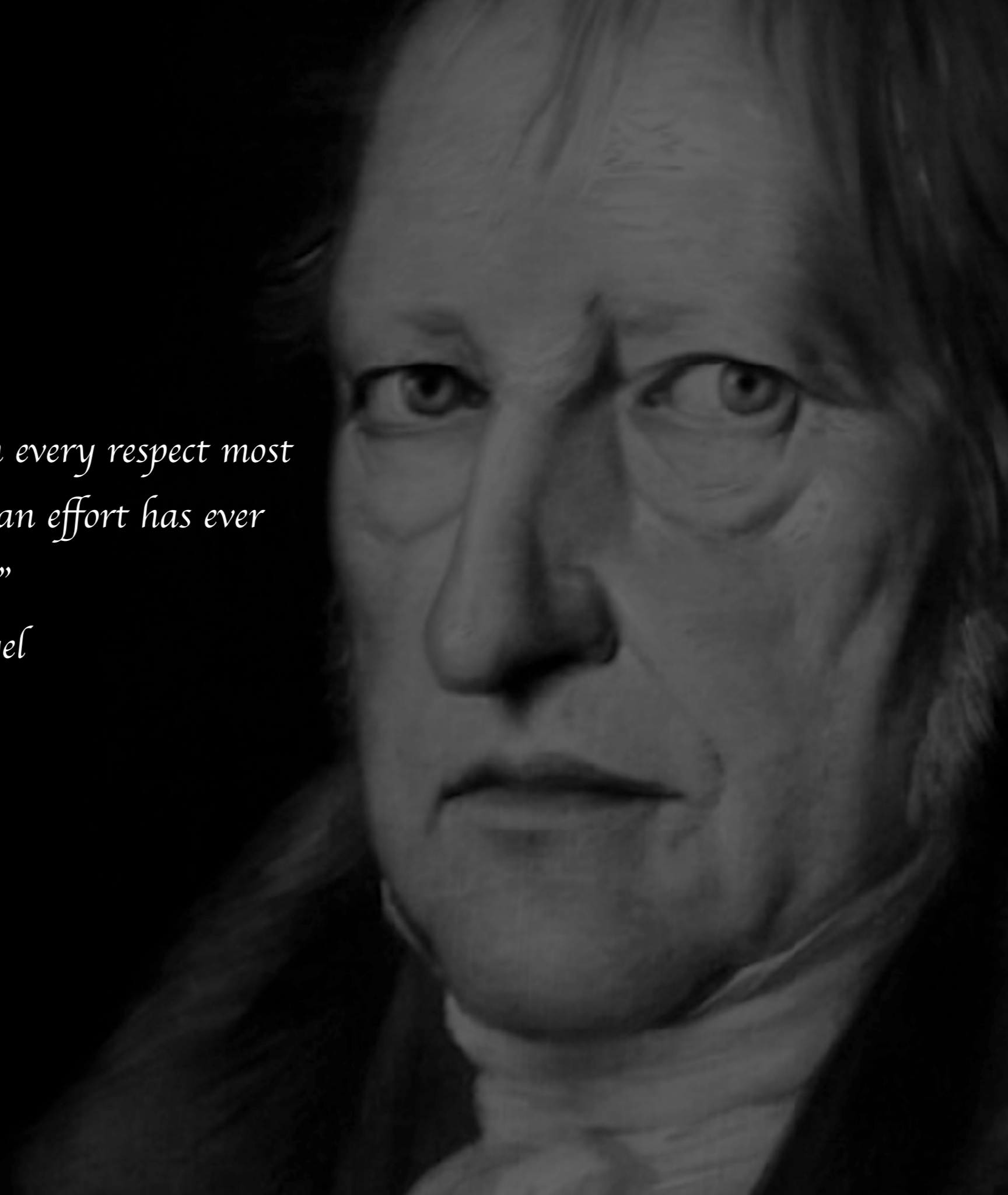


“One of the most sublime, and in every respect most consummate works of art human effort has ever brought forth.”

—G. W. F. Hegel



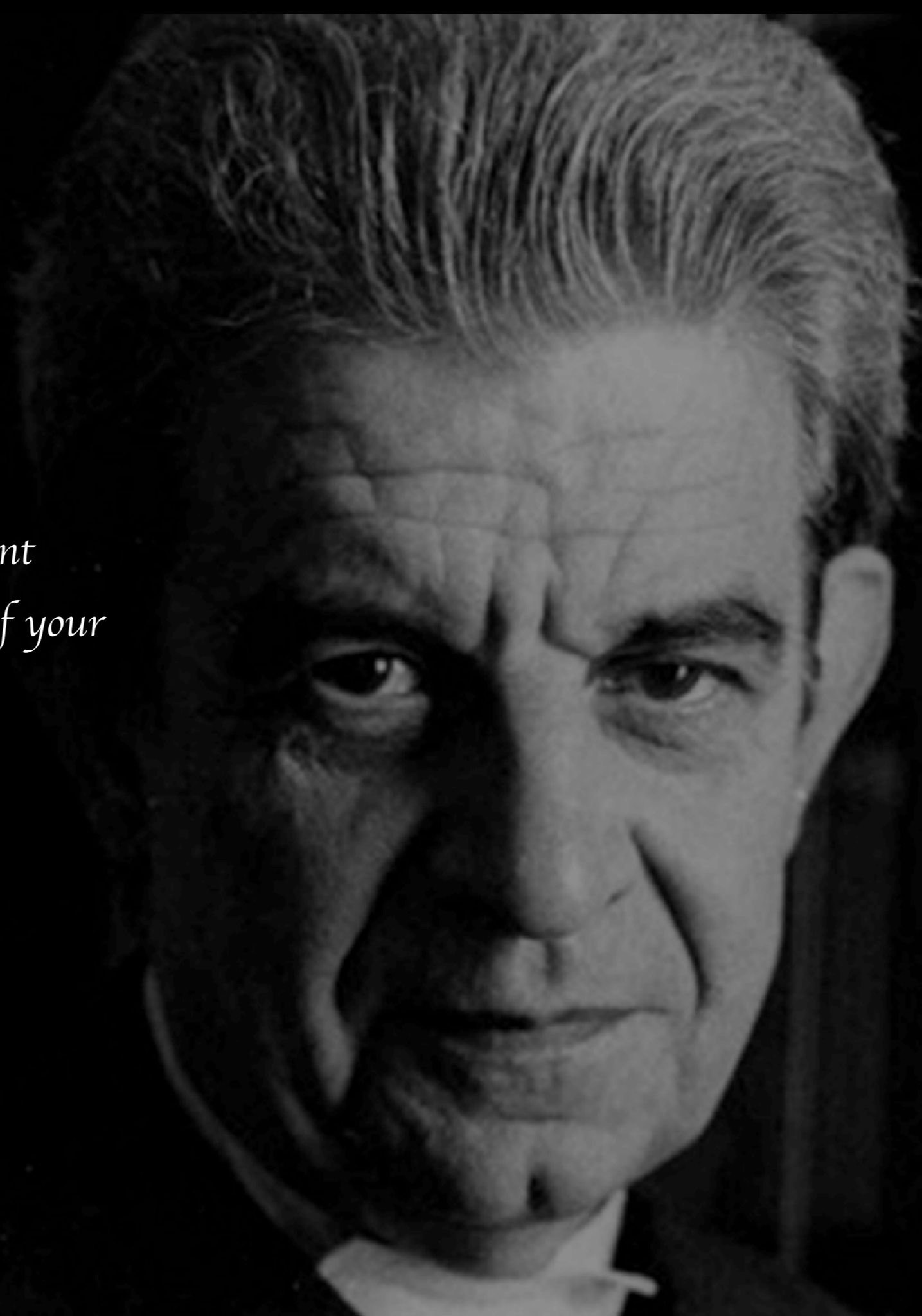
*“One of the finest tragedies of the single dramatic poet
who can be said to stand on
a level with Shakespeare.”*

—George Eliot



*“Even if you are not aware of it, the latent
fundamental image of Antigone forms part of your
morality.”*

