

characters present themselves (without song) as representatives of a more sober and mundane mentality.⁷⁴

One striking and distinctive characteristic of this play is the way in which 'characters emerge from the great lyrical utterances' (Seale 1982: 109), as if to exemplify – or repudiate – the imaginative explorations that we have just heard from the Chorus (esp. 376–83, 626–30, 1155–1256nn.). Distinctive too, is the fact that, whereas in most tragedies the actors all depart between scenes, leaving the Chorus alone to deliver their songs, in this play it appears that Kreon remains on stage for the 3rd and 5th Songs, and possibly for the 4th and Ant.'s *kommos* too.⁷⁵ If he does, his presence would confirm our sense that the Elders are inhibited from expressing (or even thinking) ideas that might run in opposition to the king's (781–800n.) – an inhibition that would persist throughout the powerful lament-scene in which, under Kreon's silent gaze, Ant. is led out through the *orchestra* for execution (801–82n.): for, although the Chorus interact closely with her in the lyric structure, their words are critical and barely sympathetic, and Kreon soon reinserts himself into the dialogue (883–90; cf. 883–943, 937–43nn.). Later, once Kreon has realized his mistake, the Elders are quick to rally around him (1091–1114n.), and in the final scene they provide a calmer accompaniment to his lyric expressions of despair, as if they, rather than he, now preside over the stage, and over the management of the city (1326–53, 1347–53nn.).

The staging requires 'no props . . . no special effects. . . . The tragedy, in all its richness and diversity of theme is embodied in the idea of simple confrontation' (Seale 1982: 109). Here and there, the text indicates how these 'confrontations' should be handled: the Guard enters slowly and haltingly (223–32), but departs with alacrity; Ant. remains staring at the ground (in disdain? cf. 441n.) until she is ready to respond directly to Kreon; Ismene is described as being flushed and in tears when she is brought in at 526 (526–30n., cf. 491–4); Haimon enters looking dismayed and angry (626–30n.), and rushes

⁷⁴ See Ewans 1998, Pickard-Cambridge 1988: 132–44.

⁷⁵ Seale 1982, Bain 1981: 4 n. 1 (and others) have Kreon depart into the palace at 780, 943, and return unannounced after the Songs: but see further 780, 801–82, 988–90nn.

off in an even more frantic state (766–7); Kreon in turn hurries off (by the same route) to rescue Ant., in near-panic (1108–14); Eurydike's silent exit during the Messenger's speech is expressive of her desperate resolve (1244–56). But for the most part we must use our imaginations to envision what should be taking place before us – in full consciousness of the power that staging and acting technique have to dictate meaning to an audience, even where the words of the text may be less than transparent.⁷⁶

5. THE MEANING OF THE PLAY

*Delectare, movere, docere?*⁷⁷ There are obviously many kinds of pleasure and benefit to be derived from Attic tragedy, many ways in which a play such as *Ant.* works on the minds and emotions of audiences and readers. It is unlikely that when S. sat down to write the play he had a clear idea of what it was going to 'mean', and even less likely that upon completion he could have explained its meaning to the satisfaction of a modern critic. The members of his original audience (which presumably included intellectuals such as Perikles, Sokrates, Aspasia, and Herodotos, as well as some thousands of semi-literate peasants and artisans) undoubtedly reacted in very disparate ways to particular scenes and to the play as a whole. Likewise, to modern readers the play will inevitably yield different meanings according to the context within which it is studied and the questions asked of it. None the less, in the belief that some approaches, and some conclusions, can be shown to be more fruitful, more adequate to the text, and more convincing than others, let us take some preliminary

⁷⁶ For example, we have no idea – but would love to know – whether Ant. and Haimon were played in S.'s first production as attractive, warm-blooded, idealistic teenagers, or as bratty, petulant trouble-makers. The text allows for either – or a combination of both (my own preference). Of course, I am also aware that at any point in performance a determined director or actor can override the plain meaning of S.'s text (and the interpretive notes of a commentary) with a gesture, a tone of voice – or a simple cut.

⁷⁷ *Entertainment, emotional stimulation (or persuasion), instruction* – these are the three chief goals for literature acknowledged by Classical critics (Cicero, *Orator* 21.69, Horace, *AP* 333–47, 391–407, etc.), and taken for granted by scholiastic commentators.

critical stabs at this remarkable work.⁷⁸ If in what follows *Antigone* may seem to switch back and forth between being a piece of moral or political philosophy, a religious rite, a sociological treatise, an imaginative poem, a stage drama, a political rally, a psychotherapy session, and more, I make no apology: (this) play can be, and should be, all of these things.

(a) *Aesthetics*

As Aristotle observes in the *Poetics*, much of the excitement and satisfaction provided by a tragic performance comes from the artful structuring of the plot (μῦθος); much, too, from the ornamented language (λέξις) and skilful vocal delivery (ὑπόκρισις), the metrical and musical rhythms and melodies (ἁρμονία, μέλος), and the visual dimensions of gesture, blocking, choreography, costume, and scenery (δῶσις, ὀρχήσις, σκευοποιία, σκηνογραφία, κτλ.). Although Aristotle gives due weight also to the moral aspects of the action and characters, most of his discussion in the *Poetics* focuses on aesthetics and dramatic technique; and his comments about these are for the most part acute and illuminating.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, however, most of the aural and visual elements of the plays as originally performed are now irrecoverable, and we must necessarily be satisfied with the 'pleasures' provided by plot, characterization, language and (to a lesser degree) metre, since these are more adequately recorded in the surviving texts. But we must never forget how much we are missing.

In our sketch of the structure of *Ant.*, we noted how it is built, scene by scene, and song by song, through a series of climaxes that culminates in the revelation of Kreon's error and the announcement

⁷⁸ 'Fruitful' and 'convincing' – to whom? Let us say, to a majority of the 'competent readers' who have weighed the critical alternatives in the light of their own examination of the text. For a helpful definition of 'literary competence,' see J. Culler, *Structuralist poetics* (Ithaca 1975) 113–30; also Fish 1980, for the idea of an 'interpretive community'.

⁷⁹ For a helpful recent account of the multiple tragic pleasures identified by Aristotle, see A. O. Rorty, 'The psychology of Aristotelian tragedy', in Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton 1992) 1–22.

of the multiple deaths.⁸⁰ The overall pattern of events is highly satisfying in its economy and logic: for it is Kreon's own edict that destroys him, by bringing about the deaths of his own son and wife. In Aristotle's terms, this series of events is indeed both 'unexpected' (παρά τὴν δόξαν) and yet inevitable ('caused by one another', δι' ἄλληλα).⁸¹ A man of high standing and basically good intentions, through a serious but not implausible (and perhaps forgivable) mistake (ἁμαρτία),⁸² due partly to a kind of reprehensible but understandable ignorance, harms his own φίλοι and thereby falls from prosperity to misery. The point at which Kreon's fortunes are seen to begin their 'reversal' (περιπέτεια) is the precise moment at which he is brought to a 'recognition' (ἀναγνώρισις) of the true state of affairs (1064–1114, esp. 1095 ἔγνωκα καὶ τὸς).⁸³ The demonstration of cause and effect, of 'the kind of thing that happens' in human affairs, the eliciting of 'pity and fear' at events befalling people 'like ourselves' who do not fully 'deserve' it, all of these are intriguing and emotionally captivating, whether or not they are ethically beneficial too.⁸⁴ The feelings of sympathy that flood through us as Ant. contemplates her entombment, and again as Eurydike and Kreon face the loss of their son; the thrill of excitement (tinged with horror and pity, or vindictive satisfaction?) provided by Teiresias' pronouncement of Kreon's sentence, and again by the narrative of

⁸⁰ Above, pp. 15–17.

⁸¹ *Poetics* 9 1452a3–4, an account that contains the germ of the modern notions of dramatic irony, paradox, and tragic inevitability; see above, pp. 20–1.

⁸² Aristotle stipulates that the fall should not come about simply through 'wickedness' (μοχθηρία); for ἁμαρτία in *Ant.*, cf. 743–4, 914, 926, 1023–32n., 1242–3n.

⁸³ It might be argued that Kreon comes to recognize, in effect, 'who' Pol. is, i.e. that he is not after all just an 'enemy' (522 ἐχθρός) but a φίλος: this would bring *Ant.* closer to the mainstream of Aristotle's favourite tragedies (*Poet.* 14 1453b10ff.). But the action of *Ant.* suggests that it is not merely failure to bury a nephew/brother, and premature burial of a niece, that is Kreon's 'mistake', but non-burial and improper burial of anyone at all.

⁸⁴ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο, *Poet.* 9 1451a 37; ὁμοίως, ἀνάξιος 13 1453a5–7, etc.; cf. *Rhet.* 2 8.1386a24. For discussion of tragedy's possible cognitive and ethical benefits, as envisaged by Aristotle, see S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London 1986) 169–201; but cf. next n.

Haimon's death, as we recognize that everything is coming together as it must – these are the 'proper pleasures' of a well-made tragedy.

(b) *Lessons*

It was widely believed in ancient Greece, and is still widely believed today, that a good tragedy (or epic) teaches a lesson of some kind, through the representation of good and bad 'examples' (παράδειγμα, *exempla*) of human action and character, and through the exploration and revelation of ultimate truths about the world we live in. Although some modern critics have vigorously opposed this idea,⁸⁵ Greek drama is full of morally evaluative language, and seems constantly to invite its audience to think about the personal choices and confrontations of its main characters. In the modern era, hundreds of books and articles have discussed the degree to which Kreon, or Ant., or both, should be held responsible for the deaths of Ant., Haimon, and Eurydike, and what we should learn from their catastrophe. No consensus has emerged.⁸⁶

Many have found Kreon to be wholly at fault, his authority illegitimate, his edict impious and foolish, his behaviour and language intemperate and vindictive.⁸⁷ But to others he appears a well-intentioned ruler, sincerely committed to laudable political principles (162–210, 188–90, 639–80nn.) and civic piety (162–3, 199–201,

⁸⁵ For example, many of the 'New Critics'; or, from another angle, those who have focused chiefly on 'dramatic technique' (esp. Wilamowitz 1917, Waldo 1951), or on the purely emotional/aesthetic effects (e.g., W. Schade-waldt, *Hermes* 83 (1955) 129–71, Heath 1987: 1–89).

⁸⁶ For surveys of different opinions, see M. Flickinger, *Iowa Stud. Class. Philol.* 2 (1935), Hester 1971: 11–19, 48–54, Steiner 1984, Oudemans & Lardinois 1987: 107–17.

⁸⁷ Among those who see Kreon as wholly villainous and/or incorrigibly shortsighted, are Jebb, Reinhardt, Whitman, Müller, Benardete, and Vickers. On this view, Kreon does not even deserve the respect accorded to such towering but misguided Sophoklean heroes as Aias or Herakles: for, unlike them, once he is faced with proof of his error (1064–79), and direct threats to his own prosperity (1091–1114n.), he quickly backs down and crumbles. He thus becomes an object of contempt rather than sympathy ('puny', Whitman 1951: 91), and the play comes to be read as a simple morality-tale demonstrating the evils of petty tyranny and disregard for the gods.

280–314, 773–6, 777–80nn.), and reasonable enough to change his mind and rescind punishment – twice – when the error of his policies is pointed out by trustworthy advisers (766–80, 1091–1114nn.): he is guilty only of misjudging the gods' attitude to non-burial, and of intemperate reactions to what he sees as disloyal opponents.⁸⁸ Conversely, Ant. is seen by many as an inspirational defender of 'higher' truths – individual liberty, family loyalty, and religious duty – whose other-worldly independence and determination, in the face of a bullying male-chauvinist civic authority, are finally vindicated by Teiresias and by the gods' destruction of Kreon; while to others, it is Ant. (and to a lesser degree, Haimon) who herself brings about the catastrophe through her inflammatory words and disruptive behaviour, which alienates the sympathy both of the other characters and of the audience.⁸⁹ On this view, Ant.'s fate, like Haimon's, is largely self-inflicted; and Kreon suffers far beyond what his own mistakes deserve. I believe that neither of these extreme positions is tenable: the text shows beyond reasonable doubt that both Kreon and Ant. are at least partly (if not equally) responsible for the tragedy. But the fact that such a broad range of responses has been elicited by this text is itself significant; for the questions raised by the play are not simple, and we should not expect the answers to be so either.

One of the reasons for the lack of critical consensus lies in the issue of non-burial. Ancient Greek attitudes concerning the treatment of the corpses of public enemies were by no means clear-cut or consistent, and, although it becomes clear long before the end of the play that Kreon has acted wrongly in his treatment of Pol. and Ant., the audience would not be in a position to be sure of this when first his edict is announced. That is to say, Kreon might – or might not – be excused for thinking that his policy was justifiable and proper. Denial of normal burial, as a way of inflicting further revenge on a particularly hated enemy and his family, was an extreme and

⁸⁸ It is significant in this regard that Demosthenes (19.247) could quote Kreon's words at 175–90 as a model of civic leadership, with no trace of irony intended (162–210n.).

⁸⁹ W. M. Calder, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 389–407, S-Inwood 1990; cf. 31, 450–70, 469–70, 526–81, 875nn.

shocking measure, but not unheard-of or self-evidently inadmissible (26–36n.).⁹⁰ In particular, the recognized penalty for traitors and temple-robbers in fifth-century Athens was refusal of burial within the boundaries of the polis (*exorismos*);⁹¹ and criminals were sometimes executed by being thrown down a cliff into 'the pit' (*barathron*), where their corpses would presumably be left to rot.⁹² Bodies of the long-dead could also be dug up and 'expelled,' as a kind of posthumous exile. And of course in literature, threats to strip the corpses of slain warriors and leave them for the beasts and birds are common (though rarely carried out, as more generous sentiments usually prevail).⁹³

No issue could be better designed than this to engage an Athenian

⁹⁰ See W. Vischer, *RhM* 20 (1865) 445ff., Rosivach 1983, Parker 1983: 44–8. We may recall Nestor's words at Hom. *Od.* 3.255–61, 'You know what would have happened if red-haired Menelaos, returning from Troy, had caught Aigisthos alive in his house: they wouldn't have heaped any burial mound for him, but the dogs and birds would have devoured him as he lay on the plain apart from the city, and none of the Achaian women would have lamented', cf. S. *El.* 1487–90. In general, vengeance was highly prized by the Greeks, and exultation at the punishment and humiliation of an enemy was normal, though the ghastlier punishments (decapitation, impaling, and other kinds of mutilation and torture) were generally regarded in the fifth century as 'barbaric' and unGreek (cf. 308–9n., and e.g. A. *Eum.* 185–90 with Sommerstein's nn., E. Hall, *Inventing the barbarian* (Oxford 1989) 158–9).

⁹¹ Thuc. 1.138.6, Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.22; also A. *Th.* 1014, E. *Pho.* 776, 1629–30. Relatives might in some cases take the body and bury it outside the borders; but the standard term for such criminals, ἀταφος (Plato, *Laws* 873c1, 960b2, etc.), implies that this was not normally expected.

⁹² Parker 1983: 47; occasionally the sea could be used to the same end. Closely analogous in some respects to the situation of *Ant.* is Lykourgos, *Against Leokr.* 121, where we are told the Athenians passed a 'decree' (ψήφισμα) 'that if any [of those who had deserted to the Spartans in Dekeleia, during the Peloponnesian War] should be caught returning, anybody could arrest them and take them (ἀπαγαγεῖν, cf. 382n., 395, 438) to the authorities, who should hand them over to the executioner at the Pit (τῷ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀρύγματος)', i.e. the traitors were to be summarily executed without trial (cf. 35–6, 435nn.) and without likelihood of burial. For the constitutional status of the 'edict' (κήρυγμα) issued by the στρατηγός Kreon, see 7–8n.

⁹³ C. P. Segal, *The theme of the mutilation of the corpse* (*Mnem. Suppl.* 17, 1971), Rosivach 1983. On the echoes in *Ant.* of Achilles' treatment of Hektor's corpse in the *Iliad* (gods' disapproval, unspoiled corpse, Priam's lone attempt, etc.), see Linforth 1961: 189–95.

audience in absorbing moral questions about revenge and the humiliation of enemies, the authority of the state to interfere with family obligations and rites, and the relations between human and divine 'law' – questions of central and immediate significance to the democracy that show up repeatedly in the literature of the fifth century.⁹⁴ So, while S.'s prime purpose in composing *Ant.* may not have been specifically to determine the precise rights and wrongs of denying burial rites (esp. since the play ends up leaving many of the key issues up in the air),⁹⁵ this highly problematic issue provided an ideal springboard, or framework, on which to construct a powerful tragic plot. Some critics have argued that it is Kreon's stipulation, not only that no burial or lamentation of any kind shall be permitted within Theban territory, but that the corpse must be 'left alone' (ἐὼν, 29, 205) for the dogs and birds – i.e. that it may not even be removed for burial *outside* the borders – that sets the measure one fatal degree beyond the bounds of political legitimacy and religious propriety (26–36n.). Perhaps so; one can certainly surmise that if Kreon had just assigned minimal burial rites for Pol., inside or outside the borders, catastrophe would have been avoided. But this fine distinction is never in fact made in the play – and in the end Pol. is given an honorific local funeral like Eteokles' (1101, 1199–1204). In sum, it does not seem to have been S.'s purpose to provide a systematic

⁹⁴ A. *Eleusiniotai* and *Hektoros Lutra*, S. *Ajax*, E. *Suppl.* all involve the defeat of an attempt to refuse burial to an enemy. The apparent intensification of interest in this issue at this period may reflect a development of moral and political scruples from the Archaic period into the fifth century (Rosivach 1983, Ostwald 1986, esp. 137–61). But it may also be the product of (a) generic and (b) class variables: (a) in 'real life', hated enemies' corpses were in fact mistreated on occasion: but in 'high literature', attempts at such mistreatment are usually presented as reprehensible; (b) the 'low' and 'ugly' (αἰσχροί), esp. slaves and common criminals, could be tortured, impaled, exposed, thrown into pits, etc., without arousing much outcry; but a noble body was inviolate (cf. 517). (Thus it appears that domestic revenge in the *Odyssey* admits abuses that are frowned upon in the *Iliad*.) In our play, Pol. may be a traitor; but he is a member of the royal family, and has a royal sister, so the gods are offended: cf. Teiresias' words at 1018.

⁹⁵ In particular, it is never made finally clear whether the principle that Kreon violates is non-burial *per se*, or non-burial of a member of his own family (Pol. being his nephew); nor whether Pol.'s (presumed) status as a traitor makes a significant difference: cf. 508–25 with nn., and see n. 120 below.

analysis of, and solution to, these issues: instead, he has composed a tragedy.⁹⁶

As Kreon's edict is announced, the original audience would probably react at first with mixed expectations (26–36n.); for Kreon defends it with language heavily charged with religious and political assurances (166–210, 199–201, 283–9, 304–6, 518–25nn.):⁹⁷ Pol. has proved himself an enemy to his own *polis* and its gods, so only fellow-traitors could wish to honour him with burial. Yet in rejecting his measure Ant. employs equally compelling language of her own (48, 72–98, 450–60, 502–4, 511–23, 921–8nn.), language that is ultimately vindicated by the prophet (998–1114, 1068–76nn.).⁹⁸ Does this subsequent vindication require us to revise our initial (equivocal) response to Kreon's decree, and decide unequivocally in favour of Ant.? Was she right all along, and Kreon simply wrong? Perhaps so – and yet, even as the action reaches its denouement, and the gods reveal their absolute disapproval of Kreon's policy, it remains unclear to what degree Ant. personally has been justified (1068–71, 1172–5, 1226–36nn.): nothing is said by Teiresias or anyone else to indicate that the gods approved of her actions; and it is debatable whether in fact she helped to correct the situation in any way.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ We may compare Shakespeare's exploitation in *Hamlet* of the moral ambivalence surrounding revenge, and the uncertainties (Catholic vs Protestant) about the existence and status of ghosts; cf. E. Prosser, *Hamlet and revenge* (Stanford 1967), esp. 97–142.

