

**Archiving Antigone on the Puerto Rican Stage:
Luis Rafael Sánchez's *La pasión según Antígona Pérez***

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The classic Greek myth of Antigone has an eternal hold on the Western world and playwrights return to its story again and again for inspiration. Puerto Rico's Luis Rafael Sánchez (b. 1936) is no exception, and his *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* (The passion according to Antígona Pérez) (1968) uses the story of Antigone as a starting point for a play that explores political, familial, and geographical themes. *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* translates the timeless story of Antigone's struggle between religious and civilian law to the Latin American context. While it is inarguable that Sánchez uses the Greek myth of Antigone to tell his own story, there are numerous changes and differences between the two. Both similarities and differences provoke questions regarding why there is a need to return to the ancient Greek stage in twentieth-century Puerto Rican literature. How does the portrayal of Antigone differ when it takes place in a fictitious Latin American dictatorship? More importantly, why return again and again to the ancient Greek myth of Antigone in order to convey new perspectives and how does this return enrich or detract from the play's arguments?

It is my contention that ancient Greece, being the founding point of theater in the Western world, holds keys to essential issues that occupy our interest and, through a return to these myths, Latin American theater attempts to understand its surrounding context and legitimize its own theater in the larger community. *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* returns to the past to show the universality of Puerto Rican and Latin American theater independent of its roots, but also wants to use past theater myths to make a profound statement on the contemporary moment. By examining the return to the theatrical archive of Ancient Greek theater, this essay examines how Sánchez uses the past to innovatively

understand the present and point to the future. Sánchez borrows from the Greek myth of Antigone in order to access an established theatrical and literary tradition of the Western canon, but he changes his story in such a way to show the multiplicity and originality of the Latin American identity. The Puerto Rican and Latin American tradition to which he is both contributing and establishing by adapting the Antigone myth becomes something unique that is not completely Western but cannot be understood as completely outside the Western tradition, as is seen in Sánchez's appropriation of various elements from the worlds that contribute to make Latin America and Puerto Rico.

Ancient Greek theater can be viewed as the archive of Western theater. This idea is central to the return to the Antigone myth, since it is the archive that contains the scripts or stories that will be rewritten for a new audience. The creation of the archive for Jacques Derrida is an act that is essential to the event that it is recording, in that the very act of archiving the event is what also creates it as it is being recorded (17). This dual role of archiving is interesting in light of theater in that the double aspect of theater—the written (the script) and the visual (the performance)—contributes to the archivization of the event it is rewriting. By remembering a past event or text, the rewritten play brings it to the forefront and makes the audience look at it again. This sheds a new light on the past text, but also gives it new meaning. The act of rewriting past Greek myths, then, is double in that it remembers something from the past, perhaps giving it meaning where it did not have it, and commenting through the past on the present. In this way, Luis Rafael Sánchez's *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* is not just commenting on the present moment in which it was written, but also giving the Greek *Antigone* new life in another context and with a different audience. Sánchez's *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* archives Sophocles' *Antigone* at the same time as it creates it. In this way, there is a mutual benefit for both the ancient text and the modern one in the Puerto Rican adaptation, in that Sánchez's Antigone brings the myth to life again in a new context that makes the ancient Greek world relevant in twentieth-century Latin America. On the other hand, the use of this established canonical text lends *Antígona Pérez* a legitimacy that would be harder to establish if the plotline were original. Sánchez's return to the theatrical archive places the play within a time-honored tradition that legitimizes the play, the author, and the context from which they come and clearly states that the author and the text are rightful members of the theatrical tradition in which they find themselves.

Nevertheless, when we are discussing theater, there is an inherent destabilization in the text, given that theater has the ability to change depending upon where and by whom it is being produced (among many other factors): there are multiple texts that can (or cannot) be analyzed and archived. In this way, theatrical texts as archival residents are constantly changing and challenging the idea of the archive: what text or performance should be archived and accessed in the future? Is it

important or even necessary to have a stable text in the archive? Theater differs from other artistic and literary genres in that it belongs both in the study of literature and in that of the visual arts, at the same time as it questions its existence in both of these areas. The written script of theater (what is often referred to as drama) is considered a genre of literature while the performance of that script is many times housed with other visual arts such as dance. Yet both these sides may leave out the other from their analysis. Given the difficulties inherent in bringing the various elements together in a single study, a literary analysis may not consider the various incarnations of a play on stage, whereas a theatrical performance may not understand the literary allusions of the author's text. These challenges to the archive question the text of *Antígona Pérez* in a similar way to that which the Puerto Rican Antigone questions the Greek original. By destabilizing its existence, *Antígona Pérez* ensures the continued relevance of the original and makes it accessible again in the Americas, and Sánchez's return to Antigone enables his own text legitimacy in the theatrical community and allows Antigone a place in Puerto Rican and Latin American culture, as we will see in the analysis below.

