

# **GENDER PRIDE AS TRAGIC FLAW IN SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE***

Omolara Kikelomo OWOEYE

Department of English and Literary Studies

Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

[laraxowo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:laraxowo@yahoo.co.uk)

## **Abstract**

This paper reexamines the source of dramatic conflict between Antigone and Creon in Sophocles' time-honoured classic, *Antigone*. Whereas critics are wont to interpret the play as a case of the State against the individual as inferred from certain declarations and actions of Creon, the present study discovers, through a psychoanalytic study of Creon, that the dominant reason for which Creon does not want to be seen as buying Antigone's explanation for flouting Creon's edict and burying her brother is because she is a woman. Creon's attitude betrays his disregard for the female gender and haughtiness arising from his membership of what he considers the superior gender. Creon's eventual tragic end is finally propelled by his obstinate refusal to change grounds because, to him, that will constitute being beaten by a woman.

## Introduction

The dominant critical perception of the conflict in *Antigone* is that which sees it as one of the State, represented in the personality of King Creon, against the individual – Antigone. The tussle between Antigone and Creon has often been construed as one between political authority and individual conscience (Northrop Frye, 1990). Watson's (1983: 30) critique of the play propagates this view as he reiterates that the play "involves a very clear conflict between differing conceptions of law, between human law and a higher, more fundamental law". This may not be utterly wrong since Creon continually affirms throughout the course of the play that his authority would not be undermined without dire consequences attending whoever is the erring citizen. The decree that Polynices must not be buried is Creon's first official declaration in office and, under the circumstances, it would be understood if he claims it is imperative to let members of the royal household and the entire Theban populace realize that his orders are not to be trampled upon. At least that is what he appears to be doing, on the surface. Only a closer look at Creon's attitude and a psychoanalytic review of his actions would reveal that a great deal of familial and sentimental considerations form the basis of this ruling and his subsequent actions in the play.

From the onset, it is quite obvious that the targets of Creon's law on the corpses of the two brothers are Antigone and Ismene since they are the only surviving relatives of the dead king Oedipus and consequently, of the two late brothers. The enmity and rivalry between Creon and Oedipus from *Oedipus Rex* does not end throughout the play and we see Creon's attempt at getting Oedipus through his children in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Thus the disposition of Creon to the children of Oedipus is one of hostility and hatred, indirectly and posthumously repaying their

father for the unjust treatment meted out to Creon in the first play of the trilogy, *Oedipus Rex*.

Besides, the circumstances surrounding the feud that leads to the death of the royal brothers involve Creon who assumes the throne as soon as Oedipus is deposed. Polynices ousts Creon and reigns till he is also overthrown by Eteocles, who chases away Polynices, his brother. It is possible that Creon would not forgive Polynices for humiliating him and may have even been involved in inciting Eteocles against his brother. Ordinarily, Eteocles has no reason to single-handedly rise against his brother since Polynices is older and therefore has greater right to the throne. The state burial Creon accords Eteocles afterwards lends credence to this suspicion.

Creon's intentions, whatever they are based on, are well shrouded and his claim that the state has to reward the loyal and punish the perfidious of the two brothers sounds plausible at the initial stage. Only as the story develops and the tension increases do we begin to discover that the reasons for Creon's obduracy when he should rescind his decision are embedded in his surreptitious and unconscious gender pride and sentiments. This posture, and the effect it has on the downfall of Creon are what we hope to delve into in the course of this paper with the aim to prove that Creon's real tragic flaw is his belief in masculine superiority and that his tragic end is catalysed by his refusal to yield in a case where a woman would emerge, or appear to emerge, victorious.

