Sophocles' ANTIGONE

THE BACKGROUND

The farmers of ancient Greece ground their grain on a large circular dirt floor, and it was within this same threshing circle that they held their seasonal ceremonies honouring Dionysus, the god of fertility. At the ceremonies, a priest of the cult and a group of his followers stood within the circle and the audience gathered around it to watch the performances dance and sing in praise of their god. In time, the performers assumed a ritual pattern and the songs and dances were organized as a part of the narrative sequence relating a story from the mythical life of Dionysus. The priest became a narrator, and his followers became a responsive chorus who enlarged upon the story which the priest related. When one of these priests, Thoetas, added another person to the group who was to impersonate Dionysus himself, the art of drama was born and the rudimentary conventions of the Greek theatre were established.

By the time of Sophocles, the simple form of the Thespian playlet had been greatly altered; Sophocles, in fact, had been the chief innovator. He increased the number of actors from one to three and placed greater emphasis on the actors than on the chorus. Yet, his theatre, like that of Aeschylus, was still conditioned by the old, rural practices. The singing and dancing chorus, while diminished in size and length, was still present and its acting area was still a round dirt floor; the audience was still seated in a semi-circle around the chorus area; the god Dionysus, longer the subject of the play, was still the patron of the theatre and a temple dedicated to him was erected just behind the chorus circle facing the audience.

The theatre at Athens, where Sophocles' plays were first performed, seated approximately twenty thousand people. The actors in order to be seen and heard, wore large, peaked masks and elevated shoes; and the acting was stylized into a ritualistic conception of gestures and intoned speeches.

The Greek theatre is an integral part of Sophocles' drama. He, as every playwright must, wrote in terms of the theatre he had to work with. In his plays, Sophocles used all the conventions of his theatre, but that is not remarkable; what is remarkable, and one of the secrets of the greatness of his plays, is that he created from those conventions the form which, conveyed the human realities he wished to examine.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

"Blessed was Sophocles, happy in his long life, his fortunes, his talent; happy to have written so many beautiful tragedies and so a fine end of a life which knew no misfortune." -Plutarch.

Sophocles' life was the happy exception to the common picture of the struggling artist. He was born in wealth, was unusually handsome, possessed a fine, athletic body, was noted for his wit and social graces and maintained the full power of his talent to the time of his death at the age of 85. He wrote over one hundred plays, eighteen of them winning first prize at the Athenian dramatic festivals, and the rest never losing to take second prize. Only seven of his plays and scattered fragments have come to us, and these, especially OEDIPUS REY, ANTIGONE, and OEDIPUS AT COLONUS are among the greatest plays in all dramatic literature.

Sophocles was born in Colonus, a small city just outside of Athens, in 496 B.C. He was trained in music and philosophy and served on the Board of Generals which governed the civil and military affairs of Athens and was at one time a director of the Treasury Department in the Delian Confederacy. Scant as our knowledge of the man may be, we know a great deal about him as an artist. He shows an exactness in what seems to be a master of dramatic skill. His creation of plots, his creation of character, his poetic power and his ironic sense of the grim and fatality of human life are so powerful and so carefully combined in each of his plays that he has no equal in drama outside of Shakespeare.

No other playwright has viewed man with such serenity and compassion as Sophocles. His heroes are not models of the perfect; he has no interest in the trivial or the banal; his hero is the man who lives his life, and the fact that he frequently comes to grief is not due to any flaw in his character, but because he is not a god; what becomes of him is the poet's matter. We must not forget the perils and dangers of life which is the most god-like of all mortal beings. For Sophocles, the accident, not the victorious, is important; he has given us a great soul rather than a happy man.

THE MYTH

ANTIGONE represents the last phase of the ancient story concerning the house of Oedipus of Thebes. Before Oedipus' birth, Jocasta, the queen of Thebes, was sold by a herder that her son was to marry her and to kill his father. To avoid this fate, Jocasta gave the baby to a shepherd, instructing him to take her out of the hills and to kill her. The shepherd, however, took pity on the child, and gave him to a fellow shepherd to nurse and to care for him. The shepherd was named Theban. Oedipus grew up in the house of the shepherd, and was taught the arts of war and the way of the world. He was educated to become a soldier, and was trained in the art of war. He was also taught the art of music, and was skilled in the use of the lyre. He was a great lover of poetry, and was noted for his beautiful singing.

When Oedipus was twenty years old, he went to Thebes, and was appointed to the office of king of the city. He was a just and wise ruler, and was beloved by all the people. He was a great warrior, and was noted for his bravery in battle. He was a great poet, and was noted for his beautiful singing. He was a great musician, and was noted for his beautiful playing of the lyre. He was a great lover of music, and was noted for his beautiful singing.

Oedipus was a great warrior, and was noted for his bravery in battle. He was a great poet, and was noted for his beautiful singing. He was a great musician, and was noted for his beautiful playing of the lyre. He was a great lover of music, and was noted for his beautiful singing.

The prophecy concerning his and his wife's death was fulfilled. Oedipus was killed in battle, and his wife was hanged. The children of Oedipus were left to themselves, and they grew up to be great men. One of them was a great poet, and was noted for his beautiful singing. He was a great musician, and was noted for his beautiful playing of the lyre. He was a great lover of music, and was noted for his beautiful singing.

Sophocles, the greatest of all Greek dramatists, wrote many plays, and was celebrated for his accuracy, his power of description, and his use of the narrative. He was the last of the great dramatists, and was noted for his beautiful singing. He was a great musician, and was noted for his beautiful playing of the lyre. He was a great lover of music, and was noted for his beautiful singing.
the nature of the man himself. Antigone and Creon are not arguing on the
same basis. Antigone's justification for burying her brother is founded on
the written laws of family loyalty and personal honour. Her plea has
only an impulsive, instinctive sense of justice. Creon cannot enter into
this region of subjective piety and love. As ruler, he must judge only on
the basis of the logical necessities of government. In this context, the
argument is irrelevant.

