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'*Another' Antigone*: *The Right To Live and To Die With Dignity. Notes on Valeria Parrella's Antigone* (2012)

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A PREFACE

"La storia non finisce" ("The story does not end [here]").

It is tempting to start with the last words by which the contemporary Italian writer Valeria Parrella seals the Exodos of her adaptation of the Sophoclean tragedy *Antigone.*[1]

Published in September 2012, Parrella's *Antigone* adds to the almost uncountable receptions of the tragic story of Oedipus' daughter and her "crime of pity" (Soph., *Antigone* 74).[2] This is a story that, ever since the remote fifth century BC, moving around the world,[3] has been finding resonance in new situations, for which it raises substantially the same questions as in antiquity about the tension and relationship between power and justice, the limitations of civic conventions and laws, the relations between the private and public sphere, the rights of the State over the individual citizen's life and death, and so forth. All these questions have been given different answers according to the specific historical, cultural and socio-political context in which Antigone's story has been re-proposed and re-written, without putting a real, definite end to that questioning. On the contrary, each new re-telling re-launches these, and even more, questions by challenging, over and over, the intended receiving audience, and, at the same time, adding new layers of meaning. Perhaps this is because there might always be a Creon who, differently disguised, represents some kind of abusive power, some sort of authority deaf to conscience. In consequence, there might always be the need for an Antigone as a reminder of rights and responsibilities that should not be abdicated in the face of that power and authority, but should be bravely defended.

From Brecht's version[4] onwards, to start from the so called western civilization, literary and theatrical adaptations of the Sophoclean *Antigone* have in fact tended to address the issue of individual responsibility, and of the ensuing choice to stand against iniquities, such as abuse of power, perpetrated in the name of the State. Throughout history, Antigone has thus become a metaphor for the struggle for freedom, an icon of the lone individual fighting and resistance against an overweening state, a champion of the defense of human rights. As if engaging in a relay race, Antigone runs from one country to another, from one period to the next, relaying the baton to her own clones.[5] To mention a few scenarios which she has visited in the last five decades of the twentieth century alone,[6] we see this 2, 500-year old woman travel from France (e.g., Jean Anouilh, 1943/1944; Charlotte Delbo, 1979) to Germany (e.g., Bertold Brecht, 1945; Heinrich Böll, 1978), during World War II and its aftermath;[7] from the former Soviet Union (e.g., Tengiz Abuladze, 1984) during a retrospective indictment of Stalinist totalitarianism, to modern Ireland (e.g., Tom Paulin, 1984) within the frame of the so-called 'Irish-question';[8] from Europe to Africa, precisely to South Africa in the '70s, during apartheid (Athol Fugard, 1973), and to British colonial Nigeria (Femi Osofisan, 1994).[9] From Europe and Africa she has landed in the 'Americas', i.e., in the United States (e.g., The Living Theatre, in the '60s) during the devastating Vietnam war, and beyond;[10] and in South America, namely in Argentina (e.g., Griselda Gambaro, 1986) in the aftermath of the 'Dirty War' (1976-1983), after the trials of some of its military leaders responsible for the murder of the '*desaparecidos*'.[11]

In all these, and even more, places and eras Antigone plays, over and over, her role of a 'freedom fighter' against an overconfident state power. The contexts and details vary; yet, as in her original place and time, the catalyst of her fight is often a corpse (or corpses) of a member of the family (either the biological family, or the 'national' family, i.e., the entire community), whose death deserves dignity, and whose memory deserves to be honoured, by being granted the 'natural' right to a burial.[12] The freedom that Antigone champions ties in with the claim to the respect of what since World War II have been called

'human rights',[13] a phrase that replaces the corresponding ancient Greek notion of 'natural laws' (νόμος, cf. Soph., *Antigone* 452),[14] laws that are universally applicable, and timeless.

A corpse, or, rather, a *quasi* corpse, is, indeed, at the heart of the new Italian play by Valeria Parrella that revisits the story of Antigone, who claims, once again, the right of her brother to be consigned to the realm of death to which he belongs. In doing so, here too she rebels against a decree that would keep him 'in the upper world'. But the outrageous and abusive act of the Sophoclean Creon to "keep up on the earth a corpse belonging to the gods below" (Soph., *Antigone* 1069-70) is turned into the unshakable determination of Parrella's Creon, Il Legislatore (The Legislator),[15] literally to keep alive, or rather, to attempt to return to life a *quasi* dead Polynices. Parella's Antigone fights this Creon to defend her brother's right finally to go where he belongs. Having been in an irreversible coma for thirteen years, he should be granted the freedom finally to rest, and thus win the right to a burial, ending with dignity a life, which, for a long time, he has neither really lived nor had any hope of really living. Re-using the tragedy of Sophocles, of his heroine's fight in defence of natural rights against man-made laws, and of her family against the state, Parrella appropriates[16] the ancient figure to address a burning issue, euthanasia, which is still the object of contemporary controversy in several countries, Italy included.[17] The crime of pity perpetrated by this new Antigone in the name both of the family, and, at least, in her view, of a universal human duty, is the removal of the feeding and breathing tubes that were obstinately keeping her brother's body in the upper-world, thus preventing him from finally being buried. The punishment that she will suffer for her rebellion against Il Legislatore is again 'to be entombed alive', not in a cave this time, but in a similarly uninhabitable environment, a prison.

"Seppellita dentro un carcere: che è come morte in vita"
("buried in a prison, which is like a living death", p. 49)[18]

This is the 'cry' of Parrella's Haemon in his confrontation with his father. Reenacting the gesture of her original model, this Antigone, too, will not let herself suffer such a debasing end. She will freely end her own life in dignity, and will commit suicide.

Plot and Structure: An Overview

PLOT: Paralyzed in a cold bed, with tubes feeding him and 'breathing' for him, Polynices, or, rather, his body, has been in a coma for thirteen years following a fatal accident. It is Il Legislatore's order that he must not be let go *naturally*, that is, must not be allowed to die. Antigone cannot stand to see what is just a shadow of her brother (p. 8) being kept in that vegetative state. To her he is not Polynices. *It* is only a phantom with a resemblance to her brother. The one who was Polynices is no longer alive. He must be granted the right to die so that he might leave with dignity a life that is no more a real life. He must be buried.[19] Allowing him to die is not a crime.

"Ho dato dignità di sepoltura a mio fratello"
("I gave my brother the dignity of being buried", p. 38).[20]

Antigone laconically talks of her action in this way when confronting Il Legislatore. She has acted out of both a sense of responsibility in her family's name, and pity toward her brother, as Haemon twice points out while inviting Il Legislatore to see the deed from Antigone's perspective (p. 49; p. 52).[21] Il Legislatore insists on sticking to his decision; hence, Antigone is conducted to prison, where she will free herself by suicide. As in Sophocles, so in this new version, seemingly because of an issue of timing Il Legislatore is unable to avoid this tragic end (p. 93). But when the Chorus, and then Haemon inform him of Antigone's suicide, Il Legislatore seems completely unmoved; nor does he seem to have any reaction to the twice announced suicide of Haemon by Haemon himself (p. 93; p. 94).[22] In the end all that is left is a letter written by Antigone on the brink of death, a letter that, although addressed to Haemon, is meant to speak to all (audience included), and seals the play with an open-ended conclusion.

STRUCTURE: With only one exception, the structure of Parrella's play resembles that of a classical Greek tragedy, presenting the canonical sequence of prologue, parados, and episodes that alternate with

stasima.[23] The exception is the additional Act that follows the traditional Exodos, and is entirely reserved for Antigone's letter. It constitutes a kind of epilogue, simply entitled "La Lettera" ("The letter", pp. 96-97).

Within this traditional structure, some differences are to be noted in terms of the redistribution of contents and significance attributed to them.

Like Sophocles' prologue, Parrella's sets the ground for the following action. It mentions the forbidden burial (p. 6, cf. Soph., *Antigone* 7-8, 21-30), and Antigone's irrevocable determination nevertheless to grant her brother a burial (pp. 7-8, cf. Soph., *Antigone* 45-6; 71-4). As in Sophocles, the prologue refers to Antigone's decision as an attempt to achieve the impossible (p. 5, cf. Soph., *Antigone* 90, 92), and as the product of an unsound mind (p. 6, cf. Soph., *Antigone* 68, 99). However, whilst Sophocles' prologue is delivered as a dialogue between Antigone and Ismene, Parella's is composed as a monologue, spoken by Antigone and addressed, though not exclusively, to Ismene. Ismene is in fact evoked as if Antigone is talking directly to her but she does not appear, nor does she speak at all in this play. An audience familiar with the original would suppose that the initial dialogue between the two sisters, with which Sophocles' play opens, has already occurred elsewhere, since this monologue is built on it, and refers to it in terms of Antigone's comment and response to the invisible Ismene's objections to her plan.

