

Meaning and Myth: Translating the Fourth Stasimon of *Oidipous Turannos*

Every translator, willingly or not, produces a distinct version of the text he or she translates. Connotations and subsidiary meanings of the Greek words are lost, while those of the English words are introduced. Controlling these new meanings is among the translator's tasks. But "imperfections" in translations need not be viewed as such. While reading translations together can help to reveal and retain the manifold of meaning and complexity contained in the original, read individually, each translation brings to light a new Oidipous and a new Sophokles. Translation does not simply "bring across"—it finds and creates anew. The differences among translations may, at times, betray the translator's assumptions about the text and performance, or his preferences and purpose. While each translation comes from the same original author—here, Sophokles and his *Oidipous Turannos*—the translators and moment of translation are unique. So, too, are the works themselves.

The fourth stasimon of *OT*, in which the Chorus speaks of and addresses their just fallen king, is an especially apt example of the ways in which even subtle distinctions in tone or diction can create different meanings. Depending on the manner of translating often ambiguous Greek words and phrases, the Chorus can express any combination of pity, judgment, love, disappointment, or anger with Oidipous. All are present in the Greek but the translator's work determines where on the continuum from pity to condemnation the Chorus' opinion will fall.

This paper will examine the work of Ruby Blondell, Robert Fagles, Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, and Reginald Gibbons in translating the fourth stasimon of *OT*. Though in name translations of the same object, each will be shown to have created a distinct chorus with differing opinions of past and ongoing events. None look at Oidipous in precisely the same way; even the recollection of events differs among the translations. By examining the methods, processes, and meanings of these translations, I aim to demonstrate that each translation is a distinct and self-contained retelling of the myth of Oidipous. Healthy myth, writes Bringhurst, is "perpetually under revision." This evolution is not necessarily conscious—it may most naturally be unconscious. The decisions and interpretations of translators are not outside of this process. The aim of translation is (or ought to be) to bring across alive—and if the myth is still a living myth, it is, like Heraklitus' river, always in flux. In addition to a better understanding of the workings of these translations, this paper aims to further a better understanding of the way in which the majority will encounter and learn from the myth and Sophokles' play, and to provide a framework that allows us to better approach both myth and play as living, rather than static, items.

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