

## CURSES AND DIVINE ANGER IN EARLY GREEK EPIC: THE PISANDER SCHOLION

To the volume of essays about Sophocles with which a number of my former pupils were kind enough to present me on my seventy-fifth birthday,<sup>1</sup> Martin West contributed an interesting article called 'Ancestral Curses'. He deals with the part played by the curses of ancestors and others, and also by the divine anger which may pursue a family, and with the operations of the Erinyes, especially in the epics and tragedies relating to the House of Labdacus. The part of his article with which I am now concerned is the part relating to post-Homeric early epics and the use made of them by the tragedians.

West writes (p. 37) that 'it is not typical of epic to move across generations, and even less to make connections between events in different generations'. How sure can we be of this? The trouble with any sort of generalization about early epic is that we have so little material. There is certainly not much of this kind of thing in Homer. But even here the pursuit of a family by divine anger may be found, and may be seen to have considerable importance.

We are told in the last book of the *Iliad* that when

Achilles was maltreating the body of Hector, the gods pitied the dead man. All of them wished to send Hermes to rescue the corpse, except for Hera, Poseidon and Athena (24.25–6):

ἐνθ' ἄλλοις μὲν πᾶσιν ἐήνδανεν, οὐδέ ποθ' Ἑρμὶ  
οὐδέ Ποσειδάων' οὐδέ γλαυκῶπιδι κούρῃ,  
ἀλλ' ἔχον ὥς σφιν πρῶτον ἀπήχθετο Ἴλιος ἱρή  
καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαός "Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔνεκ" ἄτης,  
ὃς νείκεσσε θεάς, ὅτε οἱ μέσσαυλον ἔκοντο,  
τῇν δ' ἦινης', ἣ οἱ πόρε μαχλοσύνην ἀλεγεινήν.

This passage was athetized in antiquity, by Aristarchus among others,<sup>2</sup> and in the days when belief in multiple authorship was rife various parts of it were deleted by many scholars. West in his edition accepts Bekker's athetesis of 29–30. But the greater part of it has been accepted by several scholars since the appearance of Karl Reinhardt's famous article, *Das Parisurteil*.<sup>3</sup> Reinhardt showed how, in the words of Colin Macleod (loc. cit.), 'Homer heightens and extends the tragedy by taking us

<sup>1</sup> *Sophocles Revisited: Essays presented to Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones*, ed. Jasper Griffin (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> See H. Erbse, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem* V (Berlin, 1977), 520–1.

<sup>3</sup> K. Reinhardt, *Wissenschaft und Gegenwart* (Frankfurt, 1938) = *Von Werken und Formen* (Godesberg, 1948), 11–36 = *Tradition und Geist* (Göttingen, 1960), 16–36; English version in G. M. Wright and P. V. Jones, *Homer: German Scholarship in Translation* (Oxford, 1997), 170–99. Cf. T. C. W. Stinton, Euripides and the judgment of Paris', *JHS* Suppl. XI (1965) = *Collected Papers on Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1990), 17–75; Jasper Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), 195, with n. 49; Malcolm Davies, *JHS* 101 (1981), 56–62; C. W. Macleod, *Homer, Iliad Book 24: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1982), 8–9; N. J. Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary* VI (ed. G. S. Kirk) (Cambridge, 1993), 276–7.

back to where it started.' The somewhat unheroic tone is in accordance with Homer's treatment of the gods, seen in the episodes of the rescue of Paris by Aphrodite in Book 3 and the subsequent teasing of Hera and Athena by Zeus (4.5–6), of the wounding of Aphrodite by Diomedes in Book 5, of the seduction of Zeus by Hera in Book 14, and most notably in the battle of the gods in Book 21. Unlike mortals the gods could not be killed, so that their fates could not be tragic. The cyclic epic called the *Cypria* told how at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, Eris, by throwing the apple inscribed 'For the Fairest', provoked the judgement of Paris.<sup>4</sup>

In Book 24 of the *Iliad* there is no mention of the reason for Poseidon's enmity to Troy;<sup>5</sup> but in Book 21 (441–2)<sup>6</sup> we have been told of his grudge against the city of his enemy Laomedon. The capture of Troy by Heracles and Telamon had not sufficed to appease Poseidon's enmity, so that here we have a case of divine anger extending over more than one generation. In the *Odyssey* also divine anger was not without importance.

Homer tells us little about the Labdacids. In the brief account of the parricide and incest of Oedipus at *Od.* 11.271–2, the gods immediately make these crimes known to men: ἄφαρ δ' ἀνάπυστα θεοὶ θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν. Oedipus' mother Epicaste hangs herself, but Oedipus continues to rule; at *Il.* 23.679–80, there is mention of the funeral games held after his death. But the Odyssean passage ends by saying that Epicaste left to Oedipus ἄλγεα . . . πολλὰ μάλ', ὅσσα τε μητρὸς Ἑρινύες ἐκτελέουσι. That indicates that the Erinyes will act as they usually do in such cases, so that there will be more trouble for Oedipus, and perhaps for his descendants.

What of other early epic poems? Our knowledge of them is severely limited. But thanks to Apollodorus and the summaries of Proclus, we have a general notion of the contents of the *Cypria* and the other post-Homeric epics dealing with the Trojan War.<sup>7</sup> It might be argued that the matter-of-fact, straightforward narrative style,<sup>8</sup> a bugbear to Callimachus and other poets of his time and later, in which one episode follows another with little reference forward or back, which was held to be characteristic of cyclic epics, does not appear to lend itself to this kind of thing.<sup>9</sup>

But two early epics seem not to have been written in that style. These are the *Oedipodeia* and the *Thebaid*. The *Oedipodeia* is ascribed by the Tabula Borgiana to Cinaethon of Lacedaemon, to whom the *Little Iliad* and the *Heracleia* also are ascribed.<sup>10</sup> But the author of a scholion on Euripides (Mon. 560, on pp. 414–15 of Eduard Schwartz, *Scholia in Euripidem* I [Berlin, 1887]; see below, p. 3) speaks of a plurality of authors. Many writers ascribe the *Thebaid* to Homer, including Callinus

<sup>4</sup> See Richardson (n. 3), 91.

<sup>5</sup> Reinhardt (*T.u.G.* 28) writes 'Poseidon wird schuldigerweise wie eine Parenthese mitgenannt'; but at this point Homer has no reason to go into detail. One should not worry about Zeus's apparent ignorance of the reason for Hera's hatred of the Trojans at *Il.* 4.31–2; to him that reason would surely seem a trivial one.

<sup>6</sup> See Richardson (n. 3), 91.

<sup>7</sup> Brief sketch in M. Davies, *The Epic Cycle* (Bristol, 1989); texts and bibliography in A. Bernabé, *Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum Testimonia et Fragmenta* I (Stuttgart, 1996) and M. Davies, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen, 1988) (on these two editions, see S. Timpanaro, *RFIL* 125 [1997], 17, n. 2). For the use of the *Cypria* by Euripides, see F. Jouan, *Euripide et les Légendes des Chants Cypriens* (Paris, 1966).