Creon is impetuous, stubborn, suspicious, quick to anger, and, as a
king, he is inclined to relish the taste of power. Yet he is honest and resolute in his sense of responsibility and duty. His tragic failing is that his confident and true nature misleads him. He will admit of no position. His belief is sound but it is also partial, and it is the whole. It is not that Creon is a stubborn fool, it is simply that
he, like other men, has limitations. Within his limits he works intelligently and conscientiously and in another situation he might have lived a full and happy life. But given the virtues and weaknesses of his character, coupled with Antigone's and the nature of their dispute, tragedy is the inevitable result.

Sophocles' "tragic view of life" has nothing to do with a malignant fate
or a decree of the gods. The tragedy of ANTIGONE is a natural tragedy:
it reflects the precarious balance which exists between happiness and misfortune in the world. Since life is uncertain, certainty can be a
dangerous thing. The wise man will make the prudent judgment, but how
one can be sure exactly what will be? It is hard to tell. Decisions must be made, action must be taken, and each man must take his own
reasonable assessment of what is wise. Creon judges accordingly, and it
is his tragedy that he judges incorrectly. But what man could do more?

John Sommers.

THE RECORDING

University and college theatres have become the treasurehouses of a large
share of western drama. ANTIQUE has been recognized for centuries as one
of the great plays, but it is seldom done on the commercial stage. The
academic theatre, which now constitutes the largest body of active theatre
on our continent, keeps alive the heritage of the dramatic past. This
recording represents a part of that heritage and is a sampling of that
kind of theatre.

In making this record, certain alterations had to be made in the play.
Sophocles did not write with a long-playing record in mind. Large
sections of the choral material had to be cut away together with a few
speeches of the principal characters. These cuts are indicated by /-
signs. The major part of the play remains in tact, and I trust that the
power and beauty of the drama is still present in this slightly
amended version.

John Sommers.
Scene: Before the palace of Creon, King of Thebes.
A central double door and two lateral doors.
A platform extends the length of the façade.
And from this platform three steps lead down
Into the orchestra, or chorus-ground.
Time: dawn of the day after the repulse
Of the Argive army from the assault on Thebes.

ANTIGON: Oh tell it! Tell everyone!
Think how they'll hate you when it all comes out.
If they learn that you know about it all the time.

So fiery! You should be cold with fear.

ANTIGON: Perhaps. But I am doing only what I must.

IMENSE: But can you do it? I say that you cannot.

ANTIGON: Very well: when my strength gives out, I shall do no more.

IMENSE: Impossible things should not be tried at all.

ANTIGON: Go away, Imenés.
I shall be hating you soon, and the deal will too,
For your words are hateful. Leave me my foolish plan:
I am not afraid of the danger; if it means death,
It will not be the worst of deaths - deaths without honour.

IMENSE: Go then, if you feel you must.
You are unwise,
But a loyal friend indeed to those who love you.

(Exit into the Palace. Antigone goes off. L. Enters the Chorus.)

Chorus:
Now the long blade of the sun, lying

Level east to west, touches with glory

Chives of the Seven Gates. Open, unclosed

Eye of golden day! O marching light

Across the eddy and rush of Eros' streams,

Striking the white shields of the enemy

Throes heading backward from the blaze of morning!

Polyneices their commander

Roused them with windy phrases,

His wild eagle scouring:

Insults above our land,

His wings their shield of snow,

His crest their marshalled helm.

Polyneices their commander

Roused them with windy phrases,

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Insults above our land,

His wings their shield of snow,

His crest their marshalled helm.

Chorus: Against our seven gates in a yarning ring

Antistrophe 1

The finished square came down covered in the night.

Stone to death in the public square!

There it is,

And now you can prove what you are;

A true sister, or a traitor to your family.

IMENSE: Antigone, you are mad! What could I possibly do?

ANTIGON: You must decide whether you will help me or not.

IMENSE: I do not understand you. Help you in what?

ANTIGON: Imenés, I am going to bury him. Will you come?

IMENSE: Bury him! You have just said the new law forbids it.

ANTIGON: He is my brother. And he is your brother too.

IMENSE: But of the danger! Think what Creon will do!

ANTIGON: Creon is not strong enough to stand in my way.

IMENSE: Ah sister! Oedipus died, everyone hating him

For what his own search brought to light, his eye

Ripped out by his own hand; and Iocaste died,

His mother and wife at once; she twisted the cords

That strangled her life; and our two brothers died;

Each killed by the others' sword. And we are left!

But oh, Antigone,

Think how much more terrible than these

Our own death would be if we should go against Creon

And do what he has forbidden! We are only women,

We cannot fight with men, Antigone!

The law is strong, we must give in to the law.

In this thing and in worse, I beg the Dead

To forgive me, but I am helpless: I must yield

To those in authority. And think it is dangerous business

To be always meddlesome.

ANTIGON: If that is what you think,

I should not want you, even if you asked to come.

You have made your choice, you can be what you want to be.

But I will bury him; and if I must die,

I say that this crime is holy; I shall lie down

With him in death, and I shall be as dear

To him as he to me.

It is the dead,

But the living, who make the longest demands:

We die for ever...

You may do as you like,

Since apparently the laws of the gods mean nothing to you.

IMENSE: They mean a great deal to me; but I have no strength

To break laws that were made for the public good.

ANTIGON: That must be your excuse, I suppose. But as for me,

I will bury the brother I love.

IMENSE: I am so afraid for you!

ANTIGON: You need not be.

IMENSE: You have yourself to consider, after all.

ANTIGON: But no one can hear of this, you must tell no one.

I will keep it a secret, I promise!

Oh tell it! Tell everyone!

(Enter Creon from the palace. He addresses the Chorus from the top step.)

