

# ANTIGONE

*Translated by*

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## CHARACTERS

*Antigone*

*Ismene*

*Chorus of Theban Elders*

*Creon*

*A Guard*

*Haemon*

*Teiresias*

*A Messenger*

*Eurydice*

## ANTIGONE

SCENE: *Thebes, before the royal palace. Antigone and Ismene emerge from its great central door.*

*Antigone*

My sister, my Ismene, do you know  
of any suffering from our father sprung  
that Zeus does not achieve for us survivors?  
There's nothing grievous, nothing free from doom,  
not shameful, not dishonored, I've not seen.  
Your sufferings and mine.  
And now, what of this edict which they say  
the commander has proclaimed to the whole people?  
Have you heard anything? Or don't you know  
that the foes' trouble comes upon our friends?

10

*Ismene*

I've heard no word, Antigone, of our friends.  
Not sweet nor bitter, since that single moment  
when we two lost two brothers  
who died on one day by a double blow.  
And since the Argive army went away  
this very night, I have no further news  
of fortune or disaster for myself.

*Antigone*

I knew it well, and brought you from the house  
for just this reason, that you alone may hear.

*Ismene*

What is it? Clearly some news has clouded you.

20

*Antigone*

It has indeed. Creon will give the one  
of our two brothers honor in the tomb;  
the other none.

Eteocles, with just entreatment treated,  
as law provides he has hidden under earth  
to have full honor with the dead below.  
But Polyneices' corpse who died in pain,  
they say he has proclaimed to the whole town  
that none may bury him and none bewail,  
but leave him unwept, untomb'd, a rich sweet sight  
for the hungry birds' beholding.  
Such orders they say the worthy Creon gives  
to you and me—yes, yes, I say to me—  
and that he's coming to proclaim it clear  
to those who know it not.  
Further: he has the matter so at heart  
that anyone who dares attempt the act  
will die by public stoning in the town.  
So there you have it and you soon will show  
if you are noble, or fallen from your descent.

*Ismene*

If things have reached this stage, what can I do,  
poor sister, that will help to make or mend?

*Antigone*

Think will you share my labor and my act.

*Ismene*

What will you risk? And where is your intent?

*Antigone*

Will you take up that corpse along with me?

*Ismene*

To bury him you mean, when it's forbidden?

*Antigone*

My brother, and yours, though you may wish he were not.  
I never shall be found to be his traitor.

*Ismene*

O hard of mind! When Creon spoke against it!

*Antigone*

It's not for him to keep me from my own.

*Ismene*

Alas. Remember, sister, how our father  
perished abhorred, ill-famed.  
Himself with his own hand, through his own curse  
destroyed both eyes.

Remember next his mother and his wife  
finishing life in the shame of the twisted strings.  
And third two brothers on a single day,  
poor creatures, murdering, a common doom  
each with his arm accomplished on the other.  
And now look at the two of us alone.

We'll perish terribly if we force law  
and try to cross the royal vote and power.

We must remember that we two are women  
so not to fight with men.

And that since we are subject to strong power  
we must hear these orders, or any that may be worse.  
So I shall ask of them beneath the earth  
forgiveness, for in these things I am forced,  
and shall obey the men in power. I know  
that wild and futile action makes no sense.

*Antigone*

I wouldn't urge it. And if now you wished  
to act, you wouldn't please me as a partner.  
Be what you want to; but that man shall I  
bury. For me, the doer, death is best.

Friend shall I lie with him, yes friend with friend,  
when I have dared the crime of piety.

Longer the time in which to please the dead  
than that for those up here.

There shall I lie forever. You may see fit  
to keep from honor what the gods have honored.

« SOPHOCLES »

*Ismene*

I shall do no dishonor. But to act  
against the citizens. I cannot.

*Antigone*

That's your protection. Now I go, to pile  
the burial-mound for him, my dearest brother.

*Ismene*

Oh my poor sister, How I fear for you!

*Antigone*

For me, don't borrow trouble. Clear your fate.

*Ismene*

At least give no one warning of this act;  
you keep it hidden, and I'll do the same.

*Antigone*

Dear God! Denounce me. I shall hate you more  
if silent, not proclaiming this to all.

*Ismene*

You have a hot mind over chilly things.

*Antigone*

I know I please those whom I most should please.

*Ismene*

If but you can. You crave what can't be done.

*Antigone*

And so, when strength runs out, I shall give over.

*Ismene*

Wrong from the start, to chase what cannot be.

*Antigone*

If that's your saying, I shall hate you first,  
and next the dead will hate you in all justice.  
But let me and my own ill-counselling  
suffer this terror. I shall suffer nothing  
as great as dying with a lack of grace.

« ANTIGONE »

*Ismene*

Go, since you want to. But know this: you go  
senseless indeed, but loved by those who love you.

*(Ismene returns to the palace; Antigone leaves by one of the side  
entrances. The Chorus now enters from the other side.)*

*Chorus*

Sun's own radiance, fairest light ever shone on the gates of

Thebes,

100

then did you shine, O golden day's

eye, coming over Dirce's stream,

on the Man who had come from Argos with all his armor

running now in headlong fear as you shook his bridle free.

He was stirred by the dubious quarrel of Polynceices.

110

So, screaming shrill,

like an eagle over the land he flew,

covered with white-snow wing,

with many weapons,

with horse-hair crested helms.

He who had stood above our halls, gaping about our seven gates,  
with that circle of thirsting spears.

Gone, without our blood in his jaws,

120

before the torch took hold on our tower-crown.

Rattle of war at his back; hard the fight for the dragon's foe.

The boasts of a proud tongue are for Zeus to hate.

So seeing them streaming on

in insolent clangor of gold,

130

he struck with hurling fire him who rushed

for the high wall's top,

to cry conquest abroad.

Swinging, striking the earth he fell

fire in hand, who in mad attack,

had raged against us with blasts of hate.

He failed. He failed of his aim.

« SOPHOCLES »

For the rest great Ares dealt his blows about,  
first in the war-team.

140

The captains stationed at seven gates  
fought with seven and left behind  
their brazen arms as an offering  
to Zeus who is turner of battle.

All but those wretches, sons of one man,  
one mother's sons, who sent their spears  
each against each and found the share  
of a common death together.

Great-named Victory comes to us  
answering Thebe's warrior-joy.

150

Let us forget the wars just done  
and visit the shrines of the gods.

All, with night-long dance which Bacchus will lead,  
who shakes Thebe's acres.

*(Creon enters from the palace.)*

Now here he comes, the king of the land,  
Creon, Menoeceus' son,  
newly named by the gods' new fate.  
What plan that beats about his mind  
has made him call this council-session,  
sending his summons to all?

