

as human folly undermines that quest: "quid mirum, si non escendunt in altum ardua adgressi? sed si vir es, suspice, etiam si decidunt, magna conantis" (*Vit. beat.* 20. 2). Moreover, the large measure of his success in dramatizing this perception of human

frailty in himself is surely owed to the wit, craft, and irony, with which he composed his philosophic song.

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### SOPHOCLES *ANTIGONE* 1108–12

In *Antigone* 1066–71, Tiresias prophesies that "one born of Creon's loins" will die because Creon has wrongfully lodged a living soul in a grave and has prevented the corpse of Polynices from being buried. The Chorus advises Creon to free Antigone and bury Polynices (1100–1101). The order of events expressed by Tiresias and the Chorus places the freeing of Antigone before the burial of Polynices. In the exode of the play the Messenger reports that Creon and his attendants first buried Polynices and then went to the cave where Antigone had been immured (1192–1205).

Many prominent scholars have recently followed Jebb in believing that the order in which Creon performs his two tasks reverses the sequence which he had indicated earlier, when he told the Chorus of his intentions (1108–12).<sup>1</sup> Only a few critics, such as Jebb and Waldo, regard this assumed inconsistency as a flaw in the dramaturgy of the play,<sup>2</sup> and even they do not consider it a serious mistake. The others point out, as Jebb

himself notes, that it would be anticlimactic if the Messenger reported the burial after the momentous events at the cave.<sup>3</sup> Though Jebb can explain to his own satisfaction the reason for the dramaturgical blemish, he cannot expunge it except to say that Greek drama, because of its interest in rhetorical effect, is not so consistent nor clear as modern drama in matters which, though part of the play, occur off stage.<sup>4</sup> But surely a play, ancient or modern, that has an important dramatic effect arbitrarily motivated, is blemished more seriously than Jebb is willing to admit. Before, however, we accept this dramaturgical flaw, whether it be serious or not, we ought to re-examine Creon's expression of his intentions (1108–12) and the implications in the story incidents; for it seems that an anxiety for Antigone's safety, born of a knowledge of later events in the play, has misled Jebb and those critics who agree with him.

When the Chorus advises Creon "to free the maiden and bury the dead" (1100–1101),

1. See R. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments*, "Antigone," III<sup>3</sup> (Amsterdam, 1962), pp. xviii–xx; A. J. A. Waldo, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 129–32; G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study in Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca, 1958), p. 258, n. 17; H. D. F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama* (New York, 1960), pp. 174–75; S. M. Adams, *Sophocles the Playwright* (Toronto, 1957), pp. 56–57.

2. Jebb, pp. xix–xx; Waldo, pp. 129–32.

3. Jebb, pp. xix–xx. Waldo, pp. 129–32, agrees with Jebb that the reason for the sequence of Creon's performance of the events is "a matter of structural convenience" rather than good dramaturgy. Kirkwood, p. 258, n. 17, admitting that if Creon had not reversed the order of events, the Messenger's speech would be "wretchedly anti-climactic," considers the reversal not a flaw but "a good dramatic reason." Kitto, pp. 174 f., does not regard the reversal as a flaw nor only as a

means to make the Messenger's speech more effective, for he believes that Sophocles could easily have removed the inconsistency if he had so wished. Kitto views the reversal only as a discrepancy from Creon's original intentions which, he believes, has some additional, though slight significance: Creon, going to the cave of Antigone, as he had originally intended, passes the body of Polynices and, since Antigone is in no immediate danger, he changes his mind, deciding to bury the corpse first and efface the offense against the gods. Adams, pp. 56–57, also attributes more significance to Creon's reversal of events than just the advantage it gives to the Messenger's speech. He believes that Creon in a moment of sanity intended to rescue Antigone first, but he changed his purpose, overcome by "a final seizure of *ate*, mental blindness."

4. Jebb, p. xix.

Creon, after some hesitation and reluctance, exclaims:

ὦδ' ὡς ἔχω στείχοιμ' ἄν· ἵτ', ἵτ', ὀπάονες  
οἱ τ' ὄντες, οἱ τ' ἀπόντες, ἀξίνας χεροῖν  
ὀρμάσθ' ἐλόντες εἰς ἐπόψιον τόπον.  
ἐγὼ δ', ἐπειδὴ δόξα τῇδ' ἐπεστράφη,  
αὐτός τ' ἔδρασα καὶ παρὼν ἐκλύσομαι

[1108–12].