⁹⁷ Furthermore, the edict is described by several characters as being, not just Kreon's, but 'of the citizens' (79, 907 πολιτῶν, cf. 35–6, 59–60nn.) and 'the law' (59–60, 452). Kreon's constitutional position is in fact left rather vague throughout (7–8n.), as commonly happens in Attic tragedy, straddling as it does the socio-political worlds of the Bronze Age ('heroic') past and fifth-century (democratic) Athens; cf. Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1981: 237–47, Rohdich 1980, P. E. Easterling, 'Constructing the heroic', in C. Pelling, ed., *Greek tragedy and the historian* (Oxford 1997) 21–37, Seaford 1994. As it turns out, the constitutionality of the edict is not made an issue in the play, though the character of Kreon's style of leadership most certainly is.

⁹⁸ But it is significant that her rhetoric, as well as being personally antagonistic (69–70, 450, 469–70nn.), is heavily negative: she is more concerned to reject than to affirm (450–70n., 538–9, 905–7). Thus it is not easy to pinpoint the positive principles that she is defending, beyond absolute devotion to parents and brother, and respect for the dead and the gods below (cf. n. 120 below).

⁹⁹ Brown 1987: 7–10, S-Inwood 1990.

That Kreon's edict was wrong is made blindingly clear by mid-play. But it is clear too that the catastrophe is brought about, not just by his mistake, but by a particular combination of circumstances and decisions (by Ant. and Haimon, as well as Kreon himself) which raise further moral questions of considerable complexity. In Kreon's case, not only does he offend against the sacred laws of family and the underworld gods, but his increasingly 'tyrannical' conduct (esp. his identification of the 'city' with himself; his obsession with his own authority; his harsh and high-handed threats; his unreasonable suspicion of others) contributes directly to his downfall – though opinions may differ as to whether these traits are to be detected right from the start (162–210, 211–14nn.) or become apparent only in the scene with the Guard (280–314n.), or later still (473ff.?; or 631–780, or even 1033–63).¹⁰⁰ As for Ant., whether or not her extraordinary (even faintly incestuous?, cf. 73, 523, 898–9) devotion to her brother and parents is to be interpreted as evidence of an inherited taint which may itself be a 'cause' of the continuing disasters (471–2, 594–603, 900–3nn.), she clearly contributes, through her unreasonable, impatient, and intransigent behaviour, to the catastrophe that finally wipes out her family, as is repeatedly pointed out by both the Chorus and Ismene.¹⁰¹

Thus the moral issues, of right and wrong, responsibility and blame, remain open to analysis and debate, both during the progress of the play and after it is over. The sense of closure is strong, for the

¹⁰⁰ The 'tyrannical' qualities of Kreon are discussed by Bowra 1944: 72–8, Podlecki 1966 (with ref. to Hdt. 3.80–2), H. Funke, *Ant. und Abend.* 12 (1966) 29–50, C. Cerri, *QUCC* 39 (1982) 137–55, Blundell 1989: 123–6.

¹⁰¹ These seem to be two of the more 'reliable' witnesses from among the play's internal audiences (though pro-Ant. critics do not always agree on this); cf. 49–68, 98–9, 526–81; 100–61, 211–12, 278–9, 471–2, 770, 1091–1114, 1326–53nn. The (male) Elders are of course much more critical of Ant. than her sister is: and it is likely that many members of the Athenian audience would have shared their view; some might even have agreed with Kreon in regarding her, not merely as difficult and disruptive, but as a thoroughly 'bad woman', in her disobedience and rejection of marriage, and perhaps even in her usurpation of the male responsibility for burying Pol. (43, 903nn.): see S-Inwood 1989a, but also Foley 1996. A late twentieth-century audience is less likely to share Kreon's, Ismene's and the Chorus' disapproval of her 'unfeminine' resistance to male authority (61–3, 484–5, 525, 679–80).

play's action is indeed 'complete and whole' (Aristot. *Poet.* 7 1450b25, cf. 6 1449b25, 8 1450a31-5): but no less strong is our awareness that the conflicts fuelling this tragic catastrophe are incapable of easy resolution, and that the personal miscalculations and mischances that triggered it are of a kind all too likely to recur.

(c) *Characters*

If the play teaches a 'lesson', then, it is not that of a simple morality-play: neither Kreon nor Ant. is a villain, neither a saint. Should we see it instead as a tragedy of 'character'? Attic drama cannot be expected to offer the same depth and nuances of characterization as one finds in Ibsen or O'Neill, or even Shakespeare; and ancient Greek representations and interpretations of human behaviour and motivation will not always translate comfortably into twentieth-century terms. Yet the human figures presented on stage by S. none the less achieve a degree of coherence, distinctiveness, and immediacy that encourages us to begin to regard them, and respond to them, as if they were actual persons, whose dilemmas and sufferings command our sympathy and identification.¹⁰²

The action of *Ant.* results from the clash between two dogmatic and inflexible individuals. If either Kreon or Ant. were less rigid, more capable of compromise, catastrophe could be averted. But compromise is foreign to their natures, and much of the power and attraction of the play comes from the sheer force and inevitability of their collision.¹⁰³ But as the climax builds, we come to realize how radically different the two characters are: Ant. alone maintains to

¹⁰² For discussion of the different possible definitions and functions of 'character' in drama, see J. Gould, *PCPS* 24 (1978) 43-67, Easterling 1977, Blundell 1989: 16-25, and Goldhill and Easterling in Pelling 1990. On the processes whereby we come to piece together whole 'characters' from the visual and verbal clues supplied by a playwright, see Beckerman 1970: 130-67, 210-21, Elam 1980: 110-17, 131-4.

¹⁰³ Kreon and Ant. are 'daimonically linked' (Reinhardt 1979: 65); cf. Benardete 1975: 1 158, 'One wonders whether Ant. does not need Creon in order to be what she is.' There are hints of a long-standing antagonism between the two characters, cf. 7-8, 31-2, 192-206, 469-70, 561-2nn.

the bitter end those 'heroic' qualities of stubbornness, outspokenness, and courage for which S.'s hero(ine)s are renowned,¹⁰⁴ while Kreon's resolve crumbles, and he tries, belatedly and futilely, to make amends for his mistakes and avert catastrophe. This contrast of personalities and principles (primarily between Ant. and Kreon, but also between her and the mild and cautious Ismene, the practical-minded Guard, and the short-sighted Elders) fuels the play's series of confrontations, and to some critics the transcendent sense of commitment and other-worldliness of the heroine represents S.'s loftiest vision for humanity, an inspiring alternative to the mundane limitations of civic life.¹⁰⁵

Yet it is Kreon, not Ant., who has the largest role and most lines to speak, and it is his downfall that commands our attention in the final scenes.¹⁰⁶ He is presented as a well-meaning, unexceptional man, fatally corrupted and ruined by the exigencies of power. Repeatedly, after enunciating a more or less laudable set of general principles, he fails to live up to them in the face of public challenges to his masculine and parental authority: but it is not entirely clear in the end whether it is the principles themselves, or Kreon's self-contradictory conduct, that has been exposed as morally deficient. His language and attitudes display a curiously banal combination of brutality and pettiness (of a kind familiar to us from twentieth-century totalitarian leaders); and although he precipitates divine wrath on a large scale, he does not strike us as a tragic 'overreacher', but almost an 'everyman'. For readers who prefer their tragic heroes grand and larger-than-life, this ordinariness, so far from bringing him closer and making him 'one of us', seems only to make him

¹⁰⁴ See esp. Knox 1964: 1-59; also Bradley 1905, on Shakespearean heroes.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., Jebb, Whitman 1951, Reinhardt 1979, Lesky 1972: 140-2, Benardete 1975; cf. too J. A. Moore, *Sophocles and Arete* (Harvard 1938). This tendency to idealize the passionate and uncompromising vision of one isolated, doomed character (Achilles, Dido, Hamlet, Captain Ahab, James Dean...) is characteristic of the post-Romantic humanistic tradition at large: for the ideological implications of this tendency, see Rohdich 1980: 22, Dollimore 1989: 53-6, 153-81.

¹⁰⁶ It takes special pleading to make the case (e.g., Reinhardt 1979: 93, Knox 1964: 115-16) that the presence of Ant. is felt throughout the closing scenes despite the text's complete silence about her.

more repulsive. But the drama is more compelling, and the ending more pitiful, if we recognize his good intentions, his sincere commitment to what he takes to be best for his city and family, and his eventual willingness to learn – even if it comes too late.

For many years, the ‘problem’, whether Ant. or Kreon should count as ‘the tragic hero’, and whether or not the unity of the play is compromised by the prominence of two main characters rather than one, was the subject of constant debate.¹⁰⁷ But more recently, as the focus has shifted onto the action and the social dimensions of the play, rather than the characters, this pseudo-problem has evaporated: for it is obvious that the key events of the drama depend precisely on the interaction and interdependence of both figures (as, e.g., in E. *Hipp.*, A. *Ag.*, or S. *Tr.* and *Phil.*). Without one, there could be no tragedy for the other.¹⁰⁸

The contrast between these two characters, rooted as it is in differences of gender, age, and political standing,¹⁰⁹ is fully represented in their respective diction and speech-patterns. Kreon habitually starts out and ends his speeches with generalizations, and relies heavily on analogies and abstractions, often in the form of simile, metaphor, or γνῶμη. His use of harsh metaphors drawn from coinage and metal-working, from military organization and warfare, from the commanding and steering of a ship, and from the breaking and yoking of animals, lends an especially rigid and domineering tone to his utterances; and his constant reliance on γνῶμαι seems to reflect a desire to define and maintain his world in the most stable and unvarying (‘universal’) terms possible.¹¹⁰ Ant.’s language is more

¹⁰⁷ For discussion of the ‘diptych’ structure of *Ant.* (and of *Aj.* and *Tr.* too), see Waldoock 1951, Webster 1969: 102–25.

¹⁰⁸ This shift of focus owes much to Jones 1962. But for sympathetic discussion of Sophoklean characterization, see, e.g., H. Diller, *WS* 69 (1956) 70–85, *Ant. und Abendl.* 6 (1957) 157–69, G. H. Gellie, *Sophocles: a reading* (Melbourne 1972), Kitzinger 1976.

¹⁰⁹ Perhaps parentage too: Ant. is accused of being just like her father (471–2, cf. 875; see Johnson 1997).

¹¹⁰ Goheen 1951, Foley 1996: 59–60. Kitzinger 1976: 143–57 points out that Kreon is ‘a man who grasps at conventional language and opinion to maintain an unacceptable and idiosyncratic position ...’; ‘generalizations often

concrete and particular, and she tends to assert more baldly what she feels – indeed ‘knows’ – to be the self-evident, experiential truth (69–77n.; cf. 472, 480, 686n.), with heavy use of negative particles and sarcastic barbs to express her rejection of the views of others (4–6n., 69–70, 450–70n., 538–9, 925–8; 31, 469–70nn.).¹¹¹ The two of them are contrasted in turn with the other, less intransigent, more ‘normal’ members of the community: Ismene’s balanced and reasonable presentation of alternatives throws Ant.’s tunnel vision into sharp relief (49–68n.); the Guard’s self-protective verbal smoke-screens amount almost to a parody of Kreon’s own autocratic mannerisms, as his down-to-earth concerns and opinions are couched in incongruously high-flown, even pseudo-philosophical language, in a comic commentary on the serious business of tragedy (223–36 with nn., 316–21, 327–31, 388–400, 437–40nn.); Haimon’s youthful temper is shown straining to maintain proper filial respect despite his growing rage and frustration (626–780, 683–723nn.); and even the Elders are tellingly characterized as simultaneously timid and critical, obtuse and insightful, doubtful but loyal, limited as they are by their conventional assumptions and their deference to Kreon’s authority.

Distinctively drawn though each of these figures is, we should acknowledge none the less that their internal psychological states and personalities, i.e. their true ‘characters’ as such behind their dramatic masks, remain largely unformulated by the text, and thus beyond our consideration.¹¹² Rather, we may say that Ant. and Kreon embody and articulate the most typical and generalized characteristics of their precisely defined social roles – Ant. as the devoted sister and

divert irrational reactions on Kreon’s part into rational language’. For the different terms used by Ant. and Kreon for ‘knowledge’ and ‘learning,’ see below, p. 42. For Kreon’s imagery, see esp. 162–3, 477–8, 674–5nn.

¹¹¹ See further Kitzinger 1976: 75–85, 175–80.

¹¹² The text does raise some interesting possibilities, however, about which we are at liberty to speculate: are Ant.’s (or Ismene’s) personality and motivations shaped by (consciousness of) incestuous origin (cf. Loraux 1986, Johnson 1997)? Or by resentment of her uncle’s new authority? What do the Chorus really feel about Ant. and Haimon, and about their king? What are Ant.’s feelings for Haimon? What goes through Kreon’s head when he encounters Haimon at the tomb (1226–30)? etc. Out of such questions, like Anouilh, we may construct our own new dramas.

unmarried daughter,¹¹³ Kreon as the stern soldier-ruler and father,¹¹⁴ each of them fiercely determined to resist any threat to the integrity of these roles. This is not to say that they are not convincing, even memorable, dramatic 'characters'; rather, that we are not encouraged by the text to ponder the inner workings of their minds. The meaning of the play lies for the most part elsewhere.

(d) *Ethics*

Amidst the political innovations and intellectual debates of the fifth century, increasingly insistent and systematic attention came to be paid to questions of law, custom, and behaviour, and to the proper definition and application of traditional terms of moral evaluation. What does it mean to be δίκαιος, χρηστός, σώφρων, σοφός, or ἀγαθός in a democratic polis? What is the relationship between moral goodness and political success, between human achievement and divine approval? Along with the Sophists and Sokrates, the tragedians clearly belong among the precursors of Plato and Aristotle in the realm of moral philosophy, as their reworkings of the old myths explore the shifting conceptions and applications of familiar ethical terms.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ She is παῖς at 378, 423, 472, 561, 654, 693, 949; νεᾶνις at 783-4; κόρη at 395, 769, 889, 1100, 1204; νύμφη at 568, 628, 633, 796-7 (cf. 654, 761); παρθένος at 1237: cf. Loraux 1986: 172, Segal 1981: 179-83. Kreon, however, likes to refer to her as γυνή (649, 651, 678, 680, 740, 746, 756), an easier term to use pejoratively. For her sisterly attributes, see 1, 523, 904-15nn., and below, pp. 52-4.

¹¹⁴ He is στρατηγός on first mention (8); then usually (except to Ant. herself) ἀναξ, βασιλεύς, or τύραννος (7-8n.). In the scenes involving Haimon, πατήρ occurs with insistent regularity (635, 640, 644, 683, 701, 703, 704, 742, 755, 1176, 1177, 1225, 1234).

¹¹⁵ Some well-known examples: δίκη in A.'s *Oresteia*, σωφροσύνη in E. Hipp., σοφία in E. Ba. In none of these cases does a straightforward definition emerge (any more than in an aporetic Sokratic dialogue), but we are led to recognize the complexity, or indeterminacy, of the concepts in question, as well as the ways in which highly-charged evaluative language can be more or less legitimately deployed. For explicitly ethical-philosophical treatments of Greek tragedy, see esp. A. H. Adkins, *Merit and responsibility* (Oxford 1960), Long 1968, Nussbaum 1986, Blundell 1989, B. Williams, *Shame and necessity* (Berkeley 1993). On *Ant.* in particular, see also Dalfen 1977, Hester 1971 (and WS 14 (1980) 5-8), Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, Foley 1996.

In *Ant.*, we can identify three clusters of terms that receive particularly intensive scrutiny: those denoting (i) 'piety', 'reverence', 'due observance', (ii) 'family' and 'friends', and (iii) 'understanding', 'good sense', 'planning', 'intelligence'.¹¹⁶

(i) Terms for 'piety', 'reverence' (εὐσέβεια, σέβειν, κτλ.) recur throughout the play in a wide variety of usages and contexts. The semantic field of σέβ- covers primarily the honouring of the gods, but extends also to respect for parents and the dead, and to various other more or less clearly defined obligations.¹¹⁷ Given this broad range of application, one set of σέβ- obligations could easily come into collision with others (514-21); and the degree and mode of 'devotion' that is expected may be disputed (626-780, 639-80, 683-7nn.); one person's 'reverence' may even be another's 'impiety' (74, 923-4n.). Kreon demands 'reverence' for the gods and cults of the city, for legitimate political authority (165-9, 199-201, 280-314, 508-25, 730, 744-5, 780nn.), and for his status as father (632-4, 639-80nn.); and he takes care to design a form of execution for his niece that will (he claims) allow him and his city to remain 'pure' (773-6n., 889 ἀγνοί). For her part, Ant. insists on the absolute requirement to honour, not only parents, but all one's closest kin, in death as in life (74, 502-5, 511, 943, etc.), and she claims that her actions, though labelled 'criminal' and 'impious' by others (74, 300-1, 514, 924; cf. 853-6), are in fact gloriously holy and pious (72 καλόν, 74 ὁσια, 97 καλῶς, 99 ὀρθῶς, 502 εὐκλεέστερον, 511 σέβειν, 521 εὐαγῆ, 943; cf. 695 εὐκλεεστάτων).¹¹⁸ Ismene recognizes the propriety of both kinds of claim (98-9), as do the Chorus, at least

¹¹⁶ Other terms that come under discussion include: κέρδος (221-2, 461-4, 1031-2, 1035-9nn.); ὀρθός (162-3n.); τέχνη and μηχανή (365-7n., 332-75); νόμος and νόμισμα (59-60, 295-6, 451-2, 453-5nn.).

¹¹⁷ Dover 1974: 246-54, 273-8.

¹¹⁸ Although the two characters use the same words when they speak and develop their pros and cons, the content of their speeches does not result in an antithetical relationship. Rather, the opposition is between two *realms*: word for word, and meaning for meaning, they *separate* from each other. ... What [Kreon] calls "dishonour" is holy to his opponent; what he calls "pious" is not so to her, and the same with "friend" and "foe" and "good" and "bad" (514ff), Reinhardt 1979: 77-8; cf. Goheen 1951, Dalfen 1977.

intermittently (213, 278-9, 365-75, 872-5, 872). After Teiresias' warnings, Kreon at last recognizes the obvious: 'It's best to end one's life preserving the established customs' (νόμους, 1113-14), and the play ends with the Chorus' trite endorsement of conventional attitudes, 'One mustn't be irreverent (ἀσεπτεῖν) towards the gods!' (1349-50 with n.). While this ending confirms that Kreon is indeed being punished for his impiety, as Ant. had demanded (cf. 921-8, 925-8nn.), it falls short of rewarding her for the 'piety' to which she laid claim in her final words on stage (940-3 *λεύσσετε ... οἷα πάσχω τὴν εὐσεβίαν σεβίσασσα*). Her piety did not save her from death, nor her family from extinction (599-603);¹¹⁹ and several difficult questions that have been raised about the proper 'reverence' due to the dead have still not been fully answered.¹²⁰ The paradoxes persist.

