



Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama

Sophocles  
**Antigone**

A new translation and  
commentary by David Franklin  
and John Harrison

Introduction to the Greek Theatre  
by P.E. Easterling

Series Editors: John Harrison and Judith Affleck



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## *List of characters*

ANTIGONE	<i>daughter of Oedipus</i>
ISMENE	<i>daughter of Oedipus</i>
CHORUS	<i>Theban elders</i>
CREON	<i>new king of Thebes, uncle of Antigone and Ismene</i>
SENTRY	
HAEMON	<i>Creon's son</i>
TEIRESIAS	<i>a blind old seer</i>
FIRST MESSENGER	
EURYDICE	<i>Creon's wife</i>
SECOND MESSENGER	



*Detail from a vase (c. 380–370 BC) showing a scene from the play.*

## PROLOGUE (1–90)

All Sophocles' extant plays begin with a scene involving two or more characters. The setting here is an open place, at dawn (13). Antigone and Ismene come from the gates of the palace (16). Euripides preferred to begin with a single character explaining the background to the play. Here Sophocles presents a dialogue between two sharply differentiated characters, and we learn the details of the situation gradually.

**1 My own dear sister** No translation can convey Antigone's unusual way of addressing her sister (literally 'very-sister of common blood'), which stresses the closeness of the tie of kinship.

**1–2 the sufferings bequeathed by Oedipus** Oedipus' crimes (see Background to the story, page vii) had infected Thebes with pollution (see note on page 14), for which Zeus, the supreme deity (see note on page 10), might exact retribution from subsequent generations. Now there is yet another, new misfortune.

**6 the general** Creon is now the king (155, 167). He had been regent when Oedipus' sons were young; when they shared the throne, he served in the army and is credited with saving Thebes from the Argive attack (1120). Antigone's impersonal reference to her uncle is significant; and by calling him 'general', she suggests that Thebes in the immediate aftermath of the war is under some sort of martial law: the general governs by decree (6, 22, 26, 28, 158, 182, 190).

- Notice the number of questions in Antigone's opening speech. What does this suggest about her manner and emotional state?

## Friends and enemies

**9 those we love** (*philoí*, also 11) embraces all family and close friends, whom one had an obligation to help and protect, whereas it was considered perfectly acceptable to hate or harm anyone who was one's enemy. This could extend to denying them burial, as Creon has to all the Argives. Antigone objects to her brother, her *philos*, being treated as an enemy. In Sophocles' *Ajax* the Greek generals similarly refuse burial to Ajax, their disgraced colleague.

**12 double blow** The unique, incestuous way in which Eteocles and Polyneices died is stressed (see also 50–1, 166 and note on 140–2).

**13 Argive army** See Background to the story (page vii).

**15 outside** Greek women were expected to spend most of their time in the home. For the two sisters to be out of doors creates an atmosphere of secrecy and suggests that things are not normal (see also note on 1141).

- ANTIGONE** My own dear sister, Ismene, of all the sufferings bequeathed by Oedipus, can you think of one that Zeus has not given the two of us in our lifetime? There is no pain, no ruin, shame or dishonour that I have not seen in your sufferings and mine. 5
- And now, what is this proclamation they say the general has just made to the whole city? Do you understand it? Have you heard it? Or don't you yet know that punishment fit for enemies is coming to those we love?
- ISMENE** Not a word has come to me, sweet or painful, Antigone, 10  
about our loved ones; not since our two brothers were torn away from us, dying on the same day by a double blow. Since the Argive army left, just last night, I know of nothing new; whether good fortune is coming, or more suffering.
- ANTIGONE** I was right; that is why I brought you outside the 15  
palace gates, to hear the news in private.
- ISMENE** What is it? You are clearly troubled by your news.
- ANTIGONE** Is Creon not honouring one of our brothers with 20  
burial, and leaving the other in disgrace? He has buried Eteocles in the ground, they say, observing justice and custom, so that he is honoured among the dead below.