160

*Creon.*

My friends, the very gods who shook the state  
with mighty surge have set it straight again.  
So now I sent for you, chosen from all,  
first that I knew you constant in respect  
to Laius' royal power; and again  
when Oedipus had set the state to rights,  
and when he perished, you were faithful still  
in mind to the descendants of the dead.  
When they two perished by a double fate,  
on one day struck and striking and defiled  
each by his own hand, now it comes that I

170

« 164 »

« ANTIGONE »

hold all the power and the royal throne  
through close connection with the perished men.  
You cannot learn of any man the soul,  
the mind, and the intent until he shows  
his practise of the government and law.  
For I believe that who controls the state  
and does not hold to the best plans of all,  
but locks his tongue up through some kind of fear,

180

that he is worst of all who are or were.  
And he who counts another greater friend  
than his own fatherland, I put him nowhere.  
So I—may Zeus all-seeing always know it—  
could not keep silent as disaster crept  
upon the town, destroying hope of safety.  
Nor could I count the enemy of the land  
friend to myself, not I who know so well  
that she it is who saves us, sailing straight,  
and only so can we have friends at all.

190

With such good rules shall I enlarge our state.  
And now I have proclaimed their brother-edict.  
In the matter of the sons of Oedipus,  
citizens, know: Eteocles who died,  
defending this our town with champion spear,  
is to be covered in the grave and granted  
all holy rites we give the noble dead.

But his brother Polynices whom I name  
the exile who came back and sought to burn  
his fatherland, the gods who were his kin,  
who tried to gorge on blood he shared, and lead  
the rest of us as slaves—

200

it is announced that no one in this town  
may give him burial or mourn for him.  
Leave him unburied, leave his corpse disgraced,  
a dinner for the birds and for the dogs.  
Such is my mind. Never shall I, myself,  
honor the wicked and reject the just.

« 165 »

« SOPHOCLES »

The man who is well-minded to the state  
from me in death and life shall have his honor.

210

*Chorus*

This resolution, Creon, is your own,  
in the matter of the traitor and the true.  
For you can make such rulings as you will  
about the living and about the dead.

*Creon*

Now you be sentinels of the decree.

*Chorus*

Order some younger man to take this on.

*Creon*

Already there are watchers of the corpse.

*Chorus*

What other order would you give us, then?

*Creon*

Not to take sides with any who disobey.

*Chorus*

No fool is fool as far as loving death.

220

*Creon*

Death is the price. But often we have known  
men to be ruined by the hope of profit.

*(Enter, from the side, a guard.)*

*Guard*

Lord, I can't claim that I am out of breath  
from rushing here with light and hasty step,  
for I had many haltings in my thought  
making me double back upon my road.  
My mind kept saying many things to me:  
"Why go where you will surely pay the price?"  
"Fool, are you halting? And if Creon learns  
from someone else, how shall you not be hurt?"  
Turning this over, on I dilly-dallied.

230

« 166 »

« ANTIGONE »

And so a short trip turns itself to long.  
Finally, though, my coming here won out.  
If what I say is nothing, still I'll say it.  
For I come clutching to one single hope  
that I can't suffer what is not my fate.

*Creon*

What is it that brings on this gloom of yours?

*Guard*

I want to tell you first about myself.  
I didn't do it, didn't see who did it.  
It isn't right for me to get in trouble.

240

*Creon*

Your aim is good. You fence the fact around.  
It's clear you have some shocking news to tell.

*Guard*

Terrible tidings make for long delays.

*Creon*

Speak out the story, and then get away.

*Guard*

I'll tell you. Someone left the corpse just now,  
burial all accomplished, thirsty dust  
strewn on the flesh, the ritual complete.

*Creon*

What are you saying? What man has dared to do it?

*Guard*

I wouldn't know. There were no marks of picks,  
no grubbed-out earth. The ground was dry and hard,  
no trace of wheels. The doer left no sign.  
When the first fellow on the day-shift showed us,  
we all were sick with wonder.  
For he was hidden, not inside a tomb,  
light dust upon him, enough to turn the curse,  
no wild beast's track, nor track of any hound

250

« 167 »

« SOPHOCLES »

having been near, nor was the body torn.  
 We roared bad words about, guard against guard,  
 and came to blows. No one was there to stop us.  
 Each man had done it, nobody had done it  
 so as to prove it on him—we couldn't tell.  
 We were prepared to hold to red-hot iron,  
 to walk through fire, to swear before the gods  
 we hadn't done it, hadn't shared the plan,  
 when it was plotted or when it was done.  
 And last, when all our sleuthing came out nowhere,  
 one fellow spoke, who made our heads to droop  
 low toward the ground. We couldn't disagree.  
 We couldn't see a chance of getting off.  
 He said we had to tell you all about it.  
 We couldn't hide the fact.  
 So he won out. The lot chose poor old me  
 to win the prize. So here I am unwilling,  
 quite sure you people hardly want to see me.  
 Nobody likes the bringer of bad news.

*Chorus*

Lord, while he spoke, my mind kept on debating.  
 Isn't this action possibly a god's?

*Creon*

Stop now, before you fill me up with rage,  
 or you'll prove yourself insane as well as old.  
 Unbearable, your saying that the gods  
 take any kindly forethought for this corpse.  
 Would it be they had hidden him away,  
 honoring his good service, his who came  
 to burn their pillared temples and their wealth,  
 even their land, and break apart their laws?  
 Or have you seen them honor wicked men?  
 It isn't so.  
 No, from the first there were some men in town  
 who took the edict hard, and growled against me,

« 168 »

« ANTIGONE »

who hid the fact that they were rearing back,  
 not rightly in the yoke, no way my friends.  
 These are the people—oh it's clear to me—  
 who have bribed these men and brought about the deed.  
 No current custom among men as bad  
 as silver currency. This destroys the state;  
 this drives men from their homes; this wicked teacher  
 drives solid citizens to acts of shame.  
 It shows men how to practise infamy  
 and know the deeds of all unholiness.  
 Every least hireling who helped in this  
 brought about then the sentence he shall have.  
 But further, as I still revere great Zeus,  
 understand this, I tell you under oath,  
 if you don't find the very man whose hands  
 buried the corpse, bring him for me to see,  
 not death alone shall be enough for you  
 till living, hanging, you make clear the crime.  
 For any future grabbings you'll have learned  
 where to get pay, and that it doesn't pay  
 to squeeze a profit out of every source.  
 For you'll have felt that more men come to doom  
 through dirty profits than are kept by them.

*Guard*

May I say something? Or just turn and go?

