

el aire, hasta aquí el fuego? / Quien dijo alguna vez: hasta aquí el hombre, hasta aquí, no? / Solo la esperanza tiene las rodillas nitidas. / Sangran.”

16. The Woman's Voice sings from the *Blood Wedding* lullabye.

17. “You, who come from the shores of the Tagus” is from a poem by Garcilaso de la Vega. The Tagus River flows through western Spain and Portugal. In her letter to me of March 28, 1986, Gambaro brought up “substituting an English-language poem about death, provided of course it's by a Master.” I decided against this option since I felt that Gambaro's appropriation of Garcilaso was important as a reference to a specific age, place, and literary tradition. One of the greatest poets of the Spanish Golden Age, Garcilaso influenced not only San Juan de la Cruz, Lope de Vega, and Cervantes but also Rafael Alberti, Pedro Salinas, Miguel Hernández, and other twentieth-century Spanish and Latin American poets. The original reads: “Vosotros, los del Tajo en su ribera / Cantáreis mi muerte cada día / Este descanso llevaré aunque muera / Que cada día cantáreis mi muerte, / Vosotros, los del Tajo en su ribera.”

18. “Twenty little hard ones” is from García Lorca's *Los títeres de cachiporra*. The original reads: “Veinte duritos y veinte duritos / y un rollito de veinte duritos / en el agujero del culito.”

## Antígona Furiosa

*To Laura Yusem and Bettina Muraña*

## Characters

Antígona  
Coryphaeus  
Antinous

This play premiered on September 24, 1986, at the Goethe Institute in Buenos Aires, with the following cast and artistic crew:

ANTIGONA	Bettina Muraña
CORYPHEUS	Norberto Vieyra
ANTINOUS	Ivan Moschner
SET DESIGN	Graciela Galán, Juan Carlos Distéfano
COSTUMES	Graciela Galán
CREON'S SHELL	Juan Carlos Distéfano
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Jerry Brignone
DIRECTOR, MISE-EN-SCENE	Laura Yusem

## Translator's Note

Creon is represented by a movable shell. When Coryphaeus puts on the shell, obviously he is assuming the power and the throne.

In Laura Yusem's production, Antígona's cell was represented by a pyramidal cage located in the center of the performance space. The play opened with Antígona hanged on one of the bars of this cage. Antígona never exited her cage.

The Chorus moved in the space outside the cage, set up with several café tables, each with two chairs. (One table would suffice.)

Creon's shell (torso, helmet, and arms) was made of painted polyester. It was used in a variety of ways: worn by the actor, held like a shield, or manipulated like a marionette. Toward the end of the play, it was abandoned in an old wheelbarrow.

The audience was seated all around the performance space.

Gambaro appropriates lines from Ophelia's song in *Hamlet*, act 4, scene 5, and from a Spanish translation of Sophocles's *Antigone*. Where Gambaro takes lines directly from her edition of Sophocles, I generally do the same, using Elizabeth Wyckoff's elegant English translation, published in David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, eds., *Sophocles I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954). Where Gambaro paraphrases her edition of Sophocles, generally I do likewise.

ANTIGONA hanged. In her hair is a crown of withered white flowers. After a moment, she slowly loosens and removes the rope from around her neck, adjusts her dirty white dress. She sways, humming. Sitting together at a round table, two men dressed in street clothes are having coffee. CORYPHEUS plays with a flexible little straw. He tears small pieces from his paper napkin and puts them together like flowers. He does so distractedly, with a mocking smile.

CORYPHEUS: Who is that? Ophelia? (They laugh. ANTIGONA looks at them.) Waiter, another coffee!

ANTIGONA: (sings)

“He is dead and gone, lady,  
He is dead and gone,  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.”

CORYPHEUS: There should be, but there isn't. You see grass?  
You see stone? You see a tomb?

ANTINOUS: Nothing!

ANTIGONA: (sings)

“Larded with all sweet flowers;  
Which bewept to the grave did not go  
With true-love showers.”

(She looks curiously at the cups.) What are you drinking?

CORYPHEUS: Coffee.

ANTIGONA: Coffee? What is that?

CORYPHEUS: Try it.

ANTIGONA: No. (She points.) Dark as poison.

CORYPHEUS: (instantly seizing on the word) Yes, we're poisoning ourselves! (He laughs.) I am dead! (He gets up, stiff, arms stretched out in front of him. Gasps hoarsely.)

ANTINOUS: No one touch him! Forbidden! His plague is contagious. He'll contaminate the city!

ANTIGONA: Forbidden! Forbidden? (As though dissociated from what she is doing, she removes Coryphaeus's crown and smashes it.)

ANTINOUS: She took your little crown!

CORYPHEAEUS: No one will bury me!

ANTINOUS: No one.

CORYPHEAEUS: The dogs will eat me. (gasps hoarsely)

ANTINOUS: Poor little guy! (He embraces CORYPHEAEUS. They laugh, clap each other on the back.)

