IN THE SHADOW OF POLYNICES: ANTIGONE IN POST-WAR SPAIN

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Marking the aftermath of civil war

In the spring of 1939, in the immediate aftermath of Barcelona's fall to Francisco Franco's insurgent army, Salvador Espriu set out to draft the first version of his adaptation of *Antígona*, a project that would occupy the Catalan poet and playwright for nearly three decades. In 1947 he wrote a preface, yet the play would remain unpublished until 1955, with its first stage production in 1958 at Barcelona's pioneering Agrupació Dramátic (Frederic Roda, dir.), a company that sought to highlight works by contemporary Catalan language playwrights in relation to high-profile European theater. Espriu's success in the 50s motivated him to modify the script in anticipation of its 1963 revival by Ricardo Savalt's Escola d'Art Dramàtic Adrià Gual (EADAG). He subsequently rewrote new prefaces for the play in 1964 and again in 1967 in anticipation of the 1968 publication of the revised and definitive edition (Espriu 29-32). The period spanned by the play's premiere, revival and publication—1958 to 1968—was, by all accounts, an especially dynamic moment

in Spanish social, political, and cultural history. The history of Espriu's *Antígona* as performance and text is clearly symptomatic of that dynamic.

From today's vantagepoint Espriu's 1939 initiative stands out as the first in a chain of *Antigones* that would come to dominate the Spanish post-war and post-Franco culturescape. Within a matter of years following Espriu's first version, two high-profile Republican intellectuals, José Bergamín and María Zambrano, launched their own dramatic renditions of this myth and they would likewise continue to nurture them over time. Although Bergamín most likely completed the first draft of his *La sangre de Antígona* while living in Montevideo, between 1947 and 1954, we know for certain that he reworked it shortly after moving to Paris in 1955 and possibly continued to do so up until its publication in a special issue of *Primer Acto* in 1983, just months before his death.[1] Zambrano's attachment to her Antigone is a longer and more complicated story. It begins with "Delirio de Antígona," a short piece that she published in 1948 in *Orígenes* (Havana), while still living in Cuba, yet, for reasons that only later became apparent, it is rooted in Zambrano's interest in the themes of piety and love (*caritas*) made apparent as early as 1938, by her essay on Benito Pérez Galdós's *Misericordia* published in *Hora de España* (Valencia), while she was serving as the journal's general editor. Two decades down the exilic path leading from Mexico and Cuba to France and Italy, Zambrano reworked her 1938 essay for publication in *Ínsula* in 1959 under the title "Nina o la misericordia," and a year later, in 1960, she developed her ideas further for inclusion in *La España de Galdós*, a collection of essays in which *Misericordia* plays a prominent role. Zambrano would meanwhile return to the Sophoclean myth, with revisions and prologues that would accompany the newly titled work, *La tumba de Antígona*, that appeared in 1967, 1983, and 1986, and beyond.[2]

As scholars have argued, Galdós and Sophocles are deeply intertwined in Zambrano's thinking and, as a unit, they are inextricably linked to the author's personal experience of exile.[3] Even prior to her leaving Spain, one can easily imagine how the civil strife that forced the philosopher into a sort of internal exile in Valencia must have kindled her attraction, especially as a woman, to Galdós's female protagonist, whom she saw as embodying a certain "invisible" piety. If Nina foreshadows Antigone's emergence as a major player within Zambrano's field of reference, it was clearly owing to the self-effacing piety embodied as well by Sophocles's female protagonist, driven as Antigone was by her "nature" to "love," not "hate," that is, by an "invisible" intimate proclivity that accorded not with Creon's *written* civil codes but with the "unwritten" conscience-based laws of the gods.[4] It is for these significant reasons that in 1960 Zambrano should preface her *La España de Galdós* alluding to what she was in the process of identifying as an essentially Sophoclean interplay of piety ("misericordia"), tragedy, and salvation through death:

> En el ensayo escrito hace más de 20 años, de los que aquí van, se despeja la condición o el aspecto *trágico* de vida e historia que *Misericordia* nos ofrece; la tragedia y su simple, pura, *humilde*, solución, trans histórica. Pues que no se trata de un problema, sino de un conflicto, de un *trágico conflicto* que no puede ser *salvado*, sino por una esperanza cumplida y sobrepasada; por una vida, que va más allá de la memoria y del recuerdo, *naciendo una y otra vez, como Nina hacía.* (Zambrano, *España* 15; emphasis added)

The fact that Zambrano should turn from *La España de Galdós* to *La tumba de Antígona* (see dates listed above) gives a clear sense of how she juggled two projects that were for her interrelated.

