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On Pasolini's *Edipo Re*: an overview with a focus on two neglected details. Unconscious, will, chance and destiny

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ABSTRACT. The present study aims at re-analyzing two specific aspects of Pasolini's cinematic staging of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* that seem to have received little attention. The first aspect concerns the subtle usage of body language, such as "covering the eyes, crying, gaze-interactions, starring someone or something in silence". They are peculiar details that betray, so to speak, the presence both of typically Freudian concepts (such as, "the removing of disturbing truth to the unconscious, and the unconscious awareness of the truth"), and some typically Sophoclean ideas (such as, "resignation" to what is inescapable and acceptance of it). This analysis is thus conducted within the perspective of the complex interrelation between Sophocles' text and the Freudian interpretation that Pasolini has applied to it. The second aspect, while analyzing Pasolini's self-commentary on some portions of the film, pertains to an enigmatic statement of Pasolini himself which seems to have been mostly dismissed. Pasolini's enigmatic statement touches on issues essential both to Sophocles' tragedy and its modern reception; it indeed involves the everlasting discussion on the play about the dialectical tension among "will", "chance" and "destiny" in Oedipus' story and in human condition, as exemplified by the individual case of Pasolini.

Keywords: rejection and unconscious awareness, body language, enigmatic lines, questionable comma, destiny and chance, imposition and willingness.

RESUMO. *Édipo Rei*, de Pasolini: uma análise focalizando dois itens pouco investigados. O inconsciente, o desejo, a sorte e o destino. Pelo fato de que pouca atenção foi dada a dois itens da obra *Édipo Rei*, este estudo reanalisa dois aspectos específicos à representação cinemática de Pasolini sobre *Oedipus Rex*, de Sófocles. O primeiro aspecto versa sobre o uso sutil da linguagem corpórea como "cobrir os olhos, choro, interações de fitar, contemplando alguém ou algo em silêncio". São detalhes específicos que trai a presença de conceitos freudianos (como o deslocamento da verdade incômoda para o inconsciente e a percepção inconsciente da verdade) e outras ideias tipicamente sofoclianas (como resignação àquilo do qual não se pode fugir e sua aceitação). A análise desenvolve-se dentro da perspectiva da inter-relação complexa entre o texto de Sófocles e a interpretação freudiana que Pasolini aplica a ela. Analisando os comentários que o mesmo Pasolini fez sobre o filme, o segundo aspecto envolve uma afirmação enigmática que ele mesmo fez e a qual passou despercebida. Esta afirmação versa sobre fatores essenciais à tragédia de Sófocles e à sua recepção moderna. De fato, envolve a discussão eterna na peça sobre a tensão dialética entre o "livre-arbítrio", o "acaso" e o "destino" na história de Édipo e na condição humana, algo exemplificado no caso particular de Pasolini.

Palavras-chave: rejeição e consciência do inconsciente, linguagem do corpo, linhas enigmáticas, vírgula sob investigação, destino e acaso, imposição e vontade.

Introduction

It is only in the last two decades that Pier Paolo Pasolini, an Italian artist and intellectual in the '60s, has been receiving consistent and increasing attention in Italy as well as in North America[1]. What is most impressive of Pasolini's figure is his artistic eclecticism as poet, painter, novelist, screenwriter, essayist and film director, such various facets that have always been paralleled to his intense activity of critical and theoretical reflection (FUSILLO, 1996, p. 4-5; PETKOVIC, 1997, p. 39-40). The complex variety of Pasolini's oeuvre, his amazing capability to express his mind by adopting several, different forms of communication, well justify the interdisciplinary approach that scholars tend to

[1] It would be impossible to give an account of the existing bibliography on Pasolini. I shall thus quote some of the most useful sources which I also followed for this paper. For an extensive and useful bibliographical reportoire of scholarship concerning Pasolini in North America see Pacchioni (2008). A good account and collection of scholarly works on Pasolini in Italy can be found in Fusillo (1996).

employ to unravel the specific components, and their meaning, of the production of this Italian artist. The cinematic staging of ancient Greek tragedies and the adaptations of literary masterpieces are among the most important components of Pasolini's "language", which have received special attention (FUSILLO, 1996 – with reference to Greek tragedy -; PETKOVIC, 1997, p. 145 and n. 2 – more in general). The transformation that Greek tragedy undergoes in Pasolini's cinematic reconstruction has not been explored exclusively by Classicists. It has, indeed, been explored by applying a variety of methods such as by cross-referencing films with self-commentary essays (which is the most routinely method); by relating the film's complex interplay to both its classical and psychoanalytic sources (e.g., DORIGO, 1970; BRUNETTA, 1985, 1986; DE ROSA; RINALDI, 1992; FUSILLO, 1996; ELOIT, 2004; PADUANO, 2008, p. 164-171; BIASI-RICHTER, 1997, p. 77-110); by analyzing the dramatic rendition of the ancient play in film and thus emphasizing Pasolini's respect of certain dramatic aspects of classic drama (e.g., CATANIA, 2000), and so forth. Beyond the disparity of these approaches there is a twofold common trend: to single out the novelties and/or deviations from the main source and to attempt to explain them in light of Pasolini's goals and personal views. This is what we can verify, for instance, in the existing scholarship centering on Pasolini's "Edipo Re".

It is the purpose of the present study to re-analyze a few specific aspects of Pasolini's cinematic staging of Sophocles' tragedy that seem to have received little attention, such aspects that – to use the scholarly categorization mentioned above - pertain to (a) the complex interplay of the film with its classical and psychoanalytic sources, and (b) the cross-referencing of films with self-commentary essays. The first concerns the subtle usage of body language which betrays, so to speak, the presence both of typically Freudian concepts (such as the removing of disturbing truth to the unconscious), and some typically Sophoclean ideas (such as, resignation to what is inescapable and acceptance of it). The latter, while analyzing Pasolini's self-commentary on some portions of the film, interestingly involves an enigmatic statement of Pasolini himself which seems to have been mostly dismissed.

Quick overview on the movie: a 'triptych'

I shall preface the discussion concerning the two above mentioned topics with a summary of the basic features of the movie, with reference to both structure and content, as necessary base on which to build the new observations.

Pasolini tells the story of "his" Oedipus by using two specific narratological techniques: the trilogy and the ring-composition[2]. Indeed, he articulates the plot in three sections through which – differently from Sophocles' play – it is possible to follow chronologically the vicissitudes of Oedipus: from his birth to the exposition and abandonment by his own parents; from the life with his adoptive parents in Corinth to his crucial visit to the oracle of Apollo in Delphi and from here to the fatal encounter with his father Laius whom, unconsciously and unwittingly, he killed; from his arrival in Thebes and the fundamental episode of the Sphinx to his marriage with his mother and the overtaking of the throne; from the plague decimating Thebes - the very starting point of Sophocles' tragedy - to the all events that, in the path of the ancient playwright, leads Oedipus to the discovery of his identity with the subsequent self-blinding[3]. Pasolini proceeds by also incorporating part of the plot of "Oedipus at Colonus", given that his movie ends with Oedipus wandering in exile until he reaches the place where 'his life ends', figuratively speaking. The first and third sections of the trilogy include respectively (a) the prior events, from Oedipus' birth to the episode of the pestilence - which are not chronologically described in Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" -, and (b) the later ones, which are fully dramatized by Sophocles in "Oedipus at Colonus". They thus constitute a prologue and an epilogue. As such, they frame the central section, which is where Pasolini adopts the plot of Sophocles' tragedy[4]. While the prologue and epilogue are set in modern time, in a little town in North Italy (Sacile), the central section goes back to the time of Oedipus' story, i.e., to a mythic time. The connection between prologue and epilogue is not simply determined by the modern environment. More significantly, it is the path of

[2] For a detailed structural analysis of the movie, see in particular Rossi (1951, p. 57-63); MacKinnon (1995, p. 114-119) Fusillo (1996, p. 31-71). Some scholars tend to analyze the movie as a tetrad consisting of prologue, Sophoclean premise, Sophoclean play, epilogue: see, e.g., Gervais (1973, p. 72-75).

