

## Antigone – A Clashing of the Stereotypical and the Archetypal

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*The paper engages with Antigone's steadfast resistance to and ultimate rejection of the female, Ismene-like stereotype into which she refuses to be typecast by the socially prescribed and patriarchy-tailored norms of gender essentialism. Guided by the natural and eternal laws as defined by Thomas Aquinas, Sophocles' heroine stands up against the society's distortion and violation of the universal, unwritten laws (natural, eternal, archetypal laws). Relying on the Jungian insightful archetypal criticism, I approach Antigone as the archetypal Earth Mother in its dual nature (the loving, self-sacrificing mother as well as the destructive, vengeful mother) in order to better understand the heroine's brave act and its aftermath. In this way, the paper demonstrates the uninhibitedly consistent female challenge and critical choice to stereotypical gender ideologies of the Sophoclean time, proving that the archetypal dimension is always already more powerful than any of the man-made laws.*

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From the very beginning of the play, the reader is presented with an almost prescriptive design of the Greek tragedy in which man's/woman's "fate is bound up with the divine order of the world, and tragedy occurs by the clash between that divine order and human disorder" (Ehrenberg 1954, p. 24). In the tragic play of Sophocles', it is Antigone who "upholds a divine principle" (Lardinois 2015, p. 63) and sets out on a mission to put order into what she perceives as human disorder. In this line, she assumes the socially counter-stereotypical role for a woman and openly defies Creon's, king of Thebes', proclamation which forbids proper burial of her brother Polyneikes. Therefore, it is in the opening scene that Sophocles centre-stages the unmarriageable conflicting polarities such as individual/state, human/divine, emotionality/rationality, fate/free will in the manner of a typical Greek tragedy which "takes as its primary concerns the collision of various points of views, the incommensurability of different kinds of speech, and the semantic ambiguity of its language" (Barrett 2002, p. 6). Acting in dissonance with the woman's stereotypical role of obedience and passivity paradigmatised in her sister Ismene's character, Antigone bravely steps out of the Theban society's gender-orchestrated prescriptive formula in which the fear-stricken, safe-minded Ismene remains typecast for good:

"Remember, we're women. How  
can we fight men? They're stronger.  
We must accept these things – and worse to come.

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I want the spirits of the Dead  
to understand this: I'm not free.  
I must obey whoever's in charge.  
It's crazy to attempt the impossible.” (Sophocles 2012, pp. 75–81)

Unlike Ismene, who is “essentially obedient to her womanhood, the sort of woman the Athenians understood and respected” (Ferguson 1972, p. 164), Antigone is resolute “to attempt the impossible” (Sophocles 2012, p. 81) and provide her brother a proper burial<sup>1</sup>. Unflinchingly forging forwards in the name of laws higher than the laws imposed by society and enforced by Creon-like rulers, Antigone evolves into a female opposing self and exhibits her greater-than-life character:

“I'll bury Polyneikes myself. I'll do.  
what's honorable, and then I'll die.  
I who love him will lie down  
next to him who loves me -  
my criminal conduct blameless! -  
for I owe more to the dead, with whom  
I will spend a much longer time  
than I will ever owe to the living.” (Sophocles 2012, pp. 85–92)

It is at this early stage in the play that “we have an excellent scene. First, it establishes the situation, clearly and concisely, and points to the plot. Second, Ismene and Antigone are both beautifully sketched. It was a brilliant idea of Sophocles, repeated in *Electra*, to produce a normal woman to offset his central character” (Ferguson 1972, p. 164). Importantly, the scene shows not only how absolutely fearless Antigone is but it also points to what extent she feels herself indebted to the familial, to the ancestral<sup>2</sup> and, most importantly, to the human laws. Her instinctive drive and knowledge are conducive to her arising self-knowledge and to the realization of the self, i.e., her own individuality. Believing that her resolution to bury the dead brother, Polyneikes, is biologically justifiable in the sense that “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19), she is essentially guided by an innate sense of truth which breaks down the rigid barriers of ego-centricity and demonstrates her primal, instinctive alignment with the natural, eternal and archetypal. Hardly surprisingly, therefore, it is upon the civic arrest of the naturally and archetypally attuned Antigone that nature erupts

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<sup>1</sup>Creon, the Theban ruler, has forbidden the proper ritual rite for the dead Polyneikes because he is regarded as a traitor who has betrayed his native polis, Thebes, by raising the Argive army and fighting against his own people. Consequently, Polyneikes's corpse is left to rot in the open and to be slaughtered by scavengers.

