily on ancient texts.²⁴⁷ Where other areas of eighteenth-century culture moved away from Greek influences to a greater reliance on Roman material, aesthetic

²⁴⁷ The contributions of Scottish philosophers such as David Hume have not been discussed here as they are not directly relevant to the reception of Sophocles.

philosophy clearly reflects the enduring importance of both Greek and Roman authors. Although eighteenth-century literature about Sophocles is inconsistent in its depiction of him in sublime terms, it becomes increasingly evident throughout the century that the *OC* is the epitome of the sublime play in Gothic terms. With this theoretical background in place, the remaining chapters in this thesis seek to explore what the effect of this aesthetic world-view meant to the texts, reworking, paintings and opera of the *OC* which were produced before 1788.

Chapter 2: From Stephanus to Brunck: the extraordinary life of texts

'The influence of Sophocles from the Renaissance to the present day has not been a steady pressure manifesting itself evenly through the centuries, and those who have written interesting pieces on this author during that period have not done so with a view to smoothing the path of any future editor who might wish to place before the public a continuous and developing discourse.... For the most part pieces dealing with Sophocles and X have been written from the standpoint of those who are more interested in X than in Sophocles.'²⁴⁸

The scholarship on any given author has not been produced in a cultural or political vacuum, but is as contextually contingent as any other work of reception. As Edith Hall writes:

'It is certain that researching the political agendas of the individuals who have responded to different ancient authors and artefacts has the potential to yield results that are not only intrinsically fascinating, but can illuminate the reputation and scholarly views that have attached themselves to these ancient authors. Indeed, since scholarship has usually provided the first line of interpretation of any particular author, in the form of editions and commentaries, it is *especially* important to pose the seventh question here suggested: (7) *how did the scholars responsible for the primary work on any particular ancient text personally see the world, and the place of classical literature within it?*'²⁴⁹

The operatic, pictorial and dramatic receptions of the OC are dependent on the editions their composers, librettists, artists and writers used. To understand how such works of reception reflect the text, we must understand the text they were

²⁴⁸ Dawe (1996) ix.

²⁴⁹ Hall (2008) 394.

reflecting. In this chapter, therefore, I investigate how culture informs and is informed by the transmission and translation of the texts of Sophocles.²⁵⁰ Where chapter one dealt with Sophocles in general, culminating in a Burkean reading of the *OC*, I now focus on the *OC* (*qua* text) in particular, and the plays published alongside it. I investigate how the textual and paratextual choices made by editors influence our understanding of the text, treating three classes of material: editions, scholarly works discussing textual problems, and translations.

From Stephanus (1568) to Brunck (1786), the *textus receptus* was that of Turnebus (and the Triclinian manuscripts). The text, however, did not remain static, but was emended by successive scholars. The presentation of the text, as well as the text itself, changed significantly over this third of the four periods of modern scholarship distinguished by John Sandys.²⁵¹ Careful examination of a range of aspects of the text demonstrates changing attitudes towards Greek in general and Sophocles in particular. After summarising the editions available in the eighteenth century, I discuss the effect of typography on understanding. The following examination of the engagement of eighteenth-century textual critics with Sophocles has several ends. It reveals what developments were made concerning the text, the text *qua* text; the kinds of points covered and the phases of attribution these have undergone also give us an insight into the nature of the eighteenth century and its inhabitants (and, I suggest, into the Sophoclean text *qua* literature). I then examine some eighteenth-century attitudes towards the discipline of translation, with a

²⁵⁰ See Finglass (2010) for a particularly clear discussion of the importance of transmission history in understanding a text. The approach is not novel though, see e.g. Bolgar (1971) 7, and the further call for such study in Lurje (2006). See Heath (2003) for a model of such performance and scholarship history in tandem, although this chapter differs from his methodology. For a summary of the textual history of Greek tragedy in particular see Garland (2004) although he does not mention the *OC*. On Sophocles in particular, see Jebb (1885), Turyn (1952), Speake (1978), Easterling (1982), Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990, 1997), Dawe (1978, 1994, 1996). For a call to relate classical scholarship to performance history more closely, see Macintosh (2008) 257-8. On the earlier history of textual transmission, see Reynolds and Wilson (1991).

²⁵¹ Clarke (1945) 1. On the particular importance of Bentley, see also Clarke (1945) chapter V. For discussion of the periods, see Sandys (1908) Preface.

particular focus on the translations of the *OC* and their notes, considering the ways in which they both reflect their context and also lead us to re-examine the play in its own right. Beyond typography, the formatting, frontispieces and associated literature (particularly epigrams) also affect our reading of a book, and I turn finally to these.

2.1 Use in schools

We must first note that it was in schools and at gentleman scholars' desks, and not universities, that much of eighteenth-century scholarship was being written and used. Much careful work was done in the public schools, even if Oxbridge was not the seat of academic excellence it could have been.²⁵² The amateur and pedagogical context is important in understanding the material under examination in this chapter. We must bear in mind throughout the chapter the audience for whom the texts and translations were intended, and their potential reactions. So I first briefly summarise the state of Sophoclean scholarship in eighteenth-century schools; the texts I then discuss in further detail are the anonymous 1722 and 1747 London editions, Johnson and Burton, alongside the conjectures and notes made by a number of scholars.

From its first publication in 1705 until at least 1758, Johnson's was the standard Sophoclean schoolbook.²⁵³ Sophocles was not, however, much studied in schools during the eighteenth century. In 1756-7, just before the last edition of Johnson's Sophocles and the publication of *Pentalogia*, Sophocles was entirely absent

²⁵² See Brink (1985) 23 on how universities were also acting as schools for younger audiences than today.

²⁵³ Clarke (1945) 59.

from the Winchester syllabus.²⁵⁴ By the end of the century, Winchester and Westminster were both teaching Sophocles.²⁵⁵ At Eton, Sophocles was similarly lacking, leading to the creation of books such as *Pentalogia*.²⁵⁶ John Burton (1696-1771) was a clergyman and schoolmaster, who taught at both Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and Eton College.²⁵⁷ In 1758, he published the first edition of his *Pentalogia sive tragoediarum Graecorum delectus*, which combines the five Theban plays in one volume. It was republished in 1779 by Thomas Burgess, with added notes, and reprinted in 1801.²⁵⁸ It contains *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone*, *Phoenissae* and *Seven against Thebes*, in this order. The unique conception of this book bears witness to the general resurgence in the popularity of the Attic dramatists seen in the late eighteenth century. This is attested as a general fact; it also reflects the

²⁵⁴ These included copies of the syllabus at different points in the eighteenth century, and receipts for book binding and repairs, telling us which books the school owned and used enough to require rebinding.

²⁵⁵ On Westminster and Eton see Ogilvie (1964) 83. Eton have very limited records, Harrow none. Shrewsbury, whose archives are otherwise excellent, also have no relevant material, nor does Rugby until Thomas Arnold's involvement with the school. Magdalen College School, Oxford, whose motto 'sicut lilium' links them to Eton, whose coat of arms includes a lily, abandoned their own syllabus in the eighteenth century to take on that of Eton; unfortunately they do not have any further records. On a smaller scale, Felsted School (founded 1564, where Oliver Cromwell's children were educated, with strong archives as a result) also have no record of Sophocles in the eighteenth century. For Nottingham High, see Thomas (1957) 88-9, suggesting that very little Greek was studied. Two points become clear: Sophocles was not a staple part of the eighteenth-century curriculum; eighteenth-century school archives are unfortunately particularly poor, making the material we do have particularly valuable. Samuel Patrick, who produced the second edition of *Pentalogia*, was a master at Charterhouse; unfortunately they have not been able to locate any eighteenth-century archive materials.

²⁵⁶ Although note that Johnson was also a master at Eton at one point.

²⁵⁷ See Courtney (2004). In Oxford he lectured twice a week on Xenophon and Demosthenes, see Clarke (1945) 32. Details about his life at Eton are scarce; he appears in college records but there is nothing substantial about his Greek teaching.

²⁵⁸ The 1801 edition appears to be largely a reprint of the 1758 edition, with an added section of *δευτέραι φροντίδες*. Unless otherwise specified, I work from this 1801 reprint. For points pertinent to the second edition in particular, I have consulted the 1779 original. Thomas Burgess (1756-1837) published a set of notes to the plays in 1778, also using the 1758 edition. On Burgess see Clarke (1945) 81. I list Burton's sources as an appendix at the end of this chapter, as printed by him rather than by their modern titles.

increasing importance of authors such as Longinus (for whom tragedy was so important) on the school syllabus.²⁵⁹ Ogilvie writes:

‘Only Eton and Winchester were unaffected by the great change of taste. Although Moberly numbered Thucydides among the elect, Wykehamists still devoted most of their energies to original verse compositions in Latin.’²⁶⁰

Even bastions of Latin conservatism were not unaffected by the pedagogical changes of the century. Pedagogy therefore provides the underlying theme of this chapter, as I investigate how the different aspects of Sophoclean scholarship affected the juvenile audience for whom they were mainly intended, and what effect this had on the type of scholarship in which scholars engaged.

2.2 *Available texts*

The eighteenth century is regularly criticised for producing little Greek scholarship of any merit, particularly in the field of Sophocles.²⁶¹ Jebb writes:

‘The long interval between the work of Turnebus and that of Brunck (1553-1786) produced, indeed, no edition of Sophocles which essentially altered the Triclinian basis adopted by Turnebus. The texts in common use were taken either from that of Turnebus, or (more frequently) from the modified reproduction of it by Stephanus or Canter...The seventeenth century had been

²⁵⁹ Longinus became a part of the syllabus at Winchester from 1766, under the headmaster Dr Warton.

²⁶⁰ Ogilvie (1964) 100.

²⁶¹ This is despite the noted preference of scholars for emending Attic tragedians, to the relative exclusion of biblical texts, see Clarke (1945) 2. Ogilvie (1964) 72 makes the point forcefully: ‘1700-50 was a period of torpor as far as undergraduate learning is concerned.’

almost entirely sterile in respect of Sophocles, and at its close scholars were ready to welcome a new editor.'²⁶²

It was a time ripe for new editions, but those before Brunck still failed to make a significant impression on the future of the text. In this chapter I evaluate the eighteenth-century editions on different criteria. I do not intend to promote poor scholarship, or to rehabilitate maligned scholarship, but to suggest different ways in which scholarship can be deemed important and consider the editions on these revised terms. Books such as John Burton's *Pentalogia* emerge from this analysis not necessarily as excellent texts, but as excellent books in their own contexts.

Before Brunck, the range of texts available to English scholars was indeed limited; *Biographia Classica* (1778) lists seven editions of the works of Sophocles:²⁶³

- i) Gr. 12mo. Editio Princeps. Venet. apud Ald. 1502. 10s 6d
- ii) Sophocles, Gr. apud Colinaeum, 12mo. Paris 1528. 7s 6d
- iii) Sophocles, Gr. with the Scholia, 4to, apud Turnebum, Paris 1553. 10s 6d
- iv) Sophocles, Gr. with the Scholia, apud Hen. Stephanum, 4to. Paris, 1568, 1l, 11s, 6d
- v) Sophocles, Gr. & Lat. with the Scholia, 4to. Paul Stephan. Genev. 1603. 10s 6d
- vi) Sophocles, Gr. & Lat. 3 vols. 8vo. Oxon. 1705, 1708. London 1746. This edition is superior to every other in Correctness. It has been often reprinted.
- vii) Sophocles, Gr. & Lat. 2 vols. 12mo, Glasgow 1746.

²⁶² Jebb (1914) xxxviii-xxxix. For a similar view, see Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990) 2.

²⁶³ Harwood (1778) 101. For a list of the texts consulted by Burton, see the appendix at the end of this chapter.

This is not a fully comprehensive list, but it does give a sense of the editions people were steered towards using. *Pentalogia* does not appear on the list, nor do the two anonymous versions produced in London (1722, 1747). Brüggerman also added information about these two editions (although he dated the 1747 edition to 1748).²⁶⁴

Three translations of all seven plays into English were published in eighteenth-century England by George Adams (1729), Thomas Francklin (1758-9) and Robert Potter (1788). Most of the plays were also translated and published separately; *Ajax* twice, *Electra* twice, the *OT* four times, *Philoctetes* twice. *Antigone* and *Trachiniae* were translated by Thomas Johnson in 1708.²⁶⁵ The plays of Sophocles were not produced or translated particularly frequently in the eighteenth century, especially in the first half. We have limited scholarly material on the play, but it was sufficiently influential to underpin a wide range of further creative interpretations.

2.3 Formatting

Before considering what and how scholars contributed to the development of the texts, I discuss the more tangible matter of how the texts of Sophocles were laid out, in terms of their formatting, line numbers and attributions, and typography. I suggest that especially given the juvenile audience of many texts, the very physicality of the books had an effect on the learning for which they were intended.

At a basic level, the schematisation of the text is interesting. All three translations of the *OC*, and Burton's Greek text, print the plays divided up into five acts. The other Greek editions do not. The aesthetic philosophers were trying to

²⁶⁴ Brüggerman (1797). He dated Johnson's Glasgow edition to 1745, as well as 1746. Writing later than Earl Harwood, he included the 1786 Brunck edition.

²⁶⁵ Note that several of these translations, such as the Johnson ones of 1705, 1708 and 1746, are into Latin, printed alongside the Greek.

make Shakespeare an English Sophocles, and here we see Sophocles presented in a Shakespearean style. This appropriation of Sophocles into an English cultural framework demonstrates one type of reception that Classics underwent in eighteenth-century England, emphasising similarity rather than difference, the Greeks as our cultural ancestors rather than an alien other.²⁶⁶

2.4 Typography

The influence of developing scripts on textual criticism is well-documented.²⁶⁷ In the eighteenth century, a large number of printed ligatures were still being used, reflecting the practice of the early editions and their source manuscripts. I suggest that the influence of these typefaces may also be more substantial than previously acknowledged. The development of the printing press did not remove the potential for textual corruption. In some senses it may even have increased it. The *editiones principes* were usually printed from the current humanist copies 'the text of which represented a chance mixture of traditional readings with conjectural emendations'.²⁶⁸ In the case of Sophocles, Aldus Manutius is charged with not having collated his sources with sufficient care.²⁶⁹ The *textus receptus* established for the *editiones principes* then became the source of further printed texts, and critical scholarship on the text reduced, but did not cease entirely.²⁷⁰ Errors could be reproduced and disseminated at a rapid rate. Appearance in print results in a level of presumed authority for the text which means it is less easily challenged, and

²⁶⁶ See chapter 3 and my discussion of William Mason for more on this idea.

²⁶⁷ Although Martin West suggests that the influence of scripts on the textual criticism of Sophocles has been overemphasised: 'The rise of miniscule script, with its cursive ancestry, brought a much wider range of abbreviations into use...However, it is possible to exaggerate its importance: abbreviations are not actually misread as often as some ingenious emenders think.' West (1973) 28.

²⁶⁸ Kenney (1974) 4.

²⁶⁹ Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990) 1. See also Kenney (1974) 18.

²⁷⁰ Kenney (1974) 18. Neither the Aldine, nor the Turnebus nor Juntine, but the Stephanus edition of 1568 became the base text of subsequent English editions before 1786 (notably Canter, Field, the anonymous London editions, Johnson and Burton).

textual problems can be propagated rather than corrected.²⁷¹ Volumes regularly contain incorrect page and / or line numbers, and errors in such details suggest the potential for further textual inaccuracies to arise.

The text printed in each edition may have been (almost) identical, but the typeface in which it is printed varies more considerably.²⁷² Each editor used a slightly different set of ligatures. Learning (indeed even reading) all of these make following the different editions more taxing for each generation of scholars, and increases the potential confusion over the interpretation of a syllable. Printing Greek was a problem from the first editions onwards, particularly regarding accents and breathings, and the ligatures did not help.²⁷³ These problems are exacerbated when we remember that the texts were being used as schoolbooks for students who would find Greek a challenge to start with, let alone in its complex printed form. Students would become used to reading the ligatures, but the lack of consistency between and within editions, and the hundreds of possible ligatures would still pose a greater challenge than a simple alphabetic notation.

The texts of Sophocles so far mentioned each employ slightly different sets of ligatures, with different distributions. Lines 1-8, for example, appear as follow in three different versions:

1722 Tonson and Watts

τεκνὸν τυφλῷ γέροντι Ἀντίγονη, τίνας
χώρης ἀφγμεθ', ἧ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν;

²⁷¹ On the rise of palaeography and its effect on attention to the physicality of books and the representation of writing, see Gurd (2005) 109.

²⁷² The important textual differences in the printed texts are discussed below.

²⁷³ Kenney (2001) 65. On Aldus Manutius as the trend setter, see Kenney (2001) 67; on Denys Lambin being the first to use typographical variations to distinguish lemmata from commentary and quotations, see Kenney (1974) 64.

τίς τ' πλανήτῳ Οἰδίπῳ καθ' ἡμέραν
Τῷ νῦν σπανισοῖς δέξε' ὧ δωρήμασι;
Σμικρὸν μὲν ὄξαι' ὄν' α, τῷ σμικρῷ δ' ἔτι
Μεῖον φέρον' α, καὶ τόδ' ὄξαρκοῦν ἐμοί.
Στέρφειν γὰρ αἱ πάθαι με χῶ χρόν' ὧ ξιωνῶν
Μακρὸς διδάσκει, καὶ τὸ γλυνάιον τρίτον.

Burton (1759)

TEKNON τυφλῷ γέροντος Αντιγόνη, τίνας
Χώρου ἀφίγμεθ', ἢ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν;
Τίς τὸν πλανήτῳ Οἰδίπῳ καθ' ἡμέραν
Τῷ νῦν σπανισοῖς δέξετα' δωρήμασι,
Σμικρὸν μὲν ἐξαιτῶντα, τῷ σμικρῷ δ' ἔτι
Μεῖον φέροντα, καὶ τόδ' ἐξαρκῶν ἐμοί;
Στέρφη γὰρ αἱ πάθαι με, χ' ὧ χρόνος ξιωνῶν.
Μακρὸς διδάσκει, καὶ τὸ γλυνάιον, τρίτον

Field (1673)

τεκνον τυφλῷ γέροντ' Αντιγόνη, τίνας
χώρου ἀφίγμεθ', ἢ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν;
τίς τὸν πλανήτῳ Οἰδίπῳ καθ' ἡμέραν
τῷ νῦν σπανισοῖς δέξετα' δωρήμασι;
Σμικρὸν μὲν ἐξαιτοῦντα, τῷ Σμικρῷ δ' ἔτι
μειον φέρον' α, καὶ τόδ' ὄξαρκοῦν ἐμοί.
στεργειν γὰρ αἱ πάθαι με χῶ χρόν' ὧ ξιωνῶν
μακρὸς διδάσκει, καὶ τὸ γλυνάιον, τρίτον.

Ligatures are used throughout the whole text, but inconsistently, so that both the shorthand and the word καὶ can be found within the same line, see, for example,

Antigone 182 (OCT 176) Ψυχλή τε καὶ φρόνημα ἔ γνώμῳ, πρὸν ἄν. This leaves much potential for misreading. This is particularly evident in some of Burton's notes, where he uses the ligatures inconsistently in discussing textual variants, for example at OC 187 (OCT 195) the text reads: ' Ηοῦω, while the *apparatus* reads: ἦ' οἶω; ιτα. ἦζω T.L.S. The ligature masks the different readings offered. It might be expected that when discussing different potential readings, spelling them out clearly would be useful, but this is not what we see. This makes the *apparatus* more of a record of difference than an aid to the reader in thinking about the differences.

These ligatures used in the specific typeface are not the only orthographic anomaly of interest. The spelling of words such as γιγνώσκω and γίγνομαι is also relevant. In *Pentalogia*, parts of γιγνώσκω and γίγνομαι are sometimes written with -γν-, sometimes simply with -ν-. The change reflects a change in spelling and pronunciation in Attic Greek after Aristotle; the OC predates this change and so we might expect the older spelling to be retained in texts which have some desire to reflect the 'original'. There are fourteen places in the three Sophoclean plays where -γν- could be expected, but it is only found in four examples:

Table 2: distribution of -γγ- versus -ν- in Burton and Field

| Word | Play | OCT line no. | Burton line no. | Field line no. | - γν-? |
|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------|
| γίγνεται | OC | 259 | 251 | 250 | No |
| | | 607 | 600 | 599 | No |
| | | 615 | 608 | 607 | No |
| | OT | 1408 | 1407 | 1407 | No |
| | Antigone | 232 | 238 | 238 | Yes |
| | | 650 | 662 | 665 | No |
| γίγνεσθαι | OC | 396 | 384 | 383 | Yes |
| γίγνου | OC | 291 | 283 | 282 | No |
| γιγνώσκω | OT | 1325 | 1334 | 1339 | No |
| γιγνώσκων | OC | 941 | 935 | 934 | Yes |
| | Antigone | 188 | 194 | 193 | No |
| ἐγιγνόμην | OC | 272 | 264 | 263 | Yes |
| ἐγίγνωτο | OT | 127 | 127 | 126 | No |
| | Antigone | 260 | 266 | 266 | No |

The gamma is inserted in the same place in both Field's text of the 1660s-1670s, and Burton's *Pentalogia*. Burton's text is not identical to Field's, as demonstrated by lines 1-8 above, so it is perhaps surprising to find such orthographic continuity. What it does suggest, however, is that the distribution of -γγ- versus -ν- was not something that concerned eighteenth-century editors.²⁷⁴ Scholarship had different ends. Typographical consistency is not maintained in eighteenth-century texts. This makes reading them a more specialist task and increases the risk of misreading specific syllables. The printed text did not necessarily make life easier for the scholar or student.

²⁷⁴ In contemporary volumes, New Testament texts and textbooks do not print the gamma, whilst Classical Greek books do. In the eighteenth century, the interaction between Biblical and Classical scholars and texts was far greater, and so this difference becomes less important.

The treatment of lacunae provides a further formatting issue of interest.²⁷⁵

Lacunae are printed at different places in each edition, reflecting what the editor thought was missing, usually linked to developing understanding of metre and responsion. Burton's line numbers differ markedly from the OCT. His total numbers of lines disguise this difference in being largely similar:

Table 3: total play line numbers

| Play | Burton no. lines | OCT no. lines |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| <i>OT</i> | 1529 | 1530 |
| <i>OC</i> | 1779 | 1779 |
| <i>Antigone</i> | 1355 | 1353 |
| <i>Phoenissae</i> | 1795 | 1761 |
| <i>Septem</i> | 1086 | 1078 |

Although his *OC* comes to a total of the same number of lines, within the play there is great variation, so that by the kidnap scene, line 833 in the OCT is 817 in *Pentalogia*. The difference is perhaps most noticeable in *Phoenissae*, where Burton's tendency to maintain manuscript readings at all costs means that interpolations are not excised, leading to a total length longer than the *OC*, which would otherwise be considered the longest extant tragedy. The modern line numberings for Sophocles are based on Brunck's 1786 edition. For Euripides, they are based on Joshua Barnes' 1694 edition. The further eighty-two years it took for the establishment of the Sophoclean standard further demonstrates the relative lack of critical work on Sophocles in the eighteenth century.

²⁷⁵ I return to *lacunae* in the *OC* below (p. 119).

2.5 Textual Criticism

'The main occupation of classical scholars was with the establishment of texts. It was a task which badly needed to be done. One only has to compare a modern Oxford classical text with an edition published in the early part of the seventeenth century to appreciate the enormous number of improvements which eighteenth-century scholars introduced.'²⁷⁶

In the previous section I suggested that typography has the potential to affect textual criticism. Whether the typographical variations between eighteenth-century editions are significant or not, however, it is clear that some form of textual criticism was being practised. I now turn to discuss the form this took and the relationship such criticism has with our understanding of both the text and the nature of eighteenth-century scholarship. I comment on Sophoclean editions from the anonymous 1722 two-volume edition until Elmsley's 1823 OC, with a focus on those scholars who worked in England and whose work predated Brunck's 1786 edition.

Lloyd-Jones and Wilson exhibit a pessimistic outlook on the value and potential of Sophoclean textual criticism:

'The manuscripts contain a great deal of corruption, as even conservative critics can hardly refuse to admit, and the difficulties of the language are such that even if we possessed a text corrected by the author no living scholar could be confident that he could translate it without error.'²⁷⁷

Whatever the truth of this statement, people continue to try both to 'improve' and to understand the text in culturally contingent ways. E.J. Kenney summarises the relatively haphazard state of textual criticism in the eighteenth century as follows:

²⁷⁶ Ogilvie (1964) 71.

²⁷⁷ Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1997) 9.

‘Until the opening decades of the nineteenth century brought awareness of the historical processes by which classical texts had been transmitted and editorial criteria could be devised which would take proper account of the realities thus revealed, editors of texts were largely engaged in a piecemeal and haphazard attempt to undo the damage that had been inflicted in the period between the ninth century and the Renaissance.’²⁷⁸

Eighteenth-century Sophoclean scholarship provides an excellent case study of the development of textual criticism. Six kinds of text can be discerned:

- i.) Those such as John Field’s editions of the 1670s have no textual notes, and any alterations from the *textus receptus* are unacknowledged.
- ii.) The anonymous London editions and Johnson’s editions print occasional notes to give variant readings.
- iii.) John Burton’s *Pentalogia* provides a running summary of many alternative readings and occasional comment on these.
- iv.) Books of miscellaneous notes such as Dawes’ *Miscellanea Critica* and Wakefield’s *Silva Critica* include information on individual words and lines of interest.
- v.) Generations of scholars alter existing editions with either their own suggestions or notes of those other.
- vi.) Individuals wrote letters suggesting readings to each other.

In this section I focus on the relationship between categories ii.), iii.), iv.) and v.), inevitably drawing on material from category vi.) but without recourse to specific letters.

²⁷⁸ Kenney (1974) 4.

It is possible to chart points of historical anchorage in the development of a text. As Miriam Leonard writes:

‘The scholar of the ancient world must always work with texts which are torn from their context, displaced and in disguise. But the ineradicable traces of history always return to haunt the receiver. What is more, the past has a transformative effect on the present no historian can hope to control.’²⁷⁹

Sean Gurd sets out an argument for what can be learned through and about the study of textual criticism:

‘My work on this project was sustained by a belief that every literary study of classical literature must be informed with knowledge of how it is produced. This does not simply mean studying authorial processes and publishing structures in antiquity; it also means studying the intellectual technology used in the production of those texts available to us – critical editions. Only a clear picture of how textual criticism produces and disseminates classical texts can provide a basis for their well-grounded literary study.’²⁸⁰

He makes his goal:

‘to assess the realities involved in the multiple productions of a classical text so as to facilitate a literary philology alive to the fact of plurality. I call this a *radical philology*.’²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Leonard (2008) 217.

²⁸⁰ Gurd (2005) ix.

²⁸¹ *ibid.* x.

Gurd outlines how this idea of trying to study texts in their original context is related to Winckelmann's style of Classicism, viewing Greece as a lost region of ideal unity; he notes how such an approach, viewing text as if an outsider with a bird's eye view, fails to appreciate that the texts have been produced divorced from their original context.²⁸² Consequently, I now turn to each of the editions of Sophocles produced and explain how editors engaged with their readers and discipline by means of the texts they chose to print, reading the editions in their contexts.

2.5.1 Anonymous

'It is at once admitted that where a *conjectural* emendation is adopted, the name of its first author should be given. Even this, however, is not always quite a simple duty.'²⁸³

Much space is used in the modern *apparatus criticus* naming the proposers and referring to the sources of different conjectures and emendations. This becomes far harder when the source is anonymous, but such sources remain valuable. Two anonymous editions of all seven Sophoclean plays were published at the press of Tonson and Watts in London, in 1722 and 1747. These are not identical, although they share much in common and would appear to be the product of the same unknown editor. The text itself has not been changed, but a number of footnotes have been added. These number between twenty and sixty per play, and so do not make a significant difference to the text. Some of them, however, have endured. Both editions are mentioned from Elmsley's 1823 *Oedipus Coloneus* (claiming to follow Brunck) through to modern *apparatus critici*, however, as both print a number of conjectural readings.²⁸⁴ With reference to the OC, just one reading is attributed to the 1722 edition:

²⁸² *ibid.* 25. Winckelmann is discussed further in chapter 4, with reference to Henry Fuseli.

²⁸³ Campbell (1879) viii.

²⁸⁴ Elmsley (1823) v. His list of editions includes Burton, but not Johnson.

617 τὰ ed. Londinensis a. 1722: τε codd.

On this, little more need be said, except that, as a unique reading, it establishes the edition as a text whose editor was thinking critically.

Editions from at least Heath (1762) onwards, including both Lloyd-Jones and Wilson's OCT and Dawe's Teubner, attribute up to four readings to the 1747 edition.

- (i) 44 ἀλλ' ἴλεω μὲν τὸν ἰκέτην δεξαίατο – τὸν editio Londinensis a. 1747 τὸνδ'.
- (ii) 865 θεῖέν μ' ἄφωνον τῆσδε τῆς ἀρᾶς ἔτι – τῆς ed. Londinensis a. 1747 γῆς codd.
- (iii) 1109 δυσμόρου τε δύσμορα - γε ed. Londinensis a. 1747 τε codd.
- (iv) 1402 τοιοῦτον οἶον οὐδὲ φωνῆσαι τινι – τινι ed. Londinensis a. 1747 τινὰ codd.

Not one of these four readings appears in the anonymous 1747 edition. (i), (ii) and (iv) are, however, present in the 1746 Johnson edition published in Oxford, of which more below. (iii) remains more elusive. Elmsley prints a note:

Δυσμόρου γε δύσμορα.] [Legendum] δυσμόρου γε. REISK. Legendum cum editore Londinensi δυσμόρου γε. MUSGR. Perperam libri omnes δυσμόρου τε. BRUNCK sic omnes MSS. nostri.²⁸⁵

A later hand annotating Bentley's copy of the Stephanus attributes it to Tyrwhitt, confirmed by Tyrwhitt's own marginalia in his copy of the Stephanus.²⁸⁶ Tyrwhitt's

²⁸⁵ The London editions both read τε. Brunck reads γε (*tacite*).

contribution to Sophoclean textual criticism is discussed further below, but at present it suffices to note that in their general disregard for mid-eighteenth-century scholarship, editors have missed a great deal of detail.²⁸⁷

2.5.2 Johnson

In 1705 Thomas Johnson brought out an edition of *Ajax* and *Electra*; in 1708 one of *Antigone* and *Trachiniae*. It was not until after his death in 1746 that the remaining three plays, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Philoctetes* were published as a group.²⁸⁸ The three Theban plays were not published together, but *Antigone* was brought out separately.²⁸⁹ The complete plays were brought out in 1745, and reprinted frequently²⁹⁰, notably in 1758. His edition prints the text with very little annotation, but includes (Latin) endnotes discussing some aspects of the text, and the Triclinian metrical scholia. The notes cover matters of textual variants, e.g. p. 531, on v. 247, he notes: 'Edit. LOND *οὐ καλῶϊς* – Displicet *τὸ καλῶϊς*'. He also provides cross-references with other ancient works, and with English literature. At p. 523, with reference to *OC* v. 503 *ἀφέρπειν ἄστροφος* he notes Virgil *Eclogue* CIII.161 and Ovid *Fasti* V.439. At pp. 538-9 he quotes a section of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, which was partly influenced by the *OC*.²⁹¹ Comments such as at p. 531:

²⁸⁶ Bentley's notes to the Stephanus (transcribed by T. Kidd) is to be found in the Cambridge University Library Rare Books Room, Adv.b.52.10. The later hand is probably one Andrew Downes (1549-1628). For reference to Downes, see Ogilvie (1964) 32, Sandys (1908) 336-7. Tyrwhitt's copy was bequeathed to the British Library and deposited there on his death in 1786, classmark 653.c13.

²⁸⁷ This particular error is repeated at *Philoctetes* 730, which is misattributed to the 1747 edition but is another example drawn from Johnson's 1746 text.

²⁸⁸ See Goodwin (2004).

²⁸⁹ They are first published as a trilogy by Burton (1759), as discussed below. The first translation of the play as a trilogy seems to be F. Storr's 1916 Loeb, followed by E. F. Watling's 1947 Penguin edition. The first instance I have found of the play being performed as a part of a Theban play trilogy is an 1872 production in Germany.

²⁹⁰ Notably, it was reprinted in 1758; I discuss the significance of the dates below (p. 155).

²⁹¹ See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 12-14, and Morwood (2008) 115-119.

317 Στείχουσιν ἄσσον ἡμῶν, Αἰτναΐας ἔπι – Spondaeus in pede quarto.

Malim ἡμιν, ultimâ brevi, vel si vis, ἡμιν, neque enim de accentibus
litigebamus.

further demonstrate that metrical issues were a concern. A schoolmaster, it seems his edition was produced for use in schools, where discussion of the text itself was not the prime objective. With translation skills in mind, the parallel Latin translation can be read as a 'crib'. The edition was widely disseminated and appears to have been used in a range of schools. The reader is presented with an uncontroversial text to read, with some ideas to think about at the end.

2.5.3 Burton

John Burton's text takes a completely different approach, with similarly pedagogical aims. His contribution to Sophoclean scholarship has not generally been reckoned of enormous value. The edition is noted at Brüggerman (1797) 102, without comment. It became a part of the Eton Greek syllabus from the 1760s onwards. The lack of reprints after 1801 suggests a less than favourable reception, and it was quickly supplanted by those of such men as Brunck, Elmsley, Dindorf and Hermann. Burton is not mentioned by Highet; Sandys mentions him only to comment disparagingly on Thomas Burgess and his 1778 commentary.²⁹² In what follows I discuss the edition not in order to claim that it is particularly erudite or influential, but to appreciate some of the ways in which it reflects contemporary conceptions of scholarship, yet also strives to reconfigure these.²⁹³

²⁹² Highet (1964), Sandys (1908) 105.

²⁹³ Burton is mentioned at Money (1998) 91, 205, 331n.5 for his Latin verse, and his place alongside such other writers as John Jortin, of whom see n. 228.

The edition opens with the longest introduction of any eighteenth century edition: twenty-two pages outlining the history of the edition and its pedagogical outlook, followed by a list of the texts used in compiling it,²⁹⁴ sixteen pages summarising the plots of the plays included, ninety pages of *δευτέραι φροντίδες* in the 1801 edition, and some *addenda*. A variety of features bear witness to Burton's pedagogic aim.²⁹⁵ In his preface, he wrote:

‘Non cupimus, id quod esset plane infinitum, Criticorum hominum fastidiis satisfacere, sed juventutis literarum Graecarum studiosae utilitatibus prospicere;’²⁹⁶

This is the first comment he made designed to show that his text was intended for educational use. Pages 14-19 of his *praeloquium* discuss the use of Latin in the book, and the various parts that make up the edition. Latin is used throughout; he included a ‘Lexicon sive Vocabulorum Quae in his quinque Tragoediis occurrunt notatu digniora, Explicatio’ at the end of the book, saving his readers the trouble of looking up words elsewhere. The lexicon is also in Latin; Burton may have tried to help his younger readers, but even they were expected to understand a reasonable amount of Latin.

Throughout his commentary, he provided a number of glosses to explain points of criticism, accident and syntax, for example:

OC 29 Νῶϊν] Μονοσυλλάβως, hic legitur per synizesin²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Burton (1801) 54-5.

²⁹⁵ In 1758 Burton also published *De litterarum graecarum institutionibus dissertatio critica*, a letter originally written to his nephew in 1751. Further discussion of the introduction is included below, pp. 113-114.

²⁹⁶ Burton (1801) 8.

OC 87 ἐξέχρη] Tertia Persona Singularis Imperfecti Activi (ut videtur) verbi ἐκχράω. Fit autem secundum Atticam formationem, qua α ex contractionem natum in η mutatur.

OC 336 Τὰμὰ δυστήνου κακά] Pro τὰ ἐμοῦ δυστήνου κακά. Pro Substantivus enim Genitivi casus ponere solent Graeci Adjectiva Possessiva.

Such comments indicate a range of readers are expected. Parsing notes help the beginner, stylistic notes the more advanced; this edition may appeal less to the ‘serious’ scholar, as such comments may be found patronising. Yet, a large amount of minute scholarship has gone into its preparation, choosing readings etc., suggesting that to some degree Burton used this edition to attempt to demonstrate his own scholarly credentials.

One of the other unusual features of the *Pentalogia* is that Burton tagged a number of lines with inverted commas.²⁹⁸

Table 4: lines marked “... in Burton

| Play | Total no. lines according to Burton | Lines marked “... | % |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------|
| OT | 1529 | 26 | 1.79 |
| OC | 1779 | 41 | 2.30 |
| Antigone | 1353 | 119 | 8.80 |
| Phoenissae | 1795 | 94 | 5.27 |
| Septem | 1086 | 10 | 0.92 |

²⁹⁷ All references are to the 1801 line numbers. Where important, the corresponding line numbers in the Lloyd-Jones and Wilson OCT are also included.

²⁹⁸ “ is printed at the start of the phrase and any following lines.

These lines appear to be *sententiae*, quotable lines, perhaps for transcription into commonplace books, leading the text to function in a didactic context. Some of the lines are also marked with footnotes, but many are not. For example, *Antigone* 181-189 is marked; this has a footnote: 'Totum hunc locum, usque ad vers. 196. recitat Demosthenes in Orat. *περὶ Παραπρεσβείας* p.331. edit. Franc....'. Burton noted that this passage was quoted by Demosthenes (and then Stobaeus) but does not quote the whole passage himself. His use of quotation marks thus becomes harder to understand. Most are only short passages; the longest continuous quotation is *Phoenissae* 548-59; the only dialogue is OC 800-2:

Oedipus: ἄνδρα δὲ ἰδέν' οἶδ' ἐγὼ
 Δίκαιον, ὅστις ἐξ ἅπαντος εὖ λέγῃ.
 Creon: Χωρὶς τό, τ' εἰπεῖν πολλὰ, καὶ τὰ κάρηα.

This passage is marked by Burton as sententious, providing a good example of Sophocles' philosophical thinking, going some way towards justifying the play's inclusion in the volume.²⁹⁹ The didactic function of the text is further expressed in the opening notes, where Burton gave a list of sources discussing the play, covering Valerius Maximus viii.c.7 §. 12, Cicero *Cato Maior de Senectute* ch. 7, Macrobius, Apollodorus, Homeric Scholiasts and Pausanias.³⁰⁰

Pentalogia was intended as an educational text, and its lexicon, commentary and marking of sententious lines bear witness to this aim. The edition also contains by far the most comprehensive set of textual notes of any eighteenth-century edition. Burton attempted to make transparent the sources of his text and the possible

²⁹⁹ See Long (1968) for discussion of how Sophocles' use of abstract nouns demonstrates his engagement with late fifth-century philosophical thought. Opstelten (1952) provides a detailed discussion of Sophocles as a supposed pessimist.

³⁰⁰ These were common sources for information about the play, See Kennett (1697, 1735²), Simm (1753), Harwood (1778), Seally (1788).

variations on it. Elmsley's description of him as *ab omni critica disciplina alienissimus* demonstrates that this was not an entirely successful way to promote confidence in his abilities as a critic.³⁰¹ It does, however, represent the first attempt at a reasonably comprehensive Sophoclean *apparatus criticus*; Burton sensed a need to engage critically with the text of Sophocles and lay the issues before his young readers.

Pentalogia was also the first time that the Theban plays were collected in this way.³⁰² Burton gave an explanation for his choice in his introduction:

Si forte quaerat, cur potissimum hunc tragoediarum delectum fecerim, sciat hoc a me non temere aut improvide factum: imo [sic] vero rationes haud leves suadebant: 1. Materiae ipsius dignitas, quam quidem cum Epopoeia poesis tragica communem habet; cum haec et illa sit πράξεως σπουδαίας imitatio. 2. Dispositionis artificium singulare, praeclara illa σύστασις πραγμάτων καὶ ἐπειδοσίων οἰκονομία, quae in hoc poeseos genere prae caeteris eminet; in quo nempe circumstantium incidentium ratio habetur accuratissima, et actionis, loci, temporis unitas servatur inviolata. 3. Effectus morales, κάθαρσις τῶν παθημάτων, cum in affectibus tum commovendis tum etiam moderandis mira illius vis perspiciatur, et ad mores demum rite componendos disciplinae huiusce fructus redundant. 4. Metri, harmonia, rhythmique varietas, quam Musa tragica exhibuit eximia quadam arte conditam, μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων. Atque equidem hac in parte cupio adolescentes nostros diligentius exercitari: pudeat tamdiu in hexametris et pentametris, in epigrammatis forsitan, vel uno atque altero Iliados Homericae libro haerere, nec ultra progredi, aut quidquam ultra sapere sublimius: cupio potius in liberiora poeseos spatia evocari, ad altiora oculos animosque erigere, ita ut ad theatrum Atheniense haud omnino ἐν τῇ μουσικῇ ἀμύητοι accedant.³⁰³

³⁰¹ OT Preface iv quoted at Clarke (1945) 230.

³⁰² For a summary of the play's first thousand years of transmission, see Easterling (2006b). The idea of the collection is repeated once, by William Trollope in 1825, under the title '*Pentalogia Graeca: Sophoclis Œdipus tyrannus, Œpidus Coloneus, et Antigone; Euripidis Phoenissæ: et Æschyli Septem contra Thebas: quinque dramata de celeberrima Thebaide scripta / notis anglie scriptis illustravit et lexicon vocum difficiliorum adjecit Gulielmus Trollope*', published in London by C. and J. Rivington. The concept of this collection did not otherwise catch on. It also inspired at least one further collection, Pote's *Pentalogia*, but this contained *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, *Philoctetes*, *Prometheus Bound* and *Plutus*; see Clarke (1945) 16-17.

³⁰³ Burton (1801) 4-5.

This passage demonstrates an Aristotelian poetics underlying Burton's edition, most obviously by means of the Greek quotations. He continued to quote Aristotle extensively throughout the edition, including in a footnote to his description of Aristotle in the next paragraph as *Auctor gravissimus*.³⁰⁴ Despite his clear attention to the Greek, his reasoning demonstrates that he is following the sixteenth and seventeenth-century conception of the 'Unities' developed by Castelvetro.³⁰⁵ A key contemporary codification of the unities was Boileau's 1674 *L'Art Poétique*, and English aesthetics had reacted against them in part as a reaction against such French criticism.³⁰⁶ Dacier's 1692 edition of Aristotle's *Poetics*, however, remained an important influence on English aesthetics, and Burton had read his work. He referred to Dacier in his commentary on OT 1316:

*Al' ai' Notat Dacier id esse assecutum Sophoclem, quod erat difficillimum, non longa verborum ambage temere luxuriatem, sed quae ipsa res tulit emphatice conquestum.*³⁰⁷

Burton's use of Aristotle does not necessarily appear novel in the context of eighteenth-century aesthetics, but the term *sublimius* in the final section above refers us to the concept of the sublime, suggesting that he was engaging with the growing eighteenth-century interest in Longinus. This is seen in his choice of example texts in his commentary; commenting on line 30 of *Phoenissae*, he cited Lucretius *DRN* II.6, an important passage in the development of the concept of the (Longinian) sublime

³⁰⁴ For example, he refers to *Rhetoric* iii.6 at his commentary on OT 1194 (1801:216-7), and quotes *Poetics* 13 at length on OT 1202 (1801: 217-8)

³⁰⁵ On the development of the 'Aristotelian' Unities, see Halliwell (1986).

³⁰⁶ See Blanning (2001) 311, for example.

³⁰⁷ Burton (1801) 225. Dacier's edition of the *Poetics* (1692) proved a turning point in the reception of Aristotle, and he is credited with being the first to write a Christianised reading of the OT, see Lurje (2006) 8. This Christianising interpretation of Greek drama will continue to be important in my analysis of the broader reception of the OC in eighteenth-century England.

in the eighteenth century (DRN II.1-6).³⁰⁸ Burton explicitly cited Longinus at a range of points in the text:

OT 1402 pp. 229-30 Ὡ γαμοί γαμοί - Haec doctissimus Rhetor Longinus in insigni libello de Sublimitate §. 23. qui, ubi hos et tres sequentes versus laudaverat, statim subjungit:...

OT 1405 app. crit. τὰντον codd: τὰντὸ Longinus

OC 1458 Ἰδε μάλα μέγας Locum hunc ante oculos habet Longinus in libello de Sublimitate §. 15. p.66 edit. Toup.³⁰⁹

Septem p. 499 on name of play: Ita in omnibus MSS. editisque... Longinus in libello περὶ Ὑψους c.19.

Septem 42 p. 502 Ἄνδρες γὰρ] Locum hunc adducit Longinus in libello περὶ Ὑψους sect. xv. ubi vide quae erudite observarunt egregii Interpretes, Langbainus et. Tollius.

Septem 45 p. 503 Ἄρην τ Bar. 4 Ald. et excusa Longini Exemplaria. Ἄρη τ Seld. Longini Cod. optimus Parisinensis, et MS. Vat. primus.

Septem 45 p. 503 Ἐνωὶ - Ἐνωῶ Longini MS. nuperrime laudatus.³¹⁰

Textually, Longinus preserves two variant readings, OT 1405 and Septem 45, neither of which were printed by Burton. Longinus may be useful in interpreting the spirit of the piece, but not its letter. Burton continued to draw on the *textus receptus* for his

³⁰⁸ Lucretius' role in the development of Burke's sublime with reference to Sophocles is discussed in Ryan (2010). For a history of the Lucretian sublime see Porter (2007). Martindale (2005) ch. 4 includes a post-Kantian analysis of Lucretius.

³⁰⁹ The specific reference to Toup's edition belongs to the second edition of *Pentalogia* as Toup's edition of Longinus was published in 1778.

³¹⁰ Note that he does not refer to the text in the same way at the different points. There does not appear to be any pattern to these differences.

readings, demonstrating the way in which eighteenth-century scholars went about their textual criticism, and it is to this aspect of Burton's text that I now turn.³¹¹

In treating Burton's approach to the text *qua* text, I deal first with *Phoenissae*, given its particularly complicated textual history. In the *Appendix Coniecturarum* of his (1988) Teubner edition of *Phoenissae* Mastronarde notes twelve conjectures found in the two editions of *Pentalogia*. Most of these are anonymous, but three are credited to Markland.³¹² This list of conjectures from Burton raises a range of issues about the status of the critical text in the eighteenth century. My particular focus here is on Burton's engagement with other scholars. I cite below the noteworthy examples.

3.) Line 194 ποθοῦσ' Markland apud Burton, Pental^{2 313}

7.) Line 596 βεβηκῶς Reiske 1754 (deinde etiam Markland [apud Burton 1758] et Musgrave 1778)

8.) Line 598 οὐδ'εν' var. lect. (vel anonymi coniectura?) apud Barnes; etiam coni. anonymus apud Burton, Pental²

Conjecture 7 suggests that the anonymous conjecture was made independently by both Reiske and Markland (apud Burton).³¹⁴ The entry for this conjecture in Burton reads:

³¹¹ Modern editors do cite the reading of OT 1405, but not the one of *Septem* 45.

³¹² In his *praeoquium* Burton writes at length in a positive analysis of Markland's academic abilities: Burton (1801) 9-10.

³¹³ I can only locate eleven of these conjectures in the 1758 and 1779 editions of *Pentalogia*, no.3 not appearing in the notes, *apparatus criticus* or commentary to either edition.

³¹⁴ Clarke (1945) 51. In the dedication to his *Supplices* Markland wrote: 'What profit is it if an education in letters instead of making us, as it professes to, gentle, upright, simple, frank, modest and kindly towards all men, renders us fierce, virulent, cunning, arrogant, malignant and implacable towards all who presume to differ from us even in trifles?' This moral aspect to eighteenth century pedagogy must be borne in mind more generally.

609: Ἐγγυς, οὐ πρόσω βέβηκεν ita H. legit: sc. *prope adest, non longe abiit*. Cl. M. sic: Ἐγγυς, οὐ πρόσω βεβηκῶς, sc. *Tu, qui non longe a me es, aspiciasne manus meas?* N.B. *πρόσω* cum gen. non significant (quod K. vult) *ante vel coram* – sed *procul a* &c. Quid autem? si hic interpungas: Ἐγγυς· οὐ πρόσω βεβηκῶς· εἰς χέρας λεύσσεις ἐμάς; haec certe reduplicatio est familiaris, et sententia redditur faciliior.³¹⁵

Reiske is not credited. His 1754 *Anthologiae Graecae* and the first volume of his *Animadversiones* (1757) could both have influenced Burton, but the latter does not appear to have used his work.³¹⁶ The first edition of *Pentalogia* took a long time to prepare, but the second edition could have incorporated material initially overlooked.³¹⁷ It is not the case that he was simply oblivious to continental philology; in his introduction he mentions an edition from Leiden that he is using, for example.³¹⁸ His comments about the work of Valckenaer also demonstrate that he was aware of work outside England, but chose not to use it:

³¹⁵ Burton (1801) 121-2.

