

## REWORKING OF *ANTIGONE* BY JEAN ANOUILH

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Reworking of a classic is a means to contextualize a work of art in contemporary times. A classic stands out as it transcends the spatial-temporal plane of existence and lends itself conveniently to modern interpretations. This paper will explore the reworking of *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh, in comparison to Sophocles' *Antigone*. Anouilh reworked and produced *Antigone* as a protest against the fascist regime in France, imposed by Hitler after his army occupied the country during the Second World War. The play was produced in Paris in 1942 and it depicted the plight of the French people under the oppressive, totalitarian regime. Based on Sophocles' ancient Greek tragedy, *Antigone* was first performed in Athens in the 5th century BC. In *Antigone*'s repeated use of "no!" against the dictator Creon, the French audience saw their own resistance against the German occupation. The Nazis allowed the play to be staged because some of Creon's arguments seemingly favoured autocracy.

Anouilh redefined 'tragedy' by choosing to do away with the figure of a conventional tragic hero. *Antigone*, the female protagonist dominates the plot of the play. The man-god-society matrix which was a staple element of Greek tragedy has been done away with. Anouilh creates a heroine with human foibles, with whom the audience can empathize.

The play offers an insight into the minds of the oppressed masses who struggle to break their shackles. *Antigone* is thus a metaphor for rebellion against tyranny and that is why it becomes contemporary. The thematic concerns of *Antigone* are topical as the world is still faced with both suppression from 'without' and repression from 'within' at the hands of oppressive regimes. Hence the question of allowing funeral rites for her dead brother, Polynices, is not so much about the maltreatment meted out to him after 'death', but how *Antigone* struggles to assert her right, and eventually has to pay with her life, because of her rebellion against authority. That is why the issue of 'burial rites' occupies minimal space in Anouilh's *Antigone*, where the characters are driven by impulses, and not by the notions of religion and hereafter. In *Antigone* by Sophocles, the burial issue is the locus of conflict, culminating in 'mourning'.

But for the corpse of Polynices, slain  
So piteously, they say, he has proclaimed  
To all the citizens, that none should give  
His body burial, or bewail his fate,  
But leave it still unsepulchred, unwept,  
A prize full rich for birds that scent afar  
Their sweet repast<sup>1</sup>.

The opening of *Antigone* by Anouilh is significant as it implies dramatic autonomy on a spatial-temporal plane; set without historical or terrestrial implications. This lends the play a contemporaneity and relevance in the current geo-political scenario, and brings it out of the milieu of Greek culture. The stage setting signifies a contemporary locale, where the characters onstage, are chatting, drinking and playing cards in fading light before the play begins. Interestingly, the play is not divided into acts and scenes and is played without interval.<sup>2</sup>

The prologue has been personified in Anouilh's *Antigone*, as in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. In Sophocles, Antigone delivers the prologue. The personification of the prologue engenders a self-reflexive element, which the audience is exposed to at the very onset of the play. This is evident in the following lines.

The people gathered here are about to act the story of Antigone. The one who is going to play the lead is the thin girl sitting there silent. . . She is thinking that soon she is going to be Antigone. That she'll stop being the thin dark girl whose family didn't take her seriously.. .She is thinking she is going to die, though she is still young, and like everyone else would have preferred to live<sup>3</sup>.

Anouilh creates two frames of reality. At one level, the Prologue announces the enactment of the play, which the audience is about to view, and on the other hand, addresses the actors, as 'characters' of the play. Like the Greek playwright Menander, the Prologue also offers a background to the play,

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<sup>1</sup> Available from <http://www.bartleby.com/8/6/antigone.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Plot in Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, (London: Methuen Publishing Limited, 2000), xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

introducing the characters one by one. The prologue thus sets the tone of the play.

