

## REFLECTIONS ON THE PLAY

Writing any adaptation is like drawing a map from the original to your own version. At each intersection, you make a choice about which way you want to go; the final destination depends on your focus, your interests, your emotional response, your personal experience and your research.

I started my map with the girl herself: Antigone. I read articles, listened to podcasts and ordered every adaptation of her story that I could get my hands on. I learnt what she meant to audiences across the centuries and why her story still moves people today. Antigone stood out to me as a rebel girl, willing to risk everything for what she believed in.

As I read Sophocles' play, I scribbled ideas in notebooks and on index cards. I recorded voice notes to myself whilst walking the dog. Sometimes, I talked to the dog, asking him what he thought about making Creon's conscience into a blind crow. Before writing any scenes, I slept on ideas, daydreamed characters into existence and let the conflict and themes that were brewing in my head clash against the ordinary everyday of living.

At first, Antigone and Creon filled my thoughts. Both are larger than life: powerful and stubborn in their own way. Antigone is brave and tenacious but her treatment of Ismene bothered me. Creon is angry and oppressive and yet, I began to feel a reluctant sympathy for him. Gradually, Ismene and Haemon emerged as quieter characters with something important to say.

I decided to set my version of *Antigone* in *The Facility* because I've worked in prisons and know them as intense microsocieties where a conflict between two strong characters can be explosive. Antigone as inmate and Creon as prison governor felt like a rich dynamic to explore, full of potential for drama and social comment.

The key themes are disturbingly relevant today: inequality, patriarchy, poverty and shame. In *The Facility*, Antigone is determined

to learn the truth about the death of Polynice. By taking on Creon, she is fighting for all marginalised voices – including her own. Her struggle draws out the themes of resilience, resistance, creativity and loyalty.

I am a poet as well as a script writer so the structure and style of Sophocles' *Antigone* appealed to me. I began plotting my story around seven scenes and six choral songs: my scenes advance the narrative while the choral songs play with language and form – often with a direct nod to the original as in 'Ode to Man.'

In later drafts, I allowed the Chorus, Crow and the ghost of Polynice to drift from the choral songs into the scenes, blurring the lines between poetry and prose: between narrative and comment. I created rules for myself that I broke – sometimes to create an unexpected juxtaposition or interruption: sometimes to deliberately encourage the audience to reflect mid-action.

At times, particularly with the Chorus, I have used punctuation as it's used in poetry: to emphasise the rhythm, to suggest a pause or to foreground a particular point. Feel free to play with these choices in your performance as you experiment with meaning and delivery.

I have kept stage directions to a minimum because this is your play to interpret and make relevant to your lives. Creon may be dressed as a clown. The chorus could be played by puppets. Gender roles might be reversed. Sing. Shout. Dance. Keep the stage bare or fill it with balloons to be popped throughout the performance. Have fun. Be brave. Make your voices heard.

*Sarah Hehir*