



Assignment C: *Night Journey* Answers

Now that you have seen the videotaped performance of *Night Journey* discuss the following questions in pairings.

Provide brief written responses to each.

1. What is the implication of the branches that Jocasta carries in her flashback memory?

Some possible responses:

- The stately branches reinforce Jocasta's image as Queen;
 - Perhaps these are the branches Oedipus brought to her when she first became his Queen
 - (Martha Graham's statement);
 - In Scene III of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Jocasta tells the Princes of Thebes that she is thinking of visiting the altars of the gods bearing the branches she holds as suppliants.
2. Note that the movements and headdress of The Chorus suggest the casting to be that of birds. What purpose does this casting serve throughout the choreographic text?

Some possible responses:

- It reinforces the idea of augury omens. In Greek mythology (and folklore), birds are often associated with pending evil.
 - Oedipus, in Scene III of *Oedipus Rex*, states: "Why should a man...give heed to the birds that dangle above his head?" — Graham's use of birds reinforces the irony of the reference.
3. Why does Tiresias' incessant pound his staff throughout much of the dance-drama?

A possible response:

- The pounding serves as a symbolic reinforcement of the inevitability of the prophecy of Fate.
4. What are some specific ways that *Night Journey* projects and/or enhances main aspects of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*?

Some possible responses:

- The dance movements bring enhanced understanding of the deep emotional trauma and guilt Jocasta experiences when she recognizes of the inadvertent sin of her life.
- The movements add much range and depth to the audience's grasp of the complexity of Jocasta's suffering by projecting, through sexual nuance, her deep love of and womanly passion for Oedipus as her husband, and, through cradling movements, her maternal love for Oedipus as her son.
- The reinforcement of this dual relationship sharpens the recognition of the deep ironies inherent in the narrative.

- Fuller development of the searing grief of Jocasta, through dance movement, adds another layer to the tragic dimension of Sophocles' play.
5. How does the dance-drama reinforce Oedipus as an Aristotelian protagonist? (Reference the ARTSEGE lesson, Prometheus Bound: Rebel with a Cause)
- His nobility, tragic flaw of hubris, reversal of fortune, self-revelation and drive to reclaim himself through self-punishment are forcibly articulated in dance movement.
 - The large statement of the play — man's futile attempt to outwit prophecy and Fate is brought to new dramatic heights.