



## An Analysis of Jean Anouilh and Sophocles' *Antigone*: "Suffer for" and "Suffer from"- The Clash between the Fourth Century Anarchy and the Twentieth Century Revolutionist

Ms.Faezeh Pipelzadeh  
Faculty of Arts  
Karoon Higher education Institute  
Ahwaz, Iran

---

### Abstract

This is a comparative study of Jean Anouilh and Sophocles' *Antigone*. The aim of this paper is to compare the character of Antigone in both plays. What causes the dramatic difference between the two characters in their inner feelings and intentions. They may both perform the same act, go through the same dilemma and suffer but their underlying reasons and intentions are different. What distinguishes the two characters from each other is that Antigone in Sophocles "suffers for" her brother and her family. She sacrifices herself and suffers only to make sure her only brother's corpse is rested in peace. Whereas in Jean Anouilh, Antigone has no interest in her family or her brother and "suffers from" her inner self. Which their different intentions, as it will be discussed in this article, will lead to different outcomes. As it will explain Sophocles' *Antigone* loses all her hope and enters a long lamentation while Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* does not lament at all. The reason behind their diverse outcomes in both plays will also be discussed.

**Keywords:** Antigone, Sophocles, Jean Anouilh, Clash, suffer for, suffer from, lamentation

---

### Introduction

Antigone's mission has just started. Now that both brothers have killed each other in a single combat, and their uncle, Creon, who has become the new king, asserts that while Eteocles, is the rightful sovereign and defender of Thebes, shall be given all the rites of an honorable burial, whereas Polynices, because of his disgraceful attempt to take hold of control, shall be left unburied so that the dogs and vultures can pick his corpse. As part of his edict, Creon also declares that any citizen who attempts to bury Polynices shall be stoned to death. However, Antigone, in both plays, openly unabashedly and all alone defies Creon's order, acts against the conventions and nature just because she is completely convinced that it is her right to honor and bury her brother's corpse and that it is offensive for the king or the city to stand in her way.

In both plays Antigone is rebellion, well maybe the write word to describe Sophocles' *Antigone* is that she resembles "anarchy" and for Anouilh's *Antigone* will be "a revolutionist", she stands against the household, against the cities laws, and being a woman, against men, with no fear, bringing chaos and disorder within the ship of state and they both come to suffer. However, a comparison in their actions show that due to different view point and intentions their outcome is different. Therefore, the clash between Sophocles' *Antigone* and Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* is the feeling of suffer. Antigone in Sophocles "suffers for" her brother and her family. She sacrifices herself and goes through so much pain only to make sure her only brother's corpse is rested in peace. Where as in Jean Anouilh, Antigone has no interest in her family or her brother and "suffers from" her inner self.

In Sophocles' *Antigone* justice means devotion to family. Our first meeting with Antigone, the way she addresses Ismene, she reveals her interest towards family connections. She uses a strengthen form of the word for sister "Ismene, my very sister" "sister with the same mother and father" Simon Goldhil argues that this use of adjective implies both this joint link and also a common bond of

interest through kinship ( 90). When she buries her brother she expresses her deepest feeling toward her family. Ahrens Dorf argues that what is important to her is that Polynices was her blood brother, offspring of her mother and father. Only members of her family are loved ones. The most important common bond among human beings is the bond of flesh and blood (97). The family is the principle human community and consequently the principle arena for just deeds. By pleasing her family, she pleases "those whom I ought to please must (89)"

In Sophocles' play, Antigone is as much a rebel as she appears to be a martyr. Her strong dedication and loyalty to the family, her deep sense of duty for tradition and adherence to Divine Law, paint the portrait of an individual of exceptional depth of inner strength, tenacity of purpose and integrity of effort. Yet, it is that very same strength that encourages her to violate the laws of the city, to defy and challenge the authority of King Creon.

Her behavior comes as a remind of Oedipus's own commitment to truth and justice, his acknowledgment of one's human limitations and yet the strength to come face to face with them. The action of Antigone represents not only the triumph of individual consciousness, but the very essence of Greek political tradition, and especially of fifth century Athenian allowed families to maintain their exclusiveness and power within the structure of city government, and where the defense of blood ties was not merely tolerated, but considered sacred (Tsappa 49).