The two frames of reality are over-lapping. At one level we are introduced to the characters as 'actors', as Anouilh uses the word 'lead role', for the main characters. As the play progresses Creon says to Antigone, "Now just listen. All right – I have the villain's part and you're cast as the heroine.. .but don't try to push it too far, you little nuisance"<sup>4</sup>. Anouilh employs the self-reflexive technique to merge the worlds of art and reality as in Brecht. This technique generates the 'alienation effect'. Relating the story of the play in brief in the Prologue, takes away from the play in terms of suspense, and as audience we are exposed to an 'alternate' reality. Hence the Prologue does not function as the agency having the 'last word' on the dramatic action.

Our encounter with Antigone, the 'character-actor' persona strengthens the two frames of reality. The Prologue is not creating an illusion, but two alternate realities; Antigone, the lead-role who thinks, 'soon she is going to be Antigone'. In Peter Brook's opinion "Anouilh is a poet, but not a poet of words: he is a poet of words – acted, of scenes-set, of players-performing"<sup>5</sup>. This is also similar to the technique used by Lorca in his comedies, such as *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife*, where he addresses the 'wife' as both the character and actor and instructs her about her costume. The difference is that in Lorca, the Prologue is delivered by the author and not by the chorus.

One major difference between Anouilh's and Sophocles' Antigone is that in the former the identity of the chorus has not been mentioned expressly. In Sophocles, the chorus comprises 'the Theban elders'. Interestingly, a new character of the 'nurse' has been introduced, thus excluding Creon's wife, figuring in Sophocles' Antigone. The wife's suicide is tantamount to submission to the divine order, which Creon defied in not following Teiresias' words. Furthermore the guards have been named as 'Snout', 'Jonas' and 'Binns', whereas in Sophocles there is only one guard, named as 'Sentry'. The names, although colloquial, make these guards individual characters, despite being minor ones.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Brook, *Elements of Drama* (New York: Cambridge, 1963), 11 .

The introduction of the third actor by Sophocles, which resulted in the reduction of the role of the chorus, has gone a long way. Anouilh's reworking has an unidentified chorus, with only a few lines allocated to it, and the minor characters such as 'Jonas' play an important role in furthering the plot. More so, naming the characters shows that the conflict which was 'politicized' in Sophocles, is more 'personalized' in Anouilh, as apparent in Antigone's dialogues with Jonas. Her meeting with Jonas is similar to a heroine's meeting with a 'god' or a divine being, who helps the protagonist achieve her goal, as Joseph Campbell, in his seminal work titled *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* dilates on the course of individuation<sup>6</sup>. Jonas's help in writing a letter for Antigone, despite the fact that it is risky for him, clarifies this point. She further says to Jonas, 'yours is the last human face I shall see'. Antigone then adds, 'let me look at you'<sup>7</sup>. Jonas promises help during Antigone's exile. Sophocles' Sentry is more of an egocentric character who curries favour with Creon in order to save his skin.

Creon. How and where was it that ye seized and brought her?

Guard. She was in act of burying. Now thou knowest All that I have to tell<sup>8</sup>.

In Sophocles, the sisters, Antigone and Ismene serve as a foil to each other. Anouilh however draws a contrast between them. Their physiognomies are highlighted to distinguish the two sisters, Antigone is 'dark' and 'thin', Ismene is 'fairhaired' and 'beautiful'<sup>9</sup>. It is like Frantz Fanon's thesis in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

I am black:

I am the incarnation of a complete fusion with the world, an intuitive understanding of the earth, an abandonment of my ego in the heart of the cosmos<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (California: New World Library, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 53.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bartleby.com/8/6/antigone.pdf>, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 45.

Hence the relationship between the 'dark' Antigone and the 'earth' can be looked at, on a metaphysical level. It's not merely due to her devotion to Polynices that she buries him under a mound of earth, but also her bonding with the element Earth. Earth signifies the phenomenon of birth and also symbolizes history; the cycle of change, and development. Antigone, in trying to bury her brother, is making him live forever. For whenever the story of Antigone would be recalled, it would be apparent that the cause behind her rebellion was primarily the indignity meted out to Polynices' dead body.

