

Introduction

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We begin with what appears to be a contradictory state of affairs. Tragedy is dead, or so we have been reliably informed by the likes of G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Michel Foucault, all of whom have at one point or another found reason to view tragedy in its original form as no longer relevant for understanding human life in the late modern or perhaps postmodern era. And yet, in spite of these illustrious pallbearers, we continue to be confronted by a lively proliferation of Antigones, as theorists and theatre practitioners around the world conspire in what is an undeniably ongoing revival of the character of Antigone. What, then, are we to make of the ostensible death of tragedy on the one hand, and Antigone's refusal to attend her own funeral on the other?

When considering the philosophical perspectives according to which tragedy has been judged irrelevant, it becomes clear that one arrives at this judgment only on the basis of a certain model of European inheritance, namely, a model according to which we understand ourselves (at least in part) as situated in a significant relation to the tradition that arose with the ancient Greeks and that has unfolded through European culture over the millennia down to the present day. Once relegated to a position utterly defined and delimited by the metaphysical principles, concepts, arguments, and values of that Western tradition, tragedy in general and Antigone in particular become casualties of the analysis, for there is a recognition shared by the thinkers in question that this very tradition is either drawing to a close today or has already done so. Hegel saw the fundamental ethical contradictions at work in ancient tragedy (individual versus community,

family versus state) as having been overcome or harmonized in late modern civil society. Hölderlin viewed tragedy in terms of the relationship between the human being and nature, still a powerful conceptual binary to be sure, but he came to believe that this relation required a new, specifically modern conceptualization, one that broke definitively with the tragic worldview of the ancient Greeks. Nietzsche hoped for a resurgence of something like the creative energy he glimpsed in tragic poetry, but this was never conceived as any kind of “return” to the original ancient Greek forms or texts. And Foucault has been read in ways that suggest that the demise of tragedy in modernity is bound up with the demise of the classical model of governance, various forms of sovereignty giving way to the more dispersed and perhaps still more pernicious dynamics of biopower that he observed to be at work in contemporary society. In light of these historical analyses, Antigone loses her claim to any sort of pertinence, for an epochal break with the past seems in each case to have left behind the tradition at the origin of which she is situated and by which she is presumed completely contained.

Faced, then, with what appears to be her persisting capacity to illuminate our world, faced with her continued appeal today for thinkers, poets, and activists of every stripe, we find ourselves compelled to recognize an Antigone—or Antigones—who exists somehow *in excess of* the Western metaphysical tradition that so many see as crucially at its end. The essays in this volume all attempt to locate, analyze, and explain that excess, but they do so by thematizing two different modes of critique with respect to that tradition. We might refer to these as the *immanent* mode and the *transcendent* mode, and although these often overlap and intertwine in various ways throughout the essays in this volume, these two approaches might be distinguished strategically in the following way.

On the one hand, some of our authors take up the Antigone of the European tradition itself, searching out the ways in which she might disrupt and push beyond the limits of that tradition *from within*. Now, among our contributors who undertake such an *immanent* critique, we can identify two distinct regions of inquiry. Some of them turn their attention to Sophocles’s own text and its ancient contexts, reading these carefully and deeply for an Antigone who, situated at the site of emergence for the subsequent tradition, enjoys a position not entirely dominated by its logic. Others look to the later theorizations of this Greek mytho-tragic figure, remaining thereby with respect to that tradition *intra muros*, as it were, but scouring the subsequent interpretations of Hegel, Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Lacan, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida,

Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and others, searching for moments in which the thinker in question deploys Antigone to oppose the principles or reveal the obscuring presuppositions at work in his or her own historical moment.

On the other hand, another group of our authors might be said to *transcend* the Western tradition by looking to the Antigones born of that tradition's *beyond* or *other*.¹ These interpreters focus their attention on a variety of postcolonial contexts and on queer or itinerant appropriations, finding a common tendency of deploying the figure of Antigone in creative, powerful, and context-specific ways. Indeed, again and again, Antigone seems capable of illuminating and reframing the ethical and political issues that are most vital and pressing for a given culture at a given historical moment.

Antigone and Immanent Critique: Ancient and Modern

Locating in Antigone a voice of immanent critique, many of our authors find a touchstone in the work of a relatively recent school of thought in the field of classics, specifically its approach to ancient Greek tragedy. This school has opened up new avenues for interpretation by challenging a certain long-standing conventional wisdom, namely, the belief that tragic drama was essentially conservative, a state-funded art form intended ultimately to bolster the citizenry's faith in orthodox opinions and values. Indeed, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Nicole Loraux, and Charles Segal, among others, have argued forcefully to the contrary, finding in tragedy a precisely calibrated machine for introducing difference, for opening up space for dissident opinions and exposing the questionable grounds of any entrenched values or concepts. Indeed, according to these scholars, tragedy can do so just insofar as it fictionalizes any inherited truths, any received values, and, no matter how familiar or calcified, leads these into difficulties and thereby exposes the inevitable limits of their validity. Vernant writes,

Ancient drama explores the mechanisms through which an individual, however excellent he may be, is brought to his downfall, not as the result of external constraints or his own perversity or vices, but because of an error, a mistake such as anyone might make. In this way, it lays bare the network of contradictory forces that assail all human beings, given that, not only in Greek society but in all societies and cultures,

tensions and conflicts are inevitable. By these means, tragedy prompts the spectator to submit the human condition, limited and necessarily finite as it is, to a general interrogation. The scope of tragedy is such that it carries within itself a kind of knowledge or a theory concerning the illogical logic that governs the order of human activities.²

According to this interpretation, tragedy has been since its very beginnings a tool for social and political self-critique, a means by which the polity puts itself on trial, exposing and examining its own contradictions and attempting to live in full recognition of its necessary human limitations. The *Antigone* of Sophocles's own text is, thus, already a cipher, an essentially problematizing specter, and we have only to tap into this potential in order to find a potent force for calling into question the tradition that extends from her to us. A number of the essays in this volume are engaged in precisely this project.

