

Antigone's Laments, Creon's Grief

Mourning, Membership, and the Politics of Exception

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This paper reads Sophocles' *Antigone* contextually, as an exploration of the politics of lamentation and larger conflicts these stand for. Antigone defies Creon's sovereign decree that her brother Polynices, who attacked the city with a foreign army and died in battle, be dishonoured - left unburied. But the play is not about Polynices' treason. It explores the clash in 5th century Athens between Homeric/elite and democratic mourning practices. The former (represented by Antigone) memorialize the unique individuality of the dead, focus on the family's loss and bereavement and call for vengeance. The latter (represented by Creon) memorialize the dead's contribution to the immortal polis and emphasize (as in the Funeral Oration) the replaceability of those lost. Each economy of mourning sees the other as excessive and politically unstable. The remainders of both, managed by way of exception institutions such as tragedy and the Dionysian Festival, continue to haunt us now.

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In a curious way, to focus upon the disobedient and the process of disobedience is to accept the perspective of the established order. It is a concession that it is the [wo]man who appeals beyond law that is in need of explanation.

Robert Cover, Justice Accused

Sophocles's *Antigone* is most often read as the story of an admirable civil disobedient (Antigone) who represents democratic or dissident principle by heroically resisting the overreaching sovereign power of her authoritarian uncle (Creon). Antigone buries her brother, although it is prohibited, and is sentenced to death for her dissidence.¹ This dissident Antigone is the object of Judith Butler's admiration in her quest for resources with which

to counteract contemporary efforts to enlist state power on behalf of feminist causes. Butler's Antigone may model opposition to state prerogatives but she is no anarchist. Vying with her uncle for the authority he arrogates to himself, Butler's Antigone "approximates" Creon's "stubborn will" and borrows his vocabulary, iteratively re-citing his sovereign discourse and power and exemplifying thereby an appropriately political relationship to state sovereignty.² Moreover, Butler argues, Antigone valuably pluralizes the models of desire and kinship from which psychoanalysis might take its bearings. Re-citing sovereignty's discourse and pluralizing the terms of desire and kinship, Antigone explodes their economies.

Butler's Antigone converges with that of other commentators such as Joan Copjec, Samuel Weber, Slavoj Žižek, and Luce Irigaray. In different ways and from various theoretical positions, they all see Antigone as explosive of dominant economies of kinship, meaning, or politics on behalf of democratic alternatives.³ Antigone's power as a metaphor for dissidence is virtually unrivalled. But what dissidence does she enact?

In this essay, I read Antigone's burial of her brother (but also other actions of hers) as a performance of Homeric/elite objections to the classical city's democracy. Creon on this reading represents not sovereignty run amok, or not just that, but more pointedly the fifth-century democratic polis that appropriated funerary practice for polis needs. Together, Antigone and Creon play out the political and psychic costs of changes in Athenian funerary and family law and practice, profoundly political changes. Some of these changes were first introduced by Solon 150 years earlier and since developed or altered in Athens by Cleisthenes and later Pericles. Burial styles were fundamentally contested in the 440s and 430s, as David Roselli shows. The play, written around 442 B.C. reflects this fundamental

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contestation but, contra Roselli, the play is not about burial styles. Through the issue of funerary practice, Sophocles's *Antigone* explores conflicts between honor-based versus law-based conceptions of justice, individuality and replaceability, aristocracy and democracy, Homeric honor versus democratic unity and membership.⁴ Although, as I argue later, these identifications of Creon and Antigone with democratic and elite/Homeric worldviews are contestable and subject to slippage, this approach is justified by its highlighting of hitherto unappreciated elements of Sophocles's play and by its stark illustration of some of the play's political stakes for its period and ours.⁵

These claims about the play's larger political implications are not undercut by the fact that the question of burial and mourning in Sophocles's play seems to address a prior, more fundamental question of friendship and enmity, for the politics of mourning in the play are not confined to Polynices nor to Antigone for that matter. Although Creon prohibits Polynices's burial in order to punish his treason—Polynices attacked the city with a foreign army to claim the throne from his brother, Eteocles—the assumption that the play is centrally about Polynices and his burial misleads. Contra Butler, who sees Antigone as an example for those today who seek to grieve ungrievable life (enemy dead, those who die of AIDS), the play actually and repeatedly explores the question of how permissibly to grieve not just ungrievable life but grievable life as well. The problem of when and how to mourn arises *several* times—in relation to Antigone, Haemon, Eteocles, and Eurydice as well as Polynices. This suggests that the play does not get embroiled in the problem of burial because of the politics of enmity. Rather, it takes up the problem of enmity in order to broach (in a distancing way, starting with the burial of an enemy) broad political problems of which burial politics are a synecdoche.⁶

Antigone does demand the right to bury her brother but Polynices is a pretext (just as his death is pre-textual; it does not occur in the play). He provides an occasion for Antigone to object to the democratic order of the day. In her laments for her brother but also, as we shall see, in her dirge for herself and elsewhere, Antigone memorializes the family's dead in Homeric terms (in terms of the dead's individuality, the loss to the surviving family, and the need to avenge it), exhibiting fidelity to natal over marital family, clan over polis. She gives expression to the concern that democracy, especially in its imperial capacity, sends soldiers to die in war while offering only a pretense of the memorialization and honor they deserve, a pathetic substitute for the real (Homeric) thing that only their families or clans, but not the democratic polis, can deliver.

These political stakes of Antigone's actions are obscured by those who see in Antigone a model of dissident politics as heroic action untethered, as such, to any meaningful form of life. Such theorists are often drawn to the extraordinary and to a model of politics as rupture, and so may underrate the extent to which the dissident's "no" emanates not just from a rift in the current order or from a value at odds with the public and its law—divine law, the family, or the private—but also from her embeddedness in a form of life to which she says "yes" and on behalf of which her "no" is proclaimed.⁷ One such theorist, Slavoj Žižek, focuses on Antigone's "no!" and on her stammering repetition of the tautology of her brother's kinship location in her (in)famous speech, which I discuss below. Žižek follows Lacan who points out that Antigone's love for Polynices has nothing to do with his traits, but is simply premised on his being her brother. He is who he is who he is for Antigone, Lacan says, and Žižek agrees. Butler brilliantly argues against Lacan that Polynices's singularity is less tautological than might first appear because Antigone's references to her beloved brother are dangerously and productively doubled—her brother, son of her mother, is not only Polynices, as so many readers assume but also, of course, her father, Oedipus, who is also a son of Jocasta and whom (although Butler does not say this, Derrida does) Antigone also does not get to bury (*AC*, 60-61).⁸

Against Žižek, Butler too notes that Antigone does not "simply say 'no,'" although "negations riddle her speech" (*AC*, 68). Butler and I differ regarding what it is that Antigone says yes to, however. To incest, to a different kinship, to anomalous desire, as Butler suggests? Perhaps. Certainly there is much in the play that is illuminated by and that in turn licenses Butler's powerful arguments against structuralist and psychoanalytic assumptions about kinship through the figure of the incestuous Antigone. But Antigone's identification with incest can figure something else too: The charge of incest is an old one leveled by democrats against aristocrats, those clannish families who are said to protect their power and privilege by marrying inward, blending the marital and natal family and bearing the less than optimal children that result from such endogamy. Of course, the charge is also made that aristocrats marry outward, acquiring through exogamy the wealth and soldiers they need to advance their power at home. Antigone shows her familiarity with such marital politics when she positions herself in her final speech between the two ill-fated marriages of her family, her father's endogamous incest, which destroyed him, and her brother's exogamous marriage to a daughter of the Argives, which enabled him to raise there an army to try to reclaim the Theban throne (864-71 [951-58]).⁹

Creon's contemporary detractors will undoubtedly object to the characterization of him as democratic, noting that he exhibits few of the standard democratic virtues and they would be right. But contemporary readers tend to think democracy is more a matter of procedure than substance. Reading procedurally, interpreters such as Martha Nussbaum see no evidence of democratic leaning in Creon, who after all does not deliberate nor consult with the people or the elders, and is hard pressed to take counsel from anyone.¹⁰ But Creon metonymizes democracy substantively. His ban on lamentation and his repeated emphasis on the harms of individuality represent the fifth-century democratic view. That these are unaccompanied by other more positive traits also judged democratic in classical Athens is not evidence that Creon is not democratic; it may rather be evidence that the play casts democracy in a critical light.¹¹

Another reason for the misjudgment of Creon is commentators' assumption that his kerygma against burying Polynices is obviously tyrannical or unjust. As Helene Foley points out, it was the specific measure of leaving the body out to rot that was the problem: "Contemporary Attic punishments of traitors involved casting the body outside the city's borders, throwing them below into pits and gorges, or casting them into the sea. Creon, on the other hand, left the body exposed and created pollution."¹² Even Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, one of very few to read Creon as democratic, accepts the view that his kerygma is at odds with her reading. She resolves the problem it seems to pose by suggesting that Creon's kerygma is an "error." He errs in leaving Polynices exposed rather than dishonoring the body in accordance with Attic norms for the treatment of traitors. On my reading, however, no such resolution is needed. Creon's excess is what marks him as democratic. If Creon's treatment of Polynices exceeds the bounds of the permissible, that is perfectly compatible with the claim that Creon represents Attic norms which are here represented as are the Homeric hyperbolically, through the lens of the rival worldview with which they contend. From an elite/Homeric perspective, Creon does not depart from, he rather instances, democratic practice when he mistreats the dead and prohibits burial.

Moreover, insofar as democracy would appear tyrannical to a mid-fifth-century Greek aristocrat, Creon's apparently tyrannical traits are fully compatible with his character as representative of democratic order.¹³ Creon begins in statesmanlike voice (his first "ship of state" speech is Periclean). If he becomes tyrannical over time, that may signal a defect of character; or it may suggest perspicacity: He sees that his struggle with Antigone is about more than a burial and a body. Within the framework of the play, their struggle is about the terms of collective coexistence and the recalcitrance of a

rival form of life. Creon may aim to clarify the terms of Theban membership when he promotes one brother as an honored son and denigrates the other as an enemy. One brother besieged the city (“he thirsted to drink his kinsmen’s blood and sell the rest to slavery,” says Creon of Polynices (199-202 [225-26]) while the other sought to defend it (208 [233]; cf. 285 [325]) and so, as Antigone points out, Creon “graced one with all the rites and disgraced the other” (21-24 [26-27]).¹⁴ Eteocles is given an official honorific burial in which Antigone participates but Polynices is left out to rot. Creon may mean by these measures to consolidate the lines of Theban membership. But the issue of which brother’s side Thebans should take is distinct from the larger question of whether and how a brother should be mourned; mourning practices postulate certain forms of collective life and so how we mourn is a deeply political issue to whose history in Athens I now briefly turn.

Regulating Lament

In the sixth century B.C.E., legislation is passed by Solon at Athens, then throughout Greece, restricting mourning and burial practices. Over 150 years before Sophocles wrote *Antigone*, Solon’s polis-forming legislation called for restraining what Plutarch calls the “disorderly and unbridled quality” of women’s grief [21.5], as well as the “breast beating and lamentation at burials.”¹⁵ What commentators today stress was “women’s” mourning—loud, keening—was cast as “excessive.”

At the time, families burying their dead might have turned to threnon exarchoi, who sang the threnos, “a formal lament.” These “professionals” “probably existed throughout antiquity despite possible efforts by Solon to abolish them by banning the singing of prepared dirges.”¹⁶ Kinswomen performed goos (a personal and more improvised sort of dirge) which, when lamenting men killed in battle, focused on “the plight of the bereaved” and not on the “heroic feats” of the dead or their contribution to the public good.¹⁷ Both forms of lamentation featured calls for vengeance and both were subject to Solon’s regulations, which were quite specific. The *prothesis* “was to be held indoors and the *ekphora* could only take place in silence and before dawn.”¹⁸ The *prothesis* gave “the bereaved an opportunity to indulge in shameless self-pity by bemoaning the effects upon their own lives occasioned by the loss of the beloved.” This practice is not so much an expression of authentic feeling as an orchestrated ritual.¹⁹

There may be many reasons for Solon’s innovations, including the need “in the newly formed democratic polis” to “diminish the power of the

aristocracy" for whom funerals were a way to flaunt wealth.²⁰ As Gail Holst-Warhaft points out, however, reining in the wealthy was not the only aim: (1) Solon set out to take charge of practices of remembrance in order to end cycles of vengeful violence that were seen as a threat to the new polis form (funerals were a locus of clan strife, especially in the case of a murdered relative) and (2) the emerging city aimed to reorient mourning away from its focus on the lost, irreplaceable life and toward that life's honorable dedication to the good of the polis.²¹ These two aims are connected insofar as (1) the thirst for vengeance is whetted, not slaked, by the belief that dead relatives are (2) irreplaceable.

