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SOPHOCLES  
THE ANTIGONE

Translated into English rhyming verse  
with Introduction and Notes

by

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WOKING**

# INTRODUCTION

THE ANTIGONE, like other Greek plays, has suffered from being constantly interpreted and commented upon by critics whose main interests were not in the drama nor even in the poetry but in something quite different, such as, grammar, history, philosophy, or the *stemma* of MSS. Of course for any adequate understanding of the play much preliminary study of those subjects is necessary; but a time comes when all that scaffolding must be cleared away and attention concentrated on the two elements that matter most; on the poetry, with its severe form, its delicately exact metre, and its conventional poetic diction, quite different from the language of everyday prose, qualities which to the Greek artist seemed absolutely essential; and secondly, on the drama as drama, the play as an acting play.

Of the first I will not speak; I happen to like the Greek convention, and the method of my translation is a dutiful attempt to represent it. On the second some comment may be useful to English readers. Sophocles, as compared with the other two tragedians, was more of a dramatist and less of a prophet. He loved the clash of characters and the clash of moods inside a character. Also he had a wonderful gift for the *coup de theatre*, the sudden flashing line that transforms a situation. One may think of the ironic answer to Jocasta's prayer in the *Oedipus* (I. 924), or to Clytemnestra's prayer in

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the *Electra* (l. 660); of the announcement in the *Electra* of Orestes' death to the two women, to whom it means respectively deliverance and despair (*EL* 11. 674, 675); or in this play of Ismene's unexpected "Yes, I did it" (l. 536). Such effects remind one not of Aeschylus nor even of Shakespeare, but of the great French dramatists. The very first scene of *THE ANTIGONE*, with its secret hurried opening, and the eager trust of Antigone in her sister, followed by its swift reversal, plunge us into the heart of the drama with an impetus quite foreign to the stately exposition scenes of Aeschylus and Euripides.

Again, Sophocles always keeps in his tragedies the atmosphere of a dark heroic past. He likes to have themes with a touch of the mysterious and unearthly about them. In *THE ANTIGONE* the plot centres upon a point where, according to tradition, the Theban custom roused horror in the rest of Greece. The other Greeks after a battle always allowed the enemy to collect and bury their dead. If necessary they even buried the enemy dead themselves. The Thebans buried their own dead, but if they were masters of the field, deliberately prevented the burial of their enemies. In *THE ANTIGONE*, Creon proclaims Polynices an enemy, and follows the barbarous Theban custom in leaving his body to dogs and birds. What happened to the other dead is not directly mentioned in the play (see, however, l. 1080), but in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* we hear that Theseus first interceded with the Thebans and at last made war on them in order to

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recover the bodies of the Seven and give them religious burial in Attic soil.

Any ill treatment of the dead rouses strong feeling even now. It certainly did so among Sophocles' contemporaries. But the horror was far graver and more awful in earlier ages, which attached superstitious sanctity to these last rites. The natural human horror at a barbarity is projected, as it were, on to Zeus or the Gods of the Underworld. It is they, it is the powers beyond death, who condemn and abhor such impiety. When Creon accuses Antigone of wasting her pains in "thinking always of the dead," it does not mean that she likes thinking about graves and corpses. She is caring for things beyond this world.

The character drawing is admirable. Critics have complained that both Creon and Antigone behave with some inconsistency. The answer is that all real people do, and the good dramatist likes them for it. As for Creon, it was of course preposterous of Hegel to suggest that he was as much in the right as Antigone and that our sympathies should be evenly divided. Creon is a tyrant; but a good playwright makes even his tyrants intelligible and Creon has a case. His first speech is excellent on the sacredness of public duty, but he shows the tyrant's temper in his interpretation of it. Polynices is an enemy and, though a king and Creon's own nephew, must be treated as an enemy. Anyone disobeying this order is a rebel and shall be treated as a rebel. So far so good: but the exposure of the body and the punishment of death for anyone who attempts to

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remedy that outrage are "tyrannic." Yet as soon as Creon has pronounced this judgement he is trapped. He cannot unsay it merely because the rebel proves to be his own niece. His rage and threats are in character; so is his obstinacy; but I think one can see more than once that he would escape from the necessity of carrying out his sentence if he could do so without loss of face. Perhaps if Antigone were contrite and begged for pardon there might be an opportunity; but she is utterly defiant and hostile. At one moment he thinks he has pledged himself to put Ismene to death also; and shows undisguised relief at finding that he has not. He will spare Ismene; but even so everyone is against him; unless possibly his son, always so dutiful, and now so urgently wanted, will stand at his side? But Haemon, after a would-be tactful opening, leaves the stage threatening either murder or suicide. Creon can never yield after that, but his inward trouble increases. Perhaps at the last moment, when death actually stares her in the face, this insane girl may give way. She was to have been stoned; but that can be changed. She shall be left in a rock chamber, with a little food and drink, to die, no doubt, in the long run, but not immediately. That will give her a chance to think again.

It seems curious that he does not at once yield to Tiresias, whose counsels he had always followed. But Sophocles gets an added effect from the last flare of Creon's obstinacy and suspicion. These prophets! It is his unknown enemies at work again, bribing guards, bribing corrupt "medicine men." He must add to his

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other offences this blasphemy against the Prophet, just as Oedipus did, before his cup is full. But his inner mistrust of himself has deepened. The surrender was bound to come, and when it comes it is as sudden and impulsive as his bursts of fury were. It is worth noticing that, if he had gone straight to Antigone's prison, he might still have saved her; but the prophet had said little about her. He was entirely occupied with the unburied corpse, the ritual pollution of altars, the sins against the Gods of Death. So naturally Creon goes first to remedy those.

Antigone herself is a very Sophoclean figure. We may compare her with Electra, the most ferocious of his heroines, and at the same time perhaps the most tenderly loving. Electra loses all self-restraint, and knows it. When Clytemnestra cries shame upon her, she answers (ll. 616 ff.): "Do you think I am not ashamed? Do I not know that I am behaving horribly and unlike myself?" And so she is, Sophocles cares more for the real and faulty human being than for the ideally sympathetic heroine. He has no character like some of Euripides' heroic virgin martyrs, such as Macaria or Polyxena.

Antigone is confident of her sister's love, and claims from her the same devotion as from herself, but at the first sign of refusal she turns fierce. She "hates" Ismene, and would not accept her help if she offered it. In the later scene, where Ismene only begs to be allowed to die with her, she is cruelly scornful except for one moment of softening and self-blame (l. 557). On Creon

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she declares immediate war. She expects no mercy or understanding and will show none. She treats the Elders as mere enemies, since they are not clear and whole-hearted friends. One is surprised by her verse (1. 523): "It is not my nature to join in hating, only to join in love." She had shown herself such a good hater. But Ismene thought much the same of her. She was **τοῖς φίλοις ὀρθῶς φίλη**, "A true friend to those she loved" (1. 99). It is that very quality that makes her so fierce. The loving, generous, but not quite heroic, Ismene forms a splendid foil to her.

Critics have suggested that she is very young. That would explain her vehemence and her changes of mood, from love to anger, from readiness to die to lamentation over all that she is losing. And certainly there seems to be some emphasis laid both upon her youth and upon Haemon's.

Acute characterization of this kind, if carried far, heightens the intellectual interest of any play at the expense of its emotional intensity. But the religious atmosphere of Greek tragedy is strong, and Sophocles' own inspiration overcomes his critical observation of character. In her greatest moment Antigone rises above her moods, above even her personal love for her brother, above mere rituals and taboos about dead bodies. She puts her faith simply in that eternal law of right of which Greek thought, from Aeschylus to Plato, is so abidingly conscious; a law whose ordinances are beyond death, beyond man and his anthropomorphic gods, unwritten and never failing. Through this scene

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Antigone has become, almost against her creator's wish, the most famous ideal virgin martyr of Greek tragedy.

The Guard is admirable. A man of the people, racy and half comic, he reminds one of the Nurse in the *Choephorae* but of no other character in our extant Greek tragedies. The Chorus of Elders remains for the most part impersonal. Their lyrics are among the finest in Sophocles, often difficult and enigmatic, yet with a strange untranslatable magic of language and rhythm. Only through the spoken words of the Leader does the Chorus express itself as a character in the play, and then it is a somewhat characterless character. The Elders venture twice a tentative protest against Creon, but are promptly crushed, and afterwards are afraid to champion Antigone or Haemon. They think her **ἄβουλος** "unwise," as by ordinary standards she undoubtedly is. Their failure to give her open support adds to the dramatic value of her last appearance, innocent, friendless and alone against the world. I think, however, that in certain passages (particularly 11. 853 ff., 872 ff.) where their words seem intentionally obscure one is bound to choose the interpretation which favours the condemned prisoner; had they meant to support the tyrant there would have been no need for obscurity.



# THE ANTIGONE



## CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

- ANTIGONE daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, the late King and Queen of Thebes.
- ISMENE her sister.
- CREON their uncle, Jocasta's brother, now ruling over Thebes.
- HAEMON Creon's son, betrothed to Antigone.
- TIRESIAS a blind prophet.
- EURYDICE wife of Creon, mother of Haemon.
- A GUARD.**
- A MESSENGER** a Henchman of Creon's.
- CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS** with their **LEADER.**

The date of the first performance is nowhere recorded but is conjectured to have been 441 B.C. or slightly earlier.

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*[Scene: in front of the Palace at Thebes. Enter hurriedly  
ANTIGONE from a side door, drawing ISMENE with  
her.]*

ANTIGONE.

My own, my sister, O beloved face,  
Tell me—of all the curses of our race,  
What curse shall God not heap on thee and me ?  
Surely there is no pain, no misery,  
No vileness or dishonour, that we two  
Have not already seen; and now this new  
Edict, proclaimed by our new Prince's word  
On all our people ... knowst thou ? Hast thou heard ?  
Or is it hid from thee ? There comes a fate  
On one we love meet for the worst we hate.

ISMENE.

No word, Antigone, of tidings new  
Touching our house, hath reached me, since we two  
Were left deserted, and our brothers twain  
Both in one day in mutual fury slain.  
Last night, I know, the Argives fled; I know  
Nought further that hath passed for weal or woe.

ANTIGONE.

I knew it; and for that I summoned thee  
Beyond the gate alone, to speak with me.

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ISMENB.

What is it? Some dark cloud is o'er thy thought.

ANTIGONE.

'Tis for our brothers. Hath not Creon wrought  
Honours for one, on the other foul despite?  
'Tis told that, with all customary rite,  
He layeth Eteocles in earth, full fed  
With honours, like a prince among the dead;  
But Polynices' corpse, cast out in shame,  
No man in Thebes—so hath he made proclaim—  
Shall give him tomb nor tear; there he shall lie  
Unwept, unburied, lovely to the eye  
Of staring vultures, hungry for their prey.  
Such law on thee doth our good Creon lay,  
Aye, and on me, on me! And soon, I hear,  
He cometh hot-foot hither, to make clear  
His will to them that know not. Nothing light  
He counts it. Whoso disobeys ere night  
Shall die the death . . . by stones, without the wall.  
So runs his order. Now thou knowest all.  
Now is the day to show thee nobly brave,  
Or born a princess but at heart a slave.

