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## PREFACE

Since the late eighteenth century, *Antigone* has been one of the most widely read, translated, performed, discussed, adapted, and admired of all classical Greek texts. Sophokles' play has captured the imagination of writers as diverse as Friedrich Hölderlin, Jean Cocteau, Jean Anouilh, Berthold Brecht, Rolf Hochhuth, Heinrich Böll, and Athol Fugard, and of composers such as Felix Mendelssohn, Camille Saint-Saëns, Arthur Honegger, Mikos Theodorakis, and Carl Orff; and it has attracted the critical attention of philosophers and theorists as influential as G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Georg Lukács, and Jacques Lacan. (On these, and other aspects of the history of the play's reception and interpretation, see Steiner 1984.) With its challenging exploration of conflicts between family and state, divine and human law, male authority and female resistance, *Antigone* continues to strike responsive chords in all kinds of audiences and readers, and to be assigned as a core text in courses, not only on Greek drama, but also on political theory, gender studies, and moral philosophy, in universities and colleges all over the world.

It is all the more daunting a task, therefore, to produce a new edition of the play, for its readers may be coming to it with many different kinds of questions and expectations, and with correspondingly different preferences as to the *kinds* of help it should provide. Of course, my first responsibility is to assist all readers – especially those less familiar with the language and style of Sophoklean tragedy – in figuring out how the Greek is put together, word by word and phrase by phrase; and to this end I have done my best to provide the necessary textual, lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and metrical assistance, and to supplement this with further references to the standard commentaries and scholarly aids (esp.

LSJ, Smyth, Goodwin's *GMT*, and Denniston's *GP*; and for metrical matters, Dale 1968 and West 1982. Given the nature of this series, I have favoured works in English, where possible). But almost equally basic and indispensable to the commentator's job, I take it, is the explanation of stylistic, rhetorical, theatrical, and structural aspects of the play; and, at the next level, the reader is also entitled to expect information about the social, ethical, political, religious, and literary context, and (as far as possible) the mental and psychological make-up of its Athenian audience – by which point philology has merged into hermeneutics, and the critical floodgates are wide open.

In interpreting the play, I have tried to keep two unattainable yet desirable goals constantly in view: on the one hand, to transport myself and my readers as completely as possible into the mind-sets of the original audience in the Theatre of Dionysos; and on the other, to explore the fullest range of meanings that this text can yield to us now. As audiences vary and change, so do meanings multiply and change with them. A work as dense and complex as Sophokles' *Antigone* invites many different responses and critical judgements, and I have tried to include a good number of the more fruitful and significant of these – while also explaining why others seem textually and contextually less legitimate or plausible. Likewise, I have tried to cite a fair selection of the best modern scholarship on the play, both to indicate where critical opinion diverges and to suggest helpful sites of more extensive discussion. But of course this selection represents only a tiny fraction of what is available (and still growing); and I cannot pretend to have covered it adequately. I hope those whose work I may seem to have neglected will forgive me; I could not read, let alone cite, everything.

I am happy to acknowledge my debt to previous commentators on the play, especially R. F. P. Brunck, L. Campbell, G. Müller, J. C. Kamerbeek, A. Brown, and above all R. C.

Jebb; also to S. Radt for his editions of the fragments of Aischylos and Sophokles (= *TGF* vols. 3 and 4). I am fortunate too, in establishing my text and *apparatus criticus*, to have been able to draw on the expert work of A. C. Pearson, A. Dain, A. Colonna, R. D. Dawe, and H. Lloyd-Jones & N. G. Wilson: but I have preferred to print my own version rather than follow any one of them exactly throughout.

The Introduction is intended to be accessible to Greekless readers, as well as to those planning to sift and struggle through the play in the original. After much agonizing, I abandoned my early resolve to keep this Introduction short and to let the text and the Commentary speak for themselves, line by line and scene by scene. Instead, I decided – rightly or wrongly – that, given the enormous scholarly literature on *Antigone*, and the vigorous debates that continue to rage around it, it would be irresponsible of me to stand back and refrain from larger-scale interpretive comment of my own. So in §5 of the Introduction I engage with a number of different approaches to the play, and try briefly to outline the chief merits, shortcomings, and implications of each. Doubtless some of these approaches will appeal more than others to any particular reader; but I hope none turns out to be completely unappealing and useless to all. In any case, this section of the Introduction can easily be skipped (in part, or whole) by those who want to concentrate on reading the play through with an open mind.

It has taken me much longer than planned to complete this edition. I am grateful to many colleagues, friends, and students for help of various kinds along the way: especially to my undergraduate students at Berkeley, to Ruby Blondell (and her students at the University of Washington), Judith Butler, Martin Cropp (and his students at Calgary), Michael Ewans, Leslie Kurke, André Lardinois, Rodney Merrill, Seth Schein (and his students at Davis), Deborah Steiner, and

Victoria Wohl, for their corrections and constructive criticisms; to Yasmin Syed, Paul Psinos, and Susan Moore for expert editorial assistance; to Pauline Hire, for her sure-handed guidance throughout the process of publication, and her tactful applications of spur and curb; to Alan Elliott for getting me launched on the reading and interpretation of Greek tragedy, almost forty years ago; and, as always, to the wise and patient General Editors of this series, Pat Easterling and Ted Kenney, to whose advice, I know, I should have paid more constant attention. The faults that remain (including diffuseness, vacillation, and a tendency to fall between several critical stools at once – to say nothing of outright mistakes) are my own: ἔμ' αὐτόγνωτος ὄλεσ' ὀργά.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CHCL</i>	P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox, eds., <i>Cambridge history of classical literature</i> , vol. 1 (Cambridge 1985)
Ellendt	F. Ellendt, <i>Lexicon Sophocleum</i> (Leipzig 1872)
<i>FCrHist</i>	F. Jacoby, ed., <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin 1923)
FJ&W	H. Friis Johansen and E. W. Whittle, eds., <i>Aeschylus The Suppliants</i> (3 vols., Carlsburg 1980)
Gildersleeve	B. L. Gildersleeve, <i>Syntax of classical Greek</i> (New York n.d.; repr. 1980)
<i>GMT</i>	W. W. Goodwin, <i>Greek moods and tenses</i> (New York 1890)
<i>GP</i>	J. D. Denniston, <i>The Greek particles</i> (2nd ed., Oxford 1954)
K-G	R. Kühner and B. Gerth, <i>Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache. Zweiter Teil: Satzlehre</i> (Hanover, 1898–1904)
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (8 vols., Zurich 1981–97)
Lj&W	H. Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, eds., <i>Sophocles</i> (Oxford 1990, corr. 1992: OCT)
Lj&W 1990	H. Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, <i>Sophoclea</i> (Oxford)
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. Stuart Jones, <i>A Greek-English lexicon</i> (Oxford, 1940) with <i>Revised Supplement</i> , ed. P. G. Glare (Oxford 1996)
<i>PCG</i>	R. Kassel and C. Austin, eds., <i>Poetae comici Graeci</i> (Berlin 1984–)
<i>PMG</i>	<i>Poetae melici Graeci</i> , ed. D. L. Page (Oxford 1959)
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> see Sourvinou-Inwood in <i>Bibliography</i>
S-Inwood Smyth	H. Weir Smyth, <i>Greek grammar</i> (rev. G. M. Messing, Cambridge, MA, 1956)
<i>TrGF</i>	B. Snell, R. Kannicht and S. L. Radt, eds., <i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> (Göttingen 1971–)
West	M. L. West, ed., <i>Iambi et elegi Graeci</i> (Oxford 1989–92)
W-Ingram	see Winnington-Ingram in <i>Bibliography</i>

## A NOTE ON METRICAL SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- a long (heavy) syllable
- ∪ a short (light) syllable
- × aneeps (a position which may be occupied by a syllable of either quantity)
- ∪∪ a resolution (two short syllables taking the place of a long)
- ∴ a contraction (a long syllable taking the place of two shorts)
- ∪ brevis in longo (a short syllable treated as if long)
- ∪, ∪, etc. the upper symbol refers to the strophe, the lower to the antistrophe
- // evidence of major pause ('period end')
- d - ∪ ∪ -
- D - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ -
- D2 - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ -
- ε - ∪ -
- E - ∪ - × - ∪ -
- ba. ∪ - - (bacchiac metron)
- cr. - ∪ - (cretic metron)
- ia. × - ∪ - (iambic metron)
- sp. - - (spondee)
- choriambic dim(eter) × × × × - ∪ ∪ -

For further discussion of terminology, see West 1982, especially pp. xi-xii.

## INTRODUCTION

### I. SOPHOKLES AND ATHENS

Sophokles was born c. 495 BCE, into a wealthy family from the Attic deme of Kolonos.<sup>1</sup> In addition to being the most successful tragedian of his time, he was active in public life (*hellenotamias* in 443-2; *stratēgos* in 441-40 with Perikles, and perhaps again later in the 420s with Nikias; and *proboulos* during the emergencies of 412-11). There is also a tradition that, when the cult of Asklepios was introduced into Athens in 420, S. provided an altar and home for the god in his own house until an official public shrine could be built, thus earning himself the posthumous cult title Δεξίτων ('Receiver of the god').<sup>2</sup> Various other sources (not necessarily reliable) report that he was a 'good-humoured' man,<sup>3</sup> who travelled widely, had a strong bisexual appetite, enjoyed the musical and erotic activities of the symposium, and was on good terms with such intellectual luminaries as Ion of Chios and Herodotos of Halikarnassos.

S.'s career as a playwright was long and prolific (over 120 plays), stretching from his first production in 468 until at least 409 (*Ph.*). He died in 405 (a few months after Euripides), and *OC* was produced posthumously in 401. Of the seven plays that survive entire, *Ph.* and *OC* are the only ones for which we have 'didaskalic' information fixing their dates;<sup>4</sup> but there are good stylistic reasons for regarding *Ajax* and *Trachiniai* as relatively early (between 468 and 435), and *Elektra* as late (between 420 and 410). *OT* is commonly placed in the 420s, though the evidence is thin.<sup>5</sup> *Ant.* is assigned to 442 or 441 on

<sup>1</sup> For full testimonia to S.'s life and career, see Radt, *TrGF* vol. IV, 11-107; also M. R. Lefkowitz, *Lines of the Greek poets* (London 1981) 75-87, *CHCL* 1 764-5, Ehrenberg 1954, Buxton 1995: 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Et. Magn.* 256.6 s.v. Δεξίτων = *TrGF* vol. IV, 169; cf. 167-73a. For a sceptical view of this tradition, see A. Connolly, *JHS* 118 (1998) 1-21.

<sup>3</sup> Aristoph. *Frogs* 82 εὐκόλος.

<sup>4</sup> The *Didaskaliai* were lists of dates and titles of performances in the annual dramatic competitions, first compiled by Aristotle, and subsequently used by Alexandrian and later scholars.

<sup>5</sup> On the dating of these plays, see Lesky 1972: 187-91, Schwinge 1962, B. M. W. Knox, *AJP* 78 (1956) 133-47, W-Ingram 1980: 341-3, and Easterling's *Introd.* to *S. Tr.* (pp. 10-23).

fairly solid grounds, for one of the three *hypotheseis* ('summaries', or 'introductions') contained in our MSS of the play states (*hypoth.* 1.13–14). They say that S. was awarded the *stratēgia* in Samos after his success with the production of *Antigone*.<sup>6</sup> The Samian expedition took place in 441–40,<sup>6</sup> and, whether or not S.'s election in fact owed anything to the popularity of *Ant.*, this explanation would hardly have been advanced unless the play's production was dated just a year or two earlier. Such a date in any case squares well with several structural and stylistic features of the play,<sup>7</sup> and with the additional statement (*hypoth.* 1.15) that *Ant.* 'is counted 32nd' (i.e., fairly early) among S.'s 120 plays.

Athens in the late 440s was a city of unprecedented prosperity, power, and innovation, both political and intellectual. The democratic system, first introduced in 508, and progressively modified during the subsequent decades, was by now firmly entrenched: sovereign authority lay with the popular Assembly and lawcourts, and public offices were rotated annually by election and/or lottery. Although aristocrats continued to dominate the political arena, with the 'best' men (i.e. the wealthy and well-born) leading armies and fleets on campaigns, proposing and arguing policies in the Assembly, and holding the key elective offices – above all, in the person of Perikles the Alkmaionid, who had begun his long period of ascendancy that was to continue until his death in 429 – none the less the prevailing ideology, as reflected in the language, attitudes, and assumptions of public debate, was by now vehemently democratic, emphasizing loyalty to the laws of the *polis* rather than selfish family ambitions, the freedom of all citizens to vote and speak their minds, and the accountability of all public officials for their actions and decisions.<sup>8</sup> 'Noble' families or individuals often found their own

<sup>6</sup> It may not have been concluded until a couple of years later: see R. G. Lewis, *GRBS* 29 (1988) 35–50 (arguing for 438 as the date of *Ant.*).

<sup>7</sup> In particular, the technique of 3-actor dialogue (376–581), more integrated and 'advanced' than that of *Aj.* or *Tr.*, but less so than *OT* 512–648, 1110–85, and *El.*, *Ph.* 865–1080, and *OC* (Schwinge 1962: 73–5, 79–93, K. Listmann, *Die Technik des Dreigesprächs in der gr. Tragödie*, diss. Giessen 1910); also the absence of astrophic choral lyric (found only in S.'s late plays), and the absence of *antilabē* (splitting of i.a. trimeters between two speakers, common in S.'s later plays, less so in *Aj.* and *Tr.*). See n. 5 above, n. 48 below.

<sup>8</sup> Sinclair 1988, Hansen 1991, Ober 1989: 293–339; cf. 162–210, 639–80, 1326–53nn.

interests, alliances, and foreign connections running counter to the policies of the democratic state; and popular attitudes towards them tended to combine admiration with resentment, gratitude with suspicion.<sup>9</sup> In the midst of this continuing struggle between the different segments and interests within the population, the possibility of *stasis*, in the form of an oligarchic counter-revolution, or even of a tyrant's coup, was never far from people's minds or politicians' tongues.<sup>10</sup> The same political leader who was hailed one week as defender of the people and saviour of the city, might the next be hounded into disgrace or exile as a would-be tyrant or traitor (cf. 370 ὑπὸ πτολίᾳ, 1155–71). Thus the gulf that is unfailingly maintained on the tragic stage, between the noble families whose disastrous story is being enacted, and the sundry messengers, guards, attendants, and choruses who observe and respond to them, reflects, not only the imaginary and long-superseded conditions of heroic bronze-age myth, but also (in exaggerated and distorted form) the social realities of contemporary Athens.<sup>11</sup>

Tensions of other kinds too permeated Athenian culture, in this period of rapid change and unprecedented diversity. Within one and the same community could be found, on the one hand, a small but prominent number of well-educated – and often sceptical and unconventional – teachers, performers, artists, and writers (ethnographers, scientists, historians, sophists, playwrights) who were raising questions about the gods, the cosmos, the origins of civilization and morality, and the nature and purpose of myth and fiction;<sup>12</sup> on the other, thousands (esp. the rural poor, who still probably comprised a majority of the Athenian population) who adhered staunchly to traditional religious belief and cult practice, continued to take Homer, Hesiod and the old myths pretty much at face value, and

<sup>9</sup> Sinclair 1988: 14–23, 188–96, Ober 1989: 192–247, 279–92, Maitland 1992, G. Herman, *Ritualized friendship and the Greek city* (Cambridge 1987).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 295–303, 670–100, Knox 1957: 53–106. The Athenian campaign against Samos on which S. served as *stratēgos* was in fact an operation designed to restore democratic, pro-Athenian rule in that island, after an attempted secession by oligarchs on the island.

<sup>11</sup> See further Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1981: 29–48, 237–47, Rohdich 1980, Easterling 1984, Scaford 1994, Griffith 1995; and below, pp. 54–8.

<sup>12</sup> Knox 1957: 107–58, Long 1968: 7–9, Guthrie 1971: 14–26, 55–134, G. B. Kerferd, *The sophistic movement* (Cambridge 1981), Goldhill 1986: 222–43, Rose

viewed with intense suspicion or contempt those new-fangled intellectual currents.

This was the context, then, in which the annual dramatic competitions took place in the Theatre of Dionysos. The festival of which they formed a part lasted several days,<sup>13</sup> and was attended by hundreds of non-Athenian visitors in addition to thousands of residents of Attika itself. They were treated to spectacular processions and displays of Athenian wealth and power, as well as to the numerous dithyrambs, tragedies, satyr-plays, and comedies. The expenses of each production were borne by an individual *chorēgos* (one of the wealthier citizens, to whom the city assigned such *liturgies* as a kind of taxation).<sup>14</sup> Both playwright and *chorēgos* stood to win considerable prestige from a victory in the dramatic competition, which represented the cultural pinnacle of the Athenian year.

The plays were thus both public ceremonies organized by the city for the benefit of the population at large, and performances designed by members of the city's elite to win themselves individual distinction through the demonstration of liberality, taste and skill. Given such a range of purposes and festival spirits, we may imagine that S. could count on his audience's coming to the political, moral, and religious issues that are raised in his play from a wide range of prior assumptions, beliefs, and expectations.

## 2. THE STORY OF ANTIGONE

The Theban saga of the Labdakids, of Laios and Iokaste, Oidipous and his sons, the Seven against Thebes, and the Sons of the Seven (*Epigonoi*), was one of the best known and most frequently handled of all in Greek literary and iconographic tradition.<sup>15</sup> Although, like any

<sup>13</sup> For a full account of the proceedings see Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 57–101, Goldhill 1990, Csapo & Slater 1995: 103–21, 139–65.

<sup>14</sup> By the fourth century, the three actors were paid by the city; but it is possible that in the mid-fifth century the *chorēgos* paid them; see Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 87–90, 93–6.

<sup>15</sup> E. Bethe, *Thebanische Heldentruer* (Leipzig 1891), Robert 1915, A. L. Edmunds, *HSCP* 85 (1981) 221–38, H. Petersmann, *HIS* 12 (1978) 67–96, Mastronarde 1994: 17–30, *LIMC* s.vv. 'Eteokles', 'Ismeue', 'Kapaneus', 'Oedipus', 'Septem', Zimmermann 1993.

myth, it was known in countless different, often contradictory, versions, it is possible to sketch at least the broad outlines of the story presupposed by S. as being already familiar to his Athenian audience.

Oidipous unknowingly kills his father, Laios (son of Labdakos), and marries his mother, Iokaste (daughter of Menoikeus and sister of Kreon).<sup>16</sup> Upon discovery of the truth, Iokaste commits suicide,<sup>17</sup> Oidipous blinds himself, and eventually dies too, after either wandering in exile, or moping around Thebes for several years.<sup>18</sup> At some point, Oidipous curses his two sons, Eteokles and Polyneikes, who end up quarrelling over the kingdom. Their attempt at a compromise is soon violated by one or both of them:<sup>19</sup> Pol., who has married Argeia, daughter of the Argive king Adrastos, then leads an Argive army against Thebes, to claim the throne for himself. In a battle at the seven gates, Eteokles' Thebans defeat Pol. and his six Argive champions (including the impious Kapaneus, cf. 10–16, 127–33nn.); and the two brothers kill each other, in accordance with their father's curse. A young son of Kreon also dies before or during the battle, as a kind of sacrificial victim guaranteeing safety to Thebes.<sup>20</sup> In the next phase (the point at which S.'s *Antigone* begins), with Laios'

<sup>16</sup> In epic, Oidipous' mother's name is given as Epikaste, or Euryganeia, or Euryanassa. In *Ant.* she is not named; cf. 53–4, 911.

<sup>17</sup> Not so in E. *Pho.*, perhaps a Euripidean innovation: see Mastronarde 1994: 25–6 (and cf. 53–4n.).

<sup>18</sup> From *Ant.* 49–54, 900–3, we get the impression that he died in Thebes (cf. 53–4n.). The motif of Oidipous' self-blinding (*Ant.* 51–2) is first found at A. *Th.* 782–5 (though the reading is disputed); but it was probably older (Mastronarde 1994: 22–3).

<sup>19</sup> In E. *Pho.*, the arrangement was that the brothers would alternate as ruler of Thebes; but in an earlier version Eteokles was to rule while Pol. took most of the ancestral possessions (including the necklace of Harmonia, cf. 130n.) and went to live in Argos (cf. Mastronarde 1994: 26–8). Blame for the breakdown of the agreement is variously assigned: in *Ant.*, Kreon blames Pol. for attacking Thebes (198–202, 280–9, 514–20), and he is not contradicted (cf. 111n.).

<sup>20</sup> The son's name varies: either Menoikeus or Megareus (cf. 1302–3n., E. *Pho.* 930–1018, and Mastronarde 1994: 28–30). For Haimon's role in the epic *Oidipodeia*, see below p. 9. Kreon, a descendant of one of the original 'Sown Men' (Σπάρτοι) of Thebes, is normally represented in tragedy as Iokaste's brother; it is not known what role he may have had in earlier versions. (His name means 'Ruler'.)

direct male heirs all dead, Kreon takes over as ruler of Thebes. He at first refuses to allow Adrastos and the Argives to recover their dead for burial, but is eventually persuaded or compelled (in most versions, through the intervention of Theseus and an Athenian army) to back down and hand them over.<sup>21</sup> If the story is continued further, the Sons of the Seven (*Epigonoi*) eventually return to capture Thebes and destroy the city.