The aim seems to be to shift away from Homeric dirges' focus on the unique individuality of the dead, the loss to the surviving family caused by the death, and the call to vengeance.²² Homeric mourning features "extravagant, out of control behaviour, including loud wailing, tearing the hair, and lacerating one's face. This is a common initial response to death, especially by men but also by women."²³ Note that excess mourning, later attributed to women and cast as feminine from Solon to Pericles and beyond, is in fact a trait of both men's and women's mourning in Homer. At issue in the later ban, then, are formal practices of mourning (threnos) led by women (threnon exarchoi) and the practices of loud wailing and self-laceration (goos) previously conventional, now gendered feminine and cast as excessive.²⁴ Both focus on the family's loss rather than on the city's gain from the death being mourned.²⁵

Given the privatization of the prothesis as well as its diminution (from nine days in Homer for Achilles to one day under Solon), we might expect to see forbidden practices of lamentation go underground, as it were, or take new forms. Indeed, it does seem possible that this is what happened when the late fifth century witnessed new developments in funerary practice. People (it may not have been women, specifically) began to place "in cemeteries, graves, pits or rivers the small folded lead plaques known as *katadesmoi* (curse-tablets)," most commonly in the graves of "those who died young or violently."²⁶

Subtly or overtly the forbidden lamentations remained and retained traits the new polis form tried to erase.²⁷ The laments aroused the passions of those left behind, highlighted the unique individuality of the lost life, and called for survivors to avenge the deceased. Solon in the early sixth century saw such practices as threatening to the new polis form. By the 440s, when Sophocles wrote *Antigone*, the threat had shifted but it was not diminished: Athens was now democratic and "the dead bodies mourned were more often than not the bodies of young men who died at war," no longer defending the polis but rather expanding the Athenian Empire.²⁸

Prohibition was not the only strategy in fifth-century Athens. Eventually institutions of exception were established as well. One, what Larry J. Bennett and William Blake Tyrrell call a “concession,” allowed for the bones of the dead to be displayed for two days (“twice that allowed private funerals”) in the agora and families could here mourn as they wished but on the third day the polis took over and the mourned became simply “the dead,” nameless members of the city to be buried publicly.²⁹ Also on offer were two new genres of loss—tragedy and the funeral oration.³⁰ Funeral orations, delivered by men not women, glorified the dead for their contribution to the city’s greatness and also insisted on their replaceability. The *epitaphios logos* is the “polis’ substitution of public praise for private mourning,” Gail Horst-Warhaft says (124), though it might be more apt to say the epitaph substitutes one kind of public mourning—that of the classical city—for another kind of public mourning—Homeric. The Homeric mourner’s focus on the hero’s beautiful body, embodied pain, and bereavement is replaced by the classical city’s focus on gorgeous speech—oratory that moves and pleases its audience without calling for vengeance.³¹ With this substitution is launched a new economy of substitution, in which no one is said to possess such unique singularity that his loss should be seen as devastating to family or city. In this moment, we might say, Athens treats every soldier as an “unknown soldier.” The patrios nomos, paternal ancestral law, set out rules for the public commemoration of Athenian war dead who were collected from the battlefields, divided up into their tribes (a social ordering established by Cleisthenes in 508) and cremated. Their ashes were put into common tribal coffins and displayed in the city. The names of the dead were listed on marble tablets. A big public oration was given in the public graveyard and, as Josiah Ober put it, then “everyone goes home til next year.”

Tragedy, the genre of devastating loss, also became important, perhaps to compensate for the loss of loss (mourning practices), as it were, or to balance with its larger-than-life characterizations the smaller-than-life lot to which Athenian combatants were now consigned. But tragedy could also go too far. The first tragedy, now lost, *The Capture of Miletus*, authored by a little-known tragedian named Phrynichus triggered “an epidemic of uncontrollable grief” for Athens’s sacrifice of Miletus to the Persians. For this, Phrynichus was fined a thousand drachmas and the performance of the play was prohibited by law. This puts some pressure on the common notion that Athenians shed tears at the theater that they were not allowed to shed elsewhere.³²

The episode suggests tragedy was not only subversive of polis norms, as Simon Goldhill and many others suggest. This institution of exception was also a regulated, disciplined domain within which some subversion was tolerated. Permitted, approved, if still also transgressive tragedy was a relatively safe venue that allowed and even occasioned emotions like, but not the same as, the emotions once solicited by female mourners, some of whom were “professionals” not unlike the actors who performed in the dramas. In tragic theater, emotions once exercised in now forbidden mourning rites are transformed into something else and exercised in moderation in a polis-centered and policed form. Thus, while the audience was watching Sophocles's *Antigone* and perhaps even feeling the justice of Antigone's cause, they were participating as spectators in one of the institutional forms that sought to mark her defeat and to enable the victory that I shall now argue her antagonist, Creon, hyperbolically sought.³³

Antigone's Laments: Homeric Mourning in Democratic Athens

With these contextual details in mind, readers may find Sophocles's *Antigone* opens up to them in new ways. Again and again, the play stages encounters between Homeric and classical mourning practices cast as excessive or well-judged. The distinction between these two kinds of mourning and their (im)propriety is just one way the play marks a larger divide between two paradigms of political culture: aristocratic Homeric individuality (and the community it postulates) and classical democratic community (and the forms of individuality it permits). Other markers in the play point to shifts in citizenship legislation (in 451/0, from aristocratic patrilineal to democratic bi-parental); changes in the mechanism for distributing civic responsibilities, from an aristocratic principle of worth to a democratic practice of randomness by lottery; and, more generally, a shift from an aristocratic ethics and politics of individuality and distinction to a democratic ethics and politics of interchangeability.³⁴

That Antigone buries Polynices not once but twice in the play, that is, to the point of *excess*, is just one piece of evidence suggesting the play may explore historic tensions between Homeric and classical paradigms, one feature of which is the casting by the latter of the former's mourning practices as “excessive.”³⁵ There is more. When Antigone complains to Ismene that their brother Polynices, is “to be left unwept, unburied, a lovely treasure for birds that scan the field and feast to their hearts' content” (28-30

[35-36]), Antigone re-cites the plight of Patroclus in the *Iliad*: “unwept, unburied.”³⁶

Also, Antigone’s two recorded mourning speeches—one for Polynices (at the second burial) and one for herself—are both clearly marked as Homeric, the first conventionally so, the other hyperbolically.³⁷ We hear about the first of these two laments from the sentry who witnessed it. He describes Antigone in terms that call up all the forbidden elements of women’s lamentation:

And she cried out a sharp piercing cry, like a bird come back to an empty nest, [*in Homer, an iconic representation of the mother in mourning,*] peering into its bed and all the babies gone [*bereavement*]. . . . Just so, when she sees the corpse bare she bursts into a long, shattering wail [*loud, keening*] and calls down withering curses on the heads of all who did the work [*vengeance*]. (424-28 [471-77])³⁸

Later, as Antigone approaches the cave to which Creon has consigned her, she mourns again, this time for herself. When she describes her “future life immured in the cave as ‘bereft’”³⁹ and goes on to wail that she will never marry or have children, she is, in Nicole Loraux’s words (said in the context of an argument about Euripides’ play), “like a Homeric mourner [who] weeps in advance over her future life.”⁴⁰ Antigone is not a professional mourner, she is not engaged in the more formal laments (threnos) first outlawed by Solon. *Goos* is the term used by Sophocles to describe Antigone’s plaint. She does call for vengeance as she is led to the cave in which she will die, though the call is muted by comparison with her earlier lament for Polynices (she may doubt the justice of her cause now the gods seem to side with Creon): “Very well: if this is the pleasure of the gods, once I suffer I will know I was wrong. But if these men are wrong, let them suffer nothing worse than they mete out to me—these masters of injustice” (925-28 [1017-21]).

Here, also like a Homeric mourner, Antigone focuses on the unique, irreplaceable lost life of Polynices. This seems to mark a shift from her earlier account of herself. Antigone is normally thought of as speaking on behalf of the gods of the underworld when she argues that the dead are all radically equal and, regardless of their deeds in the human world, must be buried. She does cite the gods. But her sentiments about the equality of the living and their equal claims to honor in death are also iconically Homeric: As Simone Weil points out (in James Boyd White’s parsing), there is an “‘extraordinary sense of equity’ in the *Iliad*. Homer describes Achaean and

Trojan deaths . . . in identical terms, expressive of identical feelings." He so well recognizes "the equal humanity of the people who must suffer on both sides" that "'One is barely aware that the poet is a Greek and not a Trojan.'" White adds, "A death is a death. Trojan or Achaean." This is Antigone's view. On it is premised her refusal to differentiate as the democratic Creon wants her to between Eteocles and Polynices.⁴¹

Antigone's earlier refusal to take seriously the friend-enemy distinction shifts to a focus in her final dirge on her brother's unique individuality. She ends by claiming a particular devotion to her brother, Polynices, to whom she refers as "son of my mother." This phrase, "son of my mother," is much remarked upon by Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, and others. For Butler the formal kinship location—son of my mother—is productive because it highlights, contra structuralism, the polyseamousness of kinship, its nonreferential and ambiguous character, its vulnerability to slippage. (The term, as noted above, refers not only to Polynices but also to Oedipus, Antigone's father/brother.) Irigaray interprets the phrase as indicating that for Antigone the issue is less about Polynices than about access to the forbidden maternal in this increasingly patriarchal order of kinship premised upon taboos of incest and homosexuality. The phrase is worthy of remark for another reason as well. In Homer, paternity is definitive for kinship and there is no such thing as bastardry. Against that background, to call someone a brother would not connote a shared mother. The specification of a shared mother adds information only in the Homeric context, in which the hearer would not infer a shared mother from the stated fact of fraternity. That information is rendered redundant and unnecessary in Athens by the citizenship law of 451/0 (passed almost 10 years before Sophocles wrote *Antigone*) which, "on Pericles' proposal, require[d] that candidates for citizenship be born from two freeborn native parents."⁴² Thus the phrase "son of my mother" may be another marker of the Homeric Antigone's alienness to democratic Athens, the audience or addressee of the play.⁴³

What follows from the specific irreplaceability of Polynices? No child or husband, Antigone says, could have moved her to the same self-sacrifice. "A husband dead, there might have been another. A child by another too, if I had lost the first. But mother and father both lost in the halls of death, no brother could ever spring to light again" (909-12 [1001-4]). One can always remarry or have more children, but a brother (whose parents are dead) cannot be replaced, she says, seemingly justifying her act. She will accept no substitutes.

This argument is rejected by Goethe as "*ganz schlecht*" and it is characterized by Kitto as a "frigid sophism."⁴⁴ Many critics note that this speech,

which seems calculating, renders Antigone unsympathetic and seems out of character for this otherwise principled, uncalculating woman.⁴⁵ Some (called the “the cut-and-paste scholars” by Gellrich)⁴⁶ say the passage is inauthentic, surely a later addition given its resemblance to a story told by Herodotus in his later *Histories* (3.119), in which Intaphrenes’s wife, who is forced by Darius to choose among husband, children, and brother lest they all be put to death, chose to save the last because he alone was, she said, *irreplaceable*.⁴⁷ Others insist Antigone’s speech is original. Aristotle refers to it not many years later, the stories Herodotus compiled in his *Histories* were in wide circulation, and Sophocles and Herodotus were friends. Thus Antigone’s use of the same reasoning may refer to the story retold by Herodotus yet still predate his writing. Most critics now treat the passage as authentic but the historical debate about its authenticity obscures a third interpretative option, another possible reference until now overlooked and touched by a certain black humor.

