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DECIPHERING THE POLITICS OF ANOUILH'S *ANTIGONE*



ABSTRACT: This article examines the twentieth-century adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh (1944). Written during the German Occupation of France, Anouilh's *Antigone* produced controversial and indeed opposite interpretations. Some critics found overt political allusions in the play, arguing with equal fervour that it was pro-Resistance or collaborationist, whereas the author claimed political ignorance. Through a close analysis of the text and the historical context in which it was written, the article wishes to provide a new interpretation of the play and its reception. By focusing on key terms and iconic lines as well as on crucial divergences from the Greek original, I highlight the open-textured and ideologically ambiguous nature of the play. The "neutrality" of the author, the self-conscious game with reality and the desacralisation of the tragedy contributed to shift the focus onto the intimate and personal, rather than the political, conflicts of the Greek original.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

IN FEBRUARY 1944, a few months before the liberation by the allied forces, the *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh was staged at the Théâtre de l'Atelier on the Right Bank in Paris in front of a mixed audience of German officers, collaborationists, and pro-Resistance fighters. The play was an instant success: it ran unbroken throughout the crucial year 1944, and it was then restaged 645 times until 1945.¹ The play was successfully produced after the end of the war in 1947, 1949, 1950, and 1953.²

The peculiar historical context as well as Anouilh's controversial representation of Creon and Antigone gave the play an immediate political relevance. At the moment of its production, the play received "all sorts of

1. Flashar (2009) 173.

2. See Freeman in Anouilh (2000) xlix.

political labels”,³ from fascist to pro-Resistant and collaborationist; after the war, Anouilh’s *Antigone* was hailed as an allegory of French Resistance. Since the 1950s, this “pro-Resistance” interpretation, enhanced by post-war reception and criticism, has been the dominant interpretation and has been consistently accepted by Anglophone readers.⁴ Only recently, contemporary critics have re-historicised Anouilh’s play in the immediacy of its historical and ideological context and have offered a different interpretation. In particular, Mary Ann Frese Witt and Katherine Fleming have argued that the vocabulary and register of Anouilh’s *Antigone* and her insistence on “purity” can be understood as representative of what Witt defines a “fascist aesthetics”, a subtext of fascist ideology and acceptable ideas of modern tragedy.⁵ Given the fact that there are no overt political references but rather less direct allusions and a kind of conservatism that it is difficult to label as militantly “fascist” or “right-wing”,⁶ it remains nonetheless difficult to assess whether a political reading was intended, what was the relationship of the play to current ideologies, and how sensible the author was to the political dimension of the play.

Through a detailed textual analysis of Anouilh’s version in comparison with the original that inspired it, focusing on key terms and iconic lines as well as crucial divergences from the Sophoclean text, the article wishes to provide a new interpretation of the play and its reception.⁷ In order to understand the polarised interpretations of the play advanced by critics and the exceptional storm of controversy raised by the play, I shall first explore the ideological context in which Anouilh’s *Antigone* was written, along with the play’s critical reception in contemporary reviews. By analysing Anouilh’s

3. Weinstein (1989) 141. As Worthen (2011) 408 remarks: “Neutrality, of course, is not an option in *Antigone*.”

4. See Fleming (2006) 167.

5. See Witt (1993); Fleming (2006).

6. It is difficult to attach notions of fascism (its brutality, violence, and totalitarianism) to artists — such as Anouilh — who did not actually engage actively with the politics of fascism. The only “political” act of Anouilh was the public defence of the poet Robert Brasillach, a renowned fascist who wrote in anti-Semitic journals and who was convicted after the end of the war. Like him, many writers and intellectual suspected of having supported Vichy and the Nazi occupiers were prosecuted and condemned of collaborationism. See Vandromme (1965) 180; Weinstein (1989) 131–32; Witt (1993) 61.

7. Although Guérin (2010), in French, also provides a textual analysis of Anouilh’s *Antigone*, he focuses primarily on a comparison between *Antigone* and Anouilh’s later tragedy *L’Alouette* (1953) and Jean Giraudoux’s *Électre* (1937). On Anouilh’s *Antigone*, see also Mee and Foley (2011), especially section 8, which explores the influence of Anouilh’s version on other rewritings, and Silva (2017a) 456–58.

presentation of Antigone and Creon as well as the crucial divergences of his version from the original, I shall show that, in reworking the Antigone story and reconfiguring its main motifs, Anouilh highlighted the open-textured and ideologically ambiguous nature of the play.⁸ As a reaction to and consequence of the peculiar historical circumstances in which the play was written and performed, Anouilh attempted to “maintain a morally neutral stance”.⁹ By highlighting the complex irony, ambiguity, and self-refuting nature of the tragedy, Anouilh shifted the focus onto the personal and psychological (rather than the political) conflicts of the characters. The disappearance of the gods and the desacralisation of the tragedy also pointed to philosophical, cynical, and nihilistic questions — about the absurdity of human existence and of the whole tragic process, presented as inevitable. And yet, precisely the ambiguities of Anouilh’s apparently subversive *Antigone*, its cynical and ironic nature enhanced the variety of political interpretations of the play and granted its endurance to the present day as well as its establishment as a canonical, political drama of resistance.

2. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE RECEPTION OF ANOUILH’S *ANTIGONE*

When Anouilh was writing his adaptation, Sophocles’ *Antigone* was extremely popular and successfully performed elsewhere both in Nazi Germany and in Nazi-occupied France. Arthur Honegger’s *Antigone* (1927) was revived in 1941, 1943, and 1944, just before Anouilh’s play.¹⁰ The Sophoclean tragedy was staged by the Groupe de Théâtre Antique in 1942, and Robert Garnier’s *Antigone ou la pitié* (1580) was revived in 1944 and 1945.¹¹ Anouilh’s *Antigone* differed from such operatic and traditionalist treatments of the ancient myth and reconfigured the play’s themes and motifs in a highly contemporary and personal way.

