Enrico Emanuele Prodi

Keeping the Family Close:
A Fresh Look at *P.Oxy*. 2459 (Euripides, *Oedipus*)

Keeping the Family Close:
A Fresh Look at *P.Oxy.* 2459 (Euripides, *Oedipus*)*

P.Oxy. XXVII 2459, held at the British Library, comes from a papyrus roll of Euripides' *Oedipus* assigned to the fourth century AD.[1] It was first published by E. G. Turner as five separate fragments (now E. frr. 540–540b Kannicht). The attribution was based upon the first of the five, which overlapped with a known quotation (vv. 1–2) and with an *adespoton* (vv. 7–9).[2] Scholars who have studied the papyrus since its first publication – my earlier self included – have tended to do so more with an eye to literary interpretation or textual improvement than to gaining a better sense of these remains on the material level.[3] Yet a fresh inspection of the original with a resolutely papyrological focus yields interesting results, with important consequences for the text in turn. The present article offers (I) my arguments on the relative position of Turner's frr. 1–5; (II) a new critical text of the fragment (now emphatically singular); and (III) selected textual notes.

I. The position of the fragments

a. Frr. 1 and 2

'There is no certain point of contact [of fr. 2] with fr. 1, but nothing seems to forbid positioning this fragment below fr. 1 and in the same column. The verso fibres and folds are much alike', wrote the *editor princeps*.[4] His conclusion was dismissed by Dingel, who reversed the order and placed fr. 2 first.[5] Yet an inspection of the verso shows more than just fibres and folds being alike: a κόλληϲιϲ runs down the back of both fragments, in precisely the same position relative to the trimeters on the front. The other edge of the same κόλληϲιϲ (about 2.2 cm wide) is visible on the recto in fr. 1, just to the left of the vertical break that has affected the entire height of the fragment. In fr. 2 it must have been roughly where the fragment breaks off on the right. This cannot be a coincidence: it must be the same κόλληϲιϲ in both fragments, one above the other. And since fr. 1 preserves a part of the upper margin, fr. 2 must come below it.

[1] British Library, Papyrus 3042; MP³ 443, *LDAB* 979, *TM* 59872; *editio princeps* E. G. Turner in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XXVII, London 1962, 81–6 and pll. V, VI, VIII (date on p. 81). The age of the papyrus is remarkable: it is one of only three mss. of Euripides' non-extant plays from the fourth century AD or later, and the only one on papyrus or in roll form; the other two – *BKT* V/2 pp. 84–7 (*Melanippe Captive*?, IV–V c.) and Paris. Gr. 107B, foll. 162–3 (*Phaethon*, V c.) – are parchment codices. See P. Carrara, *Il testo di Euripide nell'antichità. Ricerche sulla tradizione testuale euripidea antica (sec. IV a.C. – sec. VIII d.C.)*, Florence 2009, 485, who infers an 'ambiente culturale dagli interessi di lettura ricercati e dallo spirito tradizionalista'.

[2] The attribution of the *adespoton*, transmitted through Stobaeus' quotation of an extract from Plutarch's lost work on love (Ὅτι οὐ κρίϲιϲ ὁ ἔρωϲ, fr. 136 Sandbach), had been presciently suggested by L. C. Valckenaer, *Diatribe in Euripidis perditorum dramatum reliquias*, Leiden 1767, 194.

[3] Re-editions and studies include: H. Lloyd-Jones, rev. of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XXVII, *Gnomon* 35 (1963), 433–55, at 446–7; J. Vaio, The New Fragments of Euripides' *Oedipus*, *GRBS* 5 (1964), 43–55; C. Austin, *Nova fragmenta Euripidea in papyris reperta*, Berlin 1968, 60–61; H. J. Mette, Euripides (insbesondere für die Jahre 1939–1968), I: Die Bruchstücke, *Lustrum* 12 (1967) [1968], 5–288, at 183; J. Dingel, Der Sohn des Polybos und die Sphinx. Zu den Ödipustragödien des Euripides und des Seneca, *MH* 27 (1970), 90–96; J. Diggle, Notes on the *Erechtheus*, *Cresphontes*, and *Oedipus* of Euripides, in R. Pintaudi (ed.), *Miscellanea papyrologica*, Florence 1980, 57–60, at 60; F. Jouan and H. Van Looy, *Euripide*, VIII/2, Paris 2000, 449–52; R. Kannicht, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (*TrGF*), V/1, Berlin 2004, 571–4; C. Collard in *id.*, M. J. Cropp, and J. Gibert, *Euripides. Selected Fragmentary Plays*, II, Oxford 2004, 114–17, 124–7; C. Collard and M. Cropp, *Euripides*, VIII, Cambridge MA–London 2008, 10–13; E. E. Prodi, Note a *P. Oxy.* 2459 (Eur. frr. 540–540b Kn.), *Eikasmos* 22 (2011), 69–78; E. Iakovou, *Ödipus auf der griechischen und römischen Bühne. Der Oedipus Tragicus und seine literarische Tradition*, Berlin–Boston 2020, 97–103. For papyrological and palaeographical remarks see B. E. Donovan, *Euripides Papyri*, I: *Texts from Oxyrhynchus*, New Haven–Toronto 1969, 80–82; G. Cavallo and H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period, A.D. 300–800*, London 1987, 30; Carrara (n. 1), 483–5.

