

Dramaturgy and Sentimentality in *Antigone*

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In Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*¹ it is quite possible to see the heroine as a strong, positive character displaying an "imagination-pattern of expansion and energy," to quote the judgment of Mr. W. Calin:² audiences in occupied Paris certainly saw Antigone as a character strong enough to bear their aspirations towards liberation.³ Indeed, there is ample evidence to support such a view: Antigone is adamant in her refusal to compromise her commitment to a vision of radical purity. We have but to consider those moments in the major confrontation scene with Créon where she crucifies him by seizing on the weakness and contradiction in his argument. To Créon's invocation of a natural law as the basis for his world-view we have already seen Antigone reply in contempt: "Quel rêve, hein, pour un roi, des bêtes! Ce serait si simple". (89) And, later, when Créon continues to propose his vision of compromise and modest happiness, Antigone again attacks him with a powerful fusillade of words:

Ah! Vos têtes, vos pauvres têtes de candidats au bonheur! C'est vous qui êtes laids, même les plus beaux. Vous avez tous quelque chose de laid au coin de l'oeil ou de la bouche. Tu l'as bien dit tout à l'heure, Créon, la cuisine. Vous avez des têtes de cuisiniers!

CRÉON, *lui broie le bras.*
Je t'ordonne de te taire maintenant, tu entends?

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ANTIGONE

Tu m'ordonnes, cuisinier? Tu crois que tu peux m'ordonner quelque chose? (103)

A similar strength, mimed in Antigone's language, may be noticed in her dialogue with Ismène, when she refuses to accept the compromise implicit in the normal adult world-view:

Comprendre. . . . Vous n'avez que ce mot-là dans la bouche, tous, depuis que je suis toute petite. Il fallait comprendre qu'on ne peut pas toucher à l'eau, à la belle eau fuyante et froide parce que cela mouille les dalles, à la terre parce que cela tache les robes. Il fallait comprendre qu'on ne doit pas manger tout à la fois, donner tout ce qu'on a dans ses poches au mendiant qu'on rencontre, courir, courir dans le vent jusqu'à ce qu'on tombe par terre et boire quand on a chaud et se baigner quand il est trop tôt ou tard, mais pas juste quand on en a envie! Comprendre. Toujours comprendre. Moi, je ne veux pas comprendre. Je comprendrai quand je serai vieille. (*Elle achève doucement.*) Si je deviens vieille. Pas maintenant. (27)

Now, the important point to be noted here is that the power and dramatic value of such scenes and the status of Antigone herself are undermined not only by the irony and distance imposed by the outer play (in which Prologue and Chorus pass implicit judgment on the pathos of the inner play, which is concerned with the Créon-Antigone conflict) but by the childish language and gross sentimentality which permeate much of the rest of the play, and which appear in highly concentrated form in the scenes of dialogue between the Nurse and Antigone: the fact that Anouilh chooses to devote one eighth of his play to the Nurse scenes is a pointer to his commitment to pathos and sentimentality in his play as a whole. Later in this article I shall attempt an evaluation of the importance of this pathos in *Antigone* as a whole but, for the moment, I shall examine the detail of the Nurse scenes in an attempt to justify the contention that their dominant tonality is one of pathos and sentimentality.

Let us now consider the shape and movement of Antigone's first dialogue with the Nurse. Antigone replies to the Nurse's questions about her dawn *promenade* in a firm, controlled fashion:

LA NOURRICE

D'où viens-tu?

ANTIGONE

De me promener, nourrice. C'était beau. Tout était gris. Maintenant, tu ne peux pas savoir, tout est déjà rose, jaune, vert.

C'est devenu une carte postale. Il faut te lever plus tôt, nourrice, si tu veux un monde sans couleurs. (14)

This tone dominates for the next few pages and we can see much proof of Antigone's spontaneity and naturalness. However, five pages later we notice the first signs of degradation in the emotional tonality of the scene when Antigone says:

Nounou, tu ne devrais pas trop crier. Tu ne devrais pas être trop méchante ce matin. (19)

Her use of "méchante" and "nounou" suggest an incipient slide into the discourse of the child. A page further on we witness a further descent into pathos:

