

THE PRISON GRAVES

Too rarely, rarely in heroic strain,
The Players stir us in these hurrying years,
Too seldom thrill our hearts with noble pain,
Or ask for olden grief our gift of tears.

Now thanks to those by whom at length is shown,
Oh not unworthily, or with light intent,
The unyielding tyrant on the Theban throne,
All his outspoken pride and punishment.

By the blind seer foretold, the awful power
Of Divine Justice smites for deeds unjust;
Low, low among his helots see him cower
Like a poor maniac, moaning in the dust.

Stricken he lies; vain all that hoard of wealth
So cowardly hurled to make the helpless fear,
For even Ismene, the frail and trembling, hath
Proved brave at last, for love of her sister dear.

And who that saw thee, sad Antigone,
Bearing the burnished urn with stately tread.
But thought of some among us, sad as thee,
Forbidden to pay due rites unto their dead.

For these the August, the Antique Voices plead
Vainly – in vain Tiresias warns of fate:
Hear one speak lightly – “Not half bad indeed,
And nicely staged, but scarcely up to date.”

A three-starred Captain speaks, who might have stood
In grim Kilmainham yard to give the word,
Yet cannot now see Cleon’s crime renewed
Who flung the Argive’s corpse to wolf and bird.

“Not up to date!” he says. This very day
In an English Prison yard men turned the sod
A strangled malefactor’s corpse to lay
Nigh his, whom some have named “that Knight of God.”

And oh in gentle hearts how keen the pain,
Knowing that last vain wish that he might be,
After the scaffold's ordeal, brought again
To some sequestered grave among the free.

In Ireland? No – far, far beyond his hope
Such thought as that, too wise was he to crave
After the judgement hall, the cell, the rope,
The glorious guerdon of a martyr's grave.

But since he had served so well the world's sad poor,
England has proffered honours in the past,
And would forgive (his generous heart felt sure)
When whom he loved the most he served the last.

So while he calmed his soul to meet the end,
With gloom of prison walls o'ershadowing round,
He asked (not much to ask of foe or friend)
Outside those walls a space of holy ground.

For answer (heavier their's than Creon's blame
Who grudged his foeman's body covering dust)
A burden he was given of blackest shame,
Fit comrade deemed in death for murtherous lust.

* * * * *

And so for England fear the ultimate
Divine decree, as on the Athenian stage
Was shown the just inevitable fate
Dealt to the tyrant of an earlier age.

--Anon., "The Prison Graves," 1918.



The Posthuman and Irish Antigones: Rights, Revolt, Extinction

Natasha Remoundou*

One of the earliest connections between Sophocles' *Antigone* and Irish history emerges in the form of an anonymous poem written during the Great War entitled "The Prison Graves" (see facing text). The poem's composition is usually dated to the period following the Easter Rising, which marked a period of political violence in Ireland's struggle for independence. The fourteen-stanza poem survives as an undated broadsheet, kept in the Department of Ephemera at the National Library of Ireland.¹ The following information regarding the poem's publication is printed below its title: "Written on the production of Sophocles' *Antigone* at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, March 5th, on which day the perpetrator of the Soho sack murder was buried in Pentonville, adjoining the grave of Dr. Crippen and Roger Casement." A secure year of publication is not immediately apparent, but the "Soho sack murderer," also known as "the butcher of Soho," was a man called Louis Voisin (1875–1918), executed by hanging at HM Prison Pentonville for the murder of Emilienne Gerard on March 2, 1918. Given that the broadsheet poem mentions the burial of this man coinciding with a production of a specific *Antigone* only a few days after his death ("March 5th"), one can be reasonably confident that its publication is March 1918.² There is also no reason to doubt

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1 The National Library of Ireland digital archive, "The Prison Graves," Call Number EPH B446.

2 I would like to thank Henry Stead for identifying Voisin as the "sack murderer." The publication date of March 5, 1918 is further corroborated by a refe-

that the poem was not, as the broadsheet declares, written specifically for this occasion. Furthermore, the content of the poem corroborates the contextualizing introduction since stanza eight alludes to Voisin's ("malefactor's") corpse being laid "Nigh his, whom some have named 'that Knight of God'" [i.e., Roger Casement's].

The digital archive of the National Library of Ireland summarizes the item as follows:

First line of verse reads: "Too rarely, rarely in heroic strain..." Roger Casement was buried in quicklime without a coffin in unmarked grave beneath the skeletons of two hanged murderers inside Pentonville Prison, North London, after his execution on August 3, 1916. In 1965 his remains were repatriated to the Republic of Ireland and following a state funeral, his remains were buried with full military honours in the Republican plot in Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin.

The poem is indeed a response to the death of the Irish revolutionary nationalist, progressive, and anti-imperialist Roger Casement (1864–1916).³ It raises ethical questions regarding human dignity and civil rights, reminiscent of those later enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). As we shall see, the poem evokes Polyneices' burial and "the political use of the body after death."⁴ The poem thus uses the new staging of *Antigone* as a contemporary hook to celebrate Casement, and in turn, uses the allusion to Voisin's interment to demonstrate the relevance of both the ancient play and the poem's subject. "The Prison Graves" aligns Sophocles' *Antigone* with notions of revolt, mourning, and minority rights at the outset of Ireland's revolutionary curve during the first half of the twentieth century.

rence to the performance of *Antigone* at the Abbey in Hogan and Burnham, *The Art of the Amateur: 1916–1920*, 159–160. Hawley Harvey Crippen was an American homeopath convicted for killing his wife Cora Henrietta Crippen. He was hanged in Pentonville Prison, London, in 1910. According to Abbey Theatre archivist Mairéad Delaney, the Abbey Theatre production to which the pamphlet refers has yet to be fully confirmed. It appears that it might refer to a rental rather than a self-produced Abbey theatre production. The same broadsheet poem may also be found in the Irish Nationalism Pamphlet Collection database, University of Montana, where it is tentatively dated as of 1917 without attribution.

3 Boyce, "Casement, Roger David (1864–1916), diplomatist and Irish rebel," ODNB.

4 Enright, "Antigone in Galway."

Productions of *Antigone* in Ireland have always been critical gestures of social protest, exposing the fragility of human rights.⁵ This paper examines how applying a posthumanist lens to two key yet underexplored Irish figurations of *Antigone* might unveil new and radical understandings of the tragedy as well as the modern injustices and “inhuman politics” that fuel their Irish reception.⁶ For this study on the possibilities of a posthumanist theorization of *Antigone*, I examine the connecting threads (political, aesthetic, and critical) between the anonymous “The Prison Graves” and the unpublished play-version *The Antigone* by Aidan C. Mathews in 1984.⁷

ROGER CASEMENT AND “THE PRISON GRAVES”

Roger Casement worked for the British Foreign Office as a diplomat. He was also a poet, a humanitarian, and an anti-slavery activist who supported the rights of the powerless across continents while condemning as an eyewitness the colonial atrocities against indigenous communities in Africa and South America.⁸ As early as 1905, he was honored and knighted for his catalytic role in exposing human rights abuses in Congo, documented in the famous “Casement Report.” In 1911 he unveiled the horrors of the rubber industry of the London-incorporated Peruvian Amazon Company in the Putumayo region of the Amazon rain forest. He spent his life collecting testimonies of torture, mass rape, execution, mutilation, and genocide of the region’s native population. The report was designed to stir public outrage and thus push for legislative reforms. Casement’s knighthood was annulled, and he was executed after being convicted of treason by the British for his role in the Irish Easter Rising rebellion of 1916. Casement’s homosexuality, which had remained a subject of controversy after the British government leaked his private diaries, was also used to discredit him, both before and after his death, as an alleged sexual deviant and criminal.⁹