There is no question about the meaning of lines 1108–10; Jebb himself observes that they relate only to the burial of Polynices.<sup>5</sup> He further states that lines 1111–12 pertain to Antigone and renders them: “Since our judgment hath taken this turn, I will be present to unloose her, as I myself bound her.”<sup>6</sup> From the order of events, as Creon expresses it, it is evident, at least from the sequence of the verses, that he is thinking first of burying Polynices. If there were any purely verbal antithesis between lines 1108–10 and lines 1111–12, one might reasonably argue that Creon believed the release of Antigone ought to claim his attention first, but such an antithesis does not exist, and even Jebb denies its existence: “The sense is not: ‘do *you* go and bury Polynices, while *I* release Antigone.’ Creon takes part in both tasks.”<sup>7</sup> Thus in the text itself both the fact that Creon speaks first of burying Polynices and the fact that there is no verbal antithesis between his attendants’ actions and his own oppose, at least from the standpoint of language, the assumption that Creon’s foremost thought is to save Antigone.

It is his view of the implications in the story incidents which leads Jebb to see an implied antithesis of a different kind between lines 1108–10 and 1111–12.<sup>8</sup> “If she [Antigone] dies, his son must die (1066). Therefore, while he glances at the burial rites by telling his men to bring axes, he describes his own part by his *most urgent task*,—the release.”<sup>9</sup> This interpretation of Creon’s motivation is the basis for Jebb’s belief that Creon in lines 1108–12 is thinking first of rescuing Antigone: “The Chorus puts Creon’s duties in the natural order: ‘free the maiden from her rocky chamber and make a tomb for the unburied dead’ (1100); and Creon seems to feel that the release, as the more urgent task, ought to have precedence.”<sup>10</sup> What Jebb describes as the “natural order” may seem natural to him, as it does to the Chorus, but what proof is there that this order seems natural to Creon?

Tiresias in his first speech (998–1032) to Creon makes no mention of Antigone and only emphasizes that Creon’s failure to bury Polynices has brought a sickness upon the city (1015). Up to this point in the play Creon’s first concern has been for what he believes to be the welfare of the State. What, then, is more natural than that Creon, motivated as usual by his concern for the State as a whole rather than by a more personal and humane consideration for individual lives, should think and act first to bury Polynices in order to lift the sickness from the State? While it is true that Creon interprets Tiresias’ prophecy (1065–71) to mean that if Antigone

5. Jebb, *ad* 1109 and 1110.

6. Jebb, p. 197.

7. Jebb, *ad* 1111.

8. Some critics have taken up the question of Creon’s reversal of his intentions only from a verbal view and they agree that Creon performs the events in the same sequence that he expressed in his intentions. Since, however, Jebb’s argument does not rest on considerations of the language in the text but on the implications in the story incidents, these scholars have not answered the problem which Jebb’s interpretation raises. For example, I. M. Linforth (“Antigone and Creon,” *CPCP*, XV, No. 5 [1961], 241), following the line taken by A. Nauck (*Sophokles* [Berlin, 1873], *ad loc.*), notes that in vs. 1112 there is no object of the verbs and in addition that *ἐδρασα* is inapplicable to Antigone, since she was imprisoned and not “bound.” Consequently, he regards Creon’s words (1112) “as an expression, perhaps proverbial, of his

willingness to make reparation” and does not believe that the words refer specifically to Antigone at all. G. Müller (*Sophokles: “Antigone”* [Heidelberg, 1967], p. 234) sees vs. 1112 as ambiguous, agreeing with Linforth on its figurative meaning, but at the same time claiming that it has a literal meaning which alludes to Antigone. Several nineteenth-century scholars, earlier than Jebb, troubled by Creon’s apparent reversal of his intentions, treat the problem textually. G. Hermann (*Sophoclis Tragoediae* [Leipzig, 1866], *ad loc.*) conjectures the loss of several verses after 1110 in which Creon explained that he would bury Polynices before freeing Antigone. T. Bergk (*Sophoclis Tragoediae* [Leipzig, 1858], *ad loc.*) believes that vs. 1111–14 are an interpolation. W. Dindorf (*Sophoclis Tragoediae* [Leipzig, 1872], *ad loc.*) suspects only vs. 1111 and 1112.