## Honours due to the dead

Antigone is concerned to pay her brother due honour (*timē*, 21). The honour due to a dead man was to have his body washed and dressed (see 868) by women of his family and to be burnt or buried, with appropriate libations (see note on 401) and formal laments sung by women (see also note on 1156). To leave a corpse unmourned and unburied, as carrion for birds and beasts of prey, was to treat it, and so the gods of the underworld (67), with dishonour. But Athenian law in the 5th century BC allowed that burial in Attic soil could be refused to those guilty of sacrilege, treason or tyranny.

**25 delicious** Antigone's bitterness is reflected in her language; see also the sarcastic description of Creon as 'noble' (26).

**27 to you and me** The edict applies to all citizens (7) but to the sisters in particular, who, as the last survivors of the family, would be responsible for the funeral rites.

● What do the words **to me, I tell you** reveal about Antigone?

**30 public stoning** by the citizens is a particularly violent punishment; it may seem to Creon apt for a public enemy.

## The demands of nobility

Antigone expresses the view (32) that those of noble birth should show superior moral qualities. The incestuous nature of the sisters' birth – Oedipus was married to his own mother (47) – seems not to affect Antigone's view of her own nobility, which she is concerned to prove. She thinks it requires her to honour her brother – even at the cost of her life (32, 42, 63–4, 87–8). This is an extreme view: though the Greeks in general thought it important to honour the dead with burial, we have no evidence that they would risk their own death to achieve it (see the Chorus' view, 204). They were familiar with the practice of casting out without burial those guilty of certain crimes, including treason, so we cannot assume that they would applaud Antigone's extreme position.

## The position of women

A woman was normally always under the authority of a male. Before marriage her male authority (*kurios*) was her father or next of kin; once married, her *kurios* was her husband. Women could not vote, stand for office or speak in the law courts; they probably were not admitted to the theatre. For a young woman to flout the authority of her *kurios* as Antigone does would be extraordinary in the Athens of Sophocles' time. Ismene's more 'normal' attitude, accepting women's conventional 'bounds' (60), throws into relief Antigone's stance.

But they say it has been proclaimed to the citizens that, after his miserable death, the body of Polyneices must not be buried in a tomb, nor mourned; he is to be left unlamented, unburied, a delicious hoard for the watching birds to feast on! 25

This is the proclamation that they say the noble Creon has made to you and me – to me, I tell you – and he is coming here to make the announcement clear to those who do not know. He does not treat the matter lightly; whoever disobeys him in any respect will face death by public stoning in the city. 30

Now you know how things stand; soon you will show whether you are noble by birth, or a coward from a noble family.

**ISMENE** My poor sister, if this is how things are, what can I do to prevent or change them?

**ANTIGONE** Consider whether you will share the work and the action with me. 35

**ISMENE** What work? What are you risking? What do you mean?

**ANTIGONE** Will you lend your hands to mine, to lift the body?

**ISMENE** What? You intend to bury him, when it has been forbidden to the city? 40

**ANTIGONE** Yes, my brother and yours, even if you wish he were not. I will not be caught betraying him.

**ISMENE** You dare? When Creon has forbidden it?

**ANTIGONE** It is not for him to keep me from my own.

**ISMENE** Ah! Think, sister, how our father died: hated, disgraced, driven by the crimes he had himself uncovered to tear out both his eyes with his own hands. Then mother – his mother and wife, a double title – destroyed her life with a twisted noose. Then the third disaster: our two brothers in a single day wrought their shared destiny at each other's hand, the wretched pair, shedding their own blood. 50



### Ismene's point of view

Ismene tries to make Antigone see the situation realistically, in the context of the state: she talks of the city (40), and citizens (69), the law (53), the power of the king (54, 56); she describes in graphic detail the family disasters, and talks of the weakness of women (55). Death by stoning would be a fate even worse than all the horrors which the sisters have already suffered (52–3). She acknowledges the claims of the dead (58), but bows to superior force.

