

# The bloody dust of the nether gods: Sophocles, *Antigone* 599–603<sup>1</sup>

DOUGLAS CAIRNS

## I

νῦν γὰρ ἐσχάτας ὑπὲρ  
ρίζας ἐτέτατο φάος ἐν Οἰδίπου δόμοις·      600  
κατ' αὖ νιν φοινία  
θεῶν τῶν νερτέρων ἀμᾶ κόνις,  
λόγου τ' ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινύς.<sup>2</sup>

Though current editions of the plays of Sophocles (Dawe's Teubner, Lloyd-Jones's and Wilson's OCT, and Lloyd-Jones's Loeb) all print the emendation κοπίς for MSS' κόνις in *Antigone* 602,<sup>3</sup> there can be little doubt that κόνις is what Sophocles wrote.<sup>4</sup> Emendation is supported mainly by unease regarding the mixed metaphor that (on most interpretations) results if κόνις is read;<sup>5</sup> but the metaphor remains mixed in many interpretations of the emended text too; and in any case it is by no means clear that mixed metaphor should be grounds for emendation, especially in this most Aeschylean of Sophoclean odes.<sup>6</sup> The inadequacy of the alternative, κοπίς, is widely noted: whether as 'scimitar' or as 'chopper' the word seems inappropriate in register for *this* context; and why the nether gods should wield such a weapon in this case has not been satisfactorily explained.<sup>7</sup>

1 It is a pleasure to offer this small token of esteem for Øivind Andersen, a fine scholar and a gracious interlocutor. For help in its preparation I am indebted to Patrick Finglass, Alessandro Iannucci, and Andrea Rodighiero.

2 See below, *ad fin.*, for translation.

3 Among recent commentators on the play, Müller 1967, 143, and Brown 1987, 173 defend κοπίς, while Kamerbeek 1978, 120, Griffith 1999, 226, and Susanetti 2012, 276 argue for κόνις. The conjecture is normally attributed to the ecclesiastical historian John Jortin, but Professor Finglass advises me that it was first proposed by Reiske (1747, 727–8). It seems to have been independently suggested also by Askew, *apud* Heath 1762, 119.

4 See recently e.g. Ferrari 2010, 52–8 (in detail) and Gagné 2013, 367–8 (briefly).

5 The point is made with greatest vehemence by Platt 1910, 249–50. Jebb was similarly convinced in his 1st ed. (1888, 601–02), but more hesitant in the 2nd (1890, 114–15 and in the Appendix, 253–4); cf. Brown 1987, 173. Lloyd-Jones 1957, 17 is right to recognize that the objection is not decisive. In favour of the mixed metaphor, see esp. Tyrrell 1888, 139; also Campbell 1879, 508–09 on 603; Booth 1959.

6 See Tyrrell 1888, 139; Easterling 1978, 146.

7 See Tyrrell 1888, 139; the force of his argument against κοπίς is granted, at least partially, by Jebb 1890, 115, though he is able to show that the term is not alien to tragic diction (*ibid.* 253–4; cf. Platt 1910, 250; Lloyd-Jones 1957, 18; Long 1974, 213 n. 2). See also Easterling 1978, 146–7; Griffith 1999, 226 on 601–03 (though he retains reservations about κόνις).

Though Jebb thought that the prominence of ‘dust’ in the preceding scenes of the play might explain a copyist’s slip, κόνις for κοπίς, in 602,<sup>8</sup> others have recognized that the term is in fact emblematic of Antigone’s action in burying her brother’s body.<sup>9</sup> Someone, according to the Guard in the first episode, has sprinkled the body with ‘thirsty dust’ (τὸν νεκρὸν τις ἀρτίως | θάψας βέβηκε κἀπὶ χρωτὶ διψίαν | κόνιν παλύνας, 245–7); the corpse was thus covered in a light coating of dust, as if someone had attempted to avoid pollution (λεπτὴ δ’ ἄγος φεύγοντος ὡς ἐπῆν κόνις, 256). This is the dust that the Guard and his fellows swept off, as he tells us in his second report, 409–10, exposing the rotting corpse (μυδῶν, 410),<sup>10</sup> only for Antigone to repeat her previous action by once more covering the body with ‘thirsty dust’ (καὶ χερσὶν εὐθὺς διψίαν φέρει κόνιν, 429). The corpse is thus bloodied and rotting, and the dust is dry and absorbent; well might it be described as φοινία in 602. And as dust is an agent in 602, so it is ‘thirsty’, i.e. quasi-personified, in 246 and 429.