ANTIGONE

Non, nourrice. Ne pleure plus. Tu pourras regarder maman bien en face, quand tu iras la retrouver. Et elle te dira: 'Bonjour, nounou, merci pour la petite Antigone. Tu as bien pris soin d'elle'. Elle sait pourquoi je suis sortie ce matin. (20)

Antigone continues to use the language of the child ("maman") and Anouilh looks for a sentimental response from his audience by the way in which he evokes the image of Jocasta (Antigone imagines her mother using the childish word "nounou" and referring protectively to "la petite Antigone"). The rhythm of these sentimental exchanges, in which Antigone attempts to lure the Nurse into her pathos, begins to dominate the scene completely a few minutes later, when Antigone says:

ANTIGONE

Ne pleure plus, s'il te plaît, nounou. (*Elle l'embrasse.*) Allons, ma vieille bonne pomme rouge. Tu sais quand je te frottais pour que tu brilles? Ma vieille pomme toute ridée. Ne laisse pas couler tes larmes dans toutes les petites rigoles, pour des bêtises comme cela --pour rien. Je suis pure, je n'ai pas d'autre amoureux qu'Hémon, mon fiancé, je te le jure. Je peux même te jurer, si tu veux, que je n'aurai jamais d'autre amoureux. . . . Garde tes larmes, garde tes larmes; tu en auras peut-être besoin encore, nounou. Quand tu pleures comme cela, je redeviens petite. . . . Et il ne faut pas que je sois petite ce matin. (21)

Here, Antigone's *attendrissement* upon witnessing the distress of the Nurse has elements of genuine concern and sympathy which, though expressed twice in a concrete, intimate and childlike image ("ma vieille pomme rouge"), are

capable, nevertheless, of engaging the acceptance of an adult audience: but her continued fixation on the tears of her nurse, allied to the constellation of words implying a childhood discourse ("nounou", repeated, "petites rigoles", "bêtises"), tends to push the scene further into the realm of pathos and sentimentality; and when, at the end of her speech, Antigone says: "Quand tu pleures comme cela, je redeviens petite" we begin to ask what all this has to do with Tragedy.

When we come to the second scene between Antigone and the Nurse we cannot avoid noticing that the pathos becomes even more insistent than it was in their earlier encounter. Their second meeting opens with the Nurse coddling Antigone, and then demonstrating the gulf between her world and that of Antigone, as she asks: "Où as-tu mal?" (34) We suspect, and Antigone knows that her "mal vient de plus loin" as Phèdre puts it; that she will have to die for disobeying Créon's orders and that, at this stage of her career, "un bon café et des tartines" (33) will not really solve her problem. Antigone's reply to the Nurse's question is extremely revealing, both of her own dominant impulse and of the dominant tonality of the play as a whole:

ANTIGONE

Nulle part, nounou. Mais fais-moi tout de même bien chaud comme lorsque j'étais malade. . . . Nounou plus forte que la fièvre, nounou plus forte que le cauchemar, plus forte que l'ombre de l'armoire qui ricane et se transforme d'heure en heure sur le mur, plus forte que les mille insectes du silence qui rongent quelque chose, quelque part dans la nuit, plus forte que la nuit elle-même avec son hululement de folle qu'on n'entend pas; nounou plus forte que la mort. Donne-moi to main comme lorsque tu restais à côté de mon lit. (34)

In this extraordinarily powerful speech we have a highly poetic evocation of the recurrent phantasms of childhood. Antigone's curt reply becomes a means of access to her protected childhood past. Here, we have a good example of simple, direct, but nevertheless fine dramatic writing: the childlike request for protection, like much good dramatic dialogue, economically implies its own vital exchange with an interlocutor ("faismoi"), its own stage-directions and spatial configurations on stage--a physical movement towards the Nurse which fixes and fills out the image of Antigone as a frightened child in the spectator's imagination. This physical image is completed by the shift to the imperfect tense which takes us into a mimesis of the gestures of childhood and gathers up the affective charge engendered by earlier and similar evocations of Antigone's childhood days. The third sentence is a masterpiece of sustained dramatic-poetic writing: in it we are "entranced" into the phantasmagorical world of childhood by the isolation of certain quintessential physical details which, by their very economy and representative quality, draw on a common childhood experience, and do so in a manner sufficiently impressionistic to