*Creon*

Aren't you aware your speech is most unwelcome?

*Guard*

Does it annoy your hearing or your mind?

*Creon*

Why are you out to allocate my pain?

*Guard*

The doer hurts your mind. I hurt your ears.

« 169 »

Creon

You are a quibbling rascal through and through.

320

Guard

But anyhow I never did the deed.

Creon

And you the man who sold your mind for money!

Guard

Oh!

How terrible to guess, and guess at lies!

Creon

Go pretty up your guesswork. If you don't  
show me the doers you will have to say  
that wicked payments work their own revenge.

Guard

Indeed, I pray he's found, but yes or no,  
taken or not as luck may settle it,  
you won't see me returning to this place.  
Saved when I neither hoped nor thought to be,  
I owe the gods a mighty debt of thanks.

330

*(Creon enters the palace. The Guard leaves by the way he came.)*

Chorus

Many the wonders but nothing walks stranger than man.  
This thing crosses the sea in the winter's storm,  
making his path through the roaring waves.  
And she, the greatest of gods, the earth—  
ageless she is, and unwearied—he wears her away  
as the ploughs go up and down from year to year  
and his mules turn up the soil.

340

Gay nations of birds he snares and leads,  
wild beast tribes and the salty brood of the sea,  
with the twisted mesh of his nets, this clever man.  
He controls with craft the beasts of the open air,  
walkers on hills. The horse with his shaggy mane

350

he holds and harnesses, yoked about the neck,  
and the strong bull of the mountain.

Language, and thought like the wind  
and the feelings that make the town,  
he has taught himself, and shelter against the cold,  
refuge from rain. He can always help himself.  
He faces no future helpless. There's only death  
that he cannot find an escape from. He has contrived  
refuge from illnesses once beyond all cure.

360

Clever beyond all dreams  
the inventive craft that he has  
which may drive him one time or another to well or ill.  
When he honors the laws of the land and the gods' sworn right  
high indeed is his city; but stateless the man  
who dares to dwell with dishonor. Not by my fire,  
never to share my thoughts, who does these things.

370

*(The Guard enters with Antigone.)*

My mind is split at this awful sight.  
I know her. I cannot deny  
Antigone is here.  
Alas, the unhappy girl,  
her unhappy father's child.  
Oh what is the meaning of this?  
It cannot be you that they bring  
for breaking the royal law,  
caught in open shame.

380

Guard

This is the woman who has done the deed.  
We caught her at the burying. Where's the king?

*(Creon enters.)*

Chorus

Back from the house again just when he's needed.

Creon

What must I measure up to? What has happened?



*Guard*

Lord, one should never swear off anything.  
Afterthought makes the first resolve a liar.  
I could have vowed I wouldn't come back here  
after your threats, after the storm I faced.  
But joy that comes beyond the wildest hope  
is bigger than all other pleasure known.  
I'm here, though I swore not to be, and bring  
this girl. We caught her burying the dead.  
This time we didn't need to shake the lots;  
mine was the luck, all mine.  
So now, lord, take her, you, and question her  
and prove her as you will. But I am free.  
And I deserve full clearance on this charge.

390

*Creon*

Explain the circumstance of the arrest.

*Guard*

She was burying the man. You have it all.

*Creon*

Is this the truth? And do you grasp its meaning?

*Guard*

I saw her burying the very corpse  
you had forbidden. Is this adequate?

*Creon*

How was she caught and taken in the act?

*Guard*

It was like this: when we got back again  
struck with those dreadful threatenings of yours,  
we swept away the dust that hid the corpse.  
We stripped it back to slimy nakedness.  
And then we sat to windward on the hill  
so as to dodge the smell.  
We poked each other up with growling threats  
if anyone was careless of his work.

410

For some time this went on, till it was noon.  
The sun was high and hot. Then from the earth  
up rose a dusty whirlwind to the sky,  
filling the plain, smearing the forest-leaves,  
clogging the upper air. We shut our eyes,  
sat and endured the plague the gods had sent.  
So the storm left us after a long time.  
We saw the girl. She cried the sharp and shrill  
cry of a bitter bird which sees the nest  
bare where the young birds lay.  
So this same girl, seeing the body stripped,  
cried with great groanings, cried a dreadful curse  
upon the people who had done the deed.  
Soon in her hands she brought the thirsty dust,  
and holding high a pitcher of wrought bronze  
she poured the three libations for the dead.  
We saw this and surged down. We trapped her fast;  
and she was calm. We taxed her with the deeds  
both past and present. Nothing was denied.  
And I was glad, and yet I took it hard.  
One's own escape from trouble makes one glad;  
but bringing friends to trouble is hard grief.  
Still, I care less for all these second thoughts  
than for the fact that I myself am safe.

420

430

440

*Creon*

You there, whose head is drooping to the ground,  
do you admit this, or deny you did it?

*Antigone*

I say I did it and I don't deny it.

*Creon (to the guard)*

Take yourself off wherever you wish to go  
free of a heavy charge.

*Creon (to Antigone)*

You—tell me not at length but in a word.  
You knew the order not to do this thing?

*Antigone*

I knew, of course I knew. The word was plain.

*Creon*

And still you dared to overstep these laws?

*Antigone*

For me it was not Zeus who made that order.

Nor did that Justice who lives with the gods below  
mark out such laws to hold among mankind.

Nor did I think your orders were so strong  
that you, a mortal man, could over-run  
the gods' unwritten and unfailing laws.

Not now, nor yesterday's, they always live,  
and no one knows their origin in time.

So not through fear of any man's proud spirit  
would I be likely to neglect these laws,  
draw on myself the gods' sure punishment.

I knew that I must die; how could I not?  
even without your warning. If I die  
before my time, I say it is a gain.

Who lives in sorrows many as are mine  
how shall he not be glad to gain his death?

And so, for me to meet this fate, no grief.

But if I left that corpse, my mother's son,  
dead and unburied I'd have cause to grieve  
as now I grieve not.

And if you think my acts are foolishness  
the foolishness may be in a fool's eye.

*Chorus*

The girl is bitter. She's her father's child.

She cannot yield to trouble; nor could he.

*Creon*

These rigid spirits are the first to fall.

The strongest iron, hardened in the fire,

most often ends in scraps and shatterings.

Small curbs bring raging horses back to terms.  
Slave to his neighbor, who can think of pride?

This girl was expert in her insolence  
when she broke bounds beyond established law.  
Once she had done it, insolence the second,  
to boast her doing, and to laugh in it.

I am no man and she the man instead  
if she can have this conquest without pain.

She is my sister's child, but were she child  
of closer kin than any at my hearth,

she and her sister should not so escape  
their death and doom. I charge Ismene too.