[4] Turner (n. 1), 80.

[5] Dingel (n. 3), 92, followed by Jouan and Van Looy (n. 3), 449–50.

The interval between them can also be established: the vestiges of the last line of fr. 1 and those of the first line of fr. 2 represent one and the same line. The upper part of τ in fr. 1 v. 15 and the foot of the vertical in the appropriate place in fr. 2 v. 1 match – er – to a T, and the traces borne by the two fragments all along that line combine to make sense and good tragic idiom. The placement of fr. 5 described under *d* strengthens this conclusion.

b. Frr. 2 and 3
Pace Turner, the true reading of fr. 3 v. 5 is]όνος κόρη. Its perfect complementarity with Snell's supplement at fr. 2 v. 5 μιαιφ[όνος κόρη raises the issue whether the two fragments should be joined. A reason for doubt is the unmetricality that the join produces two lines above,]πων ἵςταντ᾽ ἀ[ν]ταγωνιςτ῀[. Yet join they must. The edges of the two fragments come together nicely. The join confirms as many as three good conjectures made in the *editio princeps*: Snell's μιαιφ[όνος κόρη at fr. 2 v. 5, probably Turner's δ]έχοιτο at fr. 3 v. 4, and the gist – although not the exact wording – of Turner's ἐξά[μ]ε̣τ[ρ᾽ at fr. 2 v. 6. The papyrus must have broken along the edge of the κόλληςις, as it also visibly did in fr. 1. The text of v. 3, then, must be corrupt. The error is easily accounted for: the scribe, or his antigraph, was misled by Euripides' ἵςταντ᾽ ἀγωνιςτ- into the dittography ἵςτα̱ν̱τ̱᾽ ἀ̱ν̱τ̱αγωνιςτ-.

I have previously remarked on the correct placement of the detached fragment that preserves the end of v. 5.[6] The last line of fr. 3 is similarly preserved by two separate fragments, now attached to the main fragment and to each other with adhesive paper. As Turner saw, the second trace in the fragment on the left and the first in the one on the right represent two parts of the same letter. Accordingly, they need to be brought closer together than they are in the frame.

c. Fr. 4
The bottom part of the three letters that constitute fr. 4 v. 1 appear to match with the traces of letter-tops that survive in the right part of fr. 1 v. 10.

d. Fr. 5
Once frr. 1 and 2 are joined as described under *a*, fr. 5 slots snugly between them on the left. Portions of three letters in vv. 1–2 find their completion in fr. 1 vv. 13–14, and another two in v. 3 are completed by fr. 2 v. 1, which moreover provides an α to go after the apostrophe that survives in fr. 5 v. 3. On the right of this fragment there is a long papyrus fibre protruding, which preserves two ink traces; these can now be matched with the extended foot of υ in fr. 1 v. 13 and the acute on ό in the line below.

Fig. 1 is a digital rendition produced from a photograph provided by the British Library. I have verified the joins on the originals under the microscope, as far as I was able, but they cannot be proved without physically rearranging the fragments, which their current framing does not allow. My conclusions, then, remain tentative. This is especially true of *c*, which rests on very little text.[7] This being the case, I have hesitated as to whether to print my reconstructed image. Things once seen are hard to unsee, and orthodoxies are easily created: all the more dangerously in a field where the skill-sets of different participants – papyrologists, editors, critics – do not necessarily overlap, and effective reciprocal scrutiny is correspondingly more difficult. But a hypothesis cannot be properly tested unless its results are clearly laid out. I offer the image with that aim in mind.[8]

---

[6] Prodi (n. 3), 78.

[7] D'Alessio, however, points out to me that my suggested placement produces a somewhat symmetrical gap on either side of the vertical axis, which may be a supporting argument.

[8] I have used Adobe Photoshop for iOS version 2.6.1. My alterations to the British Library's photograph have consisted of (i) cutting out the five fragments from their black background; (ii) returning the protruding fibre on fr. 5 (see under *d* above), which is bent upward, to a more horizontal position; (iii) returning the three sub-fragments of fr. 3 to their proper position relative to the main one (see under *b* above); and (iv) bringing the five fragments together in the way described under *a–d* above. When consulting the image, the reader should take note that the papyrus is bent in places (e.g. vv. 9 and 12 in fr. 1, 16 and 17 in fr. 3, 18 in fr. 2), which affects the position of traces and the width of lacunae.

