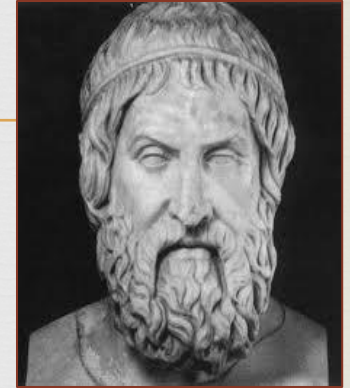


ANTIGONE



BACKGROUND

SOPHOCLES



∞ BIOGRAPHY:

∞ c.496 BC - c.406 BC

∞ born in Colonus

∞ north-west of Athens

∞ always held in high regard

∞ (see Oedipus Coloneus)

∞ family = wealthy

∞ most productive era =

∞ under PERICLES

∞ statesman, general (@ 495-429)

∞ finest phase in Athenian history

∞ period of commercial, artistic, & intellectual growth***

SOPHOCLES



☞ STYLE:

☞ unquestioning belief in the justice of the gods

☞ humans must follow the divine order

☞ protagonists =

☞ strong-willed

☞ prideful

☞ lack of self-knowledge

☞ → leads to their downfall

☞ complex plots, subtle characterization

☞ changes:

☞ 3rd actor, complexity, reduced role of Chorus

SOPHOCLES



☞ PLAYS:

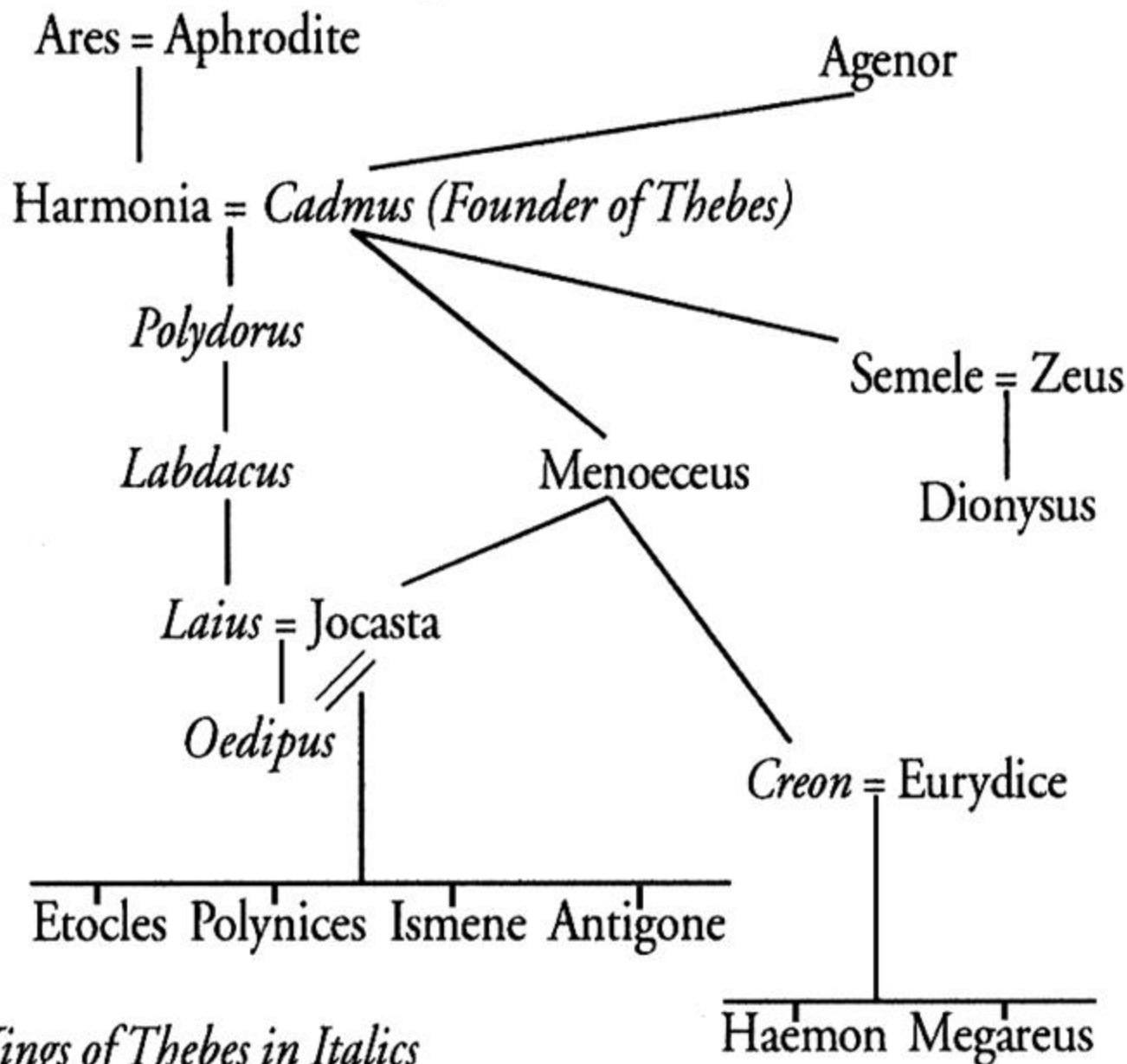
- ☞ wrote approximately 90 plays
 - ☞ from 90 to 130
 - ☞ 110 titles
 - ☞ only 7 extant
 - ☞ produced one every other year
- ☞ won 18 prizes
 - ☞ (at the City Dionysia)
 - ☞ 1st or 2nd, never 3rd
 - ☞ (several other victories at the Lenaea)
- ☞ 7 extant plays:
 - ☞ some fragments
 - ☞ *Electra, Ajax, Trachiniae, Philoctetes*
- ☞ Theban plays
 - ☞ *Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone*