CORYPHEAEUS: (offers ANTIGONA his chair) You want to sit down?

ANTIGONA: No. They're fighting now.

ANTINOUS: (kidding) Is that so?

CORYPHEAEUS: Yes. They'll cut each other up with their swords. Fall down and go boom! And you'll be the nurse! (He approaches her with an ambiguous intention that ANTIGONA doesn't register; she just moves away.) How will you care for them? Where?

ANTIGONA: I will be the one who attempts it.

CORYPHEAEUS: What?

ANTIGONA: To bury Polynices, my brother.

CORYPHEAEUS: (mockingly) Forbidden! Forbidden! The king has forbidden it! *I* have forbidden it.

ANTINOUS: No one may touch him!

CORYPHEAEUS: Who dares . . . (gestures, cutting his throat)

ANTIGONA: She didn't want to help me.

CORYPHEAEUS: She? Who is she?

ANTIGONA: Ismene, my sister. I did it alone. No one helped me. Not even Haemon, my brave one, whom I will not wed.

CORYPHEAEUS: And when is it to be, this shotgun wedding? (He

laughs, very amused; ANTINOUS joins in. They elbow each other and clap each other on the back.)

ANTIGONA: Whom I will *not* wed. For me there will be no wedding.

CORYPHEAEUS: (benignly) What a pity. (jabs ANTINOUS to get his attention)

ANTINOUS: (hurriedly) A pity.

ANTIGONA: Nor wedding night.

CORYPHEAEUS: Logical.

ANTINOUS: (like an echo) Logical.

ANTIGONA: Nor children. I will die . . . alone.

(The battle. An eruption of metallic clanging of swords, stamping of horses, screams and cries. ANTIGONA moves away. Watches from the palace. She falls to the ground, hitting her legs, rolling from one side to the other, in a rhythm that builds to a paroxysmic crescendo, as though she endures the suffering of battle in her own flesh.)

ANTIGONA: (screams) Eteocles, Polynices, my brothers, my brothers!

CORYPHEAEUS: (approaching her) Such grieving can only come to grief. What is this crazy girl trying to do?

ANTINOUS: Bury Polynices is what she's trying to do—on such a beautiful morning!

CORYPHEAEUS: They say that Eteocles and Polynices were to share the crown—one year one, one year the other. But power tastes sweet. Sticks like honey to the fly. Eteocles didn't want to share it.

ANTINOUS: Another might have relented. Not Polynices!

CORYPHEAEUS: He attacked at the seven gates of the city and fell vanquished, at the seventh! (He laughs.) And then faced off with his brother Eteocles.

ANTIGONA: They died by each other's swords! Eteocles, Polynices! My brothers! My brothers!

CORYPHEUS: (returns to the table) Always fights, battles, and blood. And the mad girl who should be hanged. Remembering the dead is like grinding water with a mortar and pestle—useless. Waiter, more coffee!

ANTINOUS: (timid) It didn't happen very long ago.

CORYPHEUS: (ferocious) It happened. Now on to something else!

ANTINOUS: Why don't we celebrate?

CORYPHEUS: (darkly) What is there to celebrate?

ANTINOUS: (He lights up. Stupidly.) That peace has returned!

CORYPHEUS: (laughs) I'll drink to that! Let's have a toast! What'll it be?

ANTINOUS: Wine?

CORYPHEUS: Yes, lots of wine! And no coffee! (mimics ANTIGONA) What is that dark liquid? Poison! (laughs, gasps hoarsely, faking a death rattle. After a moment, ANTINOUS joins in. ANTIGONA walks among her dead, in a strange gait in which she falls and recovers, falls and recovers.)

ANTIGONA: Corpses! Corpses! I walk on the dead. The dead surround me. Caress me . . . embrace me . . . Ask me . . . What?

CORYPHEUS: (comes forward)

Creon. Creon applies the law. Creon.  
Creon applies the law, in the matter of the traitor and the true.  
Creon applies the law, touching on the dead and the living.  
The same law.  
Creon will not permit burial for Polynices who wanted to be consumed  
in blood and fire  
Blood and fire the land of his parents. His body will be dinner  
dinner for the dogs and birds of prey. Creon Creon  
His law says:  
Eteocles will be honored

And Polynices  
feast for the dogs. Feast and putrefaction.  
Let no one come near—dare—to come near, like the mad girl  
circling, circling the unburied unburied unburied corpse

(He returns to his place, sits down.)

No fool is fool as far as loving death. That will be the price.

ANTIGONA: My mother lay down with my father, who was born of her belly, and thus we were begotten. And in this chain of the living and the dead, I will pay for their wrongdoings. And my own. There he is. Polynices. Polynices, my most beloved brother. For him, Creon will not allow burial, mourning, or tears. Only shame. A mouthful for the birds of prey.

CORYPHEUS: Who challenges Creon will die.

