



*Antigone's
Claim*

Kinship Between Life & Death

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CHAPTER 3

Promiscuous Obedience

In George Steiner's study of the historical appropriations of *Antigone*, he poses a controversial question he does not pursue: What would happen if psychoanalysis were to have taken Antigone rather than Oedipus as its point of departure?¹ Oedipus clearly has his own tragic fate, but Antigone's fate is decidedly postoeidipal. Although her brothers are explicitly cursed by her father, does the curse also work on her and, if so, through what furtive and implicit means? The chorus remarks that something of Oedipus' fate is surely working through her own, but what burden of history does she bear? Oedipus comes to know who his mother and father are but finds that his mother is also his wife. Antigone's father is her brother, since they both share a mother in Jocasta, and her brothers are her nephews, sons of her brother-father, Oedipus. The terms of kinship become irreversibly equivocal. Is this part of her tragedy? Does this equivocality of kinship lead to fatality?

Antigone is caught in a web of relations that produce no coherent position within kinship. She is not, strictly speaking, outside kinship or, indeed, unintelligible. Her situation can be understood, but only with a certain amount of horror. Kinship is

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not simply a situation she is in but a set of practices that she also performs, relations that are reinstated in time precisely through the practice of their repetition. When she buries her brother, it is not simply that she acts from kinship, as if kinship furnishes a principle for action, but that her action is the action of kinship, the performative repetition that reinstates kinship as a public scandal. Kinship is what she repeats through her action; to re-deploy a formulation from David Schneider, it is not a form of being but a form of doing.² And her action implicates her in an aberrant repetition of a norm, a custom, a convention, not a formal law but a lawlike regulation of culture that operates with its own contingency.

If we recall that for Lacan the symbolic, that set of rules that govern the accession of speech and speakability within culture, is motivated by the father's words, then the father's words are surely upon Antigone; they are, as it were, the medium within which she acts and in whose voice she defends her act. She transmits those words in aberrant form, transmitting them loyally and betraying them by sending them in directions they were never intended to travel. The words are repeated, and their repeatability relies on the deviation that the repetition performs. The aberration that is her speech and her act facilitates such transmissions. Indeed, she is transmitting more than one discourse at once, for the demands that are upon her come from more than one source: her brother also petitions her to give him a decent burial, a demand that in some ways conflicts with the curse that Oedipus has laid upon his son, to die at battle and be received by the underworld. These two demands converge and produce a certain interference in the transmitting of the paternal word. After all, if the father is the brother, then what finally is the difference between them? And what is to elevate the demand of Oedipus over the demand of Polyneices?

The words are upon her, but what does that mean? How does a curse come to inform the action that fulfills the prophecy inher-

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ent in the curse? What is the temporality of the curse such that the actions that she takes create an equivocation between the words that are upon her, that she suffers, and the act that she herself performs? How are we to understand the strange *nomos* of the act itself? How does the word of the Other become one's own deed, and what is the temporality of this repetition in which the deed that is produced as a result of the curse is also in some ways an aberrant repetition, one that affirms that the curse produces unanticipated consequences?

Oedipus, of course, unknowingly sleeps with his mother and slays his father, and is driven into the wilderness accompanied by Antigone. In *Oedipus at Colonus* the two of them, along with a small party of followers, are given shelter by Theseus in a land governed by Athens. Oedipus learns that his sons have explicitly forbidden his return to Thebes and also learns that they have turned against one another in a bitter battle for the throne. Toward the end of that play, the second of the trilogy, Polyneices visits Oedipus and calls upon him to return. Oedipus not only refuses but levels a curse against Polyneices, that "you shall never conquer in war your native land; . . . but shall perish by your brother's hand, and kill him who drove you out!" (1385–1393).

Antigone stands by, importuning her father to show benevolence toward Polyneices, and fails. And it remains unclear whether the brother whose act will kill him is Eteocles who delivers the fatal blow, or Oedipus, whose curse both predicts and mandates the blow itself. Polyneices, despite Antigone's protest, decides nevertheless to go into battle with Eteocles, and Antigone is left, crying out "My heart is broken!" She then speaks a line that prefigures her own knowing approach to her own fate: "Brother, how can anyone *not* mourn, seeing you set out to death so clear before you go with open eyes to death!" (Greene 1645–1649). Indeed, Antigone will and—given the chronology of the plays—"already has" undergone precisely the fate she predicts for her brother, to enter death knowingly.

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Antigone not only loses her brother to her father's curse, words that quite literally yield the force of annihilation, but she then loses her father to death by the curse that is upon him. Words and deeds become fatally entangled in the familial scene. The acts of Polyneices and Eteocles seem to fulfill and enact the father's words, but his words—and his deeds—are also compelled by a curse upon him, the curse of Laius. Antigone worries over their fate even as she embarks upon her own course of action for which death is a necessary conclusion. Her desire to save her brothers from their fate is overwhelmed, it seems, by her desire to join them in their fate.

Before he dies, Oedipus makes several utterances that assume the status of a curse. He condemns her, but the force of the condemnation is to bind her to him. His words culminate in her own permanent lovelessness, one that is mandated by Oedipus' demand for loyalty, a demand that verges on incestuous possessiveness: "From none did you have love more than from this man, without whom you will now spend the remainder of your life" (1617–1619). His words exert a force in time that exceeds the temporality of their enunciation: they demand that for all time she have no man except for the man who is dead, and though this is a demand, a curse, made *by* Oedipus, who positions himself as her only one, it is clear that she both honors and disobeys this curse as she displaces her love for her father onto her brother. Indeed, she takes her brother to be her only one—she would risk defying the official edict for no kin but Polyneices. Thus she betrays Oedipus even as she fulfills the terms of his curse. She will only love a man who is dead, and hence she will love no man. She obeys his demand, but promiscuously, for he is clearly not the only dead man she loves and, indeed, not the ultimate one. Is the love for the one dissociable from the love for the other? And when it is her "most precious brother" for whom she commits her criminal and honorable act, is it clear that this brother is Polyneices, or could it be Oedipus?

