

Oedipus at Colonus

The circle of my life by slow degrees,
Revolves around the center of this orb
My compassed fate, and archly draws to close.
And I, the solemn jest of god and man
Whose weakened feet once dare outdistance fate;
Descrying death and life at hand of son:
Myself with regal curse condemning self
To vagrant life, requiting homeless death,
And bound by furies' taunts, all-seeing, kindly.

These once bright eyes are darkened now;
My heart, which would not yield to god or man
Is weary from the fight with cruel fate;
My soul grows tired of its sojourn in the lands of men.
A journey must I make; my final test
Before my thread the withered hag does break.

Long have I lived; much have I seen, before my eyes were dimmed.
Greatly have I loved, and greatly loved have been.
Suffered greatly, and endured the stings of cruel adversity
With somewhat more than stoic grace.
And yet, I wonder still: to what cause,
For what purpose has this life been lived?

For what is this man who stands before you now:
And do not scorn me, for my withered staff:
The riddle of the sphinx full-circle comes at last.
A lesson in adversity, a warning to posterity:
Listen you! The sin of pride (like the beast) exacts a toll!
What pride was that which drew me to this place?
A king I was, who with measured grace
Did mete and dole-out justice unto a savage race,
And with equal parts of wisdom and mercy
The lives of my fellow men did somewhat assuage.

I cannot say for certain what will come.
It little profited Tiresias to have that gift;
For with his loss of sight came vision of another sort,
Yet none would of his vision, credence give.
And perchance, the same is true of me.
But write this down: this record of me;

Yet though the gods themselves allied against me;
Though cruel fate conspired to hurl me down;
As from the mountain I was thrown when still new-born,
I am more than just a plaything of the gods.

The meaning of my life is mine to give.
And that which passed has made its mark on me,
But did not consume me.
Nor did my love of mankind desert me,
When by my fellow man, I was reviled.
I am a part of all that I have seen and done;
And the sum of these, contain the man.

The circle of my life, by slow degrees,
Revolves around the center of this orb,
Which conquered fate, and brightly draws to close.
And I, whose weakened feet did dare outdistance fate,
Will pass through death, into eternity.