

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Department of English Language and Literature
M. A. Programme
“The Greek Element in Anglophone Literature”

Title of MA Dissertation: Jacques Derrida and Anne Carson’s Poetics of
Hospitality: Epitaphs, Photographs and Antigones’ Unbearable Mourning

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Date of Submission: 08/02/2019

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ABSTRACT

This thesis draws on Sophocles's *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* to examine Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality and the politics of mourning and analyze Anne Carson's translation and rewriting of this politics in *Antigo Nick*, a rewriting of *Antigone* in a post 9/11 era and *Nox*, a lyrical, autobiographical book/epitaph on mourning. Derrida's hospitality is both conditional and unconditional, arguing for a politics of an unconditional welcoming of the other that is, however, intertwined with the laws of the polis that receives the foreigners, the *xenoi*. Derrida affiliates the double bind of hospitality with the practices and rituals of mourning, prevalent in every culture and present in all human communities. The performance of the mourning ritual is not only a social but also a political practice that can challenge sovereignty, a key theme in the two Sophoclean tragedies, centering on burial rites. An overarching and recurrent symbol in the dissertation is the *stele*, the monument bearing the name and the traces of the dead. Carson's post-classicist and postmodern texts operate like epitaphs, speaking to the irreplaceability of the dead and welcoming, that is, offering hospitality to the mourning process of the living, while representing a community to-come. Antigone constitutes the symbol of the unfortunate mourner, fighting for her right to the funeral rites for the unmourned kin and arguing for an unconditional hospitality for the dead others. Performing the burial rites, respecting the individuality of the dead, constructing a *stele* and remembering the lives lost are highly political acts; they can endanger the inhospitable state or open it up to welcome the often forgotten and ungrievable parts of the population and the strangers, the *xenoi*.

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1. BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION: JACQUES DERRIDA'S THEORY OF HOSPITALITY AND MOURNING

1.1 A Prolegomenon to Hospitality

Que veut dire l'hospitalité? What does hospitality mean? What does hospitality want to say? This is an overarching question in Derrida's extensive oeuvre, one that is not easy to answer. Derrida proceeds to a return and a deconstruction of the discrepant discourses of hospitality from the Arabic, Judeo-Christian and ancient Greek traditions, in order to examine the politics of hospitality in Europe in the present. In the four seminars collected by Gil Anidgar under the title *Hostipitality*, Derrida speaks about the concept of the stranger and the necessity of a last abode in death; about mourning, love and forgiveness, constituting his idea of unconditional hospitality, which welcomes the other, even the dead other:

If, in hospitality, one must say *yes*, welcome the coming [*accueillir la venue*], say the "welcome"; one must say *yes*, there where one does not wait, *yes*, there where one does not expect, nor await oneself to, the other [*là où l'on ne s'attend pas soi-même à l'autre*], to let oneself be swept by the coming of the wholly other, the absolutely unforeseeable [*inanticipable*] stranger, the uninvited visitor, the unexpected visitation beyond welcoming apparatuses (AoR 361-2).

Derrida calls for an unconditional opening up to the foreigners who are to arrive. However, hostility and hospitality¹ are not randomly intertwined in the title of these four seminars; the others who arrive unexpectedly could present a threat for the host that attempts to welcome them; the others could even be specters haunting the host. In Derrida's concept of unconditional hospitality and opening up to the others before asking any questions, before asking any names, lurks the danger the others carry that could convert the hosts into hostages of their own guests.

Derrida's unconditional hospitality deconstructs and at the same time incorporates Immanuel Kant's conditional, juridico-political, cosmopolitical hospitality, regulated by pacts and agreements. According to Kant, hospitality is a relationship of power difference, where the host is in a superior position compared to the guest. The stranger is obliged to behave "peacefully where he happens to be, [so

that] his host may not treat him with hostility” (Kant 82). This is a hospitality of tolerance, where the others must obey and conform to the laws of the hosts; otherwise they will be exiled. Derrida’s unconditional hospitality critically engages Kant’s regulated and conditional hospitality. *The* law of unconditional hospitality and the opening of one’s home and one’s self to the other, the *hôte* as guest, is in an antinomic relationship with the laws (in the plural) of hospitality that are multiple, civic and juridico-political. Between *the* law and the laws, there is a non-dialectizable antinomy, an odd hierarchy. The unconditional welcoming of the other needs and is needed by the laws of hospitality. They require each other, while, at the same time, they are mutually exclusive.

The law is above the laws. It is thus illegal, transgressive, outside the law, like a lawless law, *nomos anomos*, law above the laws and law outside the law [...] But even while keeping itself above the laws of hospitality, *the* unconditional law of hospitality needs the laws, it *requires* them [...] In order to be what it is, *the* law thus needs the laws, which, however, deny it, or at any rate threaten it, sometimes corrupt or pervert it. And must always be able to do this (OH 79).

Derrida, in his two seminars in *Of Hospitality*, examines the interplay between conditional and unconditional hospitality and their antinomic relationship. He links hospitality with the ultimate and impossible welcoming of the other, while at the same time discussing the political and juridical restrictions conditioning hospitality of a specific locality and temporality. A state could not possibly survive by opening up its borders and allowing for a completely free flow of *arrivants*; it must be conditioned by laws, limiting and interrogating the arrivals:

[N]ever will a Nation-State as such, regardless of its form and government, and even if it is democratic, its majority on the right or the left, open itself up to an unconditional hospitality or to a right of asylum without restriction. It would never be “realistic” to expect or demand this of a Nation-State as such. The Nation-State will always want to “control the flow of immigration” (*Adieu* 90).

This extract is from *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*. In this seemingly personal book, mourning the loss of a dear friend and a very influential thinker for Derrida, there is a revisiting of Levinas’ theory on the *accueil* of the other—a French word that has no direct equivalent in English², but could be approximately rendered by the word

welcome—and a reading of Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas is not writing a book on hospitality; the word hospitality is rarely used in it. Levinas thinks of an *accueil*, a welcoming of the face of the other as a precondition for any ethical order and the foundation of philosophy. Hospitality for Levinas does not focus on laws and conditions; it is a rather open “*accueil de l’autre ou du visage comme prochain et comme étranger, comme prochain en tant qu’étranger, homme et frère*”³ (124) through a language of hospitality, language as hospitality, a language whose essence is friendship and hospitality. This ethical welcoming can, however, be very complex. The hosts have the capacity to welcome the guests, but they need to be taught by the arriving ones. The former are responsible for their guests but also threatened by the unknown arrivals. Finally, the hosts need the guests in order for them to be designated as hosts, just like the subjects in need of the other to recognize and define themselves:

It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have an idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught. The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is a non-allergic relation, an ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching [enseignement]. Teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain (Levinas 51).

Derrida agrees with Levinas that the subject is a host, one with a home that opens up and welcomes the guest. At the same time, the subject is a hostage of the guest, in need and in danger of the uninvited guest that sweeps away certainty. The host is a hostage, a “vulnerable subject subjected to substitution, to trauma, persecution and obsession,” as Derrida argues (*AoR* 364). However, the host also needs the guest. The extremity of this argument is that the host needs the guest to replace, to substitute him/her. The host appears to be urging the other to:

enter without waiting, make a pause in our home without waiting, hurry up and come in, “come inside,” “come within me,” not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place, don’t content yourself with coming to meet me or “into my home” (*OH* 123).

The sovereign subject/host is in a weakened position; he/she is always already in need of and responsible for the other, the stranger, that could come from the outside as the liberator, the savior, the Messiah, the one that holds the keys to the host’s own home.

Derrida's concept of unconditional hospitality suggests the crossing of the threshold—not only of the home, in order to welcome the other—but also the impossible threshold between life and death, opening up to all guests, unconditionally. Hospitality of death; hospitality of the dead other, of the ghost as guest, in all its *Unheimlich* and spectral quality; this is what Derrida adds to Levinas.⁴ “Hospitality therefore presupposes waiting, the horizon of awaiting and the preparation of welcoming [*accueil*]: *from life to death*” (AoR 361, emphasis in the original). Derrida is concerned not only with the hospitality the host can offer to the living others that arrive at his/her threshold, but also with the impossible hospitality towards the specters of the dead, towards the unnamed and unnamable others, the absolute others:

The difference, one of the subtle and sometimes ungraspable differences between the foreigner and the absolute other is that the latter cannot have a name or a family name; the absolute or unconditional hospitality I would like to offer him or her presupposes a break with hospitality in the ordinary sense, with conditional hospitality, with the right to or pact of hospitality. To put it in different terms, absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names (OH 25 emphasis in the original).

What happens when these absolute others cannot be categorized, named and identified; when they have been completely dispossessed from family, home and nation? What happens to hospitality when the *arrivants* seek, like Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, a place to be buried, their abode in death? What happens to mourning, when the dead are not the dearly beloved ones, but the unnamed and unnamable others?

My aim is to read Derrida's politics of hospitality and its relationship to mourning, along with two texts by Anne Carson, namely *Antigo Nick* and *Nox*, in order to unravel their shared poetics of hospitality and discuss the significance of the politics of hospitality at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. Both Derrida and Carson return to ancient Greek thought and focus on the figures of Oedipus and Antigone, to examine the politics of hospitality and the mourning in the face of the other, the enemy, the stranger, the often forgotten by the family and the state and left

unmourned. These two recurring tragic figures have always embodied the questions about the foreigner and signify the danger or the gift the stranger carries. My interest is in the ways mourning is inscribed on the *stelae*, the tombs of the dead and how the absence of a determinable *stèle* can abort or distort the mourning of the living. The question is why these contemporary authors return to the ancient Greek past,⁵ to talk about hospitality and mourning. Sophocles's two tragedies, *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone* will function as the signposts, linking the past to the present to examine the potentiality of the politics of hospitality for an alternative future. The works of Derrida will be used as a theoretical and philosophical point of reference, throughout my analysis of Anne Carson's unconventional poetics and her thinking on hospitality, mourning and memory.

1.2 Jacques Derrida's Politics of Mourning and Hospitality

Derrida revisits the concept of mourning a number of times in his oeuvre. In his essays in *Hostipitality*, he connects mourning and the last abode of the dead with his idea of unconditional hospitality, which is related to a politics of mourning. In *Aporias*, he writes: "There is no culture without a cult of ancestors, a ritualization of mourning and sacrifice, institutional places and modes of burial, even if they are only for the ashes of incineration" (43). Thus, culture is linked to the dead, to their treatment and remembrance. For Derrida, culture is also closely intertwined with hospitality: "Not only is there a culture of hospitality, but there is no culture that is not also a culture of hospitality" (AoR 361). Thus, "hospitality and the culture of the dead, of the abode as last resting place [*de la demeure comme dernière demeure*], beginning with mourning and memory itself, are the same thing" (361). Hospitality and mourning converge in that they are essential markers of human cultures, interconnecting human beings to one another and to their predecessors. However, the living can no longer have a reciprocal communication with the dead; the memories of the deceased remain only inside the former, occupying and haunting them. A hospitality towards the dead demands an interiorization of the dead that exist only inside the living ones, since they are no longer alive. In yet another book preoccupied with mourning and memory, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida writes of the process of interiorization of the dead by the living and its paradoxicality:

Upon the death of the other we are given to memory, and thus to interiorization, since the other, outside us, is now nothing. And with the dark light of this nothing, we learn that the other resists the closure of our interiorizing memory [...] [D]eath constitutes and makes manifest the limits of a me or an us who are obliged to harbor something that is greater and other than them; something outside of them within them (*Memoires*, 34).

How can one, then, mourn for the dead? Or, even more importantly, how should one do so? Derrida, in *Memoires for Paul de Man*, argues that there are two ways of mourning: on the one hand, the possible mourning means “interioriz[ing] within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives only in us” (6). The possible mourning renders the mourner a tomb, a vault, where the memory of the dead is buried; this is a form of hospitality to the dead by the living. However, this mourning is an act of infidelity and narcissism for it is not the actual other that finds hospitality in the living person but one’s own memories and sentiments towards the deceased. On the other hand, there is the impossible mourning, “which, leaving the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in a tomb or the vault of some narcissism” (6). The dead require a grave and a tomb to rest in peace. A vault is also created in the living, full of idealized images and memories of the deceased, kept “like an unborn child, like a future” (35). Derrida suggests that there is a need for both a physical and a metaphorical burial, which have to be distinct; two acts of hospitality to the dead, kept apart:

If mourning is hospitality, a burial in oneself and out of oneself, it is necessary [*il faut*] for both burials, and therefore for both hospitalities, to remain quite distinct, separated, split, that the decomposition of the body (external hospitality of physical burial) occur elsewhere in order to let the idealizing memory appropriate the hôte and dead in oneself, in an operation that is entirely one of substitution (*AoR* 415).

Hence, mourning is a quite complex concept for Derrida; it is divided in terms of its possibility or impossibility, exteriority or interiority; it demands that one should remember and forget the dead at the same time; it requires a grave and a *sema*, a *stèle*, an actual, physical location towards which to direct the mourning as well as a place inside the mourner for the memory and the metaphorical burial of the deceased to take place.

Throughout his oeuvre, Derrida employs figures from the Greek past to better illuminate his concepts; he feels the need to turn back to classical Greece to unravel the meaning of concepts such as *xenos*, the stranger, hospitality and democracy, disaffected from the techno-scientific progress of the modern era and its consequences for subjectivity. A rigorous attention to the past, chronologically and culturally removed as it is, can effect a clearer conceptualization of the present time. He writes:

Today, and on that basis, let us broach more directly the meaning of *étranger*, this time from the “Greek world” (to presuppose provisionally its unity or self-identity), but always by doing our best, since it isn’t an easy thing, to multiply the two-way journeys, a to-and-fro between the matters of urgency that assail us at this end-of-millennium,⁶ and the tradition from which we receive the concepts, the vocabulary, the axioms that are elementary and presumed natural or untouchable. It is often technopolitical-scientific mutation that obliges us to deconstruct; really, such mutation itself deconstructs what are claimed as these naturally obvious things or these untouchable axioms (*OH* 45).

His aim is to deconstruct what is so far deemed as inviolable or untouchable and draw conclusions on how these concepts have changed, in order to be able to make sense of what they signify in the present. What does hospitality and mourning mean in the 21st century? The movement is “two-way”; it is “to-and-fro;” there is the need to return to the past but with a view to the present and the future. This paper follows this back-and-forth movement from to the temporality of ancient Greek tragedy, especially around 405 BCE and the locality of a suburb of Athens, called Colonus, up until the present day Athens.