In the Guard’s second narrative, moreover, Antigone’s return to the corpse is facilitated by a dust-storm, an οὐράνιον ἄγος (418) or θεία νόσος (421) that fills the air, so that, even though the sun is high in the sky, the Guards cannot see (415–21).<sup>11</sup> When it clears, Antigone is seen (καὶ τοῦδ’ ἀπαλλαγέντος ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ, | ἢ παῖς ὁρᾶται, 422–3); she sees the body denuded of dust (426), curses those who uncovered it (427–8),<sup>12</sup> and immediately restores its covering of thirsty dust. As a result, she is captured and sentenced to death. The interplay of light and darkness in this scene prefigures the imagery of the second stasimon, in which Antigone’s act of sprinkling the bloody dust is said to extinguish the light of hope in the House of Oedipus.<sup>13</sup>

The Chorus-leader suspected that the first burial might be divinely inspired (278–9). The second burial is facilitated by a sudden, uncanny, and perhaps god-sent storm (421). The sprinkling of dust is a ritual act to ward off ἄγος (ἀφαγιστεύσας ἂ χρῆ, 247; ἄγος φεύγοντος ὡς, 256). The Guard’s second narrative, in which the dust-storm facilitates Antigone’s renewal of the corpse’s coating of dust, forms the immediate prelude to Antigone’s defiance of Creon (441ff.). In the second line of her first continuous speech in defence

8 Jebb 1890, 115.

9 See Booth 1959, 77; Easterling 1978, 148; Gagné 2013, 368; cf. Hermann 1825, 63 (quoting Triclinius; see Dindorf 1852, 316.24–6). For what follows in section I of this paper, cf. Ferrari 2010, 56–7.

10 Cf. Tiresias at 1022.

11 On the association of the god-sent dust storm and Antigone’s sprinkling of dust on the corpse, cf. Linforth 1961, 212–13.

12 A decisive objection against those, from Adams 1931 *via* McCall 1972 to Honig 2013, who maintain that Antigone did not perform the first burial.

13 Booth 1959, 76 is right to emphasize that the essential contrast in 599–602 is between ‘light’ (and the upper world), the subject of the first sentence, and ‘dust’ (of the nether gods), that of the second. This contrast is destroyed if we read κοπίς.

of her act she invokes ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη (451; cf. her references to Hades and the gods below at 519, 521, 542). Her act is one of dusting the blood-stained corpse of her ὄμαιμος (512–13), one that brings about her death, a further stage in the terrible history of her family, whose immediately previous stage is the mutual bloodshed of her brothers, including the one who wanted to taste the blood of his compatriots and kin (120–2, 201–02). She performs this act out of devotion to the nether gods (and in full acceptance that it means her death, 460–4, 497–9, 546–7, 555, 559–60). This will – as far as the Chorus know, since Creon has declared his intention also to put Ismene, her ξύναιμος (488), to death (488–90, 580–1) – put an end to the House of Oedipus. Whatever they think of her deed, moreover, the Chorus did not, in the second episode, approve of the defiance that sealed her fate: for them, it reveals the savage character that she has inherited from her father (471–2). According to Creon (562) she has been ἄνους from birth. No one who has succeeded in remaining sentient during the performance of the play so far could fail to understand the Chorus’ statement that the burial of the body (‘the bloody dust of the nether gods’), together with Antigone’s defiant words, indicative of the delusion and derangement that have beset a family so afflicted by inter- and intragenerational strife (λόγου τ’ ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινός), spells the end of the House of Oedipus.<sup>14</sup>

## II

It is thus clear that κόνις is the correct reading. But if doubt remains, it may be dispelled by external evidence, for the contribution of intertextuality to the resolution of this issue is substantial, and it has been almost entirely ignored.

First, there is the evidence of Aeschylus’ *Septem*. This is a major intertext for the play in general and for the second stasimon in particular.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the latter’s echoes of the choral ode at *Septem* 720–91, though spread throughout the stasimon, exhibit a marked clustering at lines 599–603.<sup>16</sup> In that passage of *Septem*, Aeschylus’ Chorus, like Sophocles’ in the *Antigone*’s second stasimon, place the family’s current woes in the context of its history.

14 Regardless, for the moment, of the difficulty over the precise sense of καρ’ ... ἄμα. See Section III below.

15 See (on the parodos) Else 1976, 35–40; Davidson 1983, 41, 43–8; Dunn 2012, 268–70; Rodighiero 2012, 108. On the specific debt of the second stasimon to *Septem* 653ff., 720–91, and 875–1004, see Else 1976, 16–24 (esp. 16–18), 28; cf. Bowra 1944, 87; Ditmars 1992, 77–9; Cairns 2014, 17–19. Gagné’s scepticism on the latter point (2013, 373) is misplaced; one does not have to go all the way with Else’s interpretation (which is in some particulars dubious) to see that the second stasimon’s relation to *Septem* is an intimate one.

16 As shown by the table in Cairns 2014, 18.

Most striking for our purposes are the terms in which the Chorus foresee the mutual fratricide at 734–7:

ἐπει δ' ἂν αὐτοκτόνως  
αὐτοδάκτοι θάνωσι καὶ γαῖα κόνις  
πή μελαμπαγὲς αἷμα φοίνιον,  
τίς ἂν καθαροὺς πόροι;

When they die, slain at each other's hands, and the earth's dust drinks the black and gory stream of their blood, who could provide purification?