<sup>2</sup>Antigone's ultimate respect for and overriding commitment to the ancestors is something which she never questions no matter how tyrannical the power structures she opposes may be and how dangerous the consequences of ultimately pursuing her own individual feat: “Antigone's allegiance with the dead rather than the living could suggest a reactionary faith in custom and tradition against the forces of modernism and secularism embodied in the figure of Creon...Antigone represents, for Hegel, an ethics based on absolute obedience to the pre-political customs and institutions of the family” (Barker 2009, p. 29).

and strikes back with vengeance upon those who are naturally and archetypally unattuned.

The emotionally and psychologically overwrought<sup>3</sup> scene in which Creon's guard catch Antigone in the act of re-burying the unburied Polyneikes is precluded by the tumultuous weather conditions. Everything is terror-inducing: a whirlwind is throwing up the dust, the leaves are being torn from the trees and the grasslands are being choked. The momentary cataclysm is "churning up grit all around" (Sophocles 2012, line 264) and, in this way, turning everything into an unsettled 'intermediary' zone between the living and the dead. Antigone's piercing, bird-like scream, which largely re-echoes Polyneikes's or 'a white-feathered Eagle screeching' (Sophocles 2012, p. 248), makes auditory a strong metaphysical bond between the sister and brother: "Their avian kinship does not dislodge their human kinship. The former supplements the latter" (Robert 2015, p. 31). In line with this, the bird, which is archetypally associated with "the spiritualized anima" (Yoshida 2007, p. 45), only reaffirms the reading of Antigone's scream as the last dying cry of Polyneikes' soul. What is more, the wailing, sisterly cry of Antigone over the unburied dead body acquires another dimension. It is also a motherly cry or the cry of the caring archetypal mother who is in distress over the loss of her baby son; it was "a piercing scream like a bird homing to find her nest robbed" (Sophocles 2012, p. 264). Whatever relationship is more operable or pronounced at this stage, sisterly or motherly, it is certain that Antigone has stood up in the name of the laws and values which seem to be biologically justifiable, archetypally patterned and universally well grounded.

In this way, the Sophoclean heroine has aligned herself not only with the biological but also with the natural and eternal laws – they all are convergent and share the same semantic axis, which is archetypal in design. Put differently, she asserts Thomas Aquinas' claim that: "Eternal law is the set of divine archetypes contained in the divine mind. Natural law is the set of moral principles based on human nature, which is an instantiation of the archetype of human nature in the divine mind" (Lisska 2012, p. 623). Being in accord with the dictates of moral principles, Antigone instantiates quintessentially human nature as partaking in the divine through her divine mindedness: "the law we have in us by nature is a sharing in the eternal law and [...] *puts perfect order into things*" (McDermott 1998, p. 419). It follows, therefore, that her decision to bury Polyneikes is in accord with both natural and eternal laws (divine archetypes). By degrees, she is ascribing herself the archetypal dimension of the Earth Mother through the caring, self-sacrificing aspect of a woman/a mother as well as through her perfecting tendencies towards the society's imperfection. In the former aspect, the archetypal imago springs so naturally and spontaneously whereby "[t]he qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign" (Jung 2003, p. 15). In the latter aspect, "she is the incarnation of the promise of perfection; the soul's assurance that, at the conclusion of its exile in a world of organized inadequacies, the bliss that once was

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<sup>3</sup>“This outgoing emotion, as opposed to introverted self-absorption, is characteristic of Greek tragedy, and most (perhaps all) great tragedy” (Taplin 2005, p. 122).