When it was first performed in 1944, at the height of the German Occupation, Anouilh’s version provoked a variety of antithetical interpretations. Perhaps surprisingly, the play was immediately praised by the official Press

8. On the polysemic and multivocal nature of tragedy see Foley (1995); Hall (1997); Allan and Kelly (2013).

9. Freeman (2000) xlvi.

10. Flashar (2009) 172. On the revival of Honegger’s *Antigone*, see Fulcher (2006).

11. See Steiner (1984) 138–40.

and accepted almost uniformly in collaborationist, fascist, and pro-German circles whereas it was rejected by pro-resistance writers. The first review in the *Lettres françaises* is exemplary of the hostile attitude of the underground press. The author, Claude Roy, complained: “L’Antigone qu’on nous propose n’est pas notre Antigone, la seule, la vraie.”¹² According to Roy, Anouilh’s *Antigone* did not represent the traditional model of defiant resistance to tyranny.¹³

By contrast, collaborationist critics positively regarded Anouilh’s *Antigone* as a “fascist heroine”, embodying the ideology of racial purity and superiority. The emphasis on words such as *pureté* and *grandeur*, recurrent in fascist propaganda,¹⁴ was interpreted as a clear reference to racial doctrines and fascist aesthetic of “purification” and “cult of the youth”. The enthusiastic review by collaborationist critic Alain Laubreaux, which appeared on the collaborationist journal *Je suis partout*, is symptomatic. Although he praised the magnificent revolt of *Antigone*, which embodies the revolt of “purity” against the mediocrity of men,¹⁵ he also emphasised that *Antigone* acts irresponsibly: her revolt only leads to “disorder and suicide”.¹⁶ Only when *Antigone* dies does life in Thebes return to normality, thus suggesting that France, too, will only find peace after the cessation of the Resistance. Rather than with *Antigone*, collaborationist commentators sided with Creon, who was likened to the head of the Vichy regime Philippe Pétain (or his Prime Minister Pierre Laval), who assumed a personal regime as *Chef de l’Etat français* on 10 July 1940.¹⁷

That Anouilh’s *Antigone* was “serving the Nazi occupiers and Vichy regime”¹⁸ would also be proved by the fact that Anouilh contributed

12. Roy (1944), cited by Witt (2001) 228.

13. This model was prevalent in France from the beginning of the twentieth century; see Fraisse (1966) 270.

14. See Fleming (2006) 180; Witt (1993) 51. Louis Barsacq (1944) cited by Flügge (1982) 264, also emphasised the *pureté* of *Antigone*. The director André Barsacq (1947) 157–58, described *Antigone* as “tragédie de la *pureté*”; cited by Flügge (1982) 262.

15. Laubreaux, ‘Du théâtre !’, *Je suis partout*, 18 February 1944. Alain Laubreaux was an influential critic during the Occupation. His enthusiastic review of *Antigone* appeared in the same journal edition together with an article against the “terrorism” of French Resistance. See Flügge (1982) 253; 278–79. Flügge (1982) offers a comprehensive collection of contemporary reviews.

16. Laubreaux cited by Freeman (2000) xlvii.

17. Freeman (2000) xlviii. See Cairns (2016) 135; endnote 146.

18. Fleming (2006) 178. See Witt (1993) 56, for the positive reception of Anouilh’s other works in this period. See also Witt (2001) 21–13; 192.

thirteen journalistic articles to the collaborationist press and wrote for German-sponsored papers, such as *La Gerbe* and *Aujourd'hui*. Anouilh's articles for collaborationist journals displayed a tempered monarchism, though veiled by the same irony and ambiguity which re-emerges in the *Antigone*. For example, in an article, Anouilh argued that the French Revolution was responsible for the replacement of a healthy tradition (*la saine tradition*) with a new hierarchy based on money (*l'argent*).¹⁹ In the same article, Anouilh anticipated the advent of a "new world", based on real happiness rather than on materialism or compromise. According to him, young people should be the agents of such a change in society. The motifs of purity, youth, money (often associated with the Jews and capitalism in fascist propaganda), and its corruptive effect on human life recur in Anouilh's *Antigone* as well as in his tragedies of the 1930s.²⁰ However, Anouilh's critique of money is presented in abstract, idealist tones, which tend to satirise, rather than explicitly condemn, the "bourgeois". These articles reveal Anouilh's aristocratism as well as an ironic, superficial tone which undermines the serious commitment of his social critique and resurfaces in his plays.

Despite the significant emphasis on themes dear to the conservatives, I argue that in his *Antigone* Anouilh intentionally highlighted the presence of competing voices and shifted the focus onto existentialist themes such as the sense of inevitability, absurdity, and the meaninglessness of existence. In order to understand the storm of controversy that surrounded Anouilh's production, I shall analyse how the conflict between Antigone and Creon is presented in the play, explaining how it relates both to the original and to the anti-reactions of pro-Resistance and collaborationist critics.

3. THE PRESENTATION OF *ANTIGONE* IN ANOUILH'S ADAPTATION

In Anouilh's version, Antigone presents remarkably non-heroic traits: she is an insecure and vulnerable young girl who alternates states of clam and lucidity to outburst of *folie* and emotional despair. She is characterised as skinny, "noire et maigre" (p. 19: "dark and thin"),²¹ thus resembling Anouilh's previous tragedies *L'Hermine* (1931), *La Sauvage* (1934), and *Le*

19. Flügge (1982) 219.

20. See Witt (1993) 53–5.

21. All references to Anouilh's *Antigone* are to page numbers in Anouilh (1954). English translations are taken from Freeman-Bray (2000).

Rendez-vous de Senlis (1937), in which an idealist, young protagonist fails to achieve happiness in a world dominated by money.²²

When she first appears, introduced by a prologue-character,²³ Anouilh's Antigone is thinking about her inevitable death and "role" in the story (p. 39):

Elle [Antigone] pense qu'elle va être Antigone tout-à-l'heure, qu'elle va surgir soudain de la maigre jeune fille noire et renfermée que personne ne prenait au sérieux dans la famille et se dresser seule en face du monde, seule en face de Créon, son oncle, qui est le roi. Elle pense qu'elle va mourir, qu'elle est jeune et qu'elle aussi, elle aurait bien aimé vivre. Mais il n'y a rien à faire. Elle s'appelle Antigone et il va falloir qu'elle joue son rôle jusqu'au bout.

(p. 3) She's thinking that soon she's going to be Antigone. That she'll suddenly stop being the thin dark girl whose family didn't take her seriously, and rise up alone against everyone. Against Creon, her uncle ... the king. She's thinking that she's going to die ... though she's still young, and like everyone else would have preferred to live. But there's nothing to be done. Her name is Antigone, and she's going to have to play her part right through the end.

Anouilh's Antigone is forced to fulfil a certain role to the bitter end and is aware of this necessity from the beginning. Throughout the tragedy, she is obsessed with her own individualism and death. Such an obsession could also represent a pathological condition: she is a young hysteric adolescent, who follows impatiently her instincts without listening to any reason and is determined to die.