CHRON: Gentlemen, I have the honour to inform you that our Ship of State, which recent storms have threatened to destroy,

Has come safely to harbour at last, guided by the merciful wisdom of Heaven. I have summoned you here this morning

Because I know that I can depend upon you; your devotion

To King Latae was absolute; you never hesitated in your duty

To our late ruler Oedipus; and when Oedipus died, your

Loyalty was transferred to his children. Unfortunately, as you know, his two sons, the princes Bcoëla and Polyneices,

Have killed each other in battle; and I, as the next blood,

Have succeeded to the full power of the throne.

CHRON: All hail, Creon!
ship above the public welfare. I have no use for him either.
I call God to witness that if I saw my country headed for
civil war, I should not be afraid to speak out plainly; and I need
only remind you that I would never have any dealings with
any enemy of the people. No one values friendship more
highly than I; but we must remember that friends made at
the risk of wrecking our ship are not real friends at all.

These are my principles, at any rate, and that is why I have
made the following decision concerning the sons of Oedipus:
Etocles, who died as a man should die, fighting for his coun-
try, is to be buried with full military honours, with all the
veneration that is usual when the greatest heroes die; but his
brother Polyneices, who broke his oath to come back with
fire and sword against his native city and the shrine of his
blood and all his own people into slavery—Polyneices, I say
is to have no burial; no man is to touch him or say the least
prayer for him; he shall lie on the plain, unburied, and the
birds and the scavenging dogs can do him whatever they like.

This is my command; and you can see the wisdom behind it.
As long as I am King, no traitor is going to be honoured with
the loyal men. But whoever shows by word and deed that he
is on the side of the State—he shall have my respect while he is
living, and my reverence when he is dead.

CHORAG. If that is your will, Creon son of Learix,
You have the right to enforce it: we are yours.

CHORAG. That is my will. Take care that you do your part.

CHORAG. We are old men: let the younger ones carry it out.

CHORAG. I do not mean that the sentries have been appointed.

CHORAG. Then what is it that you would have us do?

CHORAG. You will give no support to whoever breaks this law.

CHORAG. Only a crazy man is in love with death!

CHORAG. And death it is not money talks, and the wisest
Have sometimes been known to count a few coins too many.

But who is this?

CHORAG. A sentry. (Enter Sentry)

SENTRY I'll not say that I'm out of breath from running, King,
because every time I stopped to think about what I have to
tell you, I felt like going back. And all the time a voice kept
saying, 'You fool, don't you know you're walking straight
into trouble?' and then another voice: 'Yes, but if you let
somebody else get the news to Creon first, it will be even
worse than that for you!' But good sense won out, at least I
hope it was good sense, and here I am with a story that makes
no sense at all: but I'll tell it anyhow, because, as they say,
what's going to happen's going to happen, and—

CHORAG. Come to the point. What have you to say?

SENTRY I did not do it. I did not see who did it. You must not
punish me for what someone else has done.

CHORAG. A comprehensive defense. More effective, perhaps,
If I knew its purpose. Come: what is it?

SENTRY A dreadful thing...I don't know how to put it.

CHORAG. Out with it!

SENTRY The dead man—Polyneices—

(Exit Polyneices.

SENTRY ...new dust on the decayed flesh!

(Exit Creon.

SENTRY Someone has given it burial, that way, and

Gone...

(Exit Creon.

CHORAG. And the man who dared do this?

SENTRY I swear I...I do not know. You must believe me!

CHORAG. Listen: The ground was dry, not a sign of digging, no.

SENTRY But where he dug in the dust, no trace of anyone.

CHORAG. It was when they relieved us this morning; and one of them,

SENTRY The corporal, pointed to it.

CHORAG. There it was.

The strangest—

SENTRY The body, just mound over with light dust; you see?

CHORAG. Not buried really, but as if it had been covered

SENTRY Just enough for the ghost's peace. And no sign

CHORAG. Of dogs or any wild animal that had been there.

And then what a scene there was! Every man of us

ACCESSION. All proved the other man did it.

SENTRY We all had proof that we could not have done it.

Chorag. I have been wondering, King: can it be that the gods have
done this?

(Enthusiastically.

CHORAG. Money!

CHORAG. There's nothing in the world so demoralising as money.

CHORAG. Down go your cities.

CHORAG. Houses gone, men gone, honest hearts corrupted,

CHORAG. Crookedness of all kinds, and all for money.

(To Creon.

SENTRY You are sure that it is my voice, and not your conscience.

CHORAG /By God, he wants to analyse me now.

SENTRY He is not what I say, but what has been done, that hurts you.

CHORAG You talk too much.

SENTRY Maybe; but I've done nothing.

CHORAG Sold your soul for some silvers: that's all you've done.

SENTRY How dreadful it is when the right judge judges wrong!

CHORAG Your figures of speech may entertain you now, but unless you bring me the man, You will get little profit from them in the end.

(Exit Creon into the Palace.

SENTRY 'Bring me the man!' I'd like nothing better than bringing him the man! But bring him or not, you have seen the last of me here. At any rate, I am saved.

(Exit Sentry.

SIDE 1

CHORAG. Numberless are the world's wonders, but none

(CHORAG. More wonderful than men; the storm-grey sea

(CHORAG. Yields to his prow, the huge crests bear him high;

(CHORAG. Earth, holy and innoxious, is covered

(CHORAG. With shining furrows where his plow has gone

(CHORAG. Year after year, the timeless labour of stallions.

(CHORAG. The Lighthouses and beasts that sing to

(CHORAG. The little fish lighting their roads of dim water,

(CHORAG. Are all taken, tunnelled in the net of his mind;

(CHORAG. The lion on the hill, the wild horses wild-eyed,

(CHORAG. Reign in him: and his blunt yoke has broken

(CHORAG. The sultry shoulders of the mountain bull.