Moral issues were the subject of much debate in Sophocles' time. Ismene's views seem to relate to the argument that 'Might is Right', a view vigorously expressed in Book 1 of Plato's *Republic* by Thrasymachus, who claims that 'right' is simply a code of behaviour imposed on a state by its ruler (see also note on 197).

### Human and divine law

In the striking oxymoron **the crime of holy reverence** (65) Antigone sets out the debate which underlies the conflict of the play: what human law forbids may be a pious act. By burying Polyneices, Antigone claims to be not only paying the honour due to her brother, but also respecting the laws honoured by the gods (67). See note on page 34.

**76 You will be much more hateful** Antigone still treats her brother as a *philos*, though he was a traitor; but in hating Ismene, she begins to treat her as an enemy (see note on 9, also 85).

- How different is Antigone's attitude to her sister from Creon's treatment of Polyneices?



*Antigone and Ismene, New York Shakespeare Festival production 1982.*

And now the two of us left alone – think how we will die, most miserably of all, if in defiance of the law we transgress the decree and power of the king. We must remember that we were born women, not to fight against men; and that since we are ruled by stronger hands, we must listen in this matter, and in others still more painful. 55

I, at least, will beg those beneath the ground to forgive me, since I am coerced in this; I will obey those who are in power. It is senseless to overstep our bounds. 60

**ANTIGONE** I will not press you. Even should you wish to do it in the future, I would not be pleased to have you work with me. Be as you will; but I will bury him. It is noble for me to die doing this. I will lie there with him, loved by the one I love, guilty of the crime of holy reverence. I will have to please those below longer than those here, for there I will lie forever. You, if you like, go on dishonouring the laws honoured by the gods. 65

**ISMENE** I do not dishonour them; but I am powerless to act against the citizens.

**ANTIGONE** You can hold on to that excuse; but I will go to raise a burial mound for the brother I love. 70

**ISMENE** No, poor woman! I am so afraid for you!

**ANTIGONE** Do not fear for me; look after your own fate.

**ISMENE** At least don't reveal what you do to anyone; keep it secret, and I will do the same. 75

**ANTIGONE** No! Shout it out! You will be much more hateful for your silence, if you don't proclaim it to everyone!

**87 this terrible fate** Antigone is ironic – ‘this disaster you speak of’.

### **Antigone’s exit**

Antigone’s departure alone for the open country would have made a striking exit in the Greek theatre (see note on 15).

### **Antigone and Ismene**

- Examine Antigone’s arguments. What makes her determined to bury her brother?
- What are Ismene’s arguments for refusing to help Antigone? Do they seem reasonable? Is she just being weak, or saying that Antigone is in the wrong?
- With which of the two characters do your sympathies lie?
- What does Antigone’s language tell us of her emotional state?
- What impression do you get of Antigone from this scene? Heroic? Reckless? Fanatical? Noble? Foolhardy? Intemperate?
- How would you describe her treatment of Ismene?
- What are Ismene’s feelings towards Antigone?
- What are the dramatic advantages of beginning the play with a dialogue of this sort?

### **PARODOS (ENTRY OF THE CHORUS) (91–158)**

At the time of the first production of *Antigone* there would have been fifteen chorusmen. They would have entered, singing this ode, from the sides (*parodoi*) and spent the rest of the performance in the open space of the *orchestra* (see Introduction to the Greek Theatre, page 110). Viewed from above by the audience in the tiered seating, their dance and choreographed movement were an important element in the expressiveness of Greek theatre. Lyrical passages (in which the words were sung) are centred in the text.

As the sisters separate – Ismene going into the palace, Antigone leaving to bury her brother – the Chorus of Theban elders enter. Subsequent references to them (799, 904, 962) suggest that they are of noble birth. They have been summoned to hear Creon’s proclamation (157). In highly figurative language, with many echoes of epic poetry, they salute the dawn, and exult in their victory over the Argives. (For the details see the Background to the story, page vii.)