Of the pre-Sophoklean literary versions of this saga, the most influential were the epic cycle of *Thebais*, *Oidipodeia*, and *Epigonoi*, ascribed to 'Homer' or 'Arktinos', and rivalling the Trojan cycle in popularity. But various segments of the saga were treated by many other poets too, whose work survives to us only in fragments (as in the cases of Hesiod, Stesichoros, and Ion), or not at all,<sup>22</sup> and in due course numerous fifth-century tragedies were also based on this material. Of these, two celebrated tetralogies by Aischylos, the first (from c. 475 BCE?) containing *Nemea*, *Argείοι*, *Eleusiniοι*, and *Epigonoi*.<sup>23</sup> the second (from 467) *Laios*, *Oidipous*, *Seven against Thebes*, and (satyric) *Sphinx*, certainly loomed large in the awareness of S. and his Athenian audience.<sup>24</sup> It is uncertain whether A. on either occasion presented a version specifically involving denial of burial to Polyneikes: probably not.<sup>25</sup> It is true that, in the case of *The Seven against Thebes*,

<sup>21</sup> In A. *Eleusiniοι*, Theseus and Adrastos persuade Kreon to grant burial (*TrGF* III 175 = Plutarch, *Theseus* 29.4); but according to E. *Suppliant*s, Lysias' *Funerai Oralion*, Isokrates' *Panegyrikos*, etc., the Athenians defeat Kreon and the Thebans in battle (a popular *topos* of Athenian jingoism; cf. T. C. Burgess, *Epidauric literature* (Chicago 1902) 146–50). It is not known if the burial motif occurred in texts earlier than the fifth century; see Zimmermann 1993: 59–77.

<sup>22</sup> The scanty remains of the epic *Thebais* can be found in A. Bernabé, ed., *Poetae epici Graeci* I (Leipzig 1988) 17–32 and M. Davies, *Epicionum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen 1988) 21–7. Other important pretragic texts: Hesiod frs. 192–3 M–W; Stesichoros *PLille* 76a–c = M. Davies, *PMGF* 222(b); Pindar, *O.* 2.21ff., *N.* 9.18–19, *O.* 6.15ff., Ion, *PMGF* 740 (see p. 10 below). For visual representations, see Robert 1915, *LIMC* (above, n. 15).

<sup>23</sup> The order and content of these four plays are far from certain; see S. Radt in *TrGF* III s.v., Zimmermann 1993: 81–7, T. Gantz, *APP* 101 (1980) 158–9.

<sup>24</sup> H. C. Baldry, *G&R* 3 (1956) 24–37; Else 1976, Davidson 1983.

<sup>25</sup> A verse quoted by Didymos from the *Eleusiniοι* refers to a singular 'corpse' (fr. 53a Radt *vékus*, cf. 409–12n.); if this refers to Pol., and if we fol-

our MSS contain a final scene in which a herald announces over the corpses of the two brothers that 'the Councilors of the people' (1006 δῆρου πρῶβούχοις) have forbidden burial for Pol.; whereupon 'Antigone' asserts that she will disobey the edict and bury him, and the play ends with the Chorus of Theban women dividing into two groups, one going off to lament Eteokles, the other to join Ant. in burying Pol. However, most modern scholars have concluded that this scene was not composed by A. at all, but added onto his play after S.'s *Ant.* was already established as the classic treatment.<sup>26</sup> It is probable that the announcement of the arriving characters 'Antigone' and 'Ismene' at A. *Th.* 861–74 is likewise an interpolation, and that neither sister appeared in A.'s original play.<sup>27</sup> In that case, like E. *Phio.* (and E.'s lost *Antigone*),<sup>28</sup> and like S.'s own *OT* and *OC* (and lost *Epigonoi* and *Eriphyle*),<sup>29</sup> this scene is of interest for us here only as evidence for the 'reception' of our play, not for pre-Sophoklean treatments of the myth.

Even apart from this final scene, however, *Seven against Thebes* clearly exercised a strong influence on S.,<sup>30</sup> esp. in the representation of the Argive attack (100–61), of the catastrophes piling up over the family of Laios (49–57, 582–625, 857–71), and of the divine anger that may lie behind them. Yet we should beware of dwelling too

low M. Schmidt in reading *Argia* (= Pol.'s wife, daughter of Adrastos) rather than *Argetai* or *Argetai* as the title of the accompanying play, then his career throughout the trilogy appears rather prominent. But there is not much to go on here, and the rest of our evidence for the play focuses on the collective Argive dead, as in E. *Suppliant*s (cf. 1080–3n.); cf. Zimmermann 1993: 81–7.

<sup>26</sup> On the authenticity of this scene, see (*pro*) H. Lloyd-Jones, *CQ* 9 (1959) 80–115, P. S. Mellon, *The ending of A.'s Seven* (Ann Arbor 1974), and (*contra*) E. Fraenkel, *MH* 21 (1964) 58–64, R. D. Dawe, *CQ* 17 (1967) 16–28; further refs. in Zimmermann 1993: 99–111.

<sup>27</sup> The lines assigned to them in the *kommos* (961–74) could be sung by a divided chorus. There is no mention elsewhere in the play of any sisters.

<sup>28</sup> Zimmermann 1993: 161–88; the play was probably composed late in E.'s career.

<sup>29</sup> *TrGF* III F185–90, F201a–h.

<sup>30</sup> Else 1976, Davidson 1983; Garner 1990: 80–1. We know from other sources that *Seven* was one of Aisch.'s most popular and influential plays in the fifth century (Ar. *Frogs* 1021, A. Wartelle, *Histoire du texte d'Eschyle dans l'antiquité* (Paris 1971) 71–6).



insistently on possible allusions to those few texts that happen to survive to us, when so much else is lost that may have been equally familiar and significant.<sup>31</sup>

In any case, in composing *Ant.* S. appears to have made substantial innovations of his own to both action and characters, to the point that in some respects the myth is virtually reinvented: (i) the issue of the Argive dead is suppressed,<sup>32</sup> with the focus shifting instead onto the burial of Pol. and (ii) the condemnation and suicide of Ant.; (iii) Kreon's son is betrothed to Ant.; (iv) Kreon's wife is introduced into the story; (v) Ismene is made into a significant factor, as companion and foil to Ant.; (vi) the gods are assigned a crucial and distinctive role. Each of these innovations brings with it significant dramatic consequences.

(i) Instead of a dispute between Thebes and Athens (and/or Argos) over the return of enemy soldiers' bodies, the conflict between Kreon and Ant. over the proper treatment of Pol.'s corpse is internal to Thebes, and to the royal family (since Kreon is Pol.'s uncle). Thus another chapter is added to the miseries of this blighted house, and the rights and wrongs of Kreon's conduct become much muddier (see below, pp. 28–34).

(ii) The main opponent of Kreon's edict is now Pol.'s sister (who is thus structurally equivalent to Adrastos and/or Theseus in the traditional myth). So, while the final outcome (Kreon's humiliation) remains the same, the dynamics of the confrontation are transformed, as he is challenged, not by a warrior-king backed by an army, but by his own young niece, then his son, and finally a blind prophet. Gender, youthful desire, parental authority, and the mysterious will of hidden gods are thus made into key issues, while the lonely immature-

<sup>31</sup> So, for example, the version of Pherekydes of Athens (*FGHHist* III F95, probably a generation earlier than S.'s *Ant.*), has a very different story-line: the two incestuous sons of O. and Iokaste (here named Phrastor and Laonytos) are killed; only later does O. marry Euryganeia, who bears Ant., Ismene, Pol., and Eteokles; Ismene is killed by Tydeus 'at a fountain' (and presumably the sons kill one another too, along with the Seven); then O. takes a third wife, Astymedousa. See further Zimmermann 1993: 89–96, and p. 10 below for the version of Ion of Chios.

<sup>32</sup> It may perhaps surface briefly at *Ant.* 1080–3 (see n., and cf. 9–10n.).

ment and death of Ant. add further layers of pathos and lead directly to Kreon's personal ruin.

(iii) In the epic *Oidipodeia*, Haimon, who is described as κάλλιστόν τε καὶ ἡμερότατον ἄλλων | πρῶτα φίλον Κρείοντος ἀμύμονος ('finer and lovelier than all others, the dear son of noble Kreon') becomes a victim of the Sphinx at an early stage in the story (fr. 2 = schol. E. *Pho.* 1760, cf. Apollod. 3.5.8), and Kreon's other son dies during the battle against the Seven Argives (cf. 1302–3n.). In S. *Ant.*, we do not hear about any children of Kreon until shortly before Haimon's arrival, when Ismene mentions his impending marriage to Ant. (568);<sup>33</sup> then he is greeted as the 'youngest' and 'last' of Kreon's children (626; cf. 1302–3n.), and he provides the crucial link between the fates of Ant. and Kreon, for it is his passionate rage and suicide that deal his father the most crushing blow of all.

(iv) Kreon's wife, Eurydike, like his son, is not mentioned until it is time for her to appear on stage (1180–1256n.), and she has probably been invented for this play. Her role is entirely that of victim, as she arrives only to learn of her son's death, and immediately departs to commit suicide herself, thus capping Kreon's series of calamities.

(v) In the extant remains of the Theban epics, small interest seems to be shown in Oidipous' daughters;<sup>34</sup> and although an 'Ismene' shows up occasionally in various versions of the saga before *Ant.* (sometimes in contexts quite unconnected to Oidipous' family),<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the tradition of Ismene's fatal love affair (below, n. 35) suggested this theme to S. In E. *Pho.*, this new tradition of betrothal between Ant. and Haimon is maintained (*Pho.* 757–60, 944–6), and a younger brother, Menoikeus, is added who can die for Thebes (Mastronarde 1994: 28–9). In E.'s (lost) *Antigone*, Haimon and Ant. marry and even have a son of their own, Maion (*hypoth.* S. *Ant.* 1.6–8).

<sup>34</sup> Zimmermann 1993: 59–68.

<sup>35</sup> The name proclaims her indigenous significance: in addition to the River Ismenos (104n.), Thebes boasted a hill, a village, and a cult title of Apollo of this name. See E. Bethe, *RE* ix 2 (1916) 2135–6 s.v. 'Ismene', Zimmermann 1993: 68–70, I. Krauskopf, *LIMCV* 1 (1990) 796–9. (It is possible that a rough breathing, 'Ισμη-, was preferred in fifth-century Attic; see Mastronarde 1994 on E. *Pho.* 101.) According to the seventh-century elegist Mimnermos (fr. 21 West), 'Ismene was intimate (προσευλουύσσαν) with Theoklymenos, and was killed by [the Argive champion] Tydeus on the command of Athena.'

there are only minimal traces of 'Antigone'.<sup>36</sup> One possible precedent to S.'s version of the two devoted sisters may have existed in a dithyramb by Ion of Chios (a contemporary and friend of S.), in which 'both Ismene and Ant. were burnt to death in the temple of Hera, by Eteokles' son Laomadas' (presumably because the sisters had shown support for Pol.).<sup>37</sup> But the inclusion of this timid and 'normal' sister to serve as a foil to the abnormally bold and intrinsigent heroine – and to some degree as a channel for the audience's own responses (61–2, 98–9, 526–81nn.) – is likely to have been S.'s own idea.

(vi) Distinctively Sophoklean too, and obviously crucial, is the part played by the gods, an aspect of the drama in which any playwright usually enjoys much latitude. In S.'s play, the theme of divine anger at the refusal of burial to Pol. and at the unnatural 'burying' alive of Ant., looms insistently throughout the final scenes, esp. in the words of Teiresias; and, given the prophet's enormous authority and the 'objective' evidence of the failed sacrifices and polluted altars (999–1022, 1080–6), together with the repeated references to the gods' concern by Ant. and the Chorus earlier in the play (77, 450–70, 519–21, 542, 838–70, 891–4, 921–8; 278–9, 368–75, 582–625), we must regard this divine intervention as a dramatic 'fact', i.e. as an integral part of the causal chain leading to the denouement.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ant.'s function in *OC* as guide to the blind Oidipous in his wandering exile may or may not have had an Archaic precedent; cf. Zimmermann 1993: 190, 196–7. Pausanias (second century CE) mentions a local Theban legend in which Ant. dragged the body of Pol. and placed it on the funeral pyre of Eteokles (9.25.2, cf. 9.18.3); but this, like Apollodoros' account (3.7.1) that Ant. secretly stole the corpse of Pol. and buried it; and after being caught by Kreon, she was buried alive in the grave', is probably derived from S.'s play (though Petersmann argues that these reflect pre-Sophoklean traditions). Ant.'s name, but nothing more, is found in Pherekydes (see above, n. 31). As a name, Ἀντιγόνη ('In return for birth', or 'Instead of a parent' or 'Instead of procreation?') is rare (though the masculine Ἀντιγόγος becomes popular in the Hellenistic period); it was presumably invented to fit her mythical role.

<sup>37</sup> Sallustios, quoted in *lypoph.* 2.2–4 (= Ion, *PMG* 740). Perhaps Kreon's tendency in *Ant.* to treat the sisters as a like-minded pair may reflect this, or an earlier, tradition (488–9n., Zimmermann 1993: 94–5, 118).

<sup>38</sup> That is not to say that every account of the gods' attitude or Zeus's law (e.g. Ant.'s at 450–70, or Kreon's at 282–9, 514–22, or the Chorus' at 278–9,

There are of course many other areas in which S. must have followed his own creative imagination in shaping the 'plot' (μῦθος) or 'action' (πρᾶξις) or 'arrangement of the events' (οὐστρασι τῶν πραγμάτων),<sup>39</sup> without having to concern himself unduly with previous versions. The inclusion of Teiresias (who is almost a fixture in the Theban saga), and of such minor characters as a Guard, and a Messenger,<sup>40</sup> is in some respects highly conventional; yet in each case S. has made distinctive and effective use of them (223–331, 315–31, 327–31, 988–1114, 1064–90, 1192–1243nn.).

An especially crucial choice for the playwright, in determining mood, dynamics, and point(s) of view, is that of the identity and character of the Chorus.<sup>41</sup> In this case, by making them elderly Theban citizens, who are by gender, age, status, and experience much closer to Kreon than to Ant., S. has isolated his heroine to an unusual degree,<sup>42</sup> and has also provided a subtly distorting filter or lens for the audience's reception of the stage action. For, while the Elders to some degree resemble the majority of the theatre audience (adult male citizens, watching the action unfold ...), and their attempts to explore and explain the action soar at times to dazzling sublimity of lyric description and speculation, none the less, as the play proceeds, we quickly come to recognize the limitations and misapprehensions in their vision and understanding (211–14, 278–9, 332–75, 582–625nn.). The uncertainties and indeterminacy that this realization brings are, it can be said, essential components in the 'story' as S. presents it, and will keep us thinking and wondering

594–614) is guaranteed as being perfectly 'correct' and identical to the view that S. holds or wishes us to hold. See further pp. 46–8 below. (On the question, whether the gods should be thought to have performed, or assisted at, the 'first burial' of Pol., see 278–9n.)

<sup>39</sup> For Aristotle's use of these terms in the *Poetics*, and their relation to modern narratological theories of 'plot,' see E. Downing, *CA* 3 (1984) 164–78. <sup>40</sup> Our MSS present us with two different Messengers; but only one is required (1278–1316n.).

<sup>41</sup> On S.'s choruses in general, see Kirkwood 1958: 181–214, Burton 1980, Gardiner 1987, Scott 1996: 1–7, 27–30; on *Ant.* in particular, see esp. Coleman 1972, Segal 1964 and 1981: 152–7, 197–200, W-Ingram 1980: 91–116, Dittmars 1992.

<sup>42</sup> In the other six extant plays of S., the chorus is of the same gender as the main suffering hero(ine); the same is usually true in E.

throughout about what to believe and what to doubt, where to place our sympathies, what to expect next, and how to explain it after it happens. And, since the Chorus' role becomes increasingly prominent, and even decisive, in the final scenes, our assessment of their character and capabilities proves to be crucial to the overall interpretation of the play.<sup>43</sup>

### 3. STRUCTURE, DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE, STYLE

The basic structure of a Greek tragedy is one of actors' dialogue scenes alternating with choral songs.<sup>44</sup> (Our extant tragedies normally contain four or five full-scale choral songs; *Ant.* has six.) Within this simple overall structure, many variations are possible, so that no two tragedies follow exactly the same pattern. So, for example, the choral songs can vary greatly in number of responding ('strophic') pairs<sup>45</sup> and in metrical (= also choreographical) character. Likewise,

<sup>43</sup> See 1091–1114, 1257–1353, 1326–53nn., and below, pp. 55–8. Yet some critics have argued that the Chorus of *Ant.* is largely irrelevant to the interpretation of the play; e.g., B. Alexanderson, *Eranos* 66 (1966) 85–105, Vickers 1974, Heath 1987.

<sup>44</sup> For discussion of this basic structure, see K. Aichele, in Jens 1971: 48–58, Taplin 1977: 49–60. However, a more technical terminology has long been conventional (based largely on Aristotle, *Poetics* ch. 12): *prologos* = the part of the play preceding the entry of the chorus, usually two scenes (sometimes three, rarely one, as *Ant.* 1–99); *parodos* = 'entrance-song' of the chorus; *stasimon* = strophic choral song other than the *parodos*; *episodion* ('episode') = the part between one choral song and the next; *exodos* = the scene(s) following the last *stasimon*. For those who prefer these terms, I have included them along with the 'Scene/Song' headings. During the fourth century the structure of five Acts (μέρη, 'parts') divided by four choral interludes became standard, whence it persisted (via Horace, *Art of Poetry* 189–90) into Senecan, Elizabethan and Neo-Classical drama.

<sup>45</sup> In employing a series of such strophic pairs, with changing metrical components (aa bb cc, etc.), rather than repeated 'triadic' structure (aab, aab ...) or recurrent stanzas of the same type (aaa ...), the choral lyrics of Attic drama are distinctively different from all other Greek choral poetry (as they are also in admitting only the faintest tinge of Doric dialect, i.e. in the sporadic use of α for η). Triadic structure is occasionally employed in tragedy, as the final element in a series of antistrophic stanzas: so *Ant.* 801–82 (876–82 = epode, see n. on *Métre*). In the later fifth century, astrophic choral lyrics become increasingly common (esp. in E.); but there are none in *Ant.*

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dialogue scenes usually switch back and forth between *rhēsis* (extended speech by individual actors, e.g. *Ant.* 162–210; or pairs of actors in an *agōn*, as at 450–96, 639–723), *stichomythia* (line-for-line conversation, or occasionally two-line *distichomythia*, as at 78–87, 536–47), and irregular, less stylized, dialogue between two or three speakers (e.g. 237–48, 441–9, 758–80, 1091–1114).<sup>46</sup> Thus, even within the highly economical and stylized formal conventions, the pace and dynamics can be subtly and powerfully modulated.<sup>47</sup>

Although lyric is primarily the province of the Chorus, spoken iambic trimeters that of the actors, there are many opportunities for cross-over,<sup>48</sup> even apart from the convention whereby the *korymbaios* ('head-man' of the Chorus) regularly speaks trimeters in dialogue scenes with actors. As a bridge between full lyric and full iambic dialogue, and also to announce the arrival or departure of individual characters, recitative anapaests from the chorus (probably chanted, not sung) are regularly employed (155–62, 376–83, 526–30, 626–30, 1257–60nn.);<sup>49</sup> and at 939–43 a short dialogue in anapaests occurs, as the action, which has been 'frozen' during *Ant.*'s final *rhēsis* (891–928n.), picks up speed again and *Ant.* is led off for execution (929–43n.). Two of the emotional highpoints of the play occur in passages of lyric *anapaiston* ('exchange') between actor and Chorus: the first is *Ant.*'s wrenching *kommos* (quasi-ritual lament) at 801–82, with the Chorus at first responding to her lyric complaints with anapaests (802–38), then, as their distress increases, joining in with their own lyrics (853–5 = 872–5n.; cf. A. *Ag.* 1072–1177, 1406–1576; E. *Hipp.*

<sup>46</sup> All the dialogue in *Ant.* takes place in iambic trimeters; no use is made of trochaic tetrameters, which S. (like E.) employs more in his later plays.

<sup>47</sup> It is disappointing therefore to find these dynamics frequently ignored in translations and stage productions of Greek tragedy, with the whole script reduced to a formless monotone.

<sup>48</sup> This is increasingly so as the fifth century proceeds. *Ant.* however does not contain any short exclamatory lyrics from an actor, or extended monody, as do (e.g.) *El.*, *Ph.*, and *OC*; an indication of relatively early date (see n. 7, above).

<sup>49</sup> For an analysis of the contexts and functions for which anapaests are used in tragedy, see S. G. Brown, in J. H. D'Arms & J. W. Eadie, eds., *Ancient and modern: essays ... G. F. Else* (Ann Arbor 1977) 45–77, who points out that no other play employs anapaests quite so regularly as *Ant.* to announce the arrival of characters; see too Scott 1996: 34–5.

811–884); the second is Kreon's *kommos* (1261–1346), in which the Chorus continue to use iambic trimeters throughout, in a calmer counterpoint to his lyric laments.