It is not just the idea of appeasing the dead spirit as in Sophocles, but the notion of fusing of the body with Mother Earth, making it a part of the process of fruition associated with it. On learning from Jonas about the death sentence she says, 'Hail then my grave, my marriage bed, my underground home<sup>11</sup>'. Earth promises her a bond, which she was unable to secure with her mother Jocaste, due to her suicide. That is why Antigone is displeased when Ismene, at the end avows her support to her at the cost of her life. Antigone's reply is as under:

What you ought to have done was to go this morning, on all fours, in the dark grub up, the earth with your nails, under the noses of the guards be grabbed by them like a thief<sup>12</sup>.

Antigone's 'grubbing up the earth' is analogous to a process of soul-searching, which she has done of her own free will.

The conflict between fate and free-will which was paramount in Sophocles' plays, has been done away with. Free-will is the determinant of actions in Anouilh. Antigone has chosen a particular course of action for herself. And as in Sophocles, Antigone in Anouilh, accepts responsibility for her actions. Ismene is weak, and not as resolute as Antigone in Sophocles, Ismene says, "I do them no dishonour, but I find/ Myself too weak to war against the state"<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 55.

<sup>12</sup> Available online in the article, "Post Traumatic Stress and how it wrecked Thebes" at <http://gymclassfeminism.tumblr.com/post/2246358546/post-traumatic-stress-and-how-it-wrecked-thebes>.

<sup>13</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone*, 3.

The character of Creon as sketched in the Prologue is important. He is not entirely a tyrant. In fact in Anouilh's *Antigone*, it is Antigone who is more forceful than Creon, as she sarcastically points out to Creon, "you're too sensitive to be a tyrant"<sup>14</sup>. He is portrayed as a man who loves music and fine buildings and spends hours browsing through Thebes little antique shops<sup>15</sup>. This shows that Creon was an art lover. Therefore despotism is not a singular emotion that defines Creon. His partiality for music, books, and architecture, coupled with his dictatorial tendencies make him more human in Anouilh's than in Sophocles' *Antigone*. A comment on the staging of *Antigone* in France, points out,

Ironically, Nazi leaders found the arguments of Creon to be so compelling, that they permitted the play to be performed in Nazi- occupied France<sup>16</sup>.

The opening dialogues in *Antigone* by Anouilh are exchanged between the nurse and Antigone, whereas in Sophocles, Antigone and Ismene are shown conversing with each other. Antigone expresses the desire to see the world 'grey' and without colours in Anouilh. This desire is further highlighted in the next few dialogues, when she refers to the world around her as a "garden"; "A garden that hasn't yet begun to think about people"<sup>17</sup>. So Antigone's journey into the world when it is asleep, and the use of the "garden" metaphor apparently reflects the desire to retreat into the 'Prelapsarian' world, and the garden becomes a metaphor for the Garden of Eden.

The nurse is an ordinary woman, who suspects Antigone's venturing out in midnight as a sign of promiscuity. Antigone, in Anouilh, faces stringent opposition at three levels, firstly it is from Creon, then it is her sister Ismene, and thirdly it is the nurse. The greater the opposition faced by Antigone, the more resilient she become. Sophocles' Antigone is not faced with sexual accusations as hurled by the nurse in Anouilh's play. In the very beginning seeds of 'self-determination' have been sown in Anouilh's Antigone. From her going out in the dark, to actually making attempts to

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<sup>14</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Available at <http://www.newamericantheatre.com/antigone2003pr.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 6.

bury her brother, Anouilh's Antigone develops as a self-willed character. In Sophocles, Antigone's character does not evolve. She appears defiant only with regard to the burial issue, whereas in Anouilh's Antigone, nocturnal adventures lay the foundations of wilfulness in her character, built upon later.

Freud's idea of Primal Myth can be employed to connect Antigone's banishment to a 'cave', in Anouilh. Despite the fact that the play can be regarded as 'contemporary' on many counts, Antigone is condemned to exile in a cave in Anouilh.