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Knowing that he is dying, Oedipus asks, "And will they even shroud my body in Theban soil?" (406) and learns that his crime makes that impossible. He is thus buried by Theseus out of everyone else's sight, including Antigone's. Then, Antigone, in the play by that name, mimes the act of the strong and true Theseus and buries her brother out of sight, making sure that Polynices' shade is composed of Theban dust. Antigone's assertive burial, which she performs twice, might be understood to be for both, a burial that at once reflects and institutes the equivocation of brother and father. They are, after all, already interchangeable for her, and yet her act reinstitutes and reelaborates that interchangeability.

Although Sophocles wrote *Antigone* several years before *Oedipus at Colonus*, the action that takes place in the former follows the action of the latter. What is the significance of this belatedness? Are the words that goad the action understandable only in retrospect? Can the implications of the curse, understood as extended action, be understood only retrospectively? The action predicted by the curse for the future turns out to be an action that has been happening all along, such that the forward movement of time is precisely what is inverted through the temporality of the curse. The curse establishes a temporality for the action it ordains that predates the curse itself. The words bring into the future what has always already been happening.

Antigone is to love no man except the man who is dead, but in some sense she is also a man. And this is also the title that Oedipus bestows upon her, a gift or reward for her loyalty. When Oedipus is banished, Antigone cares for him, and in her loyalty, is referred to as a "man" (*aner*). Indeed, she follows him loyally into the wilderness, but at some point that following imperceptibly turns into a scene in which *she* leads *him*: "Follow, follow me this way with your unseeing steps, father, where I lead you!" (183-184).

Indeed, she is at once cursed with a loyalty to a dead man, a loyalty that makes her manly, compels her to acquire the attribute that carries his approbation such that desire and identification are

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acutely confounded in a melancholic bind. Oedipus clearly understands gender as something of a curse itself, since one of the ways in which he condemns his sons is by leveling his accusation through the trope of an orientalizing gender inversion:

Those two conform together to the customs that prevail in Egypt in their nature and the nurture of their lives! For there the males sit in their houses working at the loom, and their consorts provide the necessities of life out of doors. And in your case, my children, those who ought to perform this labour sit at home and keep the house like maidens, and you two *in their place* bear the burdens of your unhappy father's sorrows. (337-344, *my emphasis*)

Later, Oedipus maintains that Ismene and Antigone have quite literally taken the place of their brothers, acquiring masculine gender along the way. Addressing his sons, he says:

If I had not begotten these daughters to attend me, I would not be living, for all you did for me. But as it is they preserve me, they are my nurses, they are men, not women, when it comes to working for me; but you are sons of some other, and no sons of mine. (1559-1563)

His daughters thus become his sons, but these same children (Antigone and Ismene), he maintains earlier, are also his "sisters" (328). And so we've arrived at something like kinship trouble at the heart of Sophocles. Antigone has, then, already taken the place of her brother; when she breaks with Ismene, it mirrors the break that Polynices has made with Eteocles, thus acting, we might say, as brothers do. By the time this drama is done, she has thus taken the place of nearly every man in her family. Is this an effect of the words that are upon her?

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Indeed, words exercise a certain power here that is not immediately clear. They act, they exercise performative force of a certain kind, sometimes they are clearly violent in their consequences, as words that either constitute or beget violence. Indeed, sometimes it seems that the words act in illocutionary ways, enacting the very deed that they name in the very moment of the naming. For Hölderlin, this constitutes something of the murderous force of the word in Sophocles. Consider this moment in which the chorus in *Oedipus at Colonus* reminds Oedipus of his crime, a verbal narration of the deed that becomes the violent punishment for the deed. They not only narrate the events but deliver the accusation, compel his acknowledgment, and inflict a punishment through their interrogatory address:

CHORUS: Unhappy one, what then? You murdered . . . your father?

OEDIPUS: Woe! You have struck me a second blow, anguish upon anguish!

CHORUS: You killed him!

(542–545)

Thus Oedipus is verbally struck by the chorus for having struck and slain his father; the accusation verbally repeats the crime, strikes again where Oedipus is already hurt and where he is thus hurt again. He says, “You strike again,” and they strike again, strike with words, repeating, “You killed him”; and the chorus who speaks is ambiguously addressed as “God in heaven,” speaking with the force that divine words do. Such scenes no doubt prompted Hölderlin to remark upon the fatality of words in his “Anmerkungen zur Antigone”: “The word becomes mediately factic in that it grasps the sensuous body. The tragic Greek

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word is fatally factic [tödlichfaktisch], because it actually seizes the body that murders."³

It is not just that the words kill Oedipus in some linguistic and psychic sense but those words, the ones composing the prior curse of Laius upon him, move him toward incest and murder. In murdering, he fulfills or completes the words that were upon him; his action becomes indissociable from the spoken act, a condition we might say of both the curse that dramatic action reflects and the structure of dramatic action itself. These are words that one transmits, but they are not autonomously generated or maintained by the one who speaks them. They emerge from, in Hölderlin's terms, an inspired or possessed mouth (*aus begeisterten Munde*) and seize the body that murders. They are spoken to Oedipus, but he also restages his trauma, as it were, as his words seize and kill his sons, seize them and make them murderous, and as his words also seize and gender as manly the body of his daughter, Antigone. And they do this precisely by becoming words that act in time, words whose temporality exceeds the scene of their utterance, becoming the desire of those they name, repetitious and conjuring, conferring only retrospectively the sense of a necessary and persistent past that is confirmed by the utterance that predicts it, where prediction becomes the speech act by which an already operative necessity is confirmed.

The relation between word and deed becomes hopelessly entangled in the familial scene, every word transmutes into event or, indeed, "fatal fact," in Hölderlin's phrase. Every deed is the apparent temporal effect of some prior word, instituting the temporality of tragic belatedness, that all that happens has already happened, will come to appear as the always already happening, a word and a deed entangled and extended through time through the force of repetition. Its fatality is, in a sense, to be found in the dynamic of its temporality and its perpetual exile into non-being that marks its distance from any sense of home.⁴ According to Hölderlin, this prodigious performativity of the word is tragic

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both in the sense of fatal and theatrical. Within the theater, the word is acted, the word as deed takes on a specific meaning; the acute performativity of words in this play has everything to do with the words taking place within a play, as acted, as acted out.