Analysed in these purely formal terms, the basic structure of *Ant.* is as follows:

**Opening Scene (prologos) 1–99**

dialogue-scene, Ant. & Ismene.

**First Choral Song (parodos) 100–61** (ἀκτῆς ἀελίου ...)

two antistrophic pairs of stanzas, alternating with anapaests.

**Second Scene (First episodion) 162–331**

(i) dialogue: Kreon & Chorus (162–222 (inc. *rhēsis* 162–210));

(ii) dialogue: Guard & Kreon (223–331 (inc. messenger-*rhēsis*, 249–77)).

**Second Choral Song (First stasimon) 332–75** (πολλὰ τὰ

δεῖνὰ ...)

two antistrophic pairs of stanzas.

**Third Scene (Second episodion) 376–581**

(i) dialogue: Guard, Kreon, Ant. (376–445 (inc. messenger-*rhēsis*, 407–40));

(ii) dialogue: Kreon & Ant. (446–525 (*agōn* 450–96; *stichomythia*, 508–25));

(iii) Choral anapaests, announcing Ismene's arrival (526–30);

(iv) dialogue: Ismene, Ant., Kreon (531–81 (*stichomythia* 537–76)).

**Third Choral Song (Second stasimon) 582–625** (εὐδαίμονες

οἷσι κακῶν ...)

two antistrophic pairs of stanzas.

**Fourth Scene (Third episodion) 626–780**

(i) Choral anapaests, announcing Haimon's arrival (626–30);

(ii) dialogue: Kreon, Haimon, Chorus (*agōn* 639–723; *stichomythia* 726–57).

**Fourth Choral Song (Third stasimon) 781–801** ("Ἐρως

ἀνίκτετε μάχην ...)

one antistrophic pair of stanzas.

**Fifth Scene (Fourth episodion) 802–943**

(i) Choral anapaests, announcing Ant.'s entrance (802–5);

(ii) *anabaiōn-kommos*: Ant. & Chorus (806–82)

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(Ant. = two antistr. pairs + epode; choral responses = first anap., then lyrics)

(iii) dialogue: Kreon & Ant. (883–928);

(iv) anapaestic dialogue: Chorus, Kreon, Ant. (929–43).

**Fifth Choral Song (Fourth stasimon) 944–87** (ἔτρα καὶ Δανάας ...)

two antistrophic pairs of stanzas.

**Sixth Scene (Fifth episodion) 988–1114**

(i) dialogue: Teiresias & Kreon (988–1090 (*agōn*, *stichomythia*, *rhēsis*));

(ii) dialogue: Kreon & Chorus (1091–1114).

**Sixth Choral Song (Fifth stasimon) 1115–54** (πολυώνυμε, Καρμείας ἀγαλμα ...)

two antistrophic pairs of stanzas.

**Seventh & Final Scene (exodos) 1155–1353**

(i) dialogue: Messenger & Chorus (1155–1256; & Eurydike 1183–91)

(messenger-*rhēsis* 1192–1243)

(ii) Choral anapaests, announcing Kreon's entrance (1257–60);

(iii) *anabaiōn-kommos*: Kreon, Chorus, Messenger (1260–1353);

(iv) Chorus' anapaestic processional (1347–53).

It may sometimes be helpful to think of Attic drama, like Homeric epic, as being composed out of 'type scenes,' whose 'grammar' and dynamics demand proper recognition and appreciation by an experienced audience. The formalities of greeting and silence, arrival and departure, question and answer, insult and threat, would be second nature to both playwright and audience; and the technical artistry of each messenger-narrative and argument-*stichomythia*, each imagistic choral song and confrontational *agōn*, is a significant component of the sum of dramatic effects upon which the play's success depends.<sup>50</sup> That is to say, this play, like all of S.'s, owes as

<sup>50</sup> See in particular J. Duchemin, *L'agon dans la tragédie grecque* (Paris 1945); Jens 1971; J. Keller, *Struktur und dramatische Funktion des Botenberichtes bei Aischylos und Sophokles* (diss. Tübingen 1959); L. Di Gregorio, *Le scene d'annuncio nella tragedia greca* (Milan 1967); Taplin 1977; Hamilton 1978; Mastronarde 1979; Bain 1981; M. Kaimio, *Physical contact in Greek tragedy* (Helsinki 1988); Heath 1987: 124–64.

much to the brilliance of its individual scenes as to the cohesion and dramatic economy of its whole plot-structure.<sup>51</sup>

*Ant.* is highly concentrated, both temporally and in terms of theme and causation. The opening scene and first Song present the battle and the death of the brothers as having occurred the previous day (1–99n.); and somehow, during the span of the play (i.e. apparently just a few hours)<sup>52</sup> the edict is published, one brother is buried with full honours, the other twice 'buried' by *Ant.*, *Ant.* is captured, *Pol.*'s body rots and befouls the animals and altars for miles around, *Ant.* is entombed, and commits suicide. Then, as *Kreon* at last realizes what he has done, and what needs to be undone, he rushes off, shouting out orders, while the Chorus launch into a hymn of hope – all for nothing, for *Kreon* arrives at the tomb just as *Haimon* finds his fiancée dead, and has to witness his son's suicide with his own eyes. The unnatural speed and neatness of this sequence of events, though obvious when analysed thus at leisure, works unobtrusively and effectively in the theatre: for it does not depend on improbable coincidences or arbitrary interventions, but merely the removal of (or disregard for) 'dead' time and clattering details.<sup>53</sup> *Ant.* may not compare with *OT* or *E. Hippolytos* for the ostentatious precision of its ironies and steel-trap construction (partly because it contains fewer explicit predictions within the play), but its dramatic economy is none the less masterful and compelling.<sup>54</sup>

The play is constructed so as to build towards three climactic confrontations: the first between *Kreon* and *Ant.* (441–525), the second

<sup>51</sup> The notion that *S.* was only interested in the former, and routinely sacrificed consistency of characterization and plot in order to provide exciting individual scenes (e.g., Wilamowitz 1917, Walldock 1951), finds few supporters these days. See also below, pp. 34–8. On the aesthetic satisfaction provided by the play's formal organization, see below, pp. 26–8, and pp. 58–66.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 5 1449b12–15, Taplin 1977: 290–4.

<sup>53</sup> Alfred Hitchcock once remarked that '*Ant.* is life with the dull bits left out'; cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 9 1451a36–b11.

<sup>54</sup> The ironies and mechanical precision of the plot are more pronounced in Anouilh's version, as his Chorus remarks: 'The spring is wound up tight. It will uncoil of itself. That is what is so convenient in tragedy. The least little turn of the wrist will do the job. Anything will set it going ... Tragedy is clean, it is restful, it is flawless ... nothing is in doubt and everyone's destiny is known' (Anouilh 1944/1958: 23).

between *Kreon* and *Haimon* (631–765), and the third between *Kreon* and *Teiresias* (988–1090). These three scenes, each containing a furious stichomythic exchange (508–25, 726–65, 1048–63 with *m.*), represent the peaks of dramatic conflict, the points at which the tensions are stretched tightest and the stage 'action' and bodily energy display themselves most forcefully to the eyes and ears of the audience. The first two of these confrontations result in impasse and hardened resolve on both sides, but the third brings about the play's sudden reversal of direction, as *Kreon* acknowledges his mistakes and rushes off to try to repair the damage (1091–1114). In the two *kommoi*, by contrast (806–82, 1257–1353), the action is slowed down almost to a standstill, as the fuller resources and registers of lyric are employed to explore the emotional abyss into which the two main characters are plunged; and a similar effect is achieved in *Ant.*'s final *thésis* (891–928). Building up and accelerating towards the moments of climax and reversal, and serving to set the scene for the tableaux of misery and self-reflection represented in the *kommoi*, are the four long 'messenger-speeches',<sup>55</sup> in which the decisive off-stage events are presented. All four are narrative *louis de force*, packed with vivid description, skilfully paced, and subtly coloured by the perspectives of the particular speaker: the self-concerned Guard (223–331, 249–77, 407–409n.), the numinously raging prophet (988–1114n.), and the shocked, empathetic servant (1192–1243n.).

In the choral Songs, the Elders' reflective lyrics provide contrasts in perspective and tone from the passages of confrontation and pathos that precede them. It is not so much that the tension is relaxed (for the Chorus are still for the most part anxious and uncertain – except when they are indulging for a moment their more naive hopes for salvation, 100–61, 1115–54nn.); rather, because the Elders are less involved in the personal animosities of the preceding scene than the main characters, they are permitted (in part, just by reason of their conventional choral 'melic voice') to view the issues and possibilities with greater distance and speculative licence. Several of the odes of *Ant.* are based on traditional song-types that bring with

<sup>55</sup> Although only 1192–1243 is delivered by a 'Messenger', the two narratives by the Guard (249–77, 407–40) and *Teiresias*' description at 998–1032 may be regarded as belonging to this sub-genre; see *m. ad loc.*

them their own generic requirements of form and expression, notably those of prayer and hymns of thanks (100–61, 781–800, 1115–52nn.). In other cases, they are more free-wheeling and speculative, tied less tightly to any particular formula (332–75, 582–625nn.), or boldly allusive and elliptical in choice of mythical examples (944–87n.).

In general, S.'s lyric manner is not quite as boldly metaphorical and colourful as A.'s, nor as syntactically bizarre (though on occasion, e.g., 365–75, 594–603, 966–76, it can become quite convoluted). Yet the Songs of *Ant.* contrive to be constantly off-centre and unsettling, multi-layered and open-ended – much more so than E.'s, for example.<sup>56</sup> If it is characteristic of lyric poetry in general to be dense and ambiguous, these odes must be counted among the most opaque – as well as the most adventurous – in all of Greek tragedy. Indeed, so rich and suggestive are they in their language, and so far-ranging and abstract in their subject matter, that it is often difficult to extract from them a particular opinion or definite interpretation.<sup>57</sup> Sometimes two distinct layers of signification present themselves, with one 'surface' meaning that is clearly primary (i.e. what the Chorus 'mean' to say), while a secondary level of signification suggests ironically, or subversively, something further that we are undoubtedly expected to notice, though the Chorus do not 'intend' it (332–75, 781–800nn.). In other cases, it may be a mistake to single out any one interpretation as 'primary', and we might do better to recognize the multiplicity of significations as itself constituting the 'meaning' of the passage in question (582–625, 944–87nn.).

Within the dialogue, too, the Elders perform an important role, as voices of stodgy and conventional civic normality: their consistent, if sometimes half-hearted (211–14, 504–5, 872–4nn.) expressions of support of Kreon, and strong disapproval tinged with pity for Ant.

<sup>56</sup> On the style of S.'s choral lyrics, see H. Parry, *The lyric poems of Greek tragedy* (Toronto 1978) 53–6, 119–25, Segal 1964, Coleman 1972, W-Ingram 1980: 91–116; also W. Breitenbach, *Untersuchungen zur Sprache der euripideischen Lyrik* (Stuttgart 1934), esp. 53–131, 186–96.

<sup>57</sup> See esp. Segal 1964, Coleman 1972, Easterling 1978, W-Ingram 1980: 91–116, Nussbaum 1986: 68–78, Oudemans & Lardinois 1987: 118–59. The metrical character of their lyrics, however, is unusually homogeneous (Ditmars 1992, Scott 1996: 28; and see nn. on *Métre*).

and Haimon (471–2, 801–5, 875; 627–30, 766–7nn.), help to direct and articulate the audience's own ambivalent responses, or sometimes to crystallize them into sharper disagreement and ironical questioning. In general, it may be said that this Chorus is remarkable for its combination of obtuseness and insight, its ability to miss the nearest target completely – and thereby score a bull's-eye on another target they are not even aiming at;<sup>58</sup> and much in our interpretation of the play may hinge on our response to their shifting point of view and our assessment of their value as commentators and assistants to the action.<sup>59</sup>

As for the verbal and rhetorical 'style' (λέξις, δεικτέρις) of the play: this is discussed constantly in the commentary, and it would be futile to try to describe it in detail here. But a few generalities may be helpful.<sup>60</sup> The formal 'literary dialect' (*Kunstsprache*) of tragic dialogue drew widely, esp. from epic, the iambic tradition, and contemporary Ionic–Attic prose, and thus provided a distinctive amalgam of styles, at once highly artificial and yet capable of quick, almost conversational, directness.<sup>61</sup> Of the three extant tragedians, S.'s language is the most flexible and richly varied. At times his trimeters approach

<sup>58</sup> They 'speak profoundly but thoughtlessly ... They say everything in one way or another that has to be said about *Ant.* ... but they never understand anything of what they say ... They thus allow S. to be always invisible while being always present', Benardete 1975: 166–7.

<sup>59</sup> Thus on the one hand, e.g. Coleman 1972 finds the choral odes full of 'helpless bewilderment and dark despair ...', and 'the closing eulogy of τὸ πρῶτον hollow and meaningless' (27), while others read the chorus ironically throughout, as perpetually misunderstanding the true state of affairs (e.g., Benardete 1975, Müller *passim*, and *Hermes* 89 (1961) 398–422), or as being too afraid of Kreon ever to say what they really think (211–14, 504–5, 872–4nn.). On the other hand, e.g., Rohdich 1980 sees the Chorus as representing the increasingly reassuring voice of the citizens, recovering the *polis* from the excesses of its leaders. See further below, pp. 56–8.

<sup>60</sup> See further esp. Campbell 1879: 1 1–107, Bruhn 1899, Earp 1944, Goheen 1951, Long 1968, Webster 1969: 143–62, Lesky 1972: 187–91, Kitzinger 1976, Moorhouse 1982, Coray 1993, Foley 1996, and W. B. Stanford's ed. of *S. Ajax*.

<sup>61</sup> In this respect Greek tragedy could be said to lie midway between the extreme fluctuations of Elizabethan English tragedy (Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster) – which even contains passages of the 'lowest' prose – and the sustained elevation of Racine and Corneille.

the 'elevation' of A.'s, with long, sonorous compounds and elaborate word-plays and images (e.g. 1-6, 49-57, 106,4-90 with n.); but elsewhere his characters' language is plainer, the manner simpler (e.g. 69-77, 327-31, 1108-14). Such variations, together with modifications in rhetorical strategy and manner, can contribute substantially to the characterization of individual speakers, and to the pacing and mood of particular scenes. Thus the sisters' disagreement in the opening scene is cast into sharper relief by the contrast between Ismene's measured periods and ornate diction, and Ant.'s simpler language and more staccato speech patterns, full of future assertions and imperatives (49-68, 59-60, 69-77, 69-70m.). Likewise, Kreon's rigid and countrolling temperament is represented throughout by the harsh imagery of his language,<sup>62</sup> by his constant use of γνῶμαι, and by his disrespectful habit of referring to people in the third person even when they are present (473-96, 561-2, 726-7, 883-90, 931-6) or, when he does address them directly, of doing so in a crudely imperious manner (441-2, 531-5); whereas Ant.'s language is more particular, personal, and direct.<sup>63</sup>

One further feature remains to be discussed: tragic 'irony'. It was in fact precisely to describe Sophoklean style and technique that this term was first coined and analysed by a modern critic.<sup>64</sup> Every play of S. contains numerous phrases, and even whole scenes or songs, whose full significance to the theatre audience may be sharply at variance with what the speakers have in mind. The dialogue scenes of *Ant.* present relatively few instances of this, as compared with, e.g., *OT* or *Tr.*, where the *doublets entendres* and misapprehensions come thick and fast, because the main characters of this play are for the most part unusually *aware* of what they are doing and what the consequences are likely to be. (In this respect, the play may be compared with, e.g., *S. OC*, or *A. Prom.*, or *E. Med.*) So too, the only sig-

<sup>62</sup> Goheen 1951: 14-35. Kitzinger 1976: 157-64; see below (on characterization), pp. 34-8.

<sup>63</sup> E. Wolf, *Sentenz und Reflexion bei S.* (Leipzig 1910) 48-53, 126-31; Kitzinger 1976: 143-64, Foley 1996. See further below, pp. 41-2, on the vocabulary of 'knowing' and 'thinking'; also pp. 36-8.

<sup>64</sup> C. Thirlwall, *On the irony of Sophocles* (*Philol. Mus.* 2, London 1833); G. G. Sedgewick, *Of irony* (Toronto 1948) 18-23, D. C. Muecke, *The compass of irony* (London 1969). See too Kirkwood 1958: 247-87.

nificant prophecy within the play ('Ireiasias') is already starting to come true even as it is delivered, and thus provides little opportunity for ironic misunderstanding. But, in addition to the multi-layered choral Songs, the play does contain its share of small-scale misinterpretations and unwitting utterances (e.g., concerning the perpetrator of the mysterious burial: 'which *man* dared to do this...?' 248; cf. 221-2n.), chiefly from Kreon and the Chorus. One effect of these recurrent 'tragic ironies' is, as always, to point out the limits of human (or these humans') understanding; another is to instil in the audience the sense of a larger, and inescapable, pattern of events, sharply - even cruelly - at variance with that envisioned by the doomed protagonist and his half-aware advisers, and yet in its own way predictable, and aesthetically (even, for some perhaps, morally or religiously) satisfying.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4. THE PRODUCTION

The first performance of *Ant.* took place one morning in the Theatre of Dionysos, on the south slope of the Acropolis, as part of the Great Dionysia.<sup>66</sup> The audience in their banked rows of seats look down on a circular (or perhaps rectangular or trapezoidal) dance-floor (ὄρχήστρα),<sup>67</sup> and behind it a wooden structure (σκηνή), which serves in this play, as in many, to represent the 'house' or royal palace, which is the home of all the main characters in *Ant.*, since Ant. and Ismene are wards of their uncle Kreon (cf. 18-19, 531-5). The large

<sup>65</sup> 'By virtue of dramatic irony ... the mind of the spectator moves easily forward and backward. It gives him that sense of control which ... is the peculiar pleasure of the stage' (Sedgewick (previous n.) 55; cf. Reinhardt 1979: 73 'the irony of the divine ... [by which] the attitude of the man in power is mocked and his limitations revealed', 91-3 'the irony of. "too late"'); also Jones 1962: 166-77.

<sup>66</sup> Pickard-Cambridge 1988, Taplin 1977: 1-60, 434-51. We do not know the titles of the other two tragedies and satyr-play which accompanied that performance; but they must have dealt with quite different subjects, since *OC* is known to belong to a different year, *OT* did not win first prize, and the list of titles of S.'s plays does not contain any other 'Theban' dramas.

<sup>67</sup> For arguments in favour of a rectangular or trapezoidal *orchestra* at this date, see E. Pohlmann, *Studien zur Bühnendichtung und zum Theaterbau der Antike* (Frankfurt 1995; *contra*, Wilcs 1997: 44-52).



central door of this building dominates the stage (18–19, 1183–91n.), marking the boundary between visible and hidden, public and private space, and thus, to a large degree, between male and female spheres of activity and consciousness (18–19, 1183–91n.).<sup>68</sup> The male characters all arrive by the side-entrances (εἰσοδοί), one of which may be imagined as leading to the city-streets, the other to the gates and plain beyond; and they usually depart by these too.<sup>69</sup> By contrast, the female characters mostly enter and depart by the house-door. The exception is Ant., who boldly heads off alone down one εἰσοδοῦς to bury her brother (80–11.), and later reappears thence as a captive, a lone woman surrounded by soldiers (376–83n.). In the scene that follows, after bringing Ismene out to be interviewed as well, Kreon makes a point of shutting both the sisters up again indoors before their execution, 'to be women, and not roaming around free' (577–81). From this doorway Ant. begins her last journey (807, 878) to the 'bridal suite' of Death (813–16, 891–3 etc) – by way of the same path that is later taken in haste by Kreon and his attendants. In the final scenes the door becomes our focus again, as Eurydike first overhears (through the closed door) the Messenger's news, and then comes out briefly to hear the details of Haimon's death, only to disappear silently inside again, followed immediately by the anxious Messenger, who is thereby able to narrate the 'indoors' scene to us.

Anything that happens 'off-stage' (i.e. inside the palace, or in the city streets, or out on the plain and hillsides) has to be narrated to us – as it is in vivid detail by the Guard (twice), by Teiresias, and by the Messenger.<sup>70</sup> On-stage, we witness the successive confrontations of the characters, coming and going, as Kreon, head of both house-

<sup>68</sup> See Gould 1980, Easterling 1988, Zeitlin 1996: 341–74; and further J.-P. Vernant, 'Hestia-Hermes', in *Myth and thought in ancient Greece* (1965; Eng. tr. London 1983) 127–75, P. Bourdieu, 'The Kabyle House, or the world reversed', in *The logic of practice* (1980; Eng. tr. Stanford 1990) 271–83, D. Cohen, *Law, sexuality, and society* (Cambridge 1991), esp. pp. 70–97, 133–70.

<sup>69</sup> Some commentators have Haimon enter from the palace (e.g. Seale 1982: 96); but 688–700 suggest that he has come from elsewhere in the city.

