

## TWO

# Antigone and Athenian War-dead

## *Body and Identity in the Greek Tradition*

Biblical texts are not the only ancient texts with a significant interpretative afterlife. Western culture has also had a lengthy relationship of re-reading with the literature of ancient Greece and Rome—this is the origin of the “Western philosophical tradition,” which I contrasted with the Jewish tradition of biblical interpretation in chapter one. In this chapter, I will turn to a brief examination of Sophocles’ *Antigone* and its history of interpretation as a window into the way that discourse over mourning and ownership of the dead has developed. This discussion will provide a framework for the readings of Canadian material that I will undertake in the second part of the book, and especially my reading of Jane Urquhart’s *The Stone Carvers*.

George Steiner locates Jacques Barthélémy’s 1788 work, *Le Voyage de jeune Anacharsis*, at the beginning point of *Antigone*’s entrance into modern Western cultural consciousness after a lengthy period of textual obscurity. “In chapter XI,” he writes, “the hero is taken to see his first Attic tragedy. It is Sophocles’ *Antigone* and the young Anacharsis is overwhelmed: ‘Quel merveilleux assortiment d’illusions & de réalités! Je volois au secours des deux amants . . .’”<sup>1</sup> It is a rather peculiar sort of reading that would characterize Sophocles’ tragedy as first and foremost about the love between Antigone and Haemon; however, Barthélémy was simply the beginning of a long tradition of readings which have inserted emotional motivations into the play at the cost of obscuring its more substantial discourse on the opposition between state and familial power.

Simon Goldhill argues that Greek tragedy as a whole is intimately bound up in the political concerns of the time and place in which it was first written and performed, as a contribution to the “continuing public debate

1. Steiner, *Antigones*, 7.

on internal political developments.”<sup>2</sup> A number of readings of Sophocles’ *Antigone* link it to a debate over public burial in Athens during the fifth century BCE, as the city was in transition from an oligarchy to a democracy. I will briefly review these historically contextualized contemporary readings before returning to my own reading of the character of Antigone, in both the Sophoclean tragedy and a twentieth-century re-interpretation of the Antigone myth penned by Jean Anouilh. It should be noted at the outset—and repeated frequently—that I am not at all interested in a reading of *Antigone* that casts her as a tragic heroine defending religious values against the encroachment of the state. Rather, I am interested in the competing claims of authority exercised over the body of Polynices, and the way they are presented and negotiated, without attributing value to one position over or against the other. As my later analysis of the competing claims of Antigone and Creon shows, Sophocles presents both positions as significantly flawed, in startlingly similar fashions.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The early fifth century BCE saw Athens transforming from a city-state (*polis*) into an empire.<sup>3</sup> Following a victory over the Persian army in the battle of Salamis (478 BCE), a number of Greek city-states banded together to form the Delian League; by 454 BCE, the League’s treasury and governance were both firmly located in Athens.<sup>4</sup> Over the next several decades, Athens consolidated its position as the center of the Empire.<sup>5</sup> This transition wrought many changes in Athenian daily life; I am interested here particularly in the relocation of mourning and burial practices for dead soldiers from the private to the public sphere.

2. Goldhill, *Orestia*, 2. See also Goldhill, “Civic Ideology.” While Goldhill’s primary textual engagement is with Aeschylus, rather than Sophocles, large portions of his argument are about ancient Athenian tragedy in general.

3. I am greatly indebted in this section to Rebecca Futo Kennedy, for the many informative conversations we have had about the development of the Athenian empire. Most of what I now understand about the history of the period was learned in the process of editing her book, *Athena’s Justice*. For the significance of Athenian imperialism in *Antigone*, see Patterson, “Practice of Burial,” 38.

4. Kennedy, *Athena’s Justice*, 5.

5. Kennedy argues that this process of consolidation took place largely through the transference of legal authority from the other cities in the League to the Athenian courts (*Athena’s Justice*, 22; 31–32), and also, importantly, through the spread of the cult of Athena from Athens to the rest of Greece (*Athena’s Justice*, 7).

