

2

The Two Worlds of the *Antigone*

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The chorus of Theban elders begins the parodos of the *Antigone* by welcoming the rising sun¹ which looks down upon the fleeing remnants of the Argive army defeated the night before (100–109). The chorus then describes the battle itself, which took place at the gates of the city,² between Polyneices and his foreign allies on the one hand, and Eteocles and the forces of Thebes on the other (110 ff.). As prototype of the Argive army the chorus chooses Capaneus, who scaled the wall torch in hand, but was struck down at the very moment he reached the top (*βαλβίδων ἐπ' ἄκρων*), just as he was about to shout his cry of victory (131–133). Capaneus never crossed the wall but was thrust outward³ and downward to the earth below (134 f.). The other Argive leaders were killed in their own unspecified ways at the other gates of the city (141–143), Polyneices and Eteocles slew each other (144–147), and the forces of Thebes were victorious (148 f.). The fact that Capaneus' case is the only one specifically described by the chorus strongly suggests that it was meant to be typical of the Argive attack as a whole. If this is so, then the picture which we get of the battle is one of a besieged city, the enemy on one side of the city walls, unable to cross in, and the defenders on the other side, on top of the walls,

¹ We are to imagine that the chorus sings the parodos as day is breaking and the sun is beginning to rise (E. Coughanawr, *CQ* NS 23 [1973], 22 f.). The prologue between Antigone and Ismene took place in the dark of night (*ἐν νυκτὶ τῆ νῦν*, 16); see A. T. von S. Bradshaw, *CQ* NS 12 (1962), 203 f.

² The seven gates of the city are mentioned three times in the parodos (101, 119, 141). This particular detail immediately evokes the traditional accounts of the battle (notably Aeschylus' *Septem*). It also reminds us that the city was besieged (cf. also *ἀμφιχανῶν κύκλω*, 118), and that the battle was fought at the walls and gates of the city, not on the open field (see also below, note 4).

³ *πανταλωθεῖς* (134). See R. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, Part III: The Antigone*³ (Cambridge, 1900), *ad loc.*

and hence unable to cross out.⁴ I would suggest that Sophocles had more in mind here than simply presenting a particularly vivid scene to his audience's imagination, for the wall on which the battle was fought can also be seen as a dividing line which separates two radically different worlds, the world within the city and the world without.

Within the walls is the *polis* of Thebes, the city which Creon now rules. It is a city of light in the new day which the chorus had welcomed (100–109), a day which they hope will bring forgetfulness of the wars of the past (150 f.). Within the city, and specifically on the stage, the part of the city seen by the audience, Creon is in control, securing the acquiescence of the Theban elders to his rule, ordering about the guard, and determining the death of Antigone. Like the chorus, Creon looks to the future. In his opening speech he tells the chorus what he will and will not do as ruler (175 ff.), and his decree to bury Eteocles and not to bury Polyneices is the first step in his implementation of this policy for the future (cf. 192). Indeed, for the greater part of our play Creon seems to be a man with no past. There is no mention of anything which he did before the play began except for the decree, and the decree is repeated in the course of the play (194 ff.) and is thus incorporated into present time. As far as the play is concerned, Creon could just as easily have come into existence when he came into power, at the death of Eteocles and Polyneices. Only as the play is about to end do we learn that Creon has a past, when we are told that he was in some way responsible for the death of his son Megareus (1303–1313).⁵ We shall return to this point below.

Creon forms his judgement in terms of the city, or more precisely in terms of *this* city. As he sets forth his policies to the chorus, for example, Creon repeatedly uses the demonstrative τῆδε when talking of the city.⁶ For Creon it is not simply a matter of abstract principle, that one should be loyal to one's own city; his commitment is concrete and specific, to the Thebes which the audience sees on the stage before them. Eventually, of course, in the Haemon scene, Creon identifies the good of the city with his own will rather than vice versa (cf. 734–738); but it is doubtful that he has already done so at the beginning of the play. In his first address to

⁴ Thus there is no mention of a Theban sally to complete the defeat of the Argives (as there is in Euripides' vivid account of the battle, *Phoen.* 1189 ff.), and we are left with the impression that the Argive army abandoned the fight once its leaders were killed.