<sup>70</sup> It is unclear whether Eurydike's death indoors is presented by means of the *ekklēsiēna*, in addition to the narration of the *kommos*: probably not (1293n.).

hold and city, attempts futilely to 'maintain straight order' by assigning everybody a place and keeping them there (162–210, 162–3, 661–80nn.). Only in the final scene, after Kreon's son is brought in from the distant tomb-prison, and his wife from the nearby bedroom, to form the final tableau, a corpse 'at each hand'<sup>71</sup> (1298–1300, 1344–6), is everybody assembled and put in order. The conventional style of Classical Greek acting probably kept the speaking actors for the most part at some distance from one another, except for clearly marked moments of close contact.<sup>72</sup> At the opening of *Ant.* the two sisters may well be in close contact, perhaps arm in arm (1–99n.); but thereafter the only physical contact indicated by the text (apart from Teiresias leaning on his young guide, 988–90, 1087) comes with the final tableau of Kreon and his dead son and wife.

S.'s original cast of performers was entirely male: fifteen chorus members, three speaking actors, and a number of silent 'extras'. Masks would immediately identify gender, age, and status of each character, and would facilitate quick changes from one character to another. The most likely distribution of parts would seem to be the following:

1. Kreon (much the longest role, including lyrics at 1257–1346),<sup>73</sup>
2. Ant. (including lyrics at 806–82), Haimon, Teiresias and Eurydike;
3. Ismene, Guard, and Messenger.

The four opponents of Kreon would thus all be heard speaking with one voice, as it were (that of actor no. 2; cf. 626–30n.), while no. 3's

<sup>71</sup> First he brings in the body of his son (perhaps carrying it himself, or else with attendants carrying it in a quasi-funerary procession; 1257–60n.); and then Eurydike's body is brought out, for Kreon and the audience to witness.

<sup>72</sup> Taplin 1977: 28–39, Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 171–6, 246–57, Mazon 1979: 1–5, 19–34.

<sup>73</sup> Demosthenes (*De falsa leg.* 247) states that the part of Kreon was played by the τριταγωνιστής (Aischines); but he is referring to fourth-century productions, and he may be lying (Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 141). In any case, the significance of τριταγωνιστής vs τριταγωνιστής is disputed. We do not know whether any of the actors whose names are associated with S. (Teipolemos, Kleidemides, Polos: *JGF* iv 142–8), or who are recorded as winning prizes during this period (Herakleides, Nikomachos, Saondas, Andron), performed in *Ant.* – nor whether S. himself did (see above, pp. 1–2).



characters present themselves (without song) as representatives of a more sober and mundane mentality.<sup>74</sup>

One striking and distinctive characteristic of this play is the way in which 'characters emerge from the great lyrical utterances' (Seale 1982: 109), as if to exemplify – or repudiate – the imaginative explorations that we have just heard from the Chorus (esp. 376–83, 626–30, 1155–1256nn.). Distinctive too, is the fact that, whereas in most tragedies the actors all depart between scenes, leaving the Chorus alone to deliver their songs, in this play it appears that Kreon remains on stage for the 3rd and 5th Songs, and possibly for the 4th and Ant.'s *kommos* too.<sup>75</sup> If he does, his presence would confirm our sense that the Elders are inhibited from expressing (or even thinking) ideas that might run in opposition to the king's (781–800n.) – an inhibition that would persist throughout the powerful lament-scene in which, under Kreon's silent gaze, Ant. is led out through the *orchestra* for execution (801–82n.): for, although the Chorus interact closely with her in the lyric structure, their words are critical and barely sympathetic, and Kreon soon reinserts himself into the dialogue (883–90; cf. 883–943, 937–43nn.). Later, once Kreon has realized his mistake, the Elders are quick to rally around him (1091–1114n.), and in the final scene they provide a calmer accompaniment to his lyric expressions of despair, as if they, rather than he, now preside over the stage, and over the management of the city (1326–53, 1347–53nn.).

The staging requires 'no props ... no special effects ... The tragedy, in all its richness and diversity of theme is embodied in the idea of simple confrontation' (Seale 1982: 109). Here and there, the text indicates how these 'confrontations' should be handled: the Guard enters slowly and haltingly (223–32), but departs with alacrity; Ant. remains staring at the ground (in disdain? cf. 441n.) until she is ready to respond directly to Kreon; Ismene is described as being flushed and in tears when she is brought in at 526 (526–30n., cf. 491–4); Haimon enters looking dismayed and angry (626–30n.), and rushes

<sup>74</sup> See Ewans 1998, Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 132–44.

<sup>75</sup> Seale 1982, Bain 1981: 4 n. 1 (and others) have Kreon depart into the palace at 780, 943, and return unannounced after the Songs: but see further 780, 801–82, 988–90nn.

off in an even more frantic state (766–7); Kreon in turn hurries off (by the same route) to rescue Ant., in near-panic (1108–14); Eurydike's silent exit during the Messenger's speech is expressive of her desperate resolve (1244–56). But for the most part we must use our imaginations to envision what should be taking place before us – in full consciousness of the power that staging and acting technique have to dictate meaning to an audience, even where the words of the text may be less than transparent.<sup>76</sup>

### 5. THE MEANING OF THE PLAY

*Delectare, movere, docere?*<sup>77</sup> There are obviously many kinds of pleasure and benefit to be derived from Attic tragedy, many ways in which a play such as *Ant.* works on the minds and emotions of audiences and readers. It is unlikely that when S. sat down to write the play he had a clear idea of what it was going to 'mean', and even less likely that upon completion he could have explained its meaning to the satisfaction of a modern critic. The members of his original audience (which presumably included intellectuals such as Perikles, Sokrates, Aspasia, and Herodotos, as well as some thousands of semi-literate peasants and artisans) undoubtedly reacted in very disparate ways to particular scenes and to the play as a whole. Likewise, to modern readers the play will inevitably yield different meanings according to the context within which it is studied and the questions asked of it. None the less, in the belief that some approaches, and some conclusions, can be shown to be more fruitful, more adequate to the text, and more convincing than others, let us take some preliminary

<sup>76</sup> For example, we have no idea – but would love to know – whether Ant. and Haimon were played in S.'s first production as attractive, warm-blooded, idealistic teenagers, or as bratty, petulant trouble-makers. The text allows for either – or a combination of both (my own preference). Of course, I am also aware that at any point in performance a determined director or actor can override the plain meaning of S.'s text (and the interpretive notes of a commentary) with a gesture, a tone of voice – or a simple cut.

<sup>77</sup> *Entertainment, emotional stimulation (or persuasion), instruction* – these are the three chief goals for literature acknowledged by Classical critics (Cicero, *Orator* 21.69, Horace, *AP* 333–47, 391–407, etc.), and taken for granted by scholiastic commentators.

critical stabs at this remarkable work.<sup>76</sup> If in what follows *Antigone* may seem to switch back and forth between being a piece of moral or political philosophy, a religious rite, a sociological treatise, an imaginative poem, a stage drama, a political rally, a psychotherapy session, and more, I make no apology: (this) play can be, and should be, all of these things.

(a) *Aesthetics*

As Aristotle observes in the *Poetics*, much of the excitement and satisfaction provided by a tragic performance comes from the artful structuring of the plot (μῦθος); much, too, from the ornamented language (λέξις) and skilful vocal delivery (ὑπόκρισις), the metrical and musical rhythms and melodies (ῥυθμικά, μέλος), and the visual dimensions of gesture, blocking, choreography, costume, and scenery (ὄψις, ὄρχησις, σκευοποιία, σκηνογραφία, κτλ.). Although Aristotle gives due weight also to the moral aspects of the action and characters, most of his discussion in the *Poetics* focuses on aesthetics and dramatic technique; and his comments about these are for the most part acute and illuminating.<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, however, most of the aural and visual elements of the plays as originally performed are now irrecoverable, and we must necessarily be satisfied with the 'pleasures' provided by plot, characterization, language and (to a lesser degree) metre, since these are more adequately recorded in the surviving texts. But we must never forget how much we are missing.

In our sketch of the structure of *Ant.*, we noted how it is built, scene by scene, and song by song, through a series of climaxes that culminates in the revelation of Kreon's error and the announcement

<sup>76</sup> 'Fruitful' and 'convincing' – to whom? Let us say, to a majority of the 'competent readers' who have weighed the critical alternatives in the light of their own examination of the text. For a helpful definition of 'literary competence', see J. Culler, *Structuralist poetics* (Ithaca 1975) 113–30; also Fish 1980, for the idea of an 'interpretive community'.

<sup>77</sup> For a helpful recent account of the multiple tragic pleasures identified by Aristotle, see A. O. Rorty, 'The psychology of Aristotelian tragedy', in Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton 1992) 1–22.

of the multiple deaths.<sup>80</sup> The overall pattern of events is highly satisfying in its economy and logic: for it is Kreon's own edict that destroys him, by bringing about the deaths of his own son and wife. In Aristotle's terms, this series of events is indeed both 'unexpected' (πρὸς τὴν δόξαν) and yet inevitable ('caused by one another', δὲ ἑλληλα).<sup>81</sup> A man of high standing and basically good intentions, through a serious but not implausible (and perhaps forgivable) mistake (ἁμαρτία),<sup>82</sup> due partly to a kind of reprehensible but understandable ignorance, harms his own φίλοι and thereby falls from prosperity to misery. The point at which Kreon's fortunes are seen to begin their 'reversal' (περιπέτεια) is the precise moment at which he is brought to a 'recognition' (ἀναγνώρισις) of the true state of affairs (1064–1114, esp. 1095 ἕνωκα καὶ τὸς).<sup>83</sup> The demonstration of cause and effect, of 'the kind of thing that happens' in human affairs, the eliciting of 'pity and fear' at events befalling people 'like ourselves' who do not fully 'deserve' it, all of these are intriguing and emotionally captivating, whether or not they are ethically beneficial too.<sup>84</sup> The feelings of sympathy that flood through us as Ant. contemplates her entombment, and again as Eurydike and Kreon face the loss of their son; the thrill of excitement (tinged with horror and pity, or vindictive satisfaction?) provided by Teiresias' pronouncement of Kreon's sentence, and again by the narrative of

<sup>80</sup> Above, pp. 15–17.

<sup>81</sup> *Poetics* 9 1452a3–4, an account that contains the germ of the modern notions of dramatic irony, paradox, and tragic inevitability; see above, pp. 20–1.

<sup>82</sup> Aristotle stipulates that the fall should not come about simply through 'wickedness' (ποχθηρία); for ἀμαρτία in *Ant.*, cf. 743–4, 914, 926, 1023–32n., 1242–3n.

<sup>83</sup> It might be argued that Kreon comes to recognize, in effect, 'who' Pol. is, i.e. that he is not after all just an 'enemy' (522 ἐχθρός) but a φίλος; this would bring *Ant.* closer to the mainstream of Aristotle's favourite tragedies (*Poet.* 14 1453b10ff.). But the action of *Ant.* suggests that it is not merely failure to bury a *nephew/brother*, and premature burial of a *niece*, that is Kreon's mistake; but non-burial and improper burial of anyone at all.

<sup>84</sup> οἷα ἄν γένοιτο, *Poet.* 9 1451a 37; ὁμοίως, ἀνδραγαθίας 13 1453a5–7, etc.; cf. *Rhet.* 2 8.1386a24. For discussion of tragedy's possible cognitive and ethical benefits, as envisaged by Aristotle, see S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London 1986) 160–201; but cf. next n.

Haimon's death, as we recognize that everything is coming together as it must – these are the 'proper pleasures' of a well-made tragedy.

(b) *Lessons*

It was widely believed in ancient Greece, and is still widely believed today, that a good tragedy (or epic) teaches a lesson of some kind, through the representation of good and bad 'examples' (παράδειγμα, *exemplum*) of human action and character, and through the exploration and revelation of ultimate truths about the world we live in. Although some modern critics have vigorously opposed this idea,<sup>85</sup> Greek drama is full of morally evaluative language, and seems constantly to invite its audience to think about the personal choices and confrontations of its main characters. In the modern era, hundreds of books and articles have discussed the degree to which Kreon, or Ant., or both, should be held responsible for the deaths of Ant., Haimon, and Eurydike, and what we should learn from their catastrophe. No consensus has emerged.<sup>86</sup>

Many have found Kreon to be wholly at fault, his authority illegitimate, his edict impious and foolish, his behaviour and language intemperate and vindictive.<sup>87</sup> But to others he appears a well-intentioned ruler, sincerely committed to laudable political principles (162–210, 188–90, 639–800m.) and civic piety (162–3, 199–201,

<sup>85</sup> For example, many of the 'New Critics'; or, from another angle, those who have focused chiefly on 'dramatic technique' (esp. Wilamowitz 1917, Waldo 1951), or on the purely emotional/aesthetic effects (e.g. W. Schade-waldt, *Hermes* 83 (1955) 129–71, Heath 1987: 1–89).

<sup>86</sup> For surveys of different opinions, see M. Flickinger, *Isis Stud. Class. Philol.* 2 (1935), Hester 1971: 11–19, 48–54, Steiner 1984, Oudemans & Lardinois 1987: 107–17.

<sup>87</sup> Among those who see Kreon as wholly villainous and/or incorrigibly shortsighted, are Jebb, Reinhardt, Whitman, Müller, Benardete, and Vickers. On this view, Kreon does not even deserve the respect accorded to such towering but misguided Sophoklean heroes as Aias or Herakles: for, unlike them, once he is faced with proof of his error (1064–79), and direct threats to his own prosperity (1091–1144n.), he quickly backs down and crumbles. He thus becomes an object of contempt rather than sympathy ('puny', Whitman 1951: 91), and the play comes to be read as a simple morality-tale demonstrating the evils of petty tyranny and disregard for the gods.

280–314, 773–6, 777–800m.), and reasonable enough to change his mind and rescind punishment – twice – when the error of his policies is pointed out by trustworthy advisers (766–80, 1091–1114m.); he is guilty only of misjudging the gods' attitude to non-burial, and of intemperate reactions to what he sees as disloyal opponents.<sup>88</sup> Conversely, Ant. is seen by many as an inspirational defender of 'higher' truths – individual liberty, family loyalty, and religious duty – whose other-worldly independence and determination, in the face of a bullying male-chauvinist civic authority, are finally vindicated by Teiresias and by the gods' destruction of Kreon; while to others, it is Ant. (and to a lesser degree, Haimon) who herself brings about the catastrophe through her inflammatory words and disruptive behaviour, which alienates the sympathy both of the other characters and of the audience.<sup>89</sup> On this view, Ant.'s fate, like Haimon's, is largely self-inflicted; and Kreon suffers far beyond what his own mistakes deserve. I believe that neither of these extreme positions is tenable: the text shows beyond reasonable doubt that both Kreon and Ant. are at least partly (if not equally) responsible for the tragedy. But the fact that such a broad range of responses has been elicited by this text is itself significant; for the questions raised by the play are not simple, and we should not expect the answers to be so either.

One of the reasons for the lack of critical consensus lies in the issue of non-burial. Ancient Greek attitudes concerning the treatment of the corpses of public enemies were by no means clear-cut or consistent, and, although it becomes clear long before the end of the play that Kreon has acted wrongly in his treatment of Pol. and Ant., the audience would not be in a position to be sure of this when first his edict is announced. That is to say, Kreon might – or might not – be excused for thinking that his policy was justifiable and proper. Denial of normal burial, as a way of inflicting further revenge on a particularly hated enemy and his family, was an extreme and

<sup>88</sup> It is significant in this regard that Demosthenes (19.247) could quote Kreon's words at 175–90 as a model of civic leadership, with no trace of irony intended (162–210n.).

<sup>89</sup> W. M. Calder, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 389–407, S-Inwood 1990; cf. 31, 450–70, 469–70, 526–81, 875nn.

shocking measure, but not unheard-of or self-evidently inadmissible (26–36n.).<sup>90</sup> In particular, the recognized penalty for traitors and temple-robbers in fifth-century Athens was refusal of burial within the boundaries of the polis (*exorismos*);<sup>91</sup> and criminals were sometimes executed by being thrown down a cliff into 'the pit' (*barathron*), where their corpses would presumably be left to rot.<sup>92</sup> Bodies of the long-dead could also be dug up and 'expelled,' as a kind of posthumous exile. And of course in literature, threats to strip the corpses of slain warriors and leave them for the beasts and birds are common (though rarely carried out, as more generous sentiments usually prevail).<sup>93</sup>

No issue could be better designed than this to engage an Athenian

<sup>90</sup> See W. Vischer, *RhM* 20 (1865) 445ff., Rosivach 1983, Parker 1983: 44–8. We may recall Nestor's words at Hom. *Od.* 3.255–61, 'You know what would have happened if red-haired Menelaos, returning from Troy, had caught Aigisthos alive in his house: they wouldn't have heaped any burial mound for him, but the dogs and birds would have devoured him as he lay on the plain apart from the city, and none of the Achaian women would have lamented', cf. S. *El.* 1487–90. In general, vengeance was highly prized by the Greeks, and exultation at the punishment and humiliation of an enemy was normal, though the ghastlier punishments (decapitation, impaling, and other kinds of mutilation and torture) were generally regarded in the fifth century as 'barbaric' and unGreek (cf. 308–9n., and e.g. A. *Eum.* 185–90 with Sommerstein's m., E. Hall, *Inventing the barbarian* (Oxford 1989) 158–9).

<sup>91</sup> Thuc. 1.138.6, Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.22; also A. *Th.* 1014, E. *Phio.* 776, 1629–30. Relatives might in some cases take the body and bury it outside the borders; but the standard term for such criminals, ἄταφος (Plato, *Laws* 873c1, 960b2, etc.), implies that this was not normally expected.

<sup>92</sup> Parker 1983: 47; occasionally the sea could be used to the same end. Closely analogous in some respects to the situation of *Ant.* is Lykourgos, *Against Leokr.* 121, where we are told the Athenians passed a 'decree' (ψήφισμα) 'that if any [of those who had deserted to the Spartans in Dekeleia, during the Peloponnesian War] should be caught returning, anybody could arrest them and take them (ἀπαγαγεῖν, cf. 382n., 395, 438) to the authorities, who should hand them over to the executioner at the Pit (τῶν ἐν τοῦ δρυῦκτατος)', i.e. the traitors were to be summarily executed without trial (cf. 35–6, 435nn.). and without likelihood of burial. For the constitutional status of the 'edict' (κρήρυγμα) issued by the στρατηγός Kreon, see 7–8n.

<sup>93</sup> C. P. Segal, *The theme of the mutilation of the corpse* (*Mnem.* *Suppl.* 17, 1971), Rosivach 1983. On the echoes in *Ant.* of Achilles' treatment of Hektor's corpse in the *Iliad* (gods' disapproval, unspoil corpse, Priam's lone attempt, etc.), see Linforth 1961: 189–95.

audience in absorbing moral questions about revenge and the humiliation of enemies, the authority of the state to interfere with family obligations and rites, and the relations between human and divine 'law' – questions of central and immediate significance to the democracy that show up repeatedly in the literature of the fifth century.<sup>94</sup> So, while S.'s prime purpose in composing *Ant.* may not have been specifically to determine the precise rights and wrongs of denying burial rites (esp. since the play ends up leaving many of the key issues up in the air),<sup>95</sup> this highly problematic issue provided an ideal springboard, or framework, on which to construct a powerful tragic plot. Some critics have argued that it is Kreon's stipulation, not only that no burial or lamentation of any kind shall be permitted within Theban territory, but that the corpse must be 'left alone' (ἔξω, 29, 205) for the dogs and birds – i.e. that it may not even be removed for burial *outside* the borders – that sets the measure one fatal degree beyond the bounds of political legitimacy and religious propriety (26–36n.). Perhaps so; one can certainly surmise that if Kreon had just assigned minimal burial rites for Pol., inside or outside the borders, catastrophe would have been avoided. But this fine distinction is never in fact made in the play – and in the end Pol. is given an honorific local funeral like Eteokles' (1101, 1199–1204). In sum, it does not seem to have been S.'s purpose to provide a systematic

<sup>94</sup> A. *Eleusiniotai* and *Hektoros Lutra*, S. *Ajax*, E. *Suppl.* all involve the defeat of an attempt to refuse burial to an enemy. The apparent intensification of interest in this issue at this period may reflect a development of moral and political scruples from the Archaic period into the fifth century (Rosivach 1983, Ostwald 1986, esp. 137–61). But it may also be the product of (a) generic and (b) class variables: (a) in 'real life', hated enemies' corpses were in fact mistreated on occasion: but in 'high literature', attempts at such mistreatment are usually presented as reprehensible; (b) the 'low' and 'ugly' (αἰσχροί), esp. slaves and common criminals, could be tortured, impaled, exposed, thrown into pits, etc., without arousing much outcry; but a noble body was inviolate (cf. 517). (Thus it appears that domestic revenge in the *Odysssey* admits abuses that are frowned upon in the *Iliad*.) In our play, Pol. may be a traitor; but he is a member of the royal family, and has a royal sister, so the gods are offended: cf. Teiresias' words at 1018.

