

The Aesthetics of Incongruity: A Critical Reading of the Story-within-the Story in *Oedipus Tyrannus*

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Abstract

This article analyses the life story, story within the story, of Oedipus, which he narrates to Jocasta in a critical moment in the greatest Athenian tragedy of Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The play has been discussed and studied by a heterogeneous populace of critics, at least since the Renaissance up to our own time. Despite the complex constellation of criticisms, it still invites critical confabulations from various socio-political, cultural, artistic, philosophical, and psychological perspectives. These perspectives have redefined the history of its translation, remarkably dichotomising into two conspicuous groups. The article analyses the differences in the translations of the contradictory mélange of translators. It also raises a series of questions on the gaps of logical incongruities that add to the holistic pulchritude of the play as an art. The study tries to make a close reading of the story within the story in the play, and explicates the space of logical fallacies in it. It examines the aesthetics of the logical fallacies that enrich the amplitude of connotation of the text. We could n't help but wonder why Jocasta didn't seek to understand her strange husband, curiously inquire about his swollen feet, what is the reason Oedipus left Corinth, and why he killed an old man who might very well have been his own father. Why didn't he carry out the investigation into the question of parentage at Corinth? What evidence confirmed his parentage following consultation with Delphi? Why didn't he choose the road to Daulia? How did he get to Delphi? These questions not only open up the realm of logical fallacies in the story within the story, but adds the beauty of literariness of the text as an art with a certain magnitude of universality. The study is a critical reading of the English translation by David Grene.

Keywords Fallacy, tragedy, reason, aesthetics, psychoanalytic, Sophoclean, polity, incongruity.

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Introduction

The ritualistic and political art of Ancient Greece, tragedy, was the most popular art form of Athens in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. This ritual performance of tragedy, which developed from the ritual chorus in the Dionysian festival of the early era, underwent radical improvisation in the creative and innovative sensibilities of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the greatest of the classical Athenian playwrights. Tragedy was presented in Athens once a year as part of the City Dionysia competition. Athens had an exclusive group of officials who selected three playwrights to stage plays in the annual competition. Prizes were awarded to the winners at the conclusion of the festival. A panel of judges would evaluate the contest to determine the winners. "A Greek tragedy is a dramatic and choral presentation of an action usually taken from legend or remote history and involving incidents of a certain magnitude. The action is complete in itself, is treated in a serious manner, ...to exhibit some

religious, moral, or political significance" (Harsh 3). With a spectacular and startling philosophical insight conveyed in a happy resolution of crisis at the end, it artistically, on its holistic performativity, engages the spectators in a multidimensional inquiry into the quintessential questions of the lived experiences of the community/polity.

Three male actors performed all the speaking roles, including those of female characters. The trio of actors was accompanied by a chorus made up of fifteen members, who performed songs and dances throughout the play. The chorus was an integral part of Athenian tragedy. The chorus danced and sang, retaining the actual ritual nature of the Dionysian festival, and sometimes served a commentary on the action of the play. According to Albert Henrichs, "choral dancing in ancient Greek culture always constitutes a form of ritual performance, whether the dance is performed in the context of the dramatic festival or in other cultic and festive settings. The external setting in the sanctuary

of Dionysos Eleuthereus and in the distinctly cultic ambience of the City Dionysia reinforces the ritual function of the choral dances in tragedy” (Qtd. in Easterling 42). The chorus also served to hint at actions to come, serving to add suspense to the plot. The Athenian tragedy was performed in verse, with actors using recitative or spoken verse, primarily in the iambic trimeter, while the chorus sang in between scenes: “Tragedy consisted aurally of variegated theatrical verse, composed in heightened poetic language, and performed by highly trained vocalists” (Hall 10). During the players’ parts, the chorus leader might speak on behalf of the group, and the actors could sing both in response to the chorus and in monody. Aristotle in *Poetics* writes: “...it originally took shape out of improvisations. (This is true of tragedy as well as of comedy: the former began with the leaders of the dithyramb, and the latter from the leaders of the phallic singing that is a tradition that still survives in many cities.) Then it developed gradually as people exploited new possibilities as they came to light. After undergoing many changes, tragedy ceased to evolve, having achieved its natural condition” (21).