(ii) 'Benefit your friends (φίλοι) and harm your enemies!' Few Greeks before Plato would question this basic principle, which lies at the heart of Archaic and Classical morality and social relations.¹²¹ But how do we know who our true φίλοι are, and how can we ensure that they will remain so? Furthermore, given the wide semantic field occupied by φίλος - covering 'family member', 'loved one', 'friend', 'ally', even 'one's own' (limbs, etc.), and extending even further with the usage of φιλέω, φιλότης, φιλία, κτλ.¹²² - contradictions con-

¹¹⁹ A few modern scholars have focused on the status of Pol.'s (or Ant.'s) soul in Hades, and the prospects of psychic consciousness and reward down there. But this concern finds small support in the text, and seems anachronistic.

¹²⁰ For example: *does* one 'dishonour' a patriot in showing respect to a traitorous enemy (514-6)? *Do* 'good and bad' men deserve equal honour in death (520)? *Do* the dead continue to hate their enemies even in the underworld (515, 521-2; cf. 508-25n.)?

¹²¹ Archilochos fr. 23.14-15 West, Theognis 337-40, Solon fr. 1.5-6 West, etc., Blundell 1989: 26-59. The Guard provides a practical, 'low' perspective on all this (437-40): it is painful to harm one's φίλοι, but ultimately the most precious φίλος is - oneself.

¹²² Benveniste 1966: 335-53, F. Dirlmeier, *Φίλος und Φιλία im vorhellenistischen Griechentum* (Munich 1931), Blundell 1989: 39-49. For ἐχθρός/ἐχθαίρω, κτλ., the range is more limited, since these always denote positive hostility and dislike; cf. 9-10n.

stantly arise, as members of the same family or political group (= φίλοι, by definition) become 'hateful/hostile' to one another as a result of their behaviour.¹²³ Such contradictions are explored in detail in this play (cf. 182-90, 511-25, with nn.). For Ant., a φίλος is naturally and unalterably 'one's own' (9-10, 511-25, 522-3, 904-15nn.), and therefore always deserving of 'love' (73, 523, 898-9nn.) and 'honour'.¹²⁴ By contrast, Kreon proposes an unorthodox definition of φιλία that is none the less in some respects quite familiar from Athenian political debate (162-210, 508-25): natural 'ties' (family and other prior personal connections) should count for nothing, and we should 'select' (188 *θείμην*, 190 *ποιούμεθα*, 191 *νόμοισι*) our φίλοι and ἐχθροί/πολέμοι purely on the basis of their conduct towards our community. This disagreement cuts to the heart of Athenian political life (see below, pp. 48-50); but, so far from directly confronting the philosophical problem - what criteria to invoke when φιλία places conflicting demands upon a person - neither Ant. nor Kreon acknowledges the legitimacy of the other's claims at all: for Kreon, the traitorous Pol. has simply ceased to *be* φίλος to his uncle or sisters (208-10, 516-22nn.), whereas Ant. never responds to the charge that Pol. was a traitor to his city, and argues instead that Eteokles' enmity has been superseded by death (508-25, 521nn.). Characteristically, Ismene again shows some sympathy for each side (e.g. 79, 98-9) - and although she is consequently condemned by both, her mixed feelings may be shared by many members of the audience.

(iii) Throughout the play, emphasis is constantly being placed on the need for intelligence and good sense (*φρονεῖν*, *γνώμη*, *εὐβουλία*, *νοῦς*, *μανθάνειν*), and characters repeatedly accuse one another of

¹²³ Blundell 1989: 50-9; on φιλία in *Ant.*, Knox 1964: 80-8, Goldhill 1986: 79-83, 88-106.

¹²⁴ Cf. the many αὐτ- words she uses in this connection (1, 863-5nn.; also 511, 513, 900, 915nn., and 48, 696, and further Loraux 1986). But despite Ant.'s claim to be 'born to share in φιλία' (523), she does not demonstrate an especially 'loving nature', in the modern sense of those words: she is on the contrary quite cold and dismissive towards everyone except the dead, and threatens to 'hate' Ismene if she will not co-operate with her (86, 93); cf. 523n. and Nussbaum 1986: 64-5.

'foolishness' (ἀβουλία, δυσβουλία, μωρία, κτλ.) or outright 'madness' (492, 653, 765). The Chorus sing of mankind's extraordinary intelligence and ingenuity, so powerful for good or ill (332-75n.), and of the human propensity to lapse into that special kind of delusion (ἄτη, 4, 17, 582-625nn.), wherein evil is mistaken for good, injustice for justice (615-25, cf. 791-2, and 323). We should hardly expect a neat definition of 'true wisdom' to emerge: tragedy thrives on mental mistakes and contingent misunderstandings, which are represented as being typical and ineradicable, indeed intrinsic to social existence. We may, however, learn something about the possibilities and limitations of human understanding from tracing the differing mentalities and rhetorical strategies exemplified by the usage of these terms. In particular, we can trace an implicit struggle for validation between the calculating 'intelligence', 'counsel', and 'thought' (γνώμη, φρονεῖν, μανθάνειν, βούλευμα, νοῦς), recommended by Kreon and the other (male) characters, as against Ant.'s intuitive 'knowledge' and 'certainty' (especially ἐπίστασθαι, εἰδέναι);¹²⁵ and among the male characters, we may contrast Kreon's emphasis on 'calculation' and rigid 'straightness' with Haimon's and Teiresias' recommendations of 'learning' and 'bending'.¹²⁶

By the end of the play, after Kreon's ignorance and overconfident obstinacy have been starkly laid bare and punished, the Chorus sum up with the pat assertion, τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας πρῶτον ὑπάρχει. But we have received small reassurance as to the capacity of human intelligence to calculate and escape calamity in the future. Smaller minds – the Guard's, Ismene's, the Elders' – may succeed in avoiding personal disaster: but none of them has proved capable of fore-

¹²⁵ Foley 1996: 57-9, 64-8 suggests that Ant.'s language presents a distinctly 'feminine' mentality, reflective of the different contexts for moral choice experienced by women; cf. C. Gilligan, *In a different voice* (Harvard 1982). But in other respects Ant. is obviously a more 'masculine' and assertive character than her sister, and her language and actions appear shockingly 'hybristic' and 'manly' to Kreon and the Chorus (480-5; 471-2, 875, etc.). See further below, pp. 51-4.

¹²⁶ For male γνώμη, see 175-7, 188, 330, 389, 635, 640, 719; for φρονεῖν, 207, 477-9, 510 (and 557!), etc. (and cf. Ismene at 49); also οἶδα (316, 477-8n.); on Kreon's ὀρθο- words, cf. 162-3n. For Ant., ἐπίσταμαι ('be sure', 'know how to', 471-2, 480; cf. Haimon at 686) and οἶδα (2, 18, 33, 89, 447-8, 460, 521) are characteristic. See Coray 1993, esp. 58-80, Nussbaum 1986: 51-82, Foley 1996: 57-9, 64-8, C. Knapp, *AJP* 37 (1916) 300-16, and above pp. 36-7.

seeing or averting the troubles that afflict the larger community. Rather, it has been the impetuous and one-dimensional 'tempers' of Ant. and Haimon (ὀργή, 766-7, 875; cf. 471-2, 929-30) that have combined to provoke the eventual resolution, in combination with Teiresias' supernatural insight into hidden 'signs' (σημεῖα, 998n.; cf. 993 φρενός, 996 φρόνει). Perhaps some comfort may be derived from the idea, repeated at intervals throughout the play, that human beings must be 'flexible' (e.g., 710-23, 1023-8) and willing to 'learn'. But it would not be unreasonable to conclude instead from the fates of Kreon, Ant., Haimon, and Eurydike that the internal and external forces that drive us all are too unruly and unpredictable to be mastered or evaded by merely human 'good sense'.¹²⁷

(e) Contradictions

One function of drama (as of other forms of mythical, artistic, and religious expression) appears to be the opportunity it provides of articulating and confronting (in more or less disguised forms) some of society's deepest-seated tensions and conflicts, and perhaps mitigating or defusing them to some degree through the mechanisms of ritual, play, and communal celebration, a process that can be both disturbing and yet strangely satisfying. It is not so much that a particular artistic representation is likely to propose a permanent solution to such divisions and conflicts (e.g., between male and female, master and slave, family and state); rather that the very process of working through the conflict, and 'resolving' it in dramatic terms, may make it more manageable and endurable, or at least more intelligible, in the future.¹²⁸

In the case of Athenian tragedy, we may recognize a characteristic

¹²⁷ Nussbaum 1986: 80 suggests that we have learned (primarily from the examples and language of Haimon and Teiresias) to be 'flexibly responsive to the world'; but others see the 'wisdom' acquired as being of a more mysterious and paradoxical kind (Benardete 1975, Reinhardt 1979, Oudemans & Lardinois 1987).

¹²⁸ See esp. Turner 1969, and cf. Lada 1993. The Structuralist approach to myth and ritual derived from Claude Lévi-Strauss, Victor Turner, and others, with its predilection for these and other polar binary oppositions, has been applied to Greek tragedy with particular success: e.g. Vernant & Vidal-Naquet 1981, Segal 1981.

dynamic by which a set of social issues is simultaneously problematized and neutralized or foreclosed: troublesome and even radical questions about the status quo are brought to the surface, but the outcome of the play appears to eliminate, or at least to limit, the possibility of social change, and thus reinforces the sense that this status quo is unalterable and necessary (and therefore even 'right?'). This dynamic is especially pronounced in S.'s plays, and, together with their extraordinarily tight construction and sense of closure, is largely responsible for S.'s reputation for 'pessimism'.¹²⁹ Yet, even in S.'s plays, the dramatic resolution tends to be presented in such an open-ended and ambiguous fashion that different readers and audience members may draw quite different conclusions about the social and moral implications of the play: even as some of them resign themselves (sadly, or complacently) to the inescapability of fate, and perhaps to the concomitant dignity of human suffering, others may indignantly recall the elements of resistance and contradiction within the play that point to, or demand, a better alternative.¹³⁰ Thus, for example, if we read resolutely enough against the grain of S.'s dramatic text, and insist that all the injustices which we see from our modern perspective were intended so to be seen, as part of S.'s covert critique of his society, we can conclude that 'S. leads us to ask not merely whether a polity so unjustly structured can survive but whether it deserves to',¹³¹ whereas it might be preferable to insist only that S.'s text *allows* us to see these injustices (even as it also works to disguise and gloss over some of them), and thus probes certain fault-lines in the Athenian polity without coming close to

¹²⁹ E.g., J. C. Opstelten *Sophocles and Greek pessimism* (Amsterdam 1952), Whitman 1951, Reinhardt 1979. By contrast, critics usually find A.'s plays more 'optimistic' and progressive, E.'s more subversive and radically disruptive.

¹³⁰ Even within the same reader/spectator, two successive experiences of the 'same' text/dramatic performance may result in quite different responses. In general, see Dollimore's analysis of 'subversion' vs 'containment' as a critical strategy (1989: xvi-xxxii); and cf. Rose 1992: 27-42, building on N. Holland, *The dynamics of literary response* (New York 1968) and F. Jameson, *Marxism and form* (Princeton 1971). See too Griffith 1995: 107-24.

¹³¹ W. J. and A. M. Lane, in J. P. Euben, ed., *Greek tragedy and political theory* (Berkeley 1986) 182. (A similar, but more subtle, reading is offered by Benardete 1975.)

suggesting the need for radical social change, let alone any programme for effecting it. At the opposite extreme, it has been concluded that the very purpose of S.'s drama (or Shakespeare's) is to bring us to a state of aesthetic equilibrium, ever oscillating between co-existing but incompatible alternatives as we contemplate 'man's awkward position, divided and ambiguous, in a hard and ruthless world';¹³² or that the experience of *Ant.* leads us to appreciate the value of moral complexity and conflict for their own sakes.¹³³ Both these responses may bring their own aesthetic and moral satisfactions; yet the stronger our sense of 'equilibrium' and aesthetic 'richness', the easier it may be for us to cease interrogating the text for new possibilities and to settle into a complacent resignation to the inevitable.

In any case, *Ant.*'s baffling open-endedness may be said to add to, rather than detract from, the universality and power of its appeal, allowing as it does for the multiplicity of statuses and viewpoints of the play's ancient and modern audiences – even as it explains to some degree the abundance of scholarly disagreement over its 'correct' interpretation. There may indeed be several 'correct' interpretations of *Ant.*, and there seems little to be gained, and much to be lost, by insisting that one is better than all others. The play of opposites provides its own challenges, and its own rewards.¹³⁴

¹³² Oudemans & Lardinois 1987: 28.

¹³³ So Nussbaum 1986: 75-80, emphasizing the 'richness' of experience provided by the totality of S.'s play, as opposed to the pat consistency and over-simplification sought by *Ant.* and *Kreon*.

¹³⁴ Does this mean that we are all licensed to find whatever meanings we wish in this, or any, work of literature? Not exactly. We may look, we may think we have found its meaning – but then we are obliged to examine the alternatives, expose our view to criticism, take account of the original conditions of production and performance, before concluding that our own interpretation is justifiable or 'valid' in anything more than a partial or solipsistic sense; see Culler 1975, Fish 1980 (above, n. 78). In the end, of course, it is up to us, as readers, audiences, actors, directors, critics, and teachers, to what degree, and to what social ends, we may choose to focus on these oppositions and fault-lines – or any other particular elements – in a text. But we need to be aware, and explicit, about what we are doing thereby and why; see R. Williams' 'Afterword' to J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield, eds., *Political Shakespeare* (London 1985) 281-9.

(i) *Human/divine*

In one of the most famous speeches of Western literature, Ant. invokes the 'unwritten and unfaltering laws of the gods' (453-7) as her basis for disobeying the mortal Kreon's edict. Earlier, the Chorus, after singing of the wonderful achievements of 'ultra-clever man' (347 περιφραδῆς ἀνὴρ), warn that this man and his city are 'high' (ὑψίπολις) only so long as he 'reveres the justice of the gods' (369-70). So, after Teiresias explains to Kreon that the gods both below and above the ground are offended by his non-burial of Pol. and premature 'burial' of Ant. (1068-76), we may concur with the Chorus' final assessment, 'We must not be impious (ἀσεπτῆιν) towards the gods' (1349-50), and with Kreon's verdict, 'The blame for this will always belong to nobody else but me' (1317-18). The general principle, that divine law overrules human, has thus been reaffirmed, and this 'religious' lesson has been taken by many to be S.'s main concern in the play: Kreon's presumption is crushed, and the traditional rules of family-based cult are thereby reinforced.¹³⁵ This lesson is not entirely comforting, however: for even if the contemplation of the numinous mystery of the divine carries with it a kind of fascination that is enhanced by such glorious poetry as is contained in the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th Songs of *Ant.*, and by our recognition of the 'fullness of Ant.'s death' and of the 'all-embracing world with which Ant.'s figure is linked',¹³⁶ we may well be disturbed by the gods' apparent disregard for Ant. herself, even after she articulates her support for their 'laws' and accepts a lonely death in defence of them; dismayed too by the suffering and deaths of the innocent Haimon and Eurydike. The gods (as often) appear more concerned with punishment than with reward or comfort.

Furthermore, tempting though many critics have found it thus to identify Kreon squarely with the secular, Ant. with the divine, and to

¹³⁵ Ant.'s expressions of moral and religious certainty have even suggested to some critics a special kind of spiritual enlightenment or direct apprehension of the divine, such that her death has been described in terms reminiscent of Christian martyrdom (e.g., Jebb xxv-xxv, cf. Reinhardt 1979: *passim*; *contra*, Brown 1987: 7-10). On this score, discussion has surrounded Ant.'s expressions of dismay and uncertainty (loss of 'faith?'), as she contemplates death and the gods' failure to intervene; but see 921-8n.

¹³⁶ Reinhardt 1979: 93, 80; and cf. n. 65 above.

read the play as a straightforward vindication of traditional religious belief, the issues are not quite so simple. It is true that Kreon sneers at Ant.'s claims to have divinity on her side (514-16, 575-81, 777-80nn.), indignantly rejects the Chorus' suggestion that the gods might be responsible for the mysterious nocturnal burial of Pol.'s body (280-9), and accuses the venerable prophet of corruption and greed (1033-63). But Kreon himself appeals repeatedly to Zeus and the gods of his city (184, 304-5; cf. 162-3, 198-203; and 758), and does eventually heed the prophet's warnings and attempt to make amends (991-7, 1095-7). And while his scornful and hyperbolic language at times betrays gross insensitivity, bordering on blasphemy (see esp. 485-90, 889, 1039-44nn.), he does not challenge or insult the gods directly, like S.'s Aias or E.'s Hippolytos, Pentheus, or Polyestor.¹³⁷ There is historical evidence that during the mid-fifth century the Athenian *demos* began to intervene in new ways to regulate the activities of traditional family-based cults;¹³⁸ and we may regard Kreon and Ant. as representing two different kinds of religious observance, civic vs familial, or 'new' vs 'old' – even to some degree 'upper' vs 'lower' gods.¹³⁹ In so far as the play contains a clear religious 'message', it clearly validates the claims of the old familial cults: Kreon was wrong. But we should not look to press such a neat religious (or religious/secular) dichotomy too far: neither of the two main characters is entirely consistent in word and practice – and neither takes account of those other divine, but anarchical, powers

¹³⁷ Kreon's edict is not motivated at first by antagonism to Pol.'s family and its rites (which after all are his own), but by concern for the political security of the city: he suspects conspirators, not his niece.

¹³⁸ E.g. the Praxiergidai decree at Eleusis (*IG* XIII 105.35); see further Ostwald 1986: 138-61. These issues tend in modern discussions to spill over (anachronistically) into analysis in terms of 'state' vs 'church', or 'state' vs 'individual conscience'; see below, pp. 48-50.

¹³⁹ 'Ant. is not interested in heaven. As Kreon ... remarks, it is the law of Hades that she feels bound to fulfil (777) ... She mentions Zeus only twice ... (2-6, 450) ...; [by contrast] Hades 519, 542, (811, 911); Pherssephassa 894; the gods 77, 454-5, 459-60, 921, 922, 925; the gods below 451, 938; the dead below 25, 74-5, (89), 521, 560', MacKay 1962: 167. Such an opposition is familiar, e.g., from A.'s *Eum.*, where it is likewise reinforced by an opposition of gender; cf. G. Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens* (3rd ed., London 1961), Zeitlin 1996: 87-119.

whose energy obliterates these neat distinctions and sweeps all before them, Eros and Dionysos (153-4, 1115-54nn.).¹⁴⁰

(ii) *Polis/oikos*

Conflict between family obligations and the demands of the larger community, between *φιλία* and *τὸ κοινόν*, pervades every civilized society. This conflict was especially acute and clearly defined in fifth-century Athens, and nowhere more so than in this play. Kreon, as *στρατηγός* (7-8n.) and leader of his city, insists on the need for citizens and rulers alike to disregard kinship and personal favouritism and to set the highest value on discipline and 'obedience to authority' (*πειθαρχία*, 661-80); and his nephew Pol. is consequently to be treated as nothing more than an enemy of the state. Ant., however, in maintaining the overriding obligations of *φιλία* (9-10, 69-77, 508-25n.), cannot cease to regard Pol. as 'her own', whatever his public actions.¹⁴¹

Yet here too the issue is far from cut and dried. For all Kreon's political (and specifically democratic-sounding) language,¹⁴² he shows increasingly, in his confrontations with both Ant. and Haimon, that he is more concerned about his own personal authority, as a man and a father, than about his citizens' opinions (473-85, 726-69, etc.; and cf. 670-1n.). Indeed, he displays not only disrespect for family obligations, but also political incompetence in his insensitivity and mistrust of his fellow-citizens; and he ends up not only destroying his own family, but also jeopardizing the whole community of Thebes, by tainting its public altars and its relations with other cities (1015-22, 1080-3). Conversely, Ant. is by no means unconcerned about her

¹⁴⁰ On Eros and Dionysos, see W-Ingram 1980: 92-116, Segal 1981: 197-206, Nussbaum 1986: 82, Seaford 1994; and below pp. 58-66.

