


ANTIGONE'S STANCE AMONGST SLOVENIA'S UNDEAD

RACHEL AUMILLER
The Maimonides Centre for Advance Studies
University of Hamburg
20146 Hamburg, Schlüterstraße 51
rachel.anna.aumiller@uni-hamburg.de
 orcid.org/0000-0003-1065-1424

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Memorialization in the form of the architectural statue can suggest that our stance towards the past is concrete while memorials in the form of repeated social activity represent reconciliation with the past as a continual process. Enacted memorials suggest that reconciliation with the past is not itself a thing of the past. Each generation must grapple with its inherited memories, guilt, and grief and self-consciously take its own stance towards that which came before it. This article considers Dominik Smole's post World War II rewrite of Antigona as an enacted memorial within the context of socialist Yugoslavia. The practice of restaging Antigona in Slovenia may be seen as the practice of meta-memorialization, which routinely returns to the past while openly weighing the dangers of awakening the unburied dead against the dangers of letting the unaddressed conflicts of the past sleep.

Keywords: *memorialization, repetition, socialism, Antigone, Dominik Smole, G. W. F Hegel*

WALKING IN CIRCLES

Socialist monuments in postwar Yugoslavia fell into both the categories of the erected and the enacted. State-funded architectural memorials erected in the 1960s and 1970s by artists such as Serbian architect, Bogdan Bogdanović, have recently attracted international attention thanks to Jan Kempnaers, a Belgian photographer, and his collection entitled *Spomenik* (the name for Tito-era memorials).¹ Although Bogdanović

¹ Jan Kempnaers, *Spomenik* (Amsterdam, Roma Publications, 2015). Although Kempnaers' beautiful collection of photographs has attracted new enthusiasts in favour of the preservation of the remaining Partisan monuments, his work has also been criticized

identified himself as a surrealist,² these sculptures are commonly lumped together under the title of Soviet brutalism, which misrepresents their artistic, political and historical staging. Many of these now iconic steel and stone monuments, such as Bogdanović's famous Stone Flower,³ resemble a mechanical portal: a *metaxu* that binds two things together in its very act of severing. These monuments in particular can be seen as the space of the in-between that simultaneously connects and seals off two discrete worlds: the carefully maintained peace and order of the state and unspeakable years of war. The gateways forbade anyone from straying backwards into a troubled past or from allowing past conflicts to creep into the present. The status of these *Spomeniks* in post-Yugoslavian capitalism has become controversial. Some monuments have been demolished; others have been stripped of their valuable material, while the majority have fallen into disrepair due to neglect. One of Slovenia's most embraced memorialization of the war, which is still observed today, however, took the form of an enacted monument: *Pohod po Poti okoli Ljubljane*.⁴ During the Nazi occupation of Ljubljana, the 33 km parameter of the city was surrounded in barbed wire in a failed attempt to fend off the communist resistance. After the war, the wire was torn down. The empty tracks formed by the fence were reclaimed as a path for a memorial walk formally observed on 9 May to commemorate Ljubljana's liberation from the occupation.

Ljubljana's annual walk around the Path of Remembrance and Comradeship (PRC), a ritual that began in 1957 and has continued to the present day, is mirrored in Slovene theatre through the repetition of modern interpretations of Sophocles' *Antigone* following World War II.⁵ Dominik

for divorcing the monuments from their authors and historical contexts. For work that places these memorial sculptures within their political and aesthetic stage see: Kirn and Burghardt 2012; Kirn 2012.

² Korolija Fontana-Giusti 2014:33–44.

³ "Stone Flower" is a monument to the victims of Ustasha during WWII in the Jasenovac concentration camp. Created by Bogdan Bogdanović in 1966. <http://mortalcitiesforgottenmonuments.com/Bogdan-Bogdanovic>

⁴ Vurnik 2016.

⁵ On the political stage of Smole's plays: Cardullo 2011:85–90. On the history of Slovene avant-garde theater originating with Stage 57: Čufer 2003.

Smole was a founding member of the so-called Critical Generation (1951-64), a group of artists and writers who founded a series of radical underground political journals: such as *Beseda* (1951-57), *Revija 57* (lasting one year), and *Perspektive*. The Critical Generation also established Stage '57, a theatre for avant-garde productions which were often critical of the political stage of Tito's regime. One of the founders, Taras Kermauner, described the spirit of Stage '57 productions as "culturally militant, politically subversive, morally aware, and existentially edgy".⁶ Two years after the first memorial walk and the opening of Stage '57, Smole directed his celebrated rendition of *Antigona*. The restaging of Smole's play can itself be seen as an enacted memorial, which is faithfully repeated. While the Critical Generation lasted a little over a decade before its members were exiled or forced to retreat into private life, Smole's *Antigona* remains a classic text in Slovene culture and education. The play has been restaged and directed by at least eight famous Slovene directors on five different stages.⁷ Moreover, the tradition of rewriting *Antigone* on the Slovene political and theatrical stage has been taken up by a number of Slovene playwrights who followed the Smole classic.⁸ On a performative level, the persistence of the play's production is an argument in favour of the value of a living memorial over and against a memorial set in stone. In this way, the Slovene tradition echoes similar theatrical movements throughout postwar Europe that identified the erection of architectural monuments as a superficial and rushed reconciliation with the trauma of World War II. Theatrical and performance arts, such as those performed by Stage '57, functioned as counter-memorial movements, suggesting that the stone memorial absolved the future generations from the inherited responsibility

⁶ Cardullo 2011:86.

