

Totalitarianism, Martyrdom and Social Resistance: Sarah Woods' *Antigone*

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I

Sarah Woods' adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*¹ performed by TAG Theatre Company² is a politically motivated reshaping of the original text. Basing her text on twenty different translations of Sophocles' *Antigone*, the writer in residence at the Royal National Theatre challenges traditional interpretations of the original text by seeking principally to examine the social reaction to Antigone's actions. Rather than being concerned with the concept of competing claims of loyalty owed to family and state (inherent in the Creon/Antigone conflict), Woods' adaptation of the *Antigone* is concerned with the Chorus' reaction to Antigone's illegal burial of Polynices. Therefore, the focus of Woods' play is the progression of the Chorus from initial neutrality to support for Antigone. Ultimately, this progression transcends the immediate discourse to examine how the existence of injustice ought not to be ignored by society, but requires each person to stand, as an individual, for what they believe. Consequently, both political apathy and the isolation of the politically challenging individual are examined in this play and, in the requirement that justice should prevail, the transition of the Chorus from non-involvement to active participant provides a histrionic direction to the audience to challenge, rather than avoid, acts of injustice.³ This paper will seek to show that the nature of the Chorus is radically reshaped in Woods' *Antigone*, while Woods alters significantly the dialectic of Creon and Antigone, generalising Antigone's resistance so that its modern references are, arguably, vague and over generalised.

Specifically inspired by the opening of the Scottish Parliament, TAG Theatre Company commissioned Woods' re-examination of the Antigone myth to explore dramatically its political implications for contemporary young people. As part of the *Making the Nation* 1999-2002 programme (part funded by the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow City Council), this version of the *Antigone* is consciously adapted and changed in order to facilitate a questioning of the concepts of nationhood, democracy, government and collective and personal responsibility. The *Antigone* was specifically chosen by TAG Theatre Company in order to promote a political debate concerning personal responsibility. TAG's artistic director James Brining explained the political appropriateness his choice:

I'm interested in young people, or audiences, whoever, asking the questions about what it means to be a member of a society, of a community. Where does our responsibility begin and end? And that's something that is in the play. Where are the lines between us? If her brother is lying out in a field somewhere and is not allowed to be buried, is that a problem for me or not?⁴

Brining's interpretation of the *Antigone*, and Woods' adaptation of the original, raise fundamental questions concerning the political role of the individual. Taken together with the fact that the target audience is young people who are being encouraged to formulate their first responses to the new Scottish parliament, this calls for a detailed examination of how, and indeed whether, Sophocles' *Antigone* can support a political interpretation of

this kind.

The response of the Scottish press towards the text and performance was, on the whole, favourable. The lyricism of Woods' expression, the physical interpretation of the actors, and the innovation in design all received positive comment. Reservations, however, were raised with respect to the success of the political reworking of Sophocles. Whether a young audience can engage with the actions of Antigone was questioned by Rob Adams in *The Herald*⁵. And whether the play itself can support the imposition of a political interpretation on the original text was by questioned by Joyce McMillan (*The Scotsman* 7 September 2000) who commented:

In the odd stilted or leaden moment it sometimes seems as though Woods is including a little more of the explicit political argument than her play can comfortably bear.⁶

These criticisms strike at the heart of the writer's purpose and the intention of the *Making the Nation* series.

This article examines in detail key dramaturgical methods by which Woods modifies and appropriates Sophocles' original. In doing so, it examines Woods' text in three main aspects. As her text focuses on the transition of the Chorus, section II considers how the Chorus communicates its thoughts and concerns through the medium of the choral odes. It will show that the transition of the Chorus can be traced through the developing emotions of these odes, which ultimately establish Antigone as a mythic paradigm, a symbolic and generalised martyr whose isolated suffering necessitates social reaction and leads to increased political awareness. Section III examines Woods' interpretation of other characters in the play in relation to the Chorus, elucidating Woods' understanding and modification of the Antigone/Creon dialectic and its impact on the socio-political position of the Chorus. Section IV analyses the ways in which the themes of Woods' version are brought to physical fruition. This section forms a commentary on space and design, the dominant signs by which the production was transmitted to the audience. The final section briefly evaluates the modification of the Antigone myth represented by Woods' play in relation to the *Making the Nation* manifesto.

II

The success of Sarah Woods' *Antigone* results primarily from the audience's focus on the Chorus' progression. This is achieved by shifting the Chorus between two distinct modes of delivery, firstly, address made directly to the audience and, secondly, interaction with the dramatic events. Woods creates the sense of a temporal flux by having the choral odes addressed to the audience, and then creating episodes that integrate the Chorus into the dramatic events of the play. Furthermore, the choral odes are textually located in the here and now and draw upon modern referents in order to involve the audience, whereas the dialogue of the episodes is, for the most, consistent with the dramatic events. This, however, does not mean that the odes and episodes are completely distinct from each other: the odes provide a modern analysis of the dramatic events; the events themselves, whilst firmly rooted in the remove of antiquity, ask pertinent questions concerning the role of the individual.

This distinction is immediately established in the parodos where both the auditory discourse and physical meta-discourse of the Chorus separates it from the dramatic events that unfold in the stage space hinterland. Physically located at the front of the stage, the Chorus directly addresses the audience, but not from the removed location of antiquity rather from the here and now. Woods replaces the Sophoclean parodos (lines 100-161) which narrates the victory of Thebes and defeat of Polynices at the hands of Eteocles with an ode that examines the isolation of the individual. Rather than narrating preceding events, Woods' Chorus envisages a journey home through a modern city in which the only journey of importance is that of the individual, who is returning to a place of safety, which is conceived as the home. This journey is then repeated through life and remains ostensibly the same regardless of any environmental change. Woods considers that even in death the isolated journey continues with the trek no longer through the concrete streets of the developing city, but through the earth itself. Although each individual is concerned only with personal existence, the individual is also presented as archetype in that each person can be considered as one amongst many. The Chorus' journey, therefore, is everyone's journey. Consequently, in this ode Woods conceptualises how the shared experience of the 'daily grind' promotes the segregation of the individual from the community environment. Yet, ironically, it is the focus on the shared experience of each individual that generates a sense of universality that allows the Chorus to reach beyond the dramatic plot and establish a relationship with the modern audience.

Having established a familiar relationship with the audience based on shared experience, the Chorus then takes the audience into the world of the play by focusing attention on the stage action. The Chorus guides the audience's gaze to Thebes by envisaging the dawn of a new day heralded by the cry of an infant left too long alone under a tree (presumably Oedipus). As though pulling back a metaphysical veil, the Chorus both physically and textually engages with the stage/text space, becoming a lens that directs the attention of the audience away from contemplating the grind of a modern working day to concentrating on the specific time of the *Antigone*. This 'day' is specific, being the day that brings relief from the threat of Polynices (represented, as in Sophocles, as the metaphorical eagle).² Woods' Chorus simply observes 'Yesterday today' and does not recognise that significant events have taken place, a lacuna that prepares for its impartial attitude towards the actions of Antigone and the reaction of Creon. Clearly the day is not the same for Antigone and Ismene, but what is of interest is how the Chorus reacts. In this, Woods' Chorus differs radically from that of Sophocles. The latter's parodos stresses the threat to Thebes posed by Polynices and the sense of relief felt by the Theban elders when, under the auspices of Zeus, Polynices and his Argive panoply are repelled. It is this sense of relief that condemns Polynices as a traitor. Although Woods does not evade the issue of mutual fratricide, she weakens the position of Creon by minimising the threat posed by Polynices: if Polynices is not understood to be a traitor, then Creon's refusal of burial seems arbitrary. This affects the complexity of the conflict between Antigone and Creon: Polynices must be seen as a significant danger in order for Creon's edict to be understandable; otherwise, the play is without the resolution of the Sophoclean tragic dialectic.

What Woods compromises in terms of the polarity of the protagonists, however, is compensated for in the concentration on the tragedy of the Chorus. This is particularly apparent in her version of Sophocles' first stasimon ('Ode to Man' lines 332-383). Woods examines human inventiveness, past and present, by juxtaposing Sophoclean and modern images: catching birds and taming horses (lines 342-352), for example, are placed alongside the sound of a fridge and a ringing telephone so that ancient skills still in use

accompany modern technology in reflecting humanity's inventiveness. Similarly, Woods employs images of standing on the moon as well as those of sea-faring. Humanity is seen in the light of continuing progress, showing how far it has come and how constant the spirit of inventiveness. The here and now of the Chorus' address to the audience, therefore, is both dramatically and textually linked to the evolution of the dramatic events. The elision of time established in the parodos now encourages an understanding of the removed nature of the play's content for the modern audience.

