

the word *σφῶν* is hateful, Polyneices' endearing, and since Oedipus consistently refers to his sons as *σφῶν*, Polyneices to his sisters.

With great effect Sophocles gives Antigone one opportunity to employ the same dual personal pronoun: (1424–25) *ὁρᾷς τὰ τοῦδ' οὖν ὡς ἐς ὀρθὸν ἐκφέρεις / μαντεύμαθ', ὅς σφῶν θάνατον ἐξ ἀμφοῖν θροεῖ*; Here Antigone serves as a buffer between the two conflicting members of her family. She maintains a respectful and sisterly love for her brother(s) and pleads with Polyneices to save himself. In her fear for her brothers' safety she refers to them as *σφῶν*, and how much more sympathy must we now feel for siblings who care for each other, and how much irony must we now perceive in Oedipus' referring to these same two young men with the same word but with an entirely different attitude?¹³⁾

A Pronoun of Distance: *σφε* in *Antigone*

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Those who analyze Sophocles' poetry have eloquently and convincingly detailed how the poet employs interwoven and neologistic compounds that at once provide dignity, irony, or verbal majesty to a given scene.¹⁾ In this paper I hope to introduce a different but complementary perspective, that is, how Sophocles treats words of lesser importance, for instance the third person personal pronoun *σφε*. I chose this particular anaphoric pronoun since Sophocles only occasionally uses it (four times in this play, two dozen times in all the extant plays, nine of which are found in the *Trachiniae*) and had a

¹³⁾ The sympathetic use of the dual personal pronoun is used later by Oedipus at line 1543 (*ἐγὼ γὰρ ἡγεμῶν / σφῶν αὖ πέφασμαι καινός, ὥσπερ σφὼ πατρί.*), and then by the chorus at line 1740 (*τὰ σφῶν τὸ μὴ πίτνειν κακῶς.*). In both examples the word refers again to the two daughters of Oedipus.

¹⁾ See, for example, F.R. Earp, *The Style of Sophocles* (Cambridge 1944) 57–93; Hugh Parry, *The Lyric Poems of Greek Tragedy* (Toronto and Sarasota 1978) 53–61; and Dorothy M. Clay, *A Formal Analysis of the Vocabulary of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides* (Diss., Minnesota 1957) *passim*, but especially 441–5. On Sophocles' syntactical skills, see also I. E. Azelius, *De assimilatione syntactica apud Sophoclem* (Uppsala 1897).

choice in doing so. He might instead have substituted *αὐτόν, νιν*, a substantive phrase or proper noun. That Sophocles chose to use *σφε*, then, might be considered to be of some significance, even if the word itself is innately colorless. I believe Sophocles considered *σφε* in almost every instance to be a pronoun of distance and detached emotional significance. It is, of course, a subtle, understated distinction between this and other pronouns, but Sophocles' use of the word in almost every instance fits this description. Understanding the textuality of *σφε* here depends on a hermeneutic process inspired by the work of de Saussure, Derrida, and, in our own field, Goldhill,²) although I find myself not entirely able to defer to their different terminologies.

In the prologue of the *Antigone* Sophocles portrays an Ismene more fearful of Creon's edict than loving of her dead brother. This priority of values lies in direct contrast to that of Antigone, and such an opposition inevitably leads to confrontation.³) In the first stichomythic passage of the play Antigone asks Ismene in general terms to give her some assistance: (line 41): *εἰ ξυμπονήσεις καὶ ξυνεργάσῃ σκόπει*. Ismene is shocked in her incipient realization of Antigone's audacity (line 42: *ποῦ [ποῖ] γνώμης ποτ' εἶ*), and when Antigone now specifies that she indeed wants Ismene to assist her in lifting up "the body" (line 43: *τὸν νεκρὸν*), Ismene balks.⁴) She asks the obvious question with much emotion: (line 44: *ἦ γὰρ νοεῖς θάπτειν σφ', ἀπόρρητον πόλει*;). Antigone is impatient with her more conservative sister, and she immediately lashes back: (lines 45–46: *τὸν γοῦν ἐμὸν καὶ τὸν σόν, ἣν σὺ μὴ θέλῃς, / ἀδελφόν*). This reply by Antigone has caused a continuing heated and learning debate, the core of which depends on the absence of *καὶ* before *ἣν*, the punctuation, the alleged spuriousness of line 46, and the specific meaning of *ἣν σὺ μὴ θέλῃς*.⁵) The heat of the debate, however, has obscured an important

²) Simon Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia* (Cambridge 1984) esp. 1–7.

