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The undersigned, acting as a Committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Valborg Taylor Olson for the degree of Master of Arts.

They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Report

of

Committee on Examination

This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a committee of the Graduate School, have given Valborg Taylor Olson final oral examination for the degree of Master of Arts . We recommend that the degree of Master of Arts be conferred upon the candidate.

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Voltaire's Oedipe and Racine

A Thesis submitted to the
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by

Valborg Taylor Olson

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Fired with the desire to equal Racine and become the recognized master of French tragedy, the young Voltaire chose as his first subject the celebrated theme of antiquity, that of the ill-fated Oedipus. Racine had never actually competed with Sophocles in this subject, which so impressed the imagination of the Greeks. He had, however, according to Fénelon, "formé le plan d'une tragédie françoise d'Oedipe, suivant le goût de Sophocle, sans y mêler aucune intrigue postiche d'amour, et suivant la simplicité grecque." (1) Of the writing of Oedipe Voltaire said, "je travaillai à peu près comme si j'avais été à Athènes." (2) The close analogy between so much of his plot as is directly concerned with the fundamental theme of Oedipe's unconscious guilt and the Greek tragedy attests Voltaire's imitation of Racine in following "le goût de Sophocle" and "la simplicité grecque."

In Grecian legend one of the predictions of the gods had been that the son of Laïus, king of Thebes, would murder his father and marry his mother. To avoid the fulfillment of the dire prophecy the infant son of Laïus and Jocaste had been exposed on a mountain. Years later, Oedipus, the successor of Laïus, in seeking to avert the pestilence ravaging the land because Laïus'

(1) Fénelon, Lettre à M. Dacier sur les occupations de l'Académie, 1714, in Louis Racine, Mémoires sur la Vie de Jean Racine. Oeuvres, Vol. I, p. 268.

(2) Au P. Porée. Correspondance, 1730. Oeuvres, Vol. XXXIII, p. 198.

murderer had not been punished, found himself to be the unfortunate son of Laïus and Jocaste. Oedipus thereupon destroyed his sight that he might not have longer to witness the sorrows brought upon his family and subjects as the result of his involuntary crimes.

Sophocles was the first to weave this legend into tragedy. In Oedipus rex he takes up the thread of Oedipe's misfortunes after he has committed the double crime of parricide and incest. He pictures the Thebans suffering from the plague, Oedipe's efforts to remove their ills, his suspicion first of Jocaste's brother and then of himself, the final confirmation of his worst fears and consequent satisfaction of the gods by his self-inflicted blindness. It was to this treatment of the theme as the one most admired by Racine that Voltaire turned for the plot of Oedipe.

To the Oedipus of Seneca Voltaire owes none of his material and to the Oedipe of Corneille very little. Seneca modeled his tragedy very closely on the Greek with only such changes as would make the situations more terrible and far less suitable for eighteenth century presentation. Corneille made the mistake of introducing a love affair between a daughter of Laïus and Jocaste and a prince which was severely censured and thus scarcely the thing for a young author to emulate. Dimas, the name of a confidant of Oedipe in Corneille, Voltaire uses as the name of the friend of Jocaste's lover. The rôle is based, however, on that of Pylade in Andromaque as the consideration of Racine's influence on the plot of Oedipe will show. The one scene Voltaire admitted liking in

Corneille, (3) that in which Oedipe tells of having won Jocaste and the throne by conquering the sphinx, Voltaire makes use of in the exposition of his tragedy. Save a few scattered expressions, the diction in Voltaire's version is not at all like that of the seventeenth century Oedipe, but greatly resembles the diction of Racine.

Louis Racine says in his Mémoires sur la Vie de Jean Racine, " le sujet d'Oedipe, où l'amour ne doit jamais trouver place sans avilir la grandeur du sujet, et même sans choquer la vraisemblance, convenoit au dessein qu'il avoit de ramener la tragédie des anciens, et de faire voir qu'elle pouvoit être parmi nous, comme chez les Grecs, exempte d'amour." (4) Voltaire's intention to write an Oedipe, following Racine's plan, " sans y mêler aucune intrigue postiche d'amour " was frustrated by the insistent demands of the actors that a love plot be introduced. (5) The search for the love intrigue led Voltaire to Racine as a model and he found in the Oreste-Hermione plot of Andromaque the foundation for making the alteration in his tragedy. Thus, even in deviating from the original plan Racine would have wished to carry out, the aspiring

(3) Remarques sur l'Oedipe de Corneille. Oeuvres, Vol. XXXII, p.158.

(4) Louis Racine, Mémoires sur la Vie de Jean Racine.
Oeuvres, Vol. I, p.268.

(5) Epître à Madame la Duchesse de Maine en tête d'Oreste.
Oeuvres, Vol. IV, p.81.

Remarques sur l'Oedipe de Corneille. Oeuvres, Vol. XXXII, p.170.

Réponse à un Académicien. Oeuvres, Vol. XXV, p.226.

Voltaire remained the faithful disciple of the master he desired to equal.

