# EPIC DOUBLETS AND POLYNICES' TWO BURIALS

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Over twenty years ago, H. F. Johansen in his survey of Sophoclean scholarship complained about the intense scholarly attention given to the double burial of Polynices in Sophocles' *Antigone*.[1] His rebuke has been unheeded, and anyone who proposes to add to the volume of literature on the topic requires a special justification. Yet precisely because the subject has attracted so much attention, from critics with very different presuppositions, it is a fascinating example of the varying approaches which can be made to a literary problem. Explanations can be sought within the world of the play by attributing ritual or emotional reasons for Antigone's returning to the body,[2] or outside it, in the poet's technique for creating suspense.[3] Some explanations exclude each other, while others are compatible. In this paper I hope to introduce a new element into the discussion, that of epic precedent. Two groups of passages may be relevant to *Antigone*: those

[1] "Sophocles 1939–59," *Lustrum* 7 (1961) 186: "With quite an incredible enthusiasm several scholars still discuss the uninteresting question of the double burial."

[2] The only kind of explanation from within the play which is adequate by itself is an ethical one; a good recent example is G. Held, "Antigone's Dual Motivation for the Double Burial," *Hermes* 111 (1983) 190–201, which argues that the first burial shows Antigone's sense of duty, the second her love for Polynices. I do not think, however, that the two motives can be distinguished. A purely ritual explanation, like R. C. Jebb's in his commentary (Cambridge 1900[3]) on 429 (she omitted the libations the first time), is inevitably trivializing and cannot really stand alone, since we ask why the play should have required that she neglect them. The best justification of the repetition from within is that of A. T. von S. Bradshaw, "The Watchman Scenes in the *Antigone*," *CQ* 12 (1962) 200–11, who argues that the uncovered corpse demands to be hidden again, quite apart from its having been ritually covered once, and that libations would normally be repeated (to object that Greek mourners did not return to a grave the same day is pedantic). That is true, but it does not explain why the play should have been constructed in this way and it passes over or tries to argue away the supernatural elements.

[3] Like ritual explanations, purely technical explanations—notably that of T. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles*, Philol. Untersuchungen 22 (Berlin 1917) 33–34 (endorsed by H. Lloyd-Jones, *CQ* 22 [1974] 220)—trivialize, as if Sophocles' goal was a purely melodramatic effect; the best explanation from dramatic technique is that of G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca 1958) 70–72, whose interpretation looks for meaning in the effects of Antigone's capture being delayed.

which describe sudden appearances and disappearances help to explain
what actually happens in the play, while a second group provides a model
for the author's doubling of an action.

To summarize the issue: the prologue of the play is set before dawn,
while it is still night or in morning twilight, since the chorus (100) opens
the parodos with a greeting to the newly-risen sun.[4] Antigone exits, with
the avowed intention of burying her brother, at the close of the prologue
(99). After Creon's proclamation, the guard enters and after much hesi-
tation reports the burial:

> τὸν νεκρόν τις ἀρτίως
> θάψας βέβηκε κἀπὶ χρωτὶ διψίαν
> κόνιν παλύνας κἀφαγιστεύσας ἃ χρή. (245–47)

While the guard cannot know whether all necessary rites, including liba-
tions and laments, have been performed, these lines must give the
audience the impression that they have. Details follow: the ground was
dry and unbroken; no tools had been used; the earth was not of the kind
to show footprints, ἀλλ᾽ ἄσημος οὑργάτης τις ἦν. When the first "day-
watchman" discovered the burial, all were struck with a θαῦμα δυσχερές:
the body was lightly strewn with dust, as if by someone seeking to avoid
pollution, and no animal had approached it (249–58). He then describes
how the guards accused each other. This report, damning to the
speaker—since it shows that the guards themselves could only assume
complicity in each other—verifies the truth of the rest. The event is
clearly treated as a wonder.[5]

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[4] Does ἐν νυκτὶ τῇ νῦν (16) mean "last night"—so Jebb ad loc.—or "in this present
night"? Bradshaw (above, note 2) 203 points out that Jebb's parallels lack the specifying
νῦν—a word which in Sophocles refers to present time in nearly fifty occurrences, recent
but past time only once (Ant. 151). Even if the words do not prove that the prologue is set
at night, the argument of M. McCall, "Divine and Human Action in Sophocles: The Two
Burials of the Antigone," YCS 22 (1972) 107–11, that Antigone would not have had time
to bury Polynices before the day-watch began at first dawn, surely demands the wrong
kind of subtlety from the audience. The relation between "dramatic" and "real" time is
often very fluid in tragedy (see O. Taplin, The Stagecraft of Aeschylus [Oxford 1977]
290–94), so that the audience would not be in the habit of precise reckoning.

