

This paper addresses two central aspects of Sophocles' representation of Jokasta in *Oedipus Tyrannus*: first, her lack of titles; second, her name. Sophocles spotlights Jokasta's name as he invents it. Names and titles quite frequently figure significantly into the semantic structures of Athenian tragedy, especially Sophocles. In 1954 Knox asked, "Why is Oedipus called *tyrannos*?", and established that Sophocles' denominations of Oedipus are extremely important for the evolution of the drama's action and for understanding Oedipus' character; the shift from being the usurping *tyrannos* to the legitimate *basileus* demarcates the tragedy of Oedipus' self-discovery. Moreover, the levels of irony in Oedipus' name suggest that other characters' names might also be significant.

Focusing on how the *OT* names and designates Jokasta raises new questions about her role and how Sophocles shapes his audience's response to her, because the language surrounding her shows strange lacunae. Sophocles completely denies her the normal vocabulary associated with queens and royal wives (e.g. *basileia*, *anassa*, *despoina*, *akoitis*). Instead the text relentlessly designates her exclusively as *gynê*, and finally withdraws even that title, as she becomes only an article (1447). The play's language thus carefully demarcates the confused area of her familial status, and eliminates her from the social and political realms, since, while Oedipus oscillates between *tyrannos* and *basileus*, Jokasta is nothing. The infrequency of utterances of her name loads it with added weight. Jokasta is named only four times, twice by the Chorus and once each by Oedipus and Messenger (and never by her brother Creon), a paucity that jarringly contrasts with the numerous plays on the name of Oedipus. Several scholars, especially since the publication of the Lille Stesichorus fragment in 1976 (Gostoli, Thalmann, Burnett, Martin), have skirted this question, mainly allowing that the name does not appear in any text before the *OT*, but nobody has argued that Sophocles deliberately invents the name there. There is no evidence that, prior to the *OT*, any poet had ever named Oedipus' wife-mother Jokasta. The loss of many texts prevents complete certainty, but, on balance, one would think that this name would have appeared someplace.

Like Oedipus' name, Jokasta's is significant for the *OT*'s plot, as Sophocles creates for it a folk etymology. Its first syllable, *io*, is simply part of the typical vocabulary of tragic lament. But the second part, *kasta*, could be derived either from *kasis*, meaning brother or sister, or *kêdestês*, meaning connection by marriage. *Io* or *iou* typically expresses lament, but in Sophocles in particular it marks those moments of painful recognition; Jokasta (1071), Oedipus (1182, 1313, 1321). On the one hand, her name means "Alas my connection by marriage," but, on the other, "Alas my siblings." The name of Jokasta is meaningful because it signals her role in the collapse of the familial categories in her household. The cries of lamentation embedded in her name surface as Oedipus and Jokasta learn the truths about themselves. These moments of realization motivated Sophocles' decision to re-name the wife-mother of Oedipus.