The parodos does not echo the themes of the original play. It actually works literally as the Chorus' 'entry-song', in that it marks the entrance of a *sui generis* Chorus consisting of just two people: a female and a male.

The number of episodes remains the same as in Sophocles (i.e., five), while their contents are differently redistributed as a result of the innovative addition of the portrait of Antigone's life in prison prior to her suicide. This becomes the content of the fifth episode, which also includes a new character: an anonymous female prisoner, supposedly Antigone's roommate. In Sophocles, the fifth episode is reserved for the confrontation between Teiresias and Creon. In Parrella's *Antigone* this confrontation is anticipated in the fourth episode. In consequence, the lyric kommos and Antigone's farewell to the light, i.e., the contents of Sophocles' fourth episode, are also anticipated, shortened, and re-elaborated in the form of a stasimon. Indeed, it constitues the third stasimon. It appears that Parrella, appropriating the lyric part of the original fourth episode, re-proposes it as a lyric interlude between episodes, saving the dialogic form that a kommos allows, while preserving the 'choral' component that conventionally fits a stasimon.[24] It may be that this quite radical re-formatting (basically, an episode becomes a stasimon) is due to the author's intention to maintain the very famous second episode in the same position as in Sophocles, despite the redistribution of the themes. As is well-known, the second episode consists of the direct confrontation between Antigone and Creon (here, Il Legislatore), in the course of which Antigone recites the everlasting lines concerning the 'unwritten laws of Zeus' (Soph., *Antigone* 450-5). In other words, this episode is the kernel of the tragedy. Keeping it in the same position as in the original is perhaps an act of homage, by the modern author, to a fixedly recognized core of the story.

A change in terms of content of the stasima also occurs in the fourth stasimon, which, in Sophocles, contains the three *mythica exempla* of Danae, Lycurgus and Cleopatra's sons who all suffered imprisonment. These *exempla* are mentioned by the Chorus as parallels to Antigone's fate (Soph., *Antigone* 944-87).[25] Parrella completely eliminates this content, presumably as part of her modernization of the overall tragedy. Antigone is ancient exemplum enough. In Parrella's play, the fourth stasimon instead contains a brief exchange between the two members of the Chorus, who passively watch Antigone being brought into prison. They question what they could do, and one reminds the other of an exhortation that Antigone delivered in her farewell in the third stasimon. Here Antigone had ended her last words with a gnomic consideration which calls on the necessity for people to take the lead and act with sound reason when the ruler himself lacks it:

> "Quando al legislatore manca la ragione è il popolo che deve tornare a ragionare"
>
> ("When the legislator lacks reason it is the people who must take over and show reason" p.55)

In answer to the Chorus' member asking about these people, Antigone had said, "Cercalo" ("Go to look for them", p. 55). Recalling this invitation, one of the Chorus' members makes it clear that this is now their task: evidently Il Legislatore has gone too far; he has not behaved soundly. The people should not resign themselves to it. If the ruler cannot behave reasonably, the people must. It thus seems that the fourth stasimon constitutes a sequel to the third, explaining what there remains implicit, and is not yet understood by the Chorus members. It is time to react, as Antigone did; it is time to overcome the people's indifference (p. 54), and their convenient self-preservation under the pretext of obeying their leader without questioning the soundness of his decisions.[26]

The people's cold indifference, which Parrella's Antigone blames while she is being conducted to her 'grave', i.e., to prison, perhaps echoes the cold reaction, if not emotional disconnection, of the Chorus to Sophocles' Antigone while she delivers her own farewell (Soph., *Antigone* 806-942): Antigone seeks pity from them, but what she gets in response is perceived as mockery (l. 839), and is, in a way, an expression of the distance that the Chorus takes from her. In Sophocles, in fact, the Chorus acknowledges that her action is one of reverence, yet refuses to dismiss the importance of revering the king (Soph., *Antigone* 872-4), and blames Antigone's 'self-willed temper' and 'autonomy' (Soph., *Antigone* 822, 853-4, 875, 929-30). Parrella's Antigone, sensing such indifference to her case and to her brother, solicits a different reaction by suggesting that the Chorus' members look for people who would have the courage to respond to the situation with the good sense that Il Legislatore currently lacks. As has been seen, this suggestion is only taken up later (i.e., in the fourth stasimon), but it is not put into action. Parrella's Chorus confines itself to watching the events:

> "Assistiamo ancora" ("Let us still watch [*sc.* what will happen]" p.76)

And so they do until the play, if not the 'story' is over:

> "il nostro tempo è finito, la storia non finisce" ("Our time is over, the story is not" p.94).

The Exodus, as well, is partially different in terms of content, and definitely distinct in terms of the characters that play a role in it. There is no messenger, nor does a counterpart of Eurydike appear. Through just five, very laconic sentences it is the Chorus' members who deliver the news of Antigone's suicide, specifying the way in which she has put an end to her life, by inhaling gas from the stove:

> Corifeo: "Si è uccisa"
> Corifea: "Sì, è morta"
> Corifeo: "Respirando il gas del fornellino"
>
> (M. Choryphaeus[27]: "She killed herself"
> F. Choryphaeus: "Yes, she is dead"
> M. Choryphaeus: "Inhaling the gas from the stove" p.91).

As in Sophocles, so in Parrella's Exodus, Il Legislatore appears too. He first interacts with the Chorus, denying that he has had any part in Antigone's death; then he exchanges a few words with his son Haemon. The presence of Haemon in the Exodus, and thus his delayed but also announced suicide are other innovative features of this section of the play.

As said, the very last 'Act' is occupied by the letter that Antigone has left behind. In Parella's version, Antigone does have the last word!

CHARACTERS AND THEMES INTO FOCUS.

"Tu credi di sapere con certezza la separazione tra *colui che è* e *colui che non è*. E anche a me a un primo sguardo sembrava chiaro, ma ora sono caduto nella perplessità, ora che Antigone ci ha mostrato con il suo gesto che Polinice non era già più, e che agendo sul suo corpo *ella ha agito solo con pietà*,"

("You think you can discriminate, without any doubt, between *one who is* and *one who is no more*. To me, too, this distinction seemed easy and clear at the very first glance; *but now I doubt*, for now Antigone, through her action, has proved that Polynices was already no more, and that *what she did to Polynices' body was only out of pity*," p. 49).

With these words, Haemon defends Antigone's action before his father, Il Legislatore, challenging, at the same time, his arrogant presumption that only he, his law and his judgment are right, true and uncontestable. While echoing the several attempts by the Sophoclean Haemon to break Creon's stubbornness and single-mindedness (e.g., Soph., *Antigone* 687, 705-9), in my eyes these words embody the essence of Parrella's rewriting of Antigone's tragedy. Parrella's Antigone defies the law for she wishes to give her 'quasi-corpse' brother the "dignità di sepoltura" ("dignity of being buried," p. 38),[28] exactly as her mythical archetype wished. But the condition of Parrella's Polynices', quasi-dead rather than actually dead, gives Antigone's action a different nuance. Her action does not simply challenge civic authority over the dead, nor is it in defense of a religious law.[29] By sealing a death with dignity, her action champions life, a life that is something more than a biological state, a state that 'man-made' machines can preserve, preventing the regular course of nature.[30]

> "Vita e morte sono degne quando possono essere condotte autonomamente."
> ("Life and death are worthy when they can be experienced autonomously and freely," p. 38)[31]

This is Antigone's answer to Il Legislatore who, objecting to her appeal to the 'dignity of being buried', asks what dignity is. *Autonomously* and *freely*, i.e. *with self-consciousness* and *under one's own control*, are the key concepts conveyed by Antigone's answer. In Antigone's eyes, these concepts define both human life as a life worthy of being lived, and human beings as more than simply biological entities or "bare life [nuda vita]".[32] A person who cannot breathe by himself, who cannot *freely* and *consciously* live and enjoy the world around him, cannot make his own decisions, etc., is *no longer* a human being. This person is rather in a 'lethargic' state of sleep, in a state of unconsciousness in which he does not have the same self-perception as when 'lively' awake,[33] no matter whether this 'sleep' is artificially induced, and prolonged through medical devices (as in coma[34]), or figuratively created through imposed routines and palliative-'brainwashing'-pills which deprive the person of free thought and action, as proved by the prison experience of Parrella's Antigone.[35] Both these kinds of 'sleep' are unnatural. More importantly, they have nothing to do with 'humanity', i.e., with being a person.