ISMENE.

If it has come to this, unhappy one,  
What is there I can do or make undone?

ANTIGONE.

Think. Wilt thou share my labour and my deed?

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ISMENE.

Some deed of desperate daring? Oh, take heed.

ANTIGONE.

Wilt lift that corpse with me, hand helping hand?

ISMENE.

Thou thinkst to bury, though the deed is banned. . . .

ANTIGONE.

My flesh, and thine, whom thou deniest: Yes.

ISMENE.

When Creon hath forbid? 'Tis lawlessness.

ANTIGONE.

What right hath he to bar me from mine own?

ISMENE.

Think, Sister, how our father died, alone  
In shame and hatred, self-convicted he  
And self-avenged for that old misery,  
Till his own will, his own hand, drew the night  
Down on the bleeding orbits of his sight.  
Remember her, his mother and his wife,  
And that dim swinging rope that broke her life.  
Oh, think how our two brothers on one day,  
Self-driven toward their doom to die and slay,  
Made them one death, hand against violent hand.  
And now it is you and I: alone we stand

THE ANTIGONE vv.59-81

And friendless; 'gainst the voice and majesty  
Of Kings if we rebel, most miserably  
Of all we two shall die. Oh, think again.  
We are women; who are we to fight with men?  
We are subjects, and must needs obey our king  
In this, aye or in many a bitterer thing.  
For me, I will go pray the dead, and sue  
For pardon, seeing that I am forced thereto,  
Then yield me to my master's word. To press  
Beyond our strength is naught but foolishness.

ANTIGONE.

I ask thee not; nor, shouldst thou come to me  
With offers, would I welcome aid from thee.  
Be what thou wilt! My brother's burial I  
Will make, and if for making it I die  
'Tis well. I shall but sleep with one I love,  
One who loves me, and my offence shall prove  
Blessed. I need the love of Them Below  
More than of earthly rulers, for, I know,  
There I shall lie for ever. Get thee gone;  
Despise what God counts holy, and live on.

ISMENE.

I despise nothing; but I have no skill  
Nor strength, thus to defy the City's will.

ANTIGONE.

Thou hast thy plea. I go to heap above  
My brother's corpse some covering. Him I love.

ISMENE.

Unhappy sister! How I fear for thee.

ANTIGONE.

For me fear not. Guide thine own destiny.

ISMENE.

At least, then, open to no mortal eye  
Thy plan. Be secret, and so too will I.

ANTIGONE.

Oh God, proclaim it! Speak of it before  
The whole of Thebes; I shall not hate thee  
more.

ISMENE.

Thy heart is fiery, but ice-cold thy deed.

ANTIGONE.

I know it hath their praise whose praise I need.

ISMENE.

Thou canst not reach the things thou strivest for.

ANTIGONE.

When my strength fails, then, I will strive no more

ISMENE.

'Tis wrong to strive for ends so desperate.

ANTIGONE.

Must thou so speak? Thou shalt but earn *my* hate  
And the just hate long-lasting of the dead.

# THE ANTIGONE

Oh, leave me and my own ill-counselled  
Heart to endure the worst. I shall not die  
Dishonoured, howsoever my doom may lie.

[Exit ANTIGONE right,

ISMENE.

Go then, if go thou must.—She has no heed  
Whither. Ah, where she loves she loves indeed.

[Exit ISMENE into the house. Enter  
CHORUS of Elders.

CHORUS.

[Strophe I

Ray of the sun, O fairest ray  
That ever the Seven-fold Gates have seen,  
Lifted lid of the Golden Day,  
At last thou dawnest, from where the green  
Glimmer of Dirce stirreth,  
Scattering him of the harness bright  
Who rode from Argos with shield so white;  
Headlong, fugitive, fast in flight,  
Over the plain he spurreth.

Whom Polynices, raging loud  
For rights denied, against us drew;  
An eagle, shrieking in the cloud  
And snowy-winged, to Thebes he flew;  
White-shielded was the host he led,  
With horsehair plumage helmeted.

Poised over our homes he stood; [Antistrophe I  
Round all of our gates from north to south

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Ravened his lances athirst for blood;  
    But away all hungry, with empty mouth,  
    Or ever his hurled fire  
Had hold of our crown of towers, he fled.  
So fierce a rattle of war was sped,  
Too hard to handle, about his head  
    Who bearded the Dragon's ire.

For Zeus a vaunting tongue doth hold  
    Abhorred; there he saw them pass  
In arrogance of clanging gold,  
    A long loud river. One there was  
Scaled our great wall, but ere he cried  
His triumph by God's fire he died.

*[Strophe 2*

Swung to the crashing earth he lay,  
    With firebrand blazing, who so late  
Had raged, a madman in the fray,  
    Borne on some rushing wind of hate.  
    He went his way.

And others other ways were flung,  
Trode down by Ares, like some strong  
War-horse, our Ares Thebe-sprung,  
    To whom we pray.

Seven chieftains at our portals seven,  
    Man against man, were made to yield;  
Their brazen harness stript and given  
    To Zeus, the Holder of the Field.  
Only those twain, unfortunate,

## THE ANTIGONE vv.144-163

Born of one mother and one sire,  
With each 'gainst each their lances set,  
Both won the prize of their desire,  
One death, one equal fate.

*[Antistrophe 2*

So came proud Victory from afar  
With answering joy to meet the smile  
Of marshalled Thebes on many a car;  
But now, Oh, let us rest the while  
And forget war.  
Now let us to the Temples throng  
Guided by Him who all night long  
Shaketh glad Thebes with dance and song,  
Bacchus, our star.

LEADER.

But lo, the Monarch of the land,  
Creon, Menoikeus' son, I see;  
By these new fortunes which the hand  
Of God hath laid on us, 'tis he  
Now holdeth Thebes beneath his yoke.  
Methinks he cometh pondering  
Some weighty purpose, to convoke  
Hither by public heralding  
The Elders of the folk.

*[Enter CREON.*

CREON.

Elders of Thebes, the vessel of our state,  
Though shaken in wild storms, by God's good fate

Stands upright once again, and you from all  
 The folk of Thebes are here by separate call  
 Summoned to council. For I know full well  
 The reverence constant and unshakeable  
 Ye bore toward Laius' crown; and later, when  
 King Oedipus first saved the land and then  
 Perished, ye still upheld in fealty true  
 The children of your kings. But since they too,  
 By twofold visitation in one day,  
 Each stained with brother's blood, have passed away,  
 Slaying and slain, it falleth now to me  
 To hold their powers and seat of royalty  
 By right of nearest kindred to the throne.

So be it. Yet no man can be truly known,  
 In heart and hopes and purpose, till the test  
 Of power and government make manifest  
 His nature. For that prince who, holding sway  
 Oer a great City, cleaveth not alway  
 Firm to his country's welfare, but from fear  
 Of man or fortune speaks not firm and clear,  
 I hold him, and shall hold him to the end,  
 A craven. Aye, and him who counts some friend  
 Or favoured kinsman dearer to his thought  
 Than his great City, I hold a thing of naught.  
 For this I swear. . . . Be Zeus my witness, who  
 Beholdeth all things and beholdeth true. . . .  
 Never will I be silent when these eyes  
 See hurt to Thebes approaching in the guise  
 Of service ; never shall my country's foe  
 Be friend to me; for this I surely know,

THE ANTIGONE vv. 189-214

Our City is our lifeboat; only while  
She safely floats can private friendship smile.

Such are the rules whereby I shall ensue  
This City's greatness; in accord whereto  
By general proclamation I have thus  
Decreed touching the sons of Oedipus:  
To Eteocles, who, for this land and town  
Fighting hath fallen and won him great renown,  
Be burial granted and all requiems said  
That follow to their sleep the noblest dead.  
But for his brother, who, from banishment  
Returned, like fire his angry purpose bent  
To wreck the land that bore him, to o'erthrow  
His father's gods, to glut him with the flow  
Of kindred blood, and whom he could not kill  
Cast out to slavery: such was his will:  
Lo, Polynices . . . let my people hear! . . .  
Shall have no rite of death, no funeral tear,  
But lie, a thing of scorn, unsepulchred  
And foul, to be devoured by dog and bird.

Thus have I spoke. Never before my throne  
Shall the evil and the righteous rank as one.  
Only to him who loved this City true,  
Living or dead, are rites of honour due.

LEADER.

Son of Menoikeus, such is thy command  
Touching the friend and foe of this our land.  
And thou hast power, methinks, all rules to give  
O'er them that lie dead and o'er us that live.

CREON.

Keep watch then that this order be obeyed.

LEADER.

On younger men, sire, let that task be laid.

CREON.

A guard already by the corpse is set.

LEADER.

What wouldst thou then? What task remaineth  
yet?

CREON.

Be firm, if any 'gainst my law may cry.

LEADER.

Who but a madman, sire, so seeks to die?

CREON.

Death it shall be. But many a man hath fain  
Gone deathward, blinded by some hope of gain.

*[Enter* GUARD.

GUARD.

My Lord, I can not say I have much taste  
For this affair, or come with breathless haste.  
Oft on my way I stopped to think, and then  
Turned in my tracks and half went home again.  
My heart within kept talking to me: "Friend,  
Why haste? There's trouble waiting at the end."

"Stupid, why standing still? If Creon learn  
This news from someone else, your back will  
burn."

Swithering like this, slowly I struggled on  
And made a long road of a little one,  
Till now the end has come, and I am brought  
To thee to tell all . . . 'Tis a thing of naught,  
The tale I bring.—Ah, well, at any rate  
Nothing can touch me that is not my fate.

CREON.

What is it that so weighs upon thy heart?

GUARD.

I want to tell thee first of my own part.  
I neither did the thing, nor did I see  
The doer. 'Twere unjust to punish me.

CREON.

Carefully aimed thy words, and guarded well  
Thy doings. Clearly thou hast news to tell.

GUARD.

To bear a dangerous message makes one slow.

CREON.

For God's sake, get thy message told and go!

GUARD.

I tell you then. That corpse. . . some man has just  
Buried it and escaped. He strewed dry dust  
To cover it and performed due offering.

CREON.

How now! What man hath dared to do this thing?

GUARD.

Who knows? No mark of pickaxe could be found,  
No earth turned by the shovel. All the ground  
Is hard, dry, trackless, rutted by no wheel,  
And he who did the deed untraceable.  
When the first watchman showed it us, surprise  
Caught us and fear. Quite vanished from our eyes  
Was that dead man, not buried but below  
A coverlet of dust well hid, as though  
To avoid pollution. No sign met the eye  
That any dog or wild beast had come nigh  
Or torn his flesh.—Oh, evil words and hard  
Flew fast between us, guard accusing guard.  
It nearly came to blows at last, and none  
Was there to keep the peace. 'Twas every one  
Accused and none convicted. Each could swear  
That he knew nothing. Ready enough we were  
To carry red hot iron with a bare hand,  
To walk through fire, or by God's altar stand  
And take sworn oaths we had not done the thing,  
Nor knew who had, nor shared its compassing.  
At last, when all our searches reached no end,  
One spoke the fatal word that made us bend  
Our heads to the earth in fear. We saw no way  
To oppose the thing he said, nor yet to obey  
Without sore trouble. All must be revealed  
To thee, he said, forthwith, and not concealed.

