



*Modul Bahan Ajar*

# CLASSIC DRAMA

*FREDY NS*



### RENCANA PEMBELAJARAN SEMESTER (RPS)

Mata Kuliah : Classic Drama (3 sks)  
Semester : 4  
Kode : SBI 4221  
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra  
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris  
Dosen : Tim

**Deskripsi Singkat:**

Mata kuliah ini merupakan mata kuliah wajib yang harus diikuti seluruh mahasiswa sastra Inggris dengan bobot 3 sks. Mata kuliah ini dirancang dengan tujuan: (1) memberikan pengetahuan dasar mengenai konsep, sejarah perkembangan, dan jenis-jenis drama; (2) memberikan pengetahuan mengenai elemen-elemen intrinsik dalam drama; (3) memberikan ketrampilan menelaah teks drama-drama klasik dari segi intrinsik dan sekaligus segi ekstrinsik yaitu pada drama-drama pramodern yang secara konvensi dianggap memiliki *lasting value*; dan (4) memberikan pengetahuan dasar mengenai konsep drama sebagai pertunjukan.

**Kompetensi yang ingin dicapai:**

Mahasiswa memahami konsep, sejarah perkembangan, dan jenis-jenis drama, mampu menelaah drama secara komprehensif dari sisi intrinsik dan memahami drama baik sebagai teks maupun pertunjukan.

**Bahan kajian:**

1. Definisi, perkembangan drama, jenis dan aliran drama.
2. Unsur-unsur intrinsik dalam menganalisis drama-drama klasik.
3. Unsur-unsur pementasan drama.

**Kriteria Nilai Akhir:**

Kuis	: 15%
Tugas Terstruktur	: 15%
Presentasi	: 15%
UTS	: 25%
UAS	: 30%

**Pelaksanaan Kuliah:**

(1) NO	(2) MINGGU KE	(3) KEMAMPUAN AKHIR YANG DIHARAPKAN	(4) MATERI PEMBELAJARAN	(5) BENTUK PEMBELAJARAN	(6) KRITERIA (INDIKATOR) PENILAIAN	(7) ALOKASI WAKTU
1	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mampu memahami kontrak perkuliahan.</li> <li>2. Mampu menjelaskan definisi drama</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kontrak kuliah</li> <li>2. Definition of Drama</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ceramah</li> <li>2. Diskusi</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mampu menyebutkan tujuan, topik, dan kriteria penilaian mata kuliah Drama.</li> <li>2. Mampu menyebutkan definisi drama dan memberikan contoh sesuai definisi tersebut.</li> <li>3. Mampu menyebutkan persamaan dan perbedaan drama</li> </ol>	150 menit

					dengan prosa, puisi, dan karya non-fiksi setelah menganalisis potongan drama berjudul <i>Tender Offer</i> karya Wendy Wasserstein.	
2	2	Mampu mengerti mengapa perlu mempelajari drama klasik	What is Classic Drama?	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi	1. Mampu menyebutkan nilai-nilai universal dalam drama klasik. 2. Mampu menyebutkan karya sastra kanon	150 menit
3	3	Mampu menjelaskan sejarah perkembangan drama.	Development of Drama	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi	1. Mampu menyebutkan periodisasi drama dari masa Yunani klasik sampai drama modern 2. Mampu menyebutkan penulis pada periode-periode perkembangan drama	150 menit
4	4	Mampu menjelaskan karakteristik drama klasik.	Genres and Schools of Drama	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi	Mampu menyebutkan karakteristik drama klasik pada segi bahasa, tokoh dan penokohan, tema, dan setting.	150 menit
5	5	1. Mampu memahami istilah-istilah khusus dalam	Oedipus Rex	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi 3. Presentasi	1. Mampu memahami istilah-istilah khusus dalam drama tragedi klasik Yunani Oedipus	150 menit

		<p>drama tragedi klasik Yunani Oedipus Rex</p> <p>2. Mampu menjelaskan <i>background information</i> tentang drama yang dianalisis (sosio-kultural) drama</p> <p>3. Mampu memahami kosakata dalam konteks dialog drama</p>			<p>Rex</p> <p>2. Mampu menjelaskan <i>background information</i> tentang drama yang dianalisis</p> <p>3. Mampu memahami kosakata dalam konteks dialog drama Oedipus Rex karya Sophocles</p>	
6	6	<p>1. Mampu memahami karakter dan karakterisasi sebagai unsur pembangun dalam drama.</p> <p>2. Mampu mengidentifikasi karakter dan karakterisasi dalam sebuah teks drama.</p>	Intrinsic element: Character	<p>1. Ceramah</p> <p>2. Diskusi</p> <p>3. Presentasi</p>	<p>1. Mampu menyebutkan definisi dan fungsi <i>protagonist, antagonist, foil, confidant</i>, dan <i>caricature</i>.</p> <p>2. Mampu menyebutkan metode-metode karakterisasi.</p> <p>4. Mampu mengidentifikasi karakter dan metode karakterisasi dalam drama Oedipus Rex karya Sophocles.</p>	150 menit



7	7	1. Mampu memahami jenis-jenis setting dalam drama. 2. Mampu mengidentifikasi setting dalam teks drama. 3. Mampu memahami alur sebagai unsur pembangun dalam drama. 4. Mampu mengidentifikasi alur dalam sebuah teks drama	Intrinsic element: Setting and plot	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi 3. Presentasi	1. Mampu menyebutkan definisi setting dan jenis-jenis setting dalam drama. 2. Mampu menyebutkan fungsi setting dalam drama. 3. Mampu mengidentifikasi setting dalam drama Oedipus Rex karya Sophocles 4. Mampu menyebutkan definisi dan fungsi plot: <i>exposition, complication, crisis, falling action</i> and <i>resolution</i> . 5. Mampu mengidentifikasi alur dalam drama Oedipus Rex karya Sophocles.	150 menit
8	8	<b>Ujian Tengah Semester</b>				
9	9	1. Mampu menjelaskan	1. Biografi William Shakespeare	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi	1. Mampu menjelaskan biografi dan	150 menit

		biografi dan karya William Shakerpeare secara singkat 2. Mampu menjelaskan background information tentang drama yang dianalisis 3. Mampu memahami kosakata dalam konteks dialog drama	2. Background information drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> 3. Perkenalan singkat pada drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	3. Presentasi	menyebutkan beberapa karya William Shakerpeare 2. Mampu menjelaskan background information tentang drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> 3. Mampu memahami kosakata dalam konteks dialog drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> karya W. Shakespeare	
10	10	1. Mampu mengidentifikasi karakter dan karakterisasi dalam sebuah teks drama. 2. Mampu memahami <i>dialogue</i> , <i>monologue</i> , <i>aside</i> dan <i>soliloquy</i> .	Drama Rome and Juliet Act 1	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi 3. Presentasi	1. Mampu mengidentifikasi karakter dan metode karakterisasi dalam drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> karya W. Shakespeare 2. Mampu menyebutkan definisi dan perbedaan <i>dialogue</i> , <i>monologue</i> , <i>aside</i> , dan <i>soliloquy</i> dalam drama 3. Mampu menyebutkan fungsi <i>dialogue</i> , <i>monolog</i> , <i>aside</i> , dan <i>sololiquy</i> dalam drama	150 menit

					<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> karya W. Shakespeare	
11	11	Mampu mengidentifikasi setting dalam teks	Drama Rome and Juliet Act 2 dan 3	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi 3. Presentasi	1. Mampu mengidentifikasi setting dalam drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> karya William Shakespeare.	150 menit
12	12	Mampu mengidentifikasi alur dalam sebuah teks drama	Drama Rome and Juliet Act 4 dan 5	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi 3. Presentasi	1. Mampu mengidentifikasi alur dalam drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> karya W. Shakespeare	150 menit
13	13	Mampu mengidentifikasi aspek sosio kultural yang ada Romeo and Juliet dan bagaimana drama Romeo and Juliet sebagai blue print untuk drama-drama selanjutnya	Film A Letter to Juliet	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi		150 menit
14	14	Mampu memahami konsep penonton dan panggung pertunjukan drama klasik	Audience and Theatre	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi	1. Mampu menyebutkan definisi <i>audience</i> dan <i>theatre</i> . 2. Mampu menyebutkan kaitan antara penonton dan panggung pertunjukan pada <i>Classical Greek theatre</i> ,	150 menit



					<i>Elizabethan theatre, dan Neoclassical theatre</i> 3. Mampu menyebutkan ciri khas <i>Classical Greek theatre, Elizabethan theatre, dan Neoclassical theatre</i>	
15	15	Mampu memahami aspek-aspek teknis dalam pertunjukan drama	Performing Drama	1. Ceramah 2. Diskusi 3. Praktik	1. Mampu menyebutkan beberapa aspek teknis yang perlu diperhatikan dalam pertunjukan drama. 2. Mampu menyebutkan fungsi dari <i>Stage decoration, Lighting, Costume, Make up, dan Sounds and Sound effects</i> . 3. Mampu membuat desain stage decoration untuk mementaskan setting-setting tempat yang ada dalam drama <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> karya William Shakespeare.	150 menit
16	16	<b>Ujian Akhir Semester</b>				



## Definition of Drama

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide the students with definition of drama. The students are expected to understand what drama is and be able to distinguish drama from other genres of literature after reading an excerpt from a drama. The students are also expected to understand the overlapping meanings between drama and theatre.

### Meeting 1

#### 1.1. Definition of Drama

The word “drama” can be interpreted in many points of view. We may associate drama with a category used to classify movies in television or certain videos in a video store. Drama is said to happen when a squad of police tries to save hostages from criminals in a thrilling rescue mission. A person is ridiculed of being a “drama queen” for getting too upset or angry over a trivial event. All in all, drama embraces a broad number of different ideas which possibly leads us to a question, “So, what is drama actually?”

The very word drama, which comes from the ancient Greek language, means “deed,” “action”, and consequently “performance”, and derive from the Greek verb *dran*, “to do.” Therefore, it is important to note that when we define drama as “action” this does not mean drama is “an exciting narrative” featuring the violence and murder found in modern action films (King, 2007:4-5). To say the least, the term drama we are discussing deals with a composition for the stage, the composition results from playwright’s creative process.

Related to the above explanation, we should refer to Pickering & Hoeper (1981:221) who propose a definition that drama means a story in dialogue performed by actors, on a stage, before an audience – in other words, a play. We also use the term drama in a more general sense to refer to the literary genre that encompasses all written plays and to the profession of writing, producing, and performing plays. When drama is related to performance, the next question may be asked, “What is the different between drama and theatre?” because we

are accustomed to the word “theatrical” to address performing arts shown in front of audience. Generally, people often make a distinction between drama, which concerns the written text or script for the performance, and theater, which concerns the performance of this script. At this rate, we can see that the words drama and theatre have two separate but somehow overlapping meanings.

Reaske (1966:5) argues that drama portrays life and human activity by means of presenting various actions of – and dialogues between – a group of characters. In order to do so, drama combines the use of language with scenery, costuming, and the actors’ physical appearance. It also makes use of vocal emphasis, tone of voice, and nonverbal forms of expression. Through characters’ action and dialogue drama is more than the representation of human life. It is also entertainment. While this term is subject – and has been subjected – to various kinds of definitions, everyone agrees that entertainment is nevertheless one of the real objectives of drama.

The following is excerpt from Wendy Wasserstein’s one-act play, *Tender Offer*. It is a simple and very short play portraying a moment in everyday lives and provides no dramatic intensity. Yet, it sufficiently provides example of what drama is.

#### TENDER OFFER

*A girl of around nine is alone in a dance studio. She is dressed in traditional leotards and tights. She begins singing to herself, “Nothing Could Be Finer Than to Be in Carolina.” She maps out a dance routine, including parts for the chorus. She builds to a finale. A man, Paul, around thirty-five, walks in. He has a sweet, though distant, demeanor. As he walks in, Lisa notices him and stops.*

PAUL. You don’t have to stop, sweetheart.

LISA. That’s okay.

PAUL. Looked very good.

LISA. Thanks.

PAUL. Don’t I get a kiss hello?

LISA. Sure.

PAUL. (*Embraces her.*) Hi, Tiger.

LISA. Hi, Dad.

PAUL. I’m sorry I’m late.

LISA. That’s okay.

PAUL. How’d it go?

LISA. Good.

PAUL. Just good?

LISA. Pretty good.

PAUL. “Pretty good.” You mean you got a lot of applause or “pretty good” you could have done better.

LISA. Well, Courtney Palombo's mother thought I was pretty good. But you know the part in the middle when everybody's supposed to freeze and the big girl comes out. Well, I think I moved a little bit.

PAUL. I thought what you were doing looked very good.

LISA. Daddy, that's not what I was doing. That was tap-dancing. I made that up.

PAUL. Oh. Well it looked good. Kind of sexy.

LISA. Yuch!

PAUL. What do you mean "yuch"?

LISA. Just yuch!

PAUL. You don't want to be sexy?

LISA. I don't care.

PAUL. Let's go, Tiger. I promised your mother I'd get you home in time for dinner.

LISA. I can't find my leg warmers.

PAUL. You can't find your what?

LISA. Leg warmers. I can't go home till I find my leg warmers.

PAUL. I don't see you looking for them.

LISA. I was waiting for you.

PAUL. Oh.

LISA. Daddy.

PAUL. What?

LISA. Nothing.

PAUL. Where do you think you left them?

LISA. Somewhere around here. I can't remember.

PAUL. Well, try to remember, Lisa. We don't have all night.

LISA. I told you. I think somewhere around here.

PAUL. I don't see them. Let's go home now. You'll call the dancing school tomorrow.

LISA. Daddy, I can't go home till I find them. Miss Judy says it's not professional to leave things.

PAUL. Who's Miss Judy?

LISA. She's my ballet teacher. She once danced the lead in *Swan Lake*, and she was a June Taylor dancer.

PAUL. Well, then, I'm sure she'll understand about the leg warmers.

LISA. Daddy, Miss Judy wanted to know why you were late today.

PAUL. Hmmmmmmmm?

LISA. Why were you late?

PAUL. I was in a meeting. Business. I'm sorry.

LISA. Why did you tell Mommy you'd come instead of her if you knew you had business?

PAUL. Honey, something just came up. I thought I'd be able to be here. I was looking forward to it.

LISA. I wish you wouldn't make appointments to see me.

PAUL. Hmmmmmmmm.

LISA. You shouldn't make appointments to see me unless you know you're going to come.  
PAUL. Of course I'm going to come.  
LISA. No, you're not. Talia Robbins told me she's much happier living without her father in the house. Her father used to come home late and go to sleep early.  
PAUL. Lisa, stop it. Let's go.  
LISA. I can't find my leg warmers.  
PAUL. Forget your leg warmers.<sup>1</sup>

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In view of the form, the excerpt above is an example of conventional drama. It means that any drama is usually presented in the similar way Wendy Wasserstein presents *Tender Offer*. However, when we are concerned with drama as performance, there are some cases that a performed drama may not be based on dramatic works. It might be derived from a prose and even from a poem. In addition, although most dramatic works are intended to be staged, there are dramas which are designed for reading rather than for performance. These kind of dramatic works are called *closet drama*.

### 1.2. Class Activity

- a. Form a group consists of 3 (three) to 4 (four) people. Discuss the excerpt of Wendy Wasserstein's *Tender Offer* and, based on the excerpt, point out some similarities and differences between drama and other literary genres (prose and poetry) you have read before.
- b. Discuss the excerpt of Wendy Wasserstein's *Tender Offer* with your group comprehensively and express your group's opinion about the drama. Do you like the drama? Why do/don't you like it?
- c. If you have question about the definition of drama, do not hesitate to ask your lecturer.

### 1.3. Individual Assignment

The following is an excerpt of interview transcript between Abdul Baha and Mr. Campbell published by *The Christian Commonwealth* on September 13, 1911. Read and compare the transcript with the excerpt of drama you have read in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from *Literature: The Evolving Canon* written by Sven P. Birkerts (1996:1001-1002)



## MEETING BETWEEN ABDUL BAHÁ AND MR. CAMPBELL

*Immediately Mr. Campbell entered the room Abdul Baha rose from his chair and advanced to meet him with smiling-face and arms extended; The elder man grasped both the hands of the younger, and, retaining them, warmly greeted him. His expression and manner showed that he regarded the occasion as no ordinary one. Standing face to face, linked hand in hand, in the centre of the room, these two spiritual leaders of world-wide fame—Eastern and Western, but essentially one in their outlook on life—formed an impressive picture that is stamped indelibly on the mind's eye of all who were privileged to be present. The meeting was so remarkable that I ventured to take notes of the conversation (conducted through an interpreter), and here reproduce them. It should be mentioned that the note-taking was quite unpremeditated. Neither speaker was aware that his words were being recorded. The conversation was private, and permission to publish was given with reluctance. Abdul Baha first inquired after Mr. Campbell's health, and said he had been very anxious to meet him. The conversation then proceeded as follows:*

R. J. Campbell	: I have long looked forward to this opportunity.
Abdul Baha	: That is proof that both our hearts are at one.
R. J. Campbell	: I think that is true.
Abdul Baha	: There is a Persian saying that hearts that are at one find their way to one another.
R. J. Campbell	: I do not think that saying is peculiar to Persia. <sup>2</sup>

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Judging from the form, the interview transcript is similar to the text of drama you have read but the transcript cannot be said as a dramatic work. Why? Write down your opinion in 200-250 words and share it with your friends next week!