[3] As Oedipus came to know, the pestilence was provoked by Apollo to punish the community for having left unpunished the murder of Laius. Indeed, the Theban community did not carry on the investigation on Laius' murder in the moment in which it happened, since they were dealing with the Sphinx, which in turn was sent *ad hoc*, precisely to divert the attention of the Thebans from Laius' murder. It must be Oedipus the one that had to look for the killer of Laius in order to save Thebes from the pestilence (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex", p. 80-141). And, it was exactly by undertaking the investigation on Laius' murder that Oedipus, inevitably, started what was, in fact, a journey of self-discovery.

[4] The adoption, so to speak, of Sophocles' text by Pasolini must by no means be intended as mere repetition. There are, indeed, several, significant variations from the original, some of which will be object of the present work. For an accurate analysis of the variations, see Rossi (1951, p. 25-44), Fusillo (1996, p. 74-77) and Lauriola (2000, p. 244-249).

Oedipus' self-discovery what links the two sections as representing the two extreme phases of the hero's life: the infancy and old age[5]; the beginning and the end. In this sense, the triadically arranged story is enclosed within a narrative circle. In a masterly fashion, Pasolini marks the extremities of this ring-composition through words, music, and images:

> - "Life ends where it begins" (MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 104)[6] – so his hero says at the end of his exile, when he reaches the place where for the first time he saw his mother and, with her, the surrounding world, i.e., the place of his birth;
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> - the music characterizing the moments of his final arrival to his birth-place echoes back to that of the first moments of Oedipus' life (see, e.g., PETKOVIC, 1997, p. 63), as it is described in the screenplay: " ... over its image flows that same musical theme... the mysterious music of childhood days" (scene 48: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 104)[7];
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> - the images on which, at the very end, the camera focuses are the same as those on which it focuses at the very beginning: a jewel of nature that, as in the cradle, held the infant Oedipus, and likewise holds him at the end of his life.

The prologue is particularly relevant to the first topic I shall discuss. It concerns the infancy of Oedipus from his birth to the terrible act that his father performed right before his abandonment: the piercing of the child's feet. Jokasta and Laius are represented as a modern couple (in the 20's or thereabouts). While Jokasta symbolizes safety and joy to Oedipus child's eyes, Laius symbolizes fear, hostility, hatred. These emotions are expressed without words: gazes, crying and silence are the basic language Pasolini uses in this section.

Sophocles and Freud in Pasolini's Edipo Re[8]. "To know or not to know"; or, still better, "To accept or not to accept"

> "Oh light, which once I could see and now I cannot see any more. For the last time now you illuminate me. I am back. Life ends where it begins"[9].

These are the last words that Pasolini's Oedipus pronounces when, blind, he arrives where for the first time he "distinguished and recognized his mother", that is, where his life started. "Here he stops" – we are told in the film - "Is this the place he was looking for, in the darkness of his night?" (scene 48: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 104).

By masterly re-elaborating the story and the text of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex", Pasolini encloses, as in a frame, his hero's life-journey of self-discovery that begins and ends in a spot of jewel of nature where the day that has given Oedipus life is revealed as that which takes his life away (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex" 437). The truth concerning Oedipus' birth, a truth that finally in his darkness he sees, reveals the falsity of what he was persuaded it was his life, thereby destroying it. "Life ends where it begins" is Pasolini's powerful and original rephrasing of the vicissitudes of his Oedipus. It does not simply single out the circular movement within which the story is re-elaborated. To my eyes it rather vividly expresses the results of the Sophoclean Oedipus' search for his own identity in a way that allows Pasolini at the same time to propose an autobiographic dramatization of his own journey of self-discovery, the discovery of his own diversity and its acceptance (see, e.g., ARONICA, 1987, p. 4-6; BIASI-RICHTER, 1997, p. 77-86, 90-93; BRUNETTA, 1985; FERRETTI, 1985; LARIVAILLE, 1985, p. 108, 136-137 with reference to the acceptance of his own diversity; NAGUEZ, 1973; PETKOVIC, 1997, p. 40-46)[10]. Sophocles' Oedipus ultimately accepts to be the one who is revealed as born from those who should not, intimate with those who should not, killing those who should not (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex", 1183-1185); and he thus finds his life ending where it began. Likewise Pasolini's Oedipus: he accepts the truth, a truth that, however, differently from Sophocles' hero, he has always tried to remove.

The interplay of Pasolini's film with its classical source cannot but intertwine with that involving Freud's interpretation of Sophocles' tragedy. "In "Oedipus Rex" – Pasolini said –I recount the story of "my" Oedipus complex; the child of the prologue is myself, his father is "my" father.., and the mother is "my" mother…"(BETTI; GULINUCCI, 1991, p. 159-160)[11]. Hence the emphasis in the prologue of the film, the section that re-elaborates Oedipus' childhood, is on the figure both of the mother and of the father. This emphasis is significantly obtained

[5] With reference to Pasolini's Oedipus, I above use the phrase 'old age' in a figurative way. By incorporating Sophocles' "Oedipus at Colonus", Pasolini meant to refer to the last part of the life of Sophocles' Oedipus, when he left Thebes and went to exile. But Pasolini's Oedipus is far from old age.

[6] Unless differently indicated in note, I shall use the English translation of the screenplay of Pasolini's "Oedipus Rex", provided by Matthews (1971).

[7] As Fusillo points out, that music is the hallmark of the 'destiny-motif' throughout the movie "una sorta di 'tema del destino' fatto di musica giapponese" (FUSILLO, 1996, p. 81).

[8] For a concise discussion on Sophocles and Freud, see Paduano (2008, p. 9-42).

[9] "O luce, che non vedo piu', che prima eri stata in qualche modo mia, ora mi illumini per l'ultima volta. Sono tornato. La vita finisce dove cominicia" (BETTI; GULINUCCI, 1991, p. 157; on these lines see also FUSILLO, 1996, p. 69-70; LAURIOLA, 2000, p. 244 and n. 4; PADUANO, 2008, p. 165 and n. 55). The above English translation is mine.

[10] Pasolini himself admitted the autobiographical essence of his adaptation of Sophocles' play: "The basic difference between "Oedipus Rex" and all of my other films is that "Oedipus Rex" is the most autobiographical…" (BETTI-GULINUCCI, 1991, p. 159; the English translation is mine).

[11] The English translation is mine. I kept the Italics that I found in the Italian quotation of Pasolini's words.

through a play of gazes. Pasolini well employs one of the several potentials the camera allows: if the ancient theater could mostly rely on the power of the words, given that the ancient actors wore a mask, the modern camera can emphasize other efficient ways to communicate such as that through eyes and gaze (MacKINNON, 1995, p. 111; RASY, 1991, p. 380; ROSSI, 1951, p. 4-7; VIANO, 1993).

The fundamental role, in Sophocles' tragedy, of Oedipus' eyes, i.e., of their eventual capability to really see and realize the truth, has been revitalized, extended to other characters and charged with different meanings in Pasolini's film, with all meanings being related to the underlying idea of realizing and understanding the truth already in the very first phases of the story. Not by chance, from the very beginning the camera focuses on the eyes and the reciprocal gazes of the three crucial personages: the child Oedipus, the mother Jokasta, the father Laius. Through the eyes of the child, first, the world around is explored; they significantly stop on his mother's face that leans over him. They look at each other and seem to recognize each others. The child laughs, and "together with his mother, for the first time, he sees the world around him" (scene 3: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 17-18). Soon after, it is his father's turn:

> "He comes up close to the pram and "looks" in, smiling terribly. The child "looks" at him, his limpid little eyes devoid of expression: perhaps he is already "pretending" indifference. The father "looks" at him… He is listening to his own inner voice. It is loud and solemn, as in a tragic drama "Here he is, the child who is gradually going to take your place in the world. Yes, he will hound you away and take your rightful place. He will kill you. He is here for no other reasons. He knows it. The first thing he will rob you of is your wife… Through love of his mother, this fellow will murder his father. And you can do nothing about it…" (my italics).
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> ….The child is still "looking" at the father, "in silence: averting his gaze" every so often… and then "looking" at him again "serious and intense". Do they understand each other? Are they "silent" because of the mysterious understanding?"(scene 5: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 20)[12] (my italics).