allow our imaginations the liberty to fill out the contours of the experience with our own emotional coloration. The essential incompleteness *and* suggestiveness of the notations in this third sentence is characteristic of the greatest drama: of that drama which refuses us the comfort of passivity and, instead, calls on us to *recreate* genuine emotional experience by bringing to bear on the play all our dramatic capacities--our emotional, visual, auditory and intellectual potentialities. An important feature of the notations in this third sentence is that even though they are eminently physical they possess *also* a more abstract, mysterious dimension which passes the child's understanding and, which, when they are subsumed at the end of the sentence into the ultimate abstract, unknowable, yet ever-present reality that is death, confound even our own understanding. The widening gyre suggested by the progressive indetermination of the notations "cauchemar"--"ombre"--"nuit"--mime the terror of the child before the Dark Unknowable. The poetic transformation of these notations into striking extended images deepens this experience for us, as do the evocative personifications of the wardrobe, seen as sneering and constantly changing its form, and of the night itself with its myriad insects and howling madwoman. Once again we can note the indeterminacy of elements such as "*les mille insectes du silence*" which gnaw "*quelque chose quelque part*" and of the "hulument de folle *qu'on n'entend pas*". "Mille" is merely a figure for "countless" insects here, and we can again see the masterly way in which concrete details are linked to more indeterminate details which image the ambiguous threat posed by the night world to the imagination of the child. This indeterminacy, allied to the eerie personifications, and to the extensive repetition of the "r" sound in the first half of the sentence, of the "s" sounds in "insectes du silence" and of the "l" sounds in "hulument de folle"--all combine to underline the incantatory quality of this vision of childhood terror. And when we examine the articulation of this cardinal sentence we may again marvel at the strength of the dramatic writing in it: it opens with two sections in almost perfect syllabic balance, but the extra syllable in the second section suggests that Antigone's childish fancy is attempting to strain beyond mere simple comparison. It is in the third section of this sentence that her imagination takes flight on a sequence of great images whose rhythm is perfectly adapted to the actor's breathing capacity, to the need for dramatic variety and emphasis within the sentence as a whole, and to the thrust of childish imagination as it strives to grasp at each flicker in the mysterious, threatening environment. This striving to grasp all the elements of potential threat lurking withing the night is mirrored in the fourth part of the sentence ("plus forte que les mille insectes . . . dans la nuit") by its length: here we arrive at the apogee of the sentence, which contains one more syllable than the third section, examined above. From this point on, we witness a gradual *decrescendo* within the phrase: the next part of the sentence is two syllables shorter than the preceding one, and there is then a sudden shock return to the septa-syllabic line which opened the sentence and which now reappears in an

almost identical form--the only difference being the substitution of "mort" for "fièvre". All the previous images of Antigone's childhood past are brutally subsumed by the overriding reality of death, the destiny which faces her in the present, and of which all those dark, threatening sounds of the night now become mere images. The final sentence in the speech, with its opening imperative, its demand for protection, its regressive reference to childhood, mirrored in the imperfect tense and in the evocation of a bedside vigil, marks a complete return to actuality and to the verbal structure of the second sentence which is, in fact, the opening sentence of that section of the speech in which Antigone begins to recreate her own poetic world of childhood: the actual opening sentence of the speech is merely the minimal reply demanded by the Nurse's question.

This entire speech of Antigone, then, is a mode of dramatic concision, rhythmic subtlety and dramatic power; its pregnant gaps--within the rich web of visual, auditory and tactile elements which force us into mobilizing our dramatic capacities; its incantatory repetition of "nounou plus forte que . . ." and its formal articulation, all combine to make a highly coherent poetic-dramatic statement. If, as Barthes says, poetry's "efforce de retransformer le signe en sens: son idéal-tendanciel--serait d'atteindre non au sens des mots, mais au sens des choses mêmes", then this speech of Antigone is, indeed, poetry.⁴

Now, the speech which we have just examined gains in strength and affective charge by virtue of its link to certain other strong speeches of Antigone which were structurally, thematically and emotionally similar, and which thus provide a sort of reservoir of strong feeling from which the later speeches draw. If we examine the following speech it will be clear how this effect is achieved:

ANTIGONE, *murmure*.