The beauty of Athenian tragedy was that it was on traditional legend, or myths set in a remote past. “The creative achievement of the Greek tragedians in turning myths into theatre takes the breath away”, opines Edith Hall (12). Sometimes, though not very often, great events of history, even recent history, could also serve as the plot material for tragedy. The cleverness was in the writing, the dialogue, and the ideas about human beings and gods expressed in the plays. The playwrights could examine the customs and moral values of the time, and make the audience question what was right and wrong. Edith Hall opines: “...the Athenian tragedies all enact the outbreak and resolution of a crisis caused by imminent or actual death, adultery, exile, pleas for asylum, war, or the infringement of... the unwritten and unshakeable laws of the gods; these were traditional taboos proscribing kin-killing, incest, violation of oaths or the host-guest relationship, and disrespect towards parents, suppliants, and the dead” (94-5). Above all, the compelling cynosure of Greek tragedy is the aesthetic representation of the tension of the problematic relationships: human/divine, male/female, adult/child, free/slave, and individual vs state.

Among the greatest tragic poets of classical Athens, Sophocles vitalised and transformed tragedy into a “whole genre, but an emotional register and an aesthetic and indeed ethical category” (Edith Hall 2). In Sophoclean skilful artistry, tragedy grew into remarkable philosophical dimensions through innovations in technique, imitations of contemporary philosophical curiosity, and allegorical recitations of socio-political

conflicts. Adding surprising depth to characterisation, he drew living men and women, who, fighting against unforeseen odds in life for a vital realisation of a truth about themselves/ their own self through suffering, embody an unfailing human passion. Clifton W. Collins rightly observes, “In each of [Sophocles’] plays, he shows how passion works out its own end—whether it be the pride of Oedipus, the stubbornness of Creon, the insane fury of Ajax, or the jealousy of Dejanira. All these passions are simple and natural; there are no eccentricities of genius, no abnormal mental states...” (Bloom 70).

Oedipus Tyrannus and the Beauty of Incongruity

Owing to the penetrating, suspenseful plots, deep and moving characterisation, engaging philosophical insights, and profound psychological, socio-cultural, and political discourse in his tragic art, Sophocles is regarded as one of the finest playwrights of all time in Western literature. About the characterisation in this tragedy, Gilbert Murray observed that “in this play every character is interesting, vital, and distinct. Oedipus himself is selected by Aristotle as the most effective kind of tragic hero, because, first, he has been great and glorious, and secondly, he has not been “pre-eminently virtuous or just.” This is true in its way. Oedipus is too passionate to be just; but he is at least noble in his impetuosity, his devotion, and his absolute truthfulness.” Although he appeared to lead a serene and joyful existence, he produced some of the most distressing portrayals of human agony in literature as a whole. He authored more than 120 plays, but only seven survived completely into our time. Among all these works, *Ajax*, *Electra*, *The Trachinae*, *Philoctetes*, and the popularly acknowledged Oedipus trilogy, *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*, are extensively read and performed. His creations have been examined, presented, and valued for more than 2,400 years. *Oedipus Tyrannus* is widely considered his greatest work, portraying the myth of Oedipus, the individual destined to slay his father and wed his mother. *Oedipus Tyrannus*, also known as *Oedipus the King* and Oedipus Rex, an epitome of tragedy by Sophocles, is the most celebrated of his impactful tragedies that still connect with audiences of our own time.