These data points are suggestive as well of the degree to which Antigone was, for Zambrano, Bergamín, and Espríu alike, a *project* in the literal sense[5], an engagement whose forward thrust must have helped propel them along their exilic pilgrimage through their respective postwar uncertainties. As to Zambrano, scholars have highlighted the philosopher's deep personal identification with the myth, focusing especially on its relevance to her relationship with her sister Araceli, a connection that Zambrano herself makes explicit.[6] If indeed Zambrano's Antigone represents a "trasunto literario de su propio drama vital" (Gómez-Blesa), her identification with a classical myth concerning the traumatic consequences of civil conflict, the moral imperative of honoring the memory of its victims, the tragedy of erasure and banishment, and the bonds of filial love linking two bereft sisters has to do not only with María Zambrano's own personal experience of deracination but also with Araceli's tragic illness, a direct consequence of Spain's civil war and a source of enduring pain for the author and her family.[7]

Lest one assume that Antigone was the exclusive domain of intellectuals writing from beyond the periphery of Spanish postwar political power, it bears recalling the aura of officialdom that was bestowed upon José María Pemán's *Antígona* during the earliest and darkest years of Spain's—and Europe's—postwar. The play was staged in May of 1945, one week following Germany's capitulation in World War II. It was performed at the preeminent Teatro Español in Madrid, a stage associated traditionally with Spain's theatrical canon. Identified as Spain's *de facto* national theater by Republican intellectuals during the 1930s, the *Español* acquired this status *de iure* when the Franco government transformed it in 1939, shortly after the cessation of hostilities, into the crown jewel of the postwar *red de teatros nacionales*. Pemán's *Antígona* came out a year later, in 1946, in *Arbor*, the journal founded

in 1943 by the state-subsidized *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas*.

In the context of Spanish postwar adaptations of the myth, the story that emerges from the performance and publication of Pemán's *Antígona* may certainly seem exceptional, given how the play aligns with the propaganda strategies adopted by the new regime for legitimizing itself in the eyes of national and international audiences. Pemán's *Antígona* "española y cristiana" mainstages triumphant postwar *nacional catolicismo* while recalling his 1930s homages (biodramas) to early modern warriors of the Catholic faith: *El divino impaciente* (1933), based on the life of Ignacio de Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order; and *Cisneros* (1934), Cardinal, Inquisitor, and confessor to the crown. Pemán's *Antígona* glorifies traditional patriarchal values in its patronizing tone—the protagonist is "la niña [desobediente]," Haemon the "fogoso y desesperado novio"—while seeking legitimacy through its grounding in elements drawn from the classical model. Pemán's distinctive treatment of the chorus bears noting in this regard. The author conceived of his chorus as a bridge linking modern Spain to Ancient Greece, one meant to invoke the idea of a Christian legacy circumventing the Hebrew prophets. It was a poorly veiled strategy for supporting the Regime's purge of Spain's heterodoxies and "contubernios." It bears noting that Pemán undertook the challenge of grounding Spain's new political order in Europe's foundational texts just as representatives gathered in San Francisco, CA, in 1946, would vote to exclude Spain from membership in the newly founded United Nations.

Although Pemán's *Antígona* is in many ways exceptional, in the end it can be taken as the exception that proves the rule. Like the others, his *Antígona* is also enveloped by the specificity of its moment, something made evident in the private deliberations that Espriu dramatizes between members of Creon's regime. In this scene, Creon's political leaders appear

obsessed with honoring the memory of the glorious fallen in the face of a critical wheat shortage and widespread famine. As a dramatic device, these deliberations recall the forensic debates that were central to Attic drama and that have been basic to the correlations that philosophers have drawn between classical tragedy and political theory. In the face of the harsh political realities of the moment, when Spanish society was indeed facing major shortages of food and basic supplies, Espriu's implied condemnation of his immediate sociopolitical context is striking, and it becomes even more so in the revised 1964 edition. The "Lúcid Conseller," a new character, concludes the play speaking of the "precarious truce" and pervasive aura of silence and complicity, the postwar *pacto de silencio*, in short, that only over time would Spaniards come to identify and defy.