<sup>8</sup> See Callimachus, *Epigr.* 2, 1041–2 in Gow–Page, *Hellenistic Epigrams* (1965), ad loc.

<sup>9</sup> On the stylistic differences between Homer and the cyclic epics, see J. Griffin, *JHS* 97 (1977), 39–53.

<sup>10</sup> See Bernabé (n. 7), 17 and Davies (n. 7), 20–1 and 92–3.

(fr. 6 West) and possibly Herodotus, whose literary judgement deserves respect; Pausanias thought it second only to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately it is not easy to get a notion of the general nature of the work from the fragments we possess.

Whether we have any serious knowledge of the content of these epics depends on the view one takes of a long scholion on Euripides, *Phoenissae* 1760, which offers a sketch of the history of the Labdacids from the initial crime of Laius to the blinding of Oedipus; it begins with the words *ἱστορεῖ Πείσανδρος*. Over this scholion, scholars, many of them displaying great learning in their handling of its problems, have sharply differed.

'Peisandros' is a very common name, as a glance at the *Lexicon of Proper Names* and at Pape-Benseler, *Griechische Eigennamen* will confirm. One of its bearers was Pisander of Camirus, the author of an early epic *Heracleia*, to whom other works have been ascribed. Another was Pisander of Laranda, the author of a long poem called the '*Ἡρωικὰ Θεογαμίαι*', who wrote under Alexander Severus. Some have taken the Pisander named at the beginning of the scholion to be the first Pisander, others the second. Others (first Welcker in 1849<sup>12</sup>) think it to be the work of a pseudo-Pisander, a prose mythographer of the Hellenistic age.

Rudolf Keydell (1935),<sup>13</sup> making use of his exceptional familiarity with late epics, distinguished the fragments quoted from Pisander of Camirus from those quoted from Pisander of Laranda, arguing that the latter, living under Alexander Severus, in his poem called the '*Ἡρωικὰ Θεογαμίαι*' produced a vast synthesis of early legends based on the love-affairs of gods with mortals, which for the Greeks of his time and after took the place of the early epics. The fragments of Pisander of Camirus are to be found in Davies (n. 7, 1988), 129–35 and Bernabé (n. 7), 164–71; those of Pisander of Laranda are printed in Heitsch.<sup>14</sup> Keydell believed that the one fragment of 'Pisander' quoted by Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, the seven quoted in the scholia on Apollonius and the two quoted in the scholia on Euripides, one of which contains the Pisander scholion, came from a third Pisander, a prose writer, a mythographer writing during the Hellenistic period.<sup>15</sup>

It seems clear that the scholion is the product of a prose writer presenting a narrative based on early poetry, and that because of the writer's carelessness or accidents of transmission or both it contains many defects. Over the origins of its content scholars have long disputed. F. W. Schneidewin in 1852<sup>16</sup> found it 'aus Altern und Dichtungen tragischer Dichter wundersam gemischt'. Erich Bethe in 1891<sup>17</sup> argued with great confidence that it summarized the *Oedipodeia*. N. Wecklein in 1901<sup>18</sup> thought that it derived from the *Thebaid* and in some parts from the *Oidipodeia*. Carl

<sup>11</sup> Herodotus 5.67.1, where see Bernabé's note on *Thebais* test. 5; Pausanias 9.9.5, where see Bernabé, *Thebais* test. 2.

<sup>12</sup> K. G. Welker, *Der epische Cyclus oder die homerischen Dichter* I (Bonn, 1835, 1865<sup>2</sup>); II (1849).

<sup>13</sup> R. Keydell, 'Die Dichter mit Namen Peisandros', *Hermes* 10 (1935), 301–2 = *Kl. Schr.* (Leipzig, 1982), 361–2 and *R.E.* 19.1 (1937), cols. 144–5 (nos. 11–13).

<sup>14</sup> E. Heitsch, *Die Griechischen Dichterfragmente der Römischen Kaiserzeit*, *Abh. der Göttinger Akademie, Ph.-Hist. Kl.*, no. 33, II (1964), suppl. 6, 44–7.

<sup>15</sup> For these fragments, see Jacoby, 16 *FGrH* I A, 1957, 181–2 and I a, 493–6 and 544–7.

<sup>16</sup> F. W. Schneidewin, 'Die Sage vom Oedipus', *GGA* 5 (1851–2), 159–60.

<sup>17</sup> E. Bethe, *Thebanische Heldenlieder* (Leipzig, 1891), ch. 1. His view was accepted by O. Höfer in Roscher's *Lexikon* 713 and by O. Gruppe, *GMR* 1 (1906), 524, n. 3.

<sup>18</sup> N. Wecklein, 'Die Kyklische Thebais, die Oedipodee, die Oedipussage und der Oedipus des Euripides', *SB der Bay. Akad.* (1901).

Robert in 1913<sup>19</sup> in a very detailed treatment strongly differed from Bethe,<sup>20</sup> calling the scholion 'ein Flickwerk aus allen möglichen Lappen'(1.163), the work of a grammarian. H. Lamer in 1924<sup>21</sup> agreed with Robert that we could not show that it followed the *Oedipodeia*, but took it to derive from a lost epic of Pisander of Camirus.

Jacoby in 1923<sup>22</sup> took it to be the work of a prose writer of the Hellenistic period, who had conflated a variety of sources, including the *Oidipodeia*, but also the *Phoenissae* and the *Chrysippus* of Euripides. Wilamowitz in 1925<sup>23</sup> differed from Jacoby, denying the existence of the Hellenistic prose pseudo-Pisander and holding that although 'Verwirrung und Einschaltung von Fremdem ist vorhanden' the scholion derives from an early epic of Pisander of Camirus called the *Κύκλος*.

The appearance in 1935 of Keydell's impressive treatment of the problem (see above) did not end the debate. Eduard Schwartz<sup>24</sup> took the scholion to summarize a late Hellenistic epic pretending to be an early one. Ludwig Deubner (1942)<sup>25</sup> argued that the first half of the scholion derived from Euripides' *Chrysippus* and the second half from his *Oedipus*. Jacoby (1957)<sup>26</sup> powerfully attacked the view of Wilamowitz and supported that of Keydell. E. L. de Kock (1962)<sup>27</sup> argued that the scholion depended both on the *Oedipodeia* and on tragedy, but that 'since we cannot determine all its sources with absolute certainty, we have no right to rely on it alone in our reconstruction of the *Oedipodeia*'. Eduard Fraenkel (1963)<sup>28</sup> found Deubner's theory that the story that Hera's anger against Laius came from the *Chrysippus* 'sehr einleuchtend'. Mastronarde (1994)<sup>29</sup> followed Jacoby and de Kock in taking the scholion to be 'a learned conflation of earlier motifs' emanating from a grammarian of the Hellenistic age'. Bernabé (1996)<sup>30</sup> believed that it came from a mythographer who depended chiefly on the *Oedipodeia*, but employed other sources also.