- At this moment of private tension, what is the effect of the arrival of these men in a mood of public celebration?

**95 Dirce** One of the rivers of Thebes.

**98 The white-shielded soldier** The coming of dawn (‘eye of the golden day’ 94) allowed the Thebans to contemplate the rout of the Argive troops, who carried white shields.



**102 Polyneices** There is a play on the meaning of the name: literally ‘man of many quarrels’.

**103 eagle** The image of the bird (white wings) is blended with that of the Argive army, and then into the picture of an eagle attacking and being repelled by a dragon (118) (for the identification of Thebes with a dragon, see Background to the story, page vii).

**114 the god of fire** was Hephaestus.

**116 Ares**, the god of war (who favoured the Trojans in the Trojan War) has also helped the Thebans (132–3).

### **Zeus**

In the battles of Greek myth, the gods took sides and regularly intervened. **Zeus who turns battles** (137) has supported the Thebans. As the supreme deity, reigning on Mount Olympus, and god of justice, he punished arrogant pride (*hubris*) – any attempt by mortals to go beyond their natural and rightful lot. The arrogance of the Argives (119, 122) incurred his displeasure, which Zeus, being originally a sky-god, showed with his thunderbolt (123). Zeus had many other roles: guardian of law and morals, of suppliants, guest-friends, the family and the home, of strangers and beggars, and god of oaths.

**124 He struck down the man** Though not named, this is clearly Capaneus, one of the seven Argive warriors, whose fall was often represented in art. He boasted that not even Zeus could keep him out of Thebes, and was destroyed by a thunderbolt as he reached the top of the wall.

**132 on our right hand** In the Greek Ares is called ‘our trace-horse’. In the four-horse chariot race the trace (right-hand) horse had to pull hardest at the turning post. So the phrase came to describe a particularly vigorous and valued comrade or ally.



*The Chorus, National Theatre production, London, 1984.*

He came against our land, 100  
 Launched by the unresolved quarrel  
 Of Polyneices; he flew over our land  
     Screaming like an eagle,  
     Shadowing our country  
 With wings as white as snow; 105  
     With countless weapons,  
 And helmets crested with horsehair.

    He hovered over our rooftops  
     And opened his jaws  
     To enclose our seven gates 110  
     With his slaughtering spears;  
     But he left  
 Before he could gorge his throat with our blood,  
     Before the pine torch of the god of fire  
     Could take hold of our crown of towers. 115  
 So fierce was the clamour of Ares raised at his back,  
     Too much for him as he fought  
     With the dragon of Thebes.

For Zeus hates the boasts of a proud tongue.  
     He looked down at them 120  
     Coming on in a mighty flood,  
     Arrogant in clashing gold;  
     And brandishing his lightning,  
 He struck down the man who was already rushing  
     To roar his triumph from the highest ramparts. 125

    Hurled down, he fell to earth with a crash,  
     The man who just now carried a torch  
     In the frenzied ecstasy of attack,  
     Panting gusting blasts of hate.  
     But things went otherwise for him; 130  
 And against others, too, great Ares rampaged,  
     Fighting on our right hand  
     To deal them their fate.

**136 They set up their trophies** Victors in battle commonly hung up armour, taken from the defeated, either at the point of battle or on a temple wall with a dedication to a god, here to Zeus. Our word ‘trophy’ is derived from the Greek word for ‘turn’ or ‘rout’ (*tropē*).

**140–2 double-slaying spears** The two brothers had quarrelled since childhood. The reciprocal nature of their death, two men of the same flesh and blood, is emphasised in the elaborate phrasing (see note on 12, and 165–6).

**144 chariot-thronged Thebes** Thebes was famous for its war-chariots, and was credited with their invention.

**151 Bacchus** (or Dionysus) was born in Thebes, where he was worshipped, often in all-night rites, with ecstatic dancing (150). A choral ode (1075–1114) is dedicated to him. It was at his festival in Athens that the play was originally performed (see Introduction to the Greek Theatre, page 110).