—Jacques Lacan



SOPHOCLES



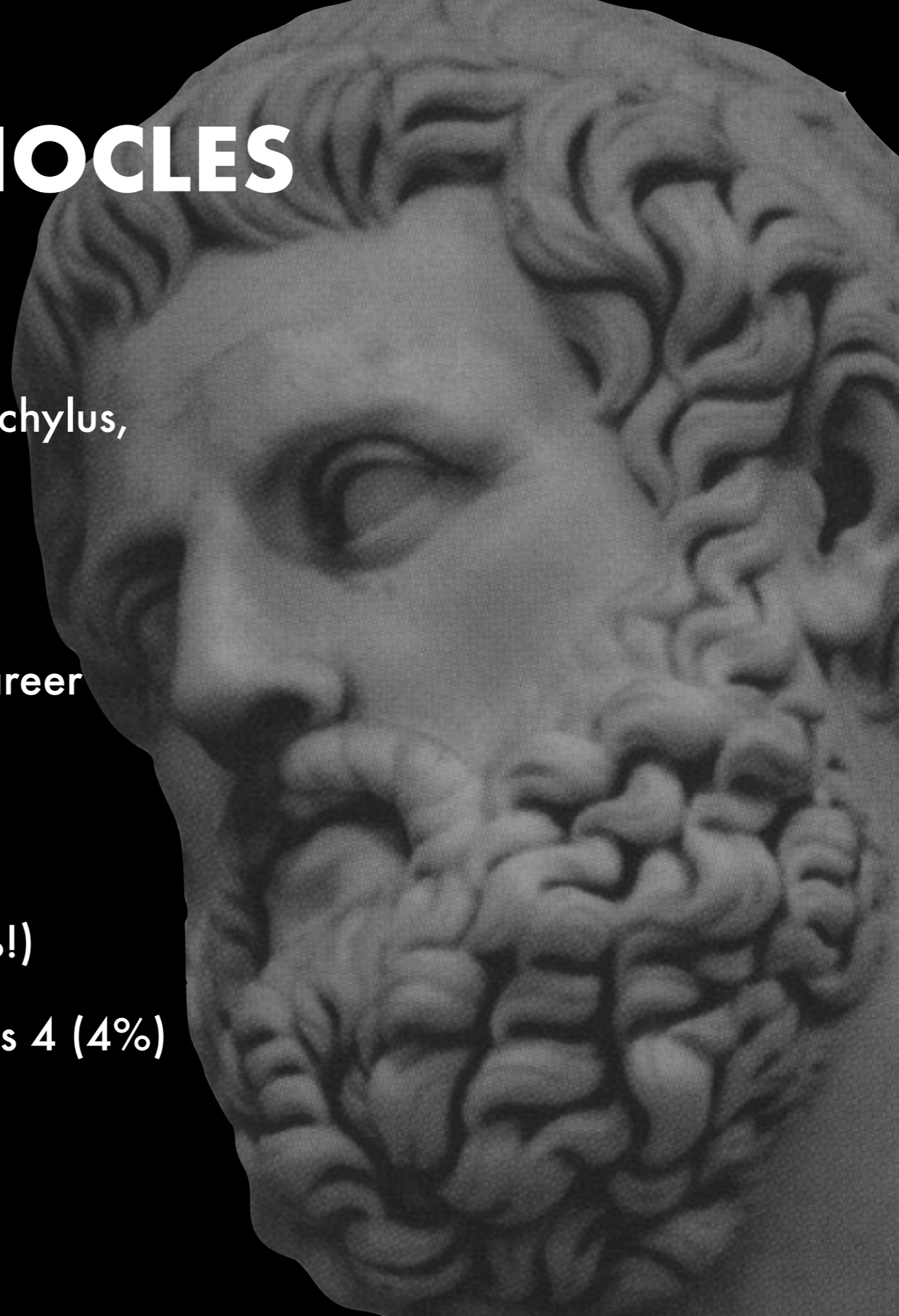
ANTIGONE

I. The Man



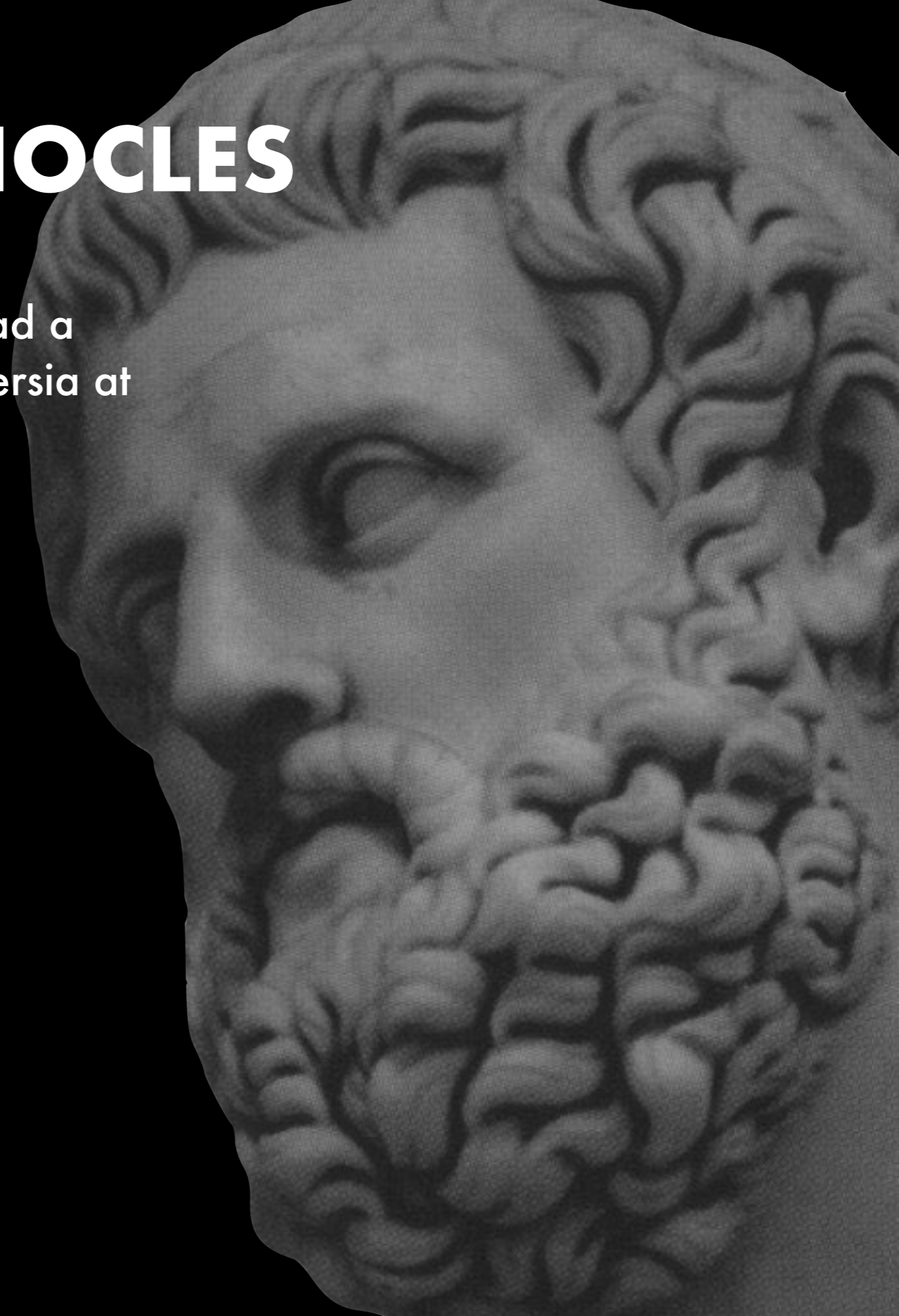
SOPHOCLES

- Born c. 495 BCE in the deme Colonus
 - (about 25 years younger than Aeschylus, 15 years older than Euripides)
- Over 120 plays produced across a career that spanned more than 60 years
- 24 victories at the City Dionysia (78%!)
 - Aeschylus won 13 (58%), Euripides 4 (4%)



SOPHOCLES

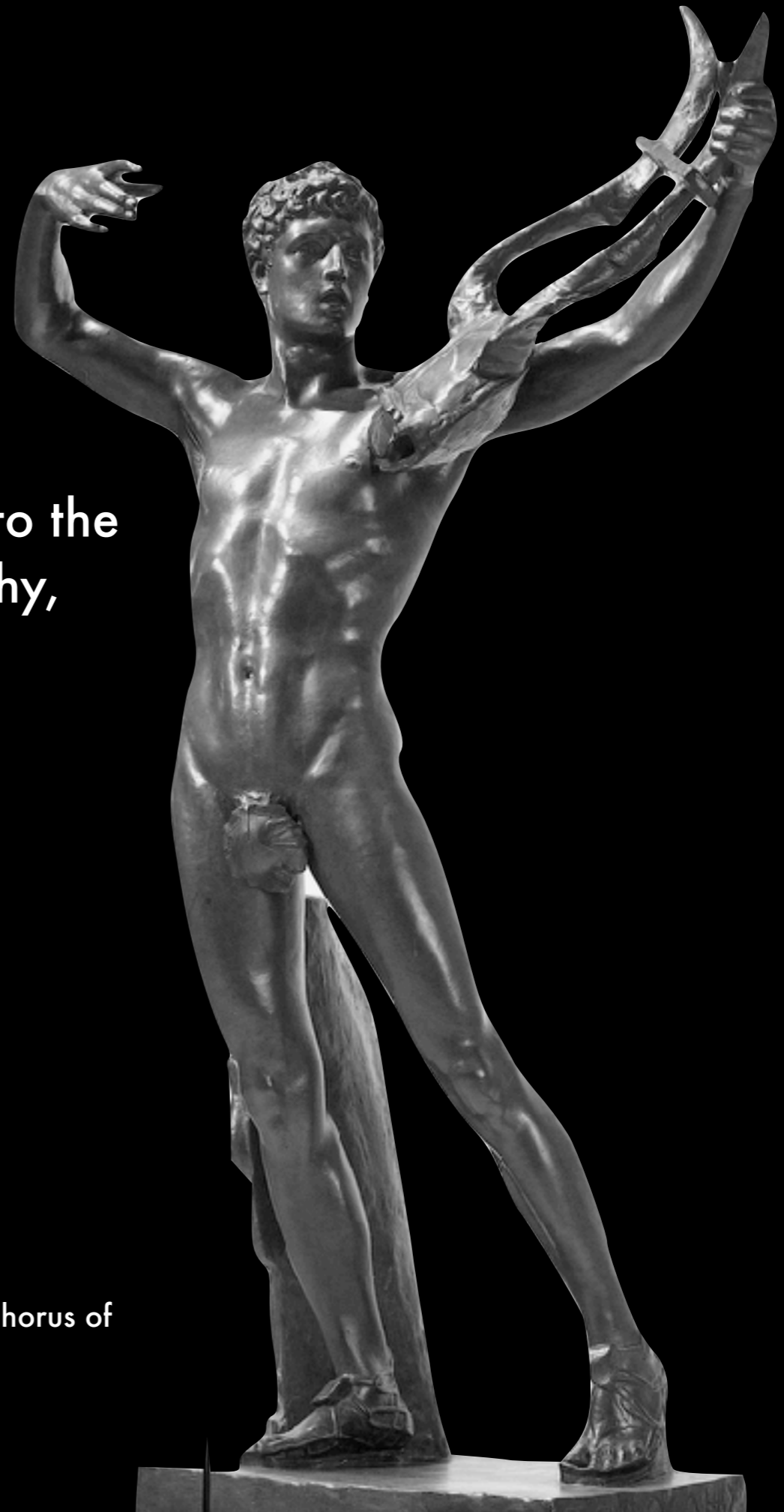
- At age 15, chosen to dance (or lead a chorus) to celebrate victory over Persia at Salamis (480 BCE)



“After the battle of Salamis... he danced to the accompaniment of his lyre round the trophy, naked and anointed with oil.”

