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SOPHOCLES, *ANTIGONE* 1226–30[1]

ὁ δ' ὡς ὁρᾷ σφε, στυγνὸν οἰμώξας ἔσω
χωρεῖ πρὸς αὐτὸν κἀνακωκύσας καλεῖ·
ὦ τλῆμον, οἷον ἔργον εἴργασαι· τίνα
νοῦν ἔσχες; ἐν τῷ συμφορᾶς διεφθάρης;
ἔξελθε, τέκνον, ἱκέσιός σε λίσσομαι. 1226

Unhappy boy, what a deed you have done! What came into your mind? What disaster destroyed your reason?' This version of 1228–9, by Andrew Brown in his recent commentary, represents the majority opinion. But what 'deed' has Haemon done that justifies such an outburst? Jebb, followed by Kamerbeek and Brown, claims that the deed which causes Creon to wail aloud with charges of insanity is Haemon's entry into Antigone's tomb.[2] Kamerbeek and Brown justify the extremity of Creon's reaction by claiming that Creon knows that Haemon intends to kill himself. But is it reasonable to suppose that Creon's first reaction to the shocking scene of Antigone's hanging corpse and Haemon helplessly wailing would be that Haemon is on the verge of killing himself? Creon has not had time to predict his son's actions and his screams of dismay are most naturally read as a reaction to something he sees before his eyes. It would also be strange if Creon had absolutely no reaction to Antigone's death; he expected to find her alive.

One might try a slightly different interpretation and not assume that Creon knows that Haemon is about to kill himself. In this case, *τίνα νοῦν ἔσχες* would be Creon's literal attempt to discover Haemon's intention. After all, this scene is surrounded by an atmosphere of great confusion (*ἄσημα*, 1209) and the surprise and confusion elicited by Haemon's unexpected presence leads Creon as well as the reader to wonder what exactly he is doing there. But unfortunately with this interpretation we no longer have a good explanation for Creon's vehemence and charges of insanity; if he does not understand Haemon's intentions there is no reason for him to be so passionately bewailing the fact that Haemon has broken into the cave.

There is a third reading which initially seems more promising. The 'compassionate reading' denies there is any accusatory force in Creon's words. Creon is shocked and moved by Haemon's melodramatic display of emotion (which would constitute the *ἔργον*; see 1223–5) and he thus tries to coax Haemon out of his distraught state. Creon's words would have the force of, 'Why are you taking it so badly, unhappy boy, come out of there, I beg you.' On this reading, the compassion of Creon's appeal is, of course, met with the intense anger and cruelty of Haemon, and this poignant contrast has a certain attractive dramatic force. It is not likely, however, that the text

[1] This note is a defence of my conjecture for line 1227 which appears in the critical apparatus of Lloyd-Jones's and Wilson's text (*Sophoclis Fabulae* [Oxford, 1990], p. 233) and is referred to in their book of textual notes, *Sophoclea* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 147–8. Earlier drafts were significantly improved by the helpful comments and suggestions of David Kovacs, Terry Irwin, Gordon Kirkwood, and Phil Mitsis. I wish also to thank Hugh Lloyd-Jones for his kindness and encouragement.

[2] Cf. Jebb, *The Antigone of Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1902), p. 223, J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles, Part III: The Antigone* (Leiden, 1978), pp. 197–8, and A. Brown, *Sophocles: Antigone* (Warminster, 1987), p. 221.

will bear this interpretation since στυγνὸν οἰμώξας and ἀνακωκύσας clearly suggest a highly excited and anguished tone, not a compassionate one, and ἐν τῷ συμφορᾶς διεφθάρης would be inappropriately comical since it is painfully obvious what disaster destroyed Haemon's reason. Again, it would be odd for Creon to have no reaction to Antigone's death.

S. M. Adams and W. M. Calder offer an ingenious alternative: Creon believes that Haemon has hanged Antigone, and οἷον ἔργον εἴργασαι amounts to an accusation of murder.[3] To be sure, this explains Creon's vehemence. But there are good reasons to think that Haemon could not have murdered Antigone and that Creon could not have thought he did.

Calder suggests that Haemon's words at 751 (ἦδ' οὖν θανεῖται καὶ θανοῦσ' ὀλεῖ τινά) are compatible with a threat to murder Antigone (p. 34). But anyone not defending a thesis would take 751 as Haemon's threat to kill himself in reaction to Creon's firm resolve to kill Antigone, not as a threat to kill Antigone himself or a suggestion of a murder-suicide pact.[4] We may dismiss the idea that Sophocles portrayed Haemon as having murdered Antigone. As for the idea that Creon merely thought he did, as Calder seems to suggest, that would produce a pointless detour leading nowhere, a misunderstanding that has no consequences and is never corrected.[5]

Broadhead proposed in 1968 that Creon's words at 1228–9 are best understood as addressed to the corpse of Antigone (her suicide is the most obvious thing that would provoke such a vehement reaction) and that the text of 1227 should be altered accordingly.[6] There is more to be said for this proposal than Broadhead saw. Since more recent commentators find his view implausible, a restatement with additions seems to be called for.

