Oedipus at Colonus

OED. Child of a blind old man,  
Antigone, where have we come to?  
Who today will give a frugal  
welcome to Oedipus the wanderer?

I ask little and get less  
but it is enough.  
Suffering, time, and noble birth  
have taught me patience.

But, child, find me a seat  
on common ground or near  
some holy place.  
Then we can learn where we are,  
and do as we are asked.

Father, I see a city wall, far off,  
but here is holy ground,  
a grove with singing nightingales.  
Sit on this rock and rest, father,  
you have walked a long way.

OED. Let me sit; protect my blindness.  
ANT. After so long, no need to teach me that.  
OED. So, can you tell me where we are?  
ANT. Athens: but I do not know this place.

OED. Everyone we met said Athens!
ANT. Shall I go and find out?
OED. Yes, if anyone lives here.

ANT. Someone must; but no need to go –
I see a man approaching.
Speak if you wish, he is by you now.

OED. Stranger, my daughter, whose eyes
are my eyes too, tells me
someone is here who can help us.

STR. Before you ask me anything
get off that seat. You’re on holy ground.
OED. What is this place? Sacred to what god?

No-one may enter it or live here.
It belongs to the Dread Goddesses,
daughters of Earth and Night.
OED. What should I call them in my prayers?
STR. We call them the Kindly Ones, all-seeing. Others use other names.

OED. May they be kind to a suppliant for I shall never leave this seat.
STR. What do you mean?
OED. It is my fate, and I have had a sign.

STR. I would not dare send you away till I report to the city and ask for instructions.
OED. But by the gods I beg you, tell me what I wish to know.

STR. Ask, and I shall not refuse you.
OED. What is this place?

STR. This ground is sacred to Poseidon; Prometheus has a shrine nearby. Where you stand is called the Brazen Threshold, mainstay of Athens.

The hero here is Colonus whose name the local people bear. It is not a famous place but honoured by us who live here.

OED. So, people do live here?
STR. As I said, named after the hero.
OED. Ruled by a king, or by the people?
STR. The king of Athens rules here too.

OED. And who is that king?
STR. It is Theseus, son of Aegeus.
OED. Could you send him a messenger?
STR. For what purpose?
OED. By a small service he may gain much.
STR. How can a blind man help him?
OED. All my words will have the power of sight.

STR. I think you are noble, though fallen on hard times. For your own safety wait here till I speak to the people – they will decide if you may stay.

OED. My child, has the stranger gone?
ANT. Yes, you may speak freely, father.
OED. Dread Goddesses!
Since your throne
was my first seat here, be gracious
to me and to Apollo, who foretold
much evil for me, but also rest
when at the last I should find
shelter in your sanctuary.

There I should reach the end of my
long suffering, and bring a blessing
to those who received me, but disaster
to those who drove me out.

And the sign?
Earthquake, thunder, or lightning.
Now, therefore, goddesses, grant me
an end to life as Apollo promised,
if I am not too unworthy.

Come, sweet daughters of darkness.
Come, Athens, honoured city,
named for Pallas.
Pity this mere shadow of Oedipus.

ANT. Quiet, for here come some old men
to see where you are resting.
OED. I will be silent. Hide me in the grove
till we’ve heard what they say.

Interlude
You are asked to imagine that a group of elders from Colonus
discover Oedipus in the Grove
and learn from him how he killed his father, married his mother
and blinded himself

OED. You received me as a suppliant
and gave your word; protect me now –
do not shun me for my ruined face.

I come in reverence to be revered
and my presence is a blessing.
All will be clear when the king comes.
Till then, do not mistreat me.

CHO. Sir, your words command respect;
the king must decide this matter.

OED. And where is the king?
CHO. In the city where his father ruled.
A messenger has gone to fetch him.
ANT. Oh Zeus! What shall I say? What am I to think, father?
OED. Antigone, what is it, child?

ISM. Father and sister, how sweet it is to greet you, found at last! And now it is hard to see you through my tears.

OED. Child, have you come?
ISM. Father, a wretched sight.
OED. Child, are you here?
ISM. Not without great trouble!
OED. Hold me, daughter.
ISM. I hold you both.

OED. Child, why have you come?
ISM. For your sake.
OED. You missed me?
ISM. Yes, and I bring news.
OED. Where are your brothers, doing what?

ISM. They are where they are. Things go badly between them.

OED. What news do you bring? What is your errand? To warn me of some danger?
ISM. I won’t tell you what I suffered to find you: to tell would be to suffer it all again.