There are, of course, other contexts in which words become indissociable from deeds, such as department meetings or family gatherings. The particular force of the word as deed within the family or, more generally, as it circuits within kinship, is enforced as law (*nomos*). But this enforcement does not happen without a reiteration—a wayward, temporal echo—that also puts the law at risk of going off its course.

And if we were to return to psychoanalysis through the figure of Antigone, how might our consideration of this play and this character lay out the possibility of an aberrant future for psychoanalysis, as that mode of analysis becomes appropriated in contexts that could not be anticipated? Psychoanalysis traces the wayward history of such utterances and makes its own lawlike pronouncements along the way. Psychoanalysis might be one mode of interpreting the curse, the apparently predictive force of the word as it bears a psychic history that cannot fully enter narrative form. The encrypted word that carries an irrecoverable history, a history that, by virtue of its very irrecoverability and its enigmatic afterlife in words, bears a force whose origin and end cannot be fully determined.

That the play *Antigone* predates its prehistory, is written decades before *Oedipus at Colonus*, indicates how the curse operates within an uncertain temporality. Uttered before the events, its force is only known retroactively; its force precedes its utterance, as if the utterance paradoxically inaugurates the necessity of its prehistory and of what will come to appear as always already true.

But how surefire is a curse? Is there a way to break it? Or is there, rather, a way in which its own vulnerability might be exposed and exploited? The one who within the present recites the

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curse or finds oneself in the midst of the word's historical effectivity does not precisely ventriloquize words that are received from a prior source. The words are reiterated, and their force is re-enforced. The agency that performs this reiteration knows the curse but misunderstands the moment in which she participates in its transmission.

To what extent is this notion of the curse operating in the conception of a symbolic discourse that is transmitted in certain but unpredictable forms by the speaking subject? And to the extent that the symbolic reiterates a "structural" necessity of kinship, does it relay or perform the curse of kinship itself? In other words, does the structuralist law report on the curse that is upon kinship or does it deliver that curse? Is structuralist kinship the curse that is upon contemporary critical theory as it tries to approach the question of sexual normativity, sociality, and the status of law? And, moreover, if we are seized by this inheritance, is there a way to transmit that curse in aberrant form, exposing its fragility and fracture in the repetition and reinstatement of its terms? Is this breaking from the law that takes place in the reinstating of the law the condition for articulating a future kinship that exceeds structuralist totality, a poststructuralism of kinship?⁵

The Antigonean revision of psychoanalytic theory might put into question the assumption that the incest taboo legitimates and normalizes kinship based in biological reproduction and the heterosexualization of the family. Although psychoanalysis has often insisted that normalization is invariably disrupted and foiled by what cannot be ordered by regulatory norms, it has rarely addressed the question of how new forms of kinship can and do arise on the basis of the incest taboo. From the presumption that one cannot—or ought not to—choose one's closest family members as one's lovers and marital partners, it does not follow that the bonds of kinship that *are* possible assume any particular form.

To the extent that the incest taboo contains its infraction within itself, it does not simply prohibit incest but rather sustains

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and cultivates incest as a necessary specter of social dissolution, a specter without which social bonds cannot emerge. Thus the prohibition against incest in the play *Antigone* requires a rethinking of prohibition itself, not merely as a negative or privative operation of power but as one that works precisely through proliferating through displacement the very crime that it bars. The taboo, and its threatening figuration of incest, delineates lines of kinship that harbor incest as their ownmost possibility, establishing "aberration" at the heart of the norm. Indeed, my question is whether it can also become the basis for a socially survivable aberration of kinship in which the norms that govern legitimate and illegitimate modes of kin association might be more radically redrawn.

Antigone says "brother," but does she mean "father"? She asserts her public right to grieve her kin, but how many of her kin does she leave ungrieved? Considering how many are dead in her family, is it possible that mother and father and repudiated sister and other brother are condensed there at the site of the irreproducible brother? What kind of psychoanalytic approach to Antigone's act would foreclose in advance any consideration of overdetermination at the level of the object? This equivocation at the site of the kinship term signals a decidedly postoeidipal dilemma, one in which kin positions tend to slide into one another, in which Antigone is the brother, the brother is the father, and in which psychically, linguistically, this is true regardless of whether they are dead or alive; for anyone living in this slide of identifications, their fate will be an uncertain one, living within death, dying within life.

One might simply say in a psychoanalytic spirit that Antigone represents a *perversion* of the law and conclude that the law requires perversion and that, in some dialectical sense, the law is, therefore, perverse. 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 satis-

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faction 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, inadvertent possibilities produced by the prohibition that come to undermine the conclusion that an invariant social organization of sexuality follows of necessity from the prohibitive law. 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?⁶

In Slavoj Žižek's brief account of Antigone offered in *Enjoy Your Symptom!*,⁷ he suggests that Antigone's "no!" to Creon is a feminine and destructive act, one whose negativity leads to her own death. The masculine act is apparently more affirmative for him, the act by which a new order is founded (46). By saying "no" to the sovereign, she excludes herself from the community and is not survivable in that exile. Yet it seems that masculine reparation and building are an effort to cover over that "traumatic rupture" caused by feminine negation. Here it seems that Antigone is once again elevated to a feminine position (unproblematically) and then understood to have constituted the founding negation for the polis, the site of its own traumatic dissolution that the subsequent polity seeks to cover over. But does Antigone simply say "no"? Surely there are negations that riddle her speech, but she also approximates the stubborn will of Creon and circumscribes a rival autonomy by her negation. Later, Žižek will make clear that Antigone counters Creon not with reasons but with a tautology that is nothing other than her brother's name: "The 'law' in the name of which Antigone insists upon Polyneices' right to burial is this law of the 'pure' signifier. . . . It is the Law of the name that fixes our identity" (91-92). But does Antigone call her brother by his name, or does she, at the moment in which she seeks to give him precedence, call him by a kinship term that is, in fact and in principle, interchangeable? Will her brother ever have one name?