ANTIGONA: Do you see me, Creon? I am crying! Do you hear me, Creon? (deep lament, raw and guttural)

CORYPHEUS: I heard nothing! I heard nothing! (He sings stammeringly, but with mocking undertone.) "There is no . . . mourning be-be-be-neath the tra-tra-anquil sky!"

ANTINOUS: Forbidden! (He shakes CORYPHEUS.) It's forbidden, right?

ANTIGONA: For whom? For those who wag their tails like dogs! Not for me! Do you see me, Creon? I will bury him, with these arms, with these hands! Polynices!

(long, silent howl upon discovering Polynices's corpse, which is represented by only a shroud. ANTIGONA throws herself on him, with her own body covering him from head to toe.)

ANTIGONA: Oh, Polynices, brother. Brother. Brother. I will be your breath. (She pants as though she would revive him.) Your mouth, your legs, your feet. I will cover you. I will cover you.

CORYPHEUS: Forbidden!

ANTIGONA: Creon has forbidden it. Cre-on, de-cree-on, decree you will kill me.

CORYPHEUS: That will be the price.

ANTIGONA: Brother, brother. I will be your body, your coffin,  
your earth!

CORYPHEUS: Creon's law forbids it!

ANTIGONA: Neither God nor justice made the law. (She laughs.)  
The living are the great sepulchre of the dead! This is what  
Creon does not know! Nor his law!

CORYPHEUS: (softly) As though he could know.

ANTINOUS: (softly) What?

CORYPHEUS: Except for Polynices, whose death he redoubles,  
Creon kills only the living.

ANTINOUS: The sepulchres are linked! (laughs) One to the other.

CORYPHEUS: Wisely. In a chain.

ANTIGONA: Memory also makes a chain. Neither Creon nor his  
law knows this. Polynices, I will be sod and stone. Neither  
dogs nor birds of prey will touch you. (with a maternal ges-  
ture) I will wash your body, comb your hair. (She does.) I  
will weep, Polynices . . . I will weep . . . Bastards!

(Ceremoniously, she scratches the earth with her fingernails,  
throws dry dust on the corpse, stretches out on it. She gets up,  
claps two large stones together, rhythmically, their sound mark-  
ing a funeral dance.)

CORYPHEUS: She is giving him the funeral rites. Better not to  
see acts that shouldn't be performed.

(He and ANTINOUS leave the table.)

ANTINOUS: (watching) She didn't manage to bury him. The  
earth was too hard.

CORYPHEUS: That's how the guards caught her. Who holds a  
loved one dearer than his country is despicable.

ANTINOUS: Exactly!

CORYPHEUS: (softly) Child, how did you not think of this? (He  
takes up Creon's effigy.)

ANTINOUS: (bows, exaggeratedly and satirically) The king! The  
king!

CORYPHEUS: I am the king. Mine the power and the throne.

ANTINOUS: He'll settle this affair for you. Antigona. (gestures  
for ANTIGONA to come forward)

CORYPHEUS: Ah! Antigona, who mortifies, who moans, who  
suffers fear and trembling.

ANTIGONA: (serenely comes forward) Fear and trembling, fear  
and trembling, fear and trembling.

CORYPHEUS: You did what I forbade.

ANTIGONA: I admit the deed and don't deny it.

ANTINOUS: (frightened) She won't deny it!

CORYPHEUS: You transgressed the law.

ANTIGONA: Neither God nor justice decreed the law.

CORYPHEUS: You dared defy me, defy me.

ANTIGONA: I dared.

CORYPHEUS: Mad!

ANTIGONA: He is mad who accuses me of dementia.

CORYPHEUS: Pride is worth nothing when it's a neighbor's  
slave.

ANTIGONA: (pointing to ANTINOUS, mockingly) Isn't that what  
he is, neighbor? And you?

ANTINOUS: (proud) No!

CORYPHEUS: Yes!

ANTINOUS: I am so! (disconcerted) The slave's neighbor or the  
neighbor's slave?

CORYPHEUS: (like ANTIGONA, laughs) This girl attacks me  
breaking the laws, and now she adds a second offense:  
boasting and laughing.

ANTIGONA: He didn't laugh at me.

CORYPHEUS:

She, not I, would be the man  
if I let her go unpunished.  
Neither she nor her sister  
will escape the most terrible death.



ANTIGONA: (turns pale) Ismene? Why Ismene?

ANTINOUS: Yes. Why Ismene?

CORYPHEAEUS: (comes out from under Creon's robe, anxious to get back in character) Why?

ANTIGONA: She didn't want to help me. She was afraid.

CORYPHEAEUS: How could she not be afraid? She's barely a child. So tender!

ANTIGONA: Before Creon, I too was afraid.

ANTINOUS: He's our king!

ANTIGONA: And I a princess! Though destined for disgrace.

ANTINOUS: Yes! Daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta. Princess.