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from <http://www.travelstothewest.org/2011/09/05/interview-and-article-in-the-christian-commonwealth/>

## Development of Drama

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide the students with historical development of western drama. The students are expected to understand the major periods of western drama, since Greek Tragedy until Twentieth century drama, and the characteristics of the drama in each period. The students are also expected to be able to scrutinize the relationship between drama and society in particular periods.

### Meeting 2

#### 2.1. Development of Drama

Drama has undergone changes through the ages. Nowadays plays are far more elaborated than those in ancient Greek era, the era which is said as the origin of western drama. Referring to Reaske (1966:6-12) we are going to discuss some major eras in western drama, which can be summarized as follows.

##### 2.1.1. The Beginnings

Religious celebration is the origin of drama. From the various pagan rites and festivals arose the earliest dramas called *Greek Tragedy* and *Greek Comedy*. Greek Tragedy arose from the patterns of the Dionysian rites of life and death. In Greek Tragedy, a central character is led into death, despair, or misery through some sort of error, either in himself or in his action. Usually the central character has some particular tragic flaw.

On the other hand, Greek Comedy arose from the patterns of the Dionysian rites of fertility. The earliest Greek comedies not only deal with fertility but also with phallic ceremonies. Greek comedy is generally divided into three categories: *Old Comedy*, *Middle Comedy*, and *New Comedy*. In Old Comedy we usually discover a great deal of rough comment on affairs of state through political satire. Middle Comedy has no surviving examples. New Comedy usually deals with romantic situations and we generally witness potential lovers working

from unhappy problematic situations into happy comfortable ones. Comedies illustrate the traditional "happy ending".



**Figure 2.1.** Dyonisus, the god of wine and intoxication.<sup>3</sup> The festivals dedicated to the god initiate the birth of western drama.

### 2.1.2. The Middle Ages

In the late ninth and tenth centuries there were *tropes* or musical presentations of certain church services, particularly the various masses. From these musical presentations came drama as the priests began to speak rather than sing the story. Eventually these tropes became independent of the church liturgy and medieval drama was established as a secular entertainment, although religious subjects were still the most popular. Gradually the presentations were moved from the church to the outdoor. Latin was replaced by regional language and the audience became more cosmopolitan.

Some of the most popular plays in this era were known as Mystery Play, which were religious plays based on certain events in biblical history. Another kind of popular play was Miracle Play or Saints' Play which told scriptural events having to do with miracle and saints. The mystery plays is divided into three kinds: *Old Testament plays*, often treating the fall of man, the loss of paradise, etc; *New Testament plays*, usually concerned with the birth of Christ; and *The Death and*

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from

<http://www.geocities.ws/Athens/Parthenon/2226/Greek/dionysis.html>

*Resurrection plays*. In other words, the story of the man and the life of Christ became the main subjects of all medieval drama. At this time also another kind of play became popular. It told scriptural events having to do with miracles and saints. These plays became known as *Miracle Plays* or *Saints Plays*.

### **2.1.3. Morality Plays and Interludes**

At round the beginning of the fifteenth century emerged the *Morality Play*. It differed from the earlier religious dramas because it contained allegory: certain abstract passions, vices, and virtues were represented on the stage by actors in bizarre costumes. Thus the audience could watch such characters as Death, Evil, Mercy, Shame, and Holiness. Some morality plays deal with a single vice or moral problem, though some deal with the whole moral problem of man's existence.

The morality plays led slowly into the creation of *interludes* which were relatively short dramas brief enough to be presented in between the other events at feasts, entertainments, etc. The interludes were extremely popular and often consisted of a dialogue between only two characters. The interludes sometimes were *farces* and not always serious and religious. Thus the interlude is often considered to be one of the major secularizing influences on the drama.

### **2.1.4. Elizabethan**

Renaissance England encouraged people from various professions to begin writing plays. By the late sixteenth century, Elizabethan drama had become the best in the history of world literature. How easy is to mention Shakespeare, but how difficult is to mention all of the many others. This era is the beginning of new kinds of plays: the romantic comedies, the revenge-murder dramas, the great cycles of history plays, the court comedies, and the pastoral plays. Thus the Elizabethan stage introduced almost unbelievable number of new and talented playwrights. At the same time, Elizabethan drama also introduced whole new kinds of secular drama, many of which survive to the present day.

### **2.1.5. Restoration and Eighteenth-Century**

In the period of the Restoration in England (beginning in 1660 when Charles II was "restored" to the English throne), *heroic plays* became extremely popular. The heroic drama was a kind of tragedy or tragicomedy characterized by excesses – violence, explosive dialogues, greatly tormented characters, elements of spectacle, and various epic dimensions. The heroes were usually great military leaders as well as great lovers and often experienced a conflict between their love for a lady and their patriotism. The heroine was always virtuous and beautiful, as well as subject to agony over conflicting interests between her hero-lover and her father. Villains were usually power-hungry and villainesses jealous lovers of the heroine's hero. All in all,

the plays were easily patterned. During the same period, the *Comedy of Manners* was born.

### **2.1.6. Nineteenth-Century and Twentieth-Century**

The "spectacle" introduced into the drama through the heroic plays slowly led into the more extreme spectacle and excessive emotionalism of *melodrama* in the nineteenth century. Toward the end of the century there was also a revived interest in more serious drama, like that of the Elizabethans. In twentieth century, problem plays and domestic tragedies became vastly popular. For example, it was used to be believed that a real "tragedy" necessarily had to follow the Aristotelian principle that a noble hero suffered a calamitous fall. In this era, however, the status of tragic hero was brought to domestic figures.

## **2.2. Class Activity**

- a. Form a group consists of 3 (three) to 4 (four) people and discuss the following questions:
  1. Why is Greek tragedy considered as "serious" play?
  2. Why did the story of Christ and Saints become the main subjects of medieval dramas?
  3. Why is Elizabethan drama considered as the best in the history of world literature?The questions require your arguments. So, write down your opinion and share it with other groups.
- b. If you have question about the development of drama, do not hesitate to ask your lecturer.

## **2.3. Individual Assignment**

Re-read the material in this chapter and choose an era you are most interested in. Why is the era interesting? Explain your reason in 200-250 words and share it with your friends next week!

## Genres and Schools of Drama

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide the students with some prominent genres and school of drama. The students are expected to understand the characteristics of major genres in drama and to be able to identify the genre of a drama. In addition, the students are also expected to be able to identify the school of a drama.

### Meeting 3

#### 3.1. Genres of Drama

In line with its development, drama has been divided into several genres. Although most playwrights are not concerned to the matter of drama classification, some playwrights do write plays in accordance with some theory of the formal principle for each genre. Thus, we need to know at least some prominent genres of drama. The following are brief explanations of some prominent genres summarized from Pickering & Hoeper (1981:283-288).

##### 3.1.1. Tragedy

Tragedy is a division of drama established by the Greeks. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the first and most influential literary theorist, promoted a famous definition of tragedy. According to Aristotle, tragedy is an imitation of an action of high importance, complete and of some amplitude; in language enhanced by distinct and varying beauties; acted not narrated; by means of pity and fear affecting its purgation of these emotions. This definition puts much of its emphasis on the tragic action, or story, which Aristotle thought should be serious, complex, and tightly structured. The Aristotelian definition accurately reflects the goal of most Greek, Roman, and neoclassical tragedy. However, it is too narrow to include many serious and important plays written during other periods. The equivalent form of tragedy, melodrama, emerged as a recognized type of theater in the 19th century. Melodrama presents sentimental, touching, and thrilling



characters in a story which tends to be exaggerated. The characters in melodrama are, generally, stereotyped.

### 3.1.2. Comedy

Comedy refers to the drama designed primarily to amuse. A comedy typically deals with common people. It is dominated by a light tone that encourages laughter (or at least amusement or entertainment), and ends happily. Horace Walpole, the eighteenth-century man of letters, once observed that "the world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those who feel." Walpole's comparison is a good guide to the key differences between comedy and tragedy.

The tragic hero is closely examined and portrayed as an individual while the comic character is viewed intellectually from a distance and represents a broad human "type" – a young lover, a hypocrite, an elegant fop, etc. The tragic mode asks us to sympathize with the hero and imagine ourselves in his position while the comic mode suggests that we step back from life and look with amusement on the humorous predicament of others. The subject matter of comedy is often as serious as that of tragedy, but the comic playwright distorts events and personalities in order to remind the audience that the play deals with fantasy and not fact. The plots of comedy are usually based on twisted imagination of the author while the plots of tragedy are revelations of our emotional and psychological core.

Some prominent subdivisions of comedy are *romantic comedy*, *comedy of humours*, *comedy of manners*, and *farce*. A play is called romantic comedy when the main sources of humor in the play are the ludicrous complications of love. A play is called comedy of humours when the main sources of humor are on the ridiculous characteristics of the blocking figures (for example, the imbalances and the eccentrics). A play is called comedy of manners when the play makes fun of the manners and conventions of human behavior. The comedy of manners is a satirical performance towards the so-called establishment and social conventions. A play is called farce when the main sources of humor are on broad and often crude verbal humor. Farce is often considered as low level of comedy or play. It traditionally gains its effects from physical humor (that can even turn into violent) and from rude verbal jokes.

### 3.1.3. Tragicomedy

In Italy, certain critics and dramatists began mixing elements and aspects of the two traditional kinds of theater to create a third kind, called *tragicomedy*. Tragicomedy is a drama which mixes the convention of tragedy and comedy. In this type of drama the protagonist, as subject to a series of crises, manages to escape to celebrate a happy ending. The example of tragicomedy is William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

### 3.2. Schools of Drama

If genre of drama is related to the story line of a drama, school of drama deals with the style. Symbolism, realism, expressionism, naturalism, and absurd are some of many schools of drama which come to prominence in line with the growth of drama. Two of those schools, namely realism and absurd drama, are highlighted in accordance with the premises from Scanlan (1988:135-143) and Birkerts (1996:1438-1440).

#### 3.2.1. Realism Drama

Realism drama is a type of modern drama that presents objective presentation of the details of everyday life. The realist shows us characters who are ordinary people, usually in a familiar domestic setting. One of the ways the reader can find his way through the variety of modern realism is to identify the major conflict of the work. In this case, there at least four important macro conflicts found in modern drama, namely male vs. female, the individual vs. social injustice, human consciousness vs. the mystery of life, and the personal dream vs. the real world. Conflicts between male and female in realism drama are usually concerned with power struggles, social issues, and marital issues; for example the obstacle faced by the female in the form of the male power structure, as we can find in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.



**Figure 3.1.** A shot from Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* performed by Churchill Productions<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from <http://inside.churchillproductions.co.uk/post/1609450511/a-dolls->

### 3.2.2. Theatre of the Absurd

When the old modes of realism are no longer adequate, new movements appear to offer new ideas. One of those movements is Theatre of the Absurd. After World War II, Europe was morally devastated. *Existentialism*, which questioned the meaning of life in a Godless universe, was popular. The widely shared sense of pointlessness was given its clearest expression in the like of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The dialogue in the drama is unlike the realist's; it is dark, disconnected, and often humorous. Theatre of the Absurd captures how it feels to live in a world without systems of meaning. Thus, conventional actions are missing entirely and audience might watch strange routines.



**Figure 3.2.** A shot from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* performed at West Yorkshire Playhouse<sup>5</sup>

### 3.3. Class Activity

- a. Have you ever watched the like of "Opera Van Java (OVJ)" or "Srimulat" on television? Do you think that kind of television show represents a genre of drama? If it does, what genre does the show represent and what is your reason? If it does not, why?

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house-by-henrick-ibsen

<sup>5</sup> Taken from <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/feb/19/waiting-for-godot-talawa-review>

Discuss the issue in a group consists of 3 (three) to 4 (four) people and share the result of your discussion with other groups.

- b. If you have question about genres and schools of drama, do not hesitate to ask your lecturer.

### 3.4. Individual Assignment

Read Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. According to you, what genre does the drama belong? What school does the drama represent? State your arguments in 200-250 words and share it with your friends next week!

## Intrinsic Elements of Drama

### 4.1. Character

#### Introduction

The aim of this sub-chapter is to provide the students with the concept of character in drama. The students are expected to understand the characters and characterization found in drama. They are also expected to be able to identify the characters in an assigned drama.

#### 4.1.1.Character

Characters are fictitious creation. There are characters designed to fit the plot and there are the plots derived from the characters. Thus, a playwright must give distinguishable attributes to the characters a dramatic work so that the characters can be comprehensively identified by the audience. Referring to Morner & Rausch (1991:31-33), Birkerts (1996:22-24), and Reaske (1966:40-47) the concept of character in drama can be summarized as follows.

Characters are the people in the drama. These people are fictional and their personal qualities and actions are limited by their function in the drama. In terms of role, we are introduced with the so-called *protagonist* and/or *antagonist* characters. Protagonist (often called *tragic hero* in tragedy) is the central character in a drama whereas antagonist is a character that hinders the protagonist to achieve his goal. In addition, we may also find *confidant*, *caricature*, and *foil* characters in a drama.

There is also the so-called *choral character*, a remnant of the *chorus* in Greek drama. Choral character is a character whose role is to comment on the actions of the main characters. Often used in plays to substitute for narrative comment, a choral character may represent

conventional wisdom or the author's own views. In Moliere's *Tartuffe*, for example, Cleante is the voice of reason and wisdom.

When Aristotle talks of character in plays, he stresses that tragedies use characters of a "higher type," usually kings, queens, and noblemen, so that we may learn from those whom we hold in high esteem and experience great pity at their downfall. By the end of a tragedy, tragic characters fall from a great height. Comedies use characters of a "lower type," usually common folk who have a sense of rawness or ugliness so that we can laugh at them, but not experience guilt, pity or fear from their pain. This lower characterization is aided by the use of masks. "Comedy is, ... an imitation of characters of a lower type—Not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly. It consists in some defect or ugliness, which is not painful or destructive. To take an obvious example, the comic mask is ugly and distorted, but does not imply pain." (Aristotle)

### Discussion

- a. Work in groups and answer the following questions:
  1. Why the protagonist in tragedy is also called tragic hero?
  2. What are the differences between confidant, foil, and caricature? What is the function of these minor characters in a drama?
  3. Is it possible that characters in a drama are non-human being? Explain your reason!
  4. If a character, who is characterized as an untrustworthy person, speaks of another character's nature, can we – as a reader/audience – simply trust him/her by considering what he/she says as a method of characterization? Explain your reason!
  5. The characterization from name and physical appearance are sometimes unreliable, why? Explain your argument!
- b. If you have question about the characters, do not hesitate to ask your lecturer.

### 4.1.2. Common Character

Most of the characters in *Lysistrata* are common folk of Athens and Sparta, the highest ranking character being the Commissioner of Public Safety. The play's title character and heroine is a common woman of Athens, Lysistrata, which means "releaser of war." This type of protagonist is common among Aristophanes' plays where an "outsider" and common citizen rises to the occasion and indicates his or her function as hero. Lysistrata's allies are other common women of Athens and Sparta, with the Spartan women and men being depicted as even more common than the others through the use of slang. The men who appear to provoke the women into submission are also



common soldiers and Athenians. The Commissioner, although attempting to bring order and authority to the scene, is quickly beaten down by the women and appears comic in his futile attempts at authority.

#### 4.1.3. The Players of Greek Comedy

It is important to consider who the players were in classic Greek comedies. Here are a few facts about the performers of such plays:

1. Classic Greek plays were all performed by men in masks. Men played all the parts, including the women's parts. Therefore, one cannot help but see the irony in watching men play all these female characters who are chastising and beating them, making endless sexual comments, and spouting oaths of abstinence.
2. Greek tragedy and comedy originated with a chorus delivering a story. A traditional chorus consisted of approximately 12 to 15 choreuts (dancers), who were young men. The size of the chorus varied slightly, but Aristophanes was unique in his use of two choruses; one chorus was far more common.
3. At first classic Greek plays were performed only by a chorus. The individual actor, known as hypokrites, or "answerer," was added to answer the calls of the chorus. The first actor's name was said to be Thespis, whose name became the root of the term "thespian." Later the single actor was called protagonistes, meaning "first competitor." Protagonistes later developed into the main character or "protagonist."
4. The early Greek playwright Aeschylus introduced the second actor, deuteragonistes, and Sophocles introduced the third actor, tritagonistes. By the fifth century B.C. there were three actors and a chorus in Athenian tragedy. By the time Aristophanes was writing in 350 B.C. many more actors as well as the double chorus had been added.
5. Each actor played several different parts within the play. The chorus members rarely left the stage, and therefore choral actors were specifically trained for dancing and singing and usually only played in the chorus.
6. The plays were often performed in theaters that held thousands of spectators, therefore the actors wore full masks of wood or leather to help accentuate their features. The masks had large gaping mouths carved out to aid in vocal amplification. The acting style was broad and highly physical so that all could see and hear each gesture.
7. The typical classic Greek comic actor wore loose body stockings padded at the breast, buttocks, and stomach, with long floppy phalluses made of leather for the male characters. *Lysistrata* made an exception to this last adornment, making the phalluses erect.