Pas envie de vivre . . . (*Et plus doucement encore si c'est possible.*)
 Qui se levait la première, le matin, rien que pour sentir l'air froid sur sa peau nue? Qui se couchait la dernière seulement quand elle n'en pouvait plus de fatigue, pour vivre encore un peu de la nuit?
 Qui pleurait déjà toute petite, en pensant qu'il y avait tant de petites bêtes, tant de brins d'herbe dans le pré et qu'on ne pouvait pas tous les prendre? (29-30)

Here, the physical immediacy, the gentle urgency, the series of parallel constructions, the dramatic rhythms, the sudden tense-shifts from present to imperfect, the unmediated evocation of certain elemental and absolute experiences of childhood--all these elements are echoed in the later speech (34) and help to give it an added strength. But, it should be noted that in the earlier speech those childhood values which are highlighted by Antigone are values which may still be deemed worthy by a significant proportion of an

adult audience, whereas the later speech, in which Antigone becomes again a frightened child, epitomizes a value which we cannot ratify. As I have suggested, the poetico-dramatic strength of the later speech is such that we are briefly trapped into accepting its terms, but no sooner are we returned to actuality in the last line of the speech than we realize that we have once again been lured, against our will, into the quicksands of pathos, and cannot be saved by a few oases of strong speech. The shock occasioned by our sudden emergence from absolute identification with the childhood world of Antigone into the growing pathos of this section of the play may well lead us to feel that we have been cheated, manipulated by the very dramatic mastery of Anouilh into a total acceptance of what we now know to be a regressive impulse. Once we have emerged from his emotional spell into the world of adult rationality, once we realize that the rhythm of pathos is rising fast, we are sorely tempted to completely withdraw our contract with the author and to cease collaborating with him in the making of his play. This temptation becomes overwhelming, I believe, during the course of the following minutes on stage when Anouilh devotes three full pages (35-37) of a relatively short text to Antigone's feelings for her dog, and to her concern that he should be looked after when she has gone. These pages are riddled with a crude sentimentality:

Voilà, je n'ai plus peur. Ni du méchant ogre, ni du marchand de sable, ni de Taoutaou qui passe et emmène les enfants . . . (35) Tu l'aimes bien, Douce, avec sa bonne grosse tête. Et puis, au fond, tu aimes bien frotter aussi. Tu serais très malheureuse si tout restait propre toujours. Alors je te le demande: ne la gronde pas. (36-37)

In this sequence of dialogue everything is given us, no creative gaps are left for us to fill-out with our experience or imagination: we are invited to engage passively in a scene of unadulterated sentimentality. Anouilh has let this sentimentality to so overwhelm his play that he cannot expect any further complicity on our part in a scheme designed to exploit our shoddier emotional susceptibilities: he cannot expect to regain the cooperation of those still left in the auditorium until intelligence, distance and control reappear on stage to balance the uninterrupted gush of cheap feeling. This, I believe, does not happen until the central speech of the Chorus. (56-58)

Now this sentimentality is, I believe, characteristic of the inner play as a whole--of the play in which Créon and Antigone enter into open conflict: but the outer play attempts to reassert distance and control of emotion, attempts to reassert the primacy of an older regal mode, tragedy, over the pathos of the *drame bourgeois* which threatens to infect it. A detailed examination of the opening speech of the Prologue and of the central and final speeches of the Chorus reveals clearly the play's attempt to insist on its own theatricality and to thus reduce our identification with the scenes of pathos which dominate the

piece. However, even in these three speeches pathos is always threatening to break through: in the central intervention of the Chorus, for example, we witness the two extremes of feeling conflicting one with the other:

Et voilà. Maintenant le ressort est bandé. Cela n'a plus qu'à se dérouler tout seul. C'est cela qui est commode dans la tragédie. On donne le petit coup de pouce pour que cela démarre, rien, un regard pendant une seconde à une fille qui passe et lève les bras dans la rue, une envie d'honneur un beau matin, au réveil, comme de quelque chose qui se mange, une question de trop qu'on se pose un soir . . . 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. La mort, la trahison, le désespoir sont là, tout prêts, et les éclates, et les orages, et les silences, tous les silences: le silence quand le bras du bourreau se lève à la fin, le silence au commencement quand les deux amants sont nus l'un en face de l'autre pour la première fois, sans oser bouger tout de suite, dans la chambre sombre, le silence quand les cris de la foule éclatent autour du vainqueur--et on dirait un film dont le son s'est enrayé, toutes ces bouches ouvertes dont il ne sort rien, toute cette clameur qui n'est qu'une image, et le vainqueur, déjà vaincu, seul au milieu de son silence.

