

FROM MELOS TO COLONUS:
ΤΙΝΑΣ ΧΩΡΟΥΣ ΑΦΙΓΜΕΘ' . . . ;

GORDON KIRKWOOD
Cornell University

My remarks this evening¹ have their origins in a topic that has interested me for several years: the kinship that exists between Thucydides and Sophocles in some fundamental aspects of their analysis of human behavior. I hope sometime to present an account of various facets of this relationship, but for the specific argument of my immediate subject this broad topic provides only a point of introduction, albeit an important one. What I have to say this evening principally concerns the unique vision of Athens that is presented in Sophocles' last play, the last product of fifth-century Attic tragedy.

To most of its critics *Oedipus at Colonus* has seemed a fervently patriotic and a deeply religious play.² I do not disagree, but I shall argue that the emotion of patriotism that is conveyed by the language of the play is not, primarily, what usually passes for patriotism, and that the religion of this play is something quite different from the conventional piety that has often been thought of as Sophoclean. This combination of peculiar patriotism and peculiar religion enlarges the story of the end of the life of Oedipus, at Colonus, into what may fairly be called Sophocles' myth of Athens. When Oedipus asks Antigone, at the outset of the play, "What land have we come to?" he is asking a question to which the play gives a deeply patriotic and religious answer.

¹ Presidential address delivered before the American Philological Association, Toronto, Canada, December 28, 1984. Some material appropriate only for the immediate occasion has been omitted and documentation has been added.

² A notable exception to the usual judgment concerning the element of religion in the play is provided by Ivan Linforth's "Religion and Drama in *Oedipus at Colonus*," *UCPCP* 14.4 (1951) 72–192. Though recognizing that "there are religious elements in the play which form part of its very texture" (75), Linforth's position is that it is not, overall, a religious play. Much of Linforth's criticism of previous work is valid, and the essay is a very important study of the play, emphasizing as its central theme "a profound and penetrating study" (185) of the person of Oedipus. I do not share his point of view concerning the element of religion, and believe that it arises from too narrow a definition of what can appropriately be called religious.

In spite of what on the surface seem to be a simple design and a static theme, it is a play of great complexity.³ It is exceptional in the richness of its scenic, visual element and in the variety of its stage action; it is also thematically complex, and no one approach can comprehend all of it. What I have to say about the play in this lecture is a partial view only, and it is above all an attempt to illustrate my conviction that *Oedipus at Colonus* constitutes a great and singular testimony to the meaning of fifth-century Athenian achievement.

I begin, however, not with Sophocles' play but, briefly, with a passage in Thucydides, in the Melian Dialogue. Most students of Thucydides would agree that the description, at the end of Book 5, of the conference between the Athenians and the Melians that preceded the siege and reduction of Melos in 416 marks a new stage in the historian's commentary on Athenian imperialism. The brutality of the action itself was not anything strikingly new in the military conduct of Athens or in the contemporary practice of warfare; but in Thucydides' history the incident has generally, and I think rightly, been regarded as marking a turning point.⁴

The rhetoric of the Melian Dialogue often reflects key terminology of preceding passages in the *History*, pointedly reminding the reader of Athenian attitudes at earlier stages of the empire, notably in the speech of the Athenian embassy at Sparta in Book 1 and in the speeches of Cleon and Diodotus in the debate on the fate of the Mytileneans in Book 3. I want to call attention to just one of these phrases, τὸ ἐπιεικές. The meaning of the word ἐπιεικές and the corresponding abstract, ἐπιεικεία, which Thucydides also uses, is roughly equivalent to the notion of "fairness" or "reasonableness," as distinguished from "justice."⁵ This is how Jacqueline de Romilly translates it in her article "Fairness and Kindness in Thucydides,"⁶ and it is a part of that "douceur" well documented and described in de Romilly's *La Douceur dans la pensée grecque*.⁷ It is related, of course, to εἰκός, and the notion of

³ The basic pattern is that of the suppliant drama as we know it from Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* and Euripides' *Heraclidae* and *Suppliant Women*. Sophocles builds on this traditional form and changes it significantly; the suppliant becomes the benefactor and the supplicated. On this aspect of the play see Karl Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, transl. H. and D. Harvey (Oxford 1979) 195–97.

⁴ A clear and authoritative statement of this view is given on pages 209–12 of John H. Finley Jr.'s *Thucydides* (Cambridge, Mass. 1942).

⁵ There is in Greek literature a long tradition of contrast between τὸ ἐπιεικές and τὸ δίκαιον, and between ἐπιεικές and νόμος, with τὸ ἐπιεικές roughly equivalent to ἀγραφος νόμος. Aristotle discusses these matters in *Rhetoric* 1.1375A–1376B. For documentation and discussion see Rudolf Hirzel, *Agraphos Nomos* (Leipzig 1900) and W. Vollgraff, *L'Oraison Funèbre de Gorgias* (Leiden 1952).

⁶ *Phoenix* 28 (1974) 95–100.

⁷ Paris 1979. See also K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Berkeley 1974) 61–63.

what is probable or to be expected is present in it. Conversely, Thucydides and other writers of the period use *εἰκός* in a way that moves from mere probability to morality, from what is “likely” to what is “reasonable” and “fair.”⁸

At the outset of the conference, the Athenians propose (5.85) that their procedure consist of dialogue instead of set speeches, and the Melians acknowledge the reasonableness (*ἐπιείκεια*, 5.86) of the proposal. But in what they then proceed to say they leave no doubt that they regard the circumstances and conditions of the proposed conference as in complete conflict with this show of reasonableness:

ἡ μὲν ἐπιείκεια τοῦ διδάσκειν καθ’ ἡσυχίαν ἀλλήλους οὐ ψέγεται, τὰ δὲ τοῦ πολέμου παρόντα ἤδη καὶ οὐ μέλλοντα διαφέροντα αὐτοῦ φαίνεται. (86)

The *μὲν . . . δέ* construction in which they state the contrast between the form and the content of the proposal asserts, diplomatically but clearly, that the Athenian ultimatum lacks *ἐπιείκεια*. In Book 1, when the Athenian ambassadors at Sparta are justifying Athenian imperial rule, they make a great point of its relative mildness which they describe (1.76.4) as *τὸ ἐπιεικές*. Another ruling power, they declare, would brook no criticism; Athens, because its rule is *ἐπιεικές*, is criticized rather than praised. In 3.40.2, Cleon, in the course of his speech opposing any clemency for the Mytileneans, names *ἐπιείκεια* as one of the three qualities most harmful to imperial rule (*ἄξυμφορώτατα τῇ ἀρχῇ*), along with pity (*οἶκτος*) and delight in rhetoric (*ἡδονὴ λόγων*). Thus Thucydides (or Cleon, if we are to ascribe the choice of words to him, which I doubt) implies that *ἐπιείκεια* is in fact a characteristic quality of the Athenians, while making it explicitly clear that in the popular post-Periclean leader’s view of how to rule it is a quality to be suppressed.