The features that encompass this Antigone's notion of humanity are the capability of acting with self-awareness, of making one's own decisions and of actively taking command of and full responsibility for oneself. For her *this* humanity is the mark of life and breath is its emblem. [36]. It is indeed the ability to breathe *autonomously* and *freely* (i.e., consciously, by himself and not forced by a machine) that has been taken away literally from Polynices in his coma, and figuratively from Antigone in prison. On the one hand, the accident and subsequent coma took away Polynices' *natural*, '*human*' breath, which is replaced by an artificial breath, forced through a tube, as the law imposes. On the other, the prison asphyxiates Antigone, who can breathe only in a specific moment, "all'ora d'aria" ("in the open air hour", p. 91), as the law - again - imposes. Theirs is not a real breath; it is an illusory and faked breath,[37] which debases their life, their person, their being human. Both their conditions of being imprisoned in a body, which is forced by law to breathe, have nothing to do with life:

> "Imprigionata in un corpo, sono, senza speranza di vita"
> ("Imprisoned in a body, this is what I am, without any hope of life" p.81).[38]

In a flash of both lucidity and despair, as she finally realizes what she has had to sacrifice in order to fulfil her commitment to her brother, Antigone uses these words to describe her condition to her anonymous cellmate in prison.[39] Interestingly she defines that state of imprisonment in a body as a trap, the same trap in which her brother was caught before her 'crime of pity'. By no surprise, Antigone thus feels that Il Legislatore has given her the same 'destiny' of her brother: to be kept 'on hold' between life and death, or, rather, to be denied a real death, although they are both as if dead, for their state cannot be called 'life':

> "Il legislatore signore ha voluto destinarmi il medesimo destino di Polinice: la Moira ancora una volta tiene il filo sospeso pronto al taglio ma nessuna delle sue sorelle tesse più la tela della mia vita"
>
> ("Mister[40] Legislator wanted to allot to me the same destiny as that of Polynices: once again Moira (Fate) keeps the thread of life on hold, ready to be cut, but none of her sisters spin the thread of my life any more" p.85).[41]

While the Sophoclean Creon is blamed for having cast "below a person who belongs above, making a living soul reside within a tomb dishonourably", and for having kept in the upper world a "corpse belonging to the gods below, deprived of rites …" (Soph., *Antigone* 1066-71), Parrella's Il Legislatore intends to keep both in the upper world, although they both belong, in a way, to 'the gods below'. Antigone's perception of the prison where she resides inhumanly is as of a tomb. To her prison means to be entombed alive, it means death[42] as surely as did the cave for the Sophoclean Antigone.

> οἵος νόμοις *πρὸς ἔργμα* τυμβόχωστον ἔρχομαι *τάφου ποταινίου*;
> "On the authority of what laws do I go to the rock-closed *prison* of my *tomb of-a-new-kind*?
> (Soph., *Antigone* 848-9)[43]

The Greek heroine asks this as she delivers her farewell, whilst being conducted to the cave, the place where her life ends. It is presumably not accidental that the prison-tomb also becomes the marriage chamber, for death will be her spouse forever (Soph., *Antigone* 891-4; cf. Parrella, p. 81).[44] As for her brother so for herself, Antigone cannot stand it. As she resolves to free her brother and return him honour and dignity by interrupting his faked breathing, so she does for herself. She commits suicide by interrupting her counterfeited breathing; in fact, in a way, she suffocates herself. Ironically and significantly, this happens when her fellow prisoners are in their open air hour (p. 91). *A maiore* Antigone's gesture expresses her rejection of an imposed-faked breathing, which is the mark of a semblance of life. And a semblance of life is just a mock:

> "[…] Non aver voluto essere lo scherno della vita."
> ("not to want to be the mockery of life," p. 86)

This rebellion is a crime that Antigone recognizes to have done, breaking no law. Like the Sophoclean Antigone, Parrella's Antigone does not think of her action as a violation of law, simply because she does not recognize the decree of Il Legislatore as law. If in Sophocles she denies Creon's injunction any validity, because the only valid laws in such a situation are those unwritten and unshakable ones which the gods have set in place for humankind (Soph., *Antigone* 449-56); in Parrella, the 'invalidation' is due to an inner law, which is as spontaneous as the one that drives people to eat when hungry, yet as inescapable as the one that drives people to sleep even if they try not to (p. 8). It is a law bound to human beings; it is a law bound to a life that makes sense. What, if anything, Parella's Antigone has infringed is the 'common sense' of justice (p. 6). In the view of this 'common sense' of justice, Antigone should have left Polynices in his coma, no matter what, thus respecting Il Legislatore's decree. This would be just and fair on the basis of a commonly sound reasoning and perception of the events.

Is it?

> "E non vale la pena di provare almeno un gesto che riapra la questione?"
> ("And, would it be not worthy at least to attempt an action which would re-open the question?" p. 6)

So asks Antigone, whilst defending her resolution to an absent Ismene in the prologue. Is hers really an infraction either of a law or of a common sense of justice? Can that law and that common sense of justice be universally valid and blindly applicable in all cases?[45] What do they know of a man who is reduced to being the subsidiary of a machine, and of a woman who cannot breathe fresh air, and is condemned to watch her soul and her humanity die, entrapped in a body that still lives?

In Sophocles, Antigone's action challenges both the right of Creon to decide over an individual in 'religious' matters, and the righteousness itself of that decision, but all gravitates around death. In Parrella, through and because of the motif of euthanasia, Antigone's action does not simply challenge the right to make a decision over life and the righteousness of that decision. Her action also calls into question the 'humanity' of the decision, and, if not more importantly, raises doubts about the definition of human being. What is it that defines life, and what is it that defines a human being, which laws or common sense of justice can *undoubtedly* claim the right to take uncontestable decisions over it? Antigone's action is meant to re-open this question; and the question is the motor of the story that she sets in place with her example, aiming to shake people with doubt,[46] as it did with Haemon as we have seen above. "But now I doubt", Haemon says, in fact, commenting on Antigone's deed.[47]

In an attempt to 'shake' Il Legislatore's bold self-confidence, Teiresias, too, points out that Polynices, an oxymoronic 'living dead', calls into doubt any certainty about the nature of 'the Being' (p. 71). The prophet reiterates Haemon's effort to call into question the king's belief that he is able undoubtedly to discern "between *one who is* and *one who is no more*" (p. 49).[48] Both Haemon and Teiresias repeatedly advise him to grant Antigone's action the benefit of doubt, to allow himself to doubt the state of Polynices and of others like him,[49] to consider whether they are still really alive beings or not, and thus to doubt the appropriateness of his law. By doing so, Haemon and Teiresias make explicit the purpose of Antigone's deed "to re-open the question". *Doubt* seems, in fact, to be a key word in both their speeches (p. 49; p. 50; p. 71). This insistence on doubt seems to me to be Parrella's adaptation of the Sophoclean Haemon's and Teireisias' invitation to Creon to be flexible, to consider the issue from a point of view other than his own, and so to reconsider his decisions for both Polynices and Antigone (see, e.g., Soph. *Antigone* 700-22; 1023-1032; 1048-52).

This *other* point of view, which Parrella's Haemon and Teiresias invite Il Legislatore to adopt, has nothing to do with the law, for Antigone's action is a matter of human compassion.

> "Solo con la pietà può essere compreso e quindi giudicato"
> ("only through pity/compassion can it be understood and judged," p. 70)

This is what Teiresias says of Antigone's deed to Il Legislatore, who keeps appealing to the law to defend his actions. As for Haemon, he does not simply point out that Antigone has acted out of pity.[50] Significantly, he also tries to make this principle of human compassion, which Antigone's deed embodies, more understandable for Il Legislatore by almost inviting him to put himself in Antigone's shoes:

> "Polinice sarei potuto essere io, … Poteva capitare a me, a te, a noi. Ci hai mai pensato?"
> (I could have been in the place of Polynices,… It could have happened to me, to you, to all of us. Have you ever thought of this?" p. 51)

Hence, while still keeping the family ties to parallel his example with Antigone's case, Haemon, in a way, universalizes the motif. What Antigone intended to show, and, accordingly, Heamon and Teiresias try to make explicit and understandable for Il Legislatore, is that the whole affair is "una questione dolorosamente *umana*" ("a painfully *human* matter," p. 44), i.e., it is a matter that cannot be managed exclusively through a strict and cold observance of regulations and laws.