#### 4.1.4. Characterization

In order to understand dramatic characters, we need to make empathic connection with their behavior. By connecting with their moment to moment behavior we can find out who the characters are, where they come from, and what they are doing. At this point we can refer to the characterization. Below are some devices of characterization.

- a. From name and physical appearance of each character (although this information is often unreliable); in the prologue or in the stage directions the playwright often describes the name of the character and the character in the physical sense. We learn from these stage directions what the character looks like and probably how he dresses; when a character walks onto the stage, it is obvious from, his appearance whether he is a meticulous or sloppy person, attractive or unattractive, old or young, small or large, etc. In other words, in the mere appearance of character we locate our first understanding of him.
- b. Through the way a character speaks; dialect, word choice, and grammar all provide clues to a person's background and intelligence. Othello's "perfect soul" is partially revealed through his eloquence. On the other hand, Iago's idiomatic slang marks him as a "profane wretch" in the very first scene of the play.
- c. Through individual's patterns of action over the course of the play; for example, Hedda Gabler, in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, pacing is an indication of her sense of suffocating confinement in her role as a woman.
- d. Through the way a character responds to others; for example in Shakespeare's *Othello*, when Brabantio seeks to arrest Othello, the latter averts a crisis with composure. Yet the violent temper of this eminent soldier eventually surfaces.
- e. Through asides, soliloquies; we are likely to understand the characters best when they speak in short asides or in longer soliloquies. On these occasions the character is telling the audience of his specific characteristics. If he is villain, he usually explains his evil intentions or at least his malicious hopes; if a lover, he offers poetic statement of devotion, etc.
- f. Through hidden narration; one of the devices of characterization frequently employed is having one character in a play narrate something about another character. The narration is hidden in the sense that it is not that playwright's direct comment.

#### 4.1.3. Further Discussion

##### **Lysistrata**

1. How are the “foreigners” depicted in this play? Discuss how Lysistrata and the Athenian women respond to their initial observations of the women from other lands as they arrive at the top of the play. Discuss differences in language, dialect, and slang.
2. Why do you think Aristophanes chose to have two choruses? Why older men and women? How does this choice add to the comedy?
3. How are the male characters depicted differently than the female characters in language, actions, and physical appearance?
4. In a play filled with common characters, which character appears to hold the highest social standing? Why? How is this character treated by others?
5. How would modern audiences respond if *Lysistrata* were performed only by men?
6. How would modern audiences respond to the phalluses and nudity?

#### 4.1.4. Character Analysis

The following are some dramatis personae you can find in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*:

- a. Lysistrata
- b. Calonice
- c. Magistrate

Analyze and explain the characters and characterization of the aforementioned personae. Do not forget to provide proofs to support your arguments. The proofs are excerpts/quotations taken from the text of the drama. It requires 3(three) excerpts/quotations at minimum to legitimate your answer.

## 4.2. Plot

### **Introduction**

The aim of this sub-chapter is to provide the students with the concept of plot in drama. The students are expected to understand the plot found in drama. They are also expected to be able to identify the plot in an assigned drama.

#### 4.2.1. THE PLAY'S CLASSIC FORMULA: THE THREE UNITIES (OF TIME, PLACE, AND ACTION)

Classic Greek plays follow a strict formula. The stage represents a single locale. The plot recounts the events of a single day, and the actions follow one storyline with no subplots. Aristotle described this dramatic structure in his important work *On the Art of Poetry* (350 B.C.). This literary formula was so revered by succeeding generations of dramatists that Aristotle's dramatic structure was eventually adopted as the rules of playwrighting and became known as the three unities: unity of place, time, and action.

**Place.** The setting of the play should be one location, usually on the street in front of an architectural structure.

**Time.** The action of the play should represent the passage of no more than twenty-four hours. Previous events leading to the action are recounted on stage as exposition.

**Action.** No action or scene in the play is a digression. All actions in the play must contribute directly to the single plotline.

Many plays written prior to the twentieth century employ Aristotle's unities. For example, plays written by Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, and George Bernard Shaw. Other playwrights writing before 1900 stretched the rule of place by having the action take place in locations that could be reached in one day. Or scenes took place in homes, streets, and shops of the same town, while still following the unities of time and action. Restoration playwrights William Congreve and Aphra Behn followed this modified formula. Others stretched and broke the rules. Shakespeare, for example, not only stretched the place rule but also introduced the use of subplots and mixed comedy with tragedy creating some of the first tragi-comedies.

##### 4.2.1.1. Class Activity

1. Test the three unities against the play *Lysistrata*. Did Aristophanes follow these rules?
2. What is the story of *Lysistrata*? Write a synopsis of the play in three sentences or in one short paragraph. Could you do this if the play did not follow the three unities? Try to write such a plot summary for a play or story that is more complicated and has one or more subplots.
3. Contemporary movies tend to be episodic and rarely follow the three unities. The intricate plots and subplots jump around in time and location. The plots and settings are more sensational. Since movies usually have extremely large budgets, reusable sets are not common. List one or more movies that do not follow the three unities. Write a plot summary for each.
4. How realistic is the plot of *Lysistrata*? Would *Lysistrata*'s strategy for ending the war work today or in recent wars?

Discuss the 1960s-70s slogan, from the Vietnam era, "Make love not war."

#### 4.2.1.2. Group Work

1. Research the locations mentioned in the script on a map of ancient Greece and its surrounding lands so you can see distances to Athens. How long would it take Spartans to travel to Athens?
2. Compare television shows that use the three unities and those that do not. How does each structure affect the audience's perceptions, empathy, intrigue, and enjoyment of the story?
3. Many television sitcoms tend to follow the unity of place for purposes of budget, building only one set or a series of local set locations that the characters visit regularly. *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, and *Frasier* are good examples. Many popular police/detective shows follow the unity of time by posting the time of day as a caption to each scene so you can follow the story from crime to final arrest, with many events taking place within 24 hours. Watch a sitcom or a detective show and write a three-sentence play synopsis focusing on the three unities. Or, using a contemporary sitcom or detective drama as a model, write your own script following Aristotle's unities.

#### 4.2.2. THE STRUCTURE OF WELL-MADE PLAY

Referring to Pickering & Hooper (1981:269-273) plot is the central aspect of all drama, for drama is primarily concerned with "what happens". A drama is composed of a series of "incidents" or "episodes" which follow after one another according to some plan of the playwright. Every incident is connected to incidents which follow. In conclusion, plot is the development of events or actions, not only in their chronological sequences, but also in their causal relationship. Like a typical short story, the plot of nearly every play contains five structural elements, namely: *exposition*, *rising action*, *climax*, *falling action*, and *resolution*.

Exposition provides certain amount of information to understand the story. It introduces casts, initiates actions, gives background information and begins characterization. Some exposition is always provided in the first scene, and all of the essential background material is usually provided by the end of the first act. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, exposition occurs when Othello and Desdemona have secretly married; and Cassio, rather than Iago, has been made Othello's lieutenant.

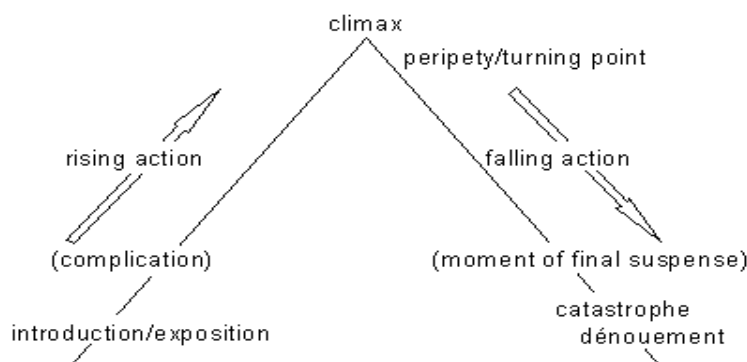
Rising action or complication introduces and develops the conflict. Complication provides initial conflict where a character begins

to face difficulties and his/her relationships with other characters begin to change. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, rising action happens when Iago recognizes that Cassio's courteous attentions to Desdemona can be used to make Othello jealous (act 2, scene 2).

The crisis/climax or turning point of the drama occurs at the moment of peak emotional intensity and usually involves a decision, a decisive action, or an open conflict between the protagonist and antagonist. Just as it is sometimes difficult to determine where the conflict originates, it is sometimes also difficult to determine when the crisis takes place. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, climax happens when Othello sees Desdemona's handkerchief in the hand of Cassio and concludes that she must die for her infidelity (act 4, scene 1).

As the consequences of the crisis accumulate, events develop a momentum of their own. In falling action stage, the tense of conflict is decreasing and the hero is slowly overpowered and increasingly helpless. The falling action does not usually last long as the rising action. Following the falling action is the resolution. The resolution is the final unwinding, or resolving, of the conflicts and complications in the plot of drama. In a tragedy, catastrophe is usually marked with the death of the hero and/or the heroine. In a comedy, however, frequently includes some unexpected twist in the plot. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, falling action followed by resolution happens when Othello learns of Desdemona's innocence and slays himself.

The plot structure in a well-made drama, especially a tragedy in five acts can be represented in a diagram called Freytag's pyramid. The diagram has been adapted to illustrate the plot structure of novels, short story, and drama (Morner & Rausch, 1991:90). The diagram can be illustrated as follows.



**Figure 4.1.** Freytag's pyramid adapted from *Die Technik des Drama* (1863)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Taken from <http://oliviafrey.webs.com/session914january.htm>



#### 4.2.2.1. Class Activity

Work in groups and answer the following questions:

1. Can we say that plot in any drama has to be identified in accordance with the classic formula of plot structure? Explain your reason!
2. Is it possible that a drama runs without plot? Explain your reason!

In most drama, there are conflicts which happen between a character and another character (external conflict) and between a character and himself or herself (internal conflict). Give an example for each conflict: the internal and the external!

#### 4.2.2.2. Plot Analysis

Analyze and identify the plot in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Locate:

- a. Exposition
- b. Rising Action/Complication
- c. Climax
- d. Falling Action
- e. Resolution

Your arguments must be supported by proofs. The proofs, in this case, are excerpts/quotations taken from the text of the drama.

#### 4.2.2.3. Individual Assignment

Write a journal of events for an entire 24 hours. Extract events from the list that could follow a singular plot, possibly in one location. Write a synopsis of these events as a play or story that follows the three unities. Make sure that it has exposition Rising Action/Complication, Climax, Falling Action, Resolution. Share it with your friends next week

## 4.3. Setting and Spectacle

### Introduction

The aim of this sub-chapter is to provide the students with the concept of setting in drama. The students are expected to understand the setting found in drama. They are also expected to be able to identify the setting in an assigned drama.

### 4.3.1. Setting

Birkerts (1996:56) argues that setting refers both to the physical location of the events and to the time in which they happen. Just as where and when are the two vital coordinates of our own lives, so they hold a central place in the lives and worlds projected in fiction. How the author makes use of the setting depends on the desired effect. Setting has everything to do with context. Thus, readers need to situate the events and to place them within the context.

Setting is related to the time and place in which the drama's story is set. Consequently, setting has many functions both in textual and staging aspects. In terms of textual aspect, Birkerts (1996:56-58) states that there are at least three (3) functions of setting. First, it can give the reader the impression of verisimilitude (that this really happened). Second, it situates us in space and time so that we can understand the events of the story as shaped by specific factors. Third, it can enhance theme, either through suggestion or through more direct symbolism. A set of important distinctions must be made between the literal, suggestive, and symbolic uses of setting.

Birkerts (1996:58) adds that the interpretation of setting is not always easy to draw. When we read of a character standing in a dark wood, are we to understand it as just a dark wood or as a dark wood suggesting something more (a moral confusion in that character's life, an impending act of violence)? No satisfying answer can be given. However, the reader is urged to be aware of the different interpretive possibilities.



**Figure 4.2.** The setting in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* visualized by Robert Gardiner for Frederic Wood Theatre<sup>7</sup>

In terms of staging aspect, the functions of setting are stated by David Welker (1969), cited in Pickering (2005:186-187), who suggests that a set can serve four basic functions: it may constitute a machine for organizing the arrangement and movement of the actors; it may express the mood of the play; it may give information about the locale and time of the play; or it may be visually interesting in itself. A decision to set a play in a certain time and place is seen as the playwright's prerogative. From this decision appears the design concept and performance style. The setting of a drama provides much of the quality of the action: a court, a cafe, a prosperous house, an island, or a church. Some dramas that once had a 'contemporary setting' may many years later be seen as historic pieces.

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from

<http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/rgardiner/rgdes/dollhse/doll02a.htm>

**4.3.1.1. Class Activity**

- a. Work in groups and answer the following questions:
  1. Can setting serve as antagonist? Explain your reason!
  2. Can setting serve as a means of revealing character? Explain your reason!
  3. Can setting enhance the atmosphere in a drama? Give example!
- b. Still in groups, analyze the setting in *Lysistrata*! Provide excerpts/quotations from the text to support your arguments.
- c. If you have question about setting, do not hesitate to ask your lecturer.

**4.3.1.2. Individual Assignment**

Vivid setting often helps readers to understand a drama but there are dramas which provide minimal description of setting on purpose. Find out a drama with unclear setting. In your opinion, why is the setting unclear? Do you think that the clarity of setting play an important role in determining the quality of a drama? Write down your opinion in 200-250 words and share it with your friends next week!

**4.3.2. Spectacle**

Spectacle includes all the visual aspects of a production: the stage, set, props, costumes, lights, sound effects, and special effects. Traditional Greek theater used spectacle sparingly. However, they did have some machines for special effects, carts to carry on and off certain characters, and detailed masks and costumes.

**THE GREEK THEATRE**

Traditional Greek theater was performed outdoors during daylight hours. The theatre space, or theatron, was typically an arena with the audience in a semi-circle around the performance area. Seats extended backwards in a step formation. Since Dionysus was the honored god of theatre, often a statue of Dionysus was placed in the front row of the audience area so that he might view the performance given in his honor. A sacrificial altar was often found in the theatron or directly on the orchestra area for sacrifices to Dionysus and other honored gods during the performances.

**THE PERFORMANCE SPACE AND SETS**

The performance space was flat, and later Greek theatres had a small scene (skene) building at the rear, facing the audience. The main actors made all their entrances from the scene building. Here the

actors changed costumes and masks, and most of the special effects or machines for magical entrances were housed. Ancient Greek theatre rarely added additional sets, but at times adorned the scene building with minor set dressings and accessories to help depict a specific location or required structure. Special wagons or carts were built to carry on and off characters who died or to elevate and float the gods. Various traps and machines for special effects were designed and housed in the scene building to create storms, smoke, and magical god entrances.

### THE CHORUS AND THE ORCHESTRA

The flat circular area directly in front of the audience was usually reserved for the chorus and was called the orchestra. The chorus often made their entrances through the audience and remained in the orchestra throughout the performance. The main characters typically came down to the orchestra and interacted with the chorus, but the chorus rarely went up to the scene building. Once the chorus arrived on stage, it usually remained on stage as an interpreter of the play's action for the audience.

#### TERMS FOR SPECTACLE:

**Mechane (Latin: machina):** a crane used to portray figures in flight, usually gods (hence the term *deus ex machina*: 'the god from the machine').

**Orchestra:** 'the dancing floor' or area in front of the skene where the chorus danced.

**Skene:** the stage building found up stage of the orchestra (origin of our 'scene').

**Theatron:** "theater" or the seeing place, and more specifically the seating-area for the audience.

**Theologeion:** raised structure from which supernatural beings spoke, located above skene or on the skene roof.

(Brown, A., *A New Companion to Greek Tragedy*)

#### 4.3.2.1. Discussion

1. Keeping in mind the ancient Greek stage, how might the play be staged? Where would the main characters enter? Where would the two choruses enter and perform? How would the gate to the Akropolis be positioned, and how would the men storm the gate?
2. Considering ancient theater traditions, what special effects might be used in this play? Suggest special effects for building structures,

masks, sound effects, the fire pots and logs the men's chorus carry, the baby, the phalluses, and the passing of time.

3. The play describes various scenes where disrobing occurs. What would the characters be wearing and how many layers might they have to disrobe? How might the Athenian women dress differently from the Spartan women?
4. The use of phalluses comically depict the men's physical condition. How would modern audiences respond to this? Could this play be produced without the use of phalluses? How might this aspect of the play be perceived differently if women played the women's parts?
5. Why did Aristotle place spectacle last on the priority list of important dramatic elements?

## 4.4. Dialogue, Monologue, Aside, and Soliloquy

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide the students with the concepts of dialogue, monologue, aside, and soliloquy as specific elements in drama. The students are expected to understand each term and its function in a drama. They are also expected to be able to identify the differences among those terms.