⁷ Stagings of Smole's *Antigona*: 1960 – Stage 57 in Ljubljana, directed by Franci Križaj; 1960 – Drama SNG in Maribor, directed by Miran Herzog; 1960 – SNG Drama in Ljubljana, directed by Slavko Jan; 1971 – Slovenian Permanent Theatre in Trieste, directed by Mile Korun; 1983 – Ljubljana City Theatre, directed by Franci Križaj; 1987 – SNG Drama of Ljubljana, directed by Meta Hočevar; 1988 – Preseren Theatre in Kranj, directed by Matjaz Zupančič; 2010 – Drama SNG in Maribor, directed by Jaka Andrej Vojevec.

⁸ Slovene renditions of Antigone: 1959 – Dominik Smole. *Antigona*; 1970 – Nada Gaborovič. *Antigona s severa*; 1983 – Jure Detela. "Antigonina pesem" from *Mah in srebro*; 1996 – Dušan Jovanović. *Antigona*; 2012 – Evald Flisar. *Antigona zdaj*; 2015 – Slavoj Žižek. *The Three Lives of Antigone*.

of preserving the memory of the past. Post World War II Yugoslav theatre suggested that memorialization must be a collective, transgenerational endeavour. The past is something we must consciously re-enact.

The specific tradition of *Antigone* productions in Slovenia, however, may be understood as meta-memorials rather than counter-memorials. I use this term meta-memorial to point to memorials that routinely revisit the complexities of both erected and enacted memorials. In Smole's version, for example, both Creon and Antigone are depicted walking in circles, which seems to offer a reflection on the newly implemented memorial walk around the Path of Remembrance and Comradeship. Creon continuously circles his carefully manicured tulip garden while Antigone walks around the city walls as she searches for her brother's corpse in a barren wasteland. Creon's flower garden represents a new age of peace in the form of a non-event: a stage of history that wilfully ignores conflict, which it does not wish to resolve as much as leave in the past. Antigone's hopeless search for her brother's body amongst countless mutilated corpses is a refusal of consolation, a refusal of superficial peace. Creon's walking and Antigone's walking are starkly opposed: there is something darkly comical about the way Creon calmly strolls through his tidy garden while Antigone suffers beneath the scorching sun as she walks amongst corpses. And yet the comic and tragic repetitions also mirror each other. Creon walks in one direction on the path towards what he believes to be a fresh future. Antigone walks in the other direction in an attempt to return to a past event for which she wishes to find redemption. They somehow fail to see that they walk the same circle. The circling is enough to drive all the characters to madness by the end of the third act. Smole raises a question that his play leaves unresolved: Does the faithful return to the past appease the ghosts of those who were never properly put to rest or do our footsteps only disrupt the sleep of the undead?⁹

Sophocles' *Antigone* of course has been adopted by many cultures in the wake of many wars to support the specific political positions of

⁹ As Lacan argues, although our ghosts may be unrealized, they are not unreal; in circling back to the past, we summon our unrealized ghost so that we can find and properly encounter that which haunts us. And yet, Lacan warns, "it is always dangerous to disturb anything in that zone of shades... without always being able to bring them up to the light of day". Lacan 1998:23.

various playwrights. The play explores the painful confusion concerning the memory of the dead following a civil war. Sophocles addresses the arbitrary nature of the treatment of the dead through the characters of Eteocles and Polynices: two brothers who both die, fighting on opposite sides of the Thebes civil war. In the end, Eteocles is on the side of the victors and is given the burial honours of a war hero. The body of Polynices, who is declared a traitor of the state, is left to rot and be forgotten. The everlasting title of hero or criminal is retroactively attached to the corpses. Had the outcome of the war been otherwise, traitor would be hero, and hero would be traitor. The king fully acknowledges the difficulties with the memorialization of the war hero. This is emphasized in Smole's play by the image of the mangled corpses that cannot be identified as hero or enemy. When the people demand that the war hero be venerated Creon responds: "But how am I to find their corpses? I do not think their names are branded on their bones. What if we mix them up? How shall we tell the hero from the traitor?" (98). Creon's initial intuition is to allow the unsorted bodies from both sides to rest together. Perhaps if the unidentified dead could enter the underworld together, so could the living learn to live as one. The retroactive judgment of the dead would only carry the conflict of the civil war into the present. As Smole's Creon says, "All is as it should be; the traitor and the hero both are dead, and all conditions needed for the rule of law, and for the return to peace and normalcy, are satisfied...should we not leave the dead to rest alone in peace?" (97). And yet, the rabble cries out for a hero, and Creon's advisors convince him that if he wants to establish postwar order and unity the enemy must be declared as such in no uncertain terms. It is in this spirit that Creon forbids Polynices' burial. And yet as we see through the perspective of Antigone, the enemy is at the same time a brother to be mourned. As Hegel interpreted the conflict between Creon and Antigone, and indeed the conflict within Creon himself, both sides are equally right according to their own logic and wrong in that they are one-sided and cannot coexist.¹⁰

In Sophocles' original play, the audience takes the position of the chorus that represents the citizens belonging to the state under the rule of

¹⁰ Hegel 1983–1987:557.

Creon. We are allowed to feel the tension of two equally compelling but conflicting ethical commands. On the one hand, we identify with Creon's desire to establish unity in the state in order to avoid another civil war. On the other, we feel the commitment to confronting our own war crimes. Peace and justice show themselves to be opposed. In Western Europe following the war, the audience of *Antigone* occupied a very different position than that of Sophocles' audience. The Western European adaptations of *Antigone* during and following World War II lost the ethical bind at the centre of the original play. Jean Anouilh's 1944 rendition staged *Antigone* in German-occupied Paris.¹¹ Bertolt Brecht's 1947 production¹² likewise portrayed Creon and the state as representing fascist Germany and Antigone as the sweetheart of the resistance. At the climax of the play when Antigone is imprisoned and sentenced to death, the state is immediately overrun and destroyed by Creon's regime. The audience of the French and German productions of *Antigone* were predisposed to fully identify with Antigone over Creon and against him. As a result, these renditions produced a kind of one-sidedness that Sophocles' original play warned against.