It bears noting that Pemán and Espriu, representatives of this early Franco-era cohort based in Spain, both adhered to the classical convention of a dramatic action progressing within a more or less mimetic framework in a linear pattern toward a denouement. By contrast, the exiled playwrights Bergamín and Zambrano break with conventional notions of time, space and dramatic action by creating a complex and intensely lyrical framework that is suggestive of a dynamic, deepening experience of interiority, of a downward or vertical pattern. "Blood" and the "tomb" referred to in the titles of these two works—Bergamín's *La sangre de Antígona*, Zambrano's *La tumba de Antígona*—are the rhetorical figures around which these plays cohere. Rhetorically, Antigone's "blood" and "tomb" point to the ritualistic dimension of drama—Bergamín's is subtitled *Misterio en tres actos*—in which the stasis of experience on the mimetic plane of reference betrays the dynamism of growing awareness and self-fulfillment within the existential or epistemological spectrum. Thus, in Zambrano's "tomb," Antigone's fixedness becomes the basis for the ever-deepening consciousness that she accrues through

conversations with her shadows. Her sister and brothers, father, wet-nurse, and Creon populate the internal spectral realm into which she descends in search of individuation, until arriving at the deepest reaches of her darkly luminous core. Her sense of oneness and realization culminates, in fact, in the triumph of oxymoron in the play's final image. Antigone's "dark luminosity," her lone star shrouded in the night ("Ahora que está aquí la estrella"), emerges at last, once she is liberated from Creon's blinding sun and thus cured of the wounds of remembrance. The suggestion of a culminating epiphany is one of various subtle Christological references strewn throughout the play. Antigone invites her father thrice to rise through her: "Por mí, sí; por mí, sí. A través de mí" (Zambrano, "La tumba" [1986] 234). The symbolic lamb appears twice in relation to the theme of "truth" and "sacrifice." Zambrano thus alludes to what becomes dominant in the adaptation that her comrade in exile was preparing when she reunited with Bergamín in Paris in 1957. It should come as no surprise that the poet who claimed that Catholicism and Communism were born of the same root would dialogue openly with Christian liturgy, not only through the pervasive symbolism of Antigone's "blood" but by the inclusion of "bread" and "wine" along with the "sword," the *arma Christi*, as it were, of Antigone's passion. By accentuating the Eucharistic dimension, Bergamín seems bent on hallowing the sacred ground or so-called "circulo mágico" of exile he shared with Zambrano. That those encompassed magically within exile's widening gyre should feel conjoined through the communal experience of ritual seems to be suggested by the unifying power that both he and the philosopher foreground: Zambrano's Antigone, as the redemptive consciousness in whom all others exist, the voice through whom they speak; Bergamín's Antigone, in whose redemptive blood she and her family are united.

Aftermathing in successive waves

The conclusions offered so far are predicated on the notion that these early postwar adaptations of Antigone represent a historical phenomenon whose coherence derives from factors that are contextual as much as textual: from not only the *hows* but the *whys* of the adaptations. The sway of this myth among Spanish playwrights from 1939 well into the new millennium—the sheer historical breadth of Antigone's endurance in Spain—seems to widen over time, unfolding as it does in successive stages. It forces us in this sense to rethink the notion of "aftermath" or "post" not only as a textbook benchmark of political history, but rather as the sign of a lingering and deep-seeded collective mindset that just possibly results from a shared traumatic past.

Before taking up these new works let us review the political and economic realities and relevant cultural discourses that give shape to the internal dynamic of these decades. The economic *aperturismo* of the early 1960s, a Franco-era turning point, was marked by realignments at the highest level of the nation's political systems (ministerial reforms), by subsequent economic development, societal change, and by levels of artistic and intellectual defiance and non-conformity that were uncommon during the early years of the Franco dictatorship. Landmark productions of plays by Valle-Inclán, Arthur Miller and, most notably, the highly influential Bertolt Brecht are salient indices of these trends.[8] Likewise, the founding of Emilio Silva's *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* in 2000 marks a pivotal moment in the politics, discourses, and cultural production of the democratic era. The intensity of the highly partisan public debates that ensued in the press and on television around the parliamentary approval of the 2007 *Ley de Memoria Histórica* and the 2022 *Ley de Memoria Democrática* along with the sheer volume of publiccations on the topic by scholars and creative writers suggests

an extraordinary, perhaps unprecedented level of attention in Spain to the question of how and why any nation should remember its past and why Spaniards in particular should remember *this* past. Works by key playwrights and performance artists of the new millennium were driven by the sense that democratic Spain had failed to account adequately for its legacy of fascism, that earlier high-profile incursions in this regard—*Las bicicletas son para el verano* (Fernando Fernán Gómez, 1982) and *¡Ay, Carmela!* (José Sanchis Sinisterra, 1987), for instance—fell short. Correlations between Antigone's conscience-based zeal to bury Polynices honorably, disobeying thereby the edict of the state he had defied, and Emilio Silva's privately funded (at least in 2000) forensic research aimed at locating and identifying the abandoned remains of Franco's victims could not be more striking. The *sombra de Polinices* does indeed seem *muy alargada*, to evoke the haunting title of Miguel Delibes's 1947 novel.