¹⁴¹ Since the *oikos/polis* opposition overlaps to some degree with that between nature (*φύσις*) and culture (*νόμος*), we may also take note here of the play's insistence on Ant.'s *natural* and hereditary characteristics and obligations (1, 37-8, 471-2, 523, 866nn.; also 683-6n.), as opposed to Kreon's emphasis on *cultural* choices, 'making straight', 'keeping order', and selectively 'establishing' his social connections (188 *θεῖον*, 190 *ποιούμεθα*; cf. 162-3, 639-80, 670-1nn., and 680 *καλούμεθ' ἄν*). See above, pp. 40-1, and Segal 1981: 152-86.

¹⁴² His assertions are reminiscent of Perikles' (Thuc. 2.38-46, 60), and later quoted approvingly by Demosthenes 19.247; see 162-210, 188-gonn.

public reputation among the citizens (84-7, 839-52, 937-43). Public and private, political and familial, cannot be wholly separated in the case of royalty: so, while the play certainly asserts the inviolable claims of kinship and points up the oppressive potential of civic authority in the wrong hands, it does so in such a way as to remind us of the inherent dangers posed to the stability of the *polis* by its leading dynastic families.¹⁴³ If 'family' is the solution, it is also the problem.

One of the most influential general theories of tragedy is that of G. W. F. Hegel, which is based directly on his reading of this play in terms of *oikos/polis* opposition.¹⁴⁴ Hegel asserts that both Kreon and Ant. are right in principle, but that each of their conflicting principles is of only limited validity, whereas each of them insists on its absolute claims: the tragic conflict destroys the two individuals, but results in the emergence of an ethically 'higher' and more inclusive plane of consciousness.¹⁴⁵ This reading has much to be said for it (provided we do not require both characters to be *entirely* or *equally* right in every respect), and lies behind many subsequent theories concerning the centrality of *conflict* to the idea of tragedy.¹⁴⁶ The biggest problem with it lies perhaps in its idea of a final 'synthesis' or elevated level of awareness (which is directly linked to Hegel's insistently evolutionist and progressive view of history); for, although the ending of *Ant.* does provide reassurances of a less troubled future, and of lessons that have been 'learned' by the survivors, neither the Chorus nor Kreon comes close to articulating a world-view that synthesizes the insights gained through the course of the tragedy, and it must remain questionable how much of this the members of the audience are able to achieve for themselves.¹⁴⁷

Closely related to this *oikos/polis* dichotomy is the issue of kinship

¹⁴³ See further Maitland 1992, Griffith 1995, and pp. 54-8 below.

¹⁴⁴ See A. & H. Paolucci, eds., *Hegel on tragedy* (New York 1962) 62-74 (from *The philosophy of fine art*), Steiner 1984: 19-42, Hester 1971.

¹⁴⁵ In insisting that Ant. and Kreon are both 'right' in principle, Hegel does not rule out the possibility of either or both being at fault in the personal (behavioural) shortcomings that heighten the conflict instead of seeking to resolve it.

¹⁴⁶ Gellrich 1988. By contrast, Aristotle has little appetite for 'conflict'.

¹⁴⁷ See 1326-53, 1343-6, 1347-53nn., and above, pp. 43-5.

and exogamy. If one of the primary functions of myth is to provide aetiologies and justifications of familiar social rules, rituals, and taboos, then the Theban saga was especially rich in examples of violations of the rules concerning endogamy/exogamy, and concerning the relative claims of birth-family vs marriage-family.¹⁴⁸ In *Ant.*, the cursed families of Laios and Menoikeus are shown transgressing these norms yet again, with the next generation consequently failing to achieve proper 'passage' from childhood to adulthood and marriage: Oidipous' two sons die at each other's hands, one unmarried, the other exploiting a foreign marriage to forge a military alliance and attack his homeland; of the two daughters, neither is married, and Ant. rejects the prospect of husband and children, while demonstrating peculiar devotion to brother and kin. At the opposite extreme, Kreon's son unites with his intended bride against his father, whom he even attempts to kill (648–60, 740–9, 1231–4). The result: obliteration of the whole extended family, as a 'lesson (<to the rest of Thebes/Athens> in old age' (1353), according to the logic of myth.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ For the particular characteristics of the 'Thebes' myth in Athenian tragedy, see esp. Zeitlin 1986, Seaford 1994: 213–20.

¹⁴⁹ The Theban saga is often narrated so as to emphasize the theme of sacrificing one family, or a single man (= *Opfertod*), to save the whole city, whether that family must be Laios' (as in *A. Th.*), or that of one of the 'Sown Men' (as in *E. Pho.*; cf. Pentheus in *E. Ba.*); see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983) 16–54, Zeitlin 1986. Such a story-pattern fits *OT* much better than *Ant.*: but in our play it is not far-fetched to see Kreon in this role of 'ritual substitute', with Ant. an innocent victim wastefully sacrificed along with him; or we might regard the whole 'extended family' (Kreon's and Oidipous' together) as the tainted element that must be eradicated for social health to be restored to Thebes. This taint is repeatedly mentioned or implied, both surrounding Ant.'s own direct ancestry (2–6, 49–57, 594–603, 857–71), and in connection with Kreon's actions within the play (1015, 1066–76, 1311, 1322–5, 1339). Although little is said in the text about any purification or communal relief resulting from the royal deaths, the burial of Pol. does remove the aura of pollution (1199–1205 with nn.), and the growing sense of co-operation between Kreon and the Chorus (and, intrinsically, between Chorus and theatre audience) may be felt to promise some further degree of reassurance and continuity; see 1347–53 nn., and pp. 54–8 below. For further discussion of the *pharmakos* theory in relation to stage tragedy, see esp. N. Frye, *Anatomy of criticism* (Princeton 1957) 147–50, 206–23, Turner 1969, R. Girard, *Violence and the sacred* (1972; Eng. tr. Baltimore 1977), W. Burkert, *GRBS* 7 (1966) 87–121, Seaford 1994: 310–18; and for Greek ritual practice, see J. Bremmer, *HSCP* 87 (1983) 299–320.

(iii) *Male/female*

Gender lies at the root of the problems of *Ant.* Throughout the play, the status and proper roles of women, the possibilities of female autonomy and subjectivity, and the limitations of traditional views of male authority and discipline, are repeatedly brought up as key issues; and in the figure of the young heroine, who refuses to be cowed by male authority, takes action against an unacceptable political order, speaks out on behalf of divinely sanctioned moral laws, and embraces a terrifying death rather than abandon her principles, S. has created one of the most impressive female figures ever to walk the stage. As we have seen, modern critical responses to *Ant.* as a character have varied widely, and we possess few clues about the reception of the play by its original audience.¹⁵⁰ None the less, as we hear Kreon shrilly – and erroneously – berating his nieces and son, and insisting on the need for men always to 'be master' of women (e.g., 482–5, 531–5, 677–80, 740–50), even the most misogynistic and paternalistic Athenian must have felt some qualms. Likewise, as Ant. and Ismene argue about what 'women against men' can achieve (61–2, 96–7), and the Chorus sing about the torments of mythical brides and mothers (944–87), it is impossible not to admire Ant.'s courage and achievement, and not to echo some at least of the praise expressed by Haimon (699 'Is she not worthy of golden honour?'), even though we may also sympathize with the more critical views of her presented by the Chorus or the Guard as detached male observers, or even those of Kreon himself.

For a Greek girl, the tokens of coming of age and social success were marriage and children: this was the prime object of her upbringing, and it was by this criterion that her reputation as a woman was established. So the day on which she was led by her father or guardian to the house of her new husband was likely to be the most significant moment of her life. Yet she was also expected to remain perpetually loyal and faithful to her natal family; and in this dual set of obligations, to father and to husband, she is constantly liable to

¹⁵⁰ It is not even known whether women attended the Theatre: see J. Henderson, *TAPA* 121 (1991) 133–47, S. Goldhill, in R. Osborne & S. Hornblower, eds., *Ritual, finance, politics* (Oxford 1994) 347–69. But there is no doubt that the majority of the original audience were male, and we may safely assume that if there was an imagined 'ideal audience' to which the plays were directed, it consisted of Athenian citizens; but see pp. 43–5 above.

conflicting demands from both sides. In Ant.'s view, in the shadow of civil war and continuing political crisis, the prospect of attachment to any group other than her father's/brother's family is tantamount to 'betrayal' (46), and she sees the only future awaiting her as reunion with her family beneath the earth (73-6 'I shall lie with him, united in love (φιλή ... φίλου μέτα) ... for ever ...'; cf. 897-9). In a grim metaphor that comes to be repeated as a virtual refrain, she prepares for her 'marriage to Hades' (806-16, 893-4nn.), in the dark underground 'bridal chamber' that will also be her 'tomb'. Her death may carry a kind of 'nobility' and 'glory' (72, 502, 695, etc.; cf. 72n.); but we recognize it as a cruel curtailment and perversion of all the sexual and maternal desires that should be expected of a woman.¹⁵¹ The pathos of Ant.'s mixed despair and defiance, as she is led off to death, brings home unforgettably the sense of a young woman's terror and isolation at leaving her family home to take up residence in another man's house and bed – but in this case deprived of the compensating excitement of torches, music, and celebrating companions, and the prospect of a desired new status and future: 'Now he has laid hands on me and is taking me away – unmarried, unsung, receiving no share of marriage to anyone or raising of children, but all alone, bereft of those who care for me ...' (916-19).¹⁵² And our final image of Ant. is of her dead white cheek spattered with blood from her bridegroom's embrace (1240-1), as her body provokes the final agonistic collision of the two men who seek to control her.

The figure of Ant. herself is gendered in curiously ambiguous and conflicted terms. On the one hand, her devotion to family and personal attention to her brother's funeral rites correspond to traditional 'feminine' priorities; and, as we saw, her language is differentiated from that of Kreon and the other male speakers by its diction and modes of argumentation.¹⁵³ Yet her self-assertive and independent

¹⁵¹ The curtailment is both external and internal to Ant.: her 'guardian' (*kuriōs*) is the very one who is 'leading' her to her deadly bridegroom; and she herself exercises her own subjective preference to the point of explicitly choosing brother and father over any prospective husband or children (904-14).

¹⁵² See further Seaford 1987, Rehm 1994: 59-71.

¹⁵³ See above, pp. 20, 36-7, and n. 125.

manner, her outspoken defiance of Kreon, and her sharp rejection of Ismene's conventionally 'feminine' mentality, together with her willingness to take action – and speak out – in the public sphere and in the name of the 'laws', mark her out as a highly unconventional and exceptional 'woman'.¹⁵⁴

The play thus raises deeply troubling questions about the status and expectations of women and about society's deep-seated gender conflicts. What does its outcome suggest by way of an answer? Through her words and actions, Ant. has publicly made her point, and has to some degree been vindicated and won glory (692-700): but she is dead, and she is largely neglected in the final scenes – no lament or honorific funeral for her is mentioned (1226-36, 1340-3nn.). She has given voice to the claims of kin and the cult of the dead, areas in which women were traditionally expected to be vocal and active; but in the end her voice has been replaced by that of Teiresias, speaking both for chthonic and 'upper' powers (1068-76), and also for 'the city' as a whole (992-4, 1015). Her 'unfeminine' venture into the male world of public action has destroyed her and others close to her. And even the burial of Pol., which she has twice attempted, is finally performed by Kreon and his men (1197-1204).

Eurydike is dead, too, the innocent victim of Kreon's mistakes; and although in her brief scene she is given a few lines that disturbingly draw attention to the recurrent miseries of her life as wife and mother (1191, 1301-5nn.), she is quickly silenced, for her role is primarily to be another vehicle for Kreon's punishment. In the closing scene, the focus is thus almost exclusively on Kreon and his sufferings. He may not have 'mastered' the women, as he intended, but he has survived them, and his political authority – shared now more

¹⁵⁴ Or, to put this another way: the contrasting patterns of behaviour and speech embodied in Ant., Ismene, and Eurydike – and within the single figure of Ant. herself – demonstrate the large (and often inconsistent) range of performativities contained within the category 'woman'. Ant. is hailed both as being 'of all women ... deserving of golden honour' (693-9) and as one who shamelessly attempts to assert herself as a 'man' in place of the king (484); conversely, Ismene can be said to be both a 'better' (more conventional) 'woman' and a less devoted (less single-minded) 'daughter' than her sister; see further M. Griffith, 'Antigone and her sisters', forthcoming in A. Lardinois and L. McClure, eds., *Making silence speak: women's voices in Greek literature and society* (Princeton 1999).

equally with the Elders – remains intact (1257–1353, 1347–53nn.). Only one female has survived – Ismene, who relapses into safe invisibility and silence well before the end of the play; and she is the one who has done the least to disrupt the prevailing male order, the one who spells out explicitly that women are ‘not to battle against men’ (62). It must be remarked, too, that during the course of the play the feminine solidarity of the two sisters has quickly been sacrificed by Ant. (and by S.?) in the name of absolute loyalty to brother and father: as a true ‘lover’ of her family (99, 523) she cannot ‘hate’ her brother or father, only her sister (86, 93–4; cf. 543, 549). And Ismene’s attempts to mend this breach repeatedly fail.¹⁵⁵

The choices for a female subject in this play are thus limited indeed: speak out, take action – and die in isolation; or keep your place indoors, in silence, in subjection, so that men may continue their misrule. How far are these choices felt to reflect the tragic peculiarities of the family of Oidipous and fictional Thebes, how far the norms of contemporary Athenian life? Did S.’s audience even notice the absence of Ismene, or the silence about Ant., in the closing scenes of the play?¹⁵⁶

(f) *Politics*

The action of *Ant.*, like that of most Attic tragedies, centres on an elite family, whose aspirations, achievements, and experiences reverberate mightily throughout their whole community.¹⁵⁷ The building

¹⁵⁵ See P. Phelan, *Mourning sex* (New York 1997) 13–16, reassessing Lacan’s claim (1992: 260–83) that Ant. ‘incarnates ... the desire of death as such ...’, which is in turn ‘linked to the desire of the mother’. See too Johnson 1997, and Katz 1994: 91–6, who argues that ‘the play describes a progression from an attempt to reconstitute a symbiotic unity with Ismene, through rejection of the living sister for the dead brother and the concomitant assumption of the maternal role, to a final and total collapse back into the dead past ...’ (p. 95).

¹⁵⁶ We may compare the closing scenes of *E. Hipp.*, or the ending of *Ar. Lysistrata*, where the heroine is likewise removed so that the men can complete the reordering of Athens and Sparta. See further Wohl 1998; also Showalter 1985, Belsey 1985.

¹⁵⁷ That ‘community’ may be as large as humankind in general (e.g. in the cases of Prometheus in *A. Prom.*, or Herakles in *S. Tr.*); but usually it is a polis or an army.

that stands centre-stage, and provides the main focus of the play’s action and the audience’s attention, represents their palace, in front of which the Elders of the city are gathered, attending on the king’s needs; the royal family passes in and out of the central door, and messengers come and go in their service. And, in accordance with tragic convention, although all the characters speak the same dialect and maintain more or less the same tragic dignity of diction and deportment,¹⁵⁸ a clear social distinction is maintained between those (named) characters of the elite and the (generally anonymous) minor figures, including the Chorus, who come either to attend to their needs, or to watch, advise, and sympathize with them – and who eventually will depart to other areas of the city to continue with their lives, chastened but relatively undamaged by the tragic denouement.

This distinction is reflected to a large degree in the relationship between the leading characters and the audience, who tend to be cast, both by the stage action and by the physical layout of the theatre, into a role similar to that of the Chorus, Messengers, or Guard. Although the spectators (ancient and modern) may be made up of several heterogeneous elements, and their ‘gaze’ and point of view may shift in unpredictable ways, from empathetic involvement with the first-hand experiences of the main characters, to the more distanced and deferential – and at times ironically slanted – views of the Chorus and other minor figures,¹⁵⁹ our relationship to the tragic ‘elite’ will normally comprise a complex mixture of admiration and disapproval, anxiety and dependency, as these central figures are presented to us alternately, or even simultaneously, as grand and superior objects of veneration, and as fatally error-prone and vulnerable misfits. Consequently, the audience may feel itself deeply involved in, and impressed by, the main characters’ larger-than-life struggles, and yet ultimately grateful for its own relative distance and immunity from their risks, achievements, and sufferings, a combination of responses that appears to be characteristic of the tragic

¹⁵⁸ The Guard provides some slightly ‘lower,’ comic elements, in exception to this general rule; see 223–331, 388–400, 437–40nn., Seidensticker 1982.

¹⁵⁹ By contrast, the ‘gaze’ of a modern cinema audience is relatively easy to track; see J. Ellis, *Visible fictions* (London 1982), K. Silverman 1983, Griffith 1995: 72–81, 1998: 36–42.

experience.¹⁶⁰ Without these elite figures, where would the tragedy be?

In the course of *Ant.*, the city is almost ruined by a collision of two high-handed aristocrats, the one parading expressions of democratic loyalty that quickly lapse into paranoid assertions of his own power, based on 'obedience to rule ... right or wrong' (676, 667), the other outspokenly defying the city's edicts and officers in the name of 'unwritten laws' and the traditional claims of family blood-ties – a phenomenon all too familiar to fifth-century Athenians, as they recalled the chequered careers of their own Peisistratids, Alkmaionids, Kimonids, and other dynastic families.¹⁶¹ By the end of the play, the audience may derive some reassurance from the political developments that they have witnessed, whereby Kreon's authoritarianism, and the excessive pusillanimity and blindness of his advisers, have been replaced by a collaborative relationship between ruler and 'citizens', conducive to a more harmonious civic future (1091–1114, 1347–53nn.; cf. 1183 ἀστοί); and perhaps they may see in these developments some confirmation that their own democratic system can prevent such egregious misbehaviour among the elite.¹⁶² But, given the Elders' distinctively upper-class status (843, 940, 988), and the exclusion throughout from the stage of any truly 'democratic' presence or voices,¹⁶³ the restoration of political order that we witness taking place in the closing scenes amounts rather, it seems, to a form

¹⁶⁰ See Bradley 1905, Jauss 1974, Griffith 1995: 107–24; we may compare too the Chorus' and Ant.'s attitude to Niobe (823–38, with n.).

¹⁶¹ Further examples were close at hand, too: e.g., the kings of Sparta and Thessaly, or the tyrants of Samos and Syracuse; cf. Shakespeare's and Marlowe's England, with its anxieties about the monarchy and the social mobility of the new bourgeois.

