

The Missing Dialogue in Antigone

After reading *Antigone*, one might feel that there is lacking a dialogue between Antigone and Haimon before their deaths. Sophocles does not include any direct communication between the two lovers during this drama. The reader might assume that such a conversation could have taken place but was not included by Sophocles; however, it is my belief that if a conversation occurred between Antigone and Haimon prior to their deaths, Sophocles would have made it a part of his drama. Since *Antigone* is a work of fiction, we cannot assume anything which we are not told. We must take the situation to be exactly as Sophocles portrays it to us. This leaves the reader to determine the importance of Antigone and Haimon not speaking together alone before their deaths. When we look at the nature of the drama, we see that the point Sophocles is trying to make is a political one. The absence of Antigone and Haimon speaking alone together adds to this political atmosphere and does not inject the play with a question of romantic love and/or loyalty. Family bonds and loyalty are the crucial issues instead.

The central question of this play is a political one. What should have more power within a society, the divine laws of the gods or the laws of the land and the mortal rulers? Antigone is a representation of the divine laws of the gods, and she remains steadfast to her beliefs that the wishes of the gods should overpower the wishes of the king. Creon, on the other hand, is the representation of the laws of the land and the mortal ruler of society. He, too, remains steadfast (until the end of the play when he realizes the divine laws are stronger) in upholding his laws and trying to overpower the laws of the gods. This political scenario would be somewhat minimized had Antigone and Haimon been faced with speaking to each other. A question of romantic loyalty would have been introduced, and it might have ruined the political point Sophocles was making. When it comes to life and death, we usually try to protect the ones we love and defend them by any means possible regardless of their guilt or innocence. Although we know that Haimon does defend the actions of Antigone, he does so outside of her presence. We do not see Haimon telling Antigone that he will help her in any way he can. Nor do we see Antigone pleading for his support for her actions. This absent conversation yields more weight to the stance taken by Haimon against Creon. We know that his attempt to convince his father of his wrongdoing is sincere, rational, and purely intellectual. It is not his feelings of love for Antigone which lead him to support her actions or uphold her innocence. He is not pleading for the "love of his life," but rather he is trying to make Creon aware of his faults in a purely intellectual manner.

Although Haimon does kill himself due to the loss of Antigone, his love for her was not the sole purpose of his opinion of the situation and whether or not she should have been punished. The rage Haimon develops while talking to Creon is the result of knowing that his father is ruling incorrectly; it is not the result of the ruling being against Antigone in particular. However, had Antigone and Haimon spoken to one another, there would be a question as to whether Haimon was approaching the situation out of full devotion to Antigone or from a belief resulting from intellect and reason.

The question of loyalty is also prevalent throughout the works of Sophocles. Although Haimon disagrees with the actions of his father, he states his loyalty to Creon when he says, "I am your son, father. You are my guide. / You make things clear for me, and I obey you. / No marriage means more to me than your continuing wisdom" (211). Antigone also remained loyal to her father in *Oedipus at Colonus*. She knows the importance of loyalty and devotion to a father. For this reason also, the absence of a dialogue between Antigone and Haimon is important. Antigone could not expect Haimon to be disloyal to his father. Had a conversation taken place between Antigone and Haimon, I can only assume that Antigone would state the unholiness of Creon's commands and actions. Haimon would then be torn between

defending his father and remaining loyal to Creon or taking the side of Antigone. If Haimon were to remain loyal to Creon in front of Antigone, the effect of his suicide would not have been as great; however, if he were to defend Antigone, he would not be as loyal to his father which would be inconsistent with the ideas presented by Sophocles and the actions of Antigone. She remained loyal to her father and can only expect Haimon to do the same. Loyalty remains to the family. It is this very reason that leads Antigone to be faced with death to begin with. Her loyalty to her brother supersedes any orders given by the king.

It is family loyalty along with the political nature of the play which make Antigone more effective without a conversation between Antigone and Haimon alone. Antigone knows the value of loyalty, and Sophocles does not put Haimon in a position to forego the loyalty he holds towards his father. Also, had there been more of a romantic undertone to the actions of Haimon, it would have taken away from the political issues that Sophocles is presenting. The question is not one of love and whether or not the decisions Antigone and Haimon make are in accordance with their love for one another, it is one of whose laws should overpower the others; those of the mortal rulers or those of the gods. By not including a dialogue between Antigone and Haimon, Sophocles is able to present his political issues in a clear manner.

Works Cited

Sophocles. *The Oedipus Cycle: Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone.* trans. Fitts, Dudley and Fitzgerald, Robert. Harcourt Brace and Company: New York, 1949.