Returning now to the Melian Dialogue, I want to examine next the sentence that constitutes most of 90:⁹

ΜΗΛ. *Ἡ μὲν δὴ νομίζομεν γε, χρήσιμον (ἀνάγκη γάρ, ἐπειδὴ ὑμεῖς οὕτω παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον τὸ ξυμφέρον λέγειν ὑπέθεσθε) μὴ καταλύειν ὑμᾶς [ἡμᾶς] τὸ κοινὸν ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ τῷ αἰεὶ ἐν

⁸ For discussion of the forms and meanings of these and related words see Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, s.v. *ῥοικα*. For the range of meaning of *εἰκός* in Thucydides, compare the phrases *κατὰ τὸ εἰκός* (1.121.4 and elsewhere) and *παρὰ τὸ εἰκός* (2.62.1 and elsewhere), where the idea of probability is dominant, with 5.96, where *τὸ εἰκός* is manifestly “fair.” While the idea of fairness is regularly prominent in *ἐπιεικές*, there are examples, such as *πρόφασις ἐπιεικής*, 3.9.2, where “reasonable” dominates.

⁹ My translation depends heavily on the notes ad loc. by Gomme and Andrewes in *HCT*. The manuscripts are divided between *ὑμᾶς* and *ἡμᾶς* after *καταλύειν*; the change in meaning is insignificant for my argument. The Loeb translation of C. F. Smith, “that what is equitable should also be just,” may be preferable. De Romilly, in the Budé, takes this phrase, without the *καί*, as “the customary respect for his rights.”

κινδύνῳ γιγνομένῳ εἶναι τὰ εἰκότα καὶ δίκαια, καὶ τι καὶ ἐντὸς τοῦ ἀκριβοῦς πείσαντά τινα ὠφελήθηται.

As we ourselves see it, it is useful (we must speak in these terms, since you have made it a condition to discuss utility, disregarding justice) for you [us] not to destroy what is for the common good: that whoever is in danger on any given occasion should be granted fair treatment and justice, and should thereby get some benefit, if he can be persuasive, even if his argument falls short of strict validity.

There is a great deal in this difficult sentence that is open to dispute, to say nothing of its textual uncertainties, but I think that the following summary of it, which I borrow from the edition of Book 5 by C. E. Graves (London 1891), reflects the *communis opinio* of editors and critics: "The Melians urge that, even setting aside abstract considerations of justice, they may hope for fair treatment on the grounds of general expediency." In other words, they are hoping for ἐπιείκεια; the context suggests that τὰ εἰκότα implies both what is fair and what is to be expected. The arrogant rejection of the principle that marks the Athenian reply emphasizes the Athenian loss of their traditional ἐπιείκεια by the year 416, and the clear adumbration (in the rest of 90) of Athens' coming need for kind behavior on the part of her enemies¹⁰ lends a further and sinister dimension to this loss of a quality in which Athens formerly took special pride. What the Athenians say in reply, in 91, is, in effect, as follows: "We have less to fear from potential conquerors than from unruly subjects; it is useful for our imperial policies for us to take Melos, and it is useful to you for the safety of your state to yield." So much for the traditional fairness of Athens. Gone is the assertion of Athenian moderation in rule that is put forward in Book 1; and no longer can we ascribe the loss of this characteristic to the influence of a single demagogue. It is Athens that is thus characterized. I cannot refrain from quoting a sentence on this passage written by William Scott Ferguson, in the *Cambridge Ancient History*: "Words penned seemingly without passion, which yet, by their pitiless exposure of the soul of a despot nation, have power even to-day to rouse the conscience of mankind against states that act as if the weak have no right which the strong need to respect. Another island remained to tempt Athens to its nemesis."¹¹

¹⁰ A. Andrewes, in "The Melian Dialogue and Perikles' Last Speech," *PCPhS* 6 (1960) 1–10, though his general view is that (10) "theories which take [the Dialogue] as a comment specifically on the Athens of 416 seem to me mostly to end in rhetoric or nonsense," nevertheless believes that "it is a hundred to one that this chapter [91] was written after the life-and-death struggle with Sparta had been resumed, and after the disaster in Sicily had given a wholly new turn to that struggle" (4).

¹¹ *CAH* 5 (Cambridge 1958) 281.

It is time now to move from Melos to Colonus and to an incident about two-thirds of the way through Sophocles' play. Theseus has rescued the daughters of Oedipus from the clutches of the invading Theban soldiery led by Creon. Creon's purpose in seizing the daughters was, of course, to get Oedipus under Theban control. The presence of Oedipus in Attica is dangerous to the Theban rulers. At this point Oedipus addresses Theseus in a speech of gratitude; in the course of it he specifies three characteristics of Theseus and his people, characteristics that he declares that he has found in them alone of men: piety (τὸ εὐσεβές), freedom from deceit (τὸ μὴ ψευδοστομεῖν), and fairness (τὸ ἐπιεικές). Whether the Athenians of Sophocles' time or any other period of antiquity merited praise as being uniquely disposed to adherence to the truth is open to question.¹² But whatever flattery of his fellow citizens we may ascribe to the playwright in these words of Oedipus, they have an integral dramatic function, sharpening the contrast, which is of central importance for the action of the play, between the iniquities and deceptions of Creon and the reliable, stalwart hospitality and friendship displayed by Theseus and the Coloneans. The word ἐπιεικές is especially striking. The quality that Thucydides portrayed as lost during the Peloponnesian War is, in this Sophoclean myth of Athens composed presumably in the closing years of the War, restored to her.

What is the playwright's purpose in presenting this description of Athens? There was, especially in the fourth century, an Athens "invented" by the orators, a utopia possessed of all the virtues. This is the Athens of the various funeral orations, which we find in Thucydides and Plato and, above all, in the orators. Nicole Loraux, in her recent book entitled *L'Invention d'Athènes*,¹³ has given us a searching study of this Athens invented by Athenian rhetoric. But I think that we would be wrong to suppose that the aged playwright, in a burst of fervent but perhaps dim-sighted *amor patriae*, has in this final play adopted the propagandistic picture of the orators. I shall argue that this Sophoclean "invention" belongs to a different order of reality. My argument has nothing to do with whether the praises of the orators are deserved or false; the point is that Sophocles' play presents a totally different and more fundamental view of the value of his native land.

