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# BAD BLOOD

## *Are both Antigone's brothers polluted?*

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1. Scholars often view Sophocles' *Antigone* as a series of binaries set up by the conflict between Creon's desire to leave the rebel Polyneices unburied and Antigone's opposing desire to bury her brother. Since Hegel, this conflict has been read as an allegory of family versus state values, religion versus politics<sup>1</sup> and female versus male agendas.<sup>2</sup> However, despite their differences both Creon and Antigone are punished at the end of Sophocles' play. Antigone hangs herself in her tomb and in response her fiancée Haemon, Creon's son, kills himself followed by his grieving mother Eurydice; neither agenda is vindicated. I suggest that this is because both Antigone and Creon ignore the fact that both of Antigone's deceased brothers are polluting Thebes with their presence.

This study will evidence the polluting presence of both Polyneices and Eteocles in Sophocles' *Antigone*, to then consider why Sophocles' characters fail to acknowledge it. I will then determine to what extent Sophocles' audience would have identified each character's neglect of the brothers' pollution by considering the Aeschylean adaptations of the Theban myth they would have been familiar with. Finally I will discuss how this oversight may have contributed to Creon and Antigone's demise whilst serving as a foil for their conflict, challenging the binaries set up by post-Hegelian scholarship.<sup>3</sup>

2. Antigone is set in the wake of Polyneices and Eteocles' civil war, in which the brothers killed one another in an attempt for the throne, polluting themselves with one another's blood. The new ruler Creon forbids anyone from burying Polyneices on the grounds that he is an enemy of the state, who allegedly attempted to burn his fatherland (πατρίδα) and drink the blood of his own people (αἵματός κοινού).<sup>4</sup> Thus Creon presents Polyneices' political rebellion as a miasmatic act of kindred bloodshed by emphasizing his ties to the homeland and employing blood imagery.

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<sup>1</sup> Hegel (1975) 221, (1977) 261–262. 275; Whitman (1951) 83–84; Knox (1964) 87, 113; Margon (1970) 182–183; Hester (1971) 30; Ferguson (1975) 45; Sorum (1982) 206; Segal (1981) 183, 186, 190; Held (1983) 9, 201; Pritchard (1992) 88–90; Holt (1999) 658; Bennett / Tyrrell (1990) 442; Lauriola (2007) 389; Meltzer (2011) 177; Honig (2009) 6; Robert (2010) 414–415; Liapis (2013) 82.

<sup>2</sup> Knox (1964) 110; Segal (1981) 183; Held (1983) 195; Butler (2000); Robert (2010) 414–415.

<sup>3</sup> Hegel views family right vs. state right, claiming that neither can be wrong or wholly justified (1975) 221. For a specific distinction of the Hegelian view and the orthodox view see Bowra (1945) 65–66; Oudemans / Lardinois (1951) 107.

<sup>4</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 198–203.

The mutual pollution caused by both brothers' fratricides is then elicited in Creon's opening monologue:

καὶ πληγέντες αὐτόχειρι σὺν μιάσματι,  
ἐγὼ κράτη δὴ πάντα καὶ θρόνους ἔχω  
γένους κατ' ἀγχιστεῖα τῶν ὀλωλότων.

So now that they have perished by twofold ruin on a single day, **striking and being struck by the polluting violence of one another**, I hold the power and the throne by reason of my kinship with the dead.<sup>5</sup>

Thus according to Creon each brother delivered the other's fatal blow in a polluting act of fratricide. Yet Creon fails to recognise that this religious *miasma*, based on blood guilt, not only lingers on Polyneices' unburied body but also pollutes Eteocles' buried corpse. Here each brother is a perpetrator and a victim of kindred bloodshed, deemed by Aristotle to be the most tragic form of violence.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the pollution of Polyneices' exposure is not the only form of pollution at play, but Creon highlights the *miasma* incurred by the blood crime each brother commits in killing the other, only to ignore the issue for the remainder of the tragedy. Whilst the pollution of exposure could be neutralised by burial, the pollution of blood crimes typically lingered despite burial ritual. For although Plato's *Laws* suggests that being killed by a brother would absolve one of the pollution incurred by killing a brother,<sup>7</sup> within Aeschylus' *Septem* the chorus presents Eteocles and Polyneices' mutual slaughter as a posthumous pollutant.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* highlights the significance of burial location in forming a hero cult, as Oedipus vows:

ἴν' οὐμὸς εὐδῶν καὶ κεκρυμμένος νέκυς  
ψυχρὸς ποτ' αὐτῶν θερμὸν αἷμα πίεται,  
εἰ Ζεὺς ἔτι Ζεὺς χῶ Διὸς Φοῖβος σαφής.

Then shall my dead body, sleeping and buried, cold as it is, **drink their warm blood**, if Zeus is still Zeus and his son Phoebus speaks the truth!