CHORAG. Words also, sung as Pauvus as air

(CHORAG. He fashioned to his good use; statecraft is his,

(CHORAG. And the skill that defies the arrows of snow,

(CHORAG. The spears of winter rain from every wind
He has made himself secure - from all but one: In the last wind of death he cannot stand. / O clear intelligence, force beyond all measurement (antisirrhope 2) Of fate of man, working both good and evil! When the laws are kept, how proudly his city stands! When the laws are broken, what of his cities then? Never say the anarchic man find rest at my heart; Never be it said that my thoughts are his thoughts.

SIDE 1  SAP 5 SCENE 2
[Enter SENTRY leading Antigone.

CHORAG. What does this mean? Surely this captive woman Is the Princess Antigone. Why should she be taken?

SENTRY Here is one who did it! We caught her in the very act of burying him. - Where is Creon?

CHORAG. Just coming from the house.

[Enter Creon, O.

CREON What has happened?

CREON Why have you come back so soon?

CREON [Expansively.] O King,

SENTRY A man should never be too sure of anything; I would have sworn that you'd not see me here again your anger Frightened me so, and the things you threatened me with; But how could I tell them That I'd be able to solve the case so soon?

CREON No dice-throwing this time: I was only to glad to come! Here is the woman. She is the guilty one: We found her trying to bury him.

SENTRY Take her, then; question her; judge her as you will. I am through with the whole thing now, and glad of it.

CREON But this is Antigone! Why have you brought her here?

CRETEN She was burying him, I tell you.

CREON [Severely.] Is this the truth?

CREON I saw her with my own eyes. Can I say more?

CREON [The details; come tell me quickly!]

SENTRY It was like this: After those terrible threats of yours, King, We went back and brushed the dust away from the body. The flesh was soft by now, and shrinking, So we sat on a hill to windward and kept guard. No mopping this time! We kept each other awake. But nothing happened until the white round sun Whirled in the centre of the round sky over us; Then, suddenly, A storm of dust roared up from the earth, and the sky Went out, the plain vanished with all its trees In the scintling dark. We closed our eyes and endured it. The whirlwind lasted a long time, but it passed; And then we looked, and there was Antigone!

SENTRY I have seen A mother bird come back to a stripped nest, heard Her crying bitterly a broken note or two For the young ones stolen. Just so, when this girl Found the bare corpse, and all her love's work wasted, She wept, and cried on heaven to damn the bands That had done this thing

CREON And sprinkled wine three times for her brother's ghost.

CREON We ran and took her at once. She was not afraid, Not even when we charged her with what she had done. She denied nothing.

CREON And this was a comfort to me, And some uneasiness for it is a good thing To escape death, but it is no great pleasure To bring death to a friend. Yet I always say There is nothing so comfortable as your own safe skin! / (Slowly, dangerously.)

CREON And you Antigone,

CREON You with your head hanging, - do you confess this thing?

CREON I do. I deny nothing.

[To SENTRY.]

CREON You may go.

[Exit SENTRY.]

[To Antigone;]

Tell me, tell me briefly: Had you heard my proclamation touching this matter?

ANTIG. It was public. Could I help hearing it?

ANTIG. And yet you dared defy the law.

CREON It was not God's proclamation. That final Justice That rules the world below makes no such laws.

ANTIG. You, edict, King, was strong,

CREON But all your strength is weakness itself against The imperial unrecorded laws of God. They are not newley now they were, and shall be, Operative for ever, beyond man utterly.

CREON I knew I must die, even without your decree: I am only mortal. And if I must die Now before it is my time to die, Surely this is no hardship can anyone

ANTIG. Think death less than a friend? This death of mine Is of no importance; but if I had left my brother Lying in death unburied, I should have suffered.

CREON Now I do not. You smile at me, Ah Creon, Think me a fool, if you like; but it may well be That a fool convicts me of folly.

ANTIG. Like father, like daughter: both headstrong, deaf to reason! She has never learned to yield.

CREON The inflexible heart breaks first, the toughest iron Cracks first, and the wildest horeses bend their necks At the full of the smallest curb. Praise! In a slave?

ANTIG. This girl is guilty of a double insensibility, Breaking the laws and boasting of it. Who is the man here? She or I, if this crime goes unpunished? Sister's child, or more than sister's child, Or closer yet in blood - she and her sister Win bitter death for this!

[To servants;]

ANTIG. Go, some of you, Arrest Iasman. I accuse him equally. Bring here; you will find her sniffing in the house there.

CREON Her mind's a traitors' crimes kept in the dark Cry for light, and the guardian brain shudders; But how much worse than this Is brazen boasting of barefaced anarchy!

ANTIG. Creon, what more do you want than my death?

CREON That gives me everything.

ANTIG. Nothing.

CREON Then I beg you kill me.

ANTIG. This talking is a great weariness; your words Are distasteful to me, and I am sure that mine Seem no good to you. And yet they should not seem so: I should have praise and honour for what I have done. All these men here would praise me Were their lips not frozen shut with fear of you. / (Bitterly.)

ANTIG. Ah the good fortune of kings, Licensed to say and to whatever they please!

CREON You are alone in that opinion.

ANTIG. No, they are with me. But they keep their tongues in leash.

CREON Maybe. But you are guilty, and they are not.

ANTIG. There is no guilt in reverence for the dead.

CREON But Eteocles - was he not your brother too?

ANTIG. My brother too.

CREON And you insult his memory?

ANTIG. (Softly.)

The dead man would not say that I insult it.

CREON He would: for you honour a traitor as much as his.

ANTIG. His own brother, traitor or not, and equal in blood.

CREON He made war on his country, Eteocles defended it.

ANTIG. Nevertheless, there are honours due all the dead.

CREON But not the same for the wicked as for the just.

ANTIG. Ah Creon, Creon, Which of us can say what the gods hold wicked?

CREON An enemy is an enemy, even dead.

ANTIG. It is my nature to join in love, not hate.

CREON Go join then, then; if you must have your love, Find it in hell! / (Finally losing patience.)

