

ANOTHER OEDIPUS

(MONOLOGUE)

incorporating Euripides' lost

Oedipus

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I am Oedipus.

I do not know my own story.

I am... another Oedipus....

My own?

in which

I am

I

(listen)

I... sssssssssssss...t

no longer ex/ist... ex/cept in darkness, in gaps between memories.

zzzzzz...d

I – ssss – in the ...(*sharp-in-breath, hold*)... *before* memories. There, there is

no ‘gap’. Therefore no –

(*A whisper, a secret*) The word ‘gap’ fills the gap it names.

Sssssssssssssss Ssssssssssssssee

In your first memory, are you seeing... or are you seen?

Child/Mother/Father.

First One. Second Two. Third Three.

Mother/Child/Father.

And or But?

Father/Mother/Child.

Three roads. I am one. From?

Say four years? Three years? Two? Before you were born. Can you *see* her?

The One who will become your mother? Of course! You were *there, then,*

necessarily, if backgrounded. (No!) Awaited. She was *your mother* before she was *a mother*. As soon as she was... old enough/WOMAN, *you* were there –

Then why can you not see her holding/nursing you, you now born (merging, *remerging*, after e-merging)?

Seeing is distance. Not

as old photographs/death-vacated/yet *returning gaze*.

(*Even quieter*) The word ‘gap’ fills the gap it names.

But the word road? The *wordroad*?

To?

“The destiny of Oedipus moves us... because it might have been ours – because the oracle laid the same curse upon us *before our birth* as upon him.”

Freud. My emphasis.

It follows: we are born *into*.... *InTo*.

But say you are firstborn. Then you cannot be born *InTo* a FAMILY.

But you are.

Into a gap, yours, you. Into... your own awaitedness, a seat reserved in a theatre.

If we could *remember being born!* None of this would happen.

Therefore no... origin. Unoriginal.

(99% *unvoiced*) The word ‘gap’ fills the gap it namessssss.

But the To?

To?

Mandalay? Ruin? Bed sores? The light? A paraffin heater? The ‘final curtain’?

No. Those are stories. I am a road. You are on me now. I do not know my own story. Own? I do not own my known. I did not story me. In. To.

Prologue. **Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once begot a child....**¹

Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once be-sired a child....

Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once be-squired a wife, spermed forth within her wombwalls’ drench....

Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once bestride his lady lay and loosed his broth of bollock-burst her-in....

Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once went all a-fuck forgetting, till his comerush waxed ahoy and waves of woman sluiced his joyjuice from him....

Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once his allout genedrive Yessed, be-dadding *me* into the works....

Into his way....

¹ The first line of Euripides’ lost *Oedipus*. Fr (fragment) 539a. All fragments from the play appear the first time in bold.

“The play was about Oedipus and Jocasta and the Sphinx.” John Malalas, 6th century, possibly with no access to a complete text, even then.

Another Oedipus. ‘The same old story’? First This then That third...

sssssssssee-ing.... Or: “King Oedipus, who [ONE] slew his father Laius and [TWO] married his mother Jocasta, merely shows *us* the fulfillment of *our own* childhood wishes.” Freud. My emphasis. Third thus *US*... *YOU* rather. Audience. Ss.

But you do not exist. Rather, you no longer. Rather, defined by me, you too lost. Defined by me, you too in darkness, in gaps between memories.

Just. Not. Blind.

I a road. You on me now.

You, my witnesses, my validators, my hypocrite fellow feelers, my co-together-breathers, my bestowers of my secret sense, my returners of my self to me (if I should lose it), my politely silent echoes, my tellers of my time (not your own), my rehearsal room would-be whisperers, my future-far-flung gossellers, my soon-to-be forgetters, my self-seeking salvagers, my confederate illusionists, my puppeted puppeteers.

Mark me then.

Quote. **Testifying to misfortune in front of all, a man lacks brain; concealment is smart.**² Unquote.

