

**THE RECEPTION OF ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY IN ENGLAND 1660-
1760**

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I, Michael Waters confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The dissertation enquires into some of the forms that the reception of ancient Greek tragedy took in England between 1660 and 1760. It looks at those critics and translators who engaged most with ancient Greek tragedy and whose engagement was accompanied by an interest in ancient theory and native English literature. Chapter 1, after examining works by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe, Thomas Goffe, Thomas May and Christopher Wase, considers William Joyner's original tragedy *The Roman Empress* (1670) in order to see what use Joyner made of Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Medea*. Chapter 2 turns to the writings of, especially, John Dryden, Thomas Rymer, John Dennis and Charles Gildon, who were the most prolific and interesting commentators on dramatic theory in England at this time, and assesses their different perspectives on the questions of tragedy and the modern stage. Chapter 3 addresses separately comments on ancient Greek tragedy contained in Jeremy Collier's attack on contemporary English theatre in *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) and in replies to him. Chapter 4 concentrates on Lewis Theobald's translations of Sophocles' *Electra* (1714) and *Oedipus* (1715) and how his views of ancient Greek tragedy influenced, and were influenced by, his interest in Shakespeare, an edition of whose plays he published in 1733. Chapter 5 examines Thomas Francklin's *The Tragedies of Sophocles* and *A Dissertation on Antient Tragedy* (both 1759) and how they reflect his interest in the contemporary stage and contemporary ideas about the value of simplicity in literature and art. I argue that the writers I examine reflect through their engagement with Greek tragedy ideas about the relationships between ancient and early modern English tragedy, particularly that of Shakespeare, and between the present and the past.

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PRELIMINARY NOTES

Except in quotations which use other terms, I refer to the titles of plays by Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles and to the names of characters, as well as to line numbers in particular plays, as they appear in the current editions of the Greek tragedians in the Loeb Classical Library series mentioned in the bibliography, except that for reasons of familiarity I shall refer simply to *Oedipus* and not *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

When I quote English translations of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides that are not those of the writers I am studying, I use the current Loeb Classical Library versions on the basis that they are intended to reflect closely the sense of the originals. Hugh Lloyd-Jones notes that his translation of Sophocles ‘has no literary pretensions, being intended as an aid to those who wish to understand the Greek text that is printed opposite’ (p. vii).

In quotations I have retained the spelling and punctuation of the sources, except that I have regularised the use of ‘i’ and ‘j’ and ‘u’ and ‘v’ and have expanded diphthongs. I have also reserved italics to titles of works.

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE, SCOPE AND CONTEXTS OF THIS DISSERTATION

1. Purpose and scope of this dissertation

In this dissertation I enquire into some of the forms that the reception of ancient Greek tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides took in England between 1660 and 1760. The start date marks the reopening of the theatres under the restored monarchy of Charles II and an increase in literary debate about theatrical matters in England; for example, the 1660s saw the first critical writings of John Dryden. The end date relates to the publication in 1759 of the first complete verse translation of Sophocles by Thomas Francklin at a time when David Garrick, whose performances Francklin admired and drew on, was at the height of his powers.

I look at those writers - critics and translators - who engaged most with ancient Greek tragedy and whose engagement was accompanied by an interest in ancient theory and native English literature, since study of the interaction between the two cultures is likely to be especially fruitful. On the whole I proceed chronologically. In chapter 1, after examining works by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe, Thomas Goffe, Thomas May and Christopher Wase that in different ways derive directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, from ancient tragedies, I consider William Joyner's original tragedy *The Roman Empress* (performed 1670) and examine the use that Joyner made of Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Medea* which he claimed as sources for his play. Although *The Roman Empress* postdates Dryden's earliest critical writings, I address it first since it was not obviously influenced by them. In the next two chapters I focus on critical writings about the theatre. In chapter 2 I consider, especially, Dryden, Thomas Rymer, John Dennis and Charles Gildon, who were the most prolific and interesting commentators on dramatic theory at this time, and assess their different perspectives on the subject of tragedy and the modern stage. In chapter 3 I examine comments on ancient Greek tragedy contained in Jeremy Collier's attack on contemporary English theatre in *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), and in replies to him; their starting point is often different from that of the writers considered in chapter 2. Although I take 1660 as my start date, in order to evaluate the extent and significance of continuity with previous thinking I look in chapters 1-3 at writers who, before 1660, anticipated later attitudes. In the last two

chapters I examine some eighteenth-century translations of Sophocles. In chapter 4 I concentrate on Lewis Theobald's translations of Sophocles' *Electra* (1714) and *Oedipus* (1715) and how his views of ancient Greek tragedy influenced, and were influenced by, his interest in Shakespeare, an edition of whose plays he published in 1733. Chapter 5 examines Thomas Francklin's *The Tragedies of Sophocles* and *A Dissertation on Antient Tragedy* (both 1759) and how they reflect his interest in the contemporary stage, especially performances by Garrick, and contemporary ideas about simplicity in literature and art. In addition, I include in an Appendix a comparison of Theobald's and Francklin's translations of Oedipus' second speech in Sophocles' *Oedipus* to which I refer in chapters 4 and 5.

English writers often discussed ancient Greek tragedy, not in isolation, but in connection with English dramas with which they were often compared. Chapters 2-5 examine various ways in which the reception of ancient Greek tragedy was influenced by, and in turn influenced, attitudes towards Shakespeare in particular.

Ancient Greek tragedies could be accessed during the period covered by this dissertation almost exclusively by being read. There were various original-language editions, the Greek text often supplemented by a Latin translation; reading some Euripides in Latin was probably the closest Shakespeare came to reading any of the Greek tragedians.¹ Performances were almost non-existent, although in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there had been some stagings in England of ancient Greek tragedies, or versions thereof, often in Latin at Oxford and Cambridge University colleges and London schools. An English-language translation of Sophocles' *Iphigenia at Aulis* had been performed at St. Paul's School, London in the 1570s or 1580s. But between 1660 and 1760 there was only one original-language production of an ancient Greek tragedy, namely two performances of Sophocles' *Oedipus* in Mile End, London in March 1714, and none in English translation.² Translations into English were in fact uncommon. Before the period I am studying, there were no English translations of plays by Aeschylus and perhaps only three of

¹ Burrow 2013: 13.

² See Smith B. R. 1988: 199-215, Wiggins 2012-2013 and the performance database of the Archive of Performances of Greek & Roman Drama (APGRD) for both general information and specific examples including the St. Paul's School and Mile End productions. Sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century English translations of ancient Greek tragedies are also recorded in Cummings and Gillespie 2009, Gillespie 2009 and Walton 2006a and 2006b.

plays by Euripides and Sophocles, which the authors I discuss are unlikely to have known. Lady Jane Lumley's *The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigenia translated out of Greake into English* (c. 1555), a translation of *Iphigenia at Aulis* based on Erasmus' Latin translation, remained in manuscript until it was published in 1909. George Peele's version of the same play (c. 1580) has not survived.³ I consider Christopher Wase's translation of Sophocles' *Electra* (1649) in chapter 1.4. No complete play of Aeschylus was translated into English until Thomas Morell's *Prometheus in Chains* in 1773, followed by a translation of all Aeschylus' tragedies by Robert Potter four years later. More of Sophocles and Euripides was available in English at an earlier date, but still only from well into the eighteenth century, as mentioned in the next section and in chapters 4 and 5. On the other hand, there were many adaptations of ancient Greek tragedies for the English stage as I mention in the next section and in chapter 1.

In this introduction I look at previous scholarship relevant to the areas that I examine in order to identify the new ground covered by this dissertation (section 2). I then consider issues that are important for the whole of the period that I am studying. They concern why so many writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thought that ancient Greek tragedy should be relevant to them in the first place: the respect accorded to the theories of Aristotle, especially, and Horace (3); views on whether human nature remained the same in different countries and periods (4); and the debate about the relative merits of ancient and modern arts and sciences (5). Attitudes to the ancient heathen gods are considered next (6). I then look at the dominant theory of translation in the period since in chapters 1, 4 and 5 I consider translations of Sophocles (7). Finally, I argue that the theme of engagement with the past underlies the dissertation as a whole (8).

2. Previous scholarship

Scholars have explored the different ways in which writers in the first half of the eighteenth century and before engaged with the writings of the ancient Greeks. These included editing and translating their works; writing literary works and

³ Wiggins 2012-2013: nos. 275, 730. Princess Elizabeth may have translated some Euripides around 1548 (Wiggins 2012-2013: no. 181); Dennis (1967: I 164, II 276) knew of it.

histories of ancient and modern times in their style and manner; debating the relative merits of ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ writers and philosophers; and recommending ancient writers

for the Use and Instruction of younger Scholars; and Gentlemen who have for some years neglected the Advantages of their Education, and have a mind to resume those pleasant and useful Studies, in which they formerly made a handsome Progress at the Schools or Universities.⁴

Scholars have also studied the importance attached by men of letters in the eighteenth century to a classical education and familiarity with the classical authors;⁵ the place of Greece in the imagination of poets, including as a primitive Arcadia and a symbol of political liberty;⁶ the influence of Greek literature and Platonism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism on English literature more generally, including neo-classical tragedy;⁷ and the performance histories of Greek tragedies and English plays influenced by them.⁸ There are recent major studies of the translation and reception of classical texts, including drama, in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English: Volume 3 1660-1790* (2005) and *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature: Volume 3 (1660-1790)* (2012).

Two works that cover similar ground to my dissertation are J. M. Parry’s unpublished 1973 dissertation *English Attitudes to Greek Tragedy 1491-1971* and Hall and Macintosh’s *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914* (2005). The former devotes only twelve pages to the years 1491-1748 which are dismissed as ‘250 years of ignorance’; Parry does not place the literary criticisms he records in any contexts that would contribute to an understanding of them. Hall and Macintosh, although they mention the translations by Wase, Theobald and Francklin, focus more on the performance histories of, and the social-political background to, various adaptations of ancient Greek tragedies mentioned later in this section.

⁴ Blackwall 1718: A2r. Other works with a similar purpose were Kennet’s *The Lives and Characters of the Ancient Grecian Poets* (1697), Felton’s *A Dissertation on Reading the Classics, and Forming a Just Style* (1713), Trapp’s *Lectures on Poetry read in the Schools of Natural Philosophy at Oxford* (translated into English 1742) and Hill’s *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics* (1753).

⁵ Clarke 1945, Most 1997, Ogilvie 1964.

⁶ Hopkins 2000, Sambrook 1993, Stern 1940

⁷ Johnson J. W. 1967. Weinbrot (1993: 55-66) gives examples of seventeenth and eighteenth century hostility to stoicism and Epicureanism.

⁸ Hall and Macintosh 2005.

Otherwise not much has been written on the subjects of my dissertation. Joyner's *The Roman Empress*, which I discuss in chapter 1, has been noticed but not in any great detail.⁹ It is not mentioned in the two *Oxford History* studies mentioned above and more can be said about its relationship to contemporary theory of tragedy. The literature on Collier is more extensive and I review it in chapter 3; little has been written on Collier's interest in ancient Greek tragedy. There is more to add to previous studies of Theobald's editing of Shakespeare about his references to Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in that context which I examine in chapter 4.¹⁰ Rierson has studied Theobald's translation of *Oedipus* but I disagree with some of his interpretations. Francklin is most often mentioned in connection with eighteenth-century translation theory. He is placed in the tradition of 'free' rather than 'exact' or 'literal' translation practice;¹¹ and mentioned as an example of the collaborative translation process (Smollett and Francklin's translation of Voltaire's works),¹² as one of the pioneer translators of ancient Greek tragedians,¹³ and as a critic of leaving the practice of translation to unskilled hacks.¹⁴ His translation of *Oedipus* in particular has been considered by Rierson and by Hall and Macintosh.¹⁵ But more can be said about his translations as a whole and about his interest in how the plays might be staged.

I do not discuss Dryden and Nathaniel Lee's adaptation *Oedipus* (1678) on which there is already an extensive literature.¹⁶ Nor do I consider in detail

⁹ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 11-12; Hughes 1996: 78; Hume 1976: 290; Macintosh 2009: 53-55; Maguire 1992: 35-37; Sauer 2002: 105-106.

¹⁰ Dugas 2006; Jarvis 1995; Jones R. F. 1919; Seary 1990; Walsh 1997a.

¹¹ Tytler 1813: 4-5, 80; Draper 1921a: 242-243, 246, 252; Jones C. E. 1948: 20; Sheldon 1919: 20, 22.

¹² Oz-Salzberger 2006: 401-402.

¹³ Kewes 2005: 249-250; Walton 2006b: 50 and 2012: 624.

¹⁴ Lund 1998: 22-23.

¹⁵ Rierson 1984: 244-248; Hall and Macintosh 2005: 218-219.

¹⁶ For example, *The Works of John Dryden*, volume XIII (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984), 441-469; Hall and Macintosh 2005: 1-29; Kewes 1998: 155-162; Rierson 1984: 105-186 and *passim*; Smith B. R. 1988: 251-257. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: *The Spectator* no. 40, 16 April 1711; *The Universal Journal*, 29 April 1724; *The Adventurer* no. 113, 4 December 1753; Adams 1729: I b7r-b8r; William Burnaby, *Letters of Wit, Politicks and Morality* (1701), 236; Collier 1698: 120; Davies 1784: III 26; Dennis 1967: I 19-22; Drake 1699: 134-138; Filmer 1707: 83-86; Gildon 1699: 46, 1710a: xl, xlvii, 1710b: 429-430, 1719: 35; Langbaine 1691: 149, 162, 167; Rymer 1956: 83; Theobald 1726: 135 and 1733: VII 44.

translations and adaptations of Euripides. First, I am not examining translations of his plays by Richard West, Gilbert West and Thomas Morell since they engaged with ancient and contemporary theatre to a much lesser extent than the authors I include in this dissertation. The first was a lawyer and politician; *Hecuba* (1726) seems to have been his only literary work.¹⁷ Gilbert West and Morell published translations of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Hecuba* respectively in 1749. Gilbert West is best known for his volume of translations of Pindar's odes in which his translation from Euripides was included; I mention his interest in the versification of Euripides' choral odes in section 7 below. Morell was a classical scholar who edited several Greek tragedies; a study of him would need to focus more on the history of classical text editing than I have been able to do.¹⁸ Second, I do not discuss the many adaptations of Euripides' plays, except that in chapter 3 I briefly discuss Gildon's *Phaeton: or, The Fatal Divorce* (1698), based on Euripides' *Medea* and Philippe Quinault's opera *Phaéton* (and in chapter 5 I refer to James Thomson's *Agamemnon* (1738) which drew on both Aeschylus and Seneca). Charles Davenant's tragedy-cum-opera *Circe* (1677) is based on *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.¹⁹ Dennis' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (1699) drew on Lagrange-Chancel's *Oreste et Pilade* as well as on Euripides.²⁰ Gildon's *Love's Victim; or, The Queen of Wales* (1701) drew on *Alcestis*, *Helen* and *Andromache*.²¹ Edmund Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolytus* (1707), an adaptation of *Hippolytus*, was the subject of much contemporary debate: it was heavily supported in *The Spectator* by Joseph Addison, who wrote the prologue, and condemned by Gildon in *The New Rehearsal or, Bays the Younger* (1715) for debasing the character of Phaedra.²² Jane Robe's *The Fatal Legacy* (1723) is 'related

¹⁷ Wells 2004.

¹⁸ Clarke 1945: 17 n. 3, 61; Smith R. 2009.

¹⁹ Cannan 1994; Cibber 1740: 56-57; Hughes 1996: 240; Hume 1976: 314; Ingram 1966: 100-105; Nicoll 1928: 125-126.

²⁰ Hall 2000: 57-58; Heitner 1964: 292-293; Hughes 1996: 442-443; Hume 1976: 454; Ingram 1966: 37-79.

²¹ Gildon: 1701: vii; Hume 1976: 451-452; Nicoll 1925: 116.

²² In the eighteenth century: *The Muses Mercury: or The Monthly Miscellany*, January, March and May 1707; *The Spectator* nos. 18, 40 and 341, 1711-1712; *The Universal Mercury*, February 1726, II 33-34; Dennis 1967: II 195; Gildon 1715: 68-69; Hill 1755: 255; Oldisworth 1719: A7r-A7v, incorporated by Samuel Johnson into his *Life of Edmund Smith*; Shiells (ed.) 1753: IV 306-308. Later: Canfield 1904: 133-135, 143; Eccles 1922: 9-10; Gray 1931: 126; Hall and Macintosh 2005: 43, 71-72; Hume 1976: 478; Nicoll 1925: 72, 80.

to Euripides' *Phoenician Women*'.²³ Charles Johnson's *Medaea* (1730) is a version tailored to eighteenth-century sensibilities: Medea kills herself and her children survive.²⁴ William Whitehead's *Creusa, Queen of Athens* (1754) is an adaptation of *Ion*.²⁵ John Delap's *Hecuba* (1761) 'testifies to the taste for pathos and female distress that lay behind the popularity of the same author's *The Royal Suppliants* (1781)'.²⁶ In addition, both John Crowne's *Andromache* (1675) and Ambrose Philips' *The Distressed Mother* (1712) were translations-cum-adaptations of Racine's *Andromache* rather than based directly on Euripides' play;²⁷ and Abel Boyer's *Achilles; or, Iphigenia in Aulis* (1700), and its rewriting by Charles Johnson as *The Victim; or, Achilles and Iphigenia in Aulis* (1714), also derive from Racine rather than from Euripides. Many of those works are discussed by Hall and Macintosh (2005) and Kelsall (2012) as examples of 'She Tragedies', that is, tragedies that focussed on the distress of suffering female heroines. I concentrate in this dissertation on works that have not been so recently and extensively discussed.

3. The continuing relevance of ancient Greek tragedy: Aristotle and Horace

As can be seen from the list of adaptations above, and others that I consider in chapter 1, many English writers thought that tragedies written in ancient Greece were relevant in their own times notwithstanding they were written over two thousand years before. I consider some of the reasons for the continued interest in this and the next two sections.

The plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides – and the epic poems of Homer – were seen as sources of dramatic stories about gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, and the relationship between them, and between the divine and the human spheres more generally. They posed questions about the (in)stability of human success and happiness through stories about the causes, morality and

²³ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 66.

²⁴ Hall 2000: 52-53.

²⁵ Bevis 1988: 204; Davies 1780: I 175-176; Hall 2000: 50, 64; Murphy 1801: I 251-260.

²⁶ Kewes 2005: 247-248; also Hall 2000: 64; Kelsall 2012: 470 n. 4; Walton 2008: 273.

²⁷ On Philips' play see Bevis 1988: 133-134, 144 n. 21; Canfield 1904: 140; Eccles 1922: 12; Jacob 1719: I 203; Nicoll 1925: 72, 86-87.

consequences of wars between great cities and of civil wars; murder, revenge and reconciliation; and incest, madness and suffering.

The plays were also seen, in whole or in part, as models for contemporary writers to follow, as exemplars of respected ancient tragic theory. It is a commonplace that theories of tragedy in England from the latter part of the seventeenth century until well into the eighteenth were hugely influenced by Aristotle, writing in the second half of the fourth century B.C., and by Horace, whose *Art of Poetry* was written just after the dawn of the Christian era. I mention those dates to emphasise the enormous time gap between the ancient theorists and their early modern English counterparts and stage practitioners. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers of the even older tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides must have been aware that they were reaching back to almost the very beginning of the then readable written record of human thought and experience (disregarding the Bible which was, of course, believed to be of divine origin). Pope wrote in the preface to his translation of the *Iliad* (1715),

When we read Homer, we ought to reflect that we are reading the most ancient Author in the Heathen World; and those who consider him in this Light, will double their Pleasure in the Perusal of him. Let them think they are growing acquainted with Nations and People that are now no more; that they are stepping almost three thousand Years back into the remotest Antiquity, and entertaining themselves with a clear and surprizing Vision of Things no where else to be found, the only true mirror of that ancient World.²⁸

Although Pope is there implicitly raising Homer above all other ancient writers, the extreme antiquity of the works of Homer and the Greek tragedians alike, far from rendering their works obsolete, could bestow on them the ability to amaze and entrance through their evocation of a long gone age of heroes and legends.

Aristotle's *Poetics* provided a way in to the age of the great tragedians. It was published in a Latin translation in 1498, and in Greek in 1508, and Francesco Robortello published the first commentary in 1548.²⁹ For all the detailed debates about the writing of tragedy in early seventeenth-century France, the first French translation of *La Poétique d'Aristote. Traduite du Grec*, by the sieur de Norville, was

²⁸ Pope 1993: 14-15.

²⁹ Smith B. R. 1988: 13.

not published until 1671.³⁰ It was followed very quickly by René Rapin's *Réflexions sur la Poétique d'Aristote et sur les Ouvrages des Poètes Anciens et Modernes* (1674) which was immediately translated into English by Thomas Rymer as *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie* (1674). The first English translation of *Aristotle's Art of Poetry Translated from the Original Greek* was not published until 1705. But the late appearance of French and English versions of Aristotle's key text hardly mattered given the existence of Greek and Latin ones and numerous commentaries including Daniel Heinsius' *Aristotelis De poëtica, in quo de tragœdiæ imprimis constitutione agitur, liber* (1643), a previous version of which had appeared in 1611, and Gerardus Vossius' *De artis poeticae natura ac constitutione liber* (1647). Moreover, several French critics wrote extensively on tragedy, notably Jules La Mesnardière (*La Poétique*, 1639), who expressly took Aristotle as his model,³¹ François Hédelin, the abbé d'Aubignac (*La Pratique du Théâtre*, 1657) and Nicolas Boileau (*L'Art Poétique*, 1674). The years 1683-1685 saw English translations of the works by Boileau (translated by William Soames and revised by Dryden) and d'Aubignac and of critical writings by Saint-Evremond.³² André Dacier's *La Poétique d'Aristote. Traduite en François. Avec des Remarques* and his translations *L'Oedipe et l'Electre de Sophocle ... avec des Remarques* (both 1692) were later additions to the critical canon. Immediately Rymer praised them in *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693) and Dennis in *The Impartial Critick* (also 1693) quoted from Dacier while disagreeing with him.³³ In chapter 4 I show how Lewis Theobald responded to Dacier's work on Sophocles.

I do not intend to write a history of the theory of tragedy or of the reception of Aristotle (and of Horace whose contribution I also mention in this section). But it is important to mention Aristotle's and Horace's main ideas because, not only were their theories influential, but the very structure of Aristotle's *Poetics* helped to determine English critics' responses to ancient Greek and modern English tragedy. Aristotle wrote that tragedy was

a representation of an action that is serious, complete, and of some magnitude; in language that is pleasurably embellished, the different

³⁰ Bray 1966: 49.

³¹ La Mesnardière 1639: QQ-RR, EEE.

³² Cannan 2006: 57; Winn 1987: 388.

³³ Dennis 1967: I 20-21, 31-32, 34, 36-37; Rymer 1956: 83.

forms of embellishment occurring in separate parts; presented in the form of action, not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about the catharsis of such emotions.³⁴

Although there was not much discussion in England at this time of what Aristotle meant by catharsis, there was general agreement that the purpose of tragedy was to arouse pity and fear, or terror, in the audience. There was much debate over the best way to achieve that, notably about the degrees of goodness and wickedness that the central character should possess. Aristotle further identified six constituents of tragedy: plot (sometimes called by French and English writers the ‘fable’ or ‘subject’), character, diction, thought, spectacle and song.³⁵ Plots could be either ‘simple’ or ‘complex’ (sometimes called ‘implex’ in France and England): the former lacked, and the latter possessed, ‘reversal’ (‘a change from one state of affairs to its opposite’) or ‘recognition’ (‘a change from ignorance to knowledge’) or both.³⁶

Other elements of tragedy were added or elaborated upon much later. The unities of action, time and place were much discussed from the sixteenth century onwards. The first two were found in, or derived from, passages in Aristotle’s *Poetics* and the unity of place was added and related to the others by Castelvetro in the sixteenth century before being taken over by his later French counterparts, notably d’Aubignac.³⁷ Rymer’s comment that the ‘regularities’ of the unities of action, time and place ‘seem in a manner to be link’d together’ reflects the lack of precision in this area.³⁸ The three unities were urged in the name of verisimilitude (French *vraisemblance*) as a way of helping the audience to believe in the truthfulness of what they saw on stage in order that they would be better able to learn from it. Aristotle explained that

we enjoy looking at the most accurate representations of things which in themselves we find painful to see, such as the forms of the lowest animals and of corpses. The reason for this is that learning is a very great pleasure ... [People] enjoy seeing images because they learn as they look at them, and reason out what each thing is.³⁹

³⁴ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 64.

³⁵ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 64-65.

³⁶ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 70-71.

³⁷ Bray 1966: 240, 257-260, 275-281, 283-284; Védier 1955: 154-160, 164-168, 172-179, 190-191.

³⁸ Rymer 1956: 27.

³⁹ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 60-61.

To that intimation of the instructive purpose of tragedy early modern critics added the specific injunction of Horace that

Poets aim either to benefit or to please, or to combine the giving of pleasure with some useful precepts for life ... The man who has managed to blend usefulness with pleasure wins everyone's approbation, for he delights his reader at the same time as he instructs him.⁴⁰

A further point picked up from Horace was the recommendation that 'if you want your play to be called for and given a second performance, it should not be either shorter or longer than five acts'.⁴¹

In summary, English writers would have found in Aristotle and Horace, and in their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commentators, an emphasis on the importance of arousing pity and fear; the relative goodness and wickedness of the central character (and his or her error or fault); the moral purpose of tragedy; the formal requirements of plot, character, diction and thought; the use of reversal and recognition; the unities of action, time and place; and a five-act structure.

Many of those points were seized on by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary theorists. As later chapters show, both ancient and modern plays were often critiqued according to how well they reflected the Aristotelian building blocks of plot, character, diction and thought. Aristotle and Horace provided a theoretical justification for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century requirement that tragedies should serve a moral purpose and teach moral lessons (chapters 2 and 3). The character of Oedipus was found problematical as writers tried to identify the nature of his wickedness and whether and how he was responsible for his own downfall (chapters 3 and 4). And Horace's emphasis on five acts led to attempts to demonstrate that the ancient Greeks had already followed that practice, with the songs of the chorus marking the intervals between acts, as Theobald and Francklin reflected in their translations of Sophocles (chapters 4 and 5).

⁴⁰ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 107-108.

⁴¹ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 103.

4. The continuing relevance of ancient Greek tragedy: universality of human nature

Ancient Greek tragedies were often thought to be still relevant, not only out of respect for their antiquity and their relation to Aristotle's theories, but because it was also often argued that human nature remained much the same across time and space and that, consequently, modern audiences would respond to tragedy written on ancient Greek lines in the same way that the ancient Greeks were assumed – despite the absence of evidence on the point – to have done.

Rymer wrote that some object

that Athens and London have not the same Meridian. Certain it is, that Nature is the same, and Man is the same, he loves, grieves, hates, envies, has the same affections and passions in both places, and the same springs that give them motion. What mov'd pity there, will here also produce the same effect.⁴²

Rymer may have taken the thought from Racine who, in the preface to *Iphigénie* (1675), expressed his pleasure at seeing, from the effect on the French stage of what he had imitated from the ancients, that good sense and reason were the same in every century, that the taste of Paris was the same as that of Athens, and that his audiences had been moved by the same things that (Racine imagined) drew tears from the most knowledgeable ancient Greeks.⁴³ Farquhar witheringly attacked the notion in *A Discourse Likewise upon Comedy in Reference to the English Stage* (1702) but Gildon continued to maintain the consistency of passions, nature and reason across the ages.⁴⁴ To demonstrate that the idea was influential throughout the period with which I am concerned I mention that Samuel Johnson, writing in *The Adventurer* in 1753, in an article on plagiarism, stated Rymer-like that

Writers of all ages have had the same sentiments, because they have in all ages had the same objects of speculation; the interests and passions, the virtues and vices of mankind, have been diversified in different times,

⁴² Rymer 1956: 19.

⁴³ Racine 1702: II 171; and Dacier (1692a: vii) made the same point. Racine had based *La Thebaïde, ou Les Frères Ennemis* (1664) on Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and taken the character of Hermione in his *Andromaque* (1667) from Euripides' play (Racine 1702: I vi, 144). Earlier, La Mesnardière (1639: 397) believed that the ancient dramatists, for example Euripides when writing the speeches with which Orestes moved Menelaus (*Orestes* lines 1567-1620), must have shed tears over the same passages that provoke tears in 'us'.

⁴⁴ Adams and Hathaway (eds.) 1950: 217; Gildon 1718: I 134-135, 139 and 1721: 12.

only by unessential and casual varieties ... The same observation may be extended likewise to the passions: their influence is uniform, and their effects nearly the same in every human breast: a man loves and hates, desires and avoids, exactly like his neighbour; resentment and ambition, avarice and indolence, discover themselves by the same symptoms, in minds distant a thousand years from one another.⁴⁵

Belief in the universality of human nature co-existed, however, with a belief that pulled in the opposite direction, namely that climate, manners, customs, temperaments and national characters differed from one age and one part of the world to another and affected the literature that different peoples produced. Dryden wrote in *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* that

tho' nature, as [Rymer] objects, is the same in all places, and reason too the same, yet the climate, the age, the dispositions of the people to whom a poet writes, may be so different that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience.⁴⁶

The two ideas can sometimes be reconciled in particular matters along the lines that Johnson went on to indicate in his article: ambition and the search for honour are universal passions but, depending on the country in which one lives, the former may be achieved 'by supplicating the people [or] by flattering the prince' and the latter by military success or by 'noisy turbulence and popular clamours'.⁴⁷ In literary matters, a work that follows the principles of an established genre can nevertheless reflect aspects of the country in which it is written. Dryden argued in the preface to *De Arte Graphica* that

if the story which we treat be modern, we are to vary the customs, according to the time and the country where the scene of action lies; for this is still to imitate nature, which is always the same, though in a different dress.⁴⁸

More specifically, the *Guardian* argued that the 'essential' characteristics of the pastoral, 'such as a Country Scene, Innocence, Simplicity', can co-exist with 'changeable' elements in the particular example, so that only fruits and flowers native

⁴⁵ *The Adventurer* no. 95, 2 October 1753, in Johnson S. 1963: II 425-427.

⁴⁶ Dryden 1962: I 214. Similarly *The Spectator* nos. 160 and 329 (3 September 1711 and 18 March 1712); *The Guardian* no. 30; Thomas Blackwell in *An Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735; Elledge (ed.) 1961: I 434); Dennis 1967: I 60, 323 and II 14-15; Dryden 1962: I 246 and II 195; Gildon 1694: 87, 210, 1710b: 304 and 1719: 246-247, 285, 337; Temple 1690b: 53-55; Theobald 1717: I 194-195 (no. 28, 13 June 1715) and 1733: I xlv-xlvi.

⁴⁷ Johnson S. 1963: II 428.

⁴⁸ Dryden 1962: II 195.

to the country in which it is set are mentioned.⁴⁹ In chapter 2 I show how discussion of the viability of introducing the chorus into modern drama was influenced by such considerations; and in chapter 3 how they affected views on the sexual morality of ancient tragedy.

Belief in the underlying universality of human nature meant that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers tended to see the past and the present as a continuum. It was natural for them to switch seamlessly between discussing an ancient tragedy and a contemporary one, and to compare them confident that the former set a standard by which to judge the latter, since the nature of the conflicts and the passions they represented, and the response to them of the reader or spectator, would be largely independent of time and place. They were therefore able to move from discussion of a modern play to an ancient one and back again without feeling that it was necessarily inappropriate to juxtapose the products of such different places, times and cultures and to use one to illuminate the other.

A striking example, because it was discussed for over a century, concerns the quarrel between Agamemnon and Menelaus in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*. When Rymer, in *The Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678), criticised the representation of the quarrel between Amintor and Melantius in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* as 'a bluster begun without provocation, and ended without any kind of satisfaction', he immediately contrasted it with the quarrel between Agamemnon and Menelaus: 'Here all the motions arise from occasions great and just; and this is matter for a Scene truly passionate and Tragical'.⁵⁰ In the preface to *Troilus and Cressida* the following year Dryden endorsed Rymer's view of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Menelaus, commenting that he had based the quarrel between Troilus and Hector in his own play on it and not, as some supposed, on that between Brutus and Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The three quarrels – Agamemnon/Menelaus, Brutus/Cassius and Amintor/Melantius – shared common elements. They were

grounded upon friendship: and the quarrel of two virtuous men, raised by natural degrees to the extremity of passion, is conducted in all three to the declination of the same passion, and concludes with a warm renewing of their friendship.

⁴⁹ *The Guardian* no. 30, 15 April 1713.

⁵⁰ Rymer 1956: 73-74.

But with the Brutus/Cassius scene now entering into the comparison, Dryden expressed his preference for Shakespeare since

the particular groundwork which Shakespeare has taken is incomparably the best; because he has not only chosen two of the greatest heroes of their age, but has likewise interested the liberty of Rome, and their own honours who were the redeemers of it, in this debate.⁵¹

In *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear* (1710) Gildon compared the quarrels between Agamemnon and Menelaus, Brutus and Cassius and Dryden's *Troilus and Hector*, arguing contrary to Dryden that

the Ground of the Quarrel in the Greek is stronger, than either Mr Dryden's or Shakespear's. For the Glory and Honour of Greece depends on that of Euripides, but I can't find the Liberty of Rome much interested on that of Brutus and Cassius.⁵²

Next, Theobald in 1717, discussing *Julius Caesar* in his periodical *The Censor*, wrote, copying Dryden, that the scene of the quarrel and reconciliation of Brutus and Cassius excelled the similar celebrated scenes involving Agamemnon and Menelaus and Amintor and Melantius, because Shakespeare represented 'Two of the greatest Heroes of their Age' and 'interested the Liberty of Rome, and their own Honour, who were the Redeemers of it, in the Debate'. Nevertheless, in Euripides

The Scene ...is very pathetically work'd, the general good of our Country, and the natural Love of our Children, are the main Topicks which the Discourse turns on: and the Passions on each Side sink by soft Degrees.⁵³

In *The Complete Art of Poetry* (1718) Gildon again praised the scene between Agamemnon and Menelaus for being 'admirably prepar'd, and of evident Importance', by contrast with that between Brutus and Cassius.⁵⁴ Finally, as late as 1784 Thomas Davies mentioned in connection with the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, not only the scenes between Amintor and Melantius and Hector and Troilus, but also those between Mark Anthony and Ventidius in Dryden's *All for Love* and Dorax and Sebastian in Dryden's *Don Sebastian*. Davies concluded,

The only scene which in my opinion can be compared with that of Shakespeare's Brutus and Cassius, for natural dialogue and truth of

⁵¹ Dryden 1962: I 241.

⁵² Gildon 1710b: 359; also 381-382.

⁵³ Theobald 1717: III 44-45, 47 (no. 70, 2 April 1717).

⁵⁴ Gildon 1718: I 230.

passion, is that admirable one between Agamemnon and Menelaus in the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, of Euripides.⁵⁵

What is important in those discussions is not whether Euripides' scene was held to be the best but the fact that for over a hundred years it was the practice to compare on an equal footing, not just the dramatic effectiveness of the various scenes, but also their truthfulness to life as representations of human passions. In 'reception' terms, the scene in Euripides was viewed through the lens of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher and Dryden, and vice-versa, as writers compared the scenes to judge not only their dramatic effectiveness but also whether more was at stake in Euripides' Greece or Shakespeare's Rome.

5. The continuing relevance of ancient Greek tragedy: 'ancients' v 'moderns'

A further element in the intellectual context of my dissertation is the debate about the relative merits of the 'ancients' and the 'moderns' in various fields of endeavour that took place in England in the 1690s, following similar arguments in France. The main English contributions were Sir William Temple's *Upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1690) and *A Defence of the Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1701), favouring the 'ancients', and William Wotton's replies in *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694), the second edition of which was published 'with Large Additions' in 1697, and *A Defense of the Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1705). Temple and Wotton concentrated more on the sciences and the plastic arts than on literary matters. Other works from the debate include Richard Bentley's writings on the 'letters of Phalaris', mentioned below, and *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* (both 1704) by Temple's former secretary Jonathan Swift. Already in *Of Dramatick Poesy* (1668) Dryden had made Crites, otherwise a supporter of the ancients, acknowledge the scientific advances of modern times:

in these last hundred years ... more errors of the school have been detected, more useful experiments in philosophy have been made, more noble secrets in optics, medicine, anatomy, astronomy discovered, than in all those credulous and doting ages from Aristotle to us.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Davies 1784: II 253.

⁵⁶ Dryden 1962: I 26. Similarly Gildon 1694: 87.

The influence of Aristotle proved longer-lasting in dramatic theory than in some other fields because of the lack of a more modern alternative, as discussed in chapter 2. The methodology of comparing ancient and modern dramatists, which I discuss in more detail in chapters 2 and 3, is evidence of a shared discourse across different areas of contention. Indeed, among literary critics the debate began earlier and continued for longer than the exchanges between Temple and Wotton; Dryden made it the foundation of *Of Dramatick Poesy*.⁵⁷

Authors of so-called ‘progress of poetry’ poems by-passed any perceived need to choose between the ancients and the moderns by postulating that ‘the rise of poetry in England was seen as having been achieved through its geographical translation from those cultures in which it had originally flourished, Greece and Rome’.⁵⁸ The ideas behind such poems may be illustrated by lines from Elijah Fenton’s contribution to the genre, *An Epistle to Mr. Southerne* (written 1711):

Arts have their Empires, and, like other States,
Their Rise and Fall are govern’d by the Fates.
They, when their Period’s measur’d out by Time,
Transplant their Laurels to another Clime.
The Grecian Muse once fill’d with loud Alarms,
The Court of Heav’n, and clad the Gods in Arms ...
The Nymph still fair, however past her Bloom,
From Greece at length was led in Chains to Rome ...
But when the Goths insulting Troops appear’d,
Such Dissonance the trembling Virgin hear’d,
Chang’d to a Swan, from Tyber’s troubled Streams
She wing’d her Flight, and sought the silver Thames.

There she inspired Chaucer, Surrey, Spenser, Waller and Granville.⁵⁹ The idea is both that ancient Greece stands at the beginning of a process of literary endeavour and that the same Muse that inspired the Greeks now also inspires writers in England, making English writers part of a continuing, rather than an alternative, literary tradition.

⁵⁷ Dryden 1962: I 23-24.

⁵⁸ Terry 2001: 51.

⁵⁹ <<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/TextRecord.php?action=GET&textsid=33817>> [accessed 14 February 2014]. Other ‘progress of poetry’ poems were Samuel Cobb’s *Of Poetry* (1710), Judith Madan’s *The Progress of Poesy* (1721), William Collins’ *An Epistle Addressed to Thomas Hanmer, on His Edition of Shakespeare’s Works* (1743) and Thomas Gray’s *Progress of Poesy* (1757).

Another important element in the ‘ancient’ and ‘moderns’ context – even though it was not, strictly speaking, part of the debate narrowly viewed since it did not involve comparison of an ancient and a modern writer or text – resulted from the controversy over the genuineness, or otherwise, of the letters of Phalaris, a Sicilian tyrant of the sixth century B.C. Temple had praised these for having ‘more Race, more Spirit, more Force of Wit and Genius than any others I have ever seen, either antient or modern’.⁶⁰ In 1695 a new edition of the letters appeared, as *Phalardis Agrigentorum Tyranni Epistolae*, under the name of the young Charles Boyle, youngest son of the second earl of Orrery and himself the future fourth earl. Bentley challenged the authenticity of the letters in *A Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1697), attached to the second edition of Wotton’s *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, which provoked a lengthy reply, published under Boyle’s name in the following year, *Dr. Bentley’s Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris, and the Fables of Aesop, Examined By the Honourable Charles Boyle, Esq.* The series of exchanges was concluded by the second, greatly enlarged, edition of Bentley’s *Dissertation* in 1699. Many of Bentley’s arguments were based on chronology. He argued in great detail that the letters mentioned matters and people that did not exist or live until after Phalaris’ time;⁶¹ and that they were written in an Attic dialect that was not that of the sixth century B.C. but was ‘a more recent Idiom and Stile, that by the whole thread and colour of it betrays it self to be a thousand years younger than He’.⁶² Bentley was arguing there for an appreciation of the ancients that was based on sound scholarship in a way that anticipated techniques of modern textual criticism which examine not only the grammatical but also the stylistic, literary and historical aspects of a work.⁶³ One side effect of the debate was a division of opinion over the desirability of the apparatus of footnotes and commentary that traditionally accompanied editions of classical texts, and now even modern works such as histories, and which some (at the ‘moderns’ end of the

⁶⁰ Temple 1690a: 59.

⁶¹ Bentley 1697: 15-40.

⁶² Bentley 1697: 51.

⁶³ Brink 1985: 59.

spectrum) viewed as essential to a full understanding of the text and others (at the ‘ancients’ end) regarded as a barrier to a true appreciation of it.⁶⁴

I will say more about notes attached to translations in chapters 1, 4 and 5 since an important feature of the versions of Sophocles by Wase, Theobald and Francklin was their use of notes to display their scholarship and to comment on the text, both to root it in antiquity by explaining aspects of ancient Greek culture and, in the case of Wase and Francklin, to connect it to the present by evoking matters of contemporary relevance.⁶⁵ All three translators intended that the translations alone should not be the only ways in which readers accessed and understood the original texts and their authors; the notes played an important role in the reception of ancient Greek tragedy by the translators and their readers.

6. Attitudes to the ancient heathen gods

Many different attitudes to the role played by the gods in ancient Greek tragedies co-existed. At one extreme they were simply denounced as evidence of primitive, superstitious heathenism.⁶⁶ An important early work of the devotional writer William Law was *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* (1726) which incorporated his pamphlet *The Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage-Entertainment Fully Demonstrated* of the same year. This denounced ‘the present celebrated Entertainment of the Stage, which is so much the Taste of this Christian Country, that it has been acted almost every Night this whole Season, I mean *Apollo and Daphne*’, presumably the pantomime by John Thurmond performed at Drury Lane.⁶⁷ The work featured ‘Venus, Bacchus, Silenus, Pan, Satyrs, Fawns, Sylvans, Bacchanals, and Bacchantes’ which were ‘imaginary Representations of such Lust, Sensuality and Madness, as never had any real Existence, but were invented by the

⁶⁴ Levine 1981: 82-83, 1991: 45-46, 112, 238, and 1999a: 115-116; Patey 1997: 51-52. Also Green M. E. 1973: 36-37 and Thomson 1948: 200.

⁶⁵ Gillespie and Wilson (2005: 48), Hopkins (2010: 17), Lund (1998: 24) and Wilson (1982: 79-80) comment on the tendency of translators to attach detailed notes, commentaries and appendices to their translations. Saïd and Biet 1996 examine notes attached to French translations of Sophocles in the second half of the eighteenth century which display the features mentioned here.

⁶⁶ Weinbrot (1993: 49-53) gives many examples of that attitude which he calls ‘Christian anti-classicism’.

⁶⁷ Law 1726: 23; Nicoll 1925: 253, 360.

Devil for the Delusion of the Heathen World'. Anyone who enjoyed such sights on the stage must have 'the same Heart and Temper' as the original worshippers of Venus and be neglectful of their Christian religion.⁶⁸ For Law, the deities and the like that were a part of Greek religion were clearly intolerable because incompatible with Christianity.

Another attitude was to regret that the ancient gods intervened in the action of tragedies. Aristotle's insistence that

the unravelling of the plot should arise from the circumstances of the plot itself, and not be brought about *ex machina*, as is done in the *Medea* ... the *deus ex machina* should be used only for matters outside the play proper⁶⁹

encouraged Gildon in *The Complete Art of Poetry* (1718) to identify Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and Euripides' *Helen* as plays that are unravelled by the descent of gods, such expedients being

but Botches, and very unartful, for they do not depend on the foregoing Incidents, nor are necessarily or probably produc'd by them, but indeed are generally quite contrary to them, and disappoint all that they had prepar'd the Audience to expect.⁷⁰

Gildon's complaint was dramaturgical in nature, but Drake objected to gods' interventions that showed them as 'either the Promoters of the Crime, or the Protectors of the Criminals', siding with wicked characters in Euripides' *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Ion*, *Heracles* and *Orestes*.⁷¹ Another objection to the gods' interventions was made by the author of a note in an anonymous translation of *Ajax* (1714) considered in chapter 4, namely that they were undignified and evidence of religious beliefs that were inferior to Christianity which allowed man the dignity of acting as a free agent.⁷²

A third attitude was to recognise that behind the ancient Greeks' attachment to their gods lay genuine religious beliefs which, even if they fell short of Christianity, were nevertheless capable of encouraging people to behave in a morally praiseworthy manner. Abraham Cowley observed in the preface to his *Poems* (1656) that, however strange stories of ancient monsters, gods and heroes were to a modern reader,

⁶⁸ Law 1726: 31.

⁶⁹ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 77.

⁷⁰ Gildon 1718: I 253.

⁷¹ Drake 1699: 170, 177-178, 196-197.

⁷² *Ajax* 1714: F6r-F6v.

yet they were then the whole Body (or rather Chaos) of the Theologie of those times. They were believed by all but a few Philosophers, and perhaps some Atheists, and served to good purpose among the vulgar ... in strengthening the authority of Law with the terrors of Conscience, and expectation of certain rewards and unavoidable punishments. There was no other Religion, and therefore that was better than none at all.⁷³

Edward Filmer, in *A Defence of Plays* (1707), approved of how impious and atheistical words spoken by Aeschylus' Prometheus and Sophocles' Ajax were punished. The Greeks,

notwithstanding the recorded Infirmities of their Gods, whatever their Notions of another World might be, and tho' they were not under those Terrors of Revelation that we are; yet they had as great a Horror, for all such bold Impieties, as we can have ... both Aeschylus, and Sophocles, ador'd those very deities they insulted in their plays, with the same Zeal, the same Devotion, that we do the only true and living God; that they thought themselves, by their Religion, oblig'd to as great an Abhorrency of all Prophaneness, Blasphemy, or theism, as we can be by ours.⁷⁴

In chapter 3 I look at how such attitudes underlie Collier's emphasis on both the heathenness of the ancient Greeks and their moral superiority to the playwrights of his own time.

Finally, it was recognised that representations of the ancient gods in poetical works had achieved powerful effects. Dennis argued in *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) that poetry pleases, and instructs by arousing compassion and terror, only if is marked by 'Passion', in particular by those forms of 'Passion', called 'Enthusiasm', such as admiration, terror or joy, whose cause 'is not clearly comprehended by him who feels them'.⁷⁵ The ancients excelled the moderns, for the most part, in epic poetry, tragedy and 'the greater Ode' because they chose sacred subjects which are more capable of arousing the 'Enthusiastick' passion than the moderns' profane subjects.⁷⁶ Dennis disagreed with poets who tried to invoke 'the Grecian Religion' in their works, doubting that 'the Generality of Readers can be so very much mov'd, as if the Passions deriv'd their Force from a Religion that is more familiar to them'.⁷⁷ Dennis urged, as Rymer had done in *Tragedies of the Last Age*, that moderns should incorporate the true religion into their writings, since

⁷³ Cowley 1656: b2v.

⁷⁴ Filmer 1707: 48-49.

⁷⁵ Dennis 1967: I 215-216.

⁷⁶ Dennis 1967: I 223.

⁷⁷ Dennis 1967: I 266.

the true Divine Poetry has the Advantage of the Pagan Poetry; that it satisfies the Reason more, at the same Time that it raises a stronger Passion, and that it entertains the Senses, and especially the Eye, more delightfully.⁷⁸

Dennis gives examples from the Psalms, St. Ambrose and, especially, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.⁷⁹

Dennis conceded the sincerity with which the ancients held their religious beliefs and respected them for it. He admitted that they employed them in their poetry to good effect, if only for themselves and not for modern readers, but argued that, if the ancients were to be imitated now, it should not be by incorporating their beliefs and their gods into modern poetry but by drawing on the Christian religion to which modern poets and readers could more easily relate. Dryden argued similarly in *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693) that modern writers of epic poetry should draw on the Christian religion and make

the ministry of angels as strong an engine for the working up heroic poetry, in our religion, as that of the Ancients has been to raise theirs by all the fables of their gods, which were only received for truths by the most ignorant and weakest of the people.⁸⁰

Pope doubted that the ancient gods could be so easily displaced, admittedly in the preface to his translation of the *Iliad* (1715) where he might be expected to take that view. He observed that Homer had been the first to bring the gods 'into a System of Machinery for Poetry' and had been criticised for it. But Pope argued that

whatever cause there might be to blame his Machines in a Philosophical or Religious view, they are so perfect in the Poetick, that Mankind have been ever since contented to follow them: None have been able to enlarge the Sphere of Poetry beyond the Limits he has set: Every Attempt of this Nature has prov'd unsuccessful; and after all the various Changes of Times and Religions, his Gods continue to this Day the Gods of Poetry.⁸¹

It is possible to identify, at least in the third and fourth of those types of attitude to the ancient gods, an acceptance that they had to be understood in the context of the times of those who believed in them and not condemned simply on the grounds, first, that those are not the times of today and moderns necessarily know better, and, second, that, as pre-Christian deities, they and their adherents were inherently to be

⁷⁸ Dennis 1967: I 266-267 (similarly I 369, 374); Rymer 1956: 75. Also Blackmore 1716-1717: I xiv-xv, 74.

⁷⁹ Dennis 1967: I 268-277.

⁸⁰ Dryden 1962: II 88-89.

⁸¹ Pope 1993: 7.

damned. This is another example of the tension between the universal and the unchanging and the time-bound and the variable. Writers could respect the sincerity and the spirituality of ancient religious believers, and for polemical purposes compare them favourably with those of their own time (of which there are examples in chapters 3 and 5), while disavowing the ancients' specific beliefs and practices because they had been superseded by Christianity and belief in the one true God. In chapters 3, 4 and 5 I discuss issues that Collier's, Theobald's and Francklin's engagements with the ancients' religious beliefs raised for them.

7. Theory of translation

The translations by Wase, Theobald and Francklin that I discuss in chapters 1, 4 and 5 can fairly be seen as examples of the dominant method of translation in the period which has been termed 'fluent domestication'.⁸² It is characterised by the fact that 'translation strategies were rarely wedded to a programme for preserving the foreignness of the foreign text' but rather 'were guided primarily by domestic values', whereas 'foreignising' translations sought to preserve the distinctive features of the original text that made it clearly the work of a different culture.⁸³ Hopkins has argued that 'there is, in practice, by no means [a] hard-and-fast polar opposition between "foreignizing" and "domesticating" translation'.⁸⁴ Nevertheless I am content to use the term 'domestication' as a useful shorthand way of describing the approach of the translators whom I consider. Their renderings, like many of their contemporaries', reflect the then prevailing view that a translation, whether from an ancient or a modern language, should read as fluently as, and appear like, a freshly composed work in the translator's own tongue – the essence of 'domestication'.⁸⁵ Theobald wrote in the preface to his translation of book I of Homer's *Odyssey* (1717) that he had tried both to be faithful to Homer's language and to write the style of English that would be familiar to his readers and that they would expect:

⁸² France 2000: 4-5.

⁸³ Venuti 2000: 55, 63 and 2008: 13-19, 35.

⁸⁴ Hopkins 2008: 138-139; also 2000: 65.

⁸⁵ Denham, preface to *The Destruction of Troy* (1656; Weissbort and Eysteinnsson (eds.) 2006: 123); Dryden 1962: II 154, 247; the earl of Orrery in a letter dated 27 August 1739 on translating Pliny's *Epistles* (*The Orrery Papers* I 265); Felton 1753: 120-121; Guthrie, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero* (1741; Steiner (ed.) 1975: 98).

I have endeavour'd all along to be Literal enough to make my Translation of Use to the Schools; yet have so far studied an Elegance of Diction, as to hope it will not be disagreeable to more polite Readers.⁸⁶

Translators distinguished between the 'sense' or 'meaning' and the 'words' of the original text. The latter presented the main difficulty to the translator. Ideally they would be reproduced one-for-one in the translation but for a host of linguistic reasons this was not usually possible.⁸⁷ Too much attention to a 'literal' rendering of the words of the original risked obscuring its sense and, crucially, the sense was privileged over the words, echoing Jerome's assertion that 'in translation from the Greek - except in the case of Sacred Scripture, where the very order of the words is a mystery - I render not word for word, but sense for sense'.⁸⁸ The original author's style, which gave him his particular character or spirit, was to be preserved, however, as this was unlikely to mask the sense.⁸⁹ A major area of debate was the extent to which a translator might add material to, or subtract it from, the original text in order (in the translator's opinion) to improve its clarity, to develop the original author's thinking, or to remove redundant, repetitious, boring, shocking or indecent passages; the result might be labelled a 'paraphrase'.⁹⁰ Moreover, there was an issue about

⁸⁶ Quoted by Pattison 2007: 133 n. 7.

⁸⁷ Reasons identified by seventeenth and eighteenth century writers why word-for-word translation was in practice unworkable included differences between the original and the receiving languages as regards idioms, proverbial sayings, figures of speech, puns, use of mono- and polysyllabic words, compound or contracted words, particles, and general richness of vocabulary; grammar, for example articles and case endings, pronouns and verb endings; word order; the complications of metre and rhyme in verse; and sound values, for example alliteration.

⁸⁸ Venuti (ed.) 2004: 23. There are statements to this effect in Dryden 1962: I 272 and II 215, 250-251; Dillon Wentworth, the earl of Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (1685; Robinson (ed.) 1997: 178); Sir Edward Sherburne, *A Brief Discourse Concerning Translation* (1702; Steiner (ed.) 1975: 89); Felton 1753: 120-121.

⁸⁹ Dryden 1962: I 271-272 and II 20-21, 23; Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (1685; Robinson (ed.) 1997: 178); Pope 1993: 17-18, 20, 22; Joseph Trapp, *The Aeneis of Virgil* (1718-1720, quoted in Pattison 2007: 140); Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust* (1744; Steiner (ed.) 1975: 101); Philip Francis, *A Poetical Translation of the Works of Horace* (1747; Steiner (ed.) 1975: 106-107); Felton 1753: 117-118, 128-129, 133-134.

⁹⁰ Theobald (1715c: A5v) 'endeavour'd to make the meanest Image pleasant, and reduce the most Licentious One to Modesty' in his translation of Aristophanes' *Plutus*. The varying degrees to which the original text might be added to or subtracted from, on which opinions differed, were discussed by Katherine Philips in 1663 in one of the *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus* (published 1705; Robinson (ed.) 1997: 171); Dryden (1962: I 268 and II 19, 27, 152-153, 246, 286-287);

how much addition or subtraction was allowed before the terms ‘translation’ or ‘paraphrase’ ceased to be applicable and a new, original work came into being that might be called an ‘imitation’.⁹¹ Finally, different approaches might be adopted, not just by the same translator in different translations at different times, but in the same translation.

Translating an ancient text is a form of engagement with the past – a topic to which I return in the next section. Hardwick has pointed to

the role of the translator’s interpretation of the wider meaning of the source text, both in its own time and for later readers [which] raises big questions about how the translator/writer views the relationship between ancient and modern, not just in terms of language but also in terms of values and ideas

and comments that ‘translation is a movement which takes place not only across languages, but across time, place, beliefs and cultures’.⁹² It is not surprising, then, that there are similarities between views on translation and other matters discussed in this introduction. *The Guardian*’s distinction, mentioned in section 4 above, between the ‘essential’ and the ‘changeable’ features of pastoral poetry, as a method of reconciling differing views on the universality of human nature and how a modern reader responds to literary works from the past, has its counterpart in translation, the ‘essential’ being the sense or meaning of an author, which must be preserved, and the ‘changeable’ the words, which are subject to variation. Moreover, the differences observed by a reader that may be apparent, even necessary, between works from the past and the present because of the differences in customs and manners present difficulties for a translator. Cowley, in the preface to his *Pindariques* (1656), justified his departures from the original text on the grounds that

We must consider in Pindar the great Difference of Time betwixt his Age and ours, which changes, as in Pictures, at least the Colours of Poetry; the no less Difference betwixt the Religions and Customs of our Countries,

Roscommon, *Horace’s Art of Poetry* (1680: A2r-A2v); Pope 1993: 17; Felton 1753: 135-142; Samuel Johnson, *The Idler* no. 69, 11 August 1759 (Johnson S. 1963: II 216-217).

⁹¹ Cowley discusses this in the preface to his *Pindariques* (1656; Weissbort and Eysteinsson (eds.) 2006: 124-125). Also Dryden 1962: I 270-271, 273; Felton 1753: 146, 149-150.

⁹² Hardwick 2000: 10, 12.

and a thousand Particularities of Places, Persons, and Manners, which do but confusedly appear to our Eyes at so great a Distance.⁹³

The references to the different customs and manners of ancient Greece and modern London are similar to Dryden's comments in *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* mentioned in section 4 above. The allusions mentioned earlier to the effects on literature of the different climates to which writers and their readers were subject surely lie behind an image in Blackwall's *An Introduction to the Classics* (1718) that compares translating 'the noble Classics' to

transplanting a precious Tree out of the warm and fruitful Climes in which it was produc'd, into a cold and barren Countrey: With much care and tenderness it may live, blossom, and bear; but it can never so chearfully flourish as in its native Soil; it will degenerate and lose much of its delicious Flavour and original Richness.⁹⁴

One translator of a Greek tragedy did attempt to preserve the essential 'foreignness' of one aspect of his text. Gilbert West wrote of his *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1749) that 'in my Translation ... I have ... varied the Measure in Imitation of the Original, as far as the different Genius of the Greek and English Versification would allow'. He added,

As the Greek Tragedy doth not, like ours, consist wholly of Dialogue, and one uniform Versification, I have, with a view of giving the English Reader a complete Notion of the Greek Theatre, introduced in my Translation a Variety of Numbers, and rendered the Odes in Rhyme ... They are ... all written in a higher Mood, than the Dialogue, and so I have endeavoured to translate them.⁹⁵

West aimed at rendering the choral odes in a way that reflected their different style and function within the tragedy, whereas Theobald and Francklin contented themselves with putting them into rhyme amidst what was otherwise blank verse. In any event, a translator's positioning a translation of a classical text in relation to the period of its translation could be supplemented by positioning it in relation its own period through, as already mentioned, the use of explanatory notes. Hopkins has commented that the notes to Pope's *Iliad* '[make] available to [their] readers systems of values and states of feeling far different from those current in their own culture'.⁹⁶

⁹³ Weissbort and Eysteinnsson (eds.) 2006: 124-125.

⁹⁴ Blackwall 1718: 57.

⁹⁵ West G. 1749: b2r-v, 132-133.

⁹⁶ Hopkins 2010: 17.

Notes can introduce a ‘foreignising’ element into the translation to set against the ‘domestication’ of the text proper, as I show in chapters 1, 4 and 5.

8. Engagement with the past

In the previous section I described translating an ancient text as a form of engagement with the past. That engagement underlies also the respect accorded to ancient theory of tragedy and the debates about whether human nature remained the same in different countries and periods and about the relative merits of ancient and modern arts and sciences. It is what all the authors I consider in chapters 1-5 were involved in. A common thread is the tension between perceived universal, timeless values and the local, variable values of a particular time and place.

In both historiography and literature appeals were made to a universal ‘nature’ that enabled the past and the present to be understood as a continuum. This might be human nature that would lead men separated in time and place to react to similar situations or artistic representations in a similar way; or the likelihood of similar situations of an exemplary nature recurring to provide lessons for political and military leaders or suitable subject material for writers in different countries and ages. Such views co-existed with awareness of the impact of local manners and customs and climatic, social, political and religious factors on historical events and on the writing of both history and literary works.⁹⁷

In *The Life of Plutarch*, prefixed to *Plutarch’s Lives, Translated from the Greek by Several Hands* (1683), Dryden - who has been described as seeing in the events of his own times ‘a recurrence of past events or the re-expression of some archetypal pattern’ and as possessing a ‘lifelong affinity for seeing the present in terms of the past’⁹⁸ - approached history in the same way that he and other writers often approached ancient literature, as providing examples to follow because of the universality of human passions and nature. Reading history

helps us to judge of what will happen, by shewing us the like revolutions of former times. For mankind being the same in all ages, agitated by the same passions, and moved to action by the same interests, nothing can

⁹⁷ The literature on seventeenth and eighteenth century historiography is considerable. I list some monographs and articles in the bibliography.

⁹⁸ Lord 1972: 156-157; also 159-160, 162-163.

come to pass but some precedent of the like nature has already been produced, so that having the causes before our eyes, we cannot easily be deceived in the effects, if we have judgment enough to draw the parallel.⁹⁹

Dryden even drew a specific parallel between ‘biographia, or the history of particular men’s lives’ and the unity of action in tragedy:

the mind is not capable of digesting many things at once, nor of conceiving fully any more than one idea at a time. Whatsoever distracts the pleasure, lessens it ... the more powerful the examples are, they are the more useful also, and by being more known they are more powerful. Now unity, which is defined, is in its own nature more apt to be understood than multiplicity, which in some measure participates of infinity. The reason is Aristotle’s.¹⁰⁰

History and literature were not entirely distinct subjects. People could approach past events and writings in a similar fashion, acknowledging their age and the different circumstances that lay behind them, debating their interest for and relevance to current times, and drawing both distinctions and parallels, on the same basis. And ideally some knowledge of history was necessary for an understanding of the literature that a particular period produced. Dryden in *Of Dramatick Poesy* argued that ‘to admire [ancient writers] as we ought, we should understand them better than we do’:

Doubtless many things appear flat to us, whose wit depended on some custom or story which never came to our knowledge; or perhaps upon some criticism in their language, which being so long dead, and only remaining in their books, ‘tis not possible they should make us know it perfectly.¹⁰¹

Addison, in the posthumously published *A Discourse on Antient and Modern Learning* (1734), considered the ‘Pleasure the Cotemporaries and Countrymen of our old Writers found in their Works, which we at present are not capable of’.¹⁰² The ancients would have known more than modern readers about the circumstances of the composition of a discourse or poem and detected topical allusions that are now lost, such as the identities of the real people on whom Homer and Theophrastus based

⁹⁹ Dryden 1962: II 4.

¹⁰⁰ Dryden 1962: II 8, referring to *The Poetics*, chapter VIII.

¹⁰¹ Dryden 1962: I 31.

¹⁰² Addison 1734: 3-4.

their characters.¹⁰³ They knew the places and landmarks mentioned by their poets, which gave their works an air of truthfulness and credibility.¹⁰⁴

In this dissertation I look at how the reception of ancient Greek tragedy reflected particular attitudes to the past and to the ‘Greekness’ and ‘ancientness’ of the ancient tragedies. To anticipate, uniformity of method on the part of the writers I consider should not be expected. Nor do they necessarily or consistently anticipate the ‘historicism’ that is seen as characteristic of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Rather their reception of ancient Greek tragedy is marked by a variety and richness of approach.

¹⁰³ Addison 1734: 4-5, 10-11.

¹⁰⁴ Addison 1734: 17-21.

CHAPTER 1: WILLIAM JOYNER'S *THE ROMAN EMPRESS* (1670)

In this chapter I examine William Joyner's *The Roman Empress* (performed 1670) which, as Joyner pointed out in his preface, has echoes of Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Medea*.¹⁰⁵ The play is significant because of how Joyner evokes Aristotelian theory of tragedy and engages with issues that Dryden was just beginning to address. At the same time Joyner distances his play from the sort of tragedies that Dryden was writing. *The Roman Empress* was not the first play performed or published in England to be based on ancient Greek precedents. I look first at the four previous published adaptations of Greek tragedies which together establish a context for Joyner's relatively unknown work: George Gascoigne and Francis Kinweltershe's *Jocasta* (chapter 1.1), Thomas Goffe's *The Tragedy of Orestes* (1.2), Thomas May's *Antigone* (1.3) and Christopher Wase's translation of Sophocles' *Electra* (1.4). Then I turn to Joyner's play (1.5).

1.1. George Gascoigne and Francis Kinweltershe's *Jocasta*

Just over a century before Joyner, in 1566, George Gascoigne and Francis Kinweltershe collaborated on *Jocasta: A Tragedie written in Greke by Euripides, translated and digested into Acte[s]* which was performed at Gray's Inn in London and published in 1573.¹⁰⁶ *Jocasta* follows the schema of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* as regards the order in which the various characters, including the chorus, take the stage and speak with each other, but the speeches are substantially rewritten, and often elaborated upon, and sometimes differ significantly from Euripides (especially I.2, III.1, III.2, the second half of IV and the chorus' speeches that conclude the acts). Also each act is introduced by a dumb show. In fact *Jocasta* is based directly, not on Euripides, but on the Italian Ludovico Dolce's version of Euripides' play, *Giocasta* (1549), itself based on a 1541 Latin translation of Euripides by Rudolphus Collinus (which Gascoigne and Kinweltershe may also have used), which Kinweltershe especially often paraphrased and elaborated upon for rhetorical and dramatic effect.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Joyner 1671: A2r-A4r.

¹⁰⁶ Wiggins 2012-2013: no. 438.

¹⁰⁷ Dewar-Watson 2010: 31; Pigman in Gascoigne 2000: 513-515; Prouty 1942: 146-157.

The theatricality of the episode at the beginning of Act III in which a goat is sacrificed so that the divine priest Tyresias can examine its entrails to elicit a prophecy for Creon has been remarked upon by scholars; it is already in Dolce.¹⁰⁸ It draws on the sacrifice of a bull by Tiresias in Seneca's *Oedipus*, of which Kinweltershe's friend Alexander Neville had published a translation in 1563, with the difference that what is narrated in Seneca is represented on stage by Dolce and Gascoigne, the latter adding a stage direction marking the entrance of a 'Sacerdos accompanied with xvi. bacchanales and all his rytes and ceremonies'.¹⁰⁹ The dumb shows, which are not in Dolce, are further examples of the play's visual richness, following the precedent of a previous 'Inn of Court' production, Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* (performed at the Inner Temple in 1561, published 1565).¹¹⁰ For example, the dumb show that introduces Act II of *Jocasta* involves two coffins (symbolising the dead brothers Eteocles and Polynices) that are buried in a grave and then set alight, whereupon 'the flames did sever & parte in twaine', denoting the continuation of the brothers' enmity even after death.¹¹¹ That might have been suggested by the sacrifice scene in Seneca's *Oedipus* in which the flames of the sacred fire mentioned there split into two halves, 'the embers of a single ritual dividing into hostility'.¹¹² For Austen, this evoking of the threat of civil war in the context of the brothers' dispute about their respective rights of succession to the Theban throne, the representation of war itself in the fourth dumb show, the visible onstage presence at the end of the play of the bodies of Jocasta and her sons, and the banishment of Oedipus and Antigone, leaving Thebes to Creon, all serve to underline the destabilising effect of an unsettled royal succession which was an important issue in mid-1560s Elizabethan England (and indeed throughout the queen's reign).¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Gascoigne 1906 contains Dolce's Italian text opposite that of Gascoigne and Kinweltershe.

¹⁰⁹ Dewar-Watson 2010: 24-27; Gascoigne 2000: 100; Macintosh 2009: 46; Smith B. R. 1988: 205 n. 9, 218.

¹¹⁰ *Jocasta*'s dumb shows are discussed by Austen 2008a: 54-57, Mehl 1965: 41-48, Pearn 1935: 387-389 and Smith B. R. 1988: 222-224.

¹¹¹ Gascoigne 2000: 75.

¹¹² *Oedipus* in the second volume of Seneca's tragedies edited and translated by John G. Fitch, lines 321-323 (Loeb Classical Library 2004).

¹¹³ Austen 2008a: 54, 56-57, 61-62. Similarly Pigman in Gascoigne 2000: 511-513, 523, 542-543.

Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe made clear how they wanted the audience and reader to respond to the play. The conclusion of ‘The argument of the Tragedie’, a handy plot summary (not in Dolce) that the reader would find before coming to the play’s text, sums up the authors’ views of the relative merits of two of the protagonists: ‘Creon is King, the type of Tyranny, / And Oedipus, myrrour of misery’.¹¹⁴ The authors made obvious which characters occupied the moral high ground. Eteocles, who initially agreed to take turns on the Theban throne with his brother Polynices, goes back on his oath, ‘Drunke with the sugred taste of kingly raigne’;¹¹⁵ and their sister Antigone denounces Eteocles as a ‘trothlesse tyrant’.¹¹⁶ Creon, in a monologue that has no counterpart in Euripides, reacts to the suicide of his son Meneceus, whose death Tyresias had prophesied would guarantee Creon’s and Eteocles’ victory against Polynices, by arguing that, since his own son has sacrificed himself for Thebes, he deserves to be king himself in place of the sons of the accursed Oedipus, ‘Either by right, or else by force of armes’.¹¹⁷ Meneceus, by contrast, is made into a thoroughgoing patriot. Whereas in Euripides Meneceus pretends to fall in with his father’s plan that he should flee Thebes but then reveals in a monologue his resolve to sacrifice himself, in *Jocasta* Meneceus insists to his father that he should die for Thebes, providing the opportunity for lengthy speeches about the transitoriness of life and obedience to the gods.

Pithy sayings worthy of attention (like Meneceus’ speeches just mentioned) are picked out in the second edition of *Jocasta* (1575) by being printed in quotation marks and highlighted by marginal glosses (added, like some of the remarks themselves, to Dolce’s text¹¹⁸), as when the servant, after listening to Jocasta’s story of the failure of Laius’ attempt to kill the child who grows up to be Oedipus, comments, ‘Experience proves, and daily is it seene, / In vaine, too vaine man strives against the heavens’.¹¹⁹ Shortly afterwards Jocasta, in line with the ‘argument of the Tragedie’, says of Oedipus, again printed in quotation marks, ‘So deeply faulteth none, the which unwares / Dothe fall into the crime he can not shunne’.¹²⁰ Further

¹¹⁴ Gascoigne 2000: 59.

¹¹⁵ Gascoigne 2000: 66.

¹¹⁶ Gascoigne 2000: 71.

¹¹⁷ Gascoigne 2000: 120.

¹¹⁸ Pigman in Gascoigne 2000: lxii, 515; Prouty 1942: 146-147.

¹¹⁹ Gascoigne 2000: 63.

¹²⁰ Gascoigne 2000: 65.

explanations for the play's events are given, however. The final dumb show shows Fortune riding in a chariot pulled by two kings and two slaves before giving the kings' crowns to the slaves and the latter's 'vyle clothes' to the kings, illustrating how 'unstable fortune, who dothe oftentimes raise to heigthe of dignitie the vile and unnoble, and in like manner throweth downe from the place of promotion, even those whom before she hir selfe had thither advaunced'.¹²¹ The chorus ends the play with a moralising speech on similar lines about how the turning of fortune's wheel will hurl down those whom it hoists up, and heave up and place aloft those who lie in the dungeon of despair: 'How fickle is to trust in fortunes wheele'.¹²² This was a theme also of the chorus' earlier songs and of Jocasta's speech to Eteocles.¹²³ In this respect the play harks back to medieval morality plays;¹²⁴ but it also looks forward to the moralising function that was attributed to the chorus by some English theorists from the late seventeenth century (chapter 2.6). Antigone provides yet another perspective by invoking her parents' incestuous marriage, 'Out of which roote we be the braunches borne, / To beare the scourge of their so foule offence', which echoes the statement which opens the 'argument of the Tragedie' that the gods stirred up strife between the brothers 'to scourge the cryme of wicked Laius, / And wrecke the foule Incest of Oedipus'.¹²⁵ Oedipus, as in Euripides, places the blame on 'The heavens [which] have from highe enforced me, / Agaynst whose doome no counsell can prevayle'.¹²⁶ And the epilogue, written by Charles Yelverton, blames ambition for men's downfall: 'ruine growes when most we reache to ryse ... The golden meane the happie dothe suffise'.¹²⁷

Jocasta thus includes, among others, the two traditional ways in which early sixteenth-century drama explained suffering, namely as the turn of Fortune's wheel and as punishment for sin, including both political and moral errors.¹²⁸ A similar combination of explanations was given by Alexander Neville three years earlier in the dedication of his translation of Seneca's *Oedipus* (1563) in which he wrote that

¹²¹ Gascoigne 2000: 122-123.

¹²² Gascoigne 2000: 139.

¹²³ Gascoigne 2000: 74, 88, 108-109.

¹²⁴ Smith B. R. 1988: 44.

¹²⁵ Gascoigne 2000: 59, 130.

¹²⁶ Gascoigne 2000: 133; compare Euripides' lines 1595-1599.

¹²⁷ Gascoigne 2000: 139-140.

¹²⁸ Lurie 2012: 442-443; Smith B. R. 1988: 44; Watson 2003: 293, 302. Kelly (1989: 193, 195-196) finds both ideas already in Chaucer.

the play demonstrated both ‘the unconstant head of wavering Fortune, her sodayne inerchaunged and soone altered Face’, and ‘the just revenge, and fearfull punishments of horrible Crimes, wherewith the wretched worlde in these our miserable dayes pyteously swarmeth’.¹²⁹ Gascoigne and Kinweltershe added to the mix the Greeks’ sense of an innocent man’s helplessness against the gods’ inscrutable decrees, just as formally they draw on both English native traditions (dumb shows) and classical precedent (Euripides via Dolce). *Gorboduc* had similarly combined both native and classical (Senecan) traditions a few years earlier.¹³⁰

Gascoigne and Kinweltershe privileged Greek antiquity by claiming indebtedness to Euripides alone around the time that Roger Ascham in *The Schoolmaster* (1570) claimed that for tragedy ‘the Grecians Sophocles and Euripides far overmatch our Seneca in Latin, namely in *oikovouία et decoro*, although Seneca’s elocution and verse be very commendable for his time’.¹³¹ Seneca was better known than his Greek predecessors during the Renaissance if judged by the numbers of translations into vernacular languages and of original plays based upon his.¹³² Gascoigne and Kinweltershe, despite working from an Italian version of Euripides’ play, presumably thought that claiming inspiration from the Greek tragedian would enhance the reputation of, and help to create interest in, their own play.