Oedipus' proposed blood drinking as a hero echoes the accusation Creon made against Polyneices' rebellion.<sup>9</sup> Though this resonance could only be recognised retrospectively, ul-

<sup>5</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 172. N. b. Segal acknowledges the "reciprocity" of the brothers' murders but does not note its significance (1981) 173. Ahrens Dorf acknowledges Eteocles is a pollutant, but dismisses it as an issue claiming: "Eteocles' fratricide is obviously eclipsed by his service to the city." (2009) 120.

<sup>6</sup> Aristot. *Poet.* 1453b.20.

<sup>7</sup> Plat. *Leg.* 868e.

<sup>8</sup> Aesch. *Sept.* 734-41.

<sup>9</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 201-212: ἠθέλησε δ' αἵματος κοινοῦ πάσασθαι.

timately the location of burial for pollutant filicides is clearly at issue in Theban tragedies either side of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Indeed, according to Pausanias, the alleged tombs of both Eteocles and Polyneices came to be worshipped as hero shrines in Thebes, reflecting the cult status achieved through their mutual fratricide, in addition to their mutual pollution.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that both brothers are polluted, Antigone buries Polyneices in Thebes against Creon's orders, fulfilling her role as a sister and female mourner. Antigone's burial is a mere scattering of dust, which may absolve the pollution of Polyneices as an unburied corpse but simultaneously creates pollution by burying a fratricide in Thebes.<sup>11</sup> Creon's guards did endure a whirlwind shortly after they uncovered the body, suggesting that Antigone's makeshift burial offered some sanctification which the soldiers had reversed.<sup>12</sup> Held suggests that because in the first burial "the bare minimum was done to satisfy the gods, Sophocles' creates an association between this burial and those (divine) laws."<sup>13</sup> However, just as Antigone replaces one form of pollution for another by burying Polyneices, so do the guards by exposing him. Given that Polyneices' exposure and burial in Thebes are alternative forms of *miasma*, the storm must be sent by a supernatural power who would not oppose the burial of a fratricide in Thebes: Polyneices himself, the buried hero.

Polyneices' hero status is not only affirmed by post-Sophoclean evidence, but also emerges in the language describing his initial burial.<sup>14</sup> Henrichs identified the dramatic use of κατέϊχε (holds) in tragedy to suggest occupying control of the land surrounding the tomb; of a body holding the earth, rather than simply being held by it.<sup>15</sup> Yet Henrichs distinguishes Sophocles' use of κατέϊχε in the first burial of Polyneices as a "funerary usage" that parallels historic examples to simply suggest the body is held in the earth.<sup>16</sup> Though the power of Polyneices' body is not asserted in the guard's report as it is by Henrich's other examples, this is most likely because these examples present κατέχειν in choral song addressing the gods whereas the guard uses this ambiguous term before giving report of the storm. In this context then, Polyneices does indeed take hold of the land around his tomb to provide a "whirlwind from the ground" (χθονὸς τυφῶς), or more specifically the underworld given the ambivalence of χθονός (ground), against those trying to expose him.<sup>17</sup> Therefore Polyneices' burial in Thebes allows him to become a hero with the power

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<sup>10</sup> Paus. 9.18.3.

<sup>11</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 409.

<sup>12</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 410–421. cf. Parker (1983) 257, Rothaus (1990) 212.

<sup>13</sup> Held (1983) 193.

<sup>14</sup> N. b. Hes. *Op.* 156.172 distinguishes the Seven who fought at Thebes as heroes and the hero cult status of the Seven seems to have endured: Ἐρῶν τὸν ἐν Θέβαις pillar (mid 6 C BCE) in Argos commemorates the dead heroes buried in Thebes (Anderson [2015] 304).

<sup>15</sup> Henrichs (1993) 174–175, e. g. Aesch. *Hik.* 24–25; *Ag.* 452–455. 1539, Soph. *Ai.* 1166ff.

<sup>16</sup> Henrichs (1993) 174.

<sup>17</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 417–418; s. v. χθονός Liddell and Scott.

to punish the guards who expose him; he remains a polluting presence in Thebes as a fratricide, as a reexposed corpse and as a result of his albeit abortive burial, as a hero. This suggests that the burial of either brother in Thebes is not consecrated by the gods, given the blood guilt of the brothers.

After this attempt, by the time Teiresias arrives to warn Creon that Polyneices should be buried, Creon has already entombed Antigone alive. Teiresias thus chides Creon:

ἐν οἷσι τῶν σῶν αὐτὸς ἐκ σπλάγχνων ἕνα  
 νέκυν νεκρῶν ἀμοιβὸν ἀντιδοῦς ἔση,  
 ἀνθ' ὧν ἔχεις μὲν τῶν ἄνω βαλῶν κάτω,  
 ψυχὴν γ' ἀτίμως ἐν τάφῳ κατοικίσας,  
 ἔχεις δὲ τῶν κάτωθεν ἐνθάδ' αὖ θεῶν  
 ἄμοιρον, ἀκτέριστον, ἀνόσιον νέκυν.

