

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## Jean Marie Lucien Pierre Anouilh (1910-1987)

The Second World War established an atmosphere of spydom and danger. In such an appropriate milieu, one would want to look at the unfolding of a symbolic narrative, set in ancient Greece but employed as a commentary on the author's own world of occupied France, with its immediate dangers and threats. Precisely that was the milieu in which the midlife French playwright, Jean Anouilh, was inspired to heal France alone in an adventure such as the following drama. France alone had produced more than a dozen fictions concerning the mysteries and terrors of the wartime imagination, in the face of, the terrors of war, the brutality of Occupation and the remorselessness of national Brainwash, Anouilh saw with special clarity the scorn of race force, and even the race's plans for international obliteration.

Anouilh's move, in the face of these hopelessly anti human behaviors was to turn to a great literary work from earlier culture, Sophocles' *Antigone*, created in the fifth century before Christ. The sharpest point of relevance, between the works of Anouilh and Sophocles, centers in the parallel between Creon, the headstrong ruler of Corinth, and the heartless Commander of the Gestapo, the German Occupation. a bullish leader of his occupying force. Anouilh turns to Creon to illustrate the brutality of the Nazi mind. The parallel is haunting.

Onstage, in Anouilh's drama, the French audience, intermixed with assorted Nazi theatergoers, watches a drama, set in fifth century BC Corinth, which features a brutal ruler father who has forbidden to permit marriage between his daughter and an alien captive. The father, Creon, exemplifies all the fascist traits most evident at that moment itself 1944--parochialism, insensitivity, sadism, folly. As the play develops we watch with stupefaction as we see the alienation grow between a father and his fiercely stubborn and resistant daughter. The finale, which leads to the tragic deaths of the three chief participants, stunningly illustrates the tragic consequences of the Nazi mentality.