In Pericles’s Funeral Oration, delivered after Sophocles wrote *Antigone* but surely capturing themes current in the discursive context 11 years earlier when Pericles was strategos in Athens, Pericles urges parents if they are still of childbearing age not to mourn too long over their lost sons but to have more children to replace them: “Some of you are of an age at which they may hope to have other children, and they ought to bear their sorrow better; not only will the children who may hereafter be born make them forget their own lost ones, but the city will be doubly a gainer. She will not be left desolate and she will be safer. For a man’s counsel cannot have equal weight or worth, when he alone has no children to risk in the general danger.”⁴⁸ As Loraux points out, the proviso about passing childbearing age is relevant to mothers not fathers, and so Pericles seems to have mothers in mind. But he never mentions mothers, only parents, in the Funeral Oration and when he turns immediately from the implied comfort of more children to their usefulness in securing good deliberation, he addresses only male citizens for only they deliberate. In this way, Loraux suggests, Pericles ends up erasing the figure his Oration means only to replace, the mother in mourning (referenced by the iconic bird at the empty nest to which the sentry compares Antigone).⁴⁹

This erasure serves the needs of an economy of substitution ascendant in democratic Athens. When Antigone insists on the specific irreplaceability of the lost brother, she may be opposing a more general fifth-century Athenian claim that individual lives are replaceable, that past lives may be forgotten if future ones take their place. (This adds extra pathos to her final regret that she will not bear children; if she cannot it may be because she

cannot bear children in a regime that treats them as the replacements it demands.) When Antigone says coldly that a husband or a child can be replaced, she calls attention to the coldness she combats. (It may be that Herodotus in reporting the story of Intaphrenes's wife meant to do the same thing.) When Antigone underlines Polynices's irreplaceability (the parents who bore him are dead) and grounds upon it her loyalty to him, she puts the lie to the idea that his death (but maybe also any death) can be responded to by way of an economy of substitution such as that called for by Pericles in the Oration.⁵⁰ When she points out that Polynices is irreplaceable because his parents are dead, here too she may parody Pericles: Being dead means they are beyond the slim consolations of the Oration; they are, as it were, way too old to have more children.

When Creon defends his treatment of Antigone, he too invokes an economy of substitution but he approves it: If Haemon cannot marry Antigone, there are "other fields for him to plow" (569 [642]), Creon says.⁵¹ But Ismene stands up for the uniqueness of her sister: "Perhaps, but never as true, as close a bond as theirs" (570 [643]). Creon is unmoved by Ismene. She stands for an order of rank and an economy of individuality he rejects. Haemon's suicide shows Ismene was right; he will not accept a replacement for Antigone. Antigone for her part may be saying in effect that there are other fields for *her* plow as well when she chooses her brother (natal family, burial) over Haemon (marital family, marriage) and argues that she did so because her brother is uniquely irreplaceable unlike a husband or children who can be replaced. She may arrogate to herself rights and privileges that Creon seeks to reserve for his son, and maybe for all sons. (That is, this may be one place where Antigone re-cites, as Butler says she does, Creon's sovereign discourse.) Thus, the argument for an economy of substitution is made more than once, but each time it fails. Perhaps Sophocles in re-citing the story of Intaphrenes's wife used hyperbole here, as elsewhere, to provoke his audience to question the economy of substitution or interchangeability which one critic identifies with democracy as such.⁵²

Economies of Citizenship

The regulation of laments is part of an education into a new economy of citizenship whose centrality to the play is signaled subtly by the play's much noted but little analyzed reference to Antigone's re-citation of the story of Intaphrenes's wife. Critics commenting on Antigone's citation usually retell in brief schematic terms the story told by Herodotus, much as I have done. But there is more to it than that. The story of Intaphrenes's wife tells not just

of a woman who reasoned similarly to Antigone but of a lamenting woman also confronted by the sovereign project of education to reason.

In Herodotus's story, a woman laments outside Darius's palace. Her husband, Intaphrenes, and all his male family have been sentenced to death because Darius suspects Intaphrenes of plotting against him. Intaphrenes's wife "came to the palace and began to weep and lament outside the door, and continued so long to do so that Darius, moved to pity by her incessant tears, sent someone out to speak to her." "'Lady,' the message ran, 'the king is willing to spare the life of one member of your family—choose which of the prisoners you wish to save.'" ⁵³ The woman thinks over the offer and then informs the messenger that if she could only have one family member, she would choose her brother. "The answer," Herodotus reports, "amazed Darius, and he sent again and asked why it was that she rejected her husband and children and preferred to save her brother, who was neither so near to her as her children nor so dear to her as her husband." The woman now responds with the *argument* that earned her the admiration of the king and the puzzlement of readers through the ages: "'My lord,' she replied, 'God willing, I may get another husband and other children when these are gone. But as my father and mother are both dead, I can never possibly have another brother. That was the reason for what I said.'" Her words find favor with the king and "to mark his pleasure, [he] granted her not only the life she asked, but also that of her eldest son. The rest of the family were all put to death" (*Histories* 3.119).

Like Sophocles's *Antigone* on my reading, Herodotus's story is centrally about a woman lamenting and a sovereign's effort to end it on behalf of public order. Instead of prohibition and threats of the sort used by Creon, Darius seeks to end the woman's lamentation with inducements. Pick one, he says, and I will release him.

Intaphrenes's wife does pick one. In picking one, she stops keening. Darius continues her socialization from lamentation into *logos* when he goes on to demand that she give reasons for her choice, a request that produces the argument about the brother's irreplaceability. Critics argue endlessly about the meaning of this speech but the real point of interest is not *what* the woman says to Darius's messenger, but *what she does when she says it*: She gives reasons, she calculates, she ranks, she shows she has entered into an economy of exchange. She no longer laments and keens, she does not call for vengeance. Darius moves Intaphrenes's wife from the abyss of need, desire and loss into what Jacques Lacan calls "the service of the goods," an economy of calculation and satisfaction that Lacan rightly identifies with Creon.⁵⁴

Where Darius succeeds, Creon fails. Creon says he wants to teach Antigone to reason properly, to know her place, taming her by blows, using force in the way that animals are tamed. But she does not respond to his methods. When Antigone cites this story, might she not do it hoping we will see her story too is about a sovereign's effort to move his subjects from the infinitude of loss into a finite and more governable economy of wants and their satisfactions?

If this is her intent, she misleads, for the analogy is not quite apt. Antigone and Creon represent two distinct and rival economies of membership, Homeric versus democratic, not one economy beset by the aneconomic ruptures of the other (a point to which I return below, with reference to structuralist readings of the play). The analogy is inapt in another way as well. Although the focus on Intaphrenes's wife rightly underlines the gendered dimensions of the politics at issue here, it is important to note that Creon's attitude is not just misogynist. He expects men, too, to accept their own substitutability, to be self-disciplining and law-abiding, to give up their heroic Homeric ambitions.

The play opens in the aftermath of the heroic single combat of Eteocles and Polynices. This style of contest is subtly contrasted by Creon with the unity of the hoplite line in which each shields his neighbor from harm and follows the orders given. The hoplites fought in phalanx formation and lived and died by an economy of substitution: When one fell, one from the next line would move in immediately to take his place. This is Creon's model of good citizenship. The good man, Creon says to Haemon, one fit to rule and be ruled, is "staunch in the storm of spears [and] he'll stand his ground, a loyal unflinching comrade at your side" (670-71 [743-45]). But "whoever steps out of line" invites "Anarchy" (673 [754]) which "breaks the ranks of spearmen into headlong rout" (674 [754]). Those who "last it out . . . owe their lives to discipline." Such men "live by law" (675-77 [755-57]).

Here Creon collapses hoplite order and law, opposing them to anarchy, dissidence, disorder: Antigone to him is not a representative of a rival order, a form of life, a rival law (of vengeance, aristocracy, Homeric honor) but rather a mere anarchic force. This is the very same anarchic or dissident Antigone, now revalued as a positive force, who is called upon by contemporary readers to restore feminist or democratic energies to a justice exhausted by legalism and betrayed by state power. But this is Creon's view of Antigone (as Robert Cover points out in the service of a different argument in *Justice Accused*). It abstracts from the social order that empowers her resistance, casts her action in negative terms, and obscures the affirmative bases of her dissidence.⁵⁵

That the play means to direct our attention to the politics of democratic Athens and the cultural context of Antigone's resistance is also elsewhere suggested when the play subtly calls attention to what, according to M. I. Finley, were the central institutions of ancient democracy: "The lot and remuneration—the lot to assign public offices and remuneration for participation in the assembly."⁵⁶ When the soldiers find that Polynices has been buried against Creon's edict and on their watch, they know someone must tell Creon what has happened. No one volunteers because they all fear his wrath. Who wants to be the bearer of bad news? They fell asleep on the job, after all. And yet the king must be told. So the soldiers draw lots and, the sentry reports sarcastically, "I got the prize" (275 [312]). Casting lots could be read as a sign of the soldiers' cowardice and avoidance of duty and they do indeed "stare at the ground" and hang their "heads in fear," according to the sentry (270-71 [305-6]). But it can also be seen as the opposite. In fifth-century Athens, almost all officials were chosen by lot, a practice first introduced more limitedly by Solon in the sixth century B.C.E. (Solon introduced appeals and some use of lottery; citizen courts came later). Indeed, the men judging the plays performed at the Dionysian Festival had themselves been chosen by lot. Submitting to lot therefore need not be seen as an avoidance of responsibility, but as a conventional mechanism for its distribution.⁵⁷ More subtly, there may here be a careful critique of fifth-century democratic Athens, a quiet suggestion that this conventional mechanism of responsibility distribution is for cowards or makes cowards of those who rely on it.

A critique of the second quintessentially democratic institution, payment to the poor for public service, is also voiced. When Creon rashly accuses one after another of taking bribes and betraying the public good (as he sees it), he airs a familiar critique of the democratic practice: once payment *for* public service is rendered, the door is opened to prize payment *over* public service and suspicion of corruption is rife.⁵⁸ Sophocles's genius may have been to find a way to broach such criticisms in front of an audience vulnerable to them and yet garner from them prizes for it, too. Most important for us, however, these references to two of the democracy's institutions may be the play's way of alerting us to the fact that other democratic innovations are at issue in this drama—the regulation of mourning and the democratic reshaping of citizenship.

That Creon might represent the democracy is one plausible interpretation of the Chorus' welcome of him as "the new man for a new day" (157 [174]). It might also help explain Creon's initial bewilderment at Antigone's resistance, since the fifth-century democracy counseled and

expected civic obedience, a view voiced by Creon when he says "that man the city places in authority, his orders must be obeyed, large and small, right and wrong" (666-67 [748-51]). But there is one oddity here. Democratic Athens did not forbid kinswomen from mourning; it limited laments *to* kinswomen.⁵⁹ Why then would Sophocles use Antigone, a kinswoman, to explore a ban that would not have applied to her? Why use goos to make us think about the forbidden threnos? There may be exaggeration for effect here. Where in Athens mourning is narrowed from the community at large to kinswomen exclusively, from public female-led performances to public male-led performances and private female mourning indoors, so in Sophocles's Thebes where *that ban is assumed to be already in effect* (it informs the expectations of the characters throughout the play, as we shall see further in a moment), the *new* restriction, Creon's edict, narrows things even further and thereby restages the old debate and reanimates it. This may be the play's way of suggesting that those who think only Creon's ban is extreme miss the extremity of the current restrictions: the Athenian restriction of mourning to kinswomen was tantamount to the prohibition of the practice, tout court, since the practice underwent huge transformations once it excluded the women for whom mourning was a central activity, the professional mourners who knew best how to move people in their grief. Or Sophocles's point may be more conservative. He may approve the Athenian regulation rather than criticize it, showing its reasonableness by comparison with Creon's more extreme prohibition.⁶⁰ Either way or both, the play invites readers or viewers to reassess the regulation of mourning and the democracy's post-heroic citizenship practices.