C'est propre, la tragédie. C'est reposant, c'est sûr . . . Dans le drame, avec ces traîtres, avec ces méchants acharnés, cette innocence persécutée, ces vengeurs, ces terre-neuve, ces lueurs d'espoir, cela devient épouvantable de mourir, comme un accident. On aurait peut-être pu se sauver, le bon jeune homme aurait peut-être pu arriver à temps avec les gendarmes. Dans la tragédie on est tranquille. D'abord, on est entre soi. On est tous innocents en somme! Ce n'est pas parce qu'il y en a un qui tue et l'autre qui est tué. C'est une question de distribution. Et puis, surtout, c'est reposant, la tragédie, parce qu'on sait qu'il n'y a plus d'espoir, le sale espoir; qu'on est pris, qu'on est enfin pris comme un rat, avec tout le ciel sur son dos, et qu'on n'a plus qu'à crier,--pas à gémir, non, pas à se plaindre,--à gueuler à pleine voix ce qu'on avait à dire, qu'on n'avait jamais dit et qu'on ne savait peut-être même pas encore. Et pour rien: pour se le dire à soi, pour l'apprendre, soi. Dans le drame, on se débat, parce qu'on espère en sortir. C'est ignoble, c'est utilitaire. Là, c'est gratuit. C'est pour les rois. Et il n'y a plus rien à tenter, enfin! (56-58)

Here, we are plunged into a theatrical atmosphere which seems, at first glance, to be diametrically opposed to the sentimentality which we have recently encountered in the Antigone-Nurse dialogues. The Chorus at once attempts

to establish itself as a voice which transcends the level of banal actuality: a voice whose origins are lost in eternity, in the totality of human, and even supra-human wisdom and experience. The first part of the speech ("Et voilà . . . bien huilé depuis toujours") is distinguished from what follows it by the neutrality and universality of the choral voice which is underscored by a series of impersonal comments: "Et voilà . . . dans la tragédie" and "C'est tout . . . depuis toujours". This absence of a personal voice is further reinforced by an absence of any obvious "literary" treatment of the material: of epithets, images, assonance, dramatic repetitions and syntactic complexity. This lack of obvious "literary" treatment of the material: of epithets, images, assonance, dramatic repetitions and syntactic complexity. This lack of obvious "literariness", linked to the relative homogeneity in the length of sentences 2, 3 and 4 and of each sentence in the triplet "On est tranquille. Cela roule tout seul. C'est minutieux", helps to confer a tone of absolute neutrality on what is, in fact, a rather subjective point of view on the situation of Antigone and on the genre of Tragedy itself. This neutralisation of the Chorus's discourse would appear, at first glance, to be strengthened by the absolute lack of hope expressed, in a monotone, by sentences 5-10: however, a close examination reveals that pathos begins to gradually insinuate itself and comes to its full flowering in the highly wrought poem on "silence" of sentence 11. It is interesting to note that the only sentence developed by Anouilh in the first ten is the one which puts such strong emphasis on the insignificance of the action which sets in motion the tragic mechanism. Anouilh's insistence here on the accidental nature of the initial action and on the inhumanity of the tragic process implies an intrinsic lack of liberty, and, thus, of responsibility, in the human agent. Now, this extended development of the theme of accident, hopelessness and lack of human liberty implies a structure of feeling which is not typical of the tragic mode but which does underlie melodrama: and so, in spite of the neutral and, at times, regal tone established by the Chorus in sentence 5 we begin to notice a slide into pathos and, whereas the great tragic dramatists explored the paradoxical coexistence of human liberty *and* of divine fatality, Anouilh seems more concerned to show the pathos of the human predicament, the passivity of the human agent and the futility of human action. We are, then, justified in asking whether the definition of Tragedy proposed in sentences 5-10 is not, rather, in spite of appearances, an accurate definition of melodrama, instead of being what it aims to be--a definition of Tragedy. The total effect of the first ten sentences in this speech is to underline the huge abyss which separates Anouilh's melodramatic world from the grandeur, nobility and strong, principled action of great tragic drama. Here, Anouilh's plan to give an aura of Tragedy to his melodrama merely succeeds in making us more acutely aware of the gulf dividing his and, possibly, our modern universe from that of the ancient tragic heroes.