II. Text

margo

(Fr. 1)   ] ̣ιδῆ τε βοστρύχ[ων] φόβην·
         οὐρὰν δ' ὑπί ̣λαc' ὑπὸ λεοντόπουν βάcιν
         καθέζετ' ̣]   ] δ' ἀποφέρουc' ὠκύπτερον
                ]ν ἐπιπα ̣ ̣ ̣ρι ̣[̣]ν χρόνωι·
                ] ̣ διήλεcε ̣ ̣ φύλλων φόβην   5
                ] προcβάλῃ τ' αὐγαῖc πτερόν·
         εἰ μὲν πρὸc ἵπ ̣πουc ἡλίου, χρυcωπὸν ἦ ̣ν
         νώτιcμα θηρ ̣όc· εἰ δὲ ̣πρ ̣ὸc νέφοc βά ̣λοι,
         κυανωπὸν ὥ ̣c τιc ἶριc ἀ ̣ντηύγει cέ ̣λαc.
                ] ̣ρῶ ̣[] ̣[   ] ̣αδ[(Fr. 4)   10
                ] ̣οὖc' ὑπ[ ] ̣αc ̣[
                ]αφρόνω ̣[   ] ̣ ̂αιθ[
(Fr. 5)   ] ̣ ̣ουcα ̣[ ] ̣φ ̣[
                ]ν πρόχε[ιρ-
(Fr. 2)   ] ̣ ̣τ' ἀντίπρωροc ̣[̣] ̣ ̣[15
         ]μον ἐλίπομεν βάθρων ̣[(Fr. 3)
         ] ̣ων ἵcταντ' {α[ν]τ} ἀγωνιcτ ̂[
         ] ̣cυρίξαc' ἱ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̣δέχοιτ'· ο ̣[
         ] ̣αἴνιγμ' ἡ μιαιφόνοc κόρη
         ἐ]πειποῦc' ἐξαμέτροιc[ι(ν)   20
                ]εν : ξύνεcιν δ' ἔχο[ν
         τέτραπον ἠδὲ δί]πουν τι τρίπου[ν τ(ε)
                ]νῆ, τριcὶ δ' ́[
                ] ̀ν δ' ἄρcεν κα ̣[
         ] ̣ευειc ἢ πάλιν ̣[25
                ]ὸν ὕμνον οπ ̣[
                ] ἡμεῖc λέξ[
                   ] ́ ̣ουγ[
                   . . .

Test. **2–3** καθέζετο Ael. *NA* 12.7 (Εὐριπίδηc) ‖ **2** Erot. υ 23 Nachmanson (Εὐριπίδηc ἐν Οἰδίποδι); Ath. 15.61, 701b ‖ **7–9** Plu. fr. 136 Sandbach ap. Stob. 4.20b.68

Lect. **1** δῆ ⫯ ρύ ⫯ ην· ‖ **2** ϋπο ⫯ τό ⫯ βά ‖ **3** φέ ⫯ ωκύπτερον ‖ **4** πά ut vid. ⫯ χρόνωι· ‖ **5** διή ⫯ φό ‖ **6** βά ⫯ τ' ⫯ αῖc ⫯ ρόν· ‖ **7** λί ⫯ πόνή pot. qu. ῆ ‖ **8** όc· ‖ **9** ίρ ⫯ c ́[‖ **10** ρῶ ‖ **11** οὖcϋ ‖ **12** ρό ⫯ ̂αι vel ̂αι ‖ **14** ρό ‖ **15** τ' ‖ **16** λί ⫯ βά ‖ **17** ίc ⫯ τ' ⫯ τῆ ‖ **18** ρίξαcαί ⫯ δέχοιτ[[ο]]·ό ‖ **19** αίνιγμαη ⫯ φό ⫯ κό ‖ **20** ποῦcε ⫯ έτ ut vid. ‖ **21** ν:ξύ ⫯ δέ ‖ **22** ρί ‖ **23**]νῆ ⫯ cίδ'́[‖ **24** ́νδά ‖ **25** ῆπά ‖ **26** όνϋ ‖ **27** εῖcλέ ‖ **28**] ́ ̣ο

