Citizenship of the Dead

Antigone and Beyond

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Introduction

The dead and their deeds—particularly those in connection with their death—carry a particular weight for the deliberations of the living. Since Pericles (at the latest!), funeral oratory has been a central component of democratic governance's repertoire, public mourning a crucial occasion to renegotiate who one is, what one did, and what remains to be done. Thus, interpreting the dead and their deeds is a decisive opportunity to interpret and determine the actions of those who remain. To understand the dead as co-citizens is a different matter, however: here, the dead might impact life beyond their death and appeal to the living to act in specific ways that might contribute to such ends. Such an understanding presupposes a particular bond between the dead and the living, and citizenship is one central possibility to address such a bond.

Citizenship tends to be regarded as a prerogative of the living, entailing the possibility of active political and civic participation, the enactment of voting rights, the bearing of civil and legal rights, and thus the recognition as part of a political community. Yet, the dead play a central role in the conceptualization of citizenship and the citizen. They are reminders of the past with symbolic significance for the present: the struggle over cemeteries and who might be buried where; rituals of public mourning and whose death is considered legitimately "grievable," to use Judith Butler's term here;[1] or the remembrance of citizens' death at the hand of the state or state officials. These seemingly random examples reveal how a political community

1 Butler uses the term to highlight that not all lives are framed equally as a 'life' and that central to this consideration is that a life's loss might be grieved in the future: "The future anterior, 'a life has been lived', is presupposed at the beginning of a life that has only begun to be lived. In other words, 'this will be a life that will have been lived' is the presupposition of a grievable life, which means that this will be a life that can be regarded as a life, and be sustained by that regard. Without grievability, there is no life, or rather, there is something living that is other than life" (*Frames*, 15).

deals with its dead and the question of who belongs to that community and on what grounds.

Such questions have been addressed extensively in and through political debates and cultural practices, but also in literature and political theory. In this context, Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, first performed in 442 BCE, has generated significant interest in both fields; it has served as a crucial text extensively analyzed by political theorists regarding the relationship between citizenship and mourning as well as the role of tragedy for citizenship (e.g., Honig; Euben; Stow), and as a text reworked and rewritten in different literary contexts around the world to negotiate membership and belonging, the rights of the dead, and questions of democratic citizenship (e.g. Głowacki; Shamsie; Köck; or in film, e.g., Deraspe).[2]

The connection between Sophocles' *Antigone* and the modern topic of citizenship first emerged as part of a feminist theoretical debate in the 1980s that asked which conclusions political feminism might draw from the figure of Antigone regarding the political role of women: Is there a specific bond that binds women to the (male dominated) political order, and which role can women play in it? *Antigone* centers on the conflict between the princess Antigone and her ruling uncle Creon over the burial of her treacherous brother Polyneices. Because Polyneices was killed attacking his own city, Creon orders his body to be left to rot, an edict Antigone does not accept and instead insists on her family duty to bury him, even if it means breaking the law—an insistence that has her sentenced to death. This conflict lends itself well to address the political conflict line between women and men. Might Antigone be regarded as the symbolic embodiment of women excluded from the political world of men, and does her defense of the familial sphere mark the political function of women?

This particular view is taken by the self-declared "social feminist" Jean Bethe Elshtain (1982).[3] It was a view shared by few, and criticized by proponents of other understandings of feminism (Dietz; Hartouni; Holland). These critics emphasize that the separation of public and private spheres has always been a politically motivated juxtaposition and instead shift the debate to the question of whether Antigone's decision for her family indeed constituted a stand against politics, or if by doing so, she rather practiced a more comprehensive and appropriate understanding of a citizen's role. In this understanding, Antigone's resistance against masculine hubris rests on the assumption that the bond of citizenship not only entails actual laws (such as those ordered by Creon), but also includes the conventions of how to appropriately deal with the dead (Dietz 28–29). Thus understood,

2 We discuss this aspect in detail in our monograph *Der Antigonistische Konflikt. 'Antigone' heute und das demokratische Selbstverständnis* (2023).