Prior to the fifth century, it is unclear whether most Athenian war-dead were cremated, and their ashes brought back to Athens for private burial, or whether internment on the field of battle was more common. Thucydides mentions the soldiers who were killed at the Battle of Marathon as receiving the exceptional honor of battlefield burial.<sup>6</sup> However, this passage is commonly known as “Thucydides’ Blunder,” due to a wealth of evidence indicating that battlefield burial was far more common than that passage indicates.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of where soldiers were buried—in their native earth or the ground on which they fell—it is clear that both the internment of repatriated bodies and commemoration of un-repatriated soldiers were carried out by private families on public ground: the Acropolis was littered with military memorials erected by members of the aristocracy.<sup>8</sup> There is a wide gap between the public burial of war dead described by Thucydides (and his description of the ceremony is still regarded as authoritative, regardless of the puzzle of the Marathon burial) and any picture that has been drawn of Athenian war-burial and commemoration prior to 508 BCE, and the transition from one practice to another was no more seamless than the advent of democracy, with which it coincided. The tensions that arose in fifth century Athens over burial, commemoration, and above all ownership of the bodies of the dead played out on the tragic stage, particularly in Sophocles’ *Antigone*.<sup>9</sup> These tensions echo into the present day, and a particularly strong parallel exists between the Athenian Empire in the mid-fifth century (BCE) and the British Empire in the early twentieth century (CE).<sup>10</sup>

Christoph Clairmont dates the genesis of public burial of war dead to the early fifth century BCE.<sup>11</sup> Prior to that, he suggests the textual evidence

6. Thucydides, *History*, 319 (Book 2, ch. 34, section 5). See also Clairmont, *Patrios Nomos*, 16; Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone*, 7.

7. See, for example, Toher, “Thucydides’ Blunder,” 497–501; see also Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, 94–95.

8. G. Anderson, *Athenian Experiment*, 107; Clairmont, *Patrios Nomos*, 16–21.

9. See Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone*, 7–14. See also the essays collected in *Helios* 33S (2006).

10. Judith Butler traces the heritage of family/state tension through philosophical criticism of *Antigone* in Lacan, Irigaray, and Hegel; however, her analysis focuses on *Antigone* as an agent against the state, and ignores the significance of the dead body as an object to be claimed by one group or another, lacking in voice, agency, or intrinsic identity of its own. See Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, 1–25. See also Griffith, “Introduction,” 48–50.

11. Clairmont, *Patrios Nomos*, 2.

indicates that “individual families cared for the burial of the sons who died in warfare,” although he admits that public honors for particularly exceptional individuals were not unheard of.<sup>12</sup> However, it would be incorrect to assume that the difficulty of repatriation or the honor associated with a public funeral made the removal of mourning and burial rites from the familial domain a simple matter. William Blake Tyrrell and Larry J. Bennett note that this removal signaled a sharp divide in Athenian society:

The public funeral exacerbated the antagonism of the demos and the family over funeral celebrations by separating the dead from their families. Women had brought the dead into the world in the company of women, and they or other women of the family should have prepared the bodies for burial and mourned them. Bones and ashes brought home by family members could be tended in the house, but the public funeral replaced the body of the deceased and moved the place of grieving from the house with its familiar things and smells to the open sunny spaces of the men’s agora. Although the public ritual allotted two days for the family to mourn the loss, twice that allowed for private funerals, such concessions paled before the splendor of the third day, when the civic values underlying the ceremony came to the fore.<sup>13</sup>

It is in this context that they suggest the confrontation between Antigone and Creon, staged by Sophocles circa 442–438 BCE, should be read, with Antigone representing the female, familial sphere usurped by the intrusion of Creon’s male public law.<sup>14</sup> This thesis has been questioned by Cynthia Patterson, who notes that “[p]ublic burial ‘in their native earth’ was a notable honor and distinction; there is no evidence that men and women (as

12. Ibid., 2.

13. Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone*, 9. See also Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 121–23.