ANTIG. But see, Iasman comes!

[Enter Iasman, guarded.]
Those tears are sisterly, the cloud
That shadow her eyes rains down gentle sorrow.

Chief
You too, Isean,.
Shame in my ordered house, seeking by blood
Stealthily - and all the time I never knew
That these two sisters were singing at my throne!

Isean,
Do you confess your share in this crime, or deny it?
Answer me.

Isean
Yes, if she will let me say so. I am guilty.
(Coldly.)

Antig. No, Isean. You have no right to say so.
You would not help me, and I will not have you help me.

Isean But now I know what you meant; and I am here
To join you, to take my share of punishment.

Antig. The dead man and the gods who rule the dead
Know whose act this was. Words are not friends.

Isean Do you refuse me, Antigone? I want to die with you:
I too have a duty that I must discharge to the dead.

Antig. You shall not lessen my death by sharing it.

Isean What do I care for life when you are dead?

Antig. Ask Creon. You're always hanging on his opinions.

Isean You are laughing at me. Why, Antigone?

Antig. It's a joyless laughter, Isean.

Isean But can I do nothing?

Antig. Yes. Save yourself. I shall not envy you.
There are those who will praise you; I shall have honour, too.

Isean But we are equally guilty!

Antig. You are alive, but I belong to Death.

Chief (To the Chorus:
Gentlemen, I beg you to observe these girls;
One has just now lost her mind; the other
It seems, has never had a mind at all.

Isean Grief teaches the steadiest minds to waver, King.

Chief You're certainly dead, when you assumed guilt with the guilty!

Isean But how could I go on living without her?

Chief She is already dead.
You are.

Isean But your son's bride!

Chief There are places enough for him to push his plow.
I want no wicked women for my sons!

Isean I have a right.

Chief O dearest Isean, how your father wrongs you!

Isean I've had enough of your childish talk of marriage!

Chorus Do you really intend to steal this girl from your son?

Chief No: Death will do that for me.

Chorus Then she must die?

Chief (To Guards:
You, there, take them away and guard them well:
For they are but women, and even brave men run
When they see Death coming.

(Exeunt Isean, Antigone, and Guards.

Side 1 Band 6

CHORUS
Fortunate in the man who has never tasted God's vengeance!
Where once the anger of heaven has struck, that house is shaken.
For ever; damnation rises behind each child
Like a wave cresting out of the black northeast,
When the long darkness under sea roars up
And burst drowning death upon the windwhipped sand.

(antistrope 1
I have seen this gathering sorrow from time long past
Loom upon God's children: generation from generation
Takes the complaisant rage of the angry god.
So lately this last flower of God's line
Drunk the sunlight and now a passionate word
And a handful of fate have closed up all its beauty.

What mortal arrogance
Transcends the wrath of Zeus?
Sleep cannot lull him, nor the effortless long months
Of the timeless god; but he is young for ever,
And his house is the shining day of high Olympus.
All that is and shall be,
And all the past, is his.
No pride on earth is free of the curse of heaven./

(strophe 1
The straying dreams of men
May bring them ghosts of joy:
But as they draw near, the walking shades burn them;
Or they walk with fixed eyes, as blind men walk.
But the ancient wisdom speaks for our time:
If any man give a wish in a fair show
Man's little pleasure is the spring of sorrow.

(strophe 2)
The weary gods of old may be lenient:
May bring them ghosts of joy:
But as they draw near, the walking shades burn them;
Or they walk with fixed eyes, as blind men walk.
But the ancient wisdom speaks for our time:
If any man give a wish in a fair show
Man's little pleasure is the spring of sorrow.
/In flood time you can see how some trees bend, And because they bend, even their twigs are safe. While stubborn trees are torn up, roots and all. And the same thing happens in sailing: Make your sheet fast, never slacken, —and over you go, Head over heels and under; and there's your voyage. Fog set you angry! Let yourself be moved; I know I am young; but please let me say this: The ideal condition Would be, I admit, that men should be right by instinct; But since we are all too likely to go astray. The reasonable thing is to learn those who can teach.

Chorus. You will do well to listen to this, King. If what he says is sensible. And you, Haimon, Must listen to your father. He speaks well.

Chiron You consider it right for a man of my years and experience To go to school to a boy? Haimon It is not right If I am wrong. But if I am right, what does my age matter? Chiron You think it right to stand up for an anarchist? Haimon No at all. I pay no respect to anarchists. Chiron Then she is not a criminal? Haimon The city would deny it, to a man. Chiron And the city proposes to teach me how to rule? Haimon Ah. Who is it that's talking like a boy now? Chiron My voice is the one voice giving orders in this city! Haimon It is no city if it takes orders from one voice. Chiron The state is the king!

(Pause.)

Chiron This boy, it seems, has sold out to a woman.

Haimon If you are a woman, my concern is only for you.

Chiron So? Your 'concern'? In a public brawl with your father?

Haimon How about you, in a public brawl with justice?

Chiron With justice, when all I do is within my rights?

Haimon You have no right to trample on God's right.

Chiron Fool, adolescent fool! Taken in by a woman!

Haimon You'll never see me taken in by anything vile.

Chiron Every word you say is for her!

Haimon (Quietly, darkly.) And for me. And for the gods under the earth.

Chiron You'll never marry her while she lives.

Haimon Then she must die. But her death will cause another.

Chiron Another? Have you lost your senses? Is this an open threat?

Haimon There is no threat in speaking to emptiness.

Chiron I swear you'll regret this superior tone of yours!

Haimon You are the empty one.

Chiron If you were not my father, I'd say you were perverse.

Chiron Girlstruck fool, don't play at words with me!

Haimon I am sorry. You preterence.

Chiron I swear, by all the gods in heaven above us, You'll watch it, I swear you shall!

(Haimon exits.