Creon oppresses Antigone not only to safeguard his political interests, but also draws erotic pleasure in controlling her. His gestures of twisting Antigone's arm, touching her and drawing her close, reflect his sadism and repressed 'incestuous' desire for a young girl like Antigone. The instructions in parenthesis such as, 'moving closer', 'gripping her arm', 'gripping more tightly', 'a twinkle in his eye', 'Close'<sup>18</sup> bring out his sadism. This is also manifest in the lines where he says that he ought to play with her as boys do with girls<sup>19</sup>. He further adds, "you think I am a brute, of course, and horribly unpoetic. But, a handful that you are, I'm fond of you. Don't forget it was I gave you your first doll, and not very long ago either!"<sup>20</sup>

Antigone is a young girl, and the fact that Creon gave her a doll, makes it a 'fetish' object for him. This is further established by the fact that Creon's wife or any female counterpart does not figure in the play. So his sensual impulses find a channel in sadistic gestures.

Since fetishism implies an unnatural attachment with an inanimate object, which channels repressed sexual desires, gifting Antigone a doll, an emblem of the female body externalizes Creon's fetish inclination towards Antigone. In contrast, in Sophocles' tragedy Antigone makes a brief appearance and commits suicide. So the only female character who stands at par with Creon is Antigone.

Creon's allegation in Sophocles that Antigone has her 'father's stubborn spirit', has been dealt with differently by Anouilh. Anouilh does not refer to

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<sup>18</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Oedipus' incestuous relationship with his mother but to his 'pride' which Antigone has inherited from her father, Oedipus. The argument between Creon and Antigone is extended in Anouilh's *Antigone*. In Sophocles it is more pronounced in case of Creon and Teiresias. The nature of the argument between Antigone and Creon in Sophocles is sexist. Creon's gender bias is dominant.

Go, then, below. And if thou must have love,  
Love those thou find'st there. While I live, at least,  
A woman shall not rule<sup>21</sup>.

Anouilh's Creon is not a male chauvinist, and that is why his perception of Antigone as a strong, willful character makes him more watchful of her actions. He is afraid, not of a 'woman', but of an 'individual'. On the contrary, Antigone makes use of the sexist argument in Anouilh, "not a pretty sight, a man who is afraid" In Sophocles' *Antigone* and also in Anouilh's, the issue of offering burial to the rotting dead body is common. Anouilh in his *Antigone* has carried this forward. In Anouilh, the issue is not of the burial rites, as Antigone expresses a marked distrust in them. When Creon dismisses the notion of burial as being 'ridiculous', Antigone affirms this, 'Yes. Ridiculous'<sup>22</sup>. This sets Anouilh's *Antigone* apart from Sophocles'.

Creon: not for other people? And not for your brother  
himself? For whom, then?  
Antigone: no one.  
Myself<sup>23</sup>.

Even Creon has been portrayed as more human in Anouilh than in Sophocles. It is most unbearable for this grey-haired, old man to live with the terrible stench that issues from the decaying body of Polynices. Yet he does that "to pay a price for law and order", as the Nazis did with regard to the Jews. Interestingly, it is Antigone who challenges Creon to put her to death and Creon delays it. Anouilh's Creon is wiser than the Creon of Sophocles who had to be "instructed" by his son that killing Antigone would only result in endearing her to the masses. This foresight on the part of Anouilh's Creon forms the undertone of his advice to Antigone and not

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<sup>21</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



'genuine' love for her. Since Creon himself is not ready to kill Antigone in Anouilh's version, Haemon does not have to use any logical arguments to save his fiancée. So Haemon does not come out as a major character.

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Haemon is very tactful in dealing with an 'all-powerful' father. He begins by promising deference to his father, and later utilizes arguments based on cause-and-effect relationship to defend Antigone. In Anouilh, Haemon's character has not been developed as such. This makes Antigone stand out in death alone. The dilemma that Creon faces in this case is crucial; he already knows that Antigone's murder would prove "unfavourable" for his regime, whereas Antigone is leading him to murder her. It is not owing to his recklessness as in *Antigone* by Sophocles, but because she publicly declares that she would bury her brother, thus leaving Creon with no other choice.