9. Jebb, *ad* 1111.

10. Jebb, p. xviii.

dies, Haemon will die,<sup>11</sup> nevertheless he has no reason to fear that Antigone is in any immediate danger. A delay of a few minutes or even of several hours could hardly be expected to endanger her life.<sup>12</sup>

What Jebb believes to be the "natural order" of events does not seem natural to Creon. The language of the text (1108–12) and the implications in the story incidents make it clear that Creon in the performance of his two tasks follows the same sequence which he had originally intended and expressed. Thus those scholars who have perpetuated Jebb's belief in a discrepancy between Creon's expression of the order of events and his perfor-

mance of them have attempted to explain away an inconsistency that does not exist.<sup>13</sup> In so doing they have obscured Creon's fundamental motive. Furthermore, since the discrepancy is nonexistent, the play, of course, lacks the dramaturgical flaw which Jebb and Waldo note. In fact, if Creon had thought and acted otherwise—considered the release of Antigone first—both the expression and performance of this order of events would have been inconsistent with his character and would have represented a real blemish in the play.<sup>14</sup>

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11. Haemon had said to Creon during their quarrel: ἡδ' οὖν θανέῖται καὶ θανοῦσα' ἀλεῖ τινά (751). Haemon's "someone else" had been ambiguous. Tiresias' prophecy (1065–71), however, had clarified the ambiguity, and Creon must now realize that Haemon had meant himself. The description in vss. 1206–30 of Creon's apprehension when he hears cries of wailing as he approaches the cave in which Antigone is immured gives further substantiation of his awareness of the nexus between the fates of Haemon and Antigone. Cf. Adams, p. 57.

12. Cf. Kitto, p. 175; Linforth, pp. 240–41.

13. See n. 3 above.

14. One might raise the objection that if, as it actually appears, Creon has expressed a preference to bury Polynices

first (1108–12), the Chorus, which has told him "to free the maiden and bury the dead" (1100–1101) in that order, might be expected to remonstrate and to remind him not to postpone rescuing her. But the Chorus, too, must realize that Antigone is in no immediate danger, and their statement of the desired order of events (1100–1101) can be understood as a natural expression of their uppermost feeling at the moment rather than as an imperative injunction to Creon. Accordingly, when Creon states the reverse order of events, there is no need for them to be alarmed. In the excitement, moreover, of Creon's sudden conversion, it is even possible that his reversal of the order of events escapes their notice. Certainly, the joy and exaltation which they display in the Ode that follows (1115–54) give no indication that they have any misgivings or fears about the future.

### *PRAEFECTUS MESOPOTAMIAE ET OSRHOENAE: A POSTSCRIPT*

An inscription from Puteoli<sup>1</sup> published by the present writer revealed the existence of an equestrian prefectship of Mesopotamia and Osrhoene in the early third century A.D. Though it was previously supposed that Mesopotamia and Osrhoene were always ruled by separate governors, this inscription showed that the provinces were at one stage joined as a single command, and so offered grounds for inferring that Osrhoene was added to the province of the prefect of Mesopotamia when Caracalla suppressed the Abgarid kingdom of Edessa in 212/3. The kingdom of Edessa was revived in 240 (though only for two years), and records of two subsequent careers show that Osrhoene

henceforth ceased to appear in the titulature of the prefect of Mesopotamia, probably thus reverting to separate status under the rule of a procurator.

The period of office of the prefect of the two provinces buried at Puteoli (L. Valerius Valerianus) evidently therefore fell between 212/3 and 240, though his epitaph provides little on which to base a more precise date. Valerianus' previous offices could only be conjectured, though parallels suggested that they probably included several military commands, with a possibility of a previous function or functions in a subordinate capacity in Mesopotamia. By a surprising coincidence,

1. *CP*, LXIV (1969), 229–33. For fuller references together with the text of the Puteoli inscription the reader is referred to that article, denoted here as *PMO*.