The analogous inventiveness of ancient and modern times is ambiguous. Woods' Chorus contemplates whether it is possible to 'unknow the known, unsee the seen...' ⁸ a question that requires the audience to meditate on the unstoppable nature of progress, and thereby recognise that there is no retreat from knowledge. Furthermore, Woods' importing of the images of bird trapping or horse taming into a modern context suggests a violation of the environment and an infringement of the natural order. Put simply, in today's environmentally conscious society, the trapping of birds is not necessarily a skill that evokes pride of achievement. Such ambiguity of image and knowledge questions modern human inventiveness: refrigerators and telephones become inventions that are not so much conveniences of modern living, but the result of a reckless and unstoppable desire for progress. Woods evokes a view of the world that is cluttered and claustrophobic, in which the individual is paradoxically reduced to an automaton by his own skill.

This ambiguity of skill and invention reaches a climax at the end of the ode where Woods' Chorus questions whether the daring of advance is rash and maintains that it is not alone in this questioning. In deliberately ambiguous syntax, the Chorus seeks assurance for itself and the audience through direct audience address and by the use of the first person plural to implicitly include the audience in the experience:

And we wonder when we dare, but do not stop, but do it more to stop
the wonder. And I wonder what I do, if this is rash, if this is wrong – but I
am not the only one.

I am not the only one. ⁹

The progression from the group's wondering to the questioning of the individual reinforces the concept of the individual both as entity questioning his/her position in a modern society and as archetype of the search for understanding by the community. This reinforces the theme of Woods' parodos: an individual is part of both personal and the wider social consciousness. Further, the transition from 'we' to 'I' changes the Chorus/audience relationship. The Chorus' use of 'we' refers to all present, locating the Chorus in the here and now; the change to the singular physically isolates the Chorus within its own spatial existence and textually serves to identify the Chorus as individual within the dramatic narrative. Similarly, the 'I' which defines the Chorus also defines the 'I' of the individual audience member rather than the 'we' of the collective: each individual member is put in the position of both individual and member of a collective. Both the discourse and the meta-discourse of the Chorus guide the audience back into the world of the play. The questioning of human daring becomes relevant explicitly to Antigone's daring and implicitly to Creon's actions.

Woods' Chorus is prepared, at most, to contemplate, but not to translate its thoughts into action. This is evident in the third ode ¹⁰ which, although pro-Antigone in spirit, realises

that the politics of apathy result in a lack of political representation and thereby loss of freedom. Woods' Chorus imitates Antigone's dilemma: 'Do not open it. Not to take something offered. Nor relax our hold to show what is inside.'¹¹ Here, the Chorus does not need to be explicit; clearly it is referring to Antigone's fistful of dust that buried Polynices. However, although the Chorus does not want to open its hand and let the dust fall (in either a physical or metaphysical capacity), it knows its reluctance is based on fear and fear of action can mean loss of freedom:

Because we are afraid of darkness, we stay in the dark. Because we don't want to lose our freedom, trap ourselves.¹²

The dramatic action, then, indicates that, whilst the Chorus supports Antigone, it advocates non-involvement as a credo. The Chorus also appreciates that, by neither acting nor actively supporting a cause that is just, it in effect allows the unjust cause to succeed. This realisation is taken beyond the specific dramatic events to develop the point that each individual's apathy contributes to a united social apathy:

And so we stay. Fist next to fist, mine and yours and his, the trees of a forest.

Each standing alone.¹³

Thus in Woods' text the extent of individual non-involvement is paradoxically presented in terms of solidarity ('Fist next to fist'), which one usually thinks of as part of active protest. Thus, the latent power of the individual, as individual and within society, is evoked through personal and mass inactivity, reflexively suggesting the power of activity. This affects the collective response of the audience and, within that, the individual response. '[M]ine and yours and his' refers to the Chorus, the individual and the collective (the third person singular representing the whole of the audience). Woods challenges inaction in a wider capacity, not perhaps with any specific cause indicated consistently by the Chorus or by the actions of Antigone, but in the wider sense of an ongoing struggle against injustice.

In the evolution of the dramatic events, injustice is presented as the domain of Creon. In Woods' ode three, the consequences of inaction are juxtaposed with the disintegration of expectation. As 'hope turns desire turns lust', what begins full of potential is debased and that debasement is embodied in the aggressive reaction of Creon. Woods' Chorus, without directly referring to Creon, envisages his 'swinging away' from a larger purpose to a more extreme and violent position. It considers his rule to be more concerned with 'knocking heads from shoulders, sun from sky, sending towers tumbling...'¹⁴ images that present Creon exerting power for its own sake and randomly striking out. Creon implicitly represents the destructive force in Thebes who is overreaching himself. His debased sense of kingship permits his attempts to overthrow both the order of the natural world and the fabric of the city. Thus, Creon, rather than Polynices, is presented as the threat to the physical structure of Thebes and, in his abuse of power, Creon, rather than Antigone, presents a challenge to the political structure of Thebes. When Woods' Chorus, drawing on Sophocles (lines 620-624), considers the destructive man as, 'driving towards disaster so that evil seems good and for a moment everything is possible as he goes his way free of ruin',¹⁵ it is clearly thinking of Creon.

The Chorus' criticisms of Creon and its own neutral doubting are consistent with the presentation of Creon as tyrant and the Chorus as apathetic. It must, however, be

acknowledged that Woods' third ode differs radically in content and function from Sophocles' second stasimon. Sophocles' 'Labdacid Ode' (lines 582-630) places the actions of Antigone in the context of the actions of the previous generations of the Labdacid house. Sophocles' Chorus has a clear and consistent thought progression: when the gods decide to destroy a house they ruin it completely; from ancient times the Labdacid house has been troubled, and without deliverance, each generation has implicated the next; and finally, the last child of Oedipus is now suffering. Thus, the Chorus considers Antigone's mind as filled with Erinyes. Accordingly, there can be little doubt that, although Sophocles' Chorus eschews any active support for Creon, in the first part of this ode it is clearly critical of the actions of Antigone and considers her actions as part of a chain of ruin. Woods', by contrast, ignores this direct criticism of Antigone's actions and instead engages in implicit criticism of Creon. Sophocles' Chorus is not repressed, freely expressing its reservations, while the balanced nature of the odes allows the audience to understand the criticisms of the actions of Antigone and Creon. In contrast, Woods' Chorus is confined by its own fear, which paralyses its expression and forces it to communicate through obscure images and fractured thoughts.

The paralysis of the Woods' Chorus results from its fear of involvement, developed in ode four, which replaces Sophocles' third stasimon ('Ode to Love' lines 781-805). Woods excises the Chorus' meditation on the power of love and replaces the ode with one concerned with the Chorus' dilemma on seeing the condemned Antigone.¹⁶ Woods' Chorus wants to distance itself from both the actions of Antigone and Creon's punishment of her:

I am holding nothing. I have nothing from this place. No part of it. I'll run out, outrun the brigands and the thieves. Run home.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the Chorus' attempts at neutrality become increasingly strained because, in Woods' text, the unjust act encourages each individual to take a stand against injustice. Indeed, the more the Chorus wants to be distant, the more Antigone becomes its focal point; this becomes particularly evident when the Chorus, desperate not to see her punishment, become haunted by Antigone's face shining in the darkness of her surroundings. The Chorus sees her in a physical capacity (in the diegetic rock tomb where she will be imprisoned) and in a meta-physical capacity (engulfed by the darkness of death). Three times the Chorus returns to the image of Antigone's face shining from within the darkness. This image stresses Antigone's solitude and her suffering: her luminous quality possesses a resonance of martyrdom, and, symbolically she shines as a beacon of hope in the darkness which signifies the injustice and apathy that surrounds her.

