

‘¡No quiero!’ Staging Alfonso Reyes’s *Ifigenia cruel* in Francoist Spain (1958)

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Alfonso Reyes’s Ifigenia cruel has long been recognized as a personal hymn of liberation, which adapts Euripides’ Iphigenia in Tauris to the convulsed Mexican shore of the early twentieth century. The dramatic poem Ifigenia cruel by Alfonso Reyes was first performed in Mexico in 1934. The next documented performance, by the company Teatro de Ensayo Escena and directed by Aitor Goiricelaya, took place at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in April 1958 – during Franco’s regime. The purpose of this article is to put the 1958 production on the map of performances of Reyes’s dramatic poem, and thus to fulfil a research niche regarding the scholarly work on this poem, which has traditionally focused on its historical context and literary legacy. Drawing on the Spanish political history of the period, the article reveals a performance history of Ifigenia cruel, which is essential for its reception.

Setting the scene: Greek tragedy and Iphigenia in the 1950s

The audience who gathered on the quiet and balmy evening of May 1954 at the Roman Theatre in Mérida witnessed the very first performance of a Greek tragedy on the emblematic site during Franco’s dictatorship (1939–75). This performance was of José María Pemán’s adaptation of Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, starring Spain’s then stage heartthrob Fernando Rabal in the leading role. As a strict Catholic, who firmly believed in the ability of theatre to instruct the masses, Pemán presented clear-cut Catholic principles in his *Oedipus* to resolve the moral ambiguities of the tragedy.¹ Unsurprisingly, Pemán was a laureate playwright and poet of Franco’s regime, which was ruled by nationalist Catholic ideals. In June 1960, Pemán’s *Oedipus* was revived in Mérida once again with Rabal in the role of the ill-fated king. The state-controlled newsreels, *Noticiarios y Documentales (No-Do)*, compulsorily broadcast in all cinemas, celebrated the lessons of the tragedy. Superimposed over images of the performance, the newsreel’s male voice-over praised the text for condemning the ‘foolish rebelliousness of the mortals’ who confront the ‘predictions’, which for the ancient Greeks were equivalent to ‘God’s providential plans’ in Spain (*No-Do* N° 911B).²

The reception and impact of Pemán’s *Oedipus* illustrate how the widespread propaganda of Franco’s dictatorship was used in all types of media, including monuments, films and the Greek and Roman classics, to spread its hegemonic ideology. In such context, outdoor performances, which aimed to reproduce the

theatre-going experience as a social and cohesive event, were encouraged by the government in emblematic spaces. One of such performances featured Euripides' *Iphigenia* on 3 May 1958 at Plaza del Dos de Mayo in Madrid, in a version by José María Rincón, only two weeks after the performance of Alfonso Reyes's *Ifigenia cruel* at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica (ICH).³ Rincón's adaptation of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* had first been staged at the Gardens of the Universidad Internacional on 31 July 1954, directed by Gustavo Pérez Puig.⁴ On 28 March 1955, it was revived at the Teatro Comedia by the Teatro Popular del Departamento de Cultura de la Delegación Nacional de Educación,⁵ and the same year the production was selected for a campaign to contribute to the diffusion of culture promoted by the local authorities in Madrid.⁶ Three years later, it was staged as part of the May celebrations in Madrid that commemorated the liberation of the city from Napoleonic troops on 2 May 1808. The propagandistic use of the play was manifested in the state's publicity of the performance, which was even more patent in Rincón's statement to the press before the 1955 performance, where he declared how he had emphasized 'la caída de los dioses paganos, la falta de vigencia de una estructura religiosa y política' ('the fall of the pagan deities and the lack of validity of a political and religious structure') in his version of the text.⁷

Besides Pemán's *Oedipus* in Mérida and Rincón's *Iphigenia*, the 1950s witnessed two *ciclos de Teatro griego* (Greek theatre series) in 1955 and 1956, which were put on at the Teatro Griego de Montjuic (built for the 1929 International Exhibition in Barcelona) and directed by the German Dolly Latz, a disciple of Max Reinhardt. These two cycles included *Prometeo*, *Electra*, *Antígona* and *Troyanas* in 1955,⁸ and *Medea*, *Ifigenia*, *Hipólito* and *Agamenón* in 1956,⁹ and were the result of Latz's persuasive negotiations with the local authorities to renovate Barcelona's theatrical scene through the classics with her company Ciudad Condal. Latz introduced the use of scenery for the first time in this venue, which she had imported from the geometrical and stylized Hollywood aesthetic. Her festivals are considered the two best theatre seasons for Greek and Roman tragedy put on in Barcelona at the time.¹⁰ Despite Latz's innovations, her *Ifigenia en Tauride*, in a version by G. Gómez de Mata,¹¹ was far from being able to completely fulfil the aesthetic demands of the intellectuals and student population interested in new forms of *teatro popular* distant from the official grandiloquent open-air performances.¹²

Soon after Pemán translated Sophocles' *Oedipus*, another oft-quoted rendering of this tragedy – the translation by classicist Rodríguez Adrados – was staged by the Teatro Español Universitario (University Theatre Group – TEU) of the Faculty of Arts of Madrid's Universidad Central.¹³ The performance was put on under the umbrella of the First International Conference on Classical Studies held in Spain, on 15–16 April 1955, with music by Joaquín Rodrigo and choreography by Elna and Leif Ornberg, inspired by Greek vases.¹⁴ Adrados's *Oedipus* toured the provinces and was also performed in Mérida in 1956.¹⁵ His account of the translation acknowledges a deliberate response to Pemán's biased, old-fashioned, and baroque rhetoric with a text in verse adapted to modern tastes. Thanks to the spirit of the TEU and the Teatro de Cámara y Ensayo that had appeared by the mid-twentieth century, the performance was possible.¹⁶

The Teatro de Ensayo, which emerged in 1950s Spain, was inspired by the innovative spirit of the Teatro de Cámara, which aimed to experiment with unknown authors and topics inconceivable in the repertoire of commercial circles and the *teatros nacionales*.¹⁷ Related to the Teatro de Ensayo and Teatro de Cámara was the TEU, the third juncture of the theatrical triangle, which was at the forefront of innovation in the Spanish theatre scene. Although both the official sections of the TEU and the Teatro de Cámara y Ensayo were directly sponsored, and therefore controlled, by the state,¹⁸ they also nurtured a pool of academics and young dramatists, such as José Sanchis Sinisterra, who would be responsible for modernizing Spanish theatre in the following decades. The TEU and the Teatro de Ensayo y de Cámara's staging, adaptations and modern refigurations of Greek and Roman dramas put forward aesthetic and political concerns which flouted censorship under the guise of antiquity.¹⁹ As in every autocratic system, Greek and Roman tragedies were adapted, transformed and reinterpreted not only to spread the official creed but also to challenge it.