She shared the planning of this burial.

Call her outside. I saw her in the house,  
maddened, no longer mistress of herself.

The sly intent betrays itself sometimes  
before the secret plotters work their wrong.

I hate it too when someone caught in crime  
then wants to make it seem a lovely thing.

*Antigone*

Do you want more than my arrest and death?

*Creon*

No more than that. For that is all I need.

*Antigone*

Why are you waiting? Nothing that you say  
fits with my thought. I pray it never will.

Nor will you ever like to hear my words.

And yet what greater glory could I find

than giving my own brother funeral?

All these would say that they approved my act  
did fear not mute them.

(A king is fortunate in many ways,  
and most, that he can act and speak at will.)

*Creon*

None of these others see the case this way.

*Antigone*

They see, and do not say. You have them cowed.

*Creon*

And you are not ashamed to think alone?

*Antigone*

No, I am not ashamed. When was it shame  
to serve the children of my mother's womb?

*Creon*

It was not your brother who died against him, then?

*Antigone*

Full brother, on both sides, my parents' child.

*Creon*

Your act of grace, in his regard, is crime.

*Antigone*

The corpse below would never say it was.

*Creon*

When you honor him and the criminal just alike?

*Antigone*

It was a brother, not a slave, who died.

*Creon*

Died to destroy this land the other guarded.

*Antigone*

Death yearns for equal law for all the dead.

*Creon*

Not that the good and bad draw equal shares.

*Antigone*

Who knows that this is holiness below?

*Creon*

Never the enemy, even in death, a friend.

*Antigone*

I cannot share in hatred, but in love.

*Creon*

Then go down there, if you must love, and love  
the dead. No woman rules me while I live.

(*Ismene is brought from the palace under guard.*)

*Chorus*

Look there! Ismene is coming out.

She loves her sister and mourns,  
with clouded brow and bloodied cheeks,  
tears on her lovely face.

*Creon*

You, lurking like a viper in the house,  
who sucked me dry. I looked the other way  
while twin destruction planned against the throne.  
Now tell me, do you say you shared this deed?  
Or will you swear you didn't even know?

*Ismene*

I did the deed, if she agrees I did.  
I am accessory and share the blame.

*Antigone*

Justice will not allow this. You did not  
wish for a part, nor did I give you one.

*Ismene*

You are in trouble, and I'm not ashamed  
to sail beside you into suffering.

*Antigone*

Death and the dead, they know whose act it was.  
I cannot love a friend whose love is words.

*Ismene*

Sister, I pray, don't fence me out from honor,  
from death with you, and honor done the dead.

*Antigone*

Don't die along with me, nor make your own  
that which you did not do. My death's enough.

« SOPHOCLES »

*Ismene*

When you are gone what life can be my friend?

*Antigone*

Love Creon. He's your kinsman and your care.

*Ismene*

Why hurt me, when it does yourself no good?

*Antigone*

I also suffer, when I laugh at you.

*Ismene*

What further service can I do you now?

*Antigone*

To save yourself. I shall not envy you.

*Ismene*

Alas for me. Am I outside your fate?

*Antigone*

Yes. For you chose to live when I chose death.

*Ismene*

At least I was not silent. You were warned.

*Antigone*

Some will have thought you wiser. Some will not.

*Ismene*

And yet the blame is equal for us both.

*Antigone*

Take heart. You live. My life died long ago.  
And that has made me fit to help the dead.

*Creon*

One of these girls has shown her lack of sense  
just now. The other had it from her birth.

*Ismene*

Yes, lord. When people fall in deep distress  
their native sense departs, and will not stay.

550

560

« ANTIGONE »

*Creon*

You chose your mind's distraction when you chose  
to work out wickedness with this wicked girl.

*Ismene*

What life is there for me to live without her?

*Creon*

Don't speak of her. For she is here no more.

*Ismene*

But will you kill your own son's promised bride?

*Creon*

Oh, there are other furrows for his plough.

*Ismene*

But where the closeness that has bound these two?

570

*Creon*

Not for my sons will I choose wicked wives.

*Ismene*

Dear Haemon, your father robs you of your rights.

*Creon*

You and your marriage trouble me too much.

*Ismene*

You will take away his bride from your own son?

*Creon*

Yes. Death will help me break this marriage off.

*Chorus*

It seems determined that the girl must die.

*Creon*

You helped determine it. Now, no delay!  
Slaves, take them in. They must be women now.  
No more free running.  
Even the bold will fly when they see Death  
drawing in close enough to end their life.

580

« SOPHOCLES »

(Antigone and Ismene are taken inside.)

Chorus

Fortunate they whose lives have no taste of pain.  
For those whose house is shaken by the gods  
escape no kind of doom. It extends to all the kin  
like the wave that comes when the winds of Thrace  
run over the dark of the sea.

The black sand of the bottom is brought from the depth; 590  
the beaten capes sound back with a hollow cry.

Ancient the sorrow of Labdacus' house, I know.  
Dead men's grief comes back, and falls on grief.  
No generation can free the next.  
One of the gods will strike. There is no escape.  
So now the light goes out  
for the house of Oedipus, while the bloody knife 600  
cuts the remaining root. Folly and Fury have done this.

What madness of man, O Zeus, can bind your power?  
Not sleep can destroy it who ages all,  
nor the weariless months the gods have set. Unaged in time  
monarch you rule of Olympus' gleaming light. 610  
Near time, far future, and the past,  
one law controls them all:  
any greatness in human life brings doom.

Wandering hope brings help to many men.  
But others she tricks from their giddy loves,  
and her quarry knows nothing until he has walked into flame.  
Word of wisdom it was when someone said, 620  
"The bad becomes the good  
to him a god would doom."  
Only briefly is that one from under doom.

(Haemon enters from the side.)

Here is your one surviving son.  
Does he come in grief at the fate of his bride,  
in pain that he's tricked of his wedding? 630

« 180 »

« ANTIGONE »

Creon

Soon we shall know more than a seer could tell us.  
Son, have you heard the vote condemned your bride?  
And are you here, maddened against your father,  
or are we friends, whatever I may do?

Haemon

My father, I am yours. You keep me straight  
with your good judgment, which I shall ever follow.  
Nor shall a marriage count for more with me  
than your kind leading.