The notion of Polynices' body being dead and decomposed brings to light the theory of the 'uncanny' by Freud. The online article, "The Uncanny Freud" elucidates:

Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, as in a fairy tale of Haufi's all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them... as we already know, this kind of uncanniness springs from its proximity to the castration complex. To some people the idea of being buried alive by mistake is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all but was qualified by a certain lasciviousness – the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence<sup>24</sup>.

Creon leaving Polynices unburied is an example of the castration complex, as discussed in the Little Dictionary by Charles Rycroft. Men develop this complex as a result of Oedipal rivalry with their fathers. Hence by mutilating the dead bodies, they derive a perverted pleasure for the 'castration' they have undergone as 'imposed' by their fathers<sup>25</sup>. In

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<sup>24</sup> Visit <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud/pdf>, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Appignanesi and Oscar Zarate, *Introducing Freud: A Graphic Guide to the Father of Psychoanalysis* (London: Icon Books, 2013).

Sophocles, Creon refers to 'Oedipus' almost as if using a pejorative. In Anouilh, Creon only refers to Oedipus when he finds Antigone intractable. The latter part of the quotation explains Antigone's 'phantasy'. Antigone's driving force is 'thanatos' as is evident in Sophocles and Anouilh respectively. Anouilh's Antigone says to Ismene 'you have chosen life, I've chosen death'. Creon says to chorus,

She was born to die. She may not have known it herself, but Polynices was only an excuse. And when that excuse wouldn't work anymore she chose another. All that mattered to her was to refuse everything and to die<sup>26</sup>.

The death-wish has been developed in Anouilh on an amplified scale. Even in the love scene between Antigone and Haemon, she says

Oh, I am making myself blush. But this morning I must know. When you think how I'm going to be yours, do you feel a great void growing inside you, As if something were dying...

Thanatos here has been linked with eros, – the pleasure principle in Freud, as the book *Introducing Freud: a Graphic Guide to the father of Psychoanalysis* highlights:

Since all living matter is made up of non-living, inorganic matter, then perhaps there is an instinct beyond the pleasure principle which aims to return to a state of inorganic inertia<sup>27</sup>.

That is why Freud postulated, "the aim of all life is death" and Antigone by Anouilh is an embodiment of Thanatos. Even with Haemon while referring to love-making, she employs metaphors of path. Closely related to this is the theme of 'mourning' or 'melancholia' discussed in *Introducing Freud*. In *Antigone* by Sophocles the role of mourning is predominant. In Anouilh's *Antigone* we are faced with a situation beyond melancholia. As Appignanesi puts it,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

To mourn the loss of a loved one is normal. But in Psychotic depression, the patient's grief conceals unconscious feelings of hate. Since these feelings cannot be admitted, the lost love object becomes identified with the patient's own ego...the unconscious hatred, instead of being directed at the lost love object, is misdirected against his ownself<sup>28</sup>.

The sense of loss is pronounced in *Antigone* by Sophocles. Anouilh dramatizes the aftermath of this loss. In Sophoclean *Antigone* the Sentry reports that someone had covered the body with a 'layer of earth', whereas Anouilh's guard, Jonas points out, "just a sprinkling of earth". This difference seems deliberate on the part of Anouilh, as it shows that the emphasis is not on covering the body, but on the consequences of the gesture. Antigone's sense of loss had been sublimated in her act of throwing a handful of dust on her brother's body. It further gets directed against her ownself in the form of 'thanatos', when despite loving Haemon, she prefers death to life.

Anouilh also introduces "existentialist" questions confronted by man. Almost like Sartre, Creon says to Haemon, "condemn her to live"? As Sartre laid, "man is condemned to be free, condemned to choose and that existence precedes essence"<sup>29</sup>. Each character in this play is involved in the search for a meaningful existence. This is further evident in Haemon's dialogues with Creon in Anouilh's *Antigone*. Haemon has been shown as a weak character in his play. In Sophocles, in his arguments, based on ratiocination and political acumen he directs his father, not to kill Antigone, for it would only yield results, opposite to what Creon as a despot expected. In Anouilh, his reaction to Creon's decision stems from his helplessness. Haemon does not employ any arguments, for Creon is already convinced that Antigone's life should be spared. Haemon thus, voices concerns, which invite for an existentialist reading. Creon, becomes the embodiment of higher forces, which man in the scheme of this universe is 'condemned' to succumb to.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Visit "Existentialism is Humanism" at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre.htm>.