Crit. **1** πυρc]ώ{ι}δη Diggle : ἐτε]ρειδῆ nol. Turner :]οειδῆ Prodi ‖ **2** δ' om. Erot. Ath. ⫯ ὑπίλαc' Valckenaer : ὑπίλλαcα Ael. **P** : ὑπήλλαc(α) Ael. **VLAH** : ὑπίλαc Ath. : ὑπείλλει Erot. ‖ **3** καθέζετ' Matthiae : ἐκαθέζετ' Valckenaer : καθέζετο Ael. **V** : καθίζετο Ael. **LPAH** ⫯ ἐμβά]δ', ὁλκά]δ' e.g. Turner, obl. Lloyd-Jones : εἶτα] δ', ὦμον] δ' e.g. Austin ‖ **4** ἴριζ[ε]ν dub. Prodi : [ἐ]ν Cingano ‖ **5** διήλεc(ε) Π, def. Lloyd-Jones : διήλαc' Turner ⫯ ἐπιφράcων Turner, quod vestigiis parum convenit : ἐ[πι]φ[ύλ]λων, ἐ[ρι]φ[ύλ]λων Lloyd-Jones : -εν φύλλων malim ‖ **6** ὅταν μεθῆι τε] e.g. Turner : 'a purpose clause introduced by ὅπωc' e.g. Vaio ‖ **7**]πουc Π : αὐγὰc Stob. ‖ **8** νέφοc Π : νέφη Stob. ‖ **9** ὥc Stob. **SMA**² : ὅc Stob. **A**¹ ⫯ ἀντηύγει Stob. **A**² : ἀνταυγεῖ Stob. **SMA**¹ ‖ **10** νε]κρῶν Turner ‖ **11**]γοῦc' Austin :]γοῦc Turner ‖ **12**] ἀφρόνω[ν Turner ‖ **14** πρόχε[ιρ- conieci ‖ **15**]ζετ' ἀντίπρωροc legi ‖ **17**]ταγωνιcτῆ[Turner : ἀν]ταγωνιcτῆ Austin : ἀν]ταγωνιcτῆ[ι Collard : {α[ν]τ} seclusi ‖ **18** ἵνα Turner ⫯ δέχοιτο iam Turner ‖ **19** μιαιφόνοc κόρη iam Snell ap. Turner ‖ **20** init.
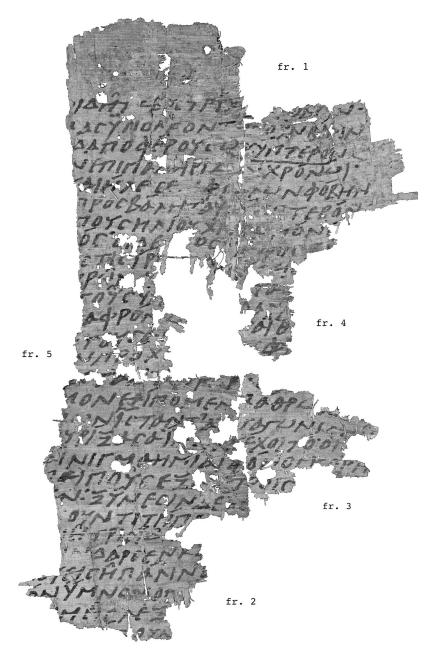
Fig. 1. *P.Oxy.* XXVII 2459, rejoined
© British Library Board, pap. 3042

τοιόνδ' e.g. Turner : τοϲόνδ' e.g. Kannicht | ἐ]πειποῦϲ' Turner, def. Collard : ὑ]πειποῦϲ' nol. Lloyd-Jones | ἐξάμετ[ρ- iam Turner ‖ **21** init. ἐν τό γε φωνῆ]εν e.g. Snell. ap. Turner : ἔϲτι τι φωνῆ]εν e.g. Lloyd-Jones : ἕν τι τὸ φωνῆ]εν e.g. Snell ap. Kannicht | ἔχο[ντ- Prodi | fin. οὐχ ὁμοειδῆ e.g. Snell ap. Kannicht ‖ **22** suppl. Turner, τ(ε) addidi ‖ **24**]ίν δ' Turner :]ίνδ' Lloyd-Jones | κα[ὶ Turner, inde θῆλυ dub. Snell ap. Kannicht ‖ **25** ἢ Turner ‖ **27**] ὑμεῖϲ λέξ[ατε Turner : ἡμεῖϲ Prodi ‖ **28** Οἰδ]ίπουν [dub. Prodi : τετρ]άπουν [etc. possis

III. Notes

These notes aim to complement earlier discussions of our fragment from a textual point of view, with no pretence to comprehensive commentary or literary interpretation.[9] They will also steer clear of wider questions about the much-debated plot of the *Oedipus* and our fragment's place within it.[10] Some assumptions and some open questions, however, need to be laid open.