Luis Rafael Sánchez is the author of many plays and novels, perhaps the best known of the latter being *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* (*Macho Camacho's Beat*) (1976), which captures the colloquial language and the popular culture of the island and uses a particular narrative rhythm that mimics the *guaracha* beat seen in the title. The idea of Puerto Rican popular culture is a topic that he revisits in the essay "La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos" (The Importance of Being Called Daniel Santos). Theater, however, was his first passion and he participated in the theater community as actor, director, and playwright. He contributed to a renewal of the Puerto Rican stage in the 1960s and 1970s. *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*, a tragedy inspired by the ancient text *Antigone* from Sophocles, takes place in a fictitious Latin American country (it seems to be based in part on the dictatorships in Haiti and the Dominican Republic) across the decade of the 1960s. The play premiered in 1968 at Old San Juan's Tapia Theater during the 11th Annual Puerto Rican Theater Festival.¹

La pasión según Antígona Pérez is organized into two acts; each is subsequently divided into scenes, seven in the first act and five in the second act. The stage is divided into two sections, one of which Antígona in her prison cell occupies throughout the play, making it possible for her to see and comment on what is happening elsewhere. As some critics have pointed out, her commentary coincides in some ways with the role of the chorus in the ancient Greek tragedy.² Interspersed with the action described below, the reader-spectator hears international and local headlines read aloud from newspaper reporters periodically, another use of the ancient chorus. This both alerts us to the time period of the play (the decade of the 1960s) and the surrounding events and also updates us on what is happening locally with the government in the

fictitious Republic of Molina, the location of the play. It is important to point out that the headlines are always ones that would meet with the dictator Creón's approval. In the play, the journalists embody one role of the chorus by commenting on outside events and narrating actions that take place offstage but are central to the argument of the play, though there is also the *multitud* (multitude) who coincide with another role of the ancient Greek chorus. These three embodiments of the chorus will be explored in more detail below.

The play begins with Antígona in jail for having buried the corpses of two dissidents, the Tavárez brothers, and thus connects with the original myth of Antigone. Though they are not blood relatives as in the original Greek myth, she considers the Tavárez brothers to be her family in their mutual fight for liberty. This construction of kinship that Antígona makes with the Tavárez brothers is important since it reproduces the necessity of her actions in regards to the brothers' cadavers. Whereas in the original Antigone is obligated by kinship and religion to bury her brothers, Antígona Pérez creates this kinship and relationship of obligation. Though the brothers are not her blood relatives, she sees them as brothers in the fight for liberty, making choice the central aspect in her own actions and obligations. The role of choice in the modern version places an emphasis on the fluidity of family, familial obligations, and liberty.

Over the course of the play, Antígona receives various visitors to her cell who implore her to confess the location of the brothers' bodies to Creón, the leader of Molina. First, Antígona's mother, Aurora Marzán, enters the cell, exhibiting a vast difference between the character of mother and daughter. Creón himself then enters to urge Antígona to confess and the reader-spectator learns more about the attempt on Creón's life and the subsequent events that took place on the 13th of April, namely, those leading to the death of the brothers. It is at this point that the impact of the split stage is maximized, in that the central action does not take place in Antígona's cell, but she is still onstage, always observing and sometimes commenting on what is happening on the other side. The action and dialogue turn to the other part of the stage, and we see Creón with his wife, the First Lady, Pilar Varga, both of whom are preparing for a reception with Monseñor Bernardo Escudero. The monseñor, recently returned from the Vatican and having received a report of the events, speaks with Creón, questioning the motives of the Tavárez brothers, but also asking for an account from Creón of his own actions. In the following scene, the monseñor visits with Antígona to ask her to confess what she knows, but she again refuses. With this, the first act ends.

The second act begins with another visit by Creón to Antígona, where he reveals that she is his niece and that he killed her father, who had opposed him. Next, Antígona's friend Irene Domingo y Zúñiga comes to visit her, saying that she has taken so long to come because only Fernando can approve visitors. With this revelation, Antígona finds

out that her love, Fernando, is working for Creón. Irene defends his actions saying that things are very hard on the outside and difficult decisions need to be made. She also reveals that she and Fernando are in love, first drawn together by their concern for Antígona and later by their growing love for one another. Following this visit, the First Lady, Pilar Varga, descends to Antígona. Pilar points out that the two women share a vice and a mortal sin: “ambición” (ambition) and “soberbia” (pride) (115), and they discuss Antígona’s imminent fate: death that very night.³ In the final scene, Creón and Antígona meet again and Antígona predicts the downfall of Creón and his reign after she is gone. And with that, she is sent to her death.