Haemon: (looking at him, then in a sudden outburst). That great strength and courage... that giant-god who used to gather me up in his arms and save me from ghosts – was that you<sup>30</sup>?

He further says,

And all that pride, those books –  
were they only leading upto this?  
To becoming a man, as you call it –  
a man whose supposed to consider himself lucky just to be  
alive?<sup>31</sup>

Later he communes,

(crying out like a child, throwing himself into Creon's arms). Oh father, it isn't true, it isn't you, it isn't happening! We're not both driven into a corner where we can only yes! You're still strong like when I was small. I beg you, let me admire you still! I'm too alone, the world's empty, if I have to stop looking up to you<sup>32</sup>.

Creon's replies to Haemon's questions are also significant in this regard. "We are alone. The world is empty<sup>33</sup>". The existentialist strain is not apparent in Sophocles' *Antigone*. The conflict in *Antigone* by Sophocles is between written and unwritten laws.

And what makes Antigone heroic is her siding with the 'unwritten' yet divine laws, as she says, "By what stern laws condemned, I go to that strong dungeon of the tomb."<sup>34</sup> In *Antigone* by Anouilh, the notion of existence has been put to question. Her choice of death signifies her search

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<sup>30</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>32</sup> Excerpts from Jean Anouilh's Adaptation of *Antigone*, available at [teacherweb.com/FL/MLEC/Harris2/Anhouil-excerpts.pdf](http://teacherweb.com/FL/MLEC/Harris2/Anhouil-excerpts.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, xvii.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Hayes Plumptre, *Sophocles: Tragedies and Fragments*, 170. Available at <http://books.google.com.pk/books?isbn=0819628913>.

for a wholesome existence. Mary Ann Frese Witt , poses the following questions,'

Was it possible for Anouilh, one of the most frequently staged playwrights during the Occupation, to remain, as he claimed, "a bete de theatre" completely unconcerned with politics? Is his *Antigone* a drama of resistance, "a fascist-leaning piece noire" or an example of modern tragedy removed from political actuality?<sup>35</sup>

Antigone poses these questions when she comes face to face with Jonas in Anouilh's *Antigone*. She is not sure if she is dying out of rebellion against Creon's regime, 'I don't know any more...what I am dying for'.<sup>36</sup> An online, article summarizing the main points of existentialism states:

This slogan is opposed to the traditional view that Essence precedes Existence, according to which we are seen as having a given nature that determines what we are and what our ultimate purpose or value is. We are understood by analogy to artefacts which are made with a pre-existing idea or concept of what they will be and what they will be good for<sup>37</sup>.

Antigone's headlong plunge into death in Anouilh is neither motivated by her devotion to Polynices nor by melancholia, as in Sophocles. It is an attempt to create a new "reality". In a passionate effusion of feelings, Antigone says to Haemon, "...the son we had in our dreams<sup>38</sup>". Her maternal instinct is linked to her dreams. The aura of freedom that characterizes the world of dreams is what she is searching for, "not that man is condemned to be free", in the existentialist sense in a 'claustrophobic' form in this world. Hence death offers her that latitude which is requisite to "create". Antigone in Anouilh becomes a medium for connecting life and death on a single plane.

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<sup>35</sup> Mary Ann Frese Witt, *The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 190.

<sup>36</sup> Tr. Barbara Bray, *Anouilh Five Plays* ( London: Meuthen, 1987), 133.

<sup>37</sup> Caroline Lidl and Kelly Huppert , "Metamorphosis Vs Stranger: An Existential Battle", available at <http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/debanach/sartreol.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Aouilh, *Antigone*, 20.