Of the legendary background for the character of Jocaste's lover Voltaire says, " Quelques personnes s'imaginent que Philoctète était un pauvre écuyer d'Hercule, qui n'avait d'autre mérite que d'avoir porté ses flèches, et qui veut s'égalier à son maître dont il parle toujours. Cependant il est certain que Philoctète était un prince de la Grèce, fameux par ses exploits, compagnon d'Hercule, et de qui même les dieux avaient fait dépendre le destin de Troie. Je ne sais si je n'en ai point fait en quelques endroits un fanfaron; mais il est certain que c'était un héros." (6) Philoctète was in legend, as Voltaire says, the bearer of Hercules' arrows, who, untrue to his promise to keep secret the resting-place of the ashes of Hercules, received a wound from one of the poisoned darts which caused him to be exiled on Lemnos, where Sophocles dramatized his lonely existence in the Philoctetes. The rest of the above statements of Voltaire are true only of Philoctète as he modeled him on Oreste who was " un prince de la Grèce, fameux par ses exploits " and capable as the son and representative of Agamemnon of arousing all Greece against Troy and thus of determining her fate at will.

(6) Lettre V sur Oedipe, qui contient la critique du nouvel Oedipe. Oeuvres, Vol. II, p.37.

The first scene of Oedipe is, in many ways, a duplication of the first scene of Andromaque. Strangely enough, from the point of view of comparison, each of these scenes comprises one hundred forty-two lines of the text. Less mechanical likenesses are, however, abundant. In both scenes the narration to a returned friend of what has happened while he was away serves to give the exposition of the tragedy. Philoctète has, like Oreste, long been absent from the woman he loves. Both heroes had found and eagerly accepted what seemed to be a chance to forget in the glory of war their hopeless love. In each case fate had assigned a mission which brought about the return of the lover and the renewal of his passion and remorse.

Dimas regrets the unhappy love of Philoctète in the manner in which Oreste had spoken to Pylade of his love for Hermiône:

Oreste (7)

" Tu vis naître ma flamme et mes
premiers soupirs.

Enfin, quand Ménélas disposa
de sa fille

En faveur de Pyrrhus, vengeur
de sa famille,

Tu vis mon désespoir; "

Dimas (8)

" J'ai plaint longtemps ce feu
si puissant et si doux;

Il naquit dans l'enfance, il
croissait avec vous;

Jocaste, par un père à son
hymen forcée,

Au trône de Laïus à regret fut
placée."

(7) Andromaque, Act I, Sc. 1, ll. 40-43.

(8) Oedipe, Act I, Sc. 1, ll. 101-104.

Philoctète's certainty that bidding an " éternel adieu " to Jocaste would put an end to his woe is a repetition of Oreste's belief that, away from Hermione, he could overcome his passion for her:

Oreste (9)

" Je fis croire et je crus ma
victoire certaine;
Je pris tous mes transports
pour des transports de
haine,
Détestant ses rigueurs, ra-
baissant ses attraits,
Je défiais ses yeux de me
troubler jamais.
Voilà comme je crus étouffer
ma tendresse.
En ce calme trompeur j'ar-
rivai dans la Grèce;
Et je trouvai d'abord ses
princes rassemblés,
Qu'un péril assez grand sem-
blait avoir troublés.

Philoctète (10)

" Il fallut fuir pour vaincre;
oui, je te le confesse,
Je luttai quelque temps; je
sentis ma faiblesse:
Il fallut m'arracher de ce
funeste lieu,
Et je dis à Jocaste un éternel
adieu.
Cependant l'univers, tremblant
au nom d'Aloïde,
Attendait son destin de sa va-
leur rapide;
A ses divins travaux j'osai
m'associer;
Je marchai près de lui, ceint
du même laurier.
C'est alors, en effet, que mon
âme éclairée

(9) Andromaque, Act I, Sc. 1, ll. 53-64.

(10) Oedipe, Act I, Sc. 1, ll. 111-120.

J'y cours. Je pensai que la
guerre et la gloire

Contre les passions se sentit
assurée."

De soins plus importants rem-
pliraient ma mémoire;
Que mes sens reprenant leur
première vigueur,
L'amour achèverait de sortir
de mon coeur."

There was nothing in the Greek legends which could justify Voltaire in representing that Philoctète has been brought back to Thebes to erect a tomb to Hercules, the leader who might have kept him faithful to his determination to seek Jocaste no more. But Oreste, because of Pyrrhus' infidelity to the Greeks in embracing the cause of Andromaque, has been redirected by fate to Hermione in much the same way:

Oreste (11)

" Mais admire avec moi le sort
dont la poursuite
Me fait courir alors au
piège que j'évite.
J'entends de tous côtés qu'
on menace Pyrrhus;

Philoctète (12)

" Crois-moi, s'il eût vécu, si
d'un présent si rare
Le ciel pour les humains eût été
moins avare,
J'aurais loin de Jocaste achevé
mon destin:

(11) Andromaque, Act I, Sc.1, (a) 65-70, (b) 85-88, (c) 97, 98.

(12) Oedipe, Act I, Sc.1, 11.95-100.