My words? Creon’s? Jocasta’s? An observation of the chorus? What chorus? Old men? Young women?

If mine, choosing, accordingly, not to exposit... to expound... not to *ex-pose* my... *xyz*... then You, my witnesses, my validators, my hypocrite fellow feelers, my... *you could not complete me*.

Mark me. Horror is... satisfying. ‘Misfortune’ is... arrival. You meet me at the station. Mark my mark.

He puts on the mask-without-a-gaze, ‘looks’ towards and over audience, slow, straining (can he see?). Removes it.

² Fr 553

Just. Not. Yet.

...

“Forcing the son of Polybus to the ground, we blind him and...”³

The son of Polybus.

“Forcing the son of Polybus to the ground, we blind him and...”

WE blind HIM.

Again he puts on the mask-without-a-gaze, ‘looks’ towards and over audience, slow, straining (can he see?). Removes it.

Why are you looking at me like...?

Pause

Fair is foul and foul is fair?

Pause

Resurrected, still rotting?

Pause

I have the secret, from outer space?

Pause

HIV positive, irresistible cologne-pheromone?

Pause

Celebrity leper?

Pause

I AM A RIDDLE.

—

sssssssssssssst

ssssssssssssmm

sssssssssssssk

ssssssssssaaaaa

— Can you fly?

— These are wings.

— In order to defeat you, I only need to be your equal.

— You to believe you are, only, I need.

³ Fr 541

- I am here.
- Where?
- Come to meet you. Defeat you.
- Feet, did you say?
- Ask your riddle.
- Man.
- That is an answer.
- To a man.

Pause

(*Puzzled*) But this was found in the desert, text badly... eroded:

Dot dot dot **her mane-hair. Her tail folding under lion leg-limbs
down she squatted... drawing in her fast-in-flight** [something]... [two line
gap].... **If toward the sun's team, then gold the beast's back – a rainbow
of steel-blue if toward clouds....**⁴

(She!)

Later: She... **σπιξασ'** [piping, hissing, sssssssss-ing]... **her riddle,
the death-dealerESS...**⁵

Then in verse.... the riddle roughly:

what has one voice but alone in nature changes

first on four feet going then on two feet then on three?

First One. Second Two. Third Three.

No.

First *Four*. Second Two (good). Third Three (good).

(*Walzing*) Four two three, four two three, four two three... (*etc.*)

If

we cannot tell the dancer from the dance

then

we cannot tell the answer from the answerer...

the dancer from the dancerer.

The teller. The tale.

...

⁴ Fr 540

⁵ Fr 540a

I defeated the Sphinx!

“The play was about Oedipus and Jocasta *and the Sphinx*.” John Malalas. –
My emphasis.

Pause

But this must be me, mine, probably:

“Dot dot dot her mane-hair. Her tail folding under lion leg-limbs down she squatted... drawing in her fast-in-flight [something]... [two line gap].... If toward the sun’s team, then gold the beast’s back – a rainbow of steel-blue if toward clouds....” Etcetera.

Anyone else, mere messenger, the said events have happened recently, just now, not ‘in the past’. Not in the passed past. Nine times out of ten. Therefore it’s me, mine.⁶

Pause

I defeated the Sphinx – though I say so myself.

Living in – reliving – the past, as near as seems-like-yesterday, not like this morning/not like half an hour ago. Sleep slices, reassembles, time. Everything before this day, remembered – fragments – everything – all there – yet *fragments*. Sliced. Cut up. Reassembled. First This then That. One. Three. Two.

Anyway, it got me King – and inside (legitimate) the queen’s panties.

Thereafter

Forcing the son of Polybus to the ground, we blind him and....

Brief pause

Forcing the son of Polybus to the ground, WE blind HIM and....

Pause

Quote unquote?

Oh yes, of course. We *have* met before. You’re that servant of Laius, aren’t you? Got away.

Pause

I don’t blind myself?