Sophocles' Antigone, too, is "no reasoner, and the other side of the case simply does not exist for her".²⁴ Like Anouilh's heroine, she shows an obsessive concern for her own death and the dead.²⁵ Paradoxically, she

22. Guérin (2010) 103 argues that Anouilh's *Antigone* "s'inscrit dans un cycle de pièces noires avant de se situer dans une conjoncture historique, les années noires".

23. The Prologue is an external observer of the story who illustrates the specific role of each member of the cast. A similar device is employed by Jean Cocteau in *La Machine infernale* (1934) in which a voice explains the nature of tragedy. The procedure of self-conscious theatre and role-playing is also reminiscent of Luigi Pirandello's *Sei Personaggi in Cerca d'Autore* (1921) and was first employed by Anouilh in *Le Voyageur sans bagage* (1937).

24. Winnington-Ingram (2009) [1980] 315.

25. As Knox remarks, this intransigence and obsession with one objective, despite the tragic consequences, is a characteristic trait of the Sophoclean hero. See especially Knox (1983) [1964] 62–73; 91.

considers death as a *kerdos*, a “profit” (εἰ δὲ τοῦ χρόνου / πρόσθεν θανοῦμαι, κέρδος αὐτ’ ἐγὼ λέγω, Soph. *Ant.* 461–62) and she does not regret her dire action since she knew that she had to die (θανουμένη γὰρ ἐξήδη, τί δ’ οὔ; Soph. *Ant.* 460). Elsewhere in the play, Antigone refers to her death and often provokes Creon to kill her (Soph. *Ant.* 497–500). She tells Ismene that she must serve the dead before the living (Soph. *Ant.* 74–5; 559–60), since in death she shall lie forever (ἐκεῖ γὰρ αἰεὶ κείσομαι. Soph. *Ant.* 76), and she alternates vocabulary related to death and life (θανουμένη 460; θανοῦμαι 462; ζῆ 464; θανόντ’ ἄθαπτον 467; οὐ ζῶσιν, οὐ θανοῦσιν 852).

Anouilh’s Antigone is also concerned with her personal glory and death, although she is not as brave as her predecessor: she admits that she would have liked to live (p. 47) and that she is not very brave (p. 72: “je n’aurais pas du courage éternellement”). She is “only” twenty, as we learn later from Creon (p. 70). The presence of the overprotective Nurse (one of the new characters introduced by Anouilh), together with several other references to Antigone’s childhood, pinpoint the heroine’s desire never to grow up, and her regression to a world of purity and innocence. The insistence on Antigone’s youth, her desire to remain a child and “pure”, as well as her youthful passion and vocation for death, were praised by some critics who interpreted the play as an apology of fascist ideology.²⁶ However, Antigone’s childish and innocent attitude also causes the instability of her commitment and allows Anouilh to emphasise the contradictions and irrationality of his heroine, whose rebellion is presented as meaningless and irrational.

Unlike Anouilh’s de-heroicised and unstable Antigone, Sophocles’ heroine shows no hesitation and is determined to express “her own” independently, without boundaries and limits (ἀλλ’ οὐδὲν ἀντὶ τῶν ἐμῶν <μ> εἴργειν μέτα, Soph. *Ant.* 48), even if this entails resisting a male authority and betraying her household obligations. Antigone is said to descend *autonomos*, “a law unto herself”, to Hades (Soph. *Ant.* 821), and the Chorus suggest that she acted out of a personal and free decision dictated by her temper, her “self-willed disposition” (αὐτόγνωτος ... ὀργά, Soph. *Ant.* 875) and “boldness” (Soph. *Ant.* 853; 862–65). Antigone’s transgressive and unconventional behaviour does nonetheless encourage admiration: her destiny is compared to mythical brides and mothers whose heroic actions are mentioned by the Chorus (Soph. *Ant.* 944–87). Sophocles’

26. See Witt (1993) and Fleming (2006).

Antigone refuses to yield and defends her principles to the point of self-sacrifice and self-destruction for a higher cause.²⁷

By contrast with Sophocles' intransigent heroine, Anouilh's Antigone is an insecure girl who does not only regress to a "child"-like condition, characterised by vulnerability, absurdity, and freedom. Anouilh has gone a step further in characterising her as less than an adult: she resembles a child or an animal. Anouilh's *petite* Antigone describes herself in pejorative terms in the third person, as a dirty and untameable animal (pp. 47–8). Whereas in the original the Chorus wonder whether the burial could be the sign of a god (Soph. *Ant.* 278–79), in Anouilh's version Creon suspects that the burial could be the action of a *bête grattant*, a small animal scratching in the dirt, or *un enfant*, since a child's spade is found near the burial place (p. 60). Also the Guard compares the heroine performing the burial to a small animal or hyena. The overprotective Nurse addresses Antigone with appellatives that recall the animal sphere: *mon pigeon*, *ma petite colombe*, and *ma tourterelle* (pp. 51–2).²⁸

Anouilh's Antigone also embodies a cultural type of aristocratic Princess who repulses, also physically, ordinary people such as the Guards. When the Guards approach her, Antigone claims (p. 64): "Je veux bien mourir, mais pas qu'ils me touchent!" (p. 27: "I don't care about dying — but I won't have them touch me!") and asks them to take off "their filthy hands off" ("leur sales mains"). According to some critics, Antigone's attitude, her fear of being touched by the mob and hear their shouting would reveal Anouilh's "own *aristocratism*".²⁹ Elsewhere in the play it is emphasised that Antigone is a "king's daughter", for example by the Nurse (p. 43; 46) and by Antigone herself (p. 64: "je suis la fille d'Œdipe"; p. 27: "I'm Oedipus' daughter"; p. 76: "Moi je suis reine"; p. 39: "I'm a queen"). However, it is difficult to reconcile these sparse references (which indeed recall the original) with "notions of the superiority of her [Antigone's] royal race",³⁰ not least because Anouilh's Antigone does not expect that, because of her priv-

27. Knox (1983) [1964] 67 argues that Sophocles' Antigone is "the most intransigent of the Sophoclean heroes".

28. On Antigone's relation with nature and animals, see Calin (1967) 77; 80.

29. Monférier (1968) cited by Freeman (2000) 63, especially in reference to Ismene's repulsion of the mob. Also Antigone, before being led to the cave, claims (p. 89): "Je ne veux plus voir leur visages, je ne veux plus entendre leurs cris!"; (p. 52): "I don't want to see their faces any more, or hear their shouting."