The fact that the eyes play a major role in the Freudian reading that Pasolini applies to his Oedipus' story has been already emphasized by the existing scholarship, although not fully analyzed. Frequently and, foremost, in crucial moments the eyes are significantly involved in a removal-action, so to speak, performed by Oedipus, an action which consists of covering the eyes with his hands, by thus explicitly expressing the refusal to see the light, i.e., the truth[13]. So far as I can ascertain, not all moments in which this significant action is performed have been considered in their full meaning, such a meaning that would imply not only the removal of the truth, but also some resignation to that unbearable truth. Important factors that would do full justice to the 'removal and resignation-action' have not received due attention. These factors are: gaze-interactions, as the ones between mother and son, and father and son described above; crying and silence that, both significantly, often accompany those interactions.

All of these factors – as I shall argue - seem to imply the presence of a certain degree of unconscious awareness, which, in the end, allows us to talk of 'removal'. The covering of the eyes itself may indeed represent an unconscious awareness of the truth, in that one could think about covering the eyes as blocking out that truth. At the same time, the strong Sophoclean concept of the ineluctability of the fate – which would exclude any level of unconscious awareness - is not completely dismissed. It seems rather to be evoked through the sense of resignation I hinted at, which often surfaces, paradoxically, along with the removal. This paradox is perhaps due to Pasolini's intention of re-elaborating and yet preserving the original. In other words, in Pasolini's Oedipus the Freudian concept of unconscious works in terms of removing a truth of which there is already, in some way, some awareness. In fact, the defense mechanism of removing a truth which is difficult to bear, by relegating that truth to the unconscious (i.e. the store of the collected information that has been repressed), is activated by some level of awareness of that truth (FREUD, 1959). In Pasolini's Oedipus, this 'some level of awareness', which conventionally we may call 'perception', surfaces through both visual and auditory elements[14]. At the same time, the Freudian concept of removing the truth, of which

[12] Except for the word 'pretending', all the others Italics are mine.

[13] On this action as a visual metaphor of the refusal to see and know the truth, see Fusillo (1996, p. 44 and n. 41; 97-103). In Pasolini' s "Edipo" Re, the refusal to see and the removal of the truth reach their best expression in the scene where Oedipus faces the Sphinx. Instead of asking the traditional riddle, the Sphinx asks Oedipus about the enigma which is inside him (i.e., his real self). Oedipus promptly answers that he does not know it, nor does he want to know it. The Sphinx would represent the unconscious of Oedipus, and her destruction at Oedipus' hands is a clear expression of the 'removal-mechanism' characterizing Pasolini's hero, i.e. his unwillingness to address his innermost thoughts. On this scene, see also Fusillo (1996, p. 90-94).

[14] With reference to the possible presence of some degree of awareness, it is interesting the way in which Durgnat analyzed the laughter with which Pasolini's Oedipus reacted to the insinuation that he is not Polybos' son (on this passage, see below, p. 11). The scholar seems to interpret that reaction as expression of "some subconscious memory of abandonment" (DURGNAT, 1972, p. 222).

there is, nevertheless, some deep perceptions, seems to be inextricably interwoven with a feeling of resignation to that truth due to the compelling, ineluctable force of destiny. And resignation, or, better, acceptance of one's own destiny is, in the end, the mark of any Sophoclean hero. In Pasolini's Oedipus what is peculiarly interesting is that both, removal and resignation, are rendered through the same kind of actions.

Pasolini's Oedipus is not blind at the beginning as Sophocles' Oedipus; he seems he has already seen and perceived his identity, as the above mentioned scene where father and son look at each other and understand each other's roles seems to show. In this sense there is some kind of awareness of the truth, which is both promptly removed, but at the same time accepted with resignation, as if since the beginning Oedipus understands there is no way out. Therefore, he cannot but be resigned to the determination of his destiny. And, this sense of resignation in turn causes him now to cry now to be intensively silent.

While existing scholarship tends to focus on the removal-action with which the eyes are concerned (that is, the act of covering the eyes), the present analysis aims at underlining the cinematic rendition of both the unconscious awareness of the removed truth[15], and the resignation to it. The following analysis will center on the most significant moments.

Covering the eyes: the refusal to see and the removal of the truth

This is the action to which most scholars have paid attention, although not all moments in which this action is performed have been appropriately taken into consideration.

In the prologue and thus during the childhood of Oedipus, the action occurs in three basic moments:

> - when the father looks at Oedipus with hatred, aware of what the child will do (i.e. steal his wife and take his place). Little Oedipus answers by looking intensively and diverting his gaze every so often. He also covers his eyes: he understands (perhaps) and does not want to realize it;
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> - after Oedipus saw his parents dancing (a possibly Freudian, jealous refusal to see the love between one's own mother and father) and got scared because of the fireworks (this might be a possible foreshadowing of the imminent "tragedy" which he would refuse to see); (my italics)
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> - more importantly, when the father seized his feet and gave him away, to abandon him to death. To my mind, this would well express Oedipus' refusal to see and to realize the beginning of his destiny.

In the so-called mythic section, that is in the more "Sophoclean" portion, in three basic moments we see Oedipus covering his eyes:

> - as soon as he has received the oracle concerning his destiny and turned away from Apollo's priestess;
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> - when, after the visit to the oracle of Apollo in Delphi, he arrived at a stone indicating the direction to Corinth[16];
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> - finally, any time it comes to decide – still better, to seemingly decide[17] - what direction to take, in his flight from Corinth. This happens not just once, as we would expect on the basis of Sophocles' text, according to which only once Oedipus was presumably given the chance to choose a road when arrived at a crossroad of three streets. Pasolini, indeed, exposed his hero to a choice (which is such only in all appearance) three times, and any time Oedipus chose without seeing, or, better, refusing to see by covering his face (see also FUSILLO, 1996, p. 80-81)[18].

In all of these cases the action has been interpreted as a metaphor of Oedipus' refusal to see and know the truth, a kind of anticipation, also, of his later physical blindness. Different, as prefaced, yet complementary to the traditional one, is the interpretation I shall argue below.

Covering the eyes: awareness and resignation

Eyes, gazes and silence

That the covering of the eyes is an effective way to express a feeling of removal is undoubted. The same should be said with reference to the feeling of awareness: you can close your eyes before

[15] The possibly unconscious awareness of the terrible truth is not limited to Oedipus. Gaze-interactions, smiles ending in sad and shady looks, intense silence often involve Jokasta, too, in a way that betrays some kind of awareness. In this way, for instance, she is described when, standing to one side, observes her husband and child looking at each other for the first time and – as said above – maybe already understanding each other's role: "The mother too… the sweet young wife… has probably understood. She smiles, but the smile freezes on her lips. She is staring hard and fixedly, as though trapped in the shadow of presentiment" (scene 5: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 20). Gaze-interactions also characterize the moment in which Laius and Oedipus met on the narrow road where Laius' murder occurs. On this moment, see below, p. 5-6.

[16] It is important to note that there are several inconsistencies between the film and the screenplay. As to the scene above under discussion, far different is the action that in the film Oedipus performed when he arrived in front of a milestone on which the name Corinth is inscribed. He looked intensively at that stone and bit his hand. The facial expression is rather that of fear and repulsion. He thus ran in the opposite direction. On the inconsistencies see also below, n. 18.

[17] As it will become clear throughout this work, and as it is along the lines of Sophocles' tragedy, those of Oedipus cannot but be decisions only in appearance: behind there is always destiny and its unpredictable way to work.