The controversy over the scholion is briefly summarized by West (n. 1), 42, who concludes that 'that text certainly cannot be used as evidence for the presence of the Chrysippus story in the epic *Oedipodeia*'. Before we assent to this, it will be as well to take a look at the scholion. Texts of it will be found not only in Schwartz, *Scholia in Euripidem* I, 414–15, but in Robert (n. 19), 150–1, Deubner (n. 25), 4, and Bernabé (n. 7), 17–19. I will set it out, pausing after each section to offer comments.

<sup>19</sup> C. Robert, *Oidipus: Geschichte eines poetischen Stoffs im griechischen Altertum* (Berlin, 1913), 149–50 (reviewed by Nilsson, *GGA* 84 [1922], 36–7).

<sup>20</sup> F. Vian, *Les Origines de Thèbes* (Paris, 1963), 207, n. 4 rightly remarks 'La sévérité de C. Robert, *Oidipus* I, 149–167, à l'encontre du fragment de Pisandre paraît excessive.'

<sup>21</sup> At pp. 506–7 of his article on Laios in *RE* 13 (1924), 467–513; so also L. W. Daly in his article on Oedipus, *RE* 17 (1937), 2103–17 (see p. 2110) and his supplement in *RE* Suppl. 7 (1940), 769–70.

<sup>22</sup> F. Jacoby, *FGrH* I (1923), 493–4.

<sup>23</sup> U. von Wilamowitz, *Hermes* 60 (1925), 280–1 = *Kl. Schr.* 4 (1962), 368–9.

<sup>24</sup> E. Schwartz, *Hermes* 75 (1940), 6–7.

<sup>25</sup> L. Deubner, *Abh. Pr. Akad., Ph. hist. Kl.* (1942), no. 4. With regard to the *Oedipus*, see n. 30 below. His view regarding the *Chrysippus* is accepted by A. Lesky, *Die Tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*<sup>3</sup> (Göttingen, 1972), 328 = 240 in the English translation by Matthew Dillon (New Haven and London, 1983), and see n. 28 below.

<sup>26</sup> In the *Nachträge* to *FGrH* I a, 544–5.

<sup>27</sup> E. L. de Kock, *Acta Classica (Proc. Class. Assoc. S. Afr.)* 4 (1961), 7–8 and 5 (1962), 1–2, 5 with useful bibliography at 28.

<sup>28</sup> E. Fraenkel, 'Zu den Phoenissen des Euripides', *SB der Bayerischen Akademie, Ph.-hist. Kl.* I (1963), 6–7.

<sup>29</sup> D. J. Mastronarde, *Euripides, Phoenissae* (Cambridge, 1994), 31–8.

<sup>30</sup> Bernabé (n. 7), 17.

ιστορεῖ Πείσανδρος ὅτι κατὰ χόλον τῆς Ἥρας ἐπέμφθη ἡ Σφίγξ τοῖς Θηβαίοις ἀπὸ τῶν ἐσχάτων μερῶν τῆς Αἰθιοπίας, ὅτι τὸν Λάιον ἀσεβήσαντα εἰς τὸν παράνομον ἔρωτα τοῦ Χρυσίππου, ὃν ἥρπασεν ἀπὸ τῆς Πίσσης, οὐκ ἐτιμωρήσαντο. ἦν δὲ ἡ Σφίγξ, ὥσπερ γράφεται, τὴν οὐρὰν ἔχουσα δρακαίνης. ἀναρπάζουσα δὲ μικροὺς καὶ μεγάλους κατήσθιεν, ἐν οἷς καὶ Αἴμονα τὸν Κρέοντος παῖδα καὶ Ἴππιον τὸν Εὐρυνόμου τοῦ τοῖς Κενταύροις μαχεσαμένου. ἦσαν δὲ Εὐρύνωμος καὶ Ἥιονεύς υἱοὶ Μάγνητος τοῦ Αἰολίδου καὶ Φυλοδίκης. ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἴππιος καὶ ξένος ὢν ὑπὸ τῆς Σφιγγὸς ἀνηιρέθη, ὁ δὲ Ἥιονεύς ὑπὸ τοῦ Οἰνομάου, ὃν τρόπον καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι μνηστῆρες.

ιστορεῖ Πείσανδρος: 'Pisander records'. That would be a surprising verb to use in speaking of a poet; it suggests rather that a prose writer is being quoted. That Hera sent the Sphinx is told us also by Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.5.8 and Dio Chrysostom 11.8. The initial statement is followed by an account of the Sphinx (ἦν δὲ . . . μνηστῆρες) which Robert (n. 19), 151–2. thought must come from a source different from that of the main *ιστορία*.

The Sphinx came from Ethiopia, in early times not the country south of Egypt but the home of a mythical folk in the east.<sup>31</sup> Does ὥσπερ γράφεται 'as is written', or does it mean 'as she is painted', as Robert, p. 153 thought? It would be surprising for us to be told only that she had the tail of a dragon, for descriptions of her usually list many more peculiarities,<sup>32</sup> and Robert may well be right in inserting δέ after οὐρὰν. That would also explain why the writer used ἦν with the participle instead of simply writing εἶχε. Bethe's suggestion that a hexameter ended οὐρὰν δὲ δράκοντος might still be right. I do not see why the account of the Sphinx should be an 'insertion' from a different source, as Robert thought.

At this point there is no mention of the Sphinx's riddle, and it is noteworthy that a number of vases show Oedipus *fighting* with the Sphinx.<sup>33</sup> All of these, except for the dubious instances which are numbered 73–5 by Krauskopf (n. 32, 8), belong to the second half of the fifth century; but does that prove that this version of the story came into being only then?<sup>34</sup> She killed many, both great and small, including Haemon the son of Creon, and Hippios the son of that Eurynomos who fought against the Centaurs. This Eurynomos and Eioneus were the sons of Magnes, the son of Aiolos; Eioneus was one of the suitors of Hippodameia killed by Oenomaos. Robert argued that these details look as if they came from a mythographer; but they may very well derive from an early epic, though they are not likely to come from a tragedy.

The view that the details given in the 'insertion' come from the *Oidipodeia* would appear to be confirmed by another scholion on line 1760, which comes from a different

<sup>31</sup> See A. Lesky, 'Aithiopika', *Hermes* 87 (1959), 27–8 = *Ges. Schr.* (Bern, 1966), 411–12.

<sup>32</sup> See J.-M. Moret, *Oedipe, la Sphinx et les Thébains* (Rome, 1984); L. Edmunds, *The Sphinx: the Ancient Legend and its Later Analogues* (Baltimore and London, 1985); I. Krauskopf in *LIMC* VII 1 (1994), 1–2 (with bibliography). The description of the Sphinx in *P.Oxy.* 2459 (fr. 83 Austin, *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea in Papyris Reperta* [Berlin, 1968] = fr. 540 Kannicht) does not support the theory that the scholion is based partly on this play.