Barely three years after Rincón's *Ifigenia*, on 11 and 12 April 1958,²⁰ Alfonso Reyes's dramatic poem *Ifigenia cruel* was performed by Teatro de Ensayo 'Escena' in Madrid, directed by Aitor Goiricelaya at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica. The performance of *Ifigenia cruel* at ICH offered a radical aesthetic alternative to that provided to the audience of Rincón's *Ifigenia* at both at the University Gardens and Plaza del Dos de Mayo. With Reyes's unorthodox and pseudo-pacifist rendering of the tragedy, the audience at the Instituto was able to focus on the inner conflict of the heroine rather than on the grandiloquent staging and the state-promoted propaganda of the open-air performance. Therefore, as I shall expound in the next section of this article, the performance of Alfonso Reyes's *Ifigenia cruel* at the ICH allowed the group of theatre people gathered around the Instituto in the late 1950s to experiment with new theatrical forms through Latin American theatre and the classics. Goiricelaya's is the first documented performance of *Ifigenia cruel* in the country that was Reyes's home by the time the dramatic poem was completed.²¹ The aim of this article, therefore, is to put Goiricelaya's staging of *Ifigenia cruel* on the map of performances of Reyes's text and set it against the background of Francoist Spain, where the poem develops new meanings which arise from Reyes's portrayal of its characters as 'mere shadows'.²²

Born in 1889, Alfonso Reyes was the youngest yet greatest exponent of the generation of writers who founded the Ateneo de la Juventud in Mexico in 1910. The Ateneo was a group of intellectuals whose main concern was to reflect upon Mexican culture, and Latin American culture in general, under the umbrella of the humanist ideas that confronted the positivism that was supported by the dictatorial government of President Porfirio Díaz.²³ *Cuestiones Estéticas* (1911), Reyes's first book, foreshadowed the foundational elements of the group of *ateneístas* that pervade his works: a profound interest in classical culture, literary theory and Spanish, French, English and Mexican literature.²⁴ Only two years after the publication of *Cuestiones Estéticas*, on 9 February 1911, Reyes's father, General Bernardo Reyes, was killed by sub-machine-gun fire in the uprising against Francisco Madero. Consequently, Reyes went into exile and resided in Spain between 1914 and 1924, when he published *Ifigenia cruel*.²⁵

Set in Tauris, Reyes's *Ifigenia* is the slaughterer and priestess of Artemis who suffers from amnesia and is incapable of remembering the violent past of her lineage; only when her brother Orestes and cousin Pilades arrive on the shores of Tauris does she recall these bloodstained memories of her past. After the *anagnorisis*, Orestes urges her to return to Mycenae, marry and propagate their lineage, which she rejects; contrary to preceding versions of the myth, Reyes's *Ifigenia* refuses to return to Aulis to perpetuate the cycle of violence of her saga. Recent interpretations of *Ifigenia cruel* have related it to the Mexican neo-Hellenism of the early twentieth century and the new conceptualization of America during that period.²⁶ The intersecting point between such kaleidoscopic readings of the poem is the sad and traumatic death of Bernardo Reyes in 1913, which scholars agree was a crucial influence for *Ifigenia's* stance in *Ifigenia cruel*.

The imprint of violence and its aftermath in the Reyes family was undoubtedly the key for the conciliatory Mexican *Ifigenia*. Reyes demythologizes the tragic heroine and transforms the myth into an 'abstraction' that not only accounts for Agamemnon's daughter but also illustrates the experience of any 'Juana González' or 'Jane Doe'.²⁷ The posthumously published *Oración del 9 de febrero*, written in Buenos Aires in 1930, when Bernardo Reyes would have celebrated his eightieth birthday, is essential to understand Reyes's rejection of violence in his quest to overcome the sense of a void after the death of his father. Reyes chooses to ignore any vengeful impulse or any feelings of rancour that might enslave him to revenge his loss. An exceedingly visual metaphor that Reyes extends in *Oración* encapsulates his standpoint: 'I did as one who is bitten by a viper and cuts his finger with the stroke of a machete'.²⁸ Harshly criticized and misunderstood by the intellectuals who dedicated their literary efforts to Mexican politics, Reyes's moderate position was echoed in some of the highbrow Spanish circles of the early twentieth century, which he frequented between 1914 and 1924, when he finished *Ifigenia cruel*.²⁹ Nonetheless, as we shall see next, Reyes's abstraction is precisely what inspired Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo to include *Ifigenia cruel* in what could be considered the first collective impulse to disseminate Latin American theatre in Francoist Spain at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica.

Staging Alfonso Reyes's *Ifigenia cruel* in Spain

The staging of *Ifigenia cruel* by Escena was part of the series of Latin American drama organized by Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in Madrid, which aimed to disseminate the works of both emerging and reputed Latin American authors. The company's activity followed that initiated by the Teatro Experimental Hispanoamericano, which was formed by Latin American students who promoted the novelties of Latin American playwrights on the stage of the ICH.³⁰ The series was directed toward the learned audience of the university: mostly students linked to Latin America, theatre critics and intellectuals of the time, and its documented stagings reveal the avant-gardist standpoint of the works selected for the performances.³¹