⁵ Teiresias does mention some earlier assistance which he gave to Creon, (993–995, cf. 1058), but this probably also refers to the sacrifice of Megareus, and not to some other event in Creon's past (see below, note 24).

⁶ 189, 191, 195, 203, 209; cf. ταύτης (189) and the chorus' use of τῆδε . . . πόλει (212) in immediate reply to Creon's initial statement.

the chorus Creon speaks only of the city: its friends are his friends, its enemies his enemies (187 f., 209 f.), and none more so than the traitor Polynices, who now suffers the fate he deserves, his corpse exposed outside the city as carrion for dogs and vultures (198–206).

The Greeks buried their dead outside the city walls. Within the walls is the world of the living, outside is the world of the dead. Polynices lies exposed outside the city, and the dead Eteocles must be buried there also (cf. 23–25), as must Oedipus, Iocasta and Laius, the whole clan of Labdacids, all now dead except Antigone and Ismene. Of these two, Ismene chooses to yield to Creon (63–67) and remains within his control in the city. Antigone, however, refuses to obey (47 f.), and so goes to bury her brother, out of the city and into the world of the dead (99).

In the theater this world of the dead lies offstage to the audience's left, the direction which convention assigns to the countryside outside the city. When Antigone leaves to bury Polynices, for example, she exits in this direction⁷ (by contrast, Ismene's submission to Creon is visibly reflected in her simultaneous exit into the palace). Throughout the play this left side exit is used only as a means of passage to and from the world of the dead, viz. to Polynices' corpse and Antigone's tomb.⁸ The demonstratives ἐκεῖ and (ἐ)κεῖνος used to describe this outer world and its inhabitants⁹ also emphasize that world's remoteness and its association with death.¹⁰

⁷ Antigone must leave by the left (at 99), also to avoid becoming entangled with the chorus which is entering at the same moment from the right (as old men the chorus would be shut up in the city during the siege, and would not be off to the left out in the countryside).

⁸ Polynices' corpse and Antigone's tomb must be fairly close to each other (and therefore offstage in the same direction), since the burying of Polynices and the freeing of Antigone are both part of the same expedition out of the city (cf. 1198–1205). At 162, Creon comes from offstage (cf. δαῦρο νεῖσθαι [33] and the chorus' somewhat lengthy anapestic greeting to Creon [155–161], on which see W. M. Calder, III, *GRBS* 9 [1968] 393, n. 24), but most probably from the right. There is no reason why Creon would be returning from outside the city (i.e., from the left) if there had been no battle beyond the walls (see above, note 4). Creon's κήρυγμα is an "emergency decree announced by the voice of a herald, the normal means adopted by a general . . . to announce his will to the population in conditions resembling what we would call martial law" (B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966], 95). It seems more likely that this sort of decree would be promulgated in the agora (offstage to the right) and that Creon would enter from this direction at 162.

⁹ ἐκεῖ: 76, 249, 777; (ἐ)κεῖνος: 71 (= Polynices), 525 (= Polynices and Eteocles), 1039 (= Polynices), 1043 (= Polynices); in terms of the following note compare also 168 (= Laius and Oedipus), 170 (= Eteocles and Polynices), 468 (the more remote obligations to the dead contrasted with the closer threat of death at Creon's hand), and perhaps 514 (= Eteocles).

¹⁰ ἐκεῖ is sometimes used as a euphemism for the underworld (*LSJ*, s.v. ἐκεῖ, 2), and

While the inner world of the city is concrete and visible on the stage, we never see the outer world of the dead. Instead, our knowledge of that world is indirect, through the reports of others, and as a consequence the outer world seems even more distant, less concrete, and so more mysterious.

Creon attempts to intervene in the outer world of the dead by prohibiting the burial of Polyneices. Although this prohibition was initially proclaimed offstage, Creon himself repeats the proclamation onstage (198–206). In this way the proclamation is dramatically associated with the onstage world of the city and is seen as an attempt by Creon to project his power, which is identified with the city, out into the world of the dead beyond.¹¹ The attempt fails repeatedly as Antigone twice buries Polyneices' body¹² and Creon himself finally completes the task.