<sup>33</sup> Krauskopf (n. 32), 14 on Oidipous nos. 75–7, described on p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> In a learned discussion of the problem presented by this variant J.-M. Moret, *Oedipe. La Sphinx et les Thébains: Essai de Mythographie I* (1984), 77–91 has shown that the vases that in all probability present Oedipus fighting with the Sphinx are all as late as the second half of the fifth century; but surely this does not prove that the story originated as late as that. Moret's book was reviewed by Krauskopf, *GGA* 314 (1987), 228–9, who was replied to by D. Gasparro, 'Offener Brief an den Herausgeber der *GGA*' (Messina, 1988).

manuscript, the Monacensis 560 (see above, p. 2). It quotes two hexameters telling of the death of Haemon, also mentioned in the Pisander scholion, which are generally agreed to come from the *Oedipodeia*:

ἀλλ' ἔτι κάλλιστόν τε καὶ ἡμεροέστατον ἄλλων  
παῖδα φίλον Κρείοντος ἀμύμονος, Αἴμονα δῖον  
(fr.1 Davies = fr.1 Bernabé)<sup>35</sup>

πρῶτος δὲ ὁ Λαῖος τὸν ἀθέμιτον ἔρωτα τοῦτον ἔσχευ. ὁ δὲ Χρύσιππος ὑπὸ αἰσχύνῃς ἑαυτὸν διεχρήσατο τῷ ξίφει.

According to Robert, this is where the main *ἱστορία* resumes. Some have argued that the Chrysippus story cannot come from an early epic, because there is no mention of homosexuality in Homer, or because homosexuality was not disapproved of in early Greece. But even if homosexuality is not disapproved of in general,<sup>36</sup> one may well disapprove of homosexual rape, and the victim of such a rape might well feel extreme shame. Even in aristocratic circles in fifth-century Athens, it was thought shameful for a man to be penetrated by another man. Further, whatever the general attitude to homosexuality may have been, no one was more likely to disapprove than the goddess who was the patroness of marriage, who happened, as we shall see presently, to have a celebrated shrine on Cithaeron dedicated to her in this capacity. Suicide on account of shame is not unthinkable in early epic.<sup>37</sup> There is no mention here of the story that Pelops cursed the violator of his son;<sup>38</sup> Hera's anger would have been enough.

τότε μὲν οὖν ὁ Τειρεσίας ὡς μάντις εἰδὼς ὅτι θεοστυγῆς ἦν ὁ Λαῖος ἀπέτρεπεν αὐτὸν τῆς ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα ὁδοῦ, τῇ δὲ Ἑρᾷ μᾶλλον τῇ γαμοστολῷ θεᾷ θυεῖν ἱερά. ὁ δὲ αὐτὸν ἐξεφαύλιζεν.

Hera sent the Sphinx; but the Sphinx did not come to Thebes until much later than the crime of Laius, until the time when Oedipus had grown up. So why was Laius planning to go to Delphi? And why did Teiresias,<sup>39</sup> knowing that Laius was hated by a god, advise Laius not to consult the Delphic oracle, as he was thinking of doing, but to sacrifice to Hera the patroness of marriage? Surely at this time Laius was thinking of going to Delphi, like Aegeus in Euripides' *Medea*, to ask why his wife had borne no children; that is what Iocaste tells us in the prologue of the *Phoenissae* (13–14). Surely the writer, or more probably the copyist, of this narrative has gone straight from Laius'

<sup>35</sup> The scholion goes on to say 'They say' that the Sphinx was not a beast but a soothsayer whose utterances were difficult to understand and who caused the deaths of many Thebans who misinterpreted her prophecies. It seems impossible to relate this to any other account of the Sphinx that is known to us, and it looks like an Euhemerist version of her story.

<sup>36</sup> On homosexuality in Greek myth, see K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London, 1977), 196–7.

<sup>37</sup> See R. Hirzel, 'Der Selbstmord', *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 11 (1908), 70–1 = 2 of the reprint of 1966. Professor Kassel points to a striking parallel quoted by Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.14, 1374b34 (*test.* 164 in Radt's edition of the fragments of Sophocles), and also cites Euripides fr. 362.24–9 Nauck and Kannicht.

<sup>38</sup> See nos. 4, 6, 8, 11, and 12 of the hypotheses to Euripides, *Phoenissae* quoted in Mastronarde's Teubner text of 1988, 5–6, and the scholion on Euripides, *Phoen.* 60.

<sup>39</sup> A scholion on E. *Phoen.* 834 quotes Pisander for the report that Teiresias married Xanthe and had four children: Phamenos, Pherecydes, Chloris, and Manto. This is more likely to come from an epic than from a tragedy, and may well come from the *Oidipodeia*.

first journey to Delphi, made in order to learn the reason for his failure to beget issue, to the second, made many years later, in order to learn what he should do about the Sphinx.

Clearly Laius' failure to have children was due to the anger of Hera. It would seem that Laius behaved insultingly to the prophet, like Oedipus in the *O.T.* and Creon in the *Antigone*, and with an equally unfortunate result. This could have come from a tragedy, but there is no reason why it should not have come from the *Oidipodeia*.

ἀπελθὼν τοῖνυν ἐφονεύθη ἐν τῇ σχιστῇ ὁδῷ αὐτὸς καὶ ὁ ἡνίοχος αὐτοῦ, ἐπειδὴ ἔτυψε τῇ μάστιγι τὸν Οἰδίποδα.

At this point the scholion should have told of the earlier journey to Delphi, after which Apollo told Laius that the city would be safe only if he had no issue. Why did Apollo tell him this? Clearly because of Hera's anger.<sup>40</sup> What happened next we know from other sources, notably Aeschylus, *Sept.* 742–57 and Euripides, *Phoen.* 12–13. If Laius had taken the prophet's advice and tried to appease Hera, he might have succeeded. But as it was he went to Apollo, who knowing of Hera's anger warned him against having a son. According to the prologue of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, spoken by Iocaste (17–20), Apollo told Oedipus what would happen if he had issue. But in a disastrous moment, Laius disobeyed this command, and Oedipus was born.<sup>41</sup>

This reflexion causes one to look back to the words τότε μὲν οὖν. The οὖν is surely inferential, and the μὲν should look forward to a sentence whose second word was δέ. That sentence will have belonged to the part of the narrative that has been lost.

Oedipus was born, and he was exposed on Kithairon, λειμῶν' ἐς' Ἑρας καὶ Κιθαίρωνος λέπας, according to Euripides, *Phoen.* 24. Euripides may well have taken this detail from the *Oedipodeia*. Only when he was grown up did Hera send the Sphinx. This is why Laius made his second journey to Delphi, on which he encountered Oedipus and was killed by him.

<sup>40</sup> It may well be that in the earliest version of the legend Hera was the only deity whose wrath pursued Laius. Of course, in the versions that are familiar to us from tragedies Apollo and his oracle seem to take over the pursuit from this time on. But how did Apollo first come to warn Laius against having children? The only explanation of it that is recorded is that Apollo's warning was caused by the wrath of Hera.

Wilamowitz in 'Die griechische Heldensage', *SBPA* (1925) 57 = *Kl. Schr.* V 2.78, writing about early epic, wrote 'Wo Orakel eingreifen, da sind wir frühestens im 7. Jahrhundert, auch wenn es in der Odyssee 8,79 vorkommt. Von da an hat der Glaube an den Pythier wie in das Leben, so in die Saga tief eingegriffen, hat die Sagen von Oedipus und Orestes ganz umgestaltet, und nun trifft man Orakel überall, aber überall zeugen sie für jüngere Bearbeitungen der Geschichte.' On the comparatively rare mentions of Pytho in Homer, see H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *History of the Delphic Oracle I* (Oxford, 1956), 313–14 and J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley, 1978), 89. Apollo's warning probably figured in the *Oidipodeia*, but in the original legend it may have had no place.

