

Title: Dangerous fracture: undermining the order of the law in Sophocles's Antigone

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If the law employs the exception--that is the suspension of law itself--as its original means of referring to and encompassing life, then a theory of the state of exception is the preliminary condition for any definition of the relation that binds and, at the same time, abandons the living being to law.

--Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*

In *Mythe et Tragedie en Grece Ancienne*, Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet acknowledge the question of the law as "la matiere veritable de la tragedie" (15). The new idea of the law in an emerging democratic society, in which it was not yet clearly separated from the spheres of morality and religion, would have been a subject of constant and continued scrutiny in Greek tragedy--an understanding of tragedy explicitly realized in Sophocles's *Antigone*. Not only is the question of law at the heart of the conflict between Creon and Antigone, it also permeates the positions of all other characters and surfaces again and again in the language of the play.(1) This tragedy, as Hans-Thies Lehmann states, "transforms the articles and foundation of law into questions, certainty into risky hypothesis" (23, trans. mine).

What is it that *Antigone* can tell us about the law? Hegel, in his influential reading of *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, saw the tragedy as a paradigmatic example of the conflict between two different legal systems: through a process of historical evolution, the order of the law of the state--represented by Creon--supersedes the older system of family law and the death cult personified by *Antigone*. The Hegelian Enlightenment model of history sets up the succession of systems of law as the precondition for the constant improvement of human society; *Antigone* thus comes to represent a general mechanism of teleological historical progress for Hegel and, despite its fatal outcome, possesses an almost reassuring quality. Yet, while quite instructive on Hegel's philosophy of history, this reading offers few insights for a critical audience today for two main reasons: not only must the discredited idea of teleological historical progress itself seem highly suspect to any contemporary approach to Sophocles's play, it also suggests a reading that smoothes out the intricate and insoluble conflict at the heart of the tragedy--a conflict that I will argue is not located in the clash of two different systems of law but in law itself, as a fracture that is constitutive of the law and that undermines its claim to validity from the very beginning. My reading of *Antigone* is informed by Judith Butler's recent engagement with the play (*Antigone's*), but while Butler focuses on the problematic laws of kinship (and their political implications for representation), I regard *Antigone* as a theatrical laboratory in which judicial law and its inherent fractures are examined and analyzed. Pursuing a different train of thought, this essay's interest in the law nevertheless runs parallel to Butler's work and will turn to it later on. I hope to show that *Antigone* may provide a valuable point of reference for a discussion of the law at a time witnessing a "Rule of Law Revival" (Carothers) in Western policy--and during which, at the same time, the fatal fraction at the heart of the law resurfaces.

I will begin my reading of *Antigone* by considering the premise upon which Sophocles's understanding of law is based, namely the political situation of the Athenian polis in the fifth century BCE. (2) This brief overview of the political context in which he speaks will then provide the background for my engagement with his questioning of the law. At the time *Antigone* was first staged around 442 BCE, the Athenian polis was enjoying a period of relative peace: only a few years before the ongoing conflict with Sparta had been put to an end with the Kallias treaty of 446-45 BCE, and it would not be for another ten years that it would furiously break out again in the Peloponnesian War. During this quiet period, Athens consolidated its position in the Attic Sea League and secured a dominant position towards its allies. The expansion and consolidation of Athenian influence largely owed to exporting the Athenian political system of democracy; the succession of tyranny or oligarchy by a newly installed democratic system in the allied cities ensured their entanglement with Athens. It is important to realize that, at this point, democracy was not only an ambitious political system under which the life of the Athenian citizens was organized according to the idea of equality (*isonomia*), but also represented an ideological instrument of power in Athens's pursuit of hegemony. Although the order of democracy served the interests of the polis--both as an instrument of hegemonic power and as a framework to secure *isonomia*--this relatively young system of political organization was subjected to a constant critique from within the polis itself. The theatre in particular provided a realm for rethinking and questioning the organizing principles of democracy, the tension between its ideals and its reality, and fostered a constant critical negotiation of the polis and its order. In the period of relative peace in which *Antigone* was written and performed, Athens flourished, and with its power grew the belief in the success and superiority of its political system.

It is at this point of heightened belief in the superiority of Athenian order that Sophocles voiced a fundamental doubt in the possibility of a superior, just order altogether. Even if the Thebes of his play appears as a tyrannis ruled by Creon alone, whose reign Haemon opposes with the argument that "that is no city, which belongs to one man" (67), the conflict articulated in *Antigone* is a conflict of

sovereignty itself and thus a conflict that haunts both tyrannis and democracy. These two systems actually seem less distinct in the play than one might think at first glance: Creon is not simply a self-righteous tyrant but the highest representative of a state, recognized as such and affirmed in his legitimacy. The chorus confirms his status as the "new ruler by the new fortunes that the gods have given" (17), and accordingly, he can be sure of his people's support when claiming that "whomsoever the city may appoint, that man must be obeyed" (61). When he forbids the burial of Polyneices, Creon uses his authority beyond the sphere of the ostensibly political, covering a delicate area of religion, the death cult. But even in this sphere the chorus affirms the legitimacy of Creon's claim: "thou hast power, I ween, to take what order thou wilt, both for the dead, and for all us who live" (21). The blending of the political and the religious sphere is not considered scandalous within the tragedy; nor would it have been perceived as such by its contemporary audience. In the Athenian polis there existed no clear distinction between politics and religion, as both were governed by the authority of the state: the tasks of the polis's institutions spanned not only legislation and governing the state but the organization of the cult as well. In this light, Creon's decree appears less as an act of transgression into a sphere beyond his authority than a legitimate act of legislation in accordance with the authority granted to him. But if Creon's use of power is legitimate, what constitutes the fatal conflict in the tragedy that is triggered by his decree? What is the fracture within the law that lies at the core of Antigone?

Antigone herself articulates her position regarding Creon's law in the first scene, denying legitimacy to his decree by stating that "he has no right to keep me from mine own" (7). Condemning Creon's decree as unlawful with regard to the laws of death cult, she points out the paradox around which the tragedy is built: in accordance with Theban law, Creon is given authority within the realm of the existing order (both political and religious) to exert influence on that order by setting up new laws. By granting the sovereign the authority to enforce laws and norms (nomoi), he is assigned the protection of the existing order (eunomia). In its last consequence, however, this authority enables the sovereign to override the existing order or several of its constitutive nomoi. In the body of the sovereign, the law sanctions its own suspension--and accordingly the suspension of the order on which the sovereign's authority is based. (3) The moment Creon invokes the legitimacy of his act and suspends the laws of the death cult, a conflict within the order of the law is revealed that weighs heavier than an ethical condemnation of his decree. The fracture that is performed here is not initiated externally, springing from the clash of two different systems of law; it is a fracture immanent in the idea of law itself insofar as it allows for the possibility of its own suspension. When Antigone rejects the legitimacy of Creon's law, more is at stake than her brother's burial. With her resistance to his decree, she marks the paradox embedded in the law, revealing its fragility. Once this denouement is performed, the law loses its stability--any reference to the law as the legitimizing basis for action collapses in the face of this instability of the law itself laid open.

It is important to note that this questioning of the law is not undertaken in terms of opposing it to another, superior law in whose integrity one can believe--when Creon accuses Antigone of doing "violence to the laws" (61), he is only right insofar as Antigone openly voices a fundamental doubt in the system of law that he represents. But the violence of which he accuses her, the destruction of the law's stability and unambiguousness, is performed by Creon himself, who by act of law suspends its order. Yet, despite his stubbornness, Creon is not a malicious or negligent representative of the state; it is by no means his intention to shatter the order on which his authority is based. He issues his decree with the security and welfare of the town in mind, and he is sure of its public and divine approval. By suspending a traditional norm, he intends to protect the whole system of norms (eunomia), and thus the order of law as a whole. So how can a power eager to protect the order end up destroying it? At which crucial point does this benign power flip to reveal its destructive potential?

In his essay "Critique of Violence," (4) published in 1921, Walter Benjamin discusses the relationship between violence and the law ("Recht") on the one hand and justice ("Gerechtigkeit") on the other. Like Sophocles in *Antigone*, he addresses the problematic nature of the law to ask how the law can provide the means to realize an ideal of justice. The sphere of law, he argues, is always founded or sustained through violence, a violence located by Benjamin in the sphere of means, insofar as violence is used to found or protect an order of law. Accordingly, Benjamin indicates two kinds of violence-as-means, which are intricately linked: the violence of law-making character and that of law-preserving character. These types of violence can be understood in terms of the democratic system to be embodied by the legislative and executive bodies of the law respectively; the dynamic at work between them will inform my reading of *Antigone*.

As Werner Hamacher convincingly argues in "Affirmativ, Streik," the occurrence of violence as laid down by Benjamin can be understood in terms of an evolutionary process. The moment a system of law has been erected by violence of law-making character in an act of autarchy (often on the precondition of doing away with an earlier, established order, as in the erection of a democratic society), that violence must, by its nature, lose its lawmaking character: it is transformed into a law-preserving violence employed by the newly established order to secure its existence. With this transformation of its character from law-making to law-preserving, violence comes to oppose its own revolutionary capacity for law-making, which would now threaten the order it is assigned to protect. It is this double bind of violence that contains it within the realm of means, instrumentalized for revolution or serving the status quo. But even if the opposition between law-making and law-preserving power leads to a drain of momentum and a deterioration of the institutional order it once founded (Benjamin, in 1921, writes with the parliaments of the early Weimar republic in mind that, to him, have left behind their revolutionary legacy and only seek apathetic compromises), their separation is nevertheless constitutive of a democratic system. The danger of a suspension of that separation becomes clear when Benjamin speaks of the "spectral mixture" of the two kinds of violence with regard to the police; by setting up laws (in the form of decrees) and simultaneously enforcing them, the police, he argues, comes to resemble an autonomous order of law largely eluding control and limitation: "Its power is formless, like its

nowhere-tangible, all-pervasive ghostly presence in the life of civilised states" ("Critique" 242). Benjamin regards the state's need for security as the reason for allowing this ghostly, unfathomable duplicity of violence to manifest itself in the police: to protect the existing order and its interests, democracy's division of powers is suspended, and the law-preserving violence that the police stands for is granted the authority of law-making, thus itself creating the ends to which it should only have been the means. The same mechanism is put on stage in *Antigone* when Creon, in order to fulfill his task of preserving the law, decides to exercise the law-making violence at his disposal.

But where law-making and law-preserving violence are merged into one authority, the existing order is already undermined as the violence used to protect that order is infiltrated by the violence that poses a threat to the existing order. Nothing else is realized in the sovereign's authority, in whose body law-preserving and law-making violence, and thus a fundamental threat to the order he is to represent, enter into a dangerous "spectral mixture." In the sovereign, the distinction of powers collapses; he himself constitutes a state of exception, a sphere in which the preservation and suspension of the law coincide. It is this exceptional position of the sovereign that is summed up by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer* as the aporetic paradox of the sovereign, who at once belongs to the sphere of law (which he is assigned to protect) and stands outside it (as he can suspend and violate that sphere). Agamben concludes that from this paradoxical position, it is the sovereign who "marks the limit (in the double sense of end and principle) of the judicial order" (*Homo* 15). The sovereign is the constituting limit of law; but as his position inevitably constitutes a violent paradox, the paradoxical fracture is pre-inscribed into the order of law. If the merging of the two kinds of violence in the paradoxical figure of the sovereign as boundary inevitably creates a fracture in the law, the order founded on the law is potentially both violent and fragile from the beginning. In the face of this fragile law, an uncompromising power of resistance manifests itself in the character of *Antigone*, countering and threatening Creon's authority. As we have seen, the fracture from which it springs is inherent in the law itself. But what mechanism produces the gesture of resistance that makes the fracture visible? And must we consider its emergence as inevitable?

In *Antigone*, it is the suspension of certain constitutive norms--the proper rites for burial--that challenges the stability of the polis as it deprives people inside the order of the security of stable orienting principles. By using his authority to throw into question basic principles of the order he represents, Creon himself challenges that order, and thus his own authority, opening it up to a fundamental doubt. Not only oppositional systems of law, but the people within the system itself, inevitably come to doubt or even oppose the order, once its instability has been revealed. The possibilities for acting on this realization are indicated in the first scene by *Antigone* and *Ismene*: while *Ismene* decides to subordinate herself to a law whose legitimacy she doubts, *Antigone* will rebel against Creon's law, openly voicing her protest. The other characters of the play opt for a less radical position from the beginning, but, as shown above, they tentatively express critique and doubts and sympathize with *Antigone's* rebellion.

To the extent that she publicly opposes Creon's law, *Antigone*, as a symptom of the law's inherent fracture, poses a threat to his order. Creon seeks to avert the danger she poses by banning her to a sphere beyond life and death: "Nay, speak not of her 'presence'; she lives no more" (53), he rebukes *Ismene*, attempting to completely eradicate the resistance to his order and even the memory of it. Creon will take *Antigone* "where the path is loneliest and hide her, living, in a rocky vault" (71) so that she can no longer be perceived or understood in the realm of the living. But neither is she allowed to enter the realm of the dead to be mourned and remembered: in her living death, she is denied humanity, even mere existence--in a sense, she is no more. With the sovereign act of banning a living being to a sphere neither inside nor outside the life of the polis, Creon seems not only to neutralize *Antigone's* rebellion, but also to affirm his sovereign power. *Antigone*, in this light, resembles the intriguing Roman figure of the *homo sacer* rediscovered by Giorgio Agamben as a paradigm for sovereignty and Western biopolitics. (5) Like the *homo sacer*, who can be killed, but not sacrificed, and is thus outside both human and divine law, *Antigone* (and before her, *Polyneices*) is expelled from the sphere of law. The sovereign's power to ban someone to that state not only neutralizes the threat any disturber of the peace might pose to the order, it also reaffirms the sovereign power itself in this act of its execution: "*homosacer* presents the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the political dimension was first constituted" (Agamben, *Homo* 83). Agamben accordingly insists that occidental politics are founded not on the fundamental distinction between friend and enemy, but between exclusion and inclusion; and yet *Antigone* and *Polyneices*, as emblematic figures of that inclusion/exclusion, nevertheless indicate that the distinction between friend and foe is an effective and sometimes necessary instrument in accomplishing that exclusion: it is the logic of friend and foe that serves as a legitimization of the ban.

As early as in his first speech, Creon announces that distinction as guideline for his policy and justifies the suspension of the right of burial for *Polyneices* with this logic: the enemy is not entitled to call upon the laws of the order he is attacking. Later in the play, *Antigone* turns against this logic: "Tis not my nature to join in hating, but in loving" (47). She refuses to adhere to a polarization between friend and foe that allows Creon to perform the sovereign act of exclusion and suspend the law for single individuals, thus undermining *isonomia*, the principle of equality before the law. Through her resistance to the logic of friend and foe, *Antigone* becomes a massive threat to Creon's authority. By transgressing his law and publicly avowing her protest, she doubly rebels against his order, questioning its validity. Because of her rebellion, she is subjected to a ban that reaffirms Creon's sovereignty; yet in her resistance to a law revealed as violent and fractured, she gains tentative support from others within the polis. She thus turns into the figure described by Benjamin as "the 'great' criminal," who, in his resistance to a violent order, "however repellent his ends may have been, has aroused the secret admiration of the public" ("Critique" 139). I would argue that the two figures of *homo sacer* and of the 'great' criminal constitute the two aspects of exclusion in *Antigone*: while the emergence of one reaffirms a sovereign power, the emergence of the other carries that power to excess, revealing its violent and repressive nature. This is what *Antigone* accomplishes:

her public resistance appeals to a latent sense of the injustice of the law amongst those who are governed by its order and who are compelled to support the act of opposition to an unjust law regardless of its ends. The possibility of resistance is thus embedded in the sovereign's rule of law, springing from the fracture within it. But what happens when sovereign power is divided, as in democracy, to prevent the "spectral mixture" of violence? Under what conditions does the potential for excessive violence endure?

The suspension of the law in modern democracies is sanctioned only in a state of exception (6). The possibility of its proclamation is provided for in numerous modern constitutions, thus establishing a legitimizing foundation for the suspension of the law under special circumstances. Giorgio Agamben, in his work on the state of exception, describes its evolution in connection with a state of war or siege, a context from which the state of exception has continually emancipated itself. But, while during a state of exception a visible sovereign power with virtually boundless powers is created (albeit temporarily), contemporary politics foster the evolution of sovereign authorities independent of a state of emergency, and thus far less visible and much harder to locate. Agamben closes his "brief history of the state of emergency" with the observation that as "a continuing tendency in all of the Western democracies, the declaration of the state of exception has gradually been replaced by an unprecedented generalization of the paradigm of security as the normal technique of government" (State 14). He thus indicates a phenomenon already elaborated on by Benjamin in his characterization of the police as a "spectral mixture" of the two forms of violence, namely the fact that the state's need for security and the felt need for protection allows for the transformation of law-preserving violence by investing it with the competence of law-making.

Even before the events of September 11, such an extension of the security paradigm could be witnessed among the Western democracies, especially in the United States. Initially proclaimed as a strategy of containment by the United States after World War II, it survived the Cold War and has since been manifested in politics such as in the build-up of a national system of defensive missiles or the revocation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia. Significantly, the extension of the security paradigm was accompanied by a radical rhetoric of polarization between friend and foe: first the Communist threat, and later, global networks of terror and rogue states, provided a concept of the enemy that was used to legitimize the first breaches of international law or violations against the sovereignty of other states, such as United States' sanctions against Cuba and Libya in 1997. (7) With reference to a terrorist threat, the sovereign power to declare a state of national emergency was evoked in Bill Clinton's Executive Order 12947 to prohibit economic transactions with designated terrorists on 23 January 1995--a declaration that has been modified and expanded several times, so that the United States has effectively been in a state of national emergency since then.

After the attacks of September 11, the logic of sharply distinguishing between friend and foe was extensively employed in American policy. On an international level, the distinction "either with us or against us" divided the world in two main camps--the "coalition of the willing" and an "axis of evil"--while in the domestic sphere, the Patriot Act provided the means for legal action against companies and individuals suspected of posing a threat to national security. With the United States' swift attack on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, a new status was created for "adversarial combatants", who were no longer considered prisoners of war (a status endowed with invulnerable rights by international conventions), but "detainees," a newly created status depriving them of any rights granted by international agreements. At the time of this essay's publication, before the eyes of an international public, they are being held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for an indefinite period of time, without any formal accusation being brought forth. Deprived of any legal status, the detainees are beyond the law; in a sense, they are no more. The distinction between friend and foe (and the self-endowed competence to make that distinction) was used by the United States to legitimize not only the suspension of the rights of individuals, but also the disregard for the sovereignty of states. As the extension of the state's authority works both inwards and outwards, a crack running through the democratic order is shown, one that resurfaces today to undermine any democratic ideal of justice: it is the re-emergence of sovereignty in the possibility of suspending the law that has become "the normal technique of government."

Sovereignty has always been fashionable in American politics, and the participation in international organizations that puts limits on national sovereignty increasingly seems to constitute a nuisance and obstacle to be cynically overcome in the pursuit of national interests. In a post-9/11 world, sovereignty is acknowledged as "a central pillar--and arguably the central pillar--of world order" by American policy planning staff (Haas)--yet there are fewer visible forms of sovereignty emerging within contemporary political structures that are of an even more disquieting nature. In "Indefinite Detention", an essay on the detainees of Guantanamo, Judith Butler attempts to locate the new manifestations of sovereignty in American society. To do so, she draws on Foucault's concept of "governmentality", which describes the organization and control of a modern (that is, non-absolutist) state and its population, a mechanism that Butler argues no longer functions in terms of transparent processes of legislation: "Governmentality operates through policies and departments, through managerial and bureaucratic institutions, through the law, when law is understood as 'a set of tactics,' and through forms of state power, although not exclusively" ("Indefinite" 52, *emph. mine*).

In Butler's reading of Foucault, the concept of governmentality historically succeeded the deteriorating rule of the sovereign and, as such, marks a modern development. It is characterized by the creation of bureaucratic institutions that are granted power of decision and governance, but that are not legitimated by public vote; but furthermore, governmentality uses the law as an instrument (a law of means, you could say with Benjamin) to sustain control of a society. For Butler, governmentality thus creates a diffuse body of institutions that continually extends its power and control and remains beyond representation and accountability. She argues that, with the extension of the security paradigm and with the corresponding extension of power in the realm of governmentality, new forms of

sovereignty--impossible to locate, unrepresentable and unaccountable, and thus highly illegitimate--are created. She describes this new sovereignty with regard to the military officials deciding on the fates of the Guantanamo detainees:

Petty sovereigns abound, reigning in the midst of bureaucratic army institutions mobilized by aims and tactics of power they do not inaugurate or fully control. And yet such figures are delegated with the power to render unilateral decisions, accountable to no law and without any legitimate authority. The resurrected sovereignty is thus not the sovereignty of unified power under the conditions of legitimacy, the form of power that guarantees the representative status of political institutions. It is, rather, a lawless and prerogative power, a 'rogue' power par excellence. ("Indefinite" 56)

Hence, at the centre of the democratic order there evolves an apparatus seemingly indispensable to uphold the order (Butler reminds us that Foucault also thought of governmentality as reviving and sustaining the modern state), but that undermines it at the same time by creating new forms of sovereignty. When Butler calls this power "lawless," though, it is not to say that it operates in a sphere beyond the law; again, it is from a position both inside and outside the law that the law itself is bent, changed, and cynically employed to foster a sphere of unaccountability. The division of powers that forms the basis for democratic society is suspended in its diffuse institutions, and this "spectral mixture" of law-making and law-preserving violence in an area that cannot be located exposes the fragility of the law and of the order it founds: "At the very moment when it would like to give lessons in democracy to different traditions and cultures, the political culture of the West does not realize that it has entirely lost its canon" (Agamben, *State* 18). Democratic ideals such as equality and accountability are undermined at the very moment when Western democracy is presented as a superior political system and safeguard of justice and equality: the order that is exported to Afghanistan and Iraq to protect the West and benefit the East has already lost its integrity, undermined from within. Subjected to the logic of friend and foe, the democratic system has become ideologized and is violently safeguarded against criticism. It seems to have reached what Jacques Derrida, in his engagement with the concept of democracy, has called "autoimmunity," a term used to mark the limits of democracy, those moments when democratic principles are violated in the name of democracy and seem unable to resist that violation (Voyous 64-65). The mechanism here seems to resemble the state of emergency, when law turns on itself, violating itself in its own name. If the law and democracy today have indeed reached a state of continuous autoimmunity, it is because they have been moved into a sphere of unaccountability through the ideologization of democracy and the rule of law. This suppression of critique happens at a time when a re-emerging sovereignty cynically employs the ideas of law and democracy only to violate them, hiding itself behind their supposed autoimmunity. And yet the autoimmunity is not complete: what the order cannot be safeguarded against is the fracture at its core, a fracture that violently opens at the point when autoimmunity occurs, when law or democracy turn upon themselves.