Toute la Grèce éclate en murmures confus;
 On se plaint qu'oubliant son sang et sa promesse
 Il élève en sa cour l'ennemi de la Grèce," (a)

Et, dût ma passion renaître dans mon sein,
 Tu ne me verrais point, suivant l'amour pour guide,
 Pour servir une femme abandonner Alcide."

" Mais l'ingrate en mon coeur reprit bientôt sa place:
 De mes feux mal éteints je reconnus la trace;
 Je sentis que ma haine allait finir son cours,
 Ou plutôt je sentis que je l'aimais toujours." (b)

" Puisqu'après tant d'efforts ma résistance est vaine,
 Je me livre en aveugle au destin qui m'entraîne." (c)

The two scenes in which Philoctète appears with Jocaste are in the same parts of Oedipe as the analagous scenes between Oreste and Hermione in Andromaque. (13) Here Voltaire uses lines from other characters than Oreste in writing the rôle of Philoctète. Most of these lines come from Andromaque's speech to Her-

(13) Andromaque, Act II, Sc. 2, and Act III, Sc. 2.

Oedipe, Act II, Sc. 3, and Act III, Sc. 3.

All similarities in parallel passages have been underlined whether they are merely common-places of poetic diction or such as to lead to the belief that they represent actual borrowings from Racine on the part of Voltaire. The reason for this underlining in the second case is obvious. In regard to the common-places, they serve rather to indicate the movement of the verse and the arrangement of ideas.

mione. Some statement on the part of Philoctète that would exclude his interference with the existing condition of Jocaste's marriage with Oedipe was necessary to make the love of Philoctète and Jocaste a reminiscence. Andromaque's assurance in her speech to Hermione that she was not jealous and did not wish to prevent Hermione's happiness in her marriage with Pyrrhus expressed exactly the sentiment Voltaire must put into the mouth of Philoctète. That he did not hesitate to do so literally is shown by the appearance in the first edition of Oedipe of the line:

" Je ne viens point ici par des jalouses larmes." (14)

This and other lines provided the material which is elaborated upon in Philoctète's first speech to Jocaste:

Andromaque (15)

" OÙ fuyez-vous, Madame?"

Andromaque (16)

" Je ne viens point ici, par de
jalouses larmes,

Vous envier un coeur qui se
rend à vos charmes."

Philoctète (19)

" Ne fuyez point, madame, et
cessez de trembler;

Osez me voir, osez m'entendre
et me parler.

Ne craignez point ici que mes
jalouses larmes

De votre hymen heureux troub-
lent les nouveaux charmes:

N'attendez point de moi des
reproches honteux,

(15) Andromaque, Act III, Sc. 4, l.858.

(19) Oedipe, Act II, Sc. 3, ll.409-420.

Ni de lâches soupirs indignes
de tous deux.

Je ne vous tiendrai point de
ses discours vulgaires
Que dicte la mollesse aux
amants ordinaires.

Un coeur qui vous chérit, et,
s'il faut dire plus,

S'il vous souvient des noeuds
que vous avez rompus,

Un coeur pour qui le vôtre
avait quelque tendresse,

N'a point appris de vous à
montrer de faiblesse."

Hermione (17)

" Ou le forçant de rompre un
noeud si solonnel,"

Andromaque (18)

" Faut-il qu'un si grand coeur
montre tant de faiblesse?"

In a later speech of Philoctète another couplet from the speech of
Andromaque is imitated:

Andromaque (20)

" Lorsque de tant de biens qui
pouvaient nous flatter,
C'est le seul qui nous reste,
et qu'on veut nous l'ôter."

Philoctète (21)

" Des biens que m'a ravis la
colère céleste,
Ma gloire, mon honneur est le
seul qui me reste;"

(17) Andromaque, Act II, Sc. 1, l. 443.

(18) Ibid., Act I, Sc. 4, l. 298.

(20) Ibid., Act III, Sc. 4, ll. 871, 872.

(21) Oedipe, Act III, Sc. 2, ll. 691, 692.

The similarity between Jocaste's relation to Philoctète and Hermione's to Oreste is shown in the first words Jocaste addresses to Philoctète. Obedience to duty has brought about circumstances preventing the union of Jocaste, as of Hermione, with the man who loves her. The expression of Jocaste's real esteem for Philoctète is, moreover, reminiscent of Hermione's jealous illusions regarding her desire to love Oreste. In the lines of Jocaste's reply to Philoctète Voltaire combined parts of three of Hermione's speeches to Oreste in the same scene of Andromaque:

Hermione (22)

" Il faut donc m'expliquer:
vous agirez ensuite.
Vous savez qu'en ces lieux
mon devoir m'a conduite.(a)

" J'ai passé dans l'Epire, où
j'étais reléguée:
Mon père l'ordonnait. Mais
qui sait si depuis
Je n'ai point en secret par-
tagé vos ennuis?
Pensez-vous avoir seul éprouvé
des alarmes?

Jocaste (23)

" Si Jocaste avec vous n'a pu se
voir unie,
Il est juste, avant tout, qu'
elle s'en justifie.