The cycle of Latin American drama at the Instituto was promoted by Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo at the Colegio Mayor Hispanoamericano Nuestra Señora Guadalupe,

where he began the arduous task of disseminating works by Latin American playwrights in Spain and Europe, for which he earned his reputation as director and critic.³² Suárez Radillo was a Cuban playwright who first set foot in Spain in 1952 with a scholarship granted by the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica to strengthen the cultural links between Spain and Latin America. A second grant in 1957 settled the theatrical career of Suárez Radillo in Spain, where, after a tour of the provinces with José Tamayo and the professional company Amadeo Vives, he took up the management of the theatre at Colegio Guadalupe, where he gathered 'un nuevo grupo de juglares españoles y latinoamericanos que pasaban temporadas en España' ('a new group of Spanish and Latin American minstrels who used to spend some time in Spain').³³ As Suárez Radillo explains in his memoirs, when Alfredo Sánchez Bella asked him '¿Quieres volver a España?' ('Would you like to come back to Spain?'), his immediate response was: 'Sí, mañana mismo, a hacer teatro' ('Yes, tomorrow, to do theatre').³⁴ It was at the suggestion of Jose María Álvarez Romero, former headmaster of the college, that Suárez Radillo developed his project at the Colegio Mayor Guadalupe.³⁵ The college's headmaster, Joaquín Campillo Carrillo, was an ardent theatre enthusiast. Together they would put on an unusual repertoire that included some of the best-known and innovative Latin American playwrights of the time.³⁶ Campillo was so inspired by his project that he refurbished the college's chapel to transform it into *un teatro real*.³⁷

Cuba was Suárez-Radillo's home country and also an important ally for Francoist cultural politics in the 1950s;³⁸ therefore it is not surprising that a week devoted to Cuban theatre was programmed between 25 and 29 March 1958, barely ten days before the premiere of Reyes's text at the ICH.³⁹ One year earlier, in June 1957, *Los siervos*, by the Cuban writer Virgilio Piñera, was read in front of an audience at the Instituto together with *La perrera*, and also directed by Aitor Goiricelaya.⁴⁰ In *Los siervos*, Piñera condemns the power relations of supposed egalitarian regimes under the guise of the absurd and focuses on the communism which threatened the Cuban government at the time. As such, it provided the perfect backdrop for deliberating political issues unexpected in other circles. On the whole, Suárez Radillo counts as many as twenty-three plays by Latin American playwrights who attracted Madrid theatre critics to Ciudad Universitaria for the first time and is fascinated by the common ethos of Latin American theatre at the time: 'El hombre, el hombre que busca la verdad de su destino, que intenta trazar un camino para él y sus semejantes' ('Man, the man who searches after the truth of his destiny, who tries to open a path for himself and his fellow men').⁴¹ In his memoirs, Suárez Radillo recalls that his aim was to 'viajar por toda Sudamérica desde el Colegio Mayor' ('travel all through South America from the Colegio Mayor') and that this was so well received by critics that they granted his stagings 'la misma atención y el mismo espacio que los de una compañía profesional que actuara en el centro de Madrid' ('the same attention and space in the newspapers as those granted to any professional company acting at the very centre of Madrid').⁴² In fact, the 1957–8 season of experimental theatre was the first in Spain to be praised by critics and audiences for its quality.⁴³

The politics of the Colegio Guadalupe – founded on 30 March 1947 to educate university students from Latin America in Spain under the premises of Christian

humanism⁴⁴ – were those of the institution which patronized it: the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, where *Ifigenia cruel* was staged. The Instituto, founded in April of the same year, responded to the interests of the regime's Foreign Office in strengthening the political relations between Spain and Latin America under the apparent guise of common and depoliticized cultural aspirations. The reality was, however, far different. The Instituto promoted actions in every cultural sphere to consolidate a Hispanic community of nations with Spain at its forefront. This would eventually unfreeze the diplomatic relations of Spain with the rest of Europe after the Second World War and transplant the cultural ties of the various countries involved to a political arena.⁴⁵ One overriding aim in this process was the evangelization of culture. Among the various cultural activities carried out under the umbrella of the Instituto there were exhibitions, concerts, conferences, performances by both amateur and professional companies, and the promotion of publications on Americanist topics such as the institution's journal, *Mundo Hispánico*.⁴⁶ These activities, more often than not, involved intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic and had widespread coverage in the media, including the *No-Do*.

Within such a context, Alfonso Reyes's *Ifigenia cruel* was put on at the ICH on 11 and 12 April 1958, coinciding with the fourth year in which Reyes had been nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature.⁴⁷ Archival material on the production is held by the Centro de Documentación Teatral (CDT) and also by Biblioteca Hispánica (Aecid), which has recently catalogued and digitized a valuable sound recording probably from the performance by the same cast broadcast on the *Altavoz de Cultura Hispánica* radio programme.⁴⁸ Photographs, reviews and the score of the production from the private collection by Goiricelaya have recently been donated to Eresbil (Archivo Vasco de la Música) and the Archivo de Mungia (Bizcaia) from the director's private collection.⁴⁹ A photograph of the performance from the private collection of the actor Carlos Ballesteros – who played the role of Orestes – held by the Centro de Documentación Teatral (CDT) in Madrid evinces how Goiricelaya chose a minimalist staging to focus on the power of Reyes's text in contrast with the bombastic open-air performance of Rincón's *Ifigenia*.⁵⁰ The modest and classically inspired costumes of the two male characters in the image – most likely Orestes and Pylades – add to the visual simplicity of the performance. No explicit reference is made either to the costumes or to the staging of the poem in *Ifigenia cruel*. Yet Reyes's interpretation of classical myths as 'mere shadows' representing the essential nature of humankind provides hints to Goiricelaya's approach.⁵¹ Indeed, as Goiricelaya announced in the show's programme, he chose to put on a 'colloquium of shadows' with 'hieratic performers', following the line of Reyes's ideas on tragedy.⁵² The objective was, as Goiricelaya claimed, to avoid the explicitness and old principles which diminished the Spanish popular theatre of the period.

Reyes's 1908 approach to the Greek tragedy *Electra* anticipates the style of *Ifigenia cruel*, where the individual accounts for the universal. Commenting on the classical *Electra*, Reyes argued that Greek tragedy is a mere reflection of universal tragedy and that the tragic poet necessarily ought to express this by shaping human types:

Los personajes de la tragedia helénica son como pantallas que paran y que muestran a los ojos las imágenes que el haz luminoso de la cámara oscura se llevaba, invisiblemente, por el aire. Los hombres de la tragedia helénica no alientan con vida real: son contornos y son sombras de seres, conciencias que cavilan, y voluntades que obran fatalmente. En su voluntad, los Destinos se manifiestan; y sus conciencias reciben esta manifestación universal.