How then can *Antigone* be read from this contemporary perspective? Can its examination of the fracture inside the law provide some orientation at what must be considered a state of crisis (rather than exception)? First and foremost, Sophocles articulates a fundamental doubt in the law and the idea of justice in *Antigone*. Exactly because it is legitimated by the law, Creon's sovereign act of suspension reveals the fatal duplicity of violence within law that always already creates its fracture. The moment the law allows for its own suspension, it forfeits its claim to integrity and stability, as does the order that is founded upon it. Insofar as it has an interest in founding and preserving its reign, the law suspends itself and vanishes through the fracture. There seems to be no way out of this cycle. Benjamin appears to concede to the insolvable duplicity of violence when he describes historical progress as a history of violence, and thus a constant "dialectical rising and falling in the lawmaking and law-preserving forms of violence. The law governing their oscillation rests on the circumstance that all law-preserving violence, in its duration, indirectly weakens the lawmaking violence it represents, by suppressing hostile counterviolence [...]. This lasts until either new forces or those earlier suppressed triumph over the hitherto lawmaking violence and thus found a new law, destined in its turn to decay" ("*Critique*" 251).

In its constant transformation, the law cannot escape decay by again and again breaking open its inherent fracture. Other than for Hegel, historical progress for Benjamin is not a teleological succession of different, constantly improving systems of law; it is rather law endlessly turning on itself in a violent circle. When Creon proclaims what appears like deeper insight into his actions at the end of *Antigone*--"My heart misgives me, 'tis best to keep the established laws, even to life's end" (99)--he in fact remains bound to a belief in the possibility of a just and right law, even though he has experienced law's immanent fracture, which precludes any possibility of a truly just law. But precisely this painful insight makes *Antigone* a powerful and inspiring statement: by exposing the fragility of the law, Sophocles's tragedy disrupts the comfortable authority with which today's self-proclaimed defenders of democracy legitimize their actions. It shows that it is precisely at the moment in which, invoking the law, a sovereign power exceeds the law and banishes people from its sphere, that it destroys its own legitimacy and the stability of its order. Jacques Derrida, in his reading of Benjamin's "*Critique of Violence*," observes the fatal double bind of law-making and law-preserving violence and concludes that "violence is not exterior to the order of law. It menaces the law from its inside" (*Force* 86, trans. mine). Accordingly, he argues in his more recent book *Rogues* that "the moment sovereignty [i.e. the merging of the two powers] exists, there is abuse of power and rogue states [...]. There are only rogue states, potential or actual. The state is roguish" (Voyous 146, trans. mine). Derrida stresses the impossibility of separating violence and sovereignty--and, indeed, drawing on Benjamin, violence, and law. Even if a state manages to keep within the boundaries of law, respecting the sovereignty of others, the dangerous potential of sovereignty's excessive violence remains at the core of its order. What comes to light in the existence of Guantanamo, in the invasion of Iraq, is the potential violence of sovereignty that will not vanish with the closing of the camp or the withdrawal of troops.

But where do we go from here? What does it mean to realize the inherent fracture of the law, the violence at its core? The authors that have guided us in our reading so far have taken care to oppose to the violence of sovereign law an idea of the law that promises a healing of its own fracture--be it Benjamin's "divine violence" ("Critique" 252) or his "real state of emergency" ("Concept" 392) that both promise a break with the "dialectical rising and falling" of violence; Agamben's "pure law" (State 88), which draws on Benjamin's idea of a "pure" violence beyond the sphere of means; or Derrida's "Politiques de l'amitie," which is based on inclusion and hospitality rather than exclusion. But these ideas tend to retain a utopian character that remains abstract or entangled with an eschatological concept of history, as in Benjamin's case. How then can the realization of law's fracture, the idea of healing, be put into political practice? We can, at this point, return to Judith Butler, who concludes her analysis of the aporias of the law of kinship with regard to Antigone, as follows:

But to establish the structural necessity of perversion to the law is to posit a static relation between the two in which each entails the other and, in that sense, is nothing without the other. This form of negative dialectics produces the satisfaction that the law is invested in perversion and that the law is not what it seems to be. It does not help to make possible, however, other forms of social life [...]. What happens when the perverse or the impossible emerges in the language of the law and makes its claim precisely there in the sphere of legitimate kinship that depends on its exclusion or pathologization? (Antigone's 68)

Butler's point here is the maybe all-too-obvious, but ultimately radical, conclusion that the deficiencies of the law laid open call not for the abandonment of the law but for its reworking, its concrete social transformation. The emergence of the unintelligible demands a rethinking of intelligibility; the fracture of the law, too, demands that we rethink it. The answers to the questions posed remain to be found but it is the act of questioning that carries the promise of healing, not in the sense of autoimmunity, but of cure. The idea of promise is one on which Derrida's concept of a "democracy to come" is based, around which his political theory circles: that democracy will "remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient" (Politiques 339, trans. mine), and thus continually demands that its paradoxes and its inner contradictions are worked out, in a persistent striving for an ideal that remains a promise. Antigone marks one of the central paradoxes on which our order is based, as well as the possibility of critique--even if her resistance is fatal to her, her act carries the potential of change. By virtue of being a play, Antigone also bears the legacy of theatre as an institution of critique, as a social realm of debate. The play itself is a promise of an art that engages in public discourse from a unique perspective, described by Lehmann as a potential "to bring the certainties that support the order of a "polis" into an uncanny suspension, without negating them in the sense of an antithesis and thus indirectly affirming their position in the act of negation. Theatre neither supports nor collapses the order: it makes it appear problematic" (34, trans. mine).

Today's orders evidently are problematic and need to appear as such. The atrocities that a continued policy of exception spawns are visible to us today in the detainees of Guantanamo or in the devastating outcome of a pre-emptive war violating international law in the name of democracy. The development seems to support Benjamin's observation that, in a circular history of violence, "the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" ("Concept" 392). At this moment of crisis, Antigone might serve not only as a model for the fragility of law itself, but also as an appeal to the theatre to again reveal the decayed basis of what has become the "normal technique of government" and to open a sphere of critique, working against the ideologization of the law. Reading Antigone today provides us with the ideal of a public discourse on the political system that we live in, of a society benefiting from self-criticism, and of a theatre employing what Derrida calls a "strategie de rupture," a "radical contestation of the order of the law, of judicial authority and finally of the legitimate authority of the state that makes its people disappear before the law" (Force 84, trans. mine). It is this call for a strategy of rupture, a contestation that carries the promise of change, that today makes the theatre and this most political of tragedies so valuable as a realm of debate--the point from which a "democracy to come" might embark.

NOTES

(1)/ All translated quotes from Sophocles's Antigone are taken from the translation by R.C. Jebb (1893).

(2)/ The following passage is based on Bleicken, Die athenische Demokratie (2nd rev. ed., Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoningh, 1994) and Welwei, Die griechische Polis (2nd rev. ed., Steiner, 1988). As becomes clear in Agamben's reconstruction of institutions of Roman Law such as the iustitium or the homo sacer, the accuracy of -- even partial -- reconstructions of antique systems of law always has to remain subject to debate. This is especially true for Greek Law, on which Roman Law is partially based, but which was not yet completely separated from the religious, moral, and private sphere or entirely systematized in a body of legislative texts.

(3)/ This figure is reminiscent of Carl Schmitt's famous dictum in Politische Theologie: Vier Kapital zur Kapital zur Lehre der Souveranitat: "Souveran ist, wer uber den Ausnahmezustand entscheidet [He is sovereign who decides on the state of exception], trans. mine; Berlin: Duncker & Humoldt, 1993). Note that within the play, the laws Creon suspends are not the written constitutional laws suspended in the modern sense of a state of emergency; Antigone explicitly stresses their unknown and mythical origins. The constitutive link between sovereignty and the state of exception that Schmitt proclaims nevertheless is the point from which the conceptions of sovereignty employed by Agamben and Derrida originate, even if they try to move away from his conception of politics based on sovereignty and a logic of distinction between friend and foe.

(4)/ Originally written in German, Benjamin's term used in the title is Gewalt, which, as translator Edmund Jephcott notes, means both "violence" and "force". I would add the possible translation of "power," yet I will follow Jephcott's use of "violence" in this essay.

(5)/ This correspondence has been noticed, if not expanded on, by Andrew Norris when he states that Agamben's work on sovereignty and bare life "is surely reminiscent of this most political of tragedies [i.e. Antigone]" (50; "Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Living Dead," *Diacritics* 30.4 [winter 2000]: 38-58).

(6)/ Even though the correct technical term in English is "state of necessity," I follow Giorgio Agamben in his use of "state of exception", stressing the connotation of this state being an exception from the rule of the law (and at the same time its all-encompassing reign) as well as spanning the range from the English "state of necessity" to the German "state of emergency" referred to by Benjamin.

(7)/ Paradoxically, the increase of violations of international law coincided with the United States' enthusiastic support for the founding of UNO as an international authority according to whose Charter and before whose Court of Justice a state can be held accountable for its actions. The United States' continuous breaches of international law before 9/11 have been compiled by Noam Chomsky in his *Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

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This essay offers a political reading of Antigone as a fundamental questioning of the law. Drawing on Benjamin, Derrida, and Agamben, it traces within the play a scandalous duplicity of violence at the heart of the law that always already undermines its authority. Today, this fracture of the law once again haunts democracy in a concealed sovereignty reborn.

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In the twentieth century, decolonization, persecution, and the unequal distribution of wealth drove more people than ever to Western democratic societies. On the other hand, the principles of capitalist economy and, to a lesser extent, liberal democracy, have come to pervade the world more deeply than ever. These developments have not only increased the tensions between cultural minorities and the predominant culture represented by the state, but have also given rise to the global conflict between Muslim fundamentalism and the democratic world. Many have become aware that conflicts induced by cultural difference are not necessarily resolved by subjugating the realm of particular cultural values to the purportedly universal values represented by the state. It has also emerged, however, that allowing communities to isolate themselves from the society as a whole will not necessarily resolve these conflicts either. Whereas both repression and tolerance may have the effect of narrowing the gap between the state and cultural minorities, both approaches actually threaten to broaden this gap. If philosophy is to take seriously the disturbing nature of these developments, then it cannot, in my view, rely on the clear-cut conceptual oppositions characteristic of the prevailing paradigm of modernity. Critical philosophy should therefore provide modernity with tools to develop a less one-sided way of comprehending itself. (1)

Such critical reflections on modernity have been developed at least since Nietzsche. In this essay, I propose to contribute to this critical strand of philosophy by reframing the contemporary conflicts between contrary social, political, and cultural values as tragic conflicts. I do not use the term tragic to suggest, in a nihilistic vein, that conflicts between cultural minorities and the majority represented by the state can never be resolved. My aim is, rather, to question the assumption of modernity that it will increasingly be able to annul its entanglement with allegedly non-modern modes of religious, cultural, or ethnic particularity. If, by contrast, the relation between the modern state and particular cultural communities is conceived as a relation between mutually dependent modes of particularity, as I will try to do, then there is no reason to assume that one of them will succeed in reducing its contrary to a necessary, yet subordinate, moment of itself.

We observe every day how the democratic world tends to oppose itself to other modes of culture in such a way that the conflict between them increases rather than decreases. The same holds true of the clash between contrary concepts such as progress and tradition, the individual and the community, reason and faith, justice and power, freedom and submission. In order to expose the tragic nature of such conflicts, I will set out from Hegel's reading of Antigone in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. By focusing on the passages that concern the tragic nature of their conflict, Hegel's reflection on Greek culture might turn out to be much more relevant to contemporary reflections on modernity than is often assumed.

I do not wish to suggest, however, that Hegel's conception of tragedy can be applied to contemporary conflicts in a direct way. As I will argue, Hegel's insight into tragic conflicts is entangled with the view that such conflicts are necessarily resolved. It seems to me that this optimistic strand of Hegel's dialectics is no longer pertinent to contemporary reflections on intercultural conflicts. In what follows, I will, therefore, try to extricate the tragic strand of Hegel's insight into tragic conflicts from its dialectical strand. This modification will allow me, I hope, to deploy the account of tragedy put forward in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* for a critical reflection on the conflicts by which the contemporary world, for all its modernity, threatens to be torn apart. Thus, whereas the first part of this essay discusses some elements of Hegel's account of tragedy in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the second part draws on this reading to sketch the contours of a systematic perspective on contemporary intercultural conflicts, a perspective that undercuts the current opposition between universalism and communitarianism. Before addressing Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, however, I will briefly consider a few recent criticisms of Hegel's account of Antigone.

In her reading of Sophocles's *Antigone* in *The Fragility of Goodness*, Martha C. Nussbaum points out that both Antigone and Creon simplify the structure of their "value-commitments" in order to eliminate conflicting obligations (51, see also 63). As she admits, her approach is in agreement with Hegel's in this respect. However, her reading is not so much concerned with this polarization itself as with the view that a life worth living cannot close itself off from such engagements as might undermine its autonomy. Nussbaum regards Antigone's decision to bury her brother as morally superior to Creon's prohibition of this burial (66-67). By suggesting, moreover, that Creon's attempt to avoid conflict is analogous to the way in which Hegel's "synthesizing discourse" denies contradictions, she can blame Hegel for ignoring the fragility of human life (75). (2) Apart from the fact that Nussbaum's remarks on Hegel are rather caricatural, I do not quite agree with her emphasis on the moral and psychological insights she takes Sophocles's play to contain.

Without doubt, Judith Butler's reading of both Sophocles's play and Hegel's account of it in *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* is more relevant to contemporary debates in political thought. Butler reads these texts in view of a "politics of kinship" that affirms the mutual dependence of the domains of state and kinship (5). However, her approach resembles Nussbaum's in that she considers Sophocles's play to offer a much more nuanced account of the female protagonist than Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Thus, she argues that Antigone's speech and actions challenge--or even deconstruct--the oppositions between nature and culture, female and male, kinship and state, oppositions that the play as a whole seem to endorse (5, 29). (3) I largely agree with this aspect of her interpretation. Yet, Butler uses the ambivalent figure of Antigone to claim that "there is no ultimate basis for a normative heterosexual monogamous family structure" (72-73). It seems to me that this latter aspect of her reading, partly mediated by psychoanalysis, is, to say the least, quite adventurous.

Regardless of whether Butler's view of Antigone is supported by the text at hand, I agree with her that Hegel does not do justice to the intricacies of Sophocles's play. However, Butler--no more than Nussbaum--considers the possible reasons for the formal character of Hegel's interpretation. Butler--in line with many other commentators--argues that Hegel straightforwardly identifies the relationship between Antigone and Creon with the relation between the family and the state. Since Hegel, in her view, considers the family to be subordinated to the state, she infers that he equally regards Antigone as subordinated to Creon. My own interpretation of Hegel turns against this kind of criticism for two reasons. I take the view, first, that feminist readings generally ignore that Hegel exclusively draws on Sophocles's play because he regards it as an outstanding reflection on the conflict that challenged Greek culture as a whole. Since, as I will argue below, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is intended to comprehend the nature of this conflict at a philosophical level, Hegel deliberately disregards the actual plot and even avoids mentioning its protagonists by name. On this view, Hegel cannot be blamed for offering an account of the conceptual oppositions that structured the prevailing self-understanding of Greek culture. Second, a careful reading of the text brings out that Hegel does not consider the relationship between Antigone and Creon to correspond to the relation between the family and the state. In this respect--and in many others--Hegel's text is much more subtle than it appears.

In sum, whereas Butler, opposing Hegel, deploys the figure of Antigone to question conceptual oppositions such as that between kinship and state, I will, in what follows, deploy Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts for much the same purpose. Yet, whereas Butler's reading primarily pertains to the issue of gender, I will focus on the relation between particularity and universality that informs such oppositions. This formal approach should provide the elements of a conceptual paradigm capable of responding to the challenges that multicultural societies face today. (4) But let me turn to Hegel first.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* might be considered to reconstruct the various ways in which thought has tried to comprehend its ultimate principle. This reconstruction relies on the idea that a specific mode of thought will always turn out to imply a contradiction between the absolute principle of thought and a specific determination of this very principle. Hegel, going along with each of these moments, each time, pushes a certain mode of thought to the point where it must acknowledge that it had all along mistaken a one-sided determination of this principle for this principle itself. Thus, the mode of thought that Hegel terms "sense-certainty" assumes that its immediate impressions constitute the absolute principle of knowledge and is subsequently forced to give up this position (76/64). As long as thought has not reached the position of speculative science itself, its inherent contradiction will impel it to relinquish its finite presupposition, thus originating a less one-sided mode of thought. Although each of these modes has actually occurred in the history of spirit, Hegel abstracts from their historical appearance in order to reconstruct the totality of possible modes of thought.

Contrary to subjective modes of thought such as sense-certainty or the understanding, modes of thought that occur as the self-awareness of a community do not derive their content from the external world. A community, Hegel holds, relates to its world as to itself (288/263). Accordingly, a particular culture cannot be understood by means of the distinction between a subject and a realm of indifferent objects. Such a culture rather distinguishes itself into individual human beings on the one hand and substantial ethical values on the other. Hegel refers to the values that allow members of a particular community to identify with that community--and to act according to rules--as the sphere of ethical life. Insofar as a community relates to these values as handed down to it since time immemorial, this sphere presents itself as a natural product rather than as the result of rational deliberation. Hegel insists, however, that, even in this case, moral values are brought about by the community itself: "What observation knew as a given object in which the self had no part, is here a given custom, but [this custom is] a reality which is at the same time the deed and the work of those who discover it" (302/276, trans. modified). According to Hegel, each society has some kind of understanding of its ultimate principles. (5) Whenever a society achieves insight into these principles--by means of public debates, the media, science, religion, art, or philosophy--it can be considered to become conscious of itself. It is through such modes of self-consciousness that a society establishes itself as a culture, that is, as a mode of spirit. As Hegel puts it, "spirit is the ethical life of a nation insofar as it is the immediate truth [...]. It must advance to the consciousness of what it is immediately [...] and by passing through a series of shapes attain to a knowledge of itself" (290/265).

I would like to emphasize that Hegel, far from projecting a pre-established form onto an unformed content, each time identifies, as it were, with the actual self-comprehension of a specific mode of culture in order to expose its inherent limit. It is not by coincidence that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* draws on Greek tragedies to articulate the essence of Greek ethical life. For Hegel, these tragedies pre-eminently reflect the conflict that occurs whenever the ultimate principle of ethical life is determined in a limited, one-sided way. In order to comprehend the conflict inherent to Greek culture as such, Hegel merely has to extricate the rational content of Greek tragedies from their narrative embedment. Thus, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* articulates not so much Hegel's own view on ethical matters as the "spirit" of Greek culture itself. This does not entail, however, that the significance of Hegel's account of Greek tragedy is confined to Greek culture alone. On the one hand, he claims that the sphere of natural ethical life continues to play a necessary, yet

subordinate role in modern civilizations. On the other hand, Hegel's formal conception of tragic conflicts transcends, by far, the realm of natural ethical life. This is, at least, what I hope to show in the last sections of this essay.

As is well known, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* seeks to comprehend the essence of natural ethical life primarily through Sophocles's *Antigone*. Hegel considers this tragedy pre-eminently to expose the complementary, yet potentially contradictory, determinations of justice on which Greek culture relied. He refers to the ultimate principle of ethical life, that is, to the "good," as the ethical substance (292/267) and to its complementary determinations as divine law and human law (293/267-68). Within Greek culture, in Hegel's view, justice occurred not only through the public government of the city, but also through "the undivided spirit of the individual who had suffered wrong" (303/277). For the spirit of someone who had been murdered, represented as a "subterranean power," was supposed to take revenge on his murderer (303/277). As I see it, the sphere of divine law refers to an archaic conception of justice, that is, a conception based on such values as kinship, pollution, and revenge. The sphere of human law, on the other hand, refers to a "modern" conception of justice based on such values as individual responsibility, equality, the right to defend oneself, and the necessity of rational deliberation. Only when the rational principle of justice came to prevail, Hegel suggests, did the initial harmony between these two ethical principles give way to their conflict (302/277). This conflict first impelled Greek culture to reflect on the contrary determinations constitutive of its ethical life. It did this primarily by producing tragedies. (6)

According to Hegel's reconstruction of the tragic self-comprehension of Greek culture, each of these contrary determinations occurs at once in the form of a law and in the form of human beings who identify with this law (293/267). The *Phenomenology of Spirit* connects the distinction between human and divine law not only to that between state and family (293-94/268), but also to that between men and women (301/275; 304/278). (7) Ethical life, Hegel notes, is initially so bound up with nature that men and women cannot but identify with one of these laws: "Ethical consciousness [...] is determined to belong to either divine or human law. The immediacy of its decision is something in itself, and therefore has at once the significance of something natural [...]; nature assigns one sex to one law and the other to the other law" (305/304, trans. modified; see also 301/275-76). This by no means implies, however, that this quasi-natural identification is in accordance with the principle of ethical life as such. On the contrary, this identification merely characterizes natural ethical life, and for that reason is doomed to be ruined. (8) An ethical act resulting from such a one-sided identification "contains the moment of crime, because it does not sublimate the natural allocation of the two laws to the two sexes, but rather [...] remains within the sphere of natural immediacy. Such an act turns this one-sidedness into guilt, a guilt that consists in seizing only one side of the essence, while adopting a negative attitude toward the other, that is, violating it" (308/282).

