

2017.2 . Ano xxxiv . Número 34

# CALÍOPE

## Presença Clássica

*separata 2*



2017.2 . Ano XXXIV . Número 34

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## Presença Clássica

ISSN 2447-875X

*separata 2*

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# *Antigone's* (mis)appropriations in Twentieth-Century Europe: Memory, Politics and Resistance

Rossana Zetti

## ABSTRACT

In this paper, I will offer a historicized reading of *Antigone's* conceptualization as a political play by analysing its reception in twentieth-century Europe. I will focus in particular on Friedrich Hölderlin's adaptation (1804), which is one of the very earliest post-Revolutionary witnesses to the political understanding of the play: it is particularly interesting because it provides a context for Bertolt Brecht's and other twentieth-century adaptations of the myth and it represents a crucial step towards the current interpretative model in which *Antigone* is an icon of radical dissent and resistance. Appropriated both by the Nazi regime and by factions of the Resistance, Hölderlin's *Antigone* was exploited as a political, subversive document or as representative of a nationalistic classical tradition. This account of the political reception of Sophocles' *Antigone* in the twentieth century will contribute to shed light on the ideological climate which produced such a high number of adaptations of the ancient play, as well as on the reasons for its pertinence to twentieth-century temporal-political conditions.

## KEYWORDS

*Antigone*, Reception, Politicization, Brecht, Hölderlin, Sophocles

SUBMISSÃO 15 nov. 2017 | PUBLICAÇÃO 19 dez. 2017

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#### 1 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXTUALIZATION

thol Fugard, author of an adaptation of the *Antigone* of Sophocles written during the apartheid period in South Africa, claimed that *Antigone* is the “greatest political play of all time”.<sup>1</sup> The political relevance of the ancient play, considered by Hegel the closest to perfection,<sup>2</sup> has led to a fruitful interaction with the present, facilitated by the urgency of political situations in the contemporary world. The *Antigone* of Sophocles enjoys one of the richest performance and reception histories: it has been translated more than fifty times into the English language in the last century and it has been performed all around the world.<sup>3</sup> The ancient myth has had a major influence upon writers, translators and playwrights of all periods, and the ambiguities of the play have lent to a variety of interpretations: at different times and in different contexts and places, *Antigone* has communicated something different. Despite such a versatility, certain inherent characteristics of her tragic *persona* – her defiance of tyranny, her rebellious spirit and her claim for human freedom – have been appropriated again and again, thus exemplifying the existence of “fugitive humane communalities” occurring across history.<sup>4</sup>

However, in order to understand why, among other Greek tragedies performed and adapted to the modern stage, the *Antigone* of Sophocles figures so prominently, it is necessary to take distance from the “mystification of *Antigone* as ‘universal’”.<sup>5</sup> Its ideas persist and resonate today as in the fifth century but they have been progressively changed and revisited in favour of a politicization of the story: precisely the relevance of the Sophoclean play to contemporary political events has inspired many overtly political versions and imitations in the twentieth century. The play’s plot and themes (Antigone’s fight for “human rights” and autonomy, her defiance of authority) enabled different authors to respond to various historical instances and political contexts, ranging in the twentieth century from Jean Anouilh’s

adaptation in wartime Paris, to Bertolt Brecht's adaptation in post-war Germany, and Tom Paulin's Irish adaptation, *The Riot Act*, performed during the period of civil strife known as "the Troubles" – just to name a few.<sup>6</sup> The play's spread and influence are not confined only to the Western world: the play attracted cross-cultural appeal even outside Europe, where it was exploited as a vehicle for contemporary political critique.<sup>7</sup>

However, *Antigone* has not always stood as the exemplary icon of principled resistance and defiance against established authority. In spite of its political and revolutionary potential, the ancient myth was also appropriated by the Nazis for their ideological propaganda and it was presented as example of heroic and patriotic drama.<sup>8</sup> In particular, the *Antigone* of Sophocles in the translation by Hölderlin was frequently performed towards the end of the Second World War as example of "heroic drama" in support of Hitler's propaganda. Although Hölderlin did not proclaim the superiority of Germany over Greece as the leader of the West, nor believed in the "Greek character" inherent to the Germans, his play was appropriated by the Nazis for their proclamation of a "racial kinship between Greeks and Germans".<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, *Antigone* was also appropriated by factions of the Resistance, which transformed the play into a political, subversive document. This tradition was followed by Bertolt Brecht who, upon the end of the Second World War, wrote an adaptation of the *Antigone* based on Hölderlin's translation. Through his reworking of the ancient original, Brecht encouraged his audience to remember and reflect upon the recent tragedy of the Second World War, in the attempt to unveil the mechanisms behind the acquisition and dismantling of power; at the same time, by adopting Hölderlin's text, he denounced the distorted readings and misappropriations of the play during Nazism. With Brecht, Sophocles' *Antigone* is established as "canonical" drama of political resistance.

