

Antigone – A Clashing of the Stereotypical and the Archetypal

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.

Keywords: *stereotypical, archetype, Earth Mother, free will, human/divine.*

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 24). In the tragic play of Sophocles', it is Antigone who "upholds a divine principle" (Lardinois 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 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 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.
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 75–81)

1

2

Unlike Ismene, who is “essentially obedient to her womanhood, the sort of woman the Athenians understood and respected” (Ferguson 164), Antigone is resolute “to attempt the impossible” (Sophocles 81) and provide her brother a proper burial¹. 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:

8

9

“I’ll bury Polyneikes myself. I’ll do.

10

what’s honorable, and then I’ll die.

11

I who love him will lie down

12

next to him who loves me -

13

my criminal conduct blameless! -

14

for I owe more to the dead, with whom

15

I will spend a much longer time

16

than I will ever owe to the living.” (Sophocles 85–92)

17

18

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 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 ancestral² 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 and strikes back with vengeance upon those who are naturally and archetypally unattuned.

34

¹Creon, 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.

²Antigone’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 29)

1 The emotionally and psychologically overwrought³ scene in which
 2 Creon's guard catch Antigone in the act of re-burying the unburied Polyneikes
 3 is precluded by the tumultuous weather conditions. Everything is terror-
 4 inducing: a whirlwind is throwing up the dust, the leaves are being torn from
 5 the trees and the grasslands are being choked. The momentary cataclysm is
 6 "churning up grit all around" (Sophocles 264) and, in this way, turning
 7 everything into an unsettled 'intermediary' zone between the living and the
 8 dead. Antigone's piercing, bird-like scream, which largely re-echoes
 9 Polyneikes's or 'a white-feathered Eagle screeching' (Sophocles 248), makes
 10 auditory a strong metaphysical bond between the sister and brother: "Their
 11 avian kinship does not dislodge their human kinship. The former supplements
 12 the latter" (Robert 31). In line with this, the bird, which is archetypally
 13 associated with "the spiritualized anima" (Yoshida 45), only reaffirms the
 14 reading of Antigone's scream as the last dying cry of Polyneikes' soul. What is
 15 more, the wailing, sisterly cry of Antigone over the unburied dead body
 16 acquires another dimension. It is also a motherly cry or the cry of the caring
 17 archetypal mother who is in distress over the loss of her baby son; it was "a
 18 piercing scream like a bird homing to find her nest robbed" (Sophocles 264).
 19 Whatever relationship is more operable or pronounced at this stage, sisterly or
 20 motherly, it is certain that Antigone has stood up in the name of the laws and
 21 values which seem to be biologically justifiable, archetypally patterned and
 22 universally well grounded.

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

³"This outgoing emotion, as opposed to introverted self-absorption, is characteristic of Greek tragedy, and most (perhaps all) great tragedy" (Taplin 122).

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

11

12 “I once heard that a Phrygian stranger,
 13 Niobe, the daughter of Tantalos,
 14 died a hideous death on Mount Sipylus.
 15 Living rock, clinging like ivy,
 16 crushed her. Now, people say,
 17 she erodes – rainwater and snow
 18 never leave her alone - they keep on
 19 pouring like tears from her eyes,
 20 drenching the clefts of her body.
 21 My death will be like hers,
 22 when the god at last lets me sleep.” (Sophocles 13)

23

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

32

33 “I did. It wasn’t *Zeus* who issued me
 34 this order. And Justice – who lives below –
 35 was not involved. They’d never condone it!
 36 I deny that your edicts – since *you*, a mere man,
 37 imposed them – have the force to trample on
 38 The gods’ unwritten and infallible laws.
 39 Their laws are not ephemeral – they weren’t
 40 made yesterday. They will rule forever.
 41 No man knows how far in time they can go.
 42 I’d never let any man’s arrogance
 43 bully me into breaking the gods’ laws.
 44 [...]
 45 My own death isn’t going to bother me,
 46 but I would be devastated to see
 47 my mother’s son die and rot unburied.
 48 I’ve no regrets for what I’ve done.” (Sophocles 506)