Read as an elegy for Casement’s arrest, conviction, and execution for high treason on August 3, 1916, the poem draws an uncanny parallel

5 See Remoundou-Howley, “Palimpsests of Antigone.”

6 Negarestani, “Drafting the Inhuman,” 183.

7 Remoundou, “Rehearsing Instabilities in Aidan Carl Mathews’ *The Antigone*,” 37–62.

8 Boyce, “Casement, Roger David (1864–1916), diplomatist and Irish rebel,” ODNB.

9 Ezard, “Sex Diaries of Roger Casement found to be genuine.” See also Boyce, “Casement, Roger David (1864–1916), diplomatist and Irish rebel,” ODNB.

between his corpse as a real-life political metaphor and the contentious corporeality of Polyneices. In the eyes of the British government, Casement's body was a traitor's corpse, guilty of crimes on several counts (political certainly, but also perhaps sexual, racial, cultural). It was also, however, (or would become) a hero's corpse for the Irish people: "whom some have named 'that Knight of God'" (8.4).

The treatment of Casement's body, buried in quicklime in the unholy ground within the walls of Pentonville Prison, is of no little importance here. All traces of his material existence were to be removed. This type of erasure is twofold. In a posthumanist context, the recontextualization of the contempt for the nationalist male hero's or fallen foe's racialized, sexualized, and politicized extinct biological corpse (Irish, homosexual, activist) mutually destabilizes a version of Irish identity that contests sexual, cultural, and racial purity. Casement's posthumous corporeal precarity further problematizes this. He embodies the spectrality of an intersectional otherness that persists while positing itself as a threat to the community even in death, i.e., while the dead remains absent or extinct. Despite its Edwardian tone and imagery (its focus not on the body erased so much as the erasing location in which it is laid to rest), the poem, partly through its irony – "*The glorious guerdon of a martyrs grave*" (10.4) – gestures toward an early posthumanist repudiation of a kind of ontological erasure that remained a source of controversy for fifty years. Via *Antigone*, the poem denounces the Western anthropocentric supremacy of humanist ethics in so far as it exposes the corrupt guise of humanitarian imperialism, selective justice, and burial rights. In addition, it is a critique of denying the claim to a decent burial and the effects this denial has beyond the terrain of the human. While it was legitimate to deny burial rights to traitors of the state in Greek antiquity as the ultimate punishment, the same rights have been held fundamental and inalienable since then. Breaching the right to burial is a sign of inhumanity.

Casement was one of the first humanitarians to use the concept of "crimes against humanity,"¹⁰ which now lies at the core of inter-

10 The concept, first codified in the London Charter in 1945 and the legal basis of the Nuremberg trial, appears in Casement's Putamayo Journal, the controversial diary he kept while conducting thorough humanitarian investigations on rubber slavery and the atrocities committed against the Putamayo Indians in Brazil. In October of 1910, Casement writes in two separate passages of the report: "Besides, these men have never been punished for the most awful offences against humanity. Not one." – "This thing we find here is carrion – a pestilence – a crime against humanity, and the man who defends it is, con-

national criminal law. He was committed to a sense of anti-colonial solidarity with indigenous minorities. His condemnation of the tragic regime of racism and oppression precipitated by powerful, capitalist forces in the Congo and the Amazon was (as Casement himself wrote to his friend Alice Green) similar to Ireland's revolutionary claim for independence from British Imperialism: "I was looking at this tragedy [...] with the eyes of another race of people once hunted themselves."¹¹ The ethical ramifications of burial rights and hegemonic power are, of course, played out in the ancient text to which the poem alludes. The choice of this dramatic subtext serves the political impetus to reclaim the right of the living to negotiate the rights of their dead.

During the decades after Casement's execution, successive British governments refused formal requests for the repatriation of his remains, while the details of his burial were kept secret from the Irish public and political opinion for many decades. Casement's reinternment in 1965, echoed in the case of his contemporary Thomas Kent (1865–1916), also executed in 1916 and whose exhumed remains were buried in his Irish hometown as late as 2015, exemplifies the importance of burial, mourning, and memory in countering the erasure of the dishonored dead. Through the prism of *Antigone's* drama, the following lines capture not simply the ethico-political frame of reference rejecting fundamental burial rites and rights but also the impact this dismissal bears on the immediate environment, human and animal:

And who that saw thee, sad Antigone,
 Bearing the burnished urn with stately tread.
 But thought of some among us, sad as thee,
 Forbidden to pay due rites unto their dead.

For these the August, the Antique Voices plead
 Vainly – in vain Tiresias [*sic*] warns of fate:
 Hear one speak lightly – "Not half bad indeed,
 And nicely staged, but scarcely up to date."

sciously or unconsciously, putting himself on the side of the lowest scale of humanity." In *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement*, 1997, 173 and 178; see also Goodman, 2009.

11 Quoted in Mitchell, *The Amazon Journal of Robert Casement*, 280, from a letter to Alice Green written on April 20, 1907. The phrase is also read as an allusion to Casement's sexuality and the persecution of gay men by British law as "another race of people"; Mirzoeff, *Introduction*, 80.

A three-starred Captain speaks, who might have stood
 In grim Kilmainham yard to give the word,
 Yet cannot now see Cleon's crime renewed
 Who flung the Argive's corpse to wolf and bird.

The anonymous poet casts David Lloyd George, the current Prime Minister, as a Cleon figure overseeing the immoral treatment of a corpse.¹² Following a series of protracted legal battles and diplomatic negotiations between the Irish State and England, Taoiseach Éamon de Valera began formal requests for the return of Casement's remains from Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1953. The specific binding legal obligations cited by Churchill then demanded that the remains of executed prisoners not be exhumed. Casement's remains were finally repatriated to Ireland in 1965. Preceding the results of this legal and sovereign struggle regarding the ownership of the corpse, some of the most memorable lines of "The Prison Graves" highlight Casement not only as a shamed national martyr but as an ally of the proletariat, of the defenseless, the vulnerable, and the poor across a transnational trajectory:

In Ireland? No – far, far beyond his hope
 Such thought as that, too wise was he to crave
 After the judgement hall, the cell, the rope,
 The glorious guerdon of a martyr's grave.

But since he had served so well the world's sad poor,
 England has proffered honours in the past,
 And would forgive (his generous heart felt sure)
 When whom he loved the most he served the last.

Read both as anti-colonial critique and lament, the poem eulogizes the legacy of an early twentieth-century human rights advocate and revolutionary activist who fought for the rights of the disenfranchised and the working class. In its astute dramatic and political energy, the stark proem to *Antigone's* modern currency enacts a decolonial, human rights performative claim to justice. As such, the classical myth, filtered

12 The Casement debate is also taken up in the poem "The Ruby Kid" by W. B. Yeats, who also wrote about Antigone in his series "A Woman Young and Old," written between 1926 and 1929. "From the 'Antigone'" is used as the coda to *Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933); see Yeats, *Winding Stair*.

across genres, resists a rigid sense of classification because it decenters the humanist idea of *anthropos* sung in the famous choral “Ode to Man” (*Antigone* 332–375). By the end of the twentieth century – the era of failed utopias and revolutions on the one hand and advanced capitalist aspirations on the other – the play provides fresh insights into what it means to occupy the category of the human in historical and material terms. Such mutually bold interrogations between *Antigone* and human rights discourse delineate an organic posthumanist horizon highlighting the relevance of classics to contemporary intersectional perspectives regarding class, gender, law, and environmental justice.