At last it was agreed. So lots were thrown  
 For who should go, and by bad luck I won.  
 I am sorry to be here, and you, I know,  
 To have me. With bad news 'tis always so.

LEADER.

Sire, while he spoke, deep in my heart a fear  
 Was whispering lest the hand of God be here.

CREON.

Silence, before my anger break its bound  
 'Gainst one so old and eke so foolish found!  
 Intolerable, to feign that gods in bliss  
 Should stoop to care for such a corpse as this.  
 Perhaps to reward him for a virtuous life  
 They gave him burial?—Him who came in strife  
 To burn their pillared temples, wreck their store  
 Of hallowed offerings, and confusion pour  
 On their own land and laws? Or did they see  
 Him wicked, and admire his villainy?

I think not. Nay, but certain of the town  
 'Gainst me and 'gainst the laws I have laid down  
 Have alway whispered, alway darkly shook  
 Their heads, nor bowed their shoulders to the yoke  
 To make their King's way easy. Well I knew  
 'Twas they who duped and bribed my guards to do  
 This mischief. Never did the human soul  
 Coin a device so dangerous and so foul  
 As money. This lays cities in the dust,  
 Drives men to exile, trains and traps the just

To do injustice, leads men to profess  
 Knavery, and learn all forms of wickedness.

These watchers who for lucre stole away  
 That corpse made one thing certain, that one day  
 Their treason shall be paid.—Now this I swear,  
 As Zeus yet holds me in his royal care,  
 Unless the culprit who this deed hath wrought  
 Be found, and hither to my presence brought,  
 No simple death awaits you: ye shall hang  
 Alive upon a cross and, pang by pang,  
 Confess all that ye plotted. Then ye may  
 Learn from what hands 'tis safe to earn your pay.  
 'Tis not from every giver. False increase  
 Leadeth more men to trouble than to peace.

GUARD.

May I reply? Or must I turn and go?

CREON.

Thine every word offends me, dost not know ?

GUARD.

Where do they hurt thee, in the ears or brain?

CREON.

How, trickster? Wouldst thou try to place my  
 pain?

GUARD.

The doer hurts thy mind and I thine ear.

CREON.

Thou art a chatterer born, that much is clear.

GUARD.

Maybe, but not a doer of this deed.

CREON.

A doer, too, who sold his soul for greed!

GUARD.

Odd, so determined to determine wrong!

CREON.

Oh, quibble with thy "determines," but ere long  
Ye shall or find the culprit, or confess  
That scurvy gains gain but unhappiness.

*[Exit CREON to the House.]*

GUARD

May he be found by all means: that were best.  
But be he caught or no—for that must rest  
With Fortune—one thing you can swear and vow:  
No one shall catch me here again. Even now  
I never hoped I should get safe away.  
I praise God for his care of me this day!

*[Exit GUARD right.]*

CHORUS.

*[Strophe I]*

Wonders are many, but none there be  
So strange, so fell, as the Child of Man.  
He rangeth over the whitening sea,  
Through wintry winds he pursues his plan:

About his going the deeps unfold,  
 The crests o'erhang, but he passeth clear.  
 Oh, Earth is patient, and Earth is old,  
 And a mother of Gods, but he breaketh her,  
 To-ing, froing, With the plough-teams going,  
 Tearing the body of her year by year.

## [Antistrophe 1]

Light are the birds and swift with wings,  
 But his hand is round them to quell and keep;  
 He prisons the tribes of wild-wood things,  
 He snares the brood of the briny deep.  
 The nets of his weaving are cast afar,  
 And his thought in the midst of them circleth full,  
 Till his engines master all beasts that are:  
 Where the wild horse drinks at the desert pool  
 That mane that shaketh For his slave he taketh,  
 And the tireless shoulder of the mountain bull.

## [Strophe 2]

Speech he hath taught him and wind-swift thought,  
 And the temper that buildeth a city's wall,  
 Till the arrows of winter he sets at naught,  
 The sleepless cold and the long rainfall.  
 All-armed he; Unarmed never  
 To front new peril he journeyeth;  
 -lis craft assuageth Each pest that rageth  
 And defence he hath gotten against all save  
 Death.

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*[Antistrophe 2*

With craft of engines beyond all dream  
He speedeth—is it to good or ill?  
For one is the City's Law supreme,  
And the Truth of God in his inmost will;  
High-cited he; but that other citiless  
Who rageth, grasping at things of naught,  
Upon roads forbidden; From him be hidden  
The hearth that comforts and the light of thought.

LEADER.

What portent of the gods . . . I see  
—Yet wonder, do mine eyes say true—  
The royal maid Antigone.

O hapless child, and hapless too  
Thy father! Do they carry thee  
A prisoner hither? Thee, confessed  
A rebel to the King's decree  
And caught in madness manifest!

*[Enter GUARD with ANTIGONE prisoner.*

GUARD.

We have her here, the doer of the thing.  
We caught her in the act.—Where is the King?

LEADER.

The King? Lo, where he comes at point of time  
*[Enter CREON.*

CREON.

How? With what issue doth my coming chime?

GUARD.

Sire, there is nothing in the world a man  
Should promise not to do. Some second plan  
Will make the first a liar. I swore amain  
No man should ever catch me here again,  
So battered by thy threats and rage was I.  
But, luck unhop'd for and outrageous, why,  
There is nothing like it; no joy half so deep.  
So here, 'gainst all the oaths I swore to keep,  
I come again, and bring this maid withal.  
I found her making the man's burial.  
No lots were thrown about it. I alone  
Caught her. This bit of luck is all my own.  
So here she is, Sire. Take her as thou wilt,  
And question and convict. I have no guilt  
Upon me, and I trust I can go free.

CREON.

Thou hast ta'en this girl? What doing? Where  
was she ?

GUARD.

Burying the dead man, just as thou hast heard.

CREON.

Dost understand, dost verily mean that word ?

GUARD.

That corpse thou hast forbid; this maiden here  
Was burying it. I saw her. Is that clear?

CREON.

How was she seen? How was she caught and  
**found ?**

## GUARD,

It came like this. Soon as we reached the ground,  
 Dazed with thine awful threats, at once we swept  
 The body clear of all the dust that kept  
 It covered. We made naked to the sky  
 That oozing flesh, and squatted on some high  
 Ridges to windward, safe from the foul smell.  
 Each nagg'd his neighbour to keep vigil well,  
 And woe to him who left his task undone.  
 And so it lasted while the noonday sun  
 Stood overhead and the heat grew and grew.  
 Then, all asudden, up a great wind blew,  
 A lifted scourge, an anguish of the air.  
 It swept the plain; it savagely stript bare  
 The level forest leaves, till all the sky  
 Was solid dust. With close-shut mouth and eye  
 We endured that plague; 'twas what the gods had  
 sent.

A long time all was dust. At last it went,  
 And there we saw this maiden. Have ye heard  
 The high sad wail of some heart-broken bird  
 Seeing the empty nest, the nurslings ta'en?  
 Just so, seeing that corpse upon the plain  
 Naked, she lifted up her voice in long  
 Lament, and spoke on him who did that wrong  
 A dire curse. Then she gathered covering dust,  
 And lifted a bronze urn, and thrice in just  
 Division poured libations on the dead.  
 When we saw that, we made one rush and led  
 Her captive. Calm she stood and undismayed.

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And when we charged her with the attempt she made  
Aforetime, and with this ourselves had seen,  
She denied nothing. . . . Oh, I have never been  
So happy and grieved at once. 'Tis simply bliss  
To escape from fear of death . . . though pain it is  
To push a friend there. . . . But all gain and loss  
Compared with my own life I count as dross.

CREON.

Thou, thou with drooping head and downcast eye:  
This deed: dost thou confess it or deny?

ANTIGONE.

I deny nothing. I avow my guilt.

CREON.

Thou Guard! Betake thee wheresoe'er thou wilt,  
A free man and absolved, away from here.

*[Exit* GUARD.

And now, thou answer me. Be brief and clear.  
Didst know this burial was by law forbid?

ANTIGONE.

I knew. How could I help it? 'Twas not hid.

CREON.

And that law, knowing, thou didst dare to break?

ANTIGONE.

I deemed it not the voice of Zeus that spake  
That herald's word, not yet did Justice, she  
Whose throne is beyond death, give such decree

To hold among mankind. I did not rate  
 Thy proclamations for a thing so great  
 As by their human strength to have overtrod  
 The unwritten and undying laws of God:  
 Not of to-day nor yesterday, the same  
 Throughout all time they live; and whence they came  
 None knoweth. How should I through any fear  
 Of proud men dare to break them and then bear  
 God's judgement?—As for death, some day no doubt  
 I am sure to die. I knew that even without  
 Thy laws; and if I now shall die before  
 My time, that grace shall I be thankful for.  
 For one who lives ringed round by griefs, as I  
 Am living, is it not pure gain to die?

I tell thee, 'tis a trifling hurt or none  
 To die thus. Had I left my mother's son  
 Dead and unburied in that field to rot,  
 That would have hurt me. These things hurt me not,  
 Ye call this madness? Madness let it be,  
 For surely 'tis a madman judgeth me.

LEADER.

Stubborn, and from a stubborn sire begot,  
 This maiden. To the storm she bendeth not.

CRBON.

Know this. It is the proudest hearts that fall  
 The deepest, and the hardest iron withal,  
 Stark-tempered in the furnace, that ye see  
 Most broken and shivered. Yet quite easily

By a small curb I have seen a fiery steed  
Taught reason. Little use to be stiff-kneed  
Before a master's eye, being a slave.

This girl showed insolence before, to brave  
The ordained law; and now, new insolence,  
She mocks us and hath pride in her offence.  
No man were I, more of a man were she,  
Should she now triumph and be gone scot-free.  
Be she my sister's child, be she by birth  
Closest of all who worship at my hearth,  
I vow that shall not save her, nay, nor yet  
Her sister from full payment of their debt.  
I know she is guilty too. She had a share  
In plotting for this burial. . . . Call her there! . . .  
I saw her in the house but now, all wild  
With weeping, from all caution grief-beguiled.  
'Tis oft so. Their own passion will betray  
Plotters who hide them from the light of day.  
But worse are they who, caught in crime, profess  
No shame, but glory in their frowardness.

ANTIGONE.

What wouldst thou with me, save to take and kill ?

CREON.

Nothing; when I have that I have my will.

ANTIGONE.

Why then delay? In all thy words to me  
There is not—and God grant there never be!—

One word not hateful to me. I know too  
 To thee is hateful all that I hold true.  
 Yet, to see true, what praise could I have won  
 More high than to have saved my mother's son  
 From dogs and birds?—Aye, all these Elders here  
 Would praise me, were their lips not sealed by fear.  
 Oh, kings are fortunate; whate'er they please  
 They say unhindered; but no kings are these.

CREON.

And this truth none but thou in Thebes can see ?

ANTIGONE.

They see it too, but trim their mouths for thee.

CREON.

Art not ashamed to be so unlike them?

ANTIGONE.

To have done a sister's duty brings no shame.

CREON.

