Oedipus at Colonus

Analysis (lines follow the Greek text):

- **Prologue**: Oedipus and Antigone: 1-116
- **Parodos** (sung while advancing to center orchestra): 117-37 (strophe)
- Parodos: 150-69 (antistrophe)
  - Kommos: Oedipus, Chorus, Antigone: 170-253
- **1st Episode** (= between chants): Oed., Ismene, Antigone: 254-509
  - Kommos: Oed. and Chorus: 510-50
- **1st Episode**: Theseus and Oed.: 551-667
- **1st Stasimon** (= sung without moving): Chorus: 667-719 = Ode to Athens
- **2nd Episode**: Antigone, Oed., Chorus, Creon, Theseus: 719-1043 [Centerpiece]
- **2nd Stasimon**: Chorus: 1044-98
- **3rd Episode**: Oed., Antigone, Theseus, 1098-210
- **3rd Stasimon**: Chorus: 1211-50 (Not to be born is best; p. 358)
- **4th Episode**: Antigone, Oedipus, Polynices, Chorus: 1252-555
  - Chorus Interludes (Kommoi) 1447-56, 1463-71, 1491-9
- **4th Stasimon**: Chorus: 1556-779
- **Exodus** (= sung while leaving the orchestra): Messenger, Chorus, Ismene, Antigone: 1578-779

Ritual, Piety, Impiety

- **a. Place**: Sacred Grove of the Eumenides (= 'Kindly Ones') = Erinyes = Furies
  - i. Statue to Poseidon (horseman)
  - ii. Stone altar in center stage
  - iii. Suppliant ritual
- **b. Myth**: Poseidon and Athena's contest for the protectorate of Athens: Olive and Horses
- **c. Prophecy**: 'There will be great vision in every word I say' (p. 288)
  1. **Prayer** (= Greek ara; also means curse) to the Furies > to Athens (see Aeschylus' Eumenides)
  2. Fate: Could Oedipus have escaped his fate? > Athens' fame as suppliants' savior (p. 299)
  3. **Ultimate Prophecy**: Six feet of earth (p. 331)
- **d. Piety and reward**: 'When I am nothing--then I am a man?' (p. 306) > hero cult (> Dexion)
  - i. Purification for trespassing (pp. 311f.)
  - ii. Hymn to Athens (pp. 326-7)
- **e. Violation of suppliant** (Antigone and Ismene being dragged away by Creon)
  - i. Creon misunderstands Athenian tribunal (Areopagus) (p. 343; see Aesc. Eum.)
- **f. Portent**: Hades thunders as he calls Oedipus to the underworld
- **g. Frustrated ritual** ~ no tomb
  - i. lament over dead at the grave performed not at the grave
  - ii. Oedipus' burial in her soil guarantees Athens' safety

Important Dates:

- 431-404 Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta (narrated by historian Thucydides)
- **before 406-5** Sophocles dies
- 404 Athens capitulates to Sparta. Democracy abolished (had been instituted 507 BCE). Regime of 'thirty tyrants'
- **401 staging of Oedipus at Colonus in city reestablished to democratic rule**
Midterm Essay Questions

As illustrated in the sample available online, the midterm is articulated in three parts:

- Essay (one to be chosen between two)
- Single-word IDs (eight out of ten)
- Excerpt IDs (1 + 2)

You will be asked to choose ONE of two essay questions. The two essay questions to be featured on the exam will be chosen among the following:

1. In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, how do the young god's actions illustrate his unique qualities of inventiveness, roguery, and skillfulness in manipulating others to his own advantage? Why would the Greeks, who value Zeus' justice and the sacredness of a sworn oath, accept and worship such a lying and thieving god as Hermes?

2. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, why does Demeter want to make the child Demophon immortal? How does the inability of gods and humans to understand each other contribute to the goddess' failure? How does the ritual she demands in compensation for the insult to her divinity help her worshipers in communicating with the goddess?

3. Discuss some of the specific ways in which individual gods resemble humans. For instance: Why do you think Greek myth used the model of human family to depict the gods? In the affair of Ares and Aphrodite we read from the *Odyssey*, does divine adultery threaten the stability of the Olympian family? Why or why not?

4. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, why is the immortal Titan Prometheus portrayed as both a lawbreaker and a savior who suffers for humanity? What personal aspects or qualities keep Zeus and Prometheus in conflict? What changes will eventually allow them to reconcile?