³¹⁶ There are now only five copies of this available in UK libraries (National Library of Scotland, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and the V&A) which suggests that it may not have been readily available in the eighteenth century either.

³¹⁷ In the preface to his book, Burton says that the book had been conceived long before but had taken a particularly long time to reach publication for two reasons. One was that raising funds proved difficult, and he ended up reliant on bequests from a couple of particularly generous individuals (Burton [1801] 3). The other is that he had delegated some of the work to his pupil Joseph Bingham, who had, unfortunately, died leaving him with a half-finished edition (Burton [1801] 4). He does not give any further information about Bingham. The *DNB* includes details of a Rev. Joseph Bingham (1668-1723) whose younger son, another Joseph Bingham, may be the person in question. He does not specify how long the volume has taken to be finished, but the long gestational period and multiple editors have several effects. Firstly, it makes it hard to ascertain to which contemporary scholars Burton could refer. His interaction with various editions and scholars will be discussed in more detail below, but it is important to note from the start that this is a problem in interpreting Burton's text. Secondly, there is a fragmenting effect on the text, which lacks consistency in the ways it refers to people and texts.

³¹⁸ Burton (1801) 6-7.

Quare desinat Lector mirari, si in Phoenissis Valkenarii (qui quidem serius quam oportuit ad manus devenerunt nostras) Commentariis parcius usi videamur.³¹⁹

In his apparatus criticus and commentary, Valckenaer is not mentioned at any point. The *δευτέραι φροντίδες* mention him just twice, *parcius* indeed.³²⁰ Bearing in mind that this is a school book, Burton was understandably concerned that Dutch philology might be beyond his school audience. The *Addenda vel Corrigenda*, however, include 39 entries under 'Conject. et Emendat. e Valkenario.'³²¹ In an attempt to retain scholarly credibility, Burton did use Valckenaer's edition, however little he may have wanted to admit it and however well he hid the evidence.

Conjecture 8 mentions Barnes, who provides a good counter-example of a more positive engagement with contemporary scholarship on Burton's part; Burton included his conjecture, taking his work seriously. Once of the most frequently noted scholars is Scaliger, whose use by Burton Jebb summarises disparagingly:

'The readings of Joseph Scaliger, to which John Burton sometimes refers, seem to have been found by the latter in a copy of Estienne's edition. The notes of H. Estienne are given entire, -'magis propter nominis auctoritatem quam quia magnam Sophocli lucem attulit'.³²²

³¹⁹ Burton (1801) 8. Note that both Askew and Valckenaer were annotators of the 1705 Oxford edition of Sophocles.

³²⁰ 1.) l. 469 p. 120 ἀδελφὸν δ'εἰσοῦσα γ'ἦκοντα σὸν – Cl. M. ita potius legendum censet quam εἰσοῦσας cum verba haec sint *Jocastae* hortantis vel imperantis – qualia sunt illa sequentia ad *Polynicem* Σὺ τ'αὖ πρόσωπον στρέφε – hic pro Γοργόνοσ *Valckenarius* l. γοργούς. 2.) l. 1447 p. 126 φεῦ, φεῦ· κακῶν σῶν, Οἰδίπου, γ' ὅσον στένω – haec Choro, non autem *Creonti* tribuit *Valckenaar*. et quidem scribit Οἰδίπους.

³²¹ Burton (1801) 143-4.

³²² Jebb (1885) liv.

Even if Burton did not engage with Scaliger or Stephanus as critically as Jebb would like, he did at least draw on multiple textual traditions in an attempt to give an overview of the situation, in contrast to his predecessors.³²³

The nature of his textual criticism can be discerned further from a careful reading of both the text and notes. He printed readings that he noted were not perfect, such as at line 992 (Lloyd-Jones and Wilson [1990] 998) he noted: “*γὼν* rectius putat Hen. Stephanus. Tu, Lector, expende, an tam feliciter conjecturam fecit vir doctus’. This entry invites the reader to engage with the process of textual criticism, perhaps also pointing towards a pedagogical outlook for the text. At other points in the commentary, he made comments about readings he does, or does not like, and gave short opinions of other editors, but this is all buried in his greater notes, and does not usually affect the text printed.

The (choral) lacunae in the OC form my final example. At 184-187 Lloyd-Jones and Wilson print a lacuna for the sake of responsion within the *kommos*. 1718-19 is also printed as a lacuna, and 1733. In *Pentalogia* Burton marks only one of these lines as a possible lacuna, 1716 (= OCT 1718), in order to match his reading of 1686-90. He did, however, introduce his own lacuna, for metrical reasons, at 1567, with the note: ‘Quartus hic Antistrophes versus debet esse Anapaesticum, Dimeter, Brachycatalectus. Impressi omnes hic errant...’³²⁴ This makes it clear that he was interested in the metrical aspects of the play. His note on OC 29: ‘*Νῶιν*] *Μονοσυλλάβως*, hic legitur per synizesin’,³²⁵ states the monosyllabic nature of the word, and such an interest in scansion is continued in notes such as that to 47: ‘*πόλεως*] *Duarum syllabarum*’. We might therefore expect metrical considerations to

³²³ On Scaliger’s scholarship see Finglass (2009b).

³²⁴ Burton (1801) 305-6.

³²⁵ See p. 110 above.

colour his readings of problem words and lines, but this is not straightforwardly the case. From this example in particular, it is clear that Burton tried to use some concept of metrical responsion in order to justify his text; eighteenth-century scholars were not devoid of metrical awareness. The inclusion of Triclinius' metrical scholia in many of the printed editions suggests that those working on Sophoclean textual criticism could be more aware of the potential contribution of metrical analyses than would those working on other authors.

As the first edition to print a large range of textual notes, Burton's edition was novel. He may not have changed the text very much, and posterity may not have remembered his edition, but it marks a decided turning point in the history of Sophoclean scholarship. Its dissemination throughout the schooling world will have influenced the boys who went on to shape the editions, scholarship, politics and artistic culture of the future.

2.5.4 Tyrwhitt

Thomas Tyrwhitt (1730-1786) worked on Chaucer, Euripides, Plutarch, Babrius, Strabo, Aristotle, Isaeus, Euripides and Aristophanes. Tyrwhitt is not known to have published on the textual criticism of Sophocles but in his correspondence with Brunck he made a range of conjectures and emendations, which were printed by Brunck in his 1786 edition, attributed to Tyrwhitt. Eighteenth-century editions of Sophocles, however, tell a slightly different story, and it appears that Tyrwhitt was making more of a contribution to the history of the Sophoclean text than previously imagined. In Bentley's copy of the Stephanus edition of Sophocles, a later hand has written a series of notes in the margin attributing various conjectures and emendations to Tyrwhitt. For the OC, there are twenty-seven such marginal notes, with a further three comments made on the printed notes. Tyrwhitt's

own copy of the Stephanus also contains a range of marginal notes but these are not identical to the ones attributed to him by the Bentley copy. Tyrwhitt's copy contains two notes not found in the Bentley copy (on lines 1259 and 1365), while Bentley's copy contains three not found in Tyrwhitt's (on lines 1169, 1213 and 1661), and three comments on the text of the notes. It is not surprising that Bentley's copy should not include all the notes found in Tyrwhitt's own copy; the transcriber might never have seen Tyrwhitt's copy, or might not have deemed it necessary to transcribe every alternative reading offered there. It is more surprising that the Bentley edition includes a total of six comments not found in Tyrwhitt's own work. They suggest that the transcriber was misattributing his notes, or that he had a separate, previously unknown source. The quality of the notes is not as relevant as the fact that there is a historical trail behind them which invites exploration, and which also demonstrates the path eighteenth-century scholars and scholarship was taking. It is, therefore, worth examining each note and its context.

1169

OCT: ὦ φίλτατε, σχές οὐπερ εἶ.

Stephanus: ὦ φίλτατε, ἐπίσχεις οὐπερ εἶ

Note: ἴσχεις Tyrw.

Tyrwhitt was not the first to propose this reading. According to Lloyd-Jones and Wilson in the OCT, it is found in *Lrz*, that is, in the manuscripts *L*, *R*, *Q*, *Zn* and *Zo*. Burton printed *ἐπίσχεις*, but noted:

ἴσχεις προ ἐπίσχεις resposui (approbante H. Stephano) sola edit. Flor. auctoritate, ut pes secundus sit Iambus. Alteram autem lectionem, εἴχεις ἥπερ εἶ, cujus meminit H. Steph. item T ad calcem suae editionis, mendosam esse patet.

Field prints ἐπίσχες οὐπερ εἶ (v.1164).

Tyrwhitt may, therefore, have been the first eighteenth-century English editor to make use of this reading, even if it was not his own conjecture.³²⁶

1213

OCT: ζώειν, σκαιοσύναν φυλάσσω

Stephanus: ζώειν σκαιοσύναν αἰεὶ φυλάσσω

Note: ~~αἰεὶ~~, delet. Tyrw.

This deletion is also not new. The OCT does not print αἰεὶ, but notes that it is an addition from Triclinius. Burton did not print it, but noted:

αἰεὶ φυλάσσω legunt hic edit. Steph. Turn. Cant. C. Rationem cur illud αἰεὶ expunxerimus, si Strophē cum Antistrophe conferas, facillime assequeris. Ibi enim versui huic apponitur βῆναι κειθεν | οθεν περ η | κει, qui est Antispasticus Dimeter, Hypercatalectus. Sed nullo modo sibi respondent, si recentiorum Impressorum fidem sequeris: lege igitur nobiscum ex auctoritate antiquarum optimarumque edit. Ald. Col. Franc. Flor. Ζωειν σκαιο | συναν φυλασ | σων. Si omnia rectissime procedunt, et versus versui ad amussim quadrat.³²⁷

³²⁶ Elmsley (1823) vi claims to be following Burton here.

³²⁷ As a contrast, Field (1673) printed αἰεὶ.

Burton's comment again demonstrates the extent to which metrical concerns did influence eighteenth-century textual criticism. Again, Tyrwhitt's reading was not new. This time there was also a precedent in print.

1661

OCT: ἀλλ' ἢ τις ἐκ θεῶν πομπός, ἢ τὸ νερτέρων

Stephanus: ἀλλ' εἰ τις ἐκ θεῶν πομπός, ἢ τὸ νερτέρων

Note: L. ἢ Tyrw.

In the OCT, Lloyd-Jones and Wilson do not provide a provenance for this reading, nor does Dawe in his Teubner edition. Burton printed ἢ τις, with the note:

Ald. Franc. Col. Flor. Turn. Cant. ἢ τις, ut nunc est in textu, exhibent: edit.

Steph. C. εἰ τις, puto minus bene.

Again as a control, Burton has not taken this over from Field, who printed εἰ (v.1656). Again, we see that Burton invested his comment with a personal voice. Again, Tyrwhitt did not make a new conjecture, but perpetuated an existing reading.

None of these three, then, can be attributed to Tyrwhitt as genuine emendations or conjectures. There remains one reading for which Tyrwhitt must be cited, that of OC 1109. The source for this remains unknown, but it demonstrates the heightened engagement with matters of textual criticism that the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and Brunck's edition, brought. The Bentley copy passed through

a number of hands and reveals a consequent layering of the text and emendations to it. Tyrwhitt's own book does not attribute his comments, but it also does not explicitly claim them as his own. The origins were not his concern. This was his private book and he annotated the text as he thought fit. Tyrwhitt may not have been the first to make these points, but the fact that they can be credited to him demonstrates the extent to which his contribution to the development of the text of Sophocles was valued, and the extent to which people were not paying that sort of heed to the editions that preceded him.

His contribution to eighteenth-century scholarship and culture more generally, however, is of greater significance. Tyrwhitt was also the scholar credited for unmasking Chatterton's Rowley forgeries, and then Macpherson's Ossian ones. As Ogilvie writes of his approach:

'It trained men in firm, critical standards of appraisal which were to be much needed as the taste for the gothick and the medieval with all their pretentious impostures burgeoned.'³²⁸

Once again, the aesthetic philosophy of the age and the technical procedures of scholarship are shown to be directly linked, with a Sophoclean scholar at the heart of proceedings. Textual criticism may not have been immune from the pretensions of the romantics, but it did play a role in unpicking some of them.

2.5.5 Others

A further selection of eighteenth-century scholars deserve mention for their Sophoclean criticism and place in contemporary cultural politics. I discuss each only

³²⁸ Ogilvie (1964) 71.

briefly, but each contributes something to our overall understanding of the contemporary intellectual, artistic and political climate.

Benjamin Heath (1704 -1766) was a town clerk in Exeter, who possibly never went to university. He was given an honorary Oxford DCL in 1763 for his *Notae sive Lectiones* (1762).³²⁹ He argued that a return to the Aldine text of Sophocles was needed, but did not publish this, leaving his suggestion to be followed up by Brunck. He made very few references to the OC in his *Notae sive Lectiones*. One example is his discussion of v.16, printed in the OCT as: *χῶρος δ' ὁδ' ἱερός, ὡς σάφ' εἰκάσαι, βρύων*. The OCT apparatus reads: *σάφ' εἰκάσαι α· ἀπεικάσαι* l s. l., rzt: *ἀφεικάσαι* l in linea. Heath wrote: 'Mihi magis arridet lectio *Aldina*...' to describe his preferences for the non-standard reading.³³⁰ The same comment is repeated of v. 52. This expression of personal preference makes it clear that he engaged critically with the text, and that the Aldine edition maintained some status throughout the Turneban century. At line 44 he credited the anonymous London edition: 'Recte Editor *Londinensis* *τον ἱκέτην*. Vox enim haec primam semper corripit.'³³¹ I have already discussed this reading, but in context here it is notable that it took just fifteen years for the misattribution to occur, and a scholar as careful as Heath could still make such errors.³³² He makes frequent references to Mudge, to Canter, and even cited Valckenaer's *Phoenissae* (59); he engaged with both British and Dutch scholarship, therefore.

Zachary Mudge is an example of a scholar whose work is known through Heath. His own publications were all sermons, but clergymen also occupied

³²⁹ See Ogilvie (1964) 71-2.

³³⁰ Heath (1762) 56.

³³¹ *ibid.* 56.

³³² The other errors are also replicated.

themselves by conjecturing on Greek tragedy. One of the most discussed and contested two lines in the OC are 1583-4, for which Mudge also made a conjecture, credited in Heath.³³³ Mudge is a good example of the theologian, not working in a university context, whose Greek-related thoughts are transmitted by means of personal correspondence rather than academic publication.³³⁴

Richard Dawes published his *Miscellanea Critica* in 1745, and referred to the OC five times, but at each point as a footnote to a point about another play rather than a discussion about the OC in its own right. The longest discussion comes under his notes on Aristophanes, where he commented on OC 1248 as a parallel to *Knights* 703.³³⁵ His work is comparative, between both plays and authors. Only the fifth and final part treats tragedy, in this wide-ranging book of miscellany. Its broad but specialist nature make it seem unlikely that this would have been a school text, or indeed a text for general perusal elsewhere.³³⁶

Gilbert Wakefield (1756-1801) published a series of volumes of 'interesting points' entitled *Silva Critica* in 1789-95, of which Sandys writes: 'A passion for tampering with the texts of the Classics pervades all the five parts of his *Silva Critica*...'.³³⁷ The work remains of interest as a product of its time and of a remarkable man. In it he discussed a range of topics, including both the OC and

³³³ Kirkwood (1987) 184. The interpretation of these lines in particular is important for a Christian reading of the play. They deal with whether Oedipus receives eternal life, see also Easterling (2006a) 139-140 and Ferrari (2003). Easterling argues against this interpretation of the line, stressing that the characters view Oedipus' departure as death, not transfiguration or apotheosis, and that this is essential, along with the uncertainty surrounding the death, in order to maintain the tragedy.

³³⁴ Note that Mudge sat for Joshua Reynolds, whose involvement in the reception of Sophocles will be discussed further in chapter 4. For an example of a conjecture by Mudge being ignored, see Finglass (2007c) 432n.66.

³³⁵ Dawes (1781) 333. 1248 is his line numbering. Even bearing in mind the changed eighteenth-century conventions, the OCT line number is 1190, which suggests that Dawes got the wrong line. The word *πάτερ* appears in both, which may explain a skim-reading error.

³³⁶ The second edition of this was done by Thomas Burgess in 1781, who had also re-edited Burton's material.

³³⁷ Sandys (1908) 430.

Longinus' *Peri Hupsous*. He made just one change to the text of the OC, at lines 1720-1.³³⁸

Αλλ' ἐπει ολβίως γ' ἐλυσε

Το τέλος, ὦ φίλαι, βίη,...

which he emended to:

Αλλ' ἐπει ολβίως γ' ΕΛΙΣΣΕΙ

ΤΟ ΤΕΛΟΣ, ὦ φίλαι, βίη.³³⁹

His engagement with the text is not extraordinary, but the critics and texts with which he engaged are indicative of the changing tide of scholarship and its relationship with contemporary culture and politics. Wakefield was a strong political activist. Imprisoned in the 1780s for his views on the French Revolution, he also campaigned against slavery in Liverpool in 1779, which may have brought him into contact with the young William Roscoe, who was to lose his parliamentary seat in 1807 for voting in favour of the abolition of slavery, and who became patron to Henry Fuseli.³⁴⁰ In 1786 Wakefield published an edition of the poetry of Thomas Gray. This would have brought him into contact with the Rev. William Mason, who had inherited Gray's papers after his death in 1776 and published the first literary biography of him. His interest in Gray is also seen in his two Latin translations of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, both published in 1776.³⁴¹ This poem, well-known across England, is credited as being one of the founding texts in the Gothic movement.³⁴² One of the most well-known artists in this movement was Henry Fuseli, whose two paintings of the OC demonstrate a close engagement with the text

³³⁸ Being post-Brunck, his line numbers are in line with modern conventions. He does cite Brunck, whose text had come out just three years before this book (e.g. 164).

³³⁹ Wakefield (1789) 161-2. The omission of diacritical marks is Wakefield's.

³⁴⁰ Roscoe and Fuseli are discussed further in chapter 4.

³⁴¹ See Gibson et al. (2008) 68. On Gray's contribution to the scholarly circles on Cambridge see Sandys (1908) 417. He is discussed further in chapter 3.

³⁴² Throughout this thesis I use Gothic in its 'neo'-Gothic sense, that is, referring to the eighteenth-century refashioning of the term and not to its original historical, architectural context.

of Sophocles, and will be discussed further in chapter 4. The same people were politicians, artists, poets and scholars, and they collaborated over their work in different fields. Biographical investigation demonstrates how scholarship and the creative arts form two aspects of the same process of the reception and appropriation of our Greek heritage.

Jonathan Toup (1713-1785) is known in part for his *Emendationes in Suidam* (1760-66), and again, he made some comments on the OC. On the hill of Demeter mentioned at OC 1596 by the messenger, he wrote 'Quare non est quod de hac emendatione dubitemus' in response to the Scholiast's note.³⁴³ In choosing the note about the hill on which to comment, Toup demonstrates how important the topography of the OC is to its interpretation.³⁴⁴ He also emended line 673, commenting on the word.³⁴⁵ This is from the Colonus Ode, another locus of important topographical detail, and religious awe, vital to the play's interpretation.³⁴⁶ He also published an edition and (Latin) translation of Longinus in 1788, as discussed in chapter 1, which further links his comments on the OC with the aesthetic of the sublime which informed all readings and uses of the OC in the eighteenth century.³⁴⁷ Toup thus provides a good example of the scholar who may not have published a ground-breaking edition, but whose work is nevertheless both interesting and indicative of the prevalent academic practices and cultural milieu.

The importance of Brunck's edition of 1786 is mentioned elsewhere, but, since he worked outside of England, I pass over his achievement to conclude this section with one of his successors, Peter Elmsley. His 1823 OC edition is thorough, and

³⁴³ Toup (1760-66) 172. On Toup's academic background see Sandys (1908) 417-8.

³⁴⁴ The topography is considered in more detail in chapters 3-5.

³⁴⁵ Toup (1760-66) 673.

³⁴⁶ See the introduction (pp. 19-24) for a brief discussion of this.

³⁴⁷ Sandys (1908) 418 says of this edition that it 'gave Porson the first impulse to classical criticism'. Thus we see the work of a lesser scholar inspire a greater one, and Longinus play an indirect role in motivating the production of great textual scholarship.

marks the start of a new phase of scholarship on it in England.³⁴⁸ Elmsley drew on a large range of previous editors, most especially Brunck and the two anonymous London editions. His opinion of Burton may not have been high, but he cited the edition, where he did not cite Johnson. He was the first to invoke a systematic appeal to the manuscript L, and his edition thus provides a clear terminus for this phase of Sophoclean scholarship, collating the work of the eighteenth century, offering some kind of criticism of it, and moving on from it.

One final example will suffice to demonstrate the importance of textual criticism to our understanding of the eighteenth century towards Sophocles. Even the line attributions in the *OC* reveal something of textual criticism and cultural prejudices. From around *OC* 1735 the names of speakers have been called into particular question.³⁴⁹ At *OC* 1751, someone says to Antigone and Ismene:

παύετε θρήνον, παῖδες· ἐν οἷς γὰρ
 χάρις ἢ χθονία νύξ, ἀπόκειται,
 πενθεῖν οὐ χρή· νέμεσις γάρ.

Cho. Cease, Virgins, from these Lamentations; for those to whom desired Death hath happen'd, we ought not to lament; it is a Fault.

Adams (1729)

Cho. We should not weep for those who wished to die,
 And meet their fate with pleasure; 'tis not just
 Nor lawful to lament them.

Francklin (1758-9)

The. Virgins, restrain your sorrows: to lament
 Those in whose tombs such blessings are reposed,
 Becomes us not: grief here would merit blame.

Potter (1788)

³⁴⁸ See Campbell (1879) ix-x. On the importance of Elmsley's contribution to Sophoclean studies, and the discovery of a previously unknown, earlier edition of the text see Finglass (2007a)

³⁴⁹ See Jebb, discussed at Watling (1947) 166.

Benjamin Heath first attributed lines 1751-3 to Theseus and not the chorus, as in the manuscripts.³⁵⁰ In the 1779 *δευτεραι φροντίδες* Burton wrote simply ‘procedit in scenam *Theseus*, alloquitur puellas, consolatur.’³⁵¹ Given that these lines echo lines spoken by Theseus earlier in the play (Ἰ Ἀλξ λόγων: – Burton line 1010) it matters to our interpretation of his character and the play whether he speaks them or not. Theseus has the greatest number of exits and entrances of any character in Greek tragedy.³⁵² Given the lack of stage directions, a character’s first lines in any given scene are vital in establishing their presence on stage. The direction to the girls is paternal, and comes better from Theseus, who has promised to care for the girls, than from the chorus. The attribution thus has the potential to colour our perception of both the chorus and Theseus, as well as assisting our understanding of the staging of the scene.

In the scene where Antigone and Ismene are kidnapped (OCT lines 800-886), Thomas Francklin rearranged the line attributions, printing a note to his line 875

‘For I am weak with age, and here alone. This line in the original is, I think, very absurdly put into the mouth of Creon; I have taken the liberty to give it to Oedipus, from whom it certainly comes with more propriety.’³⁵³

The text is shoe-horned into a way of thinking that matches with eighteenth-century characterisations, rather than paying attention to the play itself. The eighteenth

³⁵⁰ Heath (1762) 68: ‘Haec Theseo non Choro tribuendo censeo’.

³⁵¹ Burton (1801) 101.

³⁵² Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon* may also have had five entrances and exits. This depends on whether she remains onstage for any of the choruses. At most, her itinerancy only matches Theseus for frequency. She also only uses the central door, whereas Theseus crosses the stage frequently, making his entrances and exits more notable. They are discussed further in Chapter 5. For entrances and exits in tragedy see Taplin (1977, 1985 ch. 4).

³⁵³ This is the complete note.

century Greek texts mainly maintain the modern distribution, but all three translations divide up the lines differently. The chorus sometimes sound forceful, sometimes not, and Oedipus sometimes exclaims his woe, but sometimes it is moved to Antigone. Stereotypical ideas of non-interventionist choruses and strong-willed heroes affect the very setting out of the text. Brunck (1786) and Elmsley (1823) also differ from the *textus receptus*, assigning the lines to different speakers. This scene contains the greatest onstage violence of any tragedy; the confusion over how to represent it demonstrates how this very unusual scene continued to be problematic into the nineteenth century, in terms of what could be expected of characters and scenes in a Greek tragedy.

2.6 Translations

I turn now to some further brief comments about the three eighteenth-century translations of the *OC*. Translation is itself a form of interpretation and commentary, and the three eighteenth-century translations of the *OC* all inform subsequent readings of it. The role of translation as a demonstration of scholarly ability has long been recognised. As Lorna Hardwick writes:

‘Translating classical texts became a sign of linguistic vigour and independence, with the receiving language gaining additional dignity and authority by demonstrating its role in the transmission of classical learning.’³⁵⁴

Lexical accuracy is not the sole issue under discussion in translation studies; nor is it usually sufficient for a fine translation.³⁵⁵ A translation style reveals the agenda of the translator, and the preconceptions and cultural background of the intended

³⁵⁴ Hardwick (2000) 10.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.* 9.

audience, and to this extent is a helpful tool in analysing the role of a text within a culture. In this section I examine aspects of the three eighteenth-century English translations of the *OC*, from bibliographic presentation, to lexical choice, use of notes, level of literalism and specific stylistic quirks. This discussion is further contextualised by being integrated with material from the eighteenth century on the nature of translation.

George Adams wrote the first eighteenth-century translation of the *OC*, first published in 1728, and reprinted in 1781. Thomas Francklin's 1758-9 translation was printed in several editions, including a subscription one. Notable subscribers included: Mark Akenside, Richard Cumberland, Samuel Foote, David Garrick, William Hogarth, William Hamilton, the library of All Souls College, Oxford,³⁵⁶ John Rich, Mr Lewis Francis Roubilliac, Edward Walpole and Horace Walpole.³⁵⁷ The edition was reprinted in 1766 and 1788, the same year that a third translation was published, by Robert Potter. Potter's was reprinted in 1808, 1813, 1819 and 1820, suggesting a belated popularity far less than his translation of Aeschylus attracted.³⁵⁸ The developing eighteenth-century cultural climate was one in which Sophocles in general, and the *OC* in particular, was beginning to feature more highly. With this

³⁵⁶ The book reads 'All-soul's-college Cambridge' but cannot mean this.

³⁵⁷ Horace and Edward Walpole, and John Rich, are also noted as subscribing 'for Royal paper'; Francklin (1758-9) 3. Mark Akenside wrote the influential *The Pleasures of the Imagination* which characterised the 'sentimental' aspect of the eighteenth century. Richard Cumberland was a dramatist whose work included a *Caractacus* modelled on William Mason's adaptation of the *OC*, and he was a correspondent of Horace Walpole and Thomas Gray. See chapter 3 for a thorough discussion of Mason's work and his relationship with Walpole. He was also a grandson of Richard Bentley, a further biographical link to the academic textual critical tradition. The subscription of Samuel Foote and John Rich, dramatist and director, demonstrates how important Sophocles was to contemporary creative writers. David Garrick's subscription confirms this, and is in keeping with his later sponsorship of the Stanmore Greek play. Roubilliac, Hogarth and Hamilton represent a range of artists, from sculpture through satirical print to portraiture, demonstrating Sophocles' importance across the fine arts, and that interest in Sophocles was not restricted to those painting the more academic history paintings. The presence of a college library confirms that this volume did have some scholarly appeal. Horace Walpole ordered two copies, his brother another one, lending support to Sophoclean scholarship from one of England's leading families.

³⁵⁸ Most of my references come from the 1808 reprint, but some specific points are made with reference to the original. See chapter one for further discussion of Potter's translation.

background in mind, I now turn to discuss some material about translation, and then the translations themselves.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, translators endeavoured to become better known and give respectable foundations to their art.³⁵⁹ The scholarly note appended to the bottom of the page became a way of displaying their erudition and scholarly authority.³⁶⁰ In 1779, Thomas Maurice wrote (in the preface to his translation of the *OT*) that the translator:

‘has always endeavoured to represent the sense of his original, he hopes sometimes to have caught its spirit, and he throws himself without reluctance, but not without diffidence, on the conduct of those readers who understand and feel the difference that subsists between the Greek and English languages, between antient and modern manners, between nature and refinement, between a Sophocles who appeals to posterity, and a writer who catches at the capricious taste of the day.’³⁶¹

This summary of the nature of translation stands as a clear statement of intent for the century. Translation was a scholarly discipline which developed into scholarly feuding. Thomas Francklin also wrote a poem on translation, and the agonistic nature of his enterprise is discernible in both text and notes, for example:

‘From cruel Tibbald wrest his mangled fame’

v.212

³⁵⁹ Saïd and Biet (1996) 55.

³⁶⁰ *ibid.* 64.

³⁶¹ Maurice (1996) 75.

note – ‘Tibbald (or Theobald) translated two or three plays of
Sophocles, and threaten’d the public with more.’³⁶²

The translation of Sophocles can therefore be read as a more widespread example of literary and scholarly politics. Francklin’s poem opens with an acerbic comment on those who try to translate but are not good enough:

‘Such is our Pride, our Folly, or our Fate,
That few, but such as cannot write, Translate.
So DENHAM sung, who well the labour knew;
And an age past has left the maxim true.’³⁶³

vv.1-4.

Sophocles soon becomes the exemplar in the poem, alongside Terence:

‘The modern critick, whose unletter’d pride,
Big with itself, contemns the world beside,
If haply told that Terence once cou’d charm,
Each feeling heart that Sophocles cou’d warm,
Scours every stall for Echard’s dirty page,
Or pores in Adams for th’Athenian stage.’³⁶⁴

vv.31-6.

Not only is Sophocles the chosen focus author, but reference is made to Adams, the only previous eighteenth-century English translator of Sophocles. Francklin was clearly engaging not only in a debate about how translation should work, but how,

³⁶² Francklin (1753) 13.

³⁶³ Francklin (1753) 1. I investigate the contribution of John Denham to the mid-eighteenth century English literary scene at greater length in chapters 1, 3 & 4.

³⁶⁴ Francklin (1753) 3.

in particular, Sophocles should be translated for the English public. With an awareness of this agonistic translation history, I now return to the translations themselves, and first consider how the frontispieces and notes used by each translator function as tools in their scholarly armoury.

2.7 Frontispieces

The relationship between the form of a text and its (intended) audience is reflected in any frontispiece attached to the text. These can be understood in terms of their relationship with the text contained in the volume, but also to wider pedagogical views. I therefore open this section by setting the pedagogical scene through thinking about the frontispieces used in eighteenth-century volumes. Three illustrations used in a Sophoclean context all reflect contemporary concerns and, I suggest, couch them in terms particularly relevant to the *Oedipus at Colonus*. The frontispiece to Francklin's translation, for example, features an old man and a young girl. Creative literature, inspired by heaven, in the rural setting of a country parish is set around them.

Figure a.) Frontispiece to Francklin (1758-9)



This translation predates Rousseau's *Emile*, but suggests the importance that the nature-culture divide was beginning to have in eighteenth-century England, and the way in which the OC provides a framework for thinking about this. Once *Emile* was published, a further layer of pedagogic discussion was added. The type of literature used to educate, and the way in which it was set out, reflects contemporary educational thought in the way that the specific content of specific poems such as the one to Sophocles reflects contemporary aesthetic thought.

Such an attitude becomes more obvious when we turn to *The Poetical Epitome*, for example, whose subtitle reads *or Extracts, Elegant, Instructive, and Entertaining, abridged from the larger volume, with a view to the improvement and amusement of young persons at classical and other schools*'. This book explicitly links education and enjoyment. The frontispiece is of someone reading in the countryside.

Figure b.) Frontispiece to *The Poetical Epitome* (1792)

THE
H POETICAL EPITOME; **W**
 OR,
 ELEGANT EXTRACTS ABRIDGED
 FROM THE LARGER VOLUME,
 FOR
 The Improvement of Scholars at Classical and other Schools,
 IN THE ART OF SPEAKING;
 IN READING, THINKING, COMPOSING;
 AND IN THE CONDUCT OF LIFE.

*"Hushy 1
 1801"*



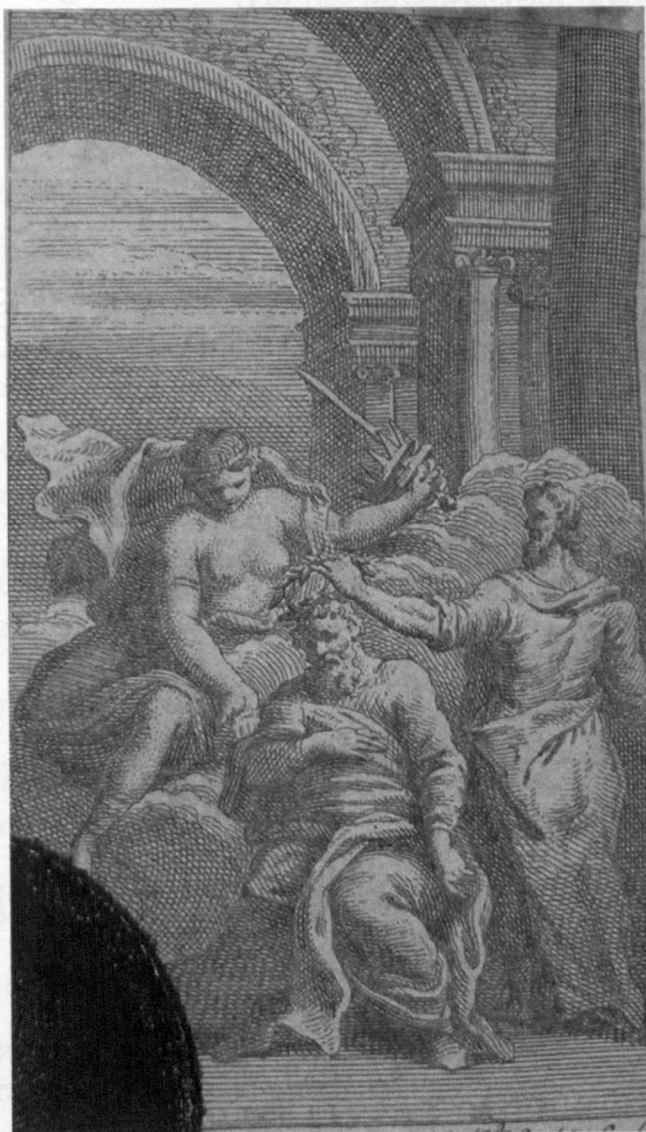
There is the Sunshine of the Breast.

LONDON:
 PRINTED FOR C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY. 1791.

This idyllic learning setting is reminiscent of the ideas set out in Rousseau's *Education of Emile* (1762). The role of the pastoral idyll in an effective education is made explicit by the illustration. The importance of the frontispiece can be traced further through other editions. Neither John Field (1668-1673), John Burton (1758), nor the 1747 edition print one. This is despite the explicitly pedagogical aim of

Pentalogia. The 1722 anonymous edition does have a frontispiece; it may not be clearly related to any Sophoclean plot but it is again evocative of these themes of pastoral and religious forms of poetry (and education) which are present in the other works.

Figure c.) Frontispiece to the anonymous London edition of Sophocles (1722).³⁶⁵



The iconography in this image seems to be focussed around the nature and power of the poet, rather than the contents of the book itself. Frontispieces may reflect the

³⁶⁵ Thanks to Karen Begg at Queen's College, Cambridge, for the photograph.

pedagogical aims or contents of an edition or translation. In pure subject terms, it is hard to discern a pattern, but the thematic links are more obvious. The three pieces shown are from an anthology, a translation and edition. All make use of the sublime as represented in nature, potentially with a religious overtone, more or less overtly linked to issues of poetic creativity and old age. All of these issues resonate with those in the *OC*, and it becomes easier to see why the play began to find greater sympathisers throughout the eighteenth century.

2.8 Notes

The role of the translation notes requires some consideration alongside the translations themselves. Notes can be used to give a sense of exactness to a translation; they can often seem little more than an alternative form of translation themselves.³⁶⁶ The eighteenth-century translation notes were intended to help both the layman and the specialist, but it is unclear how the reader can differentiate between the notes intended for these two very different audiences.³⁶⁷ The potential for a reader to be confused or patronised, rather than enlightened, is clear. In offering a range of comments external to the substance of the text, translation notes are an inherently pluralising feature in the text, reducing the potential for a clear and simple reading of the text, complicating the reading of the text implicit in the act of translation. As one discussion summarises:

‘the notes claim to eliminate the distance between the text of origin and the translated text, Antiquity and the 18th century. Most often they reveal it; they would like to seem objective and scientific. In fact, they often permit the diversion of the discourse toward ideological ends.’³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Saïd and Biet (1996) 57.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.* 56.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.* 57.

The notes demonstrate translators’ awareness of the limits of translation in conveying the meaning of a text.³⁶⁹ They express the views of the author, and are therefore thoroughly subjective, while professing an objective role in assisting the reader with interpreting the text.³⁷⁰

As well as dealing with interpretative and literary critical points about the translation, the notes perform a range of other functions. The translator has to have chosen a version of the text to translate. Eighteenth-century practice was not to justify readings in notes, and the translators do not specify what text they used. The text used has a potential to influence interpretation of the work (and will be discussed further below), but this is hidden in a translation. Any Greek used to deal with textual or translation problems is relegated to the notes.³⁷¹ Its presence there marks the limits of what translation can achieve; if the only way to explain the translation is to quote the Greek, then the translation has, at that point, failed in being accessible to those who know no Greek.³⁷²

Notes are also used to give the mythological background and cultural context for a specific idea or reference in the text. As Saïd and Biet explain:

‘But if the text thus becomes a pretext for mythology, the mythology itself is sometimes only a pretext for settling a quarrel between scholars and for displaying the stupidity of a colleague.’³⁷³

³⁶⁹ *ibid.* 72.

³⁷⁰ *ibid.* 72.

³⁷¹ *ibid.* 58-9.

³⁷² *ibid.* 60.

³⁷³ *ibid.* 63.

This sense of scholarly competition, played out through the notes, can be seen in the introductions and commentaries to the editions of Sophocles. Sometimes deferential, sometimes not, scholars frequently comment about each other's ability, describing individuals as, for example, 'vir eruditissimus'. The reality of their views towards each other can be traced more clearly when considering how they use each others' ideas. I now turn, therefore, to the notes used by Adams, Francklin and Potter, and consider how they influence our reading of the text and perception of the translators.³⁷⁴

George Adams opens his edition setting the scene as: 'A Forest near the Temple of the venerable Goddesses'.³⁷⁵ He does not name the goddesses, as befits the Erinyes / Eumenides, whose identity and function is one issue under debate in the play. Where Sophocles makes no mention of a building, both Adams and Francklin place a temple in the grove.³⁷⁶ This formalisation of the space as overtly religious emphasises the sanctity of the stage and the religious background to the play. The assumption that religious space must have a building in it will later be seen in the artistic representations of the play; even editorial stage directions influence people's reading of the text.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ I have already discussed some of the notes supplying biographical background in chapter 1. This chapter builds on comments made there.

³⁷⁵ Adams (1729).

³⁷⁶ Francklin (1758-9) 361: 'a little hill, not far from Athens, where was a temple and grove, sacred to the furies.' Where Potter (1808) gives the scene for other plays, for the OC he simply wrote 'The scene is beautifully described by Antigone at the opening of the drama, and again by the Chorus in their first ode.' (Potter [1808] 66)). The building is discussed further in chapters 4 (pp. 247-247) and 5 (pp. 284-286).

³⁷⁷ This could also be evidence of their close reading of Aristotle. Since at *Poetics* 1449a18-19 Aristotle notes that Sophocles was the first to introduce scene-painting, commentators might reasonably assume buildings necessarily featured in Sophoclean plays, even when a close reading of the text would call this into question.

Adams then fills in some historical background to Sophocles and the play, referring to the story from *De Senectute*, but only indirectly:³⁷⁸

‘This Tragedy was composed by Sophocles in his old Age, to gratify both his own Countrymen, the Colonites, and the Athenians. How well it answered his Ends, the following story related by Dr Potter is a sufficient proof...’.³⁷⁹

Adams (1729) 78

The mythological ‘showing-off’ mentioned above is evident when he discusses the history of the Eumenides:

‘venerable Goddesses – Phylarchus says they were two, and had each a statue at Athens, Polemon three, viz. Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone. They were, according to Sophocles, the Daughters of the Earth and Darkness; but to others of Nox and Acheron...’

Adams (1729) 81n.d.

Francklin also commented on this genealogy, in very similar terms:

‘These dreadful, or venerable, goddesses, were the three furies, Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone; daughters, as Sophocles tells us, of earth and night; or, according to other poetical genealogists, of Nox and Acheron...’

Francklin (1758-9) 393

Potter did not gloss this reference.

³⁷⁸ For more on these references in particular, see chapter 1 (pp. 52, 112). Potter uses the stories at (1808) 130.

³⁷⁹ The Dr Potter here referred to is John Potter (c.1647-1747), unrelated to the translator Robert Potter. See Sandys (1908) 356, Clarke (1945). The story mentioned is a summary of the *De Senectute* version.

Adams and Francklin were clearly sensitive to the religious undertones of the play, and their notes and translation reflect this. Adams translated line 5 as 'I sue to none but for a slender Alms' (Adams [1729] 79). This imposes a Christian sentiment on the play (alms-giving), but Adams also adds in as much about the pagan religious setting as possible:

'There was (says the Scholiast) an Altar at Athens raised to Ἐλεος, ie. Mercy, whom they adored as a Goddess.'

Adams (1729) 94 n.q.

Some comments are 'purely' aesthetic and subjective, e.g.: 'Many Nightingales sing in it.] This passage is exceedingly beautiful in the Original.' (Adams [1729] 80 n.c.). The passage under question is the Colonus Ode, again singled out for special attention, echoing the epigrams discussed above. Two comments that might seem part of this category are also telling:

'Observe the Cunning of Polynices, who doth not begin with a Request, but to get Favour of his Father seems first to pity his Miseries.'

Adams (1729) 142

'O thou Oedipus, why do we.] The Contrivance of the Poet is admirable here, in representing to the Mind what cannot easily be expressed in Words, i.e. the strange and surprising Manner in which Oedipus was taken away.'

Adams (1729) 158 n.d. to v.1627

The cunning of Polynices was also picked up by the other translators; Francklin is more sympathetic towards Polynices and his attempts to win Oedipus over, but still acknowledges the power and majesty of the curse:

‘Nothing can be more artful, tender, and pathetic, than this speech of Polynices: conscious of his own guilt, and well acquainted with the fiery disposition of his father, he addresses himself first to his sisters, and then slides as it were insensibly into his modest and humble supplication, clothed in terms that must have moved any but the implacable Oedipus.’

Francklin (1758-9) 439-40.

‘The curse which Oedipus here pronounces against his sons, hath something in it very awful and terrible; especially if we consider is as spoken before an audience thoroughly convinced that the curses of offended parents were always inflicted, and the prophecies of dying men always fulfilled. Nothing perhaps but Shakespeare’s *Lear* can exceed it.’

Francklin (1758-9) 443

‘Brumoy observes, that the more we consider this tender scene, between Polynices and his sister, the more natural, charming and pathetic we shall find it; the fate of every thing that has intrinsic merit, says he, is to strike us but little at first view, to improve on the second, and always to appear the more beautiful, the more we examine it.’

Francklin (1758-9) 444.

These comments reveal the sentimental attitude taken towards tragedy. The curse may be awful, but in that awe lies beauty, again reflecting concepts of the sublime. The comments also demonstrate how Sophocles and Shakespeare are again compared.³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ The specific relationship between Oedipus and King Lear is discussed further in chapter 4.

Adams also made comments about the structure of tragedy, in order to enlighten his (schoolboy?) audience, e.g. p. 88, where a note has been added on the difference between the parodos and a choral ode (stasimon). Form and content were both important aspects of the commentary process, and the pedagogical value of these translations is clear.

Potter's notes demonstrate the low-level interaction between translations and textual criticism:

v.231 οὐ καλοῖς ὄμμασιν, non pulchris oculis. Οὐκ ἀλαοῖς ὄμμασιν Ald. et MS. non caecis oculis; which reading Dr Burton approves. The editor of Brumoy hath explained the passage justly, ... alluding to the modest manners of the Grecian virgins, who never appeared unveiled before men, except such as were nearly related: this is hinted at in the next line.'

Potter (1808) 75.

This note refers to Burton's *Pentalogia*, and Pierre Brumoy's *Theatre of the Greeks*, demonstrating engagement with textual scholarship and more general commentaries on Greek tragedy. Brumoy's work was published in Charlotte Lennox's translation in 1759, and was a major reference work on Greek tragedy. It does not, however, translate the OC, but only summarises it.³⁸¹ A reference to it here therefore demonstrates an awareness of the book, but also an appeal to secondary literature for its own sake, rather than for its contribution to the discussion of the play in question as, in this case, there was none. Francklin is not demonstrating his engagement with Greek tragedy so much as his desire to appear learned and *au fait* with the latest literature.

³⁸¹ The revised French edition of 1785-89 included translations of all extant plays and ran to thirteen volumes. See Macintosh (2009) 442.

2.9 Translation points

Of Francklin's translation Roger Dawe writes: 'A dip into Francklin (1759) is enough to make some of us wish we had a copy on our own bookshelves for constant reference and delight.'³⁸² Whatever pedagogical function these translations performed, they were also pleasant literature. The criteria on which they can be judged as such, however, merit closer attention. Francklin's attitude towards translation has already been discussed. According to Dawe, this great work of his was aimed at a literal reading, which is in keeping with Francklin's stated aims.³⁸³ The translation itself, however, does not conform to such literalising ideals. The choruses are loose, particularly in the case of the Colonus Ode, the first stanza of which reads:

Thou art come in happy time,
Stranger, to this happy clime,
Long for swiftest steeds renowned,
Fertil'st of the regions round,
Where, beneath the ivy shade,
In the dew-besprinkled glade,
Many a love-lorn nightingale
Warbles sweet her plaintive tale,
Where the vine in clusters pours
Her sweets secured from wintry showers,
Nor scorching suns, nor raging storm
The beauties of the year deform.

Francklin (1758-9) 419

This stands in contrast to the Greek.³⁸⁴ The most important first reference to the horses is postponed until the third line. No mention is made of Dionysus or the bacchantes. The untrodden purity of the location remains unsung. The Homeric

³⁸² Dawe (1996) ix.

³⁸³ Maurice (1996) 74-5.

³⁸⁴ See pp. 20-21 for the Greek.

references have been lost. The nightingale is now 'love-lorn', which reduces the subtle and multiform reading of the nightingale as a symbol of death and the authorial voice. Colonus is not even named; the eighteenth-century audience were perhaps not expected to be as familiar with the name and the place as the Sophoclean audience. Francklin himself acknowledged a reason for this, when on p. 426 he noted that 'passages...must be softened a little in the translation.' The desire to make translations appropriate to their audience colours their 'authenticity' as translations.

Potter is capable of being equally non-literal with his translation. On page 71 he referred to: 'Or Jove's red lightening', translating simply ἡ Διὸς σέλας (OC 95). The Greek does not give the lightning a colour, but Potter added the detail to strange effect, in keeping with the popular gothic gloomth of his age. Calling Zeus by his Roman title is also in keeping with the translations of the age. Both Adams and Francklin use Roman names for the gods. This demonstrates the Latin background to the translations, reflecting the general educational background of the translators and likely readers.³⁸⁵ To this extent, the names remain unsurprising. This does, however, upset some of the onomastic play in which Sophocles engages. At line 947, Creon refers to the Ἄρεος...πάγον, as a reference to the Areopagus. Without using the name Ares, such a reference becomes impossible. For Potter, it is the 'mount of Mars' (p. 102). Adams (129) translated this as '*Areopagus*' and then added a note to explain it as a court, on 'the hill of Mars'. For Francklin, (429), there is a passing reference to the 'court'. Only Adams made any attempt to express the idea of the original; they and all miss the point that the *Areopagus* is partly important due to its links to the Eumenides via Aeschylus' play of that name. The OC and the *Eumenides* are both

³⁸⁵ This is also seen in the use of Latin texts to explain the Greek. Plautus, whose debt to Sophocles is not usually acknowledged, provides a good example of this, when Francklin (431) links *Poenulus* 'What evil means acquire is seldom kept: male partum malé dispersit.' to Sophocles.

plays with an underlying cult aetiology, connected with the Athenianisation of the Erinyes and the status of Athens as a political power. This combination of political, geographical and religious themes is shared between the two plays, and the link has been important to interpretations of the *OC* throughout its history.³⁸⁶

At line 100, Potter translated *νήφων ἀοίνοις, κἀπὶ σεμνὸν ἐζόμην* (*OC* 100) as: 'From wine abhorrent, pure myself from wine'. This line has proved problematic for generations of scholars to interpret, but it is clear that it is not Oedipus who is wineless.³⁸⁷ Potter makes equally odd references, such as when he makes Oedipus' last word his own name (p. 122). This does not appear in the Greek, which ends with: *κἀπ' εὐπραξία μέμνησθέ μου θανόντος εὐτυχεῖς αἰεὶ* (*OC* 1554-5).