<sup>41</sup> At Aeschylus, *Septem* 750, Wecklein (1885), Wilamowitz (1914), Groeneboom (1966), Murray (1955<sup>2</sup>), Page (1972), and West (1990) read ἐκ φίλων ἀβουλιάν. Hutchinson in his commentary of 1985 writes that the ἀβουλία is φίλος 'partly because it is associated with an object dear to Laius' heart'. West in 1991 (see n. 54 below) rendered the phrase by 'sentimental thoughtlessness', and in 1999 (p. 40) modified this to 'foolish fondness'. I cannot see that the adjective can bear this sense, and in the circumstances this reading yields an almost comical understatement. I would prefer to accept the variant ἀβουλίαι and to take the sense to be 'ruled by his φίλοι, rashly'. This reading was adopted by Verrall in his commentary of 1887, who took it to mean 'by his love, i.e., his wife'. But more probably the sense is that Laius was persuaded by those close to him, unwisely, that he ought to beget an heir. Unfortunately Verrall preferred a variant, ἀβουλίαν, yielding an internal accusative which is surely inferior to the dative.

When it should have told of Laius' first journey to Delphi, the scholion jumps ahead and tells of the second, which can have taken place only long afterwards, when Oedipus was grown up. Oedipus meets Laius ἐν τῇ σχιστῇ ὁδῷ (*O.T.* 733–4) and in Euripides (*Phoen.* 38), which was in Phocis, at a place where the path from Daulis meets the road to Delphi and another road which goes south. But the scholia on the Sophoclean passage quote a fragment of Aeschylus (387 A Radt), clearly from one or other of the lost plays of the Theban trilogy, which describes a meeting at another σχιστῇ ὁδός, better known, which is near Potniai, not far south of Thebes.

κτείνας δὲ αὐτοὺς ἔθαψε παραυτίκα σὺν τοῖς ἱματίοις, ἀποσπάσας τὸν ζωστήρα καὶ τὸ ξίφος τοῦ Λαίου καὶ φορῶν. τὸ δὲ ἄρμα ὑποστρέψας ἔδωκε τῷ Πολύβῳ. εἶτα ἔγημε τὴν μητέρα λύσας τὸ αἶνιγμα.

At this point Deubner (n. 23, 6) finds an abrupt change of subject from Laius to Oedipus, which he thinks indicates a change of source. Certainly we should expect that some word, possibly a pronoun like ἐκεῖνος, would be inserted as the subject of the sentence. But does this awkwardness really indicate a change of source? The oddity might easily be due to yet another omission.

Oedipus kills Laius and his charioteer, and carries off the belt and sword of Laius, and also his chariot, which as at Euripides, *Phoen.* 45 he gives to his supposed father, Polybus. Then he must have made his way to Thebes.

The scholion tells us with the greatest possible brevity that he married the widowed queen after having solved the riddle, which had not been mentioned in the earlier passage about the Sphinx. Albin Lesky<sup>42</sup> may have been right in thinking that in the *Oedipodeia* the Sphinx was simply a killer, not the propounder of an enigma, and that Oedipus fought and killed her.<sup>43</sup> This lends some colour to the theory that after the insertion running from ἦν δὲ to *μνηστήρες* the writer switched from the use of the *Oidipodeia* to a version based on tragedy, in which Oedipus solved the riddle. But we cannot rule out the possibility that the writer of the summary carelessly brought in the story of the riddle, familiar to all from tragedy.

μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ θυσίας τινὰς ἐπιτελέσας ἐν τῷ Κιθαιρῶνι κατήρχετο ἔχων καὶ τὴν Ἰοκάστην ἐν τοῖς ὀχήμασι, καὶ γινομένων αὐτῶν περὶ τὸν τόπον ἐκεῖνον τῆς σχιστῆς ὁδοῦ ὑπομνηθεὶς ἐδείκνυε τῇ Ἰοκάστῃ τὸν τόπον καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα διηγῆσατο καὶ τὸν ζωστήρα ἔδειξεν. ἡ δὲ δεινῶς φέρουσα ὅμως ἐσιώπα. ἠγνόει γὰρ υἱὸν ὄντα. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἦλθὲ τις γέρων ἵπποβουκόλος ἀπὸ Σικυνῶνος, ὃς εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ πᾶν ὅπως τε αὐτὸν εὔρε καὶ ἀνείλετο καὶ τῇ Μερόπῃ δέδωκε, καὶ ἅμα τὰ σπάργανα αὐτῷ ἐδείκνυε καὶ τὰ κέντρα ἀπῆιτε τε αὐτὸν τὰ ζωᾶρια, καὶ οὕτως ἐγνώσθη τὸ ὅλον. φασὶ δὲ ὅτι μετὰ τὸν θάνατον τῆς Ἰοκάστης καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ τύφλωσιν ἔγημεν Εὐρυγάνειαν παρθένον, ἐξ ἧς αὐτῷ γεγόνασιν οἱ τέσσαρες παῖδες. ταῦτά φησὶ Πείσανδρος.

<sup>42</sup> A. Lesky, *Mitt. Ver. kl. Phil* (Wien), 5 (1928), 3–4 = *Ges. Schr.* 318–19; cf. H. Lloyd-Jones in *Dionysiaca* (Cambridge, 1978), 58–9 = *Academic Papers* 1 (Oxford, 1990), 332–3 and J. R. March, *The Creative Poet. BICS Supplement* 49 (1987), 124–5.

<sup>43</sup> 'Oidipus ist erst zum Rätsellöser geworden, als die Bewohnerin des böotischen Phikiongebirges mit einem jeder Mischwesen gleichgesetzt worden war, welche die von der orientalischen Phantasie angeregte griechische Kunst geschaffen hatte': F. Wehrli, *Mus. Helv.* 14 (1957), 111 = *Theoria und Humanitas* (Zürich, 1972), 63.



After this Oedipus offers 'certain sacrifices' on Kithairon. We remember that a peak of Kithairon was the site of the great festival of the Daidala, belonging to the celebrated Plataean cult of Hera Teleia, who is identical with Hera Gamostolos.<sup>44</sup> The proximity to Thebes of this celebrated cult surely helps to explain the importance of Hera in the story. Perhaps Teiresias had advised Oedipus, as he had earlier advised Laius, to sacrifice to this deity. At any rate, the mention of this locality indicates that Hera's part in the story is not forgotten. Can we be sure that the scholion is not still following the *Oidipodeia*?