1.2. Thomas Goffe’s *The Tragedy of Orestes*

Thomas Goffe wrote *The Tragedy of Orestes* between 1609 and 1618 for performance by students at Christ Church, Oxford; it was published in 1633.¹³³ In the prologue, Goffe, like Gascoigne and Kinweltershe half a century earlier, eagerly claims descent from Euripides. Goffe likens himself to a builder who erects a new structure by cutting and reshaping stones taken from an older one:

We heere present for to revive a tale,
Which once in Athens great Eurypedes
In better phrase at such a meeting told
The learn’d Athenians with much applause ...
We here as builders which doe oft take stones,

¹²⁹ Quoted in Smith B. R. 1988: 206.

¹³⁰ Pincombe 2010: 7-8.

¹³¹ Ascham 1967: 129, referring to arrangement and fitness.

¹³² Smith B. R. 1988: 203; Watson 2003: 302.

¹³³ Larkum 2004.

From out old buildings, then must hew and cut,
To make them square, and fitting for a new;
So from an old foundation we have ta'n,
Stones ready squar'd for our new aedifice.¹³⁴

The implication is that Euripides' play is no longer fit for purpose but parts of it can nevertheless be salvaged, remodelled and incorporated into one that is better suited to the time. In fact, Goffe takes less from Euripides than he makes out, and borrowings have been identified from other classical authors (Seneca's *Agamemnon* and *Phoenician Women*, Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Cicero) as well as from Italian Renaissance tragedies.¹³⁵

Goffe's *Orestes* turns out to be a bloody English revenge tragedy, especially from the third act onwards, into which Goffe embeds elements from Euripides, just as Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe had combined classical Greek and native English precedents. Agamemnon is stabbed in his bed onstage and next morning Aegysthus crassly greets Clytemnestra with the words, 'How likes my sweet her change of bedfellow?'¹³⁶ Cassandra is 'a mad Prophetesse'.¹³⁷ Canidia is an old woman 'great in Magique spells':

One that can know the secrets of Heaven,
And in the ayre hath flying ministers,
To bring her news from earth, from sea, from hell.

She and three witches conjure up a dumb show in which Orestes sees the murder of his father.¹³⁸ Orestes stabs Aegystheus and Clytemnestra's child 'that the blood spirts in his face'.¹³⁹ Orestes taunts Aegystheus and Clytemnestra with Agamemnon's bones which he pulls out of his pocket, makes Aegystheus and Clytemnestra drink their child's blood and then stabs them. The body count continues to rise after Clytemnestra's father Tyndarus, in a plot line borrowed from Euripides' *Orestes*, banishes Orestes, his friend Pylades, Pylades' father Strophius and Electra from the court and decrees that none shall dare to give Orestes food.

¹³⁴ Goffe 1633: i.

¹³⁵ Herrick 1965: 301-304; O'Donnell 1953: 478-480 and 1954: 163.

¹³⁶ Goffe 1633: C2r. Goffe follows a Renaissance tradition of developing the relationship between Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, as well as that between Orestes and Pylades (Woodbridge 2010: 55-56).

¹³⁷ Goffe 1633: C1v.

¹³⁸ Goffe 1633: D3r, E1r-E3v.

¹³⁹ Goffe 1633: G4v.

Now Strophius dies (apparently exhausted) and Electra stabs herself. To add an element of gratuitous horror, Orestes, raving, mistakes their bodies for those of Aegystheus and Clytemnestra and stabs them with Electra's knife. Finally Orestes and Pylades commit suicide by fighting each other to the death to show Tyndarus that, in Pylades' words, 'We scorne to live when all our friends are dead'; eventually 'They fall downe dead, embracing each other'.¹⁴⁰ There are many Shakespearean echoes, for example of *Hamlet*, as when Orestes 'enters with his arme full of a dead mans bones and a Scull' which are his father's and addresses them as Hamlet does Yorick's skull;¹⁴¹ or when Agamemnon's ghost enters 'passing or'e the stage all wounded' and urges Orestes on to his revenge, concluding 'Thinke on me, and revenge', but with the added twist that, unlike the ghost of Hamlet's father, Agamemnon's ghost insists on revenge against Orestes' mother, 'that disloyall witch'.¹⁴² Goffe conflates the Orestes story with *Hamlet*, making Agamemnon equivalent to Old Hamlet, Aegystheus to Claudius, Orestes to Hamlet and Clytemnestra to a Gertrude conceived of as equally guilty with Claudius of her husband's death. Unsurprisingly a modern scholar suggests that the play might have been viewed as a parody of its kind.¹⁴³

Yet there are, too, some important elements from Sophocles' *Electra*, for example the false account of Orestes' death, albeit not accidentally in a chariot race as in Sophocles which would be too tame for Goffe. Rather, a messenger says that Orestes has jumped off a cliff into the sea out of grief for Agamemnon and that Pylades, trying to restrain him, fell with him and both were drowned. Also, it is only in Sophocles' version of the story that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus have a child.¹⁴⁴ A scene in which Orestes and Pylades each tries to protect the other by taking the blame for having killed a courtier recalls an episode in Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Goffe 1633: I2v-I3r.

¹⁴¹ Goffe 1633: D4v; *Hamlet* V.1.

¹⁴² Goffe 1633: G2v-G3r; *Hamlet* I.5 and III.4. O'Donnell (1953: 481-484) identifies borrowings from Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* as well as from *Hamlet*. Mueller (1997: 23-28, 42 n. 17) identifies equivalences between the stories of Hamlet and Orestes and verbal echoes of *Hamlet* in Goffe's play.

¹⁴³ Ewbank 2005: 49.

¹⁴⁴ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 163.

¹⁴⁵ Gliksohn 1985: 68.

The play ends with a long sententious speech by Tyndarus in which he denounces Orestes for his criminal matricide: ‘’Tis vile to hate a Father, but such love, / As breeds a hate to’th Mother, worse doth prove’. Orestes’ moral guilt is underlined by the fact that earlier Pylades had tried to dissuade him from the act: ‘But a bad mother, friend, thou shouldst not hurt, / The law of nature doth forbid such thoughts’.¹⁴⁶ Electra had similarly urged Orestes not to harm Clytemnestra and Aegysthus’ child, ‘That was unborne when that our Father dide’.¹⁴⁷ Pylades also pressed him, ‘I Faith Orestes prethee spare the child, / It hath no fault, but ‘tis too like the mother’.¹⁴⁸ Orestes’ guilt is, however, undercut by the noble manner of his death that Goffe allows him and by Tyndarus’ own praise of Orestes’ and Pylades’ ‘strong / United hearts’. Tyndarus blames events on the same ‘Fortunes wheele’ that shows ‘the vanity of man’ that Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe’s chorus invoked at the end of *Jocasta*.¹⁴⁹

Goffe showed, much more extravagantly than the comparatively restrained Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe, that the ancient Greek tragedians provided materials in the form of stories of high emotion, death and despair that could be quarried by modern playwrights for (melo)dramatic effects. Again like Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe, Goffe must have thought that his play would derive some reputational advantage from being coupled with the name of Euripides, even if the students at Christ Church would have easily detected his departures from the ancient play.

1.3. Thomas May’s *Antigone*

Thomas May prefaces his *Antigone* (1631) with a reference to how the ‘calamitous storyes of Thebes, Mycenae, Troy, and, most of all, this very discourse of the fatall and incestuous family of Oedipus’ appealed so much to the ‘ancient witts’ of Greece and to ‘the greatest Princes, both Graecian and Roman’.¹⁵⁰ May explains the phenomenon by focusing on the reactions of the members of the audience whom he categorises as either ‘wretched or fortunate’. If they are wretched, they are ‘in some sort eased by fellowship in woe’ by seeing tragic stories and by

¹⁴⁶ Goffe 1633: E3v.

¹⁴⁷ Goffe 1633: G2r.

¹⁴⁸ Goffe 1633: G2v.

¹⁴⁹ Goffe 1633: I4r.

¹⁵⁰ May 1631: A3v-A4r.

hearing ‘tragicall expressions’ that reflect their own thoughts. If they are fortunate, they react with either delight or sorrow. They may be delighted that they are more prosperous than the tragic characters and give due ‘acknowledgement to those high powers which made the difference’; or they may be made sorrowful, which is a good thing since, in cases of ‘too great a joy, & wantonnes of the soule’, ‘sad representations ... [depress] the levity of their thoughts to such a meane, as is fit to entertaine the best contemplations’.¹⁵¹

There is a passing reference there to the ‘high powers’ to which fortunate audience members may give thanks for not being as wretched as the tragic hero, but no indication if fortune’s wheel or divine providence is intended. May’s analysis of audience response offers no views on how tragic heroes meet their downfall and seems generally uninfluenced by Aristotle and Horace. May alludes to the sorrow the audience may feel at the tragic hero’s misfortune but it is not clear if that involves Aristotelian pity or catharsis, although it does seem to be a repudiation of Plato’s criticism in book 10 of the *Republic* of the way that ‘poetic imitation ...nourishes and waters’ emotions ‘when they ought to be dried up, and puts them in control of us when they should themselves be controlled’.¹⁵² Nor does May discuss the potentially moralising effect of theatre which was to dominate thinking about tragedy in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That underlines the delayed and partial arrival of theorising about tragedy in England before the 1660s.

The opening scene of *Antigone*, which was probably never performed, has echoes of Seneca’s incomplete *Thebais* or *Phoenissae*, and at the end of the seventeenth century that and Sophocles’ *Antigone* were seen as May’s sources.¹⁵³ In fact, May draws on Robert Garnier’s *Antigone, ou La Piété* (1580), albeit at some distance. Garnier’s play begins by drawing on Seneca before drawing on Sophocles.¹⁵⁴ May’s *Antigone* is remarkable dramatically for two features. The first, adopting the approach of Goffe’s *Orestes* (performed earlier although not published until two years after May’s play), is the introduction of two witches (not in Garnier)

¹⁵¹ May 1631: A4r-A5r.

¹⁵² Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 54.

¹⁵³ Langbaine 1688: 17 and 1691: 363; Gildon 1699: 96.

¹⁵⁴ Britland 2006: 142, 152 n. 9; Burian 1997: 233-234; Garnier 1580; Steiner 1984: 138-140, 196.

whom Creon asks to tell him ‘th’ assurance of my future state’. To that end one of the witches assembles a collection of

Skinns stript from horned snakes alive,
The Lynxes bowells, blood of froggs,
The Schreichowles eggs, the foame of Doggs,
The wings of Batts, with Dragons eyes,
The Crowes blacke head.

One of the dead bodies from the battlefield is reanimated and tells Creon,

Thy death is neare; yet ere thou dy
A great and strange calamity
Shall seize thy house, and thou in woe
Shalt thinke the fatall sisters slow
In giving death, desiring then
Thy reignes short date had shorter beene.¹⁵⁵

Britland identifies the scene as borrowed from the end of Book 6 of May’s translation of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* but there are clear echoes of the witches’ scenes in *Macbeth*.¹⁵⁶

The second interesting feature of May’s play is the use of two choruses, a ‘Chorus Thebanorum’ and a ‘Chorus Argivarum’, which are quite different from Garnier’s choruses and conclude each act by commenting on the action from the perspective of ordinary citizens caught up in events. At the end of the play the Chorus Thebanorum intervenes in the action by offering the Theban crown to the Athenian king Theseus who does not appear in Garnier’s play.

The play’s political significance derives from its one-dimensional representations of Creon as tyrannical and Antigone as virtuous. The latter appears as ‘a chaste and virginal heroine, whose familial piety directs her actions and leads her to a saint-like martyrdom’.¹⁵⁷ May thereby ‘cancels Antigone’s subversive devotion to chthonic deities and flattens her into a Christian paradigm’.¹⁵⁸ In the confrontation between Creon and Antigone in Act IV, in which Antigone defends her actions, Creon is given nothing to say in defence of his own position other than briefly to enquire, ‘Is disobedience merit’ and whether ‘the gods command subjects to breake / The laws of Princes?’.¹⁵⁹ Like Gascoigne and Kinweltershe in *Jocasta*,

¹⁵⁵ May 1631: D1r, D2v.

¹⁵⁶ Britland 2006: 149.

¹⁵⁷ Britland 2006: 140.

¹⁵⁸ Miola 2013: 18-19.

¹⁵⁹ May 1631: D6v.

May introduces a political theme. He engages in *Antigone*, as he had with his translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* in 1626-1627, with contemporary debates about the nature and extent of absolute royal power on the one hand and both courtly and 'popular' dissension on the other; and he proposes Theseus, who comes from Athens to restore order to Thebes, as a better model than Creon for rulers to follow.¹⁶⁰ Theseus announces Creon's death, apparently in battle with the Athenian forces, and then declines the chorus' offer of the throne with the noble words:

No; still let Thebes be govern'd by her owne ...
We drew the sword of justice, not of conquest,
Ambitiously to spread our Kingdomes bounds,
But to avenge the lawes of nature broke;
This act being done, Theseus is peace againe.¹⁶¹

May was not averse to exploiting the dramatic potential of the ancient story by pandering to popular theatrical tastes. The play ends with bodies littering the stage, as did Goffe's. In a scene with echoes of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Creon's son Aemon finds Antigone still alive where she has been entombed on Creon's orders but arrives too late as, wishing to avoid a lingering death, she has already taken poison.¹⁶² Antigone dies; Aemon's friend Dircis kills himself (method unspoken); Aemon dies, apparently by stabbing himself; and Aemon's mother Euridice says 'Ay me' and dies at the news.¹⁶³ Creon's obvious villainy and Theseus' equally obvious goodness leave little scope for a debate about the underlying causes of the tragedy. This topic was disposed of anyway in the play's first scene in which blame is pinned on fate which man cannot avoid and which makes him sin in ignorance. Antigone tries to persuade Oedipus that he acted in all innocence and could not escape cruel fate and the will of the gods. She tells him,

The age were good, were men as penitent
For true and reall faults, as you for that,
Which ignorance hath wrought, and was the crime
Of fate it selfe, not yours.¹⁶⁴

It was to be another sixty years before Dacier found a way to divert some of the blame away from the gods onto Oedipus himself, as shown in chapter 3.7.

¹⁶⁰ Britland 2006: 141-146; Norbrook 1994: 57-60 and 1999: 43-50.

¹⁶¹ May 1631: E5v.

¹⁶² Miola 2013: 17.

¹⁶³ May 1631: E3v-E5r.

¹⁶⁴ May 1631: B1v-B2r.

1.4. Christopher Wase's *Electra*

Wase's *Electra* (1649) differs from the three previous plays in being a direct translation of an ancient play, Sophocles' *Electra*. It is in fact the earliest surviving English translation of a tragedy by Sophocles and the first work of that author considered here. Wase (1627-1690) was born in Hackney and educated at Eton College before entering King's College, Cambridge in 1645. He was made a Fellow in 1648 and graduated B.A. in 1649. However, he was expelled from King's in 1650. John Evelyn, writing in his diary on 1 February 1652 and in a letter in 1668, said that Wase lost his Fellowship for refusing the 'Engagement'.¹⁶⁵ This was an order by Parliament in October 1649 that all college heads and Fellows must swear to be faithful to the Commonwealth as currently established, that is, without a king or House of Lords, Charles I having been executed on 30 January 1649. Around ten or twelve Fellows of King's were ejected for refusing to subscribe, or left to avoid being ejected, but it seems that Wase was forced out before the Engagement became an issue.¹⁶⁶

Walker writes that Wase 'took one degree, and was then turned out of the College for Publishing the Translation of *Electra*, and delivering a feigned Letter from the King to Dr. Collins', the previous Provost of King's.¹⁶⁷ The nature of the alleged 'feigned Letter' and the offence which it gave are not known. The fiercely royalist, anti-Cromwellian tone of Wase's translation of Sophocles' tragedy, and of the poems and notes which accompanied it, would have sufficed to make Wase's position at King's, and even his presence in England, untenable, given the political climate in the aftermath of the execution of Charles I. The murdered Agamemnon corresponded to the executed Charles I; the murderer and usurper Aegysthus was clearly Cromwell; and Agamemnon's avenging children Orestes and Electra stood for the children of the dead English king. Wase soon left England, serving at one point as a soldier in Flanders, before returning in February 1652 under the patronage

¹⁶⁵ Evelyn 1959: 314; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Charles II, volume 9, October* 1668-December 1669
<http://go.galegroup.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/mss/browse.do?inPS=true&userGroupName=ucl_ttda&prodId=SPOL&browseOption=calendars&searchHistory=no>
[accessed 6 December 2012].

¹⁶⁶ Saltmarsh 1958: 58 and n. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Walker 1714: 151.

of John Evelyn who recognised Wase's 'exceeding greate Erudition & no lesse modesty'.¹⁶⁸

Wase may have feared prosecution for publishing his *Electra*. Although the British Library copy is dated 'Aprill' 1649 in manuscript on the title page, a prefatory poem signed E. F. addresses Wase:

Bold Friend,
Thou hast spoke words, and thou must look
To be indited for thy per'lous Book;
Twelve honest men of Mycens shall debate
About the Symptomes of thy foolish Fate.
How wilt thou look when thou shalt be attack'd
For having broke Lord Egists new made Act?¹⁶⁹

'Lord Egist', Sophocles' Aegisthus who is described in the cast list as 'Conspiratour against the King', stood for Cromwell and the passage may be a reference to the *Act against Unlicensed and Scandalous Books and Pamphlets, And for better Regulation of Printing* of 20 September 1649 which targeted 'the subversion of the Parliament and present Government ... by lies and false suggestions, cunningly insinuated and spread amongst the people, and ... malicious misrepresentation of things acted and done', imposing a ten pound fine on guilty authors.¹⁷⁰ A date late in 1649 is also suggested by the engraving in the volume of prince Charles before a banner labelled 'Jersey' where he based himself between September 1649 and February 1650. His arrival there may be alluded to by the poem 'The Return' at the end of the volume which invokes the hoped-for coming to power of the brother of the volume's dedicatee, princess Elizabeth, who 'on our Isles appears'.¹⁷¹ Wase may have fled abroad for fear of being prosecuted under the new legislation, around the end of October.¹⁷²

It is unsurprising that a play could be seen as an appropriate way to allude to contemporary events and contemplate a better future at a time when commentators resorted to metaphors drawn from the world of the stage to complain that 'the most

¹⁶⁸ Evelyn 1959: 314-315.

¹⁶⁹ Wase 1649: ¶7r.

¹⁷⁰ <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=56369>> [accessed on 28 December 2012].

¹⁷¹ Wase 1649: 1 [separately paginated]. Charles is not named in the engraving which is captioned 'Aetatis suae 19'; he was born on 29 May 1630. The image is reproduced in Randall 1995: 218.

¹⁷² McAdam 1999: 21.

flourishing Kingdome in the Christian World, is now become the Theater of Misery, and a Spectacle of Lamentation’;¹⁷³ and ‘Never such a Tragedy was acted by any Subjects in the Christian world, since the first Constitution of Monarchy, as this unparallel’d murder of our Sovereign Lord and K.’.¹⁷⁴ Two play texts published in 1649 that spoke out against the king’s execution and denigrated Cromwell were *The Rebellion of Naples, or the Tragedy of Massenello* by ‘T. B.’¹⁷⁵ and *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I Basely Butchered*.¹⁷⁶ Wase’s translation of Sophocles’ *Electra* was similarly subversive. His choice of Sophocles’ version of the play is itself of interest. Woodbridge argues that ‘where Euripides’ *Electra* presents Electra and Orestes harshly, Sophocles unfolds the play through Electra’s perspective, courting audience sympathy for her vengefulness’, which fits with praise of the play’s dedicatee, the princess Elizabeth, as mentioned below.¹⁷⁷ Another reason for Wase choosing Sophocles might have been to differentiate himself from the republican and regicide-defender Milton who was claiming Euripides, whose ‘readiness to present characters who boldly challenged received ideas’ he admired, in support of his own positions.¹⁷⁸ Milton read avidly his copy of Stephanus’ 1602 edition of Euripides and made several hundred annotations on it.¹⁷⁹ On the title page of *Areopagitica* (1644) Milton quoted lines from a speech by Theseus in Euripides’ *Suppliant Women* (lines 438-441) on liberty and free speech:

This is true Liberty when free-born men
 Having to advise the public, may speak free,
 Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise;
 Who neither can, nor will, may hold his peace:

¹⁷³ Anon 1649a: 1.

¹⁷⁴ Anon 1649b: 2. On the appropriateness of plays to represent contemporary events at this time see Maguire 1989: 6-8 and Zwicker 1993: 41-42

¹⁷⁵ T. B. 1649. The play is discussed by Aggeler 1978: 57-60; Clare 2002: 24-25; Kewes 2006: 18; Potter 1981: 271; Randall 1995: 127-130; Woodbridge 2010: 212-213; Wright 1934: 91.

¹⁷⁶ Anon 1649c. The play is discussed by Aggeler 1978: 55-57; Clare 2002: 17-18; Maguire 1989: 9, 12-13, 22; Potter 1981: 269, 288-289, 292-293 and 1989: 28-29, 101; Purkiss 2005: 145-146; Randall 1995: 103-109; Smith N. 1994: 81-84; Wiseman 1998: 62-80; Woodbridge 2010: 209-210, 250; Zwicker 1993: 41-42.

¹⁷⁷ Woodbridge 2010: 211.

¹⁷⁸ Norbrook 1995: 38; also 1999: 125-127, 190, 439. And Smith N. 1994: 17-18 and Martindale 2012: 56-57 on Athens and Rome as denoting political liberty for Milton.

¹⁷⁹ Hale 1991; Kelley and Atkins 1961.

What can be juster in a state then this?¹⁸⁰

In his sonnet ‘Captain or colonel, or knight in arms’ (1645) Milton equated Euripides’ recital of his verses as Sparta besieged Athens with his own poem as London resisted assault by royalists.¹⁸¹ And in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) Milton quoted approvingly from a speech by Demophon in Euripides’ *Children of Heracles* (lines 423-424): ‘I rule not my people by Tyranny, as if they were Barbarians, but am my self liable, if I doe unjustly, to suffer justly’.¹⁸² Wase may have wished to claim Sophocles for royalism; he took aim at Milton in the poem ‘The Return’, telling the princess Elizabeth that their enemies were seeking to lull the people into untwisting, like ‘the froward Miltonist’, the ‘old Nuptiall knot’ between them and the crown, evoking Milton’s then notorious liberal attitude to dissolving ‘the knot of marriage’ in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643).¹⁸³

At first sight the choice of a translation of a classical play as a vehicle for the expression of royalist sentiments might seem to have been a way of trying to avoid the attentions of a censor policing the legislation against ‘Scandalous Books and Pamphlets’ who may have been more alert to texts that used contemporary materials to make their point than to those derived from antiquity. Certainly Wase claimed no role for himself beyond that of ‘the unworthy Translatour’ of his *Electra*.¹⁸⁴ But an unsigned poem ‘To my learned Friend on his apt choice and seasonable translation of *Electra* in Sophocles’ that purported to underline Wase’s claim did it in so blatant a manner as to make it clear that Wase’s self-description was a conscious pretence:

For ‘tis but Sophocles repeated, and
Eccho cannot be guilty or arraign’d.
Thus by slight of translation you make
Him libell ‘em, who is ten ages back
Out of their reach: and lay your ambush so,
They see not who ‘tis hurts ‘em. He or You.¹⁸⁵

Other poems that accompanied the play (in all, four before the translation and two after it) made the political purpose of the translation abundantly clear. Wase’s dedicatee, Charles I’s daughter the princess Elizabeth (1635-1650), was kept in close

¹⁸⁰ Milton 1981: 151.

¹⁸¹ Milton 1981: 218.

¹⁸² Milton 1974: 259.

¹⁸³ Milton 1974: 128; von Maltzahn 2014: 16; Wase 1649: 3 (separately paginated).

¹⁸⁴ Wase 1649: ¶2v.

¹⁸⁵ Wase 1649: ¶5v-¶6r.

confinement by Parliament until her death. A poem signed H. P. addresses her and invokes also her younger brother Henry, Duke of Gloucester (1640-1660) who was also closely watched by Parliament, imagining them as their father's joint avengers: the next age may

See the score of the Royall Parents wrongs,
Reveng'd by Kings which now sleep in thy Loynes.
You and the Duke are all our Hold and Fort,
Henry presents the Camp, and you the Court,
The Royall Widow with her beauteous Sky
Of Lady's, are Seen in Your Cheek and Eye:
And in Great Glo'sters little self Alone,
The Father breaths, and Brother is at Home.¹⁸⁶

Although neither Elizabeth nor Henry was their father's immediate heir, they were in England, unlike their older brothers Charles and James, and thus more readily available for royalists to visualise themselves rallying round. Moreover, editions of *Εἰκὼν Βασιλική*, *The Pourtracture of his Sacred Majestie, in his Solitudes and Sufferings* included from March 1649 onwards moving accounts of Charles' last meetings with Elizabeth and Henry, making Elizabeth especially 'an emblem of the suffering Stuart monarchy'.¹⁸⁷ When, in the play, Electra prays to Apollo, saying that she 'did still appear / With hand enlarg'd, according to my power', Wase adds a note, with Elizabeth's position clearly in mind, explaining that her words show that

the mites of a distressed innocent are more acceptable, then the Baskets of fruits, the Basons of Spices, Gumms and Incense, the Boxes of Oyls, with flagons of Wine, and all other pompous blandishments which dissembling oppressours offer.¹⁸⁸

Wase imagined Elizabeth and Henry and/or Charles avenging their father's murder and recovering the throne of England for the house of Stuart just as Electra and Orestes recovered that of Mycenae for the house of Atreus. The unsigned poem 'To his learned Friend on his ingenious choice and translation of Sophocle's *Electra*, Representing Allegorically these Times' sets out the parallels in case the reader should miss them, emphasising the belief, which I mentioned in the Introduction (section 8), that present events echo those of the ancient past and that similar situations of an exemplary nature recur:

¹⁸⁶ Wase 1649: ¶4v.

¹⁸⁷ Anon 1649d; Jacobs 2012: 227-229 (the quotation is at 227).

¹⁸⁸ Wase 1649: 52 (Sophocles' lines 1376-1378).

Me thinks this were a perfect Prophecie,
 But that there wants still the Catastrophe:
 Here guilt with guilt is parallel'd; the rime
 Of vengeance too may be compleat in time.
 Our Agamemnon's dead, Electra grieves,
 The onely hope is that Orestes lives.¹⁸⁹

The play's characters includes 'Egist, the Paramour of Clytemnestra, and Conspiratour against the King'.¹⁹⁰ 'A short extract of the History about the destruction of Troy' mentions 'The Tyrannical usurpation of the Mycenian Kingdome, with the Affliction and Oppression of the Royall Children, and the Destruction of the Conspiratours, the Enthroning of Orestes, with the Deliverance of the Royall Family'. It is important for the analogies that Wase is drawing that he can say that heaven rewarded the avenging Orestes 'by length of dayes, and happinesse of Government; for he lived ninetie years, & reigned seventy'.¹⁹¹ In a poem entitled 'The Restauration', printed after the play, Wase imagines, eleven years before the event, Charles 'in his Throne ... / Burnish't in a full Majestie'.¹⁹² And a note on the play's opening imagines people's reactions to the return of an exiled prince in terms as clearly applicable to prince Charles as to Orestes, mentioning

that delicate passion which is insinuated into us, to see an Exile entring his Country, which he was forc'd to leave very young; and to heare those places repeated as he passes along, whose bare names cannot but raise in him a Naturall endearment.¹⁹³

Wase's choice of a translation of an ancient play as the vehicle for his views was not, then, an attempt to obscure or conceal them, although this was a tactic often used by writers in the seventeenth century to avoid confrontation with the censor.¹⁹⁴ The vehicle of translation allowed Wase to use a pre-existing text to explore arguments for and against engaging in action to avenge Charles I's execution, as when Electra debates with Chrysothemis.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps Wase was unable, in the time available, to come up with an original work. Potter sees Wase's hiding behind his translation as 'relatively safe'. Randall sees the accompanying poems as underestimating 'the obviousness of this particular translator's craftiness' but

¹⁸⁹ Wase 1649: ¶6v.

¹⁹⁰ Wase 1649: ¶8v.

¹⁹¹ Wase 1649: A2v-A3r.

¹⁹² Wase 1649: 8 (separately paginated).

¹⁹³ Wase 1649: 1.

¹⁹⁴ Examples in Patterson 1984: 11, 44-58, 81, 86, 150-154, 192-198.

¹⁹⁵ McAdam 1999: 43-44.

nevertheless as ‘self-protective indirection’. My view is closer to Woodbridge’s who sees the play as ‘either naive or sardonic: even Roundheads can decipher allegory and read prefatory poems’.¹⁹⁶ I interpret the translation and its surrounding materials as a deliberate act of bravado. Wase seems to have been determined not to leave himself even the smallest fig leaf to hide behind. The analogy between the characters in *Electra* and contemporary events seemed to break down with the murderous Clytemnestra who clearly could not be equated with Charles I’s queen. Indeed, Wase cautioned in a note on *Electra*’s reference to ‘my Mother and her Mate / Egist’ that ‘similitudes run not upon all foure’. But rather than leave matters there, Wase went on to equate Clytemnestra with the English body politic, ‘which hath trull’d it in the lewd embraces of the souldiery’.¹⁹⁷ A literal reading of the play which concludes that it ‘cannot ... be read as a complete reflection of the times, since Sophocles’ tragedy is impelled by crimes within the family’ does not do justice to how Wase went about constructing analogies between *Electra* and the events of 1649.¹⁹⁸

Wase renders the play’s text relatively straightforwardly while still leaving the allegory clear. He said little about translation theory, pointing out a few years later that ‘the work of rendering terms peculiar to any Art out of one Language into another is generally difficult’ and that ‘all those who read Translations, do find by experience, that even the best of them do not move a like delight in their minds, as the Originals themselves’.¹⁹⁹ Later still he regretted

the insuperable defects in rendring Languages each by other, which are often inadaequate, and in signification, credit, phrase, variety, incommensurable one with the other. Spirits that are most delicious, we find to be most volatile, and hardly endure the transportation.²⁰⁰

Wase may have had in mind Denham’s statement in the preface to *The Destruction of Troy* (1656), a translation of part of book 2 of *The Aeneid*, that ‘Poesie is of so subtile a Spirit, that in pouring out of one Language into another, it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a Caput Mortuum’.²⁰¹ Denham’s image comes from alchemy and the ‘Caput mortuum’ may

¹⁹⁶ Potter 1989: 54; Randall 1995: 219; Woodbridge 2010: 211.

¹⁹⁷ Wase 1649: 5.

¹⁹⁸ Clare 2002: 20.

¹⁹⁹ Wase 1654: a11r, 21.

²⁰⁰ Wase 1671: A2r-A3r.

²⁰¹ Weissbort and Eysteinnsson (eds.) 2006: 123.

be an allusion to the beheading of Charles I.²⁰² Denham and Wase met in the earl of Pembroke's household at Wilton in the 1650s.²⁰³

Wase's translation follows Sophocles' text closely, even in the use of compound nouns, syntax and word order.²⁰⁴ It is written in rhyming couplets and does not divide the play up into acts and scenes. Several passages are given contemporary resonances.²⁰⁵ The chorus' remark to Electra, 'you will never raise up your father from the lake of Hades', becomes 'from deaths Catholick Meere you'll never ... deliver your Father'.²⁰⁶ Electra tells Chrysotheame to leave locks of their hair at Agamemnon's tomb 'uncomb'd unpouderd' and Wase notes: 'The Greek is *unanointed*, for in our countreys the Puff is more known than the Box of ointment, neither do I think any want of proportion betwixt *Anoint thy head*, and *Pouder thy hair*'.²⁰⁷ Sophocles' Chrysotheame remarks that Electra is not allowed to leave the house even to go to the gods; in Wase's translation Electra is not allowed to step out to church.²⁰⁸ Wase's *Electra* shows how difficult it can sometimes be to distinguish between a translation and an adaptation and how those terms are not necessarily helpful if viewed as fundamentally different rather than as points on a continuum. Certainly the text of Sophocles' play that appears in Wase's volume has every appearance of being a translation and some of the notes that Wase appends reinforce that. But the volume is more than the text of the play and explanatory notes. As already demonstrated, the materials that surround the play give it a contemporary context and application and Wase similarly adapts Sophocles' text by rendering some passages tendentiously. The 'two hands' who Electra says killed her father become 'base Conspirators',²⁰⁹ and Electra's imagining people saying approvingly of her and Chrysotheame that they took no thought of their own lives but stood forth to avenge murder becomes that they '... when Victorious Treason highest flew, / Spar'd not for

²⁰² Davis 2008: 38.

²⁰³ Aubrey 1898: I 218.

²⁰⁴ McAdam 1993: 17, 24-25, 29-30.

²⁰⁵ Potter 1989: 53-54; Randall 1995: 217.

²⁰⁶ Wase 1649: 6 (Sophocles' lines 137-139).

²⁰⁷ Wase 1649: 18 (Sophocles' lines 448-452).

²⁰⁸ Wase 1649: 34 (Sophocles' lines 911-912).

²⁰⁹ Wase 1649: 9 (Sophocles' line 205).

life, but the bold rebell slew'.²¹⁰ Wase inserts other references to treason in his rendering,²¹¹ and Electra calls Aegisthus a 'Traytor'.²¹²

The play is an example, like Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe's *Jocasta* and May's *Antigone*, of the opportunity that the stories of the ancient Greek tragedians, often concerned with the downfall of kings and royal households, offered for comment on contemporary politics to those authors and readers who were familiar with them. But it is significant also for Wase's interest in Greek tragedy and civilisation independent of the application of the particular story with which he was concerned to the England of his day. In a note before the play proper Wase gives an account of the ancient chorus rooted in its own time:

We must know, that the Ancient Quire of the Greek Tragedians in the time of Sophocles, consisted of Fifteen, seated by fives upon three Forms, or by threes upon five Forms. And in that Number were their Approaches and Returns, one speaking for the rest, being the fore party of the Quire. Musick still attended their Speeches and Dancing ... This long disuse hath transmitted us a very obscure notion of those rarities in Musick wherein the Ancient Greeks seem to have excell'd. So that it may be excusable, if I am not clear enough in delivering that, of which the injury of Time hath scarce left a shadow.²¹³

The notes with which Wase accompanied his translation comment on the play's action and explain allusions to ancient Greek legends, gods, customs etc. Those were the first attempts in an English version of an ancient Greek play to draw the reader's attention to its specific historical context. Wase used the medium of notes to achieve in that respect what Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe, Goffe and May had not attempted. Previous commentators have highlighted only two of Wase's notes that connect the text to his own time: one, already mentioned, that equates Clytemnestra with the English body politic, and another that dwells on the chorus' reference to 'Th' ancient Poll-ax Razor-edg'd / With steel wing on both sides fledg'd' by providing, clearly with Charles I's execution in mind, a drawing of such a double-headed axe and describing how it might be designed.²¹⁴ But there are almost 40 other notes which

²¹⁰ Wase 1649: 37 (Sophocles' lines 979-980).

²¹¹ Wase 1649: 8 (Sophocles' line 197), 9 (Sophocles' line 212), 41.

²¹² Wase 1649: 11.

²¹³ Wase 1649: A1r-v.

²¹⁴ Wase 1649: 19 (Sophocles' lines 484-486). Early engravings of Charles I's execution on the British Museum website show only a single-headed axe (<http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection> [accessed 30 January 2013]).

are mostly non-propagandistic and generally seek to place the text in its ancient context. Around a third function as stage directions, suggesting the characters' movements, onstage locations and inner thoughts.²¹⁵ Some relate ancient Greek legends, such as the straightforward account of Pelops, Atreus, Thyestes, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.²¹⁶ Some explain a character's words for the reader's benefit: when Clytemnestra says that Menelaus' children might have been sacrificed in place of Iphigenia, Wase notes: 'Hermione and Nicostratus children of Menelaus by Helena'.²¹⁷ Most interesting are Wase's attempts to explain ancient Greek customs. Electra reminds Chrysotheame that their mother mutilated their father's body ('arm-string'd him') and Wase explains,

It was a superstitious humour of the Ancients, after they had committed any murder, to cut the sinews about the arm-pits of the corse, fondly (as far as I can reach) supposing that they did thereby enfeeble the arms of the injured spright, and disable it from pursuing them with its crooked talons, or returning any due satisfaction.

Next, Clytemnestra 'to scour off the gore, / In cleansing rinc'd the lopt head o're and o're', which Wase describes as 'Another wise ceremony after murder, to scour the blood of the deceased, upon this designe, that thereby they might wipe off all anger'.²¹⁸ Wase also has notes on the different events that made up the ancient games, quoting an epigram by Simonides;²¹⁹ on chariotry ('one of the antiquated Modes of Chivalry');²²⁰ and on Attick laws enjoining hospitality to strangers.²²¹ Wase's interest in ancient Greek culture for its own sake, and not for how it might illuminate or have lessons for the present, and his desire to communicate that interest to the reader, is noteworthy given his concern to use his translation of *Electra* to make propaganda points about the state of contemporary England. It appears all the more so given the lack of such interest by his predecessors whom I have considered above.

²¹⁵ Wase 1649: 1, 2, 4, 6, 10, 31 (twice), 33, 40, 52, 56 (twice).

²¹⁶ Wase 1649: 2; other examples at 1, 7 (twice), 20 and 32.

²¹⁷ Wase 1649: 21 (Sophocles' lines 539-540).

²¹⁸ Wase 1649: 17 (Sophocles' lines 444-446). The latter practice involved rather the murderer wiping the blood from her hands or weapon onto the victim's head to transfer the blood-guilt from her to him: see Sophocles 1973: 115 and 2001: 169.

²¹⁹ Wase 1649: 26 (Sophocles' line 690).

²²⁰ Wase 1649: 27 (Sophocles' line 698).

²²¹ Wase 1649: 41 (Sophocles' line 1102).

Wase's *Electra* has been described as '[adapting] the "manners" of [Sophocles'] tragedy to seventeenth-century usage',²²² as a 'monarchically slanted version of Sophocles' *Electra*',²²³ as 'the most overt and passionate of midcentury editorializing translations',²²⁴ as a 'royalist translation',²²⁵ and as 'a remarkable political document which has few, if any, parallels'.²²⁶ Certainly Wase's approach in *Electra* was partly to bring Sophocles into the present through some tendentious renderings of the play's text coupled with some of his notes and the accompanying poems. Hall identifies Wase's *Electra* as '[a] powerful instance in the reception of drama ... of conscious imposition of new meaning' through translation, which she associates with Derrida's concept of "contamination".²²⁷ This is not simply an anticipation of the policy described by Denham in the preface to *The Destruction of Troy* (1656) that 'if Virgil must needs speak English, it were fit he should speak not only as a man of this Nation, but as a man of this age'.²²⁸ Rather it involved giving Sophocles words that enabled him to speak to modern concerns. However, Wase's approach was partly also to leave Sophocles in the past through notes that sought to situate the play in the time of its composition. Only by overlooking this second aspect can Wase's *Electra* be viewed solely as a 'modernisation'.²²⁹

1.5. William Joyner's *The Roman Empress*

I look first at Joyner's life before *The Roman Empress* (chapter 1.5.1), then at the play's plot and differences between the printed and manuscript versions of the text (1.5.2). Next I examine Joyner's use of ancient Greek tragedy (1.5.3) and the relevance of contemporary dramatic theory (1.5.4).

1.5.1. Joyner's biography and publication of *The Roman Empress*

²²² Potter 1989: 53.

²²³ Smith 1994: 75-76.

²²⁴ Randall 1995: 216.

²²⁵ Woodbridge 2010: 210.

²²⁶ Walton 2006a: 36.

²²⁷ Hall 2004: 59-60.

²²⁸ Weissbort and Eysteinnsson (eds.) 2006: 123. Dryden (1962: II 19, 154, 247) later made similar statements.

²²⁹ Potter 1989: 53.

Joyner was baptised in Oxford in 1622 and educated at the free schools of Thame and Coventry before entering Magdalen College, Oxford in 1636 aged 14.²³⁰ He graduated B.A. in 1640 and became a Fellow of the college in 1642. Oxford was the site of Charles I's Civil War court and headquarters from late in 1642, after the battle of Edgehill, until April 1646 when, with Oxford surrounded by parliamentary forces, Charles left and delivered himself to parliament's Scottish allies; Oxford itself surrendered in June 1646. Joyner would have found Magdalen an uncomfortable place if he had not had royalist sympathies. These are reflected in two poems he wrote. In 1638 he contributed an untitled poem in Latin to a volume by Oxford students and Fellows eulogising Charles' queen, Henrietta Maria.²³¹ In 1640 he contributed an untitled poem in English to a similar volume celebrating the birth of Charles and Henrietta Maria's son Henry, the future duke of Gloucester.²³²

However, Joyner's life soon underwent a permanent change. The Oxford historian and antiquarian Anthony Wood, who knew Joyner well, wrote that

upon a foresight of the utter ruin of the church of England by the presbyterians in the time of their rebellion, he changed his religion for that of Rome, renounced his fellowship [of Magdalen College] in 1644, and being taken into the service of the most noble Edward earl of Glamorgan, eldest son of marquess of Worcester, he went with him into Ireland.²³³

Another Oxford antiquarian, Thomas Hearne, writing in November 1705 after 'talking with Mr. Joyner (the Roman-Catholick)', wrote that Joyner 'could not have a very fair Opinion' of the Puritans 'upon account of their unmercifull Usage of Archbp. Laud, whose Head they cut off, notwithstanding the great favours they had rec'd from King James I'.²³⁴ And writing in September 1706, three days after Joyner died, Hearne recalled that Joyner 'lived a Papist to his dying day ... continually speaking well of the true Protestants; but he could not endure the Presbyterians, or any of that side, whom he commonly called Puritans'.²³⁵ The evidence is that Joyner abandoned the Anglican church for Catholicism because of the increasing influence of Protestant nonconformists who, among other things, opposed the policies of

²³⁰ Burns 2004.

²³¹ Joyner 1638: E1v-E2r; his poem is signed 'G.I. Arm. Fil. Coll. Mag. Com'.

²³² Joyner 1640: d4v-e1v; his poem is signed 'Wil Ioyner Coll. Mag.'.

²³³ Wood 1813-1820: IV 587-588. Wood knew Joyner well enough to trace his pedigree back three generations (Wood 1891-1900: III 259).

²³⁴ Hearne 1966: 20.

²³⁵ Hearne 1966: 53; similarly 380.

William Laud, the High Church Archbishop of Canterbury and ally of Charles I. Laud had been Chancellor of Oxford University from 1630 to 1641, during Joyner's undergraduate studies. In spring 1644 Parliament put Laud on trial; he was to be executed in January 1645.

Joyner's change of religion did not mean a change of political loyalties. He accompanied the earl of Glamorgan to France and Germany and spent several years as domestic steward to Walter Montagu, abbot of St. Martin at Pontoise and royalist son of the earl of Manchester. Montagu, like Joyner, was a convert to Catholicism; and Joyner was 'much esteemed for his learning, sincere religion, and great fidelity' by him.²³⁶ Joyner was also apparently for a time in the service of Charles I's widow Henrietta Maria, perhaps when in 1654 Montagu was entrusted by her with the care of her son Henry whom Parliament had allowed to travel to France.²³⁷

At some stage Joyner returned to London where his only play, *The Roman Empress*, was performed around August 1670. It is not clear what life Joyner led in London, how he maintained himself or why he decided to try his hand at playwriting. Wood records that Joyner 'spent several years in Lond. in a most retired and studious condition'.²³⁸ Writing to Wood on 18 March 1689 Joyner was to mention how he missed 'my old friends in the great City' but he does not identify them.²³⁹ Hearne records a Dr. Hudson saying that Joyner 'was intimately acquainted with Mr. Milton', but that may have been much earlier.²⁴⁰ In letters to Wood Joyner mentions the 'rare virtues' of 'my old friend Mr Cowley the Poet', who died in 1667, and regrets the death of the physician Sir Charles Scarborough with whom he had been acquainted, through Cowley, above forty years.²⁴¹ Joyner's letters to Wood also mention Edward Sherburne who published translations of two of Seneca's tragedies, *Medea* in 1648 and *Troades: or the Royal Captives* in 1679.

An interest in the theatre may be reflected in his choice of dedicatee for the printed text of *The Roman Empress*, Sir Charles Sedley, who led a somewhat riotous

²³⁶ Wood 1813-1820: IV 588.

²³⁷ Burns 2004; Cooper 2011; Joyner 1686, title page (Joyner was also known as William, or Gulielmus, Lyde, hence 'G. L.').

²³⁸ Wood 1813-1820: IV 588.

²³⁹ University College, Oxford MS P2/C2/3.

²⁴⁰ Hearne 1966: 54; Pritchard 1980: 94-97 and n. 16.

²⁴¹ University College, Oxford MS P2/C2/7 (14 April 1691) and P2/C2/14 (13 March 1694).

life and also had connections with the theatre.²⁴² He was the author of a comedy, *The Mulberry Garden* (1668), and he has been seen as the model for Lisideius, the spokesperson for French neo-classical drama in Dryden's *Of Dramatic Poesy* (1668).²⁴³ Dryden was to dedicate *The Assination; or, Love in a Nunnery* to Sedley in 1673, mentioning their pleasant, and for the most part instructive, 'genial nights' together when 'the cups [are] only such as will raise the conversation of the night, without disturbing the business of the morrow'.²⁴⁴ Pinto concluded from the apparent incompatibility of Sedley and 'a grave and pious person like Joyner' that Sedley could not have been 'the mere rakehell' of his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biographers.²⁴⁵ But just as Dryden's praise of Sedley, and his similar praise of Rochester in the dedication of *Marriage-a-La-Mode* (also 1673), have been seen as embodying a degree of irony, so Joyner's references to Sedley's 'elevated wit', rich fancy and 'subtile' judgement do not imply blindness to a prospective patron's faults.²⁴⁶

The Roman Empress was published by Henry Herringman. Although the title page bears the date 1671, it is listed in the Term Calendar for Michaelmas 1670 between the volume containing Milton's *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* and Dryden's *Tyrannick Love, or The Royal Martyr*; the latter was also published by Herringman.²⁴⁷ Herringman published plays by Davenant, Dryden, Robert and Edward Howard, Lord Orrery, Sedley (*The Mulberry Garden*, 1668, mentioned above), Shadwell and Shakespeare (the fourth folio) and the poetry of Cowley, Denham and Waller.²⁴⁸ Works by Dryden that Herringman had published before *Tyrannick Love* included *Astraea Redux. A Poem on the Happy Restoration & Return of his Sacred Majesty Charles the Second* (1660), *Of Dramatick Poesy* (1668) and several plays.²⁴⁹ It is tempting to think that Joyner chose Herringman as his publisher because he already knew or socialised with some of his other authors. Sedley and Dryden would be the most interesting possibilities, the former because

²⁴² Pepys' *Diary* 1 July 1663, 23 October 1668, 2 February 1669.

²⁴³ Dryden 1962: I 19 n. 1.

²⁴⁴ Dryden 1962: I 186.

²⁴⁵ Pinto 1927: 199.

²⁴⁶ Dryden 1717: III 273-279; Joyner 1671: A1v; Winn 1987: 245-247.

²⁴⁷ Arber 1903-1906: I 56.

²⁴⁸ Miller 1948: 292, 298, 301-302.

²⁴⁹ Macdonald 1939.

Joyner dedicated *The Roman Empress* to him and the latter because, as I will show, Joyner engages with issues in which Dryden was also interested. Of course, Joyner may have chosen Herringman simply because he knew he published several other playwrights.

1.5.2 The plot and the printed and manuscript versions of the text

The plot of *The Roman Empress* is as follows. The Romans are divided in their allegiance between, on the one hand, Hostilius and, on the other, the emperor Valentius and his wife Fulvia (one of the candidates for the Roman empress of the play's title) who have the upper hand in the current civil war. Valentius' general is Florus, whose father is presumed to be Valentius' commander of light cavalry Macrinus. But Florus knows that his father is really Arsenius, one of Hostilius' generals, and he and Hostilius' daughter Aurelia love each other.

Florus comes under personal attack on three fronts. First, Aurelia vows to destroy him when her father Hostilius falsely tells her that Florus has killed her brother in cold blood (Florus did kill him but in the ordinary course of battle). Aurelia enters Valentius' camp, pretending to be fleeing the lustful attentions of her father, and in due course denounces Florus to Valentius as a traitor to him because of Florus' love for her. Second, Valentius' wife Fulvia tells Florus she loves him. He is appalled and his rejection of her makes Fulvia determine to destroy him. She gets her maid Antonia to tell Valentius that she has seen Florus solicit the empress. Third, Carbo, previously Florus' friend, who is also in love with Aurelia, informs Valentius that Florus' father is not Macrinus but Valentius' sworn enemy Arsenius and falsely accuses Florus of joining forces with Hostilius in order to obtain the latter's daughter Aurelia and receive the Roman empire for a dowry.

Faced with Florus' apparent treacheries, Valentius, despite some misgivings, has him executed with his friend Honorius and with Arsenius. Aurelia is now guilt-stricken and by a trick induces her own father to kill her while she is disguised so that he does not know who she is; before she dies she identifies herself to him.

Valentius is abandoned by his supporters, who go over to Hostilius, for having killed Florus at the behest of court factions and women (Fulvia and Aurelia). He is then handed a letter by another woman who immediately kills herself. The letter identifies her as Valentius' first wife Palladia whom Valentius ordered to be executed

for infidelity (of which she was innocent) but who survived to give birth to her and Valentius' son - originally named Vespasius - who is/was none other than Florus.

In despair Valentius tries to kill Macrinus for his involvement in concealing Florus' true identity. Macrinus and Valentius both kill themselves. Fulvia has previously made her way to Hostilius' camp but neither of them is mentioned at the end of the play and there is no indication that either or both will assume unchallenged control of the empire.

Worcester College, Oxford has a manuscript version of the play which differs from the printed version in many respects.²⁵⁰ It is not dated. It lacks most of the stage directions, the names of the actors, the dedication and the preface. Carbo in the printed text is named Tucca (the name of characters in Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601) and Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1602)) in the manuscript. Each version has lines lacking in the other; in all, the manuscript is over 550 lines longer than the printed text. For example, in the opening scene Sophonia sees Aurelia weeping at the outcome of the latest battle and says in the manuscript:

Madam, I should esteem your tears in real value
Not language of fond lovers, pearls and jewels
Of price inestimable, did they cure
Or ease those griefs they thus lament, wch they
Rather increase, and persevering, may
The light, not only of your matchlis beauty,
But understanding a more matchless treasure,
In time extinguish.

The printed text is around half as long and more focused:

Madam, I should esteem the tears you shed
At a great value, did they ease those griefs
They thus lament: but they rather increase them:
Clear those bright lights then from those misty clouds.²⁵¹

Both the manuscript and the printed text continue with a new speech beginning, 'My dear Sophonia'. In the manuscript this completes the preceding half line 'In time extinguish'. But in the printed text the preceding line is full ('Clear those bright

²⁵⁰ MS Plays 9.20.

²⁵¹ MS fo. 2r; Joyner 1671: 1. There are many other passages where the printed text is shorter and sharper than the manuscript: MS fo. 9r-10r / Joyner 1671: 13-14; MS fo. 16v-17r / Joyner 1671: 24-25; MS fo. 18v-19v / Joyner 1671: 28-29; MS fo. 24v-27v / Joyner 1671: 38-42; MS fo. 29r-30r / Joyner 1671: 44-45; MS fo. 31r-32r, 33v; MS fo. 36v, 37v-38r / Joyner 1671: 55-56; MS fo. 40v / Joyner 1671: 59.

lights then from those misty clouds’), as is the following line in both the manuscript and the printed text, and so ‘My dear Sophonia’ is left uncompleted in the latter. There are many other occasions when, in the printed text, a half line appears without being completed but in the manuscript the half line is absent, or is itself part of a full line, or is completed by a preceding or succeeding half line that is not in the printed text. That is consistent with the manuscript preserving an early version of the text which was amended for performance and publication, mainly by shortening, without the person making the changes bothering to deal with stranded half lines; the stage directions may have been completed at this stage too. But Joyner’s metre is often irregular and there are many occasions, in the manuscript as well as in the printed text, when a half line is not completed by either the preceding or following lines which are full. The relationship between the manuscript and the printed text is unclear. Nor is it known which version, if either, was used in performance.²⁵²

Wording present in the manuscript but not in the printed text may reflect some of Joyner’s concerns. The manuscript has many attacks on the court. Arsenius attacks the influence of flatterers.²⁵³ Florus, after Fulvia has declared himself to him, fears that ‘my innocence / ... in Courts wil prove a weak defence’.²⁵⁴ Servilius, when telling his wife Antonia that he no longer loves her, reflects that ‘now civil wars corrupted have the State / We here in Court irregularly move / Blind fury guiding us or else blind love’.²⁵⁵ Tucca asserts, ‘Who cant dissemble knows not how to live / In this corrupted Court’.²⁵⁶ Valentius reflects that ‘’Tis in a Prince Tucca the greatest error, / When he forgetting his own duty placeth / His chiefest trust in hands not to be

²⁵² Joyner wrote in the preface to the printed text (1671: A3r): ‘If the language please not, I am sorry: the fault proceeds from no want of respect to the Audience. For I wrote the quantity of three or four Playes upon this noble Subject; of which I conceive this the best extract’.

²⁵³ MS fo. 7v / Joyner 1671: 10. Similarly Tucca at MS fo. 24v / Joyner 1671: 38; and Statilius at MS fo. 39v / Joyner 1671: 59.

²⁵⁴ MS fo. 14v / Joyner 1671: 21.

²⁵⁵ MS fo. 15v / Joyner 1671: 23. The first of those three lines is an interlinear insertion which, unlike the lines before and after, does not form part of a rhyming couplet and so stands alone in the surrounding manuscript text.

²⁵⁶ MS fo. 16v / Joyner 1671: 24. Similarly Servilius at MS fo. 17v / Joyner 1671: 26.

trusted'.²⁵⁷ Aurelia tempts Florus to betray Valentius and to behave like great conquerors who

... privat murders
Punish, while their boundless ambition wil
Depopulate whole countreys. Here appears
The privilege of their condicion, wch
That lawful makes, wch is accommodated
To their wil, proper interest, & pleasure.²⁵⁸

Joyner may have felt it would be inappropriate for the printed text – and perhaps also the text used in performance – to include those lines, presumably not on grounds of length since they are only a few lines each, but perhaps out of a concern that they would be resented at the court of Charles II, the amorality and licentiousness of which was a cause of concern to some.²⁵⁹ In 1667 the actor John Lacy was arrested for adding some lines to his part in Edward Howard's *The Change of Crowns* in which he 'doth abuse the Court with all the imaginable wit and plainness, about selling of places and doing everything for money'; the play seems never to have performed again.²⁶⁰ And in 1669 Robert Howard and the Duke of Buckingham's *The Country Gentleman* contained a scene that poked fun at Sir William Coventry, Commissioner of the Navy, who complained to the king and got the scene removed.²⁶¹

Other passages present in the manuscript but not in the printed text may reflect Joyner's theological concerns. Aurelia is guilt-stricken about her betrayal of Florus:

In other brests sins grow up by degrees,
Like virtues; but in mine al in a moment.
I was completely wicked in the instant:
Am I not changd Sophonia? and become
As black without, as I am foule within?

But Sophonia holds out the prospect of divine forgiveness since

When many actions of the highest nature

²⁵⁷ MS fo. 24v / Joyner 1671: 38. But in this instance Valentius is wrong since it is Florus whom he has in mind and whom he unfairly suspects.

²⁵⁸ MS fo. 30r / Joyner 1671: 45.

²⁵⁹ Harris 2006: 46, 72-74; Pepys' *Diary*, for example 17 February, 26 April, 24 June, 27 and 29 July and 8-9 August 1667, 6 July 1668 and 28 April 1669.

²⁶⁰ Pepys' *Diary* 15 April 1667; also 16 and 20 April. Bawcutt 1996: 103-104; Kinservik 2001: 39-40; Milhous and Hume (eds.) 1991: nos. 377, 378, 380, 382.

²⁶¹ Kinservik 2001: 40; Pepys' *Diary* 1, 4 and 6 March 1669.

Can't consecrate us in the sight of heaven;
There is no reason that our single fault,
Or crime of what nature so ever should
Render the Gods implacable against us.
This is to make them subject to our passions,
And were a greater trespass than the former.

She tells Aurelia that 'you more white will after your offence / Rise and appear from this your penitence, / Then, when you shind in your first innocence'.²⁶² For the last lines the printed text has, 'you more white will after this offence / Rise and appear, then in your innocence', lacking the manuscript's emphasis on penitence. The manuscript similarly seeks to redeem Hostilius in a passage not present in the printed text when he expresses regret at having deceived Aurelia into seeking Florus' downfall:

It was improvidently don; she is
My only child. I hope the Gods wil have
Compassion of her: so they might; were not
She daughter of a Tyrant. How can I expect
Mercy from them, who have usd none myself?²⁶³

Those passages display elements of the Catholic sacrament of penance, namely contrition and confession, as well as expressing the hope of divine forgiveness in what is clearly more a Christian than a Roman context. The importance attached to the Catholic sacrament of penance around this time is illustrated by Dryden's poem *The Hind and the Panther* (1687), written after Dryden's conversion to Catholicism, in which he reproaches the Church of England for having 'Confessions, fasts and penance set aside'.²⁶⁴

1.5.3. Joyner's use of ancient Greek tragedy

The differences between the manuscript and the printed text do not, however, bear on Joyner's use of ancient Greek tragedy. He boldly claimed to be influenced by Sophocles' *Oedipus* and by *Hippolytus* and *Medea*. I will first examine to what extent the similarities between those plays and Joyner's own are literally exact; and

²⁶² MS fo. 37r and 37v; Joyner 1671: 56.

²⁶³ MS fo. 38v / Joyner 1671: 57.

²⁶⁴ Line i.364 in Dryden 2000: 74 and n.; also iii.1175-1176 at 175 and n. See also 'The sacrament of penance' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* at <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11618c.htm>> [accessed 5 July 2013].

then I will comment on what I believe is the significance of his references to the ancient Greeks.

Joyner begins the preface to the play by invoking *Oedipus*:

Having consider'd, that of all Tragedies the old *Oedipus*, in the just estimation of the Antients and Moderns carry'd the Crown: a Story as yet untoucht by any English Pen; I thought, though defective in my art, I could not be but very fortunate in this my subject. Which has given me leave ... to include what is admirable in this *Oedipus*.²⁶⁵

Oedipus had been much discussed on the European mainland, for example by Joachim Camerarius in *Argumentum fabulae* (1534),²⁶⁶ Robortello in his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* (1548),²⁶⁷ Giambattista Guarini in *The Compendium of Tragicomical Poetry* (1601)²⁶⁸ and by La Mesnardière, d'Aubignac and the dramatist Pierre Corneille.²⁶⁹ Less attention had been paid to *Oedipus* by literary figures in England. Sidney had referred in *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1595) to 'the remorse of conscience in Oedipus' and recently Cowley, in his *Pindarique Odes* (1656), had called Oedipus 'the fatal Son [who] his Father slew'. Now, alongside Dryden's complaint in the preface to *An Evening's Love: or The Mock Astrologer* (1671) that Oedipus and his posterity are punished for 'the sin which he knew not he had committed', and seven years before Dryden and Nathaniel Lee's version of the play and twenty years before Dacier's influential French translation mentioned in chapters 3 and 4, Joyner drew attention to the ancient story's dramatic possibilities.²⁷⁰

Joyner went on to claim two advantages for his play over the original, of which one was 'the greatness of this Roman Emperour above so petty a Prince in Greece'.²⁷¹ Joyner does not explain why the perceived higher status of a Roman emperor should matter but he surely had in mind the traditional idea that, as Edward Phillips was soon to write in *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), tragedy shows 'the Actions and concernments of the most Illustrious Persons' and 'the violent ends or down falls

²⁶⁵ Joyner 1671: A2r.

²⁶⁶ Lurie 2012: 441-442.

²⁶⁷ Sidnell (ed.) 1991-1994: I 89-90, 93.

²⁶⁸ Sidnell (ed.) 1991-1994: I 151, 156-157.

²⁶⁹ Corneille 1965: 21, 31, 35, 44, 75, 155; D'Aubignac 2001: 116, 191, 420-421; La Mesnardière 1639: 19, 65-66, 84, 110-112, 145-147.

²⁷⁰ Dryden 1962: I 151; Sidney 2002: 91. For Cowley see footnote 780 below.

²⁷¹ Joyner 1671: A2r.

of great Princes [and] the subversion of Kingdoms and Estates'.²⁷² Kelly and Pincombe trace the history in England of the notion that tragedy derives from the downfall of great men to narrative accounts in Chaucer in the fourteenth century, in Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* (written in the 1430s) and in William Baldwin's *The Mirror for Magistrates* (published 1559).²⁷³ From that viewpoint, the more illustrious the hero, the greater and thus the more tragic would be his or her downfall, and a Roman emperor trumped a Greek 'petty' prince. The second advantage that Joyner claimed for his play is that, whereas 'there was never any such person as ... Oedipus, and the Story wholly fabulous', his is 'founded in truth and reality'.²⁷⁴ I will return to this point shortly.

Later in his preface Joyner is more specific about what he has taken from *Oedipus*, saying that there occurs

in the Person of Valentius, what Aristotle admires in *Oedipus*, confessing human wit can invent in this kind nothing beyond it. For he incurs those very misfortunes, which with all imaginable care he shun'd; condemning his Son without knowing him ... which makes him the best, and greatest of all Tragical Subjects.²⁷⁵

Joyner thus highlights the fact that Valentius executes his son without knowing who he is (moreover, Hostilius kills his daughter Aurelia without recognising her beneath her disguise). The parallel with the plot of *Oedipus* is not precise since Oedipus kills his father, not his son, in ignorance of his identity. Looking beyond that, Valentius commits no action remotely resembling Oedipus' marriage to his own mother and fathering children by her as a consequence of his ignorance. Nor does Oedipus, unlike Valentius, kill himself at the end of Sophocles' play. More fundamentally, unlike in *Oedipus* there is no serious attempt to blame the gods or fate for the various protagonists' misfortunes. Valentius is forewarned by a dream of the imminent deaths of his wife and eldest son 'murder'd by me in furious rage', which turns out to be an allusion to Sophonia and Florus (but a somewhat inaccurate forecast since Sophonia takes her own life).²⁷⁶ Valentius and his court assume that the dream refers to Fulvia and his eldest son by her and Joyner observes that

²⁷² Phillips E. 1675: **7v.

²⁷³ Kelly 1989: 193-197; Pincombe 2010: 4-5.

²⁷⁴ Joyner 1671: A2r.

²⁷⁵ Joyner 1671: A3v.

²⁷⁶ Joyner 1671: 27-28.

though [the dream] seems to give a manifest overture of the consequence, yet the obscureness is so dark, that it deceives not only Him, but the very Audience; the fatal thunderbolt falling, unseen and unheard in the midst of them.²⁷⁷

Joyner thereby attempts to underline the parallel with *Oedipus* in which Oedipus, brought up by, and wrongly believing himself to be the son of, Polybus and Merope of Corinth, flees that city when told by an oracle that he will murder his father and lie with his mother, only to fulfil the prophecy with his real parents. But Valentius takes no comparable steps to avoid the outcome of his dream and Joyner's reference to his taking 'all imaginable care' to do so is not supported by the action of his play.

On the 'truth and reality' of his story Joyner cites Zosimus and Artemius on an event that occurred in the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine in 326 which leads him to invoke 'the old Hippolytus'. Zosimus was an early-sixth century pagan historian who reported, 'Without any consideration for natural law he [Constantine] killed his son, Crispus, who ... had been considered worthy of the rank of Caesar, on suspicion of having had intercourse with his stepmother, Fausta'.²⁷⁸ The *Passion of Artemius* is a largely fictitious, probably eighth-century account of the trial of the general Artemius under the emperor Julian which attributes to Artemius the following statement which connects Crispus and Fausta with the characters in the ancient story:

Constantine did kill his wife Fausta – and rightly so, since she had imitated Phaedra of old, and accused his son Crispus of being in love with her and assaulting her by force, just as Phaedra accused Theseus' son Hippolytus. And so according to the laws of nature, as a father he punished his son.²⁷⁹

Joyner comments that the story of Constantine, Fausta and Crispus provides him with two characters

highly celebrated by all learned Nations, in the persons of Fulvia, and Florus, who much represents the old Hippolytus, unless it be in the horrid rudeness of his carriage; which I have here chang'd into a gallant bravery, ending in a dismal Catastrophe, much more agreeable to the compassion of these Times. The antient Phoedra is here set off in a real Fulvia; and I am inform'd, some exceptions are taken at the wickedness I shew in her person: but sure these people want a subject of discourse, and trouble, who would fain concern themselves in my not concealing the ill

²⁷⁷ Joyner 1671: A3v.

²⁷⁸ Woods 1998: 71, quoting from Zosimus 1982: 36.

²⁷⁹ Woods 1998: 71-72.

qualities of a Pagan woman: who for the atrocity of these crimes is known in History to have had a miserable end.²⁸⁰

As I mention below, Joyner draws on a passage in Euripides' *Hippolytus* that has no equivalent in Seneca's *Phaedra*. In *Hippolytus* Phaedra makes sexual advances to the title character who is the son of her husband Theseus and so her stepson. Hippolytus rejects Phaedra and in shame she commits suicide but leaves a note in which she accuses Hippolytus of assaulting her. Theseus ignores his son's protestations of innocence, has him killed by a monster summoned by Poseidon and only then learns the truth. Again there are differences between Joyner's play and his ancient inspiration. The catastrophe is not driven by a goddess angry at Florus, whereas in Euripides' play Aphrodite, the goddess of sexuality, sets out to destroy Hippolytus for refusing to acknowledge her power. Fulvia does not know that Florus is her stepson, or even that she has a stepson, and she is not confronted with that knowledge in the play because she leaves Valentius' camp before Florus' true identity is revealed. Nor does Florus know that he has a stepmother. Fulvia feels no remorse at engineering Florus' death and does not kill herself but survives; and Valentius kills himself unlike Theseus who survives. Florus is killed by a human executioner, not by one sent from a god. He is not in principle resistant to female charms, unlike Hippolytus (whose misogyny Joyner criticises as 'the horrid rudeness of his carriage'), since he loves Aurelia. By making his Hippolytus-equivalent not only in love, but in love with a relative of an antagonist, Joyner anticipates by several years Racine's *Phèdre* (1677) in which the French dramatist, not wishing to make Hippolytus appear too much like a philosopher, free of any imperfection, since then his death would arouse much more indignation than pity, gives him a weakness that makes him a little guilty towards his father in the form of love for Aricie, the daughter and sister of his father's mortal enemies, a character whom Racine found in Virgil.²⁸¹

The most far-reaching of those differences is the first: Fulvia's and Florus' ignorance that he is her stepson. While Fulvia remains a potential adulterer, there are no additional quasi-incestuous overtones to alter the nature and increase the gravity of her offence and which in Euripides clearly add to Hippolytus' and Theseus' revulsion. This is the result of Joyner wanting to bring in aspects of both *Oedipus*

²⁸⁰ Joyner 1671: A2v.

²⁸¹ Racine 1702: II 263.

and *Hippolytus*. An accurate parallel with *Oedipus* required Florus' true identity not to be known, so that Valentius kills him without knowing him. But an accurate parallel with *Hippolytus* would have required Florus' true identity to be known, to make overt the quasi-incestuous nature of Fulvia's passion for him. By opting for the former plot element at the expense of the latter, Joyner lost one moral dimension present in Euripides and risked fundamentally altering the audience's response to Fulvia's passion for Florus. Nevertheless, having dropped the overtones of incest in the relationship between Fulvia and Florus, Joyner did not abandon the theme altogether but retained it for use elsewhere. Hostilius' daughter Aurelia seeks to further her plan of revenge against Florus by entering Valentius' camp on the pretext of seeking protection from the 'wild lust of her Father'. None of the characters questions this extraordinary claim; indeed Florus seems to think it only to be expected given what he says is Hostilius' practice of violating 'the chastity of Virgins, / The faith of Matrons [and] Widows vows', for which nothing has prepared the reader or spectator.²⁸² This is clumsy plotting, although sexual deviancy could be seen in Restoration England as symbolising wider problems in the monarchy and society,²⁸³ albeit in this instance it is feigned.

It appears that Joyner realised that he had weakened the moral revulsion that the audience might feel at Fulvia's advances towards Florus and tried to hint at the true situation. In the opening scene of the play Aurelia's governess Sophonia converses with Macrinus who is temporarily a prisoner of Hostilius but now to be released. Their conversation reveals that Sophonia is Valentius' first wife, Palladia, who is believed dead. Macrinus tells Sophonia that the gods are looking favourably on her: 'The Gods we see / Intend your happiness, since sure by their / Instinct he [that is, Valentius] destines Florus for the Throne'.²⁸⁴ That implies that Sophonia/Palladia has an interest in Florus' wellbeing but the nature of that interest is not explained. Later, Fulvia says that Florus reminds her of Valentius when first he courted her:

Nature gave the same features to their faces,
And to their minds and bodies the same graces.
Such sprightliness was in Valentius looks,

²⁸² Joyner 1671: 24.

²⁸³ Hall and Macintosh 2005: xvi; also 9-10.

²⁸⁴ Joyner 1671: 6.

When first he courted me:
Such was his comely gesture, when on horseback
The stately courser proud was of his burden.
Thus smil'd he, thus he frown'd, and in his anger
Became more lovely from the change of passions.²⁸⁵

An attentive, experienced audience member, on the lookout for twists in the plot, children mislaid at birth, mistaken identities and so on, might have noticed those comments and deduced that Florus was Valentius' son. Or not. But in any event, a reader of the play would have been in no doubt after finding the following in the list of characters before reaching the text of the play:

Florus, whose other name is Vespasius, General of Valentius; proving at last to be his Son
Macrinus, A great Person, vulgarly passing for the Father of Florus
Arsenius, General of Hostilius, and thinking himself Father of Florus
Sophonia, [Aurelia's] Governess; who proves to be Palladia, first Wife of Valentius, supposed long before dead.²⁸⁶

In the manuscript the cast list is at the end and is even more explicit: Florus is 'a Lover & Gallant'; Fulvia is 'practicaly Lascivious'; Aurelia is '[a] Princess of great beauty whose virtues & vices are almost equal'; and Tucca (the Carbo of the printed text) and Servilius 'prove Traytors'.²⁸⁷ Those details distinguish the experience of the reader, of the printed text especially, from that of the spectator (unless the latter is forewarned or very attentive). The former would react to Fulvia's declaration of love to Florus differently to the latter. The reader and the spectator would see different things in the same work. The reader would inevitably be more alert to the parallels that Joyner was drawing with ancient Greek tragedies, not only because of the preface itself but because of the pointers in the cast list.

The third Greek play from which Joyner claims inspiration is again by Euripides (and/or Seneca):

In the escape of Fulvia I have follow'd the example of *Medea*, which by the subtile and judicious Castelvetro is only censur'd for the want of preparatives: the foregoing parts having nothing contributed to this

²⁸⁵ Joyner 1671: 14; similarly 33. Jocasta similarly compares Oedipus to her first husband in Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*: 'The more I look, the more I see of Lajus: / His Speech, his Garb, his Action, nay his Frown' (Dryden 1717: IV 390).

²⁸⁶ Joyner 1671: A4v.

²⁸⁷ MS fo. 45v.

strange action. Which is here contrary; and the conveyance more rational.²⁸⁸

Medea escapes at the end of the play after killing her estranged husband Jason's new wife and her and Jason's children. Castelvetro wrote in his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* that in tragedy

escapes from impending perils or solutions of any difficulties that have emerged in the course of the action should be the results of actions within the plot that are probable or necessary consequents of those perils or difficulties

unlike in *Medea* where the resolution comes from outside the action, the title character being carried away in a chariot drawn by dragons sent by her grandfather, the Sun.²⁸⁹ Castelvetro was echoing Aristotle who wrote that 'the unravelling of the plot should arise from the circumstances of the plot itself, and not be brought about *ex machina*, as is done in the *Medea*'.²⁹⁰ Another critic, Piero Vettori, made the same point as Castelvetro.²⁹¹ Corneille was less critical of Euripides in this respect, arguing in his *Discours des Trois Unités d'Action, de Jour, et de Lieu* (1660) that Medea was known to be a sorceress ('magicienne') and had already given proof of her powers in the way she killed her husband Jason's new wife.²⁹²

A more searching criticism was articulated by La Mesnardière in his *Poétique* (1639), namely that the morality of *Medea* was faulty since neither Jason nor Medea was punished for their offences.²⁹³ This was repeated by Dryden, a couple of years before Joyner's play, in *Of Dramatic Poesy* (1668). Dryden complained that the Greeks erred in the instructive part of tragedy since

instead of punishing vice and rewarding virtue, they have often shown a prosperous wickedness, and an unhappy piety: they have set before us a bloody image of revenge in Medea, and given her dragons to convey her safe from punishment.²⁹⁴

In Joyner's play Fulvia simply disappears from view at the end of the fourth act, with Aurelia, after the two of them have taunted Florus and his friends who are about to be executed. In the fifth act the courtier Statilius tells Valentius that Fulvia

²⁸⁸ Joyner 1671: A3v.