The translations and their notes are a form of scholarship giving various insights into the text. This direct translation of or commentary on the text is easily related to the context of the plays in general. Consideration of the frontispieces demonstrates that here too, paratextual choices may have an effect on the reception of the text. I now turn to my final category of such material, which are the epigrams appended to the texts.

2.10 Epigrams

The influence of the base text for eighteenth-century editions of Sophocles is evident beyond the readings, translation and printing of the text itself. The extra material included remained remarkably consistent across the editions. Two aspects

³⁸⁶ One particular instance of this is discussed further in ch.5.

³⁸⁷ See for example Henrichs (1983), Brown (1984), Lloyd-Jones (1990) and Lardinois (1992), although such an interpretation dates from Henrichs' work and may not have been of such concern to eighteenth-century translators and readers.

are particularly noticeable: the epigrams and lives appended to the start of the text. This material reflects eighteenth-century interpretations of Sophocles as much as the plays themselves. In so doing, both sets of texts prioritise the OC in the Sophoclean canon. I have already discussed the depiction of Sophocles as sublime in eighteenth-century texts, and I now turn to the epigrams in order to demonstrate the potential of a similar reading of further texts.

Four epigrams are regularly printed at the front of editions, from the 1568 Stephanus edition onwards:

1.) ΣΙΜΩΝΙΔΟΥ³⁸⁸

Ἐσβέσθης γηραιὲ Σοφόκλεες, ἄνθος ἀοιδῶν,
Οἶνωπὸν Βάκχου βότρυν ἐρεπτόμενος.

2.) ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ³⁸⁹

Ἡρέμ' ὑπὲρ τύμβοιο Σοφοκλέος, ἡρέμα κισσὲ
Ἐρπύζοις χλοερούς ἐκπροχέων πλοκάμους.
Καὶ πέταλον πάντῃ θάλλοι ῥόδου, ἥ τε φιλορρώξ
Ἄμπελος, ὑγρὰ πέριξ κλήματα χευαμένη·
Εἵνεκεν εὐεπίης πιτυφρόνος· ἦν ὁ μελιχροὺς
Ἡσῆσεν, Μουσῶν ἄμιγγα καὶ Χαρίτων.

³⁸⁸ The Greek is printed as found in the early editions, and not according to modern editions, but the text is now found at AP 7.20.

³⁸⁹ = AP 7.22

3.) ΕΡΥΚΙΟΥ³⁹⁰

Αἰεὶ τοι ληπαρῷ ἐπὶ σήματι δι'ε Σοφόκλεις,
Σκηνίτης μαλακοῦς κισσὸς ἄλοιτο πόδας.
Αἰεὶ τοι βούπαισι περιστάζοιτο μελίσσαις
Τύμβος ὕμηττείῳ λειβόμενος μέλντι
Ὡς ἂν τοι ῥεῖη ἀένναος Ἀτθίδι δέλτω
Κηρὸς, ὑπὸ στεφάνοις δ' αἰὲν ἔχοις πλοκάμους.

4) ΔΙΟΣΚΟΡΙΔΟΥ³⁹¹

Τύμβος ὁδ' ἐς ὠ'νθρωπε, Σοφοκλέους; ὃς τῶν Μουσῶν
Ἰρῆν παρθενίην ἱερός ὦν ἔλαχεν.
Ὅς με τὸν ἐκ Φιλοῦντος ἔτι τρίβολον πατέοντα
Πρίνινον, ἐς χρύσειον σχῆμα μεθηρμόσατο,
Καὶ λεπτὴν ἐνέδυσεν ἀλουργίδα. Τοῦ δὲ θανόντος.
Εὐθετον ὀρχηστὴν τῇδ' ἀνέπαυσα πόδα.
Ὀλβιος, ὡς ἀγαθὴν ἔλαχε στάσιν· ἥ δ' ἐνὶ χερσὶ
Κούριμος, ἐκ ποίης ἔδε διδασκαλίας;
Εἴτε σὸν Ἀντιγόνην εἰπεῖν φίλον, οὐκ ἂν ἀμάρτοις·
Εἴτε καὶ Ἠλέκτραν· ἀμφότεραι γὰρ ἄκραν.

These epigrams are all concerned with the immediate reception of Sophocles as a dramatist, and with his death and tomb. The second one in particular (found in the *Greek Anthology* VII.22) shares much in common with the Colonus ode. The idea of the grove around the tomb is also indicative of the grove at the end of the OC. *χλοερούς* in line 2 reflects *χλωραῖς* at OC 672. *θάλλοι* in line 3 reflects OC 681 and

³⁹⁰ = AP 7.36.

³⁹¹ = AP 7.37.

700 (θάλλει). The epic genitive *τύμβοιο* (1) reflects the many Homeric echoes in the Colonus ode. The Muses are invoked at line 6 here, and at OC 691-2. Three plants are mentioned in particular: i.) ivy: *κισσέ* (1), ii.) the vine *ἄμπελος* (4) and iii.) rose *ρόδου* (3). Ivy also appears in the Colonus ode: *κισσόν* (674-5), while the vine features in Antigone's opening speech (16). The rose is not found in the description of Colonus. It does, however, suggest one way in which this poem appealed to its English audience.³⁹² The botany of the OC is a reflection of the glory of Athens and its status as a city protected by the gods whose emblems are the plants that grow in it. The rose is a flower which could be read as epitomising England; botanically, it is ubiquitous; socially it is used to describe classic English beauty; politically, it has been used as an emblem of England, and of English political unity. This epigram thus demonstrates a way in which Greek poetry could be used to express English ideas and concerns, a form of cultural calquing which continues to be important in understanding how the reception of Sophocles in eighteenth-century England worked.³⁹³

It is also evident from their frequent translation and dissemination that these epigrams appealed to an audience wider than the tragedy-reading scholars. The second epigram was translated, for example, by Samuel Wesley (1662-1735; father of Charles and John):

‘Winde, gentle ever-green, to form a shade
Around the tomb where Sophocles is laid;
Sweet ivy, winde thy boughs, and intertwine
With blushing roses, and the clust’ring vine:

³⁹² See William Mason's poem *The English Garden*, discussed further in chapter 3 (pp. 185-186).

³⁹³ This relationship between the Greek of Sophocles (particularly the OC) and English nationalistic verse is explored in more depth in chapter 3 (pp. 180-187).

Thus will thy lasting leaves, with beauties sung;
 Whose soul, exalted like a god of wit,
 Among the muses and the graces writ.'

The Wesley translation was frequently reprinted,³⁹⁴ It also inspired later reworkings, such as the following by Mrs Spencer Walker, from *Commemorative feelings, or miscellaneous poems* (London: White, Cochrane, and Co., 1812): OCCASIONED BY SOME IVY LEAVES BEING WORN IN THE BOSOM OF A FRIEND; AND MEANT AS AN ANSWER TO A BEAUTIFUL AIR OF DOCTOR HARRINGTON'S.

"WIND, gentle evergreen!" and though around
 No Poet's tomb your beauteous leaves are bound,

³⁹⁴ For example:

- no. CDLXVII in *A collection of epigrams. To which is prefix'd, a critical dissertation on this species of poetry.* (1727) Printed for J. Walthoe, London.
- 193 [p. 359] in *The Poetical Epitome; or Extracts, Elegant, Instructive, and Entertaining, abridged from the larger volume; with a view to the improvement and amusement of young persons at classical and other schools* (1792). Printed in London for a named set of men (presumably a subscription volume).
- *The Words of the Most Favourite Pieces Performed at the Glee Club, the Catch Club and other Public Societies* compiled by Richard Clark, Printed by the Philanthropic Society, St. George's Fields, 1814.
- *The Port Folio* by Joseph Dennie and John Elihu Hall (1822, Philadelphia). [Simonides] p. 502.
- *The British Essayists, with prefaces Biographical, Historical and Critical, Second Edition in Forty Volumes, Vol. XI, Spectator vol. vii* (London: J. Richardson and Co.) by James Ferguson p. 355 [Simonides] (alongside the one to Euripides, here attributed to Ion).
- Quoted in *ΑΝΑΛΕΚΤΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΑ, sive Collectanea Graecae Majora ad Usum Academicarum Juventutis Accommodata. Tomus II Complectens Excerpta ex Variis Poetis* by Andreas Dalzel (1831, Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins) p. 276 n. 3 as from *Elegant Extracts in Verse*, London: Rivingtons & Co. Vol. ii. p. 304.' ubi hoc epigram. aliquis ita bene reddidit Anglice, uti notavit T. YOUNG.'
- *The Yale Literary Magazine* vol. I (1836) [Limmias] p. 79. Framed with: 'Here is a most beautiful epitaph on Sophocles, composed by Limmias, the Theban. In the first place, I will render it literally and consecutively into plain English, although, reader, thou knowest that – saving only in the Bible – the life and loveliness of all poetry dies under this *ossifying* process. "Gently over the tomb of Sophocles, gently, oh! ivy, mayst thou creep, pouring thy green curls abroad; and all about it may the petals of the rose bloom, and the grape-loving vine, scattering its moist branches around, on account of the wise docility, which he of the honey-tongue displayed, among the Muses and the Graces." It was thus elegantly translated many years since:... Beautifully done – yet somewhat marred by the incongruous idea of a *soul writing*. For my own attempt, I claim no merit, save something of fidelity. Gently, oh! ivy, gently curl thy tresses,
- *Salad for the Solitary* by Frederick Saunders (1853) in a chapter 'Citations from the cemeteries' [Simonides] p. 182, with the introduction 'The epitaph of the founder of Grecian tragedy, the celebrated Sophocles, written by Simonides, proves that such a custom of honouring the illustrious dead then existed.'

Yet shall their foliage still more envied prove
When twined around the heart of her I love;
And the famed Poet, could he breathe anew,
His laurels gladly would resign for you.'

Finally, it was set as a round by Dr W. Hayes, published in London by J. Alfred Novello. In this setting it is described as an elegy on Sophocles by Antipater, omitting both the original author and the translator. The setting, published in 1844, but also mentioned in a catalogue of eighteenth-century music up to 1825 [Simonides], would indicate that the epigram was widely known far beyond its textual occurrences.³⁹⁵ Even if its Sophoclean origins were not known, Sophoclean material was infiltrating the British cultural psyche.

Variations on this epigram were used for at least one real eighteenth-century monument. It had an extensive general effect in eighteenth-century culture. Its Greek origins, however, are not always noted, correctly or incorrectly. In the versions I have mentioned it is attributed to Simias, Simonides, Limmias and Antipater. Attributing it to Simonides demonstrates a lack of historical awareness, since the Simonides of Ceos (556-468 BC) lived a generation before Sophocles, and could not have been writing about his tomb. It is possible that the name of Sophocles could have been inserted later, but the poem's apparent use of material from the OC would suggest that it was written with Sophocles and his last, posthumous play in mind. It seems that eighteenth-century scholars were unaware of, or unconcerned with this aspect of historical accuracy.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ See Hayes (1844) 52 for the original, and anon (1825) for the catalogue.

³⁹⁶ Note that Simonides was also lauded for his extraordinary mental powers, continuing to the age of eighty, alongside Sophocles. Lefkowitz (1981) 54-55 mentions Simonides and Sophocles explicitly in this context of old age; to see an eighteenth-century connection also being made is not unexpected.

2.11 Conclusion

The publication of Brunck's text in 1786 marked a turning point in the study of Sophocles:

'By common consent of modern scholars (e.g. J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, ed. 3, London, 1967, vol. II, p. 395), this edition opens a new era in the history of the text of Sophocles by suppressing the interpolations of Triclinius and by returning to the edition by Aldus and to the Parisinus A.'³⁹⁷

This progress should not, however, inevitably consign the work of other eighteenth-century scholars to the dustbin. The editions, commentaries and translations published reflect the academic aims, cultural concerns and pedagogical propensities of the age; careful criticism of these reveals something of the time, a greater awareness of how our own text has come to be where it is and the effect the processes have on our interpretation of it. I am not aiming at a simple rehabilitation of Burton as a scholar who has been maligned by the history of scholarship; *Pentalogia* is in many ways a careless and confusing text. I would argue, however, that this edition in particular both reflects and provokes interesting developments in the eighteenth century's attitude towards Greek drama, ancient scholarship and indeed philosophical and literary criticism in general.³⁹⁸ Putting all five plays together, Burton tried to create a coherent edition with the integration of the tragedies into an authentic grand narrative. With its *δευτέραι φροντίδες*, lexicon, *apparatus criticus*, commentary, notes and multiple authors, however, it lapses into a

³⁹⁷ Saïd and Biet (1996) 59. See also Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990) 1.

³⁹⁸ Note that it was still in use at Eton in 1906, when it was mentioned in *Etoniana* (July 3rd 1906, p. 105); given the predominance of Etonians in English public life, its influence has perhaps been more far-ranging than might have been expected.

more fragmented chaos. This disjunction between intention and outcome points in part to the unfeasibility of his project, but it also suggests a lack of clarity and consistency of thought.

Its initial publication coincided exactly with Thomas Francklin's translation (1758) and closely with the publication of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757) and the edition demonstrates clear engagement with a range of material concerned with the sublime. It also coincided with Mason's *Caractacus* (1759), which was an attempt to reconfigure the authority and power of Greek literature and history for the emerging state of Britain. This coincidence between philosophical, critical and creative literature continued over the following few years. Benjamin Heath's *Notae Sive Lectiones* in 1762 comes between Macpherson's *Ossian* (1761), Walpole's *Otranto* (1764) and Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1764). After 1764, there seems to have been something of a hiatus in England. The next reception of the OC comes in the form of Mason's *Caractacus* receiving its first staging in 1776, the same year as Henry Fuseli began work on his painting *Oedipus Cursing his Son Polynices*. At this point, the scholarly editions and translations again begin to appear, such as Thomas Burgess's notes to *Pentalogia* (1778), and the second edition (1779).

There is a link between scholarly publication and creative publications and productions related to Greek drama and thought in eighteenth-century England, and both areas appear to have broken off between 1764 and 1776. I suggest that it is not coincidental that this period corresponds exactly with a period of relative international political calm but domestic turbulence for England.³⁹⁹ The Seven Years' War (1756-63) covers the first period of texts I have discussed, and ends the year before Walpole and Kant's texts. The American declaration of Independence was

³⁹⁹ See Brewer (1980) on the Wilkites in particular.

made the year before the material began to be produced again; the link between the two events is strengthened when we note that Mason's *Caractacus* was recited at a Shropshire Whig meeting in 1776, urging liberty for the colonies.⁴⁰⁰ Far from prohibiting scholars from having the time or resources to be productive, political turmoil in mid-eighteenth-century England appears to have coincided with periods of great inspiration. I suggest that Blanning's thesis on the dynamic relationship between culture and power goes some way towards explaining this phenomenon. An examination of the reception of the texts and translations of Sophocles has revealed a set of critical approaches which are also relevant to the greater cultural sphere. A historical coincidence appears between political turmoil and cultural productivity, and this deserves further investigation. Thinking about Sophocles has far greater application than just developing a text for modern scholars to read.

Appendix. The list of editions and manuscripts consulted by John Burton.

Codicum MSS. et Impressorum, cum explicatione notarum, quibus compendii gratia usi sumus.

MSS. in Bibliotheca Bodleiana.

BAR. 1. Codex *Barocc.* in Bibl. *Bodlei.* 66.

BAR. 2. Cod. *Barocc.* 68.

BAR. 3. Cod. *Barocc.* 120.

BAR. 4. Cod. *Barocc.* 231.

L. Cod. *Laudianus.*

B. 1. Cod. *Bodleianus* 2175.

B. 2. Cod. *Bodleianus* 2929.

S. Cod. *Seldenianus.*

Trin. Cod. MSS. Coll. SS. Trin. Cantabr. C. C. . C. Cod. Corp. Christi Coll. Cant.

Marg. Lectiones in margine edit. *Stanleianae* ad oram codicis literis miniatis manu ignota scriptae.

Gal. Var. lect. Cod. *Galeani.*

Ven. Var. lect. ab anonymo scriptae ad oram Ed. Aldin. in Bibl. pub. *Cantabr.*

Cas. Var. lect. et. Conjecturae *J. Casauboni.*

⁴⁰⁰ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 184.

E Bibliotheca Leidensi.

Var. Lect. e Codd. MSS. Voss. 1, 2.-

Et quae in marg. edd. viri quidam docti annotarunt-

Et *Fr. Porti Cretensis* comment. in ἐπὶ τὰ ἐπὶ Θ.

Codd. MSS. e(pta \ e)pi \ Qh/baij, quorum var. lect. Cl. Askew M.D. communicavit.
Med. MS. Membran. in bibl. *Laur. Medicaea* in pluteo xxxii. No. 9. vetustus; quo *P. Victor.* usus est.

Colb. 1. Bobmycin. in bibl. *Colbertina Lut. Par.* No. 4016. Saec. cix. citer 15.

Colb. 2. Bombycin. in bibl. *Colb.* script. anno 1299. ut patet ex notula calci.
subjecta.

A. Bomb. in bibl. reg. *Gall.* No. 3320. – saec. xiv.

B. Chartaceus in eadem bibl. bonae notae.

C. Chart. in bibl. R. *Gall.* No. 333. vetustus.

D. MS. in charta eleganter exaratus olim manu *Jani Lascharis* in bibl. R. *Gall.* No. 3521.

a. MS. chrtac. in bibl. Cl. Askew notatus M. 1. annos habens circiter 500.

Seld. Scholiastes Cod. *Seldeniani* a *Stanleio* primum editus.

Sc. Variae lect. et emendat. *J. Scaligeri.*

Heins. Lect. quas *Nic. Heinsius* olim in codice suo desripsit.

H. Lect. ad oram Cod. e *Dan. Heinsii.*

Schol. Lect. var. e *Scholiographis.*

L.S. Var. Lect. quarum meminerunt *Scholiographi.*

L. St. Var. lect. ab *H. Stephano* e Codicibus suis collectae.

T. Varietates Codicum quas ad suarum Edd. calcem *Adr. Turnebus* notavit.

Turn. *Turnebus* editions.

Ald. *Aldinae* edd.

Her. *Herovagiana* Editio.

C. Editio *Sophoclis* Cantabr. 1660.

Cant. Edd. *Canterianae.*

Col. Editio *Sophoclis Colinaea.*

Flor. Editio *Florentina.*

Franc. Editio *Francofurtina.*

Chapter 3: Colonus in England's Green and Pleasant Lands

'On the whole Mason enjoyed during his lifetime a fame to which he was hardly entitled. Yet as a literary figure he will always be interesting as the friend and biographer of Gray. He was not a great poet; yet for many years of his life he was England's greatest poet.'⁴⁰¹

Chapter one discussed the place of Sophocles in the general development of the concept of the sublime in the eighteenth century. In chapter two I demonstrated how these aesthetic shifts were reflected in Sophoclean scholarship, and where individuals such as Gilbert Wakefield provided examples of the united nature of aesthetics, religion and politics. I now turn to the creative side of this process. Rev. William Mason is not a well-known figure from the eighteenth century; only two of his plays ever made it to performance, and even they have gone unperformed since the early nineteenth century.⁴⁰² As a cleric he failed to secure a bishopric, as a poet, the laureate. He was, however, responsible for what has been called the first modern reworking of the OC. This chapter consequently focuses on the text and performance history of his play, *Caractacus*, published in 1759 but not performed until 1776. *Caractacus* fashions British identity in terms of its Celtic, Greek and Roman heritage, and expresses the productive tension between these. Not necessarily tied to any particular contemporary events, although some resonate at particular points, this play reflects the general tenor of the mid-eighteenth century.⁴⁰³ Where the OT had been used as a revolutionary text, the OC was being used to reconfigure the genre of

⁴⁰¹ St. John's College Cambridge admission appendix 1715-1767 532. On the importance of Mason as biographer of Gray, see also Draper (1924) 78 and Gaskell (1951) 16.

⁴⁰² Mason wrote several other plays: *Elfrida*, *Caractacus*, *Argentile and Curan* (a romance in the Elizabethan manner), and two lyrical libretti which were never produced: *Sappho*, *Pigmalion*. Another play, *The Indians* was never printed or produced. He also wrote two comedies: *The Surprise*, *The World Today*.

⁴⁰³ As Hall and Macintosh (2005) 184 note, Mason demonstrates the impossibility of separating the aesthetic from the political.

tragedy, a foil to the *OT*.⁴⁰⁴ The *OT* had been popular in the earlier part of the century, but we can trace a shift in aesthetics from a broadly Aristotelian to a broadly Longinian focus, and so we see a shift in popularity from the *OT* to the *OC*. Mason himself acknowledged that the *OT*'s time was past in writing about Whitehead's unfinished *Oedipus*.⁴⁰⁵ This chapter falls into four distinct parts in explaining how this progression works. A preliminary biography offers some contextualisation of both Mason and his literary offerings. I then start with a case study into one aspect of the play and its relationship with Sophocles. I continue by exploring some of the grounds on which Mason's appeal for formal neoclassicism rests. Finally I develop further the themes of place and religion in order to demonstrate how interlinked the different elements in both the *OC* and *Caractacus* are.

3.1 Biographical background

Before moving to the play itself, therefore, I offer a brief biographical contextualisation of Mason; he provides a useful case study of how the different creative, religious and political spheres of the eighteenth century interacted and any attempts to separate the various strands of eighteenth-century society, and consequently the interdependent readings of its literature, are bound to be frustrated. Dismissed by the present age as marginal, and labelled by his own and subsequent ages as neoclassical, sentimental and proto-romantic, Mason demonstrates how standard categorisations of eighteenth-century aesthetics are inadequate for dealing with the complex figures who practised them.

⁴⁰⁴ On the *OT* as a revolutionary eighteenth-century text, see Hall and Macintosh (2005) ch. 8.

⁴⁰⁵ Whitehead (1788) 123n.

Mason's literary career was shaped by his friendship with Thomas Gray. Through Gray he was introduced to Richard Hurd, Richard Cumberland and Horace Walpole; he maintained a correspondence with Walpole until the latter's death in 1797, apart from a break between 1784 and 1796 when the two fell out over political differences.⁴⁰⁶ His correspondence with Walpole is focussed around literature and politics, the two things Mason wanted information on for the sake of writing satirical literature of his own. Largely formed of romantic poetry, plays and histories, contemporary popular (sentimental) literature generated great satirical responses. Mason himself contributed much of this satire, with an anonymous newspaper column, for example. Mason would not only be aware that his works might be subject to the same critical scrutiny with which he attacked others', and that his drama capitalised on the strong vein of satirical drama so popular at the time.⁴⁰⁷

A pluralist, Mason held up to five offices at any given time; he also published on art, music and gardening,⁴⁰⁸ and has been credited with the introduction of the pianoforte to England alongside the creation of a new instrument, the celestinette.⁴⁰⁹ This disciplinary versatility permeates the eighteenth century, and is vitally

⁴⁰⁶ Walpole writes of the split in his *Walpoliana*, and attributes it to disagreement over the India Bill, but also admits the links with Pitt's proposals over the abolishment of sinecures when he writes: 'I asked [Mason] if supernumerary church-offices were not among the articles of Mr Pitt's reform?' (1800) 93. Mason had been earning his living in part through sinecures, and Walpole therefore suggested an element of hypocrisy in his efforts to dismiss them. See Smith (2004) for the most modern biography of Mason.

⁴⁰⁷ Take, for example, Henry Carey, one of the most prolific eighteenth-century authors. Of twenty-eight scripts credited to him 1717-1740, fourteen are burlesques / farces / comedies / pantomimes, the rest being mainly ballad operas.

⁴⁰⁸ His *English Garden*, published in instalments from 1772 and generally regarded as his *magnum opus*, uses horticultural writing to express political and aesthetic views, and was labelled by Mason as an 'Episodico-didactico-pathetico-politico-farrago', demonstrating the interdependence of all forms of life in a single word. I discuss it further below (pp. 182-183). His musical interests can be seen through his friendship with Charles Burney. They exchanged just a few letters (see Ribiero ed. [1991]). In 1795 Mason published his own work on music, writing a book on hymns for the organ. In terms of art, he is best known for having translated Du Fresnoy's *Art of Painting* into English, published in 1783.

⁴⁰⁹ On his five offices in 1777, see Gaskell (1951) x. On his supposed introduction of the pianoforte to England, and his celestinette, see the notes to the St John's College admission appendix, 1715-1767, p. 532 and Gaskell (1951) 36.

important in understanding how Greek tragedy came to be appropriated. Mason is an extreme example of a common phenomenon, and therefore provides an excellent case-study on whom to focus.⁴¹⁰

Mason's biographer John Draper articulates a similar view, opening his biography with the following words:

'Nothing is more worthy of study or receives a more tardy attention than the commonplace... If we would know an age, we must study the commonplace even more than the exceptional: William Mason, as a thinker, as a dilettante in many arts, and as a man living among men, fairly represents the commonplace of his period in social class; and the present study of his accomplishments, literary, artistic, clerical, political, and personal, is intended as a limited contribution towards a future evaluation of the rank and file of eighteenth-century thought.'⁴¹¹

As a country vicar, with connections in Cambridge and London, Mason can be viewed as a lynchpin connecting elite and normal society. Negotiating this boundary between 'high' and 'low' society, without participating solely in either, Mason's sermons, tracts, satire, didactic prose and wider fiction reflect how ancient literature affected many parts of society. His position as an intermediary between several types of life, people and literatures makes Mason and his work not commonplace and humdrum, but fascinating and revealing, not marginal, but liminal. This chapter focuses on just some aspects of one part of his complex world, his play *Caractacus*.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ See McKeon (1994) on the origins of disciplinarity as opposed to the inherently interdisciplinary nature of the eighteenth century.

⁴¹¹ Draper (1924) vii-viii.

⁴¹² *Caractacus* is not a play with which a modern audience is likely to be familiar. I therefore offer a brief plot summary:

Aulus Didius meets with two princes on Mona, Vellinus and Elidurus (sons of Cartismandua [sic]), and coerces them into betraying Caractacus, but Elidurus is uncomfortable with the plot. A chorus of druids prepare for Caractacus' initiation. Vellinus and Elidurus are

In 1752 Mason published his first tragedy, *Elfrida*.⁴¹³ Composed during his time at Cambridge and first published in 1759, *Caractacus* was not performed for a further seventeen years.⁴¹⁴ Both plays supposedly take their inspiration partly from Greek tragedy. They were both closet dramas, never intended for the stage.⁴¹⁵ Their dissemination in print was limited by the number of copies, and by the class of person who could afford and would choose to buy them. As such, *Caractacus* was part of a type of literature which circulated among Britain's wealthy, educated elite. Its move to the stage changed its audience, and consequently the way in which it resonated with the public.

Elfrida was produced in 1772, without Mason's agreement, and he was bitterly aggrieved at the way his work was treated.⁴¹⁶ Given its success, however, four years later Mason reworked *Caractacus* himself, for performance at the same theatre, with the same composer.⁴¹⁷ When *Caractacus* was produced, the reworking consisted of

discovered spying on them and try to justify themselves. They claim to have news of Caractacus' wife. Evelina trusts Elidurus but not Vellinus, and convinces the chorus to let her test Elidurus to find out the truth. He does. Evelina's estranged brother Arviragus returns and is accepted by Caractacus. Vellinus escapes. Arviragus and Elidurus depart to fight the Romans on Caractacus' behalf.⁴¹² A bard enters to give a messenger's account of a theoretically successful battle. Vellinus has double-crossed them, however, and more Romans attack from unexpected quarters. Arviragus is brought on stage injured. He beseeches Elidurus to look after Evelina. He dies. Aulus Didius re-enters and takes the others off to Rome as prisoners.

⁴¹³ This may have been conceived of as early as 1749, and it was not produced until 1772: see Draper (1924) 28.

⁴¹⁴ He may have had the idea for *Caractacus* as early as 1756: see (Gaskell (1951) 374.

⁴¹⁵ Although Hall and Macintosh (2005) 189 describe *Caractacus* as an impressive stage play; this shows how plays not initially destined for visual representation can in some circumstances transfer successfully to the stage.

⁴¹⁶ This is summarised concisely by the St John's admission appendix 1715-1767, 530: 'In 1752 he published through the press of William Bowyer *Elfrida, a dramatic poem, written on the model of the antient Greek Tragedy*. It was probably intended for the stage [*contra* my suggestion above, but stated without evidence]. When Mason had become better known it was produced at Covent Garden by the elder Colman with alterations, which vexed Mason. In 1776 it appeared with Mason's own improvements'.

⁴¹⁷ It opened on 6th December 1776. The reception was much cooler than for *Elfrida*. It was revived in December 1778 after a tour, possibly for one night only. The elegy to Richard Hurd (now a bishop)

adding two lines (V.vii.9-10) and deleting 181. Mason still considered it too long and offered to shorten it further right up until it went on stage.⁴¹⁸ To write such a piece was hardly unusual; 'doing' tragedies into English was a past-time of the educated Englishman, a common exercise.⁴¹⁹ What was unusual about Mason's efforts is that they made it to the stage. He is frequently criticised for being too derivative, yet one biographer accuses him of reading too little, whilst at the same time we hear through Gray's letters of his being hard at work on Ariosto in Italian, as well as Shakespeare.⁴²⁰ *Caractacus* demonstrates how one can engage with pre-existing literature while retaining a distinctive creative voice of one's own; neither derivative nor abstracted from its cultural heritage, it refashions Greek tragedy along British lines with a Roman flavour.

3.2 Neoclassicism challenged - Elements of form

'Say, scenes of Science, say, thou haunted stream!
 [For oft my muse-led steps didst thou behold]
 How oft I cry'd, O come, thou tragic Queen!
 March from thy Greece, with firm majestic tread!
 Such as when Athens saw thee fill her scene,
 When Sophocles thy choral graces led;
 Saw thy proud pall it's [*sic*] purple length devolve,
 Saw thee uplift the glitt'ring dagger high,
 Ponder with fixed brow thy deep resolve
 Prepar'd to strike, to triumph and to die.
 Bring then to Britain's plain that choral throng;
 Display thy buskin'd pomp, the golden lyre;
 Give her historic forms the soul of song
 And mingle Attic art with Shakespeare's fire.
 Ah! What, fond boy, dost thou presume to claim?
 The Muse reply'd: "Mistaken suppliant, know,
 To light in Shakespeare's breast the dazzling flame

was replaced by a Sonnet, and a letter to the manager of Covent Garden (Thomas Harris). See Gaskell (1951) 20-21 and Draper (1924) 89-90.

⁴¹⁸ See his letter written to Thomas Harris, the manager of Covent Garden, September 10th 1776.

⁴¹⁹ See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 61-62.

⁴²⁰ See Draper (1924) 64.

Exhausted all Parnassus could bestow.””

William Mason, *Elegy to the Reverend Mr. Hurd*, 13-30

Preface to *Caractacus* (1796) vi-vii.

The front page of *Caractacus* describes it as ‘A Dramatic Poem written on the model of the Ancient Greek Tragedy’. The prefaced elegy suggests that he saw himself as a creator of a composite genre, mingling ‘Attic art with Shakespeare’s fire’ to produce a new type of British drama. This chapter examines what it means to use the model of Greek tragedy read in the light of combining Attic art and Shakespeare’s fire. Hall and Macintosh take it for granted that *Caractacus* is based on the OC, but it is unclear where this awareness originates. In this chapter, therefore, I aim to analyse some of the bases on which *Caractacus* might be said to draw on the OC.⁴²¹ I suggest that this play demonstrates the influence of a Sophoclean spirit mixed with Roman content for the construction of a British dramatic identity; it is only by understanding this subtle configuration of linguistic and thematic issues alongside the formal ones raised by Hall and Macintosh that we can make sense of the play’s success.⁴²²

In the appendix to the 1796 British Museum edition of *Caractacus*, a range of Greek and Roman sources for the play are cited. They are introduced as an aid to understanding:

‘The few following quotations, from ancient authors, are here thrown together, in order to support and explain some passages in the Drama, that respect the manners of the Druids; and which the general account of their customs, to be found in our histories of Britain, does not include.’

William Mason, *Caractacus*, (1786) 99.

⁴²¹ See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 184 and 187-188 in particular.

⁴²² This cultural contingency also made *Caractacus* very much a play of its time, as is true of much of the rest of Mason’s work; it was extremely popular on stage, but has been neglected since, sounding stilted and awkward to a modern ear. See Draper (1924) 3.

These sources are: Ammianus Marcellinus, Strabo, Caesar, Pliny, Tacitus, Lucan and Dio Chrysostom. Neither Sophocles nor any other dramatist is cited in support of the play's prefatory claim to tragic form, since this is not obviously linked to the druidical nature of the work. A more subtle link demonstrating the Sophoclean spirit behind the druidical aspect of the play may, however, be drawn via the Lucanian material. I suggest it is this inspiration by spirit rather than letter which characterises *Caractacus* in general, as Mason successfully weaves together Latin, Greek and British material to create a new form of drama. Before considering the play at greater length, therefore, I offer a brief case study of Sophocles, Lucan and Mason's writing about druids in their grove.⁴²³ This is one of Burke's features of the sublime, and so provides an obvious starting point in undertaking an analysis of *Caractacus* in sublime terms.⁴²⁴

Caractacus opens with a description of the setting by Aulus Didius, the Roman invader:

Aulus Didius:

'This is the secret centre of the isle:
 Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of wonder
 Gaze on the solemn scene; behold yon oak,
 How stern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms
 Chills the pale plain beneath him: mark yon altar, 5
 The dark stream brawling round its rugged base,
 These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,
 Skirted with unhewn stone: they awe my soul,
 As if the very genius of the place
 Himself appear'd, and with terrific tread 10

⁴²³ Ambühl (2005) provides a discussion of the Theban tragic legend in Lucan, but does not discuss the OC. The links between Lucan and Sophocles deserve closer attention beyond the scope of this thesis and the material presented here is considered only in the context of *Caractacus*. Sophocles is not mentioned by contemporary or subsequent commentaries on the passage (e.g. Weber [1781], Heitland [1887] and Hunink [1992]).

⁴²⁴ See p. 87.

Stalk'd thro' his drear domain. And yet, my friends,
(If shapes like his be but the fancy's coinage)
 Surely there is a hidden power, that reigns
 'Mid the lone majesty of untam'd nature,
 Controuling sober reason; tell me else, 15
 Why do these haunts of barb'rous superstition
 O'ercome me thus? I scorn them, yet they awe me.
 Call forth the British princes: in this gloom
 I mean to school them to our enterprise.'

William Mason, *Caractacus* I.i
 (italics represent the lines cut from the performance edition)

Like Antigone at the start of the OC he is the newcomer to the place, and yet his description is resonant with the same sort of sublime language used to describe the landscape in religious and semiotic terms. His mention of oaks (line 3) recalls the Athenian olive in being a tree as central to the British identity as the olive was to the Athenian one.⁴²⁵ The altar (5) recalls that in the centre of the orchestra, and also the fact that both the OC and *Caractacus* take place in sacred groves; the conflation of religious and theatrical space I discussed in the introduction is maintained, alongside a potentially metatheatrical reading of the text. The 'dark stream brawling' (6) echoes ῥυτῶν ὑδάτων (1598-1599), while 'These cliffs, these yawning caverns' recall τὸν καταρράκτην ὁδόν (1590), and the 'unhewn rock' recalls τοῦδ' ἐπ' ἀξέστου πέτρου (19) echoed in κατὸ λαῖνου τάφου (1596). The language of majesty and nature, with references to ruggedness, awe, unhewn stone, gloom, the terrific and solemn marks this passage as in keeping with the Burkean sublime, on the way to a Gothic aesthetic.

By claiming to be writing on the model of the ancient Greek tragedy, Mason turns our thoughts towards Greek, and we assume that it is Greek literature to which he must be referring. The weight of *Caractacus*' Latinity, however, is impossible to ignore, and the play provides an excellent example of the potential for

⁴²⁵ This idea is also discussed at pp. 166, 182, 186.

fusing the two cultures into a new English model. The geographical and Gothic links in particular become even clearer when we consider this passage alongside the section of Lucan cited in the 1796 British Museum edition appendix:

The Grove of The Druids

Not far away for ages past had stood 399
 An old unviolated sacred wood, 400
 Whose gloomy boughs, thick interwoven, made
 A chill and cheerless everlasting shade:
 There nor the rustic gods nor satyrs sport,
 Nor Fauns and Silvans with the nymphs resort:
 But barbarous priests some dreadful power adore, 405
 And lustrate every tree with human gore.
 If mysteries in times of old received
 And pious ancestry be yet believed,
 There nor the feathered songster builds her nest,
 Nor lonely dens conceal the savage beast: 410
 There no tempestuous winds presume to fly;
 E'en lightnings glance aloof, and shoot obliquely by.
 No wanton breezes toss the dancing leaves,
 But shivering horror in the branches heaves.
 Black springs with pitchy streams divide the ground, 415
 And, bubbling, rumble with a sullen sound.
 Old images of forms misshapen stand,
 Rude and unknowing of the artist's hand;
 With hoary filth begrimed, each ghastly head
 Strikes the astonished gazer's soul with dread. 420
 No gods, who long in common shapes appeared.
 Were e'er with such religious awe revered:
 But zealous crowds in ignorance adore,
 And still, the less they know, they fear the more.
 Oft (as fame tells) the earth in sounds of woe 425
 Is heard to groan from the hollow depths below;
 The baleful yew, though dead, has oft been seen
 To rise from earth, and spring with dusky green.
 With sparkling flames the trees unburning shine,
 And round their boles prodigious serpents twine. 430
 The pious worshippers approach not near.
 But shun their gods, and kneel with distant fear:
 The priest himself, when or the day or night
 Rolling have reaches their full meridian height,
 Refrains the gloomy paths with wary feet, 435

Dreading the demon of the grove to meet:
Who, terrible to sight, at that fixed hour
Still treads the round about his dreary bower.

Lucan *Pharsalia* III.399 -438 Translated by Nicholas Rowe (1703-18).

This contemporary (loose) translation echoes the language of the Gothic sublime, couching Sophoclean ideas in Lucan's verse with a Longinian spirit. The Lucanian grove has been described as in keeping with the tradition of the *locus amoenus*.⁴²⁶ The Colonus ode has also been described in such terms, but only Seneca's influence on Lucan is noted by commentators.⁴²⁷ The 'unviolated...wood' (400) recalls the use of ἄβατον at OC 675.⁴²⁸ Alongside the 'boughs, thick interwoven', it suggests OC 16-17 χῶρος δ'ὄδ' ἱερός, ὥς σάφ' εἰκάσαι, βρύων / δάφνης, ἐλαίας, ἀμπέλου· or even the Colonus Ode (672-677):

θαμίζουσα μάλιστ' ἀη-
δὼν χλωραῖς ὑπο βάσσαις,
τὸν οἰνωπὸν ἔχουσα κισ-
σὸν καὶ τὰν ἄβατον θεοῦ
φυλλάδα μυριόκαρπον ἀνήλιον
ἀνήνεμόν τε πάντων χειμῶνων·

The everlasting shade (402) and lack of winds (411, 413) pick up the adjectives ἀνήλιον and ἀνήνεμον (OC 676-677). The feathered songstress (409) recalls the nightingales so prevalent in the OC.⁴²⁹ The hollow depths (426) suggest both the descent to the underworld implied at OC 1590-1591, and the underground caverns and passages in *Caractacus*. Explicit references to fear, dread, horror and awe (405,

⁴²⁶ Hunink (1992) 168.

⁴²⁷ On the Colonus ode as a *locus amoenus*, see Bierl (1991) 100. See also Calame (1998) 337, with reference to a Theocritus. This idea merits closer discussion in terms of fifth-century Athenian literature, but such a study is beyond the scope of this thesis. On Seneca's influence on Lucan's grove, see Hunink (1992) 169. He also notes (169) the influence of Lucan on *Thebaid* 2.496-523 and 4.419-442, demonstrating a continued theme of topographical importance in the Theban legend.

⁴²⁸ See discussion in the introduction (pp. 22-23).

⁴²⁹ See p. 22 above.

414, 430, 432, 424, 432, 436, 437) give us immediate access to the sublime in Longinian and Burkean terms. 'terrible to sight' does not translate anything literally from the Latin, but recalls OC 141: δεινὸς μὲν ὄραϊν, δεινὸς δὲ κλύειν, while line 420 'Strikes the astonished gazer's soul with dread' summarises *Philosophical Enquiry* II.i in just one line.⁴³⁰ References to lightning (412, 429) confirm this link. The reference to a demon (436) translates *deis* in the Latin, but may reflect the daimonic undertones of both Gothic literature and the OC.

A relationship between Lucan, Sophocles and Mason can be drawn, and it is also telling that Lucan is used in eighteenth-century literature on the sublime. In his notes on Longinus, William Smith had mentioned Caesar in *Pharsalia* as an example of the vividness which Longinus attributes to Sophocles in the OC.⁴³¹ Furthermore, Geoffrey of Monmouth had used Lucan's description of Caesar fleeing with his back to the Britons in conjunction with his promotion of Caractacus, leading to an established tradition of reading Caractacus with both Lucan and British nationalism in mind.⁴³² Eighteenth-century scholars were reading both Sophocles and Lucan in the light of Longinus, and to find echoes of both in Mason demonstrates his strategy of literary conflation in action.

The references to Aulus Didius also require an awareness of Tacitus which returns us to Mason's credited Roman sources. References to works such as Tacitus *Annals* 14.29-30 (cited in particular) and the *Agricola* suggest a certain level of historical accuracy to the play, much as the declaration at the start does some

⁴³⁰ p. 42 above.

⁴³¹ Smith (179) 2. An 1800 edition of Dryden with commentary also describes the *Pharsalia* in precisely such Longinian terms: 'Strong and glowing colours are the just resemblances of bold metaphors; but both must be judiciously applied; for there is a difference betwixt daring and fool-hardiness. Lucan and Statius often ventured them too far; our Virgil never. But the great defect of the PHARSALIA and the THEBAIS was in the design; if that had been more perfect, we might have forgiven many of their bold strokes in the colouring, or at least excused them: yet some of them are such as Demosthenes or Cicero could not have defended.' (343).

⁴³² See Curran (2002) 149ff.

affiliation with Greek tragedy. The truth of this link is again somewhat dubious. Tacitus was extremely well-known in the eighteenth century and the conflation of the two stories (Aulus Didius and Suetonius Paulinus) would not have gone unnoticed among scholars and pedants. Aulus Didius was not even in the country for the invasion of Mona, let alone the leader of an attack against Caractacus. He assisted Cartimandua, rather than imprisoning her (Tacitus *Annals* XII.40). The historical detail does not work, nor was it necessarily supposed to work.⁴³³ Again, Mason is demonstrating what it means to write creatively, engaging with his classical models, but refashioning them to represent England as a new Rome with a Grecian heritage and Celtic background.⁴³⁴ I shall return to the theme of geography below, but at this point I conclude that, before examining the formal traits of tragedy which *Caractacus* may exhibit, we must also accept that a different, more subtle form of cross-cultural inspiration and borrowing were taking place.

Both *Caractacus* and *Elfrida* have lyric odes between scenes, dividing them into episodes in a manner not previously attempted by an English writer. Hall and Macintosh make this change the focus of their work on *Caractacus*, viewing it as the main sign of Mason's classicism; for them the chorus provided the primary criterion for judging the success and quality of the play, as they emphasise the novelty of Mason's conflation of Hellenic and ancient British revivalism.⁴³⁵ Mason is supposed

⁴³³ The acknowledged sources are again not, however, the only ones which seem relevant. Aulus Didius' references to their barbarous rites are suggestive of the Druids' notorious human sacrifices. Caesar, Pliny, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Cassius Dio all mention examples of potential human sacrifice, but only Caesar and Pliny are mentioned by Mason. Dionysius of Halicarnassus had been published in translation in 1758, but Cassius Dio not since 1704, although he is mentioned in *Biographia Classica* in 1750 (see ch. 1). This kind of Roman historiography was flourishing in the mid-eighteenth century and Mason's retelling of it in dramatic form makes sense.

⁴³⁴ For a detailed discussion of the classical sources and eighteenth-century depiction of druids, see Piggott (1968).

⁴³⁵ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 184. They also point out that Milton's 1671 *Samson Agonistes* was influenced not only by tragedy in general, but by the OC in particular. *Caractacus* may have been the first reworking of the whole play, but elements are there in earlier literature, including Shakespeare's *King Lear*. For more discussion of *Lear* and *Oedipus*, see chapter 4. As they argue: an epistle to the play invites formal and thematic comparison with Greek tragedies and the play features an onstage

to have taken his cue from Handel's reliance on a chorus, notably in *Hercules* (1745).⁴³⁶ As with Handel, his choruses were criticised as an unusual and unpopular formal innovation. The frustrated dramatist Percival Stockdale, for example, used the chorus as the basis for his attack on Mason's classicism.⁴³⁷ Greek choruses are known for commenting on the action, but there were concerns that a moralizing chorus might disguise dangerous materials.⁴³⁸ One train of contemporary opinion was also that the chorus represented the decline in Athenian freedom, a feature of the time after the theoric fund was established, intended to mask the decreasing political freedom of ancient playwrights.⁴³⁹ The theoric fund, however, and theatre's important place in Athenian law, was instead praised in Mason's circle.⁴⁴⁰ This link between the chorus and politics is evident in Richard Hurd's claim that the chorus only speak the truth if they are citizens; aesthetic and political choices are two faces of the same creative process.⁴⁴¹ We do not find his comments levelled at Mason in particular, however. Indeed, in Walpole's extensive (42-volume) correspondence, *Caractacus* is barely mentioned, let alone criticised.⁴⁴² Instead, Walpole offered positive encouragement for choruses when he wrote to Mason:

chorus (12); the clergy was usually in favour of choruses but dramatists against, with Mason reconciling them in 'druidical revivalism' (198); the chorus was supposedly an expression of Epicureanism, and thus conflates the Christianity of the clerical author, native paganism and Hellenistic philosophy, a contradictory mix worthy of expanded comment further on (206).

⁴³⁶ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 197. Note that *Hercules* is the first recorded modern production / adaptation of *Trachiniae*. The first recorded stage production is Samuel Parr's 1776 Stanmore School production, which was backed by David Garrick, in the same year as *Caractacus* was produced.

⁴³⁷ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 208, quoting Stockdale *An Inquiry into the Nature and Genuine laws of Poetry* (1778: 117, 119).

⁴³⁸ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 199. For discussion of the uses of the Sophoclean chorus cf. Burton (1980), Gardiner (1987), Ley (2007) and Webster (1970).

⁴³⁹ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 200.

⁴⁴⁰ See for example Horace Walpole writing to Mason, 12th May 1778, in Lewis (1955a) 393.

⁴⁴¹ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 200.

⁴⁴² Just fourteen letters mention *Caractacus*.

‘As you are sublime in choruses, why have you only one in an opera, -in a Greek opera? They are simple and yet give variety; surely a hymeneal chorus is necessary?’⁴⁴³

The musical traditions of Greece and Britain are conflated in *Caractacus*, as with other elements of the play. There was a contemporary craze for Celtic musical traditions, where Celtic interests were inseparable from that in the music of Ancient Greece.⁴⁴⁴ Walpole referred to Mason as ‘sublime’ in his choruses, using the Burkean, Longinian term which has been becoming increasingly prominent, with Walpole in particular. In *Caractacus*, we find both a singing and a speaking chorus, with music made integral to the play;⁴⁴⁵ the 1796 edition marks the musical parts of the text with double inverted commas, and stage directions describe them as symphonies. In the parodos, for example, it reads: ‘The Chorus, preceded by Modred, the Chief Druid, descend to a Solemn Symphony’. Mason’s cross-cultural writing is also reflected in the following lines about his music:

‘Say! Mason, judge and master of the lyre!
Harmonious chief of Britain’s living choir!’

William Hayley, *An Essay on Epic Poetry in Five Epistles to the Rev. Mr Mason, with Notes* (1782) Epistle I, ii.13-14, quoted in Lewis (1955a) xxvi.

Mason is described as the master of Britain’s choruses, represented with a lyre, a symbol of Greece. Choral writing was invoked in praise of Mason’s writing, as well as censure. Here, however, we see the influence of Roman and other Greek sources, beyond those acknowledged by Mason in the appendix to the 1796 edition. The second chorus of Bards recalls comments by Diodorus Siculus (5.31). Here bards are

⁴⁴³ Horace Walpole writing to Mason, 24th January 1778, in Lewis (1955a) 345-6. The opera referred to is probably the lost *Sappho*.