Broad tensions between Homeric and democratic paradigms are referred to repeatedly in the play. But it is mostly through mourning practices that the tensions between the two are explored as in this, her final scene, when Antigone bemoans her fate at length and Creon archly comments on her plaint: Antigone says, "No one to weep for me my friends, no wedding-song,—they take me away in all my pain . . . the road lies open, waiting. Never again, the law forbids me to see the sacred eye of day. I am agony! No tears for the destiny that's mine, no loved one mourns my death" (876-82 [963-79]). To which Creon says, "Can't you see? If a man could wail his own dirge [goos] *before* he dies, he'd never finish" (883-84 [970-71]). This is not just "scornful," as Charles Segal says, though it is that too. More significantly, Creon here sums up the classical view of Homeric mourning: It is excessive and self-centered. Those who go on and on when mourning others may as well be mourning themselves; it is all about them. They put the good of the city second to their own bereavement. The play represents

this point of view hyperbolically: Creon airs the charge that Homeric mourning is *self-indulgent*—endless, excessive, and without regard for the good of the city—in response to one whose mourning is literally self-indulgent; Antigone here actually does *sing her own dirge*.⁶¹

What is to be done with the endless dirge(r)? “Take her away, quickly!” Homeric lamentation is to be “wall[ed] up,” says Creon, who wants Antigone entombed in a cave where “dead or alive, *she will be stripped of her rights, her stranger’s rights*” and her rites, for there she will stay, unwept, unmourned (885-90 [969-71]).⁶² But the soldiers delay, perhaps exhibiting the sympathy Haemon has claimed the people have for Antigone and surely illustrating for the audience the impotence of Creon whose orders are not followed as given. The soldiers extend to Antigone the hospitality Creon denies her and in her “tragic overliving” Antigone manages to do what Creon has expressly forbidden, to exercise her “stranger’s rights” and sing her own dirge, the very one in which she makes her (in)famous and supposedly inauthentic appeal to her brother’s irreplaceability.⁶³ She is finally interred, silenced, when Creon admonishes the soldiers a second time: “Take her away. You’re wasting time—you’ll pay for it, too” (931-32 [1023-24]).⁶⁴

Antigone’s laments regarding the life she has foregone, her losses, her singular attachment to her irreplaceable brother, the downfall of her family, and her calls for vengeance contrast sharply with Creon’s regulation of funerary practice and his focus on the (dis)service of those now dead to the city. The two in contrast may suggest that if the democratic oration moves us too quickly out of mourning and does too little for the dead because it instrumentalizes them for its own ends, Homeric laments fail by contrast to move mourners along quickly enough. It allows them to wallow in endless dirges, encourages a kind of death identification, and fails to return survivors to life.⁶⁵

These are the two poles in contention. But there are other options as well. Antigone is not alone in her lamentations. Concerns about the destabilizing powers of lamentation are expressly raised, for example, when Eurydice, Creon’s wife, hears of her son’s suicide. Thus, the play’s focus is not “how to solve the problem of Antigone,” as Butler’s and most other readings assume (though they might not share in the quest for “solution”), for the problem is not confined to Antigone.

Eurydice reacts strangely to a messenger’s report that her son, Haemon, is dead of a suicide committed in his father’s presence. The text says simply, “Eurydice turns and goes into the royal house.” Her strange silence stands out by contrast with Antigone’s wailing and calls for remark. Sure enough the Chorus asks, “What do you make of that? The lady’s gone,

without a word, good or bad" (1244-45 [1373-74]). The messenger joins in their concern: "I'm alarmed, too," he says. He worries, however, not about Eurydice's well-being but about the well-being of the city: "But here's my hope—faced with her son's death she finds it unbecoming to mourn in public. Inside, under her roof, she'll set her women to the task and wail the sorrow of the house. She's too discreet. She won't do something rash" (1246-50 [1375-80]). The stakes are clear: will Eurydice indulge in forbidden public, loud Homeric wailing or confine herself to the private, less "unbecoming" household-centered grief that good polis judgment since Solon recommends? (In the Gibbons and Segal translation, the line reads, "She's not without good judgment and won't do wrong.") The messenger is confident; the chorus is not: "I'm not so sure. To me at least, a long heavy silence promises danger, just as much as a lot of empty outcries" (1251-52 [1381-83]). The chorus calls the "empty outcries" potentially dangerous while also calling them empty and thereby simultaneously suggests the opposite. They are empty insofar as they cannot bring the dead back. But they are not at all empty insofar as they can restart a cycle of vengeance and destabilize the city. Loud lament can make citizens not only admire those who gave sons to the city but also, even at the same time, wonder at the wisdom of sacrificing the city's sons to war and question the economy of substitution that anchors these sacrifices.

In her private household, off the streets forbidden to her, Eurydice did not mourn quietly with her servants, as the messenger hoped (the chorus member's worry that "a long heavy silence promises danger" was conspicuous), nor did she call loudly and publicly for someone to avenge her son's death, as the messenger feared. The messenger reports to Creon that, inside, she raised "a cry for the noble fate of Megareus, the hero killed in the first assault, then for Haemon, then with her dying breath she called down torments on your head—you killed her sons" (1302-5 [1427-31]). Rather than bear more children to replace those she lost, Eurydice ends her life cursing the husband she blames for her pain. Even in her death, "the dead, the woman lying there, piles the guilt of all their deaths on you," says the messenger to Creon (1312-13 [1436-37]). When Eurydice kills herself on the sacrificial altar, in the household, away from the public streets and yet cursing her husband out loud, she dies a death that stands somewhere between the two orders in contention here. Like Antigone, Eurydice curses and calls for vengeance; unlike Antigone, Eurydice wails indoors. But Eurydice's cries and words are mobile. Through the messenger, they leave the confines of the palace.⁶⁶ This woman accepts her confinement, but her words do not. (This also supports Butler's point that the play explores the unruliness of speech acts as such [AC 7].)

Eurydice's corpse appears as well. "See for yourself!" the messenger says as servants open the palace door to bring her corpse to Creon on its bier. "Now they bring her body from the palace" (1293 [1420]). The shift from Homeric to democratic practices is not costless. Sophocles's *Antigone* opens the palace door to reveal the cost of polis life and membership. Its name? *Eurydice*, which means "wide justice."⁶⁷ Wide justice highlights the narrowness of two rival paradigms, Homeric and democratic, whose epistemic contest makes a plaything of Thebes. Eurydice, a woman who crosses boundaries—she kills herself like a man, with a dagger not a noose—haunts all forms of narrow justice.⁶⁸

Tragedy has traditionally "been read as charting the linear development of a progression, from darkness to light, from barbarism to civilization, from blood vengeance to democratic jurisdiction," says Olga Taxidou, but tragedy does not in fact represent a straight, linear path. The "emphasis on mourning tends to throw up the contradictions."⁶⁹ That contradictions are thrown up by tragedy is clearly right. But Sophocles's *Antigone* (one of Taxidou's examples) is not undone in its aspiration to plot a linear development by its focus on mourning. Rather, it focuses on mourning in order to throw up the contradictions and contestations that roil fifth-century Athens.

Antigone's Undecidabilities in Context

The idea that the play explores tensions between two paradigms—Homeric and classical—by way of their respective practices of mourning and membership seems to support Michelle Gellrich's claim that we should see "the crisis of the play in terms of the undecidability of criteria for absolute judgment." But that undecidability is not just structural, as Gellrich seems to suggest, it is also historical.⁷⁰ This reading, then, essentially contestable but historically located, occupies a middle position in recent Classics debates about the merits of referential versus polyseamus approaches.

For Helene Foley, the polyseamus nature of ancient Greek tragic texts, their dramatic character, and their dependence upon reception from a diverse, unpredictable audience all militate against referential interpretations that decode the plays as position-taking arguments in an ideological context.⁷¹ For Richard Seaford, by contrast, the focus on ambiguity is "in danger of becoming a disabling cliché."⁷² The "civic Dionysus of the *Antigone's* fifth *stasimon* was for the Greeks not . . . a quasimetaphysical principle [of ambiguity] but inherent in the imperative to perform his collective cult."⁷³ Thus, Seaford argues, the *Antigone* does not fan the flames of a never-ending tragic ambiguity but rather performatively (re)establishes

a cult that channels a "controlled ambiguity" that serves the needs of the polis (and does not also undo it). Why, however, should we assume that ambiguities aired by the play are controllable by cult worship and do not also exceed it? And what warrants privileging the play's fifth stasimon (which points to the cult) over what comes after: the suicide of Eurydice and the scene of Creon's grief?

Positioned somewhere between Foley and Seaford, the reading developed here is partial and contestable, focused on particular elements of historical context and necessarily drawing selectively on elements of this complex play. No single character is taken to represent, against Foley's caution, "a clearly defined, logically consistent, and easily assimilable viewpoint," but neither is ambiguity celebrated as such, against Seaford's caution.⁷⁴ Instead, each of the contending positions, democratic versus Homeric, is seen through the other's critical lens, the position of each amplified and criticized by surrounding characters (e.g., as when Ismene argues for Antigone's irreplaceability), and the partiality and insufficiency of both contending forms of mourning and membership are on display.⁷⁵

Thus, Antigone's dirge is endless and self-indulgent, Creon says, and it is. That the chorus mocks her in response to it (834-38 [925-30]) shows that this is not just Creon's perspective, either. Antigone is depicted through a critical democratic lens as admirable but also self-indulgent and incapable of considering things from the other's point of view.⁷⁶ And Creon's treatment of the body goes beyond the pale, Antigone says, and it does. That the sentry mentions its decay and its stench and Tiresias is horrified to find Polynices's flesh on the city's altars suggests this is not just Antigone's perspective. Creon's action represents in hyperbolic form what, to a Homeric or aristocratic point of view, looks like the democracy's generally excessive violation of the bounds of the permissible when it comes to the treatment of the dead. By depicting a recognizably democratic figure failing to bury properly in a way that exceeds even the permissible impropriety called for by a dead man's treason, the play airs the charge that the democracy disrespects the dead, tout court. From a Homeric or aristocratic perspective, what Creon did in this exceptional case was not atypical of what was routinely done in Periclean Athens: The bodies of the dead were treated improperly, their ashes thrown into communal coffins.⁷⁷ Depriving the dead of their proper rites, the democracy may as well be leaving them unburied.

Another aristocratic complaint, that the classical city lacks the power to truly enforce its agenda, lurks in the fact noted by Tiresias that the body exiled outside the city by Creon keeps returning to the city in spite of his decree. If Polynices deserves as a traitor to be cast out of the city, Creon's

kerygma has not secured that just desert but has on the contrary undone it precisely by leaving the body exposed. As a result, the exiled body keeps returning to the city in bits and pieces as carrion. From this perspective, Creon's problem is not his overzealousness but, again recalling a classic critique of democracy, his ineffectiveness. Notwithstanding his power as ruler, he simply cannot keep Polynices out of the city. Similarly, Antigone resists confinement within the household. In other words, the descendants of Oedipus can neither be kept out nor in.

Does this reading then leave us with the empty undecidability Seaford worries about? On the contrary, we are left with a deep criticality, one that finds both sides worthy and wanting. That both lead characters come to a bad end need not mean the views they aired are delegitimated or overcome. Those views may well outlive their bearers. But neither does the play, on this reading, offer us characters that are mere historical referents. Instead, the play airs through its two main characters and others too concerns about the costs of a particular democratic form of life while insisting as well on the limitations of its chief rival. These concerns are rendered visible by the binary of Homeric versus democratic used here, but there is also contiguity, mutuality, and slippage in what I have suggested thus far is a fairly binary set of terms. This is most obvious perhaps in Haemon, upon whom I have not focused here, who argues for democratic virtues of moderation and deliberation and favors the Homeric Antigone's right to bury her traitorous brother. But it is also true of Creon.

Creon is surely Homeric not democratic when he voices vengeance as the law of his ideal household: "That's what a man prays for: to produce good sons—a household full of them, dutiful and attentive, *so they pay his enemy back with interest*" (641-44 [715-17]; emphasis added) and when he, possibly vengefully, grounds his rule on the vengeful treatment of Polynices's body. Also, his mistrust of those who take pay for public (dis)service may (contra my argument earlier) be read as a marker not of his democratic corruption but of his not quite democratic character; and, in choosing to bury Polynices first before tending to the then still living Antigone, Creon may be seen as taking his cue from Antigone: although he is instructed by the chorus to "free the girl from the rocky vault and raise a mound for the body you exposed" (1100-1 [1224-25]), he follows Antigone's order (first the dead, then the living), not that of the chorus leader. Because Creon rushes first to bury the dead Polynices and then to release Antigone (as the messenger reports to Eurydice (1196-1206 [1318-28]), Creon reaches Antigone too late. He had left enough rations to sustain her for a while and so might have assumed there was time to tend first to Polynices. In delaying, Creon

privileges his sense of time (there is yet plenty) over Antigone's (which has always already run out). He may underestimate her agency (or he may secretly count on it).⁷⁸

If Creon departs from type more than Antigone, this may fit his character; he grows and changes for worse and better over the course of the play in ways his antagonist does not. This shifting, though, may also fit with the claim that he is democratic. With his lack of consistency or backbone, he personifies the aristocratic critique of the democracy, just as Antigone in her stubborn unchangeability may personify the democratic critique of aristocracy.