Historical memory is just one of the more prominent Sophoclean threads that Spanish Antigonians, especially of late, have excavated from the classical myth. For now, the important point to be made is that although such periodizations—early regime, late regime; early transition, ongoing transition—may seem facile, Spain's post-1960 Antigones—with Espriu's, Bergamín's, Zambrano's and Pemán's Antigones already very much consolidated—seem to fall into clusters that derive meaning from these turning points. They suggest the endurance of a shadow that morphs in accordance with the circumstances of their specific moment: the shadow that is the memory, whether voluntary or not, of civil strife and its victims.

If we consider the cartographies of power that pertain to systems of production and distribution—editorial companies, performance venues, directors, actors, set designers, and so forth—we are able to see that most, if not all, of Spain's postwar Antigonians emerge from the periphery of Spain's

national mainstream theater world. They also seem to be motivated by a common zeal to defy their marginality. This is certainly the case in the 1960s, when versions of the myth were brought out by three regional playwrights—the Andalusian Antonio Jiménez Romero and the Catalans Josep Muñoz Pujol and Joan Povill Adserà—and by the *manchego* priest, poet, essayist and playwright, Carlos de la Rica, active in anti-Franco dissidence throughout the 1950s and 60s. Povill Adserà's *La tragedia d'Antígona* and De la Rica's *La razón de Antígona*, emphatically didactic works, represent strictly local events, footnotes to the larger story told by Antigone's persistence in postwar Spain.[9] Jiménez Romero's "Oración de Antígona" and Josep Muñoz Pujol's *Antígona 66* have a clearer rapport with the larger story. The former, a scene from the author's *Oratorio*, appeared in *Primer Acto* in 1969 and was performed that year by the independent Teatro Estudio Lebrijano. This lyrical, Flamenco-based amalgam of dance, theater, performance, music and ritual recalls the new wave of *Andalucismo* that was dissident in its desire to dispel trivialized, Franco-era/market-driven *folklorismo* with innovative and presumptively authentic representations of Andalusian popular culture.[10] It was well received by both critics and audiences yet its exposure beyond Lebrija was limited to very short runs in theater festivals. Like Espriu's *Antígona*, Muñoz Pujol's *Antígona 66* was produced at the EADAG as part of Ricardo Salvat's campaign to promote emerging Catalan writers, an act of resistance aimed at the linguistic ideology of the Franco regime. Although the play enjoyed a 1978 revival at Barcelona's Teatre Lliure/Gracia, the critical response was nevertheless muted, owing to a perceived dogmatism redolent of the politics of the 1960s:[11] Polynices, in a peaceful student protest, is killed by his brother Etiocles, the latter a minion of the collaborationist bourgeoisie. The Antigones of the late Franco era are rooted thus in the discourses and ideologies of their moment and, in fact, seem confined by this very historical

rootedness, the respective merits of these works notwithstanding.

Although the reasons may differ, one might easily arrive at similar conclusions regarding the cluster of Spanish Antigones appearing within the context of post-1978 democratic Spain. Two Galician language versions of the myth, María Xosé Queizán's *Antígona, a forza do sangue*, published in 1989, and the *Memoria de Antígona* coauthored in 1998 by Quico Cadaval and Xavier Lama, and another Catalan version—Jordi Coca's *Antígona*, published in 2002—appear against the backdrop of a federalist restructuring of the Spanish state, with the attendant debates concerning the political competencies of the *autonomous* governments and the language policies adopted in Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque Country. In this context, retelling classical myths through the medium of Spain's *other* languages can easily be viewed as an act of defiance and legitimization aimed at various types of imposition—political, linguistic, cultural—at a time when sociolinguistic analyses show the status of these languages to be persistently fragile. In her virulently feminist-nationalist retelling of the myth, Queizán represents this dynamic in a uniquely forceful way. Her Dona Elvira dons Antigone's mantel as a rebellious noblewoman resisting Castilian-Leonese subjugation during the feudal 11th century. In her prologue, the author is explicit in affirming that such a resistance should involve dismantling the binarisms associated traditionally with the classical myth. Her Antigone (Elvira) *becomes* political, Queizán claims, as she abandons the "private, feminine" space, her "lei escura," by usurping the "lei pública masculina" (13). This process culminates in Elvira's openingly defiant public burial of her dead brother's body, the play's revolutionary finale, where she proposes the idea of a hybridized body: "¡Irmán, agora eu serei o teu corpo, a túa voz, a túa honra, a forza do sangue polos séculos dos séculos" (49). As such, the finale is foreshadowed by hints strewn throughout the play, suggesting an erotic

dimension to Elvira's love for her dead brother. Her defense of her own sterility, her strategy for resisting the advances of the Castilian-Leonese "intruder" who seeks her hand in marriage, is equally important in this regard:

> A miña frialdade frearía o seu ardor. O seu seme quedaría conxelado ao entrar no meu corpo. Non. Roi nunca me podería empreñar. Pero tampouco me deitarei con el. Prefiro xacer co meu querido irmán na cova. (Queizán 65)

Patriarchy and military conquest converge throughout Queizán's play as intertwined forms of unwanted penetration, something that must be called out and resisted, she seems to tell her audience, at all costs.