While the premise of Sánchez’s *Antígona Pérez* is similar to the ancient Greek text—Antígona is jailed and condemned for burying the bodies of her “brothers”—there are many more differences between the two texts that show the innovation of the Puerto Rican text. One of these can be seen in the marked connection to the current-day political climate that is not always seen in adaptations of ancient Greek texts. This is seen in the use of headlines proclaimed by journalists that intersperse the scenes. The role of these headlines is to situate the time of the play (the 1960s) but also to emphasize the connection between Creón and the press. The period of the play is evidenced in headlines that refer to international events such as the assassination of John F Kennedy (1963) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968). As Elina Miranda Cancela points out, the international events referenced by the journalists span the entire decade of the 1960s and underline Sánchez’s desire to “abarcara la década del sesenta como espacio temporal” (394) (embrace the decade of the sixties as a temporal space), in an attempt to reference a feeling that spans the decade rather than simply a specific year. Just as he does with the creation of the fictitious republic of Molina, which refers to various Latin American dictatorships without specifying one in particular, Sánchez wants to suggest more than one year and thus encompass a broader spectrum of time and place. Again, Sánchez amplifies definitions to include both ancient Greek myths and the ultra-modern references in order to create a new tradition of theater. In his return to the theatrical archive, Sánchez both renews and creates Antigone in his own context, which uses the traditions of the past and innovates for the future.

As stated above, in the journalists’ proclamations we see a close connection between them and Creón. While the international headlines situate the play, the national references update the reader-spectator on the actions of Antígona Pérez and Creón Molina and interpretations of these actions. While some are more informative—“Local. Antígona Pérez, quien desafiara a la autoridad de nuestras máximas instituciones con su participación en los sucesos del pasado trece de abril, sigue detenida en los sótanos de palacio” (16) (Local. Antígona Pérez, who defied the authority of our highest institutions with her participation in the events of the past thirteenth of April, continues to be detained in the

basement of the palace)—others show a marked preference for Creón and his politics: “Editorial. La dignidad en el gobierno del Generalísimo Creón Molina nace de la inescapable realidad de que no hay intelecto, fuera del suyo, que pueda llevar al país por buen camino” (49) (Editorial. The dignity of the government of Generalísimo Creón Molina is born from the inescapable reality that there is no intellect, besides its own, that can carry the country on a good path). All of the editorial comments back Creón Molina, showing the impossibility of presenting an alternative viewpoint in the Republic of Molina as is typical in a dictatorship, but which also highlights Antígona’s role of dissenter all the more since she is the only voice that dares to disagree with Creón. In this way, the journalists correspond with the role of the chorus in that they narrate and present opinions. Yet they differ from the ancient chorus since the latter was seen as the voice of authority that could temper and stand up to the antagonist. This role of restraint seen in the ancient Greek chorus does not manifest itself in the journalists’ presentations and leads the reader-spectator to believe that this is an incomplete chorus, as seen in the analysis below that emphasizes the role of other characters’ in the composition of the chorus in *Antígona Pérez*.

In *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*, there are two other manifestations of the chorus in Antígona herself when she narrates events and in the *multitud* who present the viewpoints of the people of Molina. It is interesting to explore these different manifestations of the chorus to see how they connect with the ancient use of the chorus. From Aristotle’s *Poetics*, we know that the chorus was seen “as one of the actors and as an integral part of the drama” (33), meaning that the chorus occupies a central space in the play. Simon Goldhill in *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today* summarizes the chorus as “a collective body, which mobilizes (but does not simply embody) communal wisdom and communal memory. It speaks both as a particular character and with the authority (religious, social, cultural) that comes from its status as a chorus” (53). What is central in this definition is the role of community, a role that Sánchez honors in his use of the journalists as the chorus in that they present a collective identity that, while comprised of different individuals (five in this case), presents a similar viewpoint. What’s more, according to Goldhill, the chorus, though it can misunderstand what is happening, juxtaposes with the protagonist: “The chorus stands for and dramatizes a communal voice, which is set against a hero’s individualism” (47). Both of these points can be seen in *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* and thus require a closer look. The reader-spectator sees the points of view presented by the journalists as ones that adhere too closely to that of the official Creón doctrine and will understand that the journalists are not impartial. Instead, they have become what the press often devolves into in a dictatorship: the mouthpiece of the dictator. In this capacity, they serve as an opposing voice to Antígona herself, who

stands up against Creón for her own and her people's liberty but, they are not the complete chorus in the sense of the ancient Greek tragedy.