Here is the link between the 'thirsty dust' of *Ant.* 246–7 and 429 and the 'bloody dust' of 601–02. The collocation of κόνις and φοίνιον in particular argues for φοινία ... κόνις in the latter place. Throughout the song in *Septem*, moreover, the mutual fratricide is traced to the twin causes of mental impairment and the Erinys that recur in our *Antigone* passage. These are its opening words (*Septem* 720–6):

πέφρικα τὰν ὀλεσίικον  
θεὸν οὐ θεοῖς ὁμοίαν,  
παναληθῆ κακόμαντιν  
πατρὸς εὐκταίαν Ἐρινὺν  
τελέσαι τὰς περιθύμους  
κατάρας Οἰδιπόδα βλαψίφρονος.<sup>17</sup>  
παιδολέτωρ δ' ἔρις ἄδ' ὀτρύνει.

I shudder that the un-godlike goddess, destroyer of houses, the all-true prophet of evil, the Erinys invoked by the father, has brought to pass the angry curses of deranged Oedipus.

The notions of Oedipus' derangement, his curse, and the Erinys recur in ring-composition at the end of the ode (778–91), but a further reference to mental impairment at 753–7 is of particular relevance for our purposes. Here, it is παράνοια ... φρενώλης that leads Oedipus to couple with his mother (756–7); and the children that result from his 'sowing the sacred field of his mother, the place where he had been reared' (753–4) are a 'bloody root-stock' (ρίζαν αἱματόεσσαν, 755).<sup>18</sup> Though the second stasimon's debt to *Septem* 720–91 has been much noted, it does not seem to have been remarked that the language of *Ant.* 599–603 in particular forms such a dense cluster of allusions

17 The term βλαψίφρων is a frequent gloss for ἀεσίφρων, cognate with ἄτη, the key concept in the Chorus's song at *Ant.* 583–625. See Apoll. Soph. *Lex. Hom.* 2.7 Bekker; Hsch. *a* 28; *Etym. Magn.* 20.49–50; Schol. bT on *Il.* 23.603; βλαψίφρων also qualifies ἄτη at Triphiod. 411. On βλάβη-words as glosses for ἄτη, see Dawe 1968, 101, 105; Stallmach 1968, 44; Cairns 2012, 42 n. 100.

18 'ρίζα of a family is a common poetic metaphor', Finglass 2011, 468 on *Aj.* 1178 (with refs).

to the central concepts of that ode. The occurrence of *ρίζα*, *κόνις*, and *φοίνις* in both places, given the similarity of their reference, the proliferation of other points of contact, and the thematic similarity between Aeschylus' ode and Sophocles', in itself strongly suggests that *φοινία ... κόνις* is genuine in *Ant.* 601–02.

Dust's thirst for blood (*Septem* 735–6) is also found in two passages of the *Eumenides*. At 647–8, Apollo reminds the Erinyes that

ἀνδρὸς δ' ἐπειδὴν αἷμ' ἀνασπάσῃ κόνις  
ἅπαξ θανόντος, οὔτις ἔστ' ἀνάστασις.<sup>19</sup>

When once the dust has sucked up the blood of a man that died, there is no resurrection.

Later in the play, the Erinyes, now reconciled, pray that the dust should not, in pursuit of revenge killing, and to the ruin of the city, drink the citizens' blood (980–3):

μηδὲ πιῶσα κόνις μέλαν αἷμα πολιτῶν  
δι' ὄργαν ποινὰς  
ἀντιφόνους, ἄτας  
ἄρπαλίσει πόλεως.

And may the dust not drink the black blood of the citizens, angrily pursuing vengeance in retaliatory killing, the city's ruin.

Again, *κόνις* is personified, and the thematic similarity between these passages and the contexts of *Septem* 735–6 and *Ant.* 599–603 helps corroborate the conclusions that we have drawn from the relation between *Antigone* and the *Septem*.

But the association between blood and dust goes back further, all the way to Homer. Already in 1959 Booth cited 'the Homeric stock phrase αἷματι καὶ κονίησι πεφυρμένος' in support of *κόνις* at *Ant.* 602.<sup>20</sup> That phrase does not in fact occur,<sup>21</sup> but the words αἷματι καὶ κονίησι are regularly associated with death in battle,<sup>22</sup> and blood and dust also co-occur in other locutions.<sup>23</sup> One

19 For the thought, cf. *Ag.* 1019–21; slightly more remotely *Cho.* 66–7; other passages in the *Oresteia* and beyond in Fraenkel 1950, ii. 459.

20 Booth 1959, 77.

21 The nearest thing is *πεφυρμένον αἷματι πολλῶν* at *Od.* 9.397 (echoed in *Eur. Alc.* 496 and *Bacch.* 742; *Hdt.* 3.157.1; *Xen. Ages.* 2.14; *Theoc. Id.* 26.25).

22 *Il.* 15.118, 16.639–40, 795–6, *Od.* 22.383–4 (αἷματι καὶ κονίησι).

23 See *Il.* 11.163–4, 13.617. The motif of the earth soaked with blood is, of course, more common, as are locutions which have warriors falling or lying (etc.) in dust; I restrict myself here to phrases that combine *κόνις* or *κονίη* with some term for blood.

of these is perhaps worth quoting as a possible inspiration, even if only as a verbal echo, for *Ant.* 601–02. This is *Od.* 18.97–8:

αὐτίκα δ' ἦλθεν ἀνὰ στόμα φοίνιον αἷμα,  
καὶ δ' ἔπεσ' ἐν κονίησι μακῶν.