You shall give in exchange for corpses the corpse of one from your own loins, in return for having hurled below one of those above, blasphemously lodging a living person in a tomb, you have kept here something belonging to the gods below, a corpse deprived, unburied, unholy.<sup>18</sup>

The threat Teiresias makes to Creon's son seems to be a result of the pollution caused by Polyneices' unburied body being denied to the chthonic gods. There is no explicit reference to the fact that Eteocles' buried body is similarly polluted, given his role as a fratricide.

However, the audience may recognise a *double entendre* in Teiresias' reference to corpses (νεκρῶν).<sup>19</sup> For although this explicitly refers to Antigone and Polyneices, the audience may understand Teiresias to unwittingly include Eteocles' polluted body based on Creon's opening monologue.<sup>20</sup> Indeed Teiresias' distinction of Polyneices' unburied (ἀκτέριστον) corpse being kept here (ἐνθάδ') as opposed to the underworld heightens this dramatic irony. For if Creon's opening lines are to be believed "here" (ἐνθάδ') in Thebes is the wrong place to bury either of the brothers. But this passage raises the question: why do Sophocles' characters not acknowledge that both brothers are polluted?

**3.** Following Creon's line in his opening edict, Sophocles does not make the brothers' pollution through mutual slaughter a particularly explicit issue. Neither Antigone nor

<sup>18</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 1066–72.

<sup>19</sup> Brackett claims Teiresias alludes to loss of "Creon's son Megareus who prompted by a prophecy of Teiresias, slew himself to secure the victory of the Thebans over the surrounding Argive army." Brackett (1917) 526. Cf. *Antig.* 1301–1305; Ahrens Dorf (2009) 135, 141.

<sup>20</sup> Ahrens Dorf points out that: "the play does not clearly present Teiresias as the infallible soothsayer (1091–1097; see also 1059). He fails to predict the death of Antigone and the death of Creon's wife as well (though consider 1077–1079)" (2009) 89.

Creon goes on to suggest that both brothers' bodies are polluted as a result of their fratricide. Yet in each case Sophocles indicates clear reasons as to why these characters would not confront this issue. As has been well noted, Creon's concerns are strictly political.<sup>21</sup> Thus admitting that both the treasonous Polyneices and his dutiful brother Eteocles are polluted by fratricide would scupper Creon's intentions of dishonouring Polyneices' body horrifically, and honouring Eteocles' body emphatically as a message to his people: do not oppose the state. What has not been recognised so far is the practical advantage of detaining Polyneices' body as bait to lure out surviving rebels from the civil war. Holt evidences contemporary paranoia about political insurgents,<sup>22</sup> which seems evident in Creon's assumption that a group of men must have haphazardly buried Polyneices: as Creon asks who among men (τίς ἀνδρῶν) did this, suggesting an all male group as he uses ἀνδρῶν (men), instead of ἀνθρώπων (people).<sup>23</sup>

Thus I would further Holt's analysis of Creon to suggest that he is using Polyneices' body as bait. Creon's misinterpretation of the results suggests he expected local rebels to bury the body. Despite Hester's claim that "Creon's decision is part of the background of the play, not part of the play" here Creon betrays his motives for Polyneices' exposure.<sup>24</sup> The locality of Polyneices' corpse, which Holt overlooks, reflects Creon's anxieties about his post-war kingdom, whilst his quick conclusions suggest that Creon has set this test up, eager to prove his merit as a ruler and secure control of Thebes.<sup>25</sup>

By contrast Antigone's concerns are familial, thus admitting that both her brother's corpses are polluted would deny her of her right and duty to bury her brothers at home and grieve effectively. Antigone even suggests that her brothers' politics may be moot following their death:

τίς οἶδεν εἰ κάτωθεν εὐαγῆ τάδε·

Who knows if this action is **free from blame** in the world below?<sup>26</sup>

Though this initially seems to defer Creon's powers of judgement of the civil war to the chthonic gods, Antigone's next grief-stricken reply to Creon also suggests that she hopes the political divide between her brothers is forgotten in the underworld:

K: οὗτοι ποθ' οὐχ θρόος, οὐδ' ὅταν θάνη, φίλος.

A: οὗτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν.

<sup>21</sup> See n. 1 above.

<sup>22</sup> Holt (1999) 677–678, e. g. Ar. *Vesp.* 488–502, Lys. 616.25 and more traditionally in Hdt. 6.115, 121–4.

<sup>23</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 248. N. b. Knox notes Creon's suspicion but does not read this as part of Creon's decision to expose Polyneices, Knox (1964) 88.

<sup>24</sup> Hester (1971) 22.

<sup>25</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 175–177.

<sup>26</sup> *Antig.* 521.

K: An enemy is never a friend, even when he is dead.