⁴⁴⁴ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 192-193.

⁴⁴⁵ Although the double chorus has links with the history of the Druids (see below, pp. 172-173).

differentiated from Druids proper, and associated closely with the lyre.⁴⁴⁶ Similarly in *Caractacus* there is a singing chorus of bards, and a separate chorus of druids, yet both are a part of the same group or worshippers in the sacred rites.

His use of the chorus was unusual, but not unintelligible in its context, and its particular expression through druidical characters demonstrates a conflation of Greek, Roman and Celtic sources and paradigms. Elements of this were already evident; from the late sixteenth century onwards opera had been evolving as a genre intended in part to recreate Greek tragedy, and opera was a popular genre in the elite circles of eighteenth-century England;⁴⁴⁷ from 1750-1760 approximately 25% of the new dramas on the London stage were operas (although the 1750s had also seen composers such as Handel stop writing opera).⁴⁴⁸ Mason's own two tragedies on the Greek model were both performed with music by Thomas Arne. Greek tragedy expressed through music had precedents in opera; music and choral writing were paired in oratorio; Greek tragedy's integration of a musical and spoken chorus into a spoken dramatic, fictional narrative was not so well-accepted, and it is here that Mason innovated.⁴⁴⁹

We should not, however, limit our understanding of Mason's use of Attic art to his choral writing; some other formal elements of Greek tragedy are of interest.

⁴⁴⁶ Strabo (4.4.4) differentiates between three classes and is mentioned in the 1796 edition on this point: παρὰ πᾶσι δ' ὡς ἐπίπαν τρία φύλα τῶν τιμωμένων διαφερόντως ἐστί, βάρδοι τε καὶ οὐάταις καὶ δρυῖδαι· βάρδοι μὲν ὕμνηται καὶ ποιηταί, οὐάταις δὲ ἱεροποιοὶ καὶ φυσιολόγοι, δρυῖδαι δὲ πρὸς τῇ φυσιολογίᾳ καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἀσχοῦσι.

Hall and Macintosh (2005) 208 describe the notes as documenting the play's ethnography and demonstrating the range of texts Mason used in preparing *Caractacus*. In assessing the play's classical allusions, however, I move beyond these notes, using them as a guide and not a prescription.

⁴⁴⁷ The development of opera and its links with the OC and *Caractacus* will be discussed more fully in chapter 5.

⁴⁴⁸ Handel's last new opera, *Deidamia*, was first performed in 1741. His decision to give up opera seems due in part to his disillusionment over the potential for *opera seria* to provide social comment given the ambiguity of allegory and restraints of censorship. See Taylor (1987) on the timing of his decision.

⁴⁴⁹ See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 197 on the chorus' participation and integration being Mason's distinctive contribution.

The relative novelty of Aristotle's *Poetics* in mid-eighteenth-century England may lead us to expect some Aristotelian influence on *Caractacus*, but we are largely frustrated.⁴⁵⁰ The 'Unities' are mainly lacking; the only significant one is that of place. The action is clearly set in and around the sacred grove, moving to local caves, but no further. Given the primacy of place as a theme in the OC, a relatively strong sense of place in *Caractacus* would be expected, and for its location to have a coherent continuity. As a closet drama, not intended for performance, such a practical aspect of the play as its staged environment is far less important, as the staging becomes the job of the reader's imagination. The area in which we might expect least unity, then, turns out to demonstrate the opposite, and this unusual prominence of the landscape and setting provides the focus for much of the discussion below.

Peripeteia may be read into the reversal of fortunes brought about by the deceptions in the play and Vellinus' escape from custody. The trick leading to Caractacus' downfall is supposedly transparent (given that it is explained in the prologue) but the Roman's false retreat is unexpected. The play moves from triumphant jubilation to the despondence of defeat. In this sense, there is a reversal of fortune. On Aristotle's criteria, however, this defeat is not enough. Caractacus is not a fatally flawed character. He is the victim, not the aggressor. He displays no outrageous hubris, commits no *hamartia*. He is not a suitable tragic hero and the reversal of fortune is not presented in these terms.⁴⁵¹

Anagnorisis may play a greater role in the play; we can construe it as recognition by one character of another by means of tokens (Orestes in *Choephoroi*) or ethos, or of one character of himself (Oedipus in the OT). The trope is toyed with in Act I, when Aulus Didius gives Vellinus a ring belonging to Caractacus' wife, intended to be a sign of her survival. Evelina herself criticises this as an appropriate

⁴⁵⁰ For more on the reception of Aristotle, see chapters 1 and 5.

⁴⁵¹ Aristotle *Poetics* 1452a23, 1452b27-38.

means for proving that her mother is alive, wanting letters to confirm it.⁴⁵² Physical items as tokens of identity are thus dismissed, and Aristotle's criterion cast aside.⁴⁵³ Caractacus then accepts Vellinus as his son, failing to recognise that he is a traitor. Elidurus is recognised as a treacherous associate with a good heart, and is accepted into the family. Evelina claims to be able to sense this through his countenance and bearing:

Evelina: Yet must I still distrust the elder stranger:
 For while he talks (and much the flatterer talks)
 His brother's silent carriage gives disproof
 Of all his boast...'

William Mason, *Caractacus* II.v

Evelina relies on physiognomics, a discipline growing in popularity throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁵⁴ In a play (a form of verbal exchange) silence is more telling than speech, and thus the very genre itself is played with.

Arviragus is Caractacus' true son, and the last youth to be introduced to him. His arrival is sudden and unexpected, and he must be recognised by Caractacus as the returning but not prodigal son; this happens offstage, through Evelina's mediation, and all we know about it is when Caractacus appears and welcomes Arviragus, saying that all is forgiven:

Caractacus: O my Arviragus! my son! my son!
 What joy, what transport, doth thy aged sire
 Feel in these filial foldings! Speak not, boy,

⁴⁵² This casts her as an Electra figure, perhaps in keeping with my reading of Arviragus as possessing some Orestian traits.

⁴⁵³ Aristotle *Poetics* 1452b3-8. On developing eighteenth-century (French and German) attitudes towards *anagnorisis*, see Cave (1988) ch.4.

⁴⁵⁴ For more on physiognomics, see chapter 4.

Nor interrupt that heart-felt ecstasy
Should strike us mute. I know what thou would'st say,
Yet, pr'ythee, peace. Thy sister's voice hath clear'd thee.

William Mason, *Caractacus* IV.i

This acceptance / recognition is couched in sublime terms, offering joy and transport, and striking with ecstasy. It is a thoroughly Burkean scene. *Caractacus* therefore deals with *anagnorisis* in several ways. Tokens are dismissed, physiognomy is invoked, mistakes are made and the true son is finally discovered. There is no simple reading of the Aristotelian idea of *anagnorisis*. Mason's claims present *Caractacus* as an Aristotelian play, but it makes better sense in a Longinian context, where the division between form and content is less distinct or important. Using the OC as a model also makes better sense in such a context, since we have already seen how important the OC became for interpretations and formulations of the sublime.⁴⁵⁵ By the 1750s, however, the OC had still not been staged, and so provided a good source of novel material for a playwright trying to write a new kind of play. Aesthetically, the OC was a useful and relevant text for Mason to use.

In addition, by taking the immediate focus off the content, and using a less familiar story, Mason made it more possible to write about sensitive subjects, to stage a commentary on contemporary religion and politics without attracting the attention of the censors. Theatre censorship had been introduced from 1737, which had forced playwrights to write more allegorically.⁴⁵⁶ Mason was writing twenty years after censorship started, in the wake of many dramas using allegories drawn from Greek and Roman stories (1737-1757 saw 442 new productions listed on the London stage, of which 46 have an obvious link to Greek and Latin plays). Using the OC, a more unusual play (though one gaining in scholarly popularity), and overtly

⁴⁵⁵ See chapter 1 in particular.

⁴⁵⁶ On the effect of censorship on Greek tragedy, see, for example, Macintosh (1995).

prioritising the formal aspect of Greek tragedy not only helped Mason bypass the censors in the first place, but also to reinvent the British tragic genre.

3.3 *Why Caractacus?*

It was fashionable in the eighteenth century to identify British / Celtic history with that of Greece.⁴⁵⁷ This tendency had a long precedent in British literature, where Caractacus had been used as a British hero withstanding the Romans, both before and after the discovery of Tacitus. As the first real contact between Rome and Britain, Caractacus became an easy target for use in anti-Romanism.⁴⁵⁸ In the character of Caractacus, we may discern a conflation of several cultures. Caractacus is an old man who used to be a great king with a famous name and needs to find a place for himself in contemporary society. Caractacus is also modelled on Oedipus, in terms of the father-daughter relationship. In this play, however, it is Evelina who leans on Caractacus, and the motif of mother-slaying is turned on its head:

· Caractacus: '...Ah, Evelina!
Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm
That could not save thy mother.'

William Mason, *Caractacus* I,v

There are also Christian sentiments in the play, which correspond with the potential interpretation of Oedipus within a Christian framework.⁴⁵⁹ Oedipus may be read as the man who became god, who died so that he might protect his people, who holds the power to curse and forgive. In Anglo-Saxon literature, similar ideas are suggested about King Arthur. He is said not to have died, but to have retired to

⁴⁵⁷ See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 186.

⁴⁵⁸ See Curran (2002) on the use of Caractacus from Geoffrey of Monmouth onwards.

⁴⁵⁹ See the introduction and chapter 4.

Avalon, from where he will return should Britain ever need his protection. This is reminiscent of the situation at the end of the *OC*, where Oedipus disappears to an unknown end, ready to protect the land where he has 'died'.⁴⁶⁰ The Arthurian story also has earlier Welsh precedents, in the *Mabinogion*, when Bendigeid Vran dies (shot in the foot by a poisoned dart), he commands that his head be cut off and left to protect the land outside which it is buried, facing outwards. The *Mabinogion* may have been little known in England until its translation by Lady Charlotte Guest in 1849, but that does not mean that it did not influence hundreds of years of folk tales, providing a rich pool for Mason to use.⁴⁶¹ *Caractacus* draws as much on native myth and legend as it does on Greek tragedy, reminding England of its roots and identifying those roots with Ancient Greece.

This identification continued in terms of place as well as character. Inigo Jones thought that Stonehenge was a Roman monument based on Vitruvian principles. In *Caractacus* itself, Stonehenge is an astronomical centre. Yet, described as 'choir gaur', it was also given the false etymology 'chorus gigantum / magnum' and thought of as a theatre.⁴⁶² Similarly, the round floor at Trewwry (Anglesey, Tref Alaw) was interpreted as a theatre. Circular structures, therefore, could be interpreted as theatres; they were also associated increasingly with the Greeks rather than the Romans.⁴⁶³ There was thus a conflation of Greek and British culture, and of religious and theatrical space, and *Caractacus* reflects both of these.

⁴⁶⁰ For the most comprehensive version of the Arthur legend, see Thomas Malory (1485) *The Byrth, Lyf and actes of Kyng Arthur*.

⁴⁶¹ Mason's engagement with such Western literature is perhaps demonstrated by his translation of *Knytilnga Saga*, the song of Harold the Valiant. He did not read the Norse in which it was written, but translated Mallet's French translation of Bartholinus' Latin translation (see Draper [1924] 61). Mason was clearly no stranger to borrowing literature and taking it through multiple translations and the attendant cultural filters. Note that Mallet was James Thomson's best friend in London, on whom more below.

⁴⁶² Hall and Macintosh (2005) 205. This idea is discussed by Horace Walpole in his letter to Conway, 11th November 1787, where he writes: 'Inigo Jones, or Charlton, or somebody, I forget who, called Stonehenge chorea gigantum'.

⁴⁶³ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 204.

In so doing, *Caractacus* is in keeping with the OC where space and place are key themes, and the integration of locality and religion is vitally important to any interpretation of the play. In my introduction I discussed the six main strategies by which this geographical importance is conveyed. In terms of *Caractacus*, most of these are irrelevant, but again we see Mason manipulating some theme to his own ends.

In order to make sense of this manipulation in its eighteenth-century context, I now turn to Mason's contemporaries, in particular the playwright James Thomson and the text of *Rule Britannia*. I start with a brief biography, in order to contextualise the ideas I attribute to him in writing *Rule Britannia*. Born in the Scottish borders, he was always concerned about definitions of Britain.⁴⁶⁴ The landscape made such an impression on him that he has been described as foreshadowing Wordsworth in his verse.⁴⁶⁵ From a staunchly Whig, Hanoverian-supporting family, he was intended for the ministry and went through a theological training college, before deciding in 1724-5 to make for London instead and seek his fortunes as a poet.⁴⁶⁶ There he was introduced to men such as Robert Walpole, Dr Arbuthnot, Alexander Pope and John Gay while Aaron Hill took on a mentoring role.⁴⁶⁷ It is unsurprising, therefore, to find his work expressing the same sorts of sublime sentiments that I have already traced through eighteenth-century readings of the OC. Thomson aligned himself in particular with John Dennis, whose contribution to the sublime aesthetic I discussed in chapter 1.⁴⁶⁸ He drew on Lockean physiology and Shaftesburian moral

⁴⁶⁴ As Sambrook (1991) 55 writes: 'He is a child of the Union and perhaps the first important poet to write with a British, as distinct from a Scottish or English outlook'.

⁴⁶⁵ Sambrook (1991) 2, 69.

####' [⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.* 1, 8-27.

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.* 31. Hall and Macintosh (2005) 101. See Sambrook (1991) 38-39 on their introduction and *passim* on their relationship. Note that Hill's first play was *Elfred* (1710, redramatised 1731), see Draper (1924) 174 and Sambrook (1991) 81. This links him to Mason, but Mason removed Elfrida's unfaithfulness to Athelwold, cf. Draper (1924) 253.

⁴⁶⁸ See Sambrook (1991) 44, and on Dennis, above, pp. 36, 47, 67, 74-77, 85.

philosophy, whose precepts we find echoed in Edmund Burke, again with relevance for our understanding of the OC. The Longinian aspects of Thomson's sublime are evident from the following quotation:

'Let POETRY, once more, be restored to her antient Truth, and purity; let Her be inspired from Homer, and, in return, her Incense ascend thither; let Her exchange her low, venal, trifling subjects for such as are fair, useful, and magnificent; and let Her execute these so as, at once, to please, instruct, surprise, and astonish...'⁴⁶⁹

The ideas of ascension, magnificence, pleasure and astonishment all recall contemporary Longinian-inspired language.

Thomson's particular familiarity with Greek tragedy was noted at the time, and his combination of Greek tragedy and English nationalistic writing began early in his career. In August 1726 he wrote to his friend Mallet about his latest work that:

'They contain a Panegyric on Brittania, which may perhaps contribute to make my poem popular. The English People are not a little vain of Themselves, and their Country. Brittania too includes our native country, Scotland.'⁴⁷⁰

This became *Brittania*, a blank verse of just over 300 lines published in Folio, January 21st 1729. Then, on 6th April 1738, his play *Agamemnon* opened at Drury Lane, where it played for just nine nights, without subsequent revival.⁴⁷¹ His overt engagement with Greek tragedy failed to impress, but the genre made an impact on him and its influence remains discernible in his later work. Another of his plays, *Edward and*

⁴⁶⁹ Sambrook (1991) 43.

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.* 44.

⁴⁷¹ *ibid.* 178.

Eleanora, was the second play banned by the new theatre censorship in 1740.⁴⁷² Thomson used the Greek model to express views about the unstable political situation in England, and he continued in this vein. In 1740 Thomson and Mallet co-wrote *Alfred, a Masque*, which was first performed on 1st August 1740 by command of Frederick, Prince of Wales.⁴⁷³ This masque includes the chorus now known as *Rule Britannia*.⁴⁷⁴ The music, like that for Mason's plays, was by Thomas Arne. In *Rule Britannia*, we find the same combination of focus on the country, religion, politics, law, strength against enemies and artistic inspiration that are present in both the OC and *Caractacus*.

When Britain first— at Heaven's command
 Arose— from out the azure main
 Arose, arose, arose from out the azure main
This was the charter,
The charter of the land, 5
And guardian angels sung this strain:

Refrain:
 Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves,
 Britons never never never shall be slaves.

The nations, not— so blest as thee,
Must, in their turns, to tyrants fall: 10
 Must in, must in, must in their turns to tyrants fall.
 While thou shalt flourish,
 Shalt flourish great and free,
The dread and envy of them all.

Still more majestic shalt thou rise, 15
 More dreadful, from each foreign stroke:
 More dreadful, dreadful, dreadful from each foreign stroke.
As the loud blast,

⁴⁷² It was based on *Alcestis*, further demonstrating Thomson's engagement with Greek tragedy. It was not performed until March 1775, at the Theatre Royal, which only shortly precedes the production of *Caractacus*. Cf. Hall and Macintosh (2005) 120-121. Henry Brooke's *Gustavus Visa* was the first play banned under the 1737 Licensing Act, see Sambrook (1991) 191.

⁴⁷³ Thus placing Thomson firmly in the Prince's camp, in opposition to the government. *Alfred* is also linked to *Elfred* and thus to *Elfrida*.

⁴⁷⁴ It is assumed that Thomson wrote it, but this has not been proven: see Sambrook (1991) 200-201.

The blast that tears the skies,
Serves but to root thy native oak. 20

Thee haughty tyrants ne'er shall tame:
 All their attempts to bend thee down,
 All their, all their, all their attempts to bend thee down
 Will but arouse thy,
 Arouse thy generous flame; 25
 But work their woe, and thy renown.

To thee belongs the rural reign;
 Thy cities— shall with commerce shine:
 Thy cities, cities, cities shall with commerce shine
 All thine shall be the, 30
 Shall be the subject main,
 And every shore it circles thine.

The Muses, still with freedom found,
 Shall to— thy happy coast repair:
 Shall to, shall to, shall to thy happy coast repair 35
 Blest isle! with matchless,
 With matchless beauty crown'd,
 And manly hearts to guard the fair.

James Thomson(?), *Rule Britannia*, 1740

From the very outset, there is an emphasis on Britain as divinely protected: 'at Heaven's command' (1) and 'guardian angels sang this strain' (6). Lines 18-19 ('As the loud blast, the blast that tears the skies') invokes the power of the thunderbolt, an instrument of the Old Testament God, but also of Zeus. The Muses, invoked in the last stanza, suggest the fruitfulness of British literature, also implicitly providing their inspiration for this poem itself, as Dionysus was invoked in the *Colonus Ode*. Britain is symbolised by its mighty tree, the oak (20), as Athens was by its olive. Britain as 'The dread and envy of them all' (14) recalls Athens' olive as a *φόβημα* (*OC* 699), interpreted by Jebb as a reference to Androtion's story that the Peloponnesian invaders spared the Athenian olives when they attacked.⁴⁷⁵ The *Colonus Ode* may also celebrate a defeat of the Thebans at *Colonus* in 411BC.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁵ Jebb (1885) *ad loc.*

⁴⁷⁶ For a summary of the historical references see Kelly (2009) ch.1.

Similarly here, Britain is protected against invading tyrants. 'This was the charter, the charter of the land' (3-4) reminds the British of its legal foundation as a free people; such a reference to foundation myths ties in with the focus on Athene and Poseidon in the *Colonus Ode*.⁴⁷⁷

A relationship can thus be drawn between the use of landscape in the *OC* and *Rule Britannia*; whether it is a direct relationship or not, both had an effect on Mason. Mason's use of Sophocles is not in doubt, even if the extent of this use is debateable; his relationship with Thomson requires closer attention. Thomson was connected with the type of artistic elite within whose work Mason's is to be found, including the Walpole family, and Aaron Hill. As a satirical writer, Mason was interested in any politics of literature which he could lampoon, and also with literature that shared his satirical aims. Given Thomson's battle with the censors, his work might well have aroused Mason's interest. They shared a composer in Thomas Arne, who had also composed an *Oedipus, King of Thebes*, demonstrating his own fondness for Greek tragedy.⁴⁷⁸ There is some biographical reason, then, for crediting Mason with an awareness of Thomson's work. It remains to consider whether there is any textual relationship between the *OC*, *Rule Britannia* and *Caractacus*.

I return to *Caractacus*:

Caractacus: 'Hail, hallow'd oaks!

Hail, British born! who, last of British race,

Hold you primaeval rights by nature's charter;

Not at the nod of Caesar.

...

⁴⁷⁷ For more on the ode in general see the introduction, pp. 19-24.

⁴⁷⁸ A new musical version of Dryden-Lee's play, this was first performed at Drury Lane on 19th November 1740, revived in 1744, 1755 and 1775. 1740 is the approximate year of *Rule Britannia*'s composition, 1755 is roughly when Mason was writing his own tragedies, and 1775 falls between the first performances of *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*. See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 28.

still proudly spread
Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,
Who, Roman like, assails you.'

William Mason, *Caractacus*, I.v

As in *Rule Britannia*, this description is expressed as resistance to tyrannous invaders, with support from the founding charter. Here, the invaders are named as Romans. In the next act *Caractacus* himself extols Britain's virtue in terms of its divine foundation and protection:

Caractacus: 'my soul confides
In that all-healing and all-forming Power,
Who, on the radiant day when Time was born
Cast his broad eye upon the wild of ocean
And calm'd it with a glance: then, plunging deep
His mighty arm, pluck'd from its dark domain
This throne of Freedom, lifted it to light,
Girt it with silver cliffs, and call'd it Britain:
He did, and will preserve it.'

William Mason, *Caractacus* II.vi

Whereas in *Rule Britannia*, Britain rises from the sea by itself, at heaven's command, in *Caractacus* 'His [God's] mighty arm, pluck'd [it] from its dark domain' (6). Britain is described as 'This throne of Freedom' (7), again couching the description of the land in political terms, perhaps referring to Britain's unusual constitutional monarchy, as opposed to the tyranny it resists. As in *Rule Britannia*, there is a sense of divine security in 'He did, and will preserve it' (9). At the same time, the tone and phrasing of the speech recalls Shakespeare's Gaunt:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
 This other Eden, demi-paradise,
 This fortress built by Nature for herself
 Against infection and the hand of war,
 This happy breed of men, this little world,
 This precious stone set in the silver sea,
 Which serves it in the office of a wall,
 Or as a moat defensive to a house,
 Against the envy of less happier lands,
 This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England
 This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
 Fear'd by their breed, and famous by their birth,
 Renowned for their deeds as far from home,--
 For Christian service and true chivalry,--
 As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
 Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son:
 This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,
 Dear for her reputation through the world,
 Is now leas'd out,--I die pronouncing it,--
 Like to a tenement or pelting farm:
 England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
 Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
 Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
 With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds:
 That England, that was wont to conquer others,
 Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.

From *King Richard II*, Act II scene i. (Shakespeare)

The natural defences, blessed state and Christian protection are all relevant to the *Caractacus* passages. Mason weaves Latin, Greek and English sentiments and phrases, establishing himself as a new poet for his modern society; he does indeed offer us Attic art mingled with Shakespeare's fire.

Such an allegorical reading of the landscape in *Caractacus* is supported by Mason's other work. He was known for the care he invested in his own garden designs, and his accepted *magnum opus* was *The English Garden*, a four-book poem on

horticultural themes.⁴⁷⁹ Notes in the text date aspects of its composition to points in the 1770s, contemporary with the era which made *Caractacus* performable. The poem resounds with allegorical references. pp. 80-81⁴⁸⁰ read like a manifesto for a British immigration policy expressed through plants and their associations with different countries. Oaks feature heavily in the text as a marker of the truly English tree and the rose is invoked as England's queen (125). There are appeals to Roman freedom and its links with Britain (4) and the poem finishes with a call for British freedom through its gardens (136-137) uniting the themes of landscape and political allegory already discussed. Burkean references also abound, including 'the Genius of the place... that frowns like a fiend in Gothic story' (5, also 42, 43), the gloom of a Norman fortress amid oaks (18) and references to Spenser and Milton (e.g. 25),⁴⁸¹ as well as explicit mention of Addison and Pope (29). The interdisciplinary links with painting and sculpture which we see throughout the eighteenth century also continue (9, 14) as well as to Garrick and Shakespeare (32). A reference to untouched woodland (17) again recalls the grove at Colonus as ἄβατον, while Lucan is himself mentioned in the notes alongside Virgil's *Georgics* (52, again at 134). The Horatian relationship between Art (here in gardening) and Nature can also be traced throughout the poem (especially 79, 84, 88, 111). Mason's poem provides a particularly clear example of the combination of landscape description as political allegory with sublime sentiments couched in a mixture of Greek and Roman terms which I have been tracing through *Rule Britannia* and *Caractacus*.

Another feature of all these poems are the hills (or cliffs). The precise topography of Colonus is unclear, but Jebb demonstrates that at the very least, the presence of the hill of Demeter Euchlous mentioned at OC 1600-1601 (τῷ δ' εὐχλόου

⁴⁷⁹ See Smith (2004) for a description of the gardens and their continuing importance.

⁴⁸⁰ Page numbers refer to the 1782 complete version of the poem published in Dublin.

⁴⁸¹ This point of the poem also introduces the idea of the garden as a representation of Eden, continuing to conflate issues of horticulture and religion.

Δήμητρος εἰς προσόψιον / πάγον) is important, even if it remains unidentifiable.⁴⁸²
In *Caractacus*, Snowdon is mentioned as a landscape marker, for example:

Chorus: 'Mona on Snowdon calls...'

William Mason, *Caractacus* I.iv⁴⁸³

From the top of Snowdon it is possible to see Wales, Scotland and England. Not only is it an iconic marker for North Wales, a simple way of letting the audience imagine the setting, but given its access to all three countries, it could be read as a symbol of their unity. Mona is liminal, yet given a central place in the battle for Britain's freedom. Colonus is in a similar situation, on the boundaries of Athens, yet made central to this place and held up as a beacon of resistance for the Athenians in general. The Ossian phenomenon of the 1760s had increased British readers' sensitivity to such Celtic-themed literature, with or without classical resonances. Wales as a marker of British nationalism made sense in this context. This development meant that on the basis of its Celtic pretensions, *Caractacus* could become a success on stage in 1776 where it had remained a printed oddity in 1759.⁴⁸⁴ These Celtic echoes are tied as much to religion as they are to place, and I now turn to religion as the second major strand needed to understand *Caractacus* as a sublime play in its Celto-Greco-Romano context.

⁴⁸² Jebb (1885) xxxii, and *ad loc.* For Easterling (2006a) 143 the unusual epithet *Euchloos* for Demeter links the place to Eleusis and the Eleusinian mysteries, and the hill is less a topographical reality than a further example of the construction of the dramatic space in religious terms.

⁴⁸³ This appeal to the mountains is also reminiscent of the beacon speech at *Agamemnon*: 281-316.

⁴⁸⁴ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 193-194 put it as strongly as to say that without the Ossian phenomenon, *Caractacus* would not have been staged.

3.4 Religion

'Mason seems to have kept his Sentimentalism and his theological dogma apart'⁴⁸⁵

John Draper claims that Mason's literature did not betray his clerical background, but I would disagree. I have already referred to some religious aspects of *Caractacus*, with reference to the relationship between the landscape and religion. I now turn to consider these more carefully, in order to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Mason's poetic and religious lives, and their grounding in contemporary aesthetics. In order to understand the effect of *Caractacus* on its audience and readers, I first set out some of the important religious views and developments present in eighteenth-century England.

Eighteenth-century England witnessed an enormous increase in different branches of Christianity, from denominations such as Methodism which became a part of the Protestant mainstream, to less commonly known groups such as the Swedenborgians and Zwinglians.⁴⁸⁶ The relationship between this religious instability and both poetic and political productions is important in understanding the popularity of the OC.

There is also a link between religious and political affiliations, and the Roman Catholic Church's position. Frederick, Prince of Wales, was the first member of the Royal family to become a Freemason. James Thomson was a Freemason in the

⁴⁸⁵ Draper (1924) 131.

⁴⁸⁶ The contribution of the Wesley family has already been discussed in chapter 2; William Blake was at one point a Swedenborgian; Henry Fuseli was a Zwinglian priest. The form of Christianity with which these people were involved will colour the way that they read Greek tragedy, and different elements of the tradition will resonate more with each branch. A close examination of Blake's religious affiliations and their effect on his reading of Greek literature would be particularly interesting, given his idiosyncratic affiliations to bizarre groups and his own visionary nature, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Richmond Lodge, sponsored by the Prince of Wales. In 1738 Pope Clement XII excommunicated all Freemasons.⁴⁸⁷ Hostility between the Freemasons and the Catholics was therefore endemic.⁴⁸⁸ This hostility extended throughout society at large, and may provide one way of reading the conflict in *Caractacus*. In the 1750s, when Mason first wrote the play, the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 would have been relatively fresh in people's memory. Occurring when Mason was just twenty, as an unexpected return to past factionalism, it made a significant impact on the Cambridge set of which he was a part. As he then became an Anglican minister, more formal anti-Catholic sentiments would have seemed natural, given the general vilification of Catholics, particularly in the satirical press. By 1776 when *Caractacus* was performed, the government was trying to make concessions to the Catholics, preparing the Catholic Relief Act of 1778-1780. Far from increasing harmony in Britain, however, Lord George Gordon led riots in London against these reforms after a petition signed by 60,000 people was presented to Parliament on 2nd June 1780,⁴⁸⁹ and the Scots caused such an uproar that the act was allowed not to hold in Scotland.⁴⁹⁰ Satirical prints moved towards being explicitly anti-Catholic from around 1746, particularly in 1778-1780.⁴⁹¹ The production of the play thus came on the approach to the next crisis point for eighteenth-century Catholicism in England. Its delay in production may reflect the wait for an appropriate religious climate as much as an appropriate aesthetic climate, further demonstrating how politics, religion and aesthetics were inherently linked in the 1770s.

⁴⁸⁷ Sambrook (1991) 168.

⁴⁸⁸ William Mason was himself a Freemason, see Hall and Macintosh (2005) 213.

⁴⁸⁹ For a comprehensive account of these, see Walpole writing to Mason on Sunday 4th June 1780, Friday 9th June 1780 and Thursday 29th June 1780. Note that Edmund Burke was an unnamed advisor on the Act, further linking concepts of the sublime with the contemporary religious and political situation.

⁴⁹⁰ See Miller (1986) 38-39. The Act was kept, indeed it was supplemented in 1791 by a further Catholic Relief Act, which exempted Catholics from the oath of allegiance, and there was no coordinated opposition or hostility towards this, see Miller (1986) 40.

⁴⁹¹ Miller (1986) 38.

Mason's own clerical life was closely connected with his political and literary life, and this is clearly evident in his work. In 1754 Warburton told him to abandon literature if he took up orders.⁴⁹² He stopped writing for a few years, but was ultimately unable to deny this aspect of his character, and so *Caractacus* was published. His religious views can be seen reflected in his poetry. Mason fell between the enthusiasm of the Methodists and the agnosticism of the Deists, associating poetry with Deist Sentimentalism.⁴⁹³ He viewed Methodism as too close to superstition or to the zeal of the Papists, however, and so never aligned himself too closely with it. A fundamentally charitable man, he took a conservative view on matters of doctrine. His dislike of universal salvation as unscriptural was made clearly evident in one of his published sermons.⁴⁹⁴ Believing in the necessity of faith and acts for salvation offers us a way of reading *Caractacus* whereby character in itself is not enough to condemn or save a man; his actions prompted by that character matter just as much. Elidurus' countenance proves his character as far as Evelina is concerned, but he then begs for the chance to prove himself by deeds, compounding the reasons for accepting him:

Elidurus: Give me a sword and twenty honest Britons,
 And I will quell those Romans...
 ...
 Gracious Gods!
 Then there are hopes indeed. O call them instant
 This Prince will lead them on: I'll follow him,
 Tho' in my Chains, and some way dash them round
 To harm the haughty foe.

William Mason, *Caractacus*, V.iii

⁴⁹² See Nicholas Literary Anecdotes ii.239: 'Although Mason had apparently acquiesced in Warburton's advice to abandon poetry, agreeing "the decency, reputation, and religion, all required this sacrifice of him; and that, if he went into orders he intended to give it up;" his political and literary tastes were too strong for his resolution, and he continued to be an author to the end of his life.' This is reported in the St John's admissions appendix 1715-1767, 530-531.

⁴⁹³ Draper (1924) 129, 131.

⁴⁹⁴ See Mason (1791).

Arviragus is first introduced *in absentia* as someone whose poor character is demonstrated by his wretched deeds, and who then redeems himself by the way he acts, and explains his acts, both on and off stage. This agreement of character and actions for man's worth is clearly reflected in the way youths are dealt with in the play. The links with salvation are provided by the ending, which looks towards Evelina's future; as he dies, Arviragus makes Elidurus promise to care for Evelina in their enslavement. He asks Elidurus to taken on a fraternal role, undercutting the potential romantic link which underlies the text.⁴⁹⁵

For Mason, Christianity was also fundamentally important in establishing a moral framework for life. In 1776 he wrote that faith, hope and love are the marks of a Christian.⁴⁹⁶ This echoes St Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.13: νυνὶ δὲ μένει πίστις ἐλπίς ἀγάπη τὰ τρία ταῦτα· μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη. It was possible for the eighteenth century to read the OC with a similar message. Oedipus' final words to his daughters, as related by the messenger, are:

Oedipus: τὸ γὰρ φιλεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐξ ὅτου πλέον
ἢ τοῦδε τάνδρὸς ἔσχεθ', οὔτητάμεναι
τὸ λοιπὸν ἤδη τὸν βίον διάξετον.

Sophocles OC 1617-1610

τὸ φιλεῖν is translated simply as 'love' by George Adams, Thomas Francklin and Robert Potter, as well as later by Jebb. This is the only place where all three eighteenth-century translations use the word; other examples of the verb are translated in a variety of ways. This idea of the girls being happy because of the familial love they have received is of great importance, even though it is precisely the disruption of this familial system around which their tragedy revolves. For

⁴⁹⁵ This also recalls Heracles and Hyllus in *Trachiniae*.

⁴⁹⁶ Mason (1760) 7.

Mason, familial care was vitally important, and he was a key player in the foundation of the York Asylum (an orphanage).⁴⁹⁷ This expression of familial devotion may well have rung true in his ears. Again, Arviragus' final act of ensuring a protector for Evelina is in keeping with such a model, which already includes a caring (but not incestuous) relationship between Evelina and Caractacus.

In a more overtly religious sense, when the chorus first enter in *Caractacus*, the play almost carries out a druidical mystery rite before our very eyes, but is interrupted by the interlopers. The audience are teased with the idea of seeing something they should not. Religion on stage remains taboo, the closest thing being Elidurus' purification rituals.⁴⁹⁸ This play is in part a call for religion to come off the stage, which is in keeping with contemporary Anglican attitudes. The Methodists' lack of structured ritual and reputation for excess made them very much figures of fun. At the other extreme lay the Roman Catholics, whose practices were highly performative, and far more elaborate than their Church of England counterparts. Awareness that rituals are appropriate, but only in their proper place, may be one additional message we can take from the play.

There are, however, more positive engagements with religion in the play. Elidurus and Vellinus are set up as having largely opposite attitudes towards religion. For Elidurus, local religion, the land and the rites, are of vital importance:

Elidurus: Mercy defend us! See, the awful Druids
 Are issuing from their caves: hear'st thou yon signal?
 Lo, on the instant all the mountain whitens
 With slow-descending bards. Retire, retire;
 This is the hour of sacrifice: to stay

⁴⁹⁷ See Mason (1788).

⁴⁹⁸ Note that we also experience such rituals in the OC: 460-509. These rituals, however, are only described (by the stranger to Oedipus) rather than enacted.

Is death.

William Mason, *Caractacus*, I.iii

Vellinus seems unconcerned by the potential for sacrilege. This conflicting view is also present later, when the druids apprehend them. Vellinus seeks mercy for himself on the grounds of shared nationality, while Elidurus seeks to escape a curse, the symbol of religious hatred, as uttered against Polynices in the *OC*, since he recognises the sacrilegious nature of their intrusion:

Vellinus: 'O spare, ye sage and venerable Druids!
 Your countrymen and sons'

Elidurus: 'spare the curse,
 oh spare our youth.'

William Mason, *Caractacus* II.ii

The 'good' brother is the one who takes religion seriously and wants to display some kind of piety, aware of his youth as a cause of his impious behaviour. This link between religion and age continues throughout the play, albeit at the other extreme. Modred seeks to initiate Caractacus into the company of druids, as the appropriate thing to do with an old man too infirm to govern:

Modred: 'for Caractacus
 This night demands admission to our train.
 He, once our king, while ought his power avail'd
 To save his country from the rod of tyrants;
 That duty past, does wisely now retire
 To end his days in secrecy and peace;
 Druid with Druids, in this chief of groves.'

William Mason, *Caractacus* I.iv

Caractacus, as king, continues to order the Druids around and is reminded that they, as servants of the gods, need not obey him. This may echo the Catholic situation, where loyalty to Rome might be seen to override loyalty to Britain, especially given the clear line that Pope Clement XII had taken over Freemasons. The druids may be the priests of the local religion, but they can still show traits of where religion and politics are not bound up.

The question of what Caractacus should do, given his age, continues to be important throughout the play:

Caractacus: 'In this, and all,
Your *holy will be done*. Yet, surely, Druid,
The fresh and active vigour of these youths
Might better suit with this important charge.
Not that my heart shrinks at the glorious task,
But will with ready zeal pour forth its blood
Upon the sacred roots, my firmest courage
Might fail to save. Yet, Fathers, I am old;
And if I fell the foremost in the onset,
Should leave a son behind, might still defend you.'

William Mason, *Caractacus* Iv.iv

Caractacus tries to maintain his authority over the druids immediately after deferring to Modred. The phrase 'Your holy will be done' was excised from the performance edition of the play, perhaps in part due to its Christian overtones, echoing the *fiat voluntas tua* of the Lord's prayer. Removing it lessens the Christian tone, as well as the deferral to Modred and religious authority in general.

Religious life as an alternative to political power, and the tension between political and religious authority continue to be important themes throughout the play. Caractacus tries to assert his authority over the druids by telling Modred when

to begin the initiation rites, failing to realise that the point of these rites is to remove him from power and subordinate him to a greater authority:

Caractacus: 'Bear with me, Druid,
I've done; begin the rites.

Modred: O would to heav'n
A frame of mind, more fitted to these rites
Possesst thee Prince!

Caractacus I.v (1796) 26.

In the next act Caractacus comments on the rites and their transformative power:

Caractacus: 'I feel as should the man
Who, scorning what he was, who, what he is,
Lamenting, rests all future hopes of peace
On what thy rites shall make him.'

Caractacus II.i (1796) 31.

This lack of power on Caractacus' part again tallies with idea that, as an aging king, he is past his time for ruling and should now defer to others and become what is appropriate for him, not taking the role of Oedipus in influencing the tragedy. He expects to undergo some form of transformative initiation and to emerge 'reborn'. This idea of rebirth and rejuvenation reflects the mystery cult underlying the OC. Here, however, Oedipus' rejuvenation, which takes place throughout the play, is not the result of others initiating him, but of him growing into a powerful *daimon*.⁴⁹⁹ In 1759, when the play was written, George II was seventy-six, and a play about an aging king learning where his place lies within a state at war was thoroughly pertinent. By the time that the play was produced, however, George III was on the

⁴⁹⁹ See my discussion in the introduction.

throne and such a theme was no longer so meaningful.⁵⁰⁰ The play continued to resonate with the audience not because of its overt and particular political references, but because of its representation of the overlap between religion and politics through an aesthetic lens, reflecting increasingly populist ideas of the sublime.

Caractacus also differs further from the OC in its presentation of the enemy in religious terms. In the OC, Theseus accuses Creon of abusing the gods and betraying his homeland in his conduct against Oedipus and his daughters:

Theseus: καίτοι σε Θῆβαί γ'οὐκ ἐπαίδευσαν κακόν·
οὐ γὰρ φιλοῦσιν ἄνδρας ἐκδίκους τρέφειν,
οὐδ' ἄν σ'ἐπαινέσειαν, εἰ πυθοίατο
συλῶντα τὰμὰ καὶ τὰ τῶν θεῶν, βία
ἄγοντα φωτῶν ἀθλίων ἱκτήρια.

OC 919-923

In *Caractacus* the accusations come from the invader, when Aulus Didius twice comments on the rites he has intruded upon. On the one hand, Aulus Didius claims that it is not the Roman way to trample on native religions, but to respect them wherever possible, but at the same time, he both tramples and evangelises:

Aulus Didius: 'Ye bloody priests,
Behold we burst on your infernal rites,
And bid you pause.'

William Mason, *Caractacus*, V.vii

⁵⁰⁰ Note that he did not start to display any symptoms of madness until the 1780s, so after the production of *Caractacus*. This means that links between King Lear, Oedipus and *Caractacus* cannot at this point be drawn. They become more pertinent later in the century and will be discussed briefly in chapter 4.

Aulus Didius thinks he has invaded not just the druids' sacred ground, but also the rites themselves. His next words suggest that he views his mission as at least partly altruistic and missionary, disapproving of these rites:

Aulus Didius: 'The Romans fight

Not to enslave, but to humanize the world.'

William Mason, *Caractacus* V.vii

Hall and Macintosh read Aulus Didius' reluctance to desecrate the grove as a sign that the Romans 'gave licence to all faiths'.⁵⁰¹ Given the multi-denominational situation in Britain, such an interpretation may be possible, but it is unclear which denomination Aulus Didius might be representing. As the invading Roman, Roman Catholicism would seem the most obvious analogue. Yet the Romans are not portrayed as wholly villainous, in contrast to contemporary feeling about Catholics. The desire to humanise the world would be read as both positive (spreading technology, culture and religion to improve people's lives) and negative (imposing a dominant culture assuming that the pre-existing way of life is meaningless). No simple reading of the allegory in religious terms is possible. The polysemic nature of the play is an inevitable consequence of the number of traditions Mason was trying to fuse, his own deep learning, and his endeavours to avoid censorship.

3.5 Conclusion

Hall and Macintosh conclude their chapter on *Caractacus* by saying 'Mason's *Caractacus* remains confusing'.⁵⁰² It certainly remains difficult to decipher, but this chapter has aimed to suggest some further ways of reading it and gaining access to a

⁵⁰¹ Hall and Macintosh (2005) 189.

⁵⁰² *ibid.* 214.

work which made sense in its own context but which now seems very remote. The *OC*, *Caractacus* and *Rule Britannia* exalt their homelands in similar ways. This is not to say that James Thomson modelled *Rule Britannia* on the *OC*, nor that Mason had *Rule Britannia* specifically in mind when he wrote *Caractacus*. Given Thomson's interest in Greek drama, however, it is not impossible that there was some influence exerted by the ancient playwrights over his non-classical writing. Even if there is no connection, the popularity of Thomson's work demonstrates that mid-eighteenth-century Britain was receptive to the type of poetry found in the *OC*, and that contentious topics such as religion and politics could be dealt with in poetry, despite censorship, specifically through the medium of place description.

Caractacus does borrow aspects of Greek form, but also reflects its content in terms of some allusion to the *OC* on the basis of ideological spirit as well as some textual echoes. Using the *OC* as a source text in terms of ideology and approach to poetry provided a way of engaging with contemporary aesthetics and the general political and religious atmosphere associated with developments in this field; a new form of tragedy was born, reconceptualising the concept of the tragic against the aggressive politicisation of the *OT*. In 1759 scholars were publishing in the area, and *Caractacus* came into being as a closet drama. With the advent of the Gothic novel, further Celtic obsessions and a rapidly changing political and religious landscape, the 1770s provided fertile ground for plays such as *Caractacus* to flourish. *Caractacus* then became an inspiration for further reinterpretation of the *OC*, and my final two chapters move on to deal with the artistic and musicological readings of the *OC* in the light of *Caractacus*' success, and the continued influence of the Longinian sublime as a way of integrating political and religious sentiments in a new aesthetic framework.

Chapter 4: *Ut pictura poesis*

The OC has inspired a wide range of artistic representations by well-known and unknown artists alike. Sculptures (in a variety of substances including bronze, clay and terracotta), sculptural installations, lithographs, etchings, prints and paintings – the topic has been treated in a variety of media; the 54 works of art I have catalogued range from 1776 to 1982 (Vettor Pisani, *The Tomb of Oedipus*).⁵⁰³ Greek tragedy represented in art is another form of the reception of the original texts, which can inform our reading of the texts but also improve our understanding of their recontextualisation. Few artists have produced more than one work taking inspiration from the OC; one of the few is Henry Fuseli. He painted two works: *Oedipus Curses his Son Polyneices* (1776-8) and *The Death of Oedipus* (1784), which form the central focus of this chapter. I explore the stylistic differences between the two paintings in terms of developing concepts of the sublime, demonstrating the futility of rigid genre distinctions in discussing Fuseli's work. I ground this aesthetic shift in a change of Fuseli's personal circumstances, demonstrating how the political, personal and aesthetic cannot be disentangled. This reading exemplifies the theoretical aesthetic shift I charted in chapter 1, and provides some further insights into the OC; in particular it increases our awareness of the relationship between religion and the sublime in the play.

I first describe the ancient and modern representations of the play, and the shared methodological problems of relating these to literature. I then give a brief biography of Fuseli. With this ancient and modern background in place, I analyse

⁵⁰³ Most data is taken from:.

http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/rr_gateway/research_guides/art/art_lib/oedipus_art.shtml (last accessed 30th May 2008, now defunct) This is a useful list of paintings, with some suggestions as to which part of the Oedipus story each belongs. It is neither comprehensive nor entirely accurate, however, so I have extended and modified the list, using databases such as the Grove dictionary of Art.

the relationship between Gothic literature and the OC in particular, tracing various themes and motifs through the two, before placing this in the wider realm of the relationship between art and literature viewed through the spectrum of sublimity. I review the reception of Aristotle and Longinus through two different strands of Gothic art and literature. I argue that conceptions of the sublime born from both philosophies are appropriate in understanding the OC as a Gothic text. Henry Fuseli's two paintings of the OC, I suggest, each depicts a supreme moment of sublime tragedy, according to the two different but not entirely distinct philosophical models.⁵⁰⁴ Fuseli provides a good example of the futility of trying to spilt the eighteenth century into antagonistic schools of 'Classicism', 'Neo-classicism' or 'Romanticism' (to name but a few). Instead, we see how these terms overlap, all drawing inspiration from the Ancient World, but using it for very different ends. The OC thus becomes a valuable tool for understanding further how the eighteenth century related to the Ancient World. In this chapter I focus on landscape, portrait and religious painting in order to suggest the ways in which Fuseli used the OC to deploy and exemplify a range of strategies in the reinvigoration of the genre of painting on his way to supplanting Sir Joshua Reynolds as Director of the Royal Academy.

4.1 The OC in ancient art

There are just two extant representations of the OC. These are a wall-painting on Delos, and an Apulian krater. The wall-painting appears to depict an old man with his daughter.⁵⁰⁵ The mid-fourth century BC krater shows an old man, flanked

⁵⁰⁴ For the aesthetic background see ch.1. Only the summaries will be reiterated here.

⁵⁰⁵ See *LIMC* vol. VII. 2 659. Fresko auf Delos, Maison des Comédiens.- Krauskopf 1, Abb. 19; Shefold / Jung, *SB* V 68-69 Abb. 48.

by two young girls, in a colonnaded area with a man either side.⁵⁰⁶ Containing five figures, it is impossible for the vase to represent any one scene in the OC. Similarly, the identification of the two men suggests no one scene, as they do not seem both to be old (thus discounting Creon) and so would most obviously be Polynices and Theseus, who never appear on stage at the same time. This sense of compounded scenes is, however, common in vase painting, and does not provide grounds for rejecting the krater as a depiction of the OC.⁵⁰⁷

Other depictions of the Oedipus as an old man exist but cannot be so clearly linked to the OC itself. Oliver Taplin lists criteria that must be fulfilled for a picture to be associated with a play. He notes half-open palace doors, scenery, name labels and particular figures not found in other versions of myths as potential clues,⁵⁰⁸ claiming that:

‘[i]n this respect the cases reflect a generic characteristic of ancient Greek tragedy: while the tragedies may be self-reflexive in various covert and subtle ways, they do not explicitly acknowledge their own theatricality.’⁵⁰⁹

Tragedies may or may not be open to metatheatrical interpretation, but representations of them can be more obvious in their representation of scenes as

⁵⁰⁶ LIMC entry vol. VII.2. Kelchkrater, apul. rf. Melbourne, Geddes Coll. A 5:8. – *RVAp Suppl.* 2, 1, 136, 81 Taf. 33, 4: nahe dem De Schulthess-Maler; Trendall, *RFSIS* 88 Abb. 200 (mit Inv. A 5:3) –...-Szene auf dem *Oidipous auf Kolonos*; der greise O. mit seinen beiden Töchtern aug dem Altar. Zu den weiteren Figuren → Ismene. See also Taplin (2007) for this image and discussion.