¹⁶² See Rohdich 1980, J. Winkler in Winkler & Zeitlin 1990, Goldhill 1990, Rose 1992: 185–94, Seaford 1994. Yet Attic tragedy invariably concludes with the elite continuing legitimately in power, even if this or that disruptively dominant individual may have been removed or cut down to size; cf. Griffith 1995, 1998.

¹⁶³ The subdued voice of the majority of the Theban citizens, quoted vainly by Haimon and Ant. herself (690–700, 732–9; cf. 509), is never elevated to a position of authority, or even autonomy, and they never are allowed to speak for themselves – unless the low-life Guard be thought to be representative of the *dēmos* as a whole.

of aristocratic oligarchy. Furthermore, it has not been the ordinary citizens, nor any kind of democratic process, that opposed Thebes' tyrannically-inclined leader and rescued the city from disaster: it took the defiance of a princess and the rage of the leader's own love-struck son – together with the decisive intervention of the gods and their mysterious prophet.¹⁶⁴

For all their admiration of Ant.'s boldness and loyalty, and their respect for Kreon's (male, elite) status and political ideals (as initially expressed), few members of the audience are likely to identify wholeheartedly with either, as they plunge into their tragic collision. For the most part, their relationship to the stage action will mirror that of the internal audiences of the play (Chorus, Guard, Messengers). With all their limitations, the cautious, ineffectual, and complacent Elders represent a thoroughly 'normal' perspective, especially as the play nears its conclusion: 'Both of you have spoken well ...' (725), 'We are just human beings, mortal-born ...' (835), 'Power is not to be flouted ... Your own temper ruined you' (873–4), 'The great words of boasters are paid for with great blows' (1350–3), etc. We may even recognize our own reactions, albeit exaggerated and parodied, in the expressions of mixed sympathy and relief voiced by the Guard: 'It brought pleasure and pain at the same time: it's a pleasant relief to escape from trouble oneself, yet it's painful to bring others that we care about into trouble. But for me at any rate the most important thing is my own survival and well-being (σωτηρίας)' (436–40). For, though his moral stature (like his social status) may be somewhat lower than ours, his relationship to the tragic action closely parallels the audience's: he is an uncomfortable accomplice, quick to disassociate himself from the mistakes and sufferings of the key characters, yet willing to acknowledge concern for them, even partial responsibility for their troubles – provided that he is not himself directly endangered. And above all, he can be counted on to survive (400 'I have the right to be released from these troubles', cf. 445, and 315–31, 407–40nn.).

¹⁶⁴ And these mysterious 'gods' (as often in S.) appear to have small connection with the cults and processes of the *polis*: rather, they seem to belong to a primordial or ancestral realm that is oblivious to political process or civic cult (450–1, 582–93, 601–3, 1064–gonn., etc.).

Κρ. ἴτω ἴτω,
φανήτω μόρων ὁ κάλλιστ' ἔχων
ἔμοι τερμίαν ἄγων ἀμέραν
ὑπατος· ἴτω ἴτω,
ὅπως μηκέτ' ἄμαρ ἄλλ' εἰσίδω.

[ἀντ. γ
1330

Χο. μέλλοντα ταῦτα· τῶν προκειμένων τι χρῆ
πράσσειν· μέλει γὰρ τῶνδ' ὅτοισι χρῆ μέλειν.

1335

Κρ. ἀλλ' ὦν ἐρῶ μὲν, ταῦτα συγκατηξάμην.

Χο. μὴ νυν προσεύχου μηδέν· ὥς πεπρωμένης
οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγὴ.

Κρ. ἄγοιτ' ἂν μάταιον ἄνδρ' ἐκποδῶν,
ὅς, ὦ παῖ, σέ τ' οὐχ ἐκὼν κατέκανον,
σέ τ' αὖ τάνδ', ὦ μοι μέλεος, οὐδ' ἔχω
πρὸς πότερον ἴδω, πᾶι κλιθῶ· πάντα γὰρ
λέχτρια τᾶν χεροῖν, τὰ δ' ἐπὶ κρατὶ μοι
πότημος δυσκόμιστος εἰσήλατο.

[ἀντ. δ
1340
1345

Χο. πολλῶι τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας
πρῶτον ὑπάρχει· χρῆ δὲ τὰ γ' ἐς θεοὺς
μηδὲν ἄσεπτεῖν· μεγάλοι δὲ λόγοι
μεγάλας πληγὰς τῶν ὑπεραύχων
ἀποτείσαντες
γῆραι τὸ φρονεῖν ἐδίδαξαν.

1350

1329 ἔχων Pallis: ἐμῶν Ω 1336 ἐρῶ μὲν (or ἐρώμεν) Ω: ἐρῶ or ἐρῶ νυν Φ
1340 κατέκανον Schneider: κατέκτανον Ω: κατέκτα T 1341 σέ Hermann:
ὅς σέ Ω αὖ τάνδ' Seidler: αὐτάν Ω 1343 Seidler: ὅπαι πρὸς πότερον
Φ (πρότερον Ω) κλιθῶ Musgrave: καὶ θῶ Ω 1345 τᾶν Brunck: τὰ δ'
ἐν Ω: τὰ τ' ἐν T 1349 γ' T: τ' Ω

COMMENTARY

1-99 Opening Scene (*Prologos*)

Ant. and Ismene enter, and begin to discuss the events of the preceding day and night: the repulse of the Argive invaders, and their brothers' deaths. Ant. informs Ismene of their uncle's edict forbidding burial to Pol.'s corpse, and asks her to join in defying it. Ismene tries to dissuade her, but Ant. resolves to carry out the deed alone.

This first scene is set shortly before dawn. The battle is said to have taken place the previous day, the Argives' departure during the night (see 16, 100-3, 253 with nn.); Kreon's edict seems to have been issued from the battlefield (7-8, 33, 100-3nn.), and he is now on his way to make a public statement (33-4). But we need not expect exact temporal consistency (Introd. §3), esp. in an open-air production, where no lighting-effects are possible.

In the plays of A. and E., the opening scene usually takes the form of a monologue, announcing where the play is set and what has already happened: then the real action begins (see Stevens on *Andr.* 1-55). But S.'s plays generally open with a dialogue outlining both the main issues of the play and the personalities of the chief characters (H. W. Schmidt, in Jens 1971: 27-34). So, here, the two young sisters present an immediate contrast: Ant. single-minded and intransigent, Ismene more circumspect and conventional (cf. 1-10n.).

The scene passes through three phases. In the first (1-38), despite Ant.'s impatience and Ismene's anxiety, the two seem unified in outlook (1, 2-3, 37-48nn.); then (39-77) as Ismene recoils (49-68n.), Ant. begins to distance herself from her in favour of her brother; finally (78-99), despite Ismene's conciliatory efforts, Ant. bursts out in contemptuous hostility (86-7, 93ff). The mood thus grows progressively gloomier. The sisters enter together, but leave separately, and the family solidarity so strongly invoked by the opening lines gives way to fragmentation and isolation.

1-10 The two young women enter through the centre (= palace) door (18-19n.). Their costumes and hairstyles show at once that they are royal and unmarried, and in mourning; perhaps Ant.'s garb is the more conspicuously sombre.

Ant.'s first speech, like those of Oidipous in *OT* and *OC*, and Deianeira in *Tr.*, immediately establishes her situation and her character: above all, her devotion to kin and consciousness of her family's past (2-3, 7nn.); but also her combative nature, as her opening and closing questions (2 ἀρ' οἶσθ' ὁ τι ..., 9 ἔχεις τι ...) draw Ismene into taking one side or the other.

1 κοινὸν αὐτάδελφον: appealing to her sister's identity of blood and interests, cf. *Tr.* 826, and Apollo at *A. Eum.* 89-90 σὺ δ', αὐτάδελφον αἷμα καὶ κοινοῦ πατρός, Ἑρμῇ ... Though the αὐτο- prefix in *S.* sometimes has no more than a vaguely 'intensive or emphatic force' (Campbell 1879: 1.101.6), in this play it frequently 'speaks of the blood-tie as a place of incest, of parricide (and fratricide), and of suicide' (Loraux 1986: 167); cf. 56 αὐτοκτονοῦντε with *n.*, and 49-52n. Here Ant. means 'full-sister' (though e.g. at *Eum.* 89 Apollo is not full-brother to Hermes); but the expression, lacking feminine endings, may suggest also their 'common brother' (cf. 503, 696 αὐτάδελφον, 915 ὦ κασίγνητον κάρα), and cf. 56-7 μόρον κοινόν, 147 κοινοῦ θανάτου, 201-2 αἵματος κοινοῦ, 546 κοινά. 'The pathetic emphasis of this first line gives the key-note of the drama. The origin which connects the sisters also isolates them' (Jebb).

Ἰσμήνης κάρα: elevated (and untranslatable) tragic periphrasis, as at *OC* 321; cf. 899, 915, *OT* 40, 950, *A. Ag.* 905, etc. (and *LSJ s.v.* κεφαλή 1.2, Latin *caput*); also 944-5 Δανάας ... δέμας, 764.

2-3 Lit. 'Do you know what, of the evils (stemming) from Oidipous, Zeus is not bringing to pass for us two who are (alone) still alive?' The syntax is rather confused, as ὅποιον redefines and amplifies ὁ τι (both of them objects of τελεῖ in indirect *q.*). Alternatively, we may suppose that οἶσθα ὁ τι οὐ τελεῖ; has been conflated with τί (ἐστίν) ὅποιον οὐ τελεῖ; (cf. 4-6). In either case, the sense is clear and emphatic ('every conceivable evil is descending on us'), and the syntactical informality is mitigated by the word-order, with Ζεὺς in striking *hyperbaton*.

Ζεὺς: here, perhaps, the name implies no more than a vague 'the powers that be'; contrast 127, 304, 450, 604-14nn.

τῶν ἀπ' Οἰδίου κακῶν: the family's legacy of horrors, though not so insistently kept in our minds as in *A. Th.*, does surface intermittently; see 49-57, 594-603, 856-71, and *Introd.* §5(e)(ii).

νῶν ἔτι ζῶσαι: presumably dat. (of <dis>advantage, cf. 50),

though gen. absolute would be possible. The 'evils of Oidipous' have brought death to him, his wife, and his sons; and even the 'two surviving' daughters have not really escaped (cf. 4-8). This is the first in a dense cluster of duals (3, 13-14, 21, 50, 55-7, 58, 61-2; and cf. 144-7, 170-2, 561-2, 769, and 488-9n.), describing natural but frustrated pairings - murderous brothers, disunited sisters, sister and dead brother, dying bride and groom; cf. *OC* 337-45, Knox 1964: 79-80, 67-9, W. Jäkel, *Gymn.* 68 (1961) 34-55.

4-6 Ant. explains (γάρ) the point of her rhetorical *q.* (ὅποιον κτλ. picking up 2-3 κακῶν ὅποιον οὐχὶ νῶν ...). The insistent torrent of negatives (seven in three lines, cf. 450-60) and list of rhyming neuter adjectives (4n.) hammer home the completeness of the family's public and private miseries, building up to the one that most concerns Ant. now (ἄτιμον, cf. 22 ἀτιμάσας, 25 ἐντιμον with *n.*). For the enjambment of 5-6, cf. 27n.

4 ἀτήριον: this (Brunck's) emendation is far from certain; but ἄτης ἄτερ of the MSS would mean 'free from ruin', the opposite of what is needed here (as the ancient critic Didymos already noted). The regular adj. derived from ἀάω/ἀτάομαι/ἄτη is ἀτηρός (*A. Ag.* 1484, *Eum.* 1007), but ἀτηρόν here would leave us a syllable short. ἀτήριος is not otherwise attested (it would normally imply an agent-noun *ἀτήρ); but *S.* is esp. fond of -ηριος adjectives, and cf. Homeric ἀπατήλιος vs ἀπατηλός, or e.g. *E. Andr.* 552. Alternatively, perhaps ἄτης γέμον (Hermann, cf. *OT* 4); or ἀτήσιμον, on the analogy of θανάσιμον, μόρσιμον (Dindorf; cf. Else 1976: 31, 102-4; but the formation would be irregular). ἄτη is a rich and evocative term, esp. in tragedy, suggesting both *outcome* ('delusion', 'ruin', 'misery'), and *cause* (often a mixture of human folly and supernatural sabotage: cf. 17n., 185, 864, 1096-7, 1260, and esp. 582-625n.); see further, Dodds 1951: 2-8, 37-41, R. D. Dawe, *HSCP* 72 (1968) 89-123, R. E. Doyle, *Ἄτη: its use and meaning* (New York 1984), Padel 1995: 166-87, 249-59. Along with the mention of Zeus and Oidipous in line 2, the term here increases the mood of anxiety in the face of events and powers utterly beyond the sisters' control.

6 τῶν ... κακῶν: possessive gen., 'included among our troubles' (Smyth §1300), but echoing κακῶν (partitive gen.) in 2.

7-10 Ant. introduces the particular, new indignities up to which her generalization has been leading (2-6). The repeated questions

ἀρμόζω) and ἀνδάνω (cognate with Latin *suadeo*, *suavis*) are virtually interchangeable (as at 500-1; cf. 504).

90 εἰ καὶ δυνήσῃ γ' 'Yes (γε), if in fact (καί) you succeed'; εἰ + fut. indic. = a vivid warning, as again at 93-4. For similar instances of καί, cf. 278-9, 280, 726, 770, 772, 928, 1062, 1192, 1253, 1314, GP 294-308; also 403, 554nn.

91 'So, when - and only when (ὅταν δὴ) - I lack the strength, I shall stop' (fut. perfect, cf. Tr. 587 εἰ δὲ μή, πεπαύσομαι), sc. 'but not before', GP 219-20.9.iii.

92 ἀρχὴν ... οὐ 'absolutely not' (cf. Ph. 1239, El. 439, LSJ s.v. ἀρχή 1.c), emphasizing the 'basic' incompatibility of their outlooks.

θηρᾶν ... τὰμήχανα: cf. 78-9n., 90. θηράω is a vivid metaphor for 'desire', 'pursue' (cf. El. 1054), appropriate to Ant.'s 'unfeminine' spirit of self-assertion and independence (cf. 342-7, 471-2).

93 ἐχθαρή: fut. middle for passive, as often in tragedy (210 τιμήσεται, 230 ἀλγυνῇ, 637 ἀξιώσεται, 691 τέρψη, 726 διδασόμεσθα).

94 'You will justly be embraced as an enemy by your dead brother.' ἐχθρὰ ... προσκείσῃ is virtually an oxymoron, as προστίθεμαι frequently means 'take (someone) as a friend' (Tr. 1224 ταύτην προσθοῦ δάμαρτα, OC 404-5, A. Cho. 114, LSJ s.v. προστίθημι B.ii; but cf. Xen. Kyr. 2.4.12 πολέμιον προσθώμεθα, and 1222, 1242-3 below). There may be a wry echo of 73 φίλη ... κείσομαι.

95-6 ἔα: here monosyllabic (synizesis, 33n.), cf. OT 1451.

δυσβουλίαν refers sarcastically to Ismene's criticisms of Ant. (67-8, 88-92, 99; 49-68n.); cf. 1269, and Introd. §5(d)(iii).

τὸ δεινὸν τοῦτο: again, slightly sarcastic (cf. 82 ὑπερδέδοικα).

96-7 'For I will certainly not (οὐ ... οὐδέν, emphatic) suffer anything so terrible as to prevent me from dying honourably'; cf. 72n.

μὴ οὐ: synizesis (as at OT 13, 283), cf. 33n. μὴ οὐ, instead of simple μή, is regular after a negated main verb (Smyth §2745).

98-9 εἰ δοκεῖ σοι: cf. 71, 76.

ἄνους ... φίλη: Ismene's sententious conclusion (again following enjambment, cf. 67-8n.) sums up their contrary positions: it is because Ant. is 'truly devoted to kin' that she is now behaving 'impossibly' (92 ἀμήχανα) and 'crazily' (ἄνους, cf. 562). (ὀρθῶς φίλη must be primarily active here, cf. 73, 81, 9-10n., and E. IT 610; but 'loved by' may be understood too.) She thus acknowledges the legitimacy

of Ant.'s attitude, albeit half-disapprovingly and to her departing back.

100-61 Entrance Song (*Parodos*) of the Chorus

The Chorus, fifteen white-haired old men of upper-class appearance (159, 281, 1092-3; 843, 940, 988), arrive up one or both side-entrances, and take up position in the *orchestra*. As long-standing supporters of the Theban royal family (164-74), they have been summoned now to serve as a Council of Elders (159-61); but they speak for the city as a whole (102, 149, 153; cf. 110 ἀμετέραι γαί), and their utterances, esp. thus early in the play, are bound to shape the audience's interpretation of the present situation in Thebes. (Only after the Song is over do we learn of the Elders' close association with Kreon: 159-61, 164-9.)

Their first Song is an expression of the city's joy and relief at the defeat of the invading army. With many echoes from A.'s *Th.* and from epic (esp. 106-7, 125, 127-33nn.; cf. Else 1976: 35-40, Davidson 1983, Introd. §2), they rehearse the horror of the Argive onslaught and the highlights of the battle, and credit the gods with the sudden and total victory. Whereas the opening scene showed Pol.'s family reacting in anguish to the prospect of his unburied corpse, this ode vividly points out what Pol. had represented while he lived - a hideous threat to his whole community. The form of the ode is similar to that of the Entrance Songs of *Aj.* and *Ph.*, *A. Prom.* and *E. Med.* (cf. too *Ag.* 1448-1575), with strophic lyric stanzas alternating with chanted anapaests. In those other cases, however, an actor delivers the non-lyric passages, whereas here it is the Chorus Leader (*koryphaios*), with the anapaests serving to explain and supplement the more oblique lyrics rather than to contrast with them.

The Song is a hymn of thanks to the gods of Thebes: specifically, to the dawning Sun (100-9), Ares (124-6, 138-40), Zeus (127-33, 141-47), Victory (148-51), the pantheon (153-4), and Dionysos (154-5). Hymnic form normally follows a sequence of *invocation* (name plus epithets, often inc. birth, attributes, and localities; cf. 1115n.), *hypomnēsis* ('reminding' the deity of past benefactions or epiphanies), and *request* ('so now please grant ...' in the case of a *kletic* hymn; cf. 1142

μολεῖν, 1149 προφάνηθι, with 1115–54n.) or *envoi* ('farewell and thanks ...', for a *rhapsodic* hymn, as here; cf. 148–54n.); cf. Wunsch, *RE* ix s.v. Hymnos, E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Stuttgart 1956), Parry 1978: 26–9. Much of the ode is given to narrative describing this most recent demonstration of divine favour (= 'epiphany'), with characteristic use of the connective relative (110 ὅς) and explanatory particles (127, 141, 148 γάρ), and of temporal particles (103 ποτε, 120 πρίν ποτε, 132 ἤδη, 135 τότε, 151 νῦν), referring to the constantly renewed 'contract' of χάρις ('you have saved us now, as in the past ...; so we honour you now, as in the past'; cf. 110–16, 148–54nn.). Images of athletic competition add an 'epinikian' flavour (106–9 running with shield and armour; 125–6 wrestling; 131 javelin-throw; 131–2 finishing-line; 135 torch-race; 109, 140, 149 horses and chariots; 133, 148 victor's vaunt).