known will be known again” (Campbell 2008, p. 92). Bliss in Antigone’s case is the bliss of transcendence of those organized inadequacies and the bliss of the mystic reunion with the dead family member, her brother, and the subsequent restoration of umbilical connection: “I owe more to the dead ... than I will ever owe to the living” (Sophocles 2012, p. 246). Unafraid of death, she ultimately believes that her fate, which is primarily outlined by the exercise of her free will, will be god-like just like Niobe’s and that being the archetypal image of the Earth Mother she will go on living through nature – the womb is equated with the tomb and vice versa:

“I once heard that a Phrygian stranger,  
Niobe, the daughter of Tantalos,  
died a hideous death on Mount Sipylos.  
Living rock, clinging like ivy,  
crushed her. Now, people say,  
she erodes – rainwater and snow  
never leave her alone - they keep on  
pouring like tears from her eyes,  
drenching the clefts of her body.  
My death will be like hers,  
when the god at last lets me sleep.” (Sophocles 2012, pp. 903–912)

The outcome of the society’s disorderly, imperfect conduct in relation to the perfectly orderly cosmic rhythm of natural cycles triggers not only the surfacing of the divine, archetypal Mother figure in the Sophoclean heroine but also the heroine’s nurturing of the free will within the coordinates of the social imperfections and strictures. No matter how socially defiant and transgressive Antigone’s purely instinct-driven act may seem from the stance of the hegemonic Creon-like rulers, it is important that her free-willed act does not meander away from the natural, eternal, divine and archetypal:

“I did. It wasn’t *Zeus* who issued me  
this order. And Justice – who lives below –  
was not involved. They’d never condone it!  
I deny that your edicts – since *you*, a mere man,  
imposed them – have the force to trample on  
The gods’ unwritten and infallible laws.  
Their laws are not ephemeral – they weren’t  
made yesterday. They will rule forever.  
No man knows how far in time they can go.  
I’d never let any man’s arrogance  
bully me into breaking the gods’ laws.  
[...]  
My own death isn’t going to bother me,  
but I would be devastated to see  
my mother’s son die and rot unburied.  
I’ve no regrets for what I’ve done.” (Sophocles 2012, pp. 487–506)

It is through the repetitive use of the personal pronoun *I* that Antigone most exemplarily demonstrates her indomitable free will. As the dramatic narrative develops, it becomes clearer that the crux of the narrative structure lies in the opposition of an individual to the social standards rather than the opposition of an individual to fate: “free will is seen in her self-imposed status of the ‘dramatically other’ in opposition to a glorified Athens” (Rehm 2003, p. 27). In this context, the free-willed and self-willed Antigone stands up against what she perceives as the injustice of the polis, its edicts and against Creon who “has attempted to isolate the polis as a realm of autonomous, rational human control” (Segal 1998, p. 121). Openly defying Creon’s will in the name of some higher, infallible, unwritten laws, she manages to shake off the social burdens of stereotypically perceived woman and to showcase that “[m]en’s efforts to subordinate women’s roles, functions, and influence, their efforts even to appropriate these for themselves, are only partially successful, even in the most ideologically driven documents, such as Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* or almost any of the tragedies or comedies” (Zeitlin 1996, p. 8).

Not neglecting the role of fate<sup>4</sup>, however, within the grand design of the drama, Antigone’s opposition is still primarily social and fate is certainly not a precluding or predetermining factor in the tragedy of the Sophoclean heroine: “Fate is not predetermined as in the case of Oedipus, rather the wills and actions of characters determine it” (Khare 1998, p. 213). In other words, “fate has become the inner necessity of man, that is, the constituent part of his character for which he is personally responsible” (Jerotić 2000, p. 15). Moreover, there has long been a

“misconception that Greek tragedy basically shows the working of Fate, of men fastened to the puppetry of higher powers [...] Most cultures have their expressions of fatalism; they are one of our chief sources of solace in the face of the pointless waste of ill fortune: ‘che sera, sera’, ‘God’s will be done’, ‘his number was up’, ‘it is written’.... The ancient Greeks were as prone as any to resort to such notions, though, naturally enough, after rather than before the event, and after disaster rather than good fortune. And like most cultures, for a pattern or purpose behind catastrophe they looked to superhuman forces, personal or impersonal. But this tendency does not, within the whole compass of a drama, preclude the free will of the characters or their responsibility, nor does it render their whole life puppetry. Most of the time they are presented as free agents working out their own destinies – as a rule disastrously, since this is a tragedy.” (Taplin 2005, pp. 120–121)