<sup>95</sup> In particular, it is never made finally clear whether the principle that Kreon violates is non-burial *per se*, or non-burial of a member of his own family (Pol. being his nephew); nor whether Pol.'s (presumed) status as a traitor makes a significant difference: cf. 508–25 with nn., and see n. 120 below.

analysis of, and solution to, these issues: instead, he has composed a tragedy.<sup>96</sup>

As Kreon's edict is announced, the original audience would probably react at first with mixed expectations (26–36n.); for Kreon defends it with language heavily charged with religious and political assurances (166–210, 199–201, 283–9, 304–6, 518–25nn.).<sup>97</sup> Pol. has proved himself an enemy to his own *poiesis* and its gods, so only fellow-traitors could wish to honour him with burial. Yet in rejecting his measure Ant. employs equally compelling language of her own (48, 72–98, 450–60, 502–4, 511–23, 921–8nn.), language that is ultimately vindicated by the prophet (998–1114, 1068–76nn.).<sup>98</sup> Does this subsequent vindication require us to revise our initial (equivocal) response to Kreon's decree, and decide unequivocally in favour of Ant.? Was she right all along, and Kreon simply wrong? Perhaps so – and yet, even as the action reaches its denouement, and the gods reveal their absolute disapproval of Kreon's policy, it remains unclear to what degree Ant. personally has been justified (1068–71, 1172–5, 1226–36nn.): nothing is said by Teiresias or anyone else to indicate that the gods approved of her actions; and it is debatable whether in fact she helped to correct the situation in any way.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> We may compare Shakespeare's exploitation in *Hamlet* of the moral ambivalence surrounding revenge, and the uncertainties (Catholic vs Protestant) about the existence and status of ghosts; cf. E. Prosser, *Hamlet and revenge* (Stanford 1967), esp. 97–142.

<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the edict is described by several characters as being, not just Kreon's, but 'of the citizens' (79, 907 πολῖτων, cf. 35–6, 59–60nn.) and 'the law' (59–60, 452). Kreon's constitutional position is in fact left rather vague throughout (7–8n.), as commonly happens in Attic tragedy, straddling as it does the socio-political worlds of the Bronze Age ('heroic') past and fifth-century (democratic) Athens; cf. Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1981: 237–47, Rohdich 1980, P. E. Easterling, 'Constructing the heroic', in C. Pelling, ed., *Greek tragedy and the historian* (Oxford 1997) 21–37, Seaford 1994. As it turns out, the constitutionality of the edict is not made an issue in the play, though the character of Kreon's style of leadership most certainly is.

<sup>98</sup> But it is significant that her rhetoric, as well as being personally antagonistic (69–70, 450, 469–70nn.), is heavily negative: she is more concerned to reject than to affirm (450–70n., 538–9, 905–7). Thus it is not easy to pinpoint the positive principles that she is defending, beyond absolute devotion to parents and brother, and respect for the dead and the gods below (cf. n. 120 below).

<sup>99</sup> Brown 1987: 7–10, S-Inwood 1990.

That Kreon's edict was wrong is made blindingly clear by mid-play. But it is clear too that the catastrophe is brought about, not just by his mistake, but by a particular combination of circumstances and decisions (by Ant. and Haimon, as well as Kreon himself) which raise further moral questions of considerable complexity. In Kreon's case, not only does he offend against the sacred laws of family and the underworld gods, but his increasingly 'tyrannical' conduct (esp. his identification of the 'city' with himself; his obsession with his own authority; his harsh and high-handed threats; his unreasonable suspicion of others) contributes directly to his downfall – though opinions may differ as to whether these traits are to be detected right from the start (162–210, 211–14nn.) or become apparent only in the scene with the Guard (280–314n.), or later still (473ff.?, or 631–780, or even 1033–63).<sup>100</sup> As for Ant., whether or not her extraordinary (even faintly incestuous?, cf. 73, 523, 898–9) devotion to her brother and parents is to be interpreted as evidence of an inherited taint which may itself be a 'cause' of the continuing disasters (471–2, 594–603, 900–3nn.), she clearly contributes, through her unreasonable, impatient, and intransigent behaviour, to the catastrophe that finally wipes out her family, as is repeatedly pointed out by both the Chorus and Ismene.<sup>101</sup>

Thus the moral issues, of right and wrong, responsibility and blame, remain open to analysis and debate, both during the progress of the play and after it is over. The sense of closure is strong, for the

<sup>100</sup> The 'tyrannical' qualities of Kreon are discussed by Bowra 1944: 72–8, Podlecki 1966 (with ref. to Hdt. 3.80–2), H. Funke, *Ant. und Abend.* 12 (1966) 29–50, C. Cerri, *QUCC* 39 (1982) 137–55, Blundell 1989: 123–6.

<sup>101</sup> These seem to be two of the more 'reliable' witnesses from among the play's internal audiences (though pro-Ant. critics do not always agree on this); cf. 49–68, 98–9, 526–81; 100–61, 211–12, 278–9, 471–2, 770, 1091–1114, 1326–53nn. The (male) Elders are of course much more critical of Ant. than her sister is: and it is likely that many members of the Athenian audience would have shared their view; some might even have agreed with Kreon in regarding her, not merely as difficult and disruptive, but as a thoroughly 'bad woman', in her disobedience and rejection of marriage, and perhaps even in her usurpation of the male responsibility for burying Pol. (43, 903nn.); see S-Inwood 1989a, but also Foley 1996. A late twentieth-century audience is less likely to share Kreon's, Ismene's and the Chorus' disapproval of her 'unfeminine' resistance to male authority (61–3, 484–5, 525, 679–80).

play's action is indeed 'complete and whole' (Aristot. *Poet.* 7 1450b25, cf. 6 1449b25, 8 1450a31-5): but no less strong is our awareness that the conflicts fuelling this tragic catastrophe are incapable of easy resolution, and that the personal miscalculations and mischances that triggered it are of a kind all too likely to recur.

(c) *Characters*

If the play teaches a 'lesson', then, it is not that of a simple morality-play: neither Kreon nor Ant. is a villain, neither a saint. Should we see it instead as a tragedy of 'character'? Attic drama cannot be expected to offer the same depth and nuances of characterization as one finds in Ibsen or O'Neill, or even Shakespeare; and ancient Greek representations and interpretations of human behaviour and motivation will not always translate comfortably into twentieth-century terms. Yet the human figures presented on stage by S. none the less achieve a degree of coherence, distinctiveness, and immediacy that encourages us to begin to regard them, and respond to them, as if they were actual persons, whose dilemmas and sufferings command our sympathy and identification.<sup>102</sup>

The action of *Ant.* results from the clash between two dogmatic and inflexible individuals. If either Kreon or Ant. were less rigid, more capable of compromise, catastrophe could be averted. But compromise is foreign to their natures, and much of the power and attraction of the play comes from the sheer force and inevitability of their collision.<sup>103</sup> But as the climax builds, we come to realize how radically different the two characters are: Ant. alone maintains to

<sup>102</sup> For discussion of the different possible definitions and functions of 'character' in drama, see J. Gould, *PCPS* 24 (1978) 43-67, Easterling 1977, Blundell 1989: 16-25, and Goldhill and Easterling in Pelling 1990. On the processes whereby we come to piece together whole 'characters' from the visual and verbal clues supplied by a playwright, see Beckerman 1970: 130-67, 210-21, Elam 1980: 110-17, 131-4.

<sup>103</sup> Kreon and Ant. are 'daimonically linked' (Reinhardt 1979: 65); cf. Benardete 1975: 1 158, 'One wonders whether Ant. does not need Creon in order to be what she is.' There are hints of a long-standing antagonism between the two characters, cf. 7-8, 31-2, 192-206, 469-70, 561-2nn.

the bitter end those 'heroic' qualities of stubbornness, outspokenness, and courage for which S.'s hero(ine)s are renowned,<sup>104</sup> while Kreon's resolve crumbles, and he tries, belatedly and futilely, to make amends for his mistakes and avert catastrophe. This contrast of personalities and principles (primarily between Ant. and Kreon, but also between her and the mild and cautious Ismene, the practical-minded Guard, and the short-sighted Elders) fuels the play's series of confrontations, and to some critics the transcendent sense of commitment and other-worldiness of the heroine represents S.'s loftiest vision for humanity, an inspiring alternative to the mundane limitations of civic life.<sup>105</sup>

Yet it is Kreon, not Ant., who has the largest role and most lines to speak, and it is his downfall that commands our attention in the final scenes.<sup>106</sup> He is presented as a well-meaning, unexceptional man, fatally corrupted and ruined by the exigencies of power. Repeatedly, after enunciating a more or less laudable set of general principles, he fails to live up to them in the face of public challenges to his masculine and parental authority: but it is not entirely clear in the end whether it is the principles themselves, or Kreon's self-contradictory conduct, that has been exposed as morally deficient. His language and attitudes display a curiously banal combination of brutality and pettiness (of a kind familiar to us from twentieth-century totalitarian leaders); and although he precipitates divine wrath on a large scale, he does not strike us as a tragic 'overreacher', but almost an 'everyman'. For readers who prefer their tragic heroes grand and larger-than-life, this ordinariness, so far from bringing him closer and making him 'one of us', seems only to make him

<sup>104</sup> See esp. Knox 1964: 1-59; also Bradley 1905, on Shakespearean heroes.

<sup>105</sup> E.g., Jebb, Whitman 1951, Reinhardt 1979, Lesky 1972: 140-2, Benardete 1975; cf. too J. A. Moore, *Sophocles and Areté* (Harvard 1938). This tendency to idealize the passionate and uncompromising vision of one isolated, doomed character (Achilles, Dido, Hamlet, Captain Ahab, James Dean...) is characteristic of the post-Romantic humanistic tradition at large: for the ideological implications of this tendency, see Rohdich 1980: 22, Dollimore 1989: 53-6, 153-81.

<sup>106</sup> It takes special pleading to make the case (e.g., Reinhardt 1979: 93, Knox 1964: 115-16) that the presence of Ant. is felt throughout the closing scenes despite the text's complete silence about her.

more repulsive. But the drama is more compelling, and the ending more pitiful, if we recognize his good intentions, his sincere commitment to what he takes to be best for his city and family, and his eventual willingness to learn – even if it comes too late.

For many years, the ‘problem’, whether Ant. or Kreon should count as ‘the tragic hero’, and whether or not the unity of the play is compromised by the prominence of two main characters rather than one, was the subject of constant debate.<sup>107</sup> But more recently, as the focus has shifted onto the action and the social dimensions of the play, rather than the characters, this pseudo-problem has evaporated: for it is obvious that the key events of the drama depend precisely on the interaction and interdependence of both figures (as, e.g., in *E. Hitchh.*, *A. Ag.*, or *S. Tr.* and *Phil.*). Without one, there could be no tragedy for the other.<sup>108</sup>

The contrast between these two characters, rooted as it is in differences of gender, age, and political standing,<sup>109</sup> is fully represented in their respective diction and speech-patterns. Kreon habitually starts out and ends his speeches with generalizations, and relies heavily on analogies and abstractions, often in the form of simile, metaphor, or γνῶμη. His use of harsh metaphors drawn from coinage and metal-working, from military organization and warfare, from the commanding and steering of a ship, and from the breaking and yoking of animals, lends an especially rigid and domineering tone to his utterances; and his constant reliance on γνῶμη seems to reflect a desire to define and maintain his world in the most stable and unvarying (‘universal’) terms possible.<sup>110</sup> Ant.’s language is more

<sup>107</sup> For discussion of the ‘diptych’ structure of *Ant.* (and of *Aj.* and *Tr.* too), see Waldo 1951, Webster 1969: 102–25.

<sup>108</sup> This shift of focus owes much to Jones 1962. But for sympathetic discussion of Sophoklean characterization, see, e.g., H. Diller, *HS 69* (1956) 70–85, *Ant. and Abendl.* 6 (1957) 157–69, G. H. Gellie, *Sophocles: a reading* (Melbourne 1972), Kitzinger 1976.

<sup>109</sup> Perhaps parentage too: Ant. is accused of being just like her father (471–2, cf. 875; see Johnson 1997).

<sup>110</sup> Goheen 1951, Foley 1996: 59–60, Kitzinger 1976: 143–57 points out that Kreon is ‘a man who grasps at conventional language and opinion to maintain an unacceptable and idiosyncratic position . . .’; ‘generalizations often

concrete and particular, and she tends to assert more baldly what she feels – indeed ‘knows’ – to be the self-evident, experiential truth (69–77n.; cf. 473, 480, 686n.), with heavy use of negative particles and sarcastic barbs to express her rejection of the views of others (4–6n., 69–70, 450–70n., 538–9, 925–8; 31, 469–70n.).<sup>111</sup> The two of them are contrasted in turn with the other, less intransigent, more ‘normal’ members of the community: Ismene’s balanced and reasonable presentation of alternatives throws Ant.’s tunnel vision into sharp relief (49–68n.); the Guard’s self-protective verbal smoke-screens amount almost to a parody of Kreon’s own autocratic mannerisms, as his down-to-earth concerns and opinions are couched in incongruously high-flown, even pseudo-philosophical language, in a comic commentary on the serious business of tragedy (223–36 with nn., 316–21, 327–31, 388–400, 437–40n.); Haimon’s youthful temper is shown straining to maintain proper filial respect despite his growing rage and frustration (626–780, 683–723nn.); and even the Elders are tellingly characterized as simultaneously timid and critical, obtuse and insightful, doubtful but loyal, limited as they are by their conventional assumptions and their deference to Kreon’s authority.

Distinctively drawn though each of these figures is, we should acknowledge none the less that their internal psychological states and personalities, i.e. their true ‘characters’ as such behind their dramatic masks, remain largely unformulated by the text, and thus beyond our consideration.<sup>112</sup> Rather, we may say that Ant. and Kreon embody and articulate the most typical and generalized *characteristics* of their precisely defined social roles – Ant. as the devoted sister and

divert irrational reactions on Kreon’s part into rational language’. For the different terms used by Ant. and Kreon for ‘knowledge’ and ‘learning,’ see below, p. 42. For Kreon’s imagery, see esp. 162–3, 477–8, 674–5nn.

<sup>111</sup> See further Kitzinger 1976: 75–85, 175–80.

<sup>112</sup> The text does raise some interesting possibilities, however, about which we are at liberty to speculate: arc Ant.’s (or Ismene’s) personality and motivations shaped by (consciousness of) incestuous origin (cf. Loraux 1986, Johnson 1997)? Or by resentment of her uncle’s new authority? What do the Chorus really feel about Ant. and Haimon, and about their king? What are Ant.’s feelings for Haimon? What goes through Kreon’s head when he encounters Haimon at the tomb (1226–30)? etc. Out of such questions, like Anouilh, we may construct our own new dramas.



unmarried daughter,<sup>113</sup> Kreon as the stern soldier-ruler and father,<sup>114</sup> each of them fiercely determined to resist any threat to the integrity of these roles. This is not to say that they are not convincing, even memorable, dramatic 'characters'; rather, that we are not encouraged by the text to ponder the inner workings of their minds. The meaning of the play lies for the most part elsewhere.

(d) *Ethics*

Amidst the political innovations and intellectual debates of the fifth century, increasingly insistent and systematic attention came to be paid to questions of law, custom, and behaviour, and to the proper definition and application of traditional terms of moral evaluation. What does it mean to be *dikaios*, *χρηστός*, *σώφρων*, *σοφός*, or *ἀγαθός* in a democratic *polis*? What is the relationship between moral goodness and political success, between human achievement and divine approval? Along with the Sophists and Sokrates, the tragedians clearly belong among the precursors of Plato and Aristotle in the realm of moral philosophy, as their reworkings of the old myths explore the shifting conceptions and applications of familiar ethical terms.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> She is *πίσις* at 378, 423, 472, 561, 654, 693, 949; *νεῦνις* at 783–4; *κόρη* at 395, 769, 889, 1100, 1204; *νύμφη* at 568, 628, 633, 796–7 (cf. 654, 761); *παρθένος* at 1237; cf. Loraux 1986: 172, Segal 1981: 179–83. Kreon, however, likes to refer to her as *γυνή* (649, 651, 678, 680, 740, 746, 756), an easier term to use pejoratively. For her sisterly attributes, see 1, 523, 904–15nn., and below, pp. 52–4.

<sup>114</sup> He is *στρατηγός* on first mention (8); then usually (except to Ant. herself) *ἀναξ*, *βασιλεύς*, or *τύραννος* (7–8n.). In the scenes involving Haimon, *πατήρ* occurs with insistent regularity (635, 640, 644, 683, 701, 703, 704, 742, 755, 1176, 1177, 1225, 1234).

<sup>115</sup> Some well-known examples: *δίκη* in A.'s *Orestia*, *σωφροσύνη* in E. Hipp., *σοφία* in E. *Ba*. In none of these cases does a straightforward definition emerge (any more than in an aporetic Sokratic dialogue), but we are led to recognize the complexity, or indeterminacy, of the concepts in question, as well as the ways in which highly-charged evaluative language can be more or less legitimately deployed. For explicitly ethical-philosophical treatments of Greek tragedy, see esp. A. H. Adkins, *Merit and responsibility* (Oxford 1960), Long 1968, Nussbaum 1986, Blundell 1989, B. Williams, *Shame and necessity* (Berkeley 1993). On *Ant.* in particular, see also Dalfen 1977, Hester 1971 (and *HS* 14 (1980) 5–8), Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, Foley 1996.

In *Ant.*, we can identify three clusters of terms that receive particularly intensive scrutiny: those denoting (i) 'piety', 'reverence', 'due observance', (ii) 'family' and 'friends', and (iii) 'understanding', 'good sense', 'planning', 'intelligence'.<sup>116</sup>

(i) Terms for 'piety', 'reverence' (*εὐσέβεια*, *σέβειν*, *κτλ.*) recur throughout the play in a wide variety of usages and contexts. The semantic field of *σέβ-* covers primarily the honouring of the gods, but extends also to respect for parents and the dead, and to various other more or less clearly defined obligations.<sup>117</sup> Given this broad range of application, one set of *σέβ-* obligations could easily come into collision with others (514–21); and the degree and mode of 'devotion' that is expected may be disputed (626–780, 639–80, 683–7nn.); one person's 'reverence' may even be another's 'impiety' (74, 923–4n.). Kreon demands 'reverence' for the gods and cults of the city, for legitimate political authority (165–9, 199–201, 280–314, 508–25, 730, 744–5, 780nn.), and for his status as father (632–4, 639–80nn.); and he takes care to design a form of execution for his niece that will (he claims) allow him and his city to remain 'pure' (773–6n., 889 *ἀγνοί*). For her part, Ant. insists on the absolute requirement to honour, not only parents, but all one's closest kin, in death as in life (74, 502–5, 511, 943, etc.), and she claims that her actions, though labelled 'criminal' and 'impious' by others (74, 300–1, 514, 924; cf. 853–6), are in fact gloriously holy and pious (72 *καλόν*, 74 *δύσιν*, 97 *καλῶς*, 99 *ὀρθῶς*, 502 *εὐκλεέστερον*, 511 *σέβειν*, 521 *εὐαγγῆ*, 943; cf. 695 *εὐκλεεστέρων*).<sup>118</sup> Ismene recognizes the propriety of both kinds of claim (98–9), as do the Chorus, at least

<sup>116</sup> Other terms that come under discussion include: *κέρδος* (221–2, 461–4, 1031–2, 1035–9nn.); *ὀρθός* (162–3n.); *τέχνη* and *μηχανή* (365–7n., 332–75); *νόμος* and *νόμιμα* (59–60, 295–6, 451–2, 453–5nn.).

<sup>117</sup> Dover 1974: 246–54, 273–8.

<sup>118</sup> Although the two characters use the same words when they speak and develop their pros and cons, the content of their speeches does not result in an antithetical relationship. Rather, the opposition is between two *realms*: word for word, and meaning for meaning, they *separate* from each other. . . . What [Kreon] calls "dishonour" is holy to his opponent; what he calls "pious" is not so to her, and the same with "friend" and "foe" and "good" and "bad" (514ff); Reinhardt 1979: 77–8; cf. Goheen 1951, Dalfen 1977.



intermittently (213, 278-9, 365-75, 872-5, 872). After Teiresias' warnings, Kreon at last recognizes the obvious: 'It's best to end one's life preserving the established customs' (νόμους, 1113-14), and the play ends with the Chorus' trite endorsement of conventional attitudes, 'One mustn't be irreverent (ἀσεπτεῖν) towards the gods!' (1349-50 with n.). While this ending confirms that Kreon is indeed being punished for his impiety, as Ant. had demanded (cf. 921-8, 925-8nn.), it falls short of rewarding her for the 'piety' to which she laid claim in her final words on stage (940-3 λέύσσετε ... οἷα πύσχω τὴν εὐσεβίαν σεβίσσασα). Her piety did not save her from death, nor her family from extinction (599-603);<sup>119</sup> and several difficult questions that have been raised about the proper 'reverence' due to the dead have still not been fully answered.<sup>120</sup> The paradoxes persist.

(ii) 'Benefit your friends (φίλοι) and harm your enemies!' Few Greeks before Plato would question this basic principle, which lies at the heart of Archaic and Classical morality and social relations.<sup>121</sup> But how do we know who our true φίλοι are, and how can we ensure that they will remain so? Furthermore, given the wide semantic field occupied by φίλος - covering 'family member', 'loved one', 'friend', 'ally', even 'one's own' (limbs, etc.), and extending even further with the usage of φιλέω, φιλότης, φιλία, κτλ.<sup>122</sup> - contradictions con-

<sup>119</sup> A few modern scholars have focused on the status of Pol.'s (or Ant.'s) soul in Hades, and the prospects of psychic consciousness and reward down there. But this concern finds small support in the text, and seems anachronistic.