1.3 *Oedipus at Colonus*, the Absent Sema and the Mourning of the Sisters and Daughters

Colonus is the setting of Sophocles's tragedy *Oedipus at Colonus*, where the final part of Oedipus' life and his mysterious death in the sacred grove of the Eumenides take place. Oedipus, after years of wandering with his daughter/sister Antigone, blind and miserable, arrives at an unknown land that is later on identified as Colonus, “the bulwark of Athens” (Sophocles, *Oedipus* 421).⁷ This location is not randomly chosen by Sophocles, since it was his *demos* of origin, a place venerating Oedipus as a hero

and a location of political turmoil in Athens in the era the tragedy was written,⁸ that is most probably in the years preceding Sophocles's death in 406/5 BCE. The play was staged posthumously by the tragedian's grandson, also called Sophocles, in the City Dionysia, in the theatre of Dionysus in Athens, and won first prize, in 402/1 BCE (Hesk 174). In *Oedipus at Colonus*, the old, blind Oedipus is received—after some initial suspicion—by the inhabitants of Colonus, the Chorus, as a suppliant asking for lenience and hospitality. The major factor of Oedipus' acceptance is the magnanimity of the king of Athens, Theseus, a man who “ἐπαιδευέθη ξένος” (Sophocles 562); he was raised and received his education in exile, as a stranger. Theseus, who has experienced exile, identifies with Oedipus; the king of Athens would never throw away a stranger in need of his mercy, since he has also gone through a number of dangers in exile (565-8).

Oedipus, however, is not a conventional *xenos* asking for shelter; his aim is to find hospitality in death; a final resting place for his tortured body. When his death takes place, everyone is perplexed because of its mysterious, almost supernatural hues. Oedipus, after having guided everyone to the specific location where his death will take place,⁹ demands that his daughters wash him, perform the libation rites and dress him with a shroud (ἐσθῆτι) while he is still alive. Markantonatos notices the oxymoron of these proceedings:

...the funeral preparations consisting of ritual washing with fresh water and clothing in white raiment are exclusively preserved for a corpse, not a living person [...] Oedipus is allowed to enjoy some of the mortuary offices that are normally carried out after death. The uncommonness of this remarkable compression of the three-act sequence of the Greek funeral, comprising the usual two-day laying out of the body (*prothesis*), the funeral cortege (*ekphora*), and the deposition of the corpse, into a speedily performed arrangement inside the sacred precinct only adds further force to the ritual intensity of the perplexing events (132).

Oedipus's death that follows the performance of the burial rites on Oedipus's living body is even more startling. The audience is informed of his death by the testimony of an eyewitness, the Messenger, who is at a loss concerning the events that have just occurred. He recalls how the witnesses of Oedipus's death hear a voice that is interpreted as divine, calling Oedipus “often and from many places,” (Sophocles 581) reproaching him for being late. Then, “after a short time we turned around, and could see that the man was no longer there” (583).¹⁰ Oedipus seems to have vanished rather

than died, without a locatable *sema* that could mark his death and act as a *temenos* “literally a ‘cutting’ as a sacred precinct or sanctuary” (Rhem 413) where his hero cult could take place and his daughters/sisters could perform their mourning. His death is described as a non-presence; he was just not there anymore. The messenger is very analytical in terms of how Oedipus did not die; he was not struck by lightning, nor swept by a whirlwind from the sea, nor tortured by a painful disease. He was taken away miraculously, *θαυμαστός*. Oedipus was either supernaturally transported to the heavens or the earth opened up and swallowed him, like a lacuna, an abysmal void into which he fell and disappeared.¹¹

In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida provides an extensive analysis of the concept of the *xenos*, the stranger and of mourning, by closely referring to the mourning of the two sisters/daughters, Antigone and Ismene in *Oedipus at Colonus*. The question posed in the tragedy and rewritten by Derrida is how the daughters/sisters can come to terms with the loss of a father/brother that has just disappeared without a *sema* to mark the location of his remains and how they can mourn such a death. Ismene says: “He descended with no burial, apart from all!” (Sophocles 593).¹² Oedipus did not actually remain unburied (*ataphos*), but without a *stele* to mark his last abode; his remains remain in a secret location, known only by Theseus, the sovereign of Athens. He was:

[n]ot at all, perhaps, without a grave, but without a tomb, without a determinable place, without monument, without a localizable and circumscribed place of mourning, without a stopping point [*arrêt*]. Without a fixed [*arreté*] place, without a determinable *topos*, mourning is not allowed. Or, what comes down to the same thing, it is promised without taking place, a determinable place, so thenceforth promised as an interminable mourning, an infinite mourning defying all work, beyond any possible work of mourning (*OH* 111).

Oedipus wished it to be so. He wanted only Theseus to know the location of his grave that he would then reveal only to his descendant prior to his death. This secret is a gift for the sovereign of Athens, protecting the polis from the attacks of Thebes. The outsider, the pariah, can become the savior and bestow, through his death, a gift for the community that receives and welcomes him. However, the secret that is a gift for Theseus is poisonous and causes suffering for the daughters of Oedipus.

Despite Antigone and Ismene’s wish to see the tomb, the home inside the earth of the father,¹³ to visit the place where he remains dead, where his remains remain after

his death, this is impossible. As Charles Segal argues, “Deprived of her father’s last moments of life... Antigone is left with only the emptiness, the non-presence, of the dead, perhaps the most painful residuum of losing a loved one. She does not even have the body to mourn over” (402). Oedipus deprives the two sisters of knowing his tomb where they can perform their mourning, a monument they can visit and revisit; a place that will physically retain the father. Derrida argues that Oedipus leads his daughters into a mourning of their mourning, a lamentation due to the fact that they cannot mourn their father properly. Oedipus refuses to reveal the whereabouts of his burial place “the place of his death, *where he is dead*, where he is, dead, once dead, dead once dead, dead only once once dead once and for all” (OH 99). He chooses to die in a foreign land, far away from his home in Thebes and with no locatable *sema* to identify his death. As Derrida argues, “It is as if he [Oedipus] wanted to depart without leaving so much as an address for the mourning of the women who love him [...] He is going to deprive them of their mourning, thereby obliging them to go through their mourning of mourning” (OH 93). Oedipus thus confounds the temporality of mourning by asking that his burial rites be performed before his death so that he can then disappear into a timeless, spaceless abyss. Oedipus wants to be unlocatable and erased from the memory of his daughters; that is why he does not want to leave behind a site for commemoration and remembering of the father/ brother and his tragic, unfortunate life. However, his disappearance can have the opposite result by aggravating the process of mourning and augmenting the recursion of painful memories for the two mourners.

1.4 Concluding Remarks: Antigone’s Mourning

Derrida’s philosophical analysis of unconditional hospitality and the intricacies of the work of mourning can shed light on the way we read ancient tragedies, such as *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the burial politics they entail. The theoretical part will be further enlightened through a study of *Antigone* and Carson’s innovative texts. My next concern will specifically be Antigone’s mourning of the dead father and the brothers—despite the fact that mourning for Eteocles is slightly underplayed. In *Antigone*, Thebes is faced with the issue of Polynices’s unburied body being torn apart by birds and beasts and turning into a specter that haunts the living. The ones who survive are the hostages of the dead; the revenants arrive without an invitation, without any expectation, they cross the threshold and destabilize the certainties of the survivors. According to the

unconditional law of hospitality, one should, surprisingly, welcome even the ghost, the specter of the other that can potentially fracture and traumatize. The failure, in both cases of the Labdacid family, to draw a clear division between the actual burial and the interiorization of the dead leads Antigone to a failure, an aberration and a problematic mourning towards the father that disappeared without a trace and the brother whose graphic, flesh traces are omnipresent in the city. Antigone cannot possibly bear such a series of mournings; they are unbearable. Her mourning becomes a metaphorical fabric that suffocates her and the weight of the dead on her back eventually crushes her.

Notes

¹ For the interplay of the etymology of hospitality and hostility see Benveniste 87-101 and *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* 57.

² See also *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* 36.

³ “...the welcome of the other or of the face as neighbor and as stranger, as neighbor *insofar as* he is a stranger, man and brother” (*Adieu* 68).

⁴ See *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, page 111.

⁵ This thesis traces Derrida’s return to the Greek past and ends with a brief analysis of some of his views about Islam. Derrida has also written extensively on the Abrahamic tradition and at the end of *Of Hospitality*, he connects this tradition with the ancient Greek figures he analyses before. See *OH*, pp. 151-155.

⁶ The seminars in *Of Hospitality* were first published in French in 1997.

⁷ I am using Loeb Library’s bilingual edition for both *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*, edited and translated by Hugh Lloyd Jones and containing the texts in ancient Greek and English.

⁸ See Hesk 174-179, in *Brill’s Companion to Sophocles* for the political background of the tragedy and the attempts for an accurate chronology.

⁹ For the symbolism of the specific locality of Oedipus’ death, see Segal, 369 and 482.

¹⁰ “χρόνω βραχεῖ στραφέντες, /ἐξαπείδομεν τόν ἄνδρα τόν μὲν οὐδαμοῦ παρόντ’ ἔτι” (Sophocles 582).

¹¹ In *Oedipus at Colonus*, we read: “For no fiery thunderbolt of the god made away with him, nor any whirlwind rising up from the sea at that time; but either some escort came from the gods or the unlighted foundations of the earth that belongs to those below, opening in kindness. For the man was taken away with no lamentations, and by no painful disease, but, if any among mortals, by a miracle” (Sophocles 583, 585).

¹² “ἄταφος ἔπιτνε δίχα τε παντός” (Sophocles 592).

¹³ See Sophocles: “τάν χθόνιον ἐστὶαν ἰδεῖν” (590) “τύμβον θέλομεν/ προσιδεῖν αὐταί πατρός ἡμετέρου” (596).

2. ANNE CARSON'S LITERARY POETICS OF HOSPITALITY AND MOURNING

oh sister and daughter of Oidipous,
who can be innocent in dealing with you
there was never a blank slate
we were always already anxious about you.
Anne Carson

2.1 Introduction: Anne Carson's Postmodern Parody

Anne Carson is a prolific poet and critic, who employs postmodern, post-classicist techniques, using themes and texts from the Greco-Roman tradition and translating them in the present. Her writing crosses genres and refuses to be classified under a single category. She intermingles her deep knowledge of the classics with everyday, mundane language, creating astonishing, unexpected translations and new, refreshed texts. She is particularly devoted to offering her reading of classical texts and figures and linking them to our contemporary reality, in a novel, revitalizing way. Joshua Marie Wilkinson explains how: "Carson adumbrates hundreds of new entry points to the past by getting disarmingly close to the language at hand: etymologies, contexts, myriad meanings, and implications radiating out" (2). This chapter focuses on Carson's "translation" of Sophocles's *Antigone* in *Antigo Nick* published in 2012. The text is a collaboration of Carson with Robert Currie, a visual artist, and Bianca Stone, whose brilliant sketches are included in the illustrated version of the book. The characterization of such a work as a translation, nevertheless, unsettles the limits of what can be considered as a translation of Sophocles's text. Carson's *Antigo Nick* is an elliptical rendition of the classical text, in which large parts of the original have been omitted and other parts have been rewritten in a language that is often rich in contemporary theoretical and political terms. What has happened, thus, to *Antigone* and *Antigone* in Carson's hands? My aim is to meticulously examine the way in which this peculiar translation incorporates and illuminates Derrida's theory of unconditional hospitality, by emphasizing the politics of burial and mourning in the polis, already present and persistent in the text throughout time. I intend to show that despite the historical, political and cultural differences that separate the two texts, they can both

speak to this hospitality towards the dead other and to the practice of burial rites in the public sphere.

Carson's poetics can be seen in the light of what Linda Hutcheon terms "postmodern parody," which is a rethinking of the past, not in a nostalgic and idealizing, but in a critical way: "For artists, the postmodern is said to involve a rummaging through the image reserves of the past in such a way as to show the history of the representations their parody calls to our attention" (89). The author of *Antigo Nick* parodies the contemporary politics of sovereignty that frames the *xenos*, the foreigner and the other for sovereignty; she alludes to the modern context of Islamophobia and terrorism, which lead states to foreclose the rights of citizens, allegedly for the sake of their own protection. Carson writes about the present through the lens of the classical past to demonstrate how the present is haunted by the question of the political conjured by the injustices suffered by the ones who are dispossessed, who do not belong, who are limited or zero citizens. Postmodern parody, as defined by Hutcheon "uses irony to acknowledge the fact that we are inevitably separated from that past today—by time and by the subsequent history of those representations. There is continuum, but there is also ironic difference, difference induced by that very history" (90). In her introduction to *Antigo Nick*, entitled "the task of the translator of Antigone," Carson names some of the theatrical, theoretical and philosophical rewritings of the figure of Antigone, to highlight how her Antigone gestures to the various rewritings and representations created by Hegel, Lacan, Butler, George Eliot, Žižek, Anouilh and Brecht.

The introduction provides a great deal of information about Carson's writing technique and strategies, described through her own poetic idiom. She writes: "my problem is to get you [Antigone] and your problem across into English from ancient Greek" (*Ant.* 4). This is a greatly heavy task. There is always something left behind, something that cannot cross the temporal and spatial distance between the original text and the translation.¹ Carson's duty when translating Sophocles's text consists in not letting Antigone be silenced, however unconventional her mourning might appear: "I take it as the task of the translator to forbid that you should ever lose your screams" (6). Antigone can—and has, throughout her history—lay claim to the right of burial rites and her resistance in the name of the other, including the foreigner, the *xenos*, the enemy is a timely political gesture. Her deprivation of a proper mourning and her insistence on taking care of the dead family members still needs to be voiced today. A decent

burial, respectful the funeral rites, is not always a choice for those deemed unworthy of being grieved, even in the 21st century. *Antigo Nick* will be connected to the *stelae*, inscribed and commemorating the dead, so that a specific trace of their life remains after death. For my analysis, I will draw not only on Carson's *Antigo Nick*, but also *Nox*, a very personal book/ epitaph for her dead brother—a book haunted by the figure of Antigone—as well as her critical work on Simonides of Keos and ancient inscriptions.