30. Witt (1993) 65. Winnington-Ingram (2009) [1980] 310–11; 315 discusses the pride of ancestry and sense of honour of certain Sophoclean heroes, including Antigone.

ileged status, Creon will save her. Rather, she claims that she would have done the same even if she was “a servant girl” (p. 32).

In the original, Antigone is a heroic Theban princess who shows a certain awareness of her royal blood, for example in the dialogue with Ismene (Soph. *Ant.* 38). Her troubled family history is recalled on several occasions,³¹ and the Chorus remark that she is the proud daughter of Oedipus (Soph. *Ant.* 471–72). The contempt, stubbornness, and “self-defiant confidence” of Sophocles’ Antigone are comparable to that of Anouilh’s heroine.³² Both “deny nothing” and confirm openly that they performed the burial (Soph. *Ant.* 435; p. 30). In both tragedies, Creon is ultimately unable to “tame” Antigone’s rebellious spirit.

4. THE PRESENTATION OF CREON

As Anouilh’s Antigone is not the classic heroine and presents more human traits, so Creon is not the typical brute statesman or tyrant. He is presented as a sympathetic character, a sensitive older man as well as a clever, subtle politician, and a book-lover. He describes himself as a *prince sans histoire*, who wonders whether leading men is a vain office (p. 70). Although he is devoted to his office, Anouilh’s Creon sees kingship not as an honour but as a trade, a job to do, *un office sordide, la cuisine* (p. 80). Creon’s presentation throughout Anouilh’s tragedy suggests that he is a disillusioned and idle man, a cynical and conformist ruler, rather than a despotic tyrant.

To his niece, he cynically reveals that he did not differentiate which of the brothers’ bodies had to be buried. Since their corpses were unrecognisable, he just ordered a national funeral for one, the least damaged, and left the other to putrefy outside. He admits that the awful decree was simply an inevitable compromise of his *métier* of *cuisinier*, governor (p. 74): “C’est ignoble ... mais il faut que tout Thèbes sente cela pendant quelque temps” (p. 38: “it’s necessary that Thebes should smell the body for a while”). Therefore, he is disgusted by the whole affair as much as Antigone is, and reveals the cynicism of the governing process.

The positive and cynical representation of Creon is reinforced by the fact that Anouilh’s Creon suggests to cover up the burial in order to appease

31. For example in the prologue (Soph. *Ant.* 1–10; 49–50) and in the final *kommos* (Soph. *Ant.* 892–94).

32. Knox (1983) [1964] 64.

the mob and avoid the impression that people are rebelling against his regime. By contrast, in the original, Creon's inclination is to punish Antigone (Soph. *Ant.* 480–81; 524) and there is a window of opportunity only at the end, after Tiresias' prophetic speech. However, Anouilh's Creon is unable to save the heroine. Although he is the king, he cannot oppose the law that he himself has established (p. 87): "Je suis le maître avant la loi. Plus après." (p. 50: "[I am the master] under the law. Not against it."). This principle reveals that Creon is a pragmatic ruler who wants to appease the mob above all — even at the cost of sacrificing his niece. At the end, he realises that there is nothing he can do but keep playing his role and administrating the city's affairs. He thus exits and supervises a council meeting called for five o' clock.

In the original, too, Creon is not presented as an autocratic despot; rather, he voices sound and acceptable political principles in his opening speech (Soph. *Ant.* 162–210), pointing to patriotic and civic duty, the well-being of the *polis*, and the necessity to punish traitors.³³ Sophocles shows that Creon has a legitimate ground (someone transgressed his law and therefore has to be punished), although he also emphasises the guilt of Creon, whose policy neglected the importance of the divine law and family relations. Both aspects — Creon as tyrant and Creon as reasonable and sensible ruler — are present in the original. Anouilh emphasises the more humane and positive side, as well as the king's cynical and disillusioned attitude.

Anouilh's unconventional representation of Antigone and his more sympathetic treatment of the king prompted a variety of opposite interpretations in later contexts. Because Anouilh highlighted the ambiguity and open-texture of the original, different audiences could interpret the play in different ways, either siding with Creon or Antigone. However, in Anouilh's version, competing voices and points of view are equally supported as much as undermined. Rather than the contraposition between the individual and the law of the state, Anouilh's *Antigone* portrays the opposition between two different ideals of life and happiness.

33. Most scholars agree that Creon's speech sounded "most acceptable to a fifth-century Athenian audience"; Winnington-Ingram (2009) [1980] 123. See also Knox (1983) [1964] 70; Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 135; Griffith (1999) 155–56. For criticism, see Harris (2006) 77.

5. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ANTIGONE AND CREON: POURQUOI?

Sophocles' Antigone offers a number of motivations for her act, even before performing it. Her commitment is dictated by a religious and familial obligation, by love, honour, piety, and devotion to Polynices and to the dead. Anouilh's Antigone is not equally reasonable and claims that (p. 47) "il y a des fois où il ne faut pas trop réfléchir" (p. 11: "sometimes it's best not to think too much"). She does not want to understand (*comprendre*) and accept the obligations and responsibilities of adulthood. The verb *comprendre* is repeated ten times in the exchange between Antigone and her sister (p. 48):

ANTIGONE. Je ne veux pas avoir raison.

ISMÈNE. Essaie de comprendre, au moins!

ANTIGONE. Comprendre ... Vous n'avez que ce mot-là dans la bouche, tous, depuis que je suis tout petite. ... Comprendre ... Toujours comprendre. Moi je ne veux pas comprendre. Je comprendrai quand je serai vieille.

(p. 12) ANTIGONE. I don't want to be right!

ISMENE. At least try to understand!

ANTIGONE. Understand! You've always been on at me about that, all of you, ever since I was little ... Understand, understand, always understand! I don't want to understand. I can do that when I'm old.

The same word is repeated in the *agon* between Antigone and her uncle, as the heroine says (p. 77): "Je ne veux pas comprendre. C'est bon pour vous. Moi je suis là pour autre chose que pour comprendre. Je suis là pour vous dire non et pour mourir." (p. 40: "I don't want to [understand]. It's all very well for you, but I'm not here to understand. I'm here to say no to you, and to die."). She acts only because "she has to" (p. 68: "je le devais"; p. 31: "I had to") and invites Creon to follow the same necessity (p. 72): "Faites comme moi. Faites ce que vous avez à faire." (p. 36: "Be like me — do what you have to do."). Anouilh's Antigone reduces the tragic conflict to a matter of inevitable "distribution" (p. 47):

À chacun son rôle. Lui [Créon] il doit nous faire mourir, et nous, nous devons aller enterrer notre frère. C'est comme cela que ç'a été distribué.