Moreover, this same function is served for some of our authors not by Sophocles's own heroine, but by the later theoretical deployments thereof throughout the Western tradition. Again and again, we find that the figure of *Antigone* allows certain thinkers to push their own logic, their own systems, and those of their contemporaries to their limits. This project finds a paradigm in Irigaray's undeniably brilliant reading of Hegel's treatment of *Antigone*, whereby Hegel's own system is exposed to an excess, an unrecuperated moment, calling into question the system's own presumptively totalizing validity. Indeed, reading *Antigone* in light of Freud, Heidegger, Jean-Luc Nancy, Arendt, Lacan, Kristeva, Seyla Benhabib, Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, and others, the authors of these essays problematize various positions in psychoanalysis and political and moral philosophy, as well as feminist and gender theory in their contemporary forms. In these moments, thought escapes the confines of Western philosophical speculation and thinks otherwise, thinks beyond itself.

This immanent project, in its various instantiations, consumes the authors of the essays in the earlier sections of the volume. The internal critiques undertaken throughout these sections constitute a preparation for the transcendence of the tradition by the authors of the essays in sections four and five. These essays follow *Antigone* as she travels beyond the confines of European culture or beyond the territory mapped according to the conceptual distinctions and logics of "straight" culture. They thereby mark the profound transformations and site-specific illuminations that result from *Antigone*'s having been thus transported, queered, liberated, or

reimagined. In these contexts, Antigone proves to operate in ways irreducible to the discursive possibilities of the tradition from which she came.

Antigone and Transcendent Critique: Queer Readings and Postcolonial Contexts

Perhaps the clue to the incessant resurgence of Antigones in the contexts of colonized territories lies in the European characterization of colonial populations as premodern, a characterization that was used to justify oppression in the name of civilization. If Europe could construe its project of colonization as one that cultivated a modernity not yet arrived in the colonies, then it is unsurprising that colonized populations took up and revived the form of tragic art as a vehicle for interrogating the specific forms of power, both cultural and political, wielded by colonial occupations.

Inscribing themselves into history as viable political subjects in control of their own future, postcolonial peoples have appropriated Antigone to contest the foreclosure both of their own political agency and, precisely thereby, of tragedy as a viable aesthetic form; thus, the tragedy of colonization itself becomes a theme for interrogation. The dual foreclosure of agency and the tragic form is effected by Europe's interpretation of modernity, declaring the death of tragedy, and the disappearance of sovereign modes of power in which it trades. Appointing itself the coroner of tragedy, and offering as its postmortem diagnosis the end of sovereign modes of power, Europe fails to notice that colonial expansion replaces the politics of sovereignty through its refusal to recognize the subjects it dominates as fully human, or to accord them equal political rights. If tragedy as a forum for exploring the politics of sovereignty is dead, it is reborn as an exploration of the mechanism by which the viability of political subjectivities is connected to biopolitical operations. The rebirth of tragedy, and its own continued viability, can be accounted for by the "social death" that not only political regimes, but hegemonic subjects, and oppressed subjects themselves, confer on some subjects, while according others the right to full subjectivity. A conferral, it must be added, that adapts the mechanism of subjectification through which it becomes a self-conferral, whereby subjects themselves adopt biopolitical procedures in order to administer more efficiently than the state ever could have done their own oppression.

Tragedy is, thus, transformed into a vehicle for the exploration and exposure of a new set of tensions, foremost among which is the production

of an underclass of humans whose struggle to gain recognition is at the same time a struggle to transform the terms of representation according to which subjects are commonly construed as human. Biopolitical processes are one of the ways in which meaning is expressed, structures and institutions brought into being, and subjects are granted, or denied, legitimation, or viable lives. The racialized politics of reproduction according to which European occupiers sought to populate the Argentine pampas south of Buenos Aires, for example, represent one of the ways in which such a biopolitics plays itself out. Who lives and who dies, who reproduces with whom, whose life is construed as valuable and worthy of preservation and whose is not, is determined by the desired racial configuration of the population to come.

Likewise, Sophocles's *Antigone* lends herself to the powerful problematization of gender roles and has given voice so often to those individuals who have been excluded or erased by the falsely exhaustive accounting of the human condition that those traditional roles have presumed to offer. Indeed, *Antigone* situates herself in the play at the threshold of various gendered conceptual binaries, between the familial and the political, the divine and the human, the passive and the active, in a liminal condition that makes her particularly well suited for the project of queering traditional exclusionary logics. She is a deject, an abjected figure. A child figuring in her very existence incest, excess, transgression of norms, a daughter cast out of a symbolic matrix, a figure without whom the symbolic would not, could not, exist, a figure who nonetheless cannot be properly represented in and by the very symbolic that excludes her, the very symbolic she founds in and through that founding yet contingent, constantly reworkable socio-symbolic exclusion. She is an aberrant, itinerant, queer, queered, and queering figure.