Je vous aimais, seigneur: une
suprême loi

Toujours malgré moi-meme a dis-
posé de moi;

Et du sphinx et des dieux la
fureur trop connue

Sans doute à votre oreille est
déjà parvenue;

(22) Andromaque, Act II, Sc.2, (a) 11.581, 582, (b) 522-528, (c) 535, 536

(23) Oedipe, Act II, Sc. 3, 11. 423-430.

Que l'Epire jamais n'ait vu
couler mes larmes?

Enfin qui vous a dit que

malgré mon devoir

Je n'ai pas quelquefois sou-
haité de vous voir?" (b)

Vous savez quels fléaux ont
éclaté sur nous,

Et qu'Oedipe . . . "

" Vous que mille vertus me
forçaient d'estimer;

Vous que j'ai plaint, enfin

que je voudrais aimer." (c)

Still another similarity between Oedipe and Andromaque in the location of scenes is found in the position of the scenes between Jocaste and her confidente. (24) Jocaste's confession to Echine of her inability to hide her love for Philoctète is expressed in words strikingly similar to a line used by Hermione in admitting her love for Pyrrhus to Oreste, and to lines used by Oreste in telling Pylade of the futility of his efforts to forget Hermione and in reproaching Hermione with her love for Pyrrhus:

Hermione (25)

Jocaste (29)

" Je ne m'en cache point: l'in-
grat m'avait su plaire."

" Et qu'il est vertueux, puis-
qu'il m'avait su plaire."

(24) Andromaque, Act II, Sc. 1 and Act III, Sc. 3.

Oedipe, Act II, Sc. 2 and Act III, Sc. 1.

(25) Andromaque, Act IV, Sc. 3, l. 1193.

(29) Oedipe, Act II, Sc. 2, l. 332.

Oreste (26)

" L'amour n'est pas un feu
qu'on renferme en une âme:"

Oreste (27)

" De mes feux mal éteints je
reconnus la trace;"

Oreste (28)

" Tout nous trahit, la voix, le
silence, les yeux;
Et les feux mal couverts n'en
éclatent que mieux."

Jocaste (30)

" On ne se cache point ces
secrets mouvements,
De la nature en nous indomp-
tables enfants;
Dans les replis de l'âme ils
viennent nous surprendre;
Ces feux qu'on croit éteints
renaissent de leur
cendre:"

Jocaste (31)

" Un seul mot, un soupir, un
coup d'oeil nous trahit;
Tout parle contre nous, jusqu'à
notre silence:"

The determination of Jocaste to protect her lover from the Thebans who accuse him of murdering Laius resembles in force and eagerness Pyrrhus' desire to guard Astyanax from the Greeks as a means of winning the love of Andromaque. That Voltaire was thinking of Pyrrhus as he wrote this speech of Jocaste is the more

(26) Andromaque, Act II, Sc. 2, l. 574.

(27) Ibid., Act I, Sc. 1, l. 86.

(28) Ibid., Act II, Sc. 2, ll. 575, 578.

(30) Oedipe, Act II, Sc. 3, ll. 337-340.

(31) Ibid., Act III, Sc. 1, ll. 638, 639.

evident since one line of it recalls a line from another part of the rôle of Pyrrhus:

Pyrrhus (32)

" Mais dussent-ils encore, en
 repassant les eaux,
 Demander votre fils avec
 mille vaisseaux;
 Coutât-il tout le sang qu'Hé-
 lène a fait répandre;
Dussé-je après dix ans voir
 mon palais en cendre,
 Je ne balance point, je vole
 à son secours:
 Je défendrai sa vie aux dé-
 peus de mes jours."

Pyrrhus (33)

" Oui, Seigneur, lorsqu'au pieds
des murs fumants de Troie "

Jocaste (34)

" Moi! si je la prendrai? Dus-
sent tous les Thébains,
 Porter jusque sur moi leurs
 parricides mains,
 Sous ces murs tout fumants
dussé-je être écrasée,
 Je ne trahirai point l'inno-
 cence accusée."

Jocaste's frantic desire to shield Philoctète from harm at the hands of the Thebans is immediately followed by fear of the criticism that will be heaped upon her if she befriends the man she is known to have formerly loved. The enumeration she makes creates the effect of Andromaque's speech to Céphise when she de-

(32) Andromaque, Act I, Sc. 4, ll. 283-288.

(33) Ibid., Act I, Sc. 2, l. 185.

(34) Oedipe, Act III, Sc. 1, ll. 621-624.

clears her intention to preserve her fidelity by suicide:

Andromaque (35)

Jocaste (36)

* j'ai moi-même en un jour
Sacrifié mon sang, ma haine
 et mon amour.*

* on dira que je lui sacrifie
 Ma gloire, mes époux, mes dieux
 et ma patrie!*

While by far the larger part of the influence of Andromaque on Oedipe occurs in the rôles of Philoctète and Jocaste, lines from the Racinian tragedy are scattered throughout the play. Some very definite reminiscences, taken with one exception from the parts of Oreste and Hermione, are found in the rôle of Oedipe himself, closely as it is based on the Greek original.