But I have come to tell you about the misfortunes of your sons. They agreed that Creon should rule to spare Thebes from an ancient curse.

But now, some god or their own desire has made them rivals for royal power. Eteocles has driven Polynices from throne and homeland.

So he has gone to Argos, found a new wife and new allies resolved to conquer Thebes and rule it or die in the attempt.

These are no mere words, but dreadful deeds. I cannot tell when the gods will relent.
OED. You think I might be saved?
ISM. I do – because of recent oracles.

OED. What do these oracles say?
ISM. That the Thebans will want you there, in death and life, for their own safety.

OED. How could help come from such as me?
ISM. They say their power now depends on you.
OED. So I become a man only when I no longer exist?

ISM. Yes, for the gods raise you now, though once they brought you low.
OED. A poor thing, to be destroyed in youth and lifted up in age.

ISM. You can be sure the oracle will soon bring Creon here.

OED. Why will he come? Explain!
ISM. To take you to the borders of Thebes and hold you there, for you will never be allowed inside their land.

OED. What use am I, lying at their gate?
ISM. They want you near them, but not your own master.

And has Delphic Apollo said this?
ISM. This was the word that came to Thebes.

OED. Does either of my sons know this?
ISM. Yes, both are well aware of it.

OED. And knowing it, the villains wish to have their kingdom, not their father?
ISM. I am grieved to say it is so.

OED. Then may the gods not quench their strife! If I had my way I should send the ruler away and never let the exile return.

When I was driven from the land they did not defend me, but instead preferred throne to father.

They’ll have no help from me nor profit from their kingship, as I know from the oracles, old and new. So let them send Creon to find me or anyone else with power in Thebes.
If you, strangers, stand by me now
with the help of your Dread Goddesses,
your city will be protected
and my enemies cast down.

CHO. You and your daughters, Oedipus,
deserve pity. And as you offer
to be our safeguard, I shall
give you good counsel.

OED. What must I do?
CHO. Make amends to the gods for stepping
on this holy ground when first you came.

OED. How shall I do that? Please tell me.
CHO. Bring holy spring water in clean hands,
pour a libation, facing the sunrise,
then lay down olive twigs, and pray

that those we call the Kindly Ones
look kindly on you. Pray in silence
(you, or another on your behalf)
then leave and don’t look back.
Do this, and I’ll defend you stoutly.
Don’t do it, and I fear for you.

OED. Daughters, did you hear those words?
ISM. We heard; now tell us what to do.

OED. I cannot go, being both weak and blind;
one of you must do it for me.
Do it now. But don’t leave me alone
for I am helpless without a guide.

ISM. I’ll perform the rite: but tell me where.
CHO. Beyond the grove, lady. If you need help
the man who lives there will instruct you.

ISM. I’ll go. Antigone, stay here
and guard our father. To take pains
for a parent is no pain at all.

CHO. Here is our king, Theseus,
he comes at your request.

THE. I have often heard, son of Laius,
how you blinded yourself;
now that I see you, I know you.

Clothing and face confirm it is you.
I ask in pity, Oedipus,
what you want from Athens and from me.
OED. Theseus, there is little to add to your words. If I tell you what I ask for, the talking is done.

I bring you my wretched body — a thing of no beauty but of greater value than good looks would be.

THE. What kind of value?
OED. You will learn later.
THE. When?
OED. When I die, and you bury me.

Things stand thus with me: my own sons banished me, and I cannot return because I killed my father. But now they will force me to go back.

THE. How, if you cannot enter Thebes?
OED. The oracle will compel them.

THE. What does the oracle make them fear?
OED. That they are fated to be struck down here, in this very land.
THE. So how can they set Thebes against Athens?
OED. Dearest son of Aegeus, gods alone are free from age and death. All else is subject to the power of time.

The earth grows weak, like the body, loyalty dies and falsehood grows; faith does not last between friends or between cities. From time to time friendship fades and is restored.

Between you and Thebes all is sunny now; but time brings many days and nights when they will break their promises and fight you for a trifling cause.

Then my dead body, sleeping, buried, cold as it is, will drink their hot blood if Zeus is still Zeus and Phoebus speaks the truth.

THE. Who would reject such good will? This man is guest and suppliant and brings great rewards. I accept his kindness: he shall live in our city.
Should he stay here, you must protect him.
Or he may come with me – Oedipus,
choose what you wish to do.

OED. Zeus send good fortune to such men!
THE. Will you go with me?