As Creon dominates the action within the city, Antigone determines the evolution of events which take place in the outer world of the dead, by her burial of Polyneices and by her self-determined suicide, which leads in turn to the death of Haemon. As Creon functions in the light of the new day proclaimed by the chorus (100–109), Antigone functions in darkness: in the darkness of the night before the dawn of the parodos when, in the prologue, she determines to bury Polyneices (42 ff.), in the strange darkness of the duststorm when she performs the burial (417 ff.),¹³ and in the darkness of the tomb where she dies and causes Haemon's death.¹⁴ As Creon is the man with no past, Antigone is a girl without a future. The only future act which she contemplates is the burial of Polyneices, and this act has been dictated by events in the past. Beyond the burial she foresees nothing but death, and the sooner death comes the more grateful she will be (460–464). Antigone does not even mention her own suicide,

ἐκείνος may be similarly used in reference to the dead (H. Ebeling, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu Sophokles* [Leipzig, 1869], s.v. *ἐκείνος*, 1).

¹¹ Another example of Creon's projecting the world of the city into the world of the dead is his assumption that the first burial of Polyneices was the result of sedition within the *polis* (289 ff.).

¹² I assume here that both burials reported by the guard were performed by Antigone. For our purposes, only the second burial is significant in terms of the evolution of the play's action, and this burial at least, it is generally agreed, was performed by Antigone.

¹³ Since the first burial was discovered by the day's first watch (*πρώτος . . . ἡμεροκόπος*, 253) it too must have been performed in the dark. The motif of lightlessness continues in *κούδεις ἐναργής* (263), Creon's *ἐκφανεῖτ'* (307) and *φανείτε* (325), and the guard's *ἔνδηλα καὶ σαφή* (405).

¹⁴ At 808 f. Antigone describes herself as *νέατον . . . φέγγος λείσσοσαν ἀελίου*, recalling the *ἀκτίς ἀελίου* greeted by the chorus in the opening words of the parodos (100); cf. also *οὐκέτι μοι τὸδε λαμπάδος ἱερὸν ὄμμα θέμις ὄραν* (879 f.), where the sun-eye recalls *ἀμέρας βλέφαρον* (104). The curse of the Labdacids is itself described by the chorus as a form of darkness, like black sand stirred up from the sea's dark depths (586–592).

but the actual suicide is itself secondary, for Antigone had already decided upon her own death when she comes to bury Polyneices (cf. 555). Indeed, in a very real sense she died at that moment, as she says, in order that she might benefit the dead (559 f.), and her suicide is simply the consummation of this predetermined death.¹⁵

Antigone looks only to the past, and that past is her family which dictates her present actions. As Creon's commitment to the city was concrete and specific, to the *polis* of Thebes, Antigone's commitment to family is also specific, to the royal clan of Labdacids. Antigone repeatedly identifies herself and is identified by others as the child of this family, whose ill-starred history is repeatedly recalled (2 ff., 49 ff., 858 ff.) like a genealogy of misfortunes, suggesting that Antigone too must come to grief (cf. 593 ff.,¹⁶ 856, 893 ff.). These earlier Labdacids are now all dead, buried and unburied outside the city, and Antigone's own death will be but a reunion, as she says, with 'my own' (τοὺς ἐμαυτῆς, 893; cf. 867 f.).

As Creon defines his friends and enemies in terms of the city, Antigone defines hers in terms of her family: he who attacks the family attacks her (31 f.), he who is the family's enemy is her enemy too (10, 93 f.). The enemy now is Creon, who has refused to allow the burial of Polyneices and so has intruded himself into the affairs of a family where he had no right to enter (48, 1072). Ismene too is an enemy. She does not agree with Creon, but she recognizes his power (58 ff.), and so refuses to share in the burial. By denying what Antigone considers the legitimate demands of the family upon her (cf. 45 f.) Ismene alienates herself from the family and so becomes an enemy of Polyneices and Antigone (93 f.).

By acquiescing to Creon's proclamation Ismene concedes his right to rule. This Antigone will never do. While Ismene speaks of νόμου and of ψῆφον τυράννων (59 f.), implying some legitimacy in Creon's decree,¹⁷ Antigone speaks only of τὸν στρατηγὸν and his κήρυγμα (8). Generals are not kings, and Thebes is not Creon's. For Antigone legitimacy is only in the past, in the ancestral line of Labdacids, of which she, not Creon, is the sole survivor (τὴν βασιλεῖδᾶν μούνην λοιπήν, 941).¹⁸ Antigone and Creon

¹⁵ Even though Antigone has been sentenced by Creon, the chorus recognizes that her death is her own choice (821 f., and Jebb [above, note 3], *ad loc.*). We are thus reminded that in the world of the dead Antigone, not Creon, decides what will happen.