In the context of post World War II Yugoslavia, however, Creon as well as Antigone became figures of the anti-fascist communist resistance. The Yugoslav staging of the play once again placed the audience in a space between two protagonists who were equally guilty and equally innocent. In Western Europe, the relationship between Creon and Antigone represented the oppressive force of one regime over another political body with which the audience identified. In Yugoslavia, the conflict between Creon and Antigone resonated with the internal struggle within a single political regime to which the audience felt they belonged. Antigone reacts against the crimes of state of which she herself is a member. Antigone is not opposed to Creon. Rather the split within Antigone is mirrored in the split with Creon.

Yugoslav renditions of *Antigone* recovered the ethical bind of Sophocles original play by connecting the figure of Creon to Tito rather than Hitler. Allegedly, the name Tito was originally a code name used for general

¹¹ Jean Anouilh. *Antigone*. Performed in Nazi occupied Paris, 1944.

¹² Bertolt Brecht. *Antigone*. Adopted from Hölderlin (Germany), performed in Switzerland 1947/1948.

correspondence between partisan members. The tactic was used to confuse the secret services into thinking that there was one figure in charge of the Party and the illegal movement when in fact it was a whole organization. The name was not merely a clever tactic however but also represented the unilateral, non-hierarchical nature of a movement built on the framework of communism rather than race, gender, ethnicity or religion. The name, Tito, became emblematic of Yugoslavia and when Josip Broz became the official leader of Yugoslavia, he adopted the name to represent the democratic nature of the new socialist regime. Tito was split between two Sovereign bodies: the person of Josip Broz and the symbol which could not be equated with one person. Tito, a signifier constituted by the split, thus had to undergo four deaths in order to die: 1) when Josip Broz takes on the name Tito in 1934, he himself undergoes a symbolic death becoming much more and less than the weighty signifier that he as a “referent” represents, 2) the bodily death of the Sovereign in the physical passing of Josip Broz in 1980, 3) the second symbolic death of Tito in the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1990, 4) the current process of demolishing the Partisan memorials, lingering remains of Tito. This final death of Tito is both physical and symbolic. The complexity of this fourth death repeats the driving question of Smole’s play: “How does one kill a ghost?”¹³ The character of Creon in Slovene renditions of *Antigone*, likewise stood for a sovereign ruler, but Creon was also not separate from all the members of the chorus, since Tito also stood for all. In this way the play spoke to the dead on both sides of the warfront fought in Slovenia, namely the estimated 28,000 partisans members and the 24,000 Home Guard members that died during war. The theme of the unburied dead also clearly alluded to the reparation executions of debatably 12,000 untried soldiers and citizens associated with the Home Guard in May and June of 1945 after the war.

As a member of the Communist Party, Smole questioned the actions of the party.¹⁴ Smole was one of the first voices to address the difficult

¹³ In a performance art project entitled *Shadows* Antonio Grgić renders the outline of demolished Yugoslav monuments, suggesting that although the monuments have been psychically destroyed, their symbolic value lingers as ghosts in the negative space of their absence: <http://www.antonio-grgic.com/performansi1.html>

¹⁴ Smole’s political positions were heavily influenced by the Catholic Socialist thought of Edvard Kocbek, especially his work *Fear and Courage*, 1951.

question of the memorialization of the untried and unburied during the postwar executions, such as the so-called Kočevski Rog Massacre. Rather than leaving one with a sense of resolution or respect for the heroes of the past, the play highlights the ethical ambiguity concerning our memory of the dead. However, while several others who questioned the postwar executions were silenced by the socialist state, Smole's play presented multiple conflicting perspectives within the same circle. Boris Krajger, a prominent Slovene politician responsible for silencing many projects of the Critical Generation, such as the journal *Revija 57*, not only applauded the performance of *Antigone* at Stage '57 but following the play invited Smole to start the new periodical *Perspektive* (1960-64).¹⁵ The Slovene staging of *Antigone* once again places the audience in the space between the conflicting ethical imperatives: the imperative for peace versus the imperative for reconciliation; the imperative to move forward, to forgive or forget, to create a new hopeful regime versus the imperative to return to the past, to reflect, and to confess the irredeemable deeds still unaddressed.

DOUBLING THE DOUBLE AND MAGNIFYING NOTHING

Smole's play is interesting because it not only splits the audience between Antigone and Creon; it also creates a split in Antigone and Creon themselves, thereby doubling the double. The conflict initially appears to be between two opposing sides. But as the dramatic action unfolds the conflict that appears to be between two sides is shown to be internal to each side. The two are not opposed but rather mirror the conflict that belongs equally to each of them. Creon and Antigone at first appear to be the double in the form of an odd couple. Upon closer look we see that each character is already split. But what is magnified in the mirroring of one double in her double?