CORYPHEAEUS:

She's sad  
Why does the princess feel bad?  
From her mouth like a violet  
We have nothing but sighs

ANTINOUS:

No kisses, no prayers, no lies

CORYPHEAEUS:

If only she could have kept quiet  
At the corpse of her brother not tarried  
To Haemon she could have been married.

ANTIGONA: Before Creon, I was afraid. But he didn't know.  
My king, my sire, I am afraid! I am bowed down with this ignoble weight called fear. Don't punish me with death. Let me marry Haemon, your son, know the pleasures of marriage and motherhood. I want to see my children grow, to grow old slowly. I am afraid! (She cries out her name, summoning pride.) Antigona! (She gets up, straight, defiant.) I did it! I did it!

CORYPHEAEUS: You're mad!

ANTIGONA: Creon is mad. He thinks death harbors only minor

hatreds. He thinks the law is law because it comes out of his mouth.

CORYPHEAEUS: Who is stronger, rules. That is the law.

ANTINOUS: Women don't fight against men!

ANTIGONA: As a woman, I was born to share love, not hate.

ANTINOUS: At times you forget yourself.

CORYPHEAEUS: We heard you! And it's got a nice ring, ". . . born to share love, not hate"!

ANTIGONA: I said it to Creon, who always comes carrying his hate. Hate never comes alone.

CORYPHEAEUS: Wrath. Injustice.

ANTIGONA: I rule.

CORYPHEAEUS: No woman will rule me.

ANTIGONA: But you were ruled, humbled. Brought down by your own omnipotence.

ANTINOUS: I wouldn't say brought down.

CORYPHEAEUS: (cruelly imitates him) I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say! Neither would I. Ismene was wiser.

ANTIGONA: She didn't want to help me. She was afraid. And with the fear of one who is guilty, she went before Creon. Polynices cries out for earth. Earth is what the dead ones ask for, not water or contempt. (groans like Ismene) Don't cry, Ismene. You don't want to help me. "Sssh! Silence, let no one learn of your plan. Who touches Polynices's corpse will be stoned. I ask the dead to pardon me. I shall be obedient." To whom, Ismene? To Creon, the hangman?

CORYPHEAEUS: Hangman. She said "hangman."

CORYPHEAEUS and ANTINOUS:

Power will not be outdone  
When it is questioned  
Blood begins to run.

(They lift the table and carry it to the other side of the space.)

ANTIGONA: I didn't want to make her do anything. I wanted to hold her, comfort her as when we were children, when she would come to me, crying, because they'd stolen her skipping stones or she'd hurt herself on the stairs. There, there, little one, my little one. But I heard myself shout. Rage! Rage! Coward, I hate you! May the whole world know that I will bury Polynices. Unconcealed, I will bury my dead one!

CORYPHEAEUS: Stupidly, Ismene went to the palace—an innocent with the air of one who is guilty—knowing, when she most wanted to be ignorant.

ANTIGONA: (beating her breast) "I know! I know everything!" Before Creon, courage came to her, better courage than mine, for it was born of fear. "I was complicit, complicit." (She laughs, mocking.) She, complicit, whose love is only words!

CORYPHEAEUS: I will not accept complicity that was not yours.

ANTINOUS: So you refused her?

CORYPHEAEUS: Yes. Ismene, in disgrace, wanted to sail beside her into suffering. What would another girl—not Antigona—have done? Overflowing with gratitude, she would have opened her arms!

ANTIGONA: I closed them.

ANTINOUS: Insatiable! Unsatisfied!

CORYPHEAEUS: Hers is the vice of pride. Pride plus heroism, where does it lead? ("cuts" his throat)

ANTIGONA: (sweetly) Ismene, dear face, sister, my little girl, I need the hardness of my own decision. Without envy, I want you to escape the death that awaits me. Creon called the two of us mad because we both defied him, we both scorned his laws. We wanted justice, I through justice itself and she through love.

CORYPHEAEUS: You can talk as much as you like, but your fate is sealed.

ANTINOUS: (gets up and moves away) I don't want to see it. I've already seen too much!

CORYPHEAEUS: (brings him back) Sit down. Haemon will come to plead for her.

ANTINOUS: I can see it all now. His face, full of grief . . .

CORYPHEAEUS: Well, of course! Add two and two: Antigona's sentence plus the loss of his marriage . . .

ANTINOUS: Poor little guy!

CORYPHEAEUS: He'll make use of a masterly saying.

ANTINOUS: Which one?

CORYPHEAEUS: One can rule a desert beautifully alone.

ANTIGONA: Haemon, Haemon!

CORYPHEAEUS: (goes toward Creon's effigy) He loves Antigona.

ANTINOUS: Don't take her away from him.

CORYPHEAEUS: (in the effigy) I am not I. This is death. (He laughs low.) Haemon? (ANTIGONA turns toward him.) You're not furious?

ANTIGONA: (All her replies are in a neutral tone.) No.