¹⁶ The notion of the dead influencing the present is clear in these lines when we realize that the Λαβδακιδᾶν of 593 are the dead members of the clan, not Antigone and Ismene; see H. Lloyd-Jones, *CQ* NS 7 (1957), 16 f.

¹⁷ Cf. also Ismene's βία πολιτῶν (79), echoing her νόμου βία (59). Similarly the chorus accepts Creon's legitimacy and the legitimacy of his decree; cf. βασιλεὺς χώρας (155), βασιλείοισιν . . . νόμοις (382), etc.

¹⁸ Ismene is no longer counted among the βασιλεῖδαι, since she has accepted Creon's rule, thereby failing the test of εὐγένεια (cf. 37 f.).

have two very different views of the relationship between Thebes and her rulers. Creon, at least in his public pronouncements, sees that relationship in what we might call "modern" terms: that rule depends on the consent of the governed (cf. 666 f.)¹⁹ and should be directed to the good of the city as a whole (cf. 178 ff.). Antigone speaks of Thebes in a much more "primitive" way, almost as if the city were an ancestral possession (*γᾶς πατρίας*, 806; *ἄστρῳ πατρῶν*, 937) to be passed on from generation to generation of Labdacids (cf. 941).²⁰

In summary then, we find in our play a series of dichotomies which underscore the basic dramatic conflict between Antigone and Creon:

<i>World outside the city</i>	<i>World inside the city</i>
unseen by audience	seen onstage
<i>ἐκείνοι, ἐκεῖ</i>	<i>ἦδε πόλις</i>
dominated by Antigone	dominated by Creon
darkness	light
death	life
family	city
looks to the past	looks to the future
Thebes ruled by old royal line	Thebes ruled by Creon

The separateness of these two worlds, however, is more apparent than real. In the course of the play Creon may twice reject the bonds of family as secondary to the stability of his own rule over Thebes (484 ff., 655 ff.), but in his first address to the chorus he himself invokes the previous rulers of Thebes, viz. Laius, Oedipus and the slain brothers (165 ff.), and justifies his rule precisely on the grounds of his own closeness of kinship with those who had gone before him (*γένους κατ' ἀγχιστεία τῶν ὀλωλότων*, 173 f.). This ill-omened claim of kinship with the dead is hardly an act of familial piety, as are Antigone's invocations of kinship, but only a political ploy used by Creon to help in consolidating his power in Thebes. In effect, Creon declares himself a Labdacid in order to share that family's right to rule. In the prologue, however, Antigone (2 ff.) and Ismene (49 ff.) had accounted for their own sorry state as the consequence of the ills of their family, and Ismene had mentioned Oedipus, his wife, and the two

¹⁹ In his opening speech to the chorus of elders Creon speaks of the support which the elders had provided for the previous rulers (165 ff.); and, although he does not specifically say so, it is clear that his purpose in addressing the elders is to secure the same support for himself.

²⁰ When Creon speaks of Polyneices attacking *γῆν πατρῶν καὶ θεοὺς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς* (199; cf. Antigone at 937 f.), he means *πατρῶν* from Polyneices' point of view, not his own (i.e., Polyneices' ancestral land, not Creon's). Creon's use of *πατρῶν* here is accurate, since Polyneices was a legitimate member of the Theban royal line.

slain brothers (49 ff.). Creon's invocation of the Labdacids here recalls these earlier "genealogies of misfortune" and suggests that if Creon will share in the rights of the family he will also share in the family's curse which has brought grief to all the Labdacids before him.

The curse is worked through Haemon. Haemon pleads with his father to release Antigone, arguing that to do so would benefit Creon (701 ff.). The argument is a good one for Haemon to make: by identifying the interests of Creon with those of Antigone Haemon avoids the necessity of making a choice between the two (cf. 748 f.). Creon, however, will not accept the argument, and by repeatedly charging that Haemon's loyalties lie only with Antigone (740, 746, 748) he finally forces Haemon to choose between himself and the girl. Creon justifies his sentence of Antigone in terms of his own rule over Thebes (730 ff.), but Haemon cannot accept this Thebes ruled as it now is by his father (734-745). Forced to choose, Haemon rejects his father (763 f.) and leaves the city (765). His exit is to the left,²¹ to the world outside the city walls. This outer world is the world of the dead and, as events will show, it will be the setting of Haemon's death as well.