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What is the contemporary voice that enters into the language of the law to disrupt its univocal workings? Consider that in the situation of blended families, a child says "mother" and might expect more than one individual to respond to the call. Or that, in the case of adoption, a child might say "father" and might mean both the absent phantasm she never knew as well as the one who assumes that place in living memory. The child might mean that at once, or sequentially, or in ways that are not always clearly disarticulated from one another. Or when a young girl comes to be fond of her stepbrother, what dilemma of kinship is she in? For a woman who is a single mother and has her child without a man, is the father still there, a spectral "position" or "place" that remains unfilled, or is there no such "place" or "position"? Is the father absent, or does this child have no father, no position, and no inhabitant? Is this a loss, which assumes the unfulfilled norm, or is it another configuration of primary attachment whose primary loss is not to have a language in which to articulate its terms? And when there are two men or two women who parent, are we to assume that some primary division of gendered roles organizes their psychic places within the scene, so that the empirical contingency of two same-gendered parents is nevertheless straightened out by the presocial psychic place of the Mother and Father into which they enter? Does it make sense on these occasions to insist that there are symbolic positions of Mother and Father that every psyche must accept regardless of the social form that kinship takes? Or is that a way of reinstating a heterosexual organization of parenting at the psychic level that can accommodate all manner of gender variation at the social level? Here it seems that the very division between the psychic or symbolic, on the one hand, and the social, on the other, occasions this pre-emptory normalization of the social field.

I write this, of course, against the background of a substantial legacy of feminist theory that has taken the Lévi-Straussian analytic of kinship as the basis for its own version of structuralist and

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poststructuralist psychoanalysis and the theorization of a primary sexual difference. It is, of course, one function of the incest taboo to prohibit sexual exchange among kin relations or, rather, to establish kin relations precisely on the basis of those taboos. The question, however, is whether the incest taboo has also been mobilized to *establish* certain forms of kinship as the only intelligible and livable ones. Thus one hears, for instance, the legacy of this tradition in psychoanalysis invoked by psychoanalysts in Paris in recent months against the prospect of "contracts of alliance," construed by conservatives as a bid for gay marriage. Although the rights of gay people to adopt children were not included in the proposed contracts, those who opposed the proposal fear that such contracts might lead to that eventuality and argue that any children raised in a gay family would run the immanent threat of psychosis, as if some structure, necessarily named "Mother" and necessarily named "Father" and established at the level of the symbolic, was a necessary psychic support against an engorgement by the Real. Similarly, Jacques-Alain Miller argued that whereas he was clear that homosexual relations deserve recognition, they should not qualify for marriage because two men together, deprived of the feminine presence, would not be able to bring fidelity to the relationship (a wonderful claim made against the backdrop of our presidential evidence of the binding power of marriage on heterosexual fidelity). Yet other Lacanian practitioners who trace the sources of autism in the "paternal gap" or "absence" similarly predict psychotic consequences for children with lesbian parents.

These views commonly maintain that alternative kinship arrangements attempt to revise psychic structures in ways that lead to tragedy again, figured incessantly as the tragedy of and for the child. No matter what one ultimately thinks of the political value of gay marriage, and I myself am a skeptic here for political reasons I outline elsewhere,⁸ the public debate on its legitimacy becomes the occasion for a set of homophobic discourses that

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must be resisted on independent grounds. Consider that the horror of incest, the moral revulsion it compels in some, is not that far afield from the same horror and revulsion felt toward lesbian and gay sex, and is not unrelated to the intense moral condemnation of voluntary single parenting, or gay parenting, or parenting arrangements with more than two adults involved (practices that can be used as evidence to support a claim to remove a child from the custody of the parent in several states in the United States). These various modes in which the oedipal mandate fails to produce normative family all risk entering into the metonymy of that moralized sexual horror that is perhaps most fundamentally associated with incest.

The abiding assumption of the symbolic, that stable kinship norms support our abiding sense of culture's intelligibility, can be found, of course, outside of the Lacanian discourse. It is invoked in popular culture, by psychiatric "experts" and policy makers to thwart the legal demands of a social movement that threatens to expose the aberration at the heart of the heterosexual norm. It is quite possible to argue in a Lacanian vein that the symbolic place of the mother can be multiply occupied, that it is never identified or identifiable with an individual, and that this is what distinguishes it as symbolic. But why is the symbolic place singular and its inhabitants multiple? Or consider the liberal gesture in which one maintains that the place of the father and the place of the mother are necessary, but hey, anyone of any gender can fill them. The structure is purely formal, its defenders say, but note how its very formalism secures the structure against critical challenge. What are we to make of an inhabitant of the form that brings the form to crisis? If the relation between the inhabitant and the form is arbitrary, it is still structured, and its structure works to domesticate in advance any radical reformulation of kinship.⁹

The figure of Antigone, however, may well compel a reading that challenges that structure, for she does not conform to the symbolic law and she does not prefigure a final restitution of the

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law. Though entangled in the terms of kinship, she is at the same time outside those norms. Her crime is confounded by the fact that the kinship line from which she descends, and which she transmits, is derived from a paternal position that is already confounded by the manifestly incestuous act that is the condition of her own existence, which makes her brother her father, which begins a narrative in which she occupies, linguistically, every kin position *except* "mother" and occupies them at the expense of the coherence of kinship and gender.

Although not quite a queer heroine, Antigone does emblemize a certain heterosexual fatality that remains to be read. Whereas some might conclude that the tragic fate she suffers is the tragic fate of any and all who would transgress the lines of kinship that confer intelligibility on culture, her example, as it were, gives rise to a contrary sort of critical intervention: What in her act is fatal for heterosexuality in its normative sense? And to what other ways of organizing sexuality might a consideration of that fatality give rise?