On the way back<sup>45</sup> Oedipus shows Iocaste where he killed Laius; presumably this was on the *σχιστῇ ὁδός* that was near Potniai. He also shows Iocaste the belt; Iocaste is distressed, but says nothing, not knowing that he is her son. Later the shepherd who found him and brought him to the wife of Polybus<sup>46</sup> arrives from Sicyon—in some versions of the legend Polybus is king of Sicyon, not of Corinth<sup>47</sup>—bringing the baby-clothes in which he was exposed and the *κέντρα* responsible for his swollen feet, and asking for a reward for having preserved him.

All is now known, and Iocaste kills herself and Oedipus blinds himself. But he gets married again, to Euryganeia, and she and not Iocaste is the mother of his four children. The marriage with Euryganeia is also mentioned by Pherecydes 3 *FGrH* 95 and by Pausanias 9.5.11, who remarks that it is found in the *Oidipodeia*.<sup>48</sup> Pausanias also makes the interesting observation that in view of the statement in the *Odyssey* (11.274, quoted above) that after the parricide and incestuous marriage of Oedipus the gods made these known to men *ἄφap*, 'at once', Epicaste could hardly have been the mother of four children by Oedipus. It may be significant that in historic times certain important families, including those of the Aigeidai in Sparta and of Theron of Acragas,<sup>49</sup> traced their descent from Oedipus, and will not have wished to have an ancestor who was the fruit of incest; this may well have led to the invention of the later marriage. Euryganeia was a Phlegyan from neighbouring Phocis, daughter of Hyperphas or Periphas or else Teuthras.<sup>50</sup> One presumes that after his mother's suicide Oedipus continued to reign in Thebes, as he did according to *Od.* 11.271–2 and as the mention of the funeral games for him at *Il.* 23.679–80 suggests.

<sup>44</sup> See L. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States I* (Oxford, 1896), 189 and 241, n. 2; M. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig, 1906), 50–1; K. Kerényi, *Zeus und Hera* (Leiden, 1972), 114–15. Before the battle of Plateia in 480 the Plataeans at the bidding of the Delphic oracle sacrificed to Zeus and to Hera Kithaironia (Plutarch, *Life of Aristides* 11.3).

<sup>45</sup> In Sophocles (*O.T.* 732–4) Laius is killed in Phocis, on the *σχιστῇ ὁδός*, where the road from Delphi meets the road from Daulis and the road from Thebes.

<sup>46</sup> Merope here and at Sophocles, *O.T.* 775; in Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.5.7 Polyboia, and in Pherecydes 3 *FGrH* fr. 93 Medusa.

<sup>47</sup> Sicyon is named also in scholia on *Od.* 11.271 and E. *Phoen.* 26 and in Hyginus 66 (in the fragmentum *Niebuhrianum*; see P. K. Marshall's edition of 1993, p. 66 and its preface, p. ix). In the tragedians Polybos is king of Corinth, but he is also named as king of Sicyon; see Bernabé (n. 7) on his line 24, and add to his bibliography Audrey Griffin, *Sikyon* (Oxford, 1982), 34–5. According to Pausanias 2.6.6, Polybus' daughter Lysianassa was the wife of Talaos and mother of Adrastus.

<sup>48</sup> Astymedusa is mentioned as a second wife in S D on *Il.* 4.376 and as a third by Pherecydes, loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Theron: see Pindar, *Ol.* 2.42–3. The Spartan clan of the Aigeidae built a temple to the Erinyes of Laius and Oedipus (Herodotus 4.149); like Theron they traced their descent from Thersandros; see U. von Wilamowitz, *Pindaros* (Berlin, 1922), 477 and H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* (Munich, 1962<sup>2</sup>), 485–6 = *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, trans. M. Hadas and J. Willis (Oxford, 1975), 427.

<sup>50</sup> See Pherecydes, cited in n. 46 above.

Even Robert allows that the marriage with Euryganeia comes not from tragedy, but from the *Oidipodeia*, so that on his view the compiler returned to the *Oidipodeia* at the end of his narrative.

It is conceivable that some attributed the *Oedipodeia* to Pisander of Camirus,<sup>51</sup> and that in consequence of this the writer of the scholion named him as his authority. It is also conceivable that Pisander of Laranda could have included in his *Ἡρωικὰ Θεογαμίαι*, in which the sexual unions of gods provided a framework for long mythological narrations, an account of Theban myths, starting perhaps from the marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia.<sup>52</sup> But on the whole it is likelier that it was a prose writer of the Hellenistic period or later who wrote the scholion; how far its deficiencies are due to the corruption of the text and how far to the carelessness of a copyist is not easy to determine. It seems to me likelier than not that Bethe was right and that in general the scholion sketches the plot of the *Oidipodeia*, though I do not rule out the possibility that it is to some extent affected by reminiscences of tragedy,<sup>53</sup> as in the case of the surprisingly casual mention of the riddle.

If this is right, the anger of the goddess continued over a long period. One is reminded of the anger of Hera and Athene, which brought about the fall of Troy; and one is reminded of the anger of Artemis against Oeneus, which brought about the death of Meleager (*Il.* 9.533–4 and Bacchylides 5.93–4). Bacchylides (123–4) remarks that not content with the damage inflicted by the sending of the Calydonian boar, Artemis provoked the disastrous quarrel over its spoils. Hera was a particularly vengeful goddess; one recalls her persecution of Herakles and other bastards of Zeus, and her hostility to Pelias in the Argonautic legend. The proximity to Thebes of the important cult of Hera as patroness of marriage is highly likely to be relevant.

First Hera's wrath caused Laius to remain childless; then when he neglected Apollo's warning by begetting Oedipus, Hera waited until Oedipus was grown and then sent the Sphinx. Oedipus dealt with her, but with consequences that made still more terrible Hera's punishment of the house of Laius. Iocaste in the prologue of the *Phoenissae* (19–20) says that Apollo told Laius

εἰ γὰρ τεκνώσεις παῖδ', ἀποκτενεῖ σ' ὁ φύς,  
καὶ πᾶς σὸς οἶκος βήσεται δι' αἵματος.

We have seen that Euripides' play includes certain details that derive, directly or indirectly, from the epic, and this may be one of them. It may well be that either in the *Oidipodeia* or the *Thebaid* it was suggested that the sorrows of the house of Laius would not end with Oedipus. In any case, it seems likely that the *Oidipodeia* told how Hera's wrath fell upon at least two generations of the family.

<sup>51</sup> The Tabula Borgiana (IG XIV 1292; see Bernabé [n. 7], *PEG* p.17 and Davies [n. 7], 20) attributes it to Cinaethon of Lacedaemon.

<sup>52</sup> With this possibility in mind it is interesting to consider the testimony of Johannes Philoponus on Aristotle, *Anal. Post.* 77B 32 (*Comm. in Arist. Graeca* 13.3.156–7 Wallies) = Pisander fr. 4 E. Heitsch, *Die gr. Dichterfr. d. röm. Kaiserzeit* 2.45) = Epicus Cyclus T.2 Davies: Πεισάνδρου δὲ τὴν αὐτὴν πραγματείαν ποιησαμένου, λέγω δὴ πλείστην ἱστορίαν κατὰ τάξιν συναγαγόντος, ἀντιποιησαμένου δὲ καὶ εὐτελείας καταφρονηθῆναι φασὶ τὰ τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ ποιητῶν συγγράμματα, διὸ μὴδὲ εὐρίσκεσθαι τὰ ποιήματα τὰ ἐν τοῖς κύκλοις ἀναγεγραμμένα.