OED. I wish I could: but this is the place...
THE. Where you’ll do what?

OED. Where I shall defeat those who banished me.
THE. You speak of your presence as a blessing.
It will be, if you keep your promise.
THE. Do not fear: I shall not break my word.
OED. You do not know the threats.

I know this:
I shall let no-one take you from here.
And even when I am not here my name will be your protection.

Interlude

You are asked to imagine the chorus singing in praise of Athens.

ANT. O land praised above all others, now prove the praises true!
OED. What is happening now, child?
ANT. Creon is coming, father, with an escort.

OED. Dear friends, now show me where I can take refuge.
CHO. It shall be here. I have grown old but the strength of this land has not failed.

CRE. You noble dwellers in this land, My coming seems to alarm you. Have no fear, and do not abuse me for I plan no action: I am old and know I have come to a city as powerful as any in Greece.

But I was sent, old as I am, to persuade this man to go with me
to Thebes. Our whole city chose me,
for I am bound to him in kinship
and feel his sorrows most keenly.

Unhappy Oedipus, come home;
all the Theban people call you,
justly; and I most of all.

OED. You brazenly twist good arguments
in a bad cause; but why try
to catch me once again in the snare
that will cause me greatest pain?

When I longed to leave Thebes,
you held me; when I wished to stay
you drove me out.

Now when I am welcomed here you try
to drag me away, your hatred
hidden in soft words.

You have come not to take me home
but to the border of your land
to guard you from a threat from Athens.

Take my curse, not my help;
my sons will inherit only
enough of Thebes to die in.

I know more than you can understand.
Go, and leave me here.
I shall not live badly. I am content.

CRE. I call on these men, not on you,
to witness your words.
And if I catch you...
OED. How could you,
against the will of these my friends?

CRE. I swear you’ll suffer anyway.
OED. What is that threat?
What have you done?

CRE. I have already carried off
one of your daughters.
Soon I’ll have the other.
OED. No, no!
CRE. You’ll soon have more cause to lament.
OED. You have my daughter?
CRE. Both of them, shortly.

OED. Friends, what will you do? Don’t betray me!
Won’t you drive this villain away?
CHO. Let the girl go at once!
CRE. Don’t order me! I’m not in your power!
CHO. Let her go, I tell you!
CRE. And I say, out of my way!

CHO. Forward, forward, citizens!
The city, my city, is attacked.
Forward, this way, help!

ANT. I am being dragged away, help, friends!
OED. My child, where are you?
ANT. They’re taking me away.

OED. Reach out your hands, daughter.
ANT. I cannot.

OED. Oh, I am wretched, wretched.

CHO. I call on all the people:
come quickly, come. These men
are going too far.

THE. What is this shouting? What is wrong?
Your cries of fear disturbed my sacrifice
to Poseidon, lord of Colonus.

Friend – for I know your voice – this man
has done me a terrible wrong.

THE. What’s that? What man? Tell me.
OED. Creon, whom you see here,
has seized my two dear children.
THE. What do you say?
OED. You have heard what I have suffered.

THE. One of you, hurry to the altars;
tell the people to go quickly
to the place where two roads meet.
There they must intercept the girls,
so that this stranger does not
make a fool of me with his violence.

Go quickly, I tell you. As for him –
if I dealt with him as he deserves
he would not get away unscathed.
But we’ll deal with him by the same law
that he brought with him.

You stay here until these women
are brought back where I can see them.
You must think ours a city of slaves
or hold me of little account!
I do not say Athens lacks free men, son of Aegeus; nor did I act rashly, but I did not expect your people to hold my kinsman against my will.

I felt sure they would not harbour a parricide, a man defiled, and the children of his incest.

I know the wisdom of the Hill of Ares, which would not admit such vagabonds. I put my trust there, when I took this prey.

Even then, I might have spared him had he not foully cursed me and my family. I only paid him back.

So, you can do what you like. I am alone and powerless, though my cause is just. But whatever you do I shall respond, old as I am.

OED. What insolence! Is the insult to my old age or yours? You talk of killings, marriages, disasters – none of them my fault, but the gods’ whim – from long anger against our line.

You will find no vice in me that caused me to commit such crimes against myself and my family.

Neither my marriage nor my father’s death, though you reproach me with them, proves me to be evil.

Tell me, if someone tried to kill you would you ask if he was your father or would you strike back? I think you’d strike, rightly or wrongly, if you valued life.

The gods sent these woes upon me. Even my father, if he came to life, would not contradict what I say.