<sup>120</sup> For example: *does* one 'dishonour' a patriot in showing respect to a traitorous enemy (514-6)? *Do* 'good and bad' men deserve equal honour in death (520)? *Do* the dead continue to hate their enemies even in the underworld (515, 521-2; cf. 508-25n.)?

<sup>121</sup> Archilochos fr. 23.14-15 West, Theognis 337-40, Solon fr. 1.5-6 West, etc., Blundell 1989: 26-59. The Guard provides a practical, 'low' perspective on all this (437-40): it is painful to harm one's φίλοι, but ultimately the most precious φίλος is - oneself.

<sup>122</sup> Benveniste 1966: 335-53. F. Dirlmeier, *Φίλος und Φιλία im vorhellenischen Griechentum* (Munich 1931), Blundell 1989: 39-49. For ἐχθρός/ἐχθάρω, κτλ., the range is more limited, since these always denote positive hostility and dislike; cf. 9-10n.

stantly arise, as members of the same family or political group (= φίλοι, by definition) become 'hateful/hostile' to one another as a result of their behaviour.<sup>123</sup> Such contradictions are explored in detail in this play (cf. 182-90, 511-25, with nn.). For Ant., a φίλος is naturally and unalterably 'one's own' (9-10, 511-25, 522-3, 904-15nn.), and therefore always deserving of 'love' (73, 523, 898-9nn.) and 'honour'.<sup>124</sup> By contrast, Kreon proposes an unorthodox definition of φιλία that is none the less in some respects quite familiar from Athenian political debate (162-210, 508-25): natural 'ties' (family and other prior personal connections) should count for nothing, and we should 'select' (188 θείμην, 190 ποιοῦμεθα, 191 νόμοισι) our φίλοι and ἐχθροί/πρόλεμοι purely on the basis of their conduct towards our community. This disagreement cuts to the heart of Athenian political life (see below, pp. 48-50); but, so far from directly confronting the philosophical problem - what criteria to invoke when φιλία places conflicting demands upon a person - neither Ant. nor Kreon acknowledges the legitimacy of the other's claims at all: for Kreon, the traitorous Pol. has simply ceased to *be* φίλος to his uncle or sisters (208-10, 516-22nn.), whereas Ant. never responds to the charge that Pol. was a traitor to his city, and argues instead that Eteokles' enmity has been superseded by death (508-25, 521nn.). Characteristically, Ismene again shows some sympathy for each side (e.g. 79, 98-9) - and although she is consequently condemned by both, her mixed feelings may be shared by many members of the audience.

(iii) Throughout the play, emphasis is constantly being placed on the need for intelligence and good sense (φρονεῖν, γνώμη, εὐβουλία, νοῦς, μανθάνειν), and characters repeatedly accuse one another of

<sup>123</sup> Blundell 1989: 50-9; on φιλία in *Ant.*, Knox 1964: 80-8, Goldhill 1986: 79-83, 88-106.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. the many *σὺτ-* words she uses in this connection (1, 863-5nn.; also 511, 513, 900, 915nn., and 48, 696, and further Loraux 1986). But despite Ant.'s claim to be 'born to share in φιλία' (523), she does not demonstrate an especially 'loving nature', in the modern sense of those words: she is on the contrary quite cold and dismissive towards everyone except the dead, and threatens to 'hate' Ismene if she will not co-operate with her (86, 93); cf. 523n. and Nussbaum 1986: 64-5.

'foolishness' (ἀβουλία, δυσβουλία, μωρία, κτλ.) or outright 'madness' (492, 653, 765). The Chorus sing of mankind's extraordinary intelligence and ingenuity, so powerful for good or ill (332–75n.) and of the human propensity to lapse into that special kind of delusion (ἀτη, 4, 17, 582–625nn.), wherein evil is mistaken for good, injustice for justice (615–25, cf. 791–2, and 323). We should hardly expect a neat definition of 'true wisdom' to emerge: tragedy thrives on mental mistakes and contingent misunderstandings, which are represented as being typical and ineradicable, indeed intrinsic to social existence. We may, however, learn something about the possibilities and limitations of human understanding from tracing the differing mentalities and rhetorical strategies exemplified by the usage of these terms. In particular, we can trace an implicit struggle for validation between the calculating 'intelligence', 'counsel', and 'thought' (γνώμη, φρονεῖν, μυνθάνειν, βούλευμα, νοῦς), recommended by Kreon and the other (male) characters, as against Ant's intuitive 'knowledge' and 'certainty' (especially ἐπίστασθαι, εἶδέναι);<sup>125</sup> and among the male characters, we may contrast Kreon's emphasis on 'calculation' and rigid 'straightness' with Haimon's and Teiresias' recommendations of 'learning' and 'bending'.<sup>126</sup>

By the end of the play, after Kreon's ignorance and overconfident obstinacy have been starkly laid bare and punished, the Chorus sum up with the pat assertion, τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαίμονιός πρόωτον ὑπάρχει. But we have received small reassurance as to the capacity of human intelligence to calculate and escape calamity in the future. Smaller minds – the Guard's, Ismene's, the Elders' – may succeed in avoiding personal disaster: but none of them has proved capable of fore-

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seeing or averting the troubles that afflict the larger community. Rather, it has been the impetuous and one-dimensional 'tempers' of Ant. and Haimon (ὄργη, 766–7, 875; cf. 471–2, 929–30) that have combined to provoke the eventual resolution, in combination with Teiresias' supernatural insight into hidden 'signs' (σημεῖα, 998n.; cf. 993 φρονός, 996 φρόνει). Perhaps some comfort may be derived from the idea, repeated at intervals throughout the play, that human beings must be 'flexible' (e.g. 710–23, 1023–8) and willing to 'learn'. But it would not be unreasonable to conclude instead from the fates of Kreon, Ant., Haimon, and Eurydike that the internal and external forces that drive us all are too unruly and unpredictable to be mastered or evaded by merely human 'good sense'.<sup>127</sup>

#### (e) *Contradictions*

One function of drama (as of other forms of mythical, artistic, and religious expression) appears to be the opportunity it provides of articulating and confronting (in more or less disguised forms) some of society's deepest-seated tensions and conflicts, and perhaps mitigating or defusing them to some degree through the mechanisms of ritual, play, and communal celebration, a process that can be both disturbing and yet strangely satisfying. It is not so much that a particular artistic representation is likely to propose a permanent solution to such divisions and conflicts (e.g., between male and female, master and slave, family and state); rather that the very process of working through the conflict, and 'resolving' it in dramatic terms, may make it more manageable and enduring, or at least more intelligible, in the future.<sup>128</sup>

In the case of Athenian tragedy, we may recognize a characteristic

<sup>127</sup> Nussbaum 1986: 80 suggests that we have learned (primarily from the examples and language of Haimon and Teiresias) to be 'flexibly responsive to the world'; but others see the 'wisdom' acquired as being of a more mysterious and paradoxical kind (Benardete 1975, Reinhardt 1979, Oudemans & Lardinois 1987).

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dynamic by which a set of social issues is simultaneously problematized and neutralized or foreclosed: troublesome and even radical questions about the status quo are brought to the surface, but the outcome of the play appears to eliminate, or at least to limit, the possibility of social change, and thus reinforces the sense that this status quo is unalterable and necessary (and therefore even 'right?'). This dynamic is especially pronounced in S.'s plays, and, together with their extraordinarily tight construction and sense of closure, is largely responsible for S.'s reputation for 'pessimism'.<sup>129</sup> Yet, even in S.'s plays, the dramatic resolution tends to be presented in such an open-ended and ambiguous fashion that different readers and audience members may draw quite different conclusions about the social and moral implications of the play: even as some of them resign themselves (sadly, or complacently) to the inescapability of fate, and perhaps to the concomitant dignity of human suffering, others may indignantly recall the elements of resistance and contradiction within the play that point to, or demand, a better alternative.<sup>130</sup> Thus, for example, if we read resolutely enough against the grain of S.'s dramatic text, and insist that all the injustices which we see from our modern perspective were intended so to be seen, as part of S.'s covert critique of his society, we can conclude that 'S. leads us to ask not merely whether a polity so unjustly structured can survive but whether it deserves to',<sup>131</sup> whereas it might be preferable to insist only that S.'s text *allows* us to see these injustices (even as it also works to disguise and gloss over some of them), and thus probes certain fault-lines in the Athenian polity without coming close to

<sup>129</sup> E.g., J. C. Opstelten *Sophocles and Greek pessimism* (Amsterdam 1952), Whitman 1951, Reinhardt 1979. By contrast, critics usually find A.'s plays more 'optimistic' and progressive, E.'s more subversive and radically disruptive.

<sup>130</sup> Even within the same reader/spectator, two successive experiences of the 'same' text/dramatic performance may result in quite different responses. In general, see Dollimore's analysis of 'subversion' vs 'containment' as a critical strategy (1989: xvi-xxxii); and cf. Rose 1992: 27-42, building on N. Holland, *The dynamics of literary response* (New York 1968) and F. Jameson, *Marxism and form* (Princeton 1971). See too Griffith 1995: 107-24.

<sup>131</sup> W. J. and A. M. Lane, in J. P. Euben, ed., *Greek tragedy and political theory* (Berkeley 1986) 182. (A similar, but more subtle, reading is offered by Benardete 1975.)

suggesting the need for radical social change, let alone any programme for effecting it. At the opposite extreme, it has been concluded that the very purpose of S.'s drama (or Shakespeare's) is to bring us to a state of aesthetic equilibrium, ever oscillating between co-existing but incompatible alternatives as we contemplate 'man's awkward position, divided and ambiguous, in a hard and ruthless world',<sup>132</sup> or that the experience of *Ant.* leads us to appreciate the value of moral complexity and conflict for their own sakes.<sup>133</sup> Both these responses may bring their own aesthetic and moral satisfactions; yet the stronger our sense of 'equilibrium' and aesthetic 'richness', the easier it may be for us to cease interrogating the text for new possibilities and to settle into a complacent resignation to the inevitable.

In any case, *Ant.*'s baffling open-endedness may be said to add to, rather than detract from, the universality and power of its appeal, allowing as it does for the multiplicity of statuses and viewpoints of the play's ancient and modern audiences – even as it explains to some degree the abundance of scholarly disagreement over its 'correct' interpretation. There may indeed be several 'correct' interpretations of *Ant.*, and there seems little to be gained, and much to be lost, by insisting that one is better than all others. The play of opposites provides its own challenges, and its own rewards.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Oudemans & Lardinois 1987: 28.

<sup>133</sup> So Nussbaum 1986: 75-80, emphasizing the 'richness' of experience provided by the totality of S.'s play, as opposed to the pat consistency and over-simplification sought by Ant. and Kreon.

<sup>134</sup> Does this mean that we are all licensed to find whatever meanings we wish in this, or any, work of literature? Not exactly. We may look, we may think we have found its meaning – but then we are obliged to examine the alternatives, expose our view to criticism, take account of the original conditions of production and performance, before concluding that 'our own interpretation is justifiable or 'valid' in anything more than a partial or solipsistic sense; see Culler 1975, Fish 1980 (above, n. 78). In the end, of course, it is up to us, as readers, audiences, actors, directors, critics, and teachers, to what degree, and to what social ends, we may choose to focus on these oppositions and fault-lines – or any other particular elements – in a text. But we need to be aware, and explicit, about what we are doing thereby and why; see R. Williams' 'Afterword' to J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield, eds., *Political Shakespeare* (London 1985) 281-9.

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whose energy obliterates these neat distinctions and sweeps all before them, Eros and Dionysos (153-4, 115-54nn.).<sup>140</sup>

(ii) *Polis/oikos*

Conflict between family obligations and the demands of the larger community, between *φιλία* and *τὸ κοινόν*, pervades every civilized society. This conflict was especially acute and clearly defined in fifth-century Athens, and nowhere more so than in this play. Kreon, as *στρατηγός* (7-8n.) and leader of his city, insists on the need for citizens and rulers alike to disregard kinship and personal favouritism and to set the highest value on discipline and 'obedience to authority' (*πειθαρχία*, 661-80); and his nephew Pol. is consequently to be treated as nothing more than an enemy of the state. Ant., however, in maintaining the overriding obligations of *φιλία* (9-10, 69-77, 508-25n.), cannot cease to regard Pol. as 'her own', whatever his public actions.<sup>141</sup>

Yet here too the issue is far from cut and dried. For all Kreon's political (and specifically democratic-sounding) language,<sup>142</sup> he shows increasingly, in his confrontations with both Ant. and Haimon, that he is more concerned about his own personal authority, as a man and a father, than about his citizens' opinions (473-85, 726-69, etc.; and cf. 670-n.). Indeed, he displays not only disrespect for family obligations, but also political incompetence in his insensitivity and mistrust of his fellow-citizens; and he ends up not only destroying his own family, but also jeopardizing the whole community of Thebes, by tainting its public altars and its relations with other cities (1015-22, 1080-3). Conversely, Ant. is by no means unconcerned about her

<sup>140</sup> On Eros and Dionysos, see W-Ingram 1980: 92-116, Segal 1981: 197-206, Nussbaum 1986: 82, Seaford 1994; and below pp. 58-66.

<sup>141</sup> Since the *oikos/polis* opposition overlaps to some degree with that between nature (*φύσις*) and culture (*νόμος*), we may also take note here of the play's insistence on Ant.'s *natural* and hereditary characteristics and obligations (1, 37-8, 471-2, 523, 866nn.; also 683-61n.), as opposed to Kreon's emphasis on *cultural* choices, 'making straight', 'keeping order', and selectively 'establishing' his social connections (188 *θείμην*, 190 *ποιουμένθα*; cf. 162-3, 639-80, 670-1nn., and 680 *καλοίμεθ' ἄν*). See above, pp. 40-1, and Segal 1981: 152-86.

<sup>142</sup> His assertions are reminiscent of Perikles' (*Thuc.* 2.38-46, 60), and later quoted approvingly by Demosthenes 19.247; see 162-210, 188-90nn.

public reputation among the citizens (84-7, 839-52, 937-43). Public and private, political and familial, cannot be wholly separated in the case of royalty: so, while the play certainly asserts the inviolable claims of kinship and points up the oppressive potential of civic authority in the wrong hands, it does so in such a way as to remind us of the inherent dangers posed to the stability of the *polis* by its leading dynastic families.<sup>143</sup> If 'family' is the solution, it is also the problem.

One of the most influential general theories of tragedy is that of G. W. F. Hegel, which is based directly on his reading of this play in terms of *oikos/polis* opposition.<sup>144</sup> Hegel asserts that both Kreon and Ant. are right in principle, but that each of their conflicting principles is of only limited validity, whereas each of them insists on its absolute claims: the tragic conflict destroys the two individuals, but results in the emergence of an ethically 'higher' and more inclusive plane of consciousness.<sup>145</sup> This reading has much to be said for it (provided we do not require both characters to be *entirely* or *equally* right in every respect), and lies behind many subsequent theories concerning the centrality of *conflict* to the idea of tragedy.<sup>146</sup> The biggest problem with it lies perhaps in its idea of a final 'synthesis' or elevated level of awareness (which is directly linked to Hegel's insistently evolutionist and progressive view of history); for, although the ending of *Ant.* does provide reassurances of a less troubled future, and of lessons that have been 'learned' by the survivors, neither the Chorus nor Kreon comes close to articulating a world-view that synthesizes the insights gained through the course of the tragedy, and it must remain questionable how much of this the members of the audience are able to achieve for themselves.<sup>147</sup>

Closely related to this *oikos/polis* dichotomy is the issue of kinship

<sup>143</sup> See further Maitland 1992, Griffith 1995, and pp. 54-8 below.

<sup>144</sup> See A. & H. Paolucci, eds., *Hegel on tragedy* (New York 1962) 62-74 (from *The philosophy of fine art*), Steiner 1984: 19-42, Hester 1971.

<sup>145</sup> In insisting that Ant. and Kreon are both 'right' in principle, Hegel does not rule out the possibility of either or both being at fault in the personal (behavioural) shortcomings that heighten the conflict instead of seeking to resolve it.

<sup>146</sup> Gelrich 1988. By contrast, Aristotle has little appetite for 'conflict'.

<sup>147</sup> See 1326-53, 1343-6, 1347-53nn., and above, pp. 43-5.

and exogamy. If one of the primary functions of myth is to provide aetologies and justifications of familiar social rules, rituals, and taboos, then the Theban saga was especially rich in examples of violations of the rules concerning endogamy/exogamy, and concerning the relative claims of birth-family vs marriage-family.<sup>148</sup> In *Ant.*, the cursed families of Laios and Menoikeus are shown transgressing these norms yet again, with the next generation consequently failing to achieve proper 'passage' from childhood to adulthood and marriage: Oidipous' two sons die at each other's hands, one unmarried, the other exploiting a foreign marriage to forge a military alliance and attack his homeland; of the two daughters, neither is married, and Ant. rejects the prospect of husband and children, while demonstrating peculiar devotion to brother and kin. At the opposite extreme, Kreon's son unites with his intended bride against his father, whom he even attempts to kill (648-60, 740-9, 1231-4). The result: obliteration of the whole extended family, as a 'lesson' to the rest of Thebes/Athens in old age' (1353), according to the logic of myth.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>148</sup> For the particular characteristics of the 'Thebes' myth in Athenian tragedy, see esp. Zeitlin 1986, Seaford 1994: 213-20.

<sup>149</sup> The Theban saga is often narrated so as to emphasize the theme of sacrificing one family, or a single man (= *Opfermord*), to save the whole city, whether that family must be Laios' (as in A. *Th.*), or that of one of the 'Sown Men' (as in E. *Pho.*; cf. Pentheus in E. *Ba.*); see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983) 16-54, Zeitlin 1986. Such a story-pattern fits *OT* much better than *Ant.*: but in our play it is not far-fetched to see Kreon in this role of 'ritual substitute', with Ant. an innocent victim wastefully sacrificed along with him; or we might regard the whole 'extended family' (Kreon's and Oidipous' together) as the tainted element that must be eradicated for social health to be restored to Thebes. This taint is repeatedly mentioned or implied, both surrounding Ant.'s own direct ancestry (2-6, 49-57, 594-603, 857-71), and in connection with Kreon's actions within the play (1015, 1066-76, 1311, 1322-5, 1339). Although little is said in the text about any purification or communal relief resulting from the royal deaths, the burial of Pol. does remove the aura of pollution (1199-1205 with *iii.*), and the growing sense of co-operation between Kreon and the Chorus (and, intrinsically, between Chorus and theatre audience) may be felt to promise some further degree of reassurance and continuity; see 1347-53*nn.*, and pp. 54-8 below. For further discussion of the *pharmakos* theory in relation to stage tragedy, see esp. N. Frye, *Anatomy of criticism* (Princeton 1957) 147-50, 206-23; Turner 1969; R. Girard, *Violence and the sacred* (1972; Eng. tr. Baltimore 1977); W. Burkert, *GRBS* 7 (1966) 87-121; Seaford 1994: 310-18; and for Greek ritual practice, see J. Bremmer, *HSCP* 87 (1983) 299-320.

(iii) *Male/female*

Gender lies at the root of the problems of *Ant.* Throughout the play, the status and proper roles of women, the possibilities of female autonomy and subjectivity, and the limitations of traditional views of male authority and discipline, are repeatedly brought up as key issues; and in the figure of the young heroine, who refuses to be cowed by male authority, takes action against an unacceptable political order, speaks out on behalf of divinely sanctioned moral laws, and embraces a terrifying death rather than abandon her principles, S. has created one of the most impressive female figures ever to walk the stage. As we have seen, modern critical responses to Ant. as a character have varied widely, and we possess few clues about the reception of the play by its original audience.<sup>150</sup> None the less, as we hear Kreon shrilly - and erroneously - berating his nieces and son, and insisting on the need for men always to 'be master' of women (e.g., 482-5, 531-5, 677-80, 740-50), even the most misogynistic and paternalistic Athenian must have felt some qualms. Likewise, as Ant. and Ismene argue about what 'women against men' can achieve (61-2, 96-7), and the Chorus sing about the torments of mythical brides and mothers (944-87), it is impossible not to admire Ant.'s courage and achievement, and not to echo some at least of the praise expressed by Haimon (699 'Is she not worthy of golden honour?'), even though we may also sympathize with the more critical views of her presented by the Chorus or the Guard as detached male observers, or even those of Kreon himself.

For a Greek girl, the tokens of coming of age and social success were marriage and children: this was the prime object of her upbringing, and it was by this criterion that her reputation as a woman was established. So the day on which she was led by her father or guardian to the house of her new husband was likely to be the most significant moment of her life. Yet she was also expected to remain perpetually loyal and faithful to her natal family; and in this dual set of obligations, to father and to husband, she is constantly liable to

<sup>150</sup> It is not even known whether women attended the Theatre: see J. Henderson, *TAPA* 121 (1991) 133-47; S. Goldhill, in R. Osborne & S. Hornblower, eds., *Ritual, finance, politics* (Oxford 1994) 347-69. But there is no doubt that the majority of the original audience were male, and we may safely assume that if there was an imagined 'ideal audience' to which the plays were directed, it consisted of Athenian citizens; but see pp. 43-5 above.