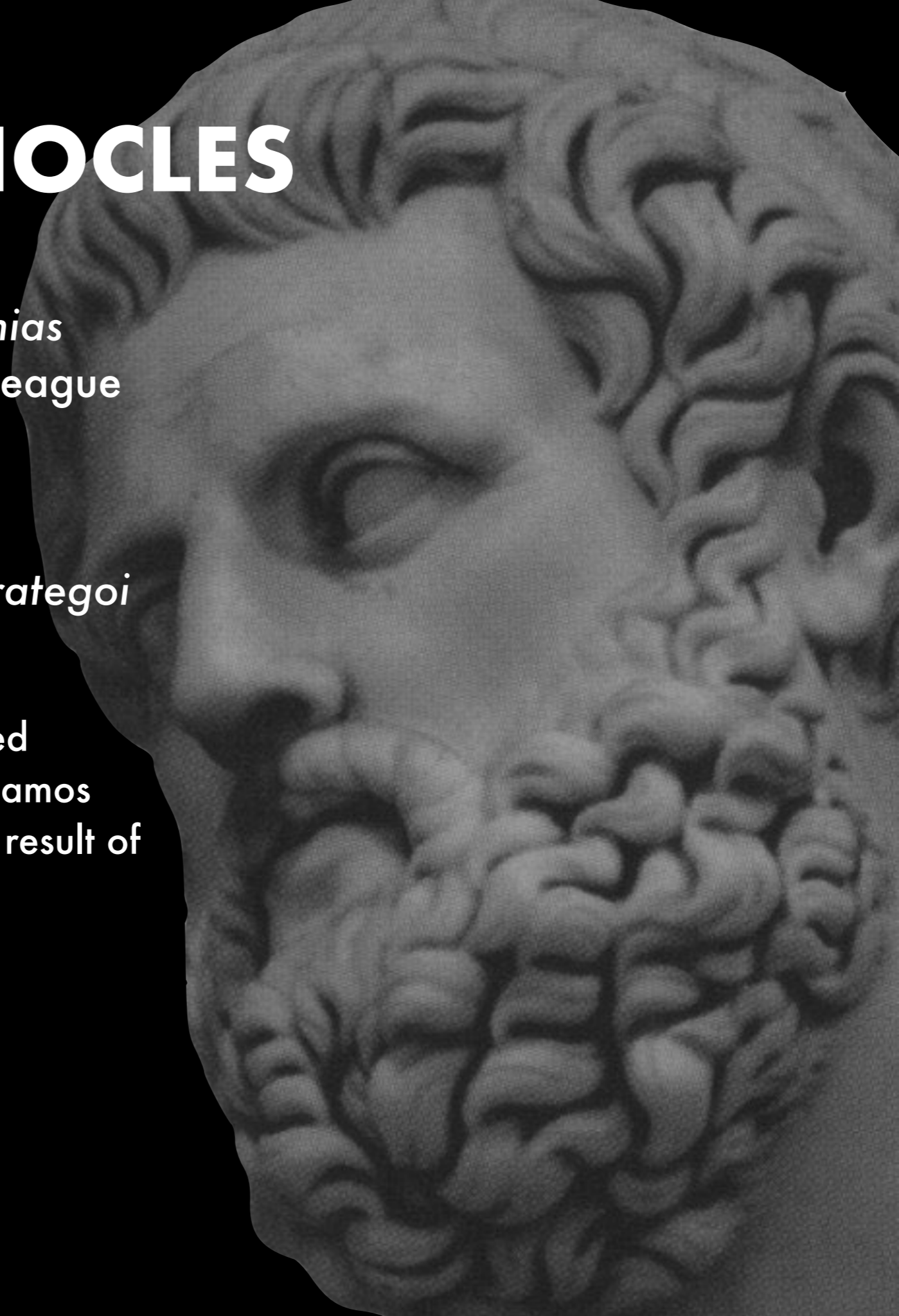
Athenaeus 1.20

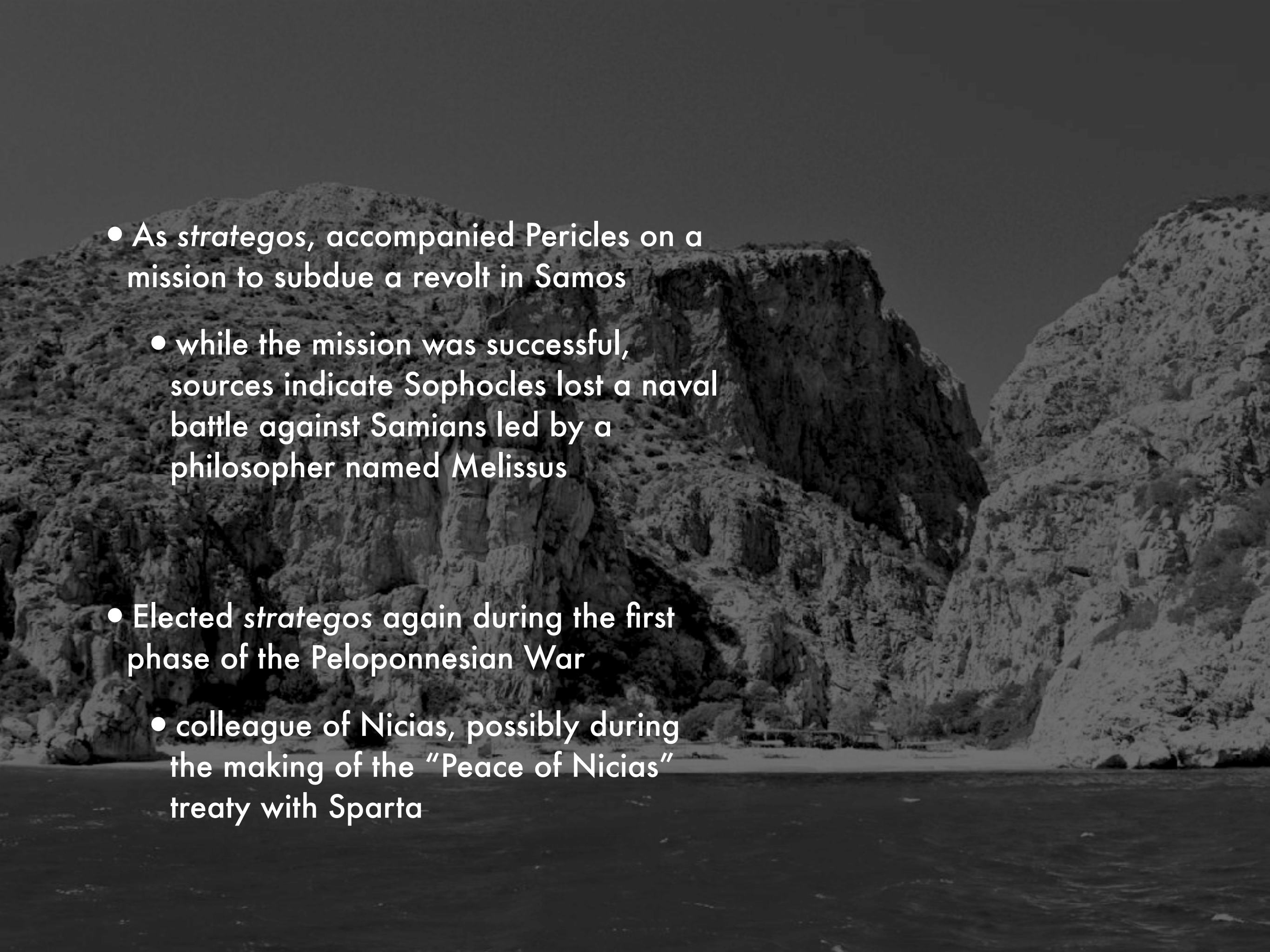
John Talbott Donoghue, “The Young Sophocles Leading the Chorus of Victory after the Battle of Salamis” (1885)



SOPHOCLES

- In 443-2 BCE, served as *hellenotamias* “Hellenic treasurer” of the Delian League
- In 441-0 BCE, elected one of ten *strategoi* (magistrates with military functions)
 - “It is said that Sophocles was deemed worthy of his office as *strategos* at Samos because he had acquired fame as a result of the performance of his *Antigone*.”
(Aristophanes of Byzantium)



- 
- As *strategos*, accompanied Pericles on a mission to subdue a revolt in Samos
 - while the mission was successful, sources indicate Sophocles lost a naval battle against Samians led by a philosopher named Melissus
 - Elected *strategos* again during the first phase of the Peloponnesian War
 - colleague of Nicias, possibly during the making of the “Peace of Nicias” treaty with Sparta

SOPHOCLES



A first-hand anecdote about Sophocles:

“I met the poet Sophocles on Chios when he was sailing to Lesbos as a *strategos*; he is a happy man who gets happy after having a few drinks and who is very astute.