### **Psychoanalysis as a Literary Theory**

The classic work of Sigmund Freud, -*"The Interpretation of Dreams"*- and some others, now popularize the employment of psychoanalysis, known in literary parlance as psychoanalytic literary criticism, in the interpretation of creative works. Both literary critics and medical practitioners have relied on Freud's theories to construe the statements, actions and inactions of

individuals they find worthy of attention. As a theory of literature, psychoanalytic literary criticism, described by Ann Dobie (2012:55) as psychological criticism, utilizes the principles of psychoanalysis in the evaluation of either character or author in a work of literature. The main thrust of the hypothesis, as put forward by Freud, includes the “theory of the primacy of the unconscious”, the importance of dreams and *id*, *ego*, and the *super-ego* as principal factors underlying human mind constructs and actions. Psychoanalytic criticism, according to Chris Baldick (2008: 275) also seldom employs “various heretical versions” of psychoanalysis in the process of literary evaluation though he concedes that the Freudian version is the most used one.

The theory of the unconscious is most relevant to literary criticism of all the contents of the Freudian proposition of psychoanalytical theory as it informs a major part of what is done in the human unconscious though the individual involved may be oblivious of this fact. Dobie (2012: 56) analyzes the working of the unconscious, as promulgated by Freud. Thus he explains:

because the conscious mind is not aware of its submerged counterpart, it may mistake the real causes of behavior. An individual may be unable to tell the difference between what is happening and what she thinks is happening. In short, our actions are the result of forces we do not recognize and therefore cannot control.

The unconscious in every human is often packed with societal ideologies, family values and experiences and other issues that often creep daily into the human mind unnoticed. Very often, ideas and perspectives that individuals may not readily declare in public reside latently in their unconscious and may not erupt for a period of time. To Hans Bertens (2008: 128),

We may expect everything that is ideologically undesirable within a given culture to have found refuge in the unconscious of its members. If we see ‘ideology’ in psychoanalytic terms, that is, as the conscious dimension of a given society, then we may posit an unconscious where everything that ideology represses – social inequality, unequal opportunity, the lack of freedom of the subject – is waiting to break to the surface.

Oftentimes in the analysis of literary characters, it is discovered that their actions and/or inactions are mostly determined by the unconscious and sometimes by dreams as “symbolic fulfillments of unconscious wishes” (Terry Eagleton, 2008: 136) and sexuality. In the unconscious there are often negative notions of “gender, class, race, religion, sexuality and nationality” (Jonathan Cullen, 1997: 1196) which influence characters’ decisions and utterances. The theory of the unconscious has been applied in the evaluation of canonized literary characters such as Hamlet, Oedipus, and Macbeth, all tragic heroes whose attitudes are informed or misinformed by ideologies, aspirations and opinions latently inhabiting the unconscious quarters of their minds. Some critics also believe that the psychoanalytic theory is more applicable to authors whose personal traits and experiences oftentimes form the source of their creative enterprise, albeit unconsciously.

The basis for this article is the investigation of the viability of the principles of psychoanalysis in the critical examination of Creon in *Antigone* by Sophocles. It is for this reason we have to undergo an explication of gender values and practices during the classical period in which the play is set in order to connect the place of these values and ideologies in Creon’s unconscious to his actions, decisions and rulings as kings throughout the course of the play. Thus we find that the “ideologically undesirable” notions of gender and power in Creon’s unconscious play fundamental parts in his reign and decrees which enhance his downfall. The standards of psychoanalysis are also relevant to an interpretation of what might be read as Antigone’s Oedipal traits in her attachment (seemingly sexual) to her father and brother. But this is beside the thrust of this paper and, except for the mention here, may not be treated into details. Psychoanalysis as a theory has been contested and has been “a source of fierce contention”. In spite of the advantages of psychoanalysis, one major weakness of the theory as means of literary

evaluation is that, in the words of Dobie, “when you make a Freudian (psychoanalytical) reading of a text, you will probably limit yourself to a consideration of the work itself”. It tends to limit the way a reader perceives the characters in a text and their actions. Our bother here however will not be to further the debate on whether the contents of the theory are apposite but an application of its tenets in deciphering the behavior of a character whose actions are obviously influenced by his unconscious.