3 As a modern example of the position that Elshtain uses to connect with Antigone, she names Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo, the Argentinian mothers in the struggle for their children killed and thrown into the sea by the Junta (Elshtain 1989).

Antigone defends a specific understanding of the citizen–she does not represent the 'Other' of politics, but a different understanding of politics. The assumption made in this essay is that this understanding does not only include the relation between the living, but also that between the living and the dead.

More recently, Charles Wells has brought together different strands of the play's theoretical reception regarding citizenship—Bonnie Honig's and Nicole Loraux's in particular—when he looks at the four possibilities of Antigone's claim for her dead brother's citizenship: her assertion of her brother's status as a citizen of Thebes, despite his betrayal; as a 'citizen' in the body of the family, in modern reception usually juxtaposed to the state; as a citizen in a polis-transcending body, namely what is now usually referred to as humanity; or her refusal of the logics of citizenship altogether (79). While Wells asks also about Antigone's own acts of citizenship when claiming the rights to burial on behalf of her brother—and her right, even obligation, to bury him—, in either case, it is Antigone who claims (or disavows) 'citizenship'—her own as well as that of the dead. This claim of belonging, if not always explicitly cast as 'citizenship,' has become the centerpiece of literary reworkings of the tragedy as well: In Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* (2018), the British citizenship of the Polynices-figure Parvaiz is posthumously revoked by the Home Secretary for Parvaiz's joining of ISIS; to the end, the Antigone-figure Aneeka insists on her brother's British citizenship, the only one he ever held. Other rewritings combine death with social marginalization but shift the conflict by taking out the aspect of Polynices' betrayal: Janusz Głowacki's play *Antigone in New York* (1993) focuses on a fragile community of homeless people and replaces Creon with the democratic state and the theatrical public; Sophie Deraspe's film *Antigone* (2019) has Étéocle killed by the police, Polynice jailed, and their sister Antigone fighting Polynice's impending deportation—here too, Creon is replaced by the democratic state, split into a benevolent lawyer and a female-dominated judiciary; Thomas Köck's play *antigone. ein requiem* (2019) holds on to the figure of Creon but replaces Polynices with nameless refugees drowned in the Mediterranean. In all of these examples, the dead are important, crucial even, but they are acted *upon*, recognized, revered, dismissed, or instrumentalized; the time of their own agency as citizens or potential citizens is over.

But what if this view on the role of the dead as being for the living is expanded to understand them also as agents? This might be understood metaphorically, when for instance Antigone declares herself to not be among the living anymore (Sophocles v. 559–560), and is interned alive in her tomb-to-be, neither fully alive anymore in a social sense nor dead in a physical one, but a powerful actor nevertheless. Agency of the dead might also be understood more literally, with citizens acting beyond their death. Three recent examples that illustrate what this might mean: A young woman, Amber Pflughoeft, cast her early vote in the 2020 American presidential election; she died briefly after, before Election Day, and the state refuses to count her vote.

On her deathbed, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wished for her replacement to be nominated by the next president (in vain). The late Congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis arranged for his call to the American nation to be published by the *New York Times* after his death in the midst of the contentious 2020 presidential election. Such expressions of will can, of course, be seen in terms of the dead's legacy to the living; yet, they can also be understood as acts that function as obligations to the living, as acts beyond death with the dead as citizen-actors, and, what is more, as an assertion of community that includes both the living and the dead.

It is this latter understanding that this essay seeks to explore. In political theory as well as in literature, Greek tragedy has served as a lens to focus on the connection of citizenship, the rights of the dead, and their role in a society's conception of community. This recourse, this essay argues, is not accidental, for it allows refocusing the understanding of citizenship to ask what role the dead play for the community of the living. In the following, we thus set out to explore examples from our respective fields—political theory and literary studies—to understand how such an extended notion of membership and belonging and the practices that potentially follow from it may question and challenge the self-conception of contemporary liberal democracies as a community of the living only.