Studying the dynamics of remembrance and propaganda behind appropriations of Sophocles' *Antigone* is therefore particularly interesting: the *Antigone* myth has been readapted and

“remembered” in different ways to communicate different political ideologies in the twentieth century, a period characterized by civil wars, dictatorships and resistance. The politicization of *Antigone* in these years is twofold – it served both the ideological instrumentalization of the Nazis and the intellectual resistance. It is in this period that *Antigone* becomes an icon of resistance and revolt; but it also becomes representative of a nationalistic classical tradition. Different responses to Sophocles’ tragedy therefore reflect cultural and political shifts occurred in the twentieth century, as well as different ways of interpreting and “remembering” the ancient play. No matter in what respect, *Antigone’s* performance in these years represents a political act.

## 2 HÖLDERLIN AND *ANTIGONE*

Of particular interest for my investigation of *Antigone’s* reception and politicization in the twentieth century are the main philosophical theories developed around the Sophoclean play in the early nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> These readings, affected by the political circumstances of the French Revolution, caused a break with the tradition and contributed to establish the current interpretative model of a “politicized” *Antigone*.<sup>11</sup> *Antigone* becomes the great twentieth-century play, which still affects us today thanks to two interpreters: a poet (Hölderlin) and a philosopher (Hegel), whose influential readings have irremediably shaped the way later authors experienced the play. The “modern” *Antigone* would have been different without Hegel and Hölderlin, and “the philosophical explorations of the Hegelian tradition might have also acquired a different orientation without *Antigone*”.<sup>12</sup>

Contemporary to Hegel, Hölderlin wrote his highly innovative translation of the ancient Greek tragedy in 1804. This translation represents a crucial step towards the current interpretative model of *Antigone* as an icon of radical resistance and it is a fundamental political and linguistic document: it was used as a libretto for Carl Orff’s 1949 opera *Antigonae* – written under the

Nazi regime and initially financed by the Reich – and it was the model-translation for Brecht’s own interpretation of the play.<sup>13</sup>

Hölderlin’s translation of *Antigone* has been notoriously characterized for its extreme radicalism. Scholars have identified many errors and a striking philological inaccuracy.<sup>14</sup> Hölderlin’s command of Greek was indeed “far from perfect” and he worked with defective editions. To Goethe and to Schiller, Hölderlin’s treatment of the Greek text gave palpable evidence of mental collapse, which the poet endured between 1804 to his death in 1843 – most likely heightened by the negative reception of his translations of both *Antigone* and *Oedipus der Tyrann*, criticized by his contemporaries.<sup>15</sup>

The rediscovery of the long neglected poet started at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first complete edition of Hölderlin’s *Sämtliche Werke* was published by Norbert von Hellingrath in six volumes between 1913 and 1923. This publication represents a decisive turning point in the reception of Hölderlin’s works: they were not considered anymore as the product of a “savage” mind but rather the achievement of a unique poet and writer. Since then, different editions of Hölderlin’s works have appeared,<sup>16</sup> and critics praised the Romantic poet, considered patriotically as exemplary of German honour and loyalty, the “purest” of poets.<sup>17</sup> The *Antigone* in the translation by Hölderlin was performed for the first time after its publication in Zurich in 1919 and in Darmstadt in 1923.<sup>18</sup>

Yet it was in Nazi Germany that Sophocles’ *Antigone* became the most popular classical work, performed 150 times between 1939 and 1944.<sup>19</sup> As the war raged on, *Antigone* significantly proclaimed “I was born to join in love and not in hate”.<sup>20</sup> The Sophoclean tragedy became an exemplary model for the new heroic drama favoured by the Nazis, celebrating the idea of sacrifice and noble death for the fatherland; productions emphasized *Antigone*’s patriotic loyalty to her family, although they sided with Creon, representative of the principle of the state.

