Version 1: Fitts and Fitzgerald Translation

TEIRESIAS:

Listen, Creon:

I was sitting in my chair of augury, at the place

Where the birds gather about me. They were all a-chatter,

As is their habit, when suddenly I heard

A strange note in their jangling, a scream, a 785

Whirring fury; I knew that they were fighting,

Tearing each other, dying

In a whirlwind of wings clashing. And I was afraid.

I began the rites of burnt-offering at the altar,

But Hephaistos 12 failed me: instead of bright flame, 790

There was only the sputtering slime of the fat thigh-flesh

Melting: the entrails dissolved in gray smoke,

The bare bone burst from the welter. And no blaze!

This was a sign from heaven. My boy described it,

Seeing for me as I see for others. 795

I tell you, Creon, you yourself have brought

This new calamity upon us. Our hearths and altars

Are stained with the corruption of dogs and carrion birds

That glut themselves on the corpse of Oedipus’ son.

The gods are deaf when we pray to them, their fire 800

Recoils from our offering, their birds of omen

Have no cry of comfort, for they are gorged

With the thick blood of the dead.

O my son,

These are no trifles! Think: all men make mistakes,

But a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong, 805

And repairs the evil. The only crime is pride.

Give in to the dead man, then: do not fight with a corpse––

What glory is it to kill a man who is dead?

Think, I beg you:

It is for your own good that I speak as I do. 810

You should be able to yield for your own good.

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| Version 2: Thomas Translation  Tiresias  You will know when you hear the omens of  my craft; for sitting on my ancient chair  of bird-watching, whre in the past all the birds  have gathered for me, I heard a strange new sound—  birds, screaming with evil, barbaric frenzy; 5  and I knw that they were tearing at one  another with bloody talons, for the rush  of winds was clear. In fear, I went at once  to test the burnt sacrifices on the  blazing altars, but no fire was burning 10  on the victims. Rather, upon the embers,  a dripping ooze tickled from the thigh pieces;  it smoked and sputtered, and the bile was scattered  in the air, and the bones lay bare of the fat  that had covered them. Thus the omens failed, 15  there were no signs, as I learned from this boy,  for he is my guide, as I am to others.  The city is sick because of your counsel,  for our altars and all our hearths are defiled  by birds and dogs with carrion from the corpse 20  of the unlucky son of Oedipus.  For this reason the gods will not accept  our sacrifices, prayers, and burnt thigh-bones,  nor do the birds shriek forth clear-signaling cries,  gorged with a slain man’s blood and fat. Therefore, 25  think on these things, my child; for every | human being makes mistakes, but when he has  made a mistake, that man is no longer  foolish and unhappy who remedies  the evil into which he has fallen 30  and is not stubborn. Obstinancy brings  the charge of stupidity. Yield to the dead,  don’t kick a fallen man! What prowess does  it take to kill one already dead?  My counsel is good, and so is my advice. 35  To learn from good advice is sweetest, if  the advisor speaks to your advantage. |

Version 3: The Braun Version

Teiresias:

Very well. Now you understand this:

Few courses of the racing sun remain

beore you lose a child of your own loins

and give him back, a corpse, exchange for corpses.

You have dishonored a living soul with exile in the tomb, 5

hurling a member of this upper world below.

You are detaining here, moreover,

a dead body, unsanctified, and so unholy,

a subject of nether gods.

The matter is out of your hands and those of the gods above. 10

A crime of violence is being done and you are commanding it.

Therefore, relentless destroyers pursue you,

Furies of death and diety;

they lie in wait for you now

to catch you in the midst of your crimes. 15

Consider that, and see if I’ve been bribed.

The time is near.

Weeping of women and men will be heard in your house.

All the enemy nations will be aroused,

all whose altars are stinking and corrupted 20

with the ton fragments the dogs, wild beasts, and birds bring.

You have hurt me. These facts

are the arrows that I fire into your heart,

unfailing, like a marksman.

You will not espcape their pain by running. 25

Boy, lead me home

Kreon can fire on younger men.

He ought to teach his tongue silence

and his mind better principles.