**152 here comes the king** There are no stage directions in our manuscripts. Entrances are often signalled in this way, partly to identify the characters, partly because of the interval between their being seen and their arrival on stage. The Chorus (unlike Antigone) call Creon ‘king’ (see 166–7), but stress that he is new to office.

**157 council** This meeting is out of the ordinary (161–2). Creon’s council is like those in Homer’s epics, in which a king would consult his council when he felt like it; the councillors had the chance to express opinions, but had no vote or powers.

- What sort of world does the rich language of the Chorus conjure up?
- What is the effect, at this stage, of Sophocles’ decision to have a chorus of old men, rather than, say, of female companions of Antigone?
- What has Sophocles achieved by introducing Antigone and Ismene before the elders?
- What is the overall mood of the ode? What sort of music could be appropriate to accompany it?

Seven commanders at seven gates,  
     Like matched against like, 135  
 They set up their trophies of bronze  
     To Zeus who turns battles.  
 Except for the two filled with hate,  
     Born of one father, one mother:  
 They raised their double-slaying spears 140  
     Against each other,  
 And both took their share of one death.

    But glorious Victory  
 Has come to chariot-thronged Thebes  
     With joy to match our own. 145  
     After these wars let us find  
     Forgetfulness.  
 Let us visit all the temples of the gods  
     With nightlong dancing and song.  
 Let him who shakes Thebes with his dancing, 150  
     Let Bacchus be our leader!

    But here comes the king of the land:  
     Creon, son of Menoeceus,  
     By the new fortunes of the gods  
     The new king. 155  
     What plan is he considering,  
 To make him summon this council of elders,  
     All sent for by one command?



## FIRST EPISODE (159–305)

**160 the gods** Creon dutifully credits the gods with the salvation of the state. The image of the state as a ship is common in Greek thought (see also 179).

### Kindred blood-shed

Any killer was polluted by the shedding of blood, and most of all the murderer of a kinsman. The **blood-guilt** (*miasma*, 166) could be cleansed only by ritual purification; it was contagious and could affect a whole community (as in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*: Oedipus' unwitting murder of his father caused a plague in Thebes). Creon's treatment of Eteocles (185) suggests that he did not think of him as polluted by his brother's death; perhaps he considered the brothers' killings cancelled one another out.

**166–7 I now possess the throne** Antigone called Creon 'the general', but his constitutional power is clear. As all the male offspring of Laius' line are now dead, Creon (brother to the dead Jocasta) succeeds to the throne as the nearest surviving male relative.

**169 until he is seen** Creon's own character is about to be put to this test.

**173 someone he loves** Creon is clarifying his own values: he can justify his treatment of his kinsman Polyneices by saying he (Creon) puts the state first. But we think of Antigone and the conflict which Creon has provoked.

**175–6 I would never stay silent** In saying that one must be fearless in speaking out in the interests of the state, Creon is talking about a ruler (169) and about himself (175).

- Does he seem to be upholding in general the right to freedom of speech?

**185 every rite ... noble dead** The rites include libations, liquid offerings poured into the ground, to be drunk by the spirits of the dead (see page 4).

**CREON** Gentlemen, after tossing the life of our city on the great  
 waves of the ocean, the gods have safely righted it once more. 160  
 I sent messengers to summon you here, away from all the  
 people, because I know that you always respected the power of  
 Laius' throne, and again, when Oedipus governed the city; and  
 when he died, you still stood by his children with unwavering  
 loyalty. Since they died on the same day by a double fate, 165  
 striking and struck in mutual blood-guilt, I now possess the  
 throne and all its powers, as I am closest kin to the dead.  
 It is impossible to learn everything of a man, his soul, his will  
 and his judgement, until he is seen practising government and  
 law. A man in command of an entire city, who does not adhere 170  
 to the best policies, but keeps his mouth closed through fear, is  
 worthless. I think that now, as I always have done. As for a  
 man who considers someone he loves to be more important  
 than his country, I say that he is nothing. May Zeus who  
 always sees everything be my witness that I would never stay 175  
 silent if I saw ruin threatening the safety of my citizens; nor  
 could I make a friend of a man who is hostile to this city.  
 I know this: that our city is our safety, and it is only when she  
 sails safely that we can make friendships. By such principles  
 I will make this city great. 180  
 So now, in accordance with these principles, I have made a  
 proclamation to the citizens concerning the sons of Oedipus.  
 Eteocles, who died fighting for this city, proving himself its  
 greatest spearsman, will be buried in a tomb and honoured  
 with every rite that comes to the noble dead. 185