²⁸⁹ Castelvetro 1984: 137, 345 n.

²⁹⁰ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 77.

²⁹¹ Cited in d'Aubignac 2001: 196.

²⁹² Corneille 1965: 68.

²⁹³ La Mesnardière 1639: 21, 85, 223.

²⁹⁴ Dryden 1962: I 38.

has gone to Hostilius' camp with Aurelia. There is no question of any supernatural intervention effecting her escape. The spectator and reader know that the remorseful Aurelia is dead but nothing more is said about Fulvia. Neither her departure from Valentius' camp nor her arrival at Hostilius' is shown or narrated. We do not know why she leaves Valentius; presumably she fears that her maligning of Florus and the reason for it will come out. There is no evidence that Fulvia shares Aurelia's (or Euripides' Phaedra's) sense of shame or guilt.²⁹⁵ We do not know how Hostilius receives her; his daughter Aurelia is Fulvia's niece, and Fulvia's sons are Hostilius' nephews, so Hostilius and Fulvia may be brother and sister or cousins, although that is not made clear. But perhaps that is the sort of preparation for the ending of his play that Joyner was laying claim to when, echoing Castelvetro, he wrote in his preface that

the great Catastrophes in this Play proceed from no external helps, or new faces unseen before; but from the interweaving of the intrinsecal parts of the Subject ... here is nothing Episodical; which I have not made essential in the construction of the Story.²⁹⁶

However, it is tempting to think that Joyner got Fulvia out of the way so unceremoniously because he had enough to cope with in the last act in disposing of Aurelia, Sophonia/Palladia, Macrinus and Valentius.

1.5.4. Joyner and contemporary dramatic theory

Given that Joyner did not follow his declared models *Oedipus*, *Hippolytus* and *Medea* that closely as regards the plot, why did he take such pains to invoke them in his preface? Herein, I think, lies the particular interest of *The Roman Empress*. Joyner must have believed that it would be prestigious for him and his play to couple it with the ancient Greeks. This reflects growing interest in Restoration England in the achievements of Sophocles and Euripides and in ancient theory of tragedy. Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesy* (1668) was a landmark in the development of theorising in England about the nature and purpose of tragedy and how a tragedy should be constructed in order to achieve the desired effect. The plays of the ancients

²⁹⁵ In the manuscript Valentius reads out a letter from Fulvia in the last act in which she confesses her love for Florus which she acknowledges he generously repulsed. But she disclaims any feelings of remorse, blaming Valentius' murder of her father for her having sought his disgrace.

²⁹⁶ Joyner 1671: A4r.

were one possible model. Crites, a spokesperson in the essay for the merits of classical drama, regrets the lost plays of the Ancients,

but so long as Aristophanes in the old comedy and Plautus in the new are extant, while the tragedies of Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca, are to be had, I can never see one of those plays which are now written but it increases my admiration of the Ancients.²⁹⁷

Dryden did not, however, write much in *Of Dramatick Poesy* about individual Greek tragedies beyond having Eugenius, spokesperson for the moderns, comment, as already mentioned, on *Medea* and criticise Euripides' clumsiness in trying to adhere to the unity of time in *The Suppliant Women*.²⁹⁸ Nor did Dryden, in any of his critical writings before *The Roman Empress*, engage with some of the matters raised by Joyner in his preface.

When Joyner writes that Valentius condemns his son without knowing him, and that this is the tragical situation admired by Aristotle in *Oedipus*, he is alluding to what Aristotle had written about how dramatists should handle 'effectively' incidents or deeds that are potentially capable of arousing pity and fear:

The deed may be done by characters acting consciously and in full knowledge of the facts, as was the way of the early dramatic poets, when, for instance, Euripides made Medea kill her children. Or they may do it without realizing the horror of the deed until later, when they discover the relationship; this is what Sophocles did with Oedipus ... A third alternative is for someone who is about to do a terrible deed in ignorance of the relationship to discover the truth before he does it.²⁹⁹

Joyner would not have found that material in Dryden or in any other English literary critic that I have come across writing before 1670. And that applies also to Joyner's mention of Castelvetro. When Joyner drew a parallel between his play and *Oedipus* he was obviously not ignorant of the fact that Oedipus kills his father, whereas Valentius kills his son. The parallel he was interested in was that of killing in ignorance followed by later awareness of 'the horror of the deed'. The tragedy inherent in that situation, which Aristotle identified in *Oedipus* and which Joyner sought to emulate in *The Roman Empress*, would not depend on whether the act was patricide or filicide. Joyner was engaging not so much with the plot of *Oedipus* as with a particular type of tragic situation highlighted by Aristotle.

²⁹⁷ Dryden 1962: I 30-31.

²⁹⁸ Dryden 1962: I 36.

²⁹⁹ Joyner 1671: A3v; Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 75.

I mentioned in the Introduction (section 3) the ready availability of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the form of editions in Greek and Latin and numerous commentaries. Joyner may have been familiar with some of that material; he could have come across it during his stay in France. He could have found in Corneille's second *Discours de la Tragédie et des Moyens de la Traiter selon le Vraisemblable ou le Nécessaire* the statement that *Oedipus* is the only ancient play in which a person kills a father or brother without knowing him, something which is inherently extraordinary but which in that case is sanctioned by legend ('la fable') or history, which were interlinked among the ancients and which were likely to have preserved the memory of such an incident taking place 'entre des personnes illustres'.³⁰⁰ Certainly Joyner assumed a great deal of knowledge on the part of the reader of his preface. He alludes to *Oedipus*, *Hippolytus* and *Medea* without identifying their authors or giving any details of their plots. He mentions 'the old Hippolytus' and 'the antient Phoedra' but says nothing about the relationship between them.³⁰¹ He cites 'Artemius' and 'Zosimus' but does not identify them or their works or describe what they say. He names Aristotle and refers to his admiration for *Oedipus* and mentions what Castelvetro thought about *Medea* without identifying him or saying that he was commenting on Aristotle. Joyner clearly wrote his preface in the expectation of an informed readership, another example of how Joyner expected the reader of *The Roman Empress* to engage differently with the published text and accompanying material than the audience in the theatre did with the play's text alone.

Joyner wrote that Valentius, by unwittingly killing his own son, was 'the most perfect subject of Tragical compassion in the judgement of Aristotle'; and that 'the chief intent of Tragedy [is] to raise Terror and Compassion'.³⁰² Although Joyner did not go on to explain what the arousing of terror and compassion (or pity) would lead to, his mention of those emotions is striking. Sidney had written that tragedy was concerned with 'stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration'.³⁰³ Dryden made a few passing references in *Of Dramatick Poesy* to tragedy arousing 'concernment', that is, fear, but he added 'admiration' to it to constitute together 'the

³⁰⁰ Corneille 1965: 44.

³⁰¹ Joyner 1671: A2v.

³⁰² Joyner 1671: A2v, A3r.

³⁰³ Sidney 2002: 98.

objects of a tragedy'.³⁰⁴ He even quoted Aristotle as saying that 'the end of tragedies or serious plays ... is to beget admiration, compassion, or concernment', the use of 'or' implying that fear was optional.³⁰⁵ In the 1660s many playwrights produced heroic tragedies, including Dryden (who wrote *The Indian Queen* with his brother-in-law Robert Howard, 1664, and *The Indian Emperour, or, The Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards*, 1665), which contained some admirable characters for at least some of whom events ended happily. Such plays aimed at arousing admiration, along with compassion or pity, rather than terror or fear. Terror and pity do not feature in the definition of a play that serves as the basis for discussion in *Of Dramatick Poesy*: 'a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind'.³⁰⁶ And when Rymer in 1678, in *The Tragedies of the Last Age*, wrote that the ancient tragedians were concerned to arouse pity, Dryden's immediate reaction was to argue that the work of tragedy 'extends farther' than moving pity and terror and should 'reform manners by delightful representation of human life in great persons, by way of dialogue'; moreover, tragedy ought to move other passions such as joy, anger, love and indignation 'to see wickedness prosperous and goodness depressed'.³⁰⁷ Joyner's emphasis on terror and pity was not common currency in England in 1670.

Dryden also at this time followed Sidney and Richard Baker by emphasising the moralising function of tragedy, in particular that it should show virtue rewarded and vice punished, a subject to which I return in chapter 2.³⁰⁸ Joyner, by writing that Euripides' *Medea* is criticised by Castelvetro 'only ... for the want of preparatives' (my underlining), may be signalling, contrary to Dryden's attitude, his own

³⁰⁴ Dryden 1962: I 41.

³⁰⁵ Dryden 1962: I 46.

³⁰⁶ Dryden 1962: I 25, and also 87, and I 122.

³⁰⁷ Dryden 1962: I 212-213, 217; Rymer 1956: 19, 27-29. However, the epilogue to Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* (1678) did assert that 'Terrour and pity this whole Poem sway; / The mightiest Machines that can mount a Play' (Dryden 1717: IV 455).

³⁰⁸ Baker 1662: 128; Dryden 1962: I 38 (criticism of *Medea*), 138-139, 151-152; Sidney 2002: 93. Dryden might also have found an emphasis on the moral purpose of tragedy through showing virtue rewarded and vice punished in La Mesnardière (1639: 55-56, 107-108, 221-223) and d'Aubignac (2001: 40).

willingness to overlook the absence of punishment for Medea's crimes, just as he shows Fulvia escaping punishment for bringing about Florus' execution.³⁰⁹

Joyner was not merely addressing different issues from those with which Dryden was concerned; he also distanced himself from Dryden's own works. Joyner wrote of his play:

Such who expect to have their ears tickled with the gingling Antitheses of Love and Honor, and such like petty wares, will find themselves deceiv'd. For the chief intent of Tragedy being to raise Terror and Compassion; I thought a more masculine and vigorous eloquence and graces more natural, and less affected, were requisite to inspire such impressions.³¹⁰

That was a sideswipe at the style of rhyming ('gingling') heroic tragedy already mentioned. Corneille, in the 1660 *Examen* of his *Nicomède* (1651), had provided a theoretical justification for a tragedy in which the protagonists, possessed of 'grandeur de courage' and 'prudence généreuse', took strength from their own virtuousness, scorned misfortune and aroused admiration in the spectator.³¹¹ A few months after *The Roman Empress* was performed, Dryden's two-part *The Conquest of Granada* was staged.³¹² When it was published in 1672 Dryden prefaced it with *Of Heroic Plays: an Essay* in which he traced the origins of heroic tragedy to William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656) and set out how he had found in Ariosto an insight that led him to conclude that 'an heroic play ought to be an imitation, in little, of an heroic poem; and, consequently, ... Love and Valour ought to be the subject of it'.³¹³ Thus while Joyner disparaged 'Love and Honor', Dryden remained attached to 'heroic' plays and to 'Love and Valour'. Also, Joyner's use of blank verse contrasted with Dryden's preference for rhyme at this time which may have been influenced by Corneille and by Katherine Philips' rhyming translations of his *La Mort de Pompée* and *Horace* (the fifth act translated by Denham) earlier in the

³⁰⁹ Fulvia is not the only guilty character who escapes unpunished: Carbo likewise defects to Hostilius.

³¹⁰ Joyner 1671: A3r.

³¹¹ Corneille 1965: 151-152. However, Corneille (1965: 8), in terms similar to those employed by Joyner, continued to give love only a secondary role in tragedy below political matters ('quelque grand intérêt d'Etat') and passions such as ambition and revenge that were nobler and more masculine ('plus noble et plus mâle') than love.

³¹² Van Lennep 1965: 177.

³¹³ Dryden 1962: I 158.

decade.³¹⁴ In *Of Dramatick Poesy* Neander, who on this point represents Dryden's own views, defends the use of rhyming verse in 'serious plays, where the subject and characters are great' as being 'as natural' as, but 'more effectual' than, blank verse, and decries the latter as too low for an ordinary sonnet, let alone for tragedy.³¹⁵

As already mentioned, *The Roman Empress* was published around the same time as Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. Sauer has suggested that their common use of blank verse is one consideration that implies that Joyner might have read Milton's manuscript.³¹⁶ As well as Milton's puritan republicanism making it unlikely that he would let a Catholic royalist like Joyner have access to his work, there were several other unrhymed tragedies in the first fifteen years of the Restoration, usually following the pattern of earlier revenge or history plays. Unlike contemporary heroic tragedies, 'they do not attempt ... to combine personal and political concerns, private and public affairs'.³¹⁷ That is to a large extent true of *The Roman Empress*. Understandably, the breakdown of intra-familial relations that it portrays has been interpreted as anxiety about the reopening of political divisions in contemporary England only a decade after the Restoration.³¹⁸ But in some ways the purely domestic nature of the tragedy is particularly strong. The action begins just after a battle between Valentius' and Hostilius' forces; thereafter warfare does not intrude into the action. The manuscript lacks even the brief reference to the recent battle that is in the opening lines of the printed text. The origins of the play's tragic events are purely domestic, not political, namely Valentius' unwarranted suspicions of his first wife Palladia's fidelity long before the play begins which leads to the concealment of Florus' true identity. There is a parallel with *Oedipus* in the way that long past events now play themselves out, but it is not fate or the gods, sending unheeded warnings through oracles, that determine events, but the (re)actions of all too fallible human beings.

Valentius' despairing lines before he kills himself,

O my eyes, giv'n me only for my torment;
What will ye first lament? the desperation
Of a Wife; or the murder of a Son;

³¹⁴ Hughes 2001: 197.

³¹⁵ Dryden 1962: I 81, 87; similarly I 115.

³¹⁶ Sauer 2002: 105-106.

³¹⁷ Rothstein 1967: 60-61; the quotation is at 61.

³¹⁸ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 12; Macintosh 2009: 54.

Or my lost honor: And I yet alive?
Am I still call'd a Prince, or Emperor?
Are these my eyes thought worthy of the light?³¹⁹

have rightly been seen as an allusion to Oedipus, who blinds himself, and as reflecting Valentius' metaphorical blindness to the truth of events.³²⁰ The printed text is more explicit on this point than the manuscript which lacks the first line and in which the second line begins 'What shal I first lament?'.³²¹ But most of Joyner's protagonists are metaphorically blind or at least misuse the gift of sight. None except Sophonia/Palladia and Macrinus knows whose son Florus really is. Aurelia is deceived by her father into thinking that Florus murdered her brother, and later deceives her father into killing her when he cannot see through her disguise, having meanwhile deceived Valentius and his court into thinking she is fleeing her father and Florus into thinking she still loves him. Arsenius and Palladia use disguise to enter Valentius' camp. Servilius' eyes are dazzled by the sight of Aurelia's image which Florus shows him; when Servilius tells his wife Antonia that he no longer loves her, he gives her a motive to help to destroy Florus. Fulvia hopes to win over Florus by giving him her image to look at. Valentius acts precipitately, first in suspecting Palladia of infidelity and then in believing the accusations against Florus without allowing him to defend himself. Joyner sympathises with Valentius on the second occasion, however. He has Florus accused not only of assaulting Fulvia but also of treason

with the most forcible reasons I could produce. For intending Valentius for my Protagonist, and the most perfect subject of Tragical compassion in the judgement of Aristotle, approv'd by all intelligent persons; I was strangely to circumvent him; and make the most excusable, I possibly could, that imprudence for which Zosimus maliciously defames him.³²²

When Valentius realises the truth, Joyner draws a parallel with Theseus, the title character's deceived father in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. First, Valentius calls himself Florus' 'Father by adoption'. Then he exclaims,

O ye immortal Gods! why has your care
Given us a touchstone to distinguish our
Adulterate gold, and no mark to discern
The treacherous hearts of false perfidious men

³¹⁹ Joyner 1671: 66; the wife to whom Valentius refers is his first wife Palladia.

³²⁰ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 11-12; Macintosh 2009: 54.

³²¹ MS fo. 44r.

³²² Joyner 1671: A2r-A2v.

which echoes Theseus' cry (while believing his son guilty), 'Oh, there ought to be for mortals some reliable test for friends, some way to know their minds, which of them is a true friend and which is not'.³²³ Valentius' tragedy is compounded by his having had the opportunity to save Florus if he had only listened, not to the outward signs of Florus' apparent guilt, but to his own internally felt misgivings:

So I methinks now ardently pursuing
Revenge; thus instigated by my reason,
And passion feel within me secret motives,
Which would retard my will.³²⁴

The play's ending is bleak, with no obvious candidate of probity to succeed Valentius. Statilius ends the play with the lines

Valentius, thy brave soul is fled, that soul
Which did not only animate thy body,
But the whole fabrick of the Roman Empire,
Which now lyes bury'd in thy Funeral;
Such is the sequel of so great a fall.³²⁵

Joyner refrains from even hinting that Hostilius or Fulvia might fill the void; both are damaged goods. Statilius stands ready to explain events to a new ruler, like Horatio at the end of *Hamlet*, but *The Roman Empress* has no Fortinbras.

1.5.5. Conclusion

The play was first performed by Thomas Killigrew's King's Company at the Theatre Royal, London around August 1670. Joyner assures us that 'in spite of a dead Vacation, and some other impediments, [it] found the applause & approbation of the Theater as oft as it appear'd'.³²⁶ Langbaine observed that the tragedy was 'writ in a more Masculine, and lofty Stile than most Plays of this Age'.³²⁷ We cannot retrieve the experience of *The Roman Empress*' performance but we can speculate about it and Joyner's place in the reception of ancient Greek tragedy. The play must have reinforced playwrights' awareness of the potential of the materials contained in

³²³ Joyner 1671: 39; Euripides' *Hippolytus* lines 925-927. There are no similar lines in Seneca's *Phaedra*.

³²⁴ Joyner 1671: 50.

³²⁵ Joyner 1671: 67.

³²⁶ Joyner 1671: A1r; Nicoll 1928: 286; Van Lennep 1965: 171. The performance of plays was suspended on 23 June 1670 'probably for six weeks' mourning on account of the death of Charles II's sister, the Duchess of Orleans, 20 June 1670' (Milhous and Hume (eds.) 1991: no. 562).

³²⁷ Langbaine 1691: 308.

the ancient tragedies, as sources of plots that would excite and entertain an audience, stir the emotions and facilitate allusions to contemporary political events; *The Roman Empress* may have encouraged Dryden and Lee to write their *Oedipus* a few years later. Certainly Joyner does not use the essential Greekness of his models; rather he quarries them for storylines which, like Goffe in *The Tragedy of Orestes*, he embeds in a play of his own devising. He makes no scruples about transferring them to Rome and even then eliminates any antique elements or references. He is not interested in his models' historical context. Unlike Wase two decades before him, who was interested in that context, Joyner wants to make creative use of his materials and for him that transcends interest in their original background and culture. The significance of Joyner's references to the ancient Greeks for the informed audience for whom he wrote his preface lies in his awareness of, and allusions to, aspects of ancient theory of tragedy, including the importance of arousing fear and terror, at a time when Dryden and others in England were beginning to explore the subject. But although allusions to fate or to Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe's or Goffe's fortune's wheel have gone, Joyner does not replace them with anything particularly sophisticated beyond the effects of human wickedness and gullibility. The vices and character flaws exhibited by his characters are too general for worthwhile lessons, moral or otherwise, to be derived from them; and the drawing of moral lessons was to be emphasised by Dryden and others in the decades following Joyner's play.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY OF TRAGEDY IN LATE SEVENTEENTH- AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I examine what use English writers made of ancient Greek tragedy in thinking about tragedy more generally in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, looking at the views of, mainly, Dryden, Rymer, Dennis and Gildon. I defer discussion of Jeremy Collier until the next chapter.

Rymer, after translating the French critic René Rapin's *Réflexions sur la Poétique d'Aristote* (1674), wrote an unperformed verse drama *Edgar* (1678) and two critical works - *The Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678) and *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693) - and spent many years as Historiographer Royal (as did Dryden), publishing important collections of political documents. Dryden's critical writings were often prefixed to plays, poems and translations and sometimes reflect aspects of those works with which he was preoccupied at the time. Both Dennis and Gildon tended to publish their critical writings separately from their other works, which included several moderately successful plays, and sought to establish themselves independently as critics.³²⁸

Dryden and others were neither unanimous nor consistent in their admiration of the ancients as they sought to establish approaches that would lead to the creation of satisfactory tragedies in their own time and country. Two sets of interlocking tensions were present, however, which complicated the task: first, generally, between respect for the timeless qualities and virtues of the past and recognition of the changed cultural and social circumstances of the present; and second, specifically, between respect for Aristotle, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides as ancient theorists and practitioners and recognition of the existing native tradition represented by, for example, Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher initially and more recently by Dryden, Otway and others. Dryden, Dennis, Gildon and Rymer all engaged extensively with both the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare, a recurring tendency that I address throughout this dissertation. Dryden wrote versions of Sophocles' *Oedipus* (with Lee) and Shakespeare's *Tempest*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Dennis adapted Euripides' *Iphigenia among the*

³²⁸ For a comparison of Dennis and Gildon see Canaan 2006: 109-110, 116, 136-137 and Novak 2014: 125-128.

Taurians and Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Coriolanus*. Gildon adapted Euripides' *Medea* and also added a seventh volume to Nicholas Rowe's edition of Shakespeare in which he published poems by Shakespeare and commented on his plays. Dryden was 'the first [English] writer to pull together the various threads of Ancient, Continental, and English criticism and interweave them in a concerted critical project' but Rymer, Dennis and Gildon were similarly engaged.³²⁹ The full title of Rymer's first major critical work - *The Tragedies of the Last Age Consider'd and Examin'd by the Practice of the Ancients* - embodied both the notion of the past as model for the present and an awareness that the 'age' that produced the plays that Rymer discussed - Fletcher and Massinger's *Rollo*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and no King* and *The Maid's Tragedy*, Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*, and Jonson's *Catiline* - was necessarily different from that of the ancients and of Rymer himself. Dryden had already called the pre-Restoration period 'the last age' in *Of Dramatick Poesy* (1668) and his *Defence of the Epilogue* (1672) was sub-titled *An Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age*, meaning that of Shakespeare, Fletcher and Jonson.³³⁰ Other writers also referred to the different 'ages' of classical, Shakespearean and contemporary times.³³¹ Such writings show an awareness of 'the concept of distinct historical periods' that Patey sees as 'one of the most significant legacies of the long debate between Ancient and Modern'.³³² Dryden and others were aware that time was moving on and there were varying views on whether, and to what extent, theories about how to write tragedy needed to change.

Dryden and others had to feel their way through conflicting approaches. This was often done through the medium of argument and debate. This could be within a single work constructed as a dialogue between spokespersons for different views, like Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesy*, Dennis' *The Impartial Critick* (1693) and Gildon's *The Complete Art of Poetry* (1718). Or theorists would respond to what others had said, as when Dryden and his brother-in-law Robert Howard exchanged views about

³²⁹ Cannan 2006: 2.

³³⁰ Dryden 1962; I 24, 169, 170.

³³¹ Dryden 1962: I 43, 214, 238-239 and II 81, 160; Farquhar in Adams and Hathaway (eds.) 1950: 216; Gildon 1694: 88-89 and 1710a: iv, xxi-xxii; Langbaine 1691: 16 and passim.

³³² Patey 1997: 67.

the use of rhymed verse and the unities in drama in the 1660s;³³³ and when Dryden composed manuscript notes responding to Rymer's *Tragedies of the Last Age* on the end papers of his copy of Rymer's work, known as *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* and published by Tonson in his 1711 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher.³³⁴ Also, as I mention later in this chapter, Dennis and Gildon opposed Rymer's endorsement of the reintroduction of the chorus and Dennis defended the concept of 'poetic justice' in reply to reservations expressed in *The Spectator*. And chapter 3 shows Dennis and James Drake responding to Collier and Collier replying to them.

Writers' views changed over time. As I mention in chapter 3, Gildon initially opposed Dacier's interpretation of *Oedipus* but later adopted it. Dryden's views on the need to observe the unities of action, place and time (discussed in the next section) varied in the light of his experience as a practising playwright, the difficulties he encountered in particular plays and awareness of the tastes of an English audience. At first he simply prided himself on following the unities in *Secret Love; or, the Maiden Queen* (1668).³³⁵ He did the same in *Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr* (1670) and *All for Love* (1678) but now stated that he had followed them to a greater degree than tragedy or the English theatre required.³³⁶ In *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* prefixed to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) he took a strict line, criticising Shakespeare and Fletcher for being deficient 'in the mechanic beauties of the plot, which are the observation of the three unities'.³³⁷ But in the preface to *Don Sebastian* (1690) he wrote that he had followed 'the three mechanic rules of unity ... at a distance; for the genius of the English cannot bear too regular a play; we are given to variety'.³³⁸ He explained that in *Love Triumphant* (1694) he had followed the unity of time but as for that of place he had followed Corneille's example and 'stretch'd the Latitude to a Street and Palace, not far distant from each other in the same City'. And he was unrepentant about the play having a double action 'because 'tis agreeable to the English Genius. We love Variety more than any other Nation; and so long as the Audience will not be pleas'd without it, the Poet is

³³³ Dryden 1962: I 11-12.

³³⁴ Dryden 1962: I 210.

³³⁵ Dryden 1962: I 107-108.

³³⁶ Dryden 1962: I 141, 222.

³³⁷ Dryden 1962: I 247.

³³⁸ Dryden 1962: II 49.

oblig'd to humour them'.³³⁹ Clearly Dryden's views were influenced by the plays he was writing at the time.

In this chapter I will concentrate on the use that Dryden and others made of ancient Greek tragedy in their theoretical writings. I will begin by considering when, how and why theories relating to tragedy contained in, or derived from, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Art of Poetry* that I mentioned in the Introduction made themselves felt in England (chapter 2.2). Next I will examine the nature of the reception of the ancient Greek tragedians, first by looking at how English writers differentiated Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides (2.3); then at their reception in general terms (2.4) and under three specific headings: political (2.5), moral, including consideration of the role of the chorus (2.6), and formal (2.7). Finally I look at the ways in which some writers believed that English drama had excelled that of the ancient Greeks (2.8).

2.2. Aristotle and Horace reach England

I mentioned in the Introduction (section 3) that Aristotle's *Poetics* were available in Latin and Greek from 1498 and 1508 respectively, supplemented by various sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian and French commentaries beginning in 1548, and that Horace also featured in the discussions. There were also many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides either in Latin translation alone or with a Latin translation alongside the Greek, a recent example of the latter being Thomas Stanley's edition of Aeschylus published in London in 1663.³⁴⁰ There were many opportunities for Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristotle and Horace to become known to English writers before the 1660s.³⁴¹ Their influence was originally a product of the general interest in, and enthusiasm for, classical thought and literature that was generated by the rediscovery of the ancients in the Renaissance. The modern editor of Roger Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* (published 1570) has called it 'the first influential document of English neoclassicism' and Ascham himself 'the first English author

³³⁹ Dryden 1717: VI 415-416.

³⁴⁰ Gruys (1981; 197) observes that Stanley's was the standard edition of Aeschylus until the early nineteenth century. Also Hirsch 1964.

³⁴¹ Herrick (1930) has much material on the earliest reception of Aristotle's *Poetics* in England.

who is acquainted with the *Poetics* of Aristotle'.³⁴² Between 1530 and 1540 Ascham was successively a student, Fellow and lecturer in Greek at St. John's College, Cambridge, having studied under John Cheke, the first Regius Professor of Greek.³⁴³ During that time Ascham wrote in a letter to an absent Fellow of the college of the increasing study of Greek as opposed to the previously more familiar Roman authors: 'Sophocles and Euripides are better known than Plautus was in former times when you were here'.³⁴⁴ Ascham quotes in *The Schoolmaster* from Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*; declares that in tragedy 'the Grecians Sophocles and Euripides far overmatch our Seneca in Latin, namely in οἰκονομία et decoro'; and recommends Sophocles along with Terence, Seneca, Virgil, Horace, Aristophanes, Homer and Pindar as models to be imitated for 'the difference they use in propriety of words, in form of sentence, in handling of their matter'.³⁴⁵

A few years later, Philip Sidney, in *An Apologie for Poetrie, or The Defence of Poesie*,³⁴⁶ showed his awareness of the unities when he criticised Norton and Sackville's play *Gorboduc* (1561) for being 'faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions'.³⁴⁷ He also referred to Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Hecuba* when claiming for the poet superiority over both the historian and the philosopher, a debate which harked back to Aristotle.³⁴⁸ Sidney commented by way of example:

Anger, the Stoics say, was a short madness: let but Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheep and oxen, thinking them the army of Greeks, with their chieftains Agamemnon, and Menelaus, and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger then finding in the schoolmen his genus and difference.³⁴⁹

³⁴² Ascham 1967: xxxvi, xxxviii.

³⁴³ Ascham 1967: xiv-xvi.

³⁴⁴ Ascham 1967: xv.

³⁴⁵ Ascham 1967: respectively 10-11 and 103; 129, referring to arrangement and fitness; and 139.

³⁴⁶ The book, which was written between 1579 and 1585, was published under both titles in 1595 (Sidney 2002: 2).

³⁴⁷ Sidney 2002: 110.

³⁴⁸ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 68-69.

³⁴⁹ Sidney 2002: 91. Sidney may have known of Sophocles' *Ajax* from Scaliger's Latin translation of the play (Sidney 2002: 162 n). Ajax's killing of the sheep and oxen is not shown but is described by Athena (Sophocles' lines 51-65), although the animals' corpses are afterwards revealed in Ajax's tent. Gildon (1718: I 55-56) plagiarised much of Sidney's discussion, including the example of *Ajax* but without implying that Ajax killed the animals onstage.

Sidney praised *Hecuba* for beginning its story of Hecuba, wife of the dead Trojan king Priam, and the deaths of her son Polydorus and daughter Polyxena, at a point near to the catastrophe rather than at an earlier stage of the story which would have required it to unfold over many years and in many places, thereby infringing the unities of time and place.³⁵⁰

Writers now began to assert the alleged moralising of the ancient Greek tragedians. Henry Crosse in *Virtue's Commonwealth* (1603) observed that Aeschylus 'aimed at virtue in blazing out the deeds of honesty with grave and sober terms' and that Sophocles and Euripides 'did labor by modest delight, to draw men by example to goodness'.³⁵¹ John Webster was aware when writing *The White Devil* (1612) of 'the criticall lawes' of tragedy that required 'heighth of stile, and gravety of person', a 'sententious Chorus' and a 'passionate and weighty Nuntius'.³⁵² The position of Ben Jonson is more complicated. He absorbed from Horace the dictum that the aim of poets generally was to join 'profit' with 'pleasure' or 'delight'.³⁵³ He acknowledged 'rules' of tragedy when he confessed that *Sejanus* (1605) was 'no true Poëme; in the strict Lawes of Time' and lacked a proper chorus,³⁵⁴ and in *Timber: or Discoveries*, published posthumously in 1640, he wrote that a play's action should 'exceed not the compasse of one Day'.³⁵⁵ But while in *Timber* he recommended study of 'the writings of the Ancients', he added that poets must 'not ... rest in their sole Authority':

For to all the observatuions of the Ancients, wee have our own experience: which, if wee will use, and apply, wee have better meanes to pronounce. It is true they open'd the gates, and made the way, that went before us; but as Guides, not Commanders ... Truth lyes open to all; it is no mans severall.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Sidney 2002: 111. Dryden (1962: I 28) made the same point about the ancients' plays generally.

³⁵¹ Pollard (ed.) 2004: 191.

³⁵² Webster 1612: A2r-A2v.

³⁵³ Asper, the Presenter, in *Every Man out of His Humour* (1600), the prologues to *Volpone, or The Foxe* (1607) and *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman* (1616), and the epilogue to *The Staple of Newes* (1631) (Jonson 1929-1952: III 435, V 23 and 164, VI 382). Jonson's translation of Horace, *His Art of Poetrie Made English* was published three years after his death in 1640.

³⁵⁴ Jonson 1925-1952: IV 350.

³⁵⁵ Jonson 1925-1952: VIII 647.

³⁵⁶ Jonson 1925-1952: VIII 567.

He claimed the precedent of Sophocles himself who wrote without the benefit of Aristotle's rules since he preceded them, writing that before

the Grammarians, or Philosophers ... found out those Lawes, there were many excellent Poets, that fulfill'd them. Amongst whome none more perfect then Sophocles, who liv'd a little before Aristotle.³⁵⁷

In 1654 Richard Flecknoe, in the preface to *Love's Dominion. A Dramatique Piece, Full of Excellent Moralitie*, described the stage or theatre as 'a Mirrour representing the Actions of men ... proposing the good for our example and imitation, and the bad to deter us from it, and for the avoiding it'.³⁵⁸ Its purpose was 'teaching Virtue, reprovng Vice, and the amendment of Manners' and 'to teach Morality'.³⁵⁹ He also claimed to have followed the unities of place and time.³⁶⁰ Ten years later Flecknoe republished the play as *Love's Kingdom, a Pastoral Tragi-comedy* and attached to it *A Short Discourse of the English Stage* in which he expanded on his earlier views, describing the stage as combining profit with pleasure along Horatian and Jonsonian lines: it was

a harmless and innocent Recreation ... that makes Youth soonest Man, and man soonest good and virtuous, by joyning example to precept, and the pleasure of seeing to that of hearing.³⁶¹

Theories of tragedy based more systematically on Aristotelian and Horatian ingredients now became dominant in England until well into the eighteenth century. Dryden and others in various ways agreed or disagreed with Aristotle and Horace, added new lines of thought or otherwise qualified their approval of what they had written. But Aristotle and Horace provided the starting point, although they were not necessarily themselves the direct sources on which English writers relied; French intermediaries were extensively read. Various factors accounted for this from the 1660s onwards. One was the influence of French culture generally in the post-Restoration court of Charles II who had spent much of his exile in Paris. A second was the successful example of neo-classical tragedy on the French stage, particularly the plays of Corneille and Racine. A third consideration was the large number of reflections on their craft by, especially, Corneille and Racine themselves. The former wrote prefaces to many of his plays and also, in 1660, twenty-four critical studies

³⁵⁷ Jonson 1925-1952: VIII 641.

³⁵⁸ Flecknoe 1654: Preface A4r.

³⁵⁹ Flecknoe 1654: Preface A4v.

³⁶⁰ Flecknoe 1654: Preface A7v.

³⁶¹ Hazlitt (ed.) 1869: 280.

(*Examens*) of them and three *Discours*, the first on the usefulness and constituent parts of drama, the second on tragedy and specifically the doctrine of *vraisemblance*, and the third on the unities of action, time and place.³⁶² Corneille was cited by Dryden in *Of Dramatick Poesy* through the voices of Crites, a supporter of the ancients, Lisideus, a supporter of French neo-classical drama, and Neander, a supporter of Dryden's own style of rhymed drama, albeit from different perspectives reflecting the difficulties that Corneille experienced in adhering strictly to neo-classical rules.³⁶³ Racine also wrote explanatory prefaces to his plays and his use of a chorus in *Esther* (1689) and *Athalie* (1691) was especially discussed, as mentioned below (2.6).³⁶⁴ Dryden followed Corneille and Racine, as well as building on the native example of Jonson and others, by discussing his dramatic theory and practice in writings prefixed to his own plays.³⁶⁵

Despite the contributions of the earlier English writers considered above, which focussed almost exclusively on the moral purpose of plays and the importance of the unities, there was no previous body of theory in England of comparable extent and thoroughness that could have acted as a counterbalance to ancient, sixteenth-century Italian and more recent French influences. The non-classical form of plays in the time of Shakespeare was attributed to this lack of thoroughgoing, native literary theory. Rymer wrote in *Tragedies of the Last Age* that

I have thought our Poetry of the last Age as rude as our Architecture, one cause thereof might be, that Aristotle's treatise of Poetry has been so little studied amongst us, it was perhaps Commented upon by all the great men in Italy, before we well knew (on this side of the Alps) that there was such a Book in being.³⁶⁶

³⁶² *Discours de l'Utilité et des Parties du Poème Dramatique, Discours de la Tragédie et des Moyens de la Traiter selon le Vraisemblable ou le Nécessaire and Discours des Trois Unités d'Action, de Jour, et de Lieu* (Corneille 1965: 1-79).

³⁶³ Dryden 1962: I 27-28, 29-30, 44, 50, 52, 63, 74-75.

³⁶⁴ In chronological order, Dacier 1692a: xvi and 1692b: [ix]-[x]; Rymer (1956: 84) in *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693); Dennis (1967: I 32) in *The Impartial Critick* (1693); Gildon 1694: 69.

³⁶⁵ Cannan 2006: 22-35.

³⁶⁶ Rymer 1956: 76 ; similarly, with specific reference to Shakespeare, Gildon 1703 : A3v and 1721: 23; Langbaine 1691: 142. Rowe (1709: I xxvi), Pope (1725: I vi) and Johnson (1968: VII 69) made the same point in their editions of Shakespeare. Reiss (1979) cites French, Dutch, German, Swiss, Italian and Spanish writers at length in a survey of Renaissance theory of tragedy but nothing of comparable substance from England.

Dryden neatly summarised the genealogy of the theory of tragedy in the preface to *De Arte Graphica* (1695):

from the practice of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, Aristotle drew his rules for tragedy ... amongst the moderns, the Italian and French critics, by studying the precepts of Aristotle and Horace ... have given us the rules of modern tragedy.³⁶⁷

There continued to be dissenting voices, like Jonson's earlier. Samuel Butler, who died in 1680, complained in a poem not printed until 1759 *Upon Critics Who Judge of Modern Plays Precisely by the Rules of the Antients*, said by its first editor to be 'very probably occasioned by' Rymer's *The Tragedies of the Last Age* which was published two years before Butler's death, that

An English Poet should be try'd b'his Peers,
And not by Pedants, and Philosophers ...
By foreign Jurymen, like Sophocles,
Or Tales falser than Euripides'.³⁶⁸

And in 1702 George Farquhar, in *A Discourse Likewise upon Comedy in Reference to the English Stage*, complained of English writers' over reliance on the ancient theorists and their modern commentators. He imagined a playwright getting down to work:

old Aristotle, Scaliger, with their commentators, are lugged down from the high shelf, and the moths are dislodged from their tenement of years; Horace, Vossius, Heinsius, Hedelin, Rapin, with some half a dozen more, are thumbed and tossed about, to teach the gentleman, forsooth, to write a comedy.³⁶⁹

But Aristotle and his commentators continued to enjoy high renown, now sometimes alongside English critics as I mention below (2.8). Less conventionally, Gildon quoted extensively in English from a discussion between the canon and the curate in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in *An Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England* (1710).³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Dryden 1962: II 191.

³⁶⁸ Butler 1759: I 161 n, 165-166.

³⁶⁹ Adams and Hathaway (eds.) 1950: 214.

³⁷⁰ Gildon 1710a: xv-xix.

2.3. Attitudes to particular Greek tragedians

Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were frequently named together as a shorthand way of referring to ancient Greek tragedy generally or reflecting the simple fact that they were the only Greek tragedians whose plays had survived.³⁷¹ But qualitative distinctions were also made. Aristotle's brief account of the rise of tragedy told how 'after many changes it attained its natural form and came to a standstill', the two individuals singled out by him being Aeschylus, who 'was the first to increase the number of actors from one to two; he cut down the part of the chorus, and gave speech the leading role', and Sophocles, who 'introduced three actors and scene painting'.³⁷² That encouraged the view that tragedy reached its highest state, even perfection, under Sophocles, as when Gildon observed in *An Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England* that

Sophocles added a third Actor and vary'd the Ornaments and brought Tragedy to Perfection, and into such Esteem with the Athenians, that they spent more in the Decorations of the Theatre, than in all their Persian Wars.³⁷³

That and similar statements followed Aristotle by not mentioning Euripides. Later such lavish expenditure on the stage was seen as evidence of Athenian degeneracy and decline and therefore to be avoided in contemporary England.³⁷⁴

More significant distinctions were also made. When the intention was to note the high quality of particular dramatists Aeschylus would be dropped from the triumvirate leaving Sophocles and Euripides to be singled out for praise. Already in the sixteenth century, George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589) listed Euripides, Sophocles and Seneca, but not Aeschylus, as ancient 'poets tragical' who 'served the stage'.³⁷⁵ Now, for example, Crites in Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesy* regrets the lost plays of the Ancients, but

³⁷¹ Ascham 1967: 48; Dennis 1967: I 159; Dryden 1962: I 26, 200 and II 161, 191; Gildon 1694: 34, 152, 1718: I 99 and 1719: 247; Milton (1981: 612) in the preface to *Samson Agonistes*; Prynne 1633: 834; Ridpath 1698: 193.

³⁷² Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 62.

³⁷³ Gildon 1710a: lxi. Similarly Dacier 1692a: 499-500 and 1692b: 152; Dennis 1967: I 166-167; Gildon 1721: 151 (now attributing the expense not to 'decorations' but to money spent by the magistrates on writers and actors); La Mesnardière 1639: BB; Rymer 1956: 94; Kennet 1697: 102.

³⁷⁴ Ralph 1743: 15-16, 17-19; Montagu 1759: 127-136, 144.

³⁷⁵ Pollard (ed.) 2004: 138.

while the tragedies of Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca, are to be had, I can never see one of those plays which are now written but it increases my admiration of the Ancients.³⁷⁶

Rymer in *The Tragedies of the Last Age* asserted that the English had the genius and the language needed to write great tragedy:

had our Authors began with Tragedy, as Sophocles and Euripides left it; had they either built on the same foundation, or after their model; we might e're this day have seen Poetry in greater perfection, and boasted such Monuments of wit as Greece or Rome never knew in all their glory.³⁷⁷

That raises the question of why Aeschylus was denied the highest praise. English writers might have noticed d'Aubignac's comment that Aeschylus, the earliest of the three Greek tragedians, wrote before the principles that were to be documented by Aristotle developed and consequently was less regular than his successors.³⁷⁸ But above all, Aeschylus' language was criticised for being too figurative and difficult, as it had been in ancient Greece in Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, in which Aristophanes has Euripides complain about Aeschylus' 'sheer massive mountains of words that it was very hard to work out the meaning of' and his 'bombast and overweight vocabulary' (lines 929-930, 939-940). Dryden commented in the preface to *Troilus and Cressida* that

Longinus has judged, in favour of [Aeschylus], that he had a noble boldness of expression, and that his imaginations were lofty and heroic; but, on the other side, Quintilian affirms that was daring to extravagance. 'Tis certain that he affected pompous words, and that his sense too often was obscured by figures.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Dryden 1962: I 31.

³⁷⁷ Rymer 1956: 21. Other comments from a variety of periods that mention Sophocles and Euripides and elevate them above, or omit even to mention, Aeschylus are Anon 1698b: 27; Adams 1729: I a2r, b6r; Mark Akenside's 'The balance of poets' in *The Museum: or, the Literary and Historical Register* (1746; Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 186-190); Blackwall 1718: 112-113; Dennis 1967: I 11, 400 and II 21; Dryden 1962: I 216, 218 and II 81, 195; Gildon 1691: 9, 1694: 221, 224, 1710a: vii, xxi-xxii, 1710b: 425 and 1718: I 31, 134; Samuel Johnson, *The Idler* no. 66, 21 July 1759 (Johnson 1963: II 205); Kennet 1697: 92; Manwaring 1737 who considers only Sophocles and Euripides; Rymer 1956: 22-23, 75; Trapp 1742: 271; Wotton 1694: 28.

³⁷⁸ d'Aubignac 2001: 100.

³⁷⁹ Dryden 1962: I 238-239. Dryden may have found Quintilian's comments on Aeschylus' style in Rymer's translation of Rapin (1674: 117-118). Other similar comments on Aeschylus' style by classical authors are mentioned in Davidson 2012:

Collier similarly commented in *A Short View*:

[Aeschylus'] Stile is Pompous, Martial, and Enterprizing. There is Drum and Trumpet in his Verse. 'Tis apt to excite an Heroick Adour, to awaken, warm, and push forward to Action. But his Metall is not always under Management. His Inclination for the Sublime; carries him too far: He is sometimes Embarrass'd with Epithetes. His Metaphors are too stiff, and far fetch'd; and he rises rather in Sound, than in Sence. However generally speaking, his Materials are both shining and solid, and his Thoughts lofty, and uncommon.³⁸⁰

This was one point on which Drake, whose *The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd* (1699) was a hostile response to Collier, agreed with the latter. Drake wrote that Aeschylus aimed

wholly at the Pathetick, and he deals almost altogether in Objects of Terror; accordingly his Flights are frequently lofty, but generally irregular, and his Verse rumbles, and thunders almost perpetually, but it usually spends itself, like a Wind-Gun, in Noise and Blast only. He sets out gloriously, launches boldly, blown up with a Tympany of Windy Hyperboles, and Buckram Metaphors; but he carries more Sail than Ballast, and his course is accordingly uneven; he is sometimes in the Clouds, and sometimes upon the Sands.³⁸¹

Given that Aeschylus was regarded less highly than Sophocles and Euripides, which aspects of these writers did English critics find commendable? Several comments on Sophocles and Euripides refer to their skill at representing passions and arousing the tragic emotions. Dennis, in the preface to his play *Rinaldo and Armida* (1699), had referred to 'that Sublime at once and Pathetick Air, which reigns in the renown'd Sophocles' and written, 'I design'd in this Poem, to make Terror the prevailing Passion, which is likewise the predominant Passion in that admirable Grecian'.³⁸² Gildon claimed in the preface to *Phaeton* (1698), a version of Euripides' *Medea*, that 'all just Critics have agreed in preferring Euripides to Sophocles himself, in his lively draught of the Passions'.³⁸³ Dennis was one such critic, commenting (albeit later, in 1717) in *Remarks upon Mr. Pope's Translation of Homer* that the playwright Thomas Otway 'had a Faculty in touching the softer Passions beyond

43-46. Sixteenth century scholars found Aeschylus' difficult Greek off putting and neglected him in favour of his compatriots (Smith 1988: 35).

³⁸⁰ Collier 1698: 26.

³⁸¹ Drake 1699: 179; also 164. For other similar comments on Aeschylus' style around this time see Kennet 1697: 92-94 and Rapin 1674: 117.

³⁸² Dennis 1967: I 195.

³⁸³ Gildon 1698: b4r.

both Ancients and Moderns, if you except only Euripides'.³⁸⁴ Blackwall described Euripides as 'famous for ... his Power in moving the Passions, especially the softer ones of Grief and Pity'.³⁸⁵

Aristotle's comment that 'Sophocles said that he portrayed people as they ought to be, whereas Euripides portrayed them as they are' was repeated by Rapin and Langbaine.³⁸⁶ Gildon seems to have had that saying in mind in *The History of the Athenian Society* (1691) but it came out differently in a formulation that alluded to a specific doctrine of late seventeenth-century theory of tragedy, namely poetic justice to which I will return:

'tis said of Sophocles, and Euripides, that one represented the Accidents of Human Life, without regard to that Poetic Justice, as they too often happen; the other, as they ought to have been.³⁸⁷

George Adams, who published a complete translation of Sophocles in prose in 1729, combined points relating to the fable and the passions when he noted that Euripides' 'chief Excellence consisted in his Moral [Pieces], i.e. those which expose to View the Happiness of some Person', in which Euripides 'mixeth the Passions so admirably well, that they are preferable to those whose Catastrophes are unfortunate, notwithstanding these are more tragical than the other'.³⁸⁸ But 'Sophocles in his Implex Pieces, i.e. his *Oedipus*, *Electra*, &c. excelled them all; for which, as well as his other Excellencies, we may conclude he is the best of all the Greek Tragedians.³⁸⁹

Praise was sometimes balanced by criticism, as when Gildon, in *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays* (1694), mocked three plays by Sophocles for being ignoble and low:

What Terror or Pity can *Philoctetes* move, or where are the great and Noble Thoughts to support it? Where is the Majesty of *Oedipus Coloneus*, which Rapin himself grants to be low and degenerate? Nor

³⁸⁴ Dennis 1967: II 121. Otway's *The Orphan* (1680) and *Venice Preserv'd* (1682) were much admired.

³⁸⁵ Blackwall 1718: 39.

³⁸⁶ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 93; Langbaine 1691: 230; Rapin 1674: 34-35, turning Aristotle's phrase into an expression of preference for Sophocles.

³⁸⁷ Gildon 1691: 9.

³⁸⁸ Adams 1729: I d4v. Dacier (1692a: 195) observed that eight of Euripides' tragedies end happily: *Orestes*, *Alcestis*, both *Iphigenia* plays, *Rhesus*, *Cyclops*, *Helen* and *Ion*, adding that most of them, however, aroused terror and compassion and their 'constitution' was tragic: only the ending spoiled them.

³⁸⁹ Adams 1729: I d4v, echoing Dacier 1692a: 302.

can I discover the mighty Pity and Terror that can be mov'd by the bringing in a Madman on the Stage, and a company of dead Sheep about him [in *Ajax*]. I'm sure 'twou'd make an Audience here laugh.³⁹⁰

Dryden had been more sympathetic to the portrayal of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, observing in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, prefixed to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679), that Sophocles

lets fall on purpose his tragic style; his hero speaks not in the arbitrary tone; but remembers, in the softness of his complaints, that he is an unfortunate blind old man; that he is banished from his country, and persecuted by his next relations.³⁹¹

2.4. Reception of the ancient Greek tragedians: general

When critics sought to illustrate the points they were making about the nature of tragedy they appealed not only to the authority of, above all, Aristotle, but to the examples of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Dryden, in *The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence* (1677), noted the obvious fact that the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides preceded Aristotle's *Poetics* which drew its rules from them.³⁹² But a degree of circularity persisted in arguments both that Aristotle's rules were vindicated by the fact of his temporal proximity to the best exemplars of the genre from which he derived them and that the ancient tragedians were the best because they adopted the rules that were later laid down by Aristotle. Gildon, in *An Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England*, gave as one reason why Aristotle's rules concerning drama were the right ones the fact that

the Age he liv'd in was in almost the first Regulation if not Rise of Tragedy; learning the Art with Sophocles and Euripides, who brought it to Perfection, and seeing the Effect it had on the most polite and knowing People of the World

and as evidence of their validity the fact that 'all the Beauties of Homer, Sophocles, and Euripides and the other Greek Poets of any Name are perfectly conformable to them'.³⁹³ Or, as Adams succinctly put it, the tragedies of the ancients 'are the true

³⁹⁰ Gildon 1694: 167; similarly on *Oedipus at Colonus* at 160. Rapin (1674: 37) wrote that 'Sophocles makes Oedipus too weak and low-spirited in his Exile, after he had bestow'd on him that Character of constancy and resolution before his disgrace'.

³⁹¹ Dryden 1962: I 251.

³⁹² Dryden 1962: I 200.

³⁹³ Gildon 1710a: xxi-xxii; similarly 1718: I 134-135.

Models according to which every good Tragedian ought to write, as being not only according to Aristotle's Rules, but even those upon which he grounded his Rules'.³⁹⁴ However, a way out of the circle was found, as when Gildon commented that Aristotle both praised and blamed Sophocles, Euripides and others, 'showing in what they transgress'd the Rules which he founds on Reason and Nature'.³⁹⁵ Aristotle was not projecting his own views back to the time of Sophocles, nor was Sophocles unwittingly anticipating those of Aristotle. Rather, Sophocles and Aristotle were respectively employing and documenting criteria that were of universal, timeless relevance. Writers denied that they were following the authority of Aristotle and Horace blindly. Rather their principles were derived from nature and reason and, since these were consistent across all ages and places, so too were the principles derived from them. Dennis made the point in *Remarks on a Book Entitled, Prince Arthur, an Heroick Poem* (1696):

the Rules of Aristotle ... are but Directions for the Observation of Nature, as the best of the written Laws, are but the pure Dictates of Reason and Repetitions of the Laws of Nature.

The writer 'who keeps up strictly to [Aristotle's] Rules, is as certain to succeed, as he who lives up exactly to Reason is certain of being happy'.³⁹⁶

English critical writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries knew little about performance-related aspects of ancient tragedy. The ancient Greeks' use of masks and thick-soled cothurnus footwear was known but their implications for performance were not the subject of speculation. The size and design of the ancient theatres, how the plays were staged and the size and composition of the ancient audience were not debated.³⁹⁷ Lack of practical experience of seeing the ancient plays performed must also have limited the possible range of responses to them. When late seventeenth-century writers discussed the ancient Greek tragedies as pieces of theatre, and how they and modern plays constructed on the same principles affected audiences, and whether the ancient plays were better than modern ones, they were not inhibited by having no practical experience of seeing the ancient plays.

³⁹⁴ Adams 1729: I c2r.

³⁹⁵ Gildon 1710a: x.

³⁹⁶ Dennis 1967: I 96.

³⁹⁷ Smith B. R. (1988: 65-80) discusses what was known, or believed was known, about Roman theatres in the Renaissance. See also chapter 5.3 below.

First-hand experience of the effect of an ancient tragedy on an audience was not thought to be essential to an appreciation of it. After all, Aristotle had been content to judge a tragedy from a Greek armchair, since ‘tragedy achieves its effect even without movement, just as epic does, for its quality can be seen from reading it ... it has vividness when read as well as when performed’.³⁹⁸ Dryden, in the ‘Epistle dedicatory’ to *Love Triumphant* (1694), envisaged Aristotle as a reader, not a spectator, when he wrote that he ‘copy’d all the Laws, which he gave for the Theatre, from the Authorities and Examples of the Greek Poets, which he had read’.³⁹⁹ Adams must have assumed that no one who read his Sophocles translations was likely ever to see one of the Greek tragedian’s plays in performance but he did not believe that that presented an obstacle to appreciation of Sophocles’ ability to arouse terror and compassion from his portrayal of his characters’ misfortunes:

For Instance, who that reads the Tragedy of *Oedipus*, but is inclined to pity that miserable Prince, and will not take Care to avoid that Rashness and Curiosity which drove him into all his Misfortunes? Who that reads the Tragedy of *Ajax* and his sad Fate, will not pity him, and resolve against being overcome by his Anger and Rage, the miserable Causes of it?⁴⁰⁰

Another factor that may have distanced writers from directly experiencing the dramaturgy of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles is that some of them may not have been able to read Greek fluently. Certainly Ascham, Rymer, Gildon and Collier could do so; and Greek and Latin were commonly a major part of the curriculum in English schools in the seventeenth century.⁴⁰¹ But *The Spectator* asserted in 1714 that many modern critics were ‘so illiterate, that they have no Taste of the learned Languages, and therefore criticise upon old Authors only at second-hand’.⁴⁰² Although Gildon translated a passage from Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis* in *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear*,⁴⁰³ he implied in *The Complete Art of Poetry* that knowledge of the classical languages was not essential through the figure of Laudon

³⁹⁸ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 96. La Mesnardière (1639: 12) agreed with Aristotle that a work is ‘imparfait’ if ‘la seule lecture faite dans un cabinet ... n’excite pas les Passions dans l’Esprit de ses Auditeurs’ and move them to trembling and tears.

³⁹⁹ Dryden 1717: VI 414.

⁴⁰⁰ Adams 1729: I a3r, echoing Dacier 1692a: xvi.

⁴⁰¹ Clarke 1959: 34-43. Rymer and Collier quote extensively in Greek.

⁴⁰² *The Spectator* no. 592, 10 September 1714, in Bond (ed.) 1965: V 26.

⁴⁰³ Gildon 1710b: 383-392; also 1721: 188-198.

(a character noted for the ‘Force of his Reason, the Penetration of his Judgement, and the Brilliant of his Wit’) who argued that it would enable appreciation only of an ancient work’s ‘Diction’, which, although one of Aristotle’s parts of tragedy, was merely

a Vehicle for the more pleasing Conveyance of the valuable and truly poetical Qualities of Invention, Disposition, Fable, Characters, Passions, &c ... Good Sense, a Knowledge of the Rules, and a Taste or Gusto in Art and Nature, and a Conversation with the best Authors he can understand, are Qualifications sufficient to make a good Judge of him who understands not one Word of Latin or Greek.

Laudon associated ‘a Pride of Knowledge’ of Greek and Latin with pedantry and denied that only a person who knew them could be called a scholar.⁴⁰⁴ Many writers were anyway probably more comfortable with Latin than with Greek and reliance on, or in any event greater familiarity with, Latin texts may explain why in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries French and English writers, when discussing and translating ancient Greek tragedies, so often referred to ancient Greek heroes and gods not by their Greek names but by their Latin equivalents, for example Ulysses and Jove rather than Odysseus and Zeus.

So a number of factors influenced how Dryden and others would respond to ancient Greek tragedy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: the lack of substantial and systematic English theoretical writings on the drama that allowed theories of tragedy based on Aristotle and Horace to become dominant under fashionable French influence, even if this was sometimes resented on patriotic grounds, as is evident in Thomas Sprat’s *Observations on Monsieur de Sorbier’s Voyage into England* (1665), replying to Samuel Sorbière’s *Relation d’un Voyage en Angleterre* (1664); the absence of a detailed understanding of the workings of ancient Greek theatres and the nature and likely responses of their audiences; the inability to see performances of ancient plays, even in translation; and belief, even if not universally held, in the universality of human experience across time and space. Such factors led many to believe in the continuing relevance and moral effectiveness of ancient literary forms and subject matter and to adopt an overwhelmingly

⁴⁰⁴ Gildon 1718: I v, 143-145. Lund (1998: 23-24) questions ‘how wide was the dispersion of classical literacy in the early eighteenth century’, concluding that ‘classical learning was ... a commodity that now had to be rendered user friendly, repackaged and marketed’ through annotated translations.

theoretical approach to an appreciation of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

2.5. Reception of the ancient Greek tragedians: political

There was, nevertheless, some discussion of the political, social and economic circumstances of ancient Greek play production. The support given to the stage by the Athenian government and its richest and most powerful citizens was frequently mentioned to illustrate the high esteem in which the ancient stage and playwrights were held, with the hope that the English government might emulate the similar support given to the French stage earlier in the seventeenth century by Cardinal Richelieu. In Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesy* Crites argued that the spirit of competition and emulation, with prizes to reward writers, which in ancient Greece had spurred on Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and others, was now absent.⁴⁰⁵ Rymer argued in *A Short View of Tragedy* that 'more of [the Athenians'] publick Money was spent about the Chorus, and other charges and decorations of their Theatre, than in all their Wars with the Kings of Persia'.⁴⁰⁶ Gildon suggested in *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays* that if Shakespeare had enjoyed 'that advantage the Greek Poets had, of a proper Subsistence, or to be provided for at the Public Charge' he would not have been so dependent on pleasing his audience, 'who not being so Skilful in Criticisms ... wou'd not be pleas'd without some Extravagances mingl'd in (tho' contrary to) the Characters such, and such a Player was to Act'.⁴⁰⁷ In such cases praising the ancients was a way of arguing for increased public and private support for the stage in contemporary England.

Dryden expressed his opposition to the reintroduction of the ancient chorus, which Rymer advocated as mentioned below (2.6), in similar political-cum-economic terms. In the preface to *Examem Poeticum* (1693) he described the chorus as 'an unprofitable encumbrance, without any necessity of entertaining it amongst us, and without the possibility of establishing it here, unless it were supported by a public

⁴⁰⁵ Dryden 1962: I 26

⁴⁰⁶ Rymer 1956: 94.

⁴⁰⁷ Gildon 1694: 88. Similarly Gildon 1699: A2r-A4r, 1710a: lix-lx and 1721: 31-32, 35.

charge'.⁴⁰⁸ And in the preface to *De Arte Graphica* (1695) he observed that a chorus was impracticable on a modern stage, which would have to be 'much more ample and much deeper' to accommodate it. Also the necessary costumes would be too expensive for a company of actors to supply. But 'I should not be sorry to see a chorus on a theatre more than as large and as deep again as ours, built and adorned at a king's charges'. If that happened, and he was given a free hand, 'I should not despair of making such a tragedy as might be both instructive and delightful, according to the manner of the Grecians'.⁴⁰⁹ In France, d'Aubignac (2001: 321) had also argued that reintroduction of the chorus would require funding from 'le Roi ou les Princes'.⁴¹⁰

Writers also stressed other, less directly monetary, types of recognition allegedly bestowed by the Athenians upon the ancient tragedians personally. The anonymous author of *A Vindication of the Stage* (1698) asserted that in Athens 'Euripides, and Sophocles, were reckoned Equal, if not Superior to their Greatest Philosophers'.⁴¹¹ In *The Usefulness of the Stage* (1698) Dennis noted that 'Aeschylus among the Athenians, was a great Captain, as well as a Tragick Poet; and Sophocles was both an able Statesman, and a Victorious General'.⁴¹² Gildon, in *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (1699), observed that 'Sophocles, as a Reward of his *Antigone*, had the Government of the City and Island of Samos confer'd upon him'.⁴¹³ More generally, Anthony Blackwall stated in *An Introduction to the Classics* (1718) that most of the chief classical writers

were plac'd in prosperous and plentiful Circumstances of Life, rais'd above anxious Cares, Want, and abject Dependence. They were Persons of Quality and Fortune; Courtiers and Statesmen, great Travellers and Generals of Armies, possess'd of the highest Dignities and Posts of Peace and War.

⁴⁰⁸ Dryden 1962: II 161.

⁴⁰⁹ Dryden 1962: II 200.

⁴¹⁰ d'Aubignac 2001: 321.

⁴¹¹ Anon 1698b: 27.

⁴¹² Dennis 1967: I 164; similarly II 319.

⁴¹³ Gildon 1699: A2v; also 1721: 28-29, 151-152.

In particular, ‘Sophocles bore great Offices in Athens, lead their Armies, and in Strength of Parts and Nobleness of Thought and Expression was not unequal to his Colleague Pericles’.⁴¹⁴

Some references to the Greeks’ official support for plays and playwrights were clearly intended to counter some of Collier’s criticisms of contemporary English theatre by demonstrating that state and stage, military prowess and poetry, religion, art, philosophy and the sciences could flourish together, and were indeed mutually reinforcing, in modern as in ancient times. Already Ascham had praised ancient Athens both for its ‘many notable captains in war for worthiness, wisdom, and learning’ and for its ‘excellent and matchless masters in all manner of learning’; and Gildon had written that ‘Athens was in that veneration with Antiquity, that it was the only place of Study in those days, and from thence was all Europe civiliz’d, and taught Arts, and Sciences’.⁴¹⁵ Now, in - to give it its full title - *The Usefulness of the Stage, to the Happiness of Mankind, to Government, and to Religion. Occasioned by a Late Book, Written by Jeremy Collier, M.A.* (1698), Dennis argued that in ancient Greece and Rome, as in modern England and France, the arts and sciences, and indeed all forms of learning, flourished together, by reason of a general raising of the mind. In Greece, there were no moral philosophy, orators or historians before Thespis ‘reduced the Drama to some sort of Form’:

of all their famous Authors who have descended to us, there was not one, that I can think of, but who was alive between the first appearing of Thespis, and the Death of Sophocles.⁴¹⁶

Moreover, the Greek tragic poets were

the Persons who animated their Armies, and fir’d the Souls of those brave Men, who conquer’d at once, and dy’d for their Country, in the Bay of Salamis, and in the Plains of Marathon; at which Place a Handful of Men, as it were, of the Disciples of Thespis, and the succeeding Poets, vanquish’d the numberless Forces of the East; laid the Foundation of the Graecian Empire, and of the Fortune of the Great Alexander.⁴¹⁷

It was also ‘plain from History and from Experience, that Religion has flourish’d with the Stage; and that the Athenians and Romans, who most encourag’d it, were the

⁴¹⁴ Blackwall 1718: 37-38. Lefkowitz (1981: 67-104) discusses the ancient origins of the biographical details attributed to the ancient Greek tragedians.

⁴¹⁵ Ascham 1967: 48-49; Gildon 1691: 9.

⁴¹⁶ Dennis 1967: I 159.

⁴¹⁷ Dennis 1967: I 166. Similarly Rymer 1956: 95.

most religious People in the World'.⁴¹⁸ In England, similarly, the drama and other forms of literature flourished together under Elizabeth and James I and since the Restoration; in the latter time also, historians, philosophers and mathematicians had flourished, including Newton and Locke.⁴¹⁹

The close relationship between the Athenian state and the plays that were performed on its stages was identified in the way that the latter praised the former. Gildon asserted in the preface to his tragedy *Love's Victim* (1701) that 'the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles, and the *Suppliant* of Euripides are directed immediately to the glory, and praise of Athens, as the *Ion* is to illustrate the Origin of the Attic People deriving them from Apollo itself'.⁴²⁰ The democratic, republican Athenians were also believed to have delighted in tragedies that showed kings coming to a bad end. That was suggested by d'Aubignac and Corneille before Rapin echoed the thought (in Rymer's translation): 'The Greeks, who were popular Estates, and who hated Monarchy, took delight in their spectacles, to see Kings humbled, and high Fortunes cast down, because the exaltation griev'd them'.⁴²¹ Rymer noted the point in *Tragedies of the Last Age* but disagreed with Rapin's interpretation, partly arguing that the effect of showing kings coming to misfortune was to arouse pity for them, which was, after all, one of the emotions that Aristotle said tragedies should aim at, and partly seeking to criticise the still harsher treatment of kings on the English stage:

Some have remark'd, that Athens being a Democracy, the Poets, in favour of their Government, expos'd Kings, and made them unfortunate. But certainly, examin the Kings of their Tragedies, they appear all Heroes, and ours but Dogs, in comparison of them. So respectful they seem to Kings in their Democracy, and so unthinking and unpolitick are our Poets under a Monarchy. Thebes was always enemy to Athens, yet would not any National pique, nor other, provoke the Poets to treat those Kings unhandsomely; because by their rules to have lessen'd the Kings, would have made their Tragedies of no effect, in moving the pitty intended by them. They made the Kings unfortunate, we make them wicked: they made them to be pittied, we make them to be curst and abhorr'd.⁴²²

⁴¹⁸ Dennis 1967: I 184.

⁴¹⁹ Dennis 1967: I 160-161. In similar vein Gildon 1699: A2r-A3r.

⁴²⁰ Gildon 1701: vii. Similarly on *Oedipus at Colonus* Adams 1729: II 78; Francklin 1759a: II 306, 331; Manwaring 1737: 181-182.

⁴²¹ Corneille 1965: 48-49; d'Aubignac 2001: 119-120; Rapin 1674: 111.

⁴²² Rymer 1956: 28-29. Rymer (1956: 42-47, 61-63, 65) criticised the ignoble portrayal of royal characters in Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and no King* and *The Maid's Tragedy*. Gildon (1721: 228-229) approved Rymer's analysis.

Gildon returned in the preface to *Phaeton* (1698) to the traditional French line when commenting on what he thought was Sophocles' excessively harsh treatment of Oedipus who is punished 'for an Accident, as much as for the most Criminal Offences ... But the miseries of a King or Tyrant, however brought about, were agreeable in a Democratic Government'.⁴²³ And Dennis commented, against the background of the War of the Spanish Succession, in the preface to his anti-French play *Liberty Asserted* (1704) that the ancient Athenians 'settled so vast a Fund upon the Tragick Stage' because 'they regarded it as the very Barrier of Liberty, which it supported by exposing the Misfortunes of Tyrants, and the Calamities that attended upon Arbitrary Pow'r'; they admired *Oedipus* 'because both the Crimes and the Calamities of Oedipus were the Consequences of his assuming unlimited Pow'r'.⁴²⁴

Another aspect of the close attention that Athens had paid to plays and playwrights also drew comment. Arguably implicit in Rymer's writings is the notion that Athens' support for the stage implied an element of official control.⁴²⁵ Certainly Rymer, likening the stage to the pulpit, favoured a 'Committee of Lay-Bishops to see that no Doctrine be there [that is, onstage] broached, but what tends to the Edification, as well as to the Delight of the Spectators', a suggestion that Dryden rejected.⁴²⁶ Gildon was more explicit about the example of ancient Greece when he asserted in *An Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England* (1710) that tragedy 'had a very advantageous Rise in Greece, falling immediately under the Inspection of the Magistrate, being founded on Religion; and this carried it so soon to Perfection', which would never have happened if it had been 'in the Hands of private Persons, and mercenary Players, ignorant of its Beauties and its Defects':

But Athens was too wise too polite a State to let that fade and remain useless in the Hands of the Ignorant, which by the Care of the Wise and Knowing might be turn'd to the Publick Advantage and Glory.⁴²⁷

Gildon concluded that in England too

⁴²³ Gildon 1698: b2r.

⁴²⁴ Dennis 1967: I 320. Similarly Morrell (1749: xiv) on the 'most infamously wicked' character of Polymnestor in Euripides' *Hecuba*.

⁴²⁵ Cannan 2006: 70-73.

⁴²⁶ Dryden 1962: II 161; Rymer 1956: 110 (also 111).

⁴²⁷ Gildon 1710a: lxi. Similarly Gildon 1721: 153.

it is plain that the only Way to make the Stage flourish is to put it into the Hands of the Magistrate, and the Management of Men of Learning and Genius; which wou'd once again bring this admirable Art to its Old Perfection.⁴²⁸

One mechanism suggested by Gildon, clearly with the Académie Française in mind, was the establishment of an Academy of Sciences whose activities would include 'the Reformation of our Stage, and the raising it to that Perfection which that of Athens had'.⁴²⁹

2.6. Reception of the ancient Greek tragedians: moral

It was a commonplace in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England that plays, especially tragedies, should convey an improving moral message to the audience. The definition of a play in Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesy*, mentioned in chapter 1.5.4, evoked 'the delight and instruction of mankind'; Neander applied its terms expressly to tragedy; and Dryden made clear in *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatick Poesy* (1668) that that was his own view.⁴³⁰ And when Dryden commented in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* (1679) that a tragedy's action and plot was built upon its moral, he made discussion of the plot inseparable from discussion of its moral purpose.⁴³¹ To some extent, as mentioned in the Introduction (section 3) and in chapter 3.5, this reflected the influence of Horace. Cicero and Quintilian also contributed to the Renaissance view of drama as an exercise in oratory, addressed to a listening audience, that used the skills of rhetoric to develop and put across arguments that invited the audience to judge which characters represented good and evil, right and wrong, thereby transmitting moral lessons that often had political implications concerning laws and justice.⁴³²

A foundation for that could also be found in Aristotle's identification of the overarching aim of tragedy as 'by means of pity and fear [to bring] about the catharsis of such emotions'. Running through Aristotle's thoughts on the degrees of goodness or wickedness that the principal character should possess was the idea that

⁴²⁸ Gildon 1710a: lxvii. Similarly Gildon 1703: A2r and 1718: I 39-40, 98-99, 231; and *The Spectator* no. 446, 1 August 1712, in Bond (ed.) 1965: IV 66.

⁴²⁹ Gildon 1719: 75; also 300-339 and 1721: 51.

⁴³⁰ Dryden 1962: I 25, 87, 122.

⁴³¹ Dryden 1962: I 248.

⁴³² Smith B. R. 1988: 14-29.

pity and fear were aroused by the representation of a person moving from prosperity to misery. Purely good men should not be so shown ‘for this does not inspire fear or pity, it merely disgusts us. Nor should evil men be shown progressing from misery to prosperity’.⁴³³ It required little further analysis to conclude that a tragedy should show wickedness punished and, as a corollary, goodness rewarded – a practice that came to be known in the late seventeenth century as poetic or poetical justice. Aristotle’s means to an end thus became much more of an end in itself: conveying a moral message. This could be one of general import, not necessarily tied to the plot of a particular play, or one (a mutant form of Aristotle’s catharsis) that did not relate to the emotions of pity and fear aroused in the reader or spectator but rather urged avoidance of the particular passions exhibited by the principal characters which had led them to commit the errors or faults which caused their downfall.⁴³⁴ Both types of moral were extracted from *Oedipus*, the first in the form that ‘no man is to be accounted happy before his death’,⁴³⁵ or that human wisdom is powerless against ‘the immutable decrees of Providence, which converts to its own purposes, all our endeavours to defeat ‘em, and makes our very Opposition subservient to its own designs’.⁴³⁶ The second type of moral was found in *Oedipus* by attributing the title character’s downfall to his arrogance, shortness of temper, proneness to violence, excessive curiosity and stubbornness, as I mention in the next chapter. This last form of moral is reflected in Gildon’s definition of tragedy in *The Complete Art of Poetry* as

an Imitation of some one serious, grave and entire Action, of a just Length, and contain’d within the Unities of Time and Place; and which without Narration, by the Means of Terror and Compassion, purges those Passions, and all others which are like them, that is, whose Prevalence can throw us into the same, or the like Misfortunes.⁴³⁷

Put succinctly: ‘When we see Medea murder her Children, or Ajax laying violent Hands upon himself, the Terror these tragical Actions produce should teach us to moderate such Passions, as were the Cause of these dismal Tragedies’.⁴³⁸

⁴³³ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 72-73.

⁴³⁴ Javitch 1999: 58.

⁴³⁵ Dryden 1962: I 248; Gildon 1694: 107. Similarly Collier 1700: 62.

⁴³⁶ Drake 1699: 136-137.

⁴³⁷ Gildon 1718: I 222.

⁴³⁸ Manwaring 1737: 324.