³) Confrontation yields characterization; T. B. L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles*² (London 1969) 85 f.

⁴) For the textual problems in line 40, which suggest different requests by Antigone, see R. M. Newton, "Sophocles *Antigone* 40" *AJPh* 96 (1975) 128–30, and the summary of emendations in J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Antigone*, part three of *The Plays of Sophocles: Commentaries* (Leiden 1978) [hereafter, Kamerbeek] *ad loc.*

⁵) See G. Müller, *Sophokles Antigone* (Heidelberg 1967) [hereafter, Müller] 35; R. D. Dawe, "Emendations in Sophocles" *PCPh* 14 (1968) 18; S. L. Radt, "Sophokles, *Antigone* 45 ff." *Mnemosyne*⁴ 24 (1971) 293–5; R. D. Dawe, *Sophocles*

clue, and that is the $\sigma\phi'$ in Ismene's question. In so far as the hypersensitive Antigone is concerned, Ismene's use of this third person personal pronoun reveals an emotional detachment and distance from Polyneices. In a sense, her referring to Polyneices as $\sigma\phi'$ is virtually an insult. It is their brother, not "him" that is to be buried.⁶) In fact, Antigone's angry reply in lines 45–46 attacks directly the use of this $\sigma\phi'$.⁷) By referring to him as $\sigma\phi'$, Ismene has verbally distanced herself from Polyneices, and this is why Antigone cruelly retorts, (paraphrasing), "He is your brother, even if you refer to him as $\sigma\phi\epsilon$, and I will not distance myself from him as you just have"; the phrase $\eta\gamma\alpha\rho\ \sigma\upsilon\ \mu\eta\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\varsigma$ and the emphatic, enjambed position of $\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\lambda\phi\acute{o}\nu$ owe their existence to Ismene's disassociating herself from her brother (and *ergo* sister), and she has done this physically by refusing to lift and bury him and verbally by referring to him unaffectionately as $\sigma\phi'$.⁸) Antigone does not address herself here to Ismene's phrase $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\rho\rho\eta\tau\omicron\nu\ \pi\acute{o}\lambda\epsilon\iota$. To this she replies at line 48 ($\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda'\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\mu\omega\nu\ \mu'\ \acute{\epsilon}\iota\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\tau\alpha$) and again in her rhesis at lines 69 and following. Nor does Antigone address herself here directly to the word $\theta\acute{\alpha}\pi\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$, which she uses (in ellipsis) only subordinately. It is the object of this $\theta\acute{\alpha}\pi\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ that is of the essence here, and Sophocles chose to insert the distancing $\sigma\phi'$ to unveil Antigone's primary allegiance—to her brother.

The prologue serves to isolate Antigone, to make her stand apart in her rejection of Creon's edict and in her obedience to the gods'

Antigone 44 ff." *Mnemosyne*⁴ 26 (1973) 127–30; S.L. Radt, "Noch einmal Sophokles, *Antigone* 45 f." *Mnemosyne*⁴ 26 (1973) 131–6, 139 n.; and R.D. Dawe, "A Further Note on Sophocles, *Antigone* 44 ff." *Mnemosyne*⁴ 26 (1973) 137–9.

⁶) The scholiast, paraphrasing $\sigma\phi'$... $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\rho\rho\eta\tau\omicron\nu$ as $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\eta\gamma\omicron\rho\epsilon\upsilon\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \kappa\epsilon\kappa\omega\lambda\upsilon\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\nu$ misses the importance of the $\acute{\sigma}\phi\epsilon$; cf. Bernard Knox, *The Heroic Temper; Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964) 76.

Antigone's $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu$ in line 43 is not at all a negative description. In fact, it is because of her great respect for the burial process and the love she has for her brother that this word becomes at once holy and bitter for her. $\sigma\phi\epsilon$, on the other hand, is an impersonal term used in neglect.

⁷) Line 46 should not be considered spurious. In rejecting the information supplied by the scholiast ($\Delta\acute{\iota}\delta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma\ \phi\eta\sigma\iota\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\mu\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \nu\epsilon\omicron\nu\theta\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$), I follow Müller *ad loc.*, Kamerbeek 45, *et al.* In addition, I find no reason to accept Kamerbeek's accusation that "there is some measure of artificiality in the wording."