[18] It would be four time if we also consider the very first one when he reaches the milestone indicating Corinth. We find some discrepancies between the screenplay and the film with reference to the above described scenes. Namely, the second time in which Oedipus halts before a fork in the road, while in the film he performed the usual action of covering the eyes – together with spinning himself around (on which, see below, p. 7), the screenplay describes a far different, yet significant kind of action, that of throwing a coin up in the air by thus trusting himself to the coin's choice, so to speak. So far as I can ascertain, with a few exceptions (see, e.g., FUSILLO, 1996, p. 81) scholars have mostly tended to disregard this interesting detail involving the throwing of the coin. I shall later discuss this scene (see below, p. 13).

something you do not like to see, since in the end you know, in yourself, you are aware that it is something you would prefer not to see. In my opinion, this applies to all moments described above and is made more explicit, each time, through other visual and auditory devices. One of them is gaze-interaction accompanied by silence, a silence sometimes described as 'profound', 'ambiguous', 'pregnant', 'serious', 'intense'. So is the silence that accompanies the action of covering the eyes when, for the first time, son and father exchange their gazes. If the typical action of covering the face may express refusal to see his father's hatred and his own subsequent role, the serious and intense gaze and the silence convey first some kind of understanding: "Do they understand each other? – we are asked, as seen above - Are they silent because of this mysterious understanding?" (scene 5: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 20). Gaze and silence thus involve, first, a presentiment, that is to say an unconscious awareness of what they will be involved in; second – above all in Oedipus' perspective – a sort of resignation: there is nothing to do; he is there in front of his father, innocent receptacle of his father's hatred, unwillingly responsible of his father's destiny. He cannot but "avert" "his gaze every so often" and then "return the look" and "be silent", perhaps "already pretending indifference" (scene 5: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 20). Gaze and silence, a 'serious and intense' one, betray his unconscious awareness and his inevitable resignation[19].

Eyes and crying

Crying is another visual and auditory device that, while accompanying the removal action of covering the eyes, conveys at the same time a feeling of unconscious awareness and resignation. Crying "per se" is not simply a reaction to fear and pain, which in turn implies being aware of what provokes fear and pain. Crying may also serve to give way to one's own frustration and, thus, resignation in face of events that one cannot change or fix, but must just accept. In my opinion, this applies to all moments in which Oedipus covers his eyes and cries. He does not simply express his refusal to see and know. He does express the fear and the pain that the unconscious understanding of the truth causes him, the frustration that the ineluctability of his destiny imposes to him, and thus the resignation. He cannot but cry to give way to these feelings despite his attempt to expunge the knowledge that causes them.

Pasolini's Oedipus covers his eyes and cries when:

> - he saw his parents dancing and is surprised by the fireworks: an apparently quiet and serene scene of an idyllic family moment (what a child, in the end, would but be re-assured by the sight of harmony between his own parents!) is interrupted by an explosion of terrifying (for a child's ears) noises. It overall conveys a presentiment of something terrible is happening. Child Oedipus perceives this, does not want to see it, but he unconsciously is aware. He cannot do anything but fear, feel pains, be resigned to accept it, and cry for both fear and frustration;
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> - the father commits the atrocious action that will mark Oedipus' life and set in motion, in some way, his destiny[20]. Child Oedipus covers his eyes and cries when Laius, after gazing long at him, "suddenly puts out his hands and squeezes the child's tiny bare feet in his fists, as if he wanted to crush them" (scene 6: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 23-24). Oedipus' crying seems to be not simply the response to the possible physical pain provoked by his father's action. Indeed, it seems also to be the reaction both to the fear that the concrete beginning of the truth he does not want to see provokes, and to the resignation to it. He cannot do anything to impede his father's action; he can just give way to his feeling by crying;
>
> - significantly, when – after the visit to the Pythia – Oedipus arrives at the stone indicating the direction to Corinth and makes (only in all appearance) his own choice: he chooses to take the opposite direction and not to go back to Corinth. He covers his eyes refusing the truth that has been just revealed to him and he cries and cries, while turning away from Corinth[21].
>
> "Like an automaton now he is walking away from the sanctuary… on the milestone beside the road is inscribed the word 'Corinth'. This is the road leading back home, to his parents. Oedipus stares at the word… drops wearily onto the milestone and gives himself up freely to the convulsion of tears. He cries and cries, covering his face…" (scene 19: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 46).

It is the crying of the one who understands that he cannot do anything but accept to live a life he has

[19] As to gaze and eyes behavior, Pasolini tends to exploit the great communicative significance of human eyes which has been object of interest since ancient time: "Writers, actors, visual artists, and advertisers have used eye expression and eye image throughout history as a primary mode of communication and representation because of our belief in the eyes as windows of the soul" (WEBBINK, 1986, p. 6). Most types of eye behaviors involve the direction of gaze as part of their function. For instance, gaze avoidance is intentional avoidance of knowing an event; while gaze aversion, as being a definite movement of the eyes away from the interaction with the partner's eyes, symbolizes repulsion or fear, or a combination of the two negative emotions (ABELE, 1986, p. 83-101). While, in some way, the covering of the eyes in Pasolini's Oedipus may be also interpreted as a form of gaze avoidance, the 'averting his gaze every so often' - which Pasolini's Oedipus performs while interacting with the father – is certainly a form of gaze aversion.

[20] As to the importance of Laius' action and its crucial role in setting in motion Oedipus' destiny, see below, p. 11.

[21] About the discrepancy between movie and screenplay concerning this scene, see also above, n. 16.

not chosen, to wander and be uncertain of where to go. It is the cry of fear, pain and resignation to a course of life he does not want to see becoming true, yet is resigned to it. It is a crying that betrays an unconscious awareness of the terrible truth that he must be resigned to accept. Significantly, after he turned away from Corinth he does not cry any more: he is resigned,

> "Soon the stone is no more than a dot in the distance… "now… his eyes are dry"… Oedipus is walking along the road that leads to far-off Thebes… "He has resigned himself to his destiny": that of a man who can never go back, who "must always press onward, out into the wide world waiting for him" (scene 20: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 46-47; the Italics is mine) (my italics).

Speaking of resignation: an additional detail. Eyes and spinning in a circle

Three times the typical removal action of covering his own eyes is accompanied by another pregnant visual device: the turning of Oedipus around himself. Indeed, except for the first time when he reaches the milestone with the name Corinth inscribed on, this action significantly takes place all the other times Oedipus halts before a fork in the road, uncertain of which direction to take. Any time the direction toward Thebes is undertaken as a result of blindly turning himself around. The combination of these two actions may signify not simply Oedipus' unwillingness to see that he is going to meet with his destiny, but also the unconscious awareness that it cannot but be in that way. Hence his resignation to this comes with a complete abdication of responsibility (SNYDER, 1980, p. 88-90). "This is what the god has said" – as the Pythia's words may re-echo in his head – "and this is what inevitably will come to pass" (scene 17: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 44-45). Oedipus cannot rebel against his destiny, he almost trusts himself to it by resigning to have fate and chance decide for him. Here, more than elsewhere, with great art, Pasolini both emphasizes the Sophoclean concept of chance (*tyche*) and the idea of the ineluctability of fate, and combines them with the Freudian notion of removal and, thus, of unconscious awareness of what is removed, by employing what has become a leitmotiv (the covering of eyes) and by exploiting it in a way that multiplies the potentials of communication without words, i.e., through the spinning in a circle and letting the chance, a "fateful chance"[22], choose.

A mysterious and enigmatic line: Pasolini's and scholars' impasse. An interpretation

> "Now all is clear… willed, not imposed, by destiny"[23]

> "That is an absolutely mysterious phrase, which I have never been able to understand; but it is in Sophocles. The exact phrase is: 'There, now all is clear, willed, not imposed by destiny.' I cannot understand the phrase, but I find it wonderful, precisely because it is enigmatic and incomprehensible. There is something very clear in the phrase, I feel it could be explained, but I can't do it. Anyway, it is a verse from Sophocles which I lifted just as it stands" (PASOLINI; STACK, 1970, p. 125-126).