By burying brother, Antigone is acting for the sake of her family. But the family is not merely a collection of individuals who are dear to one another. It is rather a community that binds its members together body and soul (9-10) (Ahrens Dorf 110). In the first place, Antigone and her siblings are " born of the same womb," the common womb of their mother, are shared by the same father, and share " the same blood" but furthermore, the fact that the family shares a common physical nature produces, according to Antigone, a reasonable expectation that they share a common moral nature- for example, a noble soul (Ahrens Dorf 111).

Antigone believes that children inherit the moral as well as the physical nature of the parents (471-2) the family, then, is a natural community, a physical and moral community, of bodies and souls (Ahrens Dorf 111). Moreover, the family is a community that links its members to the past and to the future, from generation to generation, and therefore is in some sense an immortal community, even if there is no afterlife. But for Antigone, the family is quite literally an immortal community, since family members- who are loyal to one another and do not betray their family as, in Antigone's eyes, Ismene does- will dwell together, after death in Hades.

Above all, Sophocles' Antigone believes that the family is not merely a natural unity but also a sacred unity, for it is honored by the gods and is supported by eternal laws that are enforced by Zeus, justice, and the other gods (76-7, 450-70). The family is an entity larger than the sum of its parts. It is a true community, which demands sacrifices from its members but which also benefits its members by enabling them to live on beyond their natural individual lives, both on earth and in afterlife, and thereby enables human escape, in some sense, from seemingly inescapable death (361) Ahrens Dorf 111).

Ahrens Dorf argues that by devoting herself to her family, Antigone is devoting herself to something larger than herself and making sacrifices for something beyond herself. In this essence, she is indeed acting nobly and selflessly (111). He also adds that, by devoting herself to the good of her family, she is devoting herself to the good of community- a community of flesh and blood and soul- that include her own good. She is devoting herself to a truly common good, a good that is common to all eternal happiness is one in which she will be together, in eternal communion, with her family (111). What gives Antigone confidence in her own justice and nobility and hence in her worthiness of divine rewards is her belief that the family is a true community that is both larger than herself but that also encompasses her own good (Ahrens Dorf 111).

Jean Anouilh's Antigone; Suffer from her Inner-Self

Comparing the fourth century Antigone with the twentieth century Antigone, we will realize that Jean Anouilh's Antigone is not interested in the family at all, what derives her into this is not the fact that Polynices is her brother, or whether Polynices was a hero or a traitor makes no difference to Jean Anouilh's Antigone. However, she does mention that she wants to place her brother in peace and says "I had to anyway. "She seems to be careless towards her brother corpse. she is not searching for

his immortality. She even sees the burial ceremony as an absurd act when she agrees with Creon when he says that “burial ceremony is ridiculous passport, this litany of gibberish, that you would’ve been the first to be ashamed of if you’d seen it performed.”

Even when we look at their previous family relationship, it is clear that no close bond or tie between the twentieth century brother and sisters. when Antigone recalls her childhood, she simply does not recall much and only reveals that Polynices teasing her and not paying any attention to her, except once when he returns home late at night, he gives her paper flowers which he had brought home from the party that night. We can also find out that long ago Polynices had left home and went to Argos. There was simply no news from him, so obviously there couldn’t have been any family bond between them.

Antigone also agreed with Creon when he says that Polynices was a mindless party animal, a vicious, soulless little carnivore who only knew how to drive his cars faster than the rest, and spend more money in the bars. Antigone even adds that when she was young she remembered him coming late at night or even once she woke up in the morning Polynices had just returned home looking handsome in his night clothes and smelling of liquor.

So what distinguishes Sophocles’ Antigone from Anouilh’s Antigone is the matter of suffer. Sophocles’ Antigone “suffers for” her brother that means she is suffering because of the lost of her brother; she is going all that pain and trouble just to make sure that her brother has been placed in peace. Ahrens Dorf argues that she believes that her brother's body is not a lifeless corpse. He is still present, somehow alive, even after he has died (Ahrens Dorf 102). What is horrible about the birds feeding from his corpse is that they will be devouring and tearing down Polynices still living body (102). Haemon also claims that the common people of Thebes admire Antigone because “she is the one who would not leave her own brother, who fell in bloody conflict, unburied, to perish because of dogs who eat raw flesh or some bird” Haemon suggests that, in the common view, a dead human being is not truly dead unless it is destroyed by the hungry dogs, or other animals.