### **Gender Relations in Classical Greek Society**

Gender issues are often raised in works of literature irrespective of the geographical origins of such works. What critics find as a point of similarity is the imbalance in the presentation of female gender issues in all the cultures and tribes of the world including the now civilized ones. Considerations of this subject have given rise to what is now known as gender criticism, an approach to literary criticism that is akin to gender studies. In the words of M. H. Abram (2005: 113)

The basis of gender criticism is the premise that, while sex (a person’s identification as male or female) is determined by anatomy, gender (masculinity or femininity in personality traits and behavior) can be largely independent on anatomy, and is a social construction that is diverse, variable, and dependent on historical circumstances.

Gender criticism is often conflated with feminist criticism and most works intended to be in gender studies always end up being an excursion in feminist criticism though attempts are made to develop fields of study such as men’s studies or masculinity studies. Even when the theoretical basis for the present work is not solely gender criticism, we have deemed it fit to appraise gender issues in the society under discussion because they form the basis of the issues that are unraveled as the theory of psychoanalysis takes us to the character’s unconscious.

Gender delineation in roles, household duties, societal functions and even habitation form part of the ethical composition of classical Greek people just as it is with the other cultures and tribes of the time. Greek women were unequal to their male counterparts in all matters of existence including religious worship, festivals and politics. In classical Greek societies, women were naturally confined to their homes with limited freedom to move around like men. Except for selected ceremonial functions, the women were expected to be in their homes where they run domestic affairs and take care of children. This dedication to family upkeep is expected to keep the women occupied and therefore excluded from public life. Sue-Ellen Case (2004) explains that

... the rise of the family unit radically altered the role of women in Greek public life. Ironically, the important role women began to assume within the family unit was the cause of their removal from public life... since the Athenian women were confined to the house, (explicitly in the laws of Solon), they were removed from the public life of the intellect and the soul and confined to the world of domestic labor, childbearing and concomitant sexual activities.

Above all these, the women were also supposed to be subordinate to men without striving to be heard in a society that had gone completely patriarchal. Most of the restrictions placed on women in Greek societies apply to wives and daughters as well.

The male dominance of Athenian society extends to all aspects of societal and family lives including governance, sports, writing and the theatre. Key posts belonged to men and major actions were carried out by men leaving the women to be “good, and a slave, though the woman is said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless” (Aristotle, 1997: 27). Thus Aristotle compares the inferiority of the female gender with the worthlessness of a slave. On the reflection of gender disparity in typical Athenian society, Worthen (2004: 16) notices that it extends even

to the theatre and drama saying “looking closely at both the drama and its performance can help us see how justice, power, and gender came to be arranged in Athenian society”.

Classical drama and theatre is replete with evidence of the astringent gender imbalance that characterized the Greek societies of the time. In the theatre, women are notably absent; feminine roles are played by boys and men, costumed as women. In the extant Greek drama texts, the themes and characterization often display the societal gender attitude of regarding members of the female gender as inferior to the male in all ramifications. In *Oedipus Rex* there is the practice of Levirate marriage which hands over a woman to her husband’s successor the same way his property and position are handed over. In *Alcestis*, we see how Admetus cannily pushes his wife to die in his stead though she is later brought back to life on her way to Hades. The sufferings of the grief-ridden women of Troy in the face of a war caused by masculine desires and contests in Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* also form part of the representation of gender issues in Greek drama.

### **Gender Attitudes in Antigone and Ismene**

Creon’s ruling at the beginning of the play appears devoid of any gender bias since he states categorically that he merely desires to honor the loyal and patriotic Eteocles and serve out punitive measures to the traitor, though dead. However, the colossal penalty for transgressing the decree calls for closer examination as to whether Creon anticipates the flouting of his edict from certain quarters. Antigone is swift to decode Creon’s intentions and she immediately confers with her sister that “It is against you and me he has made this order. Yes, against me” (1975: 127) Antigone considers this a travesty of the rule of law and insists that it is one’s moral and civic rights to bury his/her dead relations. The ultimate death penalty for whoever buries



Polynices is meant to scare dissidents away and also confirms that Creon really desires that Polynices be "... left unburied, left to be eaten/ by dogs and vultures, a horror for all to see." (1975: 131) It is a strange kind of punishment that offends the sensibilities of human beings yet Creon insists that the terms are not negotiable.