I do not believe that this fragment, with its wealth of descriptive detail, can be part of a prologue.[11] It must be an embedded narrative of some kind. While Oedipus cannot be identified with certainty in the fragment, it seems likely that the episode being narrated is his victory over the Sphinx, rather than one of the Sphinx's previous raids into Thebes.[12] Who is speaking, then, and in what context? The easiest answer is a messenger speech. But it has been hypothesized that the speaker is Oedipus recalling his past,[13] as he does in more compact form in Seneca's *Oedipus* (vv. 92–102, a passage which stands in an intertextual relationship with ours)[14] and of course, with reference to a different episode, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (vv. 771–833). This question is of great importance with regard to v. 16 ἐλίπομεν, v. 17 ἵϲταντ', and the first person (if such it truly is) at v. 27. If the speaker is a messenger, the plurals at vv. 16 and 27 indicate that he is part of a group, as Euripidean messengers often are.[15] ἵϲταντ' at v. 17, then, will refer to the face-off between Oedipus and the Sphinx (cf. v. 15). If, conversely, the speaker is Oedipus, who unlike a commoner can use the 'royal we', we will need to conjure a plurality of individuals alongside him, this time for the act of standing (v. 17). But their presence, and more so the attention given to them by the protagonist, becomes puzzling. On the other hand, Oedipus is a good candidate for a first-person act of λέγειν at v. 27. Like most of my predecessors, I suspect that we are dealing with a messenger speech (for the rich description cf. E. *Ion* 1122–1228, esp. 1141–62), but certainty is in very short supply in this fragment. The location of the events is also uncertain. We are clearly in the country (v. 5), where Attic vases also locate the Sphinx's encounter with Oedipus, who characteristically wears a traveller's garb;[16] perhaps we are near the Sphinx's

---

[9] For a bibliography of earlier studies see n. 3 above. Our fragment has not featured prominently in studies of Euripides' poetic or dramatic art, but see the observations by S. A. Barlow, *The Imagery of Euripides: A Study in the Dramatic Use of Pictorial Language*, London 1971, 10 and 135 n. 36.

[10] See Turner (n. 1), 81–3; Vaio (n. 3), 47–55; T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides*, London 1967, 241–6; Dingel (n. 3), 93–4; L. Di Gregorio, *L'Edipo di Euripide*, *CCC* 1 (1980), 49–94; R. Aélion, *Quelques grands mythes héroïques dans l'œuvre d'Euripide*, Paris 1986, 42–61; M. Hose, Überlegungen zum *Oedipus* des Euripides, *ZPE* 81 (1990), 9–15; M. Huys, *The Tale of Hero who was Exposed at Birth in Euripidean Tragedy: A Study of Motifs*, Leuven 1995, *passim* (esp. 76–7, 182–5, 322–4, 357–8); Jouan and Van Looy (n. 3), 436–44; Collard (n. 3), 107–10; M. Wright, *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy*, II, London 2019, 190–92, 218–21; Iakovou (n. 3), 92–129. The matter is now further complicated by a debate on the authenticity of most of the fragments attributed to the play, including the crucial fr. 541 Kannicht (sch. MAB E. *Ph.* 61 Schwartz): see V. Liapis, The Fragments of Euripides' *Oedipus*: a Reconsideration, *AJPh* 144 (2014), 307–70; P. J. Finglass, Euripides' *Oedipus*: a Response to Liapis, *AJPh* 147 (2017), 1–26; V. Liapis, The Fragments of Euripides' *Oedipus* Once Again: Neglected Evidence and Lessons Learned, *Logeion* 10 (2020), 197–237. The dispute does not affect our papyrus, whose pertinence to the authentic *Oedipus* has never been doubted.

[11] So, pre-emptively, Turner (n. 1), 82; our papyrus was nonetheless assigned to the prologue by Webster (n. 10), 243.

[12] Turner (n. 1), 81 located the scene 'at the time of her first apparition', which was problematised by Vaio (n. 3), 48–9; further arguments for her encounter with Oedipus in Di Gregorio (n. 10), 60–62; Prodi (n. 3), 76.

[13] Hose (n. 10), 12–13. That the events belonged to a time prior to the action of the play was also the opinion of Turner (n. 1), 82–3, raising objections from Dingel (n. 3), 93.

[14] Two parallels were pointed out by Valckenaer (n. 2), 193, and Turner (n. 1), 86; more extended discussions in Dingel (n. 3), 94–6; K. Töchterle, *Lucius Annaeus Seneca. Oidipus*, Heidelberg 1994, 208–10; Iakovou (n. 3), 175–7.

[15] I. J. F. de Jong, *Narrative in Drama: The Art of the Euripidean Messenger Speech*, Leiden 1991, 4.