In the second part of the Chorus's speech ("La mort, la trahison . . . seul au milieu de son silence") we have a highly charged dramatic-poetic meditation

on the futility of human action. Here death, through its image, silence, appears in palimpsest behind every human action and thus renders it futile, regardless of how important it may have seemed to the agent in the perspective of the moment. Silence irrupts into this speech in an intensely dramatic fashion: the sentence opens with three lexical units "mort," "trahison" and "désespoir" which play on the register of radical negativity, before yielding to the strength, violence and passion which cluster at the first rhythmic apogee of the sentence--"les éclats et les orages." The positive valency of these two notations contrasts with the negative valency of "mort," "trahison" and "désespoir" and contrasts even more dramatically with the series of poetic variations wrought on "les silences." The rhythm of the first part of the sentence rises to "les éclats et les orages," descends then to "les silences," and finally comes to rest on "tous les silences," which dissolves into nothingness, a dissolution which is emphasized by the violent rhythmic and lexical contrast between the silence and "les éclats et les orages." The whole of this section of the speech is punctuated regularly by "le silence," an image of death, which awaits every conqueror and hovers menacingly behind every positive action. This entire sentence is a model of powerful dramatic writing, and each element in it serves to heighten the affective intensity of a vision of the world in which human action is seen as mere theatrical gesture: the rhythmic ebb and flow, the insistent susurrant quality of the "s" sounds, the recurrent antithetical movement in the juxtaposition of positivity and negativity in, for example, "toute cette clameur, qui n'est qu'une image, et le vainqueur déjà vaincu" where rhythm and sense combine to produce a striking dramatic effect. The essence of this hopeless vision of man's destiny is encapsulated in the memorable image of a film whose sound-track has been obliterated: here, human beings, bereft of speech, act as if they were speaking real words, but for us, the spectators, they are transformed into phantom-puppets whose desperate mouthings, to them significant, are to us mere signs of a desperate failure to produce words and, thus meanings. It is worth remarking here that this implicit transformation of human action into quasi-theatrical gesture is rendered more intense by the constellation of theatrical terms which form a sort of filigree in the play as a whole: terms such as "rôle," "geste," "distribution," "personnage," "jeu" etc. are used ambiguously by Anouilh, so that we are led into assimilating the world of reality to that of the stage.

The theme of the futility of human action is taken up again in the final part of the speech, but, this time, in a more prosaic and naturalistic mode. The Chorus raises the question of different dramatic representations of human reality: it insists on the fact that in "le drame" there is always the hope of a happy ending, whereas in Tragedy "il n'y a rien à tenter":

Dans le drame . . . on aurait peut-être pu se sauver . . . Dans la tragédie on est tranquille . . . C'est une question de distribution ...

C'est une question de distribution . . . on sait qu'il n'y a plus d'espoir.

It is clear that here Anouilh is guilty of a serious deformation of the prototype of "le drame" and of Tragedy. He suggests that the hope of transcending a painful situation by human action is a hallmark of "le drame." Now, it is precisely this valorization of action which characterizes Tragedy and not "le drame," whose very movement can force us to hope for a happy ending *not* because the hero acts but because an *accident* might deliver him from an unacceptable destiny. Similarly, when the Chorus speaks of Tragedy in this speech it deforms an essential element in classical tragedy by suggesting that in tragic drama an action is carried out within a framework of absolute determinism. Now, it is clear that this simplifies greatly the nature of tragic inevitability, for, in Tragedy, action is undertaken on a ground of freedom and determinism *at the same time*, and it is this ambiguity which is constitutive of the genre. By means of these deformations Anouilh attempts to universalize the Chorus's idea of the futility of action but because of the distortions and because of the strong classical framework surrounding the inner play (i.e. the play in which Antigone disobeys the edict of Créon) we withdraw from the perspective proposed by the Chorus and we proceed to measure the pathos, relativity and passivity of *Antigone* itself, with its numerous scenes of pure sentimentality, and of our modern drama, against the grandeur, belief and strong principled action of the ancient tragic heroes. The fact that Anouilh feels it necessary to induce in us the affective response to the action and suffering of tragedy *by external means*; the fact that he gives us this lesson is such a self-conscious and distorted way; the fact that pathos and sentimentality break through the control exercised by the Chorus in the opening section of the great central speech--all point to the submersion of tragedy in *Antigone* by the melodramatic mode.