Importantly, she shines alone, a martyr for her cause, and this isolation shames the Chorus. Repeatedly, the Chorus wants to leave Thebes, but, as a spectator, it is paralysed by its implicit involvement in the events which enfold it. The Chorus tries to evade responsibility for Antigone's solitary suffering by separating itself from the power that condemned her:

For every thought, someone to think it. For every belief. For every decision, someone to make it. Not me. I cannot know what it is to make them.¹⁸

As if trying to answer the implicit criticism that political non-involvement also condemns the martyr, the Chorus attempts to assuage its anxiety by considering itself unimportant

and extraneous to the events:

To say that she will die, and she will die and would have died without me here to see...¹⁹

The Chorus wants to believe that it bears no responsibility for the punishment of Antigone. Logically, it is Creon who is accountable for Antigone's death (and in Sophocles' text Antigone herself bears some responsibility). Woods, however, in emphasising the emotional reaction of the Chorus, raises the issue of collective responsibility. Creon may be responsible for Antigone's death, but the Chorus' refusal to engage in any defence of Antigone and its persistent effort to distance itself places Creon's actions within a politically apathetic framework. As has been noted previously, the culture of apathy results in a consequential loss of freedom and, so, although the Chorus does not condemn Antigone actively, its lack of active support for her is part of her condemnation. In creating the environment of apathy, the Chorus has allowed Creon to exercise power unchecked and, therefore, has failed Antigone by omission. The Chorus cannot evade its responsibility to Antigone and subsequently cannot find refuge in being unimportant. Antigone, by her actions and in her isolation, validates the power of the individual. She, thus, demonstrates that the Chorus' attempts at neutrality, based on a concept of the individual seen as not intrinsic to the fabric of society, is misplaced. Subsequently, the Chorus' desperate desire not to face the consequences of its apathy becomes an alienating force for the audience. In light of this, Antigone's actions seem paradigmatic: whilst her burial of Polynices is motivated by personal feelings, the challenge to Creon's authority can be interpreted as a mythic paradigm exemplifying the struggle against repression.

In establishing Antigone as a mythic example of social resistance, Woods dispenses with Sophocles' use of other mythic paradigms in the fourth stasimon (lines 944-897). Rather than comparing Antigone's actions to mythological counterparts in suffering, Woods focuses entirely on the Chorus' transition. In ode five, her Chorus examines its thoughts with reference to the ancient/modern images interpolated from the previous odes. The Chorus considers the world in terms of balance and harmony:

Everything in proportion, seeking a harmony, a wholeness of creation constantly changing as the sun takes its course. We only watch. We cannot know what will happen and cannot change it.²⁰

This is the balance against which Creon's actions are interpreted and, as his rule has previously been seen as 'tearing the sun from the sky', Creon is perceived as being in conflict with nature's harmony. Creon keeps the dead amongst the living and sends the living to keep company with the dead: not burying Polynices and imprisoning Antigone in a living tomb upsets the natural balance. In response to this, Woods' Chorus envisages nature as reasserting itself, supplying the guiding principle that will provide a dramatic resolution. Woods replaces Sophocles' use of 'apportionment' (line 951) and invests the concept of nature in harmony with a similar resonance of unavoidable force. She draws on images of wealth and sailing (derived from Sophocles' lines 952f.) which revisit the images from her second ode interpolated from Sophocles' 'Ode to Man'. As has been seen, Woods invests human inventiveness with a negative resonance and, in this ode, her Chorus considers that examples of human skills are no defence against nature.

Nature, as a force of order, however, does not mean determinism. Woods' Chorus does not consider the inevitability of sunrise and sunset as reason for further inaction. Rather,

the Chorus breaks from its contemplation of the permanence of nature and inhabits a twilight world that textually coalesces ancient and modern times. The climax of the ode brings the audience back to the journey that began in the parodos. Again the Chorus finds itself at the door, but this time, instead of immediately entering the place of safety, the process of unlocking the door is interrupted by fragmentary mental images from modern society interspersed with recollections of the events of the drama. Indeed, the Chorus' experience of the play prevents it from completing the cycle of returning, in that the dramatic narrative forces the Chorus to consider its experience of the world now, through its understanding of the mythic paradigm. This time the Chorus does not cross the diegetic threshold, but lifts its eyes to the world at large and sees images of crime and suffering. Although it does not want to witness criminal acts, nor engage with the alienation of the vulnerable, the Chorus' experience of Antigone as archetypal martyr prevents it from ignoring the wider social environment. As the imagined door is opened, the image of a girl in a cave haunts the Chorus. The girl is not named as Antigone and does not need to be; she becomes an unspecified figure that symbolises the individual's struggle. Similarly, as the Chorus attempts to cross the threshold, it is prevented by a mental image of its own brother lying on the ground. Polynices is not named because he has become representative of a cause. As he was Antigone's motivation for challenging repression, the image of the corpse unburied becomes a metaphorical image of any just cause which requires social resistance. Although the Chorus tries to deny a fraternal relationship, it cannot continue its neutrality, but is compelled to make a stand: firstly, on a dramatic level, in support of Antigone; and secondly, on an interpretative level, with social injustice at large. Woods symbolises the Chorus' transition in a reversal of the traditional image of active solidarity. It releases its 'fist' of inactive solidarity and forms an open hand of active participation. In doing so, the Chorus revisits the image of social apathy presented in the third ode and symbolically mirrors the burial action of Antigone. This action serves to include the Chorus in the resistance of Antigone and signify its transition to social and political involvement.

Woods' Chorus, by joining with Antigone's struggle and juxtaposing it with images of deprivation and crime, encourages a questioning of modern injustice. Whilst no particular cause is conceived, Antigone's actions are symbolic of every cause. Consequently, in the final seventh ode, which has no corresponding stasimon in Sophocles, Woods' Chorus considers the action of the *Antigone* beginning again as part of a never ending cycle of repression and resistance:

Something swims towards me through the air and I think I have seen it before. A moment. And it moves again. I have seen it before, but it wasn't like that.²¹

On one level, this could be perceived as the play beginning again. The Chorus, envisaging Antigone and Ismene meeting to talk (with the implication that talk can result in action) reinforces the concept of the text as mythic paradigm. In beginning the play again, the Chorus reinforces the idea that the events of the *Antigone* can exemplify the requirement for participation in government. Furthermore, the fact that the events begin over again provides a modern-day catharsis, in that now, with the experience of the tragedy behind the audience, there is the potential that this experience may promote a wider social awareness. Although the histrionic events are fixed within the dramatic narrative, beyond the text and performance and on a metaphorical level, there is the potential for the individual audience member to don the mantle of the Chorus and examine his/her own socio-political judgements. Woods' Chorus sees that '[e]verything has changed and yet it is

the same.²² To what extent this is true relies ultimately on the position of the individual.

III

Woods, in order to highlight the social reaction to repression of both the community and the individual generates an atmosphere of repression from the beginning of the text. Antigone's actions are set within and against a repressive regime as Woods creates an impression of authoritarian control. She alters fundamentally the role of Creon and, so, reinterprets the Chorus/Creon relationship. Sophocles' Creon indicates concerns he shares with the Chorus and recognises its continued loyalty. At lines 162f., his opening address restates the Chorus' emotions, echoing relief that Thebes is saved (previously expressed in the parodos) and notes its continued loyalty to the ruling Labdacid house (lines 164-169). Clearly, Sophocles' Creon believes the Chorus to be loyal, appealing to its allegiance in order to have his rule accepted and respected (lines 173f.). Sophocles' Chorus is seen as Creon's natural ally: there is no suggestion of any difference between the priorities of the Chorus and those of Creon. Woods significantly alters this relationship. Firstly, she replaces the Sophoclean parodos, thereby removing the relief and hope that connects the emotions of the Chorus with Creon. Secondly, her Chorus is unaware of Creon's status and his role in the city. Hence, at the point of the play's departure, it is not seen as partisan to the Labdacid house. It is, therefore, immediately able to assume a position of uninformed neutrality and non-involvement.

Woods increases the distance between Creon and the Chorus by undermining Creon's concept of government and by presenting the Chorus as rejecting Creon's vision of a 'Brave New Thebes'. She dispenses with Sophocles' Creon's concept of civic duty and politically involved patriotism (lines 175-190) and replaces his speech with a fragmentary stichomythia that examines the contrasting attitudes of Creon and the Chorus. In episode one, two concerns characterise Woods' Creon. Firstly, his attitude is that this is a new beginning for Thebes.²³ Secondly, he desires to fulfil the perceived needs of society represented by the Chorus.²⁴ He heralds a Theban utopia. This promise, however, is short lived as Creon's governance is immediately seen to question what will ensure citizen compliance. He discusses on a philosophical level with the Chorus what is the basis of good behaviour - natural goodness or fear of punishment. In response, the Chorus considers the nature of the individual the determining factor, whereas Creon believes that fear of punishment ensures loyalty.

Because Woods' Creon establishes the policy of 'compliance through fear' before he details his edict, oppression appears to be the tenet of his rule rather than a specific reaction to the burial of a traitor. Since it is in terms of repression that Creon makes his first pronouncements, the audience (and indeed the Chorus), having already seen and heard the proposed actions of Antigone, knows that the first challenge to Creon's judgement has already been made. Antigone's actions are now seen as reaction to a potentially oppressive rule. Her burial of Polynices is seen as political in that it contravenes repressive authority embodied in one man. Arguably, this creates an imbalance in the dialectic of the *Antigone*. Because Creon's regime is initially perceived as repressive and because the Chorus distances itself from him, there is no perception that his edict is in any way justified. In effect this means that Antigone's actions are instantly seen as an act of resistance that will entail martyrdom. As martyrdom is perceived as attracting support rather than condemnation, Antigone's action is not presented as an act that undermines the rule of law, but rather as a blow for personal freedom.