Il Legislatore does not really answer Haemon's challenging question, about what he would do in Antigone's shoes.[51] Like his Sophoclean archetype, Il Legislatore proves unable to understand anything other than his own viewpoint or to listen to others than himself. He cannot doubt for he has responsibilities toward the civic community, as well as toward Haemon and his family. On account of these responsibilities, he must be firm (p. 50; cf. p. 70). While *doubt* is the key word of Haemon' and Teiresias' speeches, and a key motif of the entire play, *responsibility* is the key term that marks Il Legislatore's characterization and speeches, and constitutes another important motif of the play. From his first appearance, Il Legislatore shows himself confident in the incontestable nature of his power, and even presents himself as being 'the Law' (p. 23), exacerbating the nuance of abusive power that is usually ascribed to the picture of his Greek model. Like Creon, Il Legislatore places his rules over the state and

his family on the same level, thus paralleling his task as king with his task as father (e.g., Soph., *Antigone* 659-66; Parrella, pp. 47-8; 50).

Although in Parella, Il Legislatore indulges in evoking fatherly care and concerns (pp. 47-9), which, in a way, makes him more 'reachable' and perhaps more sympathetic than Sophocles' Creon, he ultimately remains a king, who makes his notion of responsibility a shield for his actions. Of the three times he mentions the notion of responsibility, twice he refers to his duties toward the community, and toward both state and family (pp. 34; 50). Once, and, we may say *for once*, Il Legislatore appeals to that principle however to deny any responsibility: he is not responsible for Antigone's death; she is. She had options, and has chosen to take a specific action (p. 91).

Unlike Sophocles' Creon, Il Legislatore does not seem to regret anything of his own behaviour, nor does he withdraw from his almost-blasphemous self-confidence. To his eyes, Antigone is still in the wrong. It is tempting to say that Parrella has split Creon's single-mindedness: besides having as narrow a view of the law as Sophocles' Creon, Parrella's Il Legislatore applies that single-minded view to the notion of responsibility as well. In his eyes, Antigone had choices (p. 92), while he just applied the law in accordance with his responsibilities (p. 70). While Antigone is asked to take her own responsibility for the consequences of her choice, it seems that Il Legislatore does not take his own responsibility for the consequences of his choice to apply the law rather than yield to doubt, as Antigone's action and Heamon's and Teiresias' speeches had vainly invited him to, calling on him to assess the matter in all of its aspects instead of pretending it was not a matter for debate at all (p. 72). Furthermore, Il Legislatore, who has more than once gushed over his responsibilities toward the city, then contravenes those responsibilities by deciding to keep quiet the question that Antigone's action has raised, to let it just fall into oblivion along with Antigone's life (p. 92).

An uneasy impression of contradiction thus arises, which is actually consistent with the whole picture of this character as filtered through Antigone's eyes. As she notices, Il Legislatore indeed appeals to Nature and Hades as those who will care of Polynices. His law just deprives him of a burial; what *must* happen to him, it will *naturally* happen; and, as to Hades, He well knows what and how to do:

> "… non venga consentita sepultura. Quello che deve accadere la natura lo farà accadere. Ade sa come fare, dove andare …"
>
> ("… the burial must not be allowed. That which has to happen, nature will make happen. Hades knows how to manage the matter, where to go…" p.24)

But Il Legislatore does not realize that his very law impedes nature from taking its course, by letting technology interfere. He does not realize the contradiction into which he falls (p. 54).

The contrast between *physis* and *nomos*, which the Sophoclean Antigone makes explicit through her appeal to the 'unwritten laws of gods' against the man-made decree of Creon,[52] is not perceived by Il Legislatore, as it is not by his Greek counter-part. Indeed, it seems to be voided in that Il Legislatore ironically sees his *nomos* as going hand in hand with *physis*. This idiosyncratic feature of Parrella's 'Creon' may depend on his concept of responsibility, which consists of two strictly interrelated obligations. According to Il Legislatore, his responsibility entails:

(1) guaranteeing peace and justice to the city, with justice being meant as a form of equity/impartiality, for he asserts that law must be equally applied to himself, his family and the community:

> "Se ci sarà giustizia alla mia tavola essa sarà insegna per i cittadini tutti"
> ("If there is justice in my house, that justice will be an insignia for all the citizens," p. 34);

(2) *equally* guaranteeing wellbeing to his son/family and the whole city:

> "giacché il compito del padre di famiglia e quello del capo della città sono mossi dalla stessa responsabilità"
>
> ("for a father' and a leader's main task is driven by the same kind of responsibility," p. 50).[53]

By law, a law that he represents if not personifies, his responsibility is that city and family must be equally provided with peace, justice and wellbeing. If peace is easily explained as absence of war – either with external or internal enemies (p. 34), justice lacks a real definition in that Il Legislatore vaguely talks of it in terms of impartiality. Significantly this vagueness also marks his concept of wellbeing, or, true to a literal translation of the Italian phrase, 'good life'. In my eyes, the unclear notions of justice and wellbeing are crucial to the characterization of Parrella's 'Creon', in that it tells us what Polynices symbolizes for him and further clarifies the significance of Antigone's fight in Parrella's rewriting. Polynices is nothing other than an example, *the* example of the supremacy of the law *per se,* which Il Legislatore embodies. Polynices' body is, in fact:

> "l'esempio che il legislatore porta alto tra tutti perché ricade sul suo parente prossimo, figlio della sorella, uomo della stessa casa […]. Lui è l'esempio che *la legge è sopra gli uomini* pur se da un uomo […] fatta e promulgata"
>
> ("the best example [*sc.* of the sovereignty of law] that Il Legislatore could offer, given that [*sc.* the law] is applied to his closest relative, the son of his sister, a man of his household […]. He is the example that *law is over and above man*, although […] made and promulgated by a man" p.24).

This law has nothing to do with Polynices as person, i.e., as human being – which, as we have seen, Antigone keeps pointing out. Contrary to Il Legislatore's claims of justice and equity, for Antigone Polynices is simply the example, "di come l'uomo sano e potente eserciti il suo controllo sul giovane sventurato" ("of how a healthy and powerful man can have control of a wretched youth [and exploit it]", pp. 38-9), to whom destiny has denied time and liberty to live responsibly among his peers, to make his own choices[54], and so on.

As the vague notion of justice, so that of wellbeing reveals Il Legislatore's reduction of Polynices to an example, emptying him of any human essence: in his eyes, wellbeing seems to mean just living, no matter what –another contradiction since Il Legislatore does talk of 'good life'. It seems that to Il Legislatore exploiting the progress of medicine and technology for the benefit of the city means to guarantee the city a cold, *impersonal* wellbeing and good life.

There might be nothing wrong in this. But, the problem that Parrella's Antigone raises, the question that she finds worth discussing, the doubt that should shake conscience, is how to be sure not to violate nature and cross limits that, despite all good intentions, must be respected precisely in order to guarantee men, both as individuals and as a community, a safe and *sound* life. Being responsible would indeed imply posing oneself questions, daring to doubt, rejecting shortsighted policies, and so forth. This is the sort of responsibility that Il Legislatore lacks, and that, on the contrary, Antigone assumes for her brother and herself in the face of Il Legislatore's failure.

As far as the issue of responsibility is concerned, it is noteworthy that in the short list of references which Parrella provides at the end of the play (p. 99) the author twice mentions Hans Jonas, a well-known German philosopher, promoter of the principle of responsibility with a focus on the ethical problems posed by the progress of technology.[55] In the confrontation between Il Legislatore and Haemon, Parrella quotes and paraphrases two brief passages from Jonas' monograph on this principle. One quotation, put into Il Legislatore's mouth, pertains to the above mentioned parallel between the ruler of a city and the ruler of a household: both are driven by the same kind of responsibility (p. 50). The other reference, this time put in Haemon's mouth, questions the 'audacity' of technology, for which the only antidote is humility:

> "Hai esagerato, padre […]. Concediti un atto di umiltà […]: l'umiltà è forse la sola virtù che possa sconfiggere l'arroganza della Techne"

> ("Father, you went too far […]. Let yourself yield to humility […]: humility is perhaps the only virtue that can overcome the arrogance of Technology" p.52)

Haemon implies that technology may transcend the limits that make safe human life, with the paradox that what is supposed to preserve human existence may actually destroy it in its very essence, or, to use Jonas' terms, may endanger the "the whole being of man". Such is the case of Polynices, who is kept alive by machines, and whose natural pulse is replaced by the unnatural pulse provided by technological devices. Polynices' heart is not his own, it belongs to a machine which can supply the pulse, but not the real life. This criticism is implied by the word that Haemon significantly uses to connote the technology: it is a form of *hybris*.[56] Antigone herself has implied this from the beginning, when she declares, without hesitation, that she knows well, and far better than doctors, Polynices' real 'heart' – which is not the one that is now keeping him alive (pp. 39-40):

Antigone: "… Ismene non stava lì [*sc.* accanto a Polinice] a chiedersi se quel battito
che vedevamo fosse ancora di Polinice o sostituito dalle machine. Io sì."