The burial of Polynices rapidly follows the order and things happen in quick succession thereafter; Sentry comes to report the burial with a claim of anonymity of the perpetrator in the first report. After hearing of life-threatening consequences of not producing the culprit from Creon, Sentry uses his own strategy, as he later boasts, and comes back to the Theban palace a second time with the criminal – Antigone. The discovery that Antigone is the offender brings mixed reactions from different angles but not from Creon who sternly insists that the law respects no one and that the implications of disobeying his command have been clearly spelt out initially.

Ismene is apparently more gender sensitive than Antigone drawing from her instant reaction to Antigone's proposal that they should not allow their brother's corpse to lie unburied on the ground. Her response betrays her congenital gender submissive stance as she explains to her sister that

...we are women; it is not for us /To fight against men; our rulers are stronger than we, /And we must obey in this, or in worse than this. /May the dead forgive me, I can do no other /But as I am commanded; to do more is madness. (1975: 128)

Ismene's position here is definitely a reflection of societal expectations from women in their time. She thus withdraws from the struggle and steers clear of trouble for the dual reasons of her gender and citizenship. This leaves Antigone alone with the crucial decision of choosing between obeying Creon and burying her brother.

For Antigone, there are no points to consider at all – Polynices must be buried against all gender and civic obstacles. Antigone seems not bothered by the constraints of her gender vis-à-vis societal expectation of docility in women and tells her sister that it is their duty to bury their brother and prove themselves worthy of their “high blood” (1975: 127). Beyond the prejudices of her immediate environment, Antigone esteems the law of the gods and her duty to the dead of greater import than any obnoxious ruling made by Creon and she tells Creon this to his face that

I did not think your edicts strong enough  
To overrule the unwritten unalterable laws of  
God and heaven, you being only a man.  
They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting.  
Though where they came from, none of us can tell.  
Guilty of their transgression before God  
I cannot be, for any man on earth (1975: 138).

This evidently is the thesis statement of Antigone’s actions throughout the play. Whereas Ismene perceives the issue mainly as a gender tussle where women are bound to fail, Antigone sees the matter as choice between obeying the law of God and the law of man. Man in her sense of usage here means human being, thereby juxtaposing the law of god and the law of human authorities. Antigone is focused on this, obdurate and rather gender insensitive because she adjudges her duty to God greater than the constraints of gender. Antigone momentarily forgets that she is a woman and acts courageously like a man. For a play like *Antigone* described by Sue Blundell and Nancy Rabinowitzs (2005) as “set in an age when females were generally denied a public voice”, Antigone’s attitude is palpably queer, courageous and lacks gender bias altogether. She does not see herself as a woman fighting men in a male dominated and patriarchal world, rather she sees herself a human being teaming up with the gods to battle human oppression and

injustice to fellow human beings. Thus Antigone's perspective of the conflict is that between the ethereal and the natural, between the physical and transcendental forces governing the universe. However, Creon's understanding of the situation is in sharp contrast to this.

### **Gender Pride in Creon's Unconscious**

There seems to be a consensual agreement by critics that the flaw in Creon which culminates in his fall is his pride and overblown ego. The general opinion is that

The theme of pride and its disastrous consequences is here... Even when confronted by a prophet who has never been in error, Creon cannot back down. Creon has so much faith in his own sense of order that he cannot imagine the god's will being any different from his own sense of right and wrong.

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070413120641AAwiosh>

This attitude of pride might have been propelled by a combination of his unexpected rise to the same throne from which he has suffered visceral hatred and a choleric nature that deprives him of good judgment more often. Creon's enthronement as the king of Thebes is occasioned by the tragic death of curse-laden Oedipus and the consequential tussle for the throne by the two royal brothers. Their death in battle on the same day leaves the throne vacant a second time and the next of kin, Creon, is left to assume the kingship. The kingship instantly affects Creon's opinion and estimation of himself and this is expected for, according to Northrop Frye (1990: 147-148), theirs

is a society held together by a kind of molecular tension of egos, a loyalty to the group or the leader which diminishes the individual, or, at best, contrasts his pleasure with his duty or honor. Such a society is an endless source of tragic dilemmas like those of Hamlet and Antigone.