⁸) A similar, unaffectionate use of a different third person personal pronoun can be found in *O. T.* 1174 and 1176 where the infant Oedipus is referred to dispassionately as $\nu\iota\nu$.

laws. Ismene, although she unsuccessfully repents later (lines 536 ff.), must not be a part of Antigone's actions or conviction or demise. To divorce Ismene from Antigone effectively, Sophocles needs to have Ismene reject not only the burial of Polyneices, but virtually to reject Polyneices as a brother; Ismene's love for Polyneices must be subordinate to her fear of Creon and repercussions, hence her use of *σφε*. Perhaps Ismene in her own way loves Polyneices as much as does Antigone. But Antigone does not allow for compromise, and it is Ismene's rejection of Antigone's request for help compounded with this verbal distancing from Polyneices that establishes Antigone's initial isolation. Ironically, Antigone's love for her brother creates her hostility toward and isolation from her sister.⁹⁾

This third person pronoun does not reappear until line 516 where Creon, again in stichomythia, taunts his prisoner Antigone. Claiming first that she thinks alone, that the Thebans do not at all consider her deed to have been justly done, Creon threatens her with a potent statement – that her honorable brother Eteocles will think her burial of the traitorous brother to be impious: (line 516: *εἴ τοί σφε τιμῶς ἐξ ἴσου τῷ δυσσεβεί*). For the second time that fateful morning the distancing pronoun *σφε* has been tossed into Antigone's face by one of her adversaries. Brother Eteocles, for whom Antigone bears no less love, has been compared to brother Polyneices. In our hermeneutic process of understanding the developed network of meanings in the play, we think immediately of the *σφ'* in line 44 referring to Polyneices.¹⁰⁾ Creon's use of *σφε* equates the two brothers for Antigone in a microcosm secondary to the sentence's macrocosm.

Creon's argument – typically Sophoclean¹¹⁾ – uses the same reasoning as Antigone's: Love and honor thy brother. Antigone's familial allegiances now meet with a serious challenge. If she honors one brother she must honor the other, but if she honors one brother she automatically dishonors the other. Burial for Polyneices is insult for

⁹⁾ Later in the tragedy Creon's love for law and order similarly creates his hostility towards his son, and, as will be shown, a similarly poignant use of *σφε* is found in that scene.

¹⁰⁾ Goldhill (*supra*, n. 2), 7.

¹¹⁾ E.g. O. C. 1292 f., in which Polyneices' argument (that he and Oedipus are both exiles and that they both follow the prophecies of Apollo) should appeal to Oedipus on that basis, but Oedipus, like Antigone here, lets his emotion obscure his perception of the parallel reasoning. For a sympathetic view of Creon's argument, see A. Bonnard, *La tragédie et l'homme; Études sur le drame antique* (Neuchâtel 1951).

Eteocles, and obedience to Eteocles (*sic* Creon) is dishonor to Polyneices. But Creon both exacerbates and obscures this dilemma for the passionate Antigone by his choice of words; *σφε* forces Antigone to concentrate not so much on this dilemma, which she has difficulty digesting, as on the status of her blood-relationship with Eteocles and therefore Polyneices. Not only does the *σφε* reveal this parallel; Sophocles draws a similar parallel in Antigone's retort (line 517: οὐ γάρ τι δοῦλος, ἀλλ' ἀδελφὸς ὄλετο). What makes Antigone move suddenly from an appraisal of Eteocles' sense of justice in the previous line (515: οὐ μαρτυρήσει ταῦθ' ὁ κατθανὼν νέκυσ) to a defense of her familial relationships? It is Creon's use of the verbal echo, *σφε*. Antigone replies in the next line to this *σφε* not at all coincidentally in a fashion very similar to the way in which she responded to Ismene's *σφ'* at line 45; and that is by rejecting the insulting, impersonal *σφε* which in essence represents the denigration of both Eteocles and Polyneices, and replacing it with a specific word—the same word she emphasized so strongly and bitterly in lines 45–46: ([line 517] οὐ γάρ τι δοῦλος, ἀλλ' ἀδελφὸς ὄλετο). Antigone seems to say in both passages, "It is not just some human being you are talking about and dishonoring, it is my *brother*." Besides the parallel usages of denigrating and distancing *σφε* by an adversary and Antigone's emphasis in the retort on the more proper word for *σφε*—ἀδελφός, these two stichomythic passages have even other parallels, for example Ismene's argument that burying Polyneices is ἀπόρρητον πόλει (44), the concise equivalent of Creon's subsequent σὺ τοῦτο μούνη τῶνδε Καδμείων ὄρᾳς (508).