No brother, then, was he whom this man slew ?

ANTIGONE.

That was he; by both sides my brother true.

CREON,

Him thou dost outrage, honouring thus his foe.

ANTIGONE.

The peaceful dead will scarce regard it so.

CREON.

One with a traitor's thou wilt make his grave ?

ANTIGONE.

A brother 'twas that smote him, not a slave.

CREON.

One fought to wreck, and one to save, this land.

ANTIGONE.

Still holy Death doth his due rite demand.

CREON.

The same rite for the dastard and the brave ?

ANTIGONE.

Who knows what finds forgiveness in the grave ?

CREON.

Not hate like theirs; no death can that abate.

ANTIGONE.

I shared their love. I cannot share their hate.

CREON.

Love, is it ? Then go down and love thy slain.  
While Creon lives, no woman here shall reign.

CHORUS.

But lo, Ismene at the door  
Shedding a sister's tear, dark-browed

With sorrow and a blood-red cloud  
Staineth that cheek so fair of yore.

*[Enter ISMENE.]*

CREON.

Thou lurking snake, beneath my roof to lie  
Sheltered, and drain my life-blood secretly!  
I little knew that I was cherishing  
Two seeds of death, two plotters 'gainst their king.  
Make answer. Dost confess this burial  
Was thy work too, or wilt deny it all ?

ISMENE.

'Twas my work too. My sister here will bear  
Witness. Her burden I uphold and share.

ANTIGONE.

The truth denies thee that. Thou wast afraid  
To help, nor would I ever ask thine aid.

ISMENE.

But now in thine affliction 'tis my pride  
To sail the storms with thee, whateer betide.

ANTIGONE.

Death and the dead know who it was that wrought  
The deed ; the love that loves in words is naught.

ISMENE.

Sister, reject me not. Oh, take me too.  
To die with thee and give the dead his due.

ANTIGONE.

**Thou shalt not share my fate. Thou shalt not try  
To claim what is not thine. None else need die.'**

ISMENE.

**What life have I, when thou art here no more ?**

ANTIGONE.

**Ask Creon that. 'Tis he thou carest for.**

ISMENE.

**Why to no profit art thou hurting me ?**

ANTIGONE.

**Am I ? I hurt myself if I hurt thee.**

ISMENE.

**What can I do? How can I help thee still?**

ANTIGONE.

**Save thine own life; I bear thee no ill will.**

ISMENE.

**Woe's me! No portion in thy fate have I.**

ANTIGONE.

**It was thy choice to live, and mine to die.**

ISMENE.

**That must not be till I have said my say.**

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ANTIGONE.

Why not? Some thy way think, and some my way.

ISMENE.

No, no. We both share the same crime at last.

ANTIGONE.

Have courage. Thou shalt live. My life is past  
Long since, free given in service to the dead.

*[She turns away.]*

CREON.

I swear they are both mad! One hath lost her head  
To-day, the other since her life began.

ISMENE.

My lord King, in great grief the heart of man  
Loses its hold of wisdom, and runs mad.

CREON.

Thine does, to seek bad friends for schemes as bad.

ISMENE.

How could I live without her, I alone?

CREON.

Without? None shall be with her. She is gone.

ISMENE.

Wouldst kill thy son's betrothed? What meanest  
**thou?**

CREON.

Why not? He can find other fields to plough.

ISMENE.

Never a heart like hers, so near his own.

CREON.

I want no evil women for my son.

ISMENE.

Haemon, beloved! Thy father wrongs thee sore.

CREON.

Thou and thy loves. . . . Oh, prate of them no more.

LEADER.

Wilt doom to death thine own son's bride, O King?

CREON.

Hades belike will stop their love-making.

LEADER.

The doom is fixed then? She must die this day?

CREON.

By my will—and by thine!—No more delay.  
Take them within, thralls. Hold them as is meet  
For maidens and not wanderers in the street.  
Bold are they, but the boldest turn in fear  
And seek to fly when visible death is near.

*[The GUARDS lead off the SISTERS. CREON sits brooding,*

CHORUS. *[Strophe 1*

Right blessed are they whose life hath tasted not  
 The power of Evil; for surely if once God's hand  
 Is lifted against a House, there lacks not aught  
     In a long moving stream of tribulation,  
     On, on, from generation to generation,  
         As waves upon the sand,  
 When the whole great ocean swells,  
     And the wind blows cold from Thrace,  
 And the dark of the deep sea-wells  
     Steals over the water's face,  
 Weeds and black ooze sweep  
     Up from the ocean floor,  
 And loud against the storm the steep  
     And wind-racked headlands roar.

*[Antistrophe 1*

Have I not seen, from ages long since fled,  
     Hurled on the House of the proud Labdacidae,  
 Doom after doom of the unforgotten dead?  
     No one generation redeemeth another's debt;  
     Some god still casts them down, and none may set  
         Those age-long prisoners free.  
 From the root of Oedipus  
     One branch yet lived to glow  
 As Light in the House, and thus  
     In blood 'tis stricken low;  
 The Gods below have stirred  
     A dust impenetrable,  
 And there is madness in man's word,  
     And in his bosom Hell.

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*[Strophe %*

Thy power, O Zeus, no trespass of man can shake,  
The power, which neither Sleep the all-ensnaring,  
Nor the long moons of heaven the never-wearying,  
Beguile nor overtake.

Thou, Lord of ageless life, shalt ever hold  
The reign of Olympus, throned in dazzling light,  
While the eve and the morrow, yea, and the days of old  
Show this Law clear to sight;  
In the life of mortals naught that is passing great  
Escapeth the hand of Fate.

*[Antistrophe 2*

Wide-wandering hope to many hath comfort brought,  
But to many the blindness of light-winged desire;  
She trappeth the foot of man in a ring of fire  
While still he knoweth naught.

For an ancient word yet shineth for all to see:  
That soon or late, as he waxeth in hardihood,  
To him whose mind God draws to calamity  
An evil thing seems good.

For a moment, scarce a moment, he stands elate,  
Ere closes the hand of Fate.

LEADER.

See, Haemon, thy last living son!  
In wrath, methinks, for the decree  
Which dooms the young Antigone,  
And anguish for his hopes undone.

*{Enter HAEMON*

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CRBON.

Soon we shall know, surer than seers can tell.

Son, thou hast heard our doom immutable  
On thy betrothed. Comest thou in fury wild  
Against thy father, or have I still one child  
Mine always, through all troubles at my side?

HAEMON.

Thine always, father. Thy good counsels guide  
My path. No marriage is for me so great  
A joy as thy wise ruling of the state.

CREON.

My son! Let this fixed purpose rule thy life,  
To stand behind thy father in all strife.  
Why else do men crave children? That a band  
Of faithful sons may round their table stand,  
Quick to give battle to their father's foes,  
And help his allies, as their father does.  
He who hath children that obey him not,  
How say ye? For himself he hath begot  
Grief, and loud laughter for his enemies.

Oh, do not thou, my son, in days like these  
Subdue thy reason to a woman's lure.  
An armful bitter cold, of that be sure,  
Is a false woman in thy house and bed;  
Beloved and false! That ulcer lays men dead.  
Spit on her as a thing abominable,  
And leave her kisses to the lords of Hell.

Since I have taken her with mine own hand,  
 Convicted, the one traitor in the land,  
 I will not break the sworn pledge that I gave  
 My people; she shall die. Oh, let her rave  
 Of kith and kindred and their patron Zeus;  
 If mine own kin must practise such abuse  
 As this unpunished, what will strangers do?  
 The man who keepeth his own household true  
 In loyalty, he only in the state  
 Is loyal, full-willed either to be great  
 And rule, or to be humble and obey:  
 And, if the storm of battle comes, to stay  
 True and unflinching at his comrade's side.  
 I praise not him who, flown with idle pride  
 Does violence to the laws, who seeks to fling  
 Defiance\* and give orders to his King.  
 This disobedience of all human ills  
 Is deadliest. This it is that surely kills  
 Strong cities; this makes houses desolate;  
 This amid allied armies soweth hate  
 And fear. Wherever cities safely stand,  
 Be sure Law is obeyed and saves the land.  
 Therefore to uphold the Law I fight, and still  
 Must fight, and never shall a woman's will  
 Break me. If fall I must, some man must hurl  
 Me down. Call me not weaker than a girl.

LEADER.

Perchance our age misguides us; else it seems  
 Thou hast spoken with much thought on these high  
 themes.

HAEMON.

Father, the gods have planted in our kind,  
 As man's peculiar prize, a reasoning mind,  
 And in thy words to find aught reasoned ill  
 Passes my power—far from me be the will!  
 Yet others too might some addition make  
 With wisdom. 'Tis my duty for thy sake  
 To watch the City, mark what things are done  
 Or said, or spoken in blame. The eye of one  
 Like thee strikes dread into the folk; they fear  
 To utter aught that might offend thine ear.  
 But I can hear their whisperings in the shade,  
 How the whole City mourneth for a maid  
 Most guiltless of all women, by a doom  
 Most undeserved, sent to a traitor's tomb,  
 For deeds, they say, most honourable. "Her own  
 Brother in battle slain she dared alone  
 To bury, and would not leave as carrion there  
 For ravening dogs or prowlers of the air.  
 Oh, honour, golden honour, should be hers!"  
 So runs the rumour of these whisperers.

No treasure, father, is so dear to me  
 As thy fair fortune. Nay, what can there be  
 To sons more precious than their father's fame,  
 A son's fame to his father? Must the same  
 Unchanging mood stay ever at its height,  
 And a word, spoken once, be always right?  
 A man who claimed that he alone had clear  
 Vision and power of speech without a peer—  
 Lay his soul bare, and little would ye find  
 But emptiness. They of the wisest mind

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Learn gladly many lessons, and will bend  
In season. Mark when swollen torrents rend  
Their banks, the plants that yield save every shoot;  
The stiff-necked tree falls riven from the root.  
Aye, and the mariner who keeps his sheet  
For ever taut, and never slackens it  
For any wind, will soon be overtossed  
And end his pleasant voyage keel uppermost.

Oh, cling not to thy wrath. Change that hard  
mood.

If I, being young, may yet speak aught of good  
Counsel, 'twere best that men by their own sight  
Should know all things and judge them always right.  
But seeing that in this world things fall not so,  
'Tis wise to learn what other men may know.

LEADER.

Sire, where he speaks in season, be not loath  
To learn; and thou too, Haemon. Wise are both.

CREON.

Shall I then at the fulness of my age  
Be tutored by this stripling to be sage?

HAEMON.

Nay, only to be just. 'Tis not my youth  
That asks thee to reflect. 'Tis the bare truth.

CREON.

To praise the disobedient is Truth's task?

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HAEMON.

For evil-doers nothing would I ask.

CREON.

Doth not this girl that very evil show?

HAEMON.

The whole of Thebes with one voice answers No,

CREON.

Does Thebes think to dictate our laws to us?

HAEMON.

Only the very young would argue thus.

CREON.

By whose will should I govern save mine own ?

HAEMON.

No City is that which is one man's alone.

CREON.

The City is the King's. That law doth stand.

HAEMON.

A king like thee would suit an empty land.

CREON.