AIDAN MATHEWS’ COLD WAR ANTIGONE

The profound posthumanist imbrications of human rights discourse and *Antigone* in Ireland move past the postcolonial premise of the second half of the twentieth century. The myth transforms into a potent feminist subject that confronts in performance the ever-growing injustices of neoliberal capitalism, sexism, racism, and ecocide. The following pages examine the *Antigone* of playwright Aidan Carl Mathews (b. 1956). Mathews was educated at University College Dublin, Trinity College, and Stanford University, where he studied anthropology and religion under the French philosopher René Girard. A prize-winning author in diverse genres, Mathews has published plays, poetry, short stories, and a novel.¹³ His *Antigone* was first performed in 1984, the year of the Irish *Antigones*.¹⁴ The

13 Recently, he retired as a drama producer in RTE radio. He taught English at St. Louis High School, Rathmines Dublin, and at Belvedere College. Mathews won many literary awards: the Irish Times Award in 1974; the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award in 1976; the Macauley Fellowship in 1978–79; the Ina Coobrieth Poetry Prize in 1981, and an Academy of American Poets Award in 1982.

14 For an excellent discussion of Irish receptions of the play, see Macintosh’s “Irish Antigone and Burying the Dead.” See also Remoundou-Howley, *Palimpsests of Antigone*, “Antigone stopped in Belfast: Stacey Gregg’s Ismene,” “Rehearsing Instabilities in Aidan C. Mathews’ *Antigone*,” and “The Suppliants of Syria.” At the beginning of the twentieth century, *Antigone* is translated into the Irish language by Pádraig de Brún in 1926 and by Seán Ó Carra in 1973 and Prin Duignan (2008) from Jean Anouilh’s version. Other Irish versions of *Antigone* include works by Christine Longford, Brendan Kennelly, Seamus Heaney, Tom Paulin, Conall Morrison, Stacey Gregg, Owen McCafferty, Pat Murphy, Declan Donnellan, Colm Tóibín, Darren Murphy, Marina Carr, Frank McGuinness, and Carlo Gébler. See also Arkins, *Irish Appropriations of Greek Tragedy*; Barry, “Cinema and Feminism”; Brown, *Uncompromising Female Spirit*; Cairns, “Soph-

year that had become synonymous with totalitarian terror thanks to George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) was a bumper year for productions of Sophocles' *Antigone* in Ireland. After Mathews' play, which opened in August, three more *Antigones* appeared: Tom Paulin's *The Riot Act*, Brendan Kennelly's *Antigone*, and Pat Murphy's film *Anne Devlin*.

Mathews has always been fascinated by the sweeping forces of gender violence upon the immediate community, historical victims and scapegoats, neglected figures, missing identities, and the unsafeguarded topography of human rights. A few months before the premiere of his *Antigone* on August 1st, 1984,¹⁵ his play *The Diamond Body* (with Olwen Fouéré also in the leading role) was staged in Dublin and London, dramatizing the lynching and murder of its Greek transgender protagonist, Stephanos. Mathews would later collaborate again with Fouéré and Roger Doyle on a play based on Antonin Artaud's visit to Ireland during the late 1930s and his subsequent confinement and death in a psychiatric clinic in Paris. As an Irish Independent reviewer explains, Mathews' *Antigone* was not "just the Classic Greek play in modern dress" but "a retelling of twentieth-century experience and apprehensions."¹⁶ In the playwright's own words:

It is a tragedy that Antigone should die. But it's more of a tragedy for the State than it is for her. Enigmatic and admirable, she has always represented the dignity of conscientious objection of heroic

ocles' *Antigone*"; Causey, "Review of Conall Morrison's *Antigone*"; Deane, "Field Day's Greeks (and Russians)"; Harkin, "Irish Antigones"; Heaney, "Me as in Metre"; Kennelly, *Antigone*; McDonald, "Classics as Celtic Firebrand," "The Irish and Greek Tragedy," "Translating *Antigone*"; Murrey, "Three Irish Antigones"; Paulin, "The Making of a Loyalist," "Antigone"; Richards, "In the Border Country"; Roche, "Ireland's Antigones"; Steiner, *Antigones*; Taplin, "Difficult Daughter"; Tóibín, "Oh, oh, Antigone"; Enright, "Antigone in Galway"; Wilmer, "Prometheus, Medea and Antigone," "Women in Greek Tragedy Today," *Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism*; Torrance, "Post-Cease-fire Antigones and Northern Ireland."

15 The cast included Fidelma O'Dowda (Ismene), David Heap (Creon), Paul Raynor (Haemon), Mannix Flynn (Chorus), Susie Kennedy (Chora), Nigel Mercier (Critic/Guard); the play was directed by Michael Scott who was also responsible for the lighting, music, and sound of the production. The set and the costumes were designed by Barbara Bradshaw and Brian Power, while Amelia Stein was responsible for the photography.

16 Anon. "Getting Away from Heroes and Villains."

dissent. Her pregnant sister Ismene, on the other hand, stands for a thankless sanity, the decency of daily life. Creon, in turn, embodies the appalling dilemma of a man torn between duty and inclination, family feeling and political responsibility. And the Chorus, as always, expresses the fickleness of a collaborationist rabble, of those who never fail to see the writing on the wall.¹⁷

Feminist readings of *Antigone* tend to interpret its protagonist's mourning labor as the female task of sustaining life and the body.¹⁸ In Mathews' play, the opaque entanglements of classical humanism are represented in proletarian ethics and gender politics. Antigone's female suffering, for example, is intensified by her social class, which is figured against the abstractness of law and kinship. Mathews' experimental *Antigone* is a speculative examination of the complex relationship between historical materialism and myth against the backdrop of Cold War Ireland. Flawed and vulnerable in her anti-revolutionary figuration, this Antigone demonstrates the imperfection and disunity of being human. As such, the play creates a provocative contestation of both the classical tradition and political ideologies and allegiances. In a post-nuclear plot twist, Antigone's praxis is not simply defined by her human status. She is rather transfigured into an archetype, immune to extinction, and forced to relive her classical afterlives by repeating the same labor for millennia. She is caught in a cycle of resurrection, trapped between survival and extinction, which creates an environment in which violence and constant struggle have been normalized.

In 1982 the director Michael Scott and designer Bronwen Casson were struck, while reading a Penguin translation of *Antigone*, by the tragedy's experimental possibilities. Mathews, still a student at Stanford University, was invited to translate the play, a job for which he was qualified since he had begun studying ancient Greek at school in Dublin in the late 1960s. On Mathews' return to Dublin, the team began their collaboration on what the young playwright would boldly call *The Antigone*. The script could not be called a translation in the traditional sense but was considered by its author as a conversation or dialogue with the ancient tragedy.¹⁹ He dedicated his new version to his mentor, the philosopher René Girard. The play was produced in a year that marks a reawakening of political tensions and losses

17 Mathews, *The Antigone*, 1.

18 See, e.g., Rawlinson, "Beyond Antigone," esp. 104.

19 Jones, "Cognizant of the Past," 97.

for working-class rights and civil liberties in Ireland. In Mathews' hands, Sophocles' tragedy becomes the platform for a robust critique not only of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the "disappeared" paramilitary rebels of the IRA²⁰ but perhaps of the human species itself. The play reaches further in its ambition than Irish politics, making a global statement about martyrdom and human rights crises.