The play has been a charismatic object of criticism of varied perspectives over the centuries, and so does it remain in the modern era as well. That the scholars have taken fascinating interest in reading and rereading this text gained it a phenomenal place in the history of European literature and also in the canon of literary criticism. It has been translated into almost all prominent languages in the world. It has received myriads of translations in English itself. It’s interesting to note

that there are radically varying translations in English. "But no one who sees or reads the play can rest content with its literal coherence," Francis Fergusson rightly observed (Qtd. in Mark R. Anspach vii). It is surprising that there is an apparent disparity in these translations. One obvious disparity is found in the prophecy of Apollo to Laius, reported by the old Theban Shepherd. David Grene translates:

*HERDSMAN Aye, through fear of
evil oracles.
OEDIPUS Which?
HERDSMAN They said that he
should kill his **parents**.*

In William Blake Tyrrell's translation we find:

*Oe: What sort of oracles?
He: Th e word was that he would
kill those who bore him. (91)*

In Edith Hall's its translated:

*Oedipus. What
oracles?
Theban. That it
would kill **its parents**.*

Robert Fagles translates it:

*Shepherd. She was afraid—
frightening prophecies.
Oedipus. What?
Shepherd. They said— he'd kill
his parents.*

In the translations of William Blake Tyrrell, While Edith Hall, and Robert Fagles, the prophecy states that the child/son would kill his parents. It doesn't say that the child would kill particularly his father. This is very pertinent that disparity in the number in the noun would cast doubt on the credibility of prophecy, shaking the meaning of text as a whole. At the same time, H.D. F. Kitto, Richard Claverhouse Jebb, and Luci Berkowitz and Theodore F. Brunner translations of the same context differ completely.

*SHEPHERD. Dark words of God
had made her wild.
OEDIPUS. What words?
SHEPHERD. The babe must slay his
father; so 'Twas written. (Kitto 71)*

*Oedipus: What were they?
Herdsmen: The tale ran that he
must slay **his sire**. (Jebb 111)*

*Oedipus: What prophecy?
Shepherd: the child would kill
his father (Luci Berkowitz and
Theodore F. Brunner 27)*

Similarly, one would wonder to glance at the multitude of critical views, observations and studies on the play. Marie Delcourt discusses the implication of the exposition of infants in Athens, its mythological background, in her essay "The Exposed Infant." In "Oedipus and the Surrogate

Victim", René Girard explains that more than treating fate, free will, psychology, guilt or anything like that which might influence the individual in a community, the play centres around the ritual performance of a sacrifice to ensure the reorientation, reordering, and establish peace and ethical stability in the community/polity. "Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of Oedipus Rex" by Jean-Pierre Vernant is a seminal essay that looks into the continuously shifting identity of the hero; the investigator to accused, the saviour to destroyer, the person with sight to blind, king to beggar, and citizen to exile. William Chase Grene in his "The Murderers of Laius" examines the cause of Oedipus' sense of guilt. He examines the circumstances of the murder of Laius, and contents that the murder is marked by ambiguity and narrative inconsistency and lacks clear legally consistent proof. The article examines the servant of Laius who witnessed the murder of Laius. Grene considers the observations of Paley, Jebb and Edward Kunder on the eyewitness of the murder. Grene opines that this ambiguity in the plot adds to the holistic aesthetics of the play: "his deeds, his well-meaning version of the death of Laius, the knowledge locked in his memory, have done their worst for Oedipus, and have contributed notably to the skill with which Sophocles has wrought his drama" (372). "In The Murderers of Laius, Again" Rick M. Newton argues the ambiguity about the number of murders and the semantic error with respect to the number is a graceful Sophoclean method to problematise the understanding of the Athenian audience, and their perception of guilt and truth. Karl Harshbarger in his essay "Who Killed Laius?" and Sandor Goodhart in the essay "Lêistas Ephaske: Oedipus and Laius' Many Murderers" also examines the question of the murder/murderers in the play, while in "An Anonymous Namer: The Corinthian's Testimony", Frederick Ahl casts doubt about the credibility of the Corinthian messenger who unknowingly influenced the scientific spirit of Oedipus.

