

Professor Elizabeth Mazzola
WHUM 101
Essay #2 Prompt

Ismene: In the land of the living, sister,
The laws of the land obtain:
And the dead know that as well.
The dead will have to forgive me.
I'll be ruled by Creon's word.
Anything else is madness (*The Burial at Thebes* p. 10)

Stella: I said I am not in anything that I have a desire to get out of. Look at the mess in this room! And those empty bottles! They went through two cases last night! He promised this morning that he was going to quit having these poker parties, but you know how long such a promise is going to keep. Oh, well, it's his pleasure, like mine in the movies and bridge. People have got to tolerate each other's habits, I guess.
(*Streetcar* p. 74)

Both *Antigone* (*The Burial at Thebes*) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* feature assertive females struggling against equally formidable male powers. But both plays also include sisters who can be seen as foils and as accomplices, and your job in Essay #2 is to make an argument about the importance of their role. Why are they needed? How do they advance the main themes of these plays? You might contrast Ismene with Stella, and explore how one female blocks her sister's efforts while another female supports them. Perhaps you can bring Ismene and Stella together as more conventional images of femaleness, deferential and self-effacing, more concerned with what others think. There are other questions you might consider: Do we see these other sisters grow? What do we learn about the strong females (and the strong men who battle them) because of these "lesser" sisters in the shadows?

Be sure to supply concrete textual evidence to illustrate and support your points, and also include a conclusion where you flesh out the larger meanings of your discussion or implications of what you have proposed to your readers.

Typed and titled essays are due in class on Mon, Mar 16th. They should run 750-1000 words and be carefully proofread.