The cross-referencing of films with Pasolini's self-commentary or with his reflections released elsewhere, such as in interviews, is another of the approaches that scholars have applied in analyzing how and to what extent Pasolini has changed the original to make it suitable both for the cinematic reproduction and for the communication of his own interpretation of the tragedy itself.

The above quoted passage is the answer that Pasolini gave to O. Stack on the occasion of an interview with the Italian director recorded in a book which is appropriately entitled "Pasolini on Pasolini". The intriguing and mysterious essence of the line was such to Pasolini's eyes that the same reflection significantly marks the "incipit" of the chapter devoted to "Edipo Re" and collecting the director's self-commentary in "Il cinema d'elite". "Edipo Re" (BETTI; GULINUCCI, 1991).

As expected, due to the emphasis that Pasolini himself gave to it, the line and its related comment have attracted the attention of scholars who question the meaning of those words which occur "at a point where it seems that everything is indeed destiny, and not willed at all" (PASOLINI; STACK, 1970, p. 125).

The answer given by Pasolini is unclear, somewhat contradictory, and reveals an undoubted impasse: the phrase is defined as 'mysterious', 'enigmatic' and 'incomprehensible'; nevertheless, there is something very clear in it, which he is not able to explain. Furthermore, that same answer conveys a misinformation: "Anyway, it's a verse from Sophocles which I lifted just as it stands". Indeed, nowhere do we find in Sophocles such a line. While the address to light clearly recalls the Sophoclean Oedipus' words of l. 1182 ("It has all

[22] On the relation between fate/destiny and chance in Oedipus' story, I hinted at above, see below, p. 9-13. As to the terminology 'fateful', meaning here 'wanted/decided by fate', I took inspiration by Brody (1985).

[23] The above English translation and the Italics of the mysterious line are mine (the Italian version is in Pasolini's own screenplay: PASOLINI, 1967, p. 133). (The Italian version of the line is Pasolini's reflection which is above reported in English is in BETTI; GULINUCCI, 1991, p. 159).

come out clear and true")[24], the rest is an innovation of which Pasolini seems not to be aware.

The observation that the interviewer, O. Stack, expressed when asking about the meaning of that mysterious line seems to be built on an interpretation that would be at odd with the overall metaphysical significance of Oedipus' tragedy itself which centers on the power and the ineluctability of destiny. To make explicit the interviewer's mind, "willed" would, indeed, imply the intervention of personal desire and subjective responsibility, which Sophocles' Oedipus nowhere expresses; in fact, in "Oedipus at Colonus" he goes at length to deny responsibility (see, e.g., "Oedipus at Colonus" 270-275; 520-525; 545-548; 960-980). Hence comes the perplexity of the interviewer, the impasse of Pasolini, and the various attempts of some scholars to overcome that impasse. Massimo Fusillo, briefly commenting on that striking line, talks of "amplification" in translating Sophocles, without clarifying what this "amplification" in turn would mean (FUSILLO, 1996, p. 119 and p. 175). Daniela Aronica (1987, p. 8-10) and Guido Paduano (2008, p. 165-166) charge the line, and in particular the cryptic "willed", with a meaning that would reflect the Freudian reading that Pasolini applied to this tragedy. Aronica talks of a combination between the unconscious will of Oedipus and the irrational, uncontrollable force of destiny. It would be, however, an unfair combination, given that, according to Aronica, the unconscious will to commit the 'monstrous' deeds that Sophocles' Oedipus was doomed to accomplish is, in Pasolini's Oedipus, so strong that he does not even need the imposition by destiny. Aronica confines the strong intervention of unconscious will to the incest, that is to one of the 'monstrous' deeds that, in Sophocles, Oedipus is destined to commit. The scholar bases this assumption on the way in which Jocasta is portrayed by Pasolini, that is, as catalyst of unwillingness to know[25] and as object of Oedipus' unconscious presentiment that she is his mother:

> "In her sweetness, in her white veils which blur her features, she moves about her womanly ... her matronly... her maternal work: yes, maternal. Her every feature belongs to a mother…" (scene 35: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 81)

These are Oedipus' thoughts while looking at Jokasta right after Tiresias has indeed revealed the truth about the origin of Oedipus, a truth of which while in Sophocles Oedipus does not have yet a clue, in Pasolini he has some unconscious perceptions.

Aronica argues that by now admitting that "it was willed", Pasolini's Oedipus would thus express a feeling of culpability together with the pain that the discovery of his real self provokes. Similarly, Paduano analyzes the mysterious line: it is – the scholar says – a "formula di forte colpevolizzazione" (= "phrase denoting a strong feeling of self-reproach/guiltiness": PADUANO, 2008, p. 165) through which Pasolini's Oedipus summarizes the story of his own life. Differently from Aronica, Paduano refers the intervention of the personal will to the parricide, the other of the 'monstrous' deeds of the Sophoclean hero. The scholar notes that Pasolini's Oedipus commits the parricide by being fully aware not of the personal identity of the victim, but – and significantly – of the characteristics that typically identify a father in the sons' eyes: authority and abuse of power (see, also, FERRERO, 1977, p. 91-92). These, indeed, are the traits that Pasolini emphasized in the scene where Laius and Oedipus met on the road:

> "A carriage is coming towards Oedipus, taking up the whole road. A man's head emerges from the window – he is elderly, but still strong and violent. This is Oedipus' father…. Oedipus walks forward, holding the centre of the narrow road… Oedipus and his father gaze lengthily into each other's eyes both waiting to see what the other will do. A profound, irrational hatred at once disfigures their features…Oedipus advances, firmly resolved not to give way, to defend his pride… Or perhaps he is waiting only for a civil word from the other, an amicable request to move aside. But his opponent is furious. And no such thing occurs. Because that man is Oedipus' father" (scene 26: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 51-52).

Aronica' and Paduano's interpretations are undoubtedly in line with the Freudian underpinnings of Pasolini's rendition. Both, however, seems questionable at least for two main reasons:

> - each of them confines the intervention of personal will, whether it is unconscious or not, as stronger than the imposition by destiny, to one (and a different one) of the two actions that the Sophoclean hero was doomed to accomplish[26]. The Sophoclean original lines that, to all scholars' eyes, Pasolini has 'amplified' by adding the "mysterious words", clearly

[24] Unless differently specified in note, the translation of Sophocles' text is by Blondell (2002).

[25] In Sophocles' play, more than once Jokasta indeed shows reluctance to a further investigation (see, e.g., *Oedipus Rex*, ll. 766, 848-850, 1060-1061). Pasolini certainly amplified this trait of Jokasta. On the topic see also the detailed analysis in Fusillo (1996, p. 103-118).

[26] Paduano (2008, p. 166-167) does take into account the incest and the possibly unconscious awareness, in Pasolini's Oedipus, of Jocasta's identity; he, however, does not discuss this second point with reference to the meaning of the 'mysterious' line.

express the painful discovery by the tragic hero of his own identity as both being incestuous and parricide, given that he "is revealed as born from those he should not, intimate with those he should not, killing those whom he should not" (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex", 1183-1185) (my italics);

- more importantly, there is a controversial detail that has been always disregarded – so far as I can ascertain – and that would jeopardize, or, at least, weaken, the possible Freudian explanation that has been given, in the first place, to those mysterious words. This detail pertains to the punctuation marks. Let us re-quote the line and single out the punctuation mark:

Ora tutto e' chiaro... voluto, non imposto, dal destino
Now all is clear… willed, not imposed, by destiny

This is the way in which the line appears in the following places:

- in the screenplay written by Pasolini (1967, p. 133),

- when quoted by Pasolini himself, at the beginning of the chapter devoted to "Edipo Re" in Betti and Gulinucci (1991, p. 159) – as hinted at above,

- in the English translation of the screenplay, with a light variation in the words ("Now it all fits together…" It was willed, but not imposed, by destiny") (scene 42; MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 96-97), (my italics).

- in the quotation by one of the above mentioned scholars that analyzed that passage, i.e. Fusillo (1996, p. 119).

