

and the prose of chroniclers. There were versions differing in detail, and allowing scope for selection. While the great outlines were constant, minor circumstances might be adapted to the dramatist's chosen view.

Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides agree in a trait which does not belong to any extant version before theirs. Iocasta, not Euryganeia, is the mother of Eteocles and Polyneices, Antigone and Ismene. They agree also in connecting the doom of the two brothers with a curse pronounced by Oedipus. Neither the scanty fragments¹ which alone represent the *Oedipus* of Euripides, nor the hints in the *Phoenissae*, enable us to determine the distinctive features of his treatment. With regard to Aeschylus, though our knowledge is very meagre, it suffices at least to show the broad difference between his plan and that of Sophocles.

Aeschylus. Aeschylus treated the story of Oedipus as he treated the story of Agamemnon. Oedipus became the foremost figure of a trilogy which traced the action of an inherited curse in the house of Labdacus, even as the *Oresteia* traced the action of such a curse in the house of Pelops. That trilogy consisted of the

¹ Nauck *Eur. Fragm.* 544—561, to which Unger adds *Soph. fr. incert.* 663, Meineke *adespota* 107, 309, others *adesp.* 6. Almost all the verses are commonplaces. From fr. 546, 547 I should conjecture that the Creon of Eur. defended himself against a charge of treason in a passage parallel with *Soph. O. T.* 583—615. One fragment of two lines is curious (545): ἡμεῖς δὲ Πολύβου παῖδ' ἐρείσαντες πέδῳ | ἐξομματοῦμεν καὶ διόλλυμεν κόρας. Quoting these, the schol. on *Eur. Ph.* 61 says: ἐν δὲ τῷ Οἰδίποδι οἱ Λαῖου θεράποντες ἐτύφλωσαν αὐτόν. This would seem to mean that, after the discovery, the old retainers of Laïus blinded Oedipus—for the schol. is commenting on the verse which says that he was blinded by *himself*. But the tragic force of the incident depends wholly on its being the king's own frantic act. I incline to suspect some error on the scholiast's part, which a knowledge of the context might possibly have disclosed.

From the prologue of the *Phoenissae* it appears that Eur. imagined Oedipus to have been found on Cithaeron by the ἵπποβούκοι of Polybus, and taken by them to the latter's wife. The Iocasta of Eur. herself relates in that play how, when the sons of Oed. grew up, they held him a prisoner in the palace at Thebes—that the disgrace might be hidden from men's eyes. It was then that he pronounced a curse upon them. When they have fallen, fighting for the throne, Iocasta kills herself over their bodies, and Creon then expels Oedipus from Thebes. The mutilated *ὑπόθεσις* to the *Phoenissae* does not warrant us in supposing that the *Oenomaus* and *Chrysippus* of Eur.,—the latter containing the curse of Pelops on Laïus—formed a trilogy with his *Oedipus*.