Following schools of cultural anthropology inflected by Marxian analysis and Engels's famous study of the origin of the family, a school of feminist anthropologists have taken distance from the Lévi-Straussian model—a critique exemplified perhaps most powerfully by Gayle Rubin,¹⁰ Sylvia Yanagisako, Jane Collier, Michelle Rosaldo,¹¹ and David Schneider.¹² The critique of the structuralist account, however, is not the end of kinship itself. Understood as a socially alterable set of arrangements that has no cross-cultural structural features that might be fully extracted from its social operations, kinship signifies any number of social arrangements that organize the reproduction of material life, that can include the ritualization of birth and death, that provide bonds of intimate alliance both enduring and breakable, and that regulate sexuality through sanction and taboo. In the 1970s socialist feminists sought to make use of the unwaveringly social analysis of kinship to show that there is no ultimate basis for nor-

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mativ heterosexual monogamous family structure in nature, and we might now add that it has no similar basis in language. Various utopian projects to revamp or eliminate family structure have become important components of the feminist movement and, to some extent, have survived in contemporary queer movements as well, the support for gay marriage notwithstanding.

Consider, for instance, Carol Stack's *All Our Kin* that shows that despite governmental efforts to label fatherless families as dysfunctional, those black urban kinship arrangements constituted by mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and friends who work together to raise children and reproduce the material conditions of life are extremely functional and would be seriously misdescribed if measured against an Anglo-American standard of familial normalcy.¹³ The struggle to legitimate African-American kinship dates back to slavery, of course. And Orlando Patterson's book *Slavery and Social Death* makes the significant point that one of the institutions that slavery annihilated for African-Americans was kinship.¹⁴ The slave-master invariably owned slave families, operating as a patriarch who could rape and coerce the women of the family and effeminize the men; women within slave families were unprotected by their own men, and men were unable to exercise their role in protecting and governing women and children. Although Patterson sometimes makes it seem that the primary offense against kinship was the eradication of paternal rights to women and children within slave families, he nevertheless offers us the important concept of "social death" to describe this aspect of slavery in which slaves are treated as dying within life.

"Social death" is the term Patterson gives to the status of being a living being radically deprived of all rights that are supposed to be accorded to any and all living human beings. What remains uninterrogated in his view, and that I believe resurfaces in his contemporary views on family politics, is precisely his objection to slave men being deprived by slavery of an ostensibly "natural" patriarchal position within the family. Indeed, his use of Hegel

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supports this point. Angela Davis made a radically different point in *The Black Scholar* several years ago when she underscored the vulnerability of black women to rape both within the institution of slavery and its aftermath, and argued that the family has not served as an adequate protection against sexualized racial violence.¹⁵ Moreover, one can see in the work of Lévi-Strauss the implicit slide between his discussion of kinship groups, referred to as clans, and his subsequent writing on race and history in which the laws that govern the reproduction of a "race" become indissociable from the reproduction of the nation. In these latter writings, he implies that cultures maintain an internal coherence precisely through rules that guarantee their reproduction, and though he does not consider the prohibition of miscegenation, it seems to be presupposed in his description of self-replicating cultures.¹⁶

The critique of kinship within anthropology has centered on the fiction of bloodlines that work as a presupposition for kinship studies throughout the past century. And yet, the dissolution of kinship studies as an interesting or legitimate field of anthropology does not have to lead to a dismissal of kinship altogether. Kath Weston makes this clear in her book *Families We Choose*, where she replaces the blood tie as the basis for kinship with consensual affiliation.¹⁷ We might see new kinship in other forms as well, ones where consent is less salient than the social organization of need: something like the buddy system that the Gay Men's Health Clinic in New York has established for caring for those who live with HIV and AIDS would similarly qualify as kinship, despite the enormous struggle to gain recognition by legal and medical institutions for the kin status of those relations, manifested for instance by the inability to assume medical responsibility for one another or, indeed, to be permitted to receive and bury the dead.

This perspective of radical kinship, which sought to extend legitimacy to a variety of kinship forms, and which, in fact, refused the reduction of kinship to family, came under criticism by some feminists in the aftermath of the 1960s "sexual revolu-

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tion," producing, I would suggest, a theoretical conservatism that is currently in tension with contemporary radical sexual politics. It is why, for instance, it would be difficult to find a fruitful engagement at the present time between the new Lacanian formalisms and the radical queer politics of, for example, Michael Warner and friends. The former insists on fundamental notions of sexual difference, which are based on rules that prohibit and regulate sexual exchange, rules we can break only to find ourselves ordered by them anew. The latter calls into question forms of sexual foundationalism that cast viable forms of queer sexual alliance as illegitimate or, indeed, impossible and unlivable. At its extreme, the radical sexual politics turns against psychoanalysis or, rather, its implicit normativity, and the neoformalists turn against queer studies as a "tragically" utopian enterprise.

I remember hearing stories about how radical socialists who refused monogamy and family structure at the beginning of the 1970s ended that decade by filing into psychoanalytic offices and throwing themselves in pain on the analytic couch. And it seemed to me that the turn to psychoanalysis and, in particular, to Lacanian theory was prompted in part by the realization by some of those socialists that there were some constraints on sexual practice that were necessary for psychic survival and that the utopian effort to nullify prohibitions often culminated in excruciating scenes of psychic pain. The subsequent turn to Lacan seemed to be a turn away from a highly constructivist and malleable account of social law informing matters of sexual regulation to one that posits a presocial law, what Juliet Mitchell once called a "primordial law" (something she no longer does), the law of the Father, which sets limits upon the variability of social forms and which, in its most conservative form, mandates an exogamic, heterosexual conclusion to the oedipal drama. That this constraint is understood to be beyond social alteration, indeed, to constitute the condition and limit of all social alterations, indicates something of the theological status it has assumed. And though this position

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often is quick to claim that although there is a normative conclusion for the oedipal drama, the norm cannot exist without perversion, and only through perversion can the norm be established. We are all supposed to be satisfied with this apparently generous gesture by which the perverse is announced to be essential to the norm. The problem as I see it is that the perverse remains entombed precisely there, as the essential and negative feature of the norm, and the relation between the two remains static, giving way to no rearticulation of the norm itself.