Differently, in the others of the above mentioned scholars (ARONICA, 1987; PADUANO, 2008), in the question that O. Stack asked to Pasolini in his interview, and in Pasolini's answer to that question, the line is quoted in the following way:

- Ora tutto e' chiaro, voluto, non imposto dal destino (ARONICA, 1987, p. 8).

- Voluto, non imposto dal destino (PADUANO, 2008, p. 165).

- "Now all is clear, willed, it is not destiny" (Stack's question about the meaning of that line: PASOLINI; STACK, 1970, p. 125) (my italics).

"There, now all is clear, willed, not imposed by destiny" (Pasolini's answer to Stack: PASOLINI; STACK, 1970, p. 125) (my italics).

As we can note, the difference between the two sets concerns the presence of a comma between "imposed" and "by destiny". It is not a mere detail. On the contrary, it affects the meaning of the line and may affect the explanation that one would attempt when trying to understand the reasons of that striking line. The presence of a comma between "imposed" and "by destiny" makes destiny the agent of "willed" as well, whereas the absence of that comma, by isolating "willed", makes the latter be dependent on an understood "by myself" (i.e., Oedipus). This is, indeed, what would lead to the Freudian underpinnings of the explanation Aronica and Paduano gave to that line.

Why we have these two different versions of the same lines, it is difficult to say. It is significant, however, that in the original screenplay and in other places where Pasolini himself wrote about this line, there is a comma between "imposed" and "by destiny"; while there is no comma in the script of Stack's interview, very likely due to the oral origin of that script itself for which the punctuation marks may more depend on the interpretation and style of the interviewer rather than on the intentions of the interviewed. As to the scholars, the presence or absence of that comma may depend on their source: either Pasolini's screenplay itself, or the script of his interview with Stack.

While following the personal script of Pasolini might be more reasonable, the question is: what does it mean "willed by destiny, and not imposed by destiny"?[27] It seems nonsense given that destiny, by definition, would "impose" and, thus determine, what it "wants".

On a closer analysis, however, we may say that the two actions are not the same. To impose implies necessity; to want may imply arbitrariness; indeed, it may refer to the arbitrary ways one "wants" certain things to happen. If transferred to a metaphysical level, we would call the first 'destiny', the second 'chance', which, by definition, is something arbitrary. In metaphysical terms and in the perspective of specific beliefs, they both would be ineluctable, i.e., forces superior to the individual, personal determination and will.

As it happens, destiny and chance are often regarded as interchangeable. Yet, they are two different terms and are not indicated as synonymous of each other. In ancient Greek culture and language we find two terms that can distinctively indicate the two concepts although, in the usage, not only is there the impression that one borders on the other, but they also are sometimes used as interchangeable (see, e.g., BRODY, 1985, p. 30; GREENE, 1944, p. 4, 8; O' CONNOR, 1923, p. 115). The two terms are "moira" and "tyche". The first term literally

[27] Matthew's English translation of the screenplay produces even a more striking phrase by adding the adversary conjunction 'but' (… "It was willed, but not imposed, by destiny").

indicates "one's portion life, lot, man's appointed doom", thus "destiny" (Liddell-Scott-Jones, 1968, s.v. "moira")[28]. It may imply either a merely quantitative connotation (a long or short portion of life), or a qualitative one (happiness or misery) (HOGAN, 1991, p. 13). "Tyche" means "fortune, accident, coincidence, contingency", thus "chance" (LIDDELL et al., 1968, s.v. "tyche"). Indeed, "tyche" implies such a wide range of meanings and such a fluidity that, by making its translation problematic, proves to be an elusive concept (GIANNOPOULOU, 1999, 2000, p. 257-258). It was, however, a multifaceted concept for the ancient Greeks, as well, as the following passage from Dio Chrysostom (LXIV, 8), concerning the divine personification of the concept, shows:

> "Tyche has been given different names among men: her impartiality is called Nemesis (that is, Retributive Justice); her inscrutableness is called Hope; her ineluctability/necessity is called Moira or Fate; her righteousness, Themis. She is indeed a goddess of many names and ways" (the translation is mine).

What "tyche" has in common with "moira" ("destiny") is its being an indefinite power, beyond and external to human control and comprehension, and ineluctable to a point – as seen in the above mentioned passage – to be called herself 'Moira' or 'Fate'. Yet, while "destiny-moira" could be, in some way, foreseen and it is something fixed since one's birth if not before – as in the case of Oedipus -, "chance-tyche" is unpredictable and may, thus, implies arbitrariness[29]. Both, however, are inescapable (O' CONNOR, 1923, p. 120), and this second common trait contributes to making "destiny" and "chance" interchangeable[30]. What is fateful and what is by chance are both beyond one's control and "inevitable".

In the belief of the ancient Greeks it is possible to identify a path alongside of which a gradual transition from faith – so to speak – in "destiny-moira" to that in "chance-tyche" seems to take place: from the archaic period, as reflected in Homer and Hesiod's poetry, in which "moira" is the prevailing concept, to the classical period, testifying to a transitional stage in which the two concepts coexist[31], finally, to the late-classical and post-classical period, in which we find a definite shift to the predominance of "tyche", as responsible for the unpredictable coincidences and vicissitudes in a man's life (GIANNOPOULOU, 1999, 2000; GREENE, 1944, p. 9). Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex", which falls in the acme of the classical period, partially shows the above mentioned coexistence between the two concepts, although – from a linguistic point of view – there is a certain, significant prevalence of the term "tyche" and the related verb "tynchanein", which means "to meet by chance, to come upon by chance"[32]. Interestingly, while the occurrences of the term "moira" often imply a reference to the divine oracle that has predicted Oedipus' appointed doom[33], the term "tyche" occurs to indicate all accidents/contingencies that have allowed Oedipus' doom become true[34]. The coexistence of the two concepts and their inextricable connection – both in general[35] and in particular in the working out of the tragic story of Oedipus – result in ambiguous translations of the term "tyche", from 'fate'[36] to 'fortune', or – by using

[28] In the archaic poetry, another term was used as synonymous of "*moira"*, that is "*aisa"*, meaning 'decree, dispensation of a god and – again – 'one's appointed lot, destiny'. On "*moira"* and "*aisa"* in the archaic Greek poetry, see Fraenkel (1975, p. 56-58).

[29] Indeed, the root of the word "tyche" is to be found in the verb "tynchanein", which means 'to chance on, to come upon by chance…' (LIDDELL et al., 1968, s.v. "tynchanein").

[30] The inevitability of both "moira" and "tyche" is such a common trait that gods, too, may be subjected to both; see Fraenkel (1975, p. 58), Giannopoulou (1999, 2000, p. 270-271).

[31] A coexistence of the two concepts is, however, already testified to by the Greek archaic poet Archilochus (7th. cent. BC) in the fr. 16 (WEST, 1989): "It is Chance (tyche) and Fate (moira) which give everything to a man". On the paradoxical co-operation in man' life of these forces, which were not as antithetical as it would seem to us, see below, p. 11-13.

[32] See above, n. 29. As to the number of the occurrences of "moira" and "tyche" in Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex", while the first occurs 6 times, the second occurs 13 times. Additionally, the related verb "tynchanein" occurs 14 times. Both the noun and the verb – as we will see – occur in significant stages of the tragic story of Oedipus. It might be not accidentally that the number of the occurrences of "tyche" and "tynchanein" in "Oedipus Rex" is superior to the number of the occurrences that we find both in the other two tragedies belonging to the Theban Cycle ("Oedipus at Colonus" and "Antigone"), and in the overall surviving tragedies by Sophocles. These merely quantitative data "per se" show the weight that the concept conveyed by "tyche" and "tynchanein" has namely in the tragedy "Oedipus Rex".

[33] With regard to this, emblematic are, for instance, the l. 376 and l. 713. The first line occurs during the quarrel between Oedipus and the prophet Tiresias who, in answer to Oedipus' persuasion that he cannot be harmed by the prophet, says: "Indeed, it is not your destiny (moira) to fall through me; Apollo is enough…". Oedipus' demise is a concern of Apollo, i.e., is something established before Oedipus' birth and predicted in form of oracle. The l. 713 occurs within the story that Jokasta tells Oedipus, where she refers to Apollo's oracle given to Laius according to which "his destiny (moira) would be to die at the hand of a child" born to him and Jokasta herself.