Thus Creon demands absolute loyalty and obedience from all and sundry without any regard for the nobility of other citizens of Thebes who also deserve respect. His first official proclamation

reveals that he is set to rule with iron hand and crush whoever stands in his way of absolute leadership. This insensitive approach and pride can be subtly detected in the offhand manner with which he commands the Chorus at the beginning to ensure that his order on the burial of the two brothers be kept;

CHORUS: Creon, son of Menoeceus, You have given your judgment for the friend and for the enemy. As for those that are dead, so for us who remain, Your will shall be law.

CREON: See then that it be kept.

CHORUS: My Lord, some younger will be fitter for that task.

CREON: Watchers are already set over the corpse.

CHORUS: What other duty then remain for us?

CREON: Not to connive at any disobedience. (1975: 132)

These utterances of Creon smack of pride and arrogance and even when the Chorus promptly corrects him that the instruction should have been for younger citizens he has no apology, he only states further that they should avoid any act of connivance.

Creon's relations with Haemon his son and Teiresias the blind seer further lend more credence to the claim that his behavior upon assuming the throne is characterised mainly by pride. After the altercation between him and Haemon his son, it becomes obvious that there is sense in Haemon's word and the Chorus advises Creon to consider it but Creon rhetorically queries

that "Am I to take lessons at this time of my life from a fellow of his age?"(1975: 146). This question is an index of Creon's frame of mind and the underlining feature of all he does, even with other characters. Creon's disregard for other human beings reaches its apex in his treatment of Teiresias whom Creon naturally assumes is out to beg for money. The proud assumption that his wealth and influence are what attract Teiresias hinder Creon from listening to the vision and

prophecy of the blind prophet until it is too late and the looming tragedy can no longer be averted.

Since Creon has no respect for his subjects both young and old and Teiresias the messenger of the gods, it is therefore expected that his attitude towards that of the opposite gender will be fraught with pride. Even though slightly veiled, Creon's gender pride is the most pronounced of all his negative attitudes throughout the entire play. Upon the discovery that Antigone is the dissident that Creon is looking for, he attempts to break the pride and will power with which she confronts him and owns up for the deed. Creon's gender pride first surfaces in the argument between both of them:

**ANTIGONE:** My way is to share my love, not my hate.

**CREON:** Go then, and share your love among the dead. We'll have no woman's law here, while I live. (1975: 140)

The problem here is undoubtedly not with the idea of sharing love put forward by Antigone but with the fact that the speaker is only a woman and she does not seem to recognize the fact. It is clearly revealed then that Creon is prejudiced against women and would not tolerate any act he considers as insubordination from their part. Before giving the final verdict on Antigone's offense, Creon first confines her indoors within the palace, describing there as "the proper place for women". (1975: 142). This statement emanates from Creon's unconscious, revealing societal and prejudicial belief that women are to constantly remain indoors and not meddle in the affairs of State since those are the responsibilities of the men. Thus, Creon's negative gender sensitivity is hinted at early in the play. Later as the play develops, we find that Creon is highly uncomfortable with the fact that Antigone is neither tractable nor pliable and is determined to bring her to her knees anyhow.

At the initial stage of the discourse between him and Haemon, Creon claims that the need to maintain political authority is the reason for his insistence on punishing Antigone. To this end he explains:

He whom the State appoints must be obeyed /To the  
smallest matter, be it right – or wrong. (1975: 144)

This absolutist statement of Creon's opinion of kingship forms the basis for major critical evaluation of his actions and reactions in the play without going further to discover that Creon's obstinacy is strengthened and doubled, albeit unconsciously, by the gender of the person involved in the 'crime'. His conclusion to Haemon on the issue makes Creon reveal inadvertently that the reason he would not budge is because the offender he is dealing with is a woman;