[16] On the iconography of the Sphinx see J.-M. Moret, *Œdipe, la Sphinx et les Thébains. Essai de mythologie comparée*, I (text)–II (plates), Geneva 1984; id., Quelques observations à propos de l'iconographie attique du mythe d'Œdipe, in B. Gentili and R. Pretagostini (edd.), *Edipo: il teatro greco e la cultura europea. Atti del convegno internazionale (Urbino 15–19 novembre 1982)*, Rome 1986, 205–14; I. Krauskopf, Edipo nell'arte antica, *ibid.* 327–41 (esp. 327–33) and pll. 1–26; ead., *LIMC* VII/1 (1994), 3–9, *s.v.* Oidipous (plates: VII/2, 6–13); N. Kourou, M. Komvou, and S. Raftopoulou, *LIMC* VIII/1 (1997), 1151–65, *s.v.* Sphinx (plates: VIII/2, 794–810).

lair (v. 10, with Turner's supplement), as in the Senecan flashback (cf. E. *Ph*. 806 οὔρειον τέρας). But then what are the βάθρα of v. 16?

When reasoning about the text, the possibility of corruption needs to be borne in mind. In the legible portions of 28 highly fragmentary verses there is a clear error in v. 17, another likely one in v. 5, and quite possibly a third in v. 1. Add the wrong accents at vv. 7 and 9 (and, again, quite possibly 1), and the picture of the scribe's correctness, or that of his antigraph, is less than reassuring. While corruption in fragmentary sections cannot be assumed without proof,[17] an undetected and undetectable error may nonetheless explain some of those places which cannot be supplemented into sense.

1　　The first trace is ρ, φ, ω, or (less likely) ο, none of which produces a satisfactory form as it is. I once advocated for]οειδῆ, postulating itacism and retaining the papyrus' accent: a silly thing to have done, because compounds of that form do not belong to the spoken parts of tragedy. Diggle's πυρς]ώ{ι}δη is not the only option, but the thrust of it – an adjective in -ώδης – must be right. The word need not be in agreement with φόβην, which can be an accusative of respect.

2　　Cf. *IA* 421 θηλύπουν βάσιν (of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia).

4　　Given the other mistakes made by the scribe, I mention without particular conviction that επι could represent ἐπεί as well as ἐπί. But even word boundaries, like most else in this line, are uncertain. Palaeographically the least bad reading for what follows would seem to be παλαιριζ[ ]ν, with neither α fully satisfactory and υ or χ as (less attractive) alternatives for λ, but what to make of it? A 'root' might find some sort of counterpart in the likely φύλλων in v. 5 (see *n*.), but I am unable to find a sensible connection. An epithet παλαίριζος 'with ancient roots' is nowhere attested. Cingano may well be right to suggest separating [ἐ]ν χρόνωι.

5　　The papyrus reads διήλεσε, which would have to come from an otherwise unattested διαλέω, 'grind through'. Lloyd-Jones suggests that it 'might possibly make sense here', but he omits to specify what sense he has in mind. Turner had suggested διήλασε: better (for the sense 'travel across' cf. *H.Merc*. 96), but not free from problems. Who, or what, would be the subject? The Sphinx? But she is in full view of the speaker both before (vv. 1–3) and after (vv. 7–9). The latter ceases to be an obstacle if she is flying (cf. v. 3), but if so, from where to where? She was already in sight (vv. 1–3) and will remain both in sight (vv. 15, 17) and within earshot (vv. 18–*fin*.), even though the speaker may himself have moved (v. 16). Or is it the sunlight filtering through the foliage? The uncommon construction of προσβάλλω would be paralleled, in part, by *Il*. 7.421 = *Od*. 19.433. But the verb is aorist, not imperfect, and whatever the Sphinx is doing at vv. 7–9, she must be in the open air; I do not think she can be perched *on* the tree.[18] After the mysterious verb, πι (Turner) possible, ρι (Lloyd-Jones) not, but I suspect all three traces may belong to one letter, viz. ν movable, followed by the *simplex* φύλλων; for the φόβη of trees and shrubs see fr. 495.34 Kannicht, *Ba*. 648, 722, 1138, etc.

10　　Where frr. 1 and 4 join, one might want to read τάδ[ε, but an upward curl at the top left of the first letter suggests υ more than τ, and there is no acute over α, as we would expect from this scribe if it were τάδε.

11　　Fr. 1: τοῦς' or γοῦς', probably with unmarked elision as at vv. 2, 3, 20, 21, 24. Fr. 4:]δ or]λ ; ὑ[or φ[.

12　　Turner suggested ἀφρόνω[ν (cf. v. 21), but the scribe regularly uses the acute accent where our rules prescribe the grave (vv. 7, 23, 24, 26),[19] a fact which allows word-end after the extant v. ἀφρόν, 'foam' thus becomes possible, as does ἐλ]αφρόν, 'light' or 'nimble'. Euripides may have lent the Sphinx a frothy mouth:

---

[17] I shall studiously avoid calling it Youtie's Law: see R. Kassel, Iuxta lacunam ne mutaveris, *ZPE* 200 (2016) 140; K. Panegyres, Iuxta lacunam ne mutaveris, *ZPE* 208 (2018) 162; P. Reuter, Iuxta lacunam ne mutaveris, *ZPE* 213 (2020) 28; K. Panegyres, Addendum to: P. Reuter, Iuxta lacunam ne mutaveris, *ibid*.