A: I have no enemies by birth, but I have friends by birth.<sup>27</sup>

It now becomes clear that Antigone desperately wants to assume that her brothers are reconciled in the afterlife. For not only does she hope that the chthonic gods are not condemning her brothers for the civil war, but in her second retort she also seems to hope that the feud that caused the brothers' mutual fratricide is not creating enmity between them in the Underworld.<sup>28</sup>

Antigone's desire to disregard the dispute between her brothers is used as a case to bury Polyneices out of her sense of sibling duty; thus Antigone's deluded hopes of resolution blind her to the reality of Polyneices' and Eteocles pollution, a *miasma* which endures irrespective of their emotions or intentions, past or present.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Sophocles seems to suggest that these characters are ignoring the brothers' mutual pollution in favour of their own agendas. Ultimately both Antigone and Creon need Polyneices' body in Thebes to manipulate his legacy and provide a local site for mourning, to facilitate Creon's political trap or Antigone's family duty.

Thus there are clear reasons why neither Creon nor Antigone would recognise the pollution of both brothers. They are both, however, aware that Eteocles is a pollutant. Creon declares it himself while, as Ahrens Dorf points out, Ismene reminds Antigone of the brothers' mutual slaughter twice.<sup>30</sup> The only other character we might have expected to mention Eteocles' pollution is Teiresias. However, when Teiresias interjects the most pressing problems are Polyneices' exposure and Antigone's imminent death, which suggests he has come to address those immediate emergencies.<sup>31</sup> As a result, Teiresias' overlooks Eteocles' role as a pollutant, though his phrasing may ironically remind the audience of this. So overall, Sophocles' characters are largely silent on the polluting effect of the brothers' mutual fratricide. But would Sophocles' audience have considered this to be a conspicuous silence? How effective would dramatic irony in lines such as Teiresias' have been?

4. Sophocles creates the problem of the polluted brothers by having them buried at Thebes with no mention of the rest of the Seven who fought; Antigone's burial of Polyneices is considered a Sophoclean innovation.<sup>32</sup> Not only is this version not attested elsewhere, but it also disregards the well-established fifth-century version of the myth

<sup>27</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 522–523.

<sup>28</sup> This is a delusion, as shades in the Underworld seem concerned with how the living perform funeral rites for them and events that happen among the living. e. g. Hom. *Od.* 11. 51–79, 100–137, 180–203.

<sup>29</sup> s.v. *μίασμα* Liddell and Scott.

<sup>30</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 12–14, 55–57.

<sup>31</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 988 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Whitman (1951) 83. N. b. Whitman also concedes that the Aeschylean version of the Theban saga serves as an “orthodox” backdrop to Sophocles' innovation.

in which the Athenians intervene to ensure the burial of the Seven, who fought against Thebes, at Eleusis.<sup>33</sup>

Sophocles diverges from Aeschylus' earlier trilogy: *Argeioi*, *Eleusinians* and *Epigoni*, which included Theseus' intervention to bury the Seven who fought over Thebes. According to Plutarch, in Aeschylus' *Eleusinians* the commanders of the Seven were buried in Eleusis, thus in Aeschylus' trilogy Eteocles' and Polyneices' bodies seem to have been buried outside of Thebes on neutral ground.<sup>34</sup> The burial of Polyneices and Eteocles' bodies at Eleusis, away from the battleground at Thebes, seems likely because the surviving fragment of *Eleusinians* refers to a belated burial:

ὄργα τὸ πρᾶγμα· διεμύδαιν' ἤδη νέκυς

The matter was urgent; the corpse was already putrefying.<sup>35</sup>

This makes clear that Sophocles disregarded this version of the myth when he staged Antigone's defiance of Creon's orders, by burying her brother Polyneices at Thebes.<sup>36</sup> The audience would have been aware of this novel focus on two brothers and would recognise the "polluting violence" of both brothers, as Creon puts it, to be behind the conflict between Creon and Antigone.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, Plutarch not only testifies that in Aeschylus' *Eleusinians* the Seven are permitted burial in Eleusis, but he also advocates the authority of Aeschylus' adaptation:

ταφαὶ δὲ τῶν μὲν πολλῶν ἐν Ἐλευθεραῖς δεῖκνυνται, τῶν δὲ ἡγεμόνων περὶ Ἐλευσίνα, καὶ τοῦτο Θησεὺς Ἀδράστῳ χαρισαμένου. καταμαρτυροῦσι δὲ τῶν Εὐριπίδου Ἰκετίδων οἱ Αἰσχύλου Ἐλευσίνιοι, ἐν οἷς καὶ ταῦτα λέγων ὁ Θησεὺς πεποίηται.