(p. 11) Everyone has his part to play. Creon has to have us put to death, and we have to go and bury our brother. That's how the cast-list was drawn up.

Therefore, Anouilh's *Antigone* does not provide a justification for her action, which is simply determined by her impulsive and irrational character and the refusal to conform to the rules (*nomima*) of society and life. Throughout the tragedy, words such as *comprendre*, *réfléchir*, *avoir raison*, and *pondérée* are opposed to Antigone's *folie*, *fou/folle*.³⁴ Ismene says twice (p. 47; p. 50): "tu es folle" (p. 11; 14: "you're out of your mind"). Later in the play Creon wonders (p. 60): "qui a été assez fou pour braver ma loi?" (p. 23: "Who was mad enough to flout my orders?"), which translates the words of the Greek Chorus (Soph. *Ant.* 220), and speaks of Antigone's *folie* (p. 87: "Elle [Antigone] a préféré sa folie et la mort."; p. 50: "She preferred her own folly, and death."). The word occurs elsewhere throughout the play, in reference to Antigone (p. 83: "Tu es folle"; p. 46: "You're crazy"), Haemon (p. 89: "Il est sorti comme un fou", p. 52: "He's like a madman"), and the young page (p. 97: "Tu es fou, petit"; p. 60: "You're mad, boy!").

Throughout the Sophoclean original, the necessity of showing good sense (*euboulia*, *nous*) and thinking (*phronein*, *manthanein*) is also constantly emphasised in opposition to folly or madness (*abulia*, *mania* etc.).³⁵ The protagonists accuse one another of foolishness: Ismene believes that Antigone is behaving "crazily" (*tamechana*, 92; *anous*, 99) and encourages her to "think" (*phronein*, 49) and "reflect" (*ennoein*, 61). Antigone's action is presented as irrational, a folly (*dysboulia*, 95) and madness (*aphrosynê*, 383). *Aboulia* or madness is considered the greatest evil in opposition to wisdom (*sophia*). Sophocles' Antigone disobeys and refuses to yield to the commands of the others: she is "the only one in the city who disobeyed" (Soph. *Ant.* 656; and the word recurs at lines 219 and 381, always in reference to Antigone).

Anouilh expands the motif of Antigone's *folie* and disobedience in his version and shows that, beyond this particular act (the forbidden burial of her brother), Antigone has always been rebellious and disobedient. Her decision to bury her brother is not moved by admissible reasons but rather by

34. See Deppman (2012) 529.

35. See Cairns (2016) 81, endnote 76: "madness or irrationality is predicated variously of Antigone, Creon, Haemon, and Eurydice". On *phronein* in *Antigone* see Kirkwood (1958) 233–39.

a prime, inner, and fully unreasonable instinct, which undermines her status as adult. Anouilh questions the motivation of Antigone's act and emphasises the irrationality of this young, rebellious woman, who acts irresponsibly. The changes to the original are thus directed towards a "desacralisation" of the ancient myth. We do not see on the stage a classical heroine: she is neither the epitome of fascist purity and nobility nor the champion of steadfast, political resistance, but rather a young, rebellious woman who lacks the grandeur of tragedy.

The final argument presented by Antigone, that her unburied brother will wander forever without finding a resting place (p. 68), is soon rejected by herself. Whereas in the Greek original Antigone calls upon the higher unwritten laws of the gods (Soph. *Ant.* 450–53) and her duty to her dead family members, in Anouilh the motif of burial (*cette pantomime*) is no more than a pretext to stage Antigone's tragedy. That Antigone's action could be motivated by brotherly love also appears fully inconsistent in Anouilh's version. Creon cynically reveals that they were both greedy and immoral thieves (pp. 78–9): Polynices lost a considerable sum of money in gambling and, as his father refused to repay it, he punched him in the face. Polynices had no regard for Antigone and they had not seen each other since childhood. In Sophocles' play the mutual fratricide has been responsible for the *miasma* which polluted the city. Polynices in particular has been arrogant and wicked, and died "ravaging his land" (*πορθῶν δὲ τήγδε γῆν*, Soph. *Ant.* 518:).³⁶ Yet the details about the attempted assassination of Oedipus, Polynices' gambling, and the brothers' irresponsible behaviour are added by Anouilh to increase the cynicism and irony of his version and to emphasise the meaninglessness of Antigone's attachment to her brother.

Deprived of any rational motivation, Antigone finally reveals that the real justification behind her actions can be found only in herself (p. 72): "Pour moi"; (p. 35: "Myself"). Anouilh reverses the motivations of Antigone's act: no longer religious faith or brotherly love, but the refusal of life and the satisfaction of opposing to the law. Whereas Creon suggests that she should enjoy a conventional, reassuring, and mediocre future, Antigone refuses a conventional life made of compromises, without realising that this action is, in fact, inevitable and imposed upon her. She does not want to become one of the many *candidats au bonheur* or *cuisiniers* (pp. 47–8: "craven candidates for happiness" or "cooks"). For Creon, *bonheur* means

36. In some versions of the myth, Polynices is responsible for the war. See Creon's comments on Polynices in Sophocles' version (Soph. *Ant.* 198–202; 280–89; 514–20).

maturity, rationality, and acceptance. To Antigone, it means *la vita comoda* and accepting compromises.

The concept of happiness is the object of a sustained reflection in the Greek text. In the second *stasimon*, the Chorus speak of *eudaimonia* in reference and contraposition to the sorrows of the house of the Labdacids (Soph. *Ant.* 583–84). Happiness is linked to the gods and to *eu phronein*: happy, *eudaimones*, are those whose time and house have not been shaken by the gods. As in Anouilh’s play, so in Sophocles’ tragedy happiness is something unattainable for the heroine. In Sophocles, Antigone is the “unhappy daughter of Oedipus”, incapable of achieving happiness because of the guilt inherited from her family, which is prompted by the gods’ uncontrollable plan and by the arbitrary *tukhe*. Like Sophocles’ heroine, Anouilh’s Antigone cannot achieve happiness, *bonheur* (*eudaimonia*). She wants everything straight away, not a small portion nor a mediocre compromise (p. 84): “Vous me dégoûtez tous avec votre bonheur! Avec votre vie qu’il faut aimer coûte que coûte.” (p. 47: “You disgust me, all of you, you and your happiness! And your life, that has to be loved at any price.”).³⁷