Another slippage: H.A. Shapiro points out that Creon buries Polynices in Homeric style, "with the burning of the body and the raising of the mound."⁷⁹ Notably, however, this is not on Creon's own initiative: the Chorus leader *tells* Creon to bury in this Homeric way: "go, raise a mound for the body you exposed" (1100 [1225]). Still, Creon listens. Working with material evidence, Shapiro argues that the play's Homeric references would not have been lost on the fifth-century audience. Shapiro's evidence supports my contention that Homeric themes are referenced throughout the play. But Shapiro draws different conclusions, arguing that Creon represents Achilles (the bulk of the play does not support this, in my view), comparing Achilles's desecration of Hector to Creon's treatment of Polynices. On the reading developed here, however, Creon is no Achilles. Creon may be moved by rage against Polynices but if so then Creon evidences the dependence of the democratic view he mostly represents on elements of a Homeric ethos that the democracy both admires and abjures.⁸⁰

Thus, the play troubles the binary of Homeric versus democratic in which it also traffics and whose contention it restages. But beyond these contiguities and slippages, the binary is finally and most importantly troubled in the interruption of both the codes in contention here by a keening grief that stands out for its violation of all the expectations the play and its contexts have set in place.

Creon's Grief

If Creon is finally harshly undone, that may not be to show the depth of his offenses (on this account, they may not be as deep as some readers think), but also to give him occasion to mourn. The laments of Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice all partake of the Homeric practice in which the bereaved keen loudly, prize the individuality of the lost person, call for or try to exact vengeance, or commit violence on themselves or others in response to loss. They contrast with Creon's polis-centered and initially

measured judgment of Antigone's dead brothers. But when the losses cut close, Creon is tested: will he cleave to the strictures of democratic mourning or give in to Homeric lamentation?

Hearing of Eurydice's suicide as he stands with Haemon's dead body in his arms, Creon shrieks loudly and engages in what can only be called excessive public bereavement. "I shake with dread! Why has no one stabbed straight into my chest with a two-edged sword? Desolate me, aiee! Desolate the anguish that is now mixed into me!"⁸¹ Creon seems to partake of the very practice he had forbidden. He mourns like a woman; his lament is loud, wailing, and pained. But Creon's lament differs from the outlawed laments in one important respect: He looks to no further violence or vengeance to restore a social or political equilibrium. "And the guilt is all mine— it can never be fixed on another man" (1317-18 [1441-42]).⁸² He is, he insists, solely responsible for what has happened. Unlike his son and his wife, he does not commit suicide; he only wishes for death. (One could note acidly that here, as elsewhere, he seeks to delegate to others rather than act himself: the plaintive "why has no one stabbed me?" takes the place of the heroic suicide.)⁸³ How should we understand this departure both from the code of the permitted, official funerary practice (the loud grief) and from the prohibited Homeric modes of mourning (the absolution of all others and renunciation of violence)?

These departures may bespeak Creon's continued commitment to his sovereign mission to wean Thebes from vengeance and end cycles of violence. On this reading, Creon, who seems to be utterly destroyed, does not quite lose himself. He does not yield to the passions he sees as most destabilizing to the city and so he ends the play as he began, pressing himself into service on behalf of the public good, modeling what he now sees as the appropriate comportment in mourning for Theban citizens: Creon's grief models something like Bennett and Tyrrell's "concession to familial loss and grief, loosened from normal curbs on public display" which the fifth-century polis came to allow.⁸⁴ Perhaps this "concession" is what Creon extended to Antigone when he allowed her a share in lamenting in Eteocles, though he did not offer the same to her for Polynices. Creon here avails himself of that practical concession and does not go beyond it. The play ends with his grief, incomplete or interrupted by the chorus, leaving to others (The public? The play's audience?) the final work of mourning and burying his family. From this vantage point, the play enacts the drama of Athens's "concession," telling a story of how it came to be, tracking a shift from practices that overly restricted mourning to the permitting of some public display of grief.⁸⁵ The "concession" is formally similar to the other

Athenian institutions of exception: like tragedy itself and the cult of Dionysus, the concession permits the impermissible while seeking to safeguard against its excesses by binding or limiting it in space and time. The concession permits some limited mourning inside the city, while tragedy and the cult of Dionysus permit its expression and seek to offset it with festival outside the city. Recalling here Creon's failed efforts to keep Antigone in and Polynices out, we may see the play as asking whether the city's turn to institutions of exception can really succeed in keeping mourning in or out?

There is also another possibility. Creon begins the play representing the triumph of the Periclean polis. He is repeatedly exposed to but unmoved by the Homeric laments of those who resist his rule. When he finally experiences grief, it is visited upon him with such abundance and intensity that it exposes the inadequacies of both of the practices in contention here. The play explores the conflict between two economies of mourning and membership (with various permutations represented by the contiguities that complicate Creon and also by such figures as Ismene, Haemon, and Eurydice), but sides with neither. When it ends with Creon's code-defying grief, does it softly suggest that no economy of mourning and membership, and no institution of exception, is up to the task of voicing or managing the grief we seek to express, contain, or channel? The difference of Creon's grief undoes them all.

If Charles Segal and other (post-)structuralist readers of the play miss both the concessive and ruptural properties of Creon's grief, that is because they work within and against a binary framework in which it is Antigone who is positioned as ruptural—she is wild nature—by contrast with Creon, who represents the order of civilization without concession. These readers take their bearings from the structuralist opposition of the raw and the cooked but also from the chorus's characterization of Antigone as wild and passionate and from Creon's view of Antigone as needing taming. In this as in so much else, however, Creon and the Chorus may mislead. They express the democratic perspective which refuses to see Antigone as a metonymic marker of a rival worldview and casts her instead as outside order altogether. This is hegemony's tactic—to act as if it has no rivals in the human world. Some of Antigone's contemporary admirers fall for it when they cast her as a metaphor for dissidence as such.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, historicists too miss the significance of Creon's grief. Bennett and Tyrrell because they assume Antigone not Creon represents the democratic view, and so overlook the possibly concessive trait, iconically democratic, of Creon's grief. Also, for them as for other historicists, there is no apparent historical referent in the historical context for an aneconomic

grief that ruptures the historical practices evidenced by the material culture they study.

The concessive and ruptural readings of Creon's grief, it is worth noting, do not force upon us a choice. The concession to private lament opens to view a rupture that threatens to exceed temporal and spatial boundaries to which the polis seeks to confine it. That is, the Athenian "concession" to familial grief restages that recurring issue: the capacity of institutions of exception—tragedy (Goldhill), ritual (Seaford), and now concession (Bennett and Tyrrell)—to manage fires of disruption or loss without also fanning their flames. Focusing on the play's performance of grief highlights the concern that exception institutions like these cannot turn to totally constructive purposes the very forces and emotions those institutions seek to contain, manage, elicit. What if these forces and emotions, like the children of Oedipus, will not be kept out nor in?

We might be alerted to the ambiguity of the line delineating the interpretative choice between concession and rupture by the fact that the play ends with Creon grieving but with the two bodies of his family members yet unburied. Who will bury them? Leaving the question open, the play exceeds the boundaries of its performance and interpellates the audience into this task. The central problem depicted in the play is in the end uncontained by it, and this violates the *mission* of tragedy as an exception institution that stages or occasions but also contains prohibited forces and emotions. We do not know whether Haemon and Eurydice will be buried, nor by whom, nor how (in what manner). The responsibility is, in a way, left to us. Will we take it up as polis members, rendering the dead anonymous? Or will we memorialize them by name and assert their singularity? How will we work through the infinite ruptural grief visited upon us by the play? The fifth-century audience faced these questions with some awareness of Phrynicus whose unhappy fate constitutes the limit of too much grief and the promise of the festival's dance and ritual whose happy events constitute the limit of too little.

Earlier in the play, Creon accused Haemon of taking the woman's side (Antigone's) in the conflict. Haemon responded to his father: "If you are a woman, yes—my concern is all for you" (741 [829-30]). That reassurance, with its poisoned implication that Creon was something other than manly, is now realized as Creon is unmanned, deprived of his family and power. Creon is led away: "Take me away," he says to his attendants, "quickly, out of sight, I don't even exist—I'm no one. Nothing" (1322-25 [1445-46]). His loss is inexpressible; no code can express or diminish the flesh ache of grief which reduces its bearer to nothing. Antigone, in her performance of

Homeric antagonism to the democracy's strictures, helped make apparent that sense of grievous loss. But, ironically, the grief Antigone is usually taken to personify—raw, wild—is on this account voiced by Creon. It is not best thought of as raw or wild, however, for it ruptures everything, including the nature–culture divide itself.

The chorus may then reassure somewhat with its sense of worldly order and hard-earned wisdom (which, however, always comes too late, it says) (1348-53 [1466-70]). Or we may recur to its earlier extended invitation, noted by Seaford, to leave behind grief by joining the Feast of Dionysus to dance all night.⁸⁷ But the trace of Creon's grief, its ruptural difference, which animates, sustains, and undoes the codes of lamentation and resists containment to any institution of exception, is hard to forget. Creon's grief, even if also concessive, is ruptural and shows that no amount of history, polis commemoration, sovereign reasoning, ritual feasting, juridical concession, tragic theater, worship, or codes of lamentation can erase via substitution (the democratic oration), memorialization (the Homeric laments), or exception (tragedy, cult, and the concession or familial exception) our undeniable mortality, awareness of which erupts from time to time by way of a keening grief that interrupts all efforts to channel, contain, or displace it. Some political orders find better ways than others to acknowledge or make meaning out of human mortality. Our debt to Sophocles is his invitation, still fresh and unfortunately still much needed, to look hard at the myriad ways in which we avoid the facticity of our finitude and still silence the grief that in our politics we yet do so much to generate.

Notes

1. Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Antigone's Daughters: Reflections on Female Identity and the State" in *Families, Politics, and Public Policy: A Feminist Dialogue on Women and the State*, ed. Irene Diamond (New York: Longman, 1983), 300-11; Mary Dietz, "Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem with Maternal Thinking," *Political Theory* 13, no. 1 (February 1985): 19-37.

2. Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life & Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 68; hereafter abbreviated as *AC*.

3. Joan Copjec, "The Tomb of Perseverance: On Antigone," in *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 12-47; Samuel Weber, "Antigone's Nomos," in *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 121-40; Luce Irigaray, "The Eternal Irony of the Community," in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Jill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Another recent reader emphasizes Antigone's explosive power: for Philippe Nonet, Antigone's importance is as a representative of singularity. Nonet also explicitly claims this play is not about

mourning. I argue here that the contrary is the case: this is its central topic. "Antigone's Law," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2006): 314-35.

4. In short, the play does what Jean-Pierre Vernant says all tragedy does: "The true subject matter of tragedy is social thought and most especially juridical thought in the very process of elaboration. Tragedy poses problems of law, and the question of what justice is." Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Greek Tragedy: Problems of Interpretation," in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 273-95. David Roselli and H. A. Shapiro document the contestedness of new burial legislation that limited the size and appearance of grave markers. The forbidden markers are Homeric/heroic, the permitted markers feature citizens in their civic rather than martial roles and feature women, for the first time, perhaps because of the new domestic ideology of the polis or perhaps, Roselli argues, because new citizenship laws require citizen mothers as well as fathers, and grave markers are a way of marking (maternal) citizenship. David Kawalko Roselli, "Polyneices' Body and His Monument: Class, Social Status, and Funerary Commemoration in Sophocles's *Antigone*," *Helios* 33s (2006): 135-77. H. A. Shapiro, "The Wrath of Creon: Withholding Burial in Homer and Sophocles," *Helios* 33s (2006): 119-34.