The success of *Antigone* in the repressive context of Nazi Germany might seem at odds with the political themes of protest and resistance of the play: how could authors conform *Antigone* to the ideological manipulation imposed by the regime? How is it possible that the *Antigone* was so popular and the authorities did not attempt to stop the proliferation of such a politically charged play? With Romain Rolland's *À l'Antigone éternelle* (1916) and Walter Hasenclever's *Antigone* (1917), the heroine had been established as a figure of pacifism as well as a critical political leader. Yet it is necessary to take into account the long tradition of German Classicism and cultural identification of Germany with ancient Greece started with Winckelmann.<sup>21</sup> Hitler himself was a Philhellene and in his propagandistic book *Mein Kampf* he had proclaimed Greece as universal cultural model, epitome of European civilization and racial kin, thus merging philhellenism with nationalism and promoting the identification of the Germans with the idealized people of ancient Greece.<sup>22</sup>

The combination of Hellenism and Germanism can be traced back to Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles' *Antigone* integrates the Dionysiac, Hellenic element with the German, Apollonian character, in order to clarify and render intelligible the Greek *pathos* to the German, more rational, sensibility.<sup>23</sup> Hölderlin's emphasis on the similarities between German and Greek cultures precisely served the Nazi cause to reinforce nationalistic propaganda during the war.

In his *Notes to Antigone*, Hölderlin emphasizes that tragedy emerges at times of revolution in human thinking and feeling, of "patriotic reversal" (*vaterländische Umkehr*).<sup>24</sup> Tragedy, as well as history, is built, from the beginning to the end, on a series of dialectic oppositions, each generating a dramatic revaluation of moral values and political power-relations. In Hölderlin's reinterpretation, the opposition between Creon and Antigone is political: Antigone's act is referred to as *Aufstand* ("uprising" or "insurrection"), a politically pregnant word which reveals the revolutionary and political aspiration of his translation.<sup>25</sup>

Hölderlin's translation is itself the product of years characterized by revolutions: Antigone's rebellion reflects the French Revolution, which is exemplary of a public enactment of such a reversal, and Creon's final manhandling by his servants can be paralleled to the execution of Louis XVI.<sup>26</sup> According to Hölderlin, a revolution causes a collision whose outcome is a balanced opposition: as the play ultimately reaches a (Hegelian) synthesis, so revolutions ultimately bring about a political change in the form of government and the establishment of a *republikanische Vernunftsform*.<sup>27</sup>

The relation between "Antigone's revolution" and "contemporary revolutions" is consolidated by the idea of *Vaterland* ("fatherland", "community"), a sense of patriotic relevance and nationalism. According to Hölderlin, the Germans need to express their national tendency and, at the same time, repress it to give space to the foreign element, the pathos of the Greeks: only by engaging with the alien can modern poetry become "patriotic" (*vaterländisch*) and express the originality and authenticity of the nation itself. These principles guide his own translation of the play which attempts to clarify and render intelligible the Greek spirituality in a process called by Hölderlin "the reversal of all modes and forms of representation".<sup>28</sup>

The Nazis appropriated Hölderlin's "patriotic" idea of *das Vaterländische*, and transformed the German poet into an example of spiritual leader and patriotic self-sacrifice, thus reinvigorating the idea of a strong and culturally dominant Germany.<sup>29</sup> The combination of Greek and German elements was exploited as source of ultranationalist pride, in the effort to preserve German-Western culture against threatening barbarian influences from the East, thus creating a "cultural collective memory" and heritage, directly linked to the classics.<sup>30</sup>

The performance of Greek tragedies was therefore legitimized and approved in the Nazi period. In particular, *Antigone* became the exemplary model of "heroic drama". The "heroic drama" was a new dramatic form conceptualized in Germany in the 1930s which emphasized ideas of patriotism and self-sacrifice

in order to strengthen the nationalism and unity of Germany in the wake of the imminent war. In his essay “The Immortal Conversation on the Tragic: Dramaturgy as the Law of Nordic Culture” (1937), Rainer Schlösser explained the relevance of Sophocles’ tragedies, exemplary of this “Nordic attitude” of heroism and noble death.<sup>31</sup> In May 1933, in his speech “Rede vor den deutschen Bühnenleitern”, Goebbels proclaimed the “heroicness” of German art:

Die deutsche Kunst des nächsten Jahrzehnts wird heroisch, wird stählern-romantisch, wird sentimentalitätslos, sachlich, wird national mit großem Pathos, sie wird gemeinsam verpflichtend und bindend sein, oder sie wird nicht sein.<sup>32</sup>