Dennis, in *To the Spectator, Upon his Paper on the 16th of April* (1711), identified Rymer as the person who introduced the concept of poetic justice into England.⁴³⁹ But Sidney had already articulated it in *An Apologie for Poetrie* as a factor distinguishing the poet from the historian, building on Aristotle's description of tragedy as more philosophical than history because it dealt with the hypothetical and the universal:⁴⁴⁰

Poetry ever setteth virtue so out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamoured of her Well may you see Ulysses in a storm, and in other hard plights; but they are but exercises of patience and magnanimity, to make them shine the more in the near-following prosperity. And of the contrary part, if evil men come to the stage, they ever go out ... so manacled as they little animate folks to follow them. But the historian, being captived to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and an encouragement to unbridled wickedness.⁴⁴¹

Others too had broached the subject, including La Mesnardière in France.⁴⁴² Jonson defended the punishment of the villains in *Volpone* on the grounds that he was aiming 'to put the snaffle in their mouths, that crie out, we never punish vice in our enterludes, &c. ... it being the office of a comick-Poet, to imitate justice'.⁴⁴³ Thomas Heywood in *An Apology for Actors* (1612) wrote,

If we present a tragedy, we include the fatal and abortive ends of such as commit notorious murders, which is aggravated and acted with all the art that may be, to terrify men from the like abhorred practices.⁴⁴⁴

Baker declared in *Theatrum Redivivum* (1662) that plays were more instructive about virtue and vice than life itself, since

life, being casual, and tedious, doth neither always answer to desert; nor yet is easie to be observed, where the Play no sooner shews you the Vice,

⁴³⁹ Dennis 1967: II 19. Bray (1966: 68-69, 72-74, 80-81) analyses the emergence of the idea in France. Lurje (2006: 4-6) traces the idea that tragedy should show just deeds rewarded in the end, and crimes always punished, to Philipp Melanchthon's *Cohortatio ad legendas tragoedias et comoedias*, written in 1545 and published by Joachim Camerarius as a preface to his edition of Terence in 1546.

⁴⁴⁰ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 68-69.

⁴⁴¹ Sidney 2002: 93-94.

⁴⁴² La Mesnardière 1639: 108, 221-223.

⁴⁴³ Jonson 1925-1952: V 20.

⁴⁴⁴ Pollard (ed.) 2004: 241. Hagen 1997 discusses Sidney's and Heywood's views on tragedy.

but it inflicts the punishment; no sooner the Virtue, but it bestoweth the reward.⁴⁴⁵

Rymer, wittingly or otherwise, adopted Sidney's and Baker's arguments in *Tragedies of the Last Age* with specific reference to ancient Greek tragedy. He wrote that Sophocles and Euripides realised that they could not take their stories from history since they found there

the same end happen to the righteous and to the unjust, vertue often opprest, and wickedness on the Throne: they saw these particular yesterday-truths were imperfect and unproper to illustrate the universal and eternal truths by them intended ... History, grosly taken, was neither proper to instruct, nor apt to please; and therefore they would not trust History for their examples, but refin'd upon the History; and thence contriv'd something more philosophical, and more accurate than History.⁴⁴⁶

'Poetical', as opposed to 'historical', justice required that 'the satisfaction be compleat and full, e're the Malefactor goes off the Stage, and nothing left to God Almighty, and another World', and that the spectators see punishment inflicted on stage, so that 'the fire must roar in the conscience of the Criminal, the fiends and furies be conjur'd up to their faces, with a world of machine and horrid spectacles'.⁴⁴⁷

Gildon urged that 'Poetick Justice ... ought ever to be observed in all Plays'.⁴⁴⁸ But there was not unanimity on the point, especially because the principle was not always met with in practice on the English stage. Dryden agreed with Rymer that 'the punishment of vice and reward of virtue are the most adequate ends of tragedy, because most conducing to good example of life'. But he also observed that 'the suffering of innocence ... is of the nature of English tragedy'.⁴⁴⁹ This was the case in many of Shakespeare's plays: the deaths of Desdemona in *Othello*, of Cordelia, Kent and Lear in *King Lear*, of Duncan, Banquo and Lady Macduff and her children in

⁴⁴⁵ Baker 1662: 128-129.

⁴⁴⁶ Rymer 1956: 22-23; similarly Dennis 1967: II 6. Or, as Oscar Wilde, with a dose of irony, has Miss Prism say of the three-volume novel she wrote in earlier days in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Act 2, 'The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means'. Tom Stoppard (1967: 58) parodies Wilde in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in a way that denies Rymer's 'poetic justice' when he has the Player say, 'We aim at the point where everyone who is marked for death dies ... Between "just desserts" and "tragic irony" we are given quite a bit of scope for our particular talent ... The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means'.

⁴⁴⁷ Rymer 1956: 27-28.

⁴⁴⁸ Gildon 1699: 91.

⁴⁴⁹ Dryden 1962: I 218.

Macbeth, of Brutus and Porcia in *Julius Caesar*, and that of Hamlet - deaths which for Dennis 'call the Government of Providence into Question, and by Scepticks and Libertines are resolv'd into Chance'.⁴⁵⁰

The Spectator in 1711 doubted that tragedies should only be written on the basis of poetical justice since this was not necessarily true to life: 'we find that Good and Evil happen alike to all Men on this Side the Grave'.⁴⁵¹ That provoked Dennis into penning the finest justification of poetic justice, as a reflection in this world of the divine providence that will ensure that virtue is rewarded and vice punished in the next, reflecting particularly Christian doctrines of resurrection and redemption. Dennis conceded to *The Spectator* that 'there is not always an equal Distribution of Affliction and Happiness here below' but went on:

Man is a Creature who was created immortal, and a Creature consequently that will find a Compensation in Futurity for any seeming Inequality in his Destiny here. But the Creatures of a poetical Creator are imaginary and transitory; they have no longer Duration than the Representation of their respective Fables; and consequently, if they offend, they must be punish'd during that Representation ... when we shew a Man unfortunate in Tragedy, for not restraining his Passions, we mean they every one will for such Neglect, unless he timely repents, be infallibly punish'd by infinite Justice either here or hereafter.⁴⁵²

For Dennis, Sophocles and Euripides 'in their most beautiful Pieces ... are impartial Executors of Poetick Justice'.⁴⁵³

Although Gildon asserted that

the Statesmen of Athens esteemed [tragedy] of that Moment to the Good and Reformation of their People, that, to give it the greater Authority with them, they incorporated it into their Religion; believing, that whatever

⁴⁵⁰ Dennis 1967: II 7 and also 286; Rymer 1956: 161; *The Spectator* no. 40, 16 April 1711, in Bond (ed.) 1965: I 169-170. Dennis (1967: II 49) made the same criticism of the death of Addison's Cato. Hughes (1986: 288-289) argues that 'only a minority of the tragedies premiered during [the seasons 1689-90 to 1699-1700] portray a world in which Providence bestows earthly rewards upon virtue'.

⁴⁵¹ *The Spectator* no. 40, 16 April 1711, in Bond (ed.) 1965: I 169. Also *The Tatler* no. 82, 15 October 1709, and *The Spectator* no. 548, 28 November 1712.

⁴⁵² Dennis 1967: II 20-21; similarly II 49, 111-112. Also Trapp 1742: 315-316. The doctrine was not confined to the drama: Samuel Richardson claimed that 'the notion of poetical justice, founded on the modern Rules, has hardly ever been more strictly observed in works of this nature than in the present performance', namely his novel *Clarissa* (1748; Adams and Hathaway (eds.) 1950: 327).

⁴⁵³ Dennis 1967: II 21.

improved Morality, could not be displeasing to their Gods, or alien from their Rites⁴⁵⁴

some ancient Greek tragedies were criticised not only for failing to display poetic justice but for lacking any, or any worthwhile, moral at all. Gildon claimed that Sophocles' *Philoctetes* 'not only concludes without any Moral, but is also incapable of being reduc'd to any, at least of any moment'.⁴⁵⁵ Gildon sarcastically identified 'all that can be learnt from this Play' as

First, That we never send Boys of our Errand, unless we have a God at command to make up the business he has spoil'd; if we mean our business shall be thoroughly done, and not the fate of a Nation sacrific'd to a pain in the Foot. Secondly, Not to trust Strangers we never saw before, for a fair Tale, with our Safety and Treasure, without a Mathematical Demonstration of their Fidelity and Trust. Lastly, That all Men with sore Feet shou'd not despair of a Cure.⁴⁵⁶

Drake elaborated on Aristotle's comment that Euripides had made the character of Menelaus in his *Orestes* unnecessarily bad by arguing that most of the characters in that play were wicked and that it had no good moral:

Orestes and Electra are Parricides; Tyndarus is (in his heart at least) the Murtherer of his Grand-children; Menelaus, the Betrayer of his Nephew, and Niece, whom he ought to have protected; Helen, an infamous Woman, and the accidental cause at least of the Miseries of a great part of Asia and Europe, yet clear of any intentional Guilt in this case; Pylades is engaged with his Friend in an unjust attempt to murder Helen and her Daughter; Hermione, who is next to a Mute in the Play, is the only unexceptionable Character ... The Moral (if I may call it so) of this Story is properly this, that there is no dabbling in Villany, but that those that are once enter'd, must wade thro', if they will be safe, and justify one Crime by another.⁴⁵⁷

Comments on Euripides' *Medea* show how the concept of poetic justice might be invoked to damn a play. Aristotle had criticised Euripides for the device of using

⁴⁵⁴ Gildon 1703: A2r.

⁴⁵⁵ Gildon 1694: 107. Similarly Drake 1699: 162-163. Adams (1729: II 232) did his best when identifying the moral of *Philoctetes* as 'that we ought to bear with Patience our lighter Afflictions, when we see a miserable Prince, tho' guilty of no Crime, suffer the worst of Ills'.

⁴⁵⁶ Gildon 1694: 108. Gildon was emulating Rymer's mockery of the moral of Shakespeare's *Othello* the previous year (1956: 132) as: 'First, This may be a caution to all Maidens of Quality how, without their Parents consent, they run away with Blackamoors ... Secondly, This may be a warning to all good Wives, that they look well to their Linnen. Thirdly, This may be a lesson to Husbands, that before their Jealousie be Tragical, the proofs may be Mathematical'.

⁴⁵⁷ Drake 1699: 167-168; Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 76.

the title character's grandfather Helios, the sun god, to engineer her escape but he had not commented on the fact that she goes unpunished.⁴⁵⁸ Dryden in *Of Dramatick Poesy* highlighted this point, referring to Euripides' *Medea* and *The Trojan Women*. He asserted that the Greeks erred 'in the instructive part' of tragedy, since

instead of punishing vice and rewarding virtue, they have often shown a prosperous wickedness, and an unhappy piety: they have set before us a bloody image of revenge in *Medea*, and given her dragons to convey her safe from punishment; a Priam and Astyanax murdered, and Cassandra ravished, and the lust and murder ending in the victory of him who acted them: in short, there is no indecorum in any of our modern plays which, if I would excuse, I could not shadow with some authority from the Ancients.⁴⁵⁹

Dryden again criticised *Medea's* escape from justice in the preface to *An Evening's Love: or The Mock Astrologer* (1671), albeit he noted that it was the only example 'amongst the ancient poets' that he could remember of a person escaping punishment for murder.⁴⁶⁰ I return to issues raised by *Medea* in the next chapter.

The final 'moral' aspect of ancient Greek tragedy that I wish to consider is the chorus. Discussion of the ancients' use of the chorus highlighted the tension between belief in the universality of human experience across time and space and recognition of the effects of local, variable circumstances on the literature that different peoples produce. The essays in *Choruses, Ancient and Modern* (2013) say virtually nothing about attitudes to the chorus in England at this time but interest in it had certainly been growing long before Potter's comments in his *Tragedies of Aeschylus Translated* (1777) noted there.⁴⁶¹ Many writers associated the chorus with the author's obligation to convey a moral message. Richard Blackmore observed that tragedy began as

a part of the Ancient Pagans Divine Service, when the Chorus which was originally so great a part, contain'd many excellent Lessons of Piety and Morality, and was wholly employ'd in rectifying their mistakes about the Gods, and their Government of the World, in moderating their Passions, and purging their Minds from Vice and Corruption.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 77.

⁴⁵⁹ Dryden 1962: I 38. Previously La Mesnardière (1639: 21, 85, 222-223) had criticised *Medea's* escape from punishment.

⁴⁶⁰ Dryden 1962: I 151.

⁴⁶¹ Billings 2013: 138.

⁴⁶² Blackmore 1695: ii. The moralising function of the chorus, usually seen as speaking for the poet, was also noted in *Ajax* 1714: F5v; *Electra* 1714: iii; *The*

This was not necessarily the view of Aristotle who wrote that the chorus ‘should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be a part of the whole, and should assume a share in the action’.⁴⁶³ Horace took that thought over but then gave the chorus a didactic function by positioning it on one side of the argument:

The Chorus should perform the role of an actor and the duty of a man ... It should side with the good characters and give them friendly advice, and should control those who are out of temper and show approval to those who are anxious not to transgress ... it should respect confidences, and should pray and beseech the gods to let prosperity return to the wretched and desert the proud.⁴⁶⁴

The chorus was not initially the subject of much interest among late seventeenth-century English critics. Jonson had thought fit to mention that his tragedy *Sejanus* lacked

a proper Chorus, whose Habite, and Moodes are such, and so difficult, as not any, whome I have seene since the Auntients (no, not they who have most presently affected Lawes) have yet come in the way off.⁴⁶⁵

Milton introduced the chorus into *Samson Agonistes* (1671) ‘after the Greek manner, not ancient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians’.⁴⁶⁶ Four years later Milton’s nephew, Edward Phillips, wondered in *Theatrum Poetarum* whether

the use of the Chorus, and the observation of the ancient Law of Tragedy, particularly as to limitation of time, would not rather by reviving the pristine glory of the Tragic all, advance then diminish the present.⁴⁶⁷

Then Rymer, in *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693), was encouraged by recent use of the chorus on the French stage, in Boyer’s *Jephté* (1689) and Racine’s *Esther* and *Athalie* (1689 and 1691), to assert:

Spectator no. 405, 14 June 1712 (Bond (ed.) 1965: III 516); Adams 1729: I b1r-b2r, 247 and II 74; Collier 1698: 50, 87-90, 94 and 1700: 69; Dacier 1692a: xvi and 1692b: ix-x, 198-199, 247; Drake 1699: 102, 131, 157, 259-260, 358; Francklin 1759a: I 212, II 102-103, 236, 266 and 1759b: 16, 17-19, 22, 55; Hurd 1749: 69, 75-83; Mason 1752: ix, x.

⁴⁶³ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 82.

⁴⁶⁴ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 103-104.

⁴⁶⁵ Jonson 1925-1952: IV 350.

⁴⁶⁶ Milton 1981: 611. Early modern plays that had used some form of chorus included four *Monarchick Tragedies* (*The Alexandrian Tragedy*, *Croesus*, *Darius* and *Julius Caesar*, 1607) by William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, of whom Gildon (1699: 2) wrote, ‘he has follow’d [the ancients] in nothing but the Chorus: For as for the Unities of Action, Time and Place, always observed by them, he seems to know nothing of them’.

⁴⁶⁷ Phillips 1675: Preface **8r.

The Chorus was the root and original, and is certainly always the most necessary part of Tragedy. The Spectators thereby are secured, that their Poet shall not juggle, or put upon them in the matter of Place, and Time, other than is just and reasonable for the representation. And the Poet has this benefit; the Chorus is a goodly Show, so that he need not ramble from his Subject out of his Wits for some foreign Toy or Hobby-horse, to humour the Multitude.⁴⁶⁸

Rymer saw the chorus as a decorous way of satisfying the audience's demand for spectacle and, by being ever present on stage, as a means of imposing discipline on playwrights by obliging them to adhere to the unities of time and place, as d'Aubignac had argued.⁴⁶⁹ Confident that a chorus would have the same effect in modern northern Europe as it had in ancient Greece, Rymer noted Jonson's *Catiline* (1611) as a native English example of how the device of the chorus kept the poet to the unity of place, since it 'is not to be trusted out of sight, is not to eat or drink till they have given up their Verdict, and the Plaudite is over'.⁴⁷⁰ Rymer was aware that there were problems about the chorus in practice if the playwright did not take care over where he situated the play's action since the chorus was obliged to accompany the main character everywhere: he wondered, 'how comes the Chorus into Catilins Cabinet?'⁴⁷¹ Gildon in reply pointed out that the infringement of the unity of time in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, mentioned in the next section, demonstrated that the presence of a chorus did not guarantee its observance.⁴⁷² Gildon also recognised the potential collision between the chorus and probability which he saw as a problem inherent in the chorus itself: it leads to 'the absurdist Improbabilities in Nature, which are as destructive to the End of Tragedy as any thing that can be introduced'.⁴⁷³

Rymer had gone on to imagine a modern tragedy to emulate Aeschylus' *The Persians* that would be 'far beyond any thing now in possession of the Stage, however wrought up by the unimitable Shakespear', with the Spanish Armada of 1588 substituting for Xerxes' failed invasion of Greece. He included in his plan '15 Grandees of Spain, with their most solemn Beards and Accoutrements' who 'at last form themselves into the Chorus, and walk such measures, with Musick, as may

⁴⁶⁸ Rymer 1956: 84.

⁴⁶⁹ Cannan 2001: 222 and 2006: 78-80; d'Aubignac 2001: 144, 154, 184, 316-318.

⁴⁷⁰ Rymer 1956: 172. Dennis (1967: II 75) agreed that the unity of place was a necessary consequence of the ancient chorus.

⁴⁷¹ Rymer 1956: 171.

⁴⁷² Gildon 1694: 69.

⁴⁷³ Gildon 1694: 153.

become the gravity of such a Chorus'.⁴⁷⁴ Dennis immediately ridiculed this notion in *The Impartial Critick* (1693). He imagined Elizabeth's lamentations at the news of the Spanish invasion being followed by a chorus

dancing a Saraband to a doleful Ditty: Do you think ... that if this had really happened at White-Hall, it would have been possible to have beheld it without laughing, tho' one had been never so much concerned for his Country? Now can any thing that is incongruous and absurd in the World, be proper and decent on the Tragick Stage?⁴⁷⁵

Dennis also pointed out that Racine, who was able in previous tragedies to observe the unity of place without using a chorus, 'has not tied himself to it so scrupulously' in *Esther* when he did employ it, and that the chorus was absent from the stage in *Esther* II.1 and *Athalie* III.7.⁴⁷⁶

Dennis opposed the reintroduction of the chorus on the grounds that people's customs and expectations had changed and consequently it would now be seen as an unnatural and improbable device:

For to set up the Grecian method amongst us with success, it is absolutely necessary to restore not only their Religion and their Polity, but to transport us to the same Climate in which Sophocles and Euripides writ; or else by reason of those different Circumstances, several things which were graceful and decent with them, must seem ridiculous and absurd to us ... The Chorus had a good effect with the Athenians, because it was adapted to the Religion and Temper of that People ... But we having nothing in our Religion or Manners, by which we may be able to defend it, it ought certainly to be banished from our Stage.⁴⁷⁷

Dennis denied a central tenet of the age, namely that what succeeded in ancient Greece would succeed in modern London: 'By what I have said ... it may be easily guess'd, that it is in vain to think of setting up a Chorus upon the English Stage, because it succeeded at Athens'.⁴⁷⁸ Dennis acknowledged through his mouthpiece Freeman that in ancient Greece the chorus 'was Religious in its Office and Institution', but the teaching of moral lessons does not require a chorus since 'our Theatre ... teaches some Moral Doctrine by the Fable, which must always be allegorical and universal'; and the ancient function of a chorus that comprised

⁴⁷⁴ Rymer 1956: 91-93; the quotations are at 93 and 91.

⁴⁷⁵ Dennis 1967: I 11-12.

⁴⁷⁶ Dennis 1967: I 32. Dennis suppressed the chorus in his adaptation of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (1699).

⁴⁷⁷ Dennis 1967: I 11. Similarly Drake 1699: 268.

⁴⁷⁸ Dennis 1967: I 13.

commenting on the conduct of the main characters could be replaced by how playwrights painted their manners.⁴⁷⁹ Not only the abandonment of ancient customs, but the introduction of modern dramaturgical techniques rendered the ancient chorus obsolete.

Dennis' spokesperson Freeman gave examples of the improbabilities to which the chorus in Sophocles' *Electra* gave rise:

at the end of the First Act ... Electra [is] lamenting her sad condition. The Chorus advise her not to be so loud, least she should be heard by Aegystus: yet as soon as ever she is gone, they grow infinitely louder, and in a Consort of Fifteen Voices, threaten Ruine to Clytemnestra and her Adulterer ... This Song must in all reason alarm Clytemnestra, and prevent the surprize which is design'd by the Poet. Besides, how did this Chorus dare thus loudly and publickly to contemn Clytemnestra before her own Palace, at the very time that she had the Sovereign Power in her hands?⁴⁸⁰

It was also absurd that

Orestes [discovers] himself and his design, to Electra ... (which he does in the presence of the Chorus); so that he entrusts a Secret upon which his Empire and Life depends, in the hands of Sixteen Women.⁴⁸¹

In those passages Dennis evaluates the chorus by reference to contemporary, even timeless, criteria of probability and reasonableness without invoking different criteria and circumstances which nevertheless made the chorus in *Electra* acceptable to an ancient audience.

2.7. Reception of the ancient Greek tragedians: formal

The plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were generally assessed by English writers by Aristotelian and Horatian yardsticks. This was a continuation of the approach of Ascham and his friends a century and more before:

When Master Watson in St. John's College at Cambridge wrote his excellent tragedy of *Absalom*, Master Cheke, he, and I had many pleasant

⁴⁷⁹ Dennis 1967: I 34-35.

⁴⁸⁰ Dennis 1967: I 37-38, referring to the chorus' lines 310-311, 314-315 and 473-501.

⁴⁸¹ Dennis 1967: I 38, referring to lines 1220 onwards. The author of *A Vindication of the Stage* (Anon 1698b: 23) also approved of how 'our Modern Poets, and especially the English ... have cast off that unnecessary Clog the Chorus, which is manifestly for the better, thereby freeing their Drammas from many gross Absurdities'.

talks together in comparing the precepts of Aristotle and Horace *De arte poetica* with the examples of Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca.⁴⁸²

Dryden in *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* identified ‘the parts of a poem, tragic or heroic’ on Aristotelian lines as

I. The fable itself.

II. The order or manner of its contrivance in relation of the parts to the whole.

III. The manners or decency of the characters in speaking or acting what is proper for them, and proper to be shewn by the poet.

IV. The thoughts which express the manners.

V. The words which express those thoughts.⁴⁸³

In *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* Dryden used Aristotle’s schema when he began discussion of tragedy with the plot, which was itself built upon the play’s moral, and which the poet designed before introducing the characters ‘with their manners, characters, and passions’. The plot was ‘the foundation of the play’ but its fabric, visible above ground, was ‘the manners, the thoughts, and the expressions’.⁴⁸⁴ In *Tragedies of the Last Age* Rymer analysed Fletcher and Massinger’s *Rollo Duke of Normandy* by reference to the play’s fable and characters and their ability to arouse pity and stir the passions, and ‘the thoughts and good sense’ in the play, noting in this latter connection an inconsistency in one of the characters contrary to one of Aristotle’s requirements.⁴⁸⁵ And in *A Short View of Tragedy* Rymer used Aristotle’s component parts of ‘fable’, characters’, ‘thought’ and ‘expression’ in his analysis of Shakespeare’s *Othello*.⁴⁸⁶ This approach persisted for a long time, its most extreme application being Gildon’s analysis of Shakespeare’s plays in 1710 on the basis of their fables (and division into prologues, episodes and exodes), manners, sentiments, diction, use of peripetie and discovery, and observance of the unities.⁴⁸⁷ In 1726 Richard West praised Euripides’ *Hecuba* in traditional terms: ‘The Moral appear’d to me instructive; the Diction unaffected; the Sentiments noble and just; and the Fable

⁴⁸² Ascham 1967: 139.

⁴⁸³ Dryden 1962: I 217.

⁴⁸⁴ Dryden 1962: I 247-248.

⁴⁸⁵ Rymer 1956: 23-40.

⁴⁸⁶ Rymer 1956: 131.

⁴⁸⁷ Gildon 1710b: 259-264 and passim. Also Gildon 1699: 23-24; 1710a: xxx-xxxi; 1710a: xxx-xxxi; 1715: 16-17; 1718: I 96, 222; 1719: 243-245; 1721: 234, 237-238.

unmixt and natural, and very proper to incite the tragick Passions, Pity and Terror'.⁴⁸⁸ But Henry Fielding had his tongue in his cheek when he applied the standard approach of 'a regular Examination' of tragedy, which was to 'treat separately of the Fable, the Moral, the Characters, the Sentiments, and the Diction', to his *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*.⁴⁸⁹

Some critics' comments on the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were concerned with establishing their conformity, or lack of it, with specific elements of Aristotle's principles or others derived from them, often simply taking over his views or elaborating on them. For example, Aristotle wrote regarding 'character' that characters should be good, that is, have goodness, even if a woman or a slave and so possibly 'an inferior being [or] in general an insignificant one', and should be consistent, even if 'consistently inconsistent'. He gave Menelaus in Euripides' *Orestes* as an example of unnecessary badness of character and the title character of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* as an example of an inconsistent character.⁴⁹⁰ Gildon and Adams both pointed to the example of Menelaus;⁴⁹¹ and Dennis, Gildon and Adams to that of Iphigenia.⁴⁹² Aristotle gave an example of double recognition in Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, in which 'Iphigenia was recognised by Orestes through the sending of the letter, and a second recognition was required to make him known to Iphigenia', the latter, however, being inartistically done.⁴⁹³ Gildon made the same point three times.⁴⁹⁴ And critics categorised many of the ancient plays as simple or complex according to Aristotle's definitions.⁴⁹⁵

Aristotle's apparent insistence on unity of action, and its later embodiment in critical theory, provoked the comment that it was infringed in Sophocles' *Ajax* in which 'the contest ... between Teucer, Menelaus, and Agamemnon' about the burial of Ajax 'is an Episode detach'd from, and has nothing to do with, and scarce any

⁴⁸⁸ West R. 1726: iii-iv.

⁴⁸⁹ Fielding 1731: A3r-A3v.

⁴⁹⁰ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 76.

⁴⁹¹ Adams 1729: I d1v-d2r; Gildon 1718: I 250.

⁴⁹² Adams 1729: I d2-d2vr; Dennis 1967: I 75; Gildon 1718: I 251.

⁴⁹³ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 71, 78-79.

⁴⁹⁴ Gildon 1710a: liii and 1718: I 242, 256.

⁴⁹⁵ Adams 1729: I d4r-d4v; Dennis 1967: II 287; Gildon 1710a: xliii-xliv and 1718: I 240.

dependance upon the main Action'.⁴⁹⁶ And the most common comment on one of Euripides' plays concerned the unity of time. In his *Poetices* (1561) Scaliger had expressed his displeasure at 'the battles or carnage that is completed at Thebes within a space of two hours', alluding to the fact that in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, while the chorus sings between lines 598 and 633, Theseus travels with an army from the temple of Demeter at Eleusis to Thebes, wins a battle there and returns.⁴⁹⁷ This was widely criticised both as an infringement of the unity of time and as an illustration of the sort of absurdity that poets were likely to fall into if they insisted on appearing to maintain it in inappropriate circumstances.⁴⁹⁸

The Tatler might well complain that a typical 'Critick' was

one that, without entering into the Sense and Soul of an Author, has a few general Rules, which, like mechanical Instruments, he applies to the Works of every Writer, and as they quadrate with them, pronounces the Author perfect or defective.⁴⁹⁹

But the practice of judging ancient and modern plays according to whether they met Aristotle's criteria was inevitable at a time when writers had not developed a different methodology. Gildon made that point in his remarks on the plays of Shakespeare when he noted that Aristotle's division of a play into prologue, episode, exode and chorus 'perfectly distinguish'd all the Business and Order of the whole Plot of the Play; for which the Moderns have given us no Rules in Regard of what is proper to each Act'.⁵⁰⁰ But meanwhile, using Aristotle's parts of tragedy and related principles as the building blocks of criticism precluded considering or imagining the experience of reading or seeing a play as a whole. This was the approach recommended by Pope in *An Essay on Criticism*:

In Wit, as Nature, what affects our Hearts
Is not th' Exactness of peculiar Parts;
'Tis not a Lip, or Eye, we Beauty call,
But the joint Force and full Result of all.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁶ Drake 1699: 151. Similarly *Ajax* 1714: F1v; Adams 1729: I d1r; Corneille 1965: 12 in his first *Discours*; Francklin 1759b: 14; Rapin 1674: 118.

⁴⁹⁷ Sidnell (ed.) 1991-1994: I 107.

⁴⁹⁸ *Biographia Classica* I 98; Adams 1729: I c8v; d'Aubignac 2001: 169; Corneille 1965: 72 in his third *Discours*; Dacier 1692a: 115; Dryden 1962: I 36; Gildon 1694: 69 and 1718: I 233; Rapin 1674: 118.

⁴⁹⁹ *The Tatler* no. 165, 27-29 April 1710 in Bond (ed.) 1987: II 415.

⁵⁰⁰ Gildon 1710b: 426.

⁵⁰¹ Pope 1963: 151.

However, plays tended to be considered in a fragmented, thematic manner, often without any judgment being made about how a particular perceived strength or weakness impacted on the effectiveness of the play as a whole. The writers who highlighted the non-observance of the unity of time in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* did not go on to say whether that made the play incapable of conveying a moral message or, in Aristotelian terms, 'by means of pity and fear bringing about the catharsis of such emotions'. English critics generally lacked the severity of Dacier who asserted that the anachronistic reference in Sophocles' *Electra* to the Pythian Games, which he said were not established until five or six hundred years after the death of Orestes, was an absurdity and an error that ruined the verisimilitude of the play of which it was the foundation.⁵⁰² A play was not considered as a work of art, to see how it was put together to tell its story and achieve its effects, apart from mechanistic comments about, for example, the effectiveness of a particular recognition or reversal scene.

2.8. Why some thought that English plays were better than the Greeks'

Those who believed that modern tragedians excelled the ancients pointed to several factors. In *Of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) Dryden has Eugenius say that the moderns have improved on the ancients by introducing a fixed number of acts and scenes, the unity of place which was never one of the ancients' rules, and a greater variety of plots by adding subjects with which the audience is not already familiar.⁵⁰³ That was to combine greater formal restrictions on playwrights with greater freedom in plays' contents. In the *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* (1678) Dryden concentrated on the latter aspects, observing that ancient tragedy was deficient 'in the narrowness of its plots, and fewness of persons'.⁵⁰⁴ Others agreed: key was the greater variety that resulted from a wider range of, and wider-ranging, plots, drawing on subject matter that went well beyond the small set of myths and legends that the ancients used and that were well known to their audiences, often including 'under-plots' and providing opportunities for surprising twists and turns that would keep the audience's attention and for showing the dramatist's skill in developing and unravelling the

⁵⁰² Dacier 1692b: 458-459, followed by Adams 1729: I 84.

⁵⁰³ Dryden 1962: I 33-36.

⁵⁰⁴ Dryden 1962: I 212.

strands of the plot.⁵⁰⁵ Also characteristic of modern plays, and often thought to be an advantage, was having more, and more varied, characters.⁵⁰⁶

Dryden also observed in *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* that the English had added ‘new passions’ to the ancients’ beauties, ‘as namely, that of love, scarce touched on by the Ancients, except in [the] one example of Phaedra’, and which, ‘being an heroic passion, is fit for tragedy’.⁵⁰⁷ Already in Dryden’s *Of Dramatic Poesy* Eugenius, who spoke up for early modern English drama, had remarked on the absence of scenes of love, ‘that soft passion’, in the ancients’ plays, commenting that the ‘gentleness’ of love, ‘the most frequent of all the passions’, would have tempered the horrors of their themes.⁵⁰⁸ For Gildon, using the theme of love made tragedy ‘a more perfect Image of Humane Life, in taking in that which has so great a Share in it’ and did not detract from tragedy’s majesty and gravity.⁵⁰⁹ One reason why Dennis did not produce a version of *Hippolytus* was the unsuitability of the title character for the English stage ‘which will never endure, that the principal Person of the Drama should be averse from Love’.⁵¹⁰ Joyner had addressed that point in *The Roman Empress* as mentioned in chapter 1.5.3.

Naturally, not everyone agreed that those points were to be commended. Flecknoe had argued that English dramatists made their plots complicated to the point of confusion.⁵¹¹ Gildon also had doubts about the multiplicity of actions in contemporary plays. In the preface to *Phaeton* he criticised modern dramatists for spinning out their plays ‘to an unreasonable Extent, by adding Under-plots, and several Persons, no way necessary to their Design, which was admirably avoided by the Ancients, by introducing no more Characters than were indispensably necessary

⁵⁰⁵ Anon 1698b: 23-24; Dryden 1962: I 231, 234; Gildon 1694: 167; Hill 1753: 209; *The Spectator* no. 39, 14 April 1711, in Bond (ed.) 1965: I 164; Sprat 1665: 250-251; Trapp 1742: 251, 326.

⁵⁰⁶ Temple 1690b: 54-55 followed by Anon 1698b: 23; Hill 1753: 209.

⁵⁰⁷ Dryden 1962: I 212. Love was one of the major themes of heroic drama, of which Dryden was a leading exponent, in the post-Restoration period (Bevis 1988: 40-41; Singh 1963: 17-20, 42-46).

⁵⁰⁸ Dryden 1962: I 41-42.

⁵⁰⁹ Gildon 1694: 153.

⁵¹⁰ Dennis 1967: I 79. On love as an acceptable theme for modern tragedies also Dennis 1967: I 129 but his reservations at II 168.

⁵¹¹ Flecknoe 1654: A7r and 1664: G5v.

to one compleat Design'.⁵¹² Gildon claimed that, by 'paring off those Superfluities that only swell'd the Bulk, without contributing to the end' of tragedy, he would be able in *Phaeton* to focus on those elements which 'delighted and transported' an audience, namely 'the chief Characters only, and the violent Emotions of their Passions'.⁵¹³ Ironically, Settle blamed the failure of *Phaeton* precisely on the simplicity of its action.⁵¹⁴ Filmer similarly blamed 'the cold reception' of his play *The Unnatural Brother* (1697) on the fact that

the Play was too grave for the Age, That I had made choice of too few Persons, and that the Stage was never filled; there seldom appearing above two at a time, and never above three, till the end and winding up of the whole

despite having followed Horace's advice and the example of Otway's successful *The Orphan*.⁵¹⁵

On the subject of love, Rymer praised the ancient Greeks' plays for the way that it did not 'come whining on the Stage to Effeminate the Majesty of their Tragedy', unlike in the contemporary French theatre.⁵¹⁶ And by 1719, in *The Post-Man Robb'd of his Mail*, Gildon had come round to that opinion, condemning the 'whining Scenes of Love' in contemporary English and French tragedies which destroyed the plays' majesty:

nor is it an easy Matter to reconcile these Scenes to that of Modesty, of which a Woman of Figure ought to be Mistress, especially if the Scene lie in some of the hotter Climates, where the Ladies did not use to allow themselves the Liberty of owning their Passions in so open a Manner, before they were either espous'd or marry'd ... I am not for excluding Love from our Tragedies; but then it ought to be between Man and Wife. Thus the love of Alcestis in Euripides charms us, as well as that of Helena in the play of that Name, of the same Poet.⁵¹⁷

Trapp also regretted modern playwrights' concentration on love at the expense of other passions such as ambition and friendship that might also be the proper subject of drama. The tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides are 'absolutely free' of the subject of love: they 'are adapted to infuse Terror, rather than Compassion; and don't

⁵¹² Gildon 1698: b3v.

⁵¹³ Gildon 1698: b1r. Gildon repeatedly invoked the audience's expectations in the preface to *Phaeton* and again in the preface to *Love's Victim* (1701: viii).

⁵¹⁴ Settle 1698b: 36-37.

⁵¹⁵ Filmer 1697: A2r-v.

⁵¹⁶ Rymer 1956: 117.

⁵¹⁷ Gildon 1719: 246-247; similarly 1718: I 199-202.

so much aim at appearing soft and delicate, as grand and magnificent'. Jonson and Shakespeare could dispense with love: the title characters in *Sejanus*, *Catiline* and *Julius Caesar* 'all meet their Fate without any love to hasten it'.⁵¹⁸

But the points made in defence of modern dramas that added elements not present in the ancients' plays were about more than departing from Aristotle. They were about identifying what was characteristic of English drama.⁵¹⁹ This was a patriotic exercise that aimed to elevate English drama to the level that ancient and modern French playwrights had attained; Dryden claimed to have written *Of Dramatick Poesy* 'chiefly to vindicate the honour of our English writers from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them' and he sets the discussions it records on the day of an English naval victory over the Dutch in June 1665.⁵²⁰ Writers sought in different ways to balance 'English or Elizabethan vigour' with notions of correctness and regularity derived from the ancients and their influential French followers,⁵²¹ as when Gildon hoped in *Love's Victim* to have 'reconcil'd in some Measure [the Ancients'] Regularity with our Variety'.⁵²² First, English theorists were named alongside foreign ones as sources of information and authority on how to write literary works. Gerard Langbaine in *Momus Triumphans* (1688) made a point of including Jonson's *Timber*, Rymer's *Tragedies of the Last Age* and Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesy* in a list of works available in English that taught 'the excellency of the Poetick Art, and the Rules which Poets follow, with the Reasons of them'.⁵²³ In the preface to *The Complete Art of Poetry* (1718) Gildon listed English writers and works (Rymer, Dennis, Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* and the Earl of Mulgrave's 'most excellent' *Essay on Poetry*, 1682) together with ancient and French critics.⁵²⁴ And in *The Laws of Poetry* (1721) Gildon republished Mulgrave's *Essay upon Poetry* (1682), Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse* (1684) and George Granville, Lord Lansdowne's *Concerning Unnatural Flights in Poetry* (1701), with a commentary.

⁵¹⁸ Trapp 1742: 270-271. Similarly *The Adventurer* no. 113, 4 December 1753 (II 254).

⁵¹⁹ Bate (1997: 165-172) discusses seventeenth and eighteenth century writers' attempts to identify the particularly 'English genius'.

⁵²⁰ Dryden 1962: I 17.

⁵²¹ Scodel 1999: 553.

⁵²² Gildon 1701: vii.

⁵²³ Langbaine 1688: A8r.

⁵²⁴ Gildon 1718: I a6r.

Second, Langbaine's *Momus Triumphans* further documented the native English dramatic tradition by including 'a Catalogue of all the Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, Masques, Tragedies, Opera's, Pastorals, Interludes, &c. Both Ancient and Modern, that were ever yet Printed in English', Langbaine claiming to own 'Nine Hundred and Fourscore English Plays and Masques, besides Drolls and Interludes'.⁵²⁵ Langbaine then published *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), a work that Gildon 'improv'd and continued down to this Time' as *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (1699), and which provided biographical and bibliographical information about many English writers. Gildon described his work in the dedication to Charles Caesar as a 'History of the Lives and Works of all the Dramatick Poets of your Native Country, of which few Nations have produc'd so great a Number under so very little Encouragements'.⁵²⁶

Third, the features of modern dramas with which Dryden and others supplemented Aristotle were often described as 'English', as when Sprat in his reply to Sorbière mentioned above argued that 'the English Plays ought to be preferr'd before the French'.⁵²⁷ For Dryden, it was 'the English' who added 'more plot' and the passion of love; and the fable is 'in the English more adorned with episodes, and larger than in the Greek poets; consequently more diverting'.⁵²⁸ 'English tragedy ... requires to be built in a larger compass' than the 'regular' ancient variety.⁵²⁹ For Rymer, the 'English theatre' requires 'more intrigue'.⁵³⁰ And for Gildon, an 'English audience' 'will never be pleas'd with a dry, Jejune and formal Method, that excludes Variety as the Religious observation of the Rules of Aristotle does'.⁵³¹

Finally, in *The Post-Man Robb'd of his Mail* (1719) Gildon urged the writing of tragedies drawn from ancient English history, specifying the Saxon period as being obscure enough to give the Poet as much room for Invention, as the fabulous Part of the Greek History did those Poets ... to whose Invention we owe the receiv'd Examples of all Heroic Fortitude and Wisdom

⁵²⁵ Langbaine 1688: A2r.

⁵²⁶ Gildon 1699: A2v.

⁵²⁷ Sprat 1665: 243-256; the quotation is at 247.

⁵²⁸ Dryden 1962: I 212, 215-216.

⁵²⁹ Dryden 1962: I 231.

⁵³⁰ Rymer 1956: 26.

⁵³¹ Gildon 1694: 223.

such as the characters Alcestis and Iphigenia. The Greeks ‘justly believ’d that Domestick Examples were more likely to affect than Foreign, where Clime, Customs, Manners, Religion, &c. might alter and confound the Lesson it shou’d teach’.⁵³² Gildon was clearly prepared, in order to advance his argument, to treat the different Greek city states where the plays are set as a single world and to disregard the non-Greek settings of, for example, Aeschylus’ *The Persians* (Susa) and Euripides’ *Helen* (Egypt). Richard Hurd was later to urge the choice of ‘domestic’ subjects on playwrights, observing that in the plays of the ancient Greeks ‘there is scarcely a single scene, which lies out of the confines of Greece’.⁵³³ Gildon believed that English writers could learn from the Greeks much about how to write tragedies, leavened with the greater variety of elements demanded by English audiences, but also why not to set them in foreign parts. Gildon seems to have assumed that an English audience would find a tragedy set in ancient times exemplary as long as the ancient location in which it was set was a British one. He had provided an example in *Love’s Victim* by transplanting his heroine - an amalgam of Euripides’ Alcestis, Helen and Andromache - to Wales so that the play’s characters were ‘Persons of our own Clime, Natives of the same Country, we now inhabit’.⁵³⁴

2.9. Conclusion

There was general agreement among the writers I have been considering that the teachings and practices of Aristotle, Horace and the ancient Greek tragedians - as modified or amplified by later commentators - were relevant to considerations of how to write plays in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. But the tensions that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter prevented there being a common view of the practical details. Opinions varied on the role and status of ancient authority, even on the part of the same writer. In *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatick Poesy* (1668) Dryden wrote that he derived his ‘propositions’ for ‘the better imitation of nature’ from ‘the authority of Aristotle and Horace, and from the

⁵³² Gildon 1719: 336-337. Dryden (1962: II 91-92) contemplated writing an epic poem about king Arthur and the Saxons and Blackmore (1695) did so.

⁵³³ Hurd 1749: 126.

⁵³⁴ Gildon: 1701: vii. Nicoll (1928: 156-159) mentions other plays with British historical themes written in the 1680s and 1690s.

rules and examples of Ben Jonson and Corneille'.⁵³⁵ But in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* (1679) he quoted Rapin approvingly on how the 'rules' are founded 'on good sense, and sound reason, rather than on authority'.⁵³⁶

The comparison of ancient and more modern tragedy was a common pressure point, as when Shakespeare's plays were invoked as evidence against the practice of poetic justice. *The Spectator* rightly observed:

Our inimitable Shakespear is a Stumbling-block to the whole Tribe of these rigid Criticks. Who would not rather read one of his Plays, where there is not a single Rule of the Stage observed, than any Production of a modern Critick, where there is not one of them violated?⁵³⁷

One way out of that difficulty was to argue that Shakespeare would have been an even better dramatist if he had known of, and followed, the ancients.⁵³⁸ But Rowe disagreed:

Whether his Ignorance of the Antients were a disadvantage to him or no, may admit of a Dispute: For tho' the knowledge of 'em might have made him more Correct, yet it is not improbable but that the Regularity and Deference for them, which would have attended that Correctness, might have restrain'd some of that Fire, Impetuosity, and even beautiful Extravagance which we admire in Shakespear.⁵³⁹

My purpose here is not to stray into a study of the growth of Shakespeare's reputation in this period.⁵⁴⁰ Rather I want to draw attention to the fact that consideration of ancient Greek tragedy could not be separated from views about the contemporary English stage. One manifestation of that was the influence of Shakespeare on adaptors and translators of ancient Greek tragedies, to which I have already referred in chapter 1 and to which I return in chapters 4 and 5.

Meanwhile, in the next chapter I look at the attitudes towards ancient Greek tragedy of Jeremy Collier and those who responded to the controversy about the contemporary English stage whose fires he fanned. Many of the attitudes I have described in this chapter will appear there in more detailed and tendentious forms.

⁵³⁵ Dryden 1962: I 124.

⁵³⁶ Dryden 1962: I 260.

⁵³⁷ *The Spectator* no. 592, 10 September 1714, in Bond (ed.) 1965: V 28.

⁵³⁸ Dennis 1967: II 197; Gildon 1710a: iii-iv, vii-viii, 1710b: 337-338, 347 and 1721: 23.

⁵³⁹ Rowe 1709: I iii; similarly I xiv-xv.

⁵⁴⁰ On which see Bate 1997, Dobson 1992, Novak 2014, Taylor 1990 and Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976.

CHAPTER 3: ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY AND THE COLLIER CONTROVERSY

In this chapter I concentrate on Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage, Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument* (1698, hereafter *A Short View*), and the responses to it, in which ancient Greek tragedy played a surprisingly prominent role given that Collier's main concern was with contemporary comedy. I explore, first, Collier's purpose in writing about ancient Greek tragedy; second, how he used it in his wider argumentation; and third, the effect of comments about ancient Greek tragedy on *A Short View* as a whole.

I first consider the background to publication of *A Short View* in the form of agitation about moral reform and Collier's own career (chapter 3.1) before looking at some previous attacks on the stage in which ancient Greek tragedy had been invoked (3.2). I then turn to Collier's use of ancient Greek tragedy generally (3.3) and then with specific reference to attacks on authority (3.4), the chorus and poetic justice (3.5) and sexual morality (3.6). Finally I look at how Collier addressed issues raised by specific plays: versions of the Electra story, Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Euripides' *Medea* (3.7).

3.1. The background to publication of Collier's *A Short View*

A Short View is best known as a vigorous attack on around a dozen comedies by, especially, Dryden, William Congreve and Sir John Vanbrugh that had recently been performed on the London stage. Collier's complaints are that the plays contain immodest, even immoral and blasphemous, plots, characters and language and inappropriate, satirical portrayals of members of the nobility and clergy and the institution of marriage. *A Short View* provoked numerous other works, both supporting and attacking Collier, as well as further contributions by Collier himself. Parry calls *A Short View* 'the only wide-ranging, original survey of Greek tragedy in this period [1491-1748], with illustrations of Greek tragedy's general reverence for religion' but otherwise discussions of *A Short View* have barely considered Collier's extensive comments on, and polemical use of, ancient Greek tragedy in the course of

his critique of contemporary comedy,⁵⁴¹ nor the fact that his use of examples from the ancient Greek tragedians to contrast with various practices of the moderns was adopted in several responses to him.⁵⁴²

A Short View has been studied from three different perspectives that are not, however, mutually exclusive. First, it is most obviously a contribution to theatre history. Collier's critique of recent comedies casts light, not only on them as pieces that occupied the stage, albeit they were a tiny minority of the plays of the period and not necessarily typical of the rest, but on contemporary arrangements for licensing plays for performance by the Master of the Revels which were superseded by a more formal pre-performance censorship system under the Licensing Act of 1737.⁵⁴³ Collier has also been credited with some responsibility for, if not bringing about, then at least encouraging changes in the tone of English plays, including the growing popularity of so-called 'moral' and 'sentimental' comedies.⁵⁴⁴ As the focus of this chapter is not the English stage I shall not discuss this aspect further.

Second, *A Short View* has been seen in the context of calls in the 1690s for a 'reformation of manners'.⁵⁴⁵ This was partly a top-down, Government-led initiative that has been interpreted as motivated by a desire to establish William III and Mary, following their replacement of James II on the English throne in 1688, as godly rulers whom providence had favoured with success in order to safeguard Protestantism and bring about moral reform. This was necessary following the alleged excesses of the popishly-affected Stuart kings in whose reigns, it was claimed, vice and debauchery

⁵⁴¹ Parry J. M. 1973: 12. Also Ballein 1910; Anthony 1937; Cannan 2006; Hume 1999; Kinservik 1999 and 2002; Krutch 1949; Lund 2012; Novak 1969; Self 2000, who at 34-35 notes Collier's approval of classical dramatists but does not explain the tactical nature of his use of them; Taylor 1931; Williams E. E. 1939; Williams A. L. 1975 and 1979. Dobson (1992: 113-114) sees Collier's appeals to ancient dramatists as 'part of a general movement ... towards a prudish neo-classicism'.

⁵⁴² Anon 1698b, Settle 1698a, Anon 1699a, Drake 1699, Filmer 1707 and Bedford 1719.

⁵⁴³ Anthony 1937; Hume 1999: 492-493, 498-499, 510-511; Kinservik 1999; Williams A. L. 1975: 234-235.

⁵⁴⁴ In the eighteenth century: Cibber 1740: 159-160; Davies 1780: II 348 and 1784: III 171; Johnson S. 2010: XXII 744 in his life of Congreve. Later: Ballein 1910: 2, 244-245; Krutch 1949: 257-258; Zimansky in Rymer 1956: xlvi-xlvii. Mora and Gómez-Lara (2010: 147-148, 156) attribute changes to the general climate of moral reform predating Collier.

⁵⁴⁵ Ballein 1910: 38-42; Corder 2000: 212; Gómez-Lara 2006: 119-121; Krutch 1949: 159-167; Lund 2012: 74-76; Novak 1997a: 180; Taylor 1931: 106.

had been promoted as a way of enervating and demoralising the people.⁵⁴⁶ Royal support for moral improvement took various forms. In 1689 William's *Letter to the Lord Bishop of London, to be Communicated to the Two Provinces of Canterbury and York* required the bishops to draw their congregations' attention to existing laws against 'Blasphemy, Swearing and Cursing ... Perjury ... Drunkenness [and] Prophanation of the Lords Day'.⁵⁴⁷ That became a common list of offences; later texts tended to omit specific mention of perjury and to add the adjective 'prophane' before 'swearing and cursing' and a catch-all phrase such as 'any other Dissolute, Immoral or Disorderly Practices'. Later royal urgings on the subject include a letter from Mary to the Middlesex Justices of the Peace in July 1691,⁵⁴⁸ and proclamations 'against Vitious, Debauched, and Profane Persons' in January 1692,⁵⁴⁹ 'for Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Prophaneness' in February 1698,⁵⁵⁰ and a third for the same purpose in December 1699 which repeated much of the wording of the 1692 proclamation.⁵⁵¹ William also assented to new legislation that imposed fines on 'any person or persons [who] shall ... profanely sweare or curse'⁵⁵² and banned anyone who denied particular doctrines of the Christian faith from ecclesiastical, civil and military offices and employments.⁵⁵³ Finally, on six occasions between December 1697 and December 1701 William urged in speeches in Parliament consideration of measures to counter profaneness, immorality, irreligion and vice.⁵⁵⁴

William's proclamations were not novel. Cromwell instructed the Major-Generals in October 1655 to ensure execution of 'the laws against drunkenness, blaspheming and taking of the name of God in vain, by swearing and cursing, plays

⁵⁴⁶ Bahlman 1957: v; Claydon 1996: 3, 28-33, 47-63, 90, 115; Rose 1999: 203.

⁵⁴⁷ William III 1689.

⁵⁴⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, May 1690-October 1691*, 437-438.

⁵⁴⁹ William III and Mary 1692.

⁵⁵⁰ Printed in Anon 1701a: a4v-a7v and Anon 1702: 21-26.

⁵⁵¹ William III: 1699.

⁵⁵² 6 & 7 Gul. III, c.11, *An Act for the more effectuall suppressing prophane Cursing and Swearing*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46430>> [accessed 4 October 2011].

⁵⁵³ 9 & 10 Gul. III, c.32, *An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46921>> [accessed 4 October 2011].

⁵⁵⁴ *Journal of the House of Lords*, volume 16 (1696-1701), entries for 3 December 1697, 5 July and 9 December 1698, 4 May and 16 November 1699 and 31 December 1701, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>> [accessed 22 September 2011].

and interludes, and profaning the Lord's Day, and suchlike wickedness and abominations'; and Charles II issued a proclamation against vicious, debauched and profane persons in May 1660, and one enforcing Sunday observance in January 1661, and his speech to parliament in February 1663 recommended reconsideration of the laws against immorality and profaneness.⁵⁵⁵ It is well to be cautious about the practical impact of such measures, both generally and as regards the theatre. The fact that William issued three proclamations in eight years on the same subject suggests that at least the first two were ineffective. References to profaneness etc. in William's speeches generally followed consideration of more immediately urgent matters such as the provision of money for the civil list, the navy and the army and to pay off war debts. None of the texts mentioned in the previous paragraph mentioned the theatre. And the statutes listed in William's 1689 *Letter to the Lord Bishop of London* omitted one that was directly aimed at the stage, namely 3 James I, c. 21 which imposed a fine of £10 on

any person or persons [who] doe or shall in any Stage play Interlude Shewe Maygame or Pageant jestingly or prophanely speake or use the holy Name of God or Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghoste or of the Trinitie, which are not to be spoken but with feare and reverence.⁵⁵⁶

Efforts to reform the nation's manners also comprised campaigns by lay people to prosecute and punish those who infringed existing legislation against particular offences. From around 1691 societies for the reformation of manners, which urged people to inform on offenders to the civil magistrates, proliferated alongside previously established religious societies which sought to improve their own members' morals. The reformers' chief targets were drunkenness, profane swearing and cursing, blasphemy and profanation of the Lord's Day, as well as improper goings-on in taverns, ale houses and brothels.⁵⁵⁷

The theatres were not left out of the debate. Early in William and Mary's reign John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1691, argued in a sermon *The Evil of Corrupt Communication* that plays 'do most notoriously minister both to infidelity

⁵⁵⁵ Kenyon (ed.) 1969: 349; Portus 1912: 32-33.

⁵⁵⁶ Jackson 1938: 56 n. 3. The statute, from 1605-1606, is called *An Acte to restraine Abuses of Players*.

⁵⁵⁷ Anon 1694: 8; Anon 1698e: 8-10, 13; Anon 1699b: 4-5, 12-13; Fowler 1692: 11, 19; Woodward 1698: A3v-A4r and 1701: 3, 12, 16, 34.

and vice' and should be avoided.⁵⁵⁸ William Lloyd, Bishop of St. Asaph's, condemned the popularity of 'the playhouses and worse places' in the time of Charles II in *A Sermon Preached before the Queen at Whitehall, January 30 [1691]*.⁵⁵⁹ In December 1691 an attempt by a bishop in the House of Lords to suppress the theatres on grounds of lewdness was defeated.⁵⁶⁰ In 1694 one of the detailed suggestions contained in *Proposals for a National Reformation of Manners* anticipated Collier's strictures, namely, 'To supplicate their Majesties, That the publick Play-Houses may be suppressed', since they

have a direct tendency ... to corrupt and vitiate the minds of the generality ... of all who frequent them; and by consequence also of all those who converse with such ... in these Houses, Piety is strangely ridiculed, the holy reverend and dreadful Name of God profaned, and his Glory and Interest rendred contemptible or vile; and the City ... allured hereby into the love of, and delight in Idleness, excessive Vanity, Revellings, Luxury, Wantonness, Lasciviousness, Whoredoms, and such Debaucheries.⁵⁶¹

Specimen rules for members of religious societies published in 1698 required them 'wholly to avoid lewd Play-Houses'.⁵⁶² But despite all those protests - some calling for closure of the theatres and some for avoiding them pending reformation - no action was taken against the stage at this time. The reformation of manners campaign's relevance to the theatre pre-Collier should not be overstated. Moral reformers acted against private individuals but did not threaten the theatres which had the protection of operating under royal warrant. Dennis provocatively asked in *The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter, Being a Disswasive from the Play-House*: 'are not these Clamours [against the stage] against the Queen whose Servants the Players are? Is it not her that they attack thro' them?'⁵⁶³

If the theatre corrupted people who attended it, or who spoke to those who did, so that they took to profane cursing and swearing, blasphemy and the like, they but not the theatres would be targeted. In the year that *A Short View* was published, the statute 3 James I, c. 21 was listed in anthologies of legislation that the reformers and their networks of informers could invoke, but it was not acted upon either previously

⁵⁵⁸ Hellinger 1987: xxxvii; Tillotson 1702: 320-321.

⁵⁵⁹ Quoted in Claydon 1996: 104.

⁵⁶⁰ Milhous and Hume (eds.) 1991, item 1409.

⁵⁶¹ Anon 1694: 14-15.

⁵⁶² Woodward 1698: 125.

⁵⁶³ Dennis 1967: I 308.

or immediately afterwards.⁵⁶⁴ The character Lisander in James Wright's *Country Conversations* (1694) refers to the statute and comments rhetorically, 'How often this Penalty has been incurr'd, I will not determine'.⁵⁶⁵ Only in 1700-1702 were performers at the Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields theatres prosecuted under 3 James I, c. 21, including for speaking words in Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife* that Collier had condemned; prosecutions ceased after the actors pointed out the unfairness of being punished for speaking words written by others in plays that had been officially licensed for publication and performance.⁵⁶⁶ Josiah Woodward did not mention the theatre in 1701 in his review of the reformation societies' activities in *An Account of the Progress of the Reformation of Manners*, although he added anti-theatre sentiments in later editions.⁵⁶⁷

A third approach to *A Short View* has been to see it as reflecting Collier's political views. He had previously written extensively to defend his position as a nonjuror, that is, someone who refused to swear an oath of allegiance to William and Mary and lost his position as a clergyman as a result, on the grounds that his oath to James II remained in force and William was not James' hereditary successor.⁵⁶⁸ Collier denied that obedience was owed to William as *de facto* ruler.⁵⁶⁹ He also argued that only the church, and not the secular government, had the authority to deprive him and another 400 or so clergymen of their livings.⁵⁷⁰ Collier's criticism of perceived attacks on the nobility and the clergy in stage plays, based on his refusal to distinguish between attacks on the vices of particular fictional characters and denigration of the status of the nobility and the office of clergyman generally, was rooted in his rejection of attacks on James II on the grounds that they amounted to

⁵⁶⁴ The statute is listed in Anon 1698f under swearing and cursing, as also in Anon 1701a: L1v. Meriton (1698: 78) listed it under profanation of the Lord's Day. Statutes that Meriton identified as directed against 'Keepers of Play-houses and unlawful Games' refer not to theatres but to houses or other places where unlawful games such as dice, cards and bowls were played.

⁵⁶⁵ Wright 1694: 13.

⁵⁶⁶ Anon 1704b: 7-9; Collier 1698: 77, 83, 147; Krutch 1949: 169-176; Milhous and Hume (eds.) 1991, items 1637, 1643, 1653, 1658, 1661, 1673, 1674, 1679, 1683 and 1696.

⁵⁶⁷ Woodward 1702: 37, 1704: 27 and 1706: 2.

⁵⁶⁸ Collier 1691.

⁵⁶⁹ Collier 1689c.

⁵⁷⁰ Collier 1692; also *The Office of a Chaplain Enquir'd into* in Collier 1694: 25-27 (separately paginated).

attacks on the institution of kingship. He also emphasised the need for hierarchy, stability, principle, order and authority in society which were threatened by immoral forces, including William's usurpation of the throne and contemporary stage plays alike.⁵⁷¹ I believe this approach to *A Short View* is fruitful when seeking to understand Collier's motives for discussing ancient Greek tragedy in a work ostensibly concerned with contemporary comedy.

Those approaches to *A Short View* do not fully explain why Collier wrote it in the first place. He had not previously participated in the reformation of manners movement; Dennis mocked Collier for not attacking places other than the theatre that were frequented by rakes and strumpets, and where swearing and blaspheming abounded, such as 'Taverns, Brandy-Shops, Coffee-Houses, Chocolate-Houses, Gaming-Houses for the Rakes; and Indian-Houses, Musick-Houses, Bawdy-Houses'.⁵⁷² Nor had Collier's previous writings shown an interest in contemporary literature, the stage or ancient Greek or Roman dramatists. He was certainly able to read the plays in the original Greek. Collier was educated at the free school in Ipswich, where his father was a schoolmaster, before entering Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge in 1666 and again in 1669; he graduated B.A. in 1673 and M.A. in 1676.⁵⁷³ Collier's education would certainly have included the classics: Greek and Latin were commonly a major part of the curriculum in English schools in the seventeenth century; and at Cambridge, where most teaching was performed by college tutors, surviving syllabuses of tutors at Trinity and Emmanuel colleges from the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century show varying proportions of attention paid to logic, philosophy, mathematics, rhetoric and Greek and Latin poetry, oratory and history.⁵⁷⁴ The biographer of the historian Henry Wharton, who was admitted to Gonville and Caius in 1680, shortly after Collier left, relates that Wharton

pursued his Studies with an indefatigable Industry ... By the means of which ... he improved himself much in a little time; having also read thro most of the Classick Authors, particularly the Historians both Greek and Latin, besides divers considerable Writers in English.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷¹ Dawson 2005: 207-209, 213-214; Freeman 2007: 137-140; Hopes 1978: 161-168.

⁵⁷² Dennis 1967: I 305.

⁵⁷³ Venn 1897: 428; Salmon 2004. Collier's main opponent in the debate about the English stage, James Drake, was also admitted to Gonville and Caius College, in 1685 (Hill 2004).

⁵⁷⁴ Brooke 1985: 152; Clarke 1959: 34-43, 66; Morgan and Brooke 2004: 514-517.

⁵⁷⁵ Wharton 1697: A3v.

Collier might have undertaken similar studies.

Moreover, in both *A Short View* and *A Second Defence of the Short View* Collier quotes enough lines in the original Greek to demonstrate his own learning and credentials but not so many that they erect a barrier for the less well qualified reader. In *A Short View* he identifies his sources for both Aeschylus and Sophocles on one occasion each as ‘Ed. Steph.’, that is, the Greek-only editions of those authors’ plays published by Henri Estienne, known as Henricus Stephanus, at Geneva in 1557 and 1568 respectively. Also in *A Short View* he refers to his source for Euripides as ‘Ed. Cantab.’ which suggests the edition published in Greek with a Latin translation by Joshua Barnes at Cambridge in 1694. Comparison of the page numbers cited by Collier in notes in *A Short View* with the texts of those three editions confirms that they are the ones he used. He also used Barnes’ edition of Euripides when writing *A Second Defence of the Short View*. He gives no page references for his citations of Sophocles in this; but for Aeschylus he refers to ‘Ed. Stanl.’, that is, Thomas Stanley’s edition published in Greek with a Latin translation in London in 1663; again page references given by Collier match those of this edition.

What was Collier’s motive in writing *A Short View*? Collier’s opponents were quick to claim that he wrote it only for the money, fifty guineas or fifty pounds being the sum mentioned;⁵⁷⁶ Collier had written about the poverty of the deprived nonjurors in *A Perswasive to Consideration*.⁵⁷⁷ But there was more to it than that. In 1696 Collier had attracted widespread opprobrium for giving absolution on the scaffold to two people condemned to death for their part in a plot to assassinate William. He went into hiding and was apparently, strictly speaking, an outlaw for the rest of his life.⁵⁷⁸ He might well have concluded that it was too dangerous for him to continue writing in his anti-Williamite political vein and that a change of subject matter would be prudent. The reformation of manners movement had generated criticisms of the stage, even if they had not led to action, and, as I will show, there were other attacks on the theatre that did not directly stem from within the movement. The Lord Chamberlain had warned the theatres in June 1697 against performing plays

⁵⁷⁶ Anon 1699a: 85-86 and Settle 1698b: 69; also Gildon 1719: 213.

⁵⁷⁷ Collier 1693a: 21.

⁵⁷⁸ Brougham et al. (eds.) 1747: I 1408; Collier 1696a, b; Salmon 2004.

containing profane expressions (and did so again in February 1699).⁵⁷⁹ William's promise in his speech to the House of Lords in December 1697 'effectually to discourage Profaneness and Immorality', and the royal proclamation 'for Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Prophaneness' and a sermon by Samuel Wesley which called playhouses 'Schools of Vice, and Nurseries of Profaneness and Lewdness',⁵⁸⁰ both in February 1698, must have made Collier feel confident that his forthcoming extended moralising piece on 'the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage', a title no doubt chosen to echo the reformers' terminology, would be seen as connecting with current calls for reformation of manners. The titles of the first two chapters of *A Short View*, 'The Immodesty of the Stage' and 'The Profaness of the Stage', and the subdivision of the latter into 'Cursing and Swearing' and 'Abuse of Religion and Holy Scripture', echoed the reformers' language and preoccupations. Collier might have hoped to become an accepted participant in the discourse of moral reform; he had already published two volumes of moralising essays criticising particular types of behaviour such as pride, envy and covetousness.⁵⁸¹ The years after 1697 have been seen as the highpoint of the moral reform movement, in which case Collier's timing was perfect.⁵⁸² It is wrong to argue from consequence to purpose but it is worth noting reports that *A Short View* prompted a congratulatory letter to Collier from his former critic Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury,⁵⁸³ and that William himself was pleased to order that criminal charges against Collier should not be pursued.⁵⁸⁴

3.2. Ancient Greek tragedy in previous attacks on the stage

Collier could have written an attack on contemporary English comedies without mentioning the Greeks. It is at first sight odd that he should write about ancient Greek tragedy in that context given the differences in time, country, culture and genre. However, there had been many attacks on the stage in the previous 120

⁵⁷⁹ Milhous and Hume (eds.) 1991, items 1556, 1603.

⁵⁸⁰ Wesley 1698: 21.

⁵⁸¹ Collier 1694 and 1695.

⁵⁸² Hayton 1990: 53-60; Isaacs 1982: 396.

⁵⁸³ Hume 1999: 490.

⁵⁸⁴ Cibber 1740: 159. Lund (2012 : 88) comments that publication of *A Short View* 'restored Collier to a semblance of public respectability'.

years⁵⁸⁵ and recently there had been a tendency in such works to contrast the modern stage with that of the ancients to the former's disadvantage. That had already been the case with Henry Crosse's *Virtue's Commonwealth* (1603), mentioned in chapter 2.2, which contrasted the morality of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides with modern interludes in which 'nothing is made so vulgar and common, as beastly and palpable folly [and] lust, under color of love'.⁵⁸⁶ Now critics of the stage in the 1690s often compared ancient and modern theatre in order to highlight deficiencies in the latter, usually, however, at the level of generalities, without identifying specific plays. Wright's *Country Conversations* (1694) included a dialogue 'Of the modern comedies' in the form of a report of a conversation between Lisander and his two friends Mitis and Julio. Lisander denounces modern comedies as 'the very Pictures of Immorality' on grounds that Collier was to repeat. He complains that the leading characters commonly include 'two young Debauchees whom the Author calls Men of Wit and Pleasure' and a foolish knight who is 'sometimes a Rich Country Squire, but most commonly the Poet Dubs him'. Such plays fail to be 'directed to the improvement of Virtue, or the discountenance of Vice' but rather abuse or ridicule characters 'of True Worth, Integrity and Honour'. They also rail against marriage, contain lascivious and lewd language and show disrespect to the clergy. Nevertheless, modern plays could be instructive and entertaining 'if duly Regulated', since 'the Athenians and Romans, when their Comedies became Licentious, thought it not below the Dignity and Care of their Magistrates to Regulate their Faults'.⁵⁸⁷ Similar views were expressed by Rymer and Gildon (chapter 2.5).

Sir Richard Blackmore, in the preface to his heroic poem *Prince Arthur* (1695), made similar attacks on the contemporary stage which he coupled with praise for that of Athens where the state '[retained] the Poets on the side of Religion and the Government' and the stage was set up

to teach the People the Scheme of their Religion, and those Modes of Worship the Government thought fit to encourage, to convey to them such Ideas of their Deities, and Divine Providence, as might engage their Minds to a Reverence of superior, invisible Beings, and to observe and admire their Administration of humane Affairs.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ Ballein 1910: 9-26; Hellinger 1987: xxvii-xli.

⁵⁸⁶ Pollard (ed.) 2004: 192.

⁵⁸⁷ Wright 1694: 4-5, 8, 11-14.

⁵⁸⁸ Blackmore 1695: i.

John Phillips' poem *A Reflection on our Modern Poesy* (1695) combined attacks on the modern theatre with assertions that its faults were absent in 'happy Athens' whose stage 'Was moraliz'd by Sophocles wise Rage: / Who e're he did pretend to Poetry, / Search'd the grave Precepts of Philosophy'.⁵⁸⁹ Nor did the ancients base their plots on the enervating passion of love; their tragedies were 'Masculine' and each scene taught 'some Manlike Virtue':

Their Heroes were more Stern, and fit for Wars,
Scorn'd whining Love, and Jealousy's fond Jars:
But Ours, more fit for Cupid's Childish Arms,
Are Womens Fools, and Captives to their Charms.
The Stage, which Terror should with Pity move,
With us is wholly taken up in Love.⁵⁹⁰

And unlike modern dramatists, the ancients did not impiously ridicule the clergy:

Due Reverence to their Priests was always shown,
And Distance kept from the Mysterious Gown.
Calchas was Fear'd and Honour'd as a God,
The Grecian Army still Obey'd his Nod.⁵⁹¹

The ancients' superiority is all the more striking for their lacking the moral insights that the moderns derive from their Christian faith:

And now what weak Excuse, what vain Pretence,
Can Christian Poets bring in their Defence?
Shall Heathens teach by Nature's Glow-worm Light,
What they neglect when Faith directs their Sight?⁵⁹²

Many of those viewpoints are found in Collier as I will show.

3.3. Collier's use of ancient Greek tragedy: general

Crosse, Wright, Blackmore and Phillips all anticipate Collier, both in their attacks on contemporary comedy and in making use of the ancients to counterpoint the moderns' failings. Like them, Collier decided to make the immorality and profaneness of 1690s English comedies more apparent by comparing them with a much older theatrical tradition that he claimed did not show the same faults. What

⁵⁸⁹ Phillips J. 1695: 2.

⁵⁹⁰ Phillips J. 1695: 4.

⁵⁹¹ Phillips J. 1695: 6. Calchas is Agamemnon's advisor in Homer's *Iliad* and a powerful offstage figure in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

⁵⁹² Phillips J. 1695: 2-3.

distinguishes *A Short View* from those earlier writings, apart from its length, is Collier's combative style and the fact that he did not stop at the level of generalities but analysed particular modern comedies and ancient tragedies in detail, enabling his readers to follow his arguments closely and compare them with their own reactions to reading and, in the case of contemporary comedies, seeing performances of the same works. *A Short View* can be seen as an extended theatre review that invited its readers to join in.

Collier could have decided to make more use of modern playwrights as praiseworthy exemplars. In a section on swearing on the stage he commends, or at least finds excuses for, Shakespeare ('comparatively sober'), Jonson ('still more regular'), and Beaumont and Fletcher.⁵⁹³ He describes Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* as 'remarkably Moral, and a sort of Exhortation to Chastity'.⁵⁹⁴ He approves of how, when Shakespeare represents clergymen, 'for the most part he holds up the Function, and makes them neither Act, nor Suffer any thing unhandson'; and of how he shows Falstaff 'thrown out of Favour as being a Rake, and [dying] like a Rat behind the Hangings'.⁵⁹⁵ But even if Collier had found enough acceptable older English plays to show up the faults of his own time, he would not have been able to make a crucial methodological point. For one aspect that Collier especially stressed, to which Phillips had already alluded, was the paganism of the ancient Greeks and how this did not prevent their moral superiority to contemporary Christian writers. The moderns were all the more shameful for being less decent than even the ancient heathens. Instead of arguing that there were continuities between fifth century B.C. Athens and modern London, as some other writers did, Collier embraced the differences in time and culture between them. And rather than argue that the differences made it difficult to compare ancient Athens and modern London, he used them to reinforce his point about the relative degeneracy of the present. Differences in genre were not material to this.

Collier at first stresses the abhorrent character of the ancient Greeks' religion which

⁵⁹³ Collier 1698: 57.

⁵⁹⁴ Collier 1698: 51.

⁵⁹⁵ Collier 1698: 125, 154. Elsewhere Collier (1698: 10, 50, 187) criticises the character of Ophelia and Shakespeare's use of smut (Jonson is 'much more reserved') and anachronisms.

was in a great Measure a Mystery of Iniquity. Lewdness was Consecrated in the Temples, as well as practised in the Stews. Their Deitys were great Examples of Vice, and worship'd with their own Inclination.

Whereas, Collier continues,

the Christian Religion is quite of an other Complexion. Both its Precepts, and Authorities, are the highest discouragement to Licentiousness. It forbids the remotest Tendencies to Evil, Banishes the Follies of Conversation, and Obliges up to Sobriety of Thought. That which might pass for Raillery, and Entertainment in Heathenism, is detestable in Christianity. The Restraint of the Precept, and the Quality of the Deity, and the Expectations of Futurity quite alter the Case. But notwithstanding the Latitudes of Paganism, the Roman and Greek Theatres were much more inoffensive than ours.⁵⁹⁶

Collier excuses potential faults of decorum in the ancients' plays by arguing that they are only to be expected given their heathenism, and then argues that modern writers have no such excuse: 'Can we argue from Heathenism to Christianity? How can the practise be the same, where the Rule is so very different? Have we not a clearer Light to direct us, and greater Punishments to make us afraid?'⁵⁹⁷

As well as excusing errors by the ancients and stressing that he expected modern writers with the benefit of Christianity to do better, Collier gave examples of where the ancients were already morally superior. Thus

Cassandra in reporting the Misfortunes of the Greeks stops at the Adulteries of Clytemnestra and Aegiala [that is, Aegisthus] and gives this handsome reason for making a Halt ... "Foul Things are best unsaid, I am for no Muse, / That loves to flourish on Debauchery". Some Things are dangerous in report, as well as practise, and many times a Disease in the Description. This Euripides was aware of and manag'd accordingly, and was remarkably regular both in stile, and Manners. How wretchedly do we fall short of the Decencies of Heathenism!⁵⁹⁸

Collier analyses a number of Greek tragedies in detail, identifying their positive aspects, in the interests of his larger purpose which is condemnation of the modern stage. In this he was following in the footsteps of Rymer who, in *The Tragedies of the Last Age* had drawn on Euripides' story of the rivalry of Eteocles and Polynices in *The Phoenician Women* when discussing the handling of the fighting between

⁵⁹⁶ Collier 1698: 14-15.