2.2 Polynices's Unburied Body and Antigone's Door

Antigone, the second tragedy I will closely read, was staged in 441 BCE. Although the action takes place after Oedipus' death, the return of Antigone and Ismene to Thebes and the death of their two brothers—Eteocles and Polynices in their fight over the rule of Thebes—it precedes the production of *Oedipus at Colonus* by almost forty years.² *Antigone* presents Antigone's unfortunate effort to bury the dead Polynices, left to rot without a grave and a tomb as a punishment for his treason against Thebes. The action unfolds as Creon, representing the State, and Antigone, representing the *oikos*, the family, fight over Antigone's rights to the rites of burial and the mourning of the dead. According to Vincent Rosivach, Creon was not entirely unjustified in his choice of a postmortem punishment of a traitor, as in the ancient Greek polis, leaving the dead unburied “is simply one way of abusing the dead and cannot be separated from the broader issue of mutilation of all sorts performed to dishonor and disgrace the dead enemy” (197). Creon has the right to suspend the performance of burial rites for the bodies of enemies. The state can establish the frames by which a life counts as grievable and should be treated with respect and remembrance, while also controlling the rules according to which some should remain ungrievable and be the bodies unworthy of unconditional hospitality. It can also regulate the expression of mourning for the dead and impose severe restrictions for the protection of the polis. Creon's management of the situation, however, attests to the difficulty of treating the offspring of Oedipus justly, for they can be kept neither inside the polis nor ousted from it without consequences. Polynices blurs the categories of friend and foe, since he was an autochthon citizen, born and raised in Thebes, but fled abroad and “came back from exile meaning to burn to the ground his native city and the gods of his race and meaning to drink the people's blood and to enslave its people” (Sophocles *Antigone* 21). In

Oedipus at Colonus, Polynices's appearance is seen in a negative light; he asks for forgiveness from his father only to gain control of his body that, according to the oracle, would bring the victory to the impending fight and the rule of Thebes. His abandonment of the father and the negligence towards him cast Polynices as an uncaring son, an unforgivable crime in ancient Greece. Nevertheless, there is a moment in his speech that manages to create a sympathetic profile of him. He is begging his sisters: "do not you dishonor me, but place me in my tomb with funeral rites" (Sophocles *Oedipus* 561).³ This is a moment of tragic irony, since the audience is aware of the fact that Antigone will lose her life trying to fulfill her brother's last wish, while the characters are entirely ignorant of this.⁴

Creon's final fall ensues, since, in his attempt to do away with Oedipus' children, he confuses life and death, inside and outside, above and below the earth.⁵ Tiresias warns him in *Antigo Nick*:

you've made a structural mistake with life and death
 my dear
 you've put the living underground
 and kept the dead up here
 that is so wrong
that is so wrong" (36, emphasis in the original).

According to the ancient Greek beliefs about life after death, Polynices, an unburied corpse, an *ataphos*, "could not enter Hades but [was] condemned to haunt this earth to which [he] remained indissolubly bound" (Garland 101). Antigone's priority throughout the tragedy is to cover the body, even if she can do so with dust, in order for the beloved body not to be torn apart by scavengers.⁶ Polynices is denied a tomb, a place where he can rest and a *stele* that marks the location of his remains. Hence, Antigone is deprived not only of her right to bury the brother, but also of her chance to visit and revisit his tomb, just like the father's unlocatable grave, a duty considered of utmost importance for the surviving relatives in ancient Greece, maybe equal to the actual interment. There were even special festivals and celebrations attended by relatives and friends, who returned to the tombs of their beloved dead on specific days of the year. The deceased do not disappear in the forgetfulness of death; this is the primary function of a locatable tomb. The *stele* erected in honor of the dead was venerated and taken care after, since it embodied or symbolized the body of the deceased, according to Robert Garland, who has studied the eschatological beliefs in

ancient Greece. This “would appear to proceed from the assumption that the attention paid to the *stele* by the living did materially and substantially affect the state of being of the dead in the next world” (118). It also marked the location where the dead remained. It was believed that the dead would return to their tombs and make sure that their relatives took good care of their graves and their *stelae*, made offerings and, above all, still remembered them: “In the eyes of an Athenian, a *stele* was much more than a monument erected to preserve the memory of the dead. Oiled, perfumed, decorated, crowned and fed, it was a focus of devotion and an object of adoration” (120). The lack of a determinable *stele*, of a monument situated in a location one can visit and revisit for both the father and the brother, weighs heavily on Antigone; it disrupts and interrupts her process of mourning. She is not allowed to construct a monument for her brother’s remembrance; she cannot offer him this last yet invaluable gift and offer herself some consolation in her grief. According to Richmond Lattimore, “we find in one case where a tomb is built *παραμυθίας ἔνεκα καί μνήμης*⁷ a clear statement that the erection of a monument comforts the survivors. It is the last gift one can give” (220). This set of beliefs concerning the interment of the dead still applies in our era. People feel the need to visit the place where the remains of the close relatives and friends remain; they offer flowers⁸ and talk to them.⁹ Antigone does not perform the complete rituals for the dead relatives, or pay the debts owed to them after death and is crushed by this lack of success. Her only refuge is to make herself a vault and a hospitable place for her unjustly treated dead ones.

Brecht’s Antigone keeps returning in Carson’s text; it is as if Brecht’s text exerts a sort of allure on her. She is described as the one “with a door strapped to [her] back” (*Ant.* 3). Carson reads this Antigone as supposedly carrying a door, an opening to the outside and an entrance point to the inside; the limit that must necessarily be crossed in hospitality, in the receiving of the other in one’s home. What does the door mean? The author is not certain: “a door can have diverse meanings/ I stand outside your door/ the odd thing is, you stand outside your door too” (*Ant.* 3). Antigone is an open door for the unconditional hospitality of the specters of her dead, even though they might be potential threats coming from the outside. However, there is no home for Antigone; she is on the outside, on the threshold; always. She “incarnates displacement and becomes the outside as such” (Zawacki 160). She is practically homeless; no home welcomes her and the palace of Thebes is a place of exile for her. After many years of wandering with Oedipus, she has become a foreigner, a rogue that does not belong to the polis.

When she returns, Creon meticulously forces her into a situation of exile, treating her as a *xeni* and rendering her a foreigner in her own homeland.

Antigone enters the world of the dead in an unexpected and unjust way, buried alive in a cave/tomb, left to slowly starve to death. She is yet another member of the Labdacid family who is not to receive a proper burial, with a tomb and a *stele*. Antigone's cave, lacking any doors, windows or other openings to the outside, is a suffocating and oxymoronic place; a grave hosting a living human being. Antigone, surprisingly, hails the tomb in which she will eventually meet her death a home buried in the earth that will be guarded forever.¹⁰ This cave is an unhomely home underneath the earth; it has no doors or windows to open and communicate with the outside; it is a prison cell, a torturing chamber. Jutta Gsoels-Lorensen offers a detailed analysis of the meticulous and organized strategies employed by Creon to render Antigone a deportee in her own homeland and a subject with no rights before the law, in order to establish his sovereignty in the polis and kill her with indemnity. Gsoels-Lorensen calls the cave construct: "a site not merely for just or unjust punishment, and certainly not for a mitigated sentence, but a legal and political figuration underpinning sovereignty's putatively 'blameless' [...] rupturing of a person's juridico-political existence" (114). Gsoels-Lorensen finds in *Antigo Nick* a phrase that foregrounds Creon's biopolitical methods of making Antigone disappear from his polis: he will "do" Antigone's death. This verb is a marker of cynicism and ruthlessness; this method of death is strategically used as a weapon to render Antigone redundant in the polis and then force her into disappearance, out of sight in her dark cave. Creon describes Antigone's death sentence in *Antigo Nick* in the following manner:

I'll find her a desert
in the neighbourhood
I'll bury her alive
with a bit of food
sacred closet, terrible leisure
no doubt the god of death will save her life (27).

Creon gives the final blow to Antigone by exiling her in a cave of death, a suffocating location, he calls sacred.¹¹ Creon's topographical choice emphasizes the distance he wishes to keep from the girl, while also keeping her close enough to control her. The final phrase of the extract is a mockery to Antigone; no one can save her anymore, since the sovereign has decided to bury a girl that is still alive.

However, her homelessness, her exilic situation and her sentence to death in a dark cave in the earth, with minimum food, not enough to live well and yet enough to die a slow death,¹² do not disallow Antigone from welcoming the specters of the dead and pointing to the need for an unconditional hospitality. Lacking a home, she can make herself a vault, a crypt and an abode for her beloved dead. As Derrida writes:

To offer hospitality [...] is it necessary to start from the certain existence of a dwelling, or is it rather only starting from the dislocation of the shelterless, the homeless, that the authenticity of hospitality can open up? Perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality” (*OH* 56).

Antigone, the exiled girl, as Carson comments, always carries her own door on her back, uncomfortable as this might be: “to carry one’s own door can make a person clumsy, tired and strange/ on the other hand, it may come in useful if you go places that don’t have an obvious way in, like normality/ or an obvious way out” (4) like a doorless and windowless cave in the earth. The door she carries with her has the capacity to create entrances and exits where there were none before. This is how Antigone bears [*porte*] her mourning; she wears [*porte*] a door [*porte*] on her back to be open to the *accueil* of the other, even after death. Antigone becomes a hospitable place for her dead to enter inside her and a tomb for Polynices, because of the lack of an actual one for him. In the work of mourning, as theorized by Derrida, there is “an interiorization (an idealizing incorporation, introjection, consumption of the other)” (*WoM* 8); the living interiorize the dead and remember them through memories and images incorporated and mediated through the living people’s consciousness. Through this process, the living retain their dead as close as possible, while fighting off the devastating realization that the latter no longer exist anywhere else:

What is only in us seems to be reducible to images, which might be memories or monuments, but which are reducible in any case to a memory that consists of visible scenes that are no longer anything but images, since the other of whom they are the images appears only as the one who has disappeared or passed away, as the one who, having passed away, leaves ‘in us’ only images. He is no more, he whom we see in images or in recollection, he of whom we speak, whom we cite, whom we try to let speak—he is no more, he is no longer here, no longer there (*WoM* 160).

The dead can remain only as images incorporated in the memory of the living that remain behind; they can only be viewed like still monuments. However, this hospitable interiorization for the sake of remembrance can at the same time be a violent one. Such interiorization of the dead can be achieved: “only by exceeding, fracturing, wounding, injuring, traumatizing the interiority that it [the dead one] inhabits or that welcomes it through hospitality, love, or friendship. In other words, ‘Ghosts: the concept of the other in the same ... the completely other, dead, living in me’” (*WoM* 11). Antigone opens the door perched on her back and becomes an entry and a crypt for her dearly beloved dead to live inside her; but they can haunt, hurt and hold her hostage; they are the ghosts of the others. This load is heavy and it can tear the host apart, making her feel plundered and “despoiled” (*Ant.* 30). This safeguarding of the deceased only inside her renders her their hostage and a stranger in her own body.

2.3 Antigone’s Unbearable Mourning

In *Antigo Nick*, Antigone is described by Eurydice as “that girl with the undead/ strapped to her back” (39). It is not only a door Antigone has to carry, but also the burden of her mourning for the beloved dead. Carson’s use of the word “undead” is highly interesting, since it alludes to the specters of the dead returning to hold the living hostages. Antigone cannot bear such an accumulated mourning. She is weighed down by the burden of an excessive mourning she cannot possibly carry and that eventually crushes her. Despite her efforts to become a door, a *porte* in her attempt to carry, *porter* her grief, this remains unbearable. Antigone’s dead relatives keep returning and haunting her as undead specters:

The spectral voices are dangerous. They can talk to us, persecute us, they can initiate confusion or doubt. This work [of mourning] is about localizing the dead, identifying them, and making sure that they rest well in their place, stabilized in a line from which they will never move (Idixa).¹³

The dead need to remain in a specific place; otherwise they turn into wandering ghosts, confusing life and death and torturing the surviving ones. They need to remain in their tombs, so that they will not produce disorder in the polis, like Polynices's omnipresent flesh. They also need to remain in their tombs so that the mourners can direct their mourning towards a specific location, realize that the dead are dead and start a process

of letting them rest in peace. As Nicole Loraux beautifully argues in her book on memory and forgetting in Athens, there is a need for amnesty in the polis that is, agreeing on forgetting the misfortunes of the past for the sake of a future for the community. Creon's hubris is owed to his insistent refusal to rethink his decision to hide the body of Polynices with dust and place a *stele* on top of his tomb. By leaving the corpse rot in plain sight, Creon constantly reminds the polis of the *stasis*, the civil war that tore them apart and allows neither mourning to take place nor amnesty, the letting aside of the painful past history for the sake of peace. Loraux suggests that "[n]on-forgetting is a ghost. *Alastor* or *aliterios*: something that wanders, in popular etymology (from the verb *alaomai*), or that must absolutely be avoided, as in Plutarch, who derives this word from the verb *aleuasthai*" (162). Polynices's specter haunts Thebes, a wandering spirit that is not allowed to rest in his tomb and be slowly acknowledged as dead, for the living to move on, having surpassed the past turmoil.

The impossibility of mourning a mourning that is disallowed and the incomplete performance of the mourning practices before the tomb of the dead is what Antigone has on her back. According to Derrida, she has to go through a mourning of her mourning, or rather, of her aborted mourning: "How can a mourning be wept for? How can one weep at not being able to go through one's mourning? How can one go through the mourning of mourning?" he asks in *Of Hospitality* (112-3). Antigone is gripped by the mourning of her dead kin. Eurydice urges her to forget: "try to unclench/ we said to her/ she never did" (*Ant.*39). She could never let go of her burden, the mourning she owed and felt she had not repaid to her beloved ones. Her life is not free from the dead; she feels like she owes herself to them, to their care and hospitality, to their remembrance. When Creon calls her "autonomous," he is mistaken; Carson rewrites the more accurate version: "autonomy sounds like a kind of freedom/ but you aren't interested in freedom /your task is to sew yourself into your own shroud using the tiniest of stitches" (5). Antigone is indebted to her undead; weighed down by memory and grief; restrained and suffocated in a mourning she wears like a shroud while still alive; she was never—and never will be—free. She is destined to die at a young age and does not hesitate before her death, since she has done everything in her power to ensure that her family members are decently buried and commemorated:

of course I will die

Kreon or no Kreon

and death is fine

this has no pain
 to leave my¹⁴ mother's son lying out there unburied
 that would be pain (19).

Apart from the specters of her beloved dead that keep haunting her and asking for a place inside her to keep on living as memories and images of the past, Carson's Antigone is herself a spectral presence; she has "died long ago." Carson's Antigone is complex and difficult to understand; the door on her back renders her a liminal figure, on the threshold between life and death: "I'm a strange new kind of inbetween thing aren't I/ not at home with the dead nor with the living (30). Antigone is weighed down by the burial rites she was not allowed to perform for her beloved dead and the lamentations she could not give voice to. She bears an insupportable mourning for her kin and she refuses to let them go. She prefers to become herself an open space for the dead to inhabit her, despite the dangers this cohabitation entails.