And the graves of the greater part of those who fell before Thebes are shown at Eleutherae, and those of the commanders near Eleusis, and this last burial was a favour, which Theseus showed to Adrastus. The account of Euripides in his *Suppliants* is disproved by that of Aeschylus in his *Eleusinians*, where Theseus is made to relate the matter as above.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Hdt. 9.27.3; Pin. *Ol.* 6.15; Isoc. 12.168–74; Lys. 2.7–9; Pl. *Menex.* 239b; [Dem]. 60.8; Isoc. 10.31, 14.54–5. N. b. In all accounts they are buried in Eleusis except in Pindar who suggests they are buried at Thebes and because Pindar's focus is on glorifying Athenian intervention, he does not stipulate that Eteocles and Polyneices killed one another as Sophocles' Creon does, thus fratricidal pollution is not at issue, cf. Holt (1999) 666.

<sup>34</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 29.

<sup>35</sup> Aesch. 53a. Radt.

<sup>36</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 190–206.

<sup>37</sup> For an interesting reading of Creon and Antigone as allegories for Thebes and Athens see Bennett and Tyrrell (1990) 442–456, though they overlook the importance of making the burial a domestic issue which I suggest would have been more pertinent to a Greek audience.

<sup>38</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 29. Cf. Paus. 1.39.2; Bowra (1945) 92. N. b. Aeschylus' tragedies were extracted from

Sophocles diverges from Aeschylus' authoritative adaptation in *Antigone* by making the burial of the brothers in Thebes a domestic concern. So Sophocles' audience would have been aware of the problems Sophocles creates in *Antigone* because he is the first tragedian to bury the brothers where they were both born and where, as Creon makes clear, they both shed one another's blood.

However, Sophocles does draw on a different Aeschylean tragedy in order to establish the brothers' mutual pollution as an overarching theme. If we refer back to crucial scene of Aeschylus' *Septem*, in which Eteocles and Polyneices face fighting each other, the chorus' reaction to this is extensive and striking, as they remark:

ἀνδρῶν δ' ὁμαίμοιν θάνατος ὧδ' αὐτοκτόνος,  
οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τοῦδε τοῦ μιάσματος.

But the death of two men of the same blood killing each other—that pollution can never grow old.<sup>39</sup>

Here the mutual pollution of fratricide is deemed both base and inexpiable as Sophocles' audience is reminded by Creon's opening monologue, which echoes these words in a structure that emphasises the reciprocity of the fratricide.<sup>40</sup> More importantly, we should note that Aeschylus' chorus is warning Eteocles about the dangers of pollution, not Polyneices. This suggests that Sophocles' audience would recognise that Eteocles' buried body in *Antigone* is an overlooked source of pollution because of his fratricide, as Sophocles' Creon clearly echoes Eteocles' warning in Aeschylus' *Septem*.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, Sophocles develops the issue of the brothers' mutual fratricide presented in Aeschylus' *Septem*, by alluding to the mutual pollution in Creon's opening monologue.<sup>42</sup> Sophocles then shapes a conspicuous silence on the matter amongst his main characters. This silence over the brothers' kindred bloodshed would be clear to Sophocles' audience, because in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* the Erinyes defend their right to pursue Orestes for his

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their original tetralogies and posthumously produced from 455 BC (*Vit. Aesch.* 12 = Test. 1 (Radt), *Phil. Apoll.* 6.11), thus any number of reproductions of could have taken place before *Antigone* was staged in 442 BC.

<sup>39</sup> Aesch. *Sept.* 680–1, cf. 692–694. 698–701. 705–708.

<sup>40</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 172.

<sup>41</sup> N. b. The final episode of Aeschylus' *Septem* raises the issue of Polyneices' burial, provoking debate as to whether this passage is an early post-Sophoclean interpolation cf. Lloyd Jones (1959) 80–83. If inauthentic, this overlap suggests that restagings of *Septem* conflated Aeschylus' work with Sophocles' *Antigone*; if authentic then the final scene of *Septem* invites comparison with *Antigone* by introducing the issue of Polyneices' burial having emphasised Eteocles' pollution.

<sup>42</sup> N. b. Lloyd-Jones notes Sophocles' use of Aeschylean imagery from *Septem* in the *Antigone* (1971) 113) Aesch. *Sept.* 720ff.; Soph. *Antig.* 582 ff. Cf. Bowra (1945) 87; Sophocles is aware of this play.

matricide due to the shared blood between mother and son, whereas they do not pursue Clytemnestra for killing Agamemnon because they did not share kindred blood.<sup>43</sup> Thus, given that the deed of kindred bloodshed is clearly distinguished as a pollutant in Aeschylean tragedy it then follows that the Thebans' fratricide would be considered in the same way amongst Sophocles' audience: as a polluting feature of *both* brothers' bodies.

5. Creating this issue allows Sophocles to capitalise on its tragic irony. Liapis claims

“It will not do to counter argue that Creon should have simply thrown Polyneices' body beyond the borders rather than actively to prohibit his burial. For one thing, as pointed out by Holt (1999, 665), such counter arguments are belied by the simple observation that ‘no such course of action is considered in the play, where we find only the stark extremes of exposure and full burial.’”<sup>44</sup>

But it is the fact that this solution is obvious to the audience and not the characters that allows Sophocles to create tragic irony, to have his characters driven to the extremes that mark their downfall.