[18] As does Barlow (n. 9), 10. On vases, the Sphinx is regularly represented as sitting on a rock or – after the fashion of her sculptural representations – atop a column; see Moret (n. 16), 69–75 on the implications of this detail.

[19] Not strictly an error, or at least not an aberration: see C. M. Mazzucchi, Sul sistema di accentazione dei testi greci in età romana e bizantina, *Aegyptus* 59 (1979), 145–67, at 154–5.

Seneca's Oedipus reminisces about her *cruentos … rictus* (*Oed*. 93–4), Pindar mentions her 'savage jaws' (19 *n*.), and Aeschylus, who calls her ὠμοcίτοc at *Th*. 541 (cf. E. *Ph*. 1025), evokes an ἀφρόc of gore in fr. 372 Radt (play, and context, unknown). This in turn raises the prospect of φυ]c̣ᾶι further ahead, if fr. 4 is correctly placed (the first trace is either c or, possibly, λ); cf. S. *El*. 1385 (figurative), *Aj*. 918–19,[20] 1411–13.

13   The first letter could be τ or υ; a curl suggest the latter, the almost flat right arm and the lack of an accent the former. Given the scribe's habit concerning elision (11 *n*.), it is hard to tell whether word-end falls before or after α.

14   I presume a part of πρόχειροc, 'ready' (said of a person at S. *El*. 1494, E. *HF* 161; more often of objects, which are not an impossible referent here).

15   Base and left leg of a triangle (ζ, ξ likelier than δ), then top and bottom left of a rounded letter.]ζετ' or]ξατ' have an obvious suitability; for the somewhat compressed shape of ε cf. v. 3 ὠκύπτε̣ρον, v. 5 διήλεcε̣, for α with a low tip (albeit not quite as low) cf. those at vv. 10 and 12. Then ἀντίπρωιροc, 'face to face' (S. *Tr*. 223, E. *El*. 856, [E.] *Rh*. 136), with *iota mutum* omitted as at v. 6.

16   Turner read πάθρω[]κ̣ ̣, which cannot be right. The first trace on fr. 3 looks more like β (cf. v. 2 βάc̣ιν, v. 5 φόβην), the second-to-last is ν, and βάθρων has the advantage of being a word. Here presumably it was used concretely, as in S. *OT* 142, *OC* 101 (seats), 1591 (steps), E. *IT* 962 (stand), 1157, 1201 (pedestal). Then I should guess δ, but the traces admit other interpretations (ζ, ξ).

17   All editors so far have printed the last letter as ῆ, which can only mean ἀγωνιcτῆ[ι. Yet the dative is difficult to construe in its new-found context, unless it was used adjectivally (with τρόπωι? cf. *Med*. 751, *HF* 282, *Hel*. 1547) – but I have found no example of this usage before Plu. *Th*. 25.1 (itself a doubtful parallel), and nowhere in verse.[21] The traces before the lacuna can also be read as ῶ, indicating a genitive plural which could be construed e.g. as ἀγωνιcτῶ[ν δίκην, cf. A. *Su*. 408, *Ag*. 1179, *Cho*. 195, E. *Hec*. 1162. If instead the speaker is Oedipus and the subject of ἵcταντ' are not he and the Sphinx, some crowd of onlookers may have been standing 'beside the competitor' (viz. himself; ἀγωνιcτῆ[ι πάρα ?) or 'around the competitors' (him and the Sphinx; ἀγωνιcτῶ[ν πέρι ?). But the problem outlined on p. 12 remains.

18   After ἱ, bottom of an ascender followed by a trace at mid-height (κ, λ, ν, χ), then a right-pointing hook on the baseline, like the foot of ε or c; traces of an upright or ascender, then again a hook like the one before. What remains of the papyrus surface is badly twisted, making the traces even harder to interpret. The only reading I can conjure which fits the traces and the metre is ἵν' ε̣ἰc̣δέχοιτο (with the final ο deleted with a dot above and one below), but I cannot see how 'in order to take in', 'to welcome in' might possibly fit the context. Further to the right, the papyrus is somewhat bent over itself, affecting the top part of the line. Still, the ink trace over ο which the fold partly covers has to be from a diacritic – an acute or, less probably, a rough breathing – over that letter. At the very edge the surface is abraded and the fibres are disturbed, so I cannot be sure of the two faint traces which I think I see protruding rightward from the final vertical, one on the topline, one at mid-height.