The first scene of Act IV, which contains the double confidence between Oedipe and Jocaste, Voltaire at first "translated" from Sophocles. (37) Even this scene contains several phrases and lines from the various tragedies of Racine, among them a recollection of the rôle of Pyrrhus. In threatening Andromaque with the capture of Astyanax by the Greeks Pyrrhus had said:

* Ah! Madame, les Grecs, si j'en crois leurs alarmes
Vous donneront bientôt d'autres sujets de larmes." (38)

(35) Andromaque, Act IV, Sc. 1, ll. 1183, 1184.

(36) Oedipe, Act III, Sc. 1, ll. 637, 638.

(37) Lettre III sur Oedipe, contenant la critique de l'Oedipe de Sophocle. Oeuvres, Vol. II, p. 38. Epître à Madame la duchesse de Maine, au tête d'Oreste. Oeuvres, Vol. IV, p. 81.

(38) Andromaque, Act I, Sc. 4, ll. 265, 266.

Voltaire's adaptation of the lines in the rôle of Oedipe, as Oedipe remarks Jocaste's increasing anxiety on hearing of the prediction uttered at Corinth, is as follows:

" Il n'est pas encor temps de répandre des larmes,
Vous apprendrez bientôt d'autres sujets d'alarmes." (39)

After the accusation of Oedipe by the high-priest as the murderer of Laïus when Jocaste suggests her death as a sacrifice Oedipe expresses his horror at her words in the way Hermione had reproached Oreste when he mentioned her cruelty in denying him her love. Hermione exclaimed:

" Quittez, Seigneur, quittez ce funeste langage." (40)

As Voltaire remembered the line it became:

" Quittez, reine, quittez ce langage terrible;" (41)

In the scene in which Icare, the old man from Corinth, announces to Oedipe the death of Polybus and the succession of his son-in-law to the throne, Voltaire colors Oedipe's lapse of memory by having him say what Hermione had said as in her frenzy she feared Oreste was not carrying out her command to kill Pyrrhus. Hermione had questioned Cléone:

" Quoi donc? Oreste encore,
Oreste me trahit?" (42)

(39) Oedipe, Act IV, Sc. 1, ll. 1039, 1040.

(40) Andromaque, Act II, Sc. 2, l. 505.

(41) Oedipe, Act III, Sc. 5, l. 887.

(42) Andromaque, Act V, Sc. 2, ll. 1461, 1462.

So Oedipe questions Icare:

" Eh quoi! mon père aussi, mon père me trahit?" (43)

Oedipe's soliloquy is Scene 4, Act V of Oedipe just as Oreste's was in Andromaque. One line from the first scene of Andromaque and one from the last indicate how thoroughly conversant Voltaire was with that tragedy as he constructed Oedipe. Oreste, in speaking to Pylade of the unkind fate which had brought him back to Hermione, said:

" Mais admire avec moi le sort dont la poursuite
Me fait courir alors au piège que j'évite." (44)

Oedipe, pondering on the inevitableness of his crime, declares:

" Je tombais dans le piège en voulant l'éviter." (45)

The figure of an enveloping darkness is used by Oedipe as by Oreste. As Oreste began to lose his senses he wondered:

" Mais quelle épaisse nuit tout à coup m'environne?"(46)

Oedipe, overwhelmed with the knowledge of his crime and beginning to visualise the furies and his murdered father as Oreste had the demons and Pyrrhus and Hermione, asks in bewilderment:

" Où suis-je? Quelle nuit

Couvre d'un voile affreux la clarté qui nous luit?"(47)

(43) Oedipe, Act V, Sc. 2, l. 1238.

(44) Andromaque, Act I, Sc. 1. ll. 65, 66.

(45) Oedipe, Act V, Sc. 4, l. 1338.

(46) Andromaque, Act II, Sc. 5, l. 1625.

(47) Oedipe, Act V, Sc. 4, ll. 1345, 1346.

One of the most curious adaptations of Racine to be found in Oedipe comes also from the scene of Oreste's madness. The onomatopoeia of the line:

" Pour qui sont ces serpents qui sifflent sur vos têtes?" (48)

so appealed to Voltaire that he used the sound and some of the words in an entirely different meaning. Less than one hundred lines beyond Oedipe's raving we find the high-priest comforting the Thebans, now that the gods are satisfied by Oedipe's self-imposed blindness, by saying:

" Un soleil plus serein se lève sur vos têtes;" (49)

The imitation of Andromaque in Oedipe is, thus, clearly established in the general plan of the Philoctète-Jocaste love intrigue. Six scenes of the Oedipe correspond in location to six similar scenes in Andromaque. About seventy lines of Racine's tragedy, half of them from the rôle of Oreste alone, one-fourth of them from the rôle of Hermione, and the rest from the most dramatic passages in the parts of Andromaque and Pyrrhus, appear in Voltaire's tragedy in a somewhat condensed form.

But Andromaque, while its influence on Oedipe is by far the greatest of any of the tragedies of Racine, was not the only one from which Voltaire drew as he thought out his tragedy. His knowledge of Racine at this time was, in fact, so intimate that there is in the Oedipe some slight reminiscence at least of all but

(48) Andromaque, Act V, Sc. 5, l. 1638.