All the above cited articles incontestably demonstrate that there is a certain degree of ambiguity in the play, though it enhances the aesthetics of the play as a tragedy. In this article I would like to highlight certain genuine concerns about the ambiguities inherent in the story- within-the-story in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. I Agree with S.M. Adams' view about the title of the play as Oedipus Tyrannus over the other more popular titles like Oedipus rex and Oedipus the King, as the former title enhances the meaning of the play as a whole as the title gains a deconstructive dimension to the meaning. Adams observe: "...the word "tyrannos" in the fifth century had a special significance for the Athenians. It implied abundance of wealth and power, with the consequent likelihood, if not certainty, of hubris;..." (109) Treating this title as a

prism, reading the play, with special focus on the character of Oedipus, the hero, unveils the political connotation of the text as well the hidden motives of the hero as a political being.

Oedipus is a tyrannus, despite the pretentious generosity he displayed at the beginning of the play to the suppliants. Oedipus, the king of Thebes, offers every possible assistance to the people and promises them that he will find out the polluter of the land. He initiates the investigation for the polluter, the murderer of Laius, the former king of Thebes. In the initial stage of the investigation, the question of enquiry was who killed Laius, though he shifts the question to who my parents are, as the investigation progresses. When Thebes faced a critical political crisis as the plague hit the state, the only solution to this crisis was to punish;

“By banishing a man, or expiation
of blood by blood, since it is
murder guilt
which shakes our city in this
destroying storm.”

It's quite a matter of surprise that Oedipus doesn't ask the Theban shepherd, who is the eyewitness to the murder of Laius, who murdered Laius? The answer to this question would definitely solve the political crisis Thebes faced at the moment. Instead of the vital question, he asks him, “You gave a child to him—the child he asked you of?” Being uncritical and blind to his strict empiricism in the beginning, he forgets about the actual crisis, which initiated the whole investigation, which is the quintessence of the plot, and that is why the play is called, according to Albin Lesky, an analytic tragedy.

As an analytic tragedy, it traces the reasons for what happened in the past. Things shall have logical connections, which would not leave any room for fallacy of any kind. But it's quite astonishing that a series of genuine questions about logical fallacies arises as we listen to the story within the story about Oedipus' life, which he narrates to Jocasta in the middle of the play. He narrates it as he listened to Jocasta stating that Laius was murdered “at a place where three roads meet.” It seems that the reference to the ‘crime spot’, where the three roads meet, reminds Oedipus of something, most probably a crime of grievous intensity like murder, that he committed in the past. This reference forces him to tell his own life story to Jocasta, his wife at the moment. He says:

...Polybus was my father, king of
Corinth,
775 and Merope, the Dorian, my mother.
I was held greatest of the citizens
in Corinth till a curious chance
befell me,

as I shall tell you—curious, indeed,
but hardly worth the store I set upon
it.

There was a dinner and at it was a
man,

a drunken man, who accused me in
his drink

780 of being bastard. I was furious
but held my temper under for that
day.

Ne t day I went and ta ed my parents
with it;

they took the insult ill and came
down hard

on the man who had uttered it. So I
785 was comforted with regard to the two
of them;

but still this thing rankled with me,
for the story

kept on recurring. And so I went at
last

to Pytho, though my parents did not
know.

But Phoebus sent me home again
unhonored

in what I came to learn, but he
foretold

790 other and desperate horrors to befall
me,

that I was fated to lie with my
mother,

and show to daylight an accursed
breed

which men would not endure, and I
was doomed

to be murderer of the father that
begot me.

When I heard this I fled, and in
the days

795 that followed I would measure from
the stars

the whereabouts of Corinth—yes, I
fled

to somewhere where I should not
see fulfilled

the infamies told in that dreadful
oracle.

And as I journeyed I came to the
place

where, as you say, this king met with
his death.