On 22 June 1940, Paris surrendered and the victorious German army marched into Berlin on 6 July 1940; the great victory was celebrated by Hitler at the Krolloper in Berlin.<sup>33</sup> In the autumn of 1940, two almost simultaneous productions of *Antigone* were performed in Berlin and Vienna.<sup>34</sup> The 1940-1941 theatrical season opened in Berlin with Karlheinz Stroux’s *Antigone*, which premiered on 3 September 1940 at the *Berliner Staatliches Schauspielhaus*, where the Tieck/Mendelssohn production had been shown multiple times. Stroux relied on Roman Woerner’s translation which facilitated the understanding of the text and contributed to render it accessible to the public – by contrast with Hölderlin’s obscure translation.

Karlheinz Stroux’s reading of the play did not follow the standard “interpretation” imposed by the Nazis but transgressed and contradicted the dominant ideology. Rather than classical Greece, the stage designs reminded critics of an oriental or pre-Hellenic culture. Antigone was interpreted by Marianne Hoppe and was addressed and presented as Greek, whereas Creon, interpreted by Walter Frank, was dressed as an Oriental king. The racial kinship was inverted: Antigone, a female, was presented as the Aryan-Greek model and Creon, the ruler, as a barbarian.<sup>35</sup> Although critics maintained that “the tragedy does not correspond to the standards of the sacrosanct idea of the state”,<sup>36</sup> the classical

subject matter, the mystic stage and stylized acting did not prompt a direct identification with the story; rather they allowed the author to discuss indirectly contemporary political issues, while avoiding censorship.

Particularly resonant was the *Antigone* directed in Vienna in 1940 by Lothar Müthel, followed by other five performances in Frankfurt (1941), Leipzig (1942), Vienna (1943), Göttingen (1944) and Stuttgart (1944). In correspondence with the centenary of the poet's death, on 7 June 1943, patriotic celebrations occurred across Germany, *Antigone* was performed in Vienna and the Hölderlin society was founded in Stuttgart. Goebbels was appointed "honorary patron of the Society" and Hitler ordered to place "a commemorative wreath ... in his name on Hölderlin's grave in Tübingen."<sup>37</sup> *Antigone* was even performed in 1944, a few months before Goebbels ordered the closure of all theatres. In occasion of the 1944 production of *Antigone* in Stuttgart, a newspaper wrote that "two and a half thousand years of Western culture are now preserved and defended by *Herzland Europa*".<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, although the potential subversive character of Antigone's rebellion, which emerges for example in Stroux's reading of the play, *Antigone* was exploited and mis-interpreted by the Nazis, who relied upon Hölderlin's "patriotic" and "heroic" ideas of fatherland. Through the Nazis' reading, Hölderlin gained powerful ideological resonance and became a nationalist icon of German Nazism. Brecht speaks in his *Arbeitsjournal* of "the nationalistic element intolerable to us", imposed by Hitler in the reading of German poets such as Schiller and Hölderlin.<sup>39</sup> Hölderlin's translation of the ancient play was recommended by Brecht's collaborator Caspar Neher who had watched in Hamburg the first post-war production of *Antigone* in the translation of the German poet (1946).<sup>40</sup> This production received particularly positive responses by the critics, who claimed that "Hölderlin is the more Greek of all", and intended to convey the "turmoil, the political, the republican, the revolutionary, which Hölderlin always saw in *Antigone*".<sup>41</sup>

In using Hölderlin's translation but developing a radically different reading, Brecht opposed the Nazis' use of Hölderlin's play as the epitome of the *vaterlandisch*, "a way of imagining the world from a nationalistic perspective".<sup>42</sup> The indeed opposite appropriation of the play by Brecht reveals the pliability of the *Antigone* narrative and is paradigmatic of the politicizing of the myth.

### 3 BRECHT AND *ANTIGONE*

Brecht's version draws closely on Sophocles' text, but transforms the Greek narrative in an analysis of modern class struggle. Brecht explicitly challenges the nationalistic uses of the Sophoclean play which he felt incompatible with the complexities of post-war Germany. Although appropriated by the Nazis during the war for its nationalistic appeal, the text also responded to Brecht's desire to oppose to the classical reading of the play, and to distance himself from the purely classical-humanist and "bourgeois" interest in Greek tragedy.