According to some critics, the heroine’s desire to preserve a pure, ideal, ephemeral, and innocent status, her idealistic, youthful, and rebellious fantasies, as well as her vocation for death and danger, reflect, though indirectly, a “fascist aesthetic” and rhetoric. What Anouilh’s Antigone refuses is, specifically, a “bourgeois” life and happiness, synonymous with mediocrity and compromise against grandeur and purity — promoted by fascist ideology. Because bourgeois values were associated by fascist intellectuals with “democracy”, Antigone’s refusal of a mediocre type of *bonheur* is interpreted by Fleming as complicit in fascism.³⁸ Witt suggests, too, that Antigone’s rebellious words “vous me dégoûtez tous avec votre bonheur” echo Mussolini’s slogan “noi siamo contro la vita comoda”.³⁹

It is undeniable that Anouilh’s *Antigone*, as his articles of the 1940s, tackle themes suitable to fascism — such as the refusal to conform to the oppressive and mediocre constraints of (bourgeois) society and the aspiration for purity and danger. However, these allusions remain a “less directly

37. The same phrase is pronounced by Thérèse, protagonist of Anouilh’s *La Sauvage*.

38. Fleming (2006) 179. In an article “Introduction à la littérature fasciste”, Turlais (1943) 32 speaks of the “immonde bassesse de la société capitaliste et bourgeoise”. The same refusal of bourgeois values had been consistently portrayed in Anouilh’s previous works such as *L’Hermine* (1931) and *La Sauvage* (1934); see Witt (1993) 56; Guérin (2010) 95.

39. Witt (1993) 54.

political form of fascism".⁴⁰ More important, I think, is to stress the meaninglessness of the heroine's arbitrary rebellion and the absurd inevitability of the tragic process. In the exchange with Creon, Anouilh's heroine is sure that she does not want to accept a bourgeois conventional future and grow old. However, soon after, Antigone realises that she no longer knows what she is dying for (p. 94: "Je ne sais plus pourquoi je meurs.").

In portraying Antigone's vacillations and uncertainties, Anouilh voices the ambiguities of the heroine's motivation as represented in Sophocles. The Greek heroine, too, shows a sign of self-doubt: she wonders whether she has been abandoned by the gods (Soph. *Ant.* 925–26). She is extremely isolated in her suffering: not even the Chorus support her; yet she goes to her death convinced that she has accomplished the right action. In the famous lines 905–12, she asserts that she would have not accomplished the same sacrifice for a husband or a child; she is aware that only a brother is irreplaceable and thus she has to persevere in her action. Such a controversial assertion of *philia* is absent in Anouilh's version, in which it could have been interpreted by pro-Resistance critics as a further admission of the partiality of Antigone's rebellion. In the modern version Antigone acts only for herself (*pour moi*): her brother's burial has only been a pretext to enact her own egoistic self-assertion. Rather than fighting for human rights and freedom, this Antigone rebels against the absurd compromises of human existence and is unable to leave behind the security and innocence of childhood.

Therefore, Anouilh's heroine is a self-interested, rebellious woman unable to represent the voice of the community. Antigone's choices in Anouilh are irrational, instinctive, unmotivated, and her death ultimately meaningless and absurd. In this irrationality and absurdity, I believe, lies the key for understanding Anouilh's portrayal of Antigone. Her repentance corroborates the uselessness of her action as well as the absurdity of her rebellion, thus undermining the fascist-inspiration of her striving towards an ideal purity. Anouilh's Antigone is not the epitome of a pure, uncompromising, and youthful fascist heroine, because she admits that she does not know why she is dying and realises that Creon was right. She is not, either, an exemplary, heroic, Resistance fighter because she acts only for herself and not for the community. Although her arbitrary and irrational act shows the inability of power to coerce resistance into order, it remains symbolic and irremediably fatal. Anouilh cynically emphasises that the heroine is compelled to make these choices and to die tragically because

40. Cairns (2016) 135.

of the necessity of the theatrical role imposed upon her. Her destiny is as inevitable as Creon's choice of compromise. Such inevitability shows the author's own cynical and nihilistic view of existence.

6. INEVITABILITY AND TRAGIC DETERMINISM

In Anouilh's version, the lyrics of the Sophoclean Chorus are absent, but their philosophical stance is partly absorbed into the — more playful — intervention of the Chorus explaining the nature and *déroulement* of tragedy. Anouilh's Chorus compare tragedy to a machine, which naturally and mechanically unfolds according to inevitable, though fictional, directions and roles assigned to each character (p. 62):

Voilà ... le ressort est bandé. Cela n'a plus qu'à se dérouler tout seul ...
C'est tout. Après, on n'a plus qu'à laisser faire. On est tranquille. Cela
roule tout seul. C'est minutieux, bien huilé depuis toujours.

(p. 25) So. Now the spring is wound. The tale will unfold all of itself. ...
That's all it takes. And afterwards, no need to do anything. It does itself.
Like clockwork set going since the beginning of time.

Like the Sophoclean Chorus, the modern Chorus acknowledge that man cannot escape his destiny. In the Sophoclean original the Chorus launch into the famous 'Ode to Man' and consider the achievements, potential, and limits of the human race (Soph. *Ant.* 332–75). Anouilh's Chorus also accentuate that not even man, the most resourceful of all creatures, is able to predict nor change his fate, dictated by an incomprehensible determinism. In addition to Sophocles, Anouilh adds a meta-theatrical comment on the differences between *tragédie* and *drame*. Whereas melodrama presents the characters and public with the illusion that happiness will prevail and the "bad" characters (*ces méchants acharnés*) will be punished, tragedy offers no possibility nor hope of salvation. Indeed, paradoxically, the fact that the tragic outcome of the story is inevitable from the beginning makes it reassuring (*réassurant*). There is nothing anyone can do but accept that someone will die and someone will kill. Therefore, in Anouilh's tragedy, there are no "good" and "bad" characters, "everyone is innocent" (p. 62: "on est innocent en somme"). This assertion provides the key for understanding Anouilh's play, which emphasises the absurdity of the whole tragic process. Regardless of Creon's good intentions and his willingness to save Antigone,

the outcome of the tragedy is inescapable and Antigone will die. Because they are simply playing inescapable “roles” imposed by an irrational and unpredictable distribution of roles and they cannot get away from their allotted endings, the characters are partly exculpated by fate. Anouilh’s fatalistic view of tragedy provides an “excuse” to justify their impulsive and irrational decisions.