Creon

There's my good boy. So should you hold at heart  
and stand behind your father all the way. 640  
It is for this men pray they may beget  
households of dutiful obedient sons,  
who share alike in punishing enemies,  
and give due honor to their father's friends.  
Whoever breeds a child that will not help  
what has he sown but trouble for himself,  
and for his enemies laughter full and free?  
Son, do not let your lust mislead your mind,  
all for a woman's sake, for well you know  
how cold the thing he takes into his arms 650  
who has a wicked woman for his wife.  
What deeper wounding than a friend no friend?  
Oh spit her forth forever, as your foe.  
Let the girl marry somebody in Hades.  
Since I have caught her in the open act,  
the only one in town who disobeyed,  
I shall not now proclaim myself a liar,  
but kill her. Let her sing her song of Zeus  
who guards the kindred.  
If I allow disorder in my house  
I'd surely have to licence it abroad. 660  
A man who deals in fairness with his own,

« 181 »

he can make manifest justice in the state.  
 But he who crosses law, or forces it,  
 or hopes to bring the rulers under him,  
 shall never have a word of praise from me.  
 The man the state has put in place must have  
 obedient hearing to his least command  
 when it is right, and even when it's not.  
 He who accepts this teaching I can trust,  
 ruler, or ruled, to function in his place,  
 to stand his ground even in the storm of spears,  
 a mate to trust in battle at one's side.  
 There is no greater wrong than disobedience.  
 This ruins cities, this tears down our homes,  
 this breaks the battle-front in panic-rout.  
 If men live decently it is because  
 discipline saves their very lives for them.  
 So I must guard the men who yield to order,  
 not let myself be beaten by a woman.  
 Better, if it must happen, that a man  
 should overset me.  
 I won't be called weaker than womankind.

670

680

*Chorus*

We think—unless our age is cheating us—  
 that what you say is sensible and right.

*Haemon*

Father, the gods have given men good sense,  
 the only sure possession that we have.  
 I couldn't find the words in which to claim  
 that there was error in your late remarks.  
 Yet someone else might bring some further light.  
 Because I am your son I must keep watch  
 on all men's doing where it touches you,  
 their speech, and most of all, their discontents.  
 Your presence frightens any common man  
 from saying things you would not care to hear.

690

But in dark corners I have heard them say  
 how the whole town is grieving for this girl,  
 unjustly doomed, if ever woman was,  
 to die in shame for glorious action done.  
 She would not leave her fallen, slaughtered brother  
 there, as he lay, unburied, for the birds  
 and hungry dogs to make an end of him.  
 Isn't her real desert a golden prize?  
 This is the undercover speech in town.  
 Father, your welfare is my greatest good.  
 What loveliness in life for any child  
 outweighs a father's fortune and good fame?  
 And so a father feels his children's faring.  
 Then, do not have one mind, and one alone  
 that only your opinion can be right.  
 Whoever thinks that he alone is wise,  
 his eloquence, his mind, above the rest,  
 come the unfolding, shows his emptiness.  
 A man, though wise, should never be ashamed  
 of learning more, and must unbend his mind.  
 Have you not seen the trees beside the torrent,  
 the ones that bend them saving every leaf,  
 while the resistant perish root and branch?  
 And so the ship that will not slacken sail,  
 the sheet drawn tight, unyielding, overturns.  
 She ends the voyage with her keel on top.  
 No, yield your wrath, allow a change of stand.  
 Young as I am, if I may give advice,  
 I'd say it would be best if men were born  
 perfect in wisdom, but that failing this  
 (which often fails) it can be no dishonor  
 to learn from others when they speak good sense.

700

710

720

*Chorus*

Lord, if your son has spoken to the point  
 you should take his lesson. He should do the same.  
 Both sides have spoken well.

*Creon*

At my age I'm to school my mind by his?  
This boy instructor is my master, then?

*Haemon*

I urge no wrong. I'm young, but you should watch  
my actions, not my years, to judge of me.

*Creon*

A loyal action, to respect disorder?

*Haemon*

I wouldn't urge respect for wickedness.

*Creon*

You don't think she is sick with that disease?

*Haemon*

Your fellow-citizens maintain she's not.

*Creon*

Is the town to tell me how I ought to rule?

*Haemon*

Now there you speak just like a boy yourself.

*Creon*

Am I to rule by other mind than mine?

*Haemon*

No city is property of a single man.

*Creon*

But custom gives possession to the ruler.

*Haemon*

You'd rule a desert beautifully alone.

*Creon (to the Chorus)*

It seems he's firmly on the woman's side.

*Haemon*

If you're a woman. It is you I care for.

*Creon*

Wicked, to try conclusions with your father.

*Haemon*

When you conclude unjustly, so I must.

*Creon*

Am I unjust, when I respect my office?

*Haemon*

You tread down the gods' due. Respect is gone.

*Creon*

Your mind is poisoned. Weaker than a woman!

*Haemon*

At least you'll never see me yield to shame.

*Creon*

Your whole long argument is but for her.

*Haemon*

And you, and me, and for the gods below.

*Creon*

You shall not marry her while she's alive.

*Haemon*

Then she shall die. Her death will bring another.

*Creon*

Your boldness has made progress. Threats, indeed!

*Haemon*

No threat, to speak against your empty plan.

*Creon*

Past due, sharp lessons for your empty brain.

*Haemon*

If you weren't father, I should call you mad.

*Creon*

Don't flatter me with "father," you woman's slave.

*Haemon*

You wish to speak but never wish to hear.

*Creon*

You think so? By Olympus, you shall not  
revile me with these tauntings and go free.

Still, as she wastes, the rain  
and snow companion her.  
Pouring down from her mourning eyes comes the water that  
soaks the stone.

830

My own putting to sleep a god has planned like hers.

*Chorus*

God's child and god she was.  
We are born to death.  
Yet even in death you will have your fame,  
to have gone like a god to your fate,  
in living and dying alike.

*Antigone*

Laughter against me now. In the name of our fathers' gods,  
could you not wait till I went? Must affront be thrown in my  
face?

840

O city of wealthy men.  
I call upon Dirce's spring,  
I call upon Thebe's grove in the armored plain,  
to be my witnesses, how with no friend's mourning,  
by what decree I go to the fresh-made prison-tomb.  
Alive to the place of corpses, an alien still,  
never at home with the living nor with the dead.

850

*Chorus*

You went to the furthest verge  
of daring, but there you found  
the high foundation of justice, and fell.  
Perhaps you are paying your father's pain.

*Antigone*

You speak of my darkest thought, my pitiful father's fame,  
spread through all the world, and the doom that haunts our  
house,  
the royal house of Thebes.  
My mother's marriage-bed.  
Destruction where she lay with her husband-son,  
my father. These are my parents and I their child.

860

I go to stay with them. My curse is to die unwed.  
My brother, you found your fate when you found your bride,  
found it for me as well. Dead, you destroy my life.

870

*Chorus*

You showed respect for the dead.  
So we for you: but power  
is not to be thwarted so.  
Your self-sufficiency has brought you down.