As he explains in the preface to his own *Modellbuch*,<sup>43</sup> Brecht avoided an easy identification of the conflict with one between the individual and the (Nazi) totalitarian regime. He refused to equate Antigone with German resistance fighters who fought against the Nazis; nor could *Antigone* be interpreted as a "moral play" or as representative of religion, humanity, or the individual in relation to the state.<sup>44</sup> As he suggests in the preface of the *Antigonemodell*, the choice of the material relied both on the possibility to raise interesting formal problems through the ancient play and on its political relevance.<sup>45</sup>

The focus of the play shifts from the conflict between the individual and the state to the disintegration of the society-*polis* and the "scattering of destruction" left by war. Brecht's play shows that wars are determined by questions of profit and imperialistic greed, thus drawing an explicit parallel with the Second World War. Creon is a corrupt, imperialistic tyrant, leading an aggressive war against Argos to control its mines. His power is maintained

through violence and an aggressive policy, justified by a rhetoric of honour and race. In his reinterpretation, Brecht emphasizes the violence implicated in both the ruling class, including the wealthy chorus of elders, and Antigone, who loses her dominant role: she is presented as a privileged upper class woman who has also been complicit to Creon's crimes.<sup>46</sup> The heroine merely serves to throw into relief Creon, addressed by his lackeys as "mein Führer", and his repressive government dominated by thievery and exploitation.

The Sophoclean catastrophe thus becomes, in Brecht's reinterpretation, an allegory of the decline of the Third Reich and National Socialism, as well as an analysis of society's mechanisms. The emphasis on violence and destructions provoked by war demonstrates Brecht's self-conscious attempt to reflect upon the disaster of the recent war and to explore issues of responsibility – collaboration and resistance – during the years of the Second World War.

Through his reworking of the Sophoclean play Brecht aims to awaken the critical spirit of his audience: the play becomes a pretext to reflect upon the recent past and to remember that past. Issues of memory recur throughout the play: even the title, *The Antigone of Sophocles after Hölderlin's translation adapted for the stage by Brecht*, represents an act of remembrance and links Brecht's name with Sophocles' and Hölderlin's.<sup>47</sup>

In the *parodos* of Brecht's *Antigone*, the chorus of Theban elders celebrates the victory over Argos and encourages the people to forget the recent war:

Und nach dem Kriege hier  
Macht die Vergessenheit aus!  
In alle Göttertempel  
Mit Chören die Nacht durch  
Kommt her! Und, Thebe, die Bloße im Lorbeerschurz,  
Erschütternd, herrsche der Bacchusregen!<sup>48</sup>

The "drink of oblivion" proffered by Bacchus allows the people, thirsting for peace, to rejoice in the illusory celebrations and to forget about the deaths and destructions caused by the war.

However, such a call for forgetting is a cover up manipulated by Creon in order to camouflage the reality: the much praised victory is in fact a lie because the war is not over. The eagerness to *forget* is opposed to Antigone's determination to *remember* the past: the heroine insists that it is important to remember the disasters of the past in order to avoid their repetition in the future. In the first scene of the play, Antigone disapproves of her sister Ismene: for her, the tragedy of their brothers' death is already "a yesterday thing".<sup>49</sup>

On the one hand, Brecht accuses the spectators of complicity, and his *Antigone* becomes an indictment to those people who wished to forget the past and to those "ordinary" Germans who failed to act under Hitler's regime and chose not to see, giving tacit consent to his crimes; on the other, he questions the validity of an Antigone-like-act and -death in the context of Berlin 1945. Brecht himself did not "act" but decided to flee Germany rather than staying and facing certain death. He was watching the events from a distance, during his exile.<sup>50</sup>

The final lesson offered by Brecht's play is indeed nihilistic and pessimistic: in the original, the chorus praise wisdom, which man can achieve though self-knowledge with old age and through submission to the gods,<sup>51</sup> in the modern version instead, the fall of Thebes could have been avoided and it is presented as the result of a conscious, self-destructive choice. It is human greed and lust which ultimately transform man in a "monster" to himself, incapable of becoming "become wise" even in old age.<sup>52</sup>

Brecht's tragedy teaches that man will repeat the same errors, reiterated in the updated version of the story: unless man remembers the past, the sacrifice of innumerable Antigones – or German resistance fighters – will be useless. Brecht appropriates the Antigone story as political instrument to reflect upon human actions and, more precisely, upon the "monstrous" actions and choices enacted by each single individual during the tragic years of the Second World War. Once more, classics serve as a platform to comment upon past and present events, and to question issues of moral choice and responsibility.