(49) Oedipe, Act V, Sc. 6, l. 1376.

two of Racine's plays, Alexandre le grand and Bajazet. Of some plays Voltaire took only lines, and many of them unconsciously, of others it is certain that he had whole scenes in mind.

Phrases showing intense emotion naturally appealed to Voltaire because of the strong dramatic effect they produced. In some plays this Racinian touch in expressing emotional change was practically the only thing of which Voltaire made use. The most striking example is his use of Phèdre's line when Oenone had mentioned Hippolyte:

" Malheureuse, quel nom est sorti de ta bouche?" (50)
in the very dramatic scene in which Oedipe, horrified that Jocaste should still address him as her husband, exclaims:

" Malheureuse, arrêtez, quel nom prononcez-vous?" (51)
In like manner Phèdre's exclamation:

" Quelle nouvelle a frappé mon oreille?" (52) furnished the words for Philoctète's expression of surprise on hearing of the death of Laïus, when he says:

" Quel mot a frappé mon oreille!" (53)

In Scene 1 of Act IV, in which Jocaste recounts to Oedipe the seemingly fallacious oracle about her son and Oedipe tells of killing an unknown man on the way from Corinth, Voltaire used two such

(50) Phèdre, Act I, Sc. 3, l. 206.

(51) Oedipe, Act V, Sc. 5, l. 1357.

(52) Phèdre, Act IV, Sc. 5, l. 1193.

(53) Oedipe, Act IV, Sc. 1, l. 983.

lines from Racine to increase the tensity of the situation. In Brittanicus Néron had said to Junie:

" Vous vous troublez, Madame, et changez de visage." (54)

As Jocaste remarks the change her story makes in Oedipe she says:

" Vous vous troublez, seigneur, à ce récit funeste;" (55)

Céphise had said to Andromaque when the death of Astyanax seemed inevitable:

" Vous frémissez, Madame." (56)

So, at the close of his speech relating the killing of Laïus, Oedipe says:

" Vous frémissez, Madame." (57)

The likelihood of Voltaire's direct use of the lines cited from Phèdre and Brittanicus is the greater since there are several identities of diction between the two Racinian tragedies and Oedipe. These can scarcely be said to be more than unconscious reminiscences of the vocabulary of Racine but since they occur in only one or the other tragedy they show Voltaire's acquaintance with that tragedy. Such is the case also with Bérénice and Iphigénie whose influence is negligible except as it indicates how completely Voltaire's mind was permeated with Racine.

(54) Brittanicus, Act II, Sc. 3, l. 527.

(55) Oedipe, Act IV, Sc. 1, l. 983.

(56) Andromaque, Act III, Sc. 8, l. 1013.

(57) Oedipe, Act IV, Sc. 1, l. 1084.

One of the problems that confronted Voltaire in adapting Oedipe to eighteenth century ideas was the puzzling one of the use of a chorus. Dacier advised Voltaire to use choruses (58) and the actors objected as to the omission of a love-intrigue. Choruses employed in the manner of the Greek theater, ever present on the stage and filling in the entr'-actes with their complaints, would indeed have been out of place in Voltaire's time. Still Voltaire realized that a theme so intimately bound up with the happiness of the Thebans could not be well treated if they were given no part.(59) In this connection he noted the use to which Racine put choruses in Esther and Athalie, having them appear almost solely in the entr'-actes.(60) A few lines from Esther and Athalie, though not in the choruses of those plays, and the third scene of Act II in Esther Voltaire found useful in developing scenes in which the high-priest and people appear.

Mathan, the priest of Baal, in Athalie had used the line:

" Né ministre du Dieu qu'en ce temple on adore." (61)

Oedipe addresses the high-priest:

" Vous, ministre des dieux que dans Thèbe on adore," (62)

(58) Correspondance, 1730, Au P. Porée. Oeuvres, Vol.XXXIII, p.199.

(59) Lettre VI sur Oedipe, qui contient une dissertation sur les choeurs. Oeuvres, Vol. II, p. 43.

(60) Ibid., p. 43.

(61) Athalie, Act III, Sc. 3, l. 923.

(62) Oedipe, Act I, Sc. 3, l. 167.

Athalie had used the line:

" Et la flamme du ciel sur l'autel descendue;" (63)

Only five lines beyond the line just quoted from Oedipe the high-priest says:

" Du ciel sur nos autels la flamme est descendue;" (64)

Later in Oedipe a line from Esther is used by the high-priest.

Esther had said to Aman:

" Bientôt ton juste arrêt te sera prononcé." (65)

The priest says to Oedipe:

" Aujourd'hui votre arrêt vous sera prononcé." (66)

Because of its portrayal of the trait of ingratitude in human nature Voltaire was fond of Assuérus' speech in Act II, Scene 3 of Esther. In wishing to have Oedipe censure the Thebans for not seeking Laïus' murderer Voltaire found occasion to weave in the idea contained in this scene from Esther. Mardochée, whom Assuérus felt had saved his life, had received in reward only lavish promises of benefits. Assuérus, when apprised of the fact, deplored the lack of truly faithful interest on the part of subjects and the tendency to forget merit and great services. The two speeches were as follows:

(63) Athalie, Act I, Sc. 1, l. 120.