<sup>53</sup> Tragedy tended to leave out the part played by Hera; at E. *Phoen.* 810 the Sphinx is sent by Hades, and in Euripides' *Antigone* fr. 178 Nauck and Kannicht, ap. S on *Phoen.* 1031 τὴν Σφίγγα ὁ Διόνυσος ἔπεμψε τοῖς Θηβαίοις, ὥσπερ Εὐριπίδης ἐν Ἀντιγόνη λέγει (Unger: ὡς ἐναντία [ἐναντίον M] λέγειν).

So we come to the *Thebaid*.<sup>54</sup> Fragment 2 tells how Polyneices set before Oedipus the table of Cadmus and the golden cup of Laius, with the result that he was infuriated and cursed his sons. Curiously enough fr. 3, cited in a scholion on Sophocles, *O.C.* 1375, told how the sons of Oedipus, accustomed to send their father each year the shoulder of the sacrificial beast, doubtless a beast sacrificed at some particular festival, in one year sent instead the thigh, with the result that their father took it as an insult and cursed them. Can these two fragments really have come from the same poem? The first fragment suggests that Oedipus was distressed at being reminded of the father whom he had killed. It would seem that the memory of the parricide caused Oedipus to utter a curse that continued the working of the curse that came when Laius disobeyed the injunction not to beget a son. That is surely an instance of a curse lasting over several generations. It is clear that the *Thebaid* told the story of the expedition of Adrastus and the Seven and the fatal duel between the brothers. Whether they died childless, as they did according to the choral anapaests that follow the messenger scene in our version of Aeschylus' play (828), we do not know; but the epic called the *Epigonoí* described the successful expedition against Thebes led by Laodamas, the son of Eteocles, and Thersandros, the son of Polyneices.

It would seem that the *Oidipodeia* and probably the *Thebaid* differed from those epics which could be called 'cyclical' in the pejorative sense, in many respects, including their treatment of curses and divine anger. They are linked with Homer by the central importance of divine wrath. The word *μῆνις*, one recalls, denotes a special kind of anger usually divine. 'Was *μῆνις* von den Bedeutungsverwandten *χόλος*, *ὀργή*, *κότος*, *θυμός* trennt', writes Hjalmar Frisk,<sup>55</sup> 'ist jedenfalls nicht so sehr der objektive Inhalt des Wortes, der Gedanke an den anhaltenden, im tiefsten sitzenden Groll als vielmehr seine Obertöne und sein Stilcharakter.' It is a sacral term, properly applicable to the anger of a god and very exceptionally of the wrath of an exceptional mortal, Achilles; Calvert Watkins (n. 53, 193) observes that Achilles does not dignify his own by calling it *μῆνις*, but uses the word *μηνιθμός* (*Il.* 16.62, 202, 282). It appears that the *Oidipodeia*, and probably also the *Thebaid*, had in common with Homer the central importance of a divine wrath. One remembers that these two epics are attributed to Homer by several writers, including Herodotus (see above, p. 3).

In *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, 1971, 1983<sup>2</sup>), 121–2, I argued that Aeschylus in his *Laius*, the first play of his Theban trilogy, must have made use of the Chrysippus story, and indeed by carelessly writing on p. 121 'What was the *Laius* about? The one suitable legend that involves Laius is the Chrysippus story' seemed to imply that it must have been the main subject of the play. G. O. Hutchinson in 1985<sup>56</sup> pointed out that the occurrence of the word *χυτρίζειν* (fr. 12 Radt = fr. D Hutchinson) indicates that the exposure of the infant Oedipus must have been mentioned in the play, which certainly indicates that the Chrysippus story was not the play's main subject. But the infant was exposed in consequence of Apollo's warning, and Apollo's warning was the consequence of Hera's wrath. The point made by Hutchinson was made also by West in 1991.<sup>57</sup> He also argued that the curse of Pelops and the oracle given to Laius were

<sup>54</sup> See W. Burkert, 'Seven against Thebes: an oral tradition between Babylonian magic and Greek literature', in *I Poemi Epici Rapsodici non Omerici e la Tradizione Orale* (Padua, 1981), with useful bibliography on 48.

<sup>55</sup> H. Frisk, *Eranos* 44 (1946), 29 = *Kl. Schr.* (1966), 391. Cf. Calvert Watkins, 'A propos de MHNIS', *Bulletin de la Société Linguistique de Paris* 72 (1977), 187–209.

<sup>56</sup> G. O. Hutchinson, commentary on Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes* (Oxford, 1985), xxiii.

<sup>57</sup> See M. West, 'The religious interpretation of myth in Aeschylus', in *Mito, Religion e Sociedade* (São Paulo, 1991), 230.

'basically alternative motives'. But would Apollo have issued the warning if Laius had not been guilty of some offence? The one offence which we are told that Laius committed was the rape of Chrysippus, and it is surely probable that this was mentioned in the play.<sup>58</sup> We do not know whether in Aeschylus Apollo's command was the consequence of the wrath of Hera or of the curse of Pelops; the hypotheses to the *Septem* and the *Phoenissae*<sup>59</sup> simply say that Pelops cursed Laius. But according to a scholion on *Phoen.* 60 (ed. Schwartz, p. 258) *φασὶν ὅτι Πέλοψ Χρυσίππου ἀρπαγέντος κατηράσατο μέχρι παίδων εἶναι τὸ κακόν.*

Can we know anything about the treatment of the house of Atreus in early epic? In the fragments of early epic that we have, evidence is sadly lacking. West (n. 1, 36–7) has pointed out that in the *Odyssey* 'Aegisthus appears to kill Agamemnon simply because he wants him out of the way so that he can keep Clytemnestra.' Of course, that does not prove that the author of the *Odyssey* did not know the story of Atreus and Thyestes; it may very well be that he did not mention it because he did not need to. But perhaps with due caution we can infer something about lost early epics from the extant tragedies.