At the end of this scene between Haemon and Creon, Creon may still seem to be dominant, but his encounter with Haemon has forced him to make an important retreat. Creon at first justified his intended punishment of Antigone as necessary for stability within the city (655 ff.); but the punishment has become itself a source of civil discord. Creon claimed the universal support of the city for his decree forbidding Polyneices' burial (655 f., cf. 508); but Haemon told how he himself had observed the people of the city secretly lamenting that Antigone is to be punished for the burial, but fearing Creon too much to make their objections known (688 ff.). Such is the strength of Haemon's eyewitness account that Creon can no longer claim universal support. Creon's "modern" view of his kingship has been that it is based on the consent of the governed. Without that consent now, Creon should yield and free Antigone; but he does not. Instead he abandons his "modern" view and declares that the will of the people is irrelevant (734), and that Thebes is his alone to command (736). Creon has now come to share the "primitive" view of Antigone, that Thebes is the personal possession of her king (738). He has been forced by Haemon's report to admit that, in this sense, his rule is no different from that of the Labdacids before him.

Creon's reversal continues. The punishment for the violation of his

²¹ Haemon leaves by the exit to the left, since he will eventually go to Antigone's tomb, which is offstage in that direction (see above, note 8).

decree was originally to have been stoning within the city (cf. 36). Now, almost as if to reassert his public posture as protector of the city as a whole, Creon changes the punishment and sentences Antigone to immurement outside the city, in order that the city might escape the pollution of her death (773 ff.). This sudden attention to piety may not be all that Creon claims it is. Stoning is a public act involving the whole community,²² but a public which does not support Creon's policy would be unwilling to carry out the sentence. Creon avoids the potential embarrassment or worse by changing the punishment to one which can be carried out by his own servants and soldiers, and does not depend on the community as a whole. He thus saves face, but loses far more. Though he does not realize it, by this change Creon in effect surrenders his control over Antigone. The locale of her death will not be the world of the city dominated by Creon, but the outer world of the dead, and her death will be at the time and in the manner chosen by Antigone, not by Creon.

As the play progresses it becomes evident that reality is to be found in Antigone's unseen world of darkness and death, and that Creon's city of light and life is, despite the apparent reality associated with the visible stage, nothing but an illusion which Creon's own actions ultimately destroy. This had been Haemon's message when he spoke of the civil discord stirred up by Creon's punishment of Antigone. Teiresias too is a messenger from the city,²³ but his entrance and opening words suggest that, though within the city, he is part of Antigone's world, not Creon's (or, put differently, that the outer world already extends into the city through Teiresias): his blindness, which is emphasized (988–990), suggests darkness within the city, and in contrast to the city and to Creon, both oriented to the future, Teiresias refers to the past and speaks of help which he has already given to Creon in preserving the city (993–995, cf. 1058), thus giving us the first hint of any past which Creon may have had before the play began.²⁴ Teiresias now tells Creon of the illness the city suffers

²² See E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1950), ad 1616.

²³ Teiresias enters from his παλαιὸν θᾶκον ὀρνιθοσκόπον (999); cf. θάκος . . . ἰὸν οἰωνοσκοπεῖ (Eur. *Bacch.* 347), οἰωνίσματ' ὀρνίθων μαθὼν θάκοισιν ἐν ἱεροῖσιν (Eur. *Phoen.* 839 f.). The similarity of language suggests that both Sophocles and Euripides are referring to a specific well-known Theban site, which may well be the same as the οἰωνοσκοπεῖον Τειρεσίου καλούμενον located by Pausanias (9.16.1) in or near the agora within the city of Thebes.