[5] Developing the arguments of Bradshaw, J. Margon, "The First Burial of Polyneices,"
CJ 64 (1969) 289–95, explicitly argues against the acceptance of a miraculous element in
the first burial, claiming that the miraculous note is sounded by the guard in self-
exculpation. But apart from the guard's self-damaging admissions, very strong evidence is
surely required before a minor character's report is considered unreliable. Bradshaw
argues that the protection of the body from scavengers is not miraculous, because the
audience would not have considered whether a thin layer of dust would suffice, and if
they did, they might have known that birds do not scavenge at night and the dogs had
more desirable prey. But the thinness of the layer of dust is prominent in the play, while
the precise facts about carrion-eating animals are not.

The chorus immediately suggests that the gods are responsible:

ἄναξ, ἐμοί τοι, μή τι καὶ θεήλατον
τοὔργον τόδ᾽, ἡ ξύννοια βουλεύει πάλαι. (278-79)

Creon answers with a tirade. The gods would not care for the corpse of
Polynices (180-89); the deed must be the work of Creon's political oppo-
nents and bribed guards (289-314). The speech serves to draw attention
to the suggestion it denies.[6] A principle of economy is at work, for we
assume that the poet does not spend time on an irrelevant issue. We
naturally assume that Antigone performed the burial, since we know
that she intended to bury her brother, but we do not know how her
intention has resulted in the astonishing success reported by the guard.
The choral remark and Creon's tirade suggest a miracle: he is wrong in
all his assumptions about Polynices' burial, and therefore may well be
wrong in refusing to see the gods at work in the burial. The chorus,
however, is apparently convinced, for after the guard's exit they sing the
"Ode on Man" (332-75). The astonishing feat of the burial inspires them
to sing of human ingenuity; they have the perpetrator in mind, although
their song has much wider implications.[7] At the song's close Antigone is
brought in by the guard. The choristers, immediately guessing her role,
call her appearance a δαιμόνιον τέρας (376).

The guard describes how he returned to the body and he and his
fellow-guards swept the dust from the corpse and waited upwind (407-14).
Eventually a dust-storm arose, an οὐράνιον ἄχος (418), so that the guards
closed their eyes in enduring this θείαν νόσον (421). When they could at
last open their eyes, Antigone was there, ἡ παῖς ὁρᾶται (424). Seeing the
exposed body, she lamented and cursed those responsible, and brought dust
and libations (426-31). Acused of performing both burials, she denied
nothing, ἄπαρνος δ᾽ οὐδενὸς καθίστατο (435). In a language in which
litotes is as common as in Greek, the negative form of the report is not
notable enough to suggest that Antigone made no answer at all. The princi-
ple of economy may be applied here, as with Creon's answer to the chorus's
suggestion of divine involvement: there is no reason for Antigone to be
accused of the first burial unless she performed it.[8]

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[6] On Creon's tirade, see K. Reinhardt, *Sophokles* (Frankfurt 1947[3]) 81-83.

[7] This is the interpretation of C. Segal, "Sophocles' Praise of Man and the Conflicts of the
*Antigone*," *Arion* 3.2 (1964) 46-66; cf. G. Müller, *Sophokles' Antigone* (Heidelberg 1967)
38-89. It is not universally accepted, since it assumes that the chorus is persuaded by Creon's
speech (cf. A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen* [Göttingen 1972[3]] 205).

[8] This point, and the audience's expectation that Antigone will be the one to bury Poly-
nices, seem to me decisive against the suggestion that the gods performed the first burial
made by S. M. Adams in *CR* 45 (1931) 110-11, repeated by him in *Phoenix* 9 (1955)
47-62 and *Sophocles the Playwright* (Toronto 1957) 45-49, and supported notably by
McCall (above, note 4) 103-17. It wins sympathy, though not outright support, from
C. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge,

As spectators, we naturally tend to assume that Antigone is responsible for the first burial, since we know that she intends to bury her brother. At the same time, there are distinct hints that the gods are involved, and the guard's report as well as the "Ode on Man" stress the difficulty of the action. The first burial is, furthermore, effective in keeping away scavenger animals, a detail which would not be mentioned if it were only to be expected. The likeliest answer to the mystery of the first burial is therefore that it was performed by Antigone with divine help.[9] There is a certain symmetry in the two burials: she performs the first unseen and leaves no trace, while she appears at the performance of the second as if from nowhere, out of a dust-storm which has compelled the guards to close their eyes. She thus seems to disappear and reappear. Here epic precedent is relevant, for gods often help mortals in just such appearances and disappearances.