This collection situates its interrogation of *Antigones* by negotiating a complex and contested intellectual and political terrain, one whose legacies are still undetermined. Beyond the particular configuration of her Sophoclean tragic dilemma, *Antigone's* demand to be heard in cultures that would silence her echoes across history and throughout various continents. It is not a uniform, universal echo; her voice is activated in precise political configurations that call forth her demise, bringing her to life whenever a political crisis emerges that is premised upon the articulation of some form of exclusion that the very form of a state renders inarticulable. At one and the very same time, that which is forbidden, censored, outlawed, unspeakable, impermissible, is also facilitating of the very symbolic whose founding law is conceived so as to render unreadable anything before the

law of inception. This law, now foundational, confers illegibility on anything that went before it, even the condition of this very law's conception. The law that founds meaning outlaws what gave it birth, making its own creation unintelligible. As if it were always already there. All it leaves of the alterity preceding it are traces, inscriptions, fossilized enigmas, figurations, easy to miss, hard to decipher or unravel.

Antigone's return takes shape in multiple ways. Suffering under the weight of Hegelian dialectic, coming to stand for a familial ethics that exempts her in advance from the sphere of politics, Antigone shoulders the burden of this exemption. She refashions her political exile into a critique of political systems that exclude her in advance from representation, even as they depend on her and require her to be an unacknowledged resource. An errant, wayward sign, Antigone's existence is itinerant. Operating as a destabilizing force, she reorganizes the representational space from which she is exiled, absented, or disappeared, and yet in which she occupies at the same time an oblique presence. Not easy to locate, she roams from age to age, and from shore to shore, wandering into sites of political tension, lending her name to struggles across the globe, transgressing symbolic systems that are organized around patterns of privilege in such a way as to render that privilege unavailable for interrogation.

The Essays

In the first grouping of essays, the authors focus their attention on the Antigone of Sophocles's own text, situating this in its original ancient Greek cultural and political context. Bonnie Honig reads *Antigone* as an exploration of the tensions between, on the one hand, the Homeric, aristocratic world and, on the other, classical, democratic Athens, focusing in particular on their divergent attitudes toward mourning. In the sixth century BCE, Solon had introduced legislation that was designed to curb lamentation at funerals, which subsequently came to be cast as self-indulgent and excessive. Creon's restriction of Antigone's mourning can therefore be read against the background of Solon's efforts to regulate funerary wailing and self-laceration. While Homeric funeral practices were marked by aristocratic values that emphasized individuals as uniquely irreplaceable, and highlighted vengeance, the democratic impulse emphasized the interchangeability of soldier/citizens, and the importance of the dedication of their lives for the good of the *polis*, rather than the impact of their loss to the surviving family members. *Antigone* thus allows the

disciplining and containment of mourning initiated by Solon to appear in light of democracy's instrumentalization of mourning for its own ends. If Homeric funeral practices risked a melancholic identification with the dead that focused too much on the bereaved, the post-heroic era risked the conversion of grief into the productivity and efficiency of the *polis*, in which individuality is canceled out in the service of expanding the Athenian empire.

Considering the work of Sophocles alongside that of Aeschylus and Euripides, Sean Kirkland's contribution provides a literary and historical backdrop for approaching *Antigone*, even as it shifts the interpretive focus away from the issues of freedom and determination and toward temporality. Kirkland suggests that the very essence of Greek tragedy involves a transition from "dromoscopic" to "aporetic" time, or from a temporality of racing or speeding to a temporality of waylessness and hesitation. Indeed, it is the dramatic shift from the former to the latter by which the irremediable finitude of the human condition is revealed on the Greek stage. Tragedy's central aim is to present the human being as situated and acting between past and future, understood as temporal regions that, despite being essentially obscure to us, we presume to grasp as present in the mode of *praxis*. Kirkland finds justification for such an interpretation not only in Sophocles's *Antigone*, but also in Aeschylus's trilogy, the *Oresteia*, and in Euripides's *Alcesteis*, ultimately gesturing to the work of Paul Virilio to suggest the abiding contemporary pertinence of Greek tragedy, thus interpreted.

Damian Stocking addresses an objection to the later work of Loraux. Criticizing her own earlier view that tragedy's function in the *polis* was fundamentally conservative, Loraux came to see tragedy as profoundly "critical," questioning, undermining, and disrupting with respect to any ideology or political identity. One might ask, however, why the Greek *polis* would fund and organize a cultural product that centrally encouraged its own citizens to question and transcend its own principles. Extending and deepening a previous study in which tragedy's political function was viewed through the lens of Nancy's notion of an "unworked community," Stocking here brings the Derridean analysis of autoimmunity to bear on Greek tragedy, finding in it a form of self-ruination that was in fact salutary for the Greek *polis*. Stocking focuses attention on the high concentration and remarkable employment of *autos*-related terms in Sophocles's play and then, having done so, he shows how Antigone and Creon both attempt to secure their own self-sufficiency, their own perfect totalizing immanence and freedom from the intolerable vicissitudes and

vulnerabilities of their relationally constituted existence. In the course of Sophocles's drama, these characters are quite clearly confronted with the impossibility of that endeavor, or with their own inescapable finitude, but for Stocking of more profound significance is the character of the Sophoclean text *as song*. Stocking's argument thus resonates with Honig's opening essay's exploration of female lament, which can be seen as a precursor to what presents itself in the (masculinized) form or genre of tragedy. For Stocking, song's Dionysian disintegration of boundaries and individual identities is *essentially* autoimmunizing. Thus, tragedy as song aims to bring the self to oppose its own self-isolating and self-securing efforts, that is to say, its own ultimate self-denial, its effort to eliminate its constitutive exposure to others. Tragedy, then, can be seen to result in a radical form of human community, one that the Greek *polis* might have viewed as healthy and desirable.