Peter J. Ahrens Dorf says that what is so important about burying the corpse is that one thereby saves the dead from death and hence that one allows the dead to live on after death, in other words one buries the dead in order to benefit the dead, by conferring a kind of immortality on them (103). Accordingly, Antigone's passionate insistence on burying the corpse of her brother reflects her passionate longing and hope for immortality.

Nevertheless, this is not the reason behind Anouilh’s Antigone suffer, she doesn’t “suffer for” but “suffer of”. The difference between “suffer for” and “suffer of” is that in “suffer for” a person suffers for someone else, as in Sophocles’ case Antigone is suffering because of her brother, but in “suffer of” the person suffers due to pain within himself/herself.

Whether Polynices was a hero or a traitor makes no difference to Jean Anouilh’s Antigone. Antigone fights for herself, she suffers of an inner struggle and her struggle is not one of sacred rituals but of rebellion against authority. After Creon asks her for whom she is burying her brother, she answers “for nobody, for me.”

She stands against Creon only to say “no”, she no longer wants to live under such rules and that has abounded her from all her rights. Rules that have taken away her mother, her father, her brothers and placing distance between her and her sister. Antigone has her own believes. She uses Polynices’ corpus as a tool to say her words and let Creon the Fascism know that she is against him and his dictatorship. She is willing to give everything she has and even her life but will never let him take away her believes. She cannot accept the life that Creon has pictured for her. She cannot say “yes” to the miserable life, if she says yes she will have to say yes to other things, she may have to do ugly little things, flatter, lie, sell herself in a life that no one cares for another.

On the opposite its revealed that since Creon has said “yes “ to the kingship he was forced to say “ yes” to not burying Polynices, and as we will later see “yes” to killing Antigone, “yes” to the death of his son, Haemon, and also “yes” to the death of his wife. As pointed out by the messenger at the end, more miseries will happen, it foreshadows that more disasters will take place and Creon will have no choose but to say “yes”. Therefore, Antigone says “I can still say no to anything I don’t like, and the choice is mine and mine alone. And you, with your crown, with your guards, with all your royal baggage, you can only have me put to death because you said yes.”

Therefore, for the twentieth century Antigone, the burial of the dead brother becomes, a unique opportunity to show Creon the stuff she is made of. It is the right time for Antigone to stand up before Creon and by undermining his royal power to attempt to restore her inner pride and dignity she is searching for. In this way, she succeeded in not only undermining and questioning the king's authority, but she also ridicules all that Creon represents (Tsappa 50) She stands against the conventions and culture that make up the dominant ideas of a society, she stands against all the false conscious and subconscious, all the discriminations, oppressions, inequalities, tyrannies shaped by the ideology.

What causes the difference is that the fact that the essence of human law and divine law which shapes the structure of the Athenian law does not exist in the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, although Anouilh uses the same form as the Greek writer Sophocles but he has utterly changed its substance. He has removed the religious piety, belief in the Divine Law and respect for Human Law and has made his play an amputated tragedy. (?) Anouilh is not interested in the classical value; he is simply uses Sophocles Antigone as a vehicle to express the romantic revolt. In Antigone's person Anouilh seems to envisage disobedience as the highest moral law.(? )

The conflict between Human Law and Divine Law is being replaced by the conflict of individual against power of ideology. In Anouilh Antigone performs the burial in order to reject the law, and preserve her individuality. She finds Creon's law unjust and challenges them, she tries to bring in peace but her efforts lead to violence. This is all because the logic underlying the law she rejects is not easily removable, they were at the center of the social structure, and she has rejected the power of ideology. As It will be discussed in this paper this will lead to different outcomes.

### **Lamination Vs. No Lamentations**

Due to different intentions we can clearly observe that Sophocles' Antigone and Jean Anouilh's Antigone reveal a different behavior. The first changes in their behavior appears after the conflict between Creon and Antigone. In Sophocles Antigone changes and starts her lamentation whereas in Jean Anouilh Antigone does not shutter or change after Creon's argument, she is still stubbornly standing for her act. The reason is that Anouilh's Antigone has the ability to assess the conflicts and, consequently, their choice of action in a more realistic way, outside the ancient Greek world's system of values (Tsappa 61). In a France devastated by World War II there is no immediate prize for arrest, no reconciliation of the conflict comes to life with the realization of being enclaved in a hostile and violent world. From the very beginning, Anouilh's Antigone strikes the spectators with the feeling of fatality and prediction (Tsappa 61).