Ireland in 1984 experienced widespread unemployment and high levels of emigration. The Irish Labour Party was defeated in the European elections, and Britain and Ireland were rent by industrial action, rioting, and protest. Days before the premiere of Mathews' *Antigone* in Dublin's Project Arts Centre, Mary Manning, a young cashier at Dublin's Dunnes Stores, refused to put South African grapefruit through the till and was suspended by her employers. Her and her colleagues' anti-Apartheid strike ran parallel to one of the most entrenched industrial disputes in British history – the miners' strike in England, resulting from Margaret Thatcher's conservative government's closure of twenty coal mines, causing the loss of more than twenty-thousand jobs. In addition, the Criminal Justice Act was passed in 1984, a bill that gave the Irish Police the right to detain and interrogate anyone suspected of criminal activity in Ireland.²¹

The spirit of political agitation and class struggle is proportionately reflected in the rich archival holdings surrounding the production of this 1984 *Antigone*. The production, funded by the Youth Employment Service and the Arts Council of Ireland, was plagued by financial adversities. The production cannot be disentangled from the wider culture of economic recession, unemployment, and sectarianism.

THE ANTIGONE ARCHIPELAGO

Historical time is collapsed in Mathews' *Antigone*. It is set during an urban plague in 1980s BC Ireland "soon after Sparta entered the war on the German side," where "Communist terrorists are being brought to justice by the democratically elected interim Government."²² Antiquity and modernity are mixed, creating a state of timelessness or omnitemporality. With Olwen Fouéré in the leading role, the first 1980s Irish *Antigone* is reconfigured as a worn-out actress-archetype

20 See Remoundou-Howley, *Palimpsests of Antigone*.

21 The Criminal Justice Act of 1984 is available online at irishstatutebook.ie.

22 Mathews, *The Antigone*, 1.

who has performed her role on a loop for the past three millennia. She and a troupe of actors gather on stage to give their farewell performance. The writer sought to emphasize a sense of ideological disorientation, a sense of the protagonist's not-belonging. To this end, the cast suffers from amnesia, and they have no clear notion of space and time in their meta-theatrical no-man's land:

It seemed an excellent idea to collapse the stage space, blur the line of demarcation between actor and audience and thereby achieve a moment of deconstruction, of reciprocal leakage from one sanitized area to another. Besides we had a warrant from the play itself: "Antigone" does not just mean anti-violence; it also means anti-theatre.²³

Written and produced as a critique of systematic institutional violence and neoliberal capitalist oppression during the epoch of the anti-revolutionary zeitgeist in a language reflective of the savage and fragmentary nature of human action, Mathews' *Antigone* is essentially an anti-tragedy and an anti-play. Mathews was influenced by the ideological bewilderment expressed in the Theater of the Absurd, surrealism, and the work of Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco,²⁴ Franz Kafka, Jean Anouilh, Luigi Pirandello, Dario Fo, and Judith Malina. Above all, he is critically indebted to post-structuralism, cultural anthropology, and theology, for his is an *Antigone* of postmodern conjectural antagonisms. In the Brechtian sense of theater as a practice of dialectics, it is a play that is both political and philosophical, written on the limits of a farce, agitprop satire, and the tragic. It is also a play that emerges against the backdrop of working-class struggles and cataclysmic political, environmental, and historical traumas of the twentieth century.

Cognizant of Brecht's and Anouilh's versions of the tragedy, Scott sought to "recuperate the text from tradition and to renew the hysteria and crisis of the primal plot so that the Theban site could host a thermonuclear scene."²⁵ *Antigone* is imagined as a

23 Mathews, "The Antigone," 18.

24 In his *Rhinoceros*, Ionesco criticizes blind allegiance to totalitarian ideologies like Nazism and communism by alluding to the atrocities committed by both the Nazi and Soviet regimes. At the conclusion of the play and in a posthumanist framework, Ionesco has one last man who survives on Earth and resists metamorphosing into an animal in the form of a rhinoceros.

25 Mathews, "Aidan and Antigone," 18.

hypochondriac resident of the proletariat's slums and a member of a degenerate acting troupe. Her classical, aristocratic (white, European, Western) figure has become a commodity. A proletarian actor now, she has been performing the same role for millennia in a post-nuclear contaminated prison state located in Thebes/Dublin. Peteokles (Eteocles) is a bourgeois-turned-rebel mediary. Polyneikes (Polynices) is remembered as a communist terrorist who has been airbrushed from the records of the police state. A bibliophile Ismene religiously reads leftist texts such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973), and the Chorus is the real state oppressor.²⁶

Solzhenitsyn's autobiographical narrative is woven into the fabric of *The Antigone's* production, helping it confront the collective historical legacies of political systems based on necropower, the central motif of which is the concentration camp. The organic Gulag-like habitat of the post-apocalyptic, post-World War II, polluted Thebes/Dublin is constructed around the imaginary of progress, humanism, and democracy. To paraphrase Cornelius Castoriadis, this transforms Thebes/Dublin into a tragic biopolitical regime.²⁷ In such an environment, military surveillance and the kinds of thought control associated with carceral enclosures are, in the universe of the play, suffered by indignant neo-proletarians of the late twentieth century (BC).²⁸ As a trope for the knowledge systems, technologies, networks, and mechanisms akin to this type of inhuman continuum, Antigone is metamorphosed into an inmate who

26 Russian Nobel-Laureate writer, Soviet dissident, and Soviet Gulag prisoner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) documents abject life in the Soviet prison camp system in his historical memoir *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973), which he wrote between 1958 and 1968. An outspoken critic of communism, he fought to raise global awareness of political repression in the USSR by exposing the Gulag system. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the three-volume opus was officially published in Russia in the 1980s, outraging the Soviet authorities. The writer lost his Soviet citizenship rights and found refuge in Germany, Switzerland, and then in the US, where he taught at Stanford University. In West Germany, Solzhenitsyn stayed in Heinrich Böll's house, another writer who was inspired by *Antigone* in his work and who lived in Ireland. In 1990, he returned to Russia with his citizenship fully restored after the dissolution of the Soviet Union to remain there until his death in 2008.

27 Castoriadis, "The Greek and the Modern Political Imaginary," 112.

28 On "carceral archipelago" and carceral society more broadly, see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, esp. 333.

speaks as if history has reached a point of forced interruption. The torture of the community consists of perpetually surviving atrocities and reliving their suffering and auto-extinction.²⁹ Mathews' play features arrests, show trials, slave labor, camp rebellions, passive uprisings, strikes, and internments to the neoliberal panopticon, the Western Gulag of the late twentieth century, looking back at a history of inherited humanist ideals.

Along the way, reflecting the fate of female victims of fascism (past and present), Antigone's examination of her *moira* ("destiny") of internal exile epitomizes the rift between revolt and gender oppression while detailing the commonplace events in the life of a prisoner. Antigone despairs because her brother Polyneices, who lurks in folk memory illegally, has been reduced to a non-person. He has been assassinated and buried somewhere by the secret police, he is one of the "disappeared." Moreover, Creon, *il Presidente*, has erased his name from state documents. His identity has suffered a *damnatio memoriae*; there is no official photograph of him, no body to bury, no trace left.³⁰

Solzhenitsyn traces the root of all evil to ideological fanaticism. He writes:

Ideology – that is what gives evildoing its long-sought justification and gives the evildoer the necessary steadfastness and determination. That is the social theory which helps make [...] acts seem good instead of bad [...] That was how the agents of the Inquisition fortified their wills: by invoking Christianity; the conquerors of foreign lands, by extolling the grandeur of their Motherland; the colonizers, by civilization; the Nazis, by race; and the Jacobins (early and late), by equality, brotherhood, and the happiness of future generations [...] Without evildoers there would have been no Archipelago.³¹

"Ideology" is responsible for the sprawling network of totalitarian terror through Nazi racism and the Leninist or Stalinist interpretations and implementations of Marxism. Totalitarian zealotry and ideologies rest on the power to implement destructive policies as a vision of a

29 Castoriadis has discussed briefly and suggestively the effects of *monos phronein* ("being wise alone") upon the community in the tragedy of *Antigone*, presenting it as a test case in the complexity of the dialectics inherent in collective life. Castoriadis, "The Greek and the Modern Political Imagination," 112.