²⁴ The occasion and nature of Teiresias' past assistance is not here specified, but ἐξ ἐμοῦ γὰρ τήνδ' ἔχεις σώσας πόλιν (1058) suggests some recent event: perhaps Teiresias' advice that Creon offer his son's death to save the city besieged by the Argives (cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 947–952; Megareus' death is referred to later in our play, 1303); a recent event is also suggested by 994, if we retain the present tense of the verb as in the manuscripts (see

because of him, polluted by the shreds of Polyneices' corpse which scavenger bird and beast have carried to the city and its altars (1015 ff.). Polyneices was unable to penetrate into the city while he lived, but his corpse, left unburied at Creon's command, now enters the city to befoul it after his death. In forbidding Polyneices' burial Creon had attempted to extend his control outside the city into the world of the dead; but his attempt failed, and now Polyneices and Antigone, both outside in the world of the dead, will exact Haemon's death as Creon's punishment for his mistreatment of them (1066 ff.). Creon's mistreatments of Polyneices and Antigone were political acts which denied the ties of family; but now Creon will be punished through these very family ties he had earlier denied.

It remains only to play out the inevitable. Creon leaves the stage, his world of the city, and goes into the world outside, the world of death (1114). Here obligations to the dead must override concern for those who still may live: Polyneices must be buried first.²⁵ In this world of dead Labdacids, Polyneices, the last dead Labdacid, must have his due from Creon, the man who has chosen to be his kin (cf. 173 f.).

Creon now goes to Antigone's tomb (1204 ff.). As we have seen, Creon surrendered his control over Antigone when he sentenced her to immurement outside the city. The outer world is Antigone's to dominate, and since Antigone now controls all, Creon must fail. Antigone must be dead by her own choice and hand (1221 f.) precisely because Creon would now rescue her (cf. 1111 f.). Haemon still lives, but in the tomb, the innermost recess of this world of death: now he truly belongs to Antigone. Creon enters the tomb (1226 f.) and beseeches Haemon to come out (1230); but it is too late. Creon had earlier forced Haemon to choose between himself and Antigone. Now that choice has been made, and Haemon will not leave Antigone. In a silence which seems deathlike in contrast to the cries of Creon (cf. 1226 f.), Haemon draws his sword and rushes at the intruder (1232 f.). For Creon is no longer his father, but the enemy²⁶ whom Hae-

A. C. Pearson, *CQ* 22 [1928], 187). H. D. Brackett, *CJ* 12 (1916-1917), 526, also sees in the *αὐ* of 996 (*φρόνει βεβῶς αὐ νῦν ἐπὶ ξυροῦ τύχης*) another possible reference to the death of Megareus.

²⁵ It is clear from the sequence of commands at 1108-1112 that Creon recognizes the necessity of burying Polyneices first. Creon has no reason to believe that Antigone will commit suicide (or may have already done so), and so her release would not appear to require the same haste as the burial of Polyneices, the remains of whose body already pollute the city (cf. 1015 ff.); see also J. S. Margon, *CP* 65 (1970), 105-107; Brackett (preceding note), 531-534.

²⁶ Thus Haemon "spits" at his father (1232), as earlier Creon had told him to "spit" at Antigone and treat her as an enemy (653); in both cases *πίστας* is probably meta-

mon would kill. The blow misses and Haemon turns the sword upon himself (1234–1236). His rejection of Creon²⁷ and his union with Antigone are now complete. As Haemon falls he embraces Antigone (1236 f.),²⁸ corpse upon corpse as bridegroom and wife, their wedding chamber a tomb (1240 f.).

When Creon left to bury Polyneices the chorus sang an ode (1115 ff.) whose theme of deliverance for the city of Thebes, deliverance represented by the image of light, recalls the similar theme of the parodos. But while the parodos was confidently set in the light of a dawn which had already appeared (*ἐφάνθη*, 103) to replace the past night of danger, the present ode is set in sickness and pollution (cf. 1140–1143), from which the chorus prays to be rescued by a still future appearance of Bacchus (*προφάνηθ'*, 1149). The nature of the rescuing light is also different in the two odes. In the parodos, the chorus sang of a new day which, by its nature as day, totally replaces the darkness of night. Bacchus, on the other hand, is a nocturnal god, and his light is a light which shines in the night but does not fully dispel its darkness.²⁹ By the way in which they invoke Bacchus as a bringer of light, the chorus reminds us that Thebes itself has now become a city of darkness, not the city of light promised by the parodos.