Il Legislatore: "… Più, e prima, e meglio dei medici tu sai se quel battito *accompagnava*
oppure*dominava* il cuore di Polinice?" (p. 39)

(Antigone: "… Ismene was not there [*sc.* next to Polynices] asking herself whether
that pulse was still Polynices' own or one substituted by the machines. I did."

Il Legislatore: "… Do you know far more, and before, and better than the doctors whether that pulse
matched or *dominated* the [natural] heart[beat] of Polinices? p. 39)"[57]

Consistently with the cultural system of the world of Sophocles' Antigone, the only possible antidote to *hybris* is moderation, that is, recognition of one's own limits. In this sense Haemon invites his father to humility, yielding to doubt about what defines a human being and his life.

The concern to make decisions with an awareness of their effects, as well as to care for the compatibility of those decisions with the need to safeguard the whole existence and being of man, and to avoid subverting the natural order, are central to Jonas' notion of responsibility. Evidently, Jonas' notion does not correspond to Il Legislatore's notion of responsibility for the latter has failed, in his decision-making, to take into account the nature of the essence of man, and to ponder the effects of his decision on it. Il Legislatore trusted the wonders of technology to keep his nephew alive, only to make of it an example of the supreme imperative of the law. Conversely, and conforming to Jonas' theory, Antigone insists more than once that the existence of Polynices, and of the other "mezzi cadaveri" ("almost-corpses," p. 21) is certainly not in accordance with the imperative of preserving the being of man without violating nature and subverting its balance.

Antigone, implicitly, Haemon, more explicitly, and, Teresias, partially, all seem to appeal to Jonas' philosophy. It is, however, the Chorus who paves the way to the revelation of the influence of Jonas' thought, and introduces this other key motif, the principle of responsibility, significantly with reference both to *Techne* and to the true sense of life and humanity. By no accident this happens in the first stasimon, whose Sophoclean prototype is often referred to as 'Ode on Man'. Significantly, Jonas himself starts his whole exposition of responsibility from "Das Beispiel der Antike" ("The example of Antiquity"), and precisely from an analysis of this particular choral from the ancient tragedy.[58]

As is well-known, the major part of the first stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone* (ll. 332-75) is a celebration of the marvelous-yet-frightful (δεινά, l. 333) achievements of human beings who, successfully exploiting their skills, can control nature to their own benefit, and tame natural phenomena that would threaten their existence, with one exception: death. "Only from Hades will he not find escape …," (ll. 359-60). Filtered through Jonas' analysis of this stasimon, the corresponding song of Parrella's play, or, rather, its first strophe (p. 27), turns this ambiguous sense of wonder mixed with fear into an unambiguous lamentation

and expression of concern about the appalling use of human beings' own power and control, which is seemingly to their benefit, but actually to their detriment.[59]

"Molte potenze sono tremende ma nessuna lo è più dell'uomo…"
("Many powerful things are dreadful, but nothing is more dreadful than man" p. 27).

This is the *incipit* of Parrella's stasimon whose overall content testifies to a significant linguistic and conceptual reception of the *incipit* of the Greek model, in that the author means to criticize unambiguously, rather than praise, man's use of his *powerful* skills over nature and humankind itself. Hence, playing on the word δεινός, Parrella's Chorus definitely reverses 'the marvelous' to 'the horrendously frightful'.[60] And where ancient man stopped, the modern man goes past:

"Infine pure per Ade ha trovato armi sufficienti a combatterlo"
("finally he [man] has found contrivances to fight even Hades," p. 27).

The risk of *hybris*, of going beyond human limits, which Sophocles' Chorus dreads, becomes a fact in Parrella: challenging and meaning to defy even death, by attempting to bend it to man's will, is to go beyond human limits; it is to violate nature. In Sophocles, Antigone's appeal to the divine laws, against Creon-made law, is indeed an appeal to Nature.[61] So is, in Parrella, the appeal to let Polynices die (and thus be buried), which Antigone makes against Il Legislatore-made law. Both Creon's and Il Legislatore's laws are acts of *hybris*, which, in the case of the latter, is enhanced by the "arroganza della Techne" ("the arrogance of technology", p. 52). [62]

"… qui però non scorgo alcun futuro,"
("but, here I cannot see anything for the future, p. 27)

With these words, still in the first stasimon, the Chorus continues to comment on the dreadful powers of man. As Sophocles' Creon, Il Legislatore, too, proves in fact to be shortsighted. He has established the law not only without respect for the essence and limits of humanity, but also without considering its effects on the future. He looks at the present, and in this present Polynices must be the example of the supremacy of law.

The future can, however, be preserved by restoring the 'lost principle of humanity', which, paraphrasing Jonas, consists of safeguarding the sense of responsibility toward oneself and others.[63] An awareness of this sense of responsibility is the mark that distinguishes humans from all other living beings. This principle of humanity is something that Il Legislatore has lost.[64] No surprise, then, that he cannot understand the whole issue, which is "a painfully *human* matter."

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

"Come persona Eluana è morta 16 anni fa,"
("As a person Eluana died sixteen years ago").

With these words, Prof. Umberto Veronesi, an internationally renowned Italian oncologist,[65] commented on a recent 'death ends coma' case which, while putting an end to an old-standing right-to-die controversy pertaining to an individual case, has reopened the question of euthanasia in Italy. In February 2009, a 37 year old woman, Eluana Englaro, died after the removal of her feeding tube on the request of her father who for years had fought for his daughter's right to die.[66] Suffering what doctors determined to be irreversible brain damage in a car accident in 1992 when she was 20 years old, Eluana entered a permanent vegetative state requiring artificial nutrition and hydration. She had been in this state for 17 years, until her father finally *liberated* her from what we might call the prison of that artificial life.[67]

Parrella has once mentioned Englaro's case as one of the sources of inspiration for her re-elaboration of Antigone's story.[68] The author might have been influenced by the case and, if not foremost, by the related high pitched debate that has involved medical, political and religious institutions, and has divided an

entire nation.[69] This is a way in which reception works: an ancient story is re-proposed in a way that fits the receiving culture, by referring to realities to which the receiving culture may relate. Parrella's adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy, while echoing the specific story of Eluana, whose father would be Antigone, does not simply consist, however, of reconfiguring the characters' roles and actions in such a way as to create recognizable correspondences between the real event and the fictional story. The correspondences are made recognizable for a specific purpose: like its Greek model, Parrella's play is meant to raise questions and promote reflections,[70] which the individual cases of Eluana and Polynices timelessly pose.

Doubt, justice, family's rights, state power, human limits, responsibility, sense of humanity, compassion, all are concepts that, explicitly or not, have been called into question in the case of Eluana, and by reflection in that of Parrella's Polynices, such concepts that, it is safe to say, will be, or, at least, should be called into question in any similar case. Parrella's Antigone thinks that her only crime is to have broken the common sense of justice, which she challenges by daring to commit a deed that would re-open the question: why not doubt this 'common sense of justice', the same common sense of justice which, for instance, has led the 'real', Italian Antigone, Eluana's father, to be labelled a 'murderer'? Why not suggest that a human being is only really alive if she/he can consciously conduct her/his life with dignity, can feel emotions, and have physical needs of which she/he is aware, and which she/he has the chance to freely and autonomously satisfy? Why not doubt that the just thing to do is always what Law commands – paradoxical as this might sound? Why not ask oneself what human limits are, and wonder whether to respect those limits is consistent with nature, and thus consider what it means to let nature, which has never contemplated immortality for man, really take its course, when it is not possible to keep alive what is no longer living? Why not question one's own responsibilities in the face of life and death, and where the limits of those responsibilities lie?