A further example of the threat posed by pathos and melodrama to the control of tragedy may be found in the final pages of the play:

Le Choeur, *s'avance*

Mais maintenant, c'est fini. Ils sont tout de même tranquilles. Tous ceux qui avaient à mourir sont morts . . . Morts pareils, tous, bien raides, bien inutiles, bien pourris . . . Un grand apaisement triste tombe sur Thèbes et sur le palais vide où Créon va commencer à attendre la mort. (p. 132)

The grandeur is still dominant here: we are constrained to register the powerful attempt at control implicit in the distance separating the havoc wrought by Antigone from the neutral, at times patently cynical form in which it is expressed. Yet, here too, sentimentality breaks through in the expression "un grand apaisement triste tombe sur Thèbes."

As we have noted, it is the speeches of Prologue and Chorus which are largely responsible for providing the resistance to the floods of pathos which threaten to engulf the play. Créon, too, by his speech and action, manages, ultimately, to transcend pathos. It is worth remarking, however, that even though he finally refuses the pathos and nostalgia implicit in Antigone's position, he does, nevertheless, frequently experience the desire to yield to them: we have only to examine the speech in which Créon says: "Je te comprends, j'aurais fait comme toi à vingt ans. C'est pour cela que je buvais tes paroles" (97) to realize the extent of Créon's complicity with Antigone's yearning for the purity of childhood. At the end of the play, too, we witness another good example of this complicity, both in Créon himself and in the play as a whole:

Créon

Bien sûr, tu ne sais pas. Tu en as de la chance! Ce qu'il faudrait, c'est ne jamais savoir. Il te tarde d'être grand, toi?

Le Page

Oh oui, Monsieur!

Créon

Tu es fou, petit. Il faudrait ne jamais devenir grand. (131)

Following on these exchanges the illusionless Créon makes his way to yet another dreary government meeting and thus, by his action, transcends pathos and nostalgia for childhood, even as he recognizes its fascination for him. The final stage-picture of Créon making his exit *supported* by the page (*Ils sortent, Créon s'appuyant sur le page*) reaffirms the dependence of the play on the world of childhood, nostalgia and pathos. Given the specific literary system of *Antigone*, with its obsessive exploration of the childhood theme, it is difficult not to see the child page as a visual symbol of the play's deeply-felt nostalgia for the pure world of childhood and of melodrama, a nostalgia for the pure world of innocence and of pathos, nostalgia with which it has to struggle right to the bitter end. Tragedy, in *Antigone*, is submerged by the pathos and sentimentality of melodrama: and maybe we can see Anouilh's play as an exploration of the difficulty of writing tragedy at all in the sceptical, rootless twentieth century. "Ces temps sont révolus pour Thèbes" (73) and for us, too, perhaps. It may well be that our world of science and relative values, where the individual and his action are seen as progressively less significant and free, where the possibility of understanding the totality are enormously reduced--that our modern world destroys the assumptions underlying traditional tragedy and makes it an inappropriate mirror for contemporary experience. Our modern world may well be, whether we like it or not, the world of melodrama.

University College
Belgate

Notes

1. J. Anouilh, *Antigone*, Paris, Editions de la Table Ronde, 1947. All further references will be to this edition and will normally appear after the quotations in the body of the article.
2. W. Calin, "Patterns of Imagery in Anouilh's *Antigone*", *French Review*, Vol. 41, Oct. 1967, 79.
3. See I. Wardle's Review of a B.B.C. Television production of *Antigone* in *The Listener*, 5 Nov., 1959, 796-7, and T. Bishop's, "Anouilh's *Antigone* in 1970" in *ASLHM*, 41, 1970, 43.
4. R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, (Paris: Seuil, 1957) 220.

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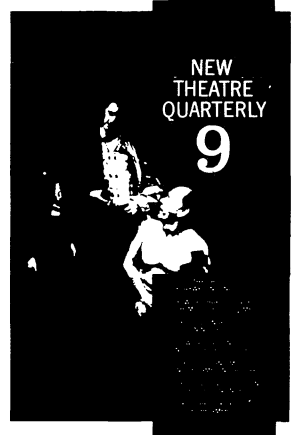
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