Therefore, I hold to the law,  
And will never betray it – least of all for a woman.  
Better be beaten, if need be, by a man,  
Than let a woman get the better of us. (1975: 144)

This is the point at which Creon finally concludes that he would not recant irrespective of whether his judgement is right or wrong, because the individual involved is a woman. Any judgement based on this statement and others like it will perceive the conflict between Antigone and Creon as a gender tussle and no more. Reading this explanation to Haemon greatly reveals Creon's mind for while he tries to expatiate on his point on defending his authority, he unintentionally lets out that the more reason he must not back down is because the offender is a woman. Thus we see that societal values on gender matters are deeply seated in Creon's unconscious and keeps interrupting Creon's statements and actions. In saying "better be ...

beaten ... by a man..." it is implied that Creon might have rescinded his decision if only he has to do so for a man. Some critical opinion says that

Creon makes a mistake in sentencing her-and his mistake is condemned, in turn, by the gods-but his position is an understandable one. In the wake of war, and with his reign so new, Creon has to establish his authority as supreme. On the other hand, Creon's need to defeat Antigone seems at times to be extremely personal. At stake is not only the order of the state, but his pride and sense of himself as a king and, more fundamentally, a man. <http://www.gradesaver.com/antigone/study-guide/major-themes/>

Creon's declaration implies that he would have long forgiven the offender if he were a man yet this is not true. It follows therefore that Creon is being influenced by the deep-seated thoughts in his unconscious mind. Later when the conversation between Creon and Haemon turns extremely sour, we see the same thought creep to the surface again as Creon despises Haemon for publicly taking sides with a woman. Creon considers his son a weakling and effeminate for this and rebukes him openly saying

Despicable coward! No more will than a woman! (Sophocles, 1975: 146)

The rationale behind Haemon arguing for Antigone does not appeal to Creon as much as the gender of the object of Haemon's defense. Creon's disgust for what he considers his son's shameless case in favor of a woman affects his acuity on the contents of the message of Haemon whom he equally perceives as too young for the advisory role he is playing. Thus, gender pride is conflated with age pride in the composition of the negative attitude that turn out to be Creon's tragic defect.

The dispute arising from Antigone's flouting of Creon's law is a political as well as familial one eliciting reactions both from the chorus on one side and members of the royal household on the other. The involvements of Antigone, Ismene and Haemon make the problem

one with a domestic side that could have been handled more personally by involving the Queen, Eurydice. The negligence of his wife in such a sensitive and somehow personal case as this further depicts Creon as an unapologetic male chauvinist, truly full of his gender with no modicum of regard for members of what he considers the inferior sex. Creon makes no recourse to his wife and she remains indoors, unmentioned even after the visit of Teiresias when it becomes obvious to him that things are going out of control and calamity is looming. Eurydice only comes on stage after the announcement of her son's death and she commits suicide immediately after the news, without confronting Creon on his culpability in their son's tragic demise. Eurydice's attitude of utmost submission to her husband buttresses the position that Creon makes all women relate to him in forced veneration and deference. Out of the three women in the play, two are highly deferential in their approach towards Creon. The one who deflates his self-conceited appropriation of himself through confident confrontations and consistent resistance is given the ultimate judgement – death.

The contention here is not the illogical elimination of other factors that contribute to the tragedy of Creon as a valid tragic hero in *Antigone*. The concession can be made that the downfall of the tragic hero is often orchestrated by a conglomeration of issues ranging from the role of fate and supernatural forces to the contributions of society and hamartia. Hubris is the one factor we here highlight with specific concentration on how the tragic hero's pride where women are concerned deepens his general pride and intensifies his fall. Perhaps he might have lost only a loved one instead of two if he has carried his wife along as a partner in progress rather than relegate her as one of the weaker sex, undeserving of and attention and being heard. Even when Creon's tragedy cannot be averted by virtue of his position as king of Thebes, the effect could have been minimal if his pride has not been toward all – the Chorus, Antigone, Haemon,



Eurydice and all who come across him. One other concession, however, is that *Antigone* is patterned after other Sophoclean tragedies in that tragic heroes often clash with Teiresias and the heroes also do not die though they are left in a stage where they would have preferred death. In the case of Creon afore discussed, his arrival at this tragic end where he losses all that is dear to him is through the instrumentation of his pride as a man. One point that needs be stressed here is that even where Creon gives other justification such as political exigency for his insistence on punishing Antigone, it becomes obvious almost immediately that his inflexibility is hinged on Antigone's gender, and not the weight of the crime she purportedly commits.