⁵⁰⁷ On this vase in particular see Taplin (2007) 25, 100-102.; he suggests that although one need not identify the pot with the play, one’s reading of the pot is enhanced if one does. He writes: ‘this vase... shows the Oedipus at Kolonos story with details that cannot be interpreted without knowledge of Sophocles’ play. This cannot be what is often referred to as “simply the myth”, because the myth was Sophocles’ story’ (100).

⁵⁰⁸ Taplin (1993) 24-5; at Taplin (2007) 32 he describes it as a “lexicon” of signals, discussing these at 35-43, listed as : costume, boots, porticoes, the rocky arch, anonymouswitness figures, the little old man, “Furies” and related figures, supplication scenes, name labels in Attic dialect and tripods.

⁵⁰⁹ Taplin (1993) 26. At Taplin (2007) 24 he argues that detailed discrepancies in the portrayal of scenes do not matter.

staged.⁵¹⁰ With these criteria in mind he limits the scenes of the OC to the two mentioned.⁵¹¹

4.2 The OC in post-classical art

The scenes represented in modern works can be divided into seven basic categories, which also reflect the two ancient examples. Based on titles, descriptions and in as many cases as possible, the works themselves, the following is a summary of the scenes represented, and the number of representations:

| | |
|---|----|
| The dead Oedipus: | 1 |
| Oedipus cursing his sons: | 8 |
| Oedipus and Antigone: | 29 |
| The death of Oedipus: | 1 |
| Oedipus and his daughters: | 2 |
| Oedipus leaving Thebes / in general as a blind exile: | 4 |
| Oedipus at Colonus: | 9 |

By far the most common scene is that of Oedipus alone with his daughter Antigone, and at least four other pieces could be put into this bracket as a subcategory, as they are entitled simply *Oedipus at Colonus* but also depict Antigone.⁵¹² The next most

⁵¹⁰ As I have demonstrated for other genres, self-aware, self-reflexive creativity is a hallmark of the eighteenth century, and its occurrence in art is therefore also noteworthy. See especially n. 149.

⁵¹¹ Many other scenes are noted; the LIMC commentary discussing Antigone includes a section entitled ‘Antigone führt den blinden Oidipus’ which includes the Delian wall-painting, and one amphora under ‘Antigone am Grab des Oidipus’. LIMC entry vol. I.1 820. For further discussion of the Melbourne *krater* see Easterling (2006b) 8-9, where she identifies the other male figures as Polynices and Creon.

⁵¹² 1.) Jean Antoine Theodore Giroust. *Oedipus at Colonus*. 1788. Oil on canvas. Dallas Museum of Art. 2.a) Fulchran-Jean Harriet. *Oedipus at Colonus*. 1796. Drawing. Neoclassicism. 2.b) Fulchran-Jean Harriet. *Oedipus at Colonus*. 1798-1799. Oil on canvas. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Titles of paintings can often, however, be misleading. The Charles Le Brun painting of 1690 is entitled *The Body*

popular specific scene is that of Oedipus with Polynices and daughter(s), cursing his son(s).

4.3 Biography of Fuseli

Born in Zurich, in 1741, Johann Heinrich Füssli was the son of an artist, with brothers also destined for the art world. His father sent him to receive a Classical education in preparation for the priesthood, however, rather than train him for art.⁵¹³ His father was a supporter of the new Classical movement, and Fuseli was exposed to this revolutionary art in the house from a young age.⁵¹⁴ At the Caroline College in Zurich, while studying Theology, he met Johann Caspar Lavater, who became a close friend, and a major influence on Fuseli's work.⁵¹⁵ They studied Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, Italian and English, gaining a full humanist education, alongside a good command of foreign languages, although Fuseli was noted for never losing his Swiss accent in English.⁵¹⁶

Fuseli was ordained as Verbi Divini Minister of the Reformed Swiss Church in 1761, and began his ministry as a Zwinglian priest.⁵¹⁷ Along with Lavater, however, he fell foul of the authorities in 1763 and, after a brief stay in Germany, he arrived in England in 1764.⁵¹⁸ In London he was taken in by publisher Joseph Johnson, whose friends included such notable figures as Edmund Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft.⁵¹⁹ He must therefore have been made aware of Burke's new theory of

of *Oedipus*. This refers not to the dead Oedipus at Colonus, but to the baby on Cithaeron. Simply looking at titles, therefore, leads to missing works, or misattributing works to other parts of the play.

⁵¹³ Myrone (2001) 11. For a general biography of all the Fuseli family see Paula and Brown (2007) and on Henry Fuseli in particular, Rodgers (2007).

⁵¹⁴ *ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ See Myrone (2001) 12, 46 on their first meeting.

⁵¹⁶ Keay (1974) 6.

⁵¹⁷ Ganz (1949) 28.

⁵¹⁸ Myrone (2001) 8, 12.

⁵¹⁹ Ganz (1949) 30, Macphail (1943) 85.

the sublime as first expounded in his *Philosophical Enquiry*. He was already known for having a disposition amenable to absorbing such sublime conceptions, as earlier in their education, both Fuseli and Lavater were noted for feeling:

‘[a] passionate interest in the supposedly republican and liberal traditions of English culture [and an] idealisation of creative genius and insistence on the role of sublime grandeur and fantasy.’⁵²⁰

Known originally as a translator and writer, Fuseli soon moved into the artistic world he knew so well from his upbringing. At the encouragement of Joshua Reynolds he tried to save money to go to Rome, the trip that many young artists were making. A fire at Johnson’s, however destroyed all his work and money.⁵²¹ Instead he took a (short-lived) tutoring position, continued with the translating work for which he was well-known, and sought commissions. He eventually found the money to go to Rome in 1770, where he remained for eight years, working independently of the two schools there, meeting a wide variety of artists, and sending paintings back to England. He returned to England in 1779, after a six-month detour to Switzerland, his last visit there. He wooed three women, one of whom was Lavater’s niece, Anna Landolt. Lavater did not give his blessing to the match, which caused a great rift between the two men.⁵²² This personal rift, I suggest, was the final motivation for Fuseli’s break away from Lavater and Winckelmann, towards an English, Burkean aesthetic, providing a personal motivation for a change in professional outlook. The rest of this chapter investigates the differences this change made to his style as exemplified by the two Oedipus paintings. Such a reading does not exaggerate the schism which grew between Fuseli and his Swiss

⁵²⁰ Myrone (2001) 46.

⁵²¹ Ganz (1949) 31, Myrone (2001) 16.

⁵²² Bohrer (1997) takes this love affair as the motivation for portraits of *Psyche*, see below (pp. 231-233). This is also discussed at Myrone (2001) 32, Myrone ed. (2006), 15 32.

friends and homeland; his attitude towards Switzerland is clear in the cartoon which he drew on his return:

Figure 1: *Caricature of the Artist leaving Italy* (1778). Pen and ink, 24.5x19.3cm, Zurich Kunsthhaus.⁵²³



After breaking with Lavater, Fuseli gravitated towards a relationship with another polymath who could support him. Fuseli's London friend Johnson was originally a Liverpudlian who had moved to London in 1752, and this link with Liverpool brought Fuseli into contact with William Roscoe (1753-1831).⁵²⁴ Roscoe made Fuseli's acquaintance in 1779 and they began a correspondence in 1783, which lasted until Fuseli's death in 1825.⁵²⁵ Roscoe has been described as 'Liverpool's cultural pioneer *par excellence*,⁵²⁶ and 'the founder of Liverpool culture'.⁵²⁷ His abolitionist stance and polymathia have become legendary, as expressed by historians of Liverpool: 'the

⁵²³ Image taken from Myrone (2005) 189. The mice in England are Benjamin West, Ozias Humphrey and George Romney, demonstrating who Fuseli saw as his competition and what he thought of them.

⁵²⁴ See Macphail (1943) 85n1.

⁵²⁵ Shannon says that Roscoe's lifelong friendship with Henry Fuseli started in 1784, in the introduction to Chandler (1953) xxx. This postdates their correspondence and so cannot be true. Macandrew (1963) notes this and dates the friendship to 1779.

⁵²⁶ Chandler (1953) 2.

⁵²⁷ Sir Alfred Shannon in the introduction to Chandler (1953) xv.

port's most influential opponent of slavery was William Roscoe, one of the most distinguished names in the History of Liverpool, poet, politician, banker, lawyer, painter and botanist'.⁵²⁸ He went bankrupt in 1816, financially ruined but in possession of a fine collection of paintings. His friends bought many of them in order to help him out, and when he refused to take them back, made a gift of them to the Royal Institution, which he helped to found. This in turn became the founding collection of the Walker Gallery, which still holds four Fuseli works, including *The Death of Oedipus*.⁵²⁹ This model of patronage and mutual support characterises the kind of philanthropy in which the close-knit circle of the eighteenth-century elite engaged.

In order to help Fuseli when he was struggling financially, in 1791, Roscoe purchased three paintings from him. These were the two *Oedipus* paintings, and a scene from Dante. Given how very different the two *Oedipus* paintings are, it is notable that Roscoe was prepared to buy both; he was not buying them simply to keep in store in order to help fund a friend. Instead, he displayed them, being known to have hung his dining room at his 1799 home Allerton Hall entirely with Fuselis. There was something about one of the paintings, however, of which Roscoe did not approve; in his letter to Roscoe dated Tuesday 7th August 1787, Fuseli remarked: 'I am extremely sorry You Should think it necessary to say a Single word about *Oedipus* – I know the Liberality of Your Mind and feel the force of your plea...'.⁵³⁰ 113 letters from Fuseli to Roscoe survive, but only eight from Roscoe to Fuseli, making Roscoe's precise attitude harder to ascertain and the nature of this 'word' remains unclear. Roscoe's willingness to buy both and offer patronage despite his own feelings towards the paintings is indicative of the eighteenth century's attitude of tolerant generosity towards those whom it patronised. This

⁵²⁸ Chandler (1953) 2.

⁵²⁹ See Walker Gallery (1994) 8, 14, Myrone (2006) 13 and Myrone ed. (2006a) 86.

⁵³⁰ Weinglass ed. (1982) 37.

chapter investigates some of the ways in which the paintings can be read as both conforming to and departing from artistic conventions, unravelling some of the threads which constituted Fuseli's genius.

4.4 Paintings of the OC by Fuseli

There are two Fuseli paintings relating to the play and limited associated drawings:

Figure 2: *Oedipus Cursing his son Polyneices* (1776-78). Oil on Canvas, 145 x 165cm (57 ½ x 65) National Gallery of Art, Washington.⁵³¹



⁵³¹ Image taken from: http://thanasis.com/Oedipus_Cursing_His_Son_PolynicesHenryFuseli.jpg (last accessed 7th February 2010). Henceforth this painting is referred to as *Polyneices*.

Figure 3: *Oedipus Cursing his son Polyneices* (1777). Pen and wash drawing, 38.9 x 50.2cm (15 ¼ x 19 ¼) The National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm.⁵³²



Figure 4: *Oedipus Cursing His Son Polyneices* (1777). Pen and wash drawing, 38.9x50.2cm, The National Museum of Arts, Stockholm.⁵³³



⁵³² Image taken from Myrone (2001) 27. Henceforth *Polyneices I*.

⁵³³ Image taken from Weinglass (1994) 350. Henceforth *Polyneices II*.

Figure 5: *Study* no date. Pen and wash, 38 x 25.6cm, British Museum, London.⁵³⁴



Figure 6: *The Death of Oedipus* (also titled *Oedipus Receives, in the Presence of his Daughters, the Foreknowledge of his Death*), (1784). Oil on Canvas, 145 x 165cm (57 ½ x 65), Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.



⁵³⁴ Image taken from Keay (1974) 58. Henceforth *Study*.

The first painting, *Polyneices* (Figure 2), was painted towards the end of Fuseli's stay in Italy. It was not exhibited until 1786, at the Royal Academy. The second, *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6), was painted when Fuseli was back in England, and was again exhibited at the Royal Academy, in 1784, as a part of Roscoe's 'provincial' contribution to the annual show. We can be sure that the paintings are supposed to be linked to Sophocles; Fuseli's specific education in Greek and Latin is certain, and demonstrable. He has also inscribed the *Study* (Figure 5) with ΣΟΦ. ΟΙΔ. ΚΟΛ., making its identification as a representation of Sophocles' play undeniable, thus strengthening the likelihood that his other painting, *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6), was also intended to be read with the play in mind.

Some initial comments concerning painting and drawing are appropriate. Fuseli was particularly keen on drawing as a medium, feeling that oil gave a heavy dead colour appropriate for an atmosphere of timelessness and mystery.⁵³⁵ William Blake echoes this sentiment when he remarks on Fuseli's work:

'His oil paintings are, for the most part, monstrously overloaded in bulk as in style, and not less overloaded in mere slimy pigment.'⁵³⁶

This is in keeping with the paintings of the OC, which invoke exactly such an atmosphere. Paul Ganz claims that Fuseli's drawings are less a product of their age than his paintings:

'They are the direct expression of his creative power and reveal his personal outlook and his fiery artistic temperament.'⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Keay (1974) 6, Schiff (1975) 15.

⁵³⁶ *The Life of William Blake* ed. Alexander Gilchrist 361, quoted in Ganz (1949) 20.

⁵³⁷ Ganz (1949) 12.

Fuseli's drawings help us to chart phases of thought and draw out different thematic emphases which may be less obvious, or indeed entirely absent, from the finished work. To this extent they are an extremely useful resource in understanding *Polyneices* (Figure 2), and we must be aware of their absence in working on *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6).⁵³⁸

Displayed in the reverse order to their painting dates, these paintings depict different moments in the OC as sublime, and an analysis of the paintings in these terms forms the basis of the rest of this chapter. I have already demonstrated the similarities between the Aristotelian and Longinian versions of the sublime, and these similarities become apparent in the paintings. *Oedipus cursing his son Polyneices* (Figure 2) is broadly but not completely Aristotelian in its conception, while *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) is broadly but not completely Longinian. Both paintings are sublime, and so despite their differences we need not accuse Fuseli of inconsistency; the category of the Gothic sublime is sufficiently broad to encompass both.

4.5 Literature and Art

'Without a historical background, much of baroque art cannot be properly appreciated or reproduced. Painting, music, and poetry of the period can be better understood and felt by comparing imagery and intent in all the arts, because of the rhetorical way creators viewed the artistic process of creation and its effect. If we can compare similar intents, effects and imagery, we can compare works from different arts without making false analogies between the arts themselves. Each genre in any given medium of expression can be compared with another, in another, not because the classifications are similar, but because each genre intends a specific emotional effect and uses similar imagery. The basis of genre classification is thus rhetorical. Art and music of the baroque period shed great light on most of literature written at that time, and vice versa. Carefully used comparisons are rewarding beyond expectation.'⁵³⁹

⁵³⁸ There is an engraving of *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) which helps us appreciate a different view of the painting. 10% of Fuseli's paintings had engravings made of them. *The Death of Oedipus* may not have been widely exhibited, but it made a sufficient impact on the eighteenth century to feature in this top 10% of Fuseli's work, see Weinglass (1994) 349-50 for this picture.

⁵³⁹ Jensen (1973) 347.

Before leaving for Rome, he was known more as a translator than as a painter, in particular when in 1765 he published a translation of Winckelmann's *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1765). In 1767 he wrote a pamphlet defending Rousseau against Voltaire: *Remarks on the Writings and Conduct of J-J Rousseau*.⁵⁴⁰ This literary life significantly influenced Fuseli's style of painting, and we are able to read his paintings in textual as well as visual terms.

The potential for art and literature to represent the same content was a highly contested area of debate for eighteenth-century aestheticians, poets and painters. As an intellectual with a literary and artistic background, Fuseli was well-placed to unite the factions, and the *Oedipus* paintings show how this works in practice. The Abbé du Bos proposed that painting was a superior genre over poetry 'in the article of moving the passions' but Burke felt that this was a misguided view.⁵⁴¹ Instead, he followed Horace's *Ars Poetica*, in which poetry and art are directly aligned:

ut pictura poesis;

Ars Poetica 361⁵⁴²

This was echoed in Fuseli's education by his teachers Bodmer and Breitinger, who claimed that poetry and painting had the same aims, but different means.⁵⁴³ Breitinger was a disciple of du Bos, but moved away from the superiority of painting towards a more balanced model.⁵⁴⁴ Horace, however, recommends that if tragedy is to be depicted, that moments from messenger speeches are not chosen for representation:

⁵⁴⁰ Myrone (2001) 11.

⁵⁴¹ Burke (1985) 61.

⁵⁴² See chapter 1 for further discussion of the Horatian sublime.

⁵⁴³ Schiff (1975) 9.

⁵⁴⁴ Hathaway (1947) 680.

aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur.
 segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem 180
 quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae
 ipse sibi tradit spectator; non tamen intus
 digna geri promes in scaenam multaque tolles
 ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens.
 ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet, 185
 aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,
 aut in auem Procne uertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
 quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

Ars Poetica 179-188

Horace's point relates to choosing appropriate topics for theatrical representation, but this idea of visualising narrative is also true of painting. *Polyneices* (Figure 2), painted at Rome and still to some extent under the sway of Winckelmann's Classicism, adheres to the Horatian criterion, but *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) does not.⁵⁴⁵

The links between literature and art are also evident in eighteenth-century attitudes towards Gothic literature. Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto* created a new type of supernatural horror story.⁵⁴⁶ He himself described it as a trifling piece:

⁵⁴⁵ I return to the precise moment of the sublime depicted in each below. p. 217ff. Taplin (2007) 24 notes the popularity of messenger speeches for representation on vases.

⁵⁴⁶ See pp. 84-86. See Morris (1985) on some further hermeneutic links between Burke and *The Castle of Otranto*.

'It was fit for nothing but the age in which it was written, an age in which much was known; that required only to be amused, nor cared whether its amusements were comfortable to truth and the model of good sense.'⁵⁴⁷

He considered it was a superficial type of work, easy for the people to understand on an emotional level:

'One must have taste to be sensible of the beauties of Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic.' *Anecdotes of Painting* (1762).

Walpole created his own home at Strawberry Hill to be in Gothic style and so took it seriously on at least some level. In contrast to the charge of triviality, Napier notes that the prime of Gothic literature, the 1780s -1800s coincided with some particularly momentous historical changes: the decline of the classical, incipient romanticism, the rise of feminine social and literary history and (unconscious) responses to the French Revolution and so the genre must also be seen as significant.⁵⁴⁸

In contrast with the charge of triviality is Gothic literature's attributed ability to portray psychological truths.⁵⁴⁹ Yet its ability to do this is also problematic. The characters are notoriously shallow, making it hard to credit them with deep psyches. This shallowness, however, is also attributed to the fact that, since they act out their psyches, more character depth is unnecessary. The genre appears to be deliberately

⁵⁴⁷ Horace Walpole to Hannah More, 13th November 1784, *Correspondence* xxi 221. See Frayling (2006) 34.

⁵⁴⁸ Napier (1987) x-xi. See also Frayling (2006) 36 on Gothic literature as re-establishing gender stereotypes in a society which felt these were breaking down. On this in Fuseli's art, see Myrone (2001) 45, who also notes the frequently mentioned story of Mary Wollstonecraft being obsessed with Fuseli, to the point of being banned from his house by Mrs Fuseli. Note that Mary Wollstonecraft was Mary Shelley's mother, further linking Fuseli and his circle with developing Gothic circles.

⁵⁴⁹ *ibid.* 1.

contradictory and liminal in terms of its literary quality and philosophical importance.⁵⁵⁰

This link between the physiological and the psychological is particularly important in understanding both Gothic literature and then Gothic art.⁵⁵¹ From the genre's inception characters were seen as acting out their inner natures. In a move reminiscent of the visual nobility that allows Odysseus to be recognised as worthy and offered *xenia*, heroes from Walpole's Theodore onwards were recognised by their noble countenances. This is in keeping with the eighteenth century's increasing preoccupation with physiognomy.⁵⁵²

Gothic literature is also particularly well-suited to both visual and dramatic representation, given its melodramatic, spectacular nature.⁵⁵³ It comes as no surprise to find that such a genre begun in novel writing soon found expression in art. It is more unexpected that it took fifteen years for the transition to take place. Gothic was a genre of convention, yet it was a convention-breaking genre and thus destabilised itself.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ *ibid.* 3-4.

⁵⁵¹ Napier (1987) 33.

⁵⁵² Physiognomy is discussed further below.

⁵⁵³ See Napier (1987) 17: 'The tendency of Gothic characters to speak in highly generalized, non-particularized terms is remarkable, for it emphasizes not only the relative flatness of their characters, but the inclination in Gothic works of the moral to intrude on – and often overshadow – the dramatic.' Napier also discusses Carol Ann Howell's 'Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Literature' – on the theatricality of Gothic, with emphasis on dramatic action and visual display, see Napier (1987) 33.

⁵⁵⁴ A self-represented 'madman', Fuseli exploited the unstable nature of the genre. On madness, see particularly Vaughan (1999). For Fuseli, see Myrone (2001) on Fuseli's self-portrait. On this also see Warner (2006) 26 'He shows himself literally looking up from an image in a book, in order to focus all his concentration on the face and the meanings – the personal inscape which physical features can project. 'The exhibition of character,' he wrote, 'in the conflict of passions with rights, the rules, the prejudices of society, is the legitimate sphere of dramatic invention. It inspires, it agitates us by reflected self-love, with pity, terror, hope and fear.''. See Napier (1982).

There are clear correspondences between Gothic art and literature, as both strived to produce creative responses to new aesthetic theories. Ideally, Gothic literature expressed the sublime terror. This terror gave rise to pity. This combination of emotions was used as a new explanation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. For some it offered too 'nice' a result:

James Barry (1741-1806): 'We affect such nice feelings and so much sensibility, as not to be able to bear the sight of pictures where the action turns upon any circumstance of distress'⁵⁵⁵

Fuseli himself seems to have been rather more positive about the role of the sublime in art than Barry:

October 1792 as 'RR' in *Analytical Review* 'that horror and loathsomeness in all its branches are equally banished from the painter's and the poet's province. Terror, as the chief ingredient of the Sublime, composes in all instances, and in the utmost extent of the word, fit material for both.'⁵⁵⁶

We take a range of themes and approaches that can be applied to Gothic art from Gothic literature and its grounding in a Burkean theory of the sublime. Linked with the spectacular, it tried to represent pity and fear with the horror (not terror) that comes from experiencing the supernatural. Burke himself was also influenced by the lines of Horace quoted above, both sensing and creating a tension between trying to represent the sublime, and acknowledging that this was something that extends beyond the bounds of what could be represented visually.⁵⁵⁷ Burke did, however, give a list of instructions on the way in which the sublime can be

⁵⁵⁵ *The Sublime* (1775) quoted at Myrone (2006) 9.

⁵⁵⁶ Myrone (2006) 13.

⁵⁵⁷ Burke (1985) 60.

represented. It requires: obscurity, and infinity,⁵⁵⁸ produced by vastness, which is an extension in height, length and depth, with height being the most important;⁵⁵⁹ roughness rather than smoothness;⁵⁶⁰ perpendiculars rather than gentle inclinations;⁵⁶¹ darkness, where excessive light is as overwhelming as darkness, therefore is subsumed under this category;⁵⁶² colours that steer away from the bright and cheerful, except for red;⁵⁶³ a particular kind of landscape: gloomy forest, howling wilderness, lion, tiger, panther, rhinoceros.⁵⁶⁴

This is represented using dark landscapes, religious symbols and two-dimensional characters, traditional gender stereotypes, emotional gestures and imposing buildings and geographical features.⁵⁶⁵ Burke himself envisaged a way of depicting the sublime in art as well as poetry. The two *Oedipus* paintings take two very different moments in the play as their subject matter, and this reflects a different application of aspects of Gothic aesthetics.

The Death of Oedipus (Figure 6) conflates two moments in the messenger speech. The messenger says that Oedipus' daughters fall at his knees after he is bathed and prepared for death, just before he addresses them for the last time and the mysterious god calls him off:

⁵⁵⁸ 'Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful terror, which is the most genuine effect, the truest test of the sublime', Burke (1958) 73.

⁵⁵⁹ 'Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime', Burke (1958) 72.

⁵⁶⁰ e.g. 'the rudeness of the work [Stonehenge] increases this cause of grandeur, as it excludes the idea of art, and contrivance; for dexterity produces another sort of effect which is different enough from this': Burke (1958) 77. On Stonehenge see also chapter 3 (p. 178).

⁵⁶¹ Burke (1958) 72.

⁵⁶² *ibid.* 80-1, 143-4.

⁵⁶³ *ibid.* 81.

⁵⁶⁴ *ibid.* 66.

⁵⁶⁵ Various lists can be found of how to construct a Gothic novel, see for example Morris (1985) 300-301.

ἐπεὶ δὲ παντὸς εἶχε δρῶντος ἡδονὴν
κούκ ἦν ἔτ' οὐδὲν ἀργὸν ὦν ἐφίετο,
κτύπησε μὲν Ζεὺς χθόνιος, αἱ δὲ παρθένοι
ρίγησαν, ὡς ἤκουσαν· ἐς δὲ γούνατα
πατρὸς πεσοῦσαι 'κλαιον οὐδ' ἀνέεσαν
στέρνων ἀραγμοὺς οὐδὲ παμμήκεις γόους.

OC 1604-1609

What is depicted, then, is not a scene from the play, but at most, part of the offstage action brought into the play's diegetic sphere by the messenger's narrative.

Art depicting something other than a representation of an actual scene in a play was a topical consideration in British art of the 1780s. Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery opened in 1789, an example of the desire to link drama and art, for art to depict dramatic moments. New interpretations of the sublime, however, and of the role of the poet and painter in creating a work, were leading to a new position, that an artist trying to represent a scene from poetry (drama) was bound to fail because the poet would remain master of the moment, and the poet's description and hermeneutics would thus inevitably override the artist's. Created narratives such as Hogarth's satirical prints were preferable, because they allowed him to create his own hermeneutics.

For some critics, such a bridge was impossible as poetry and painting had fundamentally opposing ontological statuses. Lessing, in his *Laocoon* (1766), had described poetry and painting as working in two different spheres. Poetry, according to Lessing, is a temporal medium, representing an event through a sequence of words, whereas painting is a spatial medium, representing events synchronically, in a spatial relationship.⁵⁶⁶ There is some interaction between the two

⁵⁶⁶ See Burwick (1999) 223-224 and then *passim*.

media, but at a basic level, they deal with different forms of representation. The two *Oedipus* paintings deal with this idea very differently.

Polyneices (Figure 2) depicts a curse, which may be considered a temporal act. As the longest extant curse, the curse itself takes time to be uttered. It also has its origins far further back in the play than the Polynices scene, when Oedipus says to Creon:

ἔστιν δὲ παισὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖσι τῆς ἐμῆς
χθονὸς λαχεῖν τοσοῦτον, ἐνθανεῖν μόνον

OC 789-790

The *παισί* are intended to be Oedipus' sons. The curse is grounded in the fabric of the whole play and as such takes time to develop. At this earlier point in the play, the audience are not aware that one of the sons will appear on stage. When Polynices does face Oedipus, he is damned by Oedipus in very strong words:

τοιγάρ σ' ὁ δαίμων εἰσορᾷ μὲν οὐ τί πω
ὥς αὐτίκ', εἶπερ οἶδε κινουῦνται λόχοι
πρὸς ἄστυ Θήβης. οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ' ὅπως πόλιν
κείνην ἐρείψεις, ἀλλὰ πρόσθεν αἵματι
πεσεῖ μιανθεὶς χῶ ξύναιμος ἐξ ἴσου.
τοιᾶσδ' ἀρὰς σφῶν πρόσθε τ' ἐξανῆκ' ἐγὼ
νῦν τ' ἀνακαλοῦμαι ξυμμάχους ἐλθεῖν ἐμοί,
ἴν' ἀξιῶτον τοὺς φυτεύσαντας σέβειν
καὶ μὴ 'ξατιμάζητον, εἰ τυφλοῦ πατρὸς
τοιῶδ' ἐφύτην· αἶδε γὰρ τάδ' οὐκ ἔδρων.
τοιγάρ τὸ σὸν θάκημα καὶ τοὺς σοὺς θρόνους
κρατοῦσιν, εἶπερ ἔστιν ἡ παλαίφατος
Δίκη ξύνεδρος Ζηνὸς ἀρχαίοις νόμοις.

OC 1370-1382 (main curse underlined)

The curse develops from being the blind beggar Oedipus' threat of a meagre legacy, to being the act which transforms the rehabilitated Oedipus into a *daimon*, precipitating his own death.⁵⁶⁷ It is a key moment in the process of the play and as such, is inherently tied to the temporal drive of the narrative. Not only because it is the culmination of the ideas of vengeance which permeate the play, but also as a speech act in its own right, effecting the curse through the utterance of the curse, this is a scene whose temporal nature is vastly more important than its spatial. On Lessing's terms, therefore, it is an inherently poetic scene, and not one suitable for visual representation. In being cursed by his terrible, possibly even daimonic father, Polynices is transformed into the tragic hero of the episode, suffering an unexpectedly horrific ordeal, with no hope of future redemption, only further terror. This moment of terror can be understood as a moment of Aristotelian katharsis; sympathy results in pity, empathy in painful fear; the positive pleasure is a secondary effect of a primarily negative emotion. In the Longinian sublime, however, the subject does not at any point feel real pain or fear, unlike in Aristotle.

Furthermore, for Aristotle, the observer and creator of works of art are distinct, as are the observer and sufferer, who can be connected through sympathy or empathy, but are still distinct. In *Polyneices* (Figure 2), the sight lines are all within the painting, with the viewer as external onlooker. The viewer is like a spectator at the theatre; the terrible acts happening do not involve him directly; his is only a vicarious fear, leading to katharsis. Longinus refers to the visual arts at two points in the *Peri Hupsous*. His understanding of literature as in some ways a visual medium is also evident in his discussion of the power of visualisation at section XV, where he cites the death of Oedipus as the perfect example.⁵⁶⁸ Not only do the visual arts

⁵⁶⁷ See the introduction (pp. 9-10) for a justification of this reading of the play.

⁵⁶⁸ As discussed further at p. 52.

provide good ways of thinking about how literature achieves its purpose, but literature is in some sense a visual art in its own right.

In the Longinian sublime, however, observer, creator and subject are largely conflated. The Burkean sublime also requires the object of terror to be mediated, but, with its roots in Longinus' rhetorical sublime, it is also fundamentally communicative. This is reflected in *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6): Oedipus stares out at the viewer. We become the unknown god addressing him. His hands frame his gaze, as though he were observing us and not we him. There is a level of communication with the observer missing from the first painting; we are involved in the scene. This communicative element marks the painting out as sublime in a Longinian sense. I suggest that the sublime moments of the play are points of communication with the gods, particularly the curse and the messenger speech.

As a non-verbal moment only indirectly represented by the poet, *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) also conforms much more closely with Lessing's aesthetic. It still depicts a particular moment from a play, but one intended to be imagined in the mind's eye and so suited to visual representation. This compromise between spatial and temporal representation is a feature of theatre in general; Max Harris has demonstrated how theatre has the potential to conflate space and time, using the example of Cornish *Ordinalia*, where different actions occur simultaneously, allowing narratives that in poetry would have to happen sequentially to be represented synchronically, combining visual and verbal, spatial and temporal elements.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Harris (1990) 31-36. This combination of visual and verbal elements is also present in William Blake's work. Blake, as one of Fuseli's friends, employees and supporters, took several of Fuseli's ideas to their extreme. In terms of words and pictures combining to conflate the space-time dichotomy, Blake is well-known for embedding his illustrations in frames of words, or for making his words the core of an illustration.

Thus, between *Polynices* (Figure 2) and *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) we see a shift in Fuseli's attitude towards the possibility of art representing a moment from drama (and the kind of moment that can be represented), away from the aesthetic approach of Winckelmann and towards Lessing. This is in keeping with his general move away from Winckelmann's ideal of heroic Classicism, and towards the type of created narrative scene depicted in, for example, *The Nightmare* in 1782. This shift appears to happen on Fuseli's return from Italy to England, and is echoed in other aspects of the paintings, including the bodies and backgrounds, to which I now turn.

4.6 Portrait Painting and the OC

Portrait painting was one of the dominant art forms in the eighteenth century. Opinion was divided as to whether characters in history paintings should be based on portraits or be abstract, idealised figures, and what role the newly emerging discipline of physiognomy should have in this debate. The depictions of the characters in both *Oedipus* paintings exemplify the practical effects of this debate in two main ways: the potential for using models in history / literary painting, and for representing human bodies in non-literal, symbolically loaded guises.

Both *Oedipus* paintings depict Oedipus as the same old man. This raises the question as to whether any of the characters were painted from models. Such a possibility raises the question as to where in general eighteenth-century British artists were finding models, and how they were using them.⁵⁷⁰ The issues of models behind history painting, and the relationship between history painting and portrait painting were of great importance to eighteenth-century English art. Johann Lavater,

⁵⁷⁰ Although note that *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) was painted once Fuseli was back in England, meaning that he would not be using the same live models as in Rome. This would not, however, have prevented him using figures from his own earlier sketches, or even taking inspiration from other people's work.

Fuseli's companion from Zurich, had written the seminal book on physiognomy, claiming that a person's character could be read from their features.⁵⁷¹ A pseudo-medical theory, acted out in literary characters, it was adapted by artists, linking literature and art.⁵⁷² The theory was strong in late eighteenth-century London, which affected the potential for using models.⁵⁷³ Fuseli's attitude towards physiognomy developed considerably over the period. He only published his English translation of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (illustrated by Blake) in 1788-89, by which point he was no longer so closely linked with Lavater's ideas.⁵⁷⁴ Indeed, he only translated it because they had been friends, not because he believed in physiognomy.⁵⁷⁵ He even wrote to Lavater to say that he felt constricted by physiognomy and wanted more space than the constraints it allowed him.⁵⁷⁶ He felt that a strict adherence to the principles of physiognomy in art suppressed individual characterisations in order to emphasise universal human qualities. This was antithetical to Fuseli's desire to depict individual instantiations of particular qualities, and individual scenes. Consequently, it was only with reluctance that he agreed to illustrate Lavater's work, because he felt extremely restricted by its universalising nature.⁵⁷⁷ In Fuseli's paintings, therefore, we find an extension and remodelling of physiognomic principles, as a response to Lavater but also to contemporary attitudes towards the depiction of people in paintings.

In England there was a conviction that the English did not provide good models of old age, did not look 'proper'.⁵⁷⁸ This led to a quest to find a suitable

⁵⁷¹ See e.g. Myrone (2001) 12, 46 on Fuseli and Lavater's relationship.

⁵⁷² See Warner (2006) 25 on the relationship between Gothic literature and art.

⁵⁷³ See Brewer (1986) III on the use of physiognomy in recognising the common man in satirical prints.

⁵⁷⁴ Cooper (1990) 601. See Cooper (1990) in general on physiognomy and the relationship between Lavater and Fuseli. Blake took the system further and began to use landscapes as figurative ways to express individual souls, see Vaughan (1999) 63, and Graham (1961) 562, where he gives a more thorough analysis of the religious and individualist undertones to physiognomical representation.

⁵⁷⁵ Ganz (1949) 15.

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid.* 33.

⁵⁷⁷ Schiff (1975) 10.

⁵⁷⁸ See Postle (1988) 736 on David Hamilton.

model in Britain, as both literary / historical death-bed scenes and depictions of old men were popular.⁵⁷⁹ Sir Joshua Reynolds found a man called George White, who, for him, was physically the noble embodiment of old age. Yet George White was, before his retirement into modelling, a paviour, a lowly worker, and not a nobleman.⁵⁸⁰ Without resorting to the Rousseauesque idea of the noble savage, George White had to be given a personality that accounted for his noble visage. This became less of a problem when eighteenth-century discussions on the nature of portraiture were taken into account. Portraiture painted an individual man, and so an imperfect representation of 'Man', whereas history painting could make the individual man more noble, but less representative of any particular model. In using George White as a model for history paintings, criticisms about his character need not matter as it was not his individuality which was important. Sir Joshua himself remarked in his fourth *Discourse*:

'A Portrait-Painter...when he attempts history, unless he is upon his guard, is likely to enter too much into the detail. He too frequently makes his historical heads look like portraits... An History-Painter paints men in general; a Portrait-Painter, a particular man, and consequently a defective model.'⁵⁸¹

This situation is particularly noticeable in the case of George White. Although he was never painted as a portrait subject in his own right, he was used as the model for many other paintings. Initially he is clearly recognisable as the same person:

⁵⁷⁹ See Postle (1988) 737, Myrone (2001) 25.

⁵⁸⁰ See Postle (1988).

⁵⁸¹ Postle (1988) 740.

Figure 9: Sir Joshua Reynolds *Joab*. Canvas laid on panel, 55.9 x 44.4cm, London Art Market, 1979.⁵⁸²



Figure 10: attributed to Frederico Bencovich *A hermit* 72.7x 61.2cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.⁵⁸³



⁵⁸² Image from Postle (1988) 735.

⁵⁸³ Image from Postle (1988) 737.

Keen discussion continued, however, on how far historical painting ought to use models, and if used, how accurately they were supposed to represent the sitter. In 1783 Reynolds wrote, in a note to Dr Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*:

'In painting it is far better to have a model to depart from, than to have no thing fixed and certain to determine the idea. When there is a model, there is something to proceed on, something to be corrected; so that even supposing no part is adopted, the model has still not been without use.'⁵⁸⁴

In George White's case, this meant that later pictures for which he sat (at the Academy in general rather than just for Reynolds) are less obviously him, although still obviously similar to each other:

Figure 11: Sir Joshua Reynolds *Lear in the storm* (c.1783), watercolour on ivory, 74.9 x 61.5cm, London Art Market.⁵⁸⁵



⁵⁸⁴ quoted in Postle (1988) 743,

⁵⁸⁵ See Postle (1988) 742. Image from <http://www.abcgallery.com/R/reynolds/reynolds217.htm> (last accessed 20th March 2010).

Figure 12: John Hamilton Mortimer *Lear*. etching, 40.4 x 32.6cm, Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven.⁵⁸⁶



Not only do these pictures demonstrate eighteenth-century developments in portraiture and modelling, but their subject brings us to King Lear, and through Lear, back to Fuseli. Neither Fuseli nor his followers, such as James Barry, were known for approving of models. Both of these men, however, produced pictures of Lear with Cordelia:

⁵⁸⁶ See Postle (1988) 742. Image from http://www.columbia.edu/cu/record/archives/vol20/vol20_iss18/record2018.17.html (last accessed 20th March 2010).

Figure 13: James Barry *King Lear weeping over the dead body of Cordelia* (c.1786). Oil on canvas, support: 2692 x 3670 mm frame: 2787 x 3805 x 123 mm⁵⁸⁷



With his hair swept right to left in the unnecessary storm, deference is paid to the Reynolds model. It is clearly not White, however. Martin Postle says of this painting:

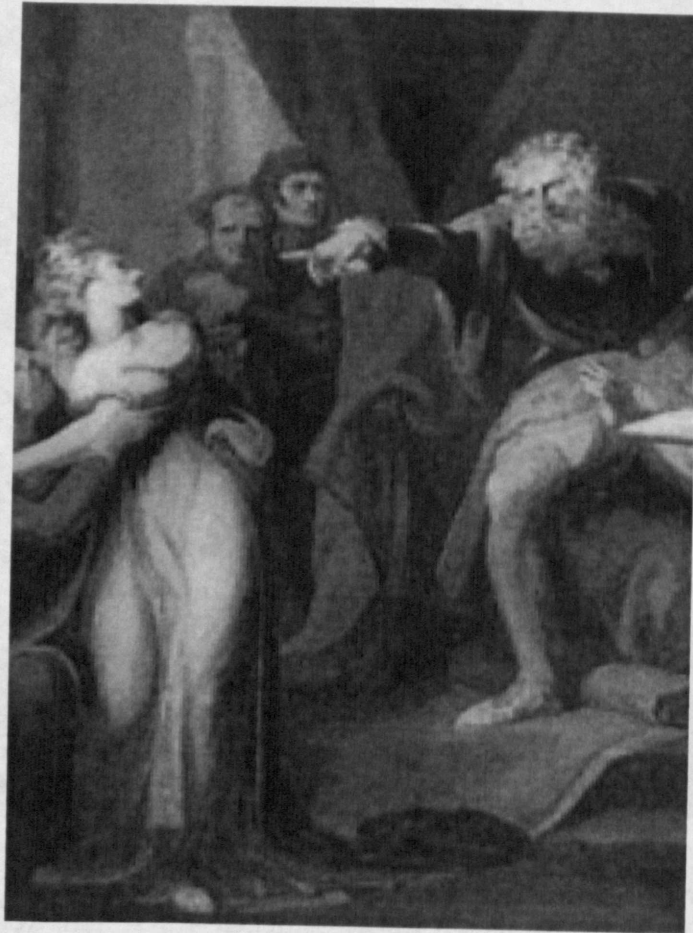
'Lear is a composite of Barry's own idea of a patriarchal type...Barry's historical paintings reveal a highly stylised approach, and an emphasis on imagination over the physical reality of the model.'⁵⁸⁸

Fuseli's version of Lear is perhaps more interesting:

⁵⁸⁷ Image taken from <http://www.theatrehistory.com/british/kinglear001.html> (last accessed 8th February 2010).

⁵⁸⁸ Postle (1988) 744.

Figure 14: Henry Fuseli *Lear Casting out Cordelia* (1785). Oil on canvas, 259 x 363 cm, the Art Gallery, Toronto ⁵⁸⁹



He focuses on an entirely different scene, on the first act of Shakespeare's play, where Lear condemns Cordelia⁵⁹⁰. This highlights the Polynices aspect of Cordelia as opposed to the Antigone aspect brought out in other versions. It is, in its right to left, high to low line from Lear to Cordelia, reminiscent of Oedipus and Polynices. In terms of the old men, again, Lear bears no resemblance to White, and it seems that with their pictures of Lear, although perhaps consistent with their own work, painters such as James Barry and Henry Fuseli were indeed espousing a different form of figure painting that did not use models. In the two *Oedipus* paintings, while

⁵⁸⁹ Image taken from:

<http://www.cas.buffalo.edu/classes/eng/willbern/Shakespeare/plays/Lear/learlect.htm>.

⁵⁹⁰ Fuseli also did a drawing of King Lear embracing the dying Cordelia, see Ganz (1949) 21, in which Lear is too shadowy a figure to discern any aspects of portraiture, although he resembles Oedipus in *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) more than he does Lear above.

the Oedipus is arguably the same in both, he is not readily identifiable as any model such as White. *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6), however, in the wild figure of Oedipus, staring at the viewer from the centre of the painting, is reminiscent of another of Reynolds' old men based on White.

Figure 15: Sir Joshua Reynolds *An apostle*. 74.9 x 62.2 cm, Private Collections.⁵⁹¹



The resemblance to Benjamin West's bard is even more striking.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ Image from Postle (1988) 739.

⁵⁹² West's bard is based on Thomas Gray's 1757 poem, which in turn influenced William Mason in writing *Caractacus*, further linking the painting with the reception of the OC.

Figure 16: Benjamin West *The bard* (1778). Oil on oak support, 292 x 229 mm frame: 440 x 370 x 60 mm, Tate Britain, purchased 1974.⁵⁹³



It is only when Reynolds has moved towards a less accurate, more romantic, idealised picture of his model George White that the resemblance is both noticeable and possible. Whether to use a model or not became a matter both of personal preference and aesthetic allegiance to ideas and people. Fuseli may have drawn on this non-literal representation of White in contributing to the rehabilitation of history painting in its literary form, but no direct link can be made.

This ambiguity over models is also evident in the depiction of the girls. I suggest that in the dark-haired woman Fuseli possibly was using a model, or at least representing a woman he had depicted before. A clue to identifying her can be found in another Fuseli work. Bohrer discusses the verso to *The Oath of the Rütli*,

⁵⁹³ Image from http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/explore/large_img.jsp?workid=16107 (last accessed 8th February 2010).

which features a wild female. Arguing against her traditional designation as a Fury, Bohrer suggests that she in fact represents Psyche.

Figure 17: *Psyche* (1779-80). Oil on canvas, 74 x 63.2cm, Anonymous Gift, The Art Institute of Chicago.⁵⁹⁴



Fuseli did paint Furies, and, for example, transformed them into the witches from *Macbeth*. Yet none of these witches is similar to the figure in this painting. She is clearly a young woman, and Bohrer suggests that the detail of the exposed breast recalls Dido, and the flowered hair Cordelia (see Figure 14).⁵⁹⁵

I suggest that the figure on this canvas is drawn from a model, and moreover from the same model as the dark-haired female in both of Fuseli's *Oedipus* paintings (assumed to be Antigone). Physically, they share the same pale face, brow-shape, sharp nose, dark curls, and even the same angle of head. Cordelia conflates aspects

⁵⁹⁴ Image taken from Bohrer (1990) 91.

⁵⁹⁵ On Fuseli and Dido, in particular the relationship with Reynolds' *Dido* see Myrone (2001) 37, Myrone (2006) 10.

of Oedipus' children; she is hated and cursed by her father, like Polynices, while retaining a commitment to him as an Antigone. Bohrer describes her depiction in Fuseli's *Lear Casting out Cordelia* (1785, Figure 14) as a posture of division and conflict – her motion, gaze and action are not together, and:

'[t]hough she may know she is devoted to her father and completely innocent of wrongdoing, she hears herself being accused by him and banished from his sight.'⁵⁹⁶

On such a reading, Cordelia conflates the roles of Antigone and Polynices; a similarity in their visual representations therefore comes as no surprise. The person in the supposed *Psyche* picture (Figure 17) has also been linked to Anna Landolt, with whom Fuseli fell in love in Zurich.⁵⁹⁷ *Polynices* (Figure 2) is dated 1776-8, that is, before Fuseli met Landolt, making it seem impossible for either this painting, or *Psyche* (Figure 17) to be a representation of her. The lack of precise date for *Polynices* (Figure 2), however, and the clear reworking it underwent, including the turning of the Ismene's head so that her profile can be seen, suggests that perhaps her portrait was included later in the play's history. It is also striking that the same woman appears in the same role in his other *Oedipus* painting, which lends further plausibility to the idea that Fuseli did have a model in mind. Again, it is not clear that Fuseli was using a model, but such ambiguity appears to be precisely what the late eighteenth century aimed for in their historical painting.

Fuseli's bodies are interesting beyond attempts to identify models behind them, however, and I now move to discuss the physicality of his portraits. His decade in Rome gave him the time and space to develop his individual approach to art, and to choice of subject. Martin Myrone suggests that in the 1770s everybody was going to Rome in order to learn the tenets of Winckelmann-style 'classical' art.

⁵⁹⁶ Bohrer (1990) 99.

⁵⁹⁷ See Bohrer (1990), Myrone (2001) 26.

He claims that novel concepts of the 'sublime' and 'original genius' were able to be developed there, but in the context of the Gothic tradition that was becoming popular in England:

'More importantly, the representation of extreme physical suffering, often in sadomasochistic contexts, was an important Gothic motif, asserting an extreme and potentially transgressive understanding of sexuality and gender (Bruhm 1994; Gardiner-Scott 1987)'.⁵⁹⁸

While in Rome, Fuseli taught himself, refusing to commit himself to the two major schools there, the Capitoline Academy of Painting and Académie Française, professing no allegiance to a particular school or unifying style.⁵⁹⁹ Ganz suggests it was in Rome that Fuseli converted to Classicism, but found in the Classicist advocacy of precise observation of nature no place for his depiction of extreme or exaggerated feeling with Gothic and daemonic overtones.⁶⁰⁰ Schiff claims that:

'He [Fuseli] demanded that art reveal the timeless, universal essence. Though he upheld the supremacy and absolute pre-eminence of classical art, his classicism was very different from Winckelmann's. Instead of 'noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur' Fuseli insisted that expression excelled mere beauty.'⁶⁰¹

This distinction between the great and the beautiful is in keeping with Burke's theory of the sublime, where beauty and sublimity are opposed.⁶⁰²

In Rome Fuseli was most strongly influenced by the work of Michelangelo, from whom he took the idea of putting man at the centre of compositions, being

⁵⁹⁸ Myrone ed. (2006a) 53.

⁵⁹⁹ See Ganz (1949) 32, Antal (1956) 28 and Keay (1974) 6 for example.

⁶⁰⁰ Ganz (1949) 17. See also Schiff (1975) 14.

⁶⁰¹ Schiff (1975) 15.