Another manifestation of the chorus can be seen in the role of the *multitud*, or the crowd, in *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*, another traditional identity of the ancient Greek chorus, though perhaps a bit more controversial. Both the *multitud* and the journalists appear onstage and intervene together, usually the journalists first and then the *multitud*. The *multitud* is defined in the stage directions as "La multitud de doscientas cabezas aglomerada en la plataforma" (19) (The crowd of two hundred heads in a mass on the platform). With the initial introduction onstage of the journalists, the *multitud* also enters, representing the people of Molina, running after newspaper pages that are blowing back and forth across the stage:

Dos mujeres con capas livianas, apenas visible el rostro, cruzan de derecha a izquierda persiguiendo las páginas. Tres hombres, uno de ellos con bastón, emergen del foso de la orquesta y, al igual que las mujeres, persiguen las páginas de los periódicos. Parejas de adolescentes, luego una enfermera, inmediatamente un militar, se suman a la caza. (15)

(Two women with light capes, their faces barely visible, cross from right to left pursuing the pages. Three men, one of them with a cane, emerge from the orchestra pit and, the same as the women, pursue the newspaper pages. Pairs of adolescents, then a nurse, immediately after a military man, add themselves to the hunt.)

The *multitud* is meant to represent a much wider reference point than the group of journalists. It is comprised of men and women (the journalists are only men) of various different professions and ages, as seen in the presence of adolescents and the inclusion of a man with a cane. Rather than the similarities found in the traditional ancient Greek chorus (all the members from the same social group), this crowd is more heterogeneous and, as such, presents different viewpoints, sometimes coinciding with one another and sometimes disagreeing. In this way, Sánchez widens the definition of the chorus to encompass, first, two distinct groups: the journalists and the *multitud*, a move that was not seen in the ancient tragedy since the chorus was meant to represent one body. Second, Sánchez's *multitud* is a disparate group of citizens that only hold in common that they occupy the same space, a depoliticized people who lack the power to intervene in the events that surround them. These distinctions from the original Antigone show Sánchez's desire to use the ancient myth in a new, modern manifestation that accounts for the multiplicities of identities that can be found in the Latin American societies of the 1960s despite the uniformity that the dictatorship attempts to put forth. In this innovation, the reader-spectator can see that Antígona Pérez will be more successful in her attempt to provoke

change in her community than the Greek Antigone because there is already a multiplicity of viewpoints that is eager to see its variation represented.

As stated above, the *multitud* is sometimes in agreement and sometimes not. Their agreement can be seen in their initial presentation to the reader-spectator when they comment on the state of the city after Antígona's arrest, which they all agree has returned to calm and peace:

La paz es nuestra.
 El país regresa a la normalidad.
 A las seis es el toque de queda.
 Para proteger los derechos ciudadanos.
 En la cárcel está la traidora.
 La que intentara secuestrar el poder.
 Triunfo de la ley, la medida y el orden. (19)

(Peace is ours.
 The country is returning to normal.
 Curfew is at six.
 To protect the citizens' rights.
 The traitor is in jail.
 The one who tried to kidnap power.
 The triumph of law, restraint, and order.)

Here, in contrast to their later statements when they divide by gender, the *multitud*'s interventions focus on the official point of view that sees the Tavárez brothers' deaths and Antígona's arrest as positive for the nation, a necessary step to bring about peace and stability. The *multitud* presents the reader-spectator with the opinion of a common, depoliticized people who are not immediately involved in the events but are affected by what is happening. Their focus is not primarily the nation's liberty and justice done to these three individuals, but instead their own security and lives.

Their attention begins to be drawn to Antígona and her plight the longer it goes on. At the end, in their last verbal intervention in the play, they split into two: the women on one side urging Antígona to stay strong, and the men on the other pressing her to cede to pressures to confess. Onstage, the two are physically separated, with the journalists taking pictures of the groups. Their statements are to grow in intensity and force: "El coro debe tener voz y ardor fustigantes, colorido dramatismo, deslumbrante fuerza" (102) (The choir should have a whipping voice and ardor, colorful drama, dazzling force). This quote is important because it definitively identifies the *multitud* as the chorus, but also for the ferocity that Sánchez attributes to the chorus' words. The chorus becomes more and more involved in the action that is taking place rather than remaining on the sidelines and simply commenting on the action taking place as would be appropriate to an ancient Greek

chorus. This is a pivotal change in the purpose of the chorus that points to the political and social engagement that Sánchez is identifying with his chorus. There is a transformation in not just the construction of the chorus but in the very idea of tragedy. Sánchez's *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*, like his chorus, does not want to retell an ancient myth. Instead, its goal is to extract emotion that will impel its characters and audience to action.