In Anouilh’s tragedy, Antigone accepts the inevitable outcome of the story and refuses to hope that it might change. She repudiates what she calls *sale espoir* (p. 47: “lousy hope”). According to Antigone’s view of life, it is preferable to live without illusions and false hopes, which can only cause delusion. In the original, too, hope (*elpis*) is described as the deception of the light-minded (*kouphonoos*), at lines 615–17. The second *stasimon* (Soph. *Ant.* 583–625) emphasises the illusory nature of hope, associated with the limited potential of human reason (unable to recognise deception), the gods (that can decide to lead one’s mind towards *atê*), and the inevitability of fate. Because of the instability of human life, even in his highest moment of glory and wealth, man has to remain vigilant and expect disaster.

In Greek tragedy human endeavours are determined both by external superhuman forces and by man’s own false hopes and errors. In response to this double causation, Anouilh employs the notion of tragic necessity and self-conscious theatricality. It is the absurdity of existence (an external random “distribution”) that dictates the tragic destiny of the characters — rather than an error (*hamartia*, common to all mankind, Soph. *Ant.* 1023–24), an inherited guilt, or a calamity imposed upon a mortal man by a god (Soph. *Ant.* 594–603). In Anouilh, Antigone is the daughter of Oedipus because of the role-playing imposed upon her by theatrical necessity (p. 70: “quand on s’appelle Œdipe, ou Antigone ...”; p. 33: “if your name’s Oedipus – or Antigone”). Both Creon and Antigone do not know that their choices are pre-determined *a priori* and are beyond their control. Like the Sophoclean characters, they are unable to foresee the consequences of their actions: man has no control over his life, which is ultimately determined by an irrevocable fate unknown to all.⁴¹ Towards the end of the tragedy the Sophoclean Chorus, too, emphasise the inescapability of fate through three exemplary stories (the mythical stories of Danae, Lykourgos, and Kleopatra, Soph. *Ant.* 944–87). Whereas the Sophoclean Chorus provide the audience with a moral lesson (wisdom can be learnt and lead to happiness, Soph.

41. This emerges both in the first (Soph. *Ant.* 361–62) and second (613–25) *stasima*, as well as in the Chorus’ words to Antigone (944–87).

Ant. 1347–48), Anouilh’s Chorus simply acknowledge that there is no possibility of escaping a pre-established fate and observe how removed the tragic events are from the unconcerned Guards. Significantly, they are the last characters to appear on stage. Tragedy is not their *oignon*: they keep drinking wine and playing cards. The pessimistic end of the play offers no solution to the absurd enactment of the tragedy and suggests a nihilistic view of the world: all values and beliefs are dismissed as perfectly useless and tragedy as a gratuitous, irremediable experience.

7. THE USE OF IRONY, CYNICISM, AND DESACRALISATION

Anouilh’s tragedy opens as the characters, dressed in simple evening clothes, drink and play cards, waiting to be introduced and play the story of *Antigone*. The colloquial language, domestic setting, as well as other blatant anachronisms contrast with the dramatic tension of tragedy. For example, Polynices is described as *tombereau, fleur de cotillon, fêtard* (p. 42: “a brinless roisterer, a cruel, soulless little thug”). He smoked cigarettes and drove sports cars. Antigone is dressed in Parisian *couturiers* and she has breakfast with (p. 15) “coffee and some toasts”. Haemon asked her to marry him at a ball and Creon tells her niece to give a child to her fiancé (p. 70).

The anachronisms, together with the colloquialism of the style and the overall desacralisation of the tragedy, were criticised by traditionalist critics and by Classicists as inconsistent with the dignity of tragedy. “On n’a jamais si bien trahi Sophocle”, claims Jean Sauvenay.⁴² Together with him, Hubert Gignoux and Jaques Poujol insisted that the play lacked the tragic element and that the author just recreated in *Antigone* his previous characters Thérèse and Eurydice.⁴³ Gignoux characterised Antigone as a “drame psychologique en marge d’une tragédie”, because of the flagrant anachronisms and because of a reduction of the dramatic conflict to a statement that both Creon and Antigone “ont également tort”.⁴⁴ Salacrou also complained that “ce n’est plus *Antigone*, c’est les ‘caprices d’Antigone’”.⁴⁵

However, the deliberate anachronisms served the author’s intention to emphasise the self-conscious playing with modernity, thus conveying an air

42. Sauvenay (1944) cited by Beugnot (1977) 33.

43. Gignoux (1946) 94–5; Poujol (1952) 338.

44. Gignoux (1946) 115.

45. Salacrou (1944) cited by Barsacq (2005) 306.

of artificiality. In emphasising the theatrical frame of the tragedy as well as the anti-heroic aspects of the ancient drama, Anouilh intentionally desacralised the tragedy and played with the audience's expectations and previous knowledge of the story. For example, in the opening scene, the Nurse naively suspects that her *petite* Antigone left the house during the night because of a romantic rendezvous with her lover (p. 42: *un amoureux*).⁴⁶ Through this ambiguity, Anouilh played on the notion of *philia* and possible sexual overtones of Antigone's relation with her brother, already present in the original (Soph. *Ant.* 73–6).⁴⁷ The Nurse is unaware of a fact that the audience may have, at this point, deduced: the *amoureux* is Polynices, and Antigone is returning home at four o' clock in the morning after having performed the funeral rite.

Moreover, the "seriousness" of the original tragic conflict is reduced in the modern version in favour of a number of minor, intimate, and personal conflicts, such as the one between Ismene and Antigone. In opposition to Ismene's femininity, Antigone is masculinised throughout Anouilh's play and regrets not being a male (p. 50): "une fille, oui. J'ai déjà assez pleuré d'être une fille!" (pp. 13–4: "Only a girl! The tears I've shed because of it!"). In the original, too, Antigone appears unfeminine: after admitting that she has performed the burial, she employs a masculine adjective to refer to herself (Soph. *Ant.* 464) and "various masculine forms replace in order to describe Antigone (e.g. 479, 496, 579–580)".⁴⁸ In addition, Anouilh's Antigone steals her sister's clothes the night before burying her brother in the attempt to look "une vraie femme" (p. 18: "a real wife"). She still wonders whether Haemon was mistaken in choosing her instead of her sister Ismene, and whether he regrets his choice. The central confrontation between Antigone and Creon, too, is changed by Anouilh and becomes a clash of two opposite conceptions of life, one which believes in the pragmatic acceptance of compromise and mediocrity, the other which privileges idealism and purity.