Unlike her Sophoclean counterpart, Anouilh's Antigone does not feel the need to justify her decision to break the royal decree and bury her dead brother according to the sacred laws. "The great unwritten, unshakable tradition" which were so important in the Sophoclean plot have been replaced in the twentieth century by Antigone's implacable spirit and her determination to carry out the actions directed by her consciousness. Creon tries hard to shutter her confidence by informing her that Polyneices is not worthy of her sacrifice. The realization neither breaks Antigone's moral, nor reduces the significance of her action (Tsappa 61). Creon's account of what is real and worthy in life have an opposite effect, not only she does not break down but it helps her to realize that her rebellion has more significance than an act of burial. It has become a symbolic gesture for rebellion of individual consciousness before the political oppression (Tsappa 67).

Antigone in Anouilh may seem to be afraid and lost but she doesn't lament as Sophocles' Antigone does. Lilian Tsappa argues that Anouilh's Antigone carries out a symbolic rebellion against a life of banality and mediocrity, against those who personify the values of life (68).

Whereas in Sophocles 'Antigone in her final scene she is overwhelmed by doubt concerning her own justice and piety. Antigone changes, in her previous scenes she had expressed no concern towards the city, and has discharged the citizens as cowards, and has argued that the laws of the city lack authority over her, but now we observe a different woman. For the first time in the play, she addresses the city and her fellow citizens and asks for sympathy (806-17,839-51,937-43). Up to now, Antigone has insisted that her death would be a gain for her, since she would be with her family forever in afterlife, but now, for the first time, she laments her death. It is here that she for the first time in the play, speaks in some details on the individuals of her family, rather than abstract entity "family", she inevitably focuses on the conflicts within her family and so alludes to her father's

patricide, the incest between her parents, and her mother's suicide (857-66). Moreover, and most shockingly, she blames her brother Polyneices for her imminent death. Antigone also says that by going to Argos, marrying as Argive princess, raising an army, and attacking Thebes, he has sacrificed his sister for the sake of the quest for power. In this way, Antigone seems to embrace the view suggested by Creon that the family is not a true community but an area of the family as such is impossible and therefore cannot be just and hence that her attempted devotion will not be rewarded by the gods.

So we see that once she is imprisoned by Creon in a tomb like cave with some food, and left to pray to the gods for salvation and to see whether or not they will save her, Antigone quickly kills herself (773-80, 1220-5). It seems that she dies in despair, without hope that the gods will save her from death or that noble, pious death will bring her happiness in the hereafter. Ahrens Dorf argues that her suicide suggest that, in the end, she has lost her confidence and she cannot believe that she deserves the gods assistance. (128)

She seems to recall Creon's argument: by honoring her brother Polynices, she is honoring her brother Eteocles' murderer and hence honoring one who dishonoring her family most emphatically. How then can she be confident that Eteocles and her parents will welcome her? How can she be confident that they will not condemn her for disloyalty to the family as harshly as she has condemned her sister? In this case, at least, it seems impossible to fulfill the Divine Law, since it is impossible for her to honor one member of her family without dishonoring another. Ahrens Dorf argues that The Divine Law appears to be fundamentally defective. It assumes that the family is a natural whole or unity, to which one can be consistently devoted (130) But the case of Polynices and Eteocles shows that the family is not a natural whole or unity. Therefore, Antigone cannot justify her burial of her brother and her hopes of earning rewards after death by invoking the Divine Law that commands humans to be devoted to the family Ahrens Dorf 130).

Moreover, in her lamentation Antigone now reasons that she never would have battled with her fellow citizens if she had another brother, or that she never would have risked her life, in order to bury a dead husband or a child. For she could have found another man to take the place of her dead husband and she could have conceived and given birth to another child to replace her dead child. But since the death of her parents, it is impossible for Antigone to have a new brother to take the place of the dead Polynices. His loss is irretrievable. Simon Goldhil believes that according to this law, then, she acted justly by sacrificing her hopes for marital and familial happiness in this life in order to bury her brother (90).