(The characters in the Hellenic tragedy are like screens, which freeze and show to the eye the images that the luminous beam of the camera obscura transported invisibly through the air. Men in Hellenic tragedy do not breathe with real life: they are outlines, shadows of beings, consciences that deliberate and wills that act fatefully.)⁵³

Reyes's recurring image of the tragic characters as 'deliberating consciences' was quoted by Goiricelaya in the programme for the 1958 production, in an attempt to evoke Reyes's own account of the poem, where he equated Electra and Iphigenia by levelling the universal abstraction of their experiences:

Mi parodia no tiene escenario muy definido, ni retrata tipos sociales, ni alardea con los pueriles encantos del color local. Sus caracteres mismos muy posible es que sean meras sombras de seres cargados con una misión ética. Fueron concebidos con sencillez. Unos frente a otros, suscitan conflictos ... pero, en sí mismos, viven bajo la complicidad de sus corazones. En tal sentido, la obra es una alegoría moral.

(My parody does not have a well-defined stage; it does not portray social stereotypes nor boasts about the puerile charms of local colour. The characters in the play might very possibly be mere shadows of human beings charged with an ethical mission. They were imagined unaffected. They raise conflicts by facing one another ... and, in their inner selves, they also live following the complexity of their hearts. In this sense, the play is a moral allegory.)⁵⁴

As such, with *Ifigenia cruel*, 'Our Greece' (*Nuestra Grecia*), the motto of the Mexican *ateneístas* (the intellectual group Reyes joined during the first decades of the twentieth century to reinvent the cultural arena of pre-revolutionary Mexico) is no longer Mexican alone, nor even Latin American, but universal. And Reyes's symbolic approach to the myth, therefore, transplants Ifigenia's peaceful rebellion to the context of any modern conflict – in this case the context of Francoist Spain of the late 1950s. For this purpose, Reyes weaves a text devoid of localisms that illustrates the universality of the experience of the offspring who aims to put an end to a violent family past.

There is no evidence of an adapted text for the performance, and the sound recording of the play broadcast in *Altavoz* follows the original dramatic poem verbatim. Hence it is very likely that *Ifigenia cruel* was staged without being blue-pencilled.⁵⁵ The setting is, as Teja argues, a naked and basic landscape, a space for the soul.⁵⁶ Reyes makes little reference to the specific scenery of the Mexican shore, and the spatial directions in the poem are limited. The action combines indoor and outdoor scenes, which is only deducible from the dialogue, with the exception of

a single example: *Ifigenia's* final exit from the stage into the temple, which explicitly confronts Orestes' departure to the sunset shore. Reyes's only other stage-setting direction is written at the very outset, where the author sets the symbolical frame for his story: 'Tarde. Costa de Táuride. Cielo, Mar. Playa, Bosque, Templo, Plaza: empieza la ciudad' ('Afternoon. Coast of Tauris. Sky, sea. Beach, forest, temple, square: the city begins').⁵⁷ The bare stage in the 1958 production emphasizes the universality of the setting, which was probably only created by the work by José Manuel Gallardo with the use of auditorium lighting.

Furthermore, and in contrast to Reyes's women-only Chorus, the Chorus directed by Goiricelaya was interpreted by both male and female performers.⁵⁸ Plausible hypotheses on the nature of this Chorus span a wide range of possibilities. A pragmatic interpretation of a mixed Chorus relies on the number of actors and actresses in the company and eludes any political construal. On the other hand, a more sociopolitical analysis might see Goiricelaya's deviation from the text as another attempt to universalize the experience of the characters involved. The performance also added a new character – the *Narrador* (Narrator) – who, as evidenced in the sound recording of the play, read the few stage directions contained in the text and emphasized the detachment from the audience.

The show was preceded by a eulogistic speech on Reyes by José María Souvirón,⁵⁹ a well-known Spanish writer who was involved with the Instituto having spent a large part of his life in Chile. Since 1953, Souvirón had worked on the cultural agenda of the Instituto as chief representative of cultural exchanges (*jefe de intercambios culturales*).⁶⁰ Souvirón, a fervent Catholic, worked on the manuscript for *Compromiso y deserción: el problema del mal en la literatura del siglo XX* while *Ifigenia cruel* was being staged at the Instituto in 1958. *Compromiso y deserción* is a collection of essays in comparative literature, which was released in 1959 and served as Souvirón's own political and literary manifesto. In this work, Souvirón deals with the twentieth-century transformation of the arts and humankind and the dangers of surrendering to evil forces that corrupt the spirit. Consequently, Reyes's pseudo-pacifist text must have necessarily attracted the attention of Souvirón for his political commitment to the use of literature to escape demonic iniquity.

Indeed, *Ifigenia cruel* is rife with oblique political references written from the standpoint of an intellectual who is only distantly involved in his homeland conflict. The spirit of concord transmitted in *Ifigenia cruel*, together with Reyes's willing rejection of vengeance⁶¹ – of *vendetta*, as he himself states – opened new and antagonistic interpretations of the poem in the 1958 performance. On the one hand, *Ifigenia's* rejection of her violent past chimed with the official discourses of social reconciliation launched by the regime to justify post-war persecutions of Republicans. If the Spanish Civil War was a legitimate crusade against Marxism from the perspective of the Nationalist forces, the regime was obliged to perpetuate the dominance of National Catholicism.⁶² On the other hand, *Ifigenia's* non-violent reconciliation spoke to Spanish intellectuals in exile whose works were not contingent on fighting Franco's regime, and to those who demanded a peaceful reconciliation to make amends with Spain's violent past (let us remember that *Altavoz* was broadcast

in Latin America and therefore within reach of Spanish intellectuals in exile). As Reyes's alter ego, the Mexican *Ifigenia* integrates her micro-history of dissent into the macro-history of the contemporary democracies that have had to face the complex conundrum of whether to confront their past or to forget it.⁶³ For that reason, *Ifigenia*'s rejection of her blood-stained fate could have easily been transplanted to the anguished voices that resonated in the Spanish university rooms of the 1950s:

Robarás una voz, rescatarás un eco;
un arrepentimiento, no un deseo.
Llévate entre las manos, cogidas con tu ingenio,
estas dos conchas huecas de palabras; ¡*No quiero!*⁶⁴

(You will steal a voice and rescue an echo;
Remorse, not a wish.
Take in your hands, clasped with your wit,
These two hollow shells empty of words; *I refuse!*)

Ifigenia's rejection is linked to the innovative portrayal of a compassionate and wise king in the figure of Toas, who gives refuge to the exiled *Ifigenia*. The Mexican Toas must have certainly been the object of interesting parallels with Mexican presidents since Lázaro Cárdenas, who never recognized the legitimacy of Franco's regime and opened the country to the Republican Spanish intellectuals who had fled from the dictatorship. The Colegio de Méjico was one of the many institutions which provided refuge to reputed scientists, scholars and artists persecuted by Franco in Spain.⁶⁵ First established in 1940 and following its predecessor Casa de España, it became a respected centre of learning and research as an initiative of President Lázaro Cárdenas. In 1958, when *Ifigenia cruel* was running at the Instituto in Madrid, Alfonso Reyes presided over the Colegio. In this context, Toas's appeal to *Ifigenia* to do away with her resentment ('Mata el rencor, e incéndiate de gozo', 'Kill your resentment and burn with joy'), as well as *Ifigenia*'s own words when the memories of her violent past come to her mind, must have positively echoed in the minds of an audience all too familiar with political exile:

Huyo, porque me siento
Cogida por cien crímenes al suelo.
Huyo de mi recuerdo y de mi historia,
como yegua que intenta salirse de su sombra.

(I escape because I feel
Tied up to the ground for a hundred crimes.
I escape from my memory and my history,
As a mare who flies from its own shadow.)⁶⁶

The last words that the Chorus addresses to *Iphigenia* also reverberate as a liberating alternative,⁶⁷ which releases Agamemnon's daughter from her vengeful *fatum*:

ya abriste pausa en los destinos, donde
brinca la fuente de tu libertad.
(you opened a pause in destinies, where
The source of your freedom leaps.)⁶⁸

At the beginning of this article, I addressed the importance of the open-air performances in the post-war period as Francoist propaganda. As discussed above, in contrast with such spectacular theatrical events, and the professional and established companies in the *teatros nacionales* (the official theatres controlled by the state), small dramatic societies, which usually operated in small venues with learned audiences, searched for new forms and themes to modernize Spanish theatre. Within such a context, Reyes's intimist appropriation of the classics easily found its way to a university audience thirsting for literary and dramatic innovations. Also, when Carmina Santos, the actress who played *Ifigenia*, exclaimed '¡No quiero!' ('I don't want to!'),⁶⁹ conflicting recollections of Spain's present and recent political past might have resonated in the minds of the audience at the ICH. Reyes's text, together with Goiricelaya's 'hieratic performers', could accommodate the discourse of both Nationalists and Republicans through the ambivalent political interpretations of its characters. On the one hand, Reyes's 'shadows' allowed the play to be aligned with Francoist predicaments regarding reconciliation and were, therefore, determinant in relieving the play of any censorship and include it in the programme of Latin American plays at the ICH. On the other hand, *Ifigenia*'s poetic dissidence could conceal the discourse of the Spanish Republican intellectuals in exile willing to forget their homeland's violent past. In any case, Reyes's symbolic writing was key to introducing the text into university rooms, which served as a catalyst of Latin American theatre in Francoist Spain. It also participated in the fresh impetus that Spanish *teatro popular* needed and built the aesthetic fabric that would pave the way for the emergence of the *teatro independiente*.

Conclusions: *Iphigenia* with consequences

Ragué Arias suggests that *Antigone* is the most popular tragic character throughout the twentieth century in Spain. The character's success, she argues, is rooted in its inherent dichotomies, which served the purposes of both Nationalists and Republicans in the post-war period.⁷⁰ As illustrated above, *Iphigenia*, even if not as regular as *Antigone*, was also appropriated by the regime to spread the principles of its National Catholicism in open-air performances. Yet ambivalent readings of Goiricelaya's 1958 staging of *Ifigenia cruel* transform the inner tribulations of its main character into a blank state which may be written over by the two sides of the conflict.

Some critics have disputed the performativity of Reyes's dramatic poem due to its statism.⁷¹ Arguably enough, this might be why the text was not so widely received in the commercial circles of the Spanish theatrical scene, despite the efforts to preserve the legacy of Alfonso Reyes by the Instituto Cervantes.⁷² Nevertheless, this does not explain why it has been in Latin America, that, beyond the obvious support of the national poet in Mexico, *Ifigenia cruel* is usually part of the repertoire of both

amateur and established companies.⁷³ A case in point is Héctor Azar's production with the Centro de Arte Dramático AC (CADAC) at the Colegio de Méjico in 1978,⁷⁴ which took place only three years after Franco's death and coincided with the passing of the Spanish Constitution.

A less down-to-earth rationale takes us to the *raison d'être* of the 1958 production. The year *Ifigenia cruel* set foot in Spain at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, various theatrical groups from the TEU and Teatro de Cámara relied on Greek tragedy to speak about the appalling reality of a silenced country that was gradually awakening from a profound cultural slumber. The all-pervasive ideology of reconciliation that underlines *Ifigenia cruel* favours opposite interpretations, which seemed to have been tailored for the political arena in which it was first performed in Spain. This brings us back to the central thesis with which I opened this article, that Reyes's *Ifigenia cruel* develops new and antagonistic meanings set against the background of Francoist Spain, allowing *Ifigenia's* shadows to speak for any modern post-war context.

