

from The Half-life of Creonite

An Antipodean Antigone

Marion M Campbell

This script for musical theatre¹ is set in Intensive Care (Neurology). Subsequent to his bashing by Creon's Security Guards, in the course of a protest occupation of the Ministry for Interior Affairs, Antigone's brother, Paul (Polyneices) lies brain dead, on life support.

So as not to make him a martyr for the What's Left Cause, Creon has rushed through legislation declaring euthanasia a treasonable offence. Haemon, Antigone's fiancé is trying to dissuade her from her darker purpose, to set Paul's soul free – to let him go.

Act Three, Scene 1

HAEMON

(Comes in; sits at end of bed; waits.)

ANTIGONE

(Looks up without recognition.)

HAEMON

Hey. Yeah it's me. Tig?

(Moves as if to embrace her.)

ANTIGONE

Don't *touch* me.

This is what your father –

Don't *touch* me.

HAEMON

Darling, Darling.

You know.

I am nothing to do with this.

ANTIGONE

This is the blood on your father's hands.

This is *my* blood *you* have spilled.

HAEMON

So this is where the division falls is it?

Your blood and mine. When we've been inside one another moving through each other's dreams. Telepathically-fucking-fused-as-one and you say this is *your* blood and that *I* have spilled it.

So this is how *you* draw the line?

ANTIGONE

From such bloodspills walls are raised and trenches dug. You know that.

HAEMON

I came my dearest darling to say I am totally outraged, totally with you on this.

ANTIGONE

Sorry I can't do with your *totally outraged*.

(Beat)

With your headline sentiments.

This is mine, my stuff now, below words, beyond them, way beyond.

Your words can't reach me now.

(ANTIGONE holding hands over ears.

HAEMON keeps talking inaudibly.)

Words smash like waves against some far off cliff face.

Like in a movie, soundtrack mute.

Mute. Mute!

(Drags HAEMON's face down to Paul's)

This is your father's moral portrait now.

Here in this smashed up brain.

This bombsite of a personality.

He's busted my brother out of his mind, out of his body and left us this flattened travesty and still and still and still he's using it for all the politics he can wring out of it.

Want words from me now – they come from the black blood of his lip.

(Beat)

Want looks from me now – they come from the busted blindness of his eye.

HAEMON

So much for what I thought we had. So soon and you've moved over. Unreachable. In love at first sight – with death.

Perhaps the rest has always been a sham for you: our love – what we have together.

A diversion at most until a melodramatic opportunity with Dame Destiny comes along?

I would have given my life for you.

CREATIVE
from The Half-Life of Creonite

ANTIGONE

Dame Destiny makes you sneer now? Don't you *cartoon* me like Issy. Or maybe I'm wrong? Maybe you're *not* better than the rest of them? Can't believe there's anything bigger to go for than little dreams of nesting couples?

Breeding nests?

And bleeding nest eggs?

I've never been sham in love and you know that.

But it's too late. And now you've said those words, call *melodrama* my only *possible* path of action.

I think we must have always been in different places altogether.

Where *could* we go with 'what we had' after *this*?

I *have* to let him die!

Haemon!

And you know your lovely father's decreed euthanasia *murder*?

(Looks at HAEMON is he crying? Softer now. Helpless.)

Do you want *what we had* in prison then?

Haemon?

He has to be laid to rest.

In his own place.

For God's sake, Haemon?

HAEMON

(Holds ANTIGONE tight in front of screen)

Hold me just hold me.

I can feel the ink flowing down the groove between us like blood does like something already written

like his death does and it darkens, goes still.

Is this languagelessness between us ... death?

You don't have to be author of it.

Of his death, Antigone.

You said how you loved Ardour, remember, the beach shack, us side by side with the surf roaring, remember, and the driftwood fire and a song shaping between us, a mattress, a doona, my keyboard on the floor, us drinking wine from the same glass. And your voice, like the soft wind on the dunes, like the song of the moving dunes and the dull boom of the surf through the night and remember, then on the windowsill, your black cat arching, beaming her moonshine eyes

straight in. Destiny was different for you then. Destiny, you said, let's call her Destiny. You said it was like a fate had taken shape, night had come calling, bright and yowling at the glass.

And, my love, that was a softer fate you saw back then.

And you saying nothing could get better than that?

And you saying, *What more do you need, I call this blessed!*

Our love, and then our songs coming.

And the blues? The Love Shack Blues you sang?

(Sings softly)

little love shack in the dunes

soft wind humming love's own tune

slow surf booming through the night

driftwood fire still alight

no refuge to the refugee

whose boat's been towed back out to sea

whose blood has stained the beach's shine

now razor wire draws the line

HAEMON & ANTIGONE

(Sing together)

little love shack in the dunes

soft wind humming love's own tune

slow surf booming through the night

driftwood fire still alight

no refuge for the refugee

whose boat's been towed back out to sea

whose blood has stained the beach's shine

now razor wire draws the line

HAEMON

Oh sweetheart, it's not too late! Let your dear brother live on – let us live on, I beg you. We can fight for their rights together. And Paul might revive or he might die. We mustn't force the wager. We can't force fate.