Kevin Thompson and Mary Rawlinson each take on directly one of the dominant frameworks or discourses in which Antigone has long been situated, posing some important questions about her continued pertinence and value. Thompson focuses his attention on the Hegelian treatment of Sophocles's heroine, finding an impetus toward other models of resistance to power, and Rawlinson contentiously insists feminist readers may have mistakenly lionized Antigone. These essays should, in effect, suggest the challenges to which the subsequent essays must respond in order to find in Antigone a persisting significance for us, as inhabitants of a late or postmodern, pervasively globalized world.

Hegel understands tragedy as a form of art that embodies the spirit of the Greek world, and he looks to the ritual, religious performance of tragic plays as a representation of tensions that pervaded the particular stage of the development of world spirit at which the cultural and social world of the Greeks, in his estimation, had arrived. In an effort to understand these prevailing tensions, as part of his wider philosophical task of discerning the ultimate truth of things, a project he casts as absolute knowledge, Hegel interprets these tensions as coming into conflict with one another, colliding with one another in such a way as to eventually reveal their inner contradiction. Such is his understanding of the ethical principles according to which Creon and Antigone act. Creon understands it to be the ethical duty of Polynices to protect the polity by sacrificing his individuality to the universal, while Antigone understands her ethical duty to bury her brother as a function of rescuing the individual from the universal. These duties clash with one another, and their collision reveals the need for a deeper understanding of ethical action than that entailed

by the immediacy of laws that assign ethical duties according to what Hegel understands to be the natural law of sexual difference of male and female, here embodied by the bond between brother and sister, which Hegel understands to be purified of desire. That these ethical actors act according to their nature, obeying laws as if out of necessity, indicates that the freedom that Hegel construes as the hallmark of modern individuality does not yet play a role in ethical action, which instead is understood in terms of obedience to a law that is immediately and naturally assigned by the nature of sexual difference.

Although they arrive at their conclusions via different means, Hegel and Hölderlin both posit the end of tragedy as bound up with the overcoming of the classical conception of sovereign power. Thompson narrates this shift in terms of a shift in understanding the role of government with reference to a seafaring, nautical model, to its understanding as pastoral. Creon, according to a prevalent Greek motif, envisages himself at the helm of the ship of state, seeking to steer a steady course through treacherous waters into a safe harbor, but finally coming to grief after failing to heed the significance of Antigone's mutinous insurrection. In the pastoral model, life itself becomes the primary object of government, which focuses on administering the life of citizens at both the level of individuals and the population as a whole. As the welfare state is dismantled, citizens themselves are exhorted to take over the responsibility for the care of the self. With this shift, mutiny no longer remains a useful tool of transformation, rather the new political task is to contest the all-pervasive rhetoric of self-governance. In contrast to the other contributions to this volume, Thompson's conclusion is thus that the mutinous Antigone can no longer serve as any kind of model in postmodernity; though if we juxtapose his argument to Stocking's argument that Antigone instructs us in the lesson of the ultimate impossibility of autonomy, since the assertion of the self must negotiate and confront contingency and alterity, we find that, paradoxically (a twist that would perhaps please the Hegelian), Antigone remains alive precisely to the extent that her story (and Creon's) shows irremediably the failure of a rigid insistence upon autonomy in the face of unavoidable contingency.

Rawlinson begins with Hegel's reading of Antigone as well. However, she does so specifically in order to criticize a broad spectrum of feminists, who have preferred a heroic, rebellious, masculinized Antigone over her younger sister Ismene, viewed as passive, weak, and feminine (in its traditionally derogatory sense). Indeed, for Rawlinson, it is Ismene who has a valuable contribution to make to contemporary feminist thought.

Rawlinson first diagnoses a certain misreading of Hegel in feminist critiques, arguing that Antigone is for Hegel worthy of both praise and criticism, praise for her expression of the truly prereflective and immediate character of the claims that our sustaining social relations make upon us and criticism for her blind stubbornness in the face of the equally valid claims of the state. Rather than subjecting Antigone to any such criticism, however, feminists have tended to lionize her and, in so doing, Rawlinson suggests that they have inadvertently reinforced the traditional Hegelian categories of masculine and feminine labor. Rawlinson thinks this pitfall can be avoided and, expanding her reading of *Antigone* to include Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus*, she opposes to the entrenched fixity of Antigone the "mobility" of Ismene, finding in the latter a courageously transgressive and experientially grounded moral agent, one who does not deny but acknowledges in her deliberations the irremediable conflicts and tensions that attend all human decision making.

The implicit logic of Rawlinson's own argument suggests not so much a repudiation of feminist readings of Antigone *tout court*, but a Hegelian reappropriation of feminist morality.³ The two essays in section four of the collection contest such a logic, by showing the need to question Hegel's conception of morality in the name of feminist and postcolonialist thought.