The woman's champion this man seems to be.

HAEMON.

Art thou a woman ? I am protecting thee.

CREON.

Wrangling against thy father, thou bad son!

HAEMON.

Against false thoughts and deeds unjustly done

CREON.

False, to uphold the honour of my crown?

HAEMON.

False, if thereby God's laws are trampled down.

CREON.

Sick for a woman! Pah, 'tis infamy.

HAEMON.

No shameful passion wilt thou find in me.

CREON.

Thou art pleading for this girl in every breath.

HAEMON.

For her, thee, me, and the holy rites of Death.

CREON.

Enough. She shall not live to be thy wife.

HAEMON.

Know then her life shall cost another life.

CREON.

Comes it to that? Thou dar'st to threaten me?

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HAEMON.

'Tis no threat to confute a vain decree.

CREON.

Curse thy vain preaching and its wisdom vain!

HAEMON.

I dare not speak ill of my father's brain.

CREON.

Thou woman's thrall, spare me thine irony.

HAEMON.

Wouldst alway speak and list to no reply?

CREON.

Thou dar'st? By Heaven above, 'tis not for thee  
To upbraid me, blame me, mock me, and go free.  
Bring forth that hated thing, that she may die  
Here where we stand, beneath her bridegroom's  
eye.

HAEMON.

I will not see her die. Conceive thou not  
Such infamy. And never more, from now,  
Madman, till death, shalt thou set eyes on me.  
They that abhor thee not can rave with thee.

*[Exit* HAEMON.

LEADER.

Most fierce and swift, O King, he hath fled from us,  
A young heart's agony is dangerous.

CREON.

Fled? With his dreams and rages? Let him fly.  
But those two girls he saves not. They shall die.

LEADER.

How? Is it thine intent to slay the two?

CREON.

Ah no. The sister never touched him. True.

LEADER.

What form of death for the other hast thou planned?

CREON.

First I will lead her to some lonely land,  
And, living, in a rock-fast sepulchre,  
Leave her imprisoned. Food and drink for her,  
A little, shall be set, lest it be said  
We have sinned and on all Thebes a curse be laid.  
Hades, the one god whom she worshippeth,  
May hear her prayers and rescue her from death.  
Else she may learn at last, when all is said,  
'Tis waste toil to think always of the dead.

*[Exit* CREON.

CHORUS.

*[Strophe*

Eros, invincible in fight,  
Who ragest in the flocks, Eros,  
Who hauntest, tender in repose,  
A maiden's cheek at night;

Past the deep sea thy pinion flies,  
 Past where the hidden forest lies;  
 And none of gods immortal may  
 Escape thee; how shall humans, they  
 Whose breath endureth scarce a day?

The Madman grasps his prize.

*[Antistrophe]*

Though man be just, by thee his mood  
 Is warped to wrong and wrecked his life;  
 'Tis thou, even here, hast wakened strife

'Tween kinsmen of one. blood.

All-conquering is thy spell soft-eyed  
 That yearneth from the waiting bride;  
 Beside the eternal laws thy will  
 Is throned, where, irresistible  
 And deathless, Aphrodite still

Mocketh her prisoners' pride.

LEADER.

I too beyond the laws am borne,  
 And can no more. Who would not weep  
 To see this maiden, how forlorn  
 She moves before us to the deep  
 Bride-chamber of eternal sleep ?

*[Enter ANTIGONE guarded.]*

ANTIGONE.

*[Strophe I]*

Behold, O Land of Thebes, O ye  
 My countrymen; I go my last  
 Journey; and never more shall see  
 The sunlight. All is past.

Hades, the Sleep-compeller, goes before  
 To guide me, living, to the lifeless shore;  
 No chant of trooping comrades leads me here,  
 No music for a human bridegroom's ear;  
 The bride of Acheron I for evermore.

CHORUS.

Therefore in glory and high praise  
 To yon dead vault thou goest thy ways;  
 No wasting sickness shalt thou fear,  
 No wages of the sword are here.  
 Alone and mistress of thy fate  
 Thou walkest living to the gate  
 Of Death, from all men separate.

ANTIGONE.      [*Antistrophe*      I

I have heard how perished piteous  
 That Phrygian stranger, once our own,  
 'Gainst a high crag on Sipylus.  
 As ivy climbs, the stone  
 Climbed and subdued her, and there wasteth she—  
 So still abides the ancient history—  
 And the rains never leave her, nor the snow,  
 And the dim crown weeps on the breast below;  
 To stone go I, most like to Niobe.

CHORUS.

A goddess she and child of Heaven;  
 We born to die, of mortal blood;  
 Is it not grace surpassing, given

To one like thee, of human breath,  
 To have shared the suffering of a god,  
 In life, in death?

ANTIGONE. *[Strophe 2*

Ah, do ye mock me? Nay,  
 By your forefathers' gods and mine I pray,  
 Will ye not wait till I have gone my way,  
 Not taunt me to my face?  
 O banks of Dirce, holy place  
 Of Thebe crowned and charioted;  
 O mine own City, men of my City, ye  
 Who are so rich; be witnesses for me,  
 How poor I go, how all uncomforted  
 Of friends, by how unjust a doom,  
 To this rock prison that shall be my tomb,  
 From night and day alike disherited,  
 Homeless on earth, homeless among the dead.

CHORUS.

My daughter, to the extreme height  
 Of daring thou hast climbed, and prone  
 Flung thee before the Altar-stone  
 Of Justice.—Ah, must thou requite  
 Wrongs by thy fathers done?

ANTIGONE. *[Antistrophe 2*

That stirs my bitterest thought,  
 My thrice-told aching sorrow for the lot  
 Of mine own father and all the travail-fraught

v v. 862-882 **THE ANTIGONE**

Line of our ancient kings.  
Alas, always the memory clings  
Of evil to my mother's bed,  
Of ignorance sent from heaven, and infamy  
Wrought on her own son—and my father he . . .  
How can my thought endure it? . . . Am I not bred  
And born from them? Away to them I go,  
Childless, accurst, to share their homes below.  
O brother, not unloved but most ill-wed,  
Thou hast slain me, thou has reached me from the  
dead.

CHORUS.

For man to be not merciless  
Is a great part of godliness;  
But never Power—so speaks the throne  
Which guardeth power—may be defied.  
'Tis for the passion of thine own  
Resolve thou wilt have died.

ANTIGONE.

Alone, alone,  
Unwept, unfriended, with no escort song,  
They lead me. All is ready for the long  
Road that is all my own.  
Ah, never more this holy Sun shall spread  
His light before mine eyes,  
Unhappy! Yet for me no tears are shed,  
No comrade sighs.

T H E A N T I G O N E v v . 883-923

CREON.

[Enter GREON.

Think ye these songs and wailings before death  
Will ever cease? They are but wasted breath.

Away with her; and in that vaulted tomb,  
Alone and lost, obedient to my doom,  
Let her go free, whether she wish to die  
Or live in that rock grave. Untouched am I  
Of blood-guilt from this girl. I take from her  
Only her right to dwell in the upper air.

ANTIGONE.

O grave, O bridal chamber; O thou deep  
Eternal prison house, wherein I keep  
Tryst with my people, the great multitude  
Below to Queen Persephone subdued.  
To them I take my way, of all- the last  
And lowliest, ere my term of life is past;  
And when I am there, my father—that is now  
My one sure hope—will welcome me; and thou,  
My mother; and thou love me, Eteocles.  
For when ye all lay dead, what hands but these  
Washed and adorned your bodies, and the due  
Drink offerings poured above you? For thee too  
Dead Polynices, that same office I  
Sought to fulfil; and 'tis for this I die.  
What law of Heaven have I offended? Yet  
How dare I look to Heaven, and hope to get  
Pity or help from there? I sought to ensure  
Our purity, and lo, I am found impure!

## VV. 924-943 THE ANTIGONE

If these things be God's pleasure, before long  
By pain I shall be taught mine was the wrong;  
But if the wrong lies with my judge, may he  
Meet no worse pain than he has wrought on me.

LEADER.

Ah, still the same wind holdeth true  
Within her, the same breezes blow.

CREON.

Aye, and for that her guards shall rue  
The slowness of the gait they go.

ANTIGONE.

Ah, very near that word hath come  
To my last breath.

CREON.

No hope I give thee, that this doom  
Means aught but death.

ANTIGONE.

O City of our fathers, O  
Ye gods ancestral, he doth lay  
His hand upon me, and I go;  
Enough, I ask no more delay.  
Oh, of our Princes is there one who sees  
Me, the great King's last daughter, deathward  
driven,  
What wrongs I suffer—and from men like these—  
Because I am faithful to the Laws of Heaven.

*[The GUARDS lead ANTIGONE away right.]*

*[Exit CREON.]*

THE ANTIGONE VV.944-965

CHORUS.

[*Strophe* 1

So Danae" from sunlight was forbidden,  
In that brass-walled prison-house immured;  
Tomb-dark was her marriage chamber hidden,  
And a yoke upon her neck; yet she endured;  
Though her lineage was of honour manifold,  
And her womb held a God's rain of gold.

(My child, O my child!)

For unknown and passing great Is the mystery  
of Fate;

There is naught that can protect from her nor save,  
Not wealth nor armed powers, Not walled City  
towers,

Nor the black ships that battle on the wave.

[*Antistrophe* I

To the same yoke that Man of Wrath was broken,  
The Edonian King, aflame to gibe and mock,  
When the doom of Dionyse on him was spoken,  
To lie bound in the bondage of the rock;  
Till the stone his hot fury did allay,  
And his pride withered, flower-like, away.

So changed he, O my child,  
And knew his wild tongue Had wrought blasphemy  
and wrong,

When he strove the Maidens' Worship to abate,  
To subdue the Maenad Choir, And to quench the  
mystic fire,

And the love-song of the Muses turn to hate.

## VV. 966-991 THE ANTIGONE

[*Strophe* %

Beyond the Dark Rocks and the sea twofold  
Lie Bosphorus shores and Salmydessus old,  
Where Ares marked the blow, the blinding pain,  
Wrought on the sons of Cleopatra twain

By Phineus' evil wife:

Accursed blow, which shed from sudden skies  
Darkness upon those vengeance-craving eyes,  
Struck by a bloody hand, struck woman-wise  
Deep with the weaver's knife.

[*Antistrophe* 2

There pining they bewailed their evil fate,  
Sons of a prisoned mother, wooed in hate:  
Yet sprung was she of high Erechtheus' race,  
And midst her father's storms, in loneliness,  
Reared among caverns wild,  
A North-Wind's daughter, courser-fleet to flee  
O'er gulf and crag; a child of Heaven was she.  
Yet even on her the eternal Fates' decree  
Bore down, O Child, my Child!

[*Enter the blind Seer TIRESIAS, led by a BOY.*

TIRESIAS.

Lords of the land, with steps in unison,  
We move, the twain served by the eyes of one.  
So guided go the journeys of the blind.

[*CREON comes from the Palace.*

CREON.

Tiresias grey, what care is on thy mind?

**TIRESIAS.**

That will I show. 'Tis thine to obey thy seer.

CREON.

To thee I have always turned a heedful ear.

**TIRESIAS.**

And thereby wisely steered our City's oar.