⁶ A reasonable, but inconclusive, argument: why should anyone other than Oedipus recount the story of the Sphinx if it happened long ago? But some reconstructions assume it has only just happened, or even happens in the early stages of the play.

He considers the mask-without-a-gaze.

Recognised.

But where was he all these...

Years? Months? Days?

I may not even be a father, yet.

I don't blind myself, then?

When that time comes, I'm ALREADY... me.

But now the son of Polybus.

He considers the mask-without-a-gaze. Makes to put it on. Realises he can no longer do so. Turns to a member of the audience, holding out the mask...

Would you...?

Pause.

No.

He throws the mask away in a sudden immense fury. Pause.

Oedipus AND Jocasta AND the Sphinx.

And Jocasta.

A wife is always beneath her husband, *even* if he is beneath her.⁷

STAND

A right-thinking wife is her husband's slave. One who looks down on him is wrong-thinking.⁸

BY

Look to the mind, the mind only. Good looks are worthless in one without wisdom.⁹

YOUR

I'll (she will) elaborate. **What makes a good wife? A wife who bonds truly with her husband necessarily adopts the following principle. First, if he is not at all handsome, she should look at him as one who is handsome, for what decides the issue here is not the eye, or not the eye alone, but the mind. Next, she should adjudge him a fine orator in everything he says, even if he is the opposite. Moreover, in whatever work she does, her goal must be his gratification. For her it is even a pleasure when he suffers**

⁷ Fr 546

⁸ Fr 545

⁹ Fr 458

some difficulty, because then she can put on a sad face and share it with him.... You and I, now you are tainted, I shall endure and share all that, nothing too much or too bitter.¹⁰

MAN.

You and I, now you are tainted... stained... infected... polluted....

Pause

No part in this, the desert.

Scissors – metaphorically, sliced

wisdom

excised, scalpel-clean, to stand alone

GET THIS

WISE UP

A woman's place for once from the horse's mouth, the 'You and I' clinches it, now YOU are tainted....

Pause

What does she KNOW?

Share all what?

I king-killer, cannot

stay here king king here here. Blindness the beginning.

EXile – d

she shall endure and share all that, nothing too much or too bitter –

Yes, (possibly) Creon has come. She says:

Envy, which undermines the minds of many, has destroyed this man, *me* included.¹¹ My emphasis.

So – he, her brother Creon, willed me (“this man”) down. He: **An unholy man who clings to the altar, seeking sanctuary, I would ignore custom and seize him for the sake of justice, unafraid of gods, for in every circumstance a bad man should know bad for bad.**¹²

Onstage altar, blinded offstage/this must come after/

assume exile merely. SHE, at this –

a wife is always beneath her husband, even if he is beneath her –

¹⁰ Fr 545a

¹¹ Fr 551

¹² Fr 554a

and so on
stands by her me/along for the ride.

Pause

Something wrong.

Pause

Something too
SUPERIOR if, and only if,
HER words, OWNED. Too autonomously his wife-appendage.
I CREATE YOU HUSBAND IN YOUR IMAGE I
Brackets.
Thighs.

Pause

Then the unthinkable. What makes a good –

Assuming normal ear-function, you hear me I hear you, potentially: two-way channel, air. But not like sight. One may be seen, looked upon, gazed at, *from behind*, asymmetrically, the seer unseen, the state of being seen, looked upon, gazed at all unknown, all *unbeknown*. But blissfully? No, unease makes itself heard, within. Felt I mean felt. The feel of eyes upon... your back or story, the seen or the seen-through.

The blind? Must know. Must just know, actors in that Theatre of Darkness, not exactly Darkness, not completely Darkness. Know, that is, where the audience – no, spectator – IS. The feel of gaze upon... not exactly upon... but nor into, being 'looked into'. No/yes, *upon* will do in that odd sense you get a grip upon yourself... the grip of gaze upon... one's... skin-of-self, self-of-skin.

The from-behind now all-around.