The authors in our third grouping of essays all follow Antigone as she pushes the basic principles and assumptions of psychoanalytic thought to their limits. Focusing upon the question of kinship structures sanctioned by and sanctioning symbolic laws, Mary Beth Mader reads *Antigone* as staging or displaying a conceptual inadequacy that itself remains unvoiced or unexpressed by any of the characters in the play. The conceptual inadequacy concerns the transmission of fault, for which Mader distinguishes two models, that of wrongdoing, and that of wrongbeing. In the first model, the genealogical line is understood to exist independently of the fault, such that genealogy or kinship, or the genealogical line itself, has an ideal or neutral status in relation to the beings generated within that line. The second model admits of no such distinction. On this model, it is not, as it is on the first model, a question of the commission of a fault by beings, where a deed is committed that might have been avoided, the deed of incest that Oedipus commits, for instance. Rather, on the second model, it is a matter of an existential fault. In their very being or existence, Antigone and Polynices are products of incest, and nothing anyone can do, or undo, will alter this fact.

Mader finds in Antigone's insistence upon burying her brother Polynices a necessarily failed attempt to undo that which cannot be undone,

namely the existential fault that the incestuous deed of her father, Oedipus, has brought into being. Polynices is this being; his existence is identical with it.⁴ Mader reads Antigone's act of burial of her brother as an effort to treat the existential fault that constitutes Polynices's very being as if it were a fault that could be rectified at the level of doing. Thus, Mader characterizes Antigone's act of burial, which attempts to retroactively undo that which Polynices is in his very being—as if his existence itself could be undone—as confusing the two models. Antigone's effort must fail, due to her misapplication of the first model of genealogical transmission of fault to her brother, to whom, *as* the offspring of Oedipus, this model does not apply.⁵ No deed can undo Polynices's existential status. Yet, even as her restorative effort fails, Antigone seeks to venerate her brother as family by honoring him through burial, not by denying the monstrosity of Oedipus's incestuous deed, but rather in full acknowledgment of it. By contrast, Creon seeks to defensively rectify the monstrosity of Oedipus's act as if by fiat, by insisting that the people judge him by the law he articulates, a law that amounts to the rule that one must not put family above *polis*. Whereas Creon wards off, or denies his family history, Antigone embraces and confronts it, even while attempting to act in such a way that is not determined by it, and even if her effort to distinguish her brother from that which he is in his very being must necessarily fail. If Stocking's analysis builds on earlier work, so too does Mader's; her groundbreaking "Antigone's Line," referenced by Sina Kramer and Marie Draz in section four of this collection, is readily available in another collection of essays to which the present volume comprises a companion volume in some crucial respects.⁶

Stacy Keltner construes Kristeva's reading of Oedipus and Antigone as challenging the foundational status that Oedipal theory accords to itself in classical, Freudian psychoanalytic theory.⁷ Taking her cue from Vernant, Kristeva stresses the pervasive ambiguity that characterizes the figure of Oedipus, who, as *pharmakos*, is both the cause of pollution and its cure. His self-abjection and exclusion from Thebes undergoes a symbolic, cathartic repetition at Colonus, where a new model of kinship is inaugurated through his relations with Theseus, one that is based not on blood, but on contractual alliance. Kristeva emphasizes a pre-Oedipal dynamic, which reconfigures phallic identification as an encounter with otherness, with foreignness. Understanding Antigone as embodying a pre-Oedipal model for ethical revolt, as a figure that radicalizes the capacity for renewal that Oedipus's encounter with Theseus dramatizes, Kristeva casts Antigone as inhabiting a position that is at once ironic and provides the resources for ethical critique.

In the last essay in this section, Georges Leroux focuses his interpretation of Antigone on three phenomena that are at the very center of psychoanalytic theory, namely, death, law, and sexual difference. In a sense, pushing through the psychoanalytic register at which these themes might be addressed, Leroux finds here three moments in which the distinction between human and divine is foregrounded and then reveals the paradoxically political character of the generation of that relation in each case. And Leroux reads Sophocles's Antigone as a transgressive figure on all three counts; indeed, her transgression "sets her 'beyond' power, law, and sexuality." Antigone is, thus, not to be understood as inhabiting one or the other pole in any of the binaries traditionally mobilized to understand her enigma. She is not to be associated with the individual against the community, the family against the state, the immediate against the rational, or the feminine against the masculine. Rather, Leroux shows that Sophocles consistently situates Antigone both beyond these binary oppositions and at the site of their emergence. Indeed, she must be approached as political, religious, and "gendered" only because she resolutely situates herself prior to the emergence of the categories by which these fundamental regions are organized.

As mentioned above, these Antigone-driven *immanent* critiques of the European tradition should be understood as preparing the way for essays in the fourth and fifth groupings, all of which trace Antigone's *transcendence* of that tradition into new regions of thought and political action, into the burgeoning field of queer theory and into the dynamics specific to new postcolonial contexts. The essays in the fourth grouping altogether represent an acknowledgment of the importance of what is surely one of the most brilliant and influential recent interpretations of *Antigone*, namely that of Judith Butler in *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*. Taking its cue from Butler, Kramer's reading of *Antigone* pursues Antigone's liminality with regard to her appropriation of the language of sovereignty. Emphasizing the indeterminable status of her constitutive exclusion, as both inside and outside the space of the political, Kramer insists upon the thoroughgoing ambiguity of Antigone's positioning. Antigone both appropriates and perverts the language of sovereignty. She fails to speak the language of sovereignty without being figured as a monstrosity in her attempt to do so. Yet, in her very failure to properly adhere to the particular configuration of political sovereignty assumed by the Greek *polis*, in her very perversion of an interpretation of sovereign power defined by a masculinized symbolic, the failure becomes that of the very terms that define political agency in such a way as to exclude her.