Sophocles also shows this duality within Antigone who is torn between her duty as a sister, which is to bury her brother, and her duty as a citizen, which is to obey the king who has issued the command not to bury the enemy. Sophocles' Creon is likewise split between his duty as king and his

¹⁵ Cardullo 2011:86.

compassion for Antigone. Both characters are split between the call of justice and the call of peace; between an absolute universal law and their devotion to a particular relationship; between their impersonal role as citizen or king and their personal role of a family member. And yet, it can also be said that Creon and Antigone's actions in their personal relationships are not truly personal because these roles are strongly circumscribed in the social conventions of Greek life. Although the characters struggle between two contradictory but equally compelling ethical imperatives, in the end their individual actions don't matter. Either way they are doomed, because the very structure of Greek political and ethical life is in contradiction with itself. This contradiction is reflected in each individual's relationship to the community, but more dramatically in each individual's relationship to him or herself.

Antigone works so well within the context of Yugoslavia, because the ancient Greek tragic theme of fate resonates with the de-emphasis of individual will in socialism. Smole ironically magnifies the dilution of the individual by doubling his characters. His characters encounter themselves as someone outside of and opposed to themselves. Or rather, the characters find that they are *nothing more* than the gap between the two roles that cannot coexist. One becomes two in the discovery of the split self – two becomes four in the doubling of the double (the recognition that the other opposing half is a mirrored double: one who is also two) – four becomes many in the total shattering of the individual – the many returns to the one, not as individual ones but as One unity containing all – One in the end shows itself to be both all and nothing.¹⁶

Both the characters of Antigone and Creon may be understood as an enactment of the ancient sceptic slogan “nothing more” or “no more” (short for: X is no more Y than Z). According to Diogenes Laertius' account, the statement “nothing more” initially suggests a double affirmation (both/

¹⁶ And thus we begin again with a new dialectical turn. One shows itself to be already two, a split between being and nothing. However, as Hegel tells us, this original odd couple, Being and Nothing, show themselves to be already doubled, represented by the phrase, “Being, pure Being” and “Nothing, pure Nothingness”. The opposed double Being and Nothing are already doubles of themselves, split by a comma (a *metaxu*) that both holds together and separates both Being/Being and Nothing/Nothing. See: Hegel 1986:82–83. See also: Dolar 2017.

and) but with repetition becomes a double negation (neither/nor).¹⁷ The statement “Antigone is no more a sister than a citizen,” initially implies that Antigone’s roles within the household and within the state are of equal value. But the repetition of this phrase, “Antigone is no more a sister than a citizen” reveals that since Antigone is both a sister and a citizen, and these roles demand opposing ethical actions in Greek society, Antigone can neither exist as a subject within the *oikos* nor within the *polis*. Likewise, Creon is *no more* sovereign than man, *no more* symbolic than embodied. The negative subjectivities of both characters are no more a (both/and) than a (neither/nor). They are instead the *metaxu* between double affirmation and double negation. The doubling of the split subject magnifies the fact that both subjects are nothing more than the enactment of the nothing more.

The result of the oscillation between two irresolvable sides, that mirror each other even in their opposition, is a kind of historical epoché: a suspension of movement in the paralysis of choice, specifically with regards to taking a stance toward our past. Smole’s play opens in a momentary pause following the war. The bodies of the dead rot in piles outside the city walls, but within the walls the citizens feel that they have returned to a simpler time. If during wartime the citizens had fierce visions of the world to come, they are now happy to eat and drink by the fire. The new king takes his place, and the chorus proclaims that peace has been restored.

Chorus: This sphere of ours, this globe, this tiny little ball... may once more draw its breath and in the welcome stillness once more hear the rustle of flowers and trees... The storm is over! We have peace at last! The rain no longer pours with double force its tears upon the dead... In spite of frames bent double, in spite of fractured limbs and heartbeats thumping through whole centuries—we too, *preserved by repetition’s sheer inertia*, to be the living witnesses of each and every occasion, raising now our heads, announce to all and sundry: “Peace is restored! Peace is restored!” (92, emphasis mine)

The crowning of the new king fills the people with hope. However, their hope is not in a new world but rather in the illusion that the king

¹⁷ Diogenes Laertius 1925:487–489 / 74–76 (Greek).

will be able to undo the memory of the war, returning the people to an earlier time when things were still, when there were no bodies to bury and difficult decisions to be made. The citizens' hope is not for progress but for the preservation of the little that remains from before the destruction of war. The present is *nothing more* than the appearance of the new within repetition's sheer inertia, in which "the tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living".¹⁸ As the chorus puts it, we sing "new words set to an ancient tune". With the new king comes the promise of peace, but Smole calls the political goal of peace into question. What is it that we aim for when we call for peace as opposed to justice, compensation or reconciliation? Smole paints the idea of peace as the dream of a non-event. No course of action can now alter or mend the terrible event of World War II. Since the great event cannot be opposed, it must be doubled, and thereby subverted, in its negative other: the non-event of peace. As Tiresias explains, "All wars are senseless, without rhyme or reason, but one thing's certain, namely that in the final analysis we have a non-event. The one who's lost is vanquished, and he who's won is the victor. So forget your fears! If peace is what you want, now you certainly have it" (92). Peace as the non-event is the communal refusal to remember or respond to the Event that has already taken everything. Peace is the historical paralysis following a period of chaos and horror. In retrospect, the only response to the great event seems to be the tragic proclamation, "It is. It has been. It cannot be otherwise."¹⁹ As Tiresias cynically puts it, "In our dealings with the dead we cannot add or take away, for if you wish to foist on them some attribute or label, to shower them with glory or to press their dead heads in the mire, you waste your effort to no end... all you get in answer is a stony smile... I am no more" (99). The non-event is the nothing in which we find rest when all else has been destroyed. In peace, the tragic proclamation "It is" is mirrored in its darkly comic negative double. We

¹⁸ Marx 1979:103.