¹² If we take "freedom from deceit" to be a political virtue of the *polis* rather than a personal attribute, perhaps the Athenian record is relatively good. But no ancient Greek state had a good record for fidelity to agreements; the alleged claims of loyalty and justice were, at least during the Peloponnesian War, so entangled in special pleading that comparisons of worth are difficult. Perhaps Thebes and Sparta were worse than Athens, or would reasonably have seemed so to an Athenian audience. On the fragility of inter-state alliances and agreements, see F. Adcock and D. J. Mosley, *Diplomacy in Ancient Greece* (London 1975), especially chapter 14.

¹³ Paris 1981.

It is perhaps a sign of the differentness of Sophocles' presentation of Athens that the word *ἐπιείκεια* does not occur in the Thucydidean Funeral Oration, even though, as we have seen, the word has its place elsewhere in Thucydides' descriptions of Athens. It does occur in the brief Funeral Oration of Gorgias, in the traditional contrast between it and justice, but it is not taken up, as so much of the vocabulary of this piece of rhetorical display is, by the later *epitaphioi*. The fact that this word is not part of the formulaic rhetorical praise of Athens may suggest that Sophocles and Thucydides alike, independently of the tradition of patriotic rhetoric, recognized and valued this treasured characteristic of their city. The concept of *ἐπιείκεια* is important in the play, and we shall return to it. But significant aspects of Sophocles' patriotism in this play lie in an entirely different realm, to which we now turn.

I have been calling the picture in *Oedipus at Colonus* a picture of Athens, but that is not quite accurate. Sophocles in this play is not concerned primarily with the city of Athens as such. The question that Oedipus addresses to Antigone at the beginning of the play is not in the first instance "What *city* have we reached?" but "What *land* (*τίνας χώρους*)?" I do not want to exaggerate this distinction, especially since Oedipus in fact immediately adds the words "the city of what men?" (*τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν*), but Antigone's answer shows that the distinction is indeed real; she contrasts the towers of the polis at a distance and the "sacred place," *χώρος ἱερός*, where they stand. The play is to a very considerable extent about a place, and the place is not Athens but Colonus and Attica. The political Athens, especially in the person of Theseus, is an important element in the play, but the emphasis of its language and locale is very different from the customary presentation of imperial Athens.

Rather than examine all the passages that might be cited to document the prominence of physical place, which would be a lengthy and unnecessary procedure, I offer a few key passages as, I hope, a sufficient *τεκμήριον*. First, lines 56–58. The Pindaric fragment (76) that was, we are told, the opening sentence of a celebrated dithyramb composed for Athens, describes the city as, among other things, the bulwark of Greece, *Ἑλλάδος ἔρεισμα*. There seems every reason to believe that this military designation refers to the preeminence of Athens in the repulse of Xerxes' invasion. There is an echo of this passage in line 58 of *Oedipus at Colonus*. The words are spoken by the Colonean stranger whom Oedipus and Antigone ask where they are. Part of the stranger's reply is this:

ὄν δ' ἐπιστείβεις τόπον
χθονὸς καλεῖται τῇσδε χαλκόπους ὁδός,
ἔρεισμά' Ἀθηνῶν.

The place where you are treading is called the brazen-stepped threshold of this land, and it is the bulwark of Athens.

The “brazen-stepped threshold” probably refers to a nearby underworld entrance, from which the place as a whole was given this name. We are very poorly informed by ancient sources as to the topography of Colonus, and interpretation of details remains speculative.¹⁴ But the point at issue is clear: just as Sophocles has in this play transferred the Erinyes/Eumenides from their Aeschylean and traditional abode on the northeast slope of the Areopagus,¹⁵ so he has transferred the notion of protection and power conveyed by the word *ereisma* from Athens to Colonus. In Pindar’s praise, Athens is the “bulwark of Hellas”; in Sophocles’ play, Colonus is the “bulwark of Athens.” Whether the playwright had the Pindaric passage in mind is beyond our knowledge, but the use of the word *ereisma* for the quiet and rural Colonus, already described by Antigone as a place teeming with laurel, olive, and the vine, where flocks of nightingales sing sweetly (16–19), is striking by its unexpectedness.

The same curious contrast in language occurs again in the famous choral ode on the excellences of Colonus and Attica. This song has much about Colonus and much about Attica and very little about Athens, a fact that is underlined by the poet at the end of the song when he has Antigone, who has just noticed the arrival of the hostile Theban party under Creon, open her appeal with the words:

ὦ πλείστ’ ἐπαίνοις εὐλογούμενον πέδον. (720)

¹⁴ On the “brazen-stepped threshold” see pages xxv–xxvii of the introduction to Jebb’s edition. For evidence concerning the existence of a supposed underworld entrance at Colonus, see J. Kastromenos, *Die Dämonen von Attika* (Leipzig 1886) 24: “... in a house to the SW of the hill of Colonus there is an opening through which, by stooping, one can enter a subterranean cave.”

¹⁵ The existence of the shrine of the Eumenides at Colonus has often been questioned, perhaps most influentially by J. G. Frazer, in a long note on Pausanias 1.28.7 in his edition of Pausanias. Pausanias, describing the Areopagus, mentions a nearby shrine of the goddesses “whom the Athenians call the Semnai, but Hesiod in the *Theogony* the Erinyes,” and informs us that within the precinct of this shrine there is a monument to Oedipus, “whose bones, I discovered after much inquiry, were brought there from Thebes.” Pausanias goes on to say that he is prevented from accepting Sophocles’ account of the death of Oedipus by what Homer says, namely that there were funeral games for Oedipus at Thebes. Later, at 1.30.4, Pausanias, in describing the environs of the Academy, tells us that “there is also to be seen a place called *κολωνὸς Ἰππιος*, the place in Attica, they say, where Oedipus first came (this report differs from the poetry of Homer, but it is a current tradition); there is also an altar of Poseidon Hippios and Athena Hippias, and a *ἡρώων* of Peirithous and Theseus, Oedipus, and Adrastus.” It is clear that Pausanias gives preference to the Areopagus shrine as the resting place of Oedipus. But it is equally clear that he does not impute this location to Sophocles, whose account he rejects. Frazer may be right in suggesting in his note that “Sophocles knew the grave of Oedipus beside the Areopagus and hinted at it in his play.” But he is wrong in his statement that “Sophocles describes the death in a mysterious way which leaves it uncertain whether the poet supposed it to have taken place at Colonus or at Athens.” *OC* 91–92 gives explicit evidence that in the play Oedipus ends his life at Colonus.