Chiron Not here, nor will she not die here. King. And you will never see my face again. Go on raging as long as you've a friend to endure you.

(Chiron exits.

Chorus. Gone, gone. Green, a young man in a rafe is dangerous!

Chiron Let him do, or dream to do, more than a man can. He shall not save these girls from death.

Chorus. You have sentenced them both?

Chiron No, you are right.

Chorus. But Antigone?

Chiron I will carry her far away Out there in the wilderness. I can't leave her. Living in a vault of stone. She shall have food, As the custom is, to absolve the State of her death, And there let her pray to gods of hell; They are her only gods: Perhaps she will show her an escape from death. Or she may learn, though late, That pity shown the dead is pity in vain.

(Exit Chiron.

Chorus Love, unconquerable Waster of rich men, keep'er Of warm lights and all night vigils In the soft face of a girl: Sea-wanderer, forest-visitor! Even the pure immortals cannot escape you. And mortal man, in his one day's dust, Trembles before your glory. Surely you smile upon ruin The just man's consuming heart. As here you have made bright anger Strike between father and son. And none has conquered but love: A girl's glance working the will of heaven: Pleasure to her alone who mocks us, Merciless Agrippa. /

Side 2

Antigone Look upon me, friends, and pity me (strope 1) Turning back at the right's edge to say Good-by to the sun that shines for me no longer; How sleepy Death Summons me down to Acheron, that cold shore: There is no bridal song there, nor any music.

Chorus Yet not displeased, but without a kind honour, You walk at last into the underworld; Untouched by sickness, broken by no word. What woman has ever found your way to death?

Antigone How often have heard the story of Iphigeneia's wretched daughter, how the stone Clung fast about her, lye-closer: and they say The rain falls endlessly. Sifting soft snow; her tears are never done. I feel the loneliness of her death in mine.

Chorus But she was born of heaven, and you Are woman, womm-born. If her death is yours, A mortal woman's, is this not for you glory in our world and in the world beyond?

Antigone You laugh at me. Ah, friends, Can you not wait until I am dead? O Thetis, O men many-charactred, in love with Fortune, O men many-charactred, in love with Fortune, O dear one of Thetis' grove, Be witness to me, denied all pity. Unjustly judged and trampled a word of love For her whose path turns. Under dark earth, where there are no more tears.

Chorus You have passed beyond human daring and come at last Into a place of stone where Justice sits. I cannot tell What shape of your father's guilt appears in this.

Antigone You have touched it at last: that bridal bed (antistrophe 2) Unrequitable, horror of son and mother mingling: Their crime, infection of all our family! O Oedipus, father and brother! Your marriage strikes from the grave to murder mine. I have been a stranger here in my own land. All my life The blasphemy of my birth has followed me.

Chorus Reverence is a virtue, but strength Lives in established laws that must prevail. You have made your choice. Your death is the doing of your conscious hand.

Antigone. Then let me go, since all your words are bitter, (epode) And the very light of the sun is cold to me. Lead me to my vigil, where I must have Neither love nor lamentation; no song, but silence.

(Chorus interrupts impatiently.

Chiron If dirges and planned lamentations could put off death, Men would be singing for ever.

(Chorus. Take her, go! You know your orders: take her to the vault. And leave her alone there. And if she lives or dies, That's her affair, not ours; our hands are clean.

Antigone I will carry her far away Out there in the wilderness. I can't leave her. Living in a vault of stone. She shall have food. As the custom is, to absolve the State of her death, And there let her pray to gods of hell; They are her only gods; Perhaps she will show her an escape from death. Or she may learn, though late, That pity shown the dead is pity in vain.

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Antig. /O tomb, vaulted bower-bed in eternal rock,
Soon I shall be with my own again
Where Persephone welcomes the thin ghosts underground:
And I shall see my father again, and you, mother,
And dearest Polydectes-

dearest indeed
To me, since it was my hand
That washed his clean and poured the ritual wine;
And my reward is death before my time!

And yet, as men's hearts know, I have done no wrong,
I have not sinned before God, or if I have,
I shall know the truth in death. But if the guilt
Lies upon Creon who judged me, the, I pray,
May his punishment equal my own.

Chorag. /A passionate heart,
Unyielding, tormented still by the same winds!

Chor. Her guards shall have good cause to regret their delaying. /Antig. Ah! That voice is like the voice of death!

Chor. I can give you no reason to think you are mistaken.

Antig. Thesebe, and you my fathers' gods,
And rulers of Thesebe, you see me now, the last
Unhappy daughter of a line of kings,
Your kings, led away to death. You will remember
What things I suffer, and at what men's hands,
Because I would not transgress the laws of heaven.

To the Guardians, simply.

Come let us wait no longer.

(Exit Antigone, L., guarded.

Side 2

Band 4

Chorus

All Diane's beauty was locked away
(Strophe 1)
In a brazen tomb where the sunlight could not come:
A small room, still as any grave, enclosed her.
Yet she was a princess too,
And Zeus in a realm of gold poured love upon her.
0 child, child,
No power in wealth or war
Or tough sea-blackened ships
Can prevail against unerring destiny:

/And Dyes' son also, that furious king,
(Antistrophe 1)
Bore the god's insubordination: his pride;
Sealed up by Zephyros in deep stone,
His madness died among echoes.
So at the last he learned what dreadful power
His tongue had mocked:
For he had profaned the revels,
And fired the wrath of the nine
Implacable Sisters that love the sound of the flute.

And old men tell a half-remembered tale
(Strophe 2)
Of horror done where a dark ledge splits the sea
And a double surf beats on the grey shores:
How a king's new woman, sick
With hatred for the queen he had imprisoned,
Ripped out his two sons' eyes with her bloody hands
While grinning Argo watched the shuttle plunge
Four times: Four blind wounds crying for revenge,
Crying, tears and blood mingled.
Pitilessly born,
(Antistrophe 2)
Those sons whose mother was of heavenly birth!
Her father was the god of the North Wind
And she was cradled by gales,
She raced with young colts on the glittering hills
And walked untrammelled in the open light:
But in her marriage deathless fate found means
To build a tomb and yoke for all her joy./

Side 2

Band 5

Enter blind Teiresias, led by a boy. The opening speeches of Teiresias should be in singing contrast to the realistic lines of Creon.