¹⁹ My characterization of tragedy as associated with the phrase 'it is' comes from Hegel's claim that tragedy is not found in the pathos of remorse or suffering, but rather in the sober acceptance that things (i. e. what one identifies as her fate or absolute essence) cannot be otherwise. See for example: Hegel VPR, 543–544.

looked to the present in the wake of destruction and declare with a mixture of grief and relief, "It is nothing. It is no more."

The theme of postwar peace as a kind of historical paralysis is most strongly represented by the figure of Creon. The split in the Sovereign is mirrored in the split in the people: While many of the citizens are content with whatever comforts the new government provides, a growing number who cannot shake the dead come forth. Even the rabble that congregates outside the palace is divided between those who praise Creon and those who demand that the king sort through the dead to bring them a hero.²⁰ Creon escapes the crowd and retreats to the stillness of his flower garden at night. He imagines he hears the birds cooing, but his page confirms that the birds are sleeping. Although Creon can barely make out the flowerbeds in the dark, he admires the orderliness of the arrangements. Ismene confronts him about a guard who she suspects was killed at the king's command, but Creon wishes only to speak of the flowers.²¹ Creon reiterates the theme of peace as a simple negation of bitter memories and a picture of unity as something that frees the individual from "the solitude of decision" (116). Smole's portrait of Creon in his garden evokes the Yugoslav tradition of adorning Tito with a garland of red flowers, a traditional socialist symbol; this image of Tito and his flowers would later become the most iconic depiction of Tito in the form of the memorial statue at the House of Flowers in Belgrade where the body of Josip Broz rests. But here Creon's red flowers are not simply a celebratory symbol of socialism. Smole adds a new layer to the symbol of the red flower, comparing nature to the tendency of the new political regime to leave the conflicts of the recent past unresolved.

²⁰ A theoretical companion to Smole's characterization of both the Sovereign and the Rabble as split between two bodies can be found in: Santner 2011.

²¹ Creon's speech: "Just now, I took a walk in the garden, and saw the tulip beds, neat footpaths, carefully trimmed bushes; it was so calm, with only the soft chirping birds those fluffy creatures, bidding the evening air 'good night.' At each step I thought I saw everywhere tiny fingers reaching out at me in peace and reconciliation. But even in this pleasant spot, the blessed calm was ruined by a thought or razor sharpness and a bitter memory, like poisoned drink.... The time has come for us to wrest from the fates the senseless exercised of their powers, to sever the coils that bring disorder, to start a new life of peace and law and open-handed friendship... Let us drive our royal hearts from the thing that most torments them: the solitude of decision" (116).

The traditional memorial stands as a permanent reminder of those who heroically lost their lives for the next generation's peace and liberty. In many ways, nature is opposed to the memorial: it absorbs death into itself, erasing the memory of decay as it replenishes itself. Each new generation of growth is an identical replacement of that which was lost, leaving nothing to be mourned.²² The traditional memorial fights against nature's process of replenishing itself all too quickly without leaving a trace of that which came before the new. As it is evident from the case of neglected memorials, if given the opportunity the earth will readily consume a concrete representation of the dead just as it does the human body. Creon eventually gives in to the pressure to address the dead. He feeds one corpse to the hungry earth – declaring it a traitor – and another corpse to the hungry rabble – declaring it a hero. The hero's body is protected from the elements and his memory honoured with a permanent representation of his sacrifice. Smole's association of Creon with nature, however, is not a simple critique of the state for not doing enough to memorialize the dead, since many partisan monuments were erected throughout Yugoslavia. Instead, Smole suggests that in the relationship between nature and the memorial there is once again a mirroring of two faces that seem to be opposed. The memorial itself can at times cover up the very life it serves to highlight by putting the dead to rest too quickly. Nature represents forgetfulness, but the memorial, in its function of selective remembrance, itself can be another form of concealment. The memory of both the forgotten body and the memorialized body are neutralized in premature reconciliation.

Smole continues to play with the motif of the split between two by using the image of Creon's peace garden. The clearing, which we call peace, is revealed to be the gap between deep and unresolved contradictions.

²² Smole's theme of nature as the desire to cover loss runs through many Slovene adaptations in Slovenia. As Žižek puts it in his retelling of *Antigone*, the "thirsty earth", which is indifferent to human concerns, readily swallows up the dead. Jure Detela's 1983 poetic rendering of *Antigone* also describes the transformation of the decaying human body into the shapes of its environment: "Beautiful is the corpse that decays in the way the tree rots...the corpse has been hidden. It is buried everywhere wherever I am." As Jure describes it, the unburied dead have lost their human attributes but are present everywhere within nature. And yet the business of our everyday life is enough to neutralize their voices.

Creon is immediately split when he enters the stage in the first scene and finds Antigone missing. “But where is everyone? Where is Antigone? Those whom I need to see should be here present: no wonder I have a headache. I do not like it when someone I need to see absents herself, especially when I have a headache. *Am I or am I not the king?*” (95, emphasis mine). Creon’s splitting headache is a symptom of his unfulfilled desire for Antigone. Antigone’s absence immediately splits Creon between the “I am” and “I am not”. The theme of Creon’s split is discussed directly in the dialogue between Creon and his advisor Tiresias. Creon reflects on the dual nature of the sovereign who is both an embodied human being and a symbol that cannot be reduced to an individual body:

Creon: “Who is the king? Is the king one man, or are there two in him? Is the king he who with stern hands holds sway and tries and punishes—and at whose order some will rise and others fall—who cannot in the chaos of decisions keep his hands clean; or is the king a man who is concerned with other things—the hues of garden flowers, the peaceful sleep of roosting birds? Is the king one or the other? Or is he both of these?”