30 Remoundou-Howley, *Palimpsests of Antigone*.

31 Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, 77.

so-called rational Eden, a redemptive humanist utopia that potentially becomes a force of radical evil.³² Such ideas are keenly operative in Mathews' *Antigone*. Via Sophocles' *Antigone*, Girard's philosophy, and Solzhenitsyn's novel, Mathews stands opposed to communist and religious dogmatism. Instead, he may be seen to recognize the destruction of individual qua individual in posthumanist terms.

MATHEWS' GIRARD'S ANTIGONE

Girard's philosophical formulations and their impact on Mathews' *Antigone* are rich and complex and require the space of an essay of their own. We know, however, that Girard's teachings were essential to Mathews at this time because he said as much in an interview. He felt that Girard, under whom he studied several myths, had "a new teaching, which he offered with authority."³³ During the play, a "Pogrom Note" (in place of a Program Note) was handed out to members of the audience, along with copies of the controversial Justice Bill. The play was, according to Mathews, "a study of martyrlic energies" and biopolitical abjection.³⁴ At the end of the tragedy, Creon is alone, a "half-demented witness to a casual massacre."³⁵ Drawing inspiration from Girard's theory of "mimetic desire" and "scapegoat mechanism," Mathews mobilizes a posthumanist agenda regarding structural exclusions and systems of violence that is thoroughly anti-revolutionary.³⁶ In *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (1987), Girard responds to Simone Weil's interpretation of *Antigone* as a precursor of Jesus in antiquity.³⁷ He writes about mimesis and desire in anthropological and largely anti-Marxist or anti-Freudian terms. In brief, Gerard felt that *Antigone*, as a proto-Christ figure, reveals collective hatred and the false difference – the presentation

32 See, e.g., Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. 470; 458.

33 Jones, "Cognizant of the Past," 97.

34 Girard discusses Sophocles' *Antigone* in his *Violence and the Sacred*, incl. 303, 293; *Job, the Victim of his People*, passim but esp. 86, 113–114; and *Things Hidden*, 244–245. See also Mathews' essay, included in an edition celebrating Girard's thought, "Knowledge of Good and Evil," 17–28.

35 "Pogrom Note," 1984.

36 Girard theorizes on the notion of "mimetic desire" in "Mimetic Desire in the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky." Spatially, the underground metaphor can be transferred to *Antigone's* cave in Sophocles and in Mathews' interrogation room, where the tragedy is sealed.

37 Girard, *Things Hidden*, 244–245; Weil, *Intimations of Christianity Among the Greeks*, chapter 3.

of unanimous persecution – as the foundation of humanity.³⁸ This is in striking contrast to Ireland’s historical genealogies, which, since the Irish Civil War and the Easter Rising, increasingly demonstrated a proclivity for nationalist martyrdom. From the 1960s onwards in Northern Ireland, a legitimate, nonviolent civil rights movement was catalytic in castigating the visceral reign of the IRA against the Catholic population of the region while protecting human rights.

THE ANTIGONE (1984) IN CONTEXT

Discussions about *Antigone* for Dublin’s Project Art Centre stage began when Ronald Reagan (the US president at the time) visited Dublin as part of his Irish tour. Mathews recalls: “It was oddly prophetic. The whole area in Dublin Castle had been cordoned off. We spent the day walking empty streets.”³⁹ Reagan called the Soviet Union an evil empire that would be left on the “ash heap of history.” The anti-communist Thatcher, too, was fearful of the Soviets, whom she described in 1976 as being “bent on world dominance.”⁴⁰ During his visit, Reagan claimed his direct Irish ancestry dated back to the period of the legendary Brian Boru.⁴¹ The four-day visit of Reagan, described by Ronal O’Leary as a “pollution of our shores” (*Hot Press* 1984), involved, among other things, a trip to his ancestral home in the small town of Ballyporeen, Co. Tipperary. He addressed a joint session of the *Dáil* (Lower House of Parliament) and Senate in Dublin, during which he stated that US policy was not to interfere in matters relating to Northern Ireland. However, he criticized the violence in the region and supported the *New Ireland Forum*, a report established to discuss ways of restoring peace and political stability in Ireland, North and South. Despite his support, the visit caused a storm among intellectual and leftist circles, precipitating protests. The 1984 Irish demonstrations protested against US foreign policy, particularly Reagan’s backing of the Contras in Nicaragua and Honduras, as well as his political coalition and friendship with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, whose stance toward Irish politics and social matters had proved provocatively rigid.

38 Gerard, *Things Hidden*, 244–245. For discussion, see also Coillie, “Antigone,” esp. 92–93.

39 Anon., “Getting Away from Heroes and Villains.”

40 Thatcher, “Britain Awake: Speech at Kensington Town Hall.”

41 References to Brian Boru can be found in the old texts and chronicles *Annals of Tigemach*, *Annals of Ulster*, and *Brjáns saga*. Brian Bóruma mac Cennétig (941–April 23, 1014) was the first and only High King of Ireland. For further reading, see Chatterton Newman, *Brian Boru: King of Ireland*.

Mathews' *Antigone* was staged with the notoriously political corpse of the imprisoned Northern Irish hunger striker Francis Hughes (1956–1981) in the forefront of Irish minds.⁴² Since Hughes died in the custody of the sovereign British state, his body, like Casement's before him, was held by the enemy (this time Thatcher's England). *The Antigone* appeared just three years after the 1981 hunger strike when ten republican inmates of the H-Blocks had starved themselves to death to protest the British government's attempts to impose a criminalization policy within the Northern Irish prison system denying republicans the status of political prisoners. Their deaths led to riots in Northern Ireland.

An integral aspect of the movement's ideology entailed the reanimation of a discourse of martyrdom whereby famous republican heroes and martyrs of the past served in the struggle for independence that would lead to a united Ireland, north and south. Mathews' text, attuned to these historical and ethical intricacies, employs the rebellious gestures of civil disobedience, mourning, and death as acts of defiance against autocratic rule, economic, ideological, and religious. However, the idolatry of martyrs cannot hold insofar as the chain of violence and scapegoating persists. Revolt gives way to hubris with the enunciation of fanaticism, terrorism, and totalitarianism.

In Mathews' version, the streets of a pandemic-stricken Thebes/Dublin are littered with weapons, burned-out jeeps, bazooka shells, and ash. At the same time, the streets reverberate with the political and social unrest of the previous century. "The immediate location of the play is vaguely post-nuclear: It could be Stalingrad in 1943; St. Petersburg in 1917, Nagasaki in 1945; any shattered culture."⁴³ The character of Heman (Haemon), in military dress, forces the Chorus into submission from the first act signaling the end of history: "We have an opportunity to collapse History [...] To begin all over. To resume time. To step out of the soiled clothing

42 Seamus Heaney wrote his version of *Antigone*, *The Burial at Thebes*, in 2004, with Hughes' case in mind. In his article "Title Deeds: Translating a Classic," Heaney argues: "But before the remains of the deceased could be removed that evening from Toome, they had first to be removed from a prison some thirty or forty miles away. And for that first leg of the journey the security forces deemed it necessary to take charge and to treat the body effectively as state property. The living man had, after all, been in state custody as a terrorist and a murderer, a criminal lodged in Her Majesty's Prison at the Maze, better known in Northern Ireland as the H Blocks." *Ibid.*, 122.