[3] Cf. S. M. Adams, *Sophocles the Playwright* (Toronto, 1957), pp. 57–8, and William M. Calder III, 'Was Antigone Murdered?', *GRBS* 3 (1960), 31–5.

[4] We may also want to ask ourselves what Haemon's intention possibly could have been in breaking into Antigone's tomb. After the fight with his father, who refused to yield, the most natural explanation would be that Haemon set out to free Antigone. He is greatly distraught to find her dead and violently angry with his father whom he rightly holds responsible. This is his motivation for trying to kill Creon (1231–4) and for killing himself (1235–9).

[5] Calder's arguments are entirely unconvincing. He cites the only other instance of women being killed by hanging (*Od.* 22.465ff.) which, of course, occurs outside tragedy, and is, besides, a judicial execution rather than a murder. Since hanging is one of the least likely ways that Antigone would have been murdered, and is a much more likely way for a woman to commit suicide in tragedy, the hangings in the *Odyssey* add little force to his argument. (In the earliest plays of Sophocles alone, two (or three if we include Antigone) of the four female suicides are hangings (Jocasta in the *Oedipus* and Deianeira in the *Trachiniae*). Eurydice in the *Antigone* is the exception. For a complete list and discussion of female deaths in tragedy, see Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* [Cambridge, MA, 1987], esp. pp. 7–32.) One would suppose that if Sophocles were describing something as unusual as a murder by hanging, he would have been much more explicit about it. As the hypotheses show, it has been taken for granted at least since Alexandrian times that Antigone's death was a suicide. Cf. *Sophoclis Fabulae*, ed. A. C. Pearson, OCT (Oxford, 1924). Calder cites Hyginus 72 which abstracts from Euripides' or Astydamas' *Antigone* a version of the story where Haemon does indeed murder Antigone. Since there is good reason to doubt a Euripidean source (see James H. Paton, *HSCP* 12 [1901], 269–76), and Astydamas' version was certainly later than Sophocles', Hyginus is not likely to tell us anything about Sophocles' version. Calder claims that it is an advantage to reconcile the Sophoclean account with that of the drama abstracted in Hyginus (p. 35), but the existence of various incompatible versions of a myth is a common phenomenon and does not pose any pressing need for assimilation. Though a murder, or Creon's assumption of one, would have very neatly explained Creon's reaction in 1228–9, the evidence, unfortunately, points against it.

[6] H. D. Broadhead, *Tragica* (Christchurch, 1968), pp. 77–80.

Broadhead uses the context of Creon's discovery as the basis of his argument. In the preceding scene Teiresias warns Creon of inevitable doom. Specifically, he implies that Haemon will die:

> ἀλλ' εὖ γέ τοι κάτισθι μὴ πολλοὺς ἔτι
> τροχοὺς ἁμιλλητῆρας ἡλίου τελῶν,
> ἐν οἷσι τῶν σῶν αὐτὸς ἐκ σπλάγχνων ἕνα
> νέκυν νεκρῶν ἀμοιβὸν ἀντιδοὺς ἕσει (1064–7)

The chorus counsels Creon to free Antigone from her tomb (1100–1). Creon decides to yield to their advice and sets out to free her by his own hand (*αὐτός τ' ἔδησα καὶ παρὼν ἐκλύσομαι*, 1112). What Creon is most afraid of is that Haemon will die *if* Antigone dies; he thus knows what he has to do in order to prevent disaster. The messenger informs Eurydice that before entering the cave Creon heard 'unintelligible sounds of a pitiful cry' (1209). Creon fears that his foreboding may be true (*ἆρ' εἰμὶ μάντις;* 1212), and wants to know specifically whether these sounds are coming from Haemon (1217–18). His foreboding must be either that Teiresias' prophecy has come true and Haemon is dying, or that Haemon's cries signal the fact that something else is wrong, perhaps that Antigone is already dead, and what Teiresias foretold is beginning to come true. Broadhead thus argues that Creon's words in 1228–9 are addressed to the corpse of Antigone; the painful distress Creon feels when faced with the dead Antigone is not indicative of a change of heart. He has not acquired a new fondness for her but the fact that she is dead means inevitable disaster for him: it is too late for him to free her, which is exactly what he set out to do (1112). This was to be his only hope of redemption, so it is only natural that when he sees her body he would first and foremost cry out in anguish over the fact that she is dead. At first glance we might wonder why Creon would be so shocked that Antigone has killed herself and wonder what drove her to it (*τίνα νοῦν ἔσχες; ἐν τῷ συμφορᾶς διεφθάρης;*). His intention was that she should die in the rocky vault. But I think that Broadhead is right that 'the questions are natural as coming from a man in a highly strung state' (p. 79); they express his chagrin that his attempt to save her life should be foiled by Antigone's impulsive action, which his sentence of death by starvation could not have anticipated.