[34] Partial analysis of the occurrences of the term tyche is in Greene (1944, p. 154 and n. 71) and Hogan (1991, p. 24). A more complete analysis with emphasis on a transition of meanings within the play itself (from the old sense of 'fortune, good or bad, viewed as expression of divine order' in the earlier scenes, to that of 'unexpected events' in the later ones), see Knox (1957, p. 176-178).

[35] In addition to the intrinsic multifaceted nature that ancient Greeks ascribed to "tyche"– as we saw above through Dio Chrysostom' s passage – the coexistence and connection between "tyche" and "moira" may be also justified by the earlier meaning of the term "tyche" as being something, bad or good, coming from gods (KNOX, 1957, p. 176 – on which see above, n. 34 -; HOGAN, 1991, p. 59), and, as such, coordinated with "moira" (see Archilochus' fr. 16, WEST, 1989, above n. 31).

[36] Just to mention some examples, for 3 of the 13 occurrences of the term "*tyche"*, Jebb (1902), gave the word the translation 'fate'/'destiny', namely in l. 102 – with reference to the murder of Laius, which, in the end, occurred both by fate (it was his fate to be killed by his son) and by incident/chance (since, as above noted, by fateful chance, we may say, Oedipus came to meet with Laius) -; l. 263 – again with reference to Laius and what Oedipus thought was his 'fate' -; l. 949 – with reference to the death of Oedipus' adoptive father, which happened 'in the course of destiny'. Elsewhere, Jebb translated the word with 'fortune', 'accident', chance'.

compounds – 'chance-event', 'chance-fortune'. Yet, arbitrary that they may be, those chance-events all led, as said, to the realization of Apollo's oracle of the destiny of Oedipus ("moira"). As such, they are characterized by some kind of necessity (GREENE, 1944, p. 143 and n. 37). Using an oxymoron, we may say they all have the aspect of 'fateful-chance' events (i.e. chance-events wanted/decided, however, by fate). In other words, chance ("tyche") seems to work as the driving agency of fate ("moira"). It is something that fate has wanted to happen so that what it has imposed could become true. The sequence, the conjuncture and the kind of the chance-events that lead to fulfill the imposition of fate depends on the will of fate itself. They are, we might think, the arbitrary ways through which fate does want something to happen. It would be as if to say, for instance: fate/destiny "has wanted, did not imposed", Oedipus not to go back to Corinth, after the visit in Delphi, and thus to arrive to a crossroad exactly in the same moment as Laius. It happened by chance, by "a fateful chance".

In Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex", strikingly emblematic of the role of "tyche", and its inextricable connection with "moira", is the ironic statement of the hero: "… I count myself a child of Chance (tyche) with her beneficial gift. This is the mother I was born from, and my kin the months have marked me out to be both small and great". In this way Oedipus defines himself after having discovered he is not the son of Polybos and Merope, and yet he is still confident about his origin, unaware both of how truly he is a son of a "fateful chance", which (like his brother-months) may 'arbitrarily' bring various events, for better or worse, and of how ironically he considers his "chance" a good one (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex" 1080-1083)[37]. This statement echoes another significant one, through which the messenger from Corinth reveals what gave the hero his proper name, i.e., Oedipus, by thus giving him an identity: "From this chance-accident (tyche) you were named the one you are" (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex" 1036). These words refer to the event that determined a peculiar physical trait of Oedipus, so peculiar as to mark his identity as the "swollen-foot' man, which is what the name Oedipus means[38].The messenger has just told Oedipus where and how he found him as an infant, i.e., on the mountain Cithaeron (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex" 1026), with his both feet pierced right through (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex" 1034). It was Laius, Oedipus' father, the one who pierced his son's feet before giving him to a servant to be abandoned to death. The piercing provoked the swelling, hence the name Oedipus originated. While that action was performed by Laius to prevent his son from surviving, in any way[39], an unpredictable event happened that caused Laius' action to result in the opposite way from what he intended. This is exactly 'chance'. "Tyche", figurative mother of Oedipus, as a real parent gave him also the name, thus his identity. The traces of the piercing were what created a connection between the infant found by the messenger and the man to whom that messenger is telling the story, which is a fundamental step in Oedipus' process of discovering his own identity.

Indeed, most of the crucial moments of Oedipus' tragic life-story can be regarded as "phases of fateful chance". To hint at some of the more significant ones, the event that led Oedipus to leave Corinth – the town he thought was his hometown – and to go to visit the oracle of Apollo in Delphi, i.e., the event that set in motion, in its primordial steps, the journey of self-discovery, is connoted as "tyche", i.e., as a 'fateful chance event' that befell him. In this way Oedipus himself refers to it when once, at dinner, a drunk man aroused suspicion about his parentage: "My father was King Polybos of Corinth and my mother Merope… I was thought greatest man among the townsfolk there until this chance event (tyche) happened to me…a man at dinner who had drunk too much called me over the wine a bastard, not my father's son" (SOPHOCLES, "Oedipus Rex" 776-780). It was after this

Similarly, Mazon (1972), in three occasions translated the word as 'sort' or 'destin', namely in ll. 263, 949 (as JEBB, 1902), and in l. 977 (on which see below p. 12). Elsewhere, he translated the same word as 'success', 'incident', 'chance', and even 'mort'.

[37] Jebb (1902), Mazon (1972) and Blondell (2002), translated with 'Fortune'. I preferred to use the phrase ' chance'/'fateful chance' both in light of the discussion I am carrying on above, and with the intention to emphasize the arbitrariness-motif as evoked by the alternation of good and bad events that have made Oedipus 'small' and 'great', such an alternation that is brought about through time (his kin months). With reference to this topic in l. 1080, see Lauriola (2000, p. 156-157). On Oedipus' tragic life as 'paradigm' of the various alternation of fortunes, see also Sophocles, "Oedipus Rex" 1186-1222, on which Lauriola (2000, p. 193-196).

[38] The Greek name of the hero, i.e., Oidipous, is a compound one and admits two etymologies, both of which share the second term of the compound, that is 'pous', meaning 'foot'. As to the first term of the compound, according to the more common etymological explanation that has been given to this name, 'oidi' is to be traced back to the verb 'oideo' which means 'to swell, to become swollen'. Hence the meaning 'swollen-foot' originated. According to the other etymological explanation, 'oidi' is to be traced back to the verb 'oida', which means 'to know'. The other possible meaning as 'the one who knows about foot/feet' is preferred by some scholars as evoking the other essential trait of Oedipus: his smartness which led him to solve the riddle of the Sphinx, centering on feet/legs. On the topic, see Lauriola (2000, p. 154-156). On the meaning of the name Oedipus, see also Calame (1986).

[39] It has been noted that the feet were the best part of the body to harm in order to impede, both physically and figuratively, someone to accomplish, to reach a specific goal (BETTINI; BORGHINI, 1986). Additionally, since it was a common custom to abandon to death deformed children, and nobody would adopt them, had Laius abandoned Oedipus without causing some kind of deformity, there would be a chance for the child to be saved and adopted. But Laius did underestimate the power of destiny! For a synthesis of the several meanings of Laius' action, see Brody (1985, p. 21-35) and Lauriola (2000, p. 154-155).

insinuation that Oedipus, not content with his (adoptive) parents' reassurance, decided to consult the oracle of Apollo. Having come to know he would kill his father and marry his mother, persuaded that Polybos and Merope were his parents, Oedipus set out his way to meet his destiny. In fact, while wandering away from Corinth he arrived to a crossroad where he met, fought and killed Laius, without knowing he was his father. From there he arrived in Thebes, and, by successfully facing the Sphinx, he gained the throne and married the queen, Jokasta, his mother.