Also focused on Antigone's disruption of symbolic systems, Liz Appel takes up her refusal to be contained by them, her status as excessive, her tendency to roam or to wander, troubling, in her wandering, the status of the field of representation itself. Such is the effort of Appel's contribution, which explores Antigone's exposure of the insufficiency of the symbolic system in terms of which she nonetheless signifies. Appel also takes up Butler's intervention as its central inspiration, by building on her understanding of Antigone as one who unravels the very symbolic system in which she is nonetheless implicated. Appel demonstrates both the radical instability of Antigone's own signifying capacity, which operates as both present and absent, and her tendency to unravel the coherence of the symbolic system that inadequately represents her. By exposing the incoherence of a signifying system that fails to contain her, Antigone points beyond a particular symbolic, calling for its rearticulation. In one of the chapters in this book that makes good on this volume's concerted effort to represent a wide range of disciplinary foci, Appel develops an innovative and original reading of the painterly responses of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres and Frances Bacon to the myth of Oedipus, suggesting that both images are haunted by Antigone's ghostly presence. Appel's chapter thereby straddles on the one hand the contributions of Kramer and Draz, expanding Butler's reading into realms that push beyond the boundaries of Butler's own analysis, and on the other hand it might be considered a companion piece to Keltner's. While Keltner employs the idiom of Kristevan psychoanalysis (itself a reworking of Lacan, the French father of psychoanalysis), and Appel interrogates a painterly tradition spawned by the Oedipal myth, both redirect us in their own fashion toward the latent figure of Antigone as the orchestrating rhythm of what Freud and Lacan cast as the story, first and foremost, of Oedipus. Drawing out the figure of Antigone in a minor key, a semiotic, affective dimension is thus restored to inhabit the story the twin fathers, German and French, of psychoanalysis tell themselves in a majoritarian strain. Without the minoritarian figure of Antigone, the story that insists on returning to the symbolic of Oedipus, as father of us all, could never have gotten off the ground. This ground remains incestuously Western, even as Antigone serves as a retroactive, semiotic force to restore it—an incestuous trait that the chapters in our final section will put in question, by understanding incest not merely in the localizing sense of the Oedipal, nuclear family, canonized in Freud's and Lacan's Oedipal triangulation, but in the sense of the extended, European family that has rendered pure Antigone's impurities by not merely imagining her as essentially European, but also racializing her as such.

Draz thinks through the question of what it might mean to listen carefully to Antigone, a fictional, canonical figure, who is resignified every time she performs, whether that performance presents itself as loyal or disloyal to Sophoclean intentions or context. Situating her consideration of Antigone against the background of Butler's *Antigone's Claim* and *Undoing Gender*, Draz reminds us that Butler reads Antigone not only as a figure who exhibits defiance in the face of Creon; it is also her failure to produce heterosexual closure that renders Antigone not so much a figure who can be made properly representative of any ideal, conservative or radical, but rather a figure that exposes the limits of representation and representability. As such, Antigone illuminates and suggests ways of reworking the terms on which lives are established as livable.

Antigone has been cast as monstrous or unintelligible by a certain tradition. We can respond to that tradition either by eliciting the unread logic of her stance (which is how Draz represents Mader's reading in "Antigone's Line") or by preserving her intelligibility as a strategy for queering that tradition. Pushing Butler's reading of Antigone to its limits, Draz suggests attentive listening to Antigone might require "listening to one's own rage and mourning," and that if Antigone is "a figure that illuminates the terms through which intelligibility is read" then she might also be a figure that resists any "final signification."

Finally, following Antigone into new geographical regions, toward which the organizational logic of this volume impels us (a purely strategic, thematic orchestration, one that makes no claim to replicate the claims to necessity of a Hegelian logic, and thereby resists subordinating this final section to any other section, gendered or otherwise), the fifth grouping of essays charts the complex significance Antigone has had (and still could have) in various postcolonial contexts. Resisting the impulse to find in Sophocles's *Antigone* lessons of universal applicability, Moira Fradinger reminds us that it is not enough to see the plethora of Antigones that spring up across the globe as merely subverting the canon, as if European, colonialist interpretations of Antigone remain intact, maintaining themselves as the prevailing, central, and defining authority concerning Antigone's legacy. Building on her wonderfully playful, imaginative tracking of Antigone's global reincarnations in her prologue to Fanny Söderback's collection, mentioned above, Fradinger narrows her focus here to one such political rebirth.

In Leopoldo Marechal's *Antígona Vélez*, Antígona is transposed into a figurative mother, pressed into the service of a European narrative that requires the cleansing of the pampas, the desert south of Buenos Aires,

and its repopulation. In this narrative, the Indians become the first “disappeared” of Argentina, but they also haunt the European conquest of the desert, becoming its unincorporated other, the eternal irony of the European immigrant community.⁸ After the brothers Ignacio and Martín Vélez have killed one another in their campaign against the Indians, and Ignacio is left unburied, Antígona enters the desert in search of flowers for Ignacio’s tomb, but her search goes unrewarded. The uncultivated desert yields no flowers; figured as barren and empty, the land stands in need, in the European immigrant imaginary, of fertilization. Antígona is sent to be killed by the Indians, but not before she has symbolically fertilized the barren land, in an act of love with her fiancé, Lisandro, who follows her into the desert. In order to be killed, rather than taken captive by the indigenous Indians—as would have been her probable fate as a woman—Antígona is dressed as a man. On no account must she become the mother of an Indian, for this would hardly conform to the project of repopulating the pampas with the sons of European immigrants. Yet, in a gesture that Fradinger reads as Marechal’s critique of the Creole Christian mission to eliminate the indigenous peoples, in their dying embrace, the bodies of Antígona and Lisandro form an Indian arrow-cross. In the crossing of Antígona’s body with her fiancé’s in death, Marechal impregnates her body with the tragic irony of the genocide of Indians that made way for the conquest and repopulation of the pampas.