The city of darkness is also the city of death. In rapid succession Creon enters bringing Haemon's body from the tomb (1257; cf. 1258 with 1266), Eurydice's corpse is revealed within the palace (1293), and we learn of the earlier death of Creon's other son, Megareus (1303). The purpose of this accumulation of deaths is not simply to overwhelm the already humbled Creon in a sea of grief. Rather, each of these deaths has its place in the patterns we have been examining. Haemon died outside the city, and the entrance of his corpse is a visible sign of the penetration of that world of death into the heart of the *polis*. Eurydice, on the other hand, died within the city, and the appearance of her body on the stage serves

phorical, "expressing contempt and disgust" (see most recently P. Mazon, *RP*, 3^e série, 25 [1951], 14).

²⁷ Haemon's suicide (like Eurydice's) is an act intended to punish Creon, and not simply a gesture of hopelessness or insanity (see M. Delcourt, "Le suicide par vengeance dans la Grèce ancienne," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 119 [1939], 161–163).

²⁸ On these verses see also C. Bonner, "The Death of Haemon (*Ant.* 1236–1237)." *Classical Studies Presented to Edward Capps* (Princeton, 1936), 24–28; Bonner reads *παρθένω* in place of *παρθένω* at 1237, as more appropriate with *προσπύσσειται* in the sense of "embraces"; see further G. Müller, *Sophokles: Antigone* (Heidelberg, 1967), *ad loc.*

²⁹ Cf. *στέροψ* . . . *λυγνός* (1126 f., referring to the smoky torches carried by the god's devotees in their night revels; cf. Jebb [above, note 3], *ad loc.*); *πῦρ πνειόντων χοράγ' ἄστρων*, *νυχίων φθεγμάτων ἐπίσκοπε* (1146–1148); *σε* . . . *πάννουχοι χορεύουσι* (1151 f.).

as a visible counterpart to that of Haemon's (cf. 1298–1300). In this sense at least the world within and the world without are both seen to be the same: both are settings for death. While Haemon and Eurydice are of the present—both die in the course of the play—Megareus is of the past. Indeed, Creon's acquiescence to Megareus' death is the only thing we ever learn of Creon's past. Through most of the play that past had been completely shut out of Creon's new world; but now, as the illusion of that new world crumbles, the past penetrates into the present through Eurydice's suicide in grief for the deaths of both Haemon and Megareus (cf. 1303 ff., 1312 f.).

Amid this destruction of family the city which Creon would rule is now forgotten.³⁰ Creon who once seemed to control all is now seen to control nothing. Events flow under their own impetus to the final destruction of his house, and Creon is powerless to stop them. In claiming his throne on the grounds of his Labdacid connections, Creon also took upon himself that family's curse, and now this man who made himself a Labdacid must see his family perish, as all the Labdacids had perished before him. Creon who would rule *κατ' ἀγχιστεία τῶν ὀλωλότων* (174), has now become, like them, an *ὀλωλότ' ἄνδρ'* (1288).³¹

The new day which the chorus had proclaimed fairest of all (100–104) was an illusion. The new Thebes of light and life, the dominance of Creon, the primacy of the *polis* were all illusions too, but the illusions are gone. The old Thebes which we saw in the prologue could not be shut outside and forgotten, and now it has returned, present and real upon the stage. In this Thebes of family, darkness and death, Creon prays for the one day which will truly be fairest, the day which will be his last (1328–1333).³²

Fairfield University

³⁰ From Eurydice's entrance on stage (1180), to hear of Haemon's death, until the end of the play Thebes is mentioned only once, and then in a quite unimportant way, when the messenger suggests that Eurydice may have gone into the palace to keep her grief private, and not to broadcast it to the city (1247–1249).

³¹ Creon's death is metaphorical (he is an *ἔμψυχος νεκρός* for whom life is no longer worth living; cf. 1166 f.); but the word *ὀλωλότ'* does link him with Eteocles (174, 195), Polyneices (174, 1029), the whole of Antigone's family (894), and the dead Haemon (1240), all of whom were previously described by the intransitive perfect of the verb *ὀλλυμι*. Creon's description of himself as an *ἔμψυχος νεκρός* also links him with the punishment which he sought to impose on Antigone (cf. 774).

³² I have taken some liberty in my paraphrase of 1328–1333 in order to point out more clearly the similarity between this passage and 100–104 (*φανήτω . . . κάλλιστ' . . . ἀμέραν*, 1329 f. ∞ *κάλλιστον . . . ἐφάνθης . . . ἀμέρας*, 100–104).