ANTIGONE



- ❧ THEBAN PLAYS = NOT a TRILOGY
- ❧ written out of order - (3, 1, 2)
 - ❧ Antigone (c. 442 BC)
 - ❧ before the outbreak of civil war (Peloponnesian Wars)
 - ❧ Oedipus the King (430 BC)
 - ❧ during early years of the wars
 - ❧ after the Athenian plague of 429 BC
 - ❧ Oedipus at Colonus (401 BC - after Sophocles' death)
 - ❧ in Sophocles' old age
 - ❧ in the final desperate days of the wars
- ❧ independent units
- ❧ not a single story arch
- ❧ inconsistencies, different mythical antecedents
- ❧ changing tragic vision

The Royal Line of Thebes



ANTIGONE



❧ BACKGROUND:

❧ Curse of the gods on House of Laius

❧ Oracle of Delphi

❧ Apollo's oracle

❧ prophecy warns that Laius will be killed by his son

❧ "Oedipus"

❧ in response, when Jocaste later bore him a son, Laius abandons the child to die in the mountains

❧ his feet pinned & bound ("swollen foot")

❧ BUT

❧ he survives - found, rescued by shepherd

❧ taken to Corinth, adopted by King Polybus & wife



ANTIGONE



☞ BACKGROUND:

☞ Curse of the gods on House of Laius

☞ Prophecy #2

- ☞ as a young man, Oedipus goes to Delphi & learns
- ☞ he is fated to kill his father & marry his mother
- ☞ → he vows never to return to Corinth

☞ Prophecies fulfilled

- ☞ on road to Thebes, Oedipus meets & kills his father (unbeknownst to either)
- ☞ solves the Riddle of the Sphinx
- ☞ & as a reward for ending the plague upon the city
- ☞ becomes king of Thebes & marries Jocasta



ANTIGONE



❧ BACKGROUND:

❧ Curse of the gods on House of Laius

❧ Oedipus & Jocasta's children

- ❧ Polynices
- ❧ Eteocles (TWINS)
- ❧ Antigone
- ❧ Ismene

❧ Blinding truth

- ❧ several years later, Oedipus learns the truth of his actions
- ❧ blinds himself (w/Jocasta's broaches), abdicates, exiles self
- ❧ Jocasta hangs herself (w/her hair)
- ❧ Creon (Jocasta's brother) becomes regent of Thebes
- ❧ until sons (in alternating years) will rule



ANTIGONE

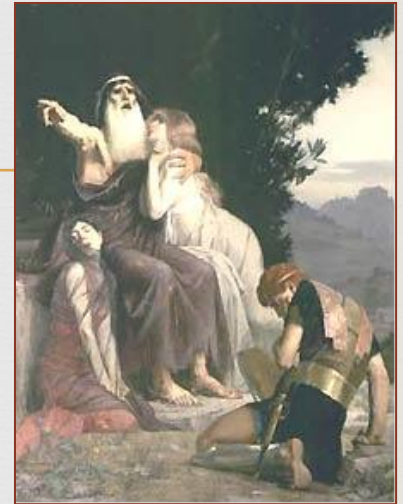


∞ BACKGROUND:

∞ Curse of the gods on House of Laius

∞ Oedipus @ Colonus

- ∞ rejoined w/ Ismene (w/ news of oracle)
- ∞ oracle **prophecy** @ Oedipus' corpse in Thebes = good
- ∞ visited by Creon, Polynices – both w/ self-interest
- ∞ Oedipus curses E&P as traitors (*kill each in battle*)
 - ∞ "That city you will never storm, but first will fall, you and your brother, blood-imbrued. [...] This curse I leave you as my last bequest: Never to win by arms your native land, nor return to Argos, but by a kinsman's hand to die and slay."
- ∞ Oedipus dies, daughters return to Thebes to try to stop bloodshed



ANTIGONE



❧ BACKGROUND:

❧ **Curse of the gods on House of Laius**

❧ **Civil War**

- ❧ Polynices, Eteocles (older, younger) vie for throne
- ❧ Eteocles exiled Polynices (to Argos)
- ❧ Polynices returns w/army - 7 chieftains ("7 against Thebes")
- ❧ Polynices & Eteocles kill each other in the ensuing battle
- ❧ Creon =
 - ❧ king of Thebes
 - ❧ uncle to Antigone & Ismene
 - ❧ soon to be father-in-law to Antigone
 - ❧ father of Haemon



ANTIGONE



☞ OPENING:

- ☞ The royal house of **THEBES**. It is still night, and the invading armies have just been driven from the city. Fighting on opposite sides, the sons of Oedipus - **ETEOCLES** and **POLYNICES** - have killed each other in combat. Their uncle - Creon - is now king of Thebes.
- ☞ Enter **ANTIGONE**, slipping through the central doors of the palace. She motions to her sister - **ISMENE** - who follows her cautiously toward an altar at the center of the stage.

ANTIGONE



❧ OPENING:

❧ Setting -

- ❧ nighttime
- ❧ immediately after a civil war
- ❧ brothers just fought & killed each other
- ❧ no clear king - not through primogeniture

❧ Actions -

- ❧ *slipping, motions, cautiously*

❧ Mood (Setting + Actions) -

- ❧ fear, tension, danger, unease