Immediately the red blood filled his [Irus'] mouth, and he fell bleating in the dust.

For the expression 'bloody dust', however, the nearest Homeric parallel comes in two Iliadic passages in which the fall of a warrior (first Asius, then Sarpedon) is compared to the felling of a tree (*Il.* 13.389–93 = 16.482–6):

ἦριπε δ' ὡς ὅτε τις δρῦς ἦριπεν ἢ ἀχερωῖς,  
ἢ ἐ πίτυς βλωθρή, τὴν τ' οὔρεσι τέκτονες ἄνδρες  
ἐξέταμον πελέκεσσι νεήκεσι νήϊον εἶναι·  
ὡς ὁ πρόσθ' ἵππων καὶ δίφρου κείτο τανυσθεῖς,  
βεβρυχῶς, κόνιος δεδραγμένος αἱματοέσσης.

He fell, as when an oak or a white poplar falls, or a tall pine, that in the mountains carpenters have cut down with newly sharpened axes, to provide timber for a ship. So he lay stretched out in front of his horses and chariot, roaring, grasping the bloody dust.

These are important lines. The simile and death description are not only memorable in themselves; their repetition in the context of two significant deaths – especially the second, which marks the completion of a stage in the great sequence of conflicts that culminates in the deaths of Patroclus and Hector and looks beyond the poem to the death of Achilles – reinforces their memorability.<sup>24</sup> Now, κόνις αἱματοέσση is not φοινία κόνις. But still I think we can prove that these passages were, at some level, in Sophocles' mind when he wrote *Ant.* 601–02.

The perfect participle, δεδραγμένος, is rare. It is the only part of the verb δράσσομαι ('grasp') to occur in Homer, and it occurs only in these two passages.<sup>25</sup> Its first extant occurrence in post-Homeric literature is in the *Antigone*. It occurs once more in Attic verse in line 1413 of Euripides' *Orestes*, and not thereafter until Dionysius of Halicarnassus cites Homer's verses four centuries later (*Comp.* 4.27, 4.29). The word's occurrence in *Antigone* comes in the Guard's speech at 235, where he describes himself as 'clinging to the hope' that he cannot suffer what he is not fated to suffer (τῆς ἐλπίδος γὰρ ἔρχομαι δεδραγμένος, | τὸ μὴ παθεῖν ἂν ἄλλο πλὴν τὸ μόρσιμον). Ten lines

<sup>24</sup> See Janko 1992, 97 on 389–93.

<sup>25</sup> Janko 1992, 97 observes that 'falling in the dust and grasping it in handfuls' is relatively common, but this is the formula ὁ δ' ἐν κονίησι πεσὼν ἔλε γαῖαν ἀγοστιῶ (*Il.* 13.508, 13.520, 14.452, 17.315).

later he breaks the news that someone has sprinkled ‘thirsty dust’ on the corpse of Polynices (245–7). The Guard describes himself as clinging to hope in a phrase whose only Homeric precedent involves the grasping of bloody dust; the Chorus in the second stasimon attribute the annihilation of hope for the House of Oedipus to the bloody dust of the nether gods. The Homeric phrase κόνιος δεδραγμένος αίματοέσσης has combined with the more obvious debt to key passages of the *Septem* to produce Sophocles’ φοινία κόνις.<sup>26</sup>

That sources for Sophocles’ phrase should be found in Aeschylus’ *Septem* and in the *Iliad* does not merely support the reading κόνις at *Ant.* 602. The links to *Septem* (where ρίζα at 755 represents the family line that now ends with the deaths of Eteocles and Polynices, and where, at 735–6, the γαῖα κόνις drinks their αἶμα φοίνιον) and Homer (where the dust is regularly bloodied by the dying warrior) indicate that the resonances of the *Antigone* passage include not only Antigone’s act of sprinkling dust on the corpse but also the death of Polynices and his brother in fratricidal combat. The associations of φοινία κόνις belong with the passage’s other affinities with *Septem* in reinforcing the ode’s central perspective, that Antigone’s act and its consequences replicate a pattern of disaster and derangement that has beset more than one generation of the Labdacids.

### III

To conclude, I need to say a little more about how we are to understand φοινία κόνις in its immediate context. First, its relation to λόγου τ’ ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινός in 603. It is debated whether this phrase should be regarded as in apposition to κόνις in 602 or as giving two further items in a list that begins with κόνις in 602.<sup>27</sup> If, as I argue, φοινία κόνις refers primarily to Antigone’s act of burial (though with resonance also of her brothers’ mutual slaughter as portrayed in *Septem*), then λόγου ἄνοια might be regarded as a further cause of the family’s extinction, namely Antigone’s defiant speech in defence of that act in the second of these episodes. Antigone herself expects that her defiance will be regarded as μωρία (469–70), the Chorus-leader comments on the temperament that she has inherited from her father (471–2), and Creon sees

26 The participle βεβρυχός also appears in Homer only in these two similes, though the finite verb βέβρυχεν occurs at *Il.* 17.264 and *Od.* 5.411–12 (both of the roar of the sea); cf. cognates at *Od.* 5.319, 12.241–2. The association with the sea in these passages is a more obvious inspiration for the description of man ‘passing through the roaring swell’ (περιβρυχίουσιν | περὸν ὑπ’ οἴδμασιν) at *Soph. Ant.* 336; but if *Hom. Il.* 13.389–93 and 16.482–6 were in Sophocles’ mind, then the influence of βεβρυχός in these passages might just be felt here too.