Frederick Leighton's painting portrays Antigone reflecting ambivalent feelings. As a comment states,

In this painting, Lord Leighton has represented Antigone as a tragic heroine. Using dramatic contrasts of light and dark, Leighton leads the viewer to focus on the expression on Antigone's face – she appears to be suffering from some troubled emotion, but still remains a brave and noble figure. By depicting a bust rather than a full-length view of Antigone we are forced to concentrate on the heroine exclusively and not, instead, the painting's setting<sup>39</sup>.

The language employed by Anouilh is colloquial. The use of one-liner sentences is significant in Anouilh's work. In Sophocles, iambic pentameter has been employed. Creon in Sophocles mouths platitudes on good governance, patriotism and loyalty. Anouilh's Creon uses informal, idiomatic dialect. In *Antigone* by Sophocles, the imagery abounds in the metaphors of death, pestilence, and decay, and hence the juxtaposition of the words like 'womb' with 'tomb'. Creon in Anouilh's *Antigone* in addressing Antigone compares her to small creatures, using words like 'hare', and 'rabbit', as in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* Helmer compares his wife Nora to a 'skylark' and other creatural imagery. As these animals occupy an insignificant position in the hierarchy of creatural life, Creon consciously makes this comparison to intimidate the self-willed Antigone.

The image of Haemon and Antigone dying while holding each other in an embrace occurs in both the Sophoclean and the Anouilh version of the myth. In Anouilh, it says, 'then he lay down beside Antigone, embracing her in a vast red pool of blood'. In Sophocles the messenger reports:

And, in the furthest corner of the vault,  
We saw her hanging by a twisted cord  
Of linen threads entwined, and him we found  
Clasping her form in passionate embrace,  
And mourning o'er the doom that robbed him of her,

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<sup>39</sup> Available at <http://loggia.com/art/19th/leighton01.html>.

His father's deed, and that his marriage bed,  
So full of sorrow<sup>40</sup>.

The cave where both of them die together in an embrace is round shaped, and hence it's resemblance to an 'egg', 'womb' or 'Omphalos', as we have in Samus Heaney. The imagery of 'womb' has been used for the cave by the chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone*. The cave thus becomes the 'philosopher's stone' as Jung would have it, as both the lovers complement each other in death, as in life to form an organic whole. Glenn Alexander Magee in the book *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, writes, "it is likely that the alchemist's aim was not to produce real gold but 'philosophical' gold".<sup>41</sup> Alchemists were concerned not only with the transformation of inanimate matter but with their spiritual transformation. That is how alchemical images become archetypal symbols, employed by Sophocles centuries ago, and by Anouilh in the 20th century.

The dialogues between the nurse and Antigone in Anouilh are noteworthy, as here the use of language becomes absurd. Language has been used to conceal motives, rather than reveal them. So language is no more a tool for communication. That is why in *Antigone* by Anouilh, there is a sense of 'friction' between all the characters. In Sophocles, Haemon and Antigone shared a pure, passionate love. Here even the relationship between Antigone and Haemon is ruptured by Antigone's use of equivocal language. Haemon never gets to understand the real motives of Antigone. Though Anouilh has dwelled more on the relationship between Antigone and Haemon, he does not show them as 'ideal' or 'star-crossed' lovers. In Sophoclean *Antigone* there is not even a single dialogue exchanged between the two. The references to Antigone as a dark woman, and Ismene as blond and fair, hint at the conflict between the 'Orient' and 'Occident'. Edward Said in his *Orientalism* writes "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of various degrees of a complex hegemony".<sup>42</sup> If we apply this theory to Anouilh's *Antigone*, one can see that Anouilh has actually subverted the thesis. Antigone is dark, yet she is not subservient to the "white woman" in the

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<sup>40</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone*, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 201.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), 11.

shape of her sister Ismene, despite the latter's constant attempts to influence Antigone's thoughts.