### 4.4.1. Dialogue, Monologue, Aside, and Soliloquy

Dialogue is the conversation of two or more people as represented in writing, in this case in a drama. Dialogue is important in forwarding action, developing characters and intensifying a sense of reality and immediacy (Morner & Rausch, 1991:55). A drama may give us talk and characters without much action and strong characters. However, a drama cannot give us characters and action without talk. Besides dialogue, a drama may contain the so-called *monologue*, *aside*, and *soliloquy*. The followings are the explanations of those terms which are summarized from Pickering & Hoeper (1981:261-268).

Dramatic dialogue includes sufficient background information to fix the time, place, and circumstances of the action. It takes the form of discussion, argument, or inquiry which may accompany and clarify actions or simply reveal attitudes and opinions. Thus, its function is to provide necessary factual information, to characterize, to speculate, and to foreshadow. Although dramatic dialogue intends to represent real life dialogue, it never is the same with actual conversation. Unlike actual conversation, which is full of hesitations, pauses, fragments, misunderstandings, and repetitions, dramatic dialogue slashes past trivial details and strikes the lure with vigor and directness. In drama, it is required a certain measured rhythm, carefully speaking lines in turn and incorporating brief pauses in the question-response pattern so that each line can be clearly heard by the audience.

Dialogue is used by the characters to express and share their feelings and/or ideas towards the other characters and the audiences. However, there is possibility that characters also employ monologue, soliloquy, and aside to speak up their mind. Monologue happens when a character speaks of his or her thoughts and feelings to him/herself. It can directly address another character, or speak to the audience. Soliloquy happens when a character in a play, alone on a stage, speaks her thoughts aloud. Aside happens when a character speaks briefly to the audience, supposedly without being heard by the other characters on stage.

#### 4.4.2. Class Activity

- a. Work in groups and answer the following questions:
  1. Can we say that theatrical production without dialogue, for examples mime and ballet, is a drama? Explain your reason!
  2. Do you know traditional puppet show ("Wayang Kulit", for example) performed by a puppeteer ("Dalang") who single-handedly plays different roles? Can we categorize such kind of show as a drama? Explain your reason!
  3. What is the difference between soliloquy and monologue? In what way (s) do they enhance the story line of a drama?
- b. If you have question about dialogue, monologue, aside, and soliloquy do not hesitate to ask your lecturer.

#### 4.4.3. Individual Assignment

Watch a movie thoroughly and point out whether there are monologues, asides, and soliloquies in the movie. Do you think movies also employ monologue, aside, and soliloquy just like you find in dramas? If yes, what is the function of those dramatic conventions in movies? If no, why do you think so? Express your idea in 200-250 words and share it with your friends next week!

Oedipus the King  
Sophocles  
Translated by David Grene

**CHARACTERS**

**OEDIPUS**, King of Thebes

**JOCASTA**, His Wife

**CREON**, His Brother-in-Law

**TEIRESIAS**, an Old Blind Prophet

**PRIEST**

**FIRST MESSENGER**

**SECOND MESSENGER**

**A HERDSMAN**

**A CHORUS OF OLD MEN OF  
THEBES**

**PART I:**

**Scene:** *In front of the palace of Oedipus at Thebes. To the Right of the stage near the altar stands the PRIEST with a crowd of children.*

*OEDIPUS emerges from the central door.*

**OEDIPUS:** Children, young sons and daughters of old Cadmus,<sup>1</sup>

why do you sit here with your suppliant crowns?<sup>2</sup>  
the town is heavy with a mingled burden  
of sounds and smells, of groans and hymns and  
incense;

5 I did not think it fit that I should hear  
of this from messengers but came myself,--  
I Oedipus whom all men call the Great.

[*He returns to the PRIEST.*]

You're old and they are young; come, speak for them.  
What do you fear or want, that you sit here  
10 suppliant? Indeed I'm willing to give all  
that you may need; I would be very hard  
should I not pity suppliants like these.

**PRIEST:** O ruler of my country, Oedipus,

You see our company around the altar;  
15 you see our ages; some of us, like these,  
who cannot yet fly far, and some of us  
heavy with age; these children are the chosen  
among the young, and I the priest of Zeus.  
Within the market place sit others crowned  
20 with suppliant garlands<sup>3</sup>, at the double shrine  
of Pallas<sup>4</sup> and the temple where Ismenus  
gives oracles by fire<sup>5</sup>. King, you yourself  
have seen our city reeling like a wreck

already; it can scarcely lift its prow  
25 out of the depths, out of the bloody surf.  
A blight is on the fruitful plants of the earth.  
A blight is on the cattle in the fields,  
a blight is on our women that no children  
are born to them; a God that carries fire,  
30 a deadly pestilence, is on our town,  
strikes us and spears us not, and the house of Cadmus  
is emptied of its people while black Death  
grows rich in groaning and in lamentation.<sup>6</sup>  
We have not come as suppliants to this altar  
35 because we thought of you as a God,  
but rather judging you the first of men  
in all the chances of this life and when  
we mortals have to do with more than man.  
You came and by your coming saved our city,  
40 freed us from the tribute which we paid of old  
to the Sphinx,<sup>7</sup> cruel singer. This you did  
in virtue of no knowledge we could give you,  
in virtue of no teaching; it was God  
that aided you, men say, and you are held  
45 with God's assistance to have saved our lives.  
Now Oedipus, Greatest in all men's eyes,  
here falling at your feet we all entreat you,  
find us some strength for rescue.  
Perhaps you'll hear a wise word from some God.  
50 perhaps you will learn something from a man  
(for I have seen that for the skilled of the practice  
the outcome of their counsels live the most).  
Noblest of men, go, and raise up our city,  
go,-- and give heed. For now this land of ours  
55 calls you its savior since you saved it once.  
So, let us never speak about your reign  
as of a time when first our feet were set  
secure on high, but later fell to ruin.  
Raise up our city, save it and raise it up.

<sup>1</sup> **Cadmus** *n.* mythical founder and first king of Thebes, a city in central Greece where the play takes place

<sup>2</sup> **suppliant crowns** wreaths worn by people who ask favors of the gods.

<sup>3</sup> **suppliant garlands** branches wound in wool, which were placed on the altar and left there until the suppliant's request was granted.

<sup>4</sup> **double shrine of Pallas** the two temples of Athena.

<sup>5</sup> **temple where Ismenus gives oracles by fire** Temple of Apollo, located by Ismenus, the Theban river, where the priests studied patterns in the ashes of sacrificial victims to foretell the future.

<sup>6</sup> **lamentation** *n.* expression of deep sorrow

<sup>7</sup> **Sphinx** winged female monster at Thebes that ate men who could not answer her riddle: "what is it that walks on four legs at dawn, two legs at midday, and three legs in the evening, and has only one voice; when it walks on most feet, is it weakest?" Creon, appointed ruler of Thebes, offered the kingdom and the hand of his sister, Jocasta, to anyone who could answer the riddle. Oedipus saved Thebes by answering correctly, "Man, who crawls in infancy, walks upright in his prime, and leans on a cane in old age." Outraged, the Sphinx destroyed herself, and Oedipus became King of Thebes



60 Once you have brought us luck with happy omen;  
be no less now in fortune.  
If you will rule this land, as now you rule it,  
better to rule it full of men than empty.  
For neither tower nor ship is anything  
65 when empty, and none live in it together.

**OEDIPUS:** I pity you, children. You have come full of  
longing,

but I have known the story before you told it  
only too well. I know you are all sick,  
yet there is not one of you, sick though you are,  
70 that is as sick as myself.

Your several sorrows each have single scope  
and touch but one of you. My spirit groans  
for city and myself and you at once.

You have not roused me like a man from sleep;  
75 know that I have given many tears to this,  
gone many ways wandering in thoughts,  
but as I thought I found only one remedy

and that I took. I sent Menoeceus' son  
Creon, Jocasta's brother, to Apollo,

80 to his Pythian temple,<sup>8</sup>  
that he might learn there by what act or word

I could save this city. As I count the days,  
it vexes me what ails him; he is gone  
far longer than he needed for the journey.

85 But when he comes, than may I prove a villain,  
if I shall not do all the God commands.

**PRIEST:** Thanks for your gracious words. Your servants  
here signal that Creon is this moment coming.

**OEDIPUS:** His face is bright. O holy Lord Apollo,  
90 grant that his news too may be bright for us  
and bring us safety.

**PRIEST:** It is happy news,  
I think, for else his head would not be crowned  
with sprigs of fruitful laurel.<sup>9</sup>

**OEDIPUS:** We will know soon,  
96 he's within hail. Lord Creon, my good brother,  
what is the word you bring us from the God?

[ CREON *enters.*]

**CREON:** A good word, --for things hard to bear  
themselves if in the final issue all is well  
100 I count complete good fortune.

**OEDIPUS:** What do you mean?  
What have you said so far

leaves me uncertain whether to trust or fear.

**CREON:** If you will hear my news before these others  
105 I am ready to speak, or else to go within.

**OEDIPUS:** Speak it to all;  
the grief I bear, I bear it more for these  
than for my own hear.

**CREON:** I will tell you, then,  
110 what I heard from the God.  
King Phoebus<sup>10</sup> in plain words commanded us  
to drive out a pollution from our land,  
pollution grown ingrained within the land;  
drive it out, said the God, not cherish it,  
115 till it's past cure.

**OEDIPUS:** What is the rite  
of purification? How shall it be done?

**CREON:** By banishing a man, or expiation<sup>11</sup>  
of blood by blood, since it is murder guilt  
120 which holds our city in this destroying storm.

**OEDIPUS:** Who is this man whose fate the God  
pronounces?

**CREON:** My lord, before you piloted the state  
we had a king called Laius.

**OEDIPUS:** I know of him by hearsay. I have not seen  
him.

**CREON:** The God commanded clearly: let some one  
126 punish with force this dead man's murderers.

**OEDIPUS:** Where are they in the world? Where would a  
trace of this old crime be found? It would be hard  
to guess where.

**CREON:** The clue is in this land;  
131 that which is sought is found;  
the unheeded thing escapes:  
so said the God.

**OEDIPUS:** Was it at home,  
or in the country that death came upon him,  
135 or in another country travelling?

**CREON:** He went, he said himself, upon an embassy,<sup>12</sup>  
but never returned when he set out from home.

**OEDIPUS:** Was there no messenger, no fellow traveler  
who knew what happened? Such a one might tell

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<sup>8</sup> **Pythian temple** shrine of Apollo at Delphi, below Mount  
Parnassus in central Greece

<sup>9</sup> **sprigs of fruitful laurel** Laurel symbolized triumph; a crown of  
laurel signified good news.

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<sup>10</sup> **King Phoebus Apollo, god of the sun.**

<sup>11</sup> **expiation** *n.* The act of making amends for wrongdoing.

<sup>12</sup> **embassy** *n.* important mission or errand

140 something of use.

**CREON:** They were all killed save one. He fled in terror  
and he could tell us nothing in clear terms  
of what he knew, nothing, but one thing only.

**OEDIPUS:** What was it?  
145 If we could even find a slim beginning  
in which to hope, we might discover much.

**CREON:** This man said the robbers they encountered  
were many and the hands that did the murder  
were many; it was no man's single power.

**OEDIPUS:** How could a robber date a deed like this  
151 Were he not helped with money from the city,  
Money and treachery?

**CREON:** That indeed was thought.  
But Laius was dead and in our trouble  
There was none to help.

**OEDIPUS:** What trouble was so great to hinder you  
157 inquiring out the murder of your king?

**CREON:** The riddling Sphinx induced us to neglect  
mysterious crimes and rather seek solution  
160 of troubles at our feet.

**OEDIPUS:** I will bring this to light again. King Phoebus  
fittingly took this care about the dead,  
and you to fittingly.  
And justly you will see in me an ally,  
165 a champion of my country and the God.  
For when I drive pollution from the land  
I will not serve a distant friend's advantage,

but act in my own interest. Whoever  
he was that killed the king may readily  
170 wish to dispatch me with his murderous hand;  
so helping the dead king I help myself.  
Come, children, take your suppliant boughs and go;  
up from the altars now. Call the assembly  
and let it meet upon the understanding  
175 that I'll do everything. God will decide  
whether we prosper or remain in sorrow.

**PRIEST:** Rise, children—it was this we came to seek,  
which of himself the king now offers us.  
May Phoebus who gave us the oracle  
180 come to our rescue and stay the plague.

[Exit all but the CHORUS.]

**CHORUS:**

*Strophe*

What is the sweet spoken word of God from the shrine of  
Pytho rich in gold

that has come to glorious Thebes?

I am stretched on the rack of doubt, and terror and  
trembling hold  
my heart, O Delian Healer,<sup>13</sup> and I worship full of fears  
185 for what doom you will bring to pass, new or renewed  
in the revolving years.  
Speak to me, immortal voice,  
child of golden Hope.

*Antistrophe*

First I call on you, Athene, deathless daughter of Zeus,  
and Artemis, Earth Upholder,  
190 who sits in the midst of the market place in the throne  
which men call Fame,  
and Phoebus, the Far Shooter, three averters of Fate,  
come to us now, if ever before, when ruin rushed upon the  
state,  
you drove destruction's flame away out  
of our land.

*Strophe*

195 Our sorrows defy number;  
all the ship's timbers are rotten;  
taking of thought is no spear for the driving away of the  
plague  
There are no growing children in this famous land;  
there are no women bearing the pangs of childbirth.  
200 You may see them one with another, like birds swift  
on the wing,  
quicker than fire unmastered,  
speeding away to the coast of the Western God.<sup>14</sup>

*Antistrophe*

In the unnumbered death  
of its people the city dies;  
205 those children that are born lie dead on the naked  
earth  
unpitied, spreading contagion of death; and gray-haired  
mothers and wives  
everywhere stand at the altar's edge, suppliant, moaning;  
the hymn to the healing God<sup>15</sup> rings out but with it the  
wailing voices are blended.  
From these our sufferings grant us, O golden Daughter of  
Zeus,<sup>16</sup>  
210 glad-faced deliverance.

*Strophe*

There is no clash of brazen<sup>17</sup> shields but our fight is with  
the War God,<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> **Delian Healer** Born on the island of Delos, Apollo's title was  
"healer"; he caused and averted plagues.

<sup>14</sup> **Western God** Since the sun sets in the west, this is the god of  
night, or Death.

<sup>15</sup> **healing God** Apollo.

<sup>16</sup> **golden Daughter of Zeus** Athena.

<sup>17</sup> **brazen** *adj.* of brass or like brass in color

<sup>18</sup> **War God** Ares

a War God ringed with the cries of men, a savage God  
 who burns us;  
 grant that he turn in racing course backwards out of our  
 country's bounds  
 to the great palace of Amphitrite<sup>19</sup> or where the waves of  
 the Thracian sea  
 215 deny the stranger safe anchorage.  
 Whatsoever escapes the night at last the light of day  
 revisits;  
 so smite the War God, Father Zeus,  
 beneath your thunderbolt,  
 220 for you are the Lord of the lightning, the lightning that  
 carries fire.

#### *Antistrophe*

And your unconquered arrow shafts, winged by the golden  
 corded bow,  
 Lycean King<sup>20</sup>, I beg to be at our side for help;  
 and the gleaming torches of Artemis with which she  
 scourges the Lycean hills,  
 and I call on the God with the turban of gold<sup>21</sup>, who gave  
 his name to this country of ours.  
 225 the Bacchic God with the wind flushed face<sup>22</sup>,  
 Evian One,<sup>23</sup> who travel  
 with the Maenad company,<sup>24</sup>  
 combat the God that burns us  
 with your torch of pine;  
 230 for the God that is our enemy is a God unhonored  
 among the Gods

[OEDIPUS *returns*.]

**OEDIPUS:** For what you ask me—if you will hear my  
 words,  
 and hearing welcome them and fight the plague,  
 you will find strength and lightening of your load.  
 Hark to me; what I say to you, I say  
 235 as one that is a stranger to the story  
 as stranger to the deed. For I would not  
 be far upon the track if I alone  
 were tracing it without a clue. But now,  
 since after all was finished, I became  
 240 a citizen among you, citizens—  
 now I proclaim to all the men of Thebes:

<sup>19</sup> **Amphitrite** sea goddess who was the wife of Poseidon, god of the sea.

<sup>20</sup> **Lycean King** Apollo, whose title *Lykios* means “god of light.”

<sup>21</sup> **God with turban of gold** Dionysus, god of wine, who was born of Zeus and a woman of Thebes, the first Greek city to honor him. He wears an oriental turban because he has come from the East.

<sup>22</sup> **Bacchic God with the wind flushed face** refers to Dionysus, who had a youthful, rosy complexion; Bacchus means “riotous god”

<sup>23</sup> **Evian One** Dionysus, called Evios because his followers addressed him with the ritual cry “evoi”

<sup>24</sup> **Maenad company** female followers of Dionysus.

who so among you knows the murderer  
 by whose hand Laius, son of Labdacus,  
 died—I command him to tell everything  
 245 to me,— yes, though he fears himself to take the  
 blame  
 on his own head; for bitter punishment  
 he shall have none, but leave this land unharmed.  
 Or if he knows the murderer, another,  
 a foreigner, still let him speak the truth.  
 250 For I will pay him and be grateful, too.