⁶⁰² See p. 42.

particularly affected by the Sistine Chapel. He was also inspired by Parmegianino's elongated bodies, which he developed into a style of anatomically unnatural bodies in his own work. This reliance on Old Masters drew him away from Winckelmann's 'Classical' ideals.⁶⁰³ Work as an artist was extremely competitive in Rome, and as Myrone writes:

'Fuseli's response to these conditions was further to develop the idiosyncratic characteristics of his art, and even further to inflate the pretensions of his imagery to sublime grandeur.'⁶⁰⁴

Fuseli was a part of a movement which desired to rejuvenate art through primal, virile expressionism.⁶⁰⁵ He styled himself as a modern ideal of creative genius, infused with potent energy, a wild painter, in everything extreme.⁶⁰⁶ Friedrich Antal claims that Fuseli was anti-mystic and anti-Gothic.⁶⁰⁷ In contrast, I have already suggested various ways in which Fuseli's *Oedipus* paintings accord with the ideals of Gothic literature, and I now move to discuss the particular example of how bodies and characters are portrayed in these two paintings. Gothic characters in paintings were known for their extraordinary physiques, including exposed muscles.⁶⁰⁸ This was in keeping with Greek statues such as the Farnese Hercules, which was seen, in Winckelmann's terms, as an anomaly, his muscles threatening to break through his body.⁶⁰⁹ In Fuseli's paintings we see him capitalise on this anomaly and make it a part of his Classical approach to Gothic art; this is particularly clear in the *Polyneices* paintings, given the extra resource of the preparatory drawings.

⁶⁰³ See Ganz (1949) 7, 14, Antal (1956) Ch. 2, Schiff (1975) 10, Myrone (2001) 18.

⁶⁰⁴ Myrone (2001) 18.

⁶⁰⁵ *ibid.* 21.

⁶⁰⁶ *ibid.* 22.

⁶⁰⁷ Antal (1956) 20-21.

⁶⁰⁸ *ibid.* 46.

⁶⁰⁹ Chard (1995) 19.

The *Study* (Figure 5) is by far the lightest of the three pictures, revealing a level of detail not seen in the others. Oedipus appears much the same in the different versions, but there are clear differences between the representations of Polynices, Antigone and Ismene. *Polyneices I* (Figure 3) is the mirror image of the other examples. This makes little difference to the overall sense of the piece, but does demonstrate the care Fuseli took in experimenting with different aspects of the same work. It is, however, striking that in *Polyneices* (Figure 2) and *Study* (Figure 5), Ismene's face is completely hidden in Oedipus' lap, whereas in *Polyneices II* (Figure 4) part of her profile is visible, along with her (in this picture) left arm. This leaves her face partly visible, and she can be to some degree 'portraited', if only in profile, which pays tribute to the remaining physiognomical influence of Lavater at this point in Fuseli's career.

The figure of Polynices shows the most important differences. Polynices in the *Study* (Figure 5) has a more elaborate hairstyle than elsewhere, the curls falling forward from his forehead.⁶¹⁰ His clothing is also more intricate in *Study* (Figure 5). Polynices is not nude, but in Fuseli's characteristic 'bodysuit', which is fashioned to incorporate aspects of armour, particularly across his torso.⁶¹¹ This displays the heroic male body, as the basic unit of high art in Renaissance art theory,⁶¹² but through the particular uniform of Fuseli's bodies. What we find is the severely incised body in profile, with a lack of spatial context and a dark background, also typical of Fuseli's work.⁶¹³ Polynices is in a very contorted position. This is reminiscent of the poses created by contemporary playful five point pictures;⁶¹⁴ for these, artists would incorporate five randomly chosen points on a page into the

⁶¹⁰ On Fuseli's growing obsession with hair, see Ganz (1949), Pressley (1975) and Frayling (1996) for example.

⁶¹¹ Such textureless garments are typical of Fuseli's work, see Bohrer (1990) 91. See also Chard (1995) 21 on clothing and classical sculpture in the eighteenth-century imagination.

⁶¹² Myrone ed. (2006a) 53.

⁶¹³ Antal (1956) 34-5, 52, Frayling (1996) 11.

⁶¹⁴ Myrone (2001) 27, Myrone ed. (2006a) 58.

outline of a figure. Fuseli is known for his extreme physicality, which becomes an obvious result of such games.⁶¹⁵ Superheroes in particular are treated with extravagant physicality and fantastic action. This sense of moral and intellectual aspirations embodied in the figure of the ideal hero was seen as based on a narrowly defined canon of Latin and Greek texts and ancient history.⁶¹⁶

Where Fuseli disagreed with Lavater, it was because he wanted to push Lavater's system beyond the individualism of the face, and into a narrative form in its own right. Fuseli extended Lavater's system to the whole body:

'Fuseli, never one for not going to extremes, extends the Lavater system, and offers the whole body as a seismograph of the volcanic eruptions surging inside.'⁶¹⁷

Fuseli took the idea of character expressed through physicality to an idealised extreme, so that his bodies lost their literal meanings, and instead veered towards literary qualities in their spatial conception and narrative associations, stripped of the elements that made them look like living bodies. He was clearly indebted to Lavater, but in extending his system, made it his own and already began to bridge any gap between poetry and painting, creating a poetic narrative out of a static image. Winckelmann promoted the statuesque aspect of Classical bodies. In the figure of Polynices, such sculpting is clearly evident. Polynices' contorted body becomes an expression of pain, a physical actualisation of the curse being uttered against him. The contortions of his body also betray his emotions and character, embodying the curse uttered against him. Lavater's facial physiognomical system has been extended to cover the whole body. In contrast, the figure of Antigone has been only barely sketched in, as some sort of shadowy link between the two men, highly unlike a real human figure, but in keeping with Fuseli's tendency to depict

⁶¹⁵ Myrone ed. (2006a) 73.

⁶¹⁶ *ibid.* 73.

⁶¹⁷ Warner (2006) 26.

humans in anatomically impossible positions, and with the Gothic background of the piece. Antigone's long extended arms, which would in reality have dislocated her shoulders, point towards the futility of trying to reconcile the two men, and the enormous difference between them. Her shadowy presence in the *Study* (Figure 5) is an indication that it is not Antigone *per se*, but her physical presence as a connective image that is important to the painting.

To return finally to Winckelmann and the reintegration of Classical learning into a new context, Fuseli's drawing *The artist in despair over the magnitude of ancient fragments* may also help to interpret his Oedipus paintings.

Figure 18: Henry Fuseli, *The Artist Moved to Despair by the Grandeur of Antique Fragments* (1778-79). Red chalk on sepia wash, 42 x 35.2cm, Kunsthhaus, Zürich.⁶¹⁸



⁶¹⁸ Image from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:FuseliArtistMovedtoDespair.jpg> (last accessed 8th February 2010).

This drawing is contemporary with *Polyneices* and depicts how oppressive Fuseli felt classical sculpture as described by Winckelmann could be. In *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) we see hands in the same gesture as the disembodied one in the drawing. Fuseli reintegrated Winckelmann into his work, positively re-embodying the fragment on his own terms. This ability to use art in the sublime manner to re-energise the genre, and provide a positive creative spin to an otherwise overwhelming situation is true of the reception tradition of Greek tragedy in general, and of the OC in particular.

4.7 Background Painting and the OC

I have considered the people in Fuseli's paintings, but their different backgrounds also merit discussion in the appropriate sublime terms. In this section, therefore, I briefly consider the backgrounds to the two paintings, and their interaction with further concerns over the nature of history painting. Again we find that different aspects of the sublime are prioritised in the different paintings, and both fit within the broader political and aesthetic context of eighteenth-century art.

During the eighteenth century, culture became invested with biological characteristics:

'civilization developed cyclically from a state of healthy youthfulness towards maturity, decadent old age and death'.⁶¹⁹

This biological interpretation of civilisation was then reversed in artistic terms, appearing as physiognomy, in both portrait and landscape terms.⁶²⁰ On the one

⁶¹⁹ Craske (1997) 219.

⁶²⁰ *ibid.* 220.

hand, portrait and landscape were 'safe' genres, that is, not the traditionally loaded history painting, but on the other, they expressed change, and represented nationhood. This focus on change and political instability is one of the central tenets of Oedipus' speech to Theseus at OC 607-628. Coming just before the 'Colonus' ode (668-719), this speech emphasises the mutability and impermanence of everything on earth. This sense of progressivism and mutability is also found in Fuseli's work:

'Pitting himself against trends of confident progressivism in Enlightenment thought, Fuseli argued that the noble naivety and sense of simple public spirit which was perceived to have existed in Antiquity was largely unrecoverable. History was seen as an ongoing process of sophistication in which man's attempts to recover his primal virility and grand sense of public duty became increasingly futile.'⁶²¹

We see this reflected in how Fuseli painted pictures whose setting is as important as the people. On his way back to England from Italy he had painted a nationalist picture to hang in the town hall of his Swiss hometown.⁶²² Back in England Fuseli painted a work on the division of England, acknowledging England's attempts to fashion its own national identity in the eighteenth century.

⁶²¹ *ibid.* 242.

⁶²² This was *The Oath of the Rütli*, hung in Zurich town hall.

Figure 19: Henry Fuseli *Hotspur, Glendower, Mortimer and Worcester Disputing the Division of England* (1784). Oil on canvas, 2100 x 1800 mm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



This painting is based on Shakespeare's *King Henry IV Part I*; with it, Fuseli showed an acute awareness of the links between politics, literature and art, particularly in the case of the ownership of land. I suggest that this nationalistic aspect of painting should also be borne in mind with Fuseli's two *Oedipus* paintings. He prefigured the English rise in history painting, simultaneously revitalising the use of Greek subjects; his literary figures cross over.⁶²³ In the wake of Mason's *Caractacus*, the OC can be seen as a Greek tragedy made British, remodelled with British roots.⁶²⁴ As an historical figure, *Caractacus* was also seen as part of a major Northern European movement to resurrect and dignify the 'gothic' 'barbarian' past.⁶²⁵ Thomas Banks's relief, sculpted in Rome during the 1770s, contemporary with Fuseli, and with the painting of *Polyneices* (Figure 2), was commissioned as a result of Mason's play.

⁶²³ On the development of history painting in eighteenth-century England, see Craske (1997), Monod (1993), Myrone (2001, ed. 2006), Vaughan (1990).

⁶²⁴ See chapter 3.

⁶²⁵ Craske (1997) 273.

Figure 20: Thomas Banks *Caractacus paraded before the seated emperor Claudius* (1777). Marble, 91.5x192.4cm, Stowe School North Hall.⁶²⁶



This represented Caractacus as a muscular northern hero before a seated emperor, physically and spiritually more dignified than his Roman aggressors.⁶²⁷ The OC, as connected to *Caractacus*, becomes a way of depicting Gothic-type heroism, in an historical painting on a Greek subject, which is clearly British and not Roman, not Catholic, and so permissible. Working alongside Banks, we can expect to see Fuseli influenced by the same sense of political artistry.

⁶²⁶ The frieze is at Stowe School in the main entrance hall. Thanks to the Michael Bevington for allowing me to visit and photograph the frieze; the picture is my own. See also Bevington (2002) 40-41. On the controversy surrounding the production of and payment for the frieze, see Bindman (2000). Pressly (1979) 49-50 suggests that Banks' drawings demonstrate a familiarity with Mason's play, further linking the various works under discussion in this thesis.

⁶²⁷ Myrone (2005) 272.

The emphasis on the atmosphere of place we find in Gothic literature is also central to the OC and the developing sublime literature in general. The importance of topographical features as literary tropes increases throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; in particular, hills and rivers are found in both the Gothic tradition, and earlier, in the topographical poetry which gave rise to Gothic geography.⁶²⁸ The tradition starts with John Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1668), where hills give the poet a vantage point from which to describe a topography in geographical, temporal and figurative terms. Of this hilltop phenomenon Foster notes:

'Fancy expands, sight contracts the visible world. And yet the eye and the muse of fancy are analogous. Just as the vantage point of the hill enables the eye to see more and farther, so also it gives the muse or fancy a launching pad for its flight into the rarefied atmosphere of poetic creation.'⁶²⁹

Oedipus links his roots with the surrogate parent figure of Mount Cithaeron, and ends his days in the shadow of the Hill of Demeter, in a grove of the Eumenides which is in some ways conflated with that on the Acropolis in the centre of Athens; hills clearly have a large part to play in the Oedipus story, in both literal and non-literal terms.

Denham takes the figurative nature of the hill further in *Cooper's Hill*, and relates Cooper's hill to Parnassus. He acknowledges that Parnassus is the creation of the poets who have imagined the Muses, writing in a post-Classical, Christianised era.⁶³⁰ The model of Parnassus as a metaphorical *locus* for poetic genius was also

⁶²⁸ See Foster (1975) 235 on hills and rivers as important in the developing genre of topographical poetry.

⁶²⁹ *ibid.* 234.

⁶³⁰ *ibid.* 236.

applied to Shakespeare, whose heir in these Neo-Classical sublime terms was said to be Handel, the first composer to gain celebrity cult status as a creator of sublime works in eighteenth-century England:

‘The works of these two ‘heroes of Parnassus’ [Shakespeare and Handel] abound with the ‘faults of genius’ as well as the ‘beauties which art cannot reach’.

Consequently, both are as easy to criticize as they are impossible to emulate. Though ‘these sons of genius sometimes dazzle, sometimes scorch, their light will always be [p]referred to the frigid moonshine of art an imitation.’⁶³¹

This idea of genius scorching and dazzling one with its light refers us back to Burke’s conception of the sublime, which reaches beyond our visual conception by means of excessive darkness, or excessive light.⁶³² For Burke there is no ‘frigid moonshine’ in darkness, but a depth of blackness which overwhelms the senses and triggers the awe associated with the sublime.

Through this developing genre of topographical poetry and its relationship with both music (Handel) and aesthetic philosophy (Burke), we can see that the Muses and their landscape are tied to conceptions of the sublime. The Muses are associated with Parnassus, but, on a Platonic model of inspiration, they are also associated with the *locus amoenus* of a garden.⁶³³ The OC invokes the hills of Parnassus, Demeter and Athens, as well as the luscious grove of the Eumenides. It is therefore an appropriate play for expressing contemporary developments in conceptions of the visual sublime expressed through landscape.

The religious tenor of the landscape is also shared between the OC and the Gothic. In the OC, Oedipus’ final departure is shrouded in mystery, a cloud of

⁶³¹ Johnson (1986) 522.

⁶³² See pp. 42 and 216.

⁶³³ See Plato *Ion*, particularly 534a4-b7.

unknowing surrounding his 'death'. Theseus is described as though he has seen something unendurable, his senses overwhelmed:

ἐξαπείδομεν
τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν μὲν οὐδαμοῦ παρόντ' ἔτι,
ἄνακτα δ' αὐτὸν ὁμμάτων ἐπίσκιον
χεῖρ' ἀντέχοντα κρατός, ὡς δεινοῦ τινος
φόβου φανέντος οὐδ' ἀνασχετοῦ βλέπειν.
ἔπειτα μέντοι βαιὸν οὐδὲ σὺν χρόνῳ
ὀρῶμεν αὐτὸν γῆν τε προσκυνοῦνθ' ἅμα
καὶ τὸν θεῶν Ὀλυμπον ἐν ταύτῳ λόγῳ.

OC 1648-1655

His dual supplication to both land and sky suggests that Oedipus has moved beyond the realm of mortal ken. Oedipus is named only twice in this messenger speech, by the mystery divinity (ὦ οὔτος οὔτος, Οἰδίπους [1627]) and when he goes to make his last speech to his daughters (ὅπως δὲ ταῦτ' ἔδρασεν, εὐθύς Οἰδίπους ψαύσας ἀμαυραῖς χερσὶν ὧν παίδων λέγει· [1638-9]). Instead, in line 1649 Oedipus is described as τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν μὲν οὐδαμοῦ παρόντ' ἔτι, 'the man who is no longer', that is, the man who has transcended his humanity and become a *daimon*.⁶³⁴

Given the particular emphasis on location in Burke, in Gothic literature and in the OC, it is surprising that neither of Fuseli's *Oedipus* paintings have particularly clear backgrounds. There are, however, important differences in the background to the versions of *Polyneices* (Figures 2-5), and perhaps an explanation for *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) in terms of the sublime. Burke was less overtly concerned with the visual arts, but still expresses his sublime in visual terms, and did aim for a

⁶³⁴ See introduction (pp. 9-10) for further discussion of this idea.

synaesthetic sublime.⁶³⁵ Given the emphasis on excess, however, the visual arts can only be sublime in being unclear and confusing. To what extent are the list of features Burke offers artists present in either of the paintings? In *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6), the background is non-specific, stormy (rough), non-realistic, and coloured red, the one bright colour that Burke will allow in his version of the sublime.⁶³⁶ We do not find the landscape of the Greek text, indeed no landscape at all is given. Instead we find sublime genius represented through confusion.

At first glance, the sheer darkness of *Polyneices* (Figure 2) also seems in line with the Burkean sublime. As the picture progressed, it became increasingly gloomy, increasingly Burkean. For Burke there is no 'frigid moonshine' in darkness, but a depth of blackness which overwhelms the senses and triggers the awe associated with the sublime. *Polynices II* (Figure 4) shows some 'gloomth', with a background that cannot be made out clearly, apart from some vegetation above Polynices. In the *Study*, however, the background is much more clearly depicted, there are trees and a building with Doric columns, presumably intended to be a temple to the Eumenides.⁶³⁷ This gives a clear religious emphasis in the *Study* (Figure 5) missing from the other two pictures. This drawing also includes more background in general, the figures comprising a smaller part of the whole piece, which is extended in all four directions. Fuseli was still changing his mind, still playing with different possibilities, until he settled on the gloomth of the final painting. Both paintings, therefore, offer a sense of the sublime simply through their backgrounds, but in both cases it is through one main feature, which is the manipulation of light and colour. In their overwhelming of the senses both paintings are heavily imbued with a

⁶³⁵ See Noske (1981) on the role of music in the Gothic novel, providing a further aspect of this synaesthesia and laying the ground for my musicological analysis of the sublime in chapter 5.

⁶³⁶ Indeed the red colour permeates unexpected aspects of the painting, note the unusual red glow coming from beside Ismene's head.

⁶³⁷ See also chapter 2 (p. 141) and chapter 5 (pp. 284-286) on the introduction of a temple into images of Colonus.

religious awe, uniting concerns of religion and landscape, and so finally, I turn to a more explicit reading of the paintings' religious natures.

4.8 Religion and the OC

Burke's conception of the sublime, Gothic literature and the OC all involve an important place for religion, particularly mystical kinds. I suggest that Fuseli chose to unite these three areas because of his own religious background. Biographers such as Gert Schiff, Martine Myrone and Friedrich Antal all claim that Fuseli's 1763 schism with the Swiss church marked the end of his engagement with Christianity. Schiff remarks:

'All that he retained from his theological training was a purely formal respect for Christianity and a vestige of Puritanism that was strangely at odds with his approach to art. The turning point in his intellectual development was undoubtedly his confrontation with Rousseau, as a result of which he finally lost all faith in the possibility of a reconciliation between the individual and society'.⁶³⁸

Antal argues that Fuseli kept 'religion', even if not Christianity, and tried to avoid depicting the Deity.⁶³⁹ In contrast with this view, I suggest that it is precisely because of the OC's religious tenor that Fuseli chose to paint it twice, and that this religious attitude is clearly evident in both paintings. Throughout its reception history the OC has been read in a Christian context, where Oedipus can become a Christ figure.⁶⁴⁰ Consequently I consider some of the other details in the pictures and their potential for religious interpretation. Polynices has laid a staff on the ground, the suppliant's staff wound with sheep's wool and olive foliage. This is partly depicted in *Polynices*

⁶³⁸ Schiff (1975) 10. On meeting Rousseau see also Myrone (2001) 14.

⁶³⁹ Antal (1956) 12. On losing his spirituality see also Vaughan (1999) 42.

⁶⁴⁰ See my introduction for a summary of how this came about, pp. 11-15.

II (Figure 4) and just suggested in the final painting. In *Study* (Figure 5) he is clearly marked by the staff as a suppliant, who would then expect better treatment than he is receiving. In the text he is described simply as falling at the altar of Poseidon, which marks him as a suppliant. He is not directly referred to as a suppliant:

Theseus:

φασίν τιν' ἡμῖν ἄνδρα, σοὶ μὲν ἔμπολιν
οὐκ ὄντα, συγγενῇ δέ, προσπесόντα πως
βωμῷ καθῆσθαι τῷ Ποσειδῶνος, παρ' ᾧ
θύων ἔκυρον ἢνίχ' ὠρμώμην ἐγώ.

OC 1156-9

Oedipus then refers to him as 'ὁ προστάτης' (1171), but not as 'ὁ ἰκέτης'. Polynices is literally the one who stands before an altar at this point, and uses the term of himself at 1278. This play explores the nature of suppliance, as Oedipus is reconfigured from suppliant to saviour.⁶⁴¹ It is hardly unexpected, then, for Polynices' own status as suppliant to be complicated. Oedipus acknowledges his suppliant status, referring to his suppliant stance and the θάκημα at 1160. Oedipus also refers to him in militaristic terms borne out by his dress and motives; knowledge of the play is imperative for decoding this picture. He has come to supplicate Oedipus for his help, not in fact Poseidon, at whose altar he was found. Oedipus is on his way to achieving daimonic status, but needs this scene to reach the pinnacle of his power, and is not yet an appropriate object of supplication. His status as a suppliant in this picture is also undercut by his wearing of a sword and more militaristic dress; this drawing marks the difference in Polynices' motives for coming to Athens; is he seeking sanctuary or war? The painting picks up some potential elements of tension in the texts and exploits the potential ambiguity of Polynices'

⁶⁴¹ See Burian (1974) for the first clear formulation of this idea.

position, reflecting further on the power dynamics of suppliancy which are so important to the play.⁶⁴²

In contrast to Polynices' suppliant's staff, in the *Study* (Figure 5), Oedipus has an upright, crooked staff lying across his shoulder that is absent in the final painting. This may be a symbol of his status as a blind beggar, although Sophocles also never describes him with one in the OC. The staff could simply symbolise old age, as might be suggested by its presence on the Melbourne *krater*; indeed several of the pots Oliver Taplin associates with Sophocles feature old men leaning on staffs.⁶⁴³ Its symbolic function is clear from its size and shape; upright, this staff would tower over Oedipus and be of limited use as a support. In *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6), the staff lies abandoned on the ground, again suggesting a symbolic rather than practical function. The particular shape of the end, moreover, might recall rather a shepherd's crook or a Bishop's crosier, subtly marking Oedipus as a shepherd. This would begin his identification with Christ; such a religious reading of the OC has been made throughout its reception history and is also discernible in other elements of the painting. However we read the staffs, their importance is reduced in the final painting, reducing in turn the Christian symbolism.⁶⁴⁴

This Christianised reading is also applicable to the composition of the painting. There is a marked difference between the individual treatments of the Polynices scene, but there are also differences between the two scenes. Both drawings depict Oedipus and Polynices' hands forming an extension of the same line, whereas in the finished painting they overlap. The drawings thus demonstrate

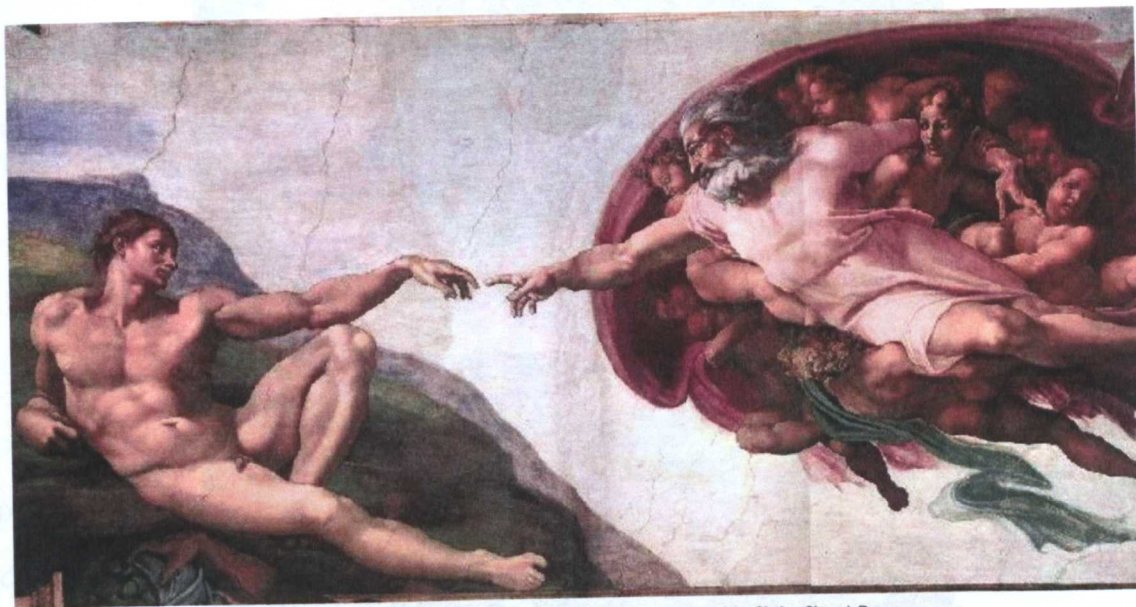
⁶⁴² Thanks to Pat Easterling for help in clarifying some aspects of this point.

⁶⁴³ See in particular figures 22 and 23 in Taplin (2007), 90-92, 93, with reference to the *Oedipus Tyrannos* and Tiresias.

⁶⁴⁴ We should also note the reference to Antigone and Ismene as *τούτοιιν...σκήπτροιιν* by Creon at 848. When even the characters are objectified as physical supports, the overt presence of the stick to help Oedipus takes on a greater potential meaning.

more clearly the inspiration from Michelangelo, whereas the painting lessens the precision of the allusion.⁶⁴⁵

Figure 21: Michelangelo *The creation of Adam* (1511). Fresco, 480 cm × 230 cm (189.0 in × 90.6 in), from the Sistine Chapel.⁶⁴⁶



Michelangelo's depiction of God creating Adam (1511) in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Rome

According to the Longinian / Burkean sublime, we are to become like God, indeed to be raised to the status of gods ourselves. In our communication with Oedipus (see above), this begins to happen in *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6).⁶⁴⁷ There is another staff at the bottom of the picture, again marking Oedipus as the suppliant and shepherd saviour. The pyramidal composition and religious tenor of the painting is more in keeping with later Blakean mysticism, or 'religion', rather than Christianity itself, the figure reminiscent of Blake's God:

⁶⁴⁵ See above (p. 234-235) for Fuseli's interest in Michelangelo.

⁶⁴⁶ Image from <http://www.artknowledgenews.com/files2009nov/Michelangelo-God-creting-Adam.jpg> (last accessed 8th February 2010).

⁶⁴⁷ See above (p. 221) for discussion of this.

Figure 22: William Blake *The Ancient of Days* (1794). Relief etching with watercolour, 23.3 x 16.8cm, British Museum, London.⁶⁴⁸



With his windswept grey hair Blake's God is reminiscent of the Lear and Oedipus figures who found their original inspiration in George White, while his contorted physique again recalls the five-point games and extreme physicality of Fuseli's school. The dark background and emphatic red lighting, the religious subject and perpendicular lines all recall Burke's criteria for sublime painting. Paintings such as both *Polyneices* (Figure 2) and *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) were examples of a new genre of art which combined landscape, portrait and history painting, depicting literary scenes in a sublime manner. This sublimity consists in elements of both

⁶⁴⁸ Image from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blake_ancient_of_days.jpg (last accessed 8th February 2010).

composition and subject matter, relying on an ability to merge literary and pictorial semiotic codes to produce startling images of great power.

4.9 Conclusion

'[I]t is debatable whether he is giving us answers at all, or whether he is simply playing a masquerade with us, fooling us with a virtuoso psychological and artistic performance. Fuseli is a master of allusion, quotation and paraphrase, which, together with his range of forms and themes, makes him an ideal subject for art historical probings. His very scholarliness surrounds his works like some rare esoteric mist, causing much perplexed shaking of heads.'⁶⁴⁹

Fuseli was an unconventional artist and William Roscoe had trouble promoting his work in Liverpool. He described selling Fuseli in provinces as 'the experiment of Liverpool'.⁶⁵⁰ Both of the Oedipus paintings were unconventional, but in different ways. Aspects of each painting are in accordance with Roscoe's known likes, but also disagree with what we know of his tastes. Both paintings demonstrated Fuseli's engagement with Greek literature. Both represent a Christianising of this tradition. To this extent, both were attractive to Roscoe. Yet he disliked something about one of them. In conclusion, therefore, I turn to summarise reasons for his disliking each painting.

Roscoe has been described as an idealist and a realist combined, who maintained a 'Blake-like' innocence.⁶⁵¹ *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) is reminiscent of Blake's style, and Blake was Fuseli's pupil. The reference to Blake makes Roscoe sound modern, and even 'Romantic', yet he is said to have liked and appealed to the previous generation because of his 'Classicism'.⁶⁵² He bought both paintings,

⁶⁴⁹ Hofmann in Schiff (1975) 29.

⁶⁵⁰ See Jacob (1979) 46.

⁶⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁶⁵² Chandler (1953) 46, and 51 'It is against this background of the dying "classical" taste of the older generation of Mason, Reynolds and Gray and the growing "Romantic" taste of the younger

suggesting that his old-fashioned Classicism was not insurmountable, and he cannot have disliked either too much. His opposition to slavery marks him out as daring and progressive, especially given its contribution to Liverpool's economy.

Polyneices (Figure 2) clearly reflects the influence of Michelangelo on Fuseli. Roscoe felt that Michelangelo was beautiful, but lacked the simplicity of style associated with ancient sculpture. This view is highly indebted to Winckelmann, and so one might expect Roscoe to have liked *Polyneices* due to its combination of influences from ancient sculpture and Michelangelo. Yet, *Polyneices* is also in part a pessimistic reaction against this kind of Classicism. The rehabilitated form comes in *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6). Roscoe is known to have disliked the 'terribilità' of his later protégé John Gibson's work.⁶⁵³ This would make him more likely to dislike the mystical terror of the second painting, and more comfortable with the Old Testament tenor of *Polyneices*. Roscoe supported Fuseli's 1799 Milton Gallery, indeed wrote verses for it, which demonstrates how he was not overly concerned with the distinction between poetry and painting, lessening any potential objections to *Polyneices*. *Polyneices* appears to adhere more closely to what is generally conceived of as the purist form of eighteenth-century Classicism, but closer inspection demonstrates the extent to which Fuseli disrupted a simple reading of it in these terms. *The Death of Oedipus* is startling and mystical, engaging the observer and requiring a greater awareness of the intellectual subtleties of the new Romantic form of Burkean aesthetics to decode it, which may have appealed less to a provincial audience. The entrepreneurial risk-taker in Roscoe may have liked it, viewing its sale as a challenge worth taking up. Were he thinking financially, this painting would have had less appeal. It is clear that a simple reading of eighteenth-century aesthetics

generation of De Quincey, Wordsworth and Coleridge that Roscoe's early career as a poet may best be judged.'

⁶⁵³ See Morris (1971) 397.

in action is far from straightforward, and which of the two paintings Roscoe disliked remains an impossible puzzle to solve with any certainty.⁶⁵⁴

Friedrich Antal attempted to define the schools to which Fuseli belonged, labelling him as Mannerist, Romantic, Classical, NeoClassical, and Gothic.⁶⁵⁵ This desire to confine Fuseli to a school penetrates right through modern literature, even to the last decade, when Martin Myrone describes Fuseli as an enigma – proclaiming intellectual refinement, individualistic and aberrant work, unlike conventional art-historical classification, a Roman Neoclassicist, Romantic Classicist, Neoclassic horrific, Sado-Mannerist.⁶⁵⁶ Reading Fuseli's two Oedipus paintings demonstrates how none of these categories can be applied individually. Versions of the sublime subsume them all. Within the framework of eighteenth-century aesthetics, the sublime was not conceptualised as a single tradition, and Fuseli has prioritised different aspects of it in each painting. When Fuseli painted *Polyneices* (Figure 2) and *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6), he represented the two most powerful moments of the play, the two representations of terror. In regarding Polynices we experience the Lucretian return, or Aristotelian katharsis. The horror of the curse is transmuted into terror by means of the indirect nature of representation. The 'death' of Oedipus depicts a moment of mystery, where events surpass human understanding and a sensory overwhelming is achieved, resulting in a version of the Longinian sublime.

The *Polyneices* pictures (Figures 2-5) do not demonstrate a sublime aesthetic in the way that *The Death of Oedipus* (Figure 6) does. This suggests that it was only on his return to England from Italy that Fuseli moved towards a Burkean aesthetic. His return to England gave Fuseli a positive motivation for developing a new aesthetical approach which would win him the patronage of a charismatic polymath, and take

⁶⁵⁴ My own view is that it was probably *The Death of Oedipus*.

⁶⁵⁵ Antal (1952).

⁶⁵⁶ Myrone (2001) 6-8.

account of his own migrant wanderings, the position of Joshua Reynolds and the Royal Academy and the growing English obsession with the Gothic novel. Lavater's involvement in Fuseli's failed love affair in Switzerland gave Fuseli a personal motive for moving away from physiognomical painting and the use of models in history paintings. *Oedipus cursing his son Polyneices* and *The Death of Oedipus* are important paintings in exemplifying the two sides of a development in Fuseli's aesthetics. The play's emphasis on itinerance, religion, landscape and politics were particularly appropriate for Fuseli on a personal level, a European migrant who spurned the country which had treated him badly. His move back to England, and personal connections with those around Burke, provided a positive motivation for emphasising the Burkean aspects of his work. The paradox, negativity and Aristotelian terror of *Polyneices* was replaced by a positive reinterpretation of ancient fragments confronted 'head-on' in *The Death of Oedipus*. Known as a foreigner who failed to assimilate in his adopted domicile, he drew strength from his status as an outsider.⁶⁵⁷ He remained Swiss in his fluent style and broad interest, while formally rejecting his Swiss roots.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁷ Schiff (1975) 9.

⁶⁵⁸ Ganz (1949) 27.

Chapter 5: *Seria*-rising Sophocles

Antonio Sacchini is not a composer with whom most modern listeners are familiar, yet in his own time he was extremely successful; in this chapter I discuss the nature of his success and its cultural contingency in the context of his opera *Oedipe à Colone* (henceforth *Oedipe*). This premiered at Versailles on 4th January 1786, for the entertainment of Marie-Antoinette, and although it was not originally well-received, when it transferred to Paris the following year,⁶⁵⁹ it won great acclaim, and played for 583 nights before 1843, making it the most performed opera of its time.⁶⁶⁰ In the intervening months Sacchini had died, moping over the apparent failure of both *Oedipe*, and his next opera, *Arvire et Evelina* (henceforth *Arvire*).⁶⁶¹ Based on the OC, Sacchini's opera, and its libretto by Nicolas-François Guillard, made use of themes of locality and religion in order to engage with changing trends in French aesthetics. In this chapter, therefore, I have two main aims: I analyse the libretto and music in order to demonstrate how an interdisciplinary reading of a text is vital in order to gain meaningful insights into it. I use this analysis of *Oedipe* to reflect on both the OC and on the changing nature of elite pre-Revolution France.

I begin with a short explanation of the value of studying opera as a cultural historian. The next section outlines some important aspects of French politics and aesthetics which are crucial to understanding *Oedipe*. I then discuss Guillard's libretto in a general aesthetic framework, before focussing on particular aspects of the text. Finally I turn to the music itself. I again focus on the theme of location, and on religious interpretations of the Oedipus myth.

⁶⁵⁹ 1st February 1787. See Jullien (1878) 114 for the first analysis of this performance.

⁶⁶⁰ The numbers are first calculated at Jullien (1878) 123-124). See also Prod'Homme (1929) 185, (1932) 623, Rushton (1969) 319 n.1, (1971) 389, Thierstein (1974) 48-9.

⁶⁶¹ Jullien (1878) 112 attributes Sacchini's death to heartbreak at his rejection by Marie-Antoinette, Schlitzer (1955) 39 to gout.

5.1 *Why study opera?*

Blanning makes music a focal point of his cultural aim, noting that it has been relatively neglected outside strictly musicological studies, but that it has the potential to reveal much about past societies.⁶⁶² My concern is primarily eighteenth-century England; yet as Sacchini spent nine years in England, the French situation read according to Blanning's thesis with respect to *Oedipe* provides an excellent case study to conclude my overall discussion of how the texts of Sophocles played an important role in shaping the political, cultural, educational and general tenor of the eighteenth century.

The operatic genre emerged in late sixteenth-century Italy, partly as an attempt to recreate the generic fusion experienced in Greek tragedy, combining dance, words and music with various forms of staging.⁶⁶³ Opera's inherently interdisciplinary nature also means that we must strive to understand how it speaks to its audience through its music, words and staging, whether overtly or implicitly, by means of harmonising its parts or by allowing them to clash with each other. Each aspect of an opera can be constructed as a form of text in its own right. The two texts I compare and contrast in particular are the libretto and score. I explore the dynamics of the relationship between these two forms of text, investigating how a composite art-form such as opera functions in its context, and how this might relate to Greek tragedy. As Michael Ewans writes, on the Camerata in Florence:

'tragedy's original vitality in fifth-century Athens, as the medium in which the dramatist could present to his fellow citizens a tragedy of intense seriousness which addressed major matters of social and political concern, became a beacon of hope to

⁶⁶² Blanning (2001) 4. See the introduction to this thesis (p. 1) for a brief outline of Blanning's main points.

⁶⁶³ Although see Ketterer (2003, 2009) on the contribution of Rome to early opera. See also Hoxby (2005) on tragedy and opera.

opera composers who felt that they themselves were living in an environment less favourable to their work and their ideals.’⁶⁶⁴

This is a somewhat oversimplified view of both fifth-century Athens and Renaissance Italy, but the general point is clear: opera was envisaged as a form of *Gesamtkunstwerk* drawing on Greek tragedy long before Wagner and Nietzsche theorised it as such.⁶⁶⁵ Opera therefore provides an excellent medium through which to think about the nature of reception studies, and about the maxim that meaning is created at the point of reception.⁶⁶⁶

In a similar vein as Blanning, William Weber charts a correlation between developments in French opera and French politics. He reads changes in the musical landscape as anticipating changes in the political one, even suggesting that the 1752 *Querelle des Bouffons* could be claimed to have channelled some of the political dissent into the artistic discussions.⁶⁶⁷ He notes a reciprocal relationship between opera and politics, concluding:

‘If the musical dispute helped temper the outrage over the constitutional question, the latter then made the conflict at the Opéra all the more severe.’⁶⁶⁸

For Weber, discussing the battle between Piccinni and Gluck as heralding a revolution in opera was a way of prefiguring the ensuing political revolution.⁶⁶⁹ A less ambitious version of the thesis that opera was vitally important to

⁶⁶⁴ Ewans (2007) 1.

⁶⁶⁵ See Hibberd (2009) on the parallel with nineteenth-century French opera.

⁶⁶⁶ See Martindale (1993) 3. Thus when Michael Ewans writes that he wants to examine divergences of plot, character and dramatic strategy ‘with reference to the values and belief structures of the original Athenian writers and audiences and of their modern counterparts’, he misses the significance of what opera can tell us: Ewans (2007) 5.

⁶⁶⁷ Weber (1984) 67–80. I discuss the *querelle* further below (p. 258).

⁶⁶⁸ Weber (1984) 80.

⁶⁶⁹ e.g. Weber (1984) 60: ‘Just as Gaubert has suggested for French society as a whole, the Opéra underwent fundamental processes of change in the years before the Revolution.’

understanding eighteenth-century French high society has been proposed by Downing Thomas, who writes that:

‘individual operas not only display traces of the aesthetic and ideological circumstances of their creation, but they also engage productively in those circumstances...opera came to serve as a touchstone in the eighteenth century for understanding the mechanisms behind human feeling and for reflecting upon how emotion impacts social relations’⁶⁷⁰

He concludes:

‘Opera was the most widespread artistic form; no other cultural expression had the same capacity to reflect social life, the same cultural prestige or comparable turnover. Opera as a whole had a double social and cultural function: its social function was as an instrument of moral and civil education (Zeno), the vehicle of the dominant ideology (Metastasio), and as a social critique (comic opera); its cultural function was to disseminate ‘high’ culture and language and to convey classical subjects or, later on, otherwise unknown ones from fiction.’⁶⁷¹

Opera had an important part to play in disseminating academic, educational, political and social ideas.

The OC provides a particularly good case study of this process in action. It is one of the less frequently performed Greek plays; there are only 167 productions catalogued since 1500, as opposed to over 900 for the *Antigone*.⁶⁷² The first production, in the form of William Mason’s 1776 reworking *Caractacus*, had choruses

⁶⁷⁰ Thomas (2002) 4.

⁶⁷¹ *ibid.* See also Downs (1992) 83.

⁶⁷² Using the APGRD database, it is 15th of 33 complete surviving fifth century tragedies (information gathered 22nd March 2010). See the introduction (p. 6) for the full statistics.

set to music by Thomas Arne, and the musical trend in productions has continued.⁶⁷³ The OC has a higher proportion of productions associated with a composer and some form of music than any other Sophoclean play. This could be in the form of an opera, or incidental music, and may be the result of better record-keeping than for other plays, but it is still striking that it has inspired so much music, including by such notable figures as Rossini and Mendelssohn.⁶⁷⁴

This chapter investigates the importance of just one of the OC's reception contexts, and suggests some reasons why the OC should be musically treated with such frequency. I suggest that the link lies not in political interpretations of the play, but in the religious aspects. Music and religion have long been linked, and ritual has a special place in opera.⁶⁷⁵ The OC is one of the most ritualistic Greek tragedies, and is interpretable within a Christian framework.⁶⁷⁶ It therefore lends itself to musical adaptation particularly easily.

The specific discussion of *Oedipe* which follows is therefore couched within several frames of reference. Firstly, opera is generically of interest as a lens through which to read Greek tragedy, and as a medium which reflects the turbulence of pre-Revolution French high culture and politics particularly well. In the specific example of the OC and *Oedipe*, we are given the opportunity to examine the relationship between drama and religion, between Greek and Christian ritual. Discussion of the role of opera in this religious system also provides the opportunity to re-examine the nature of opera as a genre in its own right. I therefore argue that a range of

⁶⁷³ See chapter 3 for further discussion of Mason's work.

⁶⁷⁴ There is the possibility of metrical issues making it more musical adaptable. See Pohlsander (1964) for an analysis of the OC in metrical terms. It does not, at first glance, seem sufficiently unusual to explain its musical reception. Scott (1996) ch.4 discusses the musical form of the OC in ancient terms, but does not cover the modern reception.

⁶⁷⁵ See Noske (1973). The links between opera and the more overtly sacred genre of oratorio is discussed further below.

⁶⁷⁶ See chapters 3 & 4 for more thorough discussion of the ritual and religious aspects of the OC.

interpretative problems raised by an analysis of the libretto in its aesthetic context only make sense when considered in the light of the opera's music.⁶⁷⁷

5.2 Context

Antonio Sacchini, born in 1730, in Italy, studied there in various conservatories where he was hailed as a great star for the future.⁶⁷⁸ In 1770 he travelled briefly to Germany and wrote operas in Stuttgart and Munich, before returning to Italy for two years.⁶⁷⁹ In 1772, he began a nine-year period as composer for the King's Theatre in London, one of only three patented dramatic establishments in the city and one frequently embroiled in disputes, often with its neighbouring opera house at Covent Garden, and its figurehead David Garrick.⁶⁸⁰ Little remains of Sacchini's London music but he was clearly successful, impressive and heavily influenced by the English music scene.⁶⁸¹ He also had a lavish lifestyle and was forced to leave the country under threat of imprisonment for debt.⁶⁸² Sacchini negotiated a contract with the Paris Opéra to write three operas,⁶⁸³ under the patronage of Marie-Antoinette,⁶⁸⁴ having been courted by them since 1775, after the enthusiastic reception of Framery's pastiche of Sacchini's *Il Cid*, *La Colonie*

⁶⁷⁷ Where Classicists have dealt with opera before, they have mainly not discussed the score itself. McDonald (2001) claims to be the first book in which musicology and Classics are united, but she does not quote any score, limiting her discussion of the music. Ewans (2007) engages with the music, but the overall analysis is weak. Hutchinson (2007) includes the score as an afterword rather than an integrated part of the discussion. Other works discuss every aspect of the opera but the score itself, e.g. Bakogianni (2007), Brown (2004) and Goldhill (2002). Phillippo (2005) comes closest to analysing score and text together.

⁶⁷⁸ His birth date has been disputed, but the matter seems to have been settled by Ulisse Proto-Giurleo in 1928, see Schlitzer (1955) 14, Thierstein (1974) 1, 3; Sauv   (2006) 13-14.

⁶⁷⁹ See Holden et al. (edd.) (1993) 927. On Garrick and Greek tragedy, see also p. 132.

⁶⁸⁰ See Woodfield (2001) *passim*.

⁶⁸¹ See Thierstein (1974) 20-30, Petty (1980), Price Milhous & Hume (1995), Sauv   (2006) 33-48.

⁶⁸² See Thierstein (1974) 30.

⁶⁸³ Thierstein (1974) 30-31.

⁶⁸⁴ See DiChiera and Robinson (2001) and Holden et al. (edd.) (1993) 927. Marie-Antoinette had taken her brother's advice on taking in Sacchini, see Jullien (1878) 149.

(1775).⁶⁸⁵ He arrived in Paris in the summer of 1781, and was formally introduced at a ball on 1st August 1781, in the presence of Marie-Antoinette and Joseph II.⁶⁸⁶ His contracted works were *Renaud*, *Chimène* and *Dardanus*, none of which was particularly successful. Two further works, however, *Oedipe* and *Arvire et Evelina*, proved more so, and it is the nature of their success which is of interest in this chapter.

Marie-Antoinette's patronage was not unproblematic. She had promised Sacchini that *Oedipe* would open the season at Fontainebleau in the autumn of 1786. She was also, however, frequently rebuked for favouring foreigners over the French.⁶⁸⁷ By 1786 she was under increasing pressure from the French people to prove her loyalty to them, and was in trouble over her excessive spending on unnecessary luxuries.⁶⁸⁸ Marie-Antoinette yielded to public pressure and the Fontainebleau premiere of *Oedipe* was cancelled in favour of Lemoyne's *Phèdre*.⁶⁸⁹

The controversy was clearly evident in what was known as the *Querelle des Bouffons*. This 'battle' began with the objection to Italian touring troops bringing opera to Paris in 1752, when Rousseau was one of the main antagonists. The tension between supposedly opposite French and Italian styles persisted, and was

⁶⁸⁵ Thierstein (1974) 24-5, Sauvé (2006) 29, 40-42. This is based on Sacchini's *Il Cid*.

⁶⁸⁶ Thierstein (1974) 31. See also Sauvé (2006) 60.

⁶⁸⁷ Jullien (1878) 116, Demuth (1963) 236-7. This opposition had a long history; Louis XV and his mistress Madame de Pompadour had favoured the French style, so the queen had favoured the Italian. Louis XVI and Madame du Barry favoured the French, so Marie-Antoinette favoured the Italian: Demuth (1963) 231.

⁶⁸⁸ This love of luxury had recently proved her undoing in the 'Diamond Necklace' affair: an unscrupulous impostor, Jeanne de Saint-Rémy, set her eye on a necklace of 647 flawless gems, worth over 1.5 million livres (Meza [2003] 81), originally intended for Louis XV's mistress (and Marie-Antoinette's enemy) Madame du Barry. Jeanne de Saint-Rémy faked letters from Marie-Antoinette and persuaded Cardinal de Rohan to buy it thinking it would ingratiate him with the queen (Asquith [1974] 111-123). She was discovered, convicted and punished (Rohan was found innocent), but Marie-Antoinette's reputation was tarnished by the affair, since it had only happened given the plausibility of her desire for the necklace, which linked her to Madame du Barry, and thus to a particularly negative portrayal of female dominance (see Meza [2003]). See Tiersot (1932) for another example, Marie-Antoinette's extraordinarily elaborate musical clock.