CORYPHEAEUS: I will be inflexible.

ANTIGONA: I know.

CORYPHEAEUS: Nothing will modify my decision.

ANTIGONA: I will not try to change it.

CORYPHEAEUS: I am glad. One wants submissive children, who will meet our enemies blow for blow and honor our friends.

ANTIGONA: It is just.

CORYPHEAEUS: Anarchy is the worst blow. Who transgresses the law and tries to give me orders will never receive my praises. I trust only those who are obedient.

ANTIGONA: I would not dare to say your words are unreasonable. But others too may speak good sense. Your gaze intimidates. I can hear what the people are saying. Doesn't she merit praise and not punishment?

CORYPHEAEUS: That woman has gone to your head.

ANTIGONA: I speak from the head, and not the heart.



CORYPHEUS: In the voice of a woman. There are no colder arms than those of a perverse, indomitable woman.

ANTIGONA: Perverse? Indomitable.

CORYPHEUS: Like that one. Spit in her face. Let her look for a husband in hell.

ANTIGONA: I will spit at her. (silence. She raises her hand to her face.) He didn't spit at me, Creon.

CORYPHEUS: (comes out from behind the robe and faces ANTIGONA) You should be proud.

ANTIGONA: Of what?

CORYPHEUS: That a youngster like Haemon is giving lessons to his father, the king!

ANTIGONA: If I am young, heed my actions rather than my age. Of Haemon's pride, I am proud.

CORYPHEUS: (moves away toward the table, outraged) Youth!

ANTINOUS: Now it's all smoothed over, but what an argument! You could hear it as far as the corner.

CORYPHEUS: If Haemon raised his voice, it was justified.

ANTINOUS: You said, "Youth!"

CORYPHEUS: So what? I wasn't referring to Haemon. He spoke for us. He said what all of us were thinking.

ANTINOUS: (confused) What? (scratches his head)

CORYPHEUS: "You condemned her unjustly."

ANTINOUS: Oh!

CORYPHEUS: What lawyers did she have? What judges? Who was at her side?

ANTINOUS: Her father?

CORYPHEUS: She has no father!

ANTINOUS: Her mother? (quick gestures of negation by CORYPHEUS) Her brothers? (further gestures) Her friends? He got hold of her and decided: This one I am going to crush.

CORYPHEUS: And we say: This girl here condemned? She pro-

tested that her brother, fallen in combat, would be deprived of a grave. Doesn't this merit praise and not punishment?

ANTINOUS: (pleased) That's what we said!

CORYPHEUS: Responding to what we said, Creon . . . (makes a vulgar gesture)

ANTIGONA: Public outcry is always born of secret words. Who believes that he alone thinks or speaks like no one else is totally empty inside.

ANTINOUS: Haemon spoke very well!

CORYPHEUS: So did Creon! He said, "I trust only those who are obedient. They will not violate the law."

ANTINOUS: (very confused) Only one should speak well so we won't be so confused!

CORYPHEUS: Confusion I can easily resolve. (Majestically, he advances toward Creon's effigy, but he stops halfway. He turns toward ANTIGONA.) The city belongs to him who rules.

ANTIGONA: One can rule a desert beautifully alone.

CORYPHEUS: There it is. The masterly saying.

ANTINOUS: (very confused) Here we go again. Who is right?

CORYPHEUS: Then they insulted each other. Creon called his son stupid, and Haemon said his father spoke like a beardless youth!

ANTINOUS: His father?

CORYPHEUS: His father! "You shall not marry her while she's alive," said Creon.

ANTINOUS: Good!

CORYPHEUS: "Then she will die, but she won't die alone," answered Haemon.

ANTINOUS: What audacity!

CORYPHEUS: What? To refute foolish words!

ANTINOUS: They weren't foolish!

CORYPHEUS: (looks at him menacingly. Suddenly smiles.) Maybe . . . my weakness is that I am easily moved.

ANTIGONA: Creon sent for me—the hated runt—so that I would die in Haemon’s presence and before his eyes.

CORYPHEUS: It didn’t happen. Haemon didn’t want it.

ANTIGONA: I know he didn’t want it.

CORYPHEUS: “She will not die in my presence,” said Haemon, “and you will never again lay eyes on me!” (He rises.) “Your obliging friends will let you abandon yourself to your furies. But you will never again lay eyes on me!”

ANTINOUS: Sit down! Don’t leave me alone!

CORYPHEUS: Why? What are you afraid of?

ANTINOUS: Nothing. (confidentially) I dared tell Creon that Haemon was feeling desperate. A serious thing at his age.

CORYPHEUS: And what is that worth? What did you risk? I, I pleaded for Ismene! What was her crime? To have listened to the mad girl. She didn’t touch the corpse.

ANTINOUS: Creon’s no fool.

CORYPHEUS: He pardoned her.

ANTINOUS: Yes, and then?