Even though her appeal is for political asylum, it is not addressed to the polis or any political entity. The word *πέδον* means land plain and simple. The emphasis in this passage is not on the imperial might or the political excellence of the city. It is on the place, the ground of Colonus and of Attica.

There is a further oddity. At the beginning of the song, the chorus describe Colonus as *κράτιστα γὰς ἔπαυλα, τὸν ἀργῆτα Κολωνόν*, "mightiest dwelling place on earth, shining Colonus," not, as Jebb translates, "earth's fairest home," but *κράτιστα*, "mightiest." The concept of power in the very soil of Colonus is present in this play. The word *ἔπαυλα* is striking too, a most apolitical, indeed unurban word, suggestive more of animal steadings and rustic security than of empire.

There are, of course, significant references in the play to civic excellences too, and Theseus is the embodiment of political virtue. Yet the three qualities that Oedipus ascribes to the Athenians, piety, honesty, and fairness, are not primarily associated with imperial achievement. The tradition of Athenian *ἐπιείκεια* is presented, in Thucydides' account, as an anomaly in the conduct of power (1.76). There is no reason to suppose that the citizens of Athens did not agree with what, Thucydides tells us, was said by both Pericles (2.63.2) and Cleon (3.37.2): the empire was a tyranny.

In the recurrent prominence of this theme of land in the language of the play there are several remarkable characteristics. In Antigone's opening description of the place where they find themselves, in answer to her father's inquiry, her emphasis is not only on the beauty of the place, but on its abundance, its productiveness: Colonus is teeming (*βρύνων*) with laurel, olive, and the vine, and the grove is dense with nightingales (*πυκνόπτεροι*). These are emphatic words, and the same kind of emphasis is evident in the ode of praise for Colonus and Attica: the nightingale is ever-present (*θαμίζουσα*) in the grove of Colonus, the plants are limitlessly fruitful (*φυλλάδα μυριόκαρπον*), narcissus blooms year round in clusters, along with golden-rayed crocus; the springs of nearby Kephissos never sleep (*ἄνπνοι κρῆναι*), and, swiftly productive (*ὠκυτόκος*), the river sends its water over the breast of the land. The language of this beautiful ode is remarkable for the sense of teeming luxuriance it conveys.¹⁶ When, in the second system of the ode, the singers turn to the attributes of Attica more generally, their

¹⁶ A. S. McDevitt, "The Nightingale and the Olive," *Antidosis, Festschrift für Walther Kranz*, Wiener Studien Beiheft 5 (1972) 227–37, emphasizes the element of beauty and fertility in the ode. His main point, that the language suggests both security (thus the word *ἔπαυλα* "suggests security from external danger," 230) and immortality, or "new life in the midst of death" (236), and in this way underlines important themes of the play, is in my opinion correct and important. I shall return to the relationship between the place and the theme of immortality below.

first and most emphatic praise is for the olive, gift of Athena, and after that Poseidon's gift of the horse. Athena Polias, the guardian of the city, goes unmentioned here and throughout the play.

A striking feature of this play is the omnipresence in it of horses. The region is, of course, Colonus *Hippios*, and Hippotes (*OC* 59), the horse-man, is the epithet of its eponymous hero. But in this play Athena too becomes, rather unusually, Hippias Athena, Poseidon is praised more as the deity of horses than of the sea, and Colonus is called not only *Hippios* but, more emphatically, *euhippos*. Critics have suggested that it is the military glory of the Athenian cavalry, so magnificently depicted on the Parthenon frieze, that is thus evoked. I see no reason to reject this interpretation, especially since there is a cavalry rescue in the play, but there is a significance that is, I think, more immediately relevant to the setting and more akin to the language of the play. As in many societies, in ancient Greece the horse is a common symbol of energy and fertility.¹⁷ The recurrent equine element of *Oedipus at Colonus* is still another aspect of the emphasis on the productive abundance of Colonus.¹⁸

I turn now to the goddesses of Colonus *par excellence*, the Eumenides. The Colonean stranger in the prologue tells Oedipus that that is the proper name at Colonus for these "daughters of Earth and Darkness," as he also calls them (40), though other names for them are valid elsewhere. Oedipus addresses them initially simply as "revered goddesses," *semnai theai*, and this designation at once links them with the Erinyes, since, as we know from many references in literature, including a passage in Sophocles' *Ajax* (837), the Erinyes were traditionally called the *Semnai* by the Athenians.¹⁹ We are, then, encountering the same fig-

¹⁷ There is much disagreement among modern authorities on Greek religion as to the extent to which Poseidon Hippios, who in some myths takes equine form (Pausanias 8.25.4), is to be regarded as a god of fertility. Both L. R. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States* (London 1896-1909) 4, Ch. 1, especially pages 20-29, and Walter Burkert, *Griechische Religion* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, Mainz 1977) 218-19, though allowing for some connection with fertility—his association with Demeter makes this certain—are firmly against regarding him as in any substantive way a chthonic figure, while W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (London 1955) 96-98, sees merit in the view that he was "originally a male spirit of fertility who dwells in the earth." In any case there are grounds, in his mating with Demeter, for positing a connection with fertility.

¹⁸ Among graves of the classical period found at Colonus there is a splendid "horse stele." I owe this reference to Professor Homer Thompson, who suggests (by letter) that "the relief was part of a *naïskos* type grave monument of the late fourth century (before 317 B.C.) marking the burial place of some famous or much loved horse." He compares the tomb of Cimon's horses in the family burial plot outside the Melite Gate, mentioned by several ancient authors including Herodotus (6.103). It is perhaps not too speculative to see evidence in this of a continuing association of the place with horses.