While hymnic form is not strictly observed throughout (e.g., the only direct address is to the Sun; and there are no patronymics, pedigrees, etc.), none the less the style is characteristically allusive and epithet-laden, singling out key moments and images while omitting or telescoping many of the narrative details (cf. 944–87); and the topical and temporal references of the first and last stanzas have the flavour of authentic cult.

Metre: strophe & antistrophe α

100	ἄκτις ἄελιου τὸ κάλ-	glyconic
117	στας δ' ὑπὲρ μελαθρων φωνω-	
101	λίστον ἐπταπύλῳ φάνεν	glyconic
118	σασιν ἀμφιχανων κυκλῶι	
102	Θηβαί τῶν προτέρων φᾶος,	glyconic//
119	λογχαῖς ἐπταπύλον στομα,	
103	ἐφάνθης ποτ', ὦ χρυσέας	choriambic dim.
120	ἔβα πρίν ποτ' ἀμετερων	
104	ἀμέρας βλεφάρων, Δῖρκαι-	glyconic (dragged)
121	αἱμάτων γενυσιν πλησθη-	

105	ὦν ὑπὲρ ῥεεθρων μολούσᾱ,	hipponactean//
122	ναί τε καὶ στεφανῶμα πυργῶν	
106	τὸν λευκάσπιν Ἀργόλικόν	choriambic dim.
123	πευκαεντ' Ἡφαιστον ἔλειν.	
107	φῶτα βαντὰ πανσάγια	choriambic dim.
124	τοῖος ἀμφὶ νωτ' ἔταθη	
108	φύγαδ' ἀπὸ δρόμον ὀξυτέρῳ	choriambic dim.
125	παταγος Ἄρεος, ἀντιπαλῶν	
109	κινήσασ' ἁλινῶι.	pherecretean//
126	δυσχειρῶμα δρακοντος.	

The aeolic character of this strophic pair is homogeneous and smooth, almost serene, in accordance with the cheerful subject-matter. Critical moments in the narrative are subtly highlighted by rhythmic shifts, in both strophe and antistrophe: at 103 = 120, the changed anceps-shape of ἐφάνθης/ἔβα (υ- instead of -x), represents the moment of resolution from tension/danger; and towards the end, the pace quickens from the heavy longs of the 'base' in 106 = 123 to the resolutions in 108 = 125 (υυ υ υυ υ -υυ-), corresponding to the 'headlong fleeing' and 'clatter' (106–9, 125nn.). Overall, the correspondence of word-shape and word-division between str. and ant. is unusually high, and there are significant verbal correspondences too (esp. in 103 = 120, 108–9 = 125–6; cf. 125–6n.); the effect seems to be to emphasize the harmony and serenity of mood.

The stanzas are built of familiar aeolic elements, esp. the glyconic (x x -υυ-υ-) and its 'anacastic' variant (-x-x-υυ- or x-x-υυ-υ-, West 1982: 30–1, 115–18; cf. Cole 1988: 79–97), also known as the 'choriambic dimeter' (Dale 1968: 132–6). There are three periods, of 3, 3, and 4 cola. Straight glyconic predominates in the first. In the second, chor. dim. makes an appearance (103 = 120), but gives way again to (slightly less regular) glyconic, with heavier ('dragged') ending in 104 = 121 (cf. 1122 = 1133, West 1982: 116–17), and a 'hipponactean' clausula in 105 = 122 (i.e. 'pendant' extension

misguided – optimism at 1115-54. The almost incantational alliteration and assonance of 152-4 (π, θ, χ/κ, and esp. παν-, θω/θη) are typical of cult invocation. W-Ingram suggests (1980: 115-16) that the occurrence of the name Βάκχιος in similar position to Ἄρης in the strophe (140) carries a sinister message (cf. too 136 βακχεύων); but there is no other hint here that Dionysos' activity will be anything other than beneficent.

ὁ Θήβας ἐλελίχθων: honorific epithet (elsewhere applied more literally to Poseidon, Pind. *P.* 6.50), governing objective gen. Θήβας (= Θήβης); this seems more likely than the variant ὁ ... ἐλελίζων (participial clause, 'the one who shakes Thebes', with Θήβας acc. plural).

ἄρχοι: both 'lead' us (= ἐξάρχοι, and cf. 1147 χορογῆ) and 'begin' the dance.

155-61 Enter Kreon, presumably up the opposite side-entrance to the Chorus'. His mask, costume, and bearing proclaim him a mature and authoritative king. He may still be wearing armour (cf. 33n.), and he is doubtless attended by a royal retinue.

These choral anapaests are formally the last 'stanza' of the epirrhematic Entrance Song (answering 141-7); but functionally they belong to the following scene (cf. 526-30), as the Elders announce the arrival of the new ruler and explain their own presence. The division between Song and dialogue is thus blurred, as if the Chorus are cut a little short in their celebrations by the speed of events and Kreon's haste.

155 ἀλλ' ὅδε γὰρ δὴ ... 'But (enough of that; cf. 148n.); for here (ὅδε) in fact comes the king ...', with δὴ, as often, 'marking the appearance of a new character on the stage', *GP* 103.4).

156 For the unusual monosyllabic prosody Κρέων (by synizesis), cf. *OC* 1073 Ῥέως, *A. Ag.* 1493 ἐκπνέων. (The synizesis of Μενοικέως is not unusual; cf. *OC* 1003 Θησεῖος etc.) We are missing υυ – or – – before or after νεοχμός, and we need a noun for νεοχμός to agree with ('a new <ruler> in these new circumstances'): perhaps ταγός or ἀρχων. But it is likely that the corruption is more extensive, since (i) Κρέων ὁ Μενοικέως seems pleonastic (West, following Hermann, suggests the more idiomatic παῖς ὁ Μενοικέως, cf. 211-12n.), and (ii) νεοχμός is nowhere else applied to a person.

158 τίνα δὴ μῆτιν ἐρέσσω ...; lit. 'rowing just what counsel

<is he coming?>', i.e. 'what is on his mind?' ἐρέσσω is common in the metaphorical sense 'ply vigorously' (van Ns 1963: 116-17); cf. *Aj.* 251 τοίᾱς ἐρέσσουσιν ἀπείλας.

159-60 σύγκλητον τήνδε γερόντων ... λέσχην 'this special conference of elders' (Jebb). In Athens, a σύγκλητος ἐκκλησία was a 'specially convened' meeting (cf. Hansen 1991: 133-5). In Homer, an advisory 'council of elders' is occasionally summoned (e.g. *Il.* 2.53 βουλὴν ... γερόντων); and Sparta and other states had a Γερουσία ('Senate'). Here, however, the Theban Elders will be asked not for advice, but for endorsement of a policy already implemented (164-9, 207-10, and cf. 211-14, 1091-1114, 1347-53nn.).

161 'Having sent <a message to us> in a shared summons', cf. 164-5.

162-331 Scene Two (First Epeisodion)

This Scene (or 'Act'; *Introd.* §3 n. 44) comprises two parts: (i) Kreon's statement to the Chorus of his policies, and their noncommittal response (162-222); (ii) the arrival of a Guard, reporting the mysterious burial of the corpse, and Kreon's furious reaction to this news (223-331).

162-210 Kreon's long opening *rhēsis* sounds confident and assertive. After complimenting the Elders on their loyalty (162-74), he first outlines the general principle on which his rule will be based: single-minded concern for the city's well-being, even at the expense of personal ties of φιλία (175-91); then he proceeds to the present application of this principle, i.e. the treatment of his two nephews' corpses (192-206); and concludes with a brief restatement of his ideals (207-10). For the structure of the argument, see Friis Johansen 1959: 114-16.

Kreon characterizes himself at once as a leader dedicated to maintaining the stability of his city through the proper exercise of his authority. In describing both his own qualities as a ruler and his expectations of his subjects (175-7n.), he makes frequent use of *gnōmai* and ethical generalizations (*Introd.* §5(c)), and his language is typical of contemporary Athenian political debate: e.g., ἀρχαί (177), νόμοι (177, 191) and εὐθύναι (178); the constant harping on πόλις (162, 166, 178, 191, 194, 203, 209), πάτρα (182), χθών (187), γῆ (199),

ἄστοι (186, 193); and the subordination of family interests to those of the city (182-90; cf. 'Perikles' at Thuc. 2.38-46 and esp. 2.60 (quoted on 188-90n.); cf. Dem. 19.247, Introd. 5(e)(ii)). For most Athenians, such phrases would presumably be charged with positive associations; and Kreon's references to 'straight', 'upright' government (162-3 ὠρθωσαν, 167 ὠρθου, 190 ὀρθῆς) and the 'ship of state' (162-3, 189-90) may also sound reassuringly traditional and legitimate. But his rejection, or redefinition, of φιλία (184-91) is quite radical, and such undemocratic terms as θρόνος (166, 173), κράτη πάντα (173, cf. 1163) and σέβοντας (166), as applied to his own status, strike a discordant note; cf. Bowra 1944: 72-8, Podlecki 1966. Furthermore, the references to his own person and opinions become obtrusive (ἐγώ, ἐμός, κτλ. occur nine times in these 49 lines, often in emphatic positions: 164, 173, 178, 184, 188, 191, 207 twice, 210; cf. 484-5n.).

162-3 τὰ μὲν δὴ . . . : 'one aspect' of the city's affairs (= the battle) has turned out well; the others will require the Elders' co-operation (ὕμᾱς δὲ . . .). For πόλεος = πόλεως, cf. A. Th. 218, *Supp.* 345; not elsewhere in S.

σάλωι σείσαντες: cf. OT 22-4 πόλις . . . σαλεύει κτλ. (also 586-92). This is the first of several nautical images employed by the 'good captain' Kreon; cf. 189-90, Goheen 1951: 44-52, van Nes 1963: 92.

θεοὶ . . . ὠρθωσαν: like the Chorus, Kreon piously acknowledges the role of the gods in the Argive defeat and his own accession to power (cf. 280-314n., and 184; also 993-5, 1058nn.). ὀρθός and its derivatives occur esp. frequently in Kreon's speeches, reflecting his determination to direct and shape nature and human beings as expertly as one might a boat or piece of metal (167, 190, 403, 494, 675; mimicked by Haimon at 636, 685, 706, Teiresias at 994; cf. too 99, 1158, 1195, 1203, Introd. §5(c) (and contrast 1343-6n.).

164-5 Lit. 'By messengers I summoned you, from all <the others> apart, to come here' (cf. 159-61, 100-61n.).

165-9 '... <because> I know well that, first, <you> always honoured the power of Laios' throne, and <then> again, while Oidipous was directing the city, <you honoured his rule>, and after he perished, you still remained reliable advisers around their children'. The variation of connectives (τοῦτο μὲν . . . τοῦτ' αὖθις . . . καὶ . . . ἔτι . . ., cf. 61-4, 1199-1202), and the ellipse of the second participial clause

(we have to supply σέβοντας . . . κράτη again after 167), blur the distinctions between the three stages, esp. since the plural κείνων (168) is oddly vague (= Oidipous and Iokaste, or Laios and Oidipous?). But there is no need to posit a lacuna after 167 (Dindorf, LJ&W); with this family some vagueness may be tactful.

170-2 διπλῆς . . . μίαν κτλ.: Kreon's words echo Ant.'s (13-14n.). But he does not employ the dual: to him the brothers are separate entities (cf. 2-3, 769nn.).

αὐτόχειρι σὺν μιάσματι: cf. 49-52n. Kindred bloodshed was a powerful source of 'pollution' (Parker 1983: 120-6). In this case, it might be uncertain whether each brother had expiated the pollution with his death, or whether some residue might continue to stain the rest of the family and community.

173-4 From requesting the Elders' continuing loyalty, Kreon goes on to assert his own authority (echoing 166 θρόνων . . . κράτη). ἐγώ (173) is emphatic, first word in the long-awaited main clause and in the trimeter, and juxtaposed with κράτη πάντα, which is in turn underlined by δὴ.

γένους κατ' ἀγγιστεῖα 'by reason of being next of kin'. ἀγγιστεῖα (neuter pl., not found elsewhere; but analogous to ἀριστεῖα) seems here to be equivalent to ἀγγιστεῖαν, the regular legal term for 'kinship' in matters of inheritance. In some traditions, Pol. and/or Eteokles had sons (Thersandros and Laodamas respectively: e.g., Hdt. 4.147, 5.61). But in extant tragedy this tradition is ignored (cf. 599). Kreon is thus not only the (implicitly, state-approved) στρατηγός (7-8n.), but, as the brothers' uncle, also their legal heir and κύριος of their sisters (7-8, 58nn.; also 486-7n.).

175-7 As he turns from the past to the immediate future (what kind of ruler will he turn out to be?), Kreon begins with a *gnōmē*, elaborating the proverb, ἀρχὴ ἄνδρα δείξει ('rule will reveal the <real> man', Aristotle, NE 5.1 1130a1, etc.). But his generalization (παντὸς ἀνδρός κτλ.) also raises the question, what kind of subjects he will turn out to have (cf. n. on ἐντριβῆς below, and 668-9n.) - and how do we 'learn' the true characters or thoughts of others, or even of ourselves, before it is too late (1347-53n.)?

ψυχὴν . . . φρόνημα . . . γνώμην: not easily distinguished; perhaps (roughly) 'character . . . mentality . . . judgement'. ψυχὴ in the Archaic period is limited to 'life-breath', 'ghost', or 'courage' (cf.

Neuters in -μα are commonly used in drama to express contempt for a person (Long 1968: 114-20: cf. 650 παραγκάλισμα, 756 δούλευμα, and e.g. *Aj.* 381 ἄλημα, *Ph.* 927, *E. Rhesos* 499 κρότημα; also 760 τὸ μῖσος). ἄλημα, though not found elsewhere before the fourth century (Euboulos *PCG* v 109; cf. *E. (?) Andr.* 937) would suit sense and tone here (cf. 324 κόμψευε). But a scholiast seems to read a variant ἄλημα (lit. 'fine-ground flour', hence 'word-sifter', 'manipulator', *Aj.* 381, 390), glossing it as = περίτριμμα τῆς ἀγορᾶς (a ref. to *Dem.* 18.127; cf. too *Ar. Clouds* 260 τρίμμα, 447 περίτριμμα δικῶν with Dover's nn., and *LSJ s.vv.* παιπάλη, παιπάλημα). The choice between them is difficult.

321 οὐχ οὐν . . . γ' 'Well, <I may be a chatterbox, but> I certainly never did this deed' (cf. 993, *GP* 422-4).

322 'Yes you did (γε), and what's more (καὶ ταῦτα) you betrayed your life for money.' (For ψυχῇ, cf. 227.) Here, and in 324-6, Kreon mechanically repeats his earlier assertions, as if no longer listening to anyone else.

323 φεῦ: The extra-metrum exclamation, interrupting the flow of stichomythia, marks this as a significant moment (cf. 1048, and *E. Ba.* 810), and underlines the degree to which the Guard by now controls the terms, tone, and pace of the discussion.

There follows an alliterative *gnōmē* levelled at Kreon himself, playing on the two senses of δόξα (δοκεῖ μοι ταῦτα can mean, 'These things appear to me <so>', or, 'This is my opinion/decision', cf. 1102, 1111): 'It is indeed disturbing, when someone is making up his mind according to <mere> appearances (ὦι δοκῇ γε), for those appearances in fact (καί, γον.) to be false' (cf. 622-5). ὦι δοκῇ is equivalent to ἔάν τιμι δοκῇ or ὦιτιμι ἄν δοκῇ (for the omission of ἄν, cf. 710-11, 1025-6nn.). The MS variant ἦν δοκῇ, though possible, is less idiomatic than the relative. Some editors read ὦι δοκεῖ, i.e. not gnomic but particular, 'It is terrible that this man . . .', which seems too bold even for this cocky character.

324 κόμψευε . . . τὴν δόξαν 'keep on playing that clever *doxa*-game of yours (= τὴν)!' To Kreon, the Guard is just a smart alec (κομπός, cf. 320 ἄλημα with n.; κόμψευε also echoes 323 καὶ ψευδῆ).

324-6 εἰ δὲ . . . | φανείτε κτλ.: construction, thought, and lan-

guage all repeat Kreon's earlier threats (306-7; 303; 310-12); cf. 322n.

δειλά 'vile', 'worthless', cf. *Theognis* 835 κέρδεα δειλά.

327-31 Kreon is already departing, and may not be intended to hear the Guard's final comments (*Mastronarde* 1979: 30, cf. *E. El.* 1142-6, *Ba.* 515-18), which are typically breezy and self-centred, echoing his opening remarks (330 ἐκτὸς ἐλπίδος / 235; 328 τύχη, 331 τοῖς θεοῖς / 236). The larger issues are not *his* concern, but Kreon's, the gods', fate's, luck's . . .; he himself is just surprised and relieved to be alive, and sure that he will not be back (329 heavily emphatic; but see 388-400 with n.). The Guard's own little comedy, with its unexpected conflicts and reversals, is integrally bound up with Ant.'s tragedy.

332-75 Second Song (First Stasimon) of the Chorus

The Elders have heard Kreon's edict; and now they have heard the Guard's account of the mysterious burial. Their reactions have hitherto been muted and non-committal (211-20, 278-9). Now, left to themselves, rather than comment directly on the previous scene, or speculate as to the outcome of future events, they launch into a far-ranging consideration of the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the human race. This is perhaps the most celebrated song in all Greek tragedy (often referred to as the 'Ode to Man'). It is also one of the least straightforward in its function and meaning.

The Chorus begin by describing, in ascending order, the extraordinary achievements of human civilization: *strophe* α - control over the natural environment (navigation and agriculture); *antistrophe* α - control over animals (hunting and fishing, harnessing of horse and bull); *strophe* β - the civilized arts (language, reason, urbanization and house-building, medicine - but not immortality); finally (*antistrophe* β) they consider the proper and improper use of these talents, and issue a prayer to avoid the latter. The sustained level of generality is such that modern critics have disagreed radically in their interpretation of the Song, even as they have admired it as a piece of poetry. Is the view of 'Man' (333 ἄνθρωπος, 347 ἀνὴρ) predominantly favourable, predominantly unfavourable, mixed, or neutral?

(Or, to put it another way, should we translate the key term of the opening line, δεινόν, as 'wonderful', 'terrible', 'strange', or 'extraordinary' (cf. 332n.)?) And what is the true point of 368–71, which ought to provide the connection with the immediate context (cf. 372 ἐμοί, 375 ὅς τ' ἔρδει)? What and whom should we have in mind when the Chorus sing of 'respecting the laws and ... gods' (368–9) on the one hand, and 'excessive daring' (371 τόλμας) on the other?

Some have concluded that the Chorus here transcend the perspective of the Elders of Thebes, to offer instead S.'s own insights; or even that the song was composed by S. as a self-contained entity, a lyric *tour de force* on the human condition that bears no particular relevance to this play (so Brown 1987). But there is no need to resort to such desperate critical measures. Rather, we may read the ode (like several in tragedy) from a double perspective, both as an attempt by this group of old Thebans to make sense of what they have just seen and heard, and as a complex and open-ended verbal structure in which S. allows us to explore larger themes arising out of this particular situation. In the choral lyric tradition, audiences were accustomed to using their intellects and imaginations to make connections between allusive myths, or free-standing moral generalizations, and the immediate occasion and context of performance (cf. 944–87n.). So here, the ironies and paradoxes that we come to recognize with regard to the different 'authors' and audiences of this ode, and the sweeping vistas that are opened up for interpretation, in no way detract from its immediate dramatic relevance and function.

