

A STUDY OF SOME OF THE 17TH
AND 18TH CENTURY
DRAMATIC VERSIONS OF
THE OEDIPUS LEGEND
IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH WITH
SOME REFERENCE TO SPANISH

by

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INTRODUCTION

The OEdipus legend is one of the world wide themes in literature. In the Greek, where it has been treated as a religious and a patriotic subject, there have been many versions of the theme itself and of its ramifications. Thereafter, the subject is treated frequently in dramatic form, but occurs also in non-dramatic literature, as in the epic poem of Statius and in the "romans" in verse and prose of the middle ages.

One of the earliest references to the story is in the "Odyssey." In this account it is said that the gods disclosed OEdipus's crime, that Epicastē hanged herself and that OEdipus lived as king of Thebes tormented by the Erinys of his mother.

Pausanias, who wrote a "Description of Greece" in the second century, in narrating the legendary history of Thebes, tells of the oracle given to Jocasta and to Laius. This idea, that OEdipus was considered an historical and not a mythological character among the Greeks, is further emphasized by Pindar, who prides himself in claiming ~~that~~ OEdipus as one of his ancestors. He gives an account of the legend in his second Olympic.

(1)

Herodotus and a contemporary, Hellanicus, have given some account of the legend, and both represent OEdipus as blinding himself in the way described in the "OEdipus Tyrannus" and in Euripides's "Phoenissae."

The earliest dramatic adaptation of the theme is found in Aeschylus's trilogy, "Laius," "OEdipus" and the "Seven Against Thebes," of which only the last is extant in its entirety. Our writer shows that OEdipus in suffering punishment is expiating a crime committed by one of his ancestors. He imagines that OEdipus met Laius at the junction of three ways. In earlier accounts of OEdipus, nothing about this point has been found.

(2) Euripides has treated the theme in two different ways. In the "Phoenissae" OEdipus is thrown down and blinded by Laius's servants, presumably because he killed their master. In the Prologue to the "Phoenissae" we are surprised to find that, twenty years later, OEdipus is still alive and likewise Jocasta, who tells

1. Introduction, Earle's "OEdipus Tyrannus."
2. Euripides's "Phoenissae," p. 61.

not only the story of OEDIPUS' s birth, her own life and OEDIPUS' s fate, but goes on to tell of the quarrel of the two brothers.

In comparing Sophocles' s version with those of the other Greek writers, especially in tragedy, we find that in the first place, Sophocles' s conception of the woes of OEDIPUS is a purely fatalistic one, that Fate is above and beyond the powers of the gods; whereas, in Aeschylus the woes of OEDIPUS are caused by Cadmus, one of his ancestors, who slew the dragon of Mars. In Sophocles we find the doubling of elements in the catastrophe. (1) "Not only is an oracle given to Laius, but one is given to OEDIPUS; not only does a slave of Polybus find OEDIPUS, but a slave of Laius has given OEDIPUS into his hands." This idea may have been original with Sophocles, but from Aeschylus he borrows the conception of the junction of the ways. Sophocles is the first to make Polybus king of Corinth instead of Sicyon.

(2)

"Other Greek writers besides the great tragedians

1. Introduction to "OEDIPUS Tyrannus," Earle, p. 38.

2. " " " " "

used the tale of the Oedipus as a dramatic subject, we know; but their productions have not come down to us; even to the present day the legend has survived among the modern Greeks, without any traces of the influence of Christianity.⁽¹⁾"

In Roman literature, Caesar wrote an Oedipus, but Seneca's tragedy based on that legend is the only example in dramatic literature which has been preserved. In non-dramatic literature we find an epic poem on the subject by Statius (A.D.45-96).⁽²⁾ "The "Thebais" which the poet says took twelve years to compose is in twelve books, and has for its theme the old tale of Thebes, the deadly strife of the Theban brothers."

The mediaeval authors do not use the "Oedipus" as a theme in itself, but rather as a background and setting for the story of the quarrel between Oedipus's two sons.

Such is the place of the myth in the "Roman de Thèbes," an anonymous epic poem of 10,230 lines, written probably between 1150-1155.

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1. Encyc. Brit., 11th Ed., B. Schmidt, 1877.

2. " " "Statius."

Here the account of the quarrel is prefaced by
 the OEdipus tale: OEdipus is "trouvé par le roi de la
 ville de Phoque, Polibus, dans la forêt où l'avaient
 laissé, pendu par les pieds à un grand chêne, les trois
 serviteurs de Laïus, et élevé jusqu'à quinze ans dans
 l'ignorance de sa véritable situation, OEdipe, appelé
 bâtard par ses camarades, va consulter l'oracle d'Apol-
 lon, dont il ne comprend pas la réponse, tue son père
 dans une rixe, ..délivre Thèbes d'un 'diable' monstrueux*
 qui désolait le pays après avoir deviné son énigme et,
 à la demande des barons thébains, épouse Jocaste, qui
 s'est bien vite éprise de sa beauté, Au bout de vingt
 ans, Jocaste reconnaît son fils aux cicatrices qu'il
 a aux pieds. OEdipe se crève les yeux et se condamne
 à vivre désormais dans une obscure prison."

In the sixteenth century we find an anonymous
 prose romance treating the same subject, called
 "Sensuyt le Roman de OEdipus filz du roi Layus." And
 this story is considered to have influenced Lydgate's
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1. P. de Julleville, par M. Léopold Constans, [p. 173.
2. Lydgate's "Siege of Thebes," Temporary preface by Erdmann.

"Siege of Thebes," an allegorical poem printed in 1651,
 as a new Canterbury Tale. ⁽²⁾ "This poem is the Thebaid of
 a troubadour. The old classical tale of Thebes is
 here clothed with feudal manners, enlarged with new
 fictions of the Gothic species and furnished with
 descriptions, circumstances and machineries appropriated
 to a romance of chivalry."

With the Renaissance of classical learning, a
 renewed interest is taken in the myth, as a subject
 for dramatic productions.

We know that in England a tragedy was produced in
 Latin by William Gager (1580-1619), and one in French
 by Jean Prévost, early in the seventeenth century, both
 of whom took the "Œdipus" as their title.

But turning to an author of much more consequence,
 we find that Robert Garnier treated the theme in "An-
 tigone" (1580). He imagines that Jocaste is alive in
 the beginning of this play, but after the quarrel
 (1)
 "se donna d'un poignard dans le sein, et mourut."

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1. Argument D'Antigone, Vollmoeller, Robert Garnier,
 "Les Tragédies."
2. Warton, "History of English Poetry."

Antigone, who performed the same duties in this play as in Sophocles's "Antigone," "est prise et menée à Creon, qui la condamne à mort. Elle est descendue et encluse en une caverne pour y mourir de faim; mais elle sans attendre une si longue mort s'estranglé de ses liens de teste." We still find interest shown in the ramifications of the OEdipus theme in the next century. Rotrou wrote an "Antigone" in 1638 and Racine produced "La Thébaïde ou Les Frères Ennemis" in 1664. Both of these plays differ from Sophocles and follow Garnier in having Jocaste play a role in the drama.