According to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the inherent conflict between archaic and rational ethical life only unfolds when individuals are impelled to act, for to act is to identify with a one-sided determination of what is good in itself (304/279). *Antigone* represents this moment by the contrary ways in which *Antigone* and *Creon* react to the death of a kinsman. *Antigone* identifies one-sidedly with the divine law that obliges her to bury her brother *Polyneices*. Her uncle *Creon*, for his part, identifies one-sidedly with the law according to which traitors have forfeited their right to be buried. Precisely because *Polyneices* is both at once, *Antigone* and *Creon*, I would like to suggest, can no longer respect the "natural" limits of the divine and human determination of what is good in itself. Just like *Oedipus*, the man who was at once her father and brother, *Antigone* is conscious of only one side of the ethical substance. Whereas *Oedipus* failed to recognize his kin in the man he killed and the woman he married, *Antigone* does not recognize the treacherous citizen in her beloved brother. The death of *Polyneices* impels her explicitly to determine this side as the ultimate principle of ethical life as such, that is, to negate the contrary determination of ethical life. *Creon*, negating the truth of archaic justice, falls prey to the same hubris as his niece and daughter-in-law to be.

Hegel seems to assume that Greek culture has known a phase where the realms of the family and the state mutually affirmed and completed one another. (9) Yet he does not spell out whether this initial harmony extended to the archaic and rational determinations of justice usually associated with these realms. At one point, however, Hegel notes that "[t]he law which is manifest [to ethical self-consciousness] is in the essence tied to (verknüpft mit) its opposite; the essence is the unity of both; but the deed has only carried out one law in contrast to the other. Yet being in the essence tied to the latter, the fulfillment of the one evokes the other, and this [...] as a now hostile [...] being" (309/283, trans. modified). Hegel repeatedly refers to this initial "tie" between divine and human law in terms of their essential unity. However, he does not determine in which way the essence of ethical life contains these, its contrary determinations. This indeterminacy, I would like to suggest, allows him to treat the conflict between *Antigone* and *Creon* in a different way than he treats the conflict between the family and the state.

I would like to recall that Hegel, in the section called "Spirit," never mentions *Antigone* or its protagonists by name. Yet those passages that obliquely, but unmistakably, refer to *Antigone* and *Creon* always emphasize the symmetry of their tragic destinies and, accordingly, the truly tragic nature of their conflict. Thus, Hegel maintains that "both sides suffer the same destruction. For neither power has any advantage over the other that would make it a more essential moment of the substance" (310-11/285). The conflict between both powers does not so much result in the victory of the one over the other as in their balance: "The victory of one power and its character, and the defeat of the other side, would thus be only the part and the incomplete work, a work that advances relentlessly toward the equilibrium of both. Only in the subjugation (*Unterwerfung*) of both sides alike is absolute right accomplished and has the ethical substance manifested itself as the negative power that absorbs (*verschlingt*) both sides" (311/285, trans. modified). Hegel here maintains, first, that both determinations of the ethical substance must recognize their one-sidedness, and, second, that this recognition should result not so much in the subjugation of the one to the other as in the subjugation of both sides to the ethical

substance as such. On this view, Creon's determination of justice does not pertain to rational ethical life as such, but merely to one of its abstract moments. As soon as Creon actually defends the interests of the state, he excludes rather than incorporates the contrary determination of rational ethical life. In doing so, he fails to represent the vital interests of the society as a whole. Since Creon abstracts from the essence of ethical life just as much as Antigone does, both protagonists are forced to recognize the one-sidedness of their positions. Thus, their conflict reflects the clash between archaic ethical life and an abstract moment of rational ethical life rather than that between archaic and rational ethical life as such. For this reason, Hegel emphasizes the symmetry of the movement in which these contrary determinations attempt to establish themselves as absolutely valid. Moreover, Hegel suggests that self-conscious human beings are "incapable of surviving the destruction of this ethical power by its opposite" (310/284). This may have been another reason for Hegel to suggest that the contrary determinations of justice cannot be reconciled by Antigone and Creon themselves.

Now, Hegel regards the relation between the complementary determinations of justice as symmetrical only insofar as they are actually defended by Antigone and Creon. When he, a few pages later, discusses the relation between the state and the family in general terms, he conceives of it in a quite different way. I would like to note, however, that Hegel associates this latter relation with that between men and women, but does not associate the sphere of womanhood with either divine law or Antigone. (10) He merely maintains that human law, represented by the state, "maintains itself by absorbing into itself [...] the separation into independent families presided over by womankind, and by keeping them dissolved into the continuous fluidity proper to it" (313/287-88). A state that absorbs the sphere of the family by restraining its efforts at becoming independent can hardly be considered to facilitate the equilibrium of both. Hegel here seems to express the point of view of human law alone. Yet, even according to this view, state and family are mutually dependent, for the family provides the state with the individuals the latter needs to maintain itself (313/288). The sphere of the family, which Hegel identifies with that of the individual, on the one hand, belongs essentially to the state as such, yet, on the other, threatens the proper interests of the latter. That is why the state always tends to turn the sphere of the family into a hostile principle: "The community, however, can only maintain itself by repressing this spirit of individualism, and, because this spirit is an essential moment, it at once creates this spirit; due to its repressive attitude toward it, it creates this spirit as a hostile principle" (314/288, trans. modified). On Hegel's view of Greek culture, the state is supposed to restrain the sphere of the family, but tends to do this by setting the sphere of the family against itself. The state thus reduces itself to a sphere that is as one-sided as the one it opposes. This opposition can only be resolved, Hegel holds, if the state recognizes the family as one of its essential moments, and if the family, in its turn, accepts the state as its ultimate principle. However, this mutual recognition does not imply the symmetry of state and family. Their relation is symmetrical only insofar as both must give up their purported independence.

Insofar as the positive moment of their reconciliation is concerned, on the other hand, Hegel clearly conceives of the relation between state and family as an asymmetrical relation. For, whereas the state represents both the absolute principle of ethical life and one of its contrary moments, the family merely represents the contrary of these moments. Thus, even if these contrary moments cannot actually be reconciled within the finite element of natural ethical life, Hegel will always comprehend their conflict in light of the movement that yields their dialectical unity. Since he identifies the sphere of the state with human law (297/272) and that of the family with divine law (298/273), we can conclude that Hegel also considers divine law itself to be a necessary, yet subordinate, moment of human law. Although Hegel would certainly grant that human law, for its part, cannot flourish without divine law, he could not have defined their mutual dependence as a symmetrical relation. I have argued, however, that the text does not permit extending the asymmetry between family and state to the relationship between Antigone and Creon. Indeed, nowhere does Hegel suggest that Antigone should have yielded to her uncle and king.

Since Hegel allegedly comprehends modernity as the age of reason's ultimate self-actualization, one might hold that Hegel's conception of tragedy pertains to classical Greek culture alone. This conclusion is not warranted, however. In order to show that Hegel employs his conception of tragic conflicts to comprehend modernity as well, I will briefly examine the criticism of the Enlightenment he puts forward in a later section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In my view, this criticism is concerned with a mode of thought characteristic not merely of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but of modernity as such. I hold, moreover, that the paradigm of modernity that took shape during this period continues to define the prevailing self-comprehension of contemporary, liberal societies.

Hegel considers the Enlightenment to be first and foremost defined by the conflict between reason and faith. He refers to the mode of thought that opposes itself to faith as "pure insight"--rather than reason--in order to emphasize its lack of content (357/329). Adopting self-consciousness as its absolute principle, pure insight defines its contrary as "a web of superstition, prejudices, and errors" (357/330). It thereby opposes itself to a mode of thought, which, seen from a speculative point of view, constitutes one of its proper moments. Insofar as pure insight opposes this moment, it turns itself into an equally one-sided determination. This gives rise to the contradiction between that which this insight is in itself and the one-sided moment it actually has become. Pure insight, Hegel notes, "entangles itself in this contradiction by engaging in a fight and by assuming that it fights something other than itself [...] What pure insight thus pronounces to be its other, what it denounces as error or lie, can be nothing else but itself" (360-61/333, trans. modified). This struggle can only come to an end, according to Hegel, if pure insight recognizes the content to which it formerly opposed itself "as its own" (361/333). It must recognize, in other words, that faith, as much as itself, assumes pure thought--albeit in a different form--as its absolute principle. When Hegel subsequently discusses the one-sided ways in which pure insight and faith define this principle, he draws explicitly on his account of the Antigone:

Faith has the divine right [...] as against Enlightenment, and suffers wrong at its hands indeed [...]. But the Enlightenment has only a human right as against faith [...]. Since the right of the Enlightenment is the right of self-consciousness, however, it will not only also retain its own right, so that two equal rights of spirit would remain opposed to one another, [...] but it will maintain the absolute right, because self-consciousness constitutes the negativity of the concept, a negativity which [...] encompasses its contrary. And faith itself [...] will not be able to deny the Enlightenment its right. (372/343-344, trans. modified)

Just like Creon's right to oppose Antigone, the right of pure insight to oppose the realm of faith is a "human" right. Since the conflict between pure insight and faith concerns essential moments of thought rather than individual human beings, Hegel defines the relationship between these contrary moments as an asymmetrical relationship. According to Hegel, both moments contain their contrary within themselves. Yet only pure insight, he suggests, contains its contrary in such a way that it can incorporate its contrary moment within itself. Whereas pure insight has, therefore, an absolute right over faith, faith can maintain its "divine right" only insofar as it affirms pure insight as its absolute principle. Modern reason, in other words, should stop fighting religion and profit instead from the capacity of religion to let a community identify with concrete moral principles. Religion, on the other hand, should be satisfied with its subordinate role in modern culture and not interfere with state affairs.

Hegel would certainly admit that his account of the relation between reason and faith is at odds with the self-understanding of modernity, such as it prevailed in his time. Contrary to Greek culture, the Enlightenment did not conceive of its ultimate principle as the source of tragic conflicts. Hegel, however, employed his conception of tragic conflicts, derived from the prevailing self-understanding of Greek culture, to let modernity become aware of its incapacity to reconcile its contrary moments. Just as Antigone and Creon failed to recognize the one-sidedness of their conception of justice, faith and pure insight failed to recognize the one-sidedness of their conception of thought. In this respect, Hegel was one of the most profound critics of modernity such as it was known to him. Yet Hegel's criticism does not imply that he opposed modernity in all respects. Insofar as he held that the conflict between such contrary moments as reason and faith must give way to its resolution, he adhered to the basic optimism of modernity as such. I have argued, however, that Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts cannot be reduced to this optimistic strand. If this is true, then it must also be possible to retrieve its tragic strand.

Hegel, we have seen, employed his conception of tragedy to expose the conflict inherent in modernity such as it was known to him. Nothing prevents us, therefore, from employing the tragic strand of this conception for a critical reflection on the contemporary world. Indeed, it may well be that the mode of modernity that is ours demands more than ever that we comprehend its inherent conflicts as tragic. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* treats the conflict between archaic and rational justice, the family and the state, and faith and reason, as three different guises of the general conflict between particularity and universality. In our time, this conflict seems rather to unfold between, on the one hand, liberal democracies and, on the other, cultural communities that do not recognize the principles of modern liberalism--whether defined as human rights, individual freedom, or capitalism--as absolute principles. Although this conflict concerns the contemporary world as whole, I will limit myself to an account of this conflict such as it tends to unfold between a particular state and cultural communities that fall within its realm.

The most obvious way of connecting Hegel's account of Antigone to the contemporary world would consist in referring to the struggle of many contemporary societies to accommodate the implicit or explicit conflict between universality and particularity. Many societies, among which France and Turkey are recent examples, attempt to control the proper force of particular cultural traditions by subordinating them to the purportedly universal principles of the state. This attempt is clearly illustrated by laws that deny women the right to wear headscarves in public spaces. Such laws are based on the essentially modern opposition between the public and the private, an opposition that those who identify with a particular cultural tradition precisely put into question. All over the world, nation-states attempt--and often fail--to control the proper force of the tribal structures whence they emerged. Following Hegel, however, I will not treat these conflicts in a direct way. Instead, I will try to understand the nature of such conflicts by addressing the one-sided way in which individuals, groups, or states tend to embrace complementary values such as progress and tradition, the individual and the community, justice and power, freedom and submission, reason and faith. The tragic nature of such conflicts can only be accounted for, I think, by assuming, first, that each moment contains its contrary within itself and, second, that neither moment has, once and for all, acquired an "absolute right" over the other (cf. *Phenomenology* 372/343-344). If this is true, then these contrary moments cannot be one-sidedly distributed over cultures that define themselves as modern and cultures that do not accept the principles of modernity as absolute principles.

As I see it, the tragic strand of Hegel's conception of tragedy consists in three elements. According to the first element, contrary determinations of a particular principle are mutually dependent. Neither moment can come into its own as long as it excludes its contrary, for this contrary constitutes one of its proper moments. As long as a modern state, for example, posits the sphere of particular moral, cultural, and religious values over against itself, it threatens to deprive its citizens of valuable means to control their selfish impulses, to interpret their lives as meaningful, and to participate in the public sphere. The second element concerns the symmetry of these contrary moments. As we have seen, this element presents itself most clearly in Hegel's reflection on the relationship between Antigone and Creon. Both Antigone and Creon identify with a one-sided determination of justice. Since neither of them is able to recognize the mutual dependence of these contrary determinations, both attempt to posit their own determination of justice as the absolute principle of justice as such, thus repressing the contrary determination. The third element concerns the increasing polarization

that tends to follow from this repression. These elements suffice, I think, to develop a philosophical perspective on the conflicts that confront the contemporary world.

Given Hegel's account of the relation between the family and the state, he would probably agree, first, that modern states tend to repress the proper force of particular cultural communities in the name of universality and, second, that this repression tends to entail the re-emergence of this force as an even greater threat to the society as such. He would also maintain, however, that this polarization can be overcome if such a state recognizes the realm of particular cultural values as one of its necessary moments and if cultural minorities, for their part, recognize the set of values represented by the state as their ultimate principle. Whereas Hegel leaves open the question of whether societies will actually be able to reconcile their contrary moments in this way, he would never accept that the particular in principle tends to resist the allegedly universal values advocated by the state.

In order to account for this latter possibility, we might have to abandon Hegel's clear-cut distinction between universality and particularity altogether. I propose, therefore, to reinterpret this--asymmetrical--distinction itself as resulting from the effort of both contrary moments to prevail over their contrary. Seen in this light, the distinction between universality and particularity is nothing but the unstable result of the struggle between contrary modes of particularity, each of which attempts to establish itself as the true principle of itself and its counterpart. In this view, the state results from the attempt to posit its proper values as universal in the first place. The state then attempts to efface the particularity from which these values emerged, first, by opposing the realm of particularity, and, second, by subjugating this realm to its purportedly universal end. The more it fails to do so, the more it turns the realm of particularity into a hostile principle. Insofar as the state tends to ignore the interest of its citizens to identify with values that are rooted in a particular tradition rather than universal reason, it endangers the vitality of the society as a whole. Cultural minorities, for their part, will tend to react to this repression by increasingly identifying with opposite values, thus equally isolating themselves from the whole. Accordingly, they will tend to set themselves against the principles defended by the state. This tragic polarization entails that those individuals who identify with a particular cultural tradition will be less inclined to embrace the "modern" elements that this tradition contains. They will be less inclined, in other words, to distinguish between those elements of their tradition that could provide valuable ethical guidelines today and those that can no longer serve this purpose. To thwart this process of mutual exclusion would require each side to recognize the values adhered to by the other as belonging to its own being--for better or for worse--and to do so without reducing them to subordinate moments of itself. Although *Antigone* suggests that this mutual recognition is very difficult to achieve, the plot of this tragedy does not warrant the conclusion that the tragic polarization of contrary cultural paradigms must necessarily, and in all cases, prevail.

I suggested at the beginning of this essay that neither repression nor tolerance necessarily decreases the inherent tension between, on the one hand, the effort at homogenization of the state and, on the other, the resistance of particular minorities against this homogenization. (11) I also suggested, still following Hegel, that this tension turns into a conflict as soon as the state and particular minorities identify with on-sided determinations of a particular principle. In order to account for the polarization induced by this conflict, one cannot rely, in my view, on the clear-cut opposition between universality and particularity, nor on Hegel's dialectical subordination of the latter by the former. I do not think that Hegel's account of tragic conflicts provides the world with means to actually counter this tragic polarization. Yet I hope to have shown that Hegel's conception of tragic conflicts, if extricated from its optimistic strand, might provide contemporary debates on intercultural conflicts with the conceptual means to overcome rigid oppositions such as that between universality and particularity, reason and faith, the individual and the community, freedom and submission. It may well be that Hegel could only turn Sophocles's insight into tragic conflicts into a philosophical principle by effacing its disturbing implications. By doing so, however, he left contemporary philosophy a legacy that, in my view, demands to be transformed rather than to be turned into a hostile principle itself.

NOTES

(1) I will use the term modernity in a rather broad sense. Within the context of this essay, this term does not refer to a well-defined historical period, but to a cultural, political, and scientific paradigm rooted in the emancipatory movement that unfolded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This paradigm, based on such values as autonomous reason, individual freedom, the superiority of science, and necessary progress, does not belong to the past, but remains the prevailing world-view of liberal, democratic societies.

(2) Conflicts such as that between piety and progress, Nussbaum notes, "would not be easily solved by any harmonizing view of the state; even a ruler more Hegelian than Creon will feel a deep conflict" (74).

(3) Along similar lines, P.J. Mills regards *Antigone's* position to be much more complicated than Hegel recognizes, in that she transcends the sphere of the family, among other ways, by taking part in a political debate to defend the principle of the family (76; "Hegel's *Antigone*," *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel* [University Park: Penn State UP, 1996], 59-88). See K. Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003) for a clear account of feminist readings of Hegel.

(4) The way in which Judith Butler responds to 9/11 and the ensuing repression of critical voices in the United States suggests that she believes this to be an important task for philosophy today: "but it is surely time to allow an intellectual field to redevelop in which

more responsible distinctions might be heard, histories might be recounted in their complexity, and accountability might be understood apart from the claims of vengeance" (2-3; *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* [London: Verso, 2004]).

(5)/ In *Reason in History* (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975]), Hegel notes that the "highest moment of a people consists in its spiritual consciousness of itself." This self-consciousness occurs as the insight into "its basic principles, that which is general in its actual world" (146).

(6)/ In "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," J.P. Vernant maintains that tragedy "does not reflect [social] reality but calls it into question. By depicting it rent and divided against itself, it turns it into a problem. [...] The questions are posed but the tragic consciousness can find no satisfactory answers to them." In his view, every tragedy enacts a debate with a past "still close enough for the clash of values to be a painful one and for this clash still to be currently taking place" (33; *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, eds. J.P. Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, trans. J. Lloyd [New York: Zone Books, 1990], 29-48).

(7)/ In my view, the conflict between the archaic and rational determinations of justice provided the model for the tragic representation of other conflicts possibly tearing apart the lives of individuals and societies. See on this J.P. Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy." Vernant argues that the clash between these realms also manifests itself in the ambiguous use of legal terminology: "The legal terminology is also used to convey the conflicts that exist between legal values and a more ancient religious tradition, the beginnings of a system of moral thought already distinct from the law although the boundaries between their respective domains are not yet clearly drawn" (38).

(8)/ "This ruin of the ethical substance [...] is thus determined by the fact that ethical consciousness is directed on to the law in a way that is essentially immediate" (*Phenomenology* 315/289, cf. 301/276).

(9)/ "The whole is a stable equilibrium of all the parts, and each part is a spirit at home in this whole, a spirit which does not seek its satisfaction outside itself but finds it within itself, because it is itself in balance with the whole" (*Phenomenology* 302/277, trans, modified; cf. 304/279).

(10)/ Butler notes in *Antigone's Claim* that Hegel at this point "supplants" his references to Antigone with references to womanhood in general. Yet I cannot make sense of her suggestion that Hegel's "suppression" of Antigone corresponds to the suppression of womanhood by the state that he is describing (35-36).

(11)/ In *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Charles Taylor rightly points out that the homogenization characteristic of modern societies threatens to deprive people of the means to identify with particular values (114-18). Taylor further develops this approach in relation to the tension between Francophone and Anglophone communities in Canada in "The Politics of Recognition," *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, (Ed. A. Guttman, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992). In this essay he argues more specifically that cultural differences be recognized. What has to happen, Taylor holds, is "a fusion of horizons" (67). This suggests that Taylor is even more optimistic with regard to the future than Hegel is often taken to be.

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This essay deploys Hegel's account of Antigone in *Phenomenology of Spirit* to reflect on conflicts that challenge the contemporary world. It argues that contemporary discourses often fail to recognize the tragic nature of the conflicts between such values as are defended by the state and by cultural minorities.