Apropos of Manuel Bayo's *Ahora en Tebas*, which was first staged at the Teatro Micalet in Valencia in 1963, Sanchis Sinisterra claimed that there is no supernatural force determining the destinies of the characters in the tragedy⁷⁵ – only the actions of men and women unfolding a plot in which every specific act of their existence comes from an equally specific cause. Therefore it is all a matter of history, not of mythology.⁷⁶ Perhaps it was the weight of history that overshadowed its mythology. Perhaps it was the personal history of the poet and the general history of a whole country that consigned the performance of the 'colloquium of shadows' to oblivion in post-Francoist Spain. On the other hand, perhaps not. And for this reason, new scholarly work on the performance history of Reyes's dramatic poem is needed to understand the consequences of his *¡no quiero!* The rationale is put forward in this article, which puts the 1958 production on the map. Yet such a map only isolated voices have explored,⁷⁷ and it still remains an uncharted landscape of meanings to decipher.

NOTES

- 1 For a thorough analysis of Pemán's uses of Greek tragedy see, for example, María José Ragué Arias, *Lo que fue Troya* (Madrid: Asociación de Autores de Teatro, 1992), pp. 55–62.
- 2 Pemán also put on *La Orestíada* in Mérida in 1959. See 'Autocrítica', *ABC*, 16 June 1959, pp. 62–3.
- 3 The play was featured in the well-known television show *Estudio 1*, also directed by Gustavo Pérez Puig in 1968. The 1958 open-air performance was put on by the Teatro Popular de Educación, which was founded in 1952 as the Teatro Popular Universitario by Gustavo Pérez Puig, the stage director of the performance. The company toured Spain, funded by the Departamento de Cultura de la Delegación Nacional de Educación. See José María Díaz-Regañón López, 'Los trágicos griegos en España', *Anales de la Universidad de Valencia*, 29, 3 (1955), pp. 4–374, here p. 317.
- 4 *Boletín de la Dirección General de Archivos y Bibliotecas*, 21, (1954), p. 9.
- 5 Eduardo Pérez-Rasilla, 'La situación del teatro universitario en España desde 1939 a 1967', in Luciano García Lorenzo, ed., *Aproximación al Teatro Español Universitario (TEU)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), pp. 31–54, here p. 36. The Teatro Popular was a company of young performers, most of them university students, directed by Gustavo Pérez Puig.
- 6 *Ateneo: Las ideas, las artes y las letras*, 86, 1 (August 1955), p. 8.
- 7 'Autocrítica de "Ifigenia"', obra que el Teatro Popular estrenará mañana por la noche en la comedia', *ABC*, 27 March 1955, p. 54.

- 8 Díaz-Regañón López, 'Los trágicos griegos en España', p. 355.
- 9 *Hola* (Barcelona), 21 July 1956, p. 26. Note that the *Teatro Griego de Montjuic* was home to Xirgu's *Medea*.
- 10 Antoni Bueso, 'La posada en escena de la tragedia a Catalunya: un breu repàs', *Assaig de Teatre*, 1, (1994), pp. 103–11.
- 11 *La Vanguardia*, 15 July 1956, p. 27.
- 12 See Jerónimo López Mozo, 'El teatro de Osvaldo Dragón en España', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 591 (1999), pp. 115–18.
- 13 The leading role was this time performed by Anastasio Alemán.
- 14 Díaz-Regañón López, 'Los trágicos griegos en España', p. 355.
- 15 Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, 'Noticias sobre traducciones al español del drama griego: Mi papel en este movimiento', in José María Nieto Ibáñez, ed., *Lógos Hellenikós: Homenaje al Profesor Gaspar Morucho Gayo* (León: Universidad de León, 2003), pp. 26–39, here p. 38.
- 16 See César De Vicente Hernando, 'Los teatros de cámara y ensayo: un espacio de negociación estética para la posguerra', *ADE Teatro*, 84 (2001), pp. 38–45; and Víctor Valembois, 'El teatro de cámara en la posguerra española (Su importancia, su fuerza, su debilidad)', *Segismundo: Revista hispánica de teatro*, 12, 23–4 (1976), pp. 173–99.
- 17 See *Historia de los Teatros Nacionales 1939–1962* (Madrid: Centro de Documentación Teatral, 1993).
- 18 Cristina Santolaria Solano, 'El teatro no profesional en la década de los 60: el camnio hacia el teatro independiente', *Teatro: Revista de estudios teatrales*, 11 (1997), pp. 193–209.
- 19 Carmen Morenilla, *Mitos griegos en el teatro español* (Valencia: Cátedra de Eméritos, 2006), pp. 37–8. Another remarkable example is the performance of Euripides' *Hippolitus*, freely adapted by the student Enrique Vila Selma, which was staged at the auditorium of the University of Valencia on 23 January 1955. See Díaz-Regañón López, 'Los trágicos griegos en España', p. 317.
- 20 'Representación de *Ifigenia cruel*', *ABC*, 11 April 1958, morning edn, p. 55. The sources consulted agree in identifying the first performance of *Ifigenia cruel* in Mexico in 1934. For an analysis of Reyes's *Ifigenia* in the 2014 production of the Mexican National Theatre see Lorna Shaughnessy, 'Staging Alfonso Reyes's *Ifigenia cruel*: The Challenges of Multi-layered Narrative, Poetry, and Anti-theatricality', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 19, 1 (2019), pp. 135–55.
- 21 For the influence of Spain in Reyes's work see, for example Jerónimo Mallo, 'España en la obra literaria de Alfonso Reyes', *Hispania*, 43, 2 (1960), pp. 153–7.
- 22 Alfonso Reyes, 'Comentario a la *Ifigenia Cruel*', in *Obras Completas de Alfonso Reyes*, Vol. X (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1959), pp. 315–59, here p. 354.
- 23 Horacio Legrás, 'El Ateneo y los orígenes del estado ético en México', *Latin American Research Review*, 38, 2 (2003), pp. 34–60, here p. 35; Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, 'Vanguardia y campo literario: la Revolución Mexicana como apertura estética', *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana*, 33, 66 (2007), pp. 187–206, here p. 187.
- 24 Laura Navarrete Maya and Aurora Maura Ocampo, 'Reyes, Alfonso', in Aurora Maura Ocampo, ed., *Diccionario de escritores mexicanos, siglo XX*, Vol. VII, Part 1 (México: Universidad Nacional de Méjico, 2004), pp. 162–201, here p. 162.
- 25 As late as 1926, the 1924 Biblioteca Calleja edition of the poem was reviewed in Spain in the newspaper *El Sol*, 4 February 1926, p. 1.
- 26 See Robert T. Conn, 'Americanismo Andante: Alfonso Reyes and the 1930s', *Latin American Literary Review*, 23 (1995), pp. 83–98; and César A. Salgado, 'El periplo de la paideia: Joyce, Lezama, Reyes y el neohelenismo hispanoamericano', *Hispanic Review*, 69, 1 (2001), pp. 72–83. For a further account of Reyes and classics see, for example, Sheila Yvonne Carter, "'Ifigenia cruel': obra dramática de Alfonso Reyes', in Alan M. Gordon and Evelyn Rugg, eds., *Actas del Sexto Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1980), pp. 165–8; Susana Quintanilla, 'Dioniso en México o cómo leyeron nuestros clásicos a los clásicos griegos', *Historia Mexicana*, 51, 3 (2002), pp. 610–63; and Harold Alvarado Tenorio, 'Alfonso Reyes', *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, 19 (1990), pp. 207–11.