43 Anon., "Getting Away from Heroes and Villains," 18.

of culture.”⁴⁴ Such interrupting accords the state with the role of the oppressor of the people, the tyrant of the masses. Likewise, Mathews’ state ruler is a dictator, and Antigone performs her anarchic revolt in a hegemonic environment of law-making and law-preserving. Antigone’s example enacts doubting the legitimacy of manmade laws, “whose origin,” as Leroux writes, “remains unknown, unattributable, and undecidable.”⁴⁵ Embodying a posthuman feminist claim rather than a mere material apparatus emanating from a strictly unitary classical (therefore humanist) perspective, Antigone’s agency both resists and embraces her persistent extinction – cultural, literary, ontological, or biopolitical – as an act of revolt. In a predominantly post-industrial, post-anthropocentric age of militarized “surveillance capitalism,”⁴⁶ she survives beyond the human and despite the monolithic humanist category of the figure of “Man” as a *zoe*-driven paradox.⁴⁷ Antigone resists her species and survives her death. Hence, as an ecofeminist subject, Mathews’ version of *Antigone* is written in direct opposition to multiple sites of oppression, providing expanded scrutiny of the intricate workings of bio/necropower. Under these terms, it encompasses a series of forms of resistance.

As Christopher Murrey writes:

Mathews takes the postmodern position that *Antigone* is an ongoing drama, a script built on other scripts, a script that only seems to have a conclusion, and in its application to Irish life, a script which uses the stage space as a metaphor for the vacuum which echoes back the cries of unheeded repression, in what has already been termed the “Uncertain Eighties.”⁴⁸

The play thus draws attention to a time of ethical and socio-political contingencies marked by a bipolar distinction between human exceptionalism and dehumanized others in both Irish and transnational contexts.

44 Mathews, *The Antigone*, 5.

45 Leroux, “Communal Blood, Fraternal Blood,” 163.

46 Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.

47 I use the term *zoe* here in the context of Rosi Braidotti’s theorization of the *zoe*-oriented lines of inquiry in the Humanities currently as a critical posthuman politics of life. See Braidotti, *Posthuman Feminism*, 134–139.

48 Murrey, “Three Irish Antigones,” 128.

ANTIGONE V. CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL

The Antigone responds to a number of heated social issues and working-class struggles, which remained insoluble and marked the “crashing defeat for liberal opinion.”⁴⁹ “This was the year,” as Murrey explains, “of the New Ireland Forum Report; [...] the year of the Kerry Babies’ Case; the year after the failure of the abortion debate and the year before its sequel, the debate on divorce among others.”⁵⁰

The overtly militant stance of American and Soviet powers that are inextricably linked to these tensions are acutely reflected in Mathew’s *Antigone*. On an international level, this is the time following the Soviet War in Afghanistan when Reagan supported counterinsurgencies in third-world regions while denouncing the Soviet Union and its ideology. Within a human rights framework, the play serves as an anti-imperialist critique of us politics and simultaneously resists a specific legislative order with the passing of the Irish Criminal Justice Bill of 1984. Drawing its political and cultural force from posthumanism, the play-version both contains and enacts the debate marked, according to Rosi Braidotti, by three momentous and interconnected shifts in the Anthropocene:

First, at the social level we witness increasing structural injustices through the unequal distribution of wealth, prosperity and access to technology. Second, at the environmental level we are confronted with the devastation of species and a decaying planet, struck by climate crisis and new epidemics. And third, at the technological level, the status and condition of the human is being redefined by the life sciences and genomics, neural sciences and robotics, nanotechnologies, the new information technologies, and the digital interconnections they afford us.⁵¹

In locating one of the most emblematic Greek tragedies of the humanist tradition at the crossroads of the posthuman in modern Catholic Ireland, it is important to read Mathews’ *Antigone* as a quintessentially decolonial effort to identify the historical conditions of the emergence of a critically anti-classical re-cognition. In this critical post-Marxist and post-Christian light, in his own writings almost four decades ago,

49 Murrey, “Three Irish Antigones,” 129.

50 Ibid.

51 Braidotti, *Posthuman Feminism*, 3–4.

Mathews anticipates the posthumanist turn of the classical tradition in the late twentieth century:

Antigone, like all the major tragedies of the Greek canon, exists in cowed form. It had been sedated by its own stature. The harm of its art has been drained from it. As a result, it's suffered a sea change, a fate worse than death; it has become a classic. There are a great many reasons why this is a shame. For one thing, *Antigone* subverts the very notion of a classic, if by classic we understand the text which inscribes the meaning of history – and indeed, the history of meanings – in a fashion approved by ruling parties through their deputies in the Departments of English. *Antigone*, in fact, is the record of a refusal on the part of an individual to assent to such practices. Creon attempts to manipulate narrative, to found a text, to write a classic.⁵²

Mathews' critical strain thus reflects the period's multiple crises in Ireland and globally. The early 1980s in Ireland were a time of political and socioeconomic instability. The Troubles continued in the North of Ireland, with the Hunger Strikes causing severe unrest through 1981, the year that forty-eight people died and nearly two hundred were injured in a fire at the Stardust Ballroom in Artane, Dublin. On an international level, the first part of the decade was dominated politically by Reagan and Gorbachev, culminating with the collapse of the Soviet Union and of Communist rule in Eastern Europe. Without losing faith in its leftist leanings, Mathews' *Antigone* condemns a history of violence that is law-preserving, for it "expound[s] its relation to law and justice" as a threatening force.⁵³ Without fundamentally denouncing it, Mathews' work is also critical of communist ideology and its legacy, utopian revolutions, totalitarian regimes, and the abuse of law. For this, police repression, state surveillance, and carceral systems of oppression are the focus of his *Antigone*. Above all, it is a critique of the promise of the New Man of humanism, the inherited tradition from which *Antigone*, law, and the foundation of human rights spring.

The central matter of contention he interrogates deals with the passing of the Criminal Justice Act,⁵⁴ the rigid Bill that provided

52 Mathews, "The Antigone," 18.

53 Benjamin, *Critique of Violence*, 277.

54 "This Bill, introduced in Dáil Éireann on 17 October 1983, had caused enormous controversy and was vehemently opposed by Irish liberals, because it purports to limit the rights of suspects and to increase the powers of the Garda Síochána. It had been passed in the Dáil on 5 July 1984, but [had] not [been passed] by the

“certain new powers” to the Garda Síochána (Irish police force). Among issues such as abolition and the death penalty, the part of the Act containing specific stipulations for “detaining persons for the purpose of questioning them” without trial for forty-eight hours “for anything that [the police] deemed to be a criminal activity to do with the security of the state,”⁵⁵ had particularly close resonances with Sophocles’ *Antigone*. The provisions of this stringent legislation implied the “subsequent erosion” (and erasure) of Irish rights tied with the motif of the erosion and erasure of the citizens’ identities in the play.⁵⁶ Seeking to reclaim their traces, like Antigone does when she perseveres in looking for her disappeared brother, is a source of constant struggle. What is more, her claim is an act of revolt. The specific stipulation of the law at the time, which was overtly a reaction to terrorism, opposes what Jacques Derrida terms the “ideological capturing of the trace” in his *Spectres of Marx*.⁵⁷ Polyneikes’ disappeared corpse, like Casement’s and Kent’s in the past, continues to haunt and challenge the living. The memory of the decaying body that, in its elision, preserves its enduring phantasmagorical presence becomes the source of pollution. The mourning community, thus, afflicted by this non-appearance, is traumatized because there is no closure, no body to bury:

As in the work of mourning, after trauma, the conjuration has to make sure that the dead will not come back; quick do whatever is needed to keep the cadaver localized, in a safe place decomposing right where it was inhumed, or even embalmed as they liked to do in Moscow.⁵⁸

Compelled to recover the body of her brother, Antigone devotes herself to a hopeless quest for the missing remains of Poly. She is a “woman standing outside a police station in a city whose name she cannot remember, looking for her brother.” As a metonymic ritual of mourning and rebellion, she writes the letter P on the city walls. The secret police seek to arrest the dissident while painting over Antigone’s graffiti to erase her traces. Mathews explains:

Senate.” (It passed both Houses of the Oireachtas on November 28, 1984). See Murrey, “Three Irish Antigones,” 128.