14. The earliest date given for the first performance of Sophocles’ *Antigone* is 442–441 BCE; see Ferrario, “Replaying *Antigone*,” 79; Griffith, “Introduction,” 1–2; Patterson, “Practice of Burial,” 34. Tyrrell and Bennett place the first performance at 438 BCE (*Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone*, 3–4): they make a convincing case for their dating, especially when they read the punishment inflicted on the corpse of Polynices as an echo of the punishment inflicted on the commanders of the Samian ships in the aftermath of the Samian war (440–439 BCE)—see *Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone*, 4–5. As the precise date is largely irrelevant to my discussion here, I have opted to maintain the range of possible dates. For the gender divide in *Antigone*, see Griffith, “Introduction,” 51–54; Steiner, *Antigones*, 9–11, 236–42. For a discussion of the division between and overlap of public and private spheres of influence in the play, see Derderian, *Leaving Words to Remember*, 139–40.

groups) disagreed on that point,” and that only the intrusion of the state permitted burial of war-dead in Athens (as opposed to on the battlefield where they fell) at all.<sup>15</sup> I would suggest an interpretative middle ground between Tyrrell/Bennett and Patterson: while there may be no evidence to suggest that women, *as a group*, were unimpressed by the honor a public burial conveyed to their family members, neither is it unreasonable to suppose that women, *as individuals*, may not have been entirely happy to cede their authority over a previously private and familial ritual to the *polis*, no matter how much honor may have been involved. The error made by both Patterson and those she criticizes is to treat a group of people as though it possesses but one mind—the same difficulty which I pointed out as plaguing most theories of collective memory in chapter one.<sup>16</sup>

At the heart of the ambivalence surrounding the public funeral lies a question of memorialization and identity. A living body is complex, possessed of a personality and subjectivity, able to self-identify as a member of many different groups; a dead body loses the ability to self-narrate, and instead becomes an object to be claimed by one group or another.<sup>17</sup> The corpse of an Athenian soldier could not be buried both in the family tomb and in the common grave of the public ceremony; in death, one facet of identity would be emphasized, to the detriment of any others.<sup>18</sup> The honor

15. Patterson, “Practice of Burial,” 26–27; 36.

16. Joan V. O’Brien points out that the “dialectical tension between individual and community” was peculiar to Athens at this “brief moment in Athenian history,” in which the value placed on the individual was higher than at other times or in other Greek cities. O’Brien, *Guide to Sophocles’ Antigone*, 34. See also Ferrario, “Replaying *Antigone*,” 104–5.

It is also worth noting that, at approximately this same time, Pericles felt the need to include a warning regarding the proper conduct of female mourners in his funeral oration for the dead from the Peloponnesian War (Thucydides, *History*, 317–19; Book 2, ch. 34). The presence of such an exhortation would appear to indicate some nonconformity on the part of the Athenian women.

17. This transformation of body into object is similar to, but not the same as, the linguistic transformation described by Elaine Scarry, discussed in the prelude. The fundamental difference is that this transformation occurs after, and as a consequence of, death, whereas Scarry’s transformation occurs prior to death, and, in her scheme, is what makes death (which is to say, the killing of one human being by another) possible.

18. Closterman, “Family Members and Citizens,” discusses at length the ways in which burial practices cemented the identity of not only the person being buried but also their surviving family members. Closterman notes especially a pair of monuments to a soldier named Dexilos (d. 394 BCE) which appears to accomplish precisely what I have just said cannot be accomplished: Dexilos was buried in a public gravesite with other soldiers, and his family erected a monument in their family burial ground, thus memorializing him in both of the contexts at issue here. However, the fact remains that Dexilos’s

of a public burial could obliterate, or threaten to obliterate, the private, familial identity of the soldier.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, since the public burial was a mass burial, with the war-dead of each tribe placed together in a common chest, and one funeral oration for all the war-dead of Athens, the individuality of the soldier was subordinated to their role as a member of the Athenian military.<sup>20</sup>

## COMPETING CLAIMS

The conflict over the body of Polynices in Sophocles' *Antigone*, then, is a conflict between his civic identity and his familial role: between the meaning of his body to the state—as a traitor, an example, a locus of authority—and the meaning of his body in a more intimate context—as a brother, a link to the memory of a previously cohesive, now shattered family unit.<sup>21</sup> This conflict of meanings is evident even in two short passages from the text. The first comes at the end of Creon's first speech, delivered with only the chorus onstage; Antigone is not present to hear it, although she related the substance of the decree to Ismene in the previous scene:<sup>22</sup>