27 See esp. Lloyd-Jones 1957, 18–19; Long 1974; Easterling 1978, 148; Kamerbeek 1978, 120; Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 129; Ferrari 2010, 54; Gagné 2013, 368.

her words as ὕβρις that compounds the ὕβρις of the original offence (480–3; cf. his reference to her ἄνοια at 562). This, I think, must be the proximate reference of the phrase, and so λόγου τ' ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινύς are the second and third causes of the extinction of hope for the House of Oedipus.<sup>28</sup> Yet λόγος is not merely speech, but also reason, and if we take the phrase in that sense, then λόγου τ' ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινύς can explain, in apposition, the twin causes of Antigone's action in burying her brother – her own lack of reason and the influence of an Erinys on her mind. Though the former explanation is the more immediately relevant, the latter is also possible; both connotations may be present, and we need not be forced to choose between them.

But what precisely is it that the personified κόνις does? The real problem with the passage is not with κόνις, but with κατ' ... ἀμά. Most scholars translate the verb as 'harvest' or 'cut down'. Recently, however, both Ferrari and Gagné have revived the argument that in this case the verb has the sense 'scrape up, heap up, heap upon', (*LSJ s.v.*) attested for καταμάομαι at *Il.* 24.165 in the context of Priam's mourning for Hector (24.163–5):<sup>29</sup>

ἀμφὶ δὲ πολλή  
κόπρος ἔην κεφαλῇ τε καὶ αὐχένι τοῖο γέροντος,  
τὴν ῥα κυλινδόμενος καταμήσατο χερσὶν ἐῆσι.

Much dung lay on the head and neck of that old man, which he had heaped up on himself with his hands as he rolled in it.

Many have insisted that ἀμάω, 'harvest', and ἀμάομαι, 'gather' (normally in the middle voice) are different verbs.<sup>30</sup> The clearest indications that this might be the case are to be found in passages such as *Od.* 9.247, where the object of ἀμησάμενος is the milk of Polyphemos' herds; but where the object of ἀμάομαι (or a compound) is also something (such as a crop) that can be harvested or reaped the two senses are easily assimilated.<sup>31</sup> Among the compounds of

<sup>28</sup> So, most neatly, Gagné 2013, 368.

<sup>29</sup> Ferrari 2010, 54–5; Gagné 2013, 367; cf. Campbell 1879, 508 on 602–03, followed by Kamerbeek 1978, 120. The debate is an ancient one, since the two senses of ἀμάω/ἀμάομαι clearly lie behind the scholiast's suggestions θερίζει καὶ ἐκκόπτει· ἢ καλύπτει (*Schol.* on 602; cf. on 599: νῦν γάρ, φησὶν, ὅπερ ἦν λείψανον γενεᾶς τοῦτο μέλλει καλύπτειν ἢ κόνις).

<sup>30</sup> See (with varying degrees of confidence) Bechtel 1911, 36–7; Chantraine 1968–80, 72; Irigoien in *LfgreE* i. 606–07, 613–14; Frisk 1960, 88–9; Beekes 2010, 82, 84; cf. West 1966, 332 on Hes. *Theog.* 599.

<sup>31</sup> So Jebb 1890, 253; West 1978, 354 on Hes. *Op.* 775. Cf. e.g. Hdt. 3.98.4, 4.199.1; Ar. *Thesm.* 494; Eur. fr. 419.4 Kannicht (*Ino*); Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.688, 3.858–9 (comparing Soph. fr. 534 Radt, with Hunter 1989, 90 *ad loc.*); cf. the proverb ἄλλοι μὲν σπειροῦσι, ἄλλοι δὲ ἀμῆσονται, Diogenianus 2.62, Leutsch-Schneidewin i. 205.



these verbs, ἐπαμάομαι is regularly used of heaping up earth and is found several times (in later authors) with κόνις.<sup>32</sup> In a few cases, the active voice has the same sense, as, for example, when Diogenes Laertius 6.79 reports the final request of his namesake, the Cynic philosopher, that after his death those who survive him should simply throw his corpse into a ditch and sprinkle a little dust over it (εἷς γε βόθρον συνῶσαι καὶ ὀλίγην κόνιν ἐπαμήσαι).<sup>33</sup> In the case of καταμάω, the compound used in *Ant.* 602, the sense ‘gather, heap up’ is found only with the middle voice.<sup>34</sup> In two such cases, both in Josephus, the substance in question is κόνις. At 2.322 the high priests, in a gesture of supplication, appear before the people of Jerusalem ‘their heads sprinkled with dust’. The manuscripts are divided between καταμωμένους μὲν τῆς κεφαλῆς κόνιν and καταμωμένους μὲν τὴν κεφαλὴν κόνει, but the former is the better attested construction, one that is in fact found as a variant in section 601 of the same book.<sup>35</sup> The simple verb ἀμάω, on the other hand, does occur in the active voice, and in the same sense, in an epigram of the Late Hellenistic poet, Antipater of Sidon, *AP* 7.241.3–4, where the grieving tutor of a deceased Ptolemy ‘gathers dark dust in his warlike hands and pours it over his head’ (χερσὶν ἀμήσας | ἀνδρομάχοις δνοφερὰν κρατὸς ὑπερθε κόνιν). Though none of the relevant occurrences of the active verbs, ἀμάω or ἐπαμάω, with the middle sense (‘gather’, ‘heap up’, ‘pour’) is as early as Sophocles, there is perhaps enough here to suggest that, had he wanted to use κατ’... ἀμᾶ to refer to the gathering and pouring of dust, he could have.