800 Jocasta, I will tell you the whole
truth.

When I was near that branching of
the crossroads,

going on foot, I was encountered by
a herald and a carriage with a man in

it,
just as you tell me. He that led the

way

805 and the old man himself wanted to
thrust me
out of the road by force. I became
angry
and struck the coachman who was
pushing me.
When the old man saw this he
waited for his chance,
and as I passed he struck me from
his carriage,
full on the head with his two-pointed
goad.
810 He paid for this in full, and more:
my stick
quickly struck him backward from
the car
and he rolled out of it. And then I
killed them
all. (Grene)

Firstly, it's evident that Oedipus tells his story to his wife for the first time in their life, about two decades. I am surprised to think that why the husband and wife were never curious to know about each other, as both of them became husband and wife without any customary planning of marriage. Oedipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx, saved the city from imminent disaster, was made king by the people, and married Jocasta, the widowed queen. All these happened immediately after Laius was reported to have been murdered. Oedipus was not only a stranger to Jocasta alone but also to everyone in the palace and polity. That as a wife, living with Oedipus, a swollen-footed, "in his form not unlike" Laius, and about seventeen or eighteen years old at the time of marriage, Jocasta never felt anything strange about the stranger, her husband, is strange. At least she would have been curious about the swollen feet, as she knew how people in Athens got swollen feet like her husband. She says: "...and for the son—before three days were out/ after his birth King Laius pierced his ankles/ and by the hands of others cast him forth upon a pathless hillside." The mirror-image appearance, the pierced angles, the age, and the strangeness of the husband, nothing made her curious about him, and cast doubts about him, till she heard him tell the story of his life after about two decades, which is apparently incredulous to my very peripheral inquisitiveness, not for the high standard of critical thinking. It's not for she never wished to know about him, I suppose, but she didn't want to because, "that which is sought can be found;/ the unheeded thing escapes;/ so said the god."

More than Jocasta, it was Oedipus who should be curious. Because he tells us that he left Corinth to learn about his parents as the rumour spread, "this thing rankled with me, for the story kept on recurring." It is clear enough that the drunken man, who accused him "in his drink of

being bastard", extremely disturbed him. So, he went to the Oracle of Delphi, who "sent me home again unhonored in what I came to learn." He didn't get any hint about his parentage, he admits. But when the oracle "foretold other and desperate horrors to befall me, that I was fated to lie with my mother, and show to daylight an accursed breed which men would not endure, and I was doomed to be murderer of the father that begot me", I wonder what made him think again that Polibus and Merope are his parents. He doubted them as not his parents and left Corinth to learn about it, and didn't get any credible information to confirm them as his parents. But again, he tells us that he left Corinth to avoid the prophecy of the Oracle of Delphi that he "was fated to lie with...mother, and show to daylight an accursed breed", and "was doomed to be murderer of the father." These statements he makes to Jocasta are incompatible, as the drunkard's calling him a 'bastard', 'rankled with' him and 'kept on recurring.' The oracle disappointed him with regard to his query about his parentage. Then, it's clear that he decided not to go back to Corinth to avoid the prophecy of Delphi, but for an unconscious motive, which surfaces as an absence in the tale that is his desire for political power, which he gains in Thebes without proving his political identity. This political identity was shattered by the drunkard, and so is his unconscious desire to be the ruler of Corinth.

Leaving Delphi after having heard the prophecy, he reaches the place "where three roads meet", where he was "encountered by a herald and a carriage with a man in it,...became angry and struck the coachman...When the old man saw this...he struck me from his carriage, full on the head with his two-pointed goad. He paid for this in full, and more: my stick quickly struck him backward from the car and he rolled out of it. And then I killed them all." It's quite unequivocal that, as a man brought up in the palace of Corinth, he must be familiar with the protocol of the royal mobility from the herald and the royal car. But that the man who "solved the riddle by... wit alone", a man of unparalleled wisdom, and "greatest in all men's eyes" miserably failed to recognise the old man in the carriage was a king, is stoutly preposterous, and threatening our reasoning.

