

Antigone



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Antigone presents a rather perplexing and different aspect of her character on her second encounter with Creon, which makes it even harder to determine her original motivations and her primary desires.

She appears, in the course of this encounter, to be repenting her hasty decision of burying her brother Polynices rather than sticking by her belief as the following lines convey-" Denied my part in the wedding songs, no wedding song in the dusk has crowned my marriage." This feeling is rather contradictory to her earlier speeches and convictions when she seems to be surer of her decisions and actions.

She also gives an impression here, to be almost desperate for fame and glory. Perhaps she considers these proofs of public applaud as just rewards for her sacrifice. This desire is evident from the annoyance she expresses, at being reminded of her mortal human status, when she feels herself to be at par with the Gods. This apparent conceit and arrogance is very clearly expressed in the following lines-" O you mock me! Why in the name of all my father's Gods, why can't you wait will I am gone-must you abuse me to my face?"

She also rather blatantly, blames her entire family for her misfortune. She refers to the incest between her parents as " doomstruck" and calls herself " cursed" for being their " wretched child." She accuses her brother-Polynices as well for ruining her life and destroying her marriage, as is evident from the following lines-" Oh dear brother, doomed in your marriage-your marriage murders mine, your dying drags me down to earth alive."

She thus appears at this point to be a broken woman, pining for her lost marriage and disgusted at the death meted out for her, before her time.

But Antigone, doesn't stop at merely this complaining, condemning and cursing which are already somewhat out of character but she also rather cowardly, tries to alleviate the extent of her crime by declaring that she would never have disobeyed Creon's decree had anybody else, besides her brother, been concerned in the case. The reasons she attributes to this filial prejudice are best described as being neither noble nor convincing.

" A husband dead, there might have been another. A child by another too, if I had lost the first. But mother and father both being lost in the halls of death, no brother could ever spring to life again." This was surprisingly the same Antigone who had stated so proudly before that death longed for the same rites for all and that nobody had the permission to " override the Gods, and the great unwritten, unshakeable traditions."

One is therefore forced to wonder at her sudden transformation, for not only is she trying to rid herself of the charge but she is also formally recognizing Creon's decree as law -the same decree that she had spurned as immoral not so long ago. This speech of hers is thus in contradiction with everything that she has claimed to stand for before. She refers to Creon's edict now as " our people's will," while earlier she held the firm conviction that both God and the citizens were on her side as the following lines spoken earlier portray-" these citizens here would all agree, they would praise me too, if their lips weren't locked in fear."

Hence, in the light of all these speeches, one cannot help but think that Antigone's actions were not out of the goodness of her heart or because of her moral superiority but merely the results of a burning desire to rebel against authority. She was not a noble young woman striving to honour her dead brother but a frustrated martyr endeavoring to attain glory, fame and godly status. But then again, when seen from a different angle, she stands as the wronged daughter of unfortunate parents, denied her share of marital happiness and motherhood, despised by all and condemned to a terrible death.

It is impossible to determine therefore what she was striving for. Was it martyrdom that she had aspired to achieve or was it a normal, happy and ordinary life free from glory of any kind? One can never know for sure as even Antigone seems to be doubtful of her own intentions.