Therefore, despite recognising the brothers as having been polluted by one another's violence, Creon has neither brother's body moved elsewhere but buries his ally Eteocles and exposes Polyneices, polluted as they are, in Thebes.<sup>45</sup> This is particularly striking as Sophocles does not make clear which is the older brother who has the greater claim to Thebes.<sup>46</sup> In terms of Sophocles' audience's expectations, Creon clearly surpasses both Athenian law and the precedent of Aeschylus' *Septem*, which recommended that traitors be buried elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> Thus as Hester suggests, by detaining Polyneices in Thebes Sophocles' Creon seems ignorant as to how the location of burial, not simply burial itself, is crucial to avoiding *miasma* of an exposed enemy.<sup>48</sup> Were Creon to have cast Polyneices' body outside Thebes for burial, he could have avoided both the religious pollution of Polyneices' exposure and the polluting bloodguilt of Polyneices' burial in Thebes. Creon's failure to acknowledge the issues of both local burial and local exposure surpasses the audience's expectations of how to manage *miasma*, thus suggesting to the audience that Creon is overlooking the fact that the known fratricide Eteocles is also a pollutant at Thebes.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Aesch. *Eum.* 162–174. 210–212.

<sup>44</sup> Liapis (2013) 89, cf. Bowra (1945) 70.

<sup>45</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 172.

<sup>46</sup> N. b. Uncertainty through different versions of the myth as to who was the elder brother with the greater claim. Cf. Plut. *Thes.* 29.

<sup>47</sup> Aesch. *Sept.* 1019–1030; Thuc. 1.138.6; Craterus. 342 F 11 (Jacoby); Plut. *Them.* 32.3; Xen. *Hel.* 1.7.22–3. Cf. Holt (1999) 665.

<sup>48</sup> Hester (1971) 21.

<sup>49</sup> One might consider this a moot point given that mutual slaughter deals with the issue of revenge, but as McDowell points out, pollution and revenge are two separate issues borne out of homicide. McDowell (1963) 4.

The burial issue also allows Sophocles to highlight the *pathos* of civil war. Following the conflict between Athens and Persia for example, Themistocles' bones were denied burial at Athens because of his support for the Persians.<sup>50</sup> However Sophocles creates a problem here by removing the rest of the Seven from his version of the burial myth, in contrast to Aeschylus' *Eleusinians*. As a result of Sophocles' new insular plotline, the Thebans have no intuitive place to send the brothers' bodies away to, because Polyneices opposed Creon and Eteocles to claim his own kingdom: both brothers are home. Nor does it suit Creon or Antigone to bury the brothers on neutral ground in Eleusis as political equals away from the family home.

Thus, in the context of a tragedy at a religious festival, Sophocles' audience would surely have recognized the placement of both bodies as an issue, particularly given Aeschylus' previous treatment of Eteocles' pollution in *Septem* and Sophocles' allusion to Eteocles' pollution in *Antigone*.<sup>51</sup> In Sophocles' case, although Creon and Antigone's conflict over Polyneices' burial presents Creon's concern for the welfare of the polis in conflict with Antigone's concern for σύναιμος (of common blood), both nonetheless forsake the greater issue of pollution.<sup>52</sup> But although the controversy over Polyneices' burial polarizes Creon and Antigone, their silence over Eteocles undermines their differences; although they ignore Eteocles' body for different reasons, Creon and Antigone ultimately make the same mistake.

6. This mistake undermines traditional readings of Sophocles' characters. Knox follows Hegel's religion / state dichotomy and compares this to Athenian law reforms,<sup>53</sup> claiming that Antigone represents the old Athenian ideology of family honour, which Cleisthenes had replaced with a system of demes.<sup>54</sup> Whilst Knox's enquiry gives an interesting insight into the contemporary relevance of Antigone and Creon's conflict amongst Sophocles' audience, he overlooks the polluting placement of the bodies in Thebes. Charen goes so far as to consider "Creon's prohibition on burial and mourning as an act which prevents the end of war."<sup>55</sup> In effect, Charen is right; Creon's edict does perpetuate civil strife, but in intent Creon's edict attempts to use Polyneices' body to flush out rebels to stabilize his post war state; he cannot simply be read as the villain.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Thuc. 1.138.6, Craterus. 342 F 11. Jacoby, Plut. *Them.* 32.3, Xen. *Hel.* 1.7.22–3.

<sup>51</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 1069–72.

<sup>52</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 198.

<sup>53</sup> Hegel (1975) 1217–1218; Knox (1964) 76–79, cf. Segal (1981) 190–193 on πόλις vs. οἶκος and Liapis (2013) 82,87,96–97: most notably Demosthenes' approval of Creon's opening lines. (Dem. *De Cor.* 246–247).

<sup>54</sup> Aristot. *Pol.* 1319.

<sup>55</sup> Charen (2011) 509.