55 ECHR 328; Jones, “Cognizant of the Past,” 105.

56 Roche, “Ireland’s Antigones,” 230.

57 Derrida, “What is Ideology?”

58 Ibid.

They're part of the vocabulary of institutional violence everywhere [...] merely echoes of what exists. And indeed, there's a more explicit antecedent [...], because there is a famous photograph of Trotsky in which he has been removed, if you look over the platform.⁵⁹

Antigone's disappearance (or recurrent extinction) at the final act and the erasure of Polyeikes from the state records of the totalitarian city can be read as tropes for the Disappeared, the Irish civilians who were abducted, murdered and buried in secret places during the height of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

The play's intertextual and meta-theatrical methodology, in synergy with Antigone's corporeal memory and performative extinction, were enacted through a series of gestures of dramatic defiance. While the audience members entered the Project Arts Centre site, a multi-tasking one-man Chorus was roaming around the stage, dressed in a military uniform reminiscent of a Gestapo officer holding a Dictaphone that played classical music interspersed with agitprop, putting up posters with messages such as "Hear no Evil," "See no Evil," "Speak No Evil," "Loose Talk Costs Lives," "Think Yes," and pinning photos of war dead, refugees, and lovers.

CONCLUSION

In one of his interviews, Mathews said that he had seen his first performance of *Antigone* in Athens after the dictator Papadopoulos' arrest: "The Athenians were booing the colonels, but I knew that as soon as they came out of this nonviolence play, they would go out and beat up policemen."⁶⁰ In its evocation of Brechtian communist affiliations and proletarian art, Mathews' treatment of *Antigone* reiterates a genealogy of Antigones of the Greek left, such as those by Aris Alexandrou (1951)⁶¹ and Yiannis Ritsos.⁶² Departing from a post-World War II framework, communist writer Alexandrou wrote his version in Greece while detained as a political prisoner between 1949–1951 on the island of Ai Stratis.

59 Jones, "Cognizant of the Past," 98. See also King, *The Commissar Vanishes*, for censoring of Soviet photographs.

60 Mathews, "Aidan and Antigone in Athens," *The Irish Press*.

61 See Van Steen, "The Antigone of Aris Alexandrou."

62 On Ritsos, see Pourgouris, "Yannis Ritsos, Marxist Dialectics."

Incapable of revolutionary action to topple the oppressors, in this instance, the capitalist or militarist regime of Thebes, class distinctions leading to prosperity and justice fail to be abolished. Antigone is more of a petty bourgeois who plays her role in return for her glory. The rag-proletarians remain dominant: Chorus, Chora, and the Guard are all part of a retrograde class that oppresses Antigone. The irreconcilable conflict is enacted between myth and culture, the past and the present, history and modernity, fiction and realism. The sisterly “autadelphon” is transformed into a childish sibling competition between Antigone and Ismene. What is more, Antigone has become a commodity. Her surplus value consists in her exhausting acting part of the oppressed martyr for three millennia.

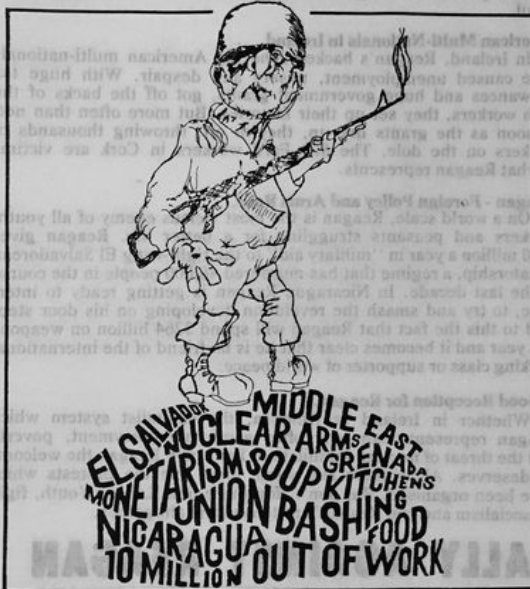
However, Antigone’s solitary defiance does not result in revolutionary triumph and the liberation of the masses. Before she disappears from the play-within-the-play in the Gulag, she is punished with her arrest and incarceration at a psychiatric hospital to be ideologically rehabilitated in the carceral archipelago of Thebes/Dublin. Echoing the myriad disappearances of other Antigones, such as Dominik Smole’s Slovenian one (1960),⁶³ Aho and Doretti’s “Desaparecidos” in Argentina and Cyprus, Mathews is cynical about capitalist societies, hierarchies of class, and social inequalities. As the play draws to its open-ended conclusion, Antigone’s incarceration irrevocably thwarts the possibilities of a heroic class struggle or a revolutionary uprising. However, “*Antigones* don’t really exist, but their heroism, small and local, exists in martial law Poland, in Greenham Common, in Argentina, everywhere.”⁶⁴ The play ends with Heman uttering the last word. He is certain Antigone is still alive despite her absence from the stage. She is “lost and found”; rumors of her being in Munich and Kharkiv are spoken by the characters. She achieves fame in her absence.⁶⁵ Antigone’s supposed disappearance can be read as the symbolic documentation of the destitution and emotional degradation suffered by post-Soviet society as a site where the memory of a traumatic history becomes an allegory of social and economic malaise. The downfall of the Soviet empire prefigures the downfall of any totalitarian regime and testifies to the misery endured before, during, and after such a downfall. Against all odds, Antigone’s meta-theatrical departure creates certain expectations and possibilities of a deferred *catharsis yet to come* in an endured return of potential revolt, an upsetting of the biopolitical order.

63 Inkret, “Images from Slovenian Dramatic and Theatrical Interpretations of Ancient Drama,” 99–109.

64 Mathews, “Aidan and Antigone in Athens.”

65 Jones, “Cognizant of the Past,” 107.

Not wanted



Reagan and the system he represents has put 10 million Americans on the dole, while 32 million live in poverty. The same parasites who are responsible for 214,000 unemployed in this country - big business, Fine Gael, Fianna Fail - welcome Reagan. Labour Youth is opposed to the visit and all that Reagan stands for.

LABOUR YOUTH
Campaign against Reagan

Fig. 1: Labour Youth Campaign poster campaigning against Ronald Reagan's visit to Ireland in 1984 (Irish Political Ephemera digital archive).



Fig. 2: Mass demonstrations in Dublin (*The Irish Times* Photographic Archive).

VOICE of REVOLUTION

20p

WORKERS OF ALL
COUNTRIES UNITE!



Vol. 8 No 17 Sept 5 1984

In continuation of RED PATRIOT

MARXIST-LENINIST WEEK!