But if you shall keep silence, if perhaps  
 some one of you, to shield a guilty friend,  
 some one of you, to shield reject my words –  
 hear what I shall do then:  
 255 I forbid that man, whoever he be, my land,  
 my land where I hold sovereignty<sup>25</sup> and throne;  
 and I forbid any to welcome him  
 or cry him greeting or make him a sharer  
 in sacrifice or offering to the Gods,  
 260 or give him water for his hands to wash.  
 I command all to drive him from their homes,  
 since he is our pollution, as the oracle  
 of Pytho's God<sup>26</sup> proclaimed him now to me.  
 So I stand forth a champion of the God  
 265 and of the man who died.

Upon the murderer I invoke this curse—  
 whether he is one man and all unknown,  
 or one of many—may he wear out his life  
 in misery to miserable doom!  
 270 If with my knowledge he lives at my hearth  
 I pray that I myself may feel my curse.  
 On you I lay my charge to fulfill all this  
 for me, for the God, and for this land of ours  
 destroyed and blighted, by the God forsaken.  
 275 Even were this no matter of God's ordinance  
 it would not fit you so to leave it lie,  
 unpurified, since a good man is dead  
 and one that was a king. Search it out.  
 Since I am now the holder of his office,  
 280 And have his bed and wife that once was his,  
 and had his line not been unfortunate  
 we would have common children—(fortune leaped  
 upon his head)—because of all these things,  
 I fight in his defense as for my father,  
 285 and I shall try all means to take the murderer  
 of Laius the son of Labdacus  
 the son of Polydorus and before him  
 of Cadmus and before him of Agenor.  
 Those who do not obey me, may the Gods  
 290 grant no crops springing from the ground they  
 plow

nor children to their women! May a fate  
 like this, or one still worse than this consume them!  
 For you whom these words please, the other Thebans,

<sup>25</sup> **sovereignty** *n.* supreme authority

<sup>26</sup> **Pytho's God** Apollo

may Justice as your ally and all the Gods  
295 live with you, blessing you now and for ever!

**CHORUS:** As you have held me to my oath, I speak:  
I neither killed the king nor can declare  
the killer; but since Phoebus set the quest  
it is his part to tell who the man is.

**OEDIPUS:** Right; but to put compulsion<sup>27</sup> on the Gods  
301 against their will—no man can do that

**CHORUS:** May I then say what I think second best?

**OEDIPUS:** If there's a third best, too, spare not to tell it

**CHORUS:** I know that what the Lord Teiresias  
305 sees, is most often what the Lord Apollo  
sees. If you should inquire of this from him  
you might find out most clearly.

**OEDIPUS:** Even in this my actions have not been  
sluggard<sup>28</sup>  
On Creon's word I have sent two messengers  
310 and why the prophet is not here already  
I have been wondering.

**CHORUS:** His skill apart  
there is besides only an old faint story.

**OEDIPUS:** What is it?  
315 I look at every story.

**CHORUS:** It was said  
that he was killed by certain wayfarers.

**OEDIPUS:** I heard that, too, but no one saw the killer.

**CHORUS:** Yet if he has a share of fear at all,  
320 his courage will not stand firm, hearing your curse.

**OEDIPUS:** The man who in the doing did not shrink  
will fear no word.

**CHORUS:** Here comes his prosecutor:  
led by your men the godly prophet comes  
325 in whom alone of mankind truth is native.

[Enter TEIRESIAS, led by a little boy]

**OEDIPUS:** Teiresias, you are versed in everything,  
things teachable and things not to be spoken,  
things of the heaven and earth-creeing things.  
You have no eyes but in your mind you know 330 with  
what a plague our city is afflicted.  
My lord, in you alone we find a champion,

in you alone on that can rescue us.  
Perhaps you have not heard the messengers,  
but Phoebus sent in answer to our sending 335 an  
oracle declaring that our freedom  
from this disease would only come when we  
should learn the names of those who killed King Laius,  
and kill them or expel them from our country.  
Do not begrudge us oracle from birds,  
340 or any other way of prophecy  
within your skill; save yourself and the city,  
save me; redeem the debt of our pollution  
that lies on us because of this dead man.  
We are in your hands; pains are most nobly taken 345 to  
help another when you have means and power.

**TEIRESIAS:** Alas, how terrible is wisdom when  
it brings no profit to the man that's wise!  
This I knew well, but had forgotten it,  
else I would not have come here.

**OEDIPUS:** What is this?  
351 How sad you are now you have come!

**TEIRESIAS:** Let me  
go home, It will be easiest for us both  
to bear our several destinies to the end  
355 if you will follow my advice.

**OEDIPUS:** You'd rob us  
of this your gift of prophecy? You talk as one who had  
no care for law nor love  
for Thebes who reared you.

**TEIRESIAS:** Yes, but I see that even your own words  
361 miss the mark; therefore I must fear for mine.

**OEDIPUS:** For God's sake if you know of anything,  
do not turn from us; all of us kneel to you,  
all of us here, your suppliants.

**TEIRESIAS:** All of you here know nothing. I will not  
366 bring to light of day my troubles, mine—  
rather than call them yours.

**OEDIPUS:** What do you mean?  
You know of something but refuse to speak.  
Would you betray us and destroy the city?

**TEIRESIAS:** I will not bring this pain upon us both,  
371 neither on you nor on myself. Why is it  
you question me and waste your labor? I will tell you  
nothing.

**OEDIPUS:** You would provoke a stone! Tell us, you  
villain,  
375 tell us, and do not stand there quietly

<sup>27</sup> **compulsion** *n.* driving force; coercion.

<sup>28</sup> **sluggard** *adj.* lazy or idle

unmoved and balking<sup>29</sup> at the issue.

**TEIRESIAS:** You blame my temper but you do not see  
your own that lives within you; it is me  
you chide.<sup>30</sup>

**OEDIPUS:** Who would not feel this temper rise  
381 at words like these with which you shame our city?

**TEIRESIAS:** Of themselves things will come, although I  
hide them  
and breathe no word of them.

**OEDIPUS:** Since they will come  
386 tell them to me.

**TEIRESIAS:** I will say nothing further.  
Against this answer let your temper rage  
as wildly as you will.

**OEDIPUS:** Indeed I am  
391 so angry I shall not hold back a jot  
of what I think. For I would have you know  
I think you were complotter<sup>31</sup> of the deed  
and doer of the deed save in so far  
395 as for the actual killing. Had you had eyes  
I would have said alone you murdered him.

**TEIRESIAS:** Yes? Then I warn you faithfully to keep  
the letter of your proclamation and  
from this day forth to speak no word of greeting  
400 to these nor me; you are the land's pollution.

**OEDIPUS:** How shamelessly you started up this taunt!  
How do you think you will escape?

**TEIRESIAS:** I have.  
I have escaped; the truth is what I cherish  
405 and that's my strength.

**OEDIPUS:** And who has taught you truth?  
Not your profession surely!

**TEIRESIAS:** You have taught me,  
for you have made me speak against my will.

**OEDIPUS:** Speak what? Tell me again that I may learn it  
better.

**TEIRESIAS:** Did you not understand before or would  
you  
412 provoke me into speaking?

**OEDIPUS:** I did not grasp it.

not so to call it known. Say it again.

**TEIRESIAS:** I say you are the murderer of the king  
416 whose murderer you seek.

**OEDIPUS:** Not twice you shall  
say calumnies<sup>32</sup> like this and stay unpunished.

**TEIRESIAS:** Shall I say more to tempt your anger more?

**OEDIPUS:** As much as you desire; it will be said  
21 in vain

**TEIRESIAS:** I say with those you love best  
you live in foulest shame unconsciously  
and do not see where you are in calamity.<sup>33</sup>

**OEDIPUS:** Do you imagine you can always talk  
426 like this, and live to laugh at it hereafter?

**TEIRESIAS:** Yes, if the truth has anything of strength.

**OEDIPUS:** It has, but not for you; it has no strength  
for you because you are blind in mind and ears  
430 as well as in your eyes.

**TEIRESIAS:** You are a poor wretch  
to taunt me with the very insults which every one soon  
will heap upon yourself.

**OEDIPUS:** Your life is one long night so that you cannot  
435 hurt me or any other who sees the light.

**TEIRESIAS:** It is not fate that I should be your ruin,  
Apollo is enough; it is his care  
to work this out.

**OEDIPUS:** Was this your own design  
440 or Creon's?

**TEIRESIAS:** Creon is no hurt to you,  
but you are yourself.

**OEDIPUS:** Wealth, sovereignty and skill outmatching  
skill  
for the contrivance<sup>34</sup> of an envied life!  
445 Great store of jealousy fill your treasury chests,  
if my friend Creon, friend from this and loyal,  
thus secretly attacks me, secretly  
desires to drive me out and secretly  
suborns<sup>35</sup> this juggling trick devising quack,  
450 this wily beggar who has only eyes

<sup>29</sup> **balking** *v.* obstinately refusing to act.

<sup>30</sup> **chide** *v.* scold.

<sup>31</sup> **complotter** *n.* person who plots against another person.

<sup>32</sup> **calumnies** *n.* false and malicious statements; slander.

<sup>33</sup> **calamity** *n.* extreme misfortune that leads to disaster.

<sup>34</sup> **contrivance** *n.* act of devising or scheming.

<sup>35</sup> **suborns** *v.* instigates a person to commit perjury.

for his own gains, but blindness in his skill.  
 For, tell me, where have you seen clear, Teiresias,  
 with your prophetic eyes? When the dark singer,  
 the sphinx, was in your country, did you speak  
 455 word of deliverance to its citizens?  
 And yet the riddle's answer was not the province  
 of a chance comer. It was a prophet's task  
 and plainly you had no such gift of prophecy  
 from birds nor otherwise from any God  
 460 to glean a word of knowledge. But I came,  
 Oedipus, who knew nothing, and I stopped her.  
 I solved the riddle by my own wit alone.  
 Mine was no knowledge got from birds. And now  
 you would expel me,  
 465 because you think that you will find a place  
 by Creon's throne. I think you will be sorry,  
 both you and your accomplice, for your plot  
 to drive me out. And did I not regard you  
 as an old man, some suffering would have taught you  
 470 that what was in your heart was treason.

**CHORUS:** We look at this man's words and yours, my  
 king, and we find both have spoken them in anger.  
 We need no angry words but only thought  
 how we may best hit the God's meaning for us.

**TEIRESIAS:** If you are king, at least I have the right  
 476 no less to speak in my defense against you.  
 Of that much I am master. I am no slave  
 of yours, but Loxias', and so I shall not  
 enroll myself with Creon for my patron.  
 480 Since you have taunted me with being blind,  
 here is my word for you.  
 You have your eyes but see not where you are  
 in sin, nor where you live, nor whom you live with.  
 Do you know who your parents are? Unknowing  
 485 you are an enemy to kith and kin  
 in death, beneath the earth, and in this life.  
 A deadly footed, double striking curse,  
 from father and mother both, shall drive you forth  
 out of this land, with darkness on your eyes,  
 490 that now have such straight vision. Shall there be  
 a place will not be harbor to your cries,<sup>36</sup>  
 a corner of Cithaeron<sup>37</sup> will not ring  
 in echo to your cries, soon, soon,--  
 when you shall learn the secret of your marriage,  
 495 which steered you to a haven in this house,--  
 haven no haven, after lucky voyage?  
 And of the multitude of other evils  
 establishing a grim equality  
 between you and your children, you know nothing.  
 500 So, muddy with contempt my words and Creon's!  
 Misery shall grind no man as it will you.

<sup>36</sup> **Shall. . . . cries** is there any place that won't be full of your cries?

<sup>37</sup> **Cithaeron** *n.* mountain near Thebes on which Oedipus was abandoned as an infant.

**OEDIPUS:** Is it endurable that I should hear  
 such words from him? Go and a curse go with you!  
 Quick, home with you! Out of my house at once!

**TEIRESIAS:** I would not have come either had you not  
 call me.

**OEDIPUS:** I did not know then you would talk like a  
 fool—  
 507 or it would have been long before I called you.

**TEIRESIAS:** I am a fool then, as it seems to you—  
 but to the parents who have bred you, wise.

**OEDIPUS:** What parents? Stop! Who are they of all the  
 world?

**TEIRESIAS:** This day will show your birth and will  
 destroy you.

**OEDIPUS:** How needlessly your riddles darken  
 everything.

**TEIRESIAS:** But it's in riddle answering you are  
 strongest.

**OEDIPUS:** Yes. Taunt me where you will find me great.

**TEIRESIAS:** It is this very luck that has destroyed you.

**OEDIPUS:** I do not care, if it has saved this city.

**TEIRESIAS:** Well, I will go. Come, boy, lead me away.

**OEDIPUS:** Yes, lead him off. So long as you are here,  
 you'll be a stumbling block and a vexation;  
 520 once gone, you will not trouble me again.

**TEIRESIAS:** I have said  
 what I came here to say not fearing your  
 countenance; there is no way you can hurt me.  
 I tell you, king, this man, this murderer  
 525 (whom you have long declared you are in search  
 of,  
 indicting him in threatening proclamation  
 as murderer of Laius)—he is here.  
 In name he is a stranger among citizens  
 But soon he will be shown to be a citizen  
 530 true native Theban, and he'll have no joy.  
 of the discovery: blindness for sight  
 and beggary for riches his exchange,  
 he shall go journeying to a foreign country  
 tapping his way before him with a stick.  
 535 He shall be proved father and brother both  
 to his own children in his own house; to her  
 that gave him birth, a son and husband both;  
 a fellow sower in his father's bed

with that same father that he murdered.  
540 Go within, reckon that out, and if you find me  
mistaken, say I have no skill in prophecy

[*exit separately TEIRESIAS and OEDIPUS*]

**CHORUS:**

*Strophe*

who is the man proclaimed  
by Delphi's prophetic rock  
as the bloody handed murderer,  
545 the doer of deeds that none dare name?  
Now is the time for him to run  
with a stronger foot  
than Pegasus<sup>38</sup>  
for the child of Zeus leaps in arms upon him  
550 with fire and the lightning bolt,  
and terribly close on his heels  
are the Fates that never miss.

*Antistrophe*

Lately from snowy Parnassus  
clearly the voice flashed forth,  
555 bidding each Theban track him down,  
the unknown murderer.  
In the savage forests he lurks and in  
the caverns like  
the mountain bull  
560 He is sad and lonely, his feet  
that carry him far from the navel of earth;<sup>39</sup>  
but its prophecies, ever living,  
flutter around his head.

*Strophe*

The augur<sup>40</sup> has spread confusion,  
565 terrible confusion;  
I do not approve what was said  
nor can I deny it.  
I do not know what to say;  
I am in a flutter of foreboding;  
570 I never heard in the present  
nor past of a quarrel between  
the sons of Labdacus and Polybus,  
that I might bring as proof  
in attacking the popular fame  
575 of Oedipus, seeking  
to take vengeance for undiscovered death in the line  
of Labdacus.

*Antistrophe*

Truly Zeus and Apollo are wise  
and in human things all knowing;

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<sup>38</sup> **Pegasus** mythical winged horse.

<sup>39</sup> **navel of earth** fissure, or crack, on Mount Parnassus from which mysterious vapors arose to inspire Pythia, priestess of the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi.

<sup>40</sup> **augur** *n.* fortuneteller or prophet; refers here to Teiresias

580 but amongst men there is no  
distinct judgment, between the prophet and me—which  
of us is right.

One man may pass another in wisdom  
but I would never agree  
585 with those that find fault with the king  
till I should see the word

proved right beyond doubt. For once  
in visible form the Sphinx  
came on him and all of us

590 saw his wisdom and in that test  
he saved the city. So he will not be condemned by my  
mind.

[*Enter CREON.*]

**CREON:** Citizens, I have come because I heard  
deadly words spread about me, that the king  
accuses me. I cannot take that from him.  
595 If he believes that in these present troubles  
he has been wronged by me in word or deed I do not  
want to live on with the burden  
of such a scandal on me. The report  
injures me doubly and most vitally—  
600 for I'll be called a traitor to my city  
and traitor also to my friends and you.

**CHORUS:** Perhaps it was a sudden gust of anger  
that forced that insult from him, and no judgment.

**CREON:** But did he say that it was a compliances  
605 with schemes of mine that the seer told him lies?

**CHORUS:** Yes, he said that, but why, I do not know.

**CREON:** Were his eyes straight in his head? Was his  
mind right  
when he accused me in this fashion?

**CHORUS:** I do not know; I have no eyes to see  
610 what princes do. Here comes the king himself.

[*Enter OEDIPUS*]

**OEDIPUS:** You, sir, how is it you come here? Have you  
so much

brazen faced daring that you venture in  
my house although you are proved manifestly<sup>41</sup>  
the murderer of that man, and though you tried,  
615 openly, highway robbery of my crown?  
For God's sake, tell me what you saw in me, what  
cowardice or what stupidity,  
that made you lay a plot like this against me?  
Did you imagine I should not observe  
620 the crafty scheme that stole upon me or  
seeing it, take no means to counter it?

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<sup>41</sup> **proved manifestly** clearly proved with evidence.



Was it not stupid of you to make the attempt,  
to try to hunt down royal power without  
the people at your back or friends? For only  
625 with the people at your back or money can  
the hunt end in the capture of a crown.

