

# Oedipus at Colonus

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## Κρέων

σοὶ δ' ἔγωγ' ὀδοιπορεῖν. [840]

ὀδοιπορεῖν: note run with Οἰδίπους

*And I--to you, **TAKE A HIKE!***

ὀδοιπορεῖν: pres inf act > ὀδοιπορέω

## Χορός<sup>1</sup>

πρόβαθ' ὦδε, βᾶτε βᾶτ', ἔντοποι·

πρόβαθ': 2 prs pl aor imperat > προβαίνω

*Step forward, forward, one and all.*

βᾶτε: 2 prs pl aor imperat > βαίνω

πόλις ἐναίρεται, πόλις ἐμά, σθένει· πρόβαθ' ὦδε μοι.

*Slayer of the city—my city, with force. Gather round me.*

## Ἀντιγόνη

ἀφέλκομαι δύστηνος, ὦ ξένοι ξένοι.

ἀφέλκομαι: 1 prs sg pres ind mp > ἀφέλκομαι S. OC 844

*I am dragged away—wretched—Oh friends, friends!*

## Οἰδίπους

ποῦ τέκνον, εἰ μοί·

*Where are you child—woe to me?*

## Ἀντιγόνη

πρὸς βίαν πορεύομαι.

πορεύομαι: 1 prs sg pres act mp > πορεύω

*With force I am carried away.*

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<sup>1</sup> F. Storr (LOEB) To the rescue one and all!  
Rally, neighbors to my call!  
See, the foe is at the gate!  
Rally to defend the State.

George F. Root: “Yes, we’ll rally ‘round the flag, boys, We’ll rally one again, Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.... The Union forever, Hurrah boys, Hurrah! Down with the traitors, Up with the stars!...” George F. Cohan: “Over there, over there, Send the word, send the word over there, That the Yanks are coming, The Yanks are coming, ...” While we might dismiss so many of these songs as jingoism gone wild, they oftentime summarize the moral imperative that a specific war represents. Julia Ward Howe’s “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” summarized and summarizes with powerful imagery issues of the American Civil War.

# Oedipus at Colonus

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath  
are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift  
sword;  
His truth is marching on.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred circling  
camps  
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and  
damps;  
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring  
lamps;  
His day is marching on.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery Gospel writ in burnished rows of steel;  
“As ye deal with My contemnners, so with you My grace shall  
deal”;  
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with His  
heel,  
Since God is marching on.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call  
retreat;  
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet;  
Our God is marching on.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:  
As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free;  
[originally ...let us *die* to make men free]  
While God is marching on.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! While God is marching on.

He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave,  
He is wisdom to the mighty, He is honor to the brave;  
So the world shall be His footstool, and the soul of wrong His  
slave,  
Our God is marching on.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Our God is marching on.

In the song, TRUTH becomes a transcendent value. The wrath that is war, has befallen America because the state has allowed slavery as a legal right. The soldiers are metonymy for the Jews in Sinai gathering round the Mishkan—“a hundred circling camps they have builded him an altar...” The rhythm of the song is much like a slashing sword.

Like the ancient Jewish right of Churban--הרבן--extermination of evil doers—so must those who believe slavery a legal right be exterminated—there can be no middle ground.

Note: “his truth is marching on”—“his day is marching on”—“God is marching on”... Note the phrases: “His rightwous sentence,” “judgment seat” and “the soul of wrong his slave.” All of these references are to eschatological judgment not only on individual salve holders but on the nation as corporate entity. “With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me” speaks directly to the transcendent need for the war to end slavery; transfiguring not only the individual but the State as well.

Dictates of the state are measured against a standard that represents something beyond the State, beyond exigencies of the time. The Nazi era of Germany comes readily to mind—as does any totalitarian state such as Russia, China, North Korea, etc.

In the Oedipus trilogy, the shift from personal evil to the state’s evil as epitomized by Creon shifts from one person and place to another person and place. (The whole point of the constant interplay of ξένος—between *host* and *guest*.) Oedipus kills his father and procreates with his mother—thus he pollutes the State. He is punished with exile for his crime. Later Creon forbids Antigone to bury her brother; she buries him despite the prohibition of the State. (Nixon would use this argument: since he is the President—what he commands is legal.)

Need and command to disobey the State is a central question to the Nazi era, as it was to the Civil War, and as it is to almost every contemporary issue of the day. It is a central though unasked question in SOPHIE’S CHOICE.

(That the South also sang this song written by Northerner and Abolitionist Julia Ward Howe, confirms reality of a demonic parody of religion, patriotism to say nothing of confirming the stupidity of humanity.)