Moreover, he "became angry" and "killed them all" when he had all the reasons not to kill anybody who was old like Laius, after hearing the prophecy that he "was doomed to be murderer of the father that begot" him. Especially when he doubted Polybus and Merope as not his parents, and anybody could be proven as his parents, he, the man of wisdom, would have evaded the murder of the old man, especially when the victim was looking like him, which, we understand, even Oedipus had noticed:

JOCASTA: He was a tall man and his hair was grizzled already—partly white—and in his form not unlike you.

OEDIPUS O god, I think I have called curses on myself in ignorance.

When Jocasta described the physical features, Oedipus shudders.

His narrative clarifies that the murder was not divinely motivated, there was no divine interference, but resulted from the anger of a psychopath: his unconscious wish to kill surfaces in many a time in the play as he threatens Creon, Tiresias, and the Theban Shepherd. He says Creon: “No, certainly; kill you, not banish you”, to Tiresias, “Not twice you shall say ghastly things like this and stay unpunished” and asks him “Do you imagine you can always talk like this, and live to rejoice at it hereafter?” To the Theban shepherd he utters, “You’re a dead man if I ask you again.” Again, when the shepherd confessed about the newborn son of Jocasta and Laius, he rushed to the chamber of Jocasta obstreperous “burst upon us shouting and we looked to him as he paced frantically around, begging us always: “Give me a sword, I say, to find this wife no wife, this mother’s womb, this field of double sowing whence I sprang and where I sowed my children!” His wish to kill Jocasta is evident here.

His sentimental tale, a story-within-the story, I would call it, is subtle in establishing that his murder of the group is accidental, not intentional. But from the circumstances I explicated above, his acts are suspicious at the time of the murder. He had an unconscious motive in the murder, which made him methodically forget completely about it after reaching Thebes. When he became king, he says, he had heard the story of the murder of Laius from others: “I know of him by hearsay. I never saw him”, and “I heard that, too, but no one sees who did it.” If he knew that the former king was murdered, it's natural for him to investigate the cruel act, rather than a vicious sin of killing the king. He didn't get curious about the murder of Laius, which obviously means his lack of interest in the case is as methodical as that of Jocasta about her strange new husband. His lack of interest in knowing about the murder of Laius as he becomes the king raises doubts. Especially, when he himself had killed a group of people, with a herald and a carriage, as a man raised in royal culture, he had more circumstantial reasons to doubt himself of the murder, which must have made him more inquisitive as he takes interest in the current enquiry into the polluter. Then, he does investigate, I doubt, not to know who the murderer is but to prove his motive, which he states, “I'll not be proved a murderer.” Even if he was ‘proved’ a

murderer, he could defend his case clearly on the grounds of self-defence. It's surprising that he never asked his wife about anything concerning Laius, her former husband and his suspicious death. It raises my suspicion about his life story.

Again, at the crossroads, it's mysterious that after he “killed them all”, he chose to take the road to Thebes, over the other two roads, one to Daulia and another to Delphi. The selection of the road has already raised concerns among critics. One of the critics asks precisely the question of why he rejected the other two roads to escape after the massacre. It's a very relevant query. But I may be taken presumptuous to raise another point in this case, that was the place and the road he took, the one to Thebes, familiar to him. My doubt emerges from the basic curiosity of a quotidian crime investigator, not of one from Scotland Yard, that is, how did Oedipus reach Delphi? Did he cross the Corinthian Gulf or walk all the way to Delphi through the land, which definitely would have taken him to cross the land of Thebes to reach Delphi? His choosing the road to Thebes, killing the royal group, solving the riddle, becoming the king, marrying Jocasta, eliminating doubts about parentage without solid proof, and killing an old man after the prophecy, all raise concerns about the gaps of fallacy in the story within the story, his life story.