⁵⁹⁷ Collier 1698: 95; also 86, 149 and 1699: 8, 1700: 90, 106-107, and 1708: 25.

⁵⁹⁸ Collier 1698: 34-35, referring to *The Trojan Women* lines 384-385.

Rollo and his brother Otto in Fletcher and Massinger's *Rollo, Duke of Normandy*.

Rymer illustrates how Euripides

seems so afraid that the Audience should forget that these dissensions are the effect of their Ancestors crimes; and in no wise spring from their own ill mind and election; that he is every where a hinting to us the curse entailed on the Family by their Grandfathers Marriage; the violence of superior powers, of Demons and Furies.

By contrast, Rollo fights and kills Otto 'without any remorse' and 'without any provocation', and threatens their mother and sister 'without any sense of honour or piety'. *Rollo* is thus far less able to move an audience to feel pity for the title character than Euripides' tragedy was in the case of Eteocles and Polynices.⁵⁹⁹

The characteristic feature of Rymer's comparisons of ancient and modern is his desire to illustrate how tragic effects should be achieved in the theatre. He is concerned with the best way to arouse the emotion of pity in the audience for characters who are shown committing terrible acts that in less skilled hands produce only revulsion. Rymer is getting to grips with Aristotelian theory which Beaumont and Fletcher had not known. But that was not Collier's prime concern. Initially he quoted Aristotle primarily in connection with comedy and also for saying that young people ought not to be permitted to see comedies.⁶⁰⁰ Only in passing did he note Euripides' 'peculiar Happiness for touching the Passions, especially that of Pity'.⁶⁰¹ However, in *A Second Defence of the Short View*, he felt it necessary to explore theory of tragedy more deeply when responding to Drake who claimed that Aristotle had distinguished between 'moral' and 'pathetick' tragedy, thereby indicating

not only that the Subjects of the Ancient Tragedy were not all Moral, but likewise that it was not necessary, that they should be so. He instances the *Phthioides*, and *Peleus*, two Tragedies that are lost, as examples of the Moral kind; and besides this mention of 'em, I do not remember any notice that he has taken of this sort of Tragedy.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁹ Rymer 1956: 29-32. Rymer (1956: 48, 73-74) also compares aspects of Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and no King* and *The Maid's Tragedy* with Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Children of Heracles*.

⁶⁰⁰ Collier 1698: 24, 159-160, 218, 234; also 1699: 6-8, 23-24, 38 (on poetic diction), 137; 1700: 18-20.

⁶⁰¹ Collier 1698: 30.

⁶⁰² Drake 1699: 192.

Drake commented that Aeschylus and Sophocles mainly wrote ‘pathetick’ tragedies;⁶⁰³ and that only Euripides’ *Alcestis*, in which Alcestis and her husband Admetus ‘reciprocally owe their lives to each others Virtue’, deserved ‘the name of a Moral Tragedy’.⁶⁰⁴ Moral plays ‘did not take at Athens’ since

Moral Tragedy not admitting such Incidents as were proper to move Terrour or Compassion, the Springs of Passion were wanting, and consequently the Audience were but weakly affected with such sort of representations.⁶⁰⁵

As Collier recognised, Drake misrepresented Aristotle.⁶⁰⁶ The latter identified four kinds of tragedy: first, those involving reversal and recognition; second, tragedies of suffering, such as Sophocles’ *Ajax*; third, tragedies of character, such as *Phthiotides* and *Peleus* mentioned by Drake as ‘moral’ tragedies; and fourth, spectacular tragedies.⁶⁰⁷ Drake seems to have meant by ‘pathetick’ tragedies those that aroused pity and terror. His use of the term ‘moral’ to identify the other kind, as when he declared that ‘the Fable of [Alcestis] is truly Moral’, risked, perhaps deliberately, confusing tragedies that represented virtuous characters with those that conveyed an uplifting moral message. By arguing that the Greeks did not favour ‘moral’ tragedies, he could be read as implying that they did not write morally improving ones, as when he observed that Aeschylus ‘seems scarce to have design’d any Moral to his Fables, or at least to have regarded it very little. His aim was wholly at the Pathetick, and he deals almost altogether in Objects of Terror’.⁶⁰⁸

Collier, in defending his claim that ancient tragedies were highly moralistic, made his own summary of Aristotle. He argued that Aristotle recognised four types of tragedy: first, one based on intrigue and discovery; second, ‘the Pathetick, the Beauty of which consists in the skill of touching the Passions, and awakening Terror and Pity to an unusual degree’; a third type ‘distinguish’d by a plain and pompous Narration without surprize of Incidents or Revolution of Affairs’ in which ‘the Gods made a great part of the Dialogue’; and, finally, the ‘Moral’, which ‘dealt chiefly in virtuous Examples, and Characters of Justice and Piety’. The second type corresponded to Drake’s ‘pathetick’ category and *Alcestis*, mentioned by Drake,

⁶⁰³ Drake 1699: 164.

⁶⁰⁴ Drake 1699: 193.

⁶⁰⁵ Drake 1699: 225.

⁶⁰⁶ Collier 1700: 75

⁶⁰⁷ Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 81.

⁶⁰⁸ Drake 1699: 179-180.

would be an example of the fourth. Collier avoided Drake's potential ambiguity over the meaning of 'moral' by arguing that all four types of tragedy 'were equally capable of a good Moral, and of adjusting Rewards and Punishments'.⁶⁰⁹ He also argued that all three Greek tragedians punished the malefactors in their plays and that Aristotle 'was not regardless of Poetick Justice'.⁶¹⁰ What mattered to Collier was not so much Aristotle's alleged categorisation of tragedy as the support that he claimed Aristotle lent to his own view that tragedy should serve a moral purpose. He declared that

The business of Plays is to recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice; To shew the Uncertainty of Humans Greatness, the suddain Turns of Fate, and the Unhappy Conclusions of Violence and Injustice: 'Tis to expose the Singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring every Thing that is Ill Under Infamy, and Neglect.⁶¹¹

A Short View aimed to show that the ancient tragedians had met that particular obligation better than modern comedies were doing, while also upholding other values that Collier held dear. I will illustrate this by showing how Collier interpreted a number of plays.

3.4. Attacks on authority

Collier condemned blasphemous comments in comedies by Congreve, Dryden and Vanbrugh before looking

a little into the Behaviour of the Heathens. Now 'tis no wonder to find them run riot upon this Subject. The Characters of their Gods were not unblemish'd. Their prospect of the other World, was but dim; neither were they under the Terrors of Revelation. However, they are few of them so bad as the Moderns.⁶¹²

Collier illustrates this by noting that the title character in Aeschylus' *Prometheus* is punished for his blasphemy, having refused

to submit even to Jupiter himself. The Chorus rebuke him for his Pride, and threaten him with greater Punishment. And the Poet to make all sure brings him to Execution before the end of the Play. He discharges Thunder and Lightning at his Head; shakes his Rock with an Earthquake,

⁶⁰⁹ Collier 1700: 75-76.

⁶¹⁰ Collier 1700: 80, 83.

⁶¹¹ Collier 1698: 1.

⁶¹² Collier 1698: 60-85, 86

turns the Air into Whirl-wind, and draws up all the Terrors of Nature to make him an example.⁶¹³

For Collier, Prometheus was rightly punished for wilful disobedience of Jupiter, by teaching men the secret of fire. It did not matter that Jupiter was a heathen god whom a modern Christian would not acknowledge had any claim to his submission, since Collier believed, like Cowley as mentioned in the Introduction (section 6), that it was important that men should recognise a spiritual dimension to life: ‘an honest Heathen is none of the worst Men: A very indifferent Religion well Believed, will go a great way’.⁶¹⁴ Collier also objected to Dryden’s characterisation of Jupiter as lewd and debauched in his *Amphitryon*.⁶¹⁵ Collier’s tactic of setting up a contrast between ancient and modern plays and his objections to critical representations of men of religion in general explain what Self sees as unusual in Collier’s ‘examples from the classical writers to illustrate their reverence of the priesthood – notwithstanding it was a priesthood dedicated to the service of what, for Collier, were pagan gods’.⁶¹⁶

Drake took sarcastic issue with Prometheus’ punishment, observing that it was

pretty singular and extravagant, that a Brother Immortal shou’d be treated so inhumanely by Jupiter, and his Fellow Gods, only for his Philanthropy, or Love to Mankind.⁶¹⁷

Collier retorted in *A Second Defence of the Short View* that Prometheus was not punished for ‘meer good Nature’:

‘Twas because he made bold with Jupiter’s Prerogative, broke into his Administration, and dispos’d of his Bounty against his Will ... Prometheus pretended it seems to understand what was fit for the World better than Jupiter, and to love Mankind more than he that made them. Now to do this, is Arrogance, and Imputation with a Witness.⁶¹⁸

The play ‘discountenanced Vice’ and ‘exposed the Singularities of Pride’, to use Collier’s formulation of ‘the business of Plays’ above, by showing the punishment of Prometheus’ blasphemy and arrogance. Collier also pointed to how arrogance towards the gods was duly punished in Aeschylus’ *Persians*:

Darius’s Ghost lays Xerxes’s ruin upon the excess of his Ambition.
‘Twas, because he made a Bridge over the Hellespont, used Neptune

⁶¹³ Collier 1698: 87-88.

⁶¹⁴ Collier 1698: 28.

⁶¹⁵ Collier 1698: 177-178, 182-183.

⁶¹⁶ Self 2000: 98-99.

⁶¹⁷ Drake 1699: 180; also 198-199.

⁶¹⁸ Collier 1700: 72-73.

contumeliously, and thought himself Superiour to Heaven. This Ghost tells the Chorus that the Persian Army miscarried for the outrages they did to Religion, for breaking down the Altars, and plundering the Gods.⁶¹⁹

Collier had previously written *A Moral Essay Concerning the Nature and Unreasonableness of Pride* which he declared was ‘originally founded in Self-love, which is the most intimate and inseparable Passion of humane Nature’, blinded men to their own intellectual and moral imperfections, and gave them ‘too high an Opinion of [their] own Excellency’.⁶²⁰ For Collier, Prometheus and Xerxes displayed those failings.

Collier had developed his theme in *A Moral Essay* by considering how men should regard the different degrees of learning, nobility and power among men. He asserted that differences in men’s ‘quality’ should be respected and maintained:

we are to observe that outward Respect ought to be given according to the Distinctions of Law, and though a Man may happen to be very defective in point of merit, yet we ought to take notice of the value Authority has set upon him.⁶²¹

When Collier protested about noblemen being made to look ridiculous in plays by Congreve and Vanbrugh, his reference to ‘levelling’ was a reminder that he was concerned about the undermining of the social hierarchy and proper authority:

What necessity is there to kick the Coronets about the Stage, and to make a Man a Lord, only in order to make him a Coxcomb. I hope the Poets don’t intend to revive the old Project of Levelling, and Vote down the House of Peers.⁶²²

Crosse had anticipated Collier on this matter in *Virtue’s Commonwealth*, denouncing the representation in plays of ‘the faults and scandals of great men, as magistrates, ministers, and such as hold public places’ which ‘must needs breed disobedience and slight respect of their authority, whereof ensueth breach of law and contempt of superiors’.⁶²³ Collier himself, in *A Moral Essay Concerning Cloaths*, had claimed that

those who make their Cloaths much better than their Condition, do but expose their Discretion. Persons of Quality have some little Colour for their Vanity: But as for others, they have nothing to say for themselves.

⁶¹⁹ Collier 1698: 88.

⁶²⁰ Collier 1694: 4, 8, 12 (separately paginated).

⁶²¹ Collier 1694: 15; also 89 (separately paginated).

⁶²² Collier 1698: 175-176.

⁶²³ Pollard (ed.) 2004: 190.

In them it looks like a Levelling Principle; like an illegal Aspiring into a forbidden Station. It looks as if they had a mind to destroy the Order of Government, and to confound the Distinctions of Merit and Degree.⁶²⁴

No seventeenth-century reader could miss the allusions to the Levellers, the mid-century radicals who, in the Putney Debates in 1647, had challenged Cromwell with their programme of popular sovereignty in opposition to the exclusive claims of property owners. In *A Short View* Collier repeated the allusion to ‘levelling’ by insisting, ‘To treat Honour, and Infamy alike, is an injury to Virtue, and a sort of Levelling in Morality ... to compliment Vice, is but one Remove from worshipping the Devil’.⁶²⁵ And he criticised satirical attacks in stage plays on figures of authority since ‘to treat Persons of Condition like the Mob, is to degrade their Birth, and affront their Breeding. It levels them with the lowest Education’.⁶²⁶ Collier’s defence of the gods’ punishment of Prometheus reflected his political concern for the maintenance of the established hierarchy and authority which Prometheus had endangered by undermining the gods’ exclusive possession of the knowledge of fire and giving mankind an inflated view of its own status and power.

With that in mind, I turn to Sophocles’ *Antigone* in which the title character defies the ruler of Thebes, Creon, by insisting on burying the body of her brother Polynices who had died in a struggle for the throne with their brother Eteocles who had also been killed. Given Collier’s continuing acceptance of James II as *de jure* king while denying William and Mary’s position as *de facto* rulers, it would not have been surprising if (admittedly anticipating Hegel by a century, as I mention in the Conclusion below) he had been interested in the clash between two different value systems, Antigone’s based on family ties and the observance of traditional religious rituals and Creon’s rooted in possession of political authority. But Collier finesses the challenge: as already mentioned, he might have felt it wise not to write as directly as before about the relative claims of religious and secular power. Instead he concentrates on two other aspects of the play: Creon’s treatment of the priest Tiresias, who warns him against pursuing his policy, and the relationship between Antigone and Creon’s son Haemon (I look at the latter point in 3.6 below).

⁶²⁴ Collier 1694: 17 (separately paginated).

⁶²⁵ Collier 1698: preface A5v.

⁶²⁶ Collier 1698: 205.

The character of Tiresias is one of several examples that Collier gives of how the ancient playwrights respected the position of priests. Tiresias ‘advises Creon to wave the Rigour of his Edict, And not let the Body of Polynices lie unburied, and expos’d’. But ‘Creon replies in a rage’ and rightly suffers for it:

Soon after, his Son, and Queen, kill themselves. And in the close the Poet who speaks in the Chorus, explains the Misfortune, and points upon the Cause, and affirms that Creon was punish’d for his Haughtiness and Impiety.⁶²⁷

By attributing Creon’s misfortunes (or rather, those of his son and queen), not to his unbending insistence on the observance of his edict, but to the fact that he defied a warning from a priest, Collier sidestepped the more difficult issue of the relative claims of the religious and secular powers and turned the issue into one of respect for the priesthood. This was a broad enough concern for Collier to feel able to broach it. It was not, however, entirely unproblematical. In *A Brief Essay Concerning the Independency of Church-Power* Collier had derived the authority of the priesthood directly from ‘Heaven it self’:

Our Blessed Saviour, who Redeemed the Church, was pleased to settle the Administration of it by his own Appointment: From Him the Apostles received Authority to teach and govern such as were Converted by them ... Neither was this Power to expire with the Apostles, but be conveyed by Succession through all Ages of the World.

The principle of apostolic succession demonstrated that ‘Churchmen ... have their Authority from God’.⁶²⁸ What made that assertion potentially controversial was the context into which Collier inserted it, namely his argument that the king and parliament had no authority to deprive nonjuring priests of their livings. This is the subtext of Collier’s examples of how the ancients demonstrated respect for the priests in their plays: Amphiaraus who guarded the sixth gate of Thebes in Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes*;⁶²⁹ Tiresias in Euripides’ *Bacchae*, in which ‘Pentheus who threatned him, is afterwards punish’d for his Impiety’;⁶³⁰ the title character in Sophocles’ *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians* who ‘is made Priestess to

⁶²⁷ Collier 1698: 89-90; also 120.

⁶²⁸ Collier 1692: 2, 12.

⁶²⁹ Collier 1698: 88, 119.

⁶³⁰ Collier 1698: 121; also 1700: 69.

Diana; and her Father thought himself happy in her Employment’;⁶³¹ and Tiresias in Euripides’ *Phoenician Women*.⁶³²

Collier contrasts those plays with comedies by Wycherley, Otway, Congreve, Dryden and Vanbrugh in which he complains that priests and the priesthood are abused.⁶³³ In Dryden’s tragedy *Don Sebastian* the character whose portrayal offends Collier is not a Christian clergyman but a mufti. Drake mocked Collier for this and complained that he

sets Priests of all Religions upon the same Foot. So they be but Priests, ‘tis no matter to whom, he expects they shou’d be respected and reverenc’d; the compliment must be paid to their Livery, whether it be Christs or the Devils.⁶³⁴

Leaving aside Drake’s pejorative tone, that is precisely what Collier believed. Attacks on all priests had to be avoided if plays were to ‘recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice’.⁶³⁵ Collier argued in the case of Oedipus’ verbal assault on Tiresias that

all Oedipus his reproaches relate to Tiresias’s person, there is no such Thing as a general Imputation upon his Function: But the English Oedipus [by Dryden and Lee] makes the Priesthood an Imposturous Profession; and rails at the whole Order.⁶³⁶

Collier was straining to make that argument given his repeated objection to satirical portrayals of members of the clergy in modern comedies where he refused to acknowledge that it was possible to make such a distinction; his policy of praising the plays of the ancients to condemn those of the moderns led him to try to do so on this occasion. In *Vindiciae Juris Regii* he had referred to ‘that pernicious distinction between the King’s Person and his Authority, which has been always too prevalent’.⁶³⁷ And in *A Defence of the Short View* he argued that the ancients avoided attacks on priests lest they be construed as politically destabilising attacks on their function:

⁶³¹ Collier 1698: 121; also 1700: 68.

⁶³² Collier 1698: 120-121.

⁶³³ Collier 1698: 98-110.

⁶³⁴ Drake 1699: 212.

⁶³⁵ Lund (2012: 88-90) observes that Collier and his supporters believed that ‘no cleric, not even hated Catholic priests, should suffer ridicule on the stage, lest reflections fall on the Church of England as well’.

⁶³⁶ Collier 1698: 120.

⁶³⁷ Collier 1689a: 47.

Though the Function and the Person are separable in Notion, they are joyn'd in Life and Business ... a Censure frequently slides from the one to the other. If you make the Man a Knave, the Priest must suffer under the Imputation: And a Fool in his Person, will never be thought discreet in his Function. Upon this account Persons in Authority, whether Spiritual or Civil, ought to be privileg'd from Abuse. To make the Ministers of Church or State, the subject of Laughter and Contempt, disables their Authority, and renders their Commission insignificant. The Heathen Dramatists seem sensible of this reasoning, and practice accordingly.⁶³⁸

Drake pointed out the incongruity of Collier's defence of Oedipus' attack on Tiresias which ran contrary to his usual position of '[allowing] no distinction betwixt the Man and the Priest'.⁶³⁹ Collier was also criticised for defending the clergy against attacks in stage plays after having himself criticised individual clergymen who swore allegiance to William.⁶⁴⁰

3.5. The chorus and poetic justice

Collier saw the chorus as upholders of moral standards and vehicles for the explanation of the plays' moral messages: the Chorus 'is usually the Poets Interpreter'.⁶⁴¹ When Aeschylus' *Prometheus* 'blusters with a great deal of Noise, and Stubbornness ... the Chorus rebuke him for his Pride, and threaten him with greater Punishment'.⁶⁴² In *Oedipus*, 'The Chorus condemns the Liberty of Jocasta, who obliquely charged a Practise upon the Oracle ... The same Chorus recommends Piety, and Relyance upon the Gods, and threatens Pride and Irreligion with Destruction'.⁶⁴³ At the end of *Antigone*, 'the Poet who speaks in the Chorus, explains the Misfortune, and points upon the Cause, and affirms that Creon was punish'd for his Haughtiness and Impiety'.⁶⁴⁴ Collier drew attention to the occasion in Euripides' *Hippolytus* when Phaedra 'declaims with a great deal of Satyr against intemperate Women; she concluded rather to die than dishonour her husband and Stain her

⁶³⁸ Collier 1699: 69-70; also 73-74, 80; *The Office of a Chaplain Enquir'd into* (Collier 1694: 3, separately paginated); Collier 1698: 139.

⁶³⁹ Drake 1699: 358.

⁶⁴⁰ Anon 1698b: 18-19; Anon 1699a: 17.

⁶⁴¹ Collier 1698: 50.

⁶⁴² Collier 1698: 87, perhaps referring to the chorus' lines 178-185.

⁶⁴³ Collier 1698: 89. Jocasta criticises oracles at lines 723-725, 857-858 and 952-953; the chorus's lines Collier alludes to could be those at 883-910.

⁶⁴⁴ Collier 1698: 90, referring to the chorus' lines 1347-1353.

Family’, whereupon ‘the Chorus is transported with the Virtue of her Resolution’.⁶⁴⁵
In two other plays of Euripides the chorus provides a moralising commentary on the action:

In Euripides’s *Bacchae*, Pentheus is pull’d in pieces for using Bacchus with Disrespect. And the Chorus observes that God never fails to punish Impiety, and Contempt of Religion ... And the Chorus in *Heraclidae* affirm it next to Madness not to worship the Gods.⁶⁴⁶

Collier also neatly connected the chorus with poetic justice. He praised the Greeks for showing the guilty punished in line with poetic justice, instancing Sophocles’ Ajax, whose distraction is represented as ‘inflicted for his Pride and Atheism’, and, as already mentioned, Creon and his family in *Antigone*.⁶⁴⁷ Collier also came to the conclusion that ‘much the major part of Euripides’s Plays are unexceptionable in their Moral’ and that ‘Poetick Justice was generally the Poet’s Care’.⁶⁴⁸ The chorus was a means by which the case for poetic justice was articulated. Collier mentions Horace’s advice to the chorus

to appear for Virtue, and perform the Offices of Friendship; To recommend Justice, and pray the Gods that Fortune might follow Desert. Now the Chorus, we know, was to unite with the Subject, to support the Design of the Play, and represent the Sence of the Poet. If therefore Horace would have the Chorus solicit thus strongly for Justice; he expected, no doubt, the Catastrophe should be govern’d by the same Instructions.⁶⁴⁹

Drake turned Collier’s view of the chorus as bearers of the ancient plays’ moral message against him by finding their pronouncements inadequate to the purpose. He was unconvinced by Collier’s view of the chorus in *Oedipus* which ‘however noble and beautiful to admiration, for the Structure and Contrivance of it, is yet very deficient in the Moral, which has nothing great or serviceable to Virtue in it,’ finding this in the chorus’ closing ‘advice to the Audience, that they should not rashly measure any man’s Felicity by his present Fortune, but wait his extremest Moments, to make a true estimate of his Happiness’.⁶⁵⁰ Drake was scathing of Sophocles’ *Ajax*, quoting the chorus’ closing words (‘Experience teaches us much, but before the

⁶⁴⁵ Collier 1698: 30-31, referring to the chorus’ lines 764-775.

⁶⁴⁶ Collier 1698: 94, referring to the chorus’ lines 1153-1164 and 1327-1328 in *The Bacchae* and 901-908 in *The Children of Heracles*.

⁶⁴⁷ Collier 1698: 88, 90.

⁶⁴⁸ Collier 1700: 70-71.

⁶⁴⁹ Collier 1700: 83.

⁶⁵⁰ Drake 1699: 131.

Event is seen, ne'r a Prophet of 'em all can tell what things will come to') which he interpreted as criticism of priests, to which Collier might have been expected to object, and commenting that 'there is no doubt, but 'twas the Poets real sense. For 'tis spoken by the Chorus, and made the Moral of the Play'.⁶⁵¹

3.6. Sexual morality

Much discussion of Sophocles' *Antigone* focussed on the issue of decorum and female modesty. Dennis had mentioned in *The Impartial Critick*, as 'a particular instance of something that must needs have been very moving with the Athenians, which yet would have been but ill receiv'd amongst us', the fact that Antigone, when condemned to be buried alive, four times bewails that she will 'go to Hell with her Maiden-head', that is, without having been married.⁶⁵² Such passages, which 'mov'd the Athenians so much', 'would have been laugh'd at with us' and appeared contemptible. The reason for this is 'the difference of Climate and Customs'. The Athenians, like modern Italians, believed that in women

Passion was predominant over Reason ... and that they were perpetually thinking, how they might make some Improvement of the Talent which Nature had given their Sex ... But we having quite contrary thoughts of our Women; which is plain, by the Confidence which we so generously repose in them, a Maid who had said, what Antigone did, upon our Stage, would have said something that would have appear'd a frailty particular and surprizing, and would have been ridiculous.

Dennis was not criticising Antigone's preoccupation with her unmarried state; rather he was explaining that what moved the Athenians would strike a modern English audience as inappropriate. The reason was 'the difference of Climate and Customs': in ancient Greece 'Women under so warm a Sun, melted much sooner than ours. Nor were they so fantastick as long to refuse what they eternally desired'.⁶⁵³

Collier in *A Short View*, while acknowledging that 'Antigone amongst her other Misfortunes laments her dying Young and Single', concentrates instead on the fact that in the process she modestly 'says not one word about Haemon', Creon's son,

⁶⁵¹ Drake 1699: 357-358.

⁶⁵² Referring to Antigone's speeches at lines 806-816, 857-871, 876-882 and 891-928.

⁶⁵³ Dennis 1967: I 12.

whom she loves, any more than Haemon labours his love for her.⁶⁵⁴ Indeed, Sophocles

takes care not to bring these two Lovers upon the Stage together, for fear they might prove unmanageable. Had They been with us, they had met with kinder treatment. They might have had Interviews and Time and Freedom enough. Enough to mud their Fancy, to tarnish their Quality, and make their Passion Scandalous.⁶⁵⁵

Collier condemned modern plays for ‘dilating so much upon the Argument of Love’: ‘Tis often the governing Concern: The Incidents make way, and the Plot turns upon’t’. Even worse is the way that the theme of love cloaked itself with language and sentiments that should be reserved for matters of higher significance:

The Hero’s Mistress is no less than his Deity ... What Sovereign Respect, what Religious Address, what Idolizing Raptures are we pester’d with? ... Love and Devotion, Ceremony and Worship are Confounded; And God, and his Creatures treated both alike! These Shreds of Distraction are often brought from the Play-House into Conversation: And thus the Sparks are taught to Court their Mistresses, in the same Language they say their Prayers.⁶⁵⁶

Collier combines a concern for decorum with a wish to preserve the boundary between the temporal and the spiritual lest the immodesty of the playhouse should infect life outside it and fail to ‘recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice’.

Drake turns Collier’s point against him. He uses the fact that Antigone does not mention Haemon to condemn her for being indifferent as to the object of her desires:

she was very desirous to dispose of her Maiden-head; but for any thing that appears from her complaint or behaviour, she was very indifferent to whom. ‘Twas a Burthen she long’d to be rid of, and seem’d not to care who eas’d her; for she does not mention her Contract with Haemon, which she decently might, but laments her want of a Husband in general terms, without giving the least hint of an Honourable Love for any particular person.⁶⁵⁷

Drake acknowledges that Collier thought that ‘tis out of pure regard to Modesty and Decency, that Antigone takes no notice of Haemon in her complaints’, but sets aside the difference between ancient Greece and modern England, that Dennis had

⁶⁵⁴ Gildon (1718: I 200, 202) and (Adams 1729: II 35-36) also praised Antigone’s modesty regarding her love for Haemon.

⁶⁵⁵ Collier 1698: 29-30.

⁶⁵⁶ Collier 1698: 281-283.

⁶⁵⁷ Drake 1699: 300.

identified, in order to condemn Antigone, and hence Collier, by the standards of his own time:

I shall not dispute, whether 'twere the fashion in the days of Sophocles or not; but I am sure 'tis accounted but an ill Symptome of Modesty in our Age, when a young Lady shews an impatience to be married, before she has made a Settlement of her Affection upon any Individual Man.⁶⁵⁸

In *A Second Defence of the Short View* Collier sought refuge in Dennis' cultural relativism. He described Antigone's laments that she must die young and single as the product of 'the Tenderness of her Sex' and as 'some natural Starts of Concern ... according to the Custom of that Age, and the Eastern Countreys'.⁶⁵⁹ Collier and Drake had similar exchanges about Electra's lament in Sophocles' play and Polyxena's in Euripides' *Hecuba* that they must die unmarried.⁶⁶⁰

Modesty in sexual matters was also at the heart of Collier's comments on Euripides' *Hippolytus* in which Phaedra's love for the title character, her stepson, has tragic consequences for them both. Collier praised Euripides for observing decorum by showing Phaedra as unwilling openly to acknowledge or act upon her passion:

Phaedra when possess'd with an infamous Passion, takes all imaginable Pains to conceal it. She is as regular and reserv'd in her Language as the most virtuous Matron ... her Frensy is not Lewd; She keeps her Modesty even after She has lost her Wits.

Collier contrasts Phaedra's restraint with one of Shakespeare's characters:

Had Shakespear secur'd this point for his young Virgin Ophelia, the Play had been better contriv'd. Since he was resolv'd to drown the Lady like a Kitten, he should have set her a swimming a little sooner. To keep her alive only to sully her Reputation, and discover the Rankness of her Breath, was very Cruel.⁶⁶¹

The author of *A Vindication of the Stage* immediately pointed to scenes between Phaedra and her nurse in which the latter urges her mistress not to resist her feelings, arguing that the play thereby affronted decency even if not through Phaedra's actions:

there I think we may meet with as home strokes of Obscenity, and as pithy arguing on the Subject, as can be found among the Moderns. It will be but a lame excuse, to say it is the Nurse, and not Phedra, the Lady,

⁶⁵⁸ Drake 1699: 300-301.

⁶⁵⁹ Collier 1700: 110.

⁶⁶⁰ Polyxena: Drake 1699: 301-302 and Collier 1700: 111-112. Electra: Drake 1699: 301 and Collier 1700: 110-111.

⁶⁶¹ Collier 1698: 10.

speaks the faulty Sentences, for if the Audience have them, the matter is not much by whom they are convey'd.⁶⁶²

The writer astutely anticipated Collier's likely riposte, namely that the attitude and language of the nurse was less objectionable in her, a servant, than it would have been in Phaedra, a king's wife. Collier did indeed excuse Plautus' use of lewd language because it occurred

only in prostituted and Vulgar People ... by confining his Rudeness to little People, the Fault is much extenuated ...[and is] not so likely to pass into Imitation: Slaves and Clowns are not big enough to spread Infection; and set up an ill Fashion.⁶⁶³

Gildon was still concerned over 20 years later to defend Phaedra's character: her 'criminal passion' for Hippolytus 'sprung not from an immodest corruption of her manners; but was inflicted upon her by the anger of Venus, and she struggled with it to the utmost of her power'.⁶⁶⁴

For Collier, Aeschylus was a particularly modest writer. He declared that Aeschylus

had always a nice regard to Good Manners. He knew corrupting the People was the greatest disservice to the Commonwealth; And that Publick Ruine was the effect of general Debaucherys. For this reason he declines the Business of Amours, and declares expressly against it.⁶⁶⁵

When Collier discussed the Furies in *Eumenides* he highlighted one of their less obvious qualities which he made to fit with his concern for sexual morality and restraint:

They wish the Virgins may all Marry and make the Country Populous: Here the Poet do's but just glance upon the Subject of Love; and yet he governs the Expression with such care, that the wishes contain a Hint to Sobriety, carry a face of Virtue along with them.⁶⁶⁶

Collier's comment on Aeschylus' *Suppliants* also had an eye to morality:

Danaus cautions his daughters very handsomely in point of Behaviour. They were in a Strange Country, and had Poverty and Dependance to struggle with: These were circumstances of Danger ... He leaves

⁶⁶² Anon 1698b: 7-8.

⁶⁶³ Collier 1698: 15-16; also 86.

⁶⁶⁴ Gildon 1721: 229.

⁶⁶⁵ Collier 1698: 26.

⁶⁶⁶ Collier 1698: 27.

therefore a solemn Charge with them for their Security, bids them never to subsist upon Infamy, but to prefer their Virtue to their Life.⁶⁶⁷

Collier's concern to discover examples of high sexual moral standards in the ancient Greek tragedians, and to do his best to present *Hippolytus* in a favourable light, both addressed a major preoccupation of the moral reformers in the 1690s and gave Collier the opportunity to inveigh all the more heavily against writers of contemporary English comedy for 'making their Top Characters Libertines, and giving them Success in their Debauchery'.⁶⁶⁸ His methodology is underlined by the way in which he inserts between his praise of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and *Suppliants* condemnation of the character of Lord Touchwood in Congreve's *The Double Dealer* for being 'a mixture of Smut and Pedantry ... and yet this Lord was one of his best Characters'.⁶⁶⁹

3.7. The Electra stories and matricide, *Oedipus* and *Medea*

3.7.1 Electra

Sophocles' *Electra* ends with the killing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus by Orestes and the chorus sings that the children of Atreus have achieved their freedom. Euripides' *Electra* takes a different turn as the playwright confronts the awkward fact that an act of justifiable vengeance for a father's murder has involved matricide, in which Electra as well as Orestes has played an active part. The gods Castor and Polydeuces, sons of Zeus and Clytemnestra's brothers, require Electra to marry Orestes' friend, Pylades, and tell Orestes that he must leave Argos and be tried for his mother's murder in Athens, although he will be acquitted as Apollo will take the blame on himself (as in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*).

Collier at first avoided saying much about the plays, commenting of Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers* that 'Orestes was obliged by the Oracle to revenge his Fathers Death in the Murther of his Mother'.⁶⁷⁰ Drake thought that the moral of *Electra* was that 'Divine Vengeance seldom fails to overtake great Villanies' but was

⁶⁶⁷ Collier 1698: 27-28.

⁶⁶⁸ Collier 1698: 2.

⁶⁶⁹ Collier 1698: 27.

⁶⁷⁰ Collier 1698: 27.

not impressed with it.⁶⁷¹ He also disapproved of the way in which, in both *Electra* plays, Providence was involved in ‘promoting Villany’ and protecting the malefactors, reflecting a harsh view of the matricides.⁶⁷² Collier rose to the bait in *A Second Defence of the Short View* with reference to Sophocles’ play, arguing that

when we consider, that [Orestes] was put upon this Practice by the Oracle, to revenge his Father’s Murther, and the Abuse of his Bed; This Consideration, I say, upon the Heathen Theology, seems to excuse the Fact.⁶⁷³

Euripides’ play was more problematical because in this *Electra* follows her mother into the house where she is to be slain and puts her hand on the sword that kills her. Again Collier and Drake disagreed. Collier in *A Short View*, perhaps seeking to deflect attention away from the matricide by raising a different point, had mentioned that when Orestes in Aeschylus’ *Libation-Bearers* ‘was going to kill [his mother], he Mentions her Cruelty, but waves her Adultery. Euripides approv’d this Reservedness and makes his *Electra* practise it upon the same occasion’.⁶⁷⁴ This is a reference to a passage in Euripides’ play in which *Electra* refrains from commenting on Aegisthus’ behaviour towards women generally as unbecoming a virgin (lines 945-946).⁶⁷⁵ Drake addressed a different point, albeit in the same speech and garbling the context. He criticised various characters in Euripides’ plays for their immodest and intemperate language, including *Electra* who

when she is urging her Brother Orestes to the murder of Aegisthus ... bids him [that is, Aegisthus] ring in his Ears the whoring of her Mother, and tell him, that since he had a Whore of her he must expect sharers in her, and be the Cuckold of other Men, as her Father had been his. That he was notorious for her Cully all the Town over. This sort of stuff she lets run over without regard to Decency, and rambles as wantonly thro the Infamy of her Family, as if ‘twere only Scandal pickt up at a Gossiping, in which they had no particular Concern.⁶⁷⁶

Electra at this point (lines 921-924) is in fact abusing the already dead Aegisthus.

⁶⁷¹ Drake 1699: 155-156.

⁶⁷² Drake 1699: 218-219.

⁶⁷³ Collier 1700: 65.

⁶⁷⁴ Collier 1698: 27

⁶⁷⁵ As already mentioned (3.3), Collier (1698: 34-35) praises a similar example of restraint by Cassandra in Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*. Needless to say, Drake (1699: 305-309) attacked the character of Cassandra, asking rhetorically ‘whether Casandra or Ophelia wou’d best become the Cloyster, or most needs the Discipline of the Nunnery in Moorfields’. Also inevitably, Collier (1700: 113-114) defended Cassandra.

⁶⁷⁶ Drake 1699: 312-313.

Collier in *A Second Defence of the Short View* can do no better than to repeat himself and exculpate Euripides' Electra, not of her involvement in the matricide, but of using indecent language in the process:

'Tis true, she encourages Orestes to kill his Mother, but then she stands clear of Indecency, and says nothing in that respect, misbecoming her Character: So far from that, that she won't so much as mention the Debaucheries of Aegystus; no not when she was recounting his other Villanies, and triumphing in his being Dispatch'd. She runs over his guilt in Murther and Injustice, but when she came to his Lewdness, she cuts off her Story, and declares it, no fit Subject for a single Lady.⁶⁷⁷

3.7.2. Oedipus

Sophocles' *Oedipus* was a tragedy that Collier and others found particularly problematical. In the sixteenth century Joachim Camerarius, in *Argumentum fabulae* (1534), understood tragedy to be an unexpected and undeserved change of the tragic hero's fortune from good to bad, resulting from an involuntary crime committed out of ignorance or against one's own will; Dryden was to reflect this viewpoint in the preface to *The Mock Astrologer* (1671), commenting disapprovingly that Sophocles punished Oedipus and his posterity for 'the sin which he knew not he had committed'.⁶⁷⁸ Then in 1545 Philipp Melanchthon argued in *Cohortatio ad legendas tragoedias et comoedias*, and in lectures published in the following year, that the tragic hero's downfall was the result of divine providence justly punishing a crime that the hero's vices, uncontrolled, depraved passions and character flaws had led him to commit.⁶⁷⁹ For some time, however, it proved difficult to apply to *Oedipus* the interpretation that came to be applied to other Greek tragedies, namely that punishment was meted out for a crime committed as a result of a character's ungovernable passions. Then in 1692 Dacier argued that Oedipus' guilt stemmed from his rashness, pride and curiosity and that divine punishment did indeed follow as a consequence of those sins.⁶⁸⁰ His rashness and blind curiosity and not his crimes were the causes of his misfortune.⁶⁸¹ His fault was that of a man, who enraged by the insolence of a coachman, killed four men two days after an oracle warned him that he

⁶⁷⁷ Collier 1700: 115-116.

⁶⁷⁸ Dryden 1962: I 151.

⁶⁷⁹ Lurie 2012: 441-444.

⁶⁸⁰ Lurje 2006: 3-9.

⁶⁸¹ Dacier 1692a: 79-80.

would kill his own father.⁶⁸² He was neither good nor wicked but a mixture of virtues and vices, the latter being pride, violence and a quick temper, rashness and imprudence. It is these that brought about his misfortune, not incest and parricide, punishment for which would have been unjust since they were involuntary crimes.⁶⁸³

Dennis immediately adopted this interpretation in *The Impartial Critick* (1693), referring to Dacier, perhaps recognising that the moral to be derived from Oedipus' fate was more relevant to readers or an audience if it originated not in an unintended act of incest but in a fault they could more easily recognise in themselves:

The faults for which Oedipus suffers in Sophocles, are his vain Curiosity, in consulting the Oracle about his Birth, his Pride in refusing to yield the way, in his return from that Oracle, and his Fury and Violence in attacking four Men on the Road, the very day after he had been forewarn'd by the Oracle, that he should kill his Father ... The Curiosity of Oedipus proceeded from a Vanity, from which no Man is wholly exempt; and his Pride, and the Slaughter which it caused him to commit on the Road, were partly caused by his Constitution, and an unhappy and violent Temper.⁶⁸⁴

Not everyone immediately followed Dennis' lead. The following year, Gildon, in *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays*, argued like Dryden that the play's moral was that 'no man can be call'd happy before his death';⁶⁸⁵ and in 1698, in the preface to *Phaeton*, he expressly denied Dacier's interpretation that Oedipus 'was punish'd for his Curiosity and Rashness, not Parricide and Incest', arguing that 'consulting the Oracle, was so far from being a Fault in the Heathen Religion, that it was one of its chief Duties'.⁶⁸⁶

This is the point at which Collier published *A Short View* (although, strictly speaking, it appeared just before Gildon's *Phateon*) in which he avoided writing about the nature of Oedipus' offence and, as already mentioned, discussed the portrayal of Tiresias instead. But Drake was more rigorous than Collier in addressing

⁶⁸² Dacier 1692a: 183.

⁶⁸³ Dacier 1692a: 184; similarly 98, 182, 255, 270 and 1692b: viii, 153, 161, 165, 174, 177, 192, 294. Liapis (2012: 94) offers a modern critique of that approach ('hopelessly reductive and irremediably tainted by Christian moralism'; and 'it [is] hard to reconcile the notion that Oedipus is punished for ... his intellectual pride with the fact that his crimes were foretold before his birth').

⁶⁸⁴ Dennis 1967: I 20.

⁶⁸⁵ Dryden 1962: I 248; Gildon 1694: 107.

⁶⁸⁶ Gildon 1698: b2r. Gildon (1703: A4v; 1710a: xxxiii, xlvi-xlvii, liii; 1715: 71; 1718: I 243-244, 255) later adopted Dacier's and Dennis' approaches, as did Adams (1729: 1 a3r, a7r-a7v, d1v, 174).

the tragedy's fundamental issue. He described Oedipus as 'innocent of any intentional Guilt' and 'exemplarily pious' and commented that the moral of the play

has nothing great or serviceable to Virtue in it. It may indeed serve to put us in mind of the Lubricity of Fortune, and the Instability of human Greatness ... [which] ... seems to carry matter of discouragement, along with it; since the most consummate Virtue meets with so disproportionate a return.⁶⁸⁷

Drake found such a moral unsatisfactory since it suggested that 'the misfortune of Oedipus ought to have been the result of a kind of negligent Oscitation in the Gods, and a loose administration of Providence'.⁶⁸⁸ Drake saw a more actively interventionist providence at work in concluding that the play's moral is

the irresistible Power of Fate, and the Vanity of Human Wisdom, when oppos'd to the immutable decrees of Providence, which converts to its own purposes, all our endeavours to defeat 'em, and makes our very Opposition subservient to its own designs.⁶⁸⁹

Oedipus could even be said to have been presumptuous and impious in trying to escape 'the Will of Heaven' by fleeing Corinth.⁶⁹⁰ Drake followed Gildon in rejecting Dacier's attempt to make Oedipus guilty of the crime of curiosity to know his fate: his recourse to an oracle when seeking certainty about his parentage was an accepted and approved procedure and 'an act of high Devotion'. Dacier's mistake 'lies in raising a Christian Moral upon a Pagan bottom; to fill up, [he has grafted] a Doctrine many ages younger upon the old Stock, and piec'd out a defect with an Absurdity'.⁶⁹¹

Collier felt able to respond now that Drake had shown the way. He was content with Drake's first suggestion that the moral of *Oedipus* was 'the Lubricity of Fortune, and the Instability of human Greatness':

Does it not hold forth a Lesson of Justice and Moderation to great Men? Does it not teach the proper use of Prosperity, and prepare us for the Turns of Adversity? This Moral is so far from being deficient in a Play, that it would make a good Sermon.⁶⁹²

That interpretation satisfied Collier's belief that the 'business of Plays' was, among other things, 'to shew the Uncertainty of Humans Greatness [and] the suddain Turns

⁶⁸⁷ Drake 1699: 129, 131-133.

⁶⁸⁸ Drake 1699: 133.

⁶⁸⁹ Drake 1699: 136-137.

⁶⁹⁰ Drake 1699: 144.

⁶⁹¹ Drake 1699: 146-147; also 228-229.

⁶⁹² Collier 1700: 62.

of Fate'. Collier refused to accept Drake's alternative moral, that it is futile for a person to resist the fate determined for him by the gods, although he admits that

if this were the Moral, it would not be without Instruction: It might shew the vanity of contesting with Omnipotence, and teach submission to the Decrees of Heaven, that People should conclude the Punishment just by the Hand that sent it, and not repine at the Mysteries of Providence.

However, says Collier, this cannot be the genuine moral of the play since the doctrine of predestination was not universal among the ancient heathens.⁶⁹³ This was to interpret the play by reference to the ancients' manner of thinking, not the moderns'. The 'Mysteries of Providence' were potentially problematical for Collier who had expressed concerns about appeals to providence in *Dr Sherlock's Case of Allegiance Considered* (1691). This was a reply to William Sherlock's *The Case of the Allegiance to Sovereign Princes Stated and Resolved According to Scripture and Reason and the Principles of the Church of England* (1690) in which Sherlock had justified his swearing the oaths of allegiance to William III and Mary that Collier had refused. Collier objected to Sherlock's argument that the new monarchs' accession to the throne was attributable to the workings of divine providence since this was glibly to equate providence with whatever situation events had produced:

If Power (as [Dr. Sherlock] affirms ...) is a certain Sign of God's Authority; if, by what means soever a Prince ascends the Throne, he is placed there by God Almighty; ... and the Advantages of Success are always to be interpreted the Gifts of Providence, then the best Title may be defeated, without either antecedent Injury, Consent, or an express Revelation from God.⁶⁹⁴

Collier's reluctance for political reasons to subscribe to the role of divine providence in human affairs prevented him from entertaining an interpretation of *Oedipus* that embraced it.

3.7.3. Medea

In chapter 2.6 I mentioned Dryden's objections to Medea's escape from justice in Euripides' play. Collier, perhaps unwilling to draw attention to Euripides' failure to give the play a moral ending by showing the guilty person punished, ignored *Medea* in *A Short View*. Subsequently, in *A Second Defence of the Short View*, after Drake had complained of Medea's escape, Collier simply explained that Euripides

⁶⁹³ Collier 1700: 63.

⁶⁹⁴ Collier 1691: 5; also 62-63.

had to take the story as he found it in history or tradition, ‘from which ‘twas unsafe to vary’, so ‘the fault lay in the History, which made the Poet more excusable’.⁶⁹⁵ It is interesting to contrast Collier’s equivocating response - since he must have felt a conflict between an instinctive unhappiness at the play’s ending and his desire to avoid criticising the morality of an ancient tragedy - with Gildon’s reaction to the play. The latter wrote in the preface to his version of the Medea story, *Phaeton*, which was published shortly after Collier’s *A Short View*, to the ‘Abuses, and Absurdities’ of which Gildon briefly refers, that the outcome of *Medea* was completely unacceptable to put before a modern audience.⁶⁹⁶ He offered three possible reasons ‘that might justify Euripides in so uncommon a Character’ as Medea: that she was the instrument chosen by the gods to punish Jason’s perjury, meaning his infidelity; that her example was intended to discourage Athenians from marrying barbarians; or that Medea, being descended from the Sun, was ‘exempted, by the Pagan Theology, from the common Rules of Mankind’.⁶⁹⁷ Gildon was clearly making the best of a difficult job – or, viewed more cynically, was putting forward justifications that he knew would be unpalatable for the purpose of showing that there was no explanation for the ending of Euripides’ play that an audience of his day would find acceptable. Gildon’s purpose was to justify his own version of the story in which he departed from Euripides by embracing an earlier tradition in which Medea’s children were killed by her unfaithful husband’s countrymen. In *The Complete Art of Poetry* (1718) Gildon was to cite *Medea* as an example of the Greek poets’ ability to choose from the different traditions surrounding their myths or even to alter them in the interests of verisimilitude or probability:

Euripides alter’d the Story ... at the Instance of the Corinthians when he was writing it, by making Medea kill her own Children, who were slain by the Corinthians, in revenge of the Death of the Daughter of Creon their King.⁶⁹⁸

In addition, in *Phaeton* the Medea character does not escape justice for killing her husband’s new wife but dies at her own hand, stabbing herself with a poisoned dagger. Neither Collier nor Gildon liked Euripides’ ending, but whereas Collier tried to avoid saying anything about it because it did not fit with his view of the morality

⁶⁹⁵ Collier 1700: 72; Drake 1699: 196-197.

⁶⁹⁶ Gildon 1698: b1v, c1r.

⁶⁹⁷ Gildon 1698: b1v.

⁶⁹⁸ Gildon 1718: I 249.

of Greek plays, Gildon tackled it head on because he wanted to justify the moral ending of his own play.

Gildon believed that his audience would not accept the ending of Euripides' *Medea* in the way he assumed the ancient Greeks had done; he also felt that he had to make the Jason character less harsh and arrogant. He saw 'a necessity on my first perusal of Euripides of alt'ring the two chief Characters of the Play, in consideration of the different Temper and Sentiments of our several Audience'.⁶⁹⁹ This was contrary to the view that what worked on the Athenian stage would necessarily work also on London's. Collier now conflated ancient and modern times when he argued that the modern stage stood condemned by virtue of the attacks of the early church fathers on the entertainments of their day.⁷⁰⁰ This reflected the common belief that the unchanging character of human nature and experience meant that practices of, and lessons from, the past were directly relevant to, and instructive for, the present. Collier represented as unbroken a connection between the past and the present that Gildon in the preface to *Phaeton* called into question.

3.8. Conclusion

The effect of writing about ancient Greek tragedy in *A Short View* was to unbalance the work as a whole. This has led critics ever since to be uncertain about whether Collier sought the reformation or the suppression of the stage. His opponents were in general clear that he aimed at suppression and their views deserve respect, although admittedly it suited them to represent Collier as taking an extreme view.⁷⁰¹ The final chapter of *A Short View* includes extensive anti-theatre quotations from ancient Greek and Roman authors and the early Church fathers which call for the banning of all theatrical and similar entertainments.⁷⁰² But earlier chapters, in an attempt to make modern English writers appear all the more reprehensible, point to the morally superior and more decorous plays of some of the ancients, thereby undermining the attitudes of the early Church that Collier relied on and allowing for

⁶⁹⁹ Gildon 1698: b1v, b2v-b3r.

⁷⁰⁰ Collier 1698: 251, 276.

⁷⁰¹ Brown 1704: 33; Cibber 1740: 158; Filmer 1707: 3, 6-7, 12, 167; Gildon 1719: 213-214; Settle 1698a: 1.

⁷⁰² Rymer (1956: 99-111) had already discussed early Christians' views on the stage in *A Short View of Tragedy*.

the possibility of a theatre that is less objectionable than that of Collier's own day, and hence one that is potentially permissible, but for the objections in principle that Collier sets out in great detail at the end of his book. This point was explored by the author of *The Stage Acquitted. Being a Full Answer to Mr Collier, and the other Enemies of the Drama* (1699) in which Lovetruth says, 'Mr Collier is not, at least in some part of his Book, for Condemning Plays in general, since he positively allows those of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides'.⁷⁰³ On the other hand, Dryden, in the preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern*, considered that Collier 'has lost ground at the latter end of the day by pursuing his point too far ... from immoral plays to no plays'.⁷⁰⁴

Collier, like Blackmore and Gildon, was clear that the ancient Greek stage existed to serve the state's secular and religious leadership in ways that the plays of his time did not, and had been subject to censorship, observing, as Wright had done, that in ancient Greece 'if the Poets wrote any thing against Religion or Good Manners, They were tried for their Misbehaviour, and lyable to the highest Forfeitures'.⁷⁰⁵ Collier quoted the statute 3 James I, c. 21 which 'is expresly against the Playhouse' (omitting words that show it to be directed also against May Games and pageants), commenting, 'By this Act not only direct Swearing, but all vain Invocation of the Name of God is forbidden. This Statute well executed would mend the Poets, or sweep the Box: And the Stage must either reform, or not thrive upon Profaness'.⁷⁰⁶ He refrained from calling for additional censorship of English stage plays, although he did 'humbly conceive the Stage stands in need of a great deal of Discipline and Restraint'.⁷⁰⁷ But he thought 'a Publick Regulation' of 'Play-House-Musick' might not be amiss, since this

throws a Man off his Guard, makes way for an ill Impression, and is most Commodiously planted to do Mischief. A Lewd Play with good Musick is like a Loadstone Arm'd, it draws much stronger than before ... Musick is almost as dangerous as Gunpowder; And it may be requires looking after no less than the Press, or the Mint.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰³ Anon 1699: 10. Also Dennis 1721: II 225 and 1967: I 146-147; Settle 1689a: 48, 53-54.

⁷⁰⁴ Dryden 1962: II 294.

⁷⁰⁵ Collier 1698: 24.

⁷⁰⁶ Collier 1698: 58-59.

⁷⁰⁷ Collier 1699: 26.

⁷⁰⁸ Collier 1698: 278-279.

Collier used ancient Greek tragedy for propaganda purposes, as a stick with which to beat the moderns. His response to it took the form of harnessing it for the purpose of his response to the comedies of his own day. Drake wrote that Collier's 'deference to the just merits of those great Genius's of Antiquity' proceeded from a 'disingenuous design', for

tho upon many occasions he declares very largely in their favour, yet 'tis only to balance and sway the competition betwixt them and the Moderns on their side, and by raising the value of their Characters, to depress the others in the esteem of the World.⁷⁰⁹

Collier sought to demonstrate that the ancient Greek tragedians were more modest in sexual matters, and more respectful towards the gods and priests, than modern English dramatists, and conveyed through the working out of the fable praiseworthy moral lessons, with virtue rewarded and vice punished. Collier's narrow purpose in examining ancient Greek tragedy, namely to defend its moral decency, led him and Drake to consider the plays not as artistic wholes but as collections of speeches which could be evaluated in isolation. I have endeavoured in this connection to bring out connections between Collier's views on ancient Greek tragedy and his earlier political and moralising writings. Collier was not interested in exploring the nature and purpose of ancient Greek theatre as such, or in tragedy as a genre (hence his slowness to discuss the nature of Oedipus' guilt). His starting point of condemnation of the modern stage made that impossible. He noted that Dryden broke the unity of time in his tragedy *Cleomenes* and undertook to examine 'the Fable, the Moral, the Characters, &c' of Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*, bizarrely shoehorning into his examination an account of the unities.⁷¹⁰ But otherwise he did not urge the theory or practices of ancient theatre on writers of his own time because he was not interested in encouraging them to produce better plays.

⁷⁰⁹ Drake 1699: 124-125; also 41.

⁷¹⁰ Collier 1698: 186, 209, 228-229.

CHAPTER 4: LEWIS THEOBALD (1688-1744)

As mentioned in the Introduction, the first decade and a half of the eighteenth century saw a number of performances and translations of plays that had classical themes and/or were derived, directly or through intermediaries, from classical authors. Three plays claimed direct inspiration from ancient Greek writers. Gildon claimed to have drawn on three plays by Euripides for the heroine of *Love's Victim; or, The Queen of Wales* (1701) whom he based on 'the boasted Alcestis of the Greeks ... mingl'd with the chaste Helena, and unfortunate Andromache of the divine Euripides'.⁷¹¹ The inspiration for Edmund Smith's *Phaedra and Hippolitus* (1707) was declared in the epilogue when the speaker craved pity for the author:

An Oxford Man, extremely read in Greek,
Who from Euripides makes Phaedra speak;
And comes to Town to let us Moderns know
How Women lov'd two thousand Years ago.⁷¹²

Smith also drew on Racine's *Phèdre* (1677).⁷¹³ The prologue to Nicholas Rowe's original play *Ulysses* (1705), which dramatised the situation of Penelope awaiting the return of her husband, who 'Left her at ripe Eighteen, to seek Renown, / And Battel for a Harlot at Troy Town', mentioned Homer as the story's source.⁷¹⁴

There followed a flurry of translations of Sophocles, published to be read rather than performed. An anonymous translation of *Electra* was published in book form in 1714; it seems not to have been noticed before that it had previously appeared in instalments in January and February 1712 in the periodical *The Rhapsody*, thirty numbers of which were published between 1 January and 8 March 1712. Then came an anonymous translation of *Ajax* (1714) and Lewis Theobald's two translations, *Electra* (1714) and *Oedipus, King of Thebes* (1715). The last three were published by the bookseller Bernard Lintot who, perhaps emboldened by the recent stage successes of Ambrose Philips' *The Distressed Mother* (1712) and Joseph Addison's

⁷¹¹ Gildon 1701: vii; Hall and Macintosh 2005: 71, 117-118.

⁷¹² Smith 1707: vi. *The Universal Mercury* in February 1726 (II 33-34) said the play was 'borrow'd from Euripides, for it was far from being a Translation'.

⁷¹³ Canfield 1904: 133; Eccles 1922: 9-10; Hume 1976: 478; Nicoll 1925: 72, 80.

⁷¹⁴ Rowe 1706: A3r.

Cato (1713), the latter being the high point of English neoclassical tragedy, thought he detected, or could create, a market for genuine ancient tragedy.⁷¹⁵

There are several different, but connected, strands to Theobald's involvement with the ancient Greek tragedians. I begin by looking further at the background to Theobald's translations of Sophocles' *Electra* and *Oedipus*, including Theobald's relationship with the publisher Bernard Lintot (chapter 4.1). Then I consider both the translated texts (4.2) and the notes which Theobald appended to them (4.3). And whereas in 4.2 I look at how Theobald's translation of *Electra* reflects his awareness of Shakespeare, in 4.4 I reverse the perspective and examine how Theobald approaches Shakespeare with an awareness of the ancient Greeks.

4.1. The background to Theobald's translations

In 'The Publisher to the Reader' prefaced to *Ajax* Lintot asserted, 'The Reputation of the Ancient Greek Tragedy is so universally known, that there can be no occasion for an Apology to usher in a Translation of any of 'em'. He exaggeratedly claimed already to 'have by me the Tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, Translated into English blank Verse' and stressed the usefulness of the translations to students of Greek:

they are all, as I have been assur'd by several Gentlemen of allow'd Judgment in these Matters, very excellently done from the Greek; the sense of the several Authors is every where very faithfully given; and where-ever the regard which was necessary to be had to our own Language would allow of it, the Translation is so near the Original, as to be of use to the Learners of the Greek Language, by the assistance it may give them in the construction of these Authors.⁷¹⁶

Lintot continued by saying that 'Critical, and Philological' notes would be appended to the translations:

Among those of the first kind, Care is taken not to tire the Reader with stale Observations gather'd out of our own or the French Writers on these Subjects; nothing more being design'd than to point out plainly those Passages which are suppos'd Beauties, or Faults ... For the other Notes that are Philological they are meant chiefly for Explaining and Illustrating the several Authors. And for that Reason, every thing in the

⁷¹⁵ On *Cato* see Bevis 1988: 133-136; Hume 1976: 483; Nicoll 1925: 85-88.

⁷¹⁶ *Ajax* 1714: A3r-A3v. Theobald wrote in similar terms about his translation of book I of Homer's *Odyssey* (1717) as mentioned in the Introduction (section 7).

old Greek Scholia's, that may conduce to that End, will be Translated in the proper Places.⁷¹⁷

Lintot was now publishing *Ajax* 'as a Specimen of my Undertaking' and he promised to produce one play a month 'if [the publick] think fit to encourage it'; and when all an author's plays had been published, 'there will be an account of his Life, and a proper Critical Preface prefix'd before 'em'.⁷¹⁸

That was a hugely ambitious programme, reflected in contracts which Lintot concluded with Theobald in 1713 for translations of Aeschylus and on 21 April 1714 for translations, from the Greek and into English blank verse, of the twenty-four books of Homer's *Odyssey* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *The Women of Trachis* and *Philoctetes*, with 'Explanatory Notes' to all those translations, plus translations of Horace's satires and epistles into 'English Rhyme'.⁷¹⁹ Theobald had a fruitful relationship with Lintot at this time. In 1713 they were building on the success of Addison's *Cato*, which was published by Lintot's competitor Jacob Tonson, for their own commercial purposes. There were at least three editions of Theobald's *The Life and Character of Marcus Cato of Utica* (or ... of *Marcus Portius Cato Uticensis*), two of which identified themselves as published by Lintot.⁷²⁰ The title pages of Lintot's editions emphasised the compiler's use of original source material, notably Plutarch; both were *Design'd for the Readers of Cato, a Tragedy*. The title page of the other edition omitted the references to classical sources but emphasised the connection to the hero of Addison's play. Also in 1713 Theobald and Lintot brought out *Plato's Dialogue of the Immortality of the Soul. Translated from the Greek*, a further attempt to cash in on *Cato* since the dialogue in question was 'the very Treatise, which Cato read no less than twice before he kill'd himself'.⁷²¹ It is not surprising that Theobald dedicated his translation of *Electra* to Addison who had provided him with so many opportunities to become a published author himself.

⁷¹⁷ *Ajax* 1714: A3v-A4r.

⁷¹⁸ *Ajax* 1714: A4r.

⁷¹⁹ The 1713 contract: Eade 1979: 169 n. 1 and Nichols 1817: II 707. The 1714 contract: British Library Add. MS 38729, fos. 234-237, summarised in Nichols 1817: II 707-708.

⁷²⁰ Theobald 1713a-c.

⁷²¹ Theobald 1713d: A2r.

Only one element of Theobald's contracts with Lintot saw the light of day, namely Theobald's translation *Oedipus, King of Thebes* in 1715. He did not publish translations of the other Sophocles plays or of Horace, although in a note on his translation of *Oedipus Tyrannus* he mentions that he intended to publish notes on *Oedipus at Colonus* as well as on Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*.⁷²² His translation of Book I only of *The Odyssey* was published in 1717, but by John Roberts, not Lintot. Lintot published both the anonymous *Ajax* and Theobald's *Electra* but neither is mentioned in the contract.

Nor was the anonymous *Electra* part of Lintot's project. He did not publish it; its preface makes no reference to Lintot's programme of translations but instead the dedication to Charles Lord Halifax promises translations of the rest of Sophocles' plays 'if your Lordship will be pleased to excuse and shelter this first Attempt';⁷²³ the preface emphasises the moralising function of ancient Greek tragedy which Lintot does not mention;⁷²⁴ and unlike the other three translations it is in prose and has no notes. An advertisement for Lintot's *Ajax* in *The Post Boy* of 16-18 March 1714, just above announcement of the book publication of the anonymous *Electra* 'Translated from the Greek of Sophocles', commented that the latter 'is done from the French Version into English Prose, taken out of a late Paper call'd the *Rhapsody*; which Paper was universally disapprov'd of'.⁷²⁵ The preface and text of the anonymous *Electra* comprised numbers 10-18 of *The Rhapsody* between 22 January and 9 February 1712; numbers 11-17 which contained the text were headed 'Sophocles's *Electra* Translated from the Greek'. Its publishers asserted in *The Lover* of 20 March 1714 that it was 'not from the French, as has been maliciously insinuated'.⁷²⁶ Scrutiny of a random selection of passages from Dacier's *Electra* and the anonymous English version reveals no evidence that the latter is simply a translation of the former although doubtless the French version may have been consulted (as it may have been by Theobald).

⁷²² Theobald 1715a: 84.

⁷²³ *Electra* 1714: A4v.

⁷²⁴ *Electra* 1714: i-iii.

⁷²⁵ Repeated in *The Post Boy* 18-20 and 20-23 March 1714 (*The Burney Newspapers at the British Library*, Gale Cengage Learning online [accessed 29 October 2013]); Graham 1926: 80 and 1930: 93.

⁷²⁶ *The Burney Newspapers at the British Library*, Gale Cengage Learning online [accessed 29 October 2013].

The saga of Theobald's proposed translation of Aeschylus' tragedies for Lintot ran for twenty years but came to nothing.⁷²⁷ Nor has anything survived of the dissertation comprising 'a compleat History of the Ancient Stage in all its Branches' that Theobald promised in *Shakespeare Restored* to include with his translations of Aeschylus.⁷²⁸ The dissertation would include accounts of the high-heeled buskins used by ancient actors 'to make themselves as tall in Stature' as the heroes they represented and of an 'artificial Help to Sound' which they used 'to speak as big, as they possibly could'.⁷²⁹ The non-appearance of Theobald's Aeschylus cannot be attributed solely to his personal failings. He was able to collate numerous editions of Shakespeare for his edition of that poet so the size of the undertaking need not have defeated him. He may have found the work harder going than he expected, especially given the difficulty of Aeschylus' language on which Dryden and others had commented, as mentioned in chapter 2.3, and which may have continued to discourage other translators. Theobald himself wrote in the preface to *The Tragedy of King Richard the II* (1720) that Shakespeare's 'most wonderful Genius, and the warmest Imagination' of any poet since Homer 'often forc'd him out of his Way, upon false Images, hard Metaphors, and Flights, where the Eye of Judgment cannot trace him', adding that 'there are many instances of [this Fault] in Aeschylus'.⁷³⁰ Moreover, Theobald may have found other projects more congenial, easier to complete and more financially rewarding, especially work on Shakespeare from 1726 onwards. And perhaps the market was not ready for Aeschylus in English: for Walton, the reason why complete translations of the three Greek tragedians were so long delayed 'resides more in the history of publishing than in any lack of enthusiasm for the Greek dramatists'.⁷³¹ Lintot, who stopped publishing Theobald in 1715, may have decided that he was better off putting resources into Pope's *Iliad* (1715-1720). Whatever the issues were, they persisted for another half century since no English translation of a tragedy by Aeschylus appeared until the 1770s.

⁷²⁷ The fullest account to date is in Jones R. F. 1919: 3-5 and *passim*.

⁷²⁸ Theobald 1726: 194.

⁷²⁹ Theobald 1726: 92, citing Horace who 'in his short History of the Progress of the Stage, takes Notice of these two Things, as peculiar Supplements to Tragedy; --- *magnumque loqui, nitique Cothurno*'. Theobald's rationale for the use of buskins had been articulated by d'Aubignac (2001: 268) and Kennet (1697: 92) and was adopted also by Gilbert West (1749: 134).

⁷³⁰ Theobald 1720: Aa1v.

⁷³¹ Walton 2009: 108-109.

The identity of the contributor(s) to the translation of, and notes on, Sophocles' *Ajax* which Lintot published in 1714 remains unclear, with perhaps both Theobald and Nicholas Rowe involved.⁷³² I find two pieces of evidence particularly significant. First, Lintot declared in his preface to *Ajax* that it was 'a Specimen' of a larger undertaking and that he had shown various translations to 'several Gentlemen of allow'd Judgment in these Matters' who had commented favourably on their quality. Second, publication of *Ajax* may predate Lintot's contract with Theobald of 21 April 1714 and may not be mentioned in it for that reason.⁷³³ I believe that Rowe provided the notes and incline to accept Pattison's suggestion that *Ajax* 'was the first translation submitted by Theobald to Lintot, perhaps as a sample of his work, and that the bookseller had it checked and (in places) corrected by Rowe, an experienced translator, before contracting the rest of the work from Theobald'.⁷³⁴ Because of the doubt over Theobald's contribution to *Ajax* I will not discuss it in detail. However, I explain below (4.2) why I believe that Theobald did not write at least two of the notes on *Ajax*.

4.2. Theobald's translations of *Electra* and *Oedipus*

Theobald held some views about ancient Greek theatre that are already familiar from chapter 2. In his periodical *The Censor* he extended the esteem in which the theatre was held from the ancient playwrights to the actors who, unlike their counterparts in contemporary England,

were chose out of the best Families ... Thus their Stage was furnish'd with Men of Learning and Ingenuity, with Orators and Poets ... In such Reputation the Players then stood, that some of them were chosen Generals, others Civil Officers: And Aristodemus particularly was commission'd from Athens to treat with Philip about Peace and War.⁷³⁵

He also argued that state support implied state control: ancient Greek theatres

⁷³² The possible translator(s) and compiler(s) of the accompanying notes are discussed by Ingram 1965 and Jones R. F. 1919: 6-7.

⁷³³ Publication of *Ajax* was announced in *The Daily Courant* on 15 March 1714 and in *The Post Boy* on 16-18, 18-20 and 20-23 March and 8-10 April 1714 (*The Burney Newspapers at the British Library*, Gale Cengage Learning online [accessed 29 October 2013]).

⁷³⁴ Pattison 2007: 130-131 n. 4.

⁷³⁵ Theobald 1717: III, 181 (no. 87, 11 May 1717).

were not, like Ours, dependant on the good Will, Caprice, or Vanity of particular Persons; but establish'd by Law, directed by Law, and all their Concerns, the Concern of the Civil Magistrate.⁷³⁶

Theobald's decision to translate Sophocles' *Electra* and *Oedipus* was undoubtedly influenced by Dacier's translation of both plays into French in 1692; Dacier also published in the same year a French translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* with his own commentary. As mentioned in the Introduction (section 3), Dacier's work made an immediate impression on English writers. The first English translation of Aristotle's *Art of Poetry* in 1705 (reissued in 1709 and 1714) included Dacier's commentary translated from the French from which Theobald quotes in the notes on his own translations. Theobald's library at his death contained Dacier's *La Poetique d'Aristote* (1692), Dacier's *Sophocles* (1693), that is, the French translations of *Electra* and *Oedipus*, and the English *Aristotle's Art of Poetry* (1705).⁷³⁷ Theobald's notes on *Electra* and *Oedipus* often refer to Dacier but also draw on scholia in the 1668 Cambridge edition of Sophocles, which contained the Greek text of the plays and a Latin translation, to which Theobald refers in a note on *Oedipus*.⁷³⁸ A more recent influence on Theobald (and on the author of the notes on *Ajax*) was Thomas Johnson who in 1705 had published at Oxford editions of *Ajax* and *Electra* in Greek with a Latin translation; Theobald twice refers to Johnson's edition in his notes on *Electra*.⁷³⁹

Whereas Dacier had used very plain prose throughout his translations, Theobald translated *Electra* and *Oedipus* into blank verse except for the chorus' songs which are distinguished by the use of rhyme and by being printed in italics. The phraseology of Theobald's translations owes nothing to Dacier. He divided the plays into five acts ending with the chorus' songs. This produced acts of greatly uneven length, especially in *Electra* whose first act accounts for over a third of the translation's length and its last act for less than a twelfth. Theobald subdivided his acts into scenes, a new scene generally beginning in neo-classical style when a character enters or exits. In those respects Theobald adhered to the same principles as Dacier with usually the same results. But Theobald exercised his independent judgement, for example in *Oedipus* beginning a new scene at Sophocles' line 1476

⁷³⁶ Theobald 1720: Bb1r.

⁷³⁷ Corbett 1744: lots 215, 369 and 558.

⁷³⁸ Ingram 1965: 94-95; Theobald 1715a: 77.

⁷³⁹ Theobald 1714: 80, 84.

with a stage direction implying the entrance of ‘Antigone and Ismene, the two young daughters of Oedipus’, whereas Dacier did not.⁷⁴⁰ The most visible difference is the fact that Theobald makes the chorus’ songs the last scenes in the first four acts of each play whereas Dacier presents them as ‘intermèdes’ between the acts consistently with earlier French theory, followed in this respect also by the author of the anonymous translation of *Electra* who situates the chorus’ songs as ‘intermediate’ choruses.⁷⁴¹

The texts of Theobald’s translations follow the sense of the original closely. In fact, overall Theobald’s translation of *Electra* has 1508 lines compared with Sophocles 1510, but Theobald omits Sophocles’ lines 701-745 from the governor’s account of the Pythian games, explaining that he has

taken a Liberty in this Narration, for which, however I may be accus’d by the Adorers of Sophocles, I shall be easily pardon’d by every English Reader: I have ventur’d rather to make an agreeable Innovation on, than be a faithful Translator of, a Passage which contains too tedious and Graphical a Description of the Pythian Games to be relish’d at this time of Day; and cools the Passion which it should excite, and keep warm by its Conciseness and Distress.⁷⁴²

The line totals are less similar in the case of *Oedipus*, Theobald’s translation having 1666 lines to Sophocles’ 1530. At least one later translator of Sophocles admired Theobald’s versions: Philip Bliss, in a note in his edition of the antiquary Thomas Hearne’s *Reliquiae Hearnianae*, recalled having been told by a friend and admirer of ‘the late eminent scholar and judicious critic, Richard Porson’ that the latter ‘highly esteemed’ Theobald’s translations from Sophocles and Aristophanes.⁷⁴³

A striking feature of Theobald’s *Electra* and *Oedipus* translations is the way he works in references to the royalty of the protagonists’ households. Clearly that is evident in Sophocles’ texts, and Dacier adds many references in both his translations to the royal palace (‘Palais’), but Theobald does much more to underline the fact.⁷⁴⁴ *Electra* refers to her dead father Agamemnon as ‘a murther’d King’ and to herself as

⁷⁴⁰ Dacier 1692b: 143; Theobald 1715a: 69.

⁷⁴¹ *Electra* 1714; d’Aubignac 2001: 253-254.

⁷⁴² Theobald 1714: 80. Dacier (1692b: 320-327) does not shorten the speech. Walton (2008: 271), while conceding that a modern director might also cut the speech, criticises Theobald for not seeing how the scene is prolonged to emphasise the speech’s differing effects on Clytemnestra and Electra.

⁷⁴³ Hearne 1869: III 137 n.