The boy assigned to pour the wine stood near the fire... As the boy tried to use his finger to remove a straw from the goblet, Sophocles asked whether he saw the straw clearly. The boy declared that he did. ‘Then blow it away, so as not to wet your finger.’ And when the boy tried to do so, Sophocles brought the goblet close to his own mouth, so that his head was closer to the boy’s. And when he was very close to him, he seized him with his arm and gave him a kiss.

SOPHOCLES



A first-hand anecdote about Sophocles:

“Everyone present applauded, laughing and shouting to salute the cleverness with which Sophocles had taken the boy by surprise.

‘Gentlemen,’ Sophocles declared, ‘I have been training myself in strategy since Pericles claimed that although I knew poetry, I was ignorant of strategy. But didn’t my stratagem succeed?’ So there is one example among many others of the shrewdness of Sophocles’ words and his acts when he took part in banquets.”

Ion of Chios, quoted in Athenaeus 13.

SOPHOCLES' CAREER



c. 468 BCE

First competition and first victory (over Aeschylus!)

???

Ajax

???

Trachiniae

442 BCE (?)

Antigone

???

Oedipus Tyrannus (second prize!)

???

Electra

409 BCE

Philoctetes

406/5 BCE

Death of Sophocles (months after death of Euripides)

401 BCE

Oedipus at Colonus

SOPHOCLES' CAREER

c. 468 BCE First competition and first victory (over Aeschylus)

??? *Ajax*

??? *Trachiniae*

442 BCE (?) *Antigone*

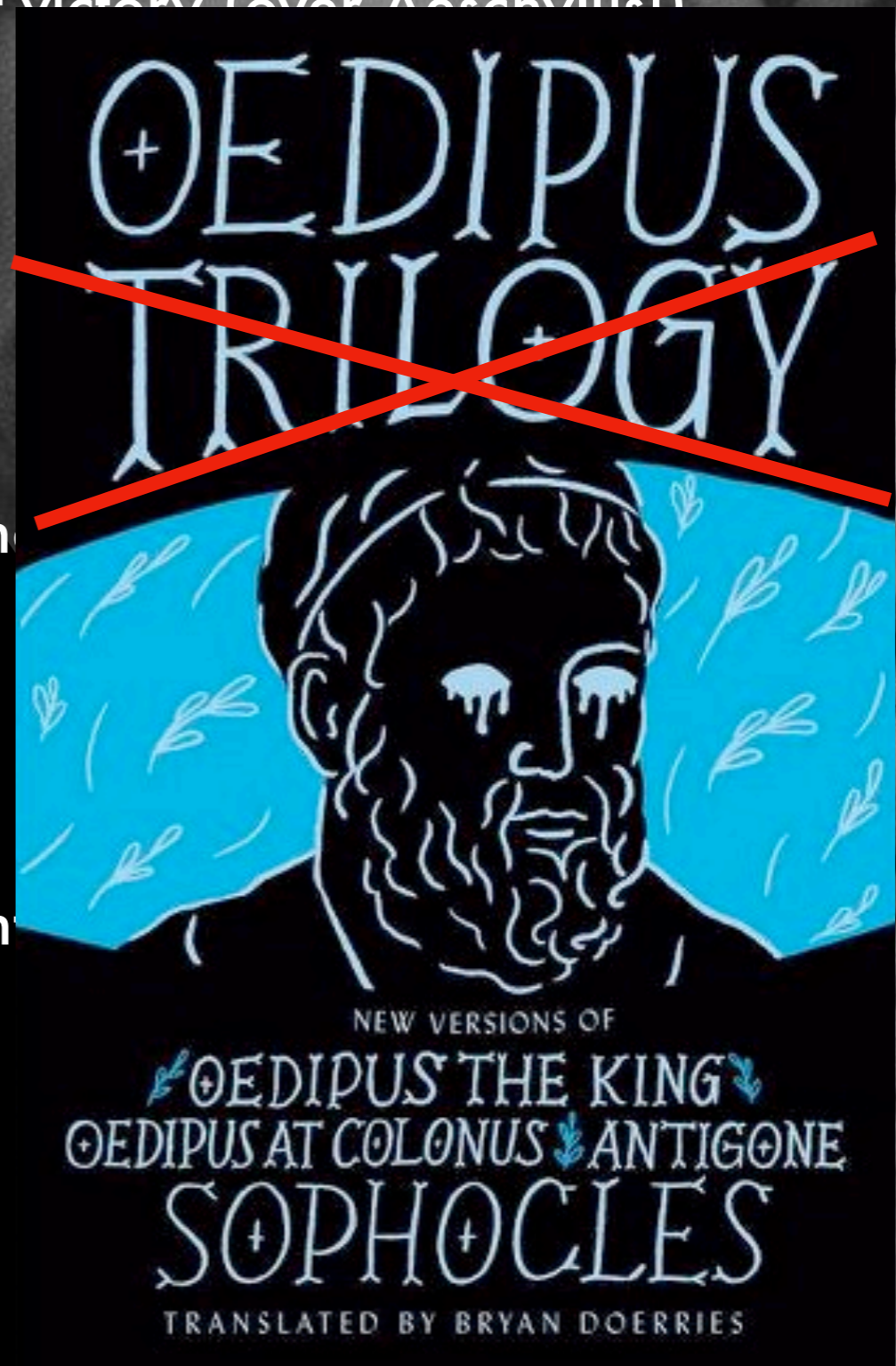
??? *Oedipus Tyrannus* (second)

??? *Electra*

409 BCE *Philoctetes*

406/5 BCE Death of Sophocles (mon)

401 BCE *Oedipus at Colonus*



SOPHOCLES



“And it is said that Sophocles, when defending himself against the charge of dementia brought by his sons, read aloud the entrance song of the chorus in the *Oedipus at Colonus*... and the song aroused such admiration that he was escorted from the court as if from the theatre, with the applause and shouts of those present.”
(Plutarch, *Moralia* 785)

“The poet said, ‘If I am Sophocles I am not senile; if I am senile, I am not Sophocles.’”
(*Vita Sophoclis*)



II. The Myth

The Theban saga was, after the Trojan War cycle, one of the most popular and enduring themes in Greek literature throughout the Archaic and Classical periods.

Before Sophocles, it had been the subject of

- Three epic cycle poems: *Thebais*, *Oedipodeia*, *Epigonoii*
- Poems by Hesiod, Stesichorus, Ion, and others
- Two tragic trilogies by Aeschylus:
 - *Nemea*, *Argeioi*, *Eleusinioi*, and *Epigonoii*
 - *Laius*, *Oedipus*, *Seven Against Thebes*, *Sphinx*



The text of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* that has been transmitted to us ends with a scene in which, following the duel between Eteocles and Polyneices, Polyneice's burial is forbidden.

Antigone and Ismene enter and Antigone asserts she will disobey the law.

Scholars believe this scene was not written by Aeschylus, but added many years later to make the play pair more easily with Sophocles' *Antigone*.

Enter from the palace ANTIGONE and ISMENE followed by a group of women making gestures of mourning. The CHORUS make room for the procession to take a stand about halfway between the palace door and the biers.

CHORUS For that ungrateful task,
the lament of these two brothers,
here now come these two,
Antigone and Ismene.
They will surely utter
loud, unstinted grief
from lovely breast and throat.
But it is right for us
before we hear their voices
to chant the grating hymn,
the harsh hymn of the Fury,
and over the dead to sing
the hate-filled paean of Hades.

1100

1110

O in your brothers most unfortunate,
of all women swayed to the menstrual pulse
most luckless and set apart,
I groan and weep for you;
without riddle or mask, but openly
I make these shrill sounds in the blood of my heart.

The CHORUS stand near the biers, alternately addressing ETEOKLES and POLYNEICES, ANTIGONE and ISMENE, and each other.

SEMI-CHORUS And you, defiant ones, foes to your kindred,
enemies to yourselves, your family's blood,
perverse and obstinate in evil paths
who seized at spear-point what had been your father's,
O full of grief, unfortunates, who found
in the deep violation of your home
misfortune, and the angry, fatal wound;

1120

Sophocles' likely inventions:

- Turning a political conflict about the return of soldiers' bodies between Thebes and Argos and/or Athens into a domestic one within Thebes
- Making Antigone, rather than Adrastus of Argos or Theseus of Athens, into Creon's opponent. "Gender, youthful desire, paternal authority, and the mysterious will of hidden gods are thus made into key issues" (M. Griffith).
- The roles of Haemon, Eurydice, and Ismene



Euripides later (?) wrote his own *Antigone*:

"Antigone is detected [burying Polyneices] in the company of Haemon and is joined with him in marriage; and she gives birth to a child, Maeon."

(Aristophanes of Byzantium)

Antigone also features in Euripides' *Phoenissae* ("Phoenician Women") which treats the war between Eteocles and Polyneices.