The influence of Brecht's play extends beyond its immediate impact. His version is as important as the original for the creation of later, politicized *Antigones* and showed the way to other adaptations that reflected on political issues of dissent and resistance.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

The twentieth-century reception of Sophocles' *Antigone* shows how a work of art can be re-interpreted and "remembered" in different ways in order to fulfill a certain political agenda and propaganda. It is not only the past itself that matters, but the ways in which this past is consciously re-interpreted and exploited to remember and shape contemporary events. *Antigone* still matters today because of the chain of political reinterpretations that has helped authors and audiences to remember and reflect upon the present through the powerful voices of heroes of the past.

The "uses and abuses" of Hölderlin's version are exemplary of the different ways of remembering the past through a work of art and of the distorting ways of using classics during totalitarianisms.<sup>53</sup> The play was then re-used by Brecht for different purposes: through his adaptation of *Antigone*, Brecht hoped to re-awaken the critical thinking of his audience and to provide them with the instruments necessary to unveil the workings of ideology and dictatorships. It is questionable whether these and other *Antigones* anchored to the history of the twentieth century have contributed to effectively instigate a political change and sentiments of revolt or nationalism in their audiences. Indeed, it is undeniable that the political directions taken by the play in the last century have underscored the play's relevance and granted its endurance to the present day.

The play's reception in this century proves the great political potentiality and versatility of a play like *Antigone*, adapted and staged in correspondence with important historical and political events. The political aspect, already present in the archetypal figure of a woman who, alone, defies the authority of

the State, has been uncovered by playwrights and directors who have demonstrated that the *Antigone* of Sophocles is appropriate not only to describe situations as they occurred in the twentieth century, but it belongs to any time and place, as John Kani acknowledges:

*Antigone* addresses itself to any corner of the world where the human spirit is being oppressed, where people sit in jail because of their fight for human dignity, for freedom.<sup>54</sup>

These versions became a sort of “original” in their own right and were able to turn the stage into a place where the distant past could be revived and remembered: theatre and the political use of classics worked as a vehicle for memory.

ABSTRACT

Le (mis)interpretazioni di *Antigone* nell'Europa del ventesimo secolo: Memoria, Politica e Resistenza

In questo articolo si propone un'analisi del processo storico che ha portato alla concettualizzazione dell'*Antigone* di Sofocle come opera politica attraverso l'analisi della sua ricezione in Europa nel ventesimo secolo. Mi concentrerò in particolare sulla traduzione di Friedrich Hölderlin (1804), che rappresenta una delle prime testimonianze post-rivoluzionarie della politicizzazione della storia di *Antigone*: è quindi particolarmente interessante in quanto fornisce un contesto per le interpretazioni del mito da parte di Bertolt Brecht e di altri autori del ventesimo secolo e rappresenta un passo cruciale verso l'attuale modello interpretativo di *Antigone* come icona di dissenso e resistenza radicale. Appropriata sia dal regime nazista che da fazioni della Resistenza, l'*Antigone* di Hölderlin fu sfruttata come documento politico e sovversivo, e come icona di una tradizione classica nazionalista. Questo resoconto della ricezione politica dell'*Antigone* di Sofocle nel ventesimo secolo, contribuirà a far luce sul clima ideologico che ha prodotto un così grande numero di interpretazioni dell'opera antica, nonché sulle ragioni della sua pertinenza alle condizioni socio-politiche di questo secolo.

PAROLE CHIAVE

*Antigone*, Ricezione, Politicizzazione, Brecht, Hölderlin, Sofocle.

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<sup>1</sup> FUGARD, 2002, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> According to Hegel, *Antigone* is “the most excellent and satisfying work of art.”, see PAOLUCCI, 1962, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> See WILMER and ZUKAUSKAITE, 2010, p. 1. An essential reference source for the study of *Antigone*’s reception in twentieth-century Europe is FLAHSAR, 2009, as well as STEINER, 1984; FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 143-182; MORAIS, HARDWICK, and SILVA, 2017; see also the section on reception in CAIRNS, 2016, p. 115-154.

<sup>4</sup> MARTINDALE, 2013, p. 173, or what STEINER, 1984, p. 138, calls “specific universals transformative across the ages.”