In this light, then, it is perhaps interesting to note that Antigone, who concludes the oedipal drama, fails to produce heterosexual closure for that drama, and that this may intimate the direction for a psychoanalytic theory that takes Antigone as its point of departure. Certainly, she does not achieve another sexuality, one that is *not* heterosexuality, but she does seem to deinstitutionalize heterosexuality by refusing to do what is necessary to stay alive for Haemon, by refusing to become a mother and a wife, by scandalizing the public with her wavering gender, by embracing death as her bridal chamber and identifying her tomb as a "deep dug home" (*kataskaphes oikesis*). If the love toward which she moves as she moves toward death is a love for her brother and thus, ambiguously, her father, it is also a love that can only be consummated by its obliteration, which is no consummation at all. As the bridal chamber is refused in life and pursued in death, it takes on a metaphorical status and, as metaphor, its conventional meaning is transmuted into a decidedly nonconventional one. If the tomb is the bridal chamber, and the tomb is chosen over marriage, then the tomb stands for the very destruction of marriage, and the term "bridal chamber" (*nymphceion*) represents precisely the negation of its own possibility. The word destroys its object. In referring to the institution it names, the word performs the destruction of the institution. Is this not the operation of ambivalence in language that calls into question Antigone's sovereign control of her actions?

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Although Hegel claims that Antigone acts with no unconscious, perhaps hers is an unconscious that leaves its trace in a different form, indeed that becomes readable precisely in her travails of referentiality. Her naming practice, for instance, ends up undoing its own ostensible aims. When she claims that she acts according to a law that gives her most precious brother precedence, and she appears to mean "Polyneices" by that description, she means more than she intends, for that brother could be Oedipus and it could be Eteocles, and there is nothing in the nomenclature of kinship that can successfully restrict its scope of referentiality to the single person, Polyneices. The chorus at one point seeks to remind her that she has more than one brother, but she continues to insist on the singularity and non-reproducibility of this term of kinship. In effect, she seeks to restrict the reproducibility of the word "brother" and to link it exclusively to the person of Polyneices, but she can do this only by displaying incoherence and inconsistency.¹⁸ The term continues to refer to those others she would exclude from its sphere of application, and she cannot reduce the nomenclature of kinship to nominalism. Her own language exceeds and defeats her stated desire, thereby manifesting something of what is beyond her intention, of what belongs to the particular fate that desire suffers in language. Thus she is unable to capture the radical singularity of her brother through a term that, by definition, must be transposable and reproducible in order to signify at all. Language thus disperses the desire she seeks to bind to him, cursing her, as it were, with a promiscuity she cannot contain.

In this way Antigone does not achieve the effect of sovereignty she apparently seeks, and her action is not fully conscious. She is propelled by the words that are upon her, words of her father's that condemn the children of Oedipus to a life that ought not to have been lived. Between life and death, she is already living in the tomb prior to any banishment there. Her punishment precedes her crime, and her crime becomes the occasion for its literalization.

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How do we understand this strange place of being between life and death, of speaking precisely from that vacillating boundary? If she is dead in some sense and yet speaks, she is precisely the one with no place who nevertheless seeks to claim one within speech, the unintelligible as it emerges within the intelligible, a position within kinship that is no position.

Although Antigone tries to capture kinship through a language that defies the transposability of the terms of kinship, her language loses its consistency—but the force of her claim is not therefore lost. The incest taboo did not work to foreclose the love that it should have between Oedipus and Jocasta, and it is arguably faltering again for Antigone. The condemnation follows Oedipus' act and his recognition, but for Antigone, the condemnation works as foreclosure, ruling out from the start any life and love she might have had.

When the incest taboo works *in this sense* to foreclose a love that is not incestuous, what is produced is a shadowy realm of love, a love that persists in spite of its foreclosure in an ontologically suspended mode. What emerges is a melancholia that attends living and loving outside the livable and outside the field of love, where the lack of institutional sanction forces language into perpetual catachresis, showing not only how a term can continue to signify outside its conventional constraints but also how that shadowy form of signification takes its toll on a life by depriving it of its sense of ontological certainty and durability within a publicly constituted political sphere.

To accept those norms as coextensive with cultural intelligibility is to accept a doctrine that becomes the very instrument by which this melancholia is produced and reproduced at a cultural level. And it is overcome, in part, precisely through the repeated scandal by which the unspeakable nevertheless makes itself heard through borrowing and exploiting the very terms that are meant to enforce its silence.

Do we say that families that do not approximate the norm but

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mirror the norm in some apparently derivative way are poor copies, or do we accept that the ideality of the norm is undone precisely through the complexity of its instantiation? For those relations that are denied legitimacy, or that demand new terms of legitimation, are neither dead nor alive, figuring the nonhuman at the border of the human. And it is not simply that these are relations that cannot be honored, cannot be openly acknowledged, and cannot therefore be publicly grieved, but that these relations involve persons who are also restricted in the very act of grieving, who are denied the power to confer legitimacy on loss. In this play, at least, Antigone's kin are condemned prior to her crime, and the condemnation she receives repeats and amplifies the condemnation that animates her actions. How does one grieve from within the presumption of criminality, from within the presumption that one's acts are invariably and fatally criminal?

Consider that Antigone is trying to grieve, to grieve openly, publicly, under conditions in which grief is explicitly prohibited by an edict, an edict that assumes the criminality of grieving Polyneices and names as criminal anyone who would call the authority of that edict into question. She is one for whom open grieving is itself a crime. But is she guilty only because of the words that are upon her, words that come from elsewhere, or has she also sought to destroy and repudiate the very bonds of kinship that she now claims entitlement to grieve? She is grieving her brother, but part of what remains unspoken in that grief is the grief she has for her father and, indeed, her other brother. Her mother remains almost fully unspeakable, and there is hardly a trace of grief for her sister, Ismene, whom she has explicitly repudiated. The "brother" is no singular place for her, though it may well be that all her brothers (Oedipus, Polyneices, Eteocles) are condensed at the exposed body of Polyneices, an exposure she seeks to cover, a nakedness she would rather not see or have seen. The edict demands that the dead body remain exposed and ungrieved, and though Antigone seeks to overcome the edict, it

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is not entirely clear all of what she grieves or whether the public act she performs can be the site of its resolution. She calls her loss her brother, Polyneices, insists on his singularity, but that very insistence is suspect. Thus her insistence on the singularity of her brother, his radical irreproducibility, is belied by the mourning she fails to perform for her two other brothers, the ones she fails to reproduce publicly for us. Here it appears that the prohibition against mourning is not simply imposed upon her but is enjoined independently without direct pressure by public law.