It follows that even though Antigone’s free will is outlined by the fatalistic context, its pervasive operability is certainly undeniable: “[t]he claim of free will operating at the same time as fate may seem contradictory, but it is not so far removed from the modern view of man being genetically and environmentally determined yet also having a measure of free choice and of responsibility within that narrow framework” (McDonald 2003, p. 53). Though the space of free agency

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<sup>4</sup>In *Antigone*, fate resides within nature and is its ordering principle. Still, the fact that Antigone exercises free will and has a critical choice of her own seem to subsidize the fatalistic patterning of the drama and the death of Antigone. In other words, she demonstrates the possibility of achieving an essentially individualized selfhood against the backdrop of largely de-individualizing polis.

might be limited and difficult to access, it is always already inside every one of us. It is from this space that the defiant Antigone bravely rises up and proves to her sister and others that there is always an inner zone of choice and freedom: “You made the choice to live. I chose to die” (Sophocles 2012, p. 72). Importantly, this liberating zone empowers her to oppose the dehumanization of her own self in the context of both Creon’s absolutely logocentric regime and inescapable fatalism. She makes it all less dehumanizing and more self-satisfactory.

Fundamentally, Antigone cannot reverse either the fatalistic or social clockwork mechanism of her own destruction. However, the very fact that she pursues her free indomitable will, sticks to her unflinching choice and makes the zone of free agency visible transforms her into a very complex female character. The complexity lies in the dyad of her being tragic and heroic, defeated and victorious like the classic Sophoclean hero/heroine:

“Sophocles creates a tragic universe in which man’s heroic action, free and responsible, brings him sometimes through suffering to victory but more often to a fall which is both defeat and victory at once; the suffering and the glory are fused in an indissoluble unity. Sophocles pits against the limitations on human stature great individuals who refuse to accept those limitations, and in their failure achieve a strange success. Their action is fully autonomous.” (Knox 1983, p. 6)

Despite the fact that the autonomy of Antigone’s act leads to her live burial “in a hollow cave” (Sophocles 2012, p. 286), she sets an example of the tragic hero<sup>5</sup> – the coinage which has become an essential feature of tragic narratives ever since and

“It is precisely this fact which makes possible the greatness of the Sophoclean heroes; the source of their action lies in them alone, nowhere else; the greatness of the action is theirs alone. Sophocles presents us for the first time with what we recognize as a ‘tragic hero’: one who, unsupported by the gods and in the face of human opposition, makes a decision which springs from the deepest layer of his individual nature, is *physis*, and then blindly, ferociously, heroically maintains that decision even to the point of self-destruction.” (Knox 1983, p. 5)

The only thing Antigone genuinely mourns upon her procession to ‘heaped-up rock-bound prison (Sophocles 2012, p. 289) is that she has not got married and given birth to a child: ‘I’ll go hearing no wedding hymn to carry me to my bridal chamber’ (Sophocles 2012, p. 287). The Chorus of Theban elders, the representatives of the legal *vox populi* of Thebes, do sympathize with the victimized woman on the one hand; on the other hand, though, they are judgemental towards her because she has disrespected the law of Thebes:

“Your pious conduct might deserve some praise,  
but no assault on power will ever

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<sup>5</sup>In his tragedies, both men and women (Antigone, Electra, Ajax) are presented as tragic and heroic at the same time: guided by their free choice and autonomous will, they show noncompliance with and opposition to the entrapping, limiting boundaries of linguistic and social discourses.

be tolerated by him who wields it.  
It was your own hotheaded  
willfulness that destroyed you.” (Sophocles 2012, pp. 957–961)

Eventually, they “disliked Creon’s edict, and they admire the fidelity and piety of Antigone’s act of burial [...] though they think the deed should have been done, they do not like the fact that it was done contrary to law. Hence their judicial attitude toward Antigone” (Kirkwood 1994, p. 53). Not even Creon’s son Haemon, who is planning to get married to Antigone, can successfully appeal to his father to revoke the edict:

“Be flexible. Not rigid. Think of trees  
caught in a raging winter torrent: Those  
that bend will survive with all their limbs  
intact. Those who resist are swept away.  
Or a captain who cleats his mainsheet  
down hard, never easing off in a blow –  
he’ll capsize his ship and go right on sailing,  
his rowing benches where his keel should be.  
Step back from your anger. Let yourself change.” (Sophocles 2012, pp. 788–796)

The two images, the image of the tree and that of the ship, speak powerfully of the importance of an alternative perspective which is not one-sidedly solipsistic but rather flexible and more open; conversely, the outcome is bound to be fatalistic and self-destructive. Just as the tree which steadfastly refuses to bend its branches will certainly be uprooted so will a person of exclusively and absolutely unbending disposition meet a fatal end. Similarly, the image of the ship is “a definite conveyance that takes people somewhere to pursue certain characteristic aims and ends. It does not and cannot simply go with every current and every wind that bears upon it; it has its own orderly way and its own course. Haemon<sup>6</sup> has not, then, urged on Creon an abnegation of the human activity of choosing the good and striving to realize the good. What he says is, that it is important, in pursuit of one’s human ends, to remain open to the claims and the pulls of the external, to cultivate flexible responsiveness, rather than rigid hardness” (Nussbaum 2001, p. 80).

It is in this scene in the play that we witness not only a revisiting of the two conflicting attitudes to life, Creon’s and Antigone’s, as an ultimately unmarriageable pair of opposites but also a heralding of the tragic outcome of Creon – the captain who ‘never eases off in a blow’ and is lacking in ‘flexible responsiveness’. Thus, “[t]ragedy recognizes the ultimate failure of the logical model, the elusiveness and ambiguity of reality” (Segal 1999, p. 21) whereby Creon’s future downfall is the consequence of his purely reason-driven decisions as opposed to Antigone’s human(e)-driven ones.

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<sup>6</sup>Unlike Antigone and Creon who pursue their own one-sided perspectives to the limits of destruction/self-destruction, “Haemon has at least tried to satisfy multiple and complex passions for his lover, his father, and the city” (Barker 2009, p. 39).

It follows, therefore, that “Antigone shows a deeper understanding of the community and its values than Creon does when she argues that the obligation to bury the dead is an unwritten law, which cannot be set aside by a particular ruler” (Nussbaum 2001, p. 66). Unlike Creon’s morally limited agency, Antigone’s mind, her conduct and her action are reflective of true though tragic nobility<sup>7</sup>.

Knowing that nobility and self-sacrifice are among the most heroic elements of a Greek tragedy, Antigone ultimately essentializes a tragically noble heroine: “[t]he ‘nobility’ that makes heroes willing to risk their lives is not exclusively male – in Euripides, this exultation of noble death is found in women who sacrifice themselves and is unequivocally admirable. Against it, however, is the good sense, a form of *sophrosyne*, that should restrain people from ignoring the limits of their power” (Scodel 2010, p. 109). In Antigone’s case, nobility and noble death mirror not only her self-sacrificing idealism but also a kind of self-fatalistic altruism. Consistently throughout the play, she is ready to die a noble death and sacrifice herself for the sake of the higher ideals in which she steadfastly believes. What makes her own sacrifice even grander and nobler is her decisiveness and firmness to meet her death alone, isolated and unassisted: “Antigone’s pursuit of virtue is her own. It involves nobody else and commits her to abusing no other person [...] Antigone’s pious actions are executed alone, out of a solitary commitment. She may be strangely remote from the world; but she does no violence to it” (Nussbaum 2001, p. 66). Undoubtedly, she dies for the high ideals she has not only proudly pursued but also lived out:

“My tomb, my bridal bedroom, my home  
dug from rock, where they’ll keep me forever –  
I’ll join my family there, so may of us dead,  
already welcomed by Persephone.  
I’ll be the last to arrive, and the worst off,  
going down with most of my life unlive.  
[...]  
I won’t hear bridal songs, or feel the joy  
of married love, and I will have no share  
in raising children. No, I will go grieving,  
friendless, and alive to a hollow tomb.” (Sophocles 2012, pp. 983–1013)