You are not a just man but think you can say whatever you please in the presence of these men.

You praise Theseus, Athens and its laws but forget how they honour the gods.
And you’d snatch an old man, a suppliant,
from this land, and abduct my daughters!

I pray to these goddesses
to be my help and my defence
so that you learn what kind of men
protect this city.

CHO. My lord, the stranger is a good man,
cursed by fortune. We should defend him.
THE. Enough talking. The abductors are
making their escape, while we stand here.

CRE. What must I do, helpless as I am?
THE. Show the way. I shall go with you
as your escort. Lead on.
The captor’s captured and the hunter
is now the prey. What is gained
by trickery is soon lost.

OED. I give thanks for your noble nature,
Theseus, and your righteous protection.

CHO. Zeus, all-seeing lord of the gods,
let our men, defenders of this land,
seize their prey victoriously.

Help them, Zeus and great Athene,
and may Apollo and his sister,
who hunts the swift dappled deer, come
to the aid of this land and people.

Wandering stranger, you shall not say
your guardian is a false prophet.
I see the women coming back
safely escorted.

OED. Where, where?

ANT. Oh father, if only you could see
this best of men, who has brought us back!
OED. Child, are you both here?
ANT. Yes, these strong hands of Theseus
and his comrades saved us.

OED. Come here, child. Let me hold you:
I feared you would never return.
I have what I love best; and now
could die happy, with you both near me.

Stand close, one on each side of me,
and bring some comfort
to this sad and lonely exile.
Tell me in few words what happened,
for a brief speech befits your youth.

ANT. This man saved us. You must hear him.
That is all I need to say.

OED. King, do not be surprised
if I speak first to my children
whom I did not hope to see again.
I owe my delight in them to you
for you alone rescued them.

Stretch out your hand for me to touch
and, if I may, let me kiss you.

But what am I saying?
How could I wish you to touch
one so defiled? I can neither
wish it, nor allow it!

Only men who have known it
can share such misery. Let me greet you
where you stand. Simply treat me
fairly, as you have till now.

THE. Of course you spoke to your daughters
before you spoke to me. That does not
offend me. Not words but deeds
are what satisfy my ambition.

But can you explain something
I heard as I returned? A strange thing,
though it will not take long to tell.

OED. What is it? I know nothing of it.
THE. A kinsman of yours,
though not from Thebes,
sits as a suppliant by Poseidon’s
altar, where I just sacrificed.

OED. Where is he from? Why has he come?
THE. I know only that he asks for you,
to speak briefly on some slight matter.
OED. About what? To be a suppliant
is no small matter.

THE. They say he seeks no more than a word
and then safe passage home again.
OED. Who can he be, this suppliant?
THE. Have you any kinsman in Argos
who might ask a favour of you?
OED. Friend, stop there!
THE. What is the matter?
OED. Do not ask!
THE. Ask about what? Tell me!

I’ve heard enough to know who it is.

THE. Who? Is there reason to shun him?

My hateful son, the last man
whose voice I’d want to hear.

THE. But you should hear a suppliant
if only from respect for the god.

Let me persuade you, young as I am,
Father. Let the king do as he wants,
to please the god, and please us too,
by letting our brother come here.

You are his father: whatever he did
to you, however cruel and wicked,
you should not return evil for evil.

OED. You persuade me, though the pleasure
of your words may cost me dear. So be it.
But, friend, if that man comes here,
let no one try to overpower me.

THE. I need hear that only once, old man:
I do not boast, but you will be safe
as long as some god keeps me safe.

CHO. Whoever asks too great a share
in life, content with nothing less,
has fallen into error.

Long years bring much pain,
and there is little pleasure to be found
when one has lived too long.

At last the deliverer brings
the same end to all,
when Hades’ doom appears
with no song, no lyre, no dance,
pointing the way to death.

Not to be born is the best thing,
and to die young the next best,
for in our heedless youth what pain
or hardship is ever far away?
Murders, strife, battles, grudges;
then at the end – old age,
loveless, helpless, friendless, where
all evils crowd together.

So too this wretched man
is battered like a northern cape
attacked in storms by all the winds.

So too his head is buffeted by waves
of ruin that never give him rest,
from west, from east,
from south, and from
the dark mountains of the north.

Intrada

The arrival of Polynices

ANT. Here comes the stranger now, I think.
He comes this way alone, father,
and tears stream from his eyes.

OED. Who is it?

The man we thought it was:
Polynices.

POL. Oh misery! What am I to do?
Sisters, shall I weep first for myself,
or for my old father here?