Significantly, two other very important moments, among several, that contribute to the realization of Oedipus' fate, are recalled by the word "tyche", i.e., fateful chance-event, coincidence, contingency. These two moments have both to do with the episode of the Sphinx. This episode plays a crucial role in the tragic life-story of Oedipus. The Sphinx was killing anyone who could not solve her riddle. Oedipus was able to solve it and thus to save the city from her depravations. But…, there was a proclamation by Creon, brother of Jokasta, according to which he would give the scepter of Thebes and wed Jokasta to anyone who should solve the riddle of Sphinx (EURIPIDES, "Phoenissae" 47-50).

Let us see how such an important moment is twice referred to through the term "tyche":

> It was thanks to the solving of the riddle of the Sphinx – as said - that Oedipus became king of Thebes and married his mother Jokasta, by thus fully accomplishing what the oracle of Apollo told him. The episode of the Sphinx, far from inaugurating prosperity and splendor – as only in all appearance it happened - marks the beginning of Oedipus' personal tragedy, i.e. the discovery of his own real identity, which will eventually destroy him. In this way the prophet Tiresias refers to the episode of the Sphinx that gave Oedipus greatness: "It is exactly that same chance-event' ("tyche") what has ruined you" (l.442). That the 'ruin' provoked by that "tyche" depends upon the discovery of his own identity is declared by the same prophet when making a casual mention of Oedipus's parents and his birth: "This day will give you life and will take it away from you" (l. 438). The day in which he will discover from whom he was given life will mark the end, figuratively speaking, of that life. This is the ultimate outcome of a series of chance-events that have led Oedipus to Thebes and to the encounter with the Sphinx; it is thus the ultimate outcome of the agencies of fate (my italics).

> The other moment in which the episode of the Sphinx is referred to through the word "tyche" occurs at the beginning of the play, when the Theban priest supplicates Oedipus to take initiatives in order to free the community from the pestilence that is decimating the population. As in the past – to paraphrase the priest's words – Oedipus provided the community with fortune ("tyche") by freeing them from the Sphinx, so now, too, he should do the same, by solving the problem of the pestilence (ll. 50-53). What is implied is that by a chance-event Oedipus successfully faced the Sphinx, a chance event which is a fortunate one only in appearance, given that it marks the downfall of the king and, with him, the demise of the community, as well (my italics).

Last, but not least, significant are the considerations about "tyche" that Jokasta expresses when trying to calm Oedipus down about his fear of going back to Corinth after his (adoptive) father's death. Oedipus, still believing that Polybos and Merope were his parents, refuses to go, not to accomplish the other prophecy of the oracle: the marriage with his mother (or, the one he still thinks is his mother, Merope): "What should a man fear, for whom the decrees of chance (tyche) are supreme, and for whom there is no clear foresight of anything?" (ll. 977-979). Man is in the power of fortune-chance which is inescapable since, in the end, is something wanted by fate: fate can be predicted, but the ways of his working – the chances, accidents etc. – cannot. Man, therefore, cannot prevent anything that fateful-chance events have already reserved for him.

That Oedipus, as any man, is in the power of the agencies of this uncontrollable, arbitrary force, and that his tragedy is the result of a series of contingencies determined by 'fateful chance-events', along with a path predetermined by destiny, is well expressed in another passage of the play where the same Theban priest we saw above, to motivate his supplication to Oedipus to help the town against the pestilence, says: "It is not because we judge you equal to the gods that I and these children sit as suppliants at your hearth, but because we see you as the first among men in life's common circumstances and in special conjunctures determined by divine powers"(ll. 31-34). The 'special conjunctures' refer to the critical combination of circumstances that brought Oedipus to Thebes and to deal with the Sphinx (LAURIOLA, 1999, 2000, p. 197, 240). The expression thus refers to a series of chances (tyche) that have been set out by 'divine powers', more precisely 'the powers controlling the destiny of individuals'[40].

[40] The corresponding Greek word is "*daimon*". This is another term through which often ancient Greeks refer to fate (see GREENE, 1944, p. 401; KNOX, 1957, p. 34, 204, n. 48; HOGAN, 1991, 257, 260; LAURIOLA, 1999, p. 150 and n. 14; 155 and n. 42).

The observations offered above demonstrate both the coexistence – so to speak - of distinguished concepts, yet at times perceived as interchangeable, such as destiny and chance-event, and their collaboration in determining the tragedy of Oedipus. This paradoxically inextricable relation between the two powers ("moira" and "tyche") that are beyond human control and will is, on the other hand, embodied by Oedipus himself since he seems to be both free and determined, able to choose (he seems to choose, for instance, not to go back to Corinth in his coming back from Delphi, but chance led him on the road to Thebes!) and helpless in front both of choices he has already made in the past, and of events (like his birth or his survival on the Cytheron) about which he could not have a choice (SEGAL, 2001, p. 53). "Moira" and "tyche" – we can say - have made choices for him. And, in this binomial, "moira" is the factual decree, while "tyche", i.e., the set of chance-events or 'fateful' junctures, seems to represent the way in which "moira" determines its own decree; it is an arbitrary way which depends on the will of "moira" itself. The implied core-idea remains that of a fated entrapment: no matter what the hero does, he ends up being captured in the network of unpredictable, interwoven threads "willed" by destiny.

Conclusion

Let us go back to Pasolini and to his mysteriously additional line that seems to evoke the will rather than the imposition of destiny. Let us, thus, attempt an alternative, still hypothetical, explanation for that addition.

In light of my analysis, it might be possible that Pasolini noted in Sophocles what provokes the impression of inconsistency, and, certainly, some perplexities, i.e., the coexistence both of an imposing destiny and of an arbitrary set of chances that destiny has wanted to happen for the sake of the realization of its own decree. He might also have realized some preponderance of the role of chance-"tyche" in Sophocles' tragedy. In consequence, Pasolini might have re-elaborated – maybe at an unconscious level - and emphasized the "tyche"-motif, as the action of spinning himself around at the crossroads would indicate. Any times Pasolini's Oedipus had to decide, in some way, for a direction, he has allowed the chance, a fateful chance, to decide. In one occasion, this emphasis on the role of chance is further highlighted by an additional action that, according to the screenplay[41], Pasolini's Oedipus performed the second time he arrived at crossroad: the throwing of a coin.

> "... The word 'Thebes' is written on one milestone, and on the other, the name of a different town. Abruptly and decisively he opens his money bag - the one his father gave him – and takes out a coin. He throws it ups in the air: the coin drops silently into the dust. Oedipus picks it up, and after examining it, takes the road to Thebes" (scene 21: MATTHEWS, 1971, p. 48-49).

This action, we may say, is the "non plus ultra" expression of the arbitrariness of fateful-chance[42]. It might be possible that Pasolini, in some way affected by the peculiar and ambiguous feature of Sophocles' text concerning "tyche", has then given it a linguistic expression through that mysterious line, persuaded it was in Sophocles in that, in a way, it does reflect the idea of the intervention of a set of circumstances-events as agencies of the "will" of Destiny.

This is, certainly, just a possible interpretation, not the solution of the mystery. Considering how Pasolini has proven to be a master in combining and interrelating Sophocles and Freud, it might be possible that if, on the one hand, he realized the ambiguous dichotomy between "moira" and "tyche" in Sophocles' Oedipus' tragedy, on the other, playing on that ambiguity, he was admitting that his Oedipus is himself, i.e., the Freudian child that has wanted, though did not realized, certain things. The Oedipus who pronounces the mysterious line can thus be an ambiguous combination of the Sophoclean character – victim, in the end, of the chances Destiny has wanted for him to happen to fulfill its own decree -, and Pasolini himself. Whether or not Pasolini did so purposefully or unconsciously it is difficult to say; certainly he has allowed us to remain in that place of mystery which the ambiguous statement evokes.

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[41] See above nn. 16 and 18.

[42] It might also be possible that the gift of Polybos of a bag with coins (which is an innovation of Pasolini of Sophocles' text) was meant by Pasolini as proleptic to this moment.

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