Above and beyond the nationalistic implications of writing in Galician and Catalan, Cadaval/Lama's and Coca's versions stand out especially for their personalized treatment of memory at a time when collective or historical memory was becoming a matter of widespread public debate in Spain. It bears recalling that not only is Antigone's insistence on burying Polynices in the classical myth motivated by her sense of moral duty in the face of political abuse, but it is also an act undertaken in defense of collective memory. It is rooted in the understanding that collective memory is the extension of familial honor, it is ritualized through burial rites and symbolized by a grave. It is understood to flow naturally over time, a flow that is disrupted in the classical myth by a tyrant seeking to manipulate memory artificially for self-interest. Cadaval and Lama build on these ideas by foregrounding the act of remembrance in and of itself as their main focus. And as the ambiguous title *Memoria de Antígona* suggests—Antigone's memory? The memory of Antigone?—they dramatize in this work not only how and why the mythical characters remember but how and why they form part of *our* memory in their status as *classical*. The Chorus evokes this theme in the opening lines

in a passage that anticipates the play's deeply lyrical, hermetic style:

> Residuos da traxedia clásica
> pegados á epidemia da memoria
> para lembra-lo lume que atravesa a vida. . . .
> Os mitos seguen vivos
> e botan raíces
> como edras na mourenza
> que agatuñan feras pola memoria
> sobre o eido comunal da inmortalidade. (129)

We advance from here through what a times seems to be a deliriously sepulchral maze—a postmodern pastiche of electronic music and techno-violence, noirish characters, and night clubs where Creon and his associates carouse with prostitutes under neon lights to celebrate the "camaradería do pracer, cos lazos profundos da luxuria" (151)—in which the characters struggle to extract themselves from the mire of their forgetfulness by remembering or reminding each other of who they are within the family. Eteocles and Polinices have forgotten their father. He (Oedipus) has forgotten the names of his sons, although he is able to relate the story of two brothers who forgot their exiled father and who neglected the needs of their sisters. Cadaval and Lama call our attention to the fact that, in the house of Cadmus, memory is linked above all to the curse that torments this family, to the tragedy in which they are imprisoned. Speaking from her death, hanging still from the noose with which she took her life, Jocasta exclaims to her daughter:

> ¡Todo nesta casa está ferido pola morte, Antígona! A area é a morte, Antígona, e ese parece se-lo noso destino. Somos unha familia condenada polos séculos a ser carne inmortal dunha traxedia eterna. Esto é o teatro, miña nena. (131)

Antígona echoes her mother's words in her final reflection on the meaning of her own life and death. Although death, as Polynices stated, may represent the clan's "regreso ó fogar," this Antigone is consumed by her nostalgia for both life and death while she is driven by a desire for freedom from the shackles of her drama, that is, from her need to remember and to be remembered: "¡Estou farta deste rito funerario que cheira a simulacro, a teatro, a miserable xogo das emocións! [/] ¡Quen puidese escapar deste xogo de espellos e de sombras!" (176).

Cadaval and Lama emphasize a dialectical intersection of the classical and the modern in *Memoria de Antígona* as a matter of both dramatic form and theme. The story reaches us as something "residual," as if filtered through the sick imagination ("epidemia da memoria") of a subject beset by mourning ("mourença"). The detailed costume and set designs by Rodrigo Roel included in the edited version give a visual rendering of this figurative patina and suggest analogies with their fellow Galician Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, whose early 20th century blending of the classical and the modern was achieved with powerful visual effects: Máximo Estrella, in *Luces de Bohemia*, for instance, with his "cabeza rizada y ciega, de un gran carácter clásico-arcaico" cloaked, meanwhile, in the garments of his tenebrous fin-de-siècle bohemian avant-garde Madrid. That Jordi Coca's characters should be dressed in "roba actual o, en tot cas, lleugerament antiquada" (29) suggests a similar fixation on the clash between the old and the new. Coca's approach to the material, however, is more overtly political and fierce in its tone. In her opening dialogue with her sister Ismene, Antigone defends her decision to bury Polynices in a vehemently accusatory voice:

> Si la pau de què parla Creont, i que tu recolzes, és això, si pot fer coses com aquestes i ens imposa el silenci amb tanta facilitat, potser ja no val la pena continuar. Qui és

> Creont? . . . Sou vosaltres que feu de Creont el Senyor absolut de la ciutat. (35-36)

She is adamant in her role as the vox populi when she accuses Creon of seeking to "fer d'aquesta ciutat una ciutat morta, sense veu ni voluntat" (47). Creon, meanwhile, dressed in his tuxedo and bearing messages of "peace"—echoes, no doubt, of Franco's "25 years of peace" publicity campaigns of the 1960s—is the unmistakable image of the most vile and pernicious totalitarian. He revels in his ability to subsume the body politic, converting his citizenry into the tentacles of his personal authority: "Us heu de convertir en els meus ulls i en les meves orelles" (39). He eventually kills Antigone. The play ends with him spitting on her dead body.