Her melancholia, if we can call it that, seems to consist in this refusal to grieve that is accomplished through the very public terms by which she insists on her right to grieve. Her claim to entitlement may well be the sign of a melancholia at work in her speech. Her loud proclamations of grief presuppose a domain of the ungrievable. The insistence on public grieving is what moves her away from feminine gender into hubris, into that distinctively manly excess that makes the guards, the chorus, and Creon wonder: Who is the man here? There seem to be some spectral men here, ones that Antigone herself inhabits, the brothers whose place she has taken and whose place she transforms in the taking. The melancholic, Freud tell us, registers his or her "plaint," levels a juridical claim, where the language becomes the event of the grievance, where, emerging from the unspeakable, language carries a violence that brings it to the limits of speakability.

We might ask what remains unspeakable here, not in order to produce speech that will fill the gap but to ask about the convergence of social prohibition and melancholia, how the condemnations under which one lives turn into repudiations that one performs, and how the grievances that emerge against the public law also constitute conflicted efforts to overcome the muted rage of one's own repudiations. In confronting the unspeakable in *Antigone*, are we confronting a socially instituted foreclosure of the intelligible, a socially instituted melancholia in which the

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unintelligible life emerges in language as a living body might be interred into a tomb?

Indeed, Giorgio Agamben has remarked that we live increasingly in a time in which populations without full citizenship exist within states; their ontological status as legal subjects is suspended. These are not lives that are being genocidally destroyed, but neither are they being entered into the life of the legitimate community in which standards of recognition permit for an attainment of humanness.¹⁹ How are we to understand this realm, what Hannah Arendt described as the “shadowy realm,” which haunts the public sphere, which is precluded from the public constitution of the human, but which is human in an apparently catachrestic sense of that term?²⁰ Indeed, how are we to grasp this dilemma of language that emerges when “human” takes on that doubled sense, the normative one based on radical exclusion and the one that emerges in the sphere of the excluded, not negated, not dead, perhaps slowly dying, yes, surely dying from a lack of recognition, dying, indeed, from the premature circumscription of the norms by which recognition as human can be conferred, a recognition without which the human cannot come into being but must remain on the far side of being, as what does not quite qualify as that which is and can be? Is this not a melancholy of the public sphere?

Arendt, of course, problematically distinguished the public and the private, arguing that in classical Greece the former alone was the sphere of the political, that the latter was mute, violent, and based on the despotic power of the patriarch. Of course, she did not explain how there might be a prepolitical despotism, or how the “political” must be expanded to describe the status of a population of the less than human, those who were not permitted into the interlocutory scene of the public sphere where the human is constituted through words and deeds and most forcefully constituted when its word becomes its deed. What she failed

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to read in *The Human Condition* was precisely the way in which the boundaries of the public and political sphere were secured through the production of a constitutive outside. And what she did not explain was the mediating link that kinship provided between the public and private spheres. The slaves, women, and children, all those who were not property-holding males were not permitted into the public sphere in which the human was constituted through its linguistic deeds. Kinship and slavery thus condition the public sphere of the human and remain outside its terms. But is that the end of the story?

Who then is Antigone within such a scene, and what are we to make of her words, words that become dramatic events, performative acts? She is not of the human but speaks in its language. Prohibited from action, she nevertheless acts, and her act is hardly a simple assimilation to an existing norm. And in acting, as one who has no right to act, she upsets the vocabulary of kinship that is a precondition of the human, implicitly raising the question for us of what those preconditions really must be. She speaks within the language of entitlement from which she is excluded, participating in the language of the claim with which no final identification is possible. If she is human, then the human has entered into catachresis: we no longer know its proper usage. And to the extent that she occupies the language that can never belong to her, she functions as a chiasm within the vocabulary of political norms. If kinship is the precondition of the human, then Antigone is the occasion for a new field of the human, achieved through political catachresis, the one that happens when the less than human speaks as human, when gender is displaced, and kinship founders on its own founding laws. She acts, she speaks, she becomes one for whom the speech act is a fatal crime, but this fatality exceeds her life and enters the discourse of intelligibility as its own promising fatality, the social form of its aberrant, unprecedented future.

2. UNWRITTEN LAWS, ABERRANT TRANSMISSIONS

18. And it is language that confers being on him: "Antigone appears . . . as a pure and simple relationship of the human being to that of which he miraculously happens to be the bearer, namely, *the signifying cut* that confers on him the indomitable power of being what he is in the face of everything that may oppose him" (*Seminar VII*, p. 282, my emphasis).

19. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 38–46.

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1. Steiner, *Antigones*, p. 18.

2. David Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), p. 131.

3. "Das Wort mittelbarer faktisch wird, indem es den sinnlicheren Körper ergreift. Das griechischtragische Wort ist tödlichfaktisch, weil der Leib, den es ergreift, wirklich tötet," in "Anmerkungen zur Antigone" in *Friedrich Hölderlin, Werke in einem Band* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1990), p. 64. All English citations are from "Remarks on Antigone," *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters*, ed. and trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977). See also Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Métaphrasis suivi de la théâtre de Hölderlin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), pp. 63–73.

4. Heidegger offers a sustained meditation on Hölderlin's translation of *Antigone* (1803), as well as his "Remarks on Antigone" with respect to the various ways that Hölderlin brings forward Antigone's "uncanniness." The proximity to death underscored in the "Remarks on Antigone" corresponds in large measure to Heidegger's reading of Antigone as one whose exile from the hearth establishes her essential relation to a sense of being that is beyond human life. This participation in what is non-living turns out to be something like the condition of living itself. As in the reading supplied by Jacques Lacan, Heidegger also claims that "[Antigone] names being itself" (118), and that this proximity to being

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involves a necessary estrangement from living beings even as it is the ground of their very emergence.

