According to the aforementioned critics, Antigone asserts herself and rejects the typical feminine role of tending hearth, husband, and family, choosing instead to stand for principle and honor in the face of death. Thus she is interpreted as a feminist Superwoman. However, a case can be made that Antigone actually holds tightly to masculine traditions rather than rebelling against them. For the sake of her male sibling’s proper burial, she is willing to sacrifice her life, but not for any hypothetical husband or hypothetical children. Antigone states, “I am the last of them [patriarchal family lineage] and I go down / in the worst death of all” (lines 942-43), continuing:

ANTIGONE. Had I been a mother
of children, and my husband been dead and rotten,
I would not have taken this weary task upon me…
If my husband were dead, I might have had another,
and children from another man, if I lost the first.
But when father and mother both were hidden in death
no brother’s life would bloom for me again…

CHORUS. It is the same blasts, the tempests of the soul,
possess her. (954-62, 980-81)

As critic Kostner points out, the tribe and family in ancient Greece was male-dominated. Women played subordinate roles and performed traditional tasks, including preparation and burial of the family dead (Kostner 165). In submitting to a sister’s role by burying her warrior-brother, Antigone is only preserving the honor of a male-dominated family line. This is not feminism.

Greek tragedy often blurs traditional roles of male and female (Loraux). However, modern readers should not assign a 21st-century worldview to the reading of a text from 441 BC when the threat of social disorder contributed to the extreme protection of women. What we know of Antigone is that she heroically sacrifices her future; what we cannot know is that she