Again we find the main theme adapted by Corneille, whose "OEdipe" appeared in 1659. Fouquet proposed the subject to the author, who ⁽¹⁾ "avait eu d'abord l'intention d'abrégéer son travail par une heureuse imitation de l'OEdipe roi de Sophocle, et de la pièce que Senèque a faite sur le même sujet; par malheur changeant d'avis il crut devoir mêler une intrigue amoureuse à cette terrible catastrophe."

1. Corneille, "Grands Écrivains," Tome 6, p. 104.

In the eighteenth century many plays on the subject appeared in rapid succession; in fact, the theme became so popular that it was treated not only by great writers, but by many inferior authors as well. Among the first was Voltaire's 'Œdipe,' written in 1718, when he was but nineteen. Like Corneille, Voltaire intended to compose his 'Œdipe' "presque sans amour." But he says, "Les Comédiennes se moquerent de moi, quand elles virent qu'il n'y avait point de rôle pour l'Amoureuse.....Je gâtai ma Pièce pour leur plaire, en affadissant par des sentimens de tendresse un sujet qui le comporte si peu."

Voltaire makes these comments on the attempts of the minor authors: "On a représenté avec un certain succès le 18 Mars 1726 l'Œdipe" de la Motte, qui fut ensuite mis en prose par son auteur. Quant à l'Œdipe" du P. Follard il n'a pas paru sur le théâtre, non plus que les quatre tragédies d'Œdipe que la Tournelle a fait paraître dans un même volume en 1731. En voici les titres: 'Œdipe et toute sa famille,' 'Œdipe ou les trois fils de Jocaste,' 'Œdipe et Polybe,' 'Œdipe ou l'ombre de Laïus.' L'auteur, qui affectionnait ce

1 Corneille vol. 6 p. 109.

2 Histoire du Théâtre François vol. XV, p. 298

sujet, promet encore trois tragédies sur OEdipe. Il n'a pas tenu parole."

Ducis, Voltaire's successor in the Academy, has ⁱⁿ followed his footsteps in producing a drama on OEdipus. He conceived the idea of reinforcing the theme by adding to it the plot of the "Alceste" of Euripides, OEdipus's misfortunes being substituted ^{as a victim} for ~~these~~ of Alceste. The play is called "OEdipe chez Admète" (1778), ^{and} ~~this~~ ^{attempts to be} play is much more dramatic ^{By doubling the action,} than most of the French dramas. The supernatural element is emphasized, the Furies play an important part, and the third and fifth acts take place "devant et dans le temple des Euménides."

Later in the century Legouvé has treated the theme in his "Éléocle" (1799).

Further evidence of the popularity of the OEdipus theme is the fact that it became the libretto for operas. In Paris, in 1787, "OEdipe à Colone," a French grand opera in three acts, appeared and was very popular at the time. The music was written by Sacchini and the words by Guillard. And not only in France, but also in Germany, we find that one of the OEdipus stories is

adapted to the opera. "Antigone," a grand opera by Johann Adolph Hasse, first produced at Brunswick in 1723, was very successful, but is long since forgotten.

In England we find but scattered treatments of our theme, of which the most noteworthy is the Dryden and Lee play written in 1679. Shelley in 1820 wrote a two-act humorous burlesque which he chose to call "OEdipus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant," but which in no way concerns the classical legend. Bulwer-Lytton, in a letter to Forester at Rome in 1846, writes: "I have... completed... a drama on the "OEdipus Tyrannus" with the choruses etc. More than this, I have arranged with the celebrated Mercadante, the composer, for the choruses and overtures." ¹ "The play, however, was withdrawn and has neither been acted or published."

In Spanish literature there is a nineteenth century example of our theme--an "Edipo" by Martínez de la Rosa, ⁽¹⁾ "estrenado en Madrid en la noche del 3 de Febrero de 1832." This author forbears to modify the theme of

1. "La Literatura Española en el Siglo XIX," Fr. Blanco García.

the Greek play, but has written his "Edipo" in a sentimental tone which is inappropriate and which disfigures the classic drama.

Menéndez y Pelayo dismisses with a word the treatment of OEdipus by Forciroli: "es obra de principiante aprovechado." But of much more importance are the two dramas by Alfieri (1749-1803), on the subject of Polynices and Antigone. ⁽¹⁾ "The peculiarity of Polynices is that the element of love is entirely absent from it." The play "is based upon Aeschylus's "Seven Against Thebes." "Antigone" is a continuation of Polynices and follows in its main outline the history of Antigone as set forth in the immortal tragedy of Sophocles, rather than the version of Apollodorus." Jocasta figures in the Polynices play but had killed herself shortly after the terrible catastrophe with which the tragedy concludes.

Although the OEdipus theme seems no longer to furnish a plot for dramatists, interest in the subject is still living, but it has turned to a revival of the

1. "Alfieri's Tragedies," Vol. 1.

original Sophoclean play and to translations. The "Oedipus Rex" is frequently staged, usually in translation, although sometimes given in the original.

It has been ⁽¹⁾ "représenté avec une pompe extraordinaire aux fêtes d'Orange dans les ruines de l'amphithéâtre romain, puis repris sur la scène des Français (Octobre 1888)."

In 1888 it was decided to give the "Oedipus Tyrannus" ⁽²⁾ at Cambridge. "This year the Greek Play Committee have produced with more than wonted care and splendour, the "Oedipus Tyrannus" of Sophocles....The strong hold which it still has upon the world as a drama is attested, not only by the memorable performance in Harvard in 1881, but by the fact that it is even today in the repertoire of the Comédie Française and has been quite recently performed in the Burg theater at Vienna." The play has also been given at the University of California.

In "Current Literature" for March, 1911, we read that "Max Reinhardt, Germany's most distinguished producer, has startled the theatrical world by his production of

1. G. Vapereau, "Dictionnaire des Contemporains", Mounet-Sully.
2. "Magazine of Art", Vol. 2.

'OEdipus' in the amphitheater of Schumann's circus in Berlin. The author of the translation is the Viennese poet, Hugo von Hofmansthal....The number of actors was small, six or seven. But there was a chorus of three hundred made up of students of the University of Berlin...The Berlin performance was followed by a similar performance in Munich."

A STUDY

Of Some of the 17th and 18th Century Dramatic Versions of

THE OEDIPUS LEGEND

In French and English, With Some Reference to Spanish.

Having observed the frequency of the appearance of the Oedipus theme in all periods of literature, we may now consider what constituted the interest in this theme, and the greater or less degree of appropriateness it presented, particularly for dramatic treatment. We shall, therefore, consider the modifications of the treatment, internally, as to the plot, characters, supernaturalism, and religious and political significance; externally, as to the divisions, the chorus, verse form and dramatic dialogue.

We shall study the "Oedipe" of Corneille, the "Oedipe" of Voltaire, the "Oedipus" of Dryden and Lee,

and shall make some reference to the "Edipo" of Martínez de la Rosa.

According to Aristotle, plots suitable for a tragedy must be concerned with such ⁽¹⁾ "persons as happen either to have suffered or done things of a dreadful nature" and with "events which appear dreadful or lamentable."