2.4 "Just the Loud One:" Solon's Ban on Lamentations and Antigone's Epigrammatic Mourning

Sophocles's *Antigone*, performed in 441 BCE, bears a special affinity with a series of bans and limitations on lamentations enforced by Solon almost 150 years before that time. The conflict between Antigone and Creon can be seen as a representation of a prevalent issue in classical Athens, namely whether the family or the polis should mourn for the dead and how. Bonnie Honig reads Antigone and Creon as representing the clash between two entirely different belief systems, the heroic/Homeric and the democratic form of mourning for the dead, respectively. Antigone is a member of the aristocratic class, whose power and influence the emerging democrats sought to limit. Honig's analysis of the tragedy under this guise provides an important historical and socio-political setting for the impact Antigone's deeds would produce on the audience and for the unfolding of a debate that must have divided the polis. The disparity between the Homeric ethics, foregrounding the singularity and irreplaceability of the dead and the democratic ethics of imperial Athens,¹⁵ praising dying for the polis and the replaceability of the dead soldiers is prevalent in this tragedy. In Pericles' funeral oration, all soldiers dying for the polis are treated as "unknown soldiers," Honig argues. She writes: "Pericles' Oration urges parents—if they are still of childbearing

age—not to mourn too long over their lost sons but to have more children to replace them” (129). The idea of the replacement of one son with another sounds cynical and cruel. However, according to Pericles, it can provide a profit for the city that will have men to protect and fight for it, while helping parents forget their previous losses.¹⁶ Honig argues that the part of Antigone’s speech concerning the irreplaceability of the brother versus the iterability of a husband or a child is a critique and an ironic response to Pericles’ ideology on mourning and remembrance of the lost soldiers: “She [Antigone] lampoons Pericles’ civic ideology which treats men as replaceable and sends them to war while depriving them in death of the individuating rites and loud lamentation that they, from a heroic perspective, are properly owed” (130).

Solon’s bans attempted to limit the excesses in lamentations by specifically targeting women and their practices of exaggerated mourning, such as “loud wailing, tearing the hair [or the clothes] and lacerating one’s face” (Honig 11). If women did not comply with the new laws, there were special officials appointed to deal with their disobedience, the *gynaikonomoi* (Alexiou 15). The state instituted laws and regulations to control the expression of mourning, for the sake of tranquility and conformity. It described with precise details how the rituals should be performed, for how long and who should participate. As Carson argues, ironically commenting on Solon’s bans:

Laws were passed specifying the location, time, duration, personnel, choreography, musical content and verbal content of the women’s funeral lament on the grounds that these “harsh and barbaric sounds” were a stimulus to “disorder and licence” (as Plutarch puts it). Female sound was judged to arise in craziness and to generate craziness (*Glass* 128).

The female voice posed a threat for the democratic polis, an uncontrolled and uncontrollable force that needed to be silenced. Mourning was considered mainly a female field, where professional mourners, the *threnon exarchoi*, sang the *goos* during “the *prothesis* (the laying out of the body)” (Garland 21). Solon’s restrictions, banning “the singing of prepared dirges” (30), rendered these professionals redundant. Creon’s edict is a sovereign’s attempt to regulate the performance of mourning adopting extreme measures. It not only disallows the burial of the dead body but also forbids anyone from mourning for the loss of Polynices. Creon decrees that the “unhappy corpse of Polynices” be left “unwept for [*ἄκλαυτον*], unburied, a rich treasure house for birds as they look out for food” (Sophocles *Antigone* 6-7). Antigone refuses to obey the

decree and abide by the restrictions imposed by Creon. In *Antigo Nick*, Creon mocks Antigone, calling her “the loud one” of the two sisters; she is also the one he will eventually punish with death for the burial of Polynices. Creon is annoyed and offended by her supposed loudness. But what does this loudness signify? In Sophocles's text, Antigone does not exemplify the loud wailing or hysterical exclamations of grief targeted by Solon. She uses arguments and tries to reasonably present her worldview and ideals, concerning the significance of the dead brother for her, even though she has to admit that her arguments do not come out as she would have liked them to. In *Antigo Nick*, Antigone wonders about the rationality of her speech on the irreplaceability of the dead brother:

is this a weird argument
 Kreon thought so
 but I don't know the words go wrong they call my
 piety impiety (*Ant.* 31).

Antigone is a woman and despite her wish to oppose Creon in a rational debate, she lacks training in political speech and argumentation. As Ismene warns her in the Sophoclean text: “We were born women, we cannot fight against men” (Sophocles 11).¹⁷ In this case the fighting (*μαχουμένα*) is a verbal one. Antigone cannot outwit Creon by talking, because, as a woman, she was never taught how.¹⁸ She is also slowly and strategically being rendered a foreigner, a subject without rights in Thebes and without the ability to defend herself.¹⁹ The only instance Antigone loses control of her mourning is when she is faced with the dead body of Polynices uncovered in the second burial.²⁰ This moment of extreme lamentation in the Sophoclean text is mediated by the Guard and not presented directly on stage. He reports:

We saw the girl; she cried out bitterly, with a sound like the piercing note
 of a bird [ὄρνιθος ὁξὺν φθόγγον] when she sees her empty nest robbed
 of her young; just so did she cry out, weeping, when she saw the corpse
 laid bare and called down curses on those who had done the deed
 (*Sophocles* 41, 43).²¹

Carson translates this forceful moment of mourning in her own personal style of coining new words and creating compound ones attempting to render the meaning of Greek, while economically and laconically translating the original. In *Antigo Nick*, there is an emphasis on the bird-simile used in the ancient text and the effect is stunning:

when I sneaked a look there she was

the child
 in her birdgrief the bird in her childreftgravecry
 howling
 and cursing (*Ant.*18).

The sound she made was a lamenting shrill noise, a “grave-cry” a bird produces when its nest is empty and all the little ones have been snatched away; a loud, incoherent, uncontrollable, “female” sound.

Carson attributes Antigone’s measured lament before her imminent death in the dark cave, through the use of parody, epigraphic density and brevity. Antigone undertakes a paradoxical grief, unsettling the economy of mourning, confusing the mourner with the mourned one. Her self-lamentation, rendered in an austere language, is almost like an epigraph summarized in the powerful, yet concise utterance:

unwept
 unwed
 unloved
 I go, (30)

which could just as well be placed on her *stele* to mark the injustice and untimeliness of her demise. This epigrammatic grieving of the self, lost before she had the chance to experience love and marriage²² and so lonely that no one is left to mourn for her, is a reminder of who Antigone was and untimely she died, like an *ἄωρος*.²³ Astonishingly, Antigone creates a lamentation and an epigraph for her own self. Her voice is not that of a crazy, uncontrollable, breast-lacerating, hair-tearing mourner; her treatment of her imminent death is rendered in an epigrammatic brevity and condensation of Sophocles’s lines. Antigone need not say more, not only because her predicament is already known, but also because words cannot save her any longer. The paradoxicality of her being buried alive in a cave of death cannot be explained or rationalized:

but I am still alive
 no wedding
 no wedding song
 no wedding chamber
 yet I shall lie in the bed of the river of Death
 while I am still alive (29).

No epigrapher could actually know what to inscribe on the *stele* of a human being walking alive towards her death by deprivation of food in a dark, inhospitable cave and

no *threnon exarchos* could possess the appropriate words to lament her. Only she can speak for her life and death and avoid merely disappearing from the polis, serving Creon's purposes. She is no longer mourning for her aborted mourning for the father or the brother; she is mourning for a mourning of her own self, since there is no one else left to mourn for her:

O Thebes
 O gods
 O look
 I go
 I'm the last one left in a line of kings
 I was caught
 in an act of perfect piety (32).

These are the last words spoken by Carson's Antigone, as she walks towards the cave of death. Her speech is surprisingly laconic and collected. Her last goodbye is summarized in the literal: "I go" and her supposed crime is characterized as an act of the utmost respect to the dead kin. Her brief, yet powerful last utterances are in a stark difference with Creon's lamentations at the end of the text. Honig reaches an interesting conclusion:

The play explores the conflict between two economies of mourning and membership [...] but sides with neither. When it ends with Creon's code-defying grief, does it softly suggest that no economy of mourning and membership, and no institution of exception, is up to the task of voicing or managing the grief we seek to express, contain, or channel, that the *différance* of Creon's grief undoes them all? (Honig 117)

Honig reads the two alternatives presented in the tragedy, namely a public mourning celebrating the service done to the polis and a personal mourning of the family focusing on the uniqueness and individuality of the dead, as destabilized by Creon's final grief for his son and his wife's loss, a lament very similar to the ones treated as female and excessive and banned by Solon. Creon's lament at the end of *Antigone* is full of cries and screams; in the ancient Greek text, from line 1261, until the end of the play, he utters an astonishingly large number of exclamations of woe and mourning (*ὦ*, *αἰαῖ*, *οἴμοι*, *φεῦ*, *ὦμοι*) and at a great frequency. In *Antigo Nick* they are all translated with a capital "O," like a gaping open mouth, like a face of woe.²⁴ "What a poet knows is how to imitate the human zero with a poetic 'O!'" (*Economy* 125)

Carson argues. Creon performs an unstoppable mourning, a “female”²⁵ mourning full of incoherent and unsettling cries of lament. When it comes to choosing his method of mourning, Creon becomes louder than loud and incomparably more incomprehensible.

2.5 *Mutus Nick: Silence, Time and Creon’s Guilt in Antigo Nick*

The elliptical language of *Antigo Nick* is consonant with Beckett’s invention to use language in order “to bore hole after hole in it until what cowers behind it seeps through” (*Ant.* 5). The translated text, saying little but sharply phrased, is creating openings, tiny nicks in language for the meaning of “a deeply other organization that lies just beneath what we see or what we say” (5) to start surfacing. *Antigo Nick* omits entire parts of the Sophoclean text in a seemingly ruthless manner. The lines are prosaic and laconic, as if language itself were tired of being reiterated. As Judith Butler argues in her very astute review of the text,

Carson does not “rewrite” Antigone. Her text becomes the verbal and visual scanning of a prolonged scream or cry. Emphatic, elliptical, *Antigonick* is more transference than translation,²⁶ a relay of tragedy into a contemporary vernacular that mixes with archaic phrasing, sometimes lacking commas and periods, a halting and then a rushing of words structured by the syntax of grief and rage, spanning centuries. The lines often stand alone, as if broken off from the original text, stricken monuments. Stanzas comprising twenty or thirty lines in the original are distilled into single words and staccato exclamations (*Can’t Stop*).

Butler accurately describes the form Carson’s translation assumes. *Antigo Nick* is, indeed, a scream crossing the centuries to speak to our times of what has remained unchanged since antiquity; the mourning for the dead who refuse to be forgotten. It is also a book filled with silences and omissions; but on purpose. Silence is an indispensable dimension for the translation of the text; it can mean more than an outpouring of words; it creates a sense of mystery and concealment of the truth.²⁷

Antigo Nick feels as if it has been built “up gradually out of many small pieces of silence” (*Ant.* 5). Even though the denouement is well-known to everyone, there is a tension and a sense of urgency and rush, where words are futile; the sensation that we are in the nick of time.²⁸ A structural analysis of the play would identify an extra

dramatis persona in this text whose name is Nick. He is, however, a mute part, a “*persona muta*, a person who says nothing on stage” (*Nox mutam*) yet always present, interminably measuring things. According to Carson’s definition in *Nox*: “Note that the word ‘mute’ (from Latin *mutus* and Greek *μῦειν*) is regarded by linguists as an onomatopoeic formation referring not to silence but to a certain fundamental opacity of human being, which likes to show the truth by allowing it to be seen hiding” (1.3.). Nick is opaque and undecipherable. Many interpretations have been suggested for him,²⁹ but he refuses easy definitions and categorizations. He is the one who keeps measuring the space, the objects and even the performers, creating an atmosphere of absurdity and mystery. The etymology of this word also leads us to a connection between silence and the ancient Greek worshipping of Demeter and her daughter Persephone, during the Eleusinian Mysteries. “The verb *myein*, ‘to initiate,’ means etymologically, ‘to close’—notably the eyes, but more importantly, the mouth. At the beginning of the sacred rites, the herald would ‘command silence’” (Agamben and Ferrando 10). This silence opens up a mystical space, where words do not have a place.

“[W]hat is a nick/ I asked my son/ what is a nick/ I asked my son” (40), utters Eurydice in her only monologue in the play. What is (a) Nick? This is the question that arises from the reading of *Antigo Nick*. Andrew Zawacki argues that Nick is “a mute temporal mutant,” (162) linked to an alternative idea of time, a caesura, a tearing up of the regular conception of time as linear and constantly moving towards the future. Nick is the reminder that sometimes time can be wounded and get full of nicks. There are moments that go so irretrievably wrong that one, unable to turn back time, would wish for a fast forward towards the end of suffering. Creon, in the end, after the suicides of his son, Haemon and wife, Eurydice, has only one wish; “I want Kreon’s death” (*Ant.* 44). The Chorus responds: “that’s the future this is the present/ you deal with the present” (44). Creon’s present is nicked “as per French *niquer*: to fuck, fuck up” (Zawacki 157). “To be ‘in the nick of time,’ as the Chorus portends, is the opposite of the vernacular expression of speed and reprieve. It means arriving too late to prevent what has happened too soon” (*Ant.* 157). Since the beginning of the play, Creon is “standing on a razor”³⁰ (35); he is (in) the nick of time; he is a hostage of the already dead and the dead-to-come. Despite his final rush, after the terrifying predictions of Tiresias, he does not manage to save Antigone, his son, his wife or himself.

Creon refuses to bury a body that however reappears as a revenant and turns him into its hostage. Polynices's remains of flesh are more powerful than Creon in the

flesh. Tiresias provides a graphic description: The altars are filled “with carrion brought by birds and dogs from the unhappy son of Oedipus who fell” (Sophocles 97).³¹ Polynices's unburied body haunts Thebes and its citizens by being a literal source of pollution, a miasma for the altars, giving off “putrefaction,” vermiculation,” “noonsunstink” (*Ant.* 18) and questioning Creon’s sovereignty. The use of these graphic words and the last compound noun coined by Carson criticize the politics of Creon, leaving a human body to rot and turn into a disgusting, abject mass, neither respecting nor offering it hospitality after death. Polynices haunts Creon and produces a domino effect that leads to the sovereign’s tragic fall; Polynices is the reason why Antigone is urged to disobey; he drives the Theban people into tumult; he leads Heamon to defy his father and, finally to commit suicide; he makes Tiresias denounce Creon for his poor judgment; he pollutes the altars and turns the birds “bebarbarismenized;”³² he makes the rites [or the rights] go wrong (35). Polynices is not an innocent guest; he arrives at the gates of Thebes fully armed in order to conquer the city. He incarnates the danger of the stranger, the threat the other carries. No state and no logically thinking sovereign would open up the doors to get conquered by a terror-provoking attacker. However, once he is dead, things change. “Death needs to have Death’s laws obeyed” (20) says Antigone; hospitality towards the dead with a decent burial is an act of respect and forgiveness; it would allow the dead to rest and his ghost would no longer haunt the living.