¹⁹ It may be more accurate to say that the goddesses worshipped in Athenian cult as the *Semnai* (references are given in Farnell [above, note 17] 5.472) are identified both in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and in *OC* with the Erinyes/Eumenides.

ures as in the Aeschylean trilogy, and they have the same double power that is so conspicuously theirs at the end of the trilogy, the power to blight and curse and the power to bless.²⁰ Their role as the deities of curse is thoroughly exploited in Sophocles' play, above all in the imprecations uttered in their name and at their shrine by Oedipus against his sons. But their potentially beneficent powers are also conspicuous in the play. They are primarily chthonic powers, as is clear from the nature of the offerings made to them for Oedipus' trespass of their sanctuary;²¹ and the impressive ritual that is so fully described in the play has the effect of linking Oedipus closely to them.²² The Colonean stranger calls them (40) "daughters of Ge," and their connection with Mother Earth is further emphasized by the fruitful abundance of their sanctuary. Oedipus' first word of address to them, *potniai*, is an epithet that often suggests fostering or maternal power and is frequently used of Demeter and Kore.²³ Kinship between Colonus and the fostering goddesses of Eleusis is repeatedly suggested in the play. The *μεγάλα θεά*, who can only be Demeter and Kore, are mentioned in the famous choral ode in

²⁰ The connection of the Eumenides of *OC* with Aeschylus has been variously assessed by critics. For a careful study of the matter see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles* (Cambridge 1980) 205–9 and Ch. 11. Winnington-Ingram presents a convincing case for accepting a very close relationship. How much Sophocles was influenced by a local Colonean cult cannot be determined, since virtually nothing is known of it except from the play. But two further points made by Winnington-Ingram about the Eumenides/Erinyes are clearly germane to Sophocles' Colonus, regardless of how closely this Colonus adheres to a historical reality: that "In some cults the Erinyes were horses or horselike creatures" (207), and that "Erinyes are chthonian powers" (208).

Little is known about the pre-Aeschylean form of these goddesses. Farnell (above, note 17) 5.439 speculates that they represented "... the phase of the personal curse midway between the pre-animistic conception ... and the higher belief in permanent personal deities," and that (440) "the starting point may have been the earth-spirit or earth-goddess whom the curser arouses by smiting the hand upon the earth." Burkert (above, note 17) 304 suggests, less fancifully, that as underworld figures "Die Erinyen sind Verkörperung der im Eid enthaltenen Selbstverfluchung." For *OC* it is really only the literary tradition that counts, apart from the nature of the offering made to them to expiate the trespass of their sanctuary, on which see notes 21 and 22. For the literary tradition, in addition to Winnington-Ingram's *Sophocles*, see Friedrich Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1949), especially Ch. 3, and Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983), especially Ch. 8.

²¹ Cf. Burkert (above, note 17) 123–24.

²² Cf. Albert Henrichs, "The 'Sobriety' of Oedipus," *HSCP* 87 (1983) 87–100, and Walter Burkert, "Opferritual bei Sophokles. Pragmatik—Symbolik—Theater," *Der Alt-sprachliche Unterricht* 28.2 (1985) 5–20. Burkert shows that details of the ritual are significantly reflected elsewhere in the play.

²³ The Erinyes are called, collectively, *πότνι' Ἐρινύς* by Athena in the *Eumenides* (950; cf. *Seven Against Thebes* 886) immediately after their declaration of the blessings of fruitfulness that they will bestow on Athens. Herodotus mentions (9.97) a shrine of Demeter and Kore called the shrine of the *Πότνιαι*. For further references to Demeter and Kore as *πότνιαι*, cf. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, s.v. *πότνια*.

praise of Colonus, and there is mention, later in the play, of a nearby shrine of Demeter Euchloos, "Demeter who guards the tender plants" (1600). There is, clearly, a close link between the goddesses of Colonus and the concept of maternal, fostering divine power. This fostering aspect of the Eumenides of Colonus is an important adjunct to the emphasis in this play on the very soil of Colonus, the *ereisma* of Athens, *κράτιστα ἔπανλα*.

Moreover, references to the deities of Olympus frequently take on a strong chthonic coloring: Poseidon is called "son of Rhea," Athena, as I have mentioned, becomes goddess of horses, and Poseidon is more conspicuously god of horses than of the sea.²⁴ Both Athena Hippias and Poseidon Hippios were, as is known from other sources,²⁵ special Colonean names for these deities. But the Olympian deities as such, in their familiar form, are by no means absent from the play. It was Apollo who sent Oedipus to his place of destiny, and when, near the end of the play, Oedipus is summoned to his secret grave, he is summoned by the thunderbolt of Zeus. Olympian deity is combined with chthonic: though Zeus is clearly the summoner, when Oedipus leaves the scene guided by his inner sight and needing no human guide, he declares that his way is led by Hermes (who in this role as *psychopompos* is a power linking the upper and lower worlds)²⁶ and the goddess of the underworld (1548). And later, the messenger reports that Theseus, after witnessing the miracle of Oedipus' disappearance, makes a gesture of reverence to earth and Olympus together, in one prayer (1654–55).

Such, then, is Sophocles' vision of his native ground.²⁷ It is indeed a deeply patriotic vision, of an Athens, or an Attica, seen not primarily as an imperial state or a political power, but as a place of beauty and of a strength that emanates from the land itself, a chthonic power.

Why does Sophocles depart so conspicuously from the usual praise of imperial Athens, and turn to this almost Virgilian emphasis on the land? Attica, after all, is not Italy; it is not normally praised as *magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus*; it is a rocky, difficult land, more inclined

²⁴ On the emphasis on fertility in this aspect of Poseidon see Noel Robertson, "Poseidon's Winter Festival," *CQ* 34 (1984) 1–15, especially 15.

²⁵ Cf. the passage of Pausanias cited above, note 15.

²⁶ Cf. Burkert (above, note 17) 246.

²⁷ Although ancient tradition strongly supports Kolonos Hippios as Sophocles' birthplace, some modern authorities formerly proposed for that honor Kolonos Agoraios; cf. the *RE* articles on Kolonos and Sophokles. Epigraphical evidence has settled the question by establishing that Kolonos Agoraios was not a deme, only a district; Kolonos Hippios is therefore certainly the deme of Sophocles. See David Lewis, "Notes on Attic Inscriptions, 24: The Deme Kolonos," *ABSA* 50 (1955) 12–17 and Benjamin D. Meritt, "The Name of Sophokles," *AJP* 80 (1959) 189. The Kolonos and Sophokles entries in the *Kleine Pauly* tacitly correct the *RE* view.

to boast of its clear air, salubrious for the mind, than of any capacity to satisfy by its fertility. Thucydides was probably right in his belief that Attica was able to maintain political stability through the early ages of Greece because its soil was too poor to incite internal power struggles or to attract invaders (1.2.5–7). The explanation for this uncharacteristic praise lies, I believe, in the links Sophocles makes between Oedipus and Colonus and its deities. The political theme, in the relationship between Oedipus and Theseus and in the correspondence of the *χάρις* of Oedipus to the *ἐπιείκεια* of Athens, is present, but much colored by the Colonean element.