- 27 Reyes, 'Comentario', p. 351.
- 28 'Pero hice como el que, picado de víbora, se corta el dedo de un machetazo'. Alfonso Reyes, 'Oración del 9 de febrero', in *Obras completas de Alfonso Reyes*, Vol. XXIV (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990), p. 29.
- 29 See Barbara B. Aponte, 'A Dialogue between Alfonso Reyes and José Ortega y Gasset', *Hispania*, 49, 1 (1966), pp. 36–43; and Barbara B. Aponte, *Alfonso Reyes and Spain: His Dialogue with Unamuno, Valle-Inclán, Ortega y Gasset, Jiménez, and Gómez de la Serna* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972). The range of philosophers and writers who left an imprint on Reyes's dramatic poem, which has been thoroughly analysed by scholars, also include Valle-Inclán, Mallarmé, Flaubert, Paul Valéry and, of course, Goethe. See Ottmar Ette, "'Una minúscula Grecia para nuestro uso': Mito griego, identidad mexicana y vanguardia latinoamericana en Alfonso Reyes', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 72, 3 (1995), pp. 327–43; Paulette Patout, 'Reminiscences Valeriennes dans "Ifigenia cruel" d'Alfonso Reyes', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 52, 2 (1978), pp. 416–37; and Alfonso Reyes, 'My Debt to Goethe', *Books Abroad*, 23, 4 (1949), pp. 346–9.
- 30 The group's first production was *La mentira* by José de Jesús Martínez. See the review by Alfredo Malquerie, *ABC* (Madrid), 18 February 1955. The group was linked to the Asociación Cultural Iberoamericana de Madrid and renovated its board in 1956, *ABC*, 21 March 1956, morning edn, p. 47.
- 31 Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, '5 años de teatro hispanoamericano', *Mundo Hispánico*, 185 (1963), pp. 43–7.
- 32 See Carmen Márquez-Montes, 'Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, un juglar de ambas orillas: In memoriam', *Latin American Theatre Review*, 36, 2 (2003), pp. 171–4.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 171.
- 34 Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, *El mar ... y más allá del mar: Recuerdos de viajes* (Madrid: Editorial Alpuerto, 1986), p. 229.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 245.
- 36 Contemporary reviews record that among the repertoire, for example, was the Argentinian *El delantero centro murió al amanecer* by Agustín Guzzani and *El gesticulador* by the Mexican Roberto Usigli. *ABC*, 25 May 1958, p. 107; *ABC*, 14 December 1958, p. 110.
- 37 Suárez Radillo, *El mar*, p. 281.
- 38 Katia Figueredo Cabrera, 'Cuba, la siempre fiel: Impronta cubana en el Instituto de Cultura Hispánica de Madrid, 1947–1958', *Illes i Imperis*, 19 (2017), pp. 169–91.
- 39 The plays programmed for the week included *Scherzo* by Eduardo Manet, *Funeral* by María Álvarez Ríos, *Parque Bar* by Raúl González de Cascorro, *Mañana es una palabra* by Nora Badía, and *Una vieja postal descolorida* by Fermín Borges. C. M. Suárez Radillo, *De Nuevo el mar ... y siempre más allá: Recuerdos de viajes y de teatro* (Madrid: Editorial Alpuerto, S.S., 1988), p. 18. See 'Informaciones teatrales y cinematográficas', *ABC*, 26 March 1958, p. 61, for a review of the series.
- 40 The play was also directed by Aitor Goiricelaya. A debate was organized after the performance with the Peruvian playwright Salazar Bondy, the Nicaraguan José de Jesús Martínez, the actress María Victoria Salinas (Teatro Experimental Universidad de Chile) and José Moraleda, director of the Escena company. 'Lectura de una obra teatral cubana', *ABC*, 27 June 1957, morning edn, p. 61. *Los siervos* was first published in the journal *Ciclón*, 1–6 November 1955, pp. 9–27; Piñera had visited Greek and Roman drama in *Electra Garrigó*, an overt criticism of the Cuban bourgeoisie. See Ricardo Lobato Morchón, *El teatro del absurdo en Cuba, 1948–1968* (Madrid: Verbum, 2002), p. 113. *Electra Garrigó* was first staged at the Valdés Rodríguez theatre in Havana in 1948. Conceived as a satire of the Cuban middle classes, in *Electra Garrigó* Piñera put Agamenón Garrigó, Clitemnestra Pla, Egisto Don, Orestes, and Electra together in the house of a bourgeois Cuban family. Contrary to Reyes's *Ifigenia*, Piñera's *Electra* integrates classical referents with cultural localisms (for example, Orestes poisons Clytemnestra with a papaya).
- 41 Suárez Radillo, '5 años', p. 43.
- 42 Suárez Radillo, *De Nuevo el mar*, p. 19.
- 43 Manuel Muñoz Carabantes, *Puesta en escena y recepción del teatro clásico y medieval en España (desde 1939 a nuestros días)* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1992), p. 111.