Right before the end, Creon decides to hastily perform the rituals of Polynices's burial. He finally provides the attacker of his polis’ freedom with decent funeral rites, belatedly demonstrating his hospitality towards the dead other. As we read in the ancient Greek text, he prays to the gods to hold back their anger, washes him with purifying water and burns the remains. He, then, heaps up a “burial mound of our³³ own earth” (Sophocles 113); but it is already too late. Creon takes too long to realize the need to cover this body with Theban dust; “the dust it takes to house enemies” (*Ant.* 37) in death. In *Antigo Nick*, we read a highly poetic, sharp and austere epigraph of unconditional hospitality towards the dearly beloved dead, symbolized by the mere act of covering with dust:

the darling you dust
the dust you disperse
the you who does not
does not what

does not
nick (37).

Creon does not realize the necessity of a hospitality of dust to the dead; in any case he does not do so soon enough. Thus, no matter how objective time keeps measuring, for Creon, there remains only one marker of time: too late. Carson renders this confused time of Creon's belatedness in a poetical, forceful succession of time expressions, of little nicks of time:

another
an hour
an hour and a half
a year
a split second
a decade
this instant
a second
a split second
a now
a nick
a neck
Kreon rushes out

all the guards rush out

hang by the neck until: (37)

Until death? This colon leaves something suspended and unsaid. Antigone commits suicide and is hanged “*βρόχῳ μιτώδει σινδόνοσ καθημμένην*” (Sophocles 114), caught in the woven noose of a piece of linen, choosing her way out of the dark cave/ tomb. At the end of the tragedy, Creon is the last man standing; however, the personal cost is too heavy. His mourning is too much to bear, his lamentation exemplifies what he deemed as excessive female loudness at the beginning and he wishes to die. Eurydice curses and accuses Creon of the death of their son, Haemon—“yes yes of course/ of course she did,” (*Ant.* 43) Creon desperately acknowledges—before taking her own life in a manner identical to her son's. Derrida argues that “the work of mourning is always an ‘I survive’... regarding the originary guilt of the living as survivor who must therefore be forgiven simply for the fact of living and of surviving the death of the other” (*AoR* 383). Creon survives but he has to bear the survivor's guilt (Levinas 383).

Even though Levinas refers to the guilt of the surviving victims of the Holocaust, Creon, the rigid sovereign, prepared to “do deaths” in order to protect his position of power suffers from severe guilt, when it comes to facing the responsibility of the deaths in his own family.³⁴

When someone dies [...] then my sadness and my guilt signify that I am responsible for this death, that I feel responsible, as one says, for this death which is therefore a murder. They signify that I have killed, symbolically or not, the other, or, in any case, that I have ‘let him die.’ As soon as I feel responsible for a death, it means that I interpret it as a murder. There always is at least nonassistance to an endangered person in the phantasm that links us to the death of our own (*AoR* 383).

Creon bears the responsibility for Antigone’s death; he locked her up in a dark, tomb/cave with a minimum amount of food and let her die. He also feels responsible for the deaths of his son and wife. His actions—or lack of them, a “nonassistance”—led them both to put an end to their lives. Love for the other requires a sense of responsibility, of guilt for not giving enough, not being adequate enough; this is also hospitality. After the death of a beloved one, one feels guilty for surviving and guilty for the death of the other.

My own, our own, are those who never die of natural death since I accuse myself of having killed them or having let them die. My own are the victims of murder, those who do not die of natural death, since, actively or passively, I feel I have lent my hand to their death. This is also what one calls love (*AoR* 384).

Love forces the living into an interiorization of the deceased, a refusal to let go, a carrying of the weighty mourning. The responsibility of the living towards the dead is not simple; the former should not speak the beloved names, for they do not let the dead rest, yet they should commemorate the losses and reassure the dead that they remember and take care of their monuments and their memories: “It is we who let them go, for we do not accompany them. It is we who hold them here—deny them their nothingness—by naming their names. Out of these two wrongs comes the writing of epitaphs,” (*Economy* 84-5) as a medium of communicating with the dead.

2.6 Inscribing the *Stele*: Ancient Greek Epitaphs and *Antigo Nick*

Carson writes of the connection between epitaphs and bodies:

No genre of verse is more profoundly concerned with seeing what is not there, and not seeing what is, than that of the epitaph. An epitaph is something placed upon a grave—a *σῶμα* that becomes a *σῆμα*, a body that is made into a sign [...] The purpose of the monument is to insert a dead and vanished past into the living present (*Economy* 73).

A *sema* reassures that the dead remain in their place and it allows the living to visit them, ask for advice and offer gifts. The *stèle* is a significant location since it bears the traces of the dead, their names and an austere inscription accounting for the life lost. In ancient Greece, Simonides was thought of as the epitaphic poet par excellence. He produced a great number of elegiac poems to be inscribed on *stelae* commemorating the dead. The inscriptions carved on stone could not possibly convey in an accurate way the singularity of the dead the tomb hosted, as they were short and condensed. However, the stones performed their duty of informing the ones passing by the tomb of the identity of the dead and of the plea of remembrance. The *stelae* were charged with the heavy duty of speaking for them:

Ancient inscriptions were truly “talking stones,” in the sense that silent reading was not a usual nor a practical mode of deciphering them. Generally inscribed in *scriptio continua* with no spaces between the words, stones demanded to be read aloud so that the reader could “recognize” (*ἀναγινώσκειν*) the words (83).

Passers-by stopped to read the epigraph and traced the history behind the individual or public monument set up to commemorate the dead. The poet can animate stones by making them talk and keep the memory of the dead immortal. Simonides was, thus, “someone who traffic[ked] in survival, reinflecting the fact of death into immortal publicity” (27).

Inscriptions, however, were concerned not only with the poetic creativity and linguistic ability of the poet, charged with speaking for those who can no longer speak, but also with the practical and physical matters of the stone: its size and dimensions. Thus, engravers:

were thinking about details like the proportions of the stone, how to place the text on the stone at a height convenient for the reader to read, how to use lettering of a different size in the heading for increased legibility and liveliness. Some engravers liked to enhance the effect of an inscription

by painting the letters after they were cut, using red paint or sometimes alternating lines of red and black (79).

The characteristic of epigrams was economy, due to the practical matters of lack of space on the tombstone. Simonides, thus, had to measure and calculate his every letter and word and the way it would appear when inscribed.³⁵ “Out of this material fact—which is also an economic fact because stones and stonecutting cost money—evolved an aesthetic of exactitude or verbal economy that became the hallmark of Simonidean style”(78). He practiced on how to say much using few words and how to paint a picture of the dead in austere language. Throughout my analysis, I have focused on the issue of language, and, more specifically, the language becoming of mourning. *Antigo Nick* is a text highly concerned with what language can translate Greek tragedy, while speaking from a contemporary viewpoint. Carson’s success in dealing with the Sophoclean text is that she departs from it, while also staying close to the issue of politics of mourning and how the democratic polis can treat a dead body in general, and, in a more extreme case, the corpse of a traitor posing a threat for the community. An overarching symbol is that of epitaphic inscriptions, the *stelae* erected—or forbidden from being erected—for the dead as well as their significance for the mourning of the surviving relatives and for memory in the polis.

Antigo Nick is a book in the form of an epitaphic monument, a *stèle* for the dead. It is not only thematically linked to the mourning of the deceased, since it follows the tragedy of Antigone and her desperate effort to bury her brother, but it is also visually linked to ancient Greek epitaphs. The illustrated version of *Antigo Nick* resembles a series of inscriptions; the text, handwritten and consisting only of capital letters, makes the similarity more pertinent. There are passages consisting of blocks of words, with equal margins on the left and the right and hardly any spaces between the words, as if they were measured using a ruler³⁶ and prepared in order to be placed on the stone of a *stèle*. In other cases, the words are scattered on the page, creating blank, unfilled spaces in the text and isolated chunks of words or phrases, epigrammatically uttered, like “stricken monuments,” as Butler suggests (*Can’t Stop*); like ruins, fragments of epigraphs. Robert Currie,³⁷ the artist that collaborated in the visual rendering of *Antigo Nick*, is the one who prepared the layout of the text on the page and did “all the measuring” (*Unwriting*). In literature, there is no limitation to the space available on a page and yet, *Antigo Nick* is written as if time were running out and it had to contain only what is absolutely necessary or as if there were limited space, not enough to write,

to translate everything. Currie, like the ancient Greek engravers, had to measure the space for the words to fit; he had to adjust his writing to the margins of the white page. Carson, then, went on to embellish the inscription/text by using red or black ink, the colors used in ancient epigraphs, too. Both Carson and Currie had to measure; the former her words translating the ancient Greek text; the latter the actual space available on the blank slate of the page. Therefore, both of them took on the responsibility of Nick, measuring interminably. Nevertheless, despite all measures and measurements, something always remains untranslatable in the most perfect translation, just like no inscription can do justice and accurately translate the human being that is gone.

A book about language and mourning in the form of an epigraphic inscription for the dead, Carson's *Antigo Nick*, is addressed to the dead hosted in the text, but also to all our dead ones, all the dead we consider our own and for whose deaths we feel guilty. Carson's translation is not merely a crossing from one language to another; it is an invitation to all the previous rewritings of the text, to all criticism and philosophy that speak for Antigone, reviewed through postmodern parody. Assuming the heavy duty of writing about Antigone's unbearable mourning, this book is charged with speaking for the dead, like a portable *stèle*, carried around and voicing the pleas of the deceased. Unlike the *stelae* commemorating the singularity of the particular body and name, this book can open up and host the mourning for all the dead, of all times. Carson writes that "the epitaphic contract [consists in that] a poet is someone who saves and is saved by the dead" (*Economy* 74). This book is accounting for the losses of the dead and bearing their memory as a *monumentum*, a monument, a *stèle* and a hospitable reminder that can be literally carried around by the living; an epitaph speaking for the interplay between the necessary singularity and reiteration of mourning, each time a new death occurs. This book, like Simonides' talking stones, speaks with the voices of the dead, the ones that are still—they cannot move: *τῇδε κείμεθα*,³⁸ here we are, here we lie—and yet still are in the memories of the living. Carson returns to the figure of Antigone to speak for the unconditional hospitality in life and death, for she is the quintessential unfortunate mourner, deprived of the mourning of her father and her brothers and doomed to die in an unconventional manner at a young age.

Antigo Nick is far from a de-politicized book, merely celebrating postmodern techniques through a startling language; it is a portable book of mourning that can talk of the need to mourn and to remember in the polis. Loraux argues that, however tough it might be sometimes, the polis should remember, not in order to resort to more

violence and vengeful wrath, but in order to be taught from past misfortunes (264). Enter the modern state of exception, especially the post 9/11 American context. In *Antigo Nick*, Eurydice gestures to this contemporary political context:

a state of exception
marks the limits of the law
this violent thing
this fragile thing (*Ant.* 39).

According to Honig, Sophocles's Antigone mocks the imperialism of the Athenian state, and the Periclean rhetoric of treating the dead as dispensable and replaceable bodies, in order to foreground her idea of the individuality of the dead brother. *Antigo Nick* does mock the contemporary militaristic ideology of the U.S.A., especially the post 9/11 rhetoric of friends, foes and the war on terror performed by a state declared in an emergency situation. Donald Pease, on his critical examination of President Bush's state of emergency, argues that: "The Emergency State expropriated sovereignty from the Homeland people so as to establish sovereignty as the rationale for the state's construction of the category of this Other to the people" (183).³⁹ The state of exception limits citizens' rights allegedly for the sake of their own protection. It changes the mores and habits that used to apply in everyday life; it regulates emotional responses and tries to control grief and mourning, channeling them in a way that is beneficial for the purposes of the state. Creon's edict ordered the deprivation of burial and lamentations for a traitor of the polis in an attempt to teach the citizens a lesson, through revenge on a dead body. Pericles spoke of the duty of the polis to bury and honor all the dead in the same way, seeing them as substitutable soldiers. Bush's rhetoric focused on the honoring of the dead as heroes and the continuation of the war to avenge their deaths and vindicate the "noble cause" (Pease 196) they died for. Antigone is opposed to this public exploitation of mourning; she opts for a personal grieving of her beloved brothers as unique human beings. Let us not forget that Antigone never takes part in the burial rites of her other brother, the defender of the land, Eteocles, either. She says: "Why, has not Creon honoured one of our brothers and dishonoured the other in the matter of their burial? Eteocles, they say, in accordance with justice and with customs *he* has hidden beneath the earth, honoured among the dead below" (Sophocles 7) (my emphasis). Creon has performed Eteocles' burial as he wished, honoring him as a hero that fell for the defense of his land. Antigone opposes her idea of mourning, a personal, intimate lamentation for every brother's individuality,

irrespectively of whether he attacked or defended Thebes. She opens up to welcome the traitor brother, the hero brother, the incestuous father/ brother and all her dead kin. Her plea can be expanded and her voice can be heard as a mouthpiece⁴⁰ for the unjustly treated dead, a voice that welcomes and offers unconditional hospitality.

2.7 “Night, Brother, Night:” The Personal Mourning of *Nox* for the Dead Brother

Nox, published in 2010, is a personal book/epitaph for a loss suffered by Carson herself when she lost her brother, with whom she had been estranged for years. The author of this book, mourning for the loss of a brother she never had the chance to bury, is a figure haunted by and sharing Antigone’s unbearable mourning. However, *Nox* is so much more than a personal collage or album of the author’s mourning; it is a book on mourning in general, one pondering on the memory of the deceased and their untranslatability. “Reading *Nox* is reckoning with the dead: her dead and your own, your death and mine” (Monson 147). There is not one single way to read *Nox*; the left-hand side provides a word-for-word analysis with definitions of all the words in Catullus’ poem 101 and the right-hand side is an assortment of photographs, scraps of letters, handwritten or typed pages, collages of different materials and sketches, all closely or more loosely related to the memory of the dead brother. *Nox*, night in Latin, is a metaphor for death and the loss of the light of day and sun, signifying life.