Tiresias: Neither one nor the other, nor even both; a king is not a human being. He is cut off from all yet is the most involved... he rises far beyond the human dimensions; his deeds are measured by their higher purpose... Greater the king who will admit no bond or obligation, who with an iron hand controls his kingdom, protecting thus the natural run of things. And in his leisure hours... well then, of course... it’s right and fitting that he should step into the garden and there commune with nature and the birds.

Creon: But when he kills, is he not sometimes or in some way wrong?

Tiresias: Kings do not kill, they sort things out. Murder is a passion, kings are passionless. Their hands are clean. (108)

Even in the stillness of his garden, where his little world appears orderly, Creon is disturbed by his fear of a contradiction at the heart of the non-event of postwar peace. Creon oscillates between the two images of

the sovereign, but as Tiresias sees it, sovereignty lies precisely in the split between the two figures. The symbol of the sovereign must be an image for all citizens to claim and yet it must also be over and above humanity. Creon is only the puppet for what he represents and acts according to what his role demands of him. As an individual Creon cannot be held accountable for the actions he has ordered. His crimes belong to all but no one in particular. The ethical conflict is not personal but societal. Antigone's sense of responsibility to the dead is everyone's responsibility. Creon's guilt is everyone's guilt. And yet although Creon is absolved of the solitude of individual decision and responsibility, he continues to feel haunted by another.

Smole's enacted memorial, like Bogdanović's sculptures, reflects the overlooked aesthetic movement of Socialist Surrealism. The play's highest moment of Surrealism takes place in a grotesque and comical dreamscape. Creon falls asleep and finds himself far from his garden in a barren land, the harshness of which echoes the landscape outside of the city walls where Antigone walks in circles. He wanders through a bleak expanse that is like a sheet of ice with "no soul to be seen, or beast or blade of grass". A ravenous firebird trails him overhead. The king continually pulls pieces of rancid meat out of his pockets and throws it to the bird that each time gulps it up, but regurgitates it: a grotesque mirroring of the circling we see in so many places throughout the play. Creon finds himself following a track made by someone who had walked this space perhaps many times before him. At first the tracks are alarming, since he does not know who made them and where they lead. But he quickly finds comfort in mindlessly following a way entirely made by another. Suddenly in the distance a small dot appears, growing larger until Creon realizes he is approaching a man. It turns out that the man, who he thought he was following, is walking in the opposite direction, towards him. The two men eventually meet on a path that is discovered to be circular. Creon's recollection of the dream-encounter is a bizarre surrealist adaptation of the master-slave dialectic, too brilliant not to quote at length:

We stood there for some time in silence, with our gaze fixed upon the ground, weighed down with guilt, until in fury I looked up and stared him in the face. And there, by God, I saw myself! But what a caricature of me: a tulip in my hand! I didn't know whether to laugh or weep!... "Give way," I told him firmly. "Give way," he also said,

equally calm. “Get lost!” I spoke forcefully and drew my sword. “Get lost!” he too repeated, grasping his tulip by the petals. I cried, “you stupid joker!” aiming my sword at this heart. He cried, “you stupid joker!”... [and] pierced me too with the unusual weapon... right into my heart...

“Enough of this,” I told him. “Since you are me, why should you try to murder me?”

“I hate you,” he said—saying exactly what I had in mind.

“I hate you too,” I said, his eyes, I dimly saw, now clouding over. “And what if we both die,” I said.

“And what if we both die?” said he.

I lost my temper. “Don’t repeat each word I say,” I shouted, “after all, you are not really me!” He answered calmly, “And you’re not really me.

And then we slowly, slowly sank...floundering in some mysterious, thick fluid *more similar to nothing than to anything I know*. The further we sank, the closer we merged, till in the end I’d say nothing remained of me except the tulip in my heart... I wanted to bite his head off. And he’d have done the same to me... But he had nothing, for nothing remained of me.” (138, emphasis mine)

In the deadly encounter between the king of swords and the king of roses – two sides of the sovereign – Creon watches himself dissipate into nothing. In this highest moment of comedy, the proclamation – It is nothing. I am no more – yields its deepest meaning. In a moment of mutual (non)recognition, the two sides see themselves through their fading vision from the non-perspective of the crack that binds them. As the birds of fire fly down to lap up their blood, the stillness of the peace garden recognizes itself – in an instance of comic anguish – in the nothingness of the void.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF NOTHING IN THE REPETITION OF NOTHING

Creon watches himself dissipate into nothing at the climax of the play. Antigone, in contrast, is nothing from start of the play. Although Creon is at times played by two actors, Antigone herself never appears on stage. We only meet the protagonist of the play through the dialogue of the other characters who are constantly speculating what Antigone might say were she present or what she might be doing or thinking elsewhere. The longer Antigone remains absent, the more frantic the speculation becomes. Creon's double is redoubled in Ismene who fills in for her missing sister, speaking lines that Sophocles wrote for Antigone. In this respect, Creon and Tiresias aren't wrong when they accuse Ismene of being possessed by her sister. Ismene initially identifies with her sister so closely that she accidentally refers to herself in third person. When Ismene passionately argues that death is the great equalizer that erases our sins and virtues alike, Tiresias attacks her, "That thought is not your own! You're quoting *her* again." "So what if I am," Ismene responds, "The words may be my sister's but I am with her in heart and soul. The thought is hers and I agree with her whole heartedly" (117). Although Smole's Ismene is at first a bold substitute for Antigone, quite unlike Sophocles' own timid Ismene, by the second act, when Antigone has yet to appear, she begins to doubt her sister's quest. Ismene begins to contradict herself, at times speaking on behalf of her sister at other times against her without being able to identify which voice is her own. Ismene, like Creon, recognizes that she is one split in two. As she confesses to the page: "My dear young page, some fateful spell cleft my soul in twain. Part of me flew aloft in pursuit of high ideals, the other pressed ruthlessly down against the ground; and the hour struck when I was fused into a single being submitting to the dictates of one body" (146). Tiresias exposes Ismene's internal contradiction, forcing her to take one of the two sides, which Ismene at times defends as her true self and at other times insists is not herself. Ismene comes undone, oscillating between the frantic claims "this is really me" and "this is not really me." In becoming dispossessed of her selves, she stumbles upon "herself" in the negative space between being and non-being:

What if it is shown that our heart's blood does not flow in harmony with the world outside, if it is discovered that we merely strut and act; *what if you realize that mankind exists—but you are not a man?* If a sudden light illuminates the unknown side of things, where all our standard, social order, and tradition seem shallow, false, and ludicrous?... What if it turns out that I am a bare, inflated mask...? (163, emphasis mine)

The insistence of Antigone's absence causes a deepening of the split within both Creon and Ismene. The crack within each character reaches the surface as both characters come to realize themselves as *more similar to the nothing* of Antigone than any version of themselves standing on the stage. Subjectivity emerges in failed subjectivity. A forced choice is given between the "me" and the "not me" that is also generated by the same subject. Between the self that is interpellated into one's social order and one's denial of this identity as who she really is, there is a bare "unknown side of things".²³ Both Creon and Ismene are initially driven through their opposition to another, which later presents itself as another side of themselves. But according to logic one cannot be both one identity and its negation. In oscillating between "me" and "not me", the place of the subject emerges not in either one or both sides of the double, but rather in the deeper sense of negativity that exists between both the interpellated self and its negation.

Each character slowly discovers him or herself to be more similar to nothing than anything that can be represented on the stage: no more living than the dead. As the present characters declare themselves to be "no more", Antigone gains a kind of negative agency through the repetition of the non-event of her failed appearance. With each failure to appear, Antigone's silence is amplified. While Creon and Ismene enact the doubling of the double, the page speaks for the crack between them, which is Antigone's absence. The page who waits on Creon is assigned to look after Antigone who has withdrawn into private following the war. While many of Ismene's

²³ As Mladen Dolar puts it, "The forced choice entails a loss and opens a void... of something that was never possessed." Dolar 1993.

inflamed monologues are attributed to Antigone, the tender page emphasizes Antigone's silence. Each time the page returns from visiting Antigone, the other characters press him to give a report of her words and actions. Each time the page reiterates Antigone's silence and the monotonous repetition of her daily walks around the city walls. The page enters the stage four times to offer four distinct accounts of Antigone's silence in her absence:

THE PAGE'S FOUR ACCOUNTS OF ANTIGONE'S SILENCE

I. The page reports that Antigone has withdrawn into her room and stands in silence by her window. Creon is split between the "am" and "am not." (95)

II. The page's second report about Antigone's silence is juxtaposed to the watchman's second report about Antigone's inflammatory public speech. In an effort to silence Antigone, Creon forces the page—who stands for Antigone's silence—to murder the watchman—who represent Antigone's rumoured speech. Creon's plan backfires: by silencing Antigone's voice, he amplifies her silence. (101–103)

III. Although Creon has given the sisters secret permission to search for the body at night (which would make the already impossible task truly impossible), the page states that she circles the walls ritualistically in silence each day in broad daylight. (123–126)

IV. The page reports that Antigone now walks in circles through the night as well. Antigone's most subversive act takes the form of obedience. Everyone, including Ismene, judges Antigone to be mad. In the persistence of her absence, they become truly hysterical and are convinced that Polyneices' ghost is everywhere. (145)

Nothing changes as the caesura of Antigone's absence punctures the temporality of the play's events. And yet, we may say that although nothing really changes, *nothing really changes* by its fourth interruption when the page reports about Antigone's midnight walks. There is no significant formal change in each report about Antigone's absence. It is precisely through this repetition without difference (or with the very minimal difference), that nothing itself becomes the agent of its own transformation. In his first

report, the page explains that day after day Antigone stares blankly out of her window. This is the page's first and last account of her speech:

Page: She seemed to be in a severe state of nervous shock and the next moment, rather too calm and collected... she took me by the hand and led me to the window. "Is the sun shining dark?" she asked. "No, no," I said "It's shining bright as ever." "How strange, how strange," she murmured, "it sheds no light on me." And then she took me by the other hand and asked "Now tell me. What is on your mind?" My mind was blank. My eyes were on the birds migrating southwards... "Birds, birds, where are you off to?" I murmured—and she said, "Forget about the birds; their way spells weakness; you have to live your life where you are." (102)

The page admires the way the flock of birds move as one as if heading toward a clear destination on the horizon. But Antigone sees the birds' unity as anchored in the desire to escape a harsh landscape that must be faced. Creon, like the page, also found comfort in the birds in his garden until the grotesque image of the fire bird regurgitating its food reminds him that there is no escape. What one devours returns whole. Antigone is likened to a bird that is separated from its flock, refusing to take flight. When the page returns to Creon for the second time he is more reluctant to speak even about Antigone's silence as if any speech would taint the purity of Antigone's refusal to appear. He reluctantly speaks to the steady repetition of her absence: "Today, like yesterday and all these recent days, she's out again, and, measured by the hour-glass sands her absence lasts from early dawn until the last rays of the dying sun" (124). The phrase "like yesterday, today, and tomorrow" is repeated by the characters like a mantra, pointing to two infinities based in repetition without difference: the inertia of a repetition free from terror that maintains the social order (126); the equally punctuated mechanical failure of Antigone to appear, a kind of repetition of nothing that terrifies the nothing of the infinity of peace. The two temporal modes take the same form and yet one haunts the other causing a disturbance in its flow.