Parrella's Antigone means to re-open all these questions with her action. They are questions, which, like those raised in the Sophoclean controversy over Polynices' burial, have determined polarized views. They are open-ended questions, but must be posed and re-proposed, so that they may be investigated in all their aspects, if the mistakes of Creon and Il Legislatore are to be avoided. Their shortsighted narrow-mindedness is their common error, and it is this flaw that the two Antigones, ancient and modern, challenge by re-proposing those very questions.[71] More importantly, they must be re-proposed to prevent them from falling into oblivion, as Il Legislatore would prefer (p. 92), and perhaps as we all might be afraid that it could happen to *any* Eluana's case.

Despite the specific positions that the characters support, we are left with the impression of unanswered questions, and this impression seems to be consistent with what is perhaps the main significance of Parrella's Antigone-character. In a manner that borders on meta-theatre, in the prologue Parrella's Antigone poses herself as the one who sets the story in motion:

> "Io sembrerò il motore dal quale scaturirà il movimento della storia…"
> (I shall seem to be the *motor* of the story," p. 8).[72]

But, as said above, the story ends neither with her (p. 94), nor with her letter, which constitutes the last Act of Parrella's play (p. 97). The letter mainly exalts the freedom that this Antigone has again achieved through death, for:

> "Thanatos possiede le ali" ("Thanatos grants you wings", p. 97).[73]

Despite a slight underscore of pessimism, this letter eventually leaves us with some hope: the hope that there will be someone so far-seeing that she/he can promote a sound future, and can take responsible actions in the present to ensure the well-being of humankind, preserving the integrity of life in full compliance with Nature:

> "Serve *cercare* a lungo, con grande disposizione d'animo […] quell'unica persona che […] inizia ora a sognare: è solo da un sogno nuovo che può principiare il futuro"

("It is necessary *to search*, for a long while and with a strong mind […], for that only person who […] now begins to dream: only from a new dream can the future start" p. 97).[74]

The story that Parrella's Antigone has set in motion to re-open, and save from oblivion, the right-to-live and right-to-die questions, i.e., essential questions of human life, is not concluded. This story is handed to us still in motion.

Antigone - and with her Sophocles' original tale - will never stop speaking to us of this and that issue, not even *post mortem* – as, concretely, the letter of Parrella's Antigone, and, figuratively, all the different receptions of her story, have so far proved.

"E non vale la pena di provare almeno un gesto che riapra la questione?
("And, would it be not worthy at least to attempt an action which would re-open the question?" p. 6)

To my eyes, this is the enduring, iconic question that, since the time of Antigone's archetypal action in a street of her hometown Thebes, has reverberated through the centuries, across the world, in each specific form that she has taken, and in each specific scenario in which she has played her part. By presenting us, over and over, with existential questions, she embodies the possibility of change when institutions fail;[75] she represents the possibility of new beginnings.

Her story does not end here.

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[1] Parrella 2012: 94. The text is written in prose; therefore I shall refer to the page(s) of the text in which the passages under discussion occur. All translations from Italian are mine. Needless to say, the translation from Italian into English might not always be strictly literal, though the core meaning will always be preserved and rendered in a way that makes sense to an English speaking audience. This also means that, when necessary, I might add words that are not present in the Italian passage, but are helpful to clarify its meaning. Most of the time I shall add explanatory endnotes to my translation. Parrella does not indicate which translation(s) of Sophocles she has consulted and whether she has looked at the Greek text, which makes my observations on her lexical choices a product of my thinking as Classicist, supported by the impression that Parrella has considered with thoroughness and care her choices thoroughly and carefully. Unless otherwise indicated in a note, all italics are mine for emphasis. An eclectic author of novels and plays, Valeria Parrella wrote *Antigone* upon a specific request from the theatre director Luca De Fusco (on the possible source of inspiration for Parrella's peculiar re-elaboration, see below, p. 000). The première occurred on September 25, 2012 in Naples (Teatro Mercadante), and has been warmly welcomed by audiences and the press. It went on another, successful Italian tour in Spring 2013. Parrella's is generally an elite audience, with some familiarity with classical masterpieces, including Sophocles' *Antigone*. Knowledge of the outline of the play is thus taken for granted. The audience is supposed to know enough to make the connections between ancient and modern that Parrella has deliberately made. The present paper focuses on the author's reception and adaptation of the story of Antigone in the light of a specific contemporary issue, and far less on her audiences' reception of her work. My analysis is thus built on my own reading of her text rather than on its performance or others' 'readings' of those performances.

[2] The translation of Sophocles' text is my adaptation from Blondell 1998.

[3] Indeed, "it is a challenge to one's stamina to follow the traces of this 2,500-year-young Theban princess…", Fradinger states fairly in the *incipit* of her essay subtly entitled "Nomadic Antigone" (2010: 15-23; the quotation is from p. 15). The bibliography concerning the reception of Sophocles' *Antigone* around the world is, in fact, immense. For a concise overview, which provides a relatively complete picture, and an updated synthesis of the scholarly literature, beside the above-mentioned Fradinger, see Söffner 2010: 73-88; Fletcher 2013: 1268-1270.

[4] See, e.g., Forte 2008; Bajama Griga 2008; Fornaro 2012a: 19-42.

[5] I borrowed this poignant image of a running Antigone from Fornaro 2010: 31-44. As seen above (n. 3), likewise significantly Antigone has been also labeled 'nomadic'.

[6] The list is not meant to be exhaustive; it is given only as *exempli gratia*. Frandiger (2010: 15-23) offers a more complete account of the different places and contexts in which Antigone has appeared in the last decades of the twentieth century and in the early twenty-first century.

[7] See, e.g., Fleming 2006: 163-86; Fornaro 2012b: 128-30 (for Anouilh); Goldfarb 1980 (for Delbo); Fornaro 2012a: 141-51 (for both). As to Brecht, see above n. 4.

[8] See, e.g., Anderson 2012: 616-7 (in particular for Abuladze); Roche 1988; Teevan 1998; Macintosh 1994; McDonald-Walton 2007.

[9] See, e.g., Fugard 2002; Fornaro 2010: 34-6; Osofisan 2007 (though note that the first performance of this play was actually in the U.S. at Emory University (Atlanta, GA): Wetmore 2002: 182.

[10] See, e.g, Fornaro 2012b: 144-6; Foley 2012: 136-8.

[11] See, e.g., Fleming 1999; Lane 2007; Nelli 2009.

[12] We should also remember another important interpretative approach, and the related trend of reception, i.e., the strictly feministic reading (see, e.g., Söderbäck 2010). This kind of reading, however, sometimes, and perhaps inevitably, mingles with the ones mentioned above.

[13] See, e.g., Nickel 2013.

[14] νόμος literally means "usage, custom", by extension "ordinance, law" (LSJ). In Sophocles' *Antigone* it occurs in both meanings: Antigone uses it to refer to the 'law of Nature' (implied in the meaning 'custom/observances sanctioned by usage', and including the laws of burial), while Creon uses it to refer to his ordinance. On Antigone's appeal to the law of nature, and on the tension between *physis* and *nomos* in Sophocles see Kerferd 1981: 113-4; and Cropp 1997: 150-3. On this tension, see also below, pp. 53-54.

[15] Throughout the paper, I shall refer to Parrella's Creon with the Italian label 'Il Legislatore'.

[16] I use the term according to the definition provided by Hardwick (2003: 3), "taking an ancient image or text and using it to sanction subsequent ideas or practices".

[17] In Italy, as in the majority of western countries, euthanasia and so-called assisted suicide are illegal. In Europe euthanasia is legally practiced only in Belgium and the Netherlands, while assisted suicide is permitted in Switzerland. In the United States, assisted suicide is legally permitted in the states of Oregon, Montana and Washington. Both practices, however, always invite heated debates.

[18] On this passage and on this equivalence established between prison and grave, see below p. 51.

[19] Interestingly in Parrella, too, we may find what is well known as 'double burial' in the scholarship of Sophocles' *Antigone* (for a concise discussion, see, e.g., Kamerbeek 1978, 93-4). Indeed, Parrella's Antigone performs twice her action of removing life support from her 'quasi-dead' brother: first she unplugs the feeding tube; then the breathing tube.

[20] See also Parrella 2012: 79.

[21] For both passages and a further discussion on them, see below pp. 50, 52.

