

Original  
features of  
his plot.

astounding reversal of a previous situation. In regard to the structure of the plot, this is what Sophocles has achieved. Before giving an analysis of his plot, we must notice two features of it which are due to his own invention.

(1) According to previous accounts, the infant Oedipus, when exposed on Mount Cithaeron, had been found by herdsmen, and reared either in Southern Boeotia, or at Sicyon, a place associated with the worship of the Eumenides. Sophocles makes the Theban herd of Laïus give the babe to the herd of Polybus, king of Corinth, who rears it as his own. Thus are prepared the two convergent threads of evidence which meet in the final discovery. And thus, too, the belief of Oedipus concerning his own parentage becomes to him a source, first of anxiety, then of dread, then of hope—in contrast, at successive moments, with that reality which the spectators know.

(2) The only verses remaining from the *Oedipus* of Aeschylus show that in that drama Oedipus encountered and slew Laïus at a meeting of three roads near Potniae, a place in Boeotia, on the road leading from Thebes to Plataea. At the ruins of this place Pausanias saw 'a grove of Demeter and Persephone'<sup>1</sup>. It appears to have been sacred also to those other and more terrible goddesses who shared with these the epithet of *πότνιαι*,—the Eumenides (*ποτνιαδες θεαι*, Eur. *Or.* 318). For the purpose of Aeschylus, no choice of a scene could have been more fitting. The father and son, doomed by the curse in their house, are brought together at a spot sacred to the Erinnyes:—

ἐπῆμεν τῆς ὁδοῦ τροχίλατον  
σχιστῆς κελεύθου τρίοδον, ἔνθα συμβολὰς  
τριῶν κελεύθων Ποτνιαδῶν ἡμείβομεν<sup>2</sup>.

'We were coming in our journey to the spot from which three high-roads part, where we must pass by the junction of triple ways at Potniae.'

But for Sophocles this local fitness did not exist. For him, the supernatural agency which dominates the drama is not that of the Furies, but of Apollo. He transfers the scene of the encounter from the 'three roads' at Potniae to the 'three roads'

<sup>1</sup> ἄλσος Δήμητρος καὶ Κόρης, 9. 8. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Aesch. fr. 167 (Nauck).