I was walking behind her as chance would have in the street say fifteen paces or strides back of her [no one!] her pace quickened not much but stride must have shortened for something in her tightened in her for I at fifteen paces or

strides back (of her) stayed without change of stride or pace and suddenly I thought we are not actually moving we are fixed in some new space-time but it didn't seem unnatural and certainly not a violence or violation though true I WAS looking at UPON her and sensed her sense that if she yielded to that near irresistible urge more than must I WANT to look back as if looking back she would see into if not me my intention pure illusion but urge that HAD more than want to be resisted because it would be Yes a kind of Yes ALSO when suddenly I realized I was making no footsteps no sound of my footsteps in fact I was barefoot in fact AFTER ALL it was I that was naked so how did she know or rather why did she think IN HER BODY I was following her or did she?

The from-behind now all-around
(not for her.)

Sky.

Ever thought about sky? Sky is Gaze. Something-Up-There-Eye. Ever thought I, I, I am NOT ONLY Down Here? *Who else* looks down... upon? God a joke, *God's* joke (good one!). Then. You. Go. Bli... go? One day hour minute second, split even, or... bit by bit. "Go"? Gone! *Something* gone, gone, not you. Where, now, the Up There? Down h... but no, now you try to learn the farness of a smell, worry WHO SMELLS ME (as (perhaps) before), but not – at least not *necessarily* (and not as as before) – from *above*!

For now there is no Sky.

How could there be? Division... of the Dark from the Light, failed.

One does not "go" into the darkness. Nor... obviously.

NO FUCKING SKY!

Like the word "and" not having/utterly having lost the word "and". Or "but".

Not forgetting never having ever fucking HAD.

Or synonyms.

Outweighs any LIMB.

NO FUCKING PHANTOM SKY!

Yes, I am angry. I – Oedipus – angry? Having had? Having... known?

What is TRULY unthinkable –

I, regicide, blinded, exiled FOR THAT ALONE

having...

Having known unknowingly, and still unknowing, now, still undiscovered to myself

left to live outside or exiled from MY–OWN story

bitter in a blindness not my own decree- or deed-inflicted

AFFLICTED merely

ANYONE's blindness For I, I, Oedipus, alone

understand

blindness, from disease or accident, ONLY SEEMS so absolutely, almost unspeakably PERSONAL, only seems to relocate you, you alone, in (into) another world, your own world, utterly unsharable, not only with the sighted, with also those like you who should empa... empa... but who are SO FAR AWAY (even shaking hands/the voice from some 'other side').

All this only seems.

IN FACT A COMMONPLACE your inner

void

your thoughts fish a thousand metres down unbearably slow

in the absence of predators

waiting

waiting

for from the surface

detritus

IN YOU USELESSNESS

the next meal

(Now at last obviously blind, without mask, he 'hears a voice') Mother!

Mother! You have come? *(He feels 'her' face. Recognition.)* Thebans, this is my mother, Periboea, wife of Polybus of Corinth, my father. Mother, I have a story. I have a story to tell you. You see, I am king! I am king of Thebes! You

will ask me how. Because I defeated the Sphinx! I, Oedipus, defeated the Sphinx. “Dot dot dot her mane-hair. Her tail folding under lion leg-limbs down she squatted... drawing in her fast-in-flight [something]... [two line gap].... If toward the sun’s team, then gold the beast’s back – a rainbow of steel-blue if toward clouds....” Etcetera.

You have come to tell me of the death of Polybus? Hum. You will also see that I am blind. Polybus? That’s good. But my story! You see, I saved the city, but I also... apparently I killed a man, on the road. I was on the road. A man. I was in his way. ‘Way.’ I was... in the way. His. But it wasn’t his! So... I killed him. Then... I defeated the Sphinx, and **nothing is harder to fight than a woman!**¹³ I, Oedipus! Polybus dead? That’s good, good. Four two three, four two three. And the answer is the answerer! I am man. Not *a* man. Man. As man, I fill... something. As a man, which, true, I also am, I... something is missing. That’s why tragedy. *A* man, *any* man, you see? Much of a muchness. Peas in a pod. But – to stand out, king, different, ONE, not just one, if you see – ONE (listen to it, ONE!) – you must be man. You must be MAN in the same sense that there is WOMAN. Or once was THEREFORE MUST BE NOW woman. Man. Nothing, therefore, missing. But my eyes. Only, now, my eyes. Polybus dead?