(64) Oedipe, Act I, Sc. 3, l. 172.

(65) Esther, Act III, Sc. 5, l. 1158.

(66) Oedipe, Act III, Sc. 4, l. 817.

Assuérus (67)

" O d'un si grand service oublié
 trop condamnable!
 Des embarras du trône effet
 inévitable!
 De soins tumultueux un prince
 environné
 Vers de nouveaux objets est
 sans cesse entraîné;
 L'avenir l'inquiète, et le
 présent le frappe;
 Mais plus prompt que l'éclair,
 le passé nous échappe;
 Et de tant de mortels, à toute
 heure empressés
 A vous faire valoir leurs
 soins intéressés,
 Il ne s'en trouve point qui,
 touchés d'un vrai zèle,
 Prennent à notre gloire un in-
 térêt fidèle,
 Du mérite oublié nous fassent
 souvenir,

Oedipe (68)

" Thébains, je l'avouerai, vous
 souffrez justement
 D'un crime inexcusable un rude
 châtement.
 Laïs vous était cher, et votre
 négligence
 De ses mânes sacrés a trahi la
 vengeance.
 Tel est souvent le sort des
 plus justes des rois!
 Tant qu'ils sont sur la terre
 on respecte leurs lois,
 On porte jusqu'aux dieux leur
 justice suprême;
 Adorés de leur peuple, ils sont
 des dieux eux-mêmes;
 Mais après leur trépas que sont-ils
 à vos yeux?
 Vous éteignez l'encens que
 vous brûliez pour eux;
 Et, comme à l'intérêt l'âme
 humaine est liée,

(67) Esther, Act II, Sc. 3, ll. 541-555.

(68) Oedipe, Act I, Sc. 3, ll. 181-192.

Trop prompt à vous parler de
ce qu'il faut punir!

La vertu qui n'est plus bien-
tôt oubliée."

Ah! que plutôt l'injure échappe
à ma vengeance

Qu'un si rare bienfait à ma
reconnaissance.

Et qui voudroit jamais s'exposer
pour son roi?"

It is quite certain that Voltaire was thinking of Assuérus' speech as he wrote the part of Oedipe. As far along in the play as the first scene of Act IV a couplet in Oedipe's forebodings of doom is similar to the couplet applied by Assuérus to his forgetfulness:

Assuérus (69)

Oedipe (70)

" L'avenir l'inquiète, et le
présent le frappe;

" Le passé m'interdit, et le
présent m'accable;

Mais plus prompt que l'éclair
le passé nous échappe;"

Je lis dans l'avenir un sort
épouvantable:"

La Thébaine, dramatizing as it did the visiting of Oedipe's sins on his children, was in theme a tragedy Voltaire would think of in planning an Oedipe along with the Oedipes preceding his. The story is taken up in La Thébaine at a point after Oedipe's death and the sub-title, Les frères ennemis, suggests

(69) Esther, Act II, Sc. 3, ll. 545, 546.

(70) Oedipe, Act IV, Sc. 1, ll. 903, 904.

the mutual hatred of Oedipè's sons Etéocle and Polynice. Their struggle for supremacy brings sorrow to Jocaste and to their sister Antigone and ends only when they destroy each other in combat. Again, it was in writing Philoctète's rôle that Voltaire sought inspiration in Racine and the lines in the speeches of Philoctète in the fourth scene of Act II and the third and fourth scenes of Act III witness the success of his search. In the first case Philoctète's declaration that the throne had never tempted him is similar in idea to Jocaste's pleading with Etéocle in an effort to make him say he did not covet power. The line from Jocaste's speech is:

" Qu'auprès du diadème il n'est rien qui vous touche." (71)

And Philoctète declares:

" Le trône est un objet qui n'a pu me tenter." (72)

Philoctète asks Jocaste not to take his honor from him by asking him to flee from danger in the way Hémon, the lover of Antigone, had asked her if she had summoned him only to deprive him of her love. Hémon says:

" Ne m'avez vous, Madame, appelé près de vous,
Que pour m'ôter sitôt un bien qui m'est si doux?" (73)

Philoctète begs Jocaste:

" Ne m'ôtez pas ce bien dont je suis si jaloux," (74)

(71) La Thèbaïde, Act I, Sc. 3, l. 112.

(72) Oedipe, Act II, Sc. 4, l. 553.

(73) La Thèbaïde, Act II, Sc. 1, ll. 309, 310.

(74) Oedipe, Act III, Sc. 2, l. 693.