But did he? In none of the other locutions in which (ἐπ)αμάω, ἐπαμάομαι, or καταμάομαι refer to the heaping up or pouring of dust (*vel sim.*) is the dust (*vel sim.*) the subject of the verb. We can envisage ἀμᾶ standing for ἀμάται with κόνιν as object, but can we construe κατ’ αὐτὸν ... ἀμᾶ κόνις in a way that makes the verb passive (‘dust is gathered over it’) or intransitive (‘dust gathers over it’)? There is no parallel for a move as bold as this.<sup>36</sup> With either of these senses, moreover, one might expect a genitive after κατά rather than

32 Earth: Thgn. 428; Hdt. 8.24.1; Xen. *Oec.* 19.11 (etc.); κόνις: Philo, *De Josepho* 25, *De vit. Mos.* 1.29; Lucian, *Anach.* 2; Origen, *C. Cels.* 6.15; Julianus Arianus, *Comm. Job* 34.7. Cf. Odysseus’ piling up leaves to make a bed at *Od.* 5.482. ἐπαμάω is the compound that is found most frequently in the sense ‘gather’, ‘heap up’; ἀπαμάω and ἐξαμάω, by contrast, both active and middle, are found almost exclusively in the sense ‘cut’, ‘reap’, ‘harvest’.

33 Cf. Epiph. *Panarion* 1.343.27 (contrast the use of the middle at 2.514.20). Cf. also the use of the active with earth as object at Iambl. *VP* 31.192 and of a covering of leaves at Heliod. *Aeth.* 2.20.3.

34 Pace Ferrari 2010, 55, who finds the active verb in this sense at Posidippus 19.13–14 Austin-Bastianini, where Poseidon is said to be capable of sinking an entire island in the sea (βεῖα καταμήσεις εἰν ἀλί νήσον ὄλην). But this is much more likely to be καταμάω, ‘mow down’ (so Austin and Bastianini 2002, 41).

35 καταμησάμενος τῆς κεφαλῆς κόνιν in MS L and in the quotation, *Suda* κ 651 s.v. καταμησάμενος. The other MSS read καταπασάμενος. Cf. n. 36 below.

36 See Jebb 1890, 253, against Campbell 1879, 508.

an accusative.<sup>37</sup> And, for what it is worth, of the five other instances of ἀμάω or its compounds attested for Sophocles, none involves the sense ‘gather’ or ‘heap up’.<sup>38</sup> The use of the passive at *Aj.* 1178 is particularly suggestive: here, as he positions Eurysaces at Ajax’s corpse in supplication, Teucer prays that anyone who might attempt to drag the child away should be ‘cast unburied from the land, the root of his whole family extirpated’ (ἄθραπτος ἐκπέσοι χθονός, | γένους ἄπαντος ρίζαν ἐξημημένος).

All these considerations suggest that the primary sense of κατ’... ἀμῶ in *Ant.* 602 is ‘cuts down’. Its subject, κόνις, is, as we have noted, a metonymy for Antigone’s action in sprinkling dust on the bloody and defiled corpse of her brother. Since that is the case, however, the association (from Homer onwards) of both καταμάομαι and κόνις with death and mourning probably permits us to assume that the sense ‘heap up (over)’, though not part of the verb’s denotation in this context, is nonetheless felt as an active connotation. The verbs (κατ)αμάω/(κατ)αμάομαι occur in prose as well as in poetry; they are not especially rare; and as their denotations, ‘reap’ and ‘gather’, are both common and relatively stable, the verbs cannot quite be seen as what Michael Silk has called ‘iconyms’.<sup>39</sup> But since there is a degree of overlap and assimilation between these senses, it seems possible that a given instance may well have the denotation of one and a connotation of the other – especially in a context in which the influence of Aeschylus is so clear and so strong and Sophocles’ language is at its most dense and suggestive.

Let us assume, then, that κατ’... ἀμῶ in *Ant.* 602 means ‘cuts down’ (appropriate to ρίζας in the previous sentence), but with overtones of ‘covers’, ‘conceals’ (appropriate to φάος). The reference of νῦν in 601 is not certain, but since φάος is the subject of the previous sentence, it is more likely to be

37 As in the Josephus passages above, if we read καταμωμένους/καταμησάμενος τῆς κεφαλῆς κόνιν (cf. n. 34 and text *ad loc.*). Cf. Pherecr. 126.2–3 Kassel-Austin; also the epigram of Antipater quoted above (where κρατὸς ὑπερθε expresses the same idea). As the examples quoted above have shown, moreover, it is the substance that is gathered or poured, not the object onto which it is poured, that is the object of ἀμάομαι, ἐπαμάομαι, καταμάομαι, etc.