Teires. Gentlemen of Thesebe; we greet you, my friend and I, who,
Share one pair of eyes on own journeys together:
For the blind man goes where his leader tells him to;

Chor. You are welcome, father Teiresias. What news have you for us?

Teires. Ah, news you shall have; and advice, if you can heed it.

Chor. I am not aware that I have ever failed to heed it.

Teires. And thus far, have steered a steady course.

Chor. I admit my debt to you; but come, what news do you have?

Teires. This Creon; you stand once more on the edge of fate.

Chor. Your words hint at disaster; speak on.

Teires. Listen, Creon, and I will show you all that my skill reveals,
At my seat of divination, where I sit
These many years, reading the signs of heaven
An unfamiliar sound came to my ears;
Or birds in vicious combat; savage cries
In strange oracular language, and the whisper of flapping wings
From which I will picture, the gruesome warfare
Of their deadly talons.

Full of foreboding; I made the test of sacrifice on the altar flame.
There was no answering flame.
Instead, rank juice oozed from the flesh,
And fell among the ashes, smouldering and sputtering.
The girl vanished in a puff
And the fire ran down and left the benches bare.
And why?
The light and heat, is your doing.
The blood that stains our altars and our shrines.
The blood that dogs and vultures have licked up
It is none other than the blood of Oedipus
Spilled from the veins of his ill-fated son.
Our fires, our sacrifices, our prayers,
The gods abominate. How should the birds
Give any other than ill named voices.
Gorged with the dregs of blood that man has shed?
These are no trifles on your son.
All men fall into sin;
But sinning, he is not forever lost, hapless and helpless.
Who can make amends, and has not set his face against repentance.
Only a fool is governed by self will.
Fate to the dead his due, wound not the fallen
It is no glory to kill and kill again.
My words are for your good, as is my will.
And should be acceptable, being for your good.

Chor. It seems that prophets have made me their special province.
All my life, I have been a sort of butt,
For the full arrows of dooming fortunes tellers.
No Teiresias, if your eagles, if the eagles of the gods themselves
Should carry his stinking, bit by bit to heaven,
I would not yield.
A man cannot defile the gods.

To go in business, speculate in India gold,
Or that synthetic gold from Sardis.
Get rich otherwise than by my consent to bury him.
Ah! Teiresias; it is a sad thing when a wise man sells out;
Or lets his words for hire.

Teires. Ah, Creon; is there no man left in the world?

Chor. What do.

Teires. No man who knows that wisdom outweighs any wealth.

Chor. As surely as bushes are closer than -

Teires. You are sick Creon; you are deathly sick.

Chor. As you say; it is not the place of a king to question a prophet.

Teires. And yet, you have said my prophecy is for sale.

Chor. The generation of prophets have always loved gold.

Teires. The generation of kings have always loved brass.

Chor. You forget yourself; you are speaking to you king.

Teires. I do not. You are a king because of me.

Chor. But you have sold out!

Teires. Must I reveal my unspoken mind?

Chor. Speak: but expect no pay from it.

Teires. Does that still seem to you so - So will you find it too costly.

Chor. Speak.

Teires. The hear this. And that it to heart.
Bre the chariot of the sun,
Has rounded once or twice his wheeling way
You will have given up a son of your own
to death - in payment for death.
Two debts to pay.
One for the life you have sent to death,
The life you have abominably entomb'd,
One for the dead still lying above the ground;
Unburied, unheaped, unblest.
By the gods below:
You cannot alter this.
The gods themselves cannot undo it.
It follows of necessity from what you have done.

Even now, the avenging Furies, the hunters of Hell
That follow and destroy, are lying in wait for you;
And will have their prey.
When the evil you have worked on others falls upon you
Do you still wish to buy me Creon?
The time will come; and soon, when you;
When your house will be filled
With lamentations of men and women, and every
Neighbouring city will be guarded in fury against you,
For upon them too, the pollution falls,
When dogs and vultures, bring the defilement of blood
To their alters and shrines.
I have done.

These are my arrows, and they are all for you.
Lead me home, my boy.
Let us leave him to vent his anger on younger ears;
Or school his tongue and his thoughts
To a milder mood than that which he now possesses.

Lead on.

1
CHORAG. The old man who has gone, King, but his words remain to plague us. I am old, too, but I cannot remember that he was ever false.

CHORAG. That is true. It troubles me. Oh, it is so hard to give him but it is worse to risk everything for such a man.

CHORAG. Creon, take my advice.

CHORAG. Go quickly; free Antigonus from her vault and build a tomb for the body of Polynices.

CHORAG. You would have us do this?

CHORAG. Yes, Creon.

CHORAG. And it must be done at once, God moves swiftly to cancel the folly of stubborn men.

CHORAG. It is hard to deny the heart. But I will do it; I will not fight with destiny.

CHORAG. You must go yourself, you cannot leave it to others.

CHORAG. I will go.

CHORAG. Bring axes, servants. Come with me to the tomb. I will set her free. Oh quickly! My mind says that the laws of the gods are mighty and a man must serve them to the last day of his life.

(Exit Creon.)

SIDE 2

BAND 6

ACHILLY

(Enter Messenger.)

MESS. Men of the line of Gods, you who live near Amphion's citadel, I cannot say of any condition of human life 'This is fixed, this is clearly good, or bad,' Fate makes up, and Fate casts down the happy and unhappy alike. No man can foretell his fate.