In the time of Sophocles such themes were indeed popular, but "the disagreeable nature of the plot forms ⁽²⁾ an objection to its success" upon the modern stage." Distress which turns upon the involutions of unnatural or incestuous passion carries with it something too disgusting for the sympathy of a refined age; whereas, in a simple state of society, the feelings require a more powerful stimulus....But the change of manners has introduced not only greater purity of moral feeling, but a sensibility which retreats with abhorrence even from

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1. Aristotle, "Rhetoric, Poetics", pp. 431, 433.
 2. "John Dryden's works", Scott and Saintsbury, Intro. to "OEdipus."

a fiction turning upon such circumstances." For that reason our later plays have some element which tends to lessen and counterbalance the effect of these horrors. Seneca's play contained all of the horrors of the Greek tragedy, "but the cold, declamatory, rhetorical style of that philosopher was adapted precisely to counteract the effect which a tale of terror produces on the feelings and imagination." Corneille, to lessen the violent effect of the theme, conceived the idea of introducing a minor plot, which, however, had the unhappy effect of reducing the central theme to a mere episode. Voltaire was adverse to modifying the theme, but did so at the suggestion of his friends. From Corneille, Dryden borrows the suggestion of modifying the horrible subject; but his underplot contains an element almost as unpleasant and disgusting as the main theme. Martínez de la Rosa alone does not modify the theme of the Greek drama, but changes the effect by a tone of sentimentalism which weakens the characters and adds nothing to the theme.

"Dryden's Works" edited by
1. Scott and Saintsbury.

Another difficulty in the treatment of the Oedipus theme, after Greek times, is to be found not merely in the theme itself, but in the interpretation. Modern tragedies in considering Oedipus as a pure, innocent man, overwhelmed by the impious decrees of fate, pay the penalty of substituting for the religious, solemn expiatory conception of Sophocles the petty solution of a kind of fatalistic prophecy which can have no higher purpose than to awaken curiosity.

In Sophocles, Oedipus is not the wholly guiltless hero that modern tragedy represents him to be; but he is the expiatory victim of the impiety of Laius and of his own faults. He was very rash and hot-tempered, as is shown by the way in which he killed the stranger at the cross roads; lack of self-control and self-restraint are considered grave and serious faults in the eyes of the Greek people. More than this, without cause he suspected in turn Creon, Tiresias and even his own wife of having murdered Laius. He exercised despotic brutality in the altercation with Creon, and finally exhibited scepticism and impious disregard of the gods. In the

eyes of the Greeks, OEdipus's punishment was deserved as a return for persistent overconfidence in prosperity and for his forgetfulness of the deities.

But after OEdipus's sins have been expiated, Sophocles does not leave him, as a cursed being, but in the "OEdipus Coloneus" solves the problem of the Fates and makes OEdipus serve a noble purpose. Here we see him supported on the arm of Antigone, beginning his pilgrimage. He is no longer the object of malediction, but a sacred being. In the eyes of his soul dawns the future; resignation shines on his face, and his whole moral nature has been purified, elevated and transformed. Blind, a beggar and an exile, he has attained the high serenity which he could not attain as a king, and after his death, his bones will scatter benediction on the hospitable
(1)
country of Attica.

Other critics, among whom ^{is} are Blanco García, believe that "OEdipus Tyrannus" is complete in itself, and that tragedies which end with that ~~of~~ the play of Sopho-

1. "Autores Dramáticos Contemporáneos," Vol. 2, ^{Mé}ndez y Pelayo.

cles do have a higher purpose than to awaken "mera
 curiosidad." ⁽¹⁾ ¿"Dónde hay terror trágico comparable al
 de la misteriosa sombra de Layo, junto con las ansiosas
 preguntas del Rey al mensajero y á Yocasta, y el sucesivo
 descubrimiento de aquella trama tanto más espantosa
 cuanto más encubierta con los velos de apariencias
 falaces y más enlazada con el incomprensible fallo del
 destino? No era necesario, pues, seguir los ulteriores
 pasos de la víctima para presentar un cuadro donde
 se encontraran juntos la compasión y el interés."... "Un
 análisis del Edipo Rey nos demostraría que su sentido
 moral y su belleza no dependen en manera alguna de
 inauditas y arcanas interpretaciones; y las palabras
 finales del coro, que hablan del protagonista como de
 un desgraciado, no como de un criminal, y aconsejan
 que no se celebre la suerte de nadie hasta después de
 muerto, indican con hiératica sobriedad el propósito
 de encarecer la limitación esencial y los contrastes
 dolorosos de la vida humana, como perdurable ironía

1. García, 121-122.

de los dioses que destruye las vanas ilusiones de los mortales."

Emile Faguet takes even a more extreme view of the place of Fatalism in "Oedipus Tyrannus" than the other critics. He says that although Sophocles "avait comme rusé avec la Fatalité et en avait comme réduit le rôle par différents subterfuges dans quatre de ses ouvrages;.. dans 'Oedipe Roi'.....il était difficile à Sophocle d'éviter ou d'esquiver la Fatalité. Ici, la Fatalité n'est^{PAS} seulement le fond du sujet; elle est tout le sujet; elle est bien le sujet tout entier...Il peut y avoir un intérêt dans une pièce uniquement fondée sur la Fatalité et...cet intérêt pouvait être^{de} curiosité...et^{de} pitié,..ces deux intérêts que l'on trouve dans 'Oedipe Roi.'

"De plus Sophocle tout en traitant le sujet fataliste... s'est comme réservé à lui-même, a réservé au poète peintre de sentiments et peintre d'âmes libres," la dernière partie.

He quotes M. Allegre, who also considers that

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1. "Journal Des Débats", Sept. 13, 1906, Emile Faguet.

Sophocles "a suivi dans l'"OEdipe Roi' une marche qui ne lui est pas habituelle. Ailleurs il réserve le dénouement à la Fatalité qui le générerait dans le cours du drame pour la peinture des caractères; ici il le réserve au caractère et consacre le reste de son drame à la Fatalité qui joue le rôle principal."

And M. Faguet goes on to say that there is a
 (1)
 "fatalité des événements et que cette fatalité des événements a bien, en vérité, la plus grande part dans l'affaire; que s'il est vrai qu'OEdipe, moins orgueilleux et et susceptible n'aurait pas tué son père, il est vrai aussi que, passant par tel sentier et non par un autre, il l'aurait tué; pour ainsi parler, encore moins pour ce qui est d'avoir épousé sa mère, ce fut bien là une fatalité d'événements dans laquelle les bons ou mauvais sentiments d'OEdipe n'entrèrent absolument pour rien."

(2)
 Strange as it may seem, "Aucun ancien n'en a dit un mot, à commencer par Aristote et à finir par les grammairiens latins les plus récents. Il faut arriver à

1. "Journal Des Débats", Sept. 27, 1906.

2. " " " " Sept. 6, 1906, E. Faguet.

Guillaume Schlegel pour entendre ~~parler~~ de la Fatalité dans le théâtre grec."