38 See *Trach.* 33 (ἐξαμῶν, ‘reaping’), *Phil.* 749 (ἀπάμησον, ‘cut off’), fr. 534.7 Radt (ἦμα, ‘harvested’); even the bare citation ἀμάσεται (fr. 625) is glossed by Hesychius (who quotes it from Sophocles’ *Troelus*) in the sense ‘harvest, i.e. kill’. For *Aj.* 1178 see text above.

39 An iconym is ‘an archaic and poetic word which has lost its denotation, and thus is used with various connotations in a range of applications which defy classification as discrete but related senses of the same word’. This is my paraphrase (Cairns 1998, 62) of Silk’s own, lengthier definition at 1983, 311–12. See esp. his page 311: ‘An iconym is a word which has lost its denotations. Its usage is unpredictable and unstable. It has certain properties which ordinary words do not have, but it has less meaning than any ordinary word has.’

‘light’ than ‘root’.<sup>40</sup> Lines 599–600 offer two metaphorical notions: the root that is the Labdacid line and the light (of hope) represented by Antigone (and Ismene). The expectation that the dust cast by Antigone on the corpse should extinguish the light is not entirely disappointed – it is there in the secondary connotation of *κατ’... ἀμῆ* that we identified above. But rather than meet that expectation in full, Sophocles has done something more interesting: the light is not extinguished in a layer of dust, but cut down, as if the light spread over the root were the root itself and the dust that extinguishes it a knife.<sup>41</sup> Antigone is the main referent of the *φῶς* that represents the hope of the continuation of the line through the offspring she might have had; but she also belongs to the *ρίζα qua* family line, and it is her act in sprinkling the bloody dust that extinguishes the light and extirpates the root. The lines constitute a particularly dense and rich example of the well-attested phenomenon of interaction in Greek poetic imagery;<sup>42</sup> it would be a great pity to lose that through emendation.

The remaining puzzles that are sometimes raised in connection with this passage are more easily solved. The presence of *viv* in 601 confirms the asyndeton between 599–600 and 601–03 and rules out the attempt to introduce a relative pronoun (whether by reading *ὄπερ* for *ὕπερ* with Laurentianus 31.10 *supra lineam* and Hermann in 599 (cf. Schol. *ad loc.*) or by restoring *ὃ* before MSS’ *τέτατο* in 600, with Hermann).<sup>43</sup> Ferrari believes that *τέτατο* in 600 can stand, giving - - ~ ~ ~ | ~ ~ ~ - | ~ - ~ - (a cretic instead of an iamb in the second metron) in responsion with - - ~ ~ ~ | ~ ~ ~ ~ - | ~ - ~ - (a regular trimeter) in 588.<sup>44</sup> But whether we restore responsion with *ἐτέτατο* (Brunck) or keep *τέτατο* makes no difference to my argument here. And so we can translate (rendering *κατ’... ἀμῆ* by the passive in English for the sake of word order):

For, as it was, a light had been extended over the last root in the house of Oedipus; it in its turn is cut down by the bloody dust of the nether gods, folly of speech, and a Fury of the mind.

40 So Kamerbeek 1978, 120 on 599–603; Tyrrell and Bennett 1998, 82–3; that the reference is to *ρίζας* is stated already in Schol. *Ant.* 601; cf. Platt 1910, 250; Easterling 1978, 147; Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 129; Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1997, 74.

41 Cf. Tyrrell 1888, 139; Booth 1959.

42 See Silk 1974.

43 In defence of the asyndeton, see Lloyd-Jones 1957, 17, with parallels; cf. Kamerbeek 1978, 120 on 599–603; Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 129; Ferrari 2010, 53. As Lloyd-Jones and Wilson observe, with a relative clause in 599–600, we should expect a demonstrative pronoun rather than *viv* in 601.

44 Ferrari 2010, 53, citing other Sophoclean cases (*Aj.* 369/384, *OT* 867/877, *OC* 1454/1469) in which such alleged freedom of responsion in lyric iambs is similarly removed by emendation.