49

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

17 Not neglecting the role of fate⁴, however, within the grand design of the
 18 drama, Antigone’s opposition is still primarily social and fate is certainly not a
 19 precluding or predetermining factor in the tragedy of the Sophoclean heroine:
 20 “Fate is not predetermined as in the case of Oedipus, rather the wills and
 21 actions of characters determine it” (Khare 213). In other words, “fate has
 22 become the inner necessity of man, that is, the constituent part of his character
 23 for which he is personally responsible” (Jerotić 15). Moreover, there has long
 24 been a

25
 26 “misconception that Greek tragedy basically shows the working of Fate, of men
 27 fastened to the puppetry of higher powers [...] Most cultures have their
 28 expressions of fatalism; they are one of our chief sources of solace in the face of
 29 the pointless waste of ill fortune: ‘che sera, sera’, ‘God’s will be done’, ‘his
 30 number was up’, ‘it is written’.... The ancient Greeks were as prone as any to
 31 resort to such notions, though, naturally enough, after rather than before the
 32 event, and after disaster rather than good fortune. And like most cultures, for a
 33 pattern or purpose behind catastrophe they looked to superhuman forces, personal
 34 or impersonal. But this tendency does not, within the whole compass of a drama,
 35 preclude the free will of the characters or their responsibility, nor does it render
 36 their whole life puppetry. Most of the time they are presented as free agents
 37 working out their own destinies – as a rule disastrously, since this is a tragedy”
 38 (Taplin 120-1).

39 In follows that even though Antigone’s free will is outlined by the
 40 fatalistic context, its pervasive operability is certainly undeniable: “[t]he claim
 41 of free will operating at the same time as fate may seem contradictory, but it is

⁴ “Fate is sometimes thought of as outside nature, sometimes as within and as the very order of nature itself” (Stern 180). 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.

1 not so far removed from the modern view of man being genetically and
 2 environmentally determined yet also having a measure of free choice and of
 3 responsibility within that narrow framework” (McDonald 53). Though the
 4 space of free agency might be limited and difficult to access, it is always
 5 already inside every one of us. It is from this space that the defiant Antigone
 6 bravely rises up and proves to her sister and others that there is always an inner
 7 zone of choice and freedom: “You made the choice to live. I chose to die”
 8 (Sophocles 72). Importantly, this liberating zone empowers her to oppose the
 9 dehumanization of her own self in the context of both Creon’s absolutely
 10 logocentric regime and inescapable fatalism. She makes it all less
 11 dehumanizing and more self-satisfactory.

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

18
 19 “Sophocles creates a tragic universe in which man’s heroic action, free and
 20 responsible, brings him sometimes through suffering to victory but more often to
 21 a fall which is both defeat and victory at once; the suffering and the glory are
 22 fused in an indissoluble unity. Sophocles pits against the limitations on human
 23 stature great individuals who refuse to accept those limitations, and in their
 24 failure achieve a strange success. Their action is fully autonomous” (Knox 6).

25
 26 Despite the fact that the autonomy of Antigone’s act leads to her live
 27 burial “in a hollow cave” (Sophocles 286), she sets an example of the tragic
 28 hero⁵ – the coinage which has become an essential feature of tragic narratives
 29 ever since and “It is precisely this fact which makes possible the greatness of
 30 the Sophoclean heroes; the source of their action lies in them alone, nowhere
 31 else; the greatness of the action is theirs alone. Sophocles presents us for the
 32 first time with what we recognize as a ‘tragic hero’: one who, unsupported by
 33 the gods and in the face of human opposition, makes a decision which springs
 34 from the deepest layer of his individual nature, is *physis*, and then blindly,
 35 ferociously, heroically maintains that decision even to the point of self-
 36 destruction” (Knox 5).