Similarly, Heidegger understands the "unwritten law" to which Antigone refers as a relationship to being and to death:

Antigone assumes as what is fitting that which is destined to her from the realm of whatever prevails beyond the higher gods (Zeus) and beyond the lower gods. . . . Yet this refers neither to the dead, nor to her blood-relationship with her brother. What determines Antigone is that which first bestows ground and necessity upon the distinction of the dead and the priority of blood. What that is, Antigone, and that also means the poet, leaves without a name. Death and human being, human being and embodied life (blood) in each case belong together. "Death" and "blood" in each case name different and extreme realms of human being.

From Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 117.

5. There have been several important works within anthropology in the last few decades showing the limitations of structuralist paradigms for thinking the problem of kinship, including Marilyn Strathern, *Reproducing the Future: Essays on Anthropology, Kinship, and the New Reproductive Technologies* (New York: Routledge, 1992). In *Gender and Kinship: Essays Toward a Unified Analysis*, ed. Jane Fishburne Collier and Sylvia Junko Yanagisako (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), the editors argue against a view of kinship that focuses exclusively on symbolic relations at the expense of social action. Perspectives in that volume that seek to elaborate the complex social conditions of kinship relations against both functionalist and purely structuralist accounts are to be found in the important contributions by John Comaroff, Rayna Rapp, Marilyn Strathern, and Maurice Bloch. See also Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, "The Analysis of Kinship Change," in *Transforming the Past: Tradition and Kinship Among Japanese Americans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

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1985), where she faults both structuralist and functionalist accounts for failing to give a dynamic understanding of kin relations. David Schneider, in *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*, elaborates how the theoretical models of kinship elaborated by Fortes, Leach, and Lévi-Strauss impose theoretical constraints on ethnographic perception, failing to account for societies that failed to approximate the theoretical norm and that, regardless of their claim not to take biological relations of reproduction as the point of departure of kinship study, still make that assumption operate as a fundamental premise of their work (see pp. 3–9, 133–177). In particular, the work of Pierre Clastres in France made dramatically and vociferously, clearly drawing in part on the prior work of Marshall Sahlins, argues that the sphere of the social could not be reduced to the workings of kinship, and cautions against any effort to treat kinship rules as supplying the principles of intelligibility for any social order. He writes, for instance, that it is not possible to reduce relations of power to those of exchange: “Power relates . . . to the . . . essential structural levels of society: that is, it is at the very heart of the communicative universe” (37). In *Society Against the State*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1987), pp. 27–49, Clastres argues for relocating the “exchange of women” within relations of power. And in “Marxists And Their Anthropology,” he offers a searing criticism of Maurice Godelier on the matter of kinship and the state. There he argues that the principle function of kinship is not to institute the incest taboo nor to exemplify relations of production, but to transmit and reproduce the “name” of the relative, and that “the function of nomination, inscribed in kinship, determines the entire sociopolitical being of primitive society. It is there that the tie between kinship and society is located.” See Pierre Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1994), p. 134.

For a notion of kinship as embodied practice, see also Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 34–35.

6. Here I am not suggesting that the perverse simply inhabits the norm as something that remains autonomous, but neither am I suggest-

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ing that it is dialectically assimilated into the norm itself. It might be understood to signal the impossibility of maintaining a sovereign lock on any claim to legitimacy, since the reiteration of the claim outside of its legitimated site of enunciation shows that the legitimate site is not the source of its effectivity. Here I am indebted to what I take to be Homi Bhabha's significant reformulation dispersed throughout his work of both speech act theory and the Foucaultian notion of discourse developed in the latter's *Archaeology of Knowledge*.

7. Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

8. See my contribution, "Competing Universalities," to Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Universality, Hegemony, Contingency* (London: Verso, 2000).

9. It has been one strategy here to argue that the incest taboo does not always produce normative family, but it is perhaps more important to realize that the normative family that it does produce is not always what it seems. There is, for instance, clearly merit in the analysis offered by Linda Alcoff and others that heterosexual incest within heterosexually normative families is an extension rather than abrogation of patriarchal prerogative within heterosexual normativity. Prohibition is not fully or exclusively privative, that is, just as prohibition requires *and produces* the specter of crime it bars. And for Alcoff, in an interesting Foucaultian move, the prohibition offers the cover that protects and abets the practice of incest. But is there any reason to check the productivity of the incest taboo here, at this dialectical inversion of its aim? See Linda Alcoff, "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" *SIGNS* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 260–291. See also for a very interesting and brave Foucaultian discussion of the criminalization of incest, Vikki Bell, *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault, and the Law* (London: Routledge, 1993).

10. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

11. See *Gender and Kinship*, ed. Collier and Yanagisako. For an excellent critique of gender-based approaches to kinship, which shows how

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the uncritical presumption of marriage underwrites the anthropological approach to kinship, see John Borneman, "Until Death Do Us Part: Marriage/Death in Anthropological Discourse," *American Ethnologist* 23, no. 2 (1996): 215-238.

12. David Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*; *American Kinship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

13. Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

14. See, in particular, the very interesting use of Hegel in his discussion of the dehumanization in slavery in Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, pp. 97-101. For Patterson's illuminating discussion of Antigone, see *Freedom, Volume 1: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), pp. 106-132.

15. Angela Davis, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," reprinted in *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 172-201.

16. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race et Histoire* (Paris: Denoël, 1987); *Structural Anthropology, Volume 2*, trans. Monique Layton (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 323-362.

17. Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

18. Like Lacan, Derrida appears to accept the singularity of Antigone's relationship to her brother, one that Hegel describes, as we have already seen, as a relationship without desire. Although Derrida does not read the play, *Antigone*, in *Glas*, he does read the figure of Antigone in Hegel, working within the terms of that reading to show how Antigone comes to mark the radical outside to Hegel's own systematic thinking and Hegel's own "fascination by a figure inadmissible within the system" (151). Although I agree that neither the figure nor the play of Antigone cannot be readily assimilated into either the framework of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* or the *The Philosophy of Right*, and is curiously applauded in the *Aesthetics* as "the most magnificent and appeasing work of art," it would be a mistake to take her persistent unreadability within the Hegelian perspective as a sign of her final or necessary unreadability.

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19. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

20. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), part I.