⁶⁸⁹ Jullien (1878) 116, Thierstein (1974) 33, 43. See also MacCull (1938) 270, Sauvé (2006) 117.

configured in terms of Gluck versus Piccinni by the late 1770s. Their rivalry came to a head with their two *Iphigenia* operas in 1779 and 1781 respectively. Both Piccinni and Sacchini studied with Durante in Naples (albeit in different schools), and Sacchini had even added arias to some of Piccinni's operas.⁶⁹⁰ In Paris, Sacchini was consequently expected to fall into the Piccinnist camp, but this was not to be.⁶⁹¹ When he first arrived, Sacchini seemed unaware of the dispute, and later, he created his own faction within it.⁶⁹²

In terms of texts, French libretto writing was notoriously poor in Rameau's time.⁶⁹³ In 1784, however, Louis XVI began to run competitions for new libretti, which were then given to composers to set.⁶⁹⁴ Guillard was one of the seven men appointed to the judging panel.⁶⁹⁵ Fifty-eight libretti were received, and instead of awarding three graded prizes, three libretti were chosen as joint winners, one of which was Guillard's own *Oedipe*.⁶⁹⁶ The libretto was not immediately given to Sacchini, but to Grétry, about which Guillard was unhappy. His supporter Mme Berton bought it back for him and then gave it to Sacchini to set.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁰ Thierstein (1974) 4-5, 8. On his time in Naples more generally, see Schlitzer (1955), Sauvé (2006) 17-23.

⁶⁹¹ See Thierstein (1974) 31. See Juillen (1878) 146-147 on the wisdom of Sacchini's choice not to attach himself to one particular camp.

⁶⁹² Thierstein (1974) 31. See Calella (2001) on the background and development of the *querelle*.

⁶⁹³ Demuth (1963) 205 Downs (1992) 87. Rousseau's attitude is indicative of the problem: Rousseau, who came to Paris in 1752, wrote his own opera, *Le Devin du Village*, in French, but still proclaimed that French was no language in which to write a libretto.

⁶⁹⁴ This is reminiscent of the annual competition to put on a tragedy, where a poet was granted a chorus, and given protagonists drawn by lot, with a *choregos* covering expenses.

⁶⁹⁵ See Thierstein (1974) 40. Sauvé (2006) 83 lists the other judges.

⁶⁹⁶ The other two were: *La Toison d'Or* by Chabenon and *Cora* by Valadier (set by Méhul, not successful). Another year Nicolas Etienne Framery won with *Médée*, intended for Sacchini. Framery also helped with Sacchini's first Paris opera, *Renaud*, and in October 1786 published a eulogy for Sacchini and an attack on Gluck. Juillen (1878) 148 notes the importance of Framery to Sacchini, but classes him as a third-rate writer.

⁶⁹⁷ Thierstein (1974) 41-42, Sauvé (2006) 83-84.

5.3 General Aesthetic background

Librettists have not always been given the acknowledgement they deserve when an opera is discussed.⁶⁹⁸ In the eighteenth century in particular, visual spectacle was the key to an opera's success. The composer fared badly and could be easily forgotten; only the librettist fared worse. The rise in popularity of Metastasio and Zeno helped to improve the lot of the librettist, albeit at the expense of the composer. Zeno wanted to make the libretto a worthy art form in its own right, on a par with the music.⁶⁹⁹ The success of Zeno and Metastasio, alongside increasing censorship, however, stifled productivity among new librettists. Louis XVI's competition was intended to help in the promotion of new libretti, but still did not allow composers and librettists to work together. It is clear from his correspondence that Gluck worked closely with Guillard on the editing of the libretto for his *IT*.⁷⁰⁰ This collaborative model continued when Guillard began to work with Sacchini. When the original four-act version of *Chimène* failed to impress the public, they created a new three-act version which was much more successful.⁷⁰¹ Their flexible partnership ensured that they could react to public opinion. With reference to *Oedipe*, not only did Guillard insist on Sacchini's setting it, but it seems that at various points in its revision and setting, Sacchini and Guillard were mutually influenced.

French libretti were typified by a number of features, which are reflected to different extents in Guillard's libretto. At the end of the seventeenth century there was a drift away from mythological themes towards historical ones,⁷⁰² but

⁶⁹⁸ Einstein (1941) 361.

⁶⁹⁹ Downs (1992) 88.

⁷⁰⁰ See Phillippo (2005) 97 for an example of this with reference to the Eumenides, discussed further below (n. 711).

⁷⁰¹ Schlitzer (1955) 70. I discuss this further below, pp. 293-294.

⁷⁰² Demuth (1963) 172.

throughout the eighteenth century myth again became increasingly popular.⁷⁰³ As operas also moved away from being showpieces for the musical talent of singers and composers and towards being dramas in their own right, librettists began to pay increasing attention to the 'Aristotelian' Unities.⁷⁰⁴ This meant a focus on unified action, leading to a French tendency to remove subplots. In order to fulfil a didactic function, characters were simplified and made symbolic of individual vices and virtues.⁷⁰⁵ This was part of an over-moralisation of drama, based on a misunderstanding of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Ballet was forbidden in Metastasian opera but was a key element in French writing. There was a tendency to move away from Italian theatricality.⁷⁰⁶ Certain aspects of musical style required the libretto to be constructed in particular ways. Before examining the extent to which these elements are true of *Oedipe*, I offer a brief synopsis:

Act 1. Polynice asks Thésée for help against Eteocles and is offered Thésée's daughter Eriphile in marriage, leading to a chorus and ballet in celebration. Polynice confesses his sin in driving out his father and despite purification rituals, including the chorus praying to the Eumenides on stage, the act ends with Polynice still polluted.

Act 2. Polynice seeks purification from his father at Colonus. Oedipe prays to the Eumenides after a visitation from them to remind him of his parricide.⁷⁰⁷ The people of Colonus try to eject Oedipe from the grove. Thésée intervenes and proclaims him an innocent victim.

Act 3. Polynice and Antigone express their concern about Oedipe. Oedipe repeats his formal curses against Polynice, but is finally persuaded to change his mind, and the opera ends with a reconciliatory trio between Antigone, Polynice and Oedipe.

I now turn to each of the features mentioned above, in order to examine the extent to which Guillard's libretto conformed to the expected French pattern.

⁷⁰³ Woodfield 21.

⁷⁰⁴ Downs (1992) 179.

⁷⁰⁵ *ibid.* 88.

⁷⁰⁶ Downs (1992) 88.

⁷⁰⁷ See Orestes in Guillard's *IT* and in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*.

5.3.1 Myth

Writing an *Oedipe* follows in a long tradition of operas and productions of the Oedipus story, usually based on the *Oedipus Tyrannus* or on Seneca's *Oedipus Rex*. One of the first works to be recognised as an opera was Gabrieli's 1585 *Edippo*. Pietro Torri, Hofkappellmeister in Munich, produced an *Edippo* in 1729 with the explicit aim of refashioning the genre in a new Italo-German context.⁷⁰⁸ Purcell wrote an *Oedipus King of Thebes* in 1692, Galliard an *Oedipus Masque* in 1722, and Arne an *Oedipus King of Thebes* in 1740, all in England. After nine years in London, Sacchini would have been aware of the English music, and given his time in Munich, possibly also of Torri's work. If Guillard were working with Sacchini, familiarity with the use of Oedipus in opera would seem less unusual. Oedipus on stage was also not entirely unheard of in France; there was an adaptation of Voltaire's *Oedipe* at the Comédie Française in 1781, the year Sacchini arrived. Writing an opera on *Oedipus* was not entirely new, but could be viewed as in some sense rejuvenating the past.⁷⁰⁹ At the same time, since nobody else was then writing operas based on *Oedipus*, and since previous *Oedipus* operas had been of the *Tyrannus* and not the *Colonus*, there was a further sense of innovation about Guillard's work – he was doing something different, rewriting aesthetic/ literary history on a different model.⁷¹⁰ This ability to take pre-existing tradition and alter it slightly in order to create something new, yet grounded in the past, is indicative of the Guillard-Sacchini partnership in general, and is a facet of their work which continues to be important throughout the rest of my discussion.

⁷⁰⁸ For more information on Torri, see anon. (1976), Buller (2003), Burney (1790), Carlson (1992), Dunn (1937), Gibney (2001), Hall (1997), Hill (1978), Junker (1913, 1920), Kost (2004), Lazarevich (2001), Price, Milhous and Hume (1991), Rose (2004), Sadler (2004), Timms (1973, 1978, 1998, 2001).

⁷⁰⁹ This is an aspect of writing an *Oedipus* also mentioned by Stravinsky in his *Poetics of Music*, where his call for rejection of Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk invites us to obey Verdi's injunction 'Let us return to old times, and that will be progress' (1947:43).

⁷¹⁰ The Oedipus myth has little folk history in France (see Edmunds [1996]), apart from a Creole version (pp. 220-2).

Seven of twenty-three new operas produced in France during Sacchini's time there were overtly based on a Greek topic:

1781 Piccinni *Iphigenie en Tauride* (to Dubreuil's libretto, following Gluck's 1779 production of the same story, to Guillard's libretto).⁷¹¹

1782 Edelmann *Ariane dans l'Isle de Naxos*

1784 Salieri *Les Danaïdes*⁷¹²

Sacchini *Dardanus* (to Guillard's libretto)

1785 Piccinni *Pénélope*

1786 Vogel *Le Toison d'Or* (dedicated to Gluck and revised as *Médée à Colchos*)⁷¹³

Lemoyne *Phédre* ⁷¹⁴

Common themes run through this collection – Ariadne, Phaedra and Medea are linked through Theseus, Iphigenia and Penelope through the Trojan War. *Iphigenia*, *Les Danaïdes*, *Le Toison d'Or* and *Phédre* have links to extant Greek tragedies, but not to Sophocles. One benefit of using the Oedipus myth is its relative lack of interaction with other myths.⁷¹⁵ If a librettist or composer desired to start afresh,

⁷¹¹ Guillard was known as the first librettist to put the Furies on stage; he was accepted as writing a more psychological drama than Dubreuil, as the Furies, whilst on stage, were also figments of Orestes' imagination. Guillard was already experimenting with boundaries, a theme which will become important later, particularly with reference to displaying the Eumenides. See Rushton (1972) 412, 414. On Gluck and Guillard's collaboration over the Eumenides, see Gluck's letter to Gluck from Vienna, 17th June 1778, Phillippo (2005) 97. The Eumenides are discussed further below, pp. 305-307.

⁷¹² This was supposed to have been composed by Gluck, but he was ill and handed the commission to Salieri.

⁷¹³ I assume this was a setting of Chanebon's libretto, although Thierstein (1974) 41 claims that this was never set.

⁷¹⁴ See Loewenburg (1978).

⁷¹⁵ The extent to which Guillard was familiar with the Sophoclean original is unclear. Renato Bossa (2001) suggests that Guillard worked not from the Greek of Sophocles, but from translations by Giovanni Schmidt. As Schmidt was only born in c.1775, however, and wrote his first libretto in 1794, this is impossible. See Black (2001). Schlitzer (1955) 70-71 discusses Schmidt's work translating Guillard. *Oedipus at Colonus* was not translated, but only summarised in Brumoy's *Théâtre des Grecs* (reprinted 1785, just as *Oedipe* was being written). Brumoy did not include the whole of Greek tragedy in his work, but translated some, summarised others, and omitted others entirely. This is not,

Oedipus was a suitable topic. Sacchini also needed to avoid myths used by Gluck and Piccinni, given their rivalry. Writing an *Oedipe*, based on Sophoclean material, rather than the previously fashionable Aeschylean, Euripidean and Senecan plays, was therefore a clear way of marking himself as different.⁷¹⁶ These operas are also almost unanimously named after women; they all deal with disastrous love affairs,⁷¹⁷ drawing on interlinked myths.⁷¹⁸ *Oedipe* may be novel in its choice of myth, but in its manipulation of myth, it does at least partly conform, since Guillard remodelled the story to be about Polynice's attempt to reconcile his love for his father and his love for his bride, Eriphile. It remains different in being androcentric rather than gynocentric, and in finishing with a happy ending. This rewriting of Greek myth to incorporate a love story was also typical of eighteenth-century French opera and drama more generally.⁷¹⁹

Oedipe gave Guillard and Sacchini the freedom to write something which stood alone, yet still drew on existing patterns to enough of an extent to ensure its popularity; different, but not too different.⁷²⁰ We have the pleasant business of a marriage being set up, and Polinice has to make peace with his father because he has

however, the place to consider the reasoning behind this. It was translated by P. Theophile Bruois in 1777, but there appear to be no other contemporary published translations from which Guillard could have been working. Guillard may have been working from the original Greek rather than from a translation, but it is unclear how much Greek he did know.

⁷¹⁶ See Macintosh (2009) on the increasing prominence of Aeschylus.

⁷¹⁷ The only one outside this category is also by Sacchini, *Dardanus*, based on the same text as Rameau's 1739 opera, reworked by Guillard. These appear to be the only operas of the Dardanus story, further demonstrating how the Sacchini-Guillard partnership could innovate whilst simultaneously grounding themselves in their immediate cultural past.

⁷¹⁸ These classical women were also used as paradigms of fashion, lending their name to hairstyles in Paris, e.g. 'à l'Iphigénie' or 'à l'Eurydice', see Asquith (1974) 68.

⁷¹⁹ Ewans (2007) 3.

⁷²⁰ Their fascination with the *Colonus* continued as Guillard wrote an *Arvire*, based on William Mason's *Caractacus* and set to music by Sacchini. This was Sacchini's last work, posthumously produced. Thomas Arne wrote the music for Mason's *Caractacus*. I comment further on *Arvire* below. For a more detailed discussion of *Caractacus*, see ch. 3. Guillard-Sacchini, as a partnership, wrote their last two works based on the same Sophoclean play. The *OC* clearly resonated with them, and later I consider some specific themes and intertexts with the Sophoclean original which demonstrate Guillard's engagement with the myth as presented in the *OC*.

wronged him, not because his father has done him wrong. Oedipe no longer enters as though from the *OT*, when the full horror of his actions would be foremost in people's minds. It also makes it less Oedipe's story; Oedipe is an agent in Polinice's story and not vice versa. In the *OC* Oedipus gains daimonic status, and from his entrance at line 1 to his exit at 1555, never leaves the stage;⁷²¹ he is on stage longer than other Sophoclean plays last; the play revolves entirely around him, and he is the middle generation of the house – Jocasta (Laius) : Oedipus : Polynices / Eteocles / Antigone / Ismene. The family is unable to progress, bound up in their past and unable to move to the future, even if it is a future that Oedipus himself has predicted.

In Guillard's libretto, familial order is reestablished; Polinice and his marriage are the centre of attention, ensuring the next generation of the family, further diminishing Oedipe's importance. The relevant themes are now the consequences of familial curses, redemption and appropriate honours due to dangerous and mysterious gods. Polinice cannot marry his foreign bride until he has placated dangerous chthonic goddesses because he has wronged his father;⁷²² in seeking redemption from his apparently implacable father he is doubly cursed, but then forgiven.

5.3.2 Aristotle

I have already discussed Aristotle and Longinus' place in eighteenth-century English aesthetics and their effect on secondary literature (ch.1). I now turn to consider how the aesthetic principles drawn from Aristotle affected the practical

⁷²¹ I disagree with Seale (1982) 118, as discussed in my introduction (pp. 8-9).

⁷²² This also suggests an affinity with Aeschylus' *Eumenides*; for the relationship between the *OC* and the *Eumenides* see Whitman (1966) and Brown (1984), Birge (1986), Lloyd-Jones (1990) and Lardinois (1992), for example.

issue of how best to write a libretto in Paris. Aristotle's *Poetics*, first printed in Venice, in 1508, circulated through many Italian and Latin translations and commentaries during the sixteenth century.⁷²³ It had a profound impact on seventeenth-century France, influencing authors in different ways depending on how they engaged with it, through translation or in Greek.⁷²⁴ Contact was mainly made through Italian translations; in particular, Castelvetro's 1570 text and commentary were widely used.⁷²⁵ Both Italian and French commentators struggled to understand this dense, fragmented treatise, and used it instead as a repository of ideas for further development. One of the most striking cases is that of the 'Aristotelian' Unities.

Aristotle recommended that in order to be coherent, a tragedy needs a beginning, middle and end to its μῦθος, to its 'plot-structure'⁷²⁶ / action:⁷²⁷

περὶ δὲ τῆς διηγηματικῆς καὶ ἐν μέτρῳ μιμητικῆς, ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς μύθους
καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαις συνιστάναι δραματικούς καὶ περὶ μίαν
πρᾶξιν ὅλην καὶ τελείαν ἔχουσιν ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος, ἥν' ὥσπερ
ζῶον ἐν ὅλῳ ποιῇ τὴν οἰκείαν ἡδονήν.

Poetics 1459a18-21

Combining this passage with a later one (1451a16-20) where Aristotle wrote that unity is not to be found in characters, Renaissance commentators drew up the Three

⁷²³ See Halliwell (1986, 1987, 1992) for lists of translations and commentaries.

⁷²⁴ See chapter 1 for discussion of Boileau's influence on the development of the French sublime reflecting Longinus.

⁷²⁵ See Halliwell (1986) 306. The first major French translation was by Dacier (1692), sufficiently late in the century for it to be obvious that French writers were using other sources than vernacular translations. See Cave (1988) 116.

⁷²⁶ Halliwell's term, see Halliwell (1986, 1987, 1992) *passim*.

⁷²⁷ See Bittner (1992) for an excellent discussion of the problem, and refutation of Halliwell's position. An actual understanding of the topic is, however, irrelevant here as long as an eighteenth-century French position can be ascertained.

Unities, of Time, Place and Action, which would explain how to achieve a perfect Aristotelian plot. Only the last originates in Aristotle, where it is the overriding principle behind plot-structure, not one principle on a par with others. Castelvetro further downgraded the Unity of Action by subordinating it to the other two. As Stephen Halliwell comments:

‘The pseudo-Aristotelian trio of Unities was to become the hallmark of the dominant French strain of neo-classicism in the seventeenth century.’⁷²⁸

He also calls them:

‘the classic case of a literary principle speciously fixated upon the *Poetics* (and therefore a pointed reminder of how little the treatise was actually *read* as opposed to being simply appealed to, even in the most self-consciously neo-classical circles)’.⁷²⁹

The authority given by Aristotle to the evolving Renaissance poetics is clearly evident when we note that the establishment of the Rules (another pseudo-Aristotelian theory)⁷³⁰ in French writing coincided with the opening of the first public theatres in Paris.⁷³¹ The neo-classicism of the previous era focused on moral interpretations of drama, using the *Poetics* for support, but as Halliwell states:

‘this spirit of French neo-classicism involved a considerable element of intellectual delusion’.⁷³²

⁷²⁸ Halliwell (1987) 20.

⁷²⁹ Halliwell (1986) 287.

⁷³⁰ See Halliwell (1986) 294 for discussion.

⁷³¹ See Halliwell (1986) 304.

⁷³² Halliwell (1986) 303.

With the advent of the eighteenth century, and the first signs of Romanticism, such a strong reliance on pseudo-Aristotelian material waned, as the Longinian spirit of the sublime became a more popular aesthetic.⁷³³

I turn to consider briefly the extent to which Guillard's libretto demonstrates an awareness of either the Unities or other Aristotelian principles, and whether an Aristotelian reading of *Oedipe* can enhance our understanding of it. At first glance, there is little evidence of Aristotelian influence. *Oedipe* ends with a reconciliation, the non-bloody end seen as the most mature way to finish a tragedy, again referring back to the *Poetics*.⁷³⁴ By creating this sudden reconciliation, however, Guillard has removed the tragic element, and consequently failed to provide any form of katharsis; any *peripeteia* is from bad fortune to good, which is not quite what we would expect. The plot does not unfold in one place, nor clearly over the course of one day. In terms of the libretto, what unity there is only undercuts the tragedy.

The *Poetics* was also read as recommending minimal subplots, in case these detracted from the clear progression of the main action. Here we see a further way in which French and Italian operas differed, a further boundary between the two cultures for Sacchini to negotiate. The Italian operas featured numerous subplots which extended the duration of the opera considerably; they could last many hours.⁷³⁵ French operas tended not to take on this meandering attitude towards subplots, avoiding the length and dramatic complexity of the Italian works. The lack of individual stars in French opera and resultant lack of arias meant dramatic unity

⁷³³ See Halliwell (1987) 22, and chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁷³⁴ See Halliwell (1986) 311 and (1987) for comment.

⁷³⁵ Although their audiences were not expected to sit through them in silent reverence.

and coherence were more important, and there was more focus on a tighter plot and on removing the extravagance associated with Italian opera, including subplots.⁷³⁶

French opera in general, then, was influenced by the Aristotelian advice. *Oedipe*, however, is not so straight-forward. In *Oedipe*, there is a possible conflict between plot and subplot; Guillard adds the character of Eriphile and begins the opera with a plot of Polynices and Eriphile's marriage.⁷³⁷ Act III completes the action begun in Act 1, that of gaining marriage with Eriphile, giving the piece an overarching general 'action'.⁷³⁸ The plot of the OC remains present, however, as a second route through the opera; Oedipus' reconciliation with both the Eumenides and Polynices is not forgotten. Some elements of fragmentation through subplots persists throughout *Oedipe*, and to this extent it does not conform to the neo-Aristotelian pattern of French drama.

The most overtly Aristotelian aspect of *Oedipe* is the reconciliation, and there may be other explanations for this.⁷³⁹ The libretto may make more sense when *not* considered through an Aristotelian lens. I discussed the development of a Longinian sublime from Boileau's work in chapter 1, and now turn briefly to consider the extent to which *Oedipe* may instead be read in this light.

I repeat the five sources of the Longinian sublime discussed in chapter 1:⁷⁴⁰

- i.) The power to conceive great thoughts.
- ii.) Strong and inspired emotion.
- iii.) Figures, of thought and speech.

⁷³⁶ They are also perhaps more of a feature of comedy. This reduction in subplots, trimming the opera down, will be discussed with a musical parallel in the removal of ornaments and the change in the aria structure for example.

⁷³⁷ In considering Guillard's relationship with French drama, it may be significant to note that Racine also included an Eriphile in his *Iphigenia*. Sacchini himself wrote an *Eriphile* (see Schlitzer [1955] 69).

⁷³⁸ See Halliwell (1986) and Bittner (1992) on 'action'.

⁷³⁹ The effects of the reconciliation are considered further below, especially pp. 307-310.

⁷⁴⁰ See p. 40.

- iv.) Noble diction (including choice of words, metaphorical and artificial language).
- v.) Dignified and elevated word-arrangement.

This more rhetorical version of the sublime is less applicable to an opera than to a play. Sacchini's French prosody was notoriously poor; he struggled to attain that elegance of fit between musical and lyric lines which so characterised Italian opera. The Parisians were particularly concerned about the insensitivity of the invading foreign composers to the French language.⁷⁴¹ This has been noted as a particular problem in his second Parisian opera, *Chimène*.⁷⁴² A linguistically technical reading of *Oedipe* is not the most useful way to approach it, hence a strictly Longinian reading of *Oedipe* is not likely to be productive. The mysterious, and (quasi-)religious awe inspired by the supposedly Longinian sublime, however, is clearly applicable to an opera based around reconciliation and mystery cult. In chapter one I demonstrated how descriptions of both plays and their authors as sublime couched in Longinian terms became increasingly evident throughout the eighteenth century. Jullien's 1893 volume of Sacchini and Marie-Antoinette provides the first comprehensive analysis of Sacchini's works and contribution to court opera and life. His descriptions of both Sacchini and *Oedipe* demonstrate that this remained a dominant critical language for writing. He quoted Grimm, whose description of Sacchini's intermittent beautiful passages amid moments of boredom recalls the Horatian flawed genius:

'que la musique est généralement admirée, qu'elle produit beaucoup d'effet, qu'il y a pourtant des longueurs, des moments d'ennui, mais qu'on est ensuite réveillé par de grandes beautés.'⁷⁴³

⁷⁴¹ Thierstein (1974) 110.

⁷⁴² Thierstein (1974) 55.

⁷⁴³ Grimm quoted at Jullien (1878) 117.

Jullien echoed the sentiment himself, including the key vocabulary of inspiration and genius:

‘C’est que chaque page de cette partition porte l’empreinte évidente du génie, c’est que Sacchini suppléait à ce qui lui manquait sous le rapport de la science, du développement, de la puissance de l’orchestre, par une inspiration délicieuse, par un sentiment sincère, une tendresse exquise, une grandeur et une noblesse extrêmes.’⁷⁴⁴

In describing the priest and Polynices, he wrote of:

‘la réponse courroucée du grand prêtre transporté d’un saint délire, l’effroi de la foule, la terreur de Polynice, la confusion du peuple...un tableau magnifique et d’une grandeur terrible.’⁷⁴⁵

Language of madness, terror and transport continue to permeate the rest of Jullien’s discussion of *Oedipe* in particular, reflecting the extent to which yet another work based on the *OC* can be read according to a Longinian aesthetic. The themes and ideas explored throughout this thesis continue to be pertinent to my analysis of *Oedipe* and remain the main lens through which it is viewed. A formal analysis of *Oedipe* in either Aristotelian or Longinian terms fails to explain the structure of the opera, but the idea, the essence of the sublime as an aesthetic feeling behind the work makes better sense. So we see Sacchini and Guillard engaging with the spirit rather than the letter of the ancient philosophy.

5.3.3 Simplification of characters

An opera libretto is necessarily shorter than a Greek tragedy, due to the expansion afforded by the music. French operas had a rich cultural heritage on

⁷⁴⁴ Jullien (1878) 118.

⁷⁴⁵ *ibid.* 120.

which to draw, not only Greek tragedies, but also Racine and Voltaire. Where Italian operas were long and complex, the new French operas were much shorter, which left less time and space for the development of characters; they were necessarily simplified at a textual level. They frequently became reminiscent of stock characters, unrealistically displaying one major characteristic in order to facilitate a moralistic interpretation of the story.

In order to help understand the role of each individual in the opera, below is a structural analysis of the opera:

Table 5 – musical numbers as designated by the score

| Number | Act | Designation | Speed | People |
|--------|-----|--------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| - | I | Overture | Allegro spiritoso | - |
| 1 | I | Air | Maestoso | Thésée |
| 2 | I | Air | Allegro sprituoso | Polinice |
| 3 | I | Choeur | Allegro spiritoso | Chorus |
| 4 | I | Choeur | Andantino | Chorus |
| 5 | I | Air | Andante grazioso | Une Athénienne |
| 6 | I | Air | Espressione a lento | Eriphile |
| 7 | I | Air | Andantino | Polinice |
| 8 | I | Trio | Tempo giusto | Eriphile, Polinice, Thésée |
| 9 | I | Choeur | Largo | Chorus |
| 10 | II | Air | Non molto lento | Polinice |
| 11 | II | Grande Scène | Largo | Oedipe, Antigone |
| 12 | II | Air | Maestoso | Thésée |
| 13 | II | Trio | Allegro | Antigone, Oedipe, Thésée |
| 14 | III | Air | Largo | Eriphile |
| 15 | III | Duo | Largo con moto | Antigone, Polinice |
| 16 | III | Air | Maestoso | Oedipe |
| 17 | III | Air | Allegro | Polinice |
| 18 | III | Air | Allegro agitato | Polinice |
| 19 | III | Trio | Maestoso | Antigone, Oedipe, Polinice |
| 20 | III | Choeur | Andante | Chorus |

Table 6 – statistical analysis of opera by characters, acts and arias.

| character etc. | Act I | Act II | Act III | Total | no. arias ⁷⁴⁶ |
|---|-------|--------|---------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Polynice | 42 | 28 | 113 | 183 + 15 | 5 |
| Oedipe | - | 59 | 92 | 141 + 12 | 3 |
| Antigone | - | 72 | 45 | 117 + 18 | 2 |
| Thésée | 26 | 20 | 2 | 38 + 3 | 2 |
| Eriphile | 11 | - | 4 | 15 + 3 | 1 |
| Une Athénienne | 9 | - | - | 9 | 1 |
| Chorus ⁷⁴⁷ | 19 | 14 | 4 | 37 + 9 | - |
| Priest | 8 | - | 7 | 15 + 9 | - |
| Choryphaeus | - | 13 | - | 13 | - |
| Herald | 4 | - | - | 4 | - |
| Voix | 1 | - | - | 1 | - |
| arias per act | 5 | 6 | 6 | 17 | - |
| total for act | 120 | 216 | 269 | 605 | 14 |
| total duration of act music ⁷⁴⁸ | 30:03 | 28:52 | 33:23 | 91.78 | - |

Characters are given in order of part-size, assessed by number of arias and numbers of lines. The + numbers in the total column are the ensemble lines. They are distributed in the following way:

duets:

Priest and Chorus: 9 lines

Oedipe and Antigone: 6 lines

⁷⁴⁶ Thierstein (1974) 102 includes a structural analysis of the opera in terms of its arias. He gives Antigone just one aria, and Oedipus two. The difficulties in assessing and defining the difference between Sacchini's arias and arioso writing is discussed further below.

⁷⁴⁷ The chorus do not sing odes between acts; there is a choral scene between Acts I and II, and between Acts II and III there is no break. They are also split into male and female. According to some commentators, this is indicative of how opera has developed away from Greek tragedy, yet there echoes of this in Euripides' *Hippolytus* for example. cf. Brown (2004).

⁷⁴⁸ The timings are taken from the 2005 recording.

Antigone and Polynice: 8 lines

trios:

Thésée, Polynice, Eriphile: 3 lines

Antigone, Polynice, Oedipe: 4 lines

The opera is in three acts, and to this extent was part of a long-standing tradition; of the 23 operas catalogued during Sacchini's time in France, 14 are 3-act.⁷⁴⁹ Within the traditional framework, however, the Guillard-Sacchini partnership demonstrated that both textually and musically there was room for great innovation, as they inverted and subverted contemporary conventions. As the opera progresses, each act has more lines, but roughly the same musical duration and number of arias. At 605 lines, *Oedipe* is just over a third of the OC's 1779 lines, yet when staged lasts roughly the same time, due to the difference in style and delivery. Rather than just over-simplifying individual characters, Guillard removed two characters (Ismene and Creon), diminished the importance of another (Theseus) and radically altered the ending. He added some aspects of his own, notably the whole first act and the character of Eriphile, but kept the libretto short without making any of the characters *exempla* of any particular moral situation.

Structurally, there are similarities to Greek tragedy: The first act is focussed around a discussion between Thésée and Polinice; the second act is a dialogue between Antigone and Oedipe, with some input from Polinice, the third act between Polinice and Oedipe, with some input from Antigone. As in a Greek tragedy, just two characters hold the scene at any one time, with a third sometimes contributing a little. Thésée appears only briefly in the third act to celebrate the reconciliation, and the chorus appear in all three acts. Polinice is clearly the protagonist, the only

⁷⁴⁹ See Loewenberg (1978). On the Italianate nature of this, see Calella (2001) 299.

character to appear significantly in all three acts, with the majority of lines and arias. He is not the castrato with whom Sacchini was used to dealing, however, but a male alto (or high tenor), sung originally by the Frenchman Louis Sebastien Lebrun.⁷⁵⁰ Sacchini's only other use of the male alto was for Vellinus in *Arvire*, further linking his two treatments of the OC.⁷⁵¹ Thésée is a tenor part, sung originally by a baritone, Louis-Claude-Armand Chardiny.⁷⁵² Sacchini used French singers for his male parts, which may have gone some way to placating an audience who were critical of non-French music and musicians. The developing musical aesthetic was in part an attempt to reconcile French and Italian styles; we have already seen how the libretto itself begins to do this, but the process is also clear in the music even at the level of the distribution of parts.

The diminished female importance may be indicative of the political and aesthetic situation in which Sacchini found himself. In England, Charles Burney toured Europe finding top singers as artistic advisor for Frances Brooke, bringing in such stars as Guadagni, Lovattini and Gabrielli to revive the theatre's ailing finances in the face of competition from David Garrick as well as the new Pantheon.⁷⁵³ The castrato and the *prima donna*, brilliant but impossible individuals, had made Sacchini's career in London most difficult, financially and artistically. Sacchini struggled to keep his *prime donne* happy in London, and the French performers were no more reliable. They had a history of performing as few as ten per cent of their

⁷⁵⁰ See Jullien (1878) 114-115 for the original case, and Charlton and Hibberd (2001). For Sacchini and his male performers, particularly Pacchierotti in London, see also Price, Milhous & Hume (1995-2001).

⁷⁵¹ Thierstein (1974) 100; 101-2 tabulates all the characters by voice part. Note that French opera was unique in Europe in not using castrati, so an alternative male voice part had to be written.

⁷⁵² He was a Frenchman who Italianised his name in order to make better progress as a singer, cf. Noiray (2001). For more on the singers in all of Sacchini's operas, see Thierstein (1974) Appendix A & B. The vocal distribution for other characters may also be significant. Antigone was sung by a soprano, but as only the third largest role, did not offer the potential for stardom a *prima donna* might crave, and is not a unique vocal part since Eriphile was also a soprano. Oedipus is a baritone role, characterising him as a liminal figure vocally, neither the stereotypical 'baddy' of a vilified bass, nor the heroic tenor.

⁷⁵³ Woodford (2001).

contracted performances, leaving the rest to understudies, and could end up in court for breach of contract, as well as disappointing their public.⁷⁵⁴ The theatres in Paris had suffered over the eighteenth century with frequent fires, requiring constant moving and rebuilding, which made paying the extortionate fees demanded by these singers unviable, and opera had to learn to work on a tight budget.⁷⁵⁵ When an opportunity arose to create an opera without such vibrant leads, on the new French model, it must have seemed an attractive project. What may have been a practical decision, concerning the desirability and viability of using a *prima donna*, can also be read in terms of its effect on the Classical tradition and contemporary understanding of Greek tragedy's part distribution. Reading the opera with both possibilities in mind can only enhance our understanding of the work itself, its context and the Sophoclean paradigm.⁷⁵⁶

The changing role of the individual is also evident through their treatment in ensemble writing. Ensembles form a reasonably important part of *Oedipe*. In France, Sacchini became known for his ensemble writing, which featured up to eight characters at a time.⁷⁵⁷ This octet is in *Arvire*, Sacchini's last Parisian opera; there seems to be a progression through his works towards an increasing amount of ensemble writing (typical of all later eighteenth-century French opera). Eldred Thierstein writes of Sacchini's setting:

'His pre-Paris operas usually consist of secco recitatives followed by da capo arias containing cadenzas. Occasionally duets, trios, quartets, and choruses in the middle or at the ends of acts break up the monotony of continuous solo singing, but the melodic beauty of the arias is still the principal focal point. Text painting is virtually non-existent and ensemble writing is of little interest. The Paris operas, on the other

⁷⁵⁴ Demuth (1963) 241.

⁷⁵⁵ See Demuth (1963).

⁷⁵⁶ The specific treatment of *Antigone* is considered further below (pp. 307ff).

⁷⁵⁷ See Thierstein (1974) 117.

hand, are much more complex because of the extensive instrumental writing (...) and the greater variety of vocal writing. The aria is still the center of attention in Sacchini's French works, but it is more varied in structure and accompaniment than in his early ones. The recitatives, which now include arioso passages, are all orchestrally accompanied and, in some instances, closely related to the arias and ensembles that surround them. Because of the Parisians' demand for elaborate operas, more characters appear on stage, creating a need for more ensembles and choruses.⁷⁵⁸

This quotation demonstrates how the libretto and its musical treatment are inseparable in any analysis of an opera. Thierstein also notes how Sacchini spent more time over his French libretti than on any of those earlier in his career; the French preoccupation with text as the most important part of vocal writing made an impact on Sacchini, but encouraged a novelty of approach.⁷⁵⁹ Sacchini's aria and ensemble-writing reflect the degrees of characterisation afforded to the characters by Guillard's libretto. Sacchini became known for an increasingly fluid distinction between aria, recit and arioso, with cadential formulae not consistent with those of other composers of his day.⁷⁶⁰ When one can no longer distinguish what constitutes a show-piece aria, or where it finishes, no opportunity for a grand exit or audience applause remains. The individual's importance *qua* both character and performer is significantly reduced. The precise impact of this way of writing is discussed further below, but at this point it remains important to acknowledge how closely linked a libretto and music can be in their treatment of individuals and ensembles.

Sacchini used French singers rather than importing international stars, and Guillard's libretto was more in keeping with the French treatment of characters. To

⁷⁵⁸ Thierstein (1974) 94-95.

⁷⁵⁹ Thierstein (1974) 91, Calella (2001) 315.

⁷⁶⁰ Thierstein (1974) 111, 113. Gluck also blurred the distinction between aria and recit, see Rushton (1971) 393 and Calella (2001) 291.

this extent, they satisfied the criterion of writing an opera to rejuvenate French works, but this is not the case with other aspects of the work, including the dance music, to which I now turn.

5.3.4 Ballet

French opera traditionally included a range of dance movements. At first glance, *Oedipe* appears to conform to this aspect of operatic structure, but I suggest that here we again see Sacchini and Guillard innovating within the boundaries of the genre, and moving from a broadly French style to a more Italianate one.

Given its posthumous performance, interest in the Parisian premiere of *Oedipe* increased enormously. Concerned about how best to manage this sudden upsurge, the management of the Opéra decided to make the unusual move of issuing tickets for the dress rehearsal. Usually audience places for a dress rehearsal would have been allocated on a 'first-come, first-served' basis. The outrage caused by this decision resulted in a part-boycott of the dress rehearsal. In order to coax the public back in for the first night, the management scheduled the ballet *Le Premier Navigateur* by Maximilien Gardel to be played before *Oedipe*.⁷⁶¹ Before the opera had even begun, therefore, the balletic framework was in place. Thierstein suggests that *Oedipe* is more Italianate in only having the one ballet in the middle of Act I and the dance music following the final trio as a part of the *exeunt omnes*.⁷⁶² Within the opera itself, there are three ballet suites, not one, which suggest that *Oedipe* is in keeping with the French school.⁷⁶³ All three, however, are in the first act, after which there are no more such musical interludes until the Act III finale. Act I ostensibly sets the opera up as stereotypically French, but the rest of the work undercuts this initial impression. The

⁷⁶¹ Jullien (187) 113-114, Thierstein (1974) 44.

⁷⁶² Thierstein (1974) 141.

⁷⁶³ See Calella (2001) 313. The formal structure of these dances is analysed at Thierstein (1974) 152-153.

audience have been drawn in, even pacified, and then treated to an increasingly less French-style work. The ballet cannot be simply have been Sacchini's addition, as Guillard would have needed to craft the scenes to include ballet suites which made sense in context and were not inappropriate breaks in the action. Such breaks might have been expected between acts, in place of an overture, but the three suites are all embedded within Act I. All three occur together, with one interruption for a short aria, and are in celebration of Eriphile's impending marriage. Again, Guillard and Sacchini have used the French aspects to their advantage, setting up a basic attitude for the opera which is not maintained. This novelty of approach is in keeping with other aspects of the opera.⁷⁶⁴

5.4 Text

I have considered the libretto in terms of its structure and general affinities with contemporary aesthetics, and now turn to consider the text itself alongside its Sophoclean model. I begin with the topic which has already proved so important in interpreting the *OC*: the depiction of the locality and its use as a dramatic tool. A notable aspect of the libretto is the lack of references to Colonus. The unnamed female in Act I is an Athenian, not from Colonus. The Sophoclean chorus consists of elders of Colonus and the play is heavily influenced by its sense of local identity;⁷⁶⁵ in Guillard the chorus is firstly double, and secondly in no way marked as Coloniote.⁷⁶⁶ This lack of Coloniote identity continues in the stage directions, for example:

⁷⁶⁴ This view is in keeping with Rushton's note that Sacchini adapted better to using choruses and dances in the French style than did Piccinni, Rushton (1969) 319.

⁷⁶⁵ See the introduction to this thesis, pp. 15-28.

⁷⁶⁶ Seale's adjective for 'from Colonus' (1982).

I.i le théâtre représente une plaine contiguë au mont Cythéron. On aperçoit le temple des Euménides, avec des ifs et des cyprès. Dans le lointain, la cité d'Athènes.

II.i le théâtre représente un désert épouvantable. On aperçoit dans le fond le temple des Euménides.

II.ii Œdipe, descendant de la montagne, et [sic] soutenu par Antigone.

I.i Le théâtre représente un vaste appartement du palais de Thésée.

Guillard, *Oedipe à Colone*

The places marked out are Mount Cithaeron, a desert, an established temple to the Eumenides and Thésée's palace.⁷⁶⁷ Colonus as a woodland oasis has disappeared. Indeed, there is little mention of Colonus. There are just two citations:

i.) **I.ii** Thésée – Habitants de Colonne [sic] et citoyens d'Athènes (p. 21)

ii.) **III.i** Polynice: Hélas, un dieu vengeur habite parmi nous.

Partout la mort nous environne.

Les sombres déités qu'on adore à Colone [sic].

Both are in addresses, the first to people, the second to gods, and so are not easily avoided, but otherwise the place name is not used. In the introduction I discussed the ways in which geographical location is demarcated, and I return to these categories now with reference to *Oedipe*.⁷⁶⁸ I now turn to some further evidence for each category and consider Guillard's *Oedipe* in the light of its Sophoclean model.

⁷⁶⁷ See Thierstein (1974) 90 on the location.

⁷⁶⁸ See p. 15 above.

Oedipus' questioning about the place.

The OC opens with a discussion between Oedipus and Antigone about the location, enriched by the contribution of the stranger when he enters.⁷⁶⁹ In Guillard's libretto Oedipus does not enter until the second act, so the scene-setting and introductory function of the Sophoclean text has become less important, reduced even further by the stage direction informing us that there is a deserted mountain, which would have been represented lavishly in the palace theatre. Antigone does still describe the setting:

Œdipe: Ta consolante voix

a passé dans mon cœur.

J'oublie en ce moment

soixante ans de malheur.

Mais dis, où sommes-nous?

Antigone: Sur un rocher terrible.

Plus loin sont des cyprès;

sous leur ombre paisible,

on voit un temple antique.

Guillard *Oedipe à Colone* II.ii (p. 27)

The grove at Colonus is described more as an oasis, with a fully established temple already in it. This temple reflects contemporary attitudes towards landscapes, and in particular, gardens. The control of natural space, represented by gardens, was written about by many of the leading contemporary intellectuals. In England, William Mason, whose influence on *Oedipe* I have already mentioned, wrote *An English Garden (an Episodico-didactico-pathetico-politico-farrago)*, and in France, Rousseau had written a treatise on how to construct a garden (*La Nouvelle*

⁷⁶⁹ These passages are discussed at pp. 16-18 above.

Heloise), recommending natural parks.⁷⁷⁰ This was in contrast to, e.g. Gabriel's designs with artificial ruins, which Marie-Antoinette chose not to apply to her own gardens.⁷⁷¹ Ruins in Marie-Antoinette's garden would have been a sign of controlled neoclassicism, a neoclassicism reflected in *Oedipe*, when Antigone describes an ancient temple.⁷⁷² This temple in the grove could be interpreted in several ways. It represents nature controlled by culture, perhaps echoing Gabriel's garden designs and expressing an aspect of late eighteenth-century aesthetics. It gives the Eumenides a visible cult presence; whereas in the OC theirs is an off-stage mystery cult, in *Oedipe* prayers are made on stage and the Eumenides have a clear, onstage home. In terms of staging, it allows for a more impressive set, in keeping with contemporary scene-design. Finally, it also signals the opera's origins in an antique text, so that Sophocles' text is the ancient temple, the adjective suggesting both its monumental authority, but also its need for modernising and renovation.⁷⁷³ However we choose to interpret the temple, the location of this libretto is closely bound up with its overall interpretation.

This sense of nationality and locality was not only present in Sophocles, and is maintained by Guillard-Sacchini and their contemporaries.⁷⁷⁴ As an Italian interloper, it was important for Sacchini that he wrote what looked like a French opera, and using an ostensibly French libretto by a French librettist was a good start,

⁷⁷⁰ On Mason's landscape writing and the OC see chapter 3.

⁷⁷¹ Asquith (1974) 81-4.

⁷⁷² A temple in the OC is not unique to *Oedipe*. This temple is also reflected in Jean Antoine Theodore Giroust's *Oedipus at Colonus* (1788), which shows a figure, presumably Polynices, approaching an old man in front of a temple. There is also evidence of a temple in drawings for Fuseli's painting *Oedipus cursing his son Polyneices*, which is discussed in chapter 4 (p. 246), and in the translations discussed in chapter 2, p. 141.

⁷⁷³ See also chapter 1, p. 83 on the description of the playwrights in architectural terms, with Sophocles as an ancient temple.

⁷⁷⁴ Grétry was known for writing music with local colour, and had been the original composer for *Oedipe*. See Rushton (2001c). His work was in 1785. He took lessons with Sacchini in Rome and was also known for his melody writing.

covering up any non-French musical ideas he might then introduce in his endeavours to revive the operatic genre.

Theseus' entrances.

In the *OC*, two of Theseus' entrances are marked by a reference to the location, either to Colonus itself, or Poseidon's nearby altar.⁷⁷⁵ In Guillard's libretto the situation is markedly different. Entrances and exits in Metastasian opera were typically marked by conventional da capo arias, and so Thésée's appearances afforded the librettist an opportunity to indulge in some aria writing. Guillard was writing a new kind of short French libretto, moving away from the Metastasian trends. When Thésée does enter, to prevent the chorus attacking Oedipe, it is in unannounced recitative.⁷⁷⁶



Bar - ba - res ar - rè - tez, quel - le rage in - hu - mai - ne

Thésée: Barbares arrêtez, quelle rage inhumaine.

Chœur: Œdipe est l'ennemi des hommes et de dieux.

Thésée: Perfides, retenez ces cris séditeux.

Rendez Œdipe, ou craignez ma colère!

Eloignez-vous!

Guillard, *Oedipe à Colone* (p. 30)

Thésée's first entrance is kept unannounced and as far away from the traditional operatic convention as possible. In the process, any sense of local colour is lost. His

⁷⁷⁵ The passages are discussed at pp. 18-19 above.

⁷⁷⁶ All musical examples are taken from the 1970 facsimile of the undated but late eighteenth-century score published in Paris.

other entrances are lost because of the plot. Creon has been removed from the story, and because Polinice has been introduced as a friend from the outset, he does not need to be introduced as a suppliant by Thésée. The libretto is also focussed around Polinice's integration and acceptance, which removes Oedipe's death from the storyline, removing the need for Thésée's last entrance.

The 'Colonus' ode

In Guillard's *Oedipe* there would have been plenty of scope for a chorus celebrating the locale, but there is none. This chorus have a very restricted function. They have 19 lines in Act 1, 14 in Act 2, and 4 in Act 3, with 9 shared in ensembles with characters. Their importance is increasingly diminished throughout the work. Their lines are not even united; they are split between two choruses, one of men and one of women, whose functions seem to be to pray to the gods (men) and accompany the bride Eriphile (women) or the 'alpha males' Polinice and Thésée (men). These functions shift to the very Sophoclean ones of harassing Oedipe (men) and providing a final choral comment (all). The location is described, but in far more negative terms, and not by the chorus. Theirs is not to eulogise the divine and natural beauty of their homeland, but to praise their leadership and accompany the protagonists.

Methods of address

When characters speak to each other or interact with the chorus, they use terms that are often geographically located, which differ between the OC and the *Oedipe*. In the OC modes of address are not simple or specific, but still give us some sense of how relationships work within the play. In a play which deals with Oedipus' reconfiguration with a new identity, moving from miasma to saviour, it is striking that the first address to him by a character other than Antigone does not

contain any vocative, but simply an instruction to move (36-37). At line 33 Oedipus addresses the stranger as ξεῖν', a courtesy not returned until line 75; Oedipus must be to some extent known before he can even be addressed. Within the first 81 lines Oedipus has addressed Antigone as τέκνον three times, from the opening word onwards, establishing her place as his child, and her first words reinforce this relationship, addressing him as πάτερ. Are we reminded that she is also his sister, or guided firmly to forget that?⁷⁷⁷ When the chorus address her at 254, she remains τέκνον Οἰδίπου, not called by name. Her status as child is most important at this point. The language of the play focuses heavily on the landscape, but where this might be expected to show through in terms of address, we find religious and relational terms are much more frequent. I have already noted that Colonus itself is only mentioned three times in the *OC*.⁷⁷⁸ In Guillard's libretto, the only times that the term Colonus is used are in address, first of the local people, second of the gods, assumed to be the Eumenides. When Thésée addresses the people of Colonus, he does so alongside the Athenians and it is never clear that there are particular people marked out as distinctively from Colonus, unlike in the *OC*. The only individualised chorus member is un-named and given the title 'Athénienne', not 'Colonnienne'.⁷⁷⁹

Oedipe's name is not mentioned until Polinice calls upon him (II.i), but what is the effect of postponing Oedipe's entry? In the first act, *Oedipe* seems as much a misnomer as *à Colone*. He is not the main character, and is not even mentioned by name. The absence lessens the effect of Oedipe's crimes by putting some distance between him and them. When Oedipus' identity is finally revealed to the chorus, it is by means of the chorus-leader questioning him about his homeland:

⁷⁷⁷ This emphasis on familial relationships continues throughout the parodos, so that at 188 Antigone is simply a παῖς, but in the lines while Oedipus braces himself to reveal his identity, he twice refers to her as τέκνον (213, 216), then as θυγάτηρ in 225.