In this way, the tragedy “shows a type of idealism which implies a belief in higher values to the point of sacrificing one’s life to achieve them” (McDonald 2003, p. 55) whereby the only heartfelt regret is over the unfulfilled married love and unrealized maternity. As her life slowly draws to its fatal closure, Antigone seems to have achieved the stance which is far more self-illuminating than self-sacrificing. First, in life there are some ideals such as unconditional compassion for its closest family members which far outreach any limiting earthly boundaries. Second, it is always possible to make a choice and challenge the power structures which we find dehumanizing and self-dispossessing. Third, free will, as in

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<sup>7</sup>“The contrast with Creon is not aimed at solving a problem of conduct but is meant to reveal the nature of Antigone’s high-minded conduct and to point up the difference between nobility and the lack of it; and the course of nobility always partakes of ultimate rightness” (Kirkwood 1994, p. 53).

Antigone's case, is a reassertion of the freedom of expression and, primarily, self-expression in line with the natural, eternal, archetypal. In this light, Antigone is the manifestation of one aspect of the Earth Mother – the loving, self-sacrificing one. However, she does not only represent the aspect of the archetypal Earth Mother which is nurturing and outgoing to the utmost but she also articulates its destructive, punishing, vengeful downside in the Earth Mother's essential duality: "But if my judges are at fault, I want *them* to suffer the pain they inflict on me now" (Sophocles 2012, pp. 1021–1022).

The subsequent tragic deaths of Haemon and Creon's wife ultimately point to Antigone's downright righteousness, the judge's "hotheaded willfulness" (Sophocles 2012, pp. 960–961) as well as to a close connection between the physical and the metaphysical, the earthly and the divine, the individual and the archetypal, etc. In the context of Antigone's symbolic representation as the archetypal Earth Mother, their deaths advocate retributive justice as well as the cosmic, divine, reciprocated intervention upon Creon's most beloved.

The play concludes that Creon "could have escaped with a lighter penalty but the bitterness is that his judgement was wrong, and that Antigone's instinct was right; and in the end he has less to cling to than she" (Kitto2002, p. 131). Throughout the play, the Sophoclean heroine has remained honest to her innermost self – she has been guided by pure instincts and the archetypally designed law of righteousness. Eventually, "Antigone, in a situation which meant death or the betrayal of her noblest instinct, chose death and made the better choice: Creon, who loved power more than righteousness, was smitten through the woman whose powerlessness he had wronged, and so learned righteousness through suffering" (Sheppard2011, p. 116).

Despite the fact that Antigone might seem as a usurper of the ordered society challenging its value system and triggering the downfall of Creon as its chief advocate, her heroic act is a true manifestation of how the cosmic, macrostructural framework of archetypal laws resurfaces and overridingly solidifies itself over the rather fragile, microstructural framework of man-made laws. Chaotic and unjust though the world could temporarily appear to be, the final scene advocates a promise of the restoration of order in Thebes once Creon has suffered his wrongdoing to gods:

"Through such endings tragedy places before us a vision of the world as a place of potential chaos and threatens the human need for order, hope, and reasonableness. Yet tragedy – Greek, Elizabethan, or contemporary – rarely suggests that chaos is the final result. The justice of Creon's end and his own acknowledgement of his responsibility vindicate Antigone and leave us with that punitive justice of the gods of which Tiresias has warned." (Segal 1998, p. 136)