At the final point of recognition in the face of disaster, Creon's loss enables him to admit that the laws of heaven are superior to the laws of man and should be reckoned as such. He declares:

Now I believe it is by the laws of heaven that man must live (1975: 156).

It is interesting to note that this same statement was earlier made by Antigone but Creon only retorts that he would not have a woman's law for any reason. His declaration at the end therefore constitutes only a periphrasis because the true point would have been to say openly that Antigone was right after all. Thus, we can conclude that Creon's detest of the female gender does not leave him, even in his state of devastation.

## **Conclusion**

Discriminatory practices towards women, we have found, are a feature of an epoch, of classical Greek societies and are exhibited by most men of the time. What is dissimilar here is the attitude of pride in Creon, displayed toward everybody but heightened when the one is a woman. It is equally interesting how Creon easily gives himself away when he is trying to propose other admissible reasons why he must punish Antigone. Each time he launches into an

explanation on why he has to be firm and uphold his own words, Creon somehow always ends up saying Antigone is unforgiveable because she is a woman. This then promotes the arguments that societal gender attitudes inhabit Creon's unconscious and often come up to work with his proud disposition to make him almost absolutely perverted in his dealings.

Even when it is agreed that ascending the throne of the king of Thebes already predisposes Creon to an irredeemable tragic end judging by the manner of exit of his four immediate predecessors - Kings Laius and Oedipus, Polynices and Eteocles - one would observe that his own downfall is caused partly by his negative attitude of pride towards women, including his loved ones. The absence of any feeling of gender superiority in his son Haemon makes Creon despise the former and spurn the boy's advice until it becomes too late. Events at the end of the play prove that Creon should have got down from his high horse and shifted grounds against his convictions of the gender order as this could have probably salvaged the situation or, at least, reduced the number of tragic deaths since a tragic character set on the path of destruction is irredeemable.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Aristotle. (1997) *Poetics* Mineola: Dover Publications.

Baldick, Chris (2008) *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bertens, Hans (2008) *Literary Theory: The Basics* Oxon: Routledge

Blundell, Sue and Nancy Rabinowitz (2005) "Gender Viewing in Classical Greece" Paper Presented at 'SEEING THE PAST: Building Knowledge of the Past and Present through Acts of Seeing'. Conference Hosted by the Archeology Centre, Standford University. February 4-6, 2005.

Case, Sue-Ellen (2004) "Classical Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts" in Worthen, W. B. (ed) (2004) *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama* Australia: Wadsworth. 106-111

- Cullen, Jonathan (1997) *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* New York: Oxford
- Dobie, Ann B (2012) *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* Australia: Wadsworth.
- Eagleton, Terry (2008) *Literary Theory: An Introduction* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Euripides (1960) *Alcestis*. Trans. Richard Lattimore. Greek Tragedies. Eds. David Green and Richard Lattimore. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, III: 261-311.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2004) *The Trojan Women*. Newsbury, M. A.: Focus Publishing.
- Frye, Northrop (1990) *Anatomy of Criticism*. London: Penguin Books.
- Sophodes (1975) *Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus and Antigone*. in *The Theban plays*. Harmondsworth Penguin Books Limited. 22 – 162.
- Watson, G. J. (1983) *Drama; An Introduction*. London: Macmillan.
- Worthen, W. B. (2004) *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama* Australia: Wadsworth.
- Abrams, M. K. (2005) *A Glossary of Literary Terms* London: Wadsworth. (Eighth Edition)
- “Antigone Themes” <http://www.gradesaver.com/antigone/study-guide/major-themes/> 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2012