Was he really interested in knowing who his parents were after his encounter with the drunkard? I doubt it. My reason allows me to conclude that he was more serious and curious about something else than his parentage. If he were really concerned about his parentage, he could investigate it there in the capacity of the prince, easily, as it is later found that his bastard identity is known to the Corinthian messenger, as well, and probably to many more. It can well be asserted that the messenger and the drunkard are not the same person, and if they are the same person, Oedipus would not have asked him, “What’s this you say, stranger? Tell me yourself.” He is a total stranger to Oedipus. Here, it's evident that at least two people, including a drunkard, knew the truth about Oedipus’s parentage, which would possibly mean that many more in Corinth would know the mystery of his identity, of which he must also be convinced, as a wise solver of riddles. After all he is a man of empiricism, which he proves later when he initiates the enquiry into the murder of Laius. He “taxed...parents with it”, and “was comforted with regard to the two of them;” but bastard “thing rankled with” him, “for the story kept on recurring.” If he was really “comforted”, then how could it ‘rankle with’ him. “The story kept on recurring” proves it that he was disturbed beyond expectation, till he became king in Thebes. Actually, it seems that he was really comforted after the coronation in Thebes till the plague hits his polity. It's my genuine doubt that what is the source of his

comfort, the knowledge about parentage or the political power. Was he expecting to be the ruler of Corinth, the unconscious dream, which is shattered as being called a bastard. The doubt is rational in light of the Periclean Citizenship Law, in which the parentage determines one's citizenship/kinship/kingship.

Conclusion

An epitome of tragedy, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, is still celebrated as an entertainer and discussed in academia across the globe for its aesthetic, technical, and discursive richness. It invites novel aesthetic appreciation and makes the audience scholastically engaged from time to time. It remains unchallenged as a tragedy, surpassing the artistic qualities of tragedies of every age. The beauty of it as a literary art lies in the mythic method and the most beautiful and engaging style of storytelling. Sophoclean technique of storytelling is flamboyant with the extraordinarily suspenseful plot, highly metaphoric diction, grandiose characterisation, and universal themes.

As an academically acclaimed literary text, it is translated as much as it is discussed and studied. From the original Greek, it entered the European languages during renaissance through the Roman's Latin influence. In Latin it was known as Oedipus rex. In nineteenth and twentieth century myriads of translations appeared in European languages, especially in English. Most gripping fact about the tradition of translations is that they vary strikingly, leaving puissant scope for revelatory critical interpretations in disciplines ranging from history, art, sociology, politics, and psychology.

As an academically acclaimed literary text, it is translated as much as it is discussed and studied. From the original Greek, it entered the European languages during the Renaissance through the Romans' Latin influence. In Latin, it was known as Oedipus Rex. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, myriads of translations appeared in European languages, especially in English. Most gripping fact about the tradition of translations is that they vary strikingly, leaving puissant scope for revelatory critical interpretations in disciplines ranging from history, art, sociology, politics, philosophy and psychology. The translations of William Blake Tyrrell, Edith Hall, Robert Fagles, translated by eliminating the instances of ambiguities, while H.D. F. Kitto, Richard Claverhouse Jebb, Luci Berkowitz and Theodore F. Brunner, and David Grene retain the original incongruities in the narrative of the play, which enlivens the faculty of critical thinking and interpretation.

The latter group of translations, though invite rational questions, helps develop extraordinary perspectives on characters, themes, and techniques, enriching the art of interpretation and criticism. These translations disturb the faculty of critical thinking, as they forcefully compel our reading to be the most intriguing experience. We could not help ask, why didn't Jocasta try to know her strange husband, enquire about swollen feet, the motive of Oedipus abandoning Corinth, and killing an old man who could probably be his own father? Why didn't he conduct the enquiry of parentage at Corinth? What facts confirmed his parentage after consultation with Delphi? Why didn't he take the road to Daulia? How did he reach Delphi? These are all questions that press upon the critical thinking of the readers of our time. These questions fall on decisive moments of the histrionics of the tragedy of *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

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