**CREON:** Do you know what you're doing? Will you  
listen  
to words to answer yours, and then pass judgment?

**OEDIPUS:** You're quick to speak, but I am slow to grasp  
you,  
630 for I have found you dangerous,---and my foe.

**CREON:** First of all hear what I shall say to that.

**OEDIPUS:** At least don't tell me that you are not guilt.

**CREON:** If you think obstinacy<sup>42</sup> without wisdom  
a valuable possession, you are wrong.

**OEDIPUS:** And you are wrong if you believe that one,  
636 a criminal, will not be punished only  
because he is my kinsman.

**CREON:** This is but just –  
but tell me, then, of what offense I'm guilty?

**OEDIPUS:** Did you or did you not urge me to send  
641 to this prophetic mumblor?

**CREON:** I did indeed,  
and I shall stand by what I told you.

**OEDIPUS:** How long ago is it since Laius. . . .

**CREON:** What about Laius? I don't understand.

**OEDIPUS:** Vanished—died—was murdered?

**CREON:** It is long,  
648 a long, long time to reckon.

**OEDIPUS:** Was this prophet  
650 in the profession then?

**CREON:** He was, and honored  
as highly as he is today.

**OEDIPUS:** At that time did he say a word about me?

**CREON:** Never, at least not when I was near him.

**OEDIPUS:** You never made a search for the dead man?

**CREON:** We searched, indeed, but never learned of  
anything.

**OEDIPUS:** Why did our wise old friend not say this then?

**CREON:** I don't know; and when I know nothing, I  
659 usually hold my tongue.

**OEDIPUS:** You know this much,  
661 and can declare this much if you are loyal.

**CREON:** What is it? If I know, I'll not deny it.

**OEDIPUS:** That he would not have said that I killed  
Laius  
had he not met you first.

**CREON:** You know yourself  
666 whether he said this, but I demand that I  
should hear as much from you as you from me.

**OEDIPUS:** Then hear, — I'll not be proved a murderer.

**CREON:** Well, then. You're married to my sister.

**OEDIPUS:** Yes,  
671 that I am not disposed to deny.

**CREON:** You rule  
this country giving her an equal share  
in the government?

**OEDIPUS:** Yes, everything she wants  
676 she has from me.

**CREON:** And I, as thirdsman to you,  
am rated as the equal of you two?

**OEDIPUS:** Yes, and it's there you've proved yourself  
false friend.

**CREON:** Not if you will reflect on it as I do.  
681 Consider, first, if you think any one  
would choose to rule and fear rather than rule  
and sleep untroubled by a feat if power  
were equal in both cases. I, at least,  
685 I was not born with such a frantic yearning  
to be a king—but to do what kings do.  
And so it is with every one who has learned  
wisdom and self-control. As it stands now,  
the prizes are all mine—and without fear.  
690 But if I were the king myself, I must

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<sup>42</sup> **obstinacy** *n.* stubbornness; state of being unyielding to reason. Creon means that Oedipus cannot see—or refuses to see—the facts

do much that went against the grain. How should  
 despotic<sup>43</sup> rule seem sweeter to me  
 than painless power and an assured authority?  
 I am not so besotted<sup>44</sup> yet that I  
 695 want other honors than those that come with profit.  
 Now every man's my pleasure; every man greets me;  
 now those who are your suitors fawn on me, —  
 success for them depends upon my favor.  
 Why should I let all this go to win that?  
 700 My mind would not be traitor if it's wise;  
 I am no treason lover, of my nature, nor would I ever  
 dare to join a plot.

Prove what I say. Go to the oracle  
 at Pytho and inquire about the answers,  
 705 if they are as I told you. For the rest,  
 if you discover that I laid any plot together with the  
 seer, kill me, I say,  
 not only by your vote but by my own.  
 But do not charge me on obscure opinion  
 710 without some proof to back it. It's not just  
 lightly to count your knaves as honest men, nor with  
 honest men as knaves. To throw away  
 an honest friend is, as it were, to throw  
 your life away, which a man loves the best.  
 715 In the time you will know all with certainty;  
 time is the only test of honest men, one day is space  
 enough to know a rogue.

**CHORUS:** His words are wise, king, if one fears to fall.  
 Those who are quick of temper are not safe.

**OEDIPUS:** When he that plots against me secretly  
 721 moves quickly, I must quickly counterplot.

If I wait taking no decisive measure  
 his business will be done, and mine be spoiled.

**CREON:** What do you want to do then? Banish me?

**OEDIPUS:** No, certainly; kill you, not banish you.

**CREON:** I do not think you've your wits about you.

**OEDIPUS:** For my own interests, yes.

**CREON:** But for mine, too,  
 729 you should think equally.

**OEDIPUS:** You are a rogue.

**CREON:** Suppose you do not understand?

**OEDIPUS:** But yet  
 I must be ruler.

**CREON:** Not if you rule badly.

**OEDIPUS:** O, city, city!

**CREON:** I too have some share  
 737 in the city; it is not yours alone.

**CHORUS:** Stop, my lords! Here—and in the nick of time  
 I see Jocasta coming from the house;  
 740 with her help lay the quarrel that now stirs you.

[Enter JOCASTA.]

**JOCASTA:** For shame! Why have you raised this foolish  
 squabbling  
 brawl? Are you not ashamed to air your private  
 griefs when the country's sick? Go in, you, Oedipus,  
 and you, too, Creon, into the house. Don't magnify  
 745 your nothing troubles.

**CREON:** Sister, Oedipus,  
 your husband, thinks he has the right to do  
 terrible wrongs—he has but to choose between  
 two terrors: banishing or killing me.

**OEDIPUS:** He's right, Jocasta; for I find him plotting  
 751 with knavish<sup>45</sup> tricks against my person.

**CREON:** That God may never bless me! May I die  
 accursed, if I have been guilty of  
 one tittle<sup>46</sup> of the charge you bring against me!

**JOCASTA:** I beg you, Oedipus, trust him in this,  
 756 spare him for the sake of this his oath to God,  
 for my sake, and the sake of those who stand here.

**CHORUS:** Be gracious, be merciful,  
 we beg you.

**OEDIPUS:** In what would you have me yield?

**CHORUS:** He has been no silly child in the past.  
 762 he is strong in his oath now.  
 Spare him.

**OEDIPUS:** Do you know what you ask?

**CHORUS:** Yes.

**OEDIPUS:** Tell me then.

**CHORUS:** He has been your friend before all men's eyes;  
 do not cast  
 him away dishonored on an obscure conjecture.

<sup>43</sup> **despotic** *adj.* absolute; unlimited; tyrannical.

<sup>44</sup> **besotted** *v.* stupefied; foolish.

<sup>45</sup> **knavish** *adj.* deceitful.

<sup>46</sup> **tittle** *n.* a very small particle.

**OEDIPUS:** I would have you know that this request of yours  
really requests my death or banishment.

**CHORUS:** May the Sun God,<sup>47</sup> king of Gods, forbid!  
May I die  
772 without God's blessing, without friends' help, if I  
had any such  
thought. But my spirit is broken by my unhappiness for  
my  
wasting country; and this would but add troubles  
775 amongst ourselves to the other troubles.

**OEDIPUS:** Well, let him go then—if I must die ten times  
for it,  
or be sent out dishonored into exile.  
It is your lips that prayed for him pitied,  
not his; wherever he is, I shall hate him.

**CREON:** I see you sulk in yielding and you're dangerous  
781 when you are out of temper; natures like yours  
are justly heaviest for themselves to bear.

**OEDIPUS:** Leave me alone! Take yourself off, I tell you.

**CREON:** I'll go you have not known me, but they have,  
785 and they have known my innocence.

*[Exit.]*

**CHORUS:** Won't you take him inside, lady?

**JOCASTA:** Yes, when I've found out what was the  
matter.

**CHORUS:** There was some misconceived suspicion of a  
story, and  
on the other side the sting of injustice.

**JOCASTA:** So, on both sides?

**CHORUS:** Yes.

**JOCASTA:** What was the story?

**CHORUS:** I think it best, in the interests of the country,  
to leave it  
794 where it ended.

**OEDIPUS:** You see where you have ended, straight of  
judgment  
796 although you are, by softening my anger.

**CHORUS:** Sir, I have said before and I say again— be  
sure that I

would have been proved a madman, bankrupt in sane  
council, if I  
should put you away, you who steered the country I  
love safely  
800 when she was crazed with troubles. God grant that  
now, too, you  
may prove a fortunate guide for us.

**JOCASTA:** Tell me, my lord, I beg of you, what was it  
that roused your anger so?

**OEDIPUS:** Yes, I will tell you.  
805 I honor you more than I honor them.  
It was Creon and the plots he laid against me.

**JOCASTA:** Tell me—if you can clearly tell the  
quarrel—

**OEDIPUS:** Creon says  
that I'm the murder of Laius.

**JOCASTA:** Of his own knowledge or on information?

**OEDIPUS:** He sent this rascal prophet to me, since  
he keeps his own mouth clean of any guilt.

**JOCASTA:** Do not concern yourself about this matter;  
listen to me and learn that human beings  
815 have no part in the craft of prophecy.  
Of that I'll show you a short proof.  
There was an oracle once that came to Laius, —  
I will not say that it was Phoebus' own,  
but it was from his servants— and it told him  
820 that it was fate that he should die a victim  
at the hands of his own son, a son to be born  
of Laius and me. But, see now, he,  
the king, was killed by foreign highway robbers  
at a place where three roads meet—so goes the story;  
825 and for the son—before three days were out  
after his birth King Laius pierced his ankles  
and by the hands of others cast him forth  
upon a pathless hillside. So Apollo  
failed to fulfill his oracle to the son,  
830 that he should kill his father, and to Laius  
also proved false in that the thing he feared,  
death at his son's hands, never came to pass.  
So clear in this case were the oracles,  
so clear and false. Give them no heed, I say;  
835 what God discovers need of, easily  
he shows to us himself.

**OEDIPUS:** O dear Jocasta,  
as I hear this from you, there comes upon me  
a wandering of the soul—I could run mad.

**JOCASTA:** What trouble is it, that you turn again  
841 and speak like this?

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<sup>47</sup> Sun God Apollo

**OEDIPUS:** I thought I heard you say  
that Laius was killed at a crossroads.

**JOCASTA:** Yes, that was how the story went and still  
845 that word goes round.

**OEDIPUS:** Where is this place, Jocasta,  
where he was murdered?

**JOCASTA:** Phocis is the country  
and the road splits there, one of two roads from Delphi,  
850 another comes from Daulia.

**OEDIPUS:** How long ago is this?

**JOCASTA:** The news came to the city just before  
you became king and all men's eyes looked to you.  
854 What is it, Oedipus, that's in your mind?

**OEDIPUS:** What have you designed, O Zeus, to do with  
me?

**JOCASTA:** What is the thought that troubles your heart?

**OEDIPUS:** Don't ask me yet—tell me of Laius—  
How did he look? How old or young was he?

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

**OEDIPUS:** O God, I think I have  
called curses upon myself in ignorance.

**JOCASTA:** What do you mean? I am terrified  
865 when I look at you.

**OEDIPUS:** I have a deadly fear  
that the old seer had eyes. You'll show me more  
if you can tell me one more thing.

**JOCASTA:** I will.  
870 I'm frightened, —but if I can understand,  
I'll tell you all you ask.

**OEDIPUS:** How was his company?  
Had he few with him when he went this journey,  
or many servants, as would suit a prince?

**JOCASTA:** In all there were but five, and among them  
876 a herald;<sup>48</sup> and one carriage for the king.

**OEDIPUS:** It's plain—it's plain—who was it told you  
this?

**JOCASTA:** The only servant that escaped safe home.

**OEDIPUS:** Is he at home now?

**JOCASTA:** No, when he came home again  
881 and saw you king and Laius was dead,  
he came to me and touched my hand and begged  
that I should send him to the fields to be  
my shepherd and so he might see the city  
885 as far off as he might. So I  
sent him away. He was an honest man,  
as slaves go, and was worthy of far more  
than what he asked of me.

**OEDIPUS:** O, how I wish that he could come back  
quickly!

**JOCASTA:** He can. Why is your heart so set on this?

**OEDIPUS:** O dear Jocasta, I am full of fears  
892 that I have spoken far too much; and therefore  
I wish to see this shepherd.

**JOCASTA:** He will come;  
895 but, Oedipus, I think I'm worthy too  
to know what it is that disquiets you.

**OEDIPUS:** It shall not be kept from you, since my mind  
has gone so far with its forebodings. Whom  
should I confide in rather than you, who is there  
900 of more importance to me who have passed  
through such a fortune?  
Polybus was my father, king of Corinth,<sup>49</sup>  
and Merope, the Dorian,<sup>50</sup> my mother.  
I was held greatest of the citizens  
905 in Corinth till a curious chance befell me  
as I shall tell you—curious, indeed,  
but hardly worth the store set upon it.  
There was a dinner and at it a man,  
a drunken man, accused me in his drink  
910 of being bastard. I was furious  
but held my temper under for that day.  
Next day I went and taxed<sup>51</sup> my parents with it;  
they took the insult very ill from him,  
the drunken fellow who had uttered it.  
915 So I was comforted for their part, but  
still this thing rankled<sup>52</sup> always, for the story  
crept about widely. And I went at last  
to Pytho, though my parents did not know.  
But Phoebus sent me home again unhonored

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<sup>48</sup> **herald** *n.* person who makes proclamations and carries messages.

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<sup>49</sup> **Corinth** city at the western end of the isthmus (Greece) that joins the Peloponnesus to Boeotia

<sup>50</sup> **Dorian** *n.* one of the main branches of the Hellenes; the Dorians invaded the Peloponnesus.

<sup>51</sup> **taxed** *v.* imposed a burden on; put a strain on.

<sup>52</sup> **rankled** *v.* caused to have long-lasting anger and resentment.

920 in what I came to learn, but he foretold  
 other and desperate horrors to befall me,  
 that I was fated to lie with my mother,  
 and show to daylight an accursed breed  
 which men would not endure, and I was doomed  
 925 to be murdered of the father that begot me.  
 When I heard this I fled, and in the days  
 that followed I would measure from the stars  
 the whereabouts of Corinth—yes, I fled  
 to somewhere where I should not see fulfilled  
 930 the infamies<sup>53</sup> told in that dreadful oracle.  
 And as I journeyed I came to the place  
 where, as you say, this king met with his death.  
 Jocasta, I will tell you the whole truth.  
 When I was near the branching of the crossroads,  
 935 going on foot, I was encountered by  
 a herald and a carriage with a man in it,  
 just as you tell me. He that led the way  
 and the old man himself wanted to thrust me  
 out of the road by force. I became angry  
 940 and struck the coachman who was pushing me.  
 When the old man saw this he watched his moment,  
 and as I passed he struck me from his carriage,  
 full on the head with his two pointed goad.<sup>54</sup>  
 But he was pain in full and presently  
 945 my stick had struck him backwards from the car  
 and he rolled out of it. And then I killed them  
 all. If it happened there was any tie  
 of kinship twixt this man and Laius,  
 who is then now more miserable than I,  
 950 what man on earth so hated by the Gods,  
 since neither citizen nor foreigner  
 may welcome me at home or even greet me,  
 but drive me out of doors? And it is I,  
 I and no other have so cursed myself.  
 955 And I pollute the bed of him I killed  
 by the hands that killed him. Was I not born evil?  
 Am I not utterly unclean? I had to fly  
 and in my banishment not even see  
 my kindred not set foot in my own country,  
 960 or otherwise my fate was to be yoked  
 in marriage with my mother and kill my father,  
 Polybus who begot me and had reared me.  
 Would not one rightly judge and say that on me  
 these things were sent by some malignant God?  
 965 O no, no, no—O holy majesty  
 of God on high, may I not see that day!  
 May I be gone out of men's sight before  
 I see the deadly taint of this disaster  
 come upon me.

**CHORUS:** Sir, we too fear these things. But until you see  
 this man

971 face to face and hear his story, hope.

**OEDIPUS:** Yes, I have just this much hope—to wait until  
 the herdsman comes.

**JOCASTA:** And when he comes, what do you want with  
 him?

**OEDIPUS:** I'll tell you; if I find that his story is the same  
 as yours, I

975 at least will be clear of this guilt.

**JOCASTA:** Why what so particularly did you learn from  
 my story?

**OEDIPUS:** You said that he spoke of highway *robbers*  
 who killed Laius. Now if he uses the same num-  
 ber, it was not I who killed him. One man cannot  
 980 be the same as many. But if he speaks of a man  
 travelling alone, then clearly the burden of the  
 guilt inclines toward me.

**JOCASTA:** Be sure, at least, that this was how he  
 told the story. He cannot unsay it now, for every  
 985 one in the city heard it—not I alone. But, Oedi-  
 pus, even if he diverges from what he said then,  
 he shall never prove that the murder of Laius  
 squares rightly with the prophecy—for Loxias  
 declared that the king should be killed by his own  
 990 son. And that poor creature did not kill him  
 surely, —for he died himself first. So as far as  
 prophecy goes, henceforward I shall not look to  
 the right hand or the left.