[22] Actually before Haemon himself, it is the Chorus that 'announces' the youth's suicide, while trying to call Il Legislatore's attention to it (p. 92). But, as we will see later, Il Legislatore does not express any emotional reaction. Unlike Sophocles' Creon, he faces it with indifference.

[23] Parrella also preserves the technical terms (e.g., 'parodo' = 'parodos; 'stasimo' = stasimon, etc.) to label the related sections of the play.

[24] The author also eliminates the renewed intervention of Creon, which, alongside the lyric kommos, is to be found in the original *Antigone*'s fourth episode (Soph., *Antigone* 806-943).

[25] See Kamerbeeck 1978: 23-4; Blondell 1998: 97.

[26] This motif of searching for people who are capable of reacting to, and changing, the *status quo* established by rulers and laws, when this *status quo* is no longer sound, seems to me to occur again, and significantly, at the conclusion of the story in the form of a hope for the future: see below, p. 58.

[27] As said above (p. 48), the chorus is made up of a male and a female. The Italian term for choriphaeus has two different endings to indicate the gender, which English does not. Hence I use the acronyms 'M' for the male choriphaeus and 'F' for the female one.

[28] As I have hinted at above, there is nothing left of the person Polynices in the body that bears his name. More than once her brother is referred to as 'semi-dead', 'almost-corpse' (p. 21; cf. p. 23); and Antigone herself firmly declares that her brother is dead (p. 31).

[29] Significantly, Parrella's Antigone never defines her action as a 'crime of pity' (cf. Soph., *Antigone* 74). Haemon (in the passage mentioned above and, similarly, at p. 52) and Teiresias (p. 70) are the ones who refer to it as 'made out of pity', however, depriving the term of any religious connotation (which is implied in Sophocles) in reflection of the secular nature of this Antigone's action. On this motif, also below p. 52.

[30] Ironically Il Legislatore thinks that his decree would assist Nature in dealing with Polynices, giving Nature time to follow its course (p. 24). For a further analysis of this, and other contradictions typical to the characterization of Il Legislatore, see below, p. 53.

[31] The Italian text does not have the word corresponding to 'freely', which is my addition. I chose to add this word in my English rendition to make more explicit and poignant the overall meaning of the passage. To my mind, 'freely' in fact emphasizes the concept of 'not being under the control of another, acting/being as one wishes, of one's own accord'. This specific concept of freedom is the one to which Antigone intends to call our attention.

[32] I borrow the label 'bare life' (namely, ζωή, vs. βίος, i.e., 'qualified life', 'manner of life') from Agamben (1995), a distinguished Italian philosopher who, under an acknowledged influence of M. Foucault, has investigated the concept of biopolitics/biopower, analyzing - and questioning - 'the sovereign power' as a form of bio-power, i.e., as an extension of state power over man's life. By virtue of this extension, the state grants itself the right to have the use of man as a mere biological entity, that is, as a 'bare life', as if lacking a conscious brain and a soul. Agamben developed his thought specifically with reference to the ideology of Nazism and its creation of the concentration camps in which, in fact, men, reduced to mere living beings and deprived of any rights, were the perfect specimens over which to exercise such sovereign power. Parrella does not make any mention of Agamben, biopolitics or biopower. As we will see, the only modern philosopher Parrella has admittedly taken into account in her re-writing of the Antigone story is Hans Jonas, namely with reference to the issue of the individual and state responsibility (see below, p. 000). However, the way in which Parrella's Antigone champions human life, through the notions of person, autonomy, freedom, self-awareness, etc., against the 'sovereign power' of Il legislatore, might evoke the complex theory of biopolitics in the erudite readers' and spectactors' minds.

[33] I wonder whether Parrella was aware, and thus played on it, that ancient Greeks perceived sleep (*Hypnos*) and death (*Thanatos*) to be very similar to each other, and both as the opposite to life (see, e.g., Vermeule 1979, 145-50). As gods, they were believed to be either twins (Homer, *Iliad* 16. 450-5) or brothers (Hesiod, *Theogony* 212). Such a resemblance is mirrored by the language: often in Homer the *formula* "to go into brazen slumber" (e.g., *Iliad* 11. 241; 14. 482, etc.) is used to indicate the death of a character.

[34] It might be useful to recall that the term 'coma' (from κῶμα) etymologically means "deep sleep".

[35] Through the dialogue between Antigone and another incarcerated woman, Parrella denounces the sad practice of 'helping' prisoners cope with the critical conditions of detention, and keeping them quiet and 'happy' by giving them pills. Those pills Antigone will refuse, maintaining consistency, until the very end, in her rejection of the products of man-made rules, and giving preference to the natural state of the things (pp. 82-3).

[36] Parrella does not indulge in any specific philosophical definition of humanity. Except for the 'principle of responsibility' (on which, see below pp. 54-56) her notion is built on rather common concepts, as described above. Once again (see above n. 32), one might also think of Agamben's distinction between ζωή and βίος, taking βίος as the mark of the notion of humanity, and thus, from the viewpoint of Parrella's Antigone, the mark of life.

[37] As we will see, breathing is an emblematic key motif, a metaphor for life. When describing who Polynices was and who he is no more, Antigone mentions her brother's breathing and the heartbeats that she used to hear when they played and ran together. The heartbeats that she can now hear do not really come from Polynices' heart; they belong to the machine (pp. 39-40): see below, p. 55.

[38] A similar tone characterizes another passage of despair, where Antigone cries "… che gabbia mai è questa in cui vengo gettata? Cosa ha a che vedere con l'uomo e la sua genia questa carcerazione?" ("…what is this cage into which I have been thrown away? What does this imprisonment have to do with man and his kind?"). Given Antigone's overall reaction to, and insistent complaints on the conditions of life in prison, I suspect that Parrella's choice of a real prison as the place of incarceration for her Antigone is not simply an attempt to adapt Sophocles' text to a modern context (being 'walled up' in a cave, today, would make little sense). Indeed, the dehumanizing condition of life in jail seems to be a crucial issue in Italy. Interestingly, in Italy Antigone has been chosen as the iconic name of an Italian non-profit socio-political association – "Associazione Antigone" ("Antigone Association"), which was founded in Rome in 1991 to promote respect for the human rights of prisoners within the penal system. It engages in the

observation of the conditions of detention, above all of women, intervening accordingly in defense of their rights. Besides a monthly newsletter, entitled *Antigone*, this association has periodically published books of reports which adopt the name of the ancient heroine in the title (e.g., *Antigone in carcere. Terzo rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione* [*Antigone in prison. Third report on the conditions of detention*] by G. Mosconi and C. Sarzotti, Rome 2004). Useful information about this association can be found on the official website www.associazioneantigone.it. Given the social activism in which she engages throughout her writing, I would think that Parrella is aware of the existence and activities of this Association. Although, to my knowledge, she has never mentioned it, it might perhaps have played some role in her decision to devote an entire episode to Antigone's life in prison as a critical mirror of women's real life conditions in Italian prisons.

[39] Indeed, Parella's Antigone, too, expresses regret for the 'joys of life' of which she will be deprived: "… ed io che futuro vedo? Nemmeno un bacio, nemmeno un velo, un dono da sposa. Un figlio" ("… And what future do I see (for me)? Not even a kiss, not even a wedding veil, not a wedding gift. (Not) a son", p. 81). These words echo the words that Sophocles' Antigone utters in her farewell (ll. 876-878).

[40] In the Italian passage, 'signore' (lit., 'sir') is used sarcastically. This explains its translation as 'Mister', a title that can similarly be used sarcastically in English.

[41] Evidently, Parrella is referring to Atropos, the Moira (Fate) generically identified with death since she was the 'cutter' of the thread of life. She also conflates the tasks of the two other Moirae (Fates), Lachesis and Clotho, since, in Greek myth, only Clotho was the 'spinner'.. For a reference to Polynices' limbo-condition, see also Parrella 2012: 41.

[42] As we have seen, the equation prison-grave-death (while still alive) had first been made by Haemon: see above, p. 47.

[43] Antigone's tomb is "of a new kind" in that a tomb, which is normally destined for the dead, is now to receive the living: Jebb 1900 *ad loc.*

[44] The grave as marriage chamber recalls the well-known ancient motif of the conflation of marriage and funeral rituals (see Rehm 1994). The so-called 'bride of death' (a woman who for love chooses Death as eternal companion) is a related figure, and is applicable to Sophocles' Antigone. Indeed, there are several hints at the bride of death-motif with reference to Antigone (e.g., Soph., *Antigone* 220; 524; 575). In Parrella, too, Il Legislatore often refers to this motif (e.g., p. 42; 91).