Since we are reading a translated version of the Greek *Antigone* and also of Anouilh's rendering of this myth, what Seamus Heaney says in this regard, becomes quite relevant. Heaney in the book, *The Government of the Tongue* writes:

What translation has done over the last couple of decades is not only to introduce us to new literary traditions but also to link the new literary experience to a modern martyrology, a record of courage and sacrifice which elicits our unstinted admiration. So subtly, with a kind of hangdog information of desertion, poets in English have felt compelled to turn their gaze East and have been encouraged to concede that the locus of greatness is shifting away from their language<sup>43</sup>.

The language of Creon undergoes a drastic change in Sophocles' *Antigone* especially when he learns about his son's and his wife's death. In the epilogue, he not only refers to becoming 'blind', but also repents what he perpetrated in rashness. Like Oedipus, he asks his subjects to "lead him away...for with fate too heavy..{his] head is bowed". In Anouilh, we do not come across any change in Creon, nor in his language. Even after learning about his son's death, he is least moved. He is "matter-of-fact" and is ready to attend a session at the Privy Council. Even the chorus does not indulge in lamentation as in Sophocles. Creon's justification is that, "you can't just fold your arms and do nothing. They say it's dirty work. But if you don't do it, who will?". In a way Creon uses "existentialist" arguments to justify his actions. He was condemned to "do"; someone has to do the "dirty job" as he says. Fred D'Agostino in his book *Chomsky's System of Ideas* says,

And neither does the achievement of a dynamic linguistic co-ordination depend on the authority of certain individuals in a particular community to introduce and to enforce changes in the system of shared linguistic dispositions. On this account, language change is co-

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<sup>43</sup> Seamus Heaney, *Government of the Tongue*, available at <https://books.google.com.pk/books>.



ordinated because each member of the linguistic community is independently predisposed to react in the same way to the introduction of novel patterns of usage<sup>44</sup>.

That is why, we see the frequent use of first person pronoun in case of Antigone and Creon in both Sophocles' and Anouilh's versions of *Antigone*.

The role of the chorus has been reworked too. The chorus was used as a commentator in the Greek tragedy. When Antigone is banished to the cave, it is the chorus which brings the news of her death, as it is not enacted, but reported to us. Anouilh gives due importance to the enactment of the scene. The chorus only works as an externalization of Creon's ego. More so, the chorus does not deliver a *parados*, the choral ode. Anouilh does not divide his play into acts or scenes. The use of 'bathos' is apparent in Anouilh's *Antigone*. The word stupidity is recurrent and is used to dismiss "burial rites" and the implications of heinous crimes. In this context, the absence of mythological references reflects Anouilh's emphasis on 'individuals' and their relative conflict and not on 'gods' or any exalted beings.

Antigone's journey into the dark can also be compared to the Buddhist concept of "Dependent Origin". Anthony Flanagan states that Buddha saw that "the process of 'becoming', of birth, old age and death was ultimately a circular process consisting of twelve links (*nidana*), each link the condition for the one following on from it. This process is referred to as 'dependent origin' or 'conditioned arising'... Dependent origin is one of the more initially difficult concepts of Buddhism".<sup>45</sup>

In this way we can see that Antigone's 'thanatos' is a step to regeneration. Thanatos and eros have been merged in the person of Antigone. Her creativity is wrought through her disposition to die. Thus Antigone becomes a liminal figure, one who can travel through the domains of life and death with the freedom of her self-will.

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<sup>44</sup> Fred D'Agostino, *Chomsky's System of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 212.

<sup>45</sup> Visit at [https://www.academia.edu/12034205/Physicalism\\_and\\_Beyond\\_Flanagan\\_Buddhism\\_and\\_Consciousness](https://www.academia.edu/12034205/Physicalism_and_Beyond_Flanagan_Buddhism_and_Consciousness).

Anouilh's reworking of *Antigone* develops the character of Antigone as a contemporary figure, caught by an inner conflict. This invites a variety of readings into Antigone's myth, where existential, psychological and political are coalesced into the drama of Antigone. More so, the chorus in this play is not judgmental and leaves the play open ended for the reader to explore.