5. I use the term *Homeric* here and throughout not to assume a specific reference to Homer in fifth-century elite practices of burial but rather to suggest that if, as I argue here, Sophocles sought (among other things) to explore the contestedness of fifth-century funerary practice, he may well have found in Homeric epic an alternative form of life, still powerful to audiences in the fifth century, that he might have drawn on for its provision of powerful resources for such an intervention. This admittedly speculative possibility stages the reading of the play presented here and is, in my view, rendered justifiable or not by that reading. But it is also buttressed by Roselli's tracking of remnants of archaic burial practices in the fifth century.

6. See Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), on the analogous use of the foreigner or outsider to explore domestic political problems.

7. Arlene Saxonhouse seeks to de-exceptionalize Antigone's dissidence too. She turns to Euripides's version because she finds in him but not in Sophocles an account of the "conditions" under which Antigone acquires political agency. Arlene Saxonhouse, "Another Antigone: The Emergence of the Female Actor in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*," *Political Theory* 33, no. 4 (2005): 472-94.

8. Žizek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*; Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960* (Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1988); Derrida reads *Oedipus at Colonus* in *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). That Antigone is deprived of lamentation rites for both her father/brother and her brother calls to attention another pair of details: Oedipus's body mysteriously disappears (in Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus*) while that of Polynices refuses to disappear and repeatedly turns up as carrion in the city. Both circumstances make proper lament impossible.

9. Citations to the play indicate first the Greek lines and then, in the square brackets, the lines from the Fagles translation, which, unless otherwise noted, is the one used throughout.

If, as Butler notes, when Antigone refers to her brother she also or really speaks of Oedipus (AC, 60-61), we can read her mention of the marriages in two ways. The passage could be referring twice to the same marriage—oh father, and, later, oh brother, refers to the same marriage twice: that of Oedipus. In favor of this reading: Antigone begins this passage saying to the chorus, "Now you raise the agony that hurts my mind the most: grief for my father." This

suggests Oedipus remains the theme for the rest of the speech. On the contrary side, Antigone then says her grief for the whole Labdacus family is like "raw earth plowed three times," suggesting that when she goes on here to speak of marriages, she does not repeatedly redescribe one, her father's, but rather lists three in turn: Oedipus's, Polynices's, and her own (which will be a marriage to death): "Oh brother, your marriage murders mine." Her claim that "your death snuffed out my life" applies to both Oedipus and Polynices and so does not shift the reading in favor of either option.

10. Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Also see Peter Euben, "Antigone and the Languages of Politics," in *Corrupting the Youth: Political Education, Democratic Culture and Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

11. On this point as on others, I differ from Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, one of the few to suggest Creon represents the democracy. She focuses in her reading not on the ban on lamentation but on the classical democracy's demand for unity and obedience. She seems to think these are represented in the play in a way that *endorses* the democratic ideology. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Assumptions and the Creation of Meaning: Reading Sophocles' *Antigone*," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 143-48.

12. Helene Foley, "Tragedy and Democratic Ideology: The Case of Sophocles' *Antigone*," in *History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama*, ed. Barbara Goff (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 134. As Rush Rehm puts it, "It seems to have been standard Athenian practice to refuse burial on Attic soil to traitors and those guilty of sacrilege. . . . Against this practice however was the pan-Hellenic custom that the dead were owed burial *somewhere*. . . a compulsion that was magnified if the dead were kin." Rush Rehm, *Marriage to Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 181n9.

13. Thus, on this reading, we do not have to choose between Creon as democrat versus Creon as tyrant nor need we say that the audience was divided between these two options, as most classicists do.

14. Creon's focus is on Polynices's treason, as Rush Rehm points out, but Polynices confounds the effort to binarize: he is "both *philos* to Antigone and *echthros* to Thebes." Antigone makes the point clear when she says to Ismene in the first scene of the play: "The doom reserved for enemies marches on the ones we love the most" (10 [12-13]). Rehm, *Marriage to Death*, 12-13. The confusion is unfortunate for Creon since (as Rehm says in the context of a discussion of *Medea*) his "principle of doing 'harm to your enemies and good to your friends' . . . demands a clear distinction between the two end-terms, 'friends' and 'enemies.'" Rehm, *Marriage to Death*, 148. Also see Foley: "Antigone and Creon use the same vocabulary in subtly different ways—the words *philos* (friend) and *echthros* (enemy), for example, develop different connotations in the context in which each character deploys them." Helene Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 173.

Elsewhere, Creon is sensitive to the flux of status and identity, more so than Antigone who argues for Polynices's burial by reference to his status: "it was . . . not some slave that died" (518 [581]). Her point is challenged *avant la lettre*, when Creon subtly points to the flux of the identity "slave" saying of Polynices "he thirsted to drink his kinsmen's blood and sell the rest to slavery." Those who are free citizens one day may be slaves the next, if their city is conquered. Thus, for Creon, action or deeds and not, *contra* Antigone, status, are what matter most. (Jill Frank's treatment of this idea in Aristotle alerted me to it here.) See Jill Frank, *A Democracy of Distinction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Saxonhouse, *Athenian Democracy: Modern Mythmakers and Ancient Theorists* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1996), chap. 5.

The flux of status argues against Roselli, who reads Creon and Antigone as offering different views of Polynices's (static) class status. (Notably, Roselli quotes only the part of Creon's speech that says "he thirsted to drink his kinsmen's blood" but not the part about selling the rest to slavery. Roselli, "Polynices' Body," 144.) Roselli, however, is right to see that the mid-fifth-century regulation of burial, specifically what I am calling Homeric burial, is at issue in this play. He offers a wealth of material evidence that supports the claims made here. I differ from him, however, in emphasizing in my reading of the play specifically the ban on lamentation and the *several* dirges sung in the play (not just the burial of Polynices) and in treating the Homeric as not just an elite fashion statement but a rival table of values under pressure from the democracy in this period. 168n85.

15. And, notes Charles Segal, "Plutarch adds that even [500 years after *Antigone*] the *gunaikonomoi* could punish those who indulged in 'unmanly and womanly expressions of emotion and grieving.'" Charles Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow: Art, Gender, and Commemoration in Alcestis, Hippolytus, and Hecuba* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 63. For more on the *gunaikonomoi*, see Nicole Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning, with the Essay "Of Amnesty and its Opposite,"* trans. Corinne Pache (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 23-24.

16. Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (London: Duckworth, 1985), 30.

17. Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992), 114.

18. Olga Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity, and Mourning* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 176; Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, cf. 33 and throughout; Douglas MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 109ff; Foley, *Female Acts*, 22-27.

19. The ritual was "intended at least partly to satisfy the soul of the deceased. . . . The deceased's passage to the next world had yet to begin." Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 30-31, citing a study of surviving dirges.

20. Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity, and Mourning*, 176. Although, as Garland points out, drawing on Eberhard Friedrich Bruck's *Totenteil und Seelgerät im Griechischen Recht* (Munich, Germany: C.H. Beck, 1926), the regulation of excess in funerary practice may cut both ways, as far as democracy is concerned: limiting "the amount which goes into a tomb increases the amount which can be inherited by the heirs." Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, xxii. Aubrey Cannon suggests another counterintuitive explanation, parsed by Foley, *Female Acts*, 23n8: rather than democratize, rules against ostentatious funerals may have guarded a class distinction under pressure, protecting "symbolic distinctions in death rituals" from being blurred by lower class imitations of the wealthy.

21. cf. Foley, *Female Acts*, 23n8, 27; and Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*.

22. The shift is noted by Holst-Warhaft, most pointedly, but tracked as well by Foley and Taxidou. Vernant explicates the Homeric episteme in detail but attends less to the shift. Testifying to the contestedness of this shift over a century or more, Plato in the *Republic* has Socrates argue for the erasure from Homer of all the passages that describe death or the dead in ways that arouse emotions: "We shall ask Homer and the rest of the poets not to be too angry with us if we strike out these passages and any others like them. Not that they lack poetic merit, or that they don't give pleasure to most people. They do. But the more merit they have, the less suitable they are for boys and men who are expected to be free and fear slavery more than death." Plato, *Republic*, trans. Tom Griffin, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 387b. For a contrary view, see Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan,

1994). Shay finds in Homer inspiration for soldiers today. Also in the *Republic*, Plato has Socrates rewrite into indirect speech or narration a part of the Iliad that Homer presents as direct speech. The aim of the rewrite is to mute Agamemnon's rage and a priest's call for revenge. In Book X, 603-6, Socrates worries about the dangers of Homeric mourning as represented in tragedy. Jill Frank called Plato's relevance to my attention. On the shift from vengeance to law in classical Athens, see Danielle Allen, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

23. Horst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 113-14.

24. Perhaps they had become such; but apart from empirics, the point is they were experienced as excessive.

25. The laments, especially the kinswomen's, "are not filled with praise of [the dead's] heroic feats but generally focus on the plight of the bereaved." Horst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 114. This fits the pattern of Antigone's goos for Polyneices (his treason would make it difficult to praise his deeds, in any case). Historical evidence suggests that in the wake of Solon's ban on laments, a culture war may have followed: The mourning outlawed at home and gendered feminine is cast as excessive, barbaric, and "eastern." With the Persian War, more than a century later, the referent of these traits—excessive, barbaric, and eastern—becomes: "Persian." Depicted as prone to excess in mourning, Persia was figured as vulnerable to Greek power and this further secured the Greek resolve to mourn, by contrast, moderately and patriotically; "The longest and most intense lamentation by tragic males is to be found in Aeschylus' *Persians* [where] the mourners are defeated barbarians, and as Edith Hall has demonstrated, their lament clearly feminizes them, makes them from the Greek perspective the antitype of the idealized male. Unlike Greek men, Xerxes and the Persian elders tear their beards and their clothes (feminine *peploi*) and beat their flesh." Foley, *Female Acts*, 29. The lamentations, nearly equally the property of men and women in Homer, then cast as the domain of women in Greece, are rendered Other, in Aeschylus's *Persians*.

26. Some had in them names to be cursed: "In certain cases as many as ten or fifteen persons are cursed on a single tablet. Other tablets are more explicit, containing formulae which curse the tongue, the eyes, the mouth, the psyche, the sanity, the arms and the legs of the named person, and invoke the assistance of the underworld deities, Persephone and Hermes." The same may be true of another innovation, a "form of cursing [that] set a small lead figure with bound hands inside a lead coffin with an inscription on the inside lid." Plato refers to the practice at 364c in the *Republic*, as Garland points out. "Often the reason for cursing appears to have been a lawsuit testimony," says Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 6-7. The *katadesmoi* may have been an iteration of the earlier, now-forbidden, revenge-seeking laments.

27. But not just women's lamentations: "Male lament in Homer does not carry the connotations of femininity and theatricality that are attached to it after Solon's laws are implemented." Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity, and Mourning*, 176. Still, there may have been gendered differences in mourning: "The two main gestures of mourning on Geometric vases [were] the female attitude of holding both hands to the head and tearing the hair, and the male attitude of holding one hand to the head, apparently beating it but not actually tearing the hair." Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 29.

28. Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity, and Mourning*, 30. Also at issue, speculate some commentators, was a power struggle among women's clans, the aristocracy, Solon, and the new polis form. On this, see Foley, *Female Acts*, 23-25; and Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 114-19. Two centuries later, Plato identified women with loud mourning, while acknowledging that men so weep too. In Plato's *Phaedo* (117d) when Socrates drinks the poison, the men who

surround him begin to weep but he quickly calls them to order: “What is this strange outcry?” asks Socrates, “I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way.” Monicka Patterson-Tutschka, taking a cue from Iris Young, comments on this as an instance of logos disciplining emotion in a review of Lisa Pace Vetter’s “*Women’s Work*” as *Political Art; Weaving and Dialectical Politics in Homer, Aristophanes, and Plato* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005). Patterson-Tutschka, “Silencing Xanthippe,” *The Review of Politics* 69, no. 3 (June 2007): 466-68. cf. Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, 10-11, on Plato’s hostility to maternal mourning.

29. Larry J. Bennett and William Blake Tyrrell, “Sophocles’ *Antigone* and Funeral Oratory,” *American Journal of Philology* 111, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 443. Students in Tina Chanter’s *Antigone* seminar alerted me to this passage.