<sup>5</sup> FRADINGER, 2014, p. 224. The question “Why a hundred ‘Antigones’ after Sophocles?”, asked by STEINER, 1984, p. 12, continues to be relevant.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Anouilh’s play was performed during the German occupation of France and then in a radically changed climate after the liberation in September 1944; it was restaged 645 times until 1945, FLASHAR, 2009, p. 173. Bertolt Brecht’s *Antigone*, first performed in 1948, opens with a contemporary Prologue set in Berlin in the closing hours of the war, in April 1945, as two nameless sister find out that their deserter brother has been hanged. Athol Fugard’s *The Island*, written during the apartheid in South Africa, was first performed in Cape Town in 1973; Seamus Heaney’s *The Burial at Thebes* was commissioned to mark the centenary of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 2004.

<sup>7</sup> See essays on *Antigone on the Contemporary World Stage*, MEE; FOLEY, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> The abuse and misappropriation of antiquity by twentieth-century totalitarian regimes has been widely explored. See ZIOLKOWSKI, 1993; THOMAS, 2001; FLEMING, 2006. On the misappropriations of *Antigone*, see FLASHAR, 2009, p. 159-175; CASTELLARI, 2011, p. 158; FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 166-182.

<sup>9</sup> FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 169. Hegel’s reading of the play was also fundamental in setting the “appropriateness” of *Antigone* for the Nazi regime; he claimed that “all educated people, and we Germans in particular, feel at home when we speak of Greece”, HEGEL, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the “philosophical” readings of the play, not only by Hölderlin and Hegel but also by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Lacan, Irigaray and Butler, see CAIRNS, 2016, p. 122-132. See also BILLINGS, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Before the feminist and political reading of Sophocles’ *Antigone* was established, eighteenth century adaptations of the play accentuated the romantic relation and desperate love between Antigone and her betrothed. See STEINER, 1984, p. 154-155.

<sup>12</sup> MICHELAKIS, 2008, p. 222.

<sup>13</sup> ATTFIELD, 2010, p. 345.

<sup>14</sup> See STEINER, 1984, p. 84; GASKILL, 2002, p. 271; PÖGGELER, 2004, p. 82-83.

<sup>15</sup> STEINER, 1984, p. 67; FIORETOS, 1999, p. 227.

<sup>16</sup> For example: the edition by Beißner and Beck, in 8 volumes (1943-85, Stuttgart), as well as the edition by Bertaux (1963), Sattler et al. (1975-, planned in 20 vol., Frankfurt), Mieth (1970, Berlin/Weimar, Darmstadt, 2 vol.) and the edition and translation by Hamburger (1966).

<sup>17</sup> See FLASHAR, 2009, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> See FLASHAR, 2009, p. 139.

<sup>19</sup> See LOHSE, 2006, p. 151; FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 168. STEINER, 1984, p. 108, refers to the years 1943 and 1944 as a period of “Antigone-fever”.

<sup>20</sup> SOPHOCLES, 2014, p. 523.

<sup>21</sup> In his *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1765), Winckelmann had proclaimed the greatness of the Greeks and the necessity to imitate the ancients.

<sup>22</sup> See FISCHER-LICHTE, 2010, p. 339. Hitler himself famously displayed an interest in particular aspects of the Greek world. Critics have noted that Greek precedents and influence are invoked frequently in his *Mein Kampf* and *Table Talk*, see FLEMING, 2006, p. 133; FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 143-165.

<sup>23</sup> See remarks in the letter to Bohlendorff (4 December 1801), HÖLDERLIN, 1963, p. 788-789.

<sup>24</sup> HÖLDERLIN, 1963, p. 675. On the concept of *vaterländischer Umkehr* see BILLINGS, 2011, p. 19-22. For Hölderlin’s *Notes to Antigone* see HÖLDERLIN, 1963. For an English translation of the notes on *Oedipus* and *Antigone* see PFAU, 1988, p. 101-106; HÖLDERLIN, 2001, p. 113-118. See also remarks in PÖGGELER, 2004, p. 84-102.