The fact that Woods' Creon considers the burial of Polynices as a political act that undermines his regime is further shown by his interaction with the Sentry. Woods' Creon abuses the guard in a way similar to that of Sophocles' and considers political disloyalty as the motivation behind Polynices burial.²⁵ However, Woods replaces the Sophoclean speech at lines 280-314 and institutes a rapid 'Gestapo-style' questioning of the Sentry, which alternates between hushed undertones, understanding assurance and threats. In light of this, Woods' Creon is seen to wield power in an insidious manner; he has not the autocratic bearing of Sophocles' Creon, rather his interrogation of the Sentry is calmly threatening. Further, Woods' Creon explicitly states that his credibility - surely modern political jargon - is in question:

Creon....do you know what this does to my credibility?

Sentry. I know

Creon. Do you know what you are doing to my credibility?²⁶

This indicates a specific concern over how he considers himself to be seen by society at large. In light of the fact that he has previously considered fear as what keeps society in order it stands to reason that, if he is not feared, then his power is diminished. Thus, Woods again undermines the specific nature of the burial of Polynices and again presents it in political terms in that Creon's wrath is examined not in relation to the burial of a perceived traitor, but in terms of questioning his credibility.

Although Woods' presentation of Creon's rule as immediately repressive is not consistent with Sophocles' text, Creon as stage tyrant is an essential part of her vision. As Woods' choral odes indicate, our primary attention is focused on the Chorus' reaction to the actions of Antigone. In light of that, it is imperative that the Chorus is not associated with Creon's executive. Consequently, Woods' Chorus is ambiguous in its relationship with Creon and non-committal towards his vision of Thebes. The Chorus does not know who Creon is and acknowledges no threat to the city. This attitude stresses the Chorus' position as politically apathetic. Its non-involvement is seen as generating an environment in which Creon's power is unchecked. This is particularly apparent in Woods' *Threshold One*, an inserted sequence of dialogue between the Chorus and the Sentry. Woods presents the Sentry asking the Chorus to intercede on his behalf in order to save him from Creon's wrath. The Chorus immediately distances itself from Creon and denies the Sentry's perceived allegiance to him.²⁷ Indeed, unlike Sophocles' Chorus, where at lines 327-331 the Guard plans his escape, Woods' Chorus seems to envisage the possibility of its leaving Thebes, reversing Sophocles' text. In contrast to Sophocles' Guard, Woods' Sentry considers the city as the place of safety. This safety, however, is considered relative to that which is 'without', an indeterminate place perceived as a place of danger inhabited by those that are socially threatening.²⁸ Consequently, whilst the city seems safer in relation to its external environs, this inevitably creates the feeling of being trapped. Because there appears to be no escape, Creon's regime seems all the more totalitarian.

Woods, in casting Creon as tyrant, establishes an initial polarity between Antigone and him. This polarity is founded on mutually exclusive concepts of right and wrong in contrast with Sophocles' text where the conflict is between two seemingly legitimate appeals, Antigone's appeal to home and hearth and Creon's support for man-made laws. In Sophocles, these higher claims construct the *oikos/polis* dialectic in which the question of 'who is right' is far from clear. Arguably, much of our interest in Sophocles' *Antigone* is

directed towards a gradual understanding of where right lies. As Woods' intention is to present the *Antigone* as a mythic paradigm, exemplifying the need for individual social and political resistance, she radically changes Sophocles' dialectic, portraying Antigone as the martyr whose suffering alienates the audience and thereby promoting a further understanding of the ramifications of individual and community apathy. In light of this, the relative merits of Antigone and Creon are immediately contrasted by the presentation of Creon as tyrant and Antigone as martyr. It is with reference to this conflict that the agon between Creon and Antigone takes place.

Woods, in the debate between Antigone and Creon, uses the stichomythia form rather than the dual speech and stichomythia construction used by Sophocles. Antigone's speech at lines 450-470 is therefore presented in terms of a dialogue in which Antigone's motivation is juxtaposed with counter arguments attributed by Woods to Creon. Woods presents Antigone as immediately gaining the upper hand. Her Antigone (following Sophocles' lines 441f.) does not look at Creon, but, unlike Sophocles' heroine, persists in her resolve, forcing Creon to make a second appeal, 'Antigone, will you not even look at me?'.²⁹ This means that Antigone does not respond to Creon's order. Rather she forces him to appeal to her emotionally, thus undermining his impersonal leadership. From this position, she challenges the validity of Creon's edict:

How can a law you have made replace laws of nature that have said what's right not just for today but always? From the beginning.³⁰

Although Woods' Antigone replaces the authority of the gods with the authority of nature, both text and version invoke the permanence of a higher cause³¹ in order to undermine Creon's position. In contrast to Sophocles, however, Woods presents Creon's reaction to this invocation, 'Our beginning is there that we might move on from it'.³² This establishes Woods' understanding of the relative positions of Antigone and Creon: their dialectic is based essentially on timelessness versus change. Subsequently, her Antigone champions the permanence of what she sees as the laws of the natural world, which in her view demand Polynices' burial:

Our beginning is there that we might move on from it – as the body returns to the earth, to the darkness...³³

It is doubtful whether Woods' Antigone has the same force of argument as Sophocles' heroine. An indeterminate sense of 'nature' and 'beginnings' does not possess the same dramatic force as the Sophoclean Antigone's great appeal to the 'unwritten and unfailing ordinances of the gods'.³⁴ Indeed, whilst a modern audience may more readily grasp the concept of nature as an omnipotent force and, in light of modern burial practices, 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes and dust to dust' has a powerful claim, Woods chooses not to explore this fully. Rather, she focuses the dialogue instead on the philosophical nature of timelessness. She, thereby, loses the opportunity to justify the burial of Polynices simply in terms of a right due to, and respected by, all.³⁵

Woods' version of the conflict between Antigone and Creon explains the latter's attitude towards the promise of change:

Why make our boats like we used to make them? Why sing the same old songs when there are so many new? Why stand still when we have legs to walk? You stand still and you stand alone.³⁶

Creon's perception of change is understood in terms of progress, but, in light of Woods' version of Sophocles' 'Ode to Man', progress is seen negatively. As has been seen, Woods' Chorus presented progress in sceptical terms, considering the advances of a consumer-led society as reckless, potentially harmful and unstoppable. It is this view that allows the audience to interpret Creon's view of change. His vision of 'everyone on the move' is understood as an affirmation of the fast-moving and non-contemplative society, whereas his dismissal of those that 'stand still' is a rejection of both the meditative character of the Chorus and the tradition inherent in the actions of Antigone. Further, Creon's vision of Thebes is similar to the modern day world the Chorus inhabits in the parodos. There, the Chorus considers its journey home as an isolated journey in which the individual is simply one automaton in a faceless society. This is the Thebes that Creon wishes to build, a world parallel to that of the Chorus (and audience). The modern world, then, is seen as negative and Creon is presented as totalitarian, while all the worlds (of audience/Chorus and Creon) are seen as dysfunctional. Ultimately, the view of Antigone that a 'world where a man cannot be buried by his own family is not my world' is endorsed, reaffirming her martyrdom.

The fact that Creon is creating a Theban dystopia is made apparent through his discourse with Haemon in episode three. Again Woods favours the stichomythia form in order to present Creon's arguments in juxtaposition to Haemon's objections. This contrasts with Sophocles' text wherein Creon is given a platform from which to declaim rhetorically his attitudes towards family and civic hierarchies, which are endorsed by the Chorus.³⁷ Woods' Creon talks at cross-purposes to Haemon and, although he similarly discusses the need for family and civic concord, Woods' Creon does not possess the same command of the proceedings. Rather he enters the stage in mid-argument and is unable to counter Haemon effectively. Indeed, Haemon's criticism of Creon is that he can not stay still long enough to understand the attitudes of those around him, denying himself an understanding of the populace.³⁸ As the Chorus envisages solidarity of inaction, Creon in his dialogue with Haemon considers the community's abdication of power as a form of freedom. He considers that society is not an active force:

They may complain, they may say they're unhappy but they won't do anything about it.³⁹

Even though Haemon argues that the community has strength in its potential for force, Creon envisages society as essentially compliant. He presents government as taking away society's need to concern itself with nature of government and paradoxically this is presented as a freedom from action rather than a freedom to act.⁴⁰ Creon's view of the Theban community reads as a manifesto for a totalitarian state:

That they are happy to be governed. They are happy to be told how things are for their own gain. Whoever the city sets up in power must be obeyed. They are happy to obey. They don't want this job.⁴¹

These sentiments have no direct counterpart in Sophocles' text. Woods' Creon's rhetoric of autocracy is directly relevant to the audience's world rather than to Thebes. Thebes becomes a distorting mirror to the modern world, where mass inactivity and social compliance are seen as virtues, especially if gain is to be made. The socially threatening individual (Antigone) is here sacrificed to a concept of 'stability', where 'stability' is a synonym for apathy and further repression.