Nox is described as an epitaph. It also physically resembles a tomb that can carry a body, since the book arrives in a box. *Nox* is, thus, a metaphorical⁴¹ epitaph; it is a portable book of mourning for the dead, a paper tomb for the beloved. The book becomes a metaphor for the coffin and the body, the *soma* of the brother. As Eleni Sikelianos argues, “[t]his book is a box that holds a body (text) that unfolds, and these sentences assume the reader has fingered that box” (148). *Nox* is an epitaph for Michael, a person that disappeared under a different name in a faraway land. According to Derrida, there is the tragedy—encountered at *Oedipus at Colonus*—where: “on meurt à l’ étranger et point toujours comme on l’ aurait désiré”⁴² (*De l’ Hospitalité* 85). The brother in *Nox* dies far away from home, as a foreigner from another country; he dies abroad as a stranger who has changed his name. Unfortunately, his widow cannot find his sister’s telephone and has her husband cremated and his ashes thrown at sea,

according to Michael's wishes. The brother has asked for no tomb; he prefers to be turned into "mute ash" (*Nox prisco*). The sister grieves his loss in a faraway land, with no identifiable *stèle* towards which to direct her mourning. In the previous mourning of the parents, she avows: "I buried the ashes under a stone cut with their names. For my brother I had no choice, I was a thousand miles away" (5.6.). Thus, the sister in *Nox* is deprived of the mourning of her brother, who chooses to die abroad, under an alias and with no determinable tomb, not a *stèle* to mark his death. She, then, finds a different way to mourn her aborted mourning; she returns to the Roman past and elegy 101 by Catullus, who shared a similar fortune; he traveled to Troad to "stand at the grave" (7.1.) of his dead brother and also "[p]erhaps he recited the elegy there," (7.1.) talking not to the actual brother but to the tombstone that bore his name.

Nox is a book that does justice to the irreplaceable and unsubstitutable brother; to Michael. The first page of the book contains the name Michael in handwritten form six times, along with a scrap of paper inscribed with the words, NOX/ FRATER/ NOX. Night, brother, night; or, otherwise: death, brother, death or even: goodnight, brother, goodnight. And farewell. However, at the same time, since the book turns to the Greco-Roman past to find consolation, it becomes more than a confession and a lamentation for a personal loss. Joan Fleming argues that it resembles a therapeutic biography that helps people come to terms with their losses. It can be an even more pervasive and powerful book, able to incite philosophical thinking about mourning and the memory of the dead, especially the ones that die unexpectedly and far away, remaining strangers even to their closest kin. The language of *Nox*, just like that of *Antigo Nick* is elliptical and at times obscure, despite the author's aspirations:

I wanted to fill my elegy with light of all kinds. But death makes us stingy. There is nothing more to be expected on that, we think, he's dead.

Love cannot alter it. Words cannot add to it. No matter how I try to evoke the starry lad he was, it remains a plain, odd history (*Nox* 1.0.)

The only consolation is the writing of light that remains behind, namely photographs. The cover of the paper cenotaph of *Nox* bears a photograph of the brother, now dead. He is wearing a pair of goggles, flippers and a bathing suit, apparently ready to go swimming. He is about ten years old—maybe a little older—and he is in a garden. The photo is cut up; just a scrap remains. Maybe some more people accompanied him in this photograph, but they are no longer visible. This epitaphic photograph—epitaphic since it is literally placed on top of the literary epitaph—speaks of the history of the

brother that has passed away. This photographic still (or cliché) speaks through shadow and light of what is still—what no longer moves—and of what still is; the memory of the beloved dead.

How can an epigraph utter a proper goodbye to the beloved? In *Nox*, Anne Carson attempts an ultimate farewell to her brother, resorting to the Roman canon. “Ave Atque Vale” are the famous last words of Catullus’ elegy 101, usually translated as “hail and farewell.”⁴³ However, in *Nox*, Carson opts for an alternative translation, accentuating the reiterative and futile effort of saying goodbye to one’s beloved dead. “Farewell and farewell” best describes the interminable valediction needed for an interminable, undead brother that still haunts the beloved.⁴⁴ The final valediction seems unbearable and yet, say goodbye we must, remembering the beloved brother and keeping him inside us. Before our dead, there is the need to:

say adieu to him, to call him by his name, to call his name, his first name,
what he is called at the moment when, if he no longer responds, it is
because he is responding in us, from the bottom of our hearts, in us but
before us, in us right before us—in calling us, in recalling to us: à-Dieu
(*Adieu* 108).

Carson’s *adieu*, in this very personal book/epitaph devoted to the memory of the brother and employing the Greco-Roman tradition in a refreshing way to provide consolation and condolence, casts the author as a modern Antigone, striving with the absence of a *stèle* for the beloved kin.

2.8 Concluding Remarks: Carson’s Poetics of Mourning

Carson’s texts are a battle of sharp words versus silence. Her strategy is speaking epigrammatically, in order to welcome the reader into her literary universe but not saying too much, disrespecting the necessary silence of texts. Carson uses postmodern parody to juxtapose the past to the present and reveal what remains the same, namely the need to mourn for the beloved dead, to commemorate them and to have a physical marker of their presence, a *stèle* and an epitaphic dedication. Otherwise, as Derrida warns, the dead can turn into specters haunting the polis which does not provide them with a decent burial. Harmony is also disturbed by the individuals that are urged to fight and disobey a state that cannot grant their loved ones their basic rights to funeral rites. The inability to perform mourning publically has dire consequences for

the individual who feels deprived and despoiled. In this chapter, I examined Antigone's unbearable mourning for the family members and her opening up to a hospitality for the undead kin. I also traced how excessive lamentations were thought of as a threat to the order of the state in Sophocles's *Antigone*. Departing from the public plea of Antigone, I then turned to a personal mourning suffered by the author of *Nox*. Carson shows both sides of mourning; the public, militant and political fight and the private loss, enclosed in a paper tomb. They both move us forward to the mourning as effected today and its intricate political repercussions, a mourning aware of the past, yet still in need of a larger scale of understanding of the human predicament called mortality, the precarious position of human lives and the need to respect and be hospitable to every dead body, regardless of name, nationality or religion.

Notes

¹ Carson crosses the gap between languages and cultures to produce a translation that rewrites the ancient text, by transposing its themes, concepts, affective discourse, rhythm and, even, acoustic effects into English. She argues: “I wouldn’t say there’s metrical fidelity to the original meters, which isn’t reproducible, but there’s a new rhythmic design to take in the English sounds and the shifting content” (Berkobien).

² For the theory of a revival of *Antigone* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* alongside *Oedipus at Colonus* see Hesk, p. 174.

³ “μή μ’ ἀτιμάσητέ γε,/ ἀλλ’ ἐν τάφοις θέσθε κἄν κτερίσμασιν”(Sophocles *Oedipus* 560).

⁴ See also, Hesk, p. 184.

⁵ See Froma Zeitlin’s analysis of Thebes as anti-Athens, especially p. 152, for an analysis on the topology of above and below in the city linked to the demarcation between the living and the dead and its interplay with the chronology of death.

⁶ “Someone has just gone off after burying the body, sprinkling its flesh with thirsty dust (διψίαν κόνιν) and performing the necessary rites” (Sophocles *Antigone* 27).

⁷ “for the sake of encouragement and memory” (my translation).

⁸ Lattimore, 135, “The favorite gift to the dead is flowers.” Some things have not changed at all, have they?

⁹ See in Liddel & Low, 294: “[T]he voice of the dead in some sense emanates from the tomb itself.” Sometimes they do respond, giving advice and comforting the living.

¹⁰ “ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφῆς οἴκησις ἀείφρονρος” (Sophocles 86)

¹¹ I read in the use of this odd collocation an allusion to Agamben’s *homo sacer*, (sacred man) a human being that can be killed with impunity. Antigone’s life, enclosed in her closet is not sacred but killable.

¹² For a further analysis on the kind of food Antigone receives and its link to the overall strategy of Creon, see Gsoels-Lorensen, especially pp. 127-8.

¹³ For Derrida's theory on the work of mourning see also <https://www.idixa.net/Pixa/pagixa-0612131426.html>, and especially number 3, "Le Travail du Deuil": "C'est ici, pour réparer cette béance, qu'intervient le *travail du deuil*. Comment supporter la disparition d'un autre, d'un objet investi ou aimé? *Les voix spectrales sont dangereuses. Elles peuvent vous parler, vous persécuter, elles peuvent introduire de la confusion ou du doute. Il s'agit, avec ce travail, de localiser les morts, les identifier, de s'assurer qu'ils restent bien à leur place, stabilisés dans une lignée dont il ne bougeront pas*" (my translation).

¹⁴ This quote comes from the version of *Antigone Nick* without Stone's illustrations. In the illustrated one, it reads: to leave *a* mother's son. This small discrepancy can change the overall meaning. The use of the indefinite article "a" opens up Antigone's speech making her a mouthpiece for any human being subjected to this postmortem violence.

¹⁵ Even though *Antigone* supposedly takes place in Thebes, narrating the misfortunes of the Theban epic cycle, the drama is actually staged in Athens. For Thebes as anti-Athens, see Zeitlin.

¹⁶ See Pericles' Oration (2.44.3) www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0200%3Abook%3D2%3Achapter%3D44%3Asection%3D3

¹⁷ "γυναῖχ' ὅτι /ἐφυνμεν, ὡς πρὸς ἄνδρας οὐ μαχομένα" (Sophocles 10).

¹⁸ For the distinction between the political life, taking place outside and the inside life of the *oikos*, reserved for women, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, chapter II "The Public and the Private Realm," pp. 22-78.

¹⁹ The language appropriate for self-defence is analyzed in Derrida's *Of Hospitality*, where he discusses Socrates' odd demand to be treated as a foreigner before the court of judges. Socrates claims to be a stranger to the juridical jargon, as Antigone is to political speech, reserved exclusively for men. (*OH* 15-17).

²⁰ See Honig, *Antigone Interrupted*, Chapter 6, where she interestingly argues that the first burial could have been effected by Ismene. This is why Antigone reacts so intensely before the body of her brother she sees for the very first time exposed out there. Antigone's later confession would be a chance to protect her sister.

²¹ "ἡ παῖς ὀρᾷται, κάνακωκύνει πικρᾷς/ ὄρνιθος ὀζὺν φθόγγον, ἐς ὅταν κενῆς/ εὐνῆς νεοσσῶν ὀρφανὸν /βλέψῃ λέχος. / οὕτω δὲ χαῦτη, ψιλὸν ὡς ὀρᾷ νέκυν,/ γόοισιν ἐξῳμῶξεν, ἐκ δ' ἀράς κακὰς /ῆρᾷτο τοῖσι τοῦργον ἐξειργασμένοις" (Sophocles 40, 42).

²² This is a common motif in epitaphs. See also Simonides: “Οὐκ ἐπιδῶν νύμφεια λέχη κατέβην τόν ἄφυκτον Γόργιππος ξανθῆς Φερσεφόνης θάλαμον.” “Ere I might behold my bridal bed, I Gorgippus went down to the chamber unescapable of flaxenhaired Persephone” (Edmonds 372-3).

²³ “The ἄωροι were those who died before their time” (Lattimore 185). If we see Polynices as an ἄωρος, we could add the fact that: “And they became, for the evil done them, evil spirits themselves” (185).

²⁴ In her translation of Sophocles's *Electra*, Anne Carson adopts a different technique towards exclamations: “Her vocabulary of screams is so rich that I chose to transliterate her cries letter for letter” (*Oresteia* 79).

²⁵ As Anne Carson argues in her essay “The Gender of Sound”: In general the women of classical literature are a species given to disorderly and uncontrolled outflow of sound—to shrieking, ailing, sobbing, shrill lament loud laughter, screams of pain or of pleasure and eruptions of raw emotion in general “(*Glass* 126). In *Antigo Nick*, Creon produces all these excessive and uncontrollable sounds.

²⁶ Both words derive from the Latin verb *transferro*. See www.etymonline.com/word/transfer and www.etymonline.com/word/translate#etymonline_v_16887

²⁷ In “Variations on the Right to Remain Silent,” Anne Carson reads Homer, the trial records of Joan of Arc, Francis Bacon’s interviews and Hölderlin’s translation of *Antigone*. All of these are connected through the theme of the silences sometimes imposed by translation. The essay starts: “Silence is as important as words in the practice and study of translation.”

²⁸ A small cut in the edge or surface of something. *In the nick of time*: at the very last moment, just in time before something bad happens. As a verb, it could mean “to make a small cut in something” or “to steal something” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 8th edition)

²⁹ See Mary Maxwell, especially pp. 180-181.

³⁰ “ἐπί ζυροῦ” (Sophocles 94)

³¹ “οἰωνῶν τε καί κυνῶν βορᾶς/ τοῦ δυσμόρου πεπτῶτος Οἰδίου γόνου” (Sophocles 96).

³² Notice this linguistic choice by Carson. She almost transliterates the ancient Greek: “βεβαρβαρωμένῳ” (Sophocles *Antigone* 94), achieving a similar acoustic effect and a bold translation.

³³ Polynices is a foreigner, a traitor that betrayed Thebes and lost his status as a citizen. However, he was an autochthon of Thebes. When he returns as a dead body, he demands hospitality of the dust and the earth from which he was supposedly born, or, as the messenger suggests in the original “*οἰκείας χθονός*,” (Sophocles 112) the dirt, the earth that is familiar, homely and hospitable. See also Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 87.

³⁴ Derrida himself generalizes the applicability of the guilt: “Regarding the guilt of the survivor, which is not only that of the concentration camp survivor, but, first of all, of any survivor, of anyone who is mourning, of all work of mourning...” (AoR 383).

³⁵ For the economy required in the writing of epigrams, see Anne Carson, *Economy of the Unlost*, pp. 91-92.

³⁶ See Anne Carson, *Economy of the Unlost* for the use of *stoichedon* and the chequer, p. 79.

³⁷ An interesting detail is that in one of the public readings of *Antigo Nick*, Robert Currie assumed the mute part of Nick, the figure that is present in *Antigo Nick* only to measure everything and everyone. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEfJKjOg3ZU

³⁸ This is a standard phrase for epitaphs. It can be translated as “we lie here.” See Edmonds, pp. 352-3.

³⁹ Donald Pease’s “Antigone’s Kin” in his critique of American exceptionalism uses the figure of Antigone as a philosophical trope to discuss the politics of mourning in the modern American context. The instances he discusses ranges from his critical reading of the Abu Ghraib photographs, the War on Terror initiated after 9/11 and Barack Obama’s rhetoric of empathy after Hurricane Katrina. The spectre of *Antigone* is conjured by Cindy Sheehan, an American mother whose son died in the Iraq war. Sheehan chose to differentiate herself from the image of the grieving mother the state had constructed for her and initiated an anti-war movement, based on counting and accounting for the deaths in Iraq and the futility of killing more people in faraway lands to avenge the painful deaths of your kin in your homeland. Sheehan is a modern Antigone in that she refuses to bury and lament her son within the state structures that offers a military ceremony to honour the heroic deeds of her son. She rather chooses to mourn her son as one more soldier sacrificed at the altar of the military force of a global supra-nation like the US. Sheehan’s act recalls Antigone’s inability to bury and have some control over the burial of Eteocles, the supposedly honored brother.