Although our modern authors claim Sophocles' "Oedipus" as their model, modifications and changes are made; an influence is usually exerted by Seneca's play, and the earlier plays affect the later modern ones.

(1)

Seneca's drama "is a play written to be read, not acted; Seneca takes the "Oedipus Tyrannus" for his model in a general way, and even reproduces a number of passages; but he deals very freely with the 'exemplar Graecum.' He makes his play much shorter (1061 verses).⁽²⁾ The suppliants do not appear; instead, we have a scene between Oedipus and Jocasta, in which the situation at Thebes is set forth. Oedipus makes no proclamation, nor does he narrate his past life to Jocasta. The reason of Oedipus's avoidance of Corinth has already been made known by him before the action begins; and Creon tells where Laius was killed early in the play. The disclosure

1. Intro. to "Oedipus Tyrannus," Earle.
2. The Greek play contains 1635 lines.

by means of the two herdsmen is very brief. The long closing scene between OEdipus, the chorus, Creon and the children⁽¹⁾ is done away with; instead we have a short scene between OEdipus and Jocasta. But Seneca has put in plenty of bombastic rhetoric and has abundantly gratified the Roman taste for supernatural horrors and bloodshed.

"Tiresias does not know the truth at first, but in an elaborate scene suggested by Sophocles's "Antigone," as it would seem, consults the omens ineffectually. He decides that Laius's spirit must be invoked to reveal the murderer....Tiresias causes the earth to open before Creon's eyes and reveal the demons of the nether world and the shades of dead heroes and heroines. From among the shades that of Laius reluctantly emerges and denounces, as the cause of the pestilence at Thebes, the blood-stained king who possessed himself, by foul murder, of his father's throne and wife. By this narrative of Creon OEdipus's suspicion of him and of Tiresias is motivated. When

1. The children are merely mentioned and do not appear.

OEdipus later discovers, by means of the herdsmen, his unconscious guilt, he digs out his eyes with his fingers. The bad taste of the author is at its worst in the messenger's speech, that describes this horror: OEdipus racks his brains to devise an adequate punishment for himself, when a sudden gush of tears suggests blinding. The Roman poet fairly revels in the ghastly details of the act. In the closing scene Jocasta stabs herself ingeniously in OEdipus's presence, after which he goes into voluntary exile with cruel fates, disease, hunger, pestilence and grief, as imaginary and sole attendants.

"Seneca's play is not without interest, partly by reason of its tacit criticism of Sophocles here and there, as implied by changes made in details of the plot. But the play is a poor one. The characters are wretchedly disfigured. OEdipus appears as a poor stupid, self-conscious, whimpering, bragging, blustering fellow. The most poetical passages are to be found in the choruses, though they have nothing to do with Sophocles. Really good are the anapaests of fate."

In the examination of our plays we note that

Corneille was influenced by the Senecan plot more than Voltaire, but that both owe much to Seneca in their style and general tone; Dryden was influenced particularly in the sensational, supernatural features, and in the Spanish play, the effect of Seneca is scarcely felt.

In Corneille the ultimate truth about OEdipe is learned by means of oracles and through disclosures which various characters make; but there is much variation from Sophocles in the manner of presentation and in the immediate effects which they produce.

The first important point in Sophocles is the message from the gods reported by Creon:

(1)
 "He clearly bids us punish with strong hand
 this slain man's murderers whosoe'er they be."

In Corneille the oracle is consulted but refuses to reply, so OEdipe himself hazards an opinion regarding the cause of the plague:

"Ce fils dont ils avaient prédit les aventures

1. Prologus, l. 115, Kennedy.

Exposé par votre ordre, a trompé leurs augures;
 Et ce sang innocent et ces dieux irrités
 (1)
 Se vengent maintenant de vos impiétés."

It is not the oracle as in Sophocles, but the ghost of Laïus appearing to Jocaste, which makes the corresponding revelation.

Here OEdipe ventures to suggest that perhaps he himself has avenged the king's death when he killed the supposed brigands, for:

"Au lieu même, au temps même, attaqué seul
 par trois,
 J'en laissai deux sans vie et l'autre ^{mis} aux
 (2)
 abois."

For the purpose of affirming or discrediting entirely Jocaste's vision, OEdipe orders Tirésie to consult the ghost of Laïus. This idea Corneille borrows from Seneca, and by means of what he learns the characters of the minor plot are implicated. The oracle is thought

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1. Act 1, Scène V.

2. Act 1, Scène V.

to refer to Dircé, the only known descendant of Laïus; it is later found that it might designate Thésée.

Again the theme reverts to the Sophoclean model when Phorbas reveals the murder of Laïus. Then as in Sophocles, the messenger from Corinth arrives and the whole truth is learned.

Differing from Seneca and following Sophocles, Jocaste's death and the blinding of Œdipe do not take place on the stage, but are merely reported to us; in Corneille by the confidantes, and in Sophocles by a messenger. Corneille continues the interest in Phorbas by having him kill himself on account of the crimes of which he has been the cause.

But by far the greatest deviation from the model is the addition of a love intrigue which obscures the main plot and draws the interest to itself. The characters are Thésée, a prince of Athens, who loves Dircé, the daughter of Laïus and Jocaste. This minor plot is thrust upon us at the very opening of the play. Through a conversation between the lovers we learn of the plague in Thebes, but only as it influences their lives and happiness.

These characters affect the main plot chiefly in bringing out the real nature of the characters of OEdipe and Jocaste. The king will not permit Dircé to marry Thésée because of the power the latter might thus gain. OEdipe is ambitious, self-centered and suspicious, depicted rather as a tyrant than as the hero who received the crown for saving the country from the Sphinx. And even after his hopes and ambitions are crushed, he shows pettiness in condemning Phorbas as responsible for his misfortunes. Later, however, he accepts his expiation and his character becomes more generous and elevated, for he says he is glad to die for the safety of all, and expresses the wish that, in case Thésée become his successor, he will endeavor to lessen the discord between the two sons. This idea of the enmity of the brothers Corneille borrows from Sophocles's "OEdipus Coloneus."

Jocaste is weak and vacillating as in Sophocles, but here there is nothing of the idea of her contempt for the oracles or of satisfaction in immediate happiness. Her character is developed chiefly by means of the minor plot. She is really anxious that Dircé marry Thésée, but

subservient to the king's wishes, says to him, "Je la
 condamnerai si vous la condamnez." And so she uses
 every possible means, "conseil, autorité, reproche,
 amour, tendresse," to try to force Dirce to accept
 OEdipe's choice. Her part in the development of the
 main theme is virtually the same as in Sophocles.

Besides the lovers, Corneille has added the
 confidants, stock characters in the 17th century drama,
 who serve the same purpose in developing the plot as
 does the chorus in Sophocles.

Passing to Voltaire's play, we find a tragedy
 superior in many ways to Corneille's; for it is more
 dramatic, more virile and shows better construction than
 the earlier one. The later play has followed Sophocles
 more closely in many scenes, and in these especially
 has been admired.