I find him in a foreign land
exiled, ragged, dirty, and blind,
his unkempt hair tousled by the wind.

Why are you silent? Speak,
father, do not turn away.
Will you dismiss me in disgrace,
without a word of explanation?

Let me tell you, father, why I came;
I, the firstborn, was driven from home
for claiming my right to rule.

My younger brother drove me out.
He did not win an argument
or defeat me in a battle
but won the city’s favour.

So be it.
I come as a suppliant, father,
to beg you to support me and
my allies who now surround Thebes
with seven armies – seven spears
aimed at the city.

I, your son, or if not yours
the child of malign Fate,
am leader of the troops from Argos.

Now by your daughters and your life
give up your anger and help me
as I seek revenge upon the brother
who drove me out and stole my land.

If oracles are to be believed
the side that you support will win.
Now, by our ancestral gods,
I beg you to take my part, father.

We are homeless beggars, both of us.
Support me and I conquer;
without you I am a dead man.

CHO. For Theseus’ sake, Oedipus,
say what you need to say
then send him away again.

Citizens, but for Theseus this man
would never have heard my voice.
Now I shall speak to him, and what I say
will not make his life any happier.

You, villain, when you held power
in Thebes, you drove your father
into exile, making me homeless,
ragged — a sight you weep at
now that your troubles are the same.

You will not destroy the city.
You and your brother will both die
polluted by each other’s blood.

Off now, I spit on you,
I am not your father. You shall not
conquer your native land, nor return
to Argos.

You and your brother
shall kill each other –

that is my curse.

I call on the dark powers of Hell
to give you a new home, and I call
on these goddesses, and on Ares
who filled you both with this dire hatred.

So go now and tell the Thebans
and your allies: these are the gifts
that Oedipus bestows upon his sons.

CHO. Polynices, no lucky journey
brought you here: now go away at once.

POL. Unlucky indeed for me,
unlucky for my companions too.
What an end to our march from Argos.
I cannot tell them, nor turn back,
but must suffer in silence.

ANT. Polynices, please do as I ask.
POL. Dearest Antigone, what is that?

ANT. Take your army straight back to Argos:
do not destroy yourself and Thebes.

POL. I cannot! How could I ever
lead them again, if I show cowardice?

Why are you angry again, brother?
What do you gain by destroying Thebes?

Flight is shameful; and shameful too
to be mocked by my younger brother.

So your mind is made up, brother?
POL. Now let me go, and goodbye.
You will not see me alive again.

ANT. I am utterly wretched.
POL. Do not weep for me.
ANT. Who would not,
seeing you set out for certain death?

POL. I shall die if I must.
ANT. No, hear me!
POL. You must not try to sway me.
ANT. Alas for me, if I must lose you.
POL. The outcome depends on Fate.
May the gods keep you two from harm,
for you do not deserve misfortune.

OED. Children! Could someone fetch Theseus?
ANT. Why do you want him here, father?

OED. The winged thunder of Zeus resounds
for my death. Bring Theseus here at once!

THE. What is this noise and uproar?
Has Zeus sent thunderbolt or hail?
When the gods send such a storm
who knows what will happen!

OED. King, I am glad you have come.
You will be blest for doing this.
My time is near, and I want to keep
my promise to you and your city.
THE. How do you know your death is near?

OED. The gods give me the appointed sign.
THE. I believe you, for I have seen
your prophecies come true. What must I do?

OED. Theseus, I shall tell you a secret
which your ageless city must keep.
I shall show you now where I must die.
Tell no-one where my grave lies hidden,
and it will protect you for ever.

You shall learn a mystery,
coming alone to the secret place,
that no-one else must know, not even
my children, much though I love them.

But you must guard this knowledge
and when you are near death tell it
to one, your chosen heir, and he
will pass it on in his turn.

So your city will always be safe
from an attack by Thebes.
Any cities may slide into dispute.
The gods know when men turn lawless.
Beware of that madness, son of Aegeus.
But you know these things already.

Let us go, for the power of the god
drives me.
Hurry! Daughters, follow me.
I lead you now, as once you led me.

Come, do not touch me but let me
find the sacred tomb where I must lie.
This way! This is where Hermes leads me,
and the goddess of the world below.

Light without light, once you were mine!
Now I feel you on my skin
for the last time
as I go to conceal in Hades
the ending of my life.

Dear stranger, blessings on you,
on this land and on your people.
For your own sakes remember me.