⁷⁴⁴ Dacier 1629b: 12, 25 and passim (*Oedipus*); 260, 263 and passim (*Electra*).

robbed of ‘Princely State’ and ‘fed with Offals from th’ Imperial Table’.⁷⁴⁵ She calls her father’s murder ‘Treason’ and Aegysthus ‘a Traytor’ and complains of seeing the latter ‘Drest in the ... Imperial Robes of State’.⁷⁴⁶ When she draws a parallel with the legendary Amphiaraus she calls his betrayal by his wife Eriphyle ‘Treason’ and him an ‘injur’d Monarch’.⁷⁴⁷

Oedipus is greeted by a priest in the opening scene as ‘Royal Oedipus, Monarch of Thebes’ and Theobald peppers the play with three dozen added references to Oedipus, Laius, Jocasta and the god Apollo as king, monarch, queen, royal and the like.⁷⁴⁸ Jocasta kills herself in ‘the Imperial Chamber’.⁷⁴⁹ Both Oedipus and his presumed father Polybus of Corinth have a Court.⁷⁵⁰ Consistently with that terminology, Oedipus accuses Tiresias and Creon of treason;⁷⁵¹ and he calls Laius’ unknown killer, Tiresias, Creon and Laius’ former shepherd traitors.⁷⁵²

Rierson identifies the magnification of royal references in *Oedipus* but I believe he draws the wrong conclusions. He sees Theobald as thereby demonstrating ‘Tory biases’ and expressing ‘a rigid moral sense and an unshakable reverence for the sovereignty of the monarch’.⁷⁵³ Theobald’s ‘exaggeration of Oedipus’ royalty is an indication of the loyalty which Queen Anne could have expected from her literary devotees, but it distorts the meaning of the original play’, which ‘expressed the potential danger of absolute political power in the hands of a single ruler [and] questioned the effectuality of powerful figures such as Pericles’.⁷⁵⁴ The chorus refers to Apollo as ‘Delian Monarch’ because Theobald, being a Tory, ‘sees the heavenly hierarchy as a reflection of the earthly one; the Greeks, on the other hand, appear to have had a more intimate relationship with the gods, calling upon them in times of duress’.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁴⁵ Theobald 1714: 6, 9.

⁷⁴⁶ Theobald 1714: 10, 12, 27.

⁷⁴⁷ Theobald 1714: 36.

⁷⁴⁸ Theobald 1715a: 2, 4 and *passim*.

⁷⁴⁹ Theobald 1715a: 61.

⁷⁵⁰ Theobald 1715a: 7, 38

⁷⁵¹ Theobald 1715a: 20, 28, 36.

⁷⁵² Theobald 1715a: 12, 13, 18, 28, 32, 56.

⁷⁵³ Rierson 1984: 209.

⁷⁵⁴ Rierson 1984: 212.

⁷⁵⁵ Rierson 1984: 214; Theobald 1715a: 8.

I will return to *Oedipus* later but first I want to look at what Theobald is doing in *Electra*; there are other additions to the text which help to explain Theobald's objective there. The cast list identifies Aegysthus as 'An Usurper of the Government of Argos' and Orestes as 'Son of the late Rightful King Agamemnon'; Orestes fittingly promises to be 'the Scourge of Usurpation'.⁷⁵⁶ Theobald makes thirty references to 'vengeance', 'revenge' and the like and several to Clytemnestra and Aegysthus' relationship as adulterous.⁷⁵⁷ Clearly such matters are present in Sophocles' play but Theobald chooses to emphasise them by increased repetition. I believe that he is turning *Electra* into a royal revenge drama by deliberately echoing *Hamlet*. Theobald's reception of *Electra*, and his translation of it, was mediated through Shakespeare to whom he was to devote so much of his working life over the next twenty years but whom he clearly already had in his mind when translating Sophocles.

Electra comments of a dream that terrifies Clytemnestra, 'My Heart suggests, the care of our Revenge / Employs his [that is, Agamemnon's] Ghost, and sent the hideous Dream', just as the ghost of Old Hamlet spurs on his son.⁷⁵⁸ The chorus, imagining the coming act of vengeance against Aegysthus and Clytemnestra, has a 'prophetic Soul', as did Hamlet.⁷⁵⁹ Particularly interesting is the passage where Electra pours out her heart:

But oh! what Daggers must divide my Soul,
When I behold the last great Injury;
The rude Assassin in my Father's Bed,
And guilty Mother's Arms? If Virtue suffer
To call Her Mother, who with rank Offence
Has injur'd Nature in her sacred Laws.
But she enjoys the Wretch deform'd with Blood,
Nor fears the Furies round th' adulterous Bed.⁷⁶⁰

The anonymous *Electra* translation of 1712/1714 had Electra seeing

this Murderer in my Father's Bed with my wretched Mother, if I may yet
lawfully call Mother her who can lie with such a Villain! Yet still she

⁷⁵⁶ Theobald 1714: iv, 4.

⁷⁵⁷ Theobald 1714: 2, 3 and passim (vengeance etc.); 5, 6, 9, 12, 22, 26 (adultery).

⁷⁵⁸ Theobald 1714: 20.

⁷⁵⁹ Theobald 1714: 21, 61; *Hamlet* I.5.

⁷⁶⁰ Theobald 1714: 12; Euripides' lines 271-276. Similarly, at 22, the Chorus says that 'impious Acts have stain'd the Royal Bed'.

goes on to keep him company, having on her Spirits no dread of any avenging Furies.⁷⁶¹

Theobald's much heightened version recalls in tone and language passages in *Hamlet*. Old Hamlet's ghost calls Claudius an 'adulterate beast' (*Hamlet* I.5). Claudius acknowledges, 'O my offence is rank' (III.3). Hamlet reproaches his mother with living 'In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love', and denounces the 'rank corruption, mining all within, / [Which] infects unseen'. Gertrude replies, 'These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears' (III.4), echoing Hamlet's promise before he goes to see her that he will 'speak daggers to her, but use none' (III.3). Hamlet pictures his mother posting 'With such dexterity to incestuous sheets' (I.2) and the ghost urges Hamlet, 'Let not the royal bed of Denmark be / A couch for luxury and damned incest' (I.5); but in *Electra*, for Orestes the court of Clytemnestra and Aegysthus is itself 'incestuous'.⁷⁶²

The approach to the Orestes story during the Renaissance had already been to show Orestes rejoicing in his revenge taking and to emphasise that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus got their just deserts.⁷⁶³ That reflected the approach of books I and III of the *Odyssey* in which Orestes' vengeance of his father is described without any doubts about the morality of the matricide (or reference to *Electra*). A century earlier Goffe had written elements of *Hamlet* into his *The Tragedy of Orestes* (chapter 1.2). Now Theobald was thinking along the same lines as Rowe who, in 'Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear' prefixed to his 1709 edition of Shakespeare, observed that '*Hamlet* is founded on much the same Tale with the *Electra* of Sophocles'. In both plays 'a young Prince is engag'd to Revenge the Death of a Father, their Mothers are equally Guilty, are both concern'd in the Murder of their Husbands, and are afterwards married to the Murderers'.⁷⁶⁴ Rowe both understated and overstated the similarities between the situations in *Electra* and *Hamlet*. He could have added that both Clytemnestra and Gertrude marry their dead husbands' near relations (the former his cousin, the latter his brother), hence the

⁷⁶¹ *Electra* 1714: 9. In the Loeb translation *Electra*, more restrained than in Theobald, sees 'the murderer in my father's bed with my miserable mother, if she can be called mother when she sleeps with him. But she is so abandoned that she lives with the polluter, having no fear of any Erinys'.

⁷⁶² Theobald 1714: 3.

⁷⁶³ Woodbridge 2010: 52-58.

⁷⁶⁴ Rowe 1709: I xxxi.

overtones of incest. On the other hand, as Gildon immediately pointed out in *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear*, ‘Hamlet’s Mother has no Hand in the Death of her Husband, as far as we can discover ... her Fault was in yielding to the incestuous Amour with her Husband’s Brother; that at least is all that the Ghost charges her with’.⁷⁶⁵ *The Spectator* followed Rowe’s view of the matter rather than Gildon’s when it noted that ‘Orestes was in the same Condition with Hamlet in Shakespear, his Mother having murdered his Father, and taken Possession of his Kingdom in Conspiracy with the Adulterer’.⁷⁶⁶

The danger in Theobald’s emphasis on royalty and revenge was that he was emphasising *Electra* as the story of an exiled prince (a title that Orestes gives himself in the first line of his first speech)⁷⁶⁷ who returns home to claim the throne for himself, and on behalf of the rightful royal house, from an usurping interloper. It would not have been surprising if Theobald’s readers had thought of more than one parallel situation in British history without Theobald necessarily having intended to evoke it to further a political agenda (whereas Wase’s version had so intended). On the one hand, the return of Orestes could be seen as prefiguring the return from exile and Restoration of Charles II in 1660, just as William Davenant’s reworking of *Hamlet* the year after has been seen in modern times as intending to emphasise the virtuous son who avenges his father by destroying the regime of the murdering usurper.⁷⁶⁸ On the other hand, and chronologically closer to Theobald’s own time, it would have been easy to see a parallel between Orestes’ situation and that of James Stuart, son of the deposed/abdicated James II and known to history as the ‘Old Pretender’. The 1701 Act of Settlement had provided for Queen Anne to be succeeded by a member of the Protestant House of Hanover in order to defeat a claim by James Stuart, the rival Catholic claimant. *The Post Boy* advertised on 8-10 April 1714 that ‘The *Electra* of Sophocles ... is in the Press, and will be speedily

⁷⁶⁵ Gildon 1710b: 397.

⁷⁶⁶ *The Spectator* no. 44, 20 April 1711, in Bond (ed.) 1965: I 189. The anonymous authors of *Some Remarks on the Tragedy of ‘Hamlet, Prince of Denmark’* (1736) and *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of ‘Hamlet’* (1752) also discussed the similarities between *Electra* and Shakespeare’s play (Elledge (ed.) 1961: I 449; Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 460).

⁷⁶⁷ Theobald 1714: 2.

⁷⁶⁸ Taylor 1990: 48.

publish'd'.⁷⁶⁹ Theobald might have felt embarrassed if his *Electra* had appeared eighteen months later; James' supporters rose in Scotland in autumn 1715 but were defeated after advancing as far as Preston. Thirty years later William Shirley claimed to have found himself in difficulties over his adaptation of *Electra* when James Stuart's son Charles Edward (the 'Young Pretender') led a second Jacobite rising. When Shirley published his play in 1765 he recalled in 'To the Reader' how he began writing the play in 1744 and finished it early in spring the following year:

No more than a very few friends had seen it before the rebellion of that year broke out; on the first tidings of which, the Author laid it aside, from an apprehension that the subject, which he had casually chosen, might be considered as invidious and offensive while the nation continued in so unhappy a situation.⁷⁷⁰

It is easy to imagine Theobald entertaining similar thoughts if publication of his *Electra* had been scheduled for late 1715 rather than the previous year. Hall has attributed the absence of attempts to stage an adaptation of Sophocles' *Electra* before Shirley's failure to secure a licence for his version of the play to its 'unshrinking presentation of feminine aggression' and its 'long-standing association with the cause of the Stuart kings'.⁷⁷¹

Theobald was aware of how easily a play might be misunderstood. In *The Censor* in May 1717 he protested vigorously at how theatre audiences were quick to 'wrest an innocent Author to their own Construction, and form to themselves an Idea of Faction from Passages, whence the Poet little suspected it should arise', thereby 'turning the Scene to a Libel upon the State'. Theobald 'not long since' was at a performance of *Oedipus*, 'whose Fable is of above three thousand Years standing', when the line *Ay, Masters, if we could but live to see another Coronation* provoked excited reactions among the audience:

⁷⁶⁹ The advertisement makes clear that this *Electra* is 'done in the same manner' as the translation of *Ajax*, that is, in blank verse with notes, and so concerns Theobald's translation of *Electra* and not the anonymous version published in book form in the same year which is in prose and has no notes.

⁷⁷⁰ Shirley 1765: iii.

⁷⁷¹ Hall 1999a: 271. Kewes (2005: 248) argues that Shirley's play clearly implies that 'like Aegisthus, the Hanoverians are nasty usurpers'. Hall and Macintosh (2005: 166-167) argue that Shirley, a Whig, would not have intended his play to express Jacobite sympathies but rather rewrote it 'as a denunciation of the then Prime Minister, John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, and his influence over the Royal Family'.

The catching at such Expressions, that have no Meaning but what is confin'd to the Scene, argues a very great Depravity of Taste, as well as of Principles, and seems to signify a Mind possess'd with Treasonable Images.⁷⁷²

Theobald could have seen Dryden and Lee's play performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 22 January or 15 May 1717.⁷⁷³

By the time *Oedipus* was published the Hanoverian succession had been achieved. Rierson's assertion that Theobald, by his exaggeration of Oedipus' royal status, was displaying 'the loyalty which Queen Anne could have expected from her literary devotees' overlooks the fact that Georg Ludwig, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg had come to the throne as George I following Anne's death on 1 August 1714. Support for the House of Hanover was associated, not with Tories, which Rierson assumed Theobald to be and who were often inclined to be more sympathetic to the House of Stuart, but with Whigs such as Theobald's dedicatee Lewis Watson who was awarded the title earl of Rockingham in 1714 in recognition of his support for the House of Hanover. That is why Theobald refers in the dedication to Rockingham's 'firm and unwavering Constancy and Zeal for the Succession in the most serene House of Hanover, ... hearty and pious Love of Liberty and Religion as by Law establish'd [and] ardent Desire and Activity in their Defence'.⁷⁷⁴ Theobald chose to dedicate his *Oedipus* to the earl of Rockingham and to emphasise Rockingham's unimpeachable loyalty to the new occupant of the throne. If anyone had been minded to detect potentially subversive undertones in *Electra* they could now read Theobald's assertion of loyalty to the crown. And he would naturally hope that nobody would take exception to the fact that in *Oedipus* he was underlining the royal standing of a central protagonist who comes to a bad and undignified end.

A second theme that Theobald emphasises in his *Oedipus* is that of fatality. He adds around two dozen references to 'fate', 'fateful' and the like, some of which are dramatically highly effective; there is an example in his translation of Oedipus' second speech in the Appendix. In more detail here: when Oedipus embarks on his

⁷⁷² Theobald 1717: III 221-222 (no. 93, 25 May 1717). In Act I of Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* the Third Citizen exclaims, 'Ha, if we were but worthy to see another Coronation, and then if we must die, we'll go merrily together' (Dryden 1717: IV 382).

⁷⁷³ Avery 1960: 432, 450.

⁷⁷⁴ Theobald 1715a: A5v; <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/watson-hon-lewis-1655-1724>> [accessed 10 April 2013].

quest for his father's killer he asks the chorus, 'How shall we backward tread the Maze of Fate, / To trace the Marks of antiquated Guilt', marks (including physical ones left on him by 'a Cord bor'd thro' his Infant Feet') that will point to his own guilt.⁷⁷⁵ The image of a 'Maze of Fate' suggests that, whatever potentially confusing twists and turns man's life may take, his destination is fixed by the maze's designer, that is, in the ancient Greek context the gods, and in Theobald's time divine providence. Theobald is here echoing the sentiments in Oedipus' appeal at the end of Act III in Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*:

To you, good Gods, I make my last Appeal;
Or clear my Virtue, or my Crime reveal:
If wand'ring in the maze of Fate I run,
And backward trod the Paths I sought to shun,
Impute my Errors to your own Decree;
My Hands are Guilty, but my Heart is free.⁷⁷⁶

Theobald's Oedipus tells Creon, 'Still I've a Monarch's Right to rule thy Fate' when he cannot rule his own.⁷⁷⁷ After Jocasta tells how she and Laius sent their child to be exposed to die, Oedipus addresses her as 'Fatal Jocasta', an allusion by Oedipus to her part in the intended death of the child and by Theobald to the fate that could not be avoided as the child would survive to kill his father.⁷⁷⁸ When Jocasta tells Oedipus how the survivor of the attack on Laius and his retinue returned 'with the fatal News' we are to understand 'fatal' as referring both to the fatalities sustained in the attack and to the fact that the attack was a fulfilment of Oedipus' fate to kill his father.⁷⁷⁹ Jocasta's last lines, as she exits having failed to prevent Oedipus questioning the shepherd who will reveal that Oedipus is her son, are, 'O fatal Monarch! – But I can no more; / 'Tis the last Greeting of our mutual Sorrows', which signal that Oedipus will soon learn that he has not escaped the fate predicted for him.⁷⁸⁰ And Fate literally has the last word as the chorus refers to Oedipus

⁷⁷⁵ Theobald 1715a: 6, 36.

⁷⁷⁶ Dryden 1717: IV 423.

⁷⁷⁷ Theobald 1715a: 32.

⁷⁷⁸ Theobald 1715a: 36.

⁷⁷⁹ Theobald 1715a: 38.

⁷⁸⁰ Theobald 1715a: 52. Cowley, in his version of Pindar's 'second Olympique Ode', used similar language when alluding to Oedipus as 'the fatal Son [who] his Father slew', explaining in a note that he calls Oedipus 'fatal' 'because of the Predictions' and that 'to mitigate the thing' he has also called him in his poem 'the innocent Parricide' (Cowley 1656: *Pindarique Odes* 3 and 7-8, separately paginated).

Who of Desert and Regal Honours proud,
 Look'd down on Fortune and th'ignoble Croud.
 Till the rough Tempest of unsteady Fate
 Rush'd on his Grandeur, and o'erwhelmed his State.
 Taught by the Change, let no rash Man depend
 On Fortune's present Smiles, but mark his End:
 Howe'er renown'd, we none must happy rate,
 Till Death secures 'em from th' Insults of Fate.⁷⁸¹

'Fate' there alludes to the gods' determination of the outcome of Oedipus' life that he has been unable to avoid. 'Fortune' denotes Oedipus' possession of success and happiness along the way whose temporary nature he did not understand and which he was destined not to hold on to.

For Rierison the repeated references in this play, as in Dryden and Lee's earlier *Oedipus*, to the role of inescapable fate are a betrayal of the true meaning of Sophocles' play. Rierison asserts that Sophocles' purpose 'was to demonstrate the ineffectuality of the protagonist's superior intellect and political prowess in coping with the unexpected turns which a man's life takes in the quest for self-awareness'.⁷⁸² In *Oedipus* Sophocles 'dared to question the intellectual superiority and unshakable humanism of the Periclean era'.⁷⁸³ Rierison argues that by interpreting Sophocles' play as a tragedy of fate, and as demonstrating retribution for sins committed, Theobald was influenced for the worse by doctrines from Senecan stoicism, medieval Christianity and eighteenth-century moralising.⁷⁸⁴ Rierison implies that such a 'fatalistic' reading of *Oedipus* is not based on an assessment of the play within its own historical and philosophical context.⁷⁸⁵ However, Rierison ignores a different context, namely the complexity of responses to *Oedipus* at the time Theobald was writing, especially following the interpretation put forward by Dacier in 1692 mentioned in chapter 3.7. Rierison shares something of that interpretation of Sophocles' *Oedipus*. He writes that the play's focus 'is on the impetuosity of the protagonist - a character trait - rather than on the omnipotence of the gods'; and that its 'ideological foundation' is that 'the same impetuosity which sent Oedipus on the search for himself, humbled him, and brought him to an awareness of the limitations

⁷⁸¹ Theobald 1715a: 72.

⁷⁸² Rierison 1984: 1.

⁷⁸³ Rierison 1984: 39.

⁷⁸⁴ Rierison 1984: 95-96, 187, 193-194, 215-216, 221, 223-224, 230-231, 239, 247, 250-251, 266.

⁷⁸⁵ Rierison 1984: 47.

of human understanding'.⁷⁸⁶ Rierson's criticism is that Theobald does not do justice to that view of the play by his over-emphasis on fate.⁷⁸⁷

Dacier's interpretation, which I believe Theobald was following, is not one-dimensional. His fullest interpretation of the play, in his notes on his translation of *Oedipus*, is prompted by the second messenger's statement that 'the griefs that give most pain are those we bring upon ourselves' (Sophocles' lines 1230-1231 as rendered in the Loeb translation). Dacier argues that misfortunes are of two kinds. First, there are 'involuntary' misfortunes such as the 'first' ones suffered by Oedipus. Dacier does not say what these are but in his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* he had called Oedipus' incest and parricide 'involuntary crimes' (chapter 3.7.2) and he presumably means these here too. Second, there are 'wilful' misfortunes, which we bring upon ourselves as if deliberately, such as the final ones suffered by Oedipus: he stubbornly seeks himself out despite the advice of others, destroys his eyes and makes himself the most wretched of men. The second category of misfortunes is harder to bear because they involve self-reproaches and repentance which are harder to bear than the suffering itself. Thus far, says Dacier, Sophocles agrees with general opinion. But, on the other hand, everything is the consequence and effect of providence which governs the world and leaves nothing to chance. In order to reconcile those two viewpoints, it should be noted that Sophocles refers to misfortunes which we 'appear' to bring upon ourselves.⁷⁸⁸ Dacier did indeed translate Sophocles' lines 1230-1231 as referring to griefs that we seem wilfully to bring upon ourselves (my underlining).⁷⁸⁹ Dacier's thinking may have been prompted by the unhappy realisation that, although the oracles had foretold that Oedipus would kill his father and lie with his mother, they said nothing about his being punished for it. Matters might have been left there with nobody, including Oedipus and Jocasta, knowing of it. But the coming of the plague, and the oracle's

⁷⁸⁶ Rierson 1984: 224-225, 263.

⁷⁸⁷ Rierson (1984: 47-65) cites with approval, among other twentieth-century works of criticism, H. D. F. Kitto's *Greek Tragedy* (first published 1939) and Bernard Knox's *Oedipus at Thebes* (1957) as refuting the notion of fatalism in *Oedipus*; Cedric Whitman's *Sophocles: a Study of Heroic Humanism* (1951) as concentrating on 'the ramifications of [Oedipus'] superior intellect'; and Gordon Kirkwood's *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (1958) as 'suggesting that will and personality are important aspects'.

⁷⁸⁸ Dacier 1692b: 228-229.

⁷⁸⁹ Dacier 1692b: 124.

decree that it would not depart until Laius' killer was known, combine with Oedipus' wilfully stubborn determination to seek out the truth to bring about his self-destruction. Oedipus' wilful stubbornness and rashness, which only seem an accident of his character, played a crucial role in completing providence's overall purpose which was his destruction as part of the fall of the House of Laius.⁷⁹⁰

Theobald strove to reflect Dacier's interpretation through the text of his translation and his notes. In the former, as I have shown, he repeatedly emphasises the role of fate but also renders Sophocles' lines 1230-1231 as 'Mischiefs, that from willing Rashness flow, / Still wound us deepest', the use of 'willing' reflecting Dacier's 'volontaire' if lacking Dacier's subtle addition of 'seeming'.⁷⁹¹ In a note Theobald reproduces the English translation of Dacier's notes that accompanied the 1705 English *Aristotle's Art of Poetry* and adds that

Oedipus is look'd upon by Mr. Dacier to be the best Subject for Tragedy that ever was; for whatever happen'd to that unhappy Prince, has this Character; 'tis manag'd by Fortune; but every Body may see, that all the Accidents have their Causes, and fall out according to the Design of a particular Providence.⁷⁹²

After thus emphasising fate, Theobald also highlights Oedipus' character flaws. When Oedipus quarrels with Tiresias, Theobald comments that

The Poet thro' this whole Scene of Oedipus and Tiresias endeavours at establishing the King's Manners, and Character: He would describe a Man, that is passionate, violent and rash; he always keeps in that Character, what is proper and necessary for the Subject; and enhances it by all the Embellishments it is capable of.⁷⁹³

When Oedipus, after Jocasta's final exit, reiterates his determination to seek out the truth about his parentage, Theobald notes that 'Oedipus's Manners are admirably

⁷⁹⁰ Gildon (1721: 162, 170-171) argued that way: the moral of *Oedipus* was 'the frailty and uncertainty of all human grandeur, the fickleness and vicissitude of the smiles of fortune, in which therefore there is no trust to be put'; and Oedipus' anger, rashness, curiosity and obstinacy were 'accidents, and drawn from the principal character and its manners, and carry on, nay accomplish the one lesson taught by the moral of the fable'.

⁷⁹¹ Theobald 1715a: 60.

⁷⁹² Aristotle 1705: 115-116; Dacier 1692a: 112; Theobald 1715a: 74. On other occasions too, Theobald (1715a: 77, 82) quotes Dacier using the words of the English translation of his commentary on Aristotle *Poetics*.

⁷⁹³ Theobald 1715a: 79. Dacier's corresponding comment (1692b: 177) is that Oedipus' abuse of Tiresias reveals his violence and quick temper and that whatever Tiresias says serves only to arouse Oedipus' curiosity.

well mark'd in this Act, for 'tis blind and rash Curiosity which makes his Misfortunes, and the unravelling of the Plot', quoting in English a lengthy passage from Plutarch who 'very aptly calls this Curiosity, an immoderate Desire of knowing every thing, and a Torrent which breaks down all the Banks of Reason which oppose it'.⁷⁹⁴ Finally, when the messenger reports that Oedipus, having blinded himself, 'cries aloud t'have all the Portals open'd, / That Thebes may see the cruel Parricide!', Theobald records a scholiast as observing

that the Pretext is very natural for bringing forth Oedipus to shew the Audience the Distress of his Blindness, by making him say, that he would shew Thebes, how justly he had punish'd himself, for his Involuntary Misfortune, and how willing he was to depart the Land by reason of the Imprecations he had fix'd on himself.⁷⁹⁵

Theobald, therefore, attributes Oedipus' destruction to the same combination of his involuntary crimes, his wilful stubbornness and rashness and the power of overriding fate that Dacier had identified; and he did so again in *The Censor* in 1717, citing Dacier.⁷⁹⁶

The complexity of Theobald's response to *Oedipus* provides a reason for doubting his authorship of at least two of the notes on the translation of *Ajax* which offer a much less sophisticated analysis of the ancient Greek attitude to the gods. A note on Sophocles' lines 952-953, which in the translation read 'The Daughter of Great Jove avenging Pallas, / Inflicts these Ills to gratify Ulysses', comments:

It seems unworthy of the Divine Nature, that the Gods should take such part with the perverseness of our Passions, as to punish one Man only to gratify the Malice of another. But this is one ill effect of what was very ornamental to their Writings, The Machinery of the Ancient Poets, where the Gods are every moment descending and mixing with the affairs of human Life ... What miserable wooden Puppets upon Wires are the Heroes all the while! How much more noble and suitable to the dignity of those Notions we ought to have of God, is the Christian System of Providence; where tho' there is a constant Care of us that accompanies the whole course of our Lives, yet Man is still left in the dignity of a free Agent.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁴ Theobald 1715a: 82-83; the quotations are at 82. Dacier (1692b: 220-221) quotes in French the same passage from Plutarch.

⁷⁹⁵ Theobald 1715a: 62, 84.

⁷⁹⁶ Theobald 1717: II, 37-40 (no. 36, 12 January 1717).

⁷⁹⁷ *Ajax* 1714: 42, F6r-F6v.

And a note on Sophocles' lines 1036-1037, which in the translation read 'Thus surely all the Events of human Life / The Gods are Authors of, and bring on Men; / They fash' on all our Woes', comments:

This is another ill effect of making the Gods to interfere so frequently in human Affairs; charging 'em as the Authors of Evil, and laying all the misfortunes that happen to us in consequence of our own folly and perverseness at the door of Heaven. And according to the Theology of the Grecian Poets, what other notion can one have of the Gods?⁷⁹⁸

The tone of those notes on *Ajax* about the Greeks' acknowledgement of the overriding power of the gods is so scornful that it provides a reason for doubting their author to be Theobald who was so soon to pen the more open-minded notes on *Oedipus* which, following Dacier, strove to reconcile wilful human frailty and divine providence.

4.3. Theobald's notes on his *Electra* and *Oedipus, King of Thebes*

Theobald was far from the first writer to append notes to a literary text in England. It had long been the practice for editors of classical texts to include ancient and medieval commentaries known as scholia and to add their own thoughts.⁷⁹⁹ But it was less common to publish notes on literary texts in English. Two seventeenth-century examples are Cowley's notes to his *Pindarique Odes* (1656) and Patrick Hume's *Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost* (1695).⁸⁰⁰ Cowley explains each ode's classical allusions and comments on what he has omitted from, or added to, Pindar's original texts. He also cites, to explain and justify his choice of ideas, phraseology and metaphors, similar passages in other classical authors, for example Homer, Euripides, Virgil, Lucretius, Ovid, Claudian, Lucan and Plutarch, and in the Bible.⁸⁰¹ Hume published 321 pages of closely printed notes on Milton's poem to accompany the sixth edition of that work. His purpose is made clear on the book's title page which advertises that within

The Texts of Sacred Writ, relating to the Poem, are Quoted; The Parallel Places and Imitations of the most Excellent Homer and Virgil, Cited and Compared; All the Obscure Parts render'd in Phrases more Familiar; The

⁷⁹⁸ *Ajax* 1714: 46, F6v.

⁷⁹⁹ Levine 1999a: 115; Lund 1998: 38; Smith B. R. 1988: 29-35, 206.

⁸⁰⁰ Seary 1990: 54 and n. 21.

⁸⁰¹ Cowley 1656: 7, 8-9, 16, 25, 29, 47, 51, 52, 65-68 (separately paginated).

Old and Obsolete Words, with their Originals, Explain'd and made Easie to the English Reader.

Hume's notes were therefore intended, not only to clarify the meaning of the text, for example by explaining Milton's classical and Biblical allusions and difficult or obsolete expressions, but also, like Cowley's, to cite precedents for Milton's text that could be found in Homer and Virgil (and, in practice, many other ancient writers). For example, Milton's 'Sing, heavenly muse' (Book I, line 6) prompts the observation that 'The Poets, Ancient and Modern, in the beginning of their most Considerable Works at least, call some one, or all, the Muses to their Assistance', quoting the *Iliad* in Greek, the *Aeneid* in Latin and Spenser.⁸⁰² And Hume annotates Milton's 'Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?' (Book I, line 33) as an 'Imitation of Homer', again quoting the *Iliad* in Greek.⁸⁰³

Two translators of classical tragedies into English before Theobald had attached notes. I have already mentioned Wase's *Electra* in chapter 1.4. In 1651 Edmund Prestwich published *Hippolitus Translated out of Seneca* in which the text of the play is followed by 'Comments' on ancient geography, legend, religion and customs.⁸⁰⁴ Prestwich explained that

If this Translation were only to fall into the hands of learned Readers, Comments were extremely unnecessary, but since we know not how the capacities of all are pallated, the Reader will be pleased to look upon these Illustrations as Torches, which if they knew the way, are useless, if not may light their understanding.⁸⁰⁵

That remark foreshadows the controversy surrounding the use of notes and other explanatory materials to explain literary texts that was very much alive around the time Theobald was writing and which I have already mentioned in the Introduction (section 5). Prestwich's approach - that the learned did not need his notes and could ignore them - could not survive the sheer quantity of annotations that came to decorate literary texts. Not even those with pretensions to learning could possibly claim to know already the volume of the materials that editors now began to marshal. But two ripostes against explanatory notes were published just before, and just as, Theobald published his translations of Aristophanes and Sophocles. Rowe had produced no notes for his six-volume edition of Shakespeare's plays (1709) and the

⁸⁰² Hume 1695: 2.

⁸⁰³ Hume 1695: 5.

⁸⁰⁴ Prestwich 1651: 49-60.

⁸⁰⁵ Prestwich 1651: 49.

following year Gildon, who opportunistically published poems by Shakespeare in what he and his publisher styled *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear. Volume the Seventh*, wrote in ‘Advertisement to the Reader’ that

the Reader ... is not to expect in the Remarks the Pedantic, Etymologies, and Grammatical Enquiries into the Diction of our Author; But I content my self to consider Him only as a Poet, and therefore to confine my self to his Poetical Beauties, and Errors; tho’ I have indeed added an Index of all his Antiquated Words, as far as all the Glossaries Extant cou’d help me out.⁸⁰⁶

Gildon often simply quotes lengthy passages from Shakespeare’s plays to illustrate their ‘Beauties’, for example from *Measure for Measure* under sub-headings ‘Mercy’, ‘Great Mens Abuse of Power’, ‘The Priviledge of Authority’, ‘On Place and Form’, ‘On Life’, ‘Death’, ‘No shuning Slander’, and ‘Place and Greatness’.⁸⁰⁷

Similarly, Pope emphasised Homer’s ‘Beauties’ in a note on the first book of his translation of the *Iliad* (1715). He regretted that hardly any previous commentator on Homer had designed to ‘illustrate the Poetical Beauties of the Author’, preferring to make remarks that are ‘rather Philosophical, Historical, Geographical, Allegorical, or in short rather any thing than Critical and Poetical’. Pope’s notes would instead ‘comment upon Homer as a Poet’.⁸⁰⁸ That seems to imply relatively less interest in what made Homer a distinctively ancient writer.⁸⁰⁹ But in practice Pope took great pains to hire assistants who helped him prepare voluminous notes of the type that he decried in addition to those that focussed ‘upon Homer as a Poet’.⁸¹⁰ On the other hand, Pope’s edition of Shakespeare (1725) concentrates on the latter aspect, using a typographical device to highlight striking passages in the body of the text:

Some of the most shining passages are distinguish’d by comma’s in the margin; and where the beauty lay not in particulars but in the whole, a star is prefix’d to the scene.

This was Pope’s method of ‘performing the better half of Criticism (namely the pointing out an Author’s excellencies)’.⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁶ Gildon 1710a: A8r; similarly 1710b: 257.

⁸⁰⁷ Gildon 1710b: 294-298.

⁸⁰⁸ Pope 1967: VII 82-83.

⁸⁰⁹ Wilson 1982: 86-87.

⁸¹⁰ Pope 1967: VII 1, cv-cvi; also examples of Homer as a poet at clxiv-clxxiii.

⁸¹¹ Pope 1725: I xxiii.

Theobald, by contrast, in his edition of Shakespeare (1733) dismissed Pope's approach as the least important element of the 'Science of Criticism' which

seems to be reduced to these three Classes; the Emendation of corrupt Passages; the Explanation of obscure and difficult ones; and an Inquiry into the Beauties and Defects of Composition. This Work is principally confin'd to the two former Parts.

He has occasionally performed the third, but

for the sake only of perfecting the two other Parts, which were the proper Objects of the Editor's Labour. The third lies open for every willing Undertaker: and I shall be pleas'd to see it the Employment of a masterly Pen.⁸¹²

Theobald clearly implies by the last phrase that Pope's efforts in that direction were inadequate.

Lintot thought that the fact that Theobald's translations of *Electra* and *Oedipus* had explanatory notes would make the volumes so attractive to buyers that he advertised their presence on the title pages (as on that of *Ajax*) and announced in the list of 'books printed for B. Lintot' at the end of Theobald's *Electra* that 'Sophocles' Tragedies' would appear 'with large Notes'. Furthermore, Lintot's programmatic 'The Publisher to the Reader' in the translation of *Ajax* set out the purpose and value of such notes in terms that directly challenged the approaches of Gildon and Pope. As quoted above (4.1), Lintot explained that the notes were 'Critical, and Philological', a choice of words that must have been intended to be tendentious. 'Philology' had been one of the battle grounds of the 'Ancients v Moderns' debate between Temple and Wotton only twenty years before. Wotton had praised 'Philological and Critical Learning' in *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694), including the work of 'Criticks' who made improvements to ancient texts which raised 'a judicious Critick very often as much above the Author upon whom he tries his Skill, as he that discerns another Man's Thoughts, is therein greater than he that thinks'.⁸¹³ Temple dismissed 'Philology' and Wotton's claims for it in *Some Thoughts upon Reviewing the Essay of Antient and Modern Learning* (1701):

he must be a Conjuror that can make those Moderns with their Comments, and Glossaries, and Annotations, more learned, than the

⁸¹² Theobald 1733: I xl-xli.

⁸¹³ Wotton 1694: 317-318.

Authors themselves in their own Languages, as well as the Subjects they treat.⁸¹⁴

Lintot's use of the words 'Critical, and Philological' served to locate his enterprise at the more scholarly end of the publishing spectrum, just as Theobald was to refer to the 'Notes Critical and Philological' that he intended to include in his edition of Aeschylus in a letter to Sir Hans Sloane on 21 September 1734.⁸¹⁵ They attempt, through the accumulation and demonstration of learning, to address an issue raised by Dryden in *Of Dramatick Poesy*, namely that 'many things appear flat to us [in ancient writers such as Euripides and Sophocles], whose wit depended upon some custom or story which never came to our knowledge'.⁸¹⁶

Theobald has 38 notes on *Electra* and 25 on *Oedipus* in addition to introductory remarks on each play. The notes discuss and explain the action of the plays, the comments of scholiasts (especially Triclinus on *Electra*), matters relating to the ancient Greek language, geography, customs, legends and religion, and other versions of the stories. In short, Theobald's notes are of the kind to which Pope objected as being 'Philosophical, Historical [and] Geographical'. Theobald often refers to Dacier who attached many more notes to his translations of the plays. Perhaps the availability of Dacier's editions to French-reading customers for Theobald's versions led the latter to include many fewer notes than the Frenchman. On several occasions Theobald is content to follow Dacier's lead. For example, he translates Dacier's comment on the anachronism of the reference to the Pythian games in *Electra*, to which I return below (4.4); and in a note about Oedipus' 'blind and rash Curiosity' he translates the same passage from Plutarch that Dacier had used.⁸¹⁷ But more interesting, as evidence of Theobald's learning and attitudes, are two other groups of remarks: those for which Dacier has no equivalent and those where he disagrees with Dacier.

The most interesting topic on which Theobald has a note and Dacier does not concerns the nature of the Sphinx in *Oedipus*.⁸¹⁸ Theobald quotes 'the second Scholiast', in Greek and English translation, for whom the Sphinx 'stands for a direct

⁸¹⁴ Temple 1701: 256-257.

⁸¹⁵ Jones R. F. 1919: 334.

⁸¹⁶ Dryden 1962: I 31; similarly I 38.

⁸¹⁷ Pythian games: Theobald 1714: 80-81; Dacier 1692b: 458-459. Oedipus: Theobald 1715a: 82-83; Dacier 1692b: 220-221.

⁸¹⁸ Also noted by Rierson 1984: 240-241.

Monster of Prey’, just as ‘Mr. Dryden presented her in the first Act of His and Mr. Lee’s *Oedipus*’. He also quotes ‘the Scholiast upon Hesiod’ in Greek and English translation, who portrays the Sphinx as ‘a Female Robber’, supported by the twelfth-century scholar John Tzetzes’ commentary on the third century B.C. writer Lycophron which Theobald also quotes in Greek and English translation; as well as the historian Diodorus who writes that Sphinxes were ‘a species of Animals, of the Ape Kind’. Theobald concludes, ‘Those who are inclined to think the whole a Mystery couch’d under a Fable, may take Nat. Comes along with them, in *Mythol.* lib. 9, chap.18.’, referring to the sixteenth-century Italian writer Natalis Comes’ *Mythologiae*.⁸¹⁹

In another note with no precedent in Dacier, on *Electra*, Theobald distances himself from some previous English critics in comments prompted by the fact that Sophocles ‘throughout this Tragedy, in many Places, insinuates the Hardship upon Electra, of being denied the Privilege of Marrying’. He refers to Euripides who in his *Electra* ‘makes Aegysthus marry Her to a Person who boasts of his Family, but is decay’d in his Fortunes’. He also mentions a possible derivation of her name ‘from her Single State’, quoting in this connection in Greek from ‘Aelian in his *Various History*’ (that is, the second-century Greek writer Aelian’s *Varia Historia* (*Ποικίλη Ἱστορία*)).⁸²⁰ Drake, arguing against Collier that ancient Greek tragedy was not necessarily more polite than contemporary English comedy, had criticised Sophocles’ *Antigone* for repeatedly lamenting that she would die unmarried, as mentioned in chapter 3.6, and complained that the same author’s *Electra*, ‘another Lady of much the same Quality and Character [is] in great distress too for want of a Husband, and complains very heavily upon that score’.⁸²¹ Collier inevitably sought to acquit *Electra* of impropriety:

This Lady, we must understand, had seen her Father Murther’d, by her Mother and Aegisthus; She was likewise ill treated in the Family, and had no Body to take care of her Interest, and make good the Expectations of her Birth: She had none but her Brother Orestes to depend on, and his long absence made her afraid she was forgotten. In short, she was impatient for his return, and seems rather to wish for Protection and Revenge, than a Settlement. And were it otherwise, the Expression is

⁸¹⁹ Theobald 1715a: 75-76.

⁸²⁰ Theobald 1714: 74-75.

⁸²¹ Drake 1699: 301.

perfectly inoffensive. And thus Sophocles stands disengaged without difficulty.⁸²²

Theobald's may have known of the spat between Collier and Drake since his library at his death contained 'Collier's *View of the Stage*, with Drake's Answer, 2 vols. '; his refusal to engage with such moralising, and his note on Electra's name, underline the more scholarly nature of his undertaking.⁸²³

Theobald reflects the studies he had presumably undertaken himself when he cites contemporary English works not mentioned by Dacier. In notes on *Electra* he justifies his translation of the Greek phrase meaning literally 'the Wolf-destroying God' by 'the glorious God of Day', that is, Apollo, as the original epithet 'would make no very beautiful Appearance in English', quoting the English cleric Nicholas Lloyd's *Dictionarium Historicum, Geographicum, Poeticum* (1686) as well as Triclinus; and he corrects an interpretation of a line by 'the learned Dr. Potter, in his *Antiquities of Greece*' (that is, John Potter's *Archaeologiae Graecae: or, The Antiquities of Greece*, two volumes, 1697-1699).⁸²⁴ In discussing 'the Customary Banquet' held to mark a death, Theobald quotes the original Greek, Johnson's Latin translation, two scholiasts and Potter again.⁸²⁵ In a note on *Oedipus* Theobald discusses the correct location of a temple to Apollo, citing both Potter and Lloyd.⁸²⁶ He also quotes praise of *Oedipus* as 'the general Rule and Model of true Plotting' in Kennet's *Lives and Characters of the Ancient Greek Poets* (1697).⁸²⁷ Theobald's library at his death contained those works by Potter (the 1722 edition), Lloyd and Kennet.⁸²⁸

Theobald disagrees with 'the learned Mr. Dacier' who believed that the chorus was composed of priests, whereas 'the Scholiasts', whom Theobald quotes in Greek and English translation, say the chorus is made up of 'certain antient Thebans'.⁸²⁹ Biet suggests that Dacier was reluctant to allow the chorus an implied political role as ordinary Theban citizens since that would be problematical in contemporary French

⁸²² Collier 1700: 111.

⁸²³ Corbett 1744: lot 66.

⁸²⁴ Theobald 1714: 71, 72-73.

⁸²⁵ Theobald 1714: 84-85.

⁸²⁶ Theobald 1715a: 81. Adams (1729: I d8r) also acknowledged consulting Potter.

⁸²⁷ Theobald 1715a: 74.

⁸²⁸ Corbett 1744: lots 30, 478, 563 and 568.

⁸²⁹ Theobald 1715a: 77-78; Dacier 1692b: 167-169.

tragedy; Theobald has no such qualms.⁸³⁰ But Theobald's most significant disagreement with Dacier concerns the character of Electra. Dacier, like La Mesnardière and Corneille before him, found Electra's involvement in her mother's murder shocking. The way she encouraged her brother to kill their mother was contrary to nature. Sophocles should have softened her character. The House of Pelops is doomed: God cannot but have resolved to exterminate a family in which a woman kills her husband and children their mother. By contrast, writes Dacier, Euripides has his Electra speak more in conformity with nature when speaking to Orestes after Clytemnestra's death.⁸³¹

Theobald begins his analysis of *Electra* by pointing out that Sophocles did not name the play after Orestes' return and revenge, 'which makes its Catastrophe', but rather after his sister who had been 'the Instrument of securing her tender Brother from the Rage of the Murtherers [of their father], by conveying him to Strophius, King of Phocus, thro' the Care of a faithful and secret Servant'. He continues,

The Poet in Her Character has labour'd to express her Miseries with vast Variety: And given her the true Features of an Heroick Daughter thro' the whole Poem. All her Sentiments give a fresh Subject for Admiration; and she is equally Wonderful, in her strong and implacable Resentments against her Father's Murtherers; in her Impatience for Orestes to come and revenge him; in her excessive Sorrows for her Brother's suppos'd Disaster; in her Transports, when she comes to know he is living; and in her Zeal, for the performance of his Revenge when once on foot.⁸³²

Hall and Macintosh rightly praise Theobald for seeing 'the importance which Sophocles attached to Electra, rather than her brother Orestes' and note that 'Theobald argues from a perspective informed by the conventions of early eighteenth-century "She-Tragedy" that the play's power lies in the multiple emotions Electra expresses'.⁸³³ The contrast between Dacier's attitude and Theobald's underlines Theobald's more sympathetic approach. Theobald was not unique in this. Collier had written with understanding of Electra's situation as mentioned above. And Gildon, in *An Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England*, seems sympathetic to her when he comments how she 'discovers Orestes to be her Brother, and changes her Miseries into Happiness in the Revenge of

⁸³⁰ Biet 1994: 118.

⁸³¹ Dacier 1692b: 433-434, 499-501.

⁸³² Theobald 1714: 70.

⁸³³ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 179.

her Father's Death'.⁸³⁴ Theobald may have influenced Anthony Blackwall who, in *An Introduction to the Classics* (1718), refers to Electra's description of how her mother killed her father:

She moves every generous Breast to sympathize with her; to boil with Indignation against the treacherous and barbarous Murderers; and bleed with Compassion for the royal Sufferer.⁸³⁵

But Adams remained unconvinced, adhering to the view familiar from Dacier that

tho' [Electra] is represented every where as a Princess of an heroick and generous Disposition, yet such Cruelty as she expresseth in promoting her Mother's Death is not at all becoming her Sex; and the Theatre is, or ought to be an Enemy to all kind of Cruelty

and that 'how great soever [Clytemnestra's] Crime was, yet it did not become her own Children to punish it in that Manner'. Euripides was 'still more faulty in this kind, for his Character of her is more cruel than that of Sophocles, or Aeschylus'.⁸³⁶

Theobald himself, shortly after his favourable portrayal of Electra, took a markedly different attitude to Hamlet in *The Censor*. He began by observing that virtue was not rewarded at the end of *King Lear* since both Cordelia and Lear died. He went on:

Shakespear has done the same in his *Hamlet*; but permit me to make one Observation in his Defence there; that Hamlet having the Blood of his Uncle on his Hands, Blood will have Blood, as the Poet has himself express'd it in *Mackbeth*.⁸³⁷

It is not obvious why Theobald was willing to exculpate Electra for killing her mother in order to avenge her father but not Hamlet for killing his uncle in order to avenge his. Perhaps he felt chivalrously that Electra's gender, which was clearly a factor in Dacier's revulsion at her character, meant that she stood in greater need of a defence, even though in a note on the play he describes her as 'more manly and stubborn' than her sister Chrysothemis.⁸³⁸

Finally, two of Theobald's notes show an editorial method that he would use repeatedly in his 1733 edition of Shakespeare and that was advertised on the title page of Hume's *Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost*, namely reference to 'Parallel

⁸³⁴ Gildon 1710a: xliii-xliv.

⁸³⁵ Blackwall 1718: 241.

⁸³⁶ Adams 1729: I 80, 154.

⁸³⁷ Theobald 1717: I 72 (no. 10, 2 May 1715).

⁸³⁸ Theobald 1714: 75.

Places and Imitations’ of ancient authors. Theobald has Electra beg Orestes not to take from her the funeral urn that she believes contains his ashes ‘By all the Honours of your Birth’, commenting that the original Greek, which Theobald quotes and renders ‘by your chin or beard’, ‘would seem very trivial and burlesque to us, however venerable amongst the Antients’. Theobald justifies his own choice of phrase by parallels from Homer and 2 *Samuel*.⁸³⁹ And in a note on *Oedipus* he explains a metaphor by what ‘the old Scholiast [says] upon the place’, quoted in Greek and English translation, and remembers ‘an Expression of Virgil’s *Palinurus*, very like this of Sophocles’, quoting in Latin from the *Aeneid*.⁸⁴⁰

4.4. Theobald, Shakespeare and the Greeks

Even leaving aside the question of the authenticity of *Double Falsehood*, the play which Theobald published in 1728 and which he said was based on one or more manuscripts of a lost Shakespeare play, Theobald was clearly sufficiently familiar with Shakespeare’s texts to be able to claim that he imitated them in his own works. In 1715 he published a poem *The Cave of Poverty*, described on the title page as ‘Written in Imitation of Shakespeare’, in the dedication to which Theobald described himself as ‘an Imitator of the Immortal Shakespeare’, even though his imitation was ‘very Superficial; extending only to the borrowing some of his Words, without being able to follow him in the Position of them, his Style, or his Elegance’.⁸⁴¹ And in letters to Warburton dated 20 November 1729 and 1 January and 10 February 1730 Theobald acknowledged, even boasted, that he was deliberately imitating in his *Orestes: a Dramatic Opera* (1731) lines from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the second such borrowing ‘I have been arrogant enough to fancy a little Shakespearesque’.⁸⁴² Theobald was also well acquainted with the plays of the Greek tragedians and in his edition of Shakespeare he connected them and Shakespeare in four different ways.

First, Theobald saw similarities between the language of Aeschylus and that of Shakespeare, as others did also. Dryden’s comments on the difficulty of Aeschylus’

⁸³⁹ Theobald 1714: 83-84.

⁸⁴⁰ Theobald 1715a: 80-81.

⁸⁴¹ Theobald 1715e: iv.

⁸⁴² Nichols 1817: II 284, 377, 603-604.

language, mentioned in chapter 2.3, were followed immediately by similar comments about Shakespeare: ‘many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible’; some of his words are ‘ungrammatical’ or ‘coarse’; and his whole style is ‘so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure’.⁸⁴³ Shakespeare was early criticised for his language, as Aeschylus had been: Henry Chettle parodied a line from *3 Henry VI* when he called Shakespeare in comments addressed to fellow playwrights in *Greenes Groatsworth of Witte* (1592) as ‘an upstart Crow ... that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you’.⁸⁴⁴

Other writers also saw parallels between the styles of Aeschylus and Shakespeare. Samuel Cobb in *Poetae Britannici* (1700) bid his readers hear Shakespeare ‘Thunder in the pompous strain / Of Aeschylus’.⁸⁴⁵ *The Spectator* in 1712 linked Aeschylus and ‘sometimes Sophocles’, ‘the Latins’ Claudian and Statius, and Shakespeare and Lee as exponents of ‘the false Sublime’.⁸⁴⁶ In a letter to Pope on 2 August 1721 Francis Atterbury confessed to finding Shakespeare in parts obscure and ‘enclin’d now & then to Bombast’, adding that ‘Aeschylus does not want a Comment to me, more than he does’.⁸⁴⁷

Theobald in an essay in *The Censor*, fresh no doubt from attempts to translate Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* from which he quotes in the same essay, made similar points but was more forgiving. He noted that ‘Criticks of every Age have ... labour’d to detract from the Merit of [Aeschylus] by imputing to him that Unhappy Pomp of Language, which we Moderns call Fustian’. He quoted Dion in support of Aeschylus’ style being ‘agreeable to the Manners of those old Heroes whom he brings on the Scene’. Moreover, Theobald agreed ‘with that admir’d Greek Critick’, that is, Longinus, who asserted that ‘the Sublime Stile, with a great many Defects, is to be preferr’d to the Middle Way however exactly hit’. Theobald also renewed Dryden’s parallel between Aeschylus and Shakespeare, finding in the former, and by implication also in Shakespeare, majesty alongside difficulty:

⁸⁴³ Dryden 1962: I 239.

⁸⁴⁴ Duncan-Jones 2011: 37-39.

⁸⁴⁵ Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: II 129; and Cobb similarly in *Of Poetry* (1710).

⁸⁴⁶ *The Spectator* no. 285, 26 January 1712, in Bond (ed.) 1965: III 11.

⁸⁴⁷ Pope 1956: II 78-79.

The Reason that Aeschylus is not so often nam'd as the Divine Sophocles, the Sententious Euripides, is, that your Adepts in Learning have been startled with this Traditional Notion of his Bombast, and Harshness of Diction. But as I have read him, without a blind Admiration, I view him as I do my Countryman Shakespear: I can find some Things in him I could wish had been temper'd by a softer Hand; but must own at the same Time, that where he is most harsh and obsolete he is still Majestick.⁸⁴⁸

Theobald also contended of Aeschylus 'that even where his Subject is Terror, he has mix'd such masterful Strokes of Tenderness, as have not been exceeded, if equal'd, by any of his Successors in Tragedy'. He continued with reference to *Prometheus Bound*, 'The Address of Vulcan [actually Hephaestus] to Prometheus, and his Concern for executing the Sentence, seem to me as pathetick as any thing I have found either in Sophocles or Euripides'.⁸⁴⁹

Theobald's second set of connections between the ancient Greek tragedians and Shakespeare concerned their use of similar phraseology. Previously writers keen to stress Shakespeare's originality had often played down the extent of his borrowings from the ancients. Dryden, having claimed in the preface to *An Evening's Love* (1671) that Shakespeare had taken some of his plots from the sixteenth-century Italian writer Cinthio, in the prologue to his version of *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) had represented the ghost of Shakespeare claiming that, when 'in a barbarous Age' he 'created first the Stage', he had 'drain'd no Greek or Latin store' in the process.⁸⁵⁰ Samuel Cobb wrote in *Of Poetry* (1710) that 'Art ne're taught [Shakespeare] how to write by Rules, / Or borrow Learning from Athenian Schools'.⁸⁵¹ And Dennis, in *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare* (1712), found no evidence in Shakespeare's tragedies that he had read translations of Sophocles and Euripides or had 'the least Acquaintance' with their plays.⁸⁵² Langbaine, in what Dobson has called 'the first full-scale exercise in Shakespearean source-hunting', had identified classical authors, but not the Greek tragedians, as the sources of *Anthony and Cleopatra* (Plutarch), *The Comedy of Errors* (Plautus), *Coriolanus* (Plutarch and

⁸⁴⁸ Theobald 1717: II 204-205 (no. 60, 9 March 1717). Theobald also linked the styles of Aeschylus and Shakespeare in the preface to *The Tragedy of King Richard the II* (4.1 above).

⁸⁴⁹ Theobald 1717: II 206 (no. 60, 9 March 1717).

⁸⁵⁰ Respectively Dryden 1962: I 154 and 1717: V 38.

⁸⁵¹ <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14528/14528-h/14528-h.htm>> [accessed 3 October 2013].

⁸⁵² Dennis 1967: II 13-14.

Livy), *Julius Caesar* (Livy) and *Timon of Athens* (Lucian).⁸⁵³ Gildon followed Langbaine in repeatedly finding evidence that Shakespeare took plots or ideas from Latin writers (such as Plautus, Ovid and Virgil) but referred to ‘the Ignorance that Shakespear had of the Greek Drama’.⁸⁵⁴

Theobald was interested less in identifying the sources of Shakespeare’s plots than in demonstrating textual similarities between Shakespeare and the Greek tragedians. He was the first editor of Shakespeare’s plays to do so. Rowe had asserted that Shakespeare ‘had no knowledge of the Writings of the Antient Poets’ since if he had read them

some of their fine Images would naturally have insinuated themselves into, and been mix’d with his own Writings; so that his not copying at least something from them, may be an Argument of his never having read ‘em.⁸⁵⁵

Gildon argued that Rowe’s conclusion did not necessarily follow from his observation, ‘so fertile a Genius as his [that is, Shakespeare’s], having no need to borrow Images from others, which had such plenty of his own’.⁸⁵⁶ Pope, in his 1725 edition of Shakespeare, argued that Shakespeare was ‘an Original’, drawing directly on nature, especially in his characters. Pope contrasted Shakespeare with Homer who

drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of Nature, it proceeded thro’ Aegyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him.⁸⁵⁷

Pope acknowledged that Shakespeare was widely read, although it was not clear in which language(s), highlighting his reading of ancient historians, in particular ‘the speeches copy’d from Plutarch in *Coriolanus*’.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵³ Dobson 1992: 102; Langbaine 1688: 21-22. Kewes (1998: 97-129) discusses Langbaine’s methodology.

⁸⁵⁴ Gildon 1710a: vii and 1710b: 300-302, 316-317, 321-322, 328; the quotation is at 321. At 373 Gildon followed Langbaine by observing that *Timon of Athens* ‘is plainly taken from Lucian’s *Timon*’ and Theobald (1720: Aa4r-Aa4v) agreed, adding Plutarch as a source.

⁸⁵⁵ Rowe 1709: I ii-iii.

⁸⁵⁶ Gildon 1710a: vi.

⁸⁵⁷ Pope 1725: I ii-iii.

⁸⁵⁸ Pope 1725: I x; similarly V 90, 143.

In *The Censor* in 1715 Theobald compared lines from plays by Aeschylus and Shakespeare. Of *Prometheus Bound* he wrote

This Sentence in the Grecian Poet is spoken by Prometheus after he is bound to Mount Caucasus, and in the height of his Distress is advis'd by the Sea-Nymphs to quit his resentments and assume a Temper;
“How easy 'tis to comfort and direct
The Wretch that labours under Racking Pains,
For him that tastes not of the Grief himself!”

He juxtaposed that with lines from *Much Ado About Nothing* (V.1), “Men counsel, and give Comfort to that Grief / Which they themselves not feel”. Theobald does not argue that Shakespeare had read Aeschylus but rather uses the similarity to illustrate ‘how closely the same Sentiment has been traced, by Authors of different Ages and Language, without being beholding to each other for an Imitation’.⁸⁵⁹

The context, it must be said, is tendentious. Theobald is trying to justify his being ‘not totally satisfied’ with Bentley’s argument that the epistles of Phalaris could not be genuine because they contained ‘some proverbial Sentences, which are recorded as the Inventions of Authors of a much later Date’, since ‘I look upon it a Hardship next to an Impossibility to determine strictly the Periods, and Origins of such Sentences’.⁸⁶⁰ Theobald’s purpose in quoting similar passages from Aeschylus and Shakespeare is to demonstrate that the same notions can be expressed in vastly different times and places because of the universality of human thoughts and experience. He was also flattering a potential patron. He dedicated volume II of *The Censor* to Charles, earl of Orrery whom he praises as ‘[a] great ... Figure in ... the Learned Part of Mankind’.⁸⁶¹ The earl, as Charles Boyle, was the front man for those who argued for the authenticity of the letters of Phalaris in the dispute with Bentley in the 1690s. Charles’ son John, the fifth earl of Orrery, supported Theobald by employing him to transcribe his family’s papers while Theobald was working on his edition of Shakespeare and gave Theobald 100 guineas in recognition of the edition’s dedication to him.⁸⁶² Theobald, in dedicating his version of Shakespeare’s *Richard II* to Charles, had farsightedly also praised John.⁸⁶³

⁸⁵⁹ Sophocles’ lines 263-265; Theobald 1717: I 182-183 (no. 26, 8 June 1715).

⁸⁶⁰ Theobald 1717: I 181-182 (no. 26, 8 June 1715).

⁸⁶¹ Theobald 1717: II A4r.

⁸⁶² Seary 1990: 201 and n. 13.

⁸⁶³ Theobald 1720: A4r-A4v.

Theobald returned twice more to the example of *Prometheus Bound* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. In the preface to *The Tragedy of King Richard the II* he argues that the similarity of ‘the Sentiment, and Terms’ in the passages demonstrated that Shakespeare had read and understood Aeschylus.⁸⁶⁴ But in a note on *Much Ado About Nothing* in his edition of Shakespeare he retreats to a more cautious position and observes that the Aeschylus (and other similar passages from Terence, Euripides and Philemon) all ‘seem to be a very reasonable Foundation’ for the Shakespeare.⁸⁶⁵

In letters to Warburton in 1730 Theobald continued to find similarities between the ancients and Shakespeare. On 12 February he noted a thought in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* which ‘I will not venture to say our Poet borrowed’ from lines 15-17 of Sophocles’ *Ajax* which he quoted in Greek.⁸⁶⁶ On 3 March he observed that Pandarus’ description of the Trojan warriors to Cressida in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* I.2 ‘seems an imitation of Homer’s Helen on the walls’ which was also ‘borrowed’ by Euripides in *The Phoenician Women* (lines 106-201) and ‘again copied’ by Statius in the ninth book of his *Thebais*.⁸⁶⁷ And on 13 March he quoted in Greek Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* line 275 and *Prometheus* line 788 as the same ‘form of expression’ as Shakespeare’s phrase ‘This table of my memory’ in *Hamlet* I.5.⁸⁶⁸

Those examples anticipate how Theobald used references to classical authors in his notes on Shakespeare’s plays in his 1733 edition of his works. The notes contain many examples of similar wording in ancient and modern writers. In the preface Theobald says that he does not wish to overstate Shakespeare’s knowledge of the classical languages, in terms reminiscent of his position in *The Censor* eighteen years earlier: ‘the Passages, that I occasionally quote from the Classics, shall not be urged as Proofs that [Shakespeare] knowingly imitated those Originals; but brought to shew how happily he has express’d himself upon the same Topicks’.⁸⁶⁹ He finds that a phrase in *The Merchant of Venice* ‘has very much the Cast of one in Philemon, the Greek Comic Poet, and Contemporary with Menander’ but adds,

⁸⁶⁴ Theobald 1720: Aa3v.

⁸⁶⁵ Theobald 1733: I 468.

⁸⁶⁶ Nichols 1817: II 480; similarly in Theobald 1733: VI 23.

⁸⁶⁷ Nichols 1817: II 534; repeated in Theobald 1733: VII 17.

⁸⁶⁸ Nichols 1817: II 560; similarly in Theobald 1733: VII 254.

⁸⁶⁹ Theobald 1733: I xxviii-xxix.

I dare not pretend ... that our Author imitated this Sentiment; for in moral Axioms, particularly, allowing an Equality of Genius, Writers of all Times and Countries may happen to strike out the same Thought.⁸⁷⁰

But on many occasions Theobald edges towards saying that Shakespeare derived passages from classical precedents, whether directly or indirectly, using different formulations. Sometimes Shakespeare had an ancient author ‘in view’ or ‘in his eye’.⁸⁷¹ Sometimes an ancient text is described as the ‘Foundation’ of Shakespeare’s.⁸⁷² Sometimes Theobald notes similarities while denying that he is venturing to affirm that Shakespeare imitated or copied the original (as in his letter of 12 February 1730 to Warburton and the *Merchant of Venice* example already mentioned);⁸⁷³ although on one occasion he says that Shakespeare ‘is unquestionably alluding to’ Virgil.⁸⁷⁴

On the whole Theobald finds ways not to say outright that Shakespeare imitated a classical author. On three occasions he says that a passage in Shakespeare has ‘the Air of [an] Imitation’ rather than that it is one. In *King Lear* an ‘exquisite Piece of Satire, drest up in a Figure and Method of Imagining from absent Circumstances, has greatly the Air of Imitation from the Antients’; and Theobald gives two examples from Plautus.⁸⁷⁵ He uses the same phrase in a note on a passage in *Coriolanus* which ‘has the Air of an Imitation, whether Shakespeare really borrow’d it, or no, from the Original: I mean, what Ulysses says in the Greek Poet of being able to distinguish Minerva’s Voice, tho’ he did not see her’, quoting in Greek lines 15-17 of Sophocles’ *Ajax*.⁸⁷⁶ And a ‘Sentiment’ in *Troilus and Cressida* ‘has strongly the Air of Imitation. Our Author seems partly to have borrow’d it from this Verse falsely father’d on Seneca ... and partly from what Terence has left us upon the

⁸⁷⁰ Theobald 1733: II 9. Theobald also notes a ‘resemblance’ (or similar) between Shakespeare and classical authors at II 342-343, 393; IV 457; V 300.

⁸⁷¹ Theobald 1733: I 438; II 230; IV 256; VII 75. Theobald had already used the phrase ‘in his Eye’ in 1720: Aa3r. Richard Farmer (1767: 44) calls ‘in his Eye’ the ‘favourite phrase’ used by critics who claimed that Shakespeare borrowed passages directly from the ancients.

⁸⁷² Theobald 1733: I 468 (above); II 369; III 433; IV 14.

⁸⁷³ Theobald 1733: IV 382; VI 212.

⁸⁷⁴ Theobald 1733: IV 252.

⁸⁷⁵ Theobald 1733: V 195.

⁸⁷⁶ Theobald 1733: VI 23.

same Subject [in *The Eunuch*].⁸⁷⁷ Similarly, when Macbeth says, ‘How is’t with me, when every noise appals me?’, Theobald notes,

This Reflection is not only drawn from the Truth and Working of Nature; but is so exprest, as that it might have been copied from this Passage of Sophocles, which Stoboeus has quoted in his Chapter upon Fearfulness; ... *Each noise is sent t’alarm the Man of Fear.*⁸⁷⁸ [my underlining]

The only clear example of Theobald arguing that Shakespeare copied directly from an ancient Greek tragedian occurs in notes on Act I of *Titus Andronicus*. Theobald reads, ‘against the Authorities of all the Copies’, that is, contrary to other editions of Shakespeare’s play, Demetrius as saying that “the Queen of Troy” took revenge “Upon the Thracian tyrant in her Tent”, other copies having “in his Tent”, as did Rowe and Pope in their editions of Shakespeare,

i.e. in the tent where she and the other Trojan Captive Women were kept: for thither Hecuba by a Wile had decoy’d Polymnestor, in order to perpetrate her Revenge. This we may learn from Euripides’ *Hecuba*; the only Author, that I can at present remember, from whom our Writer must have glean’d this Circumstance.⁸⁷⁹

Even then, the phrase ‘the only Author, that I can at present remember’ leaves open the possibility that Shakespeare might have used another, later source that Theobald has not yet identified. I will return to this example shortly. A little later, when Marcus says that ‘The Greeks, upon advice, did bury Ajax’, Theobald notes,

As the Author before shew’d himself acquainted with a Circumstance glean’d from Euripides, we find him there no less conversant with the *Ajax* of Sophocles; in which Ulysses and Teucer strenuously contend for permission to bury the Body of Ajax, tho he had been declar’d an Enemy to the Confederate States of Greece.⁸⁸⁰

In those instances we can see Theobald maintaining a balancing act. He is striving both to establish Shakespeare’s native creativity and originality and to situate him in a two thousand year old tradition of literary excellence, without implying that he derived his creativity and originality from that tradition by imitating or copying it. An example of a slightly different nature from the above that tends in the same direction concerns Shakespeare’s use of a particular metaphor. In both a letter to Warburton on 1 January 1730 and a note on *King Lear* Theobald quotes Gloucester’s

⁸⁷⁷ Theobald 1733: VII 63.

⁸⁷⁸ Theobald 1733: V 412.

⁸⁷⁹ Euripides’ lines 1014-1018; Theobald 1733: V 312.

⁸⁸⁰ Theobald 1733: V 319.

lines at the beginning of Act IV, ‘Might I but live to see thee in my Touch, / I’d say, I had eyes again!’ and mentions an earlier reference in the same play to hearing ‘Sheets of Fire’. Theobald comments that such ‘fine Boldnesses’ of expression, which critics call ‘translationes sensuum’, or ‘the transferring the Properties of one Sense to another ... to add the greater Force and Energy’, are rare in English poetry but more common in the ancients. As an example of the latter Theobald quotes in Greek to Warburton (and in English in 1733) line 103 of Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes*: ‘Alack! I see the Sound, the dreadful Crash, / Not of a single Spear’.⁸⁸¹ Here Theobald is saying, not that Shakespeare copied or imitated anything in Aeschylus, but rather that poets’ creative imagination works in similar ways across the ages and languages.

That is crucial to a third way in which Theobald uses passages from ancient writers to cast light on Shakespeare’s text, namely to validate or justify his adoption of a particular reading. It is well known that one of Theobald’s methodologies to establish Shakespeare’s text was the use of parallel passages in other plays by him and his contemporaries, a technique ‘borrowed from classical scholarship’.⁸⁸² As mentioned above (4.3), Patrick Hume, in *Annotations on Milton’s Paradise Lost*, had used parallel passages to illustrate his explanations of Milton’s epic and Theobald himself, in notes on *Electra* and *Oedipus*, cited parallel passages from Homer, Virgil and the Bible. They were a way of connecting the present to the past and finding common ground between the poetic minds of ancient and modern writers – an aspect of the belief in the universality of human nature in different ages and places.

In the preface to *The Works of Shakespeare* Theobald called the use of ‘parallel Passages and Authorities from [Shakespeare] himself’ to support his corrections and conjectures ‘the surest Means of expounding any Author whatsoever’.⁸⁸³ He went on to say of Shakespeare,

There are Obscurities in him, which are common to him with all Poets of the same Species; there are Obscurities, the Issue of the Times he liv’d in; and there are Others, again, peculiar to himself.⁸⁸⁴

⁸⁸¹ Nichols 1817: II 378; Theobald 1733: V 178-179.

⁸⁸² Seary 1990: 8 and n. 36; also examples of Theobald’s use of parallel passages, drawn from both Shakespeare and his contemporaries, at 53, 68-69, 71-73, 111, 161, 164 and 177-178.

⁸⁸³ Theobald 1733: I xliii.

⁸⁸⁴ Theobald 1733: I xlv.

The last of those categories of obscurity provides the theoretical justification for Theobald's use of parallel passages from Shakespeare himself to elucidate his text; and the second points to looking at his contemporaries as well. But the first category explains his use also of parallel passages from the ancients. I will mention here the two occasions when Theobald refers to ancient Greek playwrights.⁸⁸⁵ In *2 Henry IV* Theobald notes that the phrase 'Yet the first bringer of unwelcome News / Hath but a losing Office' 'is certainly true in Nature, and has the Sanction of no less Authorities than Those of Aeschylus and Sophocles; who say almost the same Thing with our Author here', in *The Persians* and *Antigone* respectively.⁸⁸⁶ And in *Hamlet* Theobald considered amending 'a sea of troubles' in Hamlet's 'To be, or not to be?' soliloquy by 'a siege' or 'an assay' of troubles on the basis of passages in other Shakespeare plays. Pope had retained 'sea of troubles' but speculated that it ought to be 'siege' which would continue 'the metaphor of slings, arrows, taking arms; and represents the being encompass'd on all sides with troubles'.⁸⁸⁷ Theobald decided to retain 'a sea' since instances of 'a Sea ... used not only to signify the Ocean, but likewise a vast Quantity, Multitude, or Confluence of any thing else ... are thick both in sacred and prophane writers'. Theobald's examples (as rendered in the current Loeb translations) include, from Aeschylus, the chorus' reference in *Seven against Thebes* to 'a wave of men' breaking over the city and the chorus' reference in *The Persians* to a 'great flood of men'.⁸⁸⁸ The instance already mentioned where Theobald amends 'in his tent' to 'in her tent' in *Titus Andronicus* is a somewhat confusing, because circular, application of the same methodology: he adopts a reading that makes sense on the basis of Euripides' *Hecuba* but then justifies it by reference to the same play.

The fourth way in which Theobald compared ancient Greek tragedians and Shakespeare concerned their use of anachronisms. In 1692 Dacier had noted the anachronism of the reference in Sophocles' *Electra* (line 49) to the Pythian games which he said were established over five hundred years after the death of Orestes. He complained that the absurdity of the allusion destroyed the play's verisimilitude of

⁸⁸⁵ For examples from other classical authors see Theobald 1733: I 129, 321; II 144-145; III 259; V 183.

⁸⁸⁶ Theobald 1733: III 444.

⁸⁸⁷ Pope 1725: VI 400.

⁸⁸⁸ Theobald 1733: VII 285-286.

which it was the foundation.⁸⁸⁹ In a note on his translation of *Electra* Theobald recorded Dacier's view:

Without doubt Sophocles thought his Audience did not know the Rise of those Games, or else he would have taken care not to have made such an Alteration in the Epochs; otherwise the absurdity is admirably well hid, under the wonderful Charms which are in the Relation, but, that don't justifie him.⁸⁹⁰

In another note on *Electra*, Theobald interprets words spoken by Orestes as a reference to Ulysses, disagreeing with 'the Scholiast [who] thinks Sophocles had an Eye to [a] Story concerning Pythagoras', on the grounds that this would make Orestes 'guilty of an Anachronism with a Vengeance'.⁸⁹¹ Wase had also identified the potential 'mistake of anticipation of history' if Pythagoras were alluded to but noted that Sophocles had avoided it since 'he onely names an action which might have been common to former ages, & conceals those actors which were long after the time of Orestes'.⁸⁹²

Later, having thought about anachronisms in Shakespeare, Theobald found ways to exculpate Sophocles for his reference to the Pythian games. In *Shakespeare Restored* Theobald refers to several anachronisms in Shakespeare, including mention in *Troilus and Cressida* of Aristotle who 'was at least 800 Years subsequent in Time' to the events in the play. Collier had mentioned the point in *A Short View* and Pope had changed the reference to 'Graver Sages'.⁸⁹³ But Theobald asserts that 'this Anachronism of our Poet, (and, perhaps, all the Others that he is guilty of,) was the Effect of Poetick Licence in him, rather than Ignorance'. Theobald goes on to mention anachronistic references to Galen in *Coriolanus*, to cannons in *King John* and to Machiavelli in *Henry VI*; and also anachronisms in Beaumont and Fletcher and in Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*. He continues, 'But that the poets of our own Nation may be justified in these Liberties by Examples of the Antients, I'll throw in a few Instances of the like sort from their Predecessors in the Art at Greece'. He gives the example from Sophocles' *Electra* of the reference to the Pythian games, 'which Games, as the Scholiast tells us, were not instituted till 600 Years afterwards by

⁸⁸⁹ Dacier 1692b: 414, 458-459. Adams (1729: I 84) followed Dacier.

