

The Misguided *Pietas* of Antigone in Statius' *Thebaid*

Antigone has often been identified as a figure of *pietas* in a world of overturned values. This identification comes first from her participation in attempts to block the final duel between her brothers, most directly in her appeal from the walls of Thebes to Polynices. Equally important is her defiance of Creon's order that Polynices remain unburied. A third factor in Antigone's display of *pietas* is the literal and figurative support she provides to her father, particularly in the aftermath of the death of her brothers. Discussion about Antigone's *pietas* has tended to focus on the results of her acts, with recent opinion leaning towards viewing her as, in the end, a failure. Despite her actions, the duel still happens and her father still suffers partial exile. Even her burial of Polynices is in some sense a failure, as the hatred between him and Eteocles is renewed on their funeral pyre.

While I agree that Antigone ultimately fails, this paper considers the problems inherent in her *pietas* and how they necessitate her failure. Through a consideration of the specific acts that Antigone carries out, including her involvement in a number of delays to the duel between Eteocles and Polynices, her defiance of Creon's edict, and the assistance she provides to Oedipus, and through a comparison of these with the *pietas* of Hypsipyle in the same poem, I will demonstrate that Antigone's actions are unsuccessful because the people towards whom her *pietas* is directed, especially Oedipus and Polynices, are impious, making her actions misguided and in support of impiety and *nefas*.