In the *Agamemnon* Cassandra has a vision of the ghosts of the murdered children of Thyestes, and later when she has emerged from her mantic ecstasy and is speaking in trimeters she speaks of the Erinyes, who have never ceased to be present in the house, singing of the Ate that first began the trouble and spitting, in turn, on the polluted marriage-bed of Atreus. Later, Aegisthus tells of the curse of Thyestes, which has found its fulfilment in the death of Agamemnon. Cassandra does not specify the *πρώταρχος ἄτη*, but at 1585–6 Aegisthus speaks of the dispute over the kingship. For the chorus of the *Electra* of Euripides (699–700) the trouble started with that dispute. The story as they tell it has much of the element of fantasy that Griffin<sup>60</sup> has found to be characteristic of the post-Homeric epics of the cycle; it tells of Thyestes' theft of the golden lamb symbolic of the kingship, and it relates how Zeus marked his disapproval of Thyestes' crime by causing the sun to reverse his usual path. Sophocles in his *Electra* (502) obtains a powerful if momentary effect<sup>61</sup> by having the chorus tell how the chain of disasters started with the curse of the charioteer Myrtilus, who by removing the lynch-pins of Oenomaos' chariot had given Pelops victory and the hand of Hippodameia. We cannot show that these legends were narrated in any cyclic epic, but

<sup>58</sup> True, the crime of Laius is not mentioned in the *O.T.*, and T. C. W. Stinton, 'The scope and limits of allusion in Greek tragedy', in *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy: Essays Presented to D. J. Conacher* (Calgary, 1986), 67–8 = (n. 3, 1990), 454–5 argued that 'anything essential to the plot of a Greek tragedy is always mentioned in the play'. But the only thing about the crime of Laius that is essential in the *O.T.* is the fact that he had committed a crime. Many of the original audiences knew the myths well, and even those who did not would realise, when Oedipus says (1184) that he is sprung from those who should not have begotten him, 'who am living with those I should not be living with, who have killed those whom I should not have killed', that this means that 'his parents have turned out to be those who should not have been his parents—the man he killed and the woman he married', but that his very conception has been a defiance of a divine command. Stinton's attempt (ibid. 85–6 = 479–80) to deny the presence of another allusion to an event outside a play, the allusion to the apotheosis of Heracles at the end of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, has been refuted by Carolin Hahnemann, *ZPE* 126 (1998), 67–8, by means of a convincing new interpretation of Aeschylus, fr. 73 B Radt.

<sup>59</sup> See n. 19 above; for the relevant hypothesis of the *Seven*, see O. L. Smith, *Scholia in Aeschylum* I (Leipzig, 1976), II.2 (1982) 3.16, 7.2.

<sup>60</sup> See n.3 above.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Euripides, *Orestes* 990–1 and *Helena* 386–7, and the eastern pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia (built about the middle of the fifth century); see Ismène Triantis s.v. Myrtilos, *LIMC* VI.1, 639–40.

I do not believe that they were invented by Aeschylus or by any tragedian. They have in common a fantastic element that to me suggests an epic source.

A second factor in the death of Agamemnon in Aeschylus is the wrath of Artemis, which led to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and the revenge of Clytemnestra. This was mentioned in the *Cypria*,<sup>62</sup> where as in the *Electra* of Sophocles (563–4) the goddess is said to be motivated by anger at Agamemnon's boast that he was a better archer than herself. It would seem that in the original myth the sacrifice was one of those sacrifices of a young person that were necessary in order that a campaign should be successful.<sup>63</sup> But the poet of the *Cypria* made it a consequence of the anger of the goddess, which seems to indicate that even a cyclic epic could use divine anger and its consequences to link events in different generations. Again, the almost frivolous nature of the motive attributed to the goddess reminds one of the treatment of the gods in epic that was discussed above (p. 2).

Treating of the Theban trilogy of Aeschylus, West (n. 1, 40) writes that although there is much emphasis in the *Seven* on the curse laid by Oedipus upon his sons, 'as to the earlier misfortunes of Laius and Oedipus, there is no hint that they had anything to do with a curse'. But can we be sure that this would seem to be the case if we possessed the first two plays of the trilogy? He goes on to write that when the women of the chorus look back to 'the ancient transgression, soon punished, but abiding to the third generation', that began the trouble, 'they tell us that it was Laios' disregard of Apollo's repeated warnings not to father a son'. In this particular play there is no reason why we should be told that they go further back; but when one gives the question a moment's thought, one cannot help wondering why Apollo gave Laius those warnings, and as this was the third play of the trilogy, one can hardly help guessing that though in the third play it was not mentioned, because there was no need to mention it, somewhere in the two earlier plays the reason for Apollo's warning would have been found. It is likely that in the *Oidipodeia* Hera sent the Sphinx, and that she did so because Laius had raped Chrysippus, and it is surely likelier than not that this story was mentioned in the *Laius*, the first play of the trilogy. The trouble will have started not with an ancestral curse, but with the anger of a deity.

When treating of Sophocles, West (n. 1, 40–1) starts by quoting the first triad of the second stasimon of the *Antigone* (582–603):

For those whose house is shaken by the gods, no part of ruin is wanting. . . . From ancient times, I see the troubles of the dead of the Labdacid house falling hard upon one another, nor does one generation release another, but some one of the gods shatters them, and they have no means of deliverance. For lately the light spread out above the last root in the house of Oedipus; it too is mown down by the bloody chopper of the infernal gods, folly in speech and the Erinyes in the mind.

Later, West reminds us, the Chorus suggests to Antigone that she is paying for 'some trial of her fathers' (856). 'Neither she nor they know anything of a curse', he continues, 'they only know that the family has suffered a catalogue of disasters, and they can only speculate that "some god" is set on its destruction.' Now in this particular play, which is not one of a connected trilogy, it is not necessary for the poet to go into the whole family history; all he needs is a reminder that the family of the Labdacids has long suffered a series of calamities that must have been initiated by the

<sup>62</sup> See n. 28.

<sup>63</sup> See H. Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 103 (1983), 87–102 = *Academic Papers* (n. 42), 2.306–32.

anger of a god. The poet surely knew of this succession of calamities from an epic source.

West now goes on (n. 1, 41) to the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. 'The story begins', he writes,

with the oracle given to Laius. . . . The only curse is the one laid by Oedipus on Laius' murderer and on anyone who shelters him; when Tiresias says to Oedipus 'You will presently be driven out of this land by the double-edged curse of your father and your mother', this is vatic language and does not refer to a literal curse uttered by Laius or Jocasta.

But for his present purpose the poet has no need to mention anything earlier than Apollo's oracle. Surely the poet must have known what prompted Apollo's response to Laius.

'In *Oedipus at Colonus*', West continues (n. 1, 42),

the tribulations of the house are contemplated with baffled despair. Oedipus protests that his actions were unintentional errors; he does not see himself as the victim of any curse, but of the gods, who led him into trouble, perhaps (he surmises) because they had some long-standing grudge against the family. Again, the oracle given to Laius is treated as the start of the whole matter, and nothing prior to it is mentioned.

West is perfectly right when he writes that the trouble is due not to a curse, but to divine anger; but in this particular play, as in the *Antigone* and the *O.T.*, the poet does not need to explain how that anger originated. 'There is no question of a family curse going back to Laius', West writes, 'From the high incidence of calamities people infer some divine enmity, but they have no explanation to offer for it; they are unaware of any incident that could have provoked it.' Exactly; but should we infer from this that the poet believed that there was no reason?

The whole body of early Greek myth was like a vast spider's web, in which countless events and countless persons were linked together. The stories were not invented by the authors of the post-Homeric epics which we know about; most of them must go back a long way, to the time before the introduction of writing. Like the epic poets, the tragedians, and also many members of the original audiences, including, one would imagine, those whom the poet most wished to please, must have possessed a considerable knowledge of the web, so that they knew what place the story told in a particular play occupied within it, and could use or allude to an episode in the past without telling the entire story of which it formed a part.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Professor Rudolf Kassel has generously devoted much precious time to the improvement of this article, and Professor C. Collard, the editor of this journal, has made useful comments.