Then the oracle was wrong.

Anyway, there was a man – with the man – I killed – got away. Came. Called me regicide. REG – icide. Recognised. Then... this. I must have killed, unwitting, my... what’s the word... my... forerunner, my precursor, my prototype, antecedent, prelude, prolegomena, preamble, foreword, predecessor, food processor...

My... way-maker.

What oracle? Was wrong? That said I would kill my father and...

(Delightedly) Now how can I marry you, mother? I am married already!

(Considering the word) ALREADY.... READY... something accomplished,

¹³ Fr 544

done, completed, over, finished, past.... To be... is to have been...
AWAITED... therefore to have been... ALREADY! (*Pause*) Mother?
Mother? (*Where is she?*) *Before* our birth, the same curse?
The seat in the theatre, dark... theatre, with your name on it?

We do not know she was a character. But it solves the problem.
– I am not, after all, your mother. Etcetera etcetera.
AND ALREADY BLIND!

But a single day holds multiple changes.¹⁴
The god-force¹⁵ **gives great dislocations to our lives and upends fortune.**¹⁶

(Ruminatively, trying to understand... what?)
Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once begot a child....
Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once be-sired a child....
Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once be-squired a wife, spermed forth
within her wombwalls' drench....
Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once bestride his lady lay and loosed
his broth of bollock-burst her-in....
Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once went all a-fuck forgetting, till his
comerush waxed ahoy and waves of woman sluiced his joyjuice from him....
Although forbidden by Phoebus, Laius once his allout genedrive Yessed, be-
dadding *me* into the works....
Into his way....

¹⁴ Fr 549

¹⁵ δαίμων

¹⁶ Fr 554

Something wrong.

Pause

Something too

SUPERIOR if, and only if,

HER words OWNED. Too autonomously his wife-appendage.

I CREATE YOU HUSBAND IN YOUR IMAGE I

Pause

Then the unthinkable. What makes a good...

mother? A mother who bonds truly with her... son necessarily adopts the following principle.¹⁷ (*Perfunctorily*) First, if he is not at all handsome, she should look at him as one who is handsome, for what decides the issue here is not the eye, or not the eye alone, but the mind. Next, she should adjudge him a fine orator in everything he says, even if he is the opposite. Moreover, in whatever work she does, her goal must be his gratification. For her it is even a pleasure when he suffers some difficulty, because then she can put on a sad face and share it with him.... You and I, now you are...

my son

bracketed

by my thighs, my thoughts...

It is revealed to all that a man has taken his mother to wife, so he is exiled.

The woman, however, chooses to go with him. Does she say: A) a good wife stands by her man; or B) a good mother stands by her son?

In which (incommensurate, mutually exclusive, alternative-universe-splitting) role (rendered thus identikit) would she see – cast – herself?

Logically, she says what (she thinks) he wants (longs, dream-demands) to hear, that is, *as* a good wife/*as* a good mother, indistinguishably: I

COMPLETE you, strings not attached.

Unconditional, my love, my love.

¹⁷ I am attracted to the idea that Euripidean irony extends so far as (in relation to *this* story) to define a 'good wife' in terms (arguably) more fitting a 'good mother'.

Because there is now no husband... I mean father. Not even an old photograph still returning gaze.

Out of THE WAY!

THE –

(It wasn't his.)

IT WAS.

No such thing as a dead eye. That is why
you shut them
for? in? on? ... a fresh-dead corpse.

Piano tuner?

Wine taster?

Masseur?

Blindness the beginning.

ANYONE'S.

Birth.

Beggary.