⁷⁷⁸ See above, p. 15.

⁷⁷⁹ In Francklin's 1758-9 translation, the chorus are Athenians. For him, the distinction between Colonus and Athens appears equally unimportant.

Choriphée: Votre pays?

Œdipe: Thèbes.

Choriphée: Et votre nom?

Œdipe: Ô destin ennemi!

Chœur: Grands dieux, C'est Œdipe!

Choriphée: c'est lui-même!

Chœur: Œdipe est l'ennemi des hommes et de dieux

Guillard, *Oedipe à Colone* II.ii.

This contrasts with the equivalent scene in the OC, where Oedipus is revealed through his parentage, and the reaction is one of non-verbal exclamation.⁷⁸⁰

Oedipus: Λαῖον ἴστε τιν'; ὦ.

Chorus: ἰὸν ἰού.

Oedipus: τὸ τε Λαβδακιδᾶν γένος;

Chorus: ὦ Ζεῦ.

Oedipus: ἄθλιον Οἰδιπόδαν;

Chorus: σὺ γὰρ ὄδ' εἶ;

Sophocles OC 220-222

When Oedipe talks of himself in conversation with Antigone, he says:

Œdipe: Mon nom même, mon nom est en horreur au monde.

Guillard, *Oedipe à Colone* II.ii.

This has more in common with Odysseus' revelation of his name to Alcinoos at *Odyssey* IX.19-20 than it does with Sophocles:

⁷⁸⁰ Francklin (1758-9) 300 has Oedipus address Antigone by name at this point, which destroys the anonymity of the scene.

Εἴμ' Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει.

Odyssey IX. 19-20

Oedipe then addresses the Eumenides as:

Œdipe: Filles du Styx, terribles Euménides

Guillard, *Oedipe à Colone* II.ii.

A few lines earlier he described them:

Œdipe: Je les vois, ce sont elles,
ce sont les fières Euménides

Guillard, *Oedipe à Colone* II.ii (p. 28).

In this text, Oedipe is the only person to call the Eumenides by their euphemistic title. They are otherwise addressed as 'Furies', 'filles du Styx' or 'deesses'. Oedipe calls the goddesses by their local name, despite the fact that nobody tells it to him and he is the person most removed from the local setting, being both a stranger and through his blindness and pollution unable to integrate.

Guillard's *Oedipe* thus uses names to emphasise themes as much as Sophocles' OC does, but in different ways. The significance of the Eumenides' naming may be explicable through reading *Oedipe* as a representation of Christian rituals on stage, a view discussed at greater length below.⁷⁸¹ For now, I note that they are only named by the eponymous character, that is, not the character with the most lines, Polinice, but the character who at a different levels controls the narrative, Oedipe. In later literature Oedipus is better known as a resident of Thebes than as a son of Laius, and so it is through his homeland that he is identified, which marks him more clearly as

⁷⁸¹ pp. 304, 311.

an alien in Colonus. Mt. Cithaeron is brought very close to Athens, since in a play produced outside Greece, the geography need bear no resemblance to the real landscape, and Cithaeron is useful in evoking the mountainous background desired for the set. Colonus and Athens are not distinguished, but seem almost conflated, as this sense of local power was not the librettist's concern.

In summary, the geographical aspects of the libretto provide a good starting point for thinking about how *Oedipe* interacts with its own political and artistic context, and also how it has refashioned its Sophoclean model. I now turn to examine the musical context of the opera more carefully. I demonstrate that the innovations made apparent so far are also true for the rest of this opera, that Sacchini used aspects of both French and Italian opera to engage with the reform movement but also consciously refused to take sides in the battle between Gluck and Piccinni.

5.5 Sacchini

I begin with some general comments on Sacchini's style, commenting on his three commissioned Parisian operas in turn, and then I consider some potential musical intertexts with *Oedipe* which would suggest both influence on and by Sacchini, in the hope of better understanding Sacchini's place within the eighteenth-century musical tradition; again, the ability to adapt to the context, and integrate the familiar French style with more revolutionary Italian aspects form the basis for explaining the success of *Oedipe*. I also suggest ways in which Sacchini's musical interpretation of the text adds a further semiotic layer which enhances and enriches our understanding of the OC itself.

Of *Renaud*, the Piccinnists claimed that it showed heavy Gluckian influence and consequently that Sacchini was a Gluckist, but the Gluckists refused to accept

him, claiming it lacked power and originality, which led to the creation of a third camp, the Sacchinists.⁷⁸² Winton Dean senses unease with the French style and an unashamed contentment with remaining Italian in it.⁷⁸³ Eldred Thierstein summarises the opera as including *cantabiles* and grand choruses, with a certain uniformity of style and simplicity of orchestration, but a dramatic direction allowing sustained interest throughout a scene.⁷⁸⁴ He quotes a contemporary review:

‘The result of the judgement of the musical connoisseurs, after these two performances, is that if M. Sacchini does not have the jolts, the cries, the anguish of German musicians [i.e. Gluck?], he has infinitely more sweetness, charm, and song than all the rest, and although no less pure, no less elegant, no less melodious than M. Piccinni, he is never monotonous and soporific like him; his energy is much superior.’⁷⁸⁵

Chimène was Sacchini’s first opera produced in collaboration with Guillard. Guillard wanted to cut the original play substantially, and make it more exciting, but this was not appreciated by the traditionalists. As a result, the original libretto was four acts long, in a climate which did not favour such long works. The opera was not successful. Marie-Antoinette attempted to help, and offered a chance to stage a revised version at Fontainebleau. Guillard cut the opera to three acts, and it was more successful, but to Sacchini’s cost, as it put him in direct competition with Piccinni, whose *Didon* had opened two days previously.⁷⁸⁶ *Chimène* has been praised for its rich modulation and animated orchestration, but Sacchini’s ability to set the French words remained less successful.⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸² See Jullien (1878) 141 and Thierstein (1974) 66 on this term.

⁷⁸³ Dean (1981) 324.

⁷⁸⁴ Thierstein (1974) 52-53.

⁷⁸⁵ Thierstein (1974) 53 n.2.

⁷⁸⁶ *ibid.* 36, 38, 40.

⁷⁸⁷ *ibid.* 55-56.

Dardanus was unappreciated; it was a failed reform opera, paving the way for a further attempt beyond the three commissioned works.⁷⁸⁸ Musically, with *Dardanus* we begin to see Sacchini reconcile the aspects of French and Italian opera. Thierstein comments on its choruses with their expressive harmonies and sensitive melodies, and notes that the instrumental movements were particularly good and French in character. He summarises Jullien's view that the distinctive features of Sacchini's opera were nobility and grace, combined with dramatic action.⁷⁸⁹

With *Oedipe*, we see Sacchini's style develop and mature. It provides examples of both standard features of Sacchini's French style, and differences from the previous, not entirely successful, Parisian operas. Polinice's aria at I.iv provides a clear example of Sacchini's tendency to repeat phrases following contrasting sections.⁷⁹⁰ His use of orchestrally accompanied recit and arioso is particularly distinctive, and clearly evident in *Oedipe*, such as at III.i.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁸ Demuth (1963) 174. *Dardanus* is linked in style with *Oedipe*: 'Dardanus and Oedipus emerge as true lyric dramas from which all unnecessary ritornellos and arias have been shorn' (DiChiera and Robinson [2001]).

⁷⁸⁹ Thierstein (1974) 57-58, Jullien (1976) 84-90.

⁷⁹⁰ See Thierstein (1974) 98, with reference to bars 1-2 and 34-36.

⁷⁹¹ See Thierstein (1974) 108.

Vous le sa-vez grands Dieux nos coeurs sont in-no - cens, ne

met - trez vous ja - mais de terme à nos tour - mens,

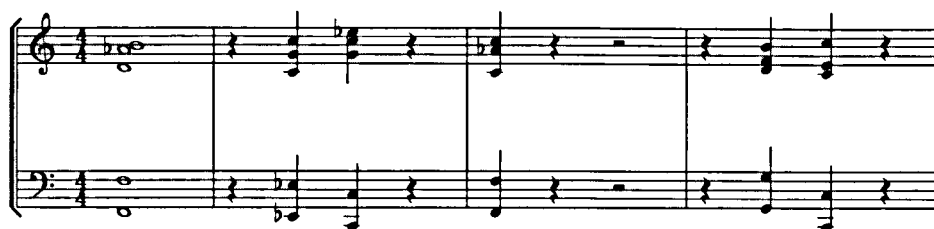
Most of his accompanied *recit* relies on string accompaniment rather than the text-painting of other instruments, but at *Oedipe* II.ii ‘Sacchini colors the text by adding flutes following a mention in the text of sifflemens’ (Ta consolante voix bars 16-18):⁷⁹²

Ta con-so-lan-te voix a pas-sé dans mon coeur j'ou-blie en ce mo-

ment soix-ante ans de mal-heur.

⁷⁹² Thierstein (1974) 115-6.

His style developed from using truncated, overlapping cadences, to delayed ones, such as at *Oedipe* I.iv (Allons au Temple, bars 40-42):⁷⁹³



Parisian opera appreciated choral writing (whereas Italian opera minimised the role of the chorus), and *Oedipe* Act I is particularly rich in this.⁷⁹⁴ Sacchini did not usually close an act with an ensemble, but does at *Renaud* Act II, *Dardanus* Act I and *Oedipe* Act II.⁷⁹⁵ To this extent, *Oedipe* is unusual in its ensemble use, but conversely, Sacchini's use of trios is usually reserved for occasions where the characters share some thought or action, and the reconciliation trio in Act III is a particularly obvious example of this.⁷⁹⁶ As with Mason's *Caractacus*, the chorus make *Oedipe* remarkable in its context; again this demonstrates engagement with a particular aesthetic, in this case French rather than Italian.

In terms of his orchestral writing, the overture to *Oedipe* is the only place where the trumpets and horns were not placed together on the top staff.⁷⁹⁷ The overture is also unusual in giving the oboe a particularly lyric line, and in being one movement rather than three.⁷⁹⁸ *Oedipe* did not simply follow a pattern, but was an opera with carefully crafted music, which deserves further contextual consideration.

⁷⁹³ See Thierstein (1974).

⁷⁹⁴ See Thierstein (1974) 123.

⁷⁹⁵ *ibid.* 117.

⁷⁹⁶ *ibid.* 119-120.

⁷⁹⁷ *ibid.* 126; 128 provides a table of the order of instruments in the scores of the overtures to the French operas.

⁷⁹⁸ *ibid.* 132, 135.

5.5.1 Musical intertexts

What of Sacchini's relationship with other composers? Throughout *Oedipe* there are frequent melodic, harmonic and rhythmic motifs reminiscent of Gluck's *Orfeo*. Orpheus' ability to use music to regenerate, to have power over nature is used by Sacchini's contemporaries as an allegory for opera itself.⁷⁹⁹ For Sacchini to make a musical reference to *Orfeo* reinforces the idea that with *Oedipe* he partly reinvented the operatic genre. It also marks out a Gluckist affiliation, in contrast to some of the Piccinnist aspects we can also note in his work. Sacchini fused elements of the French and Italian traditions, without mirroring Gluck exactly, and departing from Piccinni's style in order to create his own version of reform opera.

The French, Italian and various reform styles each have different features and we should note how the styles overlap as well as contrast. The previous French tradition, known as the *style galant*, has been described as charming and picturesque.⁸⁰⁰ The music was characterised by regular two or four-bar periods, frequent cadential affirmations of the main key, and a focus on the melodic line over polyphonic accompaniments.⁸⁰¹

Piccinni stood as a figurehead in Paris for the Italian style in the last decades of the eighteenth century.⁸⁰² Italian music prioritised the individual, emphasising vocal prowess by means of bravura arias and extravagant ornamentation. Arias tended to maintain a single tempo, key, metre and basic affection.⁸⁰³ Open-ended and interrupted arias were a popular form.⁸⁰⁴ Again based around two and four-bar

⁷⁹⁹ See Thomas (2002) 2.

⁸⁰⁰ On Lully creating a French tradition against the established Italian one, see Demuth (1963) *passim*.

⁸⁰¹ Downs (1992) 34ff – on Lully as a melodist, see Demuth (1963) 118.

⁸⁰² See Rushton (1971) in particular for a clear summary of the relationship between Piccinni and Gluck.

⁸⁰³ Rushton (1971-2) 35, 36.

⁸⁰⁴ *ibid.* 41.

phrases,⁸⁰⁵ with Piccinni's music known as particularly regular in its periodicity,⁸⁰⁶ it was more contrapuntal than French music. The chorus could be used freely, both within and between actions.⁸⁰⁷

The reforms attributed to Gluck demanded that the music should follow the poetry of the text, and not interrupt, disrupt or distort it. To this end, there was a reduction in 'distracting' *ritornelli*, cadenzas and ornaments. The aim was for *una bella semplicità*.⁸⁰⁸ Overtures should give a sense of what the following music would be like, rather than being detachable extras. There was an increase in ensembles. Arias and *recits* were less easily contrasted, and the aria form changed, with the *da capo* aria giving way to the *dal segno* aria, any introductory *ritornello* being omitted, there being less distinction between sections (including the reduction of the A section), but a popular two tempo distinction.⁸⁰⁹ This reduction of the aria form demonstrates an increasing awareness of operas as dramas in their own right, with a narrative flow which should not be unduly disrupted by excessive repetition of sections of text.

Sacchini's style was clearly reactive and developed over his time in France, but some summary comments can still be made. He was known as a particularly strong melodist in the Italian style (betraying the influence of his teacher Durante), yet still capable of a richer harmony than many of his contemporaries.⁸¹⁰ These melodies displayed an increasing lack of melodic leaps beyond the triadic, with a

⁸⁰⁵ *ibid.* 34.

⁸⁰⁶ '...and in Framery's collaborator Sacchini it is unashamedly, albeit elegantly, obvious.' Rushton (1971-2) 35.

⁸⁰⁷ Rushton (1971-2) 39.

⁸⁰⁸ Woodfield (2001) 40. On this as a feature associated with Greek tragedy, see Ewans (2007) 42. The more general idea of pure simplicity and Greek material was discussed in chapter 4 with reference to art.

⁸⁰⁹ Downs (1992) 29ff.

⁸¹⁰ Jullien (1878) 141. Fanny Burney also admired Sacchini for his melodic excellence. See also Bloom (1927) 306, 307.

special lack of octave leaps.⁸¹¹ He made judicious use of augmented sixths and diminished sevenths, for dramatic effect.⁸¹² He used his instruments to follow his vocal line. As a trained violinist, he focused on strings, with the violas often shadowing the violins.⁸¹³ He used a variety of aria forms, maintaining an audience's interest in the music rather than conforming to expectations. He also aimed for *una bella semplicità*. His aria, arioso and *recit* displayed a particular fluidity, including a tendency to run the final cadence into the next piece of *recit*.⁸¹⁴ He repeated musical fragments in an almost *leitmotif* fashion.⁸¹⁵ His melodic phrases were uneven in length, giving his music more interest, making it less predictable.⁸¹⁶ He created dramatic tension through changing harmonies over a tonic pedal point or sudden change from major to minor. His ornamentation was limited beyond basic grace notes, a simplification of the music which enhances the clarity of the text being sung.⁸¹⁷

Simply comparing the descriptions it is already obvious that both Sacchini and Gluck were combining elements of both the Italian and French styles, also sharing much common ground.⁸¹⁸ Sacchini's strongest talent as a musician appears to have been his melody writing, a strong feature of Italian style. Brought up in the Italian school, his work would always bear its mark, but in his *Oedipe*, he created neither an old-style French work, nor an Italian one, but his own reform opera. One

⁸¹¹ Thierstein (1974) 99-100.

⁸¹² See Thierstein (1974) 68.

⁸¹³ *ibid.* 144-146.

⁸¹⁴ Rushton (1971-2) 42: 'Sacchini, a specialist in melting arioso, was particularly addicted to the interrupted aria, and to link the first cadenza of an aria to the next recitative became almost a mannerism with him.' Thierstein (1974) 111. Gluck was also known for blurring the distinction between aria and *recit*, see Rushton (1971) 393.

⁸¹⁵ Dean (1981) 324. See also Thierstein (1974) 97, who views this negatively as a 'maddening tendency to repeat commonplace formulae two or three times over at the approach of every cadence.'

⁸¹⁶ Thierstein (1974) 96.

⁸¹⁷ *ibid.* 107.

⁸¹⁸ On the artificiality of these divisions between Piccinni, Gluck and Sacchini, however, see Rushton (1969, 1971). Such a list-based comparative approach is somewhat reductionist, but does serve to illustrate basic important similarities and differences between the composers.

analysis of *Oedipe* describes it as a synthesis of Italian melodic style and Gluckian principles within a French dramatic framework.⁸¹⁹ This fusion of styles both reflects the different musical influences on Sacchini and demonstrates his ability to create his own genre of reform opera from previous traditions.

To what extent do any of these features apply to particular sections of *Oedipe*? The *air* by une Athénienne in Act I is in keeping with the French style of the act, but not entirely, and therefore it provides a useful case study. Placed during the three ballet suites in Act I, this aria is not introduced by any *recit* at all, let alone engaging with any of the different kinds of *recit* being tried out in the late eighteenth century, or leading in to the subsequent music in any other way. Instead, as an *air du divertissement*, it is a standard French operatic feature.⁸²⁰ There is a strong melody, echoed by the violins and the viola. The violins and viola often (and unexceptionally) play in unison. The second violin plays in thirds with the first violin, e.g. bars 14-16, and the viola plays in thirds at e.g. bars 25-6. The harmonisation is simple, with a unison melody clearly dominant in all three parts, in reform style. The bass is a continuo, starting and ending on the tonic, again in Italian or reform style, not the native *style galant*. Homophonic rather than polyphonic, it is in keeping with the *style galant* rather than the Italian style. There are few instrumental ornaments, just eight grace notes. The vocal part also has few ornaments. It does contain a few flourishes, most notably the octave leap from bars 69 to 70.

⁸¹⁹ DiChiera and Robinson (2001). Comparing Sacchini and Gluck, Einstein (1941:359) describes Sacchini's *Oedipe* and Gluck's *IT* as immortal works of a golden age of music.

⁸²⁰ The following aria, by Eriphile, is similarly isolated.

où la beau - té n'ait des au -

tels où la beau - té n'ait des au - tels.

Oedipe 1.5 bars 66-72⁸²¹

This is supposedly unlike Sacchini, but is mirrored elsewhere in the opera. Most notably, in Antigone's aria at II.ii, bars 24-25 she has a leap of a ninth (along with two octaves, and a sixth). The original ritornello here is capped, the aria as a whole is not a full da capo. The phrasings are almost all 2- or 4-bar, sometimes a 4-bar one providing an extension of a 2-bar one, e.g. bars 42-44 followed by 45-49.

⁸²¹ Musical numbers are taken from the numberings in the score.

Sur le coeurs de tous les mor - tels votre ai -

- mable em - pi - re se fon - de,

Oedipe I.5 bars 42-9

The aria finishes with four bars of instrumental music. There are none of the diminished sevenths or augmented sixths for which Sacchini was known, although there are many other accidentals, mainly augmented fourths.

Throughout the rest of the opera, Sacchini moved fluidly between *recit* and aria, by means of *arioso* rather than the customary *recitativo secco*. In Act I, all the *recit* is *secco*, but as we progress through the opera, this becomes increasingly mixed with *accompagnato* sections, and sections mixing different types of *recit*. Theseus, whose presence is established most clearly in Act I, is the only character in Act II with *secco recit*, demonstrating a link between style and character, but also a way in which the developmental nature of the opera can be charted by means of this link. By the middle of Act II, it becomes largely impossible to distinguish between aria and *arioso*, particularly in the case of Antigone's 'Dieux! ce ne'est pas pour moi que ma voix implore'; this further diminishes the importance of the arias as set-pieces, diminishing the status of the characters as singers, but perhaps increasing their

status as characters engaged in dynamic relationships, since arias are not forms of music that allow for dialogue. This would also be in accordance with Sacchini's increased use of ensembles.

Rather than simply invoking specific intertexts, it is also clear in the *Oedipe* that Sacchini is following other Gluckian principles. In III.i for example, Polynices' lines:

'Grands dieux, grands dieux,
j'ai mérité toute votre colère.
Frappez, tonnez sur moi, mais épargnez mon père'

provide a very short, curtailed, unornamented da capo aria which flows into the accompanied recit / arioso either side.⁸²² The three forms are almost indistinguishable. The ensembles in *Oedipe* are noted as particularly striking; where in many operas ensembles do not affect the action, in Act II, Antigone's duet with Oedipus soothes and consoles him, whilst in III.iii, the trio between Polynices, Oedipus and Antigone contains the crucial character change in Oedipus which leads to Polynices' forgiveness.⁸²³

'Dieux justes
qui lisez dans le cœur des humains,
....'

Guillard *Oedipe à Colone* (38)

⁸²² See DiChiera and Robinson (2001) on this as a typical feature of Sacchini's music. 'Sacchini's accompanied recitatives are characterized by exceptional dramatic power and often combine with the following aria to form a unified musical scene through the use of common motivic material. Transitional portions of the aria itself are frequently written in the manner of accompanied recitative.'

⁸²³ Rushton (2009) see also Thierstein (1974) 125-139 on the development of Sacchini's overtures.

The overture to Act I is briefly repeated before Act III. It is a sonata-form overture and so might seem a finished, isolated piece, but in its III.i reprise interacts at least briefly with the singers' music.⁸²⁴ Although it does not contain precisely the themes and motifs of the opera, in the mode of a modern overture, there is still the sense that it is being used to unite the opera and provide a framework, and is not simply a musical appendage in the way previous overtures had been.⁸²⁵

5.5.2 Religion

Analysing the libretto of *Oedipe* above I suggested that it was possible to interpret *Oedipe* in Christian terms, but that there were problems in understanding how this might work. Considering the score in its musical context may help to make sense of this Christian reading of a pagan text. In the introduction to this chapter I outlined my argument that the relationship between music and religion is vital to understanding musical interpretations of the OC. Reading the reconciliation of *Oedipe* in a Christian context also allows for the final trio to be interpreted as a solemn performance of the divine act of forgiveness and reconciliation.⁸²⁶ The overture reprise at the start of Act III and the involvement of the priest in the final scene give a sense of ring composition. The rest of the opera demonstrates a developmental structure more than a symmetrical one, but the idea of ritual as performing a journey is not incompatible with the content of the opera. The opera, however, clearly includes a religious hierarchy and a performed prayer, in a procession, as a finale to Act I, which functions as a ritual in both musical terms (finishing the act) and contextual terms (praying for reconciliation).

⁸²⁴ Thierstein (1974) 136-7 tabulates the formal structure of Sacchini's French overtures.

⁸²⁵ It is also isolated from the rest of the opera through the internal coherence of its sonata form, see Rushton (2009).

⁸²⁶ As Blundell (1989) 243 notes, 'Forgiveness per se is not a characteristically Greek virtue'; *Oedipe* marks a clear break with dependence on Classical ethics in giving it this Christianised spin.

I suggest that *Oedipe* can be interpreted as a representation of performative Christian worship, and that this aspect of the opera becomes clearer when considering the Mozartian musical intertexts.⁸²⁷ The Mozartian echoes of Sacchini's music point us towards considering how the themes cross over between works. In *Die Zauberflöte*, for example, one of Mozart's last works, there are echoes of Sacchini's use of scales to break up *recitativo secco*, and in terms of motifs, which set up a general correspondence to suggest that if not directly influenced by Sacchini, Mozart was at least familiar with the kind of music Sacchini wrote.⁸²⁸ Links have already been drawn between arias by Antigone and Sarastro.⁸²⁹ Links between *Oedipe* and *Die Zauberflöte* help to clarify the received religious tenor of the OC. I therefore turn to examine some of the links between the two operas in terms of the invocation of the Eumenides and characterisation of Antigone.⁸³⁰

The chorus in I.v of *Oedipe* invoking the Eumenides provide the best example on which to dwell for such purposes. Emphasising the role of the Eumenides here is in keeping with an eighteenth-century preoccupation with their role in drama. Gluck wrote to Guillard about the need for Furies in the libretto for the *IT*, and they became Guillard's major contribution to the text,⁸³¹ while at the end of Cherubini's *Médée*,

⁸²⁷ Mozartian intertexts include general echoes of *Oedipe* in *Don Giovanni*, which was composed around six months after *Oedipe* had its Paris premiere. These echoes may be indicative of nothing more than musical trends, but they suggest that Mozart was at least working to a similar aesthetic as Sacchini.

⁸²⁸ Biographically, the two are clearly linked. Mozart studied Sacchini's oratorios in the 1770s, see Sadie (1968) 1016. They were both in Paris in 1778-9, but their different musical tastes meant that they are assumed not to have met, although Mozart knew Sacchini's music and wrote to his father describing *La Contadina in corte* as *singspiel*, see Thierstein (1974) 29, and Schlitzer (1955) 31, Sauvé (2006) 47 on the trip to Paris. Mozart's sister-in-law Aloysia Lange is reported to have enjoyed singing arias by Sacchini, see Rice (1990) 32.

⁸²⁹ See Thierstein (1974) 68. Sacchini's influence on Mozart in more general terms has also been noted elsewhere. See Sadie (1968) 1016 on *Betulia liberata* and Harthan (1946) 179 on more general resonances.

⁸³⁰ I have already discussed problems in interpreting their names and functions in the OC. The eighteenth century, however, seems happier to have conflated the Erinyes, Semnai Theai and Eumenides than modern editors, and so in this discussion I am no longer trying to differentiate between them.

⁸³¹ Ewans (2007) 49.

Medea sinks into a chasm with the three Eumenides.⁸³² Their inclusion on stage was an issue throughout the performance history of Greek tragedy. In *Oedipe*, the chorus, led by a priest, pray on stage for the Eumenides to forgive Polynices, where in Mozart, the chorus, accompanying Sarastro as priest, pray to Isis and Osiris, gods of the underworld and rebirth. The Mozartian chorus is supposed to represent a mystery cult, bound up with the Freemasons.⁸³³ Behind both versions is, potentially, the sense of mystery cult, and of Christianity. Where Oedipus is a Christian figure, Sarastro in the Temple of Wisdom fighting the Queen of the Night with light could be read as an allegory for fighting the devil. The two operas are linked through their treatment of themes, but also further through their music. In both operas, the priest sings a call, with response from the chorus in a manner reminiscent of oratorio. Oratorio, as sacred music, gives the chorus a sacred Christian nature, and a general religious tenor to the operas again becomes evident.⁸³⁴

In *Oedipe*, the Eumenides become the allegorical objects of Christian worship, whose function may be more easily interpreted in the light of their further appearances in opera. The Eumenides are also present in another Mozart opera, *Così fan Tutte*, when Dorabella pledges her mournful love to them, in distress, negating the function they are given in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, where their new, Athenian function is to patronise marital unions. Can an interpretation of *Oedipe* bearing this in mind make sense? In Act II of *Oedipe*, Polynice says that he would give up Eriphile to follow his sister in tending to Oedipus, with Eriphile as a symbol of the greatest possession he could give up, but also a symbol of new love. Polynice thinks he has to choose between filial and conjugal love, whereas the reconciliation allows him to have both. Invoking the Eumenides earlier in the opera to preside over this problem, uniting their universal Greek and general Athenian functions, is entirely

⁸³² Although this was later changed by Cherubini, see Ewans (2007) 70.

⁸³³ For the relevance of the Freemasons to this material see chapter 3, pp. 188-189.

⁸³⁴ It also links *Oedipe* with the original *Oedipus* proto-opera in 1585, which opens with an oratorio style chorus.

appropriate.⁸³⁵ If the invocation to the Eumenides at the start of the opera represents the desire for reconciliation, then Polynice's tortured soliloquy in II.i, followed by his wandering with Antigone, represents a form of purgatory and penance, culminating in his final forgiveness and reconciliation, witnessed by the priest, who gives the scene a final closure. On such a reading, *Oedipe* becomes a clear act of worship in its own right, as the OC is in its own context. *Oedipe* provides not Oedipe's, but Polynice's salvation.

A religious interpretation of *Oedipe* also helps to explain its supposedly unsatisfactory ending; it has been criticised for its untragic, happy ending, yet this is in keeping with all late eighteenth-century 'tragic' opera. One view dismisses any link between *Oedipe* and contemporary society:

'its [*Oedipe*'s] success is probably not unrelated to its chief dramatic defect – the evasion of important issues'⁸³⁶

I suggest that the reconciliation is in fact an issue of great importance, with clear ramifications for our interpretation of Greek tragedy, and in particular, the character of Antigone both here and in her eponymous play.

⁸³⁵ For this interpretation to be valid, Aeschylus' *Eumenides* needs to have been available. There was an *Agamemnon* in Paris in 1780, combining Aeschylus and Seneca's texts.⁸³⁵ Alfieri produced his own reworking of *Choephoroi* in Tome, 1781. Several new texts were also being prepared: between 1782 and 1794, Schütz prepared a five-volume edition of Aeschylus. *Agamemnon* was published in 1787 (Wolf) and *Choephoroi* in 1776 (Vollbarth), and would be again in 1794 (Wakefield) and 1795 (Porson). There was a modern English translation in 1777 by Potter. Aeschylus' plays were gaining increased interest throughout the late eighteenth century. Corneille and Racine did not use the Eumenides in their plays, so their inclusion cannot be attributed to the influence of French drama. There may not have been a contemporary production of *Eumenides* itself, but the use of the specific name for the Furies, and the generally increased contemporary interest in Aeschylus suggests that a link can be made. The collection of Sophocles' *OT*, *OC* and *Antigone* with Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Aeschylus *Seven Against Thebes* as *Pentalogia* (1758), also suggests that, especially with the Oedipus myth, there was a tendency to conflate material from all three Greek tragedians (see chapter 2 for discussion of this material and such strategies).

⁸³⁶ Rushton (1971).

Antigone is the only significant female character in *Oedipe*, with 117 lines and two arias, which suggest at least one important female performer. This still puts her in third place, however, behind both Polinice and Oedipe, and her character is more a facilitator of other people's stories than one in its own right, reinforced by the fact that she has the greatest number of ensemble lines; this is emphatically not an *Antigone*, however key her role in the reconciliation seems. This is in contrast to her otherwise rapidly increasing profile in the late eighteenth century. Just a few years after *Oedipe*, Hegel translated the OC for the first time, and through this was led to *Antigone*.⁸³⁷ Steiner notes that between 1699 and 1799, there were over thirty operas of *Antigone*,⁸³⁸ but in art, between 1753 and 1789, her motif did not feature in the annual Paris salon exhibitions.⁸³⁹ There were still paintings involving her in this period: in 1788 Jean Antoine Theodore Giroust exhibited a painting entitled *Oedipus at Colonus*, which depicts Antigone at Oedipus' side, subordinate, but definitely present. In 1785 Pierre Peyron exhibited, in his own Paris salon, a painting entitled *Oedipus and Polyneices* depicting both Ismene and Antigone with Oedipus and Polynices.⁸⁴⁰ In 1784, Henry Fuseli exhibited a painting in London (where he had returned from Rome in 1779, thus overlapping with Sacchini for two years) entitled *The Death of Oedipus*, followed in 1786 by the exhibiting of *Oedipus cursing his son Polyneices* which depicts Oedipus with both his daughters.⁸⁴¹ Antigone may not be present in the specific salons mentioned by Steiner, but she was certainly present in contemporary art, in her guise as daughter to Oedipus and sister to Polynices, rather than as a heroine in her own right. Her twin roles in *Oedipe* as Oedipus' guide and Polynices' mediator are in keeping with the Sophoclean original. She is not the independent heroine of *Antigone*, but, as her unnamed status in the paintings emphasises, is a satellite figure with little character of her own. In *Oedipe* she does

⁸³⁷ Steiner (1996) 8 and 22.

⁸³⁸ *ibid.* 6.

⁸³⁹ Steiner (1996) 7.

⁸⁴⁰ See Udolpho van de Sandt (2009).

⁸⁴¹ For more extensive discussion of Fuseli's paintings, see chapter 4.

not enter until Act II, emphasising their importance, and is not the sole female. Oedipus does not describe his daughters as sons, as in the OC. There are other women in the opera, including the chorus. Antigone loses her strength as the female focus of the play. The removal of the Creon episode demonstrates this further as she loses another aspect of her Sophoclean character, that of passive victim.

The reconciliation which she facilitates provides closure to the tragedy and by doing so denies the tragedy of *Antigone*. It also raises further questions about the efficacy of the curses and the possibility of their negation. Oedipe curses Polynice twice:

II.ii Laisse-moi, malheureux Polynice. Je te maudis!

III.ii Toi, scélérat, je te maudis encore.

Is one repetition sufficient to ensure the efficacy of the curse? Does Polinice's forgiveness undo it? Would this deny the *Antigone* story and rewrite literary history, or is the tragedy in the fact that it is too late for Oedipe to retract his curses? This depends on the extent to which Oedipe has acquired daimonic status in *Oedipe* – without this he cannot bring about his curses. Since the libretto is no longer concerned with Oedipe's transformation, but with his continued lineage through Polinice, this aspect of the OC is lost. In contemporary paintings, however, it is clear that the image of Oedipus cursing his son is one of the defining moments in the play.⁸⁴² Guillard does not need to transform Oedipus; the image of Oedipus as a *daimon* is strong enough, from the Sophoclean original; simply by including a curse scene Guillard can imply Oedipe's final transformation and daimonic power.⁸⁴³

⁸⁴² See chapter 4 for discussion of the moments depicted.

⁸⁴³ For discussion of the extent of the transformation, see the introduction pp. 9-10.

In either case, the curses fail and the *Antigone* story is prevented. This denial of a well-known myth is a radical departure from tradition on Guillard's part, a further example of the reform of cultural history which I have suggested is typical of *Oedipe*. Moreover, Antigone held an increasingly important status in eighteenth-century political and religious ideology. She was soon to become an icon for the women of the French Revolution.⁸⁴⁴ She was also interpreted as linked to the Eumenides, or as a proto-Christian, a counterpart to Christ, God's child and a messenger before Revelation, as the embodiment of Christian piety.⁸⁴⁵ The reconciliation is not only found in Guillard's libretto, but also occurs in Marie-Joseph Chénier's *Oedipe à Colone* (published 1820, written c.1790s) where Antigone reconciles Oedipe and Polynice, and the reconciliation is interpreted as a Christian motif. In this play, however, Polynice still has a vision of his fratricidal future when he enters the grove of the Eumenides, seeing Furies, as Orestes does in *Choephoroi* or Oedipe in *Oedipe*.⁸⁴⁶

By negating Antigone's story, Guillard could be understood as having rewritten literary history, creating a new line of plays. He also conflated the increasingly Christian vision of *Antigone* with the story of *Oedipus at Colonus*, creating a Christianised *Oedipe*. The religious aspect of *Oedipe* makes better sense when considered through the lens of Christianity. The OC can be interpreted as providing not only a cult aetiology for the cult of Oedipus at Colonus but as demonstrating that cult in action.⁸⁴⁷ Where Aeschylus used *Eumenides* to provide a cult aetiology for the Erinyes as Eumenides, in the OC this cult is already established. In *Oedipe*, Oedipe is the only person able to call the Eumenides by their proper name, as mentioned, and he undergoes some sort of vision of them in Act II. He may be interpreted as their priest / devotee. There is a sense in which the

⁸⁴⁴ See Steiner (1996) 9.

⁸⁴⁵ Steiner (1996) 27-8 (Eumenides).

⁸⁴⁶ Steiner (1996) 162.

⁸⁴⁷ See the introduction, p. 11.

treatment of the Eumenides here is Christianised, and in which Oedipus himself, through his closeness to them, obtains some cult status, despite his lack of final transformation. The staged prayer to the Eumenides in Act I could be read as the first part of a Sacrament of Reconciliation. The itinerant who alone can address the goddesses by their rightful names, but yet is badly treated in his own time, bears a certain resemblance to Christ.⁸⁴⁸ There is clearly some engagement with Christianity in both Guillard's libretto and the general reception of Oedipus and Antigone as mythological characters.

The theatrical representation of religion, and potential interpretation of the opera as some form of allegory for a religious rite also begin to collapse the barriers between musical genres. Opera was traditionally a secular, staged type of music, with oratorio sacred, unstaged music. During the course of the eighteenth century, however, these divisions began to break down. Oratorio in Catholic Europe often resembled *opera seria*, with words and music resembling aria and recit, the lives of the saints resembling the mythical heroes, alongside analogues for Oedipus himself. Oratorios were not intended for staging, but frequently were staged, turning them into mini-operas.⁸⁴⁹ Conversely, in England, as Handel introduced more choruses into his operas, opera began to resemble oratorio, a change in form which greatly affected Sacchini.⁸⁵⁰ In writing an *Oedipe* and foregrounding the religious issues and through the use of the chorus and musical intertexts with Mozart, Guillard-Sacchini contributed to crossing genre boundaries between oratorio and opera.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁸ See Breuer (1982), Edmunds (1996) on Oedipus as Christ, and Linforth (1951) and Whitman (1966) on religion and the OC more generally. Yet, the artificial and not altogether convincing speed with which Oedipus' forgiveness is finally granted suggests that the Christian message is not to be taken as a positive one. Tragedy is used as a vehicle for Christianity, but not entirely successfully.

⁸⁴⁹ See Downs (1992) 174.

⁸⁵⁰ See Demuth (1963) 217, Downs (1986) 108, Woodfield (2001) 43 and DiChiera and Robinson (2001 [Sacchini]).

⁸⁵¹ As Smither (1979-80) 88 writes: 'The use of the term oratorio changes dramatically over the eighteenth century, from 1700, where almost all oratorio was performed without stage action, to 1800 where it had come to mean sacred opera.' He also notes (89) that the key issue was the use of the chorus, who I have already discussed with reference to *Oedipe* above.

5.5.3 *Arvire et Evelina*

I have suggested that we read a certain degree of development through Sacchini's French operas, particularly once his collaboration with Guillard has begun. Before moving to any conclusions about *Oedipe*, it seems logical to consider the extent to which this trend continued with *Arvire*. Little is known about this opera, and so comment must remain limited, but its links to the OC and *Caractacus* further justify its inclusion as an epilogue to my main discussion.⁸⁵²

Thierstein notes the relationship between this opera and *Caractacus*, but links the play only to Tacitus, not to the OC.⁸⁵³ The Sophoclean link has become obscured, but the existence of *Oedipe* demonstrates Guillard's familiarity with Sophocles and awareness of the relationship between the plays. The Oedipus figure has been removed entirely from this version of the story. In *Caractacus*, Arviragus is Evelina's brother, where here his name is transferred to her father, ensuring that the oedipal aspect of the plot is subsumed. By removing *Caractacus*, it becomes possible to rewrite history and give the story a happy ending. *Caractacus* does not lose to the Romans. Nobody dies. Evelina is married to Irvin. Vellinus retains his name, but is now ambiguously both a prince and Roman, while the Roman leader has changed from Aulus Didius to Messala, and Elidurus to Irvin. The role of mystery religion is still evident, through the presence of the Druids.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵² A full plot summary can be found at Thierstein (1974) 91-93. When he died, Sacchini had almost finished the opera. Marie-Antoinette had been checking on its progress, and asked Piccinni to finish it. Jean-Baptiste Rey, however, claimed that Sacchini had already asked him to do this, and Piccinni demurred. The final work premiered on April 29th 1788, again prefaced by a ballet, but was not a great success. The *Oedipe* was revived to fill the nights left vacant by its withdrawal from the repertory, cf. Thierstein (1974) 44-45. Jullien (1878) 133-140 provides a brief discussion of the opera.

⁸⁵³ Thierstein (1974) 44 n.1

⁸⁵⁴ See chapter 3 for discussion of the Druids in this context.

Musically there are also interesting coincidences and contrasts between the two operas. Sacchini's particularly short or uneven musical phrases were noted above, and Thierstein cites an aria by Evelina as his example.⁸⁵⁵ The increasing prominence of ensemble writing in *Oedipe* continues in *Arvire*, which contains the largest ensemble of any of his operas, an octet. I have already mentioned that Sacchini's only two male alto parts are in *Oedipe* and *Arvire*.⁸⁵⁶ As the son figure, Vellinus is comparable to Polinice, but as the bad and unforgiven son, the parallel cannot be extended far. It remains striking that only the young men in the operas based on the OC are associated with this clef. Thierstein notes that Sacchini was wont to change tempo or metre for dramatic effect, but that this aspect of his style is less obvious in *Oedipe* and *Arvire*, thus uniting the two in their difference.⁸⁵⁷

The links between *Oedipe* and *Arvire* are clear; the two French operas independent of his Parisian commission Sacchini wrote were both with Guillard, and both modelled on the OC. Both therefore reflect similar issues, if in different ways and to different extents. Musically, *Arvire* demonstrates a more extreme development of Sacchini's style, away from the compromise displayed by *Oedipe*.⁸⁵⁸ The clever, subtle craft of *Oedipe* as opposed to the more clearly atypical style of *Arvire* may go some way to explaining their relative success. *Arvire* is also far less obviously based on the OC, and to this extent, fails to capitalise on the popularity and pertinence of the Sophoclean play to its eighteenth-century audience.

⁸⁵⁵ Thierstein (1974) 97.

⁸⁵⁶ See p. 279 above.

⁸⁵⁷ Thierstein (1974) 109.

⁸⁵⁸ This is clear when we note that it includes the largest orchestra of any of Sacchini's French operas, see Thierstein (1974) 144.

5.6 Conclusion

Oedipe à Colone was a success, and did not disappear as a court drama forgotten in the ensuing Revolution; somehow it caught the spirit of the age and appealed to it. It did this partly through engaging with artistic disputes, as music played important part in the lives of many late eighteenth-century elite Parisians, and art, science and politics were everybody's business in the educational explosion brought by the Enlightenment.

In a more general framework, I began this chapter by discussing the interconnected nature of pre-Revolution French cultural politics, with particular respect to opera. Weber's thesis that 'revolutionary' developments in music can both pre-empt and divert movements towards political change is, I suggest, borne out in the case of *Oedipe*. The opera itself can be read in political terms; its religious tenor is even clearer, although this itself carries a political message. The type of music, the use of singers and musicians, the setting, the relationship between libretto and score, and between source text and new text all demonstrate an engagement with contemporary artistic conflict.

Both the structure and form of *Oedipe* make better sense if we assume that this opera was a collaboration between the librettist and the composer. This is in direct contrast to the previous trend of reusing old libretti, but engages with the contemporary desire to revive opera and partially recreate the genre. Through their use of Sophocles, Guillard-Sacchini were able to innovate while remaining true to the tradition; they engaged with contemporary musical developments, yet remained distinct from the Piccinni-Gluck *querelle*. An integrated approach to *Oedipe* which is sensitive to its broader musical, textual, Classical and cultural resonances proves much more satisfying than any single analysis could. Without studying the music,

text, intertexts, history and politics, taking multiple approaches to this one work, it is far harder to understand how it functions even in the relationship it has with its Classical past. Through examining this relationship from different angles, it has also become apparent that much can be learned about Sophocles from what others have made of his text and that artistic creativity is itself a form of scholarly interpretation.

Conclusion

This thesis has dealt with three main questions to which some consistent answers have begun to emerge: what about the *OC* appealed to the eighteenth century and what can it tell us about the century? What further insights into the *OC* can eighteenth-century responses to the *OC* offer? What does a close study of one play in one century across a range of disciplines teach us about classical reception studies?

Reading the *OC* through eighteenth-century lenses prioritises certain aspects of the play. Eighteenth-century intellectuals appreciated the *OC* because of its potential for interpretation as a sublime text in a mixed Aristotelian-Longinian sense, offering an ancient example for the archaising Gothic aesthetic. Themes of place, religion and politics linked through the fashioning of one's own identity and that of the landscape in symbolic terms become increasingly focused. The links between Sophocles and the Greek epigrammatic tradition, or Sophocles and Lucan, have only become apparent in the light of their shared modern reception. Whether or not ancient readers made these connections does not matter at this point; they enhance a modern reader's understanding of the cohesive nature of ancient literature. At the particular point in history under examination here, some themes have unexpectedly been found less important. *King Lear* becomes an important analogue only after the play was banned in 1788 in the wake of George III's developing madness. Similarly, issues of blindness, old age and legacy which are so striking in the *OC* were not emphasised at this point, lacking appropriate aesthetic or political resonances.

The eighteenth century emerges from this study as a rich source for further study which has been undeservedly neglected by scholars of the Greco-Roman world. When England's population was just a tenth of its present size, networking

was far more effective, and this thesis has demonstrated some of the ways in which personal and political friendships and rivalries shaped contemporary society.

As with fifth-century BC Athens and first-century BC/AD Rome, moments of domestic and international political instability can generate enormous cultural productivity. Reading the eighteenth-century's engagement of the OC in the light of Blanning's thesis of the reciprocal nature of culture and power formalises this connection and explains some of the particular peaks and types of productivity we find 1711-1788.

Taking an aesthetic idea as a starting point it was possible to analyse a wide range of material, from points of textual criticism to operas, and demonstrate some of the shared agendas behind the scholarly and artistic choices which inform them. The eighteenth-century relationship between theory and practice and between scholarship and the creative arts has become more evident. Studying the OC in particular has been especially useful in this respect. Its prior absence from the modern stage makes it easier to see what the eighteenth century in particular made of it, without dealing with as many intermediate accreted layers of material. Each of the examples discussed in this thesis uses it to do something new with their respective genre, demonstrating the potential for using less popular works to reinvigorate and reinvent existing generic frameworks. The OC's links with the OT make this particularly evident, as it is often used in contrast with existing receptions of the OT, rather than as an adjunct to them.

In terms of the discipline of reception studies, this thesis demonstrates the importance of a rigorously interdisciplinary approach. In a century whose defining features include extreme polymathia and the burgeoning of satire, no simple reading of any material is possible. If we read a painting without taking into consideration not only generic conventions but also the painter's background beyond his painting

then we are in danger of underinterpreting a work. We must read Fuseli's work knowing how his patron William Roscoe operated in both political and aesthetic spheres, in order to understand the initial reception of the paintings and the Sophoclean aspects of this. Without an understanding of Fuseli's own literary and religious background, and of his personal circumstances, any appreciation of *The Death of Oedipus* would be far diminished.⁸⁵⁹ The situation is similar with *Oedipe à Colone*. Any reading of the opera which fails to take account of the relationship between musical and textual semiotics would also fail to make adequate sense of this complex work. The eighteenth century presents us with many examples of popular culture which still require significant intellectual engagement for full appreciation.

The issue of taste also becomes important. *Caractacus* and *Oedipe à Colone* were both deemed masterpieces by contemporary audiences, yet to a modern ear sound far less pleasing. They remain engaging as clever works which successfully manipulate artistic conventions and integrate Sophoclean words and ideas into an eighteenth-century framework, but do not feature in modern repertoires. I remain convinced that the OC is an extraordinary play worth further study. Eighteenth-century readers thought the same, as it grew to become an appropriate vehicle for expressing changing aesthetic ideas. Their responses to it, in print, on canvas or on the stage, may have receded into the recesses of our cultural memory. Their concerns over allegory and censorship, the neo-Gothic sublime and the relationship between religion, landscape and politics remain. The OC has not dropped out of the theatrical canon. Despite being the Sophoclean play which had to wait the longest to be performed on a modern stage, it has grown in popularity. This is only in part due to its association with the OT and *Antigone*, in a way which was not the case in the

⁸⁵⁹ I have presented the two Fuseli paintings to a range of groups, including sixth formers and art historians, and asked which people prefer, and which they thought Roscoe objected to. On initial responses the vote is usually unanimous; *Oedipus cursing his son Polyneices* is the preferred painting. Once I have discussed the aesthetic choices behind both, however, opinion often changes and others join me in admiration of the more numinous painting.

eighteenth century, when it had not yet been conceived of as part of a pseudo-trilogy. It is still performed and represented, however, as a work in its own right. In the twentieth century Leonard Baskin created five works of art inspired by it. It also continues to inspire operatic reworkings. Lee Breuer and Bob Telson's *The Gospel at Colonus* is perhaps the most famous version of the OC, with an original cast including Morgan Freeman, demonstrating the high popularity the play can achieve. A similar approach could be used with other plays, and other time periods, but I believe the OC is a uniquely interesting tool with which to analyse the interdisciplinary mixing of themes of religion and politics in any given culture. This was particularly pertinent in eighteenth-century England, where issues of nationhood were at stake in the formation of Britain at home and its expansion abroad. Aesthetically, the overarching idea of the sublime became a theoretical approach in search of a practical vehicle, which it found in Sophocles' final play.

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