The intimate connections of Oedipus with the goddesses of Colonus are clear enough. The curse he hurls at his sons is the more terrifyingly valid because it comes from the place of the Furies. As Winnington-Ingram expresses it, Oedipus is “the man whose destiny it was to curse and be cursed, to be the victim and the agent of the Erinyes.”²⁸

But the man of the Erinyes is also the man of the Eumenides. Oedipus announces in the prologue (92–93) that he comes to his fated place with a double power, the power to bring *κέρδη* to those who receive him and *ἄτη* to those who have betrayed him and expelled him from Thebes. His power of destruction is clear not only in the cursing of his sons, but also in the mythic tradition of the subsequent fratricidal death of the sons at Thebes, well-known to the audience from Sophocles’ *Antigone* and from other plays, and strikingly foreshadowed in this play. The benefit that Oedipus speaks of in line 92 is the other side. Oedipus begins the play as a suppliant, and for a suppliant to offer some profit to his protectors is fitting. But as the play develops, the profit that Oedipus brings to those who receive him is repeatedly referred to as a *χάρις*. *Χάρις* is a word that is markedly different from *κέρδος*, above all in that it suggests reciprocation on terms of equality rather than dues paid to a benefactor. This aspect of Oedipus’ power becomes clear in the initial meeting between him and Theseus. At this point, Oedipus foretells future troubles with Thebes and promises, in somewhat veiled language, protection for the land of Theseus. Theseus promptly accepts the presence of Oedipus as of great value and declares (636–37) that he will never reject the *charis* of Oedipus; in spite of the lowly status of Oedipus, the values are mutual. Moreover, there is a spirit of beneficence suggested by *charis* that is no necessary part of *kerdos*. The word *charis* is used to describe the mutual love and readiness to help that exist between Oedipus and his daughters (1106), while the hatred between Oedipus and Creon is specifically designated as a lack of *charis* (767, 779). The word *charis* also evokes the goddesses who personify Charis, the Charites themselves, who not only personify mutual benefi-

²⁸ *Sophocles* (above, note 20) 268.

cence but are traditionally sponsors of growth and bloom and as such have a chthonic element in their nature.²⁹

This side of the power of Oedipus, the power of grace that operates only when it is reciprocated, is an essential theme of the play, a theme that should be clearly distinguished from an interpretation that has in the past had much influence. Traditionally, there has been an inclination to view the play primarily as a demonstration of divine compensation to Oedipus, as a solace, by the grace of deity, for a life of divinely imposed suffering. This is, as Linforth long ago argued,³⁰ a mistaken view of what happens in the play. The theme of *charis* is vital, but it has to do with human grace, not divine, and its impact is quite different from compensation to Oedipus, as I shall argue presently. In this play grace is not bestowed upon Oedipus, it is bestowed by Oedipus by virtue of his heroic powers.

Oedipus and the goddesses of Colonus share a combination of destructive power and fostering beneficence, and there is a further link that is integral to the entire texture of the play and to the person of Oedipus. In their Aeschylean form, the Erinyes are hideous in appearance and bloodshot of eye. Rather than see the victim they are tracking down they smell him, "like a hound after a wounded fawn," as the chorus say of themselves at one point in the *Eumenides* (245–46). In the Sophoclean conception emphasis is almost entirely on their power of sight, and this is true not only in *Oedipus at Colonus*, but in *Ajax*, where they are described as "the maidens who see (ὀρώσας) all the sufferings of mankind" (835–36). In this last play of Sophocles their keenness of vision is much stressed. When in the prologue Oedipus addresses them as *potniai*, there is an epithet with that word, and the epithet is *δαινῶ-πες*, "those whose eyes are dread." These "daughters of old Darkness," as Oedipus calls them (106), have clear and terrible sight, and later in the play Oedipus links their power with that of "all-seeing Helios" (864–70). This theme of sight reaches its climax when Oedipus strides from the scene under the guidance of that inner sight that is given him, he says, by the chthonic power of Hermes and the underworld goddess.

One more aspect of the link between Oedipus and Colonus must be mentioned. The double power of Oedipus is his only in the place that he has come to; it is inseparable from the ground of Colonus. Oedipus belongs there. When he is told, in the prologue, that he is at the place of the Eumenides, he prays that they may receive him, their suppliant, kindly, and he declares that he will never leave this abode. Later, when Theseus asks whether Oedipus wishes to go with him to *his* home,

²⁹ Farnell (above, note 17) 5.427–31, 462–63 provides discussion and full citation of ancient sources.

³⁰ Above, note 1, especially page 100.

Athens, Oedipus, though he does not directly decline, makes it clear that Colonus is the place of his power: "This is the place" (he says, 644–46) "... wherein I shall prevail." And that, in fact, is where he stays. Perhaps, then, the opening words of the chorus are not so misplaced as they have been thought to be. When they have heard of the presence of the stranger in the sanctuary of their deities they ask, as they enter, not "where is the stranger?" but "where is he living?" (ποῦ ναίει; 117). It is a strange question to ask about the newly-arrived Oedipus, and it has troubled critics.³¹ But the word *ναίει* is fitting. This is the place of Oedipus; he knows that he has come to his destined *chora* (89), just as, at the end, he moves unerringly to his nearby appointed grave.

Oedipus brings to this place a benefit, a *kerdos* that is a *charis*. What is this gift? The most specific characteristic of it is that it protects the land of Theseus. It is alluded to in the great speech of Oedipus addressed to Theseus at their first meeting, in which he speaks of the impermanence of all human things, and then of the inevitability of strife, sometime, between Athens and Thebes. He declares that his buried corpse will one day drink Theban blood. Later in the play, just before his final disappearance, he says more about his gift. It will, he says, provide things "unmarred by old age," γήρως ἄλυπα (1519). His secret grave will establish for Athens "strength better than many shields and the helping spear of neighbors" (1524–25). A little later, he adds that his grave will make "this *polis* free from harm by the Sown Men" (1533–34), and he ends the speech with these words to Theseus and the chorus (1552–55): "Dearest of friends (ξένων), may you and your followers live in happiness and in your prosperity remember me after my death and be of good fortune forever."