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The citizens of fifth century BCE Athens who wrote, produced, performed, watched, and judged Greek tragedy accepted certain anachronisms in the depiction of a mythological past that focused on the catastrophic lives of a few royal families. Among the most striking of these anachronisms is how democratic law making processes familiar to the Athenian audience (and a relatively recent political system) are retrojected into the monarchies of myth and legend. In Aeschylus's *Suppliant Women*, King Pelasgus, responding to the Danaids's petition for sanctuary, insists on seeking the approval of the assembly of Argive citizens, whose voting practices are pointedly emphasized in the text (607). Of course, King Theseus, the archetype of democratic principles, emphasizes the judicial processes of Athens (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 1051-53), and consults the Athenian populace when he decides to champion the cause of Argive mothers (Euripides, *Suppliant Women* 404-408). Less benign is the Argive assembly who vote to stone their prince Orestes for matricide (Euripides, *Orestes* 440-42), or the Greek army at Troy, whose motion to sacrifice the captive Trojan princess Polyxena, reproduces the enactment formula that preceded the decrees passed by the Athenian democratic assembly of the fifth century (Euripides, *Hecuba* 107-108).

When tragedy mirrors the legislative processes of Athenian democracy, it makes the heroic world of mythology more familiar and accessible to the fifth century citizen audience (Easterling 2-3), but it is important to note that the legal practices of Athens are not embedded in its drama in any simplistic or merely self-congratulatory manner. Law is represented as a complicated and sometimes precarious power. Tragedy gives careful consideration to how the language of law can create the social world: the decrees engendered by the legislative bodies represented in drama are all examples of what philosophers of language such as J.L. Austin and John Searle have identified as speech acts or illocutions. In classical Athens, some of the most authoritative speech acts were collectively voiced by citizens in the legislative assembly and law courts. Their edicts and decrees exemplify Sandy Petrey's synthesis of the performative utterance as "a combination of language and social practice," which functions "within the conventional interactions that characterize a given sociohistorical group" (13).

The homologies of Athenian law and its theatre have often been noted--their shared audience and actors, their rule-governed scripts (Lanni 183; Allen 379). Like a dramatic text, a law or decree is programmatic; it prescribes what people say or do. A legal speech act, such as a decree, functions in tragedy as a potent generator of plot and action. To use Austin's terminology, the tragic events that emanate from an edict (for example, the sacrifice of Polyxena) are the perlocutions of the speech act (Austin 101). *Oedipus's* decree condemning the murderer of Laius (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 223-51) replicates Athenian legal procedure for investigating and prosecuting a homicide (Carawan). It sets in motion a series of perlocutionary consequences that cause the edict to recoil on its author, who turns out to be that murderer. Tragedy, it would seem, not only echoes the performative language of law, but exposes its fallibilities as well. In this respect, Sophocles's *Antigone* holds a special place in any consideration of the representation of law in tragedy, since it poses fundamental and disturbing questions about the capacity of language to create law, the relationship between law and force, and specifically, as this paper will argue, about the role of the citizenry in lawmaking.

I do not intend to argue that this tragedy represents any specific political situation in fifth century BCE Thebes, or Athens, although, as Richard Seaford notes, Sophocles's Theban plays might have reassured Athens that the "horrors of tyranny are projected onto the mythical past [. . .] and are safely projected onto Thebes" (42-43). The Thebes of tragedy may be the "Anti-Athens" as Froma Zeitlin put it (144), but I maintain that there is a democratic voice embedded in this text, which suggests that the civic ideology of Athens is a natural and unquenchable force. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood is justifiably cautious about reading Sophocles's Thebes as a "mimetic representation of Athenian democracy" (136), but she does advocate a reception of the play that takes into account the cultural and political context of its production, that is, democratic Athens. Her conception of how this reception operated and its relationship to democracy is substantially different from mine, however. My approach to the play is one that takes into account its status as a cultural product of "a festival of the democratic polis" (Goldhill, "Great" 115), that is informed by and sustains an ideology generated by a system in which the democratic collective "ruled through its control of public speech" (Ober, "Public" 483).

The project of this paper, then, is to consider how democratic forces manifest in this fictional version of Thebes. My strategy will be to examine the trajectory of Creon's interdiction forbidding the burial of Polyneices from its inception to its reception and eventual annulment. This command helps us to frame an important question about language and law: what gives a legal performative its status beyond its utterance by a powerful civic figure? By considering the interdiction as a speech act that becomes part of public discourse and is disseminated through the various channels of communication in the polis, I hope to expose the infelicities and distortions that vitiate its status as law. Unlike the "democratic" monarchs of tragedy, Theseus or Pelasgus, Creon does not consult the citizens of Thebes before he makes his announcement forbidding the burial. We might assume that he composed this prohibition on the battlefield where there would be no opportunity for deliberation, but he does announce it a second time to the assembly of Theban

Elders without any debate or consultation. It is my contention, nonetheless, that the voice of the demos (the citizens) is by no means silent in this text, which reflects some of the informal discursive structures of Athenian democracy.

First, however, we need to determine if there is any chance that the fifth century BCE audience could conceive of Creon's interdiction as a law. Creon refers to his proclamation as a *nomos*, a polyvalent term that can mean "established custom," or "law." Antigone describes the burial of Eteocles and the defenders of Thebes as being the "right use of custom" (*toi nomoi*) (22) (1); she explicitly denies that Creon's interdiction is a law. How would the original audience of this tragedy view her denial and challenge? In her influential article, Sourvinou-Inwood argues that we need to set aside our contemporary focus on individual freedoms which make us hostile to Creon's position (135-37). Creon represents the polis, and in every Greek city-state of the fifth century BCE, it was the polis that authorized religious activities, including funeral rituals. Antigone is overstepping her limitations by claiming to know what the gods want; only Teiresias has the authority to do this. The fact that Teiresias substantiates Antigone's claims should not, according to Sourvinou-Inwood, affect our reading of the play since we need to put ourselves in the position of the audience who cannot read ahead. Because the ruling power of Thebes has issued the prohibition, it was necessary for all Thebans to obey, regardless of their private feelings. The prohibition (*kerugma*) on burying Polyneices seems to echo an Athenian law forbidding the burial of traitors within the city walls. Generals sometimes pronounced *kerugmata* on the battlefield, and it was the duty of the common citizen to comply. (2)

Larry Bennett and William Blake Tyrrell have a different perspective: "Antigone acts correctly because she does not defy Creon, leader of Athens, but Creon, the totalitarian ruler of impious Thebes" (42). Edward M. Harris implicitly supports this approach by analyzing what the ingredients of law were to an Athenian audience. I shall return to some of his arguments later in this paper, but the germane point for now is that Athenian citizens swore the Epeheic Oath, promising to "obey those who are ruling prudently and the established laws and those which they may prudently establish for themselves in the future." In other words, blind obedience to the commands of a ruling power was not an obligation if those commands were not sensible (Harris 39-40). Moreover, epic poetry and tragedy are consistent in how they recognize the need for proper burial. While an Athenian law might have prevented burying traitors in Attica, it did not prevent traitors from being taken outside Attic borders for burial (20-21). Proper burial of the dead is a fundamental concern of the Greeks. The Homeric gods are disturbed by the defilement of Hector's corpse in Iliad 24. Sophocles's Ajax and Euripides's Suppliant Women both deal with the crisis of unburied corpses. Indeed, Creon himself, after hearing the prediction of Teiresias, decides to bury the corpse because "it is best to obey established laws" (1113-14).

Certainly by the end of the *Antigone* it becomes obvious that the gods were offended by Creon's interdiction, but would an Athenian audience have to wait for the prophecy of Teiresias before they recognized not only the impiety of the prohibition, but also its innate illegality? It is my contention that the dramatic architecture of Sophocles's *Antigone* suggests the instability of the interdiction and its illusory status as law from the opening lines of the prologue. Antigone will never call this interdiction a "law" (*nomos*), but only a *kerugma* ("announcement"), a word cognate with *kerux*, "herald," and she will never call Creon king, but merely *strategos*, general, i.e. a type of magistrate (Harris 35-36; Griffith 122). Her position toward Creon's interdiction is that of an Athenian citizen who had the right to denounce a magistrate for malfeasance and who recognizes and demonstrates that the authority of law resides in a power that transcends Creon's articulation of a command.

It is thus significant that the first person to speak in the play is not Creon announcing the edict, but Antigone complaining about it to Ismene. The play opens at an important moment in the communication of the prohibition: its reception by the very person who will contravene and obstruct it.

And what is this announcement (*kerugma*) that they say the general (*strategos*) has just now made for the entire city? (7-8)

Antigone answers her own question by quoting the *kerugma* transmitted to her by a process of public communication. On first consideration, the *kerugma* seems to fulfill the criteria required of a felicitous speech act identified by Austin (34): an "appropriate figure," the most powerful man of Thebes, possessing "the appropriate authority" has issued a command in the "appropriate circumstances," a public forum (presumably the battlefield before the play began). But as events unfold, it seems that Creon's *kerugma* has a rather subversive energy that radiates beyond its initial utterance; its status as a citation, necessary for it to take effect, somehow undermines its authority. In other words, Creon can make his pronouncement, but he cannot control the context of its reception and repetition.

When Antigone repeats the interdiction to her sister, she highlights its transmission; *kerux* words are significant in this speech, which lays stress on the announcement of the proclamation, and a reference to the process of its transmission. "Eteocles, so they say, thinking it just to make right use of custom, he has buried in the earth, to be honored by the dead beneath. But the wretchedly dead corpse of Polyneices it has been announced (*ekkekeruchthai*) to all the citizens, they say, that no man may cover with a grave nor lament. That is what, they say, noble Creon has proclaimed (*kerukschant' echein*) for you and me, for me I tell you" (22-32). Antigone's citational practices ("they say," "it has been announced," etc.) emphasize that the utterance has been removed from its author, a necessary function of its status as a civic announcement. It is not only Creon's articulation of the interdiction that gives it legs, but also its repetition by a public voice. An audience who participated in the making of law would be aware that the *kerugma* is circulated by the

citizens of Thebes who made no contribution to its formulation. Although in his opening speech Creon claims to value the counsel of his subjects (179), he later reveals his tyrannical nature by insisting to Haemon that the city belongs to its ruler (738; see also Podlecki 363-64; Euben 160). With complete incredulity he asks his son if it is the polis who will tell him what he must order (734). Creon's unilateral edict is a strong contrast to the many ancient sources that describe law as a product of common consent (Harris 27; Allen 389). Demosthenes (25.16), for example, asserts that law is "a general agreement of the entire community." As we have already noted, Athenian tragedy regularly espouses the requirement for communal participation in the legislative process, even in states ruled by mythical kings. Tragedy might be set in a mythical past, and feature legendary monarchies, but the most reasonable sovereigns seem to adhere to democratic principles. There is no evidence, however, that the citizens of Thebes make any contribution to the interdiction other than to circulate Creon's decree.

Is there any indication that Creon has the support of the citizens, whose city he purportedly wishes to enhance (191)? Charles Segal describes the interdiction as "public speech" represented in the opening scene as "part of an anonymous, ill-defined public voice" (161). He understands the public voice and Creon's broadcast of the decree to be unanimous. But is it? It is true that the Chorus offers no objections; Ismene apparently assumes that since the people of Thebes transmit the decree they must approve of it; she feels helpless to act "in defiance of the city" (79). Even Antigone eventually submits to the idea that she is acting "against the will of the city" (907). She can hardly be blamed for feeling abandoned as she is led to her death and taunted by the Chorus of Theban Elders (509), although earlier she had suggested to Creon that the Chorus agreed with her position even if they were afraid to speak out in his presence. More importantly, there are strong indications that the Chorus of Yes-men are not representative of public opinion, that Creon is not the singular voice of Thebes, and that behind his back a dissident group of voices whisper their disapproval.

Creon himself is well aware of malcontents who "from the very start muttered secretly against me" (290-91). He mistakenly believes that dissenters have bribed the guards so they can bury the corpse, but nonetheless he is aware that people are talking about his order behind his back. In defense of Antigone, Haemon corroborates Creon's realization of community unrest with an eloquent account of the disapproval of the demos (683-723). He tells his father that the population of Thebes denies that Antigone is wrong to bury her brother; this would surely include the people who transmitted Creon's interdiction to Antigone. This may not be a government where the demos contributes to the making of law with a vote, but the public voice does comment on Creon's autocratic proclamation. Antigone's citation of the demos in her quotation of the kerugma is neutral, but Haemon is especially insistent on the voices of the community who commend Antigone's action and condemn the edict. (3) Haemon can overhear what the city is saying "in the shadows" (692-93) and how it mourns Antigone, who dies undeservedly for a praiseworthy act. This report of what the city says includes a version of his father's interdiction that dogs and birds will prey on the corpse (205-206), an illustration of how the pronouncement is quoted and critiqued by the citizens of Thebes. The public announcement of Creon thus becomes a "dark secretive report" that spreads throughout the city (700). These irrepressible but anonymous voices are a powerful reminder that Creon does not have total command of the discourse in every context of the polis, despite his fantasy of absolute control. Although the Chorus of Elders may be afraid to oppose him openly, the polis includes a background of citizen voices, citing and critiquing the command--voices that have circulated its contents so effectively that Antigone can repeat them, and Haemon can report the permutations of his father's edict.

So it seems that underneath the official position we can detect a clamor of informal debates and disagreements. The text features an assortment of voices, some sympathetic towards Antigone's position, others less so, and this polyphony, a chief factor in the undeniably slippery quality of the tragedy, helps to represent the manifold voices that constitute a polis, even an autocratic polis. The play was written for an audience whose understanding of law-making included a democratic debate. The ekklesia (the democratic assembly), where laws were created, was a raucous uproar of competing opinions: the trained speakers who bantered back and forth, and also the common men, the demos, whose collective disapproval or approbation was expressed by their vote, but also less formally as a clamor, a thorubus, that arose in the assembly and was "a crucial element of Athenian democracy [...] in which ordinary people could make their thoughts known" (Tacon 180). Thucydides, Plato, and others report this thorubus, catcalls, boos, cheers, and shouting, (4) not only in the assembly, but also the courts where laws were enacted. The clamour of the corona, the bystanders, and their thorubos of dissent or approval provided one of the unofficial but necessary checks on the juries (Lanni 187). I suggest, then, that the dissent that Haemon reports to his father should be understood as just such a thorubus of disapproval.

The "dark secret report" is also a form of gossip, another important form of unofficial communication in Athens. Antigone and Ismene depend on gossip and rumour for Creon's message, since they were obviously not present at the initial utterance of the proclamation. Yet Creon himself does not hear what is said in the back allies and dark corners of his realm; he sends but he does not receive. Gossip was a powerful means of transmitting information back and forth between the public and private spheres in the Athenian democracy; it contributed to a two-way stream of communication lacking in Thebes. Contrastingly, the Athenian political system allowed for the flow of rumour back into more formal modes of discourse. Josiah Ober lists gossip and rumour as one of several political forums of debate and communication, along with the courts, assembly and theatre, where Athenian citizens could exchange information and ideas with each other (Mass 148-51). Speakers in law courts exploited the conception of Athens as a face-to-face community in which everyone knew everyone else's business, either by frequenting the agora (town square/market-place), or shops, or through prostitutes and entertainers at drinking parties. Plutarch (Nicias 30.1) records how news of the devastating naval disaster at Sicily in 416 BCE was first heard in a barber shop, and travelled rapidly throughout the city. Rumour was an important means of disseminating information and sharing opinions between the common citizen and the elite members of society. Furthermore, as Hunter has shown

(303, 307-16), gossip could be integral to the public scrutiny of magistrates, the dokimasia, when it would be woven into Athenian political discourse in a useful manner.

Thebes is abuzz with talk of the interdiction and Antigone's defiance, but the informal yet conventional modes of communication (the *thorubos* and gossip) that had authority in the Athenian democracy, are occluded in the Theban tyranny. The Guard's reluctance to report the burial to Creon suggests a cowed populace afraid to bring unwelcome news to their king. But Antigone seems to have activated a shadow demos, a ghostly whisper of the uncontrollable *vox populi* and its *thorubos*. Public talk has become displaced in Thebes--squeezed into private conversations and secret debates--but it cannot be completely silenced. From the first moments of the play, Antigone appears to have taken control of the discourse and to become a vital part of the reception and transmission of democratic talk. This in itself is perhaps one of the most striking examples of the discursive disturbances of Thebes. As Thucydides makes Pericles say, the ideal woman is "the least mentioned" (2.45.2); the absence of any female voice from fifth century BCE Athens suggests the advice was heeded. Not only is Antigone mentioned quite a bit in Thebes, but she speaks out in a political context. Creon's effects on the channels of civic discourse apparently include the erosion of the ideal of decorous feminine silence. Antigone is thus both a symptom and a remedy of Thebes' distorted discursive system.

Antigone's intrusion into public talk is evident in the prologue: she first cites Creon's *kerguma*, precisely where Creon will publish it himself, on the steps of the royal residence, but then she also performs her own speech act in this same spot: "I myself will bury him," she declares to her sister, "I will lie dead beside him" (71-72). Ismene, paradigm of feminine docility, timidly recommends silence about the plan, but Antigone insists upon public broadcast of her speech act:

Oh no! Announce it. You should be much more hateful, if you keep quiet and not proclaim [*kerukses*] this to everyone (86-87).

The prologue, which opened by emphasizing how public information had seeped into an intimate moment between two sisters, draws to a close as Antigone begins her intervention into public discourse. She expropriates the vocabulary of Creon's order for her own act of defiance: she wants the burial of her brother to be announced (*kerukses*) in the same way that Creon's ban was announced. As Judith Butler notes, "Like Creon [...] Antigone wants her speech act to be radically and comprehensively public" (28); Segal adds, "Usurping his word, she mounts a total challenge to the civic *logos*" (62).

Given the impropriety of female speech in the public sphere, Antigone's role as the voice of democratic law might seem anomalous. It is true that women of citizen status in Athens did not speak out in public, much less participate in debates about law, but Antigone's social identity as a virgin gives her special symbolic status for several reasons. The Athenian audience of this play worshipped Athena, a virgin goddess who dispensed laws. More generally, Dike (Justice) is traditionally personified as a virgin (Hamilton 96-97). Hesiod describes the murmur of protest that spreads among the people when the virgin Dike is dragged off by evil men (Works 220-21), a passage that suggests the *thorubos* of disapproval by the Theban citizens in Sophocles's play. Likewise, the allegorical figure *Demokratia* is a young woman. (5) Furthermore, the orators of the fourth century exploited the mythology of sacrificial virgins as a model for young male citizens who were being incorporated into the polis; the daughters of the Athenian King Erechtheus, who willingly sacrificed themselves on behalf of the state, were a paradigm for Athenian youths (Larson 103-104).

It is somewhat anticlimactic when Creon makes his announcement (for the second time) to his council of Elders. (6) Concurrently, Antigone, whose citation and usurpation of the *kerugma* have been given priority of placement, is defying the interdiction even as it is spoken--a dramatic contrast to the compliant Chorus. The Elders, having been summoned to hear the *kerugma*, account for their presence in this public space: they have been called for a *sunkleton leschen*, a "convened assembly" by a "public announcement" (*koinoi kerugmati*) (160-61), terminology that evokes the summoning of the democratic assembly in Athens. But they offer no argument or comment; all they can say in response is "if it is pleasing to you" (211), an ironic contrast to the enactment formula, "it seems best to the people," that preceded Athenian decrees. Creon's announcement is delivered in an official sounding formal register: "I have proclaimed (*keruksas*) to the citizens" (192); "it has been proclaimed" (*ekkekeruktai*) (203). Again *kerux* words predominate, but this vocabulary is far removed from the language of Athenian law-making. This is a command fashioned for a very specific circumstance, yet it is the nature of law to apply to general situations. Aristotle's comment that every law is "about a general matter" (Politics 1137b11-14, 27-29, as qtd. in Harris) is illustrated by the phrasing of Athenian laws--for example, "If anyone destroys the democracy at Athens" (Andocides 1.96, qtd. in Harris 23). (7)

The subsequent confrontation between Antigone and Creon would have a special resonance for the Athenian audience of the play. The process of creating laws and decrees in their political structure embraced the important principle of *isegoria*, the right of every citizen to debate in the assembly. It is quite obviously a freedom that does not exist in Creon's regime, but Antigone enacts the role of the citizen who had the right to disagree and debate about any motion made in the assembly. Hannah Roisman rightly hears her as the voice of free speech (98-102). Unlike the Watchmen, the Chorus, or the cowed Theban polity, Antigone speaks without fear in the presence of Creon. When Creon tells her that his proclamation is a law (*nomos*) (449), she fearlessly disputes him. As I have argued, the structure and subtext of the drama emphasize the infelicities of Creon's interdiction. In her much admired argument, Antigone is able to articulate related deficiencies when she makes the distinction between one man's proclamation and true *nomos*:

As far as I'm concerned, Zeus did not make this proclamation [keruksas nor did Justice, who dwells with the gods below, enact such laws [nomous] for mortals. And I don't think that your announcements [kerugmata] are so strong that they enable a mortal to outrun the unwritten and unshakeable [asphale] laws [nomima] of the gods. (450-55)

The passage emphasizes the deficiencies of Creon's proclamation in several ways: first and foremost, his kerugma is not sanctioned by the gods, which is to say Creon does not possess "the appropriate authority" to make it. A popular analysis interprets the play as a conflict between civic law and divine law (e.g. Goldhill, Reading 96), but this concept is not natural to Greek thought; the Greeks understood true law to come from the gods (Harris 27; Allen 389). It is the goddess Athena who bestows a court of law on her city at the end of Aeschylus's *Eumenides*. As the philosopher Heraclitus put it, "the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law" (fr. 253 Kirk and Raven). Demosthenes (25.16) likewise states that "every law is an invention and gift of the gods" (qtd. in Harris 27-30). Sophocles himself describes law as coming from Zeus (*Oedipus* 863-70). If the just laws of the polis are intrinsically divine, then obviously Creon's interdiction cannot be a law.