The very neutrality of Woods' Chorus encourages the audience to sympathise with the actions of Antigone and it is the Chorus' refusal to actively support Antigone that confirms her martyr status. However, in order for Antigone to be vindicated as martyr the play's community needs to acknowledge its betrayal and sacrifice of the scapegoat; this is the catharsis that Woods brings to the *Antigone*. As Woods has removed any reference or appeal to a divine higher power, instituting nature in the vacuum, comprehension comes through human understanding alone. Woods, therefore, completely removes the Tiresias sequence⁴² and focuses attention instead on the transition of the Chorus and, thereafter, Creon. This decision could be seen as undermining the play's dramaturgical structure. Tiresias performs an important role, interpreting Creon's actions in terms of the unwritten laws that regulate human behaviour, indicating what repercussions Creon will face and explaining why they will come about. It is through Tiresias that the audience undersenes Creon with his own contradictory behaviour; 'It is not I who takes darkness from the dead and light from the living.'⁴⁴ This knowledge Antigone juxtaposes with a realisation of her own suffering. Ultimately, like Sophocles' Antigone, she understands that she acted simply for love of her family and it is without a political (or, in Sophocles, a religious) manifesto that Antigone leaves to die. This final realisation unites Antigone with the audience and finally with the Chorus. It is the realisation that she is responsible for her own actions that indicates to the audience and the Chorus the power of the individual.

Antigone's exit is followed by a surreal dream-like sequence in which the play reaches a dramatic crescendo with the transition of the Chorus completed and the alienation and subsequent *volte-face* of Creon. The stage is in darkness at the beginning of the sequence.⁴⁵ Woods' use of darkness creates flexibility in the use of the stage space. Two places exist simultaneously, the Thebes inhabited by the Chorus and Creon and the rock tomb occupied by Antigone and Haemon. These places are united by the perception of the Chorus, which, although physically located with Creon, is drawn emotionally to the events in the rock tomb. As the Chorus was the linchpin between modern and ancient times in the choral odes, it now adopts the same position between the worlds of Creon and Antigone, and by virtue of this position the audience is able to appreciate the effect of Antigone's impending death on its neutrality.

Woods, in order to maximise the emotional climax again uses the stichomythia construction, in which each episode in the play is re-enacted in order to show the Chorus' transition. However, this time the dialectic is not between two polarised positions, rather it takes the form of a complex and fractured discourse in which each character restates shards of dialogue from previous episodes. In response to this the Chorus repeats to Creon what it hears from the other characters, echoing the emotions of Antigone/Ismene/Haemon/Sentry:

Antigone. If we have no peace / there can be peace in the state.

Chorus. If we have no peace –

Creon. So I / have to carry out the punishment.

Haemon. If you pursue this / the one who will suffer most is yourself.

Chorus. If you pursue this / the one who –

Creon. / Punishment for the burial of a traitor.

Sentry. Burying the / body. With her hands. With her hands.

Chorus. Burying the body. / With her hands.⁴⁶

The Chorus slowly echoes the emotions of Antigone and her supporters in a stilted and faltering way, unable to take the initiative, but at last able to express its objections in borrowed terms. This repetition shows the Chorus as part of a wider struggle against Creon, Chorus and characters united against his oppression, thereby indicating the power of the community, a power which Creon was predisposed to discount. Woods also shows the Chorus taking up the reins of individual struggle and, as the sequence culminates, the Chorus speaks out using its own expression:

Antigone. / The darkness that is his right.

Chorus. The darkness that is his right. / This is wrong.⁴⁷

The Chorus' independent thought forms the climax of the sequence. Of its own volition, the Chorus stands against Creon, releasing the fist of inaction, thus becoming an individual member of a community struggle. As Woods is using *Antigone* as a mythic paradigm, the Chorus' first steps towards group involvement and, then, its final step towards individual action stress the dual importance of individual and community struggle.

The Chorus alienates Creon further by questioning the justice of his actions. This leads him to question his sense of righteousness. He asks the Chorus: 'I am wrong?' (p.56) and is answered with 'You are wrong' by Antigone, Haemon and Ismene, a statement then repeated by the Chorus. For the first time, Creon's self-belief is shaken and, ironically, he seeks assurance from the community he previously considered powerless. He wishes that events could have been different, but he finds no relief in wishful thinking. Significantly, Woods presents the Chorus' challenge to Creon before either party is aware of the impending death of Haemon. This stresses the impact of the Chorus' transition: it is through Creon's increasing alienation that he starts to falter, reflexively implying the importance of both individual and group resistance. This, however, contrasts sharply with Sophocles' text where Tiresias, in no uncertain terms, tells Creon of the calamity that his actions will bring upon his family and the city (lines 1078-1083). It is in response to his fear of greater disaster that Sophocles' Creon accepts the Chorus' injunction to release Antigone and bury Polynices. However, the absence of Tiresias in Woods' text requires that the prophecy of Haemon's death be communicated through other means. In response to the Chorus' transition, Creon is seen to question his own actions, and it is through this questioning that he is drawn into the shadowy world of Haemon and Antigone. In this emotionally heightened state, Creon is able to communicate verbally with Haemon:

Haemon. Let her live.

Creon. I cannot.⁴⁸

In this twilight world Creon can hear the commentary of the results of his actions. The Chorus and the sentry both narrate the events in Antigone's tomb:

Chorus. A girl is shut in a cave.

Creon. Alone.

Chorus. A boy, his arms around her waist.

Creon. She is alone.

Sentry. His arms around her waist.

Creon. Haemon?

Chorus. His face against her dress.

Haemon. My wife, my bride.

Creon. My son's voice.

Chorus. And she is falling

Creon. You think I am wrong.⁴⁹

While the simultaneous nature of Creon's realisation and Haemon's death certainly makes the consequences of Creon's actions more immediate, it is arguable that the surreal quality of the Chorus/Sentry role lacks the dramatic force and consistency of Tiresias' speech. While belief in a seer may seem far-fetched to a modern audience, the authority of Tiresias is essential to understanding Creon's *volte-face*, and certainly not more difficult to reconcile than the surreal elision of time and space to which Woods resorts.⁵⁰ Tiresias *qua* Tiresias is endowed with foreknowledge so that his ability to prophesy is consistent with his *raison d'être*; it is part of his purpose in the play to establish clearly the reasons for Haemon's death in order that his death is understood by characters and audience. However, in Woods' text, Haemon's death is not presented as prophecy so much as narrative and the fact that it is shared between Chorus and Sentry diffuses the emotion of the scene and undermines the impact of the information. Indeed, Woods' dream-like episode raises questions over the play's logic. Creon, who has been presented as a totalitarian leader fixed in his resolve, on hearing this information simply turns about with little comment or regret. In contrast, Sophocles' Creon clearly regrets having to abandon his position: 'Alack! It comes hard, but I renounce my heart's purpose, and shall act! One cannot fight against superior force.' (lines 1105f.) Woods' Creon, indeed, might be considered inconsistent, simply accepting the advice of the Chorus without any evident emotion. Considering he has been presented throughout as steadfast in his belief, his abandoning of his edict appears a weak collapse, rather than a dramatic reversal of thought.

The death of Haemon significantly alters the relationship between Woods' Creon and the Chorus. In episode seven (Exodus), Creon seeks avoidance and conversely the Chorus seeks leadership for the community. Woods' Creon is unable to accept the death of Haemon and the stage directions indicate that he should treat Haemon's lifeless body as still alive. Further, Creon's attitude towards the city has undergone a radical transformation; he no longer sees the promise of a new day, seeing instead the polluted dystopia that Thebes has become:

Creon. My shoes are filthy. It's filthy. The rubbish is piled high and spilling across the streets. Thrown out from houses, from windows, from kitchens, people, animals.⁵¹

The city defiled contrasts sharply with the perception of the city at the beginning of the play where, in the parodos, the city is described as bathed in the light of promise.⁵² Creon bears the responsibility for this transition. He is seen to have polluted the city by turning the land into a tomb. In Woods' text, therefore, the city is a manifestation of Creon's guilt, and his acknowledgement of the city's condition is his first step towards the tragic realisation of his responsibility. Importantly, Creon sees the condition of the city prior to his knowledge of Eurydice's suicide. Accordingly, his failure to the city is distinguished from his failure to the family, allowing the audience to appreciate the civic effects of Creon's totalitarianism before hearing of the annihilation of his family.