Citizenship, Tragedy, and the Dead: Agency and Transgenerational Community-Building

The idea that the dead have agency is not per se new. In *The Work of the Dead*, Thomas Laqueur argues that the dead "make social worlds" (1) and continues to insist that they "remain active agents in [cultural] history even if we are convinced, they are nothing and nowhere. […] Living bodies do not have the same powers as dead ones" (18); the dead, in Laqueur's understanding, have an immense impact on the living *because* they are dead, because of the significance that the living assign to them and their care (or lack thereof). Along different lines and focusing on the representation of the dead in popular culture, Ruth Penfold-Mounce argues that "the concept of the dead possessing agency provides a vital arena for safely exploring cultural fears, norms, traditions, and perceptions about mortality" (5); 'agency' here is understood as the lasting effect the dead have on the living, e.g., as celebrities, organ donors, etc.. And in forensic sciences, the 'speaking corpse' (cf. Crossland; M'charek & Carsatelli) is not just a metaphor; it speaks by different means, 'telling' its story to be recorded, witnessed, and, ideally, to be avenged. As such, it also serves an important function in literature, from the generic conventions of detective fiction to questions of human rights violations (such as in Michael Ondaatje's 2000 novel about a forensic anthropologist in the Sri Lankan civil war, *Anil's Ghost*).

In these examples, the dead remind the living of their own inevitable death, but they also confront them with obligations; by doing so, they point to a sense of continuation of the bond between the living and the dead that exceeds death. Yet, the ample scholarly literature on burial rituals, on human rights excavations, or on the importance of the dead for cultural memory does not take up the question if and how the dead can act after death (with the exception of the figuration of the undead, of course). This, we suggest, has to do with a liberal perspective—hegemonic in modern democratic societies—that focuses on the living and neglects the dead. The examples referenced in the introductory section of this essay—the cast vote that is not counted because the voter dies before election day, Justice Ginsburg's wish to be replaced by the next president, the publication of Representative Lewis's opinion piece after his death—are difficult to reconcile with a liberal understanding of citizenship participation that regards only the living as potential citizen-actors and agents.

This difficulty motivates much current work on the role of the dead, mourning, and of notions of tragedy with regard to the Greek tragic tradition. The relevance of Greek tragedy and political philosophy for contemporary contexts has both been questioned and defended (cf. Euben). But the initially mentioned extensive reception of Sophocles' *Antigone* reflects the broad engagement with Greek tragedy not only in literature, but also in contemporary political theory, which, in turn, attests to the productivity of the lens for framing the role of the dead and mourning for contemporary polities beyond liberalism. In *American Mourning*, Simon Stow argues that "the dead will *always* participate in democratic politics"; crucial for democracy, he argues is "*how* they do so" (19), or rather, how the living make them do so, for "it is only through the living that the dead can participate in politics: either by being made to speak—in a process that the Greeks called *prosopopeia*—or by being invoked as an example of sacrifice and suffering" (19). Stow, like other critics, does not regard the dead as actors or agents, but as acted upon by the living in the context of public mourning and cultural memory. He juxtaposes what he calls romantic to tragic modes of (public) mourning; while he sees the former invested in the reconstruction and celebration of democratic unity, he suggests that the latter be seen as a productive lens of critical democratic self-reflection (21).

This is an instructive perspective for revisiting both the role of public mourning in democratic politics and polities (for Stow, the United States and more specifically, the United States after the attacks of 9/11) and the productivity of Greek tragedy as an angle from which to approach public mourning and democratic self-reflection. Stow's perspective builds on the function of Greek tragedy as a public ceremony of democratic assurance, as discussed for instance by Bonnie Honig and Nicole Loraux, on the power of tragedy to affirm democratic unity as well as to offer a space of mourning.