*Antigone*

Unwept, no wedding-song, unfriended, now I go  
the road laid down for me.  
No longer shall I see this holy light of the sun.  
No friend to bewail my fate.

880

*(Creon enters from the palace.)*

*Creon*

When people sing the dirge for their own deaths  
ahead of time, nothing will break them off  
if they can hope that this will buy delay.  
Take her away at once, and open up  
the tomb I spoke of. Leave her there alone.  
There let her choose: death, or a buried life.  
No stain of guilt upon us in this case,  
but she is exiled from our life on earth.

890

*Antigone*

O tomb, O marriage-chamber, hollowed out  
house that will watch forever, where I go.  
To my own people, who are mostly there;  
Persephone has taken them to her.  
Last of them all, ill-fated past the rest,  
shall I descend, before my course is run.  
Still when I get there I may hope to find  
I come as a dear friend to my dear father,  
to you, my mother, and my brother too.  
All three of you have known my hand in death.  
I washed your bodies, dressed them for the grave,

900



poured out the last libation at the tomb.  
 Last, Polyneices knows the price I pay  
 for doing final service to his corpse.  
 And yet the wise will know my choice was right.  
 Had I had children or their father dead,  
 I'd let them moulder. I should not have chosen  
 in such a case to cross the state's decree.  
 What is the law that lies behind these words?  
 One husband gone, I might have found another,  
 or a child from a new man in first child's place,  
 but with my parents hid away in death,  
 no brother, ever, could spring up for me.  
 Such was the law by which I honored you.  
 But Creon thought the doing was a crime,  
 a dreadful daring, brother of my heart.  
 So now he takes and leads me out by force.  
 No marriage-bed, no marriage-song for me,  
 and since no wedding, so no child to rear.  
 I go, without a friend, struck down by fate,  
 live to the hollow chambers of the dead.  
 What divine justice have I disobeyed?  
 Why, in my misery, look to the gods for help?  
 Can I call any of them my ally?  
 I stand convicted of impiety,  
 the evidence my pious duty done.  
 Should the gods think that this is righteousness,  
 in suffering I'll see my error clear.  
 But if it is the others who are wrong  
 I wish them no greater punishment than mine.

*Chorus*

The same tempest of mind  
 as ever, controls the girl.

*Creon*

Therefore her guards shall regret  
 the slowness with which they move.

*Antigone*

That word comes close to death.

*Creon*

You are perfectly right in that.

*Antigone*

O town of my fathers in Thebe's land,  
 O gods of our house.  
 I am led away at last.  
 Look, leaders of Thebes,  
 I am last of your royal line.  
 Look what I suffer, at whose command,  
 because I respected the right.

*(Antigone is led away. The slow procession should begin during  
 the preceding passage.)*

*Chorus*

Danaë suffered too.  
 She went from the light to the brass-built room,  
 chamber and tomb together. Like you, poor child,  
 she was of great descent, and more, she held and kept  
 the seed of the golden rain which was Zeus.  
 Fate has terrible power.  
 You cannot escape it by wealth or war.  
 No fort will keep it out, no ships outrun it.  
 Remember the angry king,  
 son of Dryas, who raged at the god and paid,  
 pent in a rock-walled prison. His bursting wrath  
 slowly went down. As the terror of madness went,  
 he learned of his frenzied attack on the god.  
 Fool, he had tried to stop  
 the dancing women possessed of god,  
 the fire of Dionysus, the songs and flutes.  
 Where the dark rocks divide  
 sea from sea in Thrace  
 is Salmydessus whose savage god

« SOPHOCLES »

beheld the terrible blinding wounds  
dealt to Phineus' sons by their father's wife.  
Dark the eyes that looked to avenge their mother.  
Sharp with her shuttle she struck, and blooded her hands.

Wasting they wept their fate,  
settled when they were born  
to Cleopatra, unhappy queen.

She was a princess too, of an ancient house,  
reared in the cave of the wild north wind, her father.  
Half a goddess but, child, she suffered like you.

*(Enter, from the side Teiresias, the blind prophet,  
led by a boy attendant.)*

Teiresias

Elders of Thebes, we two have come one road,  
two of us looking through one pair of eyes.  
This is the way of walking for the blind.

Creon

Teiresias, what news has brought you here?

Teiresias

I'll tell you. You in turn must trust the prophet.

Creon

I've always been attentive to your counsel.

Teiresias

And therefore you have steered this city straight.

Creon

So I can say how helpful you have been.

Teiresias

But now you are balanced on a razor's edge.

Creon

What is it? How I shudder at your words!

Teiresias

You'll know, when you hear the signs that I have marked  
I sat where every bird of heaven comes

« ANTIGONE »

in my old place of augury, and heard  
bird-cries I'd never known. They screeched about  
goaded by madness, inarticulate.

I marked that they were tearing one another  
with claws of murder. I could hear the wing-beats.  
I was afraid, so straight away I tried  
burnt sacrifice upon the flaming altar.

No fire caught my offerings. Slimy ooze  
dripped on the ashes, smoked and sputtered there.  
Gall burst its bladder, vanished into vapor;  
the fat dripped from the bones and would not burn.  
These are the omens of the rites that failed,  
as my boy here has told me. He's my guide  
as I am guide to others.

Why has this sickness struck against the state?  
Through your decision.

All of the altars of the town are choked  
with leavings of the dogs and birds; their feast  
was on that fated, fallen Polyneices.

So the gods will have no offering from us,  
not prayer, nor flame of sacrifice. The birds  
will not cry out a sound I can distinguish,  
gorged with the greasy blood of that dead man.  
Think of these things, my son. All men may err  
but error once committed, he's no fool  
nor yet unfortunate, who gives up his stiffness  
and cures the trouble he has fallen in.

Stubbornness and stupidity are twins.  
Yield to the dead. Why goad him where he lies?  
What use to kill the dead a second time?

I speak for your own good. And I am right.  
Learning from a wise counsellor is not pain  
if what he speaks are profitable words.

Creon

Old man, you all, like bowmen at a mark,  
have bent your bows at me. I've had my share

of seers. I've been an item in your accounts.  
Make profit, trade in Lydian silver-gold,  
pure gold of India; that's your chief desire.  
But you will never cover up that corpse.  
Not if the very eagles tear their food  
from him, and leave it at the throne of Zeus.  
I wouldn't give him up for burial  
in fear of that pollution. For I know  
no mortal being can pollute the gods.  
O old Teiresias, human beings fall;  
the clever ones the furthest, when they plead  
a shameful case so well in hope of profit.

1040

*Teiresias*

Alas!