Antigone's second point is to compare the instability of Creon's order with the laws of the gods, which are unwritten. The notion of "unwritten laws" is not unique to this text, but recurs in other contemporary sources. (8) They are, in the words of Rosalind Thomas, "a preexisting set of customs, traditions and assumptions onto which written laws were grafted" (54). They existed before law codes were written down, and included the treatment of one's parents, the worship of the gods, and proper treatment of the dead. While they are not specific to one polis, and common to a diversity of peoples, they are not normally set in opposition to the laws of the state. Greek thought tends to represent the two forms of *nomos* as complementing one another. In Thebes, however, an interdiction against burying the dead cannot be grafted onto or supported by the laws of the gods; it contradicts divine *nomos*, and so is not really a law.

Antigone's dichotomy between the unwritten laws of the gods and Creon's order poses an interesting problem. If the laws of the gods are unwritten, does this align the kerugma with writing? And if it does, how does this quality bear upon the transmission of the interdiction through the medium of public repetition? Antigone does not say that the kerugma is written, but in a sense it is. Writing suggests the possibility of repetition, what Jacques Derrida calls "iterability" (318), precisely the feature of the kerugma that results in its dissemination. Writing also allows for a separation between author and utterance, a phenomenon exemplified by the various repetitions of Creon's interdiction throughout the city. The ancient audience could understand that an order like Creon's, which has not been grafted onto the fixed universal laws, could be erased and "rewritten," unlike the permanence of divine *nomima*.

Another indication of its lack of stability is the emendable quality of the kerugma. Like a written document, it can be erased and rewritten, a quality suggested by its apparently instable penalty. Antigone claims that the penalty for disobedience is public stoning (36), but in his proclamation to the Chorus, Creon specifies no penalty. Once her transgression has been revealed, he sets the punishment of entombment for Antigone to avoid polluting the city with her death (773-80), a rather curious concession from a man willing to leave a corpse to rot in the sun. Explanations of this apparent deviation are various: that Antigone adds a bit of her own "emotional embroidery" with the detail (Podlecki 359), or that Creon has been partly affected by Haemon's arguments (Kamerbeek 142). Whatever reconstruction we imagine, the conclusion has to be that Creon's word is not stable, or to use Antigone's term, *asphale*, if it can be subjected to modifications or amendments.

At this point, it should be apparent that Creon's order, his kerugma, exists throughout the play as an impermanent creation, always, it seems, in flux, and never completely within Creon's control. Its illocutionary authority is explicitly denied by Antigone, who refuses to abide by it and so dies. But this does not confirm the force of Creon's words, since the circumstances of her death underscore the limitations of his linguistic authority. She made her own declaration in the prologue: "I will lie dead beside him" (73). She conspicuously disobeys the edict, and insults its author, forcing him to enforce it. As Nicole Loraux remarks, Antigone "chose to die by her own will and so to change execution into suicide" (31-32). Her suicide draws attention to the king's inability to control the effects of language, since it occurs after Creon ordered Antigone to be saved. There is a tragic symmetry, characteristically Sophoclean, in this organization: as Creon makes the command, Antigone defies it; as Creon says that he will rescue Antigone, she kills herself.

Thus on his first day as king, Creon discovers that language is not so much a blunt instrument as it is an uncontainable fluid. The tyrant is slow to learn that he cannot control the city with his words. He absolutely refuses to authorize any other voice until Teiresias speaks. The blind prophet delivers two warnings to Creon. The first is based on his reading of the bird signs, a signifying system that has become distorted by their feast of human meat. The process itself is a form of reading: the boy attendant describes the bird signs and sacrifices, Teiresias interprets and cites the text, as it were, to Creon. Yet, as long as his initial attempts to move Creon are structured as a chain of citations, he remains ineffective. It will not be the signs cited by Teiresias that persuade Creon, but a more direct communicate. An important shift occurs when Teiresias changes register in his second thesis (1064-90); now speaking in a powerful mantic voice that motivates Creon's change of heart, he utters a forceful prophecy of disaster described as *akineta*, "unmoveable" (1060). "You provoke me to speak the immovable secrets (*akineta*) of my soul," he groans after Creon has uttered his most blasphemous rebuttal. The term *akineta* conveys the violent exposure of some securely lodged truth; it could be accurately translated as "steadfast" or "secure," in other words as a synonym for *asphale*. Teiresias apparently speaks from the same place, and

has access to the same divine truths, as Antigone. She spoke in reference to steadfast (asphale) law authored by the gods that should manifest as universal moral laws or precepts. Teiresias refers to a divinely authored consequence of breaking these laws, a consequence that he would prefer to keep hidden and so akineta. But the deeper implications of his akineta are that they come directly from the gods; this prophecy is not obtained by interpreting the boy's description of the sacrifice, but rather through an immediate intuitive process that involves no reading of symbols--in this respect they also qualify as agrapta, unwritten. There is no separation between author and reader in his case, but a mystical process by which he acquires unmediated knowledge. Teiresias's revelations validate Antigone's insistence that her brother must be buried, and validate this conviction with terminology that recalls her own arguments.

Since Teiresias has direct access to the divine, he adds weight to Antigone's contention that Creon's announcement is not what he says it is--a law. A mortal cannot make a command that supersedes the authority of the gods. But Creon's utterance is performative; it does set a series of tragic events in motion, although these consequences are not the ones he intended. If the utterance is not a law, then what is it? One of Searle's modifications to Austin's inaugural theory was to make a distinction between speech acts that are ratified by communal protocols (this would include making laws) and individual speech acts such as promises, wagers, threats, and insults, which turn on social protocol but do not necessarily require an explicit formula or authorization (Searle, *Expression* 17). Creon's interdiction pretends to fit into the former category--an institutional speech act or law--but in fact falls into the latter, a threat by an individual. Creon does things with words, since various members of the community are intimidated by his threat (the Watchman, for example, guards the corpse and apprehends Antigone). But like his predecessor Oedipus, who issued a decree that turned out to have more impact on its author than any other citizen in Thebes, Creon makes a proclamation that has devastating personal consequences for himself--the loss of his son and then his wife, in essence the eradication of his family line.

Antigone (whose name means "against the family") has turned out to be a powerful agent of Creon's catastrophe; she is also the agent who reveals the flaws in his attempt to make law. She, too, has made a speech act; Timothy Gould aptly calls this a play about "a conflict of performatives" (19). Her announcement--which appears to be an individual promise--turns out to have the institutional force that Creon's illocution lacks. But she, too, has her limitations. Antigone herself was not able to persuade Creon that the unburied corpse of her brother offended the gods. This is an important point consonant with a society and a genre that associated authoritative speech with men. The original dramatic production might have emphasized the disparity by having the same actor play both Antigone and Teiresias: only when the actor portrays a male character does his voice have authority for Creon. It is not until Teiresias confirms that the laws of the gods have been violated that Antigone's similar assertion is authenticated. Teiresias predicts that, within a few days, Creon will repay corpse for corpses "because you keep up here one who belongs to the gods below, a corpse unburied, unhonored, all unhallowed" (Jebb 1070-71). Apparently, then, Antigone's burial of her brother was not a complete act. As J.L. Whitehorne notices, Antigone intended to perform the entire multi-staged ceremony herself, first approaching Ismene for help lifting the body, and then planning to erect a monument over the corpse (80-81). For the original audience of this play, a complete funeral was a multi-staged event, with distinct activities for both genders: women's roles consisted of pouring libations and mourning (as described by the Watchman at 431), but responsibility for burying the dead lay with the male members of a family (Whitehorne 137; Garland 36; Sourvinou-Inwood 140; Hame 151). It is obvious from Teiresias's words that Antigone's attempt to take over this function is innately defective; the gods clearly demand a more public, complete ritual.

Creon and Haemon are the only living male relatives who can assume this role. In taking over the responsibility for her brother's burial, Antigone had challenged Creon's position as the head of her household, and "as king of Thebes, the legal successor to the political estate of Eteocles and Polyneices, its co-rulers" (Whitehorne 137). Helene Foley has argued that Creon's refusal to bury Polyneices means that Antigone becomes an "honorary male" (180); as she reminds us, the citizens of Thebes had praised her for taking on this duty, an indication that there were exceptional circumstances in which a woman might act autonomously. Appealing as this interpretation may be, it still does not explain why Teiresias refers to the corpse as unburied, nor does it account for the fact that Antigone cannot perform the ritual as completely as she says she will. Sourvinou-Inwood is correct to stress the need for ritual closure to satisfy the gods of the underworld. This is accomplished (too late) when Creon sets about performing the necessary rites. The messenger later describes the ritual washing and arrangement of the corpse, the cremation, and the raising of the monument (1199-1204) all performed by Creon.

This would be a suitable point to return to Austin who states that, in order for a performative utterance to be effective, "the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation for the particular procedures invoked" (15, 32). A saint, to use one of Austin's examples (34), cannot baptize a penguin, and a woman, from the cultural perspective of an Athenian audience, cannot properly say, "I will bury him." She lacks the authority to make this particular promise since she is not the appropriate person to do so.

On the other hand, Antigone's insistence on inserting herself into public channels of communication and on speaking out in public functions as a necessary check on the abuse of language that Creon has perpetrated. Her performative utterance had the perlocutionary effect of her brother's official burial. Her speech act takes a most oblique route and possesses a strange spectral power, but her vow to bury her brother interfered with Creon's prohibition. By defying the edict, she sets in motion a chain of events that lead to Haemon's suicide; it is Teiresias's prophecy of this disaster that motivates Creon to bury Polyneices, foolishly believing that he has the power to change the gods' decrees, which, unlike his own, cannot be erased. Creon performs the burial first in an attempt to deflect the gods'

anger but there are no second chances in this tragic universe. Harris is mistaken when he speculates that had she waited but a few hours, Creon would have rescued her and reunited her with Haemon (48). The prophecy of Teiresias allowed for no such conditions or alternatives; it was a speech act of unimpeachable authority.

Just as Antigone insinuated herself into an authorial position by speaking Creon's edict and then enacting its penalty on herself, so too her deformed speech act ("I will bury him") exposes Creon's considerable failures at language, his inability to say "no-one will bury him." The performative power of Antigone's words resides in an uncanny combination of quotations, and parodies, but she prevails. She operates in a shadow land of language that subtends the Theban autocracy where a tyrant's word is supposed to be law. Antigone's infelicities reveal her uncommon agency, which is such that the pre-eminent male of Thebes, a king who should have the greatest authority to do things with words, cannot control his subjects by language, or even control of the effects of his language. He ends up doing precisely that which he forbade. Creon attempts to create law unilaterally, ignoring both the voice of the demos and the laws of the gods. What develops is an aberration, a situation that forces a woman into the civic space, and requires her to speak on behalf of the demos. Antigone, whose action is the subject of muffled rumours and silent uproars, who creates a scandal, becomes the embodiment of democratic debate, and the voice of true law.

NOTES

(1.) All translations from the original Greek are mine unless otherwise noted.

(2.) Sourvinou-Inwood (138, see especially n24) notes that Thucydides (4.105) gives reports of strategoi, or generals pronouncing kerugmata on the battlefield where they would be given special powers. She speculates that the law forbidding burial of traitors in Attica was in existence by 462 BCE certainly before the production of *Antigone*. Cf. Griffith (122).

(3.) Here I must disagree with Sourvinou-Inwood's suggestion that Haemon's claim is "an unsubstantiated assertion," or that the Athenian audience would have viewed this public opinion as a transgression, since "when a law was passed all were expected to obey it" (146). Creon's edict has hardly gone through the democratic processes of Athenian law making, and even read through an Athenian cultural filter, as Sourvinou-Inwood suggests, the edict still bears the stamp of tyranny.

(4.) In Aristophanes's *Acharnians* Dicaeopolis (37-39) specifically states that he has come to the assembly "to shout, interrupt and insult the orators" if they do not speak about peace. Thucydides (6. 24) describes the thorubos created by the demos in the assembly in the debate surrounding the Sicilian expedition.

(5.) The Decree against Tyranny (SEG XII 87) from the mid-fourth century BCE is inscribed on a stele with a has relief of *Demokratia* crowning the *Demos* (a seated male). It is featured on the covers of Ober's *Mass and Elite* (1989) and Gagarin and Cohen's *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Law* (2005). The stele is discussed by A. E. Raubitschek in "Demokratia" (*Hesperia* 31 [1962]: 238-43), who finds evidence for a cult of *Demokratia* from 403 BCE.

(6.) The beginning of Creon's speech was quoted by Demosthenes (*False Embassy* 19.247) as an exemplum of loyalty to the state. Foley reads this as evidence of a democratic tendency (144; see also Sourvinou-Inwood 139), but Harris points out that only part of the speech is quoted and is out of context.

(7.) This example and others are provided by Harris (23) More specific situations could be dealt with by decrees, a term which often used to denote Creon's order. For an Athenian audience decrees or edicts were ratified by the demos--the term is *psephisma*. This term is never used in reference to Creon's ban on burying Polyneices. Ismene uses the term *psephon* for the speech act forbidding the burial of her brother (60). The term simply means "decision" here as Griffith notes.

(8.) See Christopher Carey's discussion of this passage and Lysias 6.10, where the speaker appeals to both written and unwritten laws (in "Nomos in the Attic: Rhetoric and Oratory," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 116 [1996]: 40). Thucydides 2.37.3 records Pericles's discussion of unwritten laws; also see Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 4.4.19 (spoken by Socrates).

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Full Text:

Is there still a place in modern consciousness for an interest in the central issues that Antigone signified for the ancient world? Is our continued interest in the ancient tragedy at odds with our modern interests in the individual, and does this betray our misunderstanding the play, or worse, ourselves? According to Hegel, modern tragedy surpasses the ancient in representing modernity's mark of developed self-consciousness, which essentially overturns the place of the substantive ties to family and state that Hegel placed over the entrance to the ancient tragedy. This is the problem that Hegel, in his *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, poses with his view of the difference between ancient and modern tragedy: that the latter expresses the developed self-awareness of modernity and its corresponding interest in something more beautiful and, in terms of this development, more advanced than the problem raised in Antigone (1219). (1) For Hegel, the epic substantive ties to family and state are still present in modern tragedy, but they are no longer the central issue that interests and moves the modern spectator. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for example, Hegel tells us that the issue is not so much about whether the duty to honour one's family trumps the duty to maintain the security of the kingdom, but rather it is the fully developed character of Hamlet himself and his thoughts and psychological states that interests modernity most (1225-26). The substantive bonds to family and state merely provide the backdrop. Is the modern interest in Antigone, then, as Butler asks in *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*, merely a nostalgic idealization of kinship, which thus betrays Hegel's point that in modernity these once epically substantive terms have become, in Butler's words, "fragile, porous, and expansive" (22)? The implication of Hegel's view that Antigone is merely of historical interest, and thus no longer of any contemporary relevance, would seem to compel the Hegelian tradition to shift its focus away from the family and the political as substantive terms.

We need a closer look at Hegel's *Aesthetics* to see how much of Hegel's view we can agree with and perhaps to ask how much of our continuing interest in the tragedy can be said to be born simply out of nostalgia. If we look to Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel's Antigone in his essay on tragedy in *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama," we find a solution to the problem that Hegel poses for modernity's interest in the tragedy. As I explain below, Hegel overestimates the power of modernity's developed self-consciousness to reflect itself out of its substantive ties to family and state, and in doing so also makes modern tragedy impossible, whereas Kierkegaard is able to explain why the issues between family and state in the ancient Antigone remain of interest to modernity. Kierkegaard demonstrates this last point with the proposal for a modern Antigone, which, while acknowledging that the critical eye of modernity has turned in on itself, nevertheless reminds us of the significance that these substantive bonds have for understanding both tragedy and ourselves.

Kierkegaard's view of the bond between the substantive and the subject presents an additional problem for the Hegelian interpretation of Antigone, one which Butler's reading underscores. Rather than arguing, as Hegel does, that Antigone represents the clearly defined relationship of identity between the feminine and masculine, family and state, which in the end subsumes the former under the latter, Kierkegaard and Butler both argue that there is a fundamental ambiguity to Antigone, which essentially disrupts the possibility of this clearly defined relationship. Like Butler, Kierkegaard points to Antigone's family inheritance as the source of this disruptive ambiguity; for both, this raises the question of authorship regarding Antigone's actions (Kierkegaard 147-56; Butler 24-28). Unlike Butler, however, Kierkegaard shows that this ambiguity actually belongs to the essential disparity between tragedy's epic and lyrical constituents. By locating the source of the tragedy's ambiguity in the structure of the tragedy itself, rather than in Antigone's equivocal family roles born of incest, as Butler does, Kierkegaard brings into further relief tragedy's central question regarding agency and responsibility. For Kierkegaard, what we identify with and what affords the continued modern interest in Antigone is not her "incestuous" relationship, but rather a question that concerns all of us and the priority of which demands that we answer: Who is the author of my actions and to what extent are my decisions shaped by the family, the language, the gender, the culture, and the religion into which I was born?

In the following, I take up Kierkegaard's critique both of Hegel's treatment of Antigone and of the view of the difference between ancient and modern tragedy that Hegel offers in his *Aesthetics*. What is illuminating here about the differences between Hegel and Kierkegaard is that their deep disagreements arise out of broadly similar conceptual grounds, namely, tragedy as the combination of the epic and the lyric. I shall therefore sketch these areas of agreement; present Hegel's reading of Antigone and his case for a revised modern theory of tragedy; consider Kierkegaard's response to both Hegel's reading and his claim that modern tragedy distinguishes itself by the clear attenuation of its substantive ties; then finally take up Kierkegaard's proposal for a new Antigone with some brief remarks on how Kierkegaard's reading presents problems for Butler's project.

Tragedy for Hegel represents the combination of the epic and lyrical modes of poetry. In the *Aesthetics*, Hegel explains that dramatic poetry "unites the objectivity of the epic with the subjective character of the lyric" (1158). First, for Hegel, the epic is objective in that it focuses on an event that is accessible from more than merely one perspective. In Homer's *Iliad*, for instance, "we now see Calchas, now Nestor," Hegel says, "interpreting the event" (1049). In yet another sense, the epic is objective in that it also takes for its theme

the common mores that bind a community together, and to which the community gives its immediate and unreserved allegiance. A warrior fights in the Trojan War not merely because of personal passions, but rather because of the substantial bonds, for example, "family love of husband and wife," or "patriotism of the citizens" that connect the individual to a greater reality vindicates the action (1194).

By contrast, Hegel explains that "the lyric poet does not need to start from the external [...] [;] on the contrary, he is in himself a subjectively complete world" (Aesthetics 1120). What identifies the lyric is the individual's ability to create a world solely from his or her own subjective resources. Accordingly, unlike the epic, the material of the lyric need not express an objective deed or action that is motivated by a reality greater than that of the individual. In lyric poetry, the objective is subordinate to the subjective. Hegel's prime example is Pindar, who, while eulogizing the victor of some event, was always able to praise his own subjective viewpoint and talents, and, ultimately, to change places with the hero (1119). According to Hegel, ancient tragedy requires a balance between the epic and the lyrical. Thus, in tragedy's beginning, it distinguishes itself from being either merely an epic or simply a lyrical work by combining these two modes of poetry. How exactly does tragedy enact this combination?

Although Hegel and Kierkegaard agree that ancient tragedy essentially combines the epic with the lyric, they nevertheless disagree over how tragedy does this and what this synthesis ultimately signifies. In the next section I will clarify Hegel's view of Antigone as the synthesis of the epic and the lyric. I attend to three main points regarding Hegel's view, which will later provide the main focus of Kierkegaard's critique. First, Hegel's view of tragedy as this synthesis or unity appears in the denouement of Antigone, at which point these elements essentially become identical to one another. Second, it is with this clearly defined relationship of identity between the epic and the lyric that Hegel introduces his view of catharsis. Finally, I examine the relationship between the role that subjectivity plays in Hegel's notion of catharsis, as illustrated in both his reading of Antigone and his view of the modern development of tragedy.

For Hegel, ancient tragedy combines the epic and the lyric by presenting its audience with the lyrical interiority of the hero, while also telling the story about the organic cohesion of a society and a substantively grounded action that takes place within it. In other words, in ancient tragedy the epic action is balanced with the lyrical element by emphasizing the interiority of the heroes and the influence that their personal reflections and judgements have on the actions they pursue. This must be done to the extent that the focus of tragedy's action is not merely an epic event but rather, Hegel argues, "a live conception of individual freedom and independence or at least an individual's determination and willingness to accept freely on his own account the responsibility for his own act and its consequences" (Aesthetics 1205). Accordingly, in Antigone, although the objective duties to family and state supply the epic element, it is also necessary that there be robust and self-determined characters like Creon and Antigone to supply the subjective lyrical element. In contrast to the epic work, in ancient tragedy, it is not simply the greater reality in which the character finds her or his self that vindicates the action. On the other hand, in contrast to the lyrical work, the focus of tragedy cannot merely be the inner life of the individual who is capable of severing her- or himself from the substantive reality of the epic. Instead, ancient tragedy is produced only when the poet presents an objective duty that stems from, and belongs to, a reality greater than that of the individual, but which the characters nevertheless enact for reasons given by, and found in, the interiority of the characters themselves.