It is important to notice at this juncture that Ismene used the pronoun *σφε* in the first instance, Creon in the second. I have already demonstrated the significant parallelisms and echoes between the two passages, but I must also emphasize the change of speaker. This seems to be a common feature in Sophocles' use of the distancing pronoun. In four appearances in the *Antigone*, *σφε* comes from the mouth of four different speakers. This holds true in the *Ajax* where Athena distances herself early on from the manic, butchering Ajax (line 51), the parallel of which occurs in line 74 where Odysseus uses the same pronoun to describe the same character. And this is also true in the *Trachiniae* where the term is used nine times, once by Lichas (234), once by Hyllus (804), once by Hercules (1133), twice by the nurse in the same passage (878 and 912), once by Deianeira in reference to Hercules (116), once by Deianeira in reference to pitiable Iole (463), and twice by the chorus (in line 121 where Hercules

has been saved from Hades, and 831 where Hercules is about to die – a clear, echoing parallelism).

The third appearance of *σφε* in the *Antigone* occurs again in stichomythia. The chorus balks at hearing Creon's proposal to execute Ismene along with Antigone (lines 770 f.). Creon, after a moment of calm reflection, reconsiders his plan: οὐ τήν γε μὴ θιγοῦσαν· εὖ γὰρ οὖν λέγεις. With this small victory won, the chorus now obsequiously questions Creon about the method of execution for the remaining prisoner: (line 772: μόρῳ δὲ ποίῳ καὶ σφε βουλεύη κατανεῖν;). They refer to Antigone as *σφε*, a word entirely appropriate for the chorus which fears Creon and obeys his edict.¹²) At this narratological turning point, Creon's first change of heart, the chorus' use of the pronoun *σφε* echoes its two previous occurrences. Again in stichomythia, again with a change of speaker, the pronoun now refers to the third sibling of the younger Labdacid generation, Antigone. In line 44 Ismene used it to refer to distant Polyneices; in line 516 Creon used it to refer to distant Eteocles (echoing its previous reference to Polyneices); and now the chorus uses it to refer to the distant Antigone (echoing the references to her two siblings) who has left the stage after line 765. Antigone is now to die, to be just like her brothers. The chorus uses the pronoun of detachment here in order to remain within the confines of Creon's tolerance. They rightfully question Creon's blanket execution of both sisters, but Creon's law is their law. They neither request nor demand a pardon of Antigone; she has only herself to blame.¹³) It is because the chorus is constrained in this way that they refer to Antigone as *σφε*. In doing so they bond verbally Polyneices and Antigone as the two traitors – the one *σφε* (line 44) who attacked his city, the other (line 772) who buried him.

The final usage in the *Antigone* falls neatly into place. At line 1226 the messenger describes the deaths of Antigone and Haimon to Eurydice and the chorus. Beginning with Creon's reburial of Polyneices (lines 1196 f.), Sophocles then in rather concentrated detail makes Creon aware of a distant screaming (1206 f.). As Creon

¹²) Their fear of Creon's wrath and power can be seen, for example, in lines 211 f. and 220.

¹³) Line 875: σὲ δ' αὐτόγνωτος ἄλεις' ὀργά, although the attitude of the chorus elsewhere is quite controversial. See Cedric Whitman, *Sophocles: A study of Heroic Humanism* (Cambridge 1951) 89, and C.M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944) 89 f.