What man can tell me, has he thought at all . . .

*Creon*

What hackneyed saw is coming from your lips?

*Teiresias*

How better than all wealth is sound good counsel.

1050

*Creon*

And so is folly worse than anything.

*Teiresias*

And you're infected with that same disease.

*Creon*

I'm reluctant to be uncivil to a seer . . .

*Teiresias*

You're that already. You have said I lie.

*Creon*

Well, the whole crew of seers are money-mad.

*Teiresias*

And the whole tribe of tyrants grab at gain.

*Creon*

Do you realize you are talking to a king?

*Teiresias*

I know. Who helped you save this town you hold?

*Creon*

You're a wise seer, but you love wickedness.

*Teiresias*

You'll bring me to speak the unspeakable, very soon.

1060

*Creon*

Well, speak it out. But do not speak for profit.

*Teiresias*

No, there's no profit in my words for you.

*Creon*

You'd better realise that you can't deliver  
my mind, if you should sell it, to the buyer.

*Teiresias*

Know well, the sun will not have rolled its course  
many more days, before you come to give  
corpse for these corpses, child of your own loins.  
For you've confused the upper and lower worlds.  
You sent a life to settle in a tomb;  
you keep up here that which belongs below  
the corpse unburied, robbed of its release.  
Not you, nor any god that rules on high  
can claim him now.

1070

You rob the nether gods of what is theirs.  
So the pursuing horrors lie in wait  
to track you down. The Furies sent by Hades  
and by all gods will even you with your victims.  
Now say that I am bribed! At no far time  
shall men and women wail within your house.  
And all the cities that you fought in war  
whose sons had burial from wild beasts, or dogs,  
or birds that brought the stench of your great wrong  
back to each hearth, they move against you now.  
A Bowman, as you said, I send my shafts,

1080

« SOPHOCLES »

now you have moved me, straight. You'll feel the wound.  
Boy, take me home now. Let him spend his rage  
on younger men, and learn to calm his tongue,  
and keep a better mind than now he does.

(Exit.)

1090

*Chorus*

Lord, he has gone. Terrible prophecies!  
And since the time when I first grew grey hair  
his sayings to the city have been true.

*Creon*

I also know this. And my mind is torn.  
To yield is dreadful. But to stand against him.  
Dreadful to strike my spirit to destruction.

*Chorus*

Now you must come to counsel, and take advice.

*Creon*

What must I do? Speak, and I shall obey.

*Chorus*

Go free the maiden from that rocky house.  
Bury the dead who lies in readiness.

1100

*Creon*

This is your counsel? You would have me yield?

*Chorus*

Quick as you can. The gods move very fast  
when they bring ruin on misguided men.

*Creon*

How hard, abandonment of my desire.  
But I can fight necessity no more.

*Chorus*

Do it yourself. Leave it to no one else.

*Creon*

I'll go at once. Come, followers, to your work.  
You that are here round up the other fellows.

« 196 »

« ANTIGONE »

Take axes with you, hurry to that place  
that overlooks us.  
Now my decision has been overturned  
shall I, who bound her, set her free myself.  
I've come to fear it's best to hold the laws  
of old tradition to the end of life.

1110

(Exit.)

*Chorus*

God of the many names, Semele's golden child,  
child of Olympian thunder, Italy's lord.  
Lord of Eleusis, where all men come  
to mother Demeter's plain.  
Bacchus, who dwell in Thebes,  
by Ismenus' running water,  
where wild Bacchic women are at home,  
on the soil of the dragon seed.

1120

Seen in the glaring flame, high on the double mount,  
with the nymphs of Parnassus at play on the hill,  
seen by Kastalia's flowing stream.  
You come from the ivied heights,  
from green Euboea's shore.  
In immortal words we cry  
your name, lord, who watch the ways,  
the many ways of Thebes.

1130

This is your city, honored beyond the rest,  
the town of your mother's miracle-death.  
Now, as we wrestle our grim disease,  
come with healing step from Parnassus' slope  
or over the moaning sea.

1140

Leader in dance of the fire-pulsing stars,  
overseer of the voices of night,  
child of Zeus, be manifest,  
with due companionship of Maenad maids  
whose cry is but your name.

1150

(Enter one of those who left with Creon, as messenger.)

« 197 »

*Messenger*

Neighbors of Cadmus, and Amphion's house,  
there is no kind of state in human life  
which I now dare to envy or to blame.  
Luck sets it straight, and luck she overturns  
the happy or unhappy day by day.  
No prophecy can deal with men's affairs.  
Creon was envied once, as I believe,  
for having saved this city from its foes  
and having got full power in this land.  
He steered it well. And he had noble sons.  
Now everything is gone.  
Yes, when a man has lost all happiness,  
he's not alive. Call him a breathing corpse.  
Be very rich at home. Live as a king.  
But once your joy has gone, though these are left  
they are smoke's shadow to lost happiness.

1160

1170

*Chorus*

What is the grief of princes that you bring?

*Messenger*

They're dead. The living are responsible.

*Chorus*

Who died? Who did the murder? Tell us now.

*Messenger*

Haemon is gone. One of his kin drew blood.

*Chorus*

But whose arm struck? His father's or his own?

*Messenger*

He killed himself. His blood is on his father.

*Chorus*

Seer, all too true the prophecy you told!

*Messenger*

This is the state of things. Now make your plans.

(Enter, from the palace, Eurydice.)

*Chorus*

Eurydice is with us now, I see.  
Creon's poor wife. She may have come by chance.  
She may have heard something about her son.

1180

*Eurydice*

I heard your talk as I was coming out  
to greet the goddess Pallas with my prayer.  
And as I moved the bolts that held the door  
I heard of my own sorrow.  
I fell back fainting in my women's arms.  
But say again just what the news you bring.  
I, whom you speak to, have known grief before.

1190

*Messenger*

Dear lady, I was there, and I shall tell,  
leaving out nothing of the true account.  
Why should I make it soft for you with tales  
to prove myself a liar? Truth is right.  
I followed your husband to the plain's far edge,  
where Polyneices' corpse was lying still  
unpitied. The dogs had torn him all apart.  
We prayed the goddess of all journeyings,  
and Pluto, that they turn their wrath to kindness,  
we gave the final purifying bath,  
then burned the poor remains on new-cut boughs,  
and heaped a high mound of his native earth.  
Then turned we to the maiden's rocky bed,  
death's hollow marriage-chamber.  
But, still far off, one of us heard a voice  
in keen lament by that unblest abode.  
He ran and told the master. As Creon came  
he heard confusion crying. He groaned and spoke:  
"Am I a prophet now, and do I tread  
the saddest of all roads I ever trod?  
My son's voice crying! Servants, run up close,

1200

1210

« SOPHOCLES »

stand by the tomb and look, push through the crevice  
where we built the pile of rock, right to the entry.