Sophocles composed this play, presumably, shortly before his death in 406/5, hence in the last days of the Peloponnesian War, when Athenian morale was, intermittently at least, very low and ultimate defeat was near. The first thought that comes to mind is that he is undertaking to encourage his fellow citizens by suggesting that Athens may yet prevail militarily over her enemies in the War; scholars have looked, though without much success, for some Athenian triumph over a Theban force at about this time, to impart a specific historical point to the references to military action. But this interpretation faces a difficult problem. Such optimistic visions of victory would have rung very hollow indeed in the year 401, when, so far as we know, the play was first produced, by Sophocles' grandson. It would have provided little consol-

³¹ The textual note ad loc. in Jebb's edition lists several proposed emendations. Jebb's exegetical note gives parallels for *ναίειν* used of "mere situation," but none close enough in application to lessen the strangeness of this usage.

tion for the Athenians to reflect that the disaster of 404 was a little bit less complete than the Thebans would have liked.³² There is certainly an implicit reference to the Peloponnesian War in the generalization that follows, in this same speech, when Oedipus says:

αἱ δὲ μυρίαὶ πόλεις,
καὶν εὖ τις οἰκῇ, ῥαδίως καθύβρισαν. (1534–35)

Most cities, even those well-governed, turn readily to violence.

But the allusion is general, and has a meaning beyond Theban violence against Athens.³³ The gift of Oedipus ensures that the greatness of Athens will survive the violence of the Peloponnesian War and the ravages of the future, in wars and disasters to come. This is the point of the emphasis, at the beginning and the end of the speech, on great length of time. The specification, in this speech and elsewhere in the play, of protection against Thebes is of course pertinent to the action of the play, in which the enemies of Oedipus are Thebans. But this is no anti-Theban manifesto. In fact, Theseus sternly reprimands Creon for conduct unbecoming to a Theban (919–23): “Thebes did not teach you to be evil; it is not that city’s way to nourish unjust men.” The *charis* that Oedipus brings is a broader and more permanent possession than a military security that by the time of the play’s production Athens had already proved not to possess. It is, indeed, a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί*, and it gives permanence to Athens.

Oedipus is also the embodiment of the element of *aiê* that is part of the power of the Eumenides and part of his destined power. To send away the suppliant Polyneices to certain death, in spite of the pleas of Antigone, is fierce and intransigent, and the presence and behavior of Theseus, the very embodiment of *epieikeia* throughout the play—urging a fair hearing for Polyneices, for example—lend further emphasis, by

³² Cf. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.2.19–20.

³³ Jebb’s note ad loc. explains the passage as meaning “most cities are apt to enter on aggression with a light heart, even though their neighbour is well-behaved” and thus hinting at danger from Thebes, but recognizes the possibility of its application to Athens, though allowing only for the possibility that the secret of Oedipus’ burial “may be abused to the hurt of the State,” or that the strength given by the presence of Oedipus may lead to “overweening confidence.” J. C. Kamerbeek’s note ad loc., *The Plays of Sophocles, Commentaries*, Part VII (Leiden 1984), taking the passage as Jebb does, rejects the possibility that it may apply to Athens on the grounds that the *καθ- καθύβρισαν* would be pointless in reference to “wantonness . . . with regard to the guarding of the secret” or overconfidence. But this objection does not hold good for the more general warning against violence that I believe is implied. Kamerbeek’s further observation, that the warning would be “offensive” to Theseus and Athens, is true but no objection, rather a confirmation that Athens is included in the warning, since Oedipus recognizes the possible offence and apologizes for it in 1539, where he acknowledges that Theseus understands such matters.

contrast, to this side of Oedipus' nature. Polyneices is pathetic, of course, and most readers feel a twinge of pity for him. But his supplication for his father's help in his expedition against Thebes is just as dishonestly hypocritical as Creon's earlier appeal to Oedipus to return to Thebes. His enumeration of the leaders of the expedition, stressing their warrior violence, leaves no doubt of the destructiveness of what he means to do. In the structure of the play, Creon and the sons are the counterpart of Theseus and the daughters. The selfish folly of Polyneices' behavior becomes clearest of all in the remarkable little dialogue that ends this scene. Oedipus has denounced and cursed both his sons, but it is clear from the words in which he launches the curse (1370-72) that its disastrous results are contingent on Polyneices' proceeding with his attack on Thebes. As Polyneices turns to leave, the following exchange occurs between brother and sister:

- Antig.: Polyneices, I beg you, be persuaded by me.
 Polyn.: In what, dearest Antigone? Tell me.
 Antig.: Turn your army back to Argos as soon as you can; do not destroy yourself and your city.
 Polyn.: That is not possible. How could I lead the same army again, having once shown fear?
 Antig.: But must you vent your anger yet again? What profit will you get by devastating your native land?
 Polyn.: To flee is base, and I'd be sneered at by my younger brother. (1414-23)

Sophocles has provided this Polyneices with a puniness and ignobility of motive that approach the absurd. He is a small travesty of Agamemnon at Aulis. The scene would be close to comic if its implications were not so sinister and so pathetic. It is not the curse but the folly of Polyneices that enforces the disasters that follow. *Charis* can only exist mutually; Polyneices is beyond its scope.

This glance forward at the tragic sequel to the events of this play, a sequel that Sophocles had long before dramatized, is the most striking instance we have of a recurrent Sophoclean dramaturgical manner. It has often been noticed that Sophocles has a way of leaving some unpleasant or troubling matters uncompleted at the end of his plays, especially in what are generally believed to be his late plays. At the end of *Electra*, we are made uncomfortably aware that perhaps all is not yet well in the House of Atreus; in the epilogue of *Philoctetes* just enough is said about coming events at Troy to remind us that the traditional Neoptolemus of the sack of Troy departs far from the idealism and *arete* that he embodies in the play; and so also in *Oedipus at Colonus* we see the shadow of coming disaster. It is a feature of Sophoclean drama that yields no easy explanation and is perhaps simply a manifestation of Sophocles' habitual consciousness of the ambivalence of human fortunes.

Whatever we make of this presage of future turmoil and disaster, it is in harmony with other themes in this play, as expressed in the words of Oedipus to Theseus on the inevitable decay of all human things (607–15) and in the words of the chorus, in that celebrated ode (1211–48) declaring that the best fate is never to have been born, and second best to return whence we came as soon as possible. Perhaps, too, the violence of Oedipus' life is bound to reappear in the fortunes of those who are of his blood.

But the other aspect of the power of Oedipus is also strongly emphasized at the very end of the play, especially in a curious and echo-laden phrase, spoken by Theseus in offering comfort to the daughters of Oedipus:

πάνετε θρήνον, παῖδες. ἐν οἷς γὰρ
χάρις ἢ χθονία ξύν' ἀπόκειται³⁴
πενθεῖν οὐ χρή· νέμεσις γάρ. (1751–53)

Put an end to mourning, my children. Those among whom a chthonic *charis* is established ought not to grieve.