⁴⁰ Since I started the wordplay on the door [*porte*] Antigone bears [*porte*] on her back, it is inevitable not to mention that she is a mouthpiece, a *porte-voix* in French, a carrier of a voice and a voice that can become a door of welcoming the other, unconditionally.

⁴¹ A metaphorical epitaph, since it does not literally carry a body, a corpse, but also metaphorical since it can be carried around (tracing the etymology of the word to the Greek *meta+fero*, move something). It is, thus, portable.

⁴² We die abroad, as strangers, and not at all always as we would have desired to (my translation).

⁴³ See also *The Classical Outlook*, Whitney and Yeames.

⁴⁴ The definition of “ave” in *Nox* includes the following: “Be well! Fare Well! Be happy! (only in salutations); (on sepulchral monuments) now it is night”. “Vale” is defined using terms such as “Goodbye! (at the close of a letter); (in taking leave of the dead)”. Later on, we read the astonishing entry: “*parum valent Graeci verbo* the Greeks have no precise word for this (but we call it ‘night’). This impossible farewell to the beloved dead has a name in English; it is called night. In Latin, it is *nox*. Despite the fact that Carson does not mention the Greek word for this night, the night as death, Antigone, the figure haunting *Nox*, mourns for her dead and designates her grief as a darkness that has surrounded her; a deprivation of light. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, after the father/ brother’s death, we read: “*νύξ ἐπ’ ὀμμασιν βέβακε*,” night has fallen upon our [hers and Ismene’s] eyes (Sophocles *Oedipus* 586).

3. SNAPSHOTS OF THE PRESENT

...photography (the writing of light—is there a word more Greek?)
 Jacques Derrida

There has never been a time without the photograph, without the residue and
 writing of light.
 Eduardo Cadava

3.1 Introduction: Derrida's *Athens, Still Remains*

After a long wandering, it is about time we returned to the point of origin, namely, Athens and its culture of death. In this chapter, I will discuss the potency of photographs of the city to speak about death and mourning not only today but also in the present constellated with the past to open to the future. I will closely read Jacques Derrida's *Athens, Still Remains*, a text that contemplates the discontinuous but also indissoluble relation between the ancient Greek tragedies and the Greek polis in the present as it is manifested in the photographs that accompany Derrida's attention to the contemporaneity of Greek thought. Derrida's text affiliates the classical past of philosophy and tragedy with the present time of the city, as represented and mediated by the photographic lens. The French title of the book *Demeure Athènes* speaks to the issue of hospitality, since the word *demeure* is both a verb, which means "stay" in the imperative form, and a noun, which denotes "residence".¹ Athens can be a place of residence for a number of people, for native and non-native citizens as well as for *arrivants*, strangers and foreigners seeking shelter. Athens is still, that is, unmovable, in these photographs that represent the city through its ancient and modern ruins; it also remains home to people, citizens and *xenoi*, whose lives may be considered grievable and be worth welcoming, or a place of exile for foreigners and what Butler calls "ungrievable lives" (*Frames of War*, 31). This thesis will end with the reading of a contemporary political, religious and cultural debate in Athens related to the absence of a cemetery for the Muslim community of the city. What does this absence signify in terms of the politics of hospitality to the others, the strangers coming from far away to ask for shelter or their last abode, like Oedipus, the stranger and exile, who asks for the

right to be buried in the city? The inhospitable politics of the modern polis weighs upon people in need of a refuge, claiming their right to hospitality before and after death.

3.2 The Photographs as *Stelae*

Derrida writes *Athens, Still Remains* as a “preface to a collection of photographs by Jean Francois Bonhomme” (ASR Translator’s Note). He analyzes, in a series of stills, or clichés in prose, closely conversing with the photographic texts, his own thoughts about the themes of death, mourning and hospitality to meditate on the temporal palimpsest of the city of Athens, where the classical past coexists with the present. Many of the photographs in *Athens, Still Remains* depict ancient ruins; there is, however a specific obsession with death: tombs, *stelae* and epitaphic monuments, urns, sepulchers and the location of the Kerameikos cemetery² predominate in the photographic collection. These photographs represent monuments erected for remembrance’s sake. However, for Derrida, death is omnipresent even in the most mundane, everyday scenes and photographs. Death seeps:

in the cemeteries, in front of the amassed tombstones, the funeral steles, the columns and the crosses, the archaeological sites, the decapitated statues, the temples in ruins, the chapels, the antique dealers in a flea market, the displays of dead animals—meat and fish—on a market street (ASR 6).

Photographs can speak of death and for the dead. My intention is to examine the hidden connections of photographs with death and the monuments created for the commemoration of the deceased. Photographs can be characterized as the modern equivalent of the epigraphic inscription; they are images of the dead that are indispensable for remembering and commemorating them. They are also important for the mourning rituals of the living, who are able to locate and direct their mourning towards an epitaphic monument crowned by the image of the dead, standing still and unchangeable; a writing of light to combat the darkness of death and forgetfulness. As Roland Barthes writes, the photographs are a reminder of the images of the dead through memory, a spectral writing of light:

And the person or thing photographed is the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object, which I should like to call the *Spectrum* of the Photograph, because this word retains,

through its root, a relation to “spectacle” and adds to it that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead (9).

Eduardo Cadava sees photographs as linked to the undead, the ghosts of the others that remain long after their bodies are gone. He poignantly suggests that “A small funerary monument, the photograph is a grave for the living dead. It tells their history—a history of ghosts and shadows” (Cadava 10). Photographs are linked to death, since what they depict has been at a specific time in the past but no longer is. He makes the connection to the funerary monument; a photograph is a *monumentum*, a monument and a reminder of the dead, marking the impression of the photographed through the interplay of light and shadow. He postulates that “The photograph is a farewell. It belongs to the afterlife of the photographed. It is permanently inflamed by the instantaneous flash of death” (13). Photographs, for Cadava, always relate to death and show the potentiality of the return of the dead as ghosts. He intimates that this new technology does not add a new method of mourning, remembering the dead, or realizing our limitedness and ephemerality; it just emphasizes what was already known about our human condition. Derrida’s text “tells us that we did not have to wait for the invention of photography to learn why we owe ourselves to death, or why, at every step of this wondrous photographic and philosophical journey, we also owe ourselves to life” (ASR back cover).

Athens, Still Remains is guided by and rotates around a singular phrase that occurs to the author during his sojourn in Greece, carrying Bonhomme’s photographs with him. The phrase reiterated and meticulously analyzed throughout the book is an epitaph; it constitutes a common motif for engravers and a theme for inscriptions; it is also an imperative to think about life and death philosophically. This sentence “came alone” to Derrida and he could not decide what it meant outside a context. He wonders “if its inscription was being read on a piece of funerary stone or on its photograph” (ASR 63). Inscribed directly on the stone of the tomb or twice removed from the dead as the photographic copy of the *stèle*, this phrase has the potency to speak of life and death and the debt all humans owe. The epitaphic phrase, inscribed in white letters on the black surface of the first page of the book, a writing of light in the darkness of the black paper, in stark contrast with the rest of it, seems disarmingly plain: “*Nous nous devons à la mort*” [We owe ourselves to death or “we owe each other or we owe one another to death (or up until death)”] (73).³ But what is this debt we owe to death and to the dead? The living are not only responsible for the last gifts of a decent burial and

a remembrance to their dead; they also owe themselves to death, as epigraphs never fail to emphasize. Human life as a debt owed to death is an omnipresent motif in ancient inscriptions. For instance, Simonides has written the quintessential: “*θανάτω πάντες ὀφειλόμεθα*”⁴ (Edmonds 370-371). Life is a loan, a debt that needs to be eventually repaid to the owner, death, which is the ultimate banker. All that remains from human beings is dust; ash; nothingness. If we owe ourselves to death and this is the only certainty, what about human life? Is it futile and meaningless? Cadava suggests that there is yet another debt owed; the one towards life. *Athens, Still Remains* is a philosophical journey in time, running through the city of Athens, pondering on the significance of the debt owed to death in a city that has died multiple times, bears the ruins of her deaths and still survives. Derrida describes the project of his book in the following words:

Each [photograph] signifies death without saying it. Each one, in any case, recalls a death that has already occurred, or one that is promised or threatening, a sepulchral monumentality, memory in the figure of ruin. A book of epitaphs, in short, which *bears or wears mourning* [*porte le deuil*] in photographic effigy (ASR 2).

This book bears or wears an intricate mourning of the past deaths, or the expected losses of the future. Through the ruins of the city, it alludes to the ruins of memory, disremembering or forgetting the past, the deaths the city carries and the mourning it bears. A monumental book, thus, includes the photographs of the monuments of death and becomes itself a *monumentum* and a reminder of past catastrophes and lamentations. As Derrida eloquently writes, the photographer

bears in advance the mourning for Athens, for a city owed to death, a city due for death, and two or three times rather than one, according to different temporalities: mourning for an ancient, archaeological, or mythological Athens, to be sure, mourning for an Athens that is gone and that shows the body of its ruins; but also mourning for an Athens that he knows, as he is photographing it, in the present of his snapshots, will be gone or will disappear tomorrow, an Athens that is already condemned to pass away and whose witnesses...have, indeed, disappeared since the “shot” was taken; and finally, the third anticipated mourning, he knows that other photographs have captured sights that, though still visible

today, at the present time, at the time this book appears...*will have*
[*devront*] to be destroyed tomorrow (27).

Athens is a city that has died and been reborn multiple times; it is a city full of ruins of the past, bearing the past misfortunes and calling forth for memory; it is, above all, a city that has survived carrying all that mourning. These photographs can capture the various mournings Athens bears or wears; the mourning for the classical past that has been transformed into ruins and is now dead, for the present that is bound to disappear before the very eyes of the witnesses and an anticipated one, a mourning for the future that can take away all certainties and turn everything into “mute ash” (*Nox prisco*). The worn out or ruined monuments shown in *Athens Still Remains* reverberate with the aura of the past greatness of the city and highlight their present ruination. Athens is a city where past and present coexist in a non-harmonious and discontinuous way; its ruins loaded with memory and inscribing mourning, expose the nicks and wounds suffered through the millennia. Athens, the polis that hosts Oedipus, as seen in *Oedipus at Colonus*, can still offer hospitality and an abode in death to the *xenos* pleading for a refuge. This city is the mother of tragedy and the home of Antigone. The figure of Antigone, as she has been described so far, carrying her undead on her back and becoming a vault for the dead to rest inside her, can be paralleled to the city of Athens, destroyed and resurrected multiple times, yet still surviving and having the capacity to host and welcome the weary wanderers. Hence, it is not only Athens that “still remains” but also Antigone: “Tomorrow, living Athens [and living Antigone] will be seen keeping and keeping an eye on, guarding and regarding, reflecting and reinflecting on its deaths” (ASR 6).

The photographer of Athens, as well as the translator of Antigone have to bear multiple mournings, since they follow the course of a city and a figure that have repeatedly died and are about to die more times in the future, yet still survive. Derrida acknowledges that there is an overarching figure in this book of photographs and mourning; but it is not Antigone. Pondering on a photograph depicting a street sign, “PERSEFONIS” Street, he wonders: “Does not Persephone reign over this entire book, Persephone, wife of Hades, the goddess of death and of phantoms, of souls wandering in search of their memory?” (49) Antigone can be linked to Persephone, the wife of Hades reigning in the underworld. In Sophocles's text, Antigone is characterized multiple times as a worshipper or even a bride of Hades, a young girl that goes to her tomb, underneath the earth, in a dark cave, while still alive. In her self-dirge, she says:

“I shall be the bride of Acheron” (79). Antigone is a specter present in this book of photographs of ancient ruins and cemeteries, of mourning and the unconditional hospitality towards the dead. She is, more so than Persephone, concerned with the earthly and duly aspect of burial, of placing the beloved dead in the earth, in a place reserved for them in the Athenian land and honoring them with a *stele* bearing their name.

Our journey began in the theatre of Dionysus in Athens, the home of *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*. However, Thebes is only an imaginary location for the staging of these tragedies. Zeitlin observes that “The city I am calling Thebes occupies a very small territory, no larger than the extent of the stage in the theater of Dionysos under the shadow of the Akropolis at Athens” (130). Derrida’s *Athens Still Remains* leads us back to this specific location. The title of this project commenting on Bonhomme’s photographs, first published in a bilingual French-Modern Greek edition was *Athens—in the Shadow of the Acropolis (Athènes—à l’ombre de l’Acropole)*. A full circle has been described from the ancient to the contemporary city, in which theatre and the tragic figure of Antigone can still designate what it means to mourn for a brother—even one with a darker skin and different beliefs—and what it means for a political entity entitled democracy to provide unconditional hospitality in life and death before asking names and imposing rules; to open up to what could potentially destroy it; to welcome a foreigner and a possible enemy, or a savior and a carrier of a gift for the entire community.

3.3 “Demeure, Antigone”: Aborted Mourning and Absent *Semata* in Contemporary Athens

A man, a foreign man, a *xenos* arrives at a foreign land and asks for hospitality. This man is wretched and blind; he is accompanied by his daughter, who guides him. He is an impotent man, at the mercy of the citizens he pleads with for hospitality. The sovereign of this land lets him know that he cannot leave any man suffer in exile. He knows very well what exilic life means and also that all humans owe themselves to death, being merely mortals whose shared humanity is above origin, autochthony or religion. The blind man, Oedipus, finally finds an abode where he descends to his death and expresses his gratitude to the entire city of Athens that has offered him hospitality.

As Derrida argues: “The question of the foreigner concerns what happens at death and when the traveler is laid to rest in a foreign land” (*OH* 87).

A leap to Athens in the 21st century; this place, a place of hospitality in Sophocles, which has recently been receiving thousands of refugees and exiles asking for hospitality, a place without a Muslim cemetery for the large community of Muslims now living in the city.