approaches the unearthly sounds he immediately perceives its mortal significance – he refers to his journey as *δυστυχεστιάτην* (1212); he orders his attendants to break into the rocky vault to discover if it is indeed his son's voice which he has heard. There follows a descriptive delay which pursues how the entry was accomplished, where the slaves stood, the appearance of the hanged Antigone and the young Haimon embracing her. Finally, after this "delay," the type of effective dramatic delay so often and felicitously employed by Sophocles (and Euripides),¹⁴) Creon now sees "him," *σφε*, his son (1226). To the messenger and Eurydice the use of this pronoun is in itself insignificant; the chorus may or may not comprehend; but the audience and the reader certainly comprehend the reference and gather the textual echoes of the distant Polyneices, Eteocles, Antigone, and now Haimon. This poignant but verbally subtle parallel initiates the verbal climax of Creon's downfall. After Teiresias warned and threatened Creon, the inexperienced "king"¹⁵) realized his error in judgment and hurried off to correct its devastating results. The chorus hoped for his success (1115 f.), but Creon arrived too late. Now the tragedy truly climaxes: although Créon may have had reason to fear after hearing Teiresias' admonitions and although he may have realized his errors when he heard the screaming and then metaphorically referred to his present circumstance as *δυστυχεστιάτην*, it is here when he sees his son languishingly draped over Antigone's corpse that he first looks directly at his own doom. The verbal echo (*σφε*) of the dead and unburied Polyneices (line 44) and of the criminal Antigone (line 772) creates a connection between Haimon and the other two outcasts. Now even Creon's son has joined the ignominious group of "traitors," those who value family and love and divine justice over Creon's edict. Ironically, of course, Haimon is kin to Creon, just as Polyneices was to Antigone, and in light of this relationship the word *σφε* contains an even deeper meaning for Creon.¹⁶) In using *σφε* Sophocles has Creon *via* the messen-

¹⁴) E.gg. O. C. 534 f., O. T. 1124 f., and, of course, *Ant.* 223 f. On the details of the entry, see J.S. Margon, "Sophocles *Antigone* 1108–1112" *CPh* 65 (1970) 105–107, and F. Robert, "Le supplice d'Antigone et celui des servantes d'Ulysse," *BCH* 70 (1946) 501–505.

¹⁵) For Creon's precise title and position, see V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954) 105–112.

¹⁶) Kamerbeek's (197) suggestion that *σφε* might refer to both Haimon and Antigone does not obviate my interpretation. In fact, it would enhance my interpretation if Sophocles were now to be injecting subtle references within the pre-established "*σφε*-motif".

ger.¹⁷⁾ reflect upon the distance from Haimon which he and the chorus had felt earlier for Antigone and Ismene for Polyneices. As we hear Haimon referred to as *σφε*, we almost expect Creon to answer as Antigone had earlier, "That is my *son* to whom you refer, not merely 'him.'" By line 1230 (*ἔξελθε, τέκνον, ἰκέσιός σε λίσσομαι*), however, Haimon is no longer the distanced *σφε*; he is, or rather Creon has returned him to the status of, the present. Too late. Haimon spits in his face and commits suicide over his beloved.¹⁸⁾ Creon's life is ruined; he, not Antigone, is now the one in isolation, distanced from all.

Bringing out the emphasis and implied significance of the pronoun *σφε* would not have been a difficult task for the fifth-century B.C. actor. A minor change in tone of voice (even when the word was elided), a pause after reciting or in anticipation of the word, a demonstrative gesture would be all that would have to be done. With a lengthened sibilant the pronoun becomes a cacophonous syllable at least as aurally poignant if not more so as a multisyllabic compound.¹⁹⁾ *σφε* is simple, common, and significant. The pronoun *σφε* attaches a noticeable relationship between the speaker and the spoken of, the dramatic signifier and signified. It establishes a continued echo-dimension between characters and time frames. This dimension connects Antigone, Polyneices, Eteocles, Haimon, and, ultimately, Creon.

¹⁷⁾ The messenger is, of course, the actor actually speaking the word *σφε*, but in the mind's eye of the audience it is Creon who speaks it.

¹⁸⁾ Line 1240: *νεκρός περὶ νεκρῷ*—another verbal echo of the passage in lines 40 f. and another verbal linkage of Polyneices, Antigone, and Haimon, three of the characters significantly referred to as *σφε* in the tragedy.

¹⁹⁾ For Sophocles' appreciation of the force of monosyllabic words, there is the famous couplet at *O. T.* 370–1: *ἀλλ' ἔστι, πλὴν σοί· σοὶ δὲ τοῦτ' οὐκ ἔστι, ἐπεὶ / τυφλὸς τὰ τ' ὧτα τὸν τε νοῦν τὰ τ' ὀμματα' εἴ.* Sophocles might have had this kind of language in mind in line 45 of the *Antigone* (just after the first use of *σφε*): *τὸ γοῦν ἐμὸν καὶ τὸν σόν, ἦν σὺ μὴ θέλῃς.*