

Reevaluating a Sophoclean Source in a Propertian Death Pact

My paper looks closely at Propertius' death pact (2.8.17-28) and argues that Sophocles' *Antigone* is the elegist's main source in the passage. In this passage, the lover-poet uses the deaths of Haemon and Antigone as a fatal *exemplum* to threaten death and suicide to Cynthia. I have reassessed Propertius' source material because of foundational assertion Theodore Papanghelis, who argues that the Haemon/Antigone myth has a more erotic reception after Sophocles (especially in Hellenistic literature which had a great influence on Latin elegists) and that more parallels can be extrapolated between Hellenistic authors and Propertius than there are between Sophocles (Papanghelis 1987, 120-4). In other words, there is little need for philologists to consult Sophocles when encountering Propertius' allusion to Antigone's mythology.

My paper looks closely at the language and makes two arguments. The first is that the death scene between Haemon and Antigone in Sophocles contains copious erotic imagery, sufficient enough to supply Propertius with as much sexual imagery as any Hellenistic poet, as Craik shows (Craik 2002, 89-94). This section looks closely at how Sophocles writes the deaths of Antigone and Haemon in a way where each act of violence contains a double meaning of sexual acts perverted into a double death (Edwards 2007, 200). Looking closely at the layered meanings in Sophocles' Greek text then allows me to make my second argument, that Propertius' writing of Haemon and Antigone also uses violence in a similar way to create a sexual union for a couple (the lover-poet and Cynthia) in a fraught and erotically charged textual relationship. Sophocles and Propertius both share language that conveys phallic passivity, sexual climax as death, blood as semen, and the shame of youth within their displays of eroticized violence (Greene 2012, 374; Skinner 1997; Adams 1993, 49; Papanghelis 1987, 128; Sourvinou-Inwood 1989, 134-148). This, combined with the engagement with Greek texts that Propertius

likely encountered in his rhetoric training (Keith 2008, 19-44), creates a new narrative about Propertius' source material and centers the reception of the Antigone mythology in Propertius back to Sophocles.

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