Unlike Antigone who has pursued the impossible to its limits and has ultimately defied self-dispossession at least metaphysically, Creon's belated realization that his acts have been those of "a wretched coward, awash with terror" (Sophocles 2012, pp. 1464–1465) makes him dispossessed of his son and wife who "are destroyed by Creon's obduracy" (Walton 2015, p. 81). For these reasons, the Sophoclean play has by the end evolved into a well-rounded "cautionary tale

about political tyranny and resistance, about the essential role of women in the family and the city, about the proper relationship between the living and the dead” (Rehm 2003, p. 28) and about the eternal conflict between an autonomous, free-willed individual and the authoritarian restrictions of the state. Also, it is the triumph of the autonomy of the person acting archetypally and it demonstrates that the body may be lethally vulnerable but some higher idea(l)s that we consistently fight for outlive and outreach the tyranny of the one-sided, rationality-centered perspective<sup>8</sup>. What is more, the moral strength of Sophocles’ heroine and the archetypal dimension of the Earth Mother that she largely paradigmaticizes make the metaphysical magnitude of her act far greater than the dehumanizing punishment that she is unjustly sentenced to.

## Conclusion

*Antigone* deviates from the stereotypical Greek tragedy in which there is “an implicit norm and tragedy often reminds its audience of or abides by contemporary standards. Thus female characters can be admonished to stay in their place within and keep silent; men express outrage at a female challenge; aberrant women are labelled as masculine” (Foley 2001, p. 7). The Sophoclean heroine is an autonomous, free-willed, self-reliant woman who is unafraid to challenge and question what she perceives as the violation of the higher laws.

Opposing the stereotypical admonishment and silencing of the social apparatus, *Antigone* has taken on the role of an antistereotypical, challenging, archetypal woman and given memorable “speeches of absolute devotion to her brother, individual defiance against paternalistic governmental repression, and allegiance to divine authority” (Griffith 2005, p. 91). Illustrating *Antigone*’s counteractive standpoint towards the typicality and stereotypicality, the paper has also shown how her individuality and counter-stereotypicality align well with the archetypal which is in turn well attuned with both natural and eternal laws. Unlike the largely silenced Ismene-like women who are cloistered within the rigid boundaries of the male-centered and male-dominated rationalistic Athenian society, the antipodean figure of *Antigone* has mapped out her territory of activity and persisted in being an assertive, disruptive, transgressive and unsilenceable woman until her own physical death. In this context, the Sophoclean *Antigone* has showcased how the “tragedy represents the inability, impossibility, and even undesirability of eradicating the body and the irrational. It is a genre frequently concerned with the disruptive power of the body, emerging and erupting from a repressed and sublimated position in some Athenian ideological discourses, reasserting itself in drama” (Cawthorn 2008, p. 26).

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<sup>8</sup>The Chorus of Theban elders, which have been mostly cautious in taking sides and in being judgemental throughout the play, “do intervene at a critical point in Creon’s life, when he asks them for advice about what to do when confronting Tiresias’ threats of doom. At this point they are far from mere commentators on the action” (Bushnell 2008, p. 36).

Sophocles' "particular contribution to dramatic structure is the staging of conflict, in particular conflict between opposing forces rigid in attitude and uncompromising in action" (Walton 2015, p. 78) whereby the Chorus of Theban elders "appear to be afraid of both antagonists, wary of Antigone's extremism but also concerned over speaking out in the face of Creon's anger" (Bushnell 2008, p. 36) throughout most of the play. Antigone's heroization and resistance shown in the dramatic, conflicting situation have proven that "there are discursive practices that turn silence into expression of freedom, responsibility, and care" (Clair 1998, p. 68). Her discursive practice throughout the play, which has been atypical of a woman of the fifth-century Thebes, has been a powerful way of transforming the silencing zone into a speaking, woman-empowering and self-affirming territory. Ignorant and defiant of the society's laws which infringe on the burial rites, Antigone has buried her dead brother, Polyneikes, and has valiantly demonstrated her unbounded freedom of expression. Additionally, her discursive practice has not only been within the boundaries of the caring, loving archetypal mother figure; it has also reached the other end of the pendulum swing through her manifestation of the vengeful aspect of the Earth Mother – Antigone's curse on Creon – and it has shown how "[c]ivilized discourse gives way suddenly to curse or bellow" (Segal 1999, p. 53). Therefore, Antigone's, the archetypal mother's, self-sacrifice in the name of love for the dead brother and her subsequent live burial also trigger the surfacing of the vengefully destructive aspect of the Earth Mother through the death of Creon and his family.

