Version 1: Fitts and Fitzgerald Translation

**CREON:**

Gentlemen: I have the honor to inform you that our Ship of

State, which recent storms have threatened to destroy, has come

safely to harbor at last, guided by the merciful wisdom of Heaven. I

have summoned you here this morning because I know that I can

depend upon you: your devotion to King Laios was absolute; you 5

never hesitated in your duty to our late ruler Oedipus; and when

Oedipus died, your loyalty was transferred to his children.

Unfortunately, as you know, his two sons, the princes Eteocles and

Polyneices, have killed each other in battle, and I, as the next in

blood, have succeeded to the full power of the throne. 10

I am aware, of course, that no Ruler can expect complete

loyalty from his subjects until he has been tested in office.

Nevertheless, I say to you at the very outset that I have nothing but

contempt for the kind of Governor who is afraid, for whatever reason,

to follow the course that he knows is best for the State; and as for the 15

man who sets private friendship above the public welfare, ––I have

no use for him, either. I call God to witness that if I saw my country

headed for ruin, I should not be afraid to speak out plainly; and I need

hardly remind you that I would never have any dealings with an

enemy of the people. No one values friendship more highly than I; 20

but we must remember that friends made at the risk of wrecking our

Ship are not real friends at all.

These are my principles, at any rate, and that is why I have

made the following decision concerning the sons of Oedipus:

Eteocles, who died as a man should die, fighting for his country, is to 25

be buried with full military honors, with all the ceremony that is usual

when the greatest heroes die; but his brother Polyneices, who broke

his exile to come back with fire and sword against his native city and

the shrines of his fathers’ gods, whose one idea was to spill the blood

of his blood and sell his own people into slavery–– Polyneices, I say, 30

is to have no burial: no man is to touch him or say the least prayer for

him; he shall lie on the plain, unburied; and the birds and the

scavenging dogs can do with him whatever they like.

This is my command, and you can see the wisdom behind it. As

long as I am King, no traitor is going to be honored with the loyal 35

man. But whoever shows by word and deed that he is on the side of

the State,––he shall have my respect while he is living and my

reverence when he is dead.

Version 2: Thomas Translation

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| **Creon:**  Gentlemen, the gods have set right again  Our city’s affairs, after shaking them  in a storm, and I have summoned you here  out of all the citizens, knowing well  how you always revered the power of 5  Laius’ throne; then, both when Oedipus saved  The city and when he fell, you stood in  consistent support of their children.  And so, since in the same day they both fell  by twofold fate, each striking and spreading 10  fratricidal pollution, now I hold  sole power and the throne, because I am  the closest relative of the fallen.  It is impossible to know the soul,  the mind, and character of any man, 15  until he has proven himself in the law.  For if someone rules an entire city  and does not take hold of the best counsels,  but holds his tongue out of fear, I think him  to be the worst of men, now and always; 20  and the man who considers more important  than his fatherland his friend, I think him  worthless. For—and may all-seeing Zeus  be my witness—I would never be silent  if I saw madness creeping among 25  the citizens in place of salvation,  not would I consider an enemy  of my country a friend to myself, | recognizing this: that my country is  safety itself, and only when she is upright 30  can our sailing find friends. With laws like these  I will make our city grow. Therefore, I  have made a decree to the citizens  concerning the sons of Oedipus:  Eteocles, who fell fighting for this city, 35  who earned every prize of valor,  will be buried and receive all honors  that go to the best of the dead below.  His erstwhile kinsman, however, I mean  Polynices, who returned from exile 40  with hopes of burning his native land and  ancestral gods from top to bottom,  wishing to feast on kindred blood and lead  the rest into slavery, it has been  decreed that in this city he shall be 45  neither buried nor mourned by anyone,  but everyone must leave him unburied,  a feast for birds and dogs, an outrage to see.  This is my judgement, and never from me  with the base take equal honor to the good; 50  but whoever is friendly to this city will  in life and death be equally honored by me. |

Version 3: Braun Translation

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| **Kreon:**  Gentlemen, the state!  The gods have quaked her in heavy weather.  Now they have righted her.  The state rides steady once again.  Out of all the citizens, I have summoned you, 5  remembering that you blessed King Laios’ reign;  when Oedipus ruled, you stood by him;  and after his destruction stood by his sons,  always with firm counsel.  Both sons died in one day, struck and stricken, 10  paired in doom and a twin pollution.  Now I rule, as next of kin.  They are dead; I am king.  It is impossible to know a man’s soul,  both the wit and will, 15  before he writes laws enforces them.  I believe that he who rules the state  and fails to embrace the best men’s counsels,  but stays locked in silence and vague fear,  is the worst man there. I have long believed so. 20  And he who cherishes an individual beyond his homeland,  he, I say, is nothing.  Zeus who sees all will see I shall not stay silent  if I see disaster marching against our citizens,  and I shall not befriend the enemy of this land. 25  For the state is safety.  When she is steady, then we can steer.  Then we can love. | These are my principles. The state will thrive through them.  Today I have proclaimed more laws akin to those.  Those concern the sons of Oedipus: 30  Eteokles, who fought in defence of the nation  and fell in action,  will be given holy burial,  a funeral suited to greatness and nobility.  But his brother, Polyneices, the exile, 35  who descended with fire to destroy his fatherland and family gods,  to drink our blood and drive us off slaves,  will have no ritual, no mourners,  will be left unburied so men may see him  ripped for food by dogs and vultures. 40  This is an example of my thinking.  I shall never let criminals excel good men in honor.  I shall honor the friends of the state  while they live, and when they die. |

Analyze the three translations of Creon’s speech. Look closely at the diction, syntax, figurative language, and structural choices.

What similarities exist? What differences?