Ant., nor even from Kreon, but from the previously ineffectual and impotent Elders (1091–1114, 1334–1353nn.), who to some degree, like most tragic Choruses, come to embody and articulate the audience's own sense of collective relief and renewed solidarity.<sup>185</sup> The mysterious lyric knowledge and archetypal insights that the Chorus (like Teiresias) can intermittently – and finally – muster, give them the power to be both outside and inside the action, and thus put them in the same frame of reference as ourselves; and it is they alone who succeed in giving verbal articulation, however groping and incomplete, to those anarchical yet liberating natural forces, Eros and Dionysos, forces that have somehow to be, if not harnessed or contained, at least channelled into the aesthetic symmetry and recuperative order of the tragic performance itself.<sup>186</sup>

## 6. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE TEXT<sup>187</sup>

S.'s text is not well preserved. Our oldest surviving manuscript of *Ant.* (Laurentianus 32.9 = L) was written c. 950 CE (i.e. some 1,400 years later than the first performance of the play), and the rest of our MSS date from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.<sup>188</sup> (The first (Aldine) printed edition appeared in 1502.) It is not unlikely that S. himself made many changes to his text before, during, and after the period of rehearsal of his play for its first performance;<sup>189</sup> and we

<sup>185</sup> See above pp. 55–8; also Rohdich 1980, Griffith 1995: 108–24 (but cf. Gould 1996). Authority of a kind resides also with the blind, lone prophet, Teiresias, a figure exempt from normal social constraints and pleasures (no wife, no children, no regular political duties), and entitled to speak what he knows with no responsibility for the consequences; see n. 165, above.

<sup>186</sup> See F. Nietzsche, *The birth of tragedy* §§2–3, 7–9, Nussbaum 1986: 82. Henrichs 1990: 264–9 suggests a more directly salvationist function for Dionysos in *Ant.* (see 115–54n.); contrast W-Ingram 1980: 91–116, Segal 1981: 190–206, Seaford 1994.

<sup>187</sup> See esp. A. Turyn, *Studies in the manuscript tradition of the tragedies of Sophocles* (Urbana 1952), Dawe 1973–8, Lj&W vi–xiv, xviii.

<sup>188</sup> A brother of L from about the same date also survives, but only as a faded and largely illegible palimpsest (Leiden BPG 60A = Λ).

<sup>189</sup> Or subsequent performance at the Rural Dionysia, or elsewhere (Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 40–56).

have no way of knowing what version(s) of the text may have been put into circulation by him or others during the fifth and early fourth century BCE.<sup>190</sup> In the mid-fourth century, official texts of A., S., and E. were assembled in Athens, from which actors were subsequently supposed not to depart in mounting new productions. Later, in the third century BCE, scholars in Alexandria assembled the best texts they could find of all major authors, to stock their new Library, and it is generally supposed that the MSS we possess are ultimately derived from these Alexandrian editions, which were also supplemented by copious commentaries during the Hellenistic and Imperial periods.

S.'s plays were not read or performed during the Hellenistic and Roman periods as much as E.'s or Menander's. However, S. continued to be one of the canonical authors, and school editions containing seven select plays eventually became standard; and at least one such edition survived the Middle Ages, to become the basis for our surviving MSS.<sup>191</sup> The precise relations of those MSS to one another (and to other, lost MSS) are much disputed; but this much is agreed: (i) all the surviving MSS belong to a single family, even though different sub-groupings can be identified; (ii) no individual MS is so far superior to the others as to deserve special credit and credence;<sup>192</sup> (iii) the MS tradition of S. during the late Mediaeval and early Renaissance periods was quite 'open', which is to say that copyists often copied from, or consulted, more than one exemplar; on occasion, even a late and unreliable MS can contain a good reading that may have been acquired from a good old source (though sometimes it may be the result of intelligent conjecture by the scribe or his 'corrector').

<sup>190</sup> See R. D. Dawe's introduction to his edition of *OT* (Cambridge 1982) 23–6.

<sup>191</sup> In all, 150 or so MSS contain the 'Triad' (*Ajax, Elek., OT*); about a dozen MSS are regarded as useful witnesses for *Ant.* by Dawe (Teubner), and by Lj&W (OCT) in their recent editions.

<sup>192</sup> Brunck's edition (1786) mainly followed Parisinus gr. 2712 (A), of c. 1300 CE; Dindorf's edition (1832) favoured the tenth-century Laurentianus 32.9 (L), as did most subsequent editors, until Turyn and Dawe demonstrated the unsoundness of this prejudice.

is all too recognizable as 'one of us': a mature male citizen, father, husband, and wielder of full familial and political authority.<sup>183</sup> On first acquaintance, Kreon's values and aspirations strike us for the most part as quite commonplace and typical of Greek men (162–210n.). Even later, as we distance ourselves from his cruel and arrogant assertions, and come to welcome the proof that his treatment of Pol. and Ant. was wrong, we must shudder at the prospect of his confusion, shame, and loss of son, wife, and prestige. In so far as he resembles (many of) us, we recognize that his experience could be ours; and the music, gestures, and ritualistic language of the final dirge, with Kreon and the Chorus closely engaged in response to one another, inevitably strengthen that feeling of sympathy (1257–1353, 1326–53n.). His final cries (1325 'I who am no more than nothing...'; 1339 'useless man', *μῆτραιον ἄνδρα*), confirm that his earlier aspirations to absolute masculinity and authority were illusory: no 'man' should expect to rule over women, or sons, or citizens, to the degree that Kreon attempted. None the less, with his unruly ambitions duly curtailed, he will be allowed to continue to uphold the 'symbolic order' of Thebes (as will the spectators that of Athens), an order that will henceforth elicit (we are to assume) a more restrained and subdued exercise of paternal authority. For if there is anyone whose 'old age' stands to benefit from the 'lessons' of the play (1353 *γῆραι ... ἐδιδάξαν*), it should be Kreon.

Thus Kreon's aspirations and point of view are not so much negated or superseded, as muted and trimmed. Certainly there is no other character in the play who presents a more complete or authoritative model of adult behaviour, through whom we can see an alternative fantasy fulfilled: not Ant., nor the Chorus, nor Teiresias – and certainly not Kreon's own son. In Haimon's relation to his father (and to the mother whom he never mentions), the conflicting demands of erotic desire and filial obedience are clear-cut, and in

<sup>183</sup> This privileging of the male spectator's imagination (as being 'ours') is intended only to reflect fifth-century Athenian norms; in a modern Western audience, as it reads the play or sees it performed by a cast of female and male actors, most women (and not a few men) will presumably tend to identify much more readily with one or both of the sisters than with their dominating uncle.

valuing *ἔρωος* over *φιλία* and *πειθορχία*, Haimon can be seen as asserting his claims as an independent adult (or adolescent) male subject, claims that we may find attractive and appealing, even as we must be troubled by the tone and content of his interactions with his father (626–780, 735, 762–5nn.).<sup>184</sup> The prize over which the two men compete is the person of Ant. herself (632–4, 746–56, 769, 890), and the terms of their quarrel are heavily coloured with sexual jealousy and 'Oedipal' conflict: Haimon indeed tries to kill his father in the 'marriage-chamber' of the cave (1231–4); and his death in his bride's arms directly brings about that of his mother (her self-inflicted wound mirroring his, 1315–16n.). But his aspirations to sexual fulfilment, and to mature adulthood, are thwarted by the combination of his father's repressiveness and his own – and Ant.'s – impetuosity, and when he does finally get to possess the body of his bride, the narrative of his marriage-in-death simultaneously satisfies, as it eternally defers, his and our desire (1220–5, 1234–41), as if to bring home to us the inaccessibility of such rewards outside the proper structures of parental and societal approval. Indeed, this conflict between father and son is 'Oedipal' not only in the narrow, familial sense (i.e. concerning access to the body of the mother/bride), but also in the larger sense, concerning the legitimate control of language and political authority, for Haimon insists that his opposition to his father is based on concern for him personally and for the *polis*, rather than on his own desires (626–780n., cf. 637–8, 701–2, 740–9n.), and Kreon explicitly equates paternal authority in the home with political order at large (658–60, 672–80). And in this struggle for authority, too, neither father nor son truly prevails, for, as a self-styled 'non-entity' (1325), without son or wife to 'rule' in his own house, Kreon can barely bring himself to contemplate either the present or the future at all (1328–32, 1343–4) and wants only to be taken 'out of the way' (*ἐκτροδῶν*, 1321, 1339).

In the end, such mature voices of authority as we may identify in the closing scene of the play seem to proceed, not from Haimon or

<sup>184</sup> Likewise, the erotic excitement invoked by the Chorus (781–800) is interlaced with sobering reminders of Love's damaging consequences (790–1 'He who has you is mad. You twist even just men's minds, and make them unjust...'). See further Griffith 1988: 65–74.



hot-headed young Haimon (whom Ant. ignores, but Ismene mentions warmly, almost longingly, 570–2; cf. 781–800).

Furthermore, as we have seen, the two sisters present powerfully contrastive models of feminine/filial behaviour. On the one hand, Ismene, as the (not unconflicted) embodiment of conformity and subservience to male authority, the state, and her legal guardian (despite 531–76), supports her sister and the prospect of her marriage (568–74, 572–6n.), and thus provides a model of well-integrated and 'mature' psycho-social attitudes – the consequence of which, it could be said, is her survival as part of the 'order' that is restored by play's end, but also her relative lack of dramatic interest, and ultimately her silence and disappearance from the text.<sup>177</sup> By contrast, Ant. with her single-minded devotion to the memory of her irrecoverable 'natural' father (and, less so, mother: cf. 2–3n., 471–2 τὸ γέννημα ὧμόν ἐξ ὁμοῦ πατρός, etc.) and to the body of her beloved brother (esp. 73–6, 898–9nn.), rejects her sister (77–99, 526–8nn.), challenges the authority of her κύριος (458–9, 469–70, 509, 942) and of the male order of the citizens' (907 βίαι πολιτῶν, cf. 937–43n.), and consigns herself to a childless 'marriage' in the recesses of the earth/mother that bore her (806–16, 842–7, 937–43nn., 1204–5), where she is to be reunited for ever with her father and brother(s).<sup>178</sup> She will never grow up and become a 'woman'.<sup>179</sup> Her peculiar self-assertion, in opposition to the submissive conformity of Ismene, seems to raise the possibility of a true 'subjectivity' (selfhood, choice, agency; cf. 1, 523nn., and esp. 875 σὲ δ' αὐτόγνωτος ὄλεσ' ὀργά), as does her independent act – twice performed – of burying her brother on her

<sup>177</sup> The silencing of Ismene, and her removal to the status of mere spectator of the action (from outside the area of the *orchestra* and *skênê*), implicitly confirms her identification with the rest of the 'normal', socially integrated and publicly silent, female members of Theban/Athenian society; cf. Showalter 1985, Belsey 1985.

<sup>178</sup> It remains unclear (and perhaps irrelevant) what she feels (and does) about Eteokles (cf. 898–9n.), since she has no familial duties to perform for him.

<sup>179</sup> S-Inwood 1990, cf. Foley 1996. In Anouilh's play, this association between Ant.'s immaturity and her refusal to accept the political-symbolic order is more explicit: [Ant.] 'I am not here to understand ... I am here to say no to you and die.' [Creon] 'It is easy to say no ...' (Anouilh 1958: 37).

own initiative and with her own hands (900 αὐτόχειρ, cf. 43). Yet in her absolute self-negation (reflected even in her self-definition in terms of 'love' for her dead family: 523 συμφορᾶν ἔφυγ), and in her solitary death, she seems after all to confirm that the only acceptable place for such female subjectivity is – in Hades, where she can 'lie with' her family for ever (73–6, 891–9, 1204–5, 1240).<sup>180</sup>

Choral fantasies of nymphs roaming joyously on the mountains with Dionysos (1128–36, 1150–2), or of a bride and groom exchanging longing glances (795–800), contrast with Ant.'s despairing contemplation of a solitary, virginal death, and in our final image of her, she is dangling lifeless and oblivious in the cave, the inert object of Haimon's passionate embraces (1236–41). Ant. receives no final resting-place in the play, no social reintegration, for she is the one victim entirely omitted from Kreon's final cortège. It is as if she remains forever in the cave.<sup>181</sup> Her resistance to one symbolic/paternal order (Kreon's) has been absolute: but so has her reabsorption into another (her dead father's/Hades'), as she is handed over by her guardian to a subterranean husband, and condemned (like Kore-Persephone) to eternal childlessness and childlessness.<sup>182</sup>

Whereas both these sisters are figures requiring a large imaginative leap for a male spectator to achieve full identification, their uncle

<sup>180</sup> The repetition of κείσομαι, κείραι, κοιμήματα, κτλ. (73–6, 1240; 861–9; etc.), combines associations of sex, funeral, and dedicatory offering. For an analysis of the incestuous element in Ant.'s behaviour, cf. Seaford 1990: 213–14, Loraux 1986, Johnson 1997. In the end, however, it may be impossible and unnecessary to draw a sharp line between 'sexual' and 'non-sexual', 'normal' and 'incestuous' affections. Her feelings are extremely (abnormally) strong: but an Athenian audience would probably not find them pathological. (In Anouilh's version, both the erotic and the childish ('no') aspects of Ant.'s devotion to Pol. are made much more prominent.)

<sup>181</sup> Contrast too the grimly negative images of Niobe (823–33), Kleopatra, and the Boreads (966–87), etc., all invoked as analogies to Ant. and confirming her ultimate sterility and exclusion.

<sup>182</sup> See 810–16, 893–4, 1118–21nn., and Segal 1981: 200–6, Katz 1994: 92–5. Perhaps the fleeting image of her lying, bloodied, in the embrace of Haimon, provides a half-hearted, safely belated endorsement of her claims (as an assertive female subject) to sexual fulfilment and marriage (1240–1): like so many dangerously asocial hero(in)es, she can be allowed her full subjectivity only in the moment of her final removal from society.

and anxieties that develop in every child, as it faces the demands of growing up and entering adult society: the need to separate from the mother, to individuate itself as an autonomous person whose desires will not always be met by an ever-present, ever-nurturing maternal body, and to define itself as a gendered, desiring subject in relation to the authority of the Father.<sup>171</sup> According to orthodox Freudian theory, this 'Father', in the case of a boy-child, is a competitor for the love and body of the mother, in a competition that can only be won by the son when he renounces his mother's body, finds another female object of his affections, and becomes in turn a Father in his own right. In the case of a girl-child, the 'Father' is the chief agent (real or symbolic) of the patriarchal order that subjects her (as bride and mother) to a permanent role as object of male desire, sexual possession, and legal domination, a role that (allegedly) comes naturally to her in view of her 'lack' of male attributes.<sup>172</sup>

Given the intensity of the anxieties that surround these relations,

<sup>171</sup> The term 'Father' may be meant literally, or figuratively to symbolize patriarchal order, the Law, and even Language itself: see, e.g., Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (1966; Eng. tr. New York 1977) 1-7, 146-78, 281-91.

<sup>172</sup> Freudian models usually take for granted the essential difference between girls and boys, 'mothers' and 'fathers', whether these differences are taken to be natural or culturally constructed. Furthermore, most psychoanalytical theory (and practice) has bought heavily into the idea of the essential *normality* of patriarchy, and the naturalness of the restriction of female aspirations to those of marriage and child-bearing; this has made it all the easier for them to believe that the familial patterns and attitudes analysed by Freud and his followers, upon which the theories of 'self' and of gender norms are based, are universally true of all human beings, whatever familial and societal structures they may have grown up in. This seems to me unlikely; see, e.g., G. Rubin, 'The traffic in women', in R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an anthropology of women* (New York 1975) 175-210, T. De Lauretis, *Technologies of gender* (New York 1987). But there are enough points of similarity between ancient Athenian and modern Western family patterns for application of the same model to both to have some value. For orthodox Freudian readings of Greek culture and literature, see esp. Slater 1968, R. S. Caldwell, 'The psychoanalytic interpretation of Greek myth', in L. Edmunds, ed., *Approaches to Greek myth* (Baltimore 1990) 342-89, Green 1979. For helpful feminist modifications of Freudian psychoanalytical theory, with regard specifically to Greek tragedy, see esp. duBois 1988, N. S. Rabinowitz, *Anxiety veiled* (Princeton 1993), Wohl 1998.

and the instability of the gendered 'identity' that each author and audience-member is constantly (but surreptitiously) struggling to (re)construct and maintain, the appeal of dramatic and literary fiction is almost irresistible: for it gives its audience a safe and harmless opportunity to explore, or experiment with, a variety of 'subject positions', and encourages them to identify with characters and situations that in 'real life' they might never dare to imagine or confront.<sup>173</sup> Like a dream, or a game, the drama can thus 'play out' their fantasies in disguise, and may thereby provide a measure of vicarious psychological (re)integration and/or symbolic gratification.<sup>174</sup>

From the opening moments of *Ant.*, we are drawn to identify with one or both of the young, unmarried sisters, a pair of perspectives that involves us immediately in a complex and unstable pattern of relations:<sup>175</sup> with the dead, tainted parents; with the uncle who acts *in loco parentis* and embodies the adult, male (social, sexual, and symbolic) order to which the sisters are expected to subordinate themselves (173-4, 207-10, 484-9, 699-80, etc.); with the ineffectual yet reassuringly conventional (almost grandfatherly) Chorus;<sup>176</sup> and subsequently with the breezy but irresponsible Guard; and even with

<sup>173</sup> For helpful discussions of 'identification' (especially around the issue of gender-construction and relation to the 'Father'), see J. Laplanche, *Life and death in psychoanalysis* (Baltimore 1976), K. Silverman, *Male subjectivity at the margins* (New York 1992), D. Fuss, *Identification papers* (New York 1992), J. P. Butler, *Bodies that matter* (New York 1993) 93-119, 187-222.

<sup>174</sup> This 'gratification' will normally include a sense of closure and of restored 'order' and control; also (in the case of comedy at least) the guarantee of a 'happy ending' (usually including the promise of material and sexual fulfilment); cf. Iser 1978: 39-50. But it is less easy to determine what kind of 'gratification' is provided by a tragedy such as *Ant.*, though much of this Introduction may be said to have been indirectly addressing this issue. See also Green 1979, Wohl 1998; and (for a less overtly psychoanalytic account) Zeitlin 1996.

<sup>175</sup> The instability, but also the strength, of the 'identification' by the (pre-dominantly male) ancient audience with each of the two sisters must have been increased by the fact that both characters were played by male actors, a convention which, though familiar to audiences of that period, was none the less inherently unsettling and tension-creating; see Zeitlin 1996: 341-416.

<sup>176</sup> In the BBC-Princeton *Films for the Humanities* production, they wear dinner-jackets (tuxedos) throughout.

We do not blame the Guard or the Elders for the catastrophe of *Ant.*<sup>165</sup> But they deserve no credit either for resolving the tragic conflict. They have done as little as they could, merely staying as far as possible out of the way, expressing sympathy and advice, and watching the action unfold in the hands – and on the heads – of their leaders. Attic (like Shakespearean) tragedy thus fosters in its mixed audience of commoners and aristocrats a dangerous, yet reassuring, interdependency between leaders and led;<sup>166</sup> and this play, even as it poses radical and unsettling questions about gender roles, political authority, class relations, and divine justice, contrives none the less to provide both an aesthetic and a social resolution that is as conservative and hierarchical as it is predictable. The whole process is strangely seductive and comforting, even for a democratic audience. We may be troubled, even outraged, by what we have witnessed on the stage; but in the end we are led by the text and by the action to *accept* it, to be *satisfied* with it, and (temporarily at least) to be *convinced*: this is how it must (have) be(en).<sup>167</sup>

(g) *Fantasies*

Going to the theatre, or hearing a poem, or reading a book, draws us into a unique, fictional world that is constructed out of many elements: some actual or historical, others more or less imaginary and fantastic. The situations, characters, and viewpoints represented in a tragedy extend far beyond the personal experience of any one author,

<sup>165</sup> Nor do we blame Teiresias, who represents another (very different) strand in the audience's tangled skein of responses: the all-wise, yet socially disengaged prophet shares with us a unique grasp of what is about to happen, and why; and like us, he is by profession an observer and interpreter, not an agent. Thus, while he is not himself responsible for the tragic suffering of the main characters, he connives at it, and even approves of it and helps to enforce it as being dramatically necessary.

<sup>166</sup> See further Griffith 1995, 1998.

<sup>167</sup> It is this paralyzing dynamic of 'Aristotelian' necessity and resignation that Brecht was determined to resist, with his principles of 'defamiliarization' and 'epic theatre'. Of course, resistance to the impulses towards acceptance and 'satisfaction' is not unthinkable, whether through 'reading against the grain' or 'negative hermeneutics' (or even heavy doses of 'irony'); see above pp. 43–5, and, e.g., Rose 1992: 1–42, Dollimore 1989: xvi–lxviii.

whose task it is to combine mythological, narratological, linguistic, and imagistic elements (selected both from tradition and from contemporary culture at large) with her/his own personal insights and memories, to create this particular dramatic world.<sup>168</sup> Conversely, the process of mentally reassembling and *re-*creating the play, through the act of reading or of watching it in performance, involves the audience both in responding conscientiously to the verbal and visual cues provided by the text and stage conventions, and also in opening up their own individual imaginations to the process of empathetic identification with the events and characters of the fiction.<sup>169</sup>

Much of the pleasure (and some at least of the benefit) of drama derives from the cognitive and affective processes of piecing together the action and the human figures on stage, and in losing ourselves sufficiently in the illusion to be able to share the experiences of this or that dramatic character, as if it were happening to ourselves. Our 'consciousness' is thereby vicariously expanded. But there are likely to be other, subconscious, processes at work too. The audience's 'repertoire' of previous experiences and expectations will include, in addition to the common stock necessary to tune in to and decipher the linguistic and dramatic codes of a particular text,<sup>170</sup> innumerable subconscious desires, fantasies, and fears that may contribute powerfully to their engagement with the drama unfolding before them. There are indeed good reasons to suppose that one of the chief functions and appeals of fiction (as of art in general) is the exploitation and satisfaction of such fantasies, a process of which neither author nor audience may be fully aware.