The final image of Antigone's desecrated body lying abandoned on an empty stage is a reminder of the many references throughout the play that highlight the semiotic force of the body, especially if not exclusively Polynices's, left to be devoured by wild animals. Antigone is explicit in describing her act of burying her brother—"i aquestes mans petites tenen prou força per cobrir de terra el cos de Polinices"—and in justifying it according to the "llei més sagrada i elemental": "Els morts mereixen el repòs i res del que hagin fet en vida no se'ls ha de retreure quan ja no són entre nosaltres" (32). Antigone links her brother's body to the body politic explicitly, as an iconic reminder of her—of our—unfulfilled moral obligation to the community at large. Broadly speaking, Polynices iconicizes the ethical imperative of historical memory, of ritual and commemoration within the public or social domain. The relevance of these words to Spanish society at the time of this play's premiere in 2003, when Emilio Silva's team was in the early stages of locating and identifying the victims of Spanish state terrorism, could hardly be clearer. The imperative tone of Antigone's direct address brings that relevance sharply into focus.

One of the more original aspects of Coca's *Antígona* is his creation of the "Noi," the anonymous youth whose voice seems choral—he comments on the events from the margins, without partaking of them directly—and through whose eyes the playwright opens a window onto an uncertain future: "Ara vaguem sense nord"; "Diu que ens ofereix la pau, però és una pau estranya i nosaltres, els joves, no l'entenem" (36-37). We are reminded time and again throughout the play that the root cause for this generalized sense of aimlessness has to do with society's silence, a sign of its tacit complicity with authority. Antigone attacks Ismene for her complicit silence, as mentioned above. The Noi observes that Creon's spoken words "acreixen el silenci que ara domina els carrers" (37). Antigone accuses Creon defiantly to his face that the silence he imposes is "criminal" (57). Silence and historical amnesia go hand in hand in these passages. Our future is only as promising as is our resolve to know and address openly our past, Coca seems to imply. Tiresias summarizes these thoughts eloquently in his final speech to Creon, delivered over Antigone's body:

> Viuràs la teva glòria. El teu fill oblidarà això que has fet... Li costarà, però és jove i el temps esborra el pitjor de la nostra memòria si el que volem ès viure... els ciutatdans et lloaran per haver sabut governar. Però dessota de tot això queda un dolor immens, un riu de recel que crexerà sense que t'adonis de res. I això no s'oblida. (63)

"Silence," of course, evokes by opposition the utility of "words," "speech," and "voice" for exacting justice vis-à-vis the past. In the numerous ways in which Coca develops the extended metaphor of a body shrouded in silence and lies, in Antigone's many pleas for breaking that silence, for dignifying truth through the language of commemoration, Coca expands upon a thread that, to one degree or another, transcends the Antigone myth as it has been adapted in Spain over several

decades. His treatment of this problem is among the most emphatic, however, and as mentioned, it references current debates concerning the question of historical memory. The symmetry that Coca and his fellow Catalan, Salvador Espriu, engage in by foregrounding in 1939 and 2002, respectively, the prophesy and memory of a tyranny of silence is striking in this regard. This framework might serve to explain what is most at stake for those writing from the margins and what mechanisms they might develop in accordance with their circumstances in order to resist and undermine authority. More striking yet is the way in which Espriu seems to tell us just that, through his metadramatic appeal to the perlocutionary effect of drama. He achieves this through the voice of the "Lúcid Conseller" who in the final speech of the 1964 version plumbs new, liberating fields of reference as he weaves his spectators into a web of political complicity:

> I què i ha rera les brillants paraules sinò una cadena de fets buits de sentit? I així amollaria un enfilall de conceptes, però cap d'ells ja no evitaria el suplici d'Antígona […] I com establir i repartir, donc amb nítida precisió, des d'aquest movedís nivell comú, responsabilitats i culpes? La responsabilitat, per exemple, del nostre silenci, […] Però callo, perquè m'adono que ens hem quedat sols, i ens cal ajuntar-nos al seguici. I callo també, perquè la lucidesa, que deixa intacta l'acciò i els seus inintelligibles embolics, irrita de seguida tothom, fins i tot el mateix lúcid. I perquè, ben mirat, potser sí que els meus mots representen un perill, però no per a mi que parlo, sinó per a tu que escoltes. (Espriu, *Antígona* [1990] 67-68)

With these words, Espriu concludes his 1964 revised version by projecting a distinctly audacious way of adapting classical myth to the most immediate of realities.