30. On this, see Loraux, whose work is foundational for all the contemporary authors referred to here.

31. This distinction is hard to maintain since we only know about the beautiful bodies because of Homer’s beautiful words. Still Homer’s words do not call attention to themselves as a source of solace in the way that the language of the Funeral Oration does. See also Saxonhouse on “the bodiless world of” Pericles’s Funeral Oration where “death is unfelt” and whose “model of democracy,” she says, “abstracts from history, from particularistic ties, and most especially from bodies.” Saxonhouse, *Athenian Democracy*, 64, 60. Pericles, she adds, “does not talk of training bodies or fashioning arms but instead discusses the Athenian policy of openness.” His underestimation of the importance of bodies is brought home with a vengeance, she notes, when Thucydides turns to discuss the plague and its effects on Athenian bodies. *Ibid.*, 63-64.

32. “Phrynicus himself, as a corrective gesture, wrote the *Phoenician Women* twenty years later.” Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity, and Mourning*, 97. Phrynicus’s error, says Loraux, was to elicit a mourning with which Athenians, who *shared* an identity as Ions with the Milesians, identified too closely, and to replay events in which Athenians were implicated. Tragedy requires distance (in space and time) to be safe. Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, 85, 87. For Taxidou, *Persians*, also historically based, “needs to be read in the shadow of that extraordinary ban.” Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity, and Mourning*, 96-97.

33. On the active role of spectators in classical theater, see Sara Monson, *Plato’s Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). Charles Segal, in his elegant chap. 5, comes close to the reading I offer here. Charles Segal, *Sophocles’ Tragic World: Divinity, Nature, Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). He too sees Creon as representing a broader Athenian effort to contain certain forms of mourning. We differ both on details I specify below and also, more importantly, on the larger issue of what is at stake in the containment effort. For Segal the threat to polis order has not to do with a Homeric table of values but, more narrowly, with women’s mourning and loud grief that threaten the polis. Though he mentions vengeance in passing, I do not think he thinks that the stakes are between two kinds of justice; his structuralism points him rather to a culture–nature divide. Therefore, he reads the mourning scenes of Creon and Eurydice quite differently from me, while also missing other elements of the play beyond the laments, which support my claim that classical law and democracy more generally are at issue here, not just the prohibition on mourning. Moreover, because Segal identifies *Antigone* with lamentation and nature (not a rival social order), and Creon with civilization, as such, Segal misses the significance of Creon’s grief, which I discuss below. Segal, *Sophocles’ Tragic World*, 119-23; 135-36. Others who identify *Antigone* with elements of what I am calling a Homeric episteme include Simon Goldhill, *Reading Greek*

Tragedy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Theodore Zielkowski, *The Mirror of Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). Neither offers a sustained reading of the play. Moreover, for Goldhill, Antigone's Homeric identity is represented by her individuality (a rather formal trait, as opposed to the more substantive markers identified here), and for Zielkowski, as for Hegel, Antigone represents the chthonic, effeminate accorded more respect in Homer than in democratic Athens. Neither reads Antigone as representing a rival politics or form of life.

34. "The fifth century performance of *Antigone* could have raised important questions about the valuation of the individual as opposed to that of the collective citizen body, the legitimacy of the imposition (by *nomos* or otherwise) of democratic uniformity on individual tomb markers, and the right of the polis to bury—and to memorialize—its own fallen warriors outside of or above the claims of their families," says Sarah Brown-Ferrario in an article that provides archaeological evidence for this claim and supports my reading of the play. Sarah Brown-Ferrario, "Replaying Antigone: Changing Patterns of Public and Private Commemoration at Athens c. 440-350," *Helios* 33s (2006): 104. Brown-Ferrario offers no reading of the play but, in passing references to it, she assumes Creon is a tyrant. For her, then, the citation of Creon's Periclean speech by Demosthenes in the fourth century needs explanation. *Ibid.*, 80. Brown-Ferrario suggests that by the fourth century Creon has been rehabilitated. On my reading, no such explanation is needed since Creon was in both centuries marked as democratic, even if hyperbolically so. Sourvinou-Inwood's "Assumptions and the Creation of Meaning" also cites Demosthenes's use of Creon's speech as evidence in favor of her view that Creon is democratic. Her reading rests on different details than mine, centrally on the issue of treason and burial, and positions a democratic Creon against Antigone's "bad girl" dissidence with no alertness to complexities of lamentation.

35. If Antigone buries Polynices twice, she mirrors Creon who upon hearing of Eurydice's death wails, "I died once, you kill me again and again!" (1288 [1416]) or, as in Gibbons and Segal's translation, "Aiee! You have killed a destroyed man twice over!" Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. Reginald Gibbons and Charles Segal (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 122. This may repay Creon for trying to kill Polynices twice. For the view that Creon's refusal to bury Polynices evidences rage and the desire to kill him again, see George Steiner on Goethe. George Steiner, *Antigones: How the Antigone Legend Has Endured in Western Literature, Art, and Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 50-51.

36. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 22.386. Achilles says, "There is a dead man who lies by the ships, unwept, unburied: Patroklos: and I will not forget him."

37. Her first mourning, unrecorded, is unwitnessed but is performed out in the open, at night. This may be a way to suggest that under the ban on lamentation, mourning occurs in secret, but out in the open, as an open secret. Or, Charles Segal may be right when he suggests brilliantly that if the first burial speech is unrecorded, unwitnessed, that may be because it is actually not performed by Antigone but rather, as the elders worriedly suggest, by the gods. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 160. This possibility opens the play up, as I argue elsewhere, and explains why Antigone will not disavow the deed nor own up to it, a point made much of by Butler. This may seem to argue against my point that Antigone in burying Polynices twice buries to excess, but it is surely excessive to rebury a second time, regardless of whose agency is responsible for the first burial. For Creon, in any case, the second burial is "excessive" since it indulges in the forbidden laments. For a different reading of the first burial, see my *Antigone, Interrupted*, chap. 4.

38. Not quite all the forbidden elements of lament are in play here. Antigone does not self-lacerate. This may suggest she is less excessive than Creon (excessively) thinks. And/or it may suggest she is already domesticated by the polis' substitution of logos for embodiment. If she does not self-lacerate, does that mean her grief is somehow articulable and does not require the fleshly expression common in Homer?

Notably, since the sentry *describes* what he heard, the report is witness testimony and therefore suspect. Sophocles could have had Antigone perform the goos on stage; she is said to have done it openly, with the sun high in the sky. Yet we do not hear her directly (might this be a way of staging the prohibitedness of the goos?) and so the question arises—what did the sentry really hear? And how might his report itself be affected by the expectations he would have had of what Antigone *would* do, as an elite/Homeric figure? The report is his perception of what she did and may be framed by their class relationship. We might say the same of Eurydice's laments, discussed below, which are also reported by a member of the lower orders.

39. Rehm, *Marriage to Death*, 182n12.

40. Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, 63.

41. White cites Simone Weil, "The *Iliad*, or The Poem of Force," trans. Mary McCarthy, *Politics* 2 (November 1945): 321-31. White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 39-40.

42. Susan Lape, "Racializing Democracy: The Politics of Sexual Reproduction in Classical Athens," *Parallax* 9, no. 4 (2003): 52-63, 54. This point is indebted to conversation with Josh Ober.

43. Spectators may have included Athenians and foreigners. Still, I take it to be uncontroversial that tragic and comic theater in some way engaged issues of political or cultural import to Athens. This leaves open the question of whether theater supported or subverted Athenian civic ideology or anything else. Simon Goldhill, "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology," in *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?*, ed. John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1990), 97-129.

44. Steiner, *Antigones*, 44-51; H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* (London: Methuen, 1969), 130.

45. Sam Weber insightfully argues that when Antigone calculates the incalculable she does not cease to make sense but rather comes to personify the problem she represents. Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 138-40.

46. Michelle Gellrich, *Tragedy and Theory: The Problem of Conflict since Aristotle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 56-57.

47. Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey De Selincourt, ed. John M. Marincola (London: Penguin, 1996); Foley, *Female Acts*, 168; Miriam Leonard, "Lacan, Irigaray, and Beyond: Antigones and the Politics of Psychoanalysis," in *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*, ed. Vana Zajko and Miriam Leonard (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 121-40.

48. Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.44.

49. Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, 15-16.

50. The more conventional view of Athens especially among political theorists emphasizes Athens's distinct respect for diversity, innovation, and individuality. This view is anchored by the common contrast between Athens and Sparta. Given Sparta's emphasis on homogeneity and collectivity, Athens is made by the comparison to look like a mecca of individuality. But the comparison with Homeric Greece highlights other aspects of Athenian democracy, in which collectivity and polis identification cast alternative affiliations (family,

clan) and certain forms of individuality as threatening to the polis form. On the emphasis in fifth-century Athens on community versus Homeric individuality, see Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, chap. 6.

51. Foley is just one of many critics to note the offensiveness of Creon's suggestion. Foley, *Female Acts*, 184. In their focus on its offensiveness, critics may miss its irony and referent.

52. For Saxonhouse, Creon echoes "democracy's emphasis on interchangeability rather than particularity." Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 74 (though Euben disagrees; Euben, *Corrupting the Youth*, 157n51). I connect Pericles's instruction to have more children to Antigone's refusal to do so; it will not work given the (biological) irreplaceability of her brother (but maybe also of anyone). The play may alert us to a problem with democracy, as such, or specifically to this imperial democracy's perpetual hunger for more bodies and more people, as evidenced in the Funeral Oration. As Saxonhouse argues, that hunger for more bodies is not self-avowed. Instead, Pericles tries to enable its satisfaction by replacing civic affective attachment to bodies or embodiment with speech, a more reliable imaginary around which to form a polis. Saxonhouse, *Athenian Democracy*, 62-71. This fits well with the argument developed here regarding the substitution of logos in Periclean democracy for the beautiful bodies of Homeric epic. Interestingly, the identification of the beautiful body with singularity and speech with interchangeability reverses the Arendtian assumption that as bodies we are all alike while as speakers and actors we distinguish ourselves. For more on Arendt's melding of Homeric and Periclean motifs, see Ackerman and Honig, "Agonality: Conceptions of Agonism in Arendt and Arendt Scholarship," in *Hannah Arendt-Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. Herausgegeben von Wolfgang Heuer, Bernd Heiter, and Stefanie Rosenmüller (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2009).

53. The dramatic conceit is replayed through the ages in theater and film, most recently perhaps in *Sophie's Choice*, whose exploration of the conflict between mourning and justice I compare to *Antigone* in "The Other Is Dead: Mourning and Justice in Sophocles' *Antigone*," *Triquarterly* 131 (Fall 2008): 89-111.

54. Jacques Lacan, "The Essence of Tragedy: A Commentary on Sophocles' *Antigone*," in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1988). For a longer discussion of *Antigone* and Intaphrenes's wife, see my "From Lamentation to Logos: *Antigone's* Offensive Speech" in *Antigone, Interrupted*.

55. "It is a trick and a victory of statist law and politics in liberal democracies to ascribe to individuals those significant actions that are actually (also) the products of a concerted politics. Rival sovereignties, oppositional movements, and political dissidence are thereby erased from view and we are left only with small individuals (three girls [in headscarves]) or large phantoms (Islam, radical particularism, etc.)." Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). Hence the American celebration of "Rosa Parks" but not of the movement that prompted her to action. On the importance of the movement, see Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 51-53.

56. The wording is Saxonhouse's, citing M. I. Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 19, in Saxonhouse, *Athenian Democracy*, 101. Saxonhouse criticizes Finley, arguing there was more to ancient democracy than that. Her difference with him replays longstanding debates within political science: Finley here defines democracy in formal institutional terms, and Saxonhouse argues for a more expansive approach attentive to political culture and practice.

57. Later, when the sentry returns to Creon a second time, having apprehended Antigone in the act, he says, “no casting lots this time; this is *my* luck, my prize, no one else’s” (emphasis in Fagles) (396-7 [438-9]). In so saying, he refers to a different mechanism of distribution in which a man gets what he is known to be owed—the lot fell to the sentry who earlier took the risk, now without lottery he gets the real prize. Rather than by way of randomness, the quintessentially democratic distributive principle, the sentry now gets what is coming to *him*. Has he shifted from a democratic political economy to an aristocratic one? Peter Euben suggests this binary is too stark since there is evidence that people felt the gods had a role in the lottery, that lot-based selections were not random. Still, this idea is not apparent when the sentry says, “no casting lots this time; this is *my* luck, my prize, no one else’s” (emphasis in the original) (396-7[438-9]).