While psychoanalytical criticism, like psychoanalysis itself, takes many forms, most versions focus especially on the repressed desires

<sup>168</sup> For helpful discussion of the semiotic codes by means of which relatively small fragments of stage dialogue and visual action are conventionally organized to suggest a whole 'world' populated by real 'characters', see Beckerman 1970, Elam 1980: 98–134.

<sup>169</sup> Iser 1978, Jauss 1974; cf. Lada 1993, Bennett 1997.

<sup>170</sup> Such a minimal common stock is what is entailed in 'literary competence' (above, n. 78). But beyond this minimum, there may be a fair degree of variation in the personal and cultural experiences of the different audience members, esp. in the twentieth century. On the respective 'repertoires' of author and reader, see Iser 1978: 68–85.

experience.<sup>160</sup> Without these elite figures, where would the tragedy be?

In the course of *Ant.*, the city is almost ruined by a collision of two high-handed aristocrats, the one parading expressions of democratic loyalty that quickly lapse into paranoid assertions of his own power, based on 'obedience to rule . . . right or wrong' (676, 667), the other outspokenly defying the city's edicts and officers in the name of 'unwritten laws' and the traditional claims of family blood-ties – a phenomenon all too familiar to fifth-century Athenians, as they recalled the chequered careers of their own Peisistratids, Alkmaionids, Kimonids, and other dynastic families.<sup>161</sup> By the end of the play, the audience may derive some reassurance from the political developments that they have witnessed, whereby Kreon's authoritarianism, and the excessive pusillanimity and blindness of his advisers, have been replaced by a collaborative relationship between ruler and 'citizens', conducive to a more harmonious civic future (1091–1114, 1347–53nn.; cf. 1183 ὁσσοί); and perhaps they may see in these developments some confirmation that their own democratic system can prevent such egregious misbehaviour among the elite.<sup>162</sup> But, given the Elders' distinctively upper-class status (843, 940, 988), and the exclusion throughout from the stage of any truly 'democratic' presence or voices,<sup>163</sup> the restoration of political order that we witness taking place in the closing scenes amounts rather, it seems, to a form

<sup>160</sup> See Bradley 1905, Jaus 1974, Griffith 1995: 107–24; we may compare too the Chorus' and Ant.'s attitude to Niobe (823–38, with n.).

<sup>161</sup> Further examples were close at hand, too: e.g., the kings of Sparta and Thessaly, or the tyrants of Samos and Syracuse; cf. Shakespeare's and Marlowe's England, with its anxieties about the monarchy and the social mobility of the new bourgeoisie.

<sup>162</sup> See Rohdich 1980, J. Winkler in Winkler & Zeitlin 1990, Goldhill 1990, Rose 1992: 185–94, Seaford 1994. Yet Attic tragedy invariably concludes with the elite continuing legitimately in power, even if this or that disruptively dominant individual may have been removed or cut down to size; cf. Griffith 1995, 1998.

<sup>163</sup> The subdued voice of the majority of the Theban citizens, quoted vainly by Haemon and Ant. herself (690–700, 732–9; cf. 509), is never elevated to a position of authority, or even autonomy, and they never are allowed to speak for themselves – unless the low-life Guard be thought to be representative of the *dēmos* as a whole.

of aristocratic oligarchy. Furthermore, it has not been the ordinary citizens, nor any kind of democratic process, that opposed Thebes' tyrannically-inclined leader and rescued the city from disaster: it took the defiance of a princess and the rage of the leader's own love-struck son – together with the decisive intervention of the gods and their mysterious prophet.<sup>164</sup>

For all their admiration of Ant.'s boldness and loyalty, and their respect for Kreon's (male, elite) status and political ideals (as initially expressed), few members of the audience are likely to identify wholeheartedly with either, as they plunge into their tragic collision. For the most part, their relationship to the stage action will mirror that of the internal audiences of the play (Chorus, Guard, Messengers). With all their limitations, the cautious, ineffectual, and complacent Elders represent a thoroughly 'normal' perspective, especially as the play nears its conclusion: 'Both of you have spoken well . . .' (725), 'We are just human beings, mortal-born . . .' (835), 'Power is not to be flouted . . . Your own temper ruined you' (873–4), 'The great words of boasters are paid for with great blows' (1350–3), etc. We may even recognize our own reactions, albeit exaggerated and parodied, in the expressions of mixed sympathy and relief voiced by the Guard: 'It brought pleasure and pain at the same time: it's a pleasant relief to escape from trouble oneself, yet it's painful to bring others that we care about into trouble. But for me at any rate the most important thing is my own survival and well-being (σωτηρίας)' (436–40). For, though his moral stature (like his social status) may be somewhat lower than ours, his relationship to the tragic action closely parallels the audience's: he is an uncomfortable accomplice, quick to disassociate himself from the mistakes and sufferings of the key characters, yet willing to acknowledge concern for them, even partial responsibility for their troubles – provided that he is not himself directly endangered. And above all, he can be counted on to survive (400 'I have the right to be released from these troubles', cf. 445, and 315–31, 407–40nn.).

<sup>164</sup> And these mysterious 'gods' (as often in S.) appear to have small connection with the cults and processes of the *poiái*: rather, they seem to belong to a primordial or ancestral realm that is oblivious to political process or civic cult (450–1, 582–93, 601–3, 1064–90nn., etc.).

equally with the Elders – remains intact (1257–1353, 1347–53nn.). Only one female has survived – Ismene, who relapses into safe invisibility and silence well before the end of the play; and she is the one who has done the least to disrupt the prevailing male order, the one who spells out explicitly that women are ‘not to battle against men’ (62). It must be remarked, too, that during the course of the play the feminine solidarity of the two sisters has quickly been sacrificed by Ant. (and by S.?) in the name of absolute loyalty to brother and father: as a true ‘lover’ of her family (99, 523) she cannot ‘hate’ her brother or father, only her sister (86, 93–4; cf. 543, 549). And Ismene’s attempts to mend this breach repeatedly fail.<sup>155</sup>

The choices for a female subject in this play are thus limited indeed: speak out, take action – and die in isolation; or keep your place indoors, in silence, in subjection, so that men may continue their misrule. How far are these choices felt to reflect the tragic peculiarities of the family of Oidipous and fictional Thebes, how far the norms of contemporary Athenian life? Did S.’s audience even notice the absence of Ismene, or the silence about Ant., in the closing scenes of the play?<sup>156</sup>

#### (f) *Politics*

The action of *Ant.*, like that of most Attic tragedies, centres on an elite family, whose aspirations, achievements, and experiences reverberate mightily throughout their whole community.<sup>157</sup> The building

<sup>155</sup> See P. Phelan, *Mourning sex* (New York 1997) 13–16, reassessing Lacan’s claim (1992: 260–83) that Ant. ‘incarnates ... the desire of death as such ... which is in turn ‘linked to the desire of the mother’’. See too Johnson 1997, and Katz 1994: 91–6, who argues that ‘the play describes a progression from an attempt to reconstitute a symbiotic unity with Ismene, through rejection of the living sister for the dead brother and the concomitant assumption of the maternal role, to a final and total collapse back into the dead past ...’ (p. 95).

<sup>156</sup> We may compare the closing scenes of *E. Hipp.*, or the ending of *Ar. Lysistrata*, where the heroine is likewise removed so that the men can complete the reordering of Athens and Sparta. See further Wohl 1998; also Showalter 1985, Belsey 1985.

<sup>157</sup> That ‘community’ may be as large as humankind in general (e.g. in the cases of Prometheus in *A. Prom.*, or Herakles in *S. Tr.*); but usually it is a *polis* or an army.

that stands centre-stage, and provides the main focus of the play’s action and the audience’s attention, represents their palace, in front of which the Elders of the city are gathered, attending on the king’s needs; the royal family passes in and out of the central door, and messengers come and go in their service. And, in accordance with tragic convention, although all the characters speak the same dialect and maintain more or less the same tragic dignity of diction and deportment,<sup>158</sup> a clear social distinction is maintained between those (named) characters of the elite and the (generally anonymous) minor figures, including the Chorus, who come either to attend to their needs, or to watch, advise, and sympathize with them – and who eventually will depart to other areas of the city to continue with their lives, chastened but relatively undamaged by the tragic denouement.

This distinction is reflected to a large degree in the relationship between the leading characters and the audience, who tend to be cast, both by the stage action and by the physical layout of the theatre, into a role similar to that of the Chorus, Messengers, or Guard. Although the spectators (ancient and modern) may be made up of several heterogeneous elements, and their ‘gaze’ and point of view may shift in unpredictable ways, from empathetic involvement with the first-hand experiences of the main characters, to the more distanced and deferential – and at times ironically slanted – views of the Chorus and other minor figures,<sup>159</sup> our relationship to the tragic ‘elite’ will normally comprise a complex mixture of admiration and disapproval, anxiety and dependency, as these central figures are presented to us alternately, or even simultaneously, as grand and superior objects of veneration, and as fatally error-prone and vulnerable misfits. Consequently, the audience may feel itself deeply involved in, and impressed by, the main characters’ larger-than-life struggles, and yet ultimately grateful for its own relative distance and immunity from their risks, achievements, and sufferings, a combination of responses that appears to be characteristic of the tragic

<sup>158</sup> The Guard provides some slightly ‘lower,’ comic elements, in exception to this general rule; see 223–331, 388–400, 437–40nn., Seidensticker 1982.

<sup>159</sup> By contrast, the ‘gaze’ of a modern cinema audience is relatively easy to track; see J. Ellis, *Visible fictions* (London 1982), K. Silverman 1983, Griffith 1995: 72–81, 1998: 36–42.

conflicting demands from both sides. In Ant.'s view, in the shadow of civil war and continuing political crisis, the prospect of attachment to any group other than her father's/brother's family is tantamount to 'betrayal' (46), and she sees the only future awaiting her as reunion with her family beneath the earth (73-6 'I shall lie with him, united in love (φίλη ... φίλου μέτρα) ... for ever ...'; cf. 897-9). In a grim metaphor that comes to be repeated as a virtual refrain, she prepares for her 'marriage to Hades' (806-16, 893-4nn.), in the dark underground 'bridal chamber' that will also be her 'tomb'. Her death may carry a kind of 'nobility' and 'glory' (72, 502, 695, etc.; cf. 72n.); but we recognize it as a cruel curtailment and perversion of all the sexual and maternal desires that should be expected of a woman.<sup>151</sup> The pathos of Ant.'s mixed despair and defiance, as she is led off to death, brings home unforgettably the sense of a young woman's terror and isolation at leaving her family home to take up residence in another man's house and bed – but in this case deprived of the compensating excitement of torches, music, and celebrating companions, and the prospect of a desired new status and future: 'Now he has laid hands on me and is taking me away – unmarried, unsung, receiving no share of marriage to anyone or raising of children, but all alone, bereft of those who care for me ...' (916-19).<sup>152</sup> And our final image of Ant. is of her dead white cheek spattered with blood from her bridegroom's embrace (1240-1), as her body provokes the final agonistic collision of the two men who seek to control her.

The figure of Ant. herself is gendered in curiously ambiguous and conflicted terms. On the one hand, her devotion to family and personal attention to her brother's funeral rites correspond to traditional 'feminine' priorities; and, as we saw, her language is differentiated from that of Kreon and the other male speakers by its diction and modes of argumentation.<sup>153</sup> Yet her self-assertive and independent

<sup>151</sup> The curtailment is both external and internal to Ant.: her 'guardian' (*kuriós*) is the very one who is 'leading' her to her deadly bridegroom; and she herself exercises her own subjective preference to the point of explicitly choosing brother and father over any prospective husband or children (904-14).

<sup>152</sup> See further Scaford 1987, Rehm 1994: 59-71.

<sup>153</sup> See above, pp. 20, 36-7, and n. 125.

manner, her outspoken defiance of Kreon, and her sharp rejection of Ismene's conventionally 'feminine' mentality, together with her willingness to take action – and speak out – in the public sphere and in the name of the 'laws', mark her out as a highly unconventional and exceptional 'woman'.<sup>154</sup>

The play thus raises deeply troubling questions about the status and expectations of women and about society's deep-seated gender conflicts. What does its outcome suggest by way of an answer? Through her words and actions, Ant. has publicly made her point, and has to some degree been vindicated and won glory (692-700): but she is dead, and she is largely neglected in the final scenes – no lament or honorific funeral for her is mentioned (1226-36, 1340-3nn.). She has given voice to the claims of kin and the cult of the dead, areas in which women were traditionally expected to be vocal and active; but in the end her voice has been replaced by that of Teiresias, speaking both for chthonic and 'upper' powers (1068-76), and also for 'the city' as a whole (992-4, 1015). Her 'unfeminine' venture into the male world of public action has destroyed her and others close to her. And even the burial of Pol., which she has twice attempted, is finally performed by Kreon and his men (1197-1204).

Eurydike is dead, too, the innocent victim of Kreon's mistakes; and although in her brief scene she is given a few lines that disturbingly draw attention to the recurrent miseries of her life as wife and mother (1191, 1301-5nn.), she is quickly silenced, for her role is primarily to be another vehicle for Kreon's punishment. In the closing scene, the focus is thus almost exclusively on Kreon and his sufferings. He may not have 'mastered' the women, as he intended, but he has survived them, and his political authority – shared now more

<sup>154</sup> Or, to put this another way: the contrasting patterns of behaviour and speech embodied in Ant., Ismene, and Eurydike – and within the single figure of Ant. herself – demonstrate the large (and often inconsistent) range of performativities contained within the category 'woman'. Ant. is hailed both as being 'of all women ... deserving of golden honour' (693-9) and as one who shamelessly attempts to assert herself as a 'man' in place of the king (484); conversely, Ismene can be said to be both a 'better' (more conventional) 'woman' and a less devoted (less single-minded) 'daughter' than her sister; see further M. Griffith, 'Antigone and her sisters', forthcoming in A. Lardinois and L. McClure, eds., *Making silence speak: women's voices in Greek literature and society* (Princeton 1999).

Only two ancient papyri have been found containing small bits of *Ant.* (lines 242-6, 689-90): they add nothing useful.<sup>193</sup> Ancient authors and scholars (such as Demosthenes, Aristotle, Plutarch, Didymos, Athenaios, Eustathios, and Pollux) occasionally quote – not always accurately – from the play, and thus provide independent testimony for the lines in question (223, 241, 292, 318, 563, 628, 712-14, 742, 911, 1166-7; see *apparatus criticus* and nn.). But for the most part we must rely on the MSS, and when these appear all to be in error, we must seek to emend them, or acknowledge ignorance and print daggers.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>193</sup> R. A. Pack, *The Greek and Latin literary papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt* (2nd ed., Ann Arbor 1967), nos. 1463, 1571. Pack no. 377 contains a comic parody of 712-14 (see n.).

<sup>194</sup> For a description of the symbols and editorial criteria used in the text and *apparatus criticus* of this edition, see p. 69.

## A NOTE ON THE TEXT AND APPARATUS CRITICUS

In this edition, the *apparatus criticus* has been kept as short and simple as possible. No effort is made to record particular MS sources and affiliations: instead I use symbols (Φ, Ω) denoting a minority, majority, or unanimity of MSS. (There is one exception: those readings of the fourteenth-century 'Triclinian' family of MSS, which are likely to be emendations by Demetrius Triclinius himself, are designated by the symbol T.)

In noting variant readings, I have included only cases in which serious doubt exists as to what S. wrote, and I have excluded orthographical details that do not affect the meaning or metre.

- Ω Reading of all or most MSS.
- Φ Reading of a minority of MSS.<sup>1</sup>
- scholiast Reading (explicit or implicit) of one or more scholia.

For fuller description and reporting of particular MSS and their affiliations, the reader should consult Lloyd-Jones & Wilson's OCT, Dawe's Teubner edition, and Dawe 1973-8.

<sup>1</sup> Φ may comprise half-a-dozen or more MSS, or just one or two, or no more than a γράφεται, or *ante correctionem*, or *supra lineam* variant.



Ant., nor even from Kreon, but from the previously ineffectual and impotent Elders (1091–1114, 1334–1353mm.), who to some degree, like most tragic Choruses, come to embody and articulate the audience's own sense of collective relief and renewed solidarity.<sup>185</sup> The mysterious lyric knowledge and archetypal insights that the Chorus (like Teiresias) can intermittently – and finally – muster, give them the power to be both outside and inside the action, and thus put them in the same frame of reference as ourselves; and it is they alone who succeed in giving verbal articulation, however groping and incomplete, to those anarchical yet liberating natural forces, Eros and Dionysos, forces that have somehow to be, if not harnessed or contained, at least channelled into the aesthetic symmetry and recuperative order of the tragic performance itself.<sup>186</sup>

## 6. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE TEXT<sup>187</sup>

S.'s text is not well preserved. Our oldest surviving manuscript of *Ant.* (Laurentianus 32.9 = L) was written c. 950 CE (i.e. some 1,400 years later than the first performance of the play), and the rest of our MSS date from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.<sup>188</sup> (The first (Aldine) printed edition appeared in 1502.) It is not unlikely that S. himself made many changes to his text before, during, and after the period of rehearsal of his play for its first performance,<sup>189</sup> and we

<sup>185</sup> See above pp. 55–8; also Rohdich 1980, Griffith 1995: 108–24 (but cf. Gould 1996). Authority of a kind resides also with the blind, lone prophet, Teiresias, a figure exempt from normal social constraints and pleasures (no wife, no children, no regular political duties), and entitled to speak what he knows with no responsibility for the consequences; see n. 165, above.

<sup>186</sup> See F. Nietzsche, *The birth of tragedy* §§2–3, 7–9, Nussbaum 1986: 82. Henrichs 1990: 264–9 suggests a more directly salvationist function for Dionysos in *Ant.* (see 1115–54n.); contrast W-Ingram 1980: 91–116, Segal 1981: 190–206, Seaford 1994.

<sup>187</sup> See esp. A. Turyn, *Studies in the manuscript tradition of the tragedies of Sophocles* (Urbana 1952), Dawe 1973–8, Lj&W vi–xiv, xviii.

<sup>188</sup> A brother of L from about the same date also survives, but only as a faded and largely illegible palimpsest (Leiden BPG 60A = Λ).

<sup>189</sup> Or subsequent performance at the Rural Dionysia, or elsewhere (Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 40–56).

have no way of knowing what version(s) of the text may have been put into circulation by him or others during the fifth and early fourth century BCE.<sup>190</sup> In the mid-fourth century, official texts of A., S., and E. were assembled in Athens, from which actors were subsequently supposed not to depart in mounting new productions. Later, in the third century BCE, scholars in Alexandria assembled the best texts they could find of all major authors, to stock their new Library, and it is generally supposed that the MSS we possess are ultimately derived from these Alexandrian editions, which were also supplemented by copious commentaries during the Hellenistic and Imperial periods.

S.'s plays were not read or performed during the Hellenistic and Roman periods as much as E.'s or Menander's. However, S. continued to be one of the canonical authors, and school editions containing seven select plays eventually became standard; and at least one such edition survived the Middle Ages, to become the basis for our surviving MSS.<sup>191</sup> The precise relations of those MSS to one another (and to other, lost MSS) are much disputed; but this much is agreed: (i) all the surviving MSS belong to a single family, even though different sub-groupings can be identified; (ii) no individual MS is so far superior to the others as to deserve special credit and credence;<sup>192</sup> (iii) the MS tradition of S. during the late Mediaeval and early Renaissance periods was quite 'open', which is to say that copyists often copied from, or consulted, more than one exemplar; on occasion, even a late and unreliable MS can contain a good reading that may have been acquired from a good old source (though sometimes it may be the result of intelligent conjecture by the scribe or his 'corrector').

<sup>190</sup> See R. D. Dawe's introduction to his edition of *OT* (Cambridge 1982) 23–6.

<sup>191</sup> In all, 150 or so MSS contain the 'Triad' (*Ajax*, *El.*, *OT*); about a dozen MSS are regarded as useful witnesses for *Ant.* by Dawe (Teubner), and by Lj&W (OCT) in their recent editions.

<sup>192</sup> Brunck's edition (1786) mainly followed Parisinus gr. 2712 (A), of c. 1300 CE; Dindorf's edition (1832) favoured the tenth-century Laurentianus 32.9 (L), as did most subsequent editors, until Turyn and Dawe demonstrated the unsoundness of this prejudice.



SOPHOCLES  
ANTIGONE

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