**OEDIPUS:** Right. But yet, send some one for the peasant  
 to bring

995 him here; do not neglect it.

**JOCASTA:** I will send quickly. Now let me go indoors. I  
 will do  
 nothing except what pleases you.

[Exit.]

**CHORUS:**

*Strophe*

May destiny ever find me  
 pious in word and deed  
 995 prescribed by the laws that live on high:  
 laws begotten in the clear air of heaven,  
 whose only father is Olympus;  
 no mortal nature brought them to birth,  
 no forgetfulness shall lull them to sleep;  
 1000 for God is great in them and grows not old.

*Antistrophe*

Insolence<sup>55</sup> breeds the tyrant, insolence

<sup>53</sup> **infamies** *n.* items of notorious disgrace and dishonor.

<sup>54</sup> **goad** *n.* sharp, pointed stick used to drive animals.

<sup>55</sup> **insolence** *n.* arrogance; bold disrespectfulness.

if it is glutted with a surfeit,<sup>56</sup> unseasonable,  
unprofitable,  
climbs to the roof-top and plunges  
sheer down to the ruin that must be,  
1005 and there its feet are no service.  
But I pray that the God may never  
abolish the eager ambition that profits the state.  
For I shall never cease to hold the God as our protector.

### *Strophe*

If a man walks with haughtiness  
1010 of hand or word and gives no heed  
to Justice and the shrines of Gods  
despises—may an evil doom  
smite him for his ill-starred pride of heart! —  
  
if he reaps gains without justice  
1015 and will not hold from impiety  
and his fingers itch for untouchable things.  
When such things are done, what man shall contrive to  
shield his soul from the shafts of the God?  
When such deeds are held in honor,  
1020 why should I honor the Gods in the dance?

### *Antistrophe*

No longer to the holy place,  
to the navel of earth I'll go  
to worship, not to Abae  
not to Olympia,  
1025 unless the oracles are proved to fit,  
for all men's hands to point at.  
O Zeus, if you are rightly called  
the sovereign lord, all mastering,  
let this not escape you nor your ever-living power!  
1030 The oracles concerning Laius  
are old and dim and men regard them not.  
Apollo is nowhere clear in honor; God's service  
perishes.

## **PART II:**

**JOCASTA:** Princes of the land, I have had the thought to  
go  
to the Gods' temples, bringing in my hand 1035  
garlands and gifts of incense, as you see.  
For Oedipus excites himself too much  
at every sort of trouble, not conjecturing,<sup>57</sup>  
like a man of sense, what will come from what was,  
but he is always at speaker's mercy, 1040 when he  
speaks terrors. I can do no good  
by my advice, and so I came as suppliant  
to you, Lycaean Apollo, who are nearest.  
These are the symbols of my prayer and this

my prayer: grant us escape free of the curse. 1045  
Now when we look to him we are all afraid;  
he's pilot of our ship and he is frightened.

[Enter MESSENGER.]

**MESSENGER:** Might I learn from you, sirs, where is the  
house of Oedipus? Or best  
of all, if you know, where is the king himself?

**CHORUS:** This is his house and he is within doors. This  
lady is his wife and mother  
1050 of his children.

**MESSENGER:** God bless you, lady, and God bless your  
household! God bless  
Oedipus' noble wife!

**JOCASTA:** God bless you, sir, for your kind greeting!  
What do you  
want of us that you have come here? What have you  
to tell us?

**MESSENGER:** Good news, lady. Good for your house  
and for your  
1056 husband.

**JOCASTA:** What is your news? Who sent you to us?

**MESSENGER:** I come from Corinth and the news I bring  
will give  
you pleasure. Perhaps a little pain too.

**JOCASTA:** What is this news of double meaning?

**MESSENGER:** The people of the Isthmus will choose  
Oedipus to be  
1062 their king. That is the rumor there.

**JOCASTA:** But isn't their king still old Polybus?

**MESSENGER:** No. He is in his grave. Death has got  
him.

**JOCASTA:** Is that the truth? Is Oedipus' father dead?

**MESSENGER:** May I die myself if it be otherwise!

**JOCASTA:** [to a SERVANT]: Be quick and run to the  
King with the  
news! O oracles of the Gods, where are you now? It  
was from  
this man Oedipus fled, lest he should be his murderer!  
And  
1070 now he is dead, in the course of nature, and not  
killed by Oedipus.

[Enter OEDIPUS.]

<sup>56</sup> **surfeit** *n.* excessive supply

<sup>57</sup> **conjecturing** *v.* inferring or prediction from incomplete  
evidence.

**OEDIPUS:** Dearest Jocasta, why have you sent for me?

**JOCASTA:** Listen to this man and when you hear reflect  
what is the  
outcome of the holy oracles of the Gods.

**OEDIPUS:** Who is he? What is his message for me?

**JOCASTA:** He is from Corinth and he tells us that  
1076 your father Polybus is dead and gone.

**OEDIPUS:** What's this you say, sir? Tell me yourself.

**MESSENGER:** Since this is the first matter you want  
clearly told:  
Polybus has gone down to death. You may be sure of  
it.

**OEDIPUS:** By treachery or sickness?

**MESSENGER:** A small thing will put old bodies asleep.

**OEDIPUS:** So he died of sickness, it seems, —poor old  
man!

**MESSENGER:** Yes, and of age—the long years he had  
1085 measured.

**OEDIPUS:** Ha! Ha! O dear Jocasta, why should one  
look to the Pythian hearth?<sup>58</sup> Why should one look to  
the birds screaming overhead? They prophesied  
that I should kill my father! But he's dead,  
1090 and hidden deep in earth, and I stand here  
who never laid a hand on a spear against him,—  
unless perhaps he died of longing for me,

and thus I am his murderer. But they,  
the oracles, as they stand—he's taken them  
1095 away with him, they're dead as he himself is,  
and worthless.

**JOCASTA:** That I told you before now.

**OEDIPUS:** You did, but I was misled by my fear.

**JOCASTA:** But surely I must fear my mother's bed?

**OEDIPUS:** Why should man fear since chance is all in all  
1101 for him, and he can clearly foreknow nothing?  
Best to live lightly, as one can, unthinkingly. As to  
your mother's marriage bed, —don't fear it.  
1105 Before this, in dreams too, as well as oracles,  
many a man has lain with his own mother.  
But he to whom such things are nothing bears  
his life most easily.

**OEDIPUS:** All that you say would be said perfectly  
1110 if she were dead; but since she lives I must  
still fear, although you talk so well, Jocasta:

**JOCASTA:** Still in your father's death there's light of  
comfort?

**OEDIPUS:** Great light of comfort; but I fear the living.

**MESSENGER:** Who is the woman that makes you  
afraid?

**OEDIPUS:** Merope, old man, Polybus' wife.

**MESSENGER:** What about her frightens the queen and  
you?

**OEDIPUS:** A terrible oracle, stranger, from the Gods.

**MESSENGER:** Can it be told? Or does the sacred law  
1120 forbid another to have knowledge of it?

**OEDIPUS:** O no! Once on a time Loxias said  
that I should lie with my own mother and  
take on my hands the blood of my own father.  
And so for these long years I've lived away  
1125 from Corinth; it has been to my great happiness;  
but yet it's sweet to see the face of parents.

**MESSENGER:** This was the fear which drove you out of  
Corinth?

**OEDIPUS:** Old man, I did not wish to kill my father.

**MESSENGER:** Why should I not free you from this fear,  
sir.  
1130 since I have come to you in all goodwill?

**OEDIPUS:** You would not find me thankless if you did.

**MESSENGER:** Why, it was just for this I brought the  
news, —  
to earn your thanks when you had come safe home.

**OEDIPUS:** No, I will never come near my parents.

**MESSENGER:** Son,  
1136 it's very plain you don't know what you're doing.

**OEDIPUS:** What do you mean, old man? For God's sake,  
tell me.

**MESSENGER:** If your homecoming is checked by fears  
like these.

**OEDIPUS:** Yes, I'm afraid that Phoebus may prove right.

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<sup>58</sup> **Pythian hearth** *n.* the Delphic oracle that prophesied  
Oedipus' crime.



**MESSENGER:** The murder and the incest?

**OEDIPUS:** Yes, old man;  
1142 that is my constant terror.

**MESSENGER:** Do you know  
that all your fears are empty?

**OEDIPUS:** How is that,  
1146 if they are father and mother and I their son?

**MESSENGER:** Because Polybus was no kin to you in  
blood.

**OEDIPUS:** What, was not Polybus my father?

**MESSENGER:** No more than I but just so much.

**OEDIPUS:** How can  
1151 my father be my father as much as one  
that's nothing to me?

**MESSENGER:** Neither he nor I begat you.

**OEDIPUS:** Why then did he call me son?

**MESSENGER:** A gift he took you from these hands of  
mine.

**OEDIPUS:** Did he love so much what he took from  
another's hand?

**MESSENGER:** His childlessness before persuaded him.

**OEDIPUS:** Was I a child you bought or found when I  
1159 was given to him?

**MESSENGER:** On Cithaeron's slopes  
in the twisting thickets you were found.

**OEDIPUS:** And why  
were you a traveler in those parts?

**MESSENGER:** I was in charge of mountain flocks.

**OEDIPUS:** You were a shepherd?  
1167 a hireling vagrant?<sup>59</sup>

**MESSENGER:** Yes, but at least at that time  
the man that saved your life, son.

**OEDIPUS:** What ailed me when you took me in your  
arms?

**MESSENGER:** In that your ankles should be witnesses.

**OEDIPUS:** Why do you speak of that old pain?

**MESSENGER:** I loosed you;  
1175 the tendons of your feet were pierced and  
fettered, —

**OEDIPUS:** My swaddling<sup>60</sup> clothes brought me a rare  
disgrace.

**MESSENGER:** So that from this you're called your  
present name. <sup>61</sup>

**OEDIPUS:** Was this my father's doing or my mother's?  
For God's sake, tell me.

**MESSENGER:** I don't know, but he  
1181 who gave you to me has more knowledge than I.

**OEDIPUS:** You yourself did not find me then? You took  
me  
from someone else?

**MESSENGER:** Yes, from another shepherd.

**OEDIPUS:** Who was he? Do you know him well enough  
to tell?

**MESSENGER:** He was called Laius' man.

**OEDIPUS:** You mean the king who reigned here in the  
old days?

**MESSENGER:** Yes, he was that man's shepherd.

**OEDIPUS:** Is he alive  
1190 still, so that I could see him?

**MESSENGER:** You who live here  
would know best.

**OEDIPUS:** Do any of you here  
know of this shepherd whom he speaks about  
1195 in town or in the fields? Tell me. It's time  
that this was found out once for all.

**CHORUS:** I think he is none other than the peasant  
whom you have sought to see already; but  
Jocasta here can tell us best of that.

**OEDIPUS:** Jocasta, do you know about this man  
1201 whom we have sent for? Is he the man he  
mentions?

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<sup>59</sup> **hireling vagrant** person who wanders from place to place  
and works at odd jobs.

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<sup>60</sup> **swaddling clothes** long, narrow bands of cloth wrapped  
around infants in ancient times.

<sup>61</sup> **your present name** *Oedipus* means "swollen foot"

**JOCASTA:** Why ask of whom he spoke? Don't give it heed;

nor try to keep in mind what has been said.  
It will be wasted labor.

**OEDIPUS:** With such clues  
1206 I could not fail to bring my birth to light.

**JOCASTA:** I beg you—do not hunt this out—I beg you,  
if you have any care for your own life.  
What I am suffering is enough.

**OEDIPUS:** Keep up  
1211 your heart, Jocasta. Though I'm proved a slave,  
thrice slave, and though my mother is thrice slave,  
you'll not be shown to be of lowly lineage.

**JOCASTA:** O be persuaded by me, I entreat you;  
1215 do not do this.

**OEDIPUS:** I will not be persuaded to let be  
the chance of finding out the whole thing clearly.

**JOCASTA:** It is because I wish you well that I  
give you this counsel—and it's the best counsel.

**OEDIPUS:** Then the best counsel vexes me, and has  
1221 for some while since.

**JOCASTA:** O Oedipus, God help you!  
God keep you from the knowledge of who you are!

**OEDIPUS:** Here, some one, go and fetch the shepherd for me;  
1225 and let her find her joy in her rich family!

**JOCASTA:** O Oedipus, unhappy Oedipus!  
that is all I can call you, and the last thing  
that I shall ever call you.

[*Exit.*]

**CHORUS:** Why has the queen gone, Oedipus, in wild  
1230 grief rushing from us? I am afraid that trouble  
will break out of this silence.

**OEDIPUS:** Break out what will! I at least shall be  
willing to see my ancestry, though humble.  
Perhaps she is ashamed of my low birth,  
1235 for she has all a woman's high-flown pride.  
But I account myself a child of Fortune,<sup>62</sup>  
beneficent Fortune, and I shall not be  
dishonored. She's the mother from whom I spring;  
the months, my brothers, marked me, now as small

<sup>62</sup> **child of Fortune** Since Fortune, or good luck, saved him from death, Oedipus refuses to feel shame at being illegitimate or of humble origins.

1240 and now again as mighty. Such is my breeding,  
and I shall never prove so false to it,  
as not to find the secret of my birth.

**CHORUS:**

*Strophe*

If I am a prophet and wise of heart  
you shall not fail, Cithaeron,  
1245 by the limitless sky, you shall not!—  
to know at tomorrow's full moon  
that Oedipus honors you,  
as native to him and mother and nurse at once;  
and that you are honored in dancing by us, as finding  
favor in sight of our king.

1250 Apollo, to whom we cry, find these things  
pleasing!

*Antistrophe*

Who was it bore you, child? One of  
the long-lived nymphs<sup>63</sup> who lay with Pan<sup>64</sup>—  
the father who treads the hills?  
Or was she a bride of Loxias, your mother? The  
grassy slopes  
1255 are all of them dear to him. Or perhaps Cyllene's  
king<sup>65</sup>  
or the Bacchaants' God that lives on the tops  
of the hills received you a gift from some  
one of the Helicon Nymphs, with whom he mostly  
plays?

[*Enter an OLD MAN, lead by OEDIPUS' SERVANTS.*]

**OEDIPUS:** If some one like myself who never met him  
1260 may make a guess, —I think this is the herdsman,  
whom we were seeking. His old age is consonant  
with the other. And besides, the men who bring him  
I recognize as my own servants. You  
perhaps may better me in knowledge since  
1265 you've seen the man before.

**CHORUS:** You can be sure

I recognize him. For if Laius  
had ever an honest shepherd, this was he.

**OEDIPUS:** You, sir, from Corinth, I must ask you first,  
1270 is this the man you spoke of?

**MESSENGER:** This is he  
before your eyes.

**OEDIPUS:** Old man, look here at me  
and tell me what I ask you. Were you ever

<sup>63</sup> **nymphs** *n.* minor female divinities with youthful, beautiful, and amorous qualities; "nymph" means young woman.

<sup>64</sup> **Pan** Arcadian shepherd god who lived in the mountains, danced and sang with the nymphs, and played his pipes.

<sup>65</sup> **Cyllene's King** Hermes, the messenger god.

1275 a servant of King Laius?

**HERDSMAN:** I was, —  
no slave he bought but reared in his own house.

**OEDIPUS:** What did you do as work? How did you live?

**HERDSMAN:** Most of my life was spent among the flocks.

**OEDIPUS:** In what part of the country did you live?

**HERDSMAN:** Cithaeron and the places near to it.

**OEDIPUS:** And somewhere there perhaps you knew this man?

**HERDSMAN:** What was his occupation? Who?

**OEDIPUS:** This man here,  
1285 have you had any dealings with him?

**HERDSMAN:** No—  
not such that I can quickly call to mind.

**MESSENGER:** That is no wonder, master. But I'll make him remember what he does not know. For I know, that he well knows the country of  
1290 Cithaeron, how he with two flocks, I with one kept company for three years—each year half a year—from spring till autumn time and then when winter came I drove my flocks to our fold home again and he to Laius' steadings. Well—am I right or not in what I said we did?

**HERDSMAN:** You're right—although it's a long time ago.

**MESSENGER:** Do you remember giving me a child  
1296 to bring up as my foster child?

**HERDSMAN:** What's this?  
Why do you ask the question?

**MESSENGER:** Look old man,  
1300 here he is—here's the man who was that child!

**HERDSMAN:** Death take you! Won't you hold your tongue?

**OEDIPUS:** No, no,  
do not find fault with him, old man. Your words are more at fault than his.

**HERDSMAN:** O best of masters,  
1306 how do I give offense?

**OEDIPUS:** When you refuse  
to speak about the child of whom he asks you.

**HERDSMAN:** He speaks out of his ignorance, without meaning.

**OEDIPUS:** If you'll not talk to gratify me, you  
1311 will talk with pain to urge you.

**HERDSMAN:** O please, sir,  
don't hurt an old man, sir.

**OEDIPUS** [*to the SERVANTS*]: Here, one of you,  
1315 twist his hands behind him.

**HERDSMAN:** Why, God help me, why?  
What do you want to know?

**OEDIPUS:** You gave a child  
to him, —the child he asked you of?

**HERDSMAN:** I did.  
1321 I wish I'd died the day I did.

**OEDIPUS:** You will  
unless you tell me truly.

**HERDSMAN:** And I'll die  
1325 far worse if I should tell you.

**OEDIPUS:** This fellow  
is bent on more delays, as it would seem.

**HERDSMAN:** O no, no! I have told you that I gave it.

**OEDIPUS:** Where did you get this child from? Was  
1330 it your own or did you get it from another?

**HERDSMAN:** Not  
my own at all; I had it from some one.

**OEDIPUS:** One of these citizens? or from what house?

**HERDSMAN:** O master, please—I beg you, master, please  
1335 don't ask me more.

**OEDIPUS:** You're a dead man if I  
ask you again.

**HERDSMAN:** It was one of the children  
of Laius.

**OEDIPUS:** A slave? Or born in wedlock?

**HERDSMAN:** O God, I am on the brink of frightful speech.

**OEDIPUS:** And I of frightful hearing. But I must hear.

**HERDSMAN:** The child was called his child; but she within,

1344 your wife would tell you best how all this was.