If I may pray to the dark goddess
and to you, lord of the underworld,
Aidoneus, let the stranger die
without pain and without grief.

For after the torments of his life
a just god will surely raise him up.

Godesses of earth, and Hound
that guards the gates of Hell,
growling at the dead as they pass,
I pray he may walk unhindered
when he goes to the plains of death.
I call on you, Hades, endless sleep.

MESS. Men of the city, to tell my news
briefly: Oedipus is dead.
But brief I cannot be: I must tell all.

CHO. The unhappy man is dead?
MESS. He has left this life.
CHO. How was his death? Painless?

Strange and wonderful.

You saw him leave,
without a guide, but directing us all.

He went to the edge of the chasm
where brazen steps go steeply down,
by the pool where Pirithous
and Theseus made their pact.
He stopped there, close to Thoricus’ rock
and sat by the hollow pear tree,
close to the stone tomb. Here he undid
his filthy garments.

He told his daughters to fetch water.
They did so, from Demeter’s hill nearby,
and they bathed and dressed him.

When all was done as he directed
the god of earth thundered, and the girls
trembled. They wept at their father’s knees,
beat their breasts and lamented long.

When he heard them he spread his arms
and said, ‘Children, your father’s life
ends today. It is all over,
you no longer have to care for me.

‘I know that it was hard, daughters,
but one word does away with hardship:
love – and none loved you more than I,
without whom you must now live on.’

So they all wept, and then were silent;
and a voice called him, spreading terror,
so that everyone’s hair stood on end;

the voice of a god, calling often
and from many places: ‘Oedipus,
why do we wait? You delay too long.’

When he realised that a god was calling,
he told Theseus to approach and said:
‘My friend, clasp my daughter’s hands,
and you, daughters, clasp his;
and promise them faith and friendship’.

Theseus swore to do as he was asked.
Then Oedipus laid his weak hands
upon his children and spoke to them:

‘Children, you must bear this bravely
and go from here: you must not try
to look on what must not be seen.
Theseus alone shall stay as witness.’

We all heard this and left with the girls,
weeping bitterly.

When, soon after, we looked back,
the man had vanished
and the king was hiding his eyes
as if from some terrible sight.

Soon we saw him, in one same prayer,
salute the earth and the sky,
home of the gods.

The manner of his death only Theseus
could tell. There was no thunderbolt,
no whirlwind from the sea. But either
an escort from the gods took him
or earth’s dark foundations
opened and received him gently.

For he passed quietly and without pain.
If any man ever died a death
to be wondered at, it was he.

If anyone thinks I speak foolishly,
he is free to disbelieve me.

CHO. And where are the girls and their escort?
MESS. They are near:
you can hear them weeping.

ANT. Oh misery! We can only lament
the taint of our father’s blood in us,
the father for whom we suffered much,
and, at the last, things beyond reason.

CHO. What happened?
ANT. Friends, we can only guess.

CHO. He is gone?
ANT. As one would wish for him.
Neither killed in war nor drowned at sea
but mysteriously borne away
to the vast lands of death.

But now we are in deadly darkness,
my poor sister; how shall we live?
Where shall we go, over land or sea?

ISM. I do not know; I wish to die
and be with my father, for my life
is not worth living.

ANT. Alas! Zeus, where should we go?
What hope is left?

THE. Daughters, dry your tears.
One should not mourn those who die gladly,
for that would offend the gods.
ANT. Son of Aegeus, hear our plea.
THE. What is it?
ANT. To see our father’s tomb.
THE. That is forbidden.
ANT. What do you mean?

THE. He told me never to go near, and to tell no-one of his holy grave. This, he said, would keep my land safe. And this I swore before the gods.

ANT. He wished it so. It is enough. But bring us safely to Thebes, to try to save our brothers from slaughter.

THE. I will do that, and whatever else I can, to help you, and to please him who lies below. I shall do my best.

Come, make an end to tears; lament no more. For all things must obey great Nature’s law.

You are reminded that there will be

a Discussion of the Play and the Production

on Monday 1 March

at 5.00 pm

Faculty of Classics (Room I. 02)

All welcome

OED. Shall I be buried in Theban soil?
ISM. No, that would never be allowed.

OED. Then they shall never take me back!

I have uttered these curses before: now I call them into action, to teach you not to dishonour a father, even if he is blind.

How different are my daughters! So my curse on your supplication and on your talk of thrones, if Justice still sits beside the throne of Zeus.

ANT. He wished it so. It is enough. But bring us safely to Thebes, to try to save our brothers from slaughter.