Per Gabriel Wickenberg, *Oedipus and Antigone*, 1833



III. The Play

Structure of *Antigone*:

Scene 1	Prologue (1-99)	Antigone, Ismene
	Parados (100-61)	Chorus entrance
Scenes 2, 3	First Episode (162-331)	Creon, Chorus, Guard
	First Stasimon (332-75) <small>"Ode to Man"</small>	Chorus
Scenes 4, 5	Second Episode (376-581)	Guard, Creon, Antigone, Chorus, Ismene
	Second Stasimon (582-625)	Chorus
Scene 6	Third Episode (626-780)	Chorus, Haemon, Creon
	Third Stasimon (781-801)	Chorus
Scenes 7, 8	Fourth Episode (802-943)	Chorus, Antigone, Creon
	Fourth Stasimon (944-87)	Chorus
Scene 9	Fifth Episode (988-1114)	Teiresias, Creon, Chorus
	Fifth Stasimon (1115-54)	Chorus
Scenes 10, 11	Exodos (1155-1353)	Messenger, Chorus, Eurydice, Creon



Possible distribution of roles:

First actor (*protagōnistēs*)

Creon

Second actor (*deuteragōnistēs*)

Antigone, Haemon, Teiresias, Eurydice

Third actor (*tritagōnistēs*)

Ismene, Guard, Messenger

“Antigone herself is, in fact, absent from much of Sophocles’ play. After her exit into night, the drama is Creon’s. Pondering the dual or ‘broken-backed’ architecture of Sophocles’ dramaturgy, commentators have repeatedly suggested that ‘Antigone and Creon’ would be a more just title” (G. Steiner).



Sophocles' Style

- "Certainly many poets have imitated one of their predecessors or contemporaries, but Sophocles culled the best from each. For this reason he was also called 'the bee.' He brought everything together: timing, sweetness, courage, variety.

"He knew how to match timing and events, so that he could delineate a whole character from a fraction of a line or from a single speech. This is the greatest mark of poetic skill, to delineate character or effect."

(Vita Sophoclis)

Sophocles' Style

- "Of these [tragic actions], the worst is for someone to be about to act knowingly, and yet not to do so: this is both repugnant and untragic (since it lacks suffering). That is why no one makes such plots, or only rarely, for instance with Haemon and Creon in the *Antigone*."
(Aristotle, *Poetics* 14)
- "Sophocles said he created characters as they ought to be, Euripides as they really are."
(*Poetics* 25)

The Death of Sophocles

- "Satyrus says that when Sophocles was reciting the *Antigone* and came to a passage at the end of the play that did not have a break or mark for a pause, he strained his voice too much and gave up life along with his voice.

"Some say that after he recited the drama, and he was proclaimed winner, he was overcome by joy and died."
(*Vita Sophoclis*)

“Out of Sophocles’ seven surviving plays, four—including the celebrated *Antigone*—seem to have left no clearly detectable mark in surviving [vase] paintings.”

Oliver Taplin, *Pots and Plays*



NINOS DESAPARECIDOS



IV. The Legacy

ABUELAS de PLAZA



E IG... TEIN...

"Sophocles' *Antigone* may be the most commented-upon drama in the history of philosophy, feminism, and political theory."

Bonnie Honig; *Antigone, Interrupted*

“The rise of the *Antigone* in critical esteem is both a symptom and a cause of changing conceptions of genre: its central ethical conflict, political context, and foregrounding of gender relations (to say nothing of the power of its poetry and drama) have given it a special role in modern thought about tragedy.

The play’s importance has only increased since the idealist period, and today it is one of the most frequently translated, adapted, and appropriated of all Greek tragedies.”

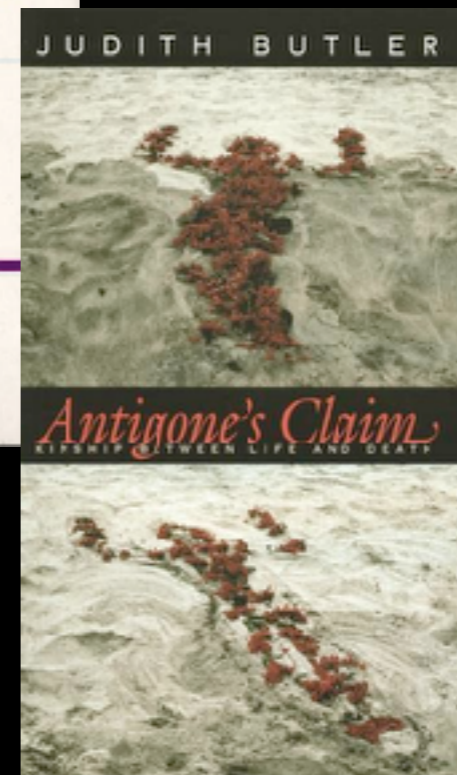
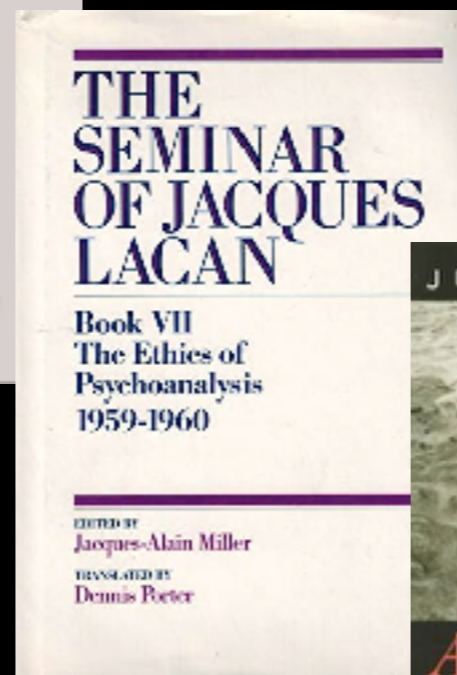
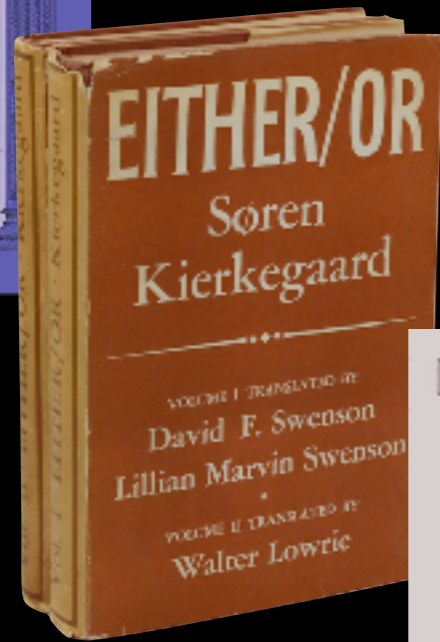
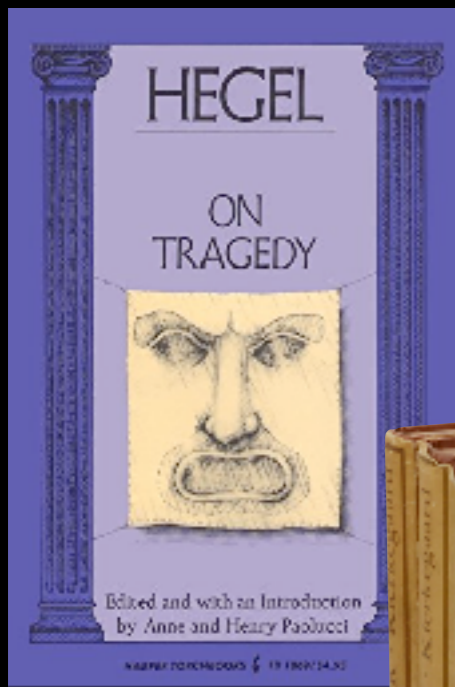
Joshua Billings, *The Genealogy of the Tragic*

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1832)