Continuing the theme of the “disappeared,” in his essay, R. Clifton Spargo is concerned with a crisis in the meaning of political action generated by the contention between sovereignty, as the constitutive force and abiding power behind the state, and the realm of “apolitics,” by which he refers to a field of human actions and motivations set apart, if only hypothetically, from the force and binding procedures of state. Basing a theory of apolitics on a Western conceptual lineage starting from Sophocles’s *Antigone* and her showdown with the state, thereafter building on Kierkegaard’s revisionist account of *Antigone* in which she obtains an “improvisational autonomy” hypothetically exempting her from restrictive public meanings, Spargo eventually traces a newly modern *Antigone* to the Latin American context. Here she makes appearances in protests undertaken by the mothers of the disappeared in Chile and Argentina and in Ariel Dorfman’s exploitation of the *Antigone* myth in a highly allegorized novel about Augusto Pinochet’s Chile. As *Antigone* stands for excepting one’s motives or actions from an already constituted political realm, and thus for modes of universalized obligation that express so-called apolitical positionality, her gestures of autonomy nevertheless obtrude on

matters of the state. Every gesture of “apolitics”—as Arendt and Giorgio Agamben might lead us to expect—necessarily leads back to the realm of politics. In the bargain, however, politics must be recalculated according to those realms or peoples the state excludes, occludes, or otherwise oppresses, and the Creon figure (as, say, Pinochet) is made answerable for what he has previously declared irrelevant to the responsibilities of the nation-state. Any new metaphorical exigency obtained by Antigone in late-twentieth-century Latin America, then, will have been provoked by an insight she affords us into the inadequacy of extant definitions of “politics,” her conflict with rogue sovereignty signifying, as though originally, a crisis in the justice of the *polis*.

Just such political crises, which speak to the question of how the state conceives of and legitimates itself, provoking the question of what it is that makes a state a state, are at stake in the South African context of apartheid and the Nigerian postcolonial context that constitute the backgrounds of Astrid Van Weyenberg’s consideration of two plays. *The Island*, first performed in 1973, is set in apartheid South Africa, and *Tegonni: An African Antigone*, is set in colonial and post-independence Nigeria. Both plays celebrate the plurality of Antigones that have arisen, employing metatheatrical devices to counter the Eurocentrism that has defined Antigone’s canonization. Structured as a play within a play, *The Island*, which resulted from the collaboration of Athol Fugard with John Kani and Winston Ntshona, at a time when association between whites and blacks was prohibited in South Africa, has as its context Robben Island prison, where Nelson Mandela was in solitary confinement for so long. The performative aspects of *The Island* transgress racial and gender boundaries, first by transposing Antigone’s predicament, configured by the philosophical canon of the West as a European plight, into the racialized context of South Africa, thereby contesting the white heritage that the European reception of Greek tragedy imagined into being. Secondly, by having an African man, Winston Ntshona, play the role of Antigone, *The Island* takes up and transposes the constraint that performatively contained ancient Greek performances of tragedy to all-male casts into the context of an all-male prison.⁹ In their performances as Creon and Antigone, John and Winston (who use their own names, thereby further rendering ambiguous the boundary between the stage and the reality of suffering imprisonment) place their audiences in the position of a prison audience, so that audiences of *The Island* do not remain an impartial witness, but are solicited to participate in the action of the play, as the addressees of John and Winston, who perform their play for prison inmates.

Femi Osofisan also challenges the appropriation of mythology as a white mythology in *Tegonni: An African Antigone*, engaging Antigone in a role that has her claim ownership of “her story,” the theatrical action of which Antigone seeks to direct at certain points, becoming theater director of her own narrative. As Antigone’s racial identification, and the authority it has traditionally carried, becomes a site of instability, so too does the status of the original *Antigone*, along with the authority it has traditionally arrogated to itself. Writing in 1994, at a time when the political corruption of military dictatorships has compounded the problems of the colonial rule of the British, which ended in 1960, Femi Osofisan sets his play in the context of late-nineteenth-century colonization of Nigeria. Despite explicit and unresolved tensions along the way, including Antigone’s testing of Tegonni’s spiritual strength as a rebel, the final scene confirms the bond between Antigone and Tegonni as symbolic, revolutionary sisters. Unlike Ismene and Antigone, they stand together at the end of the play, in solidarity with one another. The strength of their unity in difference is pitted against a tragic outcome that does not fail to repeat itself.