Their words show that they have taken sides in the battle between Creón and Antígona (both men and women sympathize with Antígona, though they have different opinions on what her subsequent actions should be) and they attempt to influence her future. First, one group issues a series of interventions (five lines spoken individually but from the group) and then the other, each presenting its own point of view. Whereas in the beginning their statements were impersonal and related to the effects of the recent political actions, now they speak directly to Antígona. Over the ensuing days, the *multitud* has established a relationship with Antígona, one that has made them identify with her and urge her to action (be it confession or continued resistance). The tension visible in their words increases as their verbal interventions continue, culminating in one-line volleys back and forth:

MUJERES. -Antígona, no cedas.
 HOMBRES. -Antígona, no sufras.
 MUJERES. -Antígona, no pierdas.
 HOMBRES. -Antígona, no mueras.
 MUJERES. -Antígona, prosigue.
 HOMBRES. -Antígona, despierta.
 MUJERES. -Antígona, tranquila.
 HOMBRES. -Antígona, alerta. (103–4)

(WOMEN. Antígona, don't give up.
 MEN. Antígona, don't suffer.
 WOMEN. Antígona, don't lose.
 MEN. Antígona, don't die.
 WOMEN. Antígona, go on.
 MEN. Antígona. Wake up.
 WOMEN. Antígona, easy.
 MEN. Antígona, alert.)

As stated, here we see the separation of the chorus into men and women. Interestingly, the women stand firm with Antígona, urging her to continue to resist Creón, even if that means death. The men, on the other hand, though they seem to sympathize with her, urge her to cede to his demands and confess the location of the Tavárez brothers' bodies. As Loreina Santos Silva points out, the chorus of women holds strong with Antígona and it is the women who are attempting to usher in a new era of liberty in the Republic of Molina by supporting the actions of

Antígona and the Tavárez brothers (442). The chorus of women sees in Antígona the future that will liberate them and their country and they are not afraid to openly support her and urge her to action. Efraín Barradas picks up on the centrality of the role of the women in *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*, underlining how Sánchez breaks chauvinistic stereotypes to initiate a new world: “la mujer deja de ser ente pasivo o mera inspiración. Antígona y las mujeres que forman el coro son los personajes dinámicos y positivos en quienes cae el peso del futuro del continente” (19) (women stop being a passive entity or a mere inspiration. Antígona and the women that form the chorus are the dynamic and positive characters in whom the future of the continent lies). In this way, Sánchez’s play renovates the myth of Antigone to create something that challenges both the world it comes from and the world for which it is written. These renovations can be seen in Sánchez’s innovations of the chorus but also, and perhaps more centrally, in the role of the women characters throughout the play. *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* is not simply a presentation of the ancient myth but a borrowing of the ancient story to retell it in a modern setting and with changes that will allow for advances in the story and its purpose within the context it is written.

This division of the chorus and their interventions quoted above continue to interest the reader-spectator when we examine the way that Sánchez states these words should be delivered: “Las ocho exhortaciones últimas son de medida heptasilábica con acento obligado en la sexta sílaba. Lo efectivo en la emisión de las mismas es la aumentación gradual de la intensidad hasta alcanzar el tope de la emoción” (104) (The last eight exhortations are in a measure of seven syllables with an obligatory accent on the sixth syllable. The effect of this emission is the gradual augmentation of intensity until it reaches maximum emotion). This delivery remembers the traditional manifestation of the ancient Greek chorus. The use of verses reminds the reader-spectator of the songs and dances of the ancient choruses, as detailed by Helene Foley and Simon Goldhill among others. This poetical intervention contributes to the tension that builds up from the very meaning of the words and seconds their significance in context by creating a rhythm that augments the tension in the reader-spectator. Here, then, we see a return to the traditional role of the chorus that was present in ancient Greek theater and juxtaposes with the innovations that Sánchez makes that have already been discussed. Just like the plotline of the play, there is a mix of innovation and tradition that contributes to the overarching goals of the play to widen definitions. Sánchez wants to use what exists in order to create something more encompassing that will be identified with Latin American theater. His definition of both Latin America and Latin American theater is expanded, as is seen throughout the play.