<sup>56</sup> Bowra (1945) 102; Whitman (1951) 90. N. b. Liapis (2013) 101 writes in Creon's defence, claiming he is reasonable.

Nor is Antigone the religious martyr many post-Hegelian scholars would have her be.<sup>57</sup> Indeed Antigone cannot even consider herself as such by the end of the play, as Ahrens Dorf demonstrates using the following passage:

ποίαν παρεξελθοῦσα δαιμόνων δίκην·  
 τί χρή με τήν δύστηνον ἐς θεοὺς ἔτι  
 βλέπειν· τίν' αὐδᾶν ξυμμάχων· ἐπεὶ γε δὴ  
 τήν δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβοῦσ' ἔκτησάμην.  
 ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν οὖν τάδ' ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς καλὰ,  
 παθόντες ἂν ξυγγνοῖμεν ἡμαρτηρότετες·

“What justice of divinities have I transgressed? Why should I, a wretched one, still look to the gods? Whom should I call to as an ally? Since, while I have been pious, I have acquired impiety. But if then these things [namely, Creon’s condemnation and punishment of her] are noble in the eyes of the gods we, having suffered, will recognise we have erred.”<sup>58</sup>

From this Ahrens Dorf raises two interesting questions: “If, then the play celebrates Antigone, why does she come to such a miserable end? [...] are her doubts regarding her own justice reasonable?”<sup>59</sup> The logical answer is that Antigone’s tale is not celebratory, but cautionary and thus her doubts are well founded. Hegel cites this last line to illustrate the conflict of religious and legal ethics.<sup>60</sup> But in context Antigone actually overlooks the religious principle of *miasma* in favour of religious practice; her desire to placate her brothers at home places Thebes in jeopardy. Thus Antigone’s crime is not as “pure” as Charen might suggest;<sup>61</sup> she does not display a “pure heroism of faith”, but champions religious practice over religious principles.<sup>62</sup>

Reviewing the characters with their shared mistake also sheds new light on the punishments they receive. Indeed Knox points out that whilst Creon is punished with the death of his family, Antigone is not saved, nor do the gods distinguish her as being “right.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Whitman (1951) 84–85; Oudemans / Lardinois (1951) 107; Segal (1981) 170; Holt (1999) 658, 663, 668, 685; Lauriola (2007) 390; Kirkpatrick (2011) 423; Charen (2011) Liapis (2013) 81, 108. N. b. Hester rightly distinguishes between Hegel’s views and the views of his descendants (1971) 15.

<sup>58</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 921–926. Ahrens Dorf’s translation (2009) 87.

<sup>59</sup> Ahrens Dorf (2009) 87.

<sup>60</sup> Hegel (1977) 284.

<sup>61</sup> Charen (2011) 504.

<sup>62</sup> Ahrens Dorf (2009) 104, cf. Segal (1981) 168. N. b. Oudemans / Lardinois (1951) 110 “nor is it an accident that a majority of the orthodoxy should reject Antigone’s lines 904–920, because these lines impair the purity of her unified identity and the loftiness of her principles.”, e. g. Whitman (1951) 92–93; Knox (1964) 62–67.

<sup>63</sup> Knox (1964) 106, 115. Nor is the inverse truly supportable in light of the Eteocles issue, cf. Bowra for the reactionary case that Antigone as an instrument of Creon’s punishment while Creon is the hero, Bowra (1945) 113–115.

Whilst I agree that Antigone is not vindicated, Segal's imagining of the *exodōs* as Creon "carrying his son's corpse before his own house" to emphasise "this king's ruin when he tries to assert the autonomy of civic order over the ties of blood," also seems reasonable.<sup>64</sup> I suggest that this, alongside Eurydice's appearance on stage before her suicide,<sup>65</sup> would have visually equated Creon's punishment as a survivor to Antigone's offstage suicide. Ultimately Antigone falls victim to Creon's edict, whereas the gods do not send Teiresias in time to save Creon from himself. From this Ahrens Dorf concludes that:

"both Creon and Antigone are destroyed by their piety. Creon fails to rescue Antigone because he places more importance on burying the dead and Antigone kills herself before she is rescued because she places insufficient trust in the human love of Haemon."<sup>66</sup>

I disagree. Both Antigone and Creon are actually destroyed by creating, in ignorance, yet more pollution for Thebes: Creon by finally burying Polyneices in Thebes and Antigone by committing suicide.<sup>67</sup> I propose that this is because both Antigone and Creon, unlike Sophocles' tragic audience, fail to accept that *both* brothers are polluted by their actions, thus should not be buried in Thebes at all. Therefore, Sophocles creates great dramatic tension by highlighting Antigone and Creon's different values, whilst rendering both their ideologies tragically futile under the laws of *miasma*.