Oenone was happy once, as I count happiness: Victorious in battle, sole governor of the land, fortunate father of children nobly born. And now it has all gone from him! Who can say that a man is still alive when his life's joy fails? He is a walking dead man. Grant him riches, let him live like a king in his great house; if his pleasure is gone, I would not give so much as the shadow of a name for all he owns.

CHORAG. Your words hint at sorrow; what is your news for us?

MESS. They are dead. The living are guilty of their death.

CHORAG. Who is guilty? Who is dead? Speak!

MESS. Haimon is dead; and the hand that killed him is his own hand.

CHORAG. His father's? Or his own?

MESS. His own, driven mad by the murder that he had done.

CHORAG. Tiresias, Tiresias, how clearly you saw it all.

MESS. This is my news; you must draw what conclusions you can from it.

CHORAG. But look, Eurydice, our queen. Has she heard the news?

(Enter Eurydice from the Palace, C.)

EURLY. I have heard something, friends: As I was unlocking the gate of Pallas' shrine, for I needed her help today, I heard a voice telling of some new sorrow. I went in. There at the temple with all my maidens about me, but spoke against whatever it is, I can bear its grief and I am not stranger.

MESS. I will tell you plainly all that I have seen. I shall not try to comfort you; what is the use, since comfort could lie only in what is not true? The truth is always best. I went with Creon to the outer plain where Polynices was lying, so friend to pity him, his body stowed by dogs. We made our prayers in that place to Hecate and Pluto, that they would be merciful. And we bathed the corpse with holy water, and we brought fresh-broken branches to burn what was left of it, and upon the urn we heaped up a towering bough of the earth of his land.

When we were done, we ran to the vault where Antigone lay on her couch of stone. One of the servants had gone ahead, and while he was yet far off he heard a voice grieving within the chamber, and he came back and told Creon, and as the King went closer, the air was full of wailing, the words loud, and he begged us to make all haste. 'Is a prophet?' he said, weeping. 'Must I walk this road? The saddest of all that I have gone before? My son's voice calls me on. Oh quickly, quickly! Look through the crevice there, and tell me if it is Haimon, or some deception of the gods!'

We obeyed, and in the cavern's farthest corner we saw her lying. She had made a noose of her fine linen veil and hanged herself. Haimon lay beside her, his arms about her waist, lamenting her, his love lost under ground, crying out that his father had stolen her away from him.

When Creon saw him, the tears rushed to his eyes, and he called to him: 'What have you done, child? Speak to me.' 'What are you thinking that makes your eyes so strange?' 'HY son, my son, I come to you on my knees!' But Haimon spat in his face. He said not a word, staring — and suddenly drew his sword and lunged. Creon shrunk back, the blade missed; and the boy, desperate against himself, drove it half its length into his own side, and fell. And as he died, he gathered Antigone close in his arms again, choking, his blood bright red on her white cheek. And now he lies dead with the dead, and she is his At last, his bride in the houses of the dead.

(Exit Eurydice into the Palace.)

CHORAG. She has left us without a word. What can this mean?

MESS. It troubles me, too; yet she knows what is best. Her grief is too great for public lamentation. She is in doubt; has she gone to her chamber to weep for her dead son, leading his maidens in his dirge?

CHORAG. It may be so but I fear this deep silence.

(Tone.)

MESS. I will see what she is doing. I will go in.

(Exit Messenger into the Palace.)

(Enter Creon with attendants, bearing Haimon's body.)

CHORAG. But here is the King himself: Oh look at him, bearing his own damnation in his arms.

CHORAG. Nothing you say can touch me any more. My own blind heart has brought me to this darkness to its end. Here you see the father murdering, the murdered son — and all my civic wisdom.

Haimon my son, so young, so young to die, I was the fool, not you; but you were late in learning it.

CHORAG. This truth is hard to bear. Surely a god Has crushed me beneath the heaviest weight of heaven, and drives me headlong a barbaric way. To trample out the thing I held most dear.

The pain that men will take to come to pain!

(Enter Messenger from the Palace.)

MESS. The burden you carry in your hands is heavy, but it is not all; you will find more in your house.

CHORAG. What burden worse than this shall I find there?

MESS. The Queen is dead.

CHORAG. 0 port of death, deathly world. Is there no pity for me? And you, angel of evil, I was dead, and your words are death again. Is it true, boy? Can it be true? Is my wife dead? Has death bred death?

MESS. You can see for yourself.

(The doors are opened, and the body of Eurydice is disclosed within.)

CHORAG. Oh pity, all true, all true, and more than I can bear! 0 my wife, my son!

MESS. She stood before the altar, and her heart welcomed the knife in her own hand guided. And a great cry burst from her lips for Magaraeus dead, and for Haimon dead, her son; and her last breath was a curse for their father, the murderer of her sons. And she fell, and the dark flowed in through her closing eyes.

CHORAG. 0 God, I am sick with fear. Are there no words here? Has no one a blow for me?

MESS. Her curse is upon you for the deaths of both.
Cheon

It is right that it should be, I alone am guilty.
I know it, and I say it. Lead me in,
Quickly, friends.
I have neither life nor substance. Lead me in.

Chorag.

You are right, if there can be right in so much wrong.
The briefest way is best in a world of sorrow.

Cheon

Let it come,
Let death come quickly, and be kind to me.
I would not ever see the sun again.

Chorag.

All that will come when it will; but we, meanwhile,
Have much to do. Leave the future to itself.

Cheon

All my heart was in that prayer.

Chorag.

Then do not pray any more; the sky is deaf.

Cheon

Lead me away. I have been rash and foolish.
I have killed my son and my wife.
I look for comfort; my comfort lies here dead.
Whatever my hands have touched has come to nothing.
Pite has brought all my pride to a thought of dust.

(as Cheon is being led into the house, the Choragos
advances and speaks directly to the audience.

Chorag.

There is no happiness where there is no wisdom;
No wisdom but submission to the gods.
Big words are always punished,
And proud men in old age learn to be wise.

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