37 The only thing Antigone genuinely mourns upon her procession to
 38 ‘heaped-up rock-bound prison (Sophocles 289) is that she has not got married
 39 and given birth to a child: ‘I’ll go hearing no wedding hymn to carry me to my
 40 bridal chamber’ (Sophocles 287). Not even Creon’s son, Haemon, who is
 41 planning to get married to Antigone can successfully appeal to his father’s
 42 common sense and his unbending disposition:

⁵In 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.

1
 2 “Be flexible. Not rigid. Think of trees
 3 caught in a raging winter torrent: Those
 4 that bend will survive with all their limbs
 5 intact. Those who resist are swept away.
 6 Or a captain who cleats his mainsheet
 7 down hard, never easing off in a blow –
 8 he’ll capsize his ship and go right on sailing,
 9 his rowing benches where his keel should be.
 10 Step back from your anger. Let yourself change.” (Sophocles 788–96)

11
 12 The two images, the image of the tree and that of the ship, speak
 13 powerfully of the importance of an alternative perspective which is not one-
 14 sidedly solipsistic but rather flexible and more open; conversely, the outcome
 15 is bound to be fatalistic and self-destructive. Just as the tree which steadfastly
 16 refuses to bend its branches will certainly be uprooted so will a person of
 17 exclusively and absolutely unbending disposition meet a fatal end. Similarly,
 18 the image of the ship is “a definite conveyance that takes people somewhere to
 19 pursue certain characteristic aims and ends. It does not and cannot simply go
 20 with every current and every wind that bears upon it; it has its own orderly way
 21 and its own course. Haemon⁶ has not, then, urged on Creon an abnegation of
 22 the human activity of choosing the good and striving to realize the good. What
 23 he says is, that it is important, in pursuit of one’s human ends, to remain open
 24 to the claims and the pulls of the external, to cultivate flexible responsiveness,
 25 rather than rigid hardness” (Nussbaum 80).

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

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

40 Knowing that nobility and self-sacrifice are among the most heroic
 41 elements of a Greek tragedy, Antigone ultimately essentializes a tragically
 42 noble heroine: “[t]he ‘nobility’ that makes heroes willing to risk their lives is
 43 not exclusively male – in Euripides, this exultation of noble death is found in

⁶Unlike 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 39)

1 women who sacrifice themselves and is unequivocally admirable. Against it,
 2 however, is the good sense, a form of *sophrosyne*, that should restrain people
 3 from ignoring the limits of their power” (Scodel 109). In Antigone’s case,
 4 nobility and noble death mirror not only her self-sacrificing idealism but also a
 5 kind of self-fatalistic altruism. Consistently throughout the play, she is ready to
 6 die a noble death and sacrifice herself for the sake of the higher ideals in which
 7 she steadfastly believes. What makes her own sacrifice even grander and
 8 nobler is her decisiveness and firmness to meet her death alone, isolated and
 9 unassisted: “Antigone’s pursuit of virtue is her own. It involves nobody else
 10 and commits her to abusing no other person [...] Antigone’s pious actions are
 11 executed alone, out of a solitary commitment. She may be strangely remote
 12 from the world; but she does no violence to it” (Nussbaum 66). Undoubtedly,
 13 she dies for the high ideals she has not only proudly pursued but also lived out:

14
 15 “My tomb, my bridal bedroom, my home
 16 dug from rock, where they’ll keep me forever –
 17 I’ll join my family there, so may of us dead,
 18 already welcomed by Persephone.
 19 I’ll be the last to arrive, and the worst off,
 20 going down with most of my life unlived.
 21 [...]
 22 I won’t hear bridal songs, or feel the joy
 23 of married love, and I will have no share
 24 in raising children. No, I will go grieving,
 25 friendless, and alive to a hollow tomb.” (Sophocles 983–1013)
 26