CORYPHEUS: And then, what?

ANTINOUS: You settled it. “What death for Antígona?” you very nicely asked.

CORYPHEUS: It was already decided. What could change it? I hid her in a hollow cave with food to last one day.

ANTIGONA: I made my last journey.

CORYPHEUS: There, she will entreat death, beg that it not touch her.

ANTIGONA: Do not touch me! Oh, death, please do not touch me.

CORYPHEUS: She will realize, a little late, that it’s useless to petition death for life.

ANTIGONA: Nevertheless, I plead.

CORYPHEUS: (sadly) Useless, but gratis!

ANTIGONA: I pleaded for sunlight. My eyes, not sated with the light.

CORYPHEUS: Love, love! What a disaster! I mean for Haemon. But if desire wins out, where does that leave the laws of the land?

ANTINOUS: Yes, yes, but what do the laws have to do with Antígona? I watch her and . . .

CORYPHEUS: She is going toward the bed in which all of us must lie.

ANTIGONA: I made my last journey. To say, “the last time.” (Her voice becomes distorted.) La-ast time. To know . . . that further on there is no light, not a single voice. Death, that sleeps in everything that breathes, pulls me to its borders. I did not know the wedding night, or marriage hymn. I go a virgin. My marriage will be with death.

CORYPHEUS: You’re forgetting the advantages: you walk through the shadows in glory, exalted.

ANTINOUS: All the world approves of you!

CORYPHEUS: No illnesses, no sufferings!

ANTINOUS: No sickliness from old age!

CORYPHEUS: Of all of us, one might say, only you will descend unto death of your own volition. It’s not so tragic.

ANTIGONA: Like Niobe, fate will put me to sleep under a mantle of stone.

CORYPHEUS: But Niobe was a goddess born of gods. We are mortals, born of mortals.

ANTINOUS: Grandiose for her to say she shares the fate of gods! (He and CORYPHEUS laugh.)

ANTIGONA: You’re laughing at me!

CORYPHEUS: No, no! (They laugh.)

ANTIGONA: Why offend me before my death, while I still breathe?

CORYPHEUS: Look, it was a joke! Don’t take offense!

(Chastised, they squeeze their lips together, swallowing their laughter.)

ANTIGONA: Oh, fortunate citizens, bear witness that no one wept with me . . .

CORYPHEAEUS: My God, she's starting to pity herself! (They try to flee.)

ANTIGONA: Let the laws, these vile laws! drag me to a cave that will be my tomb. No one will hear my weeping; no one will be aware of my suffering. They will live in the light as though nothing were happening. With whom will I share my house? I will be separated from both humans and those who died, uncounted among the living and among the dead. I will disappear from the world, alive.

CORYPHEAEUS: (kindly) Punishment always presupposes crime, my girl. There are no innocents.

ANTINOUS: (low) Never? (regains his composure) I approve—very well said!

CORYPHEAEUS: And if punishment comes down on you, you did something you shouldn't have done. What do you expect? You brought your violence to its summit, and then you fell, violently.

ANTINOUS: Splat!

ANTIGONA: Ay, what an ill-fated wedding you arranged for me, brother! With your death you killed me, though I survived you.

ANTINOUS: This is breaking my heart!

CORYPHEAEUS: Mine too. But for him who has it, power is inviolable. How could she even think of opposing it? Don't whine, my girl. A destiny so within and so without the norm can't be paid in copper coins.

ANTINOUS: Her character did her in.

CORYPHEAEUS: You should have listened to counsel. *Our* counsel!

ANTIGONA: The sun! The sun!

CORYPHEAEUS: There it is. Look at it for the last time.

ANTIGONA: For the last time. They take me away without weeping, without friends, without a husband. At my death, neither tears nor lamentation. Only my own.

CORYPHEAEUS: Did you look at the sun? Did you have a good taste? Did it warm you? Good, enough! If they let us mourn before our deaths, we would never die!

ANTINOUS: Enough! She won't quit!

CORYPHEAEUS: I'll make her quit! (He goes toward Creon's effigy, stops midway.) These delays will be regretted! (wearing the robe) Lock her up! Leave her in that tomb. If she wishes to die there, let her die. If she wishes to live hidden under this roof, let her live. We will be cleared of her death, and she will have no contact with the living.

ANTINOUS: What wisdom! What is, is not; we kill and do not kill her.

ANTIGONA: Oh, tomb; oh, wedding chamber! House hollowed out of rock, eternal prison where I will be together with my own. As the term of my life expires, I am the last and most miserable to descend. But there at least my hope is great: when I arrive I will have my father's love, and your love too, mother, and yours, my brother. When they died, with my own hands I washed their bodies, performed the funeral rites. And now, for you, dear Polynices, I receive this sad reward. If I could have been a mother, I never would have done this for my children. Never for my dead husband would I have attempted such hardship. Polynices, Polynices, you know why I say so! I could have met another husband, conceived other children, in spite of my pain. But mother and father dead, no brother can ever be born. You will never again be born, Polynices. Creon has judged me, my brother.