According to Hegel, although ancient tragedy essentially begins from its epic and lyrical constituents, providing these two elements is neither the end of the story for tragedy nor is it the most important feature, for there is still the tragic denouement, which for Hegel, is essentially conciliatory. This much is clear from Hegel's innovative reading of Sophocles's Antigone, found in his Phenomenology of Spirit and his Aesthetics. In the Aesthetics, Hegel states: "The chief conflict treated most beautifully by Sophocles [...] is that between the state [...] and the family. These are the clearest powers that are represented in tragedy, because the full reality of ethical existence consists in harmony between these two spheres and in absence of discord between what an agent has actually to do in one and what he has to do in the other" (1213, *emph. mine*). The conflict in Antigone centres on the tragic heroine's duty to bury her brother against King Creon's prohibiting this action. It is here that Hegel offers his original view that the tragic conflict in Antigone is not about a single character and her struggle with fate, but rather it is the conflict between right versus right (1216). Antigone is justified in burying the body of her brother and refusing to see it dishonoured as carrion for the dogs and vultures. Likewise, Creon is right to prohibit the brother's burial, since he must make an example of traitors who attempt to undermine the security of Thebes. Consequently, since these positions are both justified, Hegel understands there to be an inherent contradiction in the conflict. In the conciliatory denouement of Hegel's Antigone, however, the contradiction between family and state gives way to the "harmony between these two spheres."

Before considering Hegel's view of how this reconciliation between Antigone's and Creon's duties takes place, I should first note Hegel's view of the role and significance that the tragedy's chorus plays in the conciliatory ending. According to Hegel, the chorus represents "the one and undivided consciousness of the Divine [or of the ethical powers]" (Aesthetics 1210). Hegel compares the chorus to the substantive soil in which the actions of the tragic characters are rooted and out of which their actions grow and develop (1211). The chorus thus represents the epic element in tragedy, the greater reality to which the individual characters belong. In Antigone, the chorus represents the unified reality existing between the duties to family and state. In doing so, the chorus actually intimates the point at which the tragedy will end. Still, the chorus cannot complete this end by itself. Hegel tells us that the unity of these ethical powers sits like the varied multitude of Olympian gods in tranquil repose, but that this "ensemble of different relations and powers which only in a situation of inactivity, like that of the blessed gods, accomplish the work of the spirit in the enjoyment of an undisturbed life. But the very nature of this ensemble implies its transfer from its at first purely abstract ideality into its

actualization in reality and its appearance in the mundane sphere" (1196). In other words, although the chorus exemplifies the unity of Antigone's and Creon's substantive duties, it never brings this unity into the world of concrete action (1211). Accordingly, for Hegel, when the chorus praises Antigone's claim to her filial duty as much as it vindicates Creon's commitment to his kingdom, it does so only in abstraction. For this reason, Hegel understands the unity that the chorus represents to be incomplete and empty, a concept without any concrete content to justify its truth. This becomes apparent when, through the actions of each character, the two duties come into conflict, with each character assuming the authority of their own duty over the other. For Hegel, however, the unity seen from the god's eye view of the chorus is more than mere abstraction, and the actual truth of this unity is soon to be realized by each of the characters as a consequence of their attempts to divide the gods in the concrete world of action.

According to Hegel, it is tragedy's concrete portrayal of this unity that produces the tranquilizing effects of catharsis of fear and compassion in its spectators.(2) That is, tragedy first stirs compassion in its audience by appealing to the "eternal and inviolable" unity of the ethical order that the chorus represents to motivate its action. At the same time, tragedy evokes fear in the spectator by dividing the gods and exhibiting the power of the eternal order evinced by the death and destruction that necessarily follows its division. "Above mere fear and tragic sympathy," however, Hegel argues that there "stands that sense of reconciliation which tragedy affords by the glimpse of eternal justice. In its absolute sway this justice overrides the relative justification of one-sided aims and passions because it cannot suffer the conflict and contradiction of naturally harmonious ethical powers to be victorious and permanent in truth and actuality" (Aesthetics 1198). According to Hegel's innovative explanation, catharsis of the ambivalent mixture of fear and compassion occurs for the spectator with the reunification of the eternal ethical order.

How is this cathartic moment expressed in *Antigone*? This happens "only insofar as both sides suffer the same destruction" (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 285). Thus, when Antigone suffers from Creon's power to send her to the grave alive, while Creon suffers the aftermath of Antigone's death, which causes both his son and his wife to each end their own lives, the tragedy is brought to its conciliatory end (Aesthetics 1218). Hegel supports this reading with Antigone's line: "Because we suffer we acknowledge we have erred," and, he continues, "with this acknowledgment there is no longer any conflict between ethical purpose and actuality; it signifies the return to the ethical frame of mind, which knows that nothing counts but right" (*Phenomenology* 284).(3) Hegel's view is that, in *Antigone*, it is through suffering from the opposing power that the tragic misunderstanding, which first gave rise to the feelings of fear and pity, is resolved. Thus, in the tragic denouement, the spectator witnesses the re-unification of the ethical order first represented in its original unity, through only abstractly, by the chorus. But now this abstract unity has attained reality within and through the conflicting actions and consequential sufferings of the tragic characters. It is this suffering from the intrinsic contradiction of their actions that brings about the acknowledgement of their one-sided error in the truth that each of their duties actually stems from the same eternal order. For Hegel, this acknowledgment marks Antigone's attainment of the viewpoint of the chorus, of the gods from atop Mount Olympus, with the difference that her realization of the unity of the eternal order is concrete and thereby more complete than the mere abstraction of the gods. Thus, according to Hegel, with this acknowledgement, the conflict is over; the contradiction is cancelled, and the spectator's ambivalent feelings of fear and pity are replaced with the feeling of reconciliation (Aesthetics 1198).

I began this section with the question regarding how Hegel understands tragedy, and in particular, *Antigone*, as the combination of the epic and the lyric. Hegel's explanation reaches its completion with his view of catharsis as reconciliation. Consequently, according to Hegel's view, the epic and lyrical elements are combined in such a way that they form a relationship of identity. Thus, while the epic and lyrical constituents remain intact, the objectivity of the epic has moved into the interiority of the subject. For Hegel, this movement is no less true for the tragic characters than it is for the spectator. This is what catharsis as reconciliation signifies, that the spectator grasps the identity between the epic and the lyric.

There is a moral to Hegel's story of tragedy, a lesson for the spectator to learn, which becomes more apparent as tragedy progresses from its ancient to its modern form. In *Antigone*, the spectator sees that it is futile and, indeed, tragic for a human being to attempt to divide the totality of his or her ethical obligations, which in truth are unified in accordance with "absolute rationality" (Aesthetics 1215-17). *Antigone* is brought to this truth by suffering from the external power of Creon's right to his own ethical claim. It is, however, within the power of the individual to come to this truth without the aid of the opposing and external forces of family and state. To be sure, at the heart of Hegel's *Antigone* is the idea that the eternal order is identical to, and thus already present in, the individual. To grasp the divine, both the tragic heroine and the spectator need only look within. Consequently, the suffering and destruction from without that is involved in establishing this identity in *Antigone* becomes extraneous as tragedy and modern consciousness develop. Hegel makes this point when he asserts that, "finally, more beautiful than this rather external sort of denouement is an inner reconciliation which because of its subjective character, already borders on our modern treatment" (1219). On Hegel's view, *Oedipus at Colonus* expresses this inner reconciliation in that, without the presence of an external force representative of some epically substantive power, and in the exclusive terms of the lyrical element, *Oedipus* is capable of reconciling every inner conflict, bringing himself "into the unity and harmony of the entire ethical order itself" (1220). What is of central interest to modern tragedy is the sort of conflict and reconciliation we see in Sophocles's last tragedy.

For Hegel, it is this attenuation of the epic and the corresponding shift of emphasis on the lyrical element that distinguishes ancient from modern tragedy. In modern tragedy, there is no longer the need for the substantive soil of the epic, which the chorus represents for ancient tragedy (Aesthetics 1211). In modern tragedy, the chorus is absent because the actions of the tragic characters no longer require this type of ground and justification. The action is uprooted from the objective ends of the epic and instead develops from "the

pursuit of a purely subjective end [...] of a single individual [...] [and] a reconciliation in the very greatness of their nature" (1206-1207). For Hegel, this shift towards emphasizing tragedy's lyrical element marks the movement towards something more beautiful and more advanced in its treatment of subjectivity than he finds in *Antigone*. Instead of antiquity's focus on the epically substantive ties to family and state, the real interest of modernity is, Hegel tells us, the "progress and history of a great soul, its inner experience," which is "without ethical justification, but upheld solely by the formal inevitability of their personality" (1230). Hegel's view of the attenuation of the epic in modernity thus presents a problem for the Hegelian legacy of *Antigone* interpretation, which continues with the greatest interest in various manifestations of the "outmoded" conflict between the family and the state.

Both Hegel's *Antigone* and his view of the difference between ancient and modern tragedy meets heavy criticism from Kierkegaard. On the other hand, Kierkegaard also argues for the distinction between ancient and modern tragedy, which corresponds to modernity's increased interest in the inner development of its characters as we see, for example, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. To be clear, as both George Steiner and Jon Stewart note, the distinction between ancient and modern tragedy, in terms of the epic and lyric, is Hegel's, which places the debt on Kierkegaard (Steiner 55-56; Stewart 221-22). In the following, I show, however, that what both Steiner and Stewart overlook is that, while adopting Hegel's distinction, Kierkegaard directly challenges Hegel's view on two crucial points: first, Hegel's view of tragedy as reconciliation, and second, Hegel's account of tragedy's modern development in terms of this view.

At the beginning of his essay on tragedy in *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama," Kierkegaard makes it clear that the aim of his exposition is to show what is essential to the concept of tragedy, be it ancient or modern. He admits that tragedy certainly has changed since the days of Greek tragedy, but nevertheless asserts that "every historical development always lies within the sphere of the concept," which Kierkegaard deems "the foothold so indispensable [...] the tragic itself," and concludes that, at the end of the day, "the idea of the tragic is still essentially unchanged, just as weeping still continues to be equally natural to humankind" (139). Thus, despite the changes in content that history has provided as a muse for tragic dramaturgy, according to Kierkegaard, its essence remains unchanged. In particular, as I highlight below, what remains integral to tragedy are its epic and lyrical constituents. More importantly, however, in contrast to Hegel's view of the harmonious unity of tragedy's elements, for Kierkegaard, tragedy's essential components must to the very end express the discord of their disparity. Consequently, rather than the conceptual grasp of the divine by human beings, as Hegel understands it, it is the difficulty of answering a particular question that tragedy raises by its combining the epic and the lyric.

To this end, Kierkegaard broaches his analysis with Aristotle's remarks in his *Poetics* on what characterizes tragic action. Kierkegaard agrees with Aristotle that, for tragedy, the "primary factor is the [tau] [epsilon] [lambda] O [zeta] [end purpose] and the individuals do not act in order to present characters; rather these are included for the sake of action." Kierkegaard continues to explain this point in terms of the epic and the lyric that Hegel utilizes. What is emphasized in tragedy is that "the action itself has an epic element; it is just as much event as action" (143). For Kierkegaard, this brings to light an important consequence for how tragic action must be understood, namely, in tragedy "the action itself has a relative admixture of suffering" (143, 147). On this last point Isak Winkel Holm explains that the Danish term for "'suffering' [Liden] has a double meaning in this context. 'At lide'," he continues, "means not only to endure something painful but also, in a more grammatical sense of the word, to be a passive object of an action, just as 'to suffer' in old English can mean to be acted upon. [...] Thus the word 'to suffer' is to be understood in the sense in which the old Oedipus uses it in *Oedipus at Colonus*: 'Know that my actions consisted in suffering [pepenhot] rather than in doing'" (155). The idea here is that tragic action has an epic force of its own, which usurps the characters into its forward movement. Like Hegel's view of ancient tragedy, Kierkegaard argues that the force of this epic movement, which is the source of the character's actions, is grounded in "substantial determinants, the state, the family, in fate" (143). Because of tragedy's emphasis on these epically substantive determinants, the characters cannot be viewed as having sufficient lyrical freedom to be understood as completely choosing the actions themselves. Instead, these substantive ties and their accordant actions have, to some degree, already chosen the characters. Consequently, the action is not only something the tragic characters do, but also it is something they must suffer in the sense that their actions are something that happens to them. For Kierkegaard, this "suffering" the epic element in tragedy plays an important role for how we are to understand the outcome of the tragic action, and for understanding the either/or question that it raises.

According to Kierkegaard, this relative admixture of action plus suffering, which necessarily follows from the epic/lyric conception of tragedy, continues its dialectic regarding how tragic guilt must be viewed. He states that "just as the action in Greek tragedy is something intermediate between action and suffering, so also is the guilt, and therein lies the tragic collision" (144). Here, two points must be clarified: first, the point regarding tragic guilt, and second, the point regarding the tragic collision.

Unlike Hegel's view in *Phenomenology of Spirit* that *Antigone*'s "guilt is not an indifferent, ambiguous affair" (282), Kierkegaard argues that because tragic action must have a relative admixture of suffering, it follows that tragic guilt must also have a relative admixture of innocence and thus be ambiguous (144). For Kierkegaard, unambiguous guilt is inconsistent with the appropriate emphasis on epic substantiality in the epic/lyric conception of tragedy. Certain guilt would mean that too much emphasis has been wrongly placed on the lyrical element and the subject's freedom. The consequence of Hegel's view of *Antigone*'s unequivocal guilt, according to Kierkegaard, is that we "transform [her] esthetic guilt into ethical guilt. In this way the [heroine] becomes bad, evil actually becomes the tragic subject, but evil has no esthetic interest, and sin is not an esthetic element" (144). Kierkegaard illustrates his point by appeal to *Antigone*, stating that:

What provides the tragic interest in the Greek sense is that Oedipus's sad fate resonates in the brother's unfortunate death, in the sister's conflict with a specific human injunction; it is, as it were, the afterpains, Oedipus's tragic fate, spreading out into each branch of his family [...]. Therefore, when Antigone, in defiance of the king's injunction, decides to bury her brother, we see in this not so much a free act as a fateful necessity, which visits the iniquities of the father upon the children. There is indeed enough freedom in it to enable us to love Antigone for her sisterly love, but in the inevitability of fate there is also a higher refrain, as it were, that encompasses not only Oedipus's life but also his family. (Either/Or 156)

Thus, by consistently following the epic/lyric conception of tragedy, Kierkegaard maintains that, although there must be an element of lyrical freedom in tragic action, it nevertheless also has its source in the epically substantive ties to the heroine's family. Consequently, genuine tragic guilt must be ambiguous.

It is true, however, that, in contrast to Hegel's position on Antigone's guilt in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in *Aesthetics*, Hegel argues that the tragic characters are "just as much innocent as guilty" (1214). How, then, does Hegel understand tragic guilt? Is it certain or ambiguous? My suggestion is that the ambiguity of Hegel's position itself implies that, for him, guilt is not the main issue in tragedy, but rather only part of the story. To quote Hegel: "Here there is no question at all of an introverted personality's subjective reflection and its good and evil, but [...] of the vision of an affirmative reconcilization and the equal validity of both the powers in the conflict" (1216). Thus, on Hegel's view of the tragedy's denouement, when Antigone acknowledges her error and gives up her one-sided position, she is returned "to the ethical frame of mind, which knows that nothing counts but right" (*Phenomenology* 284). On Kierkegaard's view, however, things are much different. To the very end of the tragedy there remains an essential disparity between its epic and lyrical elements. Accordingly, her ambiguous guilt must remain certain.

Similarly, Kierkegaard argues that the essence of the tragic collision in *Antigone* also centres on the tension between the epic/lyric constituents of the tragedy itself; it concerns the collision between the character's lyrical freedom and her actions as determined by the epically substantive context into which she was born and, consequently, the uncertainty of her guilt and innocence. For Kierkegaard, the contradiction does not arise from the conflict between duties to family and state, but from the fact that the tragic heroine is at the same time guilty and guiltless, because she is free and not free.

Applying this last point regarding the relationship between the epic and the lyric to his critique of Hegel, Kierkegaard argues that tragedy's significance lies in the fact that their discord is never resolved into a harmonious unity. Much like the structure of *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* itself, which places a decision before the reader without ever resolving it, tragedy leaves its audience with the unresolved question of whether the tragic ending was either reached by a free act, or whether it was a consequence of the epically substantive context into which the heroine was born. This is completely in accord with the discord, rather than Hegel's dialectic that ends with reconciliation, that follows from the epic/lyric conception of tragedy. The effectiveness of Kierkegaard's view rests on maintaining this tension rather than resolving it, as Hegel does, into two sides of a relationship of identity. By maintaining this discord, Antigone ensures its relevance by presenting the possibility of raising its central question again and again. It is no surprise, then, that Butler points out that Antigone's "deed is and is not her own," and raises the same difficult question: "What legacy of acts is being worked out through the instrument of her agency?" (23-27). Hegel's view, by contrast, closes off "the possibility of this question, and with it the possibility that we might for ourselves decide on an answer. For Hegel, Antigone answers the dilemma with the both/and that the harmonious unity of the epic and lyric ultimately expresses.

Hegel's view of the difference between ancient and modern tragedy raises the same problem for Kierkegaard since it nullifies the either/or at the heart of tragedy. How so? By granting the lyrical element a place over the attenuated substantive ties to family and state, the characters become masters over the epic and, consequently, unequivocally responsible for their actions (145). By elevating the lyrical element over the epic, Hegel's view subverts the central question that is born out of suffering tragedy's epic constituent. In short, according to Kierkegaard, both Hegel's *Antigone* and his view of modern tragedy fail because each undermines tragedy's central dilemma.

These two instances, in which Hegel cancels tragedy's question, are not unrelated. The subversion of the substantive ties in modernity follows from the relationship of identity between the epic and the lyric that ancient tragedy expresses. Butler points out that, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel states that the family and state form a relationship of identity, yet it is the state that nevertheless subsumes the family under its own terms (5, 12-15). Similarly, from *Aesthetics* we see that the identity between the epic and the lyric really means the significance of the former only in terms of the latter, which is clear from Hegel's view of the difference between ancient and modern tragedy.

For both Butler's and Kierkegaard's critiques of Hegel, there is the common task of reopening the central questions of *Antigone* that Hegel's dialectic closes. For Butler, getting back to the questions *Antigone* raises carries the possibility of reconfiguring the relationship between the feminine and the masculine, and the family and the state, in ways that, in effect, do not subordinate the former under the terms of the latter (67). For Kierkegaard, on the other hand, the question stems less from the relationship between family and state than it does from the basic structure of the tragedy itself. The real difficulty that Hegel's *Antigone* fails to express is the question of whether the action that one decides to take is either the outcome of one's own free agency (the lyrical element) or whether the action is the consequence of the substantive context (the epic) into which one was born. Since prior to answering this

question it must remain uncertain to what degree one really chooses at all, for Kierkegaard, deciding this either/or must be primary to any other choice.

Yet, when faced with this question about freedom, Kierkegaard argues that a "person cannot quite become master of his inherited characteristics [...] [rather they are] a component of his truth" (160, *emph. mine*). Note, however, that Kierkegaard does not answer the either/or. He does not insist that we are free or determined. Similarly, though in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Butler offers a hopeful response to this difficult question. She states: "One can certainly concede that desire is radically conditioned without claiming that it is radically determined, and that there are structures that make possible desire without claiming that those structures are impervious to a reiterative and transformative articulation" (21). Butler further suggests that this last might be done by "borrowing and exploiting the very terms" of the structure (78). Still, the ambiguity at the heart of Antigone necessarily leaves unanswered where the epic ends and the lyric begins, or where the condition for desire ends and the desire for a transformative articulation begins. In the end, however, Butler seems to acknowledge the problem of the ambiguity when she asks, "Indeed, how are we to grasp this dilemma of language that emerges when 'human' takes on that doubled sense [...]?" (81). For both Butler and Kierkegaard, Antigone's question seems to continually reassert itself.

The essential conflict at the heart of ancient Antigone, which the tragedy's epic and lyrical elements provide, is no less apparent in Kierkegaard's proposal for a modern Antigone. To be sure, Kierkegaard recognizes that a shift of interest to the inner experience of the tragic characters distinguishes modernity from antiquity. For Kierkegaard, however, this shift does not resolve the conflict inherent in the disparity of tragedy's constituents. In the modern Antigone, the discord of these elements remains and, consequently, so does the either/or. In fact, for the modern tragic heroine everything remains the same as it was in the ancient tragedy. Only one significant fact must change in order to accommodate the tragedy to modernity. Kierkegaard proposes: "With me, everything is the same, and yet everything is different. Everyone knows that [Oedipus] has killed the sphinx and freed Thebes, and Oedipus is hailed and admired and is happy in his marriage with Jocasta. The rest is hidden from the people's eyes, and no suspicion has ever brought this horrible dream into the world of actuality. Only Antigone knows it" (154). After his death, the memory of Antigone's father continues to be hailed and honoured. Because of this, however, Antigone must protect her father's honour by keeping secret his crimes. She tells no one and feels a certain privilege that she has been given such a great responsibility. But, then, the tragic collision begins to reveal itself. "So here I come to the dramatic interest," Kierkegaard continues. "Antigone is in love, and I say it with pain--Antigone is head over heels in love" (162). In other words, in order to consummate her love to Haemon, she must reveal herself completely to him. In doing so, however, she must give her secret away and defile the memory of her father. Knowing how she feels for him, Haemon is thrown into utter confusion when Antigone refuses to marry him. Her reasons, however, must be kept secret. Only Antigone can know. Her only refuge is within herself. Still, for all of his emphasis on the inner experience of the modern heroine, Kierkegaard retains the epic element, the inheritance of her father's legacy. Accordingly, with the epic and the lyrical elements still in place, there results the same ambiguity in the tragic action.

This much is clear from Kierkegaard's proposal of the denouement of his modern Antigone. At the grave of her father, Haemon exhorts Antigone to explain herself. But, "only in the moment of death can she confess the fervency of her love," Kierkegaard explains:

When Epaminondas was wounded in the battle at Mantinea, he let the arrow remain in the wound until he heard that the battle was won, for he knew that it was his death when he pulled it out. In the same way, our Antigone carries her secret in her heart like an arrow that life has continually plunged deeper and deeper, without depriving her of her life, for as long as it is in her heart she can live, but the instant it is taken out, she must die. [...] At whose hand does she fall, then? At the hand of the living or the dead? In a certain sense, at the hand of the dead [...] inasmuch as the cause of her death is the recollection of her father; in another sense, at the hand of the living, inasmuch as her unhappy love is the occasion for the recollection to slay her (164).