Moreover, it can be said that according to her words it is right and duty of one to sacrifice their lives only to bury those family members who have died and cannot be replaced (see 450-70 and also 45-6,71-7). If your husband dies, Antigone's says, do not risk your life to bury him, but replace him, presumably because it is possible for you to recover from his death and live happily. But if an irreplaceable member of your family dies, your loss is irremediable, and therefore it makes sense to risk all to honor that member.

Therefore, through her lamentation and speech, although she shows confusion and contradiction with her previous action and words, but still she persists in holding justice and following the divine law rather than putting her own happiness and interest in priority.

As noted Antigone claims that, she does well by sacrificing her life for her brother, since she can never have another brother. Now that fact she cannot have another brother would naturally make Polynices death more grievous to her.

Another point that justifies the lack of self interest in Sophocles' Antigone is that she shows no interest towards joy and happiness that can be bought through marriage with Haemon. In Sophocles Antigone and Haemon were said to be engaged but she shows little feeling toward him, we have no scenes between the lovers or Antigone expressing her feeling towards Haemon. It's only at the last scene where we see the both of them beside each other, and it is Haemon who has killed himself for Antigone.

However, the love between Antigone and Haemon is much more obvious in Anouilh's play. Anouilh has added a scene in the play, where Antigone and Haemon meet each other, and show their love towards each other. In Jean Anouilh it is mentioned that although Antigone is not very pretty but

Haemon is greatly in love with her, even Creon mentions the love between Antigone and Haemon several times prevent her from her stubborn resistance. Another point needed to be added is that, it is Haemon's love that Antigone recalls before she dies. she writes a letter to him expressing her love towards him and asking for forgiveness. This shows the self-interest that the twentieth century Antigone has towards her own self and life.

Nevertheless, nothing can stop the twentieth century antagonist, she decides to sacrifice her love and life to preserve her individuality and self against the power of ideology. In Anouilh's play through her suicide she has actually stood against Creon and made her last and long-lasting mutiny and ridicules whatever Creon stood for. Actually Antigone's massive movement just began after her suicide as it had several meaning.

Through her suicide she made the city understand what Creon had done wrong, and made them become aware of the vicious act and brutal deed he had committed and revealed his hidden tyrant face. Through her sacrifice she came to revile the hidden secrets that Creon was attempting to hide. She comes to weaken the foundation of fascist's rules; what Creon had concentrated almost all his efforts on, while condemning Polynices and Eteocles movement in order to come to power himself.

Antigone came to remind the people of the basic rights they showed have, invited them towards resistance, rebelling against the fascist ruler, and not to accept oppressions and discriminations, even if it means to loose one's life.

She comes to show that life is worthless when it lacks any justice and right, and is full of betrayal, treachery, unfaithfulness and lies. As we will later on observe after Antigone's suicide, Creon's son, Haemon and his wife, Eurydice are overwhelmed by Antigone's death news and they both also kill themselves. It is as though they no longer desire to live under the rules and laws that has taken away their justice and rights and come to follow her movement. More importantly through her suicide the twentieth century Antigone forces Creon to express regret and remorse for his wrong actions, breaks him down and made him accept his defeat.

In conclusion, Although Jean Anouilh has used the same story and plot as Sophocles' Antigone, but through his witty changes he has made a unique play. On the surface the characters may perform the same act, and may go through them same scenario but looking deeply we will realize that their underlying intentions and inner feelings makes the characters become very different.

#### WORKS CITED

- Ahrens Dorf, Peter J. "The Pious of Heroism." *Greek Tragedy and Political Philosophy: Rationalism and Religion in Sophocles' Theban Plays*. North Carolina: Cambridge UP. 2009.
- Braun, Richard Emil. Trans, *Sophocles Antigone*. London: Oxford UP,1987.
- Goldhil, Simon. "Relation and Relationships." *Reading Greek Tragedy*. London: Cambridge UP. 1986.
- Teller, Zander. Trans, *Jean Anouilh Antigone*. Paris: Hatier, 1987.
- Tsappa, Lilain. "Antigone Vs Creon: A case Resistance Vs. Individual Consciousness." *Renunciation of Political Power as an Element of Tragic*. Chapel Hill: North Caroline UP,1993.