

SOPHOCLES *O.C.* 217

THE attribution of line 217 to Antigone seems never to have been questioned, and Hermann's emendation in 219 (μέλλετον for the μέλλετ' of the MSS.) has been generally accepted as 'fitting, since Oedipus and Antigone have just been speaking together' (Jebb; *alii similia*). However, the introduction of Antigone into this lyrical dialogue may result from misunderstanding the tenor of the scene. The passage in question is difficult in parts and the text frequently emended; nevertheless, enough seems clear to suggest that 217 belongs to the chorus. Antigone's alleged participation would interrupt the crescendo of the chorus's unremitting pressure on Oedipus until he complies with their demand in 220. The restoration of 217 to the chorus would thus reveal another instance of Sophocles' absolute concentration on the action developing at the moment, regardless of whoever else is on the stage.

The passage (212–19) is embedded in the astrophic lyrical dialogue 207–36, but the theme is introduced already in the last period of antistr. β (203–6) with the chorus's innocent, and under the circumstances natural, request that Oedipus identify himself. The astrophon begins with Oedipus' reply to the last of the three questions of the chorus (205–6: τίν' ἄν σοῦ πατρίδ' ἐκπυθοίμαν; answered by 207: ὦ ξένοι, ἀπόπολις· his ἀλλὰ μή (207) is interrupted by the chorus's astonished (209) τί τόδ' ἀπεννέπεις, γέρον; Oedipus' unexpectedly impassioned appeal (210–11) on no account to investigate his identity arouses their curiosity and suspicion, as well as their determination to extract his secret from him; and the merciless quest begins (212).

The chorus have to repeat their command three times (all imp. praes.: 212: αὔδα—taking up the imp. aor. αὔδασον from 204; 215: φώνει and 217: λέγ') till Oedipus consents: ἐρῶ (218). The first imp. (212) stands alone: 'Speak!' Oedipus tries to evade the direct confrontation with his interrogators and to gain time by drawing in Antigone: τέκνον, ὦμοι, τί γεγώνω; (213), but the chorus continue with their quest without allowing any interference, this time formulating their question in greater detail and with insistent repetition: τίνος εἰ σπέρματος . . . πατρόθεν; (214–15). Oedipus expresses his perplexity with the Homeric (*Il.* 11. 404; *Od.* 5. 465) ὦμοι ἐγώ, τί πάθω (216), again invoking his daughter in a second attempt to escape from the tightening grip of the chorus; but as before they go on with their quest immediately and relentlessly and with renewed impetus (217). Now the order to speak is backed by an ἐπείπερ-clause.¹ The cumulative effect of the three commands augmented by this causal clause breaks Oedipus' resistance: no more deliberative subjunctives and abortive appeals to his daughter; for the first time since the quest started he faces the chorus: ἀλλ' ἐρῶ· οὐ γὰρ ἔχω κατακρυφάν (218).²

But the fight is not yet over—Oedipus can still bid for time. The very

¹ ἐπείπερ ἐπ' ἔσχατα βαίνεις seems to mean literally 'since you are walking up to [or, const. praegn., 'have walked up to and are now walking on'] land beyond which there is nothing', i.e. you have no place for further retreat or for further straggling, you cannot further evade us. βαίνεις is Triclinius' emendation for the MSS.' μένεις. ἔσχατος is other-

wise used by Sophocles only either as qualifying adjective or, when as n. sing. or n. pl. subst., defined by a genitive noun.

² ἀλλ' assentient 'malgré lui' (Denniston, *Greek Particles*², p. 16). κατακρυφά is *hapax legomenon*; the verb κατακρύπτω is not found in the extant tragedies of Sophocles.

declaration that he will speak and all the more the γάρ-clause, which only acknowledged the truth of the chorus's ἐπείπερ-argument, retard the progress of the action. The chorus will not have it and express their impatience in 219: 'Hurry!';¹ which leads to the revelation of Oedipus' identity by means of three questions addressed by him to the chorus; these questions balance the three appeals by which the chorus forced Oedipus to surrender. In a way even the reactions of the interrogated parties correspond: Neither Oedipus nor the chorus replies; Oedipus turns to his daughter, the chorus to Zeus, both as it were trying to avert the already clearly envisaged horror.

If the arguments from the structure and the rhythm of the scene suggest that 217 was written for the chorus, some points in the close vicinity of the passage discussed seem to support this interpretation:

1. 225 is another appeal of Oedipus to Antigone, in the same astropon; again it is not Antigone but the chorus who reply (or, rather, continue).

2. From her appearance on the stage up to this point Antigone always uses πάτερ in the first sentence of her replies to Oedipus (14 v. 1, 9; 82 v. 81; 171 v. 170). Furthermore, whenever she addresses him in the presence of others, either reacting upon circumstances or prompted by somebody else, she always does so with πάτερ (183, 197). (The only instance of Antigone turning to her father without this vocative is 111, where she informs him of the approach of the chorus; there the identity of the speaker is clear, since only father and daughter are on the stage, as is explicitly stated by Antigone in 83: ἐμοῦ μόνης πέλας.) Had Sophocles intended 217 for Antigone, one would have expected her to address her father here too with πάτερ, either to express her reverence, or to mark the line as hers.

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¹ MSS.: μακρά μέλλετ' ἀλλὰ ταχύνετε (or ταχύνετε), Φ γε μέλλετ'. Emendations proposed: μέλλετέ γε Triclinius, μέλλομεν Elmsley, μέλλεις Blaydes, μέλλετον Hermann. Blaydes's μέλλεις is prima facie attractive, but seems not to fit the metre used in this passage: it would introduce the only parœmiac with a longum (— — — — —), all the other parœmiacs (217, 221, 223, 225, 227) having double short (— — — — —). If the

metre is assumed to have been consistent throughout, either Hermann's or Triclinius' emendation is possible in spite of the singular before and after; cf. 226 (including Antigone) with 233 sqq. Most attractive is Elmsley's μέλλομεν: now that Oedipus has surrendered to the chorus and undertaken to carry out their order, he has as it were become one of them.