ORGAN OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND (MARXIST-LENINIST)

MASS MOBILISATION TO STOP THE FASCIST CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL!

The weekend of September 14th/15th sees Days of Action being organised to mobilise the masses of democratic people against the Criminal Justice Bill as it comes before the new session of the Dail.

"Voice of Revolution" calls on the working class and all democratic people to participate militantly in this important struggle in defence of the democratic rights and judicial liberties, which the Irish people fought so hard to establish in the past, at the cost of so many generations of self-sacrifice, and which the national traitors of today — all the bourgeois parties in the "Free" State Dail, both government and opposition, are striving to abolish with this new draconian bill.

The bourgeoisie — as represented by all these parties, whether Fine Gael, Labour, Fianna Fail or Workers' Party — have spent recent years in constant propaganda efforts to whip up hysteria that "Some-
Cont'd on P.2 — CJB

MAJOR FASCIST MEASURES OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL:

1) The Bill is designed to deprive the people of the right to be considered and treated as innocent until proven guilty. The Bill gives garda unrestricted powers of arrest on the sole basis of "reasonable suspicion" against the citizen, in the case of "serious offences", and abolished the obligation of the gardai to lay definite charges to justify arrest.

2) This Bill is designed to deprive people of many existing rights while under arrest and during interrogation, in particular by abolishing the "right to silence"; and this measure still applies (even after amendments) to "suspicion of committing serious offences", despite the government's deceptive claims about the amendments. In addition, the gardai are given a carte blanche to exercise duress, from threats to torture, to extract signatures to false statements, as well as providing the inducement of immunity for the accused where he/she is prepared to inform on others — in other words inducement to perjury as in the case in the current informer cases of British colonialism in the north.

3) The Bill is to deprive defendants of many existing rights during trial, for instance by ending the existing "benefit of the doubt" by abolishing the necessity for unanimous jury verdicts, and substituting majority verdicts, as well as giving the state prosecution new rights of access to the defence case prior to the trial, such as alibis, which stacks court procedure still more strongly in favour of the state and against the individual defendant.

4) The Bill provides for still more severe jail sentences etc. including mandatory sentences for certain "serious offences", than the already severe penalties.

PROGRAMME OF MASS MOBILISATION

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14th -- Trade Union DAY OF ACTION throughout 26 Counties

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 15th -- DAY OF MASS PROTEST throughout 26 counties

11am -- Pickets on local garda stations

2.30 pm DUBLIN DEMONSTRATION assemblies at Store Street Garda Stn. by Bussars, for march via Pearse Street Garda Station to conclude at Mountjoy Jail.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th -- Dublin Inner City "Festival of Freedom".

Fig. 3: Front cover of the *Voice of Revolution* (issued by the Communist Party of Ireland, Marxist-Leninist Week, Sept. 5, 1984, Dublin, Ireland).



Fig. 4: Olwen Fouéré and David Heap (photo: Amelia Stein).



Fig. 5: Posters on the wall of Dublin's Project Arts Centre, 1984 (photo: Amelia Stein).



Fig. 6: Antigone (Olwen Fouéré) and the Chorus (Manix Flynn).
Antigone by Aidan C. Mathews, Project Arts Centre, Dublin,
1984 (photo: Amelia Stein).

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ABSTRACT

Antigone's afterlives in Ireland have always enacted critical gestures of social protest and mourning that expose the fundamental fragility of human rights caught up in the symbolic conflict between oppressors and oppressed. This paper seeks to explore the scope of rereading certain Irish figurations of *Antigone* – the exemplary text of European humanism – through a posthumanist lens that unveils new and radical understandings of modern injustices, legal fissures, and capitalist insinuations of an “inhuman politics” against proletarian minorities in twentieth-century Irish society in transnational contexts. The possibilities of a posthumanist theorization of *Antigone* at the intersection with gender, class, and human rights, reflect the connecting threads, political, aesthetic, and critical, between two texts: an early twentieth-century anonymous poem titled “The Prison Graves” dedicated to Irish human rights activist and revolutionary Roger Casement and an unpublished play-version of *Antigone* by Aidan C. Mathews in 1984, dedicated to René Girard. Written and produced as a critique of systematic institutional violence and neoliberal capitalist oppression during the epoch of the anti-revolutionary zeitgeist, the myth of *Antigone* shifts its dialectic from the nationalist nostalgia of “The Prison Graves” to the play-version of the Cold War era to reciprocate a counter-protest against the passing of the Irish Justice Bill. *Antigone* is reimagined as a hypochondriac resident of the slums of the proletariat and a member of a degenerate acting troupe. Her classical (mythical), aristocratic (white, European, Western) figure has become a posthuman commodity: a proletarian actor now, she performs the same role for millennia in a post-nuclear contaminated prison state in Thebes/Dublin. *Peteokles* is a bourgeois-turned-rebel mediary; *Polyneikes* is remembered as a communist terrorist who has been airbrushed from the records of the police state; a bibliophile *Ismene* religiously reads Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, and the Chorus is the real state oppressor.

KEYWORDS: *Antigone*, posthumanism, Irish history, Irish drama, human rights, gender, class

Posthumanistične in irske Antigone: Pravice, upor, izumrtje

IZVLEČEK

Nachleben pri Antigoni je na Irskem vedno kritična gesta družbenega protesta in žalovanja, ki razkriva temeljno krhkost človekovih pravic, ujetih v simbolni konflikt med zatiralci in zatiranimi. Namen tega prispevka je raziskati obseg ponovnega branja nekaterih irskih upodobitev Antigone – eksemplaričnega besedila evropskega humanizma – skozi posthumanistično prizmo, ki razkriva nova in radikalna razumevanja sodobnih krivic, pravnih razpok in kapitalističnih insinujacij »nečloveške politike« proti proletarskim manjšinam v irski družbi dvajsetega stoletja v transnacionalnih kontekstih. Možnosti za posthumanistično teoretizacijo Antigone na presečišču spolov, razredov in človekovih pravic odražajo politične, estetske in kritiške vezi med dvema besediloma: anonimno pesmijo z začetka dvajsetega stoletja z naslovom »Zaporniški grobovi«, posvečeno irskemu borcu za človekove pravice in revolucionarju Rogerju Casementu, ter neobjavljeno dramsko različico *Antigone* Aidana C. Mathewsa iz leta 1984, ki je posvečena Renéju Girardu. Mit o Antigoni, napisan in uprizorjen kot kritika sistematičnega institucionalnega nasilja in neoliberalnega kapitalističnega zatiranja v obdobju protirevolucionarnega duha, preide v dialektiki od nacionalistične nostalgije pesmi »Zaporniški grobovi« k igrani verziji iz obdobja hladne vojne, ki je odziv na protest proti sprejetju irskega zakona o pravosodju. Antigona je na novo predstavljena kot hipohondrična prebivalka proletarskega sluma in članica degenerirane igralske skupine. Njena klasična (mitska) in aristokratska (bela, evropska, zahodna) figura je postala posthumano blago: zdaj kot proletarska igralka že tisočletja igra isto vlogo v post-nuklearni kontaminirani zaporniški državi v Tebah/Dublinu. Peteokles je meščanski posrednik, ki se je spremenil v upornika; Polinejka se spominjajo kot komunističnega terorista, ki so ga izbrisali iz evidenc policijske države; bibliofilska Ismena z versko predanostjo bere *Arhipelag Gulag* Aleksandra Solženicina, Zbor pa je resnični državni zatiralec.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Antigona, posthumanizem, irska zgodovina, irska drama, človekove pravice, spol, razred