The Latin adage, " *Suumus jus, summa injuria*," is translated in Oedipe as well as in La Thébaidé, Jocaste in La Thébaidé used it in speaking to Polynice:

" Une extrême justice est souvent une injure." (75)

Voltaire has translated it more literally in having Philoctète say to Oedipe:

" Mais l'extrême justice est une extrême injure:" (76)

All through Oedipe Voltaire seized every opportunity to have the characters express a lack of faith in the gods and in the priests as mediums of carrying out their will. He seems to have admired a soliloquy of Jocaste in La Thébaidé for the propaganda it contained. Portions of it occur in two places in Oedipe. In the last scene of the first act Jocaste says the gods probably made human beings criminal so they might have a chance to punish them as the Jocaste of La Thébaidé had said the gods led people to the brink of crime. In the fourth scene of Act V, Oedipe's soliloquy, the involuntary character of his crime is enlarged upon:

Jocaste (77)

" Et toutefois, ô Dieux, un
crime involontaire

Jocaste (78)

" Peut-être, accomplissant ses
décrets éternels,

(75) La Thébaidé, Act IV, Sc. 3, l. 1036.

(76) Oedipe, Act III, Sc. 3, l. 736.

(77) La Thébaidé, Act III, Sc. 2, (a)11.603,604; (b)11.606-314.

(78) Oedipe, Act I, Sc. 3, ll, 229, 230.

Devoit-il attirer toute votre
colère?" (a)

" Voilà de ces grands Dieux la
suprême justice!
Jusques au bord du crime ils
conduisent nos pas
Ils nous le font commettre, et
ne l'excusent pas!
Prement-ils donc plaisir à
faire des coupables,
Afin d'en faire après d'illus-
tres misérables?
Et ne peuvent-ils point, quand
ils sont en courroux,
Chercher des criminels à qui
le crime est doux?" (b)

Afin de nous punir il nous fit
criminels."

Oedipe (79)

" Misérable vertu, nom stérile
et funeste,
Toi par qui j'ai réglé des
jours que je déteste,
A mon noir ascendant tu n'as
pu résister:
Je tombais dans le piège en
voulant l'éviter.
Un dieu plus fort que toi m'en-
trainait vers le crime;
Sous mes pas fugitifs il creu-
sait un abîme;
Et j'étais, malgré moi, dans
mon aveuglement,
D'un pouvoir inconnu l'esclave
et l'instrument.
Voilà tous mes forfaits; je
n'en connais point d'autres"

(79) Oedipe, Act V, Sc. 4, ll. 1335-1343.

The forbidden love of Xipharès and Monime in Mithridate offered a semblance of what Voltaire wished to represent in Philoctète and Jocaste, and one situation in Oedipe closely resembles in development a situation in Mithridate. In Philoctète's apostrophe to Jocaste on hearing of Laius' death Voltaire has imitated Monime's apostrophe to Xipharès when she hears that Mithridate intends to punish Pharnace and it seems possible that she and Xipharès may be united:

Monime (80)

* Ma Phaedime, et qui peut
concevoir ce miracle?
Après deux ans d'ennuis,
dont tu sais le poids,
Quoi? je puis respirer
pour la première fois?
Quoi? cher Prince, avec toi
je me verrois unie?
Et loin que ma tendresse eût
exposé ta vie,
Tu verrois ton devoir, je
verrois ma vertu
Approuver un amour si long-
temps combattu?

Philoctète (81)

* Il ne vit plus! quel mot a
frappé mon oreille!
Quel espoir séduisant dans mon
coeur se réveille!
Quoi! Jocaste . . . Les dieux
me seraient-ils plus doux?
Quoi! Philoctète enfin pour-
rait-il être à vous?
Il ne vit plus! * . . .

(80) Mithridate, Act IV, Sc. 1, ll. 1178-1180.

(81) Oedipe, Act I, Sc. 1, ll. 23-37.

Je pourrais tous les jours
 que je t'aime? "

The number and variety of similarities in Voltaire's Oedipe and Racine are, thus, apparent. Having chosen as the subject of his initial attempt in tragedy a theme on which Racine had contemplated writing, Voltaire used Racine as a model in solving the difficulties of adapting the Oedipe to the French stage of the eighteenth century. The material in the Oedipus rex which Voltaire used almost entire was not sufficient to construct a five-act tragedy of the French classic type.(82) The insistence of the actors on a love-plot furnished, with the aid of Andromaque, the bulk of the needed additional material and to a large extent the mode of incorporating it into the tragedy. The plan of the choruses in Esther and Athalie afforded the general plan of the chorus scenes in the new Oedipe. Numerous phrases rich in emotion gleaned from several of Racine's tragedies found their way into Oedipe as a means of increasing the tensity of situations and so heightening the dramatic effect of their rendition. Many scattered lines and phrases show a recollection, conscious or unconscious, of the text of Racine. Speeches and whole scenes from Racine embodying thoughts relevant to the theme were the bases for passages and scenes in Oedipe. While the actual material taken from Racine is

(82) Lettre V sur Oedipe, qui contient la critique du nouvel Oedipe.
Oeuvres, Vol. II, p. 38.

only about one-tenth of Oedipe the nature of this material is such that it gives the impression of being more abundant than it really is. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the whole is pervaded by the Racinian spirit as typified by tense situation and poignant phrases. As a stage production Oedipe presents a French picture of the legend of Oedipe painted with Greek paint and a Racinian brush.

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