27 In this way, the tragedy “shows a type of idealism which implies a belief
 28 in higher values to the point of sacrificing one’s life to achieve them”
 29 (McDonald 55) whereby the only heartfelt regret is over the unfulfilled married
 30 love and unrealized maternity. As her life slowly draws to its fatal closure,
 31 Antigone seems to have achieved the stance which is far more self-illuminating
 32 than self-sacrificing. First, in life there are some ideals such as unconditional
 33 compassion for its closest family members which far outreach any limiting
 34 earthly boundaries. Second, it is always possible to make a choice and
 35 challenge the power structures which we find dehumanizing and self-
 36 dispossessing. Third, free will, as in Antigone’s case, is a reassertion of the
 37 freedom of expression and, primarily, self-expression in line with the natural,
 38 eternal, archetypal. In this light, Antigone is the manifestation of one aspect of
 39 the Earth Mother – the loving, self-sacrificing one. However, she does not only
 40 represent the aspect of the archetypal Earth Mother which is nurturing and
 41 outgoing to the utmost but she also articulates its destructive, punishing,
 42 vengeful downside in the Earth Mother’s essential duality:

43
 44 “But if my judges are at fault, I want *them*
 45 to suffer the pain they inflict on me now.” (Sophocles 1021–2)
 46

47 The subsequent tragic deaths of Haemon and Creon’s wife ultimately point
 48 to Antigone’s downright righteousness, the judge’s “hotheaded willfulness”

1 (Sophocles 960–1) as well as to a close connection between the physical and
 2 the metaphysical, the earthly and the divine, the individual and the archetypal,
 3 etc. In the context of Antigone’s symbolic representation as the archetypal
 4 Earth Mother, their deaths advocate retributive justice as well as the cosmic,
 5 divine, reciprocated intervention upon Creon’s most beloved.

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

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

24
 25 “Through such endings tragedy places before us a vision of the world as a place
 26 of potential chaos and threatens the human need for order, hope, and
 27 reasonableness. Yet tragedy – Greek, Elizabethan, or contemporary – rarely
 28 suggests that chaos is the final result. The justice of Creon’s end and his own
 29 acknowledgement of his responsibility vindicate Antigone and leave us with that
 30 punitive justice of the gods of which Tiresias has warned” (*Sophocles’ Tragic*
 31 *World: Divinity, Nature, Society* 136).
 32

33 Unlike Antigone who has pursued the impossible to its limits and has
 34 ultimately defied self-dispossession at least metaphysically, Creon’s belated
 35 realization that his acts have been those of “a wretched coward, awash with
 36 terror” (Sophocles 1464–5) makes him dispossessed of his son and wife who
 37 “are destroyed by Creon’s obduracy” (Walton 81). For these reasons, the
 38 Sophoclean play has by the end evolved into a well-rounded “cautionary tale
 39 about political tyranny and resistance, about the essential role of women in the
 40 family and the city, about the proper relationship between the living and the
 41 dead” (Rehm 28) and about the eternal conflict between an autonomous, free-
 42 willed individual and the authoritarian restrictions of the state. Also, it is the
 43 triumph of the autonomy of the person acting archetypally and it demonstrates
 44 that the body may be lethally vulnerable but some higher idea(l)s that we
 45 consistently fight for outlive and outreach the tyranny of the one-sided,
 46 rationality-only perspective. What is more, the moral strength of Sophocles’
 47 heroine and the archetypal dimension of the Earth Mother that she largely

1 paradigmizes make the metaphysical magnitude of her act far greater than the
2 dehumanizing punishment that she is unjustly sentenced to.

3 4 5 **Conclusion**

6
7 *Antigone* deviates from the stereotypical Greek tragedy in which there is
8 “an implicit norm and tragedy often reminds its audience of or abides by
9 contemporary standards. Thus female characters can be admonished to stay in
10 their place within and keep silent; men express outrage at a female challenge;
11 aberrant women are labelled as masculine” (Foley 7). The Sophoclean heroine
12 is an autonomous, free-willed, self-reliant woman who is unafraid to challenge
13 and question what she perceives as the violation of the higher laws.