Woods follows Sophocles in depicting Creon's reaction to his wife's suicide and posthumous accusation, again focusing on the personal responsibility of Creon. Woods' Creon accepts Eurydice's charge that he is responsible for both her and Haemon's suicide:

Creon. It is true. She is right. I killed them. I killed them. And her. That is the only true thing.⁵³

This echoes the sentiments of Sophocles' Creon who similarly acknowledges his guilt.⁵⁴ However, in response to Creon's realisation, Woods' Chorus reacts slightly differently to that of Sophocles. In the latter text the Chorus counsels Creon to attend to present tasks,⁵⁵ whereas in Woods' text the Chorus focuses on the implications for the city engendered by Creon's collapse. In response to Creon's slow retreat from the stage, Woods' Chorus' concern is for the city, while Creon's concern is now for himself. Creon sees only the immediacy of his position, while the Chorus interprets what has happened at Thebes for the wider community:

Creon. ...This was not my will – that this should happen.

This was not where I was going.

Chorus. They will keep coming these heavy blows will rain down on our homes -

Creon. And yet I killed them.

Chorus. Our streets and shoulders, palaces, heads and fields, pouring down until we see.⁵⁶

Woods' Chorus now embraces civic responsibility and her Creon acknowledges his own personal responsibility. It is fitting that Woods' text should end in this way. In Woods' *Antigone* each journey has been one of self-realisation, and the realisation of the Chorus is as important as, if not more than, that of Antigone and Creon who are respectively right and wrong. The Chorus' transformation to become an active participant reaches beyond sympathy with Antigone and becomes a genuine concern for the city that the Chorus had previously wished to escape. Woods' text focuses the audience's attention on two related issues, that Creon acknowledges he was wrong and the Chorus sees for one moment how essential it is to support the just cause. Sophocles' Chorus reassures itself with the philosophical reflection that 'Good sense is by far the chief part of happiness; and we must not be impious towards the gods.' (lines 1347-1350), but Woods' text encourages the

audience to remember and be influenced by the paradigm of *Antigone*:

Chorus. ... Some things I know. Some things I have learnt. Some things I forget. It has always been this way between us. Has it always been this way between us?⁵⁷

The intention here is to promote the final realisation of the play, that of the audience. Woods draws her Chorus out of Thebes and back to the modern day with the implicit question 'should this always be the case?' Clearly the individual audience member is his/her own Chorus and each individual will ultimately draw his/her own conclusion as to his/her role in the face of the social injustice that has been evoked in each spectator's mind. Whatever the reaction to this, assessment of oneself is the aim, and the success, of Woods' text.

IV

The increasing self-awareness of Woods' Chorus and, by involvement, the audience, exercises a significant influence on the physical interpretation of the text. The play performed by TAG Theatre Company, directed by James Brining, physically and spatially focused attention on the Chorus whilst simultaneously physically polarising Antigone and Creon.⁵⁸ Although the production toured around local Scottish theatres⁵⁹ it opened at the Citizen's Theatre (Glasgow),⁶⁰ presenting the challenge of a proscenium arch stage. The production design, however, altered the dynamic of the stage/auditorium relationship,⁶¹ with the stage space divided into acting zones: a wall constructed of coats hanging on chains diagonally dissected the stage, not from corner to corner, but from down-stage left to upstage centre-left. This prevented the stage from being a definite triangular shape that would enclose the action within a very specific framework and instead created a more flexible open-ended triangular form. Along the back wall was a ramp, the existence of which only became apparent when in use. Drawing the action out of the proscenium were bales of clothes tied in a cube form and situated at the stage front right and left. The stage right bales were located on the slight apron, which served to draw the design out from the proscenium frame. Accordingly, the production design generated three spheres of acting areas (apron, walled triangle and ramp) and each area had a specific usage. The apron section of the stage was the domain of the Chorus for the duration of the choral odes, the Chorus located beside or sitting on the bales of clothes and able to communicate directly with the audience. This served to encourage an intimate relationship between the Chorus and audience, which underlined the fact that the odes were located in the here and now whereas the play's events were located at some other point in time. Consequently, the apron section of the stage was a liminal area, a threshold uniting auditorium and stage in which the Chorus acted as intermediary between audience and action. From the front of the stage the Chorus was able to direct the audience's attention to the specific points in the choral odes which reinforced the concept of *Antigone* as a mythic paradigm and, through its physicality, to the events that unfolded in the stage hinterland. Thus, the Chorus adopted the role of interpreter and guide as well as the audience's representative in the dramatic narrative.

The Chorus was able to move fluidly between the apron and the 'triangular' section of the stage, the dominant performance zone. This section of the stage was defined by the 'boundary' of the triangular wall. The wall on first appearance seemed to be a solid

structure with hanging coats gradating in colour, however the wall proves to be less corporeal than first appearance suggested. Characters entered through the wall by parting the coats, so that the wall was not a dividing boundary, but a threshold that served to delineate space, whilst simultaneously suggesting the existence of another hidden zone. Thus, the wall became a liminal rather than a fixed boundary, a membrane through which the characters could be drawn and through which they could return. This further developed the elision of time that is evident in the text; Movement Director Struan Leslie underlined this when he stated: 'We [the cast and production team] talked about it as a membrane, it is about time. We talked about Sarah's text having holes in it – time holes.'⁶² As the wall defined the acting zone, the pronounced diagonal also exerted a powerful influence on the physical interaction of the characters and, consequently, patterns emerged in the positioning of characters during the stichomythia episodes. Struan Leslie explained this:

There are problems with the diagonal, for example in the Haemon/Creon sequence when they are standing parallel to the wall (one facing upstage – one facing downstage). It is a desire path where you naturally walk, and in terms of staging they are not terribly powerful places to be, so it is more effective to walk perpendicular to the wall; rather than going with it, work against it.'⁶³

Consequently, the agon sequences entailed a lateral focus whereas the choral odes required a frontal delivery. This accentuated the division of space and time: the dramatic sequences existed without reference to the audience, whereas the choral odes directly engaged the audience, further increasing attention on the Chorus as intermediate between times and spaces.

At first, the wall seemed to be constructed of coats and clothing, the remnants and possessions of those who had died (Oedipus/Jocasta/Eteocles/Polynices); consequently, it was also a memorial to the dead. Struan Leslie developed this point: '[i]t is a memorial akin to the Vietnam memorial in Washington, a great black granite wall dug into the ground, almost the same shape as our wall.'⁶⁴ The clothing hanging on the wall was the clothes left by the dead, which, through their shape, recalled the physical existence of those who once wore them. As clothes contain the memory of the living, this reinforced Antigone's appeal to her dead family, the clothes stressed the death and, reflexively, the life of the individual who wore them and the continued existence of the dead recalled the rights that are their due. Furthermore, the coats hanging on the wall juxtaposed with parcels of clothes also contained a resonance of the warehouses full of the possessions belonging to those that died in the Holocaust. Whilst the implications of the image were not pursued with respect to Creon's totalitarian regime, the image of the Theban dystopia was made more acute by this suggestion. The repression of Creon's regime was further indicated by the sub-structure of the wall. In episode five, the characters pulled the coats off the wall, throwing them on the floor to form 'bodies'. This revealed the wall underneath to be constructed out of vertical chains pulled taut, resembling bars revealing Thebes (under Creon's auspices) as a prison. The removal of the clothes as a group action exposed the reality of Creon's regime while simultaneously stressing how combined social action shattered the façade of power.

The ramp, located at a tangent to the diagonal wall and parallel to the back of the stage, provided a third sphere of action, which in contrast to the other zones, was used solely for the metaphysical discourse of the performance. It created a third space wherein the

diegetic events of the text could be physically interpreted in order to deepen the meaning of the spoken discourse. Struan Leslie considered the ramp as representing two types of time, 'parallel' and 'folded'. Parallel time allowed for events to be physically enacted at the same time as the text suggested they happen. After Antigone had disclosed her intention of burying Polynices in the prologue and during the parodos, for example, the Sentry was seen at the top of the ramp looking out, guarding the corpse. Thus at a time parallel to the textual communication of the play, its physical life foreshadowed the future discourse of the play's characters. This heightened the physical life of the text and provided another mode of histrionic transmission. 'Folded time' allowed the audience to see events before they happened, removing the function of prophet from Tiresias to the writer/director. Struan Leslie drew attention to the *tableau vivant* formed at the end of episode five in which all the characters, excepting Creon and the Chorus, formed a living sculpture on the ramp. The image was sculptural, each figure caught in a frozen moment which foreshadowed their deaths; Antigone, Haemon and Eurydice were all presented as future martyrs in the struggle against Creon's repression, with the Sentry and Ismene finally supporting their actions. This served to alienate Creon physically and emotionally from the events of the play, showing him as isolated from the family on the ramp.