Productive as these approaches clearly are, this essay proposes a different take on the relation between tragedy and democratic politics. It sets out by focusing less on the function of tragedy but on its underlying sense of a community that incorporates the living and the dead, a sense clearly taken into account in approaches that focus on public mourning, but that sideline the question of how the dead can be understood as agents other than in metaphor or through the actions of the living. Remembering, commemoration is, of course, crucial. "Whether they are acts of remembering or acts of forgetting, rituals of commemoration are among the most important instances of the enactment of citizenship," writes Ian Morrison (289). And J. Peter Euben has highlighted the dual meaning of remembering as "recalling to mind or recollecting and becoming a member again" (157); membership, he continues, "makes us who we are. It sustains and empowers us, connecting us with a place and *with a community of the dead, living, and unborn*" (158; emphasis added). In theories of citizenship, membership and belonging have been central notions of this embeddedness in a community, but Euben's off-hand notion of community as encompassing not only the living, but also the dead and the unborn, implies a sense of the political community as transgenerational, directed not only towards the present by remembering the past, but also directed towards the future.

This perspective requires a sense of action that expands beyond the agency of the living and their lifespan. With regard to the examples referenced in the first section of this text, we thus propose refocusing the question: What if we do not understand those actions taken by the living that will come to fruition only after death as a mere expression of will but as a form of action beyond death, as community-oriented beyond the lifespan of the individual? Such 'action' is more obvious in the context of family, in which the action of the deceased are/can be understood as binding (even if their will is not adhered to). But what does that mean for the more abstract, even anonymous relation between citizens? How can the bonds that are necessary to keep the dead present, to have their actions understood as effective also beyond their death, be conceptualized? In short, how does an understanding of community as one consisting of the dead, the living, and the unborn impact our thinking about the agency and membership, that is, citizenship of the dead?

Citizenship of the dead can, of course, be and has been understood with regard to the individual's right to dignity, a proper burial, compliance with their final will, and so forth, and much of the discussion has focused on such an understanding. If understood as conceptualizing the agency of the dead, however, the focus shifts from an individual whose rights are to be protected even after death to an individual who continues to be part of a community—and whose actions potentially continue to impact this community. Such a shift is not so much a move toward a communitarian understanding of citizenship and its focus on group membership, as this requires an understanding of action and agency that is not limited to the living, but an understanding of the dead in continued interaction with the living. As such, this

shift in focus presents a challenge to liberal notions of citizenship as it does not restrict the notion of community to those simultaneously present and alive, but includes both the dead and the not-yet-born. The current debate about intergenerational justice and the importance of immediate action regarding climate change and its effect on future generations displays such an understanding of community, obligation, and responsibility; earlier manifestations of such an understanding in terms of citizenship emerged in the 1990s, framed as ecological or environmental citizenship (Dobson; Isin and Wood). And while the understanding of community in Greek tragedy as a community that exceeds the living is not unique to tragedy, the recourse to it provides a productive lens to capture a more expansive understanding of the link between individual agency, community, membership, and citizenship.

The Time(s) of Citizenship: Agency Beyond Death?

In contemporary debates of citizenship, 'space' appears to be the central category that circumscribes the individual citizen's belonging. The "territorial principle," that is, the "proposition that control over a defined territory is a constitutive feature of political community" has been preeminent (Walker 553). This applies most obviously to the notion of national citizenship, but in terms of its focus on space also to the numerous expansions and revisions that this territorial understanding has undergone as transnational or diasporic citizenships, in the debates about refugeehood and statelessness, or as subnational categorizations such as urban citizenship. In contrast, 'time' has received less attention as a potentially relevant category to the understanding of citizenship;[4] while citizenship has been discussed with regard to both the historicity of the concept and its relation to the past citizenship of a political entity, it tends to be self-evidently understood in terms of the present as the relevant time of action and participation, a present, that is—at best—productively informed by the past and results—again, at best—in equally productive changes in the future. In short, debates about citizenship tend to focus on the present and the resulting narratives of citizenship tend to imply a linear, at times even teleological understanding of time. Yet, the directedness of citizenship towards the future, beyond the lifetime of the present members of a political community, discussed in the

4 Within this collection, Mitchell Gauvin's chapter addresses this gap by considering the intersection between citizenship, time, and temporal variability in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*. Gauvin reads citizenship as a neo-imperialistic and neo-capitalist weapon against transgressive identities, thereby illuminating the ways *A Small Place* implicitly confronts temporal spaces were the local and global meet and reveal how citizenship is also a type of temporal valuation.

previous section, can be seen as a more complex approach in terms of its temporal organization. Here we find one of the reasons for the interest of contemporary citizenship studies in the genre of tragedy.