The ending Kierkegaard constructs for his modern production thus emphasizes the continued importance of the epic element in modern tragedy. To be sure, Kierkegaard compares it to an arrow that continually plunges deeper into the heart of the modern tragic heroine. Removing it signifies at once the death of both Antigone and tragedy. (4) With the epic firmly in place, the modern tragedy continues to assert its central question: Is the tragic action the result of the epic or the lyrical element?

The analogy of the epic as the arrow in Antigone's heart is a powerful image, and I think it is so for the reason that it speaks to the significance of the epic, no less in tragedy than in our own lives. All of our lives are like the story of Antigone in that none of us chooses the family into which we are born, nor the language, gender, culture, religion, etc., but nonetheless this provides each of us with our own epic, our own ground from out of which our actions can take root and develop. Accordingly, we must, in a sense, "suffer" this arrow in our own hearts, but not simply as the passive object of some action or event. That is only half the story of tragedy, the epic. The real tragedy begins when we combine the epic with the lyric, for only then is there that fundamental ambiguity of tragedy that presents us with our own either/or. For Kierkegaard, the assertion that neither modernity nor its tragedy needs the epic element is to misunderstand both the human condition and its tragic representation. We cannot separate ourselves from the continuity of our epic grounding without giving up what it means to be human. Thus, Kierkegaard can state that to preserve this inheritance "cannot be regarded as harmful to the individual," for without it there would be, as the argument goes, little sense of the individual left (160). Human agency makes little sense without an epically substantive context. But for all that, we are neither left with the

harmonious unity between the two terms that Hegel purports it to be, nor are we left with the possibility of unequivocally delimiting where each term begins and ends. To the contrary, one must continually contend with the question of whether one's decisions are the results of one's own judgments or whether they are the consequences of the substantive context into which one was born. For the one whose interest in being ethical depends on a robust sense of his or her own agency, this person must surely be pressed to contend with the ambiguity at the heart of Antigone. As long as this either/or remains for us, however, Antigone will certainly continue to demand our modern interest.

NOTES

(1)/ Compare Anne Paolucci and Henry Paolucci, *Hegel on Tragedy*, Ed. & Introduction by A. and H. Paolucci (Delaware: Griffon House Publications, 2001), xxiv-xxx; Clyde Holler, "Tragedy in the Context of Kierkegaard's Either/Or," *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or, Part I, Vol. 3*, (Ed. R. Perkins, Georgia: Mercer UP, 1995), 127.

(2)/ Here Hegel both continues Aristotle's view of catharsis as the telos of tragedy and expands Aristotle's definition by adding that what is at stake in the cathartic moment is the re-unification of the eternal ethical order first divided by the one-sided, though equally justified, actions of the opposing characters. Compare Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1193-1200 and Aristotle, "Poetics" *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Ed. J. Barnes, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), II.2320, 1449b24-1449b28, 1450a24. For criticisms on the notion of tragedy as catharsis see Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1968), 56-60; A. C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1919), 83.

(3)/ In contrast to Hegel's translation of this line, others translate it in the form of a contingency. On the possible discrepancy of Hegel's translation see Clyde Holler, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Tragedy in the Context of His Pseudonymous Works* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1981), 58n44; Allen Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2001), 55; Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*, 34-35.

(4)/ Compare George Pattison, *Kierkegaard: The Aesthetic and the Religious* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 105-106.

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Hegel argues that modernity lacks the substantive ties that are central to the opposition in Antigone. Kierkegaard's and Butler's interpretations respond by answering why the problems that the ancient tragedy raises are still problems for modernity.

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In political theory, the problem of the other is usually taken to be the problem of the foreigner, the immigrant, the refugee, perhaps the problem of sexual difference. In response to the problem so conceived, political theorists write books about the ethics and politics of multiculturalism, alien suffrage, the conflicting claims of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, internationalism and democracy, the politics of gender or sexuality in patriarchal societies. These are important, ongoing areas of inquiry.

But what if the other is dead?

That is, how should democratic societies relate to those others who are no longer around to make claims that need to be adjudicated, to those killed in the process of settlement or colonization, to the victims of civil wars, conflicts or genocide? In this essay, I look at two texts that deal with this question, a film and a play written over 2000 years apart but which speak to each other across that temporal chasm. The film, *Sophie's Choice*, movingly explores the tragic outcome of the divergent pulls of mourning and justice in the aftermath of genocide. The play, *Antigone*, stages a reflection on the politics of mourning and justice, two conflicting political responses to the dead.

In "The Dead Body and Human Rights," historian Thomas Laqueur says there is "a tension" between mourning and justice, "between on the one hand truth for the purposes of remembering [or] communal therapy and medico-judicial truth, which grounds legal or political action." The bodies of the dead can serve either purpose but not both at the same time: "[i]t is not clear that the named bodies of the dead will serve us as both a corpus delicti [enabling justice] ... and as the balm of closure" enabling mourning. Indeed, "the rhetoric of memory is manifestly different from the rhetoric of justice; the question is whether the one might serve as a substitute, an excuse, for not pursuing the other" (92).

Faced with this conflict between mourning and justice, Laqueur searches for a bridge between them: the "bridge between the two functions of the dead body" is "that these are not the bodies of beasts; they did not 'die like dogs' outside of law and culture." But, as Laqueur immediately realizes, this bridge will not support him, for the people in question here precisely did die like dogs. That is the very problem to which Laqueur's essay, which focuses on murders, massacres and genocides, is itself addressed. And so Laqueur corrects himself: "Or rather, they did 'die like dogs' despite the fact that they were human ..." This corrected claim is more accurate but it now fails to provide the sought after bridge. Instead it plunges us right back into the divide Laqueur sought to escape, as becomes clear when he adds: "which is why it is so important subsequently to determine their identities and their histories," so that "the named bodies of the dead" can serve as either "a corpus delicti" or "as the balm of closure." But not both. Justice and mourning are again at odds: "The will to prosecute may well be blunted by whatever peace remembering brings." (1) And the peace of remembering may well be disturbed by calls for justice. Neither justice nor mourning alone can offer the dead and those who survive them all they need and deserve. Laqueur does not offer a solution but he captures the problem that divides and unites the protagonists of *Sophie's Choice* and *Antigone*.

In *Sophie's Choice* and *Antigone*, the conflict between mourning and justice is explored by way of characters deprived of the opportunity to bury their dead. Might it be that the apparent incommensurability between mourning and justice explored in these texts is in some way connected to that deprivation? The question seems simple and yet it is also vexed. Recovering the dead enables those who survive them to believe they have passed on; death makes hyper-empiricists of us all. The recovered body enables the survivors to mourn those lost, sometimes to reconcile themselves with those who have done the harm or, other times, call for justice for those responsible. (2) At the same time, however, the focus on the dead named body, whether for purposes of justice or mourning, can be a distraction from, rather than a fulfillment of, ethical or political obligations. This last point is made forcefully by political scientist Thomas Hawley in a recent book about American POW/MIA recovery movements after the Vietnam War. Burial, dealing with the body of the dead, thus seems to trouble or unsettle the familiar opposition between mourning and justice. Before troubling that opposition, however, let us explore its workings in detail, as they are staged in *Sophie's Choice* and *Antigone*.

Sophie's Choice

In the film version of William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, the fabulous Meryl Streep plays Sophie, a Polish Catholic woman who somehow ends up in Auschwitz and suffers unspeakable horrors. Before Auschwitz, Sophie was a secretary to her law professor father who demeaned and dominated her, a fate to which she re-consigns herself when she marries one of her father's disciples. That she married her father is further suggested in the film by her wedding photo, perched on a shelf behind her pre-war typewriter, in which Sophie stands in her wedding gown between two men and it is unclear which one is her father and which her husband. Both men are

killed by the Nazis, but Sophie survives and after the war, in the U.S., Sophie tethers herself to the unpredictable rhythms of life with a schizophrenic, Nathan Landau (played by Kevin Kline), who by turns worships and torments her. In her hailstorm of a life, there is only one moment depicted in the film when Sophie seems to experience an autonomous pleasure. Soon after arriving in the United States, seated in an English class for immigrants, Sophie is moved by a poem recited at the end of class. The instructor offers it as evidence that the English language is not just torturously difficult but also possessed of great beauty.

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
the carriage held just ourselves
and Immortality.

Sophie asks a classmate for the name of the poet and jots it down. Then she takes herself to the New York public library and seeks out the book.

"Excuse me, sir. Could you tell me what ... Where would be that listing in catalog file ... for ... nineteenth-century American poet ... Emile Dickens, please?" she asks the librarian in accented, broken English. "In the catalog room on the left," the librarian gestures roughly, exhibiting an unmistakable disdain for her, for her foreignness, for her ignorance. "... But you won't find any such listing," he adds, as she turns in the direction just indicated. "Oh, I won't find that listing? Why won't I ... find it?" she asks, her arched brow and her repetition registering an awareness of his disdain and the wherewithal to return his mockery, somehow. "Charles Dickens is an English writer," he sniffs. "There's no American poet by the name of Dickens." "I'm sorry. No," she insists, her eyes again on the scrap of paper where she has jotted down the name: "that is, I'm sure, American poet. Emile Dickens." The librarian explodes, fairly hissing at her, his bigotry or mere impatience palpable in the impropriety of his response (a librarian shouting in the library?): "Listen! I told you! There's no such person. Do you want me to draw you a picture?" And then, as she stutters to calm him and tries to leave his presence: "I'm telling you, you hear me?" Perhaps retraumatized by this reappearance of her father--a disdainful, demeaning, sarcastic, bullying, superior man--Sophie faints and then throws up as her head is cradled in the hands of a handsome stranger who comes to her rescue. It is Nathan, who takes her home, nurses her back to health and romances her with the poetry of Emily Dickinson, a volume of whose work he gives to Sophie as a gift on the night of their first meeting.

The mishap in the library is occasioned by the unimaginability to Sophie and to the librarian of a woman poet. It is not Dickens, after all, but rather--as Nathan rightly discerns--Dickinson that Sophie seeks; not Emile, but Emily. This scene of comic-gothic error in the library is filmed as Dickens would be or, indeed, has been filmed. Like the judge in the 1968 film version of Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, the librarian in *Sophie's Choice* is propped up on a large desk that communicates and enhances his (self-) importance. He is an impatient, pettily powerful male, less brutish than Mr. Bumble but echoing him nonetheless, and powerful only in relation to Sophie, an Oliver, that hapless, weak-bodied orphan, lost and running a fever in a cruel world, but soon to be saved by the kindness of a stranger. Sophie's kind stranger, Nathan, is no Mr. Brownlow; but then Sophie is no Oliver. Hers is a death-driven world, not merely an indifferent or cruel one. Her world is Dickinsonian, rather than Dickensian or, better, it is both. Perhaps that is the point of the film's staging of the confusion of the two names. Their merger unites the indifference and cruelty of Dickens' world with the thanatoticism of Dickinson's, and links Dickens's quest for a justice in which each gets his due with Dickinson's quest for proper mourning, in which death is not unwelcome. (3) In the merger as it is enacted here, the redemptions of Dickens and the light grace of Dickinson are lost. Moreover, both Nathan's and Sophie's quests, for Dickensian justice and Dickinsonian mourning, for a good life and a good death, will be for nought.

Whatever else it is, the story of Sophie and Nathan is also about literature and literariness. They meet in the library. On their first night together, Sophie reads to Nathan, at his request, from a Polish translation of Thomas Wolfe and he reads to her from a book of poems by Dickinson. The teller of their story, the film's narrator, Stingo, is an aspiring writer from the South who has moved to Brooklyn to write his first novel. Stingo enters into Nathan and Sophie's ill-fated relationship, and later records it for us. When Nathan welcomes Stingo to their rooming house, he does so by sending him Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, with a card: "from one of Brooklyn's earliest bards to Brooklyn's newest one," (miming Emerson to Whitman, "I greet you at the beginning of a great career"). Stingo is moved into authorship by Nathan (who disparages and adores him by turns) and Sophie (who mothers and later sleeps with him before returning finally to Nathan). "I wanted to be and hoped or dreamed to be a writer," Stingo says in his narrator's voice at the film's beginning. "But my spirit had remained locked ... unacquainted with love and a stranger to death." These problems will be solved for Stingo by Sophie and Nathan.

The story Stingo had intended to write is about a twelve-year-old boy whose mother dies. (The story is his own, he admits at one point. His mother died "because I did not love her enough," he tells Sophie in a late night confidence. This confession gives the lie to his earlier claim in his narrator voice that he was "a stranger to death." Perhaps he was not acquainted with *enough* death to inspire writing. If so, Sophie will solve that problem for him, too.) Stingo's planned story of a motherless child (which the film audience never hears, although reams of paper are produced as Stingo types nightly), is replaced by "Sophie's Choice," the story of a childless mother, Sophie, whose two children died in Auschwitz. Subtly, the film suggests, the motherless child, Stingo, *is* America, willfully innocent, naive, and free of its past. The childless mother, Sophie, is Europe, a place with a past, but one that has no future.

The problem to which literature is here called to respond is that of stuckness in the face of horror or maybe merely of history. In post-World-War-II Brooklyn, Sophie, the European Catholic Holocaust survivor, and Nathan, the bipolar American Jew, cannot move past the war, Sophie because she suffered irreversible trauma in Auschwitz, and Nathan because he is, as Sophie says, "obsessed with the Nazis." The walls of Nathan's room are papered with pictures of Nazis not yet brought to justice. Nathan tortures Sophie with cruel interrogations about what she did to survive the war, when so many Jewish victims died. "Explain something to me," he says miming her Polish accent, "the reason maybe of why you are here ... walking the streets ... wearing this enticing perfumery ... while at Auschwitz, the ghosts of the millions of the dead ... still seek an answer." Sophie does not respond. She moans. The quest for justice in the face of the Holocaust cannot be satisfied. And Nathan is not wrong when he asks, did "the same anti-Semitism ... for which Poland has gained such a worldwide recognition ... did this similar anti-Semitism guide your own destiny, help you along ... protect you in a manner of speaking, so you became one of the miniscule ... handful of people who lived ... while the millions died?"

One might think that Nathan's personal quest to bring the Nazis to justice is a symptom of his madness. He is not in any position to really do this work; he is not a lawyer, not a politician, not a vigilante. But one could just as well infer that the film's point is that he who pursues justice for the Holocaust--or chooses to do so--must be mad or will surely be driven mad by the impossible quest.

Nathan cannot stop talking about the Nazis. But Sophie, like many survivors, cannot bring herself to speak of them at all. Bit by bit over the course of the film, her story comes out, in different iterations, half-truth by half-truth. The details do not matter here. What does matter is that both characters are haunted, one by her proximity to the violence, the other by the guilt (the guilt of American Jews) that comes from having been distant from it. Each suffers survivor guilt, expressed in him through madness, in her through melancholia.

And each loves Emily Dickinson, who provides the film with its leitmotif. The poem Nathan reads to Sophie on their first night together is a burial poem that might also have been (almost) a wedding song:

Ample make this bed
Make this bed with awe;
In it wait till judgment break
Excellent and fair.
Be its mattress straight
Be its pillow round;
Let no sunrise' yellow noise
Interrupt this ground

At the end of the film, when Sophie and Nathan have committed suicide together, Stingo will stand at their bedside, gazing at their bodies coupled in death, and his eyes will fall on the Dickinson volume on a nearby tabletop. He will open the book, and read the same poem, as their eulogy--"Ample make this bed ..."--re-performing the conjoining of marriage and death ritual that scholars have observed is a staple of Greek tragedy. (4)

Stingo then leaves the Brooklyn rooming house and as we watch him walk across the Brooklyn Bridge (referencing Whitman again: "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry") with the sun rising above him, his narrator's voice says:

And so ended my journey of discovery ... in a place as strange as
Brooklyn. I let go the rage and sorrow for Sophie and Nathan and
for the many others who were but a few ... of the butchered and
betrayed and martyred children of the Earth. When I could finally
see again ... I saw the first rays of daylight reflected in the
murky river. This was not judgment day, only morning. Morning:
excel lent and fair.

This, the last line of the film, rewrites Dickinson: " *Judgment* ... excellent and fair" becomes "*morning* , excellent and fair." Or perhaps, since it is a homonym, and the viewer cannot know, perhaps it becomes "*mourning* excellent and fair." Either way, or both, mo[u]rning replaces justice and Stingo walks toward a new day.

Taken as *mourning* , the line suggests Stingo is able to cross the bridge into a new future because he is now acquainted with but not broken by experiences of love and death. He is capable of the work of proper mourning. The eulogy of the poem and the telling of the story of Nathan and Sophie allow Stingo, an emerging writer, to work through the issues that trapped these bearers of justice and melancholy in their insane, impossible, death-driven romance. (Indeed, one critic refers to the novel as Stingo's bildungsroman. (5))

Taken as *morning*, by contrast, the line suggests that Stingo represents a new world naivete, possibly willful. He lets go. He just moves on, leaving the past and its ruins behind. He has a future. This second reading is supported by the film's intimation, throughout, that Stingo is foreign to this place and its drama. He refers at the film's opening and close to these events as his "voyage of discovery in a place as strange as Brooklyn." To Stingo, Nathan and Sophie are exotics. He has never known people like this before. He is from the South. There is a bucolic home to which he can retreat (he is heir to a farm "south of Virginia" on which he might live), an option unavailable to Sophie and Nathan who are stuck in their historicity. That Stingo is not stuck in his, or does not see himself that way, is made clear when Nathan taunts Stingo, suggesting that because he is a child of the South, he knows something of racial violence or lynching. Stingo takes umbrage at the suggestion. He thinks himself entirely innocent of the charge. His is an American innocence, which is to say that by some force or chance he is positioned (or positions himself) as unimplicated in the racial history of his home, while Sophie is utterly implicated even in America in the European racist past that still destroys her. Indeed, a third reading of the film might play on the pun of mo[u]rning, and ask whether there isn't willful (i.e., American) naivete in the belief that it is possible to elide or overcome the difficulties surveyed here (the stuckness of justice and melancholy, of Dickens and Dickinson) by way of a healthy, proper work of mourning, in this instance, by way of storytelling or literature. As we shall see, Whitman himself gestures toward something beyond the stuckness of justice and mourning, by way of a difficult reconciliation not just with our enemies but also with our own shared condition of mortality. In *Sophie's Choice*, however, even Whitman is inadequate: if there is here a reference to a Whitmanesque openness to a new day, it is a repetition with a dismal difference: here the first rays of daylight are reflected not in the "gladness of the river and the bright flow" by which Whitman says he is "refreshed," but rather in a "murky river." (6)

Sophocles's *Antigone*

In Greek tragedy, all rivers are murky: *no one* is innocent, though many are blind to that fact. Everyone is known by the audience to be implicated in a history that precedes them and in a fate that is foretold yet is somehow not determinative. In Sophocles' great play, *Antigone*, Nathan's stuck, raging, impotent commitment to justice (or something like it) is represented by Creon. (7) Sophie's infinite, melancholic mourning (or something like it) is represented by Antigone (though the latter pair is importantly different: Antigone calls for her brother's death to be avenged and curses those responsible. (8) Sophie, perhaps because she feels responsible for her children's fate, does no such thing. (The call for justice or vengeance is made by Nathan and could in fact implicate Sophie.) Other readers of the play see *Antigone* as staging a struggle between conflicting principles yet to be worked out in the classical setting: between family and city, divine and human law, the bonds of kinship and citizenship, oral and written law, the city's gods and the gods of the underworld, or between authoritarian and democratic rule. But the text opens up to us in new ways when we approach it through the lens of a conflict between justice (Creon's principle of giving each his due as a matter of political and civic responsibility) and mourning (Antigone's principle of lamenting the loss of a life in order to usher the dead along to the next life, where the question of just desserts--a separate issue--will be decided by gods, not men).

The play is set in Thebes, in the Bronze Age. With its spatial and temporal distance from fifth-century Athens, Bronze Age Thebes provided a way for Athenians to work through issues that might have been too close to home to be worked out safely in an Athenian setting. (9) The play's distant setting might have allowed Sophocles to broach for public consideration issues that would otherwise be dangerous to consider. It may be for this reason that, as Jean-Pierre Vernant points out, the hero of Greek tragedy is almost always alien and from a distant past. (10)

The play begins in the aftermath of near civil war. The conflict occurs in the wake of the rule of Oedipus who ruled Thebes wisely and well but who also, with his acts of patricide and incest (unintended, unknowing, but still *his* acts), polluted the polity and brought it to near ruin. As the Greek audience would have known, Oedipus's reign ends with his wife's/mother's suicide and his own exile. Left behind are the four children of his incestuous marriage to Jocasta: Eteocles, Polynices, Antigone, and Ismene. The sons, Eteocles and Polynices both claim the throne after their father leaves. Some versions of the story suggest they agree to rule by turns. Eteocles takes power first but refuses to hand the throne to Polynices when the time comes to do so. Polynices raises an army at Argos and besieges the city to claim what is his. The brothers do battle and each dies by the other's hand.

The play opens with Antigone telling her sister Ismene awful news; Ismene has not yet heard it: their brother Eteocles has been buried with full military honors by Thebes's new leader, their uncle Creon. But Polynices, their other brother, it has been decreed by Creon, is "to be left," as Antigone puts it "unwept, unburied, a lovely treasure for birds that scan the field and feast to their heart's content" (35). Creon, Antigone rightly perceives, has "graced one with all the rites and disgraced the other."