The first instance of plot development is when
 we learn that the priest has seen Laius's ghost, who

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1. Act 1, Scène IV.
2. Act 1, Scène IV.

mades this announcement:

"Les Thébains de Laïus n'ont pas vengé
la cendre,

Le meurtrier du roi respire en ces États,
(1)
Et de son souffle impur infecte vos climats."

This conception of the ghost Voltaire takes from Corneille, with this variation, that in the earlier play the ghost speaks to Jocaste. Later, in this play also, ~~he~~ appears to Jocaste. In Sophocles's tragedy, the corresponding report is given by Creon, who is accused by OEdipus of plotting against him. Now the priest is insulted by OEdipe, who even accuses him of being self-seeking and ambitious.

Although not fully believing these threatening words of the ghost, OEdipe is disturbed by them and consults the queen. This part of the play follows very faithfully the Sophoclean tragedy. Jocaste tells almost the same story about Laïus's death and OEdipe in turn reveals the same reasons for leaving Corinth.

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1. Act 1, Scène 3.

Now there remain only the announcement of the Corinthian messenger and the disclosure of Phorbas to bring about the catastrophe, in which Voltaire still follows Sophocles.

As in Corneille, OEdipe does not appear on the stage after he has blinded himself, but the circumstances of the catastrophe are merely announced; in Corneille by the confidant^e, in Voltaire by the priest. But differing in this from Corneille as well as from Sophocles, Voltaire has Jocaste kill herself on the stage.

Voltaire declares himself offended by the sub-plot imagined by Corneille, saying, "J'introduisis['] au milieu de la terreur de ce chef-d'oeuvre de l'antiquité['] non pas une intrigue d'amour, l'idée m'en paraissait trop choquante, mais au moins le ressouvenir d'une passion éteinte." But few will agree with him when we learn that this "passion éteinte" concerns Jocaste. Voltaire supposes that Philoctète was in love with Jocaste before she was married to Laïus. This invention serves only to weaken Jocaste's character, to place OEdipus in a very embarrassing situation, and to make of Philoctète a

superfluous and inappropriate character.

As in *Corneille* we are plunged into the midst of the minor theme, while its connection with the main plot comes only when the people are seeking the murderer of Laïus. The Thebans believe that Fate has brought Philoctète back at this time to receive punishment.

Jocaste assumes, of course, greater importance in this play, since she figures in the minor plot also; but this phase of her character does not concern our subject.

In the main theme she serves the same purpose in the development of the tragedy as in *Sophocles* and in *Corneille*. As in *Sophocles*, she shows contempt for the oracles:

(1)
"Des dieux l'oracle nous abuse."

And again, OEdipus refers to her disdain of the gods:

"Sans doute pour moi contre eux vous combattiez."

Neither does she show respect for the priest:

"Nos prêtres ne sont pas ce qu'un vain
peuple pense,
Notre crédulité fait toute leur science."

1. Acte 3, Scène 1V.

In Voltaire OEdipe is a much finer character than in Corneille. He shows none of those selfish or suspicious traits which are exhibited in Corneille. It is true that he is not the noble Sophoclean hero, but he is generous, considerate and thoughtful of his people. One incident--an element meant to make the plot more reasonable--seems unjustifiable. This is OEdipe's excuse for not knowing the circumstances of Laïus's death:

(1)

"Madame, jusqu'ici respectant vos douleurs,

Je n'ai point rappelé le sujet de vos pleurs."

He is unselfish up to the point of being eager to sacrifice himself for his subjects; he feels their griefs and shows great earnestness and sincerity in seeking out the cause of their afflictions.

In Sophocles, it is only after OEdipus has blinded himself that he becomes submissive to Fate; whereas, in Voltaire, immediately after the truth is learned, he accepts reverently the decrees of Destiny:

(2)

"C'en est fait; nos destins sont remplis."

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1. Acte 1, Scène 3.

2. Acte 5, Scène 5.

Phorbas is given a higher rank in this play than in Sophocles. He is "du roi le conseil et l'appui." Another deviation in his role is that after his return to Thebes, bringing with him the body of Laius, the people accused him of being the slayer of Laius; so the queen, to save him, had concealed him in a neighboring palace; and when released to tell his story, he is surprised to find the murderer of Laius on the throne.

The role of the priest is modified in this play. He reports the revelations of the oracles and his visions, thus in the development of the plot taking the place of Creon and of Tiresias in Sophocles; and like them, this character receives insults which are, however, more significant than in Sophocles, for the attacks are aimed at the priests and the clergy, rather than at the "Grand-Prêtre" of the "OEdipe."

Dryden, assisted by Lee, wrote a tragedy, "Oedipus," of which Dryden conceived the whole plan, and wrote the first and third acts, the best in the play.

As Voltaire was to do later, Dryden has borrowed the idea of a minor plot from Corneille, but his minor

theme is poorer than either of the others. From Corneille too he takes the suggestion that Jocasta and Laius have a daughter, whom he calls Eurydice, and who is loved by Adrastus, the prince of Argos. Although there is an Adrastus in both the "Roman de Thèbes" and in Lydgate's "Siege of Thebes," these characters have nothing in common but the name. Creon, who also aspires to marry Eurydice and who constitutes the connecting link between this minor plot and the main theme, varies in every respect from the Creon of the OEdipus Tyrannus; but he resembles the Créon in Racine's "La Thébaïde ou Les Frères Ennemis", both in his tyrannical character and in his desire to marry his niece, who in Racine's play is Antigone.

Very nearly the same situation is revealed at the opening of the play as in the other tragedies, with this exception, that OEdipus is at this time away from home, carrying on war. We learn the facts from a conversation between the lords of Creon's faction, who are conspiring to place him on the throne of Thebes.

The first instance of plot development is the

announcement by Dymas of the words of the god:

"Shed in a cursed hour, by cursed hand,
 Blood royal unavenged has cursed the land,
 When Laius's death is expiated well,
 (1)
 Your plague shall cease. The rest let Laius tell."

This idea of consulting the ghost, borrowed from Seneca, is common to all of the modern tragedies. The ghost is called up by Tiresias in the sacred grove, which closely resembles the sacred grove in "Oedipus Coloneus." The shade reveals that:

"....he who holds my crown...was doomed to do
 what nature most abhors.
 Ask'st thou who murdered me? 'Twas Oedipus.

 From Thebes, my throne, my bed, let him
 be driven;
 Do you forbid him earth and I'll forbid
 (2)
 him heaven."

1. Act 1, Scene 1.
2. Act 3, Scene 1.

OEdipus discredits the report, condemning Tiresias as, in the other plays, in his anger at so atrocious an accusation, he insults the character who reveals this truth to him.

The rest of the play follows Sophocles very closely; in the final disclosures which are revealed by a conversation between Jocasta and OEdipus, by the announcement of the messenger from Corinth, and by the report given by Phorbas.