**OEDIPUS:** *She* gave it to you?

**HERDSMAN:** Yes, she did, my lord.

**OEDIPUS:** To do what with?

**HERDSMAN:** Make away with it.

**OEDIPUS:** She was so hard—its mother?

**HERDSMAN:** Aye through fear

1351 of evil oracles.

**OEDIPUS:** Which?

**HERDSMAN:** They said that he should kill his parents.

**OEDIPUS:** How was it that you gave it to this old man?

**HERDSMAN:** O master,

I pitied it, and thought that I could send it  
off to another country and this man  
1360 was from another country. But he saved it  
for the most terrible troubles. If you are  
the man he says you are, you're bred to misery.

**OEDIPUS:** O, O, O, they will all come,  
all come out clearly! Light of the sun, let me  
1365 look upon you no more after today!  
I who first saw the light bred of a match  
accursed and accursed in my living  
with them I lived with, cursed in my killing.

[*Exit all but the CHORUS.*]

**CHORUS:**

*Strophe*

O generations of men, how I  
1370 count you as equal with those who live  
not at all!  
What man, What man on earth wins more  
of happiness than a seeming  
and after that turning away?  
1375 Oedipus, you are my pattern of this,  
Oedipus, you and your fate!  
Luckless Oedipus, whom of all men  
I envy not at all.

*Antistrophe*

In as much as he shot his bolt  
1380 beyond the others and won the prize

of happiness complete—

O Zeus—and killed and reduced to nought  
the hooked taloned maid of the riddling speech,<sup>66</sup>  
standing a tower against death for my land;  
1385 hence he was called my king and hence  
was honored the highest of all  
honors; and hence he ruled  
in the great city of Thebes.

*Strophe*

But now whose tale is more miserable?  
1390 Who is there lives with a savager fate?  
Whose troubles so reverse his life as his?  
O Oedipus, the famous prince  
for whom a great have  
the same both as a father and son  
1395 sufficed for generation,  
how, O how, have the furrows plowed  
by your father endured to bear you, poor wretch,  
and hold their peace so long?

*Antistrophe*

Time who sees all has found you out  
1400 against your will; judges your marriage accursed,  
begetter and begot at one in it.  
O child of Laius,  
would I had never seen you.  
I weep for you and cry  
1405 a dirge of lamentation.  
To speak directly, I drew my breath  
from you at the first and so now I lull  
my mouth to sleep with your name.

[*Enter a SECOND MESSENGER*]

**SECOND MESSENGER:** O Princes always honored by  
our country,

1410 what deeds you'll hear of and what horrors see,  
what grief you'll feel, if you as true born Thebans,  
care for the house of Labdacus's sons.  
Phasts nor Ister<sup>67</sup> cannot purge<sup>68</sup> this house,  
I think, with all their streams, such things  
1415 it hides, such evils shortly will bring forth  
into the light, whether they will or not;  
and troubles hurt the most  
when they prove self-inflicted.

**CHORUS:** What we had known before did not fall short  
1420 of bitter groaning's worth; what's more to tell?

**SECOND MESSENGER:** Shortest to hear and tell—our  
glorious queen Jocasta's dead.

<sup>66</sup> the hooked taloned maid of the riddling speech the Sphinx;  
talons are claws.

<sup>67</sup> Phasis nor Ister rivers that flow to the Black Sea.

<sup>68</sup> purge v. cleanse of guilt or sin.

**CHORUS:** Unhappy woman! How?

**SECOND MESSENGER:** By her own hand. The worst of what was done

1425 you cannot know. You did not see the sight.  
Yet in so far as I remember it  
you'll hear the end of our unlucky queen.  
When she came raging into the house she went  
straight to her marriage bed, tearing her hair  
1430 with both her hands, and crying upon Laius  
long dead—Do you remember, Laius,  
that night long past which bred a child for us  
to send you to your death and leave  
a mother making children with her son?  
1435 And then she groaned and cursed the bed in  
which  
she brought forth husband by her husband, children  
by her own child, an infamous double bond.  
How after that she died I do not know, —  
for Oedipus distracted us from seeing.  
1440 He burst upon us shouting and we looked  
to him as he paced frantically around,  
begging us always: Give me a sword, I say,  
to find this wife no wife, this mother's womb,  
this field of double sowing whence I sprang  
1445 and where I sowed my children! As he raved  
some god showed him the way—none of us there.  
Bellowing terribly and led by some  
invisible guide he rushed on the two doors, —  
wrenching the hollow bolts out of their sockets,  
1450 he charged inside. There, there, we saw his wife  
hanging, the twisted rope around her neck.  
When he saw her, he cried out fearfully  
and cut the dangling noose. Then as she lay,  
poor woman, on the ground, what happened after.  
1455 was terrible to see. He tore the brooches—  
the gold chased brooches fastening her robe—  
away from her and lifting them up high  
dashed them on his own eyeballs, shrieking out  
such things as: they will never see the crime  
1460 I have committed or had done upon me!  
Dark eyes, now in the days to come look on  
forbidden faces, do not recognize those  
whom you long for—with such imprecations<sup>69</sup>  
he struck his eyes again and yet again  
1465 with the brooches. And the bleeding eyeballs  
gushed  
and stained his beard—no sluggish oozing drops  
but a black rain and bloody hail poured down.  
So it has broken—and not on one head  
but troubles mixed for husband and for wife.  
1470 The fortune of the days gone was true  
good fortune—but today groans and destruction  
and death and shame—of all ills can be named  
not one is missing.

<sup>69</sup> **imprecations** *n.* acts of cursing and invoking evil.

**CHORUS:** Is he now in any ease from pain?

**SECOND MESSENGER:** He shouts

1476 for some one to unbar the doors and show him  
to all the men of Thebes, his father's killer,  
his mother's—no I cannot say the word,  
it is unholy—for he'll cast himself,  
1480 out of the land, he says, and not remain  
to bring a curse upon his house, the curse  
he called upon it in his proclamation. But  
he wants for strength, aye, and some one to guide him;  
his sickness is too great to bear. You, too,  
1485 will be shown that. The bolts are opening.  
Soon you will see a sight to waken pity  
even in the horror of it.

[*Enter the blinded Oedipus.*]

**CHORUS:** This is a terrible sight for men to see!

I never found a worse!  
1490 Poor wretch, what madness came upon you!  
What evil spirit leaped upon your life  
to your ill-luck—a leap beyond man's strength!  
Indeed I pity you, but I cannot  
look at you, though there's much I want to ask  
1495 and much to learn and much to see.  
I shudder at the sight of you.

**OEDIPUS:** O,O,

where am I going? Where is my voice  
borne on the wind to and fro?  
1500 Spirit, how far have you sprung?

**CHORUS:** To a terrible place whereof men's ears  
may not hear, nor their eyes behold it.

**OEDIPUS:** Darkness!

Horror of darkness enfolding, resistless unspeakable  
visitant sped by an ill wind in haste!

1505 madness and stabbing pain and memory  
of evil deeds I have done!

**CHORUS:** In such misfortunes it's no wonder  
if double weighs the burden of your grief.

**OEDIPUS:** My friend,

15110you are the only steadfast, the one that attends on  
me;  
you still stay nursing the blind man.  
Your care is not unnoticed. I can know  
your voice, although this darkness is my world.

**CHORUS:** Doer of dreadful deeds, how did you dare  
1515 so far to do despite to your own eyes?  
What spirit urged you to it?

**OEDIPUS:** It was Apollo, friends, Apollo,

that brought this bitter bitterness, my sorrows to completion.

But the hand that struck me

1520 was none but my own.

Why should I see

whose vision shoed me nothing sweet to see?

**CHORUS:** These things are as you say.

**OEDIPUS:** What can I see to love?

1525 What greeting can touch my ears with joy?

Take me away, and haste—to the place out of the way!

Take me away, my friends, the greatly miserable,  
the most accursed, whom God too hates

above all men on earth!

**CHORUS:** Unhappy in your mind and your misfortune,

1531 would I had never known you!

**OEDIPUS:** Curse on the man who took

the cruel bonds from off my legs, as I lay in the field.

He stole me from death and saved me,

1535 no kindly service.

Had I died then

I would not be so burdensome to friends.

**CHORUS:** I, too, could have wished it had been so.

**OEDIPUS:** Then I would not have come

1540 to kill my father and marry my mother  
infamously.

Now I am godless and child of impurity,

begetter in the same seed that created my wretched self.

If there is any ill worse than ill,

that is the lot of Oedipus.

**CHORUS:** I cannot say your remedy was good;

1546 you would be better dead than blind and living.

**OEDIPUS:** What I have done here was best done—don't tell me

otherwise, do not give me further counsel.

I do not know with what eyes I could look

1550 upon my father when I die and go

under the earth, nor yet my wretched mother—

those two to whom I have done things deserving  
worse punishment than hanging. Would the sight  
of children bred as mine are, gladden me?

1555 No, not these eyes, never. And my city,

its towers and sacred places of the Gods,

of these I robbed my miserable self

when I commanded all to drive *him* out,

the criminal since proved by God impure

1560 and of the race of Laius.

To this guilt I bore witness against myself—

with what eyes shall I look upon my people?

No. If there were a means to choke the fountain

of hearing I would not have stayed my hand

1565 from locking up my miserable carcass,<sup>70</sup>

seeing and hearing nothing; it is sweet

to keep your thoughts out of the range of hurt.

Cithaeron, why did you receive me? why

having received me did you not kill me straight?

1570 And so I had not shown to men my birth.

O Polybus and Corinth and the house,

the old house that I used to call my father's—

what fairness you were nurse to, and what foulness

festered beneath! Now I am found to be

1575 a sinner and a son of sinners. Crossroads,

and hidden glade, oak and the narrow way

at the crossroads, that drank my father's blood

offered you by my hands, do you remember

still what I did as you looked on, and what

1580 I did when I came here? O marriage, marriage!

you bred me and again when you had

bred children of your child and showed to men

brides, wives and mothers and the foulest deeds

that can be in this world of ours.

1585 Come—it's unfit to say what is unfit

to do. —I beg of you in God's name hide me

somewhere outside your country, yes, or kill me,

or throw me into the sea, to be forever

out of your sight. Approach and deign to touch me

1590 for all my wretchedness, and do not fear.

No man but I can bear my evil doom.

**CHORUS:** Here Creon comes in fit time to perform  
or give advice in what you ask of us.

Creon is left as sole ruler in your stead.

**OEDIPUS:** Creon! Creon! What shall I say to him?

1596 How can I justly hope that he will trust me?

In what is past I have been proved towards him

an utter liar.

[Enter CREON.]

**CREON:** Oedipus, I've come

1600 not so that I might laugh at you nor taunt you

with evil of the past. But if you still

are without shame before the face of men

reverence at least the flame that gives all life,

our Lord the Sun, and do not show unveiled

1605 to him pollution such that neither land

nor holy rain nor light of day can welcome.

[To a SERVANT.]

Be quick and take him in. It is most decent

that only kin should see and hear the troubles

of kin.

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<sup>70</sup> **carcass** *n.* dead body of an animal; here, scornful references to Oedipus' own body.

**OEDIPUS:** I beg you, since you've torn me from  
1611 my dreadful expectations and have come  
in a most noble spirit to a man  
that has used you vilely<sup>71</sup>—do a thing for me.  
I shall speak for your own good, not for my own.

**CREON:** What do you need that you would ask of me?

**OEDIPUS:** Drive me from here with all the speed you  
can

to where I may not hear a human voice.

**CREON:** Be sure, I would have done this had not I  
wished first of all to learn from the God the course  
1620 of action I should follow.

**OEDIPUS:** But his word  
has been quite clear to let the parricide,<sup>72</sup>  
the sinner, die.

**CREON:** Yes, that indeed was said.  
1625 But in the present need we have best discover  
what we should do.

**OEDIPUS:** And will you ask about  
a man so wretched?

**CREON:** Now even you will trust  
1630 the God.

**OEDIPUS:** So. I command you—and will beseech you—  
to her that lies inside that house give burial  
as you would have it; she is yours and rightly  
you will perform the rites for her. For me—  
1635 never let this my father's city have me  
living a dweller in it. Leave me live  
in the mountains where Cithaeron is, that's called  
*my* mountain, which my mother and father  
while they were living would have made my tomb.  
1640 So I may die by their decree who sought  
indeed to kill me. Yet I know this much:  
no sickness and no other thing will kill me.  
I would not have been saved from death if not  
For some strange evil fate. Well, let my fate  
1645 go where it will.  
Creon, you need not care  
about my sons; they're men and so wherever  
they are, they will not lack a livelihood.  
But my two girls—so sad and pitiful—  
150 whose table never stood apart from mine,  
and everything I touched they always shared—  
O Creon, have a thought for them! And most  
I wish that you might suffer me to touch them  
and sorrow with them.

[Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE, OEDIPUS' two  
daughters.]

1655 O my lord! O true noble Creon! Can I  
really be touching them, as when I saw?  
What shall I say?  
Yes, I can hear them sobbing—my two darlings!  
and Creon has had pity and has sent me  
1660 what I loved most? Am I right?

**CREON:** You're right: it was I gave you this  
because I knew from old days how you loved them  
as I see now.

**OEDIPUS:** God bless you for it, Creon,  
1666 and may God guard you better on your road  
that he did me!  
O children,  
where are you? Come here, come to my hands,  
1670 a brothers hands which turned your father's eyes,  
those bright eyes you knew once, to what you see,  
a father seeing nothing, knowing nothing,  
begetting you from his own source of life.  
I weep for you—I cannot see your faces—  
1675 I weep when I think of the bitterness  
there will be in your lives, how you must live  
before the world. At what assemblages  
gay company will you go and not come home  
1680 in tears instead of sharing in the holiday?  
And when you're ripe for marriage, who will he be  
the man who'll risk to take such infamy  
as shall cling to my children, to bring hurt  
on them and those that marry with them? What  
1685 curse is not there? "Your father killed his father  
and sowed the seed where he had sprung himself  
and begot you out of the womb that held him."  
These insults you will hear. Then who will marry you?  
No one, my children; clearly you are doomed  
1690 to waste away in barrenness unmarried.  
Son of Menoeceus,<sup>73</sup> since you are all the father  
left these two girls, and we, their parents, both  
are dread to them—do not allow them wander  
like beggars, poor and husbandless.  
1695 They are of your own blood.  
And do not make them equal with myself  
in wretchedness; for you can see them now  
so young, so utterly alone, save you only.  
Touch my hand, noble Creon, and say yes.  
1700 If you were older, children, and wiser,  
there's much advice I'd give you. But as it is,  
let this be what you pray: give me a life  
wherever there is opportunity  
to live, and better than was my father's.

**CREON:** Your tears have had enough of scope; no go  
within the house.

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<sup>71</sup> *vilely adv.* wickedly.

<sup>72</sup> *parricide n.* one who murders one's father.

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<sup>73</sup> *Son of Menoeceus* Creon.



**OEDIPUS:** I must obey, though bitter of heart.

**CREON:** In season, all is good.

**OEDIPUS:** Do you know on what conditions I obey?

**CREON:** You tell me them,  
1710 and I shall know them when I hear.

**OEDIPUS:** That you shall send me out  
to live away from Thebes.

**CREON:** That gift you must ask of the God.

**OEDIPUS:** But I'm now hated by the Gods.

**CREON:** So quickly you'll obtain your prayer.

**OEDIPUS:** You consent then?

**CREON:** What I do not mean, I do not use to say.

**OEDIPUS:** Now lead me away from here.

**CREON:** Let go the children, then, and come.

**OEDIPUS:** Do not take them from me.

**CREON:** Do not seek to be master in everything,  
1722 for the things you mastered did not follow you  
throughout your life.

[As CREON and OEDIPUS go out.]

**CHORUS:** You that live in my  
ancestral Thebes, behold this Oedipus, —

Him who knew the famous riddles and was a man most  
masterful;

1725 not a citizen who did not look with envy on his  
lot—

see him now and see the breakers of misfortune  
swallow him!

Look upon that last day always. Count no mortal happy  
till

he has passed the final limit of his life secure from  
pain.