Divinely granted invisibility takes many forms. A god may travel with a mortal and render him invisible, as Aphrodite leads Helen unseen among the Trojan women (*Il.* 3.420). Often the invisibility has tangible form, as ἀήρ, which is hard to specify as either a visible but shielding cloud or as a pure "cloak of invisibility": it has close affinities with a number of other substances which the gods use for concealment, νύξ, νέφος, ἀχλύς, ὀμίχλη.[10] Probably it is a mistake to expect to be able to extract a precise definition of such a supernatural phenomenon from archaic texts.[11] The extent to which characters in epic recognize divine action in such episodes varies considerably. Athena brings Odysseus and those with him out of the city invisibly, hiding them in νύξ although day has dawned (*Od.* 23.371–72); it is not said whether the goddess is physically present or not, nor whether Odysseus and his men are aware of her protection. The most famous uses of the invisibility theme, the battlefield rescues, show much variety. When Aphrodite wraps Paris in ἀήρ to save him from Menelaus (*Il.* 3.380–81), he simply disappears, and no one on the field knows what has become of him (449–54). He himself, set down in his bedchamber, where Aphrodite herself sets Helen a chair (3.425), presumably knows who has saved him, though that is not explicitly stated. At *Il.* 20.419, Hector attacks Achilles; Apollo snatches him up before Achilles' onslaught and hides him in ἀήρ. At his fourth futile

Mass. 1981) 159–60. C. H. Whitman, *The Heroic Paradox* (Ithaca 1982) 11–19, sees the burial as the work of an outraged Nature which also assists Antigone in the second burial.

[9] I am thus in agreement with H. D. F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama* (New York 1956) 138–58. Cf. B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964) 68–69 and J. C. Kamerbeek's commentary (Leiden 1978) ad 429–31.

[10] See T. Kakridis, *Homer Revisited* (Lund 1971) 89–107, and the entry for ἀήρ in the *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* (R. Philipp).

[11] R. Renehan, "On the Greek Origins of the Concepts Incorporeality and Immateriality," *GRBS* 21 (1980) 108–9, as opposed to M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966) on *Theog.* 9.

attack on cloud and vacancy, Achilles recognizes what has happened. The narrator follows Achilles, and we do not hear what becomes of Hector or whether he is aware of Apollo's help. When Poseidon has rescued Aeneas, on the other hand, he sets him down behind the lines and scolds him for fighting with Achilles (*Il.* 20.318–39). Although in this case the god covers Achilles' eyes with ἀχλύs instead of surrounding Aeneas with ἀήρ, the effect is the same. When Poseidon dissipates the mist, Achilles beholds with wonder that his victim has disappeared (341–52) and realizes that Aeneas' claim to be dear to the gods must be true.

Two further examples show how divine help can be unrecognized even by its beneficiaries. When Hermes brings Priam to Achilles' tent (*Il.* 24.333–69), he does not himself know that his guide is Hermes, even though Zeus has promised him Hermes as a guide in the encouraging message delivered by Iris (182–83). Only at Achilles' door does the god reveal himself. Priam is wakened by Hermes and guided back to Troy (679–94), again passing unseen; presumably he recognizes the god on this occasion. When Priam suddenly appears as he grasps Achilles' knees, Achilles and the others present are struck with wonder (477–84). Later, Achilles shows that he realizes that a god must have helped Priam, for otherwise he could not have slipped past the guards or opened the door (560–67). The omniscient narrator tells his audience that the young man who helps Priam is really Hermes, but the characters do not know unless the god tells them or unless the wonder of the event prompts them, like Achilles, to suspect divine action. At *Od.* 7.14–17, Athena, having disguised herself as a child before meeting Odysseus, pours a protective covering of ἀήρ over him, lest any of the Phaeacians harass him. He travels unseen throught the city and into the palace, and becomes visible only when he seizes the knees of Arete:

> καὶ τότε δή ῥ᾽ αὐτοῖο πάλιν χύτο θέσφατος ἀήρ·
> οἱ δ᾽ ἄνεῳ ἐγένοντο δόμον κάτα φῶτα ἰδόντες,
> θαύμαζον δ᾽ ὁρόωντες. . . . (143–45)

The audience is aware of the supernatural covering given Odysseus, but neither he nor the Phaeacians is aware of it. Naturally, they are startled at his sudden appearance. Later Odysseus seems to have realized that the helpful child was actually his patron goddess, for he alludes to her help at 13.320–23.[12]

The epics offer, therefore, a wide variety of god-assisted appearances and disappearances. Gods help characters on journeys which mortals have undertaken by themselves or whisk them away from danger, while

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[12] These lines were athetized (Sch. HQVind 133), the first two for grammatical reasons (ἦσιν used for the first person), 322–23 because Odysseus did not penetrate Athena's disguise; see W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer* II (London and New York 1958[2]), for a defense of the lines against objections ancient and modern.

the mortals may be unaware that they are receiving divine help and need not have asked for it. The guard's description of the second burial resembles a possible description of Odysseus' arrival at Alcinous' court, as the events would appear to an observer within the story, who could not know that the cloud which materialized into Odysseus was a mist sent by a god. It is essential to *Antigone* that the gods not manifest their disapproval of Creon's policy until it is too late. The sudden appearance of Antigone must therefore take place under circumstances which can be accepted as natural. Some of the language used for the dust-storm—especially the phrase θείαν νόσον—hints at divine participation, but the hints are delicate and restrained.[13]

If the dust-storm which precedes the second burial can be seen as rationalized ἀήρ and thus points to a divinely aided appearance, the uncanny lack of any trace of the person who performed the first burial points to a corresponding divinely aided disappearance. The text suggests a joint act by Antigone and the gods, and epic offers much precedent for divine help of precisely the kind necessary. This divine involvement solves at least one minor problem in making Antigone responsible for the first burial, namely its secrecy. Antigone wanted her deed proclaimed, not hidden (86–87); but if it is the gods who protect her, there is no oddity. Heroes snatched away from the battlefield are passive while being rescued. The symmetry of the two burials mitigates the repetition, because it seems almost as if the burial were a single, interrupted action. With the gods' help, Antigone buries her brother and disappears; when the body is again exposed, we see Antigone, through the guard's eyes, again confronting the exposed body and performing burial ritual. Her only action between her exit at the end of the prologue and her entry after the first stasimon is to bury her brother. For the unusual sequence of events through which she is both successful and is captured, the gods are apparently responsible, and some mystery in their doings is to be expected.

The epic type-scenes of disappearance and sudden appearance clarify what takes place during the two burials, and the recognition that the gods are stage-managers of the action reduces the need for motivation within the play. Nonetheless, the doublet itself remains: Antigone, with the aid of the gods, is made by the structure of the play to bury her brother twice. Even if we agree that this is not a real problem in ordinary performance or reading, in that no ordinary spectator is disturbed by a sense that this is implausible or strange, we may still ask why the same event is made to happen twice. Two different kinds of explanations

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[13] Jebb points out the Homeric echo in 416 (*Il.* 8.66); further discussion of the language, with a recognition of the function of the dust-cloud, in B. Jordan, *Servants of the Gods*, Hypomnemata 55 (Göttingen 1979) 99–101.

are appropriate: we may look for a function of the repetition within the work, or for parallels or models outside it.

The use of the double burial has certain obvious advantages. It builds suspense and allows for a revelation of Creon's character: the obsession with political opposition and bribery which he reveals after the report of the first burial appears again in the Tiresias scene and so does his naive belief that the gods share his own values. It also permits Antigone her complete triumph, and she is able to say not that she has merely attempted to bury her brother, but that she has actually done so. There is symmetry in the results of the first burial and the aftermath of the interruption of the second. The guard reports how no animal had approached the corpse (257–58), and Haemon describes how Antigone is praised as one who did not "allow" her brother to be the prey of dogs and birds (696–98). By the time of the Tiresias scene, however, all the altars of the city have been polluted by dogs and birds who have feasted on the carrion (1016–18). Antigone's bit of dust is as effective as a full burial would be, but after her arrest the body is so successfully exposed that when Creon finally buries it, the messenger frankly speaks of cremating ὃ δὴ 'λέλειπτο (1202). The two burials thus present as temporally sequential what would more realistically be alternative results: either Antigone succeeds in burying and protecting the body, or Creon captures her and the body is devoured. Only a doubled burial could present two such different realities. The sequence is possible because burial is both a ritual, effective if once performed, and the actual covering of the corpse, which must be repeated if the covering is removed. Our acceptance of the play's action as natural depends on the merging of the two aspects: the second burial is plausible because the first has been "canceled." Antigone does not only attempt to replace the dust on the body when she performs the second burial, however, but also pours libations. There is a kind of sleight-of-hand at work. If one aspect of burial is subject to "cancellation," another is not; the two are treated in such a way that together they form an entity, burial, which both can and cannot be undone.