The play ends in a melodramatic manner. OEdipus, now a raging maniac, comes upon the stage with his eyes torn from their sockets, gropes about until he finds a window unbarred, and flings himself from it, dashing out his brains. (1) "The scene draws and discloses Jocasta, held by her women, and stabbed in many places of her bosom, her hair dishevelled, her children slain upon the bed." This scene of bloodshed and slaughter is reinforced by the killing of all the principal characters in the minor plot, of whom Creon kills Eurydice, Adrastus slays Creon,

1. Act 5, Scene 1.

and Adrastus, in turn, falls at the hands of the soldiers.

Oedipus, in this play, is a loyal monarch, sympathetic^{izing} with his people and ready to die to save Thebes.

We have Adrastus's opinion of him as a soldier:

".....you tempered so

Your courage while you fought, that mercy seemed
(1)

The manlier virtue and much more prevailed."

But when the truth is revealed, he turns to curse the Corinthian messenger and Phorbas as he does at this point in Sophocles. In the end he does not become generous and submissive to fate as does the Oedipus of the other plays, but in his rage and madness throws himself from the window.

The character of Jocasta is very distasteful throughout the play, because she does not appear innocent. She is constantly haunted by the ghost of her husband and feels guilty as the wife of Oedipus. A slight suggestion in Sophocles that Oedipus resembles Laius is unnecessarily developed by Dryden, in having Jocasta comment on this several times.

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1. Act 1, Scene 1.

Like Sophocles's Jocasta, she tries to persuade OEdipus not to trust to the oracles. In the other plays, as soon as she learns of the terrible fate of OEdipus, she commits suicide; but Dryden has the bad taste to make her deliver a violent, impassioned speech after the truth is learned. She becomes insane from grief and in her madness murders her young children before turning the dagger upon her own breast.

Tiresias is an important figure in this play because of the prominence given to necromancy as a means of plot development and as a spectacular element. He is a blind prophet as in Sophocles, led, however, by his daughter, Manto, as in Seneca, and not by a young disciple as in Sophocles.

Phorbas, who in this play had been in Laius's court, "lord of all his rural pleasures,"⁽¹⁾ knowing that the king, OEdipus, was Laius's murderer, begged to be dismissed and "now lives retired."⁽²⁾ He makes the same disclosures as does that character in the other plays.

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1. Act 1V, Scene 1.
2. Act 3, Scene 1.

Creon is given extraordinary significance in this play on account of the fact that he appears in both plots. He is depicted as an unscrupulous and despicable character, and also repulsive in looks. Ambitious for the throne of Thebes, he wishes to marry his niece, Eurydice. This disgusting notion is even made the subject of comment.

While in the other plays the ghost of Laius is merely consulted and reports given, in this drama the ghost itself appears on the stage to reply to Tiresias's questions.

Of Martínez de la Rosa, Blanco García says: "conocía, no sólo el original sino también las variaciones que de él existen en diferentes lenguas, como lo dá á entender el extenso, luminoso y erudito análisis de uno y otros, puesto al frente del Edipo. Uno por uno va descubriendo con sagacidad y tino los extravíos de sus precursores, y por la exclusión de elementos y episodios extraños viene á quedarse con la primitiva tradición, áun cuando creyera necesarias algunas adiciones para hacerla viable sobre las tablas."

Although he respected the plot of the Greek tragedy, he modified the tone and spirit, in order to soften the effect of the horrible tragic catastrophe. To accomplish this purpose, he has made his characters more human; they are endowed with the feelings and emotions of ordinary beings, and they suffer the griefs and sorrows of mortals. OEdipus does not appear as a dignified monarch, thinking only of the welfare of his subjects, but in this play we see him as a husband and a father. The children are introduced several times to arouse sympathy, and to bring out OEdipus's character in connection with his daughters; for he addresses them frequently, embraces them, and weeps over them.

Jocasta is a loving wife, thinking only of OEdipus's happiness; so anxious is she not to cause him any worry that she hides her secret grief over the son who was condemned to death.

¶ We have seen that the supernatural element is very important as a means of plot development. At times announcements are merely reported from the gods, again a vivid description of some strange phenomenon is given,

or the ghost of Laius may make a spectacular appearance.

The first note of supernaturalism in Corneille occurs when Oedipus ~~says~~ he is awaiting the reply from Delphos regarding the cause of the plague. From Seneca he borrows the idea of consulting the ghost of Laius.

And not only ^{is the ghost} ~~do they consult the ghost,~~ when investigating ^{is being investigated,} the cause of Laius's death, but we learn that he has appeared often to the queen. The oracular element is greatly decreased by Corneille and there is nothing whatever in this drama corresponding to the sacrificial scene in Seneca.

In Voltaire also, Oedipus endeavors to learn the cause of the plague from the gods. In this play the priest has seen the ghost of Laius in much the same manner as he appeared to the Jocaste of Corneille. Later Jocaste tells that the ghost of her husband appeared to her also. But her vision was even more strange, for with Laius was the son whom she had sacrificed, and both of them seemed to drag her into hell. Jocaste here takes the same view of the oracle concerning Oedipus's fate as the same character in Sophocles. Both use it as an

argument to dissuade Oedipus from putting faith in the gods.

In the Greek play the oracles are very important in developing the plot. From Sophocles Seneca borrows this idea and adds the supernatural phenomena of the spectacular sacrificial scene and the rites of necromancy.

Although all of the modern authors, like Sophocles, use the oracles, they emphasize and develop more fully the idea of the ghost, for this element seems more reasonable and interesting to a modern audience. Moreover, this sort of supernaturalism was in vogue at the time these plays appeared.

As we should expect in the French classic plays, devoid of action and incident, these supernatural ^{occurrences} elements are ^{not shown} suppressed, and we are merely told about these ~~strange occurrences~~. For instance, in Corneille's play, we learn from Jocaste that she has seen the ghost of her husband; in Voltaire, her vision of her former husband is somewhat more elaborate.

In contrast with the French plays is Dryden's "Oedipus,"

in which the supernatural notions are expanded and multiplied for the purpose of enhancing the melodramatic effect. Here OEdipus and Jocasta are both haunted by Laius's ghost and we are told of the appearance in a vivid, dramatic manner. When the ghost is summoned in the sacred grove, he appears to converse with Tiresias and to make his own revelations. A weird, uncanny impression is produced by the incantation songs and by the use of scenic effects. To increase further this sensational tone, strange elements are added which are found in none of the other plays. We are reminded of Seneca when he describes that the moon is covered with blood, then is darkened by an eclipse, that there are myriads of shooting stars, great peals of thunder and dreadful lightning. But entirely original is the appearance in the sky of two figures "crowned, with the names of Jocasta and OEdipus written above in great characters of gold." Many other times he introduces thunder, lightning and violent storms, giving tone color to the play by describing the disturbances of external nature in harmony with the struggles which take place in the human minds and hearts.

He further heightens this effect by introducing a sleep-walking scene, which recalls "Macbeth." OEdipus, asleep, walks across the stage with a dagger in his right hand and a taper in his left; he is dreaming that he has slain Polybus and has married his mother.