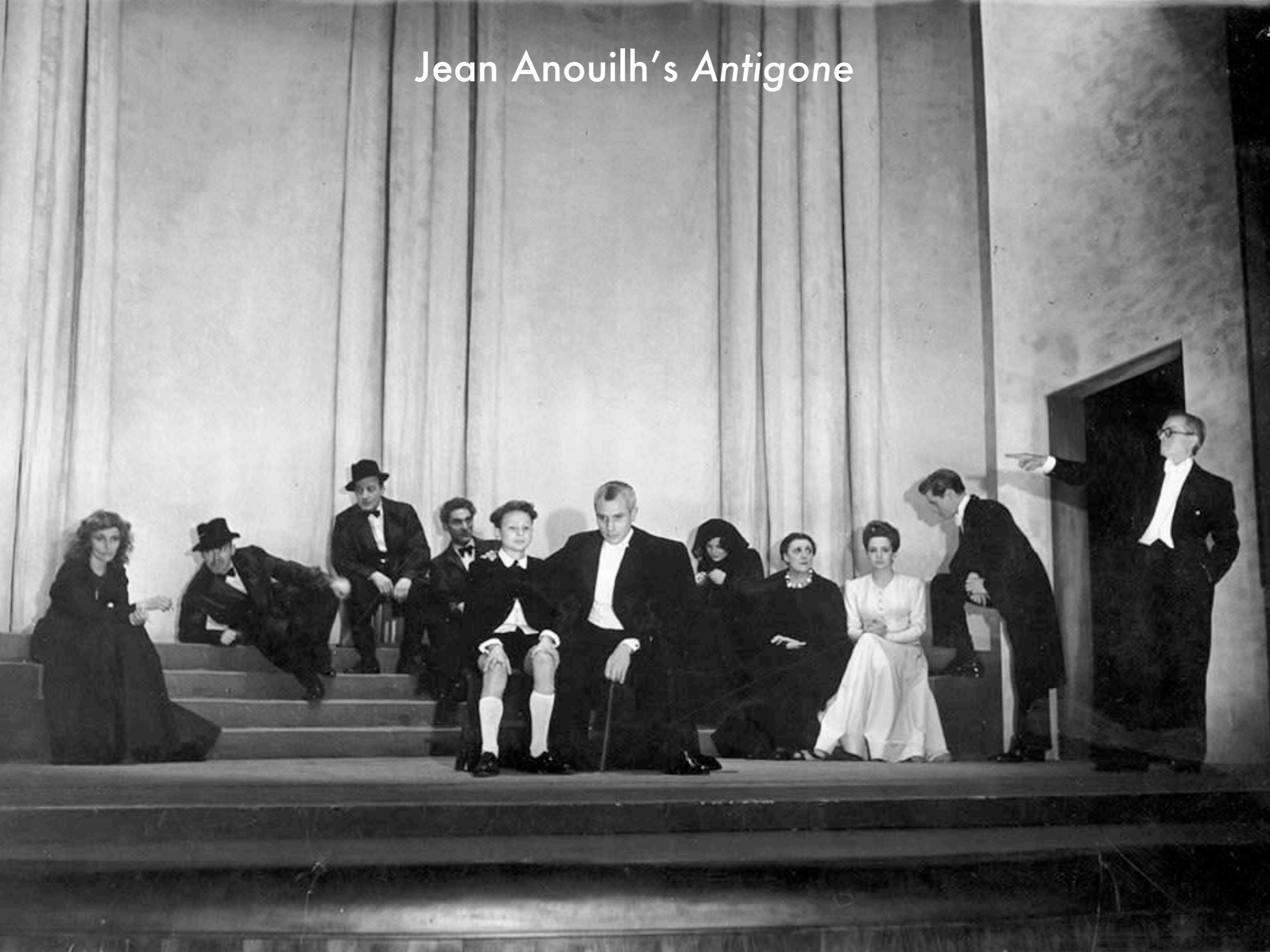
"The collision between the two highest moral powers is enacted... in that absolute *exemplum* of tragedy, *Antigone*. Here, familial love, the holy, the inward, belonging to inner feeling, and therefore known also as the law of the nether gods, collides with the right of the state.

Creon is not a tyrant, but actually an ethical power. Creon is not in the wrong. He maintains that the law of the state, the authority of government, must be held in respect, and that infraction of the law must be followed by punishment.

Each of these two sides actualizes only one of the ethical powers... This is their one-sidedness. The meaning of eternal justice is made manifest thus: both attain injustice just because they are one-sided, but both also attain justice. Here both possess their validity, but an *equalized validity*. Justice only comes forward to oppose one-sidedness."



Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*

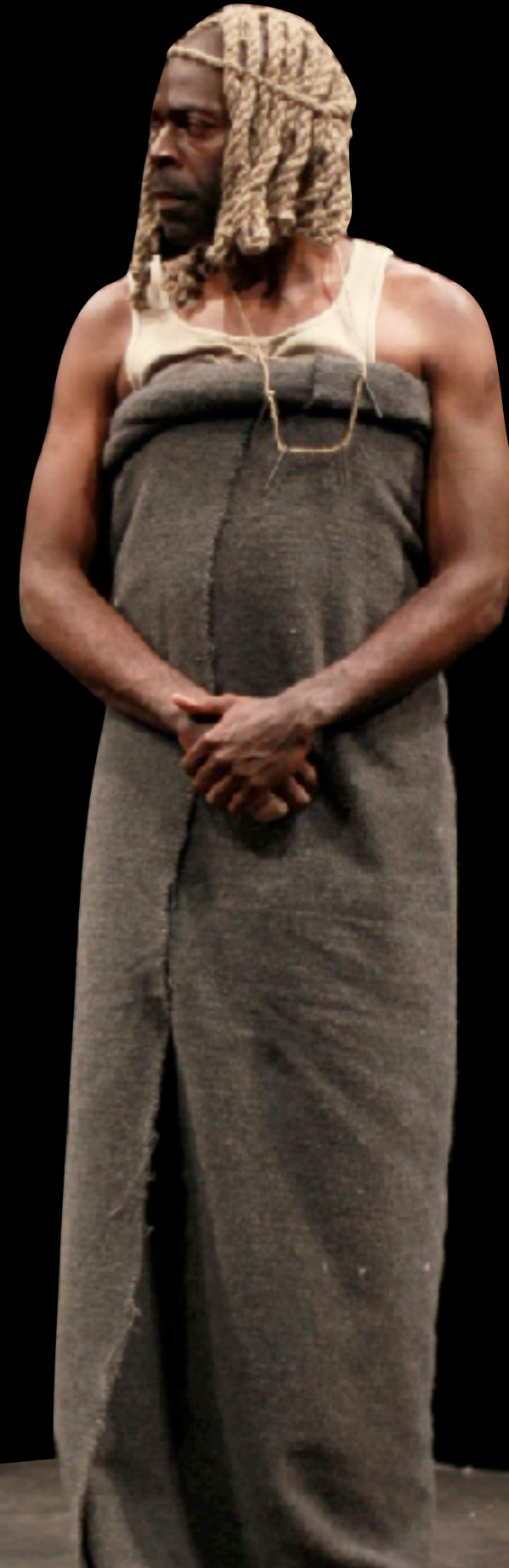


Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*

- First performed in Paris in 1944, during the Nazi occupation
- "... a mindlessly idealistic Antigone who, despite the efforts of a pragmatic, long-suffering (and generally more sympathetic) Creon, sacrifices herself for no good reason." (M. Griffith)

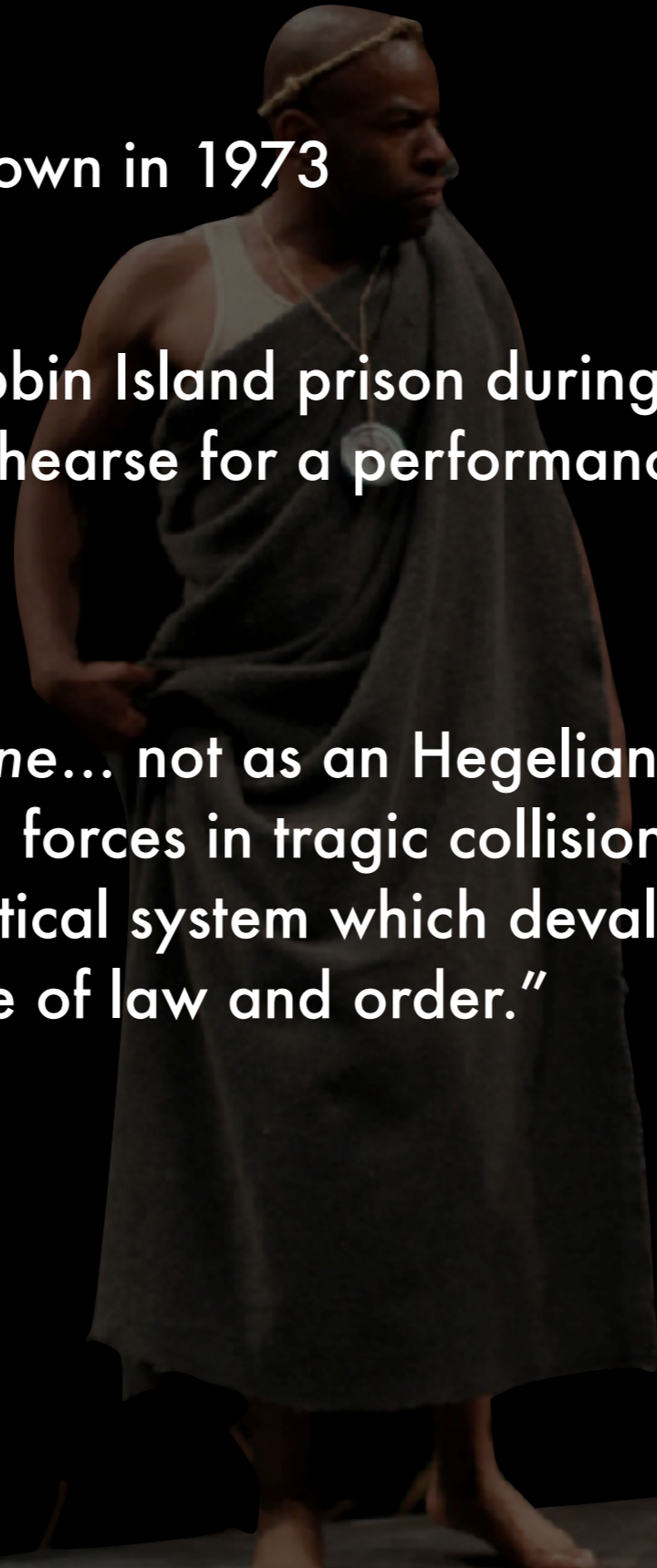


Athol Fugard's *The Island*



Athol Fugard's *The Island*

- First performed in Cape Town in 1973
- A two-man play set in Robbin Island prison during apartheid; two inmates rehearse for a performance of *Antigone*
- "Fugard reads the *Antigone*... not as an Hegelian balance of equally ethical forces in tragic collision, but as the indictment of a political system which devalues human dignity in the name of law and order."
(Errol Durbach)