CREON.

Thy truth I have felt, and know.

**TIRESIAS.**

Know then, once more  
Thou art standing on the razor edge of doom.

CREON.

How so? I tremble at thy words, thy gloom.

**TIRESIAS.,**

List to the warnings of my craft, and thou  
Shalt know all. When I took my place but now  
At my old seat of augury, that fair  
Harbour for every wanderer of the air,  
I marked in the birds' voices an unknown  
Turmoil, an evil and bejargoned tone;  
And in the air felt blood, with claw and beak  
Bird tearing bird. That whirr of wings could speak.

Much fearing, to burnt sacrifice I turned.  
The altar was full-kindled; but there burned  
No flame upon my gifts; only a dank  
Humour came oozing from the victim's flank,

VV. 1009-1032 THE ANTIGONE

And smoked and sputtered; and the lobe and gall  
Were scattered bursting, and the bones withal,  
Bared of the fat that wrapped them round, writhed  
back.

All signs had failed me: all were dim with lack  
Of answer, as I learned from this boy's sight,  
Who giveth me, as I give others, light.

'Tis thou hast brought this sickness on the land.  
Through thee our hearthstones and our altars stand  
Polluted, one and all, with carrion torn  
By dogs and birds from that dead corpse thy scorn  
Leaves naked, the slain son of Oedipus.

Wherefore the gods no more accept from us  
Due prayers of sacrifice, nor heed the flame  
Of our burnt offering; nor will birds proclaim  
By voice or wing their message, who for food  
Are gorged with a slain man's polluting blood.  
Ponder these things, my Prince, and know that  
none

Lives from all error free. When wrong is done,  
I count that man not witless nor unblest  
Who striveth to redeem a fault confessed,  
And changes. 'Tis the stubborn, cleaving fast  
To their own mood, show witless at the last.  
Oh, yield thee to the dead. Stab not again  
Them that are fallen. To re-slay the slain  
Is scarce a deed of valour. Lord, I prize  
Thy welfare, and I know wherein it lies.  
Therefore think well. Surely 'tis little pain  
To heed a lesson that brings naught but gain.

T H E A N T I G O N E V V . 1033-1052

CREON.

Old man, ye all must shoot your bolts at me,  
Like archers at the butts. Even augury  
Must have its practice. Augurs! Nay, I know  
Your tribe has bought and sold me long ago.

Go, chase your bargains; make your profits sure  
With gold alloy of Sardis, aye, and pure  
Gold, if ye list, from India; but for all  
Your bribes that man shall not have burial.  
Not though the carrion by our Father's own  
Eagles were borne to the Olympian throne,  
Not even for fear of that would I bestow  
Burial on that man's flesh. Besides, I know  
Earth has no stain to touch the gods withal.

Not so, my aged seer; an ugly fall  
Waits even the subtlest of us, when they make  
Smooth words and treacherous for lucre's sake.

Alas!  
Alas!

TIRESIAS.

Doth any of mortals know, doth any muse . . .

CREON.

Know what? Speak out. Let all men hear thy news.

TIRESIAS.

How precious is good counsel, more than gold.

CREON.

And lack of it great mischief, so I am told.

TIRESIAS.

Yet with that mischief sick thou standest here.

CREON.

I care not to speak insult to a seer.

TIRESIAS.

Insult it is, to call my warnings vain.

CREON.

These prophets always had a lust for gain.

TIRESIAS.

The lust of tyrants is a baser thing.

CREON.

Know'st thou that speech is spoken of thy King?

TIRESIAS.

Yes; 'twas I taught him how to save this land.

CREON.

Good seercraft hast thou, but a greedy hand.

TIRESIAS.

Peace! Lest I say the word I must not say.

CREON.

Speak freely; but this time 'tis not for pay.

TIRESIAS.

These things in truth thou canst believe of me?

CREON.

Yes, never think I am befooled by thee.

## TIRESIAS.

Then list and know. Above thine head shall run  
 Scarce one course of the chariot of the Sun,  
 Ere thou from thine own flesh one living head  
 Shalt give to death as payment for the dead.  
 A thing of light thou hast hurled to eternal gloom,  
 A soul held prisoned living in the tomb;  
 Yet holdest in the light, Death's law denied,  
 Unharboured, unbewailed, unpurified,  
 A corpse, not thine nor to the world above  
 Pertaining; thou hast forced the gates thereof.  
 Wherefore pursuing slow, implacable,  
 From Heaven Avengers seek thee and from Hell,  
 Till all thou hast wrought thou suffer. Wouldst  
 thou gauge

If this a hireling speaks, and no true sage?  
 Thou hast not long to wait ere wailing cries  
 From man and woman in thy house shall rise.  
 Yea, hate of thee rends many cities, all  
 Whose slaughtered sons from dogs had funeral  
 Or beasts or birds, who then polluted came  
 Back to their City's hearth, and fouled its flame.

These words—for thou hast wronged me—I  
 have shot

Like arrows; thou shalt not forget how hot  
 Their flame is. . . . Child, let us go home again.  
 Let this king spend his rage on younger men,  
 And learn to keep a gentler tongue, and bear  
 In his heart's core more ruth than now is there.

*[Exit TIRESIAS and the Boy.]*

LEADER.

He hath gone, O King. Most dire his bodings were.  
And well I wot that never since this hair,  
Now white and old, from sable turned its hue,  
Has aught which that voice uttered proved untrue.

CREON.

I know it, and am shaken in my mind.  
'Twere hard to weaken. Yet, if pride be blind,  
To let pride foul the rocks, that too weie hard.

LEADER.

Son of Menoikeus, think; be well on guard!

CREON.

What should I do then? Speak. I will obey.

LEADER.

Free from her tomb that maiden. Go straightway\*  
Then make due burial for that outcast dead.

CREON.

This is thy counsel? I must bow my head?

LEADER.

Yes, Lord, and with all speed. Too swiftly press  
The strokes of God upon man's tardiness.

CREON.

Ah me, 'tis hard. Against my cherished will  
I yield. The thing must be; why struggle still?

LEADER.

Go, leave it not to others. Do the deed.

CREON.

Even as I am, I go.—Up with all speed,  
My servitors. Take axes, one and all,  
Gather to yonder hill. There wait my call.

My judgement is reversed. Since it was I  
Who tied this knot I also shall untie.  
Yet, Oh, I fear. The wise are they who wend  
The ways of law even to their being's end.

[Exit CREON.]

CHORUS. [Strophe I

Many-named One, thou the delight of Cadmus'  
daughter,

Thou the high Thunderer's Son,  
Lord of Icaria and the all-welcoming water  
That leads to Deo's throne;

O Mystery, She of the mystic virgin band,  
Thebe, is all thine own,

And the rippling flow of Ismenus and that deep land  
Where Dragon's teeth were sown.

[Antistrophe I

Thou art seen by an Eye in the smoke of the brands  
above thee

Where peaks two-crested gleam;  
Seen by the dancing Corycian nymphs, who love thee,  
And low Castalia's stream.

And the ivied slopes of Nysa, with all her long  
Green capes of clustered vine,  
Have sent thee with jubilation of unearthly song  
To watch o'er Thebes divine.

VV. 1137-1167 THE ANTIGONE

*[Strophe 2*

Her of all cities ye twain hold first in honour,  
    Thou and the Lightning's Bride;  
Be near to her now, while this strong plague is on her,  
Come, healing feet, over Delphi's mountain side  
    Or the gulf's moaning tide.

*[Antistrophe 2*

Thou leader of circling stars, whose breath is fire,  
    God of the midnight Voice,  
Zeus-child, Iacchos, appear, and let the choir  
Of Maenads, night-enchanted about thy lyre,  
    O Treasure of Life, rejoice!

*[Enter MESSENGER from right.*

MESSENGER.

O ye who dwell beside the wall divine  
Of Cadmus and Amphion's ancient shrine  
There lives not one whose fortunes I would dare  
Call sure, for good or evil, anywhere.  
'Tis Chance upraises, Chance hurls down again  
The lowly and the exalted among men,  
And what seer knoweth aught that shall abide?  
Creon was blest, high-praised on every side,  
Who saved the City of Cadmus from her foes  
And kinglike to her sole dominion rose,  
Holding straight course, by stalwart sons upstayed;  
And now 'tis all lost! One who hath betrayed  
His own bliss, him I count, whate'er be said,  
No living man. He breathes but he is dead.

## THE ANTIGONE VV. 1168-1182

Heap high your house with gold, live with the pride  
And pomp of kings; but if ye be denied  
The power of joy, all else I count as less  
Than shadow of smoke compared with happiness.

LEADER.

What new grief for our kings hast thou to tell?

MESSENGER.

Death; though he lives through whom the death befell.

LEADER.

Who is the slayer ? Speak. And who the dead ?

MESSENGER.

Haemon. His blood no stranger hand hath shed.

LEADER.

No stranger hand? His sire's then, or his own?

MESSENGER.

His own, wroth with that sire for murder done.

LEADER.

O prophet, how thine every word was true!

MESSENGER

Even so. Bethink ye what remains to do.

LEADER.

But lo, 'tis Creon's Queen, Eurydice:

Unhappy! At the portal standeth she

Haply by chance; or hath she of Haemon heard?

*[Enter EURYDICE from the house.]*

EURYDICE.

People of Thebes, I caught some spoken word  
 Just as from home I started, to implore  
 Pallas with prayer. My hand was on the door  
 Lifting the bars, when on mine ear was thrown  
 Noise of a sorrow that was all my own,  
 And suddenly fear caught me, and I fell  
 Back in my handmaids' arms insensible.  
 But speak again; say what your tidings were.  
 As one well versed in sorrows I shall hear.

MESSENGER.

Naught will I hide from thee, beloved Queen,  
 Nor speak of aught save what these eyes have seen.  
 Why seek for soothing words, when any test  
 Would prove the words false? Truth is always best.

I was thy lord's attendant on his way  
 To the plain's edge, where still unpitied lay  
 That body, torn by dogs. To Pluto there .  
 And Her of the Three Ways we made our prayer,  
 In mercy to withhold their wrath; then turned  
 With cleansing waters to the dead, and burned  
 With new-plucked boughs such torn flesh as we found  
 Scattered, in one poor heap, and raised a mound  
 Of Theban earth above him. On we sped  
 Seeking the maiden's deep rock-carpeted  
 Chamber, where Death lay waiting for his bride;  
 Till one man heard a sound, something that cried  
 In anguish, circling round that shrine unblest,  
 And ran to tell the King. He quickly pressed

Onward, and lo, again there floated by,  
 As he drew near, faint phantoms of a cry  
 Of desperate sorrow. With a sudden groan  
 He cried aloud: "What evil have I done!  
 Art thou a prophet, O my heart? This road  
 Will be the bitterest that I e'er have trod.  
 That voice speaks to my heart. On; no delay.  
 Make entrance where the stones are wrenched away  
 Yonder beside the portal. Look within  
 The cell itself. See if mine ear hath been  
 Mocked by the gods, or did I hear too true  
 The voice of Haemon?" At his word we flew  
 To search, and in the cavern's most remote  
 Corner we saw her, hanging; round her throat  
 Her flaxen zone entwined; and by her young  
 Haemon, his arms about her body flung,  
 Wailed for his bride rapt from the light above,  
 His father's fury and his blasted love.