19   Cf. Pi. fr. 177(d) Maehler αἴνιγμα παρθένοι' ἐξ ἀγριᾶν γνάθων.

20   There is not a great deal of room for our scribe's broad μ, but the surface preserving the bottom right corner of α̣ is bent rightward, and further to the right the papyrus folds diagonally over itself, if slightly, which may account for the apparent lack of space. It is surprising to find such a prosaic, technical term as ἐξάμετρον in a tragedy (next attested in verse in the Imperial age: ps.-Man. *Apotel*. 1[5].13), but the strange-

---

[20] Condemned by A. Nauck, *Sophoclis Aiax*, Berlin 1867, 33, with the approval of M. L. West, Tragica II, *BICS* 25 (1978), 121 (like *OT* 1278–9 'an obvious interpolation in the interest of goriness') and of the most recent editor, P. J. Finglass, *Sophocles. Ajax*, Cambridge 2011, 406. The interpolation is not necessarily a late one, and the parallel exists regardless of authenticity.

[21] I cannot conscientiously propose ἀγωνιcτῆ[ρεc ὥc, since the noun is unattested. I note, however, that Euripides provides the first or only attestation of several such formations, which may likewise be of his own devising: ἀκοντιcτήρ (*Ph*. 140), κομιcτήρ (*Hec*. 222), κτιcτήρ (fr. 448a.19 Kannicht), ὀνειδιcτήρ (*HF* 219), all occurring when the metre required one more syllable than the corresponding form of -ιcτήc.

ness is tempered somewhat by its likely adjectival use ('six-measured'). As its noun, perhaps τόνοις, cf. Hdt. 1.47, 62, etc.? But Herodotus, and most others, use the singular (exceptions: *Suda* ε 1533, τ 768 Adler, Σ^M D.T. pp. 307–8 Hilgard). ῥυθμοῖς would do, too (for the scansion cf. A. fr. 78.2 Radt, E. *Su.* 94); also cτίχοις, but perhaps still too technical (first attested in Ar. *Ran.* 1239, Euripides speaking; see however Pi. *P.* 4.57 with Braswell *ad loc.*).

21   If the Sphinx specified that the thing in question 'has intelligence', 'the addition seems almost to destroy the riddle' (Turner). 'Or did the Sphinx challenge those who had intelligence to solve it?' (Lloyd-Jones) – but ἔχο[ν cannot be vocative with δ' there. In my earlier article I conjectured that v. 21 might be the messenger's final trimeter *in propria persona* rather than the Sphinx's first hexameter, which would allow for ἔχο[ντ-, in a sense like the one suggested by Lloyd-Jones; the beginning of the more common version of the riddle (ἔcτι δίπουν ἐπὶ γῆc καὶ τέτραπον, οὗ μία φωνή, | καὶ τρίπον, *etc.*: Asclep.Tragil. *BNJ* 12 F 7) resembles v. 22 more than it does 21. But ἔχο[ν can stand, and the hexameter with it, if it was part of a paradox, e.g. ξύνεcιν δ' ἔχο[ν οὐ ξυνίηcι (with short ι as at *IT* 298, *Hec.* 338, and generally in early hexameter) or the like. Paradoxes belong in riddles, as the collection of comic ones in Ath. 10.70–76, 448e–451b exemplifies: Alex. fr. 242 K.–A. (*Sleep*) οὐ θνητὸc οὐδ' ἀθάνατοc; Eubul. fr. 106 K.–A. (*Karion-the-Sphinx*) λαλῶν ἄγλωccοc, ἀξύνετα ξυνετοῖcι λέγων, ἂν τρώcηι τιc ἄτρωτοc; Antiph. fr. 194 K.–A. (*Sappho*) ὄντα δ' ἄφωνα βοὴν ἵcτηcι γεγωνόν. Paradoxes are also beloved by Euripides, see e.g. Parker on *Alc.* 521; so are ξύνεcιc and cognates (9× the noun, 10× the verb, 16× the adjective, plus compounds). The two things come together, in a context similar to ours, at *Ph.* 1505–7 τᾶc ἀγρίαc ὅτε | δυcξυνέτου ξυνετὸν μέλοc ἔγνω | Cφιγγὸc ἀοιδοῦ cῶμα φονεύcαc.

24   The first trace can be η, ι, or (just about) ο.

25   Turner may be right to change the accent and print ἤ, but nothing excludes ἦ, especially if the clause ending with]ε̣ύειc was already a question (LSJ s.v. ἦ II.1.a). The last trace is either β or δ: a trimeter. What is more striking is the second-person verb. Is the Sphinx following up on her hexameter riddle with an extra verse challenging her opponent (Dingel on v. 27, where he read ὑμεῖc)? Or is the messenger interrupting himself to address his audience (Mette, ditto), if he was reporting to one person? The second of these things would be especially remarkable; for the first there is a parallel of sorts in Eubul. fr. 106.5 K.–A.

Enrico Emanuele Prodi, Magdalen College, Oxford OX1 4AU, United Kingdom
enrico.prodi@classics.ox.ac.uk