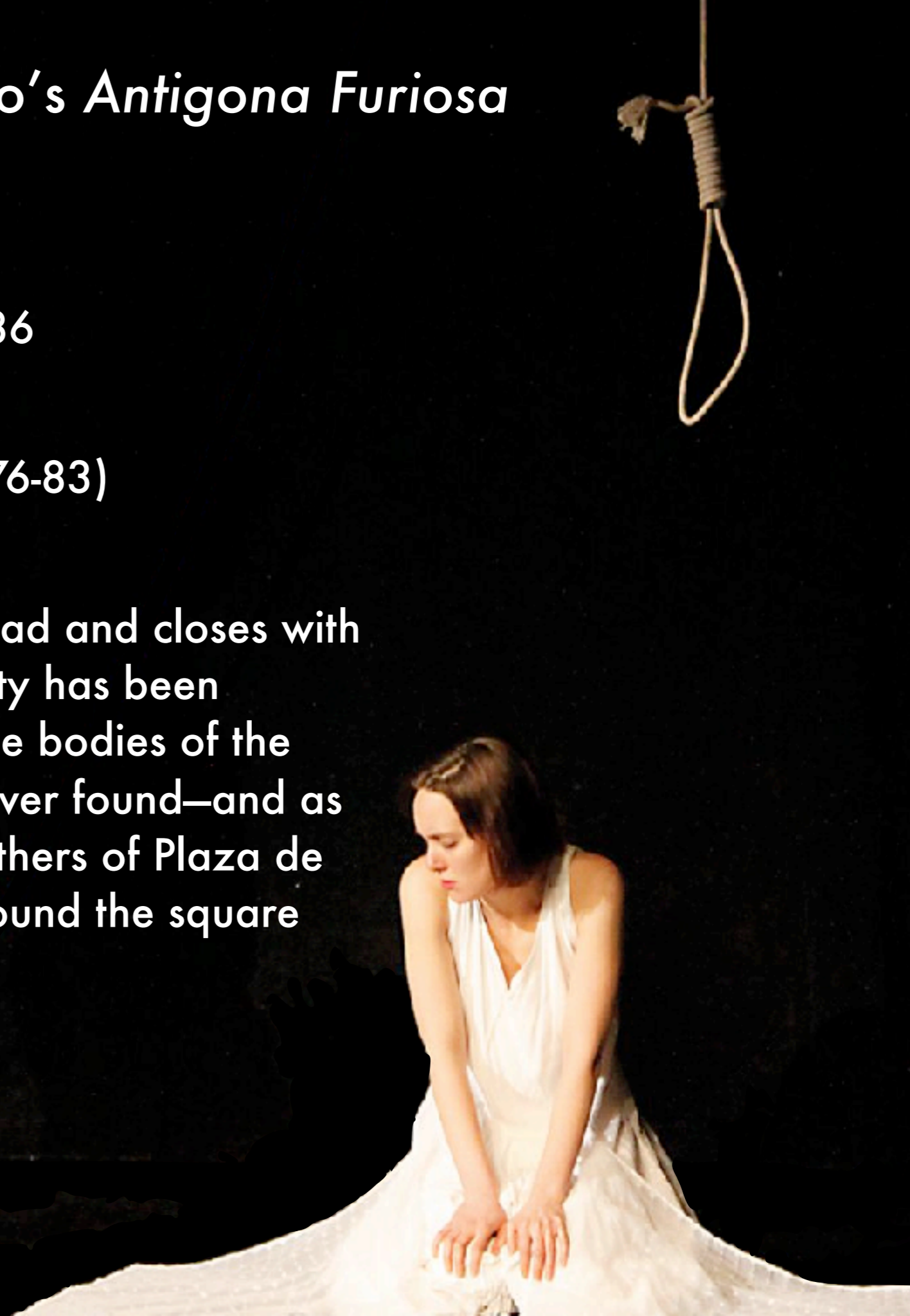


Griselda Gambaro's *Antigona Furiosa*



Griselda Gambaro's *Antigona Furiosa*

- First performed in Buenos Aires in 1986
- Set during Argentina's Dirty War (1976-83)
- The play "opens with the Antigone dead and closes with the death of Antigone.... This circularity has been interpreted... both as a reminder of the bodies of the *desaparecidos*—always looked for, never found—and as a representation of their mothers (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo), walking tirelessly in circles around the square claiming for their missing children."
(Maria Florencia Nelli)





Asociación
Madres de Plaza de Mayo
¡Ni un paso atrás!

Asociación
Madres de Plaza de Mayo

Asociación
Madres de Plaza de Mayo

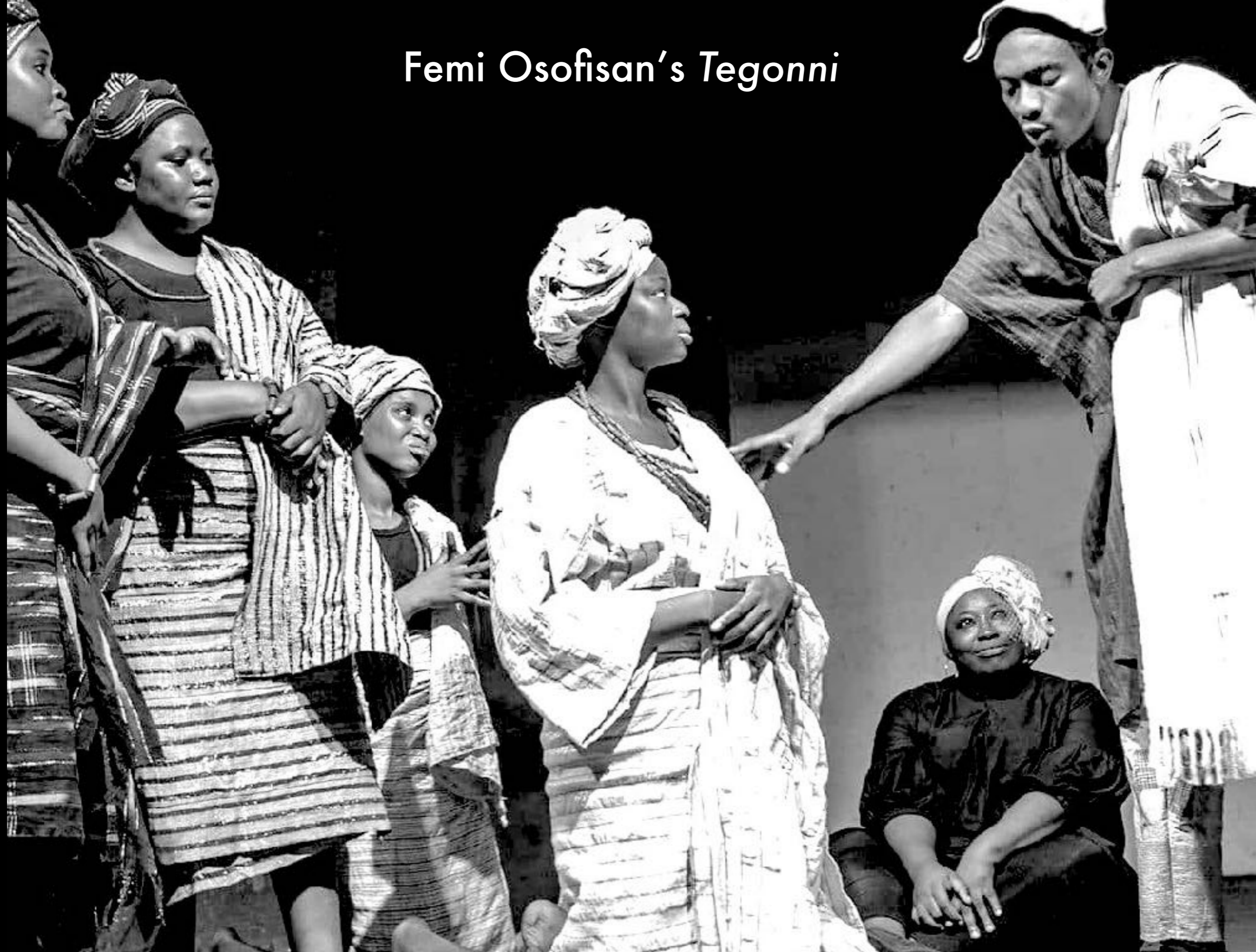
Asociación
Madres de Plaza de Mayo

Asociación
Madres de Plaza de Mayo

¡Ni un paso atrás!



Femi Osofisan's *Tegonni*



Femi Osofisan's *Tegonni*

- First performed at Emory University in 1994
- Set in nineteenth century colonial Nigeria
- "I remembered the story of the British colonisation of Nigeria and the defeat of my ancestors. And I remembered the valiant story of Antigone. The two events—one from history, the other from myth—would help me add my voice to the millions of other small voices in Africa, all shouting unheard and pleading to be set free—voices that are waiting desperately for help from friends in the free world."

"The intention is to turn the stage into a problematic space of ideological conflict, through which the audience can see itself mirrored and, possibly, energized in its struggle with history."