For various reasons, the performance of three Antigones at Mérida's Teatro Romano in the 2011 Festival de Teatro Clásico can be taken as marking a major milestone in Spanish cultural history. One of the performances was Ernesto Caballero's production of Sophocles, but the other two, Miguel Murillo's *Antígona en Mérida* and Emilio del Valle's *La Antígona del siglo XXI*, represent highly modified adaptations that in many ways advance the trend to bend the myth making it speak explicitly to the concerns of its contemporary audience. Murillo's work is particularly emblematic of this practice. The native Extremaduran sets the action in Mérida's Roman Theater in 1936, amidst the arrival of the Fascist army, as Margarita Xirgu is preparing her premiere of Sophocles's *Antígona*. Having inaugurated Mérida's *Festival* in 1933 with her landmark production of Seneca's *Medea*, at the height of Republican euphoria in Spain, with the nation's political leaders in attendance and to resounding critical acclaim, Xirgu did, in fact, plan to follow with *Antigone*, a project that was truncated by the war. Murillo's references to all of this along with his decidedly realistic representation of the war as it was experienced in Mérida have led some critics to praise his work for its didactic value.

Murillo's unrestrained portrayal of 1936 may serve to elucidate a recent trend in Spanish cultural history that bears noting here. As indicated, Silva's 2000 forensic DNA-based incursions into the past pushed the debates concerning historical memory beyond early transition-era imaginative renderings of the war by framing these debates empirically. Andrés Lima's *teatro-documental*, *1936*, which opened recently to a two-month sell-out run at Madrid's Centro Nacional de Teatro-Valle Inclán, is another telling example of this tendency. The 4-hour collaborative recreation of the prelude and consequences of the military insurrection features an

amalgamation of acting and singing, large-scale documentary images, photos and videos, and powerful sound effects, all intended to envelop and thereby immerse the audience to the extent possible in the reality of the 1930s. Like *Antígona en Mérida*, *1936* is loaded with facts. Both plays are patently unmitigated in their fact-based approach.

This coincidence may tell us something as well about Spain's decades-long debates regarding the how and why of collective memory. The staging of these plays in state-subsided venues adds unique meaning to the equation, especially in relation to Antigone's triumph in Mérida. Not that this was the tragedy's first appearance on this stage. The inclusion of Salvador Espriu's, Martín Elizondo's and María Zambrano's plays in the 1986, 1988, and 1992 editions of the festival are important milestones in that they mark the various democracy-era efforts made in support of repatriating *la España peregrina*.[12] What distinguishes 2011 is the magnitude of this concerted effort to center Antigone on the national stage, literally and figuratively, transforming all that was peripheral about this icon of the Spanish post-war into a national *seña de identidad*.

Murillo's contributions in this regard are unique and merit special attention. By locating the dramatic action where the play is in fact being performed—Extremadura—he captures with special force a confusion that is essentially theatrical. Despite any suspension of disbelief, what we see in any performance only appears to be real, much like our memories of the past. The many tricks of the trade implemented to convey this during the 2011 performance—Margarita Xirgu assuming the protagonist's role in the form of a hologram being supreme among them—support the contention that *Antígona en Mérida* celebrates above all the conversion of the Teatro Romano into a national *lieu de mémoire:* a site whose symbolism derives from its enduring power to communicate to a people the importance of its shared past.[13]

The fact that this process unfolds around a classical tragedy set in an ancient theater evokes the broader question of the role of the classical throughout this period. It is important to recall in this regard that the Mérida festival was conceived when nations were busily "inventing [foundational] traditions" (Hobsbawm), symbols and rituals devised in one way or another to seem ancient, while artists and intellectuals of various types were seeking inspiration in Greco-Roman thought and form for works that were decidedly modern. The emergence of Antigone as a prime space for reflection, with Jean Anouilh's and Bertolt Brecht's landmark plays appearing in Nazi-occupied Paris (1944) and postwar Switzerland (1948), may serve to put the Spanish adaptations into the broader perspective of a 20th-century trend. The inspiration that Hannah Arendt found in Sophocles in her essays of the 1950s and 60s may offer a valuable key for unlocking some of the deeper meaning of this phenomenon. As Arendt affirms in *Between Past and Future*, "Greek classical antiquity agreed that the highest form of human life was spent in a polis and that the supreme human capacity was speech" (62). Tragedy for that reason represented for Arendt the supreme example of Attic democracy in practice. In plays such as *Antigone*, Greek authors show how roles and relations are defined through interactions around the unpredictable nodes—paradoxes, dilemmas, contradictions—that emerge within a social network, that define that network and that are essential to our status as a community. This is all enacted, of course, through the language we use to negotiate these social crossroads. This explains the extreme value that Arendt placed upon speech as an action, the beginning—certainly not the conclusion—of a process that opens up onto the unscripted space of a future where a community continues to reinvent itself through deliberative and unbiased interaction.