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

32 Sophocles’ “particular contribution to dramatic structure is the staging of
33 conflict, in particular conflict between opposing forces rigid in attitude and
34 uncompromising in action” (Walton 78). *Antigone*’s heroization and resistance
35 shown in the dramatic, conflicting situation have proven that “there are
36 discursive practices that turn silence into expression of freedom, responsibility,
37 and care” (Clair 68). Her discursive practice throughout the play, which has
38 been atypical of a woman of the fifth-century Thebes, has been a powerful way
39 of transforming the silencing zone into a speaking, woman-empowering and
40 self-affirming territory. Ignorant and defiant of the society’s laws which
41 infringe on the burial rites, *Antigone* has buried her dead brother, Polyneikes,
42 and has valiantly demonstrated her unbounded freedom of expression.
43 Additionally, her discursive practice has not only been within the boundaries of
44 the caring, loving archetypal mother figure; it has also reached the other end of
45 the pendulum swing through her manifestation of the revengeful aspect of the
46 Earth Mother – *Antigone*’s curse on Creon – and it has shown how “[c]ivilized

1 discourse gives way suddenly to curse or bellow” (Segal 53). Therefore,
 2 Antigone’s, the archetypal mother’s, self-sacrifice in the name of love for the
 3 dead brother and her subsequent live burial also trigger the surfacing of the
 4 vengefully destructive aspect of the Earth Mother through the death of Creon
 5 and his family.

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

30 Importantly, Sophocles’ play, which is fundamentally about taking two
 31 overridingly divergent and one-sided perspectives to the level of the extreme
 32 and the absolute, questions the validity of the laws which go against the
 33 natural, eternal and archetypal and condition people culturally, ideologically
 34 and socially. What has been rejected in the play’s transgressive narrative is the
 35 logic of the superior nature of the social laws, the society-orchestrated
 36 typecasting of people and, finally, the unquestionable stereotyping of people’s
 37 behavioural patterns for the sake of the well being of the city-state. “Even
 38 when the end of the tragedy resolves the conflict, the essence or mainspring of
 39 the tragic situation itself is in the questioning” (Segal 22). Very much in the
 40 manner of great Greek tragedies, *Antigone* concludes that the perception of the
 41 world as compounded of polarities is a sort of human condition wherein a
 42 hero/heroine is supposed to come up with new ways of confronting the
 43 essential duality or polarity. The point is in the constant questioning of the
 44 duality and, more importantly, of the self in the context of this duality. The
 45 interrogatory mode of the tragic narrative as we find in *Antigone* is also
 46 implicit of a certain much-needed reassessment of the role of the stereotypical

1 and the archetypal in the context of the polarized sides and of the possibility of
 2 the expression of some degree of free will within the overly deterministic and
 3 fatalistic nomenclature. Ultimately, although Sophocles' play reaffirms that
 4 "[t]ragedy is the form of myth which explores the ultimate impossibility of
 5 mediation by accepting the contradiction between the basic polarities that
 6 human existence confronts" (*Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of*
 7 *Sophocles* 22), there is still a certain degree of operative free will which makes
 8 Antigone's fate less solipsistic and her determined zone of activity less
 9 deterministic.

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

14
 15 "The power of Sophocles' tragic heroism lies in its passionate and fearless
 16 openness to the forces that challenge and threaten the orderly framework of
 17 human existence: time, death, hatred, love. For this reason the tragic hero is
 18 always in some sense beyond the pale of civilization, which can exist only by
 19 blocking out or delimiting those forces. It is part of the greatness of the fifth
 20 century that it allows the dialogue between the two sides to develop so fully"
 21 (*Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* 201).
 22

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