Find out if that is Haemon's voice I hear  
or if the gods are tricking me indeed."

We obeyed the order of our mournful master.

In the far corner of the tomb we saw  
her, hanging by the neck, caught in a noose  
of her own linen veiling.

Haemon embraced her as she hung, and mourned  
his bride's destruction, dead and gone below,  
his father's actions, the unfated marriage.

When Creon saw him, he groaned terribly,  
and went toward him, and called him with lament:

"What have you done, what plan have you caught up,  
what sort of suffering is killing you?

Come out, my child, I do beseech you, come!"

The boy looked at him with his angry eyes,  
spat in his face and spoke no further word.

He drew his sword, but as his father ran,  
he missed his aim. Then the unhappy boy,  
in anger at himself, leant on the blade.

It entered, half its length, into his side.

While he was conscious he embraced the maiden,  
holding her gently. East, he gasped out blood,  
red blood on her white cheek.

Corpse on a corpse he lies. He found his marriage.  
Its celebration in the halls of Hades.

So he has made it very clear to men  
that to reject good counsel is a crime.

*(Eurydice returns to the house.)*

*Chorus*

What do you make of this? The queen has gone  
in silence. We know nothing of her mind.

*Messenger*

I wonder at her, too. But we can hope  
that she has gone to mourn her son within

« 200 »

« ANTIGONE »

with her own women, not before the town.  
She knows discretion. She will do no wrong.

1230

*Chorus*

I am not sure. This muteness may portend  
as great disaster as a loud lament.

*Messenger*

I will go in and see if some deep plan  
hides in her heart's wild pain. You may be right.  
There can be heavy danger in mute grief.

*(The messenger goes into the house. Creon enters with his  
followers. They are carrying Haemon's body on a bier.)*

*Chorus*

But look, the king draws near.  
His own hand brings  
the witness of his crime,  
the doom he brought on himself.

1260

*Creon*

O crimes of my wicked heart,  
harshness bringing death.  
You see the killer, you see the kin he killed.  
My planning was all unblest.  
Son, you have died too soon.  
Oh, you have gone away  
through my fault, not your own.

*Chorus*

You have learned justice, though it comes too late.

1270

*Creon*

Yes, I have learned in sorrow. It was a god who struck,  
who has weighted my head with disaster; he drove me to wild  
strange ways,  
his heavy heel on my joy.  
Oh sorrows, sorrows of men.

*(Re-enter the messenger, from a side door of the palace.)*

« 201 »

*Messenger*

Master, you hold one sorrow in your hands  
but you have more, stored up inside the house.

1280

*Creon*

What further suffering can come on me?

*Messenger*

Your wife has died. The dead man's mother in deed,  
poor soul, her wounds are fresh.

*Creon*

Hades, harbor of all,  
you have destroyed me now.  
Terrible news to hear, horror the tale you tell.  
I was dead, and you kill me again.  
Boy, did I hear you right?  
Did you say the queen was dead,  
slaughter on slaughter heaped?

1290

*(The central doors of the palace begin to open.)*

*Chorus*

Now you can see. Concealment is all over.

*(The doors are open, and the corpse of Eurydice is revealed.)*

*Creon*

My second sorrow is here. Surely no fate remains  
which can strike me again. Just now, I held my son in my arms.  
And now I see her dead.  
Woe for the mother and son.

1300

*Messenger*

There, by the altar, dying on the sword,  
her eyes fell shut. She wept her older son  
who died before, and this one. Last of all  
she cursed you as the killer of her children.

*Creon*

I am mad with fear. Will no one strike  
and kill me with cutting sword?  
Sorrowful, soaked in sorrow to the bone!

1310

*Messenger*

Yes, for she held you guilty in the death  
of him before you, and the elder dead.

*Creon*

How did she die?

*Messenger*

Struck home at her own heart  
when she had heard of Haemon's suffering.

*Creon*

This is my guilt, all mine. I killed you, I say it clear.  
Servants, take me away, out of the sight of men.  
I who am nothing more than nothing now.

1320

*Chorus*

Your plan is good—if any good is left.  
Best to cut short our sorrow.

*Creon*

Let me go, let me go. May death come quick,  
bringing my final day.  
O let me never see tomorrow's dawn.

1330

*Chorus*

That is the future's. We must look to now.  
What will be is in other hands than ours.

*Creon*

All my desire was in that prayer of mine.

*Chorus*

Pray not again. No mortal can escape  
the doom prepared for him.

*Creon*

Take me away at once, the frantic man who killed  
my son, against my meaning. I cannot rest.  
My life is warped past cure. My fate has struck me down.

1340

*(Creon and his attendants enter the house.)*

*Chorus*

Our happiness depends  
on wisdom all the way.  
The gods must have their due.  
Great words by men of pride  
bring greater blows upon them.  
So wisdom comes to the old.

1350

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE foregoing is a translation of the text of Jebb's third edition (Cambridge, 1900). In the dialogue, I have tried to bring into English almost all that I thought I saw in the Greek, even though this was to run the risk of a clumsy literalism. In the choruses, I have taken more freedom.

The following are the places where my rendering is of another text than Jebb's.

486 δμαιομεστέρας A, other MSS, and the scholiast in L. δμαιομεστέρα L, as corrected from -ais, Jebb.

The extravagance of imagining the impossible possibility of closer blood kin than a sister seems to me in character for Creon at this point. (For a similar use of language, cf. Aeschylus *Septem* 197.)

519 τούτους MSS and Jebb. ἴσους is recorded by L's scholiast and read by Pearson. Line 520 seems even more pointed if Creon is picking up Antigone's own term to throw at her.

572. This line is Ismene's in all the manuscripts. The only traditional evidence for giving it to Antigone is that the Aldine edition (1502) and Turnebus (1553) gave it to her. These editors may have had manuscript evidence lost to us. But they may also, like most modern editors, including Jebb, have been exercising their own sense of fitness. It is touching to have an Antigone stung from her silence to defend her lover. Further, if the line is not hers, we are faced with an Antigone who never mentions him; and much has been built on this.

The best argument for giving her the line is Creon's reply to it (573). If Ismene has 572 "your marriage" must mean "the marriage you talk of," or words to that effect. This is possible, but the phrase would certainly come out more naturally to Antigone.

Confusions of speakers in stichomythia are many, and I see no possibility of certainty here. It is our misfortune that the line in question is an important one. I have stayed with the manuscripts, which seems to me all one can do.