The young page, who perhaps is too young to fully understand the horrors of the war, becomes Antigone's shadow. He stands next to her through her mourning. When she goes out to find her brother's body, the page follows her outside of the city walls to search through the mangled

corpses. The page stays with Antigone even when the harsh sun forces Ismene to abandon the search. The rumoured sightings of Antigone beyond the wall in broad daylight begin to disturb people. The rather suspicious rumours of sightings of Antigone beyond the wall at midnight disturb the people more. As Antigone appears to be everywhere and nowhere (in her failure to appear anywhere), the people begin to whisper that the ghost of Polyneices has indeed returned to haunt them. Haemon becomes hysterical:

In spite of all the obstacles, she keeps up the search. And while the search continues, it's just as if we had him living with us here and now. Polyneices to the right of us, Polyneices to the left of us, in the corner by the stove, in the shadows on the ceiling, hidden behind a tree, reflected in the water of the palace pond; he's everywhere! I see him in her eyes, like a hilltop in the clouds; I see him in the dimple of your tepid smile, in the grooves of Creon's wrinkles, and Ismene's restless fingers. That damned fellow's ghost, I seem to see it everywhere! Are we all mad? Crazy? Are we ill? We killed him – why? So that he'd haunt us night and day, alive, although a ghost, and more alive than ever! (153)

By the end of the third act even Tiresias, the cynical defender of peace and order, is convinced that Polyneices stands among them. Haemon orders the watchman to kill Polyneices *again*, which once again raises the question: “How does one kill a ghost?” Soon all the characters reach a state of hysteria constantly alternating between the cries, “Polyneices is dead!” and “Polyneices is not dead!” The play becomes a game of fort-da, “Polyneices is gone! – Polyneices is here!” At one point Ismene – the only other character besides the page and the dead watchman who claim to have had a first-hand encounter with Antigone over the course of the play – calls everything she thought to be certain into question. The page tries to soothe her panic, by empathetically confessing that he is less certain about his own memories of Antigone. He directs his speech towards her before trailing off, “Now don't be angry, gracious lady, I'm only talking to myself, from dawn till noon, from noon till night, just talking to myself...” (146). In the final scene, it is reported that Antigone has miraculously found Polyneices' body and has buried the corpse in Creon's tulip garden. The guards set out to immediately execute both Antigone and the page. Tiresias returns to his pragmatic stance and declares that things will soon return to normal.

Although it is assumed that Antigone's final death is at the end of the play, a creeping suspicion chills the astute reader: Was Antigone already dead at the beginning of play? After reaching the end of the play one can return to reread Smole's play as beginning only after the event of Antigone's suicide that comes at the end of Sophocles' original and every other rendition that has since followed. It is only after reaching the end, when Ismene and the page call their own testimonies into question, that we discover that the end has already occurred before the beginning. Antigone's suicide is repeated in Smole's play not as a tragic end but as a passive act of comic revenge. In her final comic death before the beginning, Antigone gives birth to both herself and her brother as the undead, who call up the living to voice their silence louder.

The tradition of staging Smole's *Antigona* in Slovenia functions as a meta-memorial, which routinely returns to the past while openly weighing the dangers of awakening the unburied dead against the dangers of letting the unaddressed conflicts of the past sleep. However, it is not a memorial that leaves us with a sense of peace concerning the past. It raises questions about how we stand amongst the dead rather than taking a specific stance towards the past. The play magnifies different forms of negativity through the repetition of the non-event and the layering of silence. Silence can come in the form of refusing to remember but equally in the act of remembering selectively, since any act of memorialization necessarily conceals as much as it uncovers. Forgetting (in the form of keeping silent and moving forward) and remembering (in the form of pausing to give voice to the dead) are presented as yet another double. The truth itself is therefore also in what is left unsaid – the thing that has not been addressed or staged – the missing Antigone. In my reading of Smole's play, Antigone does not represent a decisive call for action, for example, the demand to memorialize the unburied dead.²⁴ Rather, the play acknowledges the impossibility of putting the dead to rest either through the act of memorialization or through carefully maintaining

²⁴ The Slovene philosopher, Spomenka Hribar, has come to be associated with the figure of Antigone because of her call for a national recognition of the untried and unburied in postwar killings, such as the Kočevski Rog Massacre. Smole's *Antigone* seems to offer a contrasting perspective to such political appropriations of Antigone that take a stance on the question of post WWII memorialization.

the quiet peace that pretends to forget. Repetition can be mindless, itself a kind of covering, as represented in the image of Creon circling his manicured garden. But there is another kind of mechanical repetition that thickens our repeated failed relationship to history with each turn.

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Rachel Aumiller

POLOŽAJ ANTIGONE MEĐU SLOVENSKIM BESMRTNICIMA

Rad razmatra preradu *Antigone* Dominika Smolea u razdoblju nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata kao izvedbeno sjećanje u kontekstu socijalističke Jugoslavije. Praksa ponovnog postavljanja Antigone u Sloveniji može se iščitati kao praksa metamemorijalizacije koja se opetovano vraća prošlosti, dok otvoreno procjenjuje opasnost od buđenja nepokopanih mrtvih u odnosu na opasnost od puštanja nerazriješenih sukoba iz prošlosti na miru.

Ključne riječi: memorijalizacija, ponavljanje, socijalizam, Antigona, Dominik Smole, . W. F Hegel



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