CORYPHEAEUS: (coming out of the robe) And well judged!

ANTIGONA: What law have I broken? What god offended? But how can I still believe in God? On whom may I call if my piety has earned me impious treatment? But if my persecutors are in the wrong, I want the same harm for them that they unjustly do to me! The same harm—no more, no less—the same harm!

ANTINOUS: Such a bigmouth.

CORYPHEUS: Rancorous, for her to keep blowing up the same old wind! (with reserve, to ANTIGONA) There is something called repentance! It's not good for much, but it's comforting.

ANTINOUS: If we know already that she dies, why doesn't she die?

CORYPHEUS: Creon said that we would regret letting her go so slowly. (low sound of wingbeats and cawing)

ANTIGONA: They're taking me away. See to what torture and by what judges I am condemned!

ANTINOUS: She is suffering.

CORYPHEUS: One always suffers when celestial light is exchanged for the darkness of a prison. Many women have known a similar fate. When power is affronted and limits transgressed, my girl, payment is always in the currency of blood. (The sound of hoarse, sinister cawing grows louder. The sound of wingbeats rises and falls.) What is that noise?

ANTINOUS: Birds in spring.

CORYPHEUS: (coldly) Stupid.

ANTINOUS: They insult me. I leave.

CORYPHEUS: Stay! Something will happen at the last minute.

ANTIGONA: I didn't know. I didn't know that Creon . . .

ANTINOUS: Is someone going to defend her?

CORYPHEUS: No, never!

ANTINOUS: So now what?

ANTIGONA: (pushes away enormous wings) Away! Away! (wails in terror, trying to protect herself. With effort, she regains her self-control.) No! Go ahead! Cover me with your stinking wings, peck at me with your beaks! (She offers herself, ferocious, her teeth clenched.) Bite! Bite! Don't pity me any more than Creon does . . .

ANTINOUS: I want to go home. I'm cold.

CORYPHEUS: We're going already. I'd like another coffee. (rises with his cup in hand, looking for coffee. Stops in front of Creon's effigy.)

ANTINOUS: (Something falls on the table. He picks it up, full of disgust.) What is this? What is this *filth*?

CORYPHEUS: Don't worry about it! Tiresias will come, and though blind, Tiresias the priest will settle everything. (He puts on Creon's robe.) What's new, old Tiresias? Your face—darkened as though doubly blind—frightens me. I never deviated from your counsel. Which is why I ruled this city well. (emphasizes) With skillful covenants. (pause) What is this filth? It's falling on *me!* (leaves, picking off the filth falling on him)

ANTINOUS: (hides with his hand something that fell on his arm, fearful and unmoving. Slowly moves his hand, while looking upward.) Plague!

CORYPHEUS: What? Plague!

ANTINOUS: I want to go home!

CORYPHEUS: The hungry birds are tearing Polynices's corpse to pieces. That's why they're screaming. They've eaten the flesh and blood of a dead man in the fray.

ANTINOUS: Let Tiresias settle this! I want to go home!

CORYPHEUS: The plague will follow you home!

ANTINOUS: I'll lock myself in!

CORYPHEUS: The plague will follow you! No God will hear our supplications. Damned birds!

ANTIGONA: A wrong permitted contaminates everyone. Hiding in our houses, devoured by fear, the plague will follow us.

CORYPHEUS: Maybe not, if Tiresias obtains from Creon that which he stubbornly denied to you.

ANTIGONA: You won't convince Creon, Tiresias. Creon told you that the entire race of priests was money-mad. (She laughs.) And you replied that tyrants all grab at shameful gain. You got along well! (She pushes away the wings, whose flapping has decreased.) I am not afraid. What does Tiresias tell you? That you'll pay with the death of one born of your own blood . . . (It grows darker.) Hae . . . Haemon . . . for having thrown me in the grave and for keeping Polynices's corpse unburied. In Tiresias's mouth, truth and lies are mixed.



Don't be angry with a corpse. What victory can there be in killing someone who is dead?

CORYPHEUS: Yes, that's what he will say.

ANTIGONA: Dogs, wolves, and vultures will tear my brother's body and with his remains befoul the altars.

CORYPHEUS: Plague!

ANTIGONA: The cities are growing agitated.

CORYPHEUS: Plague!

ANTIGONA: Tiresias, this frightens you! Easy to be a friend to power at its peak and then to separate when it declines. You pleaded for me, for Polynices torn apart. And out of fear, Creon pardoned me. (pause) I didn't know it. (The cawing and wingbeats cease.)

CORYPHEUS: "I am afraid I will have to heed the laws," said Creon.

ANTINOUS: A little late for that.