- 44 'Creación del Colegio Mayor "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe"', *Revista de Indias*, 8 (1947), pp. 259–61, here p. 259.
- 45 Antonio Cañellas Mas, 'Las políticas del Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, 1947–1953', *Historia Actual Online*, 33 (2014), pp. 77–91.
- 46 For a full account of the institution's editorial policies, see *La huella editorial del Instituto de Cultura Hispánica* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre Tavera, 2003).
- 47 Reyes was a candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature in 1949, 1953, 1956, 1958 and 1959 but he never won the prize. Ángel del Río was nominator for Alfonso Reyes in 1958.
- 48 *Altavoz de Cultura Hispana* was a radio programme which was broadcast to Latin America and the Philippines under the auspices of the ICH.
- 49 Thanks are due to the archivists at Aecid and Eresbil (in particular to Fé Piquero and Pello Leñena) for their generosity and invaluable help with the archives.
- 50 The photograph is undated yet entitled '*Ifigenia cruel*'. After inquiries made at various archives, including the CDT, it can be safely argued that the picture was taken during either the rehearsals or the performances of the play in 1958. No permissions were granted to publish the photograph in this article.
- 51 Reyes, 'Comentario', p. 354.
- 52 Programa, Eresbil, Archivo Vasco de la Música, Fondo A189/B-12, Aitor45.
- 53 Alfonso Reyes, 'Las tres *Electras* del teatro ateniense', in *Obras completas de Alfonso Reyes*, Vol. I (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1955), pp. 15–48, here p. 48.
- 54 Reyes, 'Comentario', p. 354.
- 55 The company used the original version of the text. A revised third edition was published in *Obra poética* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1952). This is also the edition reproduced in Alfonso Reyes, *Teatro Completo de Alfonso Reyes* (Monterrey, NL: Secretaría de Educación y Cultura, Instituto de la Cultura de Nuevo León, 1989). The variations between the two texts, which are very few, for the most part concern single words.
- 56 Ada María Teja, '*Ifigenia cruel* de Alfonso Reyes, el poder femenino de romper el círculo de la violencia', *Revista del Cesla*, 6 (2004), pp. 237–73, here p. 241.
- 57 Alfonso Reyes, *Ifigenia cruel* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 2009), p. 4.
- 58 These were África Martín, Concepción Álvarez-Mon, Paquita Fajardo, Delia Zantallón, Carlos Villafranca, Luis González and Víctor Ruiz Ortiz. *Arriba*, 12 April 1958, p. 21.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 José de las Casas Pérez, 'Hacia el predominio de la cultura española en América', *ABC*, 15 December 1953, morning edn, p. 3.
- 61 See Francisco Barrenechea, 'At the Feet of the Gods: Myth, Tragedy and Redemption in Alfonso Reyes' *Ifigenia cruel*', *Romance Quarterly*, 59, 1 (2012), pp. 6–18.
- 62 Michael Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-making Spain since 1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 69–96.
- 63 Omar G. Encarnación, 'Reconciliation after Democratization: Coping with the Past in Spain', *Political Science Quarterly*, 123, 3 (2008), pp. 435–59.
- 64 Reyes, *Teatro Completo*, p. 49.
- 65 Among the reputed names that Reyes helped were Antonio Madinaveitita, José and Francisco Giral, Agustín Miralles Carlo, José Medina Echavarría, Manuel Márquez, Isaac Costero, José Gaos and José Moreno Villa. Alberto Enríquez Perea, *Inteligencia española en México: Correspondencia Alfonso Reyes/Gustavo Baz (1939–1958). Compilación, presentación y notas* (Madrid: Fundación Histórica Tavera, 2001), p. 13.
- 66 Reyes, *Teatro Completo*, p. 41.
- 67 See María Dolores Adsuar Fernández, '*Ifigenia*, la exaltación de la libertad en Alfonso Reyes', *Cartaphilus*, 3 (2008), pp. 1–6; and María Andueza, 'La nueva *Ifigenia* de Alfonso Reyes o la opción por la libertad', *Cuadernos Americanos*, 2, 104 (2004), pp. 95–101.

- 68 Reyes, *Teatro Completo*, p. 51.
- 69 'I don't want to!' would be the literal translation of the line. I have chosen to translate this as 'I refuse' earlier in the article to provide a more precise reference to Iphigenia's action.
- 70 Ragué Arias, *Lo que fue Troya*, pp. 61–5.
- 71 John B. Nomland, *Teatro mexicano contemporáneo 1900–1950* (México: INBA, 1967), p. 293.
- 72 In 2007, the *Instituto Cervantes* – an institution which preserves Spanish and Latin American literature and culture worldwide – organized an international exhibition on Alfonso Reyes which toured in Latin America.
- 73 The Peruvian company Cuatrotablas closely based its *Orestes montaje* in 1989 on Reyes's dramatic poem, and Leandro Espinosa transformed the text into an opera in 1976. Edith Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris: A Cultural History of Euripides' Black Sea Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 276.
- 74 *Boletín del Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales* (with photographs) (México: Departamento de publicaciones, 1978), p. 14. On 5 and 7 June 2014, the Compañía Nacional de Teatro in Mexico produced *Ifigenia cruel* for the eightieth anniversary of the Palacio de Bellas Artes.
- 75 Sanchis Sinisterra was the son of a Republican and also the director of the TEU (university theatre) in Valencia between 1957 and 1959, when he founded the independent Grupo de Estudios Dramáticos (GED).
- 76 'No hay fuerza sobrenatural que determine los destinos de los personajes. En otras palabras: no hay destino, no hay fatalidad. Son los hombres con sus acciones los que desencadenan el devenir de los sucesos y cada efecto concreto de su existencia procede de causa igualmente concreta. En suma: es una situación histórica – y no mítica – el medio en que la acción transcurre.' ('There is no supernatural force that determines the destinies of the characters. In other words: there is no destiny, no misfortune. It is only men and their actions, the ones who trigger the plot, and every specific consequence of their existence comes from an equally specific cause. In conclusion: the plot develops in a historical – and not mythical – context.') Quoted in Morenilla, *Mitos griegos*, p. 40.
- 77 Shaughnessy, 'Staging Alfonso Reyes's *Ifigenia cruel*'.

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