OEDIPUS’ APOLOGY AND SOPHOCLEAN CRITICISM:
OC 521 AND 547*)

BY

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In the course of the last two hundred years OC 521 and 547, part of the lyric dialogue between Oedipus and the Chorus in the first epeisodion of the Oedipus at Colonus, have undergone extensive emendation, but the reading still cannot be regarded as settled. The purpose of the present article is to give a critical assessment of the variety of readings proposed by Sophoclean scholars and to examine to what degree the textual criticism of the lines in question is influenced by the way in which the tragedy as a whole is interpreted; special emphasis will be put on the readings adopted in the latest Oxford edition of Sophocles by H. Lloyd-Jones and N.G. Wilson¹).

1.

OC 521-23 MSS: ἣνεγκον κακότατ’, ὁ ἔξενοι, ἤνεγκον ἄκων μέν,
θεὸς ἰστοι
τούτῳ δ’ αὐθαίρετον οὐδέν.

(‘I did suffer misery, o strangers, but this happened unintention-

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ally. May God know this: nothing of what happened was of my own choice'.")

*OC* 521 as delivered to us by the manuscript tradition does not make sense metrically: the word ἀκων, shaped - -, is placed where the metrical sequence - - would be expected. As the subsequent table shows, from the beginning of the nineteenth century the corrections of ἀκων have been divided between ἄεκον and ἐκον, two words polarly opposite in meaning.

I. ἄεκον:

(1) ἰνεγκον κακότατ, ὁ ἕνοι, ἰνεγκ ἄεκον μέν
θεὸς ἱστο
τοῦτον ὅ ἀυθαίρετον οὐδέν. Martin, Bergk

(2) ἰνεγκ οὖν κακότατ, ὁ ἕνοι, ἰνεγκ ἄεκον μέν, θεὸς ἱστο
τοῦτον ὅ ἀυθαίρετον οὐδέν. Whitelaw, Jebb, Pearson

(3) ἰνεγκ', ὁ, κακότατ, ὁ ἕνοι, ἰνεγκ ἄεκον μέν, θεὸς ἱστο

II. ἐκον:

ἰνεγκον κακότατ, ὁ ἕνοι, ἰνεγκον ἐκον μέν
θεὸς ἱστο
τοῦτον ὅ ἀυθαίρετον οὐδέν. Boethe, Wecklein, Campbell,

Wilamowitz, Lloyd-Jones/Wilson

Martin's correction of ἰνεγκον ἐκον μέν of the MSS into ἰνεγκ ἄεκον μέν (I 1) was, as Kamerbeek put it, "the simplest remedy". Small wonder, then, that it has been followed by many editors. Yet, this correction, demanding in its turn that the preceding ἰνεγκον should be modified into ἰνεγκ', created an incongruity between the two alternative forms of the first person aorist of ἄφρω, ἰνεγκα and ἰνεγκον, used in the same line). Correction of the first ἰνεγκον into ἰνεγκ οὖν (I 2) or ἰνεγκ', ὁ (I 3) was a natural by-product of the situation thus created.

The strategy of replacing ἰνεγκον by ἰνεγκα was disputed by the editors of the new Oxford text of Sophocles, who argued as follows:

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2) Translations mine, unless otherwise stated.
3) Cf. Jebb: "ἰνεγκον ... ἰνεγκ' might possibly stand, but would be harsh"; Dawe: "the clash between first and second aorists would be eccentric"; Kamerbeek: "the variation ἰνεγκον ... ἰνεγκ' would seem an objection".