

## Introduction

DAWNE McCANCE

**M**ore than a century after Sophocles wrote the *Antigone*, in what might be called its “first passage” into philosophy, Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, defined tragedy as an imitation of action that, by arousing fear and pity, accomplishes a *catharsis* of such emotions in the spectator (1460). As Jacques Lacan remarks in *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (245–47), with his theory of tragedy, Aristotle invokes the medical meaning that the term *catharsis* had in classical antiquity. It is Aristotle’s “therapeutic” theory that Hegel takes up during the period of tragedy’s “second passage” into philosophy (see de Beistegui and Sparks 1), when he refers in his *Aesthetics* to the *Antigone* as a “most magnificent and satisfying work of art” (2.1218). Hegel is one of a number of late-eighteenth-century thinkers for whom Greek tragedy occupies a position of absolute importance, David Farrell Krell points out in his magisterial study, *The Tragic Absolute*. Yet, despite Hegel’s “last-ditch effort” (3), the period of the “second passage” marks absolute philosophy’s tragic fall, the severance of unity, of one, “not into two, that is, not into two clearly definable units, but into a manifold that resists synthesis” (70). Contemporary critics, heirs of this tragic fall, remain fascinated with those “few houses,” that “small number of families” (Aristotle 1467; 1469), in which the finest tragedies occur. As this special issue attests, the family of *Antigone* continues to fascinate most of all.

Perhaps it is, in part, for reason of the severance of totalizing philosophy into a critical “manifold” that we cannot easily speak of the current return to tragedy as a “third passage.” As Keri Walsh notes in the review essay that opens this issue, many discourses comprise today’s flourishing field of *Antigone* studies, with philosophy enjoying no particular privilege in the field—certainly not in this special issue. At the same time, however, at least according to Walsh, Hegel’s reading of the play is still “the most influential.” For an indication of why this is the case, consider several of the following essays, notably, those by Karin de Boer, Shoni Rancher, and Victoria I. Burke.

Alongside Hegel, Walsh singles out the work of Judith Butler: it is largely to *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*, Walsh maintains, that we can attribute this century's resurgence of interest in the figure and the tragic play. The work of Butler features prominently in this issue, although, as is suggested by the following studies (which engage the writing of Agamben, Derrida, Benjamin, Kristeva, Kierkegaard, Nussbaum, Irigaray, de Beauvoir, Foucault, and others; and such topics as sovereignty, community, modernity, democracy, law, family, ethics, mourning, American politics, cultural difference, gender, genre—and tragedy itself), the field of *Antigone* studies, in keeping with Walsh's contention, is critically rich and diverse. The present issue includes some comparative studies—reading *Antigone*, for instance, with *Wuthering Heights*, and Sophocles with Ariel Dorfman—and Walter Corbella's translation of a fragment of Leopoldo Marechal's *Antígona Vélez*.

Look for the next issue of *Mosaic*: the first in our "feature author" series, it includes an interview with, and two essays by, Rodolphe Gasché.

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