Creon: Eteocles, who died fighting for this city, having excelled in battle, we shall hide in the tomb and we shall render to him all the

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body was only buried in one grave; the other monument marked the absence, rather than the presence, of a body. It is, of course, possible for a corpse to be broken down into fragments and buried in different locations—this was, for example, common practice with saints' relics. However, I would argue that at that point the body ceases to be *a body*; moreover, there is, to the best of my knowledge, no evidence that this practice was ever utilised in ancient Athens, or in the British Commonwealth. The fragmentation of saints' bodies into relics is usually not the result of any ambiguity in their identities, but rather a way of making their already fixed identity available to a wider number of people.

19. Although the Athenian war-dead were placed in ten separate caskets, one for each tribe, and memorial stele in the Agora listed the dead by tribe, restoring some measure of ownership to the larger, extended family. See Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 19.

20. Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 55–56; Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 7; Ferrario, "Replaying *Antigone*," 85. See also Goldhill, "Civic Ideology," for a discussion of the role that public performances of tragedy (especially the ceremonies conducted prior to the play) played in subordinating the individual to the state.

21. Again, note that the crucial point here is that Polynices himself is unable to exercise any agency in determining what meaning will be ascribed to his body by outside forces. See Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, 2–5. Butler points out that these two apparently contradictory meanings ascribed to Polynices' body are actually mutually dependent; the state rests on structures of kinship, and kinship requires "the support and mediation of the state" (5).

22. *Soph.Ant.*, 7 (lines 21–39).

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rites that come to the noblest of the dead below. But his brother, I mean Polynices, who came back from exile meaning to burn to the ground and to enslave its people, as for him it is proclaimed to this city that none shall bury or lament, but they shall leave his body unburied for birds and dogs to devour and savage. That is my way of thinking, and never by my will shall bad men exceed good men in honor. No, whoever is loyal to the city in death and life alike shall from me have honor.<sup>23</sup>

Notable in this speech is Creon's strict adherence to a general civic principle ("never by my will shall bad men exceed good men in honor") without regard to the particular familial circumstances in which it is applied; Creon can remember that Polynices is Eteocles' brother, but either cannot or will not recognize that that relationship means that Polynices is also a member of Creon's own family—and that the proper burial of his body is thus Creon's own responsibility.<sup>24</sup> Creon's notion of family is entirely bounded by his notion of civic duty, and those who fall outside the latter (such as Polynices, and, later, Antigone) can have no claim on him in regards to the former. This rigidity of thought is also apparent in Antigone's last speech, delivered in front of the chorus and Creon, though not actually addressed to any living person.<sup>25</sup> A portion of this speech (lines 904–20; the section of the quote below beginning "Yet in the eyes of the wise") is regarded by some relatively recent scholars as an interpolation.<sup>26</sup> However, those lines

23. *Soph. Ant.*, 20–23 (lines 194–210).

24. See O'Brien, *Guide to Sophocles' Antigone*, 35; Rehm, *Marriage to Death*, 60; Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 46–49.

25. There is some debate as to whether Creon is present during this speech, or whether he exits and returns; see Griffith, "Commentary," 281; O'Brien, *Guide to Sophocles' Antigone*, 101; Steiner, *Antigones*, 279.

26. This may say a great deal more about modern reading habits than it does about the text itself; this bit of cold rationality runs counter to the image of Antigone as the distraught, devoted sister favored by emotively motivated interpretations of the play. Anouilh's re-imagining of Antigone, discussed below, is far more connected to this image than Sophocles' original. See Griffith, "Commentary," 277–79; O'Brien, *Guide to Sophocles' Antigone*, 102–3; Steiner, *Antigones*, 280–81. For an attempt at reading Antigone's motivations as equally emotional and duty-driven, see Held, "Antigone's Dual Motivation." George Steiner may shed some light on the modern tendency towards an overly emotional rendering of Antigone, when he traces the re-entry of the play into Western consciousness back to Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélémy's 1788 work, *Le Voyage du jeune Anacharsis*: "In chapter XI, the hero is taken to see his first Attic tragedy. It is Sophocles' *Antigone* and the young Anacharsis is overwhelmed: 'Quel merveilleux assortiment d'illusions & de réalités! Je voloie au secours des deux amants . . .'" It is a peculiar reading that would characterise the play as first and foremost about the love between Antigone



are firmly part of the textual tradition of the play, and, more importantly, illustrate the familial structure which undergirds Antigone's construction of Polynices' identity.