This technique is bold. Epic, however, offered ample precedent for repetitions of all kinds of action.[14] For example, Alcinous twice notices

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[14] I refer here to the repetition of actions, quite apart from lines or passages. Among the most outstanding in the *Iliad* (listed by C. M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* [Oxford 1930] 87–96) are 2.100–142 and 9.13–28, in both of which Agamemnon suggests that the Achaeans return home; the inconclusive duels of 3 and 7; Athena and Hera's preparations to enter battle for the Achaeans at 5.720–53 and 8.381–96; and the attacks of Diomedes and Patroclus against Apollo at 5.432–44 and 16.698–711. The Epic Cycle included even more such repetitions: so in the *Cypria* there were two consultations by Zeus about beginning the war, one with Themis (1 in the numeration of Proclus' excerpts by W. Kullmann, *Die Quellen der Ilias* [Wiesbaden 1960]), one with Momus, *Cypria* fr. 1

Odysseus weeping as Demodocus sings of Troy (*Od.* 8.83–86, 521–31) but his different reaction gives the second incident a different outcome. In *Od.* 5, Odysseus twice delivers a monologue (298, 355), is struck by a great wave (313, 366–67), climbs back onto the wreckage (324–26, 371), and is assisted by a goddess (335, 382).[15] These two specimens illustrate two different types of narrative repetition. The similarity between Odysseus' adventures on the raft is there only because the narrator chooses to structure his account in this way; repetitions of this kind are essential to his method. Odysseus himself, however, asks Demodocus to sing about the Wooden Horse, so that the doublet is created by a character within the story. The double burial of *Antigone* is similarly created within the play by the guard's uncovering of the body. There are, of course, differences: the *Odyssey* lacks the divine stage-management of *Antigone*, nor does the action that causes the repetition involve an attempt to "cancel" the earlier form of the repeated act.

These elements appear elsewhere in epic, however. Hector's two duels with Achilles are managed by the gods. The first of these has already been cited as an example of divine rescue (*Il.* 20.443–54). Hector then vanishes from the action. At the close of Book 21 Apollo saves the Trojans by rousing Agenor against Achilles (544–45), hiding Agenor in ἀήρ, and disguising himself in Agenor's shape in order to decoy Achilles away from the city. At the opening of Book 22, the Trojans are safe except for Hector, whose "destructive fate" keeps him outside the gates (5). At this point Apollo reveals himself to Achilles, effectively yielding Hector to him. The degree of divine involvement is emphasized later by the discussion among the gods which culminates in Zeus' sending Athena to help Achilles (22.166–87). If we stress the element of defiance of Creon in Antigone's action, the similarity between the double burial and the doubled duel becomes clear: like Hector, Antigone is once saved from her opponent, but later, at a presumably fated moment, is delivered over to him by the gods.

For the repetition of an action which has been canceled, we may look at the Achaean wall in the *Iliad*. The gate is broken as the Trojans come over the wall to attack the ships at the end of Book 12. At the opening of Book 14, Nestor, going to investigate the shouting, sees that the wall has collapsed (ἐρέριπτο, 14.15). Yet after the Achaean rally and Zeus' awakening from his sleep on Mt. Ida, Apollo leads the Trojans over the wall again; he fills in the ditch with his feet and overturns the wall as if it were a sandcastle (15.355–64). The wall again collapses (ἔρειπε 361). Naturally, the repetition can easily be explained; only part of the wall

Allen, and two prophecies before Alexander's departure, one by Helenus, 5 Kullmann, one by Cassandra, 7 Kullmann. The list could be much extended.