**188 to drink blood that he shared** Note the ‘gothic’ language.

- Is it significant that the Chorus have used the same image (113)?

**191 lamentation** Vengeance is total: not even mourning, normally the duty of relatives, is permitted.

### Creon’s principles

Creon first reminds the old men of their loyalty to his predecessors. Then in a careful policy statement he lays out the qualities which he admires in a ruler and the principles on which he intends to govern. He has no respect for the man who puts a dear one (*philos*, see note on 9) before the state. Nothing could make him treat as a *philos* someone who is an enemy of his country. The safety of the state (*polis*) is paramount. Those who endanger the state are not real *philo*.

Antigone claims that the ties of blood are absolute (but see note on 76). Creon was ‘closest kin to the dead’ (167) and he acknowledges that Polyneices was Eteocles’ ‘blood-brother’ (186); but, he says, in matters that affect the safety of the state, the ties of blood may have to be sacrificed. He proposes as a principle that we should choose our *philo* on the basis of their conduct in the community (176–7).

### Kinship versus the state

Antigone has expressed the traditional bonds of family and kinship, still strong in Sophocles’ day. Yet the Greek citizen had other claims on his loyalty – to the state. In an age of frequent wars it was everyone’s concern to defend his *polis*, the citizens’ guarantee of individual freedom, of the rule of law and civilised life. In democratic Athens the *polis* administered justice, which in earlier times had been settled by feuds based on the natural bonds of the blood tie. The tension between the claims of the state and the family is reflected in a popular debate in Sophocles’ time about the relative importance in human affairs of law/custom (*nomos*) and nature (*phusis*). The development of the *polis* created conflicts with traditional values, which the case of Polyneices’ burial illustrates. Creon, in limiting the claims of *philia*, is adjusting to this change.

- What do you think of the views which Creon expresses? With which of his views do you think the original (possibly all-male) Greek audience would sympathise?
- Does Creon’s way of expressing himself tell us anything about him? Do you detect any unattractive qualities?
- Does our knowing Antigone’s intentions affect our attitude to Creon?
- The danger to Thebes has only just passed (13) and Creon is new to office (155). Attempt both a sympathetic and a hostile performance of his speech.

But his blood-brother, Polyneices, who returned from exile to  
the land of his fathers and the gods of his people, prepared to  
burn it to the ground, prepared to drink blood that he shared,  
and to throw the rest into slavery, this man, it has been  
proclaimed to the city, will not be dignified with burial or 190  
lamentation. He must be left unburied, a corpse for the birds  
and dogs to eat, a disgrace in all eyes. Such is my will; never by  
my consent will the worthless stand in higher honour than the  
just. But whoever is loyal to this city will be honoured by me in  
death as in life. 195

**197–8 the power to enact any law** The Chorus' way of describing Creon's autocratic power would probably strike an ominous note for the first (Athenian) audience (see note on 463).

**200 Lay this burden** The Chorus are old, but this excuse may hide a more general reluctance to cooperate (200–6).

**203 those who disobey** Creon evidently is aware of opposition (see 161, 266–9); he does not suspect Antigone (see 231), but we cannot know this yet.

**204 in love with death** The Chorus, who are ignorant of Antigone's intentions, ironically remind us of her words (63, 87–8) and recall Ismene's (81).