Different from all of the former modes of treatment is Martínez de la Rosa's conception of supernaturalism. It is less dramatic in presentation; in fact, these effects do not appear on the stage, but are reported, as in the French plays. But in the minuteness of description and in the awfulness of the circumstances, we are reminded of Seneca, and therefore they produce a much more profound impression on the characters, where they are used primarily to advance the plot. Here the characters are awe-stricken and haunted by the messages from the ghost. OEdipus appears frightened and almost overcome at the sight of Laius's ghost in the temple. He was clad in royal purple and the deep wound showing on his breast; there is a confused image of Jocasta by his side and the bloody hand of Laius seemed to separate them. The ghost with a low groan gives OEdipus this warning:

"Huye infelix del tálamo y del tórono que
mancha el crimen."

And not OEdipus but Jocasta lives in continual dread,
always brooding over the meaning of the omens.

In Sophocles, not only are the divine powers
used in working out the plot of the drama, but there is
a reverent, religious tone and a distinct religious
element in the drama.

P In the theme itself there is a religious and a
moral teaching, and ⁽¹⁾ "as such we may fairly think it was
employed by religious teachers....The tale of Laius and
OEdipus could readily be made to point a moral against
the violation of unwritten laws such as the first three
of those set forth by Socrates in Xenophon's "Memorabilia"--
reverence the gods, honour parents, commit no incest,
return good for good."

Not only is the theme itself religious, but it is
enveloped in a religious tone and setting. In the very
opening of the play we see "a crowd of suppliants waiting

1. Earle's "OEdipus Tyrannus."

at the altar. As the door opens and OEdipus come out, all the suppliants with a cry move toward him in attitudes of prayer." The presence of the suppliants gives us at once the feeling that "OEdipus" is a religious drama, and it brings us into sympathy with the play which is to follow. The songs of the chorus, which is composed of Theban elders, are devout in thought, and the priest worshipping with the suppliants enhances the religious tone. (1) And moreover, Sophocles is "un poète religieux, presque un prêtre." Greek tragedy is also philosophic, but it is "plus religieuse que philosophique."

Fatalism still plays an important part in Seneca's tragedy, but here, with a philosophic instead of a religious significance. It is the Stoical philosophy which had penetrated so deeply into the life of many Romans as to become a creed and a practical code of morals for everyday use. This doctrine is summed up in this stoical maxim of necessity:

"Fatis agimur, cedite Fatis,

1. "Journal des Débats", Sept. 27, 1906, Emile Faguet.

Non sollicitae possunt curae,
 Mutare rati stamina fusi;
 Quicquid patimur morale genus,
 Quicquid facimus venit ex alto;
 Servatque sua decreta colus,
 (1)
 Lachesis dura revoluta manu."

Seneca may also have had political reasons for writing "Oedipus," "Perhaps to check the seeds of vice in Nero, his pupil, to whom incest and blood were afterwards so familiar."
 (2)

Corneille, in writing his "Oedipe," has no religious or philosophic aims, nor even the political purpose which we find later, in Voltaire's tragedy; but feeling the theme itself too horrible to stand alone as the center of interest, this author conceived the idea of obscuring the main theme by a sub-plot.

However, with no political intent, he has elevated the position of Oedipus to the dignity of a sovereign whose commands must be obeyed without question. Even the

1. Intro. to Dryden's "Oedipus," Scott and Saintsbury.
2. Ibidem.

queen can have no authority over her own daughter, but must yield to OEdipus's wishes: "Je la condamnerai si vous la condamnez." Voltaire uses his tragedy for the express purpose of expressing his political views. In his disregard for the clergy and for religion he attacks the priests throughout the play. Philoctète, addressing OEdipe gives Voltaire's estimate of them:

"Entre un pontife et vous je ne balance pas
 Un prêtre quel qu'il soit,
 Quelque dieu qui l'inspire,
 (1)
 Doit prier pour ses rois et non pas les maudire."

And again Philoctète says:

(2)
 "Mais un prêtre est ici d'autant plus redoutable
 Qu'il vous perce à nos yeux par un trait
 respectable.

Fortement appuyé sur des oracles vains;
 Un pontife est souvent terrible aux souverains;
 Et dans son zèle aveugle, un peuple opiniâtre

--

1. Act 3, Scène 4.

2. Act 3, Scène 5.

De ses liens sacrés imbécile idolâtre
 Foulant par piété les plus saintes des lois,
 Croit honorer les dieux en trahissant ses rois;
 Surtout quand l'intérêt, père de la licence,
 Vient de leur zèle impie enhardir l'insolence."

And OEdipus's "confident" gives him this advice:

(1)

"Ne nous endormons pas sur la foi de leurs prêtres."

He even makes Jocaste a mouthpiece for his abuses:

"Ah! d'un prêtre indiscret dédaignant les fureurs,
 Cessez de l'excuser par ces lâches terreurs,"

And also she says:

"Nos prêtres ne sont pas ce qu'un vain peuple
 pense,

Notre crédulité fait toute leur science."

Not content with showing his contempt and distrust for the priests, he even attacks the position of the king. And it is Philoctète again who voices Voltaire's views:

(2)

"Pour Hercule et pour moi, c'est un homme ordinaire."

--

1. Acte 2, Scène 5.

2. Acte 1, Scène 3.

"Qu'eussé- je été sans lui? rien que le
fils d'un roi,

Rien qu'un prince vulgaire.

Le trône est un objet qui n'a pu me tenter;

.....

J'ai fait des souverains et n'ai point voulu l'⁽¹⁾être."

In direct contrast to Dryden's play, which abounds in conspiracies and unscrupulous political schemes, is the "Edipo" of Martínez de la Rosa. The political element is kept in the background and obscured even more than in the Sophoclean model, for the character of Creon is omitted and the whole interest centers on OEdipus himself; and it is on OEdipus the man instead of the dignified ideal monarch of Sophocles.

1. Act 1, Scène 2.

During the Renaissance there was a short-lived revival of the Greek divisions of the drama as, for instance, in Garnier's "Antigone"; however, ⁽¹⁾ "from Seneca the European tragedy received the five acts which have become the rule of the modern stage." "These are the divisions, together with the sub-divisions, of scenes which we find in each of the plays. In the instances where the chorus appears, it is in each case included within the scene.

Whenever the chorus is found in the modern drama, it is merely a revival of the Greek chorus and cannot interpret its spirit or fulfill its function; and besides, all outward conditions of the drama are now hopelessly against it; so Corneille and Dryden have wisely omitted it; but Voltaire and Martínez de la Rosa have incorporated a semblance of one in their plays.

Voltaire has his own conception of the chorus, and his own reasons for introducing it: "J'en ai fait un personnage qui paraît à son rang comme les autres acteurs, et qui se montre quelquefois sans parler,

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1. "The Influence of Seneca on the Elizabethan Drama", J.W.Cunliffe.

seulement pour jeter plus d'intérêt dans la scène et pour ajouter de la pompe au spectacle." It merely comments upon the action or upon a character, reports in a different manner what has already been said, or laments over some misfortune. It really has no place in the play and when it complains of its sad fate (Actel, Scène 2) we are inclined to say with the priest:

"Cessez et relevez ces clameurs lamentables."