The use of last names in Sánchez’s *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* coincides with the play’s overarching goals of mixing the ancient with

the modern. We see that the characters have first names (as is customary, of course, in the Greek tragedies that they are borrowing from) and last names. Using last names was not customary in ancient Greek theater but is a marked characteristic of contemporary times, an inclusion that shows the time and place that the modern play is set in. Sánchez gives his characters last names that place them within a marked ethnic heritage that will set them apart both from the originals and from other versions of the play. This marks the characters and the play within a Spanish-speaking context from the very title. What is more, Sánchez uses the last name Pérez, a common last name in virtually all Spanish-speaking countries, for his main character. This allows a certain level of identification between Antígona and the reader-spectator that makes her actions more comprehensible.

This identification between Antígona and America is echoed in various moments of Sánchez's play. While he does not specify a country or a dictatorship in his play, Sánchez approximates Antígona's identity with that of America itself, making her more accessible to the audience. From the very beginning, when Antígona introduces herself onstage in the first few lines, she underlines the connection with America: "Empecemos por donde se empieza siempre. Nombre, Antígona Pérez. Edad, veinticinco años. Continente, América. Color . . . (*Sonríe.*) No importa" (13) (Let's begin where one always begins. Name: Antígona Pérez. Age: twenty-five. Continent: America. Color: . . . [*She smiles.*] It doesn't matter). The close connection that the protagonist establishes between the continent and herself is underlined by the stage directions that have identified her with the place of the play: "Antígona Pérez resume en su físico el cruce de razas en que se asienta el ser hispanoamericano" (13) (Antígona Pérez is physically summed up in the intersection of races that characterize the Spanish American being). There is a concerted effort here to connect Antígona and the play as a whole with the Latin American experience, one that is echoed in the fictitious "Spanish American" location of the play. For Efraín Barradas, this contributes to Sánchez's efforts to underline the "Latin American-ness" of Puerto Rico, given that he takes for granted the Latin American identity of Puerto Rico: "un autor nuestro dice, más fuertemente que ninguno antes, que somos un país latinoamericano al no decir que lo somos sino al asumir en su obra a toda América Latina y hablar desde una perspectiva latinoamericana" (21) (one of our authors says, more strongly than any before, that we are a Latin American country not by saying that we are but by assuming all of Latin America in his work and speaking from a Latin American perspective). Again, the reader-spectator sees a desire to widen existing definitions rather than create something new from nothing. Sánchez taps into archival conventions but in an innovative way that allows the possibility of something new. His play connects the subject matter and his own land of Puerto Rico to Latin America by intervening in the discussion of what is Latin America

while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of definitions of America and Puerto Rico.

As stated, the use of last names first appears in the title, but the title holds various points of analyses, such as the use of the word “pasión” in *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*. In the Western world, *passion* used in the context of suffering is most often employed to refer to Jesus Christ’s passion: his trial, torture, and crucifixion. In this way, the use of “passion” in the title remembers Christ’s tribulations within the context of Antígona Pérez’s own suffering, especially since there is a parallel between their experiences. Both Antígona and Christ are subjected to public humiliation and torture before they are publicly killed. Moreover, Christ’s death is believed to save his people. As Eliseo Colón-Zayas indicates, Antígona’s death is meant to be a similar liberation as Christ’s, both for herself and for her people (92). When Creón offers her a way to live by confessing to her crimes, she chooses death as the only way to preserve her own legacy and, subsequently, put into motion the freedom of her people. Much like Christ needed to suffer and die to save the souls of his followers, it is only through her own suffering and death that Antígona’s people will be set free:

CREÓN. . . Fíjate que vengo a buscar tu última palabra. Te he presentado dos soluciones a una misma altura y distancia. De un lado, la salvación. De otro lado, la condena. Escoge. Debemos liquidar esta cuenta con premura.

ANTÍGONA. Escojo. La salvación me la dará la muerte.

CREÓN. . . Imagine, I’m coming to get your final word. I’ve given you two solutions at the same height and distance. On one side, salvation. On the other, condemnation. Choose. We should end this bill quickly.

ANTÍGONA: I choose. Death will bring me salvation.) (119).

The salvation that Antígona sees in her death will materialize for her people when they see what has happened, a spark that she hopes will be lit with her death. Just as Christ’s death would serve as an example and a liberation for the people that would follow him, Antígona means her death to be a symbol and a spark for her people. Her death will be the catalyst for her people’s liberation, meaning that freedom can only be realized through suffering. Antígona’s legacy, then, is one of sacrifice for her people.