**205 money** Tragic tyrants tend to impute gain as a motive for opposition. Creon may be prevented from expanding on this theme (as he does later, 271) by the Sentry's arrival.

### The Chorus

- What do we learn of the Chorus from their words to Creon?
- Are they dissociating themselves from Creon's decree or simply being deferential (especially 197–8)?
- Do you sympathise with them?

### The Sentry

We have been told (201) that the corpse was guarded, but we are not prepared for the arrival of the sentry (207), who must enter from the same direction in which Antigone went. He is not announced and his circumlocution prevents us being sure what his errand is, until 228. Slaves and characters of humble status are quite common in Greek tragedy: though they – like women – played little part in public life, they had a 'voice' in drama, especially comedy.

**210 My spirit was talking to me** The inner dialogue is a feature of epic poetry, in which a hero could debate with his spirit (*thumos* or *psychē*), as if it had a sort of independent existence. In *Odyssey ix* Odysseus thinks of killing Cyclops, 'but a second *thumos* checked me'.  
○ What is the effect of this epic device when used by the guard?

**CHORUS** Such is your pleasure, son of Menoeceus, in dealing with the enemy and the friend of this city. You have the power to enact any law, both for the dead and for those of us surviving.

**CREON** So now you must be guardians of my decree.

**CHORUS** Lay this burden on a younger man.

200

**CREON** Men are already in position to guard the body.

**CHORUS** So what is your command, if not that?

**CREON** That you do not side with those who disobey the decree.

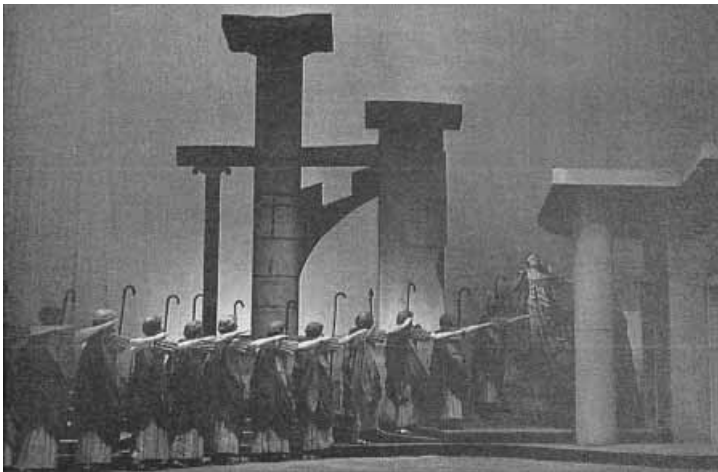
**CHORUS** No-one is such a fool that he is in love with death.

**CREON** And indeed that is the penalty. But money often destroys men through their greed.

205

**SENTRY** Lord, I will not say that I put enough spring in my stride to arrive out of breath with hurrying. You see, I had many pauses for thought, turning in my tracks to go back where I came from. My spirit was talking to me all the time, saying 'Fool, why are you going where you'll be punished for your journey? Wretch, are you wasting time again? If Creon hears this news from someone else, you'll be sure to suffer for it!'

210



*The Chorus salute Creon, production in Poland, 1946.*

**221 I didn't do it!**

- How nervous is the Sentry? (See 213.)

**227 Out with it!** The Sentry's meandering speech tests Creon's patience.

- What has Creon's reaction been up to now? Amused? Suspicious? Irritated?

**229–30 the proper rites** See note on 237.

**231 man** Creon does not imagine it was the work of a woman. The audience naturally assumes that it was Antigone, and can begin to enjoy the dramatic irony of knowing more than a character on stage.

**237 a thin layer of dust** Antigone had not managed to heap up the mound which she intended (71). She had managed no more than a light covering of earth, suggesting the work of someone seeking to avoid the curse/pollution which one was supposed to incur in passing a corpse without sprinkling earth on it (238). It is not clear whether such a sprinkling was 'symbolic' or did constitute burial.

**245 red-hot iron ... fire** Ancient formulae accompanying oaths.