In the preceding scene, the Elders' puzzlement and fear were conspicuous; and these mixed emotions continue to colour their description of 'Man' and his achievements throughout this ode. They see 'Man' as ethically double-edged, talented but flawed; by 'the act of daring' (371) they mean specifically the ingenious but illegal burial of Pol.'s body (cf. 248 ὁ τολμήσας τάδε, 59 νόμου βίαι, 287 νόμους διασκεδών); and they worry that the man who perpetrated it (375; cf. 262, 302, 321) may bring ruin on himself and all of Thebes (370 ἄπολις). This, we may say, is the 'surface' meaning of the Song – what the Elders *intend* to say.

But from the better-informed perspective of the reader/audience, many of their words take on quite different significance (even as we

share their point of view too, at least intermittently): we can see things that they cannot. We know who performed the burial, and why – the 'daring' that accomplished it was proof, not only of human ingenuity, but also of piety and courage (as well as luck or divine favour; cf. 278–9n.); and it was intended not so much to subvert the laws of the land as to uphold them (23–4, 74–7; cf. 454–7). Conversely, the figure of the over-zealous civilizer (catcher, tamer, builder, teacher), may remind us (if not the Elders) of Kreon, currently 'high in his city' (368–70; cf. 1160–71) through dedication to its laws and gods (367–9, cf. 175–83, 285–8, 510ff.); cf. Goheen 1951: 54–6, Segal 1964.

The ode is also of interest as a document in the 'history of ideas'. It stands as one of the earliest extant examples of the growing Greek interest in the evolution of human societies and in the opposition between 'nature' (φύσις) and 'culture' (νόμος), subjects central to the new scientific, anthropological, and political currents of the mid-fifth century. Although the ode does not present a continuous evolutionary narrative, like that of 'Protagoras' at Plato, *Prot.* 320c–322d, or Prometheus at A. *Prom.* 442–506 (cf. Guthrie 1971: 60–8, 79–84, A. T. Cole, *Democritus and the sources of Greek anthropology* (APA Monogr 25, 1967)), it does provide a similarly comprehensive list of human achievements that distinguishes the higher stages of civilization from the life of beasts, and culminates with 'political' life, justice, and law (368 νόμους, 369 δίκαν, 370 ὑπόπολις, ἄπολις). Here, even more prominently than in those other accounts, the ambiguous moral character of 'technology' (esp. 365 τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας) and of human ingenuity in general is emphasized: culture is presented as an aggressive process of 'defeating' and 'mastering' nature (338–9, 343, 347nn.). So, while the 'wonderful' benefits of architecture, medicine, language, and law are acknowledged, so is mankind's 'terrible' urge to dominate and to push beyond accepted limits: οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον. See further esp. Benardete 1975, Burton 1980: 95–104, Segal 1964, 1981: 152–66.

Metre: strophe and antistrophe α

332 πῶλλ' ἄ τ' αἰνῶν κοῦδ' ἐν ἄν-
342 κουφονων τε φυλον ὁρ-

choriambic dim.

- 360 παντοπόρος· ἀπόρος ἐπ' οὐδεν ἔρχεται $e \times e \times e$
 370 ὑψιπολις· ἀπαλις ὅτωι το μη καλον
- 361 τὸ μέλλον· Ἄϊδα μόνον $\times e e$
 371 ξυνεσσι τολμας χαριν.
- 362 φευξίν οὐκ ἐπαξεται, $e \times e$
 372 μητ' ἐμοι παρεστιος
- 363 νόσων δ' ἀμηχανὼν φύγας $\times e \times e$
 374 γενοιτο μητ' ἴσον φρονων
- 364 ξυμπέφρασταί. $e \times //$
 375 ὅς ταδ' ἔρδει.

The metre could be categorized as 'dactylo-epitrite', as it is easily described in 'D × e' notation; but it might better be regarded as 'prosodiac-enoplian', for the dactylic (D) and epitritic (e = iambic) elements are less integrated with one another than is usual for true dac.-ep. (cf. West 1982: 132-6, Dale 1968: 162, 180-4). Thus the first period (353-5 = 365-7) is predominately 'dactylic' (i.e. deploys largely the expanded choriamb, or 'hemiepes', -UU-UU-, plus anceps; but no cretics), whereas the rest is entirely cretic/iambic, and contains no double-shorts at all (apart from the scurrying resolutions of 360 = 370). In the clausula to the first period (355 = 367), the responsion of τότε μὲν . . . το ὄργας confirms that this is a 'rising' aeolic colon of the expanded 'aristophanean' type (in effect, 'Alcaic decasyllable' preceded by one long syll.; cf. 585 = 596), rather than dac.-ep., since resolution of anceps in dac. ep. is very rare.

In the iambic portion, we twice have a movement from syncopated dimeters, to a faster, less syncopated element (360 = 370, 363 = 373), and back to a heavier, syncopated clausula (361 = 371, 364 = 375). The final element of all (-UU-), although analysable as a 'trochaic' metron, maintains the cretic/iambic character (Dale 1968: 95-6), while reasserting the pendant tendency of the first strophic pair (cf. 341 = 351).

Particularly striking are the strong punctuation and resolutions in

360 = 370 (see 355-60n.), which provide a climactic effect, of build-up and release, followed by renewed, unresolved tension. Overall, in both strophe and antistrophe the words accompanied by iambic rhythms are generally darker in mood than those of the dactylic portions.

332 πολλά τὰ δεινὰ . . . : a brief example of *priamel*, a common rhetorical device for focusing attention on the intended object of praise or blame (here, ἀνθρώπος) by briefly considering and rejecting others first (e.g. Sappho fr. 16, Pindar, *O.* 1.1ff.). The opening words recall those of A. *Cho.* 585ff. πολλά μὲν γὰρ τρέφει δεινὰ . . ., which likewise ends up focusing on ἀνδρὸς φρόνημα (594): there the associations of δεινὰ are almost entirely sinister; but here it soon becomes obvious that the epithet has been chosen precisely because of its multivalence ('terrible', 'awe-inspiring', 'wonderful', 'strange', 'clever', 'extraordinary'). These first two lines thus open up for 'humankind' an almost infinite range of possibilities.

ἀνθρώπου: cf. 347 ἀνὴρ with n., and contrast 278-9.

334 τοῦτο: i.e. ἀνθρώπου, cf. 296 τοῦτο after 295 ἄργυρος. The pronoun seems to be attracted into the neuter by the adjacent neuter predicate noun (here, sc. τὸ δεινόν, cf. 295 νόμισμα).

334-41 The list of human achievements begins with a 'polar' or 'universalizing' doublet: sea and land (Bundy 1961: 24-5; cf. 39-40, 785-6, 951-4nn.). What is emphasized is not, as often, the initial invention of ships and ploughs, but the daring and perseverance that continue to drive people to defy natural limits. Both elements present challenges; but sea-faring is esp. appropriate to set the tone for the whole ode, given its notoriously ambiguous status, as a positive symbol of adventure and technical mastery, but also a negative one of temerity, violation of boundaries, and unnatural greed (Horace, *Odes* 1.3.9ff. with Nisbet and Hubbard's nn.). To the Athenians of the 440s, heavily dependent on imported grain, victors of Salamis, and rulers of the Aegean through the Delian League, triremes and trade were indispensable sources of power and prosperity; but none the less, at least among the upper classes, and in the rest of mainland Greece, farming, hunting, hoplite and cavalry warfare, and landed wealth continued to be more highly respected.

335 νότωι: dat. of agent, cf. 586-9, Hom. *Od.* 14.253 ἐπλέομεν Βορέηι ἀνέμωι. The stormy south wind blows in the winter, when sailing is most hazardous (Hes. *WD* 675-7).

336-7 περιβρυχίοισιν | ... ὑπ' οἰδμασιν 'proceeding beneath billows that engulf <them> all around', cf. LSJ *s.v.* βρύχιος, ὑπόβρυχα, ὑποβρύχιος. The alliteration of initial π- (and χ-) in 334-7 is striking; then τ/θ in 338-9.

338-41 ὑπερτάταν 'most august', because 'oldest'; cf. Plato, *Tim.* 40c γῆν ... πρώτην καὶ πρεσβυτάτην θεῶν, Solon fr. 4a.2 West.

Γᾶν | ἄφθιτον, ἀκαμάταν ἀποτρύεται: oxymoron, with a slightly sinister flavour, perhaps enhanced by the heavy rhythm and punctuation (see n. on *Metre*). Though the earth is 'inexhaustible and untiring', mankind still 'rubs her away', 'wears her out <to his own advantage>' (middle), as if she surrenders only grudgingly (cf. Hes. *WD* 42-6). For the rare (but metrically convenient) fem. ending of ἀκαμάταν, usually two-termination, cf. *El.* 1239 ἀδμήταν, A. *Cho.* 619. For the initial lengthening (ἀκαμ-), convenient in dactylic/anapaestic contexts, cf. epic ἀθάνατος κτλ., and 837 ἰσοθέοις.

ἱλλομένων ἀρότρων ἔτος εἰς ἔτος 'as the ploughs ply up and down (or 'circle round'; cf. LSJ *s.v.* εἴλω c), year after year', an adaptation of Homeric περιτιλλομένων ἐνιαυτῶν ('as the seasons wheel round'). For ἔτος εἰς ἔτος, cf. A. *Prom.* 682 γῆν πρὸ γῆς, Hes. *Th.* 742, Blaydes on Ar. *Ach.* 235. The quick, steady dactylic rhythm of 339-40 reinforces the sense of regularity.

ἱππείωι γένει: probably periphrasis for the less dignified 'mules' (ἡμιόνοις: cf. Simonides fr. 515 *apud* Ar. *Rhet.* 3 2.14.1405b). Horses were rarely used for ploughing.

πολεύων: here transitive, the regular term for 'turning over' the soil; cf. Hes. *WD* 462 ἔαρι πολεῖν, with West's n. More strictly correct would be the neuter, πολεῖν; but the switch to the masc. is not uncommon (and cf. 343 ἀμφιβαλόν). The two forms would in any case have been written identically by S. in the old Attic script.

342-7 Birds, wild beasts, fish are caught (for food) in mankind's cunning nets.

κουφονόων ('unthinking') goes primarily with ὀρνίθων (cf. 617, and Theognis 580 ὀρνιθος κοῦφον ἔχουσα νόον), but applies implicitly to all three classes of creature, in contrast to 347 περιφραδῆς ἀνὴρ.

ἀμφιβαλὼν ἄγει | ... | σπείραισι δικτυοκλώστοις are to be taken together, with φύλον, ἔθνη, φύσιν objects of both verbs. The elaborate, even pleonastic, periphrases are typical of high choral lyric. ἄγει = 'carries off', 'takes'; cf. 877 ἄγομαι, and the common idiom ἄγειν καὶ φέρειν.

347 περιφραδῆς ἀνὴρ: 'cunning'/'careful'/'skilful' would all fit here (cf. 364 συμπεφρασται); the περι- prefix may be intensive ('very') or may denote 'on every side' (cf. περιφράζομαι). The delayed subject gains emphasis (cf. 360 παντοπόρος with n.), further enhanced by the mid-colon punctuation. For ἀνὴρ, shifting unobtrusively from ἀνθρώπου (333), cf. 221-2, 248, 290nn.

347-52 The higher animals, horses and oxen (and sheep and goats?), are domesticated and harnessed for mankind's use. κρατεῖ (347) presents a more politically charged image of 'control', 'domination' over nature than 'passing through' (336-7 χωρεῖ, περῶν) or 'wearing out' (339 ἀποτρύεται) or 'capturing' (343 ἄγει); cf. Kreon at 173, 485, 679-80; also 61-4. In 347-50, it is hard to determine what kind of animal(s) is meant by θηρὸς ὀρессиβάτα, and whether this is a separate category from that of horse and bull in 351-2: ἄγραυλος and ὀρессиβάτης may be applied to almost any semi-domesticated animal, including cattle (cf. 352 οὔρειον), pigs (cf. Pindar fr. 313 ὀρείκτιτος), and horses (cf. Strabo 3.4.15 ὀρειβατεῖν). Sheep and goats might seem the most obvious candidates (cf. Plato, *Laws* 677b, *OT* 1100, Hom. *Od.* 9.155 αἶγες ὀρεσκῶιοι, Hes. *Shield* 407): but this would entail taking μηχαναῖς as 'fences', 'pens' etc. - rather feeble as examples of human 'mastery' (unless we think too of shears, gelding-irons, milk-pails?). 'Harnesses' (yoke, reins, bit, etc.) used to 'control' oxen and horses suit the normal sense of μηχανή much better. So, rather than taking θ' in 350 as linking separate statements ('he masters animal x and harnesses animals y and z'), we should probably regard it as explanatory ('he masters the wild animals, i.e. harnesses horse and bull'; cf. 355 καί and Smyth §§2968, 2869a). In 351, the MSS offer ἄζεται, ἔζεται, ἄζετ', or ἔζετ', none of which scans or makes sense: we need a past or present tense ('has put under' or 'puts under') scanning υ-υυ. The scholiast's gloss is ὑπάγει (cf. Hom. *Il.* 16.148 ὑπαγε ζύγον ὠκέας ἵππους, 23.291, etc., Sappho fr. 44.17), so we might read ὑπηγάγετο (or ὑπήγαγεν, or possibly ὑπήγαγ' ἔς, Blaydes), perhaps with Doric α (ὑπάγ-).

Another possibility is ἵππον ὀχμάζεται ἀμφὶ λόφον ζύγῳ, with the final -ωι shortened by correption (Schöne and Franz, accepted by Dawe, Brown, LJ&W).

353-64 By learning language, reasoning, city-planning and house-building, and medicine, mankind has devised 'refuge' from the elements and from disease – from everything except death itself. The stanza dwells on human resourcefulness in finding a 'way out' or 'escape' from inanimate threats (360 παντοπόρος, ἄπορος; 359 φεύγειν, 362 φεύξιν, 363 φυγὰς). The 'impulse to organize cities' (ἀστυνόμοι ὄργαι) develops after technical mastery of the natural world is complete (cf. 332-75n., and Aristot. *Pol.* 1.2.12, 6.8.4 on ἀστυνομία). Usually the invention of language is listed at an earlier stage (e.g. E. *Supp.* 201-13, Guthrie 1971: 61-2; cf. 332-75n.).

353-4 ἀνεμόεν | φρόνημα 'thought as quick as the wind', cf. Hom. *Il.* 15.80-3 (νόος), *Od.* 7.36 (νόημα), and esp. A. *Cho.* 593 ἀνεμόεντα ... κότον (332n.). So φρόνημα here = νοῦς (contrast 458-60n.).

355 ὀργὰς 'impulses', 'disposition'. Although ὀργαί are usually innate (as e.g. *Aj.* 639 συντρόφοις ὀργαῖς, A. *Supp.* 763), the idea that people might acquire, even 'learn' different 'dispositions' is not uncommon: E. *Tro.* 53 ὀργὰς ἡπίους, Semonides fr. 7.11 ὀργὴν ἄλλοτε ἀλλοίην ἔχει, Theognis 214; cf. too 875.

ἐδιδάξατο 'he taught himself' (or 'they taught one another'), a rare use of the middle as reflexive (cf. *Aj.* 1376 ἀγγέλλομαι ... εἶναι φίλος = 'I announce myself ...', Campbell 52, Smyth §1717).

355-60 After the three acc. objects of 353-5, the construction switches to infin. (φεύγειν): '... <and he taught himself> how to escape ...'

ὑπαίθρεια or ἐναίθρεια is the most likely correction of the MS αἶθρια (to restore correspondence with 368; see n. on *Metre*). It is probably best taken as a noun: (lit.) 'to escape the open air of uncomfortable frosts and the harshly-raining shafts'. The alternative, adj. agreeing with βέλῃ, is awkward: 'to escape the open-air <shafts> of frost and the rainy shafts'. (What are 'shafts of frost?') For the whole phrase, cf. A. *Ag.* 335-6 τῶν ὑπαίθριων πάγων | δρόσων τ' ἀπαλλαχθέντες (and cf. *Ag.* 555 δυσσυλίας); also S. fr. 96 Radt.

παντοπόρος· ἄπορος ...: παντοπόρος = εὐπόρος (see LSJ s.v. II.2), summing up all of 353-9, while alliteration, *homoioteleuton*, asyn-

deton, punctuation and resolutions combine to emphasize this pivotal antithesis (echoed in 370 ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις ..., cf. n. on *Metre*).

360-1 οὐδέν ... | τὸ μέλλον 'nothing that might occur' (i.e. the opposite of πᾶν τὸ μέλλον); more normal would be οὐδέν τῶν μελλόντων.

361-4 Αἶδα μόνον ...: the blunt (asyndetic) reminder of mankind's one inescapable limitation is quickly mitigated by the bold claim that '<previously> irresistible diseases' can be escaped. Thus medicine, as the art that comes closest to bringing immortality, represents the apex of the list (as at A. *Prom.* 477-83 ... πόρους ἐμψάμην· | τὸ μὲν μέγιστον ... τὰς ἀπάσας ἐξαμύνονται νόσους).

ἐπάξεται 'will procure' (LSJ s.v. ἐπάγω II.1).

365-7 Lit. 'Having this resourceful <quality> of invention <as> something clever beyond expectation, <he> proceeds sometimes <to> harm (or 'evil,' cf. 370), other times to good.'

τὸ μηχανόεν | τέχνας: an almost Thucydidean abstraction (e.g. 1.90 τὸ ... ὑποπτον τῆς γνώμης), cf. J. S. Rusten, *Thuc. Book II* (Cambridge 1989) 22-3. For τέχνας in this context, cf. Plato, *Prot.* 321c τὴν ἐντεχνον σοφίαν, A. *Prom.* 506 with Griffith's n.; also 494 τεχνωμένων.

τοτέ μὲν ... ἄλλοτ': variation for ἄλλοτε μὲν ... ἄλλοτε δὲ ..., or τοτέ μὲν ... τοτέ δὲ ...; cf. *El.* 739 τότ' ἄλλος, ἄλλοθ' ἄτερος ... (The MS variant ποτέ would also be possible. For the responsion, ποτέ μὲν / ὀργὰς (355), see n. on *Metre*).

ἐπ' goes (ἀπὸ κοινοῦ) with κακόν as well as ἐσθλόν (257-8n.).

368-71 Hitherto, 'mankind' (333 ἄνθρωπος, 347 ἀνὴρ) has been the single, unified subject of every verb. With τοτέ ... ἄλλοτ', it was suggested that 'sometimes' this subject acts one way, 'sometimes' another; but now the existence of two distinct kinds of people, or individuals, is implied (370 ὅτῳ, 375 ὅς).

γεραίρων is the most likely correction of the MS παρείρων ('interweaving ...', vainly defended by Campbell, LJ&W 1990: 124). The Elders assume that the (human) 'laws of the land' and the 'justice of the gods' go hand in hand (cf. 304-5n., contrast 450-60).

ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις: (cf. 360 παντοπόρος· ἄπορος with n.) We may understand both (i) '... his city is high; but his city is nothing, if ...' (cf. Pind. *P.* 8.2 μεγιστόπολις, LSJ s.v. ἄπολις III), and (ii) 'He is high in his city; but he is outcast if ...' (cf. *OT* 510 ἡδύπολις, LSJ s.v.