[15] See B. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey*, Hermes Einzelschriften 30 (1974) 133ff., esp. 143–44, 184–87.

falls in the first attack, but Apollo destroys it completely. The close rela-
tionship of the two wall-crossings, however, which enclose a series of
events which are contrary to the will of Zeus, is shown by Patroclus'
response to what is apparently the second crossing (15.390–404); he
reacts to the noise here as Nestor reacts to the noise of the first (which
Patroclus apparently fails to hear).[16]

  None of these doublets is precisely analogous to Sophocles' device,
but each has points of similarity. One further aspect of the double burial
may perhaps be compared to Homeric narrative method. The second
burial represents an alternative outcome of the action of burial. It also,
in a sense, represents a new beginning for a plot which is otherwise at a
standstill. If Antigone has succeeded in burying her brother and not been
caught, the issue raised in the prologue has been settled, and the drama
is at an end. The repetition of the burial permits a new beginning, and
this use of the doublet has Homeric precedent. So, for instance, at the
opening of *Odyssey* 19 Odysseus is alone in the hall:

  Αὐτὰρ ὁ ἐν μεγάρῳ ὑπολείπετο δῖος ᾿Οδυσσεύς,
  μνηστήρεσσι φόνον σὺν ᾿Αθήνῃ μερμηρίζων. (1–2)

He then addresses Telemachus, suggesting the removal of the arms from
the hall; Telemachus and Odysseus, lighted by Athena, put the weapons
away, and Telemachus goes to bed. The opening lines of the book are
then (51–52) repeated, not because this time the deliberations are to
have any result, but to begin the next incident, when Penelope enters
with her maids and Melantho is rude to Odysseus. This repetition is a
ring-composition, closing the first episode to allow the next, but despite
its obvious formal quality it is a real narrative unit, giving Odysseus an
occupation until Penelope enters. The most remarkable use of a doublet
as a bridge between narrative sections is certainly the doubling of the
divine council in *Od.* 1 and 5. The first ends with Athena's advice that
Hermes be sent to Calypso, while she herself will go to Ithaca to rouse
Telemachus (1.81–95). She carries out her task. When the fifth book
opens, with Telemachus in Sparta, Athena complains to the assembled
gods about Odysseus, who is still suffering on Calypso's island, while the
suitors are planning to murder Telemachus on his way home (7–20).
Zeus sensibly reminds her that she has planned Odysseus' return and
revenge herself, and can help Telemachus (22–27). He then sends
Hermes on his mission, with a prophecy of how Odysseus will reach
Ithaca. This doublet is self-consciously a repetition; Zeus seems almost
amused that the gods are repeating themselves. Ordinarily, a council
which concludes with missions for two members would initiate a

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[16] On the temporal ambiguity here see C. H. Whitman and R. Scodel, "Sequence and
Simultaneity in *Iliad* N, Ξ, and O," *HSCP* 85 (1981) 1–15.

"branching": the first strand of narrative thus established would be brought to a convenient halting-point, and the second would then begin.[17] Here, however, the first strand is exceptionally long and the poet could hardly show Zeus as returning to address Hermes when Athena is finished with Telemachus. The second council, furthermore, allows the poet to offer more information about what is to come next. Above all, however, it is necessary in order to establish the importance of the new narrative section; without a new council, the story of Odysseus might seem to take a secondary place to that of Telemachus. Similarly, it is the second burial which leads to the rest of the action of *Antigone*, and it is obviously best to begin the confrontation of the two antagonists in the strongest possible way—which means with the capture of Antigone in the act of burying Polynices.

Thus, while no Homeric example provides an exact parallel for Sophocles' method in *Antigone*, a number of passages present doublets which resemble it in different ways or in different aspects. Homeric doublets certainly are closer than anything to be found in the extant corpus of Sophocles himself to the dramatic technique used here. It is reasonable to guess that examples of technique such as those cited served as the basis for Sophocles' method here. Faced with a need to represent contradictory results of the same event, a dramatist steeped in Homeric epic would naturally adapt the useful feature of Homeric narrative which allowed a single event to be split into two. As in language, so in method the tragedian borrows and adapts epic. From epic he takes a common type of event, divinely aided appearance and disappearance. He unites this epic borrowing with another, the device of repeated action. Absent from his drama, however, is the omniscient narrator of epic, with the result that the audience is deprived of the superior position it has in epic narrative; like the characters, the audience must guess for itself what has happened.

[17] T. Krischer, *Formale Konventionen des homerischen Epik*, Zetemata 56 (Munich 1971), esp. 104–5, 122–24; on the difference between *Od.* 1/5 and messenger scenes, and the Telemachy as secondary narrative, see K. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen*, Hypomnemata 19 (Göttingen 1969) 98.