“If someone from the Pakistani community dies, we send him back to Pakistan,” says Said, the president of the Greek Pakistani community, “the community pays for all the expenses. We have never buried anyone in Greece, as far as I know, at least” (Hulot) (my translation).⁵

According to an article that appeared in the electronic version of *Lifo* magazine, which reports on the absence of a cemetery for Muslims in Athens⁶ and publishes the interviews of certain members of the community, every time a member of the Pakistani community dies in Greece, they have to raise money on their own to transfer the body back to its country of origin. Usually, the whole community contributes to cover the expenses, since there is no help from the state. This process could cost from 1.500 Euros, to much more than that, as the article suggests. The posthumous forced repatriation these people have to be subjected to when they are sent back to Pakistan after their death marks the limits of the state’s hospitality towards the other, the *xenos*, the *allothriskos*.⁷ The Muslim religion dictates that the body should not be exhumed after three years, which is the case in the cemeteries of Athens due to the lack of space. The other options of burial are not very tempting, either. There is some space available at Schisto, the interviewees say, but it is not a proper cemetery since the conditions there are awful. It mostly looks like a mass grave, a place where no one wants to bury their beloved ones. Another option is for the dead to be transported to Xanthi or Komotini, two cities in the North of Greece, where there are Muslim cemeteries.⁸ The psychologically difficult issue that arises from such transportations, however, is that the kin of the dead cannot visit their grave again. Once they send their dead people away, they can only remember and mourn from afar, for they will probably never be able to travel the distance and regularly visit their tombs. The state demonstrates an inability to provide an abode in death, a last resting place, a *dernière demeure* to all human beings asking for its hospitality. The problem is aggravated by the refugee crisis that has hit Greece, with thousands of people—of different religions for the most part—arriving on its shores, fleeing violence and war in their countries of origin. Another

enlightening article reports a Muslim family that was forced to bury their baby in Komotini⁹ and describes the impossibility of mourning and the lament for not being able to mourn properly or to ever revisit the tomb of their dearly beloved dead baby. The article is accompanied by a photograph, taken by Ayhan Mehmet, whose caption is:

A Syrian refugee baby is being buried in Komotini, Greece on September 29, 2017. Syrian refugees Muhammed and Semah [...] had to bury their child, who died before birth, in Komotini 750km away from Athens due to the absence of Muslim graves in Athens (Naci).

The photograph depicts the moment of burial, where a tiny red coffin, shaped like a box, is about to be buried. This coffin/box looks familiar. It reminds of the little paper epitaph Carson creates to come to terms with such mourning at a distance when her brother dies faraway, in another country, under a different name. The literary counterpart of the red coffin, namely *Nox*, is a portable one, unlike the parents' mourning that seems unbearable. *Nox* is an assortment of memorabilia and memories, photographs and images of the dead body, literally carried around by the living. Carson's book can, thus, speak for her personal mourning and the loss of a specific brother, Michael, but it can also become a voice, *vox*, in Latin, speaking for all the dead buried in distant lands, disremembered and misremembered by the state, deprived of their family and friends, yet always carried around within the living.

However, the *allothriskoi* are not necessarily foreigners; they may be legally acknowledged citizens of a state that does not cater for their needs and disallows them hospitality. These lives, though members of the polis, are framed by the sovereignty as ungrievable. Butler's brilliant analysis of the biopolitical frames designating some lives as worth living and being mourned, whereas others as not deserving to be grieved and remembered, can shed light on the violence perpetuated upon the bodies of these people after they die. Instead of feeling the shared mortality and the precariousness it entails for all humans, there is "[a] specific exploitation of targeted populations, of lives that are not quite lives cast as "destructible" and "ungrievable" [...] Consequently, when such lives are lost they are not grievable ..." (*Frames* 31). Butler speaks of frames of war; her description of ungrievable populations is relevant to the peaceful context of Athens, where violence towards sections of the population is more subtle, yet equally inhumane. These people are subjected to the inhospitable politics of the state, deprived of their rights to proper funeral rites and of a tomb and an epigraph that can speak for

them after they are gone. The absent *sema* weighs on the living mourners left behind; they are unable to mourn for their dead; they are far away from the remains of their beloved ones. The sovereign powers in this case do not forbid them from burying their dead via an edict; it is rather the absence of a legal context and an insistent indifference to the specific religious and political needs of the citizens/ *xenoi* who live in the polis that renders the state guilty of the misfortunes to which these people are subjected after death. The mourners, like Antigone, are denied their right to perform the burial rites, to mourn, and, thus, their right to the city. They suffer the restrictions of hospitality not given to their dead by the state that refuses to acknowledge their cultural difference and presence. Carson defines her duty towards Antigone thus: “to forbid that you should ever lose your screams” (*Ant.* 6). Antigone must have the right to be heard and to mourn for her dead, even if her lamentations are an uncomfortable voice that threatens to shatter the state. A silent mourning, the incomplete or absent performance of the burial rituals and the lack of a determinable *stèle* for the deceased weigh on the unfortunate mourners and disallow them the expression of their mourning and the reassurance that their dead rest in peace. The ban on lamentations and the circumscription of the burial rites are not merely extreme measures of the state in cases of emergency. They most disturbingly arise in peaceful contexts, disallowing people their access to mourning and memory of the dead and exempting them from a hospitable treatment. Certain populations, such as the Muslim community of Athens, overlooked as they are by the state, lose their screams and are not granted their right to rites.

3.4 Concluding Remarks: Antigones Today

Before us is a series of photographs yet to be taken: a photograph of Muslims in a mosque in Athens; one of a Muslim cemetery situated in the city, filled with *stelae* accounting for the individuality of the dead and wishing them a peaceful death and the reassurance that they will not be forgotten. The absence of these photographs from the images of the city is a political issue; it is an issue of the state that refuses to acknowledge parts of the population as grievable and, thus, worthy of a tomb and a *stèle* in Athens; worthy of being covered with Athenian dust. The state exempts its citizens from a hospitality after death, from the erection of a *stèle* honoring their lives and respecting their remains. The sovereign powers circumscribe the rights to funeral rites to a number of citizens framed as ungrievable lives, people for whom no mourning

should be dispensed, no tears should be produced and no lamentations should be heard. Derrida, throughout his writing on hospitality, argues for an unconditional opening up and welcoming of the others, before asking their names—or their religion. He proposes that hospitality be given to the *arrivants*, the ones coming from far away; that they should be invited into a place where they can live, a place that can also host them when they are dead. The idea of offering hospitality to the dead means more than just offering a grave and a tomb; it entails letting the dead rest in peace, in their tombs. A failure to bury and perform the funeral rites within the community can lead to turmoil and political unrest, as *Antigone* never fails to remind us. An unconditional hospitality could potentially hurt the state that is in need of law, order and control; or it could potentially save it. For Mustapha Cherif, the solution is the opening up to a plurality of voices and cultures he calls “idioms”:

A civilization must be plural; it must ensure a respect for the multiplicity of languages, cultures, beliefs, ways of life. And it is in this plurality, in this alterity, that a chance—I won’t speak of a solution—for the future is possible, namely, in multiplicity and plurality. Respect for this multiplicity and plurality is very difficult, because we must cultivate the idiom. What I call ‘idiom’ is the uniqueness of the language of the other, that is, the poetry of the other. There is no poetry and opening up without the idiom of the other (81).

It is of utmost importance that we listen to the voices of the disenfranchised, the dispossessed, the exiles in need of hospitality, the living mourning for their dead, the strangers speaking strange languages, the daughters who want to bury their fathers, the sisters who mourn their brothers, the mothers who grieve for their children. Cherif suggests that the culture and language of the others have their own poetry that needs to be heard. Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad speak of the remembrance of the dead and the traces they leave behind for the living, by quoting an Islamic poem:¹⁰

A man after death is a tale.
He vanishes, yet his traces [athar] remain.
[...]The best condition for a man is when the reports of him after death are good.
His memory will endure after him,
Even though his house is empty of his being (155).

This instance of the Muslim idiom is not different from the ones we have traced so far. A human being after death becomes a story, a series of images and words carried only

by the living and epigrammatically inscribed on the *stèle*. The human body vanishes, yet the traces remain; the memories and the memorabilia remind of the life lost; the photographs bear the likeness. All the dead need is a peaceful place to rest where they can be commemorated so that their lives, precarious, ungrievable but lived, will not be forgotten.

Note

¹ See also the Translator's Note of *ASR*.

² Illustration number 1 is entitled: "Kerameikos Cemetery, Street of Tombs, Sepulcher; number 10: Kerameikos Cemetery—Funerary Stele; 15: Kerameikos Cemetery—Lekythos; 17: Agora, Inscription; 18: Kerameikos Cemetery Museum—Detail from a Funerary Stele; 26: Kerameikos Cemetery—Street of Tombs; 31: Agora—Sarcophagus.

³ See the translator's note on the difficulty of translating the French phrase, p. 73.

⁴ "We all owe ourselves to death" (my translation).

⁵ The article was published in Greek and all the extracts or summaries I will provide have been translated by me.

⁶ For the legal context and the historical aspect of Muslim communities in Greece, see Tsitselikis.

⁷ An *allothriskos* is a person that believes in a different religion than Orthodox Christianity, the official dogma of Greece.

⁸ See Tsitselikis, pp. 412-413. The issue of the absence of a Muslim cemetery and a mosque in Athens and other places in Greece is not a new one. It has been discussed by Council's of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, back in 2002 and yet things are still moving very slowly.

⁹ <http://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/greece-lack-muslim-cemetery-athens-compounds-grieving/>

¹⁰ As we read in the Notes of the book, the quote is from: Thurayyā Maḥās, *al-Qiyam al-ruḥīya fī al-shi'r al-ʿarabī* (1964), p. 159.

4. CONCLUSION

Antigone and *Oedipus at Colonus* are two tragedies concerned with the social and political significance of burial rites, highlighting the politics of hospitality that the city is called to offer not only to the living but also to the dead. The traces of the dead, buried inside the living as images and memories and outside in their tombs, remain and attest to the individuality of the deceased. Epigrams are indispensable for mourning, since they mark the location where the remains of the dead remain in peace and quiet and they inscribe the beloved names. In my thesis, I examined two literary works by Carson that can function as epitaphic inscriptions, speaking for the dead and disallowing forgetfulness. Language in these texts/epitaphs is characterized as epigrammatic, since it is sharp, precise and laconic. The texts speak for the singularity of the deceased for the bereaved relatives and friends, while functioning as an alleviation and a guide for mourning both in the public and the personal sphere. Burying the brother is a task for Antigone and for the sister of *Nox*, but it is also the duty of the state ruled by Creon in *Antigone Nick*. However, in the latter case, the brother is not seen as a loving and loved human creature, but is framed as an enemy and the question of “the dust it takes to house enemies” (*Ant.*37) is pushed to its extremity. A line that carries an enormous force and epigrammatically describes *Antigone*, is: “I am someone born to share in love not hatred”¹ (Sophokles 29). Human beings are born to love together (*συνφιλεῖν*), to enter the politics of friendship, to do the difficult work of *filia* (friendship) in difference, always prior to identity, rather than resort to the politics of hatred (*συνέχθειν*). In *Islam and the West*, a dialogue between Cherif and Derrida on the status of Islam today and its relationship with what is usually termed as the West, Cherif thus concludes his thoughts:

May the wheel of time not lock on us, may the wheel of the world not grind up our differences, may the forgetting of that which is required of us be pushed aside—that the different other is indispensable to our lives is common sense: “If God had wanted it, he would have made you a single community, but he wanted, the Koran tells you, to test you through the gift of difference” (93).

The gift of difference is appreciated through a coming together, an opening up to the other through a hospitable welcoming. The last gift one can offer is a decent burial,

respectful of the burial rites of every religion and a *stèle* honoring the memory of the dead. The utmost gift is remembering the dead and commemorating them, since they can teach us a lot about living and loving together as a marker of common humaneness, about our debt towards death and our indebtedness to live together and live well in the polis.

Notes

¹ This translation of the original: “οὗτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν” (Sophocles *Antigone* 523), comes from a translation of *Antigone* by Carson for the theater. This is a different translation than *Antigo Nick*, in which she stays closer to the original text, without cutting lines and introducing her more colloquial and surprising linguistic choices. This version “received its world premiere at Grand Theatre de Luxembourg, in collaboration with the Barbican in London, starring Juliette Binoche and directed by Ivo van Hove,” as we read in the back cover of the book. I prefer it to the rendition of the phrase as: “I have no enemies by birth, but I have friends by birth” (51), in the Loeb edition, edited by Lloyd-Jones.

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ABSTRACT IN GREEK

Η διατριβή αυτή μελετά την *Αντιγόνη* και τον *Οιδίποδα επί Κολωνώ* του Σοφοκλή μέσα από το πρίσμα της φιλοσοφικής ανάλυσης της φιλοξενίας και της πολιτικής του πένθους του Ζακ Ντερριντά με σκοπό την ανάλυση δύο κειμένων της Αν Κάρσον, του έργου *Antigo Nick*, μια επανεγγραφή της *Αντιγόνης* μετά την 11^η Σεπτεμβρίου και του ποιήματος *Nox*, το οποίο είναι ένα λυρικό, αυτοβιογραφικό βιβλίο/επιτύμβια στήλη για το πένθος. Η φιλοξενία, σύμφωνα με τον Ντερριντά, έχει προϋποθέσεις αλλά είναι ταυτόχρονα και απροϋπόθετη· υποστηρίζει την πολιτική της απροϋπόθετης υποδοχής του άλλου, ενώ συνδέεται άρρηκτα με τους νόμους της πόλης που δέχεται τους ξένους. Ο Ντερριντά σχετίζει τον διπλό δεσμό της φιλοξενίας με τις πρακτικές και τα τελετουργικά της ταφής, που είναι εξέχοντα σε κάθε πολιτισμό και παρόντα σε όλες τις κοινωνίες. Η τέλεση των τελετουργικών του πένθους δεν είναι μόνο κοινωνική αλλά και πολιτική πρακτική που μπορεί να θέσει την εξουσία υπό αμφισβήτηση, κάτι που αποτελεί κεντρικό θέμα και στις δύο τραγωδίες του Σοφοκλή, που δίνουν έμφαση στα τελετουργικά της ταφής. Ένα επαναλαμβανόμενο σύμβολο στη διατριβή αυτή είναι η ταφική στήλη, το μνημείο που φέρει το όνομα και τα ίχνη των νεκρών. Τα μεταμοντέρνα κείμενα της Κάρσον λειτουργούν σαν επιτύμβιες επιγραφές και υποδέχονται, δηλαδή προσφέρουν φιλοξενία στο πένθος των ζωντανών, ενώ αναπαριστούν μια κοινωνία του μέλλοντος. Η *Αντιγόνη* αποτελεί το σύμβολο του άτυχου πενθούντα, που πολεμάει για το δικαίωμά του στα τελετουργικά της ταφής για τους συγγενείς που δε θρηνήθηκαν, ενώ υπερασπίζεται την απροϋπόθετη φιλοξενία προς όλους τους νεκρούς. Η τέλεση των τελετουργικών ταφής, ο σεβασμός των νεκρών, η κατασκευή της ταφικής στήλης και η μνήμη των νεκρών είναι καθαρά πολιτικές πράξεις: μπορούν να θέσουν σε κίνδυνο το αφιλόξενο κράτος ή να το διευρύνουν ώστε να υποδεχτεί τα μέρη του πληθυσμού που συχνά ξεχνιούνται και δεν θεωρούνται άξια θρήνου και τους ξένους.