ἄπολις 1). Like Kreon, the Elders see the interests of citizen, ruler and *polis* as identical (191n.).

370-5 At last comes the more specific and personal application (372 ἐμοί) of the ode's general message. Someone has committed an act of 'daring' (τόλμας, cf. 248 ὁ τολήσας, and 278-9), which may endanger the whole city: so the Chorus pray never themselves to associate with the 'perpetrator of these deeds'.

μήτ' ... παρέστιος | ... μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν: i.e. sharing neither domestic nor political association; cf. *OT* 249 ξυνέστιος, and *Hdt.* 1.60 τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήσαντες ('making common cause'). Less likely, 'May he never think like me' = 'May I never think like him', cf. *Hom. Il.* 15.50 ἴσον ἐμοὶ φρονέουσα (so Jebb).

ὅς τάδ' ἔρδει: most naturally taken as 'he who who is doing these things' (i.e. the defier of Kreon's edict; cf. 252 ὁ ἐργάτης), though the phrase could be equivalent to ὅστις ἄν τοιάδε ἔρδῃ (like the MS variant ἔρδοι).

376-581 Scene Three (Second Epeisodion)

There are three phases to this Scene, but the transitions between them are smooth and seamless (441-9n.). In the first (376-445), the Guard returns with Ant. under escort, and describes to Kreon how she was caught re-burying the corpse. When Kreon questions her, Ant. acknowledges responsibility, and the Guard departs. In the second phase (446-525), Kreon and Ant. argue about the rights and wrongs of honouring Pol.'s corpse: neither gives way, and Kreon becomes even angrier, going on to accuse Ismene of complicity in the burial and threatening to execute her too. In the third phase (526-81), Ismene is brought in, and a three-way dialogue ensues, with Ismene insisting that she did participate in the burial, but Ant. rejecting her claim. As the scene closes, Ismene tries unsuccessfully to dissuade Kreon from executing Ant., by appealing to the prospect of his son's marriage to her.

376-440 In previous scenes we have seen Ant. and Kreon state their principles and intentions, and we are by now fully prepared to witness the confrontation between them. But after Ant. is led in, suspense for the *agōn* ('formal debate', *Introd.* §3) between them is further increased, as Ant. stands silently by (441n.) while the Guard

delivers his long *rhēsis* narrating her capture. This speech vividly portrays Ant.'s devotion to her brother's body, while also deepening the sense of mystery surrounding the burial, as we hear of the sudden dust-storm that allowed her to escape the notice of the guards. Critics have puzzled (though audiences generally have not) as to why Ant. returned to Pol.'s body, and, if she was planning to re-bury it (as her carrying of a pitcher implies, 430), why she was so surprised to find the corpse uncovered (423-8). (Of course, if the first burial was the gods' doing, and did not involve Ant. at all, this would actually be her first visit to the corpse (M. H. McCall, *JCS* 22 (1972) 107-11); but see 223-331, 278-9, 435nn.). Some have argued that, by uncovering the corpse (409-10), Kreon's guards have indeed negated the earlier burial rites, so that Ant. is impelled by religious obligation to repeat them: but the Guard's earlier account explicitly stated that 'due burial' was completed (246-7 θάψας ... ἃ χρῆ, cf. 256). Others see the two burials as working on different levels, the first symbolically satisfying divine law, while the second represents Ant.'s human expression of devotion to her brother (G. Held, *Hermes* 111 (1983) 190-201). Or, in a cruder interpretation, S. has included two burials for purely 'dramatic' reasons: so that first Kreon can react to the (successfully completed) secret burial, and then Ant. can be caught in the act (Wilamowitz 1917: 33-4).

However, it seems unnecessarily pedantic thus to analyse Ant.'s (or S.'s) motives, esp. since the two burials are surrounded with mysterious ambiguities that subtly thwart rational explanation. In purely human terms, there is nothing surprising about Ant.'s returning to the corpse to pay further respects, or about her distress at seeing it lying exposed again (423-8n.). Yet the possibility of divine intervention is again left open: 'The second burial is as uncanny as the first. Ant. is hidden from the guards by the whirlwind of dust until she is already beside the body ... This is an implicit miracle - just natural enough to explain Kreon's failure to see the gods at work. And if Ant. is aided by miraculous help here, we may suspect she had it earlier' (Scodel 1984: 55-6; cf. 256, 278-9nn.).

376-83 The choral anapaests abruptly announce an unexpected 'apparition' (τέρας): Ant. is being led in (up the same *eisodos* used for her exit at 97: *Introd.* §4) under an armed escort - headed by the familiar figure of the Guard. The *korymbaios* greets her with amazement

(πῶς ..., τί ποτ' ..., οὐ δὴ που ...), tinged with pity (379-80) and unconcealed disapproval (381 ἀπιστοῦσαν, 383 ἀφροσύνη). Can *this* really be the bold and lawless criminal of whom they have just been singing (370-5)? What are they (or we) to think (ἀμφινόω) or say (πῶς ... ἀντιλογήσω ...)? In performance it could be made clear whether their address to Ant. is a genuine greeting, or a self-contained *apostrophē*, the questions merely rhetorical and 'apistetic' ('I can hardly believe ...', Mastronarde 1979: 12, 94). In any case, they receive no response from her (384-5, 441nn.).

376-8 ἐς 'in the face of', cf. *Tr.* 1243 ἀπορεῖν ἐς πολλά, *OT* 980. τόδε 'here' (deictic). Postponed thus, and followed by punctuation and asyndeton, it gives an unsettled rhythm, emphasizing the Chorus' consternation. It is probably a mistake to smooth this out, e.g. by punctuating before τόδε rather than after, or adopting εἰ for ἐς and inserting <δ> after πῶς (with Reiske, LJ&W).

ἀντιλογήσω: probably aorist subj. (deliberative), though fut. indic. is possible: 'How, when I know that this is Ant., can I maintain that it is not?'

381 οὐ δὴ που introduces 'a surprised or incredulous question' (*GP* 223.ii, 267.iii); here followed by emphatic οὐ γὰρ = 'Surely it can't really be *you* ...?'

ἀπιστοῦσαν: cf. 219, 656. The present (= 'imperfect') tense denotes a continuing attitude, while her particular act of disobedience is specified by the aorist καθελόντες (383).

382 The one-syllable overlap of the anapaestic metron (τοῖς βασιλείοισιν ἀγούσι νόμοις) is unusual for S. (elsewhere only at 141 επτά λοχαγοὶ γάρ, and *OC* 1771; see Parker, *CQ* 8 (1958) 82-9); so some read βασιλείοις ἀνάγουσι or ἀπάγουσι. (ἀπάγω is often used of 'arresting' a criminal, but usually with the force of 'taking him away', which is out of place here; cf. 435n.)

383 ἀφροσύνη: cf. 49, 95, 220nn., and 562, 603; *Intro.* §5(d)(iii).

384-5 ἦδ' ... | τήνδ': emphatically deictic, 'Here she is ...! This is the one ...!' (cf. 377 τόδε, 386 ὅδε). With no formalities (contrast 223-36), the Guard blurts out his news, and himself supplies the answer to the Chorus' questions (376-83n.). Only then (ἀλλά) does he pause abruptly to note that Kreon is not present to hear it.

386-7 ἐς δέον ... ποῖαι ... τύχη: by dramatic convention, the

King returns 'just at the right moment', cf. 1180-2, *OT* 1416. The MS variant ἐς μέσον ('in public') fits less well with 387.

388-400 Another half-comic moment from the Guard (cf. 223-36n.), as he trots out seven lines (388-94) of self-important truisms to explain his re-arrival: four more lines (396-7, 399-400) on his own good fortune, and just three lines (395-6, 398-9) about the capture of Ant. (See again 437-40, Mastronarde 1979: 37.)

388 οὐδέν ἐστ' ἀπώμοτον 'There is nothing that you could swear would never happen' (cf. 329-31), echoing the proverbial χρημάτων ἀελπτὸν οὐδέν ἐστίν οὐδ' ἀπώμοτον (*Archil.* fr. 122.1 West; cf. 394 ἀπώμοτος).

389 'Second thoughts make a lie of intentions.' ἐπίνοια apparently here = 'after-thought', as in 'Epimetheus' (and perhaps A. *Supp.* 1043; Griffith, *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 339). But usually it means much the same as γνώμη (*Coray* 1993: 202), and this may be another example of the Guard's over-inflated manner. (For the *aphaeresis*, cf. 83n.)

389-91 'I was insisting that I should not be here again at all soon, by reason of your threats just now', referring to 329-31 (cf. 394). For σχολῇ ποτε, cf. 231n., and LSJ s.v. β.2. For (emphatic) ἄν + future indic./infin., see *GMT* §197, 208, 216, and e.g. Plato, *Rep.* 615d, Thuc. 2.80.1 ῥαϊδίως ἄν ... κρατήσουσι and 2.80.8, with Rusten's nn., Moorhouse 1982: 216-17. For the dative (ἀπειλαῖς), cf. 690-1n.

ἐχειμάσθην: a common image, esp. in tragedy and medical writers; cf. *Ph.* 1460, A. *Prom.* 563, 838, van Nes 1963: 22-5.

392-4 ἀλλ' ... γὰρ ... | ἦκω: see *GP* 98-9, and 148-9n., 155. Lit. 'But - since joy that is outside, and contrary to, all expectation is in no way like any other pleasure in its extent - I have come back!' (οὐδέν adverbial, μήκος internal acc. of 'respect' or 'extent').

ἐκτός: sc. ἐλπίδος, cf. 330. The zeugma of ἐκτός (+ gen.) καὶ παρ' (+ acc. ἐλπίδας) is harsh and somewhat pleonastic, and no near parallel has been adduced (K-G II §450.h, 444.b); perhaps it should be taken as an expansion of παρέξ, as in Homeric παρέκ νόον. If emendation is preferred, Bothe's εὐκτός is neat ('wished-for even against expectation', cf. LJ&W 1990: 125), though normally the *event*, not the 'joy', would be expressly 'wished-for'.

cf. 499-501, Ellendt 777 col. 1; with the MS variant ἐμοί, Kreon's reply would seem a little less absolute and decisive.

576-7 δεδογμέν' (sc. ἐστί) = δέδοκται (cf. 447 κηρυχθέντα with n.). ὥς ἔοικε adds a note of finality (cf. 7-10 with n.). Ismene means only to observe objectively, 'It is decided, so it seems, that ...'; but Kreon callously takes the phrase as meaning 'It seems good': 'Yes (γε), to you *and* to me.' (If the Chorus spoke 576 (see 572-6, 574nn.), Kreon might genuinely believe that they agreed with his policy (cf. 211-14n.); but the Chorus would hardly use the singular τήνδε, when *both* sisters are under Kreon's sentence of death (489-90, 531-5, 577-81; cf. 769-70 with nn.).)

μὴ τριβᾶς ἔτ': sc. ποιήσθε; 'Don't delay!' (cf. A. Ag. 1055-6 οὐ ... σχολή ... τρίβειν). See too 1078 οὐ ... τριβή.

578-9 'From now on, they must be <proper> women, and not roaming loose' (cf. 18-19n.). Kreon's anxiety that his captives might escape (580 φεύγουσι) is characteristically tinged with horror of female independence; cf. 944-87n., Seaford 1990.

ἀνειμένας: cf. El. 516 ἀνειμένη μὲν ... αὖ στρέφηι ('Are you on the loose again?'), and LSJ s.vv. ἀνίημι II.6, ἀνετος (implying moral 'laxness' too).

580-1 Kreon concludes with another ill-chosen *gnōmē* (cf. 473-96n.): 'Even bold men try to escape, you know (τοι, cf. 473), once they see Death actually (ἦδη) closing in.' He underestimates the sisters' resolve.

Ismene and Ant. are led inside. Kreon probably remains on stage during the Choral Song that follows (626-30n., Introd. §4 p. 24).

582-625 Third Song (Second Stasimon) of the Chorus

With the two sisters, the last direct descendants of the House of the Labdakids, facing imprisonment and execution, the Chorus sing about the divine forces that can haunt and destroy a family, and about the recurrent patterns of human folly and misery. Although the opening phrase suggests a *makarismos* ('Blessed are they who ...'; 582n.), the rest of the ode dwells on the deceptive and destructive power of the gods.

The morality and theology of the Song are deeply traditional, with echoes from Hesiod, Solon, Hdt., and esp. A. Th. 720-91 (cf.

Easterling 1978, Else 1976: 11-18, 74-6). The key term is ἄτη, that inescapable complex of delusion, error, crime, and ruin (583, 614, 625; cf. 4n.): once a family is afflicted, disasters and sufferings may recur for generation after generation, until that family is wiped out completely (cf. Solon fr. 13.25-32, A. Th. 742-71, Ag. 758-71, Eum. 932-7); it is Zeus's law that no mortal can expect to live long free from disaster (cf. Bacchyl. 5.54-5 οὐ γὰρ τις ἐπιχθονίων πάντα γ' εὐδαίμων ἔφν); but people are led by hope or desire to mistake evil for good, and to suffer the consequences (cf. Solon fr. 13.33-6, Theogn. 637-40). The Chorus insist throughout that all this is brought about by god(s) (583 θεόθεν, 597 θεῶν τις, 602 θεῶν τῶν νεπτέρων, 604 Ζεῦ, 608-9 δυνάστας ... Ὀλύμπου, 624 θεός: cf. 604-14n.). Usually, in other discussions of these issues (esp. in Aisch.), we find emphatic mention too of human responsibility for ruin: divine disfavour is not arbitrary, but is prompted by acts of wanton violence, sexual misconduct, or impiety, states of blood-guilt, curses, etc. (cf. A. Th. 720-91). But here the Chorus say little about the guilt of Oidipous' family: only that their sufferings are 'ancient' (593) and that god gives them no relief; see further W-Ingram 1980: 164-72.

The language of this Song is so densely packed and boldly imagistic (earthquake; sea-storm; a plant harvested as it strains towards the light; the glittering residence of never-sleeping Zeus; a foot stepping on hot embers) that the key ideas of divine victimization and ancestral suffering, conventional though they are, acquire fresh resonance and power, and bring vividly to the surface anxieties that have lurked unexpressed since the opening lines of the play (esp. 1-6, and cf. 49-57). Are these characters, whom we have seen speaking and acting with such independence of spirit, really mere victims of heredity and circumstance? – or (more terrifying still) of malevolent divinities bent on destroying them and their whole families?

These questions are raised, but not answered, for the particular relevance and application of the Song to the immediate context are not spelt out. That the family of Oidipous does, in general terms, fit this pattern of ἄτη is obvious enough. But, in seeking somehow to explain the capture and condemnation of Ant., the Elders leave some crucial issues vague and undefined (perhaps, in part, because Kreon is still present on stage). *Where* exactly should we locate the 'folly' (ἄτη), the 'expectation' (616 ἑλπίς), the 'transgression' (605

ὑπερβασία), and the 'deception' (617 ἀπάτα)? And *whose* 'mindlessness of word and Fury of the mind' (603) was it that provoked this latest harvest of ruin (599–602)? Presumably, the Elders believe that the blame lies with Ant. (indeed, these phrases could describe A.'s Eteokles, cf. *Th.* 653–719, 742–65; Else 1976: 11–26): but the Chorus do not say so explicitly; and in any case, how reliable or authoritative is their voice? 'Choruses ... are great explainers. They think they know: sometimes they are right, but equally they can be wrong, or partly wrong' (W-Ingram 1980: 160; see *Introd.* §3, pp. 18–21). So, once again, we may be in two minds as to whether to endorse their interpretation of events, or to supplement, or even reject it, through our recognition of the ambiguities and ironies to which their words give rise. In particular, we can recognize that it is not only Oidipous' family that is thus haunted by ἄτη, and guilty of mental aberration, but Kreon's too (see 332–75n.).

Metre: strophe and antistrophe α

- 582 εὐδαιμόνες οἷσι κακῶν ἀγευστὸς αἰῶν. x D x e x
594 ἀρχαία τα λαβδακιδαν οἰκῶν ὀρώμαι
- 584 οἷς γὰρ ἄν σείσθῃ θεοθεν δόμος, ἄτας e x D x
595 πηματα φθιτῶν ἐπι πημασι πιπτοντ',
- 585 οὐδὲν ἔλλειπει γένεας ἐπὶ πληθὺς ἑρπῶν. e x D x e_Λ//
596 οὐδ' ἀπαλλασσει γένεαν γένος, ἀλλ' ἑρῖπει
- 586 ὁμοῖον ὥστε ποντίον x E//
598 θεῶν τις, οὐδ' ἔχει λυσιν. (2 iambics)
- 587 οἶδμα δύσπνοοις ὅταν E
599 νυν γὰρ ἐσχάτας ὅπερ (Λ2 ia.)
- 588 Θρηῖσσησιν ἑρεβός ὑφαλον ἐπιδραμη πνοαῖς,
600 ῥιζας ἐτέτατο φαιος ἐν Οἰδιππου δομοῖς, 3 ia. //

- 590 κύλινδει βυσσοθεν ba. | cr.
601 κατ' αὐτὸν φοινία (Λ2 ia.Λ)
- 591 κελαινὰν θινὰ, καὶ δύσανεμοι ba. | cr. | ia.
602 θεῶν τῶν νερτερῶν ἄμαι κονίς, (Λ3 ia.)
- 593 στόνων βρέμονσιν ἀντίπληγες ἄκται. 2 ia. | ba.//
603 λόγου τ' ἀνοία καὶ φρενῶν Ἑρινύς. (3 ia.Λ)

Like the second strophic pair in the Second Song (353–75), this pair begins in dactylo-epitrite (here more clearly defined as such in the first two long cola, 584–5 = 595–6), and then shifts into pure 'epitritic' (iambic-cretic, 586–7 = 598–9), and thus into straight iambics (syncopated) for the second half (see Dale 1968: 182–4 for parallels).

At the beginning and end of the stanza, the insistent falling rhythm (... 0 – – 582–5 = 594–6, 592 = 603) seems to reinforce the sense of an inescapable pattern of events, esp. with the final word of the ant. (Ἑρινύς). (This rhythm is even more insistent in the 2nd strophic pair.) In mid-stanza, the switch to iambics accompanies a quickening of the narrative tempo; in particular, 588 with its highly resolved ia. trim. enhances the verbal sense (rushing winds, etc.), while the abrupt syncopation that follows (590–1) suggests the storm's disruption and turbulence; in the antistrophe (600) the resolution is less extreme, but the rhythm conveys a similar process of vigorous growth (600) stunted by the violent onslaught of the gods (601–2). There is striking correspondence between str. and ant. in 585–6/596–7, 'the assonance and verbal repetition underscoring the repetition of ideas and theme of inherited woe' (Ditmars 1992: 76; cf. 614/625); and a similar effect occurs in the strophe, with the assonance and symmetry of αἰῶν, ἄτας, and ἄκται at colon-end (582, 583, 592). A highly unusual kind of correspondence (possibly mere coincidence: but perhaps audible and significant) also links 593 and 603: the pattern of pitch-accents for the two lines is virtually identical (Ditmars 1992: 76).

The dac.-ep. period is concluded (585 = 596) by a clausula similar to 355 = 367. In the preceding colon (584 = 595), some editors retain the MS reading φθιμένων in the antistrophe, which would give a 'resolved link-anceps' (in responson to unresolved: – 0 – 0 0