Thus at the end of the play, in the midst of the daughters' grief, we are strongly reminded of the other, beneficent side of the power of Oedipus and reminded that it is a chthonic power.

Earlier, I mentioned that the ἐπιείκεια of Theseus is in strong contrast with the ferocity of Oedipus' behavior toward his sons. But there is another aspect of the complex and paradoxical figure of Oedipus that may strengthen the link between Oedipus and Athens. The word ἐπιεικές occurs in only one other passage of what remains of the works of Sophocles, fragment 770, three lines from an unknown play. The fragment links τὸν ἐπιεικές and χάρις and contrasts them with δίκη. The fragment as a whole has, I think, no relevance to *Oedipus at Colonus*, but the linking of these words suggests that to Sophocles there was some kinship between the two qualities and that the χάρις of Oedipus is not unrelated to the ἐπιείκεια of Athens. Theseus' immediate acceptance of Oedipus illustrates strikingly his ἐπιείκεια in offering asylum to

³⁴ Reisig's ξύν' ἀπόκειται, a slight change from the συναπόκειται (or ξυν-) found in most of the manuscripts, is regarded by most modern editors (including Dain and Dawe) as a certain correction. Martin's νύξ ἀπόκειται, adopted by Pearson, has no justification. Jebb, reading ξύν', translates "where the kindness of the Dark Powers is an abiding grace to the quick and the dead." To translate with the phrase "to the quick and the dead" is to assume, as Jebb's note makes clear that he did, that Oedipus is among those receiving *charis*; Kamerbeek interprets similarly. There is no warrant for this assumption either in the immediate context or in the rest of the play. On the contrary, as the theme of *charis* and the emphasis on the power of Oedipus clearly show, there is ample reason to take this passage as uniting the power of Oedipus and the power of the chthonic deities. For evidence on the cult of Oedipus see Lowell Edmunds, "The Cults and the Legend of Oedipus," *HSCP* 85 (1981) 221–38 and Henrichs (above, note 22).

a suppliant; but it also adumbrates what becomes ever clearer as the play develops, that the *χάρις* brought by Oedipus is a reciprocal gift.

This is perhaps as far as the clear evidence of the play invites us to go. I add here a final, rather speculative suggestion that is at least in harmony with the rest. I have stressed the element of growth and bloom in this paradoxical landscape. There is also recurrent in the play the suggestion of renewal,³⁵ and it is closely linked with the "chthonic grace" established by Oedipus. By his death, he achieves the power that is so conspicuous a theme in the play. Clearly, the power of Oedipus is exempt from the decay and obliteration he has spoken of, and since it is inseparably linked with the ground of Colonus, the bulwark of Athens, Athens too is, by necessary implication, exempt from death. As the chorus say, when faced by the menace of Creon and his troops, "Even if I am old, the strength of this land does not grow old" (726–27). The final speech of Oedipus to Theseus (1518–55), when Theseus has been summoned, in order to be the sole witness of the place of Oedipus' death, reinforces this theme. I have quoted some of the opening part of the speech already, but the words are important here (1518–19): "I shall teach you, son of Aegeus, what lies in store, unmarred by old age, for this city." At the end of his speech, he proceeds to lead the way to his place of burial. The gift that old age cannot harm is his presence in the ground of Colonus, and this completes Sophocles' picture of the man and the place: from death come renewal and permanence. It is as if Sophocles is punning on the traditional Athenian boast of autochthony: Oedipus, by no means an example of Attic autochthony, by his heroic spirit reinforces its chthonic power.

The heroism of Oedipus has its immortality, *γῆρως ἄλυντον*; its exponent dies, but its strength continues in the very ground of Attica, conferring upon it a "chthonic grace." The strength of Athens/Attica is also *γῆρως ἄλυντον*; like the heroism of Oedipus, it has a power of survival and renewal that keeps it forever, in some sense, the bulwark of Greece.

We know from Pausanias (1.30.4) that in Athenian tradition Theseus as well as Oedipus was venerated at Colonus. Perhaps it is permissible to see combined in this permanence that the play celebrates both the *epieikeia* of Theseus and the power of Oedipus, with its twofold range.

Sophocles too was, according to the tradition reported in the *Life* that is found in several of the manuscripts of the plays, in some sense a hero, a chthonic power in whose honor sacrifices were offered after his death. I have been arguing that the picture of Colonus, Attica, and,

³⁵ McDevitt (above, note 16) has good observations on this theme in relation to Stasimon 1.

implicitly, Athens, is Sophocles' myth of Athens. I do not suggest that he meant to include himself in this myth that asserts the permanence of Athens, but it is not too fanciful, I hope, to suggest that his chthonic status is an appropriate symbol of what, in his Athens, the Athens of the fifth century B.C., has proved to be γήρως ἄλυστον: the intellectual achievement of its society, and, at the heart of it, Attic tragedy. This too can justly be called the power of Athens, the *ereisma* of Hellas.

I would like to end this philological journey on a slightly personal note. In his attractive account of the topography of Colonus (pages xxx–xxxviii of the introduction to his edition), Jebb quotes a rather gushingly romantic poem, written by a Mr. George Wotherspoon, lamenting the loss of the ancient beauty of the place. I spare you Wotherspoon's lament, but shall read Jebb's brief, rather cheerful comment: "If Colonus has thus lost its ancient charms, at least the views from it in every direction are very fine; especially so is the view of the Acropolis." Jebb's report now needs some revision. Though Colonus is in a rather dingy district of modern Athens, it has its attractions. From a recent visit to Colonus I can confirm that the view to the southeast, toward Mount Hymettus, is still fine, or would be if it were not for that disaster of modern Athens, its omnipresent air pollution. Toward the Acropolis the view is blocked, but pleasantly so, by what has now grown up at Colonus. In the generation that has passed since I first visited Colonus, the small hill has been made into a pleasant park, shaded with evergreen trees and ornamented with laurel and olive and oleander; there are pathways and beside them benches where Colonean elders sit, some of them perhaps as unaware of Oedipus as was the *xenos* of the parodos of Sophocles' play. I like to think that this renewal of a sanctuary of greenness in the midst of an ancient city whose architectural monuments are crumbling under the polluting ills of modern urban life symbolizes the existence of a *monumentum marmore perennius*, the undying power of the play and of the intellectual achievement of the Athens which it celebrates.³⁶

³⁶ I am indebted to the anonymous reader for *TAPA* for valuable criticisms.