## References

- Adams, Sinclair M. (1931) 'The Burial of Polyneices'. *CR* 45: 110–11.
- Austin, Colin and Guido Bastianini. (2002) *Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia*. Milan: LED (Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto).
- Bechtel, Friedrich. (1914) *Lexilogus zu Homer: Etymologie und Stammbildung Homerischer Wörter*. Halle: Niemeyer.
- Beekes, Robert. (2010) *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*. Leiden: Brill.
- Booth, Nathan B. (1959) 'Sophocles, *Antigone* 599-603: A Positive Argument for κόνις'. *CQ* 9: 76–7.
- Bowra, C. Maurice (1944) *Sophoclean Tragedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Brown, Andrew. (1987) *Sophocles: Antigone*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Cairns, Douglas L. (1998) 'Aotos, anthos, and the Death of Archemorus in Bacchylides' Ninth Ode'. *PLLS* 10: 57–73.  
 – (2012) 'Atê in the Homeric Poems'. *PLLS* 12: 1–52.  
 – (2014) 'From Solon to Sophocles: Intertextuality and Interpretation in Sophocles' *Antigone*'. *JASCA* 2: 3–30.
- Campbell, Lewis. (1879) *Sophocles*, vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Chantraine, Pierre. (1968–1980) *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Davidson, John F. (1983) 'The Parodos of the *Antigone*: A Poetic Study'. *BICS* 30: 41–51.
- Dawe, Roger D. (1968) 'Some Reflections on *Atê* and *Hamartia*'. *HSCP* 72: 89–123.
- Dindorf, Karl Wilhem. (1852) *Scholia in Sophoclis tragoedias septem ex codicibus aucta et emendata*, vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ditmars, Elizabeth van Nes. (1992) *Sophocles' Antigone: Lyric Shape and Meaning*. Pisa: Giardini Editori.
- Dunn, Francis M. (2012) 'Dynamic Allusion in Sophocles'. In *Brill's Companion to Sophocles*, edited by Andreas Markantonatos, 263–79. Leiden: Brill.
- Easterling, Patricia E. (1978) 'The Second Stasimon of the *Antigone*'. In *Dionysiaca: Nine Studies in Greek Poetry by Former Pupils Presented to Sir Denys Page on his Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Roger D. Dawe, James Diggle, and Patricia E. Easterling, 141–58. Cambridge: Classical Faculty Library.
- Else, Gerald F. (1976) *The Madness of Antigone*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Ferrari, Franco. (2010) 'La luce soffocata: Soph. *Ant.* 583–603'. In *Antigone e le Antigoni*, edited by Anna Maria Belardinelli and Giovanni Greco, 50–8. Milan: Mondadori Education.
- Finglass, Patrick J. (2011) *Sophocles: Ajax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fraenkel, Eduard. (1950) *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frisk, Hjalmar. (1960) *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 1. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Gagné, Renaud. (2013) *Ancestral Fault in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Griffith, Mark. (1999) *Sophocles: Antigone*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, Benjamin. (1762) *Notae sive lectiones ad tragicorum Graecorum veterum Aeschyli Sophoclis Euripidis quae supersunt dramata deperditorumque reliquias*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hermann, Gottfried. (1825) *Sophoclis Antigona ad optimorum librorum fidem recensuit et brevibus notis instruxit Car. Gottlob Aug. Erfurdt, cum adnotationibus Godofredi Hermanni*. London: Black, Young, and Young.
- Honig, Bonnie. (2013) *Antigone, Interrupted*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Hunter, Richard. (1989) *Apollonius of Rhodes: Argonautica Book III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Janko, Richard. (1992) *The Iliad: A Commentary. Vol. IV, Books 13-16*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jebb, Richard C. (1888/1890<sup>2</sup>) *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments. Part III: The Antigone*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kamerbeek, Jan C. (1978) *The Plays of Sophocles: Commentaries. Part 3: The Antigone*, Leiden: Brill.
- Linforth, Ivan M. (1961) 'Antigone and Creon'. *University of California Publications in Classical Philology*. 15: 183–260.
- Lloyd-Jones, Hugh. (1957) 'Notes on Sophocles' Antigone', *CQ* 51: 12–27. (Reprinted in *id.*, *Greek Epic, Lyric, and Tragedy: The Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones* (Oxford, 1990), 368–87.)
- Lloyd-Jones, Hugh and Nigel G. Wilson. (1990) *Sophoclea: Studies on the Text of Sophocles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
– (1997) *Sophocles: Second Thoughts*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Long, Timothy. (1974) 'Τε καί and κοπις in Sophocles' *Antigone* 602'. *RM* 117: 213–14.
- McCall, Marsh. (1972) 'Divine and Human Action in Sophocles: The Two Burials of the *Antigone*'. *YCS* 22: 103–17.
- Müller, Gerhard. (1967) *Sophokles: Antigone*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Platt, Arthur. (1910) 'Sophoclea III: *Antigone*'. *CQ* 4: 247–56.
- Reiske, Johan Jacob. (1747) 'Specimen emendationum in Graecos auctores'. *Miscellanea Lipsiensia Nova* 5: 717–29.
- Rodighiero, Andrea. (2012) *Generi lirico-coralì nella produzione drammatica di Sofocle*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Silk, Michael S. (1974) *Interaction in Poetic Imagery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
(1983) 'LSJ and the Problem of Poetic Archaism: From Meanings to Iconyms'. *CQ* 33: 303–30.
- Stallmach, Josef. (1968) *Ate: Zur Frage des Selbst- und Weltverständnisses des frühgriechischen Menschen*. Meisenheim am Glan: Hain.
- Susanetti, Davide. (2012) *Sofocle: Antigone*. Rome: Carocci.
- Tyrrell, Robert Y. (1888) Review of Jebb 1888. *CR* 2: 138–41.
- Tyrrell, W. Blake and Larry J. Bennett. (1998) *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- West, Martin L. (1966) *Hesiod: Theogony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
– (1978) *Hesiod: Works and Days*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.