[45] Later, in fact, Il Legislatore tries to clear himself by stating that he has just implemented the law that equally applies to all (p. 70).

[46] This aim is consistent with Parrella's preference for the dramatic genre, as she stated in an interview (Calligaro 2012): "Il teatro è un tempio moderno, dove avviene un rito collettivo. Per partecipare devi alzarti dal divano, devi assumere un atteggiamento attivo, viverlo. Lo stesso atteggiamento da tenere verso i temi fondamentali della vita. Pensare, spegnere la tv" ("The theatre is a modern temple, where a community ritual takes place. To take part in it you have to leave your couch, you have to take an active approach, and to experience it. It is the same sort of approach that one should take to the fundamental themes of life. To think, and (thus) to turn off the TV").

[47] See above, pp. 49-50.

[48] See above, p. 52.

[49] From the guard's report one comes to know that there were others 'semi-dead / semi-corpses', who were being artificially kept alive (p. 21).

[50] See Parrella 2012: 49, 52, on which above, p. 50.

[51] It should be also noted that, although, with Haemon too, Il Legislatore stubbornly insists on the supremacy of law for which he would not yield to Antigone, he does not miss the chance to express, exactly in his confrontation with Haemon, statements that reveal some nuance of misogyny, and that can be traced back to the gender-biased statements present in the Greek model. For instance, in Parella as in

Sophocles (ll. 740; 746; 747) Creon thinks that Haemon is speaking under the influence of his love for Antigone (e.g., p. 51). It is also during his confrontation with Haemon that Il Legislatore 'solves' the possibly upcoming problem of his son remaining without a fiancée by suggesting that he will soon forget the woman, and new women will come along. This is a 'soft' variation of the cold reply to Ismene's question whether Creon will really kill his own child's bride-to-be, "… for him there will be other plots of land to plow", is the laconic answer of Creon (Soph., *Antigone* 567-8). On the gender issues in Sophocles' *Antigone*, see Burian 2010.

[52] See also above, n. 14.

[53] As Parrella acknowledges (p. 99), these lines are a quotation from Hans Jonas' *Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (1979), translated in English as *The Imperative of Responsibility. In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (by H. Jonas and D. Herr, 1984). As I shall explain in more detail, Jonas' text seems to work as the hypotext of some portions of the dialogues of Parrella's characters, with reference to the principle of responsibility and to the wondrous achievements of technology: see below, pp. 54-56. Valuable observations on the presence of Jonas' philosophy in Parrella's *Antigone*, can be found in Fornaro 2012.

[54] A more explicit critique of abusive authority, which, as we have seen, is standardly associated with Creon, is quite perceptible here. This also adds to the correspondences between the modern and the ancient work. I use the term 'correspondences' according to the definition given by Hardwick (2003: 10): "aspects of a new work which directly relate to a characteristic of the source".

[55] The page numbers of Jonas' work are from the Italian edition by Portinari 2002.

[56] Literally speaking, Haemon uses the word 'arroganza'. Although English provides a perfectly correspondent term (*arrogance*) I have preferred to use the Greek word, both suspecting that Parrella had in mind the ancient Greek concept of *hybris*, and believing that the transliterated Greek term fits more effectively the context and its significance.

[57] I find the choice of the verb 'to dominate' peculiarly significant and suitable for what is at issue here, in that it emphasizes the thesis that Antigone has at heart: Polynices as a person is no more; his life is something imposed, and not *naturally* continuing, if a machine takes control over his heart.

[58] The analysis of *Antigone's* 'Ode to Man' marks, in fact, the *incipit* of the very first chapter of Jonas's monograph.

[59] In Parrella's first stasimon, in its complaints the Chorus refers, in particular, to the deterioration of the environment, and to the manipulation of human mind.

[60] On the ambiguity of this adjective within the first stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone*, see Kamerbeek 1978: 82. Jonas' German translation is "Ungeheuer" which has, in turn, an ambiguous meaning. As noun, it means 'monster'; as adjective, it can mean both 'prodigious' and 'monstrous/frightening'. Blondell (1998: 34 and n.2) translates "awesome". Parrella's rendition emphasizes the negativity, or, rather, the dangerous implications, of man's powers.

[61] Aristotle was the first to understand Antigone's appeal to the divine laws, against the man-made law of Creon, as an appeal to Nature: see, e.g., *Rhet.* 1373b4-5; 1375a31.

[62] And, as hinted at, to go beyond measure by trusting technology too much is a paramount concern in Jonas' philosophy, for it would eventually lead the world to catastrophe; hence the need to prompt man to moderation originates (e.g., Portinaro 2002: 179; 237-43; 282-3).

[63] The future of human beings and of human life's integrity is the cornerstone in Jonas' ethical theory based on responsibility: regarding this, see e.g., Pascual 2009 (above all, pp. 204-8).

[64] Interestingly, Il Legislatore himself tells the guard to look at him, and talk to him, as the Law, not as a human being (p. 23). On the other hand, the Chorus barely recognizes Il Legislatore as "one of us": the position he holds is 'too high', to the point that he is perceived as something different from man. He cannot, in fact, understand the deeply *human* story that is unfolding before his eyes (p. 44).

[65] Veronesi 2008.

[66] This case became the most frequent headline in Italian newspapers and magazines for months. It also had some resonance in international media. The most detailed account of the case is in the Italian magazine *Panorama* 2008 (http://italia.panorama.it/Eluana-Englaro-tutte-le-tappe-della-vicenda). As for the international press, an article in *The New York Times* by R. Donadio 2009 should be noted. It recalls the parallel case of Terri Schiavo that had occurred in the U.S in 2005. Eluana's case has also prompted an ethical reconsideration of the question by medical professionals: see, e.g., Lucchetti 2010; Moratti 2010.

[67] Indeed, in a recent interview, Eluana's father referred to his decision with the words "Ho liberato mia figlia" (= "I liberated my daughter"): see Portelli 2012.

[68] See Calligaro 2012.

[69] Interestingly, as recently as September 2012, the Italian director Marco Bellocchio presented the movie *Bella Addormentata* (*Sleeping Beauty*) which is set in the final days of Eluana Englaro's life and, by mixing real footage and fictional characters, recreates the debate aroused by her case.

[70] See above, n. 46.

[71] As said above, to doubt that it is always right to follow the law sounds paradoxical, which in turn would depose in favour of both Creon and Il Legislatore who are applying a law, while Antigone is violating it. But, what the two Antigones (implicitly) and their champions Heamon and Teireisias (more explicitly) ask of their leaders (and us) is to see the issue from a different perspective, inviting them and us - we may think – to assume a flexible, sound attitude. Although chaos might be the result that one would dread, taking such a flexible attitude – at least with reference to some specific issues involving life and death– is not completely inadmissible. In order to clarify this, and to make more explicit the message I see in Parrella's Antigone, it is noteworthy that the author once stated that when she started thinking of how to reshape the figure of Antigone, she thought of "today's strenous fighters" for individual freedom against the institution (see Calligaro 2012). Beside Eluana's father, on that occasion Parrella mentioned the cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, who was one of the most influential progressive thinkers of the Catholic Church. Known for his liberal views on subjects such as priest celibacy, condom use and even abortion, on one occasion, he also wrote a public letter to express support for a patient's right to die, asking the Vatican to consider respecting the requests of terminally ill patients who, "in all lucidity", ask for the withdrawal of life-prolonging assistance. This cardinal was asking the leaders of the Church to see the issue – and accordingly to act - from a perspective other than the strict law and faith. So was Antigone in the past and today. For a concise report on cardinal Martini's personality, see Pianigiani 2012.

[72] Teiresias, too, recalls the important role of this Antigone, as the one who set in motion the story, a story which is still in movement, since Antigone herself is 'the movement' of the story (p. 72).

[73] The literal translation of this passage would be "Thanatos has wings". I rendered it differently to make explicit the meaning of this metaphor. Wings are symbolic of freedom, and what Antigone intends to say is that death has granted her 'the wings of freedom', liberating her from the prison of her body, which has been reduced merely to a living/biological entity within the walls of the factual jail, thus depriving her of any human dignity.

[74] About this 'search-motif', see also above, p. 48-49.

[75] An interpretation of the Sophoclean Antigone as representing the possibility of a new or changed law is in Rose 1996.