To a large extent, *Antigone* has justified the act of an individual who refuses to be reduced either to a mere subject of the polis and its laws or to a passive, servile, unquestioning woman's role based on the discriminatory binary of gender essentialism. On the road of her own individuation or self-realization Antigone has outgrown the ego-centrism and one-sided perspective of the Creon or Ismene type and embraced life in its primal totality and indeconstructible wholeness compounded of the natural, eternal and archetypal laws. Antigone's self-realization, manifested through her role of the archetypal Earth Mother in its duality, has been made possible due to her deeper, more complex understanding of essential human nature: "The Self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference, which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness" (Jung 1968, p.41). On the one hand, the Sophoclean heroine's fundamentally biological and instinctive drive to provide the dead brother an adequate burial is the symbolic representation of the aspect of the archetypally caring mother figure acting in accordance with both natural and eternal laws. On the other, we can see how the other (Other) aspect of the archetypal Earth Mother, which is vengeful and destructive, is likewise exploited and personified in the figure of Antigone: the enraged Earth Mother's curse befalls those closest to Creon whereby life and (re)productivity are reduced to death and sterility: "By corrupting funeral rites and exposing the corpse of Polyneices, Creon allows the pollution to spread. With the loss of ritual purity comes the loss of fertility. The deaths of the bride and groom lead to the destruction of the house" (Nagy 1998, p. XI).

Importantly, Sophocles' play, which is fundamentally about taking two overridingly divergent and one-sided perspectives to the level of the extreme and the absolute "is not aimed at solving a problem of conduct but is meant to reveal the nature of Antigone's high-minded conduct and to point up the difference between nobility and the lack of it; and the course of nobility always partakes of ultimate rightness" (Kirkwood 1994, p. 53). Eventually, the play questions the validity of the laws which go against the natural, eternal and archetypal and condition people culturally, ideologically and socially. What has been rejected in the play's transgressive narrative is the logic of the superior nature of the social laws, the society-orchestrated typecasting of people and, finally, the unquestionable stereotyping of people's behavioural patterns for the sake of the wellbeing of the city-state. "Even when the end of the tragedy resolves the conflict, the essence or mainspring of the tragic situation itself is in the questioning" (Segal 1999, p. 22). Very much in the manner of great Greek tragedies, *Antigone* concludes that the perception of the world as compounded of polarities is a sort of human condition wherein a hero/heroine is supposed to come up with new ways of confronting the essential duality or polarity. The point is in the constant questioning of the duality and, more importantly, of the self in the context of this duality. The interrogatory mode of the tragic narrative as we find in *Antigone* is also implicit of a certain much-needed reassessment of the role of the stereotypical and the archetypal in the context of the polarized sides and of the possibility of the expression of some degree of free will within the overly deterministic and fatalistic nomenclature. Ultimately, although Sophocles' play reaffirms that "[t]ragedy is the form of myth which explores the ultimate impossibility of mediation by accepting the contradiction between the basic polarities that human existence confronts" (Segal 1999, p. 22), there is still a certain degree of operative free will which makes Antigone's fate less solipsistic and her determined zone of activity less deterministic.

The uncompromising clash between the stereotypical and the archetypal, which forms the nucleus of the play, has unavoidably necessitated the multiple losses and deaths by the end and yet Antigone's tragedy has acquired heroic dimensions:

"The power of Sophocles' tragic heroism lies in its passionate and fearless openness to the forces that challenge and threaten the orderly framework of human existence: time, death, hatred, love. For this reason the tragic hero is always in some sense beyond the pale of civilization, which can exist only by blocking out or delimiting those forces. It is part of the greatness of the fifth century that it allows the dialogue between the two sides to develop so fully." (Segal 1999, p. 201)

Ultimately, it seems that the stereotypical-archetypal clash has been an eternal and at times literally unavoidable in the context of great individual, familial and social injustices. Still, no matter how conflicting, unmarriageable and warring the opposites may be it is the dialogue which should always be resorted to with a view to coming up with a life-saving alternative to the fatalistic extremism of exclusively one-sided perspective – be it individually or socially propelled.

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