The physical interpretation of the text was also transmitted through the meta-discourse of the actors. This discourse was variously inspired by mimetic interpretations of diegetic events and gesticulations that encapsulated the nature of each character. During Woods' second choral ode Antigone was seen letting her fist open, mimicking the fist of dust that buried Polynices and physically recreating the textual image of Antigone's open hand of action contrasted with the Chorus' fist of inactivity. This action became a leitmotif of characters, however, were also typified by gesticulations that exemplified their relative positions. Struan Leslie divided these gesticulations into five main groups: law, city, state (movements derived from oratory); justice and death (released hand and covering of eyes); family home and hearth (hand striking breast); light and life (open hand help upwards) and darkness (hand covering the head). These movements underscored the physicality of the text and enabled a physical understanding of both characters and audience. The movements of each character, therefore, displayed their motivation through an archetypal gesture ultimately derived from stylised and representational movement. Emotional movements (family, life and death) were associated with the body as the source of emotion and therefore were employed by Antigone, Haemon, Eurydice and, latterly, Ismene. In contrast, the oratorical gestures were directed away from the body, abrupt rather than fluid movements, hands slicing the air, diagonal to the line of the body. Indeed, Creon's physical language seemed to be inspired by the gesticulations of modern rhetoric, giving the impression of a 'Tony Blair-style' oratory.⁶⁵ Struan Leslie drew attention to how this was derived from Woods' construction of Creon's speeches:

This is very much what Sarah [Woods] has in terms of the construction of his speeches. Saying something, saying it again and saying it a third time - very much within that spin-doctor style.⁶⁶

Accordingly, Creon's actions typified him as the political ruler concerned with the city, rather than with the family and his gesticulations at first suggested power. This was further indicated by the fact that Ismene initially followed Creon, emulating his oratorical style in her relations with Antigone. She abandoned these, however, when she joined with her sister's struggle. Ultimately, although oratorical gestures seemed to express power, they were finally seen to be weak in relation to the emotional gestures of Antigone/Haemon/Eurydice. Creon, in the face of his family's destruction, found no solace

in his physical and verbal political rhetoric. Indeed, one of the strongest images of the production was the solitary figure of Creon, stripped of political trappings, carrying his dead son on his shoulder, physically and emotionally bearing the terrible burden of his responsibility.

The power dynamics of the production were also evident in the costume design.⁶⁷ The stage design deliberately eschewed a fixed location or time, rather evoking a series of associations that suggested death and repression. Similarly, with the costume design, there was no single reference but costumes that gained meaning through their juxtaposition. The costumes of Ismene and Antigone indicated this clearly. Ismene was attired in a long white dress of no obvious time period, which she lifted to walk, stressing her femininity, an implied delicacy that was reinforced by her long and flowing hair. In contrast, Antigone was presented as less stereotypically feminine, her hair pulled back and tied away from her face, her skirt shorter, her legs bare, and boots on her feet. However, the lack of feminine trappings stressed Antigone's vulnerability and her separation from the traditional female sphere of inaction, which further emphasised her martyrdom. Nevertheless, femininity was not simply associated with acceptance. Eurydice was presented as the image of motherhood. Linda Duncan McLaughlin created a hauntingly beautiful figure as Eurydice, her sleeveless princess-line gown accentuating the contours of the feminine shape. This, juxtaposed with the emerging masculinity of Haemon, reinforced her as a maternal symbol.

In contrast to the female costumes, the male costumes suggested a particular time period. The male costumes introduced a martial power dynamic that echoed 1914-1918, although this period was not developed in the overall production design. The Sentry in dust-laden kilt, tee shirt and puttees recalled British forces in India. Haemon was similarly attired in Scottish military garb, in muted tones. A further resonance of the Raj was confirmed in Creon's cream linen trousers tucked into brown leather boots, cream shirt and matching cravat with full length brown greatcoat. The specific time and location implied by these costumes did not impose a specific reading on the production: the importance of the costumes was the relationship that they suggested. The military garb of the Sentry and Haemon confirmed their subordinate relationship to Creon and reflexively confirmed his power. Furthermore, Creon used his costume to indicate his power, but the more precarious his position became, the more he was divested of the trappings of power. At the end of the play, we saw him in his trousers and shirttails. The allusion to the Raj was essentially anachronistic and did not locate the production in British India nor suggest anything specifically about British colonial rule: it simply created a familiar sense of a hierarchical and non-democratic society in which compliance was demanded. The wearing of kilts by the subordinate, yet rebellious, characters of Haemon and the Sentry introduced a Scottish dimension, although this should not be stressed, as dust-laden tartan was the only overt Scottish symbol in the imperialist motifs of the design of the production. The importance of the Scottish military uniforms therefore, lies in the fact that they contributed to a general impression of militaristic and autocratic rule which reflexively suggests the importance of democracy. In relation to this martial hierarchy, the Chorus, neutrally dressed in white linen jacket and trousers, conformed to the image of expatriate citizens, involved, yet not involved, belonging, yet not belonging. Accordingly, the Chorus was outwith the martial hierarchy, yet part of citizen compliance, unknown to Creon, yet still intrinsic to his governance. Consequently, the Chorus represented the uninvolved population at large, whose developing political awareness formed the chief interest of the production.

It is clear that Sarah Woods' text, both written and performed, is substantially different from Sophocles' play. It, however, engages in a modern examination of the Antigone myth. It is consciously a play for a modern audience, which asks the modern spectator to assess his/her political consciousness in reference to contrasting contemporary politics of apathy and resistance. Her text examines the developing process of political self-awareness, affirms how political activity is intrinsic to the democratic process and, conversely, how political apathy promotes indifference that results in erosion of freedom. Woods' Antigone is paradigmatic of the struggling individual, pitting herself against the forces of totalitarianism in a cause in which she is entirely justified. Woods dispenses with interpretations of Antigone as a socially destabilising force, undermining the case Sophocles allows to Creon. This is done in order to elicit a different response to the play. The traditional dialectic in which commendation and blame are debated does not form the subject of this play. Woods' *Antigone* is not asking the audience to wrestle intellectually with the competing claims of Antigone and Creon, nor indeed are they asked to understand why Antigone is right to bury her brother. Rather, the play examines social reaction to political challenge, particularly through Woods' representation of the Chorus. Finally, the play explores challenge to the individual to take a stand in support of the just cause.

Woods, however, does not develop what is conceived as a modern equivalent of a just cause. Globalisation, environmental misuse, crime and alienation of the socially vulnerable are all variously hinted at in the text, but none of the causes are consistently pursued. Antigone is presented as an archetypal figure, championing all causes. No contemporary cause, however, is championed explicitly, leaving the individual audience member to ponder the relative merits of competing causes. With respect to TAG's *Making the Nation* season, Woods' *Antigone* does indeed draw attention to the importance of citizen involvement in government and the dangers of apathy. Although the play eschews a specifically Scottish perspective, the external political background for which the play was commissioned and against which it was performed clearly links the play to current developments in Scotland at time of writing. Despite the reservations expressed by Adams and McMillan, the box office success of the tour clearly demonstrated the play's capacity to reach a youth audience, while, as this paper has shown, Woods' adaptation clearly sustains the revised political interpretation discussed in this paper.

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Accepted for publication June 2001

Endnotes

¹ Sara Woods' *Antigone* is not yet published. For information contact Micheline Steinberg Playwrights (tel: 020 7287 4383). All quotations and page numbers are taken from a manuscript copy. Quotations from Sophocles' *Antigone* are taken from Sophocles, *Antigone* (ed and trans) Hugh Lloyd Jones (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1994). For production details see below note 58.

² This paper is greatly indebted to Struan Leslie (Movement Director for TAG's *Antigone*) who kindly agreed to be interviewed and in the process elucidated many of the intricacies of the production. I would also like to thank Greg Giesekam (University of Glasgow) for his thoughts and comments on the text and performance and Dr. Douglas Cairns (University of Glasgow) who assisted with the complexity of translation. I would particularly like to thank Professor Ian Brown (Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh) for his continued advice and encouragement. Finally, I acknowledge the editorial support of Simon Ethan Saunders (Saraband Scotland Ltd).