We can secure Broadhead's position by noting that it probably never crossed Creon's mind that Antigone would kill herself; Creon chooses to give Polynices a proper burial *before* freeing Antigone, which suggests that suicide is a possibility that has not occurred to him. Someone looking back on this situation in a calmer and more rational state of mind might not have been at all surprised that Antigone killed herself; her impetuous personality and inherited curse led her to such a deed. But Creon, absorbed in the anxious task of undoing his mistake, is naturally shocked and dismayed that it is too late to free her. His words in 1228–9 are not serious questions; he knows what she has done and he is cursing what he perceives to be her insanity.

The phrase *ἐν τῷ συμφορᾶς διεφθάρης* may very well lend support to reading 1228–9 as addressed to Antigone. *διεφθάρης* is taken by most commentators as referring to mental destruction. But in the parallels cited by Jebb and Kamerbeek, the verb is found with an accusative of respect, *φρένας*, which makes its meaning explicit.[7] The *νοῦν* in the preceding sentence (1229) may be reason enough to take *διεφθάρης* as mental destruction, but we should also consider taking it to mean physical destruction, that is, Antigone's death, which is, on Broadhead's and my interpretation, what causes Creon's distress. This interpretation is in keeping with the most common meaning of the verb, and suits the context perfectly.

[7] *Il.* 15.128 *μαινόμενε, φρένας ἠλὲ διέφθορας*; Eur. *Helen* 1192 *διέφθαρσαι φρένας*.

We need not follow Broadhead in underplaying Creon's concern about Haemon in this scene. Kamerbeek is right to claim that before entering the tomb Creon is largely distressed about the life of his son (p. 197); the context of the scene makes this clear. But if Creon's only fear in entering the tomb was that Haemon was dead, he should have been relieved to find him alive. But his distress shows that this is not so, and the preceding scene shows why he must also be concerned about Antigone. If we read these lines as addressed to Antigone's corpse they have a clear and natural meaning and are not without the dramatic force appropriate for this climactic moment in the messenger's speech. Creon's second but no less urgent concern is, indeed, the well-being of his son. This concern is his motivation for uttering line 1230 which is clearly addressed to Haemon (*τέκνον*).[8] Creon begs Haemon to leave the tomb (*ἱκέσιός σε λίσσομαι*) because he is afraid of what he may do; for Teiresias had foreseen 'a corpse for corpses' (1067).

The *αὐτόν* in line 1227 must be altered in order for the text to give the meaning I have suggested to lines 1228–9. Broadhead has proposed *αὐτῷ* or *αὐτούς* (p. 79). These suggestions would fit the context well; Creon would have to be approaching both of them since Haemon is embracing the corpse of Antigone.[9] In this case, *σφε* would be taken as plural.[10]

But do these changes make it clear to the audience whom Creon is addressing? If the messenger says that Creon approached both of them and called out, it may not be evident that he first addresses Antigone and then Haemon. Knowledge of the circumstances would incline the audience to suppose that 1228–9 are addressed to Antigone: they must at this point realize that Creon thought it would be possible to free Antigone and set things right. But she has made the foolish mistake of killing herself (foolish, at least, in Creon's eyes). This is a crushing blow to Creon, and when the audience hears the words 'O wretch, what a deed you have done! What came into your mind? What disaster destroyed your reason?' they might naturally assume that these words were directed to Antigone.

We could avoid a pointless ambiguity in the text, however, by altering *αὐτόν* to *αὐτήν*. This would make it much clearer that Creon is addressing Antigone, as *τέκνον* makes it clear that he then addresses Haemon. Creon's attention would naturally be focused on Antigone's corpse, and it would make sense for Sophocles to say that Creon approached her and called out; at this point Creon is addressing Antigone only. In this case, *σφε* would naturally be feminine singular since it was the sight of Antigone that made Creon wail, and we should translate, 'And when he saw her, he groaned a bitter groan and went towards her and with a cry of lamentation he called out "O wretch, what a deed you have done! What came into your mind? By what disaster were you done to death?"' There is then no difficulty in taking 1230 as addressed to Haemon, since the vocative, *τέκνον*, marks the shift of address.[11]

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[8] The vocative is sufficient to indicate a change of subject; cf., for example, *Ajax* 66–72, 541–2; *Trachiniae* 307–10.

[9] Corruption of *αὐτῷ* is easier to explain than that of *αὐτούς*. An iota subscript or adscript could have easily found its way into this form causing some later scribe to alter the apparent dative singular to the accusative singular.

[10] Jebb takes it as referring to Haemon (p. 217). Calder and Broadhead have suggested the plural (Calder p. 32, Broadhead p. 78).

[11] *χωρεῖ* and *καλεῖ* (1227) could just as easily be addressed to Antigone as to Haemon; that Creon approaches Antigone's corpse and calls out to it as though it could actually hear him lends dramatic force to the scene and underscores the vehemence of Creon's reaction.