CORYPHEUS: He will also have to heed his feelings when Haemon . . . (gestures, stabbing himself)

ANTIGONA: (humming, puts on the crown of flowers) And so I married. (twists her neck and body in a strange manner, as though she is hanging, hanged) Death: bride, mother, sister . . .

CORYPHEUS: Ah, the fury of Haemon!

ANTIGONA: Fury of youth!

CORYPHEUS: Creon called to him, sobbing. How could you enter that tomb? I hear your voice, or do my senses deceive me? Move the stones that block the entrance. Haemon! I beg you! Come out from that tomb! (parodic sobbing)

ANTIGONA: Haemon wrapped his arms around my waist.

CORYPHEUS: Then what did Haemon do? He spit on his father! (spits in ANTINOUS's face)

ANTINOUS: Not on me!

CORYPHEUS: And drew his sword and . . . (attacks)

ANTINOUS: (jumping) Creon barely escaped.

CORYPHEUS: It would have been better if he'd been killed. Is there anything worse than one's own misfortune? Not only Haemon, but also Eurydice, his mother, stabbed herself to death.

ANTINOUS: She too! No one's left!

CORYPHEUS: Creon's left. (He puts on the robe.)

ANTIGONA: He sobbed, his arms around my waist.

CORYPHEUS: Haemon, oh, wretch! In what misfortune do you wish to lose yourself?

ANTIGONA: His blow to Creon missed, and he threw himself upon his sword. Still breathing, he wrapped himself in my arms and died gasping . . . waves of blood . . . waves of blood . . . on my face . . . (suddenly screams) Haemon, Haemon, no! Don't die! Don't double my solitude.

ANTINOUS: All these problems from a lack of common sense! Right?

CORYPHEUS: Ay, these minds and their mistakes! People of my lineage killing and being killed. Ay, son, son! All the calamity sowed in my family and on this earth! And now me, guilty! Against me, all the darts! I will suffer in this prison, on bread and water. (sobs sincerely)

ANTINOUS: (disconcerted) Prison, but you're still in power. What do you mean by prison? Bread and water, delicacies and wine? Bowing and scraping and ceremonies?

CORYPHEUS: I will suffer until they understand!

ANTINOUS: You have a big heart that easily pardons . . .

ANTIGONA: His own crimes.

CORYPHEUS: Mine were the power and the throne. (ashamed) Even now . . .

ANTINOUS: In spite of your terrible pain you enjoy yourself. Perfect happiness! Like us! (ANTIGONA lets out an animal cry.)

CORYPHEUS: I pardon them! They know not what they are doing. I am the one to be condemned, I, who made a



holocaust on my son, on my wife. Antigona, who brought so much harm down on my head and heritage, I pardon you!

ANTINOUS: (theatrical) Bravo! (CORYPHEAEUS removes the robe, bows.)

ANTIGONA: (sings)

“They bore him barefaced on the bier  
And in his grave rained many a tear.”

I weep for you, Haemon! Blood, you had so much blood!  
(touches her face) Without and within, I am full of your  
blood. I don't want it . . . I don't want it. It's yours. Drink  
of your blood, Haemon. Recover your blood. Live!

ANTINOUS: Will he?

CORYPHEAEUS: (smiling at his stupidity) A little difficult.

ANTINOUS: But . . .

CORYPHEAEUS: (cuttingly) When there's blood involved, acts can't  
be mended, idiot!

ANTIGONA: (softly) You doubled my solitude. Why did you pre-  
fer nothingness to pain? Flight to the obstinacy of the con-  
quered?

ANTINOUS: He was very young!

CORYPHEAEUS: And you, why were you in such a hurry? (ges-  
tures, hanging himself)

ANTIGONA: I was afraid of hunger and thirst. Afraid I would  
weaken ignobly. At the last moment, crawl and beg.

ANTINOUS: The hardest hearts can soften “at the last moment.”  
Didn't you hear him weeping? He pardoned you.

ANTIGONA: No. I still want to bury Polynices. I will *always*  
want to bury Polynices. Though I a thousand times will live,  
and he a thousand times will die.

ANTINOUS: Then Creon will *always* punish you.

CORYPHEAEUS: And you a thousand times will die. You don't  
have to call death, my girl. She comes on her own. (smiles)  
Pressuring her is fatal.

ANTIGONA: Will there never be an end to this mockery?

Brother, I cannot endure these walls I cannot see, this air  
that seals me in like stone. Thirst. (She touches the earthen  
bowl, lifts it and brings it to her lips. Freezes.) I will drink  
and stay thirsty, my lips will grow slack, my tongue will  
grow thick like that of a mute animal. No. I refuse this bowl  
of mercy that masks their cruelty. (Slowly, she turns it upside  
down.) Mouth moist with my own saliva, I will go to my  
death. Proudly, Haemon, I will go to my death. And you will  
come running and lean on your sword. I didn't know. I was  
born to share love, not hate. (long pause) But hate rules.  
(furious) The rest is silence! (She kills herself, with fury.)

Curtain