Finally, in the last essay of the collection, Cecilia Sjöholm explores the continuities between Sophocles’s *Antigone* and the dance and performance art of contemporary artists Marie Fahlén and Ana Mendieta. In doing so, she attends to the performance aspects of tragedy that are often overlooked in favor of its textual meaning. In classical tragedy the invisible corpse, always offstage, becomes the ground of visible tragic action; in the work of Cuban exile Mendieta, this excluded ground is incorporated into the action of the performance, the invisible is rendered visible. Mendieta exposes her own body, as the female body comes to be both buried and unburied on stage, in a manner that solicits the audience’s reflection upon the uncertainty of drawing boundaries that demarcate life from death. Thus, the living death to which Creon consigns Antigone when he buries her alive in an underground cave undergoes a reworking and an interrogation. Sjöholm takes up Hannah Arendt’s understanding of political action as inaugurating a new beginning, and as necessarily implicated in plurality and unpredictability, to illuminate the work of burial.

In Mendieta’s art, which highlights the affinity between burial and exile, the work of uncovering and renewal is staged in such a way that the audience participates in the processes that decide who belongs to a community and who does not, who suffers death (and whose death is acknowledged), and who is reborn. Sjöholm’s analysis thus resonates with Fradinger’s, while also recalling Butler’s, in showing that the question of the demarcation between the living and the dead is a political question,

both one that is resolved by the boundaries that constitute communities and one that helps to constitute and delineate communal boundaries. Whose death is marked, and remarked, whose death is seen as worthy of burial, and whose burial, or lack of it, is seen as a scandal, and why, remains a matter, still, in many ways, to be determined.

Yet, Antigone lives on. Always pushing beyond the spatiotemporal coordinates that define her original incarnation, her continual rebirths delineating a multiply determined legacy. Beyond the historical specification Sophocles gives her in the fifth century BCE, beyond the geographical confines of her literary and theatrical birthplaces, beyond Thebes and Athens, she continues to defy expectations. Antigone's appeal to an affective economy that subtends, informs, and supports the very kinship structure upon which Creon stakes his claim to be ruler of Thebes is also a demand to acknowledge that the rule of law emerges from and operates within a complex network of affiliations, which distributes recognition differentially. Antigone thus draws attention to the fragility of the law, to its precarious existence, to the contingency and partiality of its foundation. She points to the vulnerability of peoples not considered to be fully legal subjects, not regarded as properly human, not seen as worthy of the conferral of the right to be participants of a democracy.

Even in her worst moments, even when she invokes her right to be heard in a way that colludes with and condones slavery, even when she becomes a sign of empire, or aligns herself with colonialism, still the text that bears her name serves as a call to disrupt settled interpretive landscapes, to rearrange hierarchies, to realign borders, to cross boundaries, to reimagine futures.

We believe we have drawn together an inspirational collection of essays, inspired by the figure of Antigone, generative of new Antigones, Antigones to come. Antigone does not so much stand for a principle as incessantly incarnate the disruption of grounds upon which principles emerge; yet, that she is principled there is no doubt. The principles for which she has been asked to stand are legion, and are not always composite with one another. We have indicated, both throughout the organizational structure of the collection, and through the editorial commentary contained in this introductory essay, some of the principles elucidated, and evaporated, in her name, together with some of the thematic relationships that cohere these essays. We have left many others unarticulated, themes other readers may find. The collection initially grew out of a series of interdisciplinary, intercollegiate, academic, and community events, interspersed among various locations in and around the city of Chicago,

and coordinated by the editors of this volume. These events, incorporating theatrical performances, some by new playwrights, some by more established playwrights, academic courses in a variety of curricular guises, departmental seminars, and a conference, were loosely assembled under the title “The Year of Antigones.” We hope that this volume, in which we present a series of original essays on Antigone, which break her out of her disciplinary bonds, might serve as a catalyst for the emergence of many Antigones to come.¹⁰ We also hope it might perhaps serve as some kind of teaching vehicle, in ways that remain yet to be determined.

Antigone’s rebirth declines predictability. A “voice from nowhere,” as one of our authors puts it, she turns up everywhere, defying convention, overturning expectations, redefining discourses. Beyond her crypt, beyond the underground cave to which Creon consigns her, burying her alive, so that she occupies a realm between life and death, Antigone’s restless spirit haunts us. Every time she takes her own life, preempting Creon’s death sentence, she inspires another playwright, painter, or choreographer, undergoes a rebirth, rising again to configure a new imaginary, another political configuration, her transgressive spirit challenging that which passes for order. The essays that follow constitute a resolutely interdisciplinary consideration of Antigone’s legacy, breaking free of the disciplinary boundaries that usually contain monographs and collections on tragedy. They aim to unsettle orthodoxies, to suggest new interpretive strategies, and to offer readings of Antigone that both follow her into non-Western, queer, contexts, but also rework the canonical, Western reception of *Antigone* in new ways, thereby, we hope, preparing for, inspiring, and calling for still more readings. Other Antigones. Other plays. Other performances and artistic transpositions. Other interpretations. Other politics. Antigone will always rise again.

Notes

1. The term *transcendence* here should be heard in the radicalized sense one finds in the work of Martin Heidegger or Jean-Luc Nancy, rather than in the traditional sense that would usually entail accessing some universal or absolute truth. Already early on in his career, in the period of *Being and Time*, Heidegger is trying to move the notion of “transcendence” away from its Platonic and Kantian connotations and toward something that both belongs to human life itself at every moment and that places the human being in relation to something other than itself. Heidegger writes, “To be a subject means to transcend. This entails that Dasein does not exist as something that occasionally transcends from itself—the fundamental meaning of its existence is the transcendence beyond the