The King saw all, and with a dreadful groan  
 Rushed on into the cave: "Unhappy son,  
 What is it thou hast done? What evil thought  
 Possessed thee or what anguish so distraught?  
 Forgive me, child! Come forth. Thy father prays."  
 With burning eyes the boy flung back his gaze,  
 Spat in his face and spoke no word, but drew  
 His sword twice-stabbing. Back his father flew  
 And his stroke missed its aim. Then, wroth with fate,  
 Wroth with himself, he flung with all his weight  
 His body on the sword, till through his side  
 'Twas driven for half its length. Yet, as he died,

v v . 1 2 3 7 - 1 2 5 6 T H E A N T I G O N E

He turned again with groping arms, and pressed,  
Ere all sense fled, the maiden to his breast,  
And, as he gasped his life away, there flowed  
Across her pale cheek a red stream of blood.

Dead on the dead he lies, his marriage rite  
Fulfilled not here but in the realms of night.  
Surely, of all the perils God hath cursed  
Mankind with, man's own folly is the worst,

*[Exit EURVDICE*

LEADER.

How read you that? The Queen so suddenly  
Vanished without a word. What meaneth she?

MESSENGER.

I too am full of wonder; yet I wait  
On hope, that hearing thus of Haemon's fate  
She deigns not here in public to begin  
The mourning. She will charge her maids within  
To aid her private sorrow. Firm and true  
Her judgement is; no folly would she do.

LEADER.

Who knows? On my heart heavy both would lie,  
Too deep a silence or too wild a cry.

MESSENGER.

Oh, we must know. I fear some thought apart  
And secret lies in that indignant heart.  
I will go seek her. Aye, thou counsellest well;  
Silence can be too great, and terrible.

*[Exit MESSENGER. Enter CREON from right with  
the body of HAEMON in his arms.*

CHORUS.

But lo, the King himself draws near,  
 His arms with a strange burden fraught,  
 Which—dare I speak it?—showeth clear  
 Its story of blind evil wrought  
 By his own hand, his thought.

CREON.

*[Strophe I*

O sins of a darkened brain  
 Hard and death-fraught! At one  
 Ye see us, father and son,  
 Slayer and slain.  
 Woe for my counsels high,  
 Unblessed! So young to die,  
 So young; art verily dead  
 And the spirit within thee fled;  
 The madman not thou, but I?

LEADER.

Methinks thou hast looked on Justice, all too late

CREON.

Ah me, I have learned my lesson. But the  
 weight  
 Of God's wrath then, I trow,  
 Was heavy upon my brow  
 And hurled me to harsh ways and desperate.  
 Gone is my happiness  
 And cast behind;  
 Alas for the sore stress  
 Of poor mankind. *[Enter MESSBNGER.*

MESSENGER.

O Master, rich in woes and grief-possessed,  
One sorrow in thine arms thou earnest,  
And lo, another waiteth in thine home.

CREON.

How? Is there worse affliction yet to come?

MESSENGER.

The Queen is dead, true mother of the dead  
Thou holdest. This new blow hath bowed her  
head.

CREON.

*{Anttstrophe I*

O Haven of Hades, thou  
Unclean, insatiable,  
Is there no mercy now?  
Alas, herald of ill,  
Caster abroad of woe,  
What tidings bringest thou? Oh,  
The cry of a woman slain,  
Life given where life was ta'en,  
Clingeth, and will not go\*

*[The Body of EURYDICE is borne in.*

CHORUS.

'Tis no more hidden; all thou canst behold.

CREON.

I see a new dire grief upon me rolled:  
Ah me, what stroke of fate  
Still can my heart await,  
Even as my dead son in my arms I fold.



CREON.

Surely this heavy deed  
Shall never lift, Ah me,  
Nor lie on another's head  
To leave me free.  
'Twas I, even I, who slew  
My son; that word is true.  
Ye thralls, away, away, and beyond the press  
With one who is now no more than nothingness.

LEADER.

Well counsellest thou, if ought can here be well;  
Briefest is best where all is miserable.

CREON. [*Antistrophe* 2

Come to me, come in power  
O thou sweet destiny,  
Bringer of my last hour,  
Fairest of hours that be,  
That ne'er another dawn these eyes may see.

LEADER.

Such thoughts be for the morrow; this day's call  
Sufficeth; and God's eye shall care for all.

CREON.

All that I crave is gathered in that prayer.

LEADER.

Ah, pray no more. From that which must befall  
No man escapeth. Each his lot must bear.

CREON.

Away with a life most vain!  
My son, thee have I slain,  
Unwitting, and thee, O dear  
Woman who liest here.  
From which of you should I best  
Seek pardon ? Where find rest ?  
All that was in my hands awry hath fled.  
And left a moveless doom to crush my head.  
[CREON *is led away.*

CHORUS.

Supreme in man's felicity  
Is Wisdom; and the wise in awe  
Bow them beneath God's ancient law.  
Vain-glorious lips and vanity  
In heavy stripes their payment earn,  
And men grow old before they learn.

# NOTES

P. 17, ll. I, 2. The curses of our race: The family tree according to Sophocles is as follows:

(I)                    LAIUS = JOCASTA

                         OEDIPUS = JOCASTA

ETEOCLES      POLYNICES      ISMENE      ANTIGONE

(2)                    MENOIKEUS =      ?

                         |-----|

                         JOCASTA

                         CREON = EURYDICE

                         |-----|

                         MEGAREUS      HAEMON

CREON was Jocasta's brother. This play picks up the story as left by Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* (where, after the discovery of Oedipus' involuntary sins, Jocasta hangs herself and Oedipus puts out his eyes) and Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (where Oedipus is already dead and his two sons, fighting for the crown of Thebes, have killed one another).

Sophocles in his old age wrote another Oedipus play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, in which the old and blind Oedipus, driven to exile by his sons, is tended by young Antigone; but there is no suggestion of that story here.

## THE ANTIGONE

The language of this first speech of Antigone is, in the Greek, hurried, excited and not quite grammatical.

P. 17, l. 18. Beyond the gate: In Greek drama people who wish for privacy generally go out of doors.

P. 20, l. 77. "You make of no account rules which the gods regard as sacred."

P. 22, l. 100. The happy victory-song of the Elders makes a good contrast with the tense foreboding of the previous scene. As to the allusions: Polyntces, after being expelled from Thebes by his brother, had married Argeia, the daughter of Adrastus, King of Argos, who led the expedition of the Seven Chiefs against Thebes in order to win the crown for his son-in-law. The Dragon stands for Thebes, whose oldest families were sprung from the Dragon's Teeth sown by Cadmus; Dirce is the famous Theban stream. The White Shields were characteristic of Argos.

P. 23, l. 133. One there was: The gigantic Capaneus, who defied the thunderbolt of Zeus and was struck dead by it.

P. 23, l. 140 ff. Ares, god of War, and Dionysus (Bacchus) are the two patron gods of Thebes. The b, the nymph, is a sort of personification of Thebes; one might compare the nymph Aegina, the goddess Athena, or *Dea Roma*.

P. 23, l. 141. Seven chieftains: the names of the Seven vary: the most usual list is Adrastus, Tydeus,

## NOTES

Capaneus, Hippomedon, Parthenopaeus, Amphiaraus, Polynices.

P. 25, l. 182ff. Creon's speech is dignified and patriotic. Granted the law that enemies should be left unbuned, his decision not to exempt Polynices from the law for personal or family reasons, is correct, though perhaps imprudent. The law itself, and the penalty of death for attempting to break it, were by Athenian standards barbarous and are afterwards explicitly condemned by Tiresias (p. 65, ll. 1015 ff.).

P. 26, ll. 211 ff. The Elders clearly dislike Creon's decision.

P. 27, ll. 223 ff. The GUARD. A very effective character. See Introduction, p. 11.

P. 29, l. 248. What man: Some dramatic value in the masculine.

P. 30, ll. 278 f. These lines, the only open protest of the Elders, rouse Creon to fury. This should be remembered in interpreting their cautious language later.

P. 30, l. 289. Have always whispered: It is objected that Creon speaks as if he had reigned for a considerable time, whereas this was really his first day on the throne. One might answer that, as the Queen's brother and a sort of Grand Vizier to Oedipus, as he is represented in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, he had long had experience of these intrigues.

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P. 32, 1. 323. A play on the two senses of the word **δοκεῖν**, "to seem good" and "to think." "A bad business, when a man is determined to think what is untrue."

P. 32, 11. 332-375. CHORUS. A fine imaginative lyric on the tremendous powers of man and his scientific inventions, a power which may be used equally for good or for evil. It reads like a prophetic condemnation of our contemporary world.

P- 35, 11- 400-450. It is worth noting that Creon is utterly taken aback by the discovery of Antigone's action and at first does not know what to say or do. Antigone of course is fully prepared.

P. 36, 11. 418-431. The dust-storm hid everything like a thick fog, and Antigone took advantage of it to approach the body. The question has been raised why she should make this second burial. She had already performed the necessary rite; ritually there was no need to do it again, while materially this second attempt is just as inefficient as the first. The answer, I think, is that such reasoning might satisfy an expert theologian, but does not allow for natural human feeling. When Antigone saw the body exposed again she would naturally try again to bury it, even if the burial could only be formal.

P. 38, 11. 454 f. The unwritten and undying laws of God: This belief in an external law of Justice or Righteousness, as independent of human wishes as the physical laws of the universe, is deeply characteristic

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of Greek thought. It is here a law of the Gods, but normally the Gods themselves are subject to it.

P.41 , l 523. The form of this famous line is untranslatable and its meaning not clear. "I was born not to hate with those who hate, but to love with those who love." She will take no part in the family feuds, but she feels intensely the ties of love or kinship that hold the family together. Cf. 893-903, p. 60.

P. 43, l. 556. That must not be: I.e. You shall not take it as settled that you are to die and I to live, until you have heard me.

P. 45, l. 572. Haemon beloved: The MSS. attribute this line to Ismene, rightly in my opinion. Many modern editors, following Aldus, give it to Antigone on the ground that "Haemon beloved" or "most dear" is more natural in Antigone's mouth, and Creon's "Thou and thy love" more natural as addressed to her. They also seem to have felt that some expression of Antigone's love for Haemon was greatly needed. On the other hand (1) the sudden intervention of a new speaker with a single line is difficult in any drama and, I think, unexampled in Greek drama; (2) It was not in accord with Greek taste that a woman should express her love in the presence of men. Even in Euripides' play *Phaedra* never speaks a word to Hippolytus. Cf. *Ar. Frogs* 1044. Not only is Antigone silent about her love, but Haemon indignantly repudiates his father's taunt that he is influenced by his.

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I take it that Antigone turns away after l. 560 ("free given in service to the dead)," and Ismene breaks off in despair after Creon's insulting rejection of her in l. 573.