That Sophocles would have sought to emphasize an open-ended "multiplicity of significations" (Griffith 18) as the

stimulus for opening up and not closing off debate can be seen in various aspects of his play. The fact that a major part of the action unfolds after Antigone's death and ends with Creon's remorseful suffering, a scene that may or may not have elicited pity among his spectators (Griffith 28-29), could, in the end, have something to do with Sophocles's social status. As an esteemed member of the Athenian social elite, Sophocles clearly did not conceive of his work from any sort of periphery, nor did he seem interested in inflecting it toward anything as local, personal, contemporary or predetermined as what we have seen in our cohort of adaptations. This may ultimately offer further support for George Steiner's theory that the tragic vision is something of the bygone past, that what we call tragedy has succumbed under the powerful sway of the modern cult to the rational.[14] As a cohort, Spain's Antigones may in fact illustrate just that: a rupture, a shadow or residue, most of all just a memory.

NOTES

1. Santa María Fernández discusses this in *El teatro de José Bergamín*.

2. These editions are all cited in the bibliography.

3. The articles included in *Primer Acto*'s special edition, *Libro de Antígona*, are all excellent and relevant to the topics discussed here. Regarding the correlations between Galdós and Sophocles in Zambrano's work, see López Arranz.

4. Griffiths provides a precise rendering of Antigone's much cited and diversely translated retort to Creon: "Even if my brothers hate each other, my nature is not such as to join one of them in hating the other, but to join in loving them as they love me" (211). It is interesting to note that, according to this scholar, the terms that Antigone coins to portray her love as essentially familial or collective—"synéchthō" and "symphileō" (to "hate" or "love together")—are uniquely hers ("found nowhere else in classical

Greek"). Griffiths also discusses Antigone's much studied invocation of the "unwritten and unfaltering laws of the gods" (46).

5. "Project" from the Latin, *proicere*, *pro-*, "forward" + *jacere* "to hurl or throw."

6. In a letter that she sent from Havana dated 12 Aug. 1945, María reveals to her sister her work on this new project in the following terms: "Hermana estoy haciendo un ensayo sobre 'Antígona' la figura de la tragedia griega, la hermana que se sacrificaba... Eres tú y va dedicado a ti. Forma parte de un libro que te dedicaré entero" (Cited by Rodríguez Rodríguez 15).

7. The Zambrano family fled Spain on 28 Feb. 1939, just days after Barcelona capitulated. In October of 1940, in Nazi occupied France, the Gestapo arrested Araceli Zambrano's husband, Manuel Muñoz, and extradited him to Spain. Director de Seguridad during the Second Republic, Muñoz was executed in Madrid's Díez Porlier detention center on 1 Dec. 1942. María remained by her sister's side to care for her from 1946, the year their mother died, until Araceli's death in 1972. For further details, see Rodríguez Rodríguez.

8. See Zatlin for a detailed summary of these events.

9. Povill's play draws correlations between the myth and Christian doctrine and was staged in December of 1961 in Olesa de Montserrat, the town where the author taught school, by the Companyia de Teatre de la Passió (Bosch 105). De la Rica's was staged by students enrolled in the acting school he founded in Cuenca in the 1960s. He published it in 1980 in El Toro de Barro, the editorial he founded in 1961 for promoting Manchego authors (Muñoz, "Sorprendente").

10. Salvador Távora's *Cuadra de Sevilla*, founded in 1969, and Radio Televisión Española's documentary series *Rito y geografía del cante*, transmitted from 1971 to 1973 (and followed by *Rito y geografía del baile*), are important examples of this phenomenon.

11. Writing in *Mundo Diario*, one critic (J.C.) refers to the author's "discurso libertario."

12. Such efforts met with uneven success. Madeleine Poujol recounts the sad story of Martín Elizondo's failure to survive in Spain as a playwright after returning from France for the performance of his award-winning *Antígona entre muros*, in the 1988 Mérida festival.

13. The director Helena Pimenta comments on this in a YouTube interview.

14. See in particular Chapter One of his *Death of Tragedy*.

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