⁸⁹⁰ Dacier 1692b: 459; Theobald 1714: 81.

⁸⁹¹ Theobald 1714: 73.

⁸⁹² Wase 1649: 4. Adams (1729: I 85-86) and Dacier (1692b: 416-417) also have notes on the point.

⁸⁹³ Collier 1698: 187; Pope 1725: VI 42.

Triptolemus'.⁸⁹⁴ So whereas Theobald in 1714 had echoed Dacier's condemnation of the anachronism in *Electra*, now in 1726 he was able to see it as an example of the sort of 'Poetick Licence' in which Shakespeare had indulged.

One defence of anachronisms that Theobald eventually mounted was the one he had mentioned in his note on *Electra*: that audiences do not necessarily notice them. He had developed a theoretical foundation for this line of thought by 1733:

In all Anachronisms, as in other Licences of Poetry, this Rule ought certainly to be observ'd; that the Poet is to have Regard to Verisimilitude. But there is no Verisimilitude, when the Anachronism glares in the Face of the common People. For this Falshood is, like all other Falshoods in Poetry, to be only tolerated, where the Falshood is hid under Verisimilitude.

Machiavelli, mentioned in *I Henry VI*,

was a Foreigner, whose Age, we may suppose, the common Audience not so well acquainted with; as being long before their time ... This, therefore, was within the Rules of Licence; and if there was not Chronological Truth, there was at least Chronological Likelihood: without which a Poet goes out of his Jurisdiction, and comes under the Penalty of the Criticks Laws.⁸⁹⁵

That pragmatic approach was reinforced by an appeal to the author's creative imagination, as in the note on *Troilus and Cressida* already mentioned:

tho' Shakespeare, almost in every Scene of his historical Plays, commits the grossest Offences against Chronology, History, and Antient Politicks; yet This was not thro' Ignorance, as is generally supposed, but thro' the too powerful Blaze of his Imagination; which, when once raised, made all acquired Knowledge vanish and disappear before it.⁸⁹⁶

In various ways Theobald sought to make connections between Shakespeare and Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Shakespeare was similar to Aeschylus in the style of his language, and to appreciate one was to appreciate the other. The Greeks (and other ancient writers) and Shakespeare had on occasions used similar phraseology; but Theobald was reluctant to say too explicitly that Shakespeare had knowingly and deliberately copied or imitated his ancient predecessors. And the Greeks and Shakespeare were linked across the millennia by their poetic imaginations which led them to adopt not only similar thoughts and expressions but

⁸⁹⁴ Theobald 1726: 134-135. Similarly Theobald 1733: VII 42-44; with examples of other 'knowing' and 'wilful' anachronisms in Shakespeare at I xxx-xxxii; III 157, 170, 172; VI 21, 55-56.

⁸⁹⁵ Theobald 1733: IV 112.

⁸⁹⁶ Theobald 1733: I xxx.

an approach to anachronisms that transcended mere chronological accuracy. Theobald's reception of *Electra* and *Oedipus* was mediated through Shakespeare to whom he was to devote much of his working life but whom he clearly already had in his mind when translating Sophocles. Conversely, at times his reception of Shakespeare was mediated through the ancients. Theobald could use the Greeks and Shakespeare to validate and justify each other. Shakespeare's use of anachronisms could be read back into those of Sophocles and Euripides, as an example of the dialogue between present and past that Martindale has highlighted as an integral part of reception theory.⁸⁹⁷

4.5. Conclusion

Theobald's translations of *Electra* and *Oedipus* were influenced by some of the same considerations that had influenced earlier writers. His amplification of the protagonists' royal status in both plays is consistent with Joyner's insistence that the elevated status of the Roman emperor in his *The Roman Empress* made him a particularly fit subject for tragedy as compared with a mere 'petty' Greek prince. For both Joyner and Theobald tragedy demanded central characters whose misfortunes would resonate to a greater extent with an audience or a reader if their high social and political standing was underpinned by emphasis on their royalty. This implied the vital nature of their position and personal success to the well-being and safety of the state and the importance in that context of the principle of hereditary or (as in the case of England under George I) an otherwise well-organised succession. At the end of *The Roman Empress* Statilius lamented the destruction of 'the whole fabrick of the Roman Empire' which Valentius' fall entailed.⁸⁹⁸ In *Electra* the central story line concerns the restoration of the crown of Mycenae to the rightful hereditary heir of the House of Atreus. In *Oedipus* we are constantly reminded of the title character's fears that those who cross him are treasonous traitors, whose actions by definition will destabilise Thebes, and his downfall implies that of his sons who would have been expected to succeed him: Oedipus' confidence that 'their sturdy Sex will strive, / And bustle thro' Adversity for Bread' is undermined by the informed reader's knowledge

⁸⁹⁷ Martindale 2006: 5-6.

⁸⁹⁸ Joyner 1671: 67.

of their subsequent deadly rivalry.⁸⁹⁹ Theobald also writes of how the versions of the story by Euripides, Statius and Seneca ‘keep [Jocasta] alive, till after the mutual Death of Eteocles and Polynices in single Combat’, an allusion which assumes that the reader knows who Eteocles and Polynices were and how they fell out.⁹⁰⁰

A second way in which Theobald followed earlier writers is in the parallels he makes between the ancient Greek tragedians and Shakespeare. As already mentioned, there are echoes of *Hamlet* in Goffe’s *The Tragedy of Orestes* and of *Macbeth* in May’s *Antigone*, and both Rowe and *The Spectator* had connected *Electra* and *Hamlet*. Theobald recalls *Hamlet* in his translation of *Electra* but he goes further. In chapter 2 I have shown how for some critics there was a tension between admiration for neo-classical dramaturgy and admiration for England’s native theatre. Theobald seeks to reconcile the two traditions by pointing to linguistic parallels between Shakespeare and ancient Greek and Latin writers, beginning in *The Censor* in 1715 with the juxtaposition of phrases from Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* and Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* to illustrate how the same sentiments could occur independently to writers of different times and places, and continuing in similar vein in the 1730s in letters to Warburton and his edition of Shakespeare.

Theobald did not use the traditional dichotomy of ‘Ancients v Moderns’ when discussing the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare. In *The Censor* in 1715 he had declared himself

so profess’d an Admirer of Antiquity, that I am never better pleas’d with the Labours of my Contemporaries, than when they busy themselves in retrieving the sacred Monuments of their Fore-Fathers from Obscurity and Oblivion.⁹⁰¹

He deprecated ‘a Spirit of Detraction [which has reigned] for some Years in the World, which has labour’d to strip the Ancients of their Honours, on purpose to adorn some more Modern Brow’, attributing it to jealousy on the part of modern writers who, ‘unable to come up to the Strokes of Antiquity ... draw down Authors to their own Dates, to prove that all Merit in Writing was not confin’d to the Aera’s of

⁸⁹⁹ Theobald 1715a: 69.

⁹⁰⁰ Theobald 1715a: 84.

⁹⁰¹ Theobald 1717: I 29 (no. 5, 20 April 1715).

Paganism'.⁹⁰² But by 1717 Theobald was taking a more nuanced view. He now denied that

Learning is in a State of Decay, and that we every day lose ground of the Ancients, and seem travelling backward into a Land of Ignorance and Darkness ... it being my Opinion, upon a curious Survey of Particulars, that Knowledge shoots out at this very Day into more flourishing Branches than ever, and that the Number of the Learned rises yearly in our fruitful Island.⁹⁰³

That sentiment perhaps explains why Theobald did not find it necessary to engage in a controversy whose high point had passed and which, in any event, implied an 'either / or' way of looking at past and present that did not correspond to the approach he took to understanding and appreciating the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare. His concentration on textual parallels in the ancients and Shakespeare avoids the need to debate their relative merits and the latter's perceived failure to observe the classical rules.

Theobald was certainly interested in the ancient cultures, manners and habits of thought revealed by Sophocles' *Electra* and *Oedipus*, as Wase and Prestwich had been in the middle of the previous century in their translations of *Electra* and Seneca's *Hippolitus*. All three responded to the ancient texts as they found them and explained ancient legends, religion, customs etc. without condescending to them or inserting their own judgements, unlike the author of the notes on *Ajax*.

Rierson observes that Theobald's *Oedipus* was 'the first British *Oedipus* to be published with critical notes and annotations, and it establishes a scholarly attitude toward the work which continues to the present day', although Rierson adds that 'the notes and commentary ... contribute very little to a greater understanding of the play'.⁹⁰⁴ Some learned readers (that is, those who could read the ancient languages) might have taken the trouble to read *Electra* and *Oedipus* in the original Greek, perhaps with Latin translations opposite and in editions that also printed the scholia. Theobald made overt use of them in his notes. As in his note about Eteocles and Polynices, he combined the obligation to explain with assumptions about what his readers already knew. Thus he refers to what 'the Scholiast(s)', or the 'first' or the 'second' scholiast, had written about particular passages, without thinking it

⁹⁰² Theobald 1717: I 137 (no. 19, 23 May 1715).

⁹⁰³ Theobald 1717: II 28-29 (no. 35, 10 January 1717).

⁹⁰⁴ Rierson 1984: 187-188, 209.

necessary to explain to the reader who they were or when they wrote, and he also quotes them in Greek. On the other hand, he goes on to translate them into English, which a learned reader would not necessarily require, as if wishing to reach out to a broader readership, albeit one that was potentially interested in ancient Greek tragedy in the first place and which Theobald and Lintot may have found was not as large as they had hoped when the latter launched his project to produce English versions of all the Greek tragedians. In addition, Theobald brought contemporary English scholars (Lloyd, Potter and Kennet) into his notes, reinforcing the links between literature and scholarship which are evident also in the work of Thomas Francklin to whom I turn next.

CHAPTER 5: THOMAS FRANCKLIN (1721-1784)

Thomas Francklin was the son of the printer and publisher Richard Francklin. The latter is best known as the publisher of *The Craftsman*, a periodical founded in 1726 by the ‘patriotic Whig’ William Pulteney and the former Tory and Jacobite Henry St John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, in opposition to the First Lord of the Treasury (and in modern parlance Prime Minister) Robert Walpole. Richard also published Theobald’s *Shakespeare Restored* (1726) and many works by his son Thomas who became a Church of England minister and man of letters rather than succeeding to his father’s business.⁹⁰⁵

In this chapter I look at Thomas Francklin’s *The Tragedies of Sophocles* (1759), which was published by subscription and was the first complete verse translation of Sophocles. Publication by subscription was a way of trying to ensure that funds would be in place to pay for a publication, assuming that everyone who promised to subscribe did so promptly.⁹⁰⁶ It was also a way of attracting the custom of prominent people whose names would be published at the front of what was often a handsomely produced volume. Francklin was successful on both counts. He was able to dedicate the two quarto volumes of *The Tragedies of Sophocles* to the Prince of Wales who succeeded to the throne as George III the following year. The subscription list is headed by the Prince, his brother Prince Edward and their uncle the Duke of Cumberland. The other some 590 subscribers included many members of the aristocracy, the church, parliament (including John Wilkes), the legal profession, Oxford and Cambridge Universities (including Francklin’s predecessor as Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, William Fraigneau, and his successor, Michael Lort) and Canterbury, Eton, St. Paul’s and Westminster schools; and members of the literary, artistic and acting professions - Mark Akenside, Richard Cumberland, Samuel Foote, David Garrick, William Hogarth, Lewis Francis (that is, Louis-François) Roubillac, Horace Walpole, Mrs. Woffington, the Poet Laureate William Whitehead and Thomas Warton.

I look first at Thomas Francklin’s literary career and academic background (chapter 5.1) and then at his views on translation (5.2). Next I examine Francklin’s *A*

⁹⁰⁵ Caudle 2007, 2009.

⁹⁰⁶ Other translations from the ancients published by subscription included Pope’s Homer and Potter’s Aeschylus and Euripides (Gillespie and Wilson 2005: 45-46).

Dissertation on Antient Tragedy (1759) which he published to accompany his *Tragedies of Sophocles* (5.3). Turning to *The Tragedies of Sophocles* specifically, I first look at the style of the translations (5.4) and then at the notes with which Francklin accompanied them (5.5). On several occasions Francklin's reception of Sophocles is influenced by the stage of his own time (5.6). Like Theobald, he finds textual parallels between Sophocles and other authors, especially Shakespeare (5.7). I consider the reception of Francklin's translations (5.8) before summarising how Francklin saw the relationship between Sophocles' time and his own (5.9).

5.1. Francklin's literary career and academic background

Thomas was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating B.A. in 1743 and M.A. in 1746 (after becoming a Fellow the previous year). After periods as 'usher', or assistant master, at his old school, deacon at Ely and priest at Rochester, Francklin was elected Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge University in 1750, a post which he held until 1759 when he married. He published *Translation; a Poem* in 1753. Posts held by Francklin from 1759 included offices at St. Paul's, Covent Garden and the Great Queen Street Chapel, London, chaplain to the king and to the Royal Academy on its foundation in 1768 and, on the death of Oliver Goldsmith in 1774, the Professorship of Ancient History there.⁹⁰⁷

Francklin's publications, in addition to those already mentioned, include translations of Cicero's *Of the Nature of the Gods* (1741), *The Epistles of Phalaris* (1749), Voltaire's *Oreste* (1762) for Smollett's *The Works of Mr. de Voltaire. Translated from the French*, and *The Works of Lucian* (1780); contributions to Smollett's *Critical Review* (1756 onwards);⁹⁰⁸ a periodical *The Centinel* (1757); three stage plays, *The Earl of Warwick* (1766), based on Jean-François La Harpe's *Warwick*, *Matilda* (1775), based on Voltaire's *Amélie, ou Le Duc de Foix*, both of which were put on by Garrick at Drury Lane, and a comedy *The Contract* (1776); and many sermons.

On Francklin's death in 1784 *The Gentleman's Magazine* wrote that he

⁹⁰⁷ *British History Online* 2010; Courtney 1889; Mercer 2004; Welch 1788: 119, 123.

⁹⁰⁸ Francklin's contributions in 1756 are identified, and some are discussed, by Roper (1959: 39-40, 43-44) and Basker (1988: 39-40 and passim).

was possessed of no inconsiderable share of learning and poetical abilities, and was long a favourite in the literary world. His translations of Phalaris, Sophocles, and Lucian, equally evince his learning and his genius, as they are not more distinguished for fidelity in the version, than congeniality with the spirit of the admirable originals ... his death may be considered as a loss to the republic of letters.⁹⁰⁹

On the death of Francklin's widow twelve years later *The Gentleman's Magazine* described her as the 'widow of the justly-celebrated Dr. Thomas F. some time Greek professor at Cambridge, translator of Sophocles, &c. and author of some other valuable works'.⁹¹⁰ Charles Churchill was less complimentary about Francklin, declaring in *The Rosciad* that 'He sick'ned at all triumphs but his own' and in *The Journey* that Francklin was 'proud of some small Greek'.⁹¹¹ A satirical piece in *The Court Magazine* in December 1761 described Francklin's motives for writing as 'learning and ostentation'.⁹¹²

Francklin is the first English translator of Sophocles to boast of a scholarly background: he advertised himself as 'Greek Professor in the University of Cambridge' on the title page of *The Tragedies of Sophocles* which further declared itself to be 'from the Greek'. He thereby differentiated his translations from those of Charlotte Lennox whose *The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy*, also published in 1759, apparently after Francklin's translations, included translations of several plays by Sophocles and Euripides taken, as her title page acknowledged, not from the Greek but from Pierre Brumoy's *Le Théâtre des Grecs* (1730).⁹¹³ Francklin's and Lennox's volumes both had dedications to the Prince of Wales dated 4 June 1759, marking the prince's twenty-first birthday. Lennox is another writer who engaged with both the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare: she published a detailed examination

⁹⁰⁹ *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle* LIV, 1784 (London: D. Henry and E. Newbery), 238-239, which includes Francklin in a section entitled 'Obituary of considerable Persons; with Biographical Anecdotes'.

⁹¹⁰ *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle* LXVI, 1796 (London: E. Newbery), 446.

⁹¹¹ Churchill, *The Rosciad* (London: W. Flexney, 1761), 3; *The Journey* (London: W. Flexney, 1765), 6.

⁹¹² Anon 1761: 168.

⁹¹³ *The Critical Review* (June 1759, VII 513), in a review of Francklin's translations, refers to 'a new translation of Brumoy, by another celebrated hand, which, we are told, will soon make its appearance'. Lennox provided English versions of Sophocles' *Oedipus*, *Electra* and *Philoctetes* and of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Alcestis* and *The Cyclops*.

of Shakespeare's sources, *Shakespear Illustrated: or the Novels and Histories, On which the Plays of Shakespear are Founded* (three volumes, 1753-1754).⁹¹⁴

Francklin's learning impressed Mrs. Inchbald who, in remarks accompanying publication of *The Earl of Warwick* in volume 19 of her *British Theatre* (1808), noted that the play 'was brought on the stage ... by Dr. Thomas Franklin, called the Grecian, from his learning'. But Francklin's tenure of the Professorship in Greek does not necessarily imply a particularly high level of scholarship by modern standards. The example of Richard Watson is instructive in this respect. He was elected Professor of Chemistry at Cambridge in November 1764 at which time he 'knew nothing at all of Chemistry, had never read a syllable on the subject; nor seen a single experiment in it'.⁹¹⁵ In 1771 Watson was appointed Professor of Divinity, despite having no bachelor's degree in the subject and having acquired the degree of D.D. by royal mandate only the day before the candidates for the post were to be examined. But all was well, since 'on being raised to this distinguished office, I immediately applied myself with great eagerness to the study of divinity'.⁹¹⁶

Moreover, Francklin's Professorship may have been a result less of his qualities as a Greek scholar than of his nomination by his own College. He was the fourth in a sequence of six Fellows of Trinity who held the Professorship between 1712 and 1780.⁹¹⁷ Trinity, in acknowledgement that the stipend was charged on the College, provided three of the seven people who made the election to the post: the Master and the two senior Fellows. The four other electors (the Vice-Chancellor of the university, the Provost of King's and the Masters of St. John's and Christ's) had therefore to unite on a rival candidate to overturn Trinity's choice. Francklin secured the Professorship in 1750 by winning by four votes to the three cast for William Barford, a Fellow of King's, suggesting that Barford failed to achieve the necessary solidarity among the non-Trinity electors.⁹¹⁸ Barford's own candidature may have been promoted less because of his own merits than as a way of frustrating Trinity's

⁹¹⁴ Bate 1997: 146-147.

⁹¹⁵ Watson 1817: 28-29.

⁹¹⁶ Watson 1817: 38.

⁹¹⁷ Tanner (ed.) 1917: 78.

⁹¹⁸ Nichols 1812: IV 278; Winstanley 1935: 101-102, 362 n. 48.

dominance of the post, the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Keene, having tried to persuade the classical scholar Jeremiah Markland to stand for election.⁹¹⁹

Having secured his Professorship, Francklin, besides perhaps giving an inaugural lecture, may have done no more than turn up to take part in examinations. The *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State, Discipline, Studies and Revenues of the University and Colleges of Cambridge* (1852-1853) reported, ‘We believe that no Lectures had been given during the last century and a half by any of the occupants’ of the chair of Professor of Greek.⁹²⁰

5.2. Francklin on translation

Francklin’s *Translation: a Poem* (1753) belongs to a tradition of poems on literature. He perhaps chose the medium of verse because of the precedent of Roscommon’s *Essay on Translated Verse* (1684), to which Francklin refers in his own poem and which concerned translation specifically and was accompanied by five complimentary poems, including one by Dryden.⁹²¹

Francklin claimed in *A Dissertation on Antient Tragedy* that ‘the old tragedians have been shamefully disguised and misrepresented to the unlearned, by the false medium of bad translations’.⁹²² He had argued in *Translation* that ‘the contempt, in which the antients are held by the illiterate wits of the present age, is in a great measure owing to the number of bad translations’.⁹²³ He attributes these to poorly-paid hacks such as those employed by the publisher Edmund Curll ‘who paid them by the sheet for their hasty performances’;⁹²⁴ to pale pedants ‘Who [write] at last

⁹¹⁹ Nichols 1812: IV 283.

⁹²⁰ *Report of the Commissioners* 1852-1853: 49-50.

⁹²¹ Other examples of poems on literature include versions of Horace’s *Ars Poetica* by Roscommon (1680), John Oldham (1684) and Thomas Creech (1684), as well as the Dryden-Soames translation of Boileau’s *Art Poétique* (1683) mentioned in the Introduction (section 3); the Earl of Mulgrave’s *Essay on Poetry* (1682); Samuel Wesley’s *Epistle to a Friend Concerning Poetry* (1700); Lord Lansdowne’s *Unnatural Flights in Poetry* (1701); Richard Blackmore’s *Advice to the Poets* (1706); Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* (1711); and the ‘progress of poetry’ poems mentioned in the introduction (section 5).

⁹²² Francklin 1759b: 3.

⁹²³ Francklin 1753: 3.

⁹²⁴ Francklin 1753: 4. A common if no doubt exaggerated picture according to Gillespie and Wilson (2005: 41-42) and Hopkins and Rogers (2005: 81-95). Dryden

ambitiously to shew / How much a fool may read, how little know'; to timid writers who follow their original too closely, 'Anxious to keep th' Original in view; / Who mark each footstep where their master trod, / And after all their pains have mist the road'; to those who, conversely, stray far from the original and 'an author's sense ... boldly quit, / As if asham'd to own the debt of wit'; and, finally, to the fact that 'half our translations [are] done from translations by such as were never able to consult the original'.⁹²⁵ French translations, especially in prose, 'are acknowledged to be more faithful and correct, and in general more lively and spirited than ours'.⁹²⁶ It is no wonder that

... when here the sweets of Athens come,
Or the fair produce of imperial Rome,
They pine and sicken in th'unfriendly shade,
Their roses droop, and all their laurels fade.⁹²⁷

It is not easy to derive a theory of translation from Francklin's poem. In 1757 Arthur Murphy fairly commented that 'there are very few rules to guide a translator in this piece'.⁹²⁸ Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, in *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (first published 1791), called Francklin's *Translation* 'rather an apology of the art, and a vindication of its just rank in the scale of literature, than a didactic work explanatory of its principles'.⁹²⁹ But Francklin was not seeking to lay down detailed rules or principles of the sort that Murphy and Tytler missed. However, he was influenced by Roscommon who, in *An Essay on Translated Verse*, had recommended:

Examine how your humour is inclined,
And which the ruling passion of your mind;
Then seek a poet who your way does bend,
And choose an author as you choose a friend:
United by this sympathetic bond,
You grow familiar, intimate and fond;
Your thoughts, your words, your styles, your souls agree,

(1962: II 213-214), however, makes the same complaint in his *Life of Lucian* (1711); as does Gildon (1691: 4; 1719: 323).

⁹²⁵ Francklin 1753: 5-6.

⁹²⁶ Francklin 1753: 7. In 1756 Francklin again asserted the past superiority of French translations of 'the most celebrated authors of antiquity' (*The Critical Review*, May 1756, I 293).

⁹²⁷ Francklin 1753: 3.

⁹²⁸ Murphy 1963: 109.

⁹²⁹ Tytler 1978: 5.

No longer his interpreter, but he.⁹³⁰

Francklin refers to Roscommon and uses a similar image ‘drawn from [a] more lively passion’, namely love rather than friendship:

Unless an author like a mistress warms,
How shall we hide his faults, or taste his charms,
How all his modest, latent beauties find,
How trace each lovelier feature of the mind,
Soften each blemish, and each grace improve,
And treat him with the dignity of love?⁹³¹

In *The Critical Review* in 1756 Francklin similarly observed that that ‘a translator ... is generally too fond of his author to spy out any blemish or imperfection in him’.⁹³²

The idea that sympathy between translator and original would lead the former to overlook the latter’s imperfections is implicit in Dryden’s preface to *Sylvae: or, the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (1685), where he wrote that ‘a translator is to make his author appear as charming as possibly he can, provided he maintains his character and makes him not unlike himself’, and in Pope’s *An Essay on Criticism* which argues that

A perfect Judge will read each Work of Wit
With the same Spirit that its Author writ,
Survey the Whole, nor seek slight Faults to find,
Where Nature moves, and Rapture warms the Mind.⁹³³

Later in this chapter I will look at ways in which Francklin used notes on *The Tragedies of Sophocles* to praise, defend and justify the Greek tragedian.

Gavrinsky, using a somewhat overblown image, sees Francklin’s language in *Translation* as reflecting ‘the sexual dialectic’ inherent in the activity of a translator torn between the wish on the one hand to ‘[observe] the original as if it were a primal authority protected by civilization’s most universal prohibition - the one against incest’ and, on the other hand, to reject ‘this metaphoric prohibition’, overcoming ‘the taboo placed on it, and in a Nietzschean disregard for Christian-cultural traditions, [becoming] aggressively self-affirmative as he transforms the passive

⁹³⁰ Robinson (ed.) 1997: 177.

⁹³¹ Francklin 1753: 9-10.

⁹³² *The Critical Review*, May 1756, I 294.

⁹³³ Dryden 1962: II 19; Pope 1963: 151.

introduction-translation into an act of creation'.⁹³⁴ To Chamberlain, Francklin exemplifies 'the sexualisation of translation' which makes a distinction between writing and translation, 'marking, that is, the one to be original and "masculine", the other to be derivative and "feminine"'.⁹³⁵ More prosaically, in a footnote Francklin explains, 'A bias of inclination towards a particular author, and a similarity of genius in the translator seem more immediately necessary than wit or learning'.⁹³⁶ Lund has explained this as 'the necessity for innate sympathy between the translator and the original author'; and Kelly as balancing scholarship with 'creative "fire" and kinship with [the] author'.⁹³⁷

But musings on the nature of translation were not all that Francklin aimed at in *Translation*. He also used the work as a vehicle for advertising his proposed translations of Sophocles. First, he criticised his predecessors in the field, Adams only in passing but Theobald - who, as Francklin was to do, had employed verse and so was potentially a point of comparison on that score - more directly, commenting that 'Tibbald (or Theobald) translated two or three plays of Sophocles, and threaten'd the public with more', employing the disparaging form of Theobald's name that Pope had used in the *Dunciad Variorum*.⁹³⁸ Next, Francklin represented himself hesitatingly taking on the burden of righting the wrongs done to Sophocles by Theobald in particular. He imagined ancient writers showing their anger at how badly they had been served by British translators:

On us thy heroes still indignant frown,
Or look with awful indignation down;
The tears of Rome for injur'd learning flow,
And Athens grieves that Britain is her foe.⁹³⁹

Francklin then undertook to rescue Sophocles:

To fame unknown, but emulous to please,
Trembling I seek th' immortal Sophocles.
Genius of Greece, do thou my breast inspire
With some warm portion of thy poet's fire,

⁹³⁴ Gavronsky 1977: 53, 56-57.

⁹³⁵ Chamberlain 1988: 455-458.

⁹³⁶ Francklin 1753: 10.

⁹³⁷ Kelly L. 2005b; Lund 1998: 23.

⁹³⁸ Francklin 1753: 3 (Adams) and 8 and 13 (Theobald). Francklin's reference to Theobald's 'two or three' translations may reflect his careless ignorance or uncertainty over who translated the 1714 *Ajax*.

⁹³⁹ Francklin 1753: 12-13.

From hands profane defend his much-lov'd name;
From cruel Tibbald wrest his mangled fame.⁹⁴⁰

Francklin's concern for Sophocles' 'mangled' fame was a trope found in Elizabeth Thomas' earlier expression of regret that Dryden had been unable to translate Homer: 'Had he but liv'd t'ave made great Homer ours; / Redeem'd his injur'd Sire, and set him free / From Chapman, Hobb's, and mangling Ogilby'.⁹⁴¹ Earlier still, Charles Cotton, in a poem prefixed to Prestwich's *Hippolitus*, had expressed the idea that previous translators had mistreated the original text in terms that evoked the physical mangling suffered by the play's title character:

Hippolitus that erst was set upon
By all, mangled by mis-construction
Dis-membred by mis-prision, now by thee
And thy ingenious Chirurgerie;
Is re-united to his limbs, and grown
Stronger as thine, then when great Theseus son.⁹⁴²

Returning to *Translation*: finally, and bluntly, a paragraph printed opposite the final page of the poem announced: 'Speedily will be Publish'd, Proposals For Printing by Subscription, Sophocles. Translated into Blank Verse, By Thomas Francklin, Fellow of Trinity-College, and Greek Professor in the University of Cambridge'.⁹⁴³

5.3. A Dissertation on Antient Tragedy

At the end of the list of subscribers to *The Tragedies of Sophocles* is the note: 'On, or before the first of November next, will be publish'd, *A Dissertation on the Antient Tragedy*; Which will be deliver'd (Gratis) to the Subscribers to this Work, who are desired to send for it, as soon as printed, to R. Francklin in Russel-street, Covent-garden'.⁹⁴⁴ Judging by copies that I have seen, some subscribers had the *Dissertation* bound into their copy of *The Tragedies of Sophocles*. The fifty-seven page *Dissertation* contains sections on the origin of tragedy; the parts of ancient tragedy; the chorus; the verse, recitation, and muse of ancient tragedy; the

⁹⁴⁰ Francklin 1753: 13.

⁹⁴¹ Thomas 1722: 90; also 24 and similarly on Dryden as translator of Virgil at 18-21, 23.

⁹⁴² Prestwich 1651: B2r.

⁹⁴³ Francklin 1753: 15.

⁹⁴⁴ Francklin 1759a: c1r.

construction of the Greek theatre; the scenes, machines and decorations; masks; the time when tragedy flourished in Greece; and the three Greek tragedians.

Francklin also reproduced, with English wording, a 'Plan of a Greek Theatre' prepared by Nicholas Boindin. Boindin published plans of ancient Greek and Roman theatres with his 1708 *Discours sur la forme et la construction du théâtre des anciens, où l'on examine la situation, les proportions, & les usages de toutes ses parties* in *Mémoires de Littérature, Tirez des Registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions & Belles Lettres*.⁹⁴⁵ Francklin's accounts of the construction of the Greek theatre, and of its scenery, machines and decoration, are largely a close translation or summary of parts of Boindin's essay on the former subject.⁹⁴⁶ Francklin did not avail himself of Francis Vernon's brief description of 'the Theater of Bacchus' at Athens published in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* on 24 April 1676;⁹⁴⁷ or of George Wheler's detailed account in *A Journey into Greece* (1682);⁹⁴⁸ or of the descriptions of ancient Greek and Roman theatres in Bernard de Montfaucon's *L'Antiquité Expliquée et Représentée en Figures* (1719-1724) which had been translated into English.⁹⁴⁹ Plate II in Robert Sayer's *Ruins of Athens, with Remains and other Valuable Antiquities in Greece* (London, 1759) showed the ruins of the theatre at Athens 'called the Theatre of Bacchus' but did not provide detailed information that Francklin could have used.

In the *Dissertation* Francklin returns to some of the themes discussed by earlier writers. He followed tradition (see chapters 2.6 and 3.5) in emphasising the role of

⁹⁴⁵ Boindin 1753: I xv-xvi; *Mémoires de Littérature* etc. I 136-153. Boindin also published essays on the origins of theatre and its progress among the Greeks and the Romans and on the costumes and masks used in ancient theatre.

⁹⁴⁶ Boindin 1753: II 297-298, 300, 308-310, 316-318, 324-325; Francklin 1759b: 32-35, 37-38. Brumoy (1730: I xcv-xcvii) may also have drawn on Boindin or on a common source.

⁹⁴⁷ <<http://rstl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/11/123-132/575.full.pdf>> [accessed 1 October 2013].

⁹⁴⁸ *A Journey into Greece* (London: William Cademan, Robert Kettlewell, and Awnsam Churchill, 1682), 365-367.

⁹⁴⁹ *Antiquity Explained, and Represented in Sculptures, By the Learned Father Montfaucon. Translated into English by David Humphreys, M.A. And Fellow of Trinity-College in Cambridge*, five volumes (London: J. Tonson and J. Watts, 1721-1725), III 148-160.

the chorus ('an essential part of antient tragedy peculiar to itself'⁹⁵⁰) in expressing 'moral or political reflections', thereby

[preventing] the illiterate, and undistinguishing part of the audience, from mistaking the characters, or drawing hasty and false conclusions from the incidents and circumstances of the drama: the poet by this means leading them as it were insensibly into such sentiments and affections as he had intended to excite, and a conviction of those moral and religious truths, which he meant to inculcate.⁹⁵¹

Francklin also argued that the continuous onstage presence of the chorus preserved the unities of action, time and place.⁹⁵² But although he thought that the chorus 'might be render'd useful and ornamental, even on our own [stage]', he denied that 'it should be admitted constantly and indiscriminately into the modern theatre', although it might 'at least gain admission to the closet', that is, it might appeal to the reader of a play text.⁹⁵³ He recognised, like Dennis, that the temporal and cultural gulf between ancient Greece and eighteenth-century England meant that Greek theatre was not necessarily a basis for modern drama:

we must ... fairly acknowledge that our manners and customs, our opinions, views, taste and judgment, are so different from those of Greece, that her drama is by no means in every respect a proper model and standard for modern poets, and must, after all we can advance in it's favour, always remain among those reproachful monuments of the purity and simplicity of former ages, which we cannot imitate though we are forced to admire.⁹⁵⁴

Francklin was reflecting the debate on the chorus that had recently been sparked by William Mason in letters prefixed to his *Elfrida, a Dramatic Poem. Written on the Model of the Antient Greek Tragedy* (1752). Francklin praised Mason's play in *Translation* and in *A Dissertation on Antient Tragedy*.⁹⁵⁵ Mason had stressed that use of a chorus on ancient Greek lines 'lays a necessary restraint on the Poet', by forcing him to observe the unities of time and place, and provides 'the opportunity of conveying moral reflections with grace and propriety'.⁹⁵⁶ Mason had been opposed by Thomas Gray in a letter to Mason ('if [the ancients] have done

⁹⁵⁰ Francklin 1759b: 16.

⁹⁵¹ Francklin 1759b: 19.

⁹⁵² Francklin 1759b: 22.

⁹⁵³ Francklin 1759b: 23-24.

⁹⁵⁴ Francklin 1759b: 56.

⁹⁵⁵ Francklin 1753: 12 and 1759b: 24.

⁹⁵⁶ Mason 1752: vii-ix with further comment on the chorus as 'a proper vehicle for moral and sentiment' at x.

wonders notwithstanding this clog sure I am they would have performed still greater wonders without it’);⁹⁵⁷ by a lengthy piece in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in May 1752 (‘nothing surely can be more absurd than to admit the reality of a company of women, who are not only present to every incident, but make and sing an extemporary ode on the occasion’);⁹⁵⁸ and by Arthur Murphy in *The Covent-Garden Journal* in September 1752 (mocking the notion that Shakespeare could have inserted a chorus into the action of *Othello* or *Julius Caesar*).⁹⁵⁹ The earl of Orrery, in his preface to Lennox’s *The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy*, also rejected the chorus, on the grounds that ‘no delusion can ever render us sufficiently enchanted to suppose fifteen people capable of keeping a secret, and, which is still as extraordinary, fifteen people of the same mind, thought, voice, and expression’.⁹⁶⁰ The terms of the debate are similar to that initiated by Rymer sixty years earlier (chapter 2.6).

Francklin provides pen pictures in *The Dissertation* of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Several English writers on tragedy and tragedians had done so before him: Edward Phillips in *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), Basil Kennet in *The Lives and Characters of the Ancient Grecian Poets* (1697), Edward Manwaring in *An Historical and Critical Account Of the most Eminent Classic Authors in Poetry and History* (1737, Sophocles and Euripides only), the *Biographia Classica: The Lives and Characters of the Classic Authors* (1740) and John Hill in *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics* (1753). Such accounts typically combined biographical details and anecdotes with generalised comments on the Greek tragedians’ main qualities and observations on particular plays. Francklin’s contribution does not break new ground. Aeschylus was ‘a bold, nervous, animated writer’; his language was ‘generally poignant and expressive, though in many places turgid and obscure, and even too often degenerating into fustian and bombast’; and his ‘peculiar excellency was in raising terror and astonishment, in warm and descriptive scenes of

⁹⁵⁷ Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 448.

⁹⁵⁸ *The Gentleman’s Magazine, and Historical Chronicle. Volume XXII. For the Year M.DCC.LII* (London: Edward Cave), 224-225.

⁹⁵⁹ Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 450-451.

⁹⁶⁰ Lennox 1759: I xi.

war and slaughter'.⁹⁶¹ Sophocles (under whose direction tragedy 'attain'd to it's highest degree of perfection'⁹⁶²) was 'the prince of antient dramatic poets':

his fables, at least of all those tragedies now extant, are interesting and well-chosen, his plots regular and well-conducted, his sentiments elegant, noble and sublime, his incidents natural, his diction simple, his manners and characters striking, equal and unexceptionable.

By contrast with Aeschylus, 'the warmth of [Sophocles'] imagination [was] temper'd by the perfection of his judgment'.⁹⁶³ Euripides was for Francklin 'the philosopher of the theatre':

he abounds much more in moral apophthegms and reflections than Aeschylus or Sophocles, which as they are not always introduced with propriety give some of his tragedies a stiff and scholastic appearance, with which the severer critics have not fail'd to reproach him.⁹⁶⁴

Francklin concludes that

Upon the whole, though Euripides had not perhaps so sublime a genius as Aeschylus, or a judgment so perfect as Sophocles, he seems to have written more to the heart than either of them.⁹⁶⁵

Francklin, notwithstanding his loyalty to Sophocles, may have been deliberately reversing the judgement of Rapin, copied verbatim by the *Biographia Classica*, that Euripides 'goes not to the heart, so much as Sophocles'.⁹⁶⁶ Francklin might have agreed with an unsigned article 'Parallel between Sophocles and Euripides' in *The British Magazine* in August 1766. This argued that Euripides 'dwelt chiefly upon the softer passions, the passions which are common to mankind in general, and made it his chief care to speak to the heart', whereas Sophocles represented 'whatever is

⁹⁶¹ Francklin 1759b: 48. I record similar comments in chapters 2.3 and 4.4. See also, closer in time to Francklin, *Biographia Classica* I 76-77; Hill 1753: 200-203.

⁹⁶² Francklin 1759a: a2r. This commonplace is found also in *Biographia Classica* I 83; Dennis 1967: I 166; Gildon 1710a: lxi; Hill 1753: 205; Kennet 1697: 102; Rymer 1956: 22, 94.

⁹⁶³ Francklin 1759b: 51. Similarly Hill 1753: 204.

⁹⁶⁴ Francklin 1759b: 54. Euripides' 'sentences' are noted by *Biographia Classica* I 89, 95; Braithwait 1630: 194; Drake 1699: 164; Hill 1753: 208; Hurd 1749: 96; Kennet 1697: 120-121; Manwaring 1737: 189, 192, 196, 199; *The Rhapsody* no. 1, 1 January 1712; Rapin 1674: 119; Theobald in *The Censor* (1717: II 204, no. 60, 9 March 1717). Gilbert West (1749: 143 and passim) and Thomas Morell (1749: 30-31 and passim) highlighted sententious statements in their translations of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Hecuba* respectively by printing them in quotation marks, as Gascoigne and Kinweltershe had done in their *Jocasta* almost two centuries previously.

⁹⁶⁵ Francklin 1759b: 55.

⁹⁶⁶ Rapin 1674: 118; *Biographia Classica* I 98.

great and noble in human nature, embellished and adorned by all the pomp and eloquence, and all the various imagery of the most luxuriant and warm fancy'.⁹⁶⁷

Francklin arrived at a view of how to regard ancient tragedy which rejected the two extremes of uncritical adulation and complete disdain:

to affirm, as many who have more learning than judgment sometimes will, that there are no good tragedies but the antient, is the affectation of scholastic pedantry; to deny them their deserved applause, and treat them with ridicule and contempt, is, on the other hand, the effect of modern pride, ignorance, and petulancy.⁹⁶⁸

5.4. The style of Francklin's translations

Francklin's translations in *The Tragedies of Sophocles* are in blank verse - the standard format of the period - with rhyme for the choruses, like Theobald's translations of *Electra* and *Oedipus* and Thomas Sheridan's translation of *Philoctetes* (1725). Sheridan - friend of Swift, father of the actor Thomas and grandfather of the playwright Richard Brinsley - was a Dublin clergyman and schoolmaster whose pupils performed plays in Greek and Latin.⁹⁶⁹ Wase had used rhyming couplets throughout his *Electra* and Adams only prose.

Francklin divides his translations into acts and scenes as characters enter and exit and the chorus sings, despite, in his *Dissertation*, describing as 'unwarrantable' the 'modern refinement' of dividing Greek tragedy into acts and scenes, for which 'there doth not seem to be the least ground or foundation'. He criticises commentators who fail to distinguish between Aristotle, who does not refer to acts, from Horace, who calls for five, because they 'never allow for the time between Aristotle and Horace, but leap from one to the other with the utmost agility'.⁹⁷⁰ Such a person was Gilbert West who was unable to identify how the ancient Greeks distinguished acts from scenes when he was translating Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* but was sure that they did so: 'Some Distinction there must have been

⁹⁶⁷ *The British Magazine for Gentlemen and Ladies*, volume VII (London: J. Fletcher), 407-408.

⁹⁶⁸ Francklin 1759b: 58; similarly 3-4.

⁹⁶⁹ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 245-246; Sheridan 1994: 36-37, 108-109, 131-132, 178-179; Woolley 1979: 96, 98.

⁹⁷⁰ Francklin 1759b: 11-13. Dryden (1962: I 33-34) had distinguished Aristotle from Horace on the point 90 years earlier in *Of Dramatick Poesy*.

between the Acts and the Scenes, as is evident from the Rule laid down by Horace of dividing the Play into Five Acts'.⁹⁷¹ For all his reservations, Francklin was no more able to resist the tradition of the five act structure than Johnson was when he divided Shakespeare's plays into acts 'though I believe it to be in almost all the plays void of authority'.⁹⁷²

Rierson has commented that in his *Oedipus* translation Francklin 'is not as preoccupied with the royalty of the protagonist as Theobald ... Theobald emphasized the royalty of the protagonist; Francklin, the humanity'.⁹⁷³ Hall and Macintosh, referring to Oedipus' confrontation with Creon, observe that the former 'sounds less the haughty autocrat than the exhausted patriarch whose insubordinate dependants have worn him down', linking this with Francklin's praise in *A Dissertation* of modern tragedy's 'judicious descent from the adventures of demi-gods, kings, and heroes, into the humbler walk of private life, which is much more interesting to the generality of mankind'.⁹⁷⁴ Indeed Francklin's translations more generally maintain an even tone that is less elevated than, for example, Theobald's.

The comparison of Theobald's and Francklin's translations of Oedipus' second speech in the Appendix contains examples of those points. The different styles of Theobald's and Francklin's translations can also be seen in their versions of the first lines spoken by Electra (Sophocles' lines 86-95) to which I add Adams' (there is nothing to show that Francklin had read Wase's translation of 1649 or the anonymous translation of 1712/1714):

Theobald, 1714:

O sacred Light, and O thou ambient Air,
How have ye witness'd to my constant Sorrows!
How have ye seen these Hands, in Rage of Grief,
Harrow and bruise my swoln and bleeding Bosom!
While each new Morn was blasted with my Woe:
How have the circling Nights heard my Despair!
How have my Walls and hated Bed been curst,
And eccho'd to my still repeated Anguish!
My Sighs, my Groans for my unhappy Sire ...⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷¹ West 1749: 162.

⁹⁷² Johnson 1968: VII 107.

⁹⁷³ Rierson 1984: 245-246.

⁹⁷⁴ Francklin 1759b: 57; Hall and Macintosh 2005: 219-220.

⁹⁷⁵ Theobald 1714: 5.

Adams, 1729:

O sacred Light, and Air equally surrounding the Earth; woe is me! How often hast thou heard my Complaints, how many repeated blows with which I strike my Breast hast thou seen, when the dark Night is past? For what is done in the Night, my loathsome Bed and the sorrowful Chamber are conscious of, how I lament my miserable Father ...⁹⁷⁶

Francklin, 1759:

O! sacred light, and O! thou ambient air!
Oft have ye heard Electra's loud laments,
Her sighs, and groans, and witness'd to her woes,
Which ever as each hateful morn appear'd
I pour'd before you; what at eve retir'd
I felt of anguish my sad couch alone
Can tell, which water'd nightly with my tears
Receiv'd me sorrowing; that best can tell
What pangs I suffer'd for a hapless father ...⁹⁷⁷

Francklin's opening words are identical to Theobald's and in part to those of Adams. This is unsurprising since 'O sacred light' is a literal translation of the Greek (ὦ φάος ἀγνὸν) and use of that phrase does not imply that Francklin took his wording from others. But Francklin may have taken 'ambient air' from Theobald since Adams follows the Greek more closely. Francklin uses less imagery than Theobald (Theobald has 'in Rage of Grief' and 'circling nights') and less elevated diction ('father' rather than 'Sire'). It is dangerous to rely overmuch on analysis of a single, small passage but a reading of the translations generally reveals Francklin's style to be more straightforward and less rich in imagery than other versions. Sheridan's version of *Philoctetes* is also free of high-flown imagery; his recent editor describes its language as 'direct and easily apprehensible on the stage, as Sheridan was perhaps bearing in mind that the play might be spoken by his schoolboys'.⁹⁷⁸ The relative accessibility of Francklin's language may account for his translations' longevity which I mention later.

Francklin may have been influenced in his choice of style by two factors. First, he wanted to be concise. He points out that in *Antigone* the title character, when asked by Creon if Eteocles was not her brother, replies in Greek that 'he was my brother by the same father, and by the same mother'. Francklin comments that

⁹⁷⁶ Adams 1729: I 87.

⁹⁷⁷ Francklin 1759a: I 103.

⁹⁷⁸ Sheridan 1994: 40-41.

the Greek writers, though generally concise, are sometimes very prolix, as in the passage before us, where the sentiment takes up a whole line in the original, and is better express'd in these two words of the translation namely, 'He was'.⁹⁷⁹ Previously, by contrast, Francklin had written that when translating Cicero

I have endeavour'd ... to preserve Tully's manner of writing, not departing from it even in that Particular, which has been imputed to him by some as a Fault, the Prolixity of his Periods; for there is generally such a pressing Occasion for that Prolixity that the Connection of the Argument would be broke without it; and to depart from it would be to depart from Cicero's Manner of writing.⁹⁸⁰

Perhaps Francklin took a different view eighteen years on or felt that 'prolixity' was less suited to a dramatic work. Some of Francklin's compressions in *The Tragedies of Sophocles* are very effective, particularly when compared with his predecessors. Francklin's Oedipus points out that he has a personal interest in finding Laius' killer: 'Who murder'd him perchance would murder me; / His cause is mine'. Previous versions were much wordier. Theobald wrote, 'The sacrilegious Hands that struck at Laius, / At Oedipus may aim their second blow: / Thus aiding Him, I shall my self secure'; and Adams had, 'For whosoever it was that kill'd Laius, would imbrue likewise his Hands in my Blood: So that while I labour for his Vengeance, at the same Time I provide for my own Security'.⁹⁸¹

Examination of Francklin's *Electra* shows several occasions when he shortened the text. He reduces Sophocles' lines 201-253 (Electra's lamentations to the chorus) to less than half. He also shortens the account of Orestes' supposed death at lines 680-763 to 65 lines, omitting lines 716-723 entirely. There were precedents for shortening this speech. Although Wase translated it all, Theobald omitted Sophocles' lines 701-745 (chapter 4.2) and Adams omitted the descriptions of Orestes' fellow competitors in the chariot race 'which I thought to be of small Importance'.⁹⁸² Other shortenings by Francklin may have been influenced by a sense of decorum. In Electra's first speech above Francklin suppresses mention of Electra beating her breasts. More (or, in this context, less) strikingly, Francklin describes Oedipus

⁹⁷⁹ Sophocles' line 513; Francklin 1759a: II 36.

⁹⁸⁰ Francklin 1741: A2v.

⁹⁸¹ Sophocles' lines 139-141; Adams 1729: I 174; Francklin 1759a: II 188; Theobald 1715a: 7. Brumoy (1730: I 14) and the Loeb translation are closer to Theobald and Adams than to Francklin.

⁹⁸² Adams 1729: I 115.

piercing his eyes in restrained terms, referring only to ‘show’rs of blood’ which fell ‘down his cheek’. By contrast, Theobald says that the ‘bleeding Strings’ of Oedipus’ ‘Balls of Light’

... stain’d all his mangled Face;
Nor did alone a Stream of putrid Gore
Follow the Wounds: but strong and gushing Showr’s
Of red discolour’d Tears drove down his Cheeks!

And Adams says that Oedipus’ ‘bloody Eye-balls stained his Beard, nor did they only send down moistening Drops, but even a black Shower of Blood, thick as Hail, poured down’.⁹⁸³

A second consideration for Francklin may have been a desire to emulate what he saw as Sophocles’ ‘simple’ diction.⁹⁸⁴ Indeed, for Francklin Greek drama generally was an example of ‘the purity and simplicity of former ages, which we cannot imitate though we are forced to admire’.⁹⁸⁵ He commented on the opening of *Electra* that ‘the place of action, the persons, with the whole view and subject of the piece, are pointed out to us, in the first scene, with that accuracy, plainness and simplicity, for which Sophocles is so eminently distinguished’.⁹⁸⁶ In *Philoctetes* the chorus describes the title character’s distress ‘in all the elegance of antient simplicity’; and of the play generally Francklin writes, ‘One cannot help observing with what a variety of interesting circumstances Sophocles has contrived to embellish a subject so simple as to appear at first sight incapable of admitting any’.⁹⁸⁷ The ‘simplicity, and want of incidents, which modern critics may condemn’ in *Antigone* ‘were probably among those beauties which recommended it to the favour of antiquity’.⁹⁸⁸ In *The Women of Trachis*, ‘nothing can exceed the simplicity and elegance of [the] description’ of Deianira’s death and Francklin condemns Seneca’s *Hercules Furens* and Rotrou’s *Hercule Mourant* for having ‘deviated from the simplicity and beauty of the original’.⁹⁸⁹ And Francklin contrasts ‘the beauty and

⁹⁸³ Sophocles’ lines 1267-1279; Adams (1729: I 236); Francklin 1759a: II 271; Theobald (1715a: 62). Brumoy (1730: I 75) and the Loeb translation are closer to Theobald and Adams than to Francklin.

⁹⁸⁴ Francklin 1759b: 51.

⁹⁸⁵ Francklin 1759b: 56.

⁹⁸⁶ Francklin 1759a: I 97.

⁹⁸⁷ Francklin 1759a: I 243, 288.

⁹⁸⁸ Francklin 1759a: II 91.

⁹⁸⁹ Francklin 1759a: II 153, 174.

simplicity' of the priest's 'short but pathetic description of the plague at Thebes' in *Oedipus* with 'the tinsel refinements of Seneca, and the wild rants of our own madman Lee, on the same subject'.⁹⁹⁰ Francklin found simplicity also in Greek art and architecture:

the same remarkable love of order and simplicity, the same justness of symmetry and proportion, the same elegance, truth and sublimity, which appear'd in the buildings, pictures and statues of that age, are conspicuous also in the antient [Greek] drama.⁹⁹¹

'Simplicity' for Francklin meant, in relation to tragedy, the conveying of clear meaning through speech that was concise and shorn of excessive ornamentation, and concentration of the play's subject or plot on a single action. Francklin was not alone in identifying such qualities in ancient Greek tragedy. Gilbert West, in his translation of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, had described the 'Characteristick' of Euripides' 'Style and Manner' as 'Simplicity and Conciseness', contrasting 'the simple native Majesty' of ancient tragedy generally with 'the glittering Theatrical Ornaments' of the modern.⁹⁹² Francklin could also have found an emphasis on 'simplicity' in Voltaire's epistle to the Duchesse du Maine prefixed to his tragedy *Oreste* (1750) of which Francklin was to publish a translation in 1762. Voltaire wrote (in Francklin's translation) of 'that simplicity so strongly recommended by the Greeks, and so difficult to attain, the true mark of genius and invention; and the very essence of all theatrical merit'.⁹⁹³ An article in the periodical *The World* in 1753 made similar points; in his own periodical, *The Centinel*, Francklin claimed kinship with *The World* when he referred to its editor under his assumed name as 'my immediate predecessor and brother-centinel, the ingenious Mr. Fitz-Adam'.⁹⁹⁴ By contrast with John Hill, who in *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics* (1753) preferred 'the variety of characters in our plays' to the 'flat simplicity' of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the author of article 26 in *The World* (28 June 1753) extolled the quality of simplicity not only in the drama, in which 'simplicity of

⁹⁹⁰ Francklin 1759a: II 179; similarly II 272.

⁹⁹¹ Francklin 1759b: 44.

⁹⁹² West 1749: 131-132.

⁹⁹³ *The Dramatic Works of Mr. de Voltaire. Translated by the Rev. Mr. Francklin. Vol. III* (London: J. Newbery et al., 1762), 19. Voltaire's emphasis on 'simplicity' is a major theme in Dudouyt 2009; also Dudouyt 2013: 207.

⁹⁹⁴ Francklin 1758: I 10 (no. 3, 20 January 1757).

fable is an indispensable quality’, but in other forms of art.⁹⁹⁵ In painting, ‘luscious and gay colouring defeats the very end of the art, by turning the attention from its principal excellencies; that is, from truth, simplicity, and design’, on which grounds Raphael was to be preferred to Rubens. In architecture, a ‘multiplicity of minute ornaments’ distinguished ‘meanness of manner ... from greatness; that is, the Gothic from the Grecian; in which every decoration arises from necessity and use, and every pillar has something to support’. In writing, as a general proposition,

It seems to be the fate of polished nations to degenerate and depart from a simplicity of sentiment. For when the first, and most obvious thoughts have been pre-occupied by former writers, their successors, by straining to be original and new, abound in far-fetched sentiments, and forced conceits

which ‘captivate the minds of vulgar readers, who are apt to think the simple manner unanimated, and dull, for want of being acquainted with the models of the great antique’. As regards the drama, the modern preference for ‘intrigue, baseness and bustle’, for ‘episodes or under-characters’, means that ‘our attention is diverted and destroyed by different objects, and our pity divided and weakened, by an intricate multiplicity of events and of persons’, whereas

The Athenians ... who could relish so simple a plot, as that of the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, had certainly either more patience, or more good sense ... than my present countrymen.

Francklin echoed many of those thoughts: the general emphasis on simplicity; the association of simplicity with ‘former ages’ (Francklin) or ‘former writers’ of less ‘polished’ nations (*The World*); its location in ancient art and architecture as well as in literature; dislike of excessive ornament in the language of literary texts; admiration of Raphael, Sophocles being for Francklin ‘the Raphael of the antient drama’;⁹⁹⁶ and the example of Sophocles’ success in dramatising the ‘simple’ subject or plot of *Philoctetes*.⁹⁹⁷ *The World* and Francklin were not alone in emphasising ‘simplicity’. What is today recognised as the most celebrated use of that term in relation to ancient Greece was by the German art historian Johann Winckelmann who, in *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerei und*

⁹⁹⁵ Hill 1753: 209; *The World*. By Adam Fitz-Adam (*The Burney Newspapers at the British Library*, Gale Cengage Learning online [accessed 14 November 2013]).

⁹⁹⁶ Francklin 1759b: 51.

⁹⁹⁷ Racine (1702: I 311) had invoked the ancients’ admiration of the simplicity of the action of *Philoctetes* (and of *Ajax* and *Oedipus*) in the preface to *Bérénice* (1671).

Bildhauerkunst, only four years before Francklin's *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, used the phrase 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur' ('edle Einfalt und stille Grösse') of gesture and expression to describe a characteristic not only of Greek art but of Greek writings 'of the best times, from the school of Socrates'.⁹⁹⁸

Francklin was engaging with contemporary debate about literature and art and in particular with one strand in the line of thought concerning 'primitivism' that would soon identify 'simplicity' as characteristic of James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language* (1760) and *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem, in Six Books: Together with several other Poems, Composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic Language* (1762). A review of *Fingal* in *The Critical Review* in December 1761 found the poem's 'want of variety' in its similes 'a genuine mark of the poem's authenticity, of its having been composed in the age of simplicity, before the mind was stored with a great number of ideas'; and *The Monthly Review* in February 1762 discussed the typical features of poetry composed, like *Fingal*, 'in the very early infancy of languages and states, when the manners of men were simple, and their intercourse confined'.⁹⁹⁹ An early admirer was John Gordon in *Occasional Thoughts on the Study and Character of Classical Authors, on the Course of Litterature, and the Present Plan of a Learned Education. With some Incidental Comparisons between Homer and Ossian* (1762). Like *The World* article above, Gordon denounced 'the natural progress of art' which

after it has borrowed a few principles of imitation from nature (which however it soon forgets and leaves quite out of sight) is to travel to as great a distance as it can, from its first outset; and to render things as complex and intricate, as possible; which improved reason alone will be able to reduce to any tolerable degree of simplicity or propriety.¹⁰⁰⁰

He dismissed his own much vaunted age of 'fine writing' as that of 'ornamental writing' which 'in point of use or worth, is pretty much like ornamental china; the

⁹⁹⁸ My translation from Winckelmann's *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* at <<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/2446/4>> [accessed 16 September 2013].

⁹⁹⁹ Moore (ed.) 2004: III 13, 20.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Gordon 1762: 30.

figures in both having nearly the same propriety, and bearing commonly an equal resemblance to nature and truth'.¹⁰⁰¹ Gordon also condemned

the most admired books of antiquity [which] were written within such a period as this, that is, when men had turned their backs upon nature to pay the greater court to art

instancing 'specious, verbose, and florid declamation' and 'an artificial arrangement of words and phrases'.¹⁰⁰² By contrast, 'some specimens of Erse poetry, lately published' display a 'great simplicity and attention to nature' which shows that they were written 'in an earlier state of civilization; before art had reached that height, to which it had attained in Homer's time' which is characterised by the latter's '[great] luxuriancy of artificial ornament'.¹⁰⁰³ Gordon's preference for plain, direct writing, which he claimed to find in the *Ossian* poems, over the excessive ornamentation of his own age is similar to the ideas expressed in *The World* and by Francklin, except that these found those desirable qualities in the ancient Greeks whereas Gordon believed they had already degenerated from simpler, more natural ways of writing.

The review of Francklin's *Tragedies of Sophocles* in *The Monthly Review* concurred that the translations achieved the conciseness and simplicity which Francklin aimed at:

The language is easy and natural, and suited to the sentiments, which, for the most part, are plain and simple: tho', in those passages where the description is more pathetic, the style is proportionably heightned and animated. The translation is remarkably close and concise ... the English Poet seems to have, in some measure, preserved that elegance and simplicity, for which the Grecian is so deservedly admired.¹⁰⁰⁴

I will conclude this section with a look at Francklin's possible borrowings from other translators. There are occasional similarities between Francklin's translations and those of his English-language predecessors, as in the case of Electra's opening words mentioned above; however, there is no sign that Francklin borrowed from Sheridan's *Philoctetes*. I have already mentioned Francklin's swipes at Adams and

¹⁰⁰¹ Gordon 1762: 37.

¹⁰⁰² Gordon 1762: 55-56.

¹⁰⁰³ Gordon 1762: 109, 111-112, 114-115. Others found the poems less immediately accessible: 'This is a central primitivist paradox ... the spontaneous, simple poetry of the bard turns out to need considerable study in order to be understood by the modern reader' (Moore 2004: 28).

¹⁰⁰⁴ *The Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal. By Several Hands. Volume XXI* (London: R. Griffiths), 417-423 at 417, November 1759. See also Nangle 1934: 201.

Theobald in *Translation*. Now he mocked Adams' translation of *The Women of Trachis* in a footnote to his own translation: 'The last Strophe and Antistrophe of this Chorus are so drolly translated by Mr. Adams, that I cannot refuse my readers a sight of it. It runs as follows ...'.¹⁰⁰⁵ Francklin rarely borrows from his predecessors. When Theobald, Adams and Francklin's priests call Oedipus 'the first of men' it is likely because they are translating the Greek literally (ἀνδρῶν ... πρώτον) rather than because the later translators are copying the earlier.¹⁰⁰⁶ On the other hand, when Theobald, Adams and Francklin have Creon tell how Laius fell 'oppressed by numbers' it is probable that the later translators are following the earlier since a literal translation of the Greek (σὺν πλήθει χερῶν) would be 'with a number (or crowd) of hands'; Francklin could also have borrowed from Brumoy who has 'Laius ... fut accablé par le nombre'.¹⁰⁰⁷ And whereas Electra bids Orestes give Aegisthus' body a fitting burial out of sight without further elaboration, Francklin has Electra urge Orestes to 'cast his carcase forth / To th' dogs and vultures', seemingly following the approaches previously adopted by Theobald ('let them throw / His Body forth, a Prey to Dogs and Vultures') and Adams ('expose him to the Birds and Dogs').¹⁰⁰⁸ Despite Francklin's mocking of Theobald and Adams, he was not averse to borrowing occasionally from their translations and, as I will now show, from their notes.

5.5. Francklin's notes

Francklin's notes often cover the same or similar ground as those of previous translators into English, although he takes nothing from Sheridan's notes on his translation of *Philoctetes* which succinctly explain topographical references and identify persons mentioned in the text and legends associated with them. Like

¹⁰⁰⁵ Francklin 1759a: II 138. Walton (2012: 624) calls Adams' translations 'prosy stuff, especially in the choruses'.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Sophocles' line 33; Adams 1729: I 169; Francklin 1759a: II 180; Theobald 1715a: 3; also the Loeb translation.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Sophocles' line 123; Adams 1729: I 173; Brumoy 1730: I 13; Francklin 1759a: II 187; Theobald 1715a: 6. The Loeb translation follows the Greek closely, saying that Laius died 'by the hands of many'.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Sophocles' line 1488; Adams 1729: I 158; Francklin 1759a: I 194; Theobald 1714: 67. The anonymous translator in 1712/1714 similarly had 'let his vile Carcass be thrown to the Dogs and Crows' (*Electra* 1714: 58). Brumoy (1730: I 193) followed the Greek closely without elaboration.

Theobald, Francklin has notes on *Oedipus* about the sphinx;¹⁰⁰⁹ and on Oedipus' continuing ignorance of how Laius died.¹⁰¹⁰ On the latter point: both Theobald and Francklin cite Dacier but Francklin takes the opportunity to defend Sophocles as I mention later in this section. Like Adams, Francklin has a factual note on *Ajax* about the different types of Greek soldier, contrasting the fighting roles and status of Menelaus and Teucer;¹⁰¹¹ a note on *Philoctetes* about an allegedly prophetic remark directed by Hercules at Neoptolemus;¹⁰¹² and a note on *Oedipus* mocking Seneca's treatment of a particular passage which Francklin turns into general denigration of Seneca.¹⁰¹³ And like both Theobald and Adams, Francklin comments in *Electra* about the ancient practice of averting the dangers described in nightmares by telling them to the sun;¹⁰¹⁴ the ancient practice of mutilating the dead and wiping blood from the weapon used to kill them;¹⁰¹⁵ the nature of the token or distinguishing mark by which Electra recognizes Orestes, seeming to favour the same conclusion as Adams and for the same reason;¹⁰¹⁶ and in *Oedipus* about the composition of the chorus, Francklin siding with Adams in believing the chorus to comprise both priests and townspeople whereas Theobald believed that for most of the play it was the latter only.¹⁰¹⁷ The most obvious case of Francklin copying a previous translator is a note on *Antigone* about ordeal by fire which mentions the case of Emma, mother of Edward the Confessor, a comment previously made only by Adams.¹⁰¹⁸

Francklin's notes tend to be shorter than those of Theobald and Adams and have a less scholarly air. He rarely quotes from ancient sources, whether in Greek, Latin or English translation. In particular he generally avoids citing scholiasts whose 'conjectures' he describes as 'generally whimsical' and who 'according to custom, misled the translators'.¹⁰¹⁹ As well as the by now standard range of comments (on

¹⁰⁰⁹ Francklin 1759a: II 180; Theobald 1715a: 75-76.

¹⁰¹⁰ Francklin 1759a: II 185-186; Theobald 1715a: 76-77.

¹⁰¹¹ Adams 1729: I 60, and also a note by him on *Philoctetes* at II 279; Francklin 1759a: I 70-71.

¹⁰¹² Adams 1729: II 295; Francklin 1759a: I 295.

¹⁰¹³ Adams 1729: I 206; Francklin 1759a: II 230.

¹⁰¹⁴ Adams 1729: I 101; Francklin 1759a: I 120; Theobald 1714: 79-80.

¹⁰¹⁵ Adams 1729: I 102-103; Francklin 1759a: I 121-122; Theobald 1714: 76-77. Wase (1649: 17) had also commented on those matters.

¹⁰¹⁶ Adams 1729: I 144-145; Francklin 1759a: I 173; Theobald 1714: 84.

¹⁰¹⁷ Adams 1729: I 175; Francklin 1759a: II 189-190; Theobald 1715a: 77-78.

¹⁰¹⁸ Adams 1729: II 22-23; Francklin 1759a: II 23.

¹⁰¹⁹ Francklin 1759a: I 173 (similarly II 15) and II 155.

the plots of the plays and the development of the action, ancient topography, religion, legends and customs etc.), Francklin takes the opportunity to engage with a variety of issues: moral, including the relationship between Sophocles' heathenism and the Christianity of his own time; political; theory of tragedy and the interpretation of *Oedipus*; and defence of Sophocles against potential criticism.

Notes on *Philoctetes*, *The Women of Trachis* and *Oedipus* emphasise the function of the chorus in expressing the plays' moral messages which Francklin stressed also in *A Dissertation on Antient Tragedy*.¹⁰²⁰ Francklin may have taken from Richard Hurd's notes on Horace's *Ars Poetica* the idea that the chorus in *Antigone*, as Francklin expresses it, 'is composed of slaves, who are obliged to assent to what they could not approve, and submit to orders which they could not resist', and that Sophocles was thereby complimenting the Athenians 'who would naturally take a pleasure in comparing [the evils and miseries of an arbitrary government] with the freedom and happiness of their own'.¹⁰²¹ Francklin did not, however, engage with Hurd's discussion of how the terms of the ancient Greek chorus' moralising was determined by 'the common and established notions of right and wrong' and by the political conditions of its own time.¹⁰²²

In a note on *Oedipus* Francklin emphasises the role of providence, commenting that the play's fable is

visibly calculated to impress this moral and religious truth on the minds of the audience, viz. that whatever is decreed by divine providence must inevitably come to pass; and that all the means, which are made use of by men to counteract it's designs, do, in the end, only promote and forward the accomplishment of them.¹⁰²³

That is consistent with views about providence that Francklin expressed from the pulpit. In a sermon on the history of Joseph, Francklin stressed that

the eye of Divine Providence is over all things, always active and vigilant for the preservation of the righteous; so influencing and directing the

¹⁰²⁰ Francklin 1759a: I 212; II 102-103, 236, 266; 1759b: 18-19.

¹⁰²¹ Francklin 1759a: II 20. Compare Hurd 1749: 77-78 and 80 n (and earlier, Adams 1729: II 21).

¹⁰²² Hurd 1749: 69, 75-81 with further examples from Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Medea*.

¹⁰²³ Francklin 1759a: II 228; similarly on *Oedipus* at II 244, 245, 282.

actions of men, as, by secret and unseen ways, to fulfil its own unerring purposes, to reward the good, and to punish the evildoer.¹⁰²⁴

In another sermon, ‘On a wounded spirit’, Francklin argued that ‘there is a perpetual acting providence presiding over, and directing all human affairs; and we need not doubt but that the spirit of man is its constant favourite, its peculiar care’.¹⁰²⁵ The beneficent nature of Christian divine providence distinguished it from how the Greeks imagined the role of their gods in their lives. Francklin was also concerned to deny the role of chance. He has Jocasta cry, ‘Why should man fear, whom chance, and chance alone / Doth ever rule?’ and in a note decries

the impiety of this sentiment, which has been embraced by the despisers of religion from the earliest period of time to this day. When men are once persuaded that chance and not providence rules all things here below, they naturally conclude themselves at liberty to follow their own inclinations, without the least regard to the will of heaven.¹⁰²⁶

Francklin acknowledges the heathen nature of the Greek gods but has no difficulty in drawing moral and religious conclusions from their representation in ancient poetry. He calls the Greeks ‘remarkably superstitious’; refers to ‘all [the] absurdities contain’d in the mythology and religion of the Greeks’; and observes that ‘there is a strong resemblance between the oracles of antiquity, and the witches of modern times’.¹⁰²⁷ But he admits that in *Electra* the title character’s prayer before the altar of Apollo ‘lessens the horror of the murder, by representing it as an act of piety, and agreeable to the will of heaven’ without quibbling over the non-Christian nature of that heaven.¹⁰²⁸ The note on Jocasta’s impious outcry mentioned above similarly equates ancient and modern thinking when it comments that her punishment ‘was apparently design’d by Sophocles as a lesson to the free-thinkers of his age, and may afford no unprofitable admonition to those of our own’.¹⁰²⁹ And like Collier, Francklin argues that the moral behaviour of the ancient heathens shames modern Christians, as when Orestes defers meeting Electra until after he has performed a ritual at his father’s tomb:

A brother has an opportunity of seeing and conversing with a sister whom he loved, and from whom he had been separated twenty years, but

¹⁰²⁴ Francklin 1785: I 82.

¹⁰²⁵ Francklin 1785: I 140.

¹⁰²⁶ Sophocles’ line 977; Francklin 1759a: II 245.

¹⁰²⁷ Francklin 1759a: I 101, 239; II 166. Similarly II 190, 319.

¹⁰²⁸ Francklin 1759a: I 183.

¹⁰²⁹ Francklin 1759a: II 245.

he forgoes it, in order previously to perform a religious duty. Christians may read and profit by the example.¹⁰³⁰

A note on *Oedipus* comments more broadly, ‘If the antient drama may be thought by some to fall short of the modern in some less important points, we must at least acknowledge it, with regard to morality, infinitely superior to our own’.¹⁰³¹ The clergyman Francklin manages to enlist heathenism in the cause of Christianity by identifying the morally righteous behaviour that it encouraged in its adherents and that was worthy of recommendation to his own readers.

In *A Dissertation on Antient Tragedy* Francklin wrote that ancient Greek writers unsurprisingly reflected the values of their society in their plays: they ‘point out the evils of monarchy, and engrave their favourite democratical principles on the hearts of the people’.¹⁰³² *Antigone* and *Oedipus* provide Francklin with the opportunity to take aim at the common eighteenth-century target ‘arbitrary government’ as represented by Creon and Oedipus respectively. He stressed - in terms similar to the views expressed by Rabin, Gildon and Dennis the previous century about the anti-monarchical views of the ancient Greek tragedians, as mentioned in chapter 2.5 - how criticism of tyranny would have been agreeable to Sophocles’ ‘free’ Athenian audience. And in a note on *Oedipus* he condemned Dacier for arguing ‘with the true spirit of a Frenchman’ that Christianity teaches obedience to even the worst of princes.¹⁰³³ However, Hall and Macintosh point out that ‘Francklin would have bridled at the possibility of allowing his *Oedipus* to serve as the target for any anti-royalist sentiments’ more generally.¹⁰³⁴ Indeed, Francklin introduces a particularly royalist note when Oedipus demands of Tiresias, ‘mean’st thou to betray / Thy country and thy king?’ The Greek (καταφθεῖραι πόλιν) means literally ‘destroy the city’; Theobald has ‘betray the Land’; and Adams has ‘suffer your Countrey entirely to be destroyed’. Francklin’s pairing of ‘Thy country and thy king’ is far more evocative of the patriotism to be expected at the time of the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763).¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰³⁰ Francklin 1759a: I 102; similarly II 112.

¹⁰³¹ Francklin 1759a: II 244.

¹⁰³² Francklin 1759b: 45.

¹⁰³³ Francklin 1759a: II 19-20, 48, 221; similarly a note on *Electra* at I 108.

¹⁰³⁴ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 220.

¹⁰³⁵ Sophocles’ lines 330-331; Adams 1729: I 185; Francklin 1759a: II 201; Theobald 1715a: 17.

Francklin also used his notes to engage with the theory of tragedy, and in particular the interpretation of *Oedipus*, without, however, breaking new ground. He praises the denouement of *Antigone*, highlighting poetic justice and pity and terror, key components of tragedy identified by late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century critics:

Poetical justice is strictly observed; the unfortunate Creon suffers as a king, as a husband, and as a father; and in spite of all his crimes becomes an object of compassion. Thus terror and pity are both effectually rais'd, the one by his exemplary punishment, and the other by his unparallel'd misfortunes.¹⁰³⁶

In *Philoctetes* Francklin has Neoptolemus tell the title character

... misfortunes, which the gods
Inflict on mortals, they perforce must bear,
But when oppress'd by voluntary woes
They make themselves unhappy; they deserve not
Our pity or our pardon; such art thou.

The sentiment is in Sophocles but Francklin's use of the adjective 'voluntary' recalls Dacier's analysis of Oedipus' crimes as both 'volontaire' and 'involontaire' which Theobald had espoused (chapter 4.2).¹⁰³⁷ Francklin applies the terminology directly to Oedipus when he notes that

the murder and incest committed by him were involuntary crimes; but his anger, impatience, contempt of the gods, and putting out his own eyes, were voluntary, and therefore, as Sophocles observes, more dreadful: doubtless no misfortunes are so bitter and insupportable as those which we bring on ourselves by our own follies.¹⁰³⁸

Francklin underlines the contribution of Oedipus' 'voluntary' acts to his downfall when Tiresias calls his enquiries into Laius' death 'rash' and when Francklin in a note calls Oedipus' character, as revealed in his meeting with Tiresias, 'presumptuous, self-sufficient, resentful and suspicious'.¹⁰³⁹ In *Oedipus at Colonus* Francklin has Antigone refer to her father's 'involuntary crimes' and Oedipus call his

¹⁰³⁶ Francklin 1759a: II 81.