In many ways, Antígona Pérez is a martyr in the Christian definition. Just before Antígona goes to her death, she predicts Creón’s fall as dictator of Molina, remembering the falls of other Latin American dictators that have gone before him. Her last words foretell how her death will convert her into a martyr whose image will help spark the rebellion that will bring Creón down. Her death, then, is not an end but a beginning reminiscent of the Christian tradition, as she herself details:

Antígona es otro nombre para la idea viva, obsesionante, eterna de la libertad. Las ideas no sucumben a una balacera ni retroceden desorientadas por el fuego de un cañón amaestrado. Ni recortan su existencia porque su tirano inútil decreta pomposamente su desaparición. (*Fogosa.*) Matarme es avivarme, hacerme sangre nueva para las venas de esta América amarga. (*Urgente.*) Aligera, Creón, aligera. Dame, dame la muerte. (121)

(Antígona is another name for the living, obsessive, eternal idea of liberty. Ideas do not succumb to a shootout nor do they retreat disoriented by the fire of a contrived cannon. Nor do they cut away their existence because a useless tyrant pompously decrees their disappearance. [*Vehemently.*] To kill me is to give me life, renew my blood for the veins of this bitter America. [*Urgently.*] Hurry up, Creón, hurry up. Kill me.)

Like Christ's death, which has been transformed into a symbol of freedom and sacrifice within Christianity, Antígona's death is meant to be the catalyst that will liberate the people of Molina. In this way, her death is not meaningless or an empty act, but one that will fulfill the promise of hope and freedom. By referring to her incarceration and suffering as a passion, Sánchez makes her into a martyr who lives, and dies, for others. Daniel Zalacaín seconds this connection with the passion of Christ, further identifying it with the Puerto Rican situation: "Su pasión—como sugiere el paralelo con la Pasión de Cristo—implica resurrección y salvación de los valores absolutos y auténticos del puertorriqueño en defensa de su libertad; pasión por la que igualmente atraviesa Puerto Rico en la lucha por mantener su identidad contra la avalancha norteamericana a que es sometido" (118) (Her passion—as is suggested by the parallel with the Passion of Christ—implies a resurrection and salvation of the absolute and authentic values of the Puerto Rican in defense of liberty; passion that crosses Puerto Rico equally in its fight to maintain its identity against the North American avalanche to which it is subjected). Zalacaín sees Antígona's martyrdom as parallel to Puerto Rico's struggle to maintain its cultural independence in the face of the US behemoth that threatens to overtake its identity. This is an interesting reading, though, since it conflicts in part with the idea that Sánchez is trying to identify with the broader Latin American experience. Zalacaín explores the role of the local here rather than the global that would connect the play with the experience of its Latin American neighbors, the latter of which I see as more central to the play's argument. With the use of the word "pasión," there is a merging, then, of Greek myth with Christian philosophy in *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* that allows the play to refer to both heritages and amplify its references and message.

The merging of Greek myth and Christian philosophy identified here is one analyzed repeatedly in various scholarly articles on *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*. Lorraine Elena Ben-Ur's "Myth Montage in a Contemporary Puerto Rican Tragedy: 'La pasión según Antígona Pérez'" is perhaps the article where the idea of myth is explored most in depth. The title and its use of the word *passion*, for Ben-Ur, is what first hints at the role of Christian mythology, which is compounded by the fact that there are twelve scenes in the play, replicating the number of Stations of the Cross that are traditionally commemorated at Good Friday (18–19). Nevertheless, Ben-Ur does recognize that the play presents differences from traditional ideas of Christianity, namely that Antígona rejects "the other-worldly orientation and the demand for resignation implied by these Christian symbols" (19). She does this by advocating for change rather than acceptance of what is happening in this world, namely the Republic of Molina. This philosophy is more in line with the liberation theology that was becoming popular in Latin America at the time when the play was written and takes place.⁴ Many of the ideas that Antígona presents—particularly, liberating her people from repression through her death—can be associated with this idea of liberation as presented in liberation theology, which also connects the play and its plotline with a movement that was popular across various parts of the Americas. Again, then, we see how Sánchez merges both the traditional Christian ideas of sacrifice with modern philosophies of liberation. He returns to the archive to rewrite Antigone for his own audience. The merging of Greek and Christian myths further points to Luis Rafael Sánchez's efforts to use an ancient myth from the cradle of Western civilization to frame a modern story of liberation and sacrifice. He underlines the fact that Latin American societies have roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in ancient Greek myth, which he unites with the Latin American experience to create a hybrid that will be capable of putting forth a new interpretation of a Latin American community.