ANTIGONICK

SOPHOKLES

Translated by Anne Carson

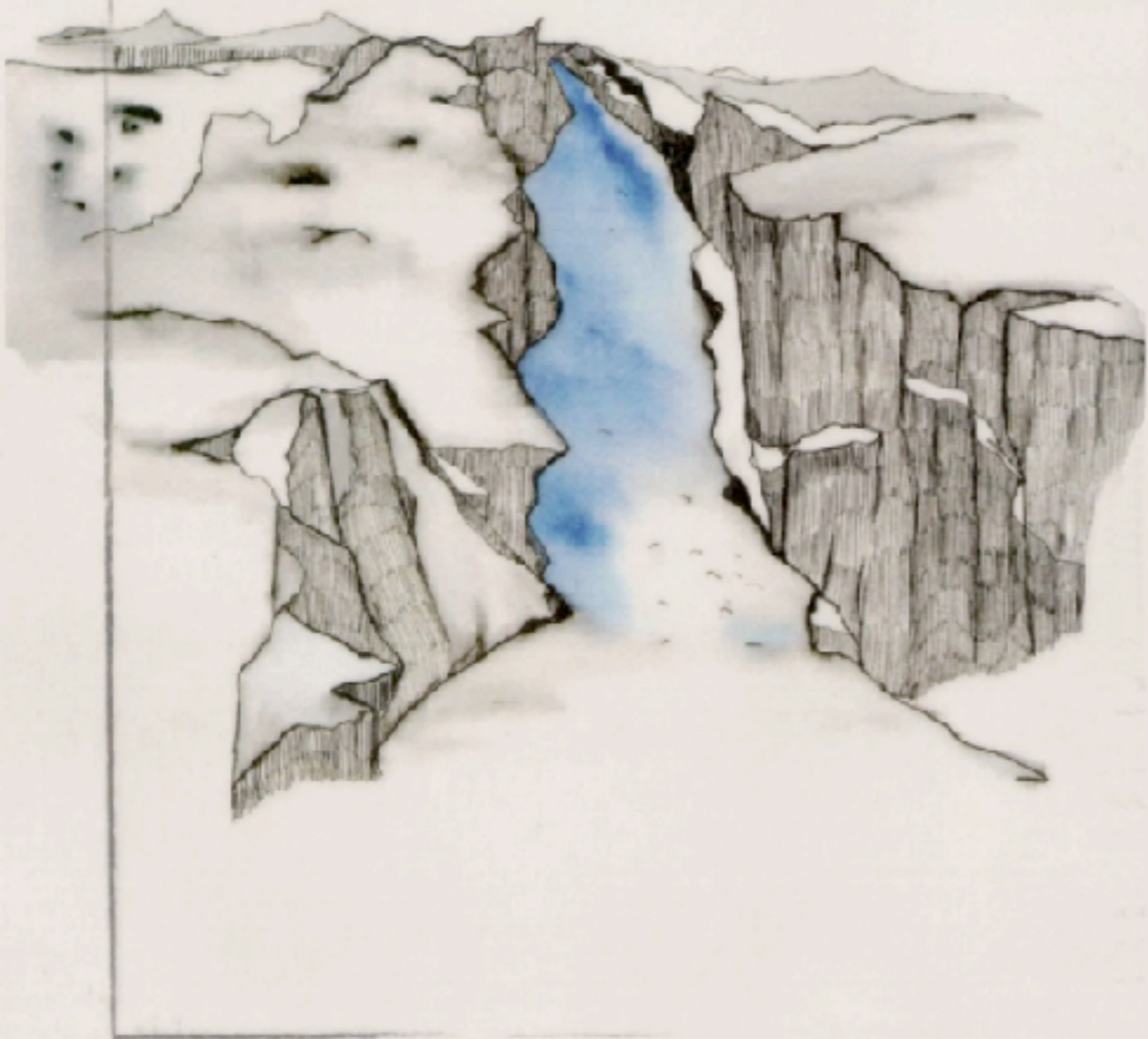
Illustrated by Bianca Stone

Design by Robert Currie



A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK

(2012)



[ENTER GUARD]

GUARD: WELL KREON: WELL WHAT GUARD: WELL WE
KREON: WELL WE WHAT GUARD: WELL WE SAW

SOMEONE KREON: SAW SOMEONE WHAT GUARD: OR
ACTUALLY NO ONE KREON: WAS IT SOMEONE OR NO ONE
GUARD: WELL HYPOTHETICALLY KREON: YOU GOAT'S
ANUS, TELL ME WHO BURIED THAT BODY I SAID WAS

UNLAWFUL TO TOUCH GUARD: DON'T KNOW KREON: SO
FIND OUT

[EXIT KREON AND GUARD]

CHOROS:

MANY TERRIBLY QUIET CUSTOMERS EXIST BUT NONE MORE
TERRIBLY QUIET THAN MAN
HIS FOOTSTEPS PASS SO PERILOUSLY SOFT ACROSS THE SEA
IN MARBLE WINTER
UP THE STIFF BLUE WAVES AND EVERY TUESDAY
DOWN HE GRINDS THE UNASTONISHABLE EARTH
WITH HORSE AND SHATTER

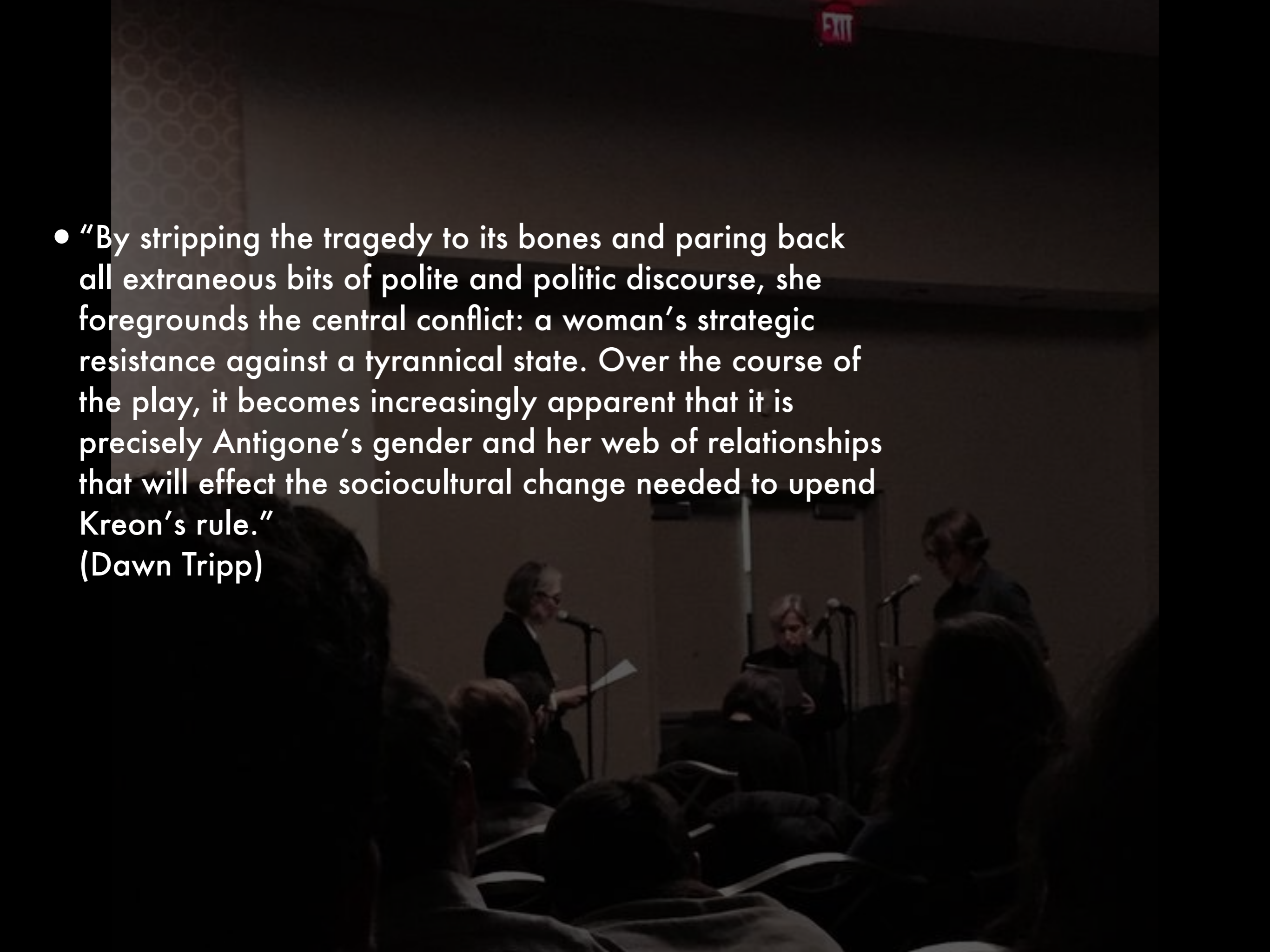
SHATTERS TOO THE CHEEKS OF BIRDS AND TRAPS THEM IN HIS FOREST
HEADLIGHTS,
SALTY SILVERS ROLL INTO HIS NET, HE WEAVES IT JUST FOR

THAT,

EXIT



- “By stripping the tragedy to its bones and paring back all extraneous bits of polite and politic discourse, she foregrounds the central conflict: a woman’s strategic resistance against a tyrannical state. Over the course of the play, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is precisely Antigone’s gender and her web of relationships that will effect the sociocultural change needed to upend Kreon’s rule.”
(Dawn Tripp)



CHORUS: LAST WORD WISDOM BETTER GET SOME
EVEN TOO LATE