46. As Silva (2017b) 81, correctly remarks, despite the Nurse's attempts to understand Antigone, she "is unable to penetrate either the strangeness of her personality or the meaning of her actions".

47. In the original, too, Sophocles employs the Greek word *philos* (Soph. *Ant.* 73; 81) or *autadelphos* (503; 517) to emphasise the bond which ties Antigone to her brother as blood-relative (also stressed at lines 466–67 and 511).

48. Andújar and Nikoloutsos (2017), 24. In Sophocles, Ismene emphasises their inferiority as women and shows feminine subservience to the male authority by contrast with Antigone's unconventional subversion of the female role. Conversely, Anouilh's Ismene does not feel inhibited as a woman as in the original (pp. 61–2).

In Anouilh's version, the trivial and colloquial dialogues of the Guards contrast with the dramatic conflicts of the tragedy and serve to emphasise certain macabre and grotesque aspects. Anouilh introduces three Guards instead of one and expands their role. Although Sophocles dedicates a certain attention to this character, a cowardly and materialistic figure only moved by selfish preoccupations,⁴⁹ Anouilh depicts the Guards in greater detail. Paradoxically, the Guard named Jonas is the last person with whom Antigone speaks and interacts before her death. His frivolous discourses and military slang contrast with Antigone's tragedy and her invocation (p. 92): "O tombeau! O lit nuptial! O ma demeure souterraine!" (p. 51: "Hail, then, my grave, my marriage bed, my underground home!"). The lyrical and dramatic tone of this line is inconsistent with Antigone's usual plain diction. Anouilh is here quoting his Sophoclean model (Soph. *Ant.* 891–92): ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφῆς / οἴκησις ἀείφροουρος. However, in Anouilh, Antigone's *kommos* loses the intensity of the original and is desacralised by the presence of the materialistic Guard, preparing a *chique* in front of her, and his superficial comments.

Towards the end of the play, when Antigone writes a romantic farewell letter to her fiancé, the scene is made playful and grotesque because of the comments of the insensitive Guard. When Antigone asks him to send the letter, the Guard is only convinced by Antigone's offering of her golden ring, on the condition that he will write it in his own handwriting (p. 92). The overall effect of this scene is sharply grotesque and reveals the aristocratism of Anouilh's Antigone, who is disgusted by the common, "mediocre" men, their egotism and indifference.

Therefore, the anachronism, the use of irony, the presence of the materialistic Guards, as well as the ironic and distancing comments of the Chorus emphasise the metatheatricality of the performance and strip the ancient tragedy of its grandeur. The self-conscious playing with reality and the desacralisation of the tragedy accentuate the open, ideologically unstable texture of Anouilh's *Antigone* and intentionally shift the focus onto the author's cynical and nihilistic view of existence.

49. The Sophoclean Guard is a "garrulous, cowardly, yet witty figure"; Griffith (1999) 165.

8. CONCLUSION

Although Anouilh's *Antigone* was a potentially political and subversive play, when first performed in 1944 it was accepted by collaborationist and German censors. After the liberation, the play continued to be a success. Despite the fact that Anouilh was praised in fascist journals and literature under the Occupation, his name never appeared on the "black lists" in the period which followed the liberation and saw a wave of executions of suspected collaborators, known as the *épuration sauvage* ("wild purge").⁵⁰

A close analysis of the play has indeed revealed that Anouilh's version portrays the absurdity of life and the impossibility to realise the aspirations of childhood in adult life, rather than the political opposition of the individual against the tyranny of the state. Anouilh's Creon is a sensible and clever ruler who, unlike the Sophoclean Creon, is not guilty. At the end, Anouilh's Antigone admits that "Creon was right" (pp. 93–4: "Créon avait raison"). She does not inspire resistance nor fascist values but rather vulnerability, instability, and irrationality. She is a self-interested young woman who does not want to grow up. Age is of crucial importance in Anouilh's play: Antigone's desire for eternal innocence and pure life is opposed to Creon's opportunistic acceptance of the compromises of adulthood. Although he is trapped in his role of *chef d'État*, Creon understands Antigone's position: he has insights and intuitions that the Greek Creon only gains at the end and he also admits that she was right (p. 92).

In Anouilh's tragic world, both the heroes and the anti-heroes or "compromisers" are merely acting within a play and the tragedy is presented as unavoidable.⁵¹ Such fatalism partly exculpates the characters from their own actions and decisions and points to the nihilism and cynicism of the whole tragic process. It is precisely the cynical and ironic nature of Anouilh's play, its intentionally unclear political allegory (enhanced by the ambiguities of the original itself), as well as the absence of a categorical distinction between victims and villains that caused the variety of interpretations and controversy in the context of 1944 occupied France. Anouilh intentionally emphasised the ambiguous nature and competing voices of the ancient tragedy and avoided a univocal, clear-cut ideological position. Through his tragedy,

50. See Flügge (1982) 306. On his experience of the *épuration*, see Anouilh (1987) 173–79.

51. This categorisation recurs in Anouilh's *Pièces noires*. On the difference between the heroes and the mediocre, see Witt (1993) 55.

Anouilh expressed his pessimistic view of existence arguably as a reaction to the historical and political circumstances in which the play was written. Although the sparse and indirect allusions to what Witt and Fleming define “fascist aesthetic” might reveal a certain political liability,⁵² it remains difficult to label these general literary themes as evidence of a militant fascist ideology. In my paper, I have argued that Anouilh shifted the focus on the personal and psychological conflicts enacted in the tragedy, its inevitable outcome, and the disillusioned and cynical view of existence.

The different responses to and opposite readings of the play demonstrate the malleability of Sophocles’ *Antigone* and the complexities of its conflicts, which escape a one-sided, fixed interpretation. The case of Anouilh’s *Antigone* also shows the difficulties for an author to control all of a play’s effects. Whether this was the author’s intention or not, the interpretation of his *Antigone* changed through time because of the complex interplay between aesthetic, propaganda, and political ideologies in the period that immediately preceded and followed the end of the Second World War. Although his *Antigone* was not explicitly political, it was made political by the critical reception of the time, as well as by subsequent readings and appropriations that have transformed the Sophoclean drama into a political play of resistance and dissent. Today, *Antigone* has become the political play of protest and the epitome of the spirit of resistance also thanks to Anouilh’s apparently subversive adaptation and its interaction with the history of the twentieth century.

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52. See Witt (1993); Fleming (2006).

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