Continuing with the title, it is interesting to see the preposition "según" (according to) as the link between the first and the second parts of the title: *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*. There is a suggestion that this is a general, collective passion that could be shown from another viewpoint. As Eliseo R. Colón-Zayas suggests in his study of Luis Rafael Sánchez's theater, the use of "según" makes a connection with the audience since there is a suggestion that the passion portrayed is from one single point of view and multiple perspectives exist (90). He maintains that using "según" rather than "de" creates a situation in which the reader-spectator feels more integrated into the action onstage, being able to understand and participate in the events in a more active manner (90). I agree with the assertion that "según" creates a closer connection with the reader-spectator since there is the connotation that the passion portrayed onstage does not wholly belong to Antígona, but instead is part of all the characters and even the reader-spectator. In this

way, Sánchez brings home the story for the reader-spectator, making it possible for him/her to feel a participant in the events onstage.

The critic Efraín Barradas also views the linker “según” as important in the title given that it implies that what the reader-spectator is about to experience is but one version of the truth, a point of view that remembers the role of the journalists and their presentation of “truth” in the play. This multiplicity of points of view is something that Antígona herself acknowledges in her first words when she discusses her own death: “Los periódicos han inventado una historia que no es cierta, los periódicos enfermos de fiebre amarilla. Una historia sin escrúpulos, maligna, improvisada con el afán de destruir mi nombre y mi reputación. Habrá, pues, dos versiones de una misma verdad. La mía. La de ellos” (14) (The newspapers have invented a story that is not true, the newspapers sick with yellow fever. A perverse, improvised story without scruples and with the urge to destroy my name and reputation. There will be, then, two versions of the same truth. Mine. Theirs). The acknowledgement of a diversity of views in the use of the word “según” and that Antígona presents in this quote is in line with Sánchez’s general project in *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* to amplify and widen definitions. Here, Antígona recognizes that there is an official viewpoint that will be put forth from the mouth of the journalists that will obliterate her own experience. In order for her point of view to be seen she must present it herself. Truth, then, has a multiplicity of positions, all of which need to be presented. This parallels Sánchez’s own project of multiplicity in Latin American identity and urges the reader-spectator to consider how many other versions of the truth have been missing from the official record.

Like Christ, Antígona becomes a martyr who sacrifices everything in order to fulfill a destiny that will liberate her people. In this way, borrowing from the Christian faith offers the playwright a recognizable myth to innovate. This innovation, which can be seen in the blending of myths and stories in *La pasión según Antígona Pérez*, is the modernization of traditional ideas that is Sánchez’s goal in the play, as we have seen. Sánchez returns to the archive to modernize various myths that are founding moments of the Western world (ancient Greek theater, Christian theology) in order to anchor his Latin American story within some of the inherited traditions of his people. In so doing, he both renovates the past and writes the future of Western and Latin American theater through his own Antigone story, inserting Western myths and theater in Latin American theater and the Latin American experience in Western theater and culture.

Many of the world’s stories were first examined on the ancient Greek stage and so it is inevitable that all great storytellers would return here. Greek theater is an endless source of inspiration for all veins of Western theater, and Hispanic theater is no different. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand why playwrights and the theater community return to these tragedies and comedies again and again. In *La pasión*

según Antígona Pérez, an ancient Greek text is used to point to the contemporary moment to show the topic's and text's persistence and universality. An ancient script makes space for the past and the present and, in this way, this twentieth-century play archives ancient Greece while it innovatively critiques the present moment. Sánchez wants to broaden the spectrum and canon of Puerto Rican theater, to undoubtedly link it to both Latin American and Western theater. He modernizes this story and makes it accessible to a new audience but, he also creates an audience that considers and comprehends the ancient texts within a Latin American setting. He creates a hybrid world where the old and the modern mix to bring a new light to the contemporary moment.

Notes

1. For an informative article on a production of the play from 1991 in the Centro Bellas Artes in Puerto Rico by Teatro del Sesenta, see Dávila-López.
2. This is seen in articles by Gloria Waldman, Lorraine Elena Ben-Ur, and Loreina Santos Silva.
3. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
4. Liberation theology is a religious philosophy that interprets Jesus Christ's teachings through the lens of a liberation from poverty and injustice. For detractors, this is seen as a lineation with Marxist ideology, while its adherents interpret these ideas as the idea that the Church should struggle against the forces that keep the poor disenfranchised rather than accept them. This theology originated in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s and the term was coined by Gustavo Gutiérrez in 1971, who also popularized the slogan "preferential option for the poor," which highlighted the focus on ending poverty and repression. It comes out of a general atmosphere of reform in the Catholic Church that was marked by the Second Vatican Council in 1962 and the Conference of Latin American Bishops in 1968.

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