P. 46, l. 582 CHORUS. When a House is once shaken by God there is no escape for it, Evils come upon it like waves of the sea in storm till nothing is left. So it is now with House of Oedipus. The sisters were the one hope left, and that hope is now swept away by dust from the world of darkness, by folly and raging hate. The greatness of Zeus is eternal, man's greatness merely leads to downfall. The man who thinks himself great is deluded by false Hope for a moment—just a moment—before he falls.

Observe that this is a reversion to the primitive doctrine of the Jealousy of God, which Aeschylus passionately denies (*Ag.* 750-760). In Sophocles it is mere prosperity or greatness that is punished; in Aeschylus it is not that, it is always unrighteousness

Pp. 48 ff., ll. 631-765. The Haemon Scene. In this scene Creon, deserted by everyone, becomes desperate and loses all self-control. Haemon's tact does not hold out long, but of course nothing but utter submission would have appeased Creon.

P. 52, ll. 738 f. Haemon states the normal Greek position against the "tyrant," who thinks the State belongs to him. (*L'etat c'est moi.*) Such a ruler would suit a state which had no inhabitants, because then there would be nobody to differ from him!

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P. 55,11. 769 f. Those two girls: A significant touch. Creon will not withdraw any decision he has made and for the moment he imagines he has to put both the sisters to death. To his great relief he is reminded that Ismene has not broken the law and he has said nothing about her.

P. 55,11. 781 ff. Eros Chorus. How strange is Love among beasts, men and gods; fierce, tender, unescapable—and a Madman! He breeds injustice among the just and hate between kinsmen. Is love a personal fascination; is it an impersonal eternal Power? Either way it is irresistible. (Pronounce the o long, like "a rose.")

P. 56, l. 801. I too beyond the bounds: The Elders can no longer profess obedience or neutrality.

P. 56 ff., ll. 806-882. The sequence of thought in this lyric scene is worth noting.

A N T. I go to a living death, a bride of the Grave.

CHO. But you go of your own will, to a death like no other. You will have great glory.

A N T. Niobe, once queen of Thebes, was turned to weeping stone; I am like her.

CHO, She was a goddess. You are to die a goddess's death.

A N T. DO not mock me! I go friendless, homeless in both worlds, to a death that is miserable and unjust.

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**CHO.** Daughter, you have dared all, for the sake of Right, and lost. It must be some sin of your forefathers for which you suffer.

**ANT.** That is my bitterest thought. I come of a sinful and accursed House. I am like them and I go to join them.

**CHO.** If Creon were truly godly he would be merciful; but Power cannot endure to be defied. You die for your own passionate faith.

**ANT.** I am utterly alone. I die friendless and unpitied.

P. 57, 1. 324. Niobe, daughter of Tantalus, was wife to Amphion, King of Thebes. When her children were slain by Apollo and Artemis, she went back to her home at Mt. Sipylus and was turned to weeping stone.

P. 58, 11. 353 ff. Prone flung thee before the Altar stone: That is as a suppliant, the regular connotation of *προσπίπτειν* in tragedy. The common interpretation: "You have gone to the extreme of recklessness, and naturally come into conflict with Altar of Justice" seems to me to suit neither the Greek nor the situation.

P. 59, 1. 872. To be not merciless: A very obscure phrase in the Greek. "To revere (pay respect) is a kind of godliness." Creon did not "pay respect" to Antigone; Antigone did "pay respect" to Polynices; either may be referred to, but the following phrase, which certainly refers to Creon, makes a better antithesis if this refers

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to Creon too. The sense is: "If Creon were really pious he would have some regard for his victims; but one cannot expect a man in power ever to allow his power to be defied."

P. 60, 1. 889. Untouched am I; His conscience is troubling him. "I did not kill her. It is not my fault if she died." I have heard a distinguished oriental theologian argue that to strike a man whom you dislike with a stick is a sin, but there is no obligation to give or sell food to him even though he is starving and the refusal to do so will have fatal results. Cf. Macbeth's "Thou canst not say I did it" to Banquo's ghost.

P. 60, 11. 904—920. I have omitted a passage of sixteen lines which occurs in all the MSS. but is considered spurious by most editors. See the discussion in Jebb; also in Mr. Page's *Actors' Interpolations in Tragedy*, pp. 86 ff. If an interpolation, it was interpolated before the time of Aristotle, who refers to it (*Rhet.* 3, 16). The argument is taken from *Herodotus* 3, 11 where the wife of Intaphernes gives the same reasons for saving the life of her brother rather than her husband or child.

Yet he who thinks will praise what I have done.  
Never, were I a mother and my son  
Lay dead, were I a wife and he that died  
My husband, never had I so defied  
My City's will. Ye ask me on what ground?  
A husband lost, another might be found ;

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Another son be born if one were slain.  
But I, when Hades holds my parents twain,  
Must brotherless abide for evermore.  
Therefore I did thee honour, and therefore:  
Hath Creon called me mad, my brother, yea,  
A doer of evil. And I am led away  
Unwed, unsung, robbed of the love that should  
In right be mine and joy of motherhood.  
Friendless, by fate accursed, with my breath  
Yet warm, they cast me to the House of Death.

They are not only poor verses; they are totally inconsistent with Antigone's previous statements of motive ; they are also irrelevant to the situation, as there was no question of saving a brother's life.

P. 60, l. 924. I am found impure: Literally "I acquired impiety" where we should say "a reputation for impiety." In primitive societies, where the collective feeling has almost irresistible authority, the individual who is universally considered "impious" or "impure" or "blood-guilty" or the like becomes so in his own opinion as well. In early Greek society the individual was vigorously asserting himself, his own judgement and conscience, against the herd, but the language still retained phrases belonging to the more primitive condition. From this usage Sophocles gets a fine psychological effect. Her courage fails. She is impious, in the eyes of Thebes, in the eyes of the gods; impious altogether!

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P. 6I, 1. 940. The great King's last daughter: The only real representative, since Ismene has capitulated. In her last protest she again asserts that she is right and all Thebes wrong, she a royal princess and Creon and his associates common people.

P. 62 f., 11. 944-987. A difficult enigmatic poem. Early poetry in many parts of the world likes to make riddling allusions to the national myths and legends. The "kennings" of Icelandic Skaldic poetry form a striking instance. Gold is called "the Giants' mouthful" because of three giants who once divided a hoard by taking each as much of it as his mouth could hold; an arrow is "the leaping herring of Egil," Egil being a celebrated archer. Here reference is made to three Children of Kings who, like Antigone, were subdued by Fate and confined in strange prisons. Danag, princess of Argos, was prisoned in a tower of brass because her father, Acrisius, had been told by an oracle that her son would kill him. But Zeus in a shower of gold visited her in the tower. Her son was Perseus.

Lycurgus, King of the Edonians in Thrace, rejected and insulted Dionysus, as Pentheus, King of Thebes, does in the *Bacchae*.

Cleopatra, daughter of Boreas and Oreithyia, was married to Phineus, King of Salmydessus, who put her away and married the wicked Eidothea, who had Cleopatra imprisoned and her sons blinded.

The repeated cry, "My child" is possibly an appeal to Antigone even now to repent and ask for mercy, **but** more probably it is a mere expression of emotion.

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P. 63 ff., ll. 988-1090. The Tiresias Scene. In structure like a preliminary study for the great Tiresias scene in the Oedipus; the warning, the silence, the breakdown of the silence through anger, and the confounding of the proud king. Note that the prophet is almost entirely occupied with the question of ritual pollution; there is no word of defence or sympathy for Antigone. Tiresias in tragedy is regularly guided by a boy, except in the *Bacchae* (ll. 170 ff.) where he has inspiration to guide him.

P.66 , ll. 1033 ff. It seems curious, if Creon had hitherto always been guided by Tiresias, that he should be so ready to suspect him now. There is the same relation between Oedipus and Tiresias, between Saul and Samuel, one might almost add, between Henry II and Thomas a Beckett. Doubtless the King feared and disliked these uncanny medicine-men, even while he gave them all marks of respect and honour.

P. 68, l. 1080. Hate of thee rends many cities: Evidently, therefore, all the dead of the invading army were left unburied; Polynices was only being treated like the rest. The prophet condemns the whole practice, as Athenian opinion condemned it. See Euripides' *Suppliant Women*.

P. 69, l. 1100. Free from her tomb that maiden: If he had gone straight to release Antigone, as the Elders advised, she might have been saved. See Introduction, p. 9.

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P. 70, l. 1115 ff. The song of exultation coming just before disaster, a favourite effect of Sophocles, is perhaps justified here by the relief of the Elders at Creon's change of heart. The similar outburst in the *Oedipus, II.* 1086 ff., is harder to justify. Cf. *Ajax*, ll. 693 ff., *Trachiniae*, 633 ff.

P. 70, l. 1115. Many-named One: Many separate local worships were absorbed into the cult of Dionysus who was then regarded as one god with many names. Here he is specially associated with Eleusis, sharing the Mysteries with Demeter; with Thebes, as son of Zeus and Semele, who died in the embrace of the divine Lightning; with Delphi, where his torches can be seen flashing over the peaks of Parnassus, above the Corycian Cave; with the Maenads, whose dances he leads under the mystic name of Iacchus.

P. 71, ll. 1155 and 1188. The "unprepared" entrances of the Messenger and of Eurydice show a certain lack of technical skill compared with Sophocles' later work, though the actual Messenger's Speech is very fine when we come to it. (Cf. on 1244.)

P. 73, l. 1183. I caught some spoken word: Not necessarily the words just spoken to the Chorus, which would leave hardly time for the queen's swoon and recovery.

P. 73, l. 1199. Her of the Three Ways: Hecate. As a goddess of the underworld she was offended by the denial of the funeral rites.

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P. 73, ll. 1204, 1207. "That tower unblest": The horror felt by the ordinary man at the living tomb of Antigone expresses itself in these repeated phrases.

P. 74, l. 1216. Stones wrenched away: This showed that some one had broken into the tomb: evidently Haemon.

P. 74, l. 1233. Twice-stabbing: literally "twofold points (stabbers) of his sword."

P. 75, l. 1244. [*Exit* EURYDICE: This silent exit is an effect which Sophocles used later with much greater effect in the *Oedipus*, l. 1072.

P. 78, l. 1301. There at the altar kneeling: The Greek text is uncertain here. It looks as if it mentioned her suicide, but if so, Creon's question in l. 1314 and the two lines answering it would clearly "be superfluous.

P. 78, l. 1303. That elder son: Megareus or Menoikeus. Tiresias had pronounced that, to save Thebes, one of the Spartoi (the Dragon race), must die. Megareus voluntarily stabbed himself and fell from a tower into the Dragon's den. In Euripides' *Phoemssae* Creon tries to save his son, who deliberately deceives him in order to sacrifice himself. Perhaps Sophocles was here following a version in which Creon obediently carried out the demand of the prophet.

P. 79, l. 1324. Briefest is best: Most readers feel disappointed by the later scenes of this play. After the

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departure of Antigone and the last lyric about her (1. 987) it is difficult to become greatly interested in the new characters, Tiresias and Eurydice. Tiresias, of course is necessary to the plot, but Eurydice seems only to have been added in order to give greater poignancy to the Messenger's Speech by having it actually addressed to the mother of Haemon and not merely to the Elders. It looks as if Sophocles had made a bold experiment in the effect to be produced by silent acting.



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