Me^{nández} y Palayo ~~states~~ that the chorus should be the "expresión del sentido moral en la tragedia lírica, eco de la voz de Dios en la voz, de las muchedumbres, efusión del sentimiento religioso del poeta, personaje impersonal (si vale la frase) y que, sin embargo tiene un alma tan individual como cualquier otro de la tragedia." And here is his estimation of the choruses in Martínez de la Rosa's "Edipo": "¿A qué queda reducido en Martínez de la Rosa sino á un accesorio de ornato, á unas caplillas más ó menos dignas de la gravedad trágica?"

None of these choruses serve the purpose of the Sophoclean tragedy in aiding plot development, either by making announcements itself or by being addressed by the

other actors. Therefore, to supply the office of the choruses, the "confidants" are substituted in the French plays, Creon's faction in Dryden's, and Hyparco in Martínez de la Rosa's.

Seneca, besides giving to the modern drama the divisions of the play, has also exerted a great influence on the style.

Corneille's "Œdipe" is written in the heroic couplet, the verse form prevalent in the classic period of French literature. This form gives the drama a cold, stilted style and is well adapted to the rhetorical speeches which compose the play. The speeches are usually very long, and in the few instances where we find short speeches and interrupted dialogue, they are those sharp, terse sentences, so characteristic of Corneille in repartee, used to heighten the interest and to emphasize a certain point, rather than for the purpose of giving a natural tone to the play.

Even the "conversations amoureuses" are recited in a polite, eloquent manner devoid of all feeling.

The epigrammatic phrases and maxims so common in

Seneca are not lacking here:

"Ah! Seigneur quand l'Amour tient une âme alarmée,
Il l'attache aux périls de la personne aimée."

"Vivez pour faire vivre en tous lieux ma mémoire."

And ridiculously extravagant and exaggerated phrases
are not uncommon:

"Quelque ravage affreux qu'étale ici la peste,
L'absence aux vrais amants est encore plus funeste."

And not only is this formal declamatory dialogue
found in the love scenes, but there is no variation,
even in the tragic scenes of the main plot. Even the
announcement of Oedipus's blinding himself is prefaced
by some carefully balanced phrases in the "précieux"
language from which Corneille was never able to free
himself:

"Ce que j'ose encore dire,
Qu'il vit et ne vit plus, qu'il est mort
et respire."

In a single instance the verse form deviates from
the heroic couplet; Dircé delivers a monologue in lyric
form. Voltaire makes the following comment on her speech:

"Il n'y a que ^{de} l'esprit et encore ^{de} l'esprit
alambiqué. Si Dircé était dans un véritable danger ces
epigrammes déplacées ne toucheraient personne. Jugez
quel effet elles doivent produire quand on voit évidem-
ment que Dircé à laquelle personne ne s'intéresse, ne
court aucun risque."

Therefore Voltaire, probably to avoid the mistake
of his predecessors in the lyric form, adopts the heroic
couplet, even for the songs of the chorus. The language
is cold and formal, therefore as may be expected, the
tone of the play is, as in Corneille's play, rhetorical
and non-dramatic. Voltaire, famous for his epigrammatic
phrases, does not disappoint us in a liberal use of them
in his "OEdipe:"

(1)
"Ces dieux dont le pontife a promis le secours,
Dans leurs temples, Seigneur, n'habitent pas toujours!"

Both Corneille and Voltaire, as we have observed,
strictly adhere to the classical conception of French
tragedy in the seventeenth century. Both have the same
general tone of formality; they are addressed rather to

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1. Acte 2, Scène V.
v. Corneille, Œuvres Complètes, vol II.

the intellect than to the emotions, and all action is eliminated. Corneille has written his tragedy with the sole view of presenting to French playgoers a modernized version of the Sophoclean tragedy. But Voltaire, not content with interesting us in his interpretation of the "Oedipus," has inculcated a political significance in his drama.

In Dryden's play we find a very different presentation. All of the action which can possibly take place is crowded into the play, and it is produced in a spectacular, sensational manner. The play is full of impassioned, emotional, violent speeches and there is a superfluity of dramatic movement.

Dryden does, however, show some French influence: the polish of style, the monotonous manner of expression, and the servility to the rule of the unities. From Seneca and likewise from Corneille, he takes the idea of including many epigrammatic, terse sayings, and sharp speeches in his dialogue.

"The language of Dryden's "Oedipus" is, in general, nervous, pure and elegant, and the dialogue, though in so

high a tone of passion, is natural and affecting. Some of Lee's extravagancesⁱ are lamentable exceptions to this observation. This may be instanced in the passage where Jocasta threatens to fire Olympus, destroy the heavenly furniture and smoke the dieties like bees out of their ambrosial⁽¹⁾ hive."

We find, at times, the note of sentimentalism which pervades the Spanish "Edipo," in such expressions as, "My beloved," and "thou softest, sweetest of the world," "Nay, she is beauteous too," and "Life of my life and treasure of my soul."

Epigrammatic phrases abound: "Fools are the daily work of Nature; her vocation; if she form a man, she loses by 't,'tis too expensive;

>Twould make ten fools; a man's a prodigy."

The vocabulary of this tragedy is very different from the polite, formal, dignified language of the French play; it is a specialized tragic diction intended to emphasize the feeling of horror. The dialogue abounds in

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"Dryden's Works,"

1. Scott and Saintsbury.

such words as "swords," "javelins," "daggers," "poison," "struggle," "crimes"; and such phrases as "infernal gods," "awful powers," "infernal spirits," "rebellious traitor," "land of lust," "most wretched of mankind," are common.

With the exception of the songs and some lines which rhyme in the incantation scene, the tragedy is written in blank verse, a form which is more flexible than the heroic couplet and which is better suited for the passionate, emotional dialogue which is found throughout the play.

CONCLUSION

We have found that the OEdipus theme has been universally treated in various forms of literature, and that in modern as well as Greek times it has served especially as a dramatic subject.

Our most prominent examples are the "OEdipe" of Corneille and of Voltaire, the "OEdipus" of Dryden, and the "Edipo" of Martínez de la Rosa, all of which are inferior to the Sophoclean model.

Corneille and Voltaire, it is true, keep the dignified impersonal tone of the Sophoclean play, but both mar it by an adventitious sub-plot based on a love story. Dryden sinned, not only as did the French writers, in introducing this love element, but filled his play with sensational scenes couched in bombastic language. Martínez de la Rosa, while refraining from tampering with the Greek plot, has robbed it of its dignity by bringing it out of the heroic realm. In his OEdipus, accessible to the emotions and sufferings of an ordinary

being, we fail to recognize the Sophoclean prototype.

It is because of the horror of the story, and especially because Fatalism is the foundation and "tout de sujet" of the Sophoclean "Oedipus," that the modern plays ~~succeed in being~~^{are} only inadequate and inferior imitations of their exemplar. When they eliminate the religious conception of Fatalism and attempt to obscure its significance, the whole purpose is gone out of the tragedy, ^{only} curiosity is aroused by the oracles, and the gradual disclosures finally bringing about the catastrophe; the dramas become merely a "mechanical manipulation of plot."
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1. Vaughan, "Types of Tragic Drama."