¹⁰³⁷ Sophocles' lines 1316 ff; Francklin 1759a: I 287. Sheridan (1725: 45) and Adams (1729: II 290) already referred in this passage to 'voluntary Woes' and 'voluntary Sufferings' respectively.

¹⁰³⁸ Francklin 1759a: II 269.

¹⁰³⁹ Francklin 1759a: II 200, 203.

killing of his father an ‘involuntary deed’.¹⁰⁴⁰ Adams had also used the adjective ‘involuntary’ on both occasions.¹⁰⁴¹

The final aspect of Francklin’s notes that I wish to consider in this section is his repeated defence of Sophocles. In *Translation* Francklin had advocated hiding the original author’s faults and softening his blemishes. There are many occasions when Francklin uses his notes simply to praise and express his admiration of Sophocles.¹⁰⁴² More striking are the instances when he feels the need to excuse or justify aspects of the plays. In a note on *Electra* he defends the account of Orestes’ exploits and death at the Pythian games against ‘our modern critics’ who may think it too long by noting that

this circumstantial detail was necessary to give the story an air of veracity in the eyes of the person to whom it is related, at the same time that the author had by this means an opportunity of shewing his poetical and descriptive talents in the narration

notwithstanding that, as already mentioned, Francklin himself shortens the passage.¹⁰⁴³ He notes of *Philoctetes* that ‘a dispute concerning a bow and arrows may probably seem to a modern critic but an unpromising subject for a tragedy’ but that ‘the defenders of Sophocles’ would point out that ‘on those arrows ... depended no less than the fate of a whole nation’ and that ‘politically consider’d ... it was a point of the utmost consequence’.¹⁰⁴⁴ And he has a lengthy note on Oedipus’ continuing ignorance of the circumstances of Laius’ death, mentioning the criticisms of Dacier and Brumoy and adding,

If I had leisure and inclination to turn commentator on this passage before us, I cannot but think it were an easy task ... to defend Sophocles, and to prove that there is no such glaring absurdity in the supposition of Oedipus’ real or pretended ignorance on this occasion

before going on to do so, arguing that Oedipus may have felt that it was none of his business ‘to inspect too narrowly into the murder of his predecessor, whom he

¹⁰⁴⁰ Francklin 1759a: II 305, 355.

¹⁰⁴¹ Adams 1729: II 93, 130.

¹⁰⁴² Francklin 1759a: I 32, 134, 151, 173, 183, 187-188, 217, 257, 263, 288; and II 82, 85, 91, 153, 179, 228, 266, 286.

¹⁰⁴³ Francklin 1759a: I 136-137.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Francklin 1759a: I 206-207.

thought no ways related to him' and that the people were preoccupied with the threat of the sphinx.¹⁰⁴⁵

5.6. Sophocles and the contemporary stage

In *Translation* Francklin had hoped that in his translations of Sophocles he would 'like him the various passions move'.¹⁰⁴⁶ Now, in his notes in *The Tragedies of Sophocles* he often identifies scenes that are 'impassioned' or 'pathetic', that is, both expressive of emotions and likely to arouse them in the audience, such as Oedipus'

pathetic address to his daughters, which excites the warmest compassion for his misfortunes, and creates in the minds of the audience that piety and submission to the will of the gods, which the whole drama is visibly design'd to inculcate.¹⁰⁴⁷

David Hume had stressed the importance of generating an emotional response in the audience in his essay *Of Tragedy* (1757), referring to the poet 'rousing and supporting the compassion and indignation, the anxiety and resentment of his audience'.¹⁰⁴⁸ Novak argues that this concern had developed earlier in the century (although Thomas May had emphasised audience response in the form of delight or sorrow in the preface to *Antigone* in 1631 as mentioned in chapter 1.3):

In general, during this period [1660-1740], critical theory moved from a formal analysis of dramatic structure based on what criticism thought to be rationalist principles to an affective theory in which the feelingful response of the audience was the crucial test of a play.¹⁰⁴⁹

Francklin was also thinking along those lines. At the end of *Translation* he imagined scenes from Sophocles that evoked death and despair and had the potential for making a visual and emotional impact on an audience:

A father's death while soft Electra mourn,
Or shed her sorrows o'er a brother's urn;
Or fair Antigone her griefs relate;
Or poor Tecmessa weep her hapless state;

¹⁰⁴⁵ Francklin 1759a: II 185-186.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Francklin 1753: 14.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Francklin 1759a: II 282; also I 25, 26, 32, 57, 260 and II 58.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Sidnell (ed.) 1991-1994: II 89.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Novak 1997a: 167.

Or Oedipus resolve the dark decrees of fate.¹⁰⁵⁰

Francklin was not alone in recognising the potency of the episode of Electra grieving over the urn that supposedly contained her dead brother's ashes; it was represented in the engraved frontispiece to the anonymous translation of *Electra* in 1714. When Francklin's translation of Voltaire's *Oreste* was performed as *Orestes* at Covent Garden in 1769, Samuel Cotes produced a miniature, copied in an engraving by Philip Dawe, of the actress Mrs. Yates as Electra holding the urn.¹⁰⁵¹ Francklin's translation of Voltaire's play was revived as *Electra* at Drury Lane in 1774 and Mrs. Yates again played the title character. She was so strongly associated with the part that when Theobald's translation of *Electra* was republished in *Bell's British Theatre* in 1777, despite itself never being performed, the engraved frontispiece again showed Mrs. Yates as Electra holding the urn.¹⁰⁵²

Francklin frequently reveals in *The Tragedies of Sophocles* his interest in aspects of the staging of the dramas. It seems likely that behind Francklin's comments lie recollections of moments he had experienced or heard of on the contemporary stage, especially performances of David Garrick at whose marriage to Eva Maria Veigel he had officiated in 1749.¹⁰⁵³ Francklin admired Garrick. As already mentioned (5.2), in *Translation* Francklin favoured a sympathetic relationship between author and translator and he saw something similar at work between the writing of Shakespeare and the acting of Garrick:

So when great Shakespear to his Garrick join'd,
With mutual aid conspire to rouze the mind,
'Tis not a scene of idle mimickry,
'Tis Lear's, Hamlet's, Richard's self we see;
We feel the actor's strength, the Poet's fire;
With joy we praise, with rapture we admire.¹⁰⁵⁴

In a review of John Brown's tragedy *Athelstan* in *The Critical Review* in March 1756 Francklin used traditional, Aristotelian formulae, judging the play 'very deficient in

¹⁰⁵⁰ Francklin 1753: 14, referring to *Electra*, *Antigone*, *Ajax* and *Oedipus*.

¹⁰⁵¹ Foskett 1972, plate 62; Highfill et al. 1973-1993: XVI 335.

¹⁰⁵² Hall and Macintosh 2005: 176 and fig. 6.5. The frontispiece to Theobald's original translation represented the revealing of Clytemnestra's body.

¹⁰⁵³ Stone and Kahrl 1979: 408.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Francklin 1753: 8; quoted by Thomas Davies (1780: II 397) as one of several 'Testimonies of Mr. Garrick's Genius and Merits'. For Kelly L. (2005a: 68), Francklin's lines on Garrick 'evoke the Greek theory that actors induce their poet's emotions and attitudes in their audience by re-enacting the moment of composition'.

plot, character, sentiment, and diction'. But he praised Garrick for having 'the art, like the Lydian king, of turning all that he touches into gold; and [ensuring] applause to every fortunate bard', including 'immortal Shakespear'.¹⁰⁵⁵ Shortly after that review Francklin and Garrick had a difference of opinion over a slighting comment allegedly made by Francklin about Brown's previous play *Barbarossa* (1754), and possibly about Garrick himself who acted the part of Achmet, but its effects were not permanent.¹⁰⁵⁶ Francklin's appointment as the king's chaplain in November 1767 was a result of Garrick's influence;¹⁰⁵⁷ and Francklin and Garrick corresponded about Garrick's productions of Francklin's plays. Francklin could be a tetchy correspondent and Garrick wrote about him in 1774, 'I have long seen his insincerity & double dealing – I avoid him as a Friend, but I do him all justice as a Manager'.¹⁰⁵⁸

In the middle of the eighteenth century London actors and actresses acquired the status of celebrities against the background of the fierce rivalry between the two patent theatres, Covent Garden and Drury Lane. They were the subjects of reports, reviews, favourable and hostile criticism, anecdotes and gossip in books, newspapers, pamphlets, letters and diaries and were represented in paintings and prints. Garrick 'was more often painted in his lifetime than anyone in England, with the exception of the reigning monarch' and may have been 'the subject of more original paintings than any figure in English history'.¹⁰⁵⁹ A catalogue lists 120 paintings, drawings and engravings of Garrick 'in private character' and 130 original and engraved portraits of him in stage roles.¹⁰⁶⁰ The number and ready availability of prints engraved after the paintings ensured that the images circulated widely.¹⁰⁶¹ Francklin's readers would have understood and been able to visualise his allusions to Garrick.

When Francklin wrote on the ancients' use of masks in *A Dissertation on Ancient Tragedy* he argued against their use on the contemporary stage on the grounds that it would inhibit an important element in the acting of Garrick and others. Previously Trapp had criticised the ancients' use of masks as 'contradictory to

¹⁰⁵⁵ *The Critical Review*, March 1756, I 149.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Little and Kahrl (eds.) 1963: letter 174, Garrick to Francklin 14 November 1756; Stone and Kahrl 1979: 657.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Little and Kahrl (eds.) 1963: letter 681 n.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Little and Kahrl (eds.) 1963: letter 867.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Respectively Shawe-Taylor 2003: 11 and Highfill et al. 1973-1993: VI 80.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Highfill et al. 1973-1993 VI: 81-101.

¹⁰⁶¹ West 1991: 46.

Reason' and nature, and as 'this Opprobrium of the Theatre', for impeding the actor's speech and preventing the actor's face displaying varied emotions. In a footnote, Trapp's translator offered an alternative view by quoting Lewis Crusius as saying that the ancients used masks to make the actors distinguishable, in view of the size of the stage and the absence of artificial lighting, and to indicate the character represented by an actor who might play several different parts.¹⁰⁶² On the other hand, Gilbert West saw no value in the ancient masks which he denounced as a monstrous absurdity.¹⁰⁶³ Francklin took a more sympathetic view, closer to Crusius'. He noted that the tragic poets 'by the assistance of a large and frightful masque, [endeavoured] to fill the minds of the spectators with a religious awe, and veneration' of the heroes and demigods that the actors represented.¹⁰⁶⁴ Masks also gave actors 'an opportunity of playing several parts, wherein the character, age, and sex were different, without being discover'd', magnified their voices and by their exaggerated size compensated for the fact that the often distant audience could not see 'the natural expression of the [actors'] eyes and countenance'.¹⁰⁶⁵ Francklin could have found the usefulness of masks given the size of ancient theatres, and in enabling actors to represent the grandeur of gods and heroes and to play different parts, in Boindin or in Turnbull's translation of Boindin's essay on ancient theatrical costumes and masks.¹⁰⁶⁶ The suggestion that the ancient masks could amplify the actors' voices had also been made by Brumoy.¹⁰⁶⁷

Francklin set against that assessment of the usefulness of masks in their original context a recognition that they were unsuited to modern conditions for the reason that Trapp had given but Francklin now particularised:

I will promise to ... vote for the restoration of the antient masque, whenever they will shew me one that can represent the happy features of Quin, in the Character of Falstaff, or give us an idea of a frantic Lear, like the look and face of the inimitable Garrick.¹⁰⁶⁸

¹⁰⁶² Trapp 1742: 245-246. Crusius (1733) discussed the use of masks at II 164-166, 218-219.

¹⁰⁶³ West 1749: 134.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Francklin 1759b: 40.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Francklin 1759b: 41.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Boindin 1753: II 328, 334, 344-347, 349-350; Turnbull 1740: 87, 92, 100-102, 103-104.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Brumoy 1730: I xcvi.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Francklin 1759b: 41. Similarly William Cooke in *The Elements of Dramatic Criticism* (1775): 'who has seen Garrick thunder and lighten, freeze and dissolve by

The Italian Pompeo Batoni painted Garrick in 1764 looking at an edition of Terence's comedies open at a page of antique masks; like Francklin, Batoni was alluding to Garrick's ability to conjure up a variety of different facial expressions which was noted by his contemporaries.¹⁰⁶⁹ Gainsborough found Garrick hard to paint because he kept altering his features; and Garrick astonished guests at dinner in Paris in 1763 with the speed and accuracy with which he could change his expression from love to hatred, terror, pity, jealousy, desire and joy.¹⁰⁷⁰

More specific examples of Garrick's acting might lie behind some of Francklin's notes in *The Tragedies of Sophocles*. When in *Ajax* the chorus observes that the title character 'seems indeed distracted' Francklin comments,

Ajax is here represented as sitting alone in his tent just recover'd from his delirium, and reflecting with horror on what he had done during the continuance of it: what the chorus here observes concerning his distraction doth not therefore proceed from any thing which he says, but, probably, from a wildness in his looks and gesture which still remain'd, and induced them to believe that his distemper was not quite removed.¹⁰⁷¹

That description brings to mind Hogarth's representation of Garrick as Shakespeare's Richard III (painting 1745, engraved by Charles Grignon 1746) after seeing the ghost of Henry VI before the Battle of Bosworth. Hogarth shows Garrick as Richard, just as Francklin imagines Ajax: in his tent, horror struck, with a wild look and gesture, in Richard's case in the form of a raised arm with palm facing outwards towards the viewer.¹⁰⁷² Garrick's admirers and detractors alike remarked on the way he used gestures and other bodily movements to convey the dramatic situation and the mental state of the character he was playing.¹⁰⁷³ John Hill in *The Actor* declared that 'the life and spirit of a representation depend greatly on [gestures]; and what is more than both, its truth'.¹⁰⁷⁴ Benjamin Wilson painted Garrick in poses that showed him starting in surprise with one or both arms outstretched with palms outwards: as

the irresistible accompaniment of his features, but must turn with contempt from so feeble, so inadequate a substitute [as masks]?' (quoted in Kelsall 2012: 471 n. 11).

¹⁰⁶⁹ McIntyre 1999: 3, 127; Murphy 1801: II 17, 185-186; Shawe-Taylor 2003: 11; Stone and Kahrl 1979: 315; *Every Look Speaks* 2003, no. 25.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Shawe-Taylor 2003: 14, 17; Stone and Kahrl 1979: 35.

¹⁰⁷¹ Francklin 1759a: I 25.

¹⁰⁷² *Every Look Speaks* 2003, fig. 1 and no. 4; Murphy 1801: I 23-25; Paulson 1992-1993: II 246-257.

¹⁰⁷³ Woods 1984: 10-13, 18-22, 41-42.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Hill 1755: 232; also 98.

Romeo seeing Juliet awaken in the tomb in Garrick's own addition to Shakespeare's text, as Hamlet seeing his father's ghost on the battlements, and as Lear seeing Poor Tom in the storm scene; the first two of those paintings were in circulation as prints only a few years before Francklin's note on *Ajax*.¹⁰⁷⁵ They were attitudes with which playgoers would have long been familiar, derived as they were from traditional rhetorical theories of acting.¹⁰⁷⁶ In the same year that Francklin published *The Tragedies of Sophocles* Thomas Wilkes observed in *A General View of the Stage* that when actors expressed astonishment 'the whole body is actuated: it is thrown back, with one leg set before the other, both hands elevated, the eyes larger than usual, the brows drawn up, and the mouth not quite shut'.¹⁰⁷⁷ It is not difficult to believe that Francklin had a similar image in mind in the case of the 'wildness in [Ajax's] looks and gesture'.¹⁰⁷⁸

A mental image of Garrick may also have influenced Francklin when he visualised Oedipus, having blinded himself, entering 'in the most miserable condition, advancing slowly towards the front of the stage; the chorus, shock'd at so moving a spectacle, turn their eyes from him', exclaiming, 'O! horrid sight! more dreadful spectacle / Than e'er these eyes beheld!'.¹⁰⁷⁹ Wilkes described Garrick as Lear in the storm scene 'coming down from one corner of the Stage, with his old grey hair standing, as it were, erect upon his head, his face filled with horror and attention, his hands expanded and his whole frame actuated by a dreadful solemnity'.¹⁰⁸⁰ Garrick's Lear was intended to shock the audience in the way that Francklin imagines Oedipus shocking the chorus, while also engaging the audience's sympathy with his

¹⁰⁷⁵ The three respectively in Stone and Kahrl 1979: 570 (engraved by T. Stayner 1753); *Every Look Speaks* 2003, no. 8, Lennox-Boyd et al. 1994: no. 22, Stone and Kahrl 1979: 546 (engraved by James McArdell 1754); Lennox-Boyd et al. 1994: no. 12, McIntyre 1999 plate 17 and Stone and Kahrl 1979: 538 (engraved by James McArdell 1761).

¹⁰⁷⁶ Stone and Kahrl 1979: 28-46, 474, 547; also West 1991: 92-106 on conventional ways in which actors of Garrick's time represented the passions.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Wilkes 1759: 118.

¹⁰⁷⁸ West (1991: 27, 32, 48-50, 63-65), however, is sceptical about how accurately paintings and prints recorded actual performance moments. Francklin (1759a: I 260) also refers to 'the variety of passions, express'd in the countenance and gesture' of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Francklin 1759a: II 272.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Wilkes 1759: 234.

‘most miserable condition’.¹⁰⁸¹ Francklin stressed that Sophocles aroused both pity and compassion for Oedipus’ misfortunes.¹⁰⁸²

Near the end of *Electra*, when Aegisthus demands ‘send Clytaemnestra hither’ and removes the veil from the corpse that he believes is that of Orestes but is in fact Clytemnestra’s, Orestes replies ‘She is before thee’ and Aegisthus exclaims, ‘Ha! What do I see?’ Francklin invites the reader to visualise the best contemporary actors performing the scene, again stressing the importance of actors’ use of facial expressions to convey the drama of the moment. He refers to ‘the sudden change of fortune to all the persons concern’d, the surprise and despair of Aegisthus, the joy and triumph in the countenances of Orestes and Electra’ and continues:

how it was acted on the Greek stage, we cannot pretend to determine, most probably with taste and judgment. Let the English reader consider those inimitable actors, Quin, Garrick, and Cibber in the parts of Aegisthus, Orestes, and Electra, and from thence form to himself some idea of the effect which such a catastrophe would have on a British audience.¹⁰⁸³

Francklin connects another moment in *Electra* with a Shakespearean performance with which Susannah Cibber, a leading actress in Garrick’s company whom Francklin mentions in that passage, was associated. When Electra in her misery at the news of Orestes’ death tells the chorus, ‘Here will I lay me down, and on this spot / End my sad days’, Francklin observes that Electra, ‘shock’d at the behaviour of Clytemnestra, and apprehensive of still worse treatment than she had ever yet received ... lays herself down in anguish on the ground to lament her misfortunes’, adding, ‘There is something not unlike this in Shakespear’s *king John*, where Constance throws herself on the Earth’.¹⁰⁸⁴ This alludes to the passage in which Lady Constance, mother of Arthur, John’s nephew and rival claimant for the throne, sits down in protest at the proposed marriage of John’s niece to the French dauphin which is intended to end the French king’s support for Arthur. Thomas Davies praised the performance of Mrs. Cibber as Constance at this precise point in the play:

¹⁰⁸¹ On this latter aspect of Garrick’s *Lear* see Lennox-Boyd et al. 1994: 28; Murphy 1801: I 27-30; Stone and Kahrl 1979: 260-261, 535, 539; and Woods 1984: 35-36.

¹⁰⁸² Francklin 1759a: II 178, 282.

¹⁰⁸³ Francklin 1759a: I 192-193.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Francklin 1759a: I 143.

When Mrs. Cibber threw herself on the ground in pronouncing “Here I and sorrow sit: Here is my throne, let kings come bow to it” her voice, look, and person, in every limb, seemed to be animated with the true spirit which the author had infused into her character.¹⁰⁸⁵

The audience was so struck by that speech that on each night of *King John*’s first run in 1745 it demanded that Mrs. Cibber speak it a second time.¹⁰⁸⁶ Francklin could have seen Mrs. Cibber play Constance at Drury Lane in February-March 1745, at Covent Garden in February-April 1751 (when Peg Woffington also appeared in the role when Mrs. Cibber was taken ill), and at Drury Lane in January-March 1754. Anne Bellamy also performed the role at Covent Garden in April 1758.¹⁰⁸⁷ Francklin could also have read Constance’s words in a contemporary edition of the play; Theobald’s, unlike Rowe’s and Pope’s, had a stage direction ‘Sits down on the Floor’ immediately after the lines which Davies quotes.

Francklin also identified occasions when he saw Sophocles developing the story and moving the action forward in order, Francklin argued, to satisfy the audience’s impatience and hold its attention. In *Electra* the chorus’ fourth song ‘is shorter, we may observe, than any of the rest, probably so contrived by the author, to relieve the impatience of the spectator, who is naturally eager to see the catastrophe’.¹⁰⁸⁸ That example connects Francklin’s concern here with his preference for conciseness in plot and speech that I have already mentioned as an example of ‘simplicity’. In *Philoctetes* ‘the resolution of Neoptolemus to restore the arrows to Philoctetes gives a new turn to the plot, disconcerts the measures of Ulysses, and awakens the attention of the spectator, who expects with eagerness the consequences of it’; and when Philoctetes debates with himself whether to sail with Neoptolemus and Odysseus to Troy, ‘this doubt and uncertainty causes a new situation in the drama, which keeps up the attention of the audience’.¹⁰⁸⁹ And at the end of *Oedipus at Colonus* the compression of the off-stage events is excusable since ‘the impatience of the spectator to know the catastrophe may plead ... strongly in defence of this precipitation’.¹⁰⁹⁰

¹⁰⁸⁵ Davies 1784: I 35-36.

¹⁰⁸⁶ McIntyre 1999: 98-99.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Davies 1784: I 56-57; Scouten 1961: II 1154-1156; Stone 1962: 238-240, 250, 405-408, 414, 663.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Francklin 1759a: I 183; Sophocles’ lines 1384-1397.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Francklin 1759a: I 279, 288; Sophocles’ lines 1233, 1350.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Francklin 1759a: II 388; Sophocles’ line 1580.

Francklin was not alone in claiming to detect in Greek drama a desire to move the action along. Joseph Warton in *The Adventurer* in 1754, in an article whose title, presumably bestowed by the collected edition's editor, 'In what arts the ancients exceed the moderns', harked back to debates of over half a century before, compared the relative merits of Greek tragedy's concentration on a single action and contemporary English playwrights' and audiences' preferences for a multiplicity of plots. Like the author of *The World* article of 1753 mentioned above, Warton identifies the former practice as better suited to hold the audience's attention:

It is by this simplicity of fable alone, when every single act, and scene, and speech, and sentiment and word, concur to accelerate the intended event, that the Greek tragedies kept the attention of the audience immovably fixt upon one principal object, which must be necessarily lessened, and the ends of the drama defeated, by the mazes and intricacies of modern plots.¹⁰⁹¹

Nevertheless, Warton and Francklin were surely reflecting views about the expectations of audiences of their own time rather than the attitudes of ancient Greek audiences about which they had no evidence. Support for this interpretation may be found in the fact that Garrick's adaptations of older English plays to meet the needs of his own audiences show, among other things, a 'major concern for an actively moving plot'.¹⁰⁹²

In several ways, therefore, Francklin's reception of Sophocles takes place through the medium of contemporary theatrical practice and experience, especially Garrick's company and performances of Shakespeare. Much more than Theobald, who had had a play of his own performed before he translated *Electra* and *Oedipus*, Francklin, several years before writing his own first play, *The Earl of Warwick*, imagines how the ancient plays were written and performed in ways that echo the stage practices of his own time. Francklin's translation of Oedipus's second speech in the Appendix shows that he had an ear for performance through his use of enjambment to convey the character's emotional state and sense of urgency. Whereas Dryden, in the preface to *The Spanish Friar* (1681), had declared that his interest was to please his audience but his ambition was to be read, this being 'the more lasting and the nobler design: for the propriety of thoughts and words, which are the hidden beauties of a play, are but confusedly judged in the vehemence of

¹⁰⁹¹ *The Adventurer* 1752-1754: II 338 (no. 127, 22 January 1754).

¹⁰⁹² Stone and Kahrl 1979: 283.

action', Francklin liked to imagine how his translations, although not intended for performance, might be brought to life on the stage.¹⁰⁹³

5.7. Textual parallels between Sophocles and other authors

Francklin, like Theobald, identified passages in Sophocles that had parallels in other sources, for example in the Bible, explaining in this case that 'the customs and manners of the Greeks were originally drawn from the eastern nations, which accounts for the similitude so observable in Sophocles and other heathen writers with some parts of holy writ'.¹⁰⁹⁴ Blackwall had made the same point in *An Introduction to the Classics*:

Much of the Heathen Theology is deriv'd from the Rites of the Jewish Religion: The most remarkable Stories of the Bible lie under the Disguise of Pagan Fables, and the Classical Historians give Testimony to the Veracity of the Prophets ... The noblest Writers of the Heathen World have borrow'd many of their Notions from the sacred Philosophy of Moses.¹⁰⁹⁵

Religious beliefs and practices were commonly seen as having migrated from one ancient near-Eastern people to another.¹⁰⁹⁶ But this view was not universally shared or welcomed: in his edition of *Paradise Lost* (1732) Bentley ignored or even excised passages that Patrick Hume's 1695 commentary had identified as connecting the Old Testament with ancient wisdom, including that of Greek writers.¹⁰⁹⁷

Coming more up to date, Francklin noted a passage in *Philoctetes* that Addison 'had probably ... in view' when he was writing *Cato*.¹⁰⁹⁸ He also identified an image in Otway's *The Orphan* (1680) that was similar to one in *Philoctetes* and doubted that 'Otway himself, with all his tenderness, could have drawn a more striking picture' than Sophocles' description of the deaths of Haemon and Electra.¹⁰⁹⁹ Otway was much admired for his ability to evoke emotions and passion. Dennis wrote in 1717 that Otway 'had a Faculty in touching the softer Passions beyond both Ancients and Moderns, if you except only Euripides'; and in *The Centinel* Francklin praised

¹⁰⁹³ Dryden 1962: I 278; similarly in the preface to *Don Sebastian* (II 46).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Francklin 1759a: II 7; also I 33, 295; II 15, 44, 47, 51, 58, 238, 279.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Blackwall 1718: 81; also 79, 82, 87, 89-90.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Manuel 1959: 112-120.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Haugen 2011: 225-226.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Francklin 1759a: I 230.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Francklin 1759a: I 216; II 85.

Otway who ‘has found the avenues to the heart - and roots it from its centre’, especially in *The Orphan*.¹¹⁰⁰ Francklin also asserted that ‘the character of Melisander in the *Agamemnon* of Thomson, is a close imitation of the Philoctetes’ and that the former play ‘abounds in many fine imitations of the antient tragedy’.¹¹⁰¹ James Thomson’s *Agamemnon* (1738) drew on both Aeschylus’ and Seneca’s plays but Thomson took the character of Melisander from mention in the *Odyssey* of an unnamed bard who, left behind by Agamemnon to watch over Clytemnestra’s welfare, was abducted by Aegisthus and left to die on a desert island (hence the similarity to Philoctetes’ situation).¹¹⁰²

But Francklin, like Theobald, was particularly keen to note perceived parallels with Shakespeare. Other writers since Theobald had done the same. Warburton, in his edition of Shakespeare (1747), found a parallel between speeches of Hotspur in *I Henry IV* and Eteocles in Euripides’ *Phoenician Women*, to Samuel Johnson’s approval.¹¹⁰³ Peter Whalley, in *An Enquiry into the Learning of Shakespeare* (1748), identified many parallel passages between the ancients and Shakespeare, including speeches in *King Lear* and *Hamlet* that had ‘a remarkable Affinity’ and ‘a remarkable Similitude’ with lines from Sophocles’ *Oedipus* and Euripides’ *Hippolytus* respectively.¹¹⁰⁴ Richard Hurd, in *A Discourse Concerning Poetical Imitation* (1751), argued that such passages did not necessarily imply imitation or detract from writers’ originality: ‘quick, perceptive, intelligent minds ... will hardly fail of seeing nature in the same light, and of noting the same distinct features and proportions’.¹¹⁰⁵ Theobald had said much the same, as mentioned in chapter 4.4; and Samuel Johnson was to take a similar line in his edition of Shakespeare.¹¹⁰⁶ Richard Farmer was to

¹¹⁰⁰ Dennis 1967: II 121; Francklin 1758: II 108 (no. 101, 16 November 1757).

¹¹⁰¹ Francklin 1759a: I 220; also I 221, 229. Hall and Macintosh (2005: 110) surmise that Thomson knew Sheridan’s translation of *Philoctetes*.

¹¹⁰² On Thomson’s *Agamemnon*, its ancient sources, the attacks on Walpole that it embodied and its reception see Campbell 1979: 113-116; Conolly 1976: 49-50, 53; Davies 1780: II 32-33; Fulford 2000: 194-198; Hall 1999b: 118, 2004: 55 and 2005: 69-72, 105-106, 113-114; Hall and Macintosh 2005: 99-115; Hammond 2000: 19-20; Ingram 1966: 166 and passim; Kern 1966: 292-294; Macintosh 1995: 55-57; Mueller 1980: 73-74; Ridley 2000; Sambrook 1991: 152 and passim; Scott 1988: 214, 227-228; Thomson 1958: 108 and passim, and 1987: xiv-xv, cxvii, 114.

¹¹⁰³ Johnson 1968: VII 462; Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 238.

¹¹⁰⁴ Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 285, 287.

¹¹⁰⁵ Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 430.

¹¹⁰⁶ Theobald 1717: I 182 (no. 26, 8 June 1715) and 1733: II 9; Johnson 1968: VII 85.

denounce ‘the rage of Parallelisms’ when he argued that Shakespeare derived many passages not, as others had claimed, directly from ancient writers, but from English translations of them or from works by English writers.¹¹⁰⁷ But now Francklin was pleased to find verbal echoes between Sophocles and Shakespeare. When Tecmessa refers to Ajax’s conversation with the (to her) invisible goddess Athena by saying that he ‘with some shadow seem’d to hold discourse’, Francklin points to *Hamlet*, presumably to Gertrude’s asking her son, who has been addressing the (to her) invisible ghost of his father, why ‘you ... with th’incorporal air do hold discourse’.¹¹⁰⁸ Francklin’s translation is similar to Adams’ in which Ajax ‘held Discourse with some Shadow’.¹¹⁰⁹ Francklin also notes visual parallels, reflecting his interest in performance-related aspects of Sophocles’ plays. I have already mentioned the similarity he saw between Electra and Constance in Shakespeare’s *King John*. Another example is his comment, when the chorus in *Antigone* sees Creon enter with his dead son in his arms, that ‘Sophocles, we may imagine, thought it would heighten the distress’, continuing

Shakespear was of the same opinion, and brings in Lear with Cordelia in his arms; though in Tate’s alteration of it, which is always ridiculously follow’d in the representation, this circumstance is omitted.¹¹¹⁰

Francklin both identified a parallel in Shakespeare and expressed a strong preference for *King Lear* to be performed as it was originally written and not as it had been adapted by Nahum Tate, whose ending, in which Cordelia survives and marries Edgar, held the stage from 1681 until well into the nineteenth century.¹¹¹¹

Francklin’s interest in Shakespeare was such that he introduced two parallel passages into his Sophocles translations, one of them perhaps unwittingly. In *Electra*, as Orestes and his companions go to kill Clytemnestra, the chorus visualises them as ἄφυκτοι κύνες, that is as ‘unavoidable’ dogs or hounds, which Francklin acknowledged by glossing the phrase in Latin as ‘canes inevitabiles’. Previous translations used the phrases ‘The chasers of facts villainous / The hounds below’

¹¹⁰⁷ Farmer 1767: iii, 10-25, 32-47, 52, 61-66.

¹¹⁰⁸ Francklin 1759a: I 22. Other verbal similarities noted by Francklin between Sophocles and Shakespeare are at 1759a: I 195-196 and II 147, 166, 171, 197, 268.

¹¹⁰⁹ Adams 1729: I 22.

¹¹¹⁰ Francklin 1759a: II 86.

¹¹¹¹ Branam 1956: 54-56; Maguire 1991: 29. Theobald in *The Censor* had preferred Tate’s ending because it showed virtue rewarded (Theobald 1717: I 72, no. 10, 2 May 1715).

(Wase); ‘Th’ avenging Furies’ (Theobald); and ‘the inevitable Furies’ (the anonymous 1714 version and Adams).¹¹¹² Francklin, however, opts for ‘the dogs of war’ and then notes that ‘Shakespear has exactly the same image, “Cry havock, and let slip the dogs of war”’, erroneously referring to the prologue to *Henry V* (the line comes from *Julius Caesar*).¹¹¹³ A phrase in Shakespeare suggests a translation which Francklin then compares to its own inspiration. In *Oedipus at Colonus* Oedipus, sensing the approach of death, hopes that Theseus will come to him ‘Whilst yet I live, and keep my perfect mind’.¹¹¹⁴ That irresistibly evokes King Lear’s pitiful ‘to deal plainly, / I fear I am not in my perfect mind’. Francklin’s translation is quite unlike Adams’ ‘Will [Theseus] find me alive and in my senses?’.¹¹¹⁵ Moreover, Francklin has the chorus in *Ajax* say that Ajax would never have killed the flocks and herds of animals if he had been ‘in his perfect mind’.¹¹¹⁶ Francklin, who frequently has notes pointing out verbal echoes between Sophocles and Shakespeare, has none on these occasions, perhaps implying that he did not notice what his unconscious was writing. Francklin’s translation of Oedipus’ second speech in the Appendix may contain another small borrowing of a word from Shakespeare.

Francklin did more than just notice parallel passages in Sophocles and Shakespeare. He ends his *Dissertation* with a patriotic tilt at ‘French, Italian, Spanish and German critics’ who vent their spleen at ancient Greek tragedy out of envy that they have nothing comparable of their own, whereas

Englishmen should be above such envy, and such malevolence, because they can boast a dramatic writer, superior to all that antiquity ever produced: we may safely join with the most sanguine partisans of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, in the sincerest admiration of their several excellencies, and rejoice within ourselves to see them all united and surpass’d in the immortal and inimitable Shakespear.¹¹¹⁷

¹¹¹² Wase 1649: 53; Theobald 1714: 61; *Electra* 1714: 52; Adams 1729: I 151. Brumoy (1730: I 186) has ‘les inevitables Furies’.

¹¹¹³ Francklin 1759a: I 183. Francklin may have been thinking of the reference in the prologue to *Henry V* to ‘famine, sword and fire’ that ‘Leashed in like hounds / Crouch for employment’ as Henry invades France.

¹¹¹⁴ Francklin 1759a: II 382.

¹¹¹⁵ Adams 1729: II 152.

¹¹¹⁶ Francklin 1759a: I 15; and another use of ‘perfect mind’ in relation to Ajax at I 24. The anonymous 1714 translation of *Ajax* has no precedent for Francklin’s use of ‘perfect mind’ in either instance.

¹¹¹⁷ Francklin 1759b: 58-59.

Francklin was extolling Shakespeare - no doubt influenced by England's engagement against France and Spain in the Seven Years' War – at a particularly propitious time for the continuing growth of Shakespeare's reputation.¹¹¹⁸ Taylor sees Francklin's *Dissertation* as coinciding exactly with several other developments that marked Shakespeare's 'coronation as the King of English Poets'.¹¹¹⁹ In the same year Edward Wortley Montagu, condemning the enervating effects of public entertainments, felt it appropriate to couple the 'rage for theatrical entertainments [which] fatally contributed to the ruin of the [Athenian] Republick' with 'that strange Shakespeare-mania (as I may term it) which prevail'd so lately, and so universally amongst all ranks and all ages'.¹¹²⁰ In the dedication of *The Tragedies of Sophocles* Francklin reversed the more usual practice of measuring a modern playwright against the standard of the ancients, as when Gildon wrote that if Shakespeare had known of the unities 'he wou'd have been the Sophocles of England, as he is now but little more, than the Thespis or at most the Aeschylus'.¹¹²¹ Francklin, on the other hand, called Sophocles 'the acknowledged prince of tragic poets, the admiration of all Greece, the envy of his cotemporaries, and in a word, the Shakespear of antiquity'.¹¹²² Francklin exemplifies how during the eighteenth century Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides 'came to be considered able if inferior precursors of Shakespearian drama'.¹¹²³ Similarly, Whalley, in *An Enquiry into the Learning of Shakespeare* (1748), called Aeschylus 'the Athenian Shakespeare'; and Churchill in *The Rosciad* (1761) wrote that Shakespeare 'Mounting aloft ... wings his daring flight, / While Sophocles below stands trembling at his height'.¹¹²⁴

5.8. Reception of Francklin's translations

The Tragedies of Sophocles was reviewed in *The Critical Review* and *The Monthly Review*. Both reviews were favourable, the former perhaps unsurprisingly

¹¹¹⁸ Bate (1997: 169) observes that the planning of both Johnson's edition of Shakespeare (1765) and Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee at Stratford (1769) go back to the period of the Seven Years' War.

¹¹¹⁹ Taylor 1990: 114.

¹¹²⁰ Montagu 1759: 129, 132.

¹¹²¹ Gildon 1710b: 347.

¹¹²² Francklin 1759a: a2r.

¹¹²³ Kewes 2005: 242, 249.

¹¹²⁴ Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: III 285, IV 436.

so since Francklin was a major contributor to the journal for over twenty years from March 1756.¹¹²⁵ On the other hand, the reviewer of Francklin's *Dissertation on Antient Tragedy* in *The Critical Review* did not refrain from disagreeing with him about the history of dividing plays into acts and reproved his 'passion and prejudice against certain contemporary writers, who deserve well of the public', alluding to harsh remarks directed by Francklin in the *Dissertation* against the playwright Arthur Murphy, a reproach repeated more forcefully a few months later after Murphy had retaliated in *A Poetical Epistle to Mr. Samuel Johnson, A.M.*¹¹²⁶ *The Critical Review* also condemned in disinterested fashion books issued by its own publisher, Robert Baldwin.¹¹²⁷ Its reviewer of Francklin's *The Tragedies of Sophocles* acknowledged the difficulty of translating from Greek given

the great difference between the idioms of the Greek and English languages, and ... the vast dissimilitude of manners, customs, and religious rites, between the simplicity of antient times, and the polished improvements of the present age.

Nevertheless, 'Mr. Francklin has enriched his translation with notes explanatory and critical, for the benefit of the unlearned reader; and has, in our opinion, executed the work with equal accuracy and spirit'. Developing the last point, the reviewer asserted,

We have carefully compared the greatest part of his *Electra* with the original, and will venture to say it is translated with great fidelity, nothing being omitted, but now and then an unnecessary epithet, which, by being retained, would have flattened the translation.¹¹²⁸

The review then quoted the Governor's account of Orestes' supposed death at the Pythian Games, a 'remarkably animated and picturesque' narration, 'though some critics may think it interrupts the business of the drama'. This was an unfortunate choice that belied the reviewer's previous comments since, as already mentioned, Francklin compressed Sophocles' 79 lines into 64, omitting several completely.¹¹²⁹

The Monthly Review praised both the accuracy of the translation and the elegance of Francklin's language:

¹¹²⁵ Basker 1988: 151, 305, n. 66.

¹¹²⁶ *The Critical Review*, July 1760, X 36-37, 41 and October 1760, X 319-320; Dunbar 1946: 76.

¹¹²⁷ Basker 1988: 43; Donoghue 1996: 25.

¹¹²⁸ *The Critical Review*, June 1759, VII 512-513.

¹¹²⁹ *The Critical Review*, June 1759, VII 514-515.

The translation is remarkably close and concise, yet sufficiently free to give it the air of an original: and, as far as we can judge from the passages we have compared, the sense of the Author is given with great fidelity and exactness. In a word, the English Poet seems to have, in some measure, preserved that elegance and simplicity, for which the Grecian is so deservedly admired.¹¹³⁰

Several writers acknowledged that Francklin had made Sophocles' tragedies more accessible. Abraham Portal, author of the tragedy *Olindo and Sophronia* (1758), hailed 'happy Francklin', in 'an elegiac ode' published in *The Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette* in October 1759, with the lines: 'What praise, great Bard, to thee is due, / Now, in their genuine scenes, we view / The matchless sorrows of the Theban King', referring to Oedipus.¹¹³¹ Robert Lloyd, a subscriber to *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, surely had Francklin in mind when he wrote in *Shakespeare: An Epistle to Mr. Garrick* (1760), combining recognition of Francklin's achievement with hints at the drudgery involved, that

Thanks to much industry and pains,
Much twisting of the wit and brains,
Translation has unlock'd the store,
And spread abroad the Grecian lore,
While Sophocles his scenes are grown
E'en as familiar as our own.¹¹³²

Daniel Hayes, in a poetic epistle to Churchill on the latter's *Rosciad* which criticised contemporary actors and actresses, referred to 'Francklin's Sophocles' as evidence of the usefulness of the stage.¹¹³³ An anonymous correspondent to *The Public Advertiser* of 10 September 1763, arguing for the use of blank verse as opposed to rhyme in translations of ancient poets, cited the example of 'Franklin's Sophocles [which] will at least give us a more perfect Idea of his Original ... than Dryden or Pope can possibly do' of Homer and Virgil in their rhymed versions.¹¹³⁴ Some of Francklin's translations influenced other artists. His translation of *Electra* inspired Angelica Kauffman's painting of *Electra giving her sister Chrysothemis her girdle*

¹¹³⁰ *The Monthly Review*, November 1759, XXI 417.

¹¹³¹ *The Burney Newspapers at the British Library*, Gale Cengage Learning online [accessed 27 December 2013].

¹¹³² Vickers (ed.) 1974-1976: IV 419.

¹¹³³ Quoted in the *Public Ledger or the Daily Register of Commerce and Intelligence*, 15 October 1761 (*The Burney Newspapers at the British Library*, Gale Cengage Learning online [accessed 8 January 2014]).

¹¹³⁴ *The Burney Newspapers at the British Library*, Gale Cengage Learning online [accessed 8 January 2014].

and a lock of hair from Orestes for the grave of Agamemnon (c. 1778) and Benjamin West's painting *Aegistus, raising the veil, discovers the body of Clytemnestra* (1780).¹¹³⁵ His translation of *Oedipus at Colonus* may have influenced Blake's poem *Tiriell* (c. 1789).¹¹³⁶

Two translators of Sophocles later in the century felt obliged to position their works in relation to Francklin's. Thomas Maurice, who published a translation of *Oedipus* in 1779, acknowledged Francklin's 'merits', 'established and exalted reputation' and 'erudition', while opposing his own translation to Francklin's on the grounds that the latter was a 'literal' rendering whereas his own was 'free': Maurice, unlike Francklin, 'was not fettered by his text, but guided by it'.¹¹³⁷ This is a useful reminder, especially in view of G. H. Lewes' complaint below that Francklin's translation was too much of a paraphrase, that terms like 'free' and 'literal' translation can represent points on a spectrum whose precise position depends on the observer's viewpoint and argument. Potter, who translated all three Greek tragedians between 1777 and 1788, was more grudging. He referred in the preface to *The Tragedies of Sophocles Translated* (1788) to Francklin's 'well-acquired reputation'; but in letters to a correspondent he described Francklin's version as 'in high repute, though in truth it is ill done, it is unfaithfull, always spiritless' and commented, 'I know not for whom he translated, nor to whom his translation can be pleasing'.¹¹³⁸ Francklin's *Tragedies of Sophocles* was republished in 'carefully revised and corrected' editions in 1766 and 1788 (the latter no doubt to coincide with Potter's volume) and a composite edition of translations of Greek tragedies was published in the 1790s comprising Potter's Aeschylus, Francklin's Sophocles and Michael Wodhull's Euripides.

In 1844 G. H. Lewes mounted a savage attack on Francklin whom he called 'one of the most astonishing blockheads in the records of poetry', 'the dullest man of his age', possessed of 'incompetence [and] unsuspecting dulness', and 'a monument of unexampled imbecility'.¹¹³⁹ This was in the context of a lengthy plea for translations that aimed at high degrees of 'literality' and 'fidelity' which Lewes

¹¹³⁵ Bakogianni 2009: 41-47; Hall and Macintosh 2005: 177-178 and fig. 6.6.

¹¹³⁶ Raine 1957: 4-5, 8 and 1969: I 39-40.

¹¹³⁷ Maurice 1779: 151-152.

¹¹³⁸ Potter 1788: iv; Stoker 1993: 298, 300.

¹¹³⁹ Lewes 1844: 463, 466, 468.

defined as ‘not, of course, schoolboy construing, not dictionary fidelity, but the finding of exact equivalents for each word of the original, and no more’ in which ‘the charm of poetry may in some measure be lost, but the spirit of the writer, and his age, remains’. Francklin’s translations on the other hand, despite being ‘the standard English Sophocles’, were characterised by paraphrase which was ‘a cloak for ignorance and want of taste’ in which ‘sound and sense are equally lost’ and we have ‘only gained the translator’s substitution’.¹¹⁴⁰ Lewes explicitly rejected the tradition which Francklin represented, which I described in the Introduction (section 7), namely endeavouring ‘to make the original speak as he would have spoken had he lived in these days’, for example ‘[supposing] that if Sophocles were now to be born, he would be born a Francklin’.¹¹⁴¹ Similarly, early in the twentieth century, Sheldon wrote of Francklin’s translation of Lucian, in terms applicable also to *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, that Francklin’s English ‘is generally clear, dignified, and well chosen’ but his translation ‘is not now regarded as an accurate translation in any strict sense of the term’, having ‘many of the common faults of the free method of interpretation’.¹¹⁴² Draper similarly cited Francklin as an example of the eighteenth-century practice of favouring ‘free’ over ‘exact’ translations.¹¹⁴³ Much more recently, Poole has called Francklin’s Sophocles translations ‘worthy, mild, fluent’ (and Potter’s ‘decent and dull’).¹¹⁴⁴

Francklin’s Sophocles has had a long life. An abridged version of his translation of *Oedipus at Colonus* was read to accompany Mendelssohn’s incidental music to the play at a concert at the Crystal Palace in March 1888.¹¹⁴⁵ The translations of *Antigone* and of the two *Oedipus* plays were published in 1894 in India and in London respectively and a new edition of *The Tragedies of Sophocles* was published in London in 1909 complete with the *Dissertation* and Francklin’s dedication and notes.¹¹⁴⁶ Francklin’s translation of *Oedipus* was performed ‘in the Greek Theatre at the University of California, May 14 [1910], on the occasion of the

¹¹⁴⁰ Lewes 1844: 460-461, 463, 466.

¹¹⁴¹ Lewes 1844: 462; and generally Collins and Williams 1987.

¹¹⁴² Sheldon 1919: 22.

¹¹⁴³ Draper 1921a: 242-243, 246.

¹¹⁴⁴ Poole 2000: 361.

¹¹⁴⁵ *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 29, 218-219.

¹¹⁴⁶ British Library catalogue; Google Books.

golden jubilee of the College of California'.¹¹⁴⁷ And when in 2013 the author of an article on Dickens' *Bleak House* quoted from *Philoctetes* she used Francklin's translation.¹¹⁴⁸

5.9. Conclusion

Francklin's translations in many ways followed in the footsteps of earlier ones. He adopted traditional ideas about the nature and purpose of tragedy (including the function of the chorus) and translation; his notes cover similar ground to those of Theobald and Adams; and like Theobald he sought verbal parallels between Sophocles and other writers, notably Shakespeare, although, unlike Theobald, he does not theorise about how such similarities arose. On the other hand, Francklin is more alive to performance-related aspects of the plays, often imagining how the ancient actors may have performed their parts and the plays' emotional impact on the audience.

Francklin asserted the importance of knowledge of the circumstances of the plays' original performances:

Dramatic, as well as every other species of poetry, is best known and distinguish'd by the place of it's birth; it will take it's form, colour, and complection from it's native soil, as naturally as water derives it's taste and qualities from the different kinds of earth, through which it flows: it is absolutely necessary, before we can judge impartially of the Greek tragedies, to transport ourselves to the scene where they were represented, to shake off the Englishman for a time, and put on the Athenian.¹¹⁴⁹

Although the prevailing theory of translation was to make the plays' characters sound like modern English people, readers should imagine themselves as Athenians. Knowledge of Athenian religion, laws and customs was essential to forming a correct judgement of the tragedies produced there.¹¹⁵⁰ Differences between Athenian and modern customs meant that use of the chorus was appropriate then but not now. Further, it was absolutely necessary, in order to 'taste the beauties' of *Oedipus at Colonus*, that 'the reader have an eye throughout both to the political and religious

¹¹⁴⁷ *The Classical Journal* 6, 48.

¹¹⁴⁸ Francklin 1759a: I 217; Greiner 2013: 87, 92 n (who might alternatively have used Potter's translation if she specifically wanted one that pre-dated Dickens).

¹¹⁴⁹ Francklin 1759b: 43.

¹¹⁵⁰ Francklin 1759b: 45-46.

state of Greece, and the time of its appearance on the stage'.¹¹⁵¹ Francklin's attitude is reminiscent of Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*:

You then whose Judgment the right Course wou'd steer,
Know well each Ancient's proper Character,
His Fable, Subject, Scope in ev'ry Page,
Religion, Country, Genius of his Age:
Without all these at once before your Eyes,
Cavil you may, but never Criticize.¹¹⁵²

For Francklin, the writings of even much more recent authors would benefit from similar knowledge: reviewing an edition of Ben Jonson in *The Critical Review* in 1756 he stressed the desirability of notes to explain Jonson's 'allusions to the customs and manners of the age he lived in' that would draw on 'a pretty exact knowledge of the English tongue, and an intimate acquaintance with [Jonson's] cotemporary writers'.¹¹⁵³

Francklin goes out of his way to be understanding of the matricide in *Electra*, invoking Greek religious beliefs and circumstances of playwriting as his reasons. As Orestes is killing Clytemnestra offstage, Electra onstage urges him to strike another blow. Francklin observes that the French critics Brumoy and Dacier reacted with horror to hearing 'a sister exhorting her brother to murder her own mother' since 'nature starts at such inhumanity [and] Orestes should be revenged, but by some other hand'. Francklin comments that

the more indulgent English reader will acquit the poet, when he considers the manners and character of the people before whom the play was represented. The murder of Clytaemnestra, we are frequently put in mind, was by command of the oracle; and was therefore look'd on by the antients, however contrary to the dictates of nature, as an act of piety. Their idea of fatality was, of itself, sufficient to take away all the horror and cruelty of it; besides which, it may be added in favour of Sophocles, that the story of Clytaemnestra, the persons concern'd in her death, and every circumstance attending it, was too well known to the whole audience to admit of any material alteration in the conduct of it.¹¹⁵⁴

Francklin was there imagining how an ancient audience might have viewed the matricide although he had no evidence on which to base his view. Admittedly, other writers had taken a similar line and Francklin's opinion reads like a composite of

¹¹⁵¹ Francklin 1759a: II 289.

¹¹⁵² Pope 1963: 147.

¹¹⁵³ *The Critical Review*, June 1756, I 465.

¹¹⁵⁴ Francklin 1759a: I 187-188.

theirs. Both Rymer and Adams called Orestes' matricide 'an act of Justice', the latter adding that the audience would 'not look upon him as an Assassin or a Parricide, but an Executor of divine Vengeance, and an Instrument which God had made use of to punish so horrible a Crime'. Collier and Gildon also sought to exculpate Orestes on the grounds that he was obeying the oracle, Gildon pointing out that Sophocles was not master of his story.¹¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Francklin's comments show how far he was willing to go to defend Sophocles, lest criticism of the matricide be seen as criticism of the tragedian. A tradition developed of playing down the deliberate killing of Clytemnestra by following a recommendation of Corneille in his *Discours de la Tragédie et des Moyens de la Traiter selon le Vraisemblable ou le Nécessaire* (1660).¹¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, versions of the story in France - Longepierre's *Électre* (1702, published 1730), Crébillon's *Électre* (1708) and Voltaire's *Oreste* (1750) - and later in England, Shirley's *Electra* (published 1765) - made Orestes innocent of wilful matricide by having him kill Clytemnestra involuntarily when she comes between him and Aegisthus.¹¹⁵⁷ Francklin does not engage with such approaches, preferring to defend what Sophocles wrote.

Francklin does not consistently adopt a historicist approach to the plays. He is also able, indeed eager, to view them through the lens of contemporary theatre. He often receives Sophocles through Shakespeare and the performances of Garrick and his contemporaries. He imagines how the plays would be performed by the likes of Garrick and Mrs. Cibber and how audiences would respond to them by reference to performance practices of his own day. Francklin wants his readers to have one foot in ancient Athens and the other in contemporary London.

¹¹⁵⁵ Adams 1729: I 159-160; Collier 1700: 65; Gildon 1710b: 397; Rymer 1956: 48.

¹¹⁵⁶ Corneille 1965: 49.

¹¹⁵⁷ Out of similar considerations of decorum, English eighteenth century versions of the Medea story avoid deliberate infanticide by the title character: in Gildon's *Phaeton* (1698) the children are killed by the local people, in Johnson's *The Tragedy of Medaea* (1730) they survive and in Glover's *Medea* (1767) Medea kills them while seized by madness (Hall 2000: 50-55).

CONCLUSION

In 1758, the year before Francklin's *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, Garrick commissioned from the sculptor Roubillac a statue of Shakespeare (presented to the British Museum 'for the use of the public' under the terms of Garrick's will and transferred to the British Library in 2005) which he erected within an octagonal 'temple of Shakespeare', behind a portico with eight Greek Ionic columns, at his villa at Hampton near London.¹¹⁵⁸ Both Garrick and Roubillac subscribed to Francklin's work. Their juxtaposition of ancient Greece and Shakespeare, visible today since a replica of the original statue is in place, illustrates one of the themes of this dissertation, namely the tension between admiration of the ancient Greek tragedians and the desire to celebrate the achievements of the English stage, especially Shakespeare, and to seek its further improvement.

Gascoigne and Kinweltershe, Goffe and May were interested in the 'Greekness' of their ultimate source materials mainly as a quarry from which they could extract story lines and some ancient colour. They were interested less in their materials' 'ancientness' than in their adaptability to contemporary theatrical styles. Gascoigne and Kinweltershe (through their play's title) and Goffe (in his preface) were also pleased to associate their plays with Euripides, while Goffe and May happily wove in elements from Shakespeare.

Joyner similarly claimed links with Euripides and also with Sophocles. But he differs from those earlier writers in also being genuinely interested in ancient tragic theory and in how it might be made to work in an original modern play. In this latter respect he is closer to Dryden, Rymer, Dennis and Gildon who sought to identify what was of lasting value in ancient Greek tragic theory and practice. Like early modern historians, they were interested in the past for its exemplary value and relevance, bridging the temporal or geographical gap between ancient Greece and modern England. At the same time, they recognised the pull of more recent native drama.

Collier is part of the 'exemplary' tradition but in a different way. He was not particularly interested in the 'Greekness' of ancient tragedy but its 'ancientness' was vitally important. For him, the Greek plays were the product of an ancient culture

¹¹⁵⁸ Davies 1780: II 412; Dobson 1992: 179-182; <www.garrickstemple.org.uk> [accessed 30 August 2013].

whose main difference from that of his own day, namely its heathenness, served only to emphasise how its high moral purpose was superior to that of the drama of his own time. Collier connects with other, more specialist literary critics through his insistence that plays should demonstrate morality and poetic justice.

Both ‘ancientness’ and ‘Greekness’ were important to Wase, Theobald and Francklin. They combined translations of the texts of Sophocles’ plays into the English idiom of their day with notes that drew attention to the plays’ original historical and cultural contexts. Francklin’s strong emphasis on the need to understand the ancient Greeks’ culture, politics and history in order to appreciate their plays connects him with Bentley’s analytical approach to the letters of Phalaris sixty years before and with other writers who addressed the same issue. But notes could also be used to bridge the gap between antiquity and the translators’ own times. Wase, like the poets who wrote about his translation, alluded to its contemporary political resonance, while Francklin was keen to identify textual parallels with more recent authors, especially Shakespeare. Theobald used Sophocles and Shakespeare, particularly in his edition of the latter, to explain and justify each other’s texts. Francklin was more interested in bringing Sophocles into conjunction with contemporary stagecraft and ideas about simplicity in art.

The need, emphasised by Francklin, to attain a deep knowledge of the original contexts and circumstances of the production of an ancient work, despite the difficulties that Addison identified as mentioned in the Introduction (section 8), was stressed also by Thomas Warton in *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754). He wrote that it ‘in reading the works of an author who lived in a remote age’ it was necessary to ‘place ourselves in his situation and circumstances’ in order to be able to understand ‘how his turn of thinking, and manner of composing were biass’d, influenc’d, and as it were, tinctur’d’ by the very different circumstances of his time. That is, it was necessary to understand the effects of past writers’ backgrounds on both what they wrote and how they wrote it.¹¹⁵⁹ This pointed to a new ‘historicist aesthetics’ which Osborne sees emerging in the 1770s, as a consequence of which

the absolute validity of the Aristotelian model [came] to be called into question; this signalled the end of one line of dramatic criticism and

¹¹⁵⁹ Terry 2001: 307-308.

opened the way for a bolder and more innovative approach to drama than had been adopted in the eighteenth century.¹¹⁶⁰

Aristotle was now seen as ‘as an essentially descriptive aesthetician, drawing his standards from the phenomena which lay before him in his own day’.¹¹⁶¹ This was a more historicist approach to the past than had often been articulated previously. That is, there was increasing recognition of the distinctive characteristics of past periods and cultures and how they differed from each other and from the present, rather than an assumption that past experience and practice were of universal value and could be guides for the present. Literary texts should be evaluated as products of a specific culture and period.¹¹⁶² This is an attitude which in its fullest form is usually associated with the nineteenth century but had its antecedents well before the end of the eighteenth.

Attitudes changed to Aeschylus in particular and to Greek tragedy in general. The tragedies of Aeschylus, whose difficult language and unsophisticated manner had precluded complete acceptance, found admirers in the nineteenth century. Francklin had written of the earliest Greek tragedian that ‘his genius [is] lively, but uncultivated; his sentiments noble and sublime, but at the same time wild, irregular, and frequently fantastic’.¹¹⁶³ Potter, in the first complete translation of Aeschylus’ tragedies (1777), wrote that in *Prometheus Bound* he had ‘exerted the strength and ardour of his genius with a wild and terrible magnificence’.¹¹⁶⁴ Those were qualities that would appeal in the Romantic age and afterwards. Potter’s translations (reprinted several times in the early nineteenth century) made Aeschylus available to English readers; John Flaxman’s thirty-one illustrations of Aeschylus’ plays (1795) added visual images; and, following the publication in English in 1815 of August Wilhelm Schlegel’s lectures on Greek drama, Aeschylus ‘enjoyed the reputation of being a kind of honorary Shakespeare: a rugged, towering genius’.¹¹⁶⁵

One factor that altered attitudes to ancient Greek tragedy more widely was the development of ideas, not about the form and structure of tragedies as examples of a

¹¹⁶⁰ Osborne 1997: 184.

¹¹⁶¹ Osborne 1997: 207.

¹¹⁶² Moles 2001: 196-198.

¹¹⁶³ Francklin 1759b: 48.

¹¹⁶⁴ Potter 1779: I xxiii.

¹¹⁶⁵ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 475. Also Parry 1973: 54-58, 68-73 on Aeschylus’ reputation in England in the first half of the nineteenth century.

literary genre, which was the main concern of the writers mentioned in this dissertation, but about what it was that made tragedy distinctive. Tragedy had long been discussed in relation to philosophy. Aristotle described tragedy as more philosophical than history because it dealt with the hypothetical and the universal, a point taken up in various ways by Sidney, Rymer, Dennis and Gildon;¹¹⁶⁶ and that distinction between tragedy and history underpinned the concept of poetic justice in the former as mentioned in chapter 2.6. And particular tragedies were interpreted by reference to a philosophical framework embodying concepts of the sacred and the divine, hence the many references to ‘fate’ and ‘providence’ in previous chapters. Now, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries philosophers made theories about what was inherently ‘tragic’ about human existence the centre piece of philosophical systems. Although some French and Italian writers continued into the nineteenth century to discuss what should be the appropriate rules for the form and structure of tragedies, in Germany particularly ‘the tragic is abstracted from drama and its circumstances for the first time’.¹¹⁶⁷ The difference is clearly visible in the contrast between the neo-classical poetics of the Leipzig professor Johann Christoph Gottsched’s *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst für die Deutschen* (four editions 1730-1751), and his efforts to improve the German stage by undertaking and commissioning translations and adaptations of model foreign dramas, including Addison’s *Cato*, and some of his fellow Germans’ discussions of tragedy starting half a century later. Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling’s and Georg Wilhelm Hegel’s thinking about tragedy had a quite different starting point. For them, the tragic resulted from the inevitable conflict between man’s self-conscious striving to assert himself (subjective freedom) and external circumstances acting as constraints (objective necessity) which produced human misfortune and suffering, whether man struggled defiantly but vainly against those constraints or resigned himself to them.¹¹⁶⁸

Differing attitudes to Sophocles’ *Antigone* illustrate the change of approach. Early modern interpretations did not look much beyond the text of the play and had no difficulty in identifying Antigone as praiseworthy and Creon as blameworthy. The sixteenth-century scholar Melanchthon blamed Creon for ‘his immoderate

¹¹⁶⁶ Dennis 1967: I 70; Gildon 1718: I 54-59; Murray and Dorsch (eds.) 2000: 68-69; Rymer 1956: 8, 23; Sidney 2002: 90, 100.

¹¹⁶⁷ Lambropoulos 2006: 8; also 34, 57-58.

¹¹⁶⁸ Lambropoulos 2006: 37-41, 48-52; Young 2013: 69-94, 110-138.

cruelty and stubbornness’;¹¹⁶⁹ and later writers followed him in seeing Creon as unjust and cruel and Antigone as a noble and pious heroine.¹¹⁷⁰ Others saw the play in more overtly political terms that reflected the preoccupations of their own time, with Creon representing arbitrary government and despotism.¹¹⁷¹ A well known example of a different approach is that of Hegel who saw *Antigone* as an illustration of his theory of the tragic, according to which tragedy arises from the conflict between two opposed ethical principles that are both important for the well-being of the community, namely the obligations owed by the individual to the family and to the state, out of which a new equilibrium emerges, if only in conclusions drawn by the audience. The tragedy in *Antigone* results from the inevitability of the conflict between two unyielding protagonists and the destruction of Antigone who enters into it fully conscious of the implications of her actions.¹¹⁷²

In England George Eliot, in her essay ‘The *Antigone* and its Moral’ (1856), reflected Hegel’s approach in a manner that underlined the difference between it and the writers I have considered in this dissertation. She saw the play as representing the conflict between ‘sisterly piety which allies itself with reverence for the Gods’ and ‘the duties of citizenship’ which, crucially, were two principles ‘both having their validity’. Antigone is an example of a reformer, martyr or revolutionist who suffers, not by ‘fighting against evil only’, but by placing herself ‘in opposition to a good – to a valid principle which cannot be infringed without harm’. Eliot draws attention to the distance between her interpretation of *Antigone* and that of writers from previous centuries when she declares dismissively: ‘It is a very superficial criticism which interprets the character of Creon as that of a hypocritical tyrant, and regards Antigone as a blameless victim. Coarse contrasts like this are not the materials handled by great dramatists’.¹¹⁷³ I would argue that the authors I discuss were neither ‘superficial’ nor prone to making ‘coarse contrasts’. Rather, like Eliot,

¹¹⁶⁹ Lurie 2012: 444.

¹¹⁷⁰ Dryden 1962: I 252; Gildon 1710a: xliii; La Mesnardière 1639: 56 and also 223, 225; Manwaring 1737: 180; May’s *Antigone* discussed in chapter 1.3; Rymer 1956: 33. Also Collier on Creon in chapter 3.4.

¹¹⁷¹ Adams 1729: I a3r-a3v and also I d2v and II 6-7, 10; Francklin in chapter 5.5; Hurd 1749: 77-78.

¹¹⁷² Steiner 1984: 27-42; Young 2013: 110-123.

¹¹⁷³ Eliot 1990: 364-366.

they approached ancient Greek tragedy in a way that was rooted in the thinking and concerns of their own time.

**A COMPARISON OF THEOBALD'S AND FRANCKLIN'S TRANSLATIONS
OF OEDIPUS' SECOND SPEECH IN SOPHOCLES' OEDIPUS TYRANNUS**

Theobald and Francklin translated Sophocles' *Oedipus* lines 58-77 (twenty lines) as follows:

Theobald

O my afflicted Children, well I know,
Nor am a Stranger to, your pressing Anguish;
I see you All are hard beset by Fate:
But none of you, like Me, are bow'd with Sorrow.
For all your Grievs are centred in your King; (5)
On Me alone the mighty Load is fall'n,
And for my Self, and you, and all the State,
My Soul is wounded: Never have I slept,
When Thebes demanded I should wake for her;
But you are Witnesses how I have wept; (10)
And rack'd each painful Thought to give her Ease.
One only Hope of Rescue did I find,
And that I put in Practice; to the Dome
Of Pythian Phebus, Creon have I sent,
Meneceus' Son, my Kinsman, to enquire (15)
What Measures must be ta'en to free this City.
Th' appointed Day for his Return is past;
And I'm in pain to know what Cause detains him.
But, when He comes, accuse Me, think me Vile,
If I perform not what the God directs.¹¹⁷⁴ (20)

Francklin

O! my unhappy sons, too well I know
Your sad estate; I know the woes of Thebes;
And yet amongst you lives not such a wretch
As Oedipus; for O! on me, my children
Your sorrows press; alas! I feel for you (5)
My people, for myself, for Thebes, for all;
Think not, I slept regardless of your ills;
O! no, with many a tear I wept your fate
And oft in meditation deep revolv'd
How best your peace and safety to restore: (10)
The only med'cine that my thoughts cou'd find
I have administer'd, Menoeceus' son,
The noble Creon, went by my command
To Delphos, from Apollo's shrine to know

¹¹⁷⁴ Theobald 1715a: 4.

What must be done to save this wretched land. (15)
'Tis time he were return'd ; I wonder much
At his delay; if, when he comes, your king
Perform not all the God enjoyns, then say
He is the worst of men.¹¹⁷⁵

The Loeb edition, for comparison, translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, reads as follows:

Children, I pity you! I know, I am not ignorant of the desires with which you have come; yes, I know that you are all sick, and, sick as you are, none of you is as sick as I. Your pain comes upon each by himself and upon no other; but my soul mourns equally for the city and for myself and for you. And so you are not waking me from sleep, but know that I have shed many a tear, and have travelled many roads in the wanderings of reflection. The one remedy which, by careful thought, I have found I have applied; I have sent Creon, son of Menoeceus, my wife's brother, to the Pythian halls of Phoebus, so that he may learn by what deed or word I may protect this city. Already, when I compute the passage of the days, I am troubled, wondering how he fares; for he has been away longer than is natural, beyond the proper time. But when he comes, then I shall be a wretch if I fail to take any action that the god may indicate.

Comments

This is Oedipus' second speech in the play. Previously he has asked the chorus of Theban elders the reason for the lamentations in the city and the priest has described the effects of the plague that afflicts Thebes and asked Oedipus for help. Oedipus now says that he shares the Theban people's suffering, has sent his brother-in-law Creon to seek advice from the oracle at Delphi and is anxious that Creon has not yet returned.

Both Theobald and Francklin, whose versions have pretty well the same number of lines as Sophocles' text, employ unrhymed iambic pentameters. Most lines are end-stopped but Theobald employs enjambment in lines 7-8 and 13-14. Francklin makes much greater use of enjambment (lines 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 11-12, 16-17, 17-18 and 18-19) and I mention its use at the end of the speech below. Theobald employs alliteration: 'Self', 'State', 'Soul' and 'slept' in lines 7-8; and 'wake', 'Witnesses' and 'wept' in lines 9-10. The effect can be seen either as emphasising through rhetorical devices Oedipus' eagerness to impress the chorus with how he identifies with the Thebans' suffering, or as introducing an element of artifice which undermines his sincerity.

¹¹⁷⁵ Francklin 1759a: II 181-182.

Theobald's 'beset by fate' and 'bow'd with sorrow' (lines 3-4) take the place of Lloyd-Jones' repeated use of 'sick' which follows the Greek much more closely. Theobald takes the opportunity to introduce the idea of 'fate' as responsible, in Oedipus' view, for the Thebans' plight, having already in Oedipus' opening speech made him ask the chorus, 'has the Hand of Fate ... crushed you?' which is not in the Greek.

Francklin's 'I know the woes of Thebes' and 'wretch' (lines 2-3) paraphrase the Greek. The former phrase particularises the location of the action (as Francklin does again in line 6). Both Theobald and Francklin work several references to 'Thebes' into the previous speech of the priest and Theobald, in the very first line of his translation, adds to Sophocles' description of the Thebans as descended from Cadmus by calling them 'sons of Thebes'.

Francklin conveys a sense of urgency, mixed with pleading to be believed, in lines 5-6 by the repetition of 'for' ('I feel for you / My people, for myself, for Thebes, for all'); but this can be interpreted two ways as in the case of Theobald's use of alliteration above.

Both Theobald and Francklin by-pass the reference to the Thebans' feeling their own pain and hurry on to Oedipus' taking theirs as well as his upon himself. Theobald emphasises Oedipus' superior position as 'King' (line 5), reinforced by two uses of 'Me' (lines 4 and 6) and by 'State' (line 7). Francklin makes the point more subtly when Oedipus addresses the chorus as 'My people' (line 6); this and the previous phrase 'my children' (line 4) makes Francklin's Oedipus seem more paternalistic than regal at this point (although Francklin's priest has already called him 'king' and Francklin uses 'king' in line 17 of Oedipus' speech).

Francklin's use of 'revolv'd' (line 9) for the act of meditation may be an echo of Shakespeare's use of the word in *Cymbeline* III.3, *1 Henry VI* V.5, *Troilus and Cressida* II.3 and *Twelfth Night* II.5, the first of those being the only example in Samuel Johnson's dictionary (1755) of 'revolve' with the meaning 'to consider; to meditate on'.

Francklin's 'The only med'cine that my thoughts cou'd find / I have administer'd' (lines 11-12) follows the Greek more closely than Theobald's rendering (lines 12-13), the Greek ἰασιν denoting 'remedy', as in Lloyd-Jones'

translation, in the sense of something that heals or cures. Francklin's use of 'med'cine' also fits well with 'restore' at the end of the previous line; and his 'my thoughts' builds on his reference to meditation two lines earlier. Both Francklin and Theobald ('One only Hope of Rescue did I find, / And that I put in Practice', lines 12-13) at this point follow the Greek word order rather than a more natural English form which might be 'I have administered/applied the only ... my thoughts/I could find'.

Francklin's "'Tis time he were return'd; I wonder much / At his delay' (lines 16-17) is much briefer than both the Greek and Theobald's version. It is also dramatically much more effective: the brevity conveys Oedipus' agitation, reinforced by the caesura in line 16, which breaks the flow mid-line as Oedipus pauses for thought, and the enjambment as his thoughts rush on again. Francklin employs enjambment also in lines 17-19 and 18-19 to reflect how Oedipus' heightened emotional state demands that his words pour out uninterrupted.

Theobald employs more figurative language than Francklin: 'bow'd with Sorrow' (line 4), 'your Griefs are centred in your King' (line 5), 'On Me alone the mighty Load is fall'n' (line 6), 'My Soul is wounded' (line 8) and 'rack'd each painful Thought' (line 11). It is noteworthy that Theobald uses such language when Oedipus is seeking to identify himself with his subjects' suffering. In the second half of the speech, when Oedipus is describing the action he has taken, his language is much more direct, perhaps because he feels he does not need to try so hard to impress with his sincerity when relating something he has actually done. By contrast, Francklin's language is much simpler and more direct throughout, only 'on me, my children / Your sorrows press' (lines 4-5) being figurative.

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Debauched Incontinency, and Bastard-getting. With several Texts of Scripture prohibiting such Vices. And a brief Collection of the signal Judgments of God against Offenders in the said Vices and Debaucheries. Published for the Advancement of Reformation of Manners, so happily begun and carried on by several Societies in this Nation. By G. Meriton, Gent. The second Edition; to which is added an Abstract of the Act made the last Session of Parliament, for the more effectual Suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaness (London: John Harris and Andrew Bell)

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most pernicious corruptions; condemned in all ages, as intolerable mischiefs to churches, to republickes, to the manners, mindes, and soules of men. And that the profession of play-poets, of stage-players; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-plays, are unlawfull, infamous and misbeseeming Christians. All pretences to the contrary are here likewise fully answered; and the unlawfulness of acting, of beholding academicall enterludes, briefly discussed; besides sundry other particulars concerning dancing, dicing, health-drinking, &c. of which the table will informe you. By William Prynne, an vtter-barrester of Lincolnes Inne (London: Michael Sparke)

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