In so doing, Creon means to do justice. Although the chorus welcomes Creon as "the new man for the new day" (174), Creon does not begin anew. He begins by orienting Thebes toward the past, to prepare it for a better future. The city must pass judgment over the events it has witnessed. It cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that one brother besieged the city ("he thirsted to drink his kinsmen's blood and sell the rest to slavery," says Creon of Polynices [225-6]), while the other sought to defend it. One brother is a friend of Thebes, a patriot, the other an enemy, a traitor (233; cf. 325). Creon means to stabilize Thebes in the aftermath of the brothers' conflict. To do justice, to give each brother his due, is also to broadcast the regime's determination to prevent the brothers' rift from permeating the regime and giving rise to ongoing sectarian conflicts between Eteocleans and Polyniceans. Thus, Creon promotes one as an honored son and denigrates the other as a traitor. In order to have the clarity that, in his view, a stable regime requires (this one more than most, perhaps, since it suffered from the lack of clarity that Oedipal incest introduced and symbolized), Creon does not

inquire too deeply into the rights and wrongs of the situation. Had he done so, he might have found Eteocles in the wrong as well, for refusing to hand power to Polynices as promised. Even so, however, Creon might have said, we can acknowledge both wrongs while insisting that not all wrongs are equal. Eteocles may have been wrong to usurp power, but that does not rise to the same level of wrong as Polynices' action in attacking Thebes with a foreign army.

Most modern readers of the play consider Creon its villain and Antigone, who takes it upon herself to resist his edict and bury her brother, its heroine (Elshtain, Dietz, Butler, Irigiaray, Euben). Most also see Creon as a representative of authoritarian power and Antigone as a democratic actor. But neither character lives up to these labels. Creon's authoritarianism is put in question from the beginning; he issues an important edict but he seems to lack the power to publicize or enforce it: news of it does not reach Ismene, until Antigone tells her about it, and the edict is violated, not once but twice. (11) For her part, Antigone may stand up to authority and so is in some way necessary to democracy, but she is not herself a democratic actor. Rather than mobilize a collectivity and inspire people to join together in common action, she alienates all potential supporters and allies in the course of the play. (12)

To pick either of the main characters as hero is to dilute the play's tragic quality. Tragedy, after all, is the form in which there is no right thing to do because whichever course is chosen, another, equally compelling, is left undone (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Williams, *Shame and Necessity*). Besides, things are not so clear when it comes to heroes and villains in this play. Taking into account the brothers' destabilization of Thebes and the recent troubles under Oedipus, the reader may well begin the play with a certain appreciation for Creon's alertness to the politics of friendship and enmity. Rather than being blind to the importance of mourning and burial, Creon is highly aware of the implications of the practice. That is why he seeks to appropriate it for political purposes. He wants mourning to serve the cause of justice and justice to provide Thebes with stability. This is what leads him to prohibit the mourning and burial of Polynices, who after all went too far. Polynices pursued justice too far (it *was* his turn) and slipped into enmity.

In the end, Creon will pursue justice too far as well. He is not unlike Polynices. Creon too is immoderate. Dishonoring the dead is prohibited by conventional rules of warfare, themselves increasingly attenuated in this period and immediately after in the Peloponnesian Wars. (13) Creon seeks justice without measure (an irony, since justice for the Greeks is about measure: giving each his due). Creon slides therefore from being a potentially worthy captain of the "ship of state" into being an irresponsible navigator who will run it aground. (14) That Creon and Polynices share this same flaw is suggested by the fact that they suffer the same or similar fates. The play opens with Polynices who, deprived of burial rites, is unable to move from this world to the next, and it closes with Creon longing for death but stuck among the living, unable to move from this world to the next. The parallels continue. Just as Creon sought to prohibit anyone from clustering at Polynices' altar, so Creon finds at the play's end that no one is left to cluster at his, and it is this isolation that tortures him, though it is fit punishment: as Haemon earlier pointed out, Creon, who at that point would listen to no counsel, would be happiest ruling over a deserted island. Alone and bereft at the end of the play, Creon receives his just desserts. There is irony in this, too, since just desserts is what Creon and Polynices both told themselves they stood for.

Creon becomes, over the course of the play, a tyrant, but that need not be seen as his essence. In the end he learns his lesson, something that cannot be said of Antigone. Antigone mirrors Creon, but imperfectly. She represents the absolute imperative of mourning in opposition to Creon's principle of justice. In the absolutism of the imperative, we see her immoderation. She does not deliberate or equivocate any more than Creon does. Both are sure of themselves; too sure. She stands opposed to Creon's edict, but unlike Creon, she ends where she begins, staunchly supporting her cause. Her character does not change, though her cause does shift subtly. She begins speaking on behalf of the gods of the underworld. The dead must be buried regardless of their deeds in the human world. She ends claiming a particular devotion to her brother, Polynices, son of her mother. No child or husband, she says, could move her to the same self-sacrifice. (15) Antigone's position shifts, perhaps as a result of her clash with Creon which may harden her, perhaps as a result of her disappointment with Ismene, who does not join her cause and offers only later to share her fate. While Antigone begins the play with the passionate declaration that the dead must be buried, and proclaims that all the dead are seen as equal by the gods of the underworld and must be so treated, she ends with a different claim, one that extols the singular importance to her of Polynices, to whom she refers as "son of my mother." (16)

These shifts and ambiguities notwithstanding, in her fundamental devotion to the cause of mourning, perhaps even stuck in melancholic yearning, Antigone does not waiver. Creon, by contrast, represents an absolute principle too, but his character changes: He begins in the voice of a measured lawgiver, then becomes a tyrant, and then learns to regret and tries to undo what he has done. There is no such curvature in Antigone, who dies unrepentant, albeit with some regret for her inability to claim entry into the kinship structure (which she, as a daughter of incest, surely troubles [Steiner, Butler]) by way of marriage and motherhood.

Most commentators comment upon the worth of Antigone's cause--the dead must be buried; the gods of the underworld must not be denied, the oral law must be respected; at the very least, she is said to help illustrate the idea that, as the blind seer Tiresias says later in the play, there must be a balance between human (Creon) and divine (Antigone) law (though Creon claims the gods too, for his side, and Antigone as the daughter and sister of previous kings is also identified to some extent with human law) (Gellrich 48-52). That the play calls for balance is clearly right; but this message does not by itself argue only against Creon. Antigone herself seeks not balance but rather fulfillment of her duty to her brother, no matter the cost. The point of the play as a tragedy surely must be that disaster would have followed as well had Antigone had her way, had mourning triumphed over justice. Mourning Polynices would

fulfill an obligation, but to grace him with such rites would have left justice (giving each his due) undone. And this is no small matter. Leaving justice undone was the omission of which Oedipus was accused, after all. It is only when Thebes is visited by a plague, after many years of Oedipus' rule, that Oedipus is finally led to open an inquiry into the death of Laius, the king whom Oedipus succeeded. Laius' murderer had never been found, had not even been actively sought, and had never been brought to justice. The plague is a sign: although the Thebans had mourned their king, they had not ever done him justice and, for this failure, Thebes is punished. It is as a result of the ensuing inquiry that Oedipus discovers a series of awful truths: the stranger he killed on the road to Thebes was in fact King Laius. Laius was Oedipus' true father. And Jocasta, the widowed queen whom Oedipus married upon his arrival in Thebes (the prize given to him for liberating Thebes from the terror of the Sphinx by solving her riddle), was none other than his own mother.

In sum, the play cannot be read as siding with either of its protagonists nor with either one's cause or principles. Instead, the play insists on the simultaneous necessity of justice and mourning. The play stages their conflict in a circumstance that renders the two incommensurable: In the context of treason, the two principles--the dead must be mourned; justice must be done--are incommensurable. The dead Polynices is left to die like an animal because he is a traitor. He is not left outside the city, like a true traitor, but rather inside its bounds. He is inside the city but not buried like a true member; rather he is left out to rot and to be fed upon by wildlife. Simon Goldhill points out: "the tensions of the play are emphasized by having Polynices' body left on the land of the city." (17) Indeed. It is Polynices' liminality as both member of and traitor to Thebes that positions him in death as so deeply and troublingly productive of a non-negotiable incommensurability. Thus, the play calls the audience to interrogate the incommensurability that Laqueur reports on, to reflect on the circumstances in which incommensurability is produced, the circumstances in which people die like dogs, and their aftermath.

Burial Rites

For some readers, Antigone's inflexible commitment to her cause is a shortcoming, but it is clearly also the source of her great power. Perhaps, however, we should read her inflexibility not as cause but rather as effect. What so many take to be a sign of backbone, or principle--Antigone's inflexibility--may be a sign of melancholic stuckness, an effect of her inability, given Creon's prohibition, to mourn Polynices properly, ritually. What Antigone may point us to, in other words, is not only the importance of mourning, and justice, but also their insufficiency. She may point us beyond that pairing to ritual burial. Burial is named as the second of the pair of acts forbidden by Creon: Recall Antigone says early in the play, that it has been decreed that Polynices must be left "unwept, unburied." Unwept, unburied is the condition as well of Sophie's children, whose mourning is not forbidden by a sovereign ruler but is rather disabled by the circumstances of genocide and by Sophie's own quest for some sort of life after the crime of infanticide in which she is horribly implicated. Both characters, deprived of the rituals of death, are stuck in melancholy and live out a death-identified existence. Neither really belongs among the living. Antigone's name, which means against generation, makes the point, as does her identification with the gods of the underworld. After Auschwitz, Sophie walks the line between life and death. Seduced into the English language by Dickenson's thanato-erotic poetry, Sophie does not care about living; she just does not want Nathan to die alone: "I don't care that I'll die. I'm afraid that he'll die without me" (as her children did).

Alongside the decree of justice and the edict against mourning, next to truth and reconciliation, rights and loss, lies--burial: those rites and rituals by way of which we *inter* the dead. Inter? The word comes from Middle English meaning, to put into the ground--in terra. For the nineteenth-century philosopher, G.W.E Hegel, however, the function of burial, is not just to inter but also to interrupt the processes whereby the interred dead might become merely part of the mere organicism of nature. We, the living, put ourselves in the way, to interrupt the mere decomposition of death. With the word and deed of ritual, we insert ourselves into nature's processes and claim even the dead for the human community. In so doing, we, humans, (specifically the sister in the family unit who is obligated in Hegel's ideal state to bury the brother), in so doing we, (though Hegel does not note it), take on the role of the gods in Homeric Greece, who were said to have warded off the decomposition and disfigurement of Greek heroes by way of active intervention. As Jean-Pierre Vernant explains, drawing on three episodes reported in the *Iliad* and elsewhere,

In all three cases, the scenario is about the same. The gods miraculously save the hero from the shame of abuse that--by disfiguring, denaturing his body until it is no longer recognizable as his own, or even as a human body, or even as a body at all--would reduce him to a state of nonbeing. To preserve him as he was, the gods perform the human rituals of cleansing and beautification but use divine unguents: these elixirs of immortality preserve "intact," despite all the abuse, that youth and beauty which can only fade on the body of a living man [because, as this statement implies but does not aver, not only death but also life itself involves decomposition]. [D]eath in battle fixes forever on the hero's form [his youth and beauty], just as a stele remains erect forever to mark a tomb. (18)

What was then true for Greek heroes, that they would not be allowed to die like dogs, is true in Hegel's ideal state for all humans, and it generates an obligation to grant to all the right to have rites. We do not let humans die like dogs. (Of course, we ought not to let dogs do so, either.) We, the community, interrupt the decomposition of nature, (if not literally, with embalming, then figuratively with funerary practice), inserting the community into nature's process to mark the end of a *life*. (19)

The service we provide to the dead when we oblige their right to have rites is always also self-serving. Beth Knox, founder of a non-profit resource center for after-death care alternatives, says that "During a time of mourning, especially after a sudden, unexpected death, people want to feel useful. But all too often, the expression of condolence--'Is there anything I can do?'--has no response. In this country, where 99 percent of all deaths are handled by funeral directors, there's rarely anything of substance for friends and family to do. But ... giving people a task--picking up the death certificate, buying more dry ice, building the coffin or digging the grave--provides a *physical way to work through grief*." (20) Service to the dead provides survivors with the work needed to work through the death. This gives a literal and insightful cast to the current favored expression for grief: *working through*.

Burial, cremation, tending to the body, the rites of death are, as Antigone must have in some sense known, a way to work through, by *working* through (with physical labor), the loss of the other and the otherness of loss. If Antigone is stuck in melancholic mourning, that may be not because she is mourning a transgressive relation to her mother or the forbidden feminine (though these suppositions generate sharp readings of the text from Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler). (21) If Antigone is melancholic, stuck in her bereavement, that may be because the *work* that would allow her to *work (physically) through* grief is specifically denied to her.

The work of mourning and burial is increasingly the subject of various, sometimes conflicting political struggles in the U.S. and Europe. Some (consumer groups or advocates of green burial, for example) seek to resist the takeover of death rites by funeral homes and state institutions; others call on state institutions to enable death rituals to occur (as when family members demand that the government seek the return of lost soldiers' bodies from the battlefield). As the historian of Ancient Greece, Robert Garland, notes, dying practices have changed over the last one hundred years, from home deaths to hospitals, from death, in "the presence of one's closest kin [clustered] around a death-bed [which was] general in all ranks of society" to mid-twentieth century practices in which "the majority of people die alone in a hospital bed with only medical attendants for company." (22) Garland also notes that death rites are "the one ceremony in a person's passage through life invariably attended by a minister [and this] indicates that scruples and uncertainties continue to exist regarding death itself." It may. Or it may signal the existence of monopoly power in the death market.

When Garland concludes "I know of no popular reform movement to challenge the church's undisputed authority in this area," he unwittingly issues an invitation for further research. As it turns out, the politics of which he was unaware (in 1985, the year of the first edition of his book) has come into existence, albeit directed more toward the state than the church. Whether for reasons having to do with ignorance, indifference, or the power of the undertakers' lobby, misinformation about burial rites is rife, and some groups have arisen to address the problem. U.S. activists publicize the little known permissibility in most states of burying the dead on private property and keeping the body at home before burial. Some seek to educate "the family to act as funeral director--legal in almost all states in the United States." (23) The *Funeral Consumers Alliance* warns that state officials routinely give out false information. In Vermont, for example, families are erroneously told that they *may not* transport their own dead for burial, that caskets are *required* for burial, (an "unsupported interpretation of Vermont statutes"), and that bodies crossing the Vermont border must be embalmed. (24) The errors regarding caskets and embalming are particularly egregious because they conflict with the religious tenets of Muslims and Jews who often bury their dead in direct contact with the earth and without embalming. (25) Proponents of green burial advocate similar practices for environmental rather than religious reasons.

Focusing on the body and burial can also be a way to avoid political engagement rather than stage it, however. This is the argument made by Thomas Hawley who analyzes the political consequences of demands of U.S. families that Vietnam war casualties, the bodies of their dead or missing family members, U.S. soldiers and personnel, be accounted for and returned to the U.S. by the U.S. and Vietnamese governments after 1975. The focus on burial and the victorious retrieval of the body from (previously) enemy soil was, Hawley argues, a displaced way to experience victory in that already lost conflict. Moreover, it enabled the U.S. to avoid confrontation with the political aftermath of that war and its losses. (26) Hawley is right to ask after the effects of the national focus on repatriation, but that focus sometimes leads him to sound like he fails to appreciate the importance of the body to survivors. A political analysis of the nationalist and nationalizing effects of the POW/MIA movement can also at the same time affirm rather than undermine familial demands for the return of loved ones. Or better, such familial demands can be made otherwise.

In the realm of tragedy, Dickens and Dickinson meet in the aftermath of human cruelty, betrayal and genocide; it is the realm in which Sophie and Antigone dwell as living dead, in which Nathan and Creon cry out for justice but no one responds. At its best, mourning-work does not just retrench existing boundaries of self, community, and nation and condemn us to repeat our current traumas, as Hawley suggests is the case with the U.S. focus on repatriation after Vietnam. At its best, mourning-work also points us beyond ourselves. At its best, mourning-work asks us to extend ourselves in a kind of self-overcoming toward an other and toward a future, beyond the divide of nature and culture, the human and non-human, because in burial (as in life) all such distinctions slide and we are left not with the gladness of a new day but with a rather murky river. What lies beyond Stingo's mo[ur]ning, beyond Antigone's revenge-seeking love for Polynices as philos, even though he is also an ekhthros to Thebes, beyond Laqueur's incommensurably coupled mourning and justice? Perhaps a different kind of mourning-work, not a working through but rather a loving letting go, such

as that imagined by Whitman in *Reconciliation*, where the sharedness of death itself, that ultimate other, and the power of the word, work some sort of a magic and draw the living to the dead in the moment of ritual burial. The encounter is intimate. The body here is neither a corpus delicti nor the basis of shared memory. Instead forgetting is invoked and the evanescence of time affirmed. There is here no Antigonean call for vengeance, no declaration of the satisfactions of justice, no triumphalism--just a sense of shared vulnerability and mortality, with a nod to literariness and its abundant powers:

Word over all, beautiful as the sky!
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be
utterly lost;
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night, incessantly softly
wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world:
... For my enemy is dead--a man divine as myself is dead;
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin--I draw
near;
I bend down, and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the
coffin.

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Full Text:

In a recent article in the Explicator, Christopher S. Nassaar suggests that the incest motif of Sophocles' Oedipus the King extends beyond the oracle's prediction and manifests itself in Oedipus's overfondness for his daughters (187-89). We may go further and say that the murder element, too, re-emerges as he rushes, sword in hand, to kill his wife-mother, Jocasta. This twofold extension of the prophecy is all the more evident in the earlier written but chronologically later Antigone. In fact the very opening lines, "Dear Sister! Dear Ismene! How many evils / Our father, Oedipus, bequeathed to us!" invite such a reading.

Much has been made of Antigone's turning from justifying her defiance by the laws of the gods to a recognition of her personal motives (Knox 49). In that light, we could interpret Antigone's remarkable lack of interest in her fiance, Haemon, as an attempt to disengage herself from the incest of her family's past. Haemon, after all, is both her cousin and quasi uncle. Note, for example, how readily she dismisses her forthcoming marriage: "Not mine the hymeneal chant, not mine the bridal song, / For I, a bride, to Acheron belong" (lines 758-59).

Yet there may be a more cogent explanation for Antigone's indifference. Even as she invokes the laws of the gods to defy Creon and to bury her slain brother, Polyneices, an excessive love of him suggests quite another motive:

Born of such parents, with them henceforth I abide, Wretched, accursed, unwed. And you, Polyneices, you found an ill-fated bride, And I, the living, am ruined by you, the dead. (799-802)

Rather than as the "ill-fated bride" of Haemon, it is as the bride of her slain brother that Antigone may see herself. That would explain Antigone's recurrent death wish that culminates in her suicide by hanging (eerily paralleling her mother/grandmother Jocasta's fate). One might expect Antigone, as a bride of Haemon, to be eager to live; one might as readily expect her, as Polyneices' bride, to long for a speedy death: "Loved, I shall rest beside the one I loved" (72). Thus, Antigone perpetuates the incest motif, while the reciprocal fratricide of Eteocles and Polyneices - a lethal anti-incest demonstration propelled, ironically, by Oedipus's curse of his sons in Oedipus in Colonus - perpetuates the murder element.

The incest, however, does not stop there. Antigone, humorless and domineering, is a female copy of Oedipus. The chorus calls her "[t]he violent daughter of a violent father" (430). And Creon says: "[I]f she triumphs / And goes unpunished, I am no man - she is (439-40). Later he states, "While yet I live, no woman rules me," (480). Thus Antigone perpetuates her father's role, inclusive of his incestuous feelings for Ismene.

The play begins with a scene between the two sisters. In asking Ismene to help her bury their brother, Antigone essentially invites her into a suicide pact. When Ismene, level-headed, if intellectually limited, pleads that "we who are weak / Are ruled by the stronger" (62-63) and refuses, Antigone's rage approximates that of the jilted lover. Ismene, however, may not only fear Creon's authority but may also seek to escape, once and for all, from incest's quagmire; Antigone revels in it.

Later as Ismene, weakening, offers her belated cooperation, Antigone, again like the jilted lover, takes pleasure in taunting her. When Ismene asks, "What happiness can I have when you are gone?" she may be speaking merely out of sisterly love. Yet Antigone's retort smacks of a lover's jealousy: "Ask Creon that. He is the one you value" (502, 503). As to Ismene sharing her punishment, Antigone responds, "No. That would not be just. I never let you / Take any part in what you disapproved of" (492-93). (You refused me earlier, now suffer!) Bitterly she adds, "To love in words alone is not enough" (496). While this love refers primarily to the dead brother, it may just as well apply to Antigone herself. Again, to Ismene's "Do you gain anything by taunting me?" Antigone replies, "Ah, no! By taunting you, I hurt myself" (504, 505). Indeed. Once disappointed in her wooing of Ismene, she appears determined, all the more readily, to join Polyneices in death.

Upon Antigone's demise, both of the Oracle's predictions are eased out of existence by way of a more distant relative, Haemon. His betrothal to Antigone, after all only mildly incestuous, is never consummated. And his lunging at his own father, Creon, with his sword - just as Oedipus had lunged at Laius - fails too. With his suicide the double prophecy comes, at long last, to an end. The sole survivor, besides a broken Creon, bereft of heirs, is Ismene; practical and adaptable, she will perforce marry out of the family and be the likely progenitor of a new and healthy breed. Ismene is hope; she is the future.

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Abstract:

The character Antigone's remarkable indifference to her fiance Haemon in dramatist Sophocles' tragedy 'Antigone' may be interpreted as an effort to distance herself from the incest of her family's past. However, lines 799-802 in the play suggest that Antigone is not the ill-fated bride of Haemon but, rather, of her dead brother Polyneices. Interpreted thus, these lines would explain the woman's recurrent death wish.

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