Antigone: But when I come there, I am confident that I shall come dear to my father, dear to you, my mother, and dear to you, my own brother; since when you died it was I that with my own hands washed you and adorned you and poured libations on your graves; and now, Polynices, for burying your body I get this reward! Yet in the eyes of the wise I did well to honor you; for never, had children of whom I was the mother or had my husband perished and been moldering there, would I have taken on myself this task, in defiance of the citizens. In virtue of what law do I say this? If my husband had died, I could have had another, and a child by another man, if I had lost the first, but with my mother and my father in Hades below, I could never have another brother. Such was the law for whose sake I did you special honor, but to Creon I seemed to do wrong and to show shocking recklessness, O my own brother.<sup>27</sup>

Antigone values familial relationships based on blood ties (to mother, father, and brothers) over and above those formed by choice (to a hypothetical husband, or any children she may have produced with him), but, like Creon, favors some blood ties over others. Just as Creon forgets his relationship and responsibilities to the dead body of Polynices, Antigone willfully forgets her relationship to the living Ismene (and her more distant relationship to Creon himself).<sup>28</sup> Her family is defined by her contact with their bodies; they are those that she "with my own hands washed [. . .] and adorned."<sup>29</sup>

The actual face-to-face confrontation between Antigone and Creon is quite brief, and the dialogue nowhere near as philosophically satisfying as the speeches each makes when the other is absent. Creon and Antigone

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and Haemon, but if this is, indeed, the vehicle by which the play came to popular attention, then the centrality of Antigone's love, transferred from Haemon to her brother, in later readings can better be understood. See Steiner, *Antigones*, 7.

27. *Soph.Ant.*, 86–89 (lines 897–915).

28. This is a case of Antigone exercising the exact same limited approach to kinship as does Creon; Ismene (and Creon) has transgressed the principles by which Antigone measures relationship and so no longer counts—see *Soph.Ant.*, 11–13, 53–55 (lines 70–96, 538–549); Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, 9–10; Steiner, *Antigones*, 265–66. For Antigone's similarity to Creon, see Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, 6; Patterson, "Practice of Burial," 38–39; Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 75.

29. *Soph.Ant.*, 86 (lines 900–901).



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do not really enter into a conversation about the body of Polynices; they do not have sufficient common ground to converse. Their argument consists of each repeating and elaborating upon their basic assertion, neither able to enter into the other's worldview sufficiently to engage with and challenge their own assertion.<sup>30</sup> For both Creon and Antigone, one facet of Polynices' identity must override and obliterate the other: he is either a brother or an enemy; his body must be treated in the fashion appropriate for one or the other. It cannot be both.

What is markedly absent from all this debate over the appropriate role and placement of Polynices' body is any debate at all over Polynices himself. He exists for both Antigone and Creon almost entirely as a symbol of the principles, civic or familial, for which each of them argue. All of Antigone's speeches in defense of his right to burial concentrate on the strength of the familial bond. Not once does she mention that his behavior in life merits any particular treatment of his body in death—that he was, for example, a kind man, fond of dogs and small children. All of Creon's invective against him is focused on his symbolic role as an enemy of the *polis*, the leader of an attacking army, a set of claims which make little sense in the larger context of the drama. If Polynices was attempting to conquer Thebes in order to gain what he almost certainly saw as his rightful place on the throne (and let us not forget that he was the elder brother), how seriously can we take the idea of him defiling his own temples, selling his own household into slavery?<sup>31</sup> Creon never tells us, never offers any proof, that Polynices is exactly the sort of person who would do such things; rather, he seems to expect his listeners both on stage and in the audience to understand that the position of Polynices's body outside the walls of the city as complete substantiation of his claims—the body's location once again serving as proof of one identity, at the cost of other possible identities.<sup>32</sup>

30. See Griffith, "Introduction," 34–35.

31. Soph.*Ant.*, 21 (lines 199–202). See Griffith, "Introduction," 30–1, "Commentary," 161–62; Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 49; Steiner, *Antigones*, 215–21.