- <sup>25</sup> HÖLDERLIN, 2001, p. 73.
- <sup>26</sup> According to UNGER, 1984, p. 2, Hölderlin showed “a growing interest in and enthusiasm for the intellectual and political ideals of the French Revolution”, expressed through his poetry and especially the Hymns to the *Ideals of Mankind*. LOUTH, 1998, p. 155, remarks that Hölderlin’s present is “determined by the French revolution and by Greek antiquity.” As STEINER, 1984, p. 81, observes, this virtual manhandling is a motif entirely invented by Hölderlin.
- <sup>27</sup> HÖLDERLIN, 1963, p. 676.
- <sup>28</sup> PFAU, 1988, p. 114.
- <sup>29</sup> FLASHAR, 2009, p. 141.
- <sup>30</sup> See ZIOLKOWSKI, 2000, p. 555; FLASHAR, 2009, p. 164.
- <sup>31</sup> See FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 167.
- <sup>32</sup> Quoted in LOHSE, 2006, p. 160.
- <sup>33</sup> On the historical context, see LOHSE, 2006, p. 152-153.
- <sup>34</sup> On these productions of *Antigone*, see LOHSE, 2006, p. 151-186; FLASHAR, 2009, p. 165-168. On Stroux’s *Antigone* see FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 171-179.
- <sup>35</sup> See FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 177.
- <sup>36</sup> FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 176.
- <sup>37</sup> SAVAGE, 2008, p. 5. In this occasion, patriotic celebration occurred across Germany and a special edition of Hölderlin’s poems was prepared by Beißner.
- <sup>38</sup> Trans. From FLASHAR, 2009, p. 165.
- <sup>39</sup> Trans. RORRISON; WILLETT, 1993, p. 306.
- <sup>40</sup> On this production see CASTELLARI, 2011, p. 156-157. See remarks in BRECHT, 1988, p. 12: “Auf Rat von Cas nehme ich die Hölderlinische Übertragung, die wenig oder nicht gespielt wird”. Brecht was not aware of the theatrical success of the play during the Nazi period; see FLASHAR, 2009, p. 141; FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 166-182.
- <sup>41</sup> FISCHER-LICHTE, 2017, p. 187.
- <sup>42</sup> GOLDHILL, 2012, p. 151.
- <sup>43</sup> The *Antigonemodell 1948* opens with a programmatic foreword it includes drawings by Neher, a sequence of images from the scene photographed by Ruth Berlau in 1948, with captions in hexameters (the so called *Brückemerse*, which form the *Antigone-Legende*), notes by Brecht and the full text of *Antigone*. In addition, the *Modellbuch* explains Brecht’s and Neher’s choices for the setting, costumes, way of acting and moving of the performers. See BRECHT, 1988, p. 47-55.
- <sup>44</sup> BRECHT, 1988, p. 48: “die große Figur des Widerstands im antiken Drama repräsentiert nicht die Kämpfer des deutschen Widerstands, die uns am bedeutendsten erscheinen müssen”.
- <sup>45</sup> BRECHT, 1988, p. 48: “Für das vorliegende theatralische Unternehmen wurde das Antigonedrama ausgewählt, weil es stofflich eine gewisse Aktualität erlangen konnte und formal interessante Aufgaben stellte.”
- <sup>46</sup> On Brecht’s use of the chorus, see REVERMANN, 2013.
- <sup>47</sup> On the implications and problems of citation raised in this title, which allows Brecht to avoid plagiarism, see SAVAGE, 2006, p. 153-155; TAXIDOU, 2008, p. 245. On Brecht’s “thievery”, see BROWN, 1978.
- <sup>48</sup> BRECHT, 1977, p. 19; for an English translation, see BRECHT, 2003, p. 12.
- <sup>49</sup> BRECHT, 2003, p. 12. For the original, see BRECHT, 1977, p. 18: “Schon ist er dir Gestriges”.
- <sup>50</sup> Brecht, forced to leave his homeland when Hitler came to power because of his communist affiliation, returned to Europe in October 1947 after years of exile spent in Scandinavia and in the United States.
- <sup>51</sup> SOPHOCLES, *Antigone*, 1348-1353.
- <sup>52</sup> In the first line of the second *stasimon* (SOPHOCLES, *Antigone*, 332), the Sophoclean choral ode defines “many things” as δεινότερον; the adjective *deinos* means “formidable”, in the ambivalent connotation of “clever, marvellous” but also “fearful, terrible”. Brecht renders the Greek *deina* with the German *ungeheuer* which points exclusively to the “monstrosity” of man.
- <sup>53</sup> I borrow the formulation “uses and abuses” from FLEMING, 2006.
- <sup>54</sup> John Kani collaborated with Athol Fugard in the South-African production of *Antigone* entitled *The Island*. Here, John Kani in an interview with Martin Phillips in Feb. 2000, quoted in MEE; FOLEY, 2011, p. 6.