58. The same evidence suggests to Roselli that Creon was a tyrant: “Creon’s frequent references to ‘payment’ and ‘hiring’ [use] such low vocabulary [that they] may also serve to highlight Creon’s vulgar character and improper (tyrannical) behavior as ruler of Thebes.” Roselli, “Polyneices’ Body,” 166n68. Roselli cites Sophocles’s *Antigone*, ed. and comm. Mark Griffith (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 175, 302-3, 1035-39. But a low vocabulary could also show Creon is a democrat in elite perspective.

59. “At Athens, the emphasis is on the banning of offerings at the grave and the limitation of the right to mourn to kinswomen.” Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 115.

60. I think the details of the play when read in light of the regulation of lamentation suggest the play is a critical one, mostly because most of the humor appears on the side critical of democracy. Taxidou, however, argues for Sophocles’s fundamental identification with the democracy. Underlining his friendship with Pericles, she positions Sophocles as too intimate with power and too rewarded with Athenian theater prizes to be unimplicated in the ideology of the “Greek miracle.” By contrast to Sophocles, who sets up an organic relationship to the city state, Taxidou argues, Euripides “sets up a critical, combative relationship with the city state . . . quite consciously sever[ing] the supposed organic link between tragedy and the city state.” Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity, and Mourning*, 12. She prefers Euripides, the exile, reportedly torn to death by dogs at the order of his finally inhospitable host, Archelaos, the King of Macedon. *Ibid.*, 12, 99.

61. “Antigone sings for herself the very wedding hymn and funeral dirge that Kreon has denied her,” says Rehm. In fact, Creon interrupts her and says to take her away. But she resumes her dirge and goes on until Creon threatens the soldiers again. Creon also denies her her rite in a different way unnoted by Rehm, not by silencing her—that Creon tries and fails the first time to do—but by mocking her as self-indulgent, Homeric. *Rehm, Marriage to Death*, 64. Segal says Creon is “scornful” but does not read that scorn (as conveying a classical perspective on Homeric lament). Segal, *Sophocles’ Tragic World*, 249n22.

62. But the city may mourn her; Haemon has told Creon they do so while Antigone is still alive (693 [766-78]). Sophocles does not show the city mourning her after her death, however. This elision of the question of whether she is mourned after death may be significant in a play that centers on the (im)permissibility of mourning as an indication of polis (dis)loyalty.

63. On “overliving,” see Emily R. Wilson, *Mocked with Death: Tragic Overliving from Sophocles to Milton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

64. This highlights one side effect of discrediting this speech. If the speech is a later addition as Jebb (who called Creon’s “delay” a “dramatic blemish”), Kitto, and Goethe hoped, then Creon is less impotent. Richard C. Jebb, *The Antigone of Sophocles* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1891), xviii-xix. Antigone would presumably, prior to the later addition, have been interred immediately, on Creon’s first, direct orders. Thus, an assumption

of sovereign power's security may have subtly influenced the judgment of some incredulous readers of Antigone's dirge.

65. Of course, Antigone's inability to return to life may be blamed as much on the prohibition of her laments as on her participation in them. I make the case for the former reading in "The Other Is Dead."

66. Eurydice's is a modified Homeric lament. She experiences her son's death as a physical searing pain and she laments it loudly *but* she does so indoors, and few, other than the messenger who reports it and maybe her household servants, seem to have heard her cries, certainly not the audience. What should we make of the fact that her cries would have been unknown were it not for their transmission through the agency of the male soldier? Segal says Eurydice's mourning conforms to classical women's lamentation. He thereby generates a great reading of many of the play's details, but he misses the scene's departure from those forms. He also argues that Antigone and Eurydice are perfectly parallel in their mourning, ering, in my view, by apparently focusing on Antigone's first recorded lamentation, not her second (for herself). Her first lament for Polynices is, like Eurydice's, reported by a witness, but Antigone's second dirge, for herself, is heard directly by the audience. Both occur outside. Segal, *Sophocles' Tragic World*, 134-37.

67. The etymology is noted in Matthew S. Santirocco, "Justice in Sophocles' *Antigone*," *Philosophy and Literature* 4, no. 2 (1980): 15, n39.

68. Women in tragedy die by noose and men by dagger, argues Loraux in *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). Segal reads Eurydice's death by dagger as a sign that she takes female self-lacerative mourning to an extreme. He thus recuperates Eurydice for femininity and does not allow her to die like a man. Rather than stand somewhere between the Homeric and democratic orders, Segal's Eurydice represents the extremity of female mourning. And Antigone is her double. When Haemon's blood spurts onto her, she looks like she self-lacerated, Segal suggests. Segal, *Sophocles' Tragic World*, 125-29, 134-37. This is a very interesting take, but it recuperates for a binary framework what I see as an illustration of a plural spectrum of possibilities in lament (Segal puts Antigone and Eurydice together, though Antigone does not "self-harm" in lament) and it goes against Loraux's mapping of the gendered pattern of suicide. *Ibid.*, 135. Something Segal does not attend to: in the Homeric paradigm, women and men mourn similarly. But Segal refers repeatedly, as do most commentators in the past 15 or more years, to "women's lamentation."

69. Taxidou, *Modernity and Mourning*, 178.

70. Gellrich, *Tragedy and Theory*, 72.

71. Foley criticizes "unilateral and anti-dialogic" readings and calls for approaches that attend to plural voices in drama rather than "privilege one voice over another" as the carrier of a play's meaning. Ancient Greek tragedy confronts us "not only with a cultural system that prides itself on being open to public exchanges of ideas and differences of opinion but also with a literary form such as drama, which unfolds as a complex dialogue that refuses to be bound in any direct fashion by the discourses of the agora." Foley, "Tragedy and Democratic Ideology," 143, 132.

72. Richard Seaford, "Historicizing Tragic Ambivalence: The Vote of Athens," in *History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama*, ed. Barbara Goff (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 203. Against the claim that the play suggests the "city can only continue its existence by sacrificing those who are its most respected representatives, and there is no end to this persistent self-sacrifice," quoting T. C. Wouter Oudemans and André P. M. H. Lardinois, *Tragic Ambiguity* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1987), 159, Seaford insists the

play offers a clear message: “What is enacted is precisely an end [as opposed to a never-ending], from which the democratic polis may persistently benefit.” The political undesirability of a powerful family’s “introverted autonomy” is enacted, and the play also interpellates the audience into an “emotional cohesion of collective pity for those destroyed.” Seaford, “Historicizing Tragic Ambivalence,” 207. Thus, polis unity is twice achieved: powerful threats are eliminated and shared pity for them elicited.

73. *Ibid.*, 207.

74. Foley, “Tragedy and Democratic Ideology,” 144.

75. Thus, I differ from Roselli’s conclusion that “*Antigone* may question some of the fault lines of Athenian society, but it also affirms an archaic and elitist practice of celebrating the elite citizen male, as archaic elites had done and as a few Athenian families continued to do.” Roselli, “Polyneices’ Body,” 158. The practice is referenced in the play but is also presented in politicizing and parodic terms.

76. Elsewhere, I argue, however, that she is motivated throughout by consideration for Ismene (see chap. 4, *Antigone, Interrupted*).

77. Another example of hyperbole in the play is given but not recognized in those terms by Foley, who treats it instead as evidence that Creon does not represent democracy: “Despite democratic ideology that privileges the interests of the state, Creon’s blanket denial of the importance of kin ties may well have signaled an inadequacy in his attitude to leadership from the first speech on.” Foley, “Tragedy and Democratic Ideology,” 139.

78. For Roselli, “Creon’s decision to construct a tomb *first* (and to release *Antigone* second) underscores the importance of the [Homeric burial] monument and its significance to the audience.” Roselli, “Polyneices’ Body,” 152. This reading of Creon’s (in)action shows the limits of Roselli’s otherwise valuable burial-focused interpretation of the play. His insistence that the play is about burial as a marker of status makes him miss other important elements of the play and leaves him vulnerable to Foley’s criticism of narrowly historicist, referential readings.

Patchen Markell imaginatively describes the events: Creon’s deed, he says, outraces Creon’s efforts to undo or control it, thus illustrating the contingency and finitude of the human world, in which our actions exceed our ability to contain or control them. Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), chap. 3. But the text suggests another reading as well: As I suggest above, it is also true that Creon’s failure to undo his deeds is partly due to his failure to listen to the Chorus’ leader. Going to Polynices first and to *Antigone* only second, Creon chooses not only to try (and fail) to undo his deed, as Markell suggests, but also or instead to *permit* the deed to continue to outrace his efforts to undo it—*Antigone* dies in the time it takes Creon to get there, having stopped first to bury Polynices. There may be more agency here and more power than Markell notes, both in Creon’s choices and in *Antigone*’s. Indeed, that is what tragedy may be said to require, a sense that until the last possible moment it could have been otherwise, and even then. . . . Moreover, there is agency here beyond that of the primary players. The messengers, sentry, soldiers animate the action by reporting the goings-on to the various players, even though the reactions to what is heard are predictably tragic (lament, suicide). There is something of an Upstairs–Downstairs class politics at work here.

79. Shapiro, “Wrath of Creon,” 131.

80. Regarding Shapiro’s comparison of Creon and Achilles, I argue in “Sophocles Re-writes Homer” (in *Antigone, Interrupted*) that although Creon’s treatment of Polynices may call to mind Achilles, the figure of Achilles is better represented in this play by *Antigone*. For *Antigone*/Achilles, Polynices is not Hector but rather Patroclus—also a brother (brother-like to Achilles) and an incestuous love.

81. Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. Gibbons and Segal, 1306-11 [1394-7]. Here, I use not the Fagles translation but rather that of Gibbons and Segal because it better captures the sense of Creon's grief, perhaps because it is informed by Segal's sense that Creon mourns like a woman. Segal, *Sophocles' Tragic World*, 127-31.

82. Segal sees that Creon mourns like a woman but does not note the significance of Creon's departure from the form of women's lamentation when he takes the guilt on himself rather than call for revenge. *Ibid.*, 127, 130. In a wonderful essay on Hegel's *Antigone* (framed by Hegel's reading of the play as a dispute between public and private but in powerful contention with that reading nonetheless), Patricia Mills focuses on this detail (without noting its character as a departure from lamentation codes) and asks if Creon's embrace of his guilt is evidence of his superiority to Antigone. "Creon's admission of guilt makes him the hero of the play [on Hegel's account] since it gives him a higher ethical consciousness." Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 70. That is, Mills focuses on what the admission tells us about Creon. I focus on what the admission *does*: Creon's lament ends the cycle of violence. The dramatic counterpoint of Creon's lament is not just Antigone's but also Eurydice's, who called to avenge Creon's wrongs and thereby staged his assumption of guilt (though he could still have sensibly have called for revenge, blaming it all on Antigone or lashing out at Ismene, not yet sacrificed in all this). One thing is sure: at this point, *the play is not about Polynices, anymore, if it ever was.*

83. The chorus shows its awareness of Creon's penchant to delegate when it says, earlier, "Do it now, go, don't leave it to others" (1107 [1231]), echoing Achilles's criticism of Agamemnon. Of course, the chorus also urges Creon in this last scene to live out his life rather than end it; that is, *not* to act on his own but rather to leave his fate to the gods.

84. Bennett and Tyrrell, "Sophocles' *Antigone*," 443.

85. Whether or not the "concession" anticipates Hegel's "solution" to the problem posed by this tragedy is a separate and important question.

86. When Luce Irigaray shifts the focus of her earlier reading of *Antigone* as representing a blood bond that civic kinship disavows to Antigone as articulating a claim to political power (briefly, in Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*, trans. Karin Montin [New York: Routledge, 1994]), Irigaray moves out of the range of this critique. Irigaray, "The Eternal Irony."

87. Seaford's suggestion points beyond his argument to another. The lure of the appetites (which are later whetted by the Feast) may in Homer and elsewhere provide a way out of otherwise infinite grief, a point I explore in "From Lamentation to Logos." Seaford, "Historicizing Tragic Ambivalence." That said, the fifth *stasimon* (1115-54 [1238-72]) precedes Creon's grief. Does the invitation to the feast remain, or is it overcome and defeated by Creon's later encounter with loss?

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