ANTIGONE

We. We? I am not forcing fate, Haemon. I would let death *welcome* my brother, receive him. This is where we are so different. I am just giving myself as fate's instrument. I've got to answer its call. We can't go back to our shack in the dunes. I knew already in that song it was too late.

CREATIVE
from The Half-Life of Creonite

HAEMON

Ah, and you know now how to drive in the barb.

coming down on you, loosening your grip on everything else and only death's here – like lava in your veins.

ANTIGONE

Well, habit kills things surely. Coralling moments into repetition, into pattern will surely *kill* those moments. That moment is precious for me, what do you think? I just don't want to weaken it with rituals of reminiscence. *We always make our getaway to Ardour*: do you like the sound of that? What do you want to say? Again and again and again?

(Pulling away)

You're . . . you're greedy for it!

Oh my dearest.

Maybe that's why your look from the beginning broke my heart.

You'd gone, way before I set eyes on you, fast-forward into age.

When you led your father shared his blindness shared his

homelessness! Oh your soul

had sailed out and seen his frontierless solitude.

You shared the walking plague that he became.

Like when you burned in my arms you were always anticipating a greater fire.

A fire more terrible and yes –

A fire not subject to repetition!

Once you went skinless into his exile and shared his social death, his shame, his statelessness, you could never really return. Your look, oh both new born, excruciatingly so, and already terrible with infinite sorrow.

HAEMON

I'm not trying to cheapen . . . Your . . . contempt is what –

(Voice breaks.)

ANTIGONE

(Softening, once more.)

We can't go back. You know as well as I do, dear Haemon, that life isn't just in such retreats. We are – and our destiny is right here –

(Points to bed behind screen)

where our acts define us *against*, needs be, the social rule. I can't refuse what I have to do. The last thing I'll sacrifice my brother to is the total decay of Creon's Staged Morality. His Screen Christianity. His TV Evangelism.

ANTIGONE

(Almost aglow)

To see for the blind!

To say, we've entered a red country now, where raw and wounded and hate-scarred people now only speak the language of whips and knives.

I shared his soul's slow massacre.

Walked the shattered glass of his hubris.

Walked its endlessness –

until I too bristled with knife-thoughts, whip words, swallowed glass.

HAEMON

But you make Paul your own High Morality and throw away all we've had.

ANTIGONE

Hush. What we have had is always there.

(Holds hand to her heart, his heart.)

HAEMON

If only you'd let me love you now....

ANTIGONE

But I'm too far . . .

HAEMON

(Reaching for her, running his hands along her forearms. Tenderly at first, then almost repulsed.)

You *are* too far . . . It's like you've got Death

HAEMON

And you came to love me and then to tell me this! That you were only ever on borrowed time!

Do you think that I can live without you?

Do you think that I can embrace –

ANTIGONE

Oh I pity you if I am your life.

Oh I pity you if I am your reason.

HAEMON

Yes, well you might. It's like you only have now – this abstract reason's become your flaming vocation.

I'm *jealous* of your flaming vocation
and I'm unlucky enough to love you for it.
I even love you for *burning* me with it.
My soul is fused with yours whether
you like it or not. I'd give my breath
for you to breathe more deeply,
this body for you to swim more deeply
in living water, and more deeply to keep
craving life
no, not this Death that keeps you sharp and
terrible
that keeps you strange – as touching as
untouchable.

ANTIGONE

I'm sorry but *fusion* is a lie to me, Haemon.
I've seen what it's about. We're ultimately dread-
fully alone. Like for my father. There's finally
only solitude, no *fusion*. The only beautiful act
chooses the dead as its relentlessly unsentimental
audience. I must hold up my defining act to the
dead. To the beautiful and merciless judgement
of the dead.

HAEMON

Oh tell me you won't! Oh pull that terrible
thought from where it's lodged. You've got to
dispel this . . . intoxication. Think. Miracles can
happen – he might die of his own accord. An
embolism or what d'you call it? An aneurism or
whatever. They say the spleen, after such injuries
. . . Tig. Come back to me!

(HAEMON and ANTIGONE embrace but
Antigone's gaze is lost beyond the audi-
ence – where the dead watch.)

HAEMON

Darling I beg you to get some sleep, that at least.
You're in no state to make any decision. You're
wild and high on exhaustion. Overwrought. You
should feel you, your high voltage tension!

(Exits)

The Author

Marion M. Campbell's novels, *Lines of Flight* (1985), *Not Being Miriam* (1988) and *Prowler* (1999) were published by Fremantle Arts Centre Press and a fourth, *Shadow Thief* will be published in May 2006 by Pandanus Press. She has had two works produced for performance: *Dr Memory in the Dream Home* and *Ariadne's Understudies*. Marion teaches Creative Writing in the Department of English at the University of Melbourne.

Notes

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