Antigone's punishment for the burial of Polyneices is her own burial, orchestrated by Creon. But the permanence of the tomb made for her is much more reminiscent of Eteocles' permanent tomb, alluding to the true crime of ignoring Eteocles' burial. Indeed Segal suggests that Sophocles assimilates Antigone's retreat to the tomb as a symbolic womb in which to rejoin her brothers.<sup>68</sup> This link is evident in Antigone's identification of herself as "unwept, friendless, unwedded" (ἄκλαυτος, ἄφιλος, ἀνυμέναιος), like a lost child when going to her tomb.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, even Antigone's suicide appears to be a commitment to her delusion that her family will be reunited, that her death in Thebes will bring peace. Sophocles has Antigone hang herself, just as her mother is described as having done in Homer's *Odyssey*,<sup>70</sup> rejecting the existing variant in which Antigone burns in He-

<sup>64</sup> Segal (1980) 141. N. b. Hegel notes parallel punishments of Creon and Antigone (1975) 471.

<sup>65</sup> Soph. *Ant.* 1180–1245, cf. Liapis (2013) 105–106.

<sup>66</sup> Ahrens Dorf (2009) 148.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Segal (1981) 175 identifies Creon himself as a pollutant of Thebes (Soph. *Antig.* 1015. 1052. 1142. 1291. 1305) but ignores the potential pollution of Antigone's suicide. Tyrrell and Bennett (1998) 138 point out that in detaining Eurydice on her way to temple "Creon prevents another woman from carrying out rituals that benefit his city and household" though this of course supposes that Antigone's burial of Polyneices in Thebes would have been beneficial.

<sup>68</sup> Segal (1981) 73, cf. 184 on linguistic significance of ἀδελφος "brother" literally "one of the same womb." cf. Bowra (1945) 91; Seaford (1990) 78–79; (1994) 349.

<sup>69</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 876–877, cf. on the inversion of a wedding procession to a funeral regression to the natal family: Seaford (1994) 351, 381; Tyrrell / Bennett (1998) 140–141.

<sup>70</sup> Hom. *Od.* 11.271–280. cf. Sophocles' subsequent *Oedipus Tyrannus* maintains this suicide (1260–66).

ra's temple.<sup>71</sup> By mirroring Antigone's suicide with her mother's Sophocles promises no resolution, no family reunion as Antigone expected her brothers' shades to share.<sup>72</sup> Given Antigone's previous delusion that her brothers might be reconciled after death, it seems her suicide is a futile attempt to join them, polluting herself as they polluted one another.<sup>73</sup>

Creon's punishment is the loss of his son and wife. His focus on the political fall out of the Theban civil war blinded him to the civil war within his own household and the damage that ignoring Haemon's pleas for his betrothed Antigone would do. Creon's edict, forbidding Polyneices burial elsewhere and sanctioning Eteocles' polluted burial in Thebes, forsakes family values in favour of demonstrating strength as a king. As a consequence, he loses his own family and destroys his royal bloodline.<sup>74</sup> Creon's punishment is that he lives to suffer the consequences of his actions; he pollutes Thebes knowingly with both Polyneices' exposure and Eteocles' burial, and unwittingly by instigating the suicides of Antigone, Haemon and his wife Eurydice.<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, having considered the implications of Eteocles' burial, it seems to underscore the binaries of female versus male agendas and family versus state values presented by existing scholarship. But unlike the existing scholarship, I suggest that for each character these values motivate them to overlook the bigger issue of Eteocles as a source of *miasma*. As a result, Eteocles' pollution undermines the binary of Antigone's religious motives versus Creon's political motives. Antigone's desire for a local site for ritual lamentation ignores the overriding religious principle of pollution; she is a champion of religious practices, not religious values. Therefore, Eteocles' pollution emphasises the very disparate motives Antigone and Creon have for ignoring it and, in turn, the futility of these motives, as both characters endure a punishment that fits their crime.

More pressingly, considering the mythical subtext of Sophocles' drama unveils some problems with post-Hegelian readings of this tragedy. Reading Sophocles' characters as allegories of their values is tempting. But such readings take us away from the audience's experience of the play against its mythical backdrop and Aeschylean intertext; Sophocles' muted *miasma* presents Antigone and Creon as complex and uniquely motivated characters who suffer for the same mistake. Thus it seems that philosophers follow the lead of Sophocles' protagonists; they subscribe to principles that are secondary to Eteocles' polluting presence, a presence that a contemporary community audience would have recognised

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<sup>71</sup> Ion of Chios 740. Campbell.

<sup>72</sup> Soph. *Antig.* 522–523.

<sup>73</sup> Parker (1983) 41–42 “in a case of suicide by hanging, the rope and the branch were destroyed or thrown outside the boundaries of the city”, cf. Plut. *Them.* 22.2, D. L. 6.2.61.

<sup>74</sup> cf. on political and personal aspects of family in *Antigone* Segal (1981) 193–194 and Butler (2001) 5–7

<sup>75</sup> On the polluting and symbolic significance of these suicides cf. Bennett and Tyrrell (1998) 140–152.

through their knowledge of myth and religion.

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