³ The political context of this adaptation is clearly evidenced in Mark Brown's interview with Sarah Woods (*Scotland on Sunday* 3 September 2000, p. 7) 'Whereas *Antigone* is most often considered a straightforward heroine, the author doubts whether most of us would be prepared to put our lives in danger for a cause. Consequently her text creates a moral and political ambiguity over the wisdom of the character's stance, opening up a debate about whether and how people should challenge established power. "*Antigone* is", she argues, "a play which is very much about taking an active role in society."' "

⁴ Interview with Rob Adams in *The Herald*, 29 August 2000, p. 18.

⁵ Whether the play will reach the youth audience has been questioned by Rob Adams in *The Herald* from 29 August 2000, p. 18. 'The test might be whether wee *Antigone-Marie McBride* of the fourth year, at the behest of Mr Creon, head of English, gets back on the bus afterwards.'

⁶ Joyce McMillan, *The Scotsman*, 7 September 2000, p. 15.

⁷ Sophocles' *Antigone* 110-116, cf with Woods' *Antigone* 'A black shape flies, hovers over the sun - an eagle, claws out, mouth open, screaming - then away.' (p. 7)

⁸ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 20.

⁹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 21.

¹⁰ This replaces Sophocles' second stasimon lines 582-630.

¹¹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 32.

¹² Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 32.

¹³ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 32.

¹⁴ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 33.

¹⁵ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Woods' fourth ode is inspired by Sophocles' lines 801-5 'But now I am carried beyond the laws at this sight, and I can no longer restrain the stream of tears, when I see *Antigone* here passing to the bridal chamber where all come to rest.'

¹⁷ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 40.

¹⁸ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 40.

¹⁹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 41.

²⁰ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 47.

²¹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 63.

²² Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 63.

²³ **'Creon.** Everything is different here because everything has changed. For all of us. This is the beginning. The very beginning. And if we grasp it, if we act then our actions will determine how things will be. ' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 9.

²⁴ **'Creon.** ...What do you want?

Chorus. Nothing.

Creon. Then what do you need? There are things you need.' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 9.

²⁵ Woods' Creon similarly considers that bribery has corrupted the Watch. 'There are men in this city who find me hard to bear, who whisper in secret - shaking their heads. Perhaps it was one of those men - or one in their pay?' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 16, cf Sophocles' *Antigone*, lines 289-294.

²⁶ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 17.

²⁷ **'Sentry.** You're his man.

Sentry. Speak for me

Chorus. He won't listen.' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 18.

²⁸ The Sentry considers that nobody leaves the city '[e]xcept hunted men, brigands and exiles. Even the watch stay in their groups, even those who quarry with hammers and chisels go in groups and the shepherds are fierce as their dogs. This is the safest place.' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 19.

²⁹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 23.

³⁰ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 23.

³¹ See Sophocles' *Antigone*, lines 450-455.

³² Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 23.

³³ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 24.

³⁴ See Sophocles' *Antigone*, lines 450-455.

³⁵ Mark Brown (*Scotland on Sunday*, 3 September 2000, p. 7) considers Antigone's attitude towards the burial of Polynices can be compared with both the pressurising of the Chilean authorities by the Mothers of the Disappeared and in the fury of the relatives of the Russian sub-mariners who remain trapped in the Kursk sub-marine.

³⁶ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 24.

³⁷ For Sophocles' Creon declamation see lines 639-680 and for the Chorus' positive reaction see lines 681f.

³⁸ 'You're busy acting all the time. No sooner do you have a piece of knowledge than you act on it - before the next invasion, before the next King.' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 35.

³⁹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ This is particularly apparent when Woods' Creon considers freedom as '[t]he freedom of inaction. The crime committed, the law upheld - and they are safe are happy.' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 35.

⁴¹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 35.

⁴² Rob Adams (*The Herald*, 29 August 2000, p. 18) attributes Woods' excision of Tiresias to her belief that the seer does not correspond to a contemporary equivalent.

⁴³ See Sophocles' *Antigone*, lines 1064-1080, and in particular '... you shall give in exchange for corpses the corpse of one from your own loins, in return for having hurled below one of those above... and you have kept here something belonging to the gods below...'

⁴⁴ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 45 and repeated on p. 55.

⁴⁵ This can be interpreted on different levels. Structurally, the darkness of night indicates that the tragedy of Antigone takes place within a single day, yet beyond this the darkness could be seen as symbolic of the repression of Creon's rule. Antigone has previously been seen as a beacon shining in the blackness of the tomb (ode four) and arguably Creon by condemning her to darkness, robs the world of its light. Accordingly, the oppressive nature of his rule is physically manifested through the death of light, which indicates the absence of hope. This is further communicated textually through Creon's desperate calls for light: '**Creon.** Where are the lamps? (*He shouts.*) Where are the lamps? (*No-one responds.*)'. He is seen as alone in the gloom that he has created, only the Chorus stands by, paralysed by its inactivity. The darkness can also be seen as a physical manifestation of Creon's edict. The stage plunged in darkness suggests the blackness of a tomb, and, considering that Creon has denied Polynices an actual tomb by keeping him on the earth, the world becomes his tomb. This point is made explicit later in the sequence when Antigone, in reference to Polynices, considers '/The darkness that is his right.' (p. 56) Further, the darkness of the stage also recalls the tomb the living Antigone is incarcerated in, reinforcing physically the concept that Creon is perverting the natural order of life and death.

⁴⁶ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 56.

⁴⁸ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 57.

⁴⁹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, pp. 57-8.

⁵⁰ In contrast, Leon McDermott (*Sunday Herald*, 3 September 2000, p. 11) considers this sequence the emotional heart of the play. 'Redemption comes in the form of a slow-dance of regret and loss as the extent of the damage done is revealed, an ethereal, doomed eulogy to Antigone and her husband, Haemon. And it's here the heart of Sophocles' beats, and it is here TAG Theatre go beyond the ordinary and take a bold step towards brilliance.'

⁵¹ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 64.

⁵² 'Pinkish stones weathered golden brown, course with cavities placed upon another on another placed.' Woods' *Antigone*, p. 8.

⁵³ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 65.

⁵⁴ 'Ah me, this can never be transferred to any other mortal, acquitting me! For it was I who killed you, unhappy one, I speak the truth!' Sophocles' *Antigone*, lines 1317-1320.

⁵⁵ Sophocles, lines 1334 f. are possibly concerned with the burial of Haemon and Eurydice (whose corpses appear to be present on stage at lines 1298-1300). There is also the suggestion that Creon's desire for death is again an attempt to seek a power beyond what is his right. The Chorus implicitly reminds Creon that, as the gods are responsible for life and death, his desire for death is again an attempt to overreach the mortal lot. The important point here in relation to Woods' text is that Sophocles' Chorus makes no mention of the governance of the city.

⁵⁶ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 66.

⁵⁷ Sara Woods' *Antigone*, p. 67.

⁵⁸ For further production details and educational information contact Carol Heleas or Karen Douglas +44 (0)141 552 4949.

⁵⁹ TAG's *Antigone* toured Garrison Theatre, Lerwick; Arts Guild Theatre, Greenock; Town Hall, Falkirk; Rothies Hall, Glenrothes; Brunton Theatre, Musselburgh; Lemon Tree, Aberdeen; Theatre Royal, Dumfries; from September to October 2000.

⁶⁰ With the following cast: Paul Blair (Sentry), William Elliot (Chorus), Molly Innes (Antigone), Helen Lomax (Ismene), Linda Duncan McLaughlin (Eurydice), Harry Ward (Haemon) and Mathew Zajac (Creon).

⁶¹ The TAG production was designed by Soutra Gilmour and built by Scott Associates.

⁶² This and all subsequent quotations from Struan Leslie are taken from an interview conducted in Glasgow on 28 August 2000. A transcript of this interview is available from the Department of Drama, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh.

⁶³ Interview with Struan Leslie, Glasgow, 28 August 2000.

⁶⁴ Interview with Struan Leslie, Glasgow, 28 August 2000.

⁶⁵ Stuan Leslie cautioned that Tony Blair was not a conscious inspiration, but acknowledged that he was a figure in mind. He also described Bill Clinton as an inspiration.

The important aspect is the political movement and interestingly Struan Leslie revealed that one of the costume ideas was to develop the political context by costuming in glorified suits. (Paraphrased from Interview with Struan Leslie, Glasgow, 28 August 2000).

⁶⁶ Interview with Struan Leslie, Glasgow, 28 August 2000.

⁶⁷ TAG's Wardrobe Supervisor is Lyndie MacIntyre and maintenance by Lynn Tonner.

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