32. Of course, Polynices's willingness to bring foreigners to aid his capture of the city may have made it easier for Creon to paint him as a traitor. For commentary on this issue, see Griffith, "Commentary," 161; Holt, "Polis and Tragedy," 663. The body lying outside the city walls is different from the body lying outside the territory of the city, as that territory extended beyond the walls. Athenian law provided for denial of burial within the "native earth" of Athens; it is Creon's refusal to permit Polynices' body to be moved elsewhere for burial that is shocking to Athenian sentiment. See Griffith, "Introduction," 31; Holt, "Polis and Tragedy," 663–65; Patterson, "Practice of Burial," 33. Holt rejects the

## ANOUILH'S *ANTIGONE*

Jean Anouilh's rendering of the tragedy, written and produced in Nazi-occupied France, both fills in and highlights the gaps in Sophocles' text.<sup>33</sup> This is an odd drama; its English debut included in the program a note from the translator, Lewis Galantière: "The reader will have to take my word for it that only the citizen of a German-occupied country [. . .] would be able to come away from the play feeling that Antigone's case is stronger than Creon's".<sup>34</sup> And yet, read with a strong consciousness that the play *is* meant to be about the French Resistance, that Creon's counsel that Antigone ought to live, and be happy, is the counsel of a totalitarian regime persuading its citizens to mind their own business and go about their daily activities uninterrupted, Anouilh's drama almost eclipses the *pathos* of the original. At the same time, however, we should remember that Sophocles' original Antigone, with her championing of aristocratic family values, was also a rather difficult character for the democratic Athenian audience to engage with; Anouilh's Antigone is, perhaps, true to the spirit of the problematic and unsympathetic original.

Antigone's defense of Polynices on the basis of their kinship is fatally undermined by Creon's attack against Polynices' worthiness *as a person*:

CREON: Poor Antigone! With her night-club flower. Do you know what your brother was?

ANTIGONE: Whatever he was, I know that you will say vile things about him.

CREON: A cheap, idiotic bounder, that is what he was. A cruel, vicious little voluptuary. A little beast with just wit enough to drive a car faster and throw more money away than any of his pals. I was with your father one day when Polynices, having lost a lot of money gambling, asked him to settle the debt; and when your

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suggestion that there is anything shocking about Creon's denial of burial, and maintains that he acts perfectly within what an Athenian audience would recognise as the law. His, however, is a minority opinion, and does not produce a particularly coherent reading of the play. However, see MacKay, "Antigone, Coriolanus, and Hegel," which argues that the controversy over the burial of Themistocles (c. 459 BCE) provides a useful context for the debate between Antigone and Creon.

33. For a point-by-point comparison between Anouilh's and Sophocles' versions of the drama, see Deutsch, "Anouilh's Antigone." See also the response to Deutsch's review by Schlesinger, "Anouilh's Antigone Again."

34. Cited in Berry, "Antigone and the French Resistance," 17.

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father refused, the boy raised his hand against him and called him a vile name.

ANTIGONE: That's a lie!

CREON: He struck your father in the face with his fist. It was pitiful.<sup>35</sup>

Here, the argument could be made that the conflict is really one of (symbolic) familial affection against actual merit, as Creon's recollection of Polynices's actual character overwhelms Antigone's blind loyalty to a brother she last saw when she was twelve years old. However, Antigone's attempt at refutation here is not, as it is in Sophocles, an assertion of the familial bond transcending any flaws in character. Rather, she attempts to deny that the flaws are real: "That's a lie!" Presumably, then, in this version of the tale Polynices' merit or lack thereof in life still has some impact on the way his body ought to be treated in death. Otherwise, Anouilh's Antigone would have no need to refute Creon's claims. They would be, as they are to the Antigone of Sophocles, simply irrelevant.<sup>36</sup>

The continuation of Creon's speech, however, re-introduces an element of uncertainty regarding the state of Polynices's body:

Funny, isn't it? Polynices lies rotting in the sun while Eteocles is given a hero's funeral and will be housed in a marble vault. Yet I have absolute proof that everything that Polynices did, Eteocles had plotted to do. They were a pair of blackguards--both engaged in selling out Thebes, and both engaged in selling out each other; and they died like the cheap gangsters they were, over a division of the spoils.