"If citizenship could be said to have a genre," writes Carrie Hyde, "that genre would be tragedy" (181). Unlike the link drawn between citizenship and tragedy by the previously discussed critics, Hyde reads citizenship's 'tragedy' primarily in terms of the continuing processes of exclusion that characterize its history as well as its present. Regarding the future, then, "tragedy offers an agonic confrontation that holds out no necessary promise of rescue or reconciliation or redemption" (Scott 201). Directing acts of citizenship towards the future, in other words, is based precisely in the knowledge that there is no promise of progress, that the meanings of citizenship and democracy remain contested, and that citizens' visions for the future require explicit affirmation, even mobilization beyond the individual's lifetime.

One example of such a future-directed act of citizenship is the op-ed by the late Congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis published by *The New York Times* on July 30, 2020. Lewis died on July 17; he had written the article several days before his death, to be published on the day of his funeral. Lewis was the author of uncounted previous articles, but with regard to the questions we consider here, this last, posthumous publication bears crucial significance for a revised understanding of citizenship of the dead and a notion of action that ascribes agency to citizens beyond their death. The fact that the letter was meant to be read on the day of the funeral—a day of commemoration of his life's achievements as well as an acknowledgement of what his death meant not only to his family but also to the nation—added additional weight to his posthumous words, and are a good example of how the dead can be considered acting citizens.

Heike Paul has argued with regard to Senator John McCain's meticulous preparation of his own funeral, that he activated a sense of what she calls "civic sentimentalism"—an appeal to emotion and empathy as culturally specific mode of crisis management in the United States (8)—beyond his death, and that this activation served as a counter-point to then-president Trump's blatant disregard for established codes of democratic civility (85). John Lewis' op-ed, effectively a letter to the nation, can be understood along similar lines—like McCain, he wrote from a position imbued with symbolic capital and even more so than McCain, was read as a voice with undisputed moral authority. His letter also activated central codes of American political rhetoric; rhetoric steeped in, to speak with Paul, civic sentimentalism. The op-ed's title "Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation" already draws on a central trope, redemption. The text itself begins thus:

> While my time here has now come to an end, I want you to know that in the last days and hours of my life you inspired me. You filled me with *hope* about the next chapter of the great American story when you used your power to make a

> difference in our society. Millions of people motivated simply by *human compassion* laid down the *burdens* of division. (emphases added)

The text makes suffering and the alleviation of suffering central to its agenda. 'Compassion' is the crucial term that links it to the rhetoric of sentimentality, and 'hope' to a (secularized) Christian promise of a better future for the nation. But hope is not certainty; what is hoped for is but one possibility. "Democracy is not a state," Lewis writes, "*It is an act and each generation must do its part* to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world at peace with itself" (emphasis added).

There is "no necessary promise of rescue or reconciliation or redemption," to reference Scott once more (201); progress is not assured, it has to be fought for. Lewis' letter—addressed to a 'you' that is the nation's youth and future—has to be read in the context of Black Lives Matter activism which intensified in the wake of George Floyd's death at the hand of a police officer, and the impending election campaign in which the 45th president did not tire to announce that he could lose the election only by massive fraud on part of his opponents. Lewis' letter works by creating a direct analogy between his own experiences growing up as a Black man in the segregated South in the 1950s, the murder of Emmett Till, the struggle for Civil Rights, and the contemporary young generation's witnessing of an unabashed presidential support for white supremacists, the murder of unarmed Black men and women by the police, and the rise of Black Lives Matter. Lewis creates continuity between his generation and contemporary youth, with Martin Luther King Jr.'s teachings as a guideline—non-violence, the centrality of the democratic vote, and the insistence on the ideal of an inclusive United States as both a promise and an obligation. And Lewis expands this obligation beyond the borders of the nation when, towards the end; he writes:

> People on every continent have stood in your shoes, through decades and centuries before you. The truth does not change, and that is why the answers worked out long ago can help you find solutions to the challenges of our time. Continue to build union between movements stretching across the globe because we must put away our willingness to profit from the exploitation of others.

What is of interest here, then, is how this passionate appeal to the nation and particularly the nation's youth can be considered not merely as a prominent citizen's political testament but as a citizen's act beyond death. Lewis' understanding of the political community encompasses the dead—whose sacrifices present a reminder to the living that indeed "democracy is not a state" that can be reached once and for all—as well as present generations and those not yet born. His self-positioning in this regard is relevant: He begins by acknowledging that his "time here has now come to

an end," speaking, literally, from his deathbed, and he arranges for his words being read *after* his death. His act of citizenship is thus deliberately placed at the threshold between life and death, thereby calling into question the definite nature of this boundary for his agency as a citizen; if anything, his speaking across that boundary makes his intervention all the more powerful. What his text and the circumstances of its publication and circulation manifest is a notion of community in which the dead still speak and act, in which 'the future' is no abstract notion beyond the individual lifespan, but a concrete realm of responsibility not only for the living. The linear time of modernity that underlies liberal notions of the political community, that is, time as a neat succession of past, present, and future in which the past may be remembered but in which those who act always have to be present, is complicated by a sense of simultaneity of the living and the dead as citizen-coactors.

Citizenship of the Dead and the Limits of Liberal Self-Understanding

Liberalism has its issues with the dead. Liberal citizenship, as Iseult Honohan summarizes, "is primarily a formal, and in principle universal, legal status protecting individuals" (84), particularly against infringements by the state. It is a notion centered on individual rights and freedoms which "does not prioritize shared goods or a broader common good among citizens. Nor does it emphasize the commitment or civic virtue of citizens" or consider active participation essential to the understanding of citizenship (87). This model of the liberal individual allows the dead to have some power beyond the grave, which is mostly the power of testament. But such power of the dead is limited to the distribution of private assets. In terms of politics, liberalism's is the citizenship of the living and not of the dead. There are political reasons for this. Upholding the concept of negative liberty—'liberty from interference'—as the core principle of liberalism, Isaiah Berlin, critically described its opposite, the concept of positive freedom—'liberty to'—as "the great society of the living and the dead and the yet unborn" and denounces any inclusion of the dead as indicative of "organic" or "collective" political thought (179).

Berlin's attitude reflects liberalism's limitation in thinking beyond the living and focusing on rights rather than agency. What he had in mind was Edmund Burke's famous critique of the French Revolution and its destruction of feudal society. Not that Burke had been a staunch defender of the feudal order, on the contrary, to some extent he even supported the American colonies' struggle for political independence. But whereas the American revolutionaries seemed to uphold political principals very much in line with British traditions, the French seemed to ignore traditions of political thought entirely. Burke rejected the idea of a social contract that did not include the dead as well as the living. Modeling the state in terms of a "partnership,"

Burke explains in his "Reflections on the Revolution in France," published in November 1790:

> As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primæval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place. (101)

Bringing the dead into play—as Burke did in the cited passage—seemed to Berlin to confuse politics with metaphysics, an instrument of ideologists to determine what the living might be forced to do, even against their expressed will. For liberalism, the only refuge was to uphold the freedom of the individual against all claims by those who claimed to speak for or in the name of the dead. Indeed, it is the core of conservatism to keep a check on the political will of the living by reminding them of tradition's obligations, and tradition often implies honoring the dead—and their will. When the conservative Gilbert Chesterton spoke of the democracy of the dead, this is precisely what he meant. In *Orthodoxy*, published in 1909, we find him stating:

> Those who urge against tradition that men in the past were ignorant may go and urge it at the Carlton Club, along with the statement that voters in the slums are ignorant. It will not do for us. If we attach great importance to the opinion of ordinary men in great unanimity when we are dealing with daily matters, there is no reason why we should disregard it when we are dealing with history or fable. Tradition may be defined as an extension of the franchise. Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death. (83)

It is no surprise that democrats protested against such arguments that connect Chesterton in a direct line to Burke. Thomas Paine immediately rejected Burke's critique in his book on *Rights of Man* (its first part published in March 1791) and formulated the democratic credo that the dead shall not bind the living:

> Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, in all cases, as the ages and generations which preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has

> no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow … Every generation is, and must be, competent to all the purposes which its occasions require. It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated. When man ceases to be, his power and his wants cease with him; and having no longer any participation in the concerns of this world, he has no longer any authority in directing who shall be its governors, or how its government shall be organized, or how administered. (63-64)

Thomas Jefferson took the same line at several occasions (although without giving Paine due credit) to argue about the potential role of the dead for the living: "The dead? But the dead have no rights. They are nothing; and nothing cannot own something" (216). The dead are nothing and therefore they cannot bind the living:

> Can one generation bind another, and all others, in succession forever? I think not. The Creator has made the earth for the living, not the dead. Rights and powers can only belong to persons, not to things, not to mere matter, unendowed with will. The dead are not even things. The particles of matter which composed their bodies, make part now of the bodies of other animals, vegetables, or minerals, of a thousand forms. To what then are attached the rights and powers they held while in the form of men? (386)

Given conservative attempts to restrict the political will of the majority of the living in recourse to the dead, liberal as well as democratic critiques of any potential claim by the dead for having a say in what the living ought to do is therefore reasonable. But even if one concedes that in a democratic context the dead may have no "right" to bind the living, it is still within the bounds of the democratic polity that the dead might nevertheless try to persuade the living to continue what they started, to appeal to them to learn from their failures and achievements. There is a difference between the interpretation of the deceased's deeds and intentions by some of the living for political manipulation on the one hand, and the articulation of will for the future by the dead themselves in full knowledge that they have no right to bind the hands of the living, on the other.

Conclusion

In his posthumous *New York Times* op-ed, John Lewis does not refer to tradition or seek to bind the living by invoking the heritage of the dead and their deeds. But neither does he express a merely private wish for what should happen after his death. As a dead co-citizen with an authority established by his life's work and further deepened by this speaking beyond his own lifespan, he gives advice; he does not demand but reflect upon where both—the dead and the living—stand, and which path the

living should follow. His words and their publication stand in a tradition of posthumous 'death-bed letters' by public figures. Understanding such a letter as we do here, as a citizen's future- and community-directed action beyond death, as enacted 'citizenship of the dead,' not only shifts the attention from citizenship as status and a set of rights to citizenship as obligatory participation. Our interpretation also expands the understanding of the community towards which such participation is directed: a community in which the obligation of citizens does not end with their death, and in which they still have a voice—not the decisive voice, not the only voice, but a voice, or rather, voices—that should be heard, weighted, and considered. Consequently, this supposes an understanding of politics that includes not only the living, but also the dead.

While this understanding can be found in a number of non-liberal and also non-western notions of community and politics, it is prominent in tragedy, and tragedy provides one central mode of making such a notion narratable. Sophocles' particular rendering of conflict lines in his tragedy *Antigone*—elsewhere we have called this the "Antigonistic conflict" (Llanque/Sarkowsky)—lends itself well to the exploration of such a notion and its actualization in our political present. The ongoing reworkings of *Antigone* in political theory and literature may, of course, be a result of the perpetuation of a canonical dynamic; but they clearly attest to the productivity of such reinterpretation in trying to expand the horizon of the living.

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