But, as I told you a moment ago, I had to make a martyr of one of them. I sent out to the holocaust for their bodies; they were found clasped in one another's arms—for the first time in their lives, I imagine. Each had been spitted on the other's sword, and

35. Anouilh, "Antigone," trans. Galantière, 53–54.

36. The divide between Anouilh's and Sophocles' Antigone has much to do with the divide Lars Albinus has identified as existing between the ancient and modern concepts of ψυχή (psyche): "The modern meaning of psyche, or soul, is basically conceived in terms of *self* or *identity*. With regards to the concept of ψυχή, the opposite is actually stated in the beginning of the *Illiad*, where [. . .] the deceased is clearly identified with the 'corpse' (σώμα) and not with the psyche, which flies off to the invisible realm of memory." In other words, for Sophocles, Polynices *is* his body, whereas to Anouilh, there is a distinction to be drawn between the body and the person. See Albinus, *House of Hades*, 43–44. See also Kurts and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 331.

the Argive cavalry had trampled them down. They were mashed to a pulp, Antigone. I had the prettier of the two carcasses brought in, and gave it a State funeral; and I left the other to rot. I don't know which was which. And I assure you, I don't care.<sup>37</sup>

This passage shows also a sharp contrast between Anouilh's and Sophocles' Creon, the latter of which, "by differentiating between them [the brothers] [. . .] is blinded to the more compelling reality of their sameness as corpses."<sup>38</sup> Anouilh's Creon sees Eteocles and Polynices as interchangeable in both death and life; he uses this interchangeability to blind *others* to their sameness, by creating a hero of one and a villain of the other. This now total ambiguity of the unburied body proves fatal to Antigone's position; she succumbs entirely to Creon's argument, and (briefly) resolves to let him cover up her disobedience so that she can live, marry Haemon, and be happy. Clearly, the issue of personal rather than symbolic identity matters more to Anouilh than it did to Sophocles; one would expect the latter's Antigone to respond here that the unburied body belongs to *a* brother, regardless of which *particular* brother it is.

In Anouilh's version, Antigone eventually chooses death, against all of Creon's arguments, as a protest against the banality of life, rather than out of deference to a higher authority or as a show of solidarity with her dead brother(s). The corpse of Polynices (or Eteocles) fades from the attention of both characters and audience—the revelation of the body's ambiguous personal identity is also a revelation of its unimportance, and the rest of the play focuses on the inexplicable and unavoidable mechanisms which compose Anouilh's vision of the tragic.<sup>39</sup> Not so for Sophocles, who insists that Creon must bury Polynices before attempting to un-bury Antigone, thus keeping the body, with all its symbolic weight (but no personality), at the center of the action right up until the end of the play. The burial and memorialization practices of the First World War, as we shall see, reflect the tensions that have been uncovered here: between body and personality, between familial and civic group membership. Although there have been attempts to restore the body to prominence, either in burial practice or in discourse about the costs of warfare (as in the work of Elaine Scarry), memorialization since 1914 has focused increasingly on a more nebulous

37. Anouilh, "Antigone," trans. Galantière, 55.

38. Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 49.

39. For a full discussion of Anouilh's tragic vision, see Heiney, "Jean Anouilh," and especially his discussion of Antigone on pp. 333–34.

## PART ONE: Remembering to Forget

concept of identity—primarily through an emphasis on the names of individuals. The relationship between body and name remains ambivalent—sometimes it is a complementary substitution, flowers propped against a memorial plaque as they might be left on a grave; sometimes the two *loci* of identity appear to be in tension with one another. This will become especially clear in the final chapter of Part Two, “Making Memory Solid,” which addresses First World War memorials from a contemporary perspective, and in which the main character, Klara Becker, plays an Antigone-